



RESIST

Fostering Queer Feminist Intersectional Resistances against Transnational Anti-Gender Politics

The RESIST Project Report

Effects of, and Resistances to 'Anti-Gender' Mobilisations Across Europe: A Report on Spain – Catalonia and Basque Country



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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
List of Tables and Figures	3
Chapter 9: Spain—Catalonia and Basque Country	4
Executive Summary	4
Introduction	4
Context	5
Findings	6
1. 'Anti-gender' is experienced as an old discourse with new forms	6
2. 'Anti-gender' is lived as political violence	7
3. Online violence and threats of violence are central to 'anti-gender' experiences	7
4. 'Anti-gender' appears as physical violence across private and public spaces	8
5. The emotional dimension of 'anti-gender' effects	9
6. 'Anti-gender' changes participants' behaviours: avoiding, moderating, and silencing	10
7. Self-defence and solidarities as responses to face the lack of protection	11
8. The creation of bubbles for liveable lives	12
9. People create many forms of organised resistance: from the local to the global	13
10. 'No pasarán'. Public figures persistently resist	13
Conclusion	14
Respondent Profiles	16

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Respondent profiles Spain—Catalonia and Basque Country	16
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Chapter 9: Spain—Catalonia and Basque Country

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Executive Summary

In recent years, Spain has seen notable progress in feminist and LGBTI rights. Key legislative initiatives include the 'Trans Law', aimed at guaranteeing transgender rights, and the 'Solo Sí Es Sí' law, which redefines sexual consent to emphasise explicit agreement. Despite these advancements, persistent challenges remain. The rise of the far-right, with its Spanish nationalist, anti-immigration, anti-feminist, anti-LGBTI stance, has complicated the socio-political landscape. This report focuses on the experiences of those affected by 'anti-gender' revealing the pervasive impact of 'anti-gender' politics. It is based on 33 participants who participated in twelve interviews and/or four focus groups.

The political nature of 'anti-gender' attacks is identified as being deliberate and purposefully directed towards achieving political ends, such as asserting ideological beliefs and halting or reversing feminist or LGBTI-affirmative policies. This political violence is experienced as collective and as using violence and fear to achieve political objectives. It heavily affects public or visible feminist figures but also has a profound impact on society, especially those in marginalised positions. This highlights a continuum of violence and discrimination, which is intersected by racism, national minorisation, and fatphobia. Such attacks are characterised by being aggressive and are present both on and offline.

'Anti-gender' violence fosters a climate of fear, demobilisation, and withdrawal from public and online spaces, leading to an emotional toll and significant changes in behaviour, including the abandonment of activist spaces, self-censorship, and the creation of protective bubbles that, whilst offering safety, isolate activists from broader societal engagement.

The forms of active resistance span from boycotts of specific campaigns to digital protection strategies; from monitoring of 'anti-gender' politics and documenting attacks to initiating dialogue with the aim of convincing potential 'anti-gender' actors. Despite this climate of fear and attacks, some public figures remain committed and use their influence to resist and persist, using their influence as a reason to continue fighting.

Keywords: 'Anti-gender' politics; Catalonia; Basque country; emotional dimension; self-censorship; digital harassment; political violence; activism

Introduction

This case study report explores the lived experience of encountering ‘anti-gender’ politics, and analyses everyday resistances in Spain, specifically in Catalonia and the Basque Country.

It outlines how 33 feminist academics, activists, public intellectuals and members of the general public experience, negotiate, and resist attacks related to their identities, lives, politics, and work in the arena of sexualities and genders.

The report is written from the findings of 4 focus groups—with 21 participants, between 3 and 8 in each group—and 12 individual interviews with people who are based in Catalonia and the Basque country. They responded to the invitation to participate in focus groups or interviews because they experienced some form of ‘anti-gender effects’. The sample was recruited via targeted emails and phone calls to individuals and groups that may be affected (for details see [Table 1: Respondent profiles Spain—Catalonia and Basque Country](#)).

Following an outline of the Spanish context, including the terminology used in this report, this report will outline the key findings which bring together the main points that crossed focus groups and interviews.

Context

In the past ten years, Spain has seen significant advancements in feminist and LGBTI rights. The feminist movement has grown stronger, with widespread protests and visibility. It has witnessed large-scale feminist demonstrations, notably the International Women’s Day marches on March 8th, which have drawn millions of participants on the streets. Territorial differences make it difficult to generalise across the feminist movements that exist in the different self-governed regions; broadly, there are debates and divisions over sex work, trans rights and intersectional perspectives that imply internal conflicts. One of the main achievements of recent years is the advent of the feminist movement to institutions. While these are important advancements, persistent gender-based violence, social, political and economic inequalities, as well as ongoing discrimination and violence against LGBTI people remain. Moreover, the far-right presence in Spain has been notable. One of the most prominent far-right parties, Vox, founded in 2013, has gained increasing attention and support in national and regional elections; it is characterised by its Spanish nationalist, anti-immigration, anti-feminist, and anti-LGBTI stances, and has capitalised on issues such as immigration, nationalism, and opposition to Catalan independence to attract electoral support, particularly in regions where these issues are salient.

