



ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Dossier “Women’s Rights: Advances, Setbacks, and Current Debates”

<https://doi.org/10.30545/academo.2026.n1.1357>

Rights in question: the reconfiguration of equality policies in Argentina (2023–2025)

Derechos cuestionados: la reconfiguración de las políticas de igualdad en Argentina (2023–2025)

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the impact of the political and discursive orientations adopted by the National Executive Branch in Argentina since December 2023 on gender equality policies. An exploratory-descriptive methodology with a mixed approach was employed, articulating documentary and discourse analysis with a survey of 100 key informants and semi-structured interviews. The main findings evidence a process of structural backsliding, manifested in the elimination of the Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity, the dismantling of territorial programs, and a critical budget cut in areas of sexual health and violence prevention. Likewise, it is identified that the “anti-woke” discourse operates as a legitimizing device for institutional de-articulation, generating perceptions of vulnerability and precariousness among women and LGBTIQ+ individuals. It is concluded that Argentina is undergoing a historical rupture in the state gender architecture that weakens effective access to rights; nevertheless, feminist resistance networks persist, attempting to sustain the achievements reached in a context of increasing social and political polarization.

Keywords: Gender equality, government policy, human rights.

Resumen

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo examinar el impacto de las orientaciones políticas y discursivas adoptadas por el Poder Ejecutivo Nacional en Argentina desde diciembre de 2023 sobre las políticas de igualdad de género. Se empleó una metodología de carácter exploratorio-descriptivo con un enfoque mixto, que articuló el análisis documental y del discurso con una encuesta a 100 informantes clave y entrevistas semiestructuradas. Los hallazgos principales evidencian un proceso de backsliding o retroceso estructural, manifestado en la eliminación del Ministerio de las Mujeres, Géneros y Diversidad, el desmantelamiento de programas territoriales y un recorte presupuestario crítico en áreas de salud sexual y prevención de violencias. Asimismo, se identifica que el discurso “anti-woke” opera como un dispositivo de legitimación para la desarticulación institucional, generando percepciones de vulnerabilidad y precarización en mujeres y personas LGBTIQ+. Se concluye que Argentina atraviesa un quiebre histórico en la arquitectura estatal de género que debilita el acceso efectivo a derechos; no obstante, persisten redes de resistencia feminista que intentan sostener las conquistas alcanzadas en un contexto de creciente polarización social y política.

Palabras clave: Igualdad de género, política gubernamental, derechos humanos.

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Article received: July 11, 2025. Accepted for publication: December 28, 2025. Published: April 30, 2026.

Conflicts of Interest: None.

Funding Source: None.

Responsible Editor: Herib Caballero Campos . Universidad Americana. Asunción, Paraguay.

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Website: <http://revistacientifica.uamericana.edu.py/index.php/academo/>

Introduction

In recent years, gender equality policies in Argentina have undergone a process of reconfiguration that specialized literature identifies as *backsliding*, that is, a regression in the institutionalization and effective implementation of these policies between 2023 and 2025. This phenomenon is part of a neoconservative counteroffensive of regional and global scope, widely documented in recent studies on equality policies (UN Women, 2020). From a scientific perspective, analyzing these processes is relevant insofar as it allows for the examination of the relationship between political discourse, institutional reconfigurations, and the guarantee of rights in contemporary democratic contexts.

In the Argentine case, the questioning of equality policies is articulated around narratives that challenge the so-called “gender ideology”⁽¹⁾ and shift public debate toward a logic of “cultural battle.” As Berdondini and Vinuesa (2024) point out, the so-called “anti-woke” discourse⁽²⁾ appeals to notions of state efficiency and the defense of traditional values to delegitimize gender policies, presenting them as ideological or expendable. In this framework, and following Daveiro (2024), this discourse does not operate merely as political rhetoric but as a legitimizing device that enables the redefinition of state capacities and the erosion of democratic consensus built over recent decades.

This process becomes particularly relevant following the shift in political orientation of the national Executive Branch on December 10, 2023, with the inauguration of Javier Milei as President of Argentina. His arrival in government is part of the rise of radical right-wing movements in Latin America and marks a reorientation of the role of the state characterized by the delegitimization of public intervention, antifeminism, and the absence of a human rights and intersectional approach (Berdondini & Vinuesa, 2024; Daveiro, 2024). Within this context, the present study is empirically grounded in the analysis of recent decisions that directly impact previously institutionalized public gender policies.

