SURVEY ON DISINFORMATION TO WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF CHILE
We thank all the members of the Board of Directors, collaborators of Fundación Multitudes, from the present, past and future, which made it possible to carry out this study.

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INTRODUCTION

In just two years Chile is facing a strong period of political campaigns, in which citizens have to approach the polls on 6 occasions between November 2020 and December 2022. With the last of these (presidential) elections around the corner, technological development, and the Covid-19 pandemic, many of the activities, such as political campaigns, have become digital with great relevance in social media, a place where disinformation campaigns and fake news are mostly generated. In particular, women candidates have used social media the most, because it’s free and allows direct interaction with voters.

However, this is a double-edged sword, since the little data available regarding online gender violence indicates that it is women who are often the targets of disinformation campaigns on these platforms. Just as women are progressively moving closer to more equitable participation in public power, trying to keep the promise of democracy as a government by the people and for the people, - women being a key part of it - gender disinformation in politics puts at risk the hard-earned achievements reached so far by women candidates for elected positions. This is when data protection becomes vitally important, since the non-proper use of information is not only reflected in its misrepresentation, but also the malicious use of sensitive and/or reserved data.

Disinformation fosters suspicion and mistrust of women who counter the norms publicly. The intention of disinformation as a form of online gender violence is intended to question whether women belong or are capable of making decisions, and
is a stealthy and pernicious way of undermining women and dissuading them from participating in electoral processes.

This emerging threat has devastating consequences for women in public life and, by extension, for democracies everywhere.

For this reason, the least we can do is remove barriers designed to keep women out of public leadership. Disinformation represents a significant barrier, especially in an age when people are increasingly receiving their news from social media. This is coupled with the fact that studies show that social media users are more likely to believe disinformation. For this reason, at the beginning of this year Fundación Multitudes decided to create the **Women’s Observatory Against Disinformation and Fake News** that will carry out multiple data collection and analyses on disinformation campaigns against women in political life and activism on social media.

Furthermore, this group will make recommendations to combat the dissemination of this phenomenon, placing special emphasis on the detection, verification, identification and dismantling of disinformation campaign strategies and dissemination models.

Our best opportunity is to begin with the investigation, documenting, and analyzing disinformation against women parliamentarians in Chile to respond more effectively to this problem, starting with the recognition of this phenomenon as a negative factor in the participation of women in electoral processes and politics. This first report presents the preliminary results of the survey on the impact of disinformation and violation of personal information of women parliamentarians in Chile.
REPORT OBJECTIVE

Analyze the surveys carried out with Chilean women parliamentarians in order to know their experiences and stories in relation to political exercise and the delegitimization suffered due to disinformation campaigns and data breaches, in order to establish the first data at the national level, collect conclusions and generate recommendations.

INFORMATION COLLECTION SUMMARY

During 2020, there were 36 women deputies and 12 women senators.

Of the female deputies, 25 replied, corresponding to 69.4% of the total, while half of the female senators replied.

In total, 31 out of 48 women parliamentarians replied, i.e. 64.5% of the total.

This survey began to be applied in January 2021 until September of the same year.

SURVEY DESCRIPTION

The anonymous survey consists of:

- Five questions characterizing the sample (position, age, belonging to the LGBTQ+ community, years of service and being indigenous people),
- Four quantitative questions about the experience of disinformation and, finally,
- A qualitative analysis section where the parliamentarians are invited to describe a personal experience lived around this issue.
CHARACTERIZATION OF THE SAMPLE

- No parliamentarian belongs to the LGBTQ+ community, which accounts for the lack of representation of sexual diversity in women in Congress.
- The average age of women parliamentarians is 46.9 years. On average, the deputies are 45.7 years old and the senators 52 years old.
- Their average years of public service together is 15.4 years. On average, the senators have 22.3 years and the deputies 13.7 years of public service.
- Regarding being indigenous people:
  1. 80.6% are not indigenous people.
  2. 12.9% are not, but feel identified.
  3. 6.5% are indigenous people.

