

THE STATE OF SEXISM

A survey by

JUMP

SOLUTIONS FOR EQUITY AT WORK



With the financial support of Wallonia



With the financial support
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And the collaboration of



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Scope and objectives of the survey

First survey in 2016, second in 2024

JUMP specialises in diversity, equality and inclusion in the workplace and has been working for 20 years to build a fairer and more inclusive society. **The main obstacle to genuine equality between women and men is sexism, an ideology based on the assumption that women are inferior to men.** In 2016, we gathered the experiences of **3,294 women**. The results were staggering and prompted us to create **a wide range of free tools to combat this discrimination, which underpins all other forms of inequality**, as well as training programmes delivered in companies, institutions, schools and universities. **Society has changed over the past eight years.** The #MeToo movement has shifted perceptions of sexism. This new survey, which focuses on **sexist and sexual violence during education and at work**, enables us to gauge this change and to propose solutions for businesses, as well as policy and legislative recommendations.

In 2024, 5,214 people responded, including nearly 1,000 men

The survey was conducted via an online questionnaire sent to JUMP's European database and shared by 25 partner associations and other organisations, mainly based in Belgium and France, but also in Italy, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, etc. The number of responses from Belgium and France is high enough to allow for separate national analyses. The other countries together still represent 25% of the responses. Despite different legislative and cultural contexts, **no significant differences in results were found across countries.** The number of responses received reinforces the value of the results, but it is important to bear in mind the **sociological specificity** of our environment: professionally active, university-educated people, mostly between 35 and 65 years old and likely more aware of sexism issues than the general population

Men represent 20% of respondents

Drawing on our experience from 2016, JUMP used a different questionnaire for men and women (non-binary people had access to the women's questionnaire) in order to collect women's experiences and men's perceptions. Non-binary respondents or those who did not wish to disclose their gender represent 2% of the total, a proportion too small for separate statistical analysis. We have therefore excluded them from the statistical regressions.

Why have different questionnaires for women and men?

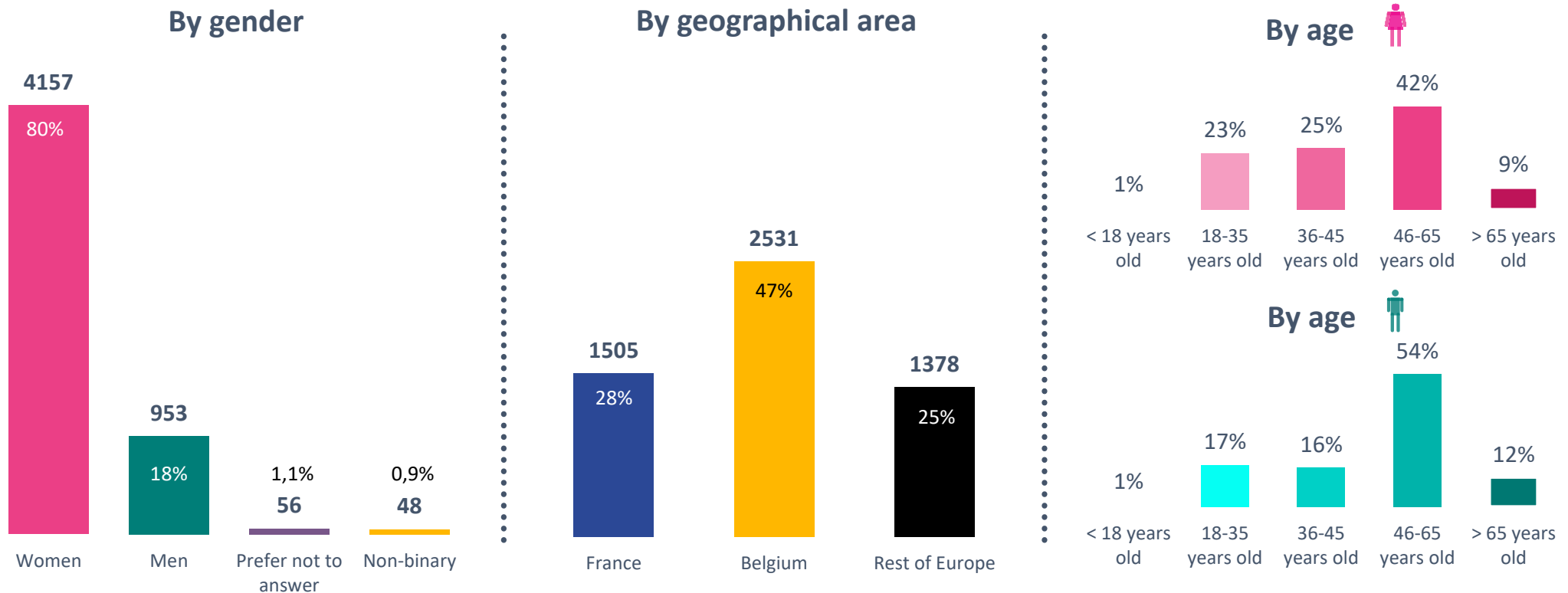
There is no 'reverse sexism' against men, just as there is no 'reverse racism' against white people. Men can experience sexism individually. Most often, this involves criticism of their attitudes or choices when they do not conform to expected masculine norms, or comments about their abilities in relation to the home, children or social relationships. The sexism men may experience individually is a secondary effect of a system that devalues what is perceived as feminine and assigns different roles to women and men.

THE SEXISM EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN IS BOTH INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE. IT STRUCTURES THE GENDER HIERARCHY.

Number of respondents: 5,214

Number of written testimonies: 3,976

> 70% completion rate, but nearly 90% of responses were usable for statistical analysis



Results by country: We carried out several statistical regressions to check whether the results differed significantly between countries (where the number of responses allowed). No notable differences were observed, apart from **the perception of sexism as “very serious”** in France, where it is higher (+9 points among women and +12 among men). We also observe that French women are better able to identify and respond to sexism, probably due to the scale of the #MeToo movement, driven by the strength of feminist civil society, and thanks to the legislation that followed, in particular against sexist and sexual violence, which is clearly addressed with appropriate measures in the Labour Code. This makes France the only country in Europe with such a comprehensive set of measures.

3,976 testimonials received!

Every word was read, every testimony counted

These life experiences are at the heart of our survey and remind us of the importance of continuing to listen, analyse and act

- We received **3,976 comments** in **7 languages**, a mixture of personal stories and messages of gratitude. Many respondents emphasised the therapeutic impact of the survey and its role in raising awareness of ordinary sexism.
- The women felt **confident** as they read the questions. This safe environment provided them with both the motivation and the opportunity to share their experiences. JUMP is particularly proud of this.

*"Congratulations on this initiative!
It gives us a voice, and that's vital."*

*"Thank you for allowing me to **reflect on my own experiences** and share them."*

*"The testimonies of female students are often ignored. **Please listen to us!**
We have things to say too."*

*"Thank you for your survey, it has
a therapeutic effect on those who speak out."*

*"This survey made me realise how much sexism is part of our everyday lives. Thank you for **raising our awareness**."*



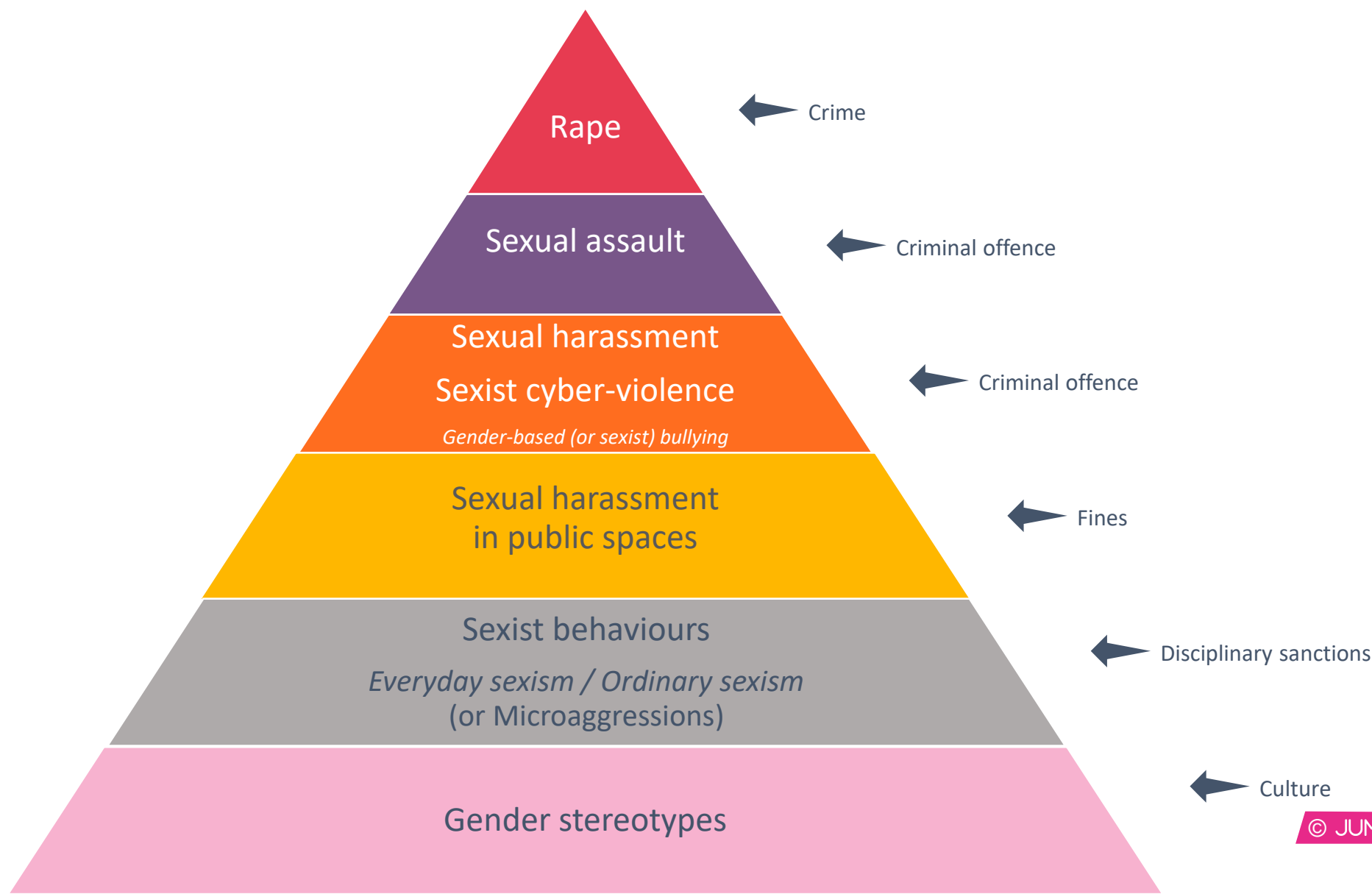
*"For your methodology, please be aware that I struggled to answer 'sometimes'.
My responses are affected by the traumatic amnesia I developed in order to psychologically survive that assault. I must have been
so conditioned by this person to say nothing to anyone that
I ended up trying to forget."*



*"Thank you for this survey, I've been able to share experiences
I've never dared tell anyone about before."*

The pyramid of sexist and sexual violence at work

Sexism is an ideology based on the belief that women are inferior to men, that manifests itself through a range of behaviours and actions, from seemingly harmless comments to extremely serious acts of rape and murder. High Council for Gender Equality (France)



EVERYDAY SEXISM IS DOMINATION IN ITS SMALLEST, MOST BANALISED FORMS

Everyday sexism in the workplace is defined as the totality of attitudes, remarks, and behaviours based on gender stereotypes (...) which, although seemingly harmless or of low intensity, have the purpose or effect, consciously or unconsciously, to delegitimise individuals, to make them feel inferior, to destabilise them in an insidious—or even seemingly benevolent—way in the workplace, and to cause harm to their physical or mental health.

High Council for Equality (France)

HOSTILE SEXISM

Sexist insults

Disrespectful remarks

Discriminatory behaviour

SUBTLE SEXISM

Sexist humour

Gendered Division of Labour

Mansplaining*

Maninterrupting*

Bropropriating*

BENEVOLENT SEXISM

“Sweetheart, Honey, Beautiful...”

Standards of femininity

Paternalistic chivalry

Performative motherhood

Essentialist view

***Mansplaining:** when a man explains something to a woman in a condescending or patronising manner, often on a subject she already understands, assuming she knows less than he does.

***Maninterrupting:** when a man repeatedly or unjustifiably interrupts a woman, especially during a meeting or discussion.

***Bropropriating (or bropropriation):** when a man takes credit for an idea expressed by a woman, by repeating or rephrasing it, and receives the credit or recognition in her place.

How do you measure the reality of sexism?



- All the scientific literature considers that **sexism concerns all women and all men**, since it is at the root of the social system that organises our interactions. Division of tasks, segregation of functions, discrimination, sexist and sexual violence, ordinary sexism, right down to the smallest humiliations that are rarely mentioned. **Relations between women and men are organised on a hierarchical basis**, or systemic domination to put it another way.
- Most victims never report the facts and sometimes find it difficult to identify, or even justify, what is being imposed on them. It is therefore **impossible to know precisely how many women are victims** of this or that form of sexism, harassment or sexual assault.

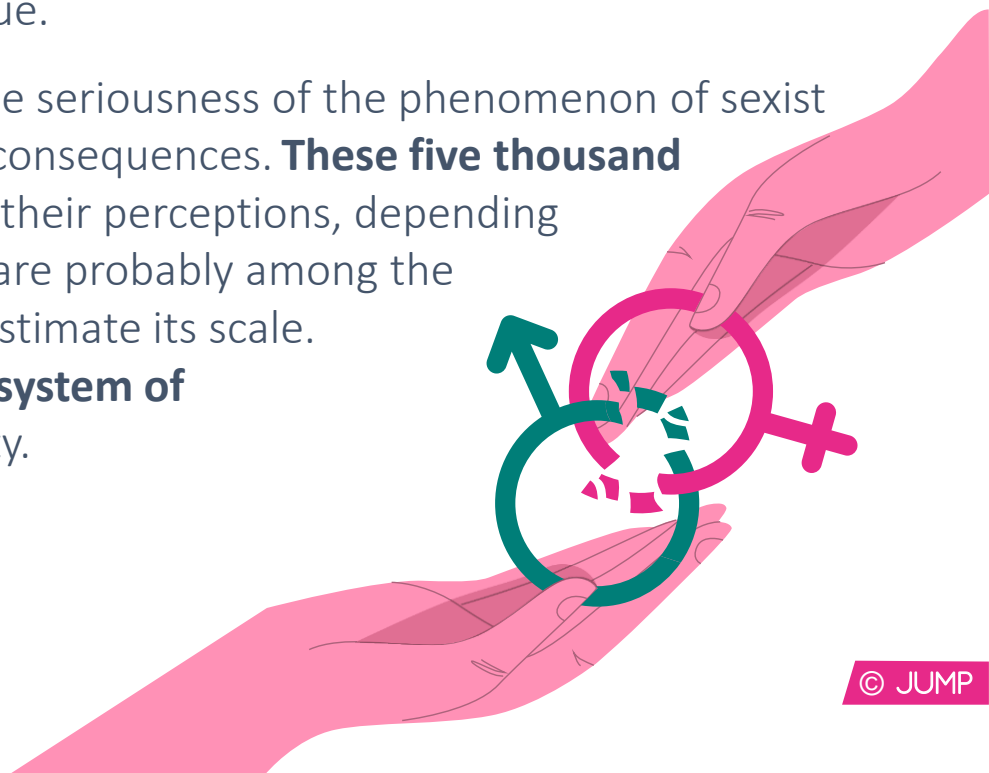
Further research – Sexism: a problem that is difficult to measure.

According to the ILO (*Violence and Harassment in the World of Work – 2022*), more than half of victims of violence or harassment at work do not tell anyone, for fear of not being believed or due to a lack of clear procedures. In France, within higher education, fewer than 10 per cent of victims of sexist and sexual violence reported the incidents to their institution (*2023 Barometer of Sexist and Sexual Violence in Higher Education*). In Belgium, it is estimated that only 8 per cent of women who are victims of sexual violence file a complaint (*Sexual Violence in Belgium: Key Figures, Current Situation and Challenges, 2024*). The Defender of Rights in France (*Annual Report on Equality, 2025*) notes that internal company procedures are often not very visible or effective, which discourages victims from coming forward. This under-reporting distorts reality and prevents collective awareness from developing.

The reality of sexism, as told by those who experience it

Our study brings together the views of **four thousand women and one thousand men** who came forward spontaneously to answer our questions. We have retained the answers of the 98% of respondents who are aware that they have experienced or are experiencing sexism in one or more forms. Phenomena such as sexism and racism are characterised by the fact that victims generally underestimate the facts. Some respondents had an uncertain vision, and it was sometimes our questionnaire that enabled them to measure the violence they were experiencing or had experienced. As for the men who spontaneously answered the questionnaire, they probably represent a minority who, for one reason or another, are interested in the issue.

These testimonies provide a wealth of information on the seriousness of the phenomenon of sexist and sexual violence in the workplace, its processes and consequences. **These five thousand witnesses of sexism** give us a contrasting description of their perceptions, depending on whether they are women or men, even though they are probably among the most aware of the problem - while continuing to underestimate its scale. The social landscape that emerges shows us **an age-old system of oppression that is still omnipresent** in all parts of society.



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RESULTS



The perception of sexism

1

"#MeToo has led to
a better understanding of sexism."



"What used to be courtesy or
chivalry has become sexism."

"In any case, sexism is **less socially accepted**
and we're finding **some allies**."

"As everywhere else, I see a **polarisation**
between places that no longer tolerate anything and
places where anything goes."



"I have the feeling that there is still just as much sexism, but
it is expressed **in a much more violent way**. But I also
know that there are lots of men and women who are taking
up the subject to find out how to **behave, react, etc.**"

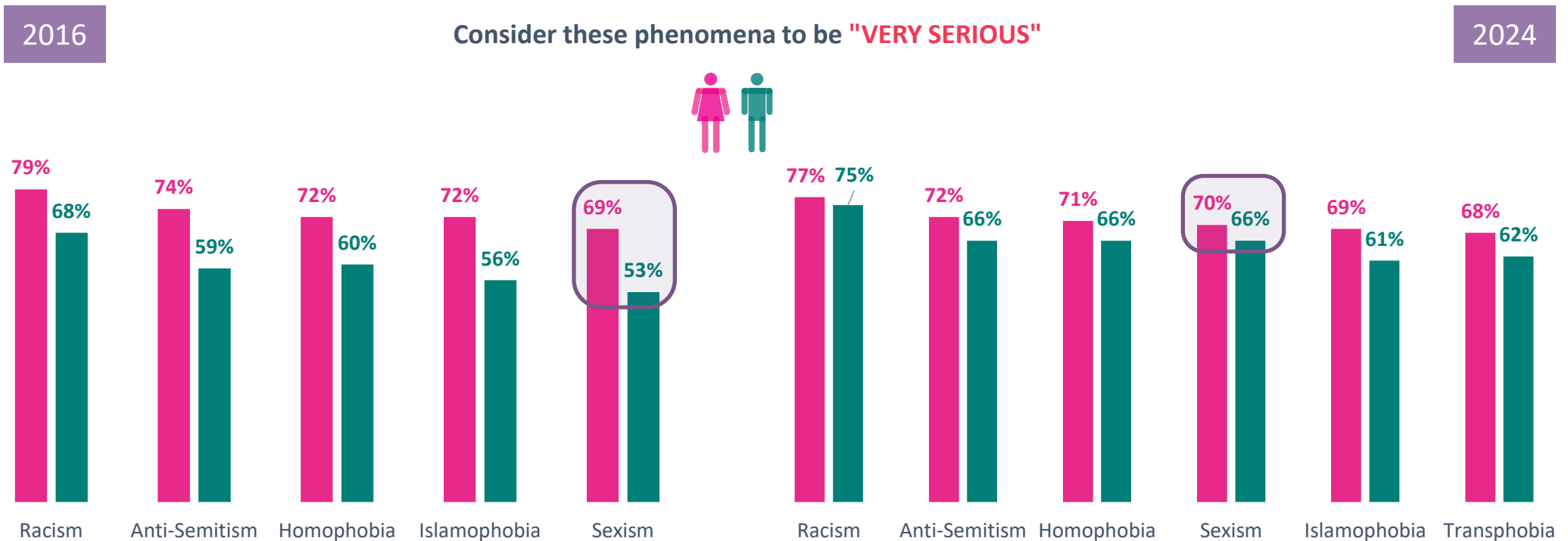


Pink box =
women's comments

Green box =
men's comments

Changes in perceptions of discrimination between 2016 and 2024

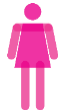
Racism is still perceived as the most serious issue



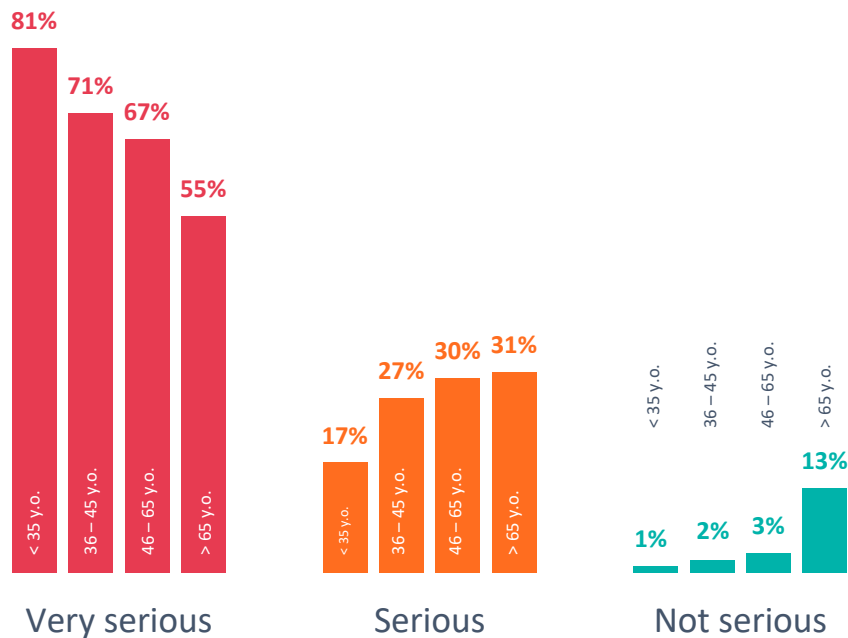
- The change in men's perception of sexism as 'very serious' has increased by 13 points (53% in 2016, 66% in 2024).
- Racism is still considered the most serious form of discrimination by everyone.
- Women remain more sensitive to all forms of discrimination than men, even though the difference in perception has narrowed between 2016 and 2024.
- People who are highly sensitive to one form of discrimination tend to be more sensitive to all others as well, and vice versa.

