

Database on South America's
Transnational Human Rights
Violations
(1969-1981)

2022 Statistical report

**Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights
Violations (1969-1981) / 2022 Statistical Report**

Principal investigator:
Francesca Lessa

Database consultant:
Lorena Balardini

Design and diagrams:
Andrea Rocha

Visual identity:
Mariana Risso y Rodrigo Barbano

The construction of this database has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no. 702004.



Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations (1969-1981) 4

About this Report 6

Executive Summary 6

PART ONE

Profile of the Recorded Victims 8

PART TWO

Characteristics of the Repressive Acts 11

Timeframe 11

Geographic Framework 13

Characteristics of the Recorded Repressive Acts 14

Places of Detention and Prisoners' Transfers 15

PART THREE

Analytical Links between the Presented Data 19



INTRODUCTION

Description of the Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations (1969-1981)

Between 2017 and 2020, the Principal Investigator Francesca Lessa developed the Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations (1969-1981) in close collaboration with Lorena Balardini.

The database contains the cases of 805 victims of the repressive coordination that operated in South America at least between August 1969 and February 1981. This is the only database on the transnational repression that occurred during the 1970s in South America and it has been developed through the methodical and careful revision of the existing available information.

The following seven sets of sources were crucial for assembling the dataset and comprise information compiled by state and non-state actors:

1. Sentences of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Italy's criminal courts.
2. Final reports of the Chilean, Brazilian, and Paraguayan truth commissions.
3. Factsheets on victims of forced disappearances and political assassinations committed by the State compiled by Uruguay's Secretaría de Derechos Humanos para el Pasado Reciente (Human Rights Secretariat for the Recent Past, SDHPR).
4. "A todos ellos" ("To All of Them") report by the Uruguayan NGO Madres y Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos Uruguayos (Mothers and Relatives of Uruguayan Disappeared Detainees).
5. "Operation Cóndor: 40 años después" ("Operation Condor: 40 Years Later") report by Argentina's Centro Internacional para la Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights, CIPDH-UNESCO).
6. Report by Uruguay's University of the Republic, "Investigación histórica sobre dictadura y terrorismo de Estado en el Uruguay (1973-1985)" ("Historical Investigation of the Dictatorship and State Terrorism in Uruguay (1973-1985)").
7. Virtual database of Chile's Museo de la Memoria y Derechos Humanos de Chile (Museum of Memory and Human Rights).

To allow us to distinguish cases of victims of transnational repression from those of state-level repression, we set a key criterion that the perpetration of the crime needed to involve the crossing of borders. We identified three different types of border crossing:

- 1) The exchange of information about a victim between two countries (normally the victim's country of origin and the host country).
- 2) The participation of foreign agents in the criminal act/s, that is to say joint operations of transnational task forces.
- 3) The clandestine transfer of the victim/s from the country where they were being detained to their country of origin.

The database also includes a residual category of “connected cases” comprising two more groups of victims: a) minors and relatives of victims who were often detained as part of the operations targeted at specific militants; and b) people detained in a country in parallel to, or, as a result of, operations in another country targeted at members of the same organisation.

The Condor workshops in Santiago (Chile) in 2015 and Montevideo (Uruguay) in 2016 brought together over fifty academics, lawyers, public policy experts, victims' relatives, and human rights activists from Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay. Together, they agreed that it is possible to identify cases of transnational repression in South America using the above criteria.

By systematically applying the above subcriteria, we identified 805 cases of victims of transnational repression. However, this is a conservative number and we believe that the actual number of victims is probably higher. We used the date when the victim was initially captured or assassinated as the starting point for each of the cases that was recorded and included in the database.

This is the first and only database to systematically map the geographies of South America's transnational terror by recording information corresponding to seventeen different variables, as follows: the victim's first name and surname; sex; age group; nationality; the country of the crime; city; date; militancy; first place of detention in the country where the crime began; second place of detention (where applicable); third place of detention (where applicable); country of transfer; date of rendition; first place of detention in the country to which the victim was transferred (where applicable); second place of detention (where applicable); third place of detention (where applicable); and final destination (assassinated, disappeared, survived, etc.).

About this Report

This constitutes the first published statistical report to be produced through the evaluation and analysis of the Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations (1969-1981). The main objective of the report is to make the main findings on the background of the recorded cases of victims of transnational repression available to the public.

The statistical data that will be presented in the following pages describe the background of the specific cases identified according to the aforementioned criteria. This data must not be interpreted in relation to- or be used to extrapolate- the remaining cases of victims in any of the countries where the acts occurred that are part of the collected information.

Resumen ejecutivo

This report presents the main findings that emerge from the Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations (1969-1981). The database was built by triangulating data compiled by state and non-state actors from Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, and Italy.

Through the developed methodology, we identified a total of 805 victims of transnational repression. It is important to clarify that the principal criterion for including a victim in the database (or not) was that there had to have been a crossing of borders as part of the perpetration of the crime. Border crossing denotes the coordination between the repressive forces of the involved countries.

The first part of the report refers to the profile of the recorded victims: nationality, sex, age range, and political affiliation. Here, the findings show that the victims were predominantly males and adults and that almost half of the recorded victims were Uruguayan nationals. It can also be observed that the majority of recorded victims belonged to a political or armed organisation.

The second part addresses the characteristics of the repressive acts. The data are analysed according to the timeframe (the time period is divided into five defined stages) and the geographic framework (the place where the crimes were committed). Here, it can be observed that the majority of the crimes took place between 1976 and 1978 and were committed in Argentina against victims of whom Uruguayans were the predominant nationality.

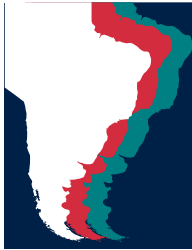
Following the perpetration of the crime, the victims were predominantly detained and later released by their captors, representing almost half of the recorded cases. Next come the victims who remain disappeared, constituting a third of the total recorded cases.

The report also analyses the places of detention and clandestine rendition that were connected specifically to transnational repressive action. Clandestine detention, in at least one unit, was commonplace in the exercise of repression against this group of victims. On the other hand, the data show that one in every four of the recorded victims was transferred to at least one other country, half of whom were taken to Uruguay.

