



GENDER, MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORKS:

**HOW DISINFORMATION FUELS  
HATRED AND MISOGYNY**



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# INTRODUCTION

Gender-based disinformation represents a serious issue as it discredits women and undermines their credibility and reputation in society. It is often used as a tool to promote specific political or ideological agendas, with women frequently becoming primary targets due to sexual motives and misogyny.

Such campaigns contribute to political polarization and create a hostile environment. Disinformation affects the mental health and well-being of women, making them more susceptible to stress and anxiety. As a result, women often withdraw from public life and face greater challenges in exercising their rights and freedoms – something that numerous [studies](#) have shown for years.

Gender-based disinformation is also directed against individuals whose gender identity deviates from traditional norms, including marginalized groups such as the LGBTIQ community. These attacks are accompanied by manipulative narratives and conspiracy theories, presented as battles against “gender ideology,” in defense of family values, or against the “deviant West.” The problem also lies in the fact that the creators of disinformation exploit existing beliefs about gender, as well as the strong emotions the public holds on this issue. This creates an ideal starting point for capitalizing on the fear and anxiety surrounding certain contemporary social phenomena and the general dissatisfaction with the system. Disinformation targeting women or LGBTIQ people is often used for sensationalist and “clickbait” journalism to attract audiences – whether through online portals or entirely anonymous social media pages.

Moreover, it is crucial to emphasize that such disinformation campaigns not only harm those who are instrumentalized, but also harm the broader public. They also affect society as a whole, aiming to create a general and continuous sense of crisis and societal decline, thereby mobilizing citizens toward anti-democratic agendas.

What begins as an attack on the rights of vulnerable community members quickly escalates into a broader assault on the rights and freedoms of all individuals in society.

These are precisely the issues explored in this research, which arose from the need for a comprehensive understanding of how such narratives are spread through traditional media and social networks.

The research is based on an analysis of media content published from January to December 2024, ensuring data relevance and timeliness. It includes some of the media whose articles are often reviewed by the editorial team of Raskrinkavanje, such as domestic web portals In4s, Borba, and Aktuelno, as well as regional and international outlets like Alo.rs, Novosti, Kurir, RT and Sputnik. Additionally, a digital archive of media content was used, and other mainstream media in Montenegro were also analyzed.

Monitoring said media outlets throughout 2024 led to the identification of more than 85 media articles containing gender-based disinformation or misleading and manipulative claims. Furthermore, the research includes over 90 articles published on the Raskrinkavanje portal over the past five years, in which numerous gender-based disinformation narratives were analyzed and proven to be false or manipulative.

What follows is an overview of the most common disinformation narratives identified in the research, along with numerous examples of media manipulation and conspiracy theories that predominantly originate from social media.

**LGBTIQ people and “gender” ideology: A threat to traditional values** – This narrative attempts to portray LGBTIQ people and gender equality as a danger to traditional family and social values, while also promoting the homogenization of society in the fight against an imagined enemy.

**A dying Europe: LGBTIQ people as a threat to survival** – LGBTIQ people are associated with demographic extinction, the spread of deadly viruses, protest organization, or even the obstruction of economic development. At the same time, this narrative seeks to impose anti-EU sentiments and frame anti-LGBTIQ positions as resistance to Western imperialism.

**Disinformation and fear: How the anti-trans narrative is built** – This narrative is based on the dissemination of disinformation and fear in order to portray transgender people in a negative light.

**Indoctrination and seeds of discord: Feminism as a threat to the family** – In this narrative, feminism is depicted as an ideology that intentionally destroys the family and fosters social discord.

**Women in public life: Disinformation, targeting and discreditation** – This narrative includes the spread of false information with the ultimate aim of diminishing the role and influence of women in society.

# LGBTIQ people and “gender” ideology:

## A THREAT TO TRADITIONAL VALUES

One of the most prevalent narratives found in social media posts and certain media outlets is that LGBTIQ people are being portrayed as promoters of “perverted” European and Western values, which stand in contrast to traditional ones. In this discourse, LGBTIQ rights and gender equality are presented as imposed concepts that threaten the traditional family and societal norms, and their spread is linked to powerful global elites.

Media and individuals frequently use disinformation and fake news to claim that the LGBTIQ community has a hidden agenda aimed at destabilizing institutions and indoctrinating children. This narrative often employs dehumanizing language and portrays LGBTIQ individuals as a danger to society, which fosters intolerance and reinforces restrictions on human rights.

