

CASE STUDY

THE UNTAPPED EXPERTISE



A STUDY OF
THE PARTICIPATION OF
WOMEN ON POLITICAL TV SHOWS
IN NORTH MACEDONIA



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INTRODUCTION

In the struggle for gender equality, the women of North Macedonia have achieved basic equality in front of the law. Ever since 1945, women can vote, run for office, and have their own bank accounts. With the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2018, the country has further committed to achieving equality, at least on paper.

The situation in the real lives of women continues to be disturbingly unfair. Women are twice as likely to experience gender-based discrimination at work than men do¹, one fifth of women in Skopje have been touched inappropriately without their consent², and 62.3% of women are economically inactive³. According to the State Agency for Statistics, in the last 5 years, on average 6,000 more boys started elementary school annually, compared to girls. However, this disparity disappears and flips later on in the academic career. Women graduates from undergraduate-level studies make up on average 58,7% of the cohorts in the last five years.

Despite these academic achievements, women are not regarded as experts in most areas. This research contributes to better understanding the gap between men and women in perceptions of expertise, particularly in media. Political TV shows rely on experts and pundits to explain complex societal and policy issues to the wider public. It is a natural and logical venue for projecting expertise. However, women are far less represented on political TV shows, and in particular on certain topics.

The findings in this report are disappointing, to say the least. Women represent less than 20% of all guests on TV shows and 70% of all TV shows in 2020 had only men as guests. The areas that get most airtime are political and foreign policy topics, presumably due to the highest level of viewership. Coincidentally, these are the areas where women are least likely to appear as experts.

Finally, while the authors recognize the non-binary nature of gender, this study deals with the representation of women in a more traditional understanding of gender. To our disappointment, none of the shows had a guest that deviated from the binary norms for gender, showing us once again, that these groups remain highly marginalized in North Macedonia. We hope that a future study of this kind will necessitate the inclusion of non-binary category due to the inclusion of members of these groups as TV debate experts in their respective fields.

¹ Vaska Leshoska et al., "Gender-Based Discrimination and Labour in North Macedonia" (Skopje, North Macedonia: Reactor - Research in Action, 2019).

² Marija Bashevska, "Gender-Based Violence in Public Spaces in Skopje" (Skopje, North Macedonia: Reactor - Research in Action, 2020).

³ Tanja Ivanova, "Gender Aspect of the Social and Economic Effects of the Pandemic Crisis Caused by COVID-19" (Skopje, North Macedonia: Reactor - Research in Action, 2020).

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The aim of this pilot research study is to draw conclusions about the number of women experts in media. It focuses solely on political TV debates due to the large number of outside guests included. Unlike news programs, political TV debates rely on external expertise in covering topics. As a result, TV producers shape the public opinion on who is regarded as an expert in a given area. Beyond the findings in this report, this research can also be a starting point for a more in-depth analysis of the portrayal of women as experts and their treatment in visual media.

The research, including collection of the sample material, coding and analysis, was performed by Ms. **Ivana Jordanovska**, as *Principal Researcher* and Ms. **Zorana Antovska**, as *Research Assistant*. For more information on the researchers please see at PRESPA Institute and biographical information included in this publication.



METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE INFORMATION

The analyzed sample was collected from 10 January 2021 to 21 March 2021 and consists of 980 episodes from seven different debate shows, broadcasted on channels with national coverage. It includes *360 Stepeni* (360 degrees) on Alsat, *Samo Vistina* (Just Truth) on Kanal 5, *Top Tema* (Top Topic) on Telma TV, *Click Plus* on TV21, *24 Analiza* (24 Analysis) on Televizija 24, *Zaspj Ako Mozes* (Sleep If You Can) on TV Alfa, and *Sto Ne E Jasno* (What's Not Clear) on TV Alfa. The sample includes all the episodes made available online on Youtube, with the exclusion of special episodes which don't follow the customary format of the show. These incorporate, but are not limited to, field TV survey-style episodes of citizens and pre-recorded interviews with foreign dignitaries.

All shows, with the exception of *24 Analiza* were coded by one coder. *24 Analiza* was coded by a second coder, who also randomly selected 10% of all the coded episodes by coder 1 and coded them independently. This check showed correct and consistent coding by coder 1 with no major issues.

