

# PUBLIC OPINION ON LETHAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MEXICO. A MISMATCH BETWEEN PREFERENCES AND EXPECTATIONS OF JUSTICE

*Opinión pública sobre la violencia letal contra las mujeres en México. Un desajuste entre preferencias y expectativas de justicia*

*Opinião pública sobre a violência letal contra as mulheres no México: Uma incompatibilidade entre preferências e expectativas de justiça*

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## **Keywords:**

*violence against women; impunity; public opinion; Mexico; conjoint analysis*

## **Abstract**

While structural factors help explain the supply of impunity for the murder of women in Latin America, we know less about how much citizens demand stronger responses to cases of lethal violence against women (VAW). What social norms prevail for punishing lethal VAW? What do citizens expect of the state's response? We investigate these questions in Mexico, using a conjoint experiment embedded in a national survey. We causally estimate the degree to which citizens have egalitarian or discriminatory views regarding the

deservingness of justice for homicide victims who are women (vs. men). We find that citizens prefer harsher penalties than they anticipate the state will deliver. Importantly, the public supports comparatively stronger punishment for the murder of women (vs. men) but expects high impunity. And, further, women on average expect a larger difference between their preferences and expectations than men.

**Palabras clave:**  
*violencia contra las mujeres;*  
*impunidad;*  
*opinión pública;*  
*México; análisis conjoint*

#### **Resumen**

Si bien factores estructurales ayudan a explicar la oferta de impunidad por el asesinato de mujeres en América Latina, sabemos menos sobre cuánto demandan los ciudadanos respuestas más severas a los casos de violencia letal contra las mujeres (VCM). ¿Qué normas sociales prevalecen para castigar la VCM letal? ¿Qué esperan los ciudadanos de la respuesta del Estado? Investigamos estas preguntas en México, utilizando un experimento *conjoint* incluido en una encuesta nacional. Estimamos causalmente el grado en que los ciudadanos tienen opiniones igualitarias o discriminatorias con respecto a la justiciabilidad de los homicidios de mujeres (comparados con homicidios de víctimas hombres). Encontramos que las sentencias que prefieren los ciudadanos son más severas que las que anticipan que impondrá el estado. Destaca que el público apoya castigos más fuertes por los asesinatos de mujeres (comparados con los asesinatos de hombres), pero espera una impunidad alta. Y, además, las mujeres en promedio esperan una diferencia mayor entre sus preferencias y expectativas que los hombres.

**Palavras-chave:**  
*violência contra as mulheres;*  
*impunidade;*  
*opinião pública;*  
*México; conjoint analysis*

#### **Resumo**

Embora fatores estruturais ajudem a explicar a impunidade para o assassinato de mulheres na América Latina, sabemos menos sobre o quanto os cidadãos exigem respostas mais duras aos casos de violência letal contra a mulher (VCM). Que normas sociais prevalecem para punir a VCM letal? O que os cidadãos esperam de resposta por parte do Estado? Investigamos essas questões no México, usando um *conjoint experiment* incluído em uma pesquisa nacional. Estimamos causalmente o grau em que os cidadãos têm visões igualitárias ou discriminatórias em relação ao tratamento da justiça dos homicídios de mulheres (em comparação com vítimas homens). Os resultados indicam que as penas que os cidadãos preferem são mais duras do que aquelas que eles antecipam que o Estado vai impor. É importante notar que o público apoia punições mais fortes para os assassinatos de mulheres (em comparação com os assassinatos de homens), mas espera alta impunidade. Além disso, as mulheres, em média, esperam uma diferença maior entre suas preferências e expectativas do que os homens.

## INTRODUCTION\*

Violence against women (VAW) is a silent pandemic that directly affects an estimated one in three women (WHO, 2021). In its most egregious form, VAW results in femicide.<sup>1</sup> Both VAW and femicide are fueled by systemic impunity – failure to punish aggression against women (Lagarde y de los Ríos, 2010). To decrease VAW and femicide, it is important to better understand where the locus of impunity resides: in societal norms that tolerate lethal violence against women and/or within institutions whose procedures, laws, and authorities fail to act to prevent and punish such crimes.

We consider this issue by looking at opinion towards lethal violence against women versus men victims. We focus on Mexico because it has a comparatively high and increasing rate of killings involving female victims (UNODC, 2019, 2022). Mexico also stands as an exemplar of impunity: only a scant proportion of murders with women victims are punished by the state (Angel, 2020). Mexico is located in a region, Latin America, that has the second highest region-average femicide rates (UNODC, 2019). The relevance of this issue to Mexico and the Latin American region is evident in the emergence and continuation of a women-led movement calling for action against lethal VAW under the slogan of “*Ni una menos*” (“Not one [woman] less”) (Alcoba and McGowan, 2020).

A complex net of factors contributes to systemic impunity for VAW. This includes corruption, ineffective legal frameworks, overburdened justice systems, & resistance to change (see Durán, 2020; Equis, 2019; Frías, 2013; García del Moral & Neumann, 2019; Huacuz, 2011; McWilliams & Aoláin, 2013; Meneghel *et al.*, 2011; Menjívar & Walsh, 2016; Walsh & Menjívar, 2016; Washington Valdes, 2005).<sup>2</sup> Pervasive violence is an accelerant (McWilliams & Aoláin, 2013). For example, lethal VAW in Mexico and elsewhere has increased in the context of criminal violence and crackdowns against organized crime (Atuesta & Vela, 2020; Auyero & Berti, 2015; Borde *et al.*, 2020; Hume, 2009; Wilding, 2010).

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\* The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this article do not reflect the views of the World Justice Project.

1. Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos' intrepid work put a spotlight on gender-motivated VAW, especially VAW resulting in murder. She originally intended to term the broader phenomenon “femicide” – that is, “a genocide against women” (Lagarde y de los Ríos, 2010, pp. xv-xvii). The term came to be used to describe individual cases and translated into English as “femicide.” The specific definition of femicide has changed over time as the phenomenon itself has changed, but it is commonly understood as lethal violence against women that is motivated in some way by the victim's gender (see Dawson and Carigan, 2021; Mujica and Tuesta, 2014; OHCHR / UN Women, 2015).

2. Civil society organizations in Latin America have pushed for institutional reforms, often as part of a larger push to deepen and strengthen democracy (Brysk, 2018; Paxton, Hughes, & Barnes, 2020; Weldon, 2002).

We consider another factor: norms that tolerate VAW. In theory, norms internalized by public officers, the judicial system, and citizens can stymie the system's application of laws meant to protect women from violence and punish those who transgress against those laws (Htun & Jensenius, 2020; Lagarde y de los Ríos, 2010). Yet too little is known about the scope of norms of impunity over lethal VAW. And research on sexism offers contrasting possibilities linked to the duality of hostile and benevolent sexism – the former an objectifying antipathy toward women and the latter a patronizing and protective regard for role-conforming women (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001). On the one hand, both can undergird a culture of impunity to the degree that women victims are demeaned and considered culpable for norms-transgressing behaviors (Abrams *et al.*, 2003). On the other hand, benevolent sexism may provoke a chivalrous response in which the public demands comparatively harsh sentences for men who murder women (Herzog & Oreg, 2008).

Knowing which tendency, if either, predominates can help determine where to place mitigating efforts. If the public expresses weaker demand for the punishment of murders against women, compared to murders against men, this would suggest public opinion plays a role in dynamics around impunity. If instead the public demands equal or greater justice for women victims, then impunity is not a response to public demand but, rather, an issue that must be addressed by doubling down on institutional reforms and efforts to reduce violence.

We address this topic with data from a conjoint experiment conducted via an online study in Mexico in 2020. The design permits us to estimate the degree to which citizens have egalitarian or discriminatory views regarding the deservingness of justice for women (vs. men) homicide victims. We also assess citizens' expectations of justice, meaning their views on the degree to which the judicial system will dispense justice to women (vs. men) homicide victims. We check the robustness of the results by repeating a version of the experiment in a national phone survey conducted in Mexico in February 2021.

We find a mismatch between preferences and expectations of justice: citizens tend to *expect* weak punishment –half of the minimum sentence– for homicides, but *prefer* long sentences. Concerning preferences for justice for killings of women, citizens tend to adopt a paternalistic view towards women. Average preferred sentences for women's killings are longer than those for killings involving victims who are men.

Regardless of the victim's and the respondent's gender, preferred sentences are substantially lower than expected sentences. That said, women (vs. men) perceive a larger gap between the punishment they prefer and those they expect for women's killings. While men expect judicial authorities to reflect their preferred chivalrous treatment towards women as both victims and perpetrators of intentional murders, women do not expect the justice system to provide the special

protection for women that they prefer. As a result, men more often perceive that impunity is less serious in homicides involving victims that are women.

These findings point to an important and gendered gap between public preferences and authorities' performance regarding justice for VAW. Our findings contrast with views suggesting that impunity is (partially) rooted in cultural values upheld by the general population. In addition, this work contributes to a burgeoning literature in political science that studies how subjective perceptions of extralegal factors —like race, gender, and ethnicity— affect views of crime victims' justice deservingness and of the reprehensibility of criminal offenses such as with respect to rape (Schwarz *et al.*, 2022) and terrorism (Huff & Kertzer, 2018).

## PUBLIC OPINION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADMINISTRATION

Public opinion influences criminal justice policy and outcomes (see Pickett, 2019). One pathway is via the electoral process: in systems with at least some modicum of accountability, candidates' platforms may address issues related to crime and justice and citizens may factor these and their evaluation of the criminal justice system into their electoral choices (Nicholson-Crotty, Peterson & Ramirez, 2009). Yet widely circulating norms matter even beyond election moments. Opinion shapes justice administration even with respect to how authorities deal with egregious offenses such as terrorism (Huff & Kertzer, 2018) and rape (Schwarz *et al.*, 2022).

At the same time, public opinion is shaped by policy making (Nicholson-Crotty *et al.*, 2009; Roberts *et al.*, 2002). Elites send cues through policy that alter attitudes around gender egalitarianism in the sphere of political participation (see Kittilson, 2010; Morgan & Buice, 2013). The decisions by judges and prosecutors establish the parameters of behaviors that merit punishment and those that are acceptable. Gender biases in the application of the law reinforce societal gender norms and identities (Dayan, 2020; Smart, 1989). As such, elite cues hold the potential to shape how individuals value and seek to protect the lives of women and men. In contexts where state institutions do not punish the killing of women and other VAW, they may contribute to normalizing these violations and tacitly send a message that women's lives are "expendable" (Menjívar, 2011).

This raises two questions: what norms prevail in the public regarding the extent to which murders perpetrated against women (vs. men) ought to be punished and what expectations do citizens have of the state's likelihood of enacting a strong punishment? Scholars have shown that extralegal factors (gender, race, and the nature of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator) shape preferences over sentencing decisions in the United States (e. g., Nooruddin, 2007). And scholars examining the U.S. also have shown that factors such as

the victim's gender and race shape opinion on severity of punishment warranted for rape (Schwarz *et al.*, 2022). We build on this research and turn our eyes to a different setting: Mexico –a country that, compared to the U.S., ranks higher in tolerance for gender-based violence (GBV) and lower on gender development (Pak, 2016; UNDP, 2021). Further, we focus specifically on an issue that is of particular concern in the Latin American region and Mexico in particular: justice for homicides.

## GENDER AND VIEWS ON JUSTICE

We focus on gender egalitarianism as expressed in public preferences for justice, as well as expected state actions. Our principal question is whether the public advocates for more or less punishment for perpetrators of murders of women (vs. men), in general and conditional on whether the respondent is a woman or a man. Answering this question provides insight into dynamics around VAW, including femicides—the most egregious expression of VAW. While not all female killings are femicides, justice for femicides has as a necessary condition that there is justice for homicides involving women victims, which allows the investigation and coding of the latter as potential femicides. In contrast, if citizens are biased against taking women's deaths seriously, lower demand of justice for women could thwart efforts to address femicides.

In order to consider lethal acts of violence against women (vs. men) in broad terms, we do not consider reactions to cases labeled “femicide” and we do not focus specifically on markers that might make lethal VAW particularly identifiable as femicide (e.g., an outcome of escalating intimate partner violence or an explicit honor killing).<sup>3</sup> The definition of femicide has changed over time, with the most encompassing interpretations considering any markers that “signal the existence of broader patriarchal systems of oppressing women.” (OHCHR / UN Women, 2015, p. 13). We also do not consider whether individuals would label the scenario as a femicide. We do, however, provide a circumstantial factor that presents the victim in an unfavorable light and that could be viewed as a justification. News stories (see Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013; Fuentes, 2020; Mahadeen, 2017; Spies, 2020) often editorialize killings of women by referring to perpetrators' attempts to justify these killings and by focusing on how victims might have challenged traditional norms (Toledo & Lagos, 2014; Wright, 2011).

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3. Research suggests that the markers of femicide include a wide range of conditions related to the gendered power imbalance between victim and perpetrator (see Dawson & Carrigan, 2021; OHCHR / UN Women, 2015).

We consider both preferences over punishment and expectations for punishment. For the latter, in general we anticipate the public to expect leniency in the punishment of crime or, in other words, for expected punishment to be less severe than preferred punishment (Roberts *et al.*, 2002). We begin without *a priori* expectations regarding gendered differences in expectations for punishment.

We do theorize over how gender may condition preferences over punishment, though we identify countervailing arguments. Specifically, we consider two distinct cognitive frameworks or schemas that individuals may use in defining their preferences regarding this topic. On the one hand, there is reason to theorize that the public will be more tolerant of VAW, one expression of which could be advocating for comparatively less punishment when women (vs. men) are murder victims. On the other hand, there is an argument to be made for citizens' chivalrous or paternalistic tendencies affecting preferences regarding justice, such that the public prefers more punishment when women (vs. men) are killed. We summarize expectations derived from these cognitive frameworks in Table 1 and, in the text that follows, we provide rationale for each.

