



# SPAIN

# LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS

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In Spain, over the past few decades, gender issues and women's empowerment have been key priorities for both governmental and non-governmental institutions, as well as in grass rooted activism. This is reflected in the implementation of feminist practices through comprehensive policies, legislative measures, and institutional frameworks.

Regarding the institutional and governmental policies active in this framework:

- The Institute for Women and for Equal Opportunities (IMIO): this governmental body promotes gender equality and women's rights, designing policies to eliminate discrimination and ensure equal opportunities
- The State Pact Against Gender Violence (2017): the pact represents a collective commitment to combat gender violence, including prevention, protection, and victim supporting measures
- Ministry of Equality: established in 2008 and restructured in 2020, focuses on advancing gender equality, combating gender violence, and promoting LGTBQI+ rights (including the creation of the General Directorate for the Real and Effective Equality of LGTBQI+ People).

Regarding the legislation enabling the implementation of equality policies:

- Organic Law 3/2007, for the effective equality of women and men: it guarantees equal treatment and opportunities for women and men in all areas, including employment, education, and political participation
- Royal Decree-law 6/2019: it introduces urgent measures to ensure equal treatment and opportunities in employment, addressing issues like gender pay gap and promoting shared family responsibilities
- Organic Law 1/2004, Comprehensive Protection Measures Against Gender Violence: it provides comprehensive protection for victims of gender-based violence, including preventive measures, support services, and legal protection
- Sexual Freedom Law (Only Yes is Yes Law): enacted in 2021, the law clarifies that consent must be explicit and strengthened the legal framework for sexual offenses, while also improving support for victims
- Law for the Real and Effective Equality of Trans People and Guarantees of LGTBQI+ Rights: it supports gender self-determination from age 16 and bans conversion therapy nationwide. This law protects trans women during their transition process, ensuring access to necessary treatments. It also includes provisions such as eliminating the legal marriage requirement for women couples wishing to establish legal parenthood.

In line with the above mentioned, an institutional framework for gender equality has been created, involving multiple levels of government and various participants such as:

- Gender Equality Units: it is present in various ministries to ensure a gender perspective in all policies and programs
- Regional and Local Equality Bodies: which includes regional and local governments implementing national policies and promoting gender equality at their respective levels
- Observatories and research centres: institutions like the Observatory on Gender Violence collect data, conduct research, and provide information to inform policymaking and raise public awareness.

Despite the progress in legislation and social awareness preceding and accompanying these efforts, many women continue to suffer from physical, psychological, and sexual violence. Feminism works to bring visibility to this issue and demand more effective measures to protect victims and sanction perpetrators.

We also encounter transversal problems such as the gender pay gap, access to reproductive health and sexual rights, glass ceilings, gender-based violence in various spheres, under-representation, and the fight against misogynistic rhetoric from the far right. On the issue of the gender pay gap and workplace inequality, on average, women earn less than men for performing the same work, and they often face challenges in accessing leadership positions. Empowering women in the workplace is fundamental to achieving real equality, and feminism advocates for policies that promote pay equity and work-life balance. Additionally, access to reproductive health and sexual rights is a crucial topic. Although Spain has made progress in this area, challenges remain, such as a lack of information and resources in some regions, as well as the need to ensure that all women have access to adequate healthcare services.

It is also essential to address the reality of migrant women from the Global South, who face restrictive legislations limiting many of the social protection advances available to those with citizenship. In the case of trans women, Spanish law prevents them from changing their name and gender on their legal residency documentation. Protocols to address specific violence against racialized women are also limited. Racist stereotypes and prejudices add to other forms of violence, amplify vulnerabilities, limit their access to services and rights, and question practices that would not be questioned for white European women. In conclusion, migrant and racialized women in Spain face a series of gender issues that are intertwined with their social and economic vulnerability. From a feminist perspective, in order to promote their empowerment, it is essential to recognize and address these challenges:

- **Access to services:** many migrant and racialized women face obstacles in accessing healthcare, education, and social assistance services. This may be due to a lack of information, language barriers, or lack of documentation. Reproductive health can be compromised, as some may not have access to adequate services

