



CENTER FOR
THE STUDY OF
DEMOCRACY

Identity Narratives and Polarisation in Bulgaria

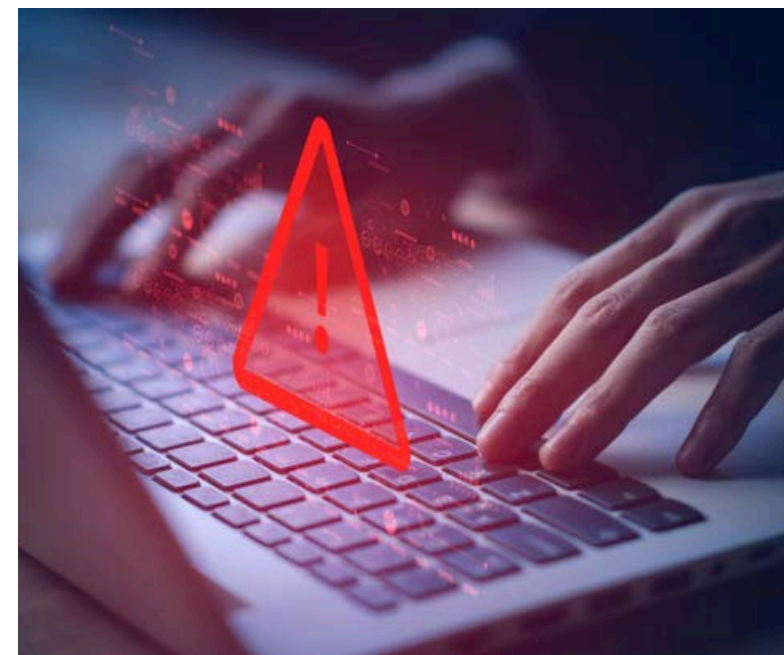
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Gendered- and Identity-Based Disinformation

- Deliberate spread of misleading or false information **targeting protected characteristics** of individuals and groups, such as gender, sexuality, race, nationality, ethnicity, and religion.
- Aims to discredit, delegitimize, intimidate, and censor the members of targeted communities, especially **women in leadership roles** and **LGBTQIA+** individuals.
- Exploitation of harmful social norms and stereotypes to further **political goals**
- Instrument of foreign information manipulation and intergerence (**FIMI**)



Overlooked Threat and Impact

National Security

- Enabling foreign information manipulation
- Creating national security vulnerabilities by eroding institutional trust
- Weakening Western international alliances

Systemic Level

- Intensifying societal divisions and polarisation
- Accelerating democratic backsliding
- Undermining fundamental rights

Individual Level

- Continuum of violence: online and offline
- Silencing through fear and censorship
- Undermining civic participation

Gendered Tropes in the Ecosystem of Russian Disinformation

NATIONALISM

- Russia is a prime anti-fascist power.
- Neo-nazi practices are being revived in the West.
- Traditional values guard against the excesses of liberalism.
- State sovereignty protects national identity.

MIGRATION

- Migrants pursue economic goals and cannot be termed 'refugees'.
- Migrants represent a security, cultural and economic threat.
- Multiculturalism undermines European civilization.

**Pro-Kremlin,
anti-democratic
discursive
ecosystem**

GENDER

- The West imposes gender ideology. – Russia defends traditional family values.
- Feminism is a dangerous challenge to demographic survival.
- Gay totalitarianism infiltrates school education.

ENERGY

- EU energy legislation unfairly targets Russia.
- Turkish stream and Nord stream ii benefit Europe.
- EU energy diversification is unfeasible.
- Cooperation with Russia brings prosperity.

The Architecture of Anti-Gender and Anti-LGBTQ Movements

Political Parties

- Revival, Greatness, There Is Such People, Bulgarian Socialist Party

CSOs and Advocacy Groups

- "Society and Values" Association
- "Family Month" Association
- "ROD International" Association
- "Conservative Society" Foundation