**Table 1. Gender Traditional Norms and Justice Deservingness Preferences<sup>4</sup>**

Circumstantial Factor	Cognitive Framework	
	Normalization of VAW	Chivalry / Paternalism
Victim is a Woman (vs. Man)	H1: Shorter Sentence	H2: Longer Sentence
Perpetrator is a Man (vs. Woman)	H1a: Shorter Sentence	H2a: Longer Sentence
Respondent is a Man (vs. Woman)	H1b: Shorter Sentence	H2b: Longer Sentence

Source: Own elaboration

The first cognitive framework involves a normalization of VAW that could result in lower stated preferences for punishment. In theory, two complementary mechanisms reinforce this type of framework. The first is that traditional gender norms may lead to lower sympathy for women victims (Pavlou & Knowles, 2001).

4. We preregistered Hypotheses 1 and 1b at Open Science Framework prior to the collection of the data for the conjoint design and prior to the collection of a follow-up phone survey (Barba and Zechmeister, 2020; Barba, Lupu and Zechmeister, 2021; also see Appendix 5). The latter document also pre-registered Hypothesis 2 prior to the phone survey. We also pre-registered expectations for how gender norms would condition the treatment; we do not explore that topic here. Finally, we pre-registered a variant of Hypotheses 1a and 2a, which considered cases in which the victim was a woman. However, due to concern about statistical power, we test for the effect of the perpetrator's gender without regard to the gender of the victim.

The second is based in the notion that women victims are more likely to be perceived as causing violence perpetrated against them than men victims (Schneider *et al.*, 1994).

A tendency to express less sympathy for certain female victims can be rooted in the application of stricter social norms for women; this can lead to situations in which (perceived or real) deviance from norms mitigates against the public's view of women as victims (Carey & Torres, 2010). Scholars distinguish between hostile sexism –objectifying antipathy toward women– and benevolent sexism –patronizing and protective inclinations towards women who adhere to role stereotypes (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001). Despite their differences, both may contribute to a culture of impunity by devaluing and failing to protect women who are perceived to transgress norms (Abrams *et al.*, 2003). Studies of sexual violence and intimate partner violence (IPV) find that those adhering to traditional gender norms tend to fault women victims when they have disrespected or cheated on a perpetrator (Taylor and Sorenson, 2005). At the same time, an argumentative line separate from the ambivalent sexism framework holds that VAW is condoned or normalized regardless of whether women victims adhere to gender stereotypes, with individuals finding fault with women victims of assault and sexual violence for displaying attributes traditionally perceived as feminine (carelessness, passivity, and excessive confidence on others) (Howard, 1984; White & Kurpius, 2002).

A subordinate value placed on women's lives may also affect how perpetrators of women's killings are treated. Some studies in criminology expect the justice system to treat male offenders who victimize women with more leniency than those who victimize men (Belknap, 2001; Franklin & Fearn, 2008). Analyses of the Latin American context have shown qualitatively that such biases against women and the normalization of violence can extend to public views of lethal VAW (Carey & Torres, 2010; Menjivar, 2011). Related, the media often normalizes homicidal VAW as reports editorialize the coverage of female killings (Fuentes, 2020; Wright, 2011).

Such dynamics are common in Mexico, where normalization of GBV is common (Htun & Jensenius, 2020). Despite progressive reforms and institutional mechanisms to address VAW in Mexico, there prevail biases in the justice system that discriminate against women victims and make them less likely to access their right to due process (Durán, 2020; Saucedo & Huacuz, 2011). The pervasiveness of this type of gender bias may lead the public to tolerate impunity, or lower levels of punishment, for murders of women compared to murders of men. This line of discussion supports the following hypothesis:

H1. Mean preferred punishment ratings will be lower for killings involving women (vs. men) as victims.



Similarly, if VAW is excused based on the victims' behavior and normalized, we may anticipate that citizens expect the state to impose shorter sentences for women's killings. Thus, we also assess whether mean expected punishment ratings are lower for women vs. men victims.

If a normalization of GBV undergirds public views on punishment for homicides, we ought to be most likely to observe that outcome when the perpetrator is a man. In the Mexican context, violence perpetrated by men against women may be perceived as legitimate when men use it to "discipline" women who fail to fulfill their obligations according to traditional gender norms or when men need to "defend" their power and assumed superiority status (Contreras, 2008; see also Glick & Fiske, 1996). In addition, scholarship on mitigating factors and victim-blaming frequently applies those ideas to dyads with men-as-perpetrators and women-as-victims. There is reason, then, to expect men perpetrators of killings of women to be treated with comparative leniency. Yet, even more generally, scholarship suggests that violence perpetrated by men is relatively more acceptable, as men are conceived as stereotypically more prone to agency and social dominance (Contreras, 2008; see also Glick & Fiske, 1996). Related, when women are the perpetrators, they are more strongly deviating from social norms that expect them to be less aggressive. Along these lines, scholars have found that women who commit violent crimes are perceived to transgress the existing gender hierarchies, and thus can receive harsher or equal treatment than men (see Chesney-Lind, 1977; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2006; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Nooruddin, 2007).

We apply this line of discussion to the public's preferences over the appropriate punishment for a murder. We express the hypothesis as follows:

H1a. Mean punishment ratings will be lower for killings perpetrated by a man (vs. a woman).

Similar norms may shape individuals' expectations of state-administered punishment. Therefore, we also consider whether individuals expect less (or more) punishment by the state for punish men vs. women as perpetrators.

Finally, we consider whether the gender of the person passing judgment (in this case, the respondent) affects punitive attitudes. Previous literature finds women less likely than men to support punitive measures, which might reflect women prioritizing moral considerations (Ramos & Nincic, 2011) as well as gender socialization (Boots & Cochran, 2011). Yet, we may expect the inverse when considering gendered relations between victims and perpetrators of lethal VAW given that men are more likely to uphold traditional gender norms (Yu and Lee, 2013) and to excuse VAW (for a review, see Flood & Pease, 2009). Such a pattern is

found in the Latin American context (Pak, 2016). That could translate to comparatively more tolerance by men of women's killings. We thus test this hypothesis:

H1b. Men (vs. women) will assign lower punishment ratings for killings involving women as victims.

While there are ample reasons to theorize the above hypotheses, a rival cognitive framework yields a different set of expectations. This second framework is based in the notion that there exists a form of paternalism or chivalry, or the generalization of women as having a less violent and blameworthy character (Baumer *et al.*, 2000; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2006; Glaeser and Sacerdote, 2000; Glick and Fiske, 1996, 2001). Patriarchal chivalrous tendencies may exist in both the public and authorities, and thus motivate a protective and punitive response to murders in which women are the victim. Under this view, society rejects VAW as women are less able to defend themselves (Baumer *et al.*, 2000; Hodell *et al.*, 2014). In contrast, compared to women, men victims may be perceived as more blameworthy since their crime incidence is higher and they are perceived as more able to cause harm (Baumer, *et al.*, 2000; Ragatz & Russell, 2010). Further, in contexts with high levels of homicidal VAW, the public may want to compensate as a reaction to this violence and, as such, may want to provide relatively more protection to women victims. Hence, there are reasons to consider that the public may be more punitive in their attitudes around killings of women compared to murders involving men as victims. This provides justification for asserting a rival hypothesis to H1:

H2 (Rival to H1). Mean punishment ratings will be higher for killings involving women (vs. men) as victims.

With regards to the gender of the perpetrator, the paternalism or chivalry thesis suggests that society acts to protect women criminals from detection and prosecution (Pollack, 1950). Some research posits that women perpetrating certain crimes are considered to be fickle, childlike, and not fully responsible for their acts (Anderson, 1976). More broadly, women perpetrators may be perceived to be more likely to act in self-defense (Cramer, 1999) and to play fundamental roles in their families, which are disrupted by incarceration (Daly, 1989). This provides reason to consider that women (vs. men) perpetrators in these scenarios may be viewed as less culpable and comparatively less deserving of punishment. As a result, we test this rival hypothesis:

H2a. (Rival to H1a). Mean punishment ratings will be higher for killings perpetrated by a man (vs. a woman).

Similarly, gender roles consistent with a paternalistic schema could also influence preferences for justice deservingness. Men are consistently found to favor retributive measures more than women, which reflects men's socialization into valuing order and acting on that basis by holding individuals accountable for their actions (Boots & Cochran, 2011). Correspondingly, studies find that women are more prone to support rehabilitation and less likely to support harsher punishment (Applegate *et al.*, 2002; Blumstein & Cohen, 1980; Ramos and Nincic, 2011), regardless of threat perceptions (Boots & Cochran, 2011; Lizotte, 2016). Thus, we also assess this hypothesis:

H2b (Rival to H1b). Men (vs. women) will assign higher punishment ratings for killings involving women as victims.

A chivalrous view would imply larger moral outrage for the killings of women. As such, we may also anticipate a pattern consistent with views of punitive populism (Roberts *et al.*, 2002), where preferred punishment is more severe than the outcomes people expect from authorities.

In addition to the above expectations, we recognize that the circumstances under which violence occurs may affect opinion about victims' deservingness of justice. Reason and passion play key roles in considerations of culpability and justice deservingness (Warrick, 2011). Stereotypes about the role of the victim in providing a motivation for violence matter for the degree to which society blames perpetrators. Along these lines, victims who appear to have provoked the perpetrator's loss of control in a way that triggers moralized rage may be seen as deserving less justice for a violation (Dawson & Sutton, 2017). We take these factors into consideration in our design and analyses.

## CASE SELECTION

To test these hypotheses, we examine public opinion dynamics in contemporary Mexico. We select this case for four reasons. First, Mexico has a comparatively high and increasing rate of killings involving female victims (UNODC, 2019, 2022). Second, Mexico has high levels of impunity for murders with women as victims. Between 2015 and 2018, only 3 percent of murders of women resulted in sentences, versus 11 percent of all homicide cases. Third, the case of Mexico may provide insights into region-relevant dynamics: Latin America has the second highest region-average femicide rates (UNODC, 2019). Regional figures indicate that more than 90 percent of femicides go unpunished (Htun and Jensenius, 2020; see also Brysk, 2018; García del Moral and Neumann, 2019; Menjívar & Walsh, 2016). Fourth, Mexico —along with other countries in

the region— has been the focus of significant grassroots efforts to eliminate femicide. Women in Mexico and across Latin America have created a movement whose slogan is “*Ni una menos*” (“Not one [woman] less”) to demand action to address lethal VAW (Alcoba & McGowan, 2020; López, 2020).

## METHODOLOGY AND DATA

We use a conjoint analysis to study, on the one hand, the multidimensional factors that may guide the public’s preferences for punishing killings, and, on the other hand, respondents’ characteristics. This allows us to simultaneously identify the causal effect of several distinct characteristics surrounding a crime and to test the hypotheses posed above (Hainmueller *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, this approach minimizes social desirability bias: respondents are presented with several factors that may justify their rating, which makes it less likely that they refrain from revealing a true preference stemming from a particular attribute that is not viewed favorably by others (Hainmueller *et al.*, 2014). We use linear regression and correct standard errors for within respondent clustering, a standard statistical method to analyze conjoint experiments. We then estimate, holding other attributes constant, the overall effect of a particular attribute, or its average marginal component effect (AMCE), averaged over the joint distribution of the remaining attributes.

In the principal conjoint study, individuals are provided with three scenarios (or tasks) in which a victim is stabbed to death. The set-up for each scenario is the same. The discretely valued attributes around the scenario vary as follows (and see text box). First, in attribute A, the victim of the stabbing is randomly assigned to be either a man or a woman; this allows us to evaluate H1 and H2. Second, in attribute B, the perpetrator of the stabbing is randomly assigned to be either a man or a woman; this allows us to assess H1a and H2a. Third, we consider the average marginal component effect of attribute A conditional on the gender of the respondent, which allows us to evaluate H1b and H2b. The last two discrete attributes (C and D) are randomly assigned to take into account circumstances of the killing that may affect respondents’ preferences and expectations of justice: i) the event provoking the stabbing is randomly assigned to be a lie, a situation in which the perpetrator is ridiculed, or a robbery; and ii) the event provoking the stabbing is randomly described as occurring with no one around or in front of the perpetrator’s friends.

### Textbox 1. Online Experiment Design

**TEXT.** [A(1) A young man / (2) A young woman] found out that [B (1) a young man / (2) a young woman] [C (1) lied to them / (2) ridiculed them / (3) robbed them].

[D (1) No one else was aware of what happened / (2) The person who was [If C = 1 then lied to / If C = 2 then ridiculed / If C = 3 then robbed] was shamed in front of their friends]

Right when this happened, in a rage attack, [if A = 1 then “the man”/ If A = 2 then “the woman”] fatally stabbed the person who had [if C = 1 then “lied to them” / if C = 2 then “ridiculed them”/ if C = 3 then “robbed them”].)

Source: Own elaboration

We use a rating-based conjoint design, where the main dependent variable is the question that follows immediately after the description of the scenario on justice preferences: In your opinion, in years of prison time, what is the appropriate punishment for this stabbing? The dependent variable ranges from zero to fifty. Fifty years is the maximum sentence for homicide in most Mexican states.<sup>5</sup> A second question follows this one and asks about expected preferences: how many years of punishment the stabbing is likely to actually receive. Responses to this question allow us to describe opinion dynamics around impunity and justice. The survey also records the gender of the respondent.

