

Violence against women and the girl child

Femicide in Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC]



Femicide, the most extreme expression of violence against women

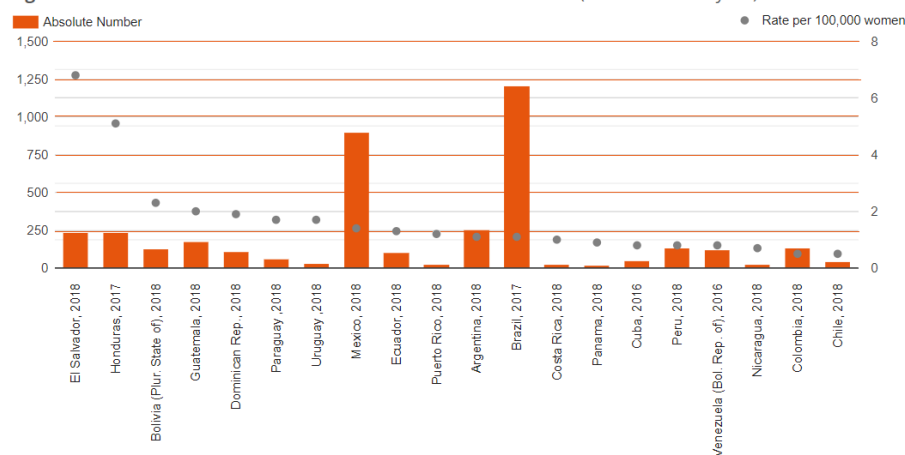
Structural discriminatory, violent and patriarchal cultural patterns sustain gender inequality in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. Despite progress over recent decades, gender-based discrimination and violence against women remains a serious problem, which manifests itself in various areas and in multiple forms. **Femicide**¹, described as the most dramatic and extreme form of violence against women, represents an attack on women and their human rights on a daily or exceptional basis in two settings: (a) violence in relationships, whether in a union or not (intimate femicide); and (b) violence inflicted by other persons, whether relatives, people from a woman's social environment or strangers, which may derive from situations of social conflict or crime.

Current situation

Progress made in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean regarding the codification of femicide as a criminal offence and its statistical visibility have not been effective in reducing this expression of extreme violence against women. According to the information for the most recent year, as provided by 33 countries in the region to the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean,² more than 3,800 women were killed because of their gender.

The incidence of femicide in some countries in Central America remains an acute and worrying problem (see figure I). In 2018, four of the five highest rates of femicide were recorded in Central America: in El Salvador (6.8 femicides per 100,000 women); Honduras (5.1 femicides per 100,000 women); Guatemala (2.0 femicides per 100,000 women); and the Dominican Republic (1.9 femicides per 100,000 women).

Figure I Total number and rates of femicide in Latin America: 2018 (latest available year)



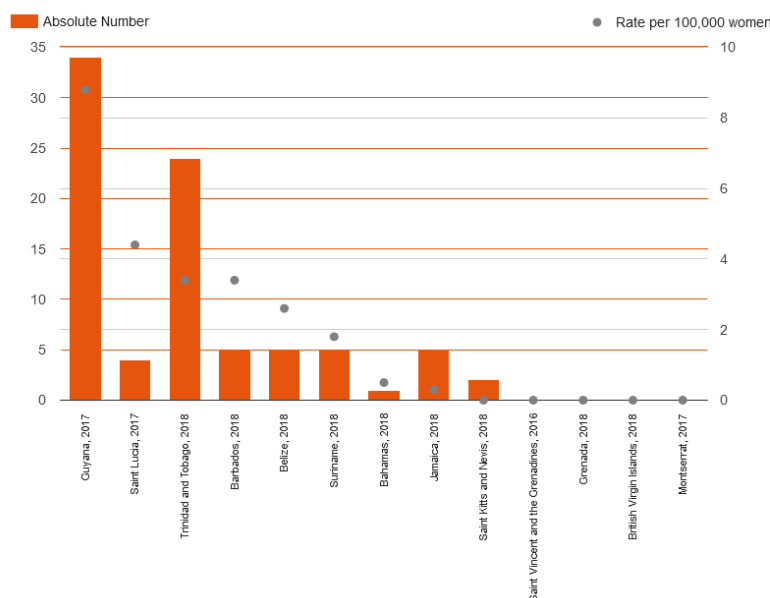
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (<https://oig.cepal.org/en>). Data are available for 20 countries.

