



GENDER- AND
IDENTITY-BASED
DISINFORMATION

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The following report is based on materials prepared by fact-checkers from “Myth Detector.”

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www.mdfgeorgia.ge

www.mythdetector.com

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**Gender
Barometer**

INTRODUCTION

The instrumentalization of gender- and identity-based disinformation for political purposes remained a pressing issue in 2024, reflecting both domestic developments in Georgia and international and regional topics.

This study, which analyzes data from 2024, reviews the themes, targets, methods, and sources of gender- and identity-based disinformation. The research dedicates a separate section to disinformation narratives related to the West, while another section focuses specifically on manipulative content tied to Georgia's internal political and social processes.

As the data analysis shows, both local and foreign malicious actors use this topic not only to violate individual rights but also as a political tool. In addition to stigmatizing specific groups, they fuel anti-Western and anti-liberal sentiments.

The research analyzes information identified and verified by the fact-checking platform “Myth Detector” between January 1 and December 31, 2024, containing elements of gender- or identity-based disinformation.

METHODOLOGY

The goal of this research is to identify gender-based disinformation and examine its sources and modus operandi.

In the presented study, the Media Development Foundation (MDF) relies on the definition of gender-based disinformation developed by the **EU Disinfo Lab**.

“Gender-based disinformation focuses on the intersection between disinformation and gender, where women, gender non-conforming people, and marginalized groups such as LGBTQIA+ individuals are disproportionately targeted and harassed by spreading deceptive or inaccurate content about them. The techniques for diffusing gendered disinformation are diverse, and can comprise misogynist comments that reinforce gender stereotypes, the sexualisation and diffusion of graphic content, online harassment including threats of violence, and even cyber-attacks.”¹

The study also draws on the definition of identity-based disinformation developed by the European External Action Service (EEAS).

Identity-based disinformation, as defined by the European External Action Service (EEAS), involves spreading misleading or false claims related to gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, and other identity markers to silence, undermine, or repress marginalized communities. Such disinformation destabilizes social cohesion, erodes trust in democratic processes, and leverages societal vulnerabilities for strategic gains. This approach is intended not just to misinform but to weaken democratic structures by targeting social groups, fuelling fear, and amplifying division.²

It is important to note that this study exclusively focuses on identity cases related to gender and sexual orientation.

In addition, the examples of factually inaccurate content discussed in the research are evaluated using indicators such as **slut-shaming** and attacks based on moral criteria.³

¹ EU DisinfoLab & #ShePersisted, 12 `October, 2022. Gender-Based Disinformation 101: Theory, Examples, and Need for Regulation <https://bit.ly/3JZmtLn>

² EEAS, 8 November, 2024. Safeguarding democracy: building resilience against identity-based disinformation <https://bit.ly/42kFgrM>

³ Giorgi Urchukhishvili, Georgian Indicators of Sexist Hate Speech, Working focus groups report, Sapari Tbilisi, 2020. <https://bit.ly/4cpF6EI>

Slut-shaming is the practice of criticizing people, especially women and girls, who are perceived to violate expectations of behavior and appearance regarding issues related to sexuality. Examples of slut-shaming include being criticized or punished for violating dress code policies by dressing in perceived sexually provocative ways, requesting access to birth control, or having premarital, casual, or promiscuous sex. It can also include being victim-blamed for being raped or otherwise sexually assaulted. Slut-shaming is used to shame and stigmatize women.

Attacks based on moral criteria – attacking on the grounds of moral values.

The monitoring is based on continuous observation of 280 Facebook pages/groups using social media analysis tools, as well as cases identified by “Myth Detector” within Meta’s third-party fact-checking program. These include content from both Georgian- and Russian-language social media accounts.

The full and regularly updated list of Facebook accounts monitored is available on the **Gender Barometer** website.⁴

Once verifiable information is identified through monitoring, the fact-checking and content rating process is carried out using “Myth Detector’s” methodology,⁵ which is grounded in international practices and standards.

⁴ Social media monitoring methodology. <https://genderbarometer.ge/en/methodology1/>

⁵ Fact-checking methodology, <https://mythdetector.com/en/methodology/>

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KEY FINDINGS

The 2024 monitoring revealed the following tendencies:

- A total of 71 cases of gender- and identity-based disinformation were identified. The majority (53) — consistent with previous years — focused on sexual orientation, while 18 were related to gender-based disinformation and manipulation.
- The identified examples were largely anti-Western in nature, targeting both individual public figures and specific events (e.g. the U.S. presidential elections, the Paris Olympics, and Eurovision), as well as Western countries, including the United States, EU member states, and the United Kingdom.
- Among anti-Western themes, the most prominent was the issue of gender transition, along with the discrediting of certain politicians and other public figures through the spread of misogynistic and homophobic content.
- In some instances, the content reflected intersectional discrimination and had a political dimension, emphasizing Russia's messianic mission as the sole defender of Orthodox Christianity *vis a vis* the so-called “corrupt West.”
- In the context of Ukraine, identity-based disinformation mainly manipulated LGBTQ+ symbols and had a distinctly homophobic undertone.
- In Georgia, pro-European and pro-democracy protest movements were the main targets of government propaganda. These movements were discredited through fake visuals with homophobic content, mockery of women-led protests, targeted disinformation campaigns against female activists and journalists.
- A common tactic was linking ongoing political and civic protests in Georgia with LGBTQ+ issues. The objective was to divert public attention from political demands to controversial identity-related topics, and to manipulate the sentiments of conservative segments of society.
- Gender and identity-based disinformation was also used in the context of Georgia's 2024 parliamentary elections, targeting female politicians from opposition parties, the female President of Georgia, and male politicians from opposition parties.
- During the pre-election period, slut-shaming was used to discredit female politicians, while homosexuality was weaponized to discredit male politicians.
- The most common form of identity-based disinformation was visual manipulation. In 8 cases, visuals were generated using technology (AI, deepfakes) and were predominantly homophobic in content.
- Visual manipulation was primarily used to discredit protests, attack individual politicians and public figures. It also dominated disinformation campaigns related to Ukraine and the Olympics.
- Disinformation and manipulation were particularly evident in narratives surrounding gender transition, legislation, sexual and civil education, and other topics that allowed for subjective interpretations.

- While in previous years the instrumentalization of identity-related topics was mainly carried out by Kremlin-aligned and far-right actors using Russian sources, in 2024 there was a noticeable increase in the involvement of pro-government media in this process. As a result, the trend of foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) in identity-related issues was amplified by domestic propaganda and full mobilization of government resources.
- There was thematic convergence between Georgian pro-government media, Kremlin-aligned actors, and Russian propaganda channels on issues such as: Equating civil and sexual education with loss of identity; Homophobic disinformation against the West and Western public figures; Discrediting Ukraine.
- Gender- and identity-based disinformation targeting protests, the opposition, activists, and journalists was most actively disseminated through anonymous pro-government Facebook accounts.
- Among pro-government media outlets, POSTV stood out as the most active in spreading identity-based disinformation and manipulative content. Among Russian-language propaganda outlets, TV Tsargrad was the most frequent source of identity-focused disinformation;
- As in previous years, anonymous Facebook accounts aimed at discrediting the Georgian opposition tried to shift attention from political issues to identity topics during times of crisis.

1. GENDER- AND IDENTITY-BASED DISINFORMATION

Gender-based disinformation, which focuses on the intersection of gender and disinformation—where women, non-binary individuals, and the LGBTQIA+ community are disproportionately targeted by false and manipulative content—similar to the previous years, was once again predominantly used as a political tool against opponents.

The report covers data on gender- and identity-based disinformation from January 1 to December 31, 2024, and analyzes 71 cases identified by the fact-checking platform “Myth Detector.” As in previous years, the majority of these cases (53) involved sexual orientation, while 18 focused on gender-based disinformation and manipulation.

1.1. Themes and Targets

Similar to past years, gender- and identity-based disinformation maintained a strong anti-Western tone, targeting both individuals—such as politicians, activists, human rights defenders, and journalists—and specific events and Western countries.

The detected false and manipulative content, which was largely intentional, spanned 12 themes, 4 of which were directly related to domestic political processes in Georgia.

Among the anti-Western narratives, topics related to gender reassignment were the most prevalent, along with discrediting of specific politicians and public figures through misogynistic and homophobic messaging. In the case of Georgia-related gender- and identity-based disinformation, the content aimed to discredit the protest movements was predominant.