Perceptions of sexism change with age

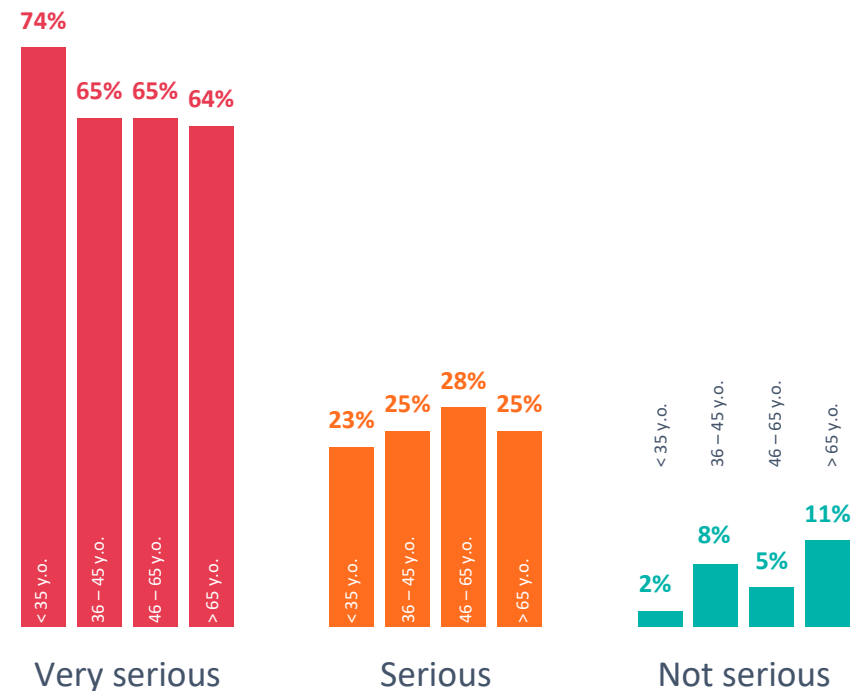
The younger you are, the less tolerant of sexism you are. Especially for women.



Perception of the seriousness of sexism by age



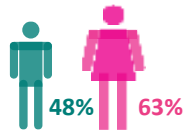
Perception of the seriousness of sexism by age



The perception of sexism as a 'very serious' phenomenon decreases much more significantly among women as they get older (81% of the under-35s, down to 55% of the over-65s) than among men (74% of the under-35s, down to 64% of the over-65s). This age-related tolerance of sexism was already observed in our 2016 survey. It suggests that women have internalised such violence as “normal” for generations.

The impact of #MeToo: society has changed

- Since **2016**, the perception of the seriousness of discrimination, and sexism in particular, has increased significantly. This awareness is particularly visible among our male respondents, more of whom now consider sexism to be a major problem. Despite this, differences in perception between men and women persist.
- Divergent experiences and perceptions :



The frequency of sexism is **stable** or **increasing**



The frequency of sexism is **decreasing**

- All or nothing: People who are highly sensitive to one form of discrimination tend to be more sensitive to all others as well, and vice versa.

Further research

According to the French High Council for Equality (Sexism Barometer – Toluna Harris Survey, 2024), a sexist remark or joke is upsetting to three out of four women, but only one in two men.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), in its 2024 Report on Gender Equality in Europe, confirms this gap between women's and men's tolerance of sexism.

*"As I get **older**, I see sexism more clearly and I dare to be more assertive."*

*"Now I'm no longer afraid to cause **a scene in the street.**"*

*"I don't let anything pass anymore, **even if it means arguing** with everyone."*

*"I **feel personally stronger** and more legitimate in refusing sexist behaviours."*

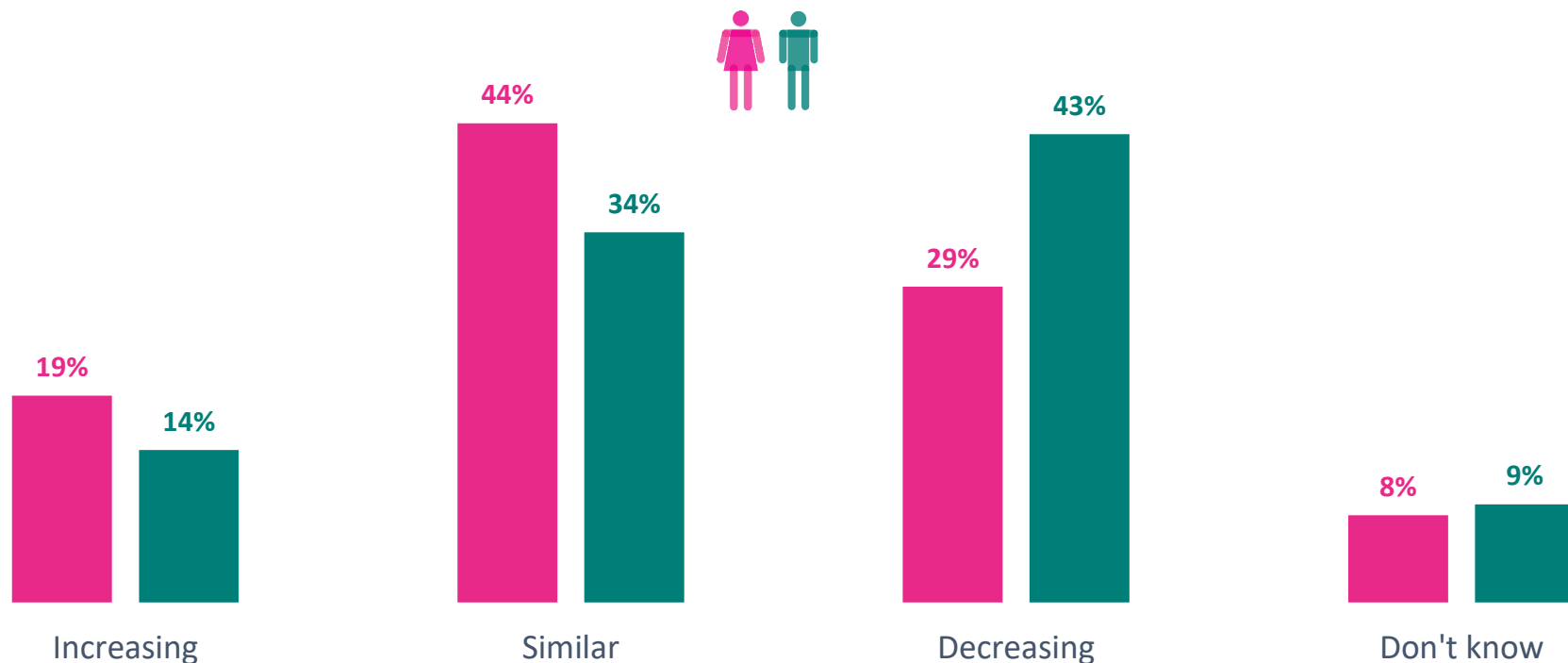
*"I learnt that **giving in was not consent.**"*

*"I've **educated myself** about feminism and statistics so I can argue using facts."*

The impact of #MeToo: society has changed

63% of women think that the frequency of sexism is similar or increasing
43% of men think that sexism is decreasing

The frequency of sexism over the last 10 years: up, down or the same?



Further research – #MeToo: a catalyst, but not yet a cure. In Belgium, reports of sexual harassment at work doubled between 2022 and 2023 (*Inappropriate behaviours in the Workplace, IEFH, 2025*). However, according to the ILO (*Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, 2022*), the majority of victims remain silent, particularly in workplace settings.

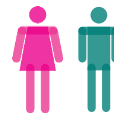
The impact of #MeToo: society has changed

9 out of 10 people are better at detecting sexism

8 out of 10 indicate they react differently

9 out of 10 women and 8 out of 10 men are calling for more action.

Do you feel that you are better able to detect sexism than you were 10 years ago?



Yes



Do you react to sexism differently than you did 10 years ago?

Yes



Do you think specific tools should be put in place to tackle sexism?

Yes



Yes



The impact of #MeToo: society has changed

What **women** say

*"Before, I remained silent.
Now, **I always speak up.**"*

*"I observe and try to be aware of sexism. Since I experienced its consequences, I try to **better understand where it comes from.**"*

*"I speak up and
I'm teaching my daughters to do the same!"*

*"**#MeToo** opened many people's eyes
and **gave legitimacy to my voice.**"*

*"When I was younger, I stayed **silent out of fear.**
Today, I respond with anger."*

What **men** say

*"Times are changing, and what was 'normal'
30 or 40 years ago, is **now unacceptable.**"*

*"Some jokes that used to make me laugh
now shock me. »*

*"**Now I know better**
how to react."*

*"I was aware of the situation **in theory.**
It has become much more **real.**"*

*"Some women dared to speak out in the media. It helped
me reflect on and **change some of my behaviours**
that were not appropriate."*

Women's experience of sexism

2

"Posters of naked women were displayed in the technicians' changing room, right next to the meeting room."

"You'll **put on your nice skirt** to see the clients tomorrow?"

"A colleague created **a pornographic montage** using my photo and shared it."

"My colleagues look at **pornographic pictures** together at the office."

"I was assigned **note-taking** and event planning tasks simply because I was the only woman on the team."

"During a technical explanation, the teacher spoke only to my male colleague, even though **it was my project.**"

"I've been **asked to organise the company seminar**, even though I'm in charge of payroll."

"When I spoke up in a meeting, my manager rephrased what I said **as if I weren't credible.**"



A social nightmare

- 98% of the women who responded spontaneously to our survey reported having experienced sexist and sexual violence. It is their responses that we analyse here, as they reflect a segment of the population who are sufficiently aware of the sexism they endure to be able to articulate it. In some cases, it was through the experience of answering each question of the survey, one by one, that they began to grasp the full extent of the violence they had experienced.
- These nearly four thousand responses from women able to describe the mechanisms of workplace violence are of exceptional value. They reveal the **systemic nature of these experiences, showing how different types of situations align**: from education to employment, from the private to the public sphere, from early childhood to retirement, from factory workers to company leaders, from inappropriate remarks to rape—something weaves these experiences together. It **reasserts the social hierarchy in which masculinity dominates femininity, systematically hindering women from occupying their rightful place in every dimension of society, especially at work.**



- These women also unveil, through both their responses and the many open comments, **the hidden face of the iceberg of sexist and sexual violence**: silent suffering, lack of reporting—even for the most serious acts—, absence of support, and how they internalise the violence.
- Although this social nightmare has finally come to light since the MeToo movement, **prevention, responses and solutions are far from adequate to address the problem**. This gap could, in time, generate significant costs for society as a whole—and for businesses in particular.

A All women are victims of sexism, everywhere *All men know this*

98% of women respondents say they have **EXPERIENCED** sexism at least once.
97% of men respondents say they have **WITNESSED** it.

JUMP collected testimonies from women as victims of sexism, and from men as witnesses or perpetrators.

Women can also be sexist towards other women. Like men, they are socially conditioned to devalue what is considered feminine. While some may benefit individually from such attitudes, this ultimately weakens women collectively. As for the various forms of sexual violence, they are committed almost exclusively by men.

Why a different questionnaire for women and men?

There is no anti-male sexism, just as there is no anti-White racism. Men can experience sexist behaviours on an individual level. Most often, this takes the form of criticism directed at their attitudes or choices when they do not conform to expected masculine norms (for example, regarding caring responsibilities or social relationships). However, expectations surrounding masculinity do not have the same impact on men's social position as expectations surrounding femininity have on women's. The sexism that men may experience individually is a secondary consequence of a system that devalues what is perceived as feminine and assigns different social roles to women and men.

**The sexism experienced by women is both individual and systemic.
It structures the hierarchy between women and men.**



In which context are women most impacted by sexism?

98% of women respondents say they have been **VICTIMS** of sexism at least once

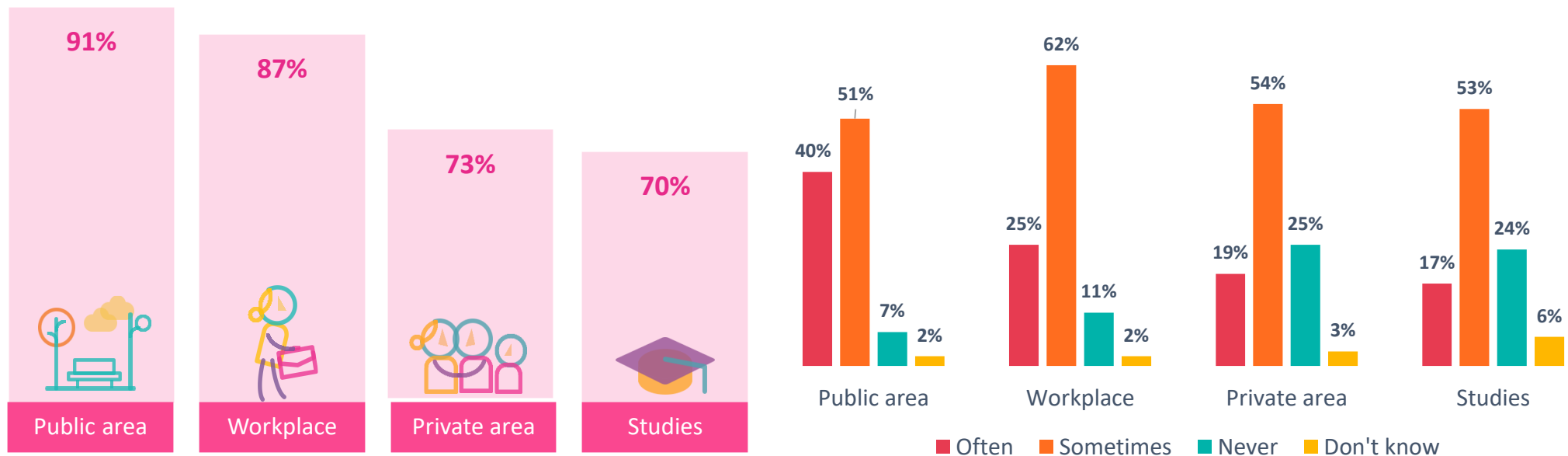
97% of men respondents say they have **WITNESSED** sexism

Sexism is a universal reality, widely experienced and widely observed



Have you ever been a **VICTIM** of sexist behaviours?

Sum of "**sometimes**" and "**often**" responses among women



Convergences – Young women in particular

According to the High Council for Equality in France (*Sexism Barometer – Toluna Harris survey, 2024*), 90 per cent of women aged 15–24 say they have been victims of sexism at some point, and 51 per cent have received unsolicited sexual images.

In which context have men witnessed sexism?

98% of women respondents say they have been **VICTIMS** of sexism at least once

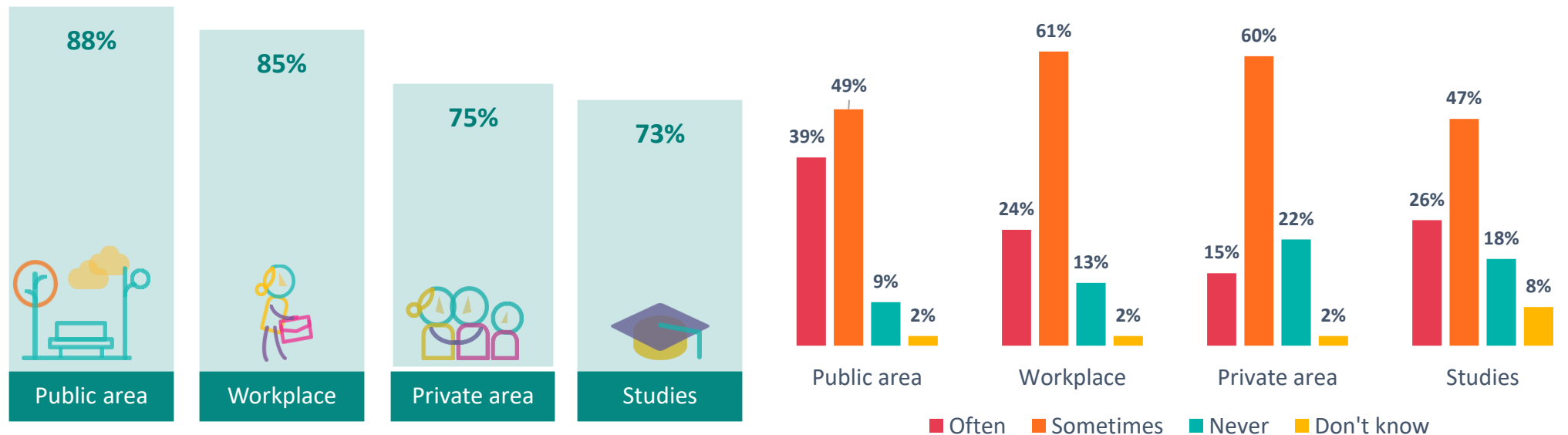
97% of men respondents say they have **WITNESSED** sexism

Sexism is a universal reality, widely experienced and widely observed



Have you ever been a **WITNESS** to sexist behaviours?

Sum of "**sometimes**" and "**often**" responses among men



What does sexism look like and what are its consequences?

Voices of women...



Public area

"Being constantly approached in the street and **regularly harassed.**"

"In the street, I regularly get **whistled at or called out.**"

"On a tram, a man **masturbated in front of me.** I was frozen, and **no one reacted.**"

"**Unwanted sexual contact** on public transport."

"At a party, someone I didn't know **touched me without my consent.** I froze – I didn't know what to do."

"**Sexism on the streets is really the most prevalent,** in everyday life."



Studies

"During an internship, my supervisor **attempted to rape me.** I managed to escape, but I didn't say anything out of fear of the consequences."

"A geography teacher was known for **looking under female students' skirts.** It was common knowledge, yet no one intervened."

"A master's professor invited me to his office, implying that **a good grade would depend on how I responded.**"

"I wanted to become an **engineer,** and I was told quite clearly that **no one would want to marry me** afterwards."



Workplace

"A female project manager who **isn't allowed to lead meetings** on her own project."