- **Discrimination and racism:** these women often experience discrimination not only because of their gender but also due to their ethnic origin or nationality. This can appear in the workplace, where they may be exploited or face difficulties in accessing decent jobs. Intersectionality is key factor here, as discrimination experiences are more complex and varied
- **Economic empowerment:** job insecurity is a significant challenge. Many migrant women work in informal sectors or under exploitative conditions, limiting their ability to achieve economic independence. Promoting economic empowerment through training and access to resources is essential to improving their situation
- **Representation and voice:** the lack of representation in decision-making spaces is another issue. Migrant and racialized women are often underrepresented in politics and social organizations, limiting their ability to influence policies that affect their lives. Promoting their active participation is crucial to ensuring that their needs and perspectives are heard
- **Stigmatization and stereotypes:** these women often face negative stigmas and stereotypes that affect their self-esteem and integration into society. Combating these stigmas is essential to fostering a culture of respect and acceptance.

In summary, from a feminist perspective, gender issues in Spain encompass violence, workplace inequality, reproductive rights, and representation. Empowering all women is key to addressing these issues and building a more just and equal society.

# EDUCATION

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Several universities and institutions in Spain offer degrees and specializations dedicated to gender studies. These programs aim to provide in-depth knowledge and critical perspectives on gender issues, promoting research and professional development in this field.

Among the **university programs** in gender studies:

Complutense University of Madrid (UCM):

- Masters in Gender Studies: this program covers topics such as feminist theory, gender and development, and gender-based violence, preparing students for careers in academia, public policy, and social services
- PhD in Gender Studies: this doctoral program offers advanced research opportunities in gender studies.

University of Barcelona (UB):

- Masters in Women's, Gender, and Citizenship Studies: this master's program focuses on feminist theories, gender equality policies, and the history of women's movements, equipping students with skills to analyse and address gender inequalities

Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB):

- Masters in Gender and Communication: this program explores the intersection of gender and media, addressing how gender is represented and constructed in various forms of communication

University of Salamanca (USAL):

- Masters in Interdisciplinary Gender Studies: this interdisciplinary master's program examines gender from multiple perspectives, including sociology, law, and history, fostering a comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics

University of Granada (UGR):

- PhD in Women's and Gender Studies: this doctoral program promotes advanced research in women's and gender studies, contributing to both academic and practical advancements in gender equality.

Additionally, **programs for LGBTQI+ individuals** have been introduced, such as the Master's in LGBTQI+ Studies at UCM and the Master's in Sexual Identity and LGTBQI+ Diversity at USAL.

Regarding **sexual and reproductive health education**, Spain provides it through various channels, including educational institutions, healthcare providers, and non-governmental organizations.

### In the field of educational institutions:

- Primary and Secondary Education: sexual and reproductive health education is integrated into the school curriculum, particularly in subjects like biology, ethics, and social sciences. The curriculum includes topics such as puberty, contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and healthy relationships
- Higher Education: universities and vocational training centres offer courses and workshops on sexual and reproductive health, often within health sciences, social work, and education programs.

### Among the healthcare services available in Spain, the most notable are:

- The Spanish National Health System (SNS): it provides comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, including contraception counselling, STI testing and treatment, prenatal and postnatal care, and family planning services. These services are available at primary care centres and specialized clinics
- Gynaecology and Family Planning Clinics: they offer specialized services and education on sexual and reproductive health, ensuring access to accurate information and appropriate care.

### Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):

- Federation of State Family Planning (FPFE): FPFE is a leading organization in Spain dedicated to promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights. They provide education, advocacy, and services related to family planning, sexual health, and gender equality
- Association of Women for Health (AMS): AMS focuses on women's health issues, offering workshops, counselling, and resources on sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and gender-based violence.

Other groups, experts and associations also offer workshops, diplomas, and specialized courses on gender-based violence, sexuality and intimacy, and more, such as the Specialized Course in Gender-Based Violence by Otro Tiempo; Workshops and courses on sexuality, consent, and desire, and prevention of sexual violence for educators and youth workers by @boca.a.boca\_edu.sexual.

# CIVIL SOCIETY

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In the past years, civil society in Spain has played a crucial role in promoting gender equality and empowering women. One of the most prominent movements in this regard is the 8M movement, which emerged as a unified state force around the International Women's Day. This movement has mobilized millions across the country, becoming a powerful symbol in the fight for women's rights, an instrument to denounce gender-based violence, and to demand for inclusive and equitable public policies.

