



PRESS RELEASE - April 16, 2015

Report on gender harassment and sexual assault in public transportation: the High Council for Gender Equality calls for a national plan of action

In response to a request from the Minister of Social Affairs, Health and Women's Rights, Ms. Marisol Touraine, and from Ms. Pascale Boistard, Secretary of the State in charge of Women's Rights, the HCEfh publishes today its Report on gender harassment and sexual assault in mass transit.

The phenomenon of gender harassment and sexual assault covers a broad spectrum of acts along a continuum of violence, whether these are acts which are punishable by law (e.g. injury) or not (e.g. whistling, comments). Every female user of mass transit has been a victim, but not all have been identified as such. Young women are particularly susceptible to these problems.

This is a vicious phenomenon that has a daily impact on the lives of women, especially considering that women make up two-thirds of public transport users. Because their actions incite fear, stress, helplessness and anger, aggressors put enormous psychological pressure on women, which can ultimately affect women's health. This constant pressure limits the freedom of women, because they are often obligated to alter their daily lives: changing their routes, modes of transportation, schedules, attitudes and clothing in order to avoid confrontation. Gender harassment and sexual assault are mechanisms which, whether consciously or unconsciously, are designed as an attempt to exclude women from the public arena.

Although this phenomenon is widespread, it remains poorly understood and largely minimized or even normalized. In its first institutional report on this issue, the HCEfh calls for a definitive course of action from the State, local authorities as well as transportation agencies. The HCEfh recommends a national plan of action "Stop gender harassment and sexual assault" which consists of the following three aims and 15 recommendations:

- **AIM Nr. 1: Define and measure gender harassment** and sexual assault in public places, particularly in mass transit. Both quantitative and qualitative data on this phenomenon are still incomplete;
- **AIM Nr. 2: Cooperate with mass transit providers** to improve existing warning systems, to train professionals how to react in the case of assault, to try out innovative solutions for managing transportation, and to denounce advertisements that degrade women;
- **AIM Nr. 3: Work together with public authorities** to detect, recognize and counter this phenomenon through a nationwide awareness campaign, through improved law enforcement, and through integrating equality education in the school system.

This plan aims to understand, recognize and combat the phenomenon of gender harassment and sexual assault. To fully realize women's freedom, places of transport can no longer remain a hideout for harassers but must become a vehicle for diversity and equality.

The 15 recommendations of the plan as well as the report in full can be found here:
<http://bit.ly/1CNXLk7>

Contact: Claire Guiraud – Responsible for Education and Communication at HCEfh

M: +33 (0) 6 09 14 43 06 **T:** +33 (0) 1 42 75 86 94 **E:** claire.guiraud@pm.gouv.fr

The HCEfh was established by decree of the President of the French Republic on January 3rd, 2013. This independent advisory body, working under the Prime Minister, is composed of 73 members: representatives of associations, qualified experts, representatives elected at the national and local level, and public officials. The mission of the HCEfh is to evaluate public policies, to promote public debate about gender equality, and to make recommendations for measures which will further foster gender equality.