

FACILITATION GUIDE EVERYDAY SEXISM IS NOT A TRIVIAL MATTER

Developed by the Action Committee Against Everyday Sexism of INRS



Everyday sexism is not acceptable!

Everyday sexism is when we say or do things that seem harmless but that exclude women and gender minorities. We need to stop putting up with it.
We need to change our behaviour!

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INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE

At the initiative of members of the student community at the Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS), awareness-raising activities and tools to combat **everyday sexism** in universities were created in 2023. This guide was developed as part of that initiative.

This guide can be used to run discussion workshops on everyday sexism in an academic setting. These workshops have several positive effects. For instance, they break the isolation of people who are subjected to sexism, but who do not dare to speak out for fear of negative reactions. They also raise awareness of the fact that sexist microaggressions create a hostile environment for women and sexual and gender minorities, hindering their recognition and advancement and hampering their chances of pursuing an academic career.

The discussions held during the workshops can be used to take stock of the situation regarding everyday sexism within your team or establishment. They can also be used to create awareness-raising tools like posters, as the INRS community did.

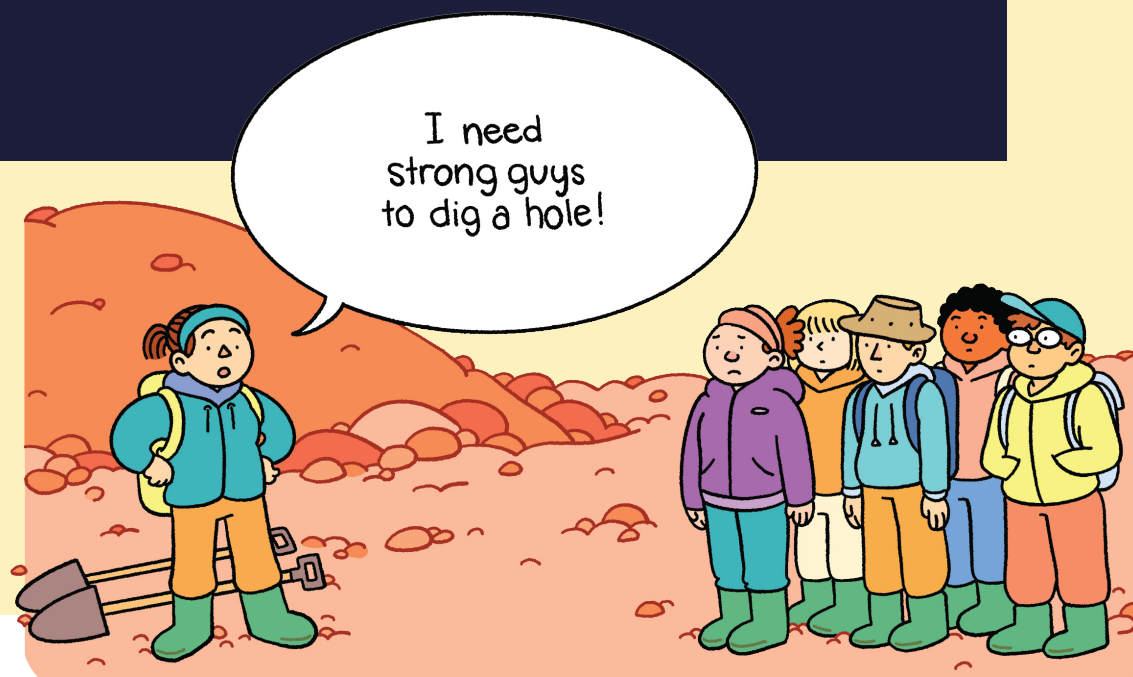
Everyday sexism, refers to a set of seemingly innocuous comments or behaviors that contribute to excluding women and sexual and gender minorities or questioning their legitimacy in certain places, such as in academia.

¹ Microaggressions often take the form of brief, seemingly banal interactions. These interactions, whether intentional or not, are hurtful, offensive, or insulting to the people from minority groups who usually suffer them.

