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Violence on TikTok

What do 16 billion views reveal about the mobilisations of autumn 2026?

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Summary

Following the violence that accompanied the mobilisations of autumn 2026, the French authorities considered temporarily suspending TikTok and other social media platforms. Three arguments are put forward in support of this measure: (i) social media allegedly served to coordinate the violence, (ii) to spread it through images, and (iii) to amplify it artificially, through artificial intelligence or foreign interference operations.

We test these three arguments against nearly one million public videos about the mobilisations, which gathered 16 billion views and 4.5 million comments on TikTok between 1 September and 29 October. Calls to mobilise circulated widely on the platform, but traces of any coordination of violence remain very limited. Images of violence account for 14% of views, and more than half of these come from the media; demands (32% of views) and humour (31%) carry more weight. Comments on videos showing violence condemn these acts nearly ten times more often than they celebrate them, and explicit calls for violence make up 0.27% of comments. Finally, our analyses show neither that violent images enjoy a general visibility advantage likely to encourage their spread, nor that the mobilisations were subject to any major artificial amplification, notably through the use of artificial intelligence or foreign interference operations.

These results do not rule out mechanisms that escape our observation, in particular in private exchanges or personalised recommendations. They nonetheless call into question the relevance of a shutdown that would also hamper uses of the platforms for information, expression and mobilisation.

To take these results further, we call for better researcher access to platform data and invite users to donate their TikTok history.

Help research: share what you saw on TikTok!

Platforms play an increasingly important role in our democracies. Researchers only see what is posted, not what actually appears on your screen: by sharing what you saw on TikTok, you help them understand what users are exposed to. Participation is open, voluntary and restricted to people aged 18 or over, on a secure platform of the University of Zurich; nothing is transmitted without your consent. *Contact: hugo.subtil@ipz.uzh.ch*

Take part (English) tiktokforscience.org

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Box 1: Key findings

- **964,000 videos, 16 billion views.** From 1 September to 29 October, 1% of the videos posted on TikTok from France were about the mobilisations. Their circulation accompanied two major waves, around the school blockades of 1 October and the demonstrations of 17 October.
- **Actors with contrasting roles.** Small creators post 87% of the videos and gather 48% of the views. The media post 1.6% of the videos and concentrate 19% of the views, but 56% of the views of videos showing violence.
- **Few traces of any coordination of violence.** Explicit calls for violence remain rare and attract few views: around 100,000 views before 17 October, against 7.5 million for instructions on where to gather. The locations of the 17 October incidents were not named in advance any more than others, and referrals to private messaging apps account for only 0.03% of comments.
- **Violence remains a minority share.** Only 14% of views show violence, against 32% for demands, 31% for humour and 26% for joyful content.
- **Violence is mostly condemned.** The images circulate in contrasting political contexts. Under videos showing violence, 20.6% of comments explicitly condemn these acts, against 2.2% that celebrate them. Exchanges are occasionally virulent (0.27% explicit calls for violence and 0.9% hateful comments), but condemnation of violence dominates.
- **No sign of major artificial amplification.** Showing violence is associated with 34% fewer views for small creators, but 40% more views for the media. Content labelled as AI accounts for less than 3% of views, and our indicators show no sign of foreign interference.
- **A call for users to donate their TikTok histories.** To better understand TikTok's role, we encourage users to donate their TikTok histories and call for better researcher access, as provided for under EU regulation.

From the mobilisations to the case against social media

Autumn 2026 in France was marked by two large-scale social movements. The high-school student movement, which denounced in particular the deterioration of teaching conditions, reached a high point on 1 and 2 October, with several hundred high schools blockaded. The police response was massive, with several people seriously injured, nearly 2,000 arrests on 1 October alone[1] and nearly 7,000 people taken into police custody between the start of the movement and 8 October.[2] The movement enjoyed broad support among young people: 92% of 16-to-20-year-olds consider its demands justified (Algan 2026). In parallel, the "Bloquons tout" ("Let's block everything") movement, whose rallying call had been circulating since 2025 and was revived in September by calls on TikTok, articulated demands about purchasing power and gradually brought together collectives stemming from the Yellow Vests (*Gilets jaunes*) and trade unions.

On 17 October 2026, marches brought together between 550,000 and 800,000 demonstrators across France. The demonstrations were marked by major clashes with the police, urban violence and property damage affecting nearly 3,000 shops. That day marked the convergence of the two movements.

Following the violence of 17 October, social media found itself at the centre of public debate. Three arguments have been put forward to justify restrictions on social media. First, it allegedly constitutes a venue for the **coordination of violence**, making it possible to organise gatherings quickly, to identify targets and to share information on police movements. Second, social media is said to feed a **contagion of violence**: the circulation of images showing violent behaviour would help to normalise it, or even to glorify it, and could thus encourage its reproduction. The third argument concerns the **artificial amplification of violence**: accounts, including foreign ones, might seek to reach a wide audience by exploiting recommendation algorithms with spectacular content or content fabricated using artificial intelligence.

It was in the name of these risks that, on 22 October, Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu asked the four

[1] French Interior Ministry: 1,949 people arrested on Thursday 1 October 2026, a figure reported by Europe 1 and France 24.

[2] French Justice Ministry: 7,950 people taken into police custody, including 6,773 minors, figures as of 13 October 2026 at 5 p.m., reported by franceinfo, 14 October 2026. Earlier tallies: 5,060 people in custody as of 5 October and 6,877 as of 8 October.

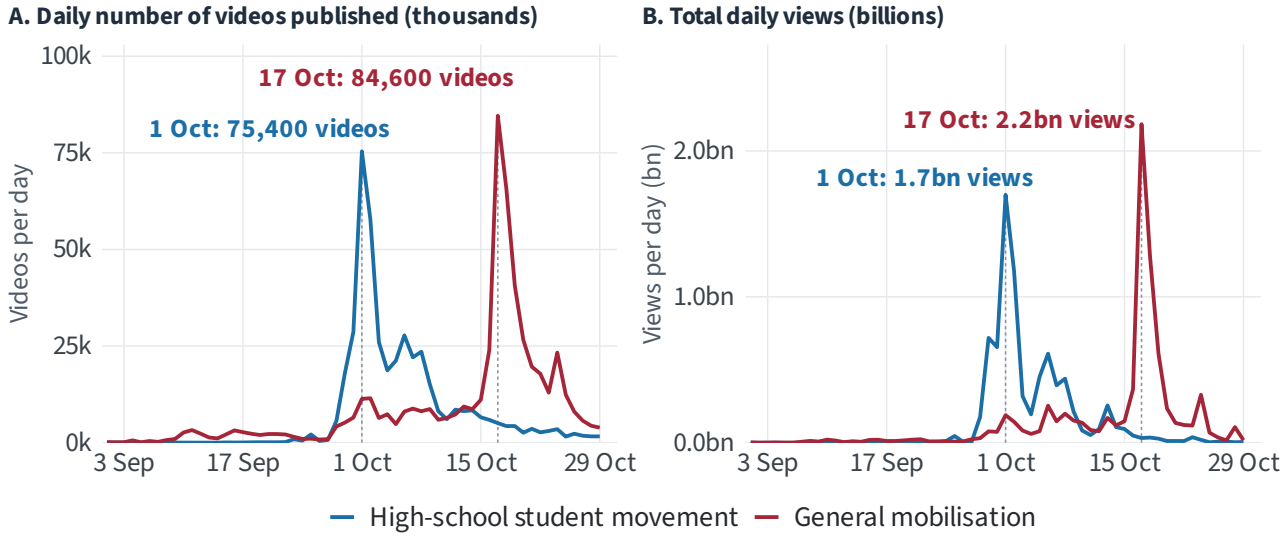
main telecommunications operators to stand ready to temporarily suspend access to TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat during the demonstrations planned for 24 October.[3] Revealed by *Blast*, the letter envisaged a shutdown of a few hours, by filtering the platforms' domain names. Initially intended for mobile connections, the measure ran into technical difficulties raised by the operators, who considered it impossible, at short notice, to limit it to certain networks or territories. It could thus have affected all users of the platforms concerned indiscriminately, whatever content they post or watch. The shutdown was ultimately not implemented.[4] In parallel, on 27 October the Senate adopted two more narrowly targeted provisions: one would allow the administrative authorities to demand the removal within 24 hours of content inciting serious offences and, failing that, to have access to it blocked; the other would extend the power of criminal courts to suspend accounts used to commit certain offences linked to demonstrations and unlawful assemblies.[5] These provisions, still under examination, target content and accounts; the shutdown envisaged on 22 October targeted entire platforms.

While the disturbances that occurred during the demonstrations have been documented, the mechanisms through which the platforms allegedly contributed to organising or spreading them remain far less substantiated. Drawing on novel data on TikTok, one of the main platforms at the heart of the debate, this note aims to contribute to that discussion. With 23.3 million French visitors per month in 2025,[6] TikTok is one of the main platforms used by under-25s. 42% of them get news on the platform every day, and since its creation in 2016 it has taken on growing political significance. For 54% of under-25s, social media, video platforms or AI are the main way of getting news, against 26% for television, radio and the press (20% and 62% respectively for the French population as a whole).[7] We examine in turn the platform's role in any coordination of violence, the place of violent images and their possible contribution to normalising such behaviour, and then the signs of artificial amplification of content. Our data cover neither private messaging, nor Snapchat or Instagram, nor each user's recommendation feed

Figure 1

Two waves: the school blockades peak on 1 October, the general mobilisation on 17 October

Daily number of videos published (A) and total daily views (B) for each of the two mobilisations



Note: daily number of videos on each of the two mobilisations, in thousands, and daily views of these videos, in billions, 1 September – 29 October 2026. How to read: on 1 October, about 75,400 videos on the high-school student movement were published; together they gathered 1.7 billion views.

3. Letter from the Prime Minister to the heads of Orange, Bouygues Telecom, Iliad (Free) and Altice France (SFR), 22 October 2026, published by *Blast*. See Y. Mhamdi, "Le Premier ministre a préparé la coupure des réseaux sociaux pour le 24 octobre", *Blast*, 24 October 2026; *Next*, 27 October 2026.

4. "J'ai interrogé Emmanuel Macron", interview with HugoDécrypte, 28 October 2026.

5. French Senate, amendment no. 94 rect. bis to bill no. 87, adopted on 27 October 2026 (ballot no. 36).

6. Arcom (the French audiovisual and digital regulator), *Observatoire de l'audience des plateformes en ligne*, 2025 edition, March 2026, pp. 9 and 14.

7. Arcom, *Les Français et l'information*, 2nd edition, January 2026, pp. 46 and 62. Ipsos bva survey of 3,377 people aged 15 and over, 16 June to 23 July 2025. In this survey, getting news covers politics, society, sport and culture.

(Box 2).

One million videos, 16 billion views

Of the 81.5 million TikTok videos recorded in France between 1 September and 29 October 2026, 964,000 are about the autumn mobilisations, gathering more than 16 billion views (the high-school student movement alone was the subject of 436,000 videos, with 8.1 billion views). According to the categorisation offered by TikTok, the daily production of content on "Society" more than doubled from late September compared with the rest of 2026: an average of 10,700 "Society" videos were published every day from 28 September to 29 October, against 5,000 from 1 January to 27 September (Appendix B, Figure 7).

The circulation of these videos follows two successive waves, matching the main phases of the mobilisations (Figure 1). The first accompanied the high-school student movement and peaked on 1 October, with 75,400 videos posted in a single day, gathering 1.7 billion views. The second accompanied the general mobilisation: it began to take shape as early as late September, gained visibility alongside the high-school demonstrations and peaked with the mobilisations of 17 October. The videos' audience then reached an exceptional level: the 84,600 videos posted on 17 October gathered nearly 2.2 billion views. Attention to the mobilisations on TikTok was therefore not concentrated on a single event: the platform accompanied the various phases of the movement, giving massive visibility to the high-school mobilisation as well as to that of 17 October.

Box 2: Where the data come from

The data come from an infrastructure run by Benjamin Guinaudeau and hosted by the Center for Social Media, AI and Politics (New York University), which continuously collects a large random sample of the videos uploaded to TikTok. From 1 September to 29 October 2026, 81.5 million videos posted from France were recorded. We then drew a stratified sample of 1.45 million videos, of which 1.05 million were downloaded and analysed with a set of artificial intelligence models. For these videos, we were thus able to describe the following attributes: the main topic of the video, its stance towards the movement (supportive, neutral or hostile), its dominant emotion, whether it mentions demands, and the type of violence shown. We also collected and analysed, along similar lines, 19.1 million comments in order to measure the reactions of the audiences exposed to this content. The method is detailed in Appendices A (collection and sampling), C (account typology), D (video coding scheme), E (audience leaning) and F (comments).

