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SPOTLIGHT ON CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY

A Quarterly Newsletter by the Institute of Criminology and Public Safety

ICPS's CONTRIBUTIONS TO CRIMINOLOGICAL RESEARCH



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GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION:

Spotlight on Crime and Public Safety is a quarterly, online newsletter published in March, June, September and December by the Institute of Criminology and Public Safety (ICPS) at The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). This newsletter is interdisciplinary in nature and provides a space for academics, researchers, professionals, policymakers, students and stakeholders from diverse fields to share their views. Articles/Commentaries should be between eight hundred (800) to one thousand (1,000) words in length. We also encourage the submission of creative efforts (for example, poems, photography, posters, quotes etc). Submission deadlines are February 15 for the March issue and May 15 for the June issue. Note: The September 2025 issue is our Special Student Issue, and the December 2025 issue is our Special Staff Issue. References or Bibliographies should be prepared using the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th Edition)*. Contributors should include their professional/job title/appropriate designation, contact email and photograph (optional) for use in the relevant issue. Submissions should be sent via email to icpsnewsletter@utt.edu.tt.

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Editorial



Dear Enthusiastic Readers,

We are pleased to present the December 2025 edition of ***Spotlight on Crime and Public Safety***, the Institute of Criminology and Public Safety's (ICPS) quarterly newsletter. As customary, this is a dedicated staff issue, and reflects the continued commitment by the ICPS to advancing research, dialogue, and evidence-informed approaches to the complex crime and public safety challenges facing Trinidad and Tobago, the wider Caribbean, and the international community.

Chantelle Cummings explores how adolescents in Trinidad and Tobago perceive online risks and responsibility. In her article "It's Risky Business: Adolescents' Perspectives on Social Media Use," she emphasises the importance of culturally informed education to support safer digital engagement. Natasha Dass-Mahabir situates national crime challenges within wider regional trends, examining the scale, costs, and drivers of violence while advocating holistic, evidence-based responses in her article "Violence and Insecurity in the Caribbean Region: A Focus on Trinidad and Tobago."

Linda Mohammed looks at "The Association Between Work-Family Conflict, Burnout, and Turnover Intentions Among Police Officers in Trinidad and Tobago: The Moderating Role of Affective Commitment," examining how occupational stress affects officer wellbeing, retention, and overall public safety outcomes. Community-policing officers' efforts to rebuild trust and legitimacy in high-crime communities via empathy, engagement, and relationship-building are explored by Casandra Harry in her article "Winning Hearts and Minds: Police Perspectives on Building Legitimacy in Trinidad and Tobago", while Keron Ganpat analyses intelligence-driven interdiction strategies in his article entitled "US Kinetic Strategy Against Venezuelan Narco-Networks: Employing Intelligence as an Irregular Force Multiplier," assessing their legal foundations, strategic objectives, and implications for accountability in contemporary gray-zone operations.

"Fireworks Use in Trinidad and Tobago: Will New Legislation Work or Total Ban?" is the focus of Vidya Lall and Jade Carrera in their article which critically assesses recent legislative reforms, enforcement challenges and implications for public health, safety, animal welfare, and vulnerable populations. Princess Bhagoutie explores the psychological and social risk factors influencing youth delinquency, the role of guilt neutralisation, self-control, parental supervision, and their implications for evidence-based prevention and policy in her article "Understanding Youth Delinquency in Guyana: What the Latest Research Reveals.'

We hope this edition informs your work, stimulates meaningful discussion, and contributes to ongoing efforts to build safer, healthier, and more resilient societies. We invite you to engage with the research presented and to continue the conversation on advancing crime prevention and public safety across our region.

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"Trinidad and Tobago confronts conflicts that seriously threaten our stability and peace. The notion that the Caribbean is a zone of peace has become a false ideal."

- The Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, SC
Prime Minister, Republic of
Trinidad and Tobago
Excerpt from Address, UNGA80,
New York. September 26, 2025

It's Risky Business: Adolescents' Perspectives on Social Media Use



Introduction

The internet provides access to a gamut of resources that can broaden the worldview of adolescents in addition to providing a space for social communication and the formation of friendships. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2017) estimates that globally, young people (ages 15-24) are the most connected group, with adolescents accounting for approximately one in three internet users. Data released from the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT, 2024) indicates that as much as 96% of households in Trinidad and Tobago subscribed to a fixed internet service in the previous year, reflecting the highest rate of internet subscription and usage in five years. This data is indicative of the increased accessibility of online information and communication mechanisms, particularly via social media platforms.

According to Kemp (2024), as much as 54% of the population of Trinidad and Tobago were social media users, with 131.6% of the total population having mobile connections. This suggests that connectivity and social networking are commonplace within this society and appear to transcend age groups, with adolescents and young adults accounting for the majority of social media users. The increased usage among youth is also coupled with the escalation of material on the internet, making it somewhat limitless and unknowable to many. This aspect of unknowability makes the internet a place of risk and exploitation among adolescents.

While there is awareness that adolescents face risks when traversing through cyberspace, the degree to which adolescents experience risks and the way they respond to these risks are unclear. Some of the risks that adolescents face while in the online domain include physical risks such as joining criminal gangs within and outside of the school environment, human trafficking and recruitment to extremist organisations, and kidnappings.

The social risks that adolescents may face are inclusive of sexual exploitation (Hollis et al., 2017), particularly in the form of grooming, cybervictimisation, and pornography (making and being forced or coerced to view videos) (Kraft & Wang, 2010). Research conducted by Alvarez-Segura et al. (2025) indicates that as much as 90% of pornography viewing takes place using mobile devices. Earlier research by Pathmendra et al. (2023) suggests that the significant increase in access to pornography by children and adolescents should be considered as a global public health concern. The psychological risks that they face include anxiety, depression, suicide ideation, suicide attempts and actual suicide (Guann & Subrahmanyam, 2009). The sharp increase in depression, self-harm, and suicide among adolescents, coinciding with the rise in digital media use, suggests that digital technologies and social media may play a role in worsening mental health outcomes among adolescents (Kim et al., 2025). Less severe risks that adolescents may face while traversing cyberspace include being contacted by strangers, seeing or receiving media that caused some level of emotional discomfort, feeling pressured into sending photos of themselves or other personal information, and being lured into spending money online that they did not intend to spend (Savoia et al., 2021).

Internationally, countries are educating their adolescents on internet use and encouraging active online engagement. However, the scale of education on internet safety remains unknown, especially in Trinidad and Tobago. While adolescent development may generally follow a similar trajectory globally, cultural nuances need to be considered when examining the risks experienced and the level of responsibility that adolescents assume while engaging in online activities.

Method

This qualitative study in which over fifty secondary school-aged children participated in focus group sessions, examined the perceived risks that adolescents in Trinidad and Tobago encounter while using social media and attempted to gain insight into their perceptions of safety while communicating via social media platforms. The research questions that the study attempted to provide answers for were as follows:

1. What are the risks that adolescents experience while using social media?
2. Does culture and its influence on adolescent development play a role in experiences of online risk associated with social media?
3. What are some self-derived methods being utilised to mitigate the risks that adolescents face while using social media?

Findings

The narratives of the students revealed that adolescents in Trinidad and Tobago gravitate toward the use of the social media platforms TikTok and WhatsApp as opposed to Facebook. Their rationale for this was that their parents and grandparents were Facebook users, and they wanted some level of freedom and privacy while engaging with others via social media.

Students indicated that social media risks existed, but their safety in the online environment was dependent on them taking responsibility for their actions on social media.

'...It's according to how you post on the internet. If you are not posting pictures about your body. For the girls who do post their bodies, they'll be approached nearly every week...'
(Female, 14 years, Form 3)

'...Some people are just desperate and they want somebody to talk to and they may not trust their family and neither their friends, so they go online and see someone who comes at them and you just take the chance...'
(Female, 16 years, Form 5)

'...Look at pictures you post. The things you do and the kind of comments you have on it. It would just make it easier for them to drag you in with them...'

(Female, 17 years, Form 5)

The narratives related to the risks that adolescents experienced while interacting on social media revealed that they are exposed to risks such as being exposed to graphic images of murder, being lured to self-harm, and engaging in sexual exploitation, all of which may be deemed inappropriate to their ages.

'…I went up on the internet and I was watching some cartoon and some popping up on the screen of man hanging himself and people forcing them to do it with guns and holding it to his head and telling him do and if he doesn't, he will shoot him….' (Male, 13 years, Form 1)

'…Well one famous gang that tempted me was the Illuminati. I was going up on Facebook and they posted up how you could get rich fast and can you like join the page. One of them was talking to me and saying, "Send a picture of you cutting yourself."' (Male, 12 years, Form 1)

'…I have an experience where a person on Instagram will message me, message, and message and then ask if I want nude pictures…' (Female, 14 years, Form 3)

Conclusion

This study expanded our understanding of adolescents' perspectives on Social Media usage, risks, and responsibilities. As suggested by the narratives, adolescents face many risks while engaging on social media platforms, but interestingly, they are also aware of and practice risk mitigation strategies. Adolescents in this study believed that they were responsible for the risks they encountered based on their online activities, which, for some females, were integrated with specific cultural norms and expectations. As evidenced by Miller and Slater (2020), adolescents from Trinidad and Tobago craft their niches in the social media environment while interacting with both strangers and friends. Like existing in the real world, many adolescents have become digital natives and are able to practice safe social media practices. Social media has become a necessary part of their lives. Rather than being critical of these platforms as adults, educating adolescents about safe usage of them would create safer online interactions.

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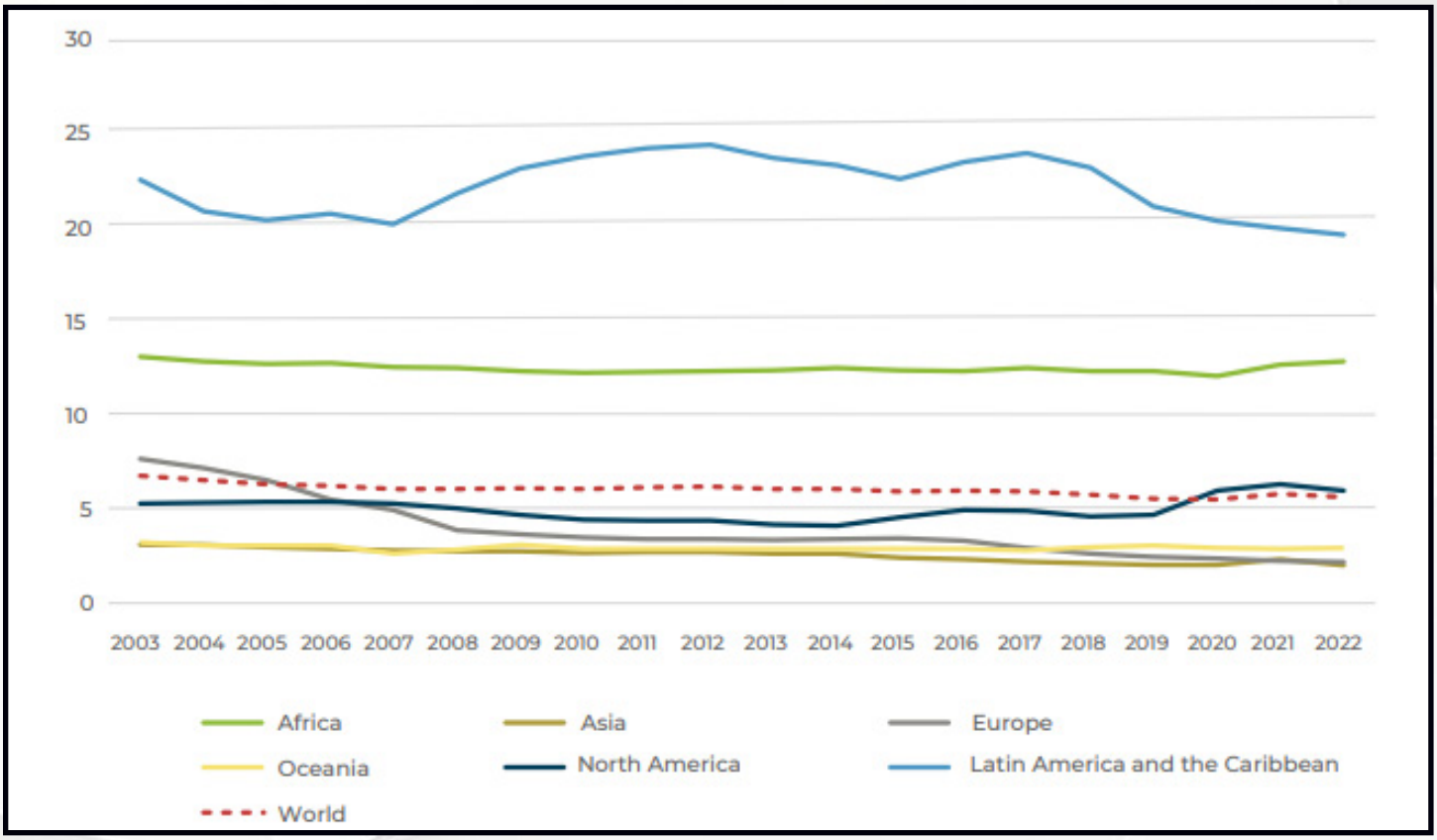
Violence and Insecurity in the Caribbean Region: A Focus on Trinidad and Tobago



