



# The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality


## Methodologies and good practices on assessing the costs of violence against women

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# Assessing the costs of violence against women in Spain

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## Abstract:

Violence Against Women (VAW) is a major social problem. Traditionally, the media focus in the number of deaths/fatal victims caused by VAW, which is the tip of the iceberg. However, this is a fairly poor view of the problem. Together with other approaches, VAW cost estimation opens and delves about this problem in a more comprehensive way.

Beyond fragmented studies in Spain, namey regional or topic specific, Mañas-Alcón et al. (2019) perform a country-level cost estimation of VAW covering a wide number of itineraries (labour, healthcare, legal and other dimensions). Costs refer to tangible direct and indirect costs. Methodologically, we follow the accounting model, considering two approaches (when applicable), based on Zhang et al. (2012) and Dubourg et al. (2005), which allows to consider a wide range of costs categories and agents, which then can be added up reaching a total value.

The main data source used was the Macro Survey on Violence Against Women, which is the most relevant statistical operation produced in Spain on violence against women. It achieves the quality requirements introduced by the UN Statistics Committee (UN, 2014).

Results are presented both showing the overall cost and by itineraries. Moreover, by considering different assumptions for each itinerary (when data is available), several estimations are made, hence, a range rather than a point estimate is provided.

From a conservative estimation, it provides a base ground or a minimum cost limit (1,281.01 Mill. €), from which, by providing different (somehow less restrictive) assumptions, other (higher) estimates are presented.

## 1. Relevant country context

In 2004, the Spanish Government approved the Organic Law 1/2004 on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence (BOE, 2004). This law considers that the violence directed against women for the fact of being women is one of the most brutal symbol of inequality and one of the most flagrant attacks on fundamental rights such as freedom, equality, life, safety and non-discrimination (GREVIO, 2019, pp. 85-89). The purpose of this Law is to fight the violence exercised against women by both

their present or former spouses or by men with whom they maintain or have maintained analogous affective relations (often defined as intimate partner violence, IPV), with or without cohabitation, as an expression of discrimination, the situation of inequality and the power relations prevailing between genders.

Between 2003 and 2019, 1,033 women have been murdered by their current or former partners, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. In 2019 a total of 168,111 gender violence complaints were presented to the justice department, and 161,434 women were victims of IPV in Spain (GDGBV, 2019, and CGJ, 2020).

Besides the thousands of victims who experience suffering and pain, VAW also entails significant economic costs in terms of expenditures on service provision and healthcare, lost income for women and their families, work absenteeism of victims and aggressors, police and legal costs, etc. Calculating the cost of gender violence helps to know the economic resources lost by the agents/those affected by the violence, who are not only the victims, but also their relatives and friends, the aggressors, the companies of the private sector, the public administration, the civil society, and future generations.

## 1.1 Previous studies conducted in Spain

The first studies carried out in Spain on the cost of VAW had a very restricted geographical scope. Martínez-Martín et al. (2004) estimated the costs of VAW in Andalusia (NUTS ES61) and the annual cost of VAW evaluated was 2,356.8 Million € in 2002 (3,176.97 Mill. € in 2020 currency). Of this total, 30% of the costs referred to employment losses, 26.6% to social costs, 25% to children protection, 15.7% to healthcare services and the rest (only 2.7%) to justice system. The direct cost per inhabitant and year was 113 € (152.3 € in 2020 currency).

Hernández et al. (2006) estimated a global costs of 23.29 Mill. € in 2004 (29.62 Mill. € in 2020 currency) for the Valencian Community region (NUTS ES52) in 2004. Health system accounted for 58.4% of the costs, 29.3% were allocated to social services used by the victims and 12.3% to justice system and police services.

Despite the interest of these studies, and the enormous controversy surrounding these issues, no further attempts have been made to measure the costs associated with gender-based violence in Spain until Mañas et al. (2019). It is the first complete study about the economic costs of VAW in Spain, funded by the Government Delegation for Gender-Based Violence (GDGBV). In section 2, we present the methodology and the main results of this study.

## 2. Methodologies for assessing the costs of gender-based violence

### 2.1 The cost of VAW in Spain

Mañas-Alcón et al (2019) produced some estimations about the total economic cost generated by intimate partner violence against women in Spain for the year 2016. Our study includes, on the one hand, tangible direct costs (referred to the monetary value of the goods and services consumed in the prevention and treatment of gender violence). We also calculate, on the other hand, tangible indirect costs (referred to the resources that are lost because of the reduction of the productive activity or the loss of income due to greater female inactivity or unemployment caused by gender violence).