1. Was TikTok used to coordinate violence?

The first argument put forward to justify suspending social media concerns its presumed role in coordinating violence. In his letter of 22 October to the telecommunications operators, the Prime Minister stated that "several social networks played a decisive role not only in the crystallisation and virality of unlawful slogans but also as levers for the operational coordination of violence during the demonstrations (organisation of looting, exchanges about targets, movements of groups or positions of the police)".[8] Two phenomena must be distinguished: the spread of rallying calls and calls to demonstrate, which can contribute to organising the social movement, and the operational coordination of violence. Our data allow us to observe directly the circulation of calls to mobilise on the public side of TikTok. To examine the hypothesis of a coordination of violence, we look for the traces it might have left in this content: locations mentioned in advance, referrals to private messaging apps, or identical messages posted simultaneously by several accounts.

TikTok clearly played a role in circulating calls to mobilise. The date of 17 October began to gain visibility as early as 8–10 September, even before the first press articles we identified on the subject. Its spread then intensified sharply: from 1 October, more than 1,000 videos a day mentioned this date, and nearly 123,000 recorded videos referred to it between 16 September and 20 October. These results show an early and massive circulation of the rallying call.

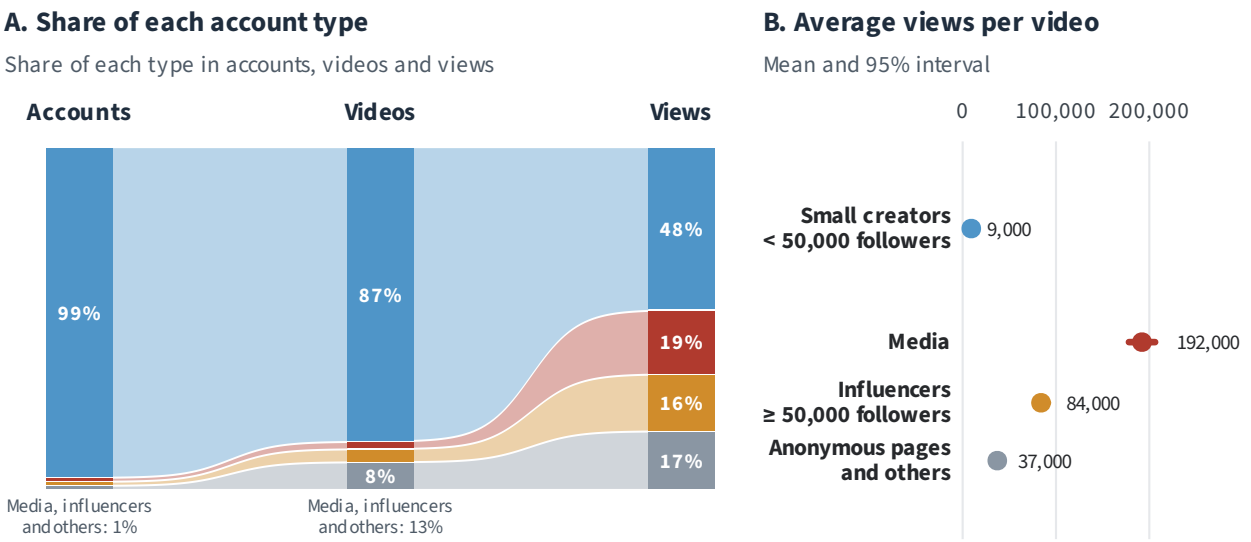
Signs of more directly organisational uses are much more limited. On the days of school blockades, about 8% of the schools observed had been named in a video before the first images of their blockade appeared. This estimate remains uncertain, however, as videos do not always make it possible to identify precisely which schools are involved. Videos specifying a place or a time gained visibility from late Septem-

[8] Letter from the Prime Minister to the heads of Orange, Bouygues Telecom, Iliad (Free) and Altice France (SFR), 22 October 2026, published by *Blast*; our translation.

Figure 2

Small creators dominate what is posted, the media enjoy outsized visibility

Share of each account type in accounts, videos and views (A); average views per video (B)



Note: share of each account type in accounts, videos and views on the mobilisations, and average views per video, 1 September – 29 October 2026.

ber, with no peak specific to the mornings of mobilisation, and these views are concentrated on a very small number of posts. Referrals to private groups on WhatsApp, Telegram or Signal are likewise more frequent in comments on the mobilisations than in other exchanges, but remain rare: about 1,100 occurrences among 4.5 million comments, less than 0.03%. TikTok thus appears as a space where rallying calls and, to a lesser extent, practical information circulate, without the public data revealing any systematic organisation of gatherings.

Signs of a coordination of violence are more tenuous still. Videos explicitly calling for violent acts are rare: depending on the day, they represent 0.04 to 0.21% of the videos on the mobilisations published in the preceding week, and at most 0.11% of their views. Before 17 October, their cumulative audience, of the order of 100,000 views, remained marginal compared with the 7.5 million views of instructions on where to gather. The places where incidents would occur on 17 October were not mentioned in advance any more than comparable places, and the simultaneous reproduction of the same instructions by several accounts concerns only about 2% of the 9,681 gathering instructions identified (1 to 3% depending on the day). Finally, nothing clearly indicates that the tensest days were preceded by peaks in explicit calls for violence.

These results do not rule out coordination outside our field of observation, in private messaging or on other platforms; nor do they establish it. While TikTok helped circulate rallying calls and some practical information, the observed data do not support the claim that the platform was used to coordinate violent acts.

2. Did TikTok fuel a contagion of violence?

Violence, a minority share of views

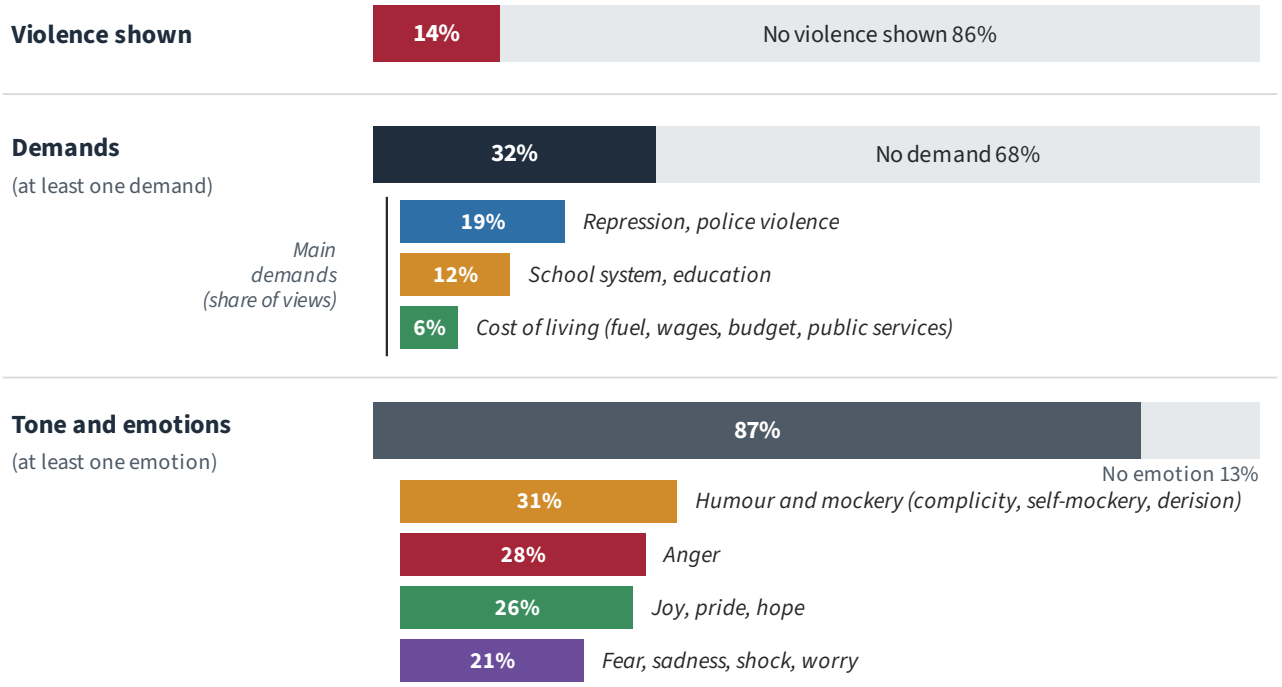
The depiction of violent acts occupies only a minority share of views on TikTok: it concerns 14% of the views of videos about the mobilisations (Figure 3). TikTok appears in particular as a space where the demands structuring the mobilisations circulate. With 32% of views, these demands are relayed far more widely than instances of violence. They concern mainly the repression of the demonstrations by the police (19% of views), the school system and teaching conditions (12%) and the cost of living (6%).

While nearly nine views out of ten concern a video conveying a particular emotion or tone, the emotional register is far from dominated by anger. Humorous tones (31% of views) and expressions of joy, pride or hope (26%) occupy a place comparable to that of anger (28% of views). The mobilisations thus appear on TikTok in varied emotional registers, in which humour and positive emotions coexist with anger, far from the image of a platform turned solely towards violent esca-

Figure 3

Content of the videos on the mobilisations

As a share of the views of videos related to the mobilisations (0.96 million videos, 16 billion views)



Note: share of the views of videos on the mobilisations that show violence, mention a demand or express an emotion, all accounts combined, 1 September – 29 October 2026; a video can mention several demands or express several emotions. How to read: 14% of views go to videos that show violence.

lation.

The relatively limited visibility of violent imagery on TikTok provides a first reason to question assumptions about the platform's role in spreading violent behaviour. This finding can be refined by examining more precisely which violence is shown, by which accounts and from which angle.

Who posts, who gets seen?

Not all videos enjoy the same visibility: 1% of them alone gather nearly 55% of views. Small creators post the vast majority of videos about the mobilisations (87%), far ahead of anonymous pages and other accounts (7.7%), influencers (3.3%) and the media (1.6%) (Figure 2; the account typology is described in Appendix C). Yet they gather only 48% of views, while the media enjoy disproportionate visibility (19% of views for 1.6% of posts). Their videos average 192,000 views, against 84,000 for those of influencers, 37,000 for those of anonymous pages and other accounts, and 9,000 for those of small creators. TikTok thus allows private individuals to reach a wide audience, while giving the media a considerable place in the circulation of images of the mobilisations.

Who contributes to the visibility of violence and of the other dimensions of the movement?

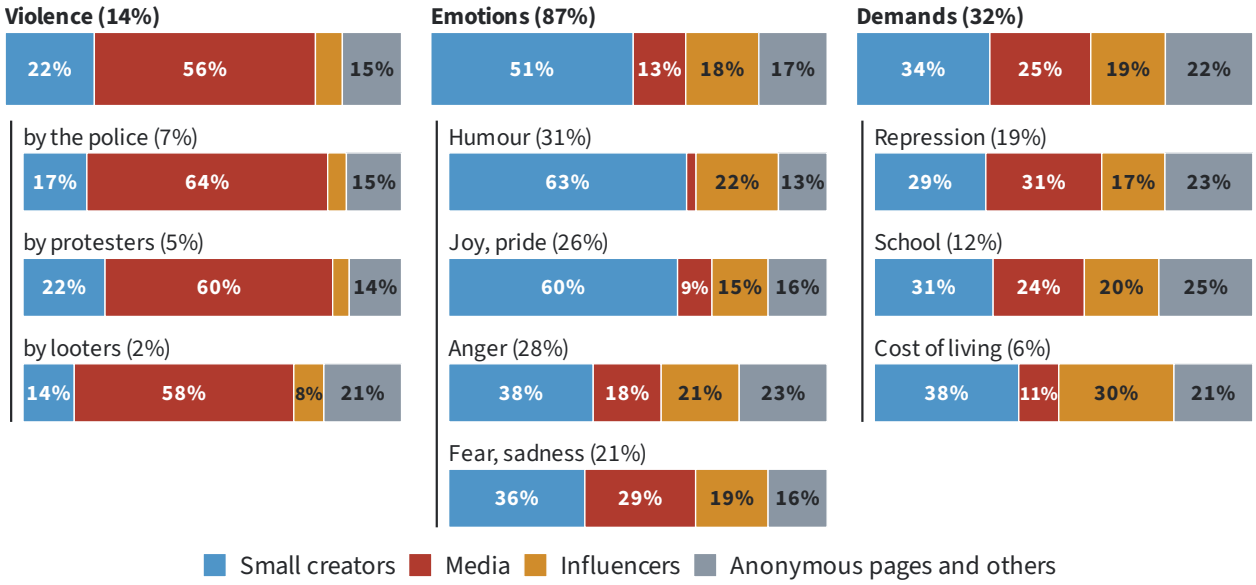
Although they concentrate nearly half of all views, small creators contribute only 22% of the views of videos showing violence, against 56% for the media (Figure 4). They tend instead to show the mobilisations from the inside, through images of blockades, marches and gatherings in which the creators themselves often take part. These videos frequently draw on a humorous or joyful register, in keeping with TikTok's codes: music, memes, staged scenes, participatory formats. Small creators thus account for nearly two thirds of the views of humorous videos (63%). Small creators also contribute to the visibility of negative emotions, though to a lesser extent: they account for 36% of the views of videos expressing fear, sadness or shock, and 38% of the views of videos expressing anger.