Table 1. Themes of Gender- and Identity-Based Disinformation

Themes Related to the West			Themes Related to Georgia		
Theme	Target	Quantity	Theme	Target	Quantity
Disinformation/manipulation about gender reassignment	West	9	Linking protests to the LGBTQ+ community / discrediting protests using sexist visuals	Anti-government protests	10
Discreditation of foreign female politicians/public figures using slut-shaming or questioning their gender identity	Kamala Harris, Annalena Baerbock, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Brigitte Macron	8	Pre-election discreditation of the opposition using slut-shaming and LGBTQ+ identity references	President Zurabishvili, UNM, Akhali, Federalists	6
Homophobic disinformation against Western politicians and clergy	West	7	Discrediting female activists and journalists	Mtavari Arkhi journalist, Director of NGO Sapari, former Public Defender	3
Linking sexual and civic education to perversion or loss of gender/sexual orientation	West, Ukraine	7	Disinformation/manipulation related to legislation	EU, UN	3
Homophobic disinformation/manipulation related to the Olympics/sports	France, Europe	6			
Discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community on various grounds	Europe, US, LGBT Lobby	6			
Discrediting the Ukrainian army / Ukraine through sexist and homophobic narratives	Ukraine	5			
Discrediting the women's movement	International Women's Day	1			
		49			22

1.2. Methods

The most widespread form of gender- and identity-based disinformation identified in 2024 was visual manipulation, which accounted for 37 out of the 71 total cases. This was followed by disinformation (20) and manipulative content/missing context cases (8). Fabricated quotes and posts appeared in 6 cases, most of which targeted female activists and human rights defenders,

with one case linked to the Paris Olympics. Only one instance of partly false information was identified.

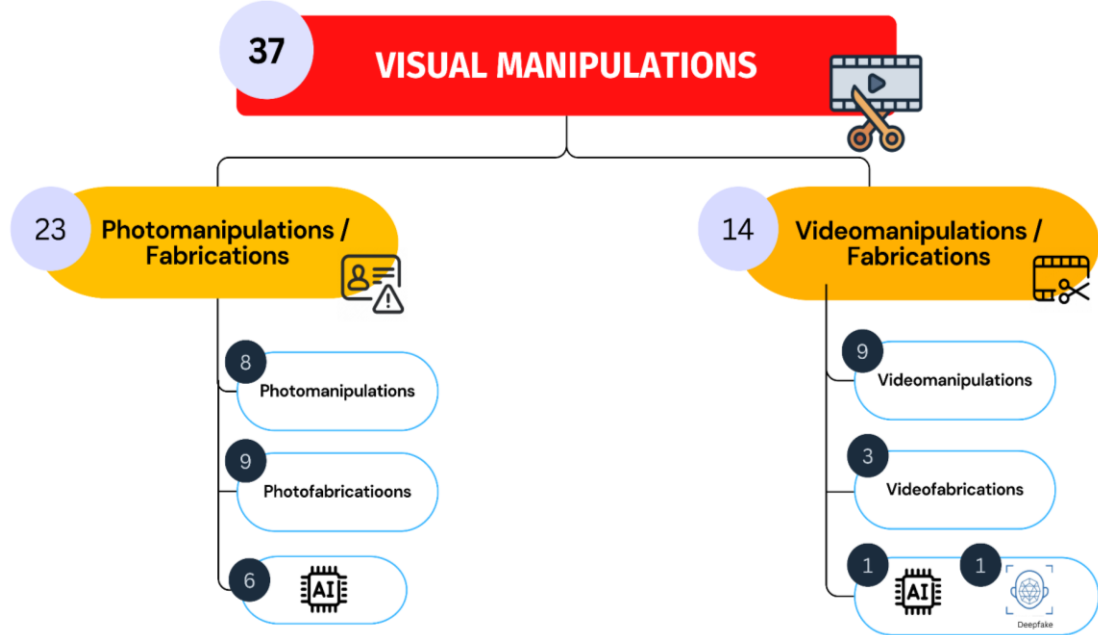
Figure 1. Methods of Gender-/Identity-based Disinformation



Among the 37 cases of visual manipulation, the most common form was photomanipulation or fabrication, which appeared in 23 cases. Within the 15 cases of photofabrication, AI-generated content was identified in 6 instances. Video fabrication occurred in 5 cases, including one AI-generated video and another altered using deepfake technology. The remaining video fabrications involved various editing techniques. In addition, 9 cases were classified as videomanipulation, where the visuals did not match the accompanying description, creating a misleading context.

Notably, visual manipulation was most frequently used to discredit protests as well as individual politicians and public figures. Visual manipulation also featured prominently in disinformation campaigns targeting Ukraine and the Olympics.

Figure 2. Typology of Visual Manipulation - Gender-/Identity-based Disinformation



Disinformation Generated Through the Use of Technology. Out of the 8 cases of disinformation generated using technology, 7 contained homophobic content. In two instances related to Georgia, AI- and deepfake-generated images of a gay couple kissing were used to discredit the opposition ahead of parliamentary elections, as well as pro-European and pro-democracy protests. In one case, an AI-generated image of two men kissing targeted French President Emmanuel Macron and circulated on Georgian social media through Russian sources. Another case of AI-generated gender-based disinformation targeted U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris.

Disinformation/Manipulation. The 20 cases of disinformation and 8 instances of manipulation or missing context cases were predominantly tied to issues such as gender reassignment, legislative changes, and sexual or civic education—topics that often lend themselves to multiple interpretations and can be easily weaponized for manipulation.

Fabricated Quotes/Posts. Fabricated quotes and Facebook posts were used for a range of purposes. For example, actor Mel Gibson was falsely cited as a source in order to fuel negative sentiment against the Paris Olympics. Posts attributed to the Public Defender and a journalist were manipulated to discredit them. In some cases, fake posts were circulated in the name of women's rights defenders in a satirical tone intended to mock feminism. However, because many users did not perceive the content as satire, these fabricated messages were widely accepted as real and used as tools for attacking the individuals to whom the quotes were falsely attributed.

1.3. Sources and their modus operandi

Data analysis reveals that the sources of gender- and identity-based disinformation vary depending on the topic. At the same time, a new trend has emerged: while in previous years the instrumentalization of these themes was primarily carried out by pro-Kremlin and far-right actors—with disinformation largely originating from Russian sources⁶—in 2024, the role of pro-government media in this process has become significantly more prominent. Compared to fragmented pro-Kremlin outlets and anonymous social media accounts, these government-aligned media have far greater and more centralized resources. As a result, the trend of foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI)⁷ on identity issues, which has for years been

⁶ Kintsurashvili T, Gendered Disinformation 2023, Media Development Foundation, <https://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/241/>

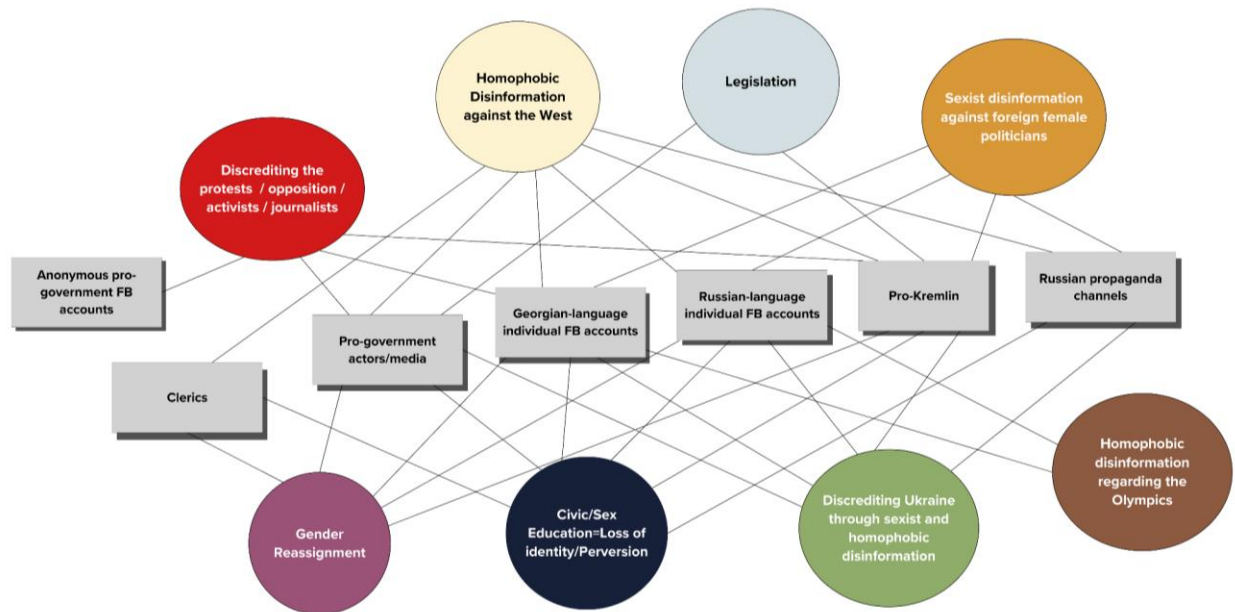
⁷ „Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) describes a mostly non-illegal pattern of behaviour that threatens or has the potential to negatively impact values, procedures and political processes. Such activity is manipulative in character, conducted in an intentional and coordinated manner, by state or non-state actors, including their proxies inside and outside of their own territory.“ European External Action Service's (EEAS) Stratcom division, February 2023. 1st EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference threats https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/1st-eeas-report-foreign-information-manipulation-and-interference-threats_en

led by the Kremlin, has now been joined by local propaganda efforts and the full mobilization of state-controlled resources.

