

Out of the Shadows Index: Brazil

The Out of the Shadows Index

Every year, more than 400 million children are exposed to child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA). The [Out of the Shadows Index](#), developed by [Economist Impact](#), reviews the performance of 60 countries in addressing CSEA, assessing each country's approach to prevention and response. The countries covered by the research are home to 85% of the world's children. The regional report for Latin America and the Caribbean focuses on Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela and Jamaica.

Trends across Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean ranks above the global average in its response to child sexual exploitation and abuse, which covers elements like the provision of support and recovery services for victims and survivors, and child-friendly justice proceedings. This performance is driven by generally strong judicial systems, social protection and child-friendly medical care systems.

By contrast, the region is weaker with regards to measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse of children, which includes national action plans and effective legislation. There are substantial gaps in the legislation across the majority of countries in the region with regards to the criminalisation of all forms of child sexual abuse and exploitation. The majority of countries also lack rehabilitation programmes for those who commit sexual offences against children to reduce reoffending. No country included in the Index was found to have mandatory rehabilitation programmes for children and young people who have committed sexual offences.

Only four countries have developed a national plan to combat sexual violence against children (Mexico, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala), though only Brazil had an identifiable source of funding to implement its national plan. National plans developed previously in Argentina, Colombia, Jamaica, Peru and Venezuela had all expired by 2022.

Child-friendly court processes that avoid retraumatising child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse are beginning to be adopted across the region. Brazil, Guatemala and Mexico have introduced programmes to train judges and prosecutors in child-friendly procedures, trauma and sexual abuse, but the research found limited evidence of this approach in other countries. Confidence in justice and law enforcement remained low compared to other regions covered by the Index.

Context and findings for Brazil

While the Out of the Shadow Index does not focus on the scale of sexual violence against children, it is worth noting recent statistics on the scale of the issue in Brazil. Between 2017 and 2020 there were 179,277 registered cases of child rape, with 80% of victims being girls, according to [figures](#) released by UNICEF and Brazilian Public Security Forum. Of all cases of rape, children are the victim in 70% of cases, [according](#) to the FEAC Foundation.

Out of the 60 countries covered by the Out of the Shadows Index, Brazil ranked 11th globally, scoring 65.7 out of a possible 100. This makes Brazil the highest scoring country covered by the research within Latin America and the Caribbean.

Brazil ranks first globally on its laws against child sexual exploitation and abuse, although there is space for improvement in that Brazil does not have a 'close in age' exemption which excludes from prosecution consensual sexual activity between underage children as long as both children are of a similar age. And unlike its regional neighbours Colombia, El Salvador, Peru and Venezuela, Brazil has also not abolished limitation periods for sexual violence against children.¹ The limitation period for these crimes is 20 years, and begins running when the victim turns 18 years old.

In terms of responding to cases of sexual violence against children, Brazil scores particularly highly for initial response (hotlines and reporting) and regarding the overall quality of police capacity. The country is one of the three included in the Index to have a specialised policy agency dedicated to child sexual exploitation and abuse (the others being El Salvador and Guatemala), as well as one of three to have police units specialised in online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

On the other hand, Brazil performs well in terms of education on CSEA - it is part of only a minority of countries in the region which provide community-based education for parents specifically focusing on child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Further resources:

- [The Out of the Shadows Index: global ranking and data](#)
- [Regional report on Latin America](#) and [country briefings](#)
- [Methodology used in developing the Index](#)
- [Violence against children in Latin America and the Caribbean 2015-2021](#)

¹ Overall within the region, the countries that have abolished the statute of limitations (SoL) for most child sexual abuse offences are: El Salvador (in 1997), Nicaragua (in 2007), Peru (in 2018), Ecuador (in 2018), Chile (in 2019), Colombia (in 2021), Venezuela (in 2021). Elsewhere, debates have arisen over abolishing the statute of limitations in [Argentina](#), [Mexico](#) and [Paraguay](#).