International literature warns that processes of gender-related backsliding manifest through the

erosion of normative, institutional, and discursive frameworks (UN Women, 2020). In Argentina, these dynamics are expressed specifically through “anti-woke” discourse, articulated around the notion of “gender ideology,” and translated into concrete decisions such as the dismantling of the Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity (MMGyD)⁽³⁾, attempts to modify regulations related to gender parity, and the hollowing out of policies aimed at the prevention and eradication of gender-based violence, among others. These antecedents make it possible to define the research problem and situate it within an updated theoretical and empirical framework.

In this context, the hypothesis guiding this work holds that the ongoing backsliding process, reinforced by antifeminist and anti-rights discursive practices, weakens the institutionalization of the gender perspective within the Argentine state and differentially affects social perceptions regarding the protection and promotion of rights. In particular, it is posited that the weakening of institutional gender frameworks constitutes a central factor in shaping perceptions of vulnerability among women and sexual diversity groups.

Based on the above, this paper aims to critically analyze the impact of the political and discursive orientations adopted by Argentina’s National Executive Branch since December 2023 on gender equality policies. The general objective is to examine the influence of these orientations on the design, implementation, and legitimacy of the institutional gender framework. To this end, the following specific objectives are proposed:

- a) Identify the main institutional transformations linked to the redefinition or dismantling of equality policies;
- b) Analyze the role of so-called “anti-woke” discourse in legitimizing these transformations;
- c) Evaluate the effects of these processes on the protection and promotion of the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ individuals.

It should be noted that throughout this article, the acronym LGBTIQ+ will be used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, travesti, intersex, and queer individuals, as well as other non-hegemonic gender

identities and sexual orientations. The “+” sign is included to indicate the open nature of the category, recognizing the plurality and dynamism of sex-gender experiences in the contemporary Argentine context.

Methodology

This research is framed within an exploratory–descriptive methodological design, using a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative techniques, with a predominance of qualitative analysis. This approach is appropriate for examining the impact of political and discursive decisions adopted by the Argentine national government since December 10, 2023, on gender equality policies, as it allows for simultaneously capturing the magnitude of social perceptions regarding these processes and the interpretive frameworks that sustain them. Likewise, the mixed-methods approach enables an integrated analysis of changes in the institutional architecture of the state and the social meanings constructed around the role of the state and the guarantee of rights for women and LGBTIQ+ individuals, within a regional and international context shaped by the rise of conservative discourses and processes of gender policy backsliding.

The study was conducted in Argentina during the second half of 2024 and the first months of 2025, a period characterized by profound normative, organizational, and symbolic transformations in the field of gender policies. The methodological strategy combined the use of primary and secondary sources, as well as different techniques for data collection and analysis.

On the quantitative level, a structured digital survey was implemented and distributed through social media and activist networks, with the aim of collecting general perceptions regarding the regression in equality policies. A non-probabilistic convenience sample of 100 participants was used, with inclusion criteria consisting of being over 18 years old, residing in Argentina, and expressing interest in issues related to the rights of women and gender-diverse populations. Variables were operationalized based on the perception of regression in gender policies (nominal scale: Yes, No, Maybe) and the areas

perceived as affected (health, education, employment, violence, and public policies), allowing for multiple responses. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, based on the calculation of absolute and percentage frequencies, without employing inferential methods due to the exploratory nature of the study. Additionally, the instrument included open-ended questions that complemented the quantitative analysis by capturing participants’ evaluations, arguments, and meanings associated with the recorded perceptions.

The qualitative component aimed to explore in depth subjective perceptions, experiences, and meanings attributed to the impact of measures implemented by the National Executive Branch in the field of gender policies. To this end, semi-structured interviews were conducted as the primary data collection technique. The instrument consisted of a guide of fourteen (14) open-ended, scripted questions, with an estimated maximum duration of fifteen (15) minutes per interview. The thematic axes included general perceptions of gender policies, impacts on daily life, forms of organization and resistance, as well as perspectives and expectations for the future. Interviews were conducted with key informants selected through purposive and theoretical sampling, prioritizing conceptual saturation over statistical representativeness. Inclusion criteria considered gender diversity—including individuals who self-identify as women, men, and non-binary persons—heterogeneity in biographical trajectories and profiles, a broad age range from 18 to 75 years, and geographic distribution across different localities in Argentina, in order to capture diverse generational and territorial perspectives.

