



Stock image. Subjects depicted are not survivors or physical or sexual violence, and images are used with consent.

2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: STUDY ON THE PREVALENCE AND DEPENDENCE OF WOMEN AND ADOLESCENTS ON THE GUATEMALAN JUSTICE SYSTEM

Indicators of Prevalence of Violence and Dependency of the Population on the Justice System

Executive Summary

The 2022 study, "The Prevalence of Violence Against Women and Adolescents and Their Dependence on the Guatemalan Justice System," prepared by International Justice Mission (IJM), examines the prevalence of physical and sexual violence against women and adolescents in Guatemala, along with their reliance on the justice system for protection and justice.

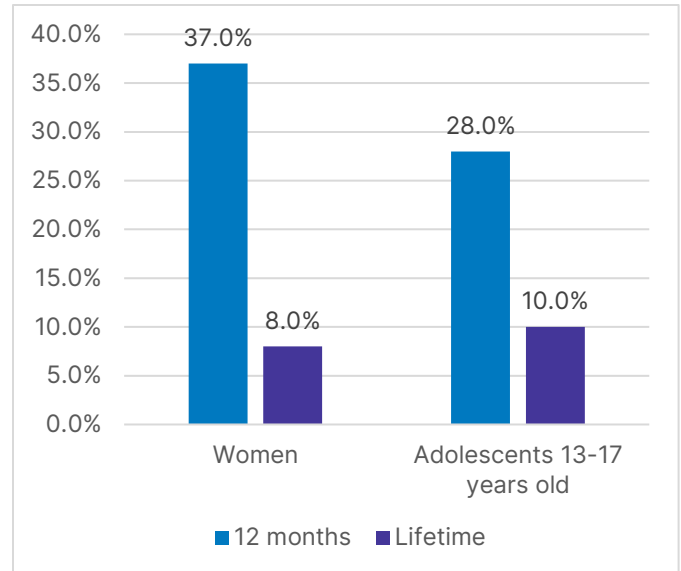
The Northern Triangle of Central America, which includes Guatemala, is one of the most violent regions in the world, with violence against women and adolescents being a structural issue. In Guatemala, physical and sexual violence significantly impact these groups, creating a high demand for intervention from the justice system. To assess this problem, the study provides key indicators—based on surveys of 3,060 households across 17 municipalities in the country's eight regions—that highlight the justice system's opportunities to serve these populations. This analysis can inform decision-making to strengthen the justice system's response capacity and support public policies aimed at eradicating violence.

The study's findings indicate a disparity between the prevalence of violence and the actual reliance of women and adolescents on the justice system, highlighting the need to design and implement strategies for improvement

1. Prevalence of Violence

In Guatemala, nearly 4 out of 10 women (37%) and 3 out of 10 adolescents aged 13 to 17 (28%) have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. Furthermore, in the 12 months prior to the study, the prevalence of physical or sexual violence among adolescents is higher (10%) compared to that experienced by adult women (8%).

PREVALENCE OF PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN WOMEN AND ADOLESCENTS BETWEEN 13-17 YEARS OLD



2. Types of Violence

Physical violence: 32% of adult women and 25% of adolescents aged 13-17 years have experienced physical violence at some time in their lives, especially slapping, pushing, and hitting with objects. Fifty-seven percent of women who have experienced physical violence have experienced it on more than one occasion.

Sexual Violence: 18% of women have experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives, primarily involving unwanted sexual attempts. Half of the women who have been victims of sexual violence report having faced it on multiple occasions (50%).

For the adolescent population, over 8% have experienced sexual violence, with unwanted touching being the most common form of abuse.

Overlapping Violence: 10% of adult women and 5.4% of adolescents aged 13 to 17 have experienced both physical and sexual violence

3. Age and Context of Violence

Four out of 10 female victims of sexual violence encountered it for the first time before the age of 13, while 3 out of 10 experienced it between the ages of 14 and 17. For physical violence, adult women typically face it for the first time between the ages of 18 and 30, whereas 65% of adolescents experienced physical violence before the age of 13.

In 61% of cases of physical violence and over 54% of cases of sexual violence against adult women, such violence occurs in private settings. In contrast, physical violence against adolescents predominantly takes place in public spaces (77%), while sexual violence occurs equally in both private and public spheres.

