

Sexist insults *Analysis of the Living Environment and Security surveys*



Executive summary

This study examines insults that their victims have deemed sexist in the "Living Environment and Security" survey (CVS). The reader will find the main characteristics of this type of insult (victims, locations, times, perpetrators, consequences, etc.), determined by comparing them with the overall phenomenon of insults.

Sexist insults stand out from other types of insult in terms of trend and structure. On the one hand, their number has shot up since 2010, whereas the number of insults overall has remained stable over the same period. The main drivers behind this rise are the increase in number of insults in public spaces and even bigger increase in the number of insults in the workplace.

On the other hand, over the 2006-2016 period, the characteristics specific to sexist insults are simply more pronounced trends of the distinctive factors of insults in general. Accordingly, women are even more over-exposed to sexist insults than they are to insults in general: their victimisation rate (3.8%) is nearly ten times that of men (0.4%). Victims of sexist insults are younger. These insults tend to be voiced slightly more often in public spaces and more often target the victims' physical appearance. Sexist insults thus throw into sharper relief the characteristics that distinguish insults in general from other types of crime against people (threats, physical violence).

Words of caution

The adjective "sexist" that describes the insults analysed in this Grand angle issue is associated with the way the victims have perceived them.

*We are therefore dealing with **insults which their victims have deemed to be sexist**, but the expression "sexist insults" has been given precedence over the more exact expression "insults characterised as being sexist by their victims".*

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Main findings

The perpetrators and their victims



86%

of victims **INSULTED BY MEN**

Half

the victims **UNDER 35 YEARS OF AGE**

WOMEN NEARLY 10 times more

exposed than men

2%

of respondents **CLAIM TO HAVE BEEN A VICTIM**

34%

of victims **INSULTED BY A GROUP OF PERPETRATORS**

The circumstances



94%

of insults delivered **FACE-TO-FACE**

39%

of insults target **THE VICTIM'S PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

Over half

of insults delivered **IN THE PUBLIC SPACE**

22%

of insults received **AT NIGHT**

75%

of insults received **DURING THE WEEK**

The consequences



39%

of victims report **PSYCHOLOGICAL DAMAGE**

21%

of victims report **DISRUPTION IN THEIR DAY-TO-DAY LIVES**

3%

of victims **FILE AN OFFICIAL REPORT OR GIVE A STATEMENT**

Introduction¹

Sexism is a notion which first gained currency in the United States in the 1960s. It describes discriminatory behaviour on the grounds of the victim's gender. It is to be understood in the context of the broader issue of gender equality.

Gender equality has become a public issue that governments across many countries have been addressing for a number of decades now. In France, several pieces of legislation enshrine these efforts, including the act on equality in the workplace, gender equality in political representation and the fight against sexism. But some associations, institutions and citizens do not think that this legal apparatus goes far enough in promoting equality.

There has recently been a groundswell of activity in French society, not least *via* social media, publicly and symbolically decrying behaviour lambasted as being misogynistic, chauvinistic, amounting to harassment and even violent in some instances. The international "#Meetoo" and French spin-off "#Balance ton porc" movements are shining the spotlight on behaviour, conducted in everyday settings, which is deemed to be sexist.

It is this same concern to fight against the behind-the-scenes nature of ordinary power struggles experienced by women that makes the case for more careful attention to be paid to the place of women in writing conventions². "Inclusive writing"³ is thus championed in the name of shifting from the gendered nature of language, and the unequal gender relations it is constantly conveying, to a gender-neutral version. Its advocates particularly contest the use of the masculine form as the gender-neutral version (which does not exist in the French language). Their arguments, which draw on the history of the language⁴, show that the increased dominance of the masculine gender to the detriment of the feminine gender, particularly noticeable from the 17th century⁵, is the result of some grammarians' efforts to reserve certain occupations (writer, physician) to men, thereby undermining the use of the feminine form to describe these occupations⁶.

There has been a backlash from some corners against this use of inclusive writing, which has already gained considerable ground: inclusive writing apparently complicates things needlessly (this is the argument the Government put forward in November 2017 in a [circular](#) aimed at regulating its use in administrative publications). Some linguists or historians are critical of this view, and argue that language

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(1) The French version of this publication contains a second part analysing the sexist insults as reported by the victims: <https://inhesj.fr/ondrp/publications/grand-angle/les-injures-sexistes>

(2) See, in particular, the report by the High Council for Gender Equality on the subject of "gender-neutral public communication".

(3) There is no official definition of what constitutes inclusive writing. One way of defining it could be: use of punctuation (bracket, hyphen, dot etc.) to include both women and men in the designation of groups.

(4) And this history goes back a long way. Ever since the French Revolution, women

should remain independent from political entanglements. Other renowned grammarians, Alain Rey among them, do not consider this to be the right approach to tackling gender inequality. But even some of those opposed to inclusive writing acknowledge the problem: "language is chauvinistic"⁷.

It is against this backdrop of the questions raised by the use of gender in the French language that the analysis of sexist insults reported in the "Living Environment and Security" (CVS) survey has been conducted.

This analysis unpicks the characteristics of offensive situations, beyond merely their verbal content: so the victims, contexts, perpetrators and consequences for the victims. Accordingly, the victimisation rate stands at 2.2% for the 2006-2016 period. Two additional findings need to be underscored forthwith: over the period in question, women are nearly ten times more exposed than men, and this rate has been rising since 2013.

have been criticising the sway the masculine form holds over the French language, including Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793) who wrote the Declaration of the Rights of Women (1791) and, a century later, Hubertine Auclert (1848-1914), who wrote that "feminisation of the language is urgent" (quoted in Taïeb, 2005).

(5) And well before that, from the late 15th century, as Éliane Viennot shows by highlighting the decisive role that printed text played in conveying narratives that were "unfavourable to women" (2011, p. 15).

(6) [\[URL\]](#); [\[URL\]](#)

(7) [\[URL\]](#)

Part 1:

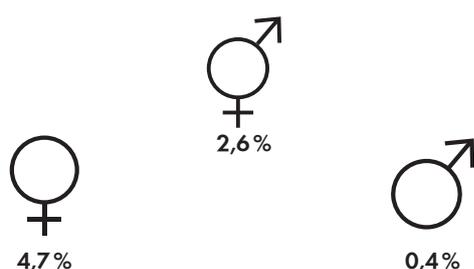
The circumstances of sexist insults

The CVS survey gives an idea of the extent of the problem of insults, whether or not these are considered to be sexist by their victims. The respondent is initially asked "Have you personally been a victim of insults on the part of someone not currently living in the same housing as you?". If s/he replies yes, a series of questions follows including one on the potential discriminatory nature of the offence. It is on the basis of this characterisation that the data below is analysed.

3/100 people were insulted in a sexist manner in 2016, women representing a disproportionate number of victims

Over the 2006-2016 period, 9.9% of individuals were victims of insults over the year running up to the survey⁸. This proportion, referred to as the victimisation rate⁹, falls to 2.2%, still for the 2006-2016 period, when only insults deemed to be sexist (so linked with the fact of being a woman or a man) by their victims are considered. For 2016 alone, this rate climbs to 2.6% for sexist insults and 9.6% for all insults (Appendix A). In other words, in 2016, one in ten people claim to have been insulted and 3/100 claim to have been the victim of a sexist insult.

Victimisation rate for sexist insults (2016)



Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017.
Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

These rates mask notable differences to do with the gender of the victims, for women are more likely to be on the receiving end of sexist insults than men. For the whole of

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(8) For details about the study scope, readers are invited to read the part "Further details on...".

(9) The victimisation rate is the number of victims relative to the total population. The victimisation rates indicated in this part have been calculated for one year. To find out the victimisation rates for two years, i.e. bearing on offences experienced over the two years running up to the survey, readers are invited to consult Appendix A.

the 2006-2016 period, the victimisation rate for sexist insults among women is 3.8%, versus 0.4% for men. In other words, whereas nearly 4/100 women have been the victim of at least one sexist insult on the part of someone who does not live in the same housing, this is only the case for less than 1/100 men.

