



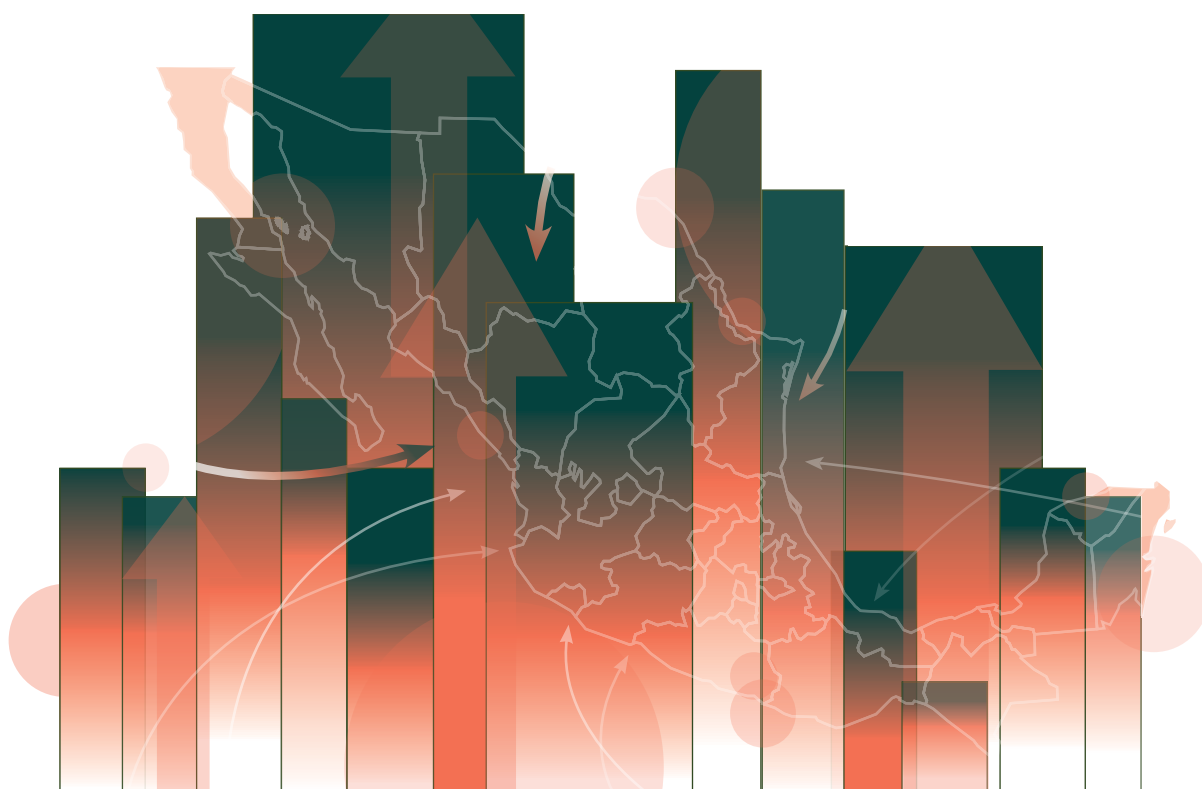
# Mexico Peace Index 2025

○ Results  
and Trends

○ Mexico-US  
Border

○ Economic Impact  
of Violence

○ Positive  
Peace





## Quantifying Peace and its Benefits

The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit think tank dedicated to shifting the world's focus to peace as a positive, achievable, and tangible measure of human well-being and progress. IEP achieves its goals by developing new conceptual frameworks to define peacefulness; providing metrics for measuring peace; and uncovering the relationships between business, peace and prosperity as well as promoting a better understanding of the cultural, economic and political factors that create peace.

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# Executive Summary

This is the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the Mexico Peace Index (MPI), produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP). It provides a comprehensive measure of peacefulness in Mexico, including trends, analysis, and estimates of the economic impact of violence. The MPI is based on the Global Peace Index, the world's leading measure of global peacefulness, produced by IEP every year since 2007. The MPI consists of 12 sub-indicators aggregated into five major indicators.

Mexico's peacefulness improved by 0.7 percent in 2024. This was the fifth straight year of modest improvement, following four years of steep deteriorations. Last year, 18 states improved in their peace scores and 14 states deteriorated.

Colima ranked as the country's least peaceful state for the third year in a row, as it once again had over 100 killings per 100,000 people, by far the worst murder rate in the country. The next most violent states were Guanajuato, Morelos, Baja California and Quintana Roo. In contrast, Yucatán was the most peaceful state in Mexico for the eighth consecutive year, followed by Tlaxcala, Durango, Chiapas and Nayarit.

Despite modest improvements over the past five years, Mexico is substantially less peaceful than it was in 2015. In that time, peace in the country has deteriorated by 13.4 percent, with many crime indicators significantly higher than they were a decade ago. The homicide rate, for example, is 54.7 percent higher than in 2015, and the firearms crime rate is 71.2 percent higher.

Organized criminal activity continues to be the main driver of the extreme levels of violence in Mexico. Since 2007, the annual number of homicides estimated to be linked to criminal organizations has increased more than sixfold, rising from about 3,000 yearly deaths to roughly 18,000 last year. In contrast, homicides not associated with organized crime have shown comparatively little change in this same period.

Much of this violence arises in the context of Mexico's complex relationship with the United States, particularly Mexican cartels' activities to meet the demand from the massive US market for illicit drugs

— especially fentanyl. The vast majority of the flows of goods and people across the Mexico-US border are legal, regulated and mutually beneficial. However, in the past decade, the illegal cross-border flows of drugs, weapons and money have had devastating impacts on both Mexico and the United States. In Mexico, they have fueled extreme levels of armed conflict among organized criminal groups across large swathes of the country, and in the United States they have been associated with tens of thousands of deaths from drug overdoses. Moreover, recent surges in the northward flows of unauthorized international migrants have had destabilizing effects on both countries, giving rise to diplomatic tensions and internal political divisions. However, statistics from the past three years suggest that some of these unauthorized or illicit flows — specifically those related to migrants and drugs — may have peaked in 2022-2023 and could now be on a downward trajectory.

In the past decade, Mexico has also seen a rise in domestic forms of organized crime, particularly retail drug crimes and extortion. Extortions have risen by 45.5 percent since 2015, while retail drug crimes have risen by more than 161 percent. While Mexico has traditionally been seen as a producer or transit point for drugs destined for the United States, its internal drug market has been growing in recent years. There has been a marked rise in Mexicans seeking treatment for psychoactive substances such as methamphetamine and ecstasy, even as abuse of substances like alcohol and marijuana appears to be declining.

In the context of Mexico's historic national elections of June 2024, last year was the deadliest year on record for political figures in the country. There were at least 201 politically motivated killings in 2024, with about one-fifth of the deaths occurring in the month preceding the election. Data from the last three election cycles shows that political violence tends to spike immediately before each election. The vast majority of the victims of political violence are figures operating at the municipal level. Experts have suggested that this is due to the substantial importance that local power holds for organized criminal groups.

There is a rising trend of people being reported missing or disappeared across Mexico, which has caused growing levels of alarm and outrage. Since 2010, there have been roughly 292,000 reported cases of missing persons in Mexico, and more than half of these cases are from the past six years. In parallel to this, a rise in the discovery of mass and unmarked graves across the country suggests that many of these missing individuals have likely been the victims of homicide. The practice of homicide and the secretive burial of bodies has been particularly prevalent in Jalisco. Since 2006, one-third of the bodies found in clandestine graves across Mexico have been found in Jalisco alone. In March 2025, the discovery of a mass killing site in Teuchitlán, Jalisco sparked national protests over the perceived failures of authorities to prevent such violence and to properly search for and locate the bodies of victims.

The economic cost of Mexico's extreme levels of violence is staggering. Last year, the economic impact of violence increased for the first time since 2019. It totaled 4.5 trillion pesos (US\$245 billion) in 2024, equivalent to 18 percent of Mexico's GDP. On a per capita basis, the economic impact was 33,905 pesos, more than the average monthly salary of a Mexican worker. Last year, the impact increased by 3.4 percent, or 149 billion pesos.

Mexico's spending on domestic security and the justice system are well below regional and international levels. Mexico spent 0.7 percent of its GDP on domestic security and the justice system in 2024, less than half of the average for both Latin America and OECD countries.

To tackle crime and violence more effectively, Mexico's judicial system is in need of increased investment. The country has an average of 4.4 judges and magistrates per 100,000 people, one-fourth the global average. This has resulted in large numbers of people being incarcerated while awaiting trial or sentencing. Strengthening the judiciary is of particular importance for combatting Mexico's high levels of impunity. In 2024, Mexico passed a judicial reform which shifts the judicial selection process to direct elections by popular



Illegal cross-border flows of drugs, weapons and money have had devastating impacts on both Mexico and the United States

vote. While the aim of this reform is to promote accountability and increase efficiency, experts argue that elections could serve to make the judicial system more vulnerable to political influence, ultimately undermining its ability to blindly uphold the rule of law.

Mexico's socio-economic resilience, as measured by its Positive Peace Index (PPI) score, has deteriorated by 2.4 percent in the last decade. This represents a larger deterioration than was seen by the greater Central American and the Caribbean region, which on average deteriorated by 0.8 percent. Positive Peace is a measure of the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies.

Mexico's deterioration in Positive Peace over the past decade has been driven by deteriorations in four Pillars of Positive Peace: *Well-Functioning Government*, *Good Relations with Neighbors*,

*Sound Business Environment* and *Low Levels of Corruption*. This report's sub-national measure of the Positive Peace, the Mexico Positive Peace Index (MPPI), further shows that *Low Levels of Corruption* and *Well-Functioning Government* are the Pillars with the highest levels of correlation with actual levels of peacefulness across states, as measured by the MPI and its five

indicators of negative peace. This suggests that corruption and administrative ineffectiveness are key drivers of violence in Mexico, as they contribute to impunity and reduce the resources available to combat crime.

While robust security strategies are indispensable to reducing violence in Mexico, building peacefulness also requires continued initiatives to address the social and institutional conditions that give rise to violence. It will be important to foster greater levels of public trust by tackling corruption, strengthening institutions so that they are seen as effective and legitimate, and expanding meaningful opportunities for young people. The 2025 Mexico Peace Index report offers a multifaceted view of the country's challenges related to peace and violence, providing insights for policymakers, business leaders, and civil society seeking to build peace across the country.

# Key Findings

## Section 1: Results and Trends

- ▶ In 2024, peacefulness in Mexico improved by 0.7 percent, with three MPI indicators registering improvements and two indicators registering deteriorations. Eighteen states improved and 14 deteriorated.
- ▶ Last year marked the fifth consecutive year of improvement. This was preceded by sharp deteriorations between 2015 and 2019. However, peace continues to be substantially lower than it was in 2015.
- ▶ The minimal change in overall peacefulness in 2024 can be attributed to the homicide rate, which remained steady, recording a less than one percent deterioration.
- ▶ Colima was the least peaceful state in the country in 2024, driven by its extremely high homicide rate. With 101 deaths per 100,000 people, the state registered the country's worst homicide rate.
- ▶ After Colima, the least peaceful states in Mexico last year were Guanajuato, Morelos, Baja California, and Quintana Roo.
- ▶ Yucatán was the most peaceful state in the country for the eighth year in a row, followed by Tlaxcala, Durango, Chiapas and Nayarit.
- ▶ In 2024, Zacatecas recorded the largest improvement in peacefulness, while Tabasco recorded the largest deterioration.
- ▶ Mexico's peace score has deteriorated by 13.4 percent since 2015. However, since peacefulness reached its lowest level in 2019, the country has shown an improvement of 6.4 percent.
- ▶ All five of the MPI indicators have experienced an overall deterioration since 2015, with the firearms crime and homicide indicators recording the largest increases.
- ▶ Since 2015, firearms crime has experienced the largest overall deterioration, with its rate increasing by 71.2 percent. This change is driven by deteriorations in both the homicide with a firearm and assault with a firearm sub-indicators.
- ▶ In the past ten years, the national homicide rate has increased by 55 percent, rising from 15 to 23 deaths per 100,000 people. Overall, there were 11,700 more deaths in 2024 than in 2015.
- ▶ Last year, in the context of Mexico's general elections, the country experienced its highest number of politically motivated homicides on record. Such homicides have spiked around the time of the country's three last election cycles.
- ▶ Growing numbers of people have gone missing in recent years in Mexico, with concerns that this is increasingly due to forcible disappearances by criminal organizations. In the past two decades, Jalisco has recorded both the most missing persons and most exhumed bodies from unmarked graves.
- ▶ The national rate of violent crimes has risen by over 14 percent since 2015, driven by a 137 percent increase in sexual assault and a 102 percent increase in family violence. These two rates increased each year from 2015 to 2023, but last year they recorded their first decreases on record.
- ▶ Since 2015, the rate of organized crime recorded a deterioration of nearly 60 percent. This poor performance can largely be attributed to a more than twofold increase in the rate of retail drug crimes.
- ▶ There have been major shifts in the US and Mexican drug markets in the past decade. Users in the United States have increasingly consumed synthetic drugs like fentanyl, and a growing number of Mexicans have started consuming and seeking treatment for illicit drugs.
- ▶ Despite an improvement in peacefulness, fear of violence remains high, with 73.6 percent of the population regarding the states in which they live as unsafe in 2024.
- ▶ About 54 percent of Mexicans rank crime and violence as the single greatest threat to safety in their daily lives, the third highest rate in the world.
- ▶ Colima has recorded the largest deterioration in peacefulness since 2015, with its rates of firearms crimes, violent crimes, and homicides all increasing by over 250 percent.
- ▶ After Colima, the largest deteriorations in peacefulness since 2015 were recorded in Guanajuato, Morelos, Quintana Roo, and Nuevo León.
- ▶ In the same period, Tamaulipas recorded the largest overall improvement in its peace score, followed by Sinaloa, Coahuila, Durango, and Guerrero.
- ▶ Overall, 24 states have deteriorated in peacefulness since 2015, while eight states have improved.

- ▶ In recent years, the Mexico-US border has experienced surges in northward flows of illicit drugs and unauthorized migrants, both of which have been highly profitable to criminal smugglers and have had destabilizing social and political effects on both countries.
- ▶ Related illegal flows of firearms southward have contributed to massive increases in gun violence and homicides in Mexico.
- ▶ Statistics from the past few years, however, suggest that some of these unauthorized or illicit flows – specifically those related to migrants and drugs – may have peaked in 2022-2023 and now be on a downward trajectory.

## Section 2: Economic Value of Peace

- ▶ The economic impact of violence in Mexico was 4.5 trillion pesos (US\$245 billion) in 2024, equivalent to 18 percent of the country's GDP.
- ▶ The economic impact of violence increased in 2024, rising by 3.4 percent, or 149 billion pesos.
- ▶ Overall, the total cost of violence in the past decade increased by 32 percent, or 1.1 trillion pesos.
- ▶ The economic impact of violence was six times higher than public investments made in healthcare and more than five times higher than those made in education in 2024.
- ▶ Mexico's spending on domestic security and the justice system in 2024 was equal to 0.7 percent of its GDP, less than half of the average for both Latin America and other members of the OECD.
- ▶ Spending on domestic security decreased by 30 percent from 2015 to 2024, while spending on the justice system decreased by 12 percent.
- ▶ In 2024, expenditure on the military recorded the largest increase of all the indicators in the model.
- ▶ In 2024, homicide constituted 38 percent of the economic impact of violence. This is equivalent to 1.7 trillion pesos.
- ▶ A ten percent reduction in the economic impact of violence is more than the federal government's total spending on physical infrastructure, including transport, schools, hospitals, information technology, utilities and urban infrastructure.
- ▶ Protection costs peaked in 2020 but increased by six percent over the 2015-2024 period.
- ▶ The economic impact of violence was 33,905 pesos per person in 2024, more than the average monthly salary in Mexico.
- ▶ There were three states where the economic cost of violence was substantially higher than in all others. In Morelos, Colima and Guerrero, the cost represented more than 35 percent of the state's GDP.

- ▶ The per capita economic impact varied significantly from state-to-state last year, ranging from 12,309 pesos in Yucatán to 89,916 pesos in Colima.
- ▶ Violent crime – including robbery, assault, sexual assault, and firearm-related offenses – was the only cost item to show a decrease in 2024.
- ▶ Since 2015, 26 states have recorded increases in their economic impact, with an average increase of 60 percent. In contrast, only six states have recorded decreases, with an average decrease of 17 percent.