4. Aggressors

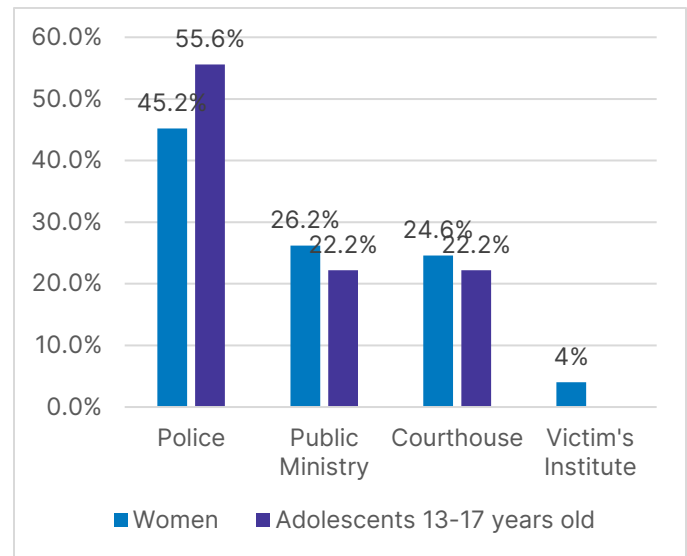
Violence is predominantly perpetrated by individuals close to the victim. In cases of physical violence, 73% of women knew their aggressor, with partners or ex-partners accounting for 51% of these cases. Similarly, 55% of sexual violence incidents were committed by people close to the victim. This trend is also evident among adolescents aged 13 to 17, where over 72% of physical violence perpetrators and 55% of sexual violence perpetrators are known to the victim and belong to their close circle.

5. Whistleblowing, Access to Justice, and Dependence on Justice System Institutions

Despite the high prevalence of violence, reporting rates are low, with only 33% of adult women and 12% of adolescents who experienced violence reporting the incident to any justice system institution. This indicates that only one-third of all cases of violence against women are reported, along with one-eighth of those involving adolescents.

Among those who do report, the police and the Public Prosecutor's Office are the preferred institutions. However, nearly half of those who reported expressed dissatisfaction with the attention, support, or protection they received.

CHART 2. INSTITUTIONS OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM TO WHICH WOMEN AND ADOLESCENTS AGED 13-17 YEARS OLD WENT TO REPORT VIOLENCE



6. Reasons for Underreporting

Among the reasons victims do not report the violence they have experienced are fear, shame, and the normalization of violence. Three out of ten adult women and adolescents aged 13 to 17 did not perceive the physical violence they suffered as a problem. This normalization of physical and sexual violence is concerning, as it discourages victims from seeking help or justice.

8. Dependence on the Community

Communities play a crucial role in guiding and supporting cases to the justice system. 3 out of 4 individuals who reported experiencing violence also confided in someone within their community, particularly family members. Therefore, community support can significantly enhance the likelihood that victims will formalize their complaints.

9. Services for Victims and Survivors

The study identifies the lack of care services for victims and survivors as a significant issue. Only 1 in 5 survivors who experienced violence in the 12 months prior to the survey received care or restorative services—such as support from

community, governmental, or nongovernmental providers—that could help reduce their vulnerability to re-victimization.

Challenges and Recommendation

The study highlights various challenges to the protection provided by the Guatemalan justice system for women and adolescents. These include the high prevalence of physical and sexual violence against these populations, the low levels of reporting to justice institutions after violence has occurred, and the resulting underreporting of such incidents. Additionally, the normalization of violence diminishes the likelihood of victims seeking justice and support, while dissatisfaction with the justice system further complicates the reporting process.

In light of these challenges, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the protection processes provided by the justice system:

- Enhance reporting mechanisms to ensure that the population is informed about available reporting channels, how to access them, and how to use them safely. Increasing the availability of these channels and ensuring their interconnection would streamline processes and improve the experience for victims and survivors.
- Expand access to care services to ensure that the justice system provides more victims and survivors with protection, psychological support, and legal assistance, as these services are essential for reducing the risk of revictimization. This recommendation aligns with the need to

establish more effective referral and coordination networks between communities and justice system institutions.

- Provide immediate protection by strengthening mechanisms for risk assessment and prioritization of violence cases handled by the justice system. Additionally, improve the flow of information and the notification of protection measures to victims.
- Change cultural narratives through awareness-raising and educational efforts in communities and society to shift perceptions of violence and encourage reporting.
- Utilize technology to enhance the responsiveness of justice system institutions. Implement strategic information systems to manage cases more efficiently and reduce response times.

In conclusion, the study highlights not only the seriousness of physical and sexual violence against women and adolescents in Guatemala but also the disconnect between the prevalence of violence and the justice system's capacity to respond effectively. Despite the significant number of women and adolescents experiencing such violence, most do not access the justice system due to fear, ignorance, or the normalization of violence. To address this issue, it is essential to strengthen reporting mechanisms, improve coordination between institutions and communities, and ensure that victims and survivors receive the necessary support for their recovery and long-term protection.