While the tone is predominantly convivial and positive, the content posted by small creators nonetheless has political and informational reach. Small creators contribute a third (34%) of the views of videos mentioning at least one demand, in particular those

Figure 4

Who shows the violence, the emotions and the demands of the movement?

Views in each row split between account types; in parentheses, share of all views



Note: breakdown of views between the four account types, for videos on the mobilisations that show violence, express an emotion or mention a demand, overall and then by perpetrator, emotion or demand, 1 September – 29 October 2026; in parentheses, the share of these videos in all views.

concerning the cost of living (38%) and the school system (31%). They also play a substantial part in circulating demands in response to repression and police violence (29% of views on this subject). These videos are therefore not mere entertainment: they allow participants to publicise their mobilisations by relaying their demands and their experience of events.

The visibility of violence on TikTok is due first and foremost to the media. They account for 64% of the views showing police use of force, 60% of those showing violence by protesters and 58% of those devoted to property damage and looting. Mirroring this, on the emotional side, the media account for 2% of humorous views and 9% of views of joy, pride or hope, but 18% of views of anger and 29% of views of fear, sadness or shock.

The evolution of content makes it possible to specify how these different depictions of the mobilisations succeed one another and coexist as events unfold (Appendix D, Figure 10). During the first major days of the high-school student movement, the videos posted by small creators first reflected the demonstrators' enthusiasm, with a strong circulation of content expressing joy and humour rather than anger. Demands about schools, moreover, gained visibility *before* those denouncing repression and police violence. The media, for their part, gave particularly high visibility to images of violence and expressions of fear, notably on the major days of mobilisation. Small creators continued to relay the demands and to give ample room to positive emotions, while influencers and anonymous pages also contributed to the circulation of these various registers. As 17 October approached, concerns about the cost of living gained visibility, a sign of the broadening of the movement's agenda. These developments do not suggest a growing and generalised foregrounding of violence on TikTok. They show rather that content reflects the different phases of the mobilisations, with demands and emotional registers that vary according to events and account types.

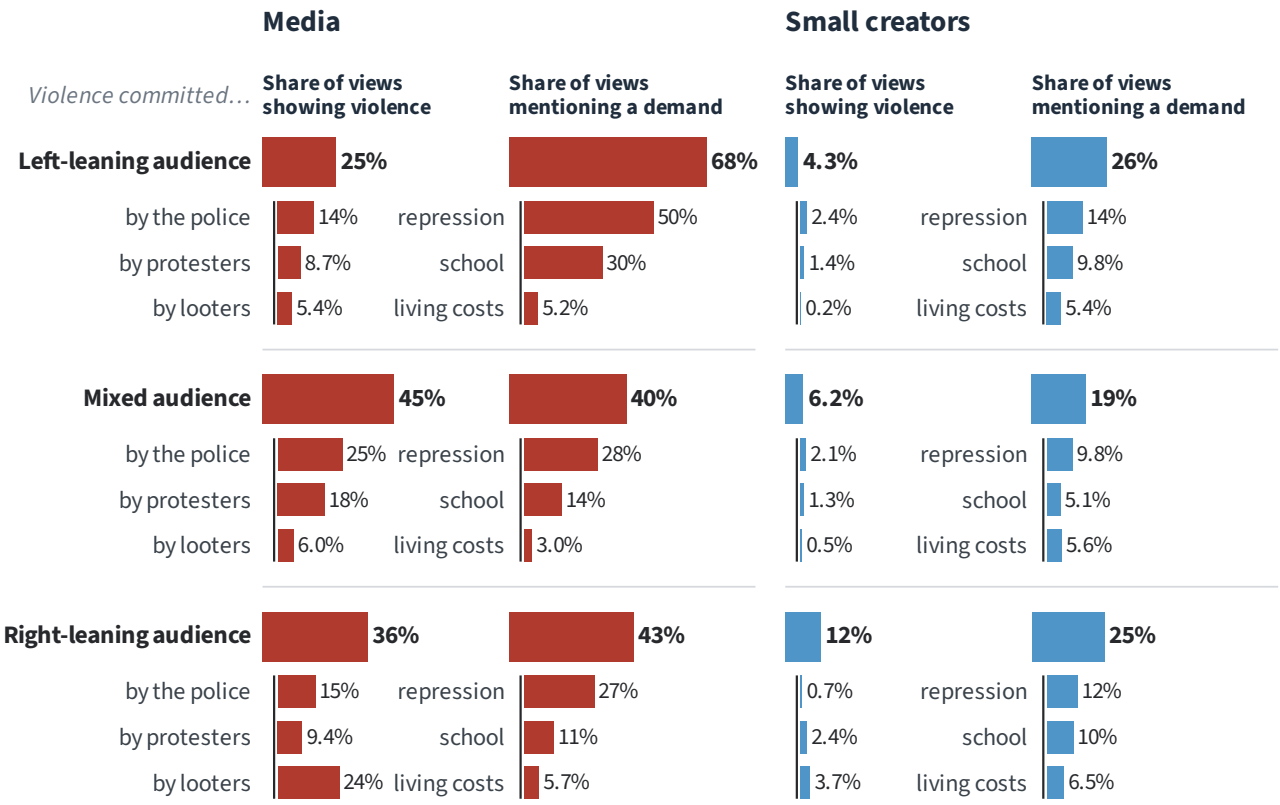
Does showing violence normalise it?

The question is not only how many violent images circulate on TikTok, but whether these images help to present violence as a legitimate or desirable practice. Circulating violent images does not necessarily imply approving of them: it can also serve to denounce the acts depicted. To assess the plausibility of the contagion mechanism, we examine the political context in which these images circulate and how they fit into the different depictions of the mobilisations. We therefore look at the political leaning of the audience of the accounts that circulate these images, estimated from their commenters (Appendix E) and strongly correlated with their stance towards the mobilisations: accounts on the left tend more to support the movement,

Figure 5

Who shows violence, who relays the demands?

Share of the views of each account type, by the political leaning of its audience, that show violence (by perpetrator) or mention a demand (by demand)



Note: share of views going to videos showing violence, overall and then by perpetrator, or mentioning a demand, overall and then by demand, according to the political leaning of the account's audience (Appendix E), for small creators and the media, 1 September – 29 October 2026; cells based on fewer than 100 coded videos are faded. Influencers and anonymous pages and others: Figure 11 in Appendix D.

while those on the right are generally more hostile to it (see Appendix E, Figure 12).

The results reveal marked differences according to the political leaning of accounts, particularly among the media (Figure 5; for influencers and anonymous pages and other accounts, see Appendix D, Figure 11). Whereas 25% of the views of media on the left concern videos showing violence, this proportion reaches 36% for those on the right, and 45% for those with a mixed audience, where police use of force is the main violence shown (25% of views). The gap is particularly pronounced for looting and property damage, which account for 5% of the views of media on the left, against 24% for those on the right. Conversely, media on the left give more visibility to demands (68% of views, against 40% for media with a mixed audience and 43% on the right), notably those concerning repression and police violence (50% against 28% and 27%) and the school system (30% against 14% and 12%). Media on the right also refer to these demands, but in videos that are often hostile to the movement.

These differences also emerge across news outlets, with their stance on the protest being closely associated with the political leanings of their audiences (Appendix E). Left-leaning outlets such as *Le Média* or *StreetPress* give greater visibility to police violence, while right-leaning outlets such as *CNews*, *Le Figaro* or *Europe 1* give greater visibility to property damage and looting. A similar political pattern emerges in the coverage of protesters' grievances: the further to the right a news outlet's audience leans, the less visibility it tends to give to these grievances (Appendix E, Figures 15 and 14).

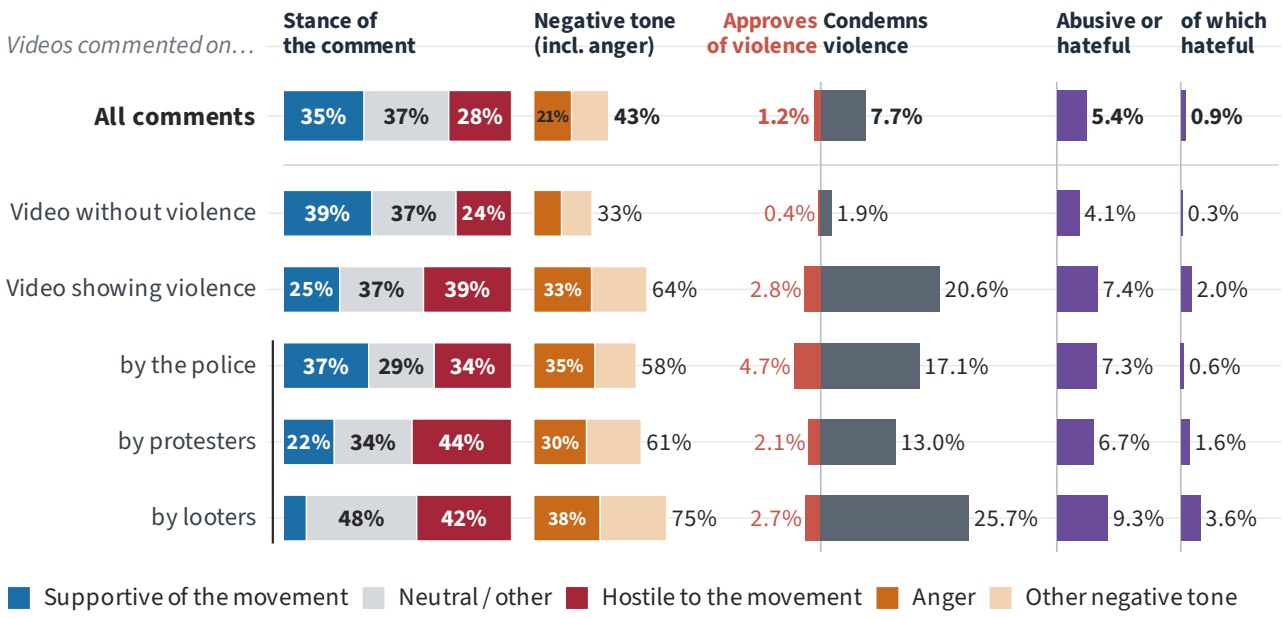
Small creators, for their part, stand out for the much smaller place occupied by images of violence in the views of their videos, whatever the leaning of their audience. This share is particularly low for accounts on the left (4% of views, against 12% on the right). Beyond ideological differences, small creators' videos give more room to substantive demands than to images of violence.

These results invite us to distinguish the circulation of

Figure 6

Comments: stance, tone and relation to violence

All coded comments, then by the content of the video commented on: stance towards the movement and negative tone, share of comments that approve of (call for, threaten or celebrate) or condemn a violent act, share of abusive or hateful comments, of which hateful



Note: left, stance towards the movement of the coded comments and share of comments with a negative tone, including those expressing anger; right, share of comments that call for violence, threaten, celebrate or condemn a violent act, and share of abusive or hateful comments. All comments under videos on the mobilisations, then according to whether the video shows violence and who commits it, 1 September – 29 October 2026.

images of violence from any glorification of it. The visibility given to looting and property damage by media whose audience lies on the right suggests that these images can also circulate in a context of criticism of the protesters. Likewise, the place given to police violence by media whose audience lies on the left is a reminder that showing violence can also serve to denounce it and to feed public debate. Images of violence thus take part in contrasting political depictions of the mobilisations, and their visibility cannot be equated with approval of violent behaviour.

Images that fuel anger, but not necessarily support for violence

The analysis of the 4.5 million comments posted under videos about the mobilisations (Appendices F and G) provides a complementary test of the normalisation hypothesis, this time by looking at the reactions the videos provoke. These comments offer only a partial view of this reception, since the users who express themselves are not necessarily representative of the audience as a whole. They nonetheless allow us to observe some of the emotions and positions that accompany the circulation of images.

