

Diversity, equity and inclusion in Quebec's video game industry

Preliminary Research Report
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Methodology

- **Survey of 1,532 employees** from Quebec video game industry who work in development teams (out of approximately 10,800)
- **Interviews with 17 persons** who experienced problems related to diversity, equality and inclusion in Quebec video game studios

Survey Objectives

- Providing a **current picture** of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the Quebec video game industry
- Identifying the **most prevalent DEI issues** in this industry



Interviews Objectives

- Understanding **how** DEI problems manifest themselves in studios
- Understanding **why** such problems persist



Sample Composition



Gender

63%

Men



32%

Women

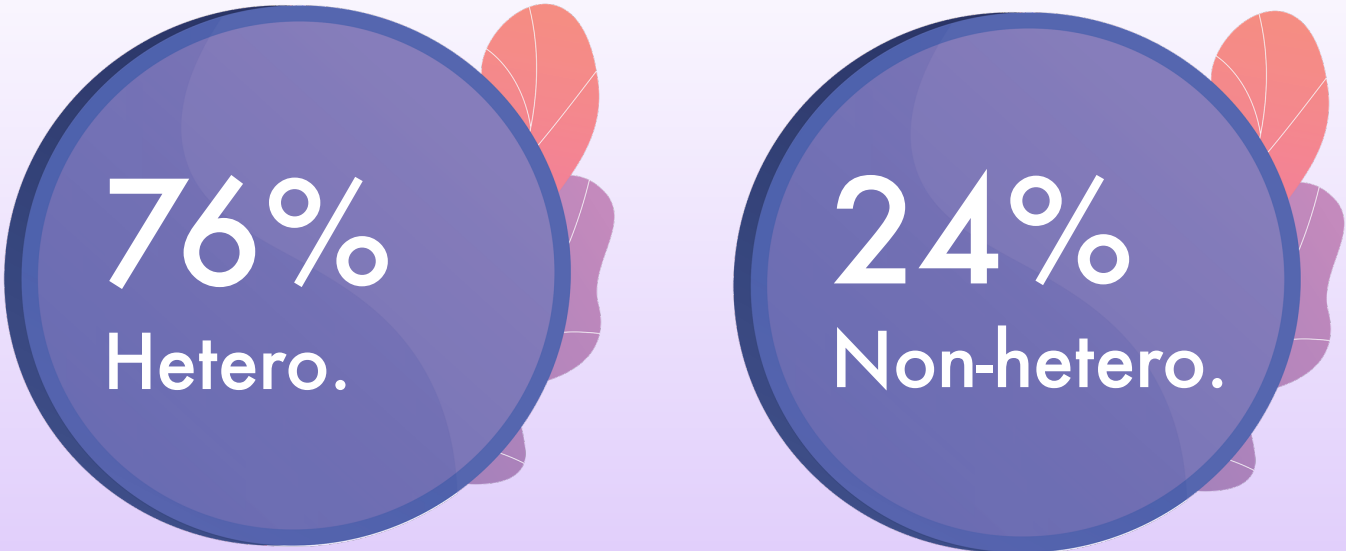


5%

Non-cis.



Sexual Orientation



76%
Hetero.

24%
Non-hetero.

Ethnicity



Disability



Intersectionality



34 years old
11% non-hetero
12% racialized
2% disabled



31 years old
40% non-hetero
13% racialized
4% disabled



30 years old
91% non-hetero
17% racialized
12% disabled

Mental Health



Mental Health

9% of men
22% of women
40% of non-cis.
have a **mental illness**

X4



Mental Health

« You cannot go on sick leave in this kind of company if you want to keep your job. It is seen more as a **weakness** than anything else. It is not well perceived. »
(Jean-Christophe)



Vertical segregation



Vertical Segregation

Hierarchy

5% Top management

12% Director

18% Lead

32% Senior

23% Junior



Hierarchy

4% Top management

5% Director

21% Lead

20% Senior

31% Junior



Hierarchy

0% Top management

7% Director

19% Lead

16% Senior

45% Junior



Vertical Segregation

48% of men

41% of women

27% of non-cis.

are « **very** » confident
to be able to **move up**



Vertical Segregation

94% of non-racialized
89% of racialized
are **confident** to be able
to **move up**



Sticky Floor

Difficulty for people from certain marginalised groups to **move up** the ladder in a company despite their skills and experience.