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

When preparing the invitation to your discussion workshop, it's a good idea to think about the people you want to bring together and the hierarchical relationships between them. For example, in some cases, the presence of individuals in positions of authority can make students reluctant to share their experiences.

If your aim is to use the testimonials collected during the workshop to create awareness-raising tools, we recommend that you announce this in the invitation. You should also make sure to obtain the consent of the participants at the start of the workshop, and to anonymize their testimonials so that they cannot be recognized.



INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME OF PARTICIPANTS

INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

- Recommended duration: 1:15
- 10 minutes to set the scene and hold an icebreaker activity
- 45 minutes to share experiences
- 10 minutes to wind up



CONFIDENTIALITY AND SPACE FOR DISCUSSION

- Remind yourself of the following points about confidentiality and the fact that this is a space for discussion:
 - We ask you not to repeat the stories shared here today with anyone. We want to create a space of trust.
 - Discussions must be held responsibly, in good faith, and without animosity.
 - We ask you to show respect for others. Do not invalidate their experiences or make direct accusations against any individual.
 - The workshop is not a place to debate the existence of everyday sexism, but rather a space to share experiences of this phenomenon and to highlight the ways it manifests in our study and research environment.
 - If anyone fails to follow these instructions, they will be asked to leave the workshop.
 - You can leave (and return) at any time if necessary.



- If you need psychological or psychosocial support because of a situation, you can contact [resource available at your facility].

ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY

- Do an icebreaker activity that lets people describe their current state of mind. For example:
 - Post a series of images or a list of emotions for all participants to see.
 - Invite participants to take turns identifying how they feel, referring to one of the images or emotions.
 - Potential questions: How are you feeling right now? What is your frame of mind as you arrive at the workshop?
 - Allow time for reflection, then go round the table so that everyone can express their opinions and explain the word or image they have chosen.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