For 2016 alone, the victimisation rate for sexist insults jumps to 4.7% for women, but remains identical for men (0.4%). What this means is that, in 2016, it is estimated that almost 5/100 women were the target of at least one sexist insult during the previous year.

The victims' age is also a distinguishing criterion of the victimisation rate. As such, it can be noted that the younger the victim, the more likely s/he is to be the target of sexist insults (this also applies for insults in general). Over the whole of the 2006-2016 period, the victimisation rate among the under 30s is 4%, whereas it is less than half that for the over 30s (1.7%). If we look solely at the gender of victims, it can be noted that, over the same period, 7.3% of women under 30 years of age have been the victim of at least one sexist insult over the previous year. For 2016 alone, the victimisation rate is higher since nearly one in ten women under 30 years of age had to endure at least one sexist insult over the previous 12 months (victimisation rate of 9%).

An upward trend in sexist insult claims over the past decade

The overall number of insults (so not just sexist insults) has been stable over the 2006-2016 period. It almost reached the 5 million mark in 2016 (Graph 1). This number rose sharply between 2011 and 2012 before dipping markedly in 2013. The other changes are not significant¹⁰.

If we focus on sexist insults alone, an overall upward trend can be observed over the 2006-2016 period. Specifically, the number of sexist insult victims fell slightly between 2006 and 2010 then rose almost steadily, and significantly, between 2010 and 2016 (excluding 2013).

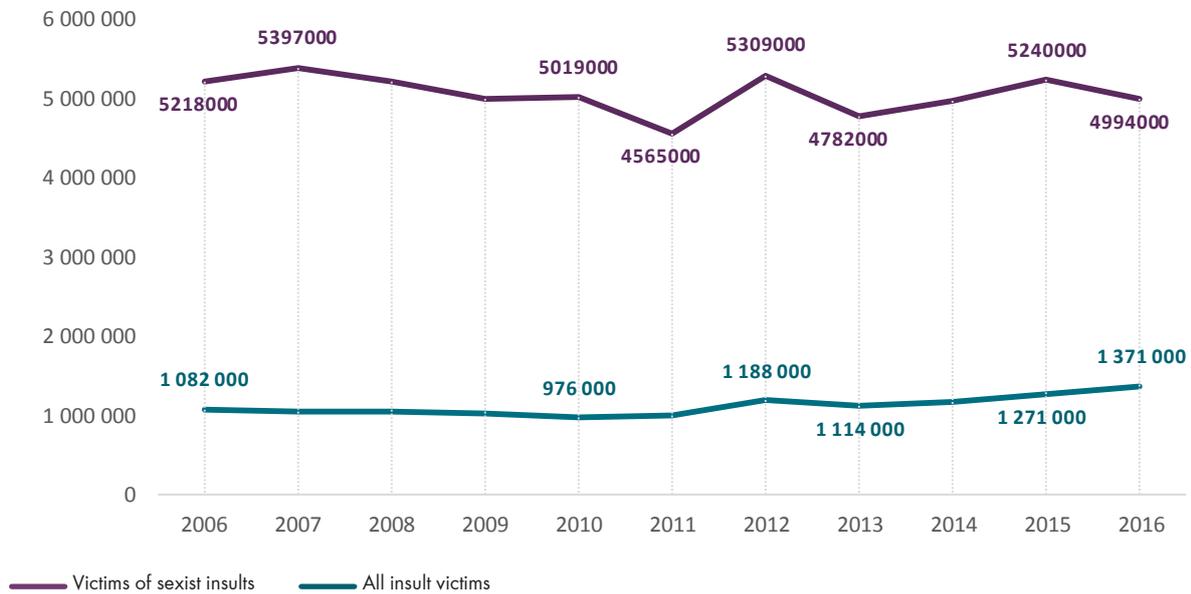
This rise could be interpreted in at least two ways. One, that the number of cases of offensive behaviour of a sexist nature has in effect increased. Two, given that the data is reliant on respondents' statements, it might be considered

(10) The significance of a variation has to do with its associated risk of error. If a variation is not significant, the level of precision of the variation is such that evidence of the existence of a trend is not conclusive. With a risk of error of between 5 and 10%, the trend is considered to be notable but fairly weak (not very significant). With a risk of error between 1 and 5%, the significance is considered sufficient. Below 1%, the trend will be considered "very significant".

that victims are now interpreting as sexist, insults which used to be much more widely accepted as normal and which were thus not stated as being "sexist". From the data in our

possession we are unable to determine which of these explanations is the more likely.

Graph 1. Trend in the number of victims of sexist insults between 2006 and 2016

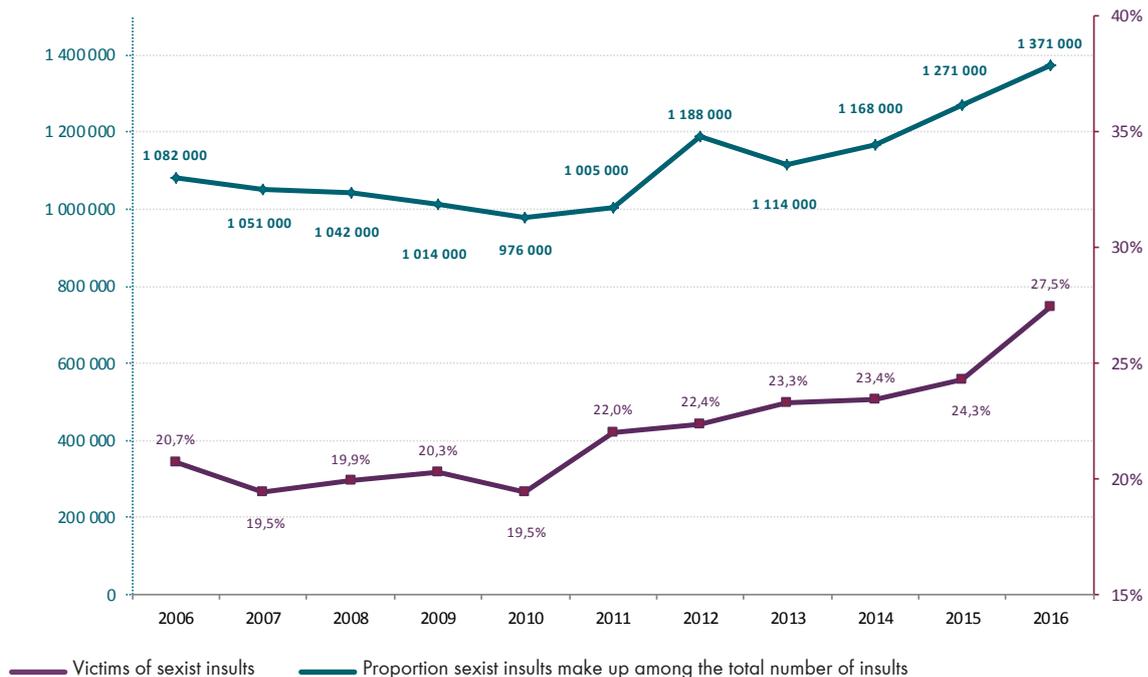


Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMSi, 2007-2017. Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over. Note: In 2016, it is estimated that there were nearly 5 million victims of insults and 1.4 million victims of sexist insults.

The proportion that sexist insults make up among the total number of insults has risen overall between 2006 and

2016: accounting for a fifth of all insults in 2006, they represented more than a quarter ten years later (Graph 2).

Graph 2. Trend in the number of sexist insult victims and in the proportion they make up among the total number of insults between 2006 and 2016



Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMSi, 2007-2017. Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over. Note: In 2016, sexist insults accounted for 27% of all insults. The number of victims of this type of insult is estimated to be 1.4 million that year.