Our core dataset is from a survey conducted via the internet (programmed in Qualtrics) with a sample of 2,000 Mexican adults drawn from an opt-in panel managed by Netquest. Data collection ran from October 14 to October 23, 2020. Netquest uses a quota-based approach to draw as close to a representative sample as possible from its proprietary panel. We include an adjustment survey weight variable to increase the age, gender, education, and geographic representativeness of the survey. The weighted sample approximates the population on gender and age.<sup>6</sup> As expected for online studies in the Latin American region, even the weighted sample is skewed toward those who are more educated and wealthier (Castorena *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, to assess the robustness of the results with a more representative survey, we conducted a follow-up phone survey experiment from January 27 to February 22, 2021. The phone survey was conducted on a sample of 1,000 Mexican adults by Data-OPM using a random-digit dial (RDD)

5. The corresponding federal maximum sentence is 60 years.

6. As an exception, the oldest population group is underrepresented in the weighted online sample. We include robustness checks for relevant socioeconomic characteristics in Appendix 2.

approach.<sup>7</sup> A version of our instrument was included alongside other modules in an omnibus academic study organized by the firm.<sup>8</sup> This study succeeded in achieving a sample that is more reflective of the broader population: according to data from 2019, 60 percent of the Mexican population has an educational level below 10<sup>th</sup> grade (OECD, 2019) and, in the weighted phone survey data, this figure is 53.7 percent (versus 36.6 percent for the weighted online study). The design of the phone survey varied slightly: we included one scenario describing a stabbing very similar to the online survey. In this scenario, the varying attributes are only the gender of the victim and the gender of the perpetrator (randomly assigned to be either a woman or a man). In turn, we fix the third and fourth attributes to describe a person who has been ridiculed in front of their friends, and in a fit of rage that ridiculed person murders the person who ridiculed them. See Appendix 2 for more details on both surveys.

## FINDINGS

Looking at views on punishment for homicides overall, we find that citizens on average expect authorities to underperform in the dispensing of justice. The average expected sentence is not only half of the legal minimum sentence for aggravated homicide, it is also ten years shorter than the average sentence respondents prefer. Concerning our hypotheses, we find citizens tend to adopt a paternalistic view in their preferences regarding the punishment of women's murders. We also find a noteworthy mismatch between the preferences and the expectations of women citizens. While men perceive that the state acts in congruence with their chivalrous expectations, women perceive that the judicial authorities' responses equally permit impunity for men and women victims.

### *Preferences vs. Expectations of Justice*

First, we observe a tendency to prefer punitive measures and yet to expect impunity for homicides (see Figure 1). The average preferred sentence, while not

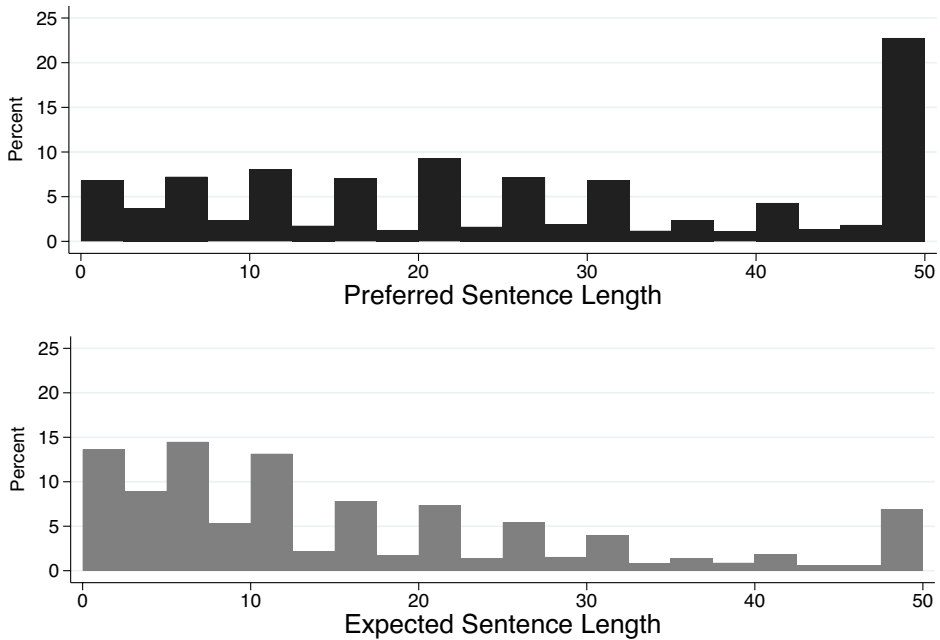
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7. The sampling design relied on a dual frame including lists of both cell phone and landline numbers provided by Mexican telecom authorities. 93 percent of the population has a landline or a cell phone.

8. The measurement of the dependent variable (preferred and expected sentence) in the phone survey has a relatively high missingness: 20.8 percent of respondents failed to express a preferred sentence and 17.2 percent did not reveal the sentence they expected authorities to impose, which compares to around 1 percent missingness in the online survey measurements. The patterns of missingness are not robustly correlated with the variables of interest in either case. However, those who fail to respond are significantly more likely to be less educated. See Table 3 and 4 in Appendix 2.

taking any of the conjoint experiment attributes into account, is 27 years (SD = 17). Meanwhile, on average the expected actual sentence is 15 years (SD = 14), with a median of ten years.<sup>9</sup> Thirty two percent of respondents prefer a sentence of forty years or longer, while 62.4 percent expect a sentence of fifteen years or shorter. More descriptive statistics are reported in Tables 1 and 2 of Appendix 3.

**Figure 1. Distribution of the Dependent Variable (Weighted).**



Note: The figure at the top plots the frequency distributions of the preferred sentences for homicides, and the figure at the bottom plots the frequency distributions of the expected sentences for homicides. Both are based on an online survey with a sample of 2,000 Mexican adults drawn from an opt-in panel in 2020. Both variables are measured after the vignette text of the conjoint experiment (see text for wording) The preferred sentences for homicides presented at the top are measured by asking, “In your opinion, in years of prison time, what is the appropriate punishment for this stabbing?” The plot at the bottom is based on answers to the question: “And how long do you think the sentence for this stabbing will actually be?” Response options were provided to respondents on a sliding scale from 0 to 50.

Source: Own elaboration

9. The phone survey results show a similar pattern: the average preferred sentence is 28 (SD = 18) with a median of 25 years, while the mean expected sentence is 19 (SD = 16), with a median of 15 years.

## Hypothesis Tests

The first column of graphs in Figure 2 summarizes the findings resulting from our analysis of Hypothesis (H) 1 and H1a and their rivals, H2 and H2a. In short, we find support for H2 and H2a. Killings involving women (vs. men) victims receive higher average preferred sentences (as stated in H2), and the public prefers longer sentences for homicides perpetrated by men (vs. women) (as in H2a). Specifically, average preferred sentences are roughly four years longer for stabbings involving women victims and for those involving men as perpetrators. These findings reveal that, concerning justice for lethal VAW, society at large operates under a paternalistic cognitive framework and/or one marked by a patronizing bent found within benevolent sexism. We do not find support for H1 and H1a (see plots A-D in Figure 2). Further, panels A and B within Figure 3 show that these results are consistent across survey mode –online and phone.<sup>10,11</sup>

We next test the conditioning effects of respondent gender on preferred punishment levels, as stated H1b and H2b. We do not support for either H1b or H2b. The results presented in Figure 2 (A-D) and in Figure 1 in Appendix 3 show that there are no significant differences in the average preferred punishment ratings of men and women respondents.

We now turn to an exploratory look at expected (as opposed to preferred) punishment ratings. By comparing Plots A-D to Plots E-H in Figure 2, we see that citizens expect the state to impose sentences that are on average shorter than they prefer. That said, the public on average perceives that the state's response will match their paternalistic preferences: the average individual expects authorities to make a distinction in favor of women victims and women perpetrators. For the pooled sample analyzed in Figure 2, respondents expect longer sentences for killings involving women (vs. men) victims and shorter sentences for those involving women perpetrators (see Plots E-H in Figure 2). Specifically, citizens expect the judicial system to impose sentences around one year longer for homicides involving women victims and for those in which the perpetrator is a man. These results are generally consistent results across survey mode: although in the phone survey the AMCE for women victimization is not statistically significant,

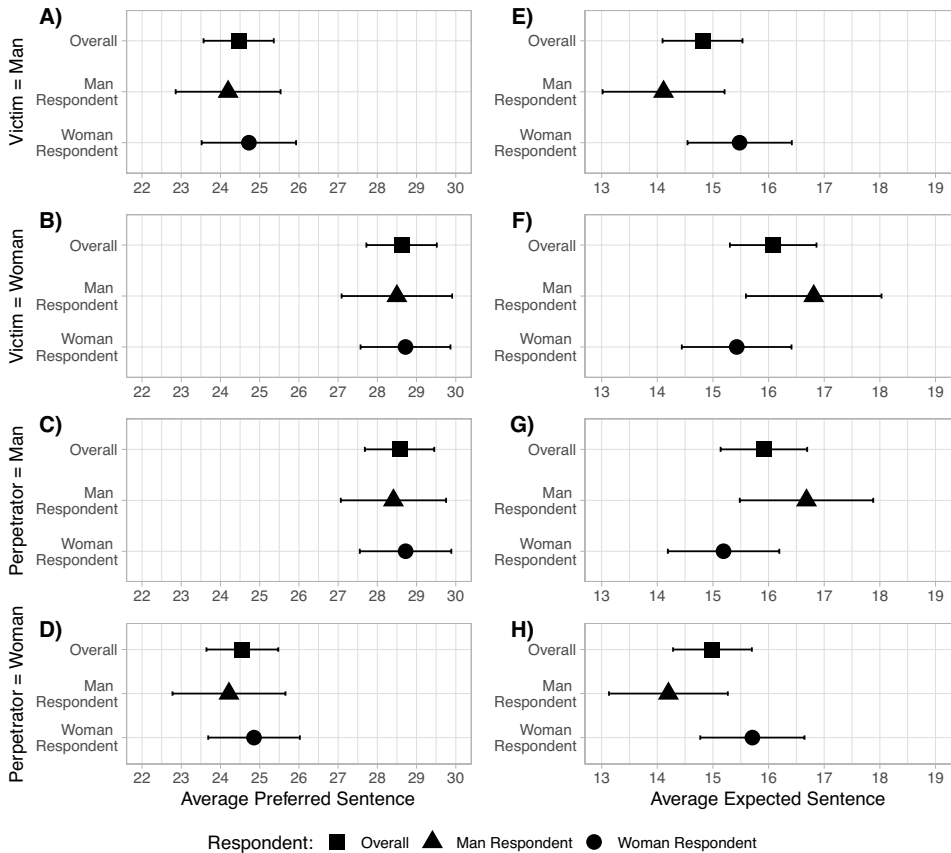
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10. Figure 3 reveals an additional noteworthy result in the findings: respondents prefer lower sanctions for perpetrators who were robbed –as opposed to those who were lied to or ridiculed– such that the latter honor-based defense is not a comparatively more attenuating circumstance.

11. We find that carryover effects from one task to the next in the conjoint analysis are not a significant concern. We present the results of the diagnostic tests for conjoint experiments in Appendix 4.



**Figure 2. Summary of Findings**



Note: The figure shows the average preferred and expected sentences for homicide. Square-shaped estimates depict averages for the overall population, triangle-shaped estimates symbolize averages for men respondents, and circle-shaped estimates for women respondents. Average preferred and expected sentences are based on the online survey questions described in Figure 1 (as well as in the Methodology section and the Appendix 1). The respondent's gender is measured by asking, "For statistical purposes, could you please indicate your gender?" Response options were Man, Woman, and Other. "Other" is excluded from this analysis due to statistical power considerations.

Source: Own elaboration

the direction of the coefficient is positive and the AMCE of man as perpetrator reflects a paternalistic tendency<sup>12</sup> (see Figure 3, panels C and D).

Turning to the potential conditioning effect of respondent gender, we find that both women and men expect authorities to impose sentences for the killings of women that are shorter than they prefer (see panels B and F in Figure 2). Nevertheless, we find gendered differences in the sentences men and women anticipate will be imposed by the justice system: in analyses that consider the conditional effect of respondent gender (see results in panels C and D in Appendix 3 Figure 1), we find that men expect sentences around three years longer for stabbings involving women victims (although for the phone survey, this result tends in this direction but is not significant). That is, men prefer *and* often expect authorities to impose significantly longer sentences for stabbings involving women victims than for those involving men victims (see the triangle-shaped estimates in Figure 2). At the same time, men expect justice for women killings to still be insufficient with respect to their preferred punishment ratings. By contrast, women expect authorities to treat women victims with the same impunity that they treat men victims (see the circle-shaped estimates in Figure 2). Considering that women respondents *prefer* larger punishment ratings for women killings, this implies that women would prefer a chivalrous justice system but do not expect this to be reflected in actual sentencing, which they expect will be the minimum on average.

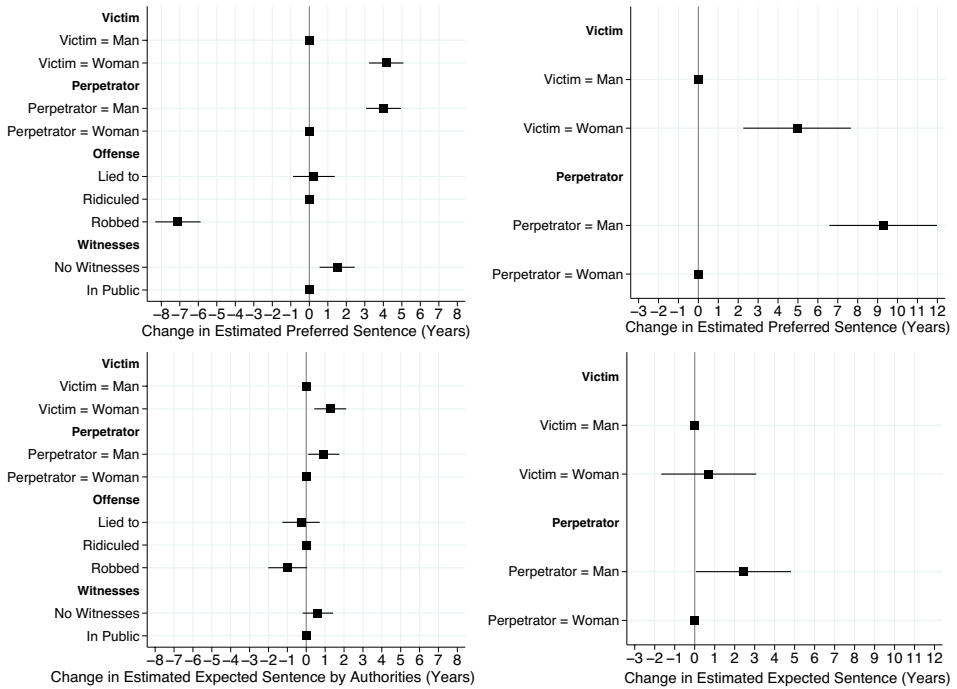
## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study adds to our understanding of the factors contributing to high impunity rates for killings of women, impunity that fails to mitigate against femicide. Recognizing that structural factors help explain the supply of impunity for the murder of women in Latin America, we turn attention to public demand for punishment of lethal violence against women (VAW). We focus on preferences and expectations for punishment of lethal VAW, without labeling the murder as femicide, because justice for lethal VAW is a critical precursor to justice for femicide and because the definition of femicide varies across individuals and places. We focus our study on Mexico, where murder rates of women and impunity levels for those acts are especially high, where citizens hold relatively more traditional gender norms than they do in other settings where gendered attitudes towards justice have been studied, and where a movement to eliminate femicide has attracted the attention of policymakers and others.