Figure 1 shows the number of monitored episodes per show. *Samo Vistina* had the highest number of episodes available online, with *360 Stepeni* having the lowest number.

Figure 1: Number of Episodes per Show

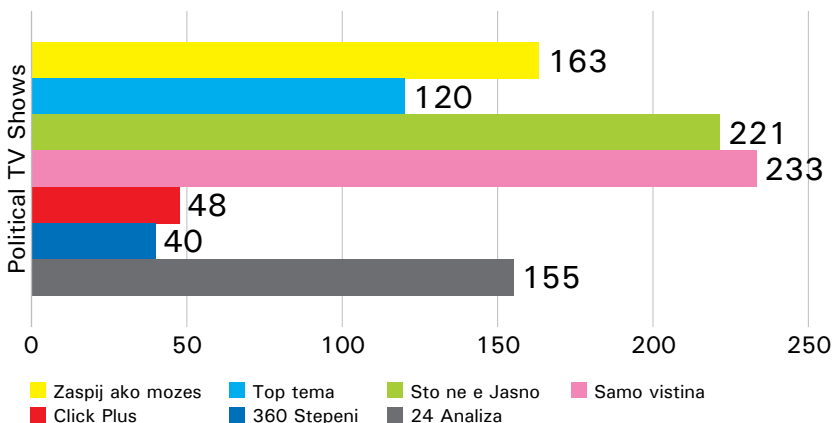
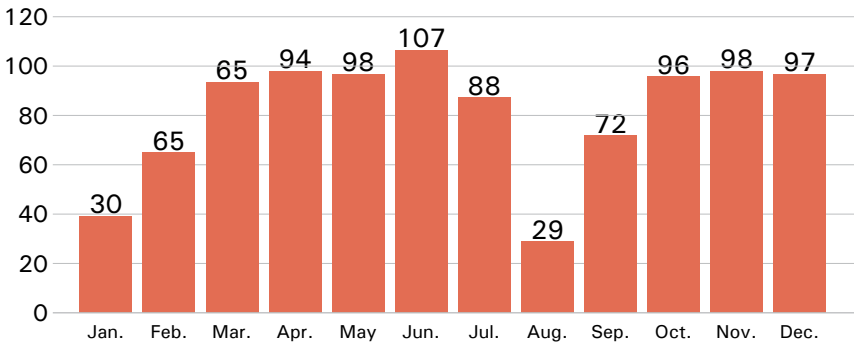


Figure 2 shows the distribution of episodes by month. January and August have the lowest number of episodes, as the months with the largest number of days off, due to religious or personal holidays. The other months show a relatively consistent number of episodes, with the exception of February. However, since the monitoring was conducted in the first three months of 2021, it is possible that some of the episodes from the previous year were no longer available.

Figure 2: Distribution of Episodes by Month



CODEBOOK INFORMATION

For each episode the following information were collected:

- ▶ The name of the show
- ▶ The name of the TV channel
- ▶ The month in which the episode was aired
- ▶ The gender of the host
- ▶ Number of episodes per week
- ▶ Number of guests
- ▶ Number of female guests
- ▶ Main topic of the show

For the topic of the show, we developed several categories that we expected to be salient. However, as Table 2 shows, some of the expected topics were barely covered in the TV shows. Science and Technology, aside from the ongoing pandemic, and Gender Issues were barely discussed, with Culture and Sport also having a significantly low number of dedicated episodes.

An important note on the coding decisions should be made. In episodes where more than one topic was covered, the topic of the episode was coded according to which topic was allotted most airtime. In the rare case where the different topics received roughly equal time, the topic that was discussed first was coded as the topic of the episode. With this in mind, it is possible that the under-represented categories did receive airtime which is not visible in the data. However, the stark differences between the various topics show us that in the best-case scenario, these topics are routinely considered secondary in importance.

