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Case Study on Tracking Research Influence on Gender-Based Violence Policy in West Africa and Latin America

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ILDA

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Abstract

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a global public health crisis and a serious human rights violation, impacting approximately 30% of women worldwide. This case study investigates the influence of research on policies related to discussing, addressing, preventing, and responding to GBV in West Africa (WA) and Latin America (LATAM). Utilizing the Overton platform, we conducted keyword-based searches employing Boolean search operators such as "gender violence," "violence against women," and "gender-based violence" within the "Search in Policy Documents" tab. Additionally, we conducted a distinct query centered on the UN Resolution 1325. Subsequently, the findings were analyzed across various dimensions, encompassing geographical distribution, policy topics, publication year, among others. In LATAM, 86 policy documents were identified, with a majority originating from governments and focusing on justice, politics, and violence against women. Research citations within these policies were primarily from the Global South, particularly Brazil, emphasizing economic and medical issues. Conversely, only one policy document was found for WA, highlighting a discrepancy given the region's high GBV prevalence. Our findings indicate significant policy fluctuations in Brazil, correlating with political changes, and reveal a higher concentration of policies citing UN Resolution 1325 in the Global North. Similar trends are observed in the Portuguese query for the Resolution 1325 in Brazil. Moreover, the results suggest that government-related publications in both cases originate from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a polyglot institution that produces much of its content in both Portuguese and English. This suggests that Overton's platform may not comprehensively capture policies published by various Brazilian government agencies or ministries. Lastly, almost half of the funders institutions for GBV research cited in policies from WA are from the Global South. Overton's comprehensive document descriptions and comparative analysis capabilities proved invaluable, though the platform faces limitations such as the lack of static data sharing and descriptive analysis for policy documents not citing research. This study underscores the complex interplay between academic research and GBV policy development and the need for improved research tools to better support policy analysis and formulation.

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1. What is gender-based violence and why does it matter? The context of Latin America and West Africa

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive phenomenon that is recognized as both a global public health crisis and a grave infringement upon human rights. It constitutes a broad spectrum of harmful behaviors perpetrated against individuals due to gender differences, typically targeting individuals because of their perceived roles, norms, or expectations within society (IASC, 2015).

GBV inflicts physical, sexual, or psychological harm, regardless of whether the violence occurs in private or public settings, including digital spaces. In particular, girls, women, and other gender-diverse people (e.g. LGBTQI+ groups) bear a disproportionate burden of its impact. Within this demographic, GBV can manifest in various forms, including but not limited to domestic violence, sexual violence, femicide, forced marriage, and intimate-partner violence.

Global statistics vividly demonstrate the widespread prevalence of GBV. Estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO) reveal that approximately one in three (30%) women worldwide has experienced either physical violence (such as slapping, burning and choking), and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence (such as rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment) during their lifetime (WHO, 2018).

In 2022 alone, approximately 48,800 women and girls worldwide lost their lives at the hands of intimate partners or other family members. This equates to an alarming average of more than five women or girls being killed every hour by someone within their own family circle (UNODC & UN Women, 2023).

While these statistics paint a worrying picture, it is crucial to acknowledge that underreporting significantly hinders our understanding of the true extent of GBV. Alarmingly, less than 40% of women who endure violence actively seek any form of assistance (DESA, 2015).

GBV is a multifaceted phenomenon, with numerous risk factors contributing to it. These factors encompass various dimensions, including societal norms that elevate men's status while diminishing women's, limited access for women to paid employment, disparities in gender equality such as discriminatory legal frameworks, lower levels of education, among others. These interconnected elements underscore the complex interplay of social, economic, cultural and individual factors that perpetuate GBV (WHO, 2024).

1.1. Gender-based violence in West Africa

GBV is a pronounced issue in West Africa (WA), where over 40% of women are victims of physical and/or sexual violence (UN Women Africa, 2023). These alarming statistics are intricately linked to various socio-cultural factors, such as conflict and displacement. To illustrate this connection, the case of Liberia holds particular significance.

Liberia's recent history has been marked by two civil wars, the most recent of which ended in 2003. Throughout these conflicts, women and girls faced staggering levels of violence, with reports indicating that between 61% and 77% were victims of rape (UNDP Liberia, 2023). Unfortunately, GBV persists in Liberian society today, fueled by entrenched traditional gender norms that disproportionately harm women and girls.

In 2019, reported cases of sexual violence soared to 2,708, and in 2022, approximately 1,975 cases were reported, with a concerning 73.7% involving rape, sexual assault, or other forms of sexual violations (UNDP Liberia, 2023). Furthermore, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) remains widespread and accepted in 10 out of 15 counties in Liberia, affecting an estimated 72% of women and girls in rural areas (UNFPA, n.d.).

Child marriage persists as a prominent issue in Liberia, with recent data indicating that 36% of girls are married before reaching their 18th birthday (UNDP, 2022). Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that GBV in Liberia is vastly underreported (LISGIS, 2021), leading to low conviction rates and meaning that the actual numbers could be significantly higher.

Likewise, in Sierra Leone, where GBV is also considered a systematic issue, approximately 60% of women aged 15 to 49 are estimated to have experienced physical or sexual violence and spousal violence (Stats SL & ICF, 2020). In 2019, one out of every four reported cases of GBV in the country involved sexual violence against a minor, leading President Julius Maada Bio's decision to declare rape a national emergency (HRCSL, 2020). Adding to the severity of Sierra Leone's GBV landscape, the country has the fourth highest rate of FGM prevalence in Sub-Saharan Africa (Perrin et al., 2024). However, GBV underreporting remains a serious issue, as many survivors opt not to report these incidents due to various factors such as stigma, shame, and economic worries (Schneider, 2019). A notable majority (57%) of Sierra Leoneans believe that domestic violence should remain a private matter to be handled within the family, rather than being addressed as a criminal issue (M'Cormack-Hale & Twum, 2022).

Lastly, in Senegal, 27% of women aged 15 to 49 reported experiencing physical violence since the age of 15, with 55% of these incidents perpetrated by a husband or partner. GBV emerges as the most prevalent yet often hidden human rights violation, as 68% of survivors aged 15 to 49 never disclosed their experiences or sought assistance (WHO Senegal, 2022). Sexual violence against children and the prevalence of child marriage represent significant challenges confronting Senegal, where approximately one in three girls is impacted by the former. Additionally, the pervasive issue of FGM persists, with statistics revealing that 25.2% of women aged 15 to 49 were victims in 2019 (UNICEF Senegal, 2022).

1.2. Gender-based violence in Latin America

GBV continues to plague Latin America (LATAM) at alarming rates. It holds the dubious distinction of having the highest incidence of sexual violence globally perpetrated by non-partners, coupled with the second-highest occurrence of partner or former partner violence (UNDP, 2017). Additionally, LATAM grapples with an alarming prevalence of femicide, evidenced by the staggering figure of 4,640 reported cases in 2019 alone, as documented by the Gender Equality Observatory spanning 24 countries across the region (ECLAC, 2020).

While GBV is a complex and multifaceted issue that defies singular explanations, it is pertinent to note that countries like Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina exhibit shared cultural patriarchal beliefs. These beliefs perpetuate gender stereotypes and prejudices, thus fostering a high social tolerance for GBV and contributing to the region's heightened rates of such violence. A study conducted by Oxfam in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) revealed that 5 out of 10 women perceive violence against women and girls as normal, and an astounding 86% of individuals in the region, both men and women, stayed that they would refrain from intervening if a male friend were to physically assault his female partner (Oxfam, 2018).

To illustrate this issue further, Argentina's National Institute of Statistics and Censuses documented 576,360 cases of GBV from 2013 to 2018 (INDEC, 2019), with 31.9% of women who endured physical violence from their partner or former partner not seeking assistance from their social circle or institutions (Ministerio de las Mujeres, Género y Diversidad, 2022). In 2021 alone, the nation recorded 251 femicides (CSJN, 2021).

In 2022, approximately 30% of Brazilian women reported experiencing some form of domestic violence (DataSenado, 2024). In that year, Brazil documented 1,463 femicides, equating to one case every six hours. Among these, 73% were perpetrated by an intimate partner or former intimate partner of the victim. Yet, the Brazilian Forum of Public Security suggests that there could be significant underreporting regarding this issue (FBSP, 2023).

In Mexico, the alarming toll of GBV continues to devastate communities. In 2023 alone, the country witnessed over 830 femicides. The *Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública* (Executive Secretariat of the National System of Public Security) reported a staggering 258,683 cases of intimate partner violence during the same year, underscoring the pervasive nature of this issue (SESNSP, 2024).

1.3. Gender-based violence multifaceted consequences

GBV inflicts deep and enduring impacts on women's physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health, manifesting in unintended pregnancies, induced abortions,

gynecological complications, and sexually transmitted infections, such as HIV. The ramifications extend further, as GBV amplifies susceptibility to mental health disorders like depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and increases the likelihood of suicide attempts. Studies reveal that women subjected to intimate partner violence are nearly twice as likely to grapple with depression and substance abuse (WHO, 2021)

The effects of GBV extend beyond individual victims, affecting the health and well-being of children within affected families (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008). Exposure to violence during childhood fosters behavioral and emotional disturbances, predisposing them to either perpetrate or suffer violence later in life.

Furthermore, GBV exacts a heavy toll on society, bearing significant social and economic costs. Victims often grapple with isolation, hindered employment opportunities, loss of income, diminished participation in daily activities, and compromised ability to care for themselves and their offspring (WHO, 2024). To address GBV effectively, the formulation and implementation of evidence-based public policies are paramount. Thus, evaluating the evidence-based nature of existing policies becomes imperative in the quest to eradicate this pervasive issue.

2. Case Study Objective and Research Questions

This case study is part of the IDRC's sponsored project entitled ***Innovations to monitor knowledge sharing results – Exploring the Overton platform to track policy influence.*** Within this context, in this case study, our aim is to identify the influence of research on policies related to discussing, addressing, preventing, and responding to GBV in WA and LATAM. Through an examination of the Overton solution, our objective is to address the following inquiries:

1. What evidence can we find on research underpinning **GBV policies/initiatives** in countries from WA (specifically, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Senegal) and from LATAM (specifically, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico)?
 - 1.1. What's the geographical distribution?
 - 1.2. From which research institutions (e.g. Global North, Global South)?
2. How do GBV research influence on policy differ across West African and Latin American countries?
 - 2.1. Are there notable variations in political structures, levels of development, and cultural contexts?
 - 2.2. What's the underpinning research about (e.g. health, sociology, economy, legislation, etc.)?

3. How do international frameworks and agreements influence the adoption and implementation of national policies to prevent and address GBV in WA and LATAM?
 - 3.1. To what extent do online policy research metrics effectively capture the relevant gender debates and contextual issues, such as language nuances, within the field of GBV?
4. What role do local and international research partnerships play in shaping government policies to prevent and address GBV in WA and LATAM?
5. What are the advantages and challenges of using online policy research metrics to assess the research influence on policy, specifically GBV?