Horizontal Segregation



Horizontal Segregation



IT (programming, etc.)

31% of men

12% of women

21% of non-cis.



Art (graphic design, etc.)

18% of men

31% of women

23% of non-cis.



Quality assurance

12% of men

10% of women

33% of non-cis.

Entry door



Entry door

4% of men
7% of women
3% of non-cis.
were recruited by a
headhunter

x2



Entry door

17% of men

16% of women

33% of non-cis.

entered via **quality assurance**

X3



Entry door

37% of men
34% of women
25% of non-cis.
entered with an
interview



Unconscious biases

Can lead managers to select candidates who look like them or who fit the role of « gamer » or « geek ».



Glass-slipper

A metaphor that illustrates how "occupations come to appear, by their very nature, to possess central, enduring and distinctive characteristics that make them **suitable for some people** and not plausible for others." (Ashcraft, 2013: 7)



Wage Inequality



Wage Inequality

20% of men
28% of women
44% of non-cis.
make **45,000\$** or less

X2



Wage Inequality

55% of men
63% of women
47% of non-cis.
make between **46,000\$**
and **105,000\$**



Wage Inequality

15% of men
8% of women
3% of non-cis.
make between **106,000\$**
and **135,000\$**

X5



Wage Inequality

10% of men
2% of women \curvearrowright X5
6% of non-cis.
make more than
136,000\$



Wage Inequality

47% of men

29% of women

31% of non cis.

with **8 years** of exp. or +

make **more than 106,000\$**



Wage Inequality

20% of men
5% of women **X4**
19% of non cis.
with **8 year** of exp. or +
make **more than 136,000\$**



Wage Inequality

49% of men
26% of women
16% of non cis.
in management positions
make more than **106,000\$**

X2



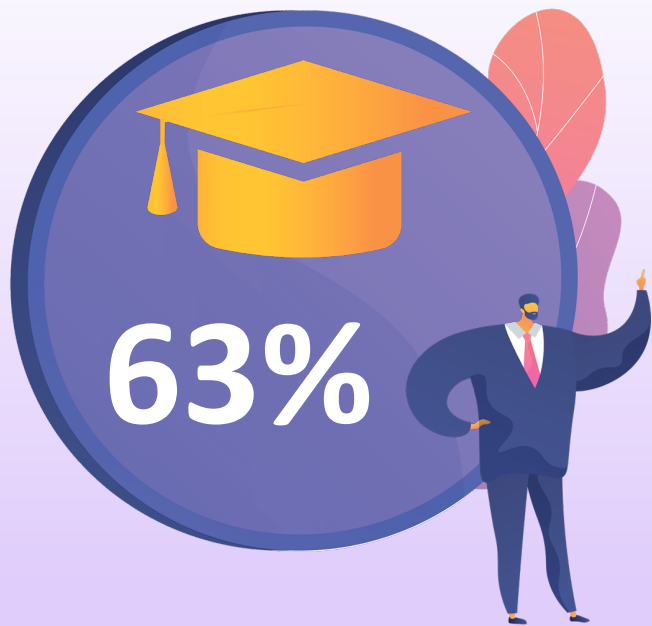
Wage Inequality

23% of men
5% of women
5% of non-cis.
in management positions
make more than **136,000\$**

