



#Metoo two years later...

EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY ON SEXISM AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK

On the occasion of the anniversary of the eruption of the Weinstein affair (5 October 2017) and the many similar allegations it triggered in all sectors of activity, the Jean Jaurès Foundation and the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) launched a major survey conducted by Ifop (French Institute for Public Opinion) to measure the extent of sexist or sexual violence suffered by European women at their workplaces. Filling a gap in reliable or recent data on the subject – the last European study on the subject dates back to 2012¹ – this survey conducted in the five biggest countries of the European Union (France, Germany, Spain, Italy, United Kingdom) makes it possible to quantify sexism or sexual harassment suffered by women in the professional realm while breaking certain stereotypes about victims' characteristics or the profile of their harassers.

Survey

October 2019



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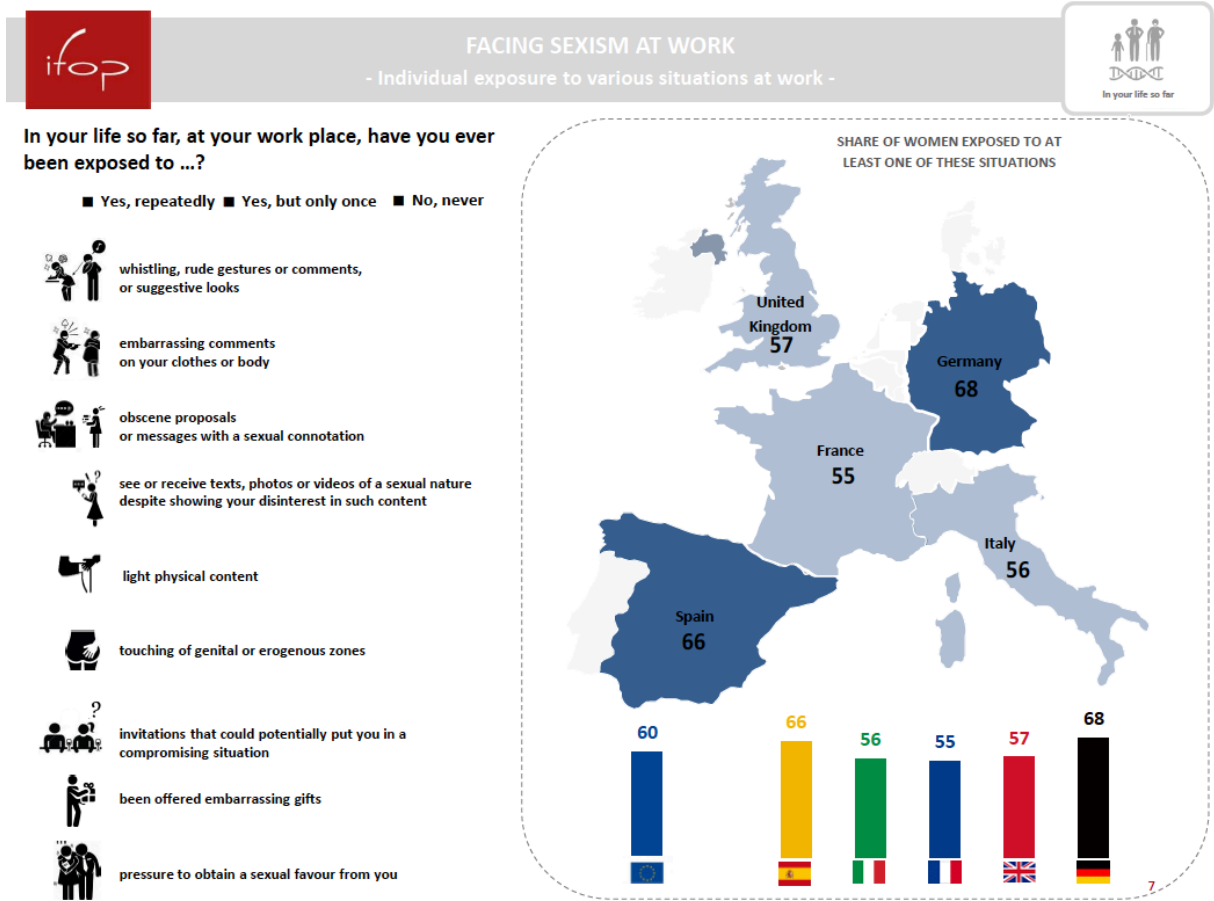
1 - SIX OUT OF TEN EUROPEAN WOMEN HAVE SUFFERED SEXIST OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE DURING THEIR CAREERS

- Far from being a disciplined environment, where self-control and sexual impulses prevail, the world of work is an environment where a majority of **European women (60%) report that they have been victims of at least one form of sexist or sexual violence during their careers.**

This number of victims – in the "broad" sense, because it includes all forms of sexist or sexual violence, whether repeated or not – is significantly higher in Spain (66%) and Germany (68%), two countries that have both experienced proactive policies (e.g.: €1 billion plan for the State Pact against Gender-based Violence in Spain, federal action plan of 130 measures in Germany in 2013) and national controversies that have undoubtedly increased public awareness of these issues (e.g. wave of assaults in Germany in 2015, "wolf pack" case in Spain, harassment of Moroccan female agricultural workers in Andalusia).

