

TOLERANCIA SOCIAL EN LA POBLACIÓN FRENTE AL COMERCIO SEXUAL CON PERSONAS MENORES DE EDAD

EN CENTROAMÉRICA, PANAMÁ Y REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA



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FRENTE AL COMERCIO SEXUAL

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EN CENTROAMÉRICA, PANAMÁ Y REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA



Project
"Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of
Children and Adolescents in Central America, Panama and Dominican
Republic" **ILO/IPEC**

Abril, 2006

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ILO/IPEC

Social tolerance in the population towards the sex trade with minors in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic.

International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) Subregional Coordination for Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic
INTERNATIONAL LABOR OFFICE

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IN CENTRAL AMERICA, PANAMA AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

PRESENTATION

This document, *Social tolerance in the population towards the sex trade with minors in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic*, analyzes data compiled by the company CID-Gallup Latin America at the request of the Project "Prevention and elimination of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic" of the IPEC Program of the International Labor Office, on the knowledge and perception of adults in the countries of the region about the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

This publication aims to provide relevant information for institutions working for the prevention and elimination of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. There is international consensus on the need to stop this form of sexual violence, considered a severe form of economic exploitation of minors, and all the countries of the world, without exception, have ratified international conventions through which they have committed themselves to take urgent measures to end this form of exploitation. In order to develop effective strategies, policies and programs to fulfill these commitments, it is essential to have accurate information on the phenomenon and its causes.

The information gathered shows that the tendency persists in a large part of the population to blame the victims and their families. There is an omission or invisibility of collective responsibility, and even of the state response that is stipulated in international agreements that all states have ratified. Stopping commercial sexual exploitation is a task for society as a whole, since it is a multicausal and complex phenomenon that involves economic, political, social and cultural dimensions rooted in the socialization patterns of men and women, adults and minors, governmental institutions and civil society.

The ILO considers commercial sexual exploitation as a severe violation of the human rights of minors and as a form of economic exploitation similar to slavery and forced labor that constitutes a crime by those who use and recruit children and adolescents for commercial sex, and recognizes the right of persons under 18 years of age to be immediately protected and cared for against this form of exploitation.

Therefore, this publication is expected to contribute to guide the strategies and provide inputs to the competent public institutions for the construction of national policies aimed at the protection of minors who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation.



EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

This document analyzes data collected by CID-Gallup Latin America at the request of the Project "Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic", of the IPEC Program of the International Labor Office, on the knowledge and perception of adults in the countries of the region about commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. The data were collected through the introduction of questions in the omnibus surveys, applied in the region during the period from 6 June to 13 September 2005. The interviews were conducted in Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. A total of 8,767 people over the age of 18 were interviewed¹. The total results per country have a margin of error equal to +2.8 points (95% confidence level), which means that if the entire population of each country had been interviewed, the data included in this document would not have varied by more than the margin written² here. The consultations were carried out with a representative sample of the adult population of all the countries, both in person and by telephone.

The main results of the study show that:

- There is a high level of knowledge of places where ~~nicaragua~~ are used for commercial sexual activities. About 30% of the population in El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua are aware of the existence of places where commercial sexual exploitation occurs, while in Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala, a significant but smaller percentage of the population (less than 20%) responded that they are aware of this type of place. This indicates that this is not a crime that is carried out in the community or on rare occasions.
- There is a high percentage of the population (between 88% and 97%) throughout the region that considers it a crime to pay a minor for sexual activities.
- In turn, there is a small but important group, between 2% to 7% of the population, that considers that it is not a crime.
- Between 1% (Panama) and 6% (Honduras) of the population interviewed in each country stated that people like them would choose "sexual services with minors".

1. In the case of Nicaragua, the persons interviewed were aged 18 years 16 and older.
2. CID-Gallup, Datasheet.

of age" if they had the opportunity, i.e., they admit that they would commit a crime punishable by at least two years in prison.

- In all countries, with the exception of Costa Rica (71%), the percentage of people who would report the client does not exceed 46%. Likewise, in all countries, the percentage of men who say they would not do anything about a case of commercial sexual exploitation (either because they consider that it is not their problem or because it is a common situation) exceeded in all countries the percentage of women who gave the same response, which shows that men have a greater tendency to be indifferent to the problem.
- Less than one third of the population in all countries considers that the commercial sexual exploitation of minors is caused by the exploiters, which highlights the great social tolerance that exists around this criminal activity and the need to position the issue of "demand" as a fundamental axis of prevention.
- Between one-third and one-half of the population considers that the cause of the problem lies in the moral values of the family and the victim, which shows the invisibility of the responsibility of the exploiters and the situation of ~~victim~~ and social exclusion in which the victims and their families find themselves.
- More than half of the population in all countries considers that the main responsible parties for stopping the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents are the families (especially the mother) or the underage victims themselves. In other words, the responsibility for preventing and eradicating exploitation is placed on the weakest people, ignoring the responsibility of the State and society to protect minors, as well as the violation of rights committed by the exploiters, whether they are "clients", pimps or intermediaries in this crime.

1. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Since the first international conference against commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Stockholm, the 1996, countries of Central America: Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic have been taking significant steps to address this social scourge. Various investigations have shown that children and adolescents are used on a daily basis in each of the countries of the region in various forms of exploitation, such as use by national and foreign adults and organized groups, whether for profit or not, for paid sexual activities, the production of pornography and sexual shows.

Commercial sexual exploitation is considered a severe violation of the human rights of minors because it interferes with several of their rights and because of the serious physical, psychological and social implications that truncate the healthy and optimal development of the child or adolescent, often with serious implications for the rest of their lives. In turn, exploitation fosters a type of economic, cultural and social development that undermines a model of society based on respect for the human rights of all people, including children and adolescents.

Over the last two decades, a number of international conventions have been adopted that explicitly and complementarily aim to combat exploitation from a human rights perspective, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child; from a more socioeconomic perspective, such as ILO Convention 182; or from the perspective of combating international organized crime, such as the International Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, among others.

The countries included in this study have ratified the main international conventions related to the elimination of commercial sexual exploitation and have established inter-institutional coordination bodies to analyze the problem, exchange information, discuss and propose solutions and coordinate actions aimed at preventing and eliminating exploitation.

Dates of ratification of international conventions related to commercial sexual exploitation

International conventions	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama	Dom. Rep.
United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child/UN	21.08.1990	10.07.1990	06.06.1990	10.08.1990	05.10.1990	12.12.1990	
Optional Protocol to the Convention of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding the Sale of Children, the Child Prostitution and the Use of Children in Pornography/UN	10.04.2002	24.02.2004	10.05.2002	09.05.2002	12.03.2003	09.02.2000	
Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention ¹⁸² of Child Labor/ILO	10.09.2001	12.10.2000	11.10.2001	25.10.2001	06.11.2000	13.10.2000	15.11.2000
United Nations Convention against Organized Crime Transnational/UN	24.07.2003	18.03.2003	25.09.2003	02.12.2003	09.09.2002	18.08.2004	13.12.2000*
Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Sanction Trafficking in Persons, specifically women and children who eat, drink and The Convention of the United Nations United Nations Against Crime Organized Transnational/UN	09.09.2003	18.03.2003	01.04.2004	-	12.10.2004	18.08.2004	15.12.2000*
Inter American Convention on	22.05.	17.10.			07.10.	18.04.	

Sources:

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Status of the principal international human rights instruments (2003)* [online]. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.ch/pdf/reportsp.pdf>. Consultado on: [2006, 25April].

International Labour Organization. *International Labour Standards Database, ILOLEX* [online]. Available at: <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/spanish/convdisp1.htm> Accessed on: [2006, 18April].

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Signatories to the UN Convention against Transnational Crime and its Protocols* [online]. Available at: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/index.html>. Consultado on: [2006, 8April].

Organization of American States. *Multilateral Treaties. B-57: Inter-American Convention on International Traffic in Minors* [online]. Available at: <http://www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/firmas/b-57.html>. Accessed on: [2006, 18April].

In the case of Panama, this body was created by Law No. 16 and its full name is the National Commission for the Prevention of Crimes of Sexual Exploitation (CONAPREDES). In Costa Rica, the National Commission Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (CONACOES) meets monthly to coordinate actions aimed at eliminating sexual exploitation in the country. In Nicaragua, the Consejo Nacional de Atención y Protección Integral a la Niñez y la Adolescencia (CONAPINA) deals with the problem, and in Honduras, the Comisión Interinstitucional Contra la Explotación Sexual Comercial de Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes (Inter-institutional Commission Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents) operates. In Guatemala, the Articulation Group operates, in El Salvador the Working Group and in the Dominican Republic the Commission Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents was created at the end of the 1990s.

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In addition, in Costa Rica (1997), El Salvador (1998), Guatemala (1998), Dominican Republic (1999 and 2006) and Nicaragua (2003), plans of action aimed at preventing and eliminating commercial sexual exploitation of children and ~~adults~~ ^{adolescents} have been formulated within the framework of national policies for children and adolescents. These plans have not always had the institutional and financial support required for their proper execution; however, all the countries in the region have managed to develop a series of actions aimed at ending commercial sexual exploitation. These include preventive measures, such as communication campaigns; measures aimed at protecting minors within the framework of policies for the care of children and adolescents at social risk, thanks to the efforts of nongovernmental organizations and social welfare agencies; and ~~also~~ ^{to} ensure that persons who use, recruit or offer children and adolescents for commercial sexual activities are punished.