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12. We note that the results from the phone survey might minimize the AMCE of victim's gender since the circumstantial factors describing the publicness and the offense preceding the stabbing are fixed to the conditions that minimize the effect of the victim's gender.

**Figure 3. Average Marginal Component Effects of Homicide Circumstances on Punishment Ratings**



Note: This figure shows the AMCEs of circumstantial factors on preferred (panels A and B) and on expected (panels C and D) sentence lengths for stabbings. Results in panels A) and C) are based on the analysis of a conjoint experiment included in a national online survey, and those in panel B) and D) are based on a vignette experiment included in a phone survey. Results in panels A and C are from analyses of the 2020 online survey. Results in panels B and D are based on a phone survey conducted with a sample of 1,006 Mexican adults in 2021. The preferred and expected sentences are measured by asking the same questions as in the online conjoint experiment, with the added phrase “You can choose any sentence length between 0 and 50 years of prison.” The phone survey questions are read after a vignette experiment in which victim and perpetrator gender is varied (see Appendix 1 for wording). Estimates are based on regression results shown in Tables 3 and 4 of Appendix 3.

Source: Own elaboration

Our analysis of two conjoint experiments reveals that public attitudes and expectations regarding justice for murders of women reflect certain traditional gender norms held by society. However, these norms motivate the public *not* to condone higher impunity for lethal violence against women but rather to demand

longer sentences for murders involving women victims and for men as perpetrators. In our study, citizens on average prefer a type of paternalistic protection issued towards women victims and perpetrators. And, overall they expect the judicial system to reflect these preferences —i.e., to impose sentences that are “chivalrous” and give women preferential treatment. That said, when looking at the gendered differences in the attitudes held by those issuing judgments (respondents in our survey), women expect no special treatment to be made for women victims and perpetrators. Instead, they expect the same low levels of impunity for the murder of women as they do for men who are murdered.

These findings imply that, in contexts of high impunity for lethal VAW, where states *de facto* send the message that women’s lives are “expendable” (Menjívar, 2011), the average member of the public nonetheless may prefer comparatively high punishments for perpetrators, instead of normalizing or condoning violence. At the same time, perceptions of impunity —as reflected in low expectations for state punishment— may affect behavior, leading, for example, to the underreporting of GBV (see Palermo *et al.*, 2014). On the whole the results provide evidence that continued impunity is not a matter of lack of public demand; rather, efforts to decrease impunity should double down on implementing institutional changes and improving the capacity of the judicial system. Specific reforms could include recognizing femicide as a separate crime that is addressed by specialized judges and prosecutors who are sensitive to the nuances involved in this type of violence, professionalizing the police and justice system, and trying to identify, prevent, and punish cases of GBV that may go underreported. As a caveat, our findings and these prescriptions may apply specifically to contexts with high levels of lethal VAW and relatively more traditional gender norms.

Academics might consider our findings with respect to the ambivalent —benevolent and hostile— sexism framework offered by social psychology (Glick and Fiske, 1996). This research indicates that while society treats women who abide by gender norms regulating their behavior with paternalism or benevolence, it treats those who break those rules with hostility. Conversely, we find that society does not treat women victims of homicide with comparative hostility, even when their homicide follows an event where their behavior runs contrary to an ideal —lying, ridiculing, or stealing. A limitation of this study, which future research should address, is that we do not assess whether this dynamic holds at the individual level via analyses of individual benevolent and hostile sexism measures. For now, we conclude that women victims of homicide —as well as women perpetrators of homicide— may often be treated with a type of paternalism (benevolent sexism) that demands comparatively greater punishment for men who murder women.

It is important to recognize that our research considers public opinion on average. It may be that attitudes vary significantly across local contexts. Research on

attitudes and behaviors in proximity to women's police stations provides important insight. For example, Perova and Reynolds (2017) find that establishing a women's police station in metropolitan Brazil locations reduced incidents of murders with women victims. And Córdova and Kras (2022) find that men in Brazil are more likely to condemn VAW in municipalities with women's police stations. This line of research suggests the caveat that conclusions about average opinion dynamics may not travel to all locales while, at the same time, it highlights the need for more research that investigates heterogeneity in opinion at the sub-national level.

Concerning women perpetrators of homicidal violence, further research could look more closely at the conditions that moderate the display of paternalistic attitudes towards women perpetrators of homicide. For instance, future causal analyses could compare the extent to which a society shows paternalistic tendencies towards women perpetrators who were victims of IPV (Nooruddin, 2007), women perpetrators who defended themselves from an attacker on the streets, and/or women perpetrators in other situations not examined here.

Similarly, researchers might ask whether benevolent sexism or paternalism is applicable only to victims of lethal VAW, as opposed to victims of other types of VAW. This work could consider how the tendencies identified here are compatible with the high rates of normalization of IPV in the region and the neglect suffered by victims of sexual violence and IPV. That is, future research could explore public preferences regarding protection of victims and punishment of perpetrators in cases of nonlethal VAW. Analyzing prevailing gender norms concerning the continuum of behaviors that constitute GBV may help design policies that go beyond punitive measures to restore the rule of law and focus on preventing violence, rehabilitating perpetrators and transforming their social relations, and protecting victims and providing restitution.

Interestingly, our study indicates that men expect the judicial authorities to give comparatively more preferential treatment to women. Men expect the justice system to impose shorter sentences on women perpetrators of homicidal violence (when compared to men perpetrators), and they expect harsher punishments for perpetrators of homicides involving women (as opposed to men) victims. It is plausible that these expectations affect the degree to which men demand justice for VAW since men, on average, already expect the justice system to favor women. Exploring this notion, and its implications for *Ni una menos* and related movements, is another germane avenue for future research.

### ***Declarations: Funding and/or Conflicts of interests/Competing interests***

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The authors declare that they have no known competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of the article.

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## ONLINE APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. SURVEY EXPERIMENT

#### *I. Online Survey Experiment*

(Original Spanish version)

**TEXT.** [A(1) Un hombre / (2) Una mujer] adulto(a) joven se enteró de que [B (1) un hombre / (2) una mujer] adulto(a) joven [C (1) le mintió / (2) lo/la puso en ridículo / (3) le robó].

[D (1) Nadie más estaba al tanto de lo que sucedió / (2) Quien sufrió [If C = 1 then “la mentira” / If C= 2 then “el ridículo” / If C = 3 then “el robo”] fue avergonzada(o) delante de sus amigos]

En el momento de lo sucedido, en un ataque de rabia, [if A = 1 then “el hombre”/ If A = 2 then “la mujer”] apuñaló mortalmente a quien le había [if C = 1 then “mentido” / if C = 2 then “ridiculizado”/ if C = 3 then “robado”].

- En su opinión, en años de prisión, ¿cuál es una condena apropiada para este apuñalamiento?  
(0-50) [Sliding scale]
- ¿Y cuántos años de prisión cree usted que efectivamente recibirá este apuñalamiento?  
(0-50) [Sliding scale]

(English translation):

**TEXT.** [A(1) A young man / (2) A young woman] found out that [B (1) a young man / (2) a young woman] [C (1) lied to them / (2) ridiculed them / (3) robbed them].

[D (1) No one else was aware of what happened / (2) The person who was [If C = 1 then lied to / If C= 2 then ridiculed / If C = 3 then robbed] was shamed in front of their friends]

Right when this happened, in a rage attack, [if A = 1 then “the man”/ If A = 2 then “the woman”] fatally stabbed the person who had [if C = 1 then “lied to them” / if C = 2 then “ridiculed them”/ if C = 3 then “robbed them”).]

- In your opinion, in years of prison time, what is the appropriate punishment for this stabbing?  
(0-50) [Sliding scale]
- And how long do you think the sentence for this stabbing will actually be?  
(0-50) [Sliding scale]

## II. Phone Survey Experiment

(Original Spanish version)

Ahora le voy a describir el siguiente escenario:

### CUESTIONARIO A

**TVIOLPA\_TEXT.** Un hombre adulto joven se enteró de que una mujer adulta joven le robó.

El hombre que sufrió el robo fue avergonzado delante de sus amigos.

En el momento de lo sucedido, en un ataque de rabia, el hombre apuñaló mortalmente a quien le había robado.

### CUESTIONARIO B

**TVIOLPB\_TEXT.** Un hombre adulto joven se enteró de que un hombre adulto joven le robó.

El hombre que sufrió el robo fue avergonzado delante de sus amigos.

En el momento de lo sucedido, en un ataque de rabia, el hombre apuñaló mortalmente a quien le había robado.

### CUESTIONARIO C

**TVIOLPC\_TEXT.** Una mujer adulta joven se enteró de que un hombre adulto joven le robó.

La mujer que sufrió el robo fue avergonzada delante de sus amigos.

En el momento de lo sucedido, en un ataque de rabia, la mujer apuñaló mortalmente a quien le había robado.

### CUESTIONARIO D

**TVIOLPD\_TEXT.** Una mujer adulta joven se enteró de que una mujer adulta joven le robó.

La mujer que sufrió el robo fue avergonzada delante de sus amigos.

En el momento de lo sucedido, en un ataque de rabia, la mujer apuñaló mortalmente a quien le había robado.

**TVIOLP1.** En su opinión, en años de prisión, ¿cuál es una condena apropiada para este apuñalamiento? Puede escoger cualquier condena entre 0 y 50 años de prisión. \_\_\_\_ (número entre 0 y 50)

**TVIOLP2.** ¿Y cuántos años de prisión cree usted que efectivamente recibirá este apuñalamiento? Puede escoger cualquier condena entre 0 y 50 años de prisión. \_\_\_\_ (número entre 0 y 50)

#### (English translation)

Now I am going to describe to you the following scenario:

### Questionnaire A

**TVIOLPA\_TEXT.** A young man found out that a young woman robbed him.

The man who was robbed was shamed in front of his friends.

Right when this happened, in a rage attack, the man fatally stabbed the person who robbed him.

### Questionnaire B

**TVIOLPB\_TEXT.** A young man found out that a(nother) young man robbed him.

The man who was robbed was shamed in front of his friends.

Right when this happened, in a rage attack, the man fatally stabbed the person who robbed him.

### Questionnaire C

**TVIOLPC\_TEXT.** A young woman found out that a young man robbed her.

The woman who was robbed was shamed in front of her friends.

Right when this happened, in a rage attack, the woman fatally stabbed the person who robbed her.

### Questionnaire D

**TVIOLPD\_TEXT.** A young woman found out that a(nother) young woman robbed her.

The woman who was robbed was shamed in front of her friends.

Right when this happened, in a rage attack, the woman fatally stabbed the person who robbed her.

In your opinion, in years of prison time, what is the appropriate punishment for this stabbing? You can choose any sentence between 0 and 50 prison years. \_\_ Number between 0 and 50.

And how long do you think the sentence for this stabbing will actually be? You can choose any sentence between 0 and 50 prison years. \_\_ Number between 0 and 50.

## APPENDIX 2. SURVEY MODE AND POPULATION REPRESENTATIVENESS

### I. Education

The education attainment of 60% of the Mexican population was below 10<sup>th</sup> grade (upper secondary education) in 2019 (OECD, 2019). Primary and lower secondary education groups (grades 1<sup>st</sup>–9<sup>th</sup>) are underrepresented in the online survey sample. However, in the phone survey sample 33.56% have education lower than 10<sup>th</sup> grade. This is compared to 14.46% in the online sample. In the weighted sample of the phone survey, 53.7% have educational attainment between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, which is closer to the proportion of the population with this educational attainment (See Figure 1).

Figures 2 and 3 show the estimates of the dependent variables—preferred sentences and expected sentences—for the subsamples at or below and above the median level of education.<sup>1</sup> The estimates are based on the weighted online survey sample (panels A and C in Figures 2 and 3) and the phone survey samples (panels B in Figures 2 and 3). Subsamples used for estimations shown in panels B and C are selected by splitting the sample at the population median (OECD, 2019)—lower secondary or grades 7<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup>. Panels marked by A in Figures 2 and 3 present estimates for subsamples selected taking as a threshold the online survey sample median education. We observe no significant difference driven by education in the punishment ratings for stabbings involving women victims and men perpetrators. The coefficients by education group are fairly close to each other by looking at the phone survey and the online survey data, and at subsamples based on different possible educational thresholds.

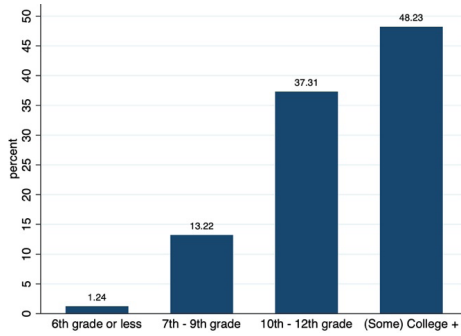
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1. In the phone sample, the median category is *secundaria* (7<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade). In the online survey, the median value in the continuous measurement of education is 12<sup>th</sup> grade, with 34.39% of the sample reporting exactly 12 years of educational attainment.

