

Guatemala leads Americas in condoning violence against unfaithful wives

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Dinorah Azpuru presenting the findings of the study in Guatemala (LAPOP/Vanderbilt)

A majority of Guatemalans believe it is understandable, and sometimes even acceptable, for women who cheat on their husbands to be subjected to violence in return, the results of a new survey indicate.

“Troublingly, 10.2 percent of Guatemalans explicitly approve of hitting a wife in cases where she has been unfaithful,” says [Dinorah Azpuru](#), author of the new [Insights study](#) (to read the study in Spanish, click [here](#)) by the [Latin American Public Opinion Project](#) (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University.

“Additionally, 47.8 percent said they would disapprove but understand. Taken together, this means that 58 percent of Guatemalans are, to some degree, willing to condone domestic violence under these circumstances.”

There was no difference between the responses of Guatemalan men and women on the issue.

“This might be surprising to those who would expect that women would have a less favorable view of this behavior given that they are the victims,” says Azpuru, associate professor of political science at Wichita State University and Guatemala team leader for LAPOP. “However, in the case of Guatemala, women and men see this issue similarly.”

The 58 percent figure puts Guatemala at the top of the list of countries in the Americas on the question. It is followed by El Salvador (42.1 percent), Guyana (35.6 percent), Mexico (34.8 percent), and Jamaica (31.1 percent). The United States ranks eighth at 26.2 percent on this indicator.

Two variables were found to influence attitudes toward unfaithful wives and violence in Guatemala. The better the perception of a family’s economic situation, the more likely a Guatemalan was to tolerate the violence against an unfaithful wife. And Guatemalans who live in rural areas and in small or medium cities are also more likely to condone violence against a wife or partner who has been unfaithful.

Factors including religion, marital status, wealth, age and education were found to have no measurable effect on the approval of

this type of behavior.

"For those who believe that education can change domestic violence norms, it is important and alarming to note that the study finds that between men and women, regardless of level of education, there are no statistically significant differences in opinion regarding violence against an unfaithful wife," Azpuru says.

LAPOP develops, implements and analyzes the AmericasBarometer public opinion surveys. Since the 1970s, LAPOP has gathered a treasure trove of public opinion data containing political perspectives from Latin American and Caribbean citizens. LAPOP data and reports are available to interested researchers at the [LAPOP website](#). LAPOP covers 28 nations including all of North, Central and South America as well as a significant number of countries in the Caribbean.

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