On this last point, it is worth noting the important progress that has been made in the region with respect to the adaptation of criminal codes to international legal instruments. Significant changes have been approved in the penal codes of Costa Rica (1999), El Salvador (2003), Panama (2004) and Honduras (2005), to typify and improve the possibility of severe punishment for conduct related to the subjection of minors to remunerated sexual activities, the production and distribution of child pornography, the trafficking and sale of minors and their use in sexual performances. There have also been other legislative advances in some countries to make possible the confiscation of exploiters' assets, the extension of the statute of limitations for offenses, harsher penalties and imprisonment for exploiters, as well as changes to improve judicial investigation, such as the legality of using wiretapping and undercover agents to investigate cases of commercial sexual exploitation as an organized crime.

In Nicaragua, sexual crimes and commercial sexual exploitation against minors have recently (2006) been criminalized in the New Penal Code Project and, in Guatemala and the Dominican Republic, proposals to change the penal code to adequately include crimes related to sexual exploitation are in the process of parliamentary discussion.

Despite the efforts made, the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents continues to be a social phenomenon that is legitimized by certain sectors, even though it is considered a severe violation of the human rights of minors.

There are many myths in the population related to the problem and little understanding that all minors¹⁸, regardless of sex, race, nationality or socioeconomic level, have the right to live free from exploitation, with shelter, food, clothing and protection in a family environment, with an educational and health care system.

health care that ensures their integral development and recreational options, without having to pay for it, much less "*pay with sex*".

In order to combat these myths and achieve actions that change the general population's behavior with regard to the problem, it is essential to identify their level of knowledge and their perception of commercial sexual exploitation. For example, if the population does not perceive commercial sexual exploitation as a form of violence but rather as a legitimate form of income generation, particularly for adolescents, "clients" - exploiters will not be perceived as such, but simply as "clients" and pimps as "employers", making it unlikely that the general population will report cases to the authorities.

In addition, combating exploitation requires the active and committed participation of various public and private institutions to develop effective actions, both at the level of prevention (ministries of education, culture, the tourism sector or poverty eradication institutions), and direct attention to victims (child protection institutions or the health sector), as well as investigation and punishment of crimes (police, prosecutors and judges). However, if the professionals working in these institutions are also influenced by the existing myths surrounding commercial sexual exploitation, it is doubly difficult for them to fulfill their responsibilities correctly, since they must not only be aware of their own functions but must also begin by overcoming the beliefs and stereotypes they have internalized.

For this reason, it is important to know what the general population thinks about this problem and its causes. This research provides the sectors and institutions that work - directly or indirectly - for the human rights of minors, particularly technical experts and decision-makers, with an input to broaden existing knowledge about the phenomenon and to guide future strategic actions.

The document analyzes data collected by CID-Gallup Latin America at the request of the Project "Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic" of the IPEC Program of the International Labor Office, on the knowledge and perception of adults in the countries of the region regarding commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

The data were collected through the introduction of questions in omnibus surveys, applied in the region from June 6 to September 13, 2005. The interviews were conducted in Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic.

A total of 8,767 people over 18 years³ of age were interviewed. The total results by country have a margin of error equal to +2.8 points (95% confidence level), which is equal to +2.8 points (95% confidence level).

3. In the case of Nicaragua, the persons interviewed were those aged 18 years 16and older.

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which means that if the entire population of each country had been interviewed, the data included in this document would not have varied by more than the margin written⁴ here. The consultations were carried out in person and by telephone with a representative sample of the adult population of all the countries.

The sociodemographic characteristics of the population interviewed are as follows:

Sociodemographic characteristics of the samples, by country (%)

Table 2	Features	Costa Rica n=1230 %	El Salvador n=1220 %	Guatemala n=1230 %	Honduras n=1400 %	Nicaragua n=1258 %	Panama n=1217 %	Dom. Rep. n=1212 %
	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age	Age
18 to years24	24	26	21	26	34	20	24	
25 to years34	23	28	37	27	25	25	25	
35 to years44	22	15	23	19	18	21	21	
45 years and over	31	31	20	28	23	33	30	
Education	Education	Education	Education	Education	Education	Education	Education	Education
Primary/None	48	51	66	66	31	25	42	
Secondary	36	37	30	29	55	48	39	
Superior	16	12	4	5	14	27	19	
Sex	Sex	Sex	Sex	Sex	Sex	Sex	Sex	Sex
Male	48	51	46	49	50	49	50	
Female	52	49	54	51	50	51	50	
Region	Region	Region	Region	Region	Region	Region	Region	Region
Metropolitan	55	28	16	59	42	55	32	
Rest of the country	45	56	74	41	58	45	41	
Other cities	–	16	10	–	–	–	27	

The following are some results on different aspects that were included in the questionnaires applied by CID-Gallup and that can contribute to the identification of key areas for intervention. The questions introduced in the omnibus surveys were intended to cover areas where there is a lack of information to address commercial sexual exploitation more effectively, such as information on the knowledge of the adult population about existing legislation in the countries. Therefore, the results allow us to formulate some recommendations to guide the strategies developed to prevent and eliminate exploitation.

4. CID-Gallup, Datasheet.

2. KNOWLEDGE OF COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AS A CRIME AMONG THE POPULATION

International conventions agree that the ~~criminal~~ sexual exploitation of children and adolescents should be considered a crime. Article 3 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography states that acts and activities related to exploitation should be "fully covered by its criminal legislation. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, establishes that States must criminalize conduct ~~rel~~to trafficking, and the same convention includes in the definition of trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation as one of the purposes of trafficking. For its part, Article 7 of ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labor mentions the need to "...take all necessary measures to ensure the effective application and enforcement of the provisions giving effect to this Convention, including the provision and application of penal or other sanctions, as appropriate. At the same time, ILO Recommendation 190 adopted on the same date as Convention 182 states in Article 12 that "Members should take measures to ensure that the following worst forms of child labor are considered to be criminal acts: ... (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances. "

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 182ILO Convention have been ratified by all the countries analyzed in this study. Therefore, all countries in the region have made a commitment to criminalize the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, and several of the countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Panama and Honduras⁵) have carried out comprehensive reforms of their penal codes in recent years to bring them into line with the ratified national conventions, and legislators have defined severe penalties for this type of crime. In Nicaragua, conduct related to commercial sexual exploitation has been criminalized in the draft of the new penal code. Meanwhile, the Dominican Republic and Guatemala are in the process of discussing draft laws that seek to precisely criminalize conduct related to commercial sexual exploitation. In order to punish the use or recruitment of

5. - Costa Rica, Law "1999,7899Law against the sexual exploitation of minors".
 - El Salvador, 2003 and 2004, Decrees No. 210 and 458 (Reforms to the Penal Code) and Decree No. 458 (Reforms to the Penal Procedural Code).
 - Panama Law No. "16which dictates provisions for the prevention and classification of crimes against sexual integrity and freedom, and modifies and adds articles to the Penal and Judicial Codes".
 - Honduras, 2005, Decree reforming Title II of the Penal Code and adding a new chapter on crimes of commercial sexual exploitation.

In these countries, it is necessary to resort to criminal legislation related to other crimes, for example, those related to other sexual crimes such as corruption, rape, indecent assault, statutory rape or related to trafficking, which in many cases does not cover typical cases of commercial sexual exploitation.

Costa Rican legislation precisely establishes in article 160 of the Penal Code that *"whoever pays a minor of any sex or promises to pay or give in exchange an economic or other advantage to a minor to perform sexual or erotic acts, shall be punished: ..."* with sentences of between two and ten years depending on the age of the victim. Decree 210 of El Salvador establishes in Article 169, *"Whoever pays or promises to pay with money or any other advantage of any nature to a person under eighteen years of age or a third person so that the minor performs sexual or erotic acts, shall be punished with a penalty of three to eight years of imprisonment"*. In turn, in Panama, Law 16 establishes in Article 229 that *"whoever solicits, demands, obtains, pays or promises to pay, directly or indirectly through another or a third party, a minor to perform sexual acts, shall be punished with a prison term of one year and a 200 day-fine"* and the penalty is up to 812 years imprisonment under certain circumstances. In 2005, Honduras passed a decree reforming the Penal Code in relation to the crimes of commercial sexual exploitation. Article 149-C states: *"Carnal access or acts of lust with persons over fourteen (14) and under eighteen (18) years of age performed in exchange for payment or any other remuneration in money or kind to the minor or to a third person, shall be punishable by imprisonment for a term of up to one year"*.

As can be seen, paying a person under 18 years of age for commercial sexual activities is severely punishable by several years in prison. At the same time, the adult male population interviewed on the subject has shown a high level of social tolerance towards exploitation⁶. Could it be that they do not know that a severe crime is committed when a minor is subjected to sexual activities with the sole promise of payment?

For the present study, the general adult population was asked: *"From what you know or have heard, is it a crime or not a crime in our country for an adult to pay an adult to have sex with a person who is 16 years old?"*⁷.

The responses show that there is a high percentage of the population (between 88% and 97%) throughout the region that considers it a crime to use a minor for sexual activities for payment.