The women who responded to this survey were mostly middle-aged women parliamentarians, with no representation of the LGBT+ community and low representation of women from indigenous peoples.
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RESULTS

The percentages of the responses of the women parliamentarians in the following questions correspond to:

"Do you feel that as an elected woman, you are more exposed to being a victim of disinformation and fake news than your male colleagues?"

- 90.3% said that they do feel more exposed to being a victim of disinformation than their male colleagues.
- 9.7% said that they do not feel more exposed to being a victim of disinformation than their male colleagues.

The responses segregated according to female deputies/senators are as follows:

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<th>Yes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Deputies</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senators</td>
<td>100%</td>
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"Do you think you have been the object of disinformation or fake news against you? (She perceives that it was, but she could not verify it or did not follow up)"

- 93.5% said that they have been the object of disinformation against them.
- 6.5% said that they have not been the object of disinformation against them.

The responses segregated according to female deputies/senators are as follows:

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<tr>
<td>Deputies</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senators</td>
<td>100%</td>
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96.8% said that they have been the victim of disinformation as a form of gender violence. 3.2% said they have not been a victim of disinformation as a form of gender violence.

“If you had the knowledge that you could become a victim of disinformation, fake news or digital gender violence, would you have run for public office?”

The responses segregated according to female deputies/senators are as follows:

- 96.8% said that they have been the victim of disinformation as a form of gender violence.
- 3.2% said they have not been a victim of disinformation as a form of gender violence.

90.3% of the women parliamentarians surveyed feel more discriminated against than their male colleagues.

96.8% of women parliamentarians surveyed have been victims of misinformation as gender-based violence.
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Based on the personal experiences reported by the women parliamentarians about their experiences of disinformation as a form of gender violence, three main aspects were collected that the parliamentarians identified as disinformation and public and personal discrediting.

In first place are hate speech and threats or direct attacks through social media and telephone calls (25.8% of those surveyed), in second place experiences of disinformation in their political work such as false information about their agenda and projects as well as negligence in the labor area (51.6% of those surveyed), and finally disinformation linked to attacks on morality or its faults (nepotism, classism, racism, xenophobia, etc.), which is also characterized as insults in the personal lives of the respondents (family, sex/love life, etc.) (38.7% of respondents).

The first category is not properly disinformation, but rather fits into the category of digital gender violence. This can have multiple readings; First of all, the women parliamentarians, or a part of them, do not have a complete understanding and / or clarity of the term disinformation as a form of digital gender violence. Rather, the parliamentarians stay in the category that encompasses all types of digital gender violence, as being a victim of disinformation campaigns was also accompanied by hate speech, verbal violence and more. These types of digital violence are specifically being denounced in the answers to this specific question, rather than the disinformation campaigns.
From this, it can be noted that disinformation as a form of gender violence is not yet in the collective consciousness, in this case of women parliamentarians, so identifying those cases as disinformation may be difficult.

These three categories are not identified among those surveyed as being exclusively directed towards women, but it is considered by the vast majority that in the debate and public scrutiny around disinformation and fake news, both in the public and private spheres, to be trivial and superficial.

Women parliamentarians must be accountable for both their personal world as well as their physical appearance, characteristics of which on many occasions are related to their abilities to access the job and / or how they are doing it, which constitutes a double vigil. This double vigil when women must maintain their attention to their behavior and work skills developed in their public life as an authority and also to maintain close attention to their private world, often of their children, partner, family and close relatives in addition to themselves. The survey helps us to report this situation, particularly in the testimonial question:

Testimonios:
“I had the episode, which was provided so that on social media everyone could comment on my appearance and not on my contribution in politics [...]. The disinformation that is generated in social media is brutal and that, consequently, gives rise to gender violence to which we are exposed publicly.” (Survey 23)
This trial that occurs in the private life of women who are or are running for public office is based on stereotyping and speculation such as sexual and physical debauchery along with verbal attacks with sexist language (terms such as "whore" or "bitch"). Directing the discussion to these issues makes women parliamentarians identify disinformation and fake news as gender violence, since it discredits them not only as potential candidates for a new election, or the current legislative work they are doing, but also in their position as women within society. This perpetuates misogynistic and stereotyped views of gender violence against women, disinformation being, in these cases, an extension of this violence. In this case, and again through the testimonial question, we are able to reach the conclusion that women parliamentarians are aware that this type of gender violence affects not only them but also their closest circles.