X4



University degree



Degree in video game



Policy on pay equity

Only 45% of the studios have one



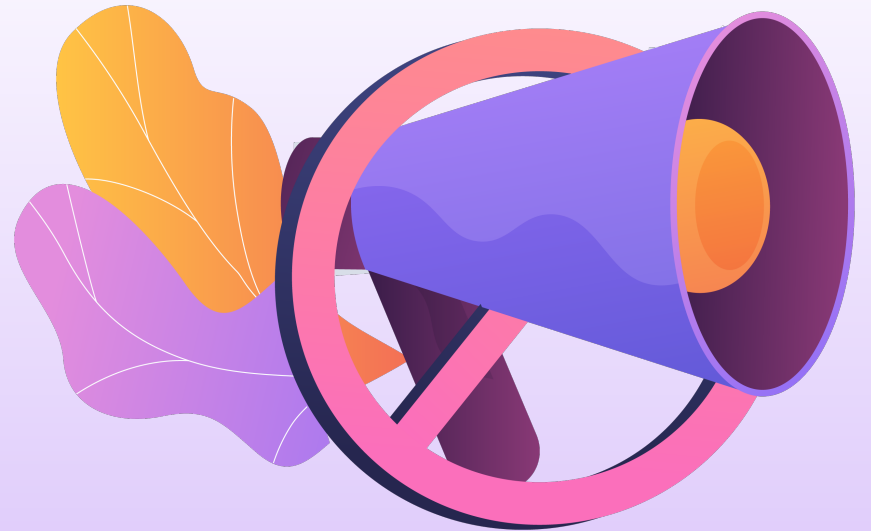
Wage negotiation

32% of men
24% of women
21% of non-cis.
are «**very much** »
willing to do it



Law of silence

« We were having a drink
and talking about wages
and then it came to
someone's ears [...] »
(Xavier)



Solo status



Solo status

15% of men
74% of women
78% of non-cis.
found themselves **alone**
or **almost** in a team

X5



Solo status

12% of solos men

41% of solos women

66% of solos non-cis.
felt **uncomfortable** in
this situation



Solo status

May give the impression of being used as a **token**, i.e. hired to make the company look inclusive rather than for skills (Hogg and Vaughan, 2007).



Stereotype Threat

Pressure that someone feels to avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes about his/her category and that can lead to continuous efforts including **self-censorship** (Steele and Joshua Aronson, 1995).



Impostor Syndrome

Tendency of a person to underestimate his/her performance, to believe that he/she **does not deserve** his/her place in a given environment or that his/her successes are due to chance rather than his/her abilities. (Chassangre, 2016)



Impostor Syndrome

66% of men

62% of women

48% of non-cis.

feel « **very much** »

that they **belong**



Impostor Syndrome

65% of non-racialized
55% of racialized
feel « **very much** »
that they **belong**



Segregation of the QAs

« The QAs are **not treated equally** than those who work on the games. [...] you cannot talk too much with the developers, the Christmas party was **separated** as well. » (Agathe)



Comfort



Comfort

64% of men

54% of women

48% of non-cis.

can « **very much** » share
their ideas **without being
judged**



Comfort

44% of men

58% of women

53% of non-cis.

feel « **very much** » the
need to **prove themselves**



Comfort

48% of men

50% of women

39% of non-cis.

receive « **very much** » the
recognition they deserve



Comfort

6% of men

10% of women

20% of non-cis.

feel « **very much** » the
need to change

X3



Satisfaction



Work Load

49% of men

52% of women

40% of non-cis.

are « **very much** »
satisfied



Distribution of tasks

52% of men

59% of women

46% of non-cis.
are « **very much** »
satisfied



Salary

42% of men
37% of women
28% of non-cis.
are « **very much** »
satisfied



Respect of their supervisor

72% of men

70% of women

65% of non-cis.

are « **very much** »
satisfied



Respect of their colleagues

79% of men

71% of women

58% of non-cis.

are « **very much** »
satisfied



Support from their supervisor

65% of men

63% of women

56% of non-cis.

are « **very much** »
satisfied



Social support

Provides access to psychological and material resources that improve an individual's ability to **cope with stress** (Cohen, 2004)