## Section 3: Positive Peace

- ▶ Nationally, Mexico's Positive Peace Index (PPI) score has deteriorated by 2.4 percent over the past decade.
- ▶ Positive Peace in Mexico has recorded substantial deteriorations since 2015. This coincides with the substantial increases in violence across the country.
- ▶ Since 2015, the Pillar of Positive Peace to record the largest improvement was *Equitable Distribution of Resources*, largely driven by Mexico's successful efforts in reducing inequalities in education, income, and life expectancy.
- ▶ The net deterioration since 2015 was driven by four Pillars of Positive Peace: *Well-Functioning Government*, *Good Relations with Neighbors*, *Sound Business Environment* and *Low Levels of Corruption*.
- ▶ Since 2015, Mexico has witnessed a steep decline in the Attitudes and Institutions domains of Positive Peace. This was mainly driven by deteriorations in three indicators: law to support equal treatment of population segments, government openness and transparency and regulatory quality.
- ▶ At the sub-national level, the Mexico Positive Peace Index (MPPI) identifies variations in societal resilience across the country's 32 states. Nuevo León, Nayarit, Yucatán, Querétaro and Sinaloa recorded the best levels of Positive Peace. In contrast, Morelos, Guerrero, Tabasco, Puebla and Oaxaca recorded the worst levels of Positive Peace.
- ▶ The MPPI Pillars with the strongest associations with negative peace, as measured by the MPI and its five indicators, are *Low Levels of Corruption* and *Well-Functioning Government*. This suggests that corruption and administrative ineffectiveness are key drivers of violence in Mexico, as they contribute to impunity and reduce the resources available to combat crime.
- ▶ Improvement in the MPI's fear of violence indicator appears to be responsive to progress in all eight Pillars of the MPPI.



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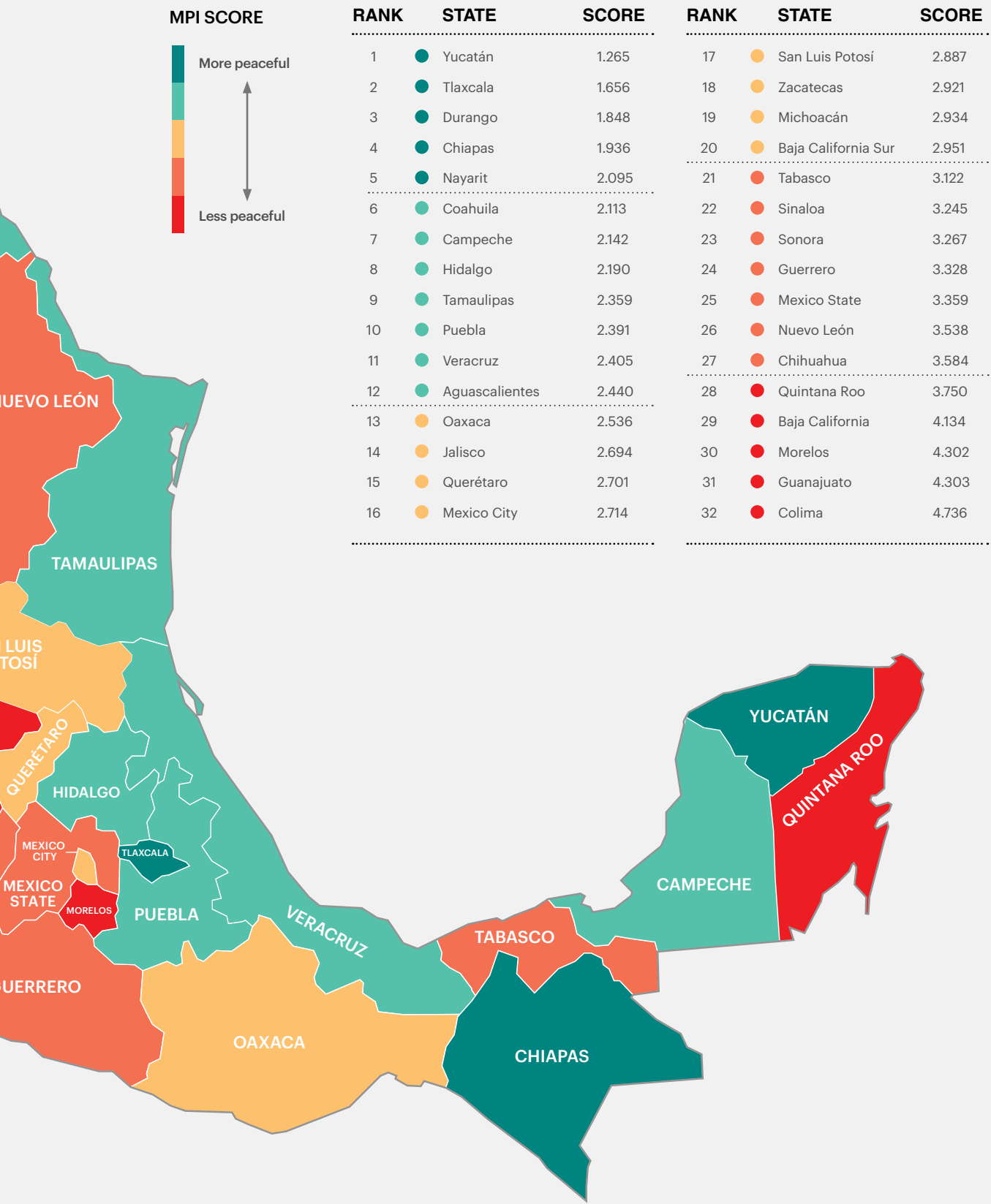
[visionofhumanity.org](http://visionofhumanity.org)

Explore the data on the interactive Mexico Peace Index map: see how peace changes over time, compare levels of peace between states and discover how the states fare according to each indicator of peace.



# 2025 Mexico Peace Index

A Snapshot of the State of Peace in Mexico





# 1 | Results and Trends




In 2024, peacefulness in Mexico improved by 0.7 percent, with three MPI indicators registering improvements and two indicators registering deteriorations. 18 states improved and 14 deteriorated.

Overall, 24 states have deteriorated in peacefulness since 2015, while eight states have improved.



In recent years, the Mexico-US border has experienced surges in northward flows of illicit drugs and unauthorized migrants, both of which have been highly profitable to criminal smugglers and have had destabilizing social and political effects on both countries.

Statistics from the past few years, however, suggest that some of these unauthorized or illicit flows – specifically those related to migrants and drugs – may have peaked in 2022-2023 and now be on a downward trajectory.

  
**55%**

In the past ten years, the national homicide rate has increased by 55 percent, rising from 15 to 23 deaths per 100,000 people from 2015 to 2024. Overall, there were 11,700 more deaths in 2024 than in 2015.

## Key Findings

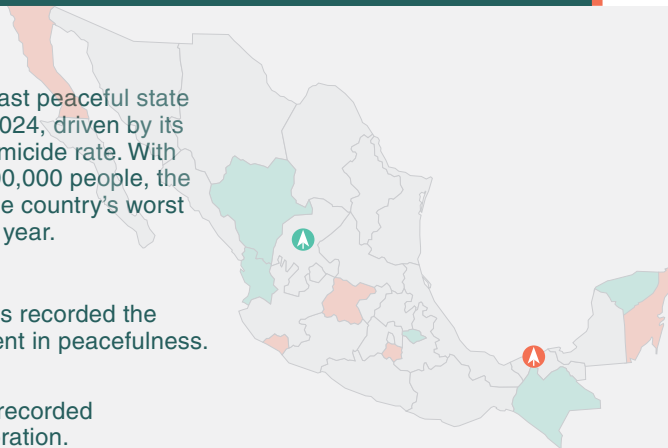
Colima was the least peaceful state in the country in 2024, driven by its extremely high homicide rate. With 101 deaths per 100,000 people, the state registered the country's worst homicide rate last year.



In 2024, Zacatecas recorded the largest improvement in peacefulness.



In 2024, Tabasco recorded the largest deterioration.



After Colima, the least peaceful states in Mexico last year were Guanajuato, Morelos, Baja California, and Quintana Roo.



Yucatán was the most peaceful state in the country for the eighth year in a row, followed by Tlaxcala, Durango, Chiapas and Nayarit.

  
**14%**

The national rate of violent crimes has risen by over 14 percent since 2015, driven by a 137 percent increase in sexual assault and a 102 percent increase in family violence.



There have been major shifts in the US and Mexican drug markets in the past decade. Users in the United States have increasingly consumed synthetic drugs like fentanyl, and a growing number of Mexicans have started consuming and seeking treatment for illicit drugs.



MPI RANK	STATE	OVERALL SCORE	HOMICIDE	ORGANIZED CRIME	VIOLENT CRIME	FIREARMS CRIME	FEAR OF VIOLENCE	OVERALL CHANGE 2023–2024	
1	Yucatán	1.265	1.130	1.250	1.124	1.053	2.355	-0.061	-
2	Tlaxcala	1.656	1.655	1.174	1.329	1.423	3.808	0.039	-
3	Durango	1.848	1.249	1.955	2.484	1.214	3.025	-0.102	↑ 1
4	Chiapas	1.936	1.922	1.484	1.414	1.738	4.438	0.199	↓ 1
5	Nayarit	2.095	1.854	1.690	2.755	1.673	2.931	-0.039	↑ 1
6	Coahuila	2.113	1.232	2.942	2.866	1.244	2.666	0.001	↓ 1
7	Campeche	2.142	1.592	2.146	2.270	1.954	3.798	-0.285	↑ 4
8	Hidalgo	2.190	1.524	2.269	2.650	1.720	3.752	-0.134	↓ 1
9	Tamaulipas	2.359	1.654	2.542	2.873	1.489	4.330	-0.088	↑ 4
10	Puebla	2.391	1.915	1.654	3.246	1.890	4.357	-0.018	-
11	Veracruz	2.405	1.663	2.447	2.688	2.028	4.517	-0.025	↑ 1
12	Aguascalientes	2.440	1.494	2.995	3.049	2.109	3.252	0.080	↓ 3
13	Oaxaca	2.536	2.459	2.011	2.280	2.814	4.037	-0.090	↑ 1
14	Jalisco	2.694	2.263	2.173	3.159	2.571	4.308	-0.102	↑ 3
15	Querétaro	2.701	1.538	3.377	3.801	1.995	3.412	0.028	-
16	Mexico City	2.714	1.662	2.237	4.211	2.246	4.375	-0.006	-
17	San Luis Potosí	2.887	1.935	3.515	3.433	2.177	4.297	0.016	↑ 3
18	Zacatecas	2.921	2.784	2.165	3.214	2.592	4.873	-0.850	↑ 10
19	Michoacán	2.934	2.830	2.567	2.228	3.607	4.528	-0.085	↑ 2
20	Baja California Sur	2.951	1.539	4.567	4.787	1.238	2.335	0.101	↓ 1
21	Tabasco	3.122	3.065	2.319	3.259	3.120	4.762	0.791	↓ 13
22	Sinaloa	3.245	2.887	3.459	3.607	3.006	3.435	0.400	↓ 4
23	Sonora	3.267	3.694	3.102	2.899	2.634	4.169	-0.066	-
24	Guerrero	3.328	3.858	2.501	2.407	3.947	4.591	0.006	↓ 2
25	Mexico State	3.359	1.775	3.814	4.776	2.811	4.870	-0.160	-
26	Nuevo León	3.538	2.626	4.409	3.305	3.938	4.229	0.021	↓ 2
27	Chihuahua	3.584	4.132	2.827	3.236	3.814	4.003	-0.030	↓ 1
28	Quintana Roo	3.750	3.210	3.698	5	2.620	4.543	0.037	↓ 1
29	Baja California	4.134	4.744	3.913	3.785	3.693	4.261	-0.325	↑ 2
30	Morelos	4.302	5	3.128	4.335	4.127	4.995	0.077	-
31	Guanajuato	4.303	3.960	4.873	3.433	5	4.881	0.154	↓ 2
32	Colima	4.736	5	5	4.012	5	4.534	-0.006	-
	National	2.938	2.402	2.871	3.292	2.722	4.264	-0.021	

Source: IEP



## 2024 Results and Ten-Year Trends

**Mexico's peacefulness has deteriorated by 13.4 percent since 2015. However, the past ten years have been marked by two distinct trends, with sharp deteriorations between 2015 and 2019, followed by modest but consistent improvements in the years that followed. Mexico's peacefulness improved by 0.7 percent in 2024.**

Figure 1.1 demonstrates the changes in overall peacefulness in Mexico since 2015. The largest single-year change was observed in 2017, when peacefulness deteriorated by 10.2 percent. Though the score continued to rise for the next two years, the rate of deterioration slowed down.

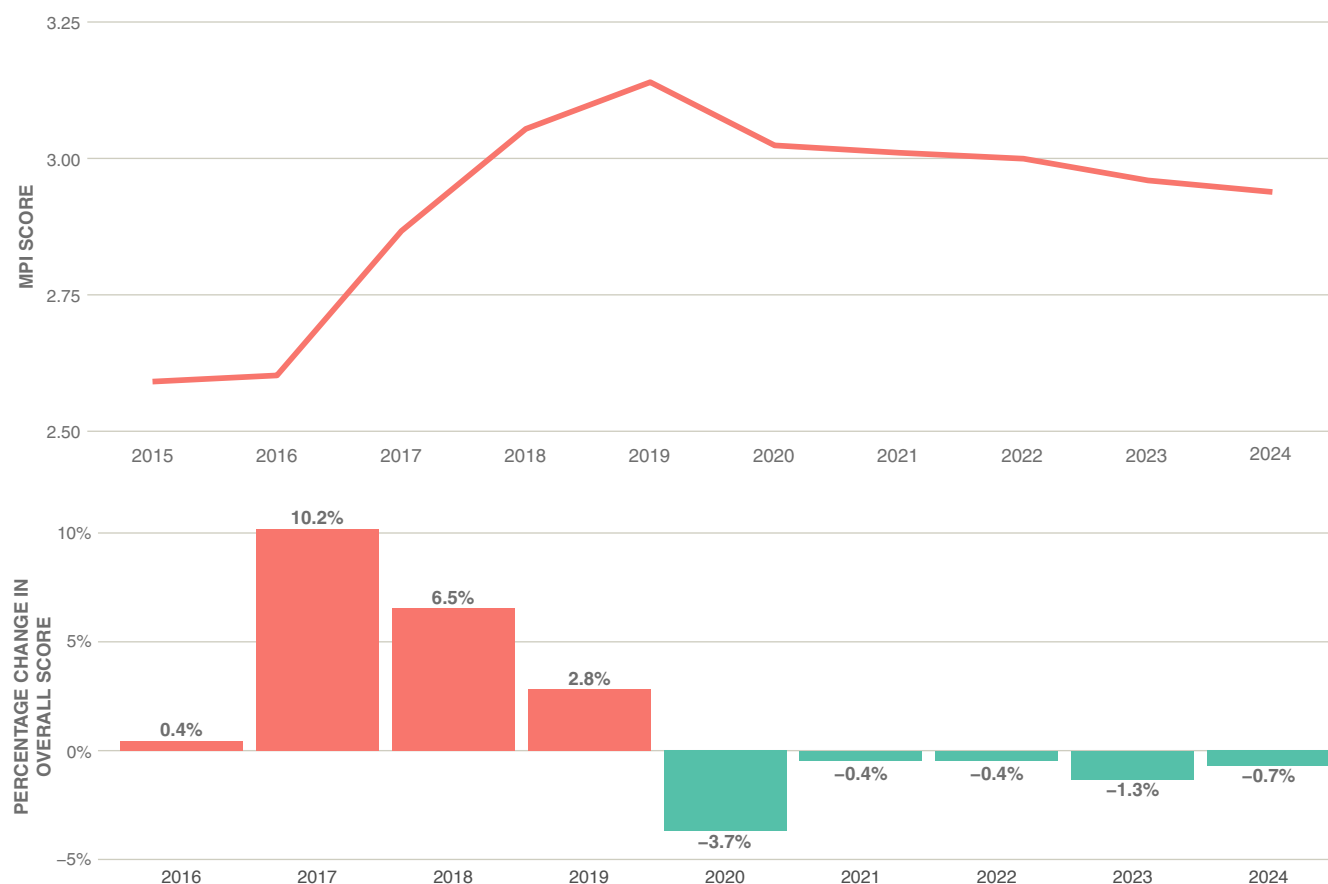
In 2020, the country experienced a reversal of the trend, with peacefulness improving by 3.7 percent. This was followed by more modest improvements over the next four years, including in 2024. Though the country has seen consistent improvements in peacefulness since 2020, these have not been drastic enough to return Mexico's peace score to its pre-2017 levels.

Figure 1.2 illustrates that the deterioration in peacefulness between 2015 and 2024 was primarily influenced by the significant rise in homicide and firearms crime. Though both indicators peaked in 2019 and have since shown improvements, neither indicator has returned to its pre-deterioration levels. In the past ten years, firearms crime has experienced the largest overall deterioration, with its rate increasing by 71.2 percent. This change has been driven by increases in both the number of assaults and the number of homicides committed with firearms. Since 2015, the rate of homicides with a firearm has almost doubled, while the rate of assaults with a firearm has shown a nearly 40 percent increase.

FIGURE 1.1

### Change in overall peacefulness, 2015–2024

Peacefulness has improved slightly in the past five years, following four consecutive years of substantial deteriorations.

