

The impact of COVID-19 on violence against women and girls in Latin America and the Caribbean



Violence against women and girls affects on average

1 in 3 women throughout their lifetime^I

According to the latest available data, in Latin America and the Caribbean

12% (approximately **19,2 millions**)

of women and girls aged between 15 and 49 have experienced physical or sexual violence by their current or former intimate partner in the 12 months preceding the survey^{II}.

The most recent information from the

33 countries

in the region^{III} indicates that in 2019 at least

3,800

women were victims of femicide/femicide.



It is likely that these figures will rise during the crisis and the pandemic, as a result of the economic impact, the lack of resources, greater tensions in the home, quarantine measures that perpetuate the isolation of women from their support networks and create additional barriers in access to essential services.

The emerging data suggests that violence against women, especially domestic violence, has intensified during the pandemic.

Mexico

In the State of Nuevo León, the Special Prosecutor for Femicide and Crimes against Women reported an increase of over

30% in reports of domestic violence

and an increase of reports of rape from two or three a day to **5 days** in recent weeks.^{IX}

Bolivia

During the quarantine period (up to 15 April 2020), the following has been reported:

4 feminicides, **1,200** cases of violence against women and

33 cases of child abuse.^{VII}

Colombia

there were **12 femicides^V** in a period of 16 days

Between 20 March and 4 April 2020, according to the Presidential Advisor for Women's Equality, and during the initial days of the national quarantine, an increase of

51% in cases of family violence against women was recorded.^{VI}

Brazil

the City of Rio de Janeiro reported an increase of

50% of complaints of gender violence during the quarantine,

according to the judge in the domestic violence section of the Rio de Janeiro Court of Justice.^{VIII}

Argentina

between 20-31 March the number of daily calls to the **144 Helpline for Gender Based Violence^V**

increased by **39%**

compared to the previous two week period between 1-19 March.

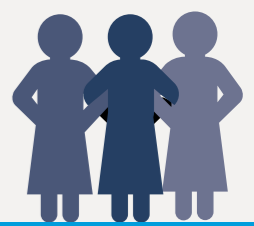
The costs of violence against women are between **1.6 and 2% of GDP** in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, according to data from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB).^X

Faced with the pandemic, support services are under pressure to respond to the increase in demand:



- In Honduras, many refuges/shelters are under pressure to respond to growing demand and to provide the biosecurity resources.^{XI}
- In Cuenca, Ecuador, the refuge/shelter for victims-survivors of gender violence is at full capacity and does not have sufficient supplies to respond to the crisis.
- In Uruguay, the National Institute of Women has made efforts to extend access to the telephone helpline 08004141 and has recognized that since the health emergency was declared in the country, there has been a significant increase in calls.^{XII}

Ensuring that that there is adequate investment in the prevention of and response to violence against women will be key to the decisions made on how to manage the health and economic crisis, and the design of incentives to address the future post-COVID-19 recovery including essential services, and support services provided by civil society, and primary prevention initiatives both during the pandemic and in the recovery phase.



4 KEY MESSAGES



1

Ensure that violence against women support services are considered essential services during the pandemic (health services, courts, shelters/refuges, legal advice services, sexual health services, psychosocial services and other social services) and facilitate access through alternative mechanisms which meet the intersecting needs of women in their diversity including support networks and community alert mechanisms with grassroots women's organizations.

2

UN Women urges all actors to work in close collaboration with women's organizations, feminist and specialist civil society organizations as well as human rights defenders, to prevent violence against women and girls in the response to COVID-19 and the recovery phase incorporating an intersectional approach in planning the response and recovery measures, including diverse organizations which represent different women's groups, especially those who are most exposed to multiple forms of discrimination and vulnerability.

3

Increase investment in prevention of violence against women and girls during the crisis and in the recovery phase to avoid the devastating impacts on women, girls/children and on society as a whole. Without investment in primary prevention of violence against women and specialist services, the impact on the lives of women, girls/children will deepen, and the costs will increase.

4

Develop communication campaigns and effective zero-tolerance measures towards perpetrators of violence, ensure that police and justice systems prioritize tackling and punishing violence and involve the whole community in uniting against gender violence.

I PAHO (2019) Intimate partner violence in the Americas: a systematic review and reanalysis of national prevalence estimates.
 II UN (2019), Sustainable Development Goals Report.
 III The most recent information from the 33 countries in the region indicates that the number of women murdered just because they were women was over 3,800. The measurement of femicide/femicide: challenges and road to empowerment in Latin America and the Caribbean, Observatory of Gender Equality of Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC <https://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/femicidio>.
 IV Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity of the Nation
 V <https://elpais.com/sociedad/2020-04-07/la-violencia-de-genero-es-una-pandemia-silenciosa.html>

VI <https://www.rcnradio.com/colombia/durante-la-cuarentena-aumentaron-las-denuncias-de-violencia-contra-la-mujer-en-un-51>
 VII <https://www.atb.com.bo/seguridad/cuarentena-33-menores-fueron-violadas-y-m%C3%A1s-de-1200-mujeres-fueron-v%C3%ADctimas-de-violencia?fbclid=IwAR24Bf3XdF-6ZQ6C6J897Vj099uB84RPBA6f7E2AF-CiYltomqdROvqMOS8>
 VIII https://www.clarin.com/internacional/coronavirus-brasil-aumentan-denuncias-violencia-genero-cuarentena-rio-janeiro_0_8ur_LTpKm.html

IX https://www.elnorte.com/aplicacioneslibre/preacceso/articulo/default.aspx?urlredirect=https://www.elnorte.com/crece-violencia-familiar-ante-covid-19/ar1902935?__rval=1
 X http://www.americalatina.org/es/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2219:la-violencia-contra-la-mujer-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe-en-cifras-%20%20&catid=764:destacamos
 XI Government of the Republic of Honduras (3 April 2020) Situation of shelters on Friday 3 April 202, National Institute of Women
 XII <http://presidencia.gub.uy/comunicacion/comunicacionnoticias/coronavirusmedidas-violencia-genero>