Values conveyed by the games

41% of men
45% of women
39% of non-cis.
are « **very much** »
satisfied



Salary

41% of non-racialized
29% of racialized
are « **very** » satisfied



Discrimination



Differential treatment

3% of men
11% of women
8% of non-cis.
« often »
experimented it

x4



Assignment of subordinate tasks

9% of men
14% of women ↻ x2
9% of non-cis.
« often »
experimented it



Assignment of subordinate tasks

« I already had a lot of tasks to do and when [this manager] arrived, he asked me to perform **secretarial tasks**. He was asking me to create his meeting, to edit his meetings, to postpone his video [conferences]. In short, **assistant tasks**. » (Alexandra)



Exclusion from the discussions

5% of men
13% of women
8% of non-cis.
are « **often** » excluded
from discussions

x2



Exclusion from the discussions

"Everyone was invited to the meetings except me. So I would see them all go into a room (I was the only woman) [...] He would tell me: 'you are **not invited**'." (Lucie)



Interruption

11% of men
29% of women
26% of non-cis.
are « **often** » interrupted

X3



Ignored opinion

« Once, I said something and the director did **not listen to me at all**. Then, my colleague had to explain the same thing again for him to understand and I really did not like that. » (Palga)



Ignored opinion

« We are just women on the project in the art department. We raised concerns about how things were done in the game and this person [in a position of authority] kind of **ignored our opinions**. It is frustrating. » (Alice)



Who speaks louder?

« In design, there are men who have **loud mouths**, who speak a lot, loudly and for a long time. I am under the impression that **women do not dare** to speak loudly and for a long time, and it can be more difficult because of that. We are not encouraged to speak like that. » (Alice)



Vulnerability to discrimination

3% of men
14% of women
10% of non-cis.
feel « **very much** »
vulnerable

↪ X5



Vulnerability to discrimination

« When I was interviewed by the supervisor and the boss at the company, I was doing well until he asked me **if I was pregnant or if I wanted children**. That was the only time in my career when I felt that I probably **worth less** than a male candidate. » (Marie-Pierre)

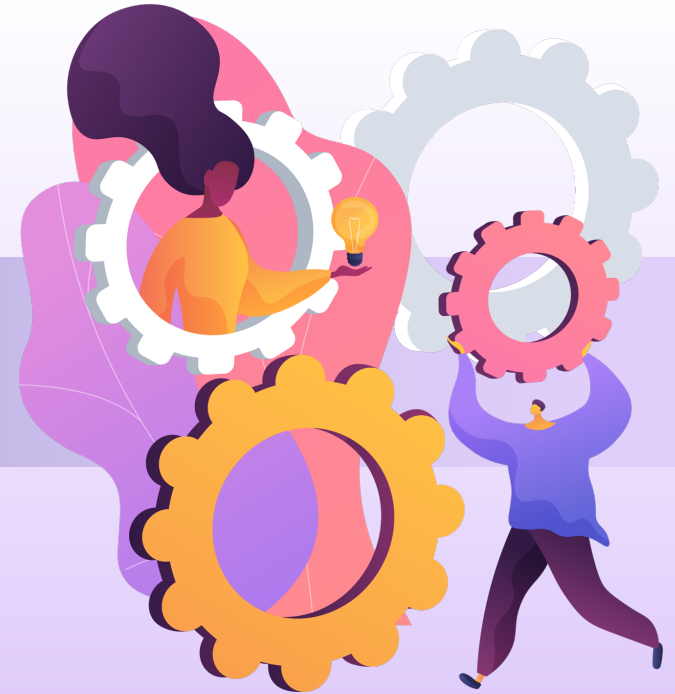


Policy on discrimination

Only 67% of the studios have one



Sexism



Ordinary Sexism

Unlike 'hostile' sexism, which refers to explicit expressions of contempt for women, 'ordinary' sexism refers to **subtle** gender stereotypes and discrimination that permeate **everyday life** and that are **normalised** or **masked** with humour, for example. (Moya et al., 2005)