Topics such as the traditional family and social values consistently rank high among media and public interests in Montenegro and the region. Thus, it is inevitable that these discussions also include LGBTIQ people and “gender” ideology, presented as a scourge that will destroy our societies and specifically target the most vulnerable – children.

It is important to add that neither Montenegro nor the other countries in the region are bastions of political and economic prosperity; rather, their societies are extremely complex. There is no shortage of problems, yet traditional family and social values often take precedence over all other pressing issues in this context.

Some regional media claim that “gender” ideology has infiltrated schools and even kindergartens, and that children are being taught “to become deviant” instead of simply remaining children. However, analysis of such media reports reveals classic manipulation of facts, or even outright fake news, frequently based on conspiracy theories.

One example is a warning issued by the IN4S portal not to join the EU, arguing that “misery and despair await us there,” as well as LGBTIQ activists and the pharmaceutical industry waiting for our children in classrooms. The [explanation](#) refers to a case from Rijeka, where the subject “Health Education” was introduced as an experimental extracurricular activity in six schools. Some portals framed this initiative as “content containing numerous examples of feminist and LGBTIQ propaganda.” Even though the article itself lacks any tangible evidence or explanation to support its headline, one of its conclusions is that the materials for this extracurricular activity “not only promote liberal ideas but present them as the only acceptable ones, which significantly influences the worldview of young people.”

On the official website of the City of Rijeka, however, the story is entirely different.

A [statement](#) regarding the introduction of this extracurricular program says: “Teaching and learning within this extracurricular activity will be organized into four thematic areas – Healthy lifestyles, proper nutrition and physical activity, Mental health – emotional and social well-being of children and youth, Sexual and reproductive health and Gender equality, and prevention of addiction and risky behaviors... Through this program, the City of Rijeka becomes the first local government unit in Croatia aiming to develop health literacy among children and youth through a holistic approach to learning about all aspects of health, thereby contributing to the well-being of all citizens.”

The citizens of Rijeka thus aim to help their children lead healthy lives and openly discuss topics that may be considered taboo. However, proponents of the “gender” ideology narrative perceive this as a threat and openly oppose the implementation of such extracurricular activities and the programs they encompass.

Another individual who turns to faith for answers is perhaps the most well-known conspiracy theorist in the region – Sasa Borojevic. He [criticized](#) a program implemented in a kindergarten in Temerin, Serbia. Borojevic claimed that the children were being “taught” that a boy can become pregnant, that a girl can fall in love with another girl, and that anyone can have “two dads and two moms” – although this is absolutely not the goal or content of the “[Genderbest](#)”, project that was carried out in Temerin. In his narrative, Borojevic emphasizes that “gender” ideology must be stopped and that religious education must be urgently introduced in kindergartens.

That he, of course, was not telling the truth was confirmed by the kindergarten administration:

“This project in no way dealt with the topic of gender identity, and therefore no such ideas were implemented towards the children, nor was that ever the subject of the project. Gender equality was introduced to them through discussions about emotions, that all professions and sports are available to both boys and girls, and that jobs are not divided into male and female ones. Certain comments on social media were the result of malicious attempts to harm our preschool institution. There was no training provided for the educators, and the parents – members of the council – were informed about the project and no one objected to it,” the kindergarten stated.

In all of this, the ones who “suffered” the most were the kindergarten staff, who [received](#) insults and threats.

Borojević [made similar claims](#) in another media outlet, where he shared the “shocking” assertion that a man from Novi Sad was granted custody of his children because he declared himself as a non-binary person in court. He again took this opportunity to mention the kindergarten in Temerin. However, a simple search for a court ruling on a non-binary father from Novi Sad yields no results. Considering Borojevic’s [history of spreading falsehoods and conspiracy theories](#), one can conclude that he was once again not telling the truth.

In that vein, we find several examples – some of which have been repeatedly investigated and proven false – including by our own platform. A viral piece of disinformation circulated on social media multiple times claimed that an LGBTIQ kindergarten had opened in Germany. This was untrue. It [referred](#) to an institution with a different concept, advocating inclusivity and respect for diversity. In these kindergartens, LGBTIQ topics are simply more visible and not a “forbidden subject,” but this does not mean that children are being encouraged at age three or four to choose a sexual orientation. Furthermore, a child’s sexual or gender identity is not a criterion for admission – parents are not asked about this in the application form. There were also claims about a children’s “gay parade,” which in reality was a [carnival in Spain](#) that included children’s participation, and one segment of the event featured political satire. We also read claims that medical schools in the U.S. are being redirected toward gender transition treatments for very young children, or that in Germany, police are removing children from Muslim families because they were taught at home that homosexuality and transgender identities are unacceptable. Once again – [these cases](#) are not true.

