HUMAN RIGHTS IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Conflict Women, Ltd.

Human Rights in Trinidad and Tobago
Issue 1: Violence Against Women

Previous recommendations

- Prioritize access to shelters, medical services, legal aid and counselling services for women exiting domestic violence situations (Botswana).
- Strengthen measures to combat violence against women by creating specialized police units to investigate these crimes and mitigate impunity (Brazil).
- Address the problem of gender-based violence and fully implement the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act, 2020, and thereby guarantee that particularly vulnerable migrant women have access to gender-based violence services and are protected from trafficking (Germany).

New developments

- Following national elections held on April 28, 2025, and the return to office of Kamla Persad-Bissessar, who had held the Office of Prime Minister from 2010 to 2015, the Gender and Child Affairs Divisions were moved from the Office of the Prime Minister to the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services, resulting in a decrease of resources and the majority of staff contracts not being renewed ***(1).***

- Since the last UPR, the National Strategic Action Plan to End Gender-Based and Sexual Violence was approved and a safe shelter for women and their dependents constructed. The authorities continued provision of a National Domestic Violence hotline 800-SAVE through the Gender Affairs Division ***(2).*** Safe shelters, however, are still insufficient to match needs with 4 shelters out of 14 being reported closed in 2020 due to a lack of funding and government subventions despite the troubling statistic that 1 in 3 women experience violence according to the Women's Health Survey (2017) ***(3)***. It is therefore a matter of deep concern that between 2020 and the present additional shelters have closed, with only 8 shelters operational, 7 led by NGOs and 1 by Government. Further, the dedicated Domestic Violence hotline was physicall relocated from the capital city of Port-of-Spain to a residential community called Couva and no longer operates on a 24 hour cycle due to the non-renewal of numerous listener contracts ***(4)***.

(1) *Primary research with former staff members of the Gender Affairs Division, August 2026*
(2) *Ministry of the People and Social Development, Statement from the Minister of the People, Social Development, and Family Services, the Honourable. Vandana Mohit on Recent Cases of GBV, Accessed on Aug 10, 2026 https://www.social.gov.tt/statement-from-minister-of-the-people-social-development-and-family-services-the-honourable-vandana-mohit-on-recent-cases-of-gender-based-violence/*
(3) *Charles Kong Soo, Trinidad and Tobago Guardian, "Shelters need $$$ to Save Women's Lives," 7 Feb. 2020 https://www.guardian.co.tt/article/shelters-need--to-save-womens-lives-6.2.1049895.202903fe9e*
(4) *Primary research with key gender stakeholders on the current operations of the National Domestic Violence Hotline, August 2026*

Issue 1: Violence Against Women

New Developments (continued)

- The Special Victims Department of the TTPS provides a new umbrella framework for the operations of the Gender-Based Violence Unit, the Child Protection Unit and the Sexual Offences Unit offering "a coordinated, victim-centred, and trauma informed response to the rising national concern surrounding domestic abuse, sexual offences, child abuse, and other related crimes" ***(5).*** Notably, despite progress made through this department, with an increase in DV reports to the TTPS from 2022-2024, the actual number of charges laid for offenses decreased.
    - Breach of protection order reports increased by 32% **(*6*)**. Charges decreased by 37% **(7).**
    - Assault by beating reports increased by 32% ***(8)***. Charges decreased by 91% ***(9).***
    - Total number of DV reports increased by 51% (***10).*** Charges decreased by 65% ***(11).***

- **Increasing incidence of femicides**: From 2022-2024, the TTPS saw a a 27% increase in homicide reports **(12)** with "over a dozen women murdered in Trinidad and Tobago from January 1 to April 8, 2026." (***13)***.

(5) Daryll Ramdass, Daily Express, "Gender-Based Violence TTPS Unit Steps up the Fight" https://trinidadexpress.com/features/local/ttps-unit-steps-up-the-fight/article_3752af1e-338c-4131-8d8e-ebd4cd884690.html. Accessed on Aug 09, 2026

(6) Central Statistical Office (CSO): Crime Statistics. Total Number of Domestic Violence Reports to Police 2010-2024: Breach of protection order, 2022-2024. Central Statistical Office, 2024, Trinidad & Tobago. cso.gov.tt/subjects/population-and-vital-statistics/crime-statistics/. Accessed 15 Jul. 2026.

(7) Nazir-Mohammed, Farzana. Public Consultation on Domestic Violence: The Need for Greater Protection: Chart 2 - Persons charged for breach of protection order, 2022-2024. Office of the Attorney General, 2024, Trinidad & Tobago. agla.gov.tt/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/DV-Presentation.pdf. Accessed 15 Jul. 2026

(8) Central Statistical Office (CSO): Crime Statistics. Total Number of Domestic Violence Reports to Police 2010-2024: Assault by beating, 2022-2024. Central Statistical Office, 2024, Trinidad & Tobago. cso.gov.tt/subjects/population-and-vital-statistics/crime-statistics/. Accessed 15 Jul. 2026.

(9) Nazir-Mohammed, Farzana. Public Consultation on Domestic Violence: The Need for Greater Protection: Chart 2 - Persons charged for assault by beating, 2022-2024. Office of the Attorney General, 2024, Trinidad & Tobago. agla.gov.tt/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/DV-Presentation.pdf. Accessed 15 Jul. 2026.

(10) Central Statistical Office (CSO): Crime Statistics. Total Number of Domestic Violence Reports to Police 2010-2024: Reports for total domestic violence offences, 2022-2024. Central Statistical Office, 2024, Trinidad & Tobago. cso.gov.tt/subjects/population-and-vital-statistics/crime-statistics/. Accessed 15 Jul. 2026.

