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Professionals' views on the relatively low prevalence of intimate partner violence against women in Spain

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Introduction: The average lifetime prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence against women by male partners in the EU was 22% (FRA, 2014). Spain, with a rate of 13%, was among the countries with the lowest IPVAW lifetime prevalence of all member states.

The **aim** of this study was to be a **first approximation** toward understanding the reasons why **Spain** is one of the European Union countries with the comparatively **lowest** prevalence rates of intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW).

Method:

Participants:

The sample was composed by **19 professionals:**

➤ **5 Focus groups**

➤ **10 Key informants**



Procedure:

1. Research on the prevalence differences in IPVAW across the EU countries supporting the relatively low prevalence of this type of violence in Spain was presented to participants.
2. Participants were asked “**Why do you think Spain is one of the countries in the EU with the lowest prevalence rates of IPVAW?**”.
3. The moderator asked follow-up questions to held the flow of the discussion

Analytic approach: A thematic analysis of the text was conducted using an inductive approach. **Three major categories** emerged and were defined as **Law and policy**, **Social awareness**, and **Cultural patterns**.

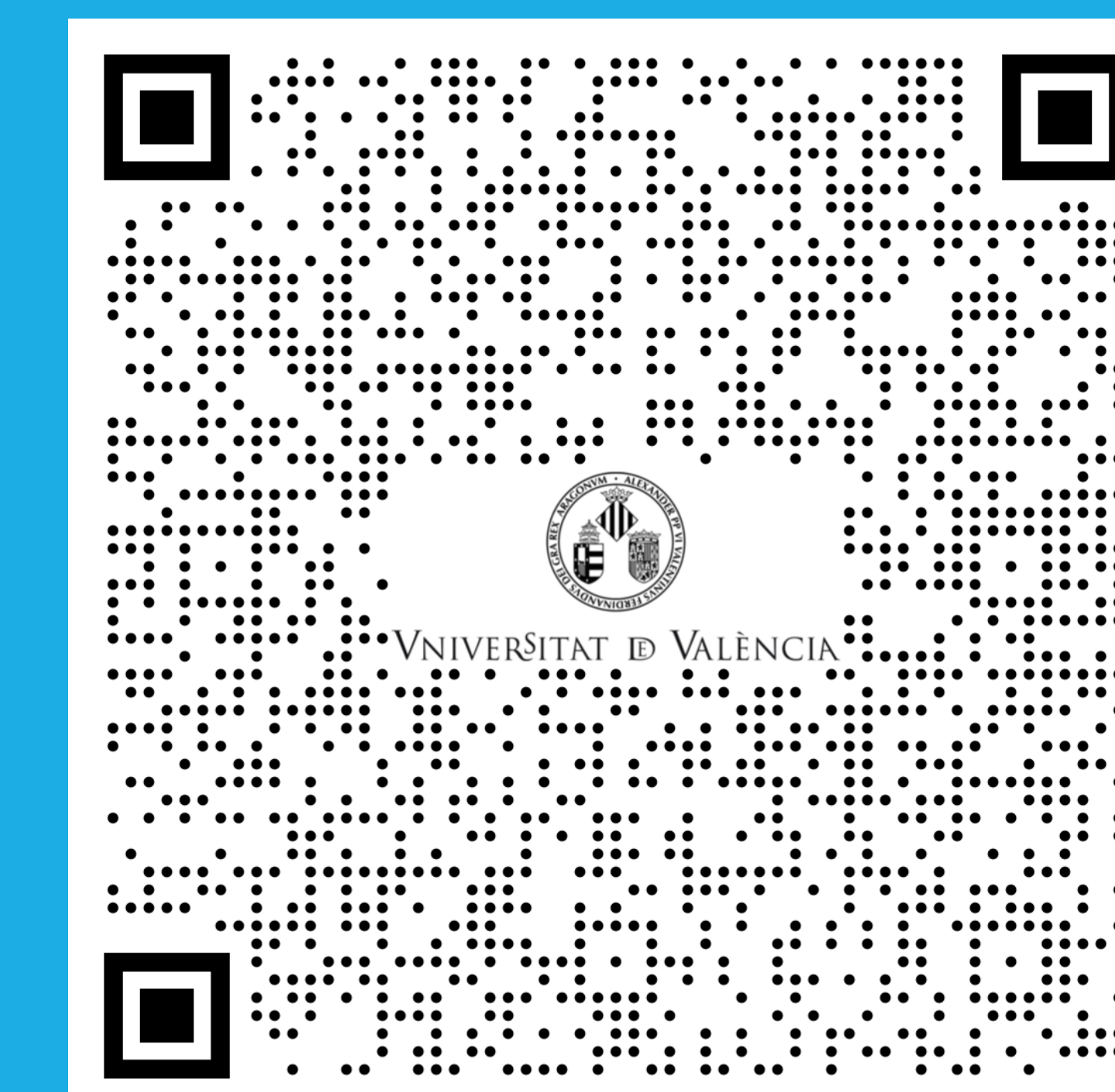
Table 1. Description of Focus Group participants and Key Informants by sex and job