Pro-Kremlin Media & Figures

- Martin Karbovski
- Petar Volgin

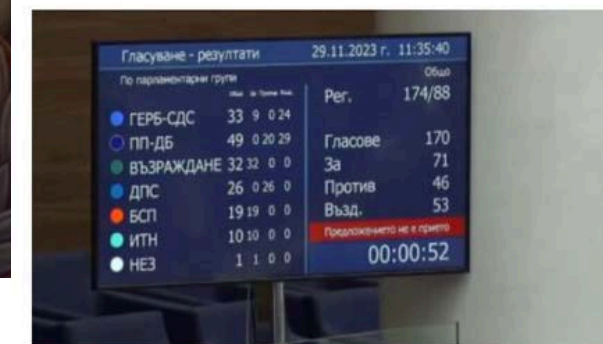
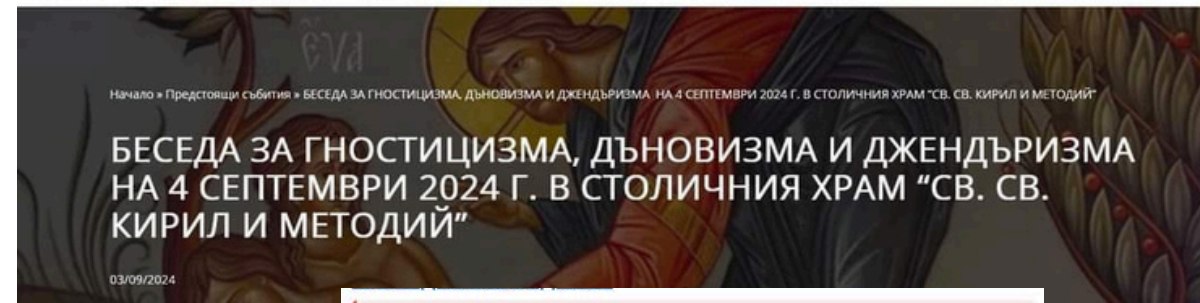
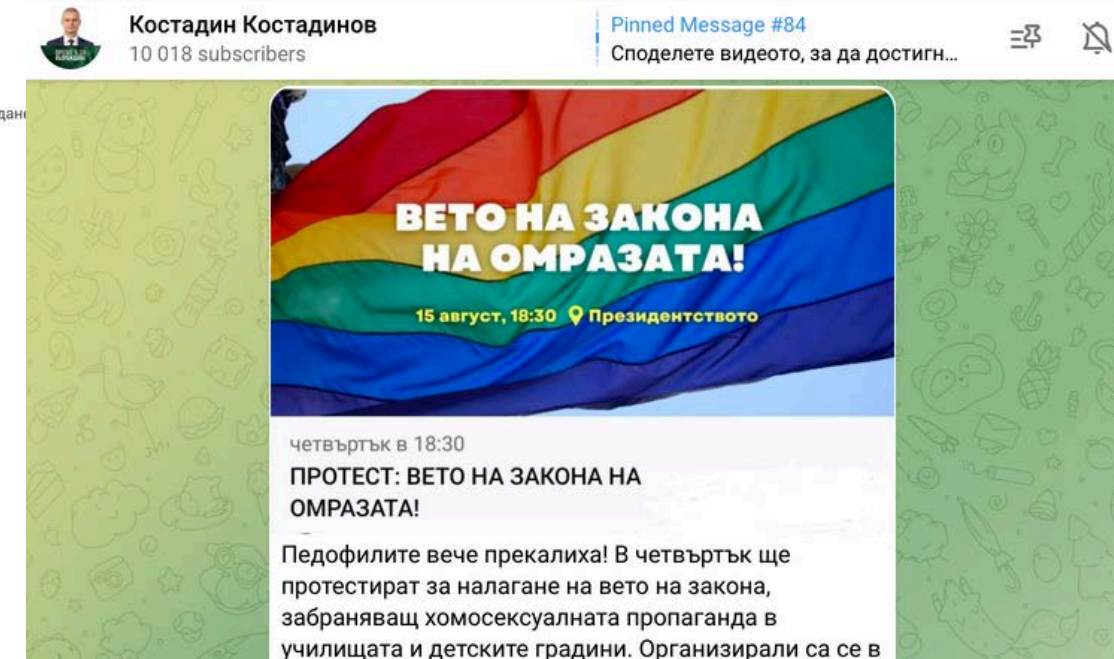
Opportunistic Actors

- The 'Manosphere'



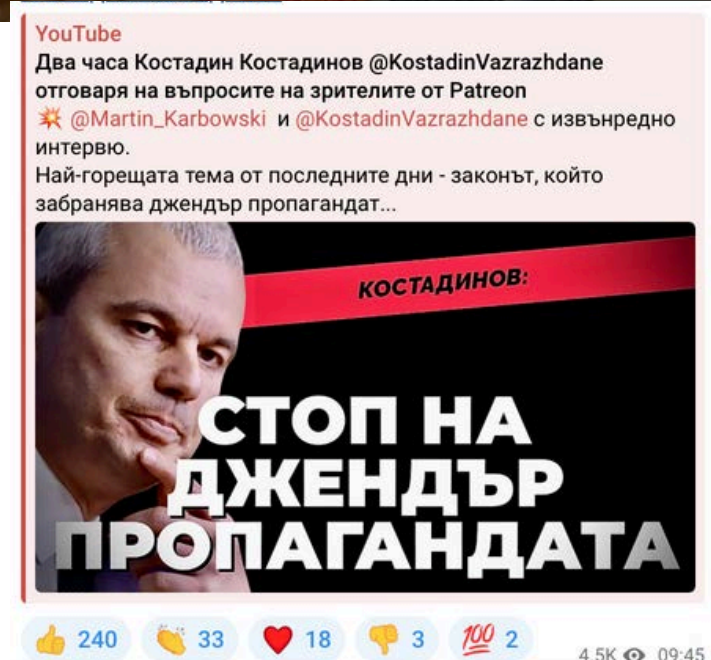
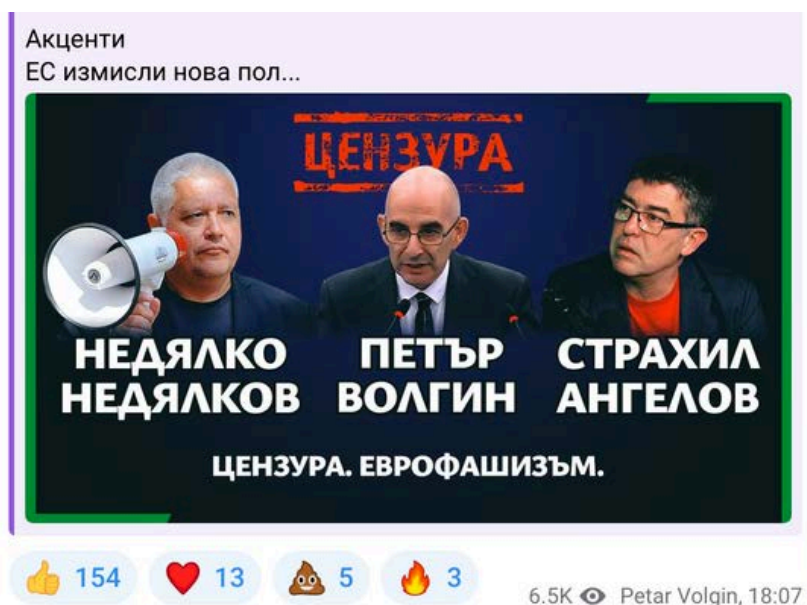
Кристиян Шкварек: Да покажем, че сме повече на шествието за "Добродетели и религии"