Lack of recognition

5% of men
9% of women
7% of non-cis.
feel that their contribution
are « **often** » minimised

↪ X2



Prejudice

5% of men
10% of women

↪ x2

5% of non-cis.

feel that their colleagues « **often** »
take for granted that they **do not**
want more responsibilities



Doubting the competences

4% of men
8% of women
10% of non-cis.
feel that their colleagues
« **often** » doubt their
competences



Doubting the competences

« When I was in quality assurance, after three months I was in charge of testing everything related to connectivity. It was really complicated [...]. A lead from another mobile team was surprised that I was able to explain it. [...] there is an expectation that women have **less advanced technical skills** than men. »
(Alice)



Doubting the competences

« I have a problem with the perception that people might have of me: thinking that I am **not competent** for example [...] as I am a woman in video games. » (Emma)



Technomascularity

Association between
masculinity, technology
and advanced
technological skills.
(Robin, 2018)



Benevolent Sexism

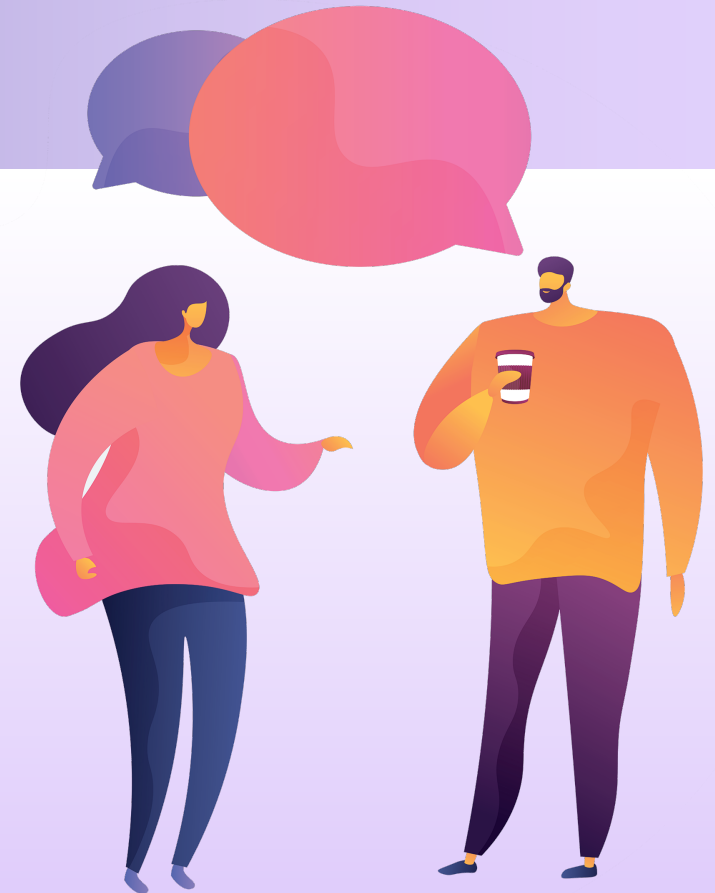
Caring but paternalistic and infantilizing behaviours towards women based on:

- a positive perception of women as gentle and warm;
- a belief in the complementarity of the sexes and in the need to maintain cordial relations between men and women;
- the chivalrous idea that men should protect women because they are vulnerable. (Sarlet and Dardenne, 2012)

Mansplaining

7% of men
18% of women
18% of non-cis.
« often » have subjects
explained to them in a
condescending way

↪ X2.5



White-knigting

2% of men

9% of women

10% of non-cis.

are « **often** » offered help
without having asked for it

X5



Crunch culture



Crunch culture

75% of men

77% of women

80% of non-cis.

