



SIN VIOLENCIA

LGBTI

*Annual
report*

**20
23**



Homicides of
LGBT
people in
Latin America
and the
Caribbean





“Annual Report. Homicides of LGBTI+ People in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023”

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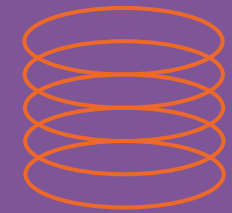
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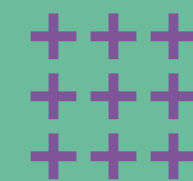
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Preface

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Lethal violence against LGBTI+ people in Latin America and the Caribbean has long been an overlooked and neglected issue. In an environment where discrimination and prejudice have fueled both violence and silence, the Regional Network for LGBTI Violence Information in Latin America and the Caribbean (Red Sin Violencia LGBTI) stands out as a beacon of hope and action. Since 2016, this network, made up of ten civil society organizations, has been dedicated to monitoring, documenting, and sharing information on LGBTI+ homicides through its Regional Observatory.

Countries and civil society organizations can use the results of this report to implement public policies based on the identified descriptive patterns and contextual elements.

This initiative not only aims to end the statistical invisibility of violence against LGBTI+ people but also to help prevent and eradicate such violence and improve state responses.

Over the years of documenting official homicide data in Latin America, I have noticed a concerning lack of information broken down by gender and sexual orientation. This gap makes it difficult to address the issue effectively, allowing the invisibility and indifference towards the violence faced by LGBTI+ people to continue. It's crucial to collect and analyze this data to bring attention to the high rates of victimization within this community and to prevent further neglect of the issue. The starting point is to demand that governments include disaggregated data on homicides to identify cases involving LGBTI+ people. Additionally, efforts should be made to reduce the underreporting of these cases, which requires gender sensitivity training for security and justice officials to properly identify, investigate, and address these crimes.

Similarly, this extensive documentation effort, which is unmatched in the region, is the first step towards understanding and effectively addressing violence against this population. Countries and civil society organizations can use the results of this report to implement public policies based on the identified descriptive patterns and contextual elements. They can also create targeted interventions to advance LGBTI+ rights and establish policies that hold perpetrators accountable and safeguard affected communities.



In 2023, LGBTI+ people in Latin America and the Caribbean continued to face persistent patterns of violence driven by prejudice, as identified by the Red Sin Violencia over the years. Examples include homicides of cisgender gay and bisexual men in their homes, cisgender lesbian women in relationships, and transgender women in public spaces. This report also tackles new and urgent regional issues such as violence linked to organized crime, political and social participation, and domestic violence. These issues underscore the complexity and urgency of addressing these specific violence dynamics and highlight the need for a comprehensive and effective approach to tackling violence against LGBTI+ people.

It includes detailed information on factors such as the location, type, and weapon used in these crimes, as well as country-specific patterns that reveal particular vulnerabilities. It is important to note the effort to unravel contextual patterns, such as symbolic prejudice in violence.

This report documents the homicides of at least 364 LGBTI+ people in the region, showing a 5.5% increase compared to the previous year. Transgender women make up 40% of these homicides, highlighting their significant vulnerability. It includes detailed information on factors such as the location, type, and weapon used in these crimes, as well as country-specific patterns that reveal particular vulnerabilities. It is important to note the effort to unravel contextual patterns, such as symbolic prejudice in violence. Additionally, it reveals that 86% of cases have unknown perpetrators, and only 10 out of 382 cases have resulted in convictions as of June 2024. The organizations within the Red Sin Violencia continue to document challenges and barriers to justice for LGBTI+ homicide cases.

This report also explores how prejudice plays a role in targeting people for certain crimes, often for economic reasons or to support organized crime. It underscores the violence linked to political and social involvement, highlighting the specific dangers LGBTI+ people face during elections, in public roles, and in positions of social leadership and human rights advocacy. Additionally, this report addresses domestic violence, noting cases where victims were killed by family members or partners.

Red Sin Violencia continue to document challenges and barriers to justice for LGBTI+ homicide cases.

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Countries and organizations focused on human rights, including civil society groups and multilateral agencies, must use these findings to develop effective prevention and protection strategies. A strong response from justice systems and tailored recommendations for each country are key to improving how we measure, prevent, and address violence. Prevention should be at the heart of efforts to combat violence against LGBTI+ people, ensuring a safe and fair environment for everyone, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

It's crucial that the country-specific recommendations in this report are implemented effectively to ensure real and lasting change in the lives of LGBTI+ people in our region. Only through a coordinated and collective effort can we build more just and inclusive societies where everyone can live without fear and with dignity. Every life lost is a reminder of the work still to be done and the responsibility we have to protect and uphold human rights without exception. Through collective action and the effective implementation of these policies, we can create a future where everyone, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, can live with dignity, safety, and respect.

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The Regional Network for LGBTI Violence Information in Latin America and the Caribbean (Red Sin Violencia LGBTI) is made up of

10 civil society organizations

and represents the first effort in the region to monitor, document, and disseminate information on homicides of LGBTI+ people through a Regional Observatory.

This work of documenting patterns and dynamics of lethal violence against LGBTI+ people began in 2016 with the aim of overcoming the statistical invisibility of prejudice-based violence, to contribute to its prevention, eradication, and to improve the response of governments.

Obtaining information about lethal violence against LGBTI+ people in Latin America and the Caribbean has always been difficult. To address this issue, the Red Sin Violencia makes its research findings available each year to governments, international bodies, and social organizations. With this information at their disposal, these entities can evaluate, develop, and promote public policies, laws, and practices to prevent, investigate, and address violence against LGBTI+ people, especially violence driven by prejudice.

In 2023, LGBTI+ people in the region continued to face the same patterns of prejudice-driven violence identified by Red Sin Violencia over the years, including homicides of cisgender gay and bisexual men at home, cisgender lesbian women in relationships, and transgender women in public spaces. However, this report also addresses three increasingly urgent regional issues where prejudice plays a significant role: first, the impact of organized crime; second, violence related to political and social participation; and third, the connection between homicide and domestic violence.

This report presents the situation of LGBTI+ homicides in 10 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean for the year 2023, highlighting regional patterns and trends based on the collective work of the Red Sin Violencia LGBTI organizations. The report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 explains the methodology used for data collection and analysis. Chapter 3 provides an analysis of the regional context in which the documented cases occurred, detailed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions, and Chapter 6 offers general and country-specific recommendations.

We believe in the power of real stories and experiences to confront and transform the challenging regional context. Therefore, we hope that the findings of this report help dismantle prejudices against sexual and gender diversity and promote social change, ensuring that everyone can live with dignity.



This report is based on both quantitative and qualitative data provided by the research teams from each of the organizations within the Red Sin Violencia. In the first phase, the network's member organizations documented cases of homicides of LGBTI+ people using the methodologies and information sources available in each country. This data was then recorded in a standardized database format to ensure consistency in the registration and analysis of cases based on the same variables. The data was then reviewed by the Technical Secretariat of the Red Sin Violencia to ensure quality control and prevent errors in the records. This process resulted in a unified regional database containing information from all participating countries, which served as the primary input for this report.

In the second phase, descriptive statistical techniques were applied to the final consolidated dataset using pre-determined analysis categories. These categories included case distribution by country, gender identity and sexual orientation of the victims, location of the incidents, the weapon used, or the suspected perpetrator. The analyses were shared with the member organizations of the network to validate the findings and establish the focus areas for both regional and national analysis.

In the third and final phase, the regional and national analyses were supplemented with qualitative information about the national context, provided by each organization. Additionally, secondary sources were reviewed to identify regional information on violence dynamics, security, and human rights. Key sources consulted included population projections from national statistical institutes in the region, reports from national offices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, reports from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and research by InSight Crime. This information was incorporated into the first complete version of the report, which was then shared again with the network's organizations for further feedback and suggestions before finalizing the document.

Methodology



Widespread Climate of Violence

In 2023, most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (including nearly all those within the Red Sin Violencia) saw reductions in both the total number and overall rate of homicides. Some countries experienced more significant declines (such as El Salvador, Honduras, Peru, and the Dominican Republic, with reductions ranging from -12.9% to -63.3%), while others, like Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Nicaragua, saw more modest decreases between -1.5% and -7.8%)¹. However, over the past decade, the region has sustained alarmingly high homicide rates, with an average annual increase of 3.7%)². In this context, organized crime is seen as the main driver of these crimes, along with the proliferation of firearms, which is considered a key factor in the high levels of lethal violence³. Additionally, in other contexts, the spread of firearms has been shown to influence the incidence of gender-based violence⁴.

Similarly, public insecurity in the region is also driven by factors such as persistent inequality, impunity, and weaknesses in justice systems⁵. Additionally, the drug trade and its high profits have sparked fierce conflicts among criminal gangs vying for control of key drug trafficking

¹ InSight Crime, *Balance de InSight Crime de los homicidios en 2023 [InSight Crime's 2023 Homicide Review]*. 2023, <https://insightcrime.org/Balance2023-2024.pdf>

² United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). *Una epidemia en movimiento: El cambiante panorama de la seguridad ciudadana en América Latina y el Caribe [An Epidemic on the Move: The Changing Landscape of Public Security in Latin America and the Caribbean]*. 2023, <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/blog/una-epidemia-en-movimiento>

³ Migliorini, D. "Crimen organizado causa la mitad de los homicidios en Latinoamérica [Organized Crime Causes Half of the Homicides in Latin America]." *InSight Crime*, 22 Dec. 2023, <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias/>

⁴ For more information, see the bulletin *El rol de las armas en la violencia contra la mujer y las estrategias de desarme con enfoque de género [The Role of Firearms in Violence Against Women and Gender-Sensitive Disarmament Strategies]* by Red Amassuru. It includes various articles and studies on how the trafficking and circulation of firearms impact femicide rates in several countries, including Mexico, Puerto Rico, Brazil, and Argentina. Available at <https://sehla.org/boletin-amassuru-gensac-1>

⁵ UNDP. *Una epidemia en movimiento [An Epidemic on the Move]*. 2023.





routes⁶, which is a major driver of violence in regions like South America. As a result, 2023 was the most violent year for Ecuador, with a 74.5% increase in its homicide rate compared to 2022, making it the country with the highest rate in Central and South America⁷.

This situation is not confined to national borders. Therefore, the Andean Community (Comunidad Andina de Naciones, CAN), through its Andean Council of Foreign Ministers, established a high-level group consisting of representatives from Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia to address transnational organized crime through information exchange, intelligence cooperation, and arms trafficking control⁸. Similarly, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños, CELAC) agreed to strengthen cooperation initiatives with the European Union in the areas of public security and social justice to combat organized crime⁹.

In response to the incidence of violence in Latin America, some states have opted to implement “tough on crime” public security policies¹⁰. These policies can be appealing to the public eye as they seem to offer a quick and, on the surface, “morally just” response to urgent situations¹¹. However, they face criticism for potentially violating human rights and

⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Global Report on Cocaine 2023: Local Dynamics, Global Challenges*, (United Nations publications, 2023), https://www.unodc.org-Global_cocaine_report_2023.pdf

⁷ InSight Crime, *Balance de InSight Crime de los homicidios en 2023 [InSight Crime's 2023 Homicide Review]*. 2023.

⁸ Voz de América, “Países andinos combatirán al crimen organizado transnacional y crearán grupo de seguridad regional”, [*Andean Countries to Combat Transnational Organized Crime and Create Regional Security Group*]. *Voz de América*, 22 Jan. 2024, <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/comunidad-andina-combatira-al-crimen>

⁹ European Union, “EU strengthens its cooperation with Latin America and Caribbean against transnational organised crime”, *European Union, External action*, 22 Nov. 2024, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-strengthens-its-cooperation-latin-america-and-caribbean-against-transnational-organised-crime_en

¹⁰ *Regionalización de las políticas de seguridad en Latinoamérica [Regionalization of Security Policies in Latin America]*. *Foreign Affairs Latinoamérica Magazine*, 2024 <https://revistafal.com/regionalizacion-de-las-politicas-de-seguridad-en-latinoamerica/>



proving ineffective. Countries like El Salvador, Ecuador¹², Perú¹³, Honduras¹⁴ and Guatemala¹⁵, for example, have adopted or pushed for these policies, which could erode the rule of law and undermine their democracies by paving the way for authoritarian practices¹⁶.

In this regard, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IA-CHR) has pointed out that although insecurity caused by criminality and violence constitutes a serious problem that states must address, “varios han acudido a figuras como la militarización de la seguridad interna, el abuso de los estados de excepción y la flexibilización de los requisitos para el porte de armas de fuego” [“several states have

¹¹ Robert Muggah, Juan Garzón and Manuela Suárez. “La ‘Mano Dura’: Los costos de la represión y los beneficios de la prevención para los jóvenes en América Latina” [*The ‘Tough on Crime’ Approach: The Costs of Repression and the Benefits of Prevention for Youth in Latin America*]. *Strategic Paper No. 36*, May 2018, <https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/La-Mano-Dura-.pdf>

¹² Human Rights Watch. *World Report 2024, Ecuador*. 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/es/world-report/2024/country-chapters/ecuador>

¹³ Presidencia del Consejo de Ministros. Premier Adrianzén anuncia fortalecimiento de ‘Plan Perú Seguro’ y política de seguridad de mano dura contra el crimen [Prime Minister Adrianzén Announces Strengthening of ‘Safe Peru Plan’ and Tough on Crime Security Policy]. *Plataforma digital única del Estado Peruano*, 2024 <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/pcm/-premier-adrianzen-anuncia-fortalecimiento-de-plan-peru>

¹⁴ Héctor Silva, “Regímenes de excepción: ¿El nuevo modelo de seguridad en Centroamérica?” [Exception Regimes: The New Security Model in Central America?]. *WOLA*, 2023, <https://www.wola.org/es/analisis/regimenes-de-excepcion-nuevo-modelo-seguridad-centroamerica/>.

¹⁵ Pérez, Sonia. “Guatemala: Políticos Apuestan a Tácticas de Mano Dura de Bukele para Ganar Elecciones” [Guatemala: Politicians Bet on Bukele’s Tough on Crime Tactics to Win Elections]. *Los Angeles Times*, 5 June 2023, <https://www.latimes.e-mano-dura>

¹⁶ Lissary, Gerardo. “Apostarle a una Estrategia de Mano Dura Como la de Bukele en El Salvador Puede Lanzar a los Países de América Latina a Esquemas Autoritarios, Incluso a Dictaduras” [Betting on a Tough on Crime Strategy Like Bukele’s in El Salvador Could Lead Latin American Countries to Authoritarian Schemes, Even Dictatorships]. *BBC Mundo*, 11 April 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-65210034>



resorted to measures such as the militarization of internal security, the abuse of states of exception, and the easing of gun carry regulations”]¹⁷. In countries like Honduras, it is also noted that the state's failure to develop effective security policies is because institutions like the judiciary and police have been “captured and weakened” by organized crime groups. Gangs, embroiled in territorial disputes over extortion revenues, have recruited police officers or perpetuated corruption within their ranks¹⁸.

In El Salvador, the so-called “Bukele Model”¹⁹, has been actively promoted, with other countries looking to replicate it. This model's strategic and extensive use of communication seems to offer a new approach to tackling organized crime. As a result, El Salvador has stopped being considered one of the most violent countries, showing reductions in crime and homicide rates²⁰. This has all taken place under a state of emergency that began in March 2022 and continues today. Since then, this policy has resulted in the arrest of 70,000 people, which is over 1% of the country's entire population²¹.