To answer these questions, we used a taxonomy and keywords search on Overton, combined with expert knowledge from the authors. The methodology employed is detailed in the next section.

3. Methodological considerations

3.1. Taxonomy and key words

Taxonomy and keywords serve as vital tools in monitoring the influence of research on GBV policy. Our investigation delved into the intricacies of crafting effective keywords, recognizing their pivotal role in improving user experience and maximizing content optimization. In our selection of keywords for queries, we opted to encompass a range of terminologies frequently employed to delineate the same phenomenon: violence stemming from gender disparities.

Table 1. Definitions of the keywords used in the Overton exploration. **Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

Keyword	Definition
Violence Against Women (VAW)	VAW is specifically defined as any form of GBV leading to or likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women. This includes threats, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, regardless of whether it occurs in public or private settings (UN General Assembly, 1993). Consequently, VAW exclusively affects those who identify as women.
Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)	VAWG is a term used to underscore and recognize the heightened vulnerability of women to violence from childhood through various stages of life (World Bank, n. d.).

<p>Gender-Based Violence (GBV)</p>	<p>GBV is a comprehensive term that encompasses any harmful act committed against an individual's will, rooted in socially constructed gender differences between males and females (IASC, 2015). Hence, it extends beyond harm inflicted solely upon women and girls to include individuals with non-conforming sexual orientations or gender identities, who may also be vulnerable to GBV.</p>
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It can be deduced that VAW falls under the umbrella of GBV, which is not restricted solely to women. However, these terms, along with VAWG, are often used interchangeably (Graaff, 2021). Some organizations and academics choose this approach because women and girls disproportionately bear the brunt of GBV, comprising the majority of victims and survivors (Kendra, 2007).

There has been a growing movement advocating for a more intersectional and inclusive understanding of gender violence. Consequently, the term GBV has gained traction as it encompasses all individuals who face violence solely due to their gender and sexuality, including non-gender-conforming men and boys.

Unlike VAW and VAWG, which focus exclusively on women and girls, GBV recognizes and addresses the wider spectrum of gender violence. It highlights the significance of unequal power dynamics reinforced by rigid gender norms, which violate the safety, dignity, and identity of individuals based on their gender identity or expression, regardless of whether they identify as female, nonbinary, or gender non-conforming (SVRI, 2022). Therefore, this study focuses on GBV.

3.2. Step-by-step: Overton exploration

To answer the first and second research questions, we used keyword-based scanning to retrieve documents in the platform containing the search terms in the “search in policy documents” tab.

Considering the range of terminology related to violence driven by gender disparities, as previously outlined in this analysis, we employed Boolean search operators using “gender violence” OR “violence against women” OR “gender-based violence” as keywords. This approach allowed us to gather more comprehensive results from scholarly articles and policy documents. Additionally, we utilized the “abstract” command preceding our keywords. This command specifically directs our search towards policies where the keywords are present in the abstracts or titles, thereby refining our focus on the most relevant documents.

After completing the keyword scanning process, we applied filters to select the countries of Argentina, Brazil and Mexico within the “Source country, state, territory” feature and utilized the “*See scholarly articles these policies cite*” tool. Subsequently, we conducted the same process for Liberia, Sierra Leone and Senegal. Following the collection of data from both groups of countries, we proceeded to analyze the reports.

To address the third research question, we focused on a particular policy exemplar, namely the UN Resolution 1325. Utilizing "Resolution 1325" as a primary keyword, we refined our search by applying the filter "*Source country, state, territory*" on the region of interest, Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico). Subsequently, to delve deeper into the selected policy case, we narrowed our filters solely on Brazil and conducted the same query in Portuguese.

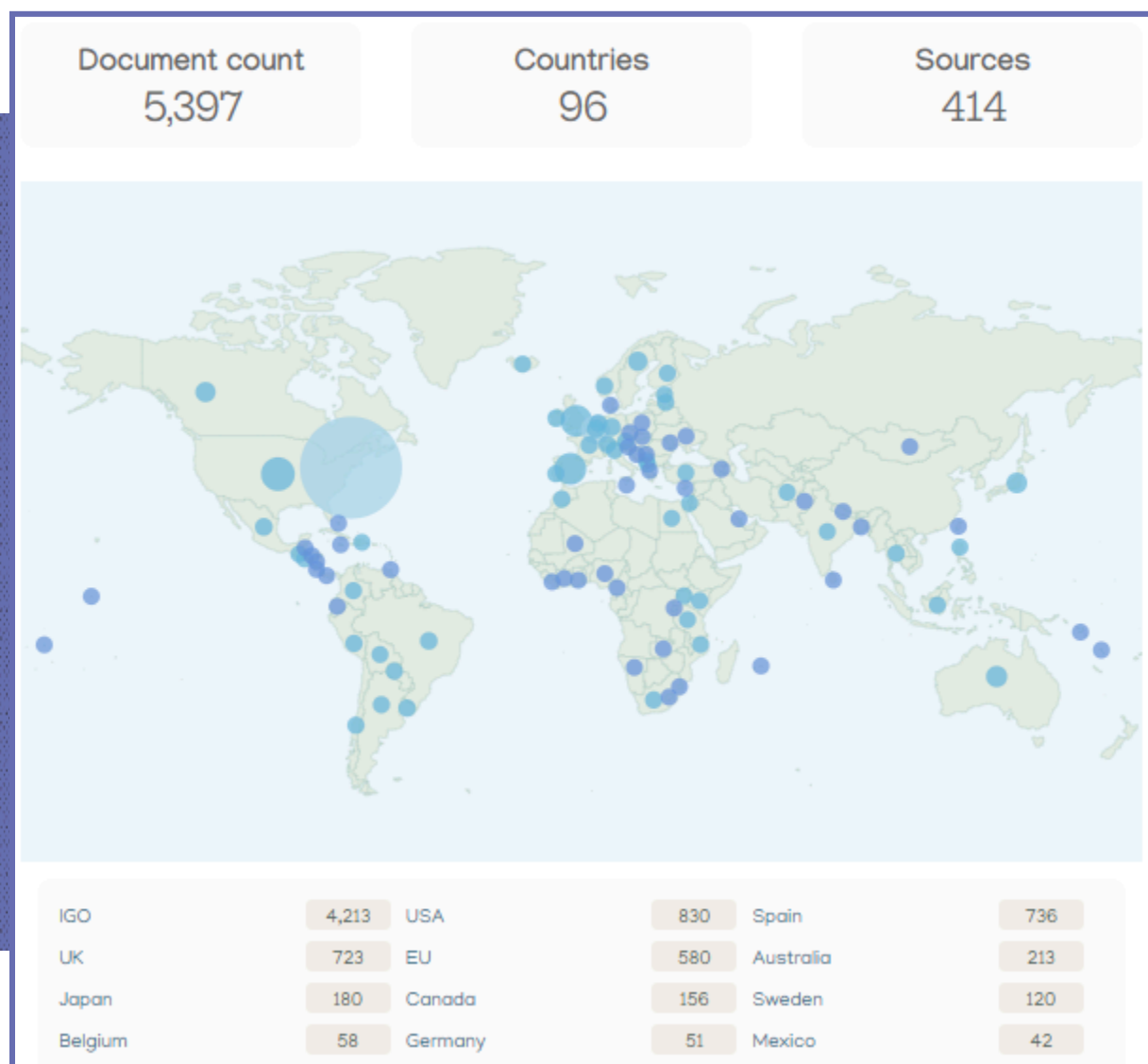
To answer the fourth research question, we employed Boolean search operators to search policy documents using "gender violence" OR "violence against women" OR "gender-based violence" as keywords from WA, and then proceeded to analyze the funders institutions of the cited research.

4. Key findings from the search in policy documents Evidence on GBV research influence on policy in West Africa and Latin America

4.1. Gender-based violence globally

This exploration starts by searching for keywords and refining the search space by successively applying filters to the metadata of the retrieved documents. Our initial keyword search for *abstract: "gender violence" OR "violence against women" OR "gender-based violence"* resulted in **5,397** different policy documents. Figure 1 shows the geographic distribution of these documents. While these documents are dispersed globally, **a majority are concentrated in the Global North**, particularly in the United States, United Kingdom and Europe.

Figure 1. Geographical distribution of policy documents retrieved from the search using abstract: “gender violence” OR “violence against women” OR “gender-based violence”.
Source: Overton platform, May 6th 2024.



From a corpus comprising **5,397** policy documents, a total of **15,982** references were extracted, without any country filters applied.¹ Figure 2 illustrates the geographic distribution of these scholarly articles. Similar to the policy documents retrieved from our search, the majority of the articles are concentrated in the Global North.

This finding aligns with existing scholarly discourse, which highlights the conspicuous absence of scientific evidence in the formulation of policies. This deficiency is notably

¹ A full report on these documents is available [here](#). It is important to highlight that the Overton platform undergoes daily updates, potentially resulting in a fluctuation in the number of documents compared to when the analysis was conducted.

ascribed, in part, to the intricate process of translating various forms of evidence, including scientific findings, into actionable policy measures (Strydom et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the emergence and proliferation of the **“Evidence-Based Policy” (EBP) movement** in the mid-1990s have exerted a more pronounced influence within Anglo-Saxon contexts (Parkhurst, 2017; De Faria, 2022). This phenomenon partially elucidates the dearth of policy documents citing research within the Global South.

Most authors are affiliated with institutions from northern countries, notably: Johns Hopkins University leads with the highest number of articles (**326**), followed by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (**259**), Columbia University (**217**), University of Michigan–Ann Arbor (**204**), Harvard University (**194**), University of Melbourne (**191**), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (**187**), University of Washington (**181**), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (**168**) and World Bank (**163**). Consequently, **none of the top 10 institutions** with the highest number of articles is based in the **Global South**.

Figure 2. Geographical distribution of the scholarly articles cited in the policy documents retrieved from the search using *abstract: “gender violence” OR “violence against women” OR “gender-based violence”*. **Source:** Overton platform, May 6th 2024.



Globally, the topic subject concentration is as follows: Sociology and Political Science (**2,165**), Public Health, Environmental and Occupational Health (**1,563**), Law (**1,406**), Gender Studies (**1,256**), Psychiatry and Mental Health (**1,132**), Clinical Psychology (**1,123**), Applied Psychology (**948**), Health (social science) (**840**), Social Sciences (miscellaneous) (**758**) and Social Psychology (**739**).