WOMEN FACING AT LEAST ONE FORM OF SEXIST AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AT WORK

- The total proportion of women who have faced at least one situation -

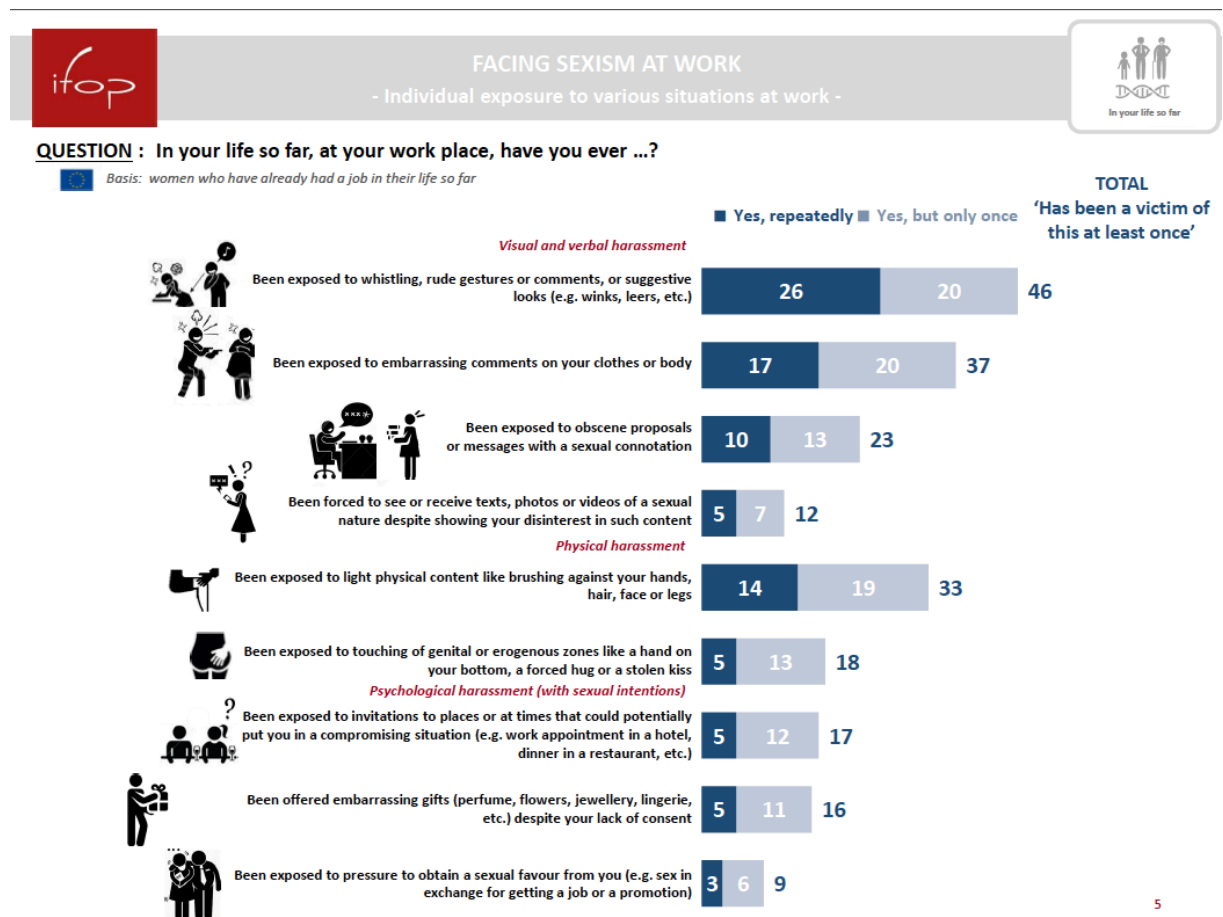


- Nevertheless, this overall figure masks the very protean nature of these attacks, given that, as in public spaces¹, verbal or visual violence is the most widespread form of violence in the workplace, with whistling or coarse gestures being the most common (26% have been the victims on several occasions) and inappropriate remarks about the victim's figure or clothing (17% have been the subject of repeated attacks).
- On the other hand, psychological pressure in a "sofa promotion" approach is a more limited practice: "only" 9% of European women have been pressured at least once to obtain an act of a sexual nature (e.g. sexual intercourse in exchange for a job or a promotion...).

¹ Ifop study for the Jean Jaurès Foundation and FEPS carried out by online self-administered questionnaire from 25 to 30 October 2018 on a sample of 6025 women, representative of the female population aged 18 and over residing in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States.

But the "sexual pressure" experienced at work is far from being reduced to sexist comments or psychological pressure. Many women report that they have been physically assaulted (e.g. 14% have had repeated light physical contact) or even sexually assaulted in the strict sense of the term: 18% of them have been sexually assaulted at least once in their career via touching on a genital or erogenous area (e.g. hand on their bottom).