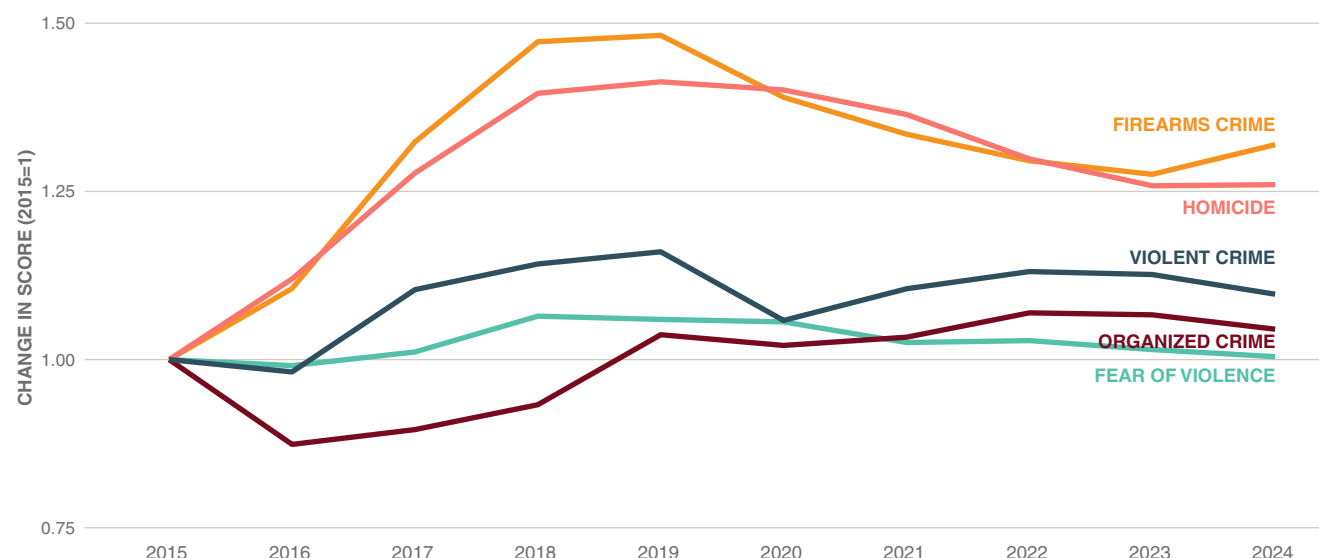


Source: IEP

FIGURE 1.2

**Indexed trend in peacefulness by indicator, 2015–2024**

Three out of the five MPI indicators recorded their worst scores in 2019 and have improved in the years since. The only indicator to register its worst score after 2020 was organized crime, which peaked in 2022.



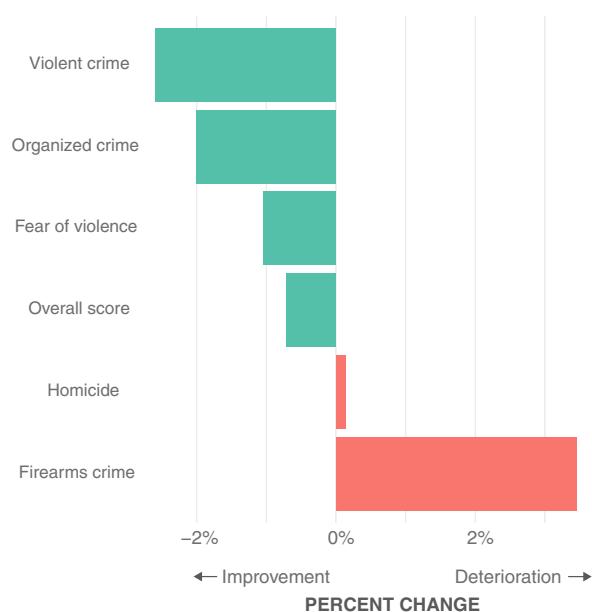
Source: IEP

In 2024, there were improvements in all but two of the five main indicators of the Mexico Peace Index (MPI), with the violent crime indicator registering the largest improvement, followed by the organized crime indicator, as shown in Figure 1.3. The homicide and firearms crime indicators both worsened, which marked the first deterioration for both indicators since 2019. Overall, 14 states deteriorated in peacefulness in 2024, while 18 states improved.

FIGURE 1.3

**Changes in peacefulness by indicator, 2023–2024**

Three peace indicators improved in 2024, while two indicators deteriorated. A lower score indicates a higher level of peacefulness.



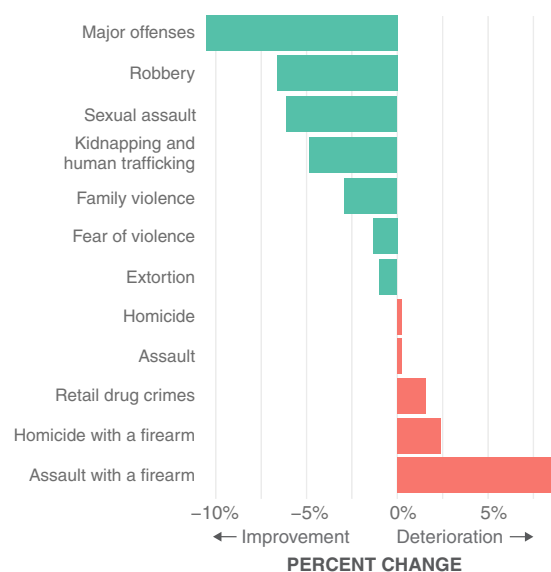
Source: IEP

Figure 1.4 depicts the changes in rates of all sub-indicators in 2024, as well as the changes in rates of homicide and fear of violence, which have no underlying sub-indicators. Seven of the 12 categories improved, while the other five recorded deteriorations. The two firearms crime sub-indicators saw the largest deteriorations in 2024, with the rate of assaults with a firearm increasing by nearly nine percent and the rate of homicides with a firearm rising by 2.4 percent.

FIGURE 1.4

**Changes in peacefulness by sub-indicator, 2023–2024**

In 2024, sexual assault and family violence rates both improved for the first time on record, while firearms-related crimes both saw their first deteriorations since 2019.



Source: IEP

Last year marked the first time since the index's inception that the rates of sexual assault and family violence improved. The sexual assault rate decreased by 6.1 percent, while the rate of family violence fell by nearly 2.9 percent. These indicators recorded increases every year between 2015 and 2023, resulting in their rates more than doubling in the past decade.

The minimal change in overall peacefulness in Mexico between 2023 and 2024 can be attributed to the homicide rate, which remained steady, recording only a 0.2 percent increase. This came after marked improvements in the homicide rate beginning in 2020.

For the second consecutive year, Zacatecas recorded the largest improvement in homicide, with its rate falling by 49.1 percent. As shown in Table 1.1, this led Zacatecas to experience by far the largest improvement in overall peacefulness in 2024, recording its best score since 2015.

Tabasco recorded the largest deterioration in peacefulness of any state in 2024, driven by a more than threefold increase in its homicide rate, by far the most substantial increase in homicides in the country. There were 921 recorded homicides in Tabasco last year, up from just 271 in 2023. The state also experienced deteriorations in each of the other four MPI indicators and all but three sub-indicators, with retail drug crimes and homicide with a firearm showing the most significant increases.

Since 2015, 24 states have deteriorated in peacefulness, while only eight have improved. In the past ten years, Tamaulipas has seen the largest improvement in overall peacefulness, driven by improvements across all indicators. Tamaulipas's most significant improvements were recorded in its rates of organized crime, homicide, and firearms crime, which respectively fell by 61.4, 50 and 37.5 percent. These positive rate changes led Tamaulipas to climb 20 places in the MPI rankings, rising from 29<sup>th</sup> place in 2015 to the ninth most peaceful state in the country

in 2024. After Tamaulipas, the most improved states in overall peacefulness were Durango, Coahuila, Guerrero and Sinaloa.

Colima has recorded the largest deterioration in peacefulness since 2015, with its rates of firearms crimes, violent crime, organized crime and homicide all increasing by over 250 percent in the past ten years. The states with the next most significant deteriorations in peacefulness were Guanajuato, Morelos, Quintana Roo and Nuevo León. Each of these states recorded dramatic increases in their homicide rates.

In 2024, Colima was once again the least peaceful state in the country, a spot that it has occupied since 2022. The state's poor performance was driven by its extremely high homicide rate. With 101 deaths per 100,000 people, last year was the third consecutive year in which Colima registered the country's most extreme homicide rate. Despite this, its 2024 rate represented a slight improvement from the 111 homicides per 100,000 recorded in 2023, which was the country's highest homicide rate on record.

Guanajuato was the second least peaceful state in Mexico last year, followed by Morelos, Baja California and Quintana Roo. This was the first year since 2019 that Quintana Roo appeared in the bottom five for overall peacefulness. While Quintana Roo's homicide rate fell in 2024, its organized crime rate increased by 25.1 percent, leading the state to record its worst peace score in six years.

Yucatán was the most peaceful state in the country in 2024, marking its eighth consecutive year in the top spot. It was followed by Tlaxcala, Durango, Chiapas and Nayarit. Since the index's inception, Yucatán has consistently recorded the lowest homicide rate in the country. In 2024, its rate of 2.2 deaths per 100,000 people was more than ten times lower than the national rate of 23.3 homicides per 100,000 people.

TABLE 1.1

### States recording the largest improvements and deteriorations in peacefulness, 2023–2024

Zacatecas recorded by far the largest improvement in peacefulness, while Tabasco recorded by far the largest deterioration.

State	Change in Score 2015 - 2024	2023 Rank	2024 Rank	Change in Rank
<b>Largest Improvements</b>				
<b>Zacatecas</b>	-0.850	28	18	↑ 10
<b>Baja California</b>	-0.325	31	29	↑ 1
<b>Campeche</b>	-0.285	11	7	↑ 3
<b>Mexico State</b>	-0.160	25	25	–
<b>Hidalgo</b>	-0.134	7	8	↓ 1
<b>Largest Deteriorations</b>				
<b>Tabasco</b>	0.791	8	21	↓ 13
<b>Sinaloa</b>	0.400	18	22	↓ 4
<b>Chiapas</b>	0.199	3	4	↓ 1
<b>Guanajuato</b>	0.154	29	31	↓ 2
<b>Baja California Sur</b>	0.101	19	20	↓ 1

Source: IEP

## MEXICO-US RELATIONS AND THE BORDER

Many of Mexico's economic, political and social dynamics are defined by its relationship with the United States, and this relationship is largely mediated by the countries' shared border. Stretching more than 3,000 kilometers, the border is the site of countless two-way flows of goods and people.

The vast majority of these flows are legal, regulated and mutually beneficial, but the illicit flows of drugs, weapons and money have had devastating impacts on both countries. This is especially the case for Mexico, where these flows have fueled extreme levels of cartel conflict in the past decade. Moreover, recent surges in the northward flows of unauthorized international migrants have had destabilizing effects on both the United States and Mexico, giving rise to diplomatic tensions and internal political divisions. However, statistics from the past three years suggest that some of these unauthorized or illicit flows – specifically those related to migrants and drugs – may have peaked in 2022-2023 and now be on a downward trajectory.

Mexico's proximity to the largest market in the world for goods and services has historically been an economic boon for the country. The industries and markets of both countries rely on each other for a variety of manufactured goods, raw materials and agricultural products, and many goods travel back and forth across the border multiple times in the process of being refined for consumers. The exports to the United States and the imports into Mexico include many of the same types of goods, including automobiles and auto parts, electrical machinery, petroleum (primarily crude from Mexico and primarily refined from the United States) and a variety of food goods and chemicals. In the past few years, Mexico has surpassed both Canada and China to become the United States's largest trading partner, with a total trade value of about US\$840 billion in 2024, comprising US\$334 billion in imports and US\$506 billion in exports, with the latter representing nearly 16 percent of all US imports.<sup>1</sup> Mexico's exports to the United States make up about two-thirds of its total exports and about a quarter of its GDP.<sup>2</sup>

However, steps taken by the new US administration have led to uncertainty over the future of bilateral trade. In early 2025, the Trump administration announced 25 percent tariffs to be placed on almost all imports from Mexico. This decision was made in the wake of the United States's US\$172 billion trade deficit with Mexico, as well as heightened concern over the flow of unauthorized migrants and illicit drugs over the border.<sup>3</sup> As a result of these and associated tariffs, the OECD has said that US economic growth will slow in 2025, estimating a 2.2 percent growth rate rather than a 2.4 percent growth rate. However, Mexico will be harder hit, with the OECD estimating that its economy will contract by 1.3 percent instead of growing by 1.2 percent.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to these flows of legal goods, as well as the regulated transit of tourists, temporary workers, daily commuters, family members, students and others, the Mexico-US border has long been a place of the unauthorized movement of migrants. Until around 2013, these migrants were mostly Mexican citizens, but that has changed in the past decade. Between 2014 and 2020,

the majority came from Central America, and since 2021, about a third have come from Central America, a third from Mexico, and a third from other countries – primarily Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, and Ecuador, along with growing numbers from Asia and Africa.<sup>5</sup>

Since 2010, US Customs and Border Control has recorded about 14.6 million encounters with unauthorized migrants attempting to enter the United States. Figure 1.5 demonstrates that encounters on the Mexico-US border over the past 15 years have made up 79.5 percent of encounters nationwide. About one-fifth of these border encounters have occurred at official points of entry, while the remainder have occurred in between official points of entry.

Between 2010 and 2018, there were consistently fewer than 600,000 Mexico-US border encounters per year. Beginning in 2019, however, the number began to rise. With the worldwide declines in international movement associated with the onset of COVID-19, there was a temporary drop in encounters in 2020, but in 2021 the number again started rising dramatically. The number eventually peaked in 2022 and 2023 at over 2.5 million each year, before dropping by more than a third in 2024, to around 1.6 million.<sup>6</sup>

The rise in migrant border encounters between 2021 and 2023 has been ascribed to a number of factors. The beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in economic hardship and increased social instability in many countries. Once restrictions on movement began to ease, many people in regions already facing violence and poverty sought better opportunities in the United States. This was evident in growing number of migrants from politically unstable countries in South America, who historically did not tend to seek entry into the United States through its southern border. In addition, certain policy and rhetorical shifts under the Biden administration created the perception of more accessible asylum procedures, which led many more people to attempt to cross the border.<sup>7</sup>

On this note, it has also been argued that the rise in encounters is in part the result of changing migrant behavior arising from the large backlog in US asylum claims.<sup>8</sup> In 2023, the latest year on record, there were over 400,000 cases awaiting adjudication, by far the largest number of pending cases on record.<sup>9</sup> While awaiting a decision on their cases, many asylum seekers have been able to legally live and work in the United States for years without facing deportation. Consequently, whereas many migrants may have previously attempted to enter the country undetected, this prolonged process may have incentivized many to intentionally present themselves to border control agents to claim asylum, thereby inflating encounter statistics.<sup>10</sup>

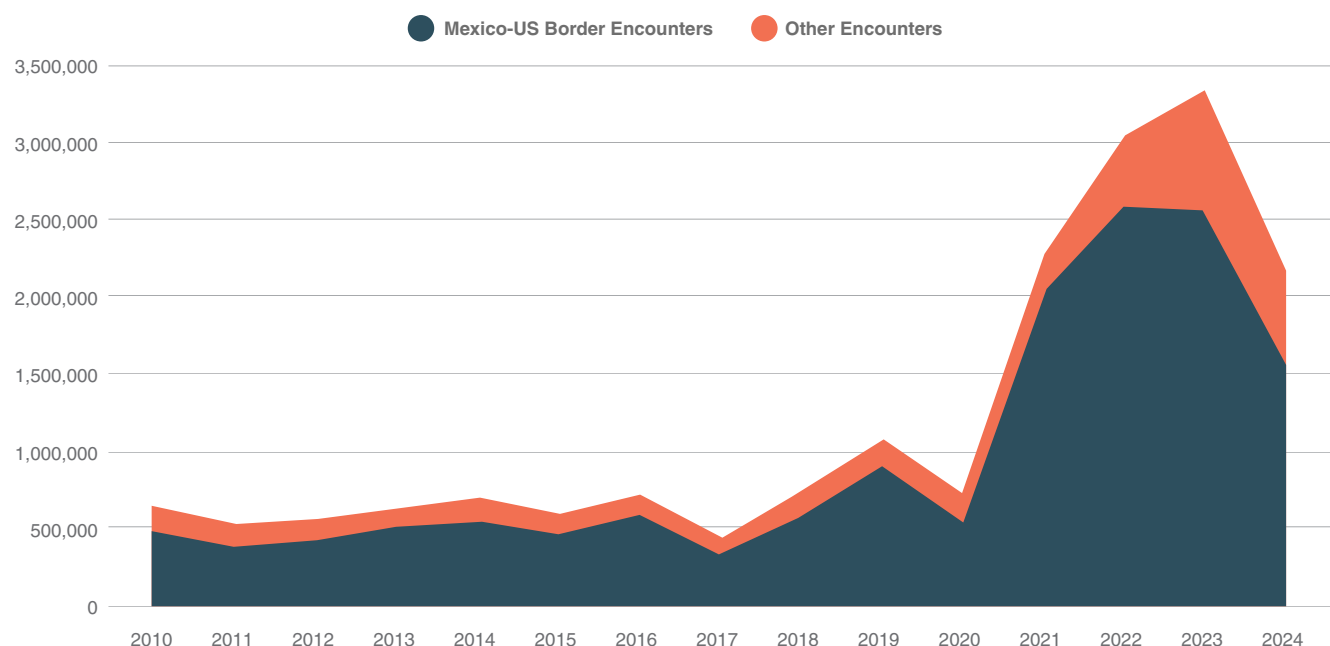
A large but unknown portion of unauthorized migrants employ human smuggling operations, often affiliated with large criminal organizations, to get them across the border. Recent reports suggest that migrants can be charged US\$7,000-18,000 to be smuggled.<sup>11</sup> Such activities have been described as now representing a “pillar” of cartels' operations. For example, it has been reported that in just a single northern border village in the state of Sonora, groups affiliated with the Sinaloa Cartel are generating over US\$1 million per month from migrant smuggling.<sup>12</sup>



FIGURE 1.5

## Encounters with unauthorized migrants to the United States, Mexico-US border and overall, 2010–2024

Encounters with unauthorized migrants to the United States surged between 2021 and 2023 but dropped markedly in 2024.