As expected, the key topics of the citing policies are “**violence**” (15,428), followed by “**domestic violence**” (14,506) and “**violence against women**” (14,498). These findings are interesting from an analytical standpoint, as they underscore a prevailing trend observed in prior

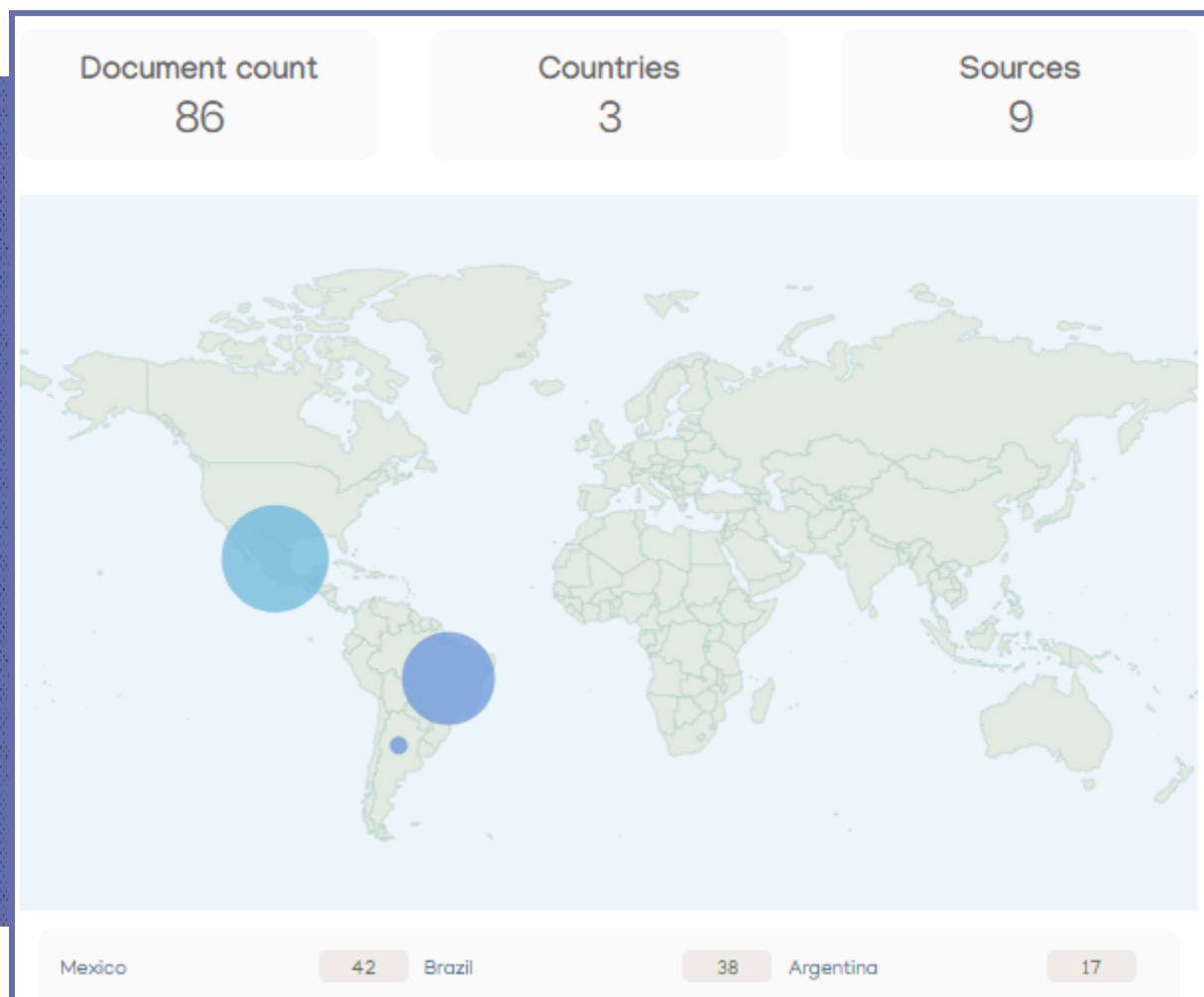
research. The majority of literature on GBV delves into comprehending its various facets, including the risk factors, consequences, and intricacies linked to health, cultural norms, social dynamics, as well as a notable emphasis on exploring the contexts/spaces in which this violence predominantly manifests, notably within domestic settings. For instance, research conducted by UN Women has unveiled that the surge in reports of violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic is attributed largely to the fact that women were "trapped" in one of the most vulnerable environments to suffer violence: within their own homes (UN Women, 2023).

4.1.1. Gender-based violence in Latin America

Following the application of filters for Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, we identified **86** policy documents.²

² A full report on these documents is available [here](#). It is important to highlight that the Overton platform undergoes daily updates, potentially resulting in a fluctuation in the number of documents compared to when the analysis was conducted.

Figure 3. Geographical distribution of the policy documents retrieved from the search using *abstract: “gender violence” OR “violence against women” OR “gender-based violence”*. After applying country filters for Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. **Source:** Overton platform, May 6th 2024.



Most policies are from governments (**72.2%**) and a minority are from think tanks (**27.8%**), as depicted in Table 2. The key topics of the policies are “**justice**” (72), followed by “**politics**” (71) and “**violence against women**” (70).

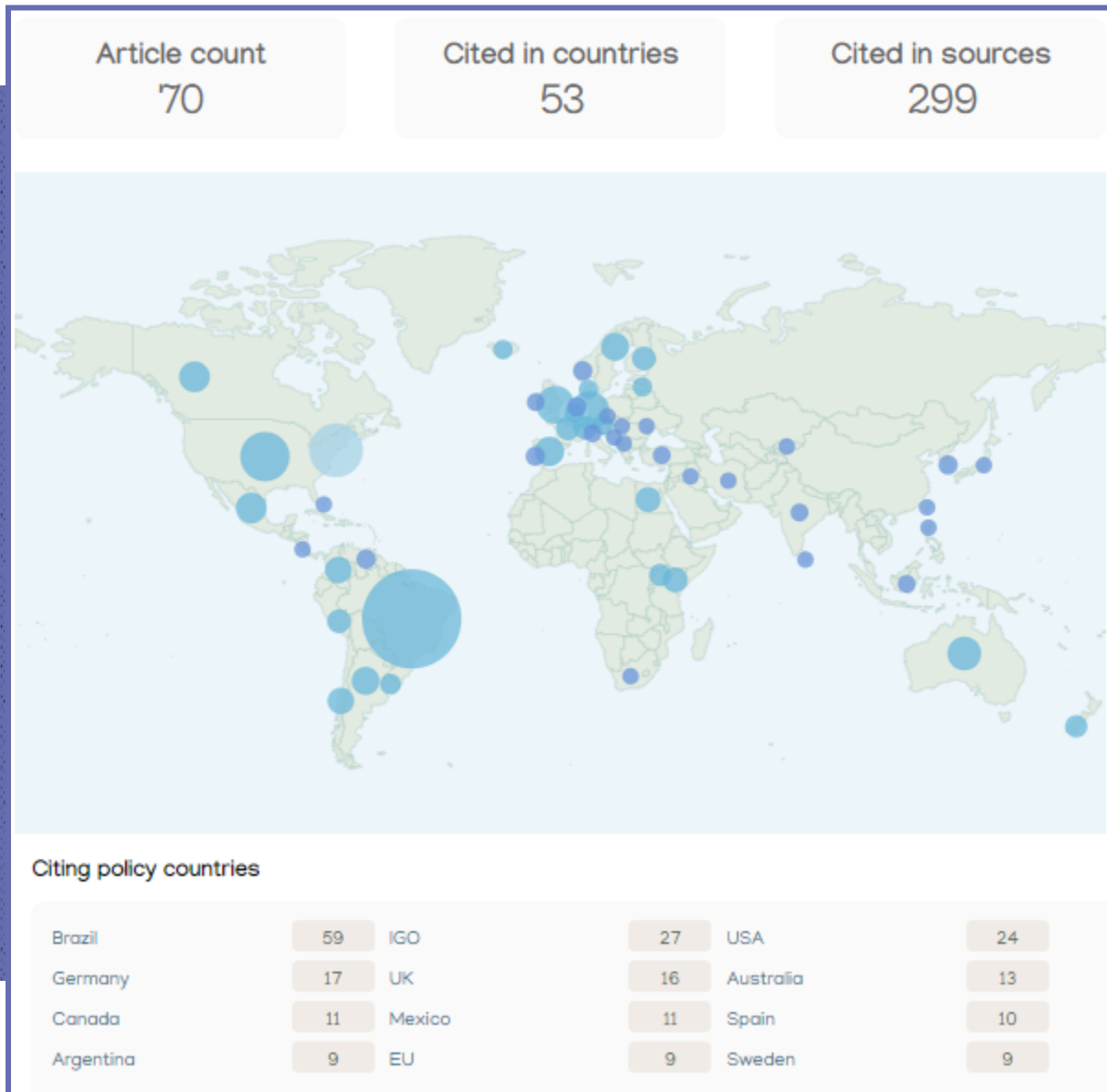
Table 2. Documents per policy source. **Source:** Elaborated by authors using data from Overton, as of May 6th, 2024.

Policy sources	Type	Country	Documents
Congreso General de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos	Government	MEX	27
Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada	Think Tank	BRA	21

Government of Argentina	Government	ARG	15
Government of Mexico	Government	MEX	7
Government of Brazil	Government	BRA	9
Senado Federal do Brasil	Government	BRA	4
CEDEs	Think Tank	ARG	1
Fundar, Centro de Análisis e Investigación	Think Tank	MEX	1
Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos	Government, Research Center	ARG	1

From a corpus comprising **86** policy documents, a total of **70 references** were identified. Figure 4 provides a visual representation of the geographic distribution of these scholarly articles. After filtering for Latin American countries, **the cited research articles are predominantly concentrated in the Global South**, notably Brazil.

Figure 4. Geographical distribution of the scholarly articles when applying filters on countries (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico). **Source:** Overton platform, May 6th 2024.



Furthermore, among the **top 10 institutions** with the highest number of articles, the majority are from the Global South. Only two of these institutions are situated in the Global North: Colgate University and Texas Woman’s University, both located in the United States of America. Seven institutions are from Brazil, one from Mexico, and none from Argentina, as illustrated in Table 3.