WOMEN FACING GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AT WORK - Personal experience of different situations in the workplace -



- Insofar as the identification of acts that make it possible to characterise sexual harassment is the subject of debates to which European laws do not provide an identical answer², Ifop assessed sexual harassment on the basis of the French legal

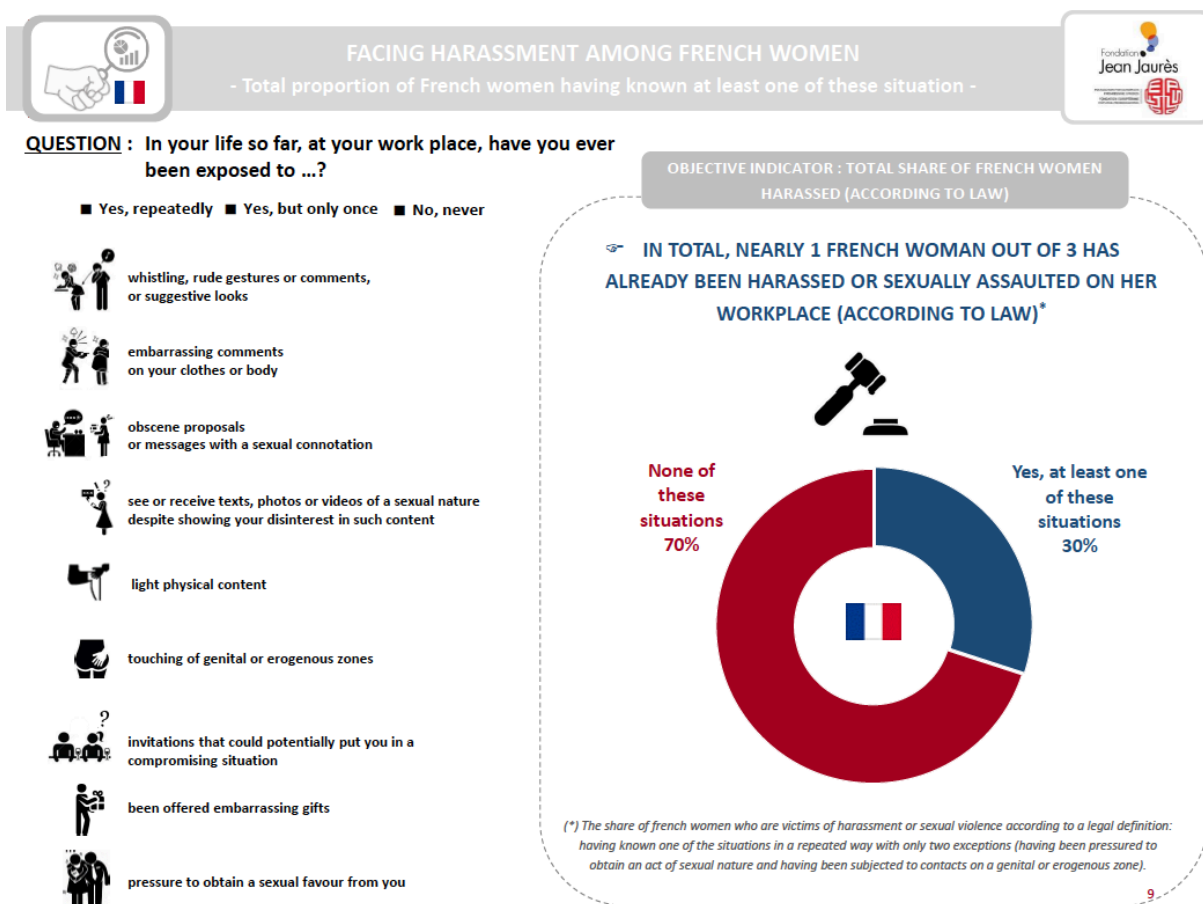
² While some restrictive laws exclude that non-verbal behaviour may be a characteristic element of sexual harassment (Spain, United Kingdom), this is not the case in Germany where it also includes verbal remarks or exposure to pornographic content.

criteria, defined as the proportion of women *repeatedly* subjected to the above situation situations, except in situations of pressures to obtain an act of a sexual nature in which case *a single occurrence* suffices to be defined as such.

The survey shows that, in total, nearly one in three (30%) French women have been harassed or sexually assaulted in their workplace in the legal sense of the term, almost the same proportion as measured by Ifop in January 2018 (32%) for a very similar category of women workers³.