The characteristics of sexist insults

After characterising the extent to which victims are exposed to sexist insults, depending on their age or gender, in this part the aim now is to compare the characteristics of sexist insult victims to all insults as a whole, with a view to detecting any specific features. For the record, in the CVS survey victims must characterise the insult endured on the basis of four options, which can be combined if necessary. "All insults" therefore encompasses not only insults that their victims have described as being "racist, antisemitic or xenophobic"¹¹, "homophobic", "sexist" or of "another type", but also insults to which the victims have not ascribed any of these discriminatory dimensions.

Words of caution

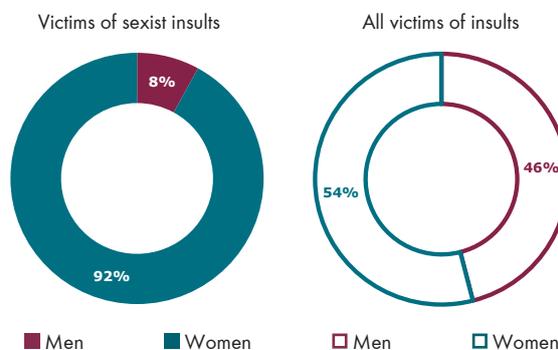
Unlike the previous part, this part conducts a structural rather than a trend-based analysis. In other words, the data presented bears on all of the CVS surveys from 2007 to 2017, which means that all of the survey years are looked at together to paint an overall "picture" of the offence. This also implies that the insults considered are those received during the two years running up to the survey. For details about the survey scope, readers are invited to consult the part "Further details on...".

Sexist insult victims are overwhelmingly female and younger than other insult victims

Although women tend to be more exposed to insults overall¹², a disproportionate number of women among sexist

insult victims is observed, compared with all types of insult (Graphs 3 and 4): nine out of ten victims of sexist insults are women, when they account for a little over half the victims of all types of insult.

Graphs 3 and 4. Breakdown of victims of insults and sexist insults according to gender

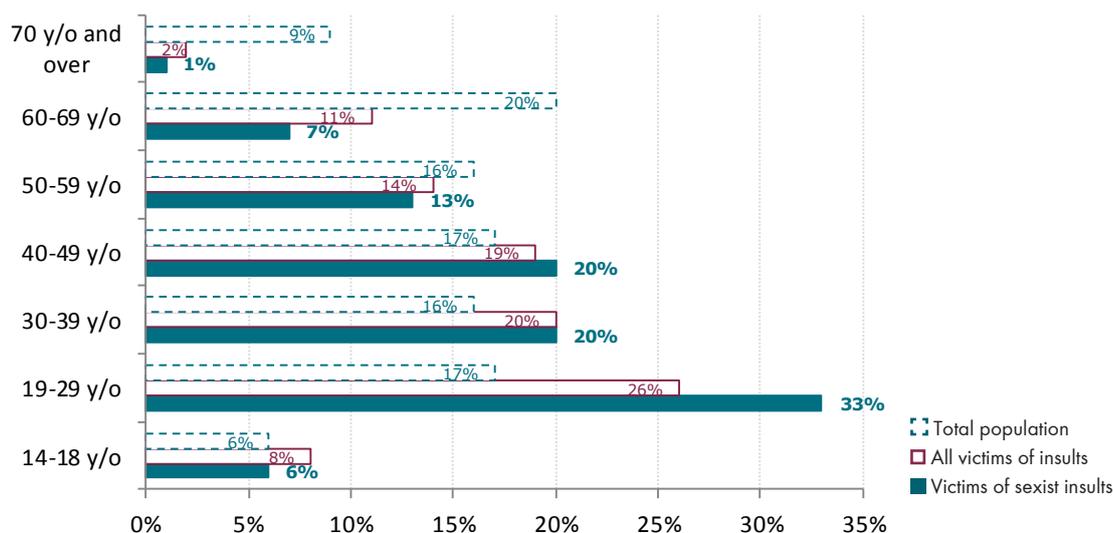


Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMSi, 2007-2017. Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over. Note: 92% of victims of sexist insults are women, whereas women represent 54% of victims of all types of insult.

Victims of sexist insults are younger than victims of insults taken as a whole (as well as than the population taken as a whole). Half of sexist insult victims are under 35 years of age (the median age of all insult victims is 38 years old).

One third of sexist insult victims is between 19 and 29 years of age, while 26% of all insult victims come within this age bracket¹³ (Graph 5).

Graph 5. Breakdown of victims of insults and sexist insults according to age



Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMSi, 2007-2017.

Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Note: 7% of sexist insult victims are between 60 and 69 years of age, while 11% of insult victims come within this age bracket. Among the total population, 20% of individuals are between 60 and 69 years of age.

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(11) A publication by the ONDRP examines racist, antisemitic and xenophobic insults on the basis of the CVS survey (Scherr, Amrous, 2017: les injures à caractère raciste, antisémite ou xénophobe).

(12) The victimisation rate (for one year) for insults - not just sexist ones - among

women is slightly higher (9.9%) than among men (9.4%) over the 2011-2016 period (ONDRP, 2017).

(13) For the record, the victimisation rate (for one year), among the under 30s is 4%, while the rate among 30 year-olds and over is 1.7%.

Underage victims (14-18 year-olds¹⁴) of insults are over-represented, whether the insult is of a sexist nature (they represent 7% of victims) or not (they represent 8% of victims of all types of insult). Between 30 and 59 years of age, the proportion of victims of sexist insults and of all types of insults is more or less the same.

Consideration of victims' earnings reveals that victims of sexist insults are on slightly higher incomes than victims taken as a whole are. Indeed, the former types of victim have a greater tendency to belong to the high-income¹⁵ (24%) and upper medium-income (22%) categories than victims of insults taken as a whole do (22% of which belong to the high-income categories and 21% to the upper medium-income categories). On the contrary, victims of sexist incomes are slightly less likely to belong to the low-income (27% of victims of sexist insults versus 28% of victims of insults taken as a whole) and medium-income categories (27% versus 29%).

In terms of qualifications, it can be observed that victims of sexist insults are more likely to have a school leaving certificate (such as the baccalaureate or A levels, 22%) or a higher education diploma (40%) than victims of insults taken as a whole are (19% and 32% respectively).

Similar circumstances whether or not the insults are of a sexist nature

The majority of sexist insults are directed face-to-face (94%) and the remainder over the telephone (4%), with only a minority taking place by post or digitally (2%). 78% of sexist insults are received during the day, and three-quarters on a week day¹⁶. For all these aspects, the context of sexist insults is not markedly different from the context in which insults as a whole take place.

Two-thirds (65%) of victims of sexist insults claim to have been targeted more than once over the previous two years

(this is the case for 61% of all victims of insults). As such, sexist insults do not demonstrate a noticeably more repetitive pattern than other types of insults.

Sexist insults		Insults overall
94%	 Face-to-face	93%
4%	 Over the telephone	5%
2%	 Insults by post or digitally	2%
78%	 During the day	79%
75%	 On a week day	72%

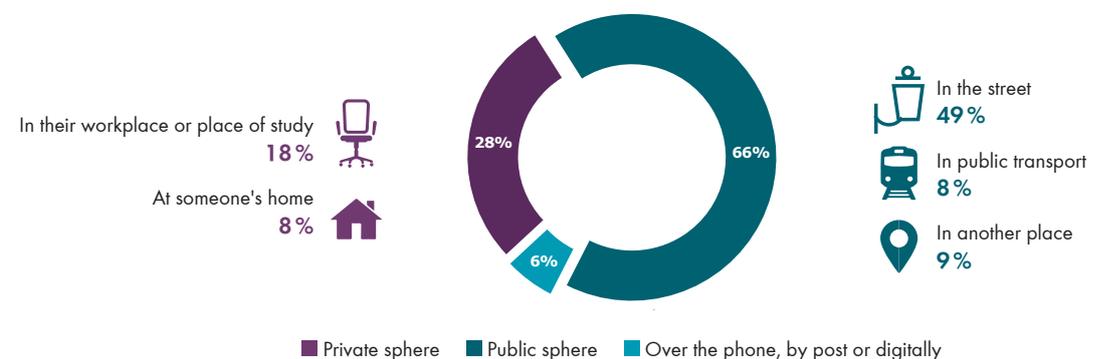
Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017. Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Sexist insults tend to take place in the public sphere

Two-thirds of sexist insults are received in the public sphere¹⁷, i.e. slightly more often than all types of insult taken as a whole (Graph 6; Appendix B). Specifically, almost half of sexist insults are uttered in the street (49%) and 8% on public transport¹⁸.