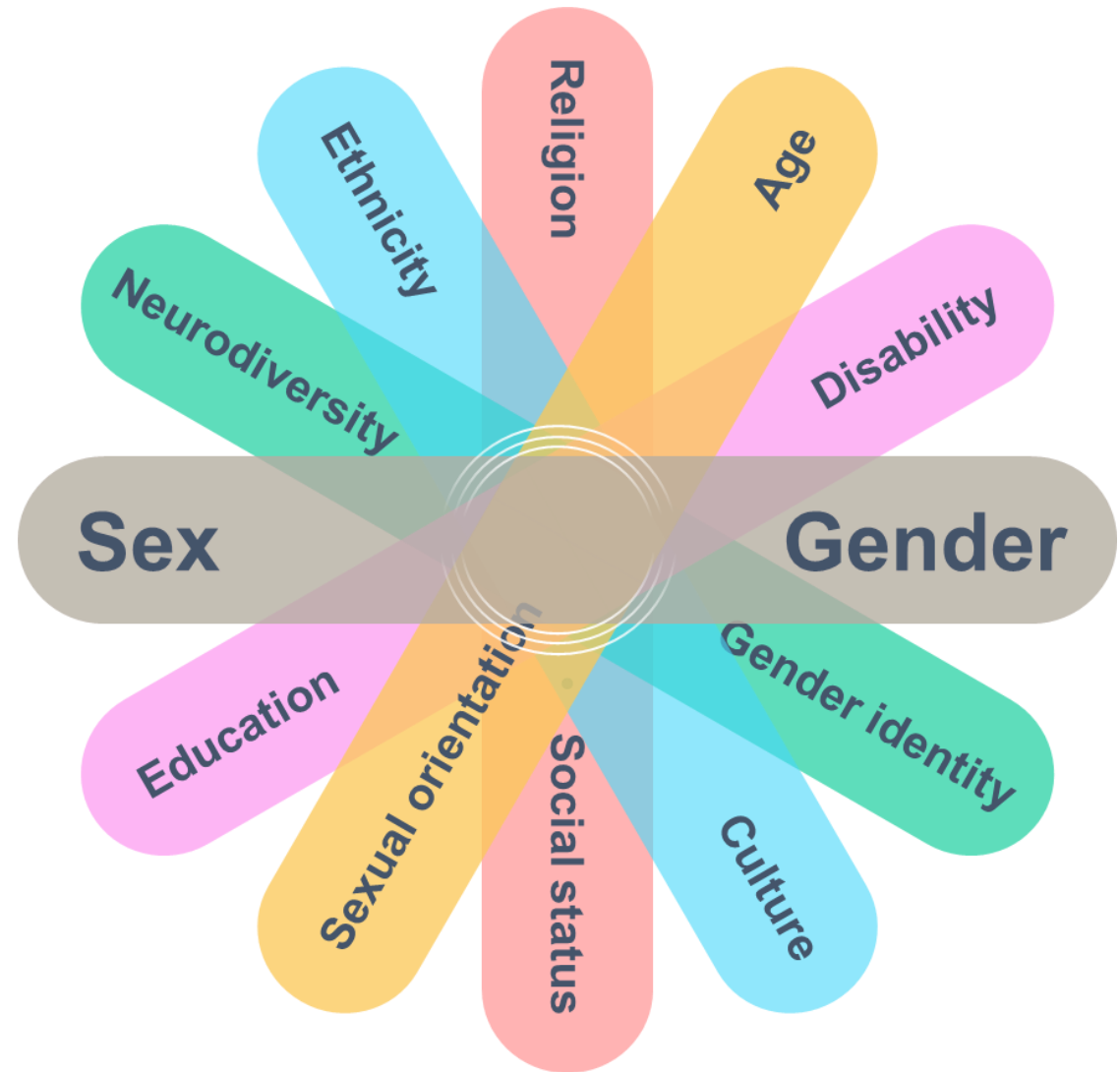
"During a job interview, I was asked to guarantee that **I wouldn't have children in the coming years** in order to get the position."

"With equal qualifications and experience, my salary was **50% lower** than that of a male colleague."

"A patient **masturbated** during a medical treatment."

Intersectionality impacts the experience of sexism

- Intersectionality highlights that every individual has multiple identities whose combination shapes unique life experiences.
- Patriarchy is a system that structures all relations of domination.
- The systemic inequality between women and men underpins all other forms of inequality. Whatever the form of discrimination considered, there is never symmetry in the way women and men are affected.
- Social inequalities intersect with inequalities between women and men, making it impossible to understand or address one without taking the others into account, at the risk of reinforcing them.
- "The most oppressed man can oppress someone else: his wife. She is the proletarian of the proletarian." Flora Tristan



Further research - Sexism does not affect all women in the same way.

According to the ILO (*Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, 2022*), racialised women, migrant women, LGBTQIA+ women, and women with disabilities are more exposed to violence. The 2023 Barometer on Sexist and Sexual Violence in Higher Education (CEDP, Osez le Féminisme, #NousToutes, Union Étudiante, Chair.int) confirms this heightened exposure. Without an intersectional approach, public policies fail to recognise these lived experiences.

B The continuum from studies to the workplace



*"I've been a victim of sexism both **at school and in the workplace**. It's always the same story."*

From sexism in education to sexism at work

A continuum that has been normalised

Discrimination throughout women's lives

During their studies or at university, **81% of women respondents reported having experienced inappropriate jokes or remarks**, a figure that remains very high in the workplace, where **88% of women report the same behaviours**.

Inappropriate looks, approaches or solicitations affect **55% of women in academic settings** and rise to **58% in professional environments**. These behaviours, often tolerated and normalised from adolescence, become a habit to be endured that continues into adulthood.

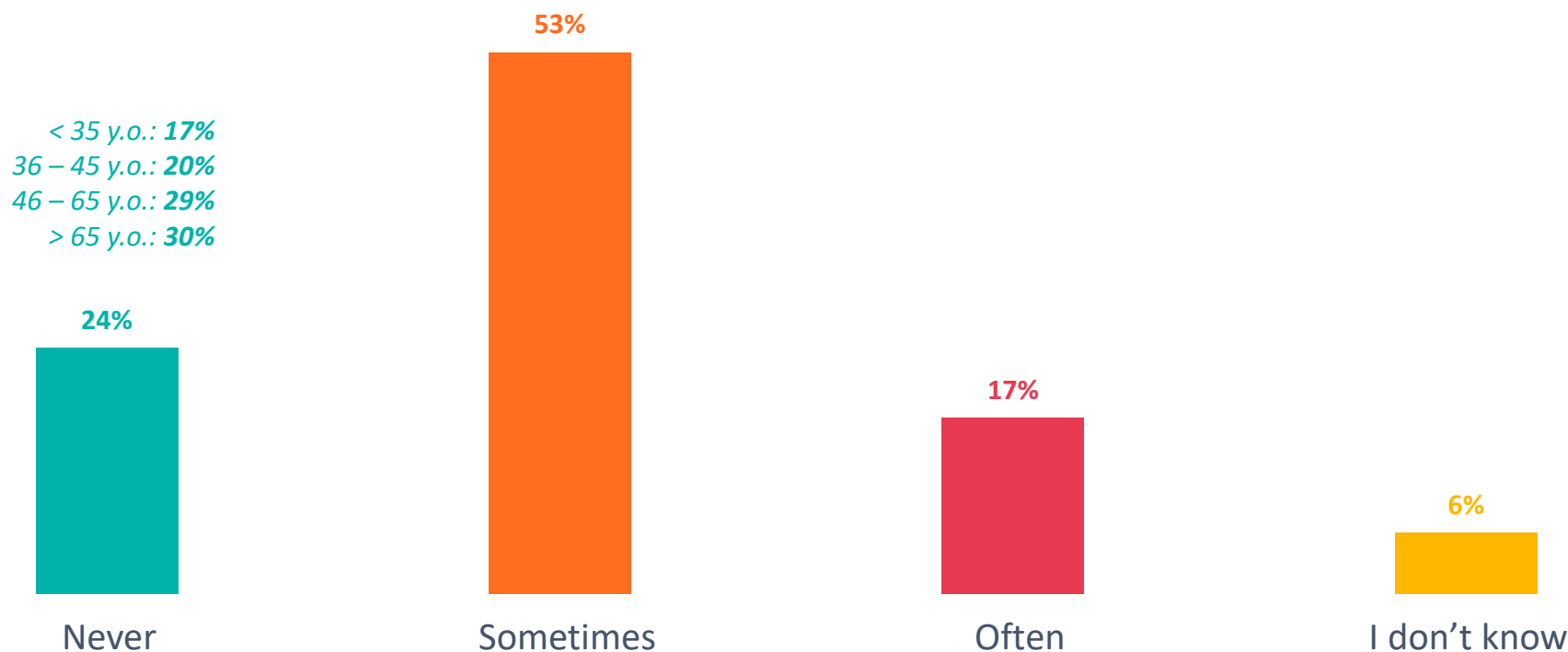
Criminal offences such as **sexual harassment** affect **14% of women during their studies** and increase to **21% in the workplace**. The same applies to **sexual assault**, which affects **14% of women in education** and **12% at work**. These figures reveal that the transition from education to employment does not signal a break, but rather a continuation of sexist violence.

These figures confirm that **sexist violence and discrimination begin early and continue throughout women's lives**. What is experienced at school or university unfortunately paves the way for what happens later in the workplace.



Studies

Sexism experienced by 7 out of 10 women



Among women who say they have **never** experienced such behaviours, 59% are over the age of 46. Many now describe situations that, at the time, were not recognised as sexist, which influences both their memories and how they perceive their experiences as victims today.

"I thought **it was just normal** that girls got less attention in the classroom."

"Are these memories too far in the past? Were such inappropriate behaviours **normalised** at the time?"

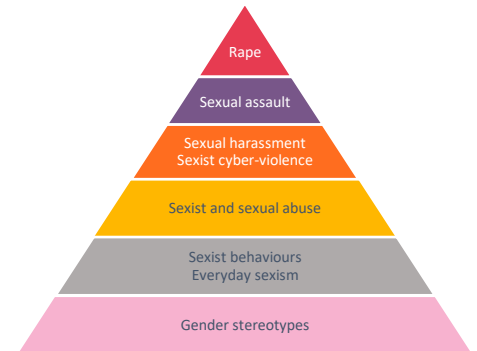
"I don't remember experiencing sexism at school, but perhaps **I didn't recognise it** as such at the time."

"I don't remember much, as it wasn't considered **problematic** at the time."

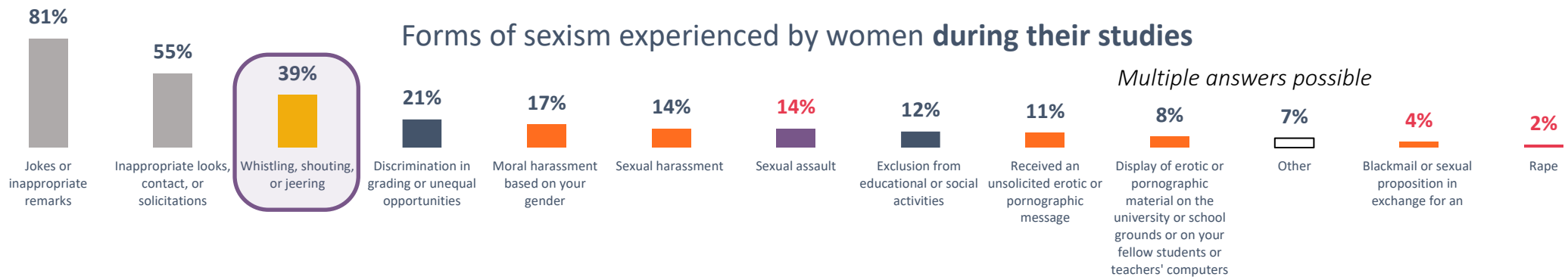
Further research - From sexism in education to sexism at work: a continuum

The 2023 Barometer on Sexist and Sexual Violence in Higher Education in France reports that 40% of female students have experienced sexual harassment. The "Elles Bougent" survey on careers in science found that 75% of women studying STEM subjects are concerned about sexism and gender-based discrimination in their future careers. One in five even considers sexism to be the main challenge they will face. The French High Council for Equality (HCE) (*Sexism Barometer, Wave 4, 2024*) also found that young women develop self-protective behaviours at an early age, including heightened vigilance, self-censorship and the normalisation of sexism.

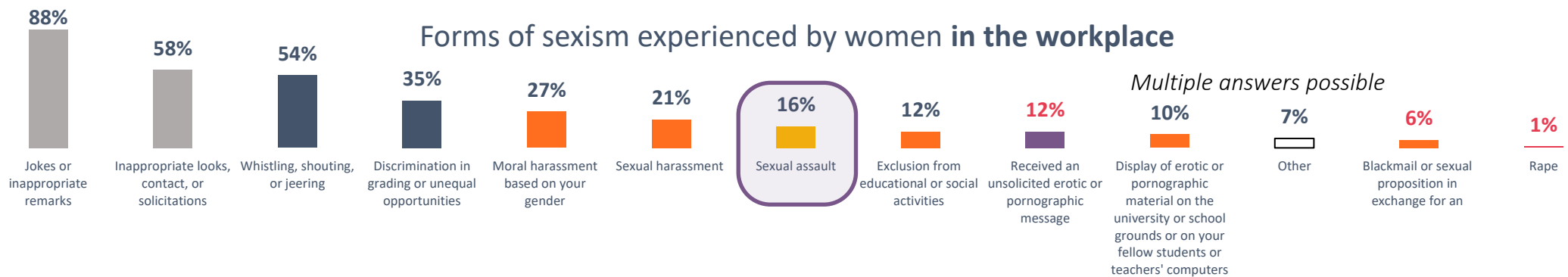
Striking similarity in the forms of sexism experienced during studies and at work



Forms of sexism experienced by women during their studies



Forms of sexism experienced by women in the workplace



The forms of sexism experienced by women during their studies and in the workplace are similar, except for behaviours such as whistling, shouting or jeering (sexist abuse), which are more common during studies than in the workplace.



Studies

14% Sexual harassment - **14%** Sexual assault

Such violence leaves lasting marks: testimonies from women aged 45 and over.

Sexual assault

"In secondary school, boys used to **pinch our boobs** and lift up our skirts."

"In the school canteen, I was a victim of unwanted sexual touching (**frottage**)."

"**Attempted rape** during a student event prevented by self-defence".

"A teacher stood next to me with his **erect penis** at the level of my head."

Sexual harassment

"My dissertation master invited me to **his hotel room** to 'work'."

"A student **offered to pay me for sex**, saying he wanted to 'try a nice girl'."

"A teacher nicknamed me 'Josephine' and said I looked like **a naked odalisque**."

Other traumatic experiences

"I was **chemically gang raped** in the 90s."

"In primary school, a boy demanded that **I take off my knickers** on the school bus."

"A geography teacher was **known to look under girls' skirts**. Everyone knew but no one did anything."



21%

Gender discrimination

Academic guidance and the assignment of gender-stereotyped tasks

*"I was advised to pursue **child psychology**, as it was seen as more appropriate for a woman."*

*"The **most visible projects** were consistently assigned to the boys."*

*"A classmate told me that **no one would want to marry** a woman who wanted to become **an engineer**."*

Hypersexualisation

*"A teacher tended to give better grades to **the girls he found attractive**."*

*"A teacher told me in front of the whole class that I had '**small breasts**', which made me feel deeply embarrassed."*

*"My teacher told me I reminded him of a work of art: that of **a naked odalisque**. I was under 16."*

Structural sexism within school culture

*"Introductory rituals at the beginning of the academic year often included **practices that were humiliating for female students**."*

*"During my studies, a teacher explicitly said that girls wouldn't pursue a career **because they would get married**."*

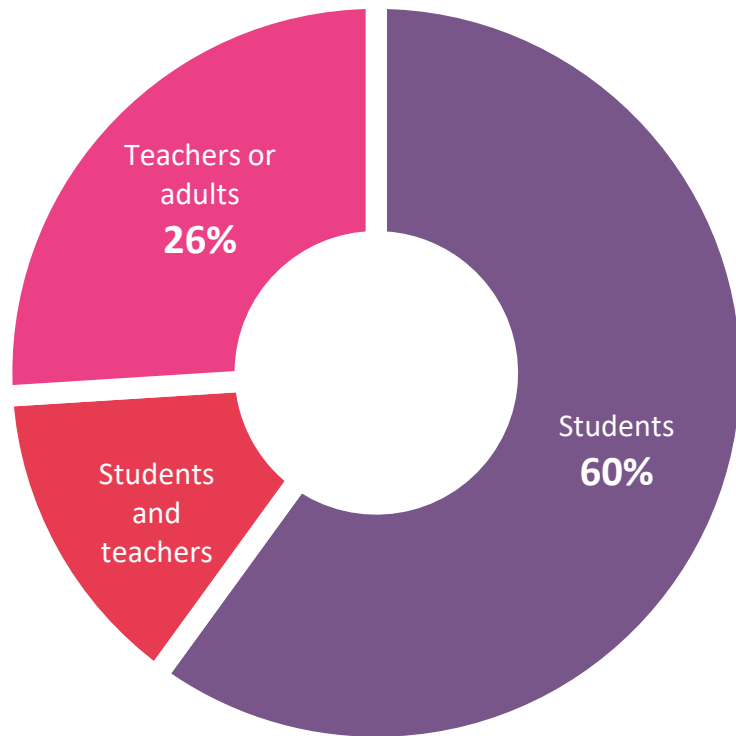
*"I didn't take part in the integration activities because I was afraid of what I'd heard. Girls were supposed to catch pineapple rings whilst blindfolded, and the rings were placed **on the boys' genitals**..."*

*"As a girl, my contributions in class were **taken less seriously** by teachers."*

*"During an oral exam, a teacher claimed that **rape was 'scientifically impossible'**."*



Perpetrators of sexist behaviours



Sexism in educational settings is fuelled both by behaviours **AMONG STUDENTS...**

"My classmates called me a 'shut' after a boy lied about having had a relationship with me."

*"A male student slipped coins **into my cleavage during class.** No one reacted."*

*"Male classmates said that **a woman's place is in the kitchen.**"*

...and **BY FIGURES OF AUTHORITY.**

*"My teacher told me I got good marks **because of my looks.**"*

*"My teacher said we got better marks if we wore **skirts.**"*

*"A teacher told me **to go back to my sewing** after an exam."*

Further research

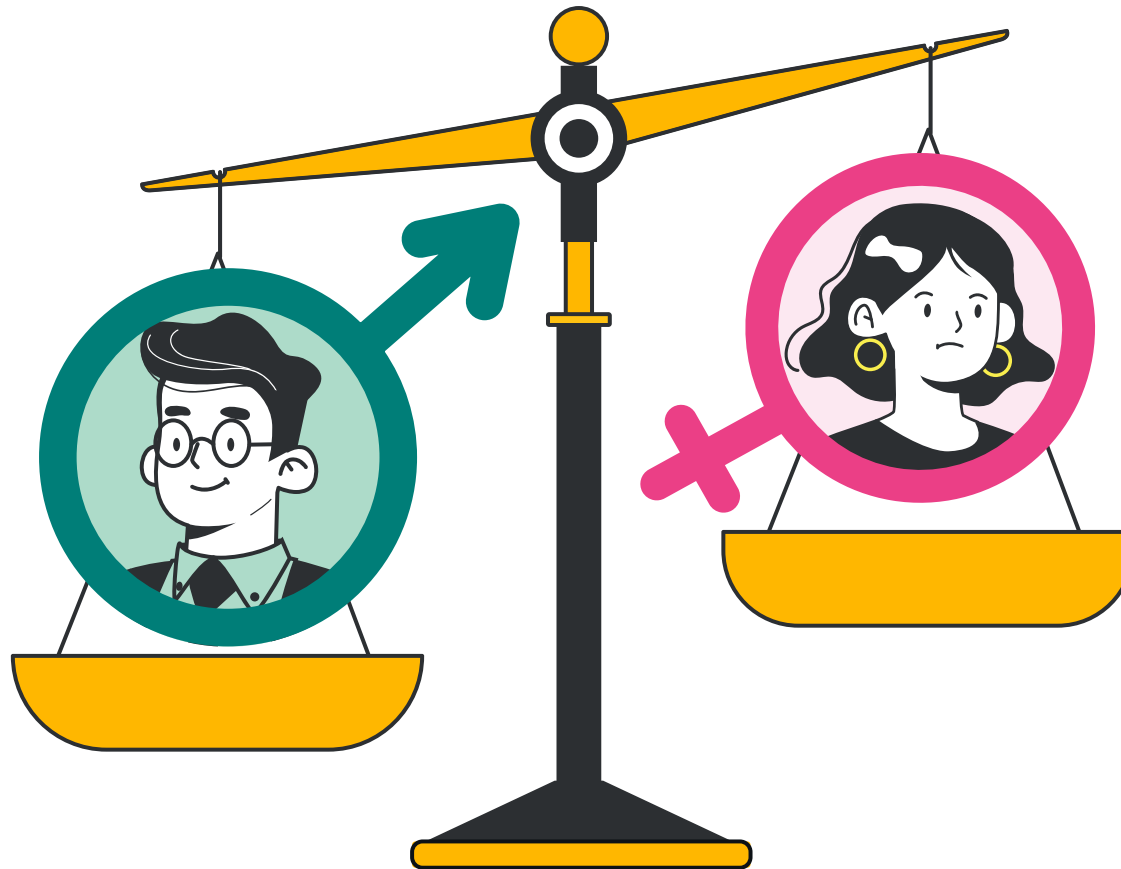
The 2023 Barometer on Sexist and Sexual Violence in Higher Education (France) shows that the perpetrators of sexist and sexual violence are:

- **Students:** They account for the majority of perpetrators across several forms of violence, including sexist abuse (55%), sexual harassment (54%), sexual assault (62%), and rape (63%).
- **Teachers:** They are identified as perpetrators in a number of cases, particularly for sexist abuse (25%) and sexual harassment (13%).

Perpetrators are overwhelmingly men, accounting for between 69% and 96% of cases, particularly those involving sexist and sexual violence.

C Focus on sexism in the workplace

Women's psychological and physical insecurity at work



The psychological and physical insecurity of women at work

- The most normalised types of sexist behaviours, such as **inappropriate jokes or remarks**, are the most common. They reflect an implicit cultural tolerance for behaviours that reinforce stereotypes and can create a hostile work environment.
- **Inappropriate looks or advances**, although often perceived as less serious, are evidence of the persistent objectification of women in the workplace.
- **Professional discrimination** illustrates how sexism is not limited to isolated acts but also influences career perspectives and equal opportunities at work.
- The existence of more serious forms of violence, such as **sexual or moral harassment**, or **sexual assault**, although statistically less common, reveals the possible consequences of the trivialisation of sexist microaggressions.
- While awareness of sexism is increasing, sexist behaviours remain omnipresent. The trivialisation of the microaggressions of ordinary sexism makes them even more difficult to denounce and to prevent.