Additionally, the analysis of the structural component of the state was addressed through purposive document sampling. In this case, the units of analysis consisted of a documentary and discursive corpus selected based on criteria of relevance, timeliness, and analytical pertinence. This corpus included national regulations—laws, decrees, resolutions, and administrative provisions—draft legislative reforms, official speeches, interviews and public statements by the President of the Nation and officials of the National Executive Branch, institutional communications, as

well as reports from international organizations, documents from civil society organizations, and recent academic production specialized in gender and human rights. Furthermore, a descriptive quantitative component based on secondary data was incorporated to contextualize the state of affairs regarding gender policies and human rights, through the collection and systematization of information from international organizations and specialized institutions, including Amnesty International, Data Género, Ahora Que Sí Nos Ven, the Gender and Public Policy Observatory (OGyPP), ELA – Equipo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Género, Fundación Mujeres x Mujeres, La Casa del Encuentro, the Network of University Observatories with a Gender Perspective, and Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia (ACIJ), among others.

The study's analytical variables were structured around central dimensions such as the degree of institutionalization of the gender perspective within the national state, the government's discursive orientation regarding equality policies, the level of state commitment to guaranteeing the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ individuals, and manifestations of backsliding in gender public policies. These dimensions were operationalized through analytical categories such as institutional dismantling, regulatory modification, budgetary and programmatic hollowing-out, and "anti-woke" rhetoric. Qualitative data analysis was carried out using document analysis, thematic analysis, and critical discourse analysis techniques, based on the systematization and coding of the corpus and temporal comparison between the periods before and after the change in government, allowing for the identification of continuities, ruptures, and trends. The integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches enabled data triangulation and strengthened the analytical validity of the results.

Finally, the main limitations of the study are acknowledged as the non-probabilistic nature of the samples, self-selection bias resulting from the digital distribution of the survey, the centrality of documentary and discursive analysis, and the recent nature of the period analyzed, which may limit the observation of long-term social effects. Nevertheless, these limitations are mitigated by the diversity of

interviewee profiles, the plurality of sources consulted, methodological triangulation, and the continuous articulation with established theoretical frameworks and empirical precedents, reinforcing interpretive caution and avoiding universal generalizations.

Results and Discussion

Since 2023, gender equality policies in Argentina have been immersed in a process of questioning and progressive dismantling, within a political context marked by the rise of anti-woke discourses and a narrative that discredits gender agendas under the rhetoric of so-called "gender ideology." In this regard, various analyses note that, ten years after the emergence of the Ni Una Menos movement, historic advances coexist with recent setbacks associated with the proliferation of hate speech and the delegitimization of these policies (Belkis, 2025). This scenario aligns with what UN Women (2020) conceptualizes as a process of *backsliding*, understood as a regression in the institutionalization of the gender perspective within the state architecture and a withdrawal from the commitments assumed by the state regarding equality (UN Women, 2020, p. 1).

This process had its first milestone with the downgrading of the Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity (MMGyD) to the Undersecretariat for Protection against Gender-Based Violence, implying a substantial loss of institutional hierarchy, operational capacity, and coordination power. At the time of this downgrade, the budget allocated to the agency represented only 0.14% of the total budget of the National Public Administration (Asociación de Trabajadores del Estado [ATE], 2024, p. 14). Subsequently, in June 2024, the area was entirely eliminated, removing any specific national-level structure dedicated to gender policies. This decision triggered a domino effect across the country: eleven provinces dismantled or downgraded their gender-related institutions, reducing their institutional and budgetary autonomy. Currently, only two jurisdictions—the Province of Buenos Aires and the Province of Neuquén—maintain ministries specifically dedicated to these agendas. In this same vein, on November 11, 2024, Argentina became the only UN member country to vote against a resolution aimed at

intensifying actions to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

Sustaining public policies addressing gender-based violence over the past 18 months has posed a significant challenge for provinces and municipalities. This difficulty is due both to resource scarcity and to the reduced prominence of these issues in the public agenda, as well as the recent spread of discourses opposing the rights of women and gender-diverse populations (Equipo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Género, 2025).