Finally, the third part analyses and discusses the relationships between some of the main variables of the dataset. The comparison of the victims' political affiliations with the timeframe highlights that cases of victims belonging to armed organisations span across the entire time period (1969-1981).

The number of cases committed against armed militants remained the same during and after the period during which the Condor System operated. Whereas eight in every ten members of political groups were persecuted during the period of the Condor System.

When we analyse the relationship between the victims' political affiliation and their condition, it can be observed that members of armed organisations were the most likely to be killed: seven in every ten members of such organisations were assassinated or disappeared. Finally, the analysis of the victims' condition by year shows that, alongside the expected peaks during the period of the Condor System, the rate of assassinations remains stable from 1974 to 1981.

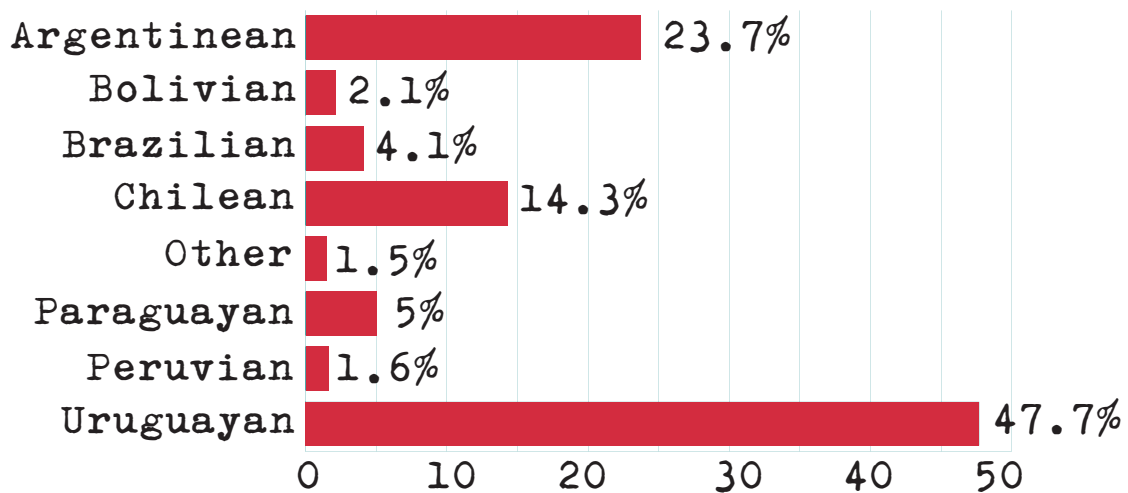


PART ONE

Profile of the Recorded Victims

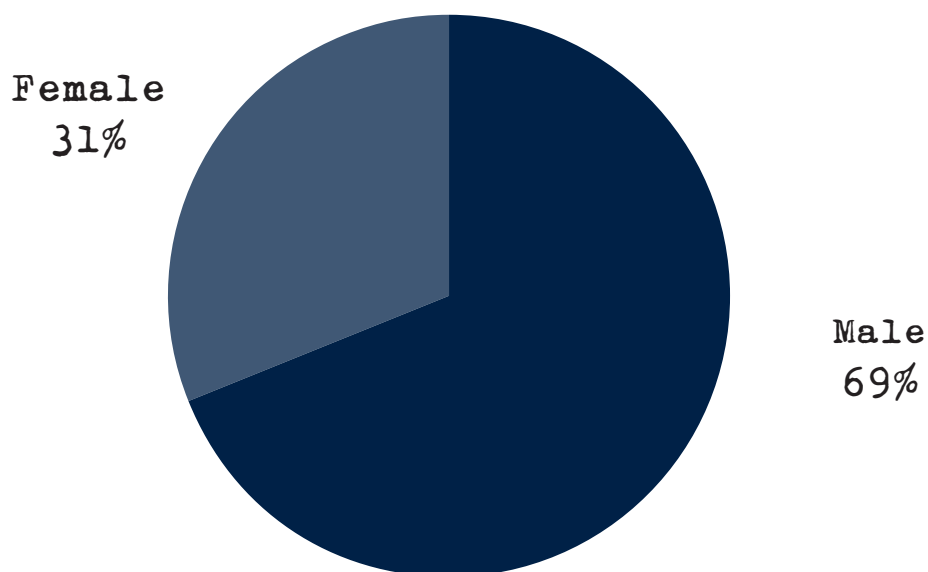
The first part of this report will now address the profile of the recorded victims: nationality, sex, age range, and political affiliation.

Graph 1: Recorded victims according to nationality. Acts corresponding to the period of 1969-1981. By percentage.



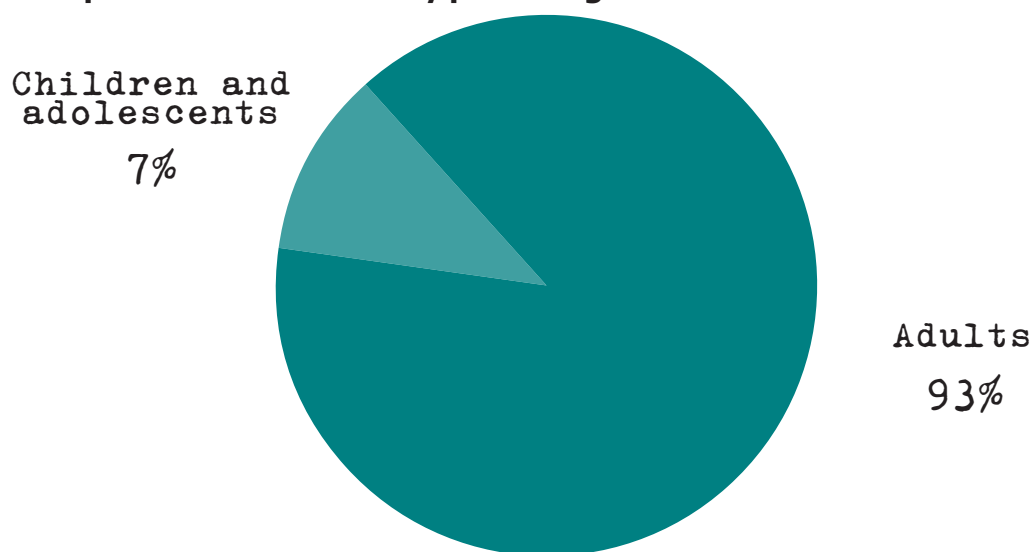
Source: Authors' graph based on the Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations.