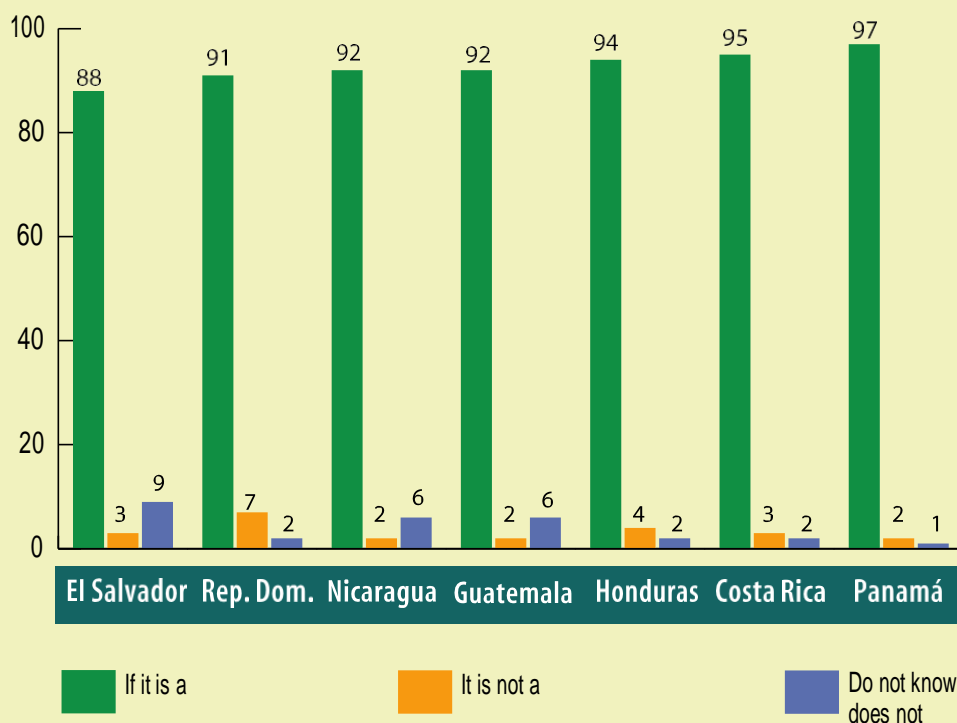
6. ILO/IPEC, 2004, José Manuel Salas Calvo and Álvaro Campos Guadamuz, "Explotación sexual comercial y masculinidad. A regional qualitative study with men from the general population".

7. The question was purposely formulated in such a way as to include cases of commercial sexual exploitation of adolescents above the age of sexual consent since it is for this age group that there are more cases and more confusion.

Conocimiento sobre delito de explotación sexual comercial de personas menores de edad, según país (%)

Gráfico

1



There is no significant difference between the countries whose penal codes explicitly establish as a crime the payment of a minor for sexual activities and those that do not explicitly establish it as a crime. In other words, in all countries there is an important notion that this is a prohibited activity, regardless of whether or not this conduct is explicitly penalized.

However, there is an important group, between 2% and 7% of the population, who consider that it is not a crime, particularly in the Dominican Republic (7%) where a higher percentage considers that it is not a crime. Likewise, in El Salvador, there is a significant percentage (12%) who either do not know if it is a crime (9%) or respond that it is not a crime (3%), despite the fact that the legislation in this country is very precise in this regard.

For this question, no major differences were identified in the responses according to the sex of the persons interviewed, since both men and women respond in more than one case out of ten (with the exception of El Salvador, which is slightly lower) that "yes, it is a crime". However, in all countries except Costa Rica, there is a slightly higher tendency for men to respond that "it is not a crime". It is particularly important to analyze the responses of men, since in other investigations carried out on the basis of information provided by the victims, it is known that in more than 90% of cases, child and adolescent victims of exploitation respond that the last person who paid them for sexual relations was male.⁸

8. ILO/IPEC, Sorensen2003. and Claramunt "Explotación sexual comercial de personas menores de edad en Centroamérica, Panamá y República Dominicana. Regional Synthesis".

Among men, Costa Rica and Panama had the lowest proportion of men who responded that "it is not a crime", while the highest percentage of men who responded that "it is not a crime" was found in El Salvador (4.5%), Honduras (4.6%) and the Dominican Republic (7.2).

People who say that paying a minor for sexual activities is "not a crime" (%)

Country	Male	Female
Costa Rica	1,7	3,5
Panama	1,8	1,0
Guatemala	2,8	1,8
Nicaragua	2,9	1,6
El Salvador	4,5	2,4
Honduras	4,6	3,1
Dominican Republic	7,2	5,8

If we analyze the characteristics of the persons who respond that "it is not a crime" according to age range, it is striking that in Panama, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador, persons between 18 and 24 years of age respond in a higher percentage than the other age groups that it is not a crime. This situation can be explained in two ways: a) young people, being closer in age to the victims, do not perceive that they are committing a crime, b) this age group is more uninformed about the problem.

If the responses of the people interviewed are analyzed in relation to their educational level, no differences are detected. Those with primary or higher education do not differ significantly in their responses. The only exception is El Salvador, which clearly criminalizes the payment of a minor for sexual activities. In this country, respondents with only primary school or no education responded to a lesser degree (85.1%) that it is a crime compared to respondents with higher education (93.1%). However, even in this country, 6.9% of respondents with higher education say they do not know if it is a crime (5.1%) or erroneously answer that it is not a crime (1.8%).

By way of summary, it can be concluded:

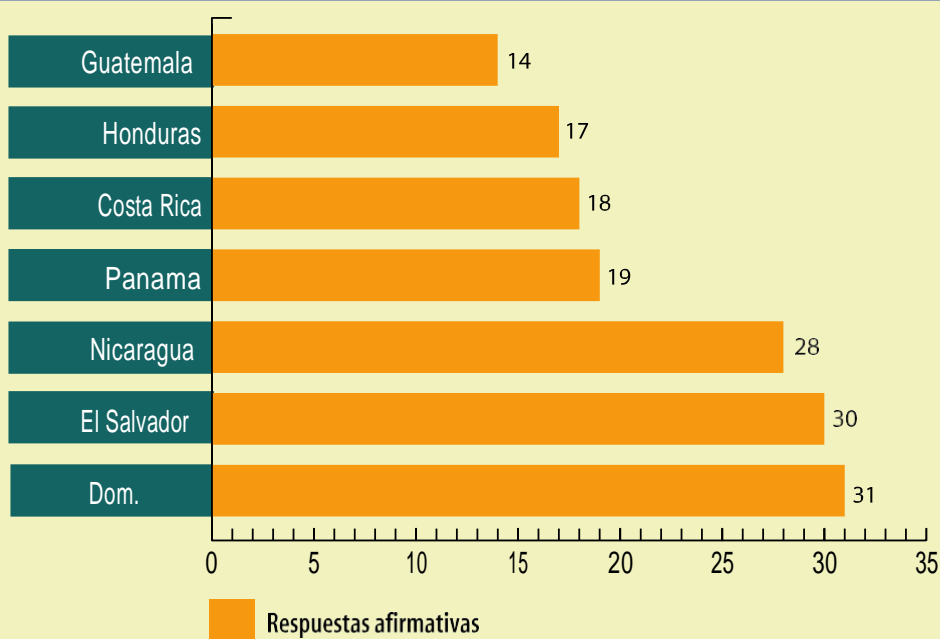
- A high percentage of the population knows that it is a crime to pay minors for commercial sex, but the existing number of cases of exploitation shows that there is a huge difference between "considering" it a crime and "behaving" according to this information.

3. VISIBILITY AND TOLERANCE OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE PROBLEM

In the previous section we noted the generalized opinion of people about the criminal nature of commercial sexual exploitation. The vast majority of the people interviewed know that it is a crime, without this meaning that they have internalized what this implies, or that they disagree with these practices.

This study also explored the visibility of the problem for the general population, i.e., is it seen as a "normal" phenomenon or does it occur sporadically and clandestinely? To this end, the population of each country was asked: "Do you know if there is any place in your country - house, brothel, hotel, nightclub, bar, massage parlor, bar show - where "sexual services" of persons under 18 years of age are offered for payment?". The population's answers unfortunately show that commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents seems to be a common phenomenon in the regional environment.

Conocimiento de lugares donde personas menores de edad son explotadas en el comercio sexual, según país (%)



Gráfico

2

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The graph shows that there is a high level of awareness of this type of place in all the countries of the region. Therefore, this is not a crime that is carried out only clandestinely or occurs sporadically, since if this were the case, the general population would not have as much information about these places. About 30% of the population in El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua are aware of the existence of places where commercial sexual exploitation occurs, while in Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala a smaller but also very significant percentage of the population (less than 20%) say they are aware of such places.