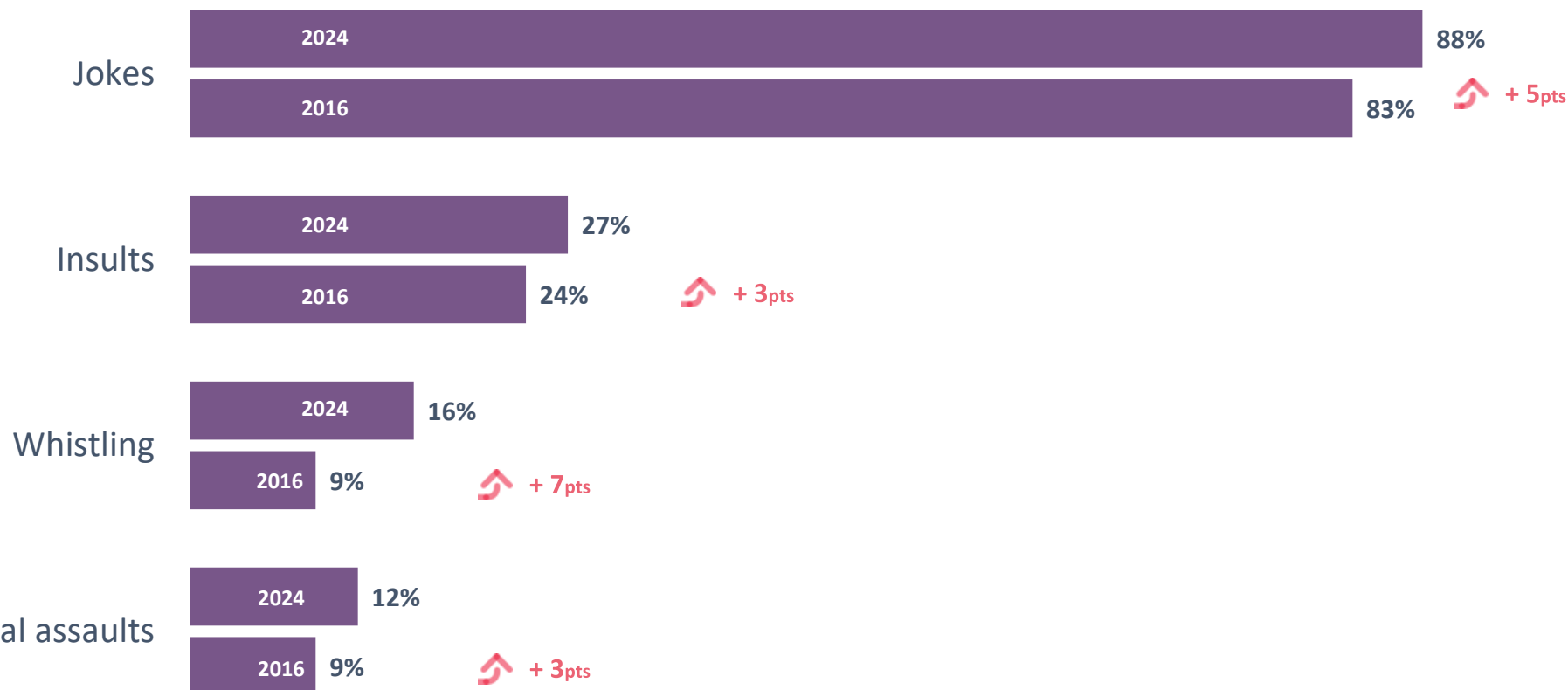




All forms of sexism are on the rise

Comparison 2016 – 2024 (Multiple answers possible)

Workplace



Further research - #StOpE 2024 survey of 301 companies in France:

70% of women have already experienced a discriminatory or sexist situation at work.

2/3 of women have already experienced sexist behaviours during meetings.

3 out of 4 women are exposed to sexist jokes, and 1 out of 2 to sexist comments.

4 out of 10 women have had to endure comments about their appearance or the way they dress.

EU-GBV Survey 2021–2022 "Gender-based violence in Belgium": 33% of women report having experienced sexual harassment during their working life. 66.6% have experienced inappropriate staring, 56.9% offensive jokes or remarks, and 25.5% inappropriate sexual advances.



Workplace

Forms of 'everyday' sexism or discrimination

2024 analysis

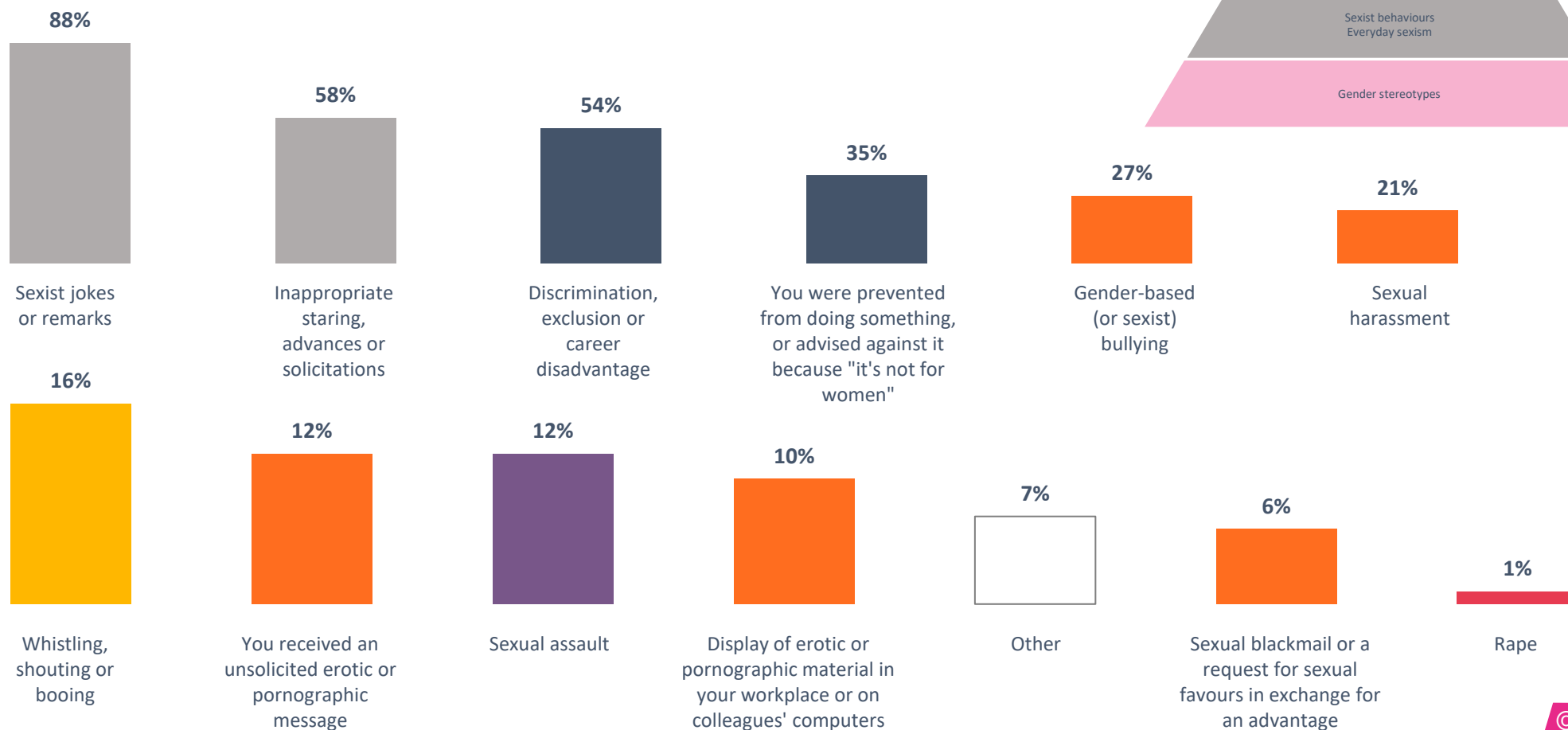
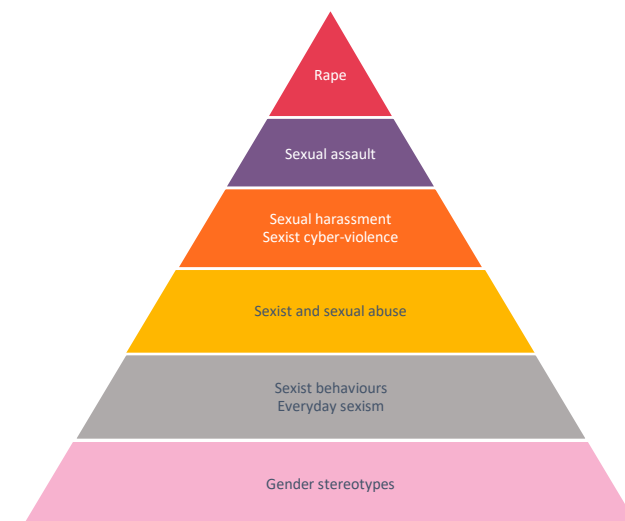
65%	Comments on your attitude at work <i>e.g. You are too bossy, You are too emotional, You should smile more to be...</i>
56%	Being interrupted more frequently when you speak
56%	Being perceived as overly sensitive when you react to jokes about women
54%	Comments on the clothes, hairstyle, or makeup you wear or should wear
54%	Being less listened to, less involved in decisions or less taken into consideration
50%	Comments on your personal life <i>e.g. Shouldn't you be at home with the kids?, How will you manage your role and new maternity?, You say you don't want children but you'll change your mind!</i>
49%	Having your skills or credibility questioned because you are a woman <i>e.g. in technical positions, leadership abilities, ...</i>
48%	Stereotypical assignment of tasks: note-taking, organising meetings or the annual event...
23%	Fear of declaring your pregnancy or extending parental leave For self-employed individuals: fear of the possible reactions of your clients, suppliers, collaborators...
21%	Not having equal access to strategic projects and/or clients For self-employed individuals, the competition with businesses led by men
19%	Hearing that you got a promotion or your position only because you are a woman
18%	Loss of employment or career advancement opportunities due to your maternity (if applicable), or slowed development of your business if you are self-employed
2%	Other



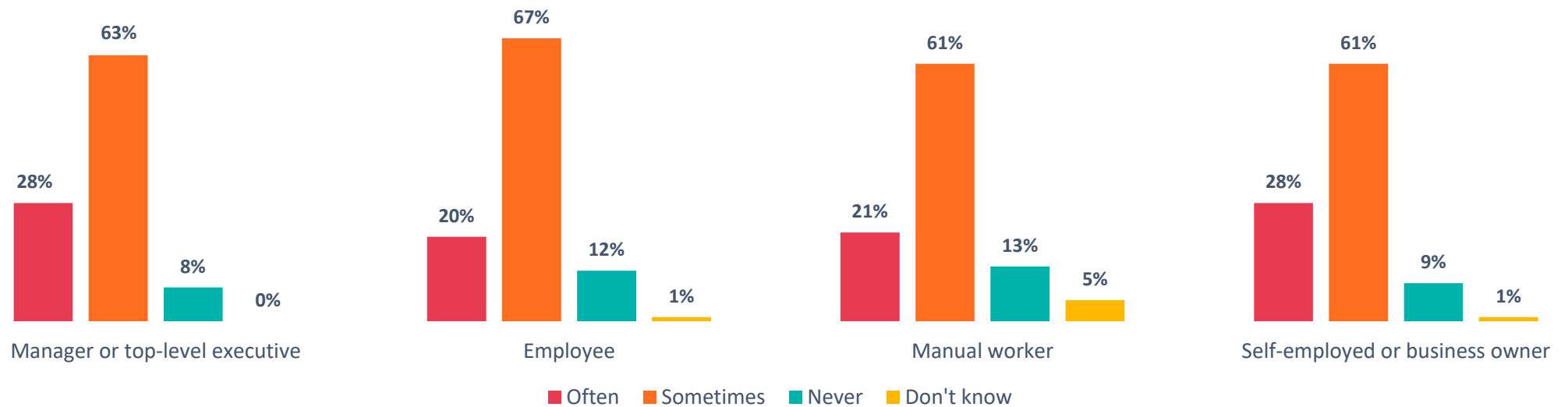
Sexist and sexual violence experienced in the workplace

2024 analysis *Multiple answers possible*

Workplace



Sexism affects all women, whatever their status or position



*"It's surprising that a woman is handling such a demanding project team so well!",
"Don't you think **this big project** would be better handled by a man?"*

*"A client called me '**sweetheart**' and refused to deal with me until a man took over."*

*"I was told I shouldn't apply for a promotion because **the responsibilities would be 'too heavy' for a woman.**"*

*"(When applying for a loan), the banker **refused to listen to me** until my male colleague arrived to pitch with me."*

Further research - Sexism is reinforced for women in precarious situations, but also for those who challenge power

ILO 2022: People in precarious or low-skilled jobs are the most exposed to sexist violence and the least likely to report it.

"The Reality Gap" Shape Talent 2024 (Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Sweden): Inequalities increase with seniority. Nearly one in two women managers or executives tends to feel devalued during meetings.

IPSOS Survey 2023 (France): 49% of women scientists report having experienced sexual harassment during their career. 65% report a negative impact on their commitment to science and on their career.

Who are the perpetrators of sexism at work?

The double burden faced by frontline women (in direct contact with users/customers)

Multiple answers possible

Between colleagues

"An idea I suggested in a meeting was ignored, then **repeated by a man** who received all the credit for it."

"As women, we're not listened to as much when we go round the table, either by our colleagues or by male clients. It's clearly **difficult for them to take instructions from a woman.**"

By superiors

"During an assessment, I was asked **if I planned to have a child** before being given a strategic project."

"During an internship, **my supervisor attempted to rape me**. I managed to escape, but I said nothing out of fear of the consequences."

By clients

"During a client meeting, the client **made comments about my appearance** and then refused to take me seriously until a man stepped in."

"I'm a restaurant owner, and one of my business partners, who is a woman, is in charge of the wine. She creates the wine list and has the most expertise. Yet **some male clients still prefer to ask for my advice**, even after I've explained that she's in charge of that part."

77%

73%

41%

Colleagues

People in a higher
hierarchical position than
you

Clients, providers
or partners

Women's voices...

Diminishing and negative stereotypes

"During meetings, there was an unspoken expectation that a woman would take it upon herself to **make the coffee and serve others.**"

"At a gala, a man invited me to his table **'to be surrounded by beautiful women'** and placed his hand on my thigh **'to tell a joke'.**"

"**I was refused a job** with the explanation that, being a married woman, I was likely to have children."

"During a meeting, **a man interrupted me several times,** and no one said anything."

"During an interview, I was **asked if I planned to have children,** a question that would never have been asked of a man."

"I was asked to apologise to a senior colleague for a mistake he had made, **because he felt 'offended'.**"

"**My manager refused to sit next to me** in the car because I was a woman."

"In a meeting, **my ideas were ignored,** then later reused by a male colleague who took credit for them."

"A director, upon seeing that I wanted to meet a client, said: **'Do women have skills now?!'**"

"**My contributions to projects have been downplayed** as 'children's projects'."

"**I had to justify my technical skills** because my male colleagues were automatically seen as more credible."

"**A photo of a veiled woman** was placed on my desk with the comment: **'This is how women should be – silent.'**"

Women's voices...

Sexual harassment and objectification

"My male colleague made **comments about my 'huge boobs'** in front of everyone."

"I received **inappropriate messages** from a superior who said he felt a 'connection' with me. I was deeply afraid of returning to that workplace."

"During an internship, a colleague suggested I move in with him, claiming there was **a connection between us.**"

"A colleague told me about **a sexual dream he had involving me** and laughed, even though I was engaged."

"While I was providing care, **a patient began to masturbate.**"

"**A client took a photo of me** without my consent and later told me he had done it."

"A colleague created **a pornographic montage** using my photo and shared it."

Sexual assaults

"A colleague **slapped me on the buttocks** and told me to make the coffee."

"A woman on my team was **grabbed by the breasts and forcibly kissed** by a male police colleague."

"A colleague **touched me between my legs** under the table."

"My boss **kissed me on the mouth** instead of giving me a kiss on the cheek."

"A colleague gradually **slid his hand onto my bottom** during an after-work drinks session."

"Someone tried to point out that I had **a stain** on my trousers. In fact, they touched my bottom."

Discrimination

"I was **excluded from a key project** after asking a male colleague to stop raising his voice."

"I was **left out of informal conversations** among male colleagues, even though they directly influenced projects I was involved in."

"I was told in no uncertain terms that I wouldn't get a promotion because I have **children.**"

"I **lost my job** because I spoke out against sexist comments."

The double discrimination based on age and gender

A form of contemptuous sexism targeting women who are no longer considered “young”

- Sexism is not limited to questioning women’s abilities or treating them like children. It also manifests itself in a subtle contempt for those who no longer conform to the norms of ‘youth’ (**sexual or maternal utility**). This phenomenon reflects a form of double discrimination – both sexist and ageist – in which women are judged not only on the basis of their gender but also on their age.

*"My manager told me **I should be happy that a man was still flirting with me** at my age. I was 40."*

- This remark, which is supposedly “friendly” or “humorous”, in reality reflects a subtle form of devaluation. It perpetuates the idea that **a woman's value is linked to her physical appearance** or her ability to attract the male gaze, by minimising her skills and her place in the professional world.

*"With age, the catcalls in the street stop but at the office, there are jokes **about menopausal women**."*

- This type of sexism plays a significant role in rendering **women invisible** as they advance in their careers and in life, while reinforcing harmful stereotypes.

Further research – Women and age: a double burden

The French Human Rights Defender (Annual Report on Equality, 2025) notes that older women are less likely to be promoted, less likely to be listened to, and are sometimes excluded from strategic roles. McKinsey *Women in the Workplace 2024 (US)* showed that young women are just as likely as older women to have been victims of sexual harassment during their careers: 34 per cent of women under 30 and 35 per cent of women aged 50 and over have experienced one or more forms of sexual harassment during their careers.

D The impact of sexism

"It has haunted me all my life."

*"One small thing after another...
in the end, it becomes a lot.
And **we keep enduring it.**"*

*"**Anger and therapy** are
the only things that
helped me get through it."*

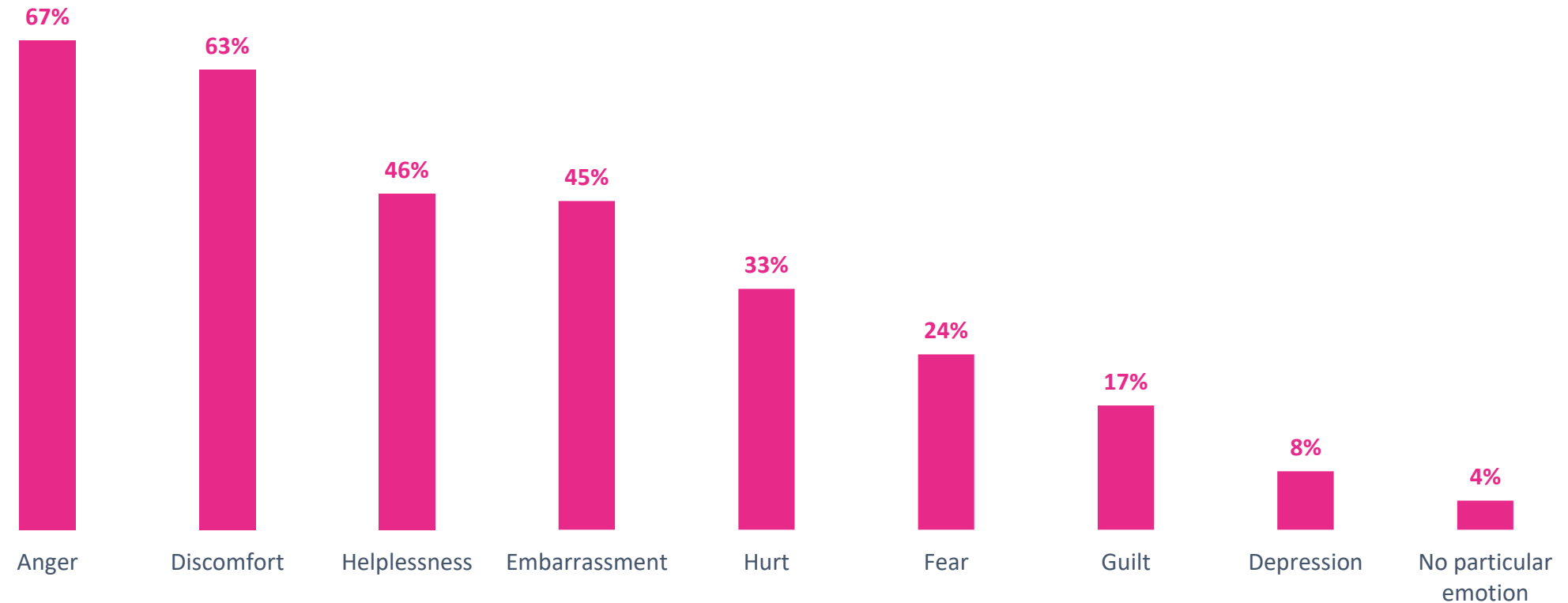
*"It's been years, and I **still have nightmares** about it."*



The psychological impact of sexism

What were your most frequent feelings when you experienced sexism?