Under videos showing violence, 64% of comments have a negative tone, against 33% under the others (Figure 6). Anger, in particular, is twice as frequent (33% of comments, against 16% under videos without violence). Violent images are associated with more heated exchanges. But expressing anger does not necessarily go hand in hand with supporting violence: it can also reflect indignation at the acts depicted.

The nature of the violence shown sheds important light on this point. Under videos of police violence, comments supportive of the movement are as numerous as hostile comments (37% against 34%). The trend reverses sharply when videos depict violence committed by protesters: 44% of comments then express hostility to the movement, against 22% expressing support. Under videos of looting, hostility reaches 42% of comments and support falls to 10%.

Examining the comments that explicitly approve of, condemn or encourage violence makes it possible to refine this finding (Figure 6). Overall, condemnations are nearly ten times more frequent than celebrations of violent acts (7.7% of comments, against 0.8%). Under videos showing violence, 20.6% of comments explicitly condemn violent acts, against 2.2% that celebrate them. Condemnation dominates whatever the nature

of the violence depicted, whether committed by the police (17.1% against 4.2% celebrations), by protesters (13% against 1.3%) or by the perpetrators of looting (25.7% against 1.7%). Images of violence do indeed provoke reactions of anger and sometimes of approval, but they are far more often accompanied by an explicit condemnation of violent acts.

Expressions more directly likely to encourage violence remain relatively rare. Explicit calls to commit violence account for 0.27% of all comments and threats for 0.09%. These proportions are higher under videos showing violence (0.43% and 0.20% respectively), but remain limited. Calls for violence, moreover, target specific actors: the perpetrators of looting and property damage are their first target. The presence of these messages should not be minimised, but their content does not necessarily amount to an incitement to reproduce the violence shown: they may also call for violence against its perpetrators.

Beyond explicit encouragement of violence, the comments also reveal a sometimes virulent conflictuality. Insults targeting a person or a group (abusive comments) account for 5.4% of all comments. This total includes 0.9% of all comments that are hateful, that is, linked to origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability (Appendix G). These proportions are markedly higher under videos showing violence, where they reach 7.4% and 2% respectively. The circulation of violent images thus goes along with a notable deterioration in the tone of exchanges, which should not be minimised. However, while insults and hateful comments contribute to the deterioration of public debate, they do not necessarily reflect a desire to encourage or reproduce the violent acts depicted.

These results do not rule out that some content may encourage violent behaviour, nor do they measure its effects on viewers. They do show, however, that the intensity of the reactions provoked by images of violence cannot be equated with support for the acts depicted. The anger and conflictuality that characterise part of the exchanges are far more often accompanied by condemnation than by celebration or calls for violence. The comments support neither the hypothesis of a generalised normalisation nor that of a glorification: they reveal contrasting reactions in which indignation and denunciation occupy an important place.

3. No sign of major artificial amplification

The third argument for considering a suspension of the platforms concerns the potential for artificial amplification of content, notably as part of foreign interference operations or through the use of artificial intelligence (AI). The way platforms work, favouring the rapid circulation of content likely to hold attention, can indeed create incentives to circulate spectacular images, notably of violence, regardless of their informational value or authenticity. Such a dynamic could be exploited by actors seeking to increase their visibility or to influence depictions of the mobilisations. To assess the scope of this hypothesis, we first examine whether images of violence enjoy particular visibility on TikTok, before looking for possible traces of artificial fabrication of content or of coordinated operations aimed at amplifying their circulation.

Overall, videos showing violent acts account for about 13% of posts and 14% of views about the mobilisations, which does not suggest any general visibility premium attached to this content. Within the same account, and taking the day of publication into account, a typical video showing violence is associated with 40% more views for the media, but with 34% fewer views for small creators (Appendix I). These gaps persist when only images of demonstrations are compared. In other words, showing violence does not increase the audience of small creators. This finding questions the existence of a generalised incentive to circulate violent images in order to gain visibility.

Content generated by artificial intelligence is certainly present in videos about the mobilisations, but its visibility remains limited. According to the labels applied by TikTok (Appendix H), 6.8% of videos about the high-school student movement and 8.6% of those about the general mobilisation are produced with AI assistance, which includes the style filters offered by TikTok, used innocuously by creators. These proportions are comparable to those observed on the rest of the platform (8.2%). This non-negligible share of videos nonetheless represents only 2.5% of the views of videos about the high-school mobilisations and 2.1% of those about the general mobilisation, with no visible surge around 1 or 17 October. Moreover, comments questioning the authenticity of videos remain relatively infrequent (1.4%). These results therefore do not suggest that AI-generated content occupied a predominant place in the depiction of the mobilisations on TikTok.

We also searched all videos and comments for the usual signs of coordinated amplification operations, notably of foreign origin. Six indicators were examined (Appendix H): the origin of accounts, the topics and framing of videos, simultaneous account creations, synchronised and copied posts, the location of commenters, and recent accounts and spam.

None reveals any large-scale interference operation. Foreign videos about the mobilisations gather few views and come almost entirely from neighbouring French-speaking countries or French-speaking Africa; none is linked to Russia. Less than 1% of comments come from accounts created after the start of the mobilisations. Our data thus reveal no coordinated campaign aimed at artificially amplifying the violence. These results are consistent with the available public findings, which are rare after 17 October. In mid-September, VIGINUM, the state service responsible for detecting foreign digital interference, had noted only very slight relaying outside France of the calls for 17 October, with almost no audience. *Le Monde* then reported a dozen accounts created or renamed on 9 September to relay these calls, but with an apparently lucrative aim.[9] In late September, VIGINUM noted no particular artificial amplification around the blockades.[10] After 17 October, the President of the Republic said he saw no visible foreign interference in the events, while denouncing a foreign manipulation of information in their wake.[11]

These observations do not rule out isolated operations or manipulations that escape the indicators used. Our analysis covers unsponsored posts geolocated in France and uploaded to TikTok; it covers neither paid advertising, nor the use of VPNs masking the country of origin, nor campaigns run on other platforms. It nonetheless reveals no sign of any major artificial amplification of images of violence during the mobilisations studied, whether through content generated by artificial intelligence or through coordinated foreign interference operations.

4. Conclusion

The violence that accompanied the mobilisations of autumn 2026 led the French authorities to consider restrictions on social media up to and including a temporary suspension of access to several platforms. Three mechanisms were invoked to justify this prospect: the coordination of violence, its contagion through the circulation of violent images, and its artificial amplification, notably through foreign interference operations or the use of artificial intelligence. Our analysis of the public content posted on TikTok does not make it possible to dismiss these risks entirely, but it provides little empirical support for the decisive role attributed to the platform in the spread of violence.

TikTok contributed substantially to the circulation of calls to mobilise, but our data reveal no convergent traces of any operational coordination of violence. The hypothesis of contagion through images finds little support in the content observed: violence occupies only a minority place in the videos about the mobilisations, while demands and humorous or positive registers enjoy wide visibility. Violent images, mainly posted by the media, fit into contrasting political depictions and provoke more condemnation than celebration or calls for violence. Finally, our analyses reveal neither a general visibility premium associated with violent images, nor a predominant role for artificial intelligence, nor signs of any major foreign interference operation.

Restricting these platforms would particularly affect young people, who are among their main users, even though they are under-represented among elected officials and the ageing of electorates tends to reduce the weight of their interests in political choices (Munger 2022; Vlandas 2023; Stockemer and Sundström 2025). Our results illustrate the importance of social media as spaces for information, expression and mobilisation. They invite us to question the relevance of a restriction whose effectiveness in preventing violence remains to be established.

Our study does not, however, settle definitively the question of TikTok's role in the spread of violence. It rests on the platform's public content, without access to private exchanges, to the inner workings of the recommendation algorithms, or to the videos each user was actually exposed to. Yet determining whether certain audiences, especially the youngest, were particularly exposed to images of violence or to calls for violence would require observing the recommendation feeds themselves, not only what creators produce.

Grounding the debate in empirical observations. There are two ways of accessing these data. The first goes through the platform: the EU Digital Services Act provides for their opening to approved researchers; it is for TikTok to apply it and for the public authorities to see to it. This access would be crucial for studying

[9] D. Leloup and F. Reynaud, "Les "gilets jaunes" de retour le 17 octobre : itinéraire d'une rumeur née sur TikTok", *Le Monde*, 16 September 2026.
[10] "Le blocus des lycées prend de l'ampleur et oppose La France insoumise et le gouvernement", *Le Monde*, 28 September 2026.
[11] Press briefing in Doha, 21 October 2026, reported by *Euronews* and *Clubic*.

the effects of platforms on society. The second goes through users themselves: anyone can download their TikTok history and donate it to research. These donations show which videos were actually watched and make it possible to better understand the role of recommendations in the circulation of images of the mobilisations. Our scheme, hosted by the University of Zurich, makes it possible to hand over these data voluntarily and securely, without providing any name, messages or contacts, and without any publication of individual information (link and QR code on the first page).

When restrictions on fundamental freedoms are being considered in response to the risks associated with digital platforms, ensuring independent access to the data needed to assess those risks becomes a matter of fundamental democratic importance.

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Appendices

These appendices specify what is measured in the note, over which period, with which sample sizes and which categories: the data (A), the volume of the "Society" category over the year (B), the account typology (C), the video coding scheme and the profile of the four account types (D), the political leaning of audiences (E), the coding of comments (F), their toxicity (G), content generated by artificial intelligence and signs of interference (H), and finally the views associated with images of violence (I).

A. Data

Period All estimates cover the window from 1 September to 29 October 2026, i.e. 59 days, which spans the peak of the high-school student movement (1 and 2 October), the marches of 6 and 13 October, the general mobilisation of 17 October, its aftermath and the ebb of 24 October.

Source The infrastructure of the Center for Social Media, AI and Politics (New York University) continuously collects a large random sample of TikTok posts at the moment they are uploaded. Over the period, 81.5 million posts from French accounts were captured.

Identifying content related to the mobilisations Two criteria guide the sampling strategy: the "Society" category that TikTok assigns to some videos, and seven keywords searched for in the caption and on-screen text ("blocu", "manif", "17oct", "lycee", "gilets", "17 octobre", "commercants"), which isolate 0.9% of the national flow but more than 80% of the views of videos on the mobilisations.

Sampling strategy The flow is divided into four broad sets: "Society" videos carrying the vocabulary of the mobilisations (109,000 captured posts), videos carrying this vocabulary without being classified as "Society" (618,000), "Society" videos without this vocabulary (367,000) and the rest of the flow (80.4 million, i.e. 98.7% of the 81.5 million captured posts), also sampled so as not to miss videos on the mobilisations without an explicit caption. Ten strata (Table 1) are drawn in full where videos on the mobilisations are frequent, and at random each day and by view bracket elsewhere. 1,053,244 videos were thus downloaded and described; each represents the videos of its stratum according to its sampling probability, calibrated day by day. The weights of eighteen videos that went viral and were not representative of their strata were corrected, so that none of them weighs excessively on the estimates.

Identifying videos on the mobilisations Of the 1,053,244 videos downloaded and described, 142,604 are about the two mobilisations, of which 141,648 are coded with the detailed scheme. Once weighted, they represent 964,000 posts and 16.2 billion views: 435,928 posts and 8.09 billion views for the high-school student movement, 527,823 posts and 8.12 billion views for the general mobilisation. The peak of the high-school student movement, on 1 October, counts 75,393 videos and 1.70 billion views; that of the general mobilisation, on 17 October, 84,599 videos and 2.18 billion views (Figure 1). The estimated daily volume of videos on the high-school student movement closely tracks the count of disrupted schools recorded by the press and the Ministry of Education ($r = 0.94$).

Measuring audience: views Views were collected on 31 October for 90% of the videos on the mobilisations; comparing the share of videos with the share of views separates supply from consumption. Views result both from an account's audience and from the distribution of its videos through the "For You" feed, where the recommendation algorithm offers each user videos based on the reactions they provoke, with no follow relationship; our data do not separate these two sources.

B. Volume of the "Society" category over the year 2026

To place the autumn sequence within the year, all videos attached to France and classified as "Society" by TikTok were tracked from 1 January to 29 October 2026: 1,691,726 videos posted by 359,413 accounts (Figure 7). From 1 January to 27 September, the category counts about 5,000 videos a day, with three secondary peaks of 8,300 to 8,800 videos a day (municipal elections and strikes on Iran in early March, wildfires in Gironde in late June, a tornado in Aude in late August). The volume then more than doubles: from 28 September to 29 October, the average reaches 10,700 "Society" videos a day; the weekly record is set in the very first week, that of 28 September, with 13,479 videos a day, and the daily peaks exceed 31,000 videos on 1 October and 32,000 on 17 October in the series shown in the figure.