Съюз на православните журналисти СПЖ
На 17 май ще се проведе мирно шествие в подкрепа на предложението за въвеждане на "Добродетели и ..."



Няма кой да предпази българските деца от разврата

Единственият въпрос, който възниква е: какво точно се случва в тази сържава? ПП/ДБ са ни ясни отгадна- гългата ръка на...



Бог върши чудеса и за обърканите деца на дъгата!

Бог върши чудеса и за обърканите деца на гъгата! Страхотен филм за спасението на един БИВШ транссексуален! Доводите на прайд-философията се изпаряват...

Mapping "Gender Ideology" in Bulgaria's Online Media

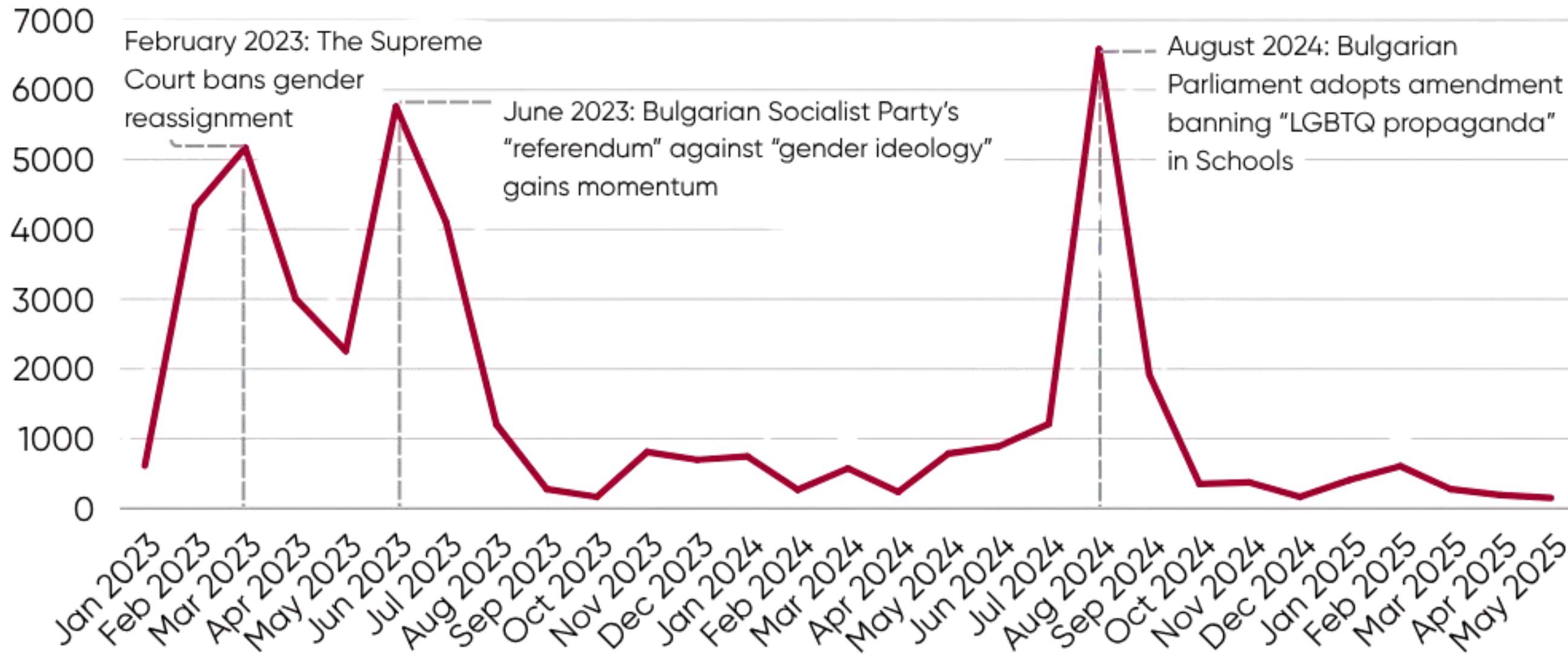


Figure 1: Number of Articles on the Topic of "Gender Ideology" in Bulgaria Per Month (Jan 2023 – May 2025)