Source: Office of Homeland Security Statistics

Note: These figures include migrant encounters with both the Office of Field Operations (official points of entry) and the United States Border Patrol (in between official points of entry). Figures are presented based on calendar years, not the fiscal years of US Customs and Border Protection. Figures available up to November 2024.

For both human smuggling and the trafficking of drugs into the United States, criminal organizations in Mexico seek to maintain control of territory in the country's border states. This is reflected in the results of the Mexico Peace Index, where two of the five worst ranked states for the organized crime indicator are the border states of Baja California and Nuevo León. Multiple cartels operate in both states, including the two most powerful cartels in the country: the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) and the Sinaloa Cartel. In Baja California, a turf war between the two groups has raged for over eight years, contributing to the state recording an extreme homicide rate of over 50 deaths per 100,000 people every year since 2016.<sup>13</sup> In Nuevo León, the encroachment of the Northeast Cartel into the capital city Monterrey has triggered a similarly violent conflict with groups that have long exerted control over the area.<sup>14</sup>

Cartels profit greatly from the manufacturing and trafficking of illicit drugs from Mexico to the United States. In the past decade, shifts in the US drug market have led to significant changes in Mexico's drug trafficking organizations. The most notable change has been the decrease in demand for plant-based drugs like marijuana and heroin, while demand for synthetic drugs, especially fentanyl, has surged. The fentanyl trade is highly lucrative due to the drug's extreme potency and relatively low production costs. Fentanyl is roughly 50 times more powerful than heroin and 100 times more powerful than morphine, meaning just two milligrams can be lethal.<sup>15</sup> As the markup price for fentanyl can be as much as 2,700 times its original production cost, as of 2022 it was estimated that cartels grossed between US\$700 million and US\$1 billion annually from the fentanyl trade. This is less than the US\$1.3 billion that

heroin was estimated to gross each year at the peak of its trade, but overheads are higher for heroin.<sup>16</sup>

The movement of fentanyl across the Mexico-US border begins on the west coast of Mexico, where shipments of the drug's precursor ingredients arrive at ports controlled either directly or indirectly by criminal organizations like the Sinaloa Cartel and the CJNG.<sup>17</sup> From there, fentanyl is synthesized in secret laboratories, where it is often pressed into pills that resemble more commonly abused substances, such as Xanax and Oxycodone. These laboratories are primarily located in the north of the country, where the drugs can be produced closest to their intended destination.<sup>18</sup> For instance, in February 2023, Mexican authorities seized over 600,000 pills containing fentanyl in a drug lab raid in Culiacán, the capital of the northern state of Sinaloa.<sup>19</sup>

Data suggests the vast majority of people that traffic fentanyl across the Mexico-US border are US citizens. Between 2019 and 2024, US citizens represented 80 percent of those caught with the drug during border crossings at official points of entry. Cartels likely recruit US citizens to transport fentanyl across the border, as legal entrants are less likely to attract suspicion.<sup>20</sup> Alternatively, criminal organizations take advantage of Mexico's extensive trade industry by concealing fentanyl in cargo bound for the United States.<sup>21</sup> According to experts, approximately 88 percent of fentanyl seizures occur at official points of entry, rather than at illegal crossing routes.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the overall strength of the fentanyl trade, recent data suggests that fentanyl trafficking across the Mexico-US border may have peaked and could now be on the decline. Between 2019 and 2023, the amount of fentanyl seized at the Mexico-US border increased by more than 600 percent, rising from 604 to 4,267 kilograms. In 2024, however, there was a 19.3 percent decline in the total volume seized, to 3,443 kilograms. A similar trend has been observed in relation to the number of seizure events in the past several years. After peaking in 2021, the number of fentanyl seizures at the border has steadily declined each year, and it registered its greatest single-year drop in 2024, when the number of seizures fell by 28.7 percent. Moreover, in 2024, fentanyl-related overdoses in the United States declined for the first time, following substantial increases over the past decade.

These trends may also be reflected in the volumes of currency and other monetary seizures at the border in the past five years. The total value of such seizures increased from just over US\$4 million in 2020 to a high of US\$20.4 million in 2023. In 2024, however, there was a minor drop, to US\$18.5 million.<sup>23</sup> These trends occurred in both inbound and outbound money seizures.

Cash reportedly remains the dominant method of money transfers for drug trafficking organizations, particularly at the local level. However, there have recently been major increases in the use of electronic money systems, particularly cryptocurrencies, which allow cartels to move vast sums of money internationally and instantaneously while avoiding banks, in-person exchanges, and cross-border money movements. Cryptocurrencies are reportedly used more and more frequently by consumers to purchase drugs like fentanyl, as well as by cartels to purchase fentanyl's precursor chemicals from China. Cryptocurrencies have also increasingly been used to launder profits from drug trafficking. In one set of documented cases between August 2022 and February 2023, for example, the Sinaloa Cartel allegedly laundered more than US\$869,000 in a scheme involving US-based couriers picking up cash from fentanyl traffickers and depositing the money to cryptocurrency accounts controlled by the cartel.<sup>24</sup>

Another illicit flow across the Mexico-US border that has profound effects on criminal activity is the smuggling of firearms from the United States into Mexico, a flow which has been referred to as the “iron river.”<sup>25</sup> While it is possible to legally obtain certain guns in Mexico, the process for ownership is highly regulated. Prospective buyers must undergo background checks and submit a range of documentation, including confirmations of the absence of a criminal record.<sup>26</sup> There is also only one store in the country that legally sells firearms to private citizens, which is located on an army base in Mexico City.<sup>27</sup>

To circumvent these restrictions, criminal actors have set up illicit pipelines to traffic guns into Mexico. Gun smugglers are known to enlist US residents or citizens to purchase firearms from gun shops or gun shows, in what is known as a “straw” purchase, and then transfer them to a cartel representative.<sup>28</sup> This flow has increasingly armed organized criminal groups with firearms, including military-grade firearms, in their highly lethal territorial disputes with each other and with government

security forces.<sup>29</sup> Mexican authorities have claimed that at least half a million firearms are smuggled into Mexico from the United States each year.<sup>30</sup>

Researchers have traced the beginnings of the rise of US guns in Mexico to the expiration of a US federal assault weapons ban in 2004, before which fewer than 90,000 firearms were estimated to be trafficked across the border each year.<sup>31</sup> In this connection, a 2013 study determined that there was an immediate uptick in firearms homicides in Mexican municipalities close to the US border following the expiration of the ban, except for municipalities bordering California, which was the only US border state to have a state-level assault weapons ban still in place.<sup>32</sup>

Traces performed by the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) on guns recovered at Mexican crime have consistently shown that at least two-thirds are smuggled into the country from the United States.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, about three-quarters of those guns originate in southwest border states, particularly Arizona and Texas, where they are brought into Mexico via trafficking pipelines to Sonora, Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, and Guanajuato.<sup>34</sup> These pipelines, combined with some of the primary drug trafficking routes through Mexico, are shown in the map in Figure 1.6.

The increased prevalence of guns has been associated with a substantial deterioration in peacefulness in Mexico in the past decade. The country has experienced major increases in homicides since 2015, and a growing share of the killings have been carried out with firearms. More than 200,000 Mexicans having been killed with guns in this time.

As a result of these dynamics, in 2021, the Mexican government filed a lawsuit in US court against several large US gun manufacturers. The lawsuit argued that such companies were liable for facilitating the influx of weapons across the border, claiming that this movement had been a major contributor in Mexico ranking third in the world in gun-related deaths. In addition to the massive human cost, the lawsuit argued that the firearms-related violence associated with this flood of guns had adversely impacted investment and economic development in Mexico.<sup>35</sup> In August 2024, a US judge dismissed the case against six of the eight companies named in the original lawsuit, citing a lack of proof that they had any involvement in facilitating weapons trafficking to cartels in Mexico.<sup>36</sup> In March 2025, oral arguments in the case were made before the US Supreme Court.

While the flows of weapons have had the most direct effects on Mexico's peacefulness in the past decade, all major flows of goods and people across the border have significant impacts on the stability of both countries. While recent evidence suggests that certain illicit and unauthorized flows may be on the decline, it remains to be seen whether these trends will be sustained. Bilateral collaboration to support the continued decline of unlawful cross-border flows, combined with the bolstering of those that are legal and mutually beneficial, will be crucial to the economic and social well-being of Mexico and the United States in the coming years.

FIGURE 1.6

### Flows of drugs and firearms between Mexico and the United States

Peace and stability in Mexico and the United States have been substantially undermined by the northward flows of drugs and the southward flows of firearms.



Source: START, ATF, IEP



## Homicide

**More than 300,000 people have been murdered in Mexico in the past decade. Between 2015 and 2019, the number of homicides rose rapidly, with the national rate climbing from 15.1 to 28.2 deaths per 100,000 people. Over the past five years, however, there has been a modest but steady decline in killings, dropping to a rate of 23.3 in 2023 and remaining at that level in 2024.**

Despite significant improvement since 2019, homicidal violence remains widespread in Mexico. In 2024, there were over 30,802 homicide victims, equivalent to an average of about 85 killings per day.

Figure 1.7 depicts the national monthly trend in homicide rate since January 2015. Following three years of significant increases, the monthly homicide rate peaked in July 2018 at 2.52 deaths per 100,000 people, after which it remained near that level for the next three years. The rate began to decline more significantly in mid-2021, falling from 2.41 deaths per 100,000 people in May 2021 to 1.75 deaths per 100,000 people in December 2024.

The changes in levels of homicide over the past nine years have been driven by organized criminal groups. Drawing on 2007-

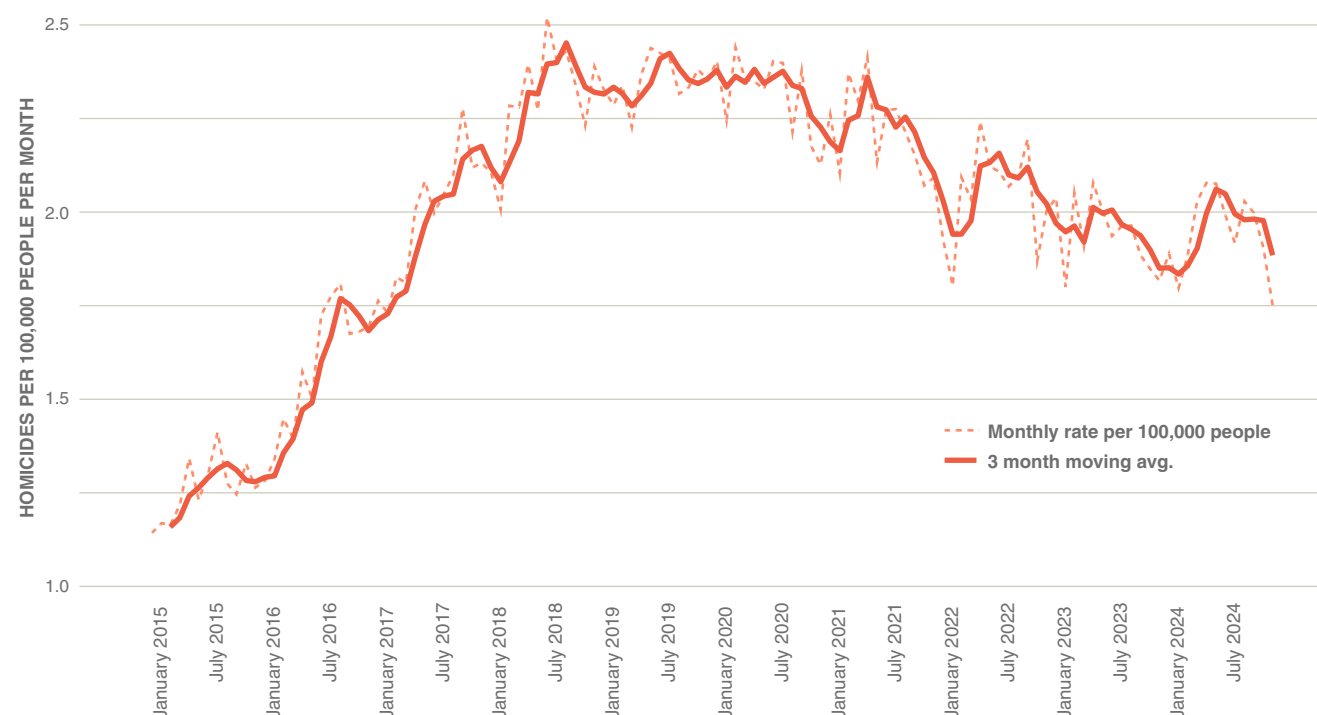
2024 figures from Lantia Intelligence, the annual number of killings estimated to be linked to organized crime rose more than sixfold in the past two decades, while all other homicides doubled. This means that, even as organized crime-related homicides increased from about 3,000 to about 18,000, the number of homicides not linked to organized crime has shown comparatively little change.

Since 2015, the number of homicides not associated with organized crime has consistently hovered between about 12,000 and 14,000 per year, as shown in Figure 1.8. In the absence of organized crime-related killings, Mexico's homicide rate would be substantially lower, at around 9.5 deaths per 100,000 people. At this rate, Mexico would have the 34<sup>th</sup> worst rate in the world, far better than its actual ranking of 15<sup>th</sup> worst in the world.

FIGURE 1.7

### Monthly homicide rate, 2015–2024

The monthly homicide rate peaked in July 2018 at 2.52 deaths per 100,000 people.

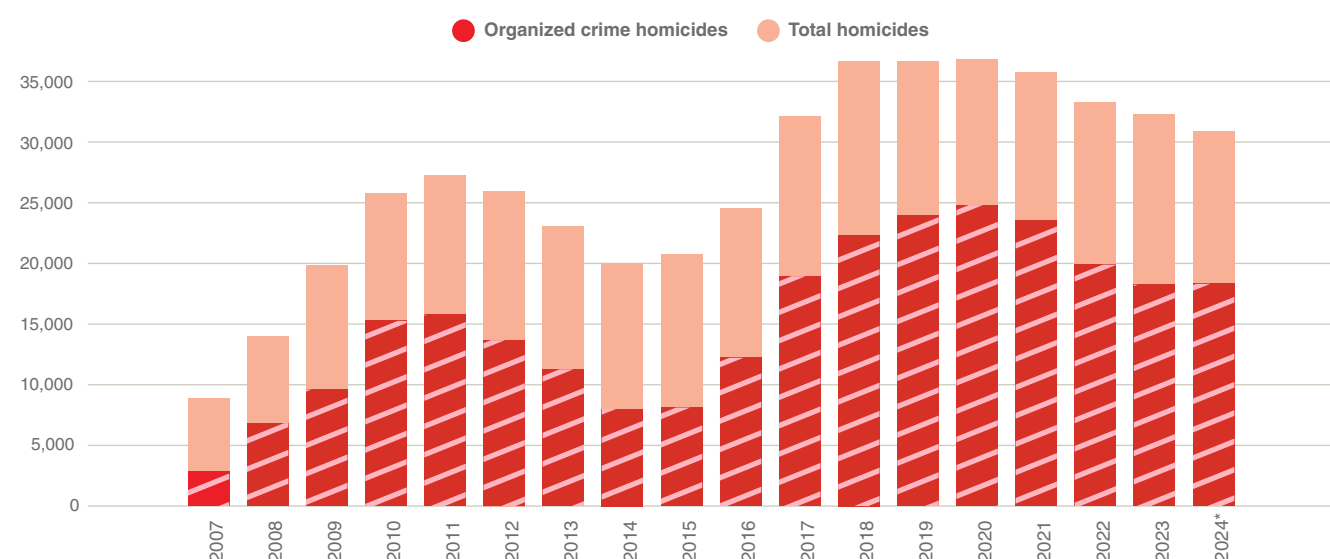


Source: SESNSP

FIGURE 1.8

**Annual homicides, overall and estimated number associated with organized crime, 2007–2024**

Killings associated with organized crime have been the driver of the overall increase in homicides across Mexico.



Source: INEGI; Lantia Intelligence; SESNSP

Note: Overall homicide statistics from 2007 to 2023 are sourced from INEGI, while the 2024 value is sourced from SESNSP\*.

**CHANGES IN HOMICIDE BY STATE, 2015–2024**

Despite the overall national improvement since 2019, most states' homicide rates have increased overall since 2015. This is because the deteriorations between 2015 and 2019 significantly outweigh the improvements experienced since then. In all, only eight states recorded improvements in their homicide rates over the entire ten-year period, while 24 deteriorated.

Table 1.2 details the number of states in different homicide rate groupings by year. In this analysis, a low homicide rate is considered less than five per 100,000 people, a moderate rate is

between five and 15, a high rate is between 15 and 30, and an extreme rate is more than 30. Homicide rates at the extreme level are more than three times higher than the national average in 2015. For comparison, the global homicide rate is 5.3 per 100,000 people and the rate for the overall Latin America and the Caribbean region is about 21.<sup>37</sup>

In 2015, only one state had more than 50 homicides per 100,000 people. But over the next several years, the number of states with extreme homicide rates rose, reaching eight in 2021 and 2022, and then declining over the past two years.

