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PRESS RELEASE

Gender breakdown of healthcare experts and participants on television falls from equal to women representing a mere 28% and 39% during the pandemic

- **A CAC report finds that although women's participation was slightly highly during the pandemic, it did not surpass a third of the total: 36% of speaking time in the news and 33.2% in debates and interviews. Gender equality is found only in talk shows and other opinion programmes**
- **Women are under-represented in the economic, employment and management spheres, and are more prevalent only as occasional witnesses, particularly with an emotional dimension**
- **CAC Chairperson Roger Loppacher wants to break the glass ceiling of one third female representation and says that more women must be included in reporting on significant pandemic management issues**
- **Women's speaking time is also the minority among representatives of governments and authorities: 35.4% for the government of Catalonia and 19% for the government of Spain**

Although television reports on the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in a quantitative increase in the prevalence of women, there has not been a qualitative improvement, with some inequalities growing.

These include greater female under-representation in the economic and employment spheres and the loss of women's historical prevalence in the health sphere. Moreover, there are fewer female expert interviewees and women have only gained representation as occasional witnesses, with a predominant focus on emotional dimensions rather than qualifications.

These are some of the salient conclusions of a Catalan Audiovisual Council (CAC) report on the prevalence of women in television news on the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CAC analysed a sample of the news broadcast on Catalan channel TV3 for the report. Specifically, it analysed both the midday and evening news programmes (*TN migdia* and *TN vespre*) in addition to magazine shows, special reports and other informative programmes including content on the COVID-19 pandemic. The period analysed was 13 to 31 March. The CAC is currently drafting a broader report on news coverage of the pandemic.

The **prevalence of women** in reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic is quantitatively greater (+6%) than normal in news programmes (36%) and remains the same in debates and interviews (33.2%). However, despite tentative progress in the last few years, women account for no more than one third of the total in reports during the abnormal period analysed, as at other times. The balance of women and men is similar only on talk shows and other opinion programmes.

CAC Chairperson **Roger Loppacher** wants to break the glass ceiling of one third female representation and says that more women must be included in reporting on significant pandemic management issues.

An analysis of the gender distribution of speaking time according to **participant groups** shines a light on major gender disparities, primarily that women are the minority in most categories. (See Annex for table of all groups.)

Women represent 28.2% of participants in the **economic and employment spheres** (representatives of companies and businesses, trade unions, business organisations and professional associations and groups). This corroborates the under-representation of women found in 2018 in this same group of participants (around 23%).

Furthermore, women account for 39.4% of the speaking time of all participants in the **healthcare sphere**, a lower proportion than at normal times (almost 47% in 2018).

However, gender inequality is particularly evident when it comes to **expert accounts**. In the data analysed, 28.7% of speaking time in the group 'experts' was given to women, while in previous periods this proportion stood at 47%.

Annual data series reveal a pattern in the **occasional participants** group, which has not only continued but actually been heightened during the extraordinary period under analysis. In 2018, 43.5% of people who appeared circumstantially in a news report (not in a social or professional role) were women, while during the period analysed this percentage was 10 points higher (53.4%).

As representatives of **governments and authorities**, women's speaking time has always been the minority. In the case of the government and authorities of Catalonia, it stood at 35.4%. It is worth noting that the Catalan ministers of the presidency (female), health (female) and the interior (male) were the three main spokespersons on the handling of the pandemic.

For the Spanish government, in which three men were the main speakers at the start of the health crisis (the prime minister, minister of health and director of the Coordination Centre for Health Alerts and Emergencies), the proportion of women heard on the news stood at 19%.

Breaking down the prevalence of women by topic reveals inequalities in representation on reporting about the pandemic. In the group 'healthcare sphere', which includes health experts (such as vaccine manufacturers), the proportion of women on **health management of the crisis** was low, while they were in the majority in coverage of **care of people**.

Specifically, women accounted for only 27.7% of the speaking time given to health professionals and health experts with a management role (excluding representatives of government). In contrast, women were given the most speaking time as basic hospital and care staff (57.5%) and health staff in a management role in homes for the elderly (67.3%). This continues to convey an image of women as more linked to the private sphere and in caring roles than in the public sphere and management.

News reports on the COVID-19 pandemic have also covered **issues that particularly affect women**, such as gender-based violence. Specifically, there was coverage of the various services set up to further protect victims and of the specific issues of sexually exploited women. This news accounted for 0.3% of all of the information analysed, which is in keeping with the usual figures.

[Analysis of the prevalence of women in reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

ANNEX:

News programmes. Prevalence of women by group. From March 13 to 31

Group	Women	Men	Total speaking time
	% speaking time	% speaking time	
Participants in the economic and employment spheres	28.2	71.8	1:29:55
Occasional participants	53.4	46.6	1:21:42
Culture and sport participants	35.8	64.2	1:16:50
Government and authorities of Catalonia	35.4	64.6	1:09:34
Healthcare participants	39.4	60.6	1:04:29
Government and authorities of Spain	19.0	81.0	0:52:47
Experts	28.7	71.3	0:33:08
Local governments and authorities	36.4	63.6	0:26:27
Other institutional participants	36.8	63.2	0:18:18
Political parties	40.6	59.4	0:17:30
Associations	43.7	56.3	0:17:08
Participants in the educational sphere	58.7	41.3	0:07:45
International organisations	13.4	86.6	0:06:42
Entities involved in the political debate	57.5	42.5	0:01:27
Catholic church	--	100	0:00:44
Total	36.0	64.0	9:24:26

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