It can be noted that insults are more likely to take place in the workplace when they are not sexist than when they are (24% and 18% respectively). In other words, sexist insults are less likely to be voiced in professional situations than all types of insult taken as a whole. Lastly, note that one in ten sexist insults is received in someone's house, whether or not this is the victim's.

Graph 6. Breakdown of victims of sexist insults according to location



Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017.

Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Note: 18% of victims of sexist insults claimed that the offence took place in their workplace or place of study, 11% at someone's home, 49% in the street, 8% in public transport and 9% in another place.

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(14) The CVS survey does not allow individuals under 14 years of age to participate.

(15) Earning categories are defined as follows. Low-income categories = first three income deciles; Medium-income categories = 4th, 5th and 6th deciles; Upper medium-income categories = 7th and 8th deciles; High-income categories = last two income deciles.

(16) The variables concerning the time of delivery are only entered where the victim has stated that the offence took place face-to-face, but the proportions are presented relative to the number of insults overall (i.e. including non-direct

insults: over the 'phone or by post).

(17) In this instance, by public sphere we mean the street, public transport as well as "other" locations.

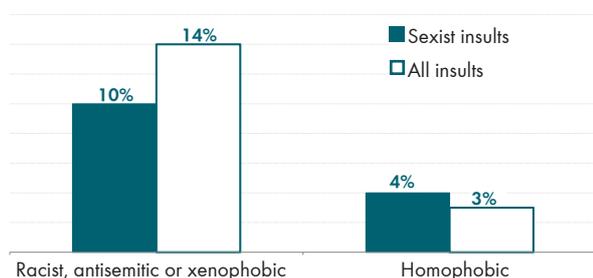
(18) Note that the spatial variable is only entered where the victim has stated that the offence took place face-to-face, but the proportions are presented relative to the number of insults overall (i.e. including non-direct insults: over the 'phone or by post).

Sexist insults are described by a single characteristic more often by women than by men

One in ten sexist insult victims also characterised the offence as "racist, antisemitic or xenophobic" (Graph 7). This rate is slightly higher among all types of insult taken together (14%).

The proportion of victims characterising the insult as homophobic is similar for sexist insults (4%) and all insults taken as a whole (3%).

Graph 7. Discriminatory descriptors ascribed to insults by their victims



Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017.

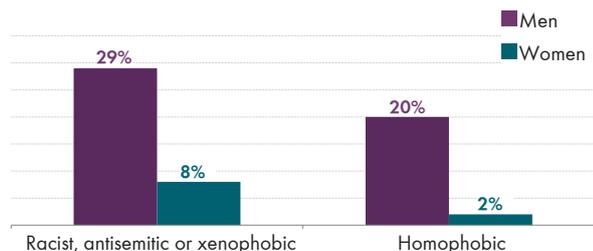
Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Note: 10% of sexist insult victims also considered the offence to be of a racist, antisemitic or xenophobic nature. 14% of insult victims describe, at the very least, the offence to have been of a racist, antisemitic or xenophobic nature.

When the victims are male (who, remember, only represent 8% of victims), they are more likely to attribute another descriptor to the sexist insult than female victims are (Graph 8). Indeed, 8% of female victims of sexist insults also describe the insult as having been racist, antisemitic or xenophobic (versus 29% of men) and 2% as homophobic (versus 20% of men).

What this means is that, while men are more likely to attribute other discriminatory descriptors to these offences (racist, antisemitic or xenophobic, or homophobic), women tend to consider the insults directed at them as having solely to do with the fact that they are women.

Graph 8. Proportion of victims of sexist insults attributed another discriminatory descriptor, according to the victim's gender



Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017.

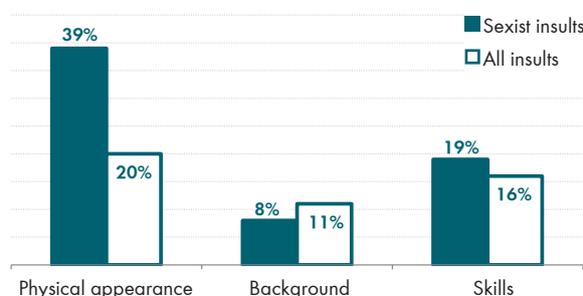
Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Note: Among female victims of insults they describe as having been sexist, 2% also consider the offence to have been homophobic in nature

Physical appearance more often targeted by sexist insults

Sexist insults bear more on victims' physical appearance (39%) than all insults taken together do (20%) (Graph 9).

Graph 9. Target of insults according to whether or not they are deemed sexist



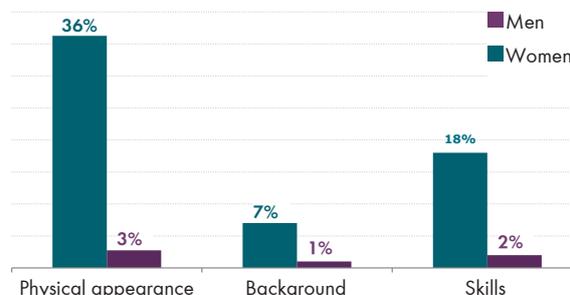
Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017.

Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Note: 39% of sexist insults target the victim's physical appearance, whereas only a fifth of insults taken as a whole do.

When looking at the gender of sexist insult victims, it can be observed that women are much more likely to experience insults targeting their physical appearance than men: this is the case for 36% of female victims of sexist insults, versus 3% of men (Graph 10).

Graph 10. Target of sexist insults according to victim's gender



Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017.

Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Note: 18% of female victims of sexist insults thought these had to do with their skills, versus 2% of male victims.

Note that this more frequent targeting of the victim's physical appearance is found in the case of homophobic insults (37% of which concern physical appearance). When looking at the victim's gender, the reverse is true for this type of insult than what is found for sexist insults: when the victim is male, the homophobic insult is more likely to target his physical appearance than if the victim had been female (Larchet, 2017).

The perpetrators of sexist insults: tend to be male, in groups, and unacquainted with the victim

Around a third of sexist insults are uttered by groups of perpetrators (which is a slightly higher rate than for all insults taken together). Whether or not the perpetrators are in a group, they are male in the majority of situations (86%), which is, once again, a slightly higher rate than for all insults taken together (73%).

Sexist insults		Insults overall
34%	 Groups of perpetrators	30%
86%	 Male perpetrators	73%
69%	+18 Adult perpetrators	69%
13%	 Perpetrators under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs	13%

Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017.

Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Regarding the perpetrators' age and possible influence of alcohol and/or drugs, there is nothing particularly setting sexist insults apart from all types of insult taken as a whole.

✓ Inset 1

Sexist insults coming from women

Sexist insults initiated by women

The proportion of female perpetrators is not as high for sexist insults as for insults in general. Indeed, women are found to be the offenders in 6% of sexist insult cases, versus 17% of all cases of insults. If we add situations where the groups of perpetrators are of both sexes to these circumstances, 13% of sexist insults are uttered by at least one woman (26% for all insults).

Female offenders have a greater tendency to target men when the insult is sexist, than for all types of insult taken as a whole: 6% of all female victims of sexist insults were insulted by women, whereas 23% of female victims of insults taken as a whole describe a female offender¹⁹.