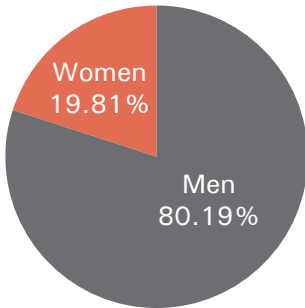
Table 1: Number of Episodes by Topic

Domestic Politics	Foreign Policy & Security	Economy	Science & Technology	Gender Issues	Education & Social Issues	Health	Culture & Sport	Other
510	185	70	2	2	32	160	11	8

FINDINGS

The findings of this monitoring pilot study are extremely concerning. Female guests make up less than 20% of the total number of guests on these shows of 1726 guests only 342 were women and 1384 were men. Women are heavily outnumbered in the coverage, with a single woman debating with four men on average.

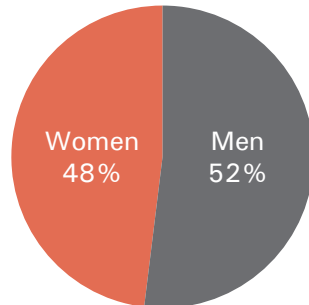
Figure 3: Percentage of Male v. Female Guests



When it comes to the hosts, the situation is significantly more equal, with women hosting 48% and men hosting 52% of all the episodes.

Figure 4: Hosted Episodes by Gender

The table and graph below show a very striking difference between the topics that receive airtime and the miniscule presence of female experts on all topics. The 50-50 bar is the one representing equal gender representation, while most episodes (689) have manels (panels with only men). However, since Domestic Politics is by far the most popular topic, it is also the one with the most striking difference with number of manels. (The table and figure includes only information on episodes with 100% male speakers, an equal number of men and women and 100% female speakers.)

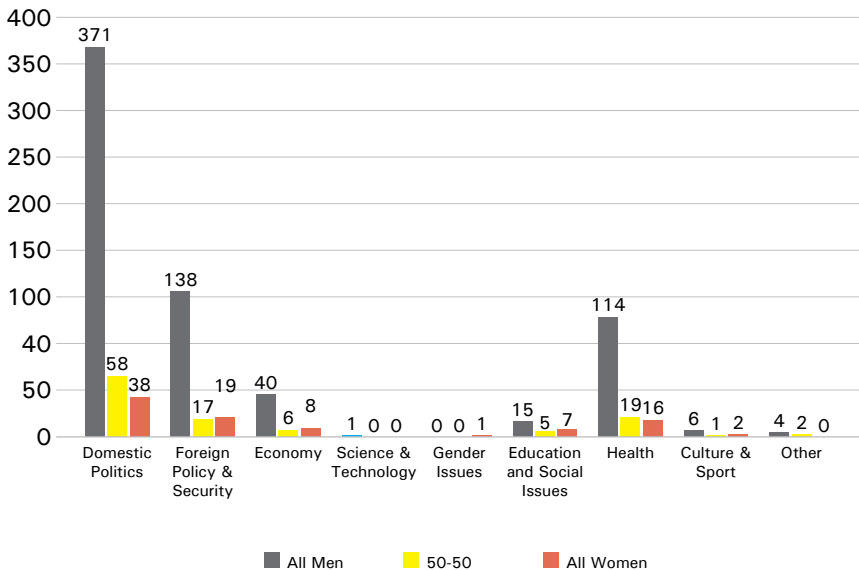


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Table 2: Comparison by Topic

Topic/Number of episodes that include:	All men	50 - 50	All women
Domestic Politics	371	58	38
Foreign Policy & Security	138	17	19
Economy	40	6	8
Science & Technology	1	0	0
Gender Issues	0	0	1
Education and Social Issues	15	5	7
Health	114	19	16
Culture & Sport	6	1	2
Other	4	2	0
Total:	689	108	91

Figure 5: Comparison by Topic



A linear regression model is used for analysis. The categorical topic variable is converted to dummy variables, and the gender of the host is used as a control variable. Education and Social Issues coefficient is the constant. The rest of the coefficients of the categorical variable are calculated by adding on or subtracting from the constant.

