



Generation Without Return

CHILDREN AND YOUTH FACING FORCED DISPLACEMENT BY VIOLENCE IN EL SALVADOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides evidence about the impact of forced displacement on children and young adults in El Salvador. In addition, it highlights the lack of inter-state mechanisms providing comprehensive and effective assistance and protection for children affected by displacement. Generalized violence in El Salvador leads to forced displacement, generating massive violations of human rights.

Murder rates of children and young adults are an expression of this widespread violence. According to the Institute of Legal Medicine (IML), El Salvador recorded the murders of 3,868 children between the ages of 0 and 19 from 2014 to 2017. When the murders of young adults aged 20 to 24 are added, that number rises to 7,770. Most of the people killed were between 15 and 24 years old, with young adults aged 20 to 24 especially affected.

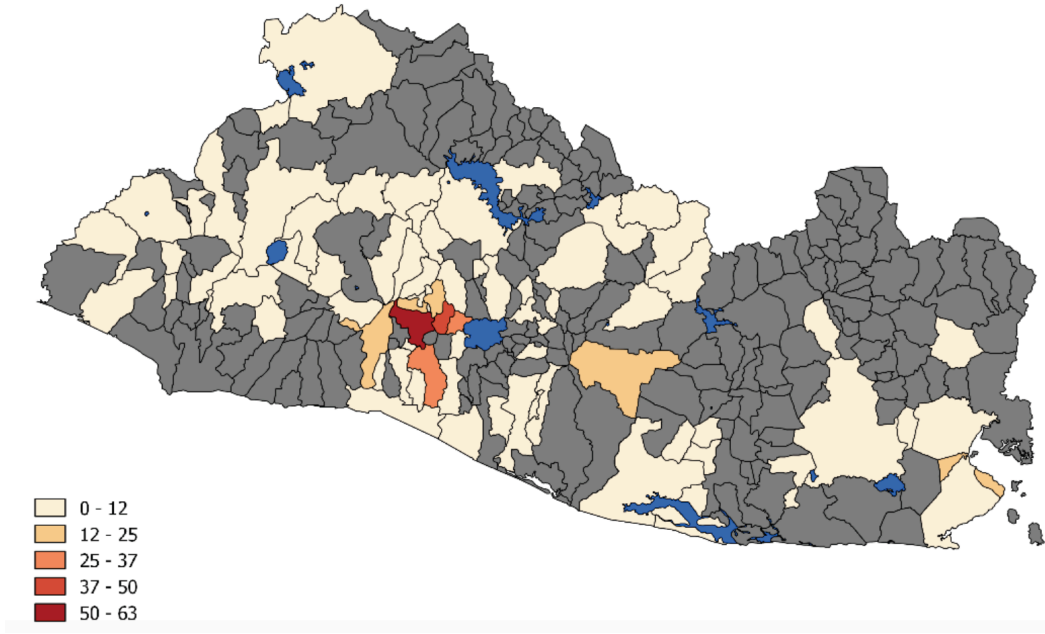
Children and young adults are also victimized by other crimes. According to National Civil Police (PNC) records, 9.1% of the injuries reported during 2017 were committed against children between 0 and 17 years— a rate of 22.7 per hundred thousand children. 71.3% of rapes and 60.2% of sexual assaults were committed against members of this same age group. These percentages rise when considering children and disabled persons together: 90.8% of rapes and 90.6% of sexual assaults were committed against children or disabled persons.

One effect of this widespread violence is a high student dropout rate. According to El Salvador's Ministry of Education, 12,221 children left school because of safety issues in 2017, representing 15.9% of students. 43.3% of those who left were girls; 56.7% were boys. 62.9% of the children who left school did so because they migrated to another country; other significant reasons for leaving include delinquency (27.6%), gang violence (5.2%), forced displacement (4.1%), and death (0.5%). While the Ministry of Education did name forced displacement as a factor in student dropouts, their displacement data does not include factors such as a "change of address" or migration.

Migration is often an alternative to living in dangerous or risky conditions. According to El Salvador's Directorate General of Migration and Foreigners (DGME), 4,762 children were deported back to El Salvador during 2016 and 2017. 30.4% said they had migrated due to insecurity, 35.9% for economic factors, 32.4% for family reunification, and 1.3% cited other reasons. The DGME does not recognize the multiple and interconnected causes of migration; for example, family reunification could be related to an act of violence.