Note: Data refer to femicide, except in the case of the Colombia, Chile, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Puerto Rico, which only report on cases of intimate femicide (committed by a current or former partner).

In the Caribbean, Guyana and Saint Lucia both recorded at least 4 deaths per 100,000 women according to the data

provided for the latest available year (see figure II).

Figure II Total number and rates of femicide in the Caribbean: 2018 (latest available year)



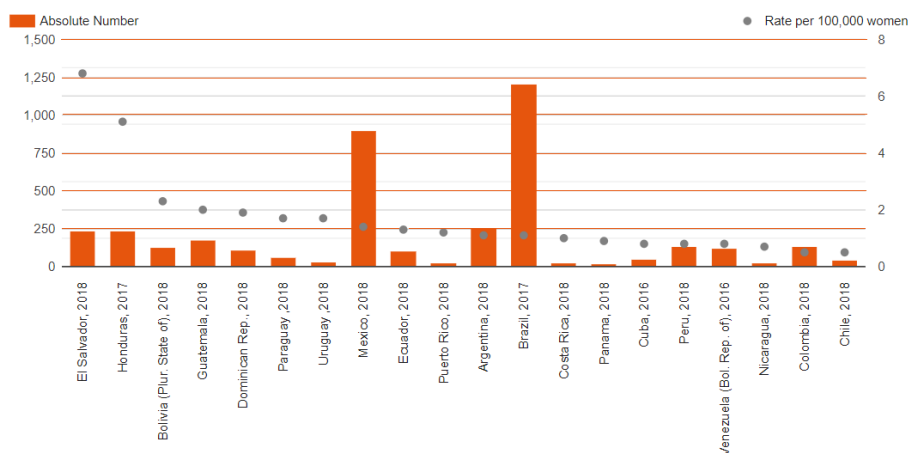
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (<https://oig.cepal.org/en>). Data are available for 13 countries.

Note: Data refer to femicide, except in the case of the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname, which only report on cases of intimate femicide (committed by a current or former partner).

The calculation of the rate per 100,000 women for the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat and Saint Kitts and Nevis is not possible owing to the lack of population estimates. The British Virgin Islands and Montserrat reported no femicides in the most recent years for which data are available (2017 and 2018); Saint Kitts and Nevis recorded two femicides in 2018.

In some countries of the region, in the majority of instances, the murders of women are cases of femicide. For example, in El Salvador, three out of five murders of women were recorded as femicides in 2018 – in other words, 60% involved a component of “hate or contempt for women”, as codified in article 45 of the comprehensive Law for a Life Free of Violence against Women passed by the legislature in 2011.

In most countries of the region, 25% to 33% of women have experienced an episode of physical or sexual violence inflicted by a partner. Those figures are higher in certain countries, such as the Bolivia (Plurinational State of) (58.5%), Colombia (33.3%), Costa Rica (35.8%) and Ecuador (35.5%), where data show that more than one third of women have been subjected to **physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner**.

Figure I Total number and rates of femicide in Latin America: 2018 (latest available year)

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (<https://oig.cepal.org/en>). Data are available for 20 countries.

Note: Data refer to femicide, except in the case of the Colombia, Chile, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Puerto Rico, which only report on cases of intimate femicide (committed by a current or former partner).

In the past few years, social demands relating to ending violence against women and girls have come to the fore. Across Latin America, several countries have experienced a resurgence of social and feminist movements against old and new forms of violence against women.

This indicates the need to link femicide with other forms of violence that are still not included among policy priorities. These various forms of violence persist because they are based on social, political and economic structures that are marked by discriminatory and violent patriarchal patterns in countries in Latin American and the Caribbean.

About the data

Coverage

Data covers the murder of women (femicide) in 33 countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

Definitions

- Femicide rate: Quantification of the murder of women killed because they are women, expressed in absolute numbers at a rate per 100,000 women. Under national laws, this type of murder is called femicide or aggravated homicide due to gender.

Footnotes

1. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Regional progress report on the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030 (United Nations publication, LC/CRM.14/5), Santiago, 2019.
2. Gender Equality Observatory for Latin American and the Caribbean.