Belize A Study of Violence Against Women Throughout Their Lifecycle, 2020

- Preliminary Considerations
- Advances and Challenges
- The Continuum of Violence:
  - Domestic Violence
  - Sexual Violence
  - Femicide/feminicide
PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS
Concepts and approaches for analysis

Violence against Women is understood to be “any action or conduct, based on gender, that causes death, harm or physical, sexual or psychological suffering to women, both in the public and private spheres.”

Source: The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, better known as the Belém do Pará Convention, 1994

What is Violence Against Women?

It is the result of a system that is based on unequal power relations between the sexes.

Source: The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, better known as the Belém do Pará Convention, 1994

Continuum of Violence

“The attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and its promise - to leave no one behind - cannot be fulfilled without putting an end to violence against women and girls.... [Rape is an] extreme manifestation of the continuum of violence against women and girls.”

UN Deputy Secretary General (Nov. 2019)

Why is it necessary to generate robust information on Violence Against Women?

1. It is the result of a system that is based on unequal power relations between the sexes.

2. Exposure to a series of specific risks coupled with other forms of discrimination and social exclusion generate high and multiple vulnerability.

3. It is urgent to develop gender-sensitive indicators that make it possible to characterize this reality and design effective public policies.

Violence Against Women in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the risk of gender-based violence, particularly intimate partner violence and violence perpetrated in the home.

In Belize, there was a notable peak in reported cases of domestic violence during the early period of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which government-imposed State of Emergency measures restricted movement for non-essential purposes.

Cases subsequently declined over the latter part of the year, resulting in an overall decline in registered cases for the year 2020.

During 2020, there were 885 domestic violence cases registered by the Belize Police Department, which represented an 8% decline from the 959 cases registered for the previous year.

The percentage of Police-registered cases resulting in arrests has also been increasing steadily over the past 4 years.

Reports were on an upward trend between April to June but declined thereafter with the relaxation of COVID-19 measures.

Whereas June 2020 recorded the highest case count (94) during the State of Emergency period, December registered the lowest case count for the year, at 54.

Domestic violence cases by month, 2020

8% decrease in domestic violence cases during 2020

Data Source: The Belize Police Department
**ADVANCES AND CHALLENGES** Legal framework, information management and victimization

**Belize’s Policy and Legal Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Act/Policy</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Protection Against Sexual Harassment Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Families and Children Act Revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>New Domestic Violence Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Trafficking in Persons Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Revised National Gender Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Cybercrime Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: Belize Crime Observatory, in consultation with the National Women’s Commission of Belize

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**5 INFORMATION GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED**

1. Obtain more comprehensive data for targeted policies
2. Promote and support data sharing for improved surveillance and intervention
3. Reduce inconsistencies in data
4. Update data and statistics more frequently
5. Strengthen capacity for information management

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**THE CONTINUUM OF VIOLENCE**

An analysis of violence against women and girls during 2020

![Graph showing the continuum of violence against women and girls](image)

The continuum of violence affects women and men differently

Although most murder victims are males, most victims of sexual violence are females. Sexual violence is often recurrent and has long-term effects on survivors.

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**How is the continuum of violence against women manifested?**

An analysis of the faces of violence against women

**Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence or intrafamily violence constitutes abuse or physical, psychological, sexual or other aggressions, inflicted by people in the family environment, which generally target the members in the most vulnerable conditions, who are also part of it: girls, women and older adults. \(\text{Source: WHO, 2002.}\)

**Domestic Violence in Law:**

“domestic violence’ includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or financial abuse committed by a person against a spouse, child, de facto spouse, or any other person who is a member of the household of the applicant or the respondent.”

Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Belize)

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**Violence against women begins within the home**

During 2020, eighty-four percent of domestic violence victims were females.

![Graph showing the age distribution of domestic violence victims](image)
Sexual Violence

Sexual violence constitutes "any sexual act, the attempt to commit a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or innuendo, or actions to commercialize or otherwise use a person’s sexuality through coercion by another person, regardless of the relationship between the victim and the offender, in any setting, including the home and workplace".


Domestic violence incidents almost always occurred inside a residence, and most often at the home of either the victim or the perpetrator.

During 2020, there were 80 reported cases of sexual violence in the major crimes category. Of these, 25 were cases of rape and 55 were cases of unlawful sexual intercourse (USI).

Females were the victims of 9 in 10 cases of sexual violence in the major crimes category during 2020. Rape and unlawful sexual intercourse* are the two categories of major crimes considered to be acts of sexual violence. There are other categories of sexual violence not included in this broader category.

Girls and adolescents were the primary victims of sexual violence in the major crimes category.

The number of sexual violence cases fluctuated over the course of 2020. However, notable peaks were recorded in June (14 cases), February (11 cases) and August (8 cases).

Incidents involving ‘harm and wounding’ and ‘assault’ together comprised 65% of all offenses associated with cases lodged during 2020.
The Central Districts registered most of the cases. During 2020, Stann Creek had the largest number of reported sexual violence cases in the major crimes category, as well as the highest number of rape cases registered for the period.

Other Sex Crimes
- During 2020, just over half (51%) of sexual assault victims were minors under the age of 16. All these minors, except for 1, were females.
- During 2020, a total of 55 sexual assault cases were registered, equal to the number of cases of unlawful sexual intercourse registered during the same year.
- During 2020, 41 domestic violence cases were associated with a sexual assault offence.

Femicide/feminicide
Femicide is generally understood to involve intentional murder of women, because they are women, but broader definitions include any killings of women or girls. Femicide is usually perpetrated by men, but sometimes female family members may be involved. Femicide differs from male homicide in specific ways. For example, most cases of femicide are committed by partners or ex-partners, and involve ongoing abuse in the home, threats or intimidation, sexual violence or situations where women have less power or fewer resources than their partner.

Femicide in Law: There is no provision on Belize’s law books for the classification of femicides. Therefore, the killing of females appears in the official statistics as murder, with no subclassification to reflect cases of gender-based killings.

...data on the murder of female victims are not generally captured and reported using this categorization.

Over the past two years, the murder rate for women in Belize has been declining, since reaching a peak in 2018
The female murder rate has fluctuated over the period 2009-2020, ranging mostly between 5 and 10 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. 2020 registered the lowest murder rate for females in Belize since 2015

Most of the female victims were in the 30-34 age range
The average age of the victims was 31, although the youngest was only 5 years old. The eldest was age 65.

Female murder counts by age group, 2020

Most female murder victims (7 of the 11, or 64%) were killed with a firearm.

Female murder counts by weapon 2020

At least 30% of female murder victims were killed by a partner or ex-partner

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