Since June 2018, the Spanish government has been led by the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (PSOE) under the leadership of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. His administration has established the Ministry of Equality, headed by Irene Montero from Unidas Podemos (2020-2023), which has been key in advancing feminist policies and legislation. The laws developed by Irene Montero have been crucial in advancing progressive legislation aimed at promoting gender equality and LGBTI rights. One of the most contentious issues has been the proposed ‘Trans Law’, which seeks to guarantee the rights of transgender individuals and streamline the process for legal gender recognition. It has sparked intense debates surrounding feminism and LGBTI politics. While proponents hail the law as a central achievement for transgender rights, transphobic discourses have raised concerns about its potential impact on women’s spaces and rights. The ‘Solo Sí Es Sí’ (only yes is yes) law, which seeks to redefine the legal framework surrounding sexual consent, emphasising that only an explicit ‘yes’ constitutes consent, has also started heated discussions. It has been identified as a crucial step in combating sexual violence and promoting a culture of consent, but it has also faced attacks from conservative quarters. From feminist perspectives, it has raised concerns about the potential unintended consequences of the law, mainly in relation to reinforcing traditional gender roles by essentialising women as victims of male violence, rather than fostering a more nuanced understanding of sexual agency and communication.

Recent political advancements in Catalonia, one of the regions where this report is focused, provide important context to this report.. The regional Catalan government has been under the control of left-wing coalitions such as Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC). During the last mandate (2021-24), the government created the Minister of Equality and Feminisms, led by Tània Verge. Through this Ministry, various initiatives and policies have been pushed forward to promote gender equality, on the one hand, and to combat gender-based violence, racism, and LGBTI-phobia, on the other. Barcelona has been governed by Ada Colau of Barcelona en Comú (2015-2023). Under her leadership, the city council has prioritised feminist policies, creating specific departments and council positions such as the Conselleria for Feminism, LGBTI and life cycle. Before this specific political period, there were some other landmark pieces of legislation, such as the Law 11/2014, known as the 'Law to Guarantee the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex People and to Eradicate Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia' (2014), considered to be one of the most comprehensive in Europe.

Findings

1. 'Anti-gender' is experienced as an old discourse with new forms

The concept of 'anti-gender' is not widely used, but identified through the effects on lived experience as something organised, aggressive, and overarching.

'Anti-gender' as a term is not widely used. Only some activists participating in international networks use it. From a more general public, it is mainly seen as an **anglophone concept**, emanating from **academic circles**. When asked about 'anti-gender' most of the participants answered similarly to Deli: "Anti-gender? I don't use it." Others, as ESPFG1.5, specified: "it sounds more like a very Anglo-Saxon concept." Núria situated it in a "theoretical field." Juliana said "'anti-gender' is the most used concept in articles and everything. Like in the academy." Only one of the participants, ESPINT03, claimed the term 'anti-gender': "Yes, the term I use, the political term, is 'anti-gender' [...] which is the catch-all, that wonderful ghost that serves to attack sexual and reproductive rights."

However, the phenomenon itself is clearly identified and **resonates with their experience**. For Muntsa it is "a concept that I don't handle much in my daily speech, but the phenomenon exists". Historically, **'anti-gender' resonates with other time periods**, though the older participants situated current 'anti-gender' discourses and practices as softer than the situation in which they used to live under the dictatorship. For example, Rosa explained: "I take it well, but it's been many years of struggle. The Franco dictatorship era was much tougher. You would have been much more at risk too." 'Anti-gender' attacks are seen as **coming from a full range of ideologies**, from left to right, from institutions, organisations, family, in public spaces, workplaces and online. As ESPINT02 argued: "it is the tip of the iceberg of something wider [...] it covers the full spectrum."

One of the main distinguishing features is the **organised nature of 'anti-gender' attacks**, which is different from other forms of structural violence. However, the **difficulties of differentiating 'anti-gender' from sexism draw a continuum that interrelates different forms of violence and discrimination**. In this sense, the effects and resistances to 'anti-gender' appear as imbricated in the everyday experience of sexism, LGBTIphobia and racism, making it difficult to specifically identify 'anti-gender' attacks from an approach that centres lived experience. As an example, from their experiences working with street sex workers, Laura confirmed that her organisation identifies "a relationship between the increase in violence against sex workers and the discourse of the [sex work] abolitionists who speak about these women from a hyper-deprecation perspective". Additionally, ESPFG2.4, a mixed-race participant, explained the difficulty she has "of separating sexism from racism because when I receive it because of one axis, it also has a lot to do with the other one". In this sense, the interrelation between everyday discrimination and 'anti-gender' effects, as well as among different axes of inequality, is a central feature in relation to the lived experience of the effects of 'anti-gender'.

An important characteristic linked to the specific effects of 'anti-gender' politics is the **aggressive nature of such attacks**. Most of the participants shared 'anti-gender' experiences underlining the aggressiveness with the following terms: Rosa, ESPINT02, ESPINT03 used the adjective **“aggressive”**, ESPINT03 the term **“belligerent”**, Muntsa specified **“virulent”**, Brayan **“violent”**, and ESPINT03 **“super violent”**.

Finally, **'anti-gender' appears as the norm**, as the everyday context, and not as an isolated attack strategy, revealing its persistence and overarching character. As Miriam said: “the structures of the organisations are like this [sexist, patriarchal, 'anti-gender'], you fight against it every day. The moments that come out of it are anecdotal or oases.”

2. 'Anti-gender' is lived as political violence

'Anti-gender' attacks are experienced as a form of political violence against those who show their commitment to feminist, LGBTI and anti-racist principles and/or practices.