According to Cristosal's data, 675 children and young adults were displaced by violence between January 2016 and March 2018 (251 in 2016, 360 in 2017, and 64 in the first quarter of 2018). Gender does not seem to have a significant impact on rates of victimization: 51% (342) of displaced children and young adults were male and 49% (333) were female. 41.3% of the children and young adults registered by Cristosal were

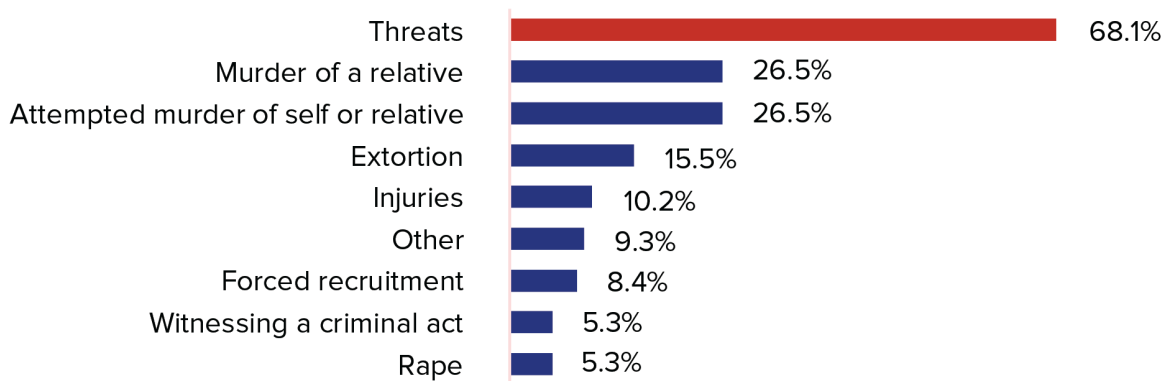
between 0 and 11 years old; 38% were between 18 and 25 years old, and 20.6% were between 12 and 17 years old. Most of the displaced children and young adults were from municipalities in the center of the country. San Salvador stands out, with 63 displaced children and youth, followed by Soyapango (49), Panchimalco (28), and Ilopango (26).



Most displaced children and young adults left municipalities in the center of the country.

Cristosal’s data indicates that 367 children and young adults, or 54.4% of those registered, were direct victims of the acts of violence that forced internal displacement. The greatest proportion of these direct victims, 44.9%, were young adults aged 18 to 25, followed by children aged 0 to 11 (35.4%) and lastly, youth aged 12-17 (19.6%).

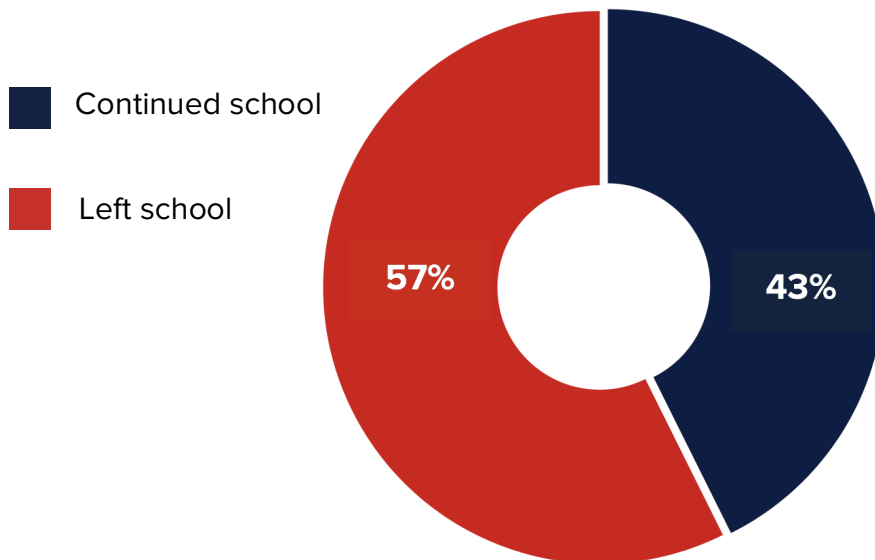
Threats were the most common act of violence, reported by 68.1% of the children and young adults registered by Cristosal. The second most common act of violence was murder or attempted murder, which affected 53% of children and young adults. 15.5% were victims of extortion, 10.2% of injuries, and 8.4% of forced gang recruitment. In regard to those perpetrating acts of violence, 96% of families with children and young adults cited gang members: 48.2% said MS-13, 41.6% Barrio 18, and 6.2% other gangs.



Top acts of violence forcing displacement in families with children or young adults.

In terms of activating the state, 54% of families with children or young adults filed official reports about the violence, but 46% did not. Reasons for not reporting include fear of reprisals (in 76% of non-reporting cases) and distrust of public institutions (21.2%). The institutions families reported to include the PNC (61.5%), the Attorney General's Office (59%), the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (24.6%), the Public Prosecutor's Office (13.1%), the Salvadoran Institute for Women's Development (2.5%), the National Council for Children and Adolescents (1.6%), and others (4.1%).

Forced displacement has socioeconomic consequences. 17.9% of displaced families (including 121 children and young adults) had a source of income before suffering violence. Of those, 51.2% lost their source of income when they were displaced. 66.4% of families saw a decrease in their monthly income, 30.9% saw no change, and 2.6% saw their income increase. In regard to school dropouts, 160 (57%) of the 279 children and young adults who had been in school before their displacement were forced to abandon their studies.



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The data indicate high social damage to this population sector. The absence of a specific public policy for the care of victims of violence in conditions of internal displacement guaranteeing the human rights of children and young people is at the core of this problem. Cristosal urges the state to consider the special risks and increased vulnerability of children, young adults, and their families, and activate state institutions to guarantee the rights of children and young adults in this extremely dangerous context.