(Multiple answers possible)



*"Years after the assault,
I still feel guilty."*

*"Due to my past experiences,
I've developed **a general sense of
mistrust towards men.**"*

*"In my youth, **fear kept me silent.**
Now, I respond with anger."*

"In public spaces, **it causes fear**. In private, it causes discomfort."

"The predominant feeling is **injustice**. Social peace depends on women's silence."

"A feeling of being **dirty**."

"Guilt for not **having set boundaries** sooner."

"I kept wondering **what I had done to deserve it**."

"We end up **believing we are responsible** when we are the victim!"

"I was **completely frozen**."

"You feel threatened and disrespected, like **an object**!"

Further research - Lasting psychological consequences

The HCE (*French High Council for Equality – Sexism, Polarisation and the State of Sexism, 2024*) refers to the mental exhaustion caused by repeated acts of aggression.

The AFMD (*French Association of Diversity Managers*) notes that 60% of women adapt their behaviours or appearance to avoid sexism.

The IEWM (*Institute for the Equality of Women and Men – Belgium – Transgressive behaviours in Companies, 2025*) describes a climate of widespread yet persistent insecurity that prevents women from being fully themselves at work.

According to the 2023 Barometer on Sexist and Sexual Violence in Higher Education, more than half of victims develop anxiety, lose self-confidence, or consider resigning.

The ILO (*Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, 2022*) reports a lasting loss of motivation.

The IPSOS Survey 2023 (France) found that 49% of women scientists report having experienced sexual harassment during their career — almost one woman scientist in two. Among them, 65% report a negative impact on their commitment to science and on their career.

The Reality Gap by Shape Talent (2024): Nearly one in two women managers report being concerned about how they are perceived during meetings, and 46% feel they do not belong.

EU-GBV Survey 2021–2022 – *Gender-based violence in Belgium*: 41.9% of women who have experienced long-term sickness absence report having been victims of sexual harassment in their employment, compared with 30% of those who have not had a long-term sickness absence.

The cost of sexism at work on women's health

Discrimination has harmful and lasting effects on people's physical and mental health, as well as on their well-being, motivation and performance at work.

Workplace health measurement tools (statistics, equipment, standards) remain largely designed on the basis of male standards. Protective equipment, prevention policies and working patterns are not designed for women's career paths or their physiological characteristics. As a result, some working environments are more dangerous or harmful for women, without this being made visible or corrected.

According to Santé Publique France, the prevalence of **psychological distress at work** was, in 2019, **twice as high among women**.

In Belgium, 60% of people on long-term sick leave are women. This rises to 80% among those aged over 55.

Data from several Belgian and French reports (Sciensano 2024, CWEF 2024, Verian–Laboratoire de l'Égalité 2024, OXFAM 2024) show that **structural sexism in the workplace has a significant impact on women's physical and mental health, without being genuinely taken into account by current prevention policies**.

Working women experience higher rates of sleep disorders, depression, chronic fatigue and physical pain, linked to gendered working conditions: mental overload, lack of recognition, multitasking, job insecurity and isolation. This poor well-being is aggravated by everyday sexist behaviours, such as inappropriate remarks, devaluation and infantilisation, identified as factors of chronic stress and psychological exhaustion.

This is what is known as the **allostatic load of sexism**, which refers to the **physiological and psychological wear and tear** caused by **repeated, cumulative and prolonged exposure** to sexist violence, microaggressions, discrimination and situations of stress linked to sexism. When stress is constant, the body's stress response system remains permanently activated. This is referred to as allostatic load.

It is the biological cost of having to adapt all the time.

The Verian report for the Laboratoire de l'Égalité (France, 2024) identifies sexist behaviours as factors that aggravate **psychosocial risks for women at work**. Remarks about women's appearance, the underestimation of their skills, and the lack of recognition or career progression are identified as sources of stress and loss of self-confidence. These repeated microaggressions and sexist behaviours have cumulative effects on mental health. **The link between these low-intensity forms of violence and psychological fatigue is now well documented, yet it has still not been incorporated into workplace well-being policies.**

The physical demands of predominantly female occupations are neither measured nor recognised, unlike those of predominantly male occupations (construction, police, firefighters, etc.). Yet women are more likely to take longer periods of sick leave due to musculoskeletal disorders. This lack of recognition is also a form of sexism. In Belgium, 32.5% of work incapacity cases due to musculoskeletal disorders concern women, compared with 30.6% for men.

- According to the Fondation des Femmes study on the cost of ageing (2025), **from the age of 45 onwards**, women, often already worn out, **leave the workforce prematurely or reduce their working hours**. Long-term sick leave and long-term work incapacity increase sharply between the ages of 45 and 55. Why?
 - They work in jobs that are physically or psychologically demanding yet are rarely recognised as such.
 - They have carried an uninterrupted mental and emotional load for two decades.
 - They go through a hormonal transition that is overlooked and whose effects are underestimated.
 - They work in environments that can be hostile, particularly when they begin to "get in the way" of men's career progression.
 - They become socially invisible as a result of sexism combined with ageism specifically affecting older women.



Sexism harms women's health

Discrimination has harmful and lasting effects on women's mental and physical health. Sexism must be recognised as an occupational risk in its own right.

2x

Higher levels of psychological distress at work among women (Santé Publique France, 2019)

60%

of people on long-term sick leave in Belgium are women.
80% among those aged over 55.

70%

of periods of incapacity lasting more than six months (burnout, anxiety disorders) concern women in Belgium.

+345%

increase in disability among women in Belgium between 1996 and 2022, compared with 71% among men.

Repeated & cumulative exposure

- **Devaluing, hostile and discriminatory** environments throughout a career
- **Everyday sexism = lasting stress and exhaustion**
- Sleep disorders, depression, chronic fatigue, pain

The allostatic load of sexism

- **Physiological and psychological wear** caused by repeated exposure to sexist violence and microaggressions
- Constant stress → **the stress-response system remains permanently activated**
- This is the **biological cost of constantly having to adapt**

Cerebral scars (PNAS study)

- **7,876 MRI scans**, 29 countries, ages 18-40
- Sexism and violence against women → **thinning of the right hemisphere**, involved in emotional regulation → depression, post-traumatic stress
- More gender-equal countries (Finland, Sweden): **no difference** between women and men
- Less gender-equal countries (India, Türkiye, Brazil): **brain alterations** among women

Impact on organisations: long-term absenteeism, loss of talent and reduced productivity. Sexism is treated as an interpersonal issue rather than an occupational risk.

Recognising it as an occupational risk in its own right is an essential prerequisite; otherwise, organisations address the consequences (burnout, absence) without tackling the causes.

E A lack of support

*"No one lifted a finger.
Except for one woman, who
was just as terrified
as I was."*

*"Women try to react, but
they can't always do so.
Where are the men?"*

*"I've lost count of the number
of times **men looked away**
(on the underground) when
I needed their help."*

*"**Ladies, stand up for
yourselves.** No one else
will do it for you."*

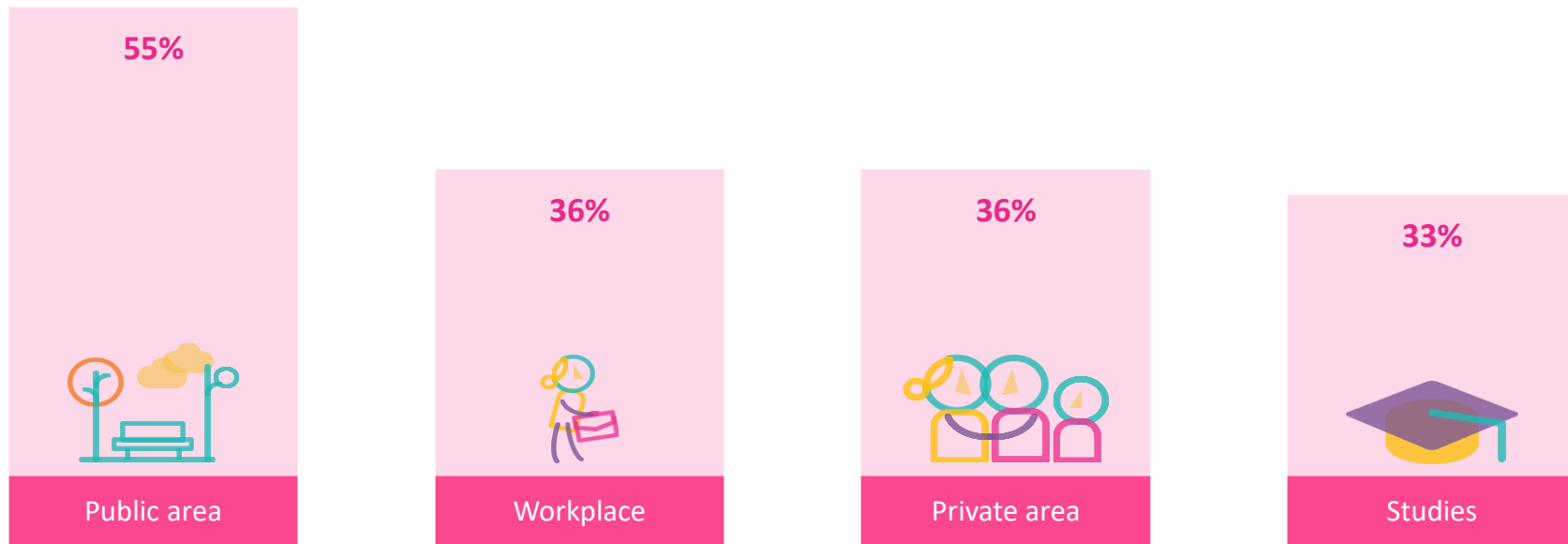


A lack of support

A phenomenon especially prevalent in public spaces

During this/these experiences, did anyone support or help you?

Answer: **Nobody**



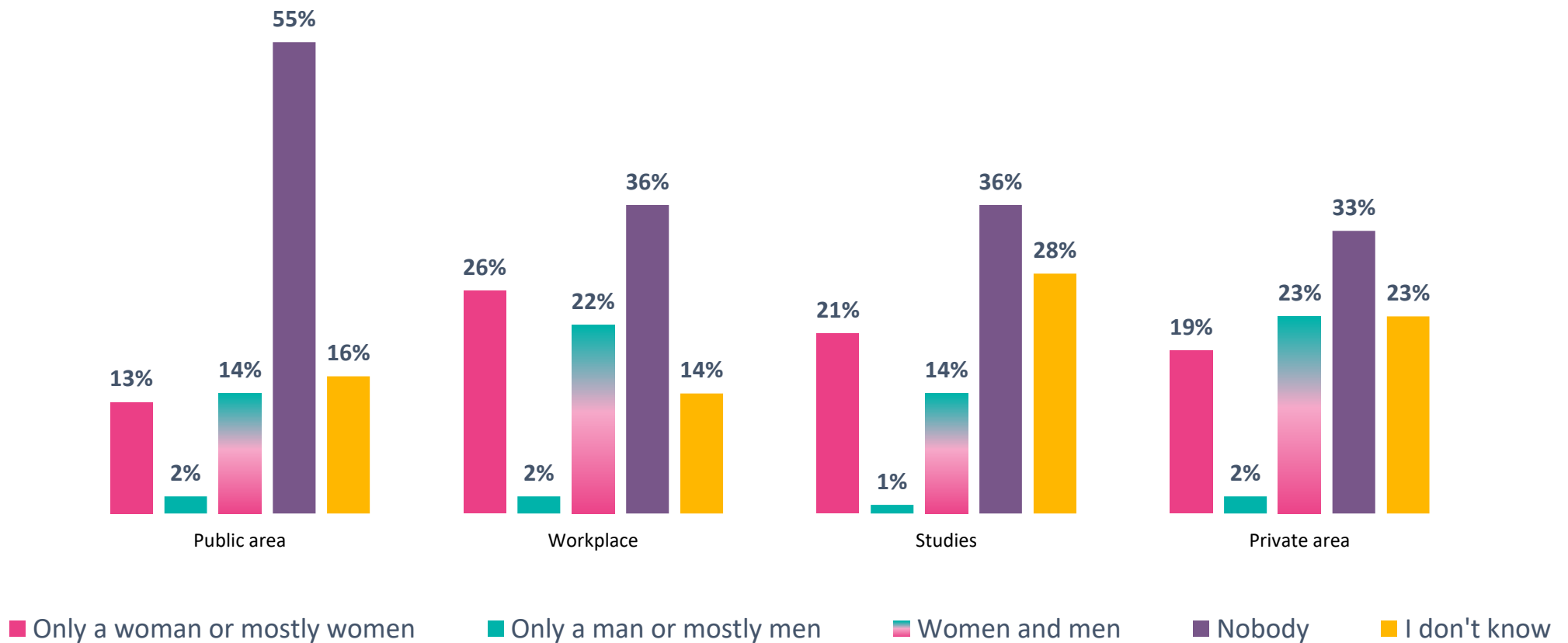
"I felt so alone. The fact that no one helped me made my feelings of anger and stress even worse."

Who steps in to protect the victim?

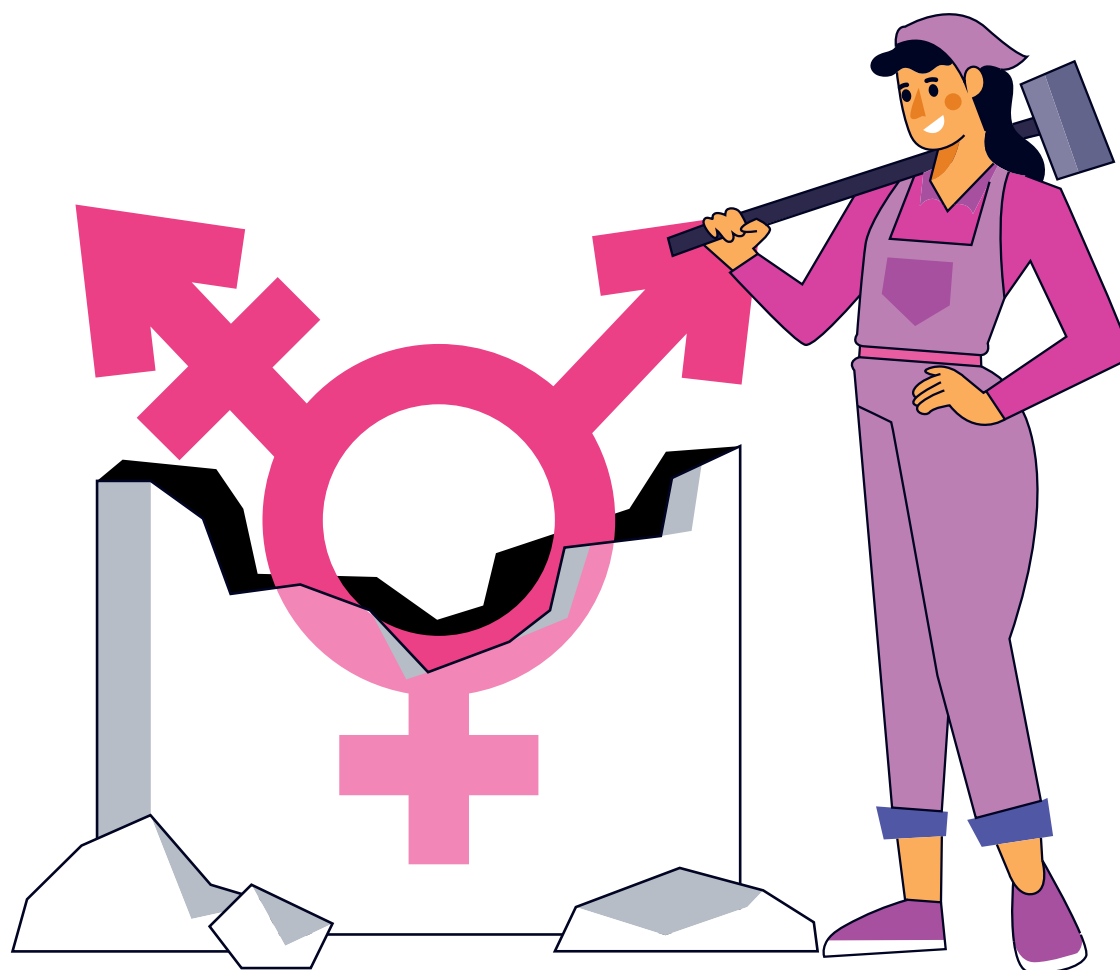
It is mainly other women who react.

Men only do so if women have already intervened.

During this/these experiences, did anyone support or help you?



F Reporting sexism



Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of women do not report it

And when they do, $\frac{2}{3}$ are not protected

Have you ever reported sexist behaviours to the authorities?



"A female client **was sent threats** after reporting sexism within her organisation."

"I might better leave the **company**, by the time my boss reacts..."

Why didn't you report sexist behaviours?

Multiple answers possible

- 57%** Doubt about the effectiveness of the reporting process in place
- 49%** I minimised the acts
- 37%** Fear of repercussions on my job or professional career
For self-employed individuals: Fear of repercussions on the development of my business
- 27%** Fear of retaliation from the person exhibiting sexist behaviours
- 24%** I didn't know who to turn to
- 14%** Other
- 4%** I was pressurised not to

"After reporting the incident, **I was removed from key projects** and my responsibilities were reduced."

"The manager I reported **continued to undermine me** in front of the team."

"A **known sexual harasser** who had been in the company for 20 years was finally dismissed after multiple reports."

Who did you report it to?

Multiple answers possible

60%	My supervisor
33%	Human Resources Department
16%	Designated person (France) or "trusted person" (Belgium) or any competent internal authority within the company
16%	Other
15%	Trade union
14%	Occupational health service or external prevention service
9%	Police
6%	Institutional equality or anti-discrimination body
3%	Reporting hotline or email set up by the company

Women show a preference for reporting cases of sexism directly to one or more trusted individuals, rather than using online or telephone tools. This suggests a greater value placed on human interaction than on the anonymity provided by such systems.

*"I have **no trust in the reporting process**. I would never use it."*

*"I **couldn't tell HR** because they get along well with my manager (the perpetrator)."*

*"I **confided in my husband** but I didn't tell anyone else."*

Women's voices...

A lack of trust in the reporting process

"It takes **so much effort**, only to be told in the end that it's not a big deal."

"**Reporting takes too much energy** for behaviours that will lead to nothing."

"I didn't file a report as **I was discouraged by the HR VP**. She saw that previous complaints resulted in negative consequences for the women."

"**Management protected the perpetrator** by saying I was just looking for trouble."

"I was fully aware that no measures would be taken, as the **perpetrator was shielded by senior management**."

"It happened behind closed doors. **It was his word against mine.**"

Minimising the acts: A deeply ingrained normalisation

"Back in the 1990s, **such behaviours were widely regarded as normal.**"

"**Sexist jokes were seen as humour** and not accepting them made me look like someone with no sense of humour."

"**I was taught not to take everything seriously**, not even inappropriate gestures."

"**It took me years to realise** that what I had experienced was sexism."

"Back then, in the 1980s, no one talked about it, **we just endured it in silence.**"

"The **MeToo movement** made me realise that certain experiences I had previously minimised were, in fact, acts of assault."

Complicity and the culture of impunity

"When I spoke out, I discovered that **the people in power were complicit.**"

"Report sexist behaviours to an all-male management? **You must be joking!**"

"**I reported a colleague for harassment**, and ended up with a performance review saying I lacked team spirit."

"In my professional environment, **reporting would have ended my career.**"

Other ...

"In my workplace, there was **no procedure in place**. And even if there had been, I doubt I would have used it."

"**I prefer to put the person making a sexist comment in their place.** Most of the time, that's enough."

"I was afraid of having to confront **the memories of an old rape all over again.**"

Men and sexism **3**

"I still struggle not to tell **young girls who are barely dressed** that I wouldn't dress like that if I were them."

"**I often turn my head** to look at women whose appearance I appreciate. Aside from that, I deeply believe in equality."

"Honestly, **I don't know how to behave with women anymore.**"

"At school (40 years ago), **I tolerated and even took part in** sexist behaviours and games during my teenage years."

"In the family context, I must admit that years ago, **I would sometimes remain at the table with the other men** while the women cleared it."

« Sometimes women seem to enjoy the sexism. Then, even **if it's only a facade**, it makes outside reactions useless. »

"**A lot of women tend to exaggerate situations** to illustrate just how condescending men can be."

