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Brazil ranked 1st in Latin America and 11th globally on child sexual violence prevention and response

[7 March 2023] Brazil is among the highest-ranking countries globally and first in Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of 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, Brazil ranked 11th globally, scoring 65.7 out of a possible 100. Brazil is also the highest ranking country regionally.

Other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are ranked as follows: **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), **Argentina** (9th regionally, 50th 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 Brazil](#) summarises the data and findings for Brazil. The following presents some of the main features:

Brazil ranks first both regionally and globally in terms of having **legislation that criminalises sexual activity with children**. Child-friendly court processes to avoid re-traumatising child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse are used. Brazil has also introduced **programmes to train judges and prosecutors in child-friendly procedures**, trauma and sexual abuse - one of only three countries (including Guatemala and Mexico) found to do this.

However, areas of improvement exist such as:

- Brazilian law prohibits sex and sexual acts for any person below 14, even if all the parties involved are under 14 and the act is consensual. **National legislation does not have a 'close age' exemption** which excludes from prosecution consensual sexual activity between underage children as long as both children are of a similar age.
- Unlike its regional neighbours Colombia and El Salvador, **Brazil has still not abolished the statute of limitations** for sexual violence crimes against children.¹ The limitation period for these crimes is 20 years, and begins running when the victim turns 18 years old.

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 (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](#).

- Brazil is one of the few countries in the region to have a national plan specifically addressing child sexual exploitation and abuse, and it is the only country found to have an **identifiable source of funding** to implement its plan.
- Brazil performs well in terms of **education on child sexual exploitation and abuse** - 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.
- In terms of responding to cases of sexual violence against children, **Brazil has hotlines that link with law enforcement**, hotlines that function online or on mobile platforms, and separate emergency response centres specifically for children.
- Brazil is one of the three countries in the region which have a **specialised policy agency dedicated to child sexual exploitation and abuse**, the others being El Salvador and Guatemala.
- In Brazil **police units that specialise in child sexual violence** are part of the National Police of each state in the federation. It is also one of three Latin American countries included in the Index to have **police units specialised in online child sexual exploitation and abuse**, and supported by forensic teams.

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.”

Responding to the national report’s findings, **Itamar Batista Gonçalves, Advocacy Manager at [Childhood Brazil](#)**, part of the World Child Foundation, led by Queen Silvia of Sweden, stated:

"Although the Brazilian efforts, in which Childhood Brazil has been actively participating, have placed the country first in Latin America and the Caribbean and 11th in the world ranking, the Out of the Shadows Index demonstrates that we have a long way to go in taking dignified care of our children and adolescents who are victims or witnesses of violence, both to qualify the responses that the country has already been offering and also to design prevention policies, a category in which Brazil ranks 25th worldwide. Implementing programmes and services for potential perpetrators of sexual violence is one of our biggest challenges when it comes to secondary prevention”.

Responding to the regional report’s findings, **Sara Oviedo, former Vice-Chair of the United Nations’ Committee on the Rights of the Child** said:

"Some of the data undoubtedly stand out, as do the countries in question, but this is the reality of Latin America, with big contrasts both within a single country and between countries, where we encounter polar opposites with regard to child protection. Meanwhile, sexual violence in all its forms: harassment (unwanted sexual advances), sexual abuse (unwanted sexual touching) and rape (sexual penetration without consent) continue to increase without a clear and definitive decision by States to fund public policies that prevent and combat sexual violence."

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.”

- 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](#) to ensure appropriate language is used when reporting on this issue.

Resources for Brazilian readers

- [Disque 100](#): a helpline to report abuse, receive advice and support.
- [SaferNet](#): an anonymous and confidential counselling helpline for violence online, including against children, how to report it and access the necessary health services.

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 [summaries](#) for each country in Latin America.

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](#)