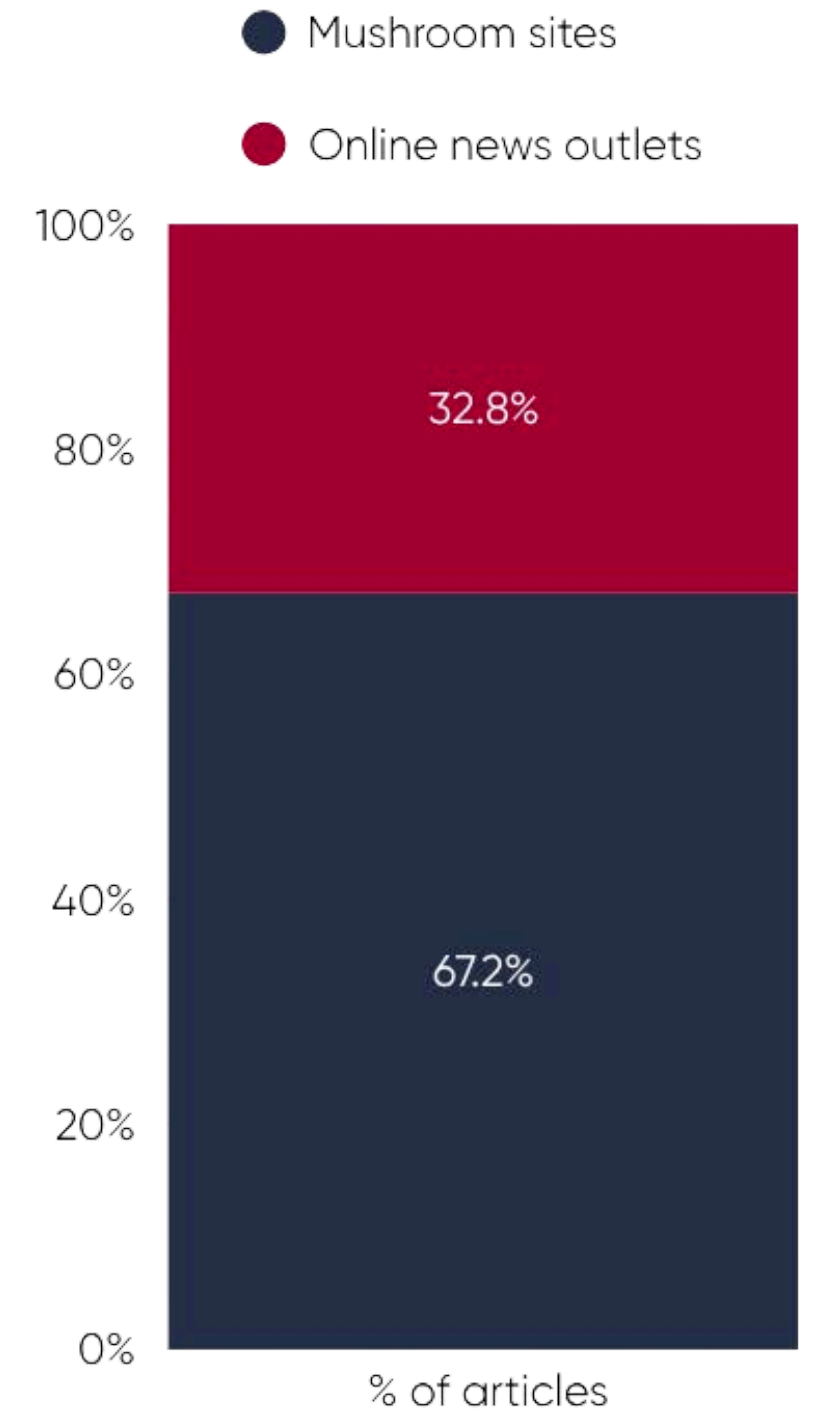


Figure 2: Source Clusters

Gender as a Weapon in Pro-Kremlin Propaganda Networks

Telegram



Figure 2: Distribution of Telegram Messages by Topic from the Total Share of 7,843 Posts (January 2023 – May 2025)