« I, as a man, was confronted with **machist behaviour at work**. Don't forget the other side of the coin. »

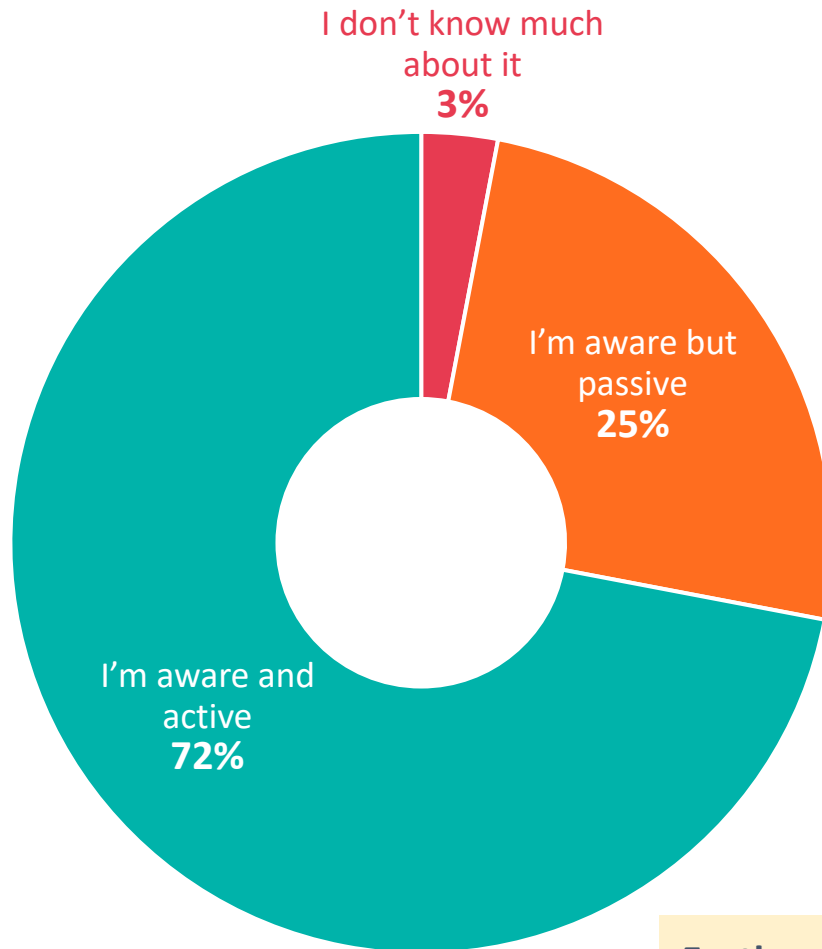
The Great Illusion

- 97% of the thousand men who responded spontaneously to our survey said they had witnessed sexism at least **once**. These men are obviously not representative of the male half of society, after all, if they took the time to complete such a lengthy questionnaire, we could assume they had a strong reason to do so. As their responses indicate, **they are mostly men who are already aware of sexist and sexual violence, either at work (through training), in their family environment, or through the media.**
- This is precisely what makes this group of nearly one thousand men so valuable: they represent those who describe themselves as the most informed and aware on the subject. Much attention is given to men who oppose equality, manosphere influencers, and other public figures, as if they were the only problem. We see less often the opposite end of the spectrum: men who are convinced they are "on the right side," **while clearly maintaining a degree of illusion about their own positioning.**
- These men underestimate the frequency and seriousness of such behaviours, struggle to talk about them, rarely intervene when witnessing them, and yet often describe themselves as highly engaged. Their blind spots around sexist and sexual violence remain significant. Although their testimonies reflect a desire to move things forward, their awareness, knowledge of the issue, and capacity to take action are evolving only very slowly.
- And yet, it is with these men that we must work if we are to advance towards true equality.



Nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of male respondents say they actively combat sexism

How do you perceive
your commitment to combating sexism?



*"I used to know nothing.
But now, I'm finally a good guy."*

*"I've learnt a lot,
and now I know how to respond."*

*"I always react
when something seems inappropriate."*

*"It seems obvious to me! As men, **we all need to be engaged** and take action."*

Further research - Men know... but too many do not feel concerned.

The French High Council for Equality (HCE) 2024: 82% of men acknowledge that women are not treated equally, but only 38% believe they have a role to play.

A Deciphering men's awareness of the phenomenon



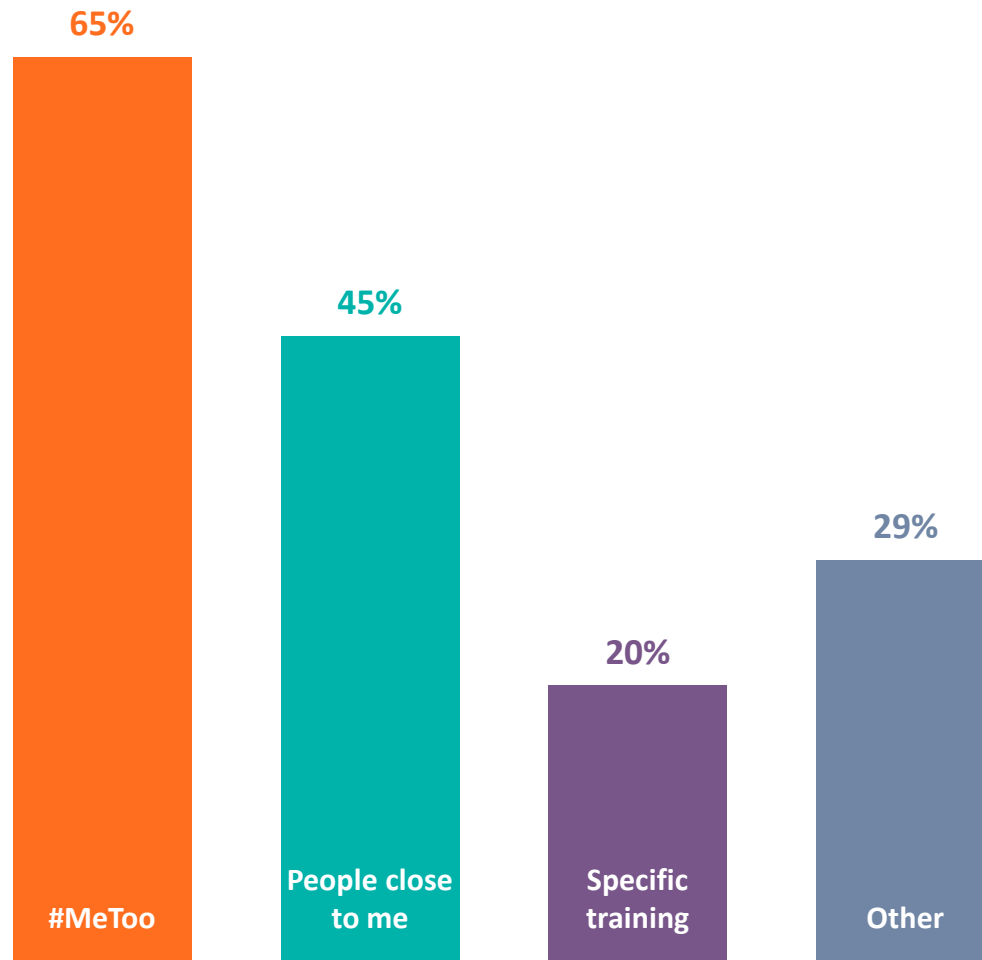
An awareness that is still insufficient

- While progress is real, it remains incomplete. Many men acknowledge past mistakes and are trying to adopt more gender-equal behaviours. Yet **cultural and structural barriers** continue to slow down this transition, showing that combating sexism cannot be reduced to individual level alone.
- Sexist humour is also being increasingly questioned. Some still try to justify it: *“I make jokes based on clichés, it’s satire.”* Others have started to reflect: *“I wouldn’t tell crude jokes like that anymore.”* Deconstruction is a slow process, so ingrained are these reflexes.
- In the workplace, several participants admit they were influenced by stereotypes: *“I thought a female candidate wasn’t strong enough for the role, but I’ve learned from that mistake.”* Many now say they try to correct these biases, aware of how they can affect careers.
- In private life, some men realise the impact of their upbringing only much later. *“The way tasks are divided in my relationship is sexist.”* admits one participant. *“I used to let women clear the table without realising what that meant.”* acknowledges another.
- For many, recent movements such as #MeToo have been a turning point, highlighting behaviours that were previously invisible. But resistance still exists, particularly around gestures that are perceived as benevolent: *“I meant well, but didn’t see how it could come across as sexist.”*



The factors that triggered men's awareness

Multiple answers possible



Of which
29.6% in France
and only 16.3% in
Belgium.

"I grew up with **a strongly gendered education**. Becoming a father of daughters changed the way I behave."

"**Studying helped me realise** that certain things were not normal."

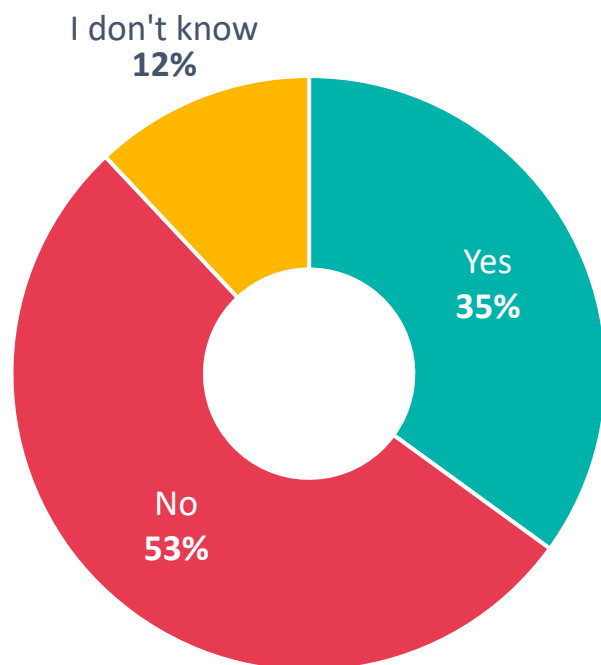
"After **#MeToo**, I started reading and listening about consent."

"Seeing all those women in the streets (during protests), I thought to myself
'My God, are there really that many?'
That's when I started to understand."

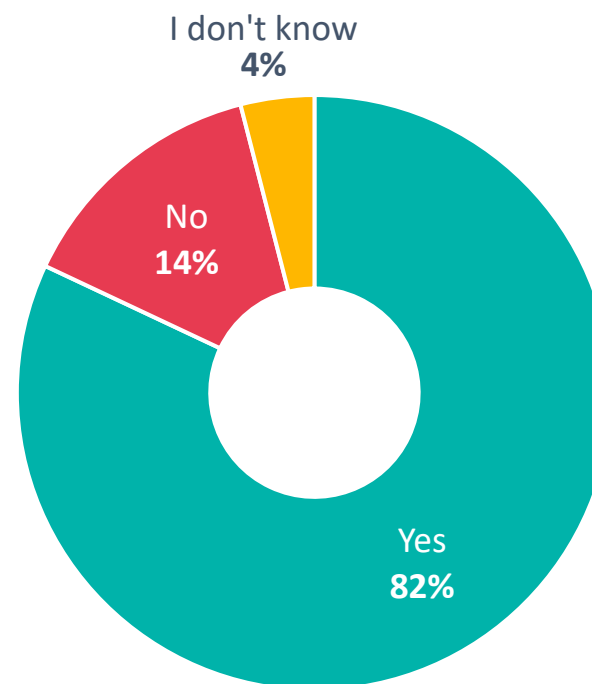
"It was my sister who made me understand **the impact of certain jokes.**"

8 out of 10 men were made aware of these issues by women in their lives, yet few ever discuss them with other men

Have the men in your circle shared with you instances of past sexism for which they were responsible without being aware of it at the time?



Have the women around you shared past experiences of sexism they were targeted by?



Only 35% of men said that other men around them had admitted and confided that they had already engaged in sexist behaviours. This is a relatively low figure, especially as it is probably underestimated by our audience of men. This denial is often explained by a simplistic view of sexism held by men, where only the most explicit forms of discrimination are recognised, while more insidious or trivialised behaviours remain largely invisible.

Men's voices...

*"I realised that if we don't ask women, they don't say anything. My mother and sister had never told me anything until I asked them: '**Are you MeToo as well?**'"*

*"It was really only after **#MeToo** that the women closer to me started opening up about their early, frequent and/or egregious stories of unwelcome sexual advances by men."*

*"My partner is an activist, **it made me more aware of the subject.**"*

*"**Feminist accounts on Instagram** have taught me a lot. I discovered many women's testimonies there."*

*"My daughters have told me things. **I don't see the world the same way anymore.**"*

*"**My wife was raped.**"*

*"My mother was **beaten and raped by my father.** I quickly realised the terrible consequences for women."*

*"I thought **it was isolated.** But with MeToo, my friends and the women in my family have told me so many things."*

Men's voices...

"I was shocked to learn that **a colleague whom I admire had made an inappropriate remark.**"

"We talk about it a little among friends
but not much, to be honest."

"Talking with my friends made me realise that
we all have behaviours we need to correct."

"Hearing my friends **describe their sexual experiences**
made me realise:
I wouldn't want my sister to be treated that way."

"It's mainly at work that I see differences. **The women in my team aren't treated the same as the men,**
that's very clear."

"(The men close to me talk) about violence. But strangely,
there's never any admission of rape.
So who rapes? No one?"

B Men's understanding of the different forms of sexism



*"Now I've realised that **small, insignificant things can have a huge impact** on women. Particularly at work. It's opened my eyes."*

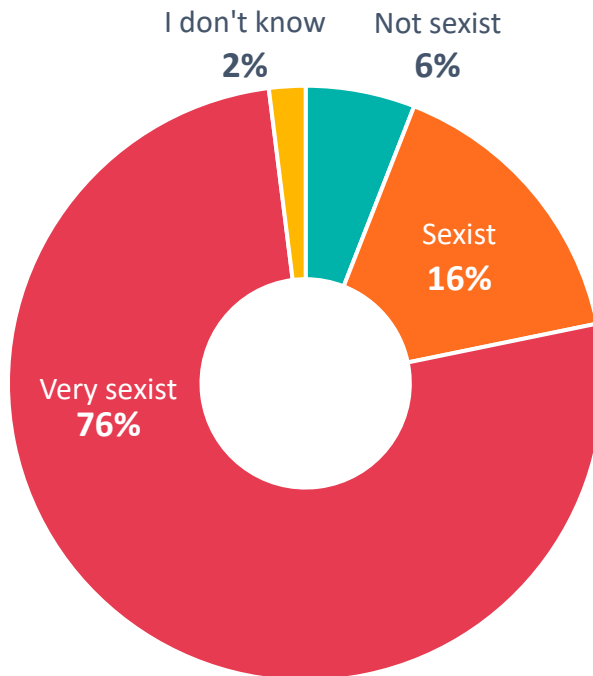
The impact of stereotypes on perceptions of women's incompetence at work

- Overall, men tend to identify as sexist comments relating to women's physical appearance, make-up, clothing or motherhood. However, **their awareness remains limited when it comes to forms of sexism that have a direct impact on careers** such as task assignments, career choices or professional opportunities.
- Only 24% of men consider it highly sexist to assign clients differently based on gender ("Bruno, you'll handle key accounts. Caroline, you'll take care of SMEs"), while 41% do not view remarks such as "You're too bossy" or "You're too emotional" as sexist. **These judgements, rooted in gender stereotypes, reflect a normative perception of women as naturally caring and well-organised.**
- Traits traditionally associated with leadership, such as authority and decisiveness, are often viewed negatively when exhibited by women, as they conflict with expected feminine stereotypes. This limits women's access to leadership positions and contributes to **a biased perception of their ability to take on such roles**. For example, only 15% of men perceive the question "She's a woman — do you think she'll make a good leader?" as highly sexist.
- **While men are relatively aware of sexism linked to appearance or motherhood, they still struggle to recognise how gender stereotypes (i.e. expected feminine qualities) directly affect women's careers. These stereotypes place women under a presumption of incompetence — one they must constantly challenge to prove they are just as capable as their male colleagues.**

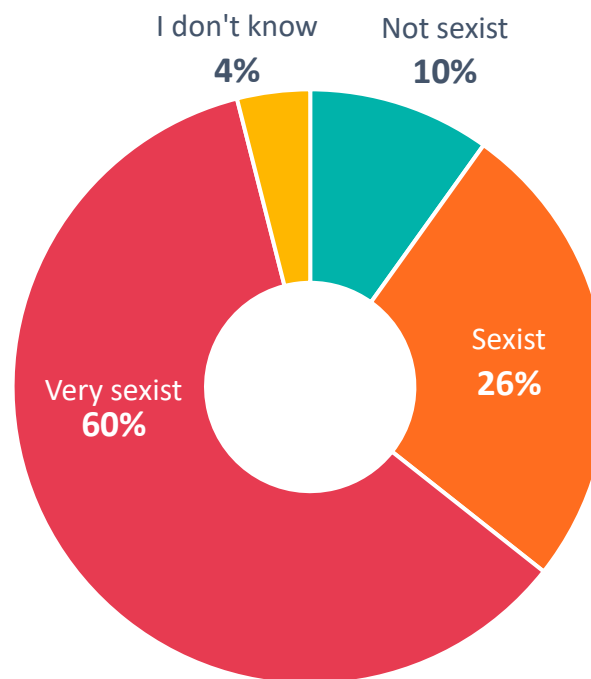


Men's perception of maternity-related sexism

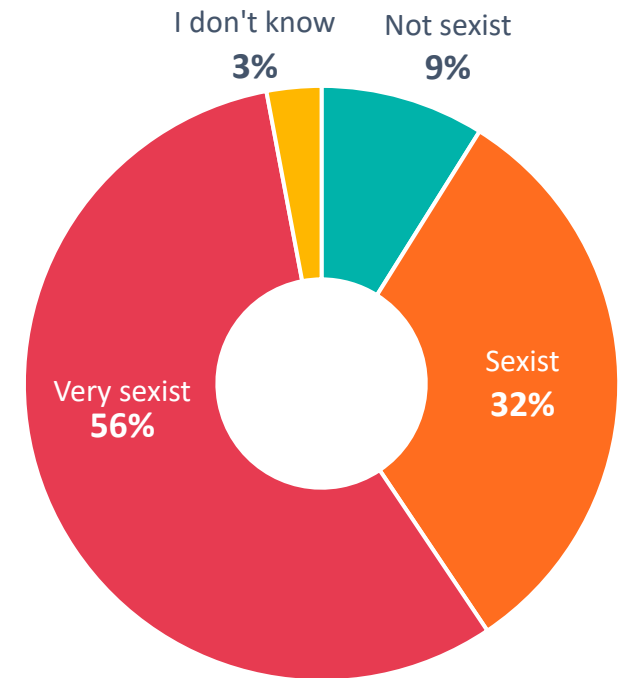
"Shouldn't you be at home with the kids at this time?"



"She is extending her maternity leave, that's not a good sign for her professional ambition!"



"She has children. She won't be able to handle the travel if she gets the job."



Further research – Motherhood is penalised. Fatherhood is rewarded.

#StOpE 2024 survey (France): More than 7 women out of 10 believe that motherhood is an obstacle to career progression. Yet only 1 man out of 2 believes that the unequal sharing of parental and domestic responsibilities has an impact on gender equality at work.

2024 Make Mothers Matter survey: After becoming mothers, 23% of European women reduced their working hours and 55% changed jobs or roles. 27% say that motherhood has had a negative impact on their employment: loss of development opportunities, lack of recognition, exclusion, and even dismissal (22% of those 27%).

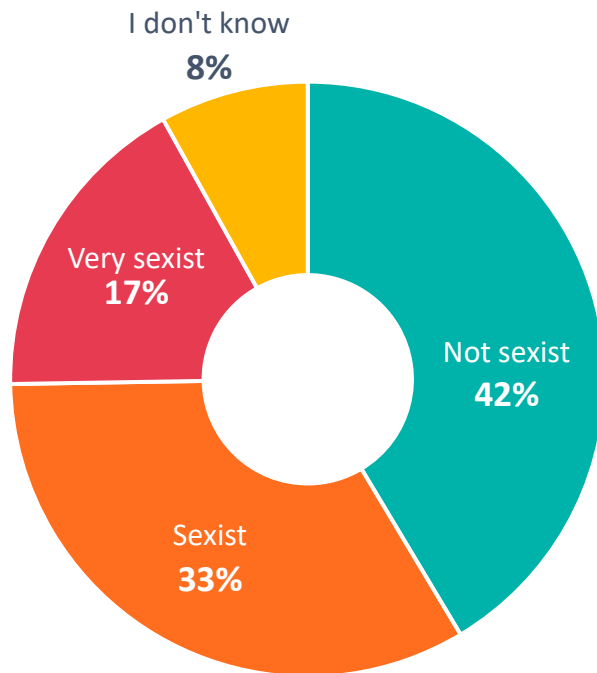
Council of Economic Analysis – France (2025): After the birth of their first child, women lose, on average, 38% of their income over a 10-year period compared with women without children.

"The Reality Gap" by Shape Talent (2024): 45% of women executives say they have slowed down their careers for the benefit of their families, 52% say that family responsibilities take away time and energy from their work, and 54% believe they are not good mothers.

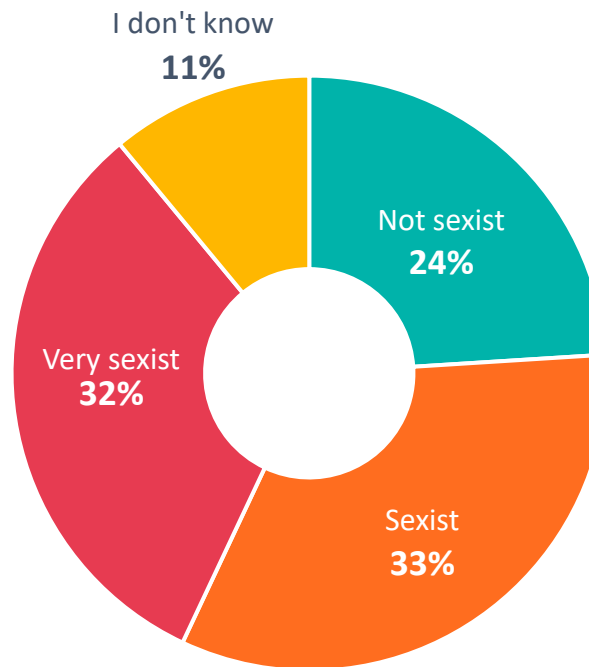
Men's perception of work-related sexism

Only 17% of men think that framing a woman as « *too emotional* » *is sexist*. They do not see the long-term impact on career dynamics.