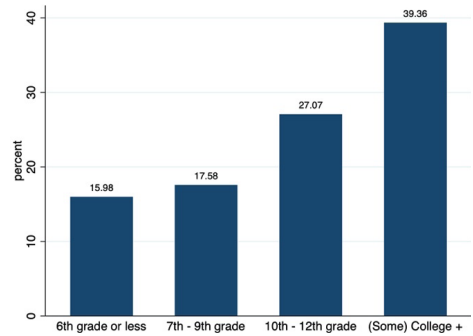


**Figure 1. Survey Representativeness of Population with Low Educational Attainment**

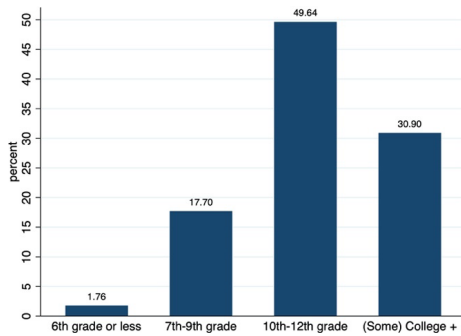
A) Unweighted Online Survey



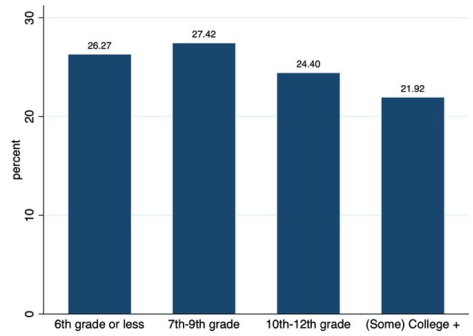
B) Unweighted Phone Survey



C) Weighted Online Survey

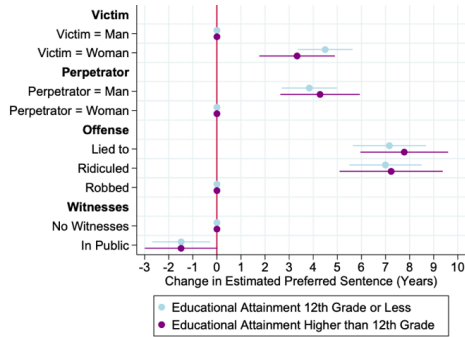


D) Weighted Phone Survey



**Figure 2. Preferred Punishment Ratings by Educational Attainment**

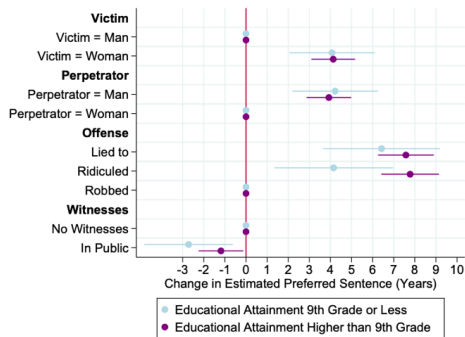
A) Online Survey: Results below and above survey survey and median education



B) Phone Survey: Results below and above population median education



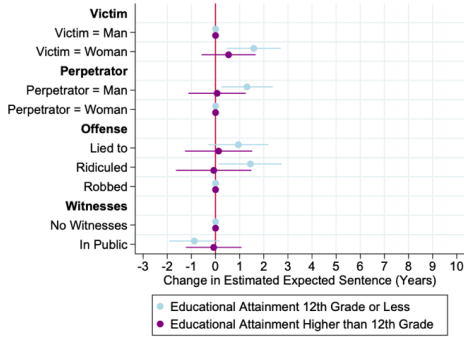
C) Online survey: Results below and above population median education



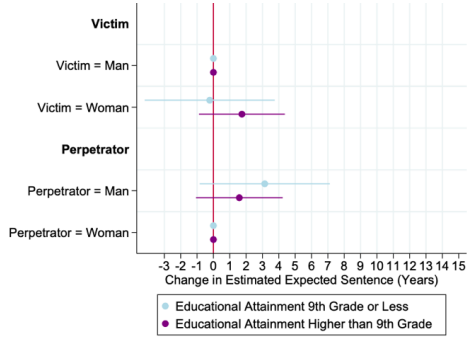
This figure shows the ACIEs of circumstantial factors on preferred sentence lengths by respondent's educational attainment. Average preferred sentences for respondents with lower educational attainment are depicted in blue and in purple for those with relatively higher attainment. Results in panels A and C are based on the analysis of a conjoint experiment included in the national online survey, and results in panel B are based on a vignette experiment included in the phone survey.

**Figure 3. Expected Punishment Ratings by Educational Attainment**

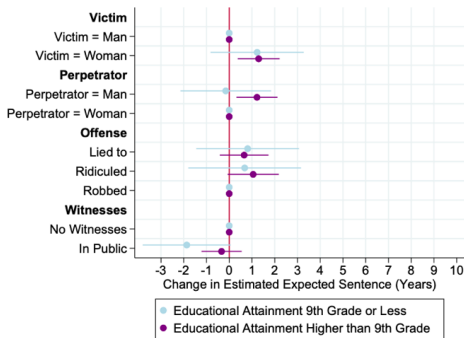
A) Online Survey: Results below and above survey survey and median education



B) Phone Survey: Results below and above population median education



C) Online survey: Results below and above population median education



This figure shows the ACIEs of circumstantial factors on expected sentence lengths for stabbings by respondent's educational attainment. Average preferred sentences for respondents with lower educational attainment are depicted in blue and in purple for those with relatively higher attainment. Results in panels A and C are based on the analysis of a conjoint experiment included in the national online survey, and results in panel B are based on a vignette experiment included in the phone survey.

## II. Socioeconomic Status

To look at the survey representativeness by socioeconomic status, Figure 4 shows the income quartiles and levels of socioeconomic difficulty in the online survey, and home internet access in the phone survey.<sup>2</sup> We chose these particular indicators of socioeconomic status because of their availability and correlation with educational attainment.<sup>3</sup> Population with home internet access in Mexico as of 2020 was estimated at 72 percent.<sup>4</sup> The phone survey, when weighted, approximates this level: 63% report home internet access.

Although the income quartile variable is more correlated with education than the perception of economic difficulty, Figure 4 presents the distribution of the online survey sample across levels of economic difficulty. The closest point of reference for the economic difficulty variable is the poverty measurement taken by the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL). In comparison with CONEVAL's indicators, people in the lowest wealth categories were underrepresented in the online weighted sample. In the online weighted sample, 7.55% reported that their salary and total home income was not enough and that they faced large economic difficulty—which is lower than CONEVAL's 17.2% food poverty estimate for 2020. Meanwhile, in the weighted online sample 38.64% reported that their salary was insufficient and that they experienced some difficulty, with a cumulative of 46.19% reporting some level of difficulty. This cumulative percentage is smaller than CONEVAL's 2020 cumulative estimate of 52.8% living in food or goods and services poverty.<sup>5</sup>

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2. The text of the question on economic difficulty in the online survey reads: "The wage or salary you receive and your total household income: (1) Covers your needs and you can save money; (2) Is just enough to cover your needs without great difficulties; (3) It is not enough and you have difficulties; (4) It is not enough and you have great difficulties; (988888) Doesn't wish to answer" ("Q10D. *El salario o sueldo que usted recibe y el total del ingreso de su hogar: (1) Les alcanza bien y pueden ahorrar; (2) Les alcanza justo sin grandes dificultades; (3) No les alcanza y tienen dificultades; (4) No les alcanza y tienen grandes dificultades; (988888) No desea responder*")

The text of the online survey reads: "Do you have Internet at home?" ("*¿Tiene usted Internet en su casa?*")

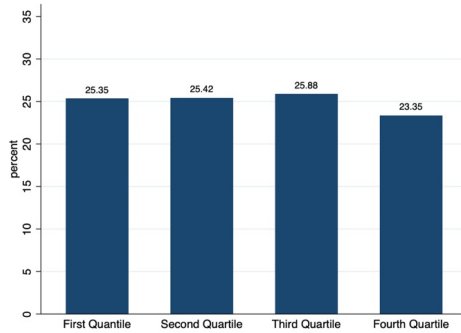
3. In the online survey, the income variable is more correlated with education than the perception of economic difficulty. Number of lightbulbs and internet access are the only R-series measures included in the phone survey. The former shows a very low correlation with educational attainment; thus, we chose internet access as an indicator.

4. INEGI (2021). Encuesta nacional sobre disponibilidad y uso de tecnologías de la Información en los hogares (ENDUTIH) 2020. INEGI.

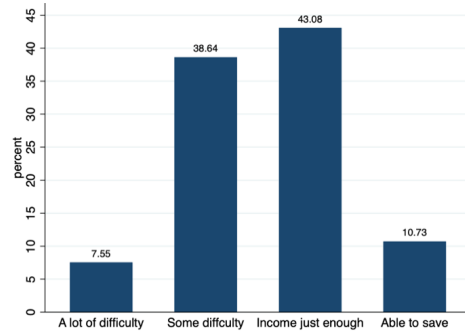
5. CONEVAL.2021, "CONEVAL presenta las estimaciones de pobreza multidimensional 2018 y 2020". Comunicado 9. From [https://www.coneval.org.mx/SalaPrensa/ComunicadosPrensa/Documents/2021/COMUNICADO\\_009\\_MEDICION\\_POBREZA\\_2020.pdf](https://www.coneval.org.mx/SalaPrensa/ComunicadosPrensa/Documents/2021/COMUNICADO_009_MEDICION_POBREZA_2020.pdf)

Figure 4. Income Quartile (R-Series) / Internet Access

A) Online survey (Weighted)  
Income Quartile



Economic Difficulty



C) Phone Survey (Weighted)

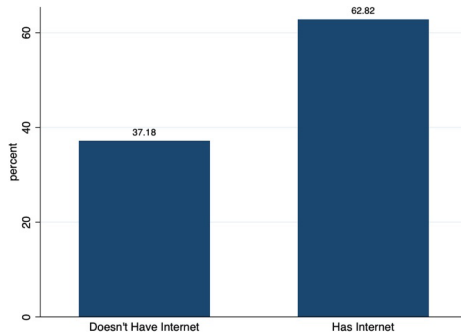
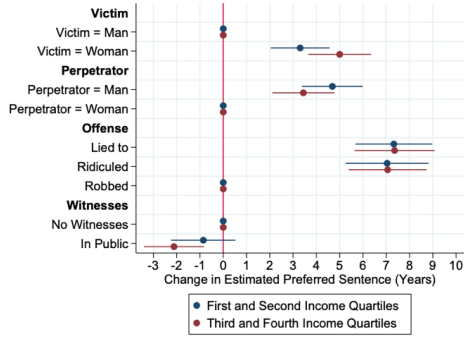


Figure 5 shows the estimated preferred and expected sentences by socio-economic status, based on the online and the phone weighted survey samples. Regardless of the variables we use to measure socioeconomic status, we observe no significant difference in the gendered punishment preferences and expectations of those with higher socioeconomic status, when compared to those with higher SES.

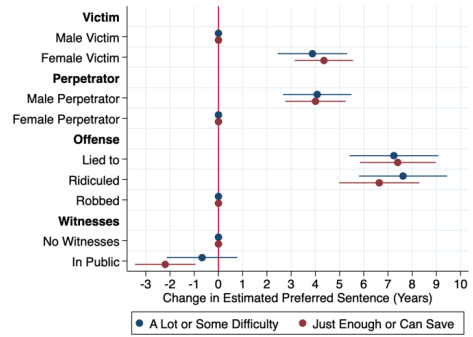
Figure 5. Punishment Ratings by Socioeconomic Status

Preferred sentences

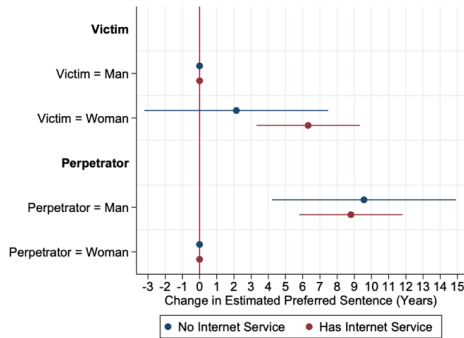
A) Online survey – Income quartiles



B) Online survey – Economic Difficulty

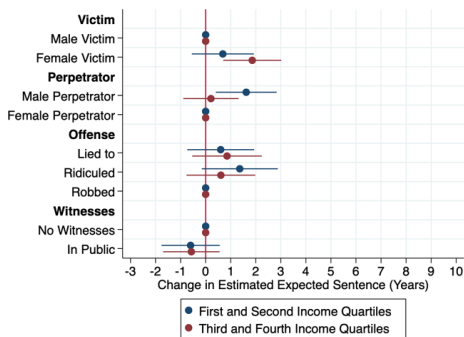


C) Phone Survey

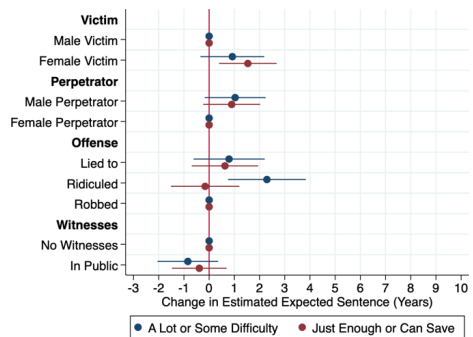


Expected Sentences

D) Online survey – Income quartiles

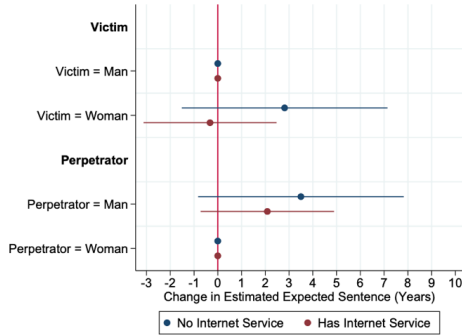


E) Online survey – Economic difficulty



**Figure 5. Punishment Ratings by Socioeconomic Status (continued)**

F) Phone Survey



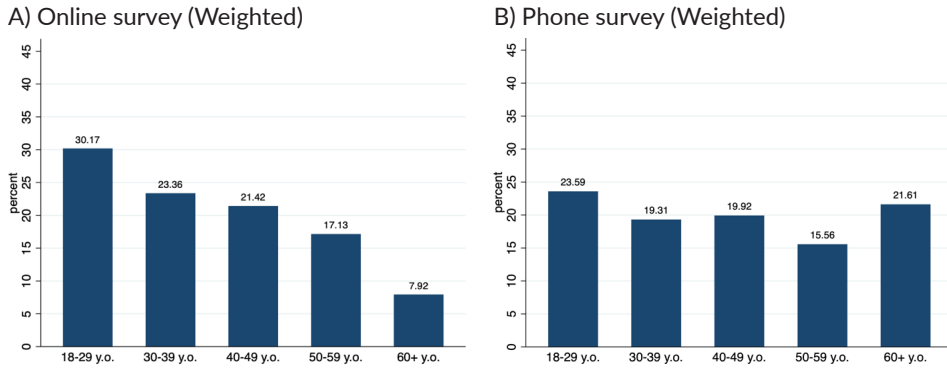
This figure shows the ACIEs of circumstantial factors on preferred and expected sentence lengths for stabbings by respondent’s socioeconomic status. Average preferred sentences for respondents with lower socioeconomic status are depicted in blue and in red for those with relatively higher attainment.

