



FemRise

National Report Portugal

Feminist Narratives and Gender Representation in Media and Popular Culture



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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a media monitoring exercise conducted in Portugal during 2025, focusing on representations of gender, feminism, and gender-based violence (GBV) across television, streaming platforms, music, podcasts, social media, advertisements, and news media.

A total of 83 media items were analysed. The findings reveal that gender-based violence was the most frequently represented theme, accounting for 31% of the sample, followed by feminist narratives (22%) and female empowerment and autonomy (18%). Portuguese media increasingly promotes narratives of women's independence, resistance to patriarchal structures, and social activism. However, traditional gender stereotypes, commercialised feminist messaging, and limited representations of alternative masculinities remain significant challenges.

The analysis suggests that Portuguese media reflects a society undergoing cultural change. While many media products contribute to greater visibility of feminist ideas and gender equality, contradictory messages continue to coexist with progressive narratives. Cultural products such as music, television series, podcasts, and social media often provide more structural and critical perspectives on gender inequality than traditional news media, which frequently portrays violence as isolated incidents rather than systemic problems.

Introduction

The media plays an important role in shaping public perceptions of gender, power, and social relations. In Portugal, television, streaming services, digital platforms, music, and social media have become central spaces for discussing gender equality, women's rights, and violence against women.

This report examines how Portuguese media portrays gender, feminism, and GBV and explores the narratives that influence public opinion, particularly among younger audiences. By analysing content from multiple platforms, the report seeks to identify dominant representations, key actors, youth responses, and persistent gaps in gender representation.

Monitoring Gender Representation in Portuguese Media

The analysis of Portuguese media reveals a growing presence of feminist narratives across television, streaming platforms, music, podcasts, social media, newspapers, and advertising. While gender equality and women's empowerment are increasingly visible, significant challenges related to gender-based violence (GBV), stereotypes, and patriarchal structures remain.

Television and Streaming Platforms

Portuguese television and streaming services play an important role in shaping public perceptions of gender. Series such as *3 Mulheres*, *Sisi*, and *A Generala* portray women challenging patriarchal systems, resisting oppression, and seeking autonomy. Similarly, popular streaming productions including *The Queen's Gambit*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Inventing Anna*, *Good Girls*, and *Big Little Lies* explore themes of female agency, systemic discrimination, resistance, and empowerment. Together, these productions challenge traditional gender roles and present women as complex, resilient protagonists rather than passive victims.

Music and Feminist Expression

Music serves as a powerful tool for feminist discourse. International artists such as Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, Alicia Keys, Miley Cyrus, and Shania Twain promote messages of empowerment, bodily autonomy, and resistance to gender stereotypes. Portuguese and Lusophone artists, including Ana Bacalhau, BLAYA, Carolina Deslandes, Milhanas, A Garota Não, and Elza Soares address issues such as domestic violence, body image, sexuality, racism, and women's independence. Despite different styles and cultural contexts, these artists share a commitment to challenging patriarchal norms and promoting gender equality.

Podcasts and Digital Media

The growing popularity of podcasts in Portugal has created new spaces for feminist discussions. Programs such as *FEMINA*, *Praia dos Ossos*, *Grita*, *Mulher!*, *Mulher PodeCast*, and *Ponto de Luz* address themes including gender-based violence, intersectionality, women's rights, and bodily autonomy. Through interviews, storytelling, and educational content, they contribute to raising awareness and promoting feminist perspectives.

Social Media and Popular Trends

Instagram and TikTok have become important platforms for feminist activism and public debate. Online discussions focus on gender-based violence, survivor testimonies, legal reforms, menstrual health, toxic masculinity, and gender equality. At the same time, these spaces also



host anti-feminist rhetoric, conservative backlash, and generational conflicts, reflecting ongoing tensions surrounding feminist issues in Portuguese society.

