

[Report on freedom of expression and the gender dimensions of disinformation](#)

Maldita.es is a non-profit foundation/media outlet that fights disinformation in Spanish and promotes transparency through fact-checking, education, and data journalism. Its mission: provide citizens with tools and information to make informed decisions. As a founder of the [European Fact-Checking Standards Network](#), it is committed to the highest methodological and transparency standards there are in journalism.

1. Conceptual issues

- What do you consider to be 'gendered disinformation'?

Gendered disinformation exists in an intersection between misogyny, sexism, hate speech and false or manipulated content. It takes tactics, techniques and procedures that are characteristic of the disinformation phenomena in order to promote hate speech and violence against women public figures, from politicians to activists or journalists.

- How is 'gendered disinformation' similar to or different from online gender-based violence?

While threats, humiliating images, and patriarchal values are common to both forms, "gendered disinformation" uses fake or manipulated stories to undermine women's credibility. Coordinated campaigns as well as isolated hoaxes targeted towards this group aim to intentionally frame women as untrustworthy, unintelligent or unqualified for their position. These humiliating contents and sexist narratives provoke a chilling effect on women, aimed at preventing them from freely expressing themselves and holding public positions because of fear of this type of retaliation. Gendered disinformation damages democracy as it entails self-censorship and that an enormous part of the population potentially stops participating in public life.

Some of the characteristics and techniques we have detected in this field are common to many different countries and targeted to many different women in power. For instance, sexist narratives that aim to harm reputation, the exploitation of anonymity to spread content or the use of troll accounts.

There is also a degree of intersectionality in gendered disinformation. For example, many of the narratives also intersect with hate speech targeting other vulnerable groups such as LGBTQ+ people or migrants.

2. Responses of States, companies and organizations

- What measures have States, digital companies or international organizations taken to combat 'gendered disinformation'?

In Spain, efforts that could be linked to fighting “gendered disinformation” are rather related to hate speech, disinformation as a whole or, online violence against women. A specific approach for ‘gendered disinformation’ has thus not been established in any way.

From the European Union, the Digital Services Act seems to be a useful tool to address this threat. Nevertheless, its consideration of “illegal content” makes it harder to tackle campaigns altogether as much of the content disseminated would not fall under this category even though the impact is extremely negative. The 2022 Code of Practice on Disinformation could uphold greater responsibility in this area.

3. Finding solutions

- What recommendations do you think the Special Rapporteur should make and to whom on combating gendered disinformation?
 - Better monitorization of trends in gendered disinformation narratives that gather the insights from fact-checkers, activists and researchers.
 - Improvement of content moderation in this field and mechanisms integrated in online platforms for victims to protect themselves from these attacks.
 - Fostering collaboration between online platforms and independent fact-checking organizations with local background that understand the political climate and are able to cooperate in content moderation and other solutions. These should imply design adaptations as well as greater transparency and data accessibility.
 - Improve standards in political campaigning that prevent political parties/leaders from participating in the spread of gendered disinformation.
 - Give more voice to activists and journalists reporting on these campaigns in order to raise awareness on the issue and protect female leadership.
 - Promote training for different relevant actors in order to improve response to these campaigns. This should be done without setting the burden of the problematic on the victims.
- What issues or areas of gendered disinformation require further research in your opinion?

Research should focus on assessing the impact that gendered disinformation has on women in public positions, both those who have been directly targeted and those who have not. Moreover, the adequacy of efforts made to tackle the problem should continuously be addressed through meaningful research, metrics and conversations with stakeholders for best practice exchanges.

- Please provide references or links to relevant research or reports.
- [Online gendered disinformation and sexist hate speech](#)
- [Best Practice Forum on Gender and Digital Rights](#)
- [Gendered disinformation: 6 reasons why liberal democracies need to respond to this threat](#)
- [Desinformación de género - análisis de los bulos de Maldito Feminismo](#)
- [LA DESINFORMACIÓN, UNA AMENAZA PARA LAS MUJERES Y LA DEMOCRACIA.](#)
- [Mujeres jóvenes y acoso en redes sociales](#)
- [Informe sobre discriminación, delitos de odio y violencia contra las mujeres relacionada con su identidad u orientación sexual](#)
- [Ser mujer, política y recibir constantes ataques machistas en la red](#)
- [She Persisted - The problem](#)
- [Gendered disinformation is a national security problem](#)
- [‘Gender trolling’ is curbing women’s rights – and making money for digital platforms](#)
- [Reflecting on Five Years of Work on Gendered Disinformation](#)