Feminist activists, scholars, representatives and professionals have become **targets of violence, harassment, intimidation and discrimination** from 'anti-gender' actors and movements. One of the central findings is that such violence is not isolated but motivated by political factors such as silencing feminist and LGBTI voices and undermining feminist and LGBTI struggles.

Juliana, who suffered heavy political violence, reproduced a dialogue she had with her brother summarising that 'anti-gender' is **directed towards visible defenders of feminism**: “My brother told me ‘if you were in your house shutting up, this wouldn't happen to you’. So, violence for me from the 'anti-gender' movement, it's for activism. I see this as very clear.” Similarly, Tània, a participant with political responsibilities stated that:

How political violence is exercised directly or especially against the most visible women, against those who make feminist policies. At this point we could understand that the attacks were not personal, that they were purely political.

Likewise, a feminist organisation in Barcelona, which works closely with sex workers, observed that they do not receive 'anti-gender' attacks because they are not particularly visible. Alba explained: “We are people who continue to be very much on the edge [...] but we see ourselves being very much on the sidelines. We are a small group, it is not a challenge to certain people who could attack us.” In online spheres, it is seen as political violence to be targeted just for being “women with an opinion,” stated ESPINT02.

The political nature of 'anti-gender' attacks is also identified as **being deliberate and purposefully directed towards achieving political ends**, such as asserting ideological beliefs and halting or reversing feminist or LGBTI policies. As the following findings show, this political violence is **collective**—involving parties, organisations and diverse groups—and **uses violence and fear** as a strategy to achieve political objectives. It heavily affects public or visible feminist figures but also has a profound impact on the society, especially those that are in marginalised positions.

As a symbolic example of the levels of the conflict, participants perceived the situation as a **war**. Irantzu said that she talks about it “in epic terms, about war. So they are like a faction. An enemy”. Irantzu and ESPINT02 argued that “It is a cultural war, totally.” As a consequence of it, some participants frame 'anti-gender' activists as adversaries which should be attacked directly, as ESPINT02 put it:

You come to the conclusion that their position is an ideological position that they know perfectly well the consequences it has [...] There is no pedagogy possible, you have to go to ‘kill with a needle’ even if it means adding more fuel to the fire.

However, this violent phenomenon is not only suffered by those who develop or defend feminist politics but also by those members of society who would potentially benefit from gender-egalitarian policies, such as

quotas. As ESPFG2.3, a firefighter, explained in relation to the reaction to the women quotas diversifying the strongly masculinised body of firefighters “a war is being prepared against the women who will enter the fire department.”

3. Online violence and threats of violence are central to 'anti-gender' experiences

Insults, death and rape threats, and doxing are the everyday online dimension of 'anti-gender' attacks.

Political violence against feminist activists is conducted in many different ways. One of the most persistent and widespread is in the form of **online attacks**. Roger said he doesn't think he knows “anyone in the LGBTI community who hasn't been in a situation where they use social media at some point [...] It has always reached this 'anti-gender' extreme right of the networks.” The attacks include **defamation, insulting, sending unsolicited porn images, rape and death threats**, among others. Insults were reported as being the most common form of attack, often reaching high numbers. As Núria explained, “I do remember once I made a tweet pro-, I don't know, trans, feminist or something [...] and someone retweeted one of these and then I had, I don't know, 500 people there insulting me.” Beyond the insults, activists that have a greater visibility are the target of constant and more violent attacks. Juliana explained that she has been the target of 'anti-gender' online attacks in in her country of origin while she was a candidate for a leftist party. They sent her “photographs of mutilated, murdered people [...] they pasted these types of figures of women killed by traffic and placed them in emails.” Irantzu also complained, “no one understands what it's like to open the phone and be insulted every day”. For years she was “receiving photocalls, videos of children performing fellatio, people singing to me ‘Cara el sol’ [symbol of Francoist Spain]” and, as many others argued too, “of the insults they call me, 90% will include fat.” She also received death threats— “the next one, it's you”—and “death to the fat.”

This kind of violence is not only a result of voicing feminist positions but it is also the **result of denouncing other violences, such as racist ones**. In this case, Andrea, a journalist, reported a racist assault committed by the police, giving her view and tagging the police on Twitter. Then, Andrea received:

Thousands of messages on Twitter, on Instagram, by email, from all sides to the point that my cell phone was blocked, because of the number of messages and it was vibrating and could no longer cope, and with almost always the same photos, there would be four, five, six photos at most, of bodies of dead women in gutters and that was it.

On the same line, Miriam also explained a situation of a friend receiving messages stating that “if you let in the Blacks and the Moors they will rape, fuck you.”

Beyond Twitter, Irantzu, Andrea and ESPINT02 also pointed to **forums such as forocoches, burbuja.info, o racocatalà** where 'anti-gender' individuals have discussions dedicated to insulting public feminist figures and organise online actions against feminist websites. As an example, ESPINT02 found an online discussion where some argued that “they should rape her, whereas others argued no, because ‘she is ugly’; others, ‘this woman will never have children and the worst punishment is that her child turns out to be a boy’.” Andrea also explained that, when working for a feminist media collective, 'anti-gender' activists organised an action through one of these forums, plotting to connect en masse to their website to tear it down.