This process of institutional dismantling occurs within a broader discursive context. According to Tabbush and Caminotti (2020), the notion of “gender ideology” has consolidated itself as both a political tool and an epistemological strategy employed by conservative actors to challenge the concept of gender as a social construct, as well as to delegitimize feminist movements and international human rights agencies. In articulation with this strategy, anti-woke narratives emerge that reinforce a “cultural battle” against policies of recognition and redistribution aimed at historically marginalized groups—narratives that, in the current context, are promoted and legitimized by the national Executive Branch itself (Pecznik, 2025, p. 21).

These narratives do not remain at the symbolic level but translate into a concrete reconfiguration of the political-institutional horizon, whose turning point was the arrival of Javier Milei to the national government, producing a redefinition of how the role of the state and social relations are conceived (Berdondini & Vinuesa, 2024). This conceptualization is grounded in the delegitimization of state intervention, antifeminism, and the absence of a human rights and intersectional approach (Daveiro, 2024, p. 151). A paradigmatic example of this orientation was the decision by the National Executive Branch, on March 8, 2024⁽⁴⁾, to rename the “Hall of Argentine Women of the Bicentennial” in the Casa Rosada as the “Hall of National Heroes,” a symbolically charged action that

took place on the same day that feminist and women’s movements mobilized in defense of equality policies and acquired rights.

Woke ideology is a mental virus. This is the great epidemic of our time that must be cured; it is cancer that must be eradicated. Wokism manifests itself in sinister radical environmentalism and the banner of climate change. (Javier Milei, President of the Argentine Republic, January 23, 2025, World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland.

In this context, a series of guiding questions emerge for this study: How do these processes impact social perceptions of gender equality policies? In what ways does anti-woke discourse influence the construction of social meanings? What forms of resistance, reorganization, or reconfiguration are deployed by feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements? What expectations and projections are being constructed regarding the future of the rights of women and gender-diverse populations?

As outlined in the methodological framework, the measurement instrument was structured around four thematic axes: general perceptions; impact on daily life; forms of organization and resistance; and future outlook. This strategy made it possible to capture personal experiences and meanings attributed by participants, organizing the results into the following analytical clusters:

- a) generalized perceptions;
- b) impact on daily life;
- c) forms of organization and resistance;
- d) future projections.

This thematic organization of the measurement instrument enabled a coherent articulation of different levels of analysis, connecting individual experiences with structural processes and social narratives. In this way, it was possible to identify not only perceptions of institutional regression but also the concrete implications of these transformations in people’s daily lives and in the strategies of resistance and mobilization of feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements. Likewise, this structure facilitated an understanding of

how gender equality policies are projected and interpreted in a context marked by anti-woke discourse and the dismantling of specialized programs and institutions, allowing for a direct connection with the first empirical research question: Do people perceive a regression in the rights of women and gender-diverse populations in the past year? (Figure 1).

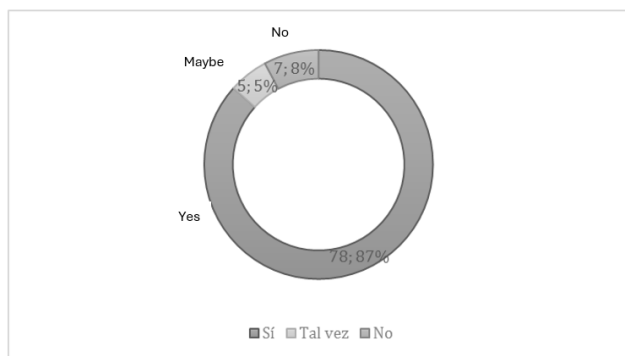


Figure 1. Perception of regression in gender policies.

In general terms, the majority of respondents perceive a significant weakening in the institutionalization of gender, particularly in areas such as sexual and reproductive health, violence prevention, comprehensive sexuality education with a gender perspective, employment, and access to economic resources (Figure 2).

