

To what extent does witnessing excessive alcohol consumption in the neighbourhood cause discomfort?

Fewer than half of respondents aged 14 and over who witness excessive alcohol consumption in their neighbourhood say that it causes them discomfort. This proportion varies according to the frequency and nature of the problems described: where these problems are frequent and result in aggressive behaviour and/or the destruction of property as a result of excessive alcohol consumption, the proportion is more than 80%.

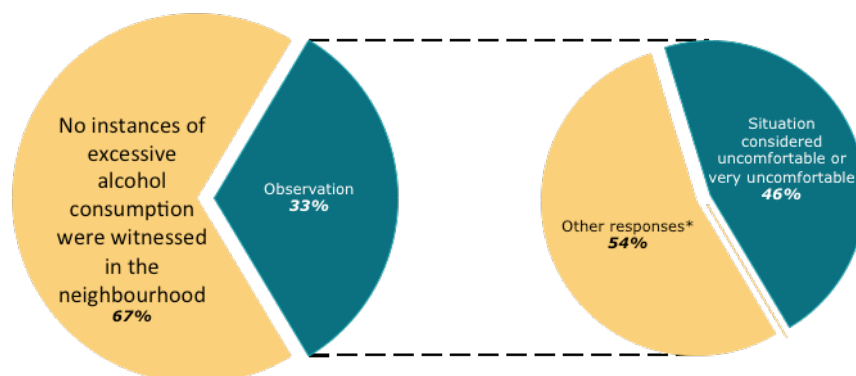
The higher level of discomfort felt among inhabitants of sensitive urban zones (SUZs) cannot be explained solely by the fact that they are faced most often with this violent behaviour towards other people or against property. At present, the Observatory is undertaking research to understand why discomfort upon witnessing the same phenomena is higher among residents of SUZs¹.

Women feel greater discomfort when witnessing excessive alcohol consumption in their neighbourhood than men: 50% of women feel uncomfortable, compared with 43% of men. In addition, young adults are more likely in proportional terms to witness alcohol-related aggression and/or impairment. Nevertheless, they feel less discomfort upon witnessing these problems than individuals aged 30 and over.

Between 2009 and 2014, around 98,000 people aged 14 and over participated in the INSEE-ONDRP "Living environment and safety" survey. This study population is representative of the 51 million people aged 14 and over who have lived in mainland France for the last six years.

According to estimates, one-third of respondents witnessed excess alcohol consumption in their neighbourhood in the 12 months prior to the survey. Of this number, 46% believe that the problems associated with excessive alcohol consumption in their neighbourhood or village are discomforting or very discomforting² (i.e. 15% of the population) [1].

1 Breakdown of individuals according to the observation of instances of excessive alcohol consumption in the neighbourhood or village, and levels of discomfort caused



(*) The other modalities proposed are: "Slightly discomforting", "Not discomforting", "Not applicable" and "Do not know".

Source: "Living environment and safety" surveys, 2009-2014

Scope: Persons aged 14 and over / mainland France

(1) ONDRP (5 March 2015), the ONDRP selected by the European Commission as part of the programme between now and 2020: http://www.inhesj.fr/sites/default/files/files/ondrp_outes_pub/communique_presse_margin.pdf.

(2) In the future, we will bring these two modalities together into one.

A feeling of discomfort linked to the frequency of this behaviour...

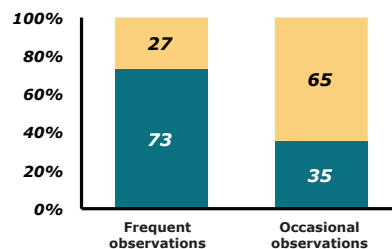
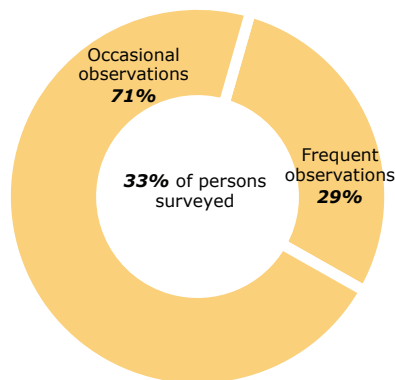
The level of discomfort felt increases with the frequency of excessive alcohol consumption in the neighbourhood. The proportion of people who feel discomfort is twice as high among individuals who witness such excessive alcohol consumption often as among those those who only witness it on an occasional basis (73% compared with 35%)³ [2].