**III. Age**

When compared to the most recent census data, the weighted online sample seems representative of the population age groups, except for those older than 60 years. Figure 6 below shows the age group distribution in the online and phone surveys.<sup>6</sup> While the oldest population group was underrepresented in the online survey, the youngest was underrepresented in the phone survey. Nevertheless, controlling for age group (vs. not) in both surveys, we observe virtually no difference in the expected and preferred punishment ratings for women victims and men perpetrators. This is the case even considering that the oldest population group would expect lower average impunity or higher average punishment ratings (see Tables 1 and 2 below).

6. We compared the following age groups: 18 -29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60 and more.

**Figure 6. Age Categories Distribution**



**Table 1. Preferred and Expected Sentences and Age (Online Survey)**

	Preferred Sentences		Expected Sentences	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Victim=woman	4.15*** (0.47)	4.15*** (0.47)	1.27*** (0.43)	1.27*** (0.43)
Perpetrator=man	4.01*** (0.48)	4.01*** (0.48)	0.92** (0.42)	0.93** (0.42)
Perpetrator lied to	7.35*** (0.61)	7.34*** (0.61)	0.70 (0.49)	0.73 (0.49)
Perpetrator robbed	7.10*** (0.63)	7.10*** (0.63)	0.98* (0.52)	1.00* (0.52)
No witnesses	-1.50*** (0.48)	-1.51*** (0.48)	-0.61 (0.41)	-0.61 (0.41)
Between 30 and 49 years old		0.16 (0.83)		0.61 (0.66)
Older than 50 years old		-0.46 (1.46)		2.40* (1.37)



	Preferred Sentences		Expected Sentences	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	18.45*** (0.68)	18.40*** (0.88)	14.11*** (0.54)	13.52*** (0.71)
Observations	6218	6218	6202	6202

Standard errors in parentheses clustered at the respondent level. Baseline levels are *Victim = man, Perpetrator = woman, Ridicule as the offense preceding the stabbing, In Public, and Respondent's age = 18 to 29 years old.*

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 2. Preferred and Expected Sentences and Age (Phone Survey)**

	Preferred Sentences		Expected Sentences	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Victim=woman	4.96*** (1.38)	4.86*** (1.38)	0.70 (1.21)	0.78 (1.20)
Perpetrator=man	9.27*** (1.38)	9.28*** (1.38)	2.44** (1.21)	2.41** (1.21)
Between 30 and 49 years old		-0.07 (1.63)		0.42 (1.40)
Older than 50 years old		-2.07 (1.75)		2.85* (1.60)
Constant	21.10*** (1.18)	21.85*** (1.51)	17.71*** (1.00)	16.57*** (1.32)
Observations	829	829	862	862

Standard errors in parentheses. Baseline levels are *Victim = man, Perpetrator = woman, and Respondent's age = 18 to 29 years old.* \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 3. Patterns of Missingness in Dependent Variables (Online Survey)**

Nonresponse in:	(1) Preferred sentence q.	(2) Expected sentence q.
Victim = woman	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Perpetrator = man	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Man respondent	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
7 - 9 years of education	-0.07*** (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)
10 - 12 years of education	-0.07*** (0.03)	0.00 (0.02)
13 + years of education	-0.07*** (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)
Second income quintile	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)
Third income quintile	0.01 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)
Fourth income quintile	0.01 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
Constant	0.08*** (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)
N	6285	6285

Standard errors in parentheses. Baseline levels are *Victim = man, Perpetrator = woman, Woman respondent, Elementary school or less and First income quartile.*

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 4. Patterns of Missingness in Dependent Variables (Phone Survey)**

Nonresponse in:	(1) Preferred sentence q.	(2) Expected sentence q.
Victim = woman	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)
Perpetrator = man	-0.03 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
Man respondent	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)
7 – 9 years of education	-0.08* (0.05)	-0.12*** (0.05)
10 – 12 years of education	-0.12*** (0.05)	-0.15*** (0.04)
13 + years of education	-0.18*** (0.04)	-0.17*** (0.04)
Has Internet service	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.03)
Constant	0.34*** (0.05)	0.29*** (0.05)
N	999	999

Standard errors in parentheses. Baseline levels are *Victim = man, Perpetrator = woman, Woman respondent, Does not have Internet and First income quartile.*

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

### APPENDIX 3. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND MAIN ESTIMATIONS

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Online Survey**

	Unweighted Means				Weighted Means	
	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Preferred sentences	0	50	26.89	17.18	26.56	17.09
Expected sentences	0	50	15.15	13.89	15.45	13.99
Man respondent	0	1	0.43	0.49	0.48	0.50
Educational level	1	4	3.33	0.75	3.10	0.74
Income Quartile	1	4	2.59	1.12	2.47	1.11

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Phone Survey**

	Unweighted Means				Weighted Means	
	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Preferred sentences	0	50	28.14	18.11	28.24	18.41
Expected sentences	0	50	18.84	15.67	19.26	15.92
Man respondent	0	1	0.50	0.50	0.49	0.50
Educational level	1	4	2.90	1.10	2.42	1.10
Has internet	0	1	0.72	0.45	0.63	0.48

**Table 3. Preferred and Expected Sentences Given Circumstantial Characteristics (Online Survey)**

Sentences=	(1) Preferred	(2) Expected
Victim=woman	4.15*** (0.47)	1.27*** (0.43)
Perpetrator=man	4.01*** (0.48)	0.92** (0.42)

Sentences=	(1) Preferred	(2) Expected
Perpetrator lied to	0.25 (0.58)	-0.28 (0.50)
Perpetrator robbed	-7.10*** (0.63)	-0.98* (0.52)
No witnesses	1.50*** (0.48)	0.61 (0.41)
Constant	24.05*** (0.68)	14.48*** (0.56)
Observations	6218	6202

Note: Standard errors in parentheses clustered at the respondent level. Baseline levels are *Victim = man, Perpetrator = woman, Ridicule* as the offense preceding the stabbing, and with *In Public*. Online survey data used for these estimations, which are depicted in Figure 1.

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

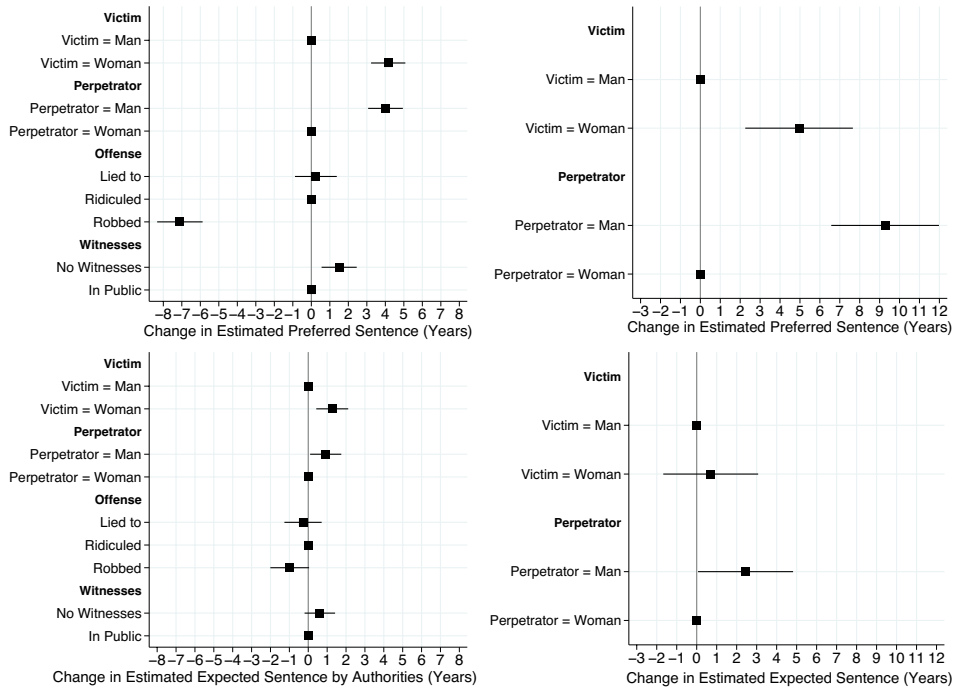
**Table 4. Preferred and Expected Sentences (Phone Survey)**

Sentences=	(1) Preferred	(2) Expected
Victim=woman	4.96*** (1.38)	0.70 (1.21)
Perpetrator=man	9.27*** (1.38)	2.44** (1.21)
Constant	21.10*** (1.18)	17.71*** (1.00)
Observations	829	862

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. Baseline levels are *Victim=man* and *Perpetrator=woman*. Data are from the 2021 phone survey.

\* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

**Figure 3. Average Marginal Component Effects of Homicide Circumstances on Punishment Ratings**



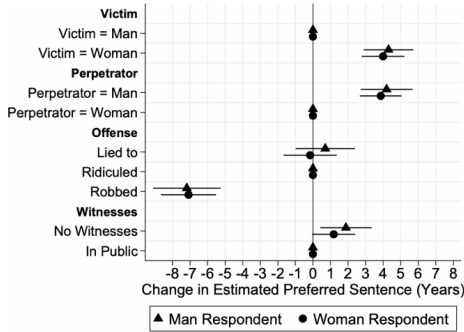
Note: This figure shows the AMCEs of circumstantial factors on preferred (panels A and B) and on expected (panels C and D) sentence lengths for stabbings. Results in panels A) and C) are based on the analysis of a conjoint experiment included in a national online survey, and those in panel B) and D) are based on a vignette experiment included in a phone survey. Results in panels A and C are from analyses of the 2020 online survey. Results in panels B and D are based on a phone survey conducted with a sample of 1,006 Mexican adults in 2021. The preferred and expected sentences are measured by asking the same questions as in the online conjoint experiment, with the added phrase “You can choose any sentence length between 0 and 50 years of prison.” The phone survey questions are read after a vignette experiment in which victim and perpetrator gender is varied (see Appendix 1 for wording). Estimates are based on regression results shown in Tables 3 and 4 of Appendix 3.

Source: Own elaboration

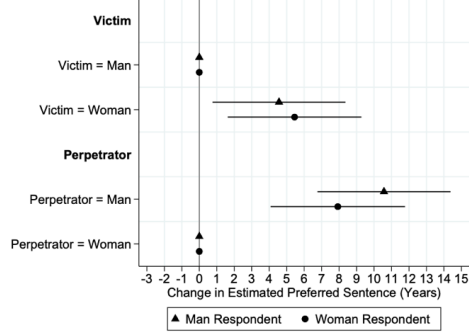
**Figure 1. Average Component Interaction Effects of Respondent's Gender and Homicide Circumstances on Punishment Ratings**

**Preferred Sentence**

**A) Online Survey**

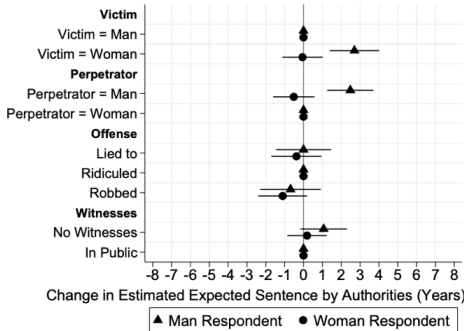


**B) Phone Survey**



**Expected Sentence**

**C) Online Survey**



**D) Phone Survey**



Note: This figure shows the ACIEs of circumstantial factors on preferred (panels A and B) and on expected (panels C and D) sentence lengths for stabbings by respondent's gender. Average preferred and expected sentences for men respondents are depicted by triangles and by circles for women respondents. Results in panels A and C are based on the analysis of the conjoint experiment included in the 2020 online survey, and those in panel B and D are based on the vignette experiment included in the 2021 phone survey. In the phone survey, the enumerator codes respondent gender according to their voice. Estimates are based on regression results shown in Tables 5 and 6 below.