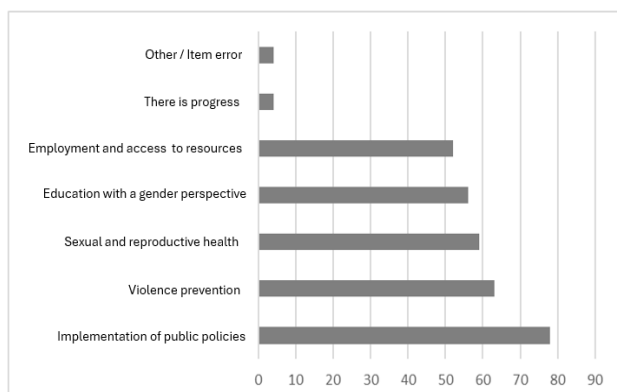


Figure 2. Frequency of areas perceived as affected by the rollback in gender policies.

This perception is reinforced by the survey of secondary information coming from civil society organizations and specialized observatories, including Amnesty International, Data Género, Ahora Que Sí Nos Ven, OGYPP, ELA, Fundación Mujeres x Mujeres, La Casa del Encuentro, the Network of University Observatories with a Gender Perspective,

and the Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia, among others.

From a quantitative and documentary approach, the data show a consistent pattern of cuts and dismantling. The Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia and the Equipo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Género (2024) analyzed the impact of the hierarchical downgrading of the MMGyD on the Programa Acompañar—a public policy that provides economic assistance and psychosocial support to women and LGBTI+ people in situations of gender-based violence, with the aim of promoting their autonomy, offering a monthly amount equivalent to the Minimum, Vital and Mobile Wage for six months, together with comprehensive support for an autonomous life project, managed through coordination with provinces and municipalities, and where the 144 hotline is key for access—during the first quarter of 2024, recording a budget execution of 79%, compared to significantly higher levels in the same period of 2023.

Likewise, Amnesty International Argentina (2024) warns that the Línea 144—a national, free and confidential telephone service in Argentina, available 24 hours a day, which provides support, guidance and referral to people in situations of gender-based violence, through an interdisciplinary team, constituting a key resource for accompaniment and articulation with other assistance mechanisms—was subject to budget and staffing cuts: during the first half of 2024, 28.45% less of the budget was executed compared to the previous year, and in June 42% of the staff were dismissed.

Along the same lines, the Programa Acercar Derechos—a public policy created to provide comprehensive support (psychological, social, and legal) to women and LGBTI+ people in situations of gender-based violence, facilitating their access to justice and rights—was systematically dismantled. During the first months of 2024, the program was eliminated in at least five provinces—Catamarca, Formosa, La Pampa, Misiones, and Santa Cruz—and, in operational terms, it went from assisting 2,897 people in the first quarter of 2023 to 1,060 in the same period of 2024, which represents a 65% decrease in

the number of people assisted (Amnesty International Argentina, 2024).

In relation to sexual and reproductive rights, Abrevaya and Tibiletti (2024) highlight that national spending on sexual and reproductive health reached its lowest level in nine years. As of November 2024, the Argentine Ministry of Health had executed only 15% of the budget allocated to the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy and 25% of that corresponding to the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Program (Plan ENIA) —an Argentine public policy (2017–2024) aimed at reducing adolescent pregnancies through comprehensive sex education, access to contraceptives (IUDs, implants), and counseling in schools and community centers—

According to the Equipo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Género (2025), despite the accumulated evidence regarding their positive results, these policies were dismantled by the current government. In the educational field, Amnesty International Argentina (2024) points to a profound underfunding of provincial Comprehensive Sexual Education teams⁽⁵⁾, putting the continuity of the program and the rights of children and adolescents at risk.

This process deepened with the announcement made on May 23, 2025, when the Argentine Ministry of Justice ordered the closure of ten national programs with a gender and diversity perspective, which constituted central pillars of public policy aimed at expanding rights and strengthening the autonomy of women and LGBTIQ+ people. Among the discontinued programs are MenstruAR, aimed at guaranteeing equitable access to menstrual management supplies as part of the right to health; Territorial gender and diversity promoters, oriented toward community support and early detection of situations of violence; and the Program for the Strengthening of Gender and Diversity Social Organizations, whose objective was to consolidate institutional capacities and territorial networks of intervention.

Likewise, the Popular Schools of Training in Gender and Diversity “Macachas y Remedios,” which promoted processes of political and civic education with a gender perspective, were eliminated; as well as

the Sembrar Igualdad program, aimed at mainstreaming the gender approach in public policies and promoting substantive equality; and the Access to Rights for Transvestite, Transsexual, and Transgender Persons mechanism, which provided comprehensive support in the face of multiple forms of structural exclusion.