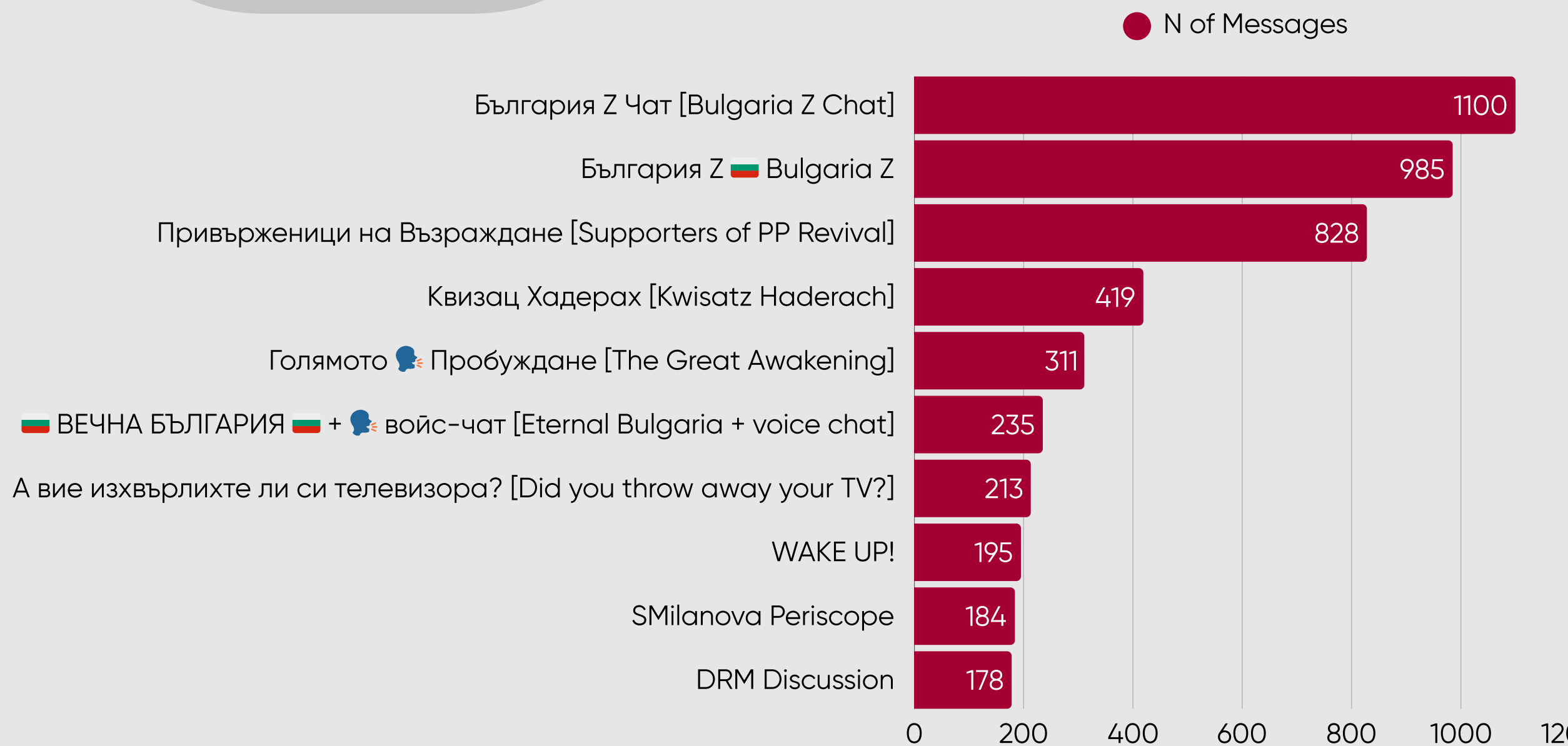
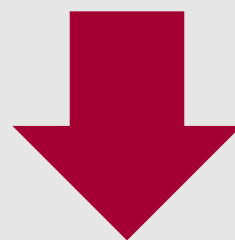


Figure 3: Top Ten Channels by Views (Jan 2023 – May 2025)

Attacks Against Women in Politics

Tactics

- Sexualisation, sharing of comprising materials, AI-driven disinformation (i.e revenge/deepfake porn)
- Stereotypes and prejudices - represented as "emotional", "hysterical" или "manipulative"
- Accusations of "treason" in pursuing "foreign agenda"
- Double standards



Impose **"costs"** on women for entering politics, reinforcing **gendered hierarchies**