consider that it is **important**
to work overtime to advance
a career



Crunch culture

« You do not usually get paid for your [extra] time or compensated with holidays. It is just time out of your own time, and the team, your boss, the other people who did it will often **make you feel bad** for not doing it.» (Marc)



Crunch culture

« My girlfriend was doing 70-80 hours [a week] as a project manager, and when she went down to 50 hours (she was paid for 37.5 hours), the VP of the company **asked her if she still liked her job.** »
(Xavier, racialized man)



Crunch culture

87% of men
86% of women
85% of non-cis.
are **willing** to work
overtime



Crunch culture

« At the time I was pushing myself to produce the same amount of work and attendance as anyone else, so I would not be seen as underperforming, so obviously it definitely **hurt my children.** » (Emma)



Psychological harassment



Psychological harassment

27% of men
37% of women
42% of non-cis.
were **belittled** by
a **colleague**



Psychological harassment

27% of men
32% of women
36% of non-cis.
were **belittled** by a
superior



Psychological harassment

17% of men
22% of women
26% of non-cis.
were **humiliated** by a
colleague



Psychological harassment

18% of men
20% of women
16% of non-cis.
were **humiliated**
by a **superior**



Psychological harassment

44% of men

53% of women

48% of non-cis.
were **ignored** by a
colleague



Psychological harassment

43% of men
45% of women
43% of non-cis.
were **ignored** by a
superior



Psychological harassment

5% of men
8% of women
8% of non-cis.
were **threaten** by
a **colleague**



Psychological harassment

9% of men

11% of women

13% of non-cis.

were **threatened** by a superior



Psychological harassment

24% of men
31% of women
34% of non-cis.
were **treated with
hostility** by a **colleague**



Psychological harassment

19% of men


19% of women

21% of non-cis.

were **treated with hostility** by a superior



Psychological harassment

4% of men
10% of women  x2
8% of non-cis.
feel « **very much** »
vulnerable to it



Psychological harassment

« From the moment [my managers] **destroyed all my work and my skills**, I became a little apprehensive about starting again in another company. When I go for interviews, I have **butterflies in my stomach** and I **fear** to encounter similar people. » (Alice P.)