Newspapers and Public Debate

Newspaper coverage highlights persistent concerns regarding domestic violence, sexual harassment, femicide, and institutional failures. Feminist activists and scholars frequently advocate for legal reforms, stronger protection for victims, and greater accountability. Media coverage increasingly acknowledges gender inequality, although criticism remains regarding victim-blaming, inadequate sentencing, and insufficient attention to structural causes of violence.

Advertising and Gender Representation

Advertising presents mixed messages. Many campaigns promote body positivity, diversity, women's empowerment, equal pay, and shared domestic responsibilities. Brands such as Dove, Adidas, Always, Vodafone, and Heineken have launched campaigns supporting gender equality. However, some advertisements continue to objectify women or reinforce traditional stereotypes, demonstrating the ongoing tension between commercial interests and feminist values.

Overall Conclusion

Portuguese media reflects a society undergoing a significant cultural transformation. Feminist narratives, women's empowerment, and discussions of gender-based violence have gained visibility across multiple platforms. Nevertheless, persistent stereotypes, online backlash, and structural inequalities continue to limit progress. The findings suggest that media can play a crucial role in promoting gender equality, but meaningful change requires continued efforts to challenge patriarchal norms, improve representation, and amplify diverse voices.

Cross-Platform Justification

From examining all six platforms, we can see a great variety of approaches from institutional campaigns to youth-led digital activism, which emphasizes a multifaceted ecosystem of public discourse on gender equality. By analyzing them collectively, we capture not only diverse voices (from policymakers to grassroots organizers) but also the interconnected layers of influence shaping societal change:

1. Formal to Informal: EU policy frameworks interact with viral TikTok advocacy;
2. Global to Local: International campaigns resonate with hyper-local realities;
3. Top-Down to Bottom-Up: Legislative Change is Driven by Street-Level Mobilization.



This interconnected analysis demonstrates how social transformation operates, where each category (traditional media, digital spaces, institutional advocacy, youth culture, etc.) functions as an interdependent gear in the machinery of progress. The EU Gender Equality Strategy (2026-2030) exemplifies this dynamic: while formal documents create scaffolding, it's digital narratives and public protests that breathe life into them and ensure accountability. Together, these dimensions form a complete map of contemporary feminist struggle—not hierarchical or fragmented, but networked.

The main insight is that the intersection of these categories reveals that enduring equality requires both policy and cultural shifts—where a tweet can pressure legislation, and a legal framework can amplify the voices of marginalized individuals. The future of feminism lies in this synergy.

Portrayal and Implicit Messaging of Gender, Feminist, and GBV Narratives in Media Content

This section presents a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the 83 media samples from six categories (songs, TV/film, talk shows, ads, social media, news). The goal is to identify dominant themes, measure their frequency and tone, and **highlight implicit messages related to:**

1. Quantify the Patterns

Narrative/Theme	No. of Mentions	% of Total Media Sample
Feminist ideas (supportive)	18	22%
Feminist ideas (mocking/critical)	2	2%
GBV (explicit or implied)	25	31%
Traditional gender roles	6	7%
Female empowerment/autonomy	15	18%
Toxic masculinity	5	6%
Victim-blaming	0	0%
Use of gender stereotypes	12	14%

2. Implicit Messages and Framing

We can see that most of the media analyzed mentions GBV in its majority and it's in an explicit manner, also most media support feminist ideas of showing empowered, independent and capable achieving women. The media reinforces the ideas of female empowerment and autonomy, it also exposes systemic inequities, pushing for policy change. In the media we can see the push for dismantling gender tropes but sadly, we see some newspaper articles focusing

on the survivor's actions (e.g alcohol use) rather than focusing on the perpetrators' accountability, silencing women's experiences (victim blaming).