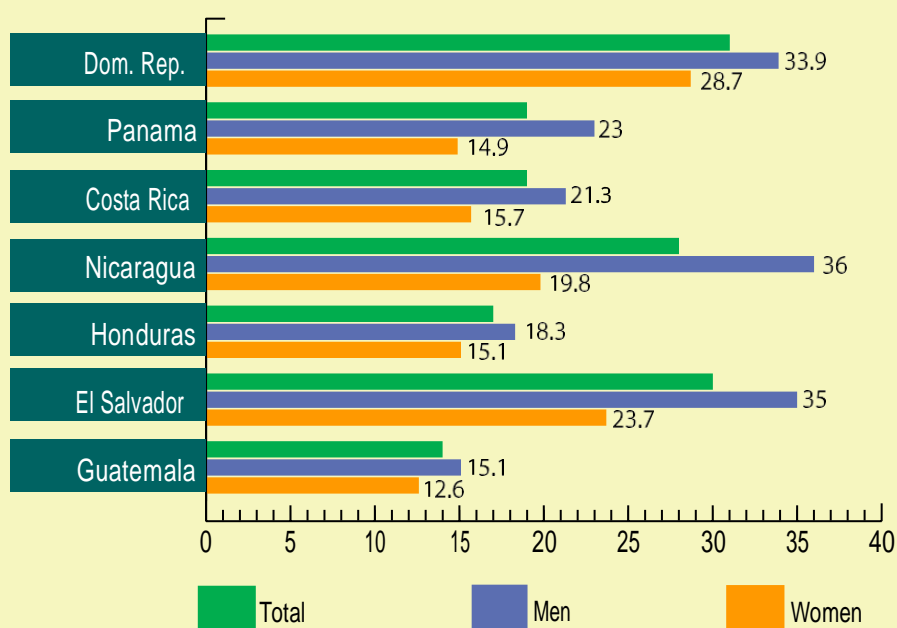
In the Dominican Republic, the differences by place of interview stand out: 24% of the people interviewed in Santo Domingo say they know of this type of place, while 40% of the population in other cities and 31% in the rest of the country say they know of this type of place. Therefore, it is a particularly visible and common problem outside the capital city.

The following graph reflects the difference in the level of knowledge of places of exploitation between men and women, where the proportion of men who identify these places is much higher than that of women, for all countries. Nicaragua shows the largest difference (36% for men versus 19.8% for women), while Guatemala and Honduras show the most similar proportions between the two groups.

Gráfico

3

Personas que afirman conocer lugares donde personas menores de edad son explotadas en el comercio sexual, según país (%)



In all countries, people with higher education have greater knowledge or practically equal knowledge about the existence of this type of places, compared to people with less education (primary or ~~secondary~~). In El Salvador this difference is significant, since 42% of the people interviewed, with higher education, affirm that they are aware of the existence of this type of places, while "only" 25% of the people with primary education have this knowledge.

By way of summary, it can be concluded:

- The fact that between 14% and 31% of the population are aware of places where sexual exploitation takes place shows that it is a widespread problem that is widely tolerated by society and by States.
- The high number of people who say they know about these types of places is also an indicator of the number of these places, since it is unlikely that the general population refers to the same establishment or the same establishments. Therefore, there are establishments and businesses that are operating outside the law and generating an economic activity based on the exploitation of the most vulnerable people in society: children and adolescents.
- It is important to be aware that behind each of the establishments where "sexual services are offered to minors" - brothels, hotels, nightclubs, bars, massage parlors, bar shows - there are adults who profit from exploitation, whether they are the owners, managers or pimps. The underage persons are not the ones who obtain lucrative profits in these places; they are "hired" and "managed" by adults, companies or illicit networks, which generate income from their exploitation.
- These data also show the need to analyze more closely the effectiveness of the control exercised by the State over the operation of these ~~establiments~~ ~~establiments~~, the criteria for issuing operating permits; the labor inspections carried out in these places; and police investigations. It is worth studying why these places are not investigated or closed if they are so easily detected by the population and whether the public officials who must act in these cases have sufficient capacity and sensitivity to "see" the cases and act in accordance with their obligations.
- In this regard, it would also be important to analyze whether the places where children and adolescents are used for the sex trade, profiting and generating income illegally, are as rigorously investigated with the established methodologies for investigating organized crime, as is the case with drug trafficking and car theft. In the latter cases, what is "traded" are at least objects, while in cases of commercial sexual exploitation it is people whose lives, well-being and integrity are compromised.
- The data also illustrate that it is still a challenge to get the population to report places that come to their attention where children and adolescents are exploited.

4. VIEWS ON PEOPLE'S WILLINGNESS TO BE "CUSTOMERS"-EXPLOITERS

From the above data, it is clear that in all the countries of the region there are places where commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is profitable. Obviously, it is profitable for these "businesses" to operate only if there is a "cliente" willing to pay for illegal sexual activities with minors.

As part of the questions included in the questionnaire applied by CID-Gallup, respondents were asked about their opinion on who most people would choose in a situation where they had the opportunity to pay for "sexual services" and what people like themselves would do.

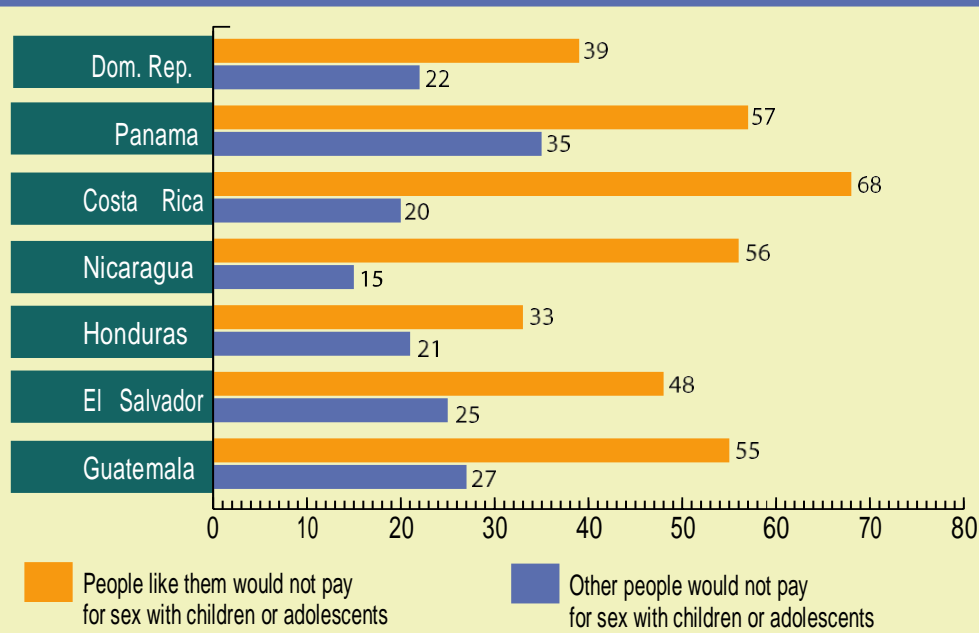
A significant group of respondents, both men and women, believe that other people or people like themselves "would not pay for sexual services" if they had the opportunity to do so. This response is encouraging in that there is an awareness of the inappropriateness of this behavior.

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Gráfico

4

Opinión sobre el comportamiento de las personas con respecto a pagar por sexo con personas menores de 18 años, según país (%)



However, it should be noted that there are respondents who believe that people like themselves would choose to pay an underage person for "sexual services" if they had the opportunity, despite the fact that this action is recognized by most as a crime.

Opinion on gender and age preference that people like them would have when paying for "sexual services" (%)

Opinion on preference	Guatemala	El Salvador	Honduras	Nicaragua	Costa Rica	Panama	Dom. Rep.
They believe that people like them would choose a woman under the age of 18 years for sexual activities paid	2	2	5	4	4	1	
They believe that people like them would choose a man under the age of 18 years for sexual activities paid	0	1	1	0	1	0	
They believe that people like them would choose a person under the age of 18 years for sexual activities paid	2	3	6	4	5	1	5
They are of the opinion that it IS a	92	88	94	92	95	97	91

It is important to remember the high percentages of people interviewed who consider that it is a crime to pay a minor for sexual activities and that in Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras, the Penal Codes now explicitly establish that paying a minor for sexual activities is punishable by imprisonment. It should be clarified that at the time the interviews were conducted in Honduras, the reform of the penal code that explicitly typifies these crimes was in the process of being approved.

Any figure above zero is unacceptable and shows that the population has not become aware that commercial sexual exploitation is a crime and that people can be punished with several years in prison if they pay a minor for sexual activities. Panama is the country in the region, followed by Guatemala, where the lowest number of people say that people like them would choose a minor for commercial sexual activities. In Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Honduras, approximately one in 20 people report that people like themselves would choose "sexual services with underage persons" if they had the opportunity. In other words, they consider that people like them would commit a crime that is criminally sanctioned if they had the opportunity.

By way of summary, it can be concluded:

- It is important to note that there is a sector of the population that in an anonymous survey admits that people like themselves would choose underage persons for commercial sexual activities, despite the fact that in the same survey a high number of people affirmed that this behavior is a crime. It is also ~~clear~~ that respondents believe that "other people" are more willing to pay for "sexual services" than "people like themselves", which may be linked to the messages disseminated in the ~~media~~ ~~and~~ movies and advertisements that project a stereotypical image of sexuality, the body of young people as a social value that gives status.

