



# MARVOW 2.0

Coordinated Multi-Agency Response  
to Violence against Older Women

## Policy Recommendations Spain



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Deliverable 4.2: MARVOW 2.0 Policy Recommendations Spain (national level)

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## 1. Introduction

According to the Macrosurvey on Gender-Based Violence (2019), 4.4% of Spanish women over 65 years of age have suffered physical and/or sexual violence by their current partner, 16.2% have suffered emotional/psychological violence and 5.2% have experienced economic violence. 67% of these women have been abused for more than 20 years, and 40% for more than 40 years. In addition, 60% of them claim to have suffered psychological consequences with 19% taking medication or drugs to cope with episodes of violence. On the other hand, only 18% of older women who suffered abuse reported it, 55% explained it to someone in their environment (compared to 81% of younger victims) and only 13% accessed psychological support (vs. 28% of younger victims). In addition, in the last 10 years (2014-23), 72 older women were murdered by their partners or ex-partners in Spain, 13.4% of total femicides.

Gender-based violence against older women continues to be a widespread and serious reality, but invisible, scarcely addressed by institutional frameworks, and with characteristics that require a differentiated response.

This document systematizes recommendations generated within the framework of the MARVOW2.0 project and based on 4 focus groups that were carried out in Spain with more than 50 professionals from different circuits against gender based violence and the contributions and comments of more

than 80 professionals who participated in the different trainings of the project, apart from the analysis of different specific protocols<sup>1</sup>, technical guides<sup>2</sup> and state and regional studies<sup>3</sup>.

It is structured at four levels: general, state, regional and local recommendations, and is inspired by community, intersectional and empowerment-focused approaches for older women.

## 2. General Recommendations

### a) Intervention approach and paradigm

- ✓ Promote individualized interventions: Each older woman has a specific story, context, and needs. Interventions should be guided by an individualized assessment that takes into account the diversity of experiences, cultural factors, family relationships, and functional abilities, avoiding standardized solutions that may not be relevant.
- ✓ Incorporate an intersectional approach, with a perspective of gender, age, health, disability, class, migration, rurality, etc. This approach makes it possible to better identify the multiple barriers faced by older women, and to design strategies adapted to complex situations of social exclusion or vulnerability.

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1 Calvià City Council. (2021). Protocol for the detection of gender-based violence in women aged 65 and over. Calvià.

Government of Catalonia – Department of Health. (2010). Protocol for the approach of gender violence in the field of health: Operational document of mistreatment of the elderly.

National Institute for the Elderly and Social Services (2015) Protocol of action against gender violence in Imserso centres. Madrid: Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality.

Junta de Andalucía. *Protocols for the care of the elderly in residential centres: Prevention and action against gender violence*. Ministry of Social Inclusion, Youth, Families and Equality.

2 Jaén Provincial Council. (2021). Guidance guide for the care and detection of gender-based violence in older women.

EDE Fundazioa – Suspergintza. (2022). Sexist violence against older women in relationships with a partner and/or ex-partner: Guide for detection and initial accompaniment.

Junta de Andalucía. (2021). Gender-based violence against older women: Specific care plan.

3 Madrid City Council. (2020). Diagnosis of gender-based violence suffered by women over 60 years of age in the city of Madrid. Directorate-General for Prevention and Care against Gender Violence.

Government Delegation for Gender Violence. (2019). Study on women over 65 years of age who are victims of gender-based violence. Ministry of Equality, Government of Spain.

Emakunde. (2021). Gender-based violence and older women in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country: making an opaque vulnerability visible. Research funded by the type 2 grant on equality between women and men.

Government of Catalonia – Department of Social Rights. (2023). Older women and gender violence from the community level.

Catalan Women's Institute. (2022). Gender-based violence against older women: a feminist and intersectional approach.

Aragonese Institute for Women. (2018). Gender violence against older women in the Aragonese population.

Navarre Institute for Equality. (2020). Violence against older women. Interaction of sexism and ageism.

- ✓ Overcoming paternalism: respecting older women's right to make informed decisions, even if they are slow or gradual. It is crucial to respect their autonomy and personal time, accompanying them without pressure, validating their processes and avoiding institutional practices that infantilize or disavow their decisions.

## b) Visibility and understanding of the phenomenon

- ✓ Recognize invisible forms of violence: economic violence, negligence, care overload, denied sexuality and sexual violence. These forms of violence are usually normalized or dismissed by both the victims and their environment and by professionals, so it is necessary to make them visible and generate tools for their early detection.
- ✓ To make visible the chronification and normalization of violence in long-term relationships.