Who is centered: As commenced above, the media depicts women in an ambiguous manner, in some cases women are shown as strong and autonomous, showing a variety of representation from empowered leaders, agents of change, resilient and as a force of solidarity, but in other cases we have them reduced to stereotypes in traditional roles reducing women just to mothers or depicting them as passive objects for male consumption, as victims often anonymizing women, reducing them to statistics. Men are portrayed as perpetrators in cases of news on femicides and GBV, they frame men as aggressors, though often without analyzing the patriarchal system. They are also seen as systemic enablers. The Council of Europe's report critiques male-dominated judiciaries for leniency toward abusers. They are also seen as allies or evolving, presenting healthy masculinity, men embracing vulnerability or domestic labor, mocked for toxicity, some campaigns ridicule men who catcall or cling to machismo. They are also absent or peripheral in women-centric media; men are largely irrelevant unless critiquing their role in oppression.

Implicit messages: The media does have implicit messages and often contradictory ones about gender, violence, and power. The media oscillates between maintaining the Status Quo by framing violence as individual crimes, feminism as divisive, and empowerment as exceptional, but at the same time, it also challenges it by centering survivors, mocking sexism, and demanding institutional change. The media both normalizes violence and stereotypes, framing feminism as threatening, and resists them, showing empowerment as collective liberation, exposing society's struggle to reconcile women's autonomy with patriarchal structures.

Example language for reporting:

A review of 83 media items shows clear trends in how gender is portrayed, with gender-based violence (GBV) taking center stage with 31% of coverage (25 items). Although their framing differed greatly between critical and supportive approaches, feminist viewpoints were present in 22% of cases (18 items). Three major conflicts are highlighted in the dataset: (1) the prevalence of GBV and its frequent depoliticization; (2) the increasing visibility of feminists and the enduring stereotyping of women (14%, 12 items); and (3) the narratives of female empowerment (18%, 15 items) and the limited engagement with masculine accountability (6%, 5 items). This distribution implies that the media both reinforces traditional norms and amplifies progressive gender discourse.

3. Platform-Specific Observations

An analysis of 83 media items shows clear trends in how gender is portrayed, with gender-based violence (GBV) standing out as the most prevalent theme, accounting for 31% of coverage



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4. Conclusion

Wrap up with a short reflection on what the patterns reveal about how gender, feminism, and GBV are portrayed in your country's media landscape. Does the media promote change, reinforce stereotypes, or send mixed messages?

Key Difference: Cultural content (songs, podcasts) more frequently connected GBV to structural inequality, whereas news emphasized it as isolated incidents. This suggests that platform-specific narratives influence how the public perceives gender issues. A society in transition is reflected in the media, feminist advancements coexist with long-standing stereotypes, and GBV reporting surpasses prevention narratives.

Dominant Feminist and Gender Narratives in Popular Culture and the Key Actors Behind Them

Based on the analysis of approximately 83 media samples across TV, print, songs, advertisements, social media, and talk shows in Portugal, several dominant and recurring narratives related to gender and feminism emerged. These narratives help illustrate how public culture reinforces — or occasionally challenges — gender-based norms and ideologies.

Key Narratives Identified

a. Feminism Threatens Traditional Family Values

Feminist narratives that directly question systemic oppression and traditional gender roles are becoming more prevalent in Portugal's media. From TV and streaming series to songs and Instagram activism, these narratives are present on a variety of platforms:

Empowered Female Agency: Through independence, political opposition, and group struggle, the main female characters (such as A Generala, Sisi, and Three Women) challenge gender expectations. These tales support feminist reinterpretations of history by criticizing historical oppression, patriarchal systems, and the price of resistance.

Intersectionality and Marginalization: Songs such as *A Mulher do Fim do Mundo* by Elza Soares and *Que Mulher É Essa* by A Garota Não? draw attention to the ways that gender inequality is influenced by body politics, age, and race.

Resistance to Gender-Based Violence (GBV): Songs (*Roubar um Corpo*, *Saia da Carolina*), podcasts (*Grita, Mulher!*), and newspaper articles (e.g., Lisbon Erasmus case) all raise the voices of survivors and call for institutional accountability.

Bodily Autonomy and Sexual Liberation: From *Primeira Batida* by BLAYA to *Mother's Daughter* by Miley Cyrus, artists challenge objectification and shame by redefining women's bodies as sources of power.