The level of violence and insecurity in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) represents a critical public safety and development challenge as it relates to crime. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023), World Bank Group Report data showed that homicide rates in LAC between 2003 to 2023 was consistently higher than other regions in the world. LAC rates of homicide was approximately 20 per 100,000 people which is more than three times the rate observed globally (5.6 per 100,000 people). See Figure 1.

Figure 1

Homicide Rate per 100,00 Inhabitants, 2003-2022

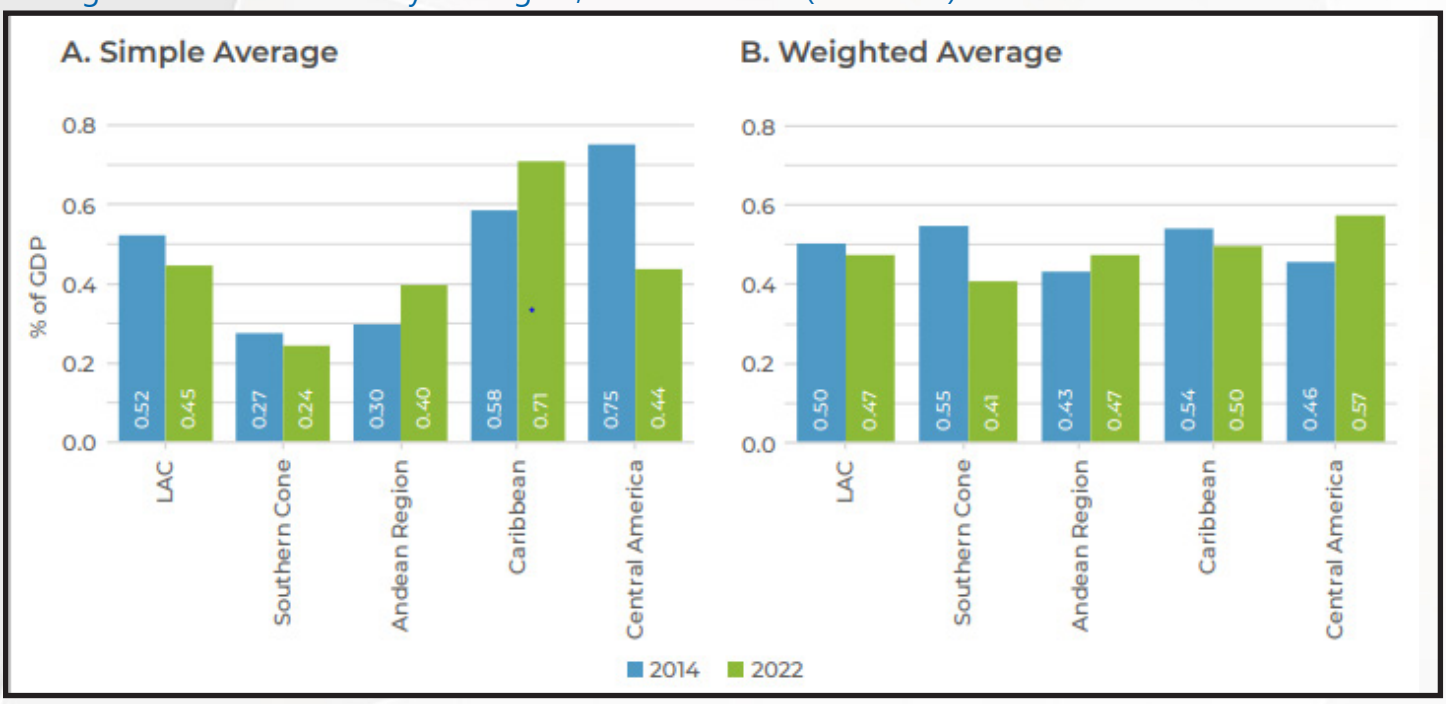


Source: Authors (Perez-Vincent, Puebla & Alvarado, 2024) calculations based on UNODC data.

In addition, Perez-Vincent and colleagues (2024) on the costs of crime and violence estimated that direct economic losses in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) reached 3.44 percent of the region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2022, underscoring the significant economic burden associated with high levels of violence (See Figures 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6). Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Honduras, Bahamas, Ecuador, Colombia, Mexico and Belize had the highest homicide rates in the region in 2022 and experienced the highest cost in human capital as a consequence of these deaths, with values between 0.61 and 1.19 percent of GDP (See Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 2

Average Cost of Homicides by Subregion, 2014 and 2022 (% of GDP)

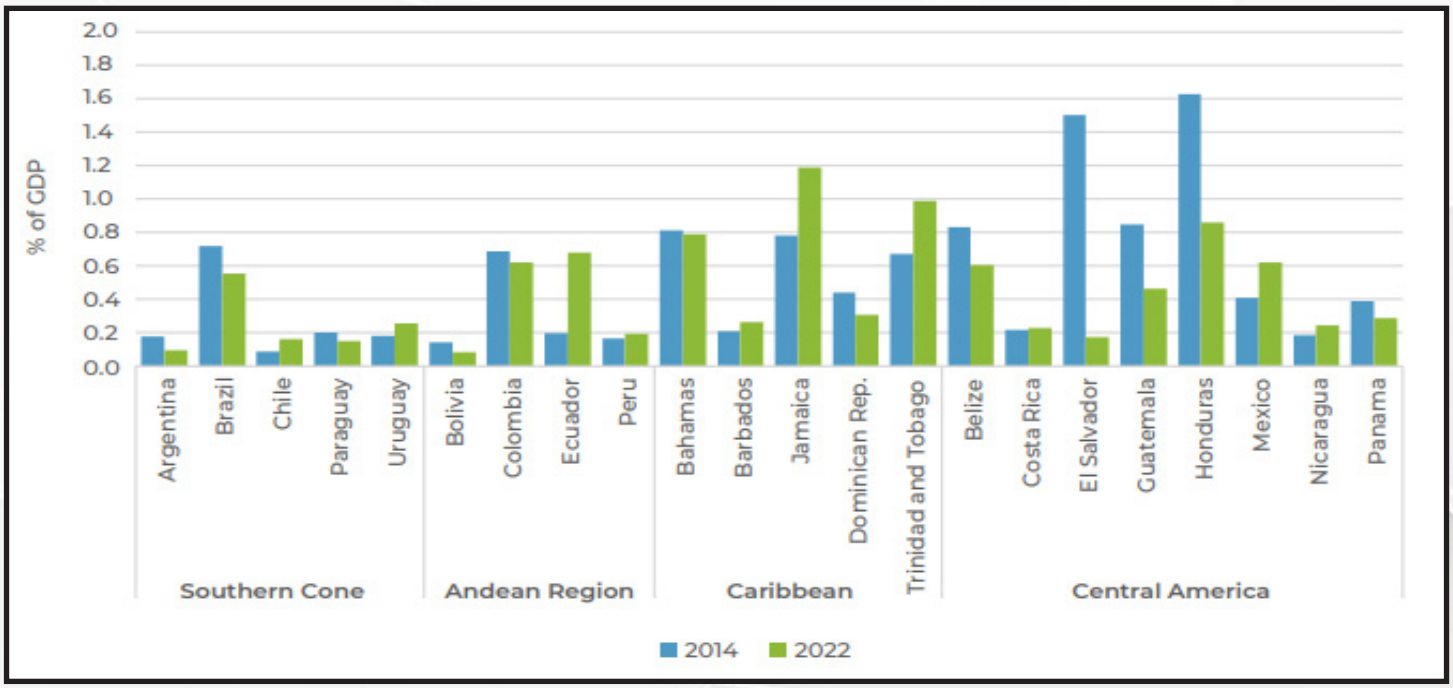


Source: Authors (Perez-Vincent, Puebla & Alvarado, 2024) calculations based on sources and assumptions.

Notes: Panel A shows the simple average of the cost per homicide by region. Panel B shows the average weighted by the value of nominal GDP in PPP of each country. LAC= 22 countries analysed in the study. Southern Cone = Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. Andean Region= Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Caribbean= Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago. Central America= Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico and Panama.

Figure 3

Cost of Homicides by Country 2014 and 2022 (% of GDP)