Graph 2: Recorded Victims according to Sex. Acts corresponding to the period of 1969-1981. By percentage.



Source: Authors' graph based on the Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations.

Graph 3. Recorded victims according to age category. Acts corresponding to the period of 1969-1981. By percentage.



Source: Authors' graph based on the Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations.
 *General characterisation from the data on the illegal appropriation of minors recorded in the database.

From the dataset, it can be seen that victims were predominantly males (69%) and adults (93%). Almost half of the recorded victims are of Uruguayan nationality (47.7%); followed by Argentines (23.7%), Chileans (14.3%), and Paraguayans (5%). The rest fall under the residual categories.

Regarding the female victims (31%) and the children and adolescents (7%), the comparison with nationality shows that the highest percentage of victims in both cases were of Uruguayan nationality (51% of the women, 52% of the children and adolescents), followed by Argentines (32% of the women, 37.5% of the children and adolescents). Although these were the two main nationalities across the total dataset, crimes against women and minors disproportionately targeted Argentines and Uruguayans to an even greater extent. Eight out of every ten women and nine out of every ten minors recorded in the database were Uruguayans or Argentines.

Table 1: Recorded victims, according to political and/or party affiliation. Acts corresponding to the period of 1969-1981. By percentage.

Type of Afiliation*	Percentage
Political groups	39,8%
Armed organisations	36,1%
International organisations	4,6%
Without militancy	12,5%
Unknown	7,1%

Source: Database on transnational human rights violations in South America. Authors' table.
 *Categories compiled based on the record of each organisation.

In terms of the victims' affiliation, at the end of the analysis, we merged the above categories for each case to allow the data to be presented in a simpler way. This revealed that the majority of the recorded victims belonged to a political (39.8%) or armed (36.1%) organisation. The predominant organisations across the entire dataset were the Uruguayan political party, Partido por la Victoria del Pueblo (Party for the Victory of the People, PVP), the Argentine guerrilla group Montoneros (14.7%), and the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros (National Liberation Movement – Tupamaros, MLN-T) MNL (11%). The cases involving members of international organisations mainly corresponded to refugees under the protection of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). It can also be seen that 12.5% of the recorded victims had no affiliation nor militancy of any sort.



PART TWO

Characteristics of the Repressive Acts

In this section, we pivot our analysis of the data to show which types of repressive acts affected this set of victims, when they were committed, and particularly where they took place.

1. Timeframe

From the outset, when we began the analytical part of the investigation that led to this project, we categorised the cases according to the time period. We broke the period down into the following five analytical stages:

1. Embryonic Interaction

Acts that occurred between August 1969 and January 1974.

2. Police Coordination

Acts that occurred between February 1974 and January 1975.

3. Hybrid Cooperation

Acts that occurred between February 1975 and February 1976.

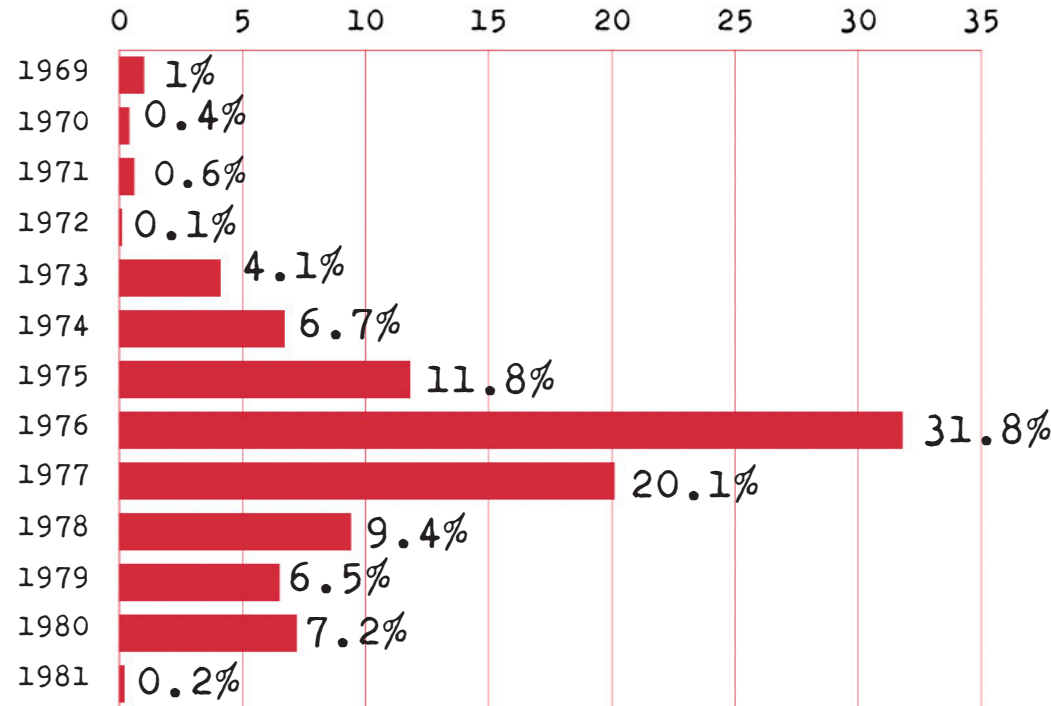
4. Condor System

Acts that occurred between March 1976 and December 1978.