Sexist insults directed by women against men

8% of all victims of sexist insults are men. In 13% of these cases, the insults came from women (these situations account for 1% of sexist insults). When groups of offenders of both sexes come into the equation, a little over a fifth of insults directed against men are voiced by at least one woman.

This type of insult (sexist, against a man, by at least one woman) does not take place face-to-face as often as all types of insult taken together do (82%). Most of these insults are received in the street (39%) and more than a fifth (22%) in the victim's workplace or place of study.

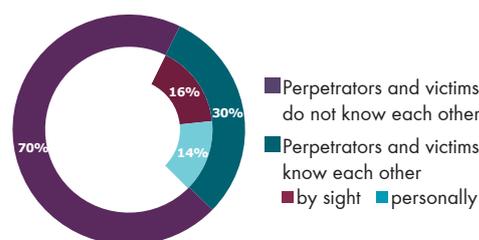
Almost all of these insults are issued by a lone female (97%), and an adult at that in nearly all cases (98%). A little over half of the victims (53%) are not acquainted with the perpetrator. When victims and perpetrators do know each other, their link is personal in three-quarters of cases. Note that in most of these personal acquaintance situations, the offender is a current or former spouse (34%). Lastly, one in ten victims reports the offence to the police or gendarmerie. In three-quarters of cases, the victims have been insulted more than once (at least twice).

These sexist insults addressed by women against men have a slightly greater tendency of also being considered racist, antisemitic or xenophobic by their victims than the other types of insult (17%). This appears consistent with the fact that such insults usually target the victim's background (16%). These insults target the victim's physical appearance less often (19%) but the latter's skills more often (41%).

Sexist insults tend to be anonymous more often than all insults taken as a whole

A lesser degree of acquaintance is observed between victims and perpetrators when the insults are sexist, since in 70% of cases they do not know each other by sight or personally (versus 59% of cases for all types of insult). Supporting this more often anonymous nature of sexist insults is the observation that the proportion of victims who personally know the person insulting them is 16% when the insult is sexist in nature, versus 20% for all types of insult (Graph 11; Appendix C).

Graph 11. Degree of acquaintance between perpetrators and victims of sexist insults



Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017.

Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Note: Victims and perpetrators know each other personally in 14% of sexist insult cases.

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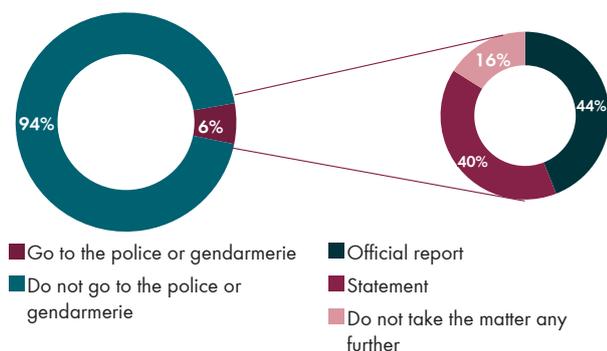
(19) For a more focused analysis of sexist insults addressed specifically by women against other women – of a very young age, in the school setting – see Clair (2017).

Where there is a personal link between victims and perpetrators, in a third of cases this link is through work. In nearly a quarter of cases where there is a personal link, the perpetrator is the victim's current or former spouse (Appendix D).

Action taken following an insult is similar whether or not this is deemed to have been sexist

The vast majority of victims of sexist insults (94%) do not subsequently report it to the police or gendarmerie (Graph 12). This rate is almost exactly the same as the rate for all types of insult (93%; Appendix E).

Graph 12. Possible steps taken by sexist insult victims



Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMSi, 2007-2017.
 Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.
 Note: Of the 6% of sexist insult victims who do subsequently go to the police or gendarmerie, 45% officially report it and 40% give a statement.

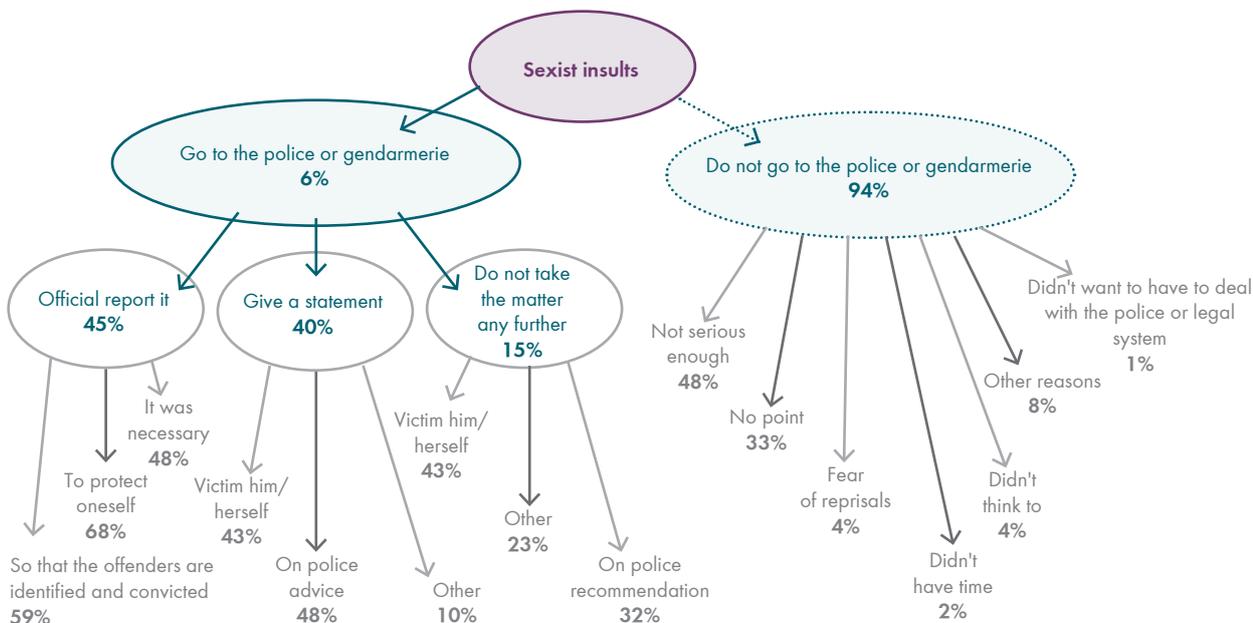
Almost half of the victims who do not go to the national police or gendarmerie justify their decision by the fact that "it wasn't serious enough" or "it wasn't worth the effort" (48%) while a third did not see the point of doing so (chart 1). Of the situations where the victims do go to the police or gendarmerie but end up not taking the matter any further, note that in 45% of cases this is their own decision, and in just under a third of cases this is following the police's recommendation.

Of the victims who did go to the police, 45% officially reported the offence and 40% gave a statement²⁰ (Graph 12). Report rates²¹ for sexist insults are therefore the same as the rate for all insults taken together (2.8%). Most of the victims who officially reported the offence said they did this so as to protect themselves (68%).

Psychological damage is more common among victims of sexist insults

In the CVS survey, victims of insults are given an opportunity to assess the "psychological damage" of the offence they endured, which can include sleep problems, fear or loss of self-confidence. Following 39% of sexist insults²², victims claim to have suffered psychological damage (whether "fairly minor" or "fairly major"), so slightly more than for all types of insult taken together (34%). The remaining victims (62%) do not identify any psychological damage (Graph 13; Appendix F).