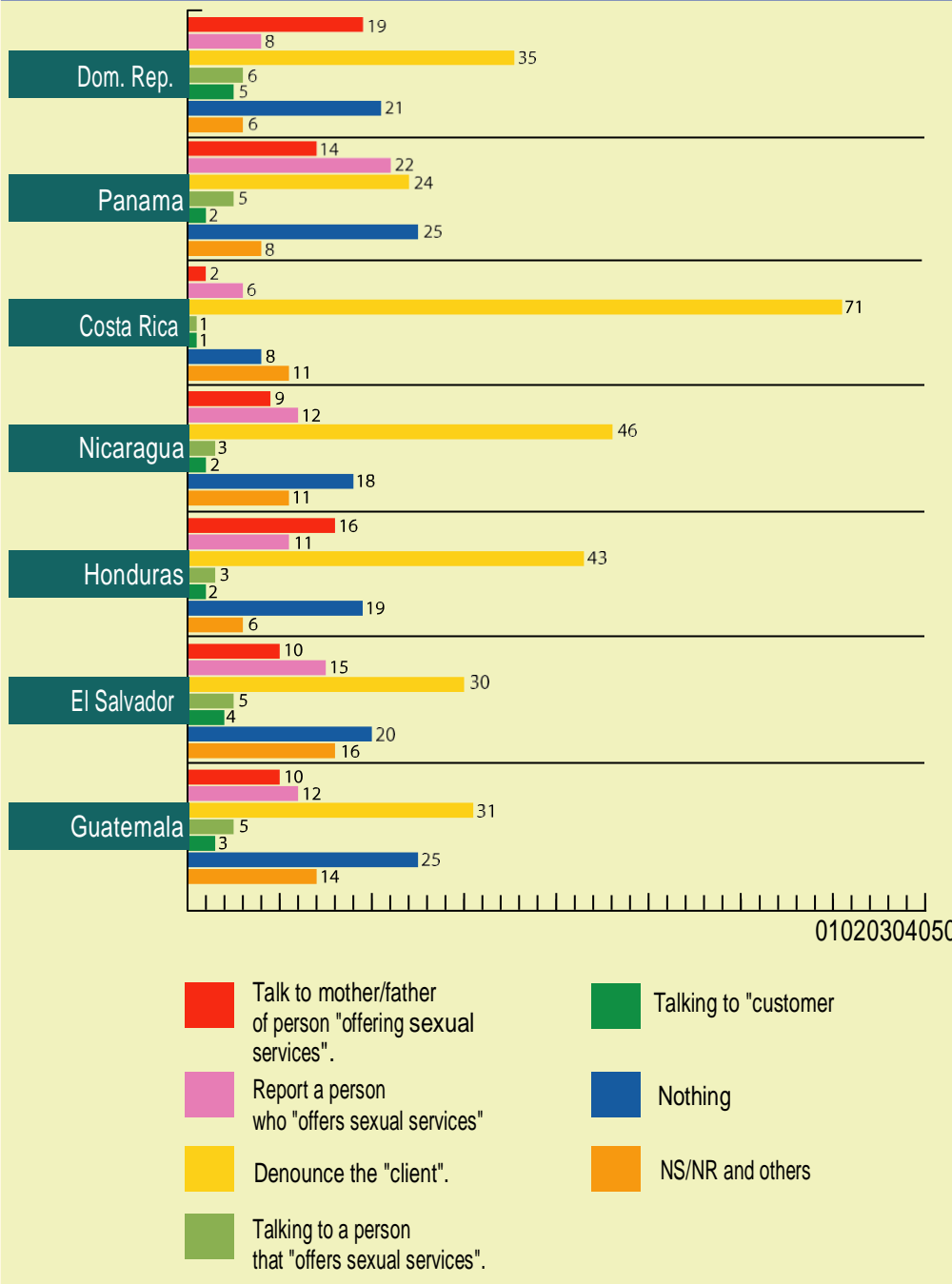
5. CRIME CONFRONTATION

Although practically the entire population recognizes that the commercial sexual exploitation of minors is a crime, one of the most important challenges is to overcome the great social tolerance of the problem, which implies moving from recognition of the crime to reporting and punishing those responsible. An example of this is the type of actions that the majority of the population expresses that they would take in the face of a case of sexual exploitation. A significant percentage of people in all countries say that they would report the person offering the "sexual services" (i.e., the victim), that they would do nothing (either because they believe it is not their problem or because they consider it a very common situation), or that they would talk to the victim's parent. In all countries, with the exception of Costa Rica (71%), the percentage of people who would report the "client" does not exceed 46%.

Población por país según lo que haría frente a un caso de explotación sexual comercial de una persona menor de edad (%)

Gráfico

5



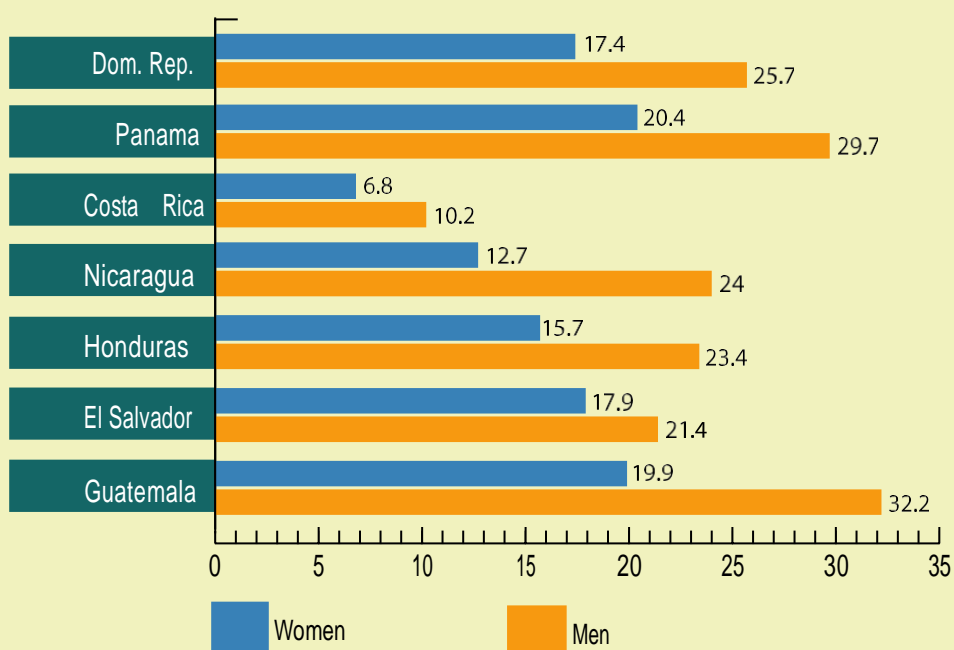
The most extreme case of this perception of the problem as a private sphere issue is Panama, where only one in 24five people 100would report the "client", compared to 22% who would report the child or adolescent who is being sexually exploited; 25% who would not do anything because they consider it is not their problem or because it is a common situation; and 14% who would talk to the victim's parents.

On the other hand, in Costa Rica, the country where a great effort has been made for the longest time to make visible the responsibility of the "clients"-exploiters, 7 out of 10 people say they would denounce the "client", although there is also a significant percentage of people who continue to hold minors responsible or consider this to be a problem that is not theirs, since it is the private sphere of the victims and their families.

Gráfico

6

Población por país que "No haría nada" frente a una situación de explotación sexual comercial, según sexo (%)



It is important to note that men and women show different behaviors in the face of the problem. In all countries, the percentage of men who said they would not do anything in the face of commercial sexual exploitation (either because it is not their problem or because it is a common situation) exceeded the percentage of women who gave the same response.

Despite this less indifferent attitude of women, it is also notable that although women have a greater tendency than men to denounce the "client"-exploiter⁹ (with the exception of Guatemala with 29.8% compared to 31.7% of men and El Salvador with 28.1% compared to 32.4%), they are also the ones who would denounce the person who "offers sexual services" (i.e., the victim), or they would talk to the victim's father or mother. This shows the need to work with women to emphasize the responsibility of the exploiters and to prevent attitudes of victimization of the most vulnerable groups (victims and their families).

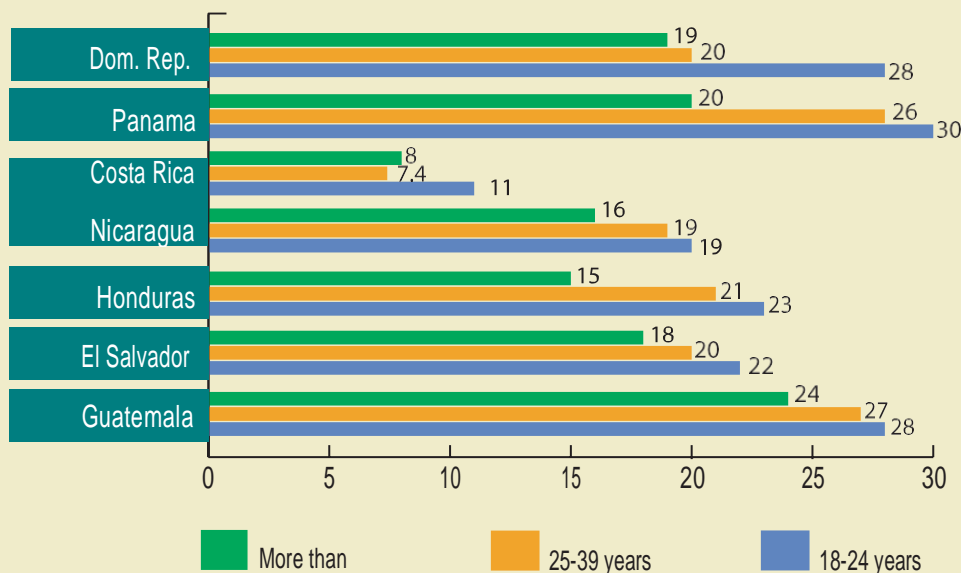
It is noteworthy that among people with higher education there is a higher tendency to report victims than among groups with lower levels of education. This situation occurs in all countries except Guatemala and Honduras, where this behavior is observed among people with primary and secondary education, respectively.

