

PRESS RELEASE - embargoed until 07/03/2023 at 08:01 (Buenos Aires)

Argentina ranked bottom in Latin America and 50th globally on child sexual violence prevention and response

[7 March 2023] Argentina is among the lowest ranking countries both globally and in Latin America in terms of its performance in preventing and responding to child sexual exploitation and abuse, according to a new report released today by Economist Impact which compares the laws and policies of nine countries in the region.

The [Regional Briefing for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) reviews Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela. The research is part of the Out of the Shadows Index (OOSI), which is the first global assessment of how countries worldwide are addressing sexual violence against children. It covers 60 countries, home to around 85 percent of the world's children. Out of the 60 countries covered by the Out of the Shadows Index, Argentina ranked 50th globally, scoring 41.5 out of a possible 100. Argentina is also the lowest scoring country covered by the research within Latin America and the Caribbean, coming in at 9th place regionally.

Other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are ranked as follows: **Brazil** (1st regionally, 11th globally), **Mexico** (2nd regionally, 12th globally), **Guatemala** (3rd regionally, 17th globally), **Colombia** (4th regionally, 19th globally), **Jamaica** (5th regionally, 20th globally), **El Salvador** (6th regionally, 21st globally), **Peru** (7th regionally, 46th globally), **Venezuela** (8th regionally, 47th globally).

Countries were scored out of 100 and ranked according to indicators that broadly measure whether legislation is in place to protect against sexual violence against children, if prevention policies and programmes exist, governments' capacity and commitment, if support and recovery services are available to abuse victims and survivors, and whether justice processes are adapted to the needs of children who have suffered sexual violence.

The [national briefing for Argentina](#) summarises the data and findings for Argentina. The following presents some of the main features:

According the Index, there are other **substantial gaps in Argentina's criminal law** with regards to sexual exploitation and abuse of children (CSEA) including:

- Unlike its regional neighbours Colombia, El Salvador, Peru and Venezuela, **Argentina has not eliminated the statute of limitations for sexual violence against children**. There is now [debate](#) in Argentina about eliminating the SoL altogether for CSEA. In June 2022, the Movimiento Derecho al Tiempo Argentina submitted to the Chamber of Deputies the draft bill "[Right to Time](#)" (Case number 0051-P-2022) proposing the elimination of the SoL for the various crimes of child sexual violence, changes to the legal terminology used for these crimes, and the establishment of a truth and reparations commission to investigate these crimes nationwide.¹
- While the **age of sexual consent** is set at 13, there are different offences and punishments that vary according to the age of the child, rather than a single universal age of consent that prohibits any sexual activity with children.

¹ Overall within the region, the countries that have abolished the statute of limitations 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 [Mexico](#) and [Paraguay](#).

- According to the Index, Argentina **does not explicitly criminalise all forms of sexual violence** against children in order to meet international standards. For example, ‘corruption of a minor’ is not explicitly described and so could be interpreted differently by judges and prosecutors.
- Argentinian law also fails to set a **higher age of consent when a person committing an offence is in a position of trust or authority over a child**. This would help to protect older children.

National policies and capacity

- The country has allowed its **national action plan** on addressing child sexual exploitation and abuse to expire.
- There are **significant failings** in terms of the measures in place in Argentina to **respond to child sexual exploitation and abuse**. There is **no specialised police agency** dedicated to child sexual exploitation and abuse in the country and no specialised police units to respond to **cases online**. These are necessary for providing child- and victim-friendly training and investigations.
- By contrast, **medical provision for victims of sexual abuse was a strength**. In addition, Argentina is one of only two countries within the region included in the OOSI that offers abortion to girls in cases where their sexual abuse resulted in pregnancy.

The regional report on Latin America concludes that, “countries [in the region] that rank highly on some indicators, may perform poorly on others. Any area of weakness diminishes the child protective system overall. Latin American and Caribbean countries have great strengths, albeit with wide variations between them. The child protective environment can therefore be further improved.”