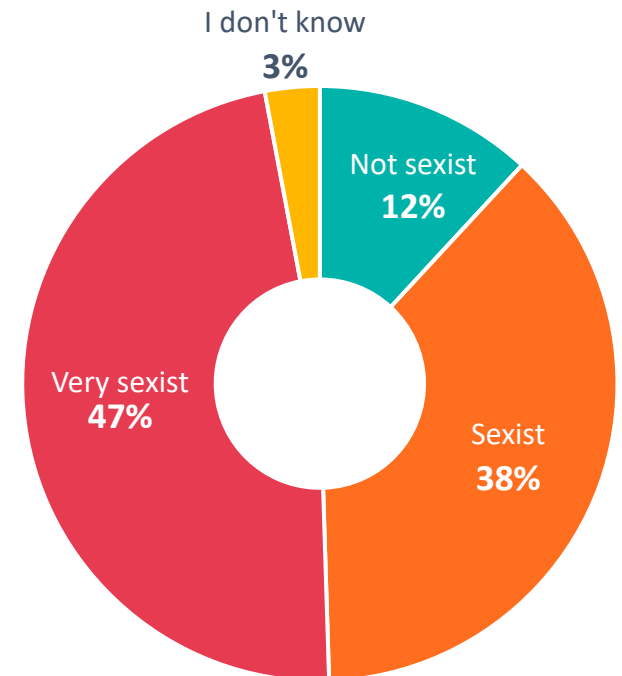
*"You are too bossy" or
"You are too emotional"*



*"Bruno, you will handle the key
accounts. Caroline, you will work on
SMEs as this requires more
interpersonal skills."*



*"Caroline, you're more accurate than a
man. Could you take the meeting notes,
please?"*



*"You're exaggerating the problem.
We **don't** live in Afghanistan."*

*"I didn't react when my colleague
ridiculed the consultant because it was
just a small, insignificant
remark."*

*"Most of the time,
it's not meant to be **malicious**..."*

*"I've made comments myself,
but they were **just jokes**."*

*"Sometimes **I don't see the problem**, especially in
the workplace. But I do realise that women don't
have the same opportunities."*

*"Not offering a woman a position of responsibility is
also giving her the opportunity
to **save her family life**."*



C Self-perception as a perpetrator



"In a society shaped by sexism, can anyone genuinely claim to be **completely free from sexist thoughts or behaviours?**"

"I may have been sexist. **But it was unintentional.**"

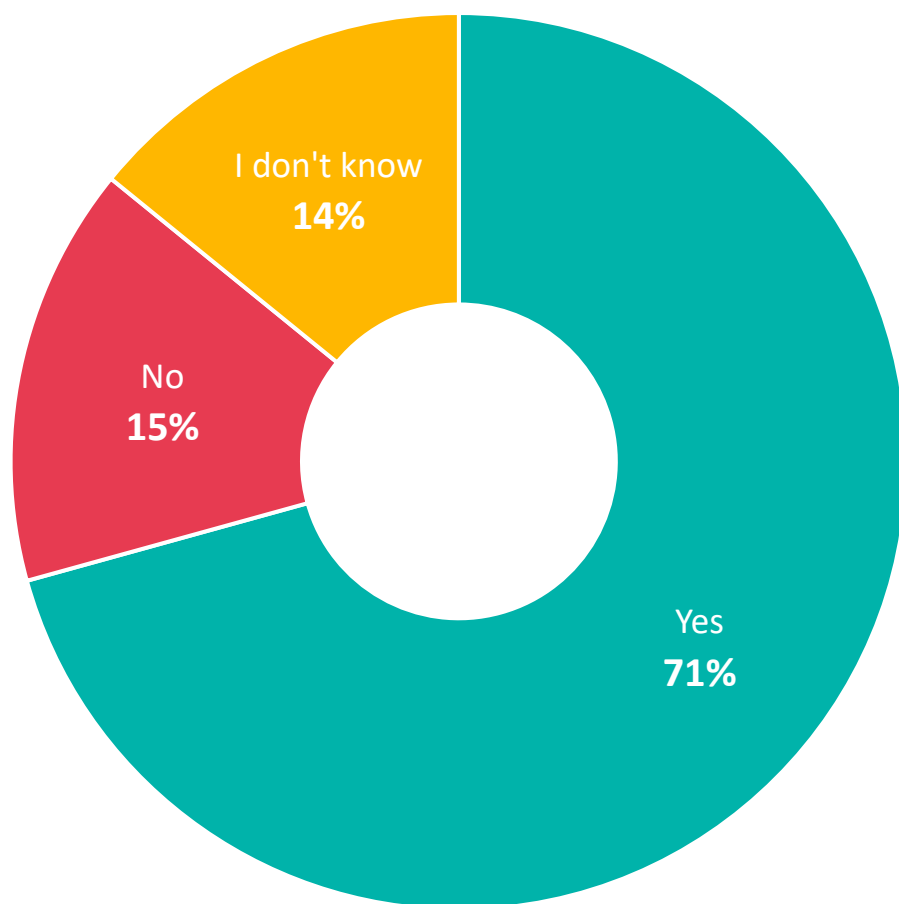
"I'm **ashamed** of some of the behaviours I've had in the past."

"I wouldn't want anyone to treat **my daughters** the way I've treated some women (at work)."

"Sexism comes mainly from **Muslims** and their culture."

7 out of 10 male respondents admit to having exhibited sexist behaviours

Personally, have you become aware of certain sexist behaviours you may have exhibited in the past?



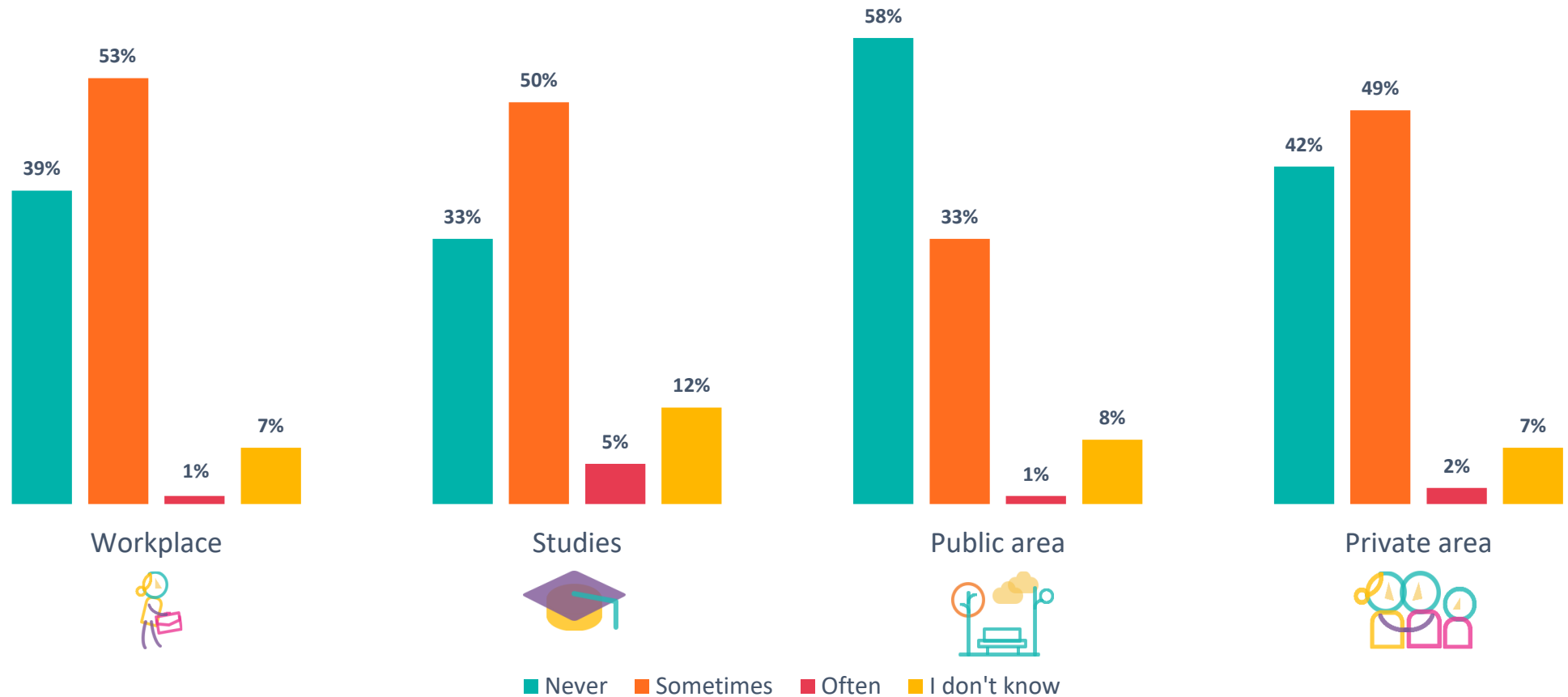
"Yes, I think we need to **look ourselves straight in the mirror.**"

"I realised that some men didn't behave with me the way they did with women, and that **helped me understand** that I must also be sexist."

"I may have been sexist at times, but I imagine it had little impact. **It wasn't intentional.**"

More than half* of male respondents admit to having behaved in a sexist way at work or during their studies, but few acknowledge doing so in public spaces

In which situations do you think you may have behaved in a sexist way, whether intentionally or unintentionally?



* By combining the answers "sometimes" and "often"

A slow shift in awareness of sexist behaviours

At work

"Times have changed. What was considered **'normal' 30 or 40 years ago** is now unacceptable."

"I tend to speak up easily, which can be **perceived as interrupting women.**"

"Sexist remarks often stem from **biased perceptions** of roles in the workplace."

During studies

"I wouldn't make those **crude jokes** anymore."

"I wasn't as **aware of sexist issues** before."

"When I was a teenager, **I was an idiot.**"

In private area

"**The division of tasks in my relationship is sexist.**"

"I used to let women **clear the table** without realising the impact it had."

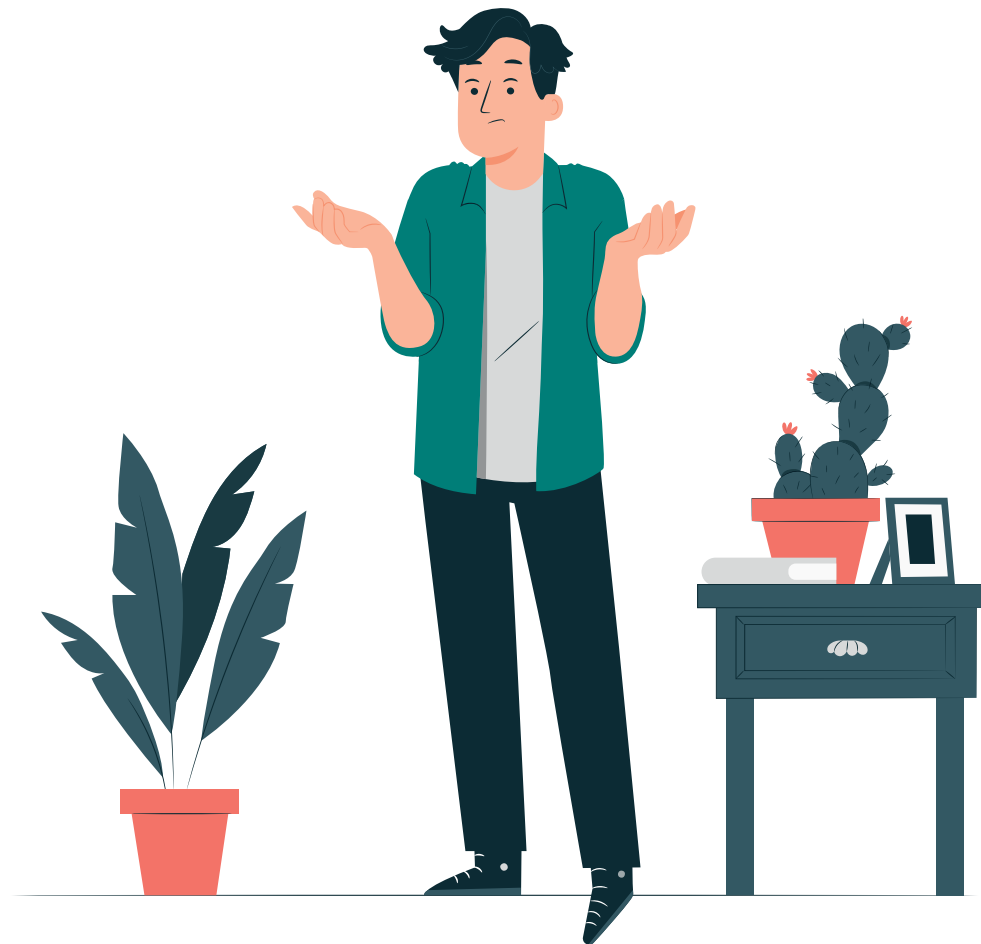
"I make jokes based on clichés, it's meant to be humour. But sometimes **my wife doesn't take it well.**"

In public area

"If I did it, it **wasn't intentional.**"

"I genuinely don't think I've ever behaved in a sexist way in the street. **That's something young lads or creeps do.**"

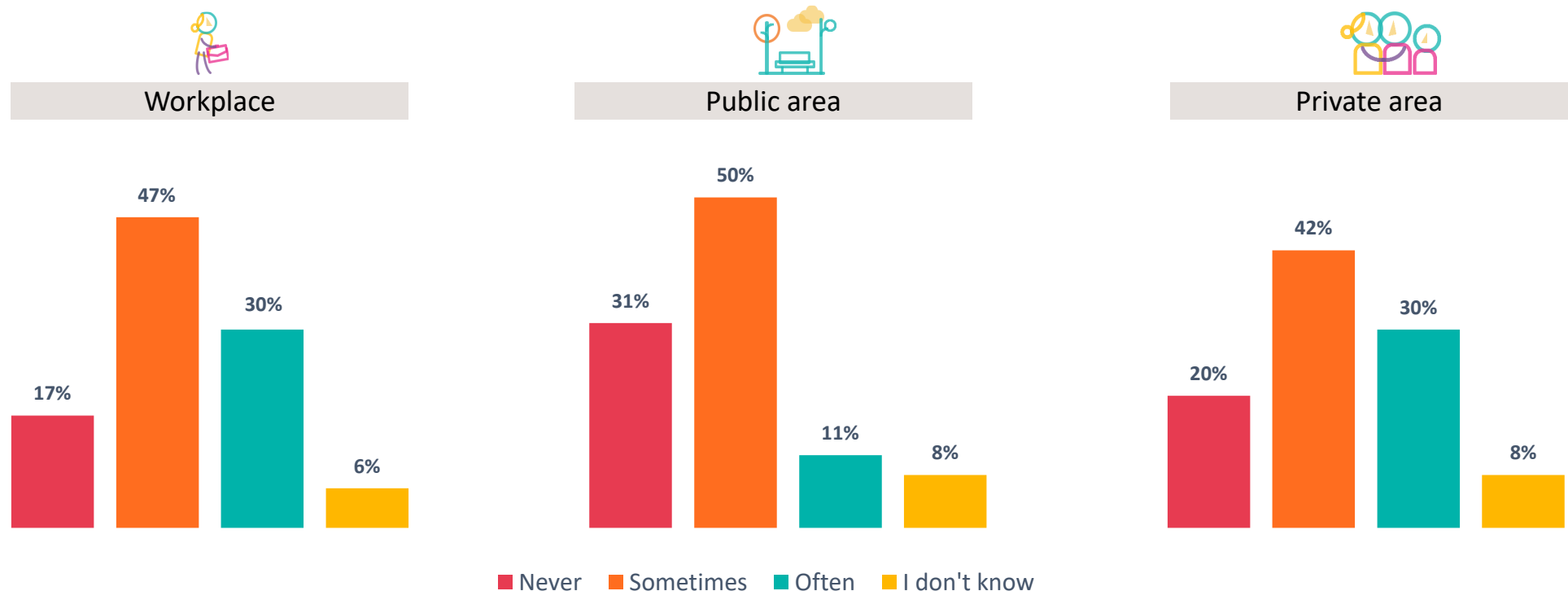
D How do men react as witnesses?



Only 1 in 3 men say they regularly react to sexism seen at work or in private settings

1 in 5 never react – even less so in public spaces

If you witnessed sexism,
did you take action to stop it or to protect the victim?



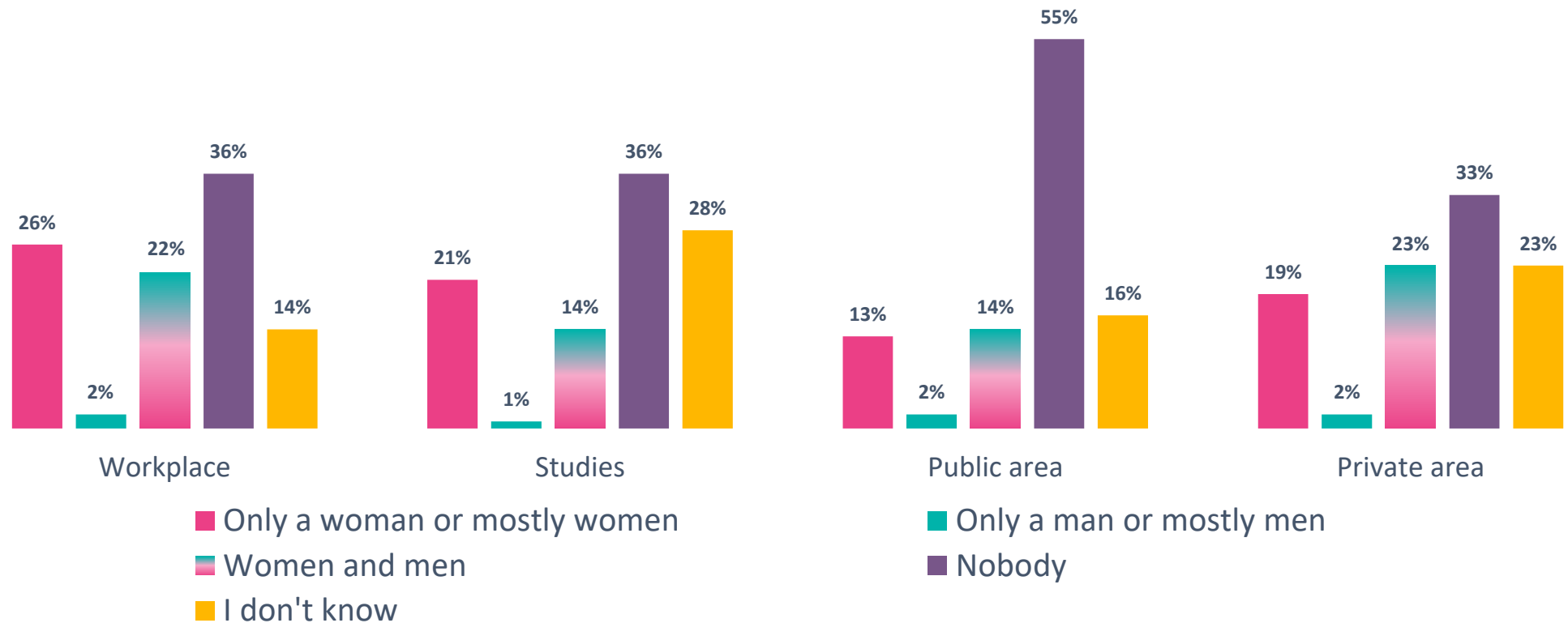
Further research

According to the French High Council for Equality (HCE) (*Sexism Barometer, Wave 4 – Toluna Harris Survey, 2024*): “Younger men are more likely than older men to believe that it is difficult to be a man in today's society : this is the case for 45% of men aged 35 or less, and for men aged 15–24 there has been an increase of 19 percentage points over the last two years. 73% of men overall believe that it is an over-generalisation to say that all men are sexist (+3 percentage points).”

... to be compared to women's perception

In fewer than 2% of cases, support comes from a single man or several men. It is almost always women who help other women.

During this/these experiences, did anyone support or help you?



*'No one lifted a finger. Except for **one woman who was just as terrified as I was.**'*

*'Women try to react, but they can't always. **Where are the men?**'*

*'I've lost count of how many times **men looked away** (on the metro) when I needed their help.'*

Reasons given by men for not taking action

Multiple answers possible

- 37% I didn't know what to do
- 28% I didn't feel like reacting / I felt it wasn't my role to react
- 27% I was afraid of the repercussions
- 27% Other
- 25% I don't know why I didn't react
- 23% I was afraid of doing the wrong thing

'Fear of a violent reaction.'

***"At the time, I wasn't aware
that it was sexist."***

***I often blamed myself afterwards
for not reacting. Looking back,
I should have intervened.'***

***'It seemed trivial at the time.
There was a kind of unspoken
alliance between the guys.'***

'It's not worth it.'

At work

"**Management knew about it** but didn't act. So what can I do if even my boss does nothing?"