## c) Training

- ✓ Incorporate the perspective of ageing in training on gender-based violence.
- ✓ Promote specific training for: health personnel, social workers, police forces, judges, home care personnel and nursing homes.
- ✓ Work with multidisciplinary teams that integrate professionals specialized in gender-based violence and gerontology.

## d) Data and evaluation

- ✓ Establish indicators and records differentiated by age, sex, dependency and context.
- ✓ Collect and cross-reference data in systems such as VIOGEN with relevant variables (age, health, rurality, etc.).
- ✓ Promote research on older perpetrators and on structural violence in institutional settings (nursing homes, home care).

## 2. Statewide

### a) Public policies and national strategy

- ✓ Include older women as a specific group in the National Strategy against Gender Violence.

- ✓ Integrate a gender and ageing approach into all public policies on equality, health and social services.

#### b) Detection Protocols and Tools

- ✓ Adapt risk assessment tools to incorporate specific bio-psycho-social indicators of gender-based violence against older women.
- ✓ Include the specific characteristics of violence against older women and their needs in protocols and guidelines for action against gender-based violence.

#### c) Resources and Rights

- ✓ Establish a specific economic benefit for older women victims of violence, which allows independence from the perpetrator. This aid must guarantee coverage of basic needs such as housing, food and health, and make it possible for women not to be economically dependent on the perpetrator for their subsistence.
- ✓ Ensure access to residential solutions without age discrimination.
- ✓ Offer home-based resources for women who do not wish to leave their home.

#### d) Awareness raising campaigns

- ✓ Develop campaigns specifically targeted at older women and men, featuring them as protagonists, using relatable language and accessible media that reflect the diversity of older persons and their experiences, avoiding stereotypical and discriminatory portrayals, to reduce the social normalization of this type of violence.

### 3. At the regional level

#### a) Specific protocols and coordination

- ✓ Develop or update specific regional protocols for action against gender-based violence against older women.
- ✓ Develop or update protocols for detecting and addressing gender-based violence against older women in specialised services for older adults (care services, residential and day centers, community facilities such as senior centers, civic centers, etc.).

- ✓ Improve coordination between both specific services for gender-based violence and for older people (dependency, home care service and telecare) and general services such as primary care, mental health, social services, police and justice services.
- ✓ Include non-judicial avenues of action for women who do not want to or are not able to report to the police.

#### b) Inclusion of the private sector

- ✓ Train and involve private services for older people (nursing homes, home care services, telecare) in detecting and addressing gender-based violence.

#### c) Community and preventive activities

- ✓ Deliver workshops on self-care, rights, active ageing and gender-based violence in centres for older people.
- ✓ Support associations of older women as spaces for socialization, empowerment and detection of violence.
- ✓ Create or promote services for older male perpetrators outside the judicial system to prevent violence against older women.

#### d) Continuing professional training

- ✓ Specialized training for professionals in social services, health services, social care, mental health centers and hospitals, long-term care services, residential and day care centers, community facilities (senior citizens' homes, civic centers, etc.), security and justice services, and others.
- ✓ Specific training in addressing gender-based violence against older women for professionals in support services for victims and perpetrators.

## 4. At the local level

#### a) Proximity services

- ✓ Strengthen health, social services and day centres as key points of detection and intervention.
- ✓ Train the staff of municipal centers for older people and telecare to detect signs of violence.

## b) Intervention with the environment

- ✓ Involve adult children in family interventions that favour older women's decision-making.
- ✓ Offer psychological support not only to the woman, but also to her environment when necessary to facilitate the breaking of the violent relationship.

## c) Emotional support and accompaniment

- ✓ Prolonged psychological support after detection, adapted to the needs of older women.
- ✓ Support groups among older women in safe, familiar and local spaces.

## d) Housing alternatives

- ✓ Create flexible housing resources for elderly women victims of gender violence: sheltered housing, semi-autonomous resources, temporary stays compatible with women's health and autonomy. Housing resources must take into account reduced mobility, health needs or care, as well as the will to maintain independence, avoiding unnecessary institutionalisation.
- ✓ Seek residential solutions for the abuser when necessary.

### MARVOW2.0 highlight

Create **flexible housing resources for elderly women victims of gender violence**: sheltered housing, semi-autonomous resources, temporary stays compatible with women's health and autonomy.

### MARVOW2.0 highlight

**Train and involve private services for older people** (nursing homes, home care services, telecare) in detecting and addressing gender-based violence.

### MARVOW2.0 highlight

Improve coordination between both specific services for gender-based violence and for older people (dependency, home care service and telecare) and general frontline services such as primary health care, mental health, social services, police and justice services

### MARVOW2.0 highlight

Adapt risk assessment tools to incorporate specific bio-psycho-social indicators of gender-based violence against older women