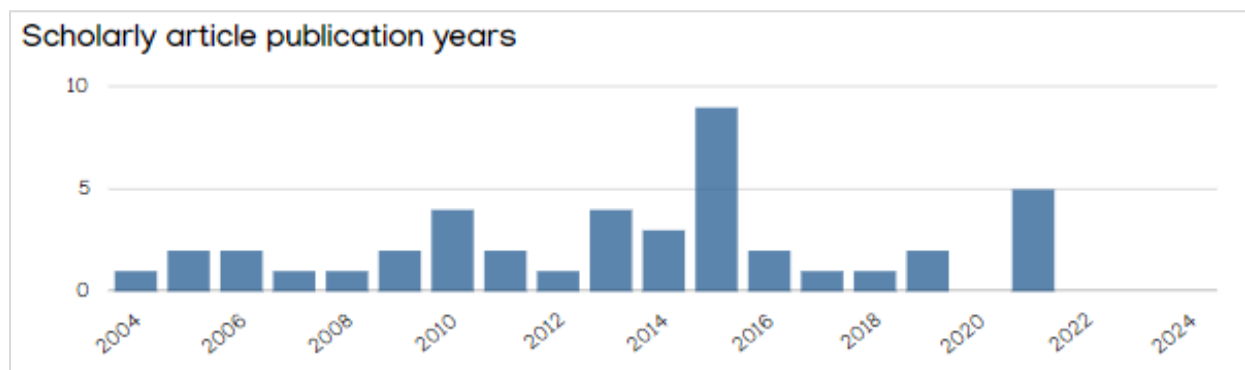
Table 3. Articles per institution based on the authors affiliation in the documents retrieved.
Source: Elaborated by authors using data from Overton, as of 6th March.

Institution	Country	Articles
University of Brasília	BR	4
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina	BR	3
Colgate University	US	2
Federal University of Bahia	BR	2
Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul	BR	2
National Autonomous University of Mexico	MEX	2
Oswaldo Cruz Foundation	BR	2
State University of Campinas	BR	2
Texas Woman's University	US	2
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais	BR	2

Furthermore, upon conducting a **chronological analysis** of scholarly article publication and the corresponding citing policies, it was observed that **2015 stood out as the year with the highest publication rate**, totaling 9 articles. Between 2004 and 2014, there was relative stability in publication numbers, averaging around 2 articles annually. However, a noticeable **decline** occurred from 2021 onwards, with no articles published after that year.

While this trend may seem to indicate a slight decline in gender-related research activity, it is more likely to reflect a delay in the integration of recent research findings into emerging policy documents by policymakers. Additionally, it could signify a lag in the updating process of both policies and scholarly articles on the platform.

Figure 5. Scholarly articles publication years after applying the filters on countries (*Argentina, Brazil and Mexico*). Source: Overton platform, May 6th 2024.



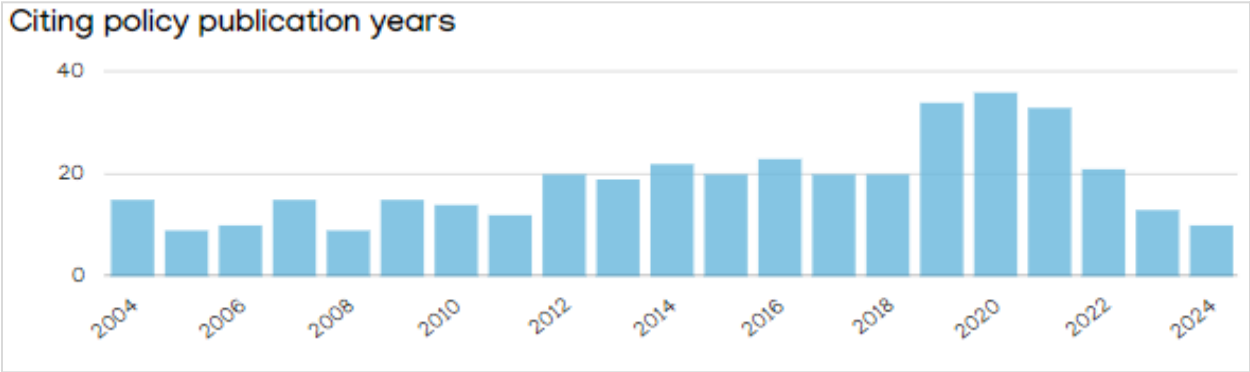
To further illustrate this hypothesis, we conducted a similar search in an academic repository, specifically Google Scholar. Using the same keywords employed in the Overton exploration, and adding new ones for the selected LATAM countries, we retrieved 324,000 results for the period of 2022-2024. As shown in Table 4, the number of publications has progressively decreased over the years, suggesting that integrating new research into repositories may require considerable time.

Table 4. Number of articles retrieved from Google Scholar per year. **Source:** Elaborated by authors, 16th March 2024.

Year	Results
2021	820,000
2020	1,110,000
2015	1,490,000
2010	1,430,000

Conversely, the publication of citing policies has been somewhat stable from 2004 to 2024, with a peak in the years 2018, 2020 and 2021.

Figure 6. Citing policy publication years after applying the filters on countries (*Argentina, Brazil and Mexico*). Source: Overton platform, May 6th 2024.

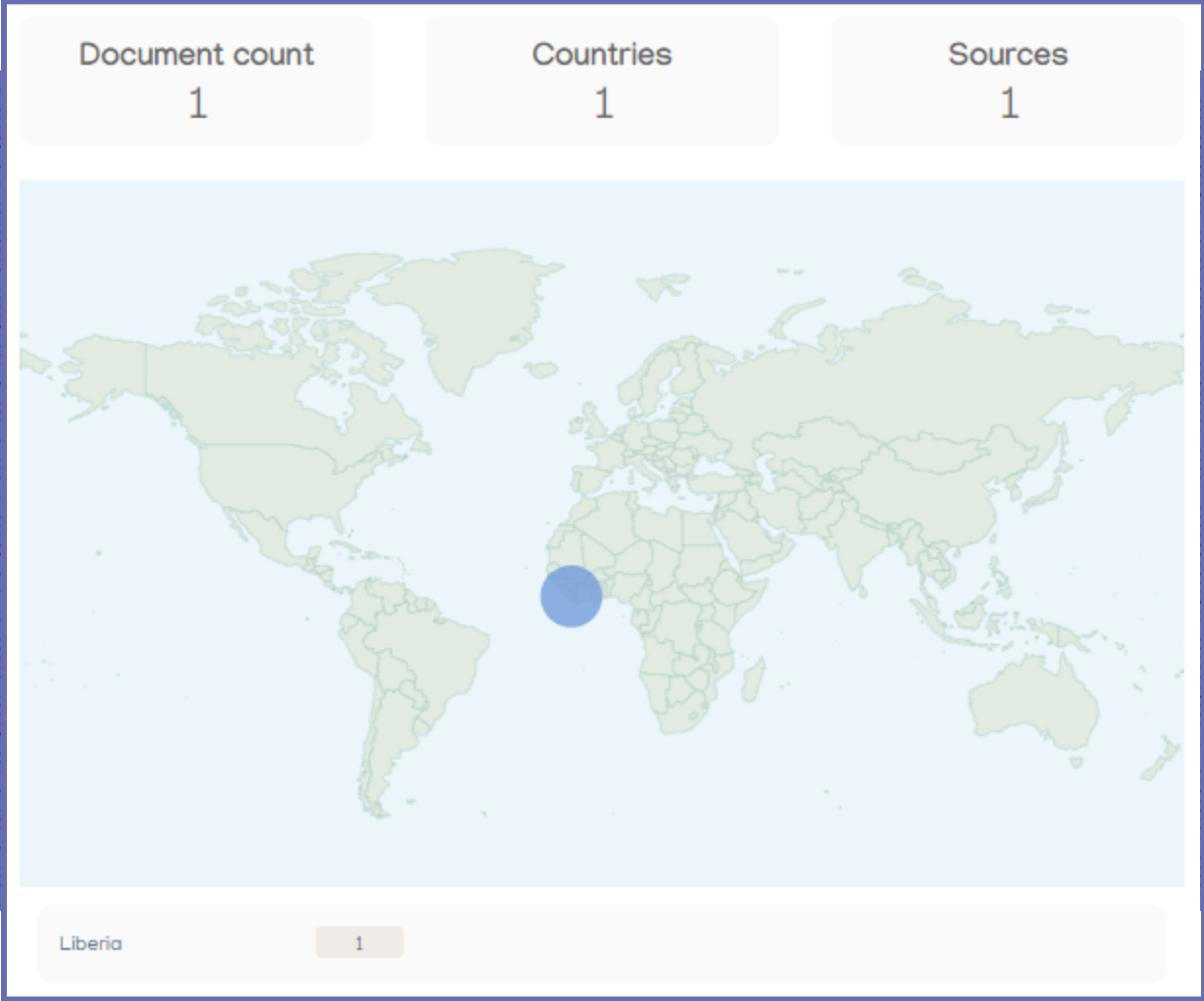


4.1.2. Gender-based violence in West Africa

Following the application of filters for Liberia Senegal and Sierra Leone we identified only **one** policy document.³

³ A full report on these documents is available [here](#). It is important to highlight that the Overton platform undergoes daily updates, potentially resulting in a fluctuation in the number of documents compared to when the analysis was conducted.

Figure 7. Geographical distribution of the policy documents when applying filters on countries (*Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone*). **Source:** Overton platform, May 7th 2024.



The sole policy document located originates from The Presidency of the Government of Liberia. Released on May 22nd, 2019, it is titled "Call for Proposals: Enough Taking Positive Action to End Sexual Gender-Based Violence in Liberia." Notably, this document does not reference any research.

The absence of policy documents from Senegal and Sierra Leone is particularly intriguing. Considering the widespread occurrence and pressing nature of GBV in these nations, alongside ongoing governmental endeavors to formulate policies aimed at tackling the disturbingly high GBV rates, the lack of policy documents in the platform raises questions.

For Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Senegal, numerous highly relevant policy documents were not found on Overton, as illustrated in Tables 5, 6 and 7. To retrieve this document using Google search, we employed a process similar to the queries conducted on Overton. The keywords used were "Gender-based Violence," "Policy," and the country names "Liberia" or "Sierra Leone" or "Senegal". Additionally, the relevance of each document was analyzed by the

authors based on our expertise. These tables, while not comprehensive, serve to highlight the absence of many pertinent policies, including national plans and governmental documents, from the platform. **This limitation impeded our capacity to perform a comprehensive comparative analysis of GBV policy documents and scholarly articles across LATAM and WA.**

Table 5. Relevant Policy documents on GBV in Sierra Leone. **Source:** Elaborated by authors.

Policy document	Year	Source	Brief description
Sierra Leone National Action Plan on GBV	2012	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs	The overall goal of this National Action Plan is to combat GBV through a holistic and strategic approach.
National Male Involvement Strategy For The Prevention Of Sexual And Gender-Based Violence In Sierra Leone	2020	Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs	The strategy seeks to accelerate the prevention of GBV by encouraging the participation of men and boys as change agents and champions of women's and girls' rights.
The Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SiLNAP) II for the Full Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008)	2019	National Government of Sierra Leone	The SiLNAP aims for the effective implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Sierra Leone.

Table 6. Relevant Policy documents on GBV in Liberia. **Source:** Elaborated by authors.