There is therefore a link between the frequency of excessive alcohol consumption and the level of discomfort felt. It should be noted that the degree of sensitivity to excessive alcohol consumption of persons surveyed can influence their responses in relation to frequency. Thus, there is a positive and reciprocal relationship between frequency and the level of discomfort felt.

...as well as the nature of the behaviour witnessed

There is also a link between the nature of the problems encountered by those surveyed and the level of discomfort felt. Of the problems raised by the survey⁴, impairment and the destruction of property following excessive alcohol consumption are the phenomena that cause the greatest discomfort. Three-quarters of respondents who observe this type of behaviour said that it made them feel uncomfortable. This is also the case for two-thirds of individual who have witnessed aggressive behaviour or fighting that can be attributed to alcohol consumption. What these people have

2 Breakdown of excessive alcohol consumption and levels of discomfort according to frequency of observation



■ Proportion of people who felt discomfort
■ Proportion of people who provided another response

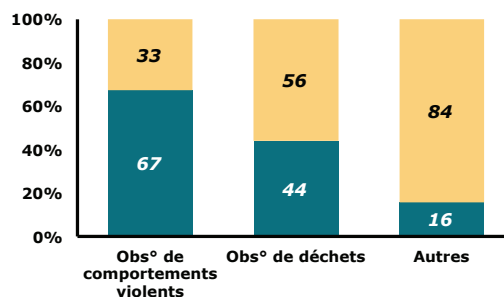
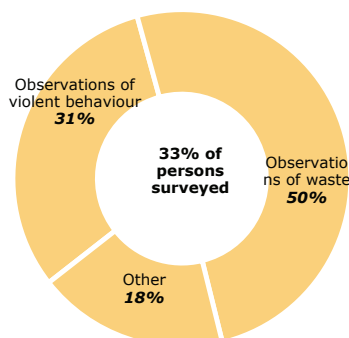
Source: "Living environment and safety" surveys, 2009-2014 Scope: Persons aged 14 and over / mainland France

in common is that they have witnessed violent behaviour towards persons or property that they attribute to alcohol⁵. Conversely, it is believed that respondents who mention only the presence of litter encounter phenomena that they attribute to excessive alcohol consumption, but without witnessing the behaviours that give rise to said litter. Therefore, respondents are not aware of the level of alcohol consumption of those persons responsible for said litter. The result of this difference is a level of discomfort that is higher among people who observe individuals engaged in violence as a result of alcohol consumption (67%), whereas among people who only observe the litter resulting from such behaviour only 44% express discomfort [3]. Meanwhile, the level of discomfort among respondents who have not identified any of the problems raised is even lower (16%).

Consideration of these two factors

In short, discomfort is associated with the frequency as well as the nature of the behaviour in question. These two criteria can be taken into account to identify four groups of individuals.

3 Breakdown of excessive alcohol consumption and levels of discomfort associated with alcohol according to nature of observations



■ Proportion of people who felt discomfort
■ Proportion of people who provided another response

