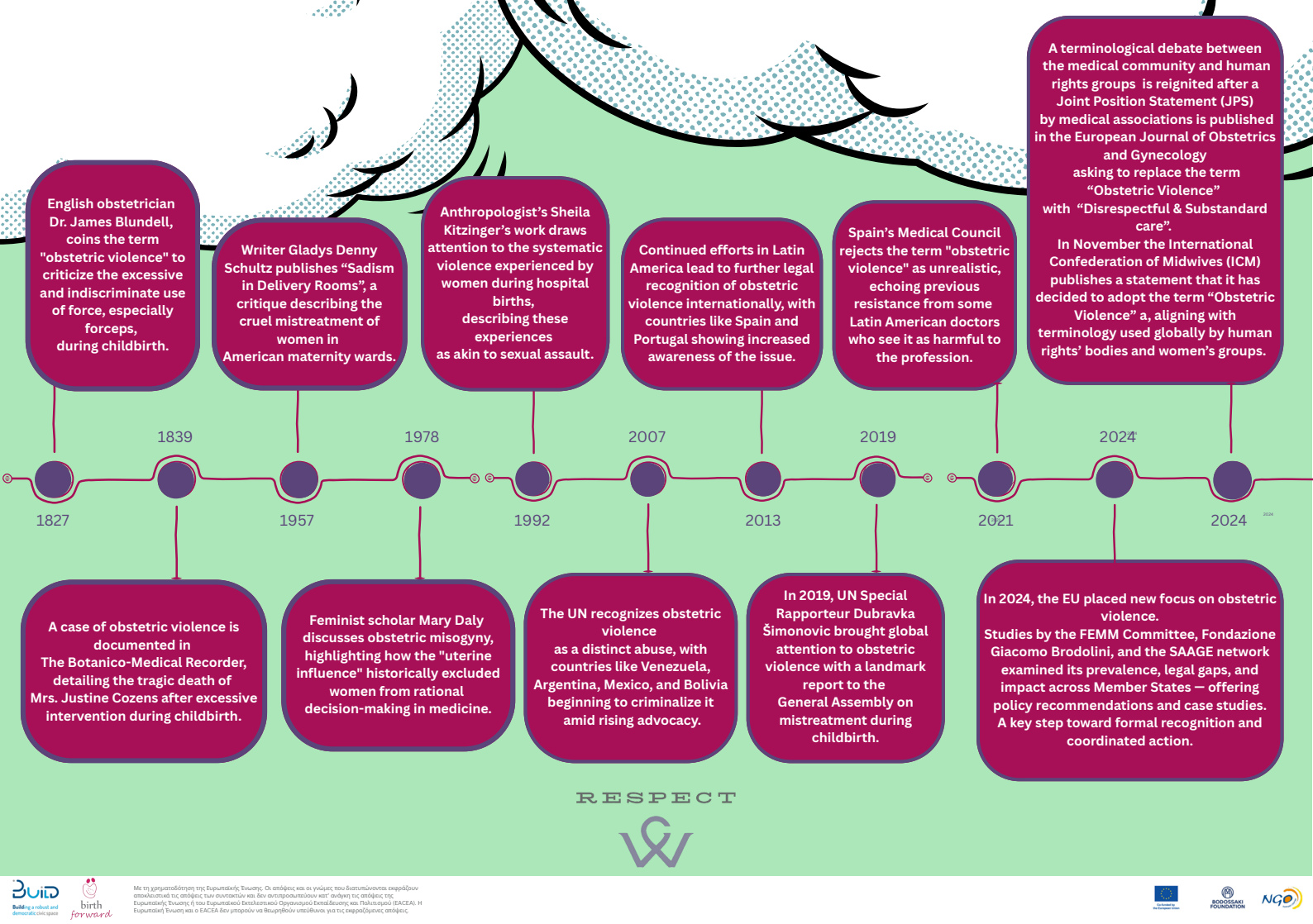


# What is **Obstetric violence?** History of the term

RESPECT





English obstetrician Dr. James Blundell, coins the term "obstetric violence" to criticize the excessive and indiscriminate use of force, especially forceps, during childbirth.

Writer Gladys Denny Schultz publishes "Sadism in Delivery Rooms", a critique describing the cruel mistreatment of women in American maternity wards.

Anthropologist's Sheila Kitzinger's work draws attention to the systematic violence experienced by women during hospital births, describing these experiences as akin to sexual assault.

Continued efforts in Latin America lead to further legal recognition of obstetric violence internationally, with countries like Spain and Portugal showing increased awareness of the issue.

Spain's Medical Council rejects the term "obstetric violence" as unrealistic, echoing previous resistance from some Latin American doctors who see it as harmful to the profession.

A terminological debate between the medical community and human rights groups is reignited after a Joint Position Statement (JPS) by medical associations is published in the European Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology asking to replace the term "Obstetric Violence" with "Disrespectful & Substandard care".  
In November the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) publishes a statement that it has decided to adopt the term "Obstetric Violence" a, aligning with terminology used globally by human rights' bodies and women's groups.

1827

1839

1957

1978

1992

2007

2013

2019

2021

2024<sup>1</sup>

2024<sup>2024</sup>

A case of obstetric violence is documented in The Botanico-Medical Recorder, detailing the tragic death of Mrs. Justine Cozens after excessive intervention during childbirth.

Feminist scholar Mary Daly discusses obstetric misogyny, highlighting how the "uterine influence" historically excluded women from rational decision-making in medicine.

The UN recognizes obstetric violence as a distinct abuse, with countries like Venezuela, Argentina, Mexico, and Bolivia beginning to criminalize it amid rising advocacy.

In 2019, UN Special Rapporteur Dubravka Šimonovic brought global attention to obstetric violence with a landmark report to the General Assembly on mistreatment during childbirth.

In 2024, the EU placed new focus on obstetric violence.  
Studies by the FEMM Committee, Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini, and the SAAGE network examined its prevalence, legal gaps, and impact across Member States — offering policy recommendations and case studies. A key step toward formal recognition and coordinated action.

RESPECT