Policy document	Year	Source	Brief description
Liberia National Gender Policy	2010	Ministry of Gender and Development	Its primary goal is to promote gender-equitable socio-economic development and enhance national capacities for improved gender mainstreaming in the national development processes.
Liberia's Second Phase National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019-2023	2019	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection	The overarching objective of the NAP is to ensure the safety, physical and mental well-being, and security of women and girls.

Gender Based Violence Action Plan: Institutional Foundations to Improve Services for Health (IFISH)	2022	Ministry of Health	The project aims to improve health service delivery to women, children, and adolescents in Liberia.
Liberia Country Gender Equality Profile	2021	UN Women, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Data-Pop Alliance	The CGEP uses an evidence-based policymaking approach in order to provide recommendations and key entry points to improve the state of gender equality in Liberia.

Table 7. Relevant Policy documents on GBV in Senegal. **Source:** Elaborated by authors.

Policy document	Year	Source	Brief description
Plan D'action National Mise En Œuvre Au Senegal De La Resolution 1325 (2000) Du Conseil De Securite Des Nations Unies	2011	Ministère du Genre et des Relations avec les Associations féminines Africaines et Etrangères	The NAP represents a pioneering initiative in Senegal, aiming to implement the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in the country for the first time.
Plan D'actions National De Mise En Œuvre De La Résolution R1325 Et Suivantes du Conseil De Sécurité Des Nations Unies Pour Le Sénégal: 2020-2024	2020	Ministere de la Femme, de la Famille, du Genre et de la Protection Des Enfants	This NAP builds upon its predecessor, conducting an assessment of the first action plan (2011-2015), and formulating new strategies and actions to be implemented.
Stratégie Nationale pour l'abandon des MGF 2022-2030	2022	National Government of Senegal	The overall goal of this National Strategy is to combat FGM.

4.2. Geographical differences

As explored in the previous section, our ability to perform a comparative analysis between Latin American and West African countries is hindered by the limited availability of relevant data in the platform. Our inquiry into WA yielded only one policy document and no scholarly

articles. Hence, **this section will concentrate solely on presenting the findings from the selected Latin American countries.**

4.2.1. Latin America (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico)

Table 8. Distribution of articles considering the journals they were published in, the subjects covered by those journals, sources of citing policy and classifications found within the retrieved documents. **Source:** Elaborated by authors using data from Overton, as of April 6th, 2024.

Top 5 Journals	Journal subjects	Sources of citing policy	Classifications of citing policy
Revista Estudos Feministas (9)	Economics and Econometrics (6)	Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (54)	Science and Technology (70)
Cadernos Pagu (4)	Medicine (all) (5)	IZA Institute of Labor Economics (16)	Politics (59)
Maria da Penha em Cena: atores e práticas na produção de justiça para mulheres em situação de violência (4)	Gender Studies (4)	World Bank (14)	Education (57)
International Economic Review (3)	Sociology and Political Science (4)	Institute of Development Studies (13)	Society (52)
Ciência & Saúde Coletiva (2)	Law (3)	NBER (13)	Health (50)

Academic studies in this region tend to prioritize **economic-related matters**, followed by medical issues. Publications related to Economics and Econometrics outnumber those related to Medicine (6 and 5, respectively). Interestingly, it is also notable that the policy sources citing these articles are predominantly related to science and technology (70), followed by politics, education, society, and health.

The results presented by the platform appear to align with the existing literature in the region, albeit not with absolute precision. For instance, upon searching the keyword “*gender-based violence Latin America*” on the Google Scholar platform, the initial articles retrieved predominantly address health and human rights concerns, with only one article centering on economic aspects, originating from the World Bank. Despite a noticeable surge

in interest over the past decades regarding the correlation and impacts of GBV on the economic progress of nations (Morrison & Orlando, 2005; Morrison, Ellsberg, & Bott, 2007; Cameron & Tedds, 2021), further investigation is necessary to determine whether the region has indeed shifted its focus towards comprehending the economic impacts of GBV.

Furthermore, between 2013 and 2016, the UNDP Gender Area of the Regional Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean, in partnership with the Regional UN Women Office and the Millennium Development Goals Fund, spearheaded the first regional mapping of policies and/or national action plans aimed at combating violence against women across the 32 countries of the LAC region (Essayag, 2017). During this comprehensive assessment, it was revealed a noticeable increase in the number of countries that officially endorsed specific national action plans on violence against women, rising from 9 countries in 2013 to 15 in 2016, representing a 66% increase compared to 2013.

The review also underscored one of the critical challenges identified in 2013 regarding the implementation of policies to address violence against women: **the lack of reliable, systematic, and periodic measurement of the prevalence and incidence of such violence.** In essence, the study highlights that there remains a disparity between research that informs policy in the region, which ideally should provide accurate information on the prevalence and incidence of violence against women. Unfortunately, this type of data does not appear to be captured or highlighted by the Overton platform.

4.3. Resolution 1325 influence in policy

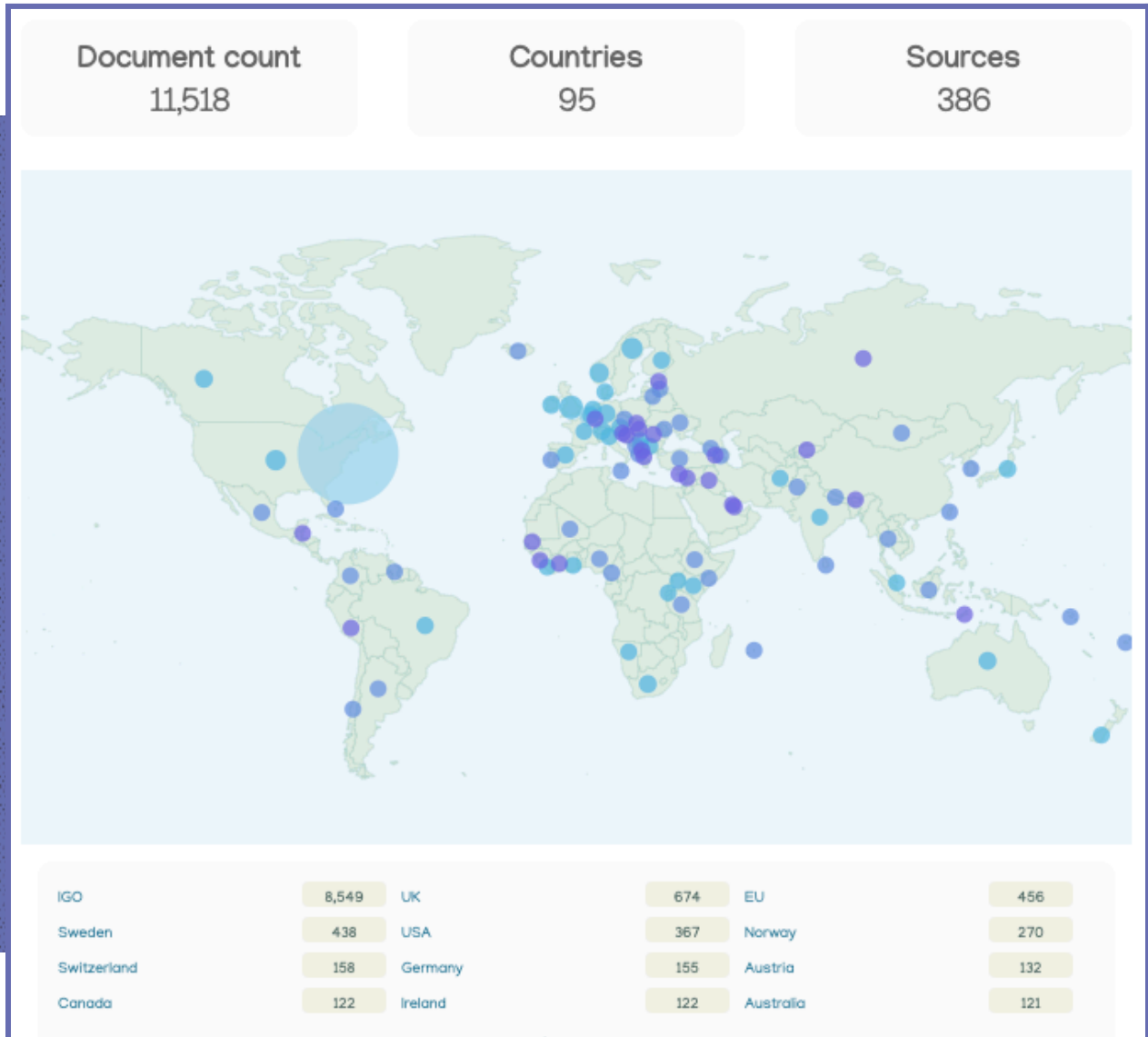
4.3.1. Tracking the influence of Resolution 1325 in policy: Global perspective

UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted at the onset of the 21st century, addresses the impact of war on women and the importance of their participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This landmark resolution emphasizes the critical role women should and do play in “the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and post-conflict reconstruction” (UN, 2000). Resolution 1325 is foundational in promoting gender equality within the peace and security agenda and has led to the development of national action plans and policies aimed at improving the role of women in peace processes globally. Therefore, we decided **to investigate this particular resolution because it plays a significant role in regions experiencing post-conflict periods or facing humanitarian crises**, where GBV is exacerbated by widespread violence and state fragility.

Our initial keyword search for “Resolution 1325” OR “UN Resolution 1325” OR “UN Security Council Resolution 1325” resulted in **11,518** different policy documents. The report with no filters applied can be found [here](#). Figure 8 shows the geographic distribution of these

documents. Most are concentrated in the Global North, particularly from international organizations (IGO) and in European countries.

Figure 8. Geographical distribution of policy documents retrieved from the search using “Resolution 1325” OR “UN Resolution 1325” OR “UN Security Council Resolution 1325”. **Source:** Overton platform, May 19th 2024.