C. Typology of creators

Account The 7,186 institutional, political, media or high-visibility accounts in the sample were classified by a language model (Claude Sonnet) from a standardised profile sheet (account metadata, posting history, sample of captions).

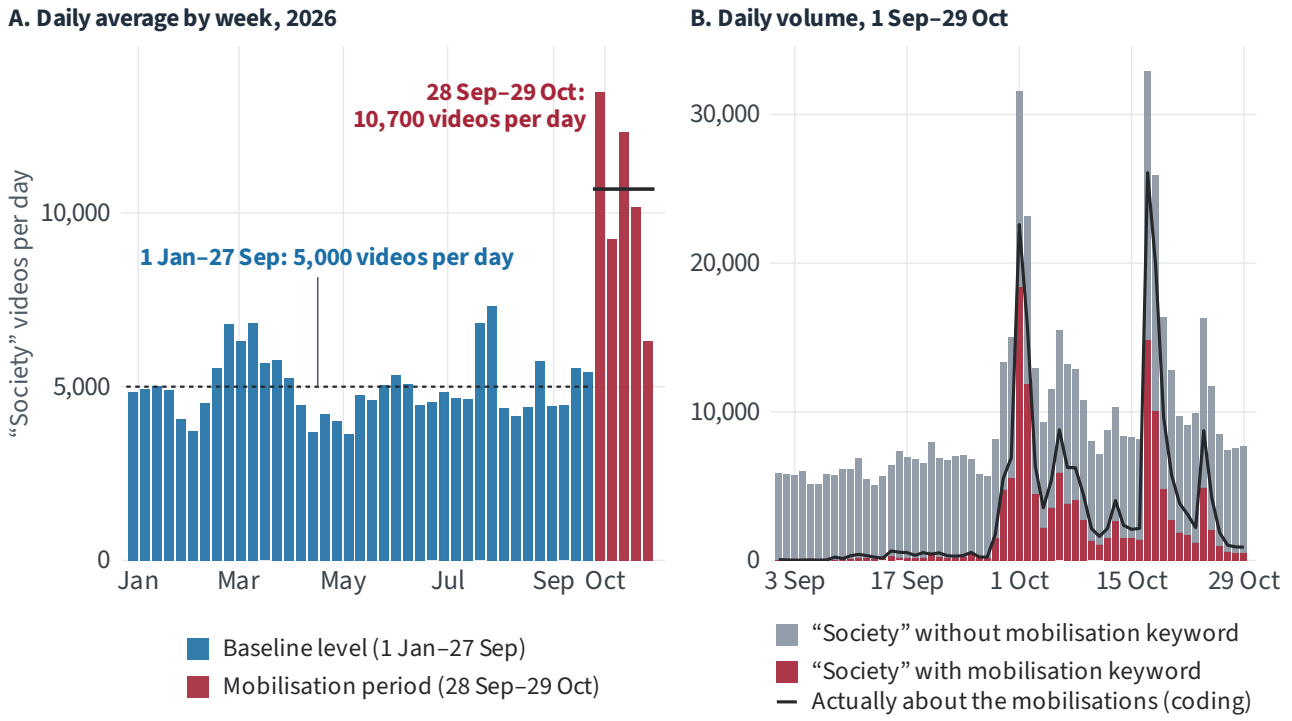
Table 1
Strata of the sampling design: videos described, 1 September – 29 October 2026

Stratum	Total number	Share of flow	Described	Share described
Society or vocabulary of the mobilisations				
1. Society and vocabulary	121,000	0.15%	73,279	60.6%
2. Media accounts	38,000	0.05%	27,366	72.0%
3. Vocabulary: caption and on-screen text	81,000	0.10%	44,526	54.7%
4. Vocabulary: caption or on-screen text	672,000	0.82%	47,250	7.0%
5. Society without vocabulary	310,000	0.38%	37,357	12.1%
6. Vocabulary: transcript only	50,000	0.06%	5,559	11.2%
Rest of the flow: neither Society nor vocabulary				
7. Media accounts	161,000	0.20%	92,674	57.6%
8. Accounts with at least two "Society and vocabulary" videos	716,000	0.88%	317,881	44.4%
9. Accounts with one "Society and vocabulary" video	917,000	1.13%	91,170	9.9%
10. Other posts	78,457,000	96.24%	316,182	0.4%
Total	**81,523,000**	**100%**	**1,053,244**	**1.3%**

Note: total number estimated from the sampling probabilities, the last stratum being obtained by difference with the 81.5 million posts. Described: videos downloaded and described; share described: described videos relative to the total number. The total includes posts without video, not drawn, which lowers this share. "Vocabulary": terms used for sampling, broader than the seven detection roots.

Figure 7

In late September, the daily volume of "Society" videos reaches nearly three times its usual level



Note: collection counts, panel B being adjusted for hourly coverage; "keyword": one of the seven roots in the caption or on-screen text. Black line: "Society" videos about the mobilisations according to the coding, i.e. 4% of the volume before 28 September and 48% afterwards.

Table 2
Accounts, videos, views and average views per video by account type, 1 September – 29 October 2026

Account type	Accounts	Share	Videos	Share	Views (millions)	Share	Views per video	95% CI
Media	376	0.1%	15,677	1.6%	3,012	18.6%	192,152	178,146 to 206,234
Anonymous pages	1,969	0.4%	61,043	6.3%	2,067	12.8%	33,867	31,523 to 36,342
Influencers (> 50k)	2,410	0.5%	31,783	3.3%	2,669	16.5%	83,984	77,458 to 91,424
Small creators	442,220	98.8%	842,448	87.4%	7,792	48.1%	9,249	8,646 to 9,861
Political and activist actors	344	0.1%	10,716	1.1%	537	3.3%	50,088	42,825 to 59,285
Other organisations	144	< 0.1%	2,084	0.2%	136	0.8%	65,266	47,142 to 90,851
Total	**447,463**	**100%**	**963,751**	**100%**	**16,213**	**100%**	**16,823**	

Note: videos on the mobilisations.

Account types Table 2 distinguishes six account types; the counts are those of accounts active on the mobilisations. The *media* (376 accounts) are the official accounts of news organisations with an identifiable newsroom, whether national (BFMTV, TF1 Info, franceinfo, *Le Monde*), regional or born online (Brut, HugoDécrypte, Loopsider); a journalist's personal account is not included. *Anonymous pages* (1,969 accounts) repost or aggregate news videos or viral clips with no identifiable person or newsroom. *Influencers* (2,410 accounts) are all other accounts with at least 50,000 followers, the usual threshold in the literature for macro-influencers. *Small creators* (an estimated 442,220 accounts) are all other accounts with fewer than 50,000 followers; a private individual one of whose videos goes viral remains a small creator. *Political and activist actors* (344 accounts) bring together elected officials, the government, parties, trade unions, high-school and university student organisations, institutions, protest collectives and accounts dedicated to the blockade of a given school. *Other organisations* (144 accounts) are the accounts of organisations that fit none of these categories. In the figures, these last two types are grouped with anonymous pages under the name "anonymous pages and others" (Figure 2). Without the follower threshold, influencers and celebrities, identifiable people whose audience constitutes their activity or their fame, account for 6.7% of videos and 31.1% of views.

D. Video coding scheme and profile of the four account types

Two steps Each of the 1,053,244 downloaded videos is first described by an audio-visual model that watches the images, listens to the soundtrack and reads the caption, with instructions to describe the scene, the words spoken and any acts of force or damage, without judgement. A language model then classifies each description by topic, into three categories: high-school student movement, general mobilisation and other topics. The 142,604 videos classified in one of the first two categories are coded with the scheme below (141,648 usable codings). On a control sample coded in parallel by a second model, agreement (kappa) reaches 0.67 on the topic, 0.70 on the presence of violence and 0.55 to 0.77 on the stance towards the movement.

Violence The scheme codes violence shown on screen: an act of physical coercion, confrontation or material destruction visible in the video. Three categories of acts can combine: police use of force (charges, blows, grenades, rubber-bullet (LBD) shots, arrests with physical restraint), clashes and projectile throwing, and property damage, arson and looting. The visible perpetrators (police, protesters or students, perpetrators of looting and damage, "looters" in the figures) and the targets (property, protesters and students, the police) are coded.

Demands A demand is coded when a claim attributed to the participants of the movement is expressed orally, on a placard or in the caption, in four families: repression and police violence; the school system (resources, unreplaced teachers, buildings, class sizes, the Parcoursup university admissions platform); the cost of living, wages and public services; the resignation of the executive or the dissolution of parliament.

Emotions and stance Fifteen categories, coded for presence, are grouped into four families: humour and

Table 3
Content profile of videos by the four account types: share of each type's views (columns 1 to 4) and breakdown of the views of each content category between the four types (columns 5 to 8)

	Share of the account type's views				Breakdown of the category's views (100%)			
Content category	**Small creat.**	**Media**	**Influenc.**	**Anon. pages**	**Small creat.**	**Media**	**Influenc.**	**Anon. pages**
All views	100%	100%	100%	100%	48.1%	18.6%	16.5%	16.9%
Violence shown on screen	6.7%	42.7%	5.9%	12.6%	22.5%	55.8%	6.8%	14.9%
committed by the police	35.7%	54.4%	34.8%	46.5%	16.9%	63.6%	5.0%	14.6%
committed by protesters	35.0%	39.1%	23.4%	33.6%	21.7%	60.1%	4.4%	13.8%
committed by looters	9.8%	17.0%	19.1%	22.5%	13.5%	58.0%	7.9%	20.5%
target: property	76.3%	55.7%	78.4%	71.4%	26.7%	48.4%	8.3%	16.6%
target: protesters, students	36.1%	58.1%	33.8%	46.3%	16.3%	65.2%	4.6%	13.9%
target: the police	5.5%	22.0%	9.7%	14.1%	7.6%	75.3%	4.1%	13.0%
At least one emotion	92.1%	61.8%	97.0%	88.4%	51.1%	13.2%	18.4%	17.2%
humour, mockery	40.9%	4.2%	41.4%	23.8%	62.9%	2.5%	21.8%	12.9%
joy, pride, hope	33.1%	12.9%	23.7%	24.3%	60.5%	9.1%	14.8%	15.6%
anger	22.0%	26.8%	34.7%	38.0%	38.2%	18.0%	20.6%	23.2%
fear, sadness, shock	15.5%	32.6%	24.1%	19.1%	36.0%	29.3%	19.1%	15.6%
At least one demand	22.3%	43.6%	36.4%	41.5%	33.7%	25.5%	18.8%	22.0%
repression, police violence	11.4%	30.7%	18.9%	25.5%	29.5%	30.6%	16.7%	23.2%
school system	8.1%	16.1%	14.8%	18.2%	31.4%	24.1%	19.7%	24.8%
cost of living, public services	5.2%	3.7%	12.0%	8.0%	38.2%	10.6%	30.4%	20.8%
Supportive of the movement	57.2%	17.8%	49.9%	43.3%	59.3%	7.1%	17.7%	15.8%
Neutral	27.3%	79.1%	31.7%	36.5%	33.4%	37.5%	13.3%	15.7%
Hostile to the movement	14.4%	3.0%	17.2%	19.0%	51.3%	4.1%	20.9%	23.7%
Gives voice to an actor or witness	4.7%	26.8%	5.0%	17.6%	20.5%	45.1%	7.4%	27.0%
of whom a mobilised high-school student	13.6%	16.4%	9.6%	15.3%	47.6%	22.1%	11.4%	18.8%

Note: columns 1 to 4, share of each type's views going to the category (perpetrators and targets: among the views of videos showing violence); columns 5 to 8, breakdown of the category's views between the types.

mockery; anger and indignation, with their target; joy, pride and hope; fear, sadness, shock and worry. As a video can combine several registers, the sum of the shares can exceed 100%. The video's stance towards the movement is coded as supportive, neutral or hostile.

Profile of the four account types Table 3 and Figure 8 give all the indicators for the four types, as a share of each type's views and as a contribution to the views of each content category; Figure 9 gives the daily series for violence, demands, joy and anger; Figure 10 breaks them down by perpetrator of violence, emotion and demand. Influencers resemble small creators: 5.9% of their views show violence (6.7% for small creators, 42.7% for the media), 41% go to humorous videos (41% and 4%), 50% to videos supportive of the movement (57% and 18%); they differ by a larger place for anger (35% against 22%) and demands (36% against 22%). Anonymous pages and other accounts are intermediate: 12.6% of their views show violence and 37% go to neutral videos.