As the diagram below shows, thematic overlaps between Georgian pro-government media, pro-Kremlin actors, and Russian propaganda channels appear in narratives that equate civic and sexual education with identity loss and moral corruption, spread homophobic disinformation targeting the West and Western public figures, and attempt to discredit Ukraine. Content related to gender reassignment appeared primarily in Georgian pro-government and pro-Kremlin media, as well as in Georgian- and Russian-language social media platforms.

Gender- and identity-based disinformation aimed at discrediting protests, the opposition, activists, and journalists was most actively disseminated through anonymous pro-government Facebook accounts, as well as by media outlets pursuing pro-government editorial policies and pro-Kremlin actors.

Figure 3. Sources of Gender- and Identity-Based Disinformation by Topics



Among pro-government media outlets, POSTV stood out the most in terms of spreading identity-based disinformation and manipulative content. At the end of 2023, POSTV launched a new show titled “Anatomy of Liberalism”, which primarily focuses on the so-called “crisis of liberalism” in the West. The program aims to construct an anti-liberal and anti-Western discourse through the dissemination of disinformation and manipulative narratives surrounding gender identity and sexual orientation. A Facebook page called “Georgia First”, created in 2022, positions itself as an anti-liberal and conservative platform, similar in tone to the POSTV program. However, unlike Kremlin-affiliated platforms that often rely on the ideas

of Russian ultranationalist philosopher Aleksandr Dugin,⁸ Georgia First mostly draws from Western far-right sources. Pro-government online media outlets are also part of the same ecosystem, participating in the coordinated dissemination of identical content on these topics.

Anonymous Facebook accounts targeting the opposition, which have been active for years and tend to shift public attention from political crises to identity issues, continue to occupy a niche focused on discrediting protests and opposition figures. Pro-kremlin actors such as Alt-Info (linked to the Conservative Movement Party), Solidarity for Peace, Sezoni TV, Salte, and others demonstrated full thematic alignment not only with Russian propaganda outlets but also with Georgian pro-government channels.

Among Russian-language propaganda media, the most frequent source of disinformation on identity-related topics was Tsargrad TV, along with various online platforms. These narratives are often disseminated in a coordinated manner through both Russian- and Georgian-language individual Facebook accounts.

Georgian-language individual Facebook accounts, which were involved in the coordinated spread of disinformation, were typically affiliated politically—either with the ruling party or the Conservative Movement. In addition to politically motivated users, it is also worth noting that Myth Detector identified a network of inauthentic accounts involved in discrediting election-related protests. These accounts were linked to the pro-government Facebook page “Ar Agarevinebt”⁹ and engaged in coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB). Similar pro-government networks had been uncovered in the past,¹⁰ and in 2023, Facebook removed such accounts,¹¹ providing further evidence that the ruling party uses not only propaganda media but also well-coordinated anonymous account networks to target its opponents.

⁸ Shekeladze, Kintsurashvili, 4 February, 2021, Dugin: “Dugin: “On certain occasions, we are forced to do....”<https://bit.ly/3G67BuJ>

⁹ Ani Kistauri, 26 November, 2024, 26 Trolls Discrediting Election Protests
<https://mythdetector.com/en/election-protests/>

¹⁰ Ani Kistauri, 4 May, 2022. The Ukrainian Front of Georgian Pro-Governmental Trolls,
<https://mythdetector.com/en/the-ukrainian-front-of-georgian-pro-governmental-trolls/>

¹¹ Civil.ge, 4 May, 2023 Meta Deletes Dozens of Accounts Associated with Georgian Government
<https://civil.ge/archives/540605>

Table 2. Sources of Gender and Identity-Based Disinformation by Thematic Categories

ACTORS Themes	Pro-government actors	Anonymous Pro-Government FB Accounts	Pro-Kremlin	Clerics	Georgian-Language Individual FB Accounts	Russian Propaganda Channels	Russian-Language Individual FB Accounts
Civil/Sexual Education = Loss of Identity / Moral Corruption	POS TV					ЦАРЬГРАД.ТБ	
Homophobic Disinformation Against Western Figures / Politicians / Public Persons	POS TV, NEWS HUB, REPORTORI.GE, DIGEST, 3060, Info 9				REGNUM	Pressa24, БИЗНЕСОНЛАЙН, РИА НОВОСТИ, МКУ, ВЫБОР НАРОДА	
Discrediting Ukraine with Sexist and Homophobic Content	POS TV		Україна: це не країна, це Європа			АНТИФАШИСТ, СУМІ ГРОМІ	
Sexist Disinformation Against Foreign Female Politicians			Жінки в Європі			ЦАРЬГРАД.ТБ, ПЯТЫЙ КАНАЛ, МКУ, тазета.ру, КРУ	
Gender Reassignment / Sex Change	POS TV, NEWS HUB, 3060, РИА НОВОСТИ		Україна: це не країна, це Європа				
Discrediting Protests / Opposition / Activists / Journalists	POS TV, DIGEST, EN, Info 9, NEWS HUB	Андрей Бондаренко, Тимур Сидоренко, Андрей Федоренко, Михаил Сидоренко	Україна: це не країна, це Європа, "Таблиця Занят"				
Legislation	POS TV, NEWS HUB, DIGEST						
Homophobic Disinformation Related to the Olympics							

2. DISINFORMATION RELATED TO THE WEST AND UKRAINE

Gender- and identity-based disinformation was primarily directed against the West, targeting both human rights issues and individuals, often in connection with socio-political processes. Disinformation was linked to local and regional issues such as:

- The U.S. presidential election
- The war in Ukraine
- The Paris Olympics
- Eurovision

Among anti-Western narratives, the most prominent topics included gender transition, as well as the discrediting of politicians and public figures through misogynistic and homophobic visual and textual materials.

2.1 Disinformation/Manipulation Regarding Gender Transition

The disinformation and manipulative materials identified around this topic (9 cases) primarily focused on gender transition among minors, promoting the idea that in Western countries, this process occurs without parental consent and in violation of children's rights. The circulated materials were largely false.

Notably, while in previous years, Kremlin-affiliated and anti-liberal groups were the most active in pushing this narrative under the guise of child protection—sometimes even introducing legislative initiatives¹²—more recently, the government and its media platforms have increasingly sought to manipulate public opinion on this topic. Sources spreading disinformation about gender transition include Bidzina Ivanishvili, the founder of the ruling Georgian Dream party, and the pro-government propaganda channel POSTV. Its program, *The Anatomy of Liberalism*, frequently focuses on issues of identity self-determination in the West and serves as a source of multiple disinformation and manipulative narratives. Another prominent actor in this regard is the pro-government Facebook page *Georgia First NEWS*, which is presented as a conservative platform.

¹² Myth Detector, 26 March, 2024. From “God is Our Truth” to the “Georgian Dream” – 8 Rights-restricting Initiatives on Sexual Orientation and Gender Initiated in the Parliament, <https://bit.ly/3E7ejjp>

Disinformation: Minors Do Not Need Parental Consent for Gender Transition

in Europe¹³

Source: Bidzina Ivanishvili, Georgian Dream



In the US¹⁴

Source: Pro-government POSTV, “Anatomy of Liberalism”, Georgia First NEWS, Pro-Kremlin “Sezoni TV”



In the Netherlands¹⁵

Source: Pro-government POSTV, Aleksandre Bolkvadze, Cleric



in Germany¹⁶

Source: FB page “Salte”, Nata Darchiashvili



2.2 Associating Sexual and Civic Education with Immorality and the Loss of Gender/Sexual Orientation

Another recurring topic related to children, which in previous years predominantly originated from Russian sources, concerns sexual and civic education in schools. The narrative that Western-imposed civic and sexual education leads to immorality and the loss of gender and sexual orientation among minors has appeared in both pro-government (POSTV, The Anatomy of Liberalism) and Kremlin-affiliated (Alt-Info) media, as well as in Russian propaganda outlets such as Tsargrad in the case of Ukraine.