**Table 5. Preferred and Expected Sentences by Respondent Gender (Online Survey)**

Sentences=	Preferred		Expected	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Respondents=	Men	Women	Men	Women
Victim=woman	4.30*** (0.72)	4.00*** (0.62)	2.70*** (0.67)	-0.05 (0.55)
Perpetrator=man	4.19*** (0.75)	3.86*** (0.61)	2.48*** (0.63)	-0.52 (0.56)
Perpetrator lied to	0.70 (0.86)	-0.16 (0.77)	0.00 (0.75)	-0.37 (0.68)
Perpetrator robbed	-7.18*** (0.98)	-7.09*** (0.80)	-0.69 (0.82)	-1.10* (0.66)
No witnesses	1.88** (0.75)	1.18* (0.62)	1.07* (0.63)	0.19 (0.53)
Constant	23.23*** (1.05)	24.80*** (0.89)	12.56*** (0.84)	16.16*** (0.74)
Observations	2666	3549	2660	3539

Note: Standard errors in parentheses clustered at the respondent level. Baseline levels are *Victim=man, Perpetrator=woman, Ridicule* as the offense preceding the stabbing, and with *In Public*. Data are from 2020 online survey data.

\* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$



**Table 6. Preferred and Expected Sentences by Respondent Gender (Phone Survey)**

Sentences=	Preferred		Expected	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Respondents=	Men	Women	Men	Women
Victim=woman	5.45*** (1.95)	4.56** (1.94)	-0.07 (1.71)	1.76 (1.70)
Perpetrator=man	7.93*** (1.96)	10.57*** (1.94)	-0.42 (1.70)	5.34*** (1.71)
Constant	22.26*** (1.70)	19.95*** (1.64)	20.27*** (1.42)	15.03*** (1.37)
Observations	406	423	427	435

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. Baseline categories are *Victim=man* and *Perpetrator=woman*. Data are from the 2021 phone survey.

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

#### APPENDIX 4. SURVEY DIAGNOSTICS IN CONJOINT EXPERIMENT

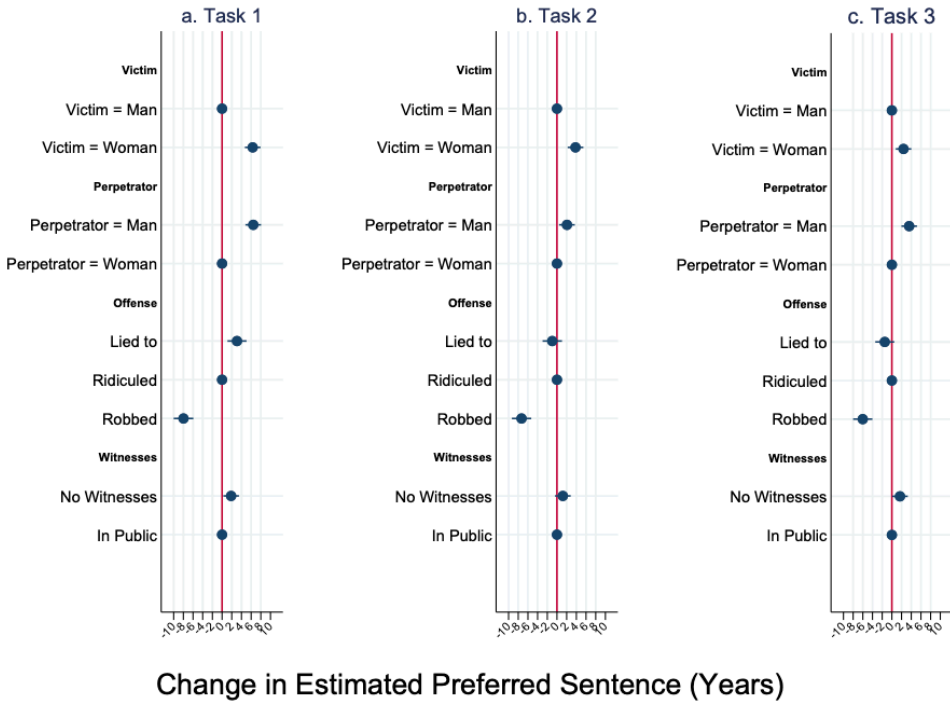
*Carryover Effects:* Although we observe carryover effects when comparing the estimates for the first, second, and third tasks, these only potentially affect the size but not the direction of the coefficients. Respondents prefer lower sentences for stabbings involving women victims in the second and third tasks compared to the average in the first task. That said, estimated preferred sentences are significantly higher for stabbings involving women victims and those involving men perpetrators, regardless of the task number.

As for expected sentences, the coefficients' size and direction for women victims are stable across tasks. The AMCEs of men perpetrator are positive and larger in tasks 2 and 3 compared to task 1. That said, the coefficient sizes are not significantly different from each other.

Following the advice of Hainmueller *et al.* (2014), we present the results while looking only at the first task (See panel a in Figure 10 and panel a in Figure 11). We observe that the average preferred sentences in the first task are as expected in our hypotheses within the paternalistic cognitive framework. In terms of expected

sentences, average responses based on the first task are significantly higher for women victims but not for men perpetrators.

**Figure 1. Average Marginal Component Effects of Homicide Circumstances on Preferred Punishment Ratings (By Conjoint Experiment Task)**



This figure shows the AMCEs of circumstantial factors on preferred sentence lengths for stabbings. Results in each panel are based on the analysis of each task of the conjoint experiment included in the online national survey.

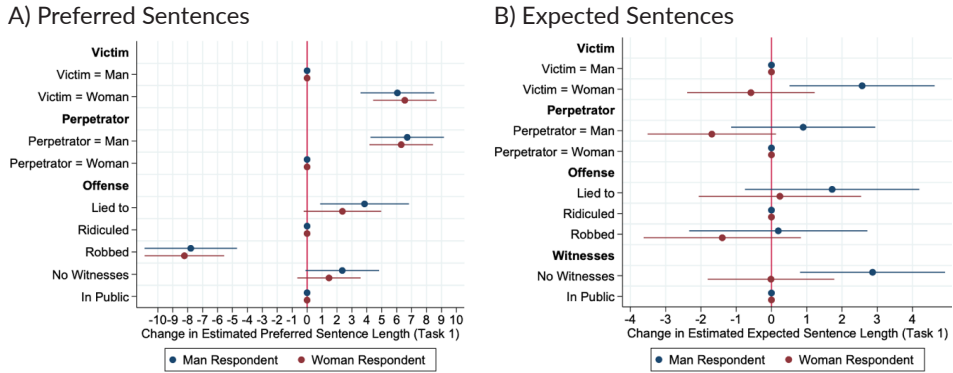
**Figure 2. Average Marginal Component Effects of Homicide Circumstances on Expected Punishment Ratings (By Conjoint Experiment Task)**



This figure shows the AMCEs of circumstantial factors on expected sentence lengths for stabbings. Results in each panel are based on the analysis of each task of the conjoint experiment included in the online national survey.

That said, average responses to the first task by respondent gender follow patterns similar to those observed in the averages for the three tasks. Specifically, despite a relatively smaller statistical power, we observe that women respondents expect lower average sentences for stabbings involving women victims and for those perpetrated by men.

**Figure 3. Average Component Interaction Effects of Respondent's Gender and Homicide Circumstances on Punishment Ratings (Task 1)**



This figure shows the ACIEs of circumstantial factors on preferred (panel A) and on expected (panel B) sentence lengths for stabbings by respondent's gender according to the first task in the conjoint analysis.

## APPENDIX 5. PRE-REGISTRATION DOCUMENTS

### Pre-Registration of Online Experiment on Punitive Attitudes toward Femicide

October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020

#### I. Motivation

Over the last five years, women across Latin America have mobilized to the call of “*Ni una menos*” (“Not one [woman] less”) to protest against government inaction in the face to rising numbers of femicides.<sup>7</sup> Regional figures indicate that

7. Óscar López. (2020, March 7th) Factbox: Where Latin America women are fighting the world's highest murder rates. Reuters. Retrieved from <https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-latam-women-protests/factbox-where-latin-america-women-are-fighting-the-worlds-highest-murder-rates-idUSKBN20U095>. Natalia Alcoba and Charis McGowan. 2020, June 4th. #NiUnaMenos five years on: Latin America as deadly as ever for women, say activists. The Guardian. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jun/04/niunamenos-five-years-on-latin-america-as-deadly-as-ever-for-women-say-activists>

around 92 percent of femicides go unpunished (Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights, cited in Htun and Jensenius, 2020) In brief, impunity around violence against women, including femicides, is a significant challenge (Menjívar and Walsh 2016; García del Moral and Neumann 2019). Mexico stands out as an unfortunate exemplar of these dynamics: out of the 12,378 female intentional killings that took place from 2015 to 2018 in Mexico, there were only 407 sentences (a 97% impunity rate).<sup>8</sup>

What factors fuel high levels of impunity? On the one hand, structural factors matter, such as corruption and resistance to change within the political and bureaucratic structures in charge of implementing violence against women regulations (Morrison et al, 2007; Ghosh and Choudhuri, 2011, Meneghel *et al.*, 2011; Kiss *et al.*, 2012; Frías, 2013; Menjívar and Walsh, 2016; Walsh and Menjívar, 2016; Baragatti, *et al.*, 2018; García del Moral and Neumann, 2019; Equis, Justicia para las Mujeres, 2019; García del Moral, 2020). Yet, on the other hand, conditions that fuel impunity are rooted in norms that tolerate, or condone, violence against women (Htun and Jensenius, 2020). Yet, while there is consensus that norms matter, there is room to advance understandings of public opinion regarding victims' deservingness of justice.

Gender norms influence the public's demand for justice for gender-based violence. Women are subject to stricter social norms and the public is prone to consider deviance from norms as factors mitigating against their portrayal as victims (Carey and Torres, 2010). Likewise, studies of sexual violence and intimate partner violence find that certain conditions associated with traditional gender norms decrease the reprehensibility of these behaviors in the eyes of the population. Those adhering to traditional gender norms tend to fault victims when they disrespect or cheat on the perpetrator (Taylor and Sorensen, 2006). Similarly, gender stereotypes affect evaluations of victims of assault and sexual violence, with female victims being blamed for displaying attributes traditionally perceived as feminine (carelessness, passivity and excessive confidence on others) and male victims being blamed for failing to display behaviors traditionally perceived as masculine (able to fight back, escape, in control, and unemotional) (Coxell and King, 1996; Krulewitz, 1981; Howard, 1984; White and Kurpius, 2002). Overall, female victims are more likely to be perceived as causing sexual violence perpetrated against them than male victims (Schneider, Ee, and Aronson, 1994).

The prevalence of gender bias may lead the public to tolerate impunity, or lower levels of punishment, for femicides compared to homicides in which a man is the victim. To the extent that there are extenuating circumstances that connect

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8. Arturo Ángel, 2020, February 20th. Subir las penas de cárcel no ha reducido los feminicidios en ningún estado. Animal Político. Retrieved from: <https://www.animalpolitico.com/2020/02/penas-carcel-femicidios-estados/>

to these biases, this tendency may be elevated. And, further, it may be accentuated among those who hold higher levels of gender bias.

In addition, elite cues may shape how individuals value and seek to protect the lives of women and men. Elite cues sent through policy have been found to alter the attitudes around egalitarianism in the sphere of political participation (Kittilson, 2010 and Morgan and Buice, 2013). Similarly, public opinion on punitive measures to fight crime acts as an input into, and likewise is influenced by, policy making (Roberts, Stalans, Indermaur, and Hough, 2002). Along these lines, then, we may expect that individuals' perceptions of state institutions' action around homicide and femicide shape the degree to which individuals advocate for harsher punishment for those committing murders. Yet, the nature of this dynamic is difficult to anticipate a priori. For example, it may be that individuals who perceive the state to be weakly committed to punishment of femicides follow the cue and likewise express a preference for comparatively lower levels of punishment for femicides (vs. murders in which a man is the victim), or it may be that individuals who perceive the state to be weakly committed react against that deficit by advocating for stronger punishment. We expect heterogeneity here; for example, the latter dynamic may be more prevalent among those with low levels of gender bias.

This project examines public opinion in Mexico toward impunity with respect to the most extreme form of violence against women, femicide. The first objective is to test the extent to which individuals advocate for less punishment when the victim of a homicide is a woman (and when the perpetrator is a man). The second objective is to test a set of conditional relationships; for instance, the study permits us to assess conditional hypotheses related to the circumstances under which the homicide occurs, the gender norms that an individual holds, and the individuals' expectations regarding how the state would react to the murder.

## **II. Sample**

The sample is 2,000 Mexican adults drawn from an opt-in online panel managed by Netquest.

## **III. Experiment**

The experiment takes the form of a conjoint study. Individuals are provided with three scenarios in which a victim is stabbed to death. The set-up for each scenario is the same. The attributes around the scenario vary as follows (and as presented in the textbox). First, the perpetrator of the stabbing is randomly assigned to be either male or female. Second, the victim of the stabbing is randomly

assigned to be either male or female. Third, the event provoking the stabbing is randomly assigned to be a lie, a situation in which the perpetrator is ridiculed, or a robbery. Finally, the event provoking the stabbing is randomly described as occurring with no one around, or in front of the perpetrator's friends.

#### Figure 1 (pre-registration 1). Experiment Design

**TVIOLC\_TEXT.** [TVIOL4C (1) Un hombre / (2) Una mujer] adulto(a) joven se enteró de que [TVIOL6C (1) un hombre / (2) una mujer] adulto(a) joven [TVIOL8C (1) le mintió / (2) lo/la puso en ridículo / (3) le robó].

[TVIOL9C (1) Nadie más estaba al tanto de lo que sucedió / (2) Quien sufrió [If TVIOL8C = 1 then "la mentira" / If TVIOL8C = 2 then "el ridículo" / If TVIOL8C = 3 then "el robo"] fue avergonzada(o) delante de sus amigos]

The main dependent variable is the question that follows immediately after the description of the scenario: In your opinion, in years of prison time, what is the appropriate punishment for this stabbing? (*En su opinión, en años de prisión, ¿cuál es una condena apropiada para este apuñalamiento?*). The dependent variable ranges from 0-50, as 50 years is the maximum sentence in the Mexican judicial system.