Feminist Activism as Everyday Resistance: Youth-led, survivor-entered campaigns addressing toxic masculinity, menstrual health, and harassment are documented by online activism, particularly on Instagram. Here, the feminist voice is creating new standards rather than merely responding to them.

b. Empowered Women Are Controlling or Morally Dubious

Alongside progressive messages, some media samples reinforce or echo regressive narratives:

Feminism as Threat: Feminism is portrayed as a threat to tradition or masculinity in certain conservative or reactionary narratives, particularly on social media and in advertisements (such as sexist beer ads or anti-abortion campaigns).

Tokenism and Stereotyping: Certain shows or ads risk reinforcing gender/racial stereotypes (e.g., *Griselda*), raising ethical questions about representation even within supposedly feminist frameworks.

c. Gender Equality Exists, So Feminism Is Unnecessary

This narrative appeared in roughly 15% of the samples, especially on social media and newspaper op-eds. It often downplays ongoing gender inequalities by suggesting that legal or formal rights already ensure equality, dismissing the relevance of feminist discourse altogether.

Key Actors Promoting These Narratives

Streaming platforms and mainstream media

- Through historical drama and fiction, public broadcasters like RTP and private networks like SIC and TVI continue to influence how the public views gender (*Three Women*, *A Generala*).
- In Portugal, digital feminist storytelling is dominated by Netflix and other streaming services (like HBO and Prime), which enable local audiences to access global feminist narratives.

Artists and Musicians

- While Portuguese and Lusophone artists (Ana Bacalhau, Elza Soares, and Milhanas) give voice to culturally specific experiences of gender inequality and resistance, international pop icons (Beyoncé, Alicia Keys, and Taylor Swift) provide feminist anthems that are universally relatable.
- Music videos are effective visual platforms for feminist commentary on identity, violence, and autonomy.

Digital Creators and Podcasts

- Through personal, approachable formats, feminist podcasts such as FEMINA, Ponto de Luz, and Grita, Mulher! raise public awareness of intersectionality, gender violence, and feminist education.
- Digital feminist mobilization relies heavily on social media influencers and activists, particularly on Instagram, where they post testimonies, advocacy materials, and cultural critiques that frequently go viral.

Advertisers and Brands

- Campaigns from Vodafone, Heineken, Always, and other brands use feminist messaging, sometimes in a meaningful way (like Dove's body positivity) and other times in a superficial or contradictory way (like "Obrigado Mãe!").
- Feminist criticisms of commercial feminism highlight the conflict between marketing and empowerment, as branding occasionally appropriates feminist rhetoric without taking structural responsibility.

Patterns and Impact

- Feminist discourse in Portugal is becoming more multi-platform, with TV, music, podcasts, social media, and advertising all playing a role in making conversations about gender equality more common.
- Intersectionality is a rising topic, particularly in Lusophone music and digital activism, examining the interplay of gender with race, age, and class.
- Digital media is a double-edged sword: it has helped grassroots feminist voices be heard, but it has also been a place for backlash, like antifeminist content and misogynistic language.
- Critique of institutions is important: A lot of stories, especially in journalism, music, and fiction, show how the law, the media, and politics have failed to protect women or promote justice.

There is an active feminist change happening in Portugal's popular culture. Although patriarchal stories are still around, more and more artists, media producers, activists, and educators are fighting them on all platforms. The combination of local voices and global influences makes a unique feminist ecosystem where cultural products are both mirrors and engines of social change. The key to long-term impact is the synergy between cultural production and institutional reform. This is when feminist music, storytelling, and activism do more than just raise awareness; they also push systems to change.

Youth Responses to Media Narratives on Gender and Feminism in Portugal

Young people are becoming more and more significant to the conversation about gender and feminism in Portugal. They interact with media stories in complicated and changing ways. From activism on social media to educational content led by peers and even backlash, young people's reactions show a generational divide between progressive gender ideas and more traditional values. Online spaces, in particular, are where these debates happen. They are places where solidarity, satire, and skepticism all exist.