E. Political leaning of audiences

Principle As subscriptions are private on TikTok, public comments serve as a trace of attention. To locate the audience of accounts without using the content of their videos or our annotations, we exploit the overlap between their commenters and those of identified political accounts, in the spirit of Barberá (2015) and Cointet et al. (2021).

Construction The 82 political accounts in the corpus (parties, elected officials, trade unions, activist collectives) and the 29,623 users who commented on at least two of them are cross-tabulated in a correspondence analysis, whose first axis orders these accounts from left to right. Each commenter receives the average position of the political accounts they commented on (210,382 positioned commenters), and each producer account the average position of its positioned commenters. The accounts named in the figures have at least 100 of them, except four: L'Express and Voici (17), Omerta (25) and Sud Radio (72); the analyses by account type (Figure 5) retain accounts with at least 10 positioned commenters, i.e. 6,210 accounts gathering 93% of coded comments, divided into three audience strata (left, centre or mixed, right).

External validation The positioning of media audiences is compared with three surveys conducted outside TikTok (Figure 12): the gap in trust towards eight

Figure 8

Video content: share of views by account type, and views per day

Left: share of each account type's views devoted to each category, over the whole period. Right: millions of views per day (3-day moving average; each panel has its own scale); dotted lines mark 1 and 17 October.

Violence shown, by type

	Small	Media	Influ.	Pages
Police force	2.5%	27%	2.2%	5.9%
Clashes	0.7%	11%	1.1%	2.5%
Damage, looting	5.1%	25%	4.6%	9.0%

Violence shown, by perpetrator

	Small	Media	Influ.	Pages
Police	2.4%	23%	2.0%	5.8%
Protesters	2.3%	17%	1.4%	4.2%
Looters	0.7%	7.3%	1.1%	2.8%

Violence shown, by target

	Small	Media	Influ.	Pages
Property	5.1%	24%	4.6%	9.0%
Protesters, students	2.4%	25%	2.0%	5.8%
Police	0.4%	9.4%	0.6%	1.8%

Demands

	Small	Media	Influ.	Pages
Repression	11%	31%	19%	26%
School	8.1%	16%	15%	18%
Cost of living	5.2%	3.7%	12%	8.0%

Emotions

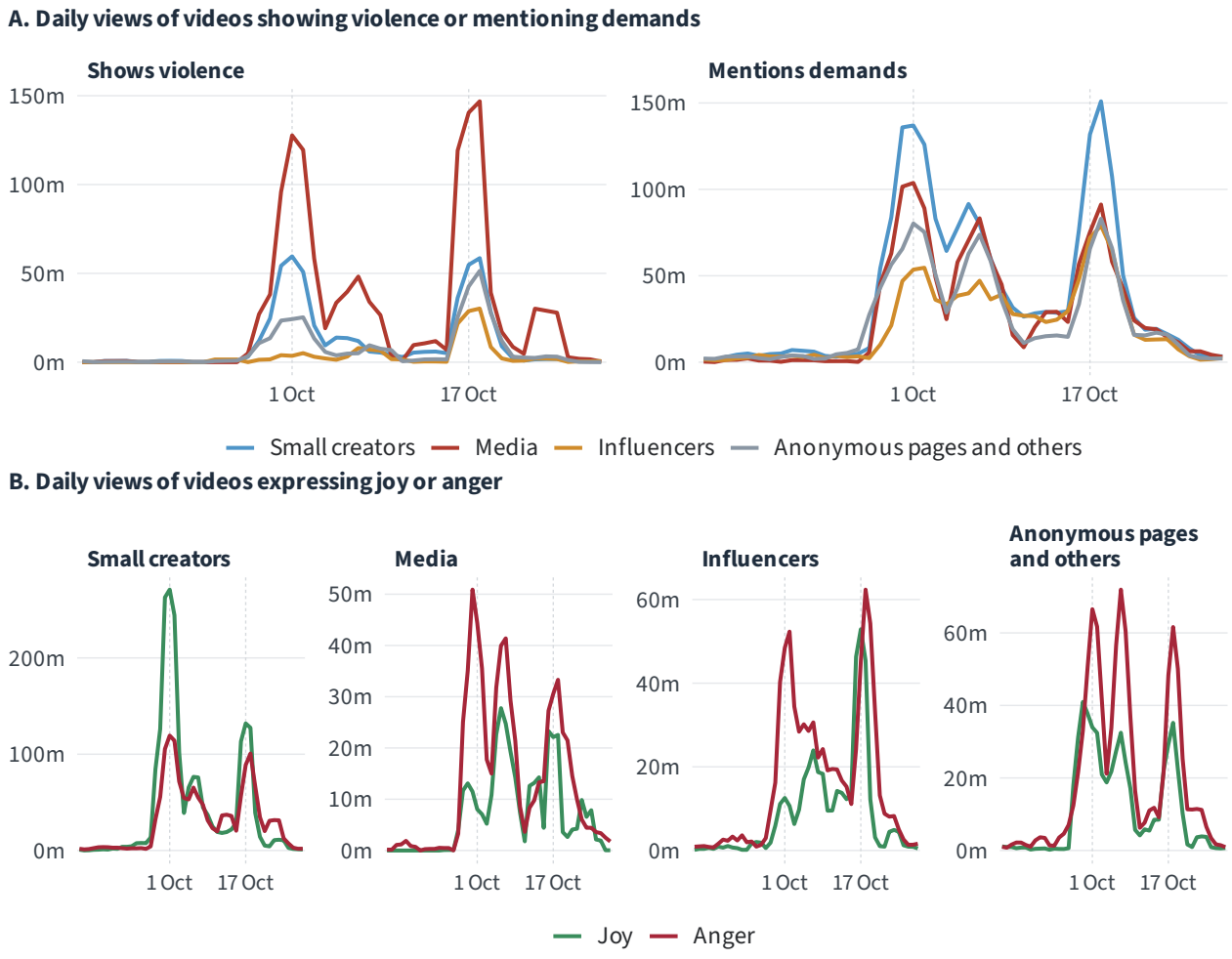
	Small	Media	Influ.	Pages
Anger	22%	27%	35%	38%
Joy, pride	33%	13%	24%	24%
Humour	41%	4.2%	41%	24%
Fear, sadness	16%	33%	24%	19%



Note: left, share of each type's views going to each category; right, daily views of each type. How to read: property damage, arson or looting is visible in 25% of the views of the media, against at most 9% for the other types.

Figure 9

Daily views of videos showing violence, mentioning a demand, expressing joy or anger, for the four account types

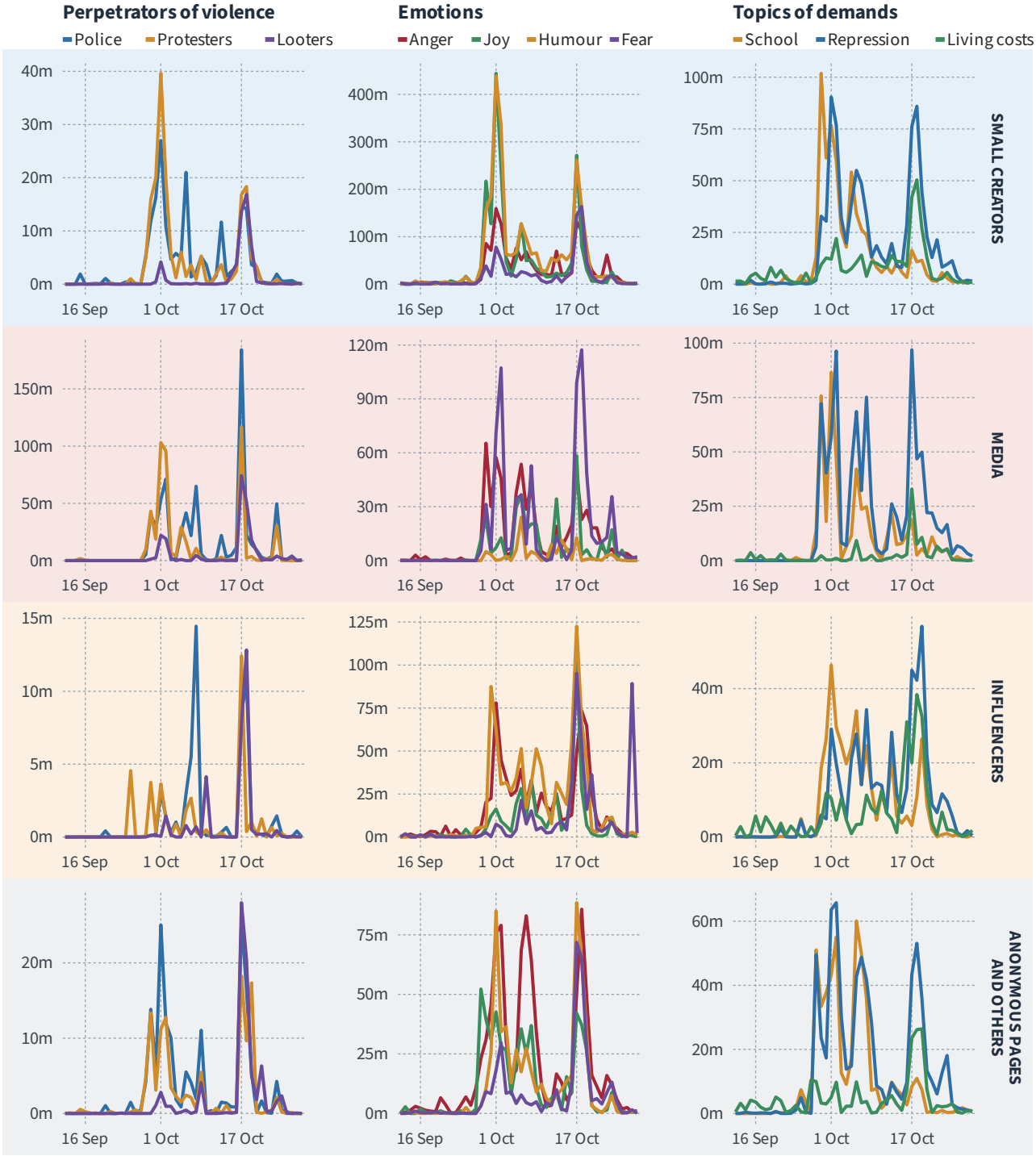


Note: daily views, in millions, 12 September – 29 October 2026. How to read: among small creators, joy clearly outweighs anger on 1 October.

Figure 10

Daily views by account type

In millions of views per day (12 September – 29 October 2026)

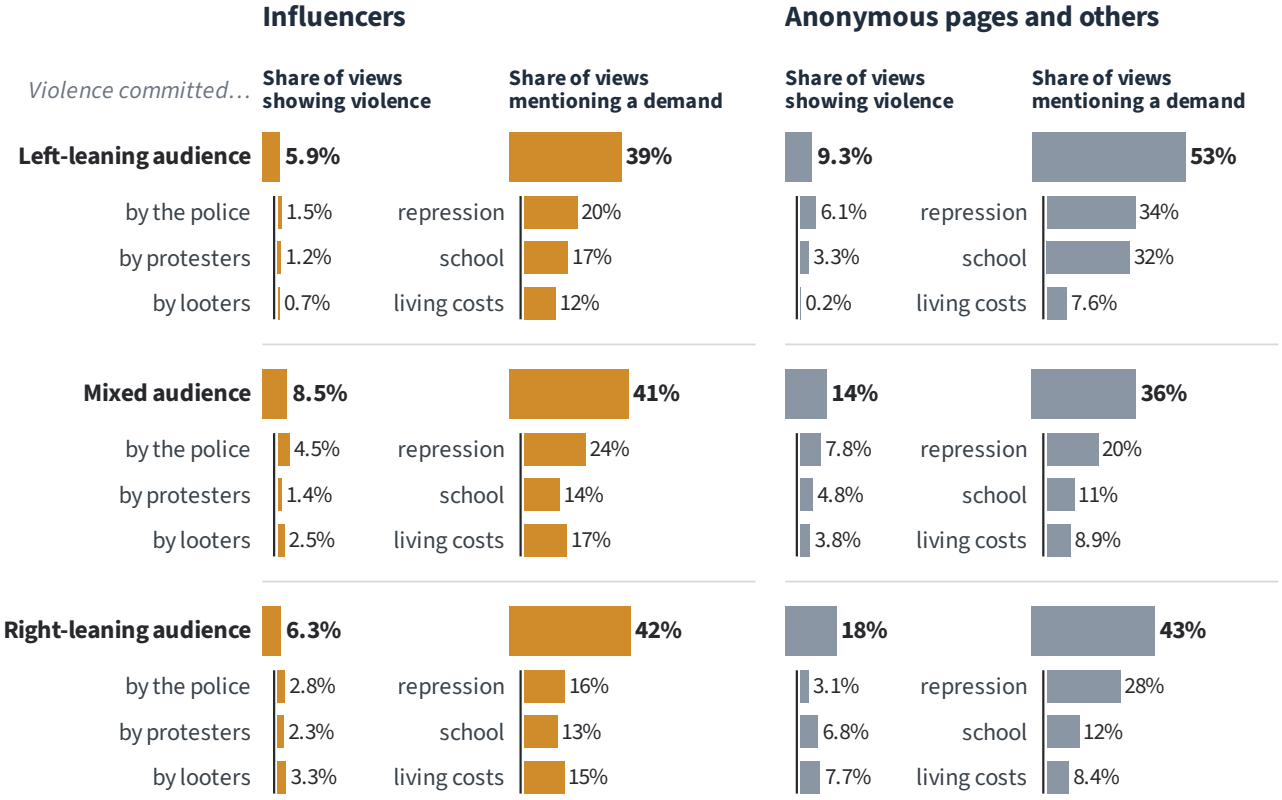


Note: daily views, in millions, 12 September – 29 October 2026; each panel has its own scale.