5. Post-Condor Dynamics

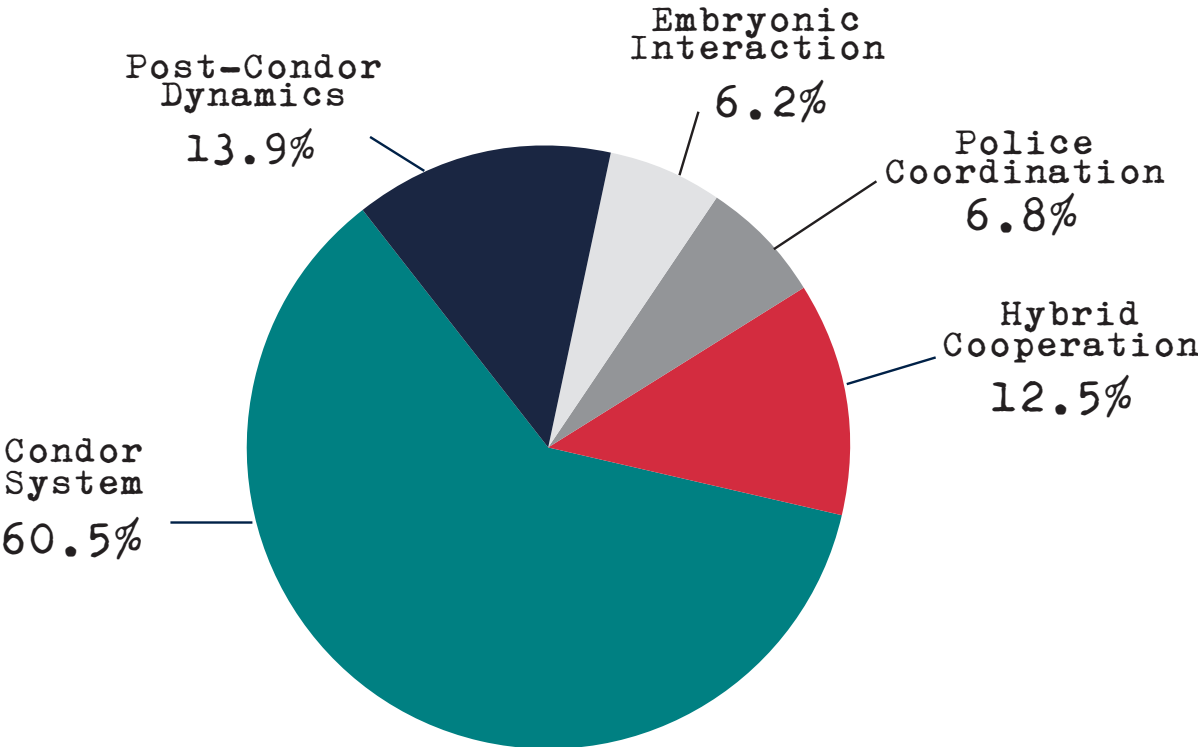
Acts that occurred between January 1979 and February 1981.

Graphic 4: Recorded victims, according to the year in which the repressive act took place. By percentage.



Source: Authors' graph. Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations.

Graph 5: Recorded victims, according to the analytical stage during which the repressive act took place. Acts corresponding to the period 1969-1981.



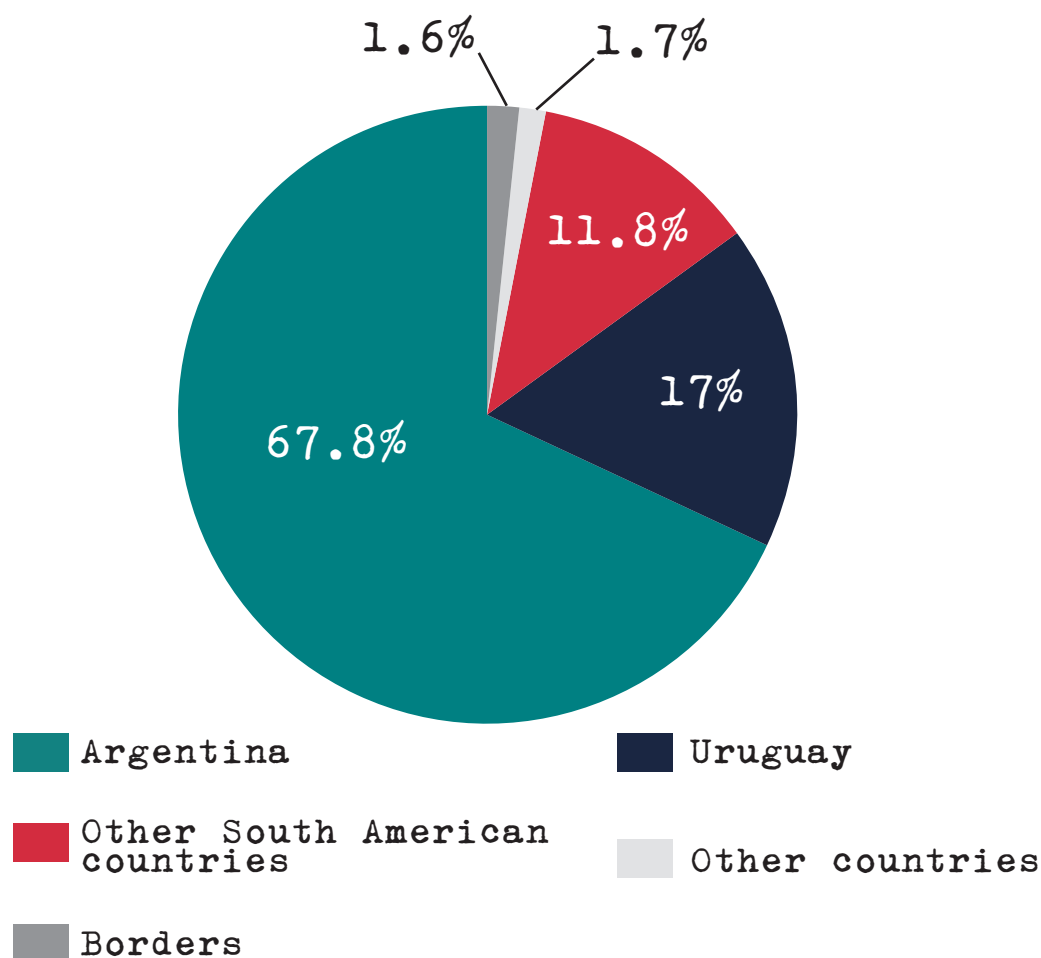
Source: Authors' chart. Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations.