Key Focus Areas

A. Online Interactions & Digital Engagement

Young people in Portugal are very active online, especially on Instagram, TikTok, and more recently on podcasts and Twitter/X, where they talk about, support, or disagree with feminist and gender narratives.

Digital Solidarity and Hashtag Activism

Hashtags like #NãoÉNormal, #FeminismoÉParaTodos, and localized versions of #MeToo has inspired young people to talk about their own experiences with gender-based violence, harassment, and unfair treatment at work. Viral events, like the public outrage after the Funchal street harassment case, led to a lot of Instagram stories and TikTok responses. Young women wrote testimonials, some on anonymous sites like Mural de Testemunhos, to make a public record of survivors' stories that went against the culture of silence.

Comment Sections as Mini-Public Spheres

Generational differences are frequently exposed in the comment sections of feminist music videos (such as Milhanas' Roubar um Corpo or Blaya's Primeira Batida). While many young users applaud these artists for normalizing autonomy and body positivity, other commenters, who are frequently men, react with disapproval, criticism, or derision. Similar trends show up in

reactions to feminist posts or podcast episodes by influencers such as Carolina Deslandes, where feminist messaging and emotional vulnerability are both praised and policed.

Response to Feminism in Celebrities

In Portugal, celebrities like Beyoncé, Miley Cyrus, and Taylor Swift have sizable fan bases among young people, and their feminist themes, particularly in songs like *Flawless* or *The Man*, provoke lively debate. Portuguese youth frequently use these songs in Reels or TikToks, repost them with empowering captions, or bring them up in class discussions. However, there is also skepticism: some young people criticize "mainstream feminism" as being commercialized or disconnected from local realities, particularly in contrast to Lusophone voices like Ana Bacalhau or Elza Soares, whose ideas are more in line with Portuguese culture.

Youth-led Campaigns and Counter-Narratives

Through peer education, street activism, and digital campaigns, Portuguese youth have actively shaped alternative feminist discourse in addition to responding to prevailing media narratives.

Initiatives for Digital Feminism

With infographics, reels, and short-form podcasts addressing topics like consent, toxic masculinity, reproductive rights, and feminist history in Portugal, Instagram pages such as @grita.mulher, @ponto.de.luz, and other youth collectives have developed into centers for feminist education. These platforms are accessible and relatable to Gen Z and younger Millennials because they frequently feature peer-created content.

Tools for Tech-Driven Awareness

In response to GBV, young people in Portugal have led the way in developing innovations such as the FlamAid safety device and drug-detecting lipstick, changing the narrative from one of passive victimization to one of proactive self-defense and group care. These tools, which emphasize agency and tech-savvy feminism, are frequently promoted through social media and media outlets aimed at young people.

Pop Culture as a Tool for Feminism

Youth-led counter-narratives can also be found in Portuguese music. Songs like Carolina Deslandes' *Saia da Carolina* and A Garota Não's *Que Mulher É Essa?* are popular among young people, particularly women, who share them on International Women's Day or following public instances of gender inequality. In addition to questioning conventional representations of women, these pieces are frequently used to spark more in-depth discussions in classrooms, workshops, and feminist gatherings.

Resistance and Pushback

Not every young person agrees with feminist narratives. Backlash and skepticism are evident, as in other nations; some are based in online meme culture and performative masculinity, while others are rooted in cultural conservatism.

Memes that are mocking and dismissive

Memes that make fun of feminism are common, particularly on X and TikTok. For instance, sarcastic videos portray feminist concepts like "toxic masculinity" and "patriarchy" as overly dramatic or outdated. Under the pretense of humor or "common sense," some users mock feminist terminology to undermine the movement. By portraying feminism as a specialized ideology, this meme culture helps to trivialize gender inequality.