Table 3: OLS Model Predicting the Percentage of Women

Predicting the Percentage of Female Guests Based on Topic		
	Percentage of Women	
Domestic Politics	-21.676*** (5.799)	
Foreign and Security Policy	-21.397*** (6.115)	
Economy	-12.816* (6.801)	
Science and Technology	-22.289 (23.210)	
Gender	46.595** (23.198)	
Health Policies	-18.722*** (6.158)	
Culture and Sport	-6.178 (11.159)	
Other	-18.332 (12.577)	
Host Gender	-2.218 (2.105)	
Education and Social Issues	38.956*** (5.745)	
N	977	
R2	0.029	
Adjusted R2	0.020	
Residual Std. Error	31.802 (df = 967)	
F Statistic	3.205*** (df = 9; 967)	
* p < .1	** p < .05	*** p < .01



The interpretation of the table is as follows: The coefficients denoted with asterisks (and in particular two or three asterisks) are statistically significant predictors. The coefficient for Education and Social Issues is used as a constant against which the other dummy variables are evaluated. If the topic of an episode are Education and Social Issues, women are likely to make 38.956% of guests. If the topic is Domestic Politics, women are likely to make up $38.956 - 21.676 = 17.28\%$ of the guests.

Women are likely to make up a similar number of speaking seats on Foreign and Security Policy debates (17.559%), slightly higher on Economy (26.14%) and Health (20.234%) debates. The only topic where women are likely to make up the majority of guests is Gender Issues (85.551%).

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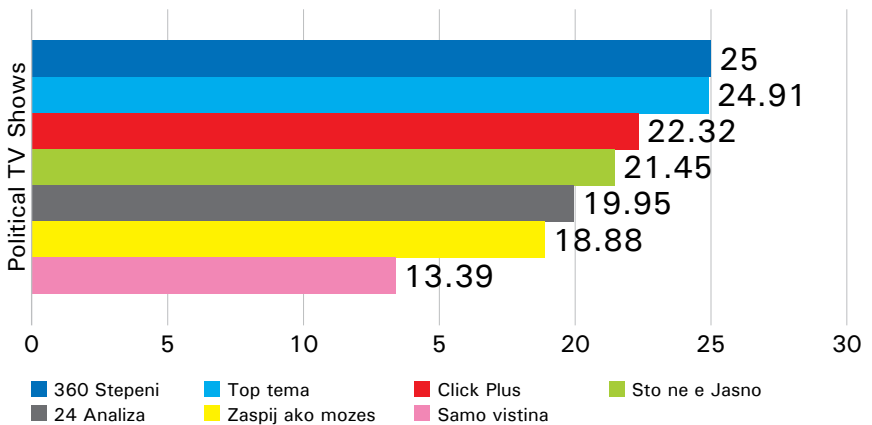
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ANALYSIS BY TV SHOW

Percentage of Women

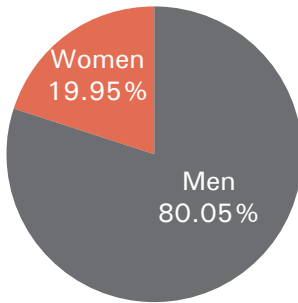




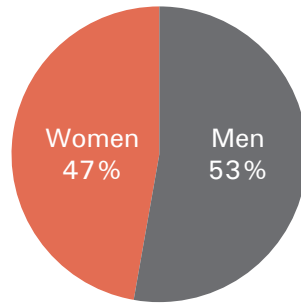
24 ANALIZA

24 Analiza is a show on **TV 24 Vesti**, a Private Broadcaster with National Concession that runs on average four times a week. It is hosted by either a male or female host, with a roughly equal distribution among the genders. While it is mostly in the format of live debate in the studio, the start of the pandemic changed the structure of some of the episodes. For a period of time, guests were introduced via video links, or in sequential order of appearance in the studio. In terms of representation of women, it closely mirrors the overall average of less than 20% of women experts.