In addition to the 8M movement, numerous non-governmental organizations have been pivotal in advancing gender equality in Spain. These organizations have led significant initiatives in education, public awareness, and support for vulnerable women. These entities not only provide direct services such as legal assistance and psychological support but also advocate for legislative changes and policies that promote gender equality across all sectors of Spanish society.

However, despite these significant strides, considerable challenges remain. Women migrants, for instance, face additional barriers due to racial and cultural discrimination, lack of access to basic resources, and precarious employment conditions. Effective inclusion of migrant women in gender and empowerment policies is crucial to addressing these inequalities and ensuring that no group is left behind on the path to equality.

Moreover, it is critical to recognize and address other intersecting axes of oppression such as sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and socio-economic status. Women experiencing these intersecting forms of oppression may face unique forms of discrimination and exclusion that require specific responses and inclusive policies. In this context, the European Union and international programs provide significant platforms for knowledge exchange, training, and collaboration among member countries. This collaborative approach is essential for developing comprehensive strategies that address the complex realities faced by women across Europe and in Spain, promoting inclusive and equitable policies that encompass all dimensions of diversity and gender equality.

The movement of migrant women and dissidents in Spain has gained significant relevance in recent years, driven by the need to make visible the specific issues these communities face. This movement seeks to address issues such as gender violence, labour exploitation, racism, and xenophobia, as well as the defence of human rights. The main characteristics of the movement are:

- **Intersectionality:** migrant women and dissidents face multiple forms of intertwined discrimination, including gender, race, social class, and migration status. The intersectional approach is essential to understanding their realities

- **Visibility:** various campaigns and actions have been carried out to highlight the experiences of migrant women, showcasing their contributions to society and denouncing the injustices they endure
- **Support networks:** there are numerous organizations and collectives working to support migrant women and dissidents, offering legal, psychological, and social resources. These networks are essential for empowering these communities
- **Activism:** many migrant women are at the forefront of social movements, participating in protests, forums, and other activities to demand their rights and fight against discrimination
- **Legislation:** the movement also advocates for changes in public policies to ensure better protection of the rights of migrants, as well as access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and employment
- **Culture and art:** through art and culture, many migrant women express their experiences and struggles, creating spaces for reflection and raising awareness in Spanish society.

This movement is part of a broader context, part of the fight for human rights and equality in Spain and around the world, showing that collaboration between different social groups is the key to advancing toward gender equity.

In conclusion, while Spain has made notable progress in gender equity through civil society activism and movements like the 8M, full inclusion of all women, especially migrants and those facing multiple forms of oppression, remains an ongoing challenge. It is crucial to intensify efforts to overcome these barriers and advance towards a more just and equitable society for all.

# RELIGION

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In the recent years in Spain religious institutions and groups play varied roles in addressing gender issues and women's empowerment, with notable critique aimed at the Catholic Church's influence. While some religious organizations promote gender equality and women's rights, the conservative stance of the Catholic Church has often acted as an obstacle to overcome for potential advancements. The Church's traditionalist views frequently oppose progressive measures such as comprehensive sex education and reproductive rights legislation, viewing them as conflicting with its moral values.

This resistance has contributed to significant societal debates and tensions, particularly concerning policies that seek to empower women and promote their autonomy. Efforts to introduce comprehensive sex education in schools, for instance, have faced strong opposition from religious groups ("Hazteoir" or "elForo de la familia" being some of the most active), including the Catholic Church, which argue that such initiatives undermine family values and religious teachings.

Moreover, it is important to analyse the influence of religious groups in a wider perspective, connected to the complex phenomenon of fundamentalism at an international level as a transnational and digitalised threat. For example, an international family of political parties and fundamentalist organisations (as "Citizengo"), which although certainly not explicitly recognizing these links, replicate the same arguments and the same strategies in their national realities. What we see today in Spain, as the harassment of voluntary termination of pregnancy clinics and attacks on sex education, sexual and reproductive rights and LGBTQI+ rights, is not a genuine and localised problem, but the local adaptation of some narratives that we can find virtually in almost every country in Europe and America.