Chart 1. Action taken following the insult

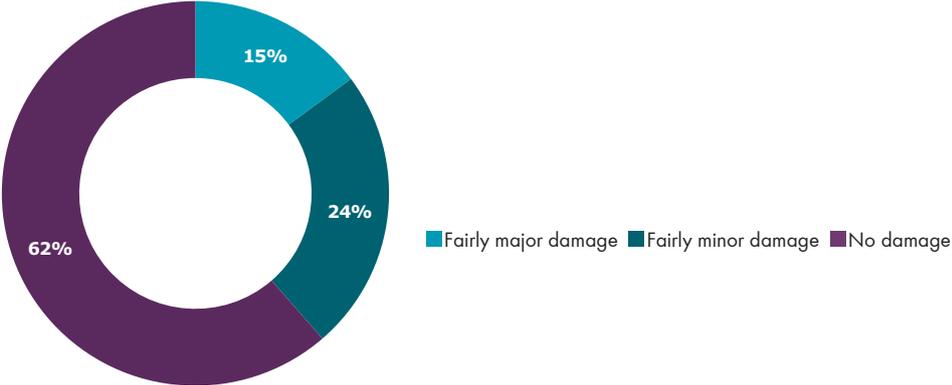


Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMSi, 2007-2017. Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.
 The reasons cited for officially reporting the offence can be combined, which is why the total number of reasons cited exceeds 100%.

(20) In pretty much half the cases (48%), the victims decided on this method on advice from the police, and in 43% of cases, it was the victims themselves who decided just to give a statement.
 (21) The report rate corresponds to the number of sexist insult victims who report the offence, relative to the number of sexist insult victims.

(22) This variable bearing on psychological damage only covers the 2007-2016 period, unlike the other variables which, for the record, cover the survey years 2007-2017. This is because the response options for this variable were rephrased in 2017, and comparison with the surveys from previous years is therefore not possible.

Graph 13. Psychological damage incurred by sexist insults



Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMSi, 2007-2016.

Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Note: 15% of sexist insult victims claim that the offence resulted in fairly major psychological damage.

This impact, which is slightly more pronounced following sexist insults, bears on the question of disruption to day-to-day or professional life, since just over a fifth (21%) of vic-

tims claim to have been affected by the experience (19% for all victims of insults).

Part 2 : The specifics of sexist insults in the street

In this part, we compare sexist insults experienced in the street with those issued elsewhere, which may take place on public transport, in the victim's workplace or place of study, in someone's house (which may or may not be the victim's), in a commercial setting or "another" location. There is a twofold reason for this finding. First, it is tied in with the significant proportion that street insults make up in the category of sexist insults (almost half). Second, the public sphere is fertile ground for the types of offence endured by women (Lebugle *et al.*, 2017). Overall, sexist insults in the street throw into sharp relief the characteristics distinguishing them from insults considered in general.

The number of sexist insults in the street has been on the rise overall since 2006. Between 2006 and 2011, this number embarked on a downward trend (*Graph 14*) before rever-

sing again from 2011 – even though the proportion they represent among sexist insults overall is falling (in 2013 they accounted for 57% of this type of insult, versus 49% in 2016).

The temporal context of sexist insults in the street: slightly more of a night-time and weekend occurrence than insults not in the street

Street insults have a slightly greater tendency to take place at the weekend (or on bank holidays) than other insults (18% of sexist insults take place during the weekend, versus 15% for other insults). The same proportions are observed for the time of day: 18% of street insults take place at night, versus 15% of insults not occurring in the street.

Graph 14. Trend in the number of victims of sexist insults in the street and in the proportion they make up among sexist insults overall between 2006 and 2016



Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMSi, 2007-2017.

Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

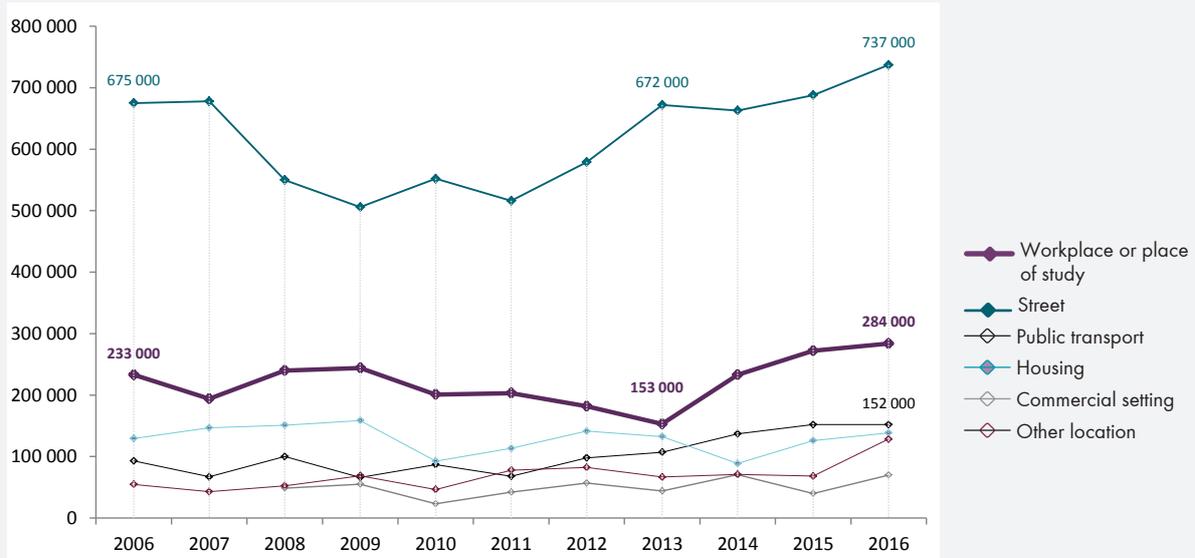
Note: In 2016, there were an estimated 737,000 victims of sexist insults in the street. These insults represent 49% of sexist insults.

✓ **Inset 2. Sexist insults in the workplace on the rise since 2013**

Although sexist insults in the street have been rising since 2011, the proportion they make up among sexist insults as a whole is falling. What is the driver behind this two-sided trend? Observing the trend in sexist insults according to location could offer up one possible explanation (Graph 15).

The proportion of sexist insults in the workplace (or place of study) among the total number of sexist insults has risen between 2013 and 2016, from 13% to 19%. This increase is associated with the very high growth in their number since 2013 (+86%). From 2013 to 2016 they climbed from 153,000 to 284,000. This sharp rise in sexist insults in the workplace or place of study is one reason why the proportion of sexist insults in the street is falling among the total number of sexist insults.

Graph 15. Trend in the number of sexist insult victims between 2006 and 2016 according to location



Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017. The answer option "commercial setting" was not added until 2009, and this is why no information is available for this item for the previous years.
 Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.
 Note: In 2016, the estimated number of victims of sexist insults on public transport stands at 152,000.

Sexist insults in the street are less repetitive than other types of sexist insult

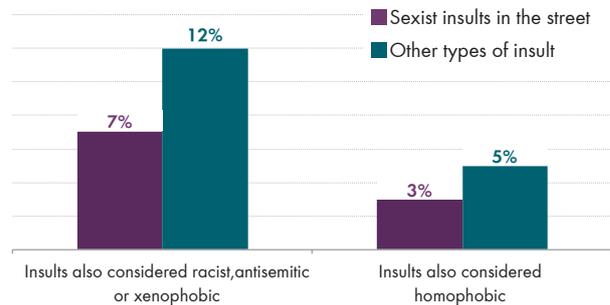
Victims of sexist insults in the street report fewer repetitive offences than the other victims of sexist insults. 62% claim to have experienced more than one insult (not necessarily all sexist and not necessarily in the street), while this is the case for 67% of victims of sexist insults that did not take place in the street.

Street insults described by a single characteristic more often than other types of sexist insult

Sexist insults in the street tend to be described more often by a single characteristic (i.e. they are not ascribed several discriminatory descriptors - racist, homophobic or other - by the victim) than the other types of sexist insult.

Specifically, note that 7% of victims of sexist insults in the street consider these also to have been racist, antisemitic or xenophobic in nature, while 12% of victims of sexist insults addressed elsewhere attribute this characteristic to the offence (Graph 16).