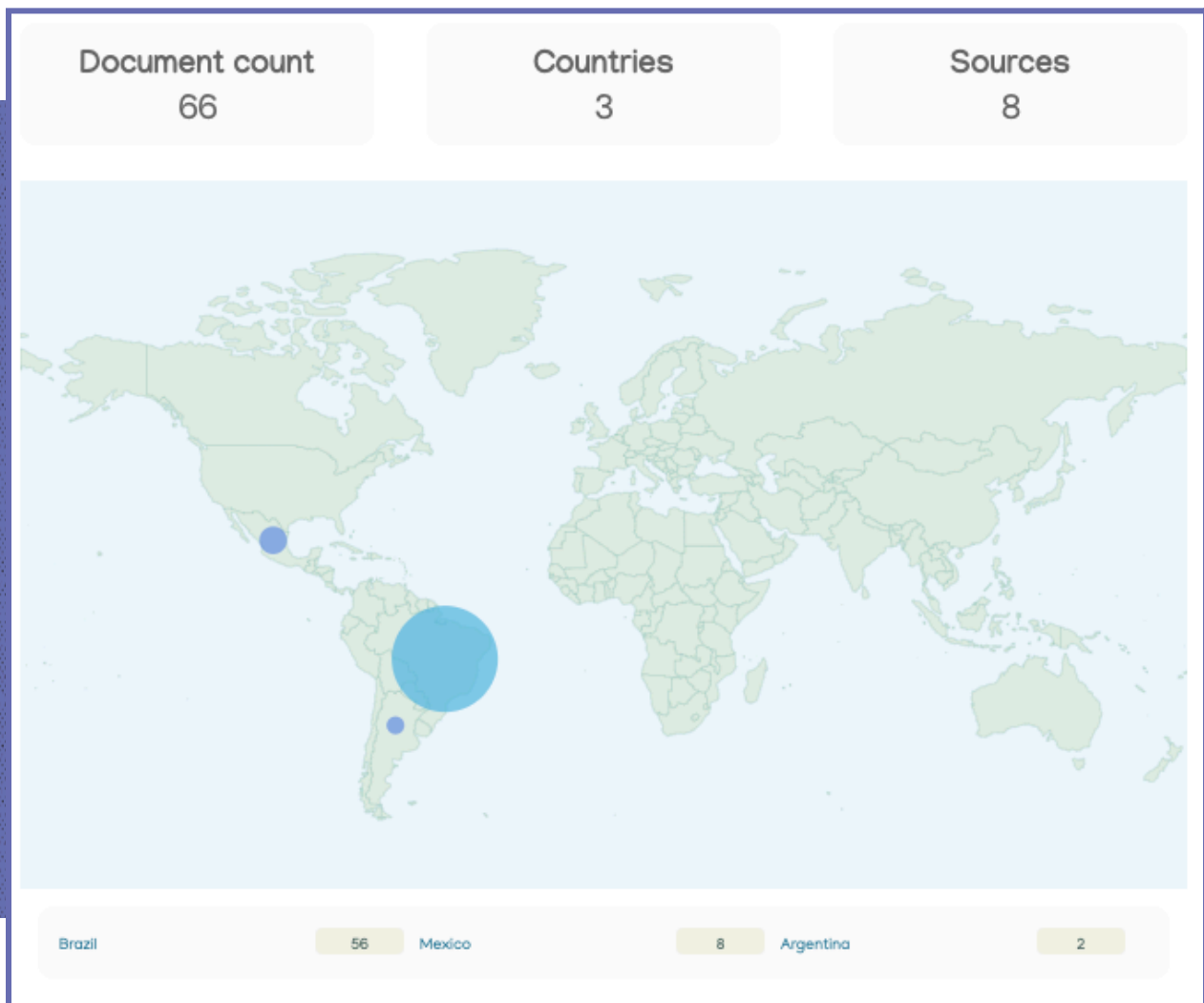


Despite the significance of Resolution 1325 for territories experiencing conflict, post-conflict periods or humanitarian crises, our investigation reveals a **concentration on the Global North**, which is a concerning discovery but not unexpected, as it aligns with the current state of affairs in the field.

4.3.2. Tracking the influence of Resolution 1325 in policy within the Brazilian context

After refining our search and filtering for Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, we identified **66** policy documents. From these, only a mere **12%** (8) cite research. The report containing these findings can be accessed [here](#). Figure 9 illustrates the geographical distribution within Latin America.

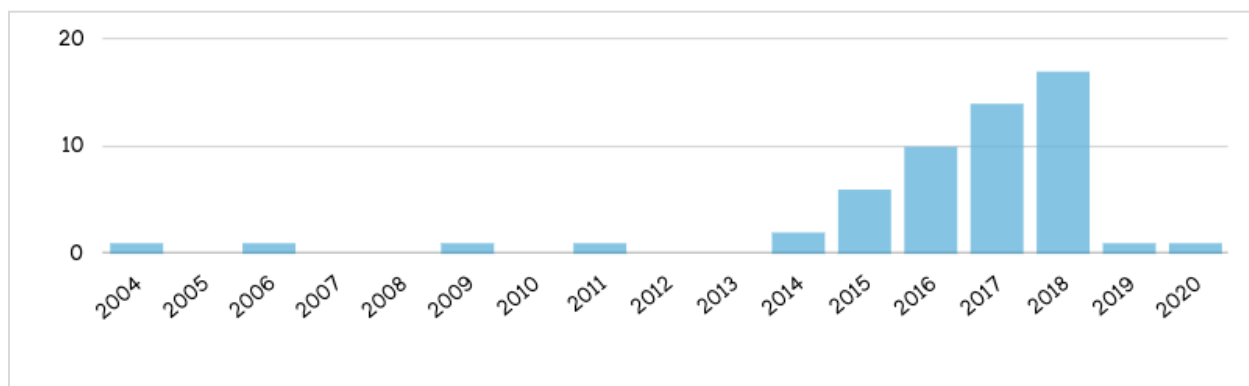
Figure 9. Geographical distribution of policy documents retrieved from the search using “Resolution 1325” OR “UN Resolution 1325” OR “UN Security Council Resolution 1325” after applying filters on Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. **Source:** Overton platform, May 19th 2024.



Following this, we proceeded to narrow down our research focus exclusively to **Brazil**. This decision was based on the authors' expertise in the local context and the substantial number of policies identified within the country, which amounted to **56 documents**, of which only **8%** cite research. This figure represents more than two-thirds of the total policies identified in the entire region, as outlined in the [report](#).

One of the most notable and accurate observations highlighted by Overton in its reports pertains to the **publication years of the policies**. Notably, there is a discernible increase in the number of policies published following 2014, followed by an abrupt decline after 2018, as indicated in Figure 10.

Figure 10. *Publication years of policy documents retrieved using the keyword “Resolution 1325” OR “UN Resolution 1325” OR “UN Security Council Resolution 1325” in Brazil.* **Source:** Overton platform, April 3rd 2024.



These findings are consistent with Brazil's political landscape and its gender agenda. During the governments of **Lula** (2002-2012) and **Dilma Rousseff** (2012-2016), both leftists from the Workers Party, many important milestones were achieved in gender policies. While a comprehensive list of achievements would be extensive for this paper, we will focus on highlighting two major milestones.

In 2006, during Lula's presidency, the **Maria da Penha** Law was enacted. This law identifies any action or omission based on gender that results in death, injury, physical, sexual, or psychological suffering, as well as moral or property damage, as **domestic and family violence against women**. Subsequently, in 2015, under Dilma Rousseff's administration, **femicide** and **discrimination against women** were incorporated into the Brazilian criminal code (Martins Teixeira, 2019).

The tenure of **Dilma Rousseff** marked a historic moment in the country's history. As the first female president, her political agenda placed a significant emphasis on gender issues across various sectors, including health and violence prevention. However, Dilma's presidency was interrupted by an impeachment in 2016, which resulted in her being replaced by her vice-president, Michel Temer (2016-2018).

Despite Dilma's presidency being marked by numerous challenges, her leadership style and abilities were often scrutinized in gendered ways, resulting in **misogynistic portraits** of her in the media and in political debates (Jalalzai et al., 2022; Dantas & Rubim, 2018). Following Rousseff's impeachment in 2016, Brazil's progress in gender policies began to decelerate. For instance, as soon as Temer assumed the presidency, the number of women occupying political posts in his government was reduced (de Oliveira, 2017).

In 2018, Brazil elected the far-right politician Jair Bolsonaro, whose campaign and mandate (2018-2022) were characterized by a clear anti-women's rights agenda. Consequently, during

his campaign, the Brazilian Women's movement emerged as the primary activist opposition to his election. Through the #EleNão movement (#NotHim in English), women initiated widespread protests across all 27 states (de Souza, 2020).

Moreover, Bolsonaro positioned himself as a figure who would restrain the advancement of gender policies in order to combat the **"gender ideology."** This term was coined by Brazilian right-wing groups to refer to educational and political activities perceived to "threaten" Christian and traditional family values (Corrêa & Faulhaber, 2022).

Hence, it was evident that, if elected, his government would be characterized by anti-gender policies from the outset. On the very day of the government's inauguration, the former Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights Damara Alves declared: *"Attention, attention. This is a new era in Brazil. Boys wear blue and girls wear pink,"* invoking symbols associated with the anti-gender movements (Rezende, 2022).

The anti-gender agenda did not merely remain confined to political discourse; it extended to the appointment of ultra-conservative representatives for gender-related political matters and the restructuring of governmental frameworks to align with this new agenda (Martins Teixeira, 2019; Corrêa & Faulhaber, 2022). Moreover, there was a notable decrease in the allocation of funds for policies concerning women, even in cases where the budget was available.

This historical context sheds light on the fluctuations observed in policy publication years and underscores the complex interplay between political events and gender-focused initiatives within Brazil. Both of these aspects are areas in which Overton could effectively capture, offering the possibility to tackle the Resolution 1325 influence in Brazilian gender policies and helping develop a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics shaping gender policies in the country.

Policy sources analysis

When analyzing the sources of the policy documents retrieved, it becomes apparent that the vast majority are from the Instituto Igarapé, a Brazilian think tank (**44**), whereas only **six** are sourced from the Brazilian Government, with an additional **six** stemming from three different think tanks. Given that the query was conducted in English, it is unsurprising that think tanks, which typically publish bilingual works in both Portuguese and English, would prominently feature in the results.

Table 9. Policy documents per policy document source in Brazil. **Source:** Elaborated by authors from analysis on Overton data, April 3rd 024.

Source	Type	Documents
Instituto Igarapé	Think tank	44
Government of Brazil	Government	6
Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada	Think tank	3

BRICS Policy Center	Think tank	2
Centro Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais	Think tank	1

Interestingly, upon analyzing the sources of publication for these six documents, it is evident that **all of them belong to the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**. One of these documents is **Brazil's National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP-WPP)**. This aligns with Brazil's external agenda, as there are no armed conflicts within the country that would typically necessitate the application of the Resolution 1325. Therefore, this demonstrates Brazil's interest and commitment from a foreign policy perspective. However, considering some of the shortcomings of the Overton platform noted in previous analyses—such as the lack of GBV-related policy documents in West Africa, a region heavily affected by GBV and home to several post-conflict and peace-building countries—it can be inferred that **not all policies, whether internal or external, fully reflect the influence and application of this Resolution in the country**.

Moreover, two additional points need to be highlighted. First, according to Overton, **Brazil's NAP-WPP cites two additional articles**: “*Women Transforming Conflict: A Quantitative Analysis of Female Peacemaking*” (Stone, 2014) and “*Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace*” (Nilsson, 2012). This indicates that not only Resolution 1325 itself influences Brazil's foreign policy, but also other scientific research.⁴

Second, attempts to access the NAP-WPP via the “Download PDF” or “Read full text on www.gov.br” options result in broken links and messages indicating that the page or article no longer exists (see Figure 11). These articles can only be accessed through traditional search platforms like Google. The same issue occurs with the other five Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents presented by the Overton platform. This presents a challenge for researchers who may find it difficult to access specific documents for more detailed analysis.