¹³ Davit Robakidze, 25 October, 2024. Gendered Disinformation Voiced by Bidzina Ivanishvili on Imedi TV, <https://bit.ly/4iKcR5A>

¹⁴ Mariam Talakhadze, 18 July, 2024. What Does California's New Law on LGBTQ+ Issues for Schools Actually Entail? <https://bit.ly/43AGZf6> Myth Detector, 23 September, 2024. Disinformation Claiming That Musk's Child Underwent Gender-Affirming Surgery Without Parental Consent <https://bit.ly/41SWLRd>

Tekla Kharazishvili, 8 July, 2024. POSTV disseminates a false translation of Biden quote about gender reassignment for children, <https://bit.ly/3DWRsag>

¹⁵ Myth Detector, 1 March, 2024. Disinformation as if 10-year-olds in the Netherlands undergo gender-affirming surgery without parental consent, <https://bit.ly/3FSmn8j>

¹⁶ Ketí Khutsishvili, 26 August, 2024. Four false and manipulative statements about Europe on Salte TV, <https://bit.ly/4lcSYFP>

Disinformation/Manipulation	Target	Violation type	Georgian and Russian sources
The claim that gender and sexual orientation topics are taught in 3rd grade in Ukrainian schools is false ¹⁷	Ukraine	Disinformation	Царьград, Individual Russian and Georgian-language Facebook accounts
The claim that homosexuality and pedophilia are taught in sex education classes in Latvia is disinformation. ¹⁸	Latvia	Disinformation	Anti-vax Facebook group Antilab-Georgia, individual Facebook accounts
The claim that civic education textbooks were translated into Georgian for "LGBT propaganda" is manipulative. ¹⁹	UNM, West	Manipulation	Pro-government Postv, PB page Anatomy of Liberalism
The claim that introducing sex education in European countries leads to increased abortions and venereal diseases is disinformation. ²⁰	Europe	Disinformation	Pro-Kremlin "Alt-Info"
The claim that religious studies in Poland will be replaced by sex education and that parents will be imprisoned for skipping sex education classes is false. ²¹	Poland	Disinformation	Pro-government "POSTV"
The claim that sex education is taught in Romania starting at age 5 is false. ²²	Romania	Disinformation	Vakhtang Tokhadze, Cleric, Alt-Info
The claim that a video of a person dressed in underwear represents a real classroom scene in a U.S. school is disinformation. ²³	US	Videomanipulation	Individual Facebook accounts

¹⁷ Tekla Kharazishvili, 21 August, 2024. Disinformation that sexual orientation is a subject taught in elementary schools in Ukraine. Myth Detector, <https://bit.ly/4hYU05M>

¹⁸ Myth Detector, 17 July, 2024. Gender Issues, Education, and Legislation – Three Disinformation about Latvia, <https://bit.ly/3XHlPbv>

¹⁹ Ani Kistauri, 20 June, 2024. How does POSTV manipulate the content of the "Compass" and "Compacito" textbooks?" <https://bit.ly/429Hdaz>

²⁰ Tekla Kharazishvili, 27 February, 2024. What is the connection between sex education and abortion and venereal disease statistics in Europe? <https://bit.ly/3QYrkyD>

²¹ Arabella Kordzakhia, 15 October, 2024. POSTV POSTV spreads partly false information about sex education classes in Poland, <https://bit.ly/3RvtWEi>

²² Tekla Kharazishvili, 25 April, „Alt-Info" Spreads False Information About Incest and Anti-Discrimination Law in Romania, <https://bit.ly/3Ru7Ge0>

²³ Myth Detector, 21 March, 2024. The Video of a Half-naked Activist was not Filmed in a US School <https://bit.ly/4igyo53>

2.3 Disinformation Against Female Politicians/Public Figures and the Discrediting of the Women's Movement

Gender-based disinformation targeting female politicians and public figures often involved attempts to shame them for alleged promiscuity or, in some cases, question their gender identity.

The highest number of slut-shaming cases (5) was related to the U.S. presidential election, primarily targeting Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris. Most of these cases involved visual manipulation and fabrication, portraying her as a former prostitute. Additionally, Harris was falsely linked to detained rapper P. Diddy,²⁴ with claims that she engaged in immoral acts with him, leading to her moral condemnation.²⁵

Among the visual manipulations aimed at discrediting Harris's past reputation,²⁶ one notable example was an AI-generated image.²⁷



AI-generated photo

²⁴ Myth Detector, 1 October, 2024. The Video Does NOT Show Kamala Harris with Arrested Rapper P. Diddy, <https://bit.ly/3FMpFKj>

²⁵ Myth Detector, 2 October, 2024. Disinformation alleging that Kamala Harris appears in footage from P. Diddy's parties, <https://bit.ly/4iT7xgp>

²⁶ Myth Detector, 24 July, 2024. Visual Manipulations Disseminated About VP Kamala Harris, <https://bit.ly/429OG9C>

²⁷ Myth Detector, 15 August, 2024. Another photofabrication spread about Kamala Harris <https://bit.ly/3G1OUlo>

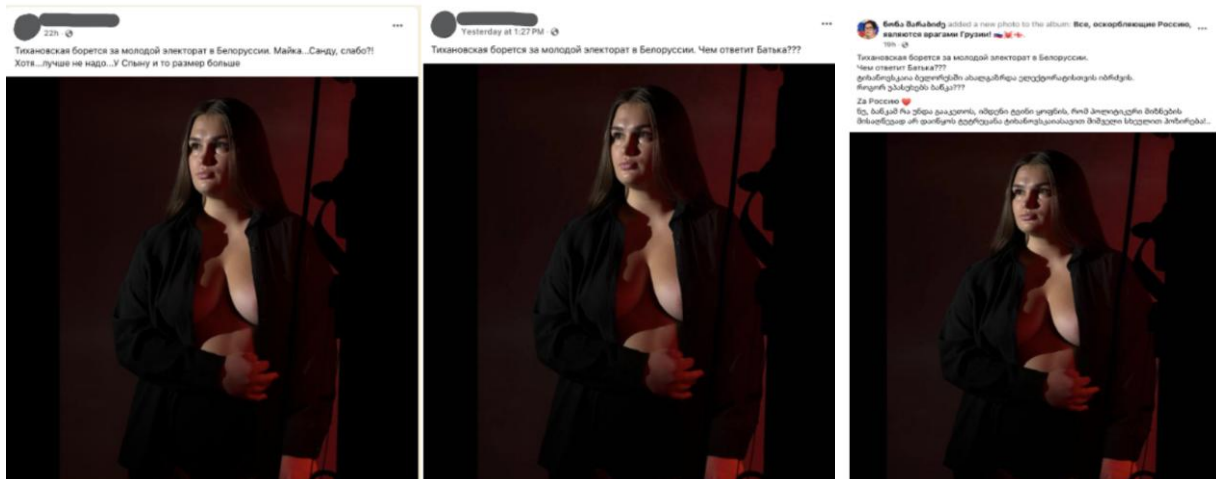


Signs of the fabrication of the photograph



The car parked behind her is without tail lights.

The targets of gender-based disinformation also included Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. Georgian and Russian Facebook accounts circulated a misleadingly captioned photo of a semi-nude porn model, falsely claiming that the image depicted Tsikhanouskaya.²⁸

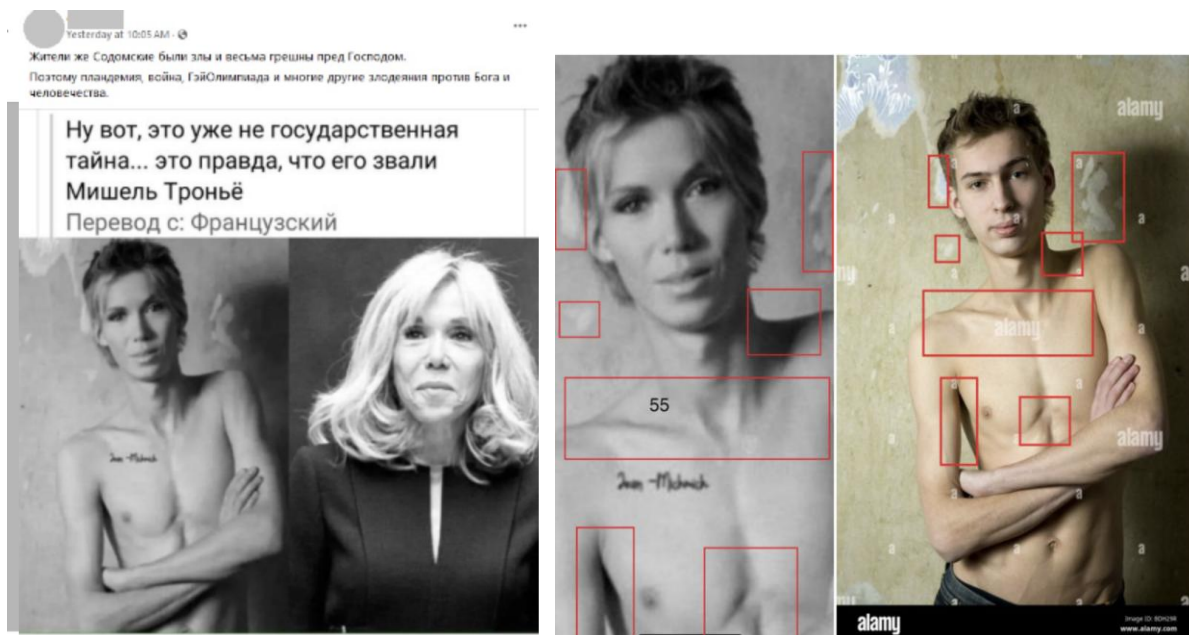


²⁸ Myth Detector, 25 September, 2024. Photomanipulation Alleging that Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya Posed Half-Naked, <https://bit.ly/4leyz3j>

Slut-shaming also targeted Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock. Disinformation claiming that she used escort services during her visit to Africa was based on a newly created, dubious source.²⁹ This material was then spread through Russian propaganda media outlets, including *Tsargrad.tv*, *MK.RU*, *KP.RU*, *GAZETA.RU*, and *5-tv.ru*. Baerbock has been a target of gender-based disinformation before, when Russian-language sources shared an image of a naked Russian porn model, falsely presenting it as proof that a young Baerbock had engaged in prostitution.³⁰

Beyond associating specific female politicians with promiscuity, disinformation also targeted International Women's Day itself. Some narratives falsely claimed that the day originated from a protest by sex workers in Denmark.³¹

In the case of France's First Lady, Brigitte Macron, the goal of the disinformation was to cast doubt on her gender identity. To achieve this, manipulated photographs were used by Georgian and Russian language Facebook accounts.³²



On the left: A fabricated photo that spread across Georgian and Russian social networks.