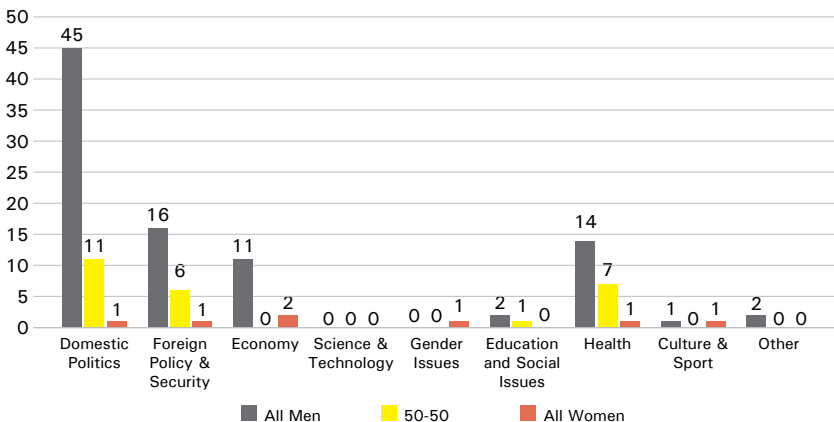
Percentage of Male v.Female Guests



Gender of Host



Comparison by Topic

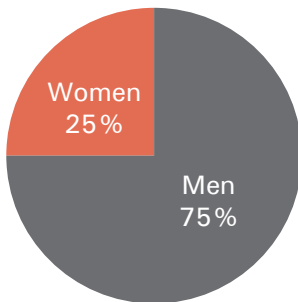




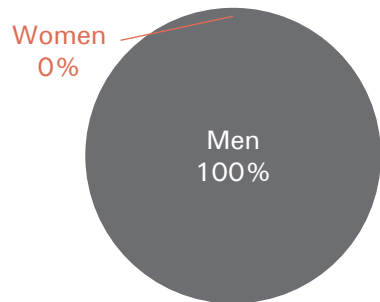
360 STEPENI

360 Stepeni is a show produced by a private production company with the same name, which runs debates once a week on **Alsat-M TV**, a Private Broadcaster with National Concession. It is hosted by one host consistently, who happens to be a man. In most cases, it has multiple guests and an intense style of debate. Overall, it does a little better than the overall average with 25% of all its guests being women.

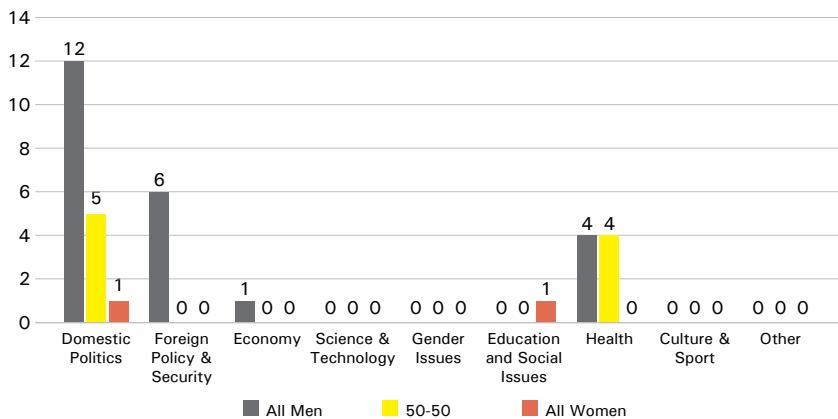
Percentage of Male v.Female Guests



Gender of Host



Comparison by Topic



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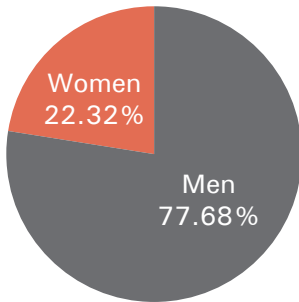
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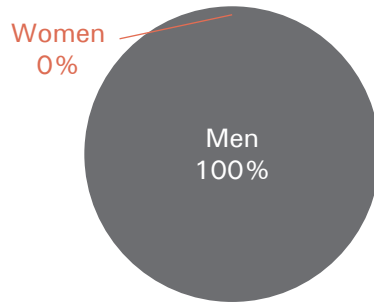
CLICK PLUS

Click Plus is a show that runs on **TV21**, a Private Broadcaster with National Concession that increased its weekly number of episodes from one to two episodes a week during 2020. It is hosted exclusively by men. It does slightly better than the average, with 22% of all guests being women.