60% of the recorded criminal acts occurred during the stage that we define as Condor System (March 1976 to December 1978), followed by the stage of Post-Condor Dynamics (14%) and Hybrid Cooperation (12.5%).

2. Geographic Framework

We consider that it is important to identify the place where the repressive acts were committed given that our main inclusion criterion for the database was that the perpetration of the crimes needed to include a crossing of borders.

Graph 6: Recorded victims, according to the country in which the repressive act was committed. Acts corresponding to the period of 1969 to 1981. By percentage.



Source: Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations. Authors' chart.

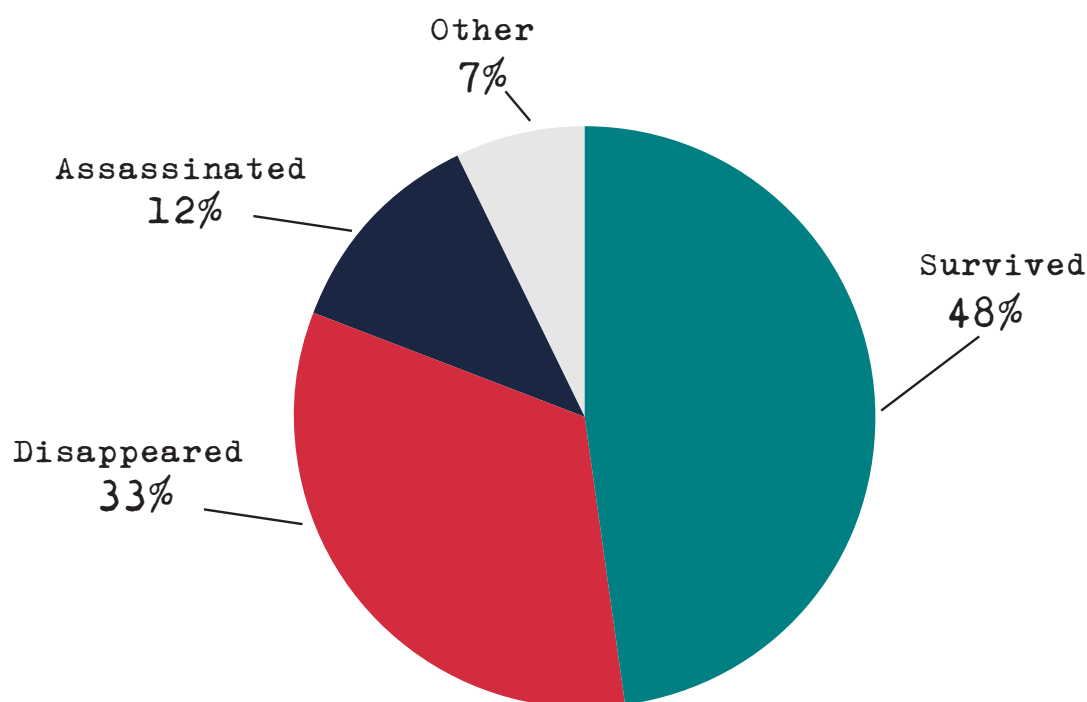
The space-time comparison reveals that the majority of the crimes were committed during the period between 1976 and 1978 and on Argentine soil against victims of whom Uruguayans were the predominant nationality.

68% of the recorded crimes were committed in Argentine territory and 17% in Uruguayan territory, inverting the ratio with the variable of the victims' nationalities. 12% were committed in other South American countries such as Chile, Brazil, Paraguay, and Bolivia.

Close to eight out of every ten crimes occurred in the countries' capitals. 60% of the crimes were committed in Buenos Aires, 15.5% in Montevideo, and 2.5% in Santiago de Chile.

3. Characteristics of the Recorded Repressive Acts

Graph 7: Victims recorded according to their status after the crime was committed. Acts corresponding to the period of 1969-1981. By percentage.