Irish teacher Enoch Burke has been a staple in the media and on websites dealing with these narratives for years, supposedly because he was persecuted for believing in God and “refusing to indoctrinate children into LGBTQ.” In reality, he was previously dismissed from a school for refusing to acknowledge a transgender student’s new identity. He was subsequently issued a restraining order to stay away from the school, which he violated – leading to his [arrest](#).

In summary, the narrative being promoted is that global elites are pushing an agenda that will primarily affect children.

All of these examples point to what few dare to say openly: policies of openness, inclusivity, and teaching young people to be more accepting and tolerant are perceived by a segment of the public as perversion and moral decline, masked as an attack on the family and traditional values. The real victims in all of this are – the children – who are not given enough understanding, information, or space to form their own opinions on this topic.

However, this raises a new question: can we truly claim that our goal is to protect them if we are deceiving and manipulating the public – including both parents and children? The answer is self-evident.



## A dying Europe:

### LGBTIQ PEOPLE AS A THREAT TO SURVIVAL

Another frequently used narrative against LGBTIQ people is the claim by conspiracy theorists that they are responsible for social instability, the spread of diseases and even demographic collapse. In this discourse, the LGBTIQ community is demonized through allegations that they are “degenerates” and harbingers of civilizational decline, even being blamed for causing various global crises.

Certain media outlets spread disinformation linking this community to the spread of deadly viruses, organizing protests, or hindering economic development. These claims are presented without any evidence, with the goal of inciting fear and intolerance toward LGBTIQ people by portraying them as a threat to the survival of society.

The fight for the rights of members of this community is constantly under attack, mainly from a single center – with Red Square at its core – but also through its proxies. The entire story is framed as a battle against “perverse” individuals who are seen as leading the West toward Armageddon, while undermining the principles of so-called genuine family values.

Russian media – followed by Montenegrin and Serbian outlets with a pro-Russian orientation – do not miss opportunities to target this community. They have [blamed](#) it for stopping lithium mining in Serbia, [organizing protests](#) in Montenegro, [abolishing Easter](#), [spreading](#) deadly viruses, and more.

All of these fit within a broader narrative: LGBTIQ people are to blame for the downfall of the world.

The most obvious example was the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games (OG) last year in Paris. Regional newsrooms hadn’t had so much “entertainment” in a while. Headlines included: [“The ceremonial collapse of Western civilization – live on air”](#), [“Scenes from the OG opening in Paris shocked the world”](#) etc. Claims of an attack on Christianity and mockery of the Last Supper were thrown around, along with [narratives](#) that the OG celebrated Satanism and transhumanism. However, as noted in [one analysis](#) by Raskrinkavanje, these allegations were driven by transphobia, nationalism, and disinformation. Their goal was to incite panic, a general sense of crisis, and to “confuse” citizens for other political purposes.

In the analyzed period, Sputnik Serbia led the attack on the LGBTIQ community, covering human rights issues with headlines such as: [“The Duma on transgender transition in the West: Russia will not follow the path leading to the degeneration of nations”](#), or [“The erasure of humanity – gender sensitivity as the new normal.”](#)

LGBTIQ activists received no support when the Russian Ministry of Justice filed a lawsuit requesting that the “international LGBTIQ movement” be designated as extremist for allegedly sowing “social and religious discord” – a claim that local media [eagerly](#) reported. In the same spirit was the statement by Slovak Minister of Culture Martina Simkovicova, who [claimed](#) that Europe is dying out because of LGBTIQ people.

This narrative often relies on emotionally charged and fear-laden messages to provoke condemnation and suspicion toward LGBTIQ individuals. Such campaigns exploit stereotypes and disinformation to manufacture a sense of threat to the social order.

## Disinformation and fear:

### HOW THE ANTI-TRANS NARRATIVE IS BUILT

We now arrive at another disinformation-based narrative, one that centers specifically on transgender people. Numerous examples from our research show that various forms of disinformation are used against trans individuals, including entirely fabricated stories that portray them as dangerous, responsible for a range of societal problems, or as part of a global scheme to transform cultural values.

Disinformation is frequently spread through sensationalist media coverage and social media posts, where trans people are blamed for all sorts of negative events – from plane crashes to (again) allegedly forcing gender ideology on children. These narratives prey on public fears and prejudices, spreading false information, statements taken out of context, or outright conspiracy theories – often bizarre and irrelevant from a fact-checking standpoint, but effective in reinforcing anti-trans rhetoric.