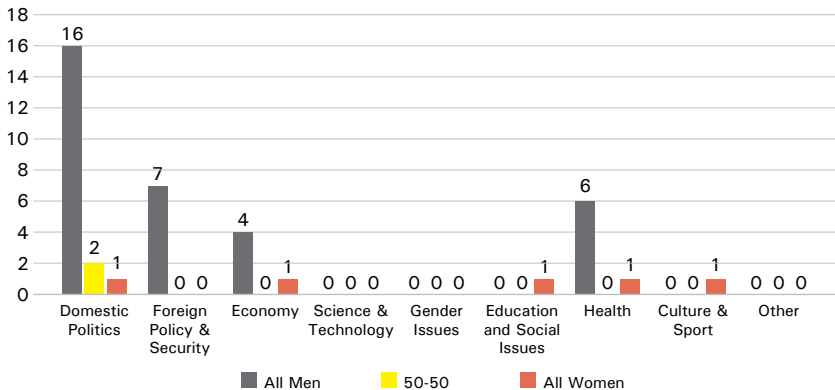
Percentage of Male v. Female Guests



Gender of Host



Comparison by Topic

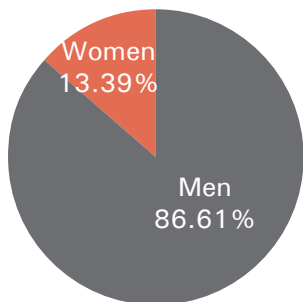




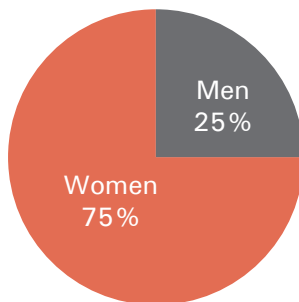
SAMO VISTINA

Samo Vistina runs on the **TV Kanal 5**, Private Broadcaster with National Concession, and is aired on average five times a week. It is mostly hosted by women, while at the same time showing an extremely poor representation of women (13.39%). This is also the lowest percentage of women on any of the monitored shows.

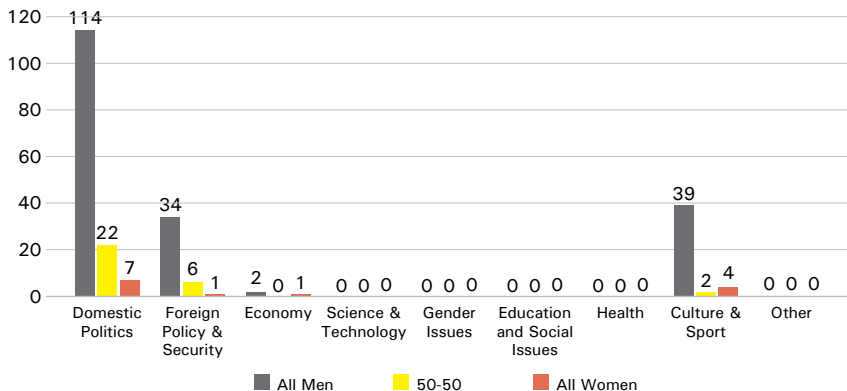
Percentage of Male v.Female Guests



Gender of Host



Comparison by Topic

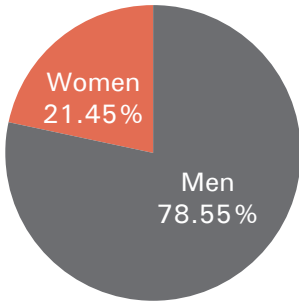




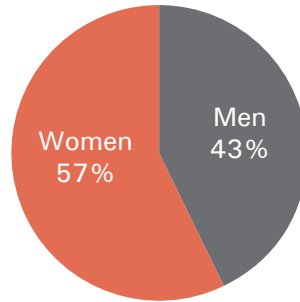
STO NE E JASNO

Sto ne e jasno is a political TV show that runs on **TV Alfa**, a Private Broadcaster with National Concession, which runs on average five times a week. It is hosted by both male and female hosts, with a slightly larger number of episodes hosted by women. It does just slightly better than the overall average (21.45%).