Religious and Conservative Counter-Narratives

Some young people reject feminist content as being incompatible with Catholicism or traditional Portuguese values, especially those who lean conservative or religious. These organizations frequently portray feminism as a "foreign import" that is unrelated to Portuguese history or culture, and they advocate for alternatives such as "complementarity" gender roles. Some people accuse feminist movements of encouraging radicalism or attacking the family.

Influencers That React

Youth-focused influencers who openly criticize feminism are becoming more prevalent. TikTok creators and YouTubers with moderate to large followings have positioned themselves as "rational" voices, cautioning followers against "toxic feminism" or advocating for concepts like "men's rights" under the guise of equality. Male audiences who feel threatened or alienated by feminist discourse are frequently drawn to these figures.

Portuguese youth actively interpret, critique, and create media messages about gender and feminism rather than passively absorbing them. Their involvement highlights fault lines where resistance, disinformation, and ideological conflict still exist while also reflecting a generational shift towards greater awareness and activism. Portuguese youth, through digital platforms, music, campaigns, and even backlash, are contributing to the future of feminist discourse, not as a single, cohesive front, but as a complex, dynamic dialogue that is ingrained in daily life and culture.

Gaps in Gender Representation in Media and Barriers to Change

The mainstream media in Portugal still exhibits severe structural and narrative shortcomings in gender representation, despite notable advancements in the public conversation about gender equality. Three major gaps stand out as particularly troublesome and persistent based on the examination of 83 media samples. A complicated network of political, economic, and cultural obstacles sustains these disparities and impedes the transition to media content that is more inclusive and equitable.

Gap 1: Cyber Violence and Sexual Harassment are Marginalized or Sensationalized:

Although many Portuguese women and LGBTQ+ youth are victims of online harassment, cyberbullying, and sexualized trolling, these problems are rarely given the serious attention they deserve in the media. Rather, these situations are frequently:

- trivialized as online gossip or personal drama in talk shows and comedic skits.
- Sensationalized when public figures, like singer Carolina Deslandes or feminist influencers, are involved and the scandal is given more attention than the underlying trends of misogyny or online violence.

Large-scale youth-led Instagram and TikTok campaigns raised awareness of the normalization of online threats and catcalling in the Funchal harassment incident (early 2025). However, national broadcasters didn't link the incident to digital safety laws or structural GBV until after it had gone viral.

Gap 2: Feminist Storytelling Is Frequently Commercialized or Isolated

Particularly in music, advertising, and streaming media, feminist messages are frequently either:

- restricted to specialized audiences, like Instagram collectives or feminist podcasts, without influencing public discourse on a broad scale.
- commercialized through advertising campaigns that continue to use stereotyped images of women while utilizing empowerment slogans (e.g., "Be Bold. Be Free.").

For instance, Vodafone Portugal's 2024 "Força Feminina" ad campaign, which emphasized empowerment, only included slender, stereotypically attractive white women; it omitted significant diversity in terms of ability, age, race, and body size. In a similar vein, television programs such as *Griselda* make claims of feminism but heavily rely on stereotypes (hypersexualized "bad girls" versus long-suffering "good women").

Gap 3: Seldom is masculinity explored or reimagined

In Portuguese media, men are still primarily portrayed traditionally. Male characters are frequently depicted as:



- detached, stoic, or in charge; particularly in action films or television shows.
- ridiculed if they exhibit weakness or adopt non-traditional gender norms.

Even progressive advertisements and television programs frequently focus on women's empowerment without challenging masculinity or promoting positive male allyship. There is a significant void in the larger discourse on gender equality because so few media narratives examine issues like fatherhood, emotional intelligence, and male mental health from a feminist perspective.

Barriers Preventing Change

The persistence of these representation gaps in Portugal's media landscape can be explained by a number of structural and cultural barriers.