In addition, we documented manipulative posts centered around identifying who is a biological man or woman, who has “masculine facial features,” and who has transitioned. These posts are deeply rooted in misogyny, transphobia, and homophobia. They usually originate in foreign-language media, and our research revealed that the “targets” are often the spouses of world leaders – suggesting that these are attempts to discredit their partners in the eyes of voters. Still, they also form part of a broader narrative aimed at targeting transgender people by portraying them as secret power brokers who make critical decisions and influence important processes.

And the examples are many.

We recorded posts accusing trans people of causing [plane crashes](#), promoting transgenderism among children by “sneaking in” [pregnant male dolls](#), and colluding with global elites who, through food – bananas, for instance – aim to alter testosterone levels in our bodies and [change our gender](#).

As you might guess – these claims are entirely false and unfounded. The American military helicopter that collided with a passenger aircraft in Washington earlier this year, resulting in the deaths of 67 people, was not piloted by a transgender person. Even if it had been, it is important to emphasize that there is not a single piece of evidence suggesting that being transgender affects a person’s motor skills or any other individual abilities. Furthermore, even if such a tragedy had occurred, it should not be used to target members of a specific community in this way, as that information would not be of public relevance without a justified reason. The story about transgender dolls originated from a [satirical website](#) and was never intended to promote transgenderism among children – nor are such dolls actually being sold. The claim about changing gender through food is entirely fictional and false, rooted in a misinterpreted 2010 [study](#) by an American biologist conducted on frogs.

Beyond such claims, we also addressed allegations that former U.S. President Joe Biden appointed a transgender person “who promotes orgies” as Assistant Secretary of Health during the COVID-19 pandemic. It [turned out](#) that the person in question was indeed transgender – Rachel Levine, then Secretary of Health in the state of Pennsylvania. However, the health department had merely issued guidelines on how to protect oneself from COVID-19 during group sex. This did not mean

that Levine was “promoting orgies,” but rather acknowledging that group sex occurs – a reality the administration had data on – and stressing the importance of virus protection, as noted by health authorities.

The 2024 Paris Olympics also created a special space for the demonization, ridicule, and attacks on transgender people – an issue previously mentioned. This was primarily due to the participation of Algerian boxer [Imane Khalif](#) whom media and social media users labeled a man who had undergone gender reassignment and was allowed to compete in the women’s category. The incident unleashed waves of transphobia, hateful comments, media sensationalism, and unethical reporting. Despite being asked for [childhood photos](#), having her parents’ testimonies circulated, and being told [to strip](#) or fight men in the ring – Imane Khalif was and remains a woman.

This was not an isolated case of so-called “gender exposure,” as shown by many other examples recorded by our editorial team. For instance, in various media reports and social media posts, it was claimed that France’s First Lady Brigitte Macron [was born male](#), allegedly supported by [a photo showing her in her youth](#). However, the image had been edited; the original, taken in 2019, depicts a young man with no connection whatsoever to Brigitte Macron.

Social media users have also pointed out the “masculine facial features” of Michelle Obama, the former First Lady of the United States. They compared and [photoshopped](#) her childhood images and used one of Barack Obama’s speeches to “confirm” their claims about a transgender First Lady. The speech in question was modified, cut, and [placed out of context](#). In it, Obama addressed a person named Michael – allegedly implying Michelle’s former name. However, he was not speaking to his “transgender wife” but referring to the son of a Navy admiral – whose name was, indeed, Michael.

As part of this research, we briefly address the Law on Legal Gender Recognition Based on Self-Determination, which – despite numerous promises and obligations undertaken by the Government of Montenegro – has still not been adopted by the Parliament of Montenegro. Among other things, the law was intended to allow transgender individuals to legally change the gender marker and unique personal identification number in official documents without undergoing surgery and sterilization, which are currently prerequisites. The proposed law was met with numerous reactions, some of which were extremely negative and accompanied by manipulative claims and disinformation that brought with them hate speech against members of the LGBTIQ community, as well as unethical and sensationalist media coverage.