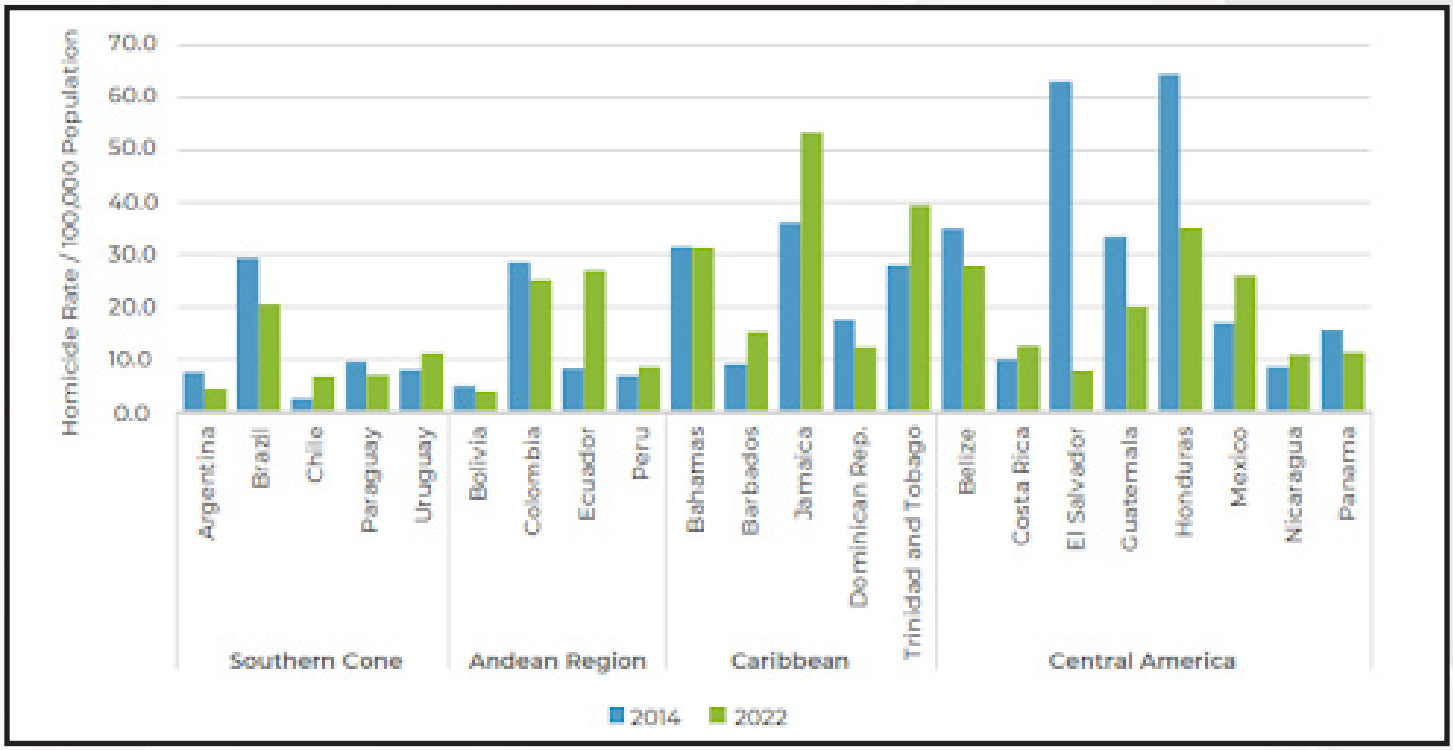


Source: Authors (Perez-Vincent, Puebla & Alvarado, 2024) calculations based on sources and assumptions.

Note: Authors state that differences between countries may be due, in part, to the availability and scope of the data used in the estimates.

Figure 4

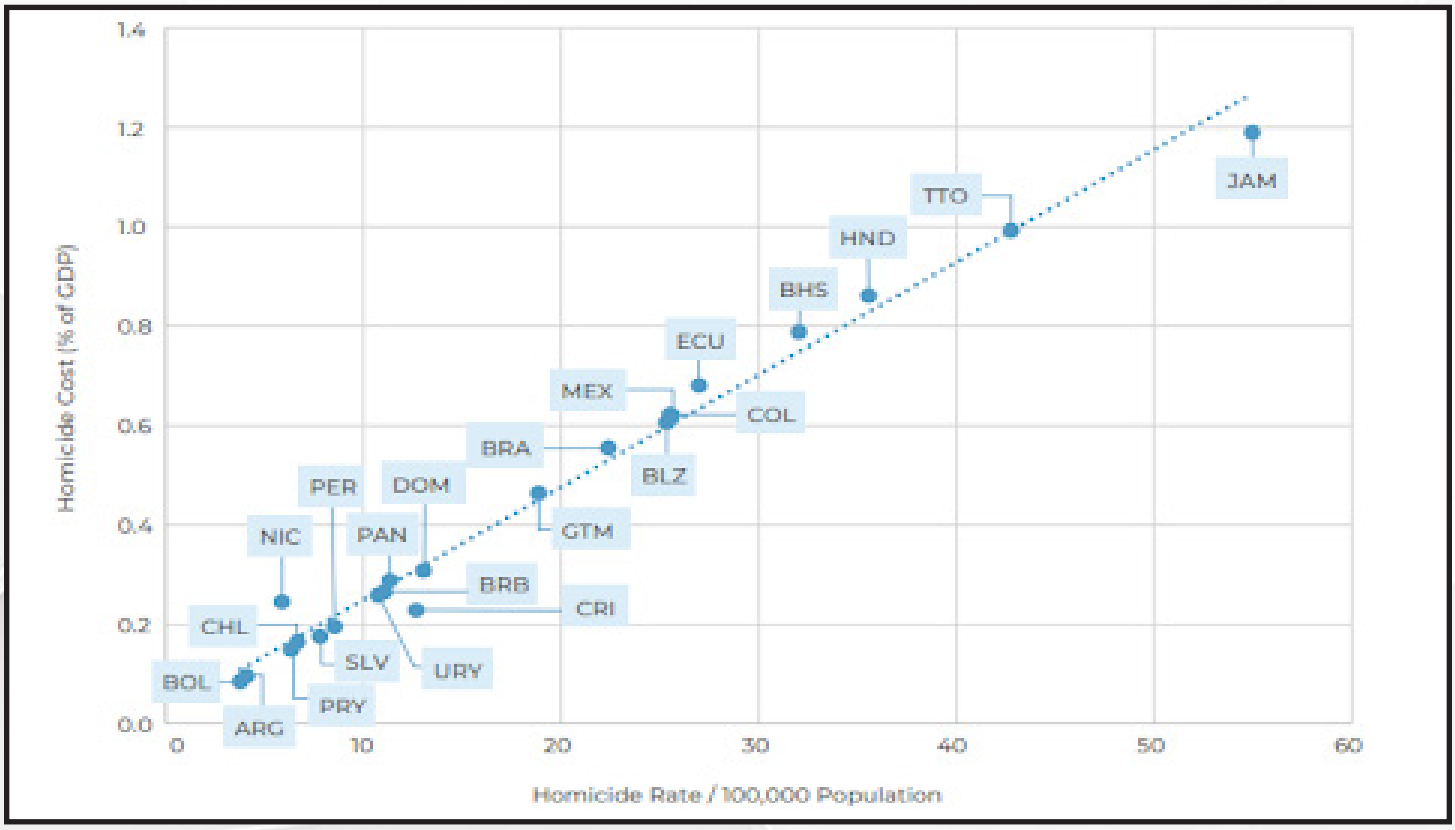
Homicide Rate per 100,00 Population, by Country, 2014 and 2022.



Source: Authors (Perez-Vincent, Puebla & Alvarado,2024) calculations based on sources and assumptions.

Figure 5

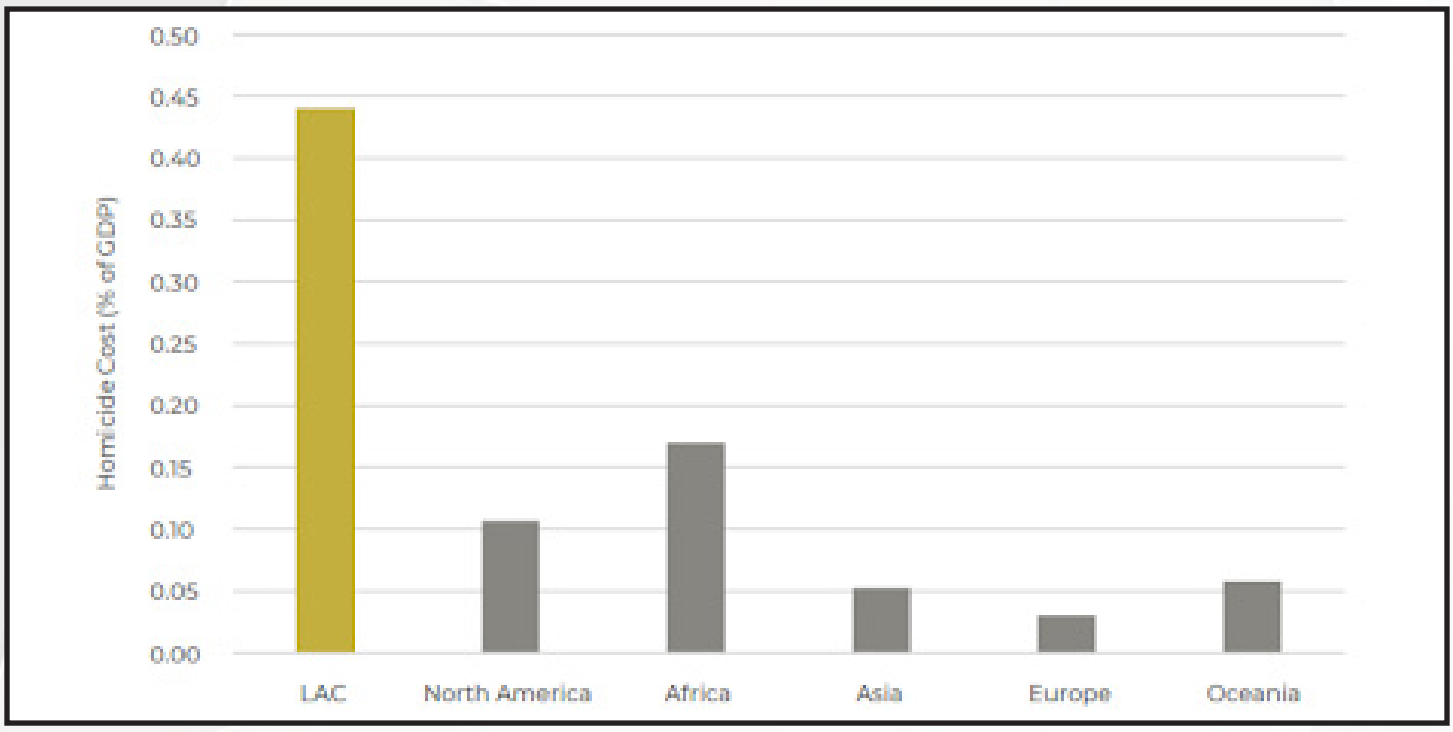
Relationship of Homicide Cost to Homicide Rate per 100,000 Population, 2022



Source: Authors' (Perez-Vincent, Puebla & Alvarado, 2024) calculations based on sources and assumptions.

Figure 6

Average Homicide Cost in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Rest of the World, 2022



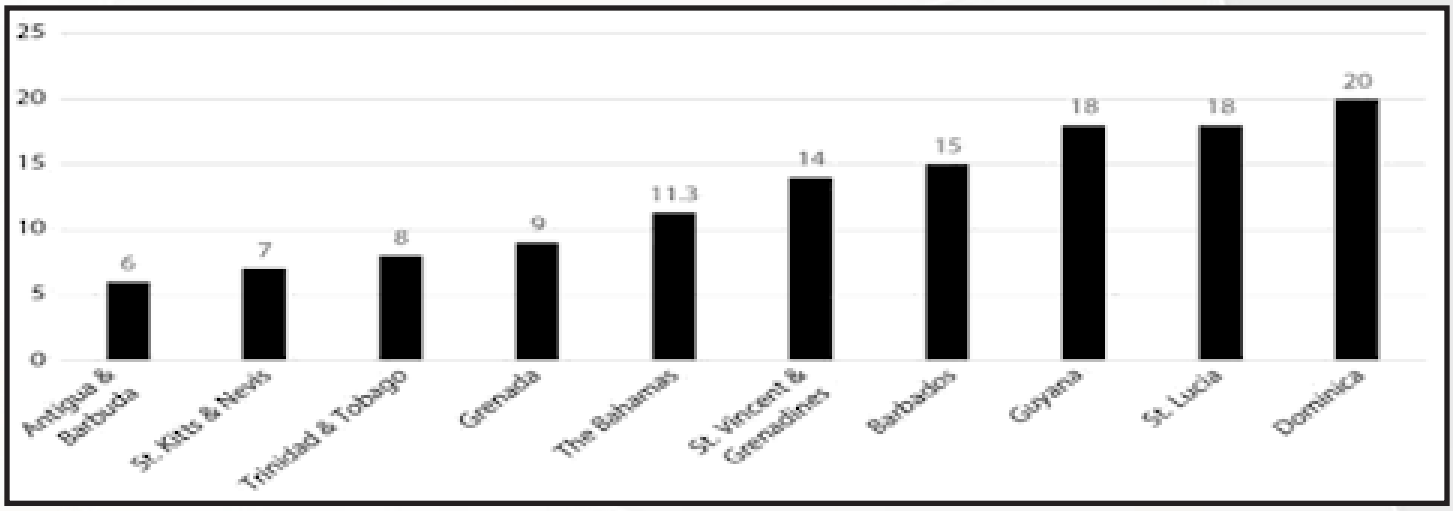
Source: Authors' (Perez-Vincent, Puebla & Alvarado, 2024 calculations based on sources and assumptions in Simple averages calculated among the countries in each region: LAC (22 countries analysed in the study); North America (2 countries); Africa (24 countries); Asia (36 countries); Europe (38 countries); and Oceania (8 countries).