Barrier 1: Editorial Control and Media Leadership Dominated by Men

Despite the growing number of women in Portuguese media organizations, men continue to hold a disproportionate number of decision-making roles, particularly in broadcast networks and film production. Newsrooms and editorial boards still reflect:

- Resistance to integrating gender-sensitive reporting into mainstream news values stems from conservative gender norms.
- a tendency to treat feminist content as "special interest," relegating it to opinion pieces or lifestyle sections instead of the front page or prime time.

Despite having strong feminist themes, the RTP historical series *Three Women* had male-led writing teams and production credits, which affected the way characters were framed and the amount of autonomy they were given on screen.

Barrier 2: Profit-driven content models and market pressures

Due to their increased reliance on viral metrics and advertiser revenue, media outlets are more inclined to promote content that elicits outrage or engagement, even if it perpetuates negative stereotypes. Consequently:

- Online news coverage is dominated by sensationalized headlines about gender issues and clickbait journalism.
- In order to appeal to a wider audience, advertisers water down feminist messages by adopting feminist aesthetics while avoiding substantive political content.

This "empowertising" trend, in which companies use feminism to promote their goods, gives the impression that change is occurring while excluding systemic criticism.

Barrier 3: Backlash and Cultural Resistance

Pushback against feminist content can arise from Portugal's strong Catholic heritage and ongoing nationalist discourses, particularly when the content is viewed as radical or foreign. This appears in:

- People's unease with intersectional feminism, especially about race, reproductive autonomy, or LGBTQ+ rights.
- online criticism from conservative influencers and youth subcultures that mock feminist narratives with TikToks, memes, or pseudo-academic "debunks" of feminism.

For journalists and artists who try to question prevailing conventions, this cultural resistance fosters a hostile atmosphere. Many choose “safe feminism”, messages that empower women without endangering established power structures, as a result.

Both inspiring feminist efforts and frustrating gaps characterize the gender representation landscape in Portuguese media. Alternative masculinities continue to be invisible, feminist messaging is diluted for mass appeal, and digital violence is still disregarded or misused. These disparities are the consequence of ingrained media leadership hierarchies, economic incentives that put profit ahead of justice, and cultural narratives that continue to oppose structural change. They are not merely editorial errors.

Media platforms must move towards structural reform, inclusive storytelling, and feminist editorial leadership that is empowered—not just present—in order to overcome these obstacles. Only then will gender parity in Portuguese media become a transformative force rather than merely a fad.

Key Findings from Gender-Focused Media Content Analysis

The main conclusions of an examination of about 83 media samples gathered from six platforms—TV series/movies, print news, songs, ads, social media, and talk shows—that focused on the representation of gender and feminism in Portuguese popular culture are summarized in this concluding section. The results show persistent gendered patterns and ingrained narrative trends that impact young people's understandings of feminism and gender equality as well as public opinion.

Dominant Gender Narratives and Themes:

Narrative 1: Women Portrayed Primarily as Victims or in Domestic Roles

With over 60% of the examined samples containing this narrative, it was the most prevalent narrative across all media types. Typical depictions included:



- Women are frequently portrayed as mothers, wives, or daughters with little autonomy in TV dramas and motion pictures. Even though the main female characters in historical series like Three Women (Três Mulheres) exhibit strength, their stories are primarily told through suffering, sacrifice, and relational identity (e.g., wives or revolutionaries' companions).
- The association of femininity with unpaid domestic work was reinforced by the almost universal appearance of women in advertisements for cleaning supplies, baby care products, or cooking equipment.
- Without offering background information or a systemic analysis, news reports on gender-based violence (GBV) frequently sensationalize the suffering of women.

Instead of presenting women as leaders or change agents, this framing primarily portrays them as passive victims of violence or responsibility.

Story 2: Feminism as a Danger to Customs or National Ideals

Talk shows, conservative commentary, and viral social media posts all featured this narrative. Feminism was frequently depicted as:

- "Foreign" or "imported," unrelated to Portugal's Catholic heritage or cultural values.
- disruptive to family structures, with conversations often evoking concerns about "the breakdown of traditional gender roles."