However, the accuracy of the homicide figures reported by the government has been questioned. The official data reportedly exclude unidentified bodies, deaths in armed clashes, deaths of alleged gang members,

¹⁷ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). “Capítulo IV.a: Desarrollo de los Derechos Humanos en la Región” [Chapter IV.a: Human Rights Development in the Region]. 2024, pp. 10-11. https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/docs/anual/2023/capitulos/IA2023_Cap_4A_SPA.PDF

¹⁸ Sam Woolston. “Pandillas a la fuga: Cómo la mano dura de Bukele llevó a las pandillas a la clandestinidad” [Gangs on the Run: How Bukele's Tough Approach Forced Gangs into Hiding]. InSight Crime, June 25, 2024. <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias/honduras-refuerza-estrategia-fallida-mano-dura/>

¹⁹ Jaime Quintanilla. “El modelo Bukele: cuando el autoritarismo se vuelve popular” [The Bukele Model: When Authoritarianism Becomes Popular]. Nueva Sociedad Magazine, March 2023. <https://nuso.org/articulo/Bukele-megacarcel-pandillas/>

²⁰ Juliana Manjarrés and Christopher Newton. “Noticias. El Salvador” [News. El Salvador]. InSight Crime, 2024. <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias/balance-insight-crime-homicidios-2023/#el-salvador-1>

²¹ InSight Crime, “El Salvador”.



and deaths of people in custody. Consequently, the only way to verify the official information is by monitoring violent events through civil society sources²². The suspension of rights and arbitrary detentions²³ in El Salvador contribute to a widespread atmosphere of fear²⁴. Additionally, it has been reported that the crackdown has caused active and semi-retired gang members from MS13 and Barrio 18 to flee to neighboring countries, where they are taken in by networks in Guatemala and Mexico on their way to the United States²⁵.

On the other hand, in countries like Colombia, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has pointed out that despite improvements in several security indicators, “la continua expansión territorial y las estrategias violentas de control social y territorial de grupos armados no estatales y organizaciones criminales” [the ongoing territorial expansion and violent strategies of social and territorial control by non-state armed groups and criminal organizations]²⁶ still pose significant risks and impacts on the civilian population. Among these, the OHCHR highlights threats, forced displacement, and violence against LGBTI+ people in territories under the control or dispute of armed groups, where the murder of nine LGBTI+ human rights defenders was recorded, as well as attacks on LGBTI+ people who participated in the territorial elections of October 2023.

²² Observatorio Universitario de Derechos Humanos (OUDH) de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas, (UCA), *Informe anual 2023: El estado de los derechos humanos en El Salvador*, (Publicaciones de proyección social de la UCA, 2023), 34-38, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PQcEj>

²³ CIDH. “Capítulo IV.a: Desarrollo de los Derechos Humanos en la Región” [Chapter IV.a: Development of Human Rights in the Region]. 2024, para. 357.

²⁴ Amnistía Internacional. “El Salvador: Políticas, prácticas y legislación arbitraria y abusiva transgreden los derechos humanos y amenazan el espacio cívico” [El Salvador: Arbitrary and Abusive Policies, Practices, and Legislation Violate Human Rights and Threaten Civic Space]. Amnistía Internacional, 2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/es/latest/news/2023/12/el-salvador-policies-practices-legislation/>

²⁵ InSight Crime, “Pandillas a la fuga” [Gangs on the Run].

²⁶ Human Rights Council, Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. “Situación de los derechos humanos en Colombia” [Human Rights Situation in Colombia] (2024), para. 10, <https://www.hchr.org.co/wp/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/02-28-2024-Informe-Anual-Advance-Espanol-2023.pdf>



Social Leadership, Political Participation, and Participatory Democracies

Human rights defense work in Latin America and the Caribbean remains highly risky²⁷. LGBTI+ human rights defenders are particularly vulnerable, facing not only prejudice against their sexual orientation, gender expression, or identity but also three additional risks: first, advocating for human rights in spaces where social activism is labeled as insurgent²⁸; second, working for the rights of LGBTI+ people, which some sectors consider “immoral”; and third, their work makes them highly visible to anti-rights and fundamentalist groups²⁹.

Regionally, Colombia and Mexico have recorded the highest number of attacks against LGBTI+ human rights defenders³⁰. However, the situation in the Northern Triangle of Central America—Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador—is also troubling, due to the limited protection available for these people. This lack of protection hampers their ability to engage in human rights work and participate politically³¹. In this en-

²⁷ Cristina Bazán, “Érika Guevara: América Latina es una región letal para las defensoras de derechos humanos” [Érika Guevara: Latin America is a Lethal Region for Human Rights Defenders] *Swissinfo*, September 20, 2023, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/%C3%A9rika-guevara-am>

²⁸ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). Segundo informe sobre la situación de las defensoras y los defensores de derechos humanos en las Américas [Second Report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas]. 2011, para. 55. <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/defensores/docs/pdf/defensores2011.pdf>

²⁹ Red Sin Violencia LGBTI. Boletín temático no. 02 – 2024: muertes violentas de personas LGBT defensoras de Derechos Humanos (2023) [Thematic Bulletin No. 02 – 2024: Violent Deaths of LGBT Human Rights Defenders (2023)]. <https://sinviolencia.lgbt/muertes-violentas>

³⁰ Red Sin Violencia, *Boletín temático no. 2*. [Thematic Bulletin No. 02]

³¹ Kalidadea. “Investigación Sobre La Realidad LGBTIQ+ En Centroamérica: Análisis de la situación política, normativa y social en Honduras, Guatemala y El Salvador y recomendaciones para las estrategias de incidencia en la región” [Investigation on the LGBTIQ+ Reality in Central America: Analysis of the Political, Regulatory, and Social Situation in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador and Recommendations for Advocacy Strategies in the Region]. 2024, p. 23.



vironment, the absence of state protection creates a persistent threat to their lives and physical safety³², discouraging those who are interested in defending human rights.

Given the symbolic and exemplary nature of this type of violence, its impact needs to be understood collectively, as it disrupts the bonds of affection and care within the LGBTI+ community. Additionally, it hinders the ability to move freely and remain in public spaces, as well as the freedom of expression for diverse bodies and identities, and interrupts the collective processes of LGBTI+ people. This violence thus becomes a significant barrier to building participatory democracy in the region³³.

Furthermore, electoral periods in the region have shown how prejudice and discrimination against LGBTI+ people are exploited, shaping collective consciousness and sending the message that these people are undesirable and should be eradicated³⁴. In Guatemala, for example, the 2023 election period and the resulting democratic crisis, triggered by the refusal to recognize the progressive party Semilla’s victory, co-

³² Oficina del Alto Comisionado de Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)]. “CIDH y ONU Derechos Humanos llaman a los Estados a garantizar el acceso a la justicia de personas defensoras víctimas de violaciones” [IACHR and UN Human Rights Office Urge States to Ensure Access to Justice for Defenders Victimized by Violations]. 2023. <https://hchr.org.mx/comunicados/cidh-y-onu-derechos-humanos-llaman-a-los-estados-a-garantizar-el-acceso-a-la-justicia-de-personas-defensoras-victimas-de-violaciones/>

³³ Andrew Flores, Miguel Fuentes and Ari Shauw. Retroceso democrático y aceptación LGBTI [Democratic Backsliding and LGBTI Acceptance]. Williams Institute, 2023, pp. 6-7. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/GAI-Democracy-Spanish-Nov-2023.pdf>

³⁴ IACHR. *Violencia contra personas LGBTI en América* [Violence against LGBTI People in the Americas]. 2015, párr. 233. <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/ViolenciaPersonasLGBTI.pdf>



incided with a rise in violence against certain groups, including LGBTI+ people³⁵. Similarly, in Mexico, a notable increase in stigmatizing and discriminatory rhetoric was reported in 2023, particularly targeting trans people³⁶ as the country prepared for the 2024 elections. In response, the IACHR highlighted that the murders of trans and non-binary individuals in leadership roles underscore the need for Latin American states to implement mechanisms that ensure their right to participate freely and meaningfully in decision-making spaces³⁷.

Religious Fundamentalism, Discriminatory, and Stigmatizing Discourses

The United Nations Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity points out that attacks on LGBTI+ people have become a tool for some authoritarian leaders, who use hostility to strengthen their power and weaken

³⁵ According to the Guatemala Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the number of attacks against human rights defenders, journalists, media outlets, and women participating in politics increased in 2023. Additionally, this Office became aware of discriminatory rhetoric against LGBTI people during the elections. For more information, see: Consejo de Derechos Humanos, Situación de derechos humanos en Guatemala. Informe del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos [Human Rights Council, Human Rights Situation in Guatemala. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights] (United Nations, 2024), https://issuu.com/oacnudhgt/docs/informe_anual_2023

³⁶ LLYC Ideas, *Discurso de odio y Orgullo LGBTIQ en la conversación digital* [Hate Speech and LGBTIQ Pride in Digital Conversations] (LLYC, 2023), 14, Informe_LLYC_Discurso_de_Odio_y_Orgulo_LGTBIQ_en_la_conversación_digital_ESP.pdf (llorenteycuencia.com)

³⁷ CIDH, “CIDH insta a los Estados a promover la participación política de personas trans” [IACHR Urges States to Promote the Political Participation of Trans People], 2024, <https://www.oas.org/es/CIDH/jsForm/?File=/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2024/065.asp>



democratic institutions by targeting LGBTI+ rights³⁸. Prejudice-driven violence, seen as an ongoing social phenomenon that stems from the justification of negative and false perceptions, thrives in a social context that is complicit. This environment is shaped by discourses, narratives, and societal views that stigmatize certain groups³⁹. That's why there's growing concern about the rise of fundamentalist groups and discriminatory rhetoric in the region, as these can legitimize, incite, and justify violence against LGBTI+ people.

Prejudice-driven violence, seen as an ongoing social phenomenon that stems from the justification of negative and false perceptions, thrives in a social context that is complicit. This environment is shaped by discourses, narratives, and societal views that stigmatize certain groups

In Latin America, misleading rhetoric about protecting "good morals," "family," and "childhood" continues to reinforce harmful stereotypes and fuel the social prejudices behind discrimination and violence against LGBTI+ people. The Red Sin Violencia has consistently documented this issue, showing that it remains prevalent. For instance, in Honduras, religious fundamentalist groups have exploited the country's social and political crisis to stigmatize LGBTI+ people, positioning themselves as the nation's moral defenders⁴⁰. In Colombia, similar tactics are being used to block progress on LGBTI+

³⁸ UN, “Informe del Experto Independiente sobre la protección contra la violencia y la discriminación por motivos de orientación sexual o identidad de género, Graeme Reid sobre protección contra la violencia y la discriminación por motivos de orientación sexual o identidad de género en relación con los derechos humanos a la libertad de expresión, de reunión pacífica y de asociación” [Report of the Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Graeme Reid on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity with Respect to Human Rights to Freedom of Expression, Peaceful Assembly, and Association] (A/HRC/56/49, 2024), para. 19.]

³⁹ IACHR, *Violencia contra personas LGBTI* [Violence Against LGBTI People], párr. 44.

⁴⁰ La Tribuna, “Asociación de Pastores convocará a una manifestación pacífica ‘por la paz de Honduras’” [Pastors’ Association to Call for a Peaceful Protest ‘For the Peace of Honduras’], *La Tribuna*, 2023, <https://www.latribuna.hn/2023/11/10/asociacion-de-pastores-convocara-a-una-manifestacion-pacifica-por-la-paz-de-honduras/>



rights, with legislative initiatives aimed at denying and pathologizing the free expression and development of gender identity from a young age, all under the pretext of protecting children.

Similarly, in Peru, religious fundamentalist groups have strengthened their presence in powerful spaces like Congress and are advancing their agendas in alliance with groups such as “La Resistencia.” This group has been criminally charged as an organization that plans violent activities against far-right opponents and is also known for its strong opposition to gender perspectives, spreading homophobic comments on social media⁴¹. These alliances seek to dismantle the rule of law and use an anti-gender agenda for political purposes.

The presence of these groups also affects the cultural sphere. In 2023, in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, anti-rights and religious fundamentalist movements violently invaded the El Altillo Beni City Museum, destroying the art exhibition ‘Revolución Orgullo,’ which had been organized to celebrate Sexual Diversity Month. Despite national regulations prohibiting all acts of discrimination, there was no enforcement of the law in this case⁴². These stigmatizing discourses also occur in the digital realm, leading to online harassment of LGBTI+ people and visible leaders, sometimes with racist undertones⁴³. Moreover, the rejection of transgender women is often framed as a stance against “erasing women,” a slogan used by trans-exclusionary groups during marches and protests on International Women’s Day⁴⁴. Thus, the impact of these groups extends into the cultural sphere as well.

⁴¹ Sarmiento, Jair. “Congreso condecora a vocero antiderechos mexicano con presencia de ministros” [Congress Honors Anti-Rights Mexican Spokesperson in the Presence of Ministers]. *Wayka*, 17 Aug. 2023, <https://wayka.pe/congreso-condecora-a-vocero-antiderechos-mexicano-con-presencia-de-ministros/>

⁴² Agreden y destruyen una de las obras de la exposición Revolución Orgullo en el Museo El Altillo” [Assault and Destruction of an Artwork from the ‘Revolución Orgullo’ Exhibit at El Altillo Museum]. *El Deber*, 14 June 2022, https://eldeber.com.bo/gente/agreden-y-destruyen-una-de-las-obras-de-la-exposicion-revolucion-orgullo-en-el-museo-el-altillo_281750

⁴³ IACHR, “Capítulo IV.a” [Chapter IV.a], para. 718.

⁴⁴ IACHR, “Capítulo IV.a” [Chapter IV.a], para. 596.



The recent election of Javier Milei as President of Argentina has heightened concerns across the region in 2023. His victory isn’t just significant for Argentina; it also signals the serious risks facing women and LGBTIQ+ people⁴⁵. Shortly after taking office, Milei dismantled the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Racism (INADI)⁴⁶ and the Ministry of Women, Gender, and Diversity⁴⁷. This move left women and diverse communities without protection from gender-based violence, all under the pretext of addressing the economic crisis and claiming that these institutions were used “por la administración anterior con fines político-partidarios para propagar e imponer una agenda ideológica” [“by the previous administration for political purposes to promote and impose an ideological agenda”]⁴⁸. This situation illustrates how leaders opposing gender issues can cause real setbacks in efforts to protect against violence. In this increasingly hostile environment, four lesbian women in Buenos Aires were recently attacked by a neighbor who threw a Molotov cocktail into the room where they were sleeping. Sofía, the sole

⁴⁵ Outright International, “Argentina en las urnas: El futuro incierto de la igualdad LGBTQ” [Argentina at the Polls: The Uncertain Future of LGBTQ Equality], 2023, <https://outrightinternational.org/insights/argentina-en-las-urnas-el-futuro-incierto-de-la-igualdad-lgbtq>

⁴⁶ DW, “Argentina cierra instituto nacional contra la discriminación” [“Argentina Closes National Institute Against Discrimination”] DW, February 23, 2024, <https://www.dw.com/es/argentina-cierra-instituto-nacional-contra-la-discriminacion/a-68347303>

⁴⁷ ABC Internacional, “Milei cierra el Ministerio de la Mujer en Argentina: «Fue creado para imponer una agenda ideológica y dar charlas»” [Milei Closes the Ministry of Women in Argentina: ‘It Was Created to Impose an Ideological Agenda and Give Talks’] ABC Internacional, June 7, 2024, <https://www.abc.es/internacional/milei-cierra-ministerio-mujer-argentina-creado-imponer-20240607063656-nt.html?ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.abc.es%2Finternacional%2Fmilei-cierra-ministerio-mujer-argentina-creado-imponer-20240607063656-nt.html>

⁴⁸ Infobae, “El Gobierno anunció el cierre definitivo del ex Ministerio de Mujeres” [The Government Announced the Final Closure of the Former Ministry of Women], Infobae, June 6, 2024, <https://www.infobae.com/politica/2024/06/07/el-gobierno-anuncio-el-cierre-definitivo-del-ex-ministerio-de-mujeres/>



survivor, shared that she used to stay home to avoid the harassment and abuse they faced daily because of their sexual orientation, but even that wasn't enough—they were attacked in a private area⁴⁹.

On the inter-American front, there's growing concern over recent statements by some members of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, who have legitimized discrimination against LGBTI+ people. These members have opposed protecting the right to gender identity and argued that states are not obligated to recognize same-sex civil unions, despite the fact that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has established strong protections in this area⁵¹.

