

The Missing Persons Indicator Project



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Project Purpose: Many people go missing every year, causing great distress to families, friends and loved ones. Collating data that will help better understand the way States engage with, and seek to solve, missing persons cases will be of great utility to those involved in missing persons efforts.

Definitions:

What is a missing Person? A person missing as a result of conflict, human rights abuses and/or organised violence.

What are indicators?

Indicators are commonly understood as an observable and measurable characteristic that evidence changes over time. In the context of human rights, it is data (quantitative and qualitative) relevant to the enjoyment of a specific human right. To be meaningful, indicators should be valid, reliable, objective, precise and timely but also be clearly aligned with policy goals, feasible in the sense that generating or acquiring the data is not too resource-intensive (UN Women 2010 and Riedel 2006).

What is a structural indicator?

Structural indicators are examining the legal, regulatory and institutional structures in place. A state who has signed and ratified a human rights treaty has expressed commitment to a certain set of human rights (Klinkner 2021).

→ Our structural indicator 1 captures a state's recognition of Missing Persons and associated rights at international and regional level.

Applicable Rights:

Right to know the truth about what happened to a missing person; Right to an effective investigation; Right to seek and share information; Right to family life and family unification; Right to an effective remedy and reparations; Right to privacy; Equality and non-discrimination.



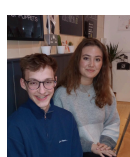
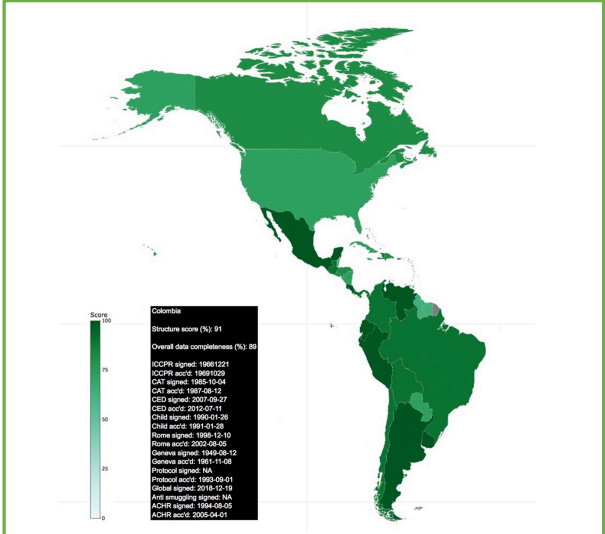
Process:

Through an application, shortlisting and interviewing process a diverse, international, inclusive group of student researchers was assembled. Training on research techniques, integrity and validity of research and data storage was provided by a team comprising law subject librarian, data expert and legal scholars. Supported by MS Teams, a designated space on Campus facilitated on-hand support throughout the term to guide and direct the students.

Data entry for structural indicator 1 consisted of:

- 5 international human rights instruments;
- 1 international criminal law instrument;
- 2 international humanitarian instruments;
- 2 soft law documents; and
- 1 applicable regional human rights treaty against all countries listed on the UN Treaty Body System.

Data Visualisation offers important overviews, facilitates comparison and captures trends, as exemplified here in the Americas.



Co-Creation: Students are at the core of this project. Through their voluntary extra-curricular engagement, they are gathering the data for sustained, high quality knowledge transfer. At the same time, participation equips students with a plethora of transferable skills and valuable research skills while contributing to a real-life societal problem with the overarching aim of alleviating missing persons cases.

'As a first-year law student, I am proud to be a part of this project. It guided me in broadening my research abilities allowing me to support ICMP's mission of finding missing people.' (Hayden Corby)

Addressing a Global Challenge through engagement with an International Organisation:

The Missing Persons Indicator Project is a collaboration between the International Commission on Missing Persons and BU. The project is designed to progressively develop comprehensive data on states and their relationship with missing persons. It will engage in continuous, global mapping of legal avenues, policies, institutions and mechanisms that are designed to address the issue of the missing, to respond to missing persons reports and to effectively investigate persons going missing or disappearing.



Sources:

- Klinkner, M, (2021) 'The Development of Indicators on Missing Persons.' *Global Report on Missing Persons*. International Commission on Missing Persons 161-175.
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- UN Women Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls, 'Indicators', last updated 31 October 2010, available <https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/336-indicators.html>.
- UNOHCHR, (2012) Human Rights Indicators. A Guide to Measurement and Implementation, UN Doc HR/PUB/12/5.

Credits: Logo by BU student Conor Byrne; image by Lina Ghaibeh and George Khoury; certificate by BU Design Unit.