These statistics emphasise the pervasive need to prevent and control criminal behaviour, which continues to be a critical public health priority worldwide, especially for Trinidad and Tobago. Furthermore, the "Crime, Violence, and Development: Trends, Costs and Policy Options in the Caribbean," (UNODC-World Bank Report, 2007) highlighted that the high incidence of crime and violence in the region was caused by the increase in weapons used in criminal acts and illicit drugs and narcotics trafficking. This is supported by other studies which have also pointed to the connection between violence and firearm availability (Baird et al., 2023; Sobers, et al., 2025; Wells et al., 2010). Thus, at a regional symposium in Trinidad and Tobago in April 2023, the leaders of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM, 2023), recognised the need for a holistic approach to prevent and control crime by incorporating sectors such as academia, culture, sports, family and religious institutions. This approach was reiterated at the 46th Heads of Government meeting in Georgetown, Guyana in February 2024 (CARICOM, 2024). This framework aligns with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2004) four step public health approach to violence: define and monitor the problem, identify risk and protection factors, develop and test prevention strategies and assure widespread adoption. Additionally, the course of action by CARICOM members is essential, given that crime and violence among children, youths and adults is multi-dimensional.

As such, crime prevention and control by governments must include a simultaneous, comprehensive, multi-domain assessment of the multiple risk factors, early onset offending that begins in early childhood continues into adolescence and adulthood, while increasing the protective resources that are tailored to the specific needs of individuals, and utilise evidence-based practices. This holistic approach is underscored by the statistics from a newspaper article, on the Symposium on Crime (Alexander, Trinidad and Tobago Guardian Newspaper, 2023), in which the previous Police Commissioner of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Erla Harewood-Christopher stated that an analysis of violent crime in Trinidad and Tobago significantly highlighted that youths between the ages of 15 to 29 years were the country's main offenders of violent crime and also the victims of crime. Further statistics provided by the Assistant Superintendent of Prisons, Winfield Walker (2024), explained that forty-two children between the ages of 12 to 18 currently being incarcerated at the Youth Training and Rehabilitation Centre in Trinidad and Tobago (YTRC) were charged with an array of criminal offences which ranged from possession of firearms to armed robbery, shooting with intent, robbery with violence, kidnapping and even murder (Hassanali, Trinidad and Tobago Guardian Newspaper, 2024). Also, a study conducted by Seepersad and colleagues (2025) which examined 18,000 Form 5 youths (equivalent to Grade 10 in the United States) in 306 schools in the Caribbean region found a significant number of youths were members of criminal gangs (See Figure 7).

Figure 7

Percentage of School Youth in Caribbean Countries Who Self-Reported That They Are Gang Members



Source: Authors: Seepersad, R., Bailey, C. & Mohammed, L. (2025)

Therefore, the recent cooperation between Trinidad and Tobago and the United States to combat narcotics and arms trafficking connected to Venezuela illustrates a coordinated strategy aimed at reinforcing preventive efforts. Also, a Caribbean firearms study, "A Weapons Compass Report" by Fabre and colleagues in partnership with the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) and Small Arms Survey (2023) observed that on average, firearms were used in over half of all the homicide cases recorded across the Caribbean region. Trinidad and Tobago emerged as one of the most impacted countries, with approximately 78 percent of its homicides committed by firearms. Building on the success of the initial collaboration, a second phase was launched in 2025, "Pathway to Policy: Integrating Security and Public Health Responses to Firearms Trafficking and Violence in the Caribbean." This initiative was jointly led by CARICOM IMPACS, Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), the George Alleyne Chronic Disease Research Centre at the University of the West Indies (GA-CDRC-UWI), and the Small Arms Survey (2025). This Caribbean project emphasised the value of a multi-domain approach which aimed at converting the evidence and recommendations from the Caribbean Firearms Study into policy measures to address firearm-related violence. The report highlighted that the circulation of illicit weapons in multiple countries promotes gang activities and also contributes to broader security challenges, including the increasing recruitment of children and adolescents into armed gangs and criminal networks, further exacerbating the rates of crime. Despite ongoing challenges and high crime rates, the research and initiatives undertaken by the Caribbean countries represent a significant advancement in the right direction toward prevention and control of crime. These efforts highlight the critical importance of sustained public health measures, evidence-based research and the region's shared commitment to understanding the factors influencing crime among individuals through comprehensive and multi-sectoral strategies.

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Understanding the Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict, Burnout, and Police Performance in Trinidad and Tobago



Introduction

Police work in Trinidad and Tobago involves high job demands that often lead to work-family conflict, burnout and turnover intentions among police officers. Utilising the Job Demands-Resources framework, this study surveyed 310 police officers in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) to examine how work-family conflict relates to burnout and turnover intentions, whether affective commitment moderates these effects, and what impacts these might have for overall police performance and public safety.

Policing is widely recognised as one of the most demanding and stressful professions globally. Officers often contend with extended work hours, irregular shifts, and frequent exposure to high-risk and violent conditions (Johnson et al., 2005; Queirós et al., 2020; Violanti et al., 2016). Trinidad and Tobago's policing environment is no different - long shifts, high job demands, high crime rates and resource constraints, to name a few. Police officers are tasked with maintaining public order, solving crimes, and enforcing the law across diverse jurisdictions. In recent years, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) has faced sustained public scrutiny for its limited effectiveness in mitigating escalating crime rates, as well as for persistent concerns related to corruption and organisational inefficiencies. Despite its relatively small population, the country struggles with rising crime rates with homicides surpassing 620 in 2024, resulting in one of the highest per-capita rates in Latin America and the Caribbean (Plummer, 2024). Some improvement has been seen recently, however, with Trinidad and Tobago's homicide rate declining to 342 as at December 2025 (Crime and Problem Analysis Unit, TTPS).

Accordingly, recent scholarship on policing in the Trinidad and Tobago context has focused on identifying the sociodemographic, organisational, and psychological determinants of police performance, highlighting the critical role of occupational stress and burnout in shaping officers' well-being, operational capacity, and propensity to consider leaving the organisation (Baek, Han & Seepersad 2022; Mohammed & Seepersad, 2024; Penco, 2024). These pressures make balancing professional and personal responsibilities challenging. In Trinidad and Tobago, where family life and social activities such as "liming" hold cultural significance (Clarke & Charles, 2012; World Trade Press, 2010), this tension can be particularly pronounced. Such competing demands often lead to work-family conflict, defined as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Left unmanaged, this conflict can negatively affect individuals, their families, the organisations that they work for, and public safety.

The World Health Organisation (2019) describes burnout as a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that is not successfully managed. Burnout manifests as emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced professional efficacy. In policing, burnout often drives employees to consider leaving their jobs as a means of escaping stress. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory posits that high job demands, such as work-family conflict, coupled with insufficient coping resources, lead to strain and burnout. Empirical evidence supports a positive correlation between work-family conflict and burnout (Reichl et al., 2014). Thus, as conflict between work and family roles intensifies, burnout becomes more likely. This study therefore sought to examine whether burnout mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intentions; whether conflicting demands created stress, which manifested as exhaustion and disengagement, ultimately increasing the desire to quit. This study also considered affective commitment, an employee's emotional attachment to their organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990), as a potential buffer. This study hypothesised that officers with strong affective commitment may remain loyal despite stress, reducing the likelihood of turnover even when burnout occurs (Duffy et al., 2018).

Methodology and Results

A quantitative, cross-sectional design was used for this study. Questionnaires were administered in person to approximately 425 officers, and responses were obtained from 312 participants. Following data cleaning and screening procedures, two surveys were removed, resulting in a final analytic sample of 310 officers. The survey took approximately 35 minutes to complete, and collection occurred over a 6-month period. Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the primary researcher. Permission was subsequently obtained from the Ministry of National Security. Participants were asked to indicate their age, gender, ethnicity, educational level, rank and number of years of service to the organisation. Gender and occupational tenure were included as control variables due to their established influence on turnover intentions. Participants were informed that their responses would be kept confidential. Standardised scales measured work-family conflict, burnout, affective commitment, and turnover intentions. Unless otherwise noted, respondents indicated their agreement with each item on a Likert-type scale (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Regression analyses supported all three hypotheses: (a) Hypothesis #1: Work-family conflict significantly predicted burnout ($b = .4509$, $t = 9.76$, $p < .001$); (b) Hypothesis #2: Burnout mediated the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intentions ($b = .2131$, 95% CI [.1306, .3145]), and (c) Hypothesis #3: Affective commitment moderated the burnout–turnover link (index = -.0516, 95% CI [-.0960, -.0044]), confirming its buffering effect. Results show that work-family conflict significantly predicts burnout, which mediates its impact on turnover intentions. Affective commitment buffers the burnout turnover link, reducing the likelihood of leaving the job. Findings highlight the need for strategies to manage work-family

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conflict and strengthen organisational commitment to improve retention.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined how work-family conflict, burnout, and affective commitment interact to influence turnover intentions among Trinidad and Tobago police officers. Consistent with JD-R theory, work-family conflict and high job demands were found to be linked to burnout, which in turn predicted turnover intentions. Importantly, affective commitment emerged as a personal resource, mitigating the impact of burnout on turnover.

These findings underscore the need for organisational strategies to be strategically implemented to improve office well-being, reduce work-family conflict and burnout while fostering commitment. Interventions might include flexible scheduling, wellness programs, and initiatives that strengthen officers' sense of belonging and organisational support. These measures will enhance organisational stability, police performance and by extension positively impact public safety. These findings are quite relevant to other developing countries which have similar occupational and systemic challenges.

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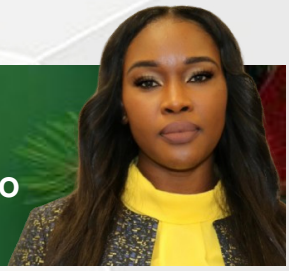
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Winning Hearts and Minds:
Police Perspectives on Building Legitimacy in Trinidad and Tobago



Police legitimacy, the belief that the police are entitled to exercise authority and should be voluntarily obeyed is foundational to effective policing. Yet in many parts of the Global South, including the Caribbean, police legitimacy remains fragile due to historical, structural, and socio-political conditions. This highlight offers an important contribution to this understudied area by examining the strategies used by community-policing officers assigned to the *Hearts and Minds (H&M)* program to build trust in high-crime, low-trust communities. Based on interviews with officers participating in the initiative, the study reveals how community engagement, relationship-building, and efforts to address local residents' concerns shape police attempts to rebuild legitimacy in communities deeply affected by gang and gun violence, police mistrust, and colonial policing legacies. The following essay synthesises key insights from the publication, drawing directly on excerpts from the text.

Historical and Social Context

Understanding the challenges facing the Hearts and Minds program requires attention to Trinidad and Tobago's policing context, which is historically rooted in colonial institutions. Policing traditions stem from British colonial rule, which emphasised "hierarchy, discipline, and the suppression of unrest over community engagement" (Benton & Ford, 2018; Brereton, 2010). These legacies have contributed to longstanding patterns of public scepticism toward the police (Adams, 2020; Pino, 2009).