Policy on psycho. harassment

63% of the studios have one



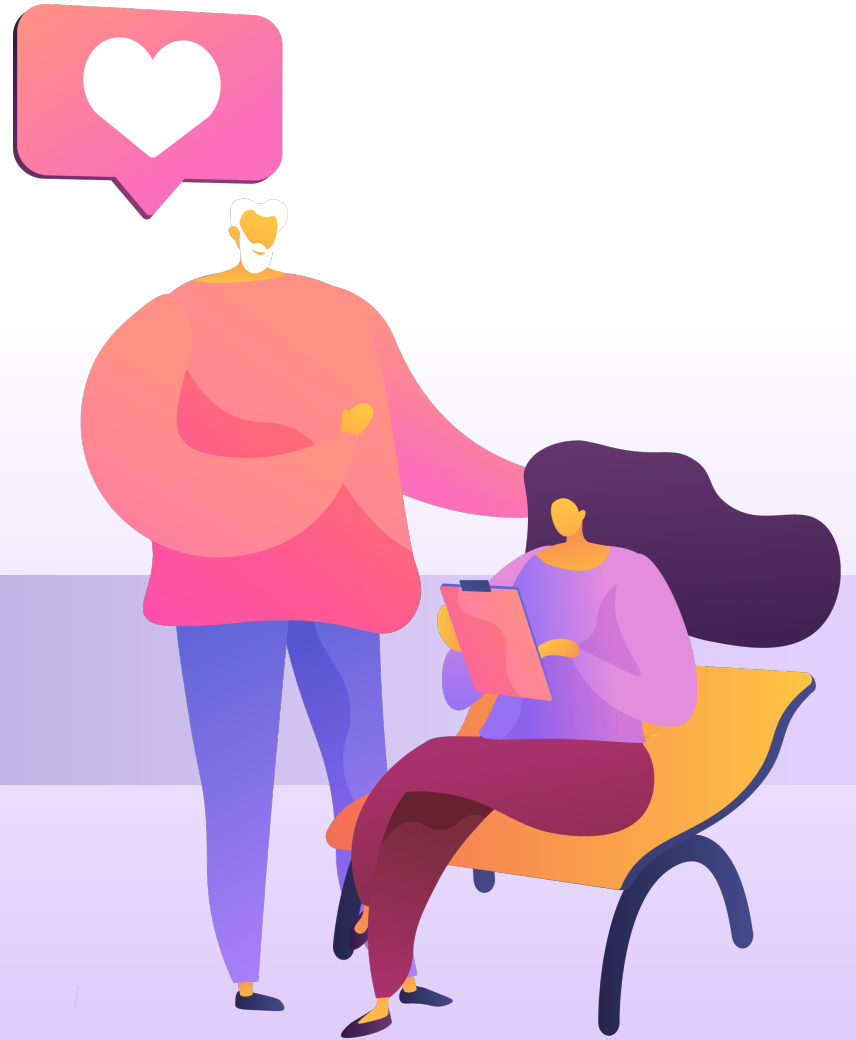
Psychological harassment

1% of non-racialized
4% of racialized
were « often » **treated**
with hostility by a
superior

x4



Sexual harassment



Sexual harassment



9% of men
38% of women
24% of non-cis.
received **unsolicited**
advances from a **colleague**

↪ X4



Sexual harassment

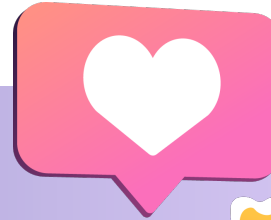


2% of men
12% of women
10% of non-cis.
received **unsolicited**
advances from a supervisor

↪ x6



Sexual harassment



12% of men
38% of women
34% of non-cis.
received **comments** on their
appearance from a **colleague**

↪ **x3**



Sexual harassment



7% of men
17% of women
19% of non-cis.
received **comments** on their
appearance from a **superior**

↪ X2.5



Sexual harassment



6% of men
19% of women
11% of non-cis.
received **sexual messages**
from a **colleague**

↻ x3



Sexual harassment



1% of men
6% of women
3% of non-cis.
received **sexual messages**
from a **superior**

↪ **X6**



Sexual harassment



4% of men
17% dof women
7% dof non-cis.
were **touched** inappropriately
by a **colleague**

x4



Sexual harassment



2% of men
7% of women

↪ X3


4% of non-cis.

were **touched** inappropriately
by a **superior**



Sexual harassment



1% of men
5% of women  **X5**
2% of non-cis.
had **sexual intimacy imposed**
on them by a **colleague**



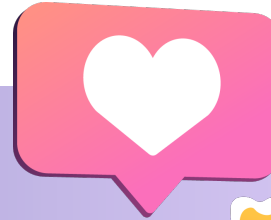
Sexual harassment



0% of men
2% of women
2% of non-cis.
had **sexual intimacy imposed**
on them by a **superior**



Sexual harassment



5% of men
47% of women
43% of non-cis.
feel **vulnerable** to it

X10



Sexual harassment



20% of non-racialized
28% of racialized
43% of non-cis.
feel **vulnerable** to it



Sexual harassment

« On Instagram and Snapchat, he **did not let go of me**. Even at the Christmas party. I'm a very social person, but at some point you have to get the signal that I am sending. »
(Alice)



Sexual harassment

« I have been in situations where men ask me and I **say no, but the situation continues**. You do not really know how to say no anymore. [...] There was one case that went really far. It went on for **a year on a daily basis**: a man who waited for me to leave every evening to **follow me**. (Marie-Pierre)



Informalism

The « generally relaxed nature of employees and their interactions » can « lead to some abusing it and embarrassing their colleagues. Being "**too**" **comfortable** with a type of humour or choice of topics of conversation in the workplace can lead to **slippage**. »
(TECHNOcompétence, 2021: 75)