To these were added the Territorial Comprehensive Protection Mechanisms, aimed at interdisciplinary attention in contexts of violence; the Igualar program, focused on promoting equality in the labor and productive sphere; and Urgent Support in Cases of Extreme Violence, which provided immediate responses in high-risk situations, including economic assistance and inter-institutional coordination.

Completing this set is the closure of Formar Igualdad, aimed at training state agents in gender and diversity perspectives, and the Producir y Generar evidencia program, aimed at producing information, indicators, and diagnoses for the design, monitoring, and evaluation of public policies with a gender approach. Taken together, these programs —national in scope and with strong territorial anchoring— were primarily directed at populations in situations of vulnerability and combined direct interventions (urgent assistance, comprehensive support, provision of supplies related to sexual and reproductive health) with medium- and long-term strategies aimed at cultural change, democratic participation, labor inclusion, and community strengthening.

In line with the testimonies collected in the interviews, the elimination of these mechanisms is perceived not only as a budget cut, but as a political decision that significantly weakens the presence of the State in territories, restricts effective access to rights, and deepens structural inequalities, especially in rural and community contexts and in sectors with lower institutional response capacity. In this way, the simultaneous closure of programs with these characteristics empirically reinforces the hypothesis of structural backsliding, in which the rollback of the institutionalization of the gender approach directly impacts both state capacities and everyday experiences and the meanings attributed to equality as a right guaranteed by the State.

From the qualitative analysis, a marked polarization emerges regarding these measures. On the one hand, those who interpret the dismantling of gender policies as a regression in terms of rights conceive it as a political decision with material and symbolic implications, framed within a cultural dispute that delegitimizes years of institutionalization.

I think it is a terrible decision that is highly consistent with the discourse of the Executive Branch, which expresses contempt and a desire to eliminate anyone who is part of a dissidence or is not heteronormative in their condition, gender, or relational choices (Interviewee 6, 2025).

The elimination of the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity represents a clear setback in the institutionalization of gender perspective policies. This decision weakens prevention and response mechanisms built in recent years and leaves the State with fewer tools to address these issues, especially affecting those who need them most (Interviewee 23, 2025).

On the other hand, those who positively value these decisions associate them with criteria of efficiency and reduction of state spending, and interpret them as a political signal aligned with the “cultural battle” against an agenda considered imposed or unnecessary.

As it was conceived, its existence made no sense. A Secretariat/Ministry should exist to improve/increase/ensure policies that benefit the area in question, not to replace existing laws or act as a policing body (Interviewee 37, 2025).

I think it is used as a message against the feminist movement and to maintain an agenda against minorities. In concrete terms, the creation of a Ministry does not radically change anything (Interviewee 88, 2025).

In this framework, backsliding is presented as a material and symbolic action of rupture with respect to the normative and discursive frameworks developed in recent years in the field of gender policies. In what way do the narratives that justify these cuts impact social perceptions of gender policies? This scenario reveals a dispute not only over institutional resources, but also over the meanings and values that sustain policies of equality. The rollback in their institutionalization is not neutral: it puts into tension the place that gender rights occupy in the current public agenda. How does this context impact everyday trajectories?

Regarding the impact on daily life, 28% of participants reported having been personally affected by these measures, 59% did not perceive direct impacts, and 13% preferred not to respond (Figure 3).

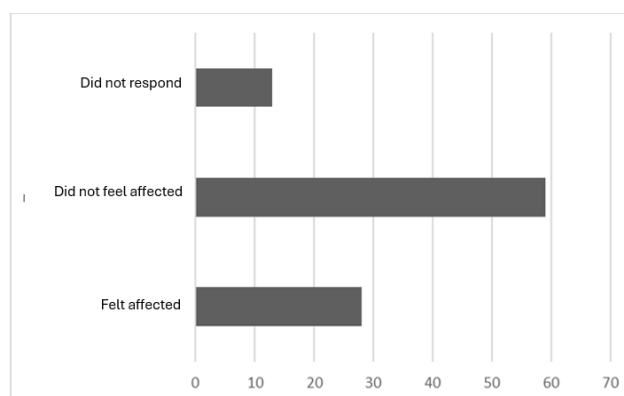


Figure 3. Distribution of responses regarding the impact of the reconfiguration of equality policies on everyday life.