Compounding this historical mistrust is the contemporary reality of violent crime. Trinidad and Tobago consistently ranks among the countries with the highest homicide rates globally; in 2022 the rate was 40.4 per 100,000 persons (UNODC, 2025). Much of this violence is attributed to gang activity disproportionately affecting young men of African descent (Maguire et al., 2008). This environment has left residents in high-crime communities fearful, distrustful of police motives, and convinced that the police are either ineffective or complicit in violence and corruption. For example, Transparency International (2024) ranks Trinidad and Tobago 82nd out of 180 countries for perceived corruption, indicating "only a moderate level of public sector integrity". Against this backdrop, the Hearts and Minds initiative emerged as an effort to shift policing practices and rebuild public trust.

The Hearts and Minds Program

The Hearts and Minds program, launched in 2006, is a specialised community-policing initiative designed to improve relations between the police and communities experiencing persistent violence and mistrust. It functions within the wider structure of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS), which debatably relies on aggressive, enforcement-heavy strategies, particularly through divisional task forces targeting high-crime areas. The Hearts and Minds unit represents a significant departure from these enforcement-centric tactics.

Officers in the H&M unit focus on building trust through presence, familiarity, and responsiveness. They spend extended time inside communities, speak with residents, hold informal conversations, and create programs that respond to local needs. These activities contrast sharply with the historical "iron fist" style of policing many residents have experienced, which officers recount as often "unfair, brutal, and/or illegal". Over time, such engagement strategies aim to soften community perceptions and improve public attitudes toward the police.

Police–Community Relations: Barriers and Progress

At the outset of their assignments, H&M officers encountered residents who "not only did not trust them, but in some cases feared them". Residents viewed the police as an occupying force, consistent with prior research describing feelings of abandonment and harassment in high-crime communities (Haugen & Boutros, 2015). The officers reported that many residents had prior negative experiences with the police, including violence, corruption, or inaction. These perceptions were entrenched through years of adversarial policing approaches. Despite these substantial barriers, officers observed gradual improvements in trust and cooperation as the program progressed. Key strategies included listening to residents' concerns and designing community programs in response. Officers believed these efforts "were successful in improving public perceptions of police and willingness to work with police".

Significance for Police Legitimacy

A large per cent of scholarly literature on legitimacy is based on large Western democracies, there exists limited insights from post-colonial states shaped by different historical and structural dynamics (Harriott, 2000; Watson & Kerrigan, 2018). The findings of this work contribute to broader discussions on policing in the Global South, where research on legitimacy is comparatively limited. Trinidad and Tobago provides an important case where high crime, mistrust, and colonial legacies converge to shape the challenges of building legitimacy. The work reveals that community-policing strategies grounded

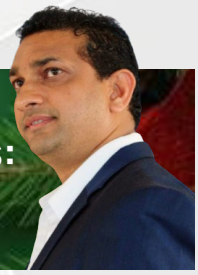
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in empathy, responsiveness, and relationship-building hold promise for strengthening police–community relations in distressed environments. Officers viewed themselves as ambassadors of a new style of policing aimed at reversing decades of hostility.

Conclusion

The Hearts and Minds initiative represents a meaningful shift toward more relational and legitimacy-focused policing in Trinidad and Tobago. Operating within communities marked by violence, fear, and entrenched mistrust, officers sought to replace adversarial policing practices with empathy, engagement, and responsiveness. The officers' accounts illustrate how thoughtful community-policing strategies may help repair damaged relationships and foster greater trust, even in challenging environments. In so doing, this work offers valuable insights into how police officers themselves conceptualise legitimacy-building efforts within the complex socio-historical realities of Trinidad and Tobago. Taken together, the study highlights both the promise and the challenges of transforming policing in contexts shaped by colonial histories, high levels of violence, and deep-seated skepticism toward state authority.

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US Kinetic Strategy Against Venezuelan Narco-Networks: Employing Intelligence as an Irregular Force Multiplier

The United States has recently escalated its anti-narcotics efforts in the Caribbean through a series of lethal military strikes on small vessels, which the US government alleges are transporting drugs from Venezuela. While the Trump administration frames these actions as a necessary campaign against "narco-terrorism," the justification for these kinetic strikes rests heavily on intelligence claims without the public release of corresponding evidence, raising profound questions about their legality under international and domestic law, and suggesting a policy goal that extends beyond simple drug interdiction.

Consequently, these kinetic strikes against drug-trafficking vessels linked to Venezuela's criminal-state nexus represents a decisive pivot from traditional law enforcement approaches to intelligence-driven unconventional warfare (UW). This strategic shift is considered necessary because the target—transnational criminal organisations (TCOs), deeply embedded within a hostile regime—operates in the "gray zone," blurring the lines between crime, insurgency, and state sponsorship. Under this framework, intelligence is not merely evidence; it is the essential weapon that justifies military action, ensures operational success, and serves the broader geopolitical objective of destabilisation and deterrence.

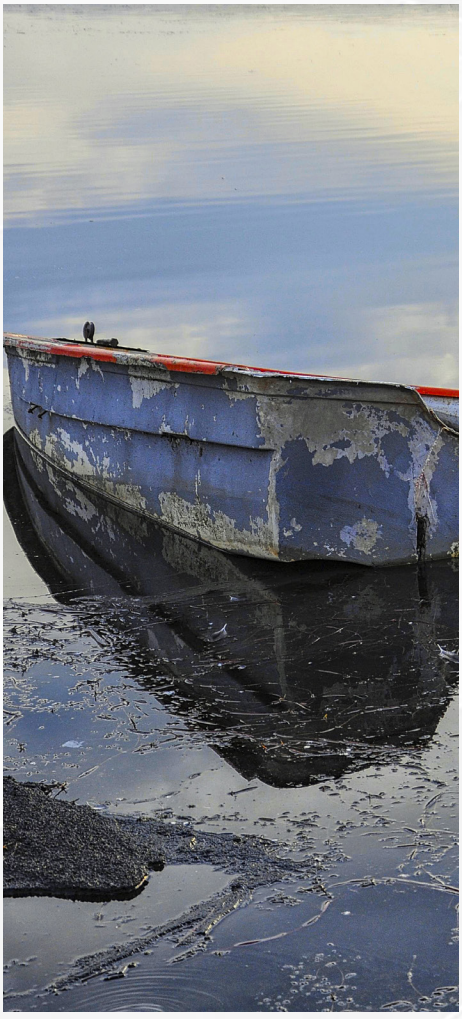
The first pillar of this strategy is the legal reclassification of the threat. Traditional law enforcement requires publicly releasable evidence to meet the high threshold of "proof beyond a reasonable doubt". However, the US government has classified these operations under the authority of Title 10 of the US Code, asserting that it is engaged in a Non-International Armed Conflict (NIAC) against designated "narco-terrorist" entities. This designation reframes the TCOs as unlawful combatants whose activities—namely, the mass trafficking of lethal narcotics into the US—constitute an armed attack justifying collective self-defense. This change is vital, as it shifts the evidentiary standard from criminal law to the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC), where kinetic strikes are justified by actionable intelligence that establishes the target's combatant status and military objective.

The second, and perhaps most critical, justification for relying exclusively on intelligence is the principle of operational security, a cornerstone of all unconventional warfare. UW relies heavily on clandestine sources and methods, including human intelligence (HUMINT), signals intelligence (SIGINT), and persistent Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets. These intelligence chains are fragile and irreplaceable. Were the US military required to reveal the raw data, wiretap transcripts, or the identity of sources in an open civilian court—as mandated by criminal law—it would irrevocably compromise the intelligence enterprise. Such exposure would allow sophisticated cartels to instantly adapt their routes, communications, and organisational security, effectively blinding US and allied forces against future operations. In a gray zone conflict, the preservation of intelligence sources is a strategic imperative that outweighs the temporary advantage of securing a civilian conviction.

Finally, the kinetic application of intelligence serves a clear and critical unconventional warfare objective: choking the financial capacity of the adversary. UW doctrine often targets the economic infrastructure that sustains an opposing government or non-state actor. In this context, the drug vessels and their cargo are not merely criminal assets; they are deemed "war-sustaining objects" that fund the political and military capacity of a destabilising regime. The speed and lethality of intelligence-driven strikes are essential for eliminating these mobile assets before they reach their destination. This strategy uses asymmetric force to achieve strategic ends, signaling to the regime that its illicit lifeline is under constant, immediate threat, thereby contributing to the broader goal of regional stability through political pressure.

In conclusion, the reliance on classified intelligence to authorise kinetic strikes against Venezuelan drug vessels is a strategic response to a complex threat that defies traditional state-versus-state conflict models. By leveraging intelligence to justify action under the Law of Armed Conflict, protecting its critical sources and methods, and achieving the unconventional goal of economic disruption, the US is executing a measured military strategy to protect its homeland security interests and exert pressure on destabilising actors in the Western Hemisphere.

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Fireworks Use in Trinidad and Tobago: Will New Legislation Work or a Total Ban?



The Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago recently met to debate the Summary Offences (Amendment) Bill, 2025 (popularly referred to as the "Fireworks Regulation Bill") tabled by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It was unanimously passed by all Members of Parliament in the House of Representatives (December 9, 2025) and the Senate (December 10, 2025), without any votes against or abstentions. Now referred to as The Summary Offences (Amendment) Act, 2025, the legislation was assented to by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on December 16, 2025.

There has been a steady advocacy campaign for many years in Trinidad and Tobago, and the passing of the Bill has been welcomed by many animal and environmental activists, health and related care professionals, and citizens generally. The use of fireworks has been a matter of great concern within Trinidad and Tobago for decades, from animal and environmental activists raising concerns for animal welfare and noise pollution, to citizens worried about the way it affects the ailing, elderly, infants, and vulnerable groups (such as the differently abled, visually impaired, trauma survivors, etc). In fact, as recently as October 2025, a three-day old baby is believed to have died due to noisy fireworks discharged outside its' home (Lal, 2025). We note that a National Animal Control Committee (NACC) was recently established by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, a coalition of all key animal welfare organisations/stakeholders in the country. We view this as a signal that animal welfare issues are now on the public policy agenda.

BAN Fireworks in Trinidad and Tobago recently created a graphic video depicting the fear and confusion experienced by animals when fireworks are discharged (https://www.facebook.com/groups/478717478997421/). The Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association (TTBWA) welcomed the Government's recent legislative update as "an act of compassion toward animals, infants, and the elderly, but also a crucial step in safeguarding the rights, dignity, and well-being of persons who are blind and visually impaired. For persons who are blind, sound is one of the primary tools used for orientation, safety, and independence. Unexpected, uncontrolled, and excessive noise from fireworks creates disorientation, anxiety, and heightened vulnerability. In some cases, it can result in dangerous situations, such as difficulty navigating in public spaces, triggering trauma, or confusion that puts blind persons at risk of accidents" (TTBWA, 2025).

Citizens Against Noise Pollution of Trinidad and Tobago (CANPTT) said that while the Bill is a "step forward" as it "marks the first time that explosive pyrotechnics are being addressed as a public health and national safety issue", it fears that the legislation "remains incomplete and insufficient to protect citizens" (Diaz, 2025). The Trinidad and Tobago Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (TTSPCA)'s Chairman, Sita Kuruvilla, lamented that every holiday season, during Carnival, and related times where loud music is often played and fireworks are discharged, it brings with it the same challenges for animal welfare. She said that animals "… will often completely lose their senses, and they'll just start running or trying to escape from the loud noise. So that is why we see them very distressed, running through the streets, or trying to escape from even their homes, pushing through barbed wire or fencing, and becoming injured, or running in front of cars and so on" (John, 2025).