Another specific kind of attack is **doxing**. ESPINT03, who works for an association that participates in parliamentary debates as an expert group, explained that the far-right regularly asks her questions and records everything to then upload it to twitter. Andrea and Irantzu described the experience of having their home addresses, telephone numbers, and other personal data posted on networks. Some participants have also found that 'anti-gender' activists make fake profiles on social media apps, resulting in them receiving all kinds of unwanted messages.

4. 'Anti-gender' appears as physical violence across private and public spaces

Physical attacks and verbal abuse targeting feminist institutions, workplaces, homes, and public spaces were reported, with incidents ranging from intrusions and insults to threats and surveillance.

Physical attacks are directed at **headquarters of associations**, editorial offices of feminist media, feminist cafés, and even the workplace and home. ESPINT03, a member of a feminist association, reported that they “have entered the association. They have not stolen anything, neither cell phones nor money, they have just moved everything”, adding that, in their office that is open to general public, unknown individuals have entered and verbally abused the staff—with terms such as “paedophiles”, “pedophile faggots”, “children-killer”—noting that “this had never happened before in a history of 35 years.”

Workplaces are often the object of 'anti-gender' attacks, especially in the case of editorial offices, lobby organisations, sexual health clinics, or gender transition services. Whereas editorial offices and lobby organisations expect they will be attacked by more organised far-right 'anti-gender' activists, in offices open to the general public they also receive insults and threats from the general public. In a gender transition service, Rosa added attacks came “from parents of trans teenagers, by policemen, who are parents of a trans minor”.

On an **institutional level**, ESPINT03 referred to insults and threats from the far-right in the parliament, while Tània said that the far-right wanted to abolish the feminist departments. Roger remembered from his work for the local government “boycotts of 'anti-gender' activists shouting very loudly to hinder feminist policy presentations taking place.” On a more international level, ESPINT03 related being harassed “very hard in the hallways of the United Nations” by 'anti-gender' lobbyists.

Within the **feminist movement**, several participants also reported 'anti-gender' confrontations during political demonstrations, mostly with so-called 'Trans Exclusive Radical Feminists' (TERFs). Marina explained “we almost came to blows”; she has also seen graffiti stating that “feminist movement is fascist”, “if my name is Manolo then you would let me in”, and accusations that trans inclusive feminists are “traffickers or pimps”. Muntsa and Barbara complained about paintings from TERFs at their feminist organisation's headquarters. Similarly in the Basque country, the trees in front of the women's house were wallpapered to protest against an event with sex workers, as Txurru described.

Home is also one of the targets. As Miriam explained, her LGBTI intersectional flag was taken away from the window of her flat, while Núria is also afraid of putting her Catalan pro-independence flag on her balcony. Juliana shared that when she was receiving 'anti-gender' attacks, other activists' houses were graffitied or surveilled from the outside.

But even in situations in daily life some participants perceive 'anti-gender' in **public space**. Andrea experienced “being in [the city] at night and having someone come and give you trouble for an article that you wrote, and isolate you in a corner in a very threatening way”. Iñi noted that the 'anti-gender' backlash has an effect over his ordinary life in public space, receiving insults or 'anti-gender' comments on a regular basis.

5. The emotional dimension of 'anti-gender' effects

A general sense of fear of attacks and harm runs next to the exhaustion of dealing with 'anti-gender' in everyday life.

The threat of actions has an emotional dimension that is crucial to understand the scope of 'anti-gender'. This emotional dimension is relevant in itself, as it is connected with wellbeing and mental health, but also because it has clear consequences in relation to changing behaviour, specifically regarding political participation.

The emotional effect is mainly related to **fear**. It is framed as the fear of being insulted, blamed, of losing one's job or job opportunities, losing funding, facing legal consequences, or being physically harassed. Participants in the research also fear becoming the targets of more serious attacks. For example, a feminist

lawyer said that, if they want to hurt her, they know who she is, and they can do it in a sophisticated way. In ESPINT03's association, they fear physical attacks in their sexual and reproductive rights service. Iñi, who already suffered attacks, fears it in a specific way: "In my case it is physical aggression. Earlier in my militancy, my experience was very crossed by the fear of prison. And now it is more crossed by physical aggression." Parents are also conditioned by this fear; both fear for their relatives' safety, especially children, but also fear of losing rights to their children, as Alba explained: "the 'anti-gender' policies in other countries have awakened certain fears in me in relation to parenting with another woman."

Tiredness is another feeling that appears as central. It is expressed as a sensation of fatigue and exhaustion of having to argue, explain, or face attacks on a daily basis, as well as tiredness from reporting crimes with no advancement. Indeed, fear in itself is perceived as tiring, too, as Laia explained that she was tired of always being in "hyper alert modus". One of the effects of this pervasive feeling is related to the time, energy and resources that the resistance to 'anti-gender' demands. As an example, Núria referred to subtle 'anti-gender' discourses in her organisation: "many of us let our guard down due to fatigue, because there comes a point where in order to participate in any political space that is not explicitly feminist, you have to leave aside certain feminist issues." Moreover, exhaustion also has the consequence of the cost of opportunity. As Barbara said: "it forces you to put the energy in one place when you could put in another." ESPINT02:

Reactionism creates fatigue, an intellectual fatigue. It creates a fatigue of saying that we are not moving forward. It creates a methodological fatigue, I no longer know how to close this debate once and for all.