FRENCH WOMEN FACED WITH SITUATIONS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- The total proportion of French women who have been faced with at least one situation -

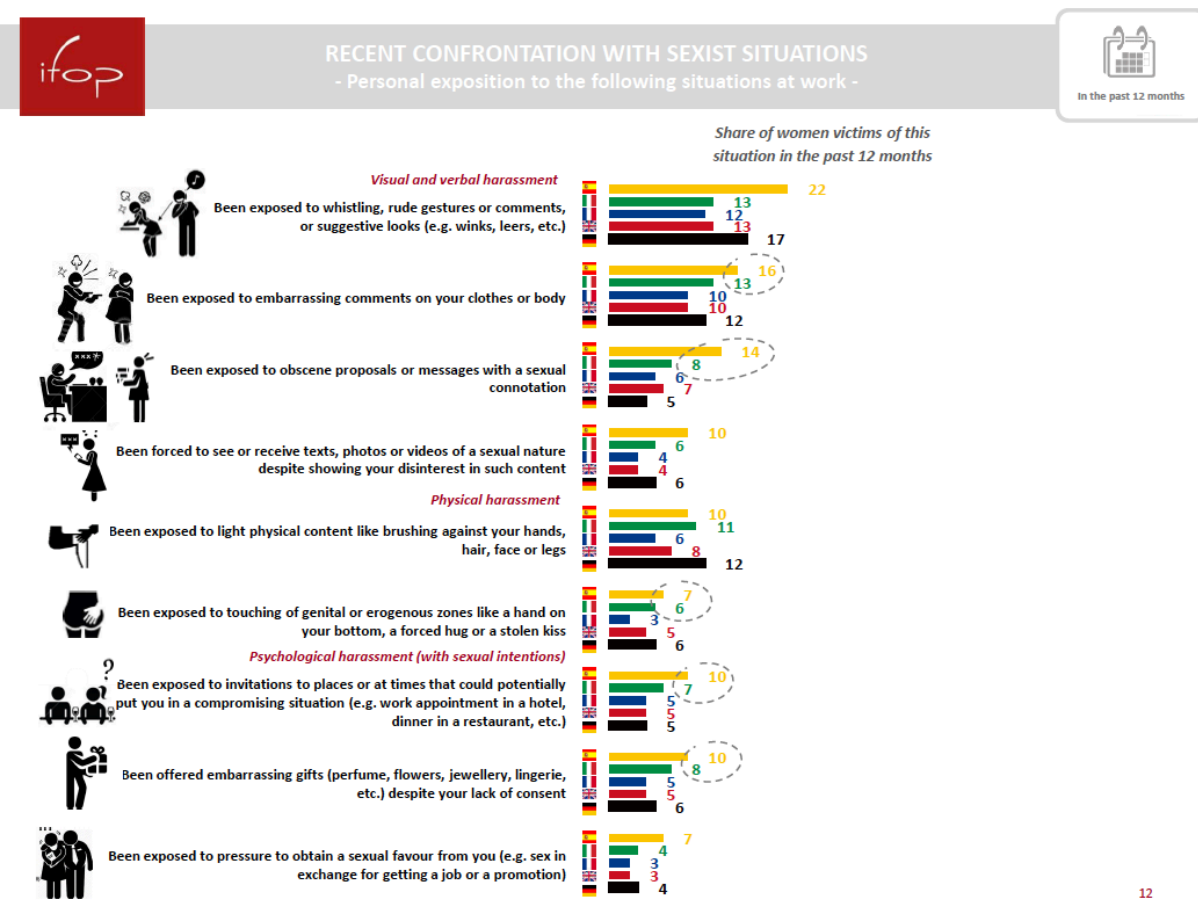


³ Ifop study for VieHealthy.com conducted by online self-administered questionnaire from 26 to 29 January 2018 on a sample of 2,008 women, representative of the female population residing in metropolitan France aged 15 and over. The sample included summer jobs and occasional activities.

Finally, it is important to note that for many, this is not a distant experience... 21% of European women have been victims of some form of sexist or sexual violence in the past 12 months. And in the detail by country, this rate highlights a higher prevalence of violence in Latin countries such as Spain and Italy, in particular for interactions that can be culturally associated with seduction (remarks about physical appearance, obscene comments, dinner invitations, embarrassing gifts).

WOMEN WHO RECENTLY FACED WITH SEXIST AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

