

## Senator pressures Uber after CNN investigation into driver assaults

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### A US senator is calling on Uber to make it easier for women who've been sexually assaulted by drivers to have their day in court.

The move comes in response to [an exclusive CNN investigation published](#) Monday that found at least 103 Uber drivers in the United States who have been accused of sexually assaulting or abusing their passengers in the past four years. The drivers were arrested, are wanted by police, or have been named in civil suits related to the incidents.

When users sign up for Uber, they agree to its terms, which includes [resolving any claim](#) on an individual basis through arbitration. It's a practice that critics say has helped the company keep the issue quiet.

In a letter sent to Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi on Wednesday, Senator Richard Blumenthal, a Democrat from Connecticut, [challenged the use of forced arbitration](#) and "respectfully requested" it end the practice.

"Claims subject to forced arbitration are relegated to private forums where powerful defendants can stack the deck against claimants and cover up wrongdoing," Blumenthal wrote. "Many potential claimants respond to this prospect by declining to file claims in the first place, leaving bad conduct undeterred."

In a statement, Uber said Wednesday that "sexual assault has no place anywhere and we are committed to doing our part to end this violence."

There is no publicly available data for the number of sexual assaults by Uber drivers or for drivers of other rideshare companies. CNN's analysis came from an in-depth review of police reports, federal court records and county court databases for 20 major U.S. cities.

[Related: CNN investigation: 103 Uber drivers accused of sexual assault or abuse](#)

At least 31 drivers have been convicted for crimes ranging from forcible touching and false imprisonment to rape, and dozens of criminal and civil cases are pending, CNN found.

CNN also contacted more than 20 police departments to obtain data on complaints that involved Uber or Lyft drivers and sexual assault. Four police departments — Austin, Boston, Denver and Los Angeles — tracked crimes involving rideshare drivers and shared their data on sexual assault complaints.

CNN did not include most of these complaints in its tally of cases, because they could not all be verified with incident reports. However, the numbers suggest that there may be many more overall incidents of sexual assault than the 103 cases found in the CNN investigation.

Uber was made aware of CNN's reporting for this story months ago but the company failed to make any executives available to speak on the record. It canceled an on-camera interview with an Uber executive earlier this month.

Jeanne Christensen, an attorney with law firm Wigdor LLP, has been pursuing Uber rape and assault cases since 2015. Christensen's firm represents a proposed class action against Uber on behalf of nine plaintiffs.

Uber is trying to compel the women to carry out their case through arbitration per its legal terms of service

— and they're fighting back. Last Thursday, 14 women [wrote a letter](#) to Uber's board detailing their experiences being assaulted by their drivers. They urged the company to remove its arbitration clause, saying it silences them and forces the issue underground.

Blumenthal's letter is in support of their request, tasking Khosrowshahi with "finally demonstrat[ing] how seriously you take the issue of sexual harassment and assault."

"Your company must lead by example and show that it values transparency and your users' safety more than your company's bottom line," he wrote. "I respectfully request that you immediately stop enforcing arbitration agreements against individuals who bring claims of sexual harassment or assault."

*-- CNN's Nelli Black, Curt Devine, Drew Griffin, Majlie de Puy Kamp, Collette Richards and Whitney Clegg contributed reporting.*