Roger Marshall of the Fireworks Action Coalition of T&T (FACTT)/Animals 360 Foundation said that his group considers "…this to be good progress, and it leaves the door open to more controls if citizens continue to flout the law and endanger and inconvenience the law-abiding and vulnerable citizens. Life is about compromise, and we think all citizens will benefit from this fireworks legislation advancing our safety, security and peace of mind. Of course, effective enforcement, responsible approval of permits outside of the permitted hours and respectful behaviours by the wider population will determine the true impact of the legislation" (FACTT, 2025). The Trinidad and Tobago Association for Retired Persons (TTARP) has also issued prior similar caution be exercised with the health and well-being of the elderly in society, and Elspeth Duncan of Venus: Doggess of Love in Tobago, a tireless supporter for a total ban on fireworks use in Trinidad and Tobago said that there are far more lucrative and innovative alternatives to traditional fireworks - ""No Fireworks" presents a red carpet of opportunity for enterprising citizens to conceptualise and materialise new businesses, skills, products and horizons in the realm of wholesome, innovative celestial entertainment" (Duncan, 2025).

Independent and Opposition Senators during the debate agreed that this is an industry which is in dire need of "regulation", and lamented the reports received over time from, for example, "the Emperor Valley Zoo, poultry farms and veterinary clinics about the distress [and death] which fireworks cause the animals there" (Chan Tak, 2025). The Honourable Attorney General, in wrapping up the debate, pointed out that this legislation is "a work in progress," indicating that the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago will continue its deliberations on the use of fireworks and any alternatives (for example, "silent fireworks") which would ensure greater comfort by all (Douglas, 2025).

Official data is generally sparse. However, in 2018, the 5th Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on an Inquiry into the Adverse Health Effects of Fireworks was laid in the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The number of injuries related to fireworks and similar explosives for the period 2013-2017 was twenty-five (25) cases, with eleven (11) of those recorded due to scratch bombs (JSC Report, 2018, p. 28; see also Law Reform Commission, 2020). Overall, legislative changes were recommended, an increase in fines for the misuse/violation of the existing laws regarding the discharge of fireworks, improvements in law enforcement, better collaboration amongst key agencies (Police, Fire, utility companies, Environment Management Authority, etc.), research be implemented to guide policy, and an extensive public education drive be undertaken.

The Environmental Management Authority (EMA) published

the results from a public survey it conducted on the use and impacts of fireworks in Trinidad and Tobago. The results revealed that dogs (60%) were the main pet affected by fireworks, followed by cats (17%), birds (13%), and other types of pets (10%). Participants said they experienced, for example, anxiety, headaches, hypertension/chest pains and PTSD triggers; those with existing health conditions such as Alzheimer's, Bipolar Disorder and Autism were at higher risk for overall stress and discomfort from the explosive noise from fireworks. Domesticated animals and wildlife will generally experience similar trauma, including death, running away and becoming lost, seizures, distress and related forms of erratic behaviour due to the confusion caused by the fireworks. Overall, 47% of the respondents said they "were in favour of banning the use of traditional (noisy) fireworks and allowing the use of noise-reducing fireworks", while 35% said all fireworks should be banned. Among the EMA's recommendations included a ban on the importation of traditional fireworks, use of noise reducing fireworks, restricted use and time of use (special holidays and celebrations), designated spaces for the discharge of fireworks, education and sensitisation of citizens and increased fines and penalties for non-compliance (EMA, 2020).

The primary aims of the amendments of the Summary Offences Act, Chapter 11:02 are to (1) regulate the use of fireworks, and (2) to make breaches of the said law a ticket offence. This creates a sense of accountability among the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and encourages law enforcers to act accordingly when complaints are made by distressed callers. The following are the key amendments of the Summary Offences (Amendment) Bill, 2025, and which appear to have taken into consideration the major requests by stakeholders:

- The Bill seeks to amend Section 2 of the Act to revise definitions of certain terms, such as "fireworks" and insert new definitions, such as "toy fireworks"
- The Bill seeks to amend the Act by repealing Sections 99 to 101 of the Act and substituting new Sections 99 to 101A-I. Among these amendments are:
    - The use of fireworks is now restricted within specified areas, such as hospitals, airports, registered animal shelters, farms where animals are reared, Forest Reserves and National Parks, and the Zoo
    - A permit is required to discharge fireworks, with the exception of public holidays and on "Old Year's Night" into New Year's Day
    - Fireworks may be discharged between the hours of 8:00pm and 9:00pm on public holidays; and between the hours of 11:30pm and 12:30am on the night of December 31 into the morning of January 1
- The Bill also proposed the amendment of the laws regarding evidence and seeks to insert a consequential amendment of the Evidence Act, Chapter 7:02, to include video recordings being accepted as evidence. This is a profound step in a great direction for what can be admissible in court and useful in the pursuit of justice.

Given widespread lobbying for the reduction of noise pollution and for the peace and safety of humans, animals and the environment, severe restrictions or total bans on fireworks now exist in countries such as Singapore, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Germany, Ireland, Chile and Australia, India, China, the United States of America and some countries within the European Union. A total ban is similarly encouraged for Trinidad and Tobago. In the interim, we encourage the Government to explore the use of, for example, eco-friendly and increasingly popular alternatives such as laser and drone light shows, glow sticks, biodegradable confetti and eco-friendly sparklers, LED light displays, fog machines, bubble makers, virtual and augmented reality fireworks, low-noise and silent fireworks, projection mapping and water displays, as the evidence to date illustrate the detrimental effects of fireworks use on humans, wildlife and vulnerable populations' health and safety (see, for example, Bateman, et al., 2023; Chen, et al., 2022; EMA, 2020; Shetty, 2024; Wellbrock et al., 2020). Local importers should be given licences for low-noise fireworks and eco-friendly alternatives only. We remain concerned that no permits are required for the use of fireworks on public holidays and December 31 in the revised legislation. Permits should be required at all times, and it is hoped that the Act will be amended in due course. And of course, pet/animal owners need to be responsible and secure them when the discharge of fireworks is expected.

Will the updated legislation work, or do we need a total ban on fireworks in Trinidad and Tobago? Local importers of fireworks have issued official releases indicating their support for the recent amendments which seek to regulate the industry; and that public safety and responsible use of fireworks remain a key objective by their companies (Sombrano, 2025). We adopt a "wait and see" approach with regard to the evidence within the next calendar year. Will the new guidelines be observed by the users of fireworks in Trinidad and Tobago? Whether during the time frames and days allowed those most affected will no longer be affected; whether law enforcement and the judicial system has the capacity and resolve to treat with offenders by adopting a zero tolerance approach to anyone violating the law; whether the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, seemingly determined to make good on its election promise to treat with the use of fireworks and reduce noise pollution for the benefit of all - will these legislative amendments be



effective in reducing noise pollution and all of the negative impacts on the animals, elderly, infants and vulnerable groups; or, whether they will have to decide on a total ban on the importation and use of fireworks in Trinidad and Tobago should the legislation and enforcement mechanisms fail? Time will tell.

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Understanding Youth Delinquency in Guyana: What the Latest Research Reveals



Youth delinquency remains one of the most pressing social challenges facing Guyana, a country grappling with rapid economic change, persistent poverty, and evolving community structures. While policymakers have introduced numerous youth-focused initiatives over the years, there has been limited empirical research on what drives delinquent behaviour among young people specifically within the Guyanese context. A new study by Princess Bhagoutie and Linda Mohammed of the University of Trinidad and Tobago begins to fill this gap, offering valuable insight into the risk factors most strongly associated with delinquency among Guyanese youth ages 10 to 29.

Drawing on data from more than 2,300 young people living in six high-crime communities, the researchers examined how four psychological and social factors—self-efficacy, self-control, parental supervision, and guilt neutralisation—relate to behaviours such as drug use, carrying weapons, attacking someone with a weapon, and gang fights. What they found not only aligns with global criminological research but also highlights several pathways that may be particularly relevant for Guyana.

Why Context Matters

Although youth delinquency has been studied extensively in North America and Europe, the Caribbean has its own historical, cultural, and economic dynamics that can shape behaviour in distinct ways. Guyana, for example, is a multi-ethnic society with high levels of poverty, unemployment, and community-level violence. According to the Guyana Police Force, more than 1,300 juveniles were charged between 2010 and 2020, and many young offenders are rearrested within a few years. Regional studies also show that justice-involved youth often become more deeply embedded in crime after coming into contact with the justice system. Understanding which factors predict delinquency in Guyana is therefore crucial—not only for designing effective interventions but also for preventing young people from entering cycles of violence and criminality.

The Study: A Closer Look

The research used data from the Community, Family and Youth Resilience (CFYR) program—one of the most comprehensive youth surveys ever conducted in Guyana. More than 2,300 participants were randomly selected from high-crime communities such as Sophia, Lodge, Corriverton, and Kitty. They answered detailed questions about their behaviour, community environment, parental relationships, and personal attitudes. The study focused on four key risk factors commonly studied in criminology: Self-efficacy - A person's belief in their ability to control their own life; Self-control - The capacity to resist impulses and consider the long-term consequences of actions; Parental supervision - How closely parents or guardians monitor a child's whereabouts and activities, and Guilt neutralisation - The mental justifications young people use to rationalise wrongdoing. The researchers also considered age, gender, and education, allowing them to understand how these demographic factors interact with the psychological and social variables.

What the Study Found

Guilt neutralisation: The strongest predictor of delinquency: Across every category of delinquent behaviour—drug use, carrying weapons, attacking others, gang fights, and total delinquency—guilt neutralisation emerged as the most powerful predictor. Young people who frequently justified wrongdoing was substantially more likely to engage in harmful or illegal behaviour.

This finding echoes decades of international research, which shows that when youths convince themselves that "nobody gets hurt" or that victims "deserve it," it becomes easier for them to commit offences without feeling remorse. In the Guyanese sample, guilt neutralisation was consistently linked to higher engagement in violence and drug use, making it a prime target for future intervention programs.

Self-control: A significant but selective predictor: Low self-control was the second most important predictor. Youths with lower self-control were more likely to use drugs, engage in gang fights, and show higher overall levels of delinquency. However, unlike in many international studies, self-control did *not* predict weapon carrying or attacking others with a weapon in the Guyanese sample.

This may reflect cultural or contextual differences, or it may be a measurement issue, since the study used only two items to assess self-control. Nonetheless, the findings reinforce the well-established idea that impulsivity and poor emotional regulation play a significant role in youth risk-taking.

Parental supervision: Protective, but limited: Parental supervision reduced the likelihood of carrying concealed weapons and engaging in overall delinquency. It nearly reached significance for drug use but did not predict violent attacks or gang involvement. These mixed results suggest that parental monitoring helps but may not be enough on its own, especially for older adolescents who are more heavily influenced by peers.

The study also noted that girls received higher levels of parental supervision than boys—possibly contributing to the lower levels of delinquency observed among female participants.

Self-efficacy: Surprisingly unrelated to delinquency: Unlike previous studies in other regions, self-efficacy did not predict any type of delinquent behaviour in the Guyanese sample. This does not mean that self-efficacy is unimportant in general; in fact, high self-efficacy is linked to better academic performance and resilience. But in this context, other factors—especially guilt neutralisation and self-control—appear to have a more direct impact on youth offending.

Implications for Guyana: The study points to several practical strategies for reducing youth delinquency. Address guilt neutralisation directly - Youth programs can incorporate cognitive-behavioural approaches that help young people challenge excuses and justifications for harmful behaviour.