⁴ Access detailed information on Brazil's National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security via this [link](#).

Figure 11. Error when attempting to access Brazil's National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security document through the link provided by the Overton platform. **Source:** Government of Brazil.



Policy subject areas analysis

Within its database, Overton adds subject area tags to policy documents, allowing each document to be associated with more than one tag. We used this feature to further investigate the UN Resolution 1325.

Expanding upon the foundational Resolution 1325 (2000), the UN Security Council's Resolution 2242 (2015) urged member states to develop domestic strategies for the effective implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda (Government of Brazil, 2022). As mentioned above, Brazil has prioritized its commitment to WPS through the establishment of the NAP-WPP in 2017, by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017).

Therefore, in our exploration of Overton, we conducted a targeted search for this pivotal policy document to assess the use of the platform. In the “*Conflicts, war and peace*” subject area (as indicated in Table 10) we located Brazil’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, which poses further evidence of Overton efficacy as a research tool.

Table 10. Policy documents per policy document subject areas. **Source:** Elaborated by authors from analysis on Overton data, April 3rd 2024.

Source	Documents
Politics	50

Society	40
Politics>government	36
Science and technology	32
Crime, law and justice	27
Crime, law and justice>law	22
Education	18
Science and technology>social sciences	16
Crime, law and justice>crime	15
Conflicts, war and peace	14

Cited institutions analysis

Only **one of the cited institutions in the retrieved policy documents is from the Global South**, specifically FIOCRUZ in Brazil, as illustrated by Table 11. This raises questions regarding the authors' origins and whether the cited works from these institutions truly delve into the Brazilian context. If neither of these factors is true, this finding could be a cause for concern.

Table 11. Policy documents per policy document source in Brazil.⁵ **Source:** Elaborated by authors from analysis on Overton data, April 3rd 2024.

Source	Country	Citations
Harvard University	US	8
Columbia University	US	5
University of Cambridge	UK	5
London School of Economics and Political Science	UK	4
Oswaldo Cruz Foundation	BRA	4
University of British Columbia	CA	4
University of Pittsburgh	US	4
University of Southern California	US	4
University of Warwick	UK	4
Yale University	US	4

⁵ Note that these are just examples of some of the institutions. A full list of institutions can be found in the full report at this [link](#).

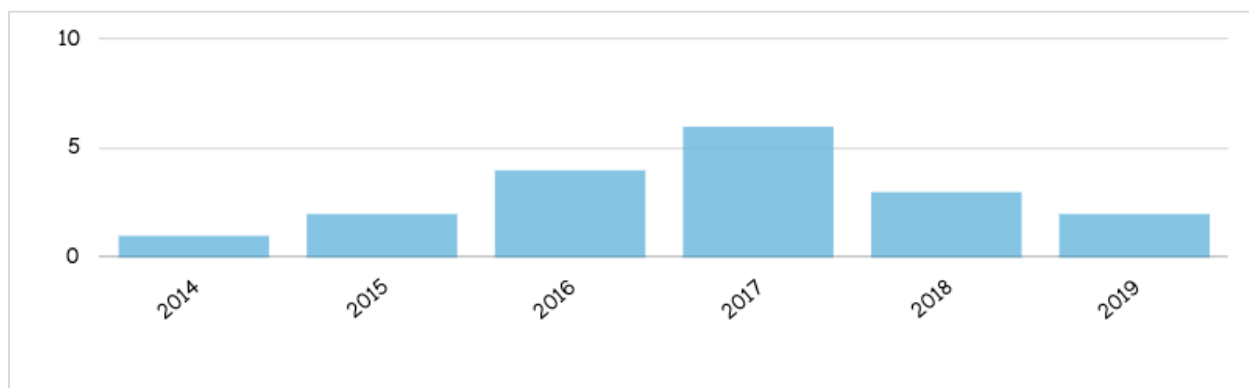
4.3.3. Portuguese query: Tracking the influence of Resolution 1325 in policy within the Brazilian context

To address the research question, "To what extent do online policy research metrics effectively **capture relevant gender debates** and contextual issues, such as language nuances, within the field of gender-based violence?", we decided to replicate the previous section's query, this time using the mother tongue of our country of interest: Portuguese. Hence, instead of searching using keywords in English, we searched using "Resolução 1325" OR "Resolução 1325 da ONU" OR "Resolução 1325 do Conselho de Segurança da ONU".

Without applying the filter for Brazil, our search resulted in **86 policy documents**. The documents show an interesting but expected geographical spread: East Timor (25), Brazil (18), IGOs (16), Portugal (13), and Angola (7). Since Portuguese is one of the languages used by the United Nations (though not an official one), all the other countries are native Portuguese speakers. Notably, with East Timor, Brazil, and Angola included, it is evident that the **majority of documents originate from the Global South** (52, specifically). The report containing these findings can be accessed [here](#).

When applying the filter to Brazil, our search results in **18 policy documents**, but citing only 4 sources. The report containing these findings can be accessed [here](#). Following a similar trend to the English query, most of the policy documents were published in 2016 and 2017, a year before the election of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, as indicated in Figure 12.

Figure 12. *Publication years of policy documents retrieved using the keyword "Resolução 1325" OR "Resolução 1325 da ONU" OR "Resolução 1325 do Conselho de Segurança da ONU" in Brazil.* **Source:** Overton platform, May 19th 2024.



Additionally, following the same trend as in the English query, most of the documents were published by think tanks, specifically Instituto Igarapé (12), followed by the *Centro Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais* (Brazilian Center for International Relations) (2), and then the Government of Brazil (2). When analyzing the documents published by the Brazilian government, we found that **both documents also belong to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**: specifically, Brazil's NAP-WPP, followed by another document apparently related to the

United Nations Security Council. While the UN-related document does not cite any articles, the NAP-WPP cites two articles, as mentioned in the previous section.

Table 12. Policy documents per policy document source in Brazil. **Source:** Elaborated by authors from analysis on Overton data, May 19th 2024.

Source	Type	Documents
Instituto Igarapé	Think tank	12
Government of Brazil	Government	2
Centro Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais	Think tank	2
Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada	Think tank	2

Regarding the documents published by the Instituto Igarapé, they not only clearly demonstrate research aimed at implementing this Resolution in Brazil's national context, as indicated by documents such as "*Implementando a agenda sobre Mulheres, Paz e Segurança no Brasil*" (Implementing the agenda on Women, Peace and Security in Brazil), but this last publication is also **cited by four other documents classified as policy documents**. However, upon closer analysis of these four other policy documents, it becomes evident that all of them are also documents published by other think tanks.

Moreover, following the same trend as presented in the English query, the institutions cited by these documents are predominantly from the Global North, led once again by Harvard University, but with a large representation of US-based institutions, as illustrated in Table 13. This reinforces the observation regarding the authors' origins and whether the cited works from these institutions truly delve into the Brazilian context.

Table 13. Policy documents per policy document source in Brazil (Portuguese query).⁶ **Source:** Elaborated by authors from analysis on Overton data, May 19th 2024.

Source	Country	Citations
Harvard University	USA	5
Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul	BRA	4
University of Warwick	USA	4
Columbia University	USA	3
London School of Economics and Political Science	UK	3
Princeton University	USA	3
University of Southern California	USA	3
University of Tennessee at Knoxville	USA	3

⁶ Note that these are just examples of some of the institutions. A full list of institutions can be found in the full report at this [link](#).

University of Washington	USA	3
Yale University	US	4

4.3.4. Comparative analysis

Overall, In both the English and Portuguese queries for the Resolution 1325, similar results were observed. Government-related publications in both cases originate from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a polyglot institution that produces much of its content in both Portuguese and English. In this sense, it is possible to conclude that **Overton's platform is unable to comprehensively capture policies published by different Brazilian government agencies or ministries**. Using the case of Brazil as an example, it can be assumed that the platform only captures documents related to bodies responsible for maintaining the country's foreign policy, precisely because these bodies adopt and use the platform's primary language (i.e. English).

Additionally, the majority of publications in both cases are from think tanks, particularly the Instituto Igarapé, an important Brazilian non-governmental organization working in the field of violence against women. Indeed, they are responsible for developing the [EVA platform](#), whose primary goal is **to comprehensively document all forms of violence against women**. This includes expanding beyond traditional definitions such as homicides and injuries to encompass psychological, sexual, and moral violence. The platform aggregates data from various sources, including the health system (through records of medical attention for non-lethal injuries or certifications of violent deaths) and the security system (through complaints and reports from security and justice forces). To present a comprehensive view, the EVA platform categorizes its data into five types of violence, guided by definitions from the Brazilian Maria da Penha Law. It also presents comparative data for Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, allowing for a regional analysis of the problem of violence against women in different Latin American countries.

In this regard, Overton's inclusion of this institution's publications illustrates a certain effectiveness of the platform. However, we argue that labeling these documents as “**policy documents**” may **not be the most accurate classification**, as they predominantly consist of independent research aimed at influencing and recommending public policies.

Finally, **the finding that the primary cited institutions** (i.e. institutions of the articles cited by these policy documents) are **predominantly from the Global North raises significant concerns**. These concerns extend not only to the **origins of the authors** (which **cannot be systematically determined**, as we only have information on their affiliated institutions), but also to the **lack of regional diversity within Overton**; the platform often exhibits a disproportionate representation of countries from the Global North.

4.4. The role of local and international research partnerships in shaping government policies to prevent and address GBV in West Africa

Upon filtering for the selected West African countries and scrutinizing the funders of the referenced research in the obtained policy documents, it became apparent that the majority of them originate from the **Global South**. Particularly noteworthy are two funders from Brazil, one being a national funding agency and the other a state-level one based in São Paulo.

The CNPq's **ProAfrica** program, established through Decree MCT No. 363 on July 22, 2004, stands out as a significant initiative by the Brazilian government. Its aim is to enhance the scientific and technological capabilities of African countries by financing the mobility of scientists and researchers engaged in projects deemed strategically relevant and of top priority for scientific and technological cooperation (CNPq, 2014). We infer that this program might have influenced the fact that 20% of all funders institutions are based in Brazil.

Only one funder institution is based in Africa, the African Development Bank Group (Ivory Coast), while two are from the US (Basic Energy Sciences and United States Agency for International Development).