Here are just a few examples recorded during our media monitoring:

*Will Montenegrins manage to defend themselves from the latest attack on their identity, family, and roots, or will they throw the values inherited from their ancestors into the Moraca River?* (Novost)

*“Gender fluidity” reaches Montenegro’s judiciary. What dangers lie behind so-called gender equality* (IN4S)

*Montenegro’s preparations for the EU: Every Montenegrin man and woman will have the right to choose their gender* (Borba)

*In Montenegro, riddled with agents of the LGBTetc ideology like Serbia, Croatia, and many other countries, there is no Misa Djurkovic or anyone like him. Even in Montenegro, anti-family laws – or at least laws with anti-family elements – have been adopted, as in Serbia.* (Borba)

*Let there be what cannot be! Montenegrin boys will be able to choose their gender – once a year* (Sputnik)

Manipulative headlines and articles like these encourage negative reactions and hate speech toward transgender people, most often based on distorted or false facts. All of this contributes to the strengthening of anti-trans narratives, making it harder to accept and protect the rights of members of this community within society.

Additionally, such narratives promote discrimination, exposing transgender individuals to verbal and physical attacks, which complicates their daily lives and access to basic rights. They also negatively affect the mental health of LGBTIQ people and reduce society’s openness toward diversity.

## Indoctrination and seeds of discord:

### FEMINISM AS A THREAT TO THE FAMILY

Disinformation narratives about feminism are often spread through propaganda and hate speech, portraying feminist movements as a threat to traditional values, the family, and the social order. These narratives claim that feminism destroys marriages, distances women from their maternal roles, and fosters hatred toward men – invoking nostalgia for the past while ignoring the structural problems women face today.

These narratives are spread via media and social networks, aiming to incite fear and insecurity in society, thereby presenting feminism as a foreign or global project that undermines local values and destabilizes the family.

Feminism is a historical movement that emerged from the pursuit of equality for women in society, ensuring their rights to education, political engagement, employment, and access to social resources.

However, not everyone sees it this way. Some propagate the claim that [feminism](#) is the invention of the famous Rockefeller family “designed to destroy marriage and the family.” And they don’t just believe this – they try to convince others by inventing fake quotes and attributing them to fictitious sources. These claims are then expanded and embellished into conspiracy theories – such as the idea that alleged Rockefeller indoctrination (which teaches young girls to hate men and not want children) is to blame for [Greece’s low birth rate](#). [Experts](#), however, point out that Greece’s low fertility rate can be attributed to several factors such as educational levels, economic instability, female unemployment, lack of government efforts to promote family expansion, emigration, an aging population, and so on.

And here is another example.

“An extreme feminist gathering” – this is how [certain Montenegrin media outlets](#) described last year’s International Women’s Day march, accusing some participants of hate speech simply because they carried a banner that read “separate church from state.” But can this message be considered hate speech? Of course not. Montenegro’s Constitution clearly states – religious communities are separate from the state. This simply means that Montenegro is, constitutionally, a secular state.

Our monitoring also identified several disinformation claims related to women’s reproductive rights or political participation. For example, there were claims that [abortion is completely banned in the United States](#), and that U.S. presidential candidates take an oath on a Masonic Bible stating that [a woman cannot be president](#) – both of which are absurd.

Such disinformation and conspiracy theories often exploit emotionally charged topics, such as family and traditional values, to elicit a strong emotional response from the public. Through these tactics, conspiracy theorists construct narratives that capture attention and foster distrust of social change, leading people to draw unfounded conclusions.



Considering these and similar manipulative narratives, it is perhaps unsurprising that [more than 40%](#) of Montenegrin citizens believe that feminism aims to dismantle the family, while 34.9% disagree, and 23.9% say they don't know.

Any attempt to portray feminism as a tool for “social control” is a misinterpretation of the movement and diminishes the long-standing struggle of women for their fundamental rights.

# He works, she raises the children

The extent to which Montenegrin society remains patriarchal, and how misguided the perception of women and their societal roles can be, is illustrated by the following examples. As part of our research, we examined statements made by several individuals who publicly and unabashedly expressed deeply sexist views.

These are individuals with a certain public reputation, who occasionally receive media attention (sometimes even entire television shows), and who primarily use social media as their communication channel. Their posts often go viral, generating a large number of reactions and comments from other users.

On social media, one can find posts claiming that the only protection for women and children from dangerous men is – good men.

*“If you want a safe and orderly society, forget about empowering women and strengthening institutions. Accept that good and moral men must be in charge and lead society – that’s the only way out of this madness,”* reads one such message.

Then there are the “well-intentioned” pieces of advice and festive greetings:

*“Message to all girls – don’t waste your youth on foolishness. Marry young and start a family, because if you don’t, a life of loneliness and emptiness awaits you.”*

*“Today, women scorn and reject men who would make them wives devoted to raising children and managing the household, and instead choose men who turn them into single mothers.”*

*“Without good and responsible men, women’s rights wouldn’t exist. Good and responsible men create a safe society and protect women and children. So, dear ladies, happy Women’s Day, and for everything you have, thank the good men beside you.”*

Some of the posts we recorded specifically target those working to protect women and survivors of violence. In these posts, female activists and NGO workers are labeled as hypocrites, hyenas, vultures, two-faced, and immoral.