Leo Ratledge, Co-Director of the Child Rights International Network (CRIN), which coordinated the launch of the regional report, said: “The Out of the Shadows Index shows the need to urgently continue the reform that is already underway across the region to prevent sexual violence against children. This will mean updating legislation on the abuse of children and developing support and response services that genuinely meet the needs and demands of survivors of child sexual abuse.”

Responding to the regional report’s findings, **Vicente Suarez from [Red de Sobrevivientes de Abuso Eclesiástico de Argentina](#)**, a national survivor-led network in Argentina, said:

“The figures show a worrying and growing reality in our society. As the report indicates, national legislation has serious flaws that harm victims and benefit their abusers. We must not forget that Argentina is a broad and diverse society, also with regard to its institutions and to the autonomy of the judiciary in each part of the country, where victims are often unable to access justice, their testimonies are relativised, and the rights of each survivor are violated. Structural change is necessary so that every inhabitant of Argentina has real access to a high-quality judicial system.”

Meanwhile, **Sonia Almada, director of [ARALMA](#) and Derecho al Tiempo Argentina**, a national NGO focusing on combatting child sexual violence and abolishing the statute of limitations for related crimes, said: “Argentina owes a historical debt to the issue of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, which is a serious public health issue. It is a complex problem that requires a systematic and comprehensive plan. The lack of sufficient public policies and of access to justice resulting from the expiry of limitation periods for these crimes revictimises survivors. In response, at ARALMA we presented a bill to modify the criminal statute of limitations, change the terminology used for these crimes and create a truth commission that can investigate sexual crimes against children. In relation to this, we are soon going to organise, jointly with CRIN, an international summit on truth commissions for these crimes.”

- ENDS -

Notes to the editor

About how to report on sexual violence against children

There is often confusion surrounding the use of different terminology to describe sexual violence against children. Misuse of terminology can risk stigmatisation, trivialisation and in worst cases be counter-productive in the work to prevent child sexual violence. We encourage you to review the [Luxembourg Guidelines](#) (available in Spanish) to ensure appropriate language is used when reporting on this issue.

Resources for Argentinian readers

- [Línea 102](#) de atención y orientación telefónica para NNA (provincia de Buenos Aires).
- [Línea 137](#) de asistencia y acompañamiento para víctimas de violencia familiar y/o sexual y asesoramiento para el acceso a la justicia.
- Línea gratuita 0800 222 1717 para denunciar el abuso sexual contra NNA desde cualquier lugar del país.
- [Qué hacer si sospechás que tu hija o hijo es víctima de abuso sexual](#)

About the Out of the Shadows Index

The Out of the Shadows Index (OOSI) is a global review of the laws, policies and services that governments must have in place to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse against children. It covers 60 countries worldwide, home to approximately 85 percent of the world's children. The Index was commissioned by Ignite Philanthropy and developed by Economist Impact, the policy research and analysis division of The Economist Group. outoftheshadows.global

Access the [global ranking and data](#), the [regional reports](#) and the [methodology](#). Also access the [briefings](#) for each Latin American country.

About Economist Impact

Economist Impact is the policy research and analysis division of The Economist Group. It partners with corporations, foundations, NGOs and governments across themes including sustainability, health and the changing shape of globalisation to catalyse change and enable progress. For 75 years, Economist Impact has shed light on policy choices through benchmarks, economic and social impact analysis, white papers, forecasting and scenario modelling. impact.economist.com

About Ignite Philanthropy

Ignite Philanthropy is a donor collaborative fund that takes advantage of philanthropy's unique role, flexibility, and ability to act quickly to empower partners, allies and grassroots voices to bring an end to violence against children and young people. www.ignitephilanthropy.org

About the Child Rights International Network (CRIN)

CRIN is a human rights organisation with a focus on children's rights. We challenge the status quo because the norms that dictate children and young people's place in society need radical change. We press for rights - not charity - and campaign for a genuine shift in how governments and societies view and treat under-18s. Through using research, policy, advocacy and art, we encourage people to think critically about the world. www.crin.org