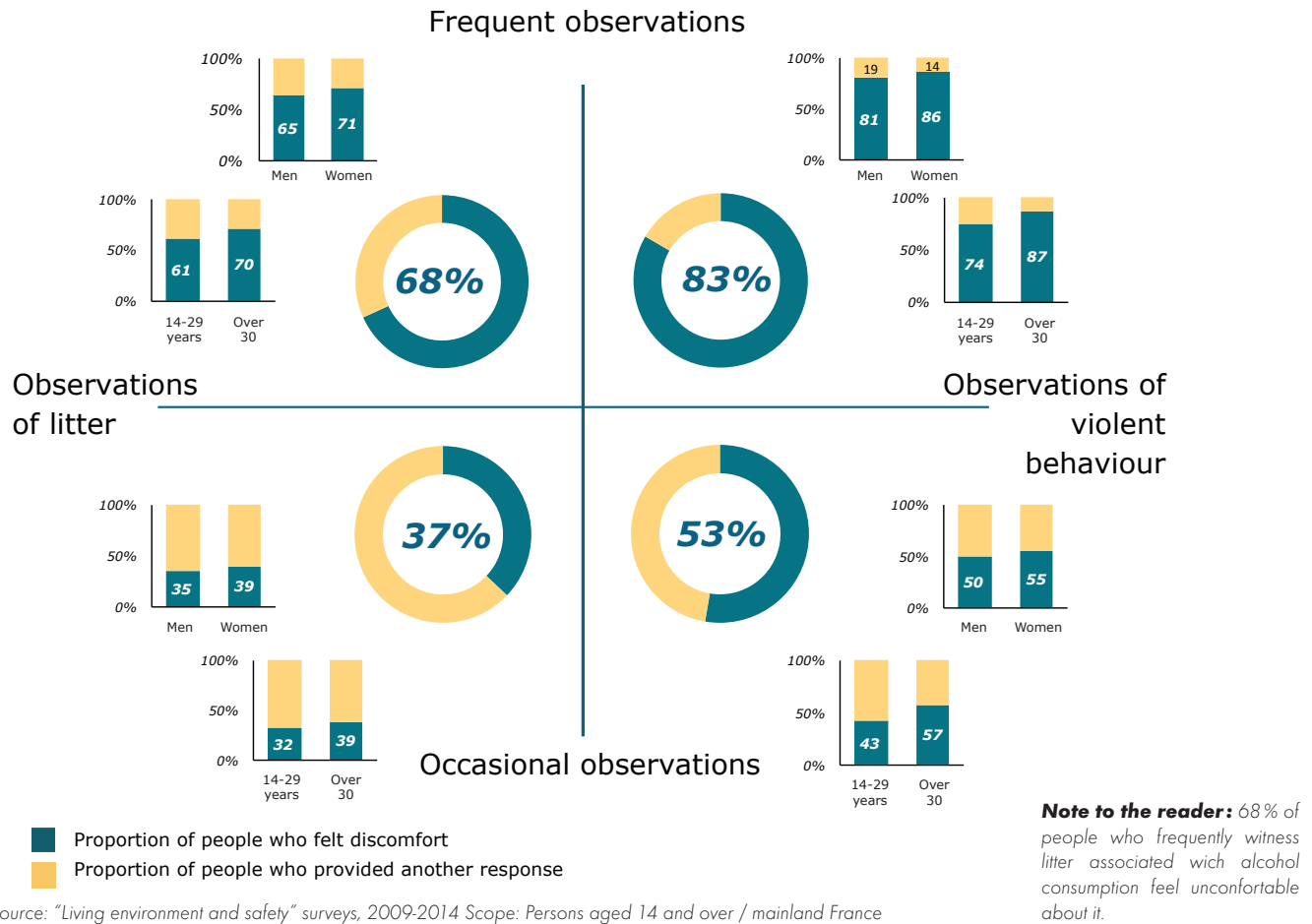
Source: "Living environment and safety" surveys, 2009-2014 Scope: Persons aged 14 and over / mainland France

(3) When a phenomenon is witnessed often, it is considered to have been observed "frequently". A phenomenon is considered "occasional" when it occurs rarely or from time to time.

(4) In response to the question, "During the last 12 months, in your personal experience, have any of the following problems related to alcohol occurred in your neighbourhood (or village)?", respondents could point out the waste produced by consumers of alcohol, aggressive behaviour and fighting and/or destruction and impairment resulting from excessive alcohol consumption.

(5) In future, the expression "violent behaviour" will be used to refer to the impairment, destruction of property, aggressive behaviour and fighting attributed to excessive alcohol consumption.