This is merely one of the many controversial posts we documented – there were dozens in total: *“You have two options: build and maintain a healthy family, properly raise your children, and care for their education in accordance with universal human values (which some call traditional, or even mistakenly, conservative), or support the public display of depravity, debauchery, immorality, and perversion under the guise of democracy and universal human rights – promoted (for money) by today’s NGOs allegedly defending those rights, led by certain hags with husbands only on paper (excluding a few ladies), and publicly declared deviants, all of whom come from dysfunctional families and who, in a society as unfortunate as ours, have been given not just a platform but importance. So go ahead – choose!”*

As emphasized, this type of content gains significant visibility and influence, and is subsequently shared and commented on further – without any accountability for the offensive and discriminatory statements it contains.

## Women in public life:

### DISINFORMATION, TARGETING AND DISCREDITATION

In Montenegro, despite some progress, it is still premature to speak of sufficient political participation of women. Patriarchal attitudes, prejudice, and a lack of interest from political parties remain key obstacles to their more active involvement in politics. Certain [studies](#) indicate that nine out of ten female politicians have experienced discrimination solely because they are women, while seven out of ten have encountered some form of violence.

In addition, women politicians and parliamentarians are frequently subjected to disinformation and media targeting, as evidenced by numerous examples from our research, presented in accordance with the established methodology.

Our experience in monitoring such content shows that it inevitably generates a large number of negative comments and insults, and fuels misogyny and hate speech – whether in social media posts or in comments on media reports themselves.

One individual who personally experienced the outrage of social media users was former Social Democratic Party (SDP) MP Draginja Vuksanovic–Stankovic, due to [a statement she never actually made](#). A Facebook page with thousands of followers featured her photograph alongside a fabricated quote claiming that “the elections in Cetinje showed that there is no real patriotism in Montenegro,” and that “Belvedere people are worthless” and had disappointed her. In reality, Vuksanovic–Stankovic made a completely different comment. She had criticized the SDP’s decision to form a local government in Cetinje with the Old Guard of the LSCG, with “unconditional support” from URA and the Democrats. “No one should expect me to stand side by side with those who attack Montenegro – neither yesterday, nor today, nor ever,” she declared, emphasizing that there are those “who will fight with all their hearts and to the end for Montenegrin Cetinje and Belvedere Montenegro.”

That disinformation knows no political affiliation – and is spread by supporters on all sides – is demonstrated by the case of [a fake news story](#) targeting former Minister of Education Vesna Bratic. For instance, the portal Aktuelno reported, under the headline “How far will the arbitrariness of a Herzegovinian who hates all things Montenegrin go,” that Bratic had removed the Montenegrin coat of arms from school report cards. This was proven false. The Ministry stated that no report card had been issued without the national emblem and that schools used forms provided by the Institute for Education of Montenegro.

Former Deputy Prime Minister and head of the “For European Niksic” electoral list, [Sanja Damjanovic](#), was also targeted by disinformation when a doctored tweet began circulating on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. The tweet falsely claimed that she had urged coalition voters to stay home on election day due to the presence of foreign nationals and the public health situation. The image was fabricated with the intent to manipulate voters.

DPS councilor Sonja Milatovic was labeled “primitive and rude” by certain portals during a session of the Niksic Municipal Assembly, when they claimed she made an obscene gesture (raising her middle finger) toward the Assembly President, Nemanja Vukovic. However, Raskrinkavanje determined – and Vukovic confirmed – that [the photo had been misinterpreted](#).

The Alo portal took things even further in a manipulative and inaccurate article based on an interview with former URA Vice President Jovana Marovic on Serbia's N1 TV. Not only did they refer to her as "Dritan's cheeky little girl," they also [fabricated](#) a quote claiming that she had said "Serbs have no business in Cetinje." Marovic never made such a statement; in fact, she said that Serbian and Montenegrin presidents Aleksandar Vucic and Milo Djukanovic should not visit the Montenegrin capital.

The [Novosti](#) portal did not shy away from labeling either. In a biased article, they referred to DPS MP Aleksandra Vukovic Kuc as "Milo's spearhead."

It goes without saying that these types of posts and articles provoke heightened public attention, and when shared on social media, expose women to online targeting, offensive and degrading comments – for which no one is held accountable.