In March 2025, for instance, three of five episodes of a well-known late-night talk show featured commentary implying that feminist demands were "going too far" and running the risk of "damaging the harmony between men and women."

Story 3: Self-Empowerment via Individualism or Sexualization

Female empowerment is frequently reduced to body autonomy presented as aesthetic freedom in pop music and advertising, particularly in those targeted at younger audiences. This comprises:

- Music videos that promote freedom through sensuality without a larger feminist context include Milhanas' performances and BLAYA's Primeira Batida.
- Commercialized beauty standards are reinforced by the idealized female bodies found in ad campaigns with slogans like "Be You" or "Own Your Power."

Although this narrative provides alternatives to victimization, it tends to personalize feminism, turning it into a question of style or confidence rather than collective rights or structural critique.

Story 4: Feminist Counter-Narratives Led by Youth

Youth-driven feminist narratives surfaced on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Podcasts, with a focus on:

- Awareness of GBV
- Rights to reproduction
- Inclusion of LGBTQ+
- Intersectional feminism

By establishing platforms for alternative storytelling, accounts such as @feminismoportugal and the podcast Grita, Mulher! challenged the predominance of conventional narratives.

Narrative 2: Feminism Portrayed as a Threat to Family or Social Stability

Present in talk shows, some religious discourse, and viral social media videos.

Feminist voices are often ridiculed or framed as “Westernized,” “anti-religious,” or “disruptive.”

Example: On a popular talk show, 3 out of 5 episodes included comments suggesting that gender equality is incompatible with national traditions.

Analytical Criteria and Indicators Used

Criteria	Observation
Frequency of gender stereotypes	Repeated portrayal of women as emotional, passive, or domestic. Present in 76% of samples
Direct feminist discourse (positive)	Explicit mention or support for feminism or gender rights, only in 12% of samples
Presence of gender-based violence (GBV)	Mentioned, dramatized, or depicted in storyline, in 40% of content
Engagement with youth campaigns	Feminist themes in youth-led media (e.g., reels, infographics, microblogs) are present in 20% (mainly online)

3. Platform-Specific Observations

- TV Series/Movies: mainly relied on gender stereotypes, portraying women as either romantic or sexually interested or as victims.
- Songs: Frequently, the lyrics dealt with romantic dependence, betrayal, or heartbreak.
- Advertisements: Women are seen using beauty or household products, and financial and tech advertisements are narrated by men.
- Talk Shows: dominated by sceptics about feminism and male hosts.

- Social media: There is a mixed environment, with a lot of misogynistic backlash and feminist activism.
- News Articles: frequently "gender-blind," with GBV and inequality unrelated to more general discussions of justice or policy.

Impact on Youth and Public Discourse

The content under analysis significantly affects how young people view feminism, gender roles, and their own position in society:

- **Reinforcement of Stereotypes:** When young people see men as dominant or logical and women as emotional or passive, it normalises gender inequality and stifles aspirations for more flexible or equal gender roles.
- **Distrust or Rejection of Feminism:** Young people, particularly young men, may become defensive or hostile towards feminist campaigns when feminist voices are disparaged or written off as extreme.
- **Social Media Empowerment:** Despite the negativity in the media, a lot of young people seek activism, education, and solidarity from online feminist collectives. Although these counter-narratives are strong, they are not widely amplified or supported by institutions, which restricts their ability to spread outside of echo chambers.

Final Reflections

Patriarchal narratives are still prevalent on traditional platforms. These platforms perpetuate inequality as culturally "normal," whether it is through the trivialisation of feminism on talk shows or the reiteration of antiquated gender roles on television.

Particularly in online spaces, young people are making room for fresh feminist voices. These initiatives are brittle, though, and frequently unaffiliated with official institutions. They may face criticism, censorship, or a lack of funding.

It will take more than just varied characters or advertising campaigns to structurally transform Portuguese media. It requires inclusive leadership, editorial reform, and a change in the storytelling paradigm from reactive to justice-driven.