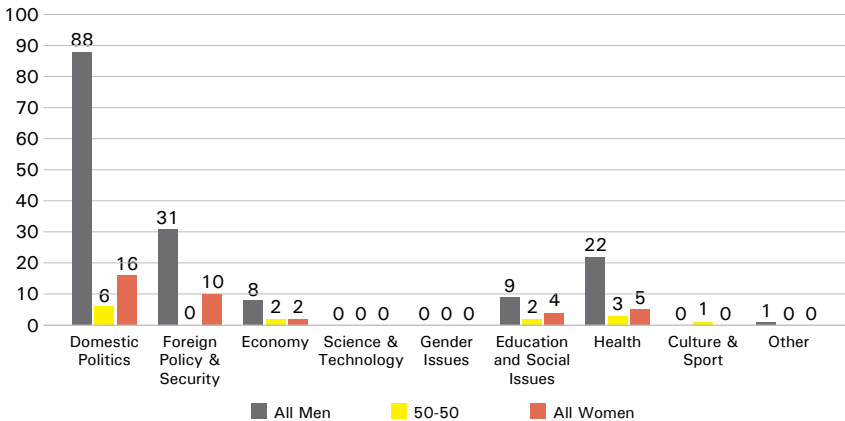
Percentage of Male v. Female Guests



Gender of Host



Comparison by Topic

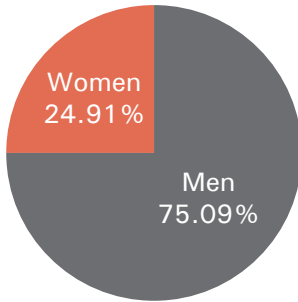




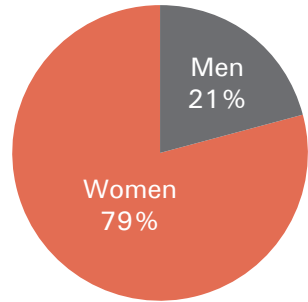
TOP TEMA

Top Tema is broadcasted on **Telma TV**, a Private Broadcaster with National Concession, aired on average three times a week. It is predominantly hosted by women and it does a bit better than the average with almost 25% of the guests being women.

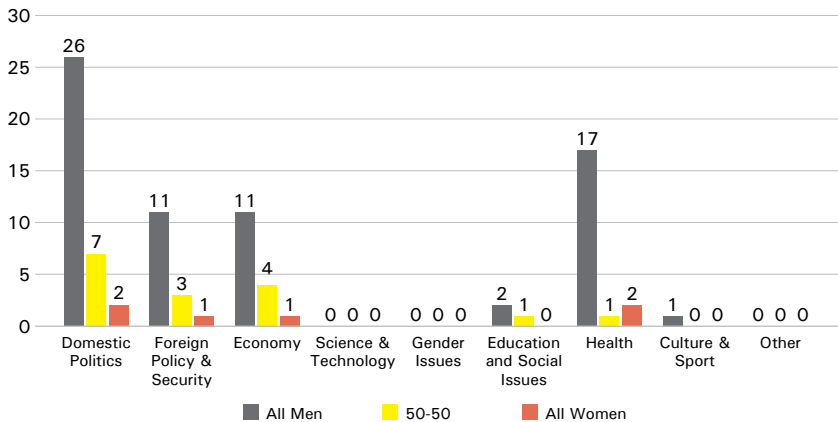
Percentage of Male v. Female Guests



Gender of Host



Comparison by Topic

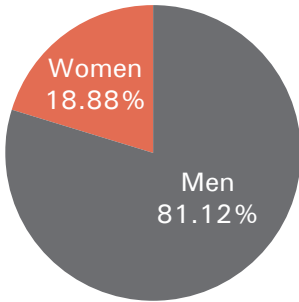




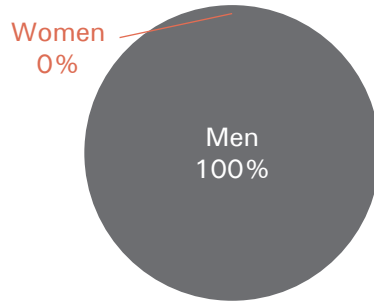
ZASPI AKO MOZES

Zaspi ako mozes is broadcasted a record six times a week, at **TV Alfa**, Private Broadcaster with a National Concession, and is hosted exclusively by men. It is unique in the fact that it usually has two hosts, both men. It has one of the lower numbers in terms of representation of women, with 18.88%.