TABLE 1.2

**State homicide levels by year, 2015–2024**

Four states recorded an extreme homicide rate in 2024, the lowest number since 2016.

	Low (<5 homicides per 100,000)	Moderate (5-15 homicides per 100,000)	High (15-30 homicides per 100,000)	Very high (30-50 homicides per 100,000)	Extreme (>50 homicides per 100,000)
2015	3	16	10	2	1
2016	3	14	6	7	2
2017	1	11	11	3	6
2018	1	8	11	7	5
2019	1	10	10	5	6
2020	1	11	9	4	7
2021	1	11	10	2	8
2022	2	13	7	2	8
2023	3	14	5	5	5
2024	3	11	7	7	4

Source: SESNSP; IEP Calculations

Yucatán, Coahuila and Durango were the three states to record a low homicide rate in 2024. Yucatán has consistently registered the country's lowest rate each year since 2015. In 2024, Yucatán's homicide rate was 2.2 deaths per 100,000 people, while Coahuila's was 3.9 and Durango's was 4.1.

In contrast, Colima, Morelos, Baja California, and Chihuahua recorded extreme homicide rates in 2024, each for at least the fourth consecutive year. Guanajuato, which had a homicide rate of 49.3 deaths per 100,000 people, recorded by far the most total number of murders in 2024, with more than 3,100 people killed. Since 2015, the homicide rate in Colima has nearly quadrupled, while those of Morelos and Guanajuato have nearly tripled.

Last year was the first year since 2019 that Zacatecas did not record an extreme homicide rate. Homicides gradually rose in the state during the late 2010s before peaking in 2021, at 97.6 deaths per 100,000 people. This rise came largely because of Zacatecas becoming a key battleground in the bloody multi-state conflict between the CJNG, the Sinaloa Cartel, and their respective allies, with the state's highways being of particular importance for the transportation of drugs northward to the United States.

But after peaking in 2021, the number of homicides in Zacatecas gradually decreased in both 2022 and 2023, though they still remained at extreme levels. In 2024, however, the state saw a major drop in deaths, with the rate falling from 58.4 to 29.7 homicides per 100,000 people. This decline resulted in Zacatecas recording the largest improvements in both the homicide indicator and overall peacefulness of any state last year.

Government agencies have credited the improvement to an increased presence of security forces in urban and rural areas, particularly the metropolitan police of Zacatecas City, members of the Army and the National Guard, and a special rapid response force created in 2023 to combat armed cartel activity in the state.<sup>38</sup> Among cartels, it has been reported that the CJNG recently has suffered the most losses due to security operations in Zacatecas, with at least 437 of its members arrested and at least 25 killed in 2023 and 2024. In the same period, the Sinaloa Cartel saw at least 261 members arrested and 31 killed, while the Northeast Cartel saw at least 120 members arrested and three killed.<sup>39</sup>

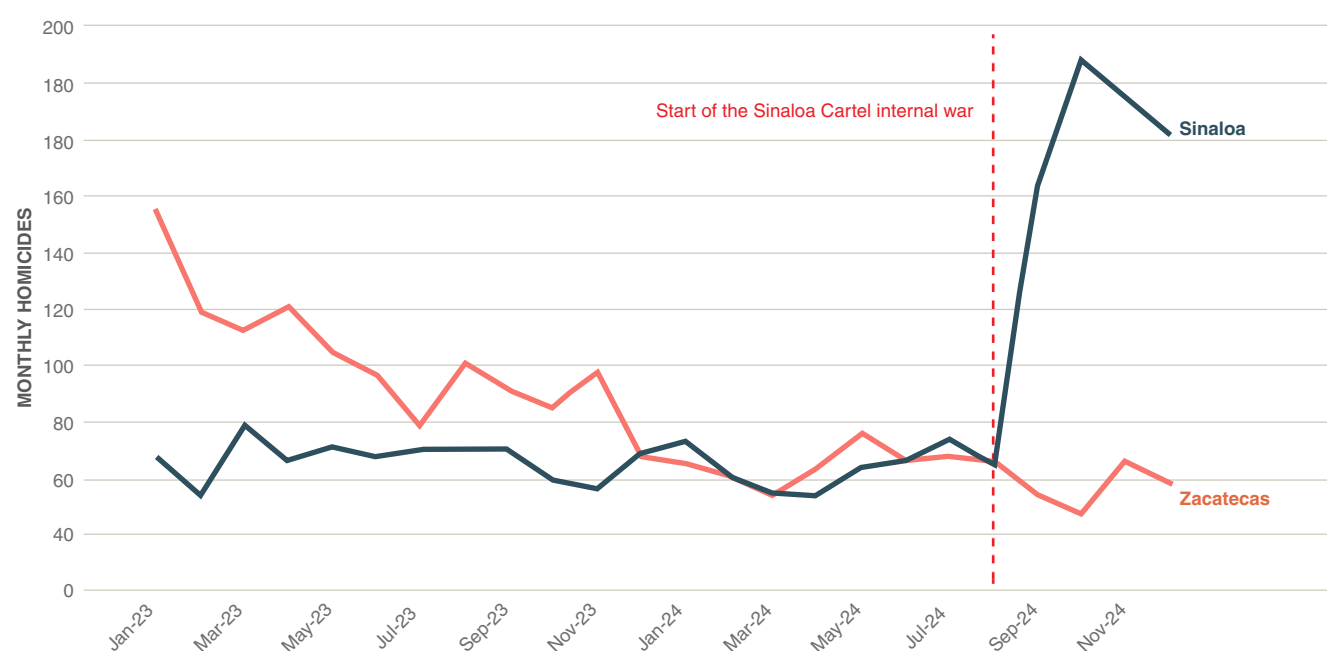
Zacatecas's drop in homicides was likely also the result of shifting dynamics in inter- and intra-cartel conflict, which tends to be the main driver of extreme homicide rates across Mexico. Specifically, in 2024, after several years of violent infighting between the Chapitos and the Mayiza factions of the Sinaloa Cartel, the rivalry dramatically escalated following the 25 July arrest of Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada at an airport in New Mexico in the United States. It is suspected that Zambada was betrayed and forcibly handed over to US authorities by Joaquín Guzmán López, one of the sons of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán and a leading member of the Chapitos faction, who also surrendered to US authorities on the same day.<sup>40</sup>

On 9 September, less than two months after these arrests, armed clashes involving the two factions, as well as government security forces, erupted across the capital of Sinaloa, Culiacán, the stronghold of the Sinaloa Cartel. In the days that followed, Culiacán and neighboring municipalities experienced widespread violence, with cartel gunmen establishing

FIGURE 1.9

### Monthly homicides, Sinaloa and Zacatecas, 2023–2024

Homicides spiked in Sinaloa after open conflict began between factions of the Sinaloa Cartel. In contrast, Zacatecas has seen a gradual decline in homicides over recent years, which may have been temporarily supported by the Sinaloa Cartel's focus on its home state in late 2024.



Source: SESNSP, IEP calculations



roadblocks, inspecting civilians' cell phones for contacts linked to rival factions, and engaging in kidnappings and executions. These actions instilled fear among residents, leading to deserted streets and closed businesses.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the deployment of about 11,000 security forces to the city, murders remained prevalent for the remainder of 2024. By December, more than 500 people had been killed due to the cartel infighting, with many of the dead believed to be cartel foot soldiers or scouts. The prolonged violence has led to unknown numbers of families being displaced from Culiacán.<sup>42</sup>

This conflict resulted in the state of Sinaloa recording the second largest deterioration in both the homicide indicator and overall peacefulness in 2024. Exclusively the result of the spike in murders between September and December, the homicide rate rose by 80.6 percent, from 17.4 to 31.4 deaths per 100,000 people. This spike is depicted in Figure 1.9, which shows the monthly homicide rates in 2023 and 2024 for both Sinaloa and Zacatecas.

The figure shows Zacatecas's downward monthly trajectory in homicides since the beginning of 2023, with the monthly rate hitting a low of 28 homicides in a month in October, the state's lowest number between 2015 and 2024. This coincided with Sinaloa hitting its highest number of homicides on record, with 188 recorded deaths in October. In early 2025, the number of homicides in Zacatecas continued to fall, dropping to 25 in January and to 19 in February, the lowest number on record.

Criminal groups like the CJNG are likely to exploit the Sinaloa Cartel's weakening position to consolidate control in some areas while expanding into others. For example, reports have suggested that, in Zacatecas, the CJNG may be attempting to build an alliance with the Chapitos faction of the Sinaloa Cartel in order to challenge the Mayiza faction. Alliances of this kind have the potential to reduce violence in some areas while exacerbating them in others, particularly in territories internally contested by the Sinaloa Cartel.<sup>43</sup>

The CJNG's expansionist efforts appear to have also fueled a major intensification of fighting in Tabasco last year. The state saw a fragmentation of its criminal landscape, following the splintering of a local group known as La Barredora in December 2023, which exacerbated disputes over control of migrant trafficking routes among local criminal groups and the CJNG. Following the group's division, some factions of La Barredora reportedly joined forces with the CJNG.<sup>44</sup> In February 2024, a video allegedly released by the CJNG targeted La Barredora's leaders, threatening to "clean" the state.<sup>45</sup>

In the months that followed, Tabasco experienced record levels of homicidal violence, with killings peaking in April and November, with 127 and 110 deaths, respectively. Most of these murders took place in the state's three largest cities: the capital of Villahermosa, along with Comalcalco and Cárdenas. However, the small municipality of Teapa, which has a population of less than 60,000, recorded the highest overall homicide rate as a result of its 52 recorded cases.

While Tabasco experienced the greatest increase in homicides in Mexico, the state of Colima continued to record by far the worst homicide rate overall. For the third year in a row, the state registered more than 100 homicides per 100,000 people, though its rate of 102 in 2024 was slightly better than the country-record high of 111 in 2023.

The least peaceful state in the country, Colima, has seen violence skyrocket in recent years as a result of cartel conflict. A small coastal state, Colima represents a key entry point for precursor chemicals from Asia for synthesizing fentanyl and methamphetamines that are processed and trafficked into the United States.<sup>46</sup> The city of Manzanillo, which, as Mexico's busiest port, handles about 30 percent of the country's maritime imports, is of strategic importance for this reason.<sup>47</sup> Drug cartels, particularly the CJNG, which is the dominant criminal actor in Manzanillo and the wider state,<sup>48</sup> have therefore engaged in highly lethal battles to assert control of the territory.

The CJNG's control of the port has regularly been challenged by rivals, making it a hotspot of violence. In 2016, the group fended off attempts by the Sinaloa Cartel and the Zetas. Although the power of the Zetas has since declined, the Sinaloa Cartel has continued to contest control over Manzanillo.<sup>49</sup> Violence also spiked in early 2022, when at least 50 fatalities were associated with the CJNG in Colima in both January and February 2022. This reportedly arose in the context of the dissolution of an alliance between the CJNG and a local affiliate known as the Mezcales. Reports suggest that the Mezcales formed a new alliance with the Sinaloa Cartel.<sup>50</sup>

Since then, challenges for control of the port and the rest of the state appear to have continued. In 2024, Manzanillo had an estimated homicide rate of 154 deaths per 100,000 people, the highest overall rate since 2020. Among all medium- and large-sized municipalities in the country,<sup>51</sup> this rate was second only to the state's capital, Colima City, with 172 deaths per 100,000 people. This represents a slight improvement from the capital's 184 deaths per 100,000 people recorded in 2023 but is still nearly a threefold increase from 2021.<sup>52</sup>

## GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION OF HOMICIDES

Mexico's high levels of homicide are primarily driven by violence in a relatively small number of urban centers. In 2024, half of all homicide cases were recorded in just 53 of Mexico's 2,462 municipalities.<sup>53</sup> However, relative to population sizes, high levels of homicide are present in urban, semi-urban, and rural settings across the country.

The map in Figure 1.10 depicts the homicide rate across Mexico's municipalities. At the municipal level, Mexico's National System for Public Security (SESNSP) only provides the number of homicide cases, which is often distinct from the number of homicide victims, as a single homicide case may involve multiple victims. However, both figures are provided at the state level. To estimate the municipal homicide rate, therefore, each municipal homicide case rate has been adjusted based on the level of state-wide discrepancy between victims and cases – differences which range widely across states. In Nuevo León and

Yucatán, for example, every homicide victim is associated with a unique case and there are therefore no discrepancies. In contrast, Zacatecas and Chiapas had the highest discrepancies between the two figures in 2024, with the total number of victims being, respectively, 25.8 and 25.3 percent higher than the total number of cases.

In 2024, there were about 260 municipalities with a homicide rate of at least 50 deaths per 100,000 people, meaning that approximately 11 percent of municipalities nationally suffer from extreme levels of homicidal violence. In contrast, about 1,100 had a rate of less than five deaths per 100,000 people, including about 970 with zero deaths, meaning that in about 44 percent of municipalities there were either no or relatively few recorded murders last year. The remaining municipalities, constituting just over half of the total, fall roughly within the moderate to very high homicide level ranges: about 21 percent of all municipalities recorded a rate of 5-15 deaths per 100,000 people, about 16 percent recorded a rate of 15-30, and about eight percent recorded a rate of 30-50.

As shown in Figure 1.10, municipalities experiencing extreme levels of homicidal violence are often clustered together in the same geographic area. These clusters commonly represent strategic places for the production or trafficking of illegal drugs.

They tend to be in areas in dispute by two or more criminal organizations, whose turf wars drive up homicide rates.

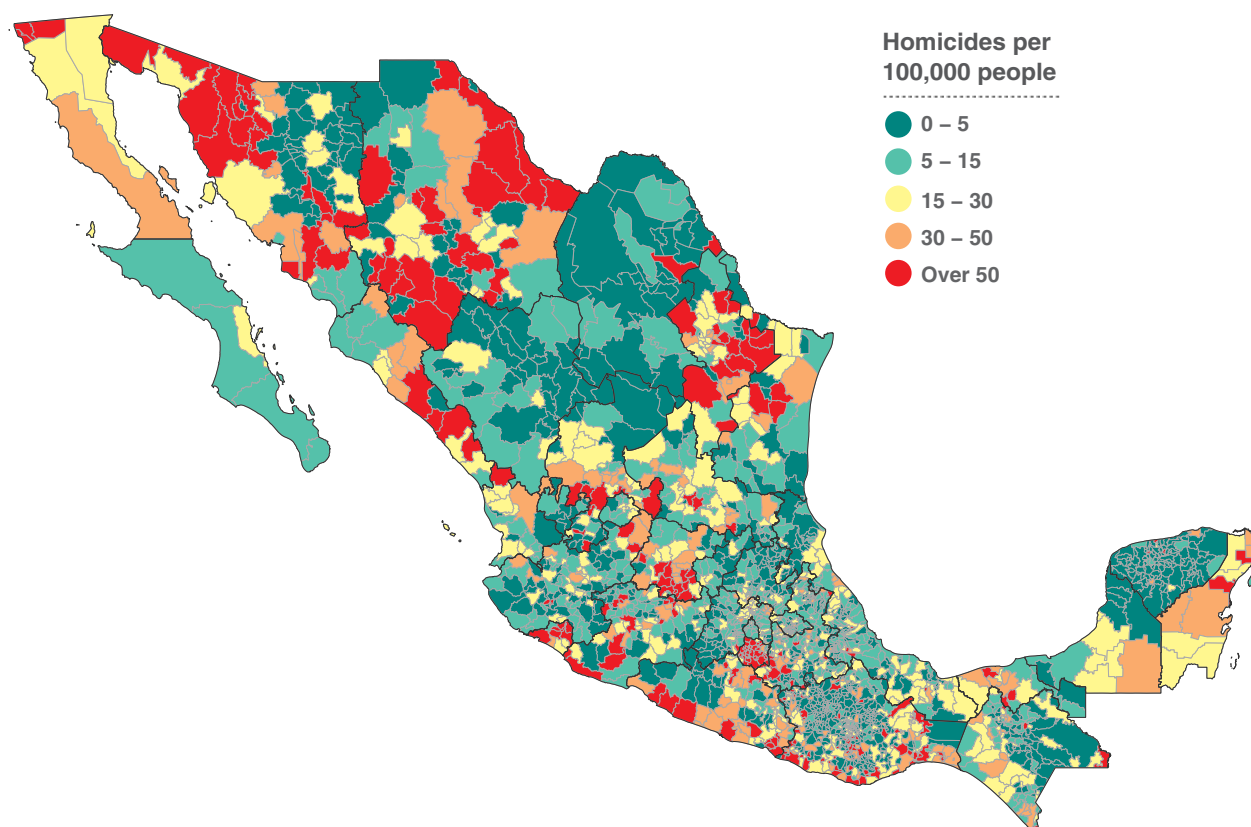
While these clusters often cross state borders, there are eight states in which at least one-fifth of municipalities recorded extreme homicide rates in 2024. The most striking of these is Morelos, where 28 out of the state's 36 municipalities had homicide rates of over 50 deaths per 100,000 people. Morelos was followed by Colima and Baja California, where more than half of the states' municipalities also had extreme homicide rates. After these, Chihuahua, Guanajuato, Nuevo León, Sonora and Sinaloa all saw 20-40 percent of their municipalities record extreme rates.