Likewise, the study reveals that younger people tend to act more indifferently, since in all countries, the percentage of the population that stated that they would not do anything in the event of commercial sexual exploitation was higher for those between the ages of 18 year²⁴ and older than for those between the ages 40 of 25 year and older than that.⁴⁰

Población por país que "No haría nada" frente a una situación de explotación sexual comercial, según rango de edad (%)

Gráfico

7



9. Honduras = 46.1% vs. 40.7% of men; Nicaragua = 48.2% vs. 44% of men; Costa Rica = 73.8% vs. 68.1% of men; Panama = 25.4% vs. 22.4% of men; and Dominican Republic = 37% vs. 33.3% of men.



No response pattern was detected that correlates age range with the actions they would take, even though it would be expected that older people, because they have more access to information, would have greater knowledge of how to act in the event of detecting a situation of commercial sex involving minors. Likewise, it would seem that socioeconomic status, educational level and place of residence do not affect the way in which people would act in the face of this problem, since the survey did not show significant differences.

By way of summary, it can be concluded:

- Although there is an important sector of the general population in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic that is aware that the commercial sexual exploitation of minors is a crime, and although the majority affirms that the "client" must be denounced, in some countries there are many responses that tend to revictimize the exploited minors and their families. In addition, indifference and omission are also characterizing the behavior of the population in the countries of the region.

6. OPINIONS ON THE CAUSES OF COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

In order to achieve effective prevention and elimination of commercial sexual exploitation of minors, it is necessary to identify the causes that trigger the problem in the collective perception. In this sense, knowing the causes that the general population identifies as the roots of the problem allows us to locate the myths and prejudices that exist around it.

Some of the causes that have traditionally been associated with the existence of the problem are related to the particular situations of the victims or their families. For the purposes of this study, these causes are referred to as endogenous causes. On the other hand, the causes linked to the conditions of the social, political, economic and cultural context surrounding the victims and their families, which in this case are mainly related to the role of the State and the sexual exploiters, are known as exogenous causes.

When people were asked about endogenous causes, in all countries, at least one third of the population believed that poverty in the families of the victims was the main cause of the problem. In both Nicaragua and Costa Rica, the percentage of people who consider poverty to be the main cause of exploitation rises to 57% and 41% respectively.

However, the fact that between a third and half of the population considers that the cause of the problem lies in the moral values of the family and the victim¹⁰, reinforces the idea that there is a great deal of prejudice and myths surrounding sexual exploitation, since these responses make invisible the situation of vulnerability and social exclusion in which the victims and their families find themselves, and reduce the problem to a moralistic and pejorative evaluation of the people at the end of the chain of exploitation.

10. Sum of the responses: Moral values of the family, Vagrancy by minors and Values of minors, gives the following results: Costa Rica = 45%, El Salvador = 32%, Guatemala = 40%, Honduras = 40%, Nicaragua = 30%, Panama = 51%, Dominican Republic = 45%.

Opinion on the endogenous causes of commercial sexual exploitation, by country (%)

Endogenous causes	Guatemala	El Salvador	Honduras	Nicaragua	Costa Rica	Panama	Dom. Rep.
Poverty of the families of underage persons	33.2	39.3	37.2	57	41.5	26.8	29.8
Lack of education of under-aged persons	15.9	14.5	20	9.2	9	14.9	22.1
Moral values of the family of minors	18.4	15.2	19.8	14.2	30.4	22.5	27.3
Moral values of the minor	13.2	10.2	6.7	7.7	5.3	11.3	4.2
Don't know / No answer	10.4	12.9	13.3	3.7	3.7	7.3	2.8

It is noteworthy that in all countries, with the exception of Guatemala, people in the youngest age range (18 to 24 years old) gave more weight to the cause "Poverty of the family of the person offering sexual services", compared to the responses of the other age ranges.¹¹

Similarly, it is important to note that in Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, a significant percentage of the population in the group with higher education responded that the main cause of commercial sexual exploitation was "the values of the family of the minor," which suggests that prejudices and stereotypes about the problem are independent of the level of education of the individuals.¹² This same tendency to assign causality to family values is slightly higher among women than among men in all countries except Nicaragua.

As for exogenous causes, between one-third and one-half of the population in all countries consider that the main reason for commercial sexual exploitation is the lack of enforcement of laws to punish those who pay for "sexual services," which emphasizes the repressive role of the State in contrast to a more preventive role. For example, the lack of promotion of policies to protect children and adolescents, and the

11. Guatemala = 26% vs. average 33%, El Salvador = 45% vs. average 39%, Honduras = 42% vs. average 37%, Nicaragua = 61% vs. 57%, Costa Rica = 55% vs. average 42%, Panama = 31% vs. average 27%, Dominican Republic = 37% vs. 30%.

12. Guatemala = 32%, Honduras = 42%, Costa Rica = 40%, Dominican Republic = 37%.

The main cause was considered by less than 28% of the population, with the exception of Honduras (40%), to be one of the most effective measures to reduce the vulnerability of victims to being trapped by exploitation networks.

Opinion on exogenous causes of commercial sexual exploitation, by country (%)

Exogenous causes	Guatemala	El Salvador	Honduras	Nicaragua	Costa Rica	Panama	Dom. Rep.
Lack of (enforcement of) laws to punish those who pay	29.3	31.2	37.1	48.2	41.5	42.3	
Persons who demand the "sexual services" of underage persons	12.4	8.8	4.2	5.9	4.1	6.5	
Lack of policies for the protection of children and adolescents	22.6	26.4	40.4	26.7	20.7	20.8	28.2
Persons who promote "sexual services" (pimps and intermediaries)	21	13.5	10.4	11	27.8	14.4	10.5
Other - Don't know / No answer	14.7	20	7.9	8.2	5.9	16	4.3

Perhaps the most worrisome aspect is the invisibility reflected in these responses of the direct responsibility of the exploiters, both the "clients" and the pimps and intermediaries. The percentage who say that the main cause is the people who promote "sexual services" ranged from 28% (Costa Rica) to 10% (Honduras), which is very low. And if we take into account the percentage who say that the main cause is the people who demand "sexual services", the figures are much lower: from 12% in Guatemala to 4% in Costa Rica and Honduras.

In general, less than one third of the population considers that the problem is caused by the exploiters, which once again highlights the great social tolerance that exists around this criminal activity and the enormous need to position the issue of "demand" as a fundamental axis of prevention, as stated in the agreements of the II World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, held in Yokohama in 2001.

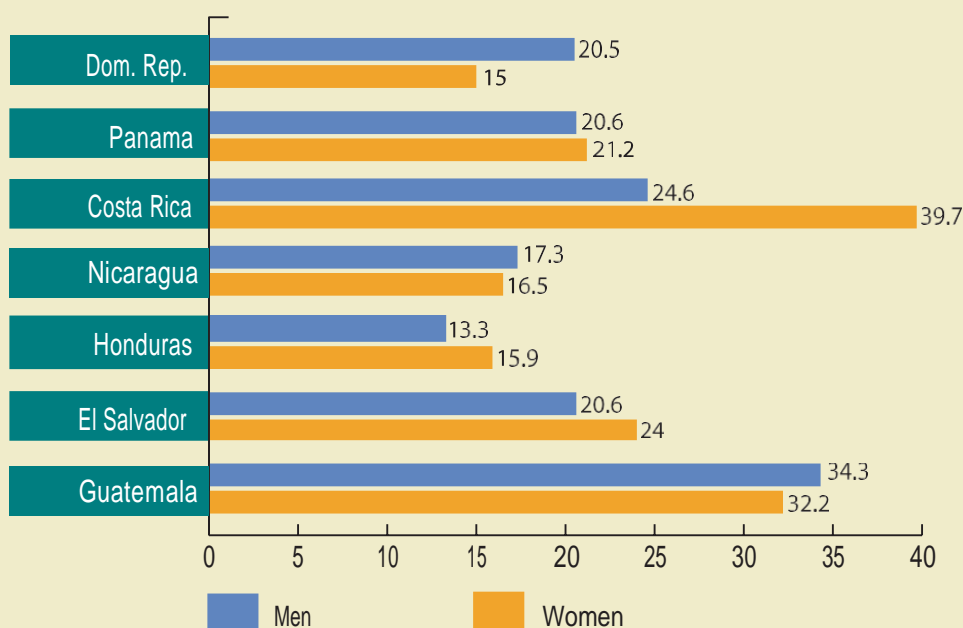
Guatemala (33%) and Costa Rica (32%) were the countries in which exploiters, whether "clients", pimps or intermediaries, were identified as the main cause, while the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Honduras had the lowest percentages, with 18%, 17% and 14%, respectively.

With respect to gender differences, in Guatemala (34.3%), Nicaragua (17.3%) and the Dominican Republic (20.5%), women showed a slightly higher tendency than men¹³ to mention that exploiters ("clients", pimps or intermediaries) were the main exogenous cause of commercial sexual exploitation, while in the other countries, men were the ones who identified exploiters as the main cause, the most notable case being Costa Rica, where 39.7% of men mentioned it, compared to 24.6% of women.

