

16th June Over half of Guatemalans regard infidelity as a justification for violence

Louisa Reynolds takes a look at [Guatemalan Double Standard Limits Femicide Courts](http://womensenews.org/story/crime-policy/legislation/150613/guatemalan-double-standard-limits-femicide-courts) [http://womensenews.org/story/crime-policy/legislation/150613/guatemalan-double-standard-limits-femicide-courts] for Women's eNews. Guatemala had made some strides in recent years overcoming impunity, including the creation of specialized courts to handle cases involving violence against women. According to Louisa, these courts have a conviction and sentencing rate above 30 percent, well above the 10 percent found in ordinary courts (I'm not exactly sure how to interpret this - just cases that arrive at the court? all crimes and not just those involving homicide?).

While there have been improvements in terms of legal procedures, much of the remaining difficulty relates to overcoming cultural norms about what is acceptable when it comes to the relationship between men and women in Guatemala. This is especially true when it comes to the age of consent for marriage within indigenous communities.

However, Wichita State University professor Dinorah Azpuru, who was part of a team that conducted a 2014 Americas Barometer survey that included violence against women, points out that some socially entrenched attitudes, such as the acceptability of beating a partner on the grounds of suspected infidelity, pose challenges.

"Judicial institutions have to be stronger to punish those who commit violence against women but at the same time people have to understand that it's wrong to do that," said Azpuru in a phone interview with Women's eNews. "If the culture of respect towards women doesn't change in the household it won't matter how good our institutions are."

High Tolerance for Violence

Bearing in mind that some of the countries with the highest femicide rates in the world are located in Latin America, Vanderbilt University included attitudes towards violence against women in its 2014 Americas Barometer survey.

It identifies Guatemala as the country in Latin America with the highest tolerance of violence against women suspected of infidelity, with 58 percent of those surveyed saying they regarded infidelity as a justification for violence, followed by 42 percent of Salvadorans, 35 percent of Guyanese and 34 percent of Mexicans.

Guatemalan women, found the survey, are just as likely to justify violence on the grounds of infidelity and double standards are deeply ingrained as men who cheat are not shunned or ostracized by society.


"Men are almost expected to be unfaithful and women suffer greatly as a result of their partners' infidelity due to the humiliation and the possibility that they will be abandoned," said Cecilia Menjivar, author of "Enduring Violence: Latina Women's Lives in Guatemala," who spoke

with Women's eNews by phone. "But if they are suspected of infidelity they are harshly punished."

The mayor of Almolonga was recently [arrested](http://www.startribune.com/12-year-old-girl-s-wedding-leads-to-probe-of-guatemala-mayor/307445291/) [http://www.startribune.com/12-year-old-girl-s-wedding-leads-to-probe-of-guatemala-mayor/307445291/] for authorizing and officiating at a 12-year-old girl's wedding in 2012. Congress has been trying to raise the minimum age for marriage to 18.

Posted 16th June by [Mike Allison](#)

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