

PRESS RELEASE - embargoed until 07/03/2023 at 05:01 (El Salvador)

## El Salvador ranked 21st globally and sixth in Latin America on child sexual violence prevention and response

[7 March 2023] El Salvador has been ranked 21st globally and sixth 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, El Salvador scored 58.8 out of a possible 100.

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), **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 El Salvador](#) summarises the data and findings for El Salvador. The following presents some of the main features.

The country scores well on in a number of areas:

- El Salvador is one of only a few countries in the region covered by the Index that have **abolished statutes of limitations** for child sexual exploitation and abuse - in fact it was one of the first to do so in Latin America.<sup>1</sup>
- It is one of the few countries in the region with a **national plan** that specifically addresses child sexual exploitation and abuse. The others are Guatemala, Mexico and Brazil, though the latter is the only one with an identifiable source of funding for the implementation of the national plan.
- In contrast to other Latin American countries, El Salvador **prohibits sexual behaviour that does not involve penetration**. And it enforces a strict **minimum age of marriage** of 18 with no exceptions - other countries that have do the same are Guatemala, Mexico and Peru. In the

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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 (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](#).

other Latin American countries included in the index, allow 16- and 17-year-olds to marry if they have parental consent.

- It provides **specialised legal aid for child victims** and mechanisms for victim compensation.
- It is one of the four countries in the region to have a **specialised police agency** dedicated to child sexual exploitation and abuse, and one of only two (alongside Mexico) to provide public access to **data on arrests, indictments and prosecutions** related to child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- It ranks highly globally (8th out of 60) on **support and recovery services**. For example, El Salvador has a dedicated decentralised Clinic for Comprehensive Care of Victims of Intra-Family Violence and Sexual Abuse.

But there are also gaps:

- The national plan barely mentions a funding plan, with El Salvador scoring exceptionally low (56th out of 60 globally) for **child rights-based budgeting**.
- While there are clear indications on what to do in case of concerns or cases of sexual violence against a child, there is no evidence that a **dedicated helpline** exists for people to report cases or concerns and all actions must go through more generic phone numbers.
- In contrast to a majority of Latin American countries, El Salvador has not developed **guidelines and training for social workers**. There are also no **rehabilitation programmes for offenders**.

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 overall regional report, **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 data on El Salvador, **Orlando Álvarez, founder of the survivor support initiative [Manuales para Sobrevivir](#)**, said:

“El Salvador has been better ranked than other Latin American countries, but that should not cloud the fact that there are still big improvements needed. Having a clear budget plan and immediate assistance mechanisms are urgent issues in order to provide the correct assistance to victims who need help. These two are core issues to help heal a post-trauma society where sexual abuse has devastating effects and ends in more social violence.”

- 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.

### 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 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](#)