Figure 11

Who shows violence, who relays the demands?

Share of the views of each account type, by the political leaning of its audience, that show violence (by perpetrator) or mention a demand (by demand)



Note: share of views going to each category, according to the leaning of the account's audience (Appendix E). Faded cells: fewer than 100 coded videos.

major media between supporters of Les Républicains and of La France insoumise (Pew Research Center 2018), correlated with our score at $r = 0.90$; the credibility of thirteen media according to the political leaning of the Fondation Descartes respondents (Cordonier and Brest 2023), correlated at $r = 0.76$; and the self-placement of audiences in the Reuters Institute survey reported by Cagé et al. (2024), whose hierarchy between left-leaning newsrooms, public service and general-interest channels, and the conservative pole is reproduced by our score.

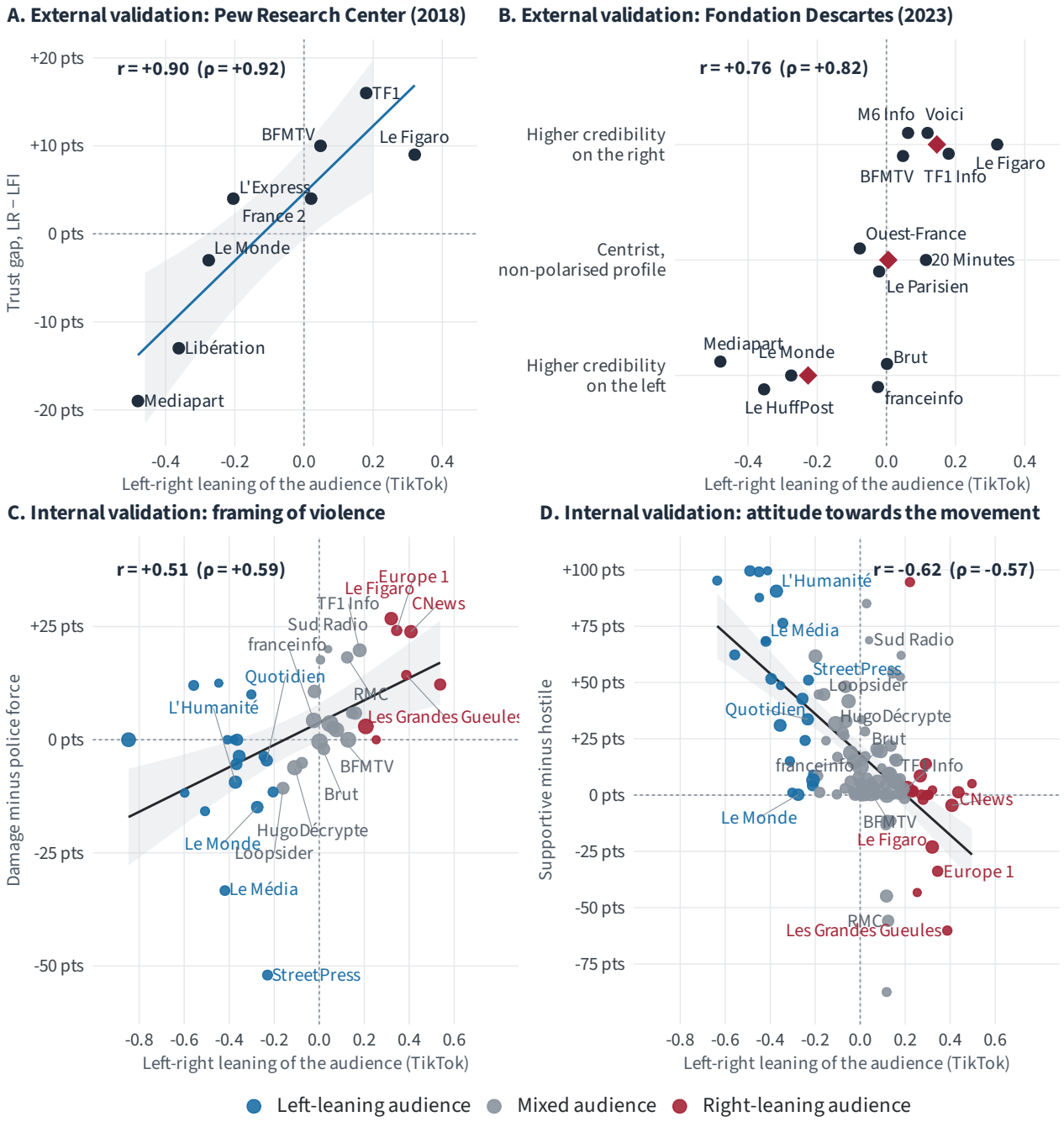
Internal validation Although built without any information on the content of videos, the score nonetheless predicts the attitude of accounts towards the mobilisations: among the one hundred and fourteen newsrooms, the net stance towards the movement (share of supportive videos minus share of hostile videos) is correlated with it at $r = -0.62$, and, among the main named media, the gap between the share of videos showing property damage or looting and the share showing police force is correlated with it at $r = +0.51$.

Newsrooms one by one Figure 13 locates one hundred and fourteen newsrooms according to the leaning of their audience and the balance of their videos supportive of and hostile to the movement, and adds the centroids of newsrooms, influencers and small creators. Figure 14 does the same, for 46 newsrooms, with the violence shown and demands. Figure 15 details the nature of the violence referred to and the stance towards the movement for newsrooms with left-leaning and right-leaning audiences, and for fifteen major newsrooms with a mixed audience.

What this score measures The score describes the political composition of the public that interacts with an account, which results both from its editorial line and from algorithmic recommendation; it does not measure the author's opinion. Imprecise for a small creator with few commenters, it is used for small creators only by aggregating audience strata of tens of thousands of videos.

Figure 12

The political leaning of audiences estimated on TikTok converges with the Pew Research Center and Fondation Descartes surveys, and predicts the attitude of accounts towards the mobilisations



In C and D, only the main media are named; the other dots are the other accounts in the corpus.

Note: left-right score of the audience compared with the Pew Research Center (2018) and Fondation Descartes (2023) surveys, with the framing of violence and with the net stance towards the movement (supportive share minus hostile share). How to read: the further right an account's audience, the more hostile its videos are to the movement.

Figure 13

Newsrooms: leaning of the audience and stance of videos towards the movement

Supportive share minus hostile share, in points, by the political leaning of the audience; diamonds: centroids of newsrooms, influencers and small creators

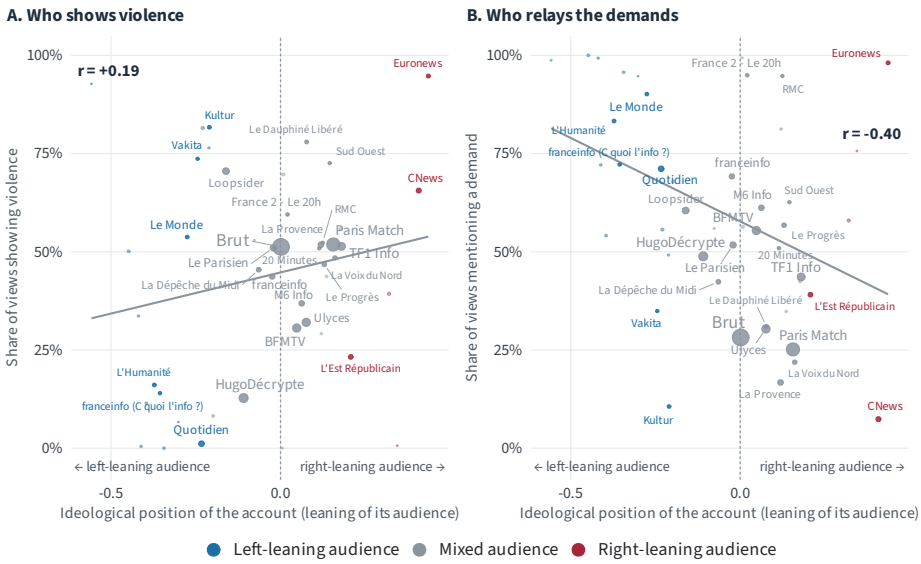


Note: each dot is a newsroom (114), with size proportional to its views; the thirty most viewed are named. Left-leaning audience below -0.2, right-leaning above 0.2, mixed in between. Net stance: supportive share minus hostile share. Diamonds: centroids of newsrooms, influencers and small creators.

Figure 14

Newsrooms: leaning of the audience, violence shown and demands

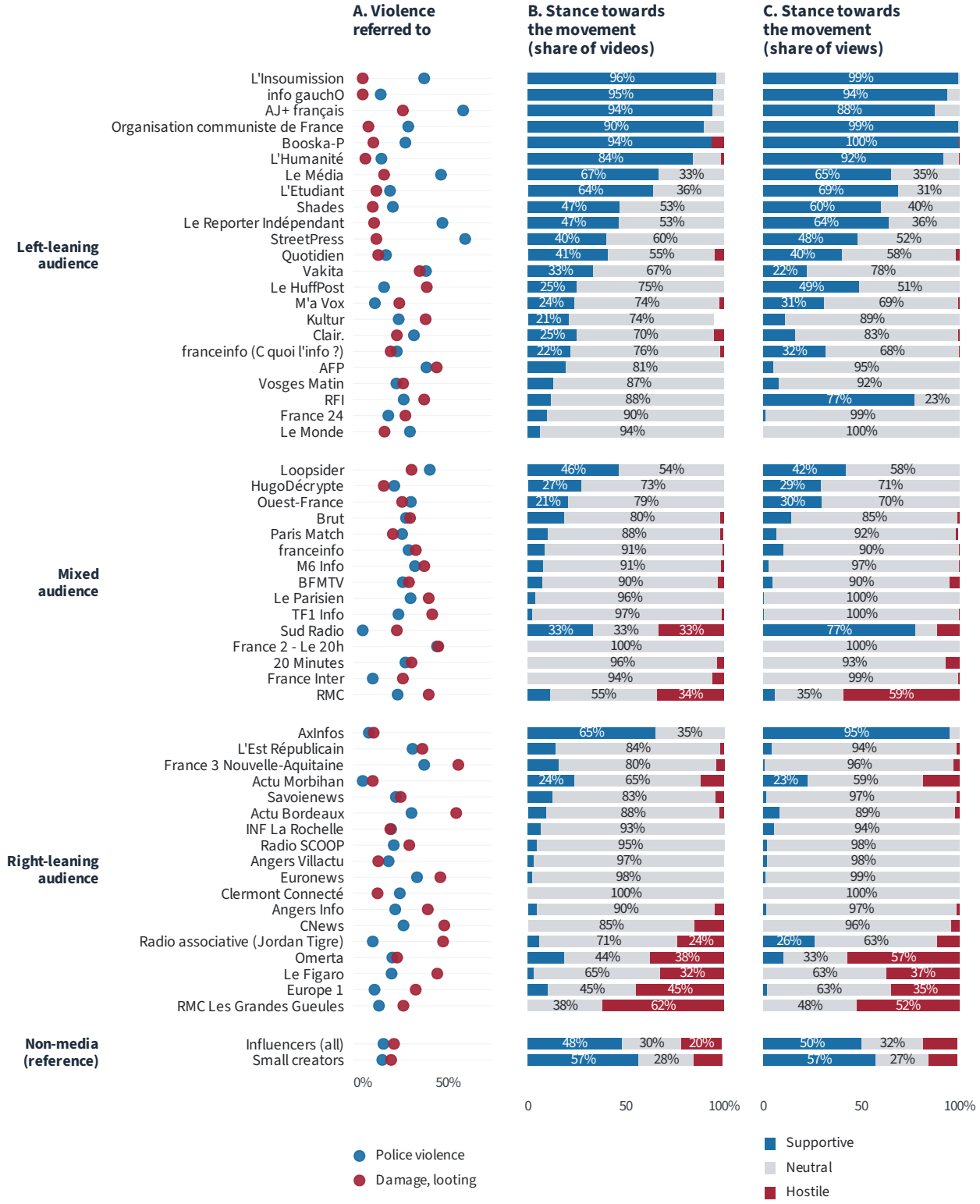
Share of each newsroom's views going to videos that show violence (A) or mention a demand (B), 46 newsrooms, 1 September – 29 October 2026



Note: each dot is a newsroom, with size proportional to its views; fitted line and correlation coefficient. How to read: the further right a newsroom's audience, the less its videos relay the demands.