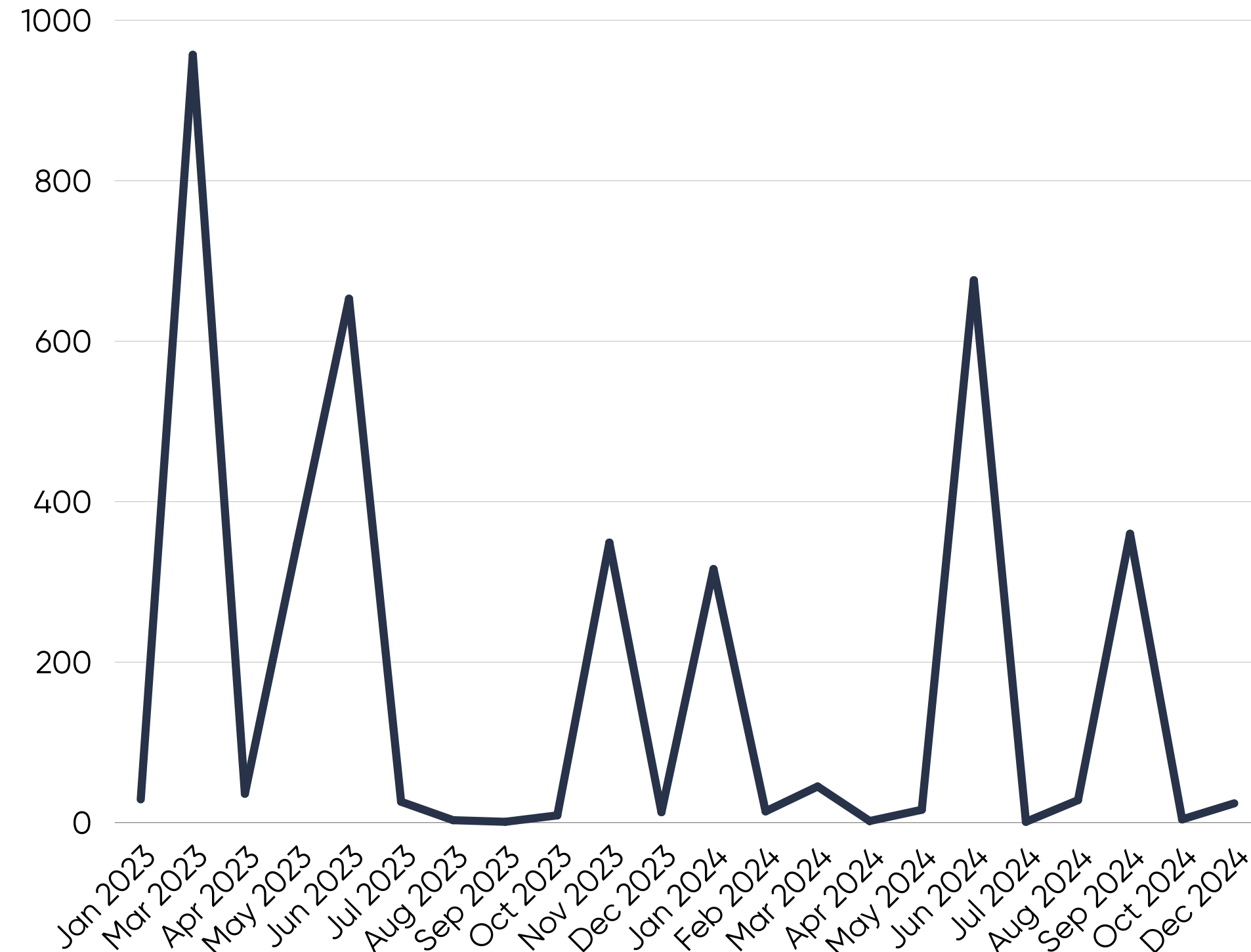


Figure 4: Volume of Online Publications Targeting Bulgarian Women in Politics (January 2023 - January 2025)

Attacks Against Ukrainian Refugee Women

Dehumanising Rhetorics

- At the centre of pro-Kremlin, post-2022 information campaigns
- **Core narratives:** “gold-diggers”, “disease carriers”, “destroying Bulgarian families”
- Transnational propaganda strategy: prevalence of Russian-language messages (Telegram)
- Denial and justification of war crimes and atrocities such as **conflict-related sexual violence** (CRSV)

Inauthentic Personas

- Series of inauthentic Facebook accounts, such as **“one Ukrainian woman in bulgaria”** (lowercase “b” is intentional)
- Constructs an inflammatory collective identity and undermines solidarity



DarsiSpsv (Facebook) – previous handles include @DariSpsv88 and @darsi_spassovaa

The "Manosphere": Where the Far-Right and Digital Misogyny Unite

A loose network of online communities, such as MGTOW, Pick-Up Artists, and incels that commonly subscribe to the **Red Pill ideology**

- **Key thesis:** male supremacy
- **Key cause:** a fight against "male extinction" in a society dominated by women and their interests
- **Vulnerable groups:** young men and boys

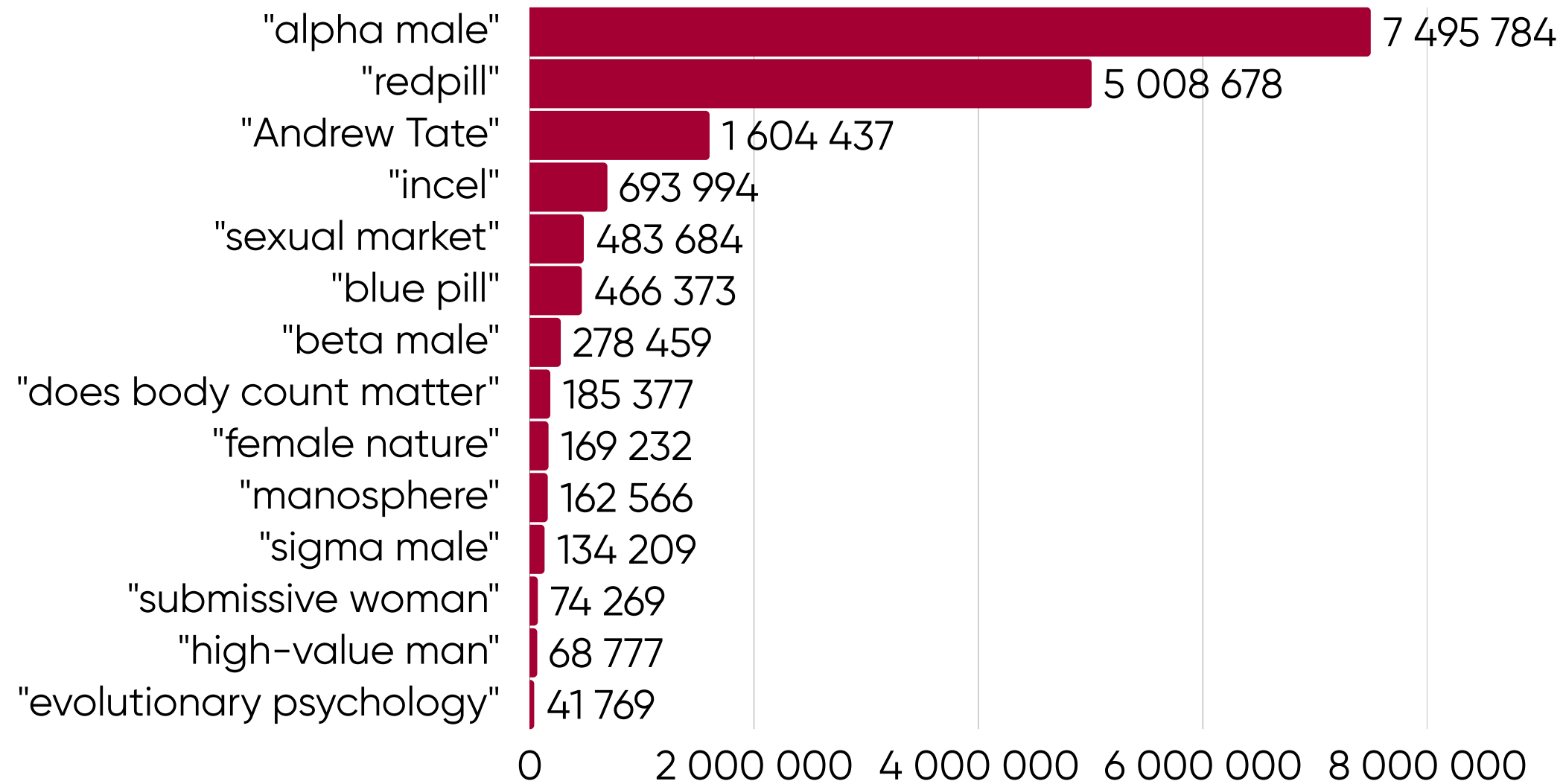
Intersectional Narratives:

- "Gender propaganda" as a strategy to feminise/sterilise men and force children to change their biological sex
- COVID-19 conspiracies
- Biolaboratories in Ukraine
- EU as a threat to national sovereignty



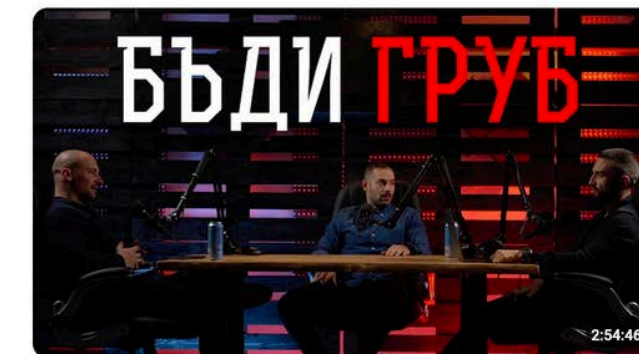
Top Keywords in Bulgarian YouTube Space Related to the Manosphere Rhetoric

● Number of views



Red Pill ще ПРОМЕНИ живота ни!
1.4K views · 2 years ago
10 от 10 - клипове
Гледай целия епизод: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mFCx-C8AsqA>

"The Red Pill will change our life!"



Манипулирай Жените!
237K views · 3 years ago
Стан и Никола
... доста интересна ред пил тема, а именно „как трябва да се държи един мъж с жените“. Интересно е какви са разликите в ...
4K

"Manipulate Women!"

Figure 5: Top Keywords in Bulgarian YouTube Space Related to the Manosphere Rhetoric

Misogyny and Gender-Based Violence as a Business Model

User messages:

- *"It is increasingly **difficult for me to work with my female colleagues, especially the ones I am supervising, since I have joined the group**"*
- *"**R*pe is an instinct. Whenever you need a f*ck, you just take it**"*

Admin messages:

- *"R*ape is a **reproduction strategy**"*
- *"[They] Got very offended when I said that women and children should respect men's physical strength. This is because [their] men are weaklings."*