Testimonials:

“I don't think there is more disinformation towards one [political] sector or another, but if they feel more threatened by a woman, the attack is different, it is to the public and private sphere, from the work of one but also from the private sphere.” (Survey 24)

"I continually receive through social networks and in meetings through meeting platforms in which I participate: harassment, harassment, threats, images with unsolicited sexual content, "funas", among others..." (Survey 6).
Almost all of the women parliamentarians claim they have suffered from disinformation. A large percentage of women parliamentarians recognize that disinformation campaigns can be and in their case have been part of a gender attack.

The vast majority have been victims of disinformation as a form of gender violence in campaigns and / or their exercise as women in decision-making.

As seen in the previous diagrams, these percentages mentioned in the previous points always cover over 90% of women parliamentarians.
Although women parliamentarians do not consider disinformation to be something that exclusively happens to women, they do consider that the discussion around women in public office includes superficial issues such as appearance, sexual life, family or the role they play within their private life.

Therefore, they consider disinformation towards women as a type of gender violence and discredit access to decision-making.

This double accountability of their private and public life, also considering disinformation as disarmament, invalidation and delegitimization of their person, can mean a significant barrier in the participation of women in politics and the possibility of seeing in politics a professional career. Women either do not want to be exposed to this double review or they do not want to expose themselves to the consequences that disinformation campaigns leave behind, especially if these are linked to their quality as people and / or women within the society. At the national level, only 23% of the seats in Congress are held by women, and at the local level - mayors - only 10% are women.
Despite the fact that a large majority of women parliamentarians claim to have suffered gender violence due to disinformation, a large majority affirm that it would not have discouraged them from future political candidacies.

At this point it is important to emphasize that when the women parliamentarians are asked "If you had the knowledge that you could become a victim of disinformation, fake news or digital gender violence, would you have run for public office?" it was widely answered that yes, which could be a positive reading at first glance. This gives us two paths of analysis that are important to highlight: First, during the conversation in the application of this survey, and the specific question, it was noted the phenomenon has become naturalized since it was taken as completely normal and natural of political exercise to be victims of disinformation campaigns as a form of gender violence and to be exposed to gender and political violence in general. "I have tough skin" "The policy is without crying" were phrases commonly used by responders to define the normalization of attacks against them. Second, the statistical behavior of this response may be the consequence of a “survival bias” phenomenon in which the analysis focuses on those who passed a selection process and excluded those who did not. That is, this analysis focuses on women who did persist through difficult institutional, cultural and social barriers to participate in political decision-making spaces, rather than those who did not.
Finally, it is important to open the discussion to the fact that this very "normalisation" of the phenomenon may be a reason why other women do not or do not want to participate in political processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While disinformation campaigns are related to national politics, the people who spread it often use narratives targeting the gender and sexuality of women in order to disrupt democratic processes. Frequently, this is then amplified by the media and the general population, who, although not having the intention, do not recognize the disinformation or do not do the due diligence process to avoid the dissemination of disinformation campaigns.

For this reason, within the Observatory's recommendations against Disinformation and Fake News, we see that it is important to:

- Educate citizens on how to combat and avoid disinformation, following international guidelines, especially in Europe, so that it is the same citizens that identify this type of gender violence online and combat it.
- Finally, ensure that both digital media and social media platforms apply OECD and European Union guidelines to avoid publishing and spreading disinformation campaigns, particularly in times of electoral processes.