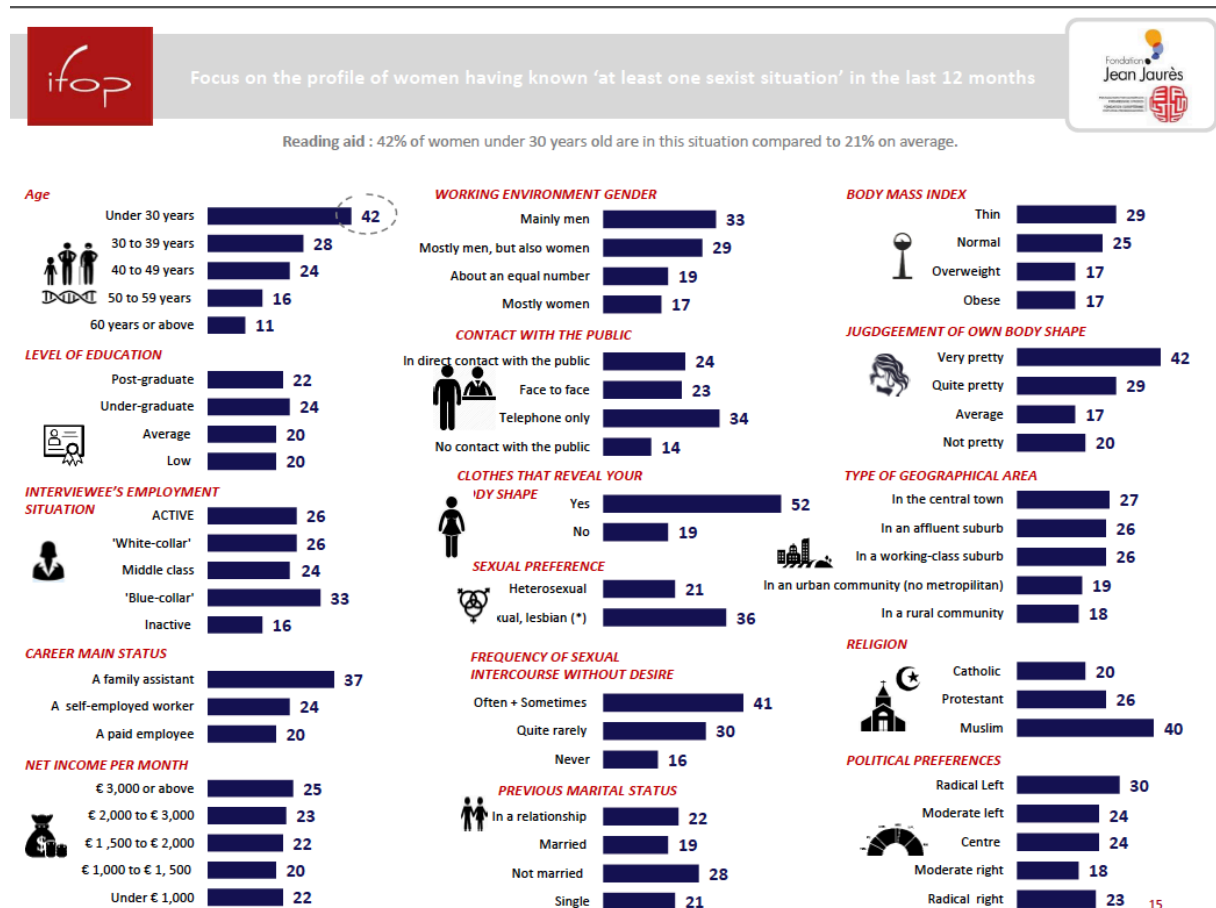
- Personal experience of different situations in the workplace -



2 – TYPICAL PROFILE OF VICTIMS OF SEXIST OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE AT WORK

In this study, active women are far from being exposed to the same levels of sexism or sexual harassment in their work environment. On the contrary, **women workers are all the more exposed to it because they are young, urban, discriminated against for their sexual orientation or religion, already victims of sexual violence, employed in a male work environment or forced to wear workwear (often showing shape, bust or legs for women).**

Focus on the profile of women who have experienced "at least one" form of sexist and sexual violence in the past 12 months



Detailed analysis of the responses from such a large sample size reveals many "heavy" variables in terms of exposure to sexism or sexual harassment at work.

☞ **An "age effect"**

Whatever the form (verbal, visual, physical), **it is systematically the youngest women who have reported the most sexist or sexual abuse in the last 12 months, and in proportions that are unparalleled compared to women from other generations.** For example, 42% of women under 30 years of age experienced "at least one" form of sexist and sexual violence in the workplace in the year preceding the survey, compared to 28% of women in their thirties, 24% of women in their forties and 16% of those in their fifties.

This overexposure of young women is no doubt due to a greater *"vulnerability linked to the lack of experience and confidence in early adulthood"*⁴ as well as to having a state of fitness that would lead them to occupy more exposed positions, particularly in professions in contact with the public or requiring them to wear clothing showing their shape (e.g. commerce, hotels, restaurants). But these results are also in line with other explanations put forward by Maryse Jaspard who, according to the ENVEFF (2000) data, explained this overexposure of young women by the fact that, from the aggressors' point of view, they were *"more in line with male gender stereotypes"*⁵. Indeed, this survey also shows a higher exposure of women corresponding to the dominant morphological stereotypes as measured by the body mass index: women with a lower than normal BMI (29%) are twice as exposed as those above average (17%). **Thus, while in the world of work, appearance segregation clearly works in favour of people who meet the dominant beauty criteria, it also works against them in terms of harassment.**

☞ **A "city" effect**

Confirming the results of the ENVEFF (2000) or VIRAGE (2015) surveys for France, **this study highlights strong territorial inequalities with regard to sexist and sexual violence against women workers in the workplace.** Indeed, the proportion of women

⁴ Brown Elizabeth and Maillolchon Florence (2003) "Espaces de vie et violences envers les femmes", *Espace, Populations, Sociétés*, 3, p. 309-321.