Gráfico

8

Población que opina que la principal causa exógena de la explotación sexual comercial son los explotadores, según sexo (%)



Comparing age groups, the study shows that young people between 18 and 24 years of age in Guatemala and Costa Rica are the ones who have the highest tendency to mention exploiters as the exogenous cause of the problem, with 40% and 37%, respectively. People over 40 years of age also express this same opinion in Guatemala (34%).

In terms of educational level, people with higher and middle school education in Costa Rica reflect greater visibility of exploiters as a cause of the problem with 41% and 34% respectively, as do people with primary education in Guatemala (35%).

Patriarchal and macho socialization patterns legitimize the demand for "sexual services" as a normal and even socially valued practice. Therefore

13. Guatemala = 32.5%, Nicaragua = 16.5%, Dominican Republic = 15%.

Therefore, people who use children and adolescents for commercial sex are not perceived or qualified as guilty of causing the individual and social harm that commercial sexual exploitation produces. This is evidenced in the following comparative table, which reflects the opinion of the population on the importance they assign to the different endogenous and exogenous causes.

Opinion on the main cause, when asking the respondent to prioritize between the endogenous cause and the chosen exogenous cause, by country (%)

Endogenous and exogenous causes	Guatemala	El Salvador	Honduras	Nicaragua	Costa Rica	Panama	Dominican Rep.
Poverty of the families of persons offering "sexual services".	23	27.2	21.9	39.6	27.1	20	17.8
Moral values of the family of the person offering "sexual services".	11.8	10	11.5	9	22.5	18.7	18.4
Lack of enforcement of punitive laws to the people who pay	11	12	17.4	21.9	14.6	15.5	15.1
Persons promoting "sexual services".	5.7	2.9	4	2.6	8.4	2	3.3
Lack of child and adolescent protection policies	8.3	9	15.4	8.5	5.9	5.7	7.3
Lack of education of persons offering "sexual services".	9.8	8.8	12.7	5.5	5.8	11	13.7
Vagrancy of persons offering "sexual services".	4.9	3.3	6.1	3.5	4.8	11.1	6.6
Moral values of the minor offering "sexual services".	7.8	5.5	2.9	4.4	1.7	8.1	2.2
People who demand the "sexual services"	1.7	0.9	1.2	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8
Don't know / No answer	14.7	10.6	7.3	3.7	8.4	7.3	14.8

Table 7

When people were asked to select between exogenous and endogenous causes, which they considered to be the main cause, only 1 to 3 people out of 100 mentioned that the "clients"-exploiters were the main culprits for the existence of the problem. And once again, the issue of the moral values of the victims and their families was placed above the moral values of the exploiters, revealing a double standard that stigmatizes the victims but not the victimizers.

It is worth noting that Costa Rica, Panama and the Dominican Republic were the countries where family values were most frequently mentioned as the main cause. In Costa Rica

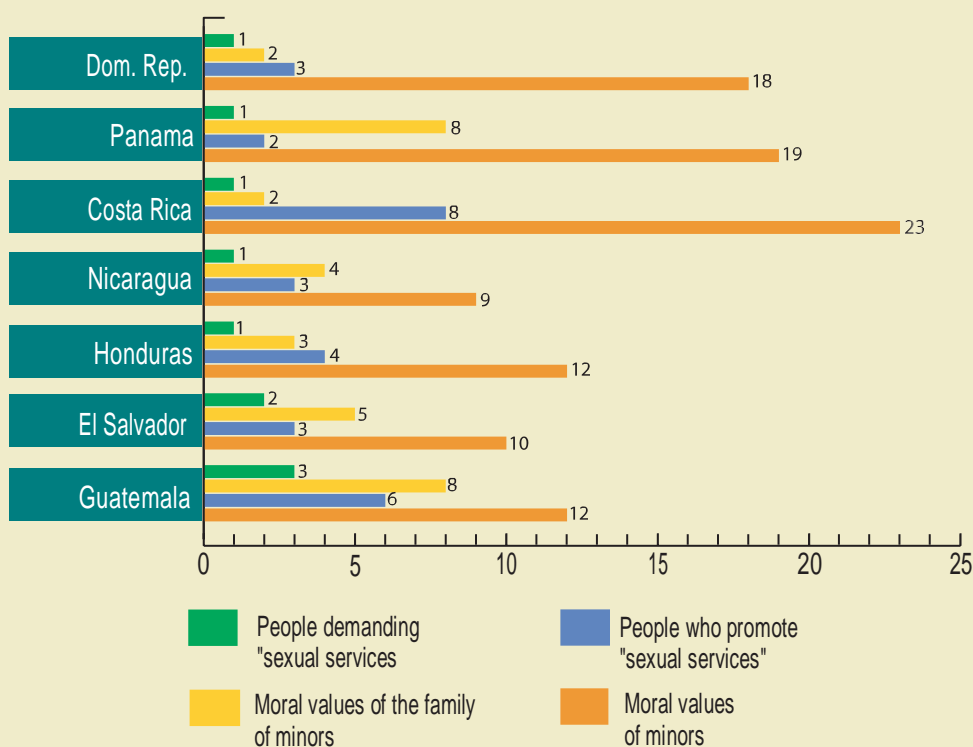
IN CENTRAL AMERICA, PANAMA AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

(8.5%) and Guatemala (5.7%) there was greater visibility of pimps and middlemen, while only in Guatemala did a significant percentage of the population mention "clients"-exploiters (3%), although this is still a minority.

Gráfico

9

Comparación entre las causas, elegidas como principales, relacionadas con la víctima y su familia y las causas, elegidas como principales, relacionadas con los explotadores, según país (%)



Women seem to give greater weight to family values as a cause of exploitation in all countries except Guatemala, but in this country, more women than men are more likely to make visible the exploiters who promote "sexual services" (6.3% compared to 5% of men).

In Panama, men (9%) and in Guatemala, both men (7.9%) and women (7.7%) are the groups that most often mention the values of exploited persons as a cause of the problem.

It is noteworthy that the higher the level of education, the greater the blame placed on the family. The most dramatic cases are observed in Honduras (32.7%), Costa Rica (33.6%) and Guatemala (19.7%) where the responses related to family values as a cause of exploitation were much higher than the national average (see Table 7: 11.5%, 22.5% and 11.8% respectively).

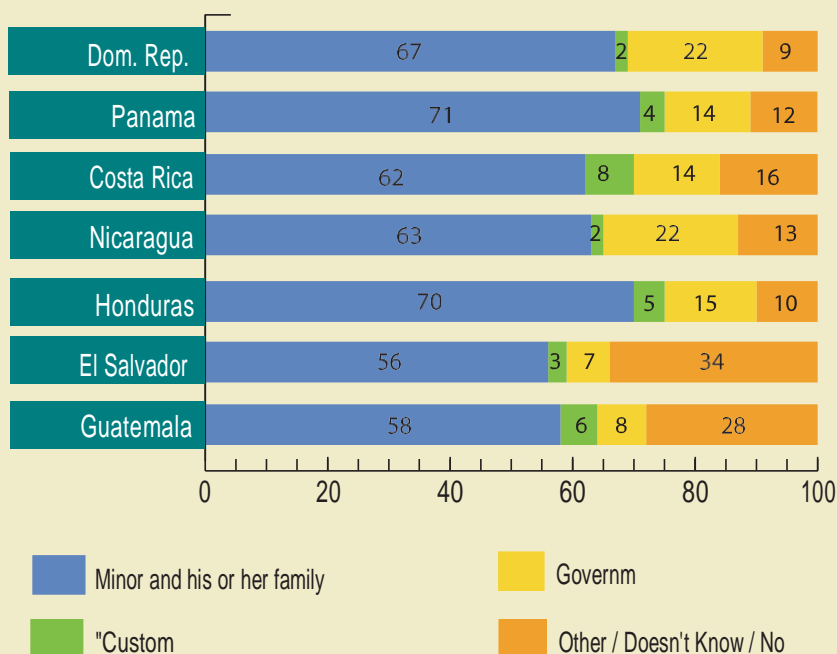
7. VIEWS ON THE MAIN ACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR STOPPING COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The study finally sought to identify on whom the general population places the responsibility for stopping the problem by asking the population, "For you, Who do you think has the primary responsibility to stop the sale and purchase of "sexual services" of persons under years 18 of age?"

The answers given are extremely disturbing in the sense that more than half of the population in all countries considers that the main perpetrators are the families (especially the mother) or the underage victim herself. This question also corroborates the invisibility of the "client"-exploiter as being responsible for the existence of the problem and the predominant view among people that the commercial sexual exploitation of minors is a private matter to be solved by the victims themselves.

Opinión sobre quién es responsable de detener la explotación sexual comercial, según país (%)

Gráfico
10



Another noteworthy fact is the role assigned to the State, whose role is generally reduced to repression (police) and, in some countries, to victim assistance through child and adolescent protection agencies.