On the right: The original photo taken by Elena Rustova, available on [Alamy](https://www.alamy.com), which was digitally altered to replace the subject's face with Brigitte Macron's.

²⁹ Myth Detector, 2 August, 2024. Newly-created Media Spread Unsubstantiated Claims to Discredit Annalena Baerbock, <https://bit.ly/4leVZ8D>

³⁰ Myth Detector, "Who does the Photo Depict? – German Foreign Minister or Russian Porn Model?"

³¹ 28 March, 2023. <https://bit.ly/3E3rkKO>

³² Tekla Kharazishvili, 13 March, 2024. Disinformation about the history of the celebration of March 8 <https://bit.ly/4chDrRd>

³² Myth Detector, 2 August, 2024 Photomanipulation of Brigitte Macron is being circulated on Facebook, <https://bit.ly/3XJSYDo>

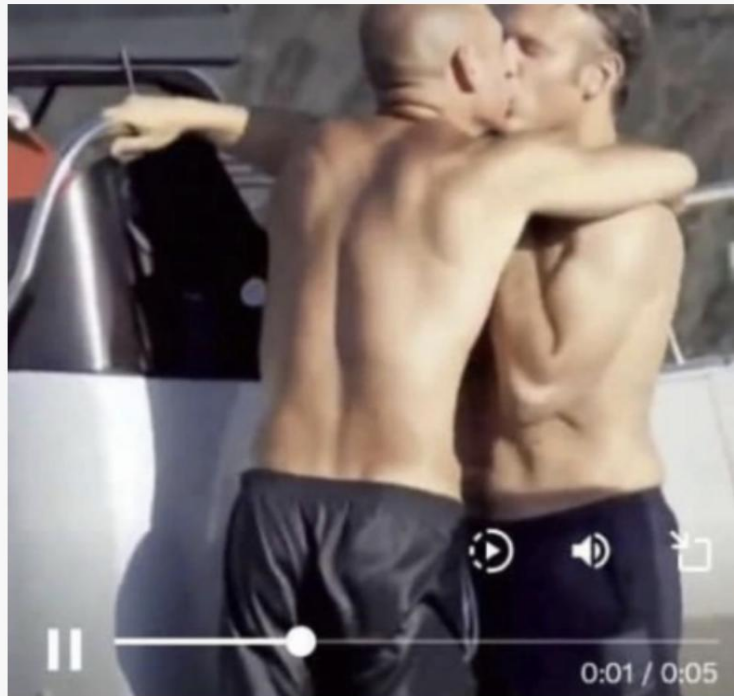
2.4 Homophobic Disinformation Targeting Western Politicians and Religious Figures

Disinformation based on identity targeted French President Emmanuel Macron and Pope Francis, utilizing AI-generated visuals.

An AI-generated video,³³ originating from Russian social network users and media outlets, depicted Macron kissing a man. The video was disseminated through Russian-language propaganda online media (*Moskovsky Komsomolets*, *pressa24.ru*, *dzen.ru*, *Arbat Media*), individual Facebook accounts, YouTube channels, Russian social networks (*Vkontakte*, *Telegram*, *LiveJournal*), and Georgian Facebook accounts.

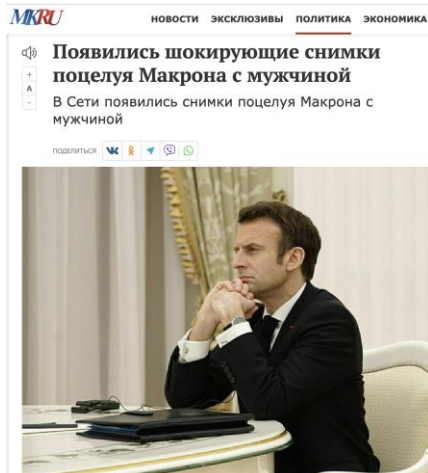


Authentic photo



AI-generated photo

³³ Myth Detector, 12 August, 2024. Video Fabrication About Emmanuel Macron Disseminated on Social Media, <https://bit.ly/3Rv62ZD>



"Московский Комсомолец". Появились шокирующие снимки поцелуя Макрона с мужчиной

[*"Moskovsky Komsomolets": Shocking photos emerge of Macron kissing a man*]

Arbat Media. Макрон целует мужчину? В Сети появились скандальные фото французского президента

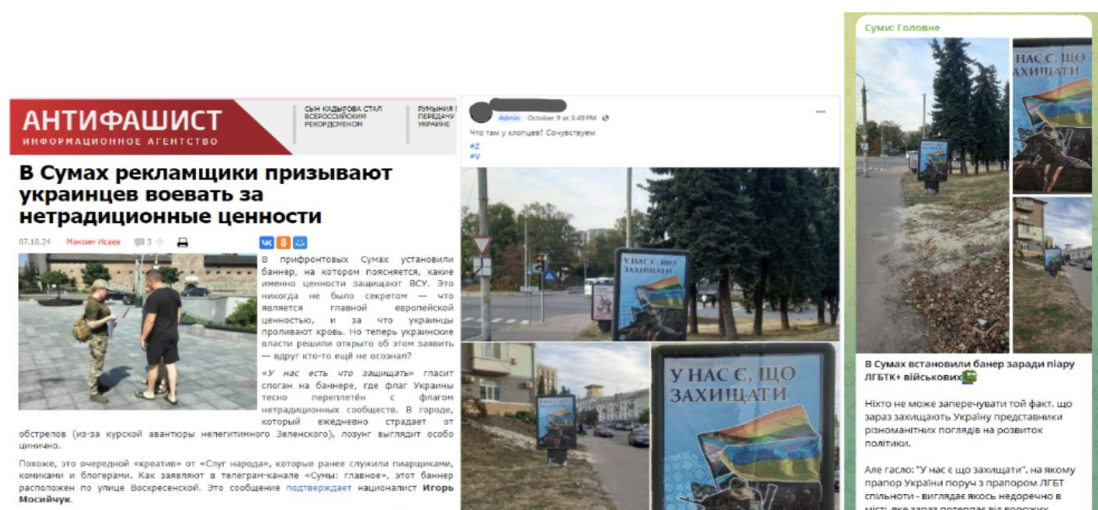
Arbat Media: Macron kissing a man? Scandalous photos of the French president appear online

An AI-generated image of Pope Francis, in which he is draped in a rainbow flag, carried an intersectional discriminatory message and was circulated with a Russian-language caption: "Россия последний оплот христианского мира. Католичество — всё." (Russia is the last stronghold of the Christian world. Catholicism is finished.) The accompanying comments were not only homophobic but also anti-Catholic, emphasizing Russia's messianic role as the sole defender of Orthodoxy: "Russia remains the only power capable of confronting the enemies of Orthodoxy!"



2.5 Disinformation targeting Ukraine

Identity-based disinformation about Ukraine primarily involved manipulation of LGBTQ+ symbols with homophobic undertones. A fabricated image, allegedly showing a Ukrainian soldier in Sumy against a backdrop of rainbow and Ukrainian flags³⁴, was spread by Russian-language sources, framing Ukrainians as defenders of “non-traditional values.”



Antifashist.com: В Сумах рекламщики призывают украинцев воевать за нетрадиционные ценности (In Sumy, advertisers urge Ukrainians to fight for non-traditional values.)