⁵ "III. Les violences sexuelles", *Les violences contre les femmes*. La Découverte, 2011, pp. 63-84.

who have recently suffered "at least one" sexist and sexual attack is twice as high in the heart of urban areas – particularly in central cities (27%) or working class suburbs⁶ (26%) – as in peripheral territories such as rural municipalities (18%) or remote towns (19%).

This gap between urban and rural areas is undoubtedly due to the anonymity inherent in large cities – which encourages inappropriate behaviour that would not be allowed in territories where gender relations are more subject to the eyes of others – but also to the very structure of their population, with the categories of women most exposed to this type of violence being overrepresented in large urban areas (e.g. young people, sexual minorities, cultural minorities, employees in service sectors with direct contacts with the public).

☞ *A "sexual minorities" effect*

As the 2006 CSF survey had already shown on sexual violence in general, this study highlights **an over-victimisation of bis and lesbians in terms of sexist and sexual violence at work: 36% of them have suffered at least one such experience in the past 12 months**, almost twice as many as heterosexuals (21%). More precisely, the difference with heterosexuals is particularly strong for certain offences with strong sexual connotations (e.g. obscene comments, pornographic videos), probably because of the "over-sexualised" image too often attributed to lesbians.

In line with previous studies that have highlighted the bullying of lesbian couples at work (e.g. the proposal for a threesome⁷), these results confirm the idea that bis and lesbians suffer, in a working world that places relatively little value on non-conformism, from double discrimination based on both their gender and their sexuality.

☞ *A "religious minorities" effect*

⁶ Suburban municipalities with a median standard of living in 2014 of less than €19, 865 per year (Local Social and Fiscal File – 2014)

⁷ Line Chamberland and Julie Théroux-Séguin, "Sexualité lesbienne et catégories de genre", *Genre, sexualité & société* [En ligne], 1 | Printemps 2009

This survey also shows **a much higher number of victims among women belonging to religious minorities such as Muslim women**, a fact that has already been highlighted in France in the ENVEFF (2000) for women from Africa or in the VIRAGE survey (2015) for the descendants of immigrants. For example, 40% of Muslim women experienced "at least one" form of sexist or sexual violence in the workplace in the year preceding the survey, compared to 26% of Protestant women and just 20% of Catholics.

Admittedly, this overrepresentation of Muslim women among recent victims must be explained by "structural effects": the Muslim population is overrepresented in the parts of the population most exposed to these forms of "harassment" (e.g. young people, working classes, large cities). But it also highlights the interactions between gender discrimination and other grounds such as origins, skin colour or a real or supposed religion.

☞ ***A "victims of sexual violence" effect***

Confirming the lessons of other surveys (e.g. VIRAGE 2015, IVSEA 2017, FULU 2017) that have highlighted the logic of cumulative sexual violence in several spheres over the life cycle (e.g. family, work), this study tends to show that **women who frequently have unwanted sex are at risk of overexposure to sexual harassment in the workplace**. For example, 41% of women in this situation have recently experienced "at least one" form of sexist and sexual violence in the workplace, compared to just 16% of those who have never had such an experience.

This logic that sexual violence forms a continuum between different living spaces is due to cognitive problems resulting from an assault that make victims more vulnerable to the pressures of a new predator⁸.

☞ ***An "environment and workwear" effect***

⁸ Muriel Salmona, *Le harcèlement sexuel*, Que Sais-Je, 2019, p 43.

Finally, the study shows that **exposure to this sexual violence varies greatly according to factors more directly related to the work environment**, such as the level of sexual diversity within the establishment (male/female ratio), direct contact with the public (face-to-face or telephone) or the wearing of work clothes that require women to show their shape, bust or legs.

It should be noted that **while the wearing of this type of clothing is quite marginal (6%) in the female labour force, women who are forced to wear it are by far those who have been most exposed to these attacks during the year** (52% have suffered "at least one" form of sexist and sexual violence in their workplace, against 19% of those who have not).

3 – HARASSMENT: A PHENOMENON THAT DOES NOT NECESSARILY IMPLY A SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HARASSER

- The results of the survey break some preconceived ideas that the perpetrators are first and foremost people who abuse their position of authority over a subordinate.

Indeed, **in most of the situations studied, only a minority of women report that the perpetrator was a hierarchical superior**. The only situation in which a significant proportion of women (34%) report having been harassed by a superior relates to psychological pressure to obtain a sexual act in exchange for, for example, a promotion or a job.

Other forms of violence are either perpetrated by colleagues who do not exercise hierarchical authority – in particular embarrassing remarks about physical appearance (46%) or remarks with a sexual connotation (38%) – or by outsiders such as customers or suppliers (e.g. receiving embarrassing gifts, 61%).

THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HARASSMENT SITUATIONS AT WORK

- More broadly, it appears that **in the world of work, the danger for women is not limited only to colleagues (superior, equal or subordinate) and even less to those in**

positions of authority. A great number of attacks are carried out by people outside the company (e.g. visitors, customers, suppliers, passers-by, strangers), which means that the problem of harassment in the workplace must be more closely linked to other forms of sexual harassment, such as street harassment.