Similar cases were found involving women in other professions as well, such as film director Marija Perovic and folk singer Jadranka Barjaktarovic.

Perovic, who commented on the enthronement of the Serbian Orthodox Church's Metropolitan Joanikije in Cetinje during a segment on public broadcaster RTCG, was falsely [attributed a statement](#) allegedly claiming that "unlike Serbs, Montenegrins are clean and have all their teeth." She never said anything of the sort.

One local and several regional outlets once again used a social media post to fabricate a story and publish a sensationalist headline, falsely reporting that Jadranka Barjaktarovic had promoted a song accompanied by a Ustasha slogan in the run-up to local elections in Niksic. This was [a completely fake news story](#).

An especially interesting case involved a female football fan who, [without cause](#), became the target of online abuse and negative comments. Certain Montenegrin right-wing Facebook pages, followed by several regional news portals, reported that she had attended a match wearing a jacket adorned with Ustasha symbols, allegedly to provoke the host country, Serbia. A closer look would have revealed that the symbol in question was merely the logo of a fashion brand, not a "symbol of Operation Storm or the expulsion of Serbs." This would have prevented not only the targeting of a young woman supporting her national team but also the stoking of interethnic tensions through the spread of false information.

As for media coverage, this research – following its established methodology – also examines the case of Vijesti daily journalist [Dragana Scepanovic](#), who was subjected to prolonged targeting by the portal Aktuelno.me. In a series of articles, she was belittled, called "a blind weapon of racketeers and media tycoons," "mentally unstable and fragile," and accused of obstructing the development of the Kolasin municipality. The court determined that Scepanovic, as a public figure, had been insulted in an extremely offensive manner and awarded her financial compensation. The portal was ordered to remove the offending articles.

In the cases documented by Raskrinkavanje ([1,2,3](#)) journalists have repeatedly been exploited in online scams. Without their consent, their names and public recognizability were used to promote weight loss products, fertility medications, and unreliable cryptocurrency trading websites.

Findings from this research show that, in terms of frequency and volume of coverage, the most disinformation about women outside Montenegro focused on Olena Zelenska, the First Lady of

Ukraine. Fabricated stories accused her of leading a lavish lifestyle, spending millions on [jewelry](#) and [luxury cars](#), allegedly [planning to flee the country](#), and holding both [Russian](#) and [Israeli passports](#). The IN4S portal went even further, falsely claiming that Zelenska was involved in the abduction and trafficking of Ukrainian children to Western countries.

Next is Kamala Harris, former U.S. Vice President and last year's presidential candidate, who was accused of [faking her COVID-19 vaccination](#). She was the subject of a [bizarre conspiracy theory](#) portraying her as a "satanic monster," sparked by a misunderstanding where some people believed she was giving a recipe not for roasting a turkey – but for roasting a baby. She was also [falsely accused](#) of supporting the legalization of fentanyl, heroin, and cocaine, although she had in fact advocated for the decriminalization of personal drug use.

The name of [Kate Middleton](#), Princess of Wales, was also used in anti-vaccine disinformation – particularly after she announced she was undergoing preventative chemotherapy. Regional anti-vaccine activist Sladjana Velkov claimed Middleton never had cancer and that her illness was faked.

Of course, we also see persistent conspiracy theories about the global elite, the New World Order, child trafficking... and central roles in these narratives are often assigned to women. For example, environmental activist [Greta Thunberg](#), was falsely claimed to be related to the famous Rothschild family. Conspiracy theorist Sasa Borojevic resurfaced [Mother Teresa](#) during the World Economic Forum in Davos, comparing her to Klaus Schwab, managing to also insert Hillary Clinton into the mix. He called Mother Teresa a "Shiptarka" (a derogatory ethnic slur) and accused her of child trafficking – without offering a shred of evidence. At one point, mistranslated names gave rise to the false claim that European Commission President [Ursula von der Leyen](#) is descended from a Nazi family – a claim debunked by several international fact-checkers. Another long-standing fabrication targets one of Europe's most powerful women, [Christine Lagarde](#). The former IMF director, French government minister, and current President of the European Central Bank was falsely quoted as saying: "Old people live too long, and that's a risk for the global economy." The actual statement she made was entirely different.

These examples illustrate how gender-based disinformation often aims to portray women in a negative light – whether they are women in positions of power, professionals in various fields, or simply as part of broader efforts to undermine fundamental women's rights. The existence of social media further fuels misogyny, with prejudice and hostility toward women resulting in hate speech.