However, the qualitative responses show that those who do feel affected go through situations of precariousness, distress, and insecurity, especially in relation to work and access to economic resources. Likewise, impacts are recorded in subjective well-being —fragility, fear, helplessness— and in the exercise of basic rights, particularly among feminist activists, state workers, and people from dissident groups.

At this point, the role of anti-woke discourse and the notion of “gender ideology” as a political tool becomes more visible. As Morán Faúndes (2023) points out, this signifier operates as a neoconservative mobilization strategy, legitimizing hatred, reinforcing binarism, and weakening cultural pluralism.

Quality of life has deteriorated in general and misogynistic discourses are circulating again. I cannot make it to the end of the month; I have to pay for medication, electricity, gas, and, above all, food (Interviewee 67, 2025).

Faced with this counteroffensive, various forms of organization and resistance persist: marches, assemblies, territorial work by NGOs, digital activism, and community and cultural spaces continue to be key tools for visibility and collective action. However, most respondents perceive a decrease in their impact on the public agenda, greater fragmentation of resistance practices, and difficulties in sustaining mobilization in an adverse context.

I would like to think that the situation will be reversed and that gender policies will exist again, but now it seems that the only thing these groups will receive are symbolic, economic, and political attacks (Interviewee 14, 2025).

According to what has been presented, projections about the future of gender policies are marked by uncertainty. Concern predominates regarding the possibility that these policies may disappear or lose strength if the current orientation of the national government continues. Nevertheless, there also emerges the conviction that social organization can sustain and recreate historical achievements, even in contexts of institutional weakening. As Rodríguez Magda (2020) points out, feminisms continue to make their way along the paths of resistance, offering critical keys to think about the tensions of transmodernity.

In this study, the majority perception of regression detected (80%) is closely correlated with what Berdondini and Vinuesa (2024) describe as a reconfiguration of the Argentine political scenario following the rise of Javier Milei. This process of backsliding does not manifest in isolation, but rather articulates institutional, budgetary, and symbolic transformations that affect the very architecture of the State.

In relation to the first objective of this research—to identify institutional transformations—the identification of “Implementation of public policies” as the area of greatest regression (77.8%) aligns with the warnings of the Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia and the Equipo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Género (2025). The downgrading and subsequent elimination of the MMGyD constitutes a turning point that has resulted in a concrete reduction in state capacity to prevent and address violence. These findings find their empirical counterpart in the reports of Amnesty International (2024) and Abrevaya and Tibiletti (2024), who document a critical budget adjustment that compromises the provision of supplies in sexual health and the continuity of essential territorial mechanisms.

Regarding the second objective—the role of “anti-woke” discourse—the qualitative results allow us to argue that this rhetoric operates as an interpretive framework that enables and justifies institutional dismantling. The notion of “gender ideology,” analyzed by Morán Faúndes (2023) as the construction of a “total enemy,” has permeated public opinion not only as a cultural dispute, but as a political positioning that redefines the legitimacy of human rights. As Pecznik (2025) warns, this discourse not only seeks to dismantle policies, but to reconfigure deep social consensus, generating polarization in which a sector of the sample positively values these cuts under criteria of “state efficiency” or “cultural battle.”

Regarding the third objective—the effects on everyday life—the research reveals that the impact of backsliding tends to deepen preexisting inequalities. Those who report being affected describe experiences of material precarization and subjective distress, especially in access to resources and personal security, in line with the studies of the Equipo Latinoamericano de Justicia y Género (2025) on gender policies in contexts of austerity. However, this process coexists with the persistence of collective practices and care networks driven by feminist movements. This double movement of “resistance and retreat” is consistent with the arguments of Tabbush and Caminotti (2020) regarding the difficulties of expanding rights in adverse contexts,

avoiding linear interpretations about the disappearance of these agendas.

In this sense, the qualitative findings reveal a paradox: while the state architecture contracts, the social support network tends to be strained, but not to disappear. Testimonies about “uncertainty” and “fear” coexist with a willingness to reorganize from institutional margins. However, the study warns that community resistance and activism, although persistent, encounter critical limits in the face of the loss of material resources and discursive hostility. This phenomenon suggests that backsliding in Argentina not only affects the provision of public services such as health or sexual education, but also seeks to wear down the associative fabric that has historically driven the expansion of the rights agenda in the region.