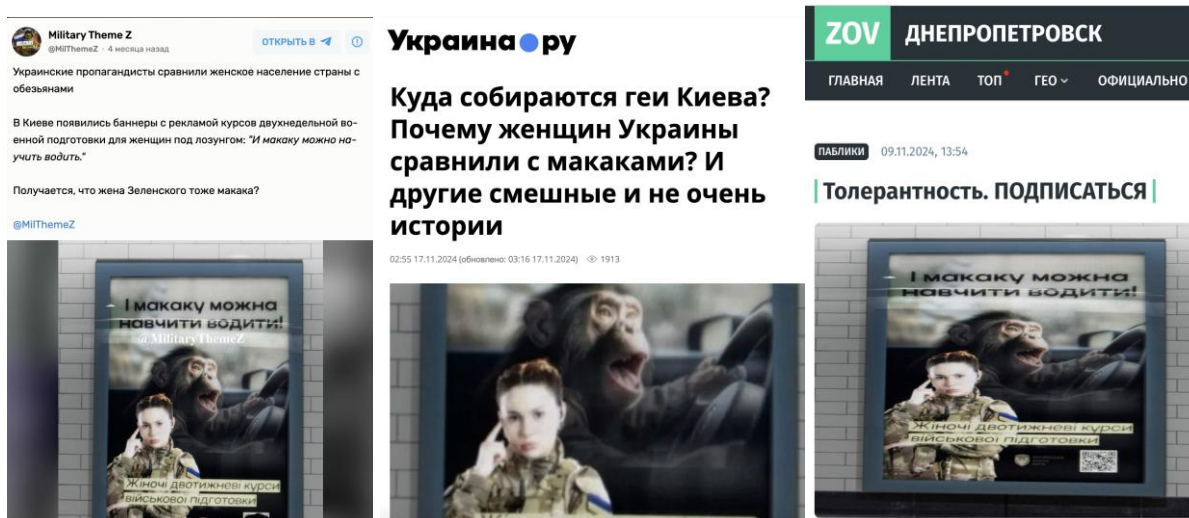


Ukrainian female soldiers were also subjected to gender-based disinformation. A fabricated poster falsely attributed to Ukraine’s Women’s Guard contained a sexist slogan:

³⁴ Лизи Элошвили, 22 октября, 2024. Фотофабрикация, будто в Сумах на баннерах украинский военный запечатлен на фоне радужного флага и флага Украины <https://bit.ly/3XOXoJc>

"Even a macaque can be taught how to ride."³⁵ This fake visual was disseminated through Russian-language online platforms (ukraina.ru, dnepr-news.ru) and social media. In some cases, the image carried homophobic undertones, portraying gay men as misogynists.

ukraina.ru: Куда собираются геи Киева? Почему женщин Украины сравнили с макаками? И другие смешные и не очень истории (Where do Kyiv's gays gather? Why were Ukrainian women compared to macaques? And other stories—some funny, some not.)³⁶.



2.6 The Olympics/Sports

The Paris Olympics became a target of homophobic disinformation as well. Both Russian and Georgian Facebook users spread multiple pieces of visual manipulation aimed at questioning the gender identity of participating athletes.

To falsely prove that female athletes were transgender, manipulated images depicted male genitalia on their bodies. In the case of boxer Imane Khelif, such an image was AI-generated,³⁷ while for a pole vaulting athlete, a digitally altered photo was used.³⁸ However, the image did not show a Paris Olympics participant but rather Russian pole vaulter Yelena Isinbayeva competing at the 2013 World Athletics Championships in Moscow.

³⁵ Нана Чадунели, 14 ноября, 2024. От имени Женской гвардии Украины распространяется фейковый постер сексистского содержания <https://mythdetector.com/ka/qhalbi-posteri-vrtseldeba/>

³⁶ ukraina.ru, 17 ноября, 2024 <https://ukraina.ru/20241117/1058968050.html>

³⁷ Myth Detector, 19 September, 2024. AI-Generated Photo Circulates to Claim Boxer Imane Khelif is a Transgender, <https://bit.ly/4cc2kh2>

³⁸ Myth Detector, 30 July, 2024. Altered Photo of a Russian Athlete Falsely Linked to Paris Olympics, <https://bit.ly/428ehQk>



AI generated photo of Imane Khelif



Evidence of AI manipulation



Altered photo



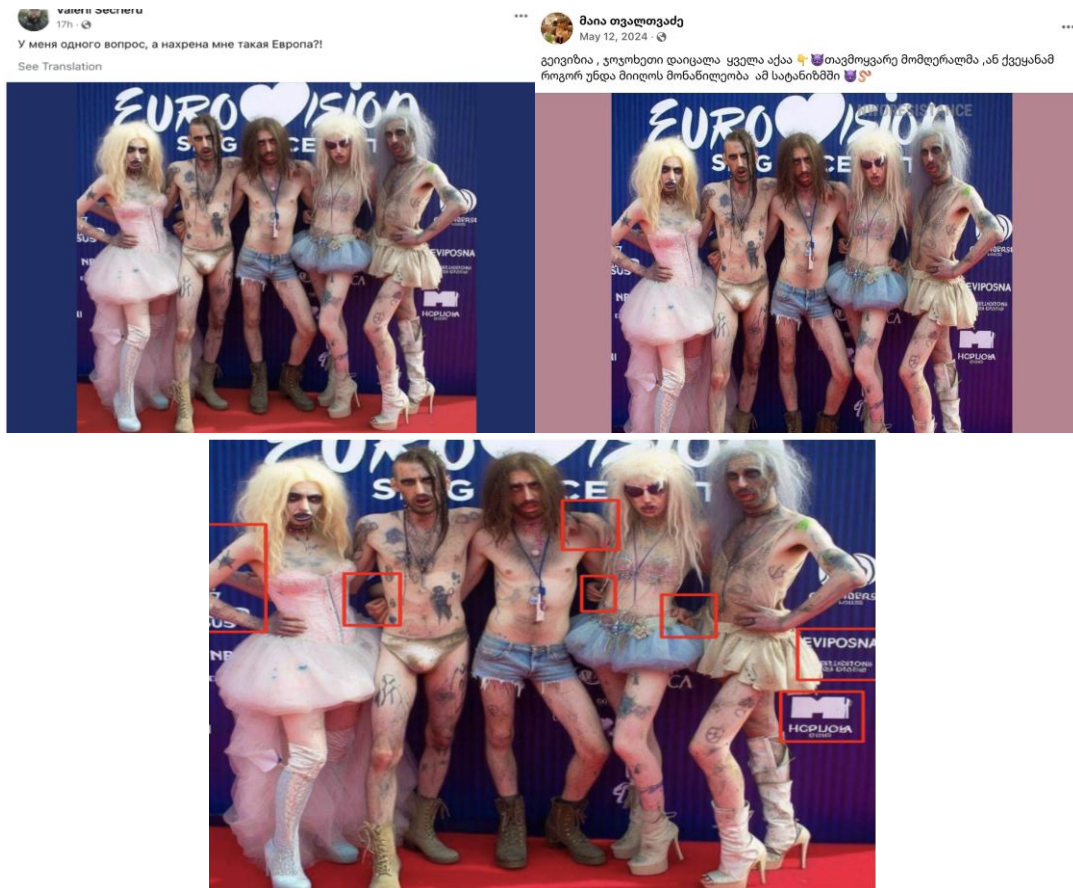
Authentic photo

Beyond visual manipulation, fabricated quotes were also used. For instance, a fabricated quote attributed to Mel Gibson claimed that he was boycotting the Olympics because a biological male was awarded a gold medal in women's swimming, allegedly offending his religious beliefs.³⁹

³⁹ Myth Detector, 1 August, 2024. Fabricated Quote Attributed to Mel Gibson About the Paris Olympics <https://bit.ly/4i0tM2J>

2.7 Eurovision Song Contest

The 2024 Eurovision Song Contest also became a pretext for anti-European messaging. An AI-generated image⁴⁰ related to the contest was circulated on social media among Georgian and Russian-speaking users, accompanied by comments such as: “Gayvision,” “Who would want such a sodomite future in their own family?” “The face and pride of Gen Z: frilly panties in Gayvision battle gear,” “Am I the only one asking, why the hell would I want such a Europe?!” In some cases, the authors of these posts not only questioned the need for a “satanic,” “sodomite” Europe, but also cast doubt on the appropriateness of participating in Eurovision at all.



Innaccuracies on the photo

⁴⁰ Mariam Dangadze, 12 May, 2024. AI-Generated images about Eurovision 2024 Dissminated online. <https://bit.ly/3EcGZrl>

3. DISINFORMATION RELATED TO GEORGIA

The main target of government propaganda was the pro-European, pro-democratic protests, the discrediting of which was mainly carried out through fabricated visuals with homophobic content, mocking women's protests, and the deliberate spread of disinformation against female activists and journalists. Gender-based and identity-based disinformation was also used in the context of the 2024 parliamentary elections, and its targets included female politicians from opposition parties, Georgia's female president, and male politicians from opposition parties.

3.1 Linking protests to the LGBTQ+ community

One of the most common tactics of linking political and civil protests in Georgia to the LGBTQ+ community was the use of fabricated content, often with visual manipulation and fabrication, to make it appear more convincing. The goal was to shift the focus from political demands to controversial issues, specifically the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, and manipulate the conservative segment of society.

This method was used by pro-government media, Facebook pages supporting the ruling party, and anonymous accounts discrediting the opposition, both during the spring protests against the law on the "transparency of foreign influence" and after the October 26th parliamentary elections, in response to pro-democratic and pro-European protests. Notably, the spread of disinformation was coordinated.

The abolition of civil sector repressive laws, new elections, and bringing the EU accession issue back to the agenda were among the demands of Georgia's pro-European, pro-democracy demonstrations. The latter demand emerged following the government's announcement that it would postpone the start of negotiations with the European Union until the end of 2028⁴¹.