4 Proportion of people who felt discomfort upon witnessing excessive alcohol consumption as a function of its frequency and nature - distinction according to gender and age



Source: "Living environment and safety" surveys, 2009-2014 Scope: Persons aged 14 and over / mainland France

When phenomena associated with excessive alcohol consumption occur often and result in aggressive behaviour and/or the destruction of property as a result of excessive alcohol consumption, more than 80% of respondents indicate a level of discomfort. Where such behaviour is witnessed on an occasional basis, this figure stands at 53% **(4)**.

37% of individuals who occasionally notice litter associated with alcohol consumption in their neighbourhood feel uncomfortable about it. Among individuals who notice said litter often, the figure is more than two-thirds.

The levels of discomfort associated with various different socio-demographic criteria are relatively stable within categories of observations: differences in levels of discomfort as a function of age and gender are limited to 14 percentage points. To an extent, the categorisation of the phenomena witnessed allows the effects of the frequency and the nature of observations on the level of discomfort reported to be "fixed". Nevertheless, we have found differences that remain for all categories of observations.

Women are more sensitive to this behaviour

On average, women who witness excessive alcohol consumption feel greater discomfort than men (50% of women, compared with 43% of men). In part, this is explained

by the fact that in proportional terms, they are more likely to observe such behaviour often (30%, compared with 27% of men). Apart from this first consideration, our attention is drawn to one result: all else being equal, women feel greater discomfort than men. For example, 71% of women who frequently encounter litter associated with alcohol consumption feel discomfort, compared with two-thirds of men. Thus, women are both more sensitive to such observations and are slightly more likely to encounter them than men.

Young adults feel less discomfort

Feelings of discomfort also vary according to age. Young people aged 14 to 29, who witness aggressive behaviour and impairment more often, represent the age group with the lowest levels of discomfort when confronted with such phenomena. Indeed, 37% of persons aged 14 to 29 who witness phenomena associated with excessive alcohol consumption are faced with violent behaviour, compared with 30% of people aged 30 and over. And yet, the proportion of people aged 14-29 who feel discomfort under such circumstances is 40%, eight percentage points below individuals aged 30 and over. When exposed to the same behaviour, the level of discomfort expressed by

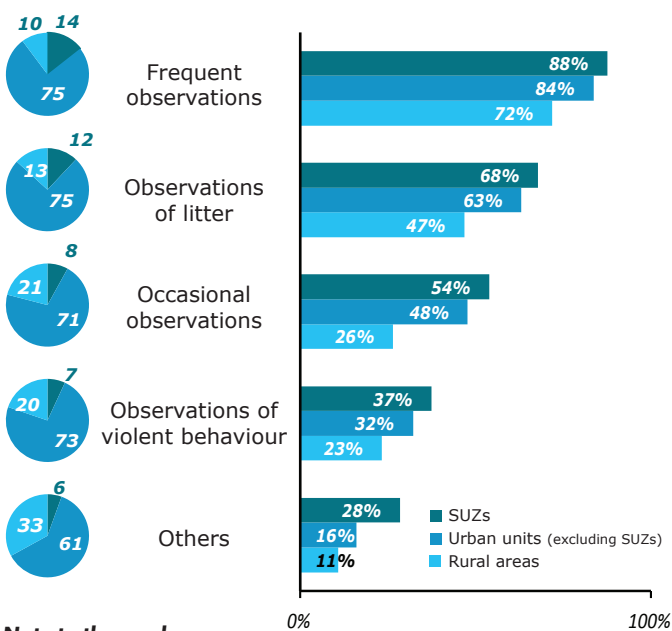
(6) In 2010, 39% of people aged 18 to 25 consumed six units of alcohol in a single sitting at least once a year compared with an average of 28% for people aged 18-75, according to the OFDT. <http://www.ofdt.fr/BDD/publications/docs/da13alc.pdf>

young adults is still lower than among people aged 30 and over. For example, close to three-quarters of people aged 14 to 29 who are frequently exposed to violent behaviour feel discomfort, compared with 87% of people aged 30 and over. According to the OFDT, young people consume alcohol in large quantities more often⁶, which could explain why they feel less uncomfortable with this behaviour.