Figure 15

Newsrooms by the leaning of their audience: violence referred to and stance towards the movement



Note: A, share of videos about police violence and about property damage or looting; B and C, stance towards the movement, as a share of videos and of views. Left-leaning audience below -0.2, right-leaning above 0.2, mixed in between (Appendix E). All newsrooms with left-leaning and right-leaning audiences; fifteen major newsrooms with a mixed audience out of 73, chosen for their national reach and the diversity of their formats. Influencers and small creators for reference.

F. Comments: sample and coding

Sample Among the top-level comments collected under videos on the mobilisations, a stratified random sample of 145,525 comments under 16,781 videos was drawn by account type, topic and period. Each coded comment is weighted like the video it comments on; the estimates describe the 4.55 million comments posted under videos on the mobilisations.

Coding with the context of the video A short comment ("Well done to them!", "What a disgrace", "Stay strong") is undetermined out of context: its political meaning flips depending on whether the video shows a school blockade, a police charge or looting. Each comment is therefore coded together with the summary of the video it comments on, with emojis transcribed into words. Three variables are coded: tone (positive, neutral, negative); emotions, in particular anger and its target, distinguished from other negative tones; and stance towards the mobilisation (support, hostility, including support for the police against protesters, or no position taken).

Controlling for composition effects The comparisons between videos of police force and videos of property damage were redone holding account type, topic and sub-period constant. The presence of violence shown then raises the probability of a negative comment by 28 to 31 points and that of an angry comment by 17 to 23 points, while the effect on hostility to the movement changes sign depending on whether the image shows police force (rise in support for the movement) or property damage and looting (rise in hostility).

G. Toxicity of comments: corpus, definitions and comparisons

Corpus Comments were collected in several waves up to 1 November: 19.1 million non-empty comments, posted from 1 September to 1 November 2026 under 769,561 French videos, including 4.55 million under the 95,022 commented videos on the high-school student movement or the general mobilisation; unless otherwise stated, the prevalences in this appendix are expressed as a share of these 4.55 million comments. They are classified by a model calibrated on a control sample that was read and annotated.

Samples for Figure 6 The rates in this figure rest on two samples drawn at random from the 4.55 million comments. Each comment is read together with the text of the video it comments on and coded by a language model (Claude Opus); none is reweighted. The first sample contains 15,000 comments, 3,000 for each of the five video types: no violence shown, violence shown and then, among the latter, violence by the police, by protesters and by looters. It measures calls for violence, threats, celebrations and abusive or hateful comments. The second sample, taken from the first, contains 1,000 comments per video type and measures the condemnation of violence. Two rows of the figure are calculated from the first: "all comments" is derived from the rows without and with violence shown; "video without violence" keeps only the 1,777 comments read under videos where violence is neither shown nor referred to.

Literal reading Only statements that can be read literally as expressing a real intention or incitement are counted as threats or calls for violence. An obvious joke ("We're going to do some damage [Tears of joy]"), a meme reference or an ambiguous case is not counted.

Calls, threats, celebrations A *call for violence* incites others to physically harm people or property ("They should send in the army to slaughter the rioters"): 0.27% of comments, about 12,000, aimed first at the perpetrators of damage (about 38% of calls), then at the executive (12%), the police (12%), protesters (11%) and property (9%). A *threat* is harm announced in one's own name or explicitly wished for ("Bunch of terrorists, I'm going to kill you"): 0.09%, about 4,000 comments. A *celebration* approves of an act of violence already committed or shown ("Well done, honestly it's the only way to get heard, serves them right"): 0.8%, about 37,000 comments.

Abusive comments and hateful comments An *abusive comment* is an insult directed at an identifiable person or group ("Pathetic clown"): 5.4% of comments, hateful comments included, about 245,000; virulent criticism without an insulting term ("What a disgrace, poor France") is not one. A *hateful comment* targets a person or group on the grounds of origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability ("Arabs again, obviously"): 0.9%, about 39,000 comments; an insult aimed at the police, the government or protesters without such a reference is abusive, not hateful.

Toxicity by video content Celebration of violence reaches 2.2% of comments under videos that show violence, against 0.3% under videos without violence: 4.2% under videos of police violence, where most celebrations approve of the use of force against protesters, 1.7% under videos of violence by looters and 1.3% under those of violence by protesters. Calls for violence rise from 0.11% to 0.43%. The media's videos receive on av-

erage more insults than those of small creators, partly because they more often show violence; for a given video type, the gap is no longer established.

Comparison with other videos The 19.1 million comments were labelled by an automatic classifier. Under the videos of the two mobilisations, 5.7% and 6.1% of comments are abusive or hateful, a level close to that of other news or society topics (5.0 to 7.3%). Entertainment or daily life videos receive fewer (1.7%). These figures are approximate: they rest on few comments read for some topics.

H. Content generated by artificial intelligence and signs of foreign interference

TikTok's labels The platform flags synthetic content either on the creator's declaration or through a label applied by its moderation, which accounts for two thirds of flagged videos and is concentrated in the "films and series" and "animation" categories. The note's indicator counts any video carrying one of these marks: 6.8% of videos on the high-school student movement and 8.6% of those on the general mobilisation, against 8.2% on the rest of the platform; as a share of the audience, 2.5% and 2.1% of views, with no rise around the peaks. Comments questioning the authenticity of the filmed scene account for 1.4% of comments.

Six indicators of coordinated operations

- *Origin of accounts*: very few French-language videos (36,000) come from accounts registered outside France, almost all in neighbouring French-speaking countries, Canada, the Maghreb and French-speaking Africa; none is linked to Russia.
- *Topics and framing*: French-speaking accounts outside France address the same topics, with a rate of mention of property damage close to that of mainland France (7% against 5%); only posts in non-French languages over-represent the riot framing (17% over the period, against 5% for posts from France; 28% from 17 to 19 October, against 9%).
- *Simultaneous account creations*: no group of accounts created at the same time and acting in concert.
- *Synchronised and copied posts*: apart from content shared by titles of the same regional press group, no coordinated posting.
- *Location of commenters*: 79% of the commenters on French videos about the mobilisations are in France, 10% in the French-speaking world outside France and 11% in the rest of the world.
- *Recent accounts and spam*: less than 1% of comments come from accounts created after the start of the mobilisation; the rare repetitive posts are isolated spam, with no reaction or visibility.

Scope These results are consistent with the available public findings presented in Section 3: in September, VIGINUM had noted only very limited foreign relaying of the calls for 17 October, and no particular artificial amplification around the blockades; after 17 October, the President of the Republic said he saw no visible foreign interference in the events, while denouncing a foreign manipulation of information in their wake.[12] Our data cover neither advertising, nor the use of VPNs masking an account's country, nor other platforms.

I. Views associated with images of violence

Measure Directly comparing videos with and without violence would be misleading. The media, whose videos are on average far more viewed, show violence more often than other accounts, and these images are concentrated on a few days when attention to the mobilisations is already very high. The gap in views would therefore partly reflect the account that posts and the day of publication, and not the effect of the image itself. For each account type, we therefore regress the logarithm of one plus the views of videos on the mobilisations on showing violence or merely referring to it, with an account fixed effect and a day fixed effect. The reference is a video from the same account without violence; the coding is that of Appendix D and standard errors are clustered by account. The result reads as a gap for a typical video: +40% for the media and −34% for small creators, from 1 September to 29 October 2026.

Robustness Table 4 gives these estimates and their variants. Table 5 gives the same estimates for influencers and anonymous pages and others. The direction of the gaps changes neither on the videos alone in which a demonstration is visible, nor between videos of the same account published on the same day, nor with the sampling weights (+39% and −37%). The gap in average views, more sensitive to very big hits, is markedly higher for the media; it remains negative for small creators.

Limits These gaps are associations and not causal effects: the videos of the same account may differ in

[12] *Le Monde*, 16 and 28 September 2026; *Euronews* and *Clubic*, 21 October 2026. Full references in Section 3.

Table 4
Gap in views associated with showing violence, relative to a video from the same account without violence

	Media		Small creators	
Comparison	**Typical video**	**Average**	**Typical video**	**Average**
Same account, day taken into account	+40% (+21 to +62)	+99% (+54 to +158)	−34% (−37 to −30)	−48% (−58 to −36)
Demonstration images only	+35% (+16 to +57)	+88% (+36 to +160)	−35% (−38 to −31)	−41% (−55 to −24)
Same account, same day	+36% (+18 to +58)	+93% (+36 to +172)	−30% (−35 to −25)	−37% (−58 to −5)
Videos tracked hour by hour: same account, day taken into account				
Views at 1 hour	+31% (+13 to +51)	+71% (+51 to +94)	−21% (−30 to −11)	−6% (−28 to +22)
Views at 6 hours	+42% (+20 to +69)	+82% (+56 to +111)	−29% (−39 to −17)	−20% (−51 to +28)
Views at 12 hours	+43% (+20 to +71)	+80% (+54 to +111)	−31% (−41 to −19)	−25% (−55 to +27)
Views at 24 hours	+45% (+21 to +74)	+87% (+56 to +125)	−31% (−42 to −20)	−31% (−58 to +13)
Views at 36 hours	+47% (+22 to +76)	+88% (+57 to +124)	−32% (−42 to −20)	−33% (−59 to +11)
Last counter	+51% (+25 to +83)	+104% (+53 to +171)	−30% (−40 to −19)	−40% (−62 to −3)

Note: videos described and coded (6,695 observations for the media and 63,591 for small creators in the first row); 95% confidence interval in parentheses. Typical video: logarithm of one plus views, unweighted. Average: Poisson model. Videos tracked hour by hour: repeated TikTok readings on 3,033 media videos and 4,967 small creator videos published from 16 September to 19 October and available at all five thresholds, i.e. 45% and 8% of the videos in the first row; views interpolated between the readings surrounding each threshold.

Table 5
Gap in views associated with showing violence: influencers and anonymous pages and others

	Influencers		Anonymous pages and others	
Comparison	**Typical video**	**Average**	**Typical video**	**Average**
Same account, day taken into account	−16% (−30 to 0)	+40% (−25 to +162)	−37% (−42 to −31)	−29% (−43 to −12)
Videos tracked hour by hour: same account, day taken into account				
Views at 1 hour	−18% (−35 to +3)	−12% (−40 to +29)	−27% (−36 to −18)	−7% (−26 to +17)
Views at 6 hours	−16% (−39 to +17)	+8% (−30 to +67)	−30% (−39 to −19)	−14% (−34 to +11)
Views at 12 hours	−21% (−43 to +9)	−3% (−35 to +47)	−32% (−42 to −22)	−22% (−39 to +1)
Views at 24 hours	−23% (−45 to +6)	−10% (−40 to +37)	−32% (−42 to −21)	−29% (−45 to −8)
Views at 36 hours	−23% (−44 to +7)	−10% (−41 to +37)	−33% (−42 to −22)	−30% (−46 to −10)
Last counter	−14% (−38 to +19)	+20% (−45 to +164)	−28% (−37 to −16)	−27% (−45 to −3)

Note: same specification as Table 4 (5,306 observations for influencers and 20,583 for anonymous pages and others in the first row). Videos tracked hour by hour: 1,892 and 4,584 videos, i.e. 36% and 22% of the first row.

their topic or format. Views are read at a variable age, from 7 to 49 days depending on the period of publication. Our data do not distinguish views coming from followers from those coming from the recommendation feed and therefore do not make it possible to isolate the role of the algorithm.

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