On this point, it is worth noting that the countries reporting the most sexual or sexist violence at work (Spain, Germany) are the same as where Ifop identified the most victims of sexual harassment in public places⁹.

Similarly, an analysis of the profile of victims highlights an overexposure of women working in a family business (37% have experienced "at least one" form of gender-based and sexual violence in the last 12 months, compared to 20% of those protected by employee status), which also leads to **a greater overlap with the issue of domestic violence or violence within the family.**

4 – RESIGNATION IS STILL THE MOST WIDESPREAD REACTION TO SEXISM AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK

Overall, the results show that few women in the face of this type of violence adopt an active strategy.

Admittedly, **only a minority of victims (between 33 and 47% depending on the situations studied) choose a purely "passive" strategy** by avoiding talking about the problem to others, whether inside or outside their company. But while a majority of them told a third party about their last experience, it was mainly to a relative or colleagues of the same rank. **Women who have adopted an "active" strategy by talking to a person likely to solve the problem internally (e.g. supervisor, trade unionist) remain the exception: 9% to 16% depending on the case.**

Only a very small minority of victims of harassment at work therefore manage to break the wall of silence that paralyzes older women in particular or those who do

⁹ Ifop study for the Jean Jaurès Foundation and the Foundation for European Progressive Studies conducted by online self-administered questionnaire from 25 to 30 October 2018 on a sample of 6,025 women, representative of the female population aged 18 and over residing in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States.

not have a standard of living that allows them to take the risk of conflict with their superiors.

It should be noted that it is not physical contact that pushes most women to talk about it (e.g. hands on their bottom) but psychological pressure such as proposals for promotion or recruitment in exchange for sexual favours. However, even in the latter cases, only 16% of victims dare to talk to a superior or union representative about it. Nevertheless, the data show that the situation is changing insofar as there is an undeniable freedom of speech among young women under 25 years of age, who are three times more likely (27%) than older people (10%) to have dared to talk to a superior or a union representative about it.

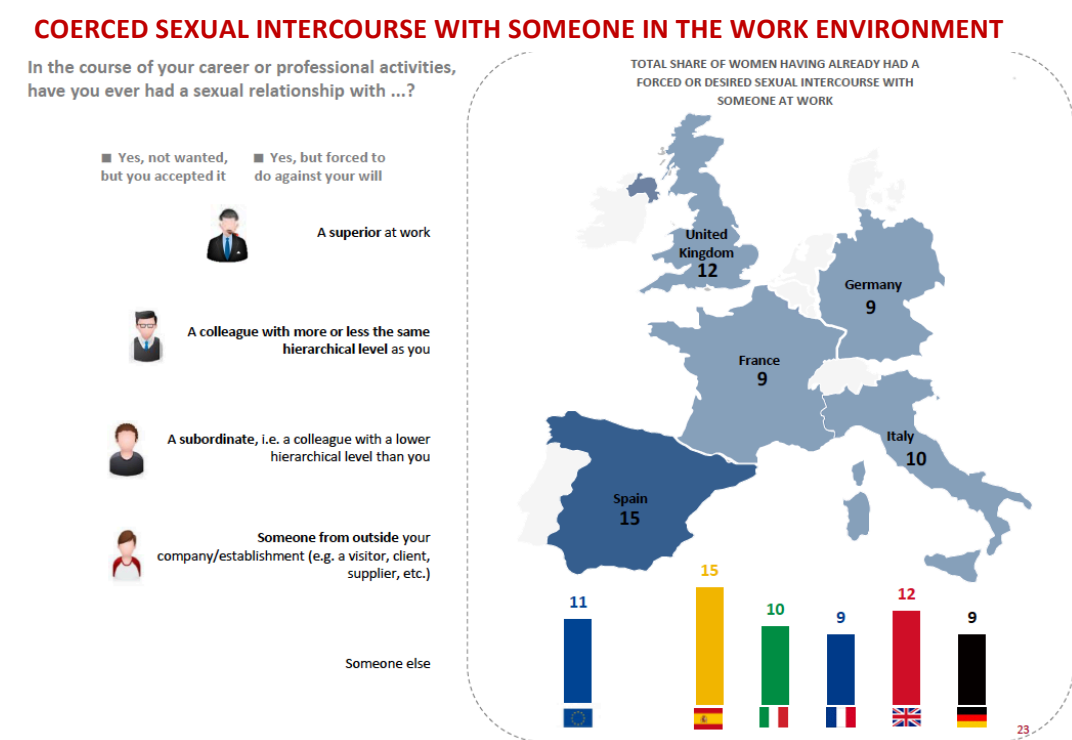
MENTIONING THE EXPERIENCE OF AN ACT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT TO OTHERS



5 – A WORLD OF WORK THAT CAN ALSO BE THE PLACE FOR FORCED SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

Finally, this survey has the merit of showing that **corporate doors do not protect women from the most serious sexual assaults**. On the contrary, since professional social spaces are more than ever a place to recruit sexual partners (20% of women have had a relationship with a colleague, 12% with a superior and 8% with a subordinate), **the work environment appears to be an environment conducive to the expression of gender social relations where "sexual pressure" can be exercised in the context of so-called seduction games.**

A high proportion of women (11%) thus admit that they have had "forced" or "unwanted" sex with someone in their professional environment during their career, i.e. either they may have accepted when they did not really want to, or they were forced to have sex against their will. While this figure is to be distinguished from that of rape in the strict sense, it nevertheless highlights the "grey zone" that may exist around consent in an environment where consent can be extorted in a context of subordination, intimidation or manipulation.