Strengthen self-control early - Since self-control develops in childhood, parenting programs that emphasise emotional regulation, consistency, and positive discipline may help reduce future delinquency. Improve parental engagement - While supervision alone is not enough, combining it with positive parenting strategies—warmth, communication, and support—may produce stronger outcomes. Enhance educational opportunities - Keeping young people in school and helping them progress academically can reduce their likelihood of becoming involved in delinquent behaviour. Conduct more Caribbean-specific research - This study represents an important first step, but broader research across diverse communities is needed to understand how risk factors operate throughout Guyana and the wider region.

Conclusion

This study offers the most detailed analysis to date of the factors associated with youth delinquency in Guyana. The findings highlight the psychological processes—especially guilt neutralisation and self-control—that shape young people's decisions, as well as the social supports that can help steer them toward more positive futures. As Guyana continues to grow and transform, investing in youth development and targeted, evidence-based interventions will be essential for creating safer communities and expanding life opportunities for the nation's young people.

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Dr. Keron Ganpat

The ICPS takes great pleasure in congratulating our colleague Keron Ganpat (at right) on being conferred with his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) on October 24, 2025 at The University of the West Indies' (UWI) Annual Graduation Ceremony at the St. Augustine Campus. Photo below shows him accepting same from UWI's Vice Chancellor Professor Sir Hilary Beckles.



Dr. Ganpat also holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in History, Master of Arts (MA) in Intelligence and Security, and a Master of Science (MSc) in Criminology and Criminal Justice. His dissertation focused on terrorism and radicalisation in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean. He is currently expanding his research in the areas of terrorism, intelligence and national security.

Best wishes for continued success Dr. Ganpat!







Chantelle Cummings



Vidya Lall



Ruth Albornoz

Chantelle Cummings, Vidya Lall and Ruth Albornoz, Co-Presenters - Paper on Experiences of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Challenges Associated with Accessing Support Services Among Female Venezuelan Migrants in Trinidad and Tobago at Panel I: Bearing Witness: Migrant Narratives in Transregional Spaces. The International Conference on Migrant and Refugee Issues in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean. December 10, 2025 (for Full Research Team Linda Mohammed, Chantelle Cummings, Andy Short, Casandra Harry, Vidya Lall, Ruth Albornoz, Daina Paul)

For more information: https://sta.uwi.edu/fhe/cll/conferences/; https://www.instagram.com/p/DQoxoNJDWOZ/; https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gu4uu6eJAKtnjrEq2HpRKTg-Vt2078p6/view

As part of its continuing outreach/public education activities, the Institute of Criminology and Public Safety (ICPS), together with colleagues at the Student Recruitment Unit (SRU) and other UTT units, attended the Education Expo on August 18, 2025, UTT's UnaTTion Fair on September 10, 2025 and St. Stephen's College Career Fair on October 30, 2025:

At Education Expo

ICPS Student Volunteers Naomi Bishop (at left) and Kyra Martinez (centre) joined Mr. Keron Ganpat, Instructor II and Vidya Lall, Senior Instructor at the Education Expo hosted at Gulf City Mall on August 18, 2025, together with Dr. Natasha Dass-Mahabir, ICPS Assistant Professor also on site giving some advice to a visitor to the ICPS booth







UTT UnaTTion Fair

UTT's UnaTTion Fair held at the Pt. Lisas Campus on September 10, 2025 was a resounding success. Organised by the Student Support Services Unit (SSU), students were able to meet with various Faculty, Student Guild representatives, fellow students and corporate stakeholders, took part in many exciting activities, toured labs and got much needed information from Registry and Accounting staff. Dr. Linda Mohammed, Assistant Professor and Programme Leader, ICPS (at centre) was on site with staff members Dr. Natasha Dass-Mahabir (at left), Mr. Keron Ganpat (at right) and Ms. Vidya Lall (not in photo). ICPS Student/Guild Volunteers were on hand representing the Tamana Campus – Kirchele Rodriguez, Jada-Marie Emmanuel-George, Zuri Swann and Utonia Nicome (from left to right). Dr. Derrick Balladin (top photo) popped in to visit us at the ICPS booth

At St. Stephen's College Career Fair

St. Stephen's College hosted their Career Fair on October 30, 2025. On hand representing the ICPS was Dr. Natasha Dass-Mahabir (at right) and Dr. Keron Ganpat (at left)





Nicholas McKenzie

Mr. Nicholas McKenzie is another distinguished graduate of the UTT Institute of Criminology and Public Safety (ICPS). He is a serving member of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force for the past 18 years. Mr. McKenzie graduated with his BASc in 2023, and is now currently enrolled in the Master of Science (MSc) programme in Operational Maritime Management at the UTT Maritime Campus as he seeks a career in this sector upon resettlement. He says that ***"The BASc in Criminology and Public Safety gave me a better understanding of the social and individual aspects of crime, victimisation and responses to crime and deviance. The ICPS lecturers were always supportive and encouraged me as a working mature student. The courses helped build my skill set, particularly with regard to evaluating evidence, critical thinking, ethics and problem solving. I recommend this Criminology and Public Safety programme to anyone in law enforcement."*** *Mr. McKenzie is actively involved in sporting activities, in particular basketball, and serves as the Medic for the Defense Force basketball teams.*

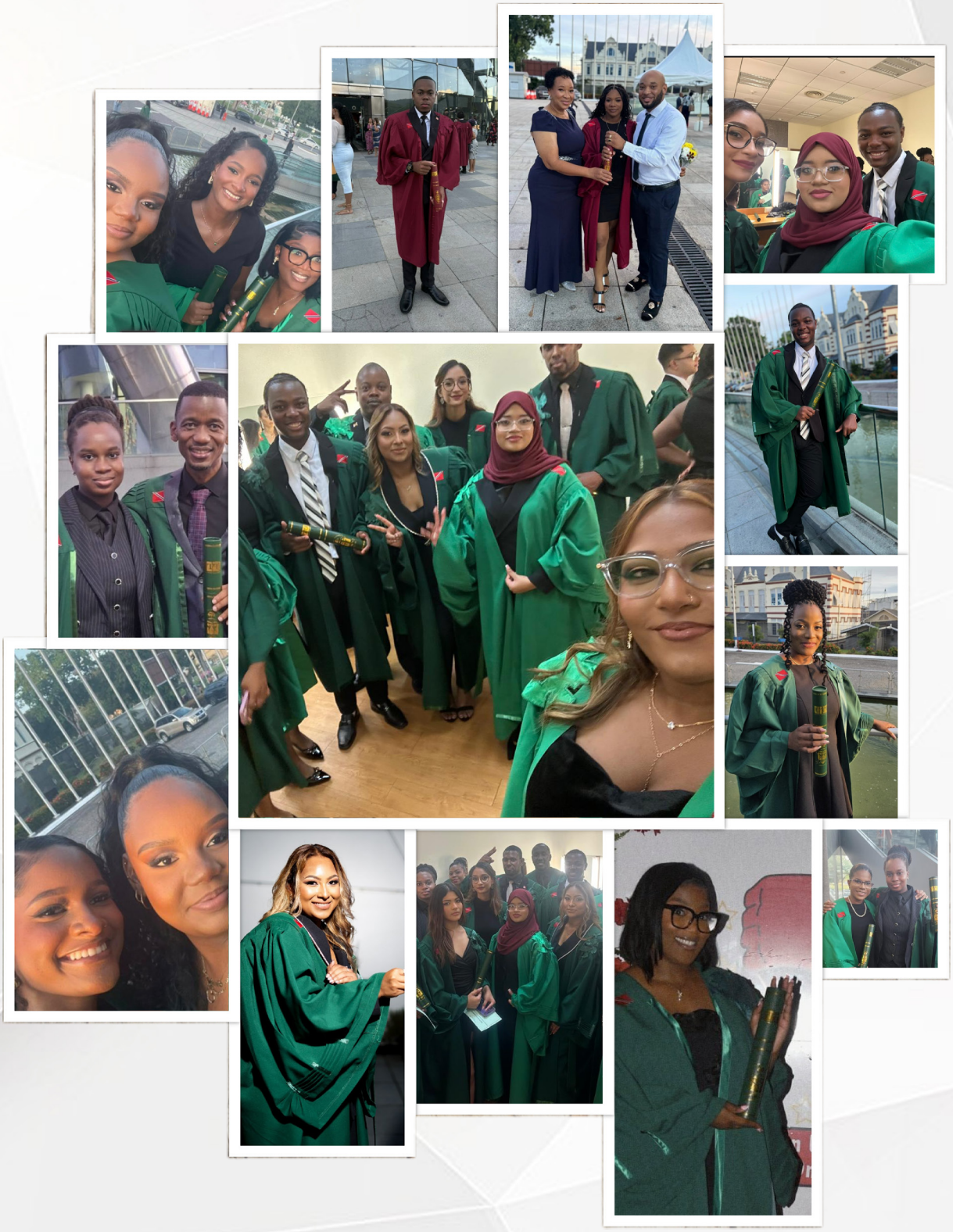


Keston Thomas



Mr. Keston Thomas graduated with a Bachelor of Applied Science (BASc) in Criminology and Public Safety from the UTT Institute of Criminology and Public Safety (ICPS) in 2024. Recently retired from the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard after 21 years of service, he says: ***"In preparing for retirement, one of the entitlements of my profession is Resettlement Training. This is geared to prepare military personnel for transition back into the civilian working world with a marketable skillset. In 2021, I opted to do mine at the UTT. The BASc in Criminology and Public Safety was the perfect option for me given the range of courses offered. Also, as a patriotic citizen, I recognised that I must do something to positively impact society, especially with young persons. The medium I use to achieve this is sport. Being an ex-basketball player and having a passion to work and develop young people's skills, I started coaching basketball in 2022. An opportunity was presented to me to join the coach staff of one of the most reputable basketball clubs in the country, Spartans TT. The club currently operates at the YMCA, located at Benbow Road, Port-of-Spain and has over 100 members, both male and female, ranging from 8–23 years of age. Coaching is something that I have grown to love. It has allowed me to interpret and view life from a different perspective especially having to deal with young people from different socio-economic backgrounds. At times you are not only a coach to these young minds but a father figure, counsellor and friend. So far it is all positive and I will continue to work with young persons for the betterment of our country. I encourage all of you, and my colleagues across all sectors in national security to do the same."***

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR ICPS GRADUATES!
UTT's 2025 Presentation of Graduates - Day 1 - November 18th, 2025



Photos above show some of our graduating students. For full photo album, view: https://utt.edu.tt/?wk=36
For the full list of our ICPS graduating students, view: https://utt.edu.tt/uploads/graduation_2025_booklet.pdf

From BASc in Criminology and Public Safety to MSc in Cybersecurity!

The ICPS takes great pride in recognising and congratulating four of its' Alumni who completed the Bachelor in Applied Science (BASc) in Criminology and Public Safety in 2023, and who moved on to the Master of Science (MSc) in Cybersecurity offered by the UTT Information and Communications Technology (ICT) unit, graduating last month November 2025. Continued best wishes to you all!



Nicholas McCall

Courtney Charles





Kiowa Bhola

Emerald John



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SPOTLIGHT ON CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY

A Quarterly Newsletter by

THE INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY AND PUBLIC SAFETY (ICPS)

Vol 6. No. 2. March 2026

The ICPS at UTT launched its online quarterly newsletter entitled ***Spotlight on Crime and Public Safety*** in December, 2020. Interdisciplinary in nature, it provides a space for local, regional and international academics, researchers, professionals, policymakers, students and stakeholders from diverse fields to share their views. Each issue features enlightening articles, commentaries, important updates, announcements and much more. We also encourage the submission of creative efforts (for example, poems, photography, posters, quotes and the like). Articles/Commentaries should be between 800-1,000 words in length. References or Bibliographies should be prepared using the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th Edition)*. We are now inviting submissions for our March 2026 open-themed issue.

