

PRESS RELEASE - embargoed until 07/03/2023 at 06:01 (Bogotá)

## Colombia ranked 19th globally and fourth in Latin America on child sexual violence prevention and response

[7 March 2023] Colombia is among the higher ranking countries 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, Argentina, 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, Colombia ranked 19th globally, scoring 59.7 out of a possible 100. Colombia is also the fourth highest scoring country covered by the research within Latin America and the Caribbean.

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), **Jamaica** (5th regionally, 20th globally), **El Salvador** (6th regionally, 21st globally), **Peru** (7th regionally, 46th globally), **Venezuela** (8th regionally, 47th globally) and **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 Colombia](#) summarises the data and findings for Colombia. The following presents some of the main features:

- Colombia scored the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean and 13th globally with regards to its **legislation in place to prevent child sexual exploitation and abuse**.
- Colombia is one of only a number of countries in Latin America covered by the Index to have **abolished limitation periods for child sexual abuse crimes**.<sup>1</sup> The move now allows victims and survivors to bring cases when they feel ready to report their abuser, which can often be delayed by many years because of trauma.
- Colombia is one of only two countries within the region included in the Index (the other being Argentina) that **permits abortion** in cases where their sexual abuse resulted in pregnancy.
- Healthcare providers in the country are obligated to provide **immediate medical and mental health services to all victims** of child sexual exploitation.

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<sup>1</sup> 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](#).

However, there are some gaps too:

- National law falls short of **prohibiting child marriage** by allowing children under the age of 18 to marry with parental consent. Article 116 of the Civil Code sets out that the minimum age to marry is 18, conversely article 117 permits younger individuals to marry if their parents consent.
- The country's **national action plan** to address child sexual exploitation and abuse was allowed to expire.
- In the judicial response to child sexual exploitation and abuse, there is no **specialised law enforcement agency** in the country to respond to abuse. There is no specialised law enforcement agency or unit to respond to **online abuse**.
- Specialised **legal aid for child victims** is also lacking.

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 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."

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## 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.

### Sexual abuse helplines in Colombia

- [Línea 141](#): a free 24-hour emergency and advice helpline for child rights violations.
- [Línea 106 Bogotá](#): a free mental health support helpline.
- [Te Guío](#): advice helpline on harmful sexual behaviours.

### 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 data](#), the [regional reports](#) and the [methodology](#). Also access the [briefings](#) 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](#)