Table 14. Policy documents per funders of cited research. **Source:** Elaborated by authors from analysis on Overton data, May 20th 2024.⁷

Funder	Country	Documents
African Development Bank Group	IC	1
Basic Energy Sciences	USA	1
Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment, United States Agency for International Development	USA	1
CNPq (National Council for Technological and Scientific Development, Brazil)	BRA	1
FAPESP	BRA	1
NERC	-	1

We examined the paper titled "Evaluation of the Performance of National Health Systems in 2004-2011: An Analysis of 173 Countries" published in the PLOS ONE journal. This article is part

⁷ A full report on these documents is available [here](#). It is important to highlight that the Overton platform undergoes daily updates, potentially resulting in a fluctuation in the number of documents compared to when the analysis was conducted.

of a project undertaken by Oxford Policy Management (OPM) with financial support from the African Development Bank. Notably, we found that none of the authors are from the African continent (Sun et al. 2017).

Additionally, Overton **does not allow to systematically identify co-authored papers, which could be useful for analysis partnerships**. This hinders a more comprehensive and detailed analysis of how research partnerships influence government policies aimed at preventing and combating GBV. For instance, it would help determine whether these policies are primarily influenced by Western ideals that may not align with the specific realities and cultures of the Global South, if there is a brain drain occurring from the Global South to the Global North, among other crucial factors necessary to address such a question.

5. Learnings on using online metrics to track research influence on gender-based violence policies

5.1 Advantages and Opportunities

5.1.1. Overton as a tool

Overton has proven to be a unique platform with exceptionally valuable tools. One standout feature is its provision of **detailed descriptions for scholarly articles**, encompassing not only their country and institutions of origin but also their subject of research, the journal in which they were published, the year of publication, authors, and many other characteristics. This function allows the systematic organization of a vast quantity of articles simultaneously, a task that would be highly demanding to accomplish manually.

Precisely because of its detailed document descriptions, Overton **facilitates comparative analysis across different countries and regions**, offering insights into variations and similarities in policy approaches and research trends across diverse contexts. For instance, we aimed to compare research on GBV underpinning public policies in Latin American countries, specifically Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, as well as in West African nations such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Senegal.

Additionally, by analyzing the chronological trends of publication years for public policies, we **uncovered insights into the political landscape** surrounding gender-based violence in Brazil. The “Publication years of policy documents” report graph was the starting point of an in-depth analysis of governmental changes in the country, providing context for understanding shifts in policy priorities and approaches over time.

As Overton undergoes **constant updates**, we observed that the results for the same queries typically change on a daily basis. This dynamic nature is a strength of the platform, demonstrating its ability to stay current with policy and scholarly article publications. However, it also presents certain challenges, which we will explore in the next section.

5.1.2. Research-specific findings

The results of our research indicate that in LATAM, specifically in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, the majority of GBV policies originate from governmental sources (72.2%), while a smaller proportion are from think tanks (27.8%). The primary focus areas of these policies are justice, politics, and violence against women. Most of the cited research within these policies is concentrated in the Global South, particularly in Brazil. These studies predominantly address economic issues and medicine.

Our examination of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 reveals that, although this policy is particularly relevant for regions undergoing conflict, post-conflict periods or humanitarian crises, there is a notable concentration of public policies citing the Resolution in the Global North. In Brazil, we observed a significant increase in the number of policies referencing this Resolution after 2014, followed by a sharp decline post-2018. This trend correlates with Brazil's political changes: substantial gender policies were implemented during the administrations of Lula and Rousseff, whereas Bolsonaro's election in 2018 marked the beginning of an anti-women's rights agenda. This context underscores the dynamic nature of policy trends and the intricate relationship between politics and GBV in Brazil, a dynamic effectively captured by Overton.

When examining the query of the UN Resolution 1325 in Portuguese, the findings are similar to the ones in English. Government-related publications in both cases originate from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a polyglot institution that produces much of its content in both Portuguese and English. This suggests that Overton's platform may not comprehensively capture policies published by various Brazilian government agencies or ministries. Overton's inclusion of Instituto Igarapé's publications demonstrates the platform's effectiveness in capturing, understanding, and addressing violence against women in Brazil, particularly from a data-driven approach. However, we argue that labeling these documents as "policy documents" may not be the most accurate classification, as they primarily consist of independent research aimed at influencing and recommending public policies. Moreover, the finding that the primary cited institutions are predominantly from the Global North raises significant concerns. These concerns extend not only to the origins of the authors (which cannot be systematically determined, as we only have information on their affiliated institutions), but also to the lack of regional diversity within Overton.

Box 1 encapsulates the **key lessons** we, as researchers, gleaned from utilizing the Overton tool to track the impact of GBV research on policy.

Box 1: Main Learnings as Researchers

1. Overton's research proved invaluable to our work, **uncovering significant insights**. Notably, the discovery that most academic research in Latin America focuses on economic issues was surprising, especially considering that gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most pressing gender-related topics in the region.
2. Overton's detailed description of policies and scholarly articles enables an in-depth analysis of the current state of evidence-based policies. Consequently, this exercise not only provided valuable insights on GBV in LA and WA but also proved to be a useful tool for future research projects focusing on public policy.
3. Considering the language factor within the platform, as evidenced by the mini-case study of Brazil and the United Nations's Resolution 1325, it becomes clear that Overton faces challenges in locating or incorporating publications into its database that originate from Ministries or Government agencies not publishing in English. Essentially, the tool primarily gathers documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in both the country's native language and English, limiting the understanding of the real impact of policies like Resolution 1325 beyond foreign affairs and specifically within the national context.
4. As researchers, we find Overton a valuable tool and plan to employ it in future endeavors, with the goal of monitoring our potential influence on public policy.

5.2 Challenges and Limitations

Numerous challenges and limitations emerged while utilizing the Overton platform for this case study. In this section, we offer **recommendations** aimed at enhancing key features to significantly improve Overton's usability and utility.

5.2.1. Operational limitations

While the platform provides the valuable feature of **sharing report results with readers**, its overall performance is hampered by operational issues. As discussed in the previous section, Overton undergoes daily updates, including changes in report results, leading to fluctuations in the number of documents compared to when the analysis was conducted. Even when applying filters such as "Published before" or "Added before" to select a specific date, the results often fail to align with previous queries. Therefore, the reports only provide updated results rather than static data from the query date.

During our exploration of Overton we encountered **discrepancies in the numbers** presented in the report tool "Policy source types," which includes categories like Government, IGO, Think Tank, or Other. These figures often failed to reconcile with the total number initially provided in the "Document count" section at the beginning of the report, raising questions about the accuracy and interpretation of these statistics.

Still the topic of report improvements, the platform would see significant enhancement if the **"Save as image"** option not only included the image itself but also captured the numerical indicators from the maps and graphs. This would offer users a more detailed and informative representation of the data, while also ensuring higher quality images.

Moreover, it is surprising that Overton, with its primary aim of providing comprehensive analysis of policy documents, **does not feature essential legal frameworks** such as the "Convention of Belém do Pará" on its platform. This hinders the platform's ability to offer a truly comprehensive understanding of policy landscapes, especially in areas where legal frameworks play a crucial role — such as GBV.

5.2.2. Research-specific challenges

Overton boasts a highly informative help [webpage](#) packed with useful content, which proved invaluable for our case study as beginners users of the platform, enriching our understanding of its functionality and tools. However, to better serve researchers like ourselves, the **help webpage** could augment its utility by incorporating more advanced content akin to the queries we have made during our exploration of the platform.

The platform would also greatly benefit from providing **clearer definitions of document types**. In fields like gender studies such precision is crucial. We suggest adding a section to the help webpage that not only offers definitions but also provides concrete examples of various document types users may encounter while using Overton. Examples could include "Publication," "Blog post," "Working paper," "Clinical guidance," "Transcript," "Legal documents," "Periodical," "Press Release," and others. This addition would enhance users' understanding and navigation of the platform's diverse content.

It is noteworthy that the main challenge we encountered with Overton was **determining the optimal search path to conduct our query** and locating the specific data we were seeking for our case study. Initially, we utilized the following query path:

1. Search in "policy documents" - abstract: "gender violence" OR "violence against women" OR "gender-based violence"

5,232 results (policy documents)

2. Explore/See scholarly articles these documents cite

15,922 results (scholarly articles)

3. Filter: Cited by policy from (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico)

840 results

Following this procedure, we proceeded to analyze the data from scholarly articles to gain insights into the underlying research supporting policy documents from the selected countries. However, we later discovered that the 840 articles results corresponded to scholarly articles cited by policy documents from selected countries, but they were not restricted by the keyword used in the search. Uncovering this was not intuitive and presented significant obstacles in finalizing the research.

After adapting our methodology, we encountered another limitation of the platform. This time, our search yielded **only one policy document from the chosen West African countries** despite existing many other relevant ones. Consequently, our ability to perform a comparative analysis between LATAM and WA was hindered.

However the effectiveness of our query was hindered by the use of the term "abstract", this could potentially signify a **gap** in the platform, but it may also imply an **overemphasis** on policies from **Global North** countries. An initial analysis could suggest challenges stemming from **insufficient governmental digitalization** or **political issues** that impede access to policy documents from West African countries. However, it is improbable that this is the case. As previously noted, we were able to identify at least three policies from each of the selected West African countries using a similar keyword scanning structure on Google search. This suggests that there is inadequate representation of policies originating from the Global South, particularly from WA, in the Overton database.

Furthermore, Overton does not provide the option to conduct a **descriptive analysis exclusively for the policy documents that cite research**, restricting the analysis to all the policy documents resulting from the search. We see this as an area for improvement, as we believe that the platform's utility would significantly enhance if this option were available, enabling researchers to specifically examine the characteristics of evidence-based public policies.

Additionally, **the Overton platform lacks the capability to systematically identify co-authored papers**; this can only be done manually. This limitation is significant from an analytical perspective because being able to identify the number of policy documents and articles authored by multiple individuals, their countries of origin, and their affiliations would allow for a **much more comprehensive and detailed analysis of how research partnerships influence government policies** aimed at preventing and combating GBV. For instance, it would help determine whether these policies are primarily influenced by Western ideals that may not align with the specific realities and cultures of the Global South, if there is a brain drain occurring from the Global South to the Global North, among other crucial factors necessary to address such a question.

Finally, we were unable to **investigate the impact of scholarly articles authored specifically by authors from the Global South** on policy. This is due to the country filter being based on institutional affiliation rather than the nationality of the authors. As a result, there is an inherent bias in the platform towards articles from the Global North, as the majority of them originate from this region, regardless of the query focus or applied filters. This hinders the ability to conduct an analysis with a decolonial lens, which would focus on academic production from and about the Global South.

For future research endeavors, we suggest **replicating the investigation into Research Question 3**: "How do international frameworks and agreements influence the adoption and implementation of national policies to prevent and address GBV in WA and Latin America?" with a focus on the **West African context**, particularly Liberia, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. This recommendation is grounded in the notable influence of **UN Resolution 1325** in these regions, where the Women, Peace and Conflict agenda holds considerable significance.

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