"(I didn't react because) the comments were **minor** and had **little impact**."

During studies

"It came with the package. **It felt normal**. When I see what my children experience during school or university trips, I realise nothing has changed."

"We were **young and stupid**."

"It's true that girls were pushed towards **literary studies**."

"I sometimes got better grades in maths **while copying off a girl**."

In private area

"Lack of courage, energy, and **fear of killing the mood**."

"**I don't want to be excluded from family life** for being the one who keeps banging on about it."

"It could create **unnecessary family tensions**."

In public area

"I was afraid to intervene in what seemed like **a private matter**."

"I wanted to react, but **I didn't feel it was my place** – I thought I'd be speaking on behalf of the person concerned, and I didn't want to take over."

"It's hard to know how to **respond to strangers**."

"Groups of teenagers are more likely to **beat me up**."

Men's self-perception does not reflect the reality of women who are victims of violence

- **Despite widespread awareness, men remain largely inactive when it comes to taking concrete action against sexism.**
- **Regardless of the context, men rarely intervene**, even in the context of this study in which the men who have responded are probably already more aware and sensitive to sexist and sexual violence than the average man.
- **Victims report that men intervene when women witnesses have already reacted.** The testimonies collected confirm that men often need women to identify the problem and react before they themselves feel "allowed" to act.
- It is in the **private sphere**, within the family or among friends, that men say they intervene the least. This inaction may be due to complex relational dynamics or a failure to recognise sexist behaviours. In fact, **20% of men admit they never speak out** in such situations, suggesting either tacit tolerance or an unwillingness to confront their close circle.
- In educational establishments, sexist behaviours seem to provoke even fewer reactions. **Men frequently cite age as a reason, explaining they did not recognise the behaviours as sexist when they were younger.**
- Despite high exposure to sexism in **public spaces**, where 88% of men say they witness sexist behaviours, their intervention remains rare. Fear of physical confrontation or a feeling of discomfort in such situations seem to explain this passivity.
- **The workplace** appears to be the setting in which men are most likely to intervene. However, even in this context, the majority say they rarely or never intervene, highlighting a persistent hesitation to take action against sexism.

Further research – Two conflicting perceptions

According to the French High Council for Equality (HCE) (*Sexism Barometer, Wave 4 – Toluna Harris Survey, 2024*), "the difference in magnitude between the proportion of women reporting having experienced at least one non-consensual situation (40%) and the proportion of men acknowledging that they may have engaged in such behaviours (23%) remains striking. The contrast is even more striking among younger generations: 51% of women aged 25–34, compared with 28% of men in the same age group, report having experienced or engaged in such situations."



Evaluating measures in the workplace

4



9 out of 10 women and 8 out of 10 men are calling for more action

Do you think specific measures should be put in place to tackle sexism?

Yes

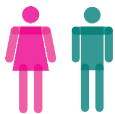
2024

93%

2016

80%

↑ + 13pts



Yes

2024

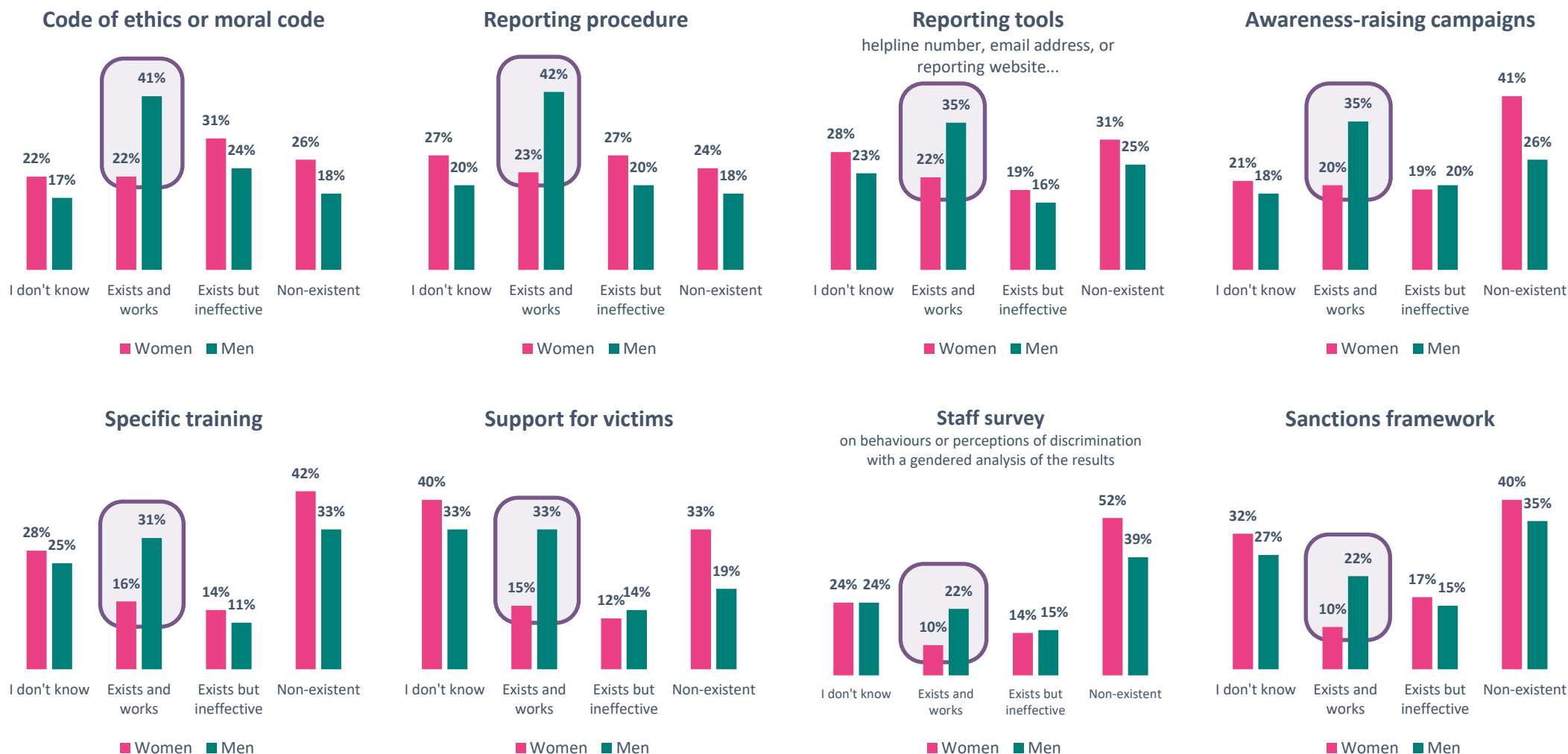
80%

2016

73%

↑ + 7pts

Men's blind spot: their relative satisfaction with the measures implemented in their organisation



"Trusted person...
Limited effectiveness."

"Honestly, **I don't know...**
because I've never needed to use these tools."

"**No idea**, I've never looked into it."

"**The most effective tool** has been the French law on sexism and sexual violence at work. When there is a legal framework and obligations, things change."

"I think **the training works well**.
Everything else is just procedures..."

"**The training has become mandatory**.
It's effective. But it should be offered more regularly!"

"One of the trusted persons in my company
often makes **sexist remarks**."

"**I've found the solution**: I started my own company,
and I keep a close eye on things!"

"**The only measure that works** is having fewer men."

RECOMMENDATIONS



Naming, measuring, changing!



5 pillars for action

“To name things wrongly is to add to the misery of the world.” — Albert Camus

NAME IT	MEASURE	COMMUNICATE	MAKE PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE	TRAIN
• Use the correct definition of sexism: a hierarchy between the sexes. • Treat sexism as a political issue, as racism is. • Clearly define it as an offence, just as racism is. • Europe should follow France’s example: everyday sexism is addressed in the Labour Code.	• Include gender-disaggregated results in all employee engagement and quality-of-working-life surveys. • Dare to ask questions about discrimination to move beyond denial. • Measure regularly, communicate the results and take action!	• A clear commitment from senior leadership against sexism, together with an expectation of exemplary behaviour. • Implement clear prevention, protection and sanction policies. • Zero tolerance in workplace policies, supported by a clear sanctions framework.	• Sexist and sexual violence are workplace safety risks. • A report should not have to be accompanied by a police complaint for an organisation to take responsibility. • Every report must be investigated promptly. • Protect victims and the organisation itself: health, reputation and social cohesion.	• Train senior leadership first, followed by management, staff and employee representatives. • Occupational Health Services and Services for Prevention and Protection at Work must understand structural inequalities (sexism, racism, ageism, etc.). • Follow France’s example, where organisations are required to appoint designated contacts for sexism.

Sexism prevents genuine equality between women and men

Breaking the inertia

- Changing this dynamic requires a profound transformation of mindsets and greater awareness across society as a whole. It is not enough simply to denounce sexism; we must also create a culture in which everyone feels both responsible and entitled to act against injustice.
- Educating, training and encouraging proactive responses to sexism are essential to ensure that intervention does not rely solely on women. Men's involvement is indispensable to bring about real change: it is time to move from being bystanders to becoming active participants in the fight against sexism.
- To bring sexism back to the centre of public attention and make it a political issue, a national day against sexism should be established, as France has done by designating 25 January each year.

"To name things wrongly is to add to the world's misfortune," said Albert Camus.

- The correct definition of sexism must be used, recalling that it lies at the root of the hierarchy between the sexes.
- Sexism must be clearly recognised as an offence, just like racism, in legislation, particularly in employment law (the Social Criminal Code and the Well-being at Work Policy), and these rules must be effectively enforced.
- Everyday sexism is not explicitly covered by the Belgian Well-being at Work Policy of 4 August 1996, unlike in France, where sexist behaviour is clearly defined in the Labour Code and allows employers to sanction employees. No employee should be subjected to sexist behaviours, defined as "any behaviour related to a person's sex that has the purpose or effect of undermining their dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment."
- Since 1st June 2023, following a ruling by the Court of Justice of the European Union, the Belgian Well-being at Work policy has been amended to include gender-based psychological harassment, as it falls within the recognised grounds of discrimination. Unfortunately, in Belgium, sexism is still never referred to explicitly in legislation and remains diluted among the 19 recognised dimensions of discrimination.

How can we eliminate sexism at work?

- **MEASURE:** Organisations should be required to measure **results by gender in all employee engagement and workplace well-being surveys**, including by asking sensitive questions to break the silence. Every organisation is simply a reflection of society. Sexism therefore permeates interpersonal relationships and every stage of recruitment and career progression, particularly if its impact on women's place at work and well-being is not measured regularly.
- **COMMUNICATE:** When leadership delivers **a clear commitment against sexism and implements clear policies** on prevention, protection and sanctions, the risks are cut in half. (French Economic, Social and Environmental Council – CESE)
- **IMPLEMENT a zero-tolerance policy** in workplace regulations towards all disrespectful behaviours and discrimination, so that the cost of reporting is never greater than the cost of remaining silent. This commitment does not mean that every inappropriate joke should result in dismissal, but that every report will be handled through a clearly identified and communicated process, supported by a sanctions framework proportionate to the seriousness of the violence, the context in which it occurred, its consequences, and the power relationships between those involved.
- **HOLD EMPLOYERS ACCOUNTABLE.** Sexist and sexual violence are occupational **health and safety risks** and must be treated as such. It should be remembered that legal proceedings and internal disciplinary procedures are independent of one another. Whether or not a police complaint has been filed, employers must promptly conduct an internal investigation to protect victims, safeguard their organisation from health risks affecting staff, and limit reputational risks. Public authorities should also lead by example in their understanding and handling of sexist violence. "Charity begins at home."
- **TRAIN, TRAIN, TRAIN...** leadership first and foremost, but also line managers, staff and employee representatives. Victims and witnesses must be able to identify and understand unacceptable behaviours so that they have the means to act.
- Public recognition of External Services for Prevention and Protection at Work (**ESPPW – SEPP**) should be linked to their ability to address structural inequalities, particularly sexism. The same applies to **occupational health services**. These bodies still tend to treat sexism as an interpersonal conflict or a mental health issue. Training for prevention advisers and trusted contacts should include at least one full day dedicated to sexism.
- **Take inspiration from France**, where companies with more than 250 employees are required to appoint a dedicated sexism officer, as well as another representative from the employee representative bodies responsible for these issues.

JUMP OFFER



The JUMP logo consists of the word "JUMP" in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered within a magenta rounded rectangle. Below the rectangle, the tagline "SOLUTIONS FOR EQUITY AT WORK" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

JUMP

SOLUTIONS FOR EQUITY AT WORK



JUMP aims to create a more equitable and inclusive society
by working with organisations to achieve
gender equality and fair representation of diversity



ASHOKA

Everyone A Changemaker™

JUMP is a social enterprise and its founder Isabella Lenarduzzi is a certified Ashoka Fellow.

Ashoka Fellows are social entrepreneurs who are recognised to have innovative solutions to social problems and the potential to change patterns across society.

JUMP mission

Our mission

is to help change the world and change companies. We work for a fairer society and for more inclusive organisations.

JUMP puts equality between women and men at the heart of its work

because we believe that, by addressing 51% of the population, gender equality is the most powerful lever for building the basics of inclusion and tackling all other inequalities and underrepresentations.

To achieve our goals,

we share our reflections widely, we offer numerous studies and tools free of charge, and we provide a wide range of solutions to public and private organisations.



JUMP SOLUTIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS



Talks, Training & E-learning

A unique customised offer of talks or training by international and multilingual experts. Development of customised e-learning courses.



Consulting

Expert analyses and guidance enabling organisations to build effective DEI plans and transform corporate culture.

JUMP solutions

Diagnostic & Surveys

Effective plans need to be data-driven. Get your diversity stats and assess the level of inclusiveness of your corporate culture. Set your goals and KPIs.



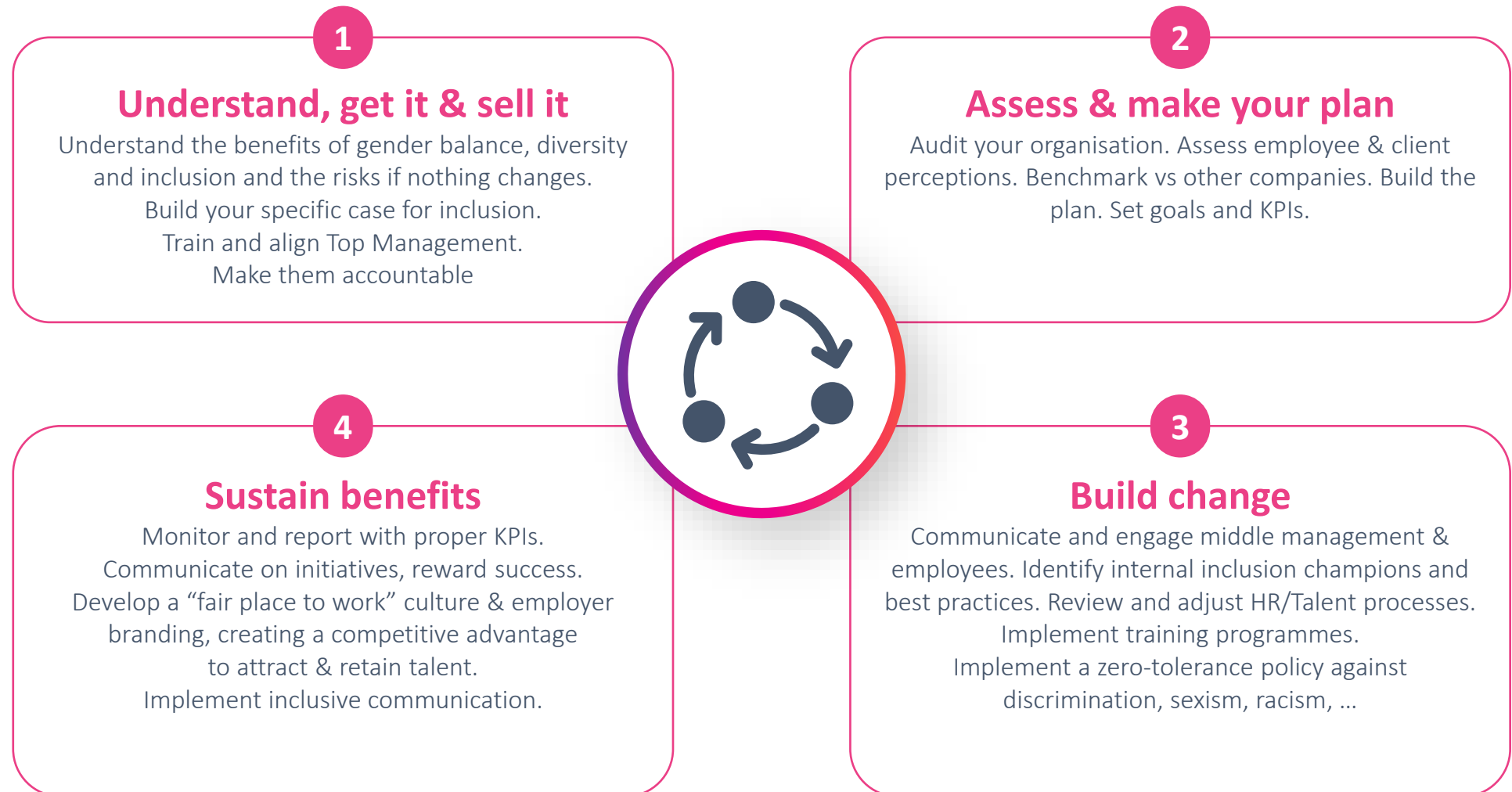
Events and communication

Clear internal and external communication helps to sustain motivation and get the benefits of your efforts. JUMP creates your customised inclusion guide and organises your events.



JUMP accompanies organisations with a proven methodology

INCLUSION IS A CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION THAT REQUIRES STRONG COMMITMENT, DATA, FAIR RESOURCES AND ACCOUNTABILITY



JUMP solutions to free your company from sexism

👉 www.jump.eu.com/resources/sexism

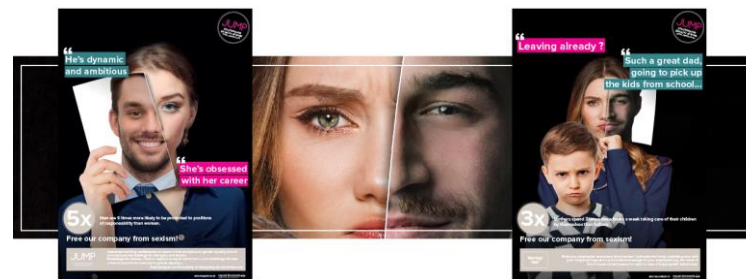
Publication

- JUMP published a guide in French and Dutch “Free your company from sexism” to help human resources managers and leaders tackle sexism in their organisations.



Poster campaign

- Our staff awareness poster campaign can be used free of charge within your organisation and is available in French, Dutch, English and German. Each poster can be customised with your company logo or a tailored message.



Conferences & training

- Awareness-raising conference:** “Sexism at work: identifying its different forms, its impact and ways to tackle it.”
- Training for leaders and managers:** “How gender bias affects women’s position in your organisation”, “Sexism harms your organisation: how to get rid of it”, “Identifying the different forms of sexism and protecting your workplace”, “Toolbox for inclusive managers”, ...
- Workshops for employees and frontline teams:** “How to tackle sexism”, “Are we treated equally and with the same respect? What can we do to improve life at work?”,...

Diagnostic & Consulting

- Develop an action plan to tackle unacceptable behaviours and establish an effective reporting process.
- Define a charter of inclusive behaviours.
- Survey employees on their perceptions of career opportunities and their awareness of Equality and Inclusion in order to measure the inclusiveness of your corporate culture and develop an action plan tailored to your needs.

How to react:

Tutorials on how to respond to verbal aggressions



Each video capsule presents a different technique and explains how to respond to discriminatory remarks with humour — through self-deprecation, cheekiness, clever comebacks, or even compliments. Since the strategies for reacting are similar whether one is facing sexism, racism, or homophobia, JUMP has chosen to address all these forms of discrimination in its video series. jump.eu.com/resources/sexism/ (Available in French)



A web platform gathering all studies, reports, articles, videos, tools, as well as a quiz to test your awareness of discrimination. stopausexisme.eu (Available in French)

JUMP produces free tools, analyses and surveys

👉 www.jump.eu.com/resources

Handbooks



2020
Libérez votre
entreprise du sexisme



2020
Bevrijd uw
onderneming
van seksisme



2020
How to build an
inclusive workplace



2023
Rethinking inclusion in
the new world of work



2023
Repenser l'inclusion
dans le nouveau monde
du travail



2025
L'inclusion : La force
de votre culture
d'entreprise

Studies & surveys

JUMP's societal studies and surveys analyse women, men and corporate practices on gender equity and DEI



2009
Concilier vie
professionnelle et suivi
scolaire des enfants



2010
L'entrepreneuriat
féminin en Belgique



2012
Women leaders
in the workplace



2013
Pioneering dads
reverse traditional roles



2016
Do men want equality
in the workplace



2016
Where do we stand
on sexism



2018
How to get more
women into
leadership roles?



2019
How can companies
embark women
in digital transformation



2025
The state of sexism

Toolboxes

JUMP toolboxes bring together our webinars, presentations and articles on the many dimensions of Equality and Inclusion

JUMP

SOLUTIONS FOR EQUITY AT WORK

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