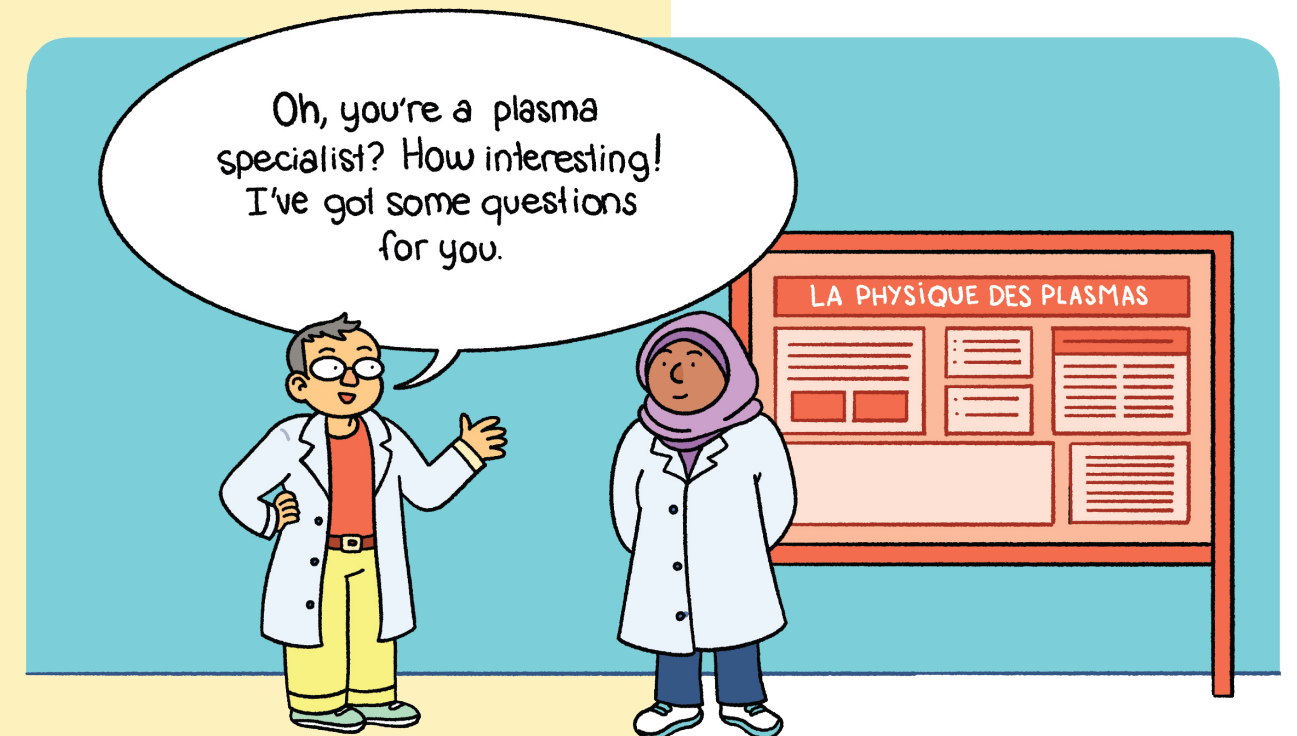
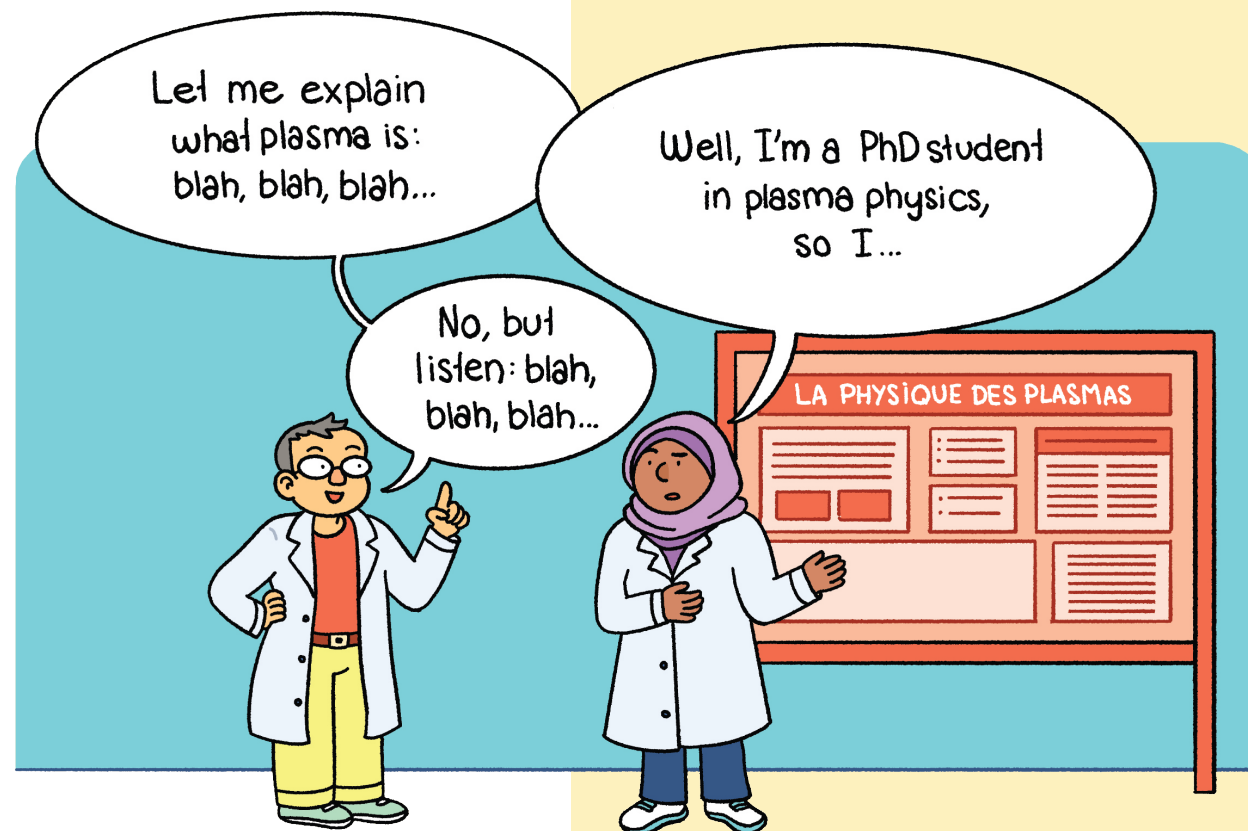
- Frame the discussion by sharing the objectives of the activity:
 - Open dialogue on everyday sexism.
 - Allow participants put experiences they've had or witnessed into words.
 - Shed light on situations that often take place in the shadows.
 - Help people who are subjected to sexism feel less isolated.