Our general methodological approach is the Accounting Model (Day, McKenna and Bowlus, 2005). It is well adapted to making estimates referred to a wide range of costs and affected agents, which can be added to provide the total cost. Component items can be costed using a 'bottom-up' or a 'top-down' approach (Chan and Cho, 2010).

The analysis has been divided into itineraries and more than one estimate has been made for each of them due to the use of different methodological approaches and/or the assumptions that support them. We offer a conservative estimate that can be taken as the lower cost limit, which is accompanied by other estimates with less restrictive assumptions. This results in a range of values for the estimation of the cost of each itinerary and, through the final aggregation, a range of values for the estimation of the total cost.

In the next subsections, we present the main results of Mañas et al. (2019), according to the estimation of costs in the different itineraries.

#### 2.1.1 Employment and labour costs

We have considered two methodological approaches for estimating the cost in this itinerary. Both use the accounting method and determine the unit cost with a bottom-up approach.

Estimation 1 follows Zhang et al. (2012). We defined three groups to produce three different estimates, according to the target population affected.

- victims of physical and/or sexual violence with injuries or illness that limit their daily activity (option A);
- victims of any type of violence with injuries or illness that limit their daily activity (option B); and
- victims of physical and/or sexual violence, considering they have suffered moderate or severe violence (option C).

Costs estimated were 354.75 Mill. € for option A, 710.88 Mill. € for option B, and 796.62 Mill. € for option C.

Estimation 2 follows Dubourg et al. (2005). The unit costs are different for physical or sexual violence and they depend on the severity. In this case, the economic cost estimate is 3,639.75 million €.

### 2.1.2 Healthcare costs

To estimate the costs of gender violence in the health itinerary, we follow two major approaches using the accounting method, with a bottom-up procedure. Only tangible direct costs for the public sector are considered.

On the one hand, following the first approach, two estimations were made. For estimation 1 we followed Zhang et al. (2012) and provided two alternative options. Option A, the most conservative, we estimate the total cost of gender violence by multiplying the number of victims of physical and/or sexual violence in the last 12 months attending medical or psychological services, by the estimated number of times they demanded the service and its assigned unit cost. The costs of the health care services itself, was 254.12 Mill. €, and represented the 87% of the total cost. The rest of the components referred to Pharmacy costs (3.1%), and complementary services (psychosocial services, training activities and prevention policies, 9.9%).

As for option B, we estimate the cost of gender violence as the product of the number of women victims of any type of gender violence in the last 12 months who attended the medical or psychological services, by the estimated number of times they demanded the service and its assigned unit cost. According to this estimate, the overall costs of the health care services were 517.84 Mill. € (91.8% healthcare, 3.3% pharmacy and 4.9% complementary services).

On the other hand, estimation 2 follows the methodology proposed by Dubourg et al. (2005). According to this estimate, the cost of health care services was 2,483.65 Mill. €.

### 2.1.3 Justiciary and legal costs

This itinerary studies the cost of gender violence in Spain from a legal perspective, estimating the different types of tangible costs of such violence for the public sector. The legal dimension of gender violence is very relevant because the beginning of the legal process is usually the starting point to end a violent relationship and to escape from the aggressor.

Unlike other categories, we use the institutional prevalence, that is, the one that refers to the number of victims who have accessed the goods and services provided by the Spanish institutions of justice in 2016. However, women who enter the justice system represent a very small group compared to the observed prevalence of gender violence. Institutional prevalence is well below true prevalence, so the cost is surely underestimated in this itinerary.

We calculate the costs of each category (legal, police, judicial and penitentiary assistance) as the product of the institutional prevalence and the cost unit by type of service. We then aggregate these products to get the total cost of the itinerary.

We have considered two methodologies to estimate the legal costs, both using the accounting method. The two estimates present a similar disaggregation into concepts (information, prior advice and legal assistance, police, justice and penitentiary). In the first, based on Zhang et al. (2012), the unit costs are determined from a proportional top-down approach, which takes public budgets to determine the proportion that may be attributable to cases of gender violence. Two options are considered, A and B, which differ in the way they compute police cost. Option A is based on the proportion of police officers. It is the most conservative and provides the lower cost limit of this itinerary (502.24 Mill. €). Option B is based on the number of reported incidents (780.17 Million €)

The second estimate uses the bottom-up approach. It is based on the unit costs (Dubourg et al., 2005) that are applied to the prevalence-year that is obtained for Spain from the Macro Survey 2015. According to this estimation, the cost of the legal itinerary is 2,247.60 Mill. €.