Residents of SUZs feel greater discomfort

There is also a link between place of residence and the level of discomfort felt. Two-thirds of people living in sensitive urban zones (SUZs) feel uncomfortable when witnessing excessive alcohol consumption, while among people living in

5 Breakdown of witnesses and associated levels of discomfort according to the type of observation as a function of place of residence



Note to the reader:

14% of people who frequently witness violent behaviour attributed to excessive alcohol consumption live in SUZs. Of these people, 88% feel discomfort upon witnessing such behaviour.

Source: "Living environment and safety" surveys, 2009-2014
Scope: Persons aged 14 and over / mainland France

other urban units the figure is just half⁷. The greater level of discomfort felt in SUZs can in part be explained by the greater frequency of such behaviour and the nature of the behaviour witnessed. One-quarter of witnesses living in SUZs often witness aggressive behaviour and/or impairment following excessive alcohol consumption, compared with 16% of residents in other urban units⁸.

However, it remains a phenomenon particular to SUZs: for any given frequency and nature of observation, the level of discomfort among residents of SUZs is higher. As a result, the proportion of persons who feel discomfort upon witnessing

violent behaviour that is the result of excessive alcohol consumption is six percentage points higher in SUZs than in other urban units [6], and more than 27 percentage points higher than in rural areas. Therefore, the nature and frequency of instances witnessed on their own cannot explain the difference in levels of discomfort felt.

Options for further study

The search for information on the level of discomfort caused by excessive alcohol consumption should be part of a more general analysis of the impact of individuals' residential environment on their perception of this phenomenon. The presence of other forms of criminal behaviour in the neighbourhood can also heighten the sense of discomfort among residents. This is the case, for example, among persons who witness drug-related activity (sale, use and/or litter)⁹. The level of discomfort caused by the witnessing of excessive alcohol consumption is significantly greater when combined with exposure to other drug-related phenomena: 60% of persons who witness both problems feel discomfort, while among people who only witness phenomena associated with excessive alcohol consumption the figure is 38%. Irrespective of the type of alcohol-associated problem in question, discomfort is always greater among individuals who witness both problems.

Moreover, the level of discomfort caused by problems associated with alcohol is even higher if one considers individuals who already feel discomfort as a result of drug problems in their neighbourhood. The close intertwining of these observations and the forms of discomfort that they cause open up the possibility of additional analyses on this subject. These analyses would have to study in greater depth the importance of the sensitivities of each in explaining the feeling of discomfort caused by witnessing excessive alcohol consumption, drug use or any other criminal activity in general.

Note on methodology

An Excel document is available to the reader to provide them with all of the methodological prerequisites required to carry out this study. From the main methodological elements, we can say that:

- Due to an amendment to the question relating to discomfort in 2009, the first surveys (2007 and 2008) cannot be compared to the subsequent surveys (2009 to 2014). Therefore, only the six last surveys were used for this study.
- To best describe the factors behind the discomfort caused by witnessing excessive alcohol consumption, the results of the surveys for 2009 to 2014 have been "piled up". This collection of samples from close to 100,000 respondents is representative of the 51 million people aged 14 and over living in mainland France.
- To facilitate the identification of individuals made to feel uncomfortable by the problems associated with excessive alcohol consumption, the modalities "uncomfortable" and "very uncomfortable" have been brought together under one modality.

(7) By comparison, one-third of persons living in rural areas who observe excessive alcohol consumption feel a sense of discomfort in the face of such behaviour.

(8) 8% of witnesses living in rural communities often witness excessive alcohol consumption first-hand.

(9) For more information on the discomfort caused by witnessing drug-related phenomena, see "Observer des phénomènes de drogue dans le quartier est-il synonyme de gêne?", ONDRP note no. 1, June 2015.