SHARING EXPERIENCES

DEFINING EVERYDAY SEXISM

- It is a good idea to cover the definition of everyday sexism:
 - Everyday sexism is a set of seemingly innocuous remarks or behaviours that contribute to the exclusion of women and sexual and gender minorities, or call into question their legitimacy in certain places, such as academia.
 - It feeds on gender stereotypes and helps perpetuate the shackles of roles considered masculine and feminine.

- Starting the discussion
 - To kick off the discussion, you can give examples of situations involving everyday sexism that you have experienced or witnessed yourself.
 - You can also refer to the examples on the following page.



Have you experienced or witnessed this type of situation in your research team, in the classroom, at meetings, or as part of an internship?



ASSIGNATION TO STEREOTYPED TASKS

Being assigned stereotypical tasks, such as administrative duties, making coffee, taking notes, cleaning the laboratories, welcoming new people to the team (“care” tasks traditionally associated with women).



BEING REDUCED TO A STEREOTYPE

Being reduced to a female stereotype (e.g., being pretty, being or becoming a mother, being “someone’s girlfriend or wife”).



MANSPLAINING

Experiencing or witnessing “mansplaining,” i.e., a man explaining to a woman something she already knows or is an expert in, often in a paternalistic or condescending tone.



DOUBTS ABOUT YOUR SCIENTIFIC SKILLS

Doubts about your scientific skills: questioning your ability to carry out fieldwork, doubting your abilities as a researcher (“I’d never have guessed that article was written by a woman”), or passing you over for an opportunity because you’re a parent, for example.



UNRECOGNIZED CONTRIBUTION

Having your contribution to a project not be recognized for what it was worth: a male colleague being given more credit for a team project, or your success being attributed to your appearance or measures to correct discrimination against women (“affirmative action”) rather than your excellence, for example.

WHAT ABOUT SEXISM TOWARDS MEN OR “REVERSE SEXISM”?

Sexism generally targets women and sexual and gender minorities. While men can also be discriminated against due to their gender, this discrimination is not proportionate to the violence, harassment, or microaggressions experienced by women and people from sexual and gender minorities. We recommend that for your workshop, you limit your discussions to the realities experienced by these groups, who have less of a voice in the public arena and whose academic careers can be jeopardized by sexism.



MARGINALIZATION

Feeling marginalized or sidelined in a scientific event or context because of your gender: being ignored or treated differently in a panel, meeting or informal gathering because you were the only woman present, being marginalized at an event due to a lack of measures to meet certain needs (e.g., no space to breastfeed or pump), for example.



JUDGMENTS ON PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Comments on your appearance or a feeling that people judge your appearance more than that of men when you give a presentation.



INFORMAL OR FAMILIAR BEHAVIORS

Feeling like certain people are more informal or familiar with you because of your gender: being the only person on a panel who is called by their first name with no title, while the men are called “Professor” or “Doctor” and their last name, for example.



DID YOU KNOW?