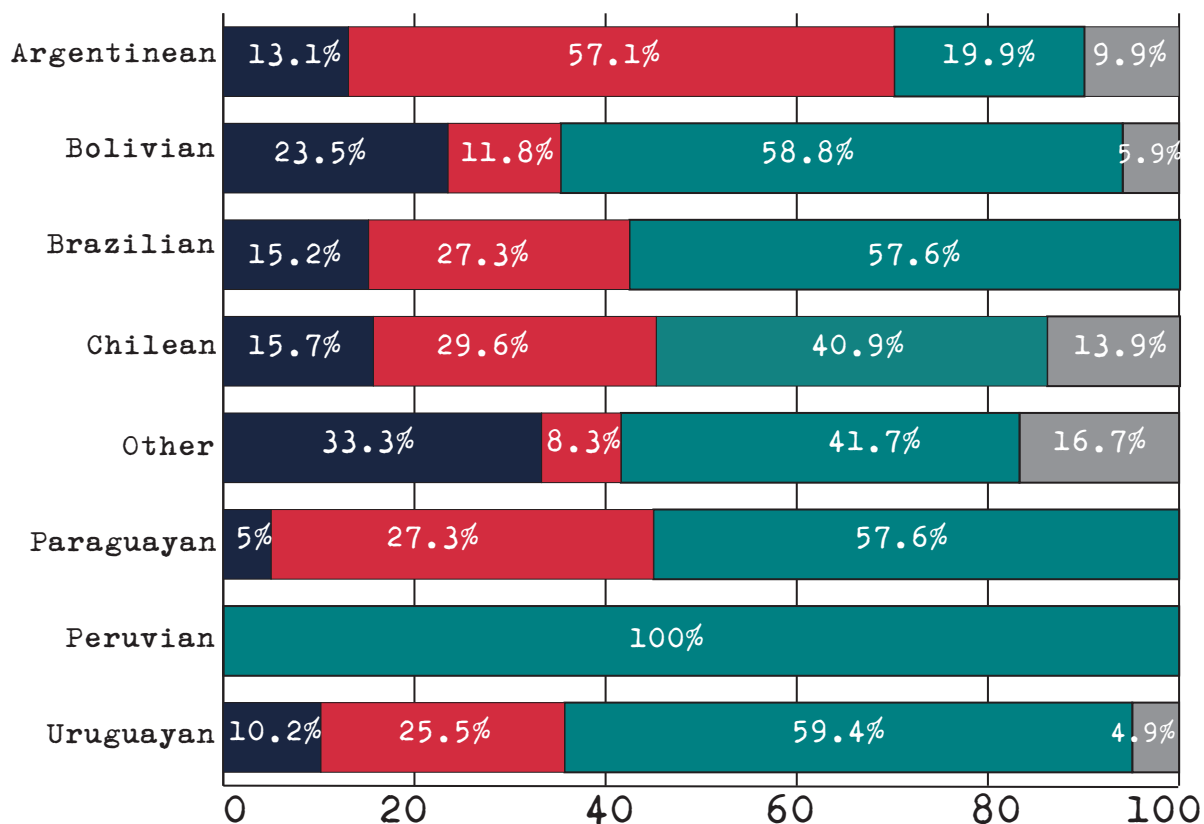


Source: Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations. Authors' chart.

The predominant status among the recorded victims was that they were detained and later released by their captors (48% of the total victims); followed by the victims who remain disappeared to this day (33%). If we analyse the disappeared victims in relation to nationality, the following graph shows that the recorded victims follow the same pattern as the general profiles of "national" victims, identified by each country through their transitional justice mechanisms.

This is, at least, the case for Argentina (with the highest number of disappeared victims), Uruguay (with the highest number of survivors), and Chile (with the smallest gap between the number of disappeared victims and survivors).

Graph 8: Victims recorded according to their nationality and status following the perpetration of the crime. Acts corresponding to the period of 1969 to 1981. By percentage.



Source: Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations. Authors' chart.



4. Places of Detention and Transfer

We will now turn to address how victims were held in special detention centres after being captured. In particular, we will analyse the number of times that people were transferred from one centre to another and the types of centres where they were held. Finally, we will lay out the particularities by country.

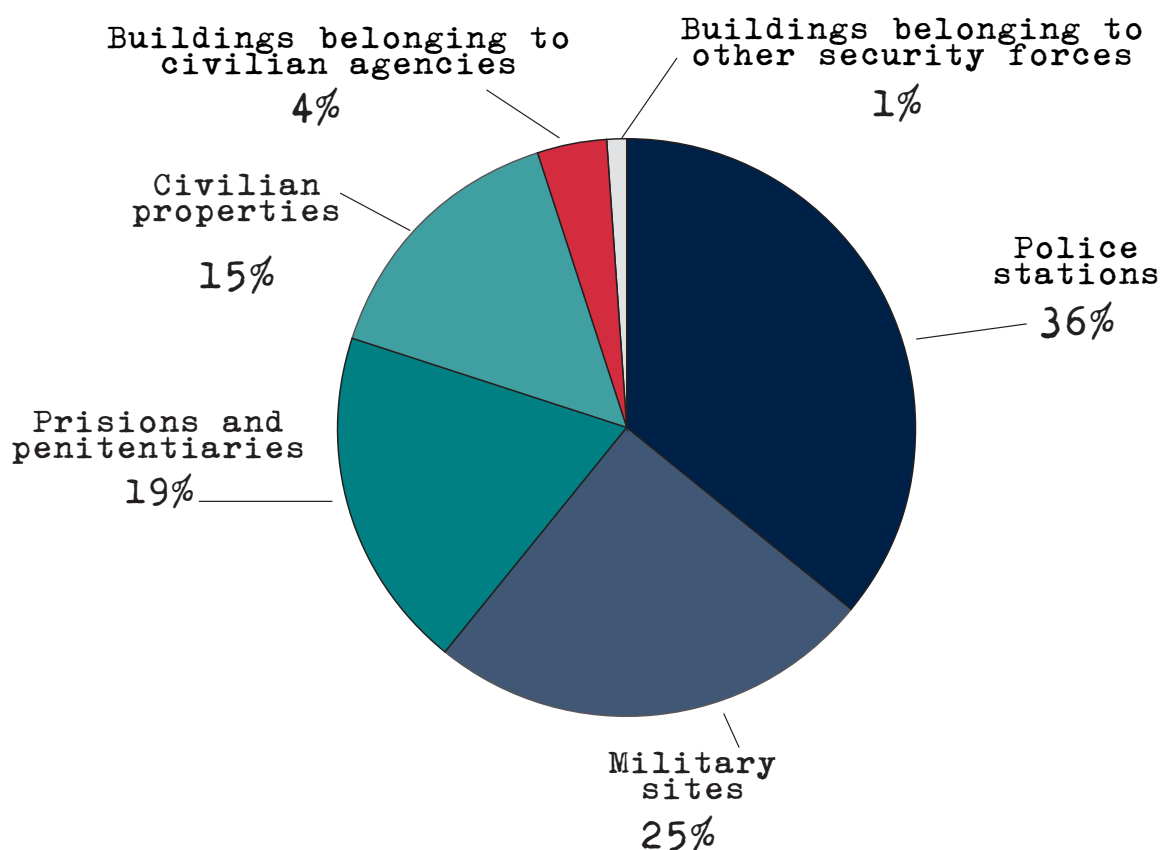
Table 2: Victims recorded according to whether evidence exists that they were taken to at least one detention centre. Acts corresponding to the period of 1969 to 1981. By percentage.

Victims taken at least one centre	66.5%
Victims taken to a second centre	32.2%
Victims taken to a third centre	8%

Source: Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations. Authors' table.

Clandestine detention, in at least one centre, was a regular practice in the exercise of repression committed against this group of victims.

Graph 9: Victims recorded according to the types of places where they were known to have been detained. By percentage.