Graph 16. Other discriminatory descriptor of the insult according to location



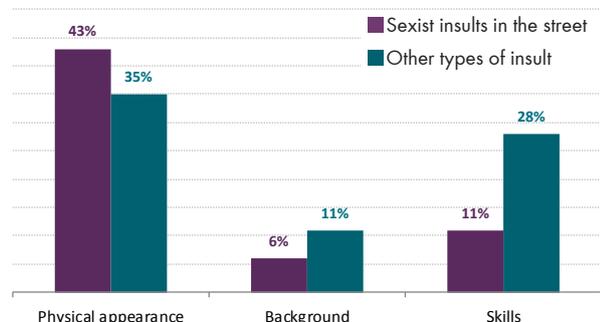
Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017.
 Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.
 Note: 7% of victims of sexist insults taking place in the street also describe the insult as having been racist, antisemitic or xenophobic. 12% of victims of sexist insults experienced somewhere other than in the street also describe these as having been racist, antisemitic or xenophobic.

Sexist insults in the street tend to target the victim's physical appearance more than the other types of sexist insult

Sexist insults in the street have a greater tendency to target the victim's physical appearance than the other types

of sexist insult. This is the case for 43% of sexist insults in the street, versus 35% of insults not addressed in the street (Graph 17). Sexist insults in the street are less likely to target the victim's background or skills than the other types of sexist insult.

Graph 17. Target of the insult according to location



Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017.

Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Note: 6% of sexist insults taking place in the street target the victim's background, while 11% of sexist insults taking place elsewhere have this as their target.

Perpetrators of street insults: male, usually in a group and usually strangers

Perpetrators of sexist insults in the street are more likely to be in a group than for the other types of insult (40% and 29% respectively).

Nine out of ten sexist insults in the street are uttered by one or more men, the remaining 10% coming from women (5%) and offenders of both sexes (5%). Note that sexist insults received somewhere other than in the street are not quite as likely to come from men (83%). In terms of perpetrator's age, sexist insults in the street do not stand out from sexist insults experienced elsewhere (more than two-thirds of perpetrators are adults only).

Sexist insults in the street		Sexist insults not in the street
40%	Groups of perpetrators	29%
90%	Male perpetrators	83%
68%	Adult perpetrators	69%
85%	Perpetrators and victims do not know each other	54%
10%	Perpetrators under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs	16%

Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017.

Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

...

(23) Remember that the variable does not include data from 2017, whose response options were rephrased.

Note that although sexist insults appear to be initiated by strangers more often in principle, this is all the more so when they take place in the street. Whereas a little over half of sexist insults not in the street are uttered by perpetrators not acquainted with the victim (54%), this is the case for 85% of sexist insults in the street. Lastly, victims are less likely to describe the perpetrator being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs in cases of street insults (10% versus 16%).

Action taken following street insults

Victims of sexist insults in the street are less likely to go to the police or gendarmerie (5% report it) than the other victims of sexist insults (8%). That said, there is a higher recorded report rate among victims of sexist insults in the street who do go to the police than among other victims of sexist insults (46% and 44% respectively). What is more, victims of sexist insults not in the street are more likely to give a statement than victims insulted in the street (43% versus 34%).

The report rate for sexist insults in the street is 1.1%, whereas it is 1.8% when the offence takes place elsewhere.

Sexist insults in the street		Sexist insults not in the street
1,1%	Report rate	1,8%
13%	Victims feeling disruption in their day-to-day or professional life	28%
32%	Victims suffering psychological damage	44%

Source: "Living Environment and Security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi, 2007-2017.

Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Disruption to day-to-day or professional life appears to be less of a problem for victims of sexist insults in the street (13% claim repercussions) than for victims of other types of sexist insult (28%). Differences can be observed in terms of psychological damage reported by victims²³ since this is not as marked when the insult takes place in the street. Indeed, whereas a fifth of victims insulted off the street claim to have suffered "fairly major" psychological damage, 9% of victims insulted in the street do. Ultimately, nearly a third of victims insulted in the street claim to have been affected psychologically (whether in a fairly major or minor way), versus 44% of victims insulted elsewhere.

We might conclude this focus on sexist insults in the street by highlighting the following finding: sexist insults in the street, the most common type of sexist insult, are more seldom considered serious by their victims.

Conclusion

Sexist insults, on an upward trend since 2013, particularly in the workplace, can be characterised by two main factors. One, they are mainly experienced by women; even if it should not be completely overlooked that nearly a tenth of victims are men. Two, they are more likely than insults in general to be issued by groups of men who do not know the victim. What is more, these characteristics are particularly

pronounced with regard to insults experienced in public spaces. This is why special focus on so-called street insults was justified. These are experienced above all by young women, targeted for their physical appearance, and as such this population group is disproportionately exposed to sexist insults.

* * *

Further details on...

Sexist insults.

Analysis of the "Living Environment and Security" surveys

The National Observatory of Crime and Criminal Justice (ONDRP) provides further details of a methodological nature on its publications by presenting its statistical sources and defining the exact type of data obtained, with particular emphasis on the type of information that can be gleaned from this and its limits.

The offence of using insulting language

In addition to the insight yielded in our introduction on the public or private dimension of insults, it should also be specified that using insulting language in public is an offence in France (Article 33 of the 29 July 1881 Act on freedom of the press).

Public exposure means any broadcasting of information, words or ideas ... to an undetermined group of people. The means of public exposure, pursuant to Article 23 of the 1881 Act, comprise "speeches, shouts or threats made in public meetings or places, or through written text, illustrations, engravings, paintings, emblems, images or any other medium conveying the written word or images sold or distributed, put on sale or exhibited in public meetings or places, or through notices or posters exhibited in public view, or through any method of communication to the public by electronic means".

Non-public insults, meanwhile, are a class 4 offence (Article R624-4 of the French Criminal Code) when they are also racist or discriminatory in nature (sexist, homophobic, transphobic or target disability).

What this means is that any insulting language uttered in public is an offence. However, insults delivered under personal circumstances, face-to-face, are an offence where they are also racist or discriminatory in nature.

Racist, sexist and homophobic motives are aggravating circumstances (Article 132-77 of the French Criminal Code providing for a general aggravating circumstance for all crimes or offences committed on the grounds of the victim's gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, and Article 33, paragraphs 3 and 4 of the 29 July 1881 Act on freedom of the press providing for this aggravation specifically for insulting language).

...

(24) For more explanations, readers are invited to refer to the presentation of the CVS survey given in ONDRP's annual report on the survey (ONDRP, 2017). The data presented in Part 2 of Grand angle has not been weighted.

The "Living Environment and Security" (CVS) survey

The "Living Environment and Security" survey (Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi) is an annual victimisation survey carried out among residents of ordinary households, which began in 2007. The information gathered during this survey bears on the two years running up the survey date and therefore covers the years 2005-2006 to 2015-2016.

As with all of the surveys conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (Insee), this survey does not question the whole of the population living in France. Because the sample of households and respondents participating in the CVS survey is limited, it is compiled so as to be representative of mainland France residents aged 14 and over. Once the data has been weighted, the figures are not exact values therefore, but estimations²⁴ rounded up to the nearest thousand.

Survey procedure

The respondents' statements are gathered during a face-to-face interview. One or more household members answer the "households" questionnaire. This is generally one of the parents where families are concerned. The questions on the offences committed against households concern residential property crime, vehicle-related crime and bank card fraud.

Within the household, the respondent aged 14 or over whose birthday is closest to 1 January answers the individual face-to-face questionnaire. S/he answers questions about such personal crimes as thefts with or without violence or threats, physical violence, threats or insults (outside the household).

The Insults module of the CVS survey

When a questionnaire respondent has been on the receiving end of insults over the two years leading up to the survey, s/he is asked questions to gain insight into the circumstances surrounding the most recent incident and, where applicable, the second most recent (some questions are not asked about the latter incident).

The first questions examine the spatio-temporal context in which the insult was expressed. Other questions in the

module seek information about the offender(s): gender, number (alone or in a group), type of relationship with the victim. These details are reliant on the victims' memory and perceptions, and some are more subjective than others (such as the fact that the offender might have been under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol or a minor).