Table 1.3 lists the 30 mid-sized and large-population municipalities with the highest homicide rates in 2024, along with the 30 with the lowest rates.<sup>54</sup> Collectively, the highest homicide municipalities accounted for one-third of all homicide cases in Mexico. While Colima City recorded the highest homicide rate in the country, Tijuana had the highest number of homicides overall, with about 1,600 registered cases. Tijuana has had the highest number of total homicides since 2017, when it overtook Acapulco, Guerrero, which held the record in 2015 and 2016.

FIGURE 1.10

### Municipal homicide rates, 2024

About 11 percent of municipalities have a homicide rate of at least 50 deaths per 100,000 people.



Source: SESNSP, IEP calculations



TABLE 1.3

**Major municipalities with the highest and lowest homicide rates, 2024**

Homicide rates in Mexican cities range from less than one to over 170 deaths per 100,000 people.

Highest Homicide Rates					Lowest Homicide Rates				
Rank	Municipality	State	Homicide Cases	Homicide Rate*	Rank	Municipality	State	Homicide Cases	Homicide Rate*
1	Colima	Colima	244	172	1	Ciudad Madero	Tamaulipas	1	0.55
2	Manzanillo	Colima	266	154	2	Gómez Palacio	Durango	4	1.14
3	San Luis Río Colorado	Sonora	243	147	3	Tampico	Tamaulipas	3	1.14
4	Celaya	Guanajuato	444	101	4	Ixtlahuaca	Mexico State	2	1.41
5	Zamora	Michoacán	178	101	5	Mérida	Yucatán	18	1.81
6	Cuautla	Morelos	167	100	6	Metepec	Mexico State	4	1.86
7	Acapulco de Juárez	Guerrero	652	99.8	7	Leerdo	Durango	4	2.60
8	Tijuana	Baja California	1,591	92.3	8	Comitán de Domínguez	Chiapas	4	3.02
9	Cajeme	Sonora	324	89.1	9	Campeche	Campeche	9	3.18
10	Comalcalco	Tabasco	133	74.4	10	Saltillo	Coahuila	27	3.21
11	Juárez	Chihuahua	945	72.4	11	Ocosingo	Chiapas	7	3.74
12	Cauhtémoc	Chihuahua	110	70.6	12	Altamira	Tamaulipas	9	3.78
13	Cuernavaca	Morelos	226	67.2	13	Monclova	Coahuila	9	3.96
14	Salamanca	Guanajuato	149	64.8	14	Tepatitlán de Morelos	Jalisco	5	3.98
15	Jiutepec	Morelos	123	64.3	15	Cuajimalpa de Morelos	Mexico City	8	4.07
16	Culiacán	Sinaloa	541	64.0	16	Piedras Negras	Coahuila	7	4.15
17	Valle de Santiago	Guanajuato	80	63.4	17	Benito Juárez	Mexico City	17	4.33
18	Uruapan	Michoacán	189	61.7	18	Huixquilucan	Mexico State	11	4.35
19	Iguala de la Independencia	Guerrero	68	52.7	19	Tulancingo de Bravo	Hidalgo	7	4.42
20	Irapuato	Guanajuato	262	52.5	20	Acuña	Coahuila	7	4.49
21	Pénjamo	Guanajuato	65	49.9	21	Torreón	Coahuila	31	4.50
22	García	Nuevo León	196	49.3	22	Mineral de la Reforma	Hidalgo	9	4.72
23	San Pedro Tlaquepaque	Jalisco	282	49.1	23	Durango	Durango	31	4.78
24	Guaymas	Sonora	63	48.2	24	Xalapa	Veracruz	21	4.91
25	Chilpancingo de los Bravo	Guerrero	113	47.6	25	Ahome	Sinaloa	20	5.17
26	Cárdenas	Tabasco	93	46.0	26	Pachuca de Soto	Hidalgo	16	5.42
27	Guadalupe	Zacatecas	77	45.7	27	Toluca	Mexico State	44	5.45
28	Tlajomulco de Zúñiga	Jalisco	277	45.5	28	Corregidora	Querétaro	10	5.57
29	Chihuahua	Chihuahua	353	43.6	29	Aguascalientes	Aguascalientes	50	5.61
30	León	Guanajuato	598	41.3	30	Ciudad Valles	San Luis Potosí	9	5.77

Source: SESNSP, IEP calculations

Note: The municipal homicide rate has been estimated by adjusting the municipal homicide case rate based on state-wide discrepancies between the recorded numbers of victims and cases. Only includes municipalities with a population of at least 150,000.

In contrast, there are several major cities and municipalities across Mexico that recorded low homicide rates in 2024. With just one recorded case of intentional homicide, Ciudad Madero in Tamaulipas had the lowest homicide rate in the country. The two other major municipalities of the Tampico metropolitan area, Tampico and Altamira, also recorded some of Mexico's lowest homicide rates, with 1.1 and 3.8 deaths per 100,000 people respectively.

Mérida in Yucatán had the lowest homicide rate of any state capital, with about 1.8 homicides per 100,000 people. Other capitals with low homicide rates include Campeche City (Campeche), Saltillo (Coahuila), Durango City (Durango), Pachuca (Hidalgo), Toluca (Mexico State), and Aguascalientes City (Aguascalientes), while two of Mexico City's 16 boroughs were also among the municipalities with the lowest homicide rates.

## HOMICIDE RATES DISAGGREGATED BY SEX

Men are much more likely than women to be victims of homicide in Mexico, consistently accounting for nearly nine in ten victims.<sup>55</sup> Male homicides can be linked to organized crime trends. Conversely, female deaths are more likely to be associated with intimate partner violence.<sup>56</sup>

Since 2015, for example, nearly one in five female homicides occurred in the home, compared to one in 13 for male homicides.<sup>57</sup> Looking at the dynamics of homicides by sex highlights the necessity for tailored approaches to address distinct patterns of violence affecting men and women in Mexico.

Table 1.4 shows that since 2015 male homicides have risen by about 75 percent, increasing by a larger percentage than female homicides. However, both male and female homicides peaked in

2019, as the two categories of killings have fallen since. Male homicides have declined 13.7 percent over the past five years, while female homicides have declined by 10.9 percent.

Femicides, the murder of a woman for gender-based reasons, has become a major concern in Mexico and across Latin America in recent years. In 2023, Latin America and the Caribbean recorded at least 3,897 cases of femicide, averaging 11 women killed per day in the region. Among the 18 Latin American countries that reported data, 11 had femicide rates exceeding one per 100,000 women, with Honduras (7.2), the Dominican Republic (2.4), and Brazil (1.4) reporting the highest figures. The majority of these crimes were committed by current or former intimate partners, highlighting the widespread prevalence of gender-based violence within the family sphere.<sup>58</sup>

In Mexico, recorded cases of femicide have risen significantly in the past decade, from 428 reported victims in 2015 to 829 in 2024, a 93.7 percent increase. While femicides are usually included in female homicide figures, not all female homicides can be considered femicides. In this analysis, femicide data is presented as separate from female homicide to assess the different dynamics of reported femicides compared to female homicide. Box 1.1 outlines the legal definition of femicide in Mexico and current limitations in data collection.

TABLE 1.4

## Homicides by sex, 2015–2024

Both male and total female homicides peaked in 2019, while femicides peaked in 2021.

Year	Total Homicides	Male Homicides	Female Homicides	% Male	% Female	Femicides	% Female Homicides Classified as Femicides
2015	18,312	15,158	2,161	87.5%	12.5%	428	19.8%
2016	23,188	20,007	2,834	87.6%	12.4%	647	22.8%
2017	29,636	25,898	3,301	88.7%	11.3%	768	23.3%
2018	34,662	30,422	3,682	89.2%	10.8%	920	25.0%
2019	35,693	31,013	3,845	89.0%	11.0%	970	25.2%
2020	35,545	30,898	3,777	89.1%	10.9%	976	25.8%
2021	34,380	29,696	3,769	88.7%	11.3%	1,019	27.0%
2022	31,957	27,264	3,786	87.8%	12.2%	981	25.9%
2023	30,566	26,578	3,433	88.6%	11.4%	853	24.8%
2024	30,886	26,779	3,427	88.7%	11.3%	829	24.2%
% Change, 2015-2024	68.7%	76.7%	58.6%	-	-	93.7%	-

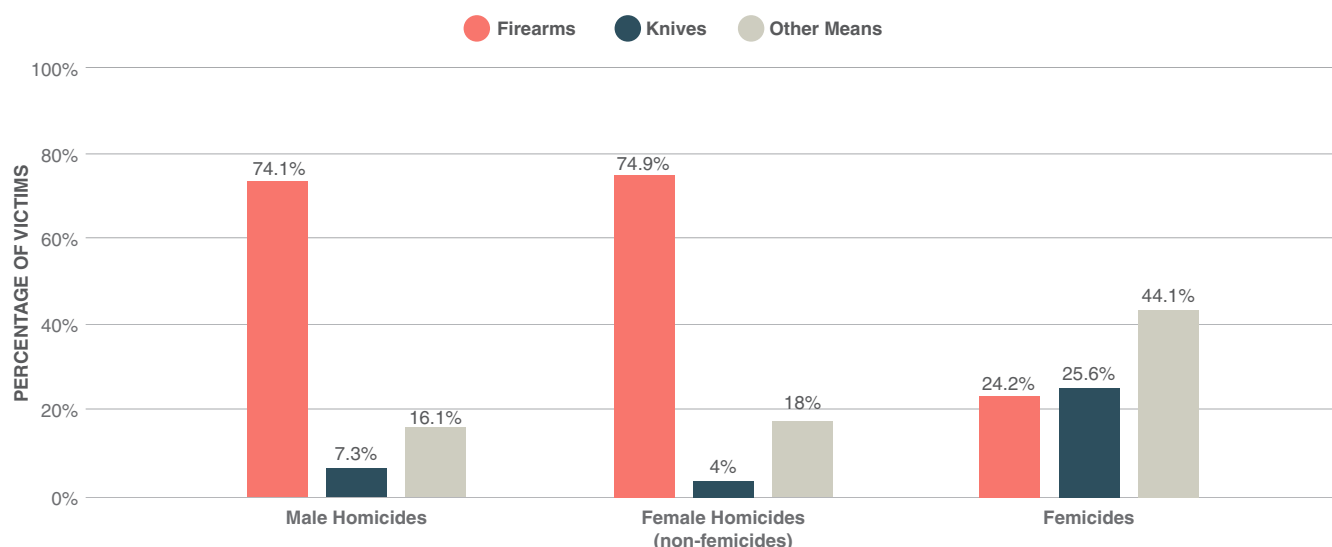
Source: SESNSP, IEP calculations

Note: Female homicides includes femicides. Total homicides include homicides where the sex of the victim is unknown, but the male and female percentages do not.

FIGURE 1.11

**Homicides by weapon and sex, 2024**

Male homicides and non-femicide female homicides show very similar patterns in relation to weapons used, while femicides show distinct patterns.



Source: SESNSP

Note: Excludes homicides in which the sex of the victim is unknown. Victims killed by unspecified means are not displayed.

**BOX 1.1****Femicide in Mexico**

Femicide is defined as the criminal deprivation of the life of a female victim for reasons based on gender.<sup>59</sup> The murder of a woman or girl is considered gender based and included in femicide statistics when one of seven criteria is met, including evidence of sexual violence prior to the victim's death; a sentimental, affective or trusting relationship with the perpetrator; or the victim's body being displayed in public.<sup>60</sup>

The number of femicides reported in Mexico grew rapidly between 2015 and 2021 but have declined moderately in the past few years. While they represented 19.8 percent of female homicides in 2015, this proportion had increased to 24.2 percent by 2024. As a relatively new crime category that requires added levels of investigation and analysis to identify, femicides have not been uniformly classified as such by different law enforcement institutions since the category's introduction.

At present, about one in four female killings in Mexico is classified as a femicide. However, the rates at which the murders of women are classified as femicides vary substantially across states. In 2024, for example, 100 percent of the murders of women in Campeche were classified as femicides, compared to only 4.2 percent in Guanajuato. It is therefore difficult to determine with certainty the true number of femicides in different states and over time.<sup>61</sup>

victims were killed with knives, while the largest share – more than two-fifths – were killed by “other means”. These latter cases likely include beatings and strangulations, though official records do not provide additional detail.

Moreover, a fourth category not included in Figure 1.11 is “unspecified” means, and femicides had the highest rate of unspecified means of any homicide type, at six percent. This means that, in total, the weaponry used in more than half of femicides is not known, which highlights the need for more granular data to understand the unique dynamics driving violence against women across the country.

In addition to gender-motivated homicides, Mexico has recently witnessed a concerning level of killings against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Between 2016 and 2020, there were at least 459 violent deaths within the LGBTQ community, translating to 7.7 deaths per month. Trans women have been disproportionately affected, comprising 54.5 percent of the victims in 2020.<sup>62</sup>

**POLITICALLY MOTIVATED HOMICIDES**

Mexico's June 2024 elections were the largest in the country's history and resulted in the historic election of its first woman president, Claudia Sheinbaum. In addition, the country selected an entirely new membership of both chambers of congress, as well as numerous governors and state-level legislative seats, with some 20,000 positions elected in total.<sup>63</sup>

Figure 1.11 shows the types of weapons used in different forms of murder in 2024. While male homicides and non-femicide female homicides show almost identical patterns, with three-quarters of deaths resulting from a gun, femicides were mostly carried out without firearms. Nearly a quarter of femicide

In recent years, however, elections have been associated with increased violence, particularly homicides. Mexico's highest homicide rate on record occurred in July 2018, the month of the last general election, when nationally there were 2.5 killings per 100,000 people, equivalent to more than 3,150 deaths.

The organization Data Cívica tracks political violence events dating back to 2018, including killings, physical attacks, kidnappings, disappearances, and acts of intimidation against political officials, civil servants, candidates, campaign staff and their family members. Based on its records, Figure 1.12 shows the monthly number of politically motivated homicides in Mexico over the past seven years.<sup>64</sup>

The figure shows that such killings – like other forms of political violence – tend to spike immediately before elections, particularly national general elections. Data Cívica's records show that in 2018 there were a total of 92 political homicides, including 22 in June, the month that preceded the general election. Such homicides then fell over the next two years, reaching a low of 51 in 2020, but started climbing again the following year, when the midterm legislative election of 2021 took place. Political homicides then rose in each of the next three years, reaching an all-time high of 201 in 2024.

Monthly homicides peaked in May 2024, the month preceding the national election, when 42 political figures were killed. Among these was the death of Lucero López Maza, a mayoral candidate for the small municipality of La Concordia, Chiapas, who was killed along with five others during a campaign event on 16 May. The armed attack was likely associated with organized crime groups, who in the past few years have been actively fighting for territory in the area, given its strategic location near the Guatemalan border and along key smuggling route for drugs and migrants. For example, less than two months prior to the mayor's death, two shootouts involving cartels and the National Guard in the municipality resulted in the deaths of at least ten people.<sup>65</sup>

The second most deadly month for political figures was April 2024, when 27 were killed. These included the high-profile assassination of mayoral candidate Gisela Gaytán in Celaya, Guanajuato. On 1 April, she was shot and killed during her first campaign event while walking through the streets with supporters. As with the killing of López Maza in Chiapas, the attack occurred in a region plagued by organized crime and cartel violence, which has made Guanajuato one of Mexico's most violent states.