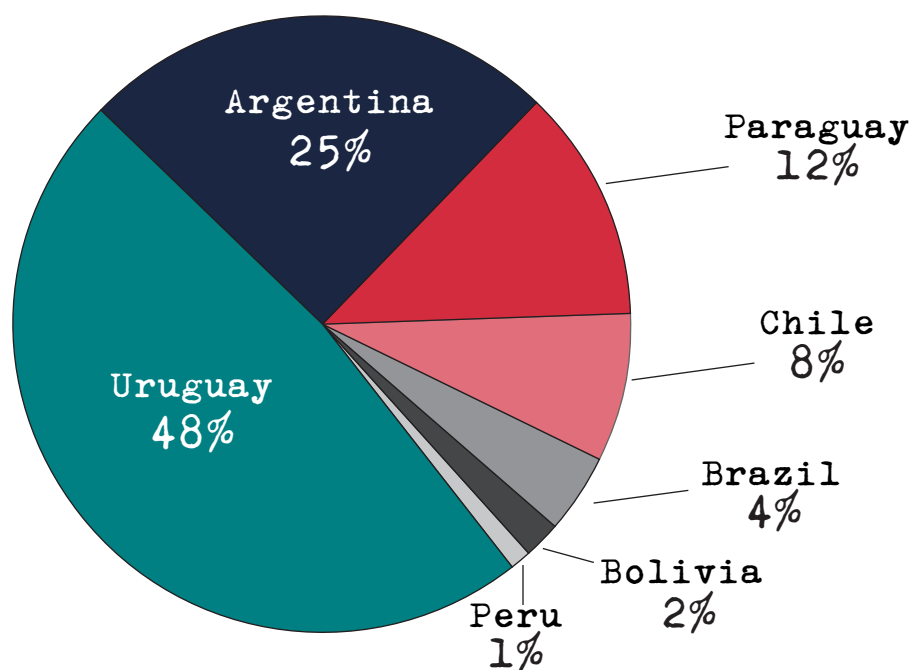
Source: Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations. Own chart.
 *Calculated on a total number of 848 places associated with the victims.

It is important to highlight that, in 53% of the cases, the name and type of place is unknown, which is to be expected when working with acts of clandestine detention. Regarding the known places of imprisonment, the most common places for the detention of victims were police and military sites (36% and 25% of the total known places, respectively).

If we consider the places of detention without grouping them, those with the greatest influx of victims were situated in Argentine territory. As previously shown, Argentina was the country where the highest proportion of the crimes took place. In Argentina, it is known that 12% of the recorded victims were taken to the Automotores Orletti clandestine detention centre, 7% were held at the Superintendencia de Coordinación Federal (Superintendence of Federal Coordination), and 5% were taken to the San Justo Brigade secret prison, all of which were situated in Buenos Aires.

Regarding the clandestine renditions, the data show that a total of 204 victims were effectively transferred to other countries, representing 25% of the total recorded cases. In the case of the other 150 victims, it is unknown whether they were transferred, but this cannot be ruled out on the basis of the collected information.

Graph 10: Transferred victims according to the country to which they were taken. Acts corresponding to the period from 1969 to 1981. By percentage.



Source: Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations. Authors' chart.
*Calculated on the set of victims for whom a transfer was recorded.

In the confirmed cases of clandestine detentions, from Graph 10, it can be observed that almost half of the victims were transferred to Uruguay. The year of the transfer is known in the case of eight in every ten victims who were definitely transferred after their capture.

VICTIMS TRANSFERRED TO URUGUAY- CHARACTERISATION



- 95% of victims transferred to Uruguay were captured in Argentina and 5% in Brazil.
- 95% were of Uruguayan nationality, 4% were Argentinean, and 1% were Paraguayan. Repressive acts committed: 77.5% took place during the Condor System stage, 16.5% during the Police Coordination.
- 62% of the repressive acts were committed during 1976 alone.
- The majority of clandestine renditions also took place in 1976: 67.4%.
- 59.8% of victims were militants of political organisations, 14.5% belonged to armed groups, and 17.5% were not involved in any type of militancy.
- 57.7% were taken to civilian properties and 26.8% to police stations.
- 72.2% were not transferred to a second detention centre. 61% were released, 30% remain disappeared.

VICTIMS TRANSFERRED TO ARGENTINA- CHARACTERISATION



- The departure points of victims transferred to Argentina were more diverse. They were captured in Uruguay and Peru (36.5% and 26.9%, respectively), Paraguay (13.5%), Bolivia (9.6%), Brazil (7.7%), and the border between Argentina and Brazil (5.8%).
- 65% were of Argentine nationality, 25% were Peruvian, 8% were Uruguayan, and 2% were Paraguayan.
- 90.4% of criminal acts were committed during the Condor System stage and 9.6% during the Post-Condor Dynamics.
- 42.3% of the crimes took place during 1978, 32.7% in 1977, 15.4% in 1976, and 9.6% in 1980. The clandestine renditions were also concentrated in the years 1977 and 1978.
- 79% of victims were militants of armed and/or political organisations, while 19% were not involved in any type of militancy.
- 38.5% were taken to police stations, 17.3% to military sites, and 17.3% to buildings belonging to civilian agencies.
- 94% were transferred to a second place of detention, the most common place of which were military sites (23%).
- 48.1% of victims remain disappeared and 44.2% were released, 3.8% of whom were appropriated children returned to their biological families.



PART THREE

Analytical Links between the Presented Data

This section will reassess the data presented in the previous sections in order to search for analytical links between the following three variables: i) the year and/or analytical stage in which the criminal acts were committed, ii) the type of crime, and iii) the victims' affiliation.

Table 3: Recorded victims according to their affiliation and the period in which the repressive acts occurred. Acts corresponding to the period of 1969 to 1981. By percentage*.

	PERIODS				
	Embryonic Interaction	Police Coordination	Hybrid Cooperation	Condor System	Post-Condor Dynamics
Political groups	3.1%	3.7%	9.4%	82.2%	1.6%
Armed organisations	10.3%	8%	16.2%	33.1%	32.4%
International organisations	0%	19%	13.5%	67.5%	0%
No militancy	5%	5%	10.9%	66.3%	12.8%
Unknown	8.8%	14%	14%	63.2%	0%

Source: Database on South America's Transnational Repression. Authors' table.

*The percentages are calculated by row to obtain the proportions for each type of affiliation.