A second question follows this one, and asks how many years of punishment the stabbing is likely to actually receive. We will analyze responses to this question in order to describe public opinion dynamics around impunity and justice and, as well, we will be able to use this measure to consider how expectations of punishment by the state connect to individuals' punitive attitudes.

#### IV. Hypotheses and Expectations

The core hypotheses test the notion that there is a culture of tolerance toward femicide (which is typically a male vs. female crime).

H1. Mean punishment ratings will be lower for stabbings involving women as victims. H1a. Mean punishment ratings will be lower for stabbings involving women as victims when the perpetrator is a male.

In addition, we test a set of conditioning relationships. Two conditioning relationships we test are the following:

H2. The gender of the respondent will condition H1 and H1a: men will be more tolerant (lower punishment ratings).

H3. The gender norms held by an individual will condition H1a: those with more adherence to gender norms that capture bias against women will be more tolerant (lower punishment ratings).

In addition to these expectations, we will analyze the data to assess other predictors of greater tolerance of femicides.

*Circumstantial Factors.* The conjoint is designed to permit a test of whether circumstantial factors related to the honor of the perpetrator may mitigate attitudes toward their punishment. Especially with respect to situations in which a man is the perpetrator of the murder, and a woman is the victim, we expect that if the perpetrator was publicly harmed by the victim, this may reduce punishment recommendations. We will likewise assess the data to see if there are differences in punitiveness according to the type of harm the victim engaged in (lying, ridiculing, or stealing).

As with the core hypotheses, we will also consider how the gender of the respondent and gender norms condition these relationships.

*Elite cues.* We expect that elite cues regarding the authorities expected punishment of the homicide may be correlated with the degree to which individuals are willing to punish the perpetrator. We measure elite cues by looking at the degree of punishment that the respondent expects the authorities will impose on the perpetrator. Again, we are predominantly interested in cases that are exemplars of femicide (perpetrator = man, victim = woman). We will explore the direction of this relationship, and whether it is conditioned by other factors (e.g., gender norms, gender of the respondent).

We may test additional conditional relationships. To that end, we will indicate in any subsequent write-up the extent to which these are informed by extant scholarship or purely exploratory.

## V. Analysis

*Pre-analysis processing.* We have included a set of attention checks in the survey and also timing variables. We will assess the quality of the data prior to analyzing it. If there are notable deficiencies in the quality of the data, we will report hypothesis tests for the full dataset and, as well, for the subset who passed the



quality control assessment. We would expect more precise tests from the latter dataset.

*Dependent variable.* The dependent variable ranges from 0-50.

*Independent variable.* The main independent variable for H1 is a dummy variable indicating whether the victim is described as a woman.

*Conditioning variables.* To assess H1a, we interact the victim-gender dummy variable with a second one, which records whether the perpetrator is a man. To assess H2, we add to the test of H1 and H1a another conditioning factor - an indicator of whether the respondent is a woman, or not.

To test H3 (and all other expectations involving gender bias norms), we will create a measure of gender norms from questions included in the survey. We anticipate using one of two approaches. The first is to create a gender norms factor using principal component analysis, transformed from the following questions included in the survey: the degree of agreement with the statements that it is a woman's duty to obey her partner, that women need their partner's permission to see their friends, and that intimate partner violence is a private matter. We expect to find a factor on which, at the least, the former two questions load highly and we would score that factor as an indicator of gender bias that captures, specifically, belief that women must defer to men.

We also have an experimental instrument on the survey, which takes the form of a conjoint experiment designed to assess the value that individuals place on girls vs. boys. We will analyze these data to see if it is reasonable to create estimates of gender bias indicating a pro-male bias. If so, we will analyze these data as a second measure of gender bias, capturing the belief that men are more valued than women.

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## PRE-REGISTRATION OF PHONE EXPERIMENT ON PUNITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD FEMICIDE IN NATIONAL SAMPLE OF THE ADULT MEXICAN POPULATION

### I. Motivation

Over the last five years, women across Latin America have mobilized to the call of “*Ni una menos*” (“Not one [woman] less”) to protest against government inaction in the face to rising numbers of femicides.<sup>9</sup> Regional figures indicate that around 92 percent of femicides go unpunished (Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women’s Rights, cited in Htun and Jensenius, 2020) In brief, impunity around violence against women, including femicides, is a significant challenge (Menjívar and Walsh 2016; García del Moral and Neumann 2019). Mexico stands out as an unfortunate exemplar of these dynamics: out of the 12,378 female intentional killings that took place from 2015 to 2018 in Mexico, there were only 407 sentences (a 97% impunity rate).<sup>10</sup>

What factors fuel high levels of impunity? On the one hand, structural factors matter, such as corruption and resistance to change within the political and bureaucratic structures in charge of implementing violence against women regulations (Morrison et al, 2007; Ghosh and Choudhuri, 2011, Meneghel *et al.*, 2011; Kiss *et al.*, 2012; Frías, 2013; Menjívar and Walsh, 2016; Walsh and Menjívar, 2016; Baragatti, *et al.*, 2018; García del Moral and Neumann, 2019; Equis, Justicia para las Mujeres, 2019; García del Moral, 2020). Yet, on the other hand, conditions that fuel impunity are rooted in norms that tolerate, or condone, violence against women (Htun and Jensenius, 2020). While there is consensus that norms matter, there is room to advance understandings of public opinion regarding victims’ deservingness of justice. Thus, we ask: To what extent does the public vary in its preferences over punitive outcomes conditional on the gender of a homicide victim?

Gender norms influence the public’s demand for justice for gender-based violence. Women are subject to stricter social norms and the public is prone

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9. Óscar López. (2020, March 7th) Factbox: Where Latin America women are fighting the world’s highest murder rates. Reuters. Retrieved from <https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-latam-women-protests/factbox-where-latin-america-women-are-fighting-the-worlds-highest-murder-rates-idUSKBN20U095>. Natalia Alcoba and Charis McGowan. 2020, June 4th. #NiUnaMenos five years on: Latin America as deadly as ever for women, say activists. The Guardian. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jun/04/niunamenos-five-years-on-latin-america-as-deadly-as-ever-for-women-say-activists>

10. Ángel, A. 2020, February 20th. Subir las penas de cárcel no ha reducido los femicidios en ningún estado. Animal Político. Retrieved from: <https://www.animalpolitico.com/2020/02/penas-carcel-femicidios-estados/>

to consider deviance from norms as factors mitigating against their portrayal as victims (Carey and Torres, 2010). Likewise, studies of sexual violence and intimate partner violence find that certain conditions associated with traditional gender norms decrease the reprehensibility of these behaviors in the eyes of the population. Those adhering to traditional gender norms tend to fault victims when they disrespect or cheat on the perpetrator (Taylor and Sorenson, 2006). Similarly, gender stereotypes affect evaluations of victims of assault and sexual violence, with women victims being blamed for displaying attributes traditionally perceived as feminine (carelessness, passivity and excessive confidence on others) and male victims being blamed for failing to display behaviors traditionally perceived as masculine (able to fight back, escape, in control, and unemotional) (Coxell and King, 1996; Krulewitz, 1981; Howard, 1984; White and Kurpius, 2002). Overall, women victims are more likely to be perceived as causing sexual violence perpetrated against them than when victims are men (Schneider, Ee, and Aronson, 1994).

This type of gender bias may lead the public to tolerate impunity, or lower levels of punishment, for femicides compared to homicides in which a man is the victim (H1). Yet, at the same time, there are reasons to consider that the public may be more punitive in their attitudes around femicides compared to murders involving men as victims (H2, a rival to H1). In the first place, the public may perceive lax state commitment to punitive approaches to femicide and issue a corrective of sorts in their own assessments: asserting a more punitive response than that they expect from the state (Simon, 2007). In the second place, there may exist a form of paternalism or chivalry, or the generalization of women as having a less violent and blameworthy character (Baumer, Messner, and Felson 2000; Beaulieu and Messner 1999; Rodriguez, Curry, and Lee, 2004; Glaeser and Sacerdote 2000), which motivates a protective and punitive response to murders in which women are the victim. For either or both reasons, we could find the public to be comparatively more punitive when considering instances of femicide (vs. homicides involving in male victims).

The gender of the perpetrator may matter as well, and here we state another open expectation. On the one hand, a paternalism or chivalry thesis in criminology literature, according to which women perpetrating non-violent crimes are considered to be fickle, childlike, not fully responsible for their acts (Rodriguez, Curry, and Lee, 2006; Noorudin, 2007), provides reason to consider that women perpetrators in these scenarios may be viewed as less culpable and deserving of punishment. Yet, on the other hand, women who commit violent crimes are perceived to transgress the existing gender hierarchies, and thus receive harsher or equal treatment than men (Boritch, 1992; Chesney-Lind, 1977; Crew, 1991; Farnworth and Teske, 1995; Spohn, 1999; Rodriguez,

Curry, and Lee, 2006; Nooruddin, 2007; Franklin, 2008; Glick, Fiske *et al.*, 2000).<sup>11</sup>

This study examines public opinion in Mexico toward impunity with respect to the most extreme form of violence against women, femicide. The first objective is to test the extent to which individuals advocate (or not) for less punishment when the victim of a homicide is a woman (in general and conditional on the gender of the perpetrator). The second objective is to test a set of conditional relationships; for instance, the study permits us to assess conditional hypotheses, in particular the role of socio-economic status in conditioning responses.

## II. Sample

The sample is a national sample of 1,000 Mexican adults drawn via random digit dial of cell

## III. Experiment

The experiment takes the form of a conjoint study. Individuals are provided with one scenario in which a victim is stabbed to death. The set-up for each scenario is the same: "Now I am going to describe to you the following scenario" ("*Ahora le voy a describir el siguiente escenario.*"). In each case, the scenario describes a person who has been ridiculed in front of their friends, and in a fit of rage that ridiculed person murders the person who ridiculed them.

The attributes around the scenario vary as follows (and as presented below). First, the perpetrator of the stabbing is randomly assigned to be either a man or a woman. Second, the victim of the stabbing is randomly assigned to be either a man or a woman. The below scenarios, A-D, are the four treatment conditions that result from this 2x2 design.

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11. This hypothesis, the selective paternalistic hypothesis, goes along the same line as the hostile sexism phenomenon observed in social psychology, according to which women who transgress traditional gender norms lose the favor of men and, instead of being treated with benevolent sexism, are sanctioned with hostile sexism (Glick, Fiske *et al.*, 2000).

### CUESTIONARIO A

**TVIOLPA\_TEXT.** Un hombre adulto joven se enteró de que una mujer adulta joven le robó.

El hombre que sufrió el robo fue avergonzado delante de sus amigos.

En el momento de lo sucedido, en un ataque de rabia, el hombre apuñaló mortalmente a quien le había robado.

### CUESTIONARIO B

**TVIOLPB\_TEXT.** Un hombre adulto joven se enteró de que un hombre adulto joven le robó.

El hombre que sufrió el robo fue avergonzado delante de sus amigos.

En el momento de lo sucedido, en un ataque de rabia, el hombre apuñaló mortalmente a quien le había robado.

### CUESTIONARIO C

**TVIOLPC\_TEXT.** Una mujer adulta joven se enteró de que un hombre adulto joven le robó.

La mujer que sufrió el robo fue avergonzada delante de sus amigos.

En el momento de lo sucedido, en un ataque de rabia, la mujer apuñaló mortalmente a quien le había robado.

## CUESTIONARIO D

**TVIOLPD\_TEXT.** Una mujer adulta joven se enteró de que una mujer adulta joven le robó.

La mujer que sufrió el robo fue avergonzada delante de sus amigos.

En el momento de lo sucedido, en un ataque de rabia, la mujer apuñaló mortalmente a quien le había robado.

The main dependent variable is the question that follows immediately after the description of the scenario: In your opinion, in years of prison time, what is the appropriate punishment for this stabbing? (*En su opinión, en años de prisión, ¿cuál es una condena apropiada para este apuñalamiento?*). The dependent variable ranges from 0-50, as 50 years is the maximum sentence in the Mexican judicial system.

A second question follows this one, and asks how many years of punishment the stabbing is likely to actually receive. We will analyze responses to this question in order to describe public opinion dynamics around impunity and justice and, as well, we will be able to use this measure to consider how expectations of punishment by the state connect to individuals' punitive attitudes.

### IV. Hypotheses and Expectations

The core hypotheses test the notion that there is a culture of tolerance toward femicide (which is typically a man vs. woman crime).

H1. Mean punishment ratings will be lower for stabbings involving women as victims.

H1a. Mean punishment ratings will be lower for stabbings involving women as victims when the perpetrator is a male.

Yet, we also test the rival hypothesis: the public prefers *greater* punishment when women (vs. men) are victims. The mechanism, as described above, may be paternalism and/or a desire to counter what might be perceived as lax anti-femicide efforts by the state.

H2 (rival to H1). Mean punishment ratings will be higher for stabbings involving women as victims.

H2a (rival to H1a). Mean punishment ratings will be higher for stabbings involving women as victims when the perpetrator is a male.

In addition, the data can be used to explore at least two additional relationships. First, we consider whether punishment preferences vary conditional on the gender of the perpetrator; as we describe above, we do not have an *a priori* expectation.

Second, we will be able to consider whether H1-H2a are conditional by the respondents' SES. We do not know in advance of the study, which is being included as part of an omnibus organized by the local firm, what will be the full suite of available indicators of SES (e.g., education and wealth), but ideally it will be possible to explore whether attitudes vary according to this concept.

Finally, the design permits us to examine the second dependent variable to assess whether the public views the state as more or less permissive (that is, less punitive) when it comes to femicides versus homicides with male victims.

## V. Analysis

*Dependent variable.* The dependent variables range from 0-50.

*Independent variable.* The main independent variable for H1 and H2 is a dummy variable indicating whether the victim is described as a woman.

*Conditioning variables.* To assess H1a and H2a, we interact the victim-gender dummy variable with a second one, which records whether the perpetrator is a man.

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