Policy on sexual harrassment

70% of the studios have one



Trust in the complaint system



Trust in the complaint system

53% of men

34% of women

27% of non-cis.

are « **very much** » confident to
be able to denounce without
being seen as a **spoilsport**



Trust in the complaint system

59% of men

41% of women

44% of non-cis.

are « **very much** » confident to
be able to file a complaint
without suffering prejudice



Trust in the complaint system

« [My manager at the time] said to me, 'You spoke to HR about it? This is a big **mistake**. If I were [your colleague], I would be even worse with you. Withdraw your complaint'. It scared me, I cried, and I **withdrew my complaint**.
(Alice P.)



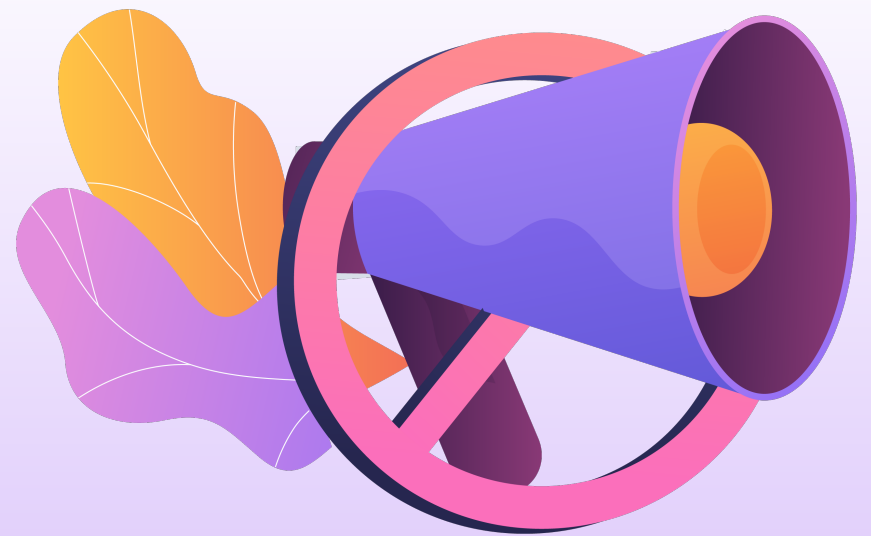
Trust in the complaint system

« HR announced that they received complaints [...] and then, on the floor, it was understood that we could not have any more fun. There were clearly people saying out loud around me: "who spoke?" **Denunciation was punished.** » (Robert, gay man)



Law of silence

Implicit code that discourages employees from reporting harassment by instilling fear of isolation or retaliation.



Trust in the complaint system

59% of men
46% of women
45% of non-cis.
are « **very much** » confident
that **no one gets a free pass**



Trust in the complaint system

39% of men
27% of women
20% of non-cis.
are confident that **adequate
sanctions** are applied

X2



Trust in the complaint system

« It's the open secret of the video game industry, human resources are **not there to protect** the employees. » (Luc, gay man)



Trust in the complaint system

90% of non-racialized
82% of racialized
are **confident** to be able to
denounce without being
seen as a **spoilsport**



Trust in the complaint system

89% of non-racialized
80% of racialized
are confident to be able to file
a complaint **without suffering
prejudice**



Trust in the complaint system

55% of non-racialized
44% of racialized
are confident that **no one**
gets a free pass



Trust in the complaint system

82% of non-racialized
72% of racialized
are confident that
adequate sanctions are
applied



Conclusion

The situation of women and non-cisgender people is less dramatic than what the past years media coverage let us believe.



Conclusion

Women and non-cisgender people are significantly less comfortable, satisfied and confident in the complaint system than men.



Conclusion

Structural obstacles to DEI persist, such as:

- vertical segregation
- horizontal segregation
- wage inequality
- ordinary and benevolent sexism
- psycho. and sexual harassment



Questions?

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