Opinion on the person or body responsible for stopping commercial sexual exploitation, by country (%)

Responsible	Guatemala	El Salvador	Honduras	Nicaragua	Costa Rica	Panama	Dom. Rep.
Minor person	7.3	9.9	11.1	8.4	16.2	13.1	7.6
Mother	10.6	5.8	6.5	10.7	4.1	12.7	7.4
Father	6.1	4.6	6.9	7.2	3	5.7	9.6
Family	33.7	36	45.8	36.7	38.2	39.3	42.7
Customer	6.2	2.7	4.5	2.1	7.9	3.5	1.7
Child protection agency	—	—	6.5	12.6	8	5.7	11.2
Police	8	6.6	8.4	9.7	6.4	7.8	10.8
Media	3.2	1.5	2.3	1.9	2.2	3.9	4.8
Another	12.9	15.4	4.1	4.5	9.8	2.4	0
NS/NR	12	17.5	3.8	6.2	4.3	6	4

In most of the countries, women showed a slight trend over men in mentioning victims and mothers as the main responsible for stopping the problem, while in Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and the Dominican Republic, men mentioned fathers more than women. In Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, men also pointed more to the government as responsible than women in these countries.

The sector with the highest level of education was more inclined to mention families as the main culprits in stopping the problem. In all countries, with the exception of Costa Rica, the percentage of "the family" responses was higher in this group than in the less educated sectors. This is observed when comparing the response percentages of people with higher levels of education in Guatemala (43.4%), El Salvador (46.8%), Honduras (63%), Nicaragua (43.8%), Panama (42.4%) and the Dominican Republic (44.8%) with the averages shown in the table below. 8.

The age variable also seems to have a special weight in this response, since persons between 18 and 24 years of age mentioned more frequently that the responsibility for stopping the problem lay with the victims themselves, in comparison with the frequency of this mention in the other age ranges. With the exception of El Salvador, the responses of this group with respect to pointing to the victims as responsible were higher than the national average (Guatemala: 11.4%, Honduras: 17.2%, Nicaragua: 12.3%, Costa Rica: 25.6%, Panama: 16.4% and the Dominican Republic: 11.2%).

By way of summary, it can be concluded:

Stopping commercial sexual exploitation is a task for society as a whole, since it is a complex, multi-causal phenomenon that involves economic, political, social and cultural dimensions rooted in the socialization patterns of men and women, adults and minors, governmental institutions and civil society.

However, the responses given by the general population show how little sensitivity there is to the problem, since indifference and blaming the victims and their families is the tendency in a large part of the population. There is an omission or invisibilization of collective responsibility, and even of the state response stipulated in the international agreements that all states have ratified.

It would seem then that Central Americans, Panamanians and Dominicans do not visualize the preventive and protective role that the States and the community as a whole can and should play to prevent more children and adolescents from being led by organized networks of commercial sexual exploitation, and to prevent their most fundamental rights from being systematically violated.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

- There is a contrast between society's awareness of the illegality of using minors for commercial sexual activities and the very high level of social tolerance and indifference to the existence of places where this phenomenon occurs. This shows that there is a need to *promote the responsibility* of the various sectors to prevent and eliminate exploitation.
- The generalized knowledge in the population regarding the criminal nature of paying a minor has not been internalized. Therefore, there is a need to address the issue of prevention of sexual exploitation in a broader framework. To prevent the existence of a "demand" for "paid sex with minors" it is necessary to go to the root and *promote comprehensive sex education* for adults, young people and minors. It is necessary to reconstruct the image of what it means to be a man and a woman in a civilized society respectful of human rights. In other words, it is necessary to foster a culture and socialization that "does not give permission" to adults, particularly men, to pay for sex with minors, but rather that this behavior is "highly frowned upon" and that condemns the exploiter. With reference to the issue of commercial sexual exploitation and masculinity, psychologists and researchers from the Costa Rican Institute for Action, Education and Research on Masculinity, Couples and Sexuality (WEM Institute) state that "*to understand male sexuality, we must understand how masculinity is constructed and socialized. It is necessary to remember that this gender condition is constituted by a series of mandates, demands and requirements made on individual men; obviously, sexuality is not outside this scheme of life.*"¹⁴ Therefore, men need to learn that they can have a more integral sexuality, not restricted to genitalized sexuality, and that they can live as men without being pressured to resort to commercial sex, and even less so with minors.
- It is the responsibility of all institutions in society to *foster a culture of social rejection* of commercial sexual exploitation. For example, public institutions should review whether they are implementing effective and adequate sexual education policies and programs to promote comprehensive sexuality. The media should critically review the image they are projecting of women and minors to avoid presenting them as sexual objects. Other socialization institutions such as families, churches and various private organizations should analyze the discourse they are handling with respect to the issue of sexuality, in order to

14. ILO/IPEC, 2004. José Manuel Salas Calvo and Álvaro Campos Guadamuz, WEM Institute, "Explotación sexual comercial y masculinidad. A regional qualitative study with men from the general population".

to prevent the "learning" of sexuality from being monopolized by the street, movies, advertisements, pornographic magazines, etc.

- The communication campaigns that are established around the sanction should include *explicit messages regarding the* number of years of imprisonment for exploitation, since it is not enough to inform that it is a crime because most people already know this.¹⁵ It is necessary, along with the efforts of the States to punish the exploiters, to promote social control and self-control, particularly among men who are the main "clients" in the sex trade. It is necessary to activate the "warning voice" or the "internal police" of people so that they rationally connect that "crime" means "going to jail" in order to change their behavior in time.
- It is necessary to *promote communication campaigns* aimed at the adult population regarding respect for the rights of children and adolescents. In their conception of the world, adults should "live" the rights of children and adolescents and refrain from abusing and exploiting children and adolescents, not only for fear of being sanctioned, but because they really feel that using minors for commercial sexual activities is not socially acceptable behavior for a democratic, caring and respectful society.
- It should be of concern to all of society that between 14% and 31% of the population of each country mentions that they know of a place where commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents takes place. This shows that there are people and businesses involved in the generation of income based on this type of exploitation. It is worth *questioning the economic "development" model* that allows these situations that violate the human rights of minors. It is simply unacceptable that a sector of the economy benefits from an activity based on the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents at the expense of their physical and psychological integrity.
- It is essential to promote dialogue and reflection on the current treatment of people as merchandise. Children and adolescents in the sex trade are used as sexual merchandise in a business that profits from their exploitation. Furthermore, this discussion goes beyond the scope of the rights of children and adolescents, as it involves the issue of gender relations. Perhaps it is time to discuss whether sex should continue to be considered a "commodity" or a "service" since in practice this turns people, most of them women and vulnerable minors, into mere commodities of the sex industry. It is necessary to define guidelines to *improve the*

15. In the short term, it is still necessary to conduct specific campaigns on criminal legislation in El Salvador and the Dominican Republic, since particularly in these countries, a considerable percentage do not know if it is a crime or respond that "it is not a crime", despite the fact that it is a conduct explicitly penalized with at least several years of imprisonment.

demarcation of market boundaries in this field. Inter-national conventions are clear in stating that the use of minors for sexual activities should be a prohibited activity.

- It is essential to *visualize the responsibility* of various sectors (media, private sector, public institutions, socialization bodies) that, in one way or another, promote the image of women and underage girls as sexual objects and contribute to give social legitimacy to the acts of exploiters.
- In order to make progress in the prevention, care and punishment of commercial sexual exploitation, it is necessary to eliminate stereotypes related to the problem and promote understanding of its causes. The current blaming of the victims themselves and their families does not facilitate a solution to the problem. It is essential to *visualize the responsibility of the "clients"-exploiters and businesses* that profit from sexual exploitation and to develop strategies to stop the harm they cause to the victims and to society.
- To eliminate commercial sexual exploitation, it is not enough to develop effective victim care programs, nor is it enough to carry out excellent police and judicial investigations that lead to the imprisonment of sexual exploiters. Although their contribution is unquestionable, it is necessary to take action to influence the prevention of new cases. It is essential to invest more in awareness-raising and social mobilization strategies to *break social tolerance* and achieve a real and broad commitment on the part of society as a whole to defend the physical, emotional and social integrity of children and adolescents.

El presente documento analiza datos recopilados por la empresa CID-Gallup Latinoamérica a solicitud del Proyecto "Prevención y eliminación de la explotación sexual comercial de niños, niñas y adolescentes en Centroamérica, Panamá y República Dominicana" del Programa IPEC de la Oficina Internacional del Trabajo, en torno al conocimiento y percepción de las personas adultas de los países de la región acerca de la explotación sexual comercial de niños, niñas y adolescentes.

La información recopilada muestra que hay conocimiento por parte de las personas adultas acerca de lugares en los que personas menores de edad son explotadas. Expresan conocer que la explotación sexual comercial es un delito, sin embargo en la cotidianidad persiste la cultura de tolerancia y una tendencia de gran parte de la población adulta a culpabilizar a las víctimas y sus familias.

Hay una invisibilización de la responsabilidad colectiva, ya que detener la explotación sexual comercial es una tarea que compete a toda la sociedad, **parYmrllllo** **que involucra dimensiones economic, political, sodal** and cultural patterns of inequality among men and women, adults and minors, **governmental institutions and society as a whole.**

Oil considers commercial sexual exploitation as a severe violation of the human rights of minors and as a form of economic exploitation similar to slavery and forced labor that constitutes a crime by those who use and recruit children and adolescents for the sex trade, *and* recognizes the right of persons under 18 years of age to be protected *and* cared for indirectly against this form of exploitation.



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