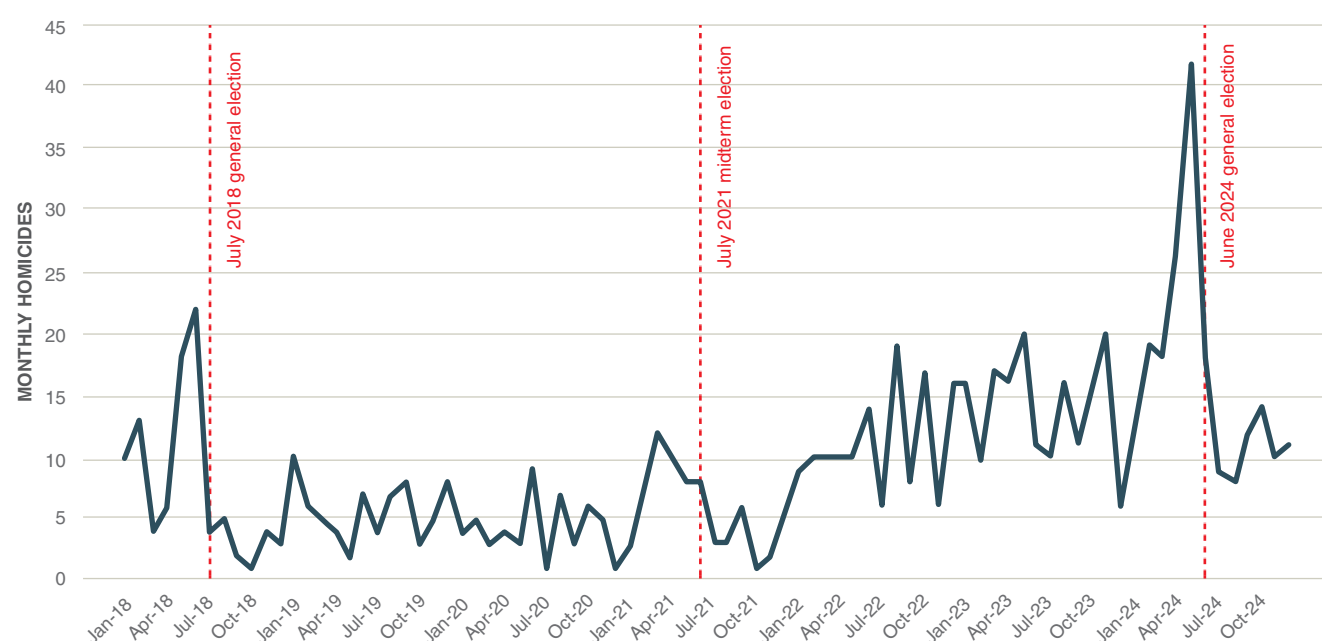
Guanajuato is reportedly contested by four main criminal groups – the CJNG, the Santa Rosa de Lima Cartel (CSRL), the Sinaloa Cartel, and two splinter factions of the Gulf Cartel. These groups' turf wars are concentrated in the so-called "Bermuda Triangle" in the center of the state, of which Celaya forms a part. This area is the site of an oil refinery and major oil pipeline that have been a hotspot for fuel theft, a highly lucrative practice for criminal groups. It is also an area rife with the trafficking and sale of drugs, including methamphetamine, with the CSRL reportedly known for selling a blue form of the synthetic drug and the CJNG known for a white form.<sup>66</sup> Industrialized areas in the state have also seen a rise in extortion, and political figures are regularly targeted by crime groups vying for control over these businesses.<sup>67</sup>

Prior to the assassination of Gisela Gaytán in Celaya, she had requested security protection due to threats but had not received assistance by the time her campaign commenced.<sup>68</sup> Her death sparked national outrage, with government officials condemning it and the Security Ministry subsequently pledging to provide security to 487 candidates.<sup>69</sup>

FIGURE 1.12

### Monthly politically motivated homicides, 2018–2024

In the past seven years, political homicides have spiked immediately preceding elections, with the largest number occurring in May 2024.



Source: Data Cívica

Note: Political violence events against current or former security forces and their family members are not included.

Similar to the dynamic with homicides in general, more men than women are the victims of politically motivated homicides. Since 2018, around nine in ten killings of political figures in the country have been men, including in 2024, when records show there were 178 male victims and 20 female victims. This may be partially the result of the elevated levels of intimidation that women candidates reportedly experience, which has led many to abandon their campaigns. In the 2024 election cycle, it was found that women candidates faced a higher number of threats than their male counterparts. In Zacatecas alone, 217 female candidates withdrew from their races due to intimidation.<sup>70</sup>

The gender discrepancy is likely also due to the fact that most office holders across the country – as well as most political and governmental personnel – continue to be men. While gender parity has been achieved among office holders in federal legislature and nearly achieved at the state governor level, only around 30 percent of municipal mayorships – by far the most numerous of the three levels – are held by women.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the percentage of female political figures killed at the federal level is only slightly higher than the overall rate. Since 2018, 14.7 percent of federal-level victims have been women, compared to 9.6 percent overall. Moreover, at the state level, an even lower percentage of victims have been women, at 8.3 percent.

On this note, between 2018 and 2024, political homicides mostly targeted political figures or governmental personnel operating at the municipal level, as shown in Figure 1.13. Of the 785 recorded killings, 628 were at the municipal level. Attacks against state-level figures were the next most common, with 121. Attacks against federal-level individuals have been the least common, with 36 recorded deaths.

Analysts have cited a variety of factors driving the disproportionate levels of political violence associated with municipal elections and government officials. These include the substantial importance that local power holds for organized criminal groups, who tend to view control at the municipal level as central to their operations. For instance, violence against political figures at the start of the electoral cycle can be meant to signal an intent to establish territorial control. Such attacks serve as a warning that the area is under the perpetrators' influence and are meant to deter potential candidates who are seen as a threat or unwilling to cooperate.<sup>72</sup>

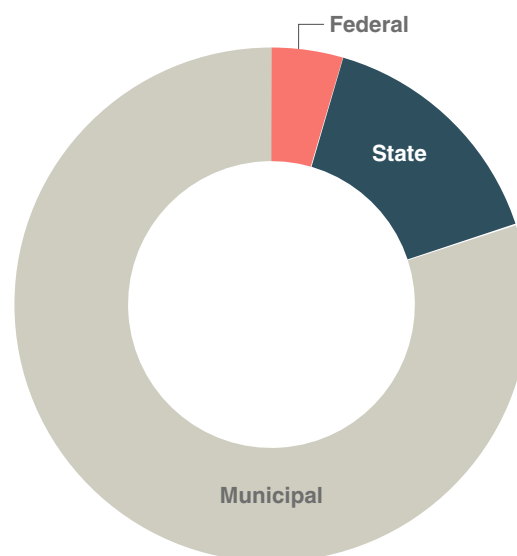
Because of these dynamics, competition between criminal groups tends to be a key driver of violence against political figures. For example, Jalisco and Sinaloa are the strongholds of the two most powerful cartels in the country – the CJNG and the Sinaloa Cartel – which each exercise a degree of criminal hegemony over their respective states. Incidents of political violence in these states have been comparatively infrequent, suggesting that these cartels' influence over local politics is strong enough to maintain control without resorting to violence.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to using violence for political ends, organized criminal groups have been known to finance the campaigns of candidates friendly to them or even put forward their own

FIGURE 1.13

### Politically motivated homicides, by victims' government level, 2018–2024

Four in five victims of political homicide are at the municipal level.



Source: Data Cívica

Note: Political violence events against current or former security forces and their family members are not included.

candidates. Moreover, municipal politicians and candidates – who are far more numerous than those at the state and federal levels – can also find themselves in more vulnerable positions because local security forces are often less well-equipped to provide protection against heavily armed criminal groups than state or federal forces.<sup>74</sup>

Since 2018, Guerrero has recorded the most political homicides, with 109 recorded incidents. The state also recorded the most of these homicides in 2024, with 34. Puebla had the second highest number of political killings last year, with 23, followed by Chiapas, with 22. More than half of all the political killings in Puebla and Chiapas in the past seven years occurred in 2024 alone.

There are also notable differences in political killings by the targets' area of government.<sup>75</sup> In 2024, current and former officials in executive positions, such as mayors, governors, and cabinet members, along with their family members, were the most commonly recorded victim, accounting for 46 percent of the total.<sup>76</sup> Candidates and their campaign staff were the next most common, accounting for 38.5 percent. In contrast, individuals affiliated with the judicial and legislative branches of government, as well as economic and finance officials, were less frequently targeted, together making up 15.5 percent of the victims.

## MISSING PERSONS

There is a rising trend of people being reported missing across Mexico. A proportion of these are likely the victims of homicide, meaning that the country's homicide rate is likely underestimated. In 2017, the Mexican government established the National Search Commission (CNB) in an effort to better track the number of missing and disappeared people in the country, as historical and contemporary figures on these cases had long been viewed as unreliable.<sup>77</sup>

Concerns about missing people being the victims of homicide are particularly strong given the recent rise in discoveries of mass and unmarked graves across the country. Analysts have observed that organized crime groups often employ forced disappearances as a method of social control. This strategy serves to instill fear within communities, suppress dissent and eliminate individuals perceived as threats to their authority. By making victims vanish without a trace, these groups aim to avoid public attention and potential law enforcement scrutiny that overt homicides might attract. Secretly killing victims and burying their bodies not only conceals the extent of their violent activities but also perpetuates a climate of uncertainty and terror, thereby reinforcing their dominance over local populations.<sup>78</sup>

A 2022 CNB report stated that, between 2006 and 2021, there were 4,839 graves found from which 8,278 bodies were exhumed,<sup>79</sup> indicating that the average unmarked grave contained between one and two bodies. Against the total of more than 5,600 graves found between 2006 and mid-2023, this suggests that there been more than 9,500 bodies found across Mexico in the past two decades.

Jalisco appears to be the state with the greatest number of homicide victims that end up in unmarked graves.<sup>80</sup> Out of 3,335 bodies exhumed from clandestine graves across the country between late 2018 and late 2021, one-third were found in Jalisco alone, by far the highest number of any state.

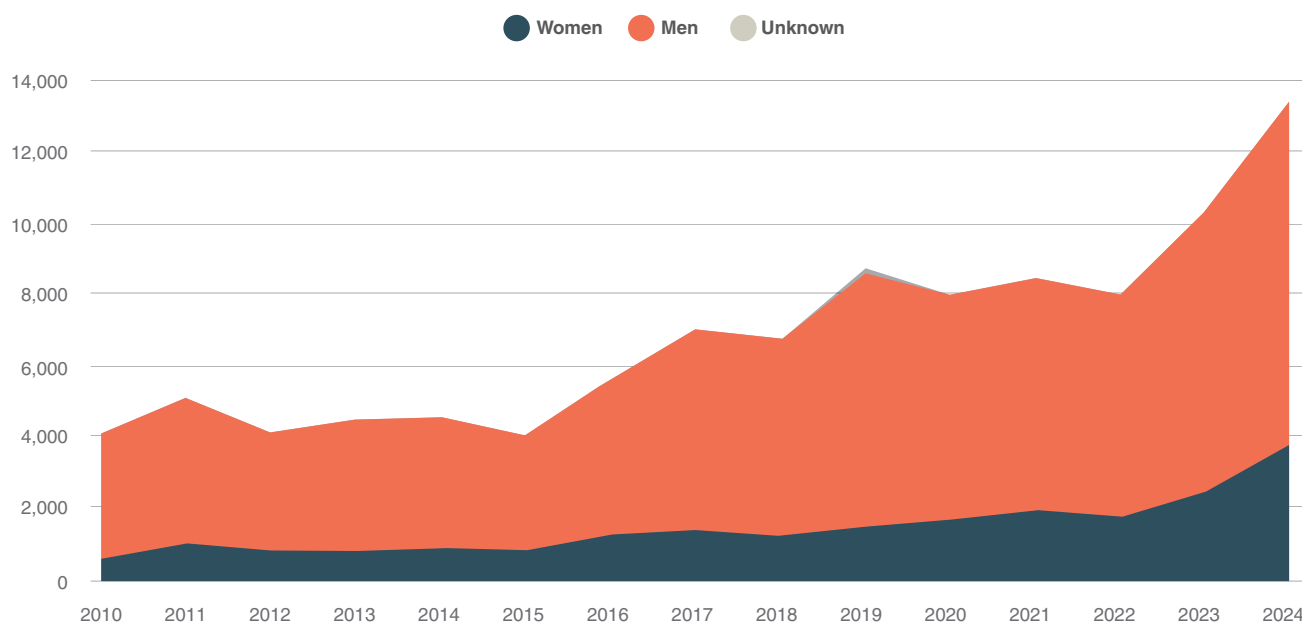
In March 2025, a remote ranch in the small town of Teuchitlán, Jalisco, located about 60 kilometers from Guadalajara, became the focus of national outrage after a group of citizens searching for missing relatives discovered what appeared to be a massing killing site operated by the CJNG. Two-hundred pairs of shoes, hundreds of items of clothing, and three alleged crematoriums were found on the site. The discovery sparked nationwide protests over authorities' failures to prevent such violence and locate the bodies of victims.<sup>81</sup>

Following Jalisco, the states of Sinaloa and Colima have recorded the highest number of exhumed bodies in recent years.<sup>82</sup> These three states are epicenters of activity for the two most powerful cartels in the country, the CJNG and the Sinaloa Cartel. For example, the small municipality of Tecomán in Colima, located ten kilometers from the Pacific coast, has been a violently contested site between the two groups over the past decade. In 2017, Tecomán recorded the highest homicide rate of any municipality in the country with a population greater than 100,000. While its known homicide rate has fallen in the years since then, it has continued to be a major site of unmarked graves. Between late 2018 and mid-2023, 7.3 percent of all discovered graves in the country were found in Tecomán alone.<sup>83</sup> This dynamic continued in 2024, with at least 35 bodies found in 39 graves in the first half of the year.<sup>84</sup>

FIGURE 1.14

### Missing or disappeared people, by sex, 2010–2024

In 2024, over 13,000 people were reported missing and have not been found, the highest number on record.



Source: Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda

Note: Figures accurate as of 25 February 2025.



While it is not known how many missing people end up as victims of homicide, there have been similarly alarming increases in disappearances in recent years. Since 2010, more than 103,000 people have been reported missing in Mexico and have not been found. More than half of these cases are from the past six years, as the number has been steadily climbing since 2015, as shown in Figure 1.14. Last year saw the most cases on record: more than 32,500 were reported missing, of which over 13,000 have not been found.

Last year saw the highest number of missing men and missing women. Historically, more men than women are reported missing each year in Mexico, but in the past few years a growing share of missing people have been women. There are diverging dynamics in the ages of those that go missing based on gender. While a large majority of all those that disappear tend to be youth or young adults, with around two-thirds falling between the ages of 15 and 34 since 2010, disappeared females tend to be younger than disappeared males. The largest cohort of female disappearances are young women aged 15-19, while the largest cohort of men are aged 25-29.<sup>85</sup>

Most people reported missing or disappeared in Mexico are eventually found. Out of about 292,000 missing person cases from 2010 to 2024, around 173,000 or 59.5 percent were found alive. Around 15,000 or 5.2 percent were found dead, while the remaining 103,000 or 35.4 percent have not been found. However, these outcomes vary substantial based on an array of factors, including the sex of the missing person and the state in which the disappearance takes place.

Figure 1.15 depicts outcomes of 2010-2024 missing persons cases based on sex. It shows that women are found alive in most cases, while men are more likely to either not be found or to be found dead. Out of more than 116,000 cases of missing women, around 91,000 have eventually been found alive, while around 25,000 have either not been found or have been found dead. In contrast, of the approximately 175,000 cases involving men, only about 82,000 have eventually been found alive. Around 80,000 have not been found, and around 13,000 have been found dead.

With regard to the states in which disappearances take place, the differences in outcome statistics are even more stark. Table 1.5 outlines the total number of people reported missing by state between 2010 and 2024, along with the rates at which these individuals have either not been found or been found dead.

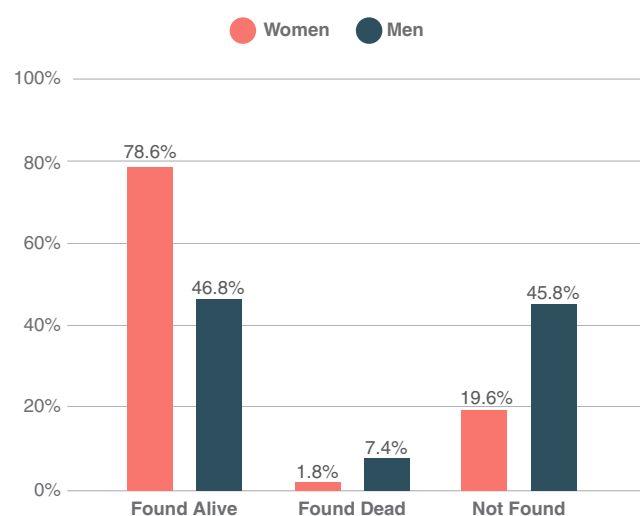
With more than 36,000 cases since 2010, Mexico State has had by far the highest number of people reported missing. Despite its high total, a relatively low percentage of Mexico State's cases have resulted in the missing person not being found or being found dead. In contrast, in Coahuila, 67.4 percent of missing person cases have gone unresolved, and an additional 7.5 percent have resulted in confirmations of death, meaning that only about one-quarter have resulted in the person being found alive.

The other states with the highest rates of unresolved missing person cases are Tabasco, Guerrero and Jalisco. Jalisco's high

FIGURE 1.15

### Outcomes of missing person cases, by sex, 2010–2024

In missing person cases, most women are eventually found alive, compared to slightly less than half of men.



Source: Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda

Note: Figures accurate as of 25 February 2025.

unresolved rate, combined with the country's second highest number of total people reported missing, mean that the state has the highest number of people that remain missing, with more than 13,000 cases since 2010. In terms of confirmations of deaths from missing person cases, Sinaloa has the highest rate, at 10.5 percent. It is followed by Colima, Guerrero, Zacatecas and Coahuila, where between 7.5 and 8.2 percent of cases have resulted in the missing person being found dead.

In contrast, the states of Yucatán, Campeche, and Aguascalientes have recorded the highest rates of missing persons being eventually found alive, with over 90 percent resulting in that outcome since 2010. In Yucatán, only 3.8 percent of cases have resulted in the person not being found and only 3.1 percent have resulted in a confirmed death. In Campeche, 5.9 percent have not been found and 1.8 percent have been found dead. And in Aguascalientes, 6.1 percent have not been found and 2.8 percent have been found dead.

The divergences based on geography and sex in the prevalence and outcomes of missing person cases are undoubtedly the result of a wide range of factors. Among these is likely the degree of dominance of organized criminal groups in different areas and such groups' favored methods of using violence to assert control.