OPEN-THEMED ISSUE

- Submission Route: ✉ icpsnewsletter@utt.edu.tt
- Submission Deadline: February 15th, 2026
- Scheduled Publication Date: March 15th, 2026

Upcoming Issue:
Open-Themed Issue - March 2026

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS



VISIT https://utt.edu.tt/icps/categories/icps-newsletters
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ON CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY

DID YOU KNOW?

DID YOU KNOW that from 25 November to 10 December 2025 marked the 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-based Violence? The 2025 theme is "UNiTE to End Digital Violence against All Women and Girls"....Violence against women and girls affects one in three women. It is a global human rights emergency that must stop. As the world marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – one of the most progressive international agreements on women's rights to date – the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE 2025 campaign focuses on one of the fastest-growing forms of abuse: digital violence against women and girls. This year's campaign is also a reminder that digital safety is central to gender equality." Do your part - become more aware, encourage others to practice online safety, volunteer where you can. For further information, view: https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/unite/theme

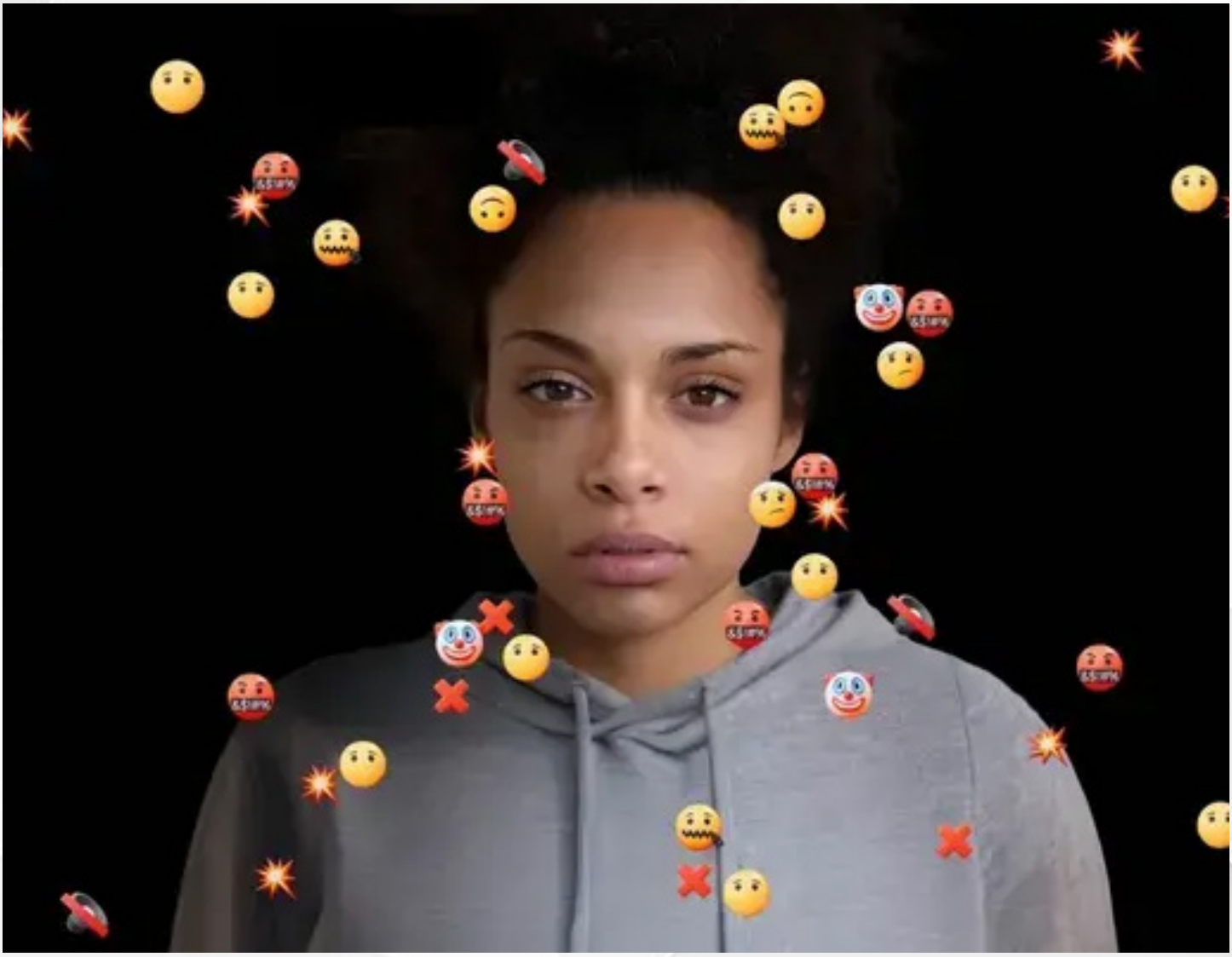
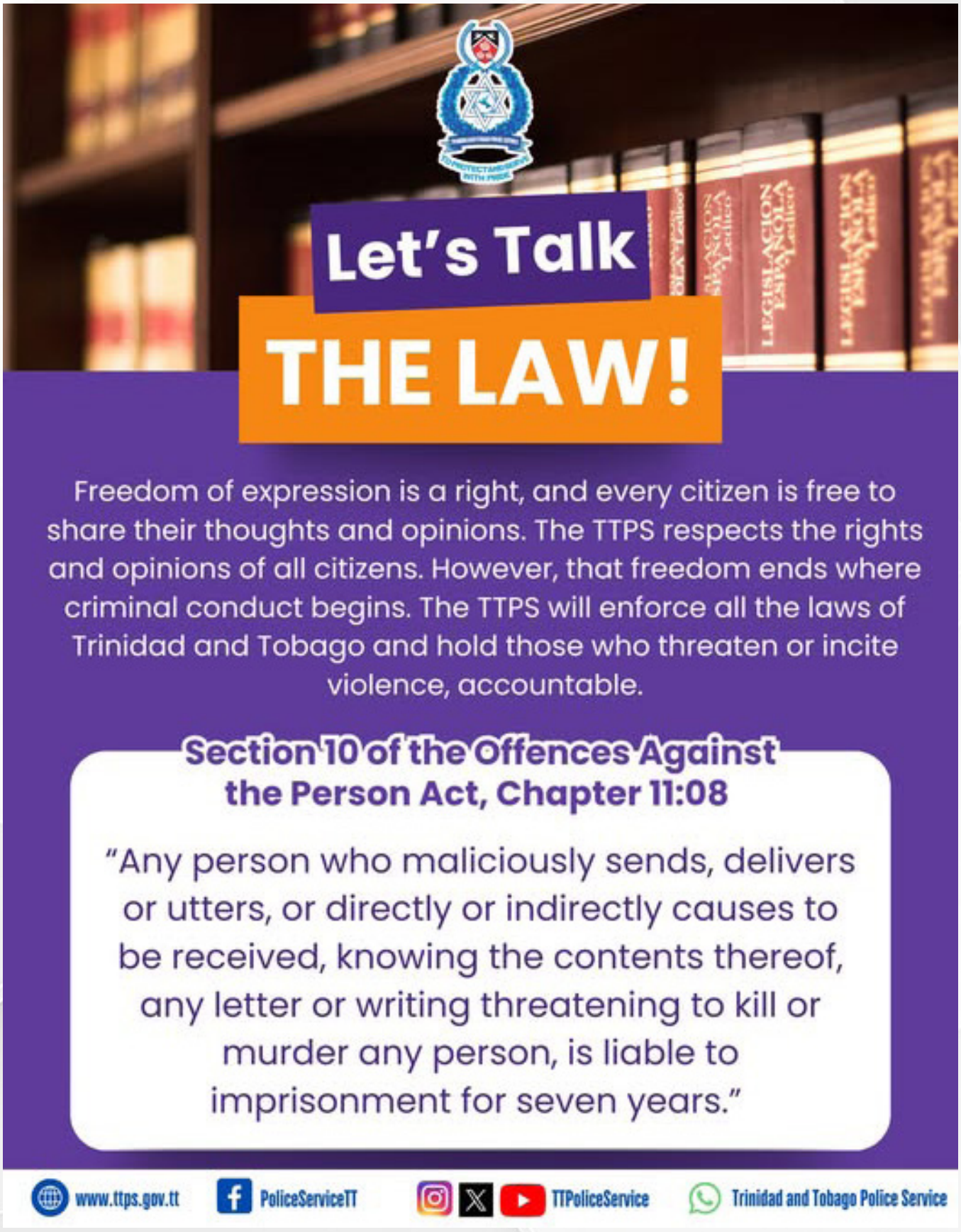


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"Sexual Offences"

a poem/spoken word by



Ryon Ramsey
Bachelor of Applied Science (B.A.Sc.)
in Criminology & Public Safety, Year 2

Once again oh courtroom would you hear my voice
loud as thunder rumbling vehemently, off of these four walls.
Our voices motif in perpetuity as long as your walls stand
may you knight my word with justice for those I defend.
Victims to sexual offences, with bandages on the mind and their bodies.

Him, her engulf in such sexual fantasies, high levels of neuroticism,
limbic system triggers emotional instability, need for dominance, control, manipulative behaviour and the inability to control such sexual urges.
Their eyes fixated on their next victim lurking in private residences,
patiently as the cougar awaits stealthily to prance on its potential victim.

Criminologist draw nigh and stimulate your intelligence and state your existence. Summoned here am I, my existence I study sexual offences and offenders, such acts done to someone without their consent,
sexual assault, rape, voyeurism, indecent acts, attempted rape and sexual offences against children. Hear me legal framework, jurisdictional difference I develop crime prevention strategies, evaluate criminal justice policies, advise government and organisation and my neighbouring friend, theory ask them what they say

Psychological theories echo your voice what happens in the minds of these offenders.
Disorders, disorders! disorders you say, yes disorders,
of what kind, paraphilic, paedophilic exhibitionistic and cognitive.
It permits them to vindicate injurious behaviour.
Perpetrator conjure distorted beliefs that victim's desires for them and children are sexual beings and are having experiences of sexual attraction to prepubescent children.
Chemical castration you are summoned.
Your reduction of libido needs to be in the streams of the sexual offender.

Members of the jury please state your names for the record,
Susan Brown-Miller, Catherine A. McKinnon, Andrea Dworking,
Diana Russel, Liz Kelly, Patricia Yancey Martin.

Your honour these are the women who would have contributed to the Feminist theory.

With heavy hearts these are their words authored in these theories,
"Against our will: Men, Women and Rape" "feminist legal theory,
Sexual dominance theory", "Sexual exploitation and pornography",
"Rape and femicide", "Continuum and sexual violence" and
"Institutional response to sexual violence" seem like a bias jury Your Honor.

So I should not be a female, must not my outward facial appearance be
as beautiful as the southern lights, must I not wear clothes that shows
the contours of my soft body, must I not have hair like the Gods,
must I not smell as the lilies of the valley. Victim blaming dances through the discourse,

Victimology authors that the focus must change why didn't
she fights back, why didn't he stop, why did she walk alone,
why can't he or her control their sexual fantasies? Now for the victim
shame, trauma, silence, stigma all comes running to abode with her or him
Now they become shackles that the victim now has to brake.

Where are the voices of the community? Community intervention must
rise as a revolution not as a reaction of amazement, but actions of ratification
of sexual offenders. Social learning need to be curbed on bettering of teaching.
So let justice heal, criminology brings compassion and theory actions practice.



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