⁴¹ Civil.ge, 28 November, 2024. „GD Aborts EU Accession,” <https://civil.ge/archives/638801>

Disinformation	Violation type	Sources
Homophobic content		
Photofabrication ⁴² and Photomanipulation ⁴³ , as if two gay protesters kiss each other (2)	AI-generated photo / Photomanipulation	Pro-government media: POSTV; Digest; INFO 9; Newshub; Exclusive News; FB page: Ar Agarevinebt. Ind. Facebook Accounts
Political content of the protest slogan changed after editing with the demand for same-sex marriage ⁴⁴ and a caption about same-sex individuals ⁴⁵ (2)	Photofabrication / photomanipulation	Anonymous Facebook groups/pages discrediting the opposition: “Political Pigsty N5”, Terenti Gldaneli, Forward Georgia for a better future !!! Pro-government FB accounts. Anti-Western: Anti-liberal Doctrine, Home to Europe
Linking the protest to the LGBTQ+ flag ⁴⁶ and using a false announcement about the pro-European protest to portray the opposition's rally as a gay pride march ⁴⁷ (2)	Photomanipulation	Anonymous Facebook page discrediting the opposition: “Anti-UNM Politics” Pro-Kremlin: “Sezoni TV”, “Home to Europe”, Individual. Facebook accounts

Out of the six instances of visual manipulation mentioned above, which artificially linked the protest to same-sex relationships, one of them was the AI-generated image of a gay couple kissing created in the Midjourney program. This visual was disseminated by pro-government media with the identical headline "Gay couple at the 'Peace' rally." The use of the word "peaceful" in this case has a propagandistic purpose—it implies the protest was not peaceful and stigmatizes same-sex relationships.

⁴² Myth Detector, 3 December, 2024, A Photo of a Gay Couple Shared by Pro-Government Media Is AI-Generated, <https://mythdetector.com/en/gay-couple/>

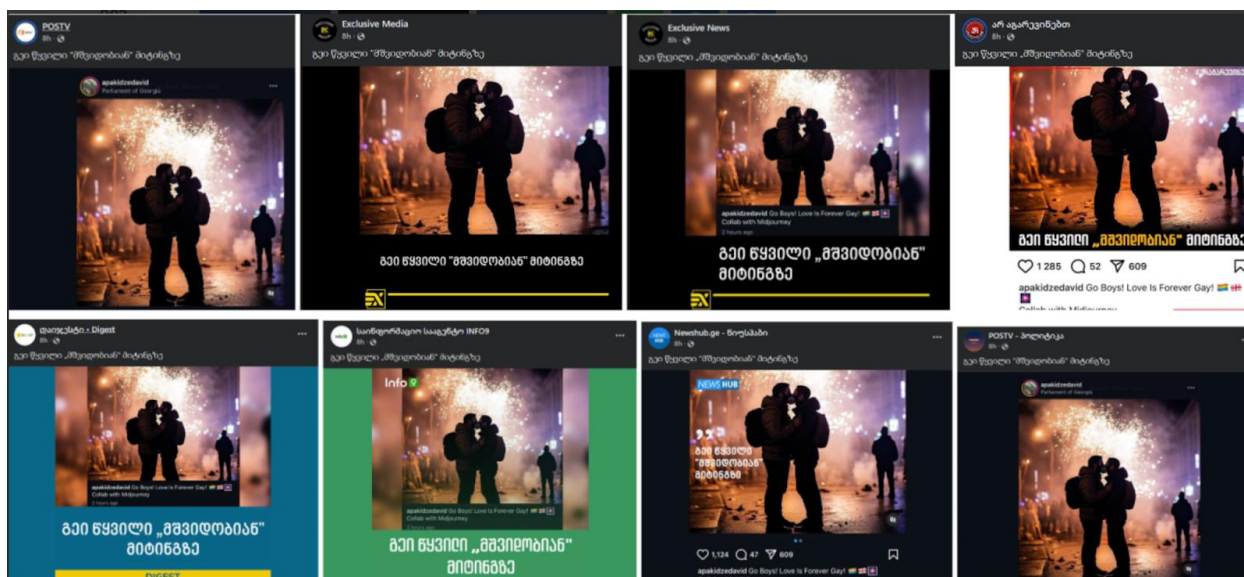
⁴³ Myth Detector, 3 May, 2024. Homophobic Photomanipulation Disseminated About Tbilisi Protests, <https://bit.ly/3QTTNpm>

⁴⁴ Myth Detector, 21 April, 2024. “Fabricated Poster Amid the Protests Against the “Russian Law <https://mythdetector.com/en/fabricated-poster-amid-the-protests-against-the-russian-law/>

⁴⁵ Myth Detector, 22 April, 2024. Who Fabricated the Protest Poster, which Concerns the European Future of Georgia? <https://bit.ly/3XGnOg1>

⁴⁶ Myth Detector, 16 April, 2024. Manipulation as if LGBTQ+ Flag was raised at the 15 April rally, <https://mythdetector.com/ka/15-aprilis-aqtsiaze-lgbtq-drosha-gashales/>

⁴⁷ Myth Detector, 20 October, 2024. Georgia Chooses the EU – Disinformation about the Organization of the March, <https://mythdetector.com/en/georgia-chooses-the-eu/>



The image of the AI-generated gay couple kissing, spread by pro-government media with the identical headline "Gay couple at the 'Peace' rally."





Inconsistencies in the AI-generated photo

3.2 Discrediting the protest with sexist visuals, discrediting female activists and human rights defenders

Along with homophobic content, as in previous years, discrediting politically and socially active women was still problematic. To discredit the protests, four instances of sexist disinformation were observed. In two cases, the goal was to discredit the protest itself, while in two others, the target was the journalist Eka Kvesitadze from the opposition's "Mtavari Channel."

In the first example listed in the table, which concerned protests over election fraud, the goal of pro-government media was to mock and belittle the women's protest. In the second case, the goal of Facebook accounts supporting the government was to present the woman's naked body as a stimulus for the protest, for which video clips from Spain were used with false descriptions. In the case of journalist Eka Kvesitadze, a falsified post and photo were linked to the protests. In one instance, the attack based on moral criteria aimed to slut-shame her: an authentic poster, where she invited the Prime Minister to respond to critical questions on a program, was edited with Photoshop, changing the text to a sexist one that listed her hourly service rates.

Disinformation	Violation Type	Sources
Sexist content		
<p>The banner of female activists' protest on election secrecy violations was altered with red spots, creating the perception of a menstrual cycle.⁴⁸</p>  <p>The image shows a side-by-side comparison. On the left, labeled 'FAKE', is a photo of a protest with a banner that has been edited to have red spots, resembling a menstrual cycle. On the right, labeled 'REAL', is the original photo of the same protest. A 'Myth Detector' logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the 'REAL' image.</p>	Photofabrication	Pro-government: PosTV, Ind. Facebook accounts
<p>A video in which a woman lifts her shirt and bends towards a crowd in front of a building, showing her naked body, depicts Barcelona, not a protest in Georgia, where protesters are encouraged by the image of a woman's naked body⁴⁹.</p>  <p>The image shows a side-by-side comparison of video frames. On the left, labeled 'FAKE' and 'TBILISI', is a frame from a video showing a woman in a dark setting. On the right, labeled 'REAL' and 'BARCELONA', is a frame from a video showing a woman in a light-colored shirt bending over a crowd in front of a building. A 'Myth Detector' logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the 'REAL' image.</p>	Videomanipulation	FB page "Sex-related Herbal Products for Men and Women." Pro-government accounts

⁴⁸ Myth Detector, 13 November, 2024. POSTV Spreads Fabricated Photo About Women's Protest Near CEC Building <https://bit.ly/4I6cW5n>

⁴⁹ Myth Detector, 2 May, 2024. Tbilisi or Barcelona – where were the footages linked to the Tbilisi protests filmed? <https://mythdetector.com/ka/tbilisi-thu-barselona/>

<p>A fabricated poster⁵⁰ and post⁵¹ with sexist content targeting the journalist from the Mtavari Channel involved in the protest.</p> <div data-bbox="134 380 677 657">  </div>	<p>Photofabrication / Fabricated post</p>	<p>Pro-government media: Marshallpress Anonymous account discrediting the opposition: Mikheil Ganubajebel Anti-Western: Tseliani Zaura</p>
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Beyond the protests themselves, the discrediting of female activists and human rights defenders was done through fabricated posts and quotes, often using absurd language to diminish gender-related topics. One of the most frequent targets in this regard has been Baia Pataridze, the leader of the women's rights organization *Sapari*. A fabricated post and quote attributed to her read: "Without men, women would reproduce faster"⁵² and "I would rather you sexually assault me and make me feel like a real woman."⁵³

It should also be noted that fabricated posts/quotes related to Baia Pataridze, which "Myth Detector" has debunked numerous times in recent years,⁵⁴ were sometimes initially created for satirical purposes. However, their dissemination on social media became a basis for criticism of her feminist activities, as social media users would actually perceive such posts as real. Moreover, these fabricated posts were used to attack the human rights defender. For example, after the President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, awarded Patariaia with the Order of Honor on International Women's Day (March 8), both the President and the human rights defender became subjects of attacks on social media. Mostly, supporters of the government on Facebook shared a screenshot of a fabricated post from 2021 attributed to Patariaia, suggesting that she was calling for regulations to reduce the number of boys and promote the birthrate of girls, and they were demanding answers from the President for awarding the author of these words.

