

Media, Elections and Gender Monitor

Lebanon

1st February - 31st March, 2022

Maharat Foundation, Madanyat Association and UN Women are partnering to monitor how gender is being addressed by the media in relation to Lebanon's 2022 electoral process, including measuring the presence, portrayal, and representation of female candidates by the media. This falls under the broader work of all three organisations to promote gender equality in Lebanon.

The focus of the elections media monitoring is on TV and social media.

Snapshot findings

18 female candidate accounts

410 total comments & responses that include violence

- Types of violence:
 - 1 Cyberbullying
 - 2 Psychological violence
 - 3 sexual violence

Overview

The Twitter and Facebook accounts of 18 female candidates were monitored during the time period, February 1 and March 31, 2022. Of the **5,870 comments responding to 240 posts by the 18 candidates, a total of 410 comments are characterized as gender-based violence**. In March, this represented 7% of all comments left on the social media accounts of the 18 female candidates. It should also be noted that this number might reflect under reporting as candidates may have immediately deleted/reported some of the more violent comments.

Examples of the comments characterized as gender based violence (all left in Arabic) include:

- "Go f*ck yourself"
- "Whore"
- "From which sex bed are you talking?"
- "You should have an appearance on porn hub"
- "The old ugly woman when she speaks"
- "Madame Plastic"
- "The parliament is not a place for women, you should be rather home and raising children"
- "Now you stopped knitting Iranian carpets and you started understanding electricity"

The violence is classified into:

- Cyberbullying;
- harassment and threats of a sexual nature;
- bias against women; and
- threats and intimidation.

The violence came from regular users, with the exception of two comments left by male candidates.

There were no recorded incidents of violence on TV against female candidates during either month. Incidents have been recorded in April, which will be reported in the next edition of this monitor. However, women and men's TV representation and presence was monitored. **The findings show men dominated political and electoral discussions aired, with male representation standing at 93% and female representation standing at 7%.**

A comparison with male candidates is not currently available.

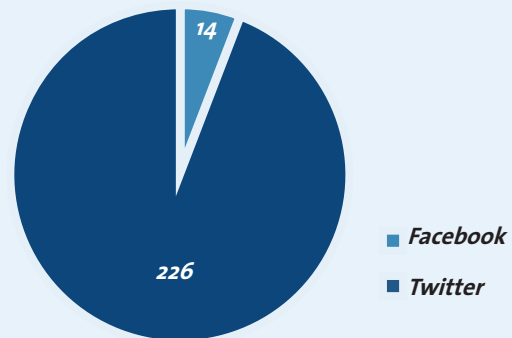
Social media platforms

The monitoring process included the social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) of 18 women candidates and activists in the public field during the months of February and March of the year 2022. Comments on their pages, positions, activities and opinions by followers or users were monitored and analyzed on social media.

240 tweets/posts were monitored and analyzed during the month of March. **A total of 410 comments, out of 5,870 constituted a type of online violence directed at the female candidates.** This represents **7% of all comments, broken down as - 81% online bullying, 9% violence based on age or appearance, 6% threats or harassment on a sexual basis, and 4% bias against women.**

These comments and responses were distributed between Twitter and Facebook as follows:

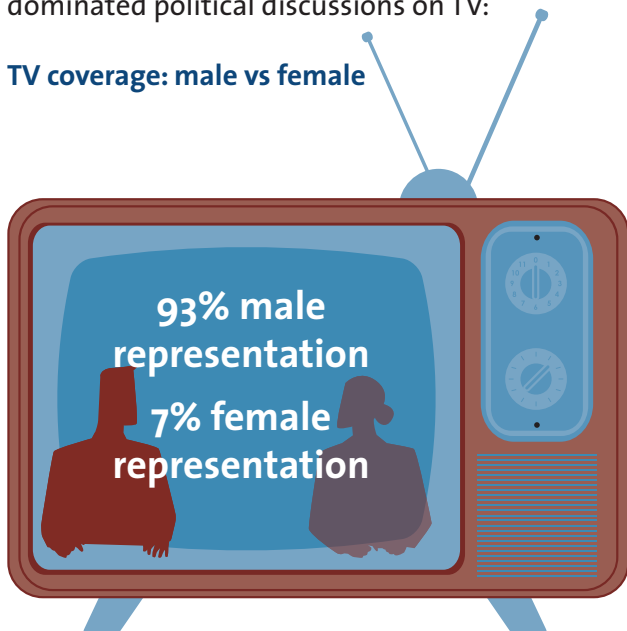
Distribution of 240 tweets/posts during march 2022 sample of 18 accounts (women candidates)



Television Coverage

Maharat Foundation monitored the presence of women across electoral and political TV segments and shows on Lebanon’s television stations during February and March. The findings show men dominated political discussions on TV:

TV coverage: male vs female



These numbers reflect candidates and pundits speaking on issues related to the elections. **Given that 15% of the candidates running are female, this shows a disproportionate bias for male representative and candidates.** Women’s political participation in the electoral process was rarely touched upon on these segments/shows, with the issue ranking last in topics broached (utilizing not more than 0.05% of the TV air time).

The Lebanese LBC Foundation did air a dedicated programme, the “Fifty-fifty in Politics” programme, to show case candidates. A number of viewers interacted online with the show, and offensive and violent comments appeared against the women candidates on the social media pages of the organization sponsoring the program. In addition, a newspaper article ran on the programme, suggesting it runs against Lebanese cultural and social norms.

Maharat Foundation, Madanyat Association and UN Women will continue to undertake gender, media and elections monitoring in the lead up to the 2022 elections, and will be working together, with Kafa (enough) Violence & Exploitation and LADE to support female candidates to address, prevent and respond to violence against women in politics.