(11) Nazir-Mohammed, Farzana. Public Consultation on Domestic Violence: The Need for Greater Protection: Chart 2 - Persons charged for domestic violence total, 2022-2024. Office of the Attorney General and Ministry for Legal Affairs, 2024, Trinidad & Tobago. agla.gov.tt/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/DV-Presentation.pdf. Accessed 15 Jul. 2026.

(12) Central Statistical Office (CSO): Crime Statistics. Total Number of Domestic Violence Reports to Police 2010-2024: Reports for murders/homicides, 2022-2024. Central Statistical Office, 2024, Trinidad & Tobago. cso.gov.tt/subjects/population-and-vital-statistics/crime-statistics/. Accessed 15 Jul. 2026.

(13) Hassanali, Shaliza. Domestic violence reports surpass 33,000 in 14 years, CSO data shows. Trinidad & Tobago Guardian, 2026, Trinidad & Tobago. https://www.guardian.co.tt/news/domestic-violence-reports-surpass-33000-in-14-years-cso-data-shows-6.2.2560291.e142274631. Accessed 15 Jul. 2026.

Recommendations
Issue 1: Violence Against Women

We recommend that the Government of Trinidad & Tobago:

- Reinstate a Ministry of Gender & Child affairs, with a designated Minister, Permanent Secretary, and budget.
- Creating a specialized GBV court to expedite processing, lower femicides, and reduce further violence/victimization to combat rising sexual abuse.
- Adequately fund shelters, which include migrant women and victims of trafficking, ensuring that these shelters are financially sustainable with measures in place for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and the provision of realistic strategies for women to transition into stable living environments after leaving.
- Increase resources, staffing, GBV training, and partnerships for the TTPS' Special Victims Department and the Community Mediation Services Division, adopting a survivor-centric approach ina ccordance with the Victims Rights Act of June 2026, ensuring that the well-being, protection, and dignity of survivors is prioritized.
- Establish a specialized government website for GBV survivors, providing assistance with: protection, psychosocial support, skills training, job placement, legal support, and safe houses, utilising the UN's Catalogue of Services for the Economic Empowerment of Women as a resource.

Situation in Trinidad & Tobago
Issue 2: Advancement of Women

Implementation of previous recommendation

- Implement a National Gender Policy and Action Plan endowed with sufficient resources to combat sexual and gender-based violence (Spain).
- Continue with efforts to promote gender parity and enhance women's participation in the political, economic, and social spheres (Pakistan).
- Amend its legislation in order to legalize the termination of pregnancies in cases of risk to the life of the pregnant woman, rape, incest and severe impairment of the fetus (Denmark).

New developments

- With the coming to office of a female Prime Minister in 2025 and the appointment of a female Leader of Opposition it is to be noted that Trinidad and Tobago experienced an unprecedented situation in which three the three (3) top Offices of State are held by women. Nevertheless, of all the Members of Parliament, less than a quarter of all members i.e. 25% are women ***(14)***.
- Further, according to the World Bank, "women's legal rights in Trinidad & Tobago were being enforced at only one-third (37%) of their full potential" ***(15)*** with "less than half (49%) of all supportive frameworks needed to support the implementation of women's economic rights at work in place" ***(16)***.
- This notwithstanding, in 2025, Trinidad and Tobago became the first country in the Caribbean to create and launch a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. This plan focuses on gun violence, organised crime, and gender-based violence ***(17)***.
- In 2026, less than a quarter (24.2%) of all rape, incest, and sexual crimes reported to TTPS were detected ***(18)***. In 2023, the TTPS received the highest number of DV reports that they'd seen in 15 years ***(19)***.

(14) Trinidad & Tobago Parliament. Members of Parliament. 2025, Trinidad & Tobago. https://www.ttparliament.org/members/. Accessed 15 Jul. 2026.
(15) World Bank Trinidad and Tobago Gender Landscape. Pillar I: Legal Frameworks Index. World Bank, 2026, Trinidad & Tobago. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099009307042224203/pdf/IDU-7e004951-4a72-4f17-8df9-6f64c038da2b.pdf. Accessed 15 Jul. 2026.
(16) World Bank Trinidad and Tobago Gender Landscape. Pillar II: Supportive Frameworks Index. World Bank, 2026, Trinidad & Tobago. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099009307042224203/pdf/IDU-7e004951-4a72-4f17-8df9-6f64c038da2b.pdf. Accessed 15 Jul. 2026.
(17) UN Women Caribbean. Trinidad & Tobago Becomes First Caribbean Nation to Launch National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security. UN Women, 26 Mar. 2025. https://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2025/03/tt-becomes-first-caribbean-nation-to-launch-a-national-action-plan-on-wps. Accessed 15 Jul. 2026.
(18) Trinidad & Tobago Police Service. Comparative Chart: Reported vs. detected offences by crime category. 2026, Trinidad & Tobago. https://www.ttps.gov.tt/statistics/comparative/?year=2026. Accessed 15 Jul. 2026.

Recommendations
Issue 6: Advancement of Women

We recommend that the government of Trinidad & Tobago:

- Update and formalize the draft National Policy on Gender and Development, given that this remains as a Green Paper.
- Monitor and evaluate implementation of the National Strategic Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence, providing current data and extend implementation to address the next four year cycle (2027-2031).
- Engage more women in peacebuilding initiatives, crime prevention and security, particularly as it relates to fighting gender-based violence, homicides and crime within society; and
- Amend legislation to permit abortion in cases of rape, incest, to strengthen existing clauses which allow for abortion where the life of the mother is considered to be in grave danger, including for reasons of mental health.

Thank you!