The remaining questions ask about what action the victim took following the offence. S/he is particularly asked if s/he reported the crime to the authorities and about any personal impact it might have had on them.

This Grand angle presents the data obtained from these closed questions on the context of the insult, the victims' and perpetrators' characteristics and action taken following the offence.

In the rest of the questionnaire, the victim is then asked to specify how s/he would describe the insulting language directed at them. For that, she can choose one or more of four adjectives: "racist, antisemitic or xenophobic", "homophobic", "sexist", "other type of insult". The victim can also state that s/he does not know how to describe the insult. The option that the victim has of choosing several adjectives to describe the same insult explains why words of a racist nature are included among the offending terms used for example.

The study scope

It is important to distinguish the CVS *survey years* from the *years in which the offences they refer to took place*. The survey years refer to the years in which the survey was carried out (2007-2017), while the victimisation years concern the period on which the questions about the offences experienced by the victims bear.

The victimisation rates indicated at the beginning of the study are so-called "one-year" rates, i.e. they concern the insults endured during the year running up to the survey. CVS can be used to calculate "two-year" rates, which refer to the offences endured during the 24 months preceding the survey. Appendix 1 also indicates the two-year rates for information.

The structural details on the characteristics of the offences of this study concern the ten years of the CVS survey combined, not including the variable on the psychological damage suffered by the victims, which excludes the year 2017. The rates are calculated on a two-year basis, i.e. they bear on the two years leading up to the survey (thus covering a victimisation period of 2005-2016).

The trend patterns presented at the beginning of Part 1 are calculated over one year only (one-year rate) to ensure that the same offence is not counted several times. The victimisation period covered is therefore 2006-2016.

* * *

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Appendices

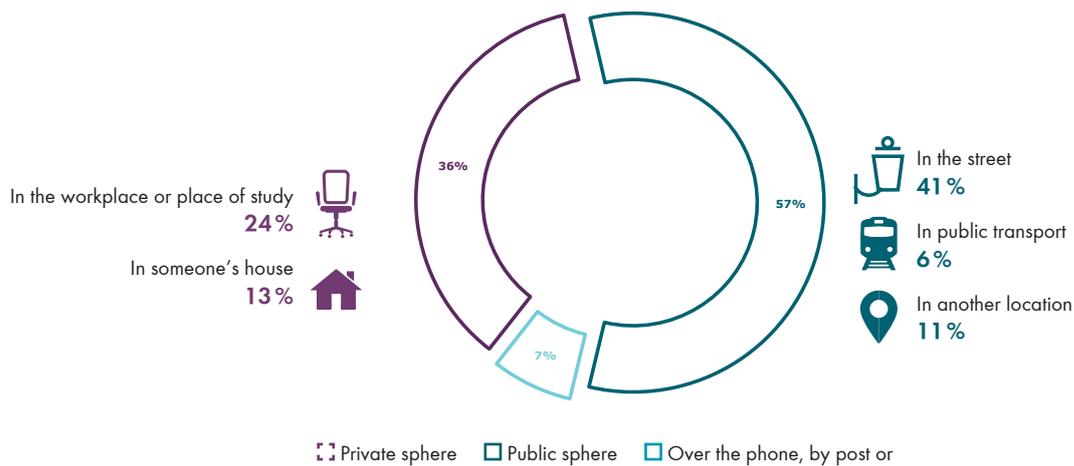
Appendix A. Victimization rate for sexist insults according to gender and age

	2006-2016		2016	
	One-year victimisation rate	Two-year victimisation rate	One-year victimisation rate	Two-year victimisation rate
Women	3.8%	4.7%	4.7%	6.0%
Men	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%	0.5%
Total	2.2%	2.7%	2.6%	3.4%
Under 30 y/o	4.0%	4.7%	4.7%	5.9%
30 y/o and over	1.7%	2.1%	2.1%	2.7%
Women under 30 y/o	7.3%	8.7%	9.0%	11.3%
Women 30 y/o and over	2.9%	3.7%	3.6%	4.5%
Men under 30 y/o	0.6%	0.7%	0.3%	0.5%
Men 30 y/o and over	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%

Source: 2007-2017 "Living environment and security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi.

Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Appendix B. Breakdown of insult victims according to location

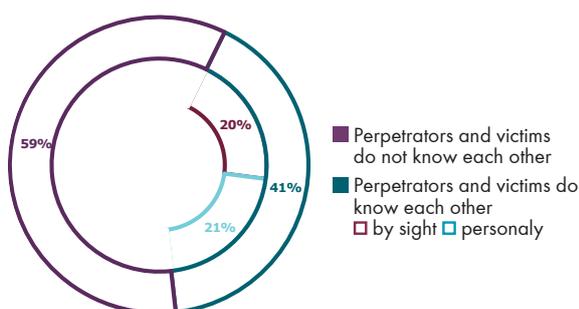


Source: 2007-2017 "Living environment and security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi.

Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

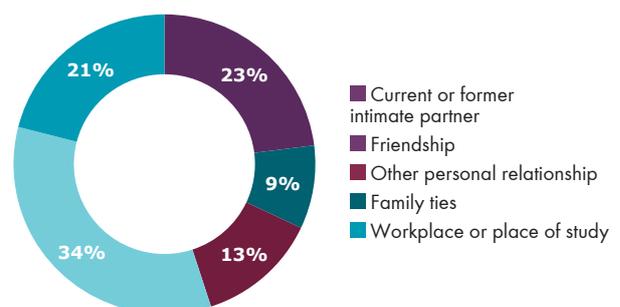
Note: Nearly a quarter of insult victims said that the offence took place at their workplace or place of study, 13% in someone's house, 41% in the street, 6% on public transport and 11% in another location.

Appendix C. Degree of acquaintance between insult victims and perpetrators



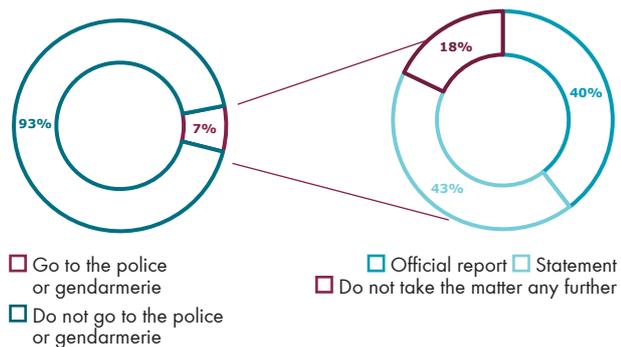
Source: 2007-2017 "Living environment and security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi.
Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.

Appendix D. Type of relationship between sexist insult victims and perpetrators when they know each other personally



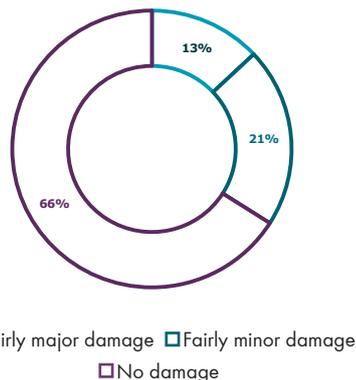
Source: 2007-2017 "Living environment and security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi.
Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.
Note: Where sexist insult victims and perpetrators know each other personally, this is primarily (34%) through their workplace or place of study.

Appendix E. Any subsequent action taken by insult victims



Source: 2007-2017 "Living environment and security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi.
 Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.
 Note: 18% of the 7% of insult victims who go to the police or gendarmerie after being insulted do not take the matter any further.

Appendix F. Psychological damage experienced by victims after being insulted



Source: 2007-2016 "Living environment and security" surveys, Insee-ONDRP-SSMsi.
 Scope: Mainland France residents aged 14 years and over.
 Note: Two-thirds of victims of all types of insult do not experience any psychological damage after being insulted.