The empirical evidence highlights the complexity of the analyzed scenario and allows us to value the methodological contribution of the study, which combines qualitative and quantitative techniques to capture both individual perceptions and structural processes.

A strength of the research lies in the triangulation of data, which allows for sustaining a high level of “analytical generalization” despite the non-probabilistic nature of the sample (100 key informants), offering relevant evidence to understand global patterns of opposition to women’s rights (UN Women, 2020). The limitations inherent to an exploratory design in a context of accelerated transition were mitigated through criteria of theoretical saturation and rigor in source triangulation.

Conclusion

This research shows that, since December 2023, Argentina has been undergoing a process of democratic backsliding characterized by the systemic dismantling of gender equality policies. The elimination of specialized bodies and the critical budget cuts represent a historical rupture that has weakened the State’s capacity to guarantee the fundamental rights of women and LGBTIQ+ people, generating an unprecedented institutional vacuum in recent decades.

The analysis shows that “anti-woke” discourse goes beyond rhetoric to operate as an effective political device. By stigmatizing the gender perspective as an “ideology,” this narrative legitimizes institutional dismantling and reconfigures social consensus on social justice, prioritizing macroeconomic efficiency over the protection of vulnerable groups. The effects of this process translate into increased material precarization and deep subjective distress, deepening preexisting structural inequalities.

Finally, although feminist movements persist through defensive strategies and care networks, these unfold in an environment of high hostility and fragmentation. The Argentine case thus fits into a global trend of setbacks that requires continued documentation of the tensions between state retreat and social resistance. The findings of this study provide key empirical evidence for understanding the fragility of hard-won rights in the face of new configurations of contemporary political and discursive power.

Article notes

1. Term used by conservative sectors to discredit the gender perspective, presenting it as an ideological doctrine, with the aim of questioning public policies on equality and rights agendas promoted by feminisms and international human rights organizations.
2. A rhetorical and political current that positions itself in critical opposition to contemporary social justice movements. From this perspective, policies of identity, diversity, and equity are questioned, arguing that they constitute a form of cultural censorship (“cancellation”) or an ideological imposition that erodes traditional values and social cohesion.
3. The Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity (MMGyD) was a ministry of the Argentine government created in 2019 by Alberto Fernández for gender policies, but it was closed and dissolved in December 2023 by the government of Javier Milei, who downgraded it to a Subsecretariat and then definitively eliminated it, alleging political and ideological use. However, some functions continued in other areas such as

the Subsecretariat for Protection against Gender-Based Violence, which was also eliminated in June 2024, marking the end of that ministerial structure.

4. March 8 commemorates International Women's Day, a date that recalls the historical struggles for equality of rights, social justice, and the recognition of women in all spheres of social, political, economic, and cultural life.
5. Provincial Comprehensive Sexual Education (ESI) teams constitute the structures responsible, within the Ministries of Education of each jurisdiction, for implementing National Law No. 26,150, adapting national guidelines to provincial contexts. Their functions include teacher training, the development of pedagogical content, and the coordination of interinstitutional actions aimed at guaranteeing the right to ESI in the educational system. However, their degree of institutionalization and availability of resources show marked inequalities among provinces, currently facing challenges linked to budget cuts and the need to sustain and strengthen their work in a context of increasing circulation of hate speech, as observed in experiences such as those of Santa Fe and the Province of Buenos Aires.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are partially available, depending on the characteristics of the methodological design. The quantitative information comes from a structured survey administered to 100 informants, whose aggregated results are included in this article. Likewise, the qualitative component is based on semi-structured interviews and on a documentary corpus composed of regulations, reports from specialized organizations, and public discourses.

For ethical reasons and in order to safeguard the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, the primary data are not publicly available. However, the aggregated data and the data collection instrument may be provided by the author for academic purposes, upon justified request.

Review comments

This article was submitted to a peer review process in anonymous mode, in accordance with the journal's editorial transparency policy. The reviewers, who participated anonymously in this process, gave their consent for the publication of the comments issued during the review.

Review comment 1: The text presents a valuable effort, but it requires a substantial rewriting before it can be evaluated again. Comments are attached.

Review comment 2: The paper explores a very current and increasingly relevant topic at both the regional and international levels, making its approach not only interesting but also pertinent. However, significant changes must be made for it to be possible for publication in ACADEMO. Recommendations are attached.

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