#### **2.1.4 Other costs**

In this itinerary, we have considered other tangible costs not included in the previous categories. They are related to the situation of vulnerability of the victim, the housing needs, and the activities of organisations of the Third Sector.

The effects of gender violence on the situation of economic vulnerability of the victims and their families are important. However, due to the lack of information, it has not been possible to quantify them. To estimate the costs of housing needs and the activities of Third Sector organisations, we have used the accounting method, combining the bottom-up approach and the prevalence for 2016.

The estimated cost of housing needs for victims of gender violence was 167.17 Mill. €. It is the result of the sum of the costs of travel and moving expenses (15.32 Mill. €, paid by victims) and the costs of shelter (151.85 Mill. €, paid by the public sector).

The organisations and associations of the Third Sector focus their activity mainly on two areas: offering services and guidance to the victims; and improve awareness of this problem. Based on the Annual Reports of the activity of these organisations and information from their web pages and social networks, we analysed the activities and services provided to victims of gender violence. Using the estimated unit cost per user and considering the number of victims of gender violence who contacted some NGO/women's organization from the Survey on Violence against Women 2015, we estimated the economic cost of the services provided by these organisations in 2.72 Mill. €.

The aggregate estimate of the total cost of this category is 169.89 Mill. €.

#### **2.1.5 Aggregate costs**

The global estimation of the tangible economic costs of gender violence in Spain range from 1,281.01 Mill. € to 8,540.89 Mill. € (see Table 1). The most conservative estimate accounts for a 0.11% of GDP and 27.60 € per capita per year, while the least conservative estimate is a 0.76% of GDP and 183.90 € per capita per year.

**Table 1: Aggregate costs in Spain (in Mill. €). 2016.**

Itineraries	Estimation 1 (Zhang et al. 2012)			Estimation 2 (Dubourg et al., 2005)
	Option A	Option B	Option C	
<b>Employment costs</b>	354.75	710.88	796.62	3,639.75
<b>Health costs</b>	254.12	517.84	517.84	2,483.65
<b>Justice costs</b>	502.24	780.17	780.16	2,247.60
<b>Other costs</b>	169.89	169.89	169.89	169.89
<b>Aggregate costs</b>	1,281.01	2,178.78	2,264.52	8,540.89
<b>GDP and Population in Spain</b>				
<b>GDP in Spain</b>	1,118,522 Million €			
<b>Population in Spain</b>	46,440,099 inhabitants			
<b>Tangible costs (as % of GDP)</b>	0.11%	0.19%	0.20%	0.76%
<b>Tangible costs (per person, in €)</b>	27.60 €	46.90 €	48.80 €	183.90 €

Source: Adapted from Mañas-Alcón et al. (2019).

## 2.2 Sources of information: The Macro Survey on Violence Against Women

The Macro Survey on Violence Against Women is the most relevant statistical operation produced in Spain on violence against women. It has been conducted every four years since 1999. Since 2011, the Government Delegation for Gender Based Violence manages it and since 2015 together with the Spanish Center of Sociological Research. It achieves the quality requirements introduced by the UN Statistics Committee (UN, 2014). There has been an improvement of the questionnaire to better assess the violence suffered by women from their current or former partners. It includes questions analysing the prevalence of non-partner physical and sexual violence against women.

The Macro Survey on Violence Against Women 2015 had a sample size of 10,171 women aged 16 or above, representative of the female population residing in Spain. The sample increased in more than 2,000 women with respect to the 2011 survey. The face-to-face interview included, for the first time, women under 18.

The Macro Survey on Violence Against Women 2019 had a sample size of 9,568 women aged 16 or above. For the first time, there are questions about sexual harassment and stalking.

## 3. Conclusions and future challenges

This type of studies have a double goal: to foresee the economic costs that represent not to reduce gender violence; and to estimate the potential gains that would result from a significant reduction in the levels of gender violence. In addition, knowing the economic cost of gender violence helps to reduce the existing social acceptance of this problem and to improve the design of public policies to eliminate it.



There are several assumptions that must be made to accomplish the estimation of costs of VAW: The methodological approach depend on the availability of statistical sources in the country to assess the effects of VAW, and the availability of prices for the services used by the victims or their employers or relatives.

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