These emotions lead to **discouragement, frustration and pessimism**, as Roger's quote illustrates:

If you've been fighting for something for a few years and what you see is that the situation is going to the opposite extreme, it's very discouraging. You feel that everything is already lost and there is no new world.

In a positive sense, emotions such as **happiness and motivation are the effects of collective responses** to 'anti-gender' politics, which show the strength of the movement and the power of collective action. As Roger shared in relation to an in-person protest against 'anti-gender': "there was a very well organised and very massive response, it was a really motivating moment to continue with activism."

6. 'Anti-gender' changes participants' behaviours: avoiding, moderating, and silencing

The actual change of behaviours that results from political violence involves avoiding certain places, leaving political organisations, moderating the discourse, and silencing.

This emotional effect creates a climate of widespread fear that leads to demobilisation, abandonment of certain spaces, and self-censorship in discourse and actions. According to Miriam, there is an "environment of fear, things that I did not have to measure before; things I decide not to do. Now I assess it more carefully."

In relation to **demobilisation and abandonment**, activists with strong feminist profiles have left many of their spaces of activism in social and political movements, parties, and institutions. Leaving these spaces is partly due to not wanting, or being unable to sustain the situation of constant attacks and criticisms within the movements themselves, as Natàlia, Núria, Miriam and ESPFG1.5 explained. Another factor is the discouraging political environment caused by the presence of 'anti-gender' actions against their spaces of participation, as Roger outlined. The abandonment of spaces is also related to the workplace for those with jobs directly related to activism that had been facing attacks, for example in Andrea's case. Fear, both as a general state and as a result of previous attacks, is also what led activists like Juliana to "begin to distance myself from the movements". As Diego argued, "I'm not in the frontline of activism anymore"; Juliana: "I had to get away from activism because I was left in depression and I didn't have the support." Others collectively left international feminist spaces due to transphobic views aired there; in the case of ESPINT03, it was because "it stopped

being a safe space". Rosa Maria, a trans woman who was involved in a left wing party, left the party when she was told that "for the next municipal elections they would not support trans people on their lists."

Another space where this **change in behaviour is observed is online**. Leaving social networks entirely is one of the most evident effects. As ESPINT03 argued, "I don't make myself visible at all. I had Twitter. I haven't used it again. I had Instagram. I immediately made it private and then closed it." In cases where online spaces are not completely abandoned, one of the clearest effects is the moderation of discourse, which involves modulating their participation to avoid certain reactions, adopting a low profile, avoiding direct confrontation, or not sharing any information related to gender issues or activism. This modulation of discourse not only happens in online spaces but also in other spheres. In the university context, it affects the way in which research projects are presented: research has to be "TERF compliant" in order to be approved in some fields according to ESPFG1.7/INT01. The same happens with institutions in the way new feminist public policies are presented and how political events are prepared. In relation to cultural performances, artists also modulate their discourse, depending on the environment in which they are carried out.

The change of behaviour produced by the 'anti-gender' attacks also materialises as an **individual and everyday self-censorship**. This involves avoiding certain spaces because of the fear of being attacked, passing, not wearing certain clothes or political symbols in public space, not showing affection in public spaces with a same gender partner, or even not going topless on the beach.

7. Self-defence and solidarities as responses to face the lack of protection

The absence of legislation and policy frameworks to protect those vulnerable to 'anti-gender' attacks reinforces the need for autonomous forms of self-defence and solidarities.

The pervasiveness of the effects is also due to the feeling of **institutional abandonment**. Specifically, in the case of defenders of defenders, whether they are individuals with institutional responsibilities, lawyers, lobbyists, or members of associations, they find themselves without resources or support for their protection. As ESPINT03 argued "the government offered us support from lawyers. They came here one day and that's all they did." The same happens in Parliamentary meetings, where their interventions are posted online by the far-right party, with their names and networks when according to ESPINT03 "the Parliament should be protecting us." Also on an institutional level, representatives complained that there is no governmental support for public figures that lead feminist departments at different territorial levels. The same occurs within political parties and organisations, where they also experience abandonment. ESPINT03's claim was clear: "we need resources and support."

The relationship with the **police** is another clear example of the lack of institutional support. The police's inability or unwillingness to handle complaints, meaning that a report may be dismissed, not pursued, or that there would be no follow-up. As Irantzu stated:

My phone number, car's licence and ID were on Twitter for three weeks. Not even [feminist lawyer could] get them to remove it for three weeks. So when people tell you to report [...] You're not going to tell a girl to report. There is a naivety with that.

The lack of trust in police is a common feeling, especially for those that have strong links with political organisations. As Irantzu argued, "being Basque and coming from the context from which I come, the last thing to do is to go to the police, because you already know that the police are evil." Roger stated that he fears the police more than the 'anti-gender' groups.

The **lack of a legal framework** is seen as problematic not only due to the lack of institutional support but also due to the lack of a conceptualisation that contributes to understanding 'anti-gender' attacks as political. As Irantzu argued: "we still haven't developed a political, feminist response to digital violence. People tell you not to look at your phone, which is a bit like telling you not to wear a miniskirt." The consequence of this lack

of protection is feeling more vulnerable and **having to face such attacks in an individualised way, or with close groups**; as Andrea stated: “we protect each other.” This includes seeking support from friends, colleagues, fellow activists, therapists, lawyers, or feminist international organisations.