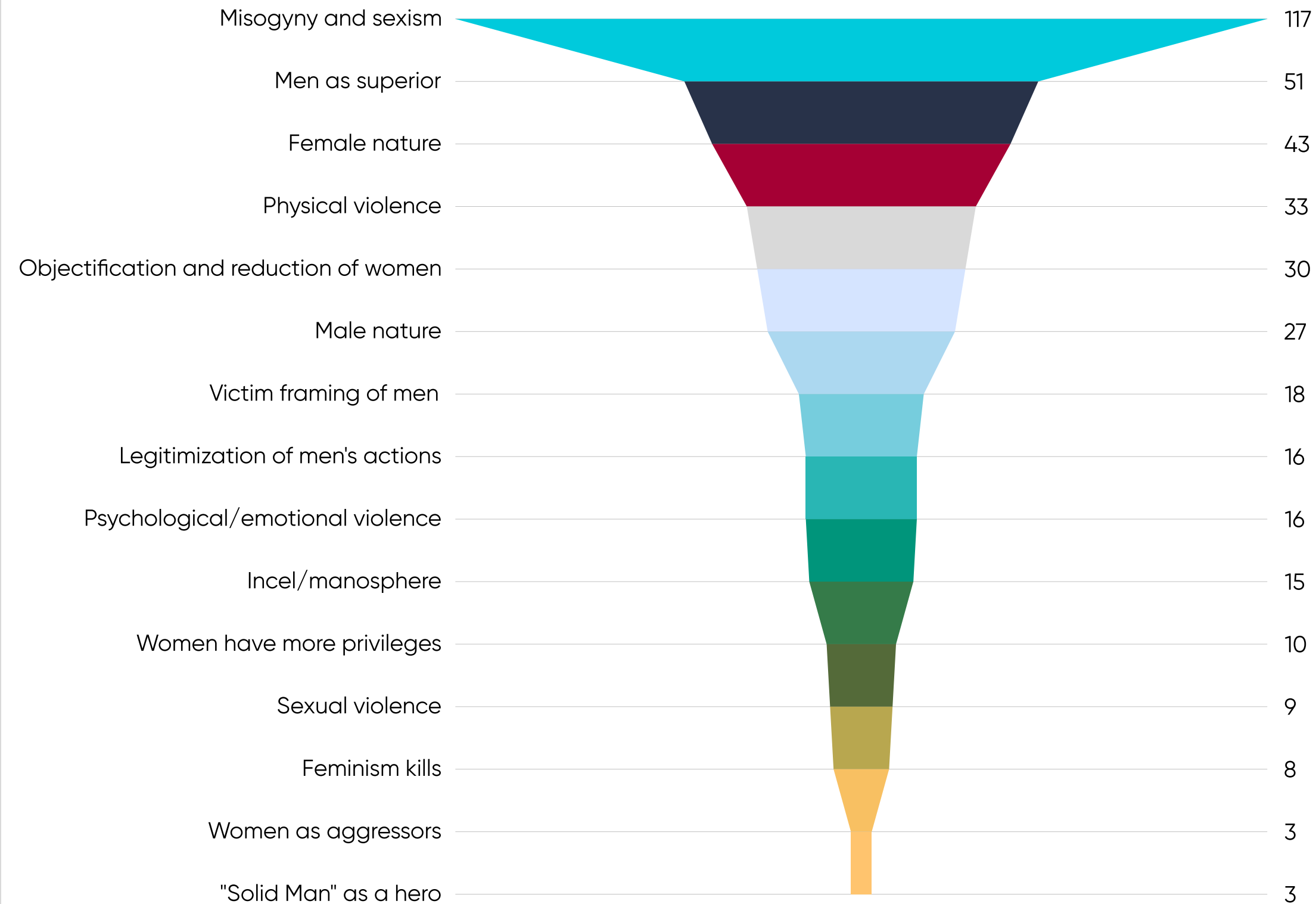


Figure 6: Topics in "A Solid Man" Telegram Group (~400 messages sample)

What's Next?

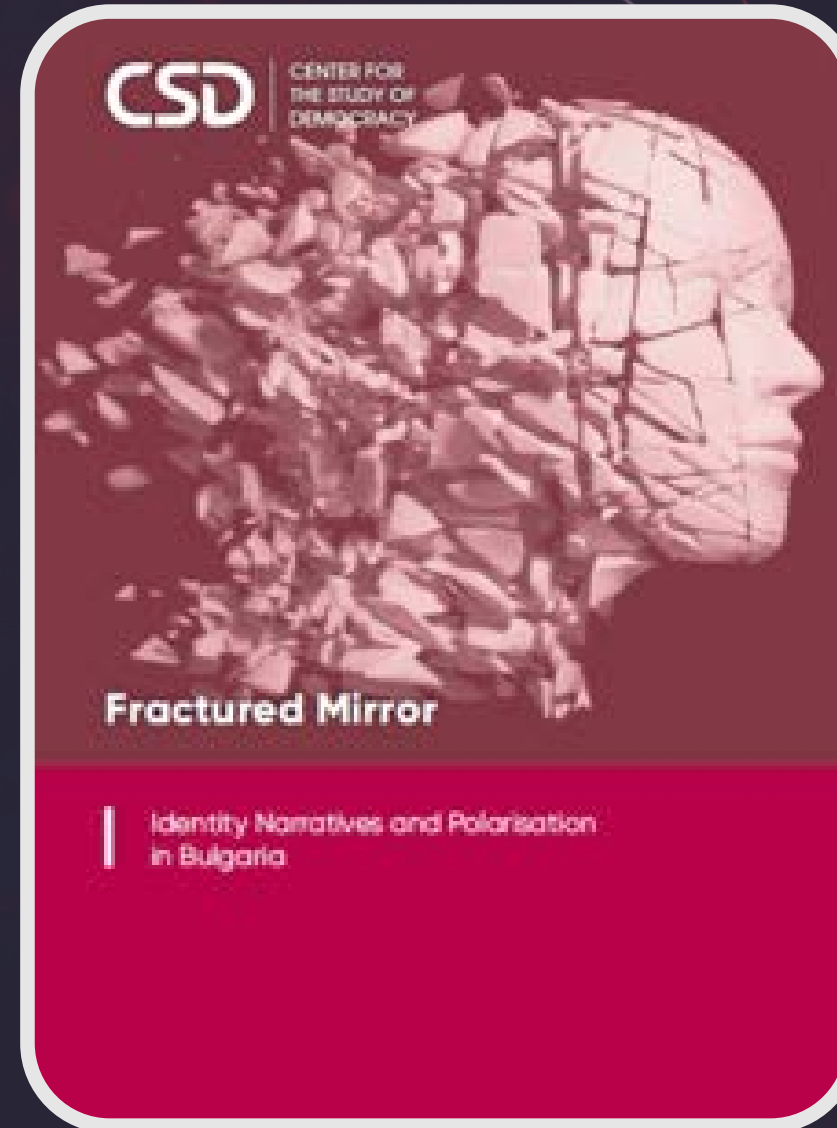
- ◆ **Introduce targeted measures against FIMI**
- ◆ **Strengthen the implementation of the DSA at the national level**
- ◆ **Curtail the financial ecosystem sustaining disinformation**
- ◆ **Establish a framework for media literacy**
- ◆ **Adopt a gender-sensitive approach**
- ◆ **Strengthen young people's resilience to manipulation and online harm**





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Thank You!



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