This can be seen in the fact that more men than women are associated with unresolved or deadly disappearances. As noted above, women in Mexico are more likely to be the victims of interpersonal and domestic violence. As such, a larger portion of female disappearances are likely temporary measures to flee abuse from a known assailant, as opposed to, for example, enforced disappearances by an armed group. The influence of organized crime on disappearance statistics can also be seen in

the large overall number of cases in states with a historically strong presence of criminal groups, as well as in the higher presumed or confirmed lethality of cases in these places.

Disappearances represent a grim reality in Mexico. They are devastating to families, as they leave loved ones without a sense of closure or justice. Unfortunately, the continued ability to track disappearances in Mexico may be undermined by recent developments. For example, since mid-2023, authorities have

stopped providing updated statistics on the discovery of clandestine graves.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, Mexico's 2025 federal budget proposal includes a 47 million peso reduction for the CNB, cutting its allocation from 1.149 billion to 1.102 billion pesos.<sup>87</sup> Tracking and scrutinizing the complex dynamics of disappearances continues to be crucial to efforts to better understand and increasingly prevent them.

TABLE 1.5

### Missing person cases and outcomes, by state, 2010–2024

In the past 15 years, Mexico State has recorded the highest total number of people reported missing, but most of these have been eventually found alive. Jalisco is the state with the most people that have remained missing.

State	Reported missing (2010–2024)	% not found	% found dead
Mexico State	36,429	24.3%	4.5%
Jalisco	21,982	60.0%	5.9%
Nuevo León	21,677	28.9%	5.6%
Tamaulipas	20,017	57.4%	3.7%
Mexico City	16,681	29.6%	3.4%
Guanajuato	13,717	20.3%	5.7%
Veracruz	13,658	45.9%	5.5%
Chihuahua	13,500	24.9%	6.6%
Sinaloa	13,253	42.3%	10.5%
Puebla	12,318	18.2%	5.0%
Michoacán	10,771	55.6%	5.6%
Sonora	8,055	58.9%	3.5%
Chiapas	7,711	18.0%	3.2%
Zacatecas	6,903	51.2%	7.5%
Morelos	6,357	28.5%	6.4%
Aguascalientes	6,256	6.1%	2.8%
Yucatán	5,907	3.8%	3.1%
Guerrero	5,874	60.0%	8.0%
Baja California	5,803	50.5%	1.8%
Hidalgo	5,101	18.4%	5.8%
San Luis Potosí	4,509	21.8%	4.6%
Durango	4,489	20.6%	4.6%
Coahuila	4,084	67.4%	7.5%
Oaxaca	3,938	13.6%	2.1%
Nayarit	3,535	42.0%	5.3%
Quintana Roo	3,490	36.6%	2.8%
Colima	3,383	28.0%	8.2%
Querétaro	3,197	17.6%	7.3%
Tabasco	2,696	67.0%	1.6%
Baja California Sur	2,534	31.3%	6.9%
Tlaxcala	1,706	7.9%	5.8%
Campeche	1,570	5.9%	1.8%
National	291,580	35.4%	5.2%

Source: Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda

Note: Figures accurate as of 25 February 2025. The national total includes cases for which the state is unknown.





## Organized Crime

**Over the past ten years, the national organized crime rate has risen by 59.1 percent. Despite the long-term trend of deterioration, the organized crime rate has improved modestly in the past two years, dropping by two percent. In 2024, the rates of three out of the four sub-indicators declined, while the rate of retail drug crimes increased by 1.6 percent.**

This subsection presents the trends and results for the four sub-indicators that make up the overall measure of organized crime: extortion, kidnapping and human trafficking, retail drug crimes, and major organized crime offenses. Major offenses include federal drug trafficking crimes and criminal offenses committed by three or more people. Figure 1.16 shows the monthly indexed trends in the rates of each of these sub-indicators from their levels in January 2015.

From 2015 to 2024, the organized crime rate has improved in ten states and deteriorated in 22. In this period, the states of Guanajuato, Colima and San Luis Potosi recorded the largest deteriorations in their rates, while Tamaulipas, Jalisco and Sinaloa were most improved. In 2024, the three states with the lowest rate of organized crime were Tlaxcala, Chiapas and Yucatan, with Tlaxcala recording only ten cases per 100,000 people, half the rate of the next best performing state. In

contrast, Guanajuato, Colima and Nuevo León recorded the highest organized crime rates in the country, with Guanajuato's rate being nearly three times the national rate of 163 cases per 100,000 people.

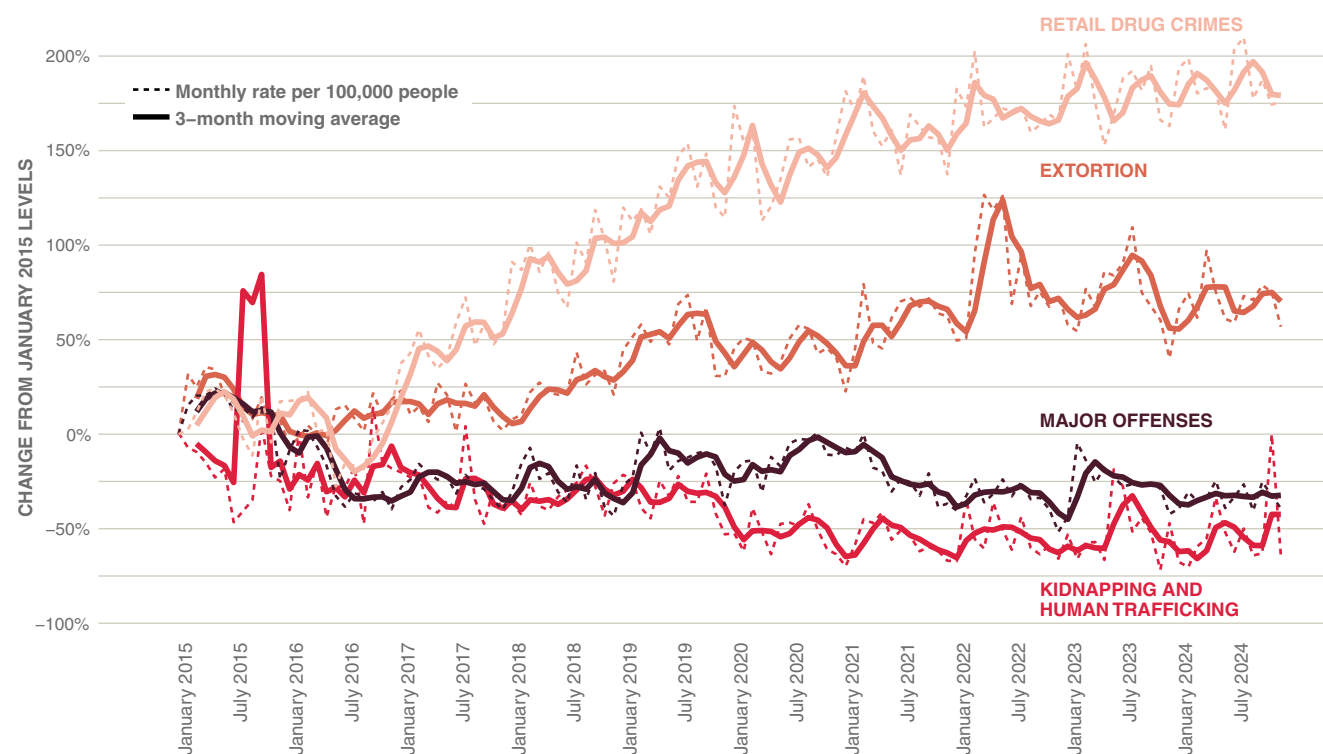
In the past ten years, the national rate of extortion increased by 45.5 percent. However, the rate peaked in 2022, and in the past two years has experienced modest declines, falling by 7.4 percent over the period. According to national survey data, monetary losses from the average extortion appear to have risen over the past ten years, from around 1,300 pesos per extortion to roughly 6,900 pesos per extortion.<sup>88</sup>

However, this survey data confirms that most instances of extortion result in minimal to no financial losses to the victims. In the 2024 edition of the national survey, for example, only 12.7 percent of extortion victims reported damages that were

FIGURE 1.16

### Indexed change in organized crime offenses, 2015–2024

Since 2015, retail drug crimes and extortions have risen substantially, while the rates of major offenses and kidnapping and human trafficking have improved.



Source: SESNSP

principally economic, while 44.6 percent reported no damages and 41.3 percent reported primarily psychological damages.<sup>89</sup>

The reason that most extortions in Mexico cause no material damage is that the vast majority are committed through fraudulent phone calls, with 92 percent of all extortions conducted this way.<sup>90</sup> Such extortions often take the form of “virtual kidnappings”, in which offenders cold-call victims, falsely claim to have a loved one held hostage, and demand a ransom payment. While extortion via phone call is the most prevalent form of extortion, they tend to be the least successful, as many recipients of these calls are not deceived. As a result, recent study suggests that just 5.4 percent of phone call extortions are successful.<sup>91</sup>

In contrast, business protection rackets, known as “cobro de piso”, are reportedly successful in two-thirds of cases.<sup>92</sup> Recent analysis has found that one in four small business owners are subject to such rackets and that the practice occurs in at least 22 of Mexico’s 32 states. Such extortion typically takes the form of forced weekly payments, which on average amount to 500 pesos per week, and commercial street vendors and markets are primary targets.<sup>93</sup> These informal taxes extort residents with low economic stability and often result in armed violence if the payments are not made in a timely manner.<sup>94</sup>

Another increasingly common form of extortion targets foreign tourists. The CJNG, for example, has been involved in timeshare scams extorting American and Canadian tourists out of hundreds of millions of dollars over the past decade.<sup>95</sup>

In the past ten years, the national rate of retail drug crimes has risen by 161 percent, by far the largest deterioration of the four organized crime sub-indicators. It has risen each year since 2016. However, the rate of increases has consistently slowed each year, and it registered only a 1.6 percent increase from 2023 to 2024. According to national survey data, the rate of people reporting knowledge of drug dealing in their neighborhood rose from 27.3 to 34.5 percent over the past decade.<sup>96</sup> This data also shows that, since 2015, crime victims have consistently reported that around 14 percent of perpetrators appeared to be under the influence of drugs.

With 315 crimes per 100,000 people, Guanajuato held the highest retail drug crime rate in the country for the fourth consecutive year. Guanajuato is located along the fentanyl and cocaine smuggling routes between Pacific ports and the United States, making it a prime location for drug trafficking organizations. Government officials have stated that the majority of the homicides that occur in the state are related to drug dealing.<sup>97</sup>

The kidnapping and human trafficking sub-indicator rate has declined by 57.1 percent since 2015, dropping from 9.9 to 4.2 cases per 100,000 people. Quintana Roo was the state most affected by kidnapping and human trafficking last year, with a rate of 22.3 cases per 100,000 people. The states elevated rate also led Quintana Roo to register the largest deterioration in this sub-indicator over the past ten years. Durango and Yucatán were the best performing states in the kidnapping and human

trafficking sub-indicator in 2024, as neither state recorded a single instance of this crime.

Sinaloa experienced the most significant improvement in kidnapping and human trafficking last year, after the state experienced a major spike in cases the year prior: the state’s rate jumped from 1.7 to 11.7 cases per 100,000 people between 2022 and 2023, but it fell back down to a rate of 2.5 in 2024.

International migrants passing through Mexico are among those most vulnerable to kidnapping and human trafficking. In 2024, the states situated near the country’s northern and southern borders had the highest average rates of kidnapping and human trafficking in Mexico. While the northern region has historically had the highest average kidnapping and human trafficking rates in the country, the southern region overtook it in the last two years, registering an average rate of 6.3 kidnapping and human trafficking cases per 100,000 people in 2024, compared to the north’s rate of 5.8 cases per 100,000. Two of the five states with the highest rates in the country can be found in the south, and two are situated in the north.

The recent surge of international migrants moving through the country has contributed to these dynamics. According to Unidad de Política Migratoria, the number of unauthorized migrants entering Mexico rose more than threefold from 2021 to 2024. The greatest uptick occurred in 2023, which recorded a 77 percent increase from the previous year.<sup>98</sup>

Calculating the precise number of kidnapping and human trafficking offenses involving migrants is challenging given the extremely low rates at which migrants report crimes. Moreover, it may be difficult to distinguish between situations in which migrants have volunteered to be smuggled and those in which they are held or trafficked against their will, as migrants sometimes place themselves at the mercy of smugglers who may exploit their vulnerable situation in various ways. Traffickers often lure and take advantage of women and children, and to a smaller degree men, for sex trafficking in Mexico and the United States by offering false job opportunities, misleading them with romantic pretenses, or through coercion. Most instances of trafficking involve family members, romantic partners, social media contacts, or deceptive job offers.<sup>99</sup>

The act of migrant kidnapping and smuggling has been described as now representing a “pillar” of cartels’ operations, rivaling the profits earned from the drug trade. For example, it has been reported that in just a single northern border village in the state of Sonora, groups affiliated with the Sinaloa Cartel are generating over US\$1 million per month from migrant smuggling.<sup>100</sup>

Recent reports have showcased the dangers that migrants face at Mexico’s southern and northern borders. In January 2024, for example, authorities freed 31 migrants taken in a mass kidnapping event in Tamaulipas. In the state, migrant abductions in border areas have reportedly become a reliable revenue stream for groups such as the Gulf Cartel and the Northeast Cartel (a splinter group from the Zetas). Other states strongly affected by such practices include San Luis Potosí, Nuevo León and Coahuila.<sup>101</sup>

In the south, cartel-affiliated gangs have reportedly developed an extensive migrant extortion network, which has been operating on an industrial scale since around mid-2023. Migrants are often abducted in broad daylight and detained in deplorable conditions, such as animal pens on deserted ranches, until they or their families can pay ransoms. In Chiapas, kidnapping has become so prevalent that many migrants must openly display the stamps on their forearms indicating that they have already paid the ransom, or risk being re-victimized.<sup>102</sup>

The national rate of major offenses, which tend to be coordinated drug trafficking activities, has improved by 40.3 percent in the past ten years, with several oscillations throughout the period. Since 2015, Colima was the state to record the largest deterioration in its rate of major offenses, while Tamaulipas experienced the most significant improvement. In 2024, the rate of major offenses fell by 10.6 percent from 5.4 cases per 100,000 people the year prior.

Part of this sizable improvement in the past decade may be the result of changes in the types of drugs that are produced and trafficked in the country. The increased prevalence of drugs like fentanyl, which are sold as small pills and can be chemically synthesized in small spaces, may be easier to covertly produce and traffic than plant-based drugs. Marijuana and heroin, for example, which used to dominate the market, require large tracts of land to grow and are bulkier to move, making them more difficult to hide from authorities.

Owing to their location along key drug trafficking routes, the states of Colima, Baja California Sur, Baja California, Sinaloa and Sonora had the five highest rates of major offenses in 2024, with rates ranging between 13.8 and 26.4 recorded offenses per 100,000 people. In contrast, the southern, eastern, and central states of Tabasco, Veracruz, Tlaxcala, Mexico State and Morelos recorded the lowest rates, with between 0.7 and 1.3 recorded offenses per 100,000 people.

## MEXICO'S ORGANIZED CRIMINAL LANDSCAPE

In early 2025, the US government designated six Mexican cartels as foreign terrorist organizations: the Sinaloa Cartel, the CJNG, the Northeast Cartel, the Familia Michoacana, the Gulf Cartel, and Cáteles Unidos (which represents an alliance of several regional cartels and local groups in Michoacán). In announcing the designations, the government stated that it was committed to “stopping the campaigns of violence and terror committed by international cartels and transnational organizations.”<sup>103</sup>

While the activities of such groups have resulted in bloodshed and a substantial loss of life abroad, the vast majority of their impact has been within Mexico. Their violent contests with each other and with authorities over territory and control of illicit rackets drove the significant deterioration in peacefulness in the country in the second half of the 2010s.

These dynamics largely arose in the aftermath of the launch of the war on drugs in 2006 and the implementation of the kingpin strategy, which sought to combat criminal organizations by targeting their leadership. While drug trafficking operations

were formerly controlled by a handful of dominant organizations, the early 2010s witnessed the fragmentation of many such cartels and their evolution into smaller but often more violent groups.<sup>104</sup> Examples of this trend throughout the 2010s include the emergence of the Caballeros Templarios as an offshoot of the Familia Michoacana,<sup>105</sup> the independence of the Zetas from the Gulf Cartel,<sup>106</sup> the separation of the CJNG from the Sinaloa Cartel,<sup>107</sup> and the subsequent split of the Santa Rosa de Lima Cartel (CSRL) from the CJNG.<sup>108</sup>

By the early 2020s, a degree of reconstitution had taken place in Mexico's organized criminal landscape, with the Sinaloa Cartel and the CJNG emerging as the two most dominant criminal actors across the country and internationally. As of 2022, the Sinaloa Cartel and the CJNG-affiliated groups were estimated to control around 30 to 35 percent of Mexico's territory.<sup>109</sup>

The CJNG is heavily militarized and rose to prominence in the past decade, particularly since 2017, through a violent national expansion campaign and by catering to the high fentanyl and methamphetamine demand in the US market.<sup>110</sup> The CJNG now holds a dominant presence in four central and western states, with a major presence in an additional 18 states across the country.<sup>111</sup> The CJNG's expansion in the late 2010s was a major driver of overall cartel conflict across Mexico. According to the records of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), the group has been associated with three out of four homicides from cartel clashes since 2016.