The precarious support from the state and institutions also leads individuals and organisations to **defend their own autonomy**. Even if it's a public health institution for trans people, changes in the government could potentially affect the centre. In this sense, Rosa, a medic at a trans health service, stated that “It will be saved if the trans community defends it”, showing a lack of trust in institutions and public servants. Along the same lines, Alba, from an association that works with sex workers, argued that:

Our political legacy has to do with the self-organisation of the people who are part of our community, it has to do with trying to promote spaces of autonomy and management, so that if support ever fails, even in improving the lives of people in the worst situations, people would have self-defence strategies.

8. The creation of bubbles for liveable lives

The creation of bubbles is seen as a main strategy to live livable lives, even though they are more a dream than a reality.

This lack of protection and the general emotional environment of fear of attacks lead to the creation of bubbles, that is, **safe spaces where they can live without having to face 'anti-gender'** in places of their everyday life. As ESPFG1.7/INT01 argued, “I'm more selective in the spaces I go to [...] It helps me in my day to day, to be safer, to be calmer or happier” and as ESPFG2.4 said, “I have unconsciously created bubbles in all aspects of my life, partner, friends, work [...]”. The university is also seen as quite a safe space too, especially for those that work within friendly environments. In this sense, it is the creation of such “transfeminist bubbles”, as Güneş argued, that prevents them from experiencing the effects of ‘anti-gender’ politics. Moreover, these bubbles not only protect from ‘anti-gender’ attacks, but also from other forms of discrimination, as ESPFG2.4 explains in relation to the creation of spaces where she feels safe regarding multiple forms of discrimination. The creation of such spaces can be seen both as a **chosen way of resistance**, according to Diego, as a way of trying to be “as happier as possible [...] doing activism on a personal, family, friends level [...] and not in the front line of activism”; but **also, as a need**, for Irantzu: “the consequence of this ['anti-gender' discourses and attacks] is that I have to live in a bubble. It's not a choice. I need to live in a bubble.”

Bubbles are created as physical and social spaces in which to feel safe. In this context, territorial and linguistic diversity, and internal conflicts, also give the opportunity to create such bubbles, where **language is seen as a form of protection from attacks**. As Iñi specifies: “in Euskera Twitter there can be debates about feminism [...] but I would never receive transphobic aggressions there.” In this sense, Catalonia and the Basque Country are seen as places where 'anti-gender' discourses are weaker than in the rest of the state; participants specifically situate the origins of trans-exclusionary feminist discourse in Madrid. In Barcelona, the transphobic discourse within feminism is identified in the example of people arriving to the city en masse by bus to counter-protest marches such as the 8th March, as Barbara explained. They also came to denounce a feminist trans inclusive summer school Barbara was involved in: “Barcelona is the city of sin. It's the brothel city that needs to be cleansed. That's why they come from all over the state to change it.”

However, sometimes these **bubbles also explode** or are not the supposed safe spaces they were imagined to be. This has to do with the pervasive character of 'anti-gender' politics, which permeates everyday spaces. This implies that 'anti-gender' discourses or attacks can be also found within the family, workplace, leisure spaces, among friends or even in feminist activists' spaces. In relation to **family or partners**, losing these spaces as bubbles is seen as one of the most painful situations, as ESPINT02 illustrates:

If I can endure the shit, the shitstorm that I endure publicly, it is because I consider that my family space and my friends' space is a safe space [...] but when you start to see that these ideologies start to penetrate your space [...] you say, "now where do I go to take shelter".

Along the same lines, when 'anti-gender' penetrates into **political spaces** built upon trust, the effect is much more intense. As ESPINT03 said, "feminist colleagues and activists for 25 years, with whom you have shared spaces, then attacking you for the trans or sex work issue with absolute belligerence and brutal violence [...] they are completely broken relationships." Rosa went further, explaining the effects of the recent changes in the feminist movements, especially in relation to the transphobic views of parts of them: "it's like my life, isn't it?, but they [TERFs] can call themselves feminists and [...] I have been very much in an identity crisis."

The creation of bubbles is also seen as **problematic as a long term strategy, as it creates spaces where there is no contact with other perspectives**. As Rosa Maria suggested: "[i]nside this bubble, every opinion we get from others, we see it as transphobic, homophobic, lesbophobic. I think people need to just listen." This links to the position of Tània, Laura, Alba, Mikel and Abel, who advocated for engaging in dialogue and putting forward convincing arguments to people who hold 'anti-gender' views, instead of solely living within bubbles.

9. People create many forms of organised resistance: from the local to the global

The forms of active resistance span from boycotts of specific campaigns; using digital protection strategies and alarm or panic buttons; monitoring of 'anti-gender' mobilisations and documenting attacks; to initiating dialogue with the aim of convincing potential 'anti-gender' actors.

Forms of resistance mainly consist of collective actions directed towards stopping 'anti-gender' campaigns such as improving feminist political formation, organisation, network establishment, and development of specific strategies for facing concrete attacks.

Specific actions may, for example, take the form of **boycotts of specific 'anti-gender' campaigns**, such as the campaign organised by HazteOir, which saw a bus with transphobic posters travel around Spain. The response to this was both institutional, in the form of an official banning of the bus in Catalonia, as well as an autonomous action to boycott it. Even though there were other collectively organised actions against 'anti-gender' campaigns mentioned, they were in the minority when compared to the range of other types of defence strategies created, often at an individual level.