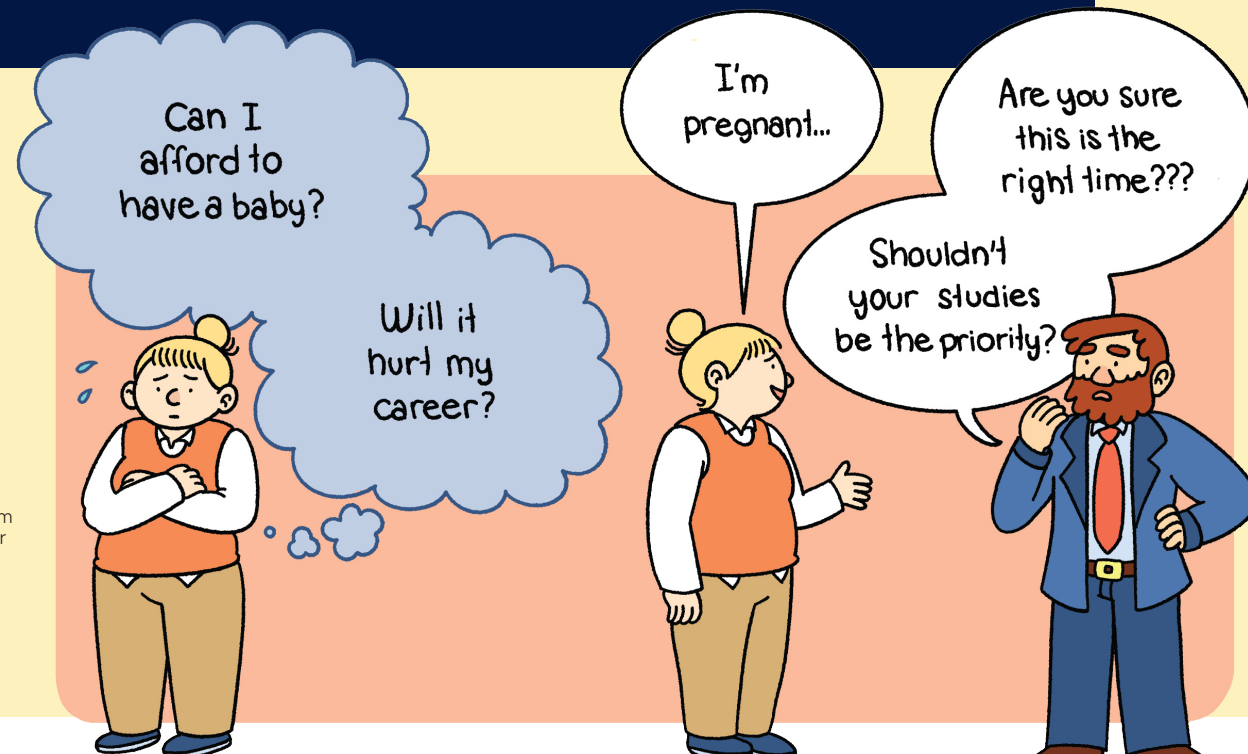
Everyday sexism can mix with other forms of discrimination, such as racism or homophobia, and affect women or people of minority sexual and gender identities differently. For example, Islamophobic prejudice can mix with sexist prejudice when female students of Muslim faith are not taken seriously in their expertise.

ACTIVITY CONCLUSION

- Go around the table again so that participants can express how they are feeling. You could ask the following questions and invite participants to choose another image or emotion to explain their state of mind:
 - How are you feeling at the end of this workshop?
 - What will you take away from the discussions?
 - Do you think today's discussions will have an impact on your actions in the future?
- Remind participants that they can contact [resource available at your facility¹] if they need psychological or psychosocial support due to a situation.
- Thank the participants.

AFTER THE WORKSHOP

You can send participants the link to the images and posters developed by INRS to raise awareness of everyday sexism and invite them to display them in their study and research environments: <https://inrs.ca/edi/sensibilisation-au-sexisme-ordinaire>.



¹ The resources "Student Mental Health Station" from ISME and "Rediscover Your Spark" from the Canadian Mental Health Association are available online at all times and accessible to everyone.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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