Gendered Disinformation & Online Attacks Against Women in Politics
The Evidence
From the beginning, female candidates received a greater number of negative attacks from right-wing and inauthentic sources.

Data Analytics from Marvelous AI
Sexist, sticky story lines

From early on in their campaigns, social media narratives of female candidates were mostly negative and mostly concerned with their character.

Top narratives persist across political spectrum

[character] Kamala Harris is not Authentically American, progressive, or black
[character] Elizabeth Warren lied about her ethnic heritage
[character] Amy Klobuchar is mean to her staff
[electability] Bernie Sanders is the “real” front-runner
[electability] Pete Buttigieg is running a good campaign
[electability] Joe Biden is creepy to women and has a lot of baggage
Coordinated Push—“Dictator Harris”
Gendered disinformation

= the spread of deceptive or inaccurate information and images against women political leaders, journalists and female public figures, following story lines that often draw on misogyny, as well as gender stereotypes around the role of women (Nature & Target).

This type of disinformation is designed to alter public understanding of female politicians’ track records for immediate political gain, as well as to discourage women seeking political careers (Motive)
Gendered disinformation vs gendered abuse
Gendered disinformation vs gendered abuse
Gendered disinformation & abuse:

- Women are overly sexual
- Women are untrustworthy
- Women are weak
- Women are stupid

Women are unfit for power (and politics is a dirty game)
Gendered disinformation & abuse: similar motives

- Push women out of politics
- Eliminate opposition
- Erode women’s rights
- Erode democratic institutions and values
- Exercise influence on foreign elections (Belarus, Ukraine)
Gendered disinformation & abuse: same actors & tools

- Authoritarian Leaders
- “Caveman” Political Leaders
- Illiberal Actors
- The Manosphere
Striking Back

Strategies and Opportunity Areas to Address Gendered Disinformation Globally
Best practices in tools & advocacy

REPORTING IN AN ERA OF DISINFORMATION:
Fairness Guide for Covering Women and People of Color in Politics

https://weareultraviolet.org/fairness-guide-2020/

PRESS RELEASES
Democratic Women’s Caucus, Speaker Pelosi Send Letter to Facebook Demanding it Stop the Spread of Gendered Disinformation and Misogynistic Attacks Against Women Leaders
What’s needed next:

1. A new research agenda

• Map major disinformation efforts – and their gendered dimension in the Global South

• Evaluate impact of various inoculation strategies, technological innovations (e.g. ParityBOT and Harmony Square) and citizen literacy programs – with a specific focus on gender-based bias & disinformation
What’s Needed Next:

2. Support women leaders

Support the women leaders who are at the forefront of democratization efforts and calls for good governance globally and are therefore becoming the targets of disinformation – providing them with the tools, the information and the support network they need to respond to gendered attacks and influence regulatory changes.
Do you want to know more?

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