The above table shows the relationship between the victims' political affiliation and the stage in which they were captured or assassinated. As expected, the majority of the crimes, regardless of the victims' political affiliation, correspond to the stage which we have defined as Condor System.

Nevertheless, the victims who were members of armed organisations are distributed across all of the analytical stages and the proportion of such victims remains equal during and after the Condor System period. In the case of political groups, the repression is clearly concentrated during the Condor System stage.

Table 4. Recorded victims according to their affiliation and status following the perpetration of the crime. Acts corresponding to the period of 1969 to 1981. By percentage*

	STATUS OF THE VICTIMS			
	Assassinated	Disappeared	Survived	Others
Political groups	9.4%	33.4%	54.4%	2.8%
Armed organisations	20%	50.3%	24.2%	4.5%
International organisations	2.7%	0%	86.5%	10.8%
No militancy	5%	8.9%	59.4%	26.7%
Unknown	7%	12.3%	75.4%	5.3%

Source: Database on South America's Transnational Human Rights Violations. Authors' table.

*The percentages are calculated by row to obtain the proportions for each type of affiliation.

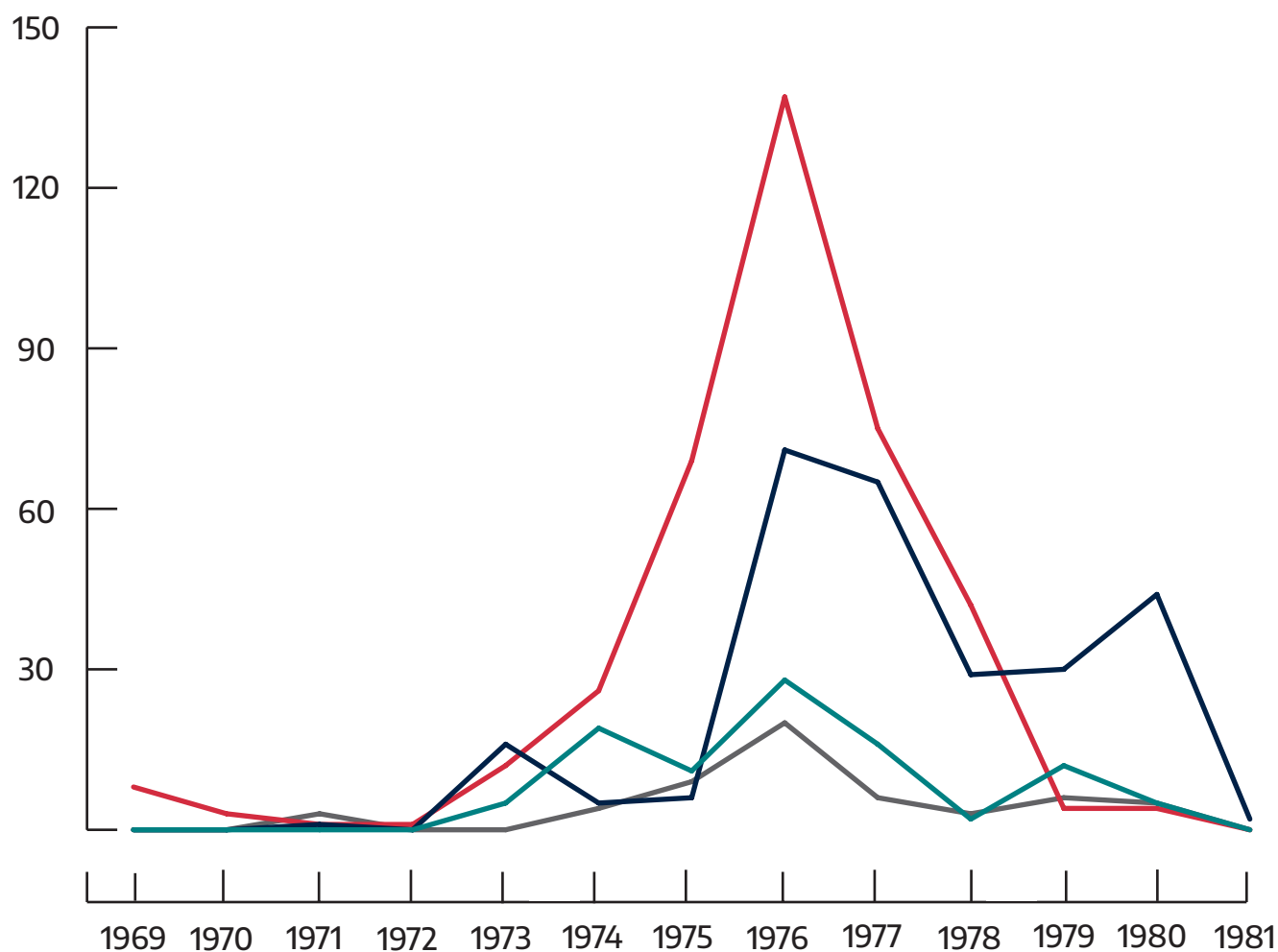
The table shows that, in the case of the members of armed groups, the most predominant statuses were those linked to extermination. Seven out of ten members of such organisations were assassinated or disappeared. The percentage of survivors increases for victims of transnational repression who belonged to political groups.

If we consider the profile of victims for each status, armed group members were also the most targeted by extreme violence, constituting 59% of the total assassinations, 54% of disappearances, and only 19% of the survivors.

Among the survivors, there is a greater distribution across all the types of affiliation, while nine out of ten of those disappeared or assassinated belonged to armed organisations or political groups.

Moreover, Graph 11 shows that the peak in captures/assassinations was 1976 across the entire set of registered cases. The curve representing the years of the captures of victims who were later released increases between 1973 and 1976, where it then starts to clearly descend; the highest values remain stable between 1976 and 1977. Of all the categories on the graph, the curve for assassinations is the most stable. In parallel to the other categories, it peaks in 1976 but the number of assassinations remains more or less evenly spread across the period from 1974 to 1979.

Graph 11: Recorded victims according to condition and year of repressive act. Period from 1969 to 1981.



Source: Database on South America's Transnational Repression. Authors' graph.

■ Assassinated

■ Survived

■ Disappeared

■ Other