Focus Group participants				Key informants			
Job	Women	Men	Total	Job	Women	Men	Total
Attorney. Court-appointed for IPVAW cases and support services for victims' of crime	3	1	4	Head of IPVAW specialized police units	2	0	2
Social educator. Family support services	1	0	1	Psychologist specialized in IPVAW victims and aggressors treatment	0	1	1
Psychologist. Batterer intervention programs and IPVAW victims programs	4	1	5	Deputy director of a batterer intervention program	1	0	1
Police officer specialized in IPVAW cases	2	3	5	Coordinator of a 24-hour women's shelter	1	0	1
Psychologist. Adolescents victims or offenders of IPVAW programs	1	1	2	Head of IPVAW victim recovery centers	1	1	2
Phone-line support service for IPVAW victims technician	1	0	1	Director of a University Master's degree on IPVAW	1	0	1
Coordinator of the support services for victims of crime.	1	0	1	Head of the Department of Women and Equality	1	0	1
				Prosecutor specialized in IPVAW cases	1	0	1

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Results:

Lower prevalence of IPVAW in Spain

Law and policy

Organic Law 1/2004

“A preventive law, a law of prevention, and I think that has also determined that despite those insufferable numbers of murdered women that we have... well, it has helped us” (K14).

Specialized profesional groups

“In Spain things are being done well because there are specific groups working on IPVAW. Just as one can work with other types of crime [...] there are groups that work only and exclusively on this... national police, local police, and the civil guard...” (FG4.2).

Specific resources for victims and offenders

“It is important to have resources, both economic as well as residential, etc., for women disclosing the violence. There are both private and public resources, that is, from associations [...] If there is violence, and the woman is in danger, she is moved to some hidden shelter.” (K15).

Social awareness

Social Movements

“The feminist movement has been talking about IPVAW long before it was an issue for the public administrations [...] I believe that the feminist movement is the one that has put this problem where it should be, on the public agendas, on the political agendas, and it is this movement that is responsible for having put pressure on the public administrations to take actions against this social problem” (K18).

Media attention

“What I am receiving from the media at the message level (is) [...] Alert, alert, alert! [...] [this problem] is being dealt with on an urgent basis. What they are doing is really alerting us the existence of this problem, visualizing it, making it evident” (K110).

IPVAW as a social problem

“People’s attitude has changed. It is no longer ‘what happens at home, it is their business, I do not want to know anything because it is not my business, it is theirs’. I think that the perception has changed, people are more involved [than before]” (FG3.2).

Cultural patterns

Family relationships

“[Spanish families] are also very supportive, and [this support] is immediately mobilized. I think that the victims, even if they feel isolated, break this isolation before [compared to other EU countries]” (K12).

Social support networks

“We have made a lot of progress [...] if I have a friend who is having a hard time [I ask her] [...] You see how among teenagers, they are already saying to each other, ‘Hey, that guy... why is he asking you to give him your phone, or why has he canceled your WhatsApp?, and why is he controlling you?’” (FG1.3)

Discussion:

According to the participants:

- ❑ **Laws and public policies** were key to the **detection and prevention** of IPVAW cases and to the improvement of support and treatment for direct and indirect victims. Laws and public policies have played an important role in the increasing visibility of this problem.
- ❑ **Higher levels of social awareness** of IPVAW in the general population have led to a growing public perception of IPVAW as a social problem that concerns all citizens, rather than a private matter. This change in the social perception of IPVAW **could influence social behaviors regarding personal involvement**.
- ❑ **Family relationships** and **social support networks** were found to be of central importance in the **detection** of situations of violence. These factors, therefore, could contribute to keeping prevalence rates in Spain relatively low.

This research will be published in:

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