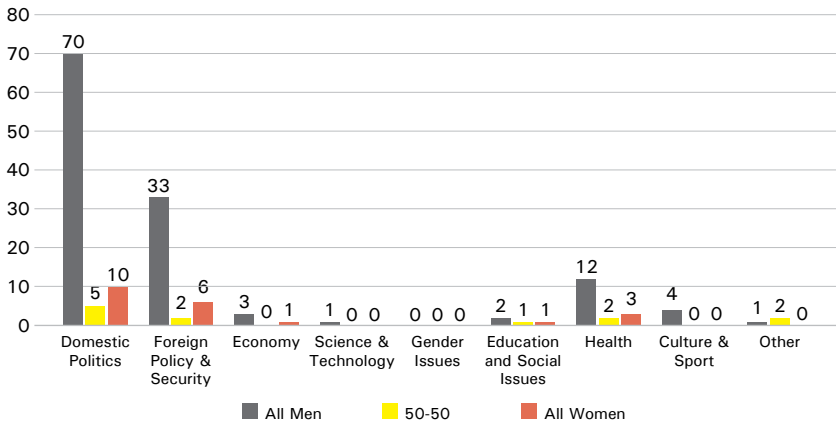
Percentage of Male v. Female Guests



Gender of Host



Comparison by Topic



CONCLUSION

This report confirmed initial expectations that women are far less represented as experts on TV debates. This fact has repercussions for the presence of women on decision-making positions, as well as the overall perception of women's knowledge and expertise in society. As opinion-makers, TV shows have a significant impact on the forming of opinion and sustaining or debunking common patriarchal perceptions of women's role in society.

The importance of topics, as shown in the number of episodes per topic also gives us a glimpse into the indirect impact that media has on certain areas of life. While it is true that political parties have the final say on electoral lists and cabinet positions, political parties are also highly sensitive to public opinion. In cases where public opinion recognizes a woman as an expert and a competent politician, the political party is more likely to appoint her to a decision-making post. In this dynamic, TV shows are in a unique position to give the space and opportunity to women to build an image that could earn them a political position.

Beyond the purely partisan realm, women would benefit from greater representation in media in other areas as well. A positive portrayal of businesswomen can influence the public opinion and encourage more entrepreneurial spirit in women. The inclusion of women experts on security issues can contribute to a more complex and multi-layered understanding of security as human security, instead of national security. Overall, the inclusion of women as experts in the public eye can contribute to a more comprehensive approach to creating and evaluating policies across the whole spectrum of topics.

The low numbers in this report also represent a high potential for improvement. The production teams of each TV show should commit to consciously increasing the number of women on the shows until a gender parity of 50% men and 50% women is reached. The TV shows that do achieve this will definitely stand out as a positive example in the country, but also beyond.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

Ivana JORDANOVSKA is a Senior Research Fellow of PRESPA Institute.

She holds a BA in Political Science with a concentration on Transatlantic Relations from the Institute for Political Science in Paris (Sciences Po) and an MA in International Relations from New York University, where she was a Fulbright Fellow.

Her professional experience includes posts in the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where she worked on parliamentary oversight and countering and preventing violent extremism. In the period 2017-2018, Ivana was an Adviser for Cooperation with International Organizations to the Prime Minister of North Macedonia.

Her research interests are *Transatlantic Relations, Democratization, Cooperation among Authoritarian Regimes and Gender Equality*.

Ivana is a Senior Research Fellow of PRESPA Institute since December 2020.

Zorana ANTOVSKA is a Research Intern of PRESPA Institute.

She is pursuing a MA in Political Science from the Faculty of Law Iustinianus Primus at the University Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje. During her studies she became part of the "Justinian Talks" podcasts session where she currently is co-host and part of the production team. She has also written blog posts on various topics for the Institute of Human Rights in Skopje.

Zorana is a Research Intern of PRESPA Institute since January 2021.