This threat, moreover, is becoming more and more diffuse. There is an increasingly obvious overlap between the different families of what we can consider as far-right extremism. Racist, fascist, supremacist, anti-feminist and anti-gender groups operate in the same spaces and defend the same ideas. In fact, probably the axis that allows us to unite all these groups is precisely the opposition and the attack to Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Therefore, any attempt to contextualise the threat must take into account its intersectional nature.

It is also important to take into account that few movements have been able to exploit the paradigm of new media, tools and discourses that have accompanied digitization like the fundamentalist groups. The integration of social networks, the use of memes and computational propaganda, the systematic dissemination of Fake News or the instrumentalization of conspiracy theories are paradigmatic examples of this phenomenon.

We cannot attribute the success of fundamentalism to these factors alone, but it is important to mention them and give them the importance they deserve. This fundamentalist offensive has to do with the imposition of a neoliberal and austericidal economic model as part of a strategy to generate de-democratizing processes.

Despite these challenges, there are instances where interfaith initiatives have facilitated constructive dialogues on gender equality, highlighting areas where religious institutions can collaborate positively. However, the ongoing influence of conservative religious perspectives, particularly from the Catholic Church, underscores the need for continued advocacy and engagement to ensure that policies promoting gender equality and women's empowerment are effectively implemented in Spanish society.

# LOCAL AREA BACKGROUND

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The work that Otra Escuela has carried out in Spain has been directed toward various collectives, public and private organizations, and individuals involved in social intervention, teaching, and activism from grassroots social movements.

Through our training, support, and systematization of experiences, we have created and consolidated over the years a community network made up of all the people, collectives, and organizations that have benefited from our work in different regions of Spain: Catalonia, Andalusia, Galicia, Madrid, Valencia, among others.

Specifically, due to the nature of our work through decolonial pedagogies, there is a significant number of young people and youth workers within our network. For this field research, as well as for the completion of the questionnaires, we have activated this network, presenting the "PHOENIX" project, its relevance, and its impact at international, national, and local levels, using various strategies:

- Newsletter: we sent information about the project and links to the surveys through our mailing lists
- Social media: we published multiple posts
- Personal networks: of each worker, as professionals and activists
- Direct and personalized communications: with allied organizations and associations.

It is important to highlight that we have sought to include various perspectives and viewpoints by involving not only those aligned with feminism, so that different aspects and representations of society could have been presented.

Concerning the profile of young people and youth workers: they can generally be characterized within social intervention and activism in social movements, positioning them as key actors in the construction of peace cultures, the promotion of coexistence, and the defence of human rights and gender equity. It is through their ability to understand and analyse social and educational contexts, and their work in political advocacy, that they manage to impact the social fabric and propose plans and strategies for social transformation.

In fact, there is a core of shared functions among social intervention professionals (such as sociologists, psychologists, social workers, social educators, cultural animators, social integrators, among others), even though the professions and fields of intervention are different. Social intervention shares common axes regarding knowledge of specific socio-cultural contexts, the creation of solutions to concrete problems affecting youth, their groups, or communities, the building of an active social fabric, and the promotion of a higher quality of life for all.

At the same time, youth who are part of social movements make up a collective that shares a set of beliefs and a sense of belonging around the search for social transformation of social and/or cultural conflicts. They weave relationships, connections, and collaborations with other organizations, institutions, collectives, and individuals in order to generate reflective dialogues, resolve conflicts, and promote professional self-care collectively. The activist, as an individual, is fuelled by passion, by the belief that things can change if one works hard enough to find a solution. Awareness of an issue brings a sense of responsibility that is essential to give legitimacy to their work and calls for the activation of various resources to generate dynamics of change and social improvement.

Under the macro group of **“youth workers”**, the following groups were involved in the research:

- People of Spanish origin as well as migrants from Latin America
- Dissidents and members of LGBTQI+ collectives
- Teachers in public schools, universities, association workers

They identified themselves as: 75% women, 13% otherwise self-identified, 12% men.

Under the macro group of **“young people”**, the following groups were involved in the research:

- People of Spanish origin as well as migrants from Latin America
- Dissidents and members of LGBTQI+ collectives
- Students in public schools, vocational training, universities, association workers and volunteers.

They identified themselves as: 70% women, 14% otherwise self-identified, 15% men.