Everyday micro-strategies are more common in relation to digital violence. In order to minimise the attacks, activists and professionals develop multiple tools and actions such as silencing, blocking, or ignoring certain profiles, accounts, and messages to avoid receiving or having to read certain messages. **Security in the digital realm** also involves securing accounts, stored information, and personal data in sometimes very robust and complex ways, as Laia explains. Another form of implementing security measures is the protection of private spaces with **alarms or panic buttons** installed at homes and feminist associations.

Resistances also take the form of autonomous and collective actions, based on **sharing knowledge, strategies, information, and resources**. The following quote is an example of that from ESPINT01:

We made a very short document [...] in which we answer questions that people have asked us and then we answer them [...] in a pedagogical way so that everyone can understand. Now every time we have a situation like this we send this document which is something we think is accessible.

This is mainly directed towards trans-exclusionary feminists within the movement in order to oppose their discourse, but such strategies are also developed in relation to 'anti-gender' groups belonging to the far-right. For example, ESPINT03 explained that they **attend 'anti-gender' conventions**, to keep track of attendees

and content and "then we share all that among the feminist movement, which is thousands of people from all over the world"; based on this information they know the next strategies of 'anti-gender' actors. Another kind of resistance is **proving political violence**, which involves the collection of evidence of this violence. However, reporting to police has proven to be less successful as reporting often is without consequences.

Dialogue and pedagogy are also resistances, in the sense that such practices are aimed at deconstructing 'anti-gender' discourse. It can be done in the form of debunking disinformation; training emergency responders (firefighters, police); training at schools. Alba explained in terms of trainings for firefighters:

There has been a forgetfulness of how to accompany or how to interpellate men without attacking them directly and [of men] feeling not quite fully reactive to feminist policies.

10. 'No pasarán'. Public figures persistently resist

Feminist public figures face persistent attacks but remain committed and fearless. They use their influence to resist and persist, rejecting victimhood, and see their influence both as a cause of attacks and a reason to continue fighting.

In this context of political violence, the commitment to feminist, LGBTI, and anti-racist struggles marks a difference in relation to other kinds of resistances that are enacted. Those that have a position of power, influence, or representation experience 'anti-gender' attacks in a very persistent and violent way. However, they are also conscious of their position of power and the responsibility that goes with it. As a consequence, some participants situated themselves in the position of **warriors**, such as Irantzu: "one thing they say in the art of war is don't allow your enemies to join, don't make it easy for them. Be whatever you want because they will never love you." Others also used metaphors related to war to express how they feel, for example ESPINT02:

If you want to position yourself in the public sphere you have to be a person with hard skin and you have to go like Daenerys from Game of Thrones, you have to bring out the dragons and let them burn everything.

Similarly, Tània a political representative expressed that:

The trench is us [...], all of us feminists, all entities that work for emancipatory policies wherever we are. But it is now that the war is being fought. We can be very pacifist, but if we lose our common sense, we lose our rights.

These convictions also imply a **reduction in fear**, having had the experience of hitting 'rock bottom'. In Irantzu's words: "I have nothing to lose. I am not afraid to go up against the police, Marlaska, Pablo Motos, or their damn mother, because I have nothing to lose." Public figures such as ESPINT02 also reported **becoming accustomed to violence**: "I'm sure that the attacks I've suffered, for another person would have meant a Vietnam [an extremely violent and complex conflict] and for me it's a normal day." Or Carla who explained that "It only happened to me once, that they organised a hate campaign against me. And I went to get eyelash extensions, girl." From Muntsa's words we can see that the commitment and political consciousness is linked to a **collective sense of struggle that provides strength and determination**: "No pasarán. You won't be able to get me down. I won't let this speech hurt me." Long trajectories in activism, as in Rosa's case, also led to a perspective of permanent struggle and determination: "I don't mind going to jail. I've known it since I was 18. It's for a good cause." Activists with visibility and political representatives such as Irantzu, ESPINT02, and Tània emphasised that they "can't afford" to be silent in online forums. ESPINT02 explained they "can't afford to disconnect" because they **see themselves as "references"** or that they feel that it is expected that they react in some way: "being on Twitter is not just a work thing, if it's not a thing to say, if women can't hear we are there, what an example you set for the rest of the women then." In this sense, they spoke about **the power and influence** they have as one of the causes of the political violence they suffer but also as a reason

to resist it. Irantzu argued that “I have 78.000 followers on Twitter, which is double the number of the inhabitants of my town. It’s the only space of power that I have. People don’t want me to mess with them on Twitter.”

Conclusion

These findings highlight the persistent character of 'anti-gender', the emotional and psychological effect on activists, and the broader socio-political context shaping these dynamics. Significant advancements in feminist and LGBTI rights have been accompanied by an intensification of the aggressiveness and belligerence of 'anti-gender' rhetoric. This evolution is marked by key inflection points and the entrance of feminist movements into governmental structures, along with the rise of far-right political entities like VOX.

The emotional and psychological impacts of political violence are profound. Activists frequently report feelings of fear, exhaustion, and a sense of discouragement. The normalisation of violence against them, both online and offline, creates an environment where the threat of attacks is a constant shadow. Digital platforms play a dual role as both a space for empowerment and a battleground for political violence. For many activists, social media is the only space where they wield significant influence, amplifying their voices and connecting with broader audiences. However, this visibility also makes them targets for harassment and threats. The pressure to maintain an active presence on these platforms, despite the risks, highlights the precarious balance between leveraging digital power, or professional reputation and safeguarding their well-being.