⁵⁰ Myth Detector, 16 April, 2024. An altered photo of Eka Kvesitadze's protest banner is being circulated on Facebook <https://mythdetector.com/ka/kvesitadzis-saprotestodamushavebuli-photo-vrtseldeba/>

⁵¹ Myth Detector, 30 April, 2024. Eka Kveitadze's Photo is Circulating with a Fake Caption <https://mythdetector.com/en/eka-kvesitdze-s-photo-fake-caption/>

⁵² Myth Detector, 21 August, 2024. A fake quote is being circulated in the name of human rights activist Baia Patariaia <https://mythdetector.com/ka/stsraphad-gamravlebase-baia-pataraias-sakhelith-tsitata/>

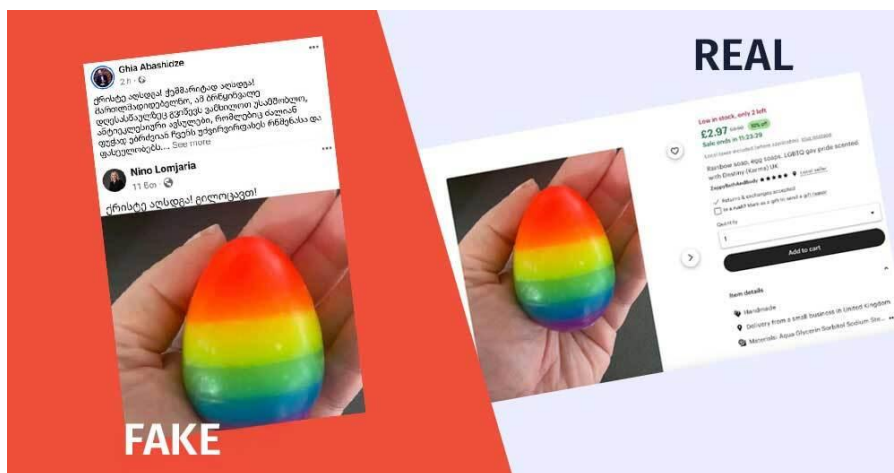
⁵³ Myth Detector, 14 March. Another fabricated post is being spread under the name of Baia Patariaia, <https://mythdetector.com/ka/baia-pataraias-gaqhalbebuli-posti/>

⁵⁴ Myth Detector <https://bit.ly/4jby7kG>



The content of fake posts attributed to Baia Pataraiia was the basis for criticism of President Zourabichvili, who granted her the award.

The practice of fabricating posts was also used in 2024 against the former Public Defender Nino Lomjaria, and this had an intersectional discriminatory nature. A fabricated post, where Lomjaria supposedly congratulates people for Easter with an LGBTQ+ rainbow-colored egg, was first shared by a government expert, who called the former ombudsman "unpatriotic," "anti-church," and "glorifier of Europe," accusing her of encouraging young people to say "forward to Europe" instead of "Christ is risen." This fake post was then shared by pro-government media (InfoPostalioni.com) and other Facebook accounts to attack Nino Lomjaria.



3.3 Discrediting the Opposition through Slut-Shaming and LGBTQ+ Identity During the Pre-Election Period

Examples of disinformation targeting Georgian politicians ahead of the 2024 parliamentary elections show that slut-shaming was used to discredit female politicians (3 cases), while accusations of homosexuality were employed to discredit male politicians (3 cases).

In two cases, the target was Tina Bokuchava, chairperson of the opposition party United National Movement (UNM), while in one case, it was the President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili. All three cases involved photo and video fabrications aimed at shaming female politicians by portraying them as promiscuous.

Disinformation	Violation Type	Sources
<p>An altered video of Tina Bokuchava (UNM) in which she allegedly declares that she loves both her husband and former President Saakashvili at the same time⁵⁵</p> 	Videofabrication	Anti-opposition Facebook page "Time for Truth," Individual Facebook accounts
<p>A digitally altered photo of Tina Bokuchava (UNM) in lingerie⁵⁶</p> 	Photofabrication	Individual accounts Facebook
<p>An altered video of President Salome Zourabichvili in which she allegedly states that she "gave it" to six presidents.⁵⁷</p> 	Videofabrication	Conservative Movement and Georgian Dream supporter accounts

⁵⁵ Myth Detector, 8 August, 2024. Manipulated Video of Tina Bokuchava Circulating on Facebook. <https://mythdetector.com/en/manipulated-video-tina-bokuchava-circulating-on-facebook/>

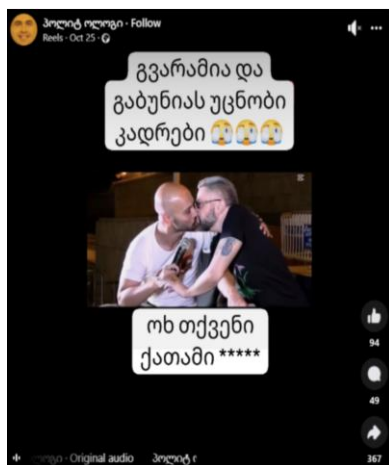
⁵⁶ Giorgi Minashvili, 13 June, 2024. Photo fabrication Disseminated on Facebook to discredit UNM Leader Tina Bokuchava, <https://bit.ly/3QUOk1q>

⁵⁷ Myth Detector, 30 October, 2024. Video Manipulation of Salome Zourabichvili's Speech from the October 28 Protest Rally, <https://bit.ly/3Ecitq9>

In two cases, the target was Nika Gvaramia, leader of the opposition party "Akhali," while in one case, it was the party "Federalists," where the party's name was manipulatively linked to the derogatory term "pedarast" (a Georgian slur).

Disinformation	Violation Type	Sources
A DeepFake video of opposition party ("Akhali") leader Nika Gvaramia kissing another man ⁵⁸	Video Fabrication / DeepFake Technology	Anti-opposition Facebook account "Polit Ologi"
An edited video of opposition leader Nika Gvaramia professing love to a man ⁵⁹	Videofabrication	Anti-opposition Facebook page "Time for Truth"
An altered video in which opposition party member Giorgi Akhalaia ("Federalists") calls his party " P**erasts " instead of "Federalists" ⁶⁰	Videofabrication	Conservative Movement and Georgian Dream supporter Facebook users

As with female politicians, visual manipulation techniques were used against male politicians. Out of three video fabrications, two involved content manipulation, while one used DeepFake technology to generate a scene of two men kissing. This DeepFake targeting Nika Gvaramia, leader of "Akhali," was released on the eve of the 2024 parliamentary elections.⁶¹



Altered scene



Authentic scene

⁵⁸ Myth Detector, 26 October, 2024. DeepFake Video of Nika Gvaramia and Giorgi Gabunia Kissing Circulates on Social Media, <https://bit.ly/4hSFZXA>

⁵⁹ Myth Detector, 24 October, 2024. Altered Video Featuring Nika Gvaramia and Giorgi Gabunia Disseminated on Social Media, <https://bit.ly/3E3SAc5>

⁶⁰ Myth Detector, 16 August, 2024. Manipulated Video of "Federalists" Political Party Circulates on Facebook, <https://bit.ly/4j8Q2Z1>

⁶¹ Myth Detector, 26 October, 2024. DeepFake Video of Nika Gvaramia and Giorgi Gabunia Kissing Circulates on Social Media, <https://bit.ly/4hSFZXA>

3.4 Disinformation / Manipulation Related to Legislation

The observed instances (3) of false content regarding legislation were mostly anti-Western in nature. The long-standing Kremlin-backed false claim⁶² that the European Union would require Georgia to legalize same-sex marriage was aired on the pro-Kremlin TV channel "Sezoni TV." Manipulated statistics falsely claimed that the West was using domestic violence laws to break up families and systematically weaken men was also promoted by the pro-Kremlin media outlet "Alt-Info".⁶³ The claim that the United Nations was planning to decriminalize all forms of sexual activity and promote pedophilia, necrophilia, zoophilia, and abortion originated from a statement by the People's Power" movement and was widely covered by pro-government media.⁶⁴

⁶² Myth Detector, 23 May, 2024. The European Union is not asking Georgia to legalize same-sex marriage in exchange for membership, <https://bit.ly/429Xpsy>

⁶³ Myth Detector, 19 March, 2024. How does alt-info manipulate the domestic violence article and what do the prosecutor's office statistics tell us? <https://bit.ly/3Y9faXA>

⁶⁴ Tsisia Kirvalidze, 12 March, 2024. Disinformation, as if UN Report Promotes Pedophilia and Zoophilia, and Incest is Legal in Switzerland <https://mythdetector.com/en/disinformation-as-if-un-report-promotes-pedophilia/>