- The detailed analysis of the profile of victims of this type of forced relationship confirms in particular **the correlation between clothing and harassment and, more specifically, the idea that requiring "sexy" clothing increases the risk of sexual violence**. Of all categories of women workers, it is in the ranks of women subject to clothing regulations requiring them to wear work clothes that highlight their shapes (e. g. heels, suits) or certain parts of their bodies (e.g. legs) that the most women (33%) have had "forced" or "unwanted" sexual relations.

In terms of public policies, this therefore raises the issue of gendered work clothes, which can increase sexual pressure on women by making them stereotypical "objects of desire", particularly in sectors (e.g. public services, hotels, restaurants) where they are in direct contact with the public.

Analysis by François KRAUS

Director of "Gender, Sexuality and Sexual Health" department

Ifop (French Institute for Public Opinion)

ABOUT THE SURVEY :

Ifop study for the Jean Jaurès Foundation and FEPS carried out by online self-administered questionnaire from 11 to 15 April 2019 on a sample of 5,026 women, representative of the female population aged 18 and over residing in Italy, Spain, France, Germany and the United Kingdom

Analysis by Juliette Clavière

Director of the Gender Equality Observatory at the Jean Jaurès Foundation

Since the emergence of #MeToo, the Jean Jaurès Foundation and the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) have sought to analyse, reflect and make proposals on the issue of sexist and sexual violence against women. The action of the Gender Equality Observatory on this issue has included reflection on the occurrence of such violence in the world of work and the means to remedy it ("Women and harassment at work", François Kraus, Jean-Jaurès Foundation, February 2018; symposium on "Sexual and sexist violence at work: current situation, state of emergency?", November 2018; "Seven proposals to combat sexual harassment in Parliament", Juliette Clavière, Jean-Jaurès Foundation, December 2017).

This new survey, conducted by Ifo, responds first and foremost to the need to have a picture of the full range of violence suffered by women in the five biggest countries of the European Union (EU). Its aim is to establish a pilot study that will then be repeated periodically to assess the evolution of the situation in France and the effectiveness of the public policies put in place to address it. The European level is an equally important means for remedy given the results obtained, particularly at the time of a new Commission being set up.

In addition to the analyses provided by François Kraus, **the Jean Jaurès Foundation primarily emphasises that this survey shows that violence is a reality for more than half of women in their professional lives. This is therefore another "inequality", on top of those already observed, and a reality that needs massive investment from public policies and actors in the world of work.** And the figures for the past 12 months, which show that nearly one in five women has been the victim of at least one form of sexist or sexual violence, only confirm the extent of the situation.

Some elements of the survey also reveal blind spots corresponding to less well identified situations which require more specific answers: this is the case for family workers, i.e. unsalaried workers who help their spouses (e.g. in trade, crafts). A total of 71% of these workers have experienced sexist or sexual abuse at least once in their lifetime (compared to

60% for the European Union average) and 37% in the last 12 months (compared to 21% for the European Union average). Often working in small set-ups and in places that can be characterised by fuzzy lines between intimacy and work (e.g. home, farm), these women probably accumulate "private" violence (especially from their spouses) without having the necessary listening and support structures to enable them to break this one-to-one relationship.

Similarly, women working in professional places open to the public or partly counting as public space (e.g. cafés, public facilities) may also be victims of violence by users or customers or bystanders. This situation shows a kind of accumulation or "overexposure" of violence for a whole series of occupations that actors in the world of work must integrate.

With regard to abuses that actually take place in the usual workplace (office, workshop, ticket booth), there is a specific French aspect concerning "pressure to obtain an act of a sexual nature from the victim in exchange for a job or promotion", since in 51% of cases the perpetrator is a superior, unlike the European Union average of 34%.

Questions might be raised about a kind of "French culture" of sexual blackmail in employment or promotion, which, under the Criminal Code, constitutes an aggravating circumstance for people who abuse the authority conferred on them by their jobs. Such a situation requires, on the one hand, a much more pronounced training policy for managers and, on the other hand, a diversification of the people to whom victims can turn for a real listening ear and source of help.

In general, awareness-raising and training are a crucial tool both for victims in order to make them aware that these acts are illegal, and for actors in the world of work to better support victims.

The number of contacts for victims should also be increased and these should not be strictly internal to the professional system. Trust in these situations is a crucial factor. **The violence committed may have led to a total loss of trust for the victim in the professional world.** She must be able to choose her interlocutor (e.g. associations, doctors) who will allow her to take the first essential step - that of being listened to - and who will allow her to make the best choice for the subsequent steps.