Unfortunately, disinformation targeting women's health is also widespread, aiming to undermine scientific and medical knowledge. Claims such as "[HPV causes infertility](#)" or that "[mammograms are dangerous](#)" have gained traction. The prevalence of such disinformation is a clear call for more comprehensive education on women's health, as well as greater involvement from relevant authorities in combating and limiting disinformation.



## How do traditional media report?

The most influential media outlets in Montenegro – those with clearly defined editorial policies – rarely spread disinformation related to gender, whether concerning women, trans individuals, or any other group.

However, “rarely” does not mean “never.” For example, the national broadcaster RTCG, which is supposed to reflect broad representation of all social groups, aired an episode of “Argumenti” on the topic of “Coexistence in Montenegro and How Religious Communities Contribute to Peace and Tolerance.” Guests included leaders of the country’s four largest religious communities – Metropolitan Joanikije Micovic of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Rifat Fejzic of the Islamic Community, Archbishop Rrok Gjonllesaj, and Rabbi Luciano Moshe Prelevic. The show briefly touched upon the Draft Law on Legal Gender Recognition Based on Self-Determination.

While the show offered space to present the views of religious communities on this human rights issue, some statements by the religious leaders were scientifically unfounded and manipulative. For instance, viewers heard Metropolitan Joanikije say: “Cases of gender transition are quite rare, and we have understanding for such people. But encouraging someone into such an unnatural dilemma is truly dangerous because we are dealing with minors. It is well known that those who transition later face problems, want to return to their original state, suffer from incurable trauma, even commit suicide... As if we don’t already have enough problems – why invite more? From a pastoral standpoint, we must have a position and make it heard.” This statement prompted a [complaint](#) from the “Ravnopravno” coalition regarding RTCG’s reporting. However, it must be noted that RTCG and other mainstream media have published content [advocating](#) the adoption of this law, [clarifying](#) misconceptions and disinformation, and [calling for](#) the adoption of the Law on Legal Gender Recognition Based on Self-Determination.

Still, some segments – out of a desire to appear balanced and to give equal time to both sides – ended up promoting conspiracy theories through their headlines. This was the case with a TV Vijesti segment and a Vijesti portal article titled: “[Law on Gender Recognition – Human Right or Attack on the Family?](#)” which included claims that gender recognition undermines tradition and family values.

TV [Adria](#) also enabled disinformation on this issue through its show Kontroverza, which featured lawyer Miomir Joksimovic as a guest. In that episode, Joksimovic made a series of controversial and false claims, such as that, if the law were passed, “children could no longer be assigned a gender at birth,” and that efforts are being made to “eliminate the possibility for someone to say ‘I am a man.’” He characterized the law as just one step in a broader attempt to prevent the majority of Montenegrins from living in accordance with their personal beliefs and the “objective truths” passed down by their ancestors. Joksimovic is known for targeting LGBTIQ individuals and for making misogynistic remarks and spreading conspiracy theories that have been the subject of our previous analyses.

The lack of widespread disinformation on the topic of gender identity in the media may, in part, be due to the silence of most political parties on this and similar legislation.

When it comes to reporting on women, these media outlets generally take an affirmative approach. In the course of our research, we did not encounter disinformation specifically targeting women.

## CONCLUSION

Gender-based disinformation not only distorts reality but also actively fosters an environment of hate speech, division, and discrimination. When left unchallenged, such narratives become the foundation for societal polarization.

This is illustrated, among other things, by the alarming findings of [research](#) indicating that 64.6% of citizens in Montenegro believe that homosexuality is a disease, 12.3% disagree, while 23.1% reported not knowing. Regarding propaganda narratives and conspiracy theories in the realm of international politics, data show that 39.6% of citizens believe the EU is forcing Montenegro to abandon traditional values, 36% disagree, and nearly a quarter (24.4%) have no opinion.

Education, combating misinformation, and increasing public awareness remain key priorities for building a more resilient and inclusive society – one in which all citizens can participate equally and realize their full potential without fear of discrimination or violence. Overall, research indicates that Montenegro experienced a [steep decline](#) in respect for LGBTIQ rights in 2024.

The narratives presented in this research contribute to deepening societal divides and reinforcing prejudice against women and LGBTIQ individuals, leading to their marginalization and reduced participation in public life. Moreover, the increasing presence of disinformation and online violence further erodes trust in institutions and undermines the democratic values of society. As a result, young and vulnerable members of the community often feel less secure in their rights and opportunities, which negatively impacts long-term development and social cohesion.



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