The role of institutions is also a crucial point. While some governmental bodies and legal frameworks represent significant advancements towards gender equality and LGBTI rights, there remains a pervasive mistrust of institutions among activists, fueled by a lack of support, potential financial cuts, and the perceived complicity of some institutional actors in perpetuating 'anti-gender' or their inaction against it.

Another dimension is the intersectional character of 'anti-gender' violence, specifically in relation to racism, fatphobia, and national identity. Activists suffer the effects of 'anti-gender' as an interrelation of multiple dimensions, as well as related to other everyday forms of discrimination, which also reveals the broader societal structures that underpin political violence.

In response to the pervasive nature of political violence, activists employ a range of strategies to resist. These include self-censorship, creating safe spaces and bubbles, and modulating participation in public discourse. While these strategies provide some sense of safety and calm, they also show the limitations and sacrifices involved in maintaining visibility and influence in a hostile environment.

'Anti-gender' also fosters resistance. The collective sense of struggle and solidarity among activists provides strength, hope and even enthusiasm of activists participating in transfeminist struggles. The forms of active resistance include: participating in institutions; boycotts of specific campaigns; digital activism; monitoring 'anti-gender' activists and documenting attacks; dialogue with, and attempting to convince potential 'anti-gender' actors.

Future research could investigate the relationship between 'anti-gender' violence and everyday discrimination, particularly how it intersects with other axes of oppression such as racism, fatphobia, and nationalism, among others. The inclusion of more diverse voices in terms of origin, ethnicity, age, and location—drawing from other parts of Spain—would be necessary to understand this phenomena too. Additionally, the emotional and psychological toll on activists, especially the long-term effects of digital violence, needs further study, alongside the strategies activists use to cope and resist. Furthermore, future studies could assess the effectiveness of institutional responses to 'anti-gender' rhetoric and violence, identifying gaps in legal frameworks, institutional support, and activist-institution relations. Finally, examining the strategies employed by feminist and LGBTI movements could provide insight into how these movements navigate a hostile environment while resisting them.

Respondent Profiles

We asked participants to fill out a voluntary demographic form with open text boxes for each variable. All 33 participants completed their voluntary demographic forms. The variable parental status was not covered by the voluntary demographic forms and is based on their narratives.

Table 1: Respondent profiles Spain—Catalonia and Basque Country

Profile	No. of Responses	Sample outline
Age groups	33	Most of the participants are between 35 and 49 (15/33) or 25 and 34 (12/33). Three participants are between 50 and 64 (3/33) and over 65 years old (3/33). Nobody in the sample fits into the youngest age group (under 25).
Gender	33	Most of the participants self-identify as women or cis women (25/33). Six participants describe themselves as (cis) men. One participant identifies as non-binary and another participant as trans non-binary.
Sexual orientation / identity	31	Most of the participants identify as bisexual, pansexual, non-binary or sexual dissident / bisexual (12/33) when asked for their sexual identity. Others identify as lesbian (7/33), heterosexual (6/33) and gay/sissy or faggot (4/33). One participant is self identified as Transbutch and another one as queer. Two participants did not respond.
Country of origin	31	Most of the participants describe their country of origin as Spain (12/33), others as Catalonia (8/33) or a mixture (2/33). Other participants indicated Basque Country (6/33), Galicia (1/33), Brazil (1/33), Turkey (1/33) and two participants did not answer.
Country of residence / legal status	32	Most of the participants describe their Country of residence / legal status as Spain (17/33), Catalonia (5/33) or Basque Country (5/33). 5/33 indicated a mixture between Barcelona, Catalonia, Basque Country and Spain. One participant does not answer.
Racial / ethnic identity	27	In terms of racial/ethnic identity, most of the participants describe themselves as white, Caucasian and/or Catalan (21/33). Six participants did not fill out the field. Other participants identified in terms such as gypsy, Latin, mixed or socialised as Turkish (6/33).
National identity	30	In terms of national identity, most of the participants describe themselves as Catalan (14/33), Basque (8/33), Spanish (3/33). Two wrote 'none', three did not respond. Other participants identified as Murcian/Catalan/Spanish, Brazilian and Galician (one each).
Educational training	33	32 of the participants declare different universitarian degrees, Bachelor, high educational level, PhD, Master, higher education, graduate etc. One participant wrote Vocational training.
Religion	30	Most of the participants identified as atheist, agnostic or simply say 'none' (27/33). One participant described themselves as non-practicing Catholic,

		another one as Christian and another one as Umbanda. Three participants did not respond.
Social class	33	Most of the participants indicate working class (13/33) or middle class (8/33). Some state higher middle class (4/33) or lower middle class (2/33). Other responses refer to class as: privileged working class, lower class, sociologically, middle class, politically, working class.
Dis/ability	33	The vast majority states not having any disability (30/33) and those who do refer to mental health issues or chronic illness.
Settlement type	33	Most of the participants live in a big city (15/33) and medium sized city (12/33). However, there are also participants from villages (5/33) and rural areas (1/33).
Parental status	33	Most of the participants do not have children (23/33), a few have children (7/33) and for others we don't have the information (3/33).
Anything else	6	Asked for anything else, a few participants referred to: Trans guy/man/boy, Euskera speaker, activist since they were 13 years old, transfeminist, defender of defenders, and feminist.