



REPORT 118/2020

Content Department

Barcelona, July 2020

Analysis of the prevalence of women in reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic

Aim of the report

This report examines the prevalence of women in reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Study universe

We analysed a sample of the news broadcast on Catalan channel TV3 because we have data for this channel to be able to compare with other periods. Specifically, we 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 that were broadcast between 13 March, when the government of Catalonia announced the lockdown and the Spanish government announced the state of emergency, and 31 March.

We analysed 38 newscasts, which account for 38 hours, 34 minutes and 33 seconds of news time on the COVID-19 pandemic, and 9 hours, 24 minutes and 40 seconds of speaking time spread over 2,208 inserts.

In addition, we analysed 30 magazine shows, 4 special reports and 26 informative programmes including content on the COVID-19 pandemic. These broadcasts comprised 462 interventions related to the pandemic: 210 interviews; 138 interventions in 59 press conferences; 110 interventions on 64 talk shows and other opinion programmes; and 2 debates each involving 2 participants.

Conclusions

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

If we look at reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of **thematic areas**, we find that women have less speaking time than men on almost all topics, while on the three primary subjects (management, health and economic and employment impacts), they account for only one third (35.4%, 35.5% and 31.5%, respectively). Turning specifically to information on health and health services, women have gone from being the majority (at normal times) to accounting for just over a third of those reporting on the pandemic. Gender equality is found only in thematic areas that are less prevalent in reporting about the pandemic and are traditionally associated with women, such as social, cultural and educational topics.

When it comes to **representation of women**, we found the same and in some cases greater inequalities as in previous periods analysed. For instance, women continue to be under-represented in the economic and employment spheres (28.2%) and have dropped as representatives of the health sphere (39.4%) and in particular as expert opinions (28.7%) compared to ordinary times. In contrast, women continue to be in the majority for personal experiences linked to the news; i.e., when there is more of an emotional dimension.

Breaking down the prevalence of women by topic reveals inequalities in representation on reporting about the pandemic. When it comes to occasional interviewees, for example, women are the only voice for those affected in homes for the elderly and clearly outweigh men (accounting for some 56%) representing consumers and those affected in education (mainly as mothers of children now being home-schooled).

However, it is perhaps most significant that among health professionals, level of responsibility and public representation are decisive factors in the prevalence of women in the news. Women account for 27.7% of health staff in management roles in the news analysed. In contrast, they represent almost 57.5% of basic care and hospital staff given speaking time.

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.