⁴⁹ Cristina Bazán, "El terror atrapa a la población LGBT+ en Argentina tras la masacre de lesbianas" [Terror Grips the LGBT+ Population in Argentina After the Lesbian Massacre], *Efeminista*, May 15, 2024, <https://efeminista.com/miedo-vuelve-poblacion-lgbt-argentina/>

⁵⁰ IACHR, *Informe Situación de Derechos Humanos en Honduras* [Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Honduras] (OEA/Ser.L/V/II, 2024), 360-398.

⁵¹ IACHR, *Opinión Consultiva OC-24/17* [Advisory Opinion OC-24/17], Párr. 102-115.



Homicides of LGBTI+ People in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2023





In 2023, at least

364 LGBTI+ people

were murdered in the ten Latin American and Caribbean countries that are part of the Red Sin Violencia. This represents a **5.5% increase compared to the number of cases recorded in 2022**. Additionally, 2023 was the most violent year on record in Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, and Honduras since Sin Violencia began documenting cases.

Beyond the slight increase in the total number of cases at the regional level, significant increases were identified in certain countries within the region. This was particularly the case in Guatemala, where the number of recorded cases rose by 34.5% compared to the previous year; in Peru, where the increase was 63.6%; and in Ecuador, which saw the highest increase in the entire region, equivalent to 144.4%.

In other countries, increases were also recorded, though not as pronounced as in Colombia (+7.4%) and Honduras (+4.6%). Countries like El Salvador and Nicaragua also saw proportionally significant increases. However, the absolute number of cases remained in single digits, so the impact of these increases might be less substantial. While 2023 was the year with the highest number of cases recorded to date in Nicaragua, the situation is different for El Salvador. The increase compared to 2022 remains below the historical figures reported for that country, where between 11 and 15 LGBTI+ people were murdered annually during its most violent years (2016-2018).

On the other hand, two countries experienced significant reductions: Mexico with a -23.5% decrease and the Dominican Republic with an -88% decrease. However, there is insufficient information to determine whether these reductions reflect a real decrease in lethal violence against LGBTI+ people in these countries, or whether they are due to increased invisibility of this violence in available sources, and/or greater barriers to identifying and documenting cases.



Graphic 1.
Homicides of LGBTI+ People in Latin America 2021-2023

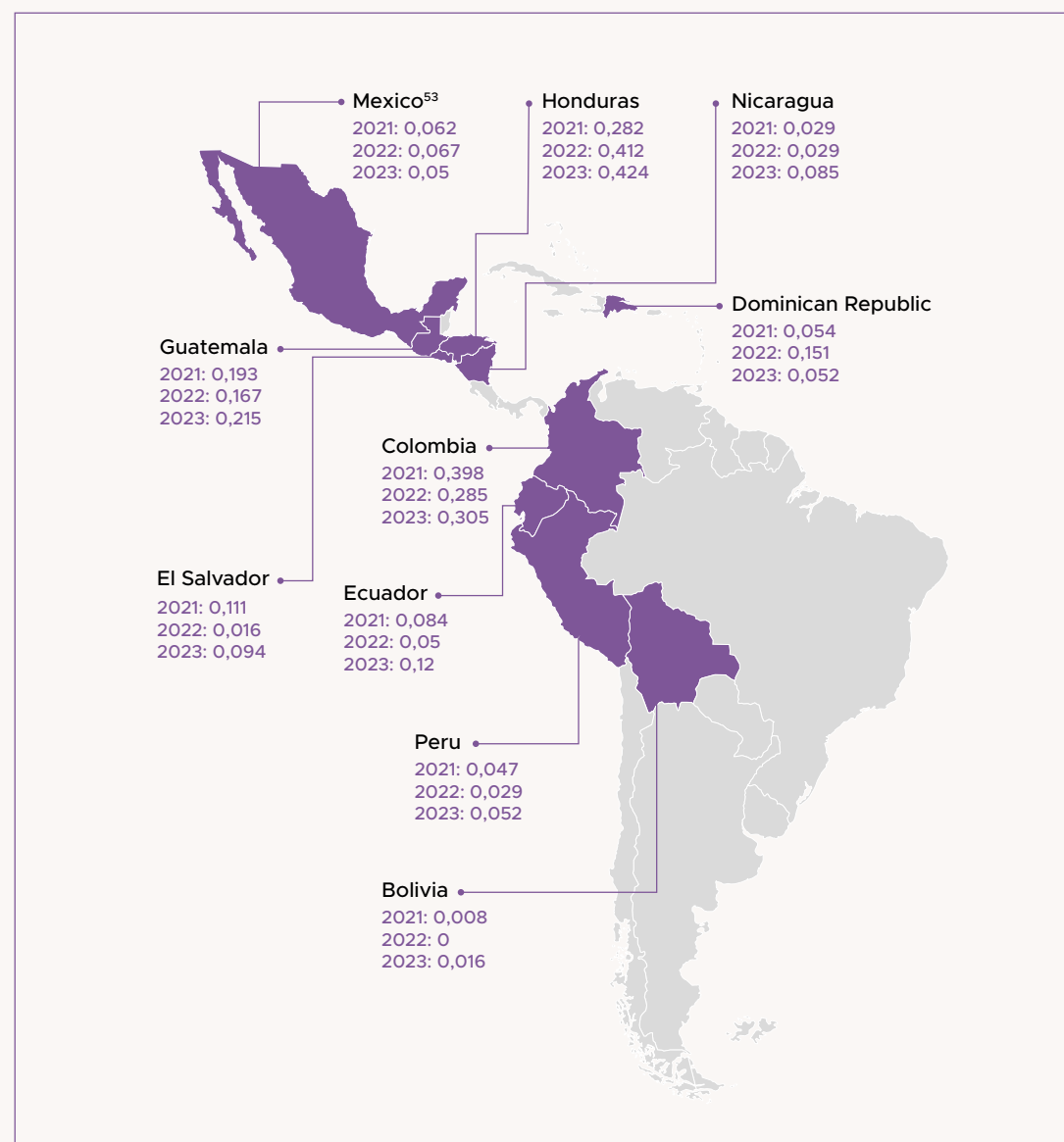


To assess and compare the levels of homicidal violence across countries, we calculated the rate of LGBTI+ homicides per 100,000 residents⁵². For 2023, Honduras continued to have the highest rate of LGBTI+ homicides relative to its population, with 0.424 LGBTI+ homicides per 100,000 residents. It was followed by Colombia at 0.305, Guatemala at 0.215, and Ecuador at 0.120.



⁵² Just like last year, global rates (i.e., relative to the total population of each country) were calculated instead of specific rates (i.e., relative to the total number of LGBTI+ people), as most countries in the region have not produced census information that would allow for estimating the total number of people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. This time, we used population estimates for each country in 2023 from the CEPAL. CEPALSTAT, 'Total Population,' accessed June 2024, https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat/dashboard.html?indicator_id=1&area_id=1&lang=es

Graphic 2.
LGBTI+ Homicide Rate per 100,000 Residents



⁵³ Although Mexico has survey data that could provide specific rates per 100,000 LGBTI+ people, we chose to use the general rate per 100,000 residents for better comparison with other countries. Specific rates for Mexico, calculated by Letra S, an organization within the Red Sin Violencia, will be referenced in a later analysis of the situation there.

When comparing rates from previous years, **Ecuador stands out with a significant rise in the incidence homicidal violence against LGBTI+ people**, moving from one of the lowest rates in 2022 (0.050) to the fourth highest in 2023. **It's also important to note that the incidence of lethal violence increased in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, and Colombia. However, Ecuador is the only country where this surge in violence against LGBTI+ people mirrors a similar increase in the overall homicide rate, which also saw a considerable jump compared to the previous year (see Chapter 3). In contrast, in countries like El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, and Colombia, the rise in LGBTI+ homicide rates happened despite a drop in the general homicide rates. Essentially, while the broader population in these countries faced fewer homicides in 2023, LGBTI+ people experienced more targeted violence.**

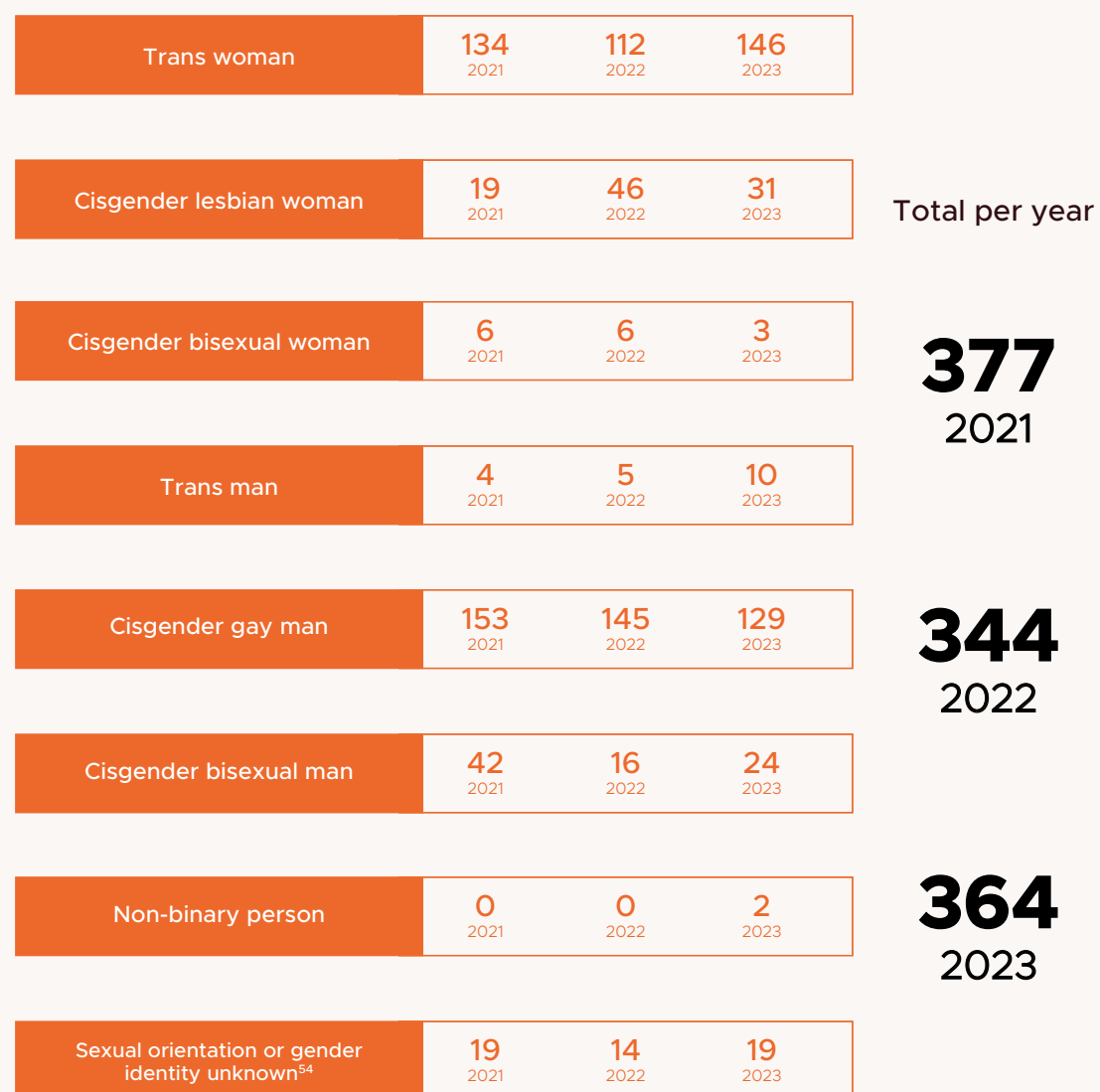
rates also fell during the same period.

I. The Victims

Based on their gender identity or sexual orientation, the majority of victims in 2023 were trans women, followed by cis gay men. This trend aligns with previous years, where most victims were cis gay men and trans women, and the proportion of male and female victims was nearly the same.



Graphic 3.
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity of the Victims.



⁵⁴ As in previous years, these cases involve victims reported simply as LGBTI+, with no further details provided about their specific gender identity or sexual orientation.



While the overall distribution of victims by gender identity and sexual orientation remained similar to previous years, some significant variations have emerged. Firstly, there has been a notable increase in the number of victims identified as trans women and trans men compared to the previous year. In fact, 2023 has been the deadliest year for trans women since Sin Violencia began its regional documentation, while the number of trans men victims has matched the record high of 10 set in 2020. Secondly, there has been a reduction in the number of victims identified as cisgender gay men, cisgender lesbian women, and cisgender bisexual women.

In fact, 2023 has been the deadliest year for trans women since Sin Violencia began its regional documentation.

Trans women make up the largest number of victims in Ecuador (where they represented 81.8% of the victims), Peru (66.6%), Mexico (66.1%), and Nicaragua (50%). **As will be explained later, in several countries in the region, including Ecuador, Peru, and Mexico, trans women are particularly targeted by organized crime due** to their heightened socioeconomic vulnerability. This includes extortion for engaging in sex work or being exploited to support criminal activities. This context may explain the high number of homicides of trans women in these countries.

Cisgender gay and bisexual men made up the majority of victims in El Salvador (100%), Guatemala (64.1%), and Colombia (49%). Many of these crimes involve criminals targeting gay men, robbing them, and then killing them in their homes using methods like asphyxiation, stabbing, or beatings. This pattern has been observed across the region for several years, but in 2023, it was particularly prevalent in Colombia. In El Salvador and Guatemala, the majority of cases involving gay men were carried out under different circumstances, often by hitmen using firearms in public spaces. Some of these cases are believed to be connected to organized crime, especially in Guatemala.



Cisgender lesbian and bisexual women were mainly targeted in Colombia and Honduras, accounting for 73.5% of the cases across the region. Honduras, in particular, saw the highest proportion of these victims, making up almost a quarter (24.4%) of the total. This is largely due to three factors: the presence of the Red Lésbica Cattrachas [Cattrachas Lesbian Network], a member of the Red Sin Violencia with significant experience in documenting crimes against lesbian women; the height-

Most of the homicides of trans men recorded in the region took place in Colombia, where six trans men were killed, making up 60% of the regional total. Although there is limited information available about these cases, several of the victims were murdered in public spaces and with firearms.

ened risks that cisgender lesbian and bisexual women face from organized crime in Honduras and other countries in the Northern Triangle; and the overall rise in lethal violence against women in Honduras during 2023⁵⁵.

Lastly, **most of the homicides of trans men recorded in the region took place in Colombia, where six trans men were killed, making up 60% of the regional total. Although there is limited information available about these cases, several of the victims were murdered in public spaces and with firearms.** Notably, at least two of them were Venezuelan migrants killed in Colombia, while another was incarcerated and was killed during a massacre in a women's prison in Honduras.

⁵⁵ El Mundo, "Aumento alarmante de femicidios en Honduras: Más de 380 víctimas en 2023 y contando" [Alarming Increase in Femicides in Honduras: Over 380 Victims in 2023 and Counting], December 19, 2023, <https://elmundo.hn/aumento-alarmanete-de-femicidios-en-honduras-mas-de-380-victimas-en-2023-y-contando/>



As in previous years, in 2023, the available sources provided little information on other characteristics of the victims, which is summarized below:

- Details about the victims' occupations were available for 45.4%. Most worked as employees (43), sex workers (28), merchants (26), or stylists (17).
- Ethnic and racial characteristics were recorded for 40.3% of the victims. The majority (127) were identified as white or mestizo, while 13 were identified as Afro-descendants, and four as Indigenous.
- Educational background information was available for 25.5% of the victims. Most (56 out of 91) had completed primary education, 11 had secondary or technical training, and 23 had some higher education, including bachelor's or postgraduate degrees.
- About a quarter of the data was collected from a differential perspective (26.6%):
 - » At least 24 LGBTI+ people who were involved in human rights work or were members of social organizations were notably targeted. Most of these victims were killed in Colombia (13), with others in Mexico (6), Guatemala (4), and Honduras (1).
 - » 14 LGBTI+ migrants, mostly Venezuelan, were documented as victims. They were killed in Colombia (including eight trans women, one cisgender bisexual man, and one Cuban-Colombian cisgender gay man). Two other migrant victims were killed in Peru, with one each in Guatemala and Honduras.
 - » Lastly, 6 people were registered as having been killed while incarcerated (five cisgender lesbian women and one trans man), all during a massacre in a women's prison in Honduras.

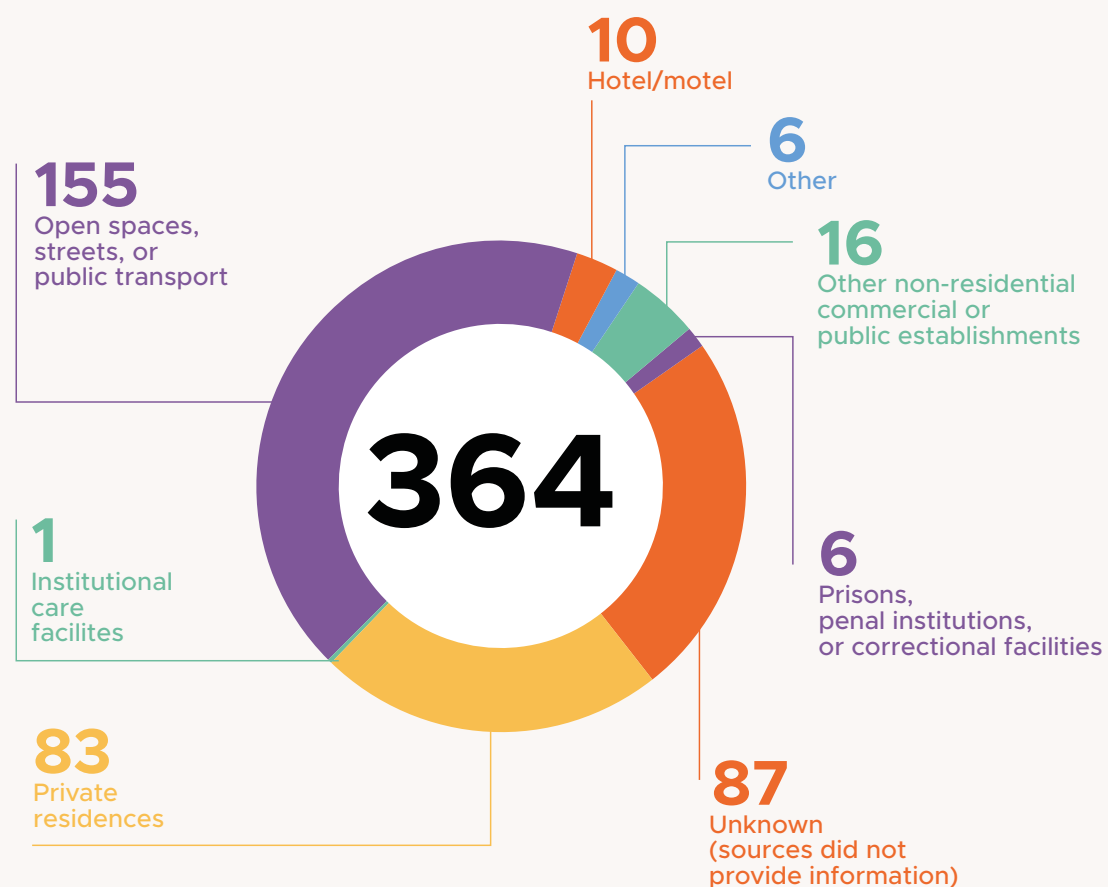


II. The Facts

Location of the Incident or Discovery of the Body

Nearly half of the recorded homicides (42.6 percent) took place in streets or other public areas (including vacant lots within cities or roads in rural areas). At least 22.8 percent occurred in private residences, with the majority of victims being cisgender gay men. This includes cases where the body was discovered at these locations, even if it is not certain whether the person was killed there or if the body was transported from another location.

Graphic 4.
Location of the Crime.



The location of the crime or where the victim's body was found can vary depending on their gender identity or sexual orientation. Firstly, although at least 42.6% of all homicides occurred in public spaces, this proportion was higher for cases involving trans women: 56.7% of them were killed in public spaces, while 21.9% were killed in private residences. Secondly, for cases involving cisgender lesbian women and cisgender gay men, just over a third of the homicides occurred in public spaces (38.7% for the former and 37.2% for the latter).

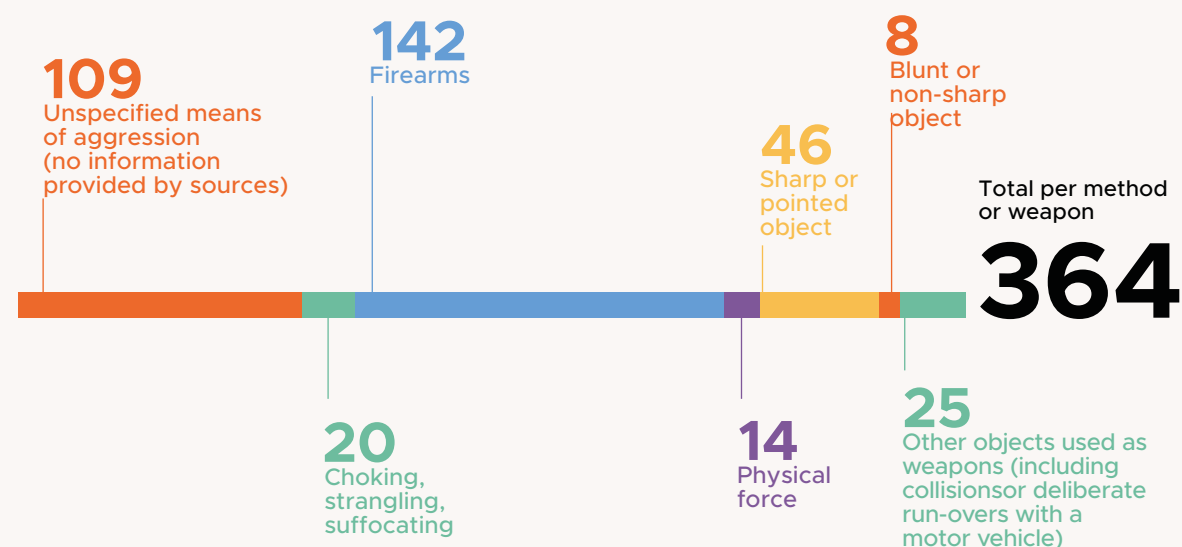
On the other hand, the majority of the 93 victims killed in private residences and hotel rooms were cisgender gay and bisexual men (53.2%), while the majority of victims killed in prisons or detention facilities were cisgender lesbian women (all of whom were killed in a massacre at a women's prison in Honduras in June 2023, where 46 people in detention died).

Methods or Weapons Used

Just over a third of these crimes were committed using firearms (39%), with a smaller proportion involving cutting or stabbing objects (12.6%), strangulation, physical force (beatings), or other methods (including cases where the victims were burned). Regionally, firearms were more commonly used to kill LGBT+ people in El Salvador (83.3%), Honduras (68.9%), Ecuador (63.3%), Guatemala (53.8%), and Mexico (50.8%), which are among the countries with higher rates of organized crime-related homicides.



Graphic 5.
Methods or Weapons Used



Just as with the location, the choice of method or weapon for these homicides also differed based on the victims' gender identity or sexual orientation.

Although firearms were the most commonly used weapon overall, their use was higher in the murders of cisgender lesbian women (64.5% of whom were killed with firearms) and trans women (43.2%). In contrast, their use was less prevalent among men, since 36.4% of cisgender gay men and 26.7% of trans men killed in 2023 died from gunshot wounds. Finally, although sharp or pointed objects were used in less than 15% of all crimes, their use was primarily against cisgender gay men and trans women, who were victims in 82.6% of the murders committed with these weapons.



Patterns of Violence Due to Prejudice

As in previous years, the limited availability and low quality of information regarding the circumstances of time, manner, and place of the crimes, as well as the characteristics of the victims, made it difficult to conduct a thorough assessment of the motives behind most of the LGBTI+ homicides recorded in 2023. However, **despite the challenges in determining the motive behind each individual crime, it is possible to analyze the broader patterns of violence against LGBTI+ people in the region, where**

Despite the challenges in determining the motive behind each individual crime, it is possible to analyze the broader patterns of violence against LGBTI+ people in the region, where prejudice plays a central role.

prejudice plays a central role. This encompasses cases where prejudice may have been either symbolic or instrumental⁵⁶, affecting both the immediate factors of the crime and the broader vulnerabilities of the victims.

On one hand, cases where prejudice is symbolic involve a clear expression of rejection towards the victim's real or perceived gender identity or sexual orientation. The intent is to send a message of hostility to the victim and others who might share the same identity.

This first group includes instances where victims faced various forms of violence. Notably, there are 55 cases where victims were tortured before being killed, 22 cases involving enforced disappearance, 13 cases of sexual violence before death, and 11 cases where victims had been previously threatened. These cases align with longstanding regional patterns of violence, such as extreme violence against cisgender gay men in private residences (at least 25 cases in 2023, including instances of torture and sexual violence), homicides of

⁵⁶ A detailed explanation of the conceptual framework of “violencia por prejuicio” [“prejudice-based violence”] used by the Red Sin Violencia, including the criteria for identifying prejudice as a motive for a crime as well as the distinction between symbolic and instrumental prejudice, can be found in the first regional report *El prejuicio no conoce fronteras* [Prejudice Knows No Borders] 2019, available at <https://sinviolencia.lgbt/el-prejuicio-no-conoce-fronteras/>



cisgender lesbian couples and cisgender gay men (six cases involving eleven victims), and extreme violence against transgender women in public spaces (12 cases).

On the other hand, cases where prejudice may have played an instrumental role involve situations where the perpetrator targets the victim due to their perceived vulnerability based on gender identity or sexual orientation. In these instances, the targeting is not necessarily driven by hostility but rather by other motives, such as financial gain. In this second group, cases where prejudice had an instrumental nature involve perpetrators selecting victims due to their gender identity or sexual orientation, with the aim of extorting or robbing them. For instance, at least 21 murders of trans women were documented, where victims were killed for refusing to pay the “cupos” [this is extortion demands related to sex work], committed by organized crime groups. Additionally, at least 12 cases involved cisgender gay men who were initially contacted in social spaces or through dating apps. The perpetrators gained their trust to enter their homes, only to later kill them.

However, the analytical distinction between symbolic and instrumental prejudice does not mean they are mutually exclusive. In practice, prejudice can manifest as both symbolic and instrumental in the same case. For example, consider the case of a 27-year-old cisgender gay man who was murdered in his home in Cali, Colombia. According to available sources, the victim arrived home early in the morning with two men who then bound him, later tortured him, and ultimately killed him with a knife before stealing his computer, cellphone, and house keys. Another example is the abduction, torture, and subsequent murder of Mandy White, a trans woman who owned a beauty salon in a village in San Agustín Acasaguastlán, Guatemala. She was being exploited by a drug trafficking group in the area. On November 28, armed men arrived at her salon, tortured her there, then put her in a sack and took



her to a road where they slit her throat and shot her. In both cases, the selection of victims for economic gain, combined with the extreme violence inflicted, reflects elements of both instrumental and symbolic prejudice.

III. Patterns of Violence by Subregion and Country

This section presents the subregional and national dynamics of homicidal violence against LGBTI+ people.



📍 Central America

In this subregion, 161 out of the 364 homicides recorded in 2023 occurred, representing 44.2% of the cases. **The whole subregion saw a rise in homicidal violence against LGBTI+ people. It includes two countries with the highest incidence of homicidal violence against LGBTI+ people in Latin America: Honduras and Guatemala.**

In **Guatemala**, 39 LGBTI+ people were killed in 2023, marking a 34.5% increase in the number of cases and a 28.7% rise in the homicide rate compared to the previous year. This made 2023 the most violent year recorded in the country to date. It is important to note that this increase cannot be attributed to a general rise in homicidal violence, as there was a slight reduction in both the total number and overall rate of homicides in Guatemala in 2023 (see Chapter 3).



Given that violence is generally a multidimensional and multifaceted issue, a single reason cannot fully explain the increase in homicidal violence against LGBTI+ people. In the case of Guatemala, the higher number of reported cases can be attributed to at least three factors: first, the strengthening of Lambda's investigative capabilities, the organization that is part of Red Sin Violencia in the country⁵⁷; second, the rise in violence related to the 2023 presidential elections (see Chapter 3); and third, the migration of gang members from El Salvador (see Chapter 3).

The majority of the victims in Guatemala were cisgender gay men (21) and transgender women (10). Most of these crimes were committed using firearms (30) and involved methods associated with organized crime, such as contract killings or murders preceded by forced disappearances, threats, kidnappings, or extortion. In fact, available sources explicitly indicate that several of the cases recorded in the country were perpetrated by armed groups or organized crime syndicates.

The link between organized crime and homicidal violence against LGBTI+ people may partially explain the geographic distribution of the cases reported in 2023. Nearly half of the cases (13) were recorded in the department of Guatemala, the country's most populous region and home to its capital. The other departments with higher case counts were Izabal (6) and Zacapa (4), which are among the least populated in the country. Consequently, the rates of homicidal violence against LGBTI+ people in Izabal and Zacapa were nearly seven times higher than the national average, with 1,309 and 1,449 incidents per 100,000 residents, respectively⁵⁸. Additionally, Izabal and Zacapa have some of

⁵⁷ Asociación Lambda, *Territorios invisibles. Informe anual del Observatorio de Derechos Humanos y Violencias por Orientación Sexual e Identidad de Género*, [Invisible Territories: Annual Report of the Human Rights and Violence Observatory for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity] 2023.

⁵⁸ To calculate the departmental rates, we used the 2023 population projections from the Guatemalan National Institute of Statistics, available at <https://www.ine.gob.gt/proyecciones/>



the highest overall homicide rates in the country⁵⁹ driven by significant organized crime activity⁶⁰. This connection helps explain the elevated levels of violence against LGBTI+ people in these departments. In fact, some cases show signs that they were committed by organized crime groups due to the methods used, such as the double homicide of a trans woman and a cis gay man in Zacapa. They were missing for three days before their bodies were found on a road, bound and showing signs of torture.

Organized crime partially explains the geographic concentration of homicidal violence against LGBTI+ people in Guatemala City. Seven of the eight homicides reported in the capital occurred in Zone 1, which is a prominent area for sex work. For years, trans women working in this zone have faced extortion, threats, exploitation, and other forms of violence from organized crime groups that control the area.

This dangerous situation continued throughout 2023, with four trans women being murdered in Zone 1. One of these victims was reportedly coerced by criminal groups to collect extortion payments, while the other three were sex workers. Among them was Valentina de Paz, vice president of Colectivo El Trébol, an organization advocating for the rights of trans sex workers. Despite requesting protection due to threats, Valentina was killed on August 26 when hitmen approached and shot her in Zone 1. A few days later, armed men threatened a group of trans women gathered on a street in the same area, ordering them to leave. One woman who refused was later found dead with at least 17 stab wounds and wrapped in sheets. Two months later, another trans

⁵⁹ Centro de Investigaciones Económicas Nacionales, "Tasas de homicidios por departamento" [Homicide Rates per Department], 2024, <https://cien.org.gt/index.php/tasa-de-homicidios-por-departamento/>

⁶⁰ InSight Crime, "Perfil de Izabal, Guatemala" [Profile of Izabal, Guatemala], January 22, 2021, <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias-crimen-organizado-guatemala/izabal-guatemala/>; "Perfil de Zacapa, Guatemala" [Profile of Zacapa, Guatemala], January 22, 2021, <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias-crimen-organizado-guatemala/zacapa-guatemala/>



woman from Colectivo El Trébol was kidnapped and murdered in Guatemala City. This shows **the persistence of a continuum of violence against trans women engaged in sex work in the capital, especially those with leadership roles in Colectivo El Trébol**. It is also important to note that the previous year, another member of the collective, advocate Nancy Sacul, was killed by a criminal who had been extorting them to allow their work in the same sector of the city.

In **Honduras**, 45 LGBTI+ people were killed in 2023. This represents a 4.6% increase in cases and a 2.9% rise in the homicide rate compared to the previous year, making it, too, the deadliest year on record for LGBTI+ people in the country. Similar to Guatemala, this increase in homicidal violence against LGBTI+ people occurred despite a significant reduction in the overall number and rate of homicides compared to the previous year. Although the government attributes this general decline in homicides to the extension of the state of emergency declared initially in December 2022, this measure has not only been ineffective in addressing other high-impact crimes committed by organized crime groups⁶¹, but has also failed to protect the lives of women, LGBTI+ people, and other vulnerable groups⁶². In fact, the rise in violence against LGBTI+ people in Honduras could be partly attributed to increased risks related to gender-based violence and organized crime (including the migration of gang members from El Salvador) and the lack of specialized approaches in public security policies to address these issues.

⁶¹ Helen Montoya, “Honduras avanza poco contra el crimen tras 6 meses de estado de excepción” [Honduras Makes Little Progress Against Crime After 6 Months of State of Emergency], *InSight Crime*, June 5, 2023, <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias/honduras-a-vanza-poco-contra-crimen-tras-6-meses-estado-excepcion/>

⁶² According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras, violent deaths of women increased by 24.2% in 2023. The Office also reported a rise in the number of murders of LGBTI+ people and attacks against human rights defenders. For more information, see: *Informe sobre la situación de los derechos humanos en Honduras*, [Human Rights Situation Report in Honduras] (United Nations, 2024), https://oacnudh.hn/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Informe-OACNUDH-2023_19.03.2024.pdf



Almost half of the documented cases in Honduras (21) occurred in the Central District of Tegucigalpa and Comayagüela. However, when accounting for population size, the incidence of violence was higher in the departments of Choluteca, Atlántida, and Colón, which had homicide rates exceeding the national average, with 0.814, 0.787, and 0.554 LGBTI+ homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, respectively⁶³.

The majority of the victims were cisgender gay men (16), transgender women (14), and cisgender lesbian women (10). To a lesser extent, the victims included transgender men (1), cisgender bisexual women (1), cisgender bisexual men (1), and two individuals reported generically as LGBTI+ without specific information about their gender identity or sexual orientation. Notably, most of these crimes (31) were committed using firearms.

Available information indicates that **prejudice continues to make LGBTI+ people in Honduras, especially cisgender lesbian and bisexual women, increasingly vulnerable in a context marked by sociopolitical violence and organized crime**, as several of these crimes were perpetrated by armed groups. In particular, two cases of massacres that primarily affected cisgender lesbian and bisexual women stand out.

The first incident occurred on March 4 at a hotel in Comayagüela that also operates as low-rent lodging, primarily occupied by people in vulnerable situations. Armed individuals arrived at the location, searched room by

⁶³ To calculate the departmental rates, we used the 2023 population projections from the National Institute of Statistics of Honduras, available at: <http://181.115.7.199/binhnd/RpWebEngine.exe/Portal?BASE=PROYPOB&lang=ESP>



Prejudice continues to make LGBTI+ people in Honduras, especially cisgender lesbian and bisexual women, increasingly vulnerable in a context marked by sociopolitical violence and organized crime

room for seven people, and then gathered them in one place where they were shot to death. Among the victims were Yahaira Emilec Hernández, a 29-year-old lesbian domestic worker, and Skarlet Gissel Ávila Matam-

oros, a 28-year-old bisexual woman involved in sex work. Two other victims were cisgender gay men. Authorities reported that the perpetrators were members of the 18th Street Gang. However, instead of approaching the investigation with a differential perspective, the National Police announced it as a “settling of accounts.”

The second case took place on June 20, when a massacre occurred inside the National Women’s Penitentiary of Social Adaptation (PNFAS) in Támara, Francisco Morazán department. On

that day, 46 inmates were killed during a confrontation between rival gangs inside the facility; this incident has been the deadliest recorded in Honduran prisons to date. The Cattrachas Lesbian Network identified five of the victims as cisgender lesbian women and one as a trans man. Although the direct perpetrators were other incarcerated women associated with the Barrio 18 gang, they used firearms belonging to the Ministry of Security⁶⁴ and planned and executed the massacre, partly due to the complicity, tolerance, and indifference of the penitentiary authorities⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ Vienna Herrera, “Secretario de Seguridad Reconoce Que Se Usaron Armas Compradas por el Estado en Masacre de PNFAS” [Secretary of Security Acknowledges That State-Purchased Weapons Were Used in PNFAS Massacre], *Contracorriente*, December 8, 2023, <https://contracorriente.red/2023/12/08/secretario-de-seguridad-reconoce-que-se-usaron-armas-compradas-por-el-estado-en-masacre-de-pnfas/>

⁶⁵ Victoria Dittmar and Helen Montoya, “La bomba de tiempo que explotó dos veces: detrás de las masacres en la prisión femenina de Honduras” [The Time Bomb That Exploded Twice: Behind the Massacres in the Women’s Prison in Honduras], *InSight Crime*, August 16, 2023, <https://insightcrime.org/es/investigaciones/instituciones-pandillas-violencia-penal-femenil-honduras/#:~:text=Lo%20ocurrido%20esa%20ma%C3%B1ana%20del,una%20prisi%C3%B3n%20femenina%20en%20Latinoam%C3%A9rica>



In **El Salvador**, the number of homicides of LGBTI+ people also rose in 2023, following a significant decrease during the first year of the state of emergency declared by the government in 2022. This increase occurred despite an overall decline in the total number and rate of homicides in the country during 2023 (Chapter 3). Similar to Honduras, the continued extension of the state of emergency throughout 2023 did not prevent this new rise in violence, **supporting the idea that such measures not only expose LGBTI+ people to various forms of non-lethal violence (such as arbitrary detentions and torture) but are also ineffective in preventing lethal violence against them.**

All the victims recorded in El Salvador during this period were cisgender men: five gay men and one bisexual man, all between 20 and 29 years old. The crimes occurred in the departments of San Salvador (3), Cabañas (2), and Usulután (1). Five out of these six homicides were committed with firearms, but available sources indicate that only one was likely perpetrated by members of organized crime groups. Noteworthy is the case of Víctor Rivas, a 24-year-old gay man, who was shot to death in his home. The perpetrator was a 30-year-old man with whom he had a relationship. The assailant shot him during an argument, fled the scene, but later returned to steal valuables and set fire to the house to destroy evidence of the crime. The perpetrator was captured three days later and prosecuted, an event highlighted by both the Attorney General’s Office and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security as a demonstration of the success of the state’s actions.

The handling of this case by the authorities, both in terms of the speed of the investigation and the publicity it received, illustrates two issues faced by LGBTI+ people in El Salvador. First, the inequality in access to justice based on social status, as the victim was from a middle-upper-class background and studied at a prestigious private university. Second, the instrumentalization of certain cases to stigmatize and downplay the violence against LGBTI+ people—by giving



more visibility to cases where the violence occurs between peers and can be portrayed as "isolated incidents" or motivated by "personal problems," rather than highlighting and pursuing cases of prejudice-based violence where the perpetrators are not part of the LGBTI+ population. This approach is also used to justify the continuation of the state of emergency. Finally, it is important to note that the use of firearms in almost all documented cases in El Salvador implies that these incidents cannot be entirely reduced to personal disputes disconnected from the broader context of macro-criminality in the country, which is characterized by a high circulation of firearms⁶⁶.

This information should not be interpreted as isolated cases or disconnected from broader dynamics of macro-criminality, especially in contexts where serious obstacles are imposed on the production and access to information on homicides by civil society, as well as a lack of transparency in official figures.

In **Nicaragua**, six homicides of LGBTI+ people were recorded in 2023, four more than the previous year. The increase in the number of recorded cases contrasts with the official report of a slight reduction in the homicide rate in the country compared to 2022 (Chapter 3). Half of these cases occurred in Managua, and half of the victims were transgender women. Notable incidents include the murder of a young transgender woman by her partner, who assaulted her during an argument, and the murder of a 65-year-old gay man in his home by

three young men, who stripped and beat him in various parts of his body before robbing him. Similar to the situation in El Salvador, this information should not be interpreted as isolated cases or disconnected from broader dynamics of macro-criminality, especially in contexts where serious obstacles are imposed on the production and access to information on homicides by civil society, as well as a lack of transparency in official figures.

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⁶⁶ Victoria Dittmar y Chris Dalby, "Decomisos de armas no paran flujos ilegales en El Salvador", *InSight Crime*, octubre 29, 2020, <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias/analisis/el-salvador-armas-ilegales/>



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North America: Mexico

In Mexico, the number of recorded cases decreased significantly compared to the previous year. However, there is insufficient information to determine the reasons for this reduction. Although the total number and overall homicide rate in the country also declined in 2023, official figures might conceal an increase in the underreporting of cases⁶⁷. This could also be true for cases where the victims are LGBTI+ people. According to Letra S, a member of the Red Sin Violencia, "muchos casos no son cubiertos por los medios de comunicación, ni denunciados por medios oficiales"⁶⁸ [many cases are not covered by the media or reported through official channels].

⁶⁷ InSight Crime, *Balance*, 40.

⁶⁸ LetraS, *La Violencia LGBTfóbica en México, 2023: Reflexiones Sobre Su Alcance Letal* [LGBT-Phobic Violence in Mexico, 2023: Reflections on Its Lethal Scope] (LetraS, 2023), 15.



Most of the recorded victims in Mexico were transgender women (43), followed by cisgender gay men (16). **The availability of census data on the LGBTI+ population in Mexico allowed Letra S to calculate specific rates and confirm a higher incidence of lethal violence against transgender women in the country.** In 2023, the specific homicide rate was 13.6 per 100,000 transgender women, more than double the overall homicide rate for women that year⁶⁹.

At least half of these crimes were committed with firearms. Most cases occurred in Guanajuato (7), Guerrero (6), Veracruz (6), Puebla (5), Mexico City (5), Colima (4), and Sonora (4). The situation in the state of Colima stands out. Colima is the least populated state in the country but also one of the most violent, due to conflicts between drug cartels over control of the production and distribution of synthetic drugs to the United States. In fact, in 2022, this federal entity had the highest homicide rate in the country (four times the national rate), and its capital was considered the most violent city in the world⁷⁰. Given its population size, Colima also had the highest LGBTI+ homicide rate in 2023: 0.528 per 100,000 inhabitants, ten times the national rate⁷¹. The four recorded victims in this state were all transgender women, each killed by armed men with firearms.

⁶⁹ LetraS, *La Violencia LGBTfóbica* [LGBT-Phobic Violence], 15.

⁷⁰ Peter Appleby, Chris Dalby, and Christopher Newton, “Epicentros de los Homicidios en América Latina” [Epicenters of Homicides in Latin America], InSight Crime, June 15, 2023, <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias/insight-cifras-zonas-criticas-homicidios-america-latina/>

⁷¹ This is the overall rate per 100,000 residents, as calculated for other countries. However, if a specific rate were calculated based on the LGBTI+ population nationwide and in each federal entity, Colima still has the highest rate, with 7,933 homicides per 100,000 LGBTI+ people, while the national rate is 1.3. This calculation uses data from the Encuesta Nacional sobre Diversidad Sexual y de Género [National Survey on Sexual and Gender Diversity] (ENDISEG) 2021, available at: https://www.inegi.org.mx/tablerosestadisticos/lgbti/#Poblacion_LGBTI



As in Colima, available information suggests that several cases recorded in various federal entities may be linked to dynamics of sociopolitical violence and organized crime. Notable among these is the forced disappearance and subsequent execution of Moisés Juárez and Brian Vargas, two LGBTI+ rights defenders. They were detained, along with five others, by an armed group traveling in trucks bearing the logos of the State Attorney General's Office of Guerrero and were later found dead in a mass grave on the outskirts of Acapulco. In other instances, signs of organized crime involvement are compounded by indications of prejudice, particularly in the nature of the violence used to murder the victims. For example, two gay couples were murdered in Sonora in July and September.

Out of the 22 cases of LGBTI+ people who were first reported missing and later found murdered, as documented by Red Sin Violencia in 2023, almost half (10) took place in Mexico.

They were disappeared, and their bodies were later found in vacant lots or along highways, inside bags, and showing signs of torture.

These cases also exemplify the deep crisis of disappearances in Mexico, which increased by 155% in 2023 compared to the previous year, according to data from the National Registry of Disappeared and Unlocated Persons (RNPDO) of the National Search Commission (CNB)⁷². Out of the 22 cases of LGBTI+ people who were first reported missing and later found murdered, as documented by Red Sin Violencia in 2023, almost half (10) took place in Mexico.

⁷² Melissa Galván, “México acumula más desapariciones: 2023 rompió el récord con 11 mil 923 víctimas” [Mexico Accumulates More Disappearances: 2023 Broke the Record with 11,923 Victims], La Lista, January 8, 2024, <https://la-lista.com/derechos-humanos/2024/01/08/mexico-rompio-record-2023-con-11-mil-923-desapariciones>



Finally, some cases seem to be driven mainly by prejudice, such as the murder of a gay man by a religiously fanatical neighbor who had previously threatened him over his sexual orientation. Among these cases are also six homicides committed on dates significant to LGBTI+ rights, including the killing of Ivanna Divina Johns, a transgender woman and human rights defender. She was shot by armed men at her business on the night of June 20, shortly after leading the second pride march in Moroleón, Guanajuato.



Spanish-Speaking Caribbean: Dominican Republic

In the Dominican Republic, two homicides were recorded in 2023, representing an 88% decrease compared to the previous year. This reduction is even greater than the decline in the total number and overall homicide rate in the country during 2023 (Chapter 3). **Possible reasons for this decrease include the deterrent effect of an increased number of convictions for homicides of LGBTI+ people in previous years, as well as the impact of various prevention campaigns, which primarily targeted cisgender gay men.** However, this decrease could also be due to a higher rate of underreporting, particularly given the growing number of disappearances of LGBTI+ people in recent years that remain unsolved and may have ended in the victims' deaths⁷³.

⁷³ TRANSSA - Trans Siempre Amigas, *Homicidios contra personas lesbianas, gais, bisexuales, trans e intersex en la República Dominicana* [Homicides Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Individuals in the Dominican Republic] (TRANSSA, 2023), 25



The two cases recorded in 2023 involve a transgender woman who was sexually assaulted and then beaten to death, and a cisgender gay man who was found with his throat slit in his home after spending time with an acquaintance who also robbed him.



South America: Andean Countries

In the Andean countries, similar patterns of lethal violence against LGBTI+ people emerge, often driven by prejudice as well as sociopolitical and macro-criminal dynamics. **This subregion includes two countries that saw the most significant increases in both the number and rate of LGBTI+ homicides in 2023: Ecuador and Peru.**

In **Colombia**, 159 LGBTI+ people were killed in 2023, representing a 7.3% increase in cases and a 7% rise in the homicide rate compared to the previous year. This rise cannot be fully explained by general trends in lethal violence, as there was a slight decrease in the total number and overall homicide rate in the country during 2023. Contributing factors may include heightened violence in areas with a stronger presence of armed groups, especially in the context of the 2023 regional elections (see Chapter 3).



The majority of the victims were cisgender gay men (60) and transgender women (45), followed by cisgender bisexual men (18), cisgender lesbian women (13), and transgender men (6). The remaining victims included one cisgender lesbian woman, one non-binary individual, and 15 people reported by sources as part of the LGBTI+ community without specific details on their gender identity or sexual orientation. Available data also lacked sufficient detail on the methods or weapons used in most of these crimes, though firearms were notably involved in the cases where such information was provided (34).

The highest number of homicides was recorded in the departments of Valle del Cauca (33), Antioquia (20), and the Capital District (13). However, the incidence rate relative to population size was highest in the departments of Amazonas (with a rate of 1.175 per 100,000 inhabitants), Putumayo (1.044), Sucre (0.905), Vichada (0.811), Meta (0.707), and Tolima⁷⁴ (0.654). Available information suggests that some of the crimes reported in these departments may have been carried out by armed groups or organized crime. For example, in Tolima, three consecutive murders occurred in the municipality of Ambalema involving a cisgender lesbian woman, a cisgender gay man, and a transgender woman. All three victims were killed in the same manner (through hired assassination) between February and March, with the second and third victims reportedly threatened after the first crime. A similar pattern was observed in Sucre, where two transgender women were consecutively murdered in Sincelejo between late October and mid-November. Both were also victims of hired assassination.

⁷⁴ To calculate the departmental rates, the population projections for 2023 from the National Administrative Department of Statistics of Colombia were used, available at: <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion/proyecciones-de-poblacion>



The actions of criminal groups, combined with prejudice in targeting victims or the type of violence inflicted, were also evident in other departments of the country. For instance, there were notable cases of cisgender gay men being murdered in their homes in Medellín and its metropolitan area (7) as well as Bogotá (3). Some of these crimes appear to have been committed by the same individual or groups who profile gay men, contact them through dating apps, arrange meetings at their homes, and then proceed to attack, rob, and kill them. Additionally, the murders of LGBTI+ human rights defenders (13) were predominantly carried out by armed group members or occurred in areas influenced by these groups. A particularly notable case is that of Shania Vanessa Pretel Gómez, a young Afro-descendant transgender woman and human rights defender, who was shot and killed on the morning of February 26 in Cali.

Ecuador experienced the most significant increase in both the total number of homicides and the rate of lethal violence against LGBTI+ individuals. **In 2023, 22 LGBTI+ people were murdered in the country, marking a 144.4% increase compared to the nine reported in 2022 and a 140% rise in the homicide rate against this population.** This surge appears to be a consequence of a similarly disproportionate increase in the overall homicide rate (see Chapter 3).

The highest number of cases in Ecuador was reported in the coastal provinces, primarily Guayas (9), El Oro (4), and Los Ríos (3). In terms of population size, the highest incidence was in the coastal province of Esmeraldas, where the LGBTI+ homicide rate was three times the national average, at 0.361 per 100,000 inhabitants⁷⁵. These four provinces

⁷⁵ As of the date of this report, provincial population projections for 2023 were not available. Therefore, provincial rates were calculated based on the population size for 2022, according to the results of the Population and Housing Census conducted that year by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses, available at: https://www.censoecuador.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Presentacio%C3%81n_Nacional_1%C2%B0entrega-4.pdf



also experienced the These four provinces are also among the hardest hit by drug trafficking violence and organized crime disputes⁷⁶ and they had the highest overall homicide rates in Ecuador in 2023⁷⁷. Indeed, a significant portion of the LGBTI+ homicides reported in 2023 is linked to these macro-criminal factors, with over half of the cases (12) being committed with firearms in hired assassinations.

More than half of the victims (15) were transgender women. It is worth mentioning the case of a transgender sex worker in Machala, El Oro province, who was murdered by organized crime members after resisting to pay the “cupos” [extortion demands]. She was shot and left alive in the bushes. Also noteworthy is the case of Angie Muñoz, a transgender woman beaten to death by her partner, who had previously abused her. This was the first case of a murdered transgender woman in Ecuador to be prosecuted as femicide, resulting in the conviction of the perpetrator.

In **Peru**, 18 LGBTI+ people were murdered in 2023, the highest number of homicides recorded in the country since reporting began by the Red Sin Violencia. **This represented a 63.6% increase in the number of cases and a 79.3% increase in the LGBTI+ homicide rate, one of the largest in the region after Ecuador.** This contrasts sharply with the drastic 27.2% decrease in the overall homicide rate in the country compared to 2022⁷⁸. The reasons for this increase may be linked to the main patterns of lethal violence against LGBTI+ people in Peru, which are tied to dynamics of organized crime and common crime (primarily extortion of sex workers and targeted killings of cisgender gay men in their homes for robbery).

⁷⁶ Chris Dalby, “Game Changer 2023: Ecuador pierde el control sobre el crimen” [Game Changer 2023: Ecuador Loses Control Over Crime], *InSight Crime*, January 4, 2024, <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias/gamechangers-2023-ecuador-pierde-control-crimen/>

⁷⁷ Observatorio Ecuatoriano de Crimen Organizado, Boletín anual de homicidios intencionales en Ecuador. Análisis de las estadísticas finales del año 2023, [Ecuadorian Observatory on Organized Crime, Annual Bulletin of Intentional Homicides in Ecuador. Analysis of the Final Statistics for 2023], <https://oeco.pdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/OECO.-BOLETIN-ANUAL-DE-HOMICIDIOS-2023.pdf>

⁷⁸ InSight Crime, *Balance*, 19.



Most of the cases were recorded in Metropolitan Lima (8) and the department of Lambayeque (3). The victims were 12 transgender women and six cisgender gay men. Worth mentioning are the murders of transgender women by criminal mafias that extort them in exchange for allowing them to engage in sex work (3), a pattern that has persisted in the country for the past three years. The first two cases occurred consecutively on February 11 and 12 in Lima, and the third on May 22 in Chiclayo, Lambayeque. Two of these incidents were marked by extreme violence and were intended as explicit warnings to other transgender women: one of the victims in Lima was kidnapped and later shot 30 times with a machine gun. The perpetrators, believed to be members of the “Tren de Aragua,” filmed the crime and circulated the video on social media as a form of intimidation against other sex workers.

In the case in Chiclayo, the victim, an Ecuadorian transgender woman, was found dead in a hotel room. Her body was gagged, showing signs of beating and with 36 stab wounds. Next to the body, the perpetrators, presumed members of extortion mafias competing for control of the northern region, left a message saying, “Aquí tienes el ejemplo del que no se alinea” [Here is an example of what happens to those who don't fall in line] directed at other sex workers who refuse to pay the “cupos” [extortion fees related to sex work].

There were also six registered homicides of cisgender gay men in their homes, some of them with extreme violence and accompanied by theft. Almost all of these cases occurred in Lima, the capital. Notably, the case of Carlos Iván Espinoza, a 41-year-old gay man, who was murdered by three other men he met at a well-known Lima nightclub. After making contact with him there, the victim went to his home accompanied by the perpetrators. Once there, they killed him and then stole 13,000 soles, his cellphone, and a laptop. The victim's body was found bound, gagged, and showing signs of having been tortured and suffocated with a tie.



The fact that the perpetrators contacted their victim at a nightclub suggests they were following a learned modus operandi, likely replicated in other cases. In previous years, similar cases of cisgender gay men being murdered by a single person or groups of people have been documented. These individuals use a strategy of contacting them through dating apps or in social venues, pretending to be interested in sexual or romantic relationships to gain access to their homes, where they then attack and rob them.

Lastly, in **Bolivia**, two homicides were registered in 2023, following a year in which none were recorded. This aligns with the general trend of lethal violence in the country. Although there are no official figures on the behavior of homicides in 2023, press sources indicate that both the total number and the overall homicide rate may have slightly increased that year. Nonetheless, Bolivia continues to have one of the lowest homicide rates in the region⁷⁹. However, this does not mean that LGBTI+ people in Bolivia do not face violence. In 2023, the LGBT Observatory of Bolivia received 29 reports of rights violations against this population⁸⁰, while the Ombudsman's Office reported 40 cases of rights violations by the police⁸¹.

The two cases registered in 2023 involve cisgender women and transgender men in relationships. The first occurred in mid-April, when Kendy, a cisgender woman, was murdered by her partner, a transgender man, in the home they shared in Cochabamba. According to available sources, the couple had a history of domestic violence. The last incident known to the family occurred on April 11. After that, the family

⁷⁹ Datos Macro, “El número de homicidios en Bolivia aumentó en 2023” [The Number of Homicides in Bolivia Increased in 2023], <https://datosmacro.expansion.com/demografia/homicidios/bolivia>

⁸⁰ Observatorio LGBT de Bolivia, “El 2023 hemos registrado 29 casos de vulneración” [In 2023, We Recorded 29 Cases of Violations], Facebook, January 9, 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1551664692247775>

⁸¹ Observatorio LGBT de Bolivia, “Denuncias de población LGBTIQ+ según instancia. Gestión 2023” [LGBTIQ+ Population Complaints by Instance. Management 2023] https://observatoriolgbt.org.bo/index.php/infografia/detalle/cod_infografia/60



lost contact with the victim until four days later when they went to her home and found her lifeless body, showing signs of asphyxiation. The second case took place in late October. The victim was Eric, a 31-year-old transgender man who was stabbed to death in his home near the Cathedral of Potosí. The perpetrator was a woman with whom he lived and had a relationship. The two had been drinking alcohol in the home when an argument escalated, leading the perpetrator to stab the victim multiple times.

IV. Response from Justice Systems Regional Trends

In 2023, LGBTI+ people across the region continued to face the same patterns of prejudice-based violence identified by the Red Sin Violencia over the years. Key patterns include homicides of cisgender gay and bisexual men in their homes, cisgender lesbian women in partnerships, and transgender women in public spaces. Since these patterns have been thoroughly analyzed in previous reports⁸², this report will focus on three regional issues where prejudice also plays a significant role;

- (i) the increasing impact of organized crime,
- (ii) violence related to political and social participation, and
- (iii) the relationship between homicide and domestic violence.

Violence Against LGBTI+ People and Organized Crime

In recent years, an increasing number of LGBTI+ homicides reported by organizations within the Red Sin Violencia show signs of being committed by armed groups, organized crime networks, or common crime. It is important to recognize that these actors profoundly impact the daily lives of broad sectors of the population in various countries. Howev-

⁸² These can be found on the website of Red Sin Violencia: <https://sinviolencia.lgbt/informes/>



er, **the available information allows us to identify specific risks and impacts for LGBTI+ people related to prejudice against their gender identity or sexual orientation.** These risks and impacts are linked to: (i) the selection of LGBTI+ victims for certain crimes, primarily for economic purposes, and (ii) the use of LGBTI+ people to support criminal activities. In both cases, prejudice operates in various ways and at different levels, influencing both the personal factors behind each crime and the broader structural conditions that increase LGBTI+ people's vulnerability to these criminal groups.

A notable example of how prejudice influences the targeting of LGBTI+ people by organized crime is seen in cases where homicides follow extortion. In the past few years, organized crime groups have increasingly used extortion as a key means of generating income and exerting control in several countries across the region, particularly in Central America and the Andean area⁸³. This practice often focuses on specific sectors, such as transportation, grocery stores, and restaurants, as well as some of the most vulnerable groups, including migrants—mainly from Venezuela⁸⁴— and sex workers⁸⁵.

In this context, the murders of transgender sex workers who refuse to pay extortion fees stand out. **As these criminal networks have ex-**

⁸³ Guillermo Vásquez del Mercado and Luis Félix, *Criminal Innovator. Emerging extortion trends in Latin America*, (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2022).

⁸⁴ Unidad Investigativa de Venezuela, “Migrantes de Venezuela siguen siendo presa fácil para el crimen organizado” [Venezuelan Migrants Continue to Be Easy Targets for Organized Crime], *InSight Crime*, February 24, 2023, <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias/migrantes-venezuela-presa-facil-crimen-organizado/>

⁸⁵ InSight Crime, *Tren de Aragua: de megabanda carcelaria a empresa criminal transnacional* [Tren de Aragua: From Prison Gang to Transnational Criminal Enterprise] (2023), 25.



panded into countries like Honduras⁸⁶, Guatemala⁸⁷, Ecuador⁸⁸ and Perú⁸⁹, the number of transgender women killed for not meeting extortion demands, or pay the “cupos”, has also risen. While this form of violence is not limited to transgender women⁹⁰ and is driven by financial motives, the prejudice they face exacerbates their vulnerability, given the cycles of exclusion and poverty they endure. Consequently, sex work, especially in unregulated settings, often becomes one of their few remaining options for survival.

Prejudice against their gender identity and occupation can significantly increase risks and facilitate criminal activity, particularly when authorities fail to protect sex workers despite clear evidence of the dangers they face, as seen in the case of Valentina de Paz in Guatemala. In some instances, authorities may even stigmatize and target sex workers, as seen in Lima, sending a troubling message that encourages civil vio-

⁸⁶ Henry Shuldiner, “Extorsión desenfrenada en Honduras desencadena estado de excepción” [Rampant Extortion in Honduras Triggers State of Exception], *InSight Crime*, November 29, 2022, <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias/extorsion-desenfrenada-honduras-desencadena-estado-excepcion/>

⁸⁷ Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, “Cultura criminal: extorsión en Centroamérica. Press Release” [Criminal Culture: Extortion in Central America. Press Release], https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/GITOC_extortion_PR-2.pdf

⁸⁸ Anastasia Austin, “¿Por qué las bandas narcotraficantes de Ecuador han recurrido a la extorsión?” [Why Have Ecuadorian Drug Gangs Turned to Extortion?], *InSight Crime*, December 20, 2023 <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias/por-que-bandas-narcotraficantes-ecuador-han-recurrido-extorsion/>

⁸⁹ Sean Doherty, “Vulnerabilidad financiera alimenta la extorsión en Perú” [Financial Vulnerability Fuels Extortion in Peru], *InSight Crime*, March 28, 2024, <https://insightcrime.org/es/noticias/vulnerabilidad-financiera-alimenta-extorsion-peru/>

⁹⁰ According to UNAIDS, several cis and trans women were murdered in Peru in 2023 “en ataques relacionados con el cobro de cuotas de trabajo sexual por parte de mafías” [in attacks related to the collection of sexual work fees by mafias]. Swissinfo, “Onusida alerta sobre asesinato de trabajadoras sexuales cis y trans en Perú” [UNAIDS Warns About the Murder of Cis and Trans Sex Workers in Peru], February 17, 2023, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/onusida-alerta-sobre-asesinatos-de-trabajadoras-sexuales-cis-y-trans-en-per%C3%BA/48296552>



lence against them. Plus, in countries like Honduras, it has been documented that extortion and violence by organized crime groups continue even when transgender women manage to leave sex work and engage in other activities, particularly through their own businesses.

A similar issue arises with the murders of cisgender gay and bisexual men in their homes. Unlike the killings of transgender women over extortion fees, these crimes are more commonly linked to local criminal activities rather than international organized crime. However, in countries like Colombia and Peru, there are documented cases where perpetrators have specialized in these crimes. These individuals or groups study the social dynamics among cisgender gay men, bisexual

In countries like Colombia and Peru, there are documented cases where perpetrators have specialized in these crimes.

men, and/or men who have sex with men. They use this understanding to profile, select, and approach victims through dating apps or social settings, build trust, and then invite themselves into their homes before attacking and killing them. While many of these cases involve theft of money or valuables, the immediate financial motive does not negate the role of prejudice in targeting cisgender gay, bisexual men, or men who engage with other men. The use of excessive violence further indicates a strong element of hostility.

Finally, prejudice also plays a crucial role in the exploitation of cisgender lesbian and bisexual women, and transgender women, who are recruited to perform tasks for criminal groups. In several countries, it has been noted that the most vulnerable women—particularly those who are impoverished, live in areas controlled by criminal groups, or face violence from their partners or family members—are often coerced into supporting criminal activities such as “narcomenudeo”⁹¹ [drug dealing]

⁹¹ Coletta A. Youngers, Teresa García Castro y María (Kiki) Manzur, *Mujeres encarceladas por delitos relacionados con drogas en América Latina: lo que los números evidencian* [Women Incarcerated for Drug-Related Offenses in Latin America: What the Numbers Show] (WOLA, 2020).



or extortion collection⁹². Additionally, being “el eslabón más débil y de mayor subordinación de la cadena delictiva”⁹³ [the weakest and most subordinate link in the criminal chain] they are more frequently incarcerated⁹⁴ or subjected to violence, including murder. This is especially true for transgender, lesbian, and bisexual women, as prejudice against their gender identity or sexual orientation can worsen their vulnerability by further limiting their support networks and job opportunities, and by facilitating profiling by the police as “sospechosas” [suspicious] or “peligrosas” [dangerous]⁹⁵.

In this context, it is important to examine the **murders of cisgender lesbian and bisexual women, as well as transgender women, who are exploited by organized crime groups for criminal activities such as drug dealing (narcomenudeo) or extortion collection, particularly in Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico**. Such cases are often portrayed by the media and authorities as “settling scores” between criminal groups, without recognizing the complex underlying situation. Indeed, while prejudice alone may not be the sole direct cause of their victimization, it should be considered a structural factor that increases the vulnerability of transgender, lesbian, and bisexual women to exploitation by organized crime groups, making them more likely to be subjected to

⁹² Guillermo Vásquez del Mercado, Luis Félix y Gerardo Carballo, *Extorsión en Centroamérica. Género, microtráfico y el caso de Panamá* [Extortion in Central America. Gender, Microtrafficking, and the Case of Panama] (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2021).

⁹³ Regional Program of the Spotlight Initiative for Latin America, *La violencia contra las mujeres y niñas en contextos de crimen organizado. Centroamérica, Colombia, México y República Dominicana* [Violence Against Women and Girls in Organized Crime Contexts. Central America, Colombia, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic] (PNUD, 2021), 34.

⁹⁴ Youngers, Castro and Manzur, *Mujeres encarceladas* [Women Incarcerated].

⁹⁵ Josefina Alfonsín, Gerardo Contreras, Kenya Cuevas, Teresa García, María Santos y Ari Vera, *Mujeres trans privadas de libertad: la invisibilidad tras los muros* [Trans Women Deprived of Liberty: The Invisibility Behind Bars] (WOLA, 2020).



violence during or after their involvement with these groups, and even for refusing to participate.

The specific risks of victimization by organized crime highlight the need to incorporate considerations of gender identity and sexual orientation into security policies aimed at tackling these groups, including measures to address high-impact crimes like extortion that affect the general population. Unfortunately, this has not been reflected in the "tough on crime" strategies adopted by regional governments (see Chapter 3). Consequently, it is unsurprising that these policies have failed to prevent further crimes against LGBTI+ people by organized crime groups.

Neglecting to include differential approaches in security policies not only raises the risk of victimization by these criminal groups but also worsens the danger of violence when LGBTI+ people are exploited without any protection or faith in the authorities to report such abuses. The massacre in the Honduran prison exemplifies this issue: gender prejudice and inequality not only increased the vulnerability of many women to gang exploitation but also affected the decision of prison authorities to provide adequate protection, despite the clear risk of violence in the facility⁹⁶, thereby failing to uphold the state's responsibility to ensure safety in such settings.

Violence Related to Political and Social Participation

In 2023, a notable trend was the increase in homicides of LGBTI+ people connected to political and social involvement. This includes: (i) murders occurring during election periods, (ii) violence related to victims' roles in public office, social leadership, or human rights advocacy, and (iii) attacks on significant dates or in key places for LGBTI+ communities.

⁹⁶ Dittmar a Montoya, "La bomba de tiempo" [The Time Bomb].



In Guatemala, Colombia, and Mexico, specific risks tied to electoral processes were identified. This could explain the rise in homicides in Guatemala and Colombia, where particular dangers emerged during elections, including stigmatizing rhetoric and attacks against LGBTI+ participants. In Mexico, similar risks were noted as preparations for the 2024 elections unfolded (see Chapter 3), though this did not result in an increase in LGBTI+ homicides.

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Some of the documented cases from 2023 illustrate this issue. In Colombia, for example, Juan Camilo Falls Trespacios, a gay, Afro-descendant human rights defender, was murdered in Cáceres, Antioquia, in mid-November 2023. This crime occurred just two weeks after the local elections at the end of October, in a region heavily influenced by armed groups. Meanwhile, in Mexico, the forced disappearance and subsequent

extrajudicial execution of activists Moisés Juárez and Brian Vargas may be linked to their involvement in the elections held in July 2024. This case, which took place in mid-October 2023, occurred just over a month after the National Electoral Institute officially began the Federal Electoral Process 2023-2024. Sources indicate that Moisés, who was the Sexual Diversity Coordinator for the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PDR) in Guerrero State, was planning to run for public office in the upcoming elections. Therefore, his disappearance and subsequent execution may have been related to his activism and prospective candidacy.

This does not mean that all electoral processes pose the same risks for LGBTI+ individuals. This is evident in Ecuador, where, despite experiencing a particularly violent electoral period in 2023, there appears to be no significant impact on homicide rates against LGBTI+ individuals. This may be partly because the election was extraordinary, faster,



and less controlled than regular elections⁹⁷, with the focus primarily on economic and security issues, while human rights, equality, and sexual and gender diversity topics were not publicly discussed. Thus, the risk of homicide against LGBTI+ people during electoral processes may be linked, on one hand, to the spread of hate speech and discriminatory rhetoric during campaigns, and on the other, to competition for local political positions (as seen in Guatemala and Colombia).

There were also cases where the murders seemed related to other forms of political or social participation, such as public office, social leadership, or human rights advocacy. Notable examples include Franklin Pabón in Colombia and Ociel Baena in Mexico. Both were non-binary human rights defenders holding public positions, from which they advocated for LGBTI+ rights. Franklin served as the LGBTIQ+ liaison for the Malambo City Hall in Atlántico and was involved in the Territorial Peace, Reconciliation, and Coexistence Council of Malambo, as well as the LGBTI representative in the Atlántico Governor's Office and an electoral observer. In 2022, Franklin received threats from paramilitary groups and was murdered by armed men on July 13, 2023. Ociel, the first openly non-binary person to hold a judicial position in Mexico as a magistrate of the Electoral Tribunal of Aguascalientes in 2017, worked to recognize the rights of non-binary individuals, such as issuing electoral certificates and other identity documents with gender options beyond male/female, and opening gender-neutral bathrooms. Due to this work, Ociel had received threats, including stigmatizing remarks from other authorities, and was assigned a security detail. However, Ociel was murdered at home on November 13.

⁹⁷ This refers to the so-called “cross death” [muerte cruzada] that governs the simultaneous process of the removal and renewal of the executive and legislative branches.



The case of Camila Azul in Ecuador exemplifies the risks faced by people representing LGBTI+ communities in other capacities, this time within cultural spaces. Camila was a 27-year-old transgender woman who participated in various trans beauty pageants, which are crucial for visibility and advocacy for transgender people across the region. She had been crowned Señorita Cultura, Virreina de la Comunidad, and Reina LGBTIQ+ de Babahoyo [titles of beauty pageants: Miss Culture, First Runner-Up of the Community and LGBTIQ+ Queen of Babahoyo]. On the night of February 9, she was murdered by hitmen in Babahoyo. Her high profile in this small city of fewer than 100,000 inhabitants caused significant distress within the LGBTI+ community.

Documented cases where lethal violence appears linked to the visibility of LGBTI+ people due to the incidents occurring on commemorative dates or at iconic locations for the community.

Lastly, there have been documented cases where lethal violence appears linked to the visibility of LGBTI+ people due to the incidents occurring on commemorative dates or at iconic locations for the community. A total of 12 such cases were recorded, with half occurring in Mexico and the others in Honduras, Guatemala, and Colombia. Apart from those previously mentioned, the case of Óscar López Camey stands out. Óscar, a gay human rights defender, was killed during an armed attack on a well-known gay nightclub in downtown Guatemala City. Óscar was a student at the University of San Carlos and a founding member of the Asociación de Estudiantes Sancarlistas de la Diversidad (AESDi). On the night of June 18, while he was at the club with friends, two armed men fired several shots into the venue, injuring three people, including Óscar, who died from the severity of his injuries. This incident shocked the LGBTI+ community in Guatemala due to Óscar's visibility, the prominence of the crime scene, and its proximity to Pride Day celebrations.



Homicides of LGBTI+ People in the Context of Domestic Violence

Addressing these other forms of lethal and non-lethal violence affecting LGBTI+ people should be done without categorizing the incidents as “passionate” or “intimate” problems, and without pathologizing or judging the relationships between them or stigmatizing either the perpetrator or the victim.

In 2023, 17 murders of LGBTI+ people were documented to be allegedly related to dynamics of domestic violence. This includes cases in which the victims were allegedly murdered (i) by blood relatives or other members of their household or (ii) by their partner.

In the first group, **at least five cases were recorded in which the victims were allegedly murdered by blood relatives or other members of their household, in Mexico, Guatemala and Nicaragua.** The case of Jheovany José García stands out, a 16-year-old gay teenager murdered by his father during an episode of domestic violence in Jinotepe, Nicaragua. According to neighbors, his father rejected him because of his sexual orientation and had previously threatened him for this same reason. On February 24, the father arrived home drunk, began attacking Jheovany's mother and, when he tried to defend her, stabbed him in the chest.

Shortly after, on March 23, a lesbian couple and the two children of one of the women were murdered in Mexico City. Reports indicate that Concepción González and Isabel Herrera had been threatened by relatives they had hosted in their home, who were attempting to claim the property. After the murders, the perpetrators placed the bodies in black bags and abandoned them in Chicoloapan. The two women were killed with a sharp weapon, and the children were raped and asphyxiated.

In a second category, there were two cases where victims were killed by their partners, recorded in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Peru. In some instances, there had been previous reports of violence between the partners. These cases underscore the urgent need to address the often-hidden issue of domestic violence within LGBTI+ relationships.

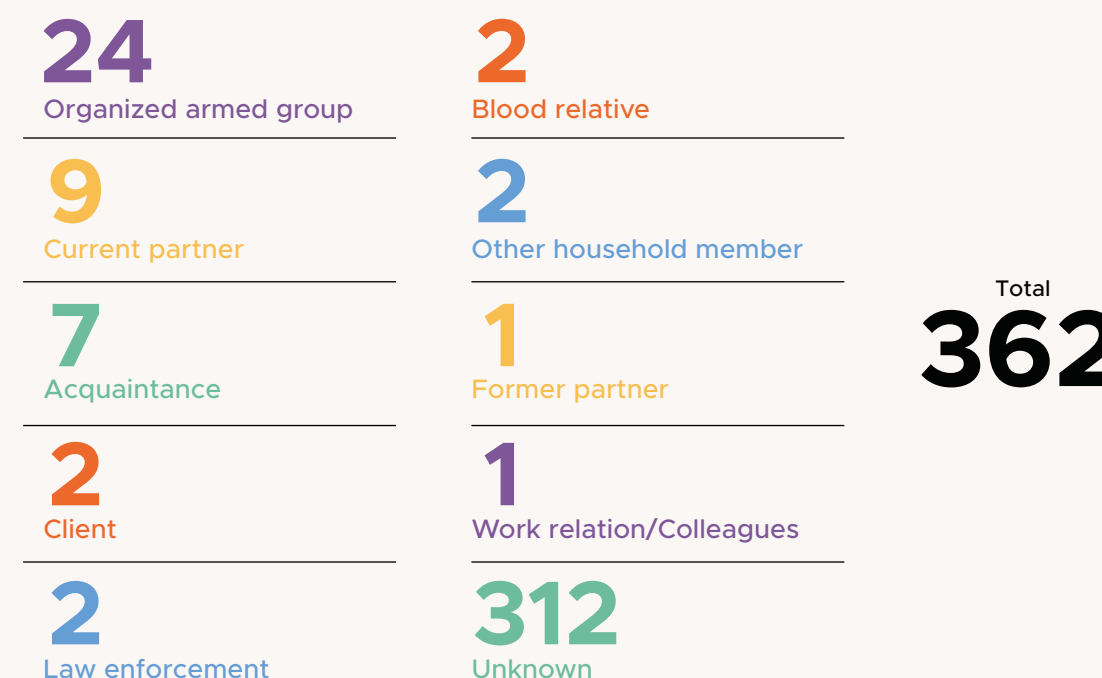


Addressing these other forms of lethal and non-lethal violence affecting LGBTI+ people should be done without categorizing the incidents as “passionate” or “intimate” problems, and without pathologizing or judging the relationships between them or stigmatizing either the perpetrator or the victim. This issue must be tackled without stigmatizing LGBTI+ relationships or their members, just as the high prevalence of domestic violence and partner violence against cisgender heterosexual women does not lead to the stigmatization of heterosexual relationships.

V. Response from Justice Systems

In 63 of the documented cases, sources provided information about the alleged perpetrators. Notably, 24 of these cases involved individuals identified as members of armed groups or organized crime networks.

Graphic 6.
Profile of the perpetrators





This year, **there have been some regional advances in access to justice for LGBTI+ homicide cases.** Notably, there was a landmark ruling in the case of Angie Brigitte Muñoz, a 42-year-old trans woman who was murdered by her partner on April 2 in Guayaquil, **Ecuador**. This case is significant as it marks the first time a trans woman's murder has been investigated and prosecuted as a femicide in the country. The verdict acknowledged the victim's gender identity, with Brigitte being referred to by her name and female pronouns throughout the proceedings. The prosecution and the judge from the Guayas Penal Guarantees Court demonstrated that Brigitte had been subjected to various forms of gender-based violence by the perpetrator, including physical abuse, insults, control, and limitations on contact with her family and friends. The violence was also linked to her gender identity, such as the transphobic insults she endured. This case stands out in a regional context where there is still state reluctance to protect trans women from femicide, often limiting the application of existing laws and policies to cisgender women.

Another significant regional progress came from **Colombia**, where the Attorney General's Office issued guidelines for investigating and prosecuting violence based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Directive 006, October 2023) and established the Grupo Nacional de Trabajo para la Investigación de Violencias fundadas en la Orientación Sexual y/o Identidad de Género de las Víctimas [National Working Group for Investigating Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity of Victims] (Resolution 0077, February 2024). In 2014, Colombia's Attorney General's Office created a program with specialized prosecutors for cases of violence against LGBTI+ people, assigning prosecutors to various regional offices and providing regular training for the Technical Investigation Corps. After five years, the program had achieved milestones such as the first conviction recognizing that the murder of a gay activist was motivated by prejudice against his sexual orientation, and the first conviction for the femicide of a trans woman.



However, at the central level, there was only one prosecutor in charge of this program, and many of the appointed prosecutors continued to exhibit biases in their work, which negatively impacted investigative activities and facilitated impunity⁹⁸. In light of these challenges, it is hoped that the issuance of guidelines and the creation of the National Working Group at the central level of the Prosecutor's Office will strengthen and complement the work of the appointed prosecutors and help guide state intervention.

Finally, it is noteworthy that in the Dominican Republic, there has been advance in the investigation and prosecution of homicides involving cisgender gay men and, to a lesser extent, transgender women. In particular, during 2023, several convictions were secured for the homicides of four gay men and one transgender woman that occurred between 2021 and 2023⁹⁹.

Alongside these advancements, **the organizations within the Red Sin Violencia continued to document challenges and barriers to justice in cases involving LGBTI+ individuals.** In the Dominican Republic, TRANSSA notes that progress is slower in cases involving transgender women. As of January 2024, only eight convictions had been obtained out of 51 registered homicides of transgender women in the country since 2006, while 11 of the homicides of cisgender gay men registered since 2016 had resulted in the identification and conviction of the perpetrators. However, none of these judicial processes acknowledged that

⁹⁸ A detailed analysis of the ongoing access to justice issues despite the establishment of this program of specialized prosecutors can be found in: Colombia Diversa and Caribe Afirmativo, *La discriminación, una guerra que no termina. Informe de derechos humanos de personas lesbianas, gays, bisexuales y trans en Colombia, 2017* [Discrimination, a War That Doesn't End. Human Rights Report on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans People in Colombia, 2017], (2018).

⁹⁹ TRANSSA, *Homicidios* [Homicides], 22-25.



prejudice related to the victims' gender identity or sexual orientation was a factor in the crimes¹⁰⁰.

A similar situation occurs in Mexico, where, of the 66 homicides recorded in 2023, Letra S could only identify the investigative approach of the authorities for 23 of these cases. Among the main investigative lines pursued by the Prosecutor's Offices were organized crime, intentional or aggravated homicide, and femicide¹⁰¹, while hate crime (as defined under their legislation) was adopted as an investigative line in very few cases.

In Ecuador, despite the historic sentencing for the femicide of Angie Muñoz and the recognition of her gender identity throughout the judicial process, there is still no systematic identification of the gender identity or sexual orientation of victims in judicial processes. This hinders proper case processing and the application of differential approaches. Meanwhile, in Bolivia, it is reported that Law 045 against racism and all forms of discrimination has not been applied to cases involving violations of the rights of LGBTI+ people.

¹⁰⁰ TRANSSA, *Homicidios* [Homicides], 22-25.

¹⁰¹ LetraS, *La violencia LGBTfóbica* [LGBT-Phobic Violence] 27.





In 2023, lethal violence against LGBTI+ people increased across most of Latin America and the Caribbean. That year, at least 364 LGBTI+ people were killed in the ten countries in the region that are part of the Red Sin Violencia, marking a 5.5% increase from the previous year. This regional uptick was also reflected in most of the network's member countries. Actually, this has been the most violent year on record for LGBTI+ people in Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, and Ecuador since the Regional Observatory began its documentation efforts.

These findings contrast sharply with the broader security trends in several countries in the region, where both the total number of homicides and the overall homicide rates have declined (with a few exceptions like Ecuador, where security has continued to worsen). The rise in lethal violence against LGBTI+ people, including that perpetrated by organized crime, also contradicts the "tough-on-crime" rhetoric and policies adopted by several regional governments. This shows that these approaches are ineffective in protecting the lives and rights of LGBTI+ individuals, even if they may lead to temporary drops in homicide rates for the general population.

Central America accounted for 159 of the 362 homicides, or 44% of the total number. Meanwhile, in the Andean region, 201 cases were recorded, with the majority occurring in Colombia (159). However, both Peru and Ecuador saw significant increases in lethal violence. On the other hand, the Dominican Republic reported just two homicides, an 88% reduction likely due to the deterrent effects of criminal convictions and prevention campaigns. Lastly, Mexico also saw a decrease to 65 recorded homicides, although this may be due to underreporting.

This year was also the deadliest for trans women, who were the primary targets in Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, and Nicaragua, particularly suffering from organized crime's violent practices in most of these countries. In contrast, there was a noted decline in the number of victims identified as cisgender gay men, cisgender lesbian women, and cisgender bisexual women.

The information gathered indicates that prejudice based on gender identity and/or sexual orientation continues to play a significant role in many of these crimes. This includes cases where prejudice may have



been either symbolic or instrumental. In symbolic cases, the violence involved victims being subjected to multiple forms of abuse, torture, forced disappearance, and sexual violence before being killed, as well as receiving prior threats.

On the other hand, cases where prejudice played an instrumental role were evident in situations where victims were targeted specifically because of their gender identity or sexual orientation, with the intent to extort or rob them. This includes documented homicides of trans women who were killed for refusing to pay extortion related to sex work, as well as cases of cis gay men who were targeted after being contacted in homosocial spaces or through dating apps, where the perpetrators gained their trust to enter their homes and then murder them.

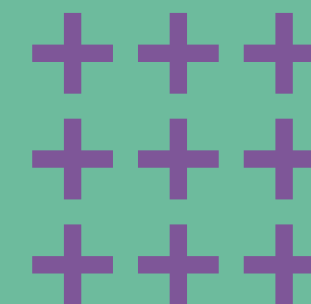
Human rights advocacy in Latin America and the Caribbean continues to be a high-risk endeavor. In 2023, at least 24 LGBTI+ people who were engaged in human rights work or were part of social organizations were murdered, primarily in Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. Additionally, risks to LGBTI+ people were documented in the context of electoral processes in Mexico, Guatemala, and Colombia. This highlights the urgent need for measures to ensure the rights of LGBTI+ people in the region to defend human rights and participate in politics.

In 2023, LGBTI+ people in the region continued to face the same patterns of prejudice-driven violence identified by the Red Sin Violencia over the years: the murders of cis gay and bisexual men in their homes, of cis lesbian women in relationships, and of trans women in public spaces. However, three regional issues where prejudice plays a significant role were also identified: (i) the increasing impact of organized crime, (ii) violence related to political and social participation, and (iii) the link between homicidal violence and domestic violence, where victims were killed by blood relatives, other household members, or their partners.

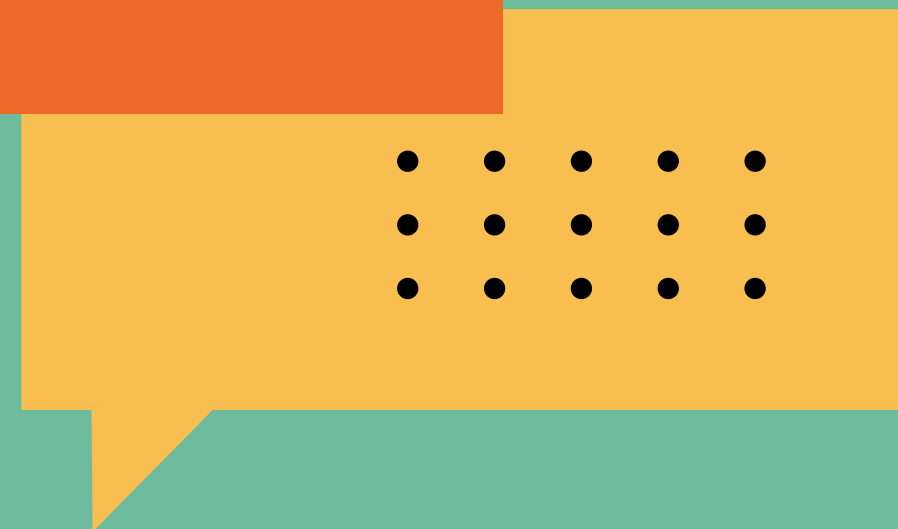
Finally, in 2023, organizations within the Red Sin Violencia continued to document challenges and barriers to accessing justice in cases of LGBTI+ homicides. Nevertheless, some progress was made at the regional level. Among the key advancements was the sentencing for femicide in the case of Angie Brigitte Muñoz, a 42-year-old trans woman



murdered on April 2 in Guayaquil, Ecuador. This marked the first time in the country that the murder of a trans woman was investigated and prosecuted as femicide. Another significant regional advancement was the Colombian Prosecutor's Office issuing guidelines (Directive 006 of October 2023) for investigating and prosecuting violence based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity as well as the establishment of the National Working Group for the Investigation of Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity of Victims, which can serve as a model for prosecutorial institutions across Latin America and the Caribbean.



Recommendations



Based on the findings and analysis presented in this report, the Red Sin Violencia LGBTI recommends that all States in the region:



- Incorporate differential approaches based on gender identity and sexual orientation into the security strategies and policies they adopt to address major dynamics of macro-criminality, national and transnational organized crime, and high-impact crimes such as homicides and extortions. This should recognize the distinct needs and risks to the safety of LGBTI+ people.



- Design and implement participatory policies to protect the life and integrity of LGBTI+ people engaged in human rights defense or participating in electoral processes, and to safeguard their labor.



- Develop and implement programs to prevent, investigate, and sanction domestic violence against LGBTI+ people perpetrated by family members, partners, and/or other household members.



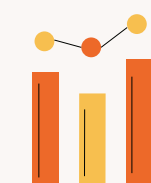
Bolivia



Conduct periodic training and awareness-raising for justice operators on the rights of the LGBTI+ population. These processes should be incorporated as a mandatory component of the curricula for various authorities, such as the National Police, Public Prosecutor's Office, and the Ombudsman's Office.



Ensure that all public policies and regulations adopted or implemented for the protection of women against gender-based violence also include and are effectively applied to trans women.



Implement public policies for the systematic collection and disaggregated analysis of data on the prevalence and nature of violence against LGBTI+ people. This information should be made publicly available in a timely manner. Additionally, allocate a budget and resources for the proper implementation of this measure.



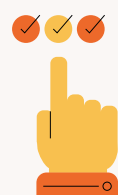
Develop public policies, programs, or action plans to prevent and combat discourses that promote stigmatization, violence, and discrimination against LGBTI+ people based on their sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity.



Colombia



The Urgent LGBTI Cases Table, chaired by the Ministry of the Interior, should be reactivated and strengthened in coordination with entities such as the Ministry of Equality and Equity, the National Prosecutor's Office, the National Police, the Ombudsman's Office, and the National Protection Unit, to address cases of violence and imminent threats to the lives of LGBTI+ people.



The National Working Group for the Investigation of OSIG-Based Violence at the National Prosecutor's Office is encouraged to produce regular public reports detailing progress in investigating crimes against LGBTI+ lives, identifying criminal patterns, and advancing prosecution and sentencing.



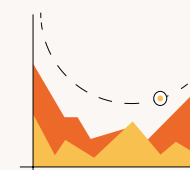
Efforts should be made to transform social perceptions and honor the memory of LGBTI+ victims of homicide in Colombia, highlighting their journeys, struggles, and community contributions. This initiative should be led by the Ministry of Cultures, Arts, and Knowledge.



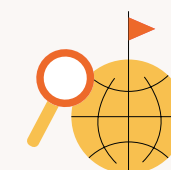
A state observatory for violence against LGBTI+ people should be established to facilitate interinstitutional coordination and information sharing, addressing major challenges in systematizing and responding to violence against this population.



Ecuador



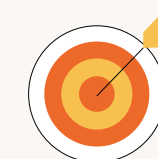
It is essential to collect and publicly report statistical data on complaints and criminal investigations related to crimes against LGBTI+ individuals, including violent deaths resulting from their sexual orientation, gender expression, and identity.



Protocols should be established for investigating violent deaths of LGBTI+ individuals, alongside creating discussion and training opportunities for prosecutors and investigative personnel to ensure these cases are handled properly.



Train judges and criminal justice personnel to recognize cases where sexual orientation and gender identity may be relevant factors, as well as to understand the legal knowledge needed to apply international standards in adjudicating these crimes.



Reforms to the Criminal Investigation Code should be made, in accordance with ruling 133-17-SEP-CC, to ensure that hate crimes (as defined nationally) are investigated and prosecuted using an expedited and specialized procedure.



El Salvador



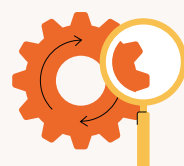
The Legislative Assembly should reconsider the Gender Identity Law proposal to officially recognize trans identities nationwide. This recognition is key to mitigating risks to their physical safety and supporting their overall well-being across social, economic, and personal aspects.



The Directorate for Victim Assistance (DAV) should develop and update strategies to ensure that protocols for vulnerable populations, including LGBTI+ people affected by violence, are effective and adhered to.



Comprehensive care protocols for LGBTI+ victims of violence should be developed and enforced, ensuring they receive medical, psychological, and legal support in a non-discriminatory manner.



Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established to regularly assess the effectiveness of state measures against violence towards LGBTI+ individuals. This might include creating human rights observatories and producing periodic reports to refine these measures as needed.



Guatemala



Encourage the development of violence prevention policies for LGBTI+ people by the Ministry of the Interior (MINIGOB) to reduce crime rates.



Protocols and guidelines for criminal and forensic investigations should be established for the Public Ministry and the National Institute of Forensic Sciences (INACIF) to ensure thorough and appropriate investigations of violence motivated by prejudice against LGBTI+ people.



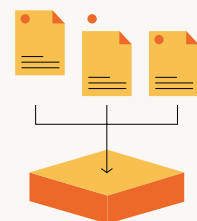
Encourage investigators to apply differentiated investigative methods for cases involving violence against trans women, ensuring that these approaches are tailored to the specific dynamics of such violence.



Public awareness campaigns should be launched to educate the general population about LGBTI+ human rights, addressing often-overlooked issues such as migration and the experiences of LGBTI+ children and adolescents.



Honduras



Implement the reparative measures ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the Vicky Hernández case. This includes designing and setting up a data collection system to track violence against LGBTI+ people, helping to assess its prevalence and trends.



All discriminatory laws based on sexual orientation and gender identity that perpetuate social prejudices and justify violence against LGBTI+ people should be repealed or revised. This includes measures such as allowing non-discriminatory blood donations, legalizing same-sex marriage, and facilitating name changes for trans individuals.



The Special Prosecutor's Office for Crimes Against Life (FEDCV), which handles violent deaths of LGBTI+ individuals, needs to be strengthened to ensure that aggravating factors in the Penal Code are applied correctly in these cases.



Launch campaigns aimed at changing societal attitudes to combat violence against LGBTI+ individuals, uphold secular state principles free from religious fundamentalist interference, and counter discriminatory narratives about sexual orientations and gender identities promoted by political parties.



Nicaragua



Train and sensitize law enforcement officers on LGBTI+ rights and the specific risks they face, using a differentiated approach. This training should also address issues such as sex work, HIV status, and human rights advocacy within the LGBTI+ community.



Ensure that national regulations protecting LGBTI+ people are properly applied during investigations and legal processes related to violence and discrimination. Provide regular training for state officials on these issues, as, in many cases, public officials claim ignorance.



State records should include detailed, disaggregated information on violence against LGBTI+ people across various sectors, with a commitment to transparency and accountability.



Mexico



Develop information and recording systems for violence against LGBTI+ people that provide detailed and disaggregated statistics, taking into account the specifics of sexual and gender diversity with an intersectional approach.



Create and implement a protocol for investigating homicides, femicides, and transfemicides of LGBTI+ individuals. This protocol should incorporate a gender perspective and differentiated approach to ensure unbiased and non-discriminatory actions, as well as guarantee access to justice for victims and their families, whether biological or social.



Design and implement ongoing training programs for personnel involved in investigations and judicial processes to prevent the use of stereotypes related to sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. This training should aim to avoid revictimizing or criminalizing direct or indirect victims.



Develop and implement preventive public safety strategies for LGBTI+ people at higher risk of violence, such as sex workers and human rights activists.



Promote widespread awareness campaigns to eliminate stereotypes related to diverse sexual orientations and gender identities/expression within society.



Peru



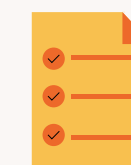
Train staff responsible for recording violence complaints in police and prosecution services to collect high-quality, disaggregated data by sexual orientation, gender identity, and other factors in the National Police of Peru and the Public Ministry systems. This will allow for the analysis of violence patterns against LGBTI+ people and the development of prevention strategies.



Provide training for police and prosecutorial staff on handling violence complaints based on prejudice and discrimination. This training should ensure they have the necessary elements from the outset to clarify incidents, offer protection, and avoid revictimizing LGBTI+ people or their families.



To comply with the reparative measures mandated by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the Azul Rojas Marín case, develop a protocol proposal for investigating and administering justice in cases of violence against LGBTI+ individuals. This should be done through the Grupo de Trabajo Multisectorial [Multisectoral Working Group] created by Ministerial Resolution No. 0111-2023-JUS, and establish a data collection system for cases of violence against LGBTI+ individuals.



Extend all legal protections against gender-based violence, including femicides, to trans women, regardless of whether their identity documents reflect their gender identity. This is particularly important given the complexities of legal gender recognition processes in the country.



Dominican Republic



Design and implement public policies aimed at reducing discrimination and violence against LGBTI+ people. These policies should incorporate differentiated approaches based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and include monitoring, recording, and analyzing cases of discrimination and violence driven by prejudice.



Adopt a new Penal Code that provides protections against violence and discrimination motivated by prejudice related to sexual orientation and gender identity, without justifying such acts under the pretext of "public morals" or "freedom of worship."



The Public Ministry should apply the guidelines for ensuring access to justice for LGBTI+ individuals, as validated in 2018, and promote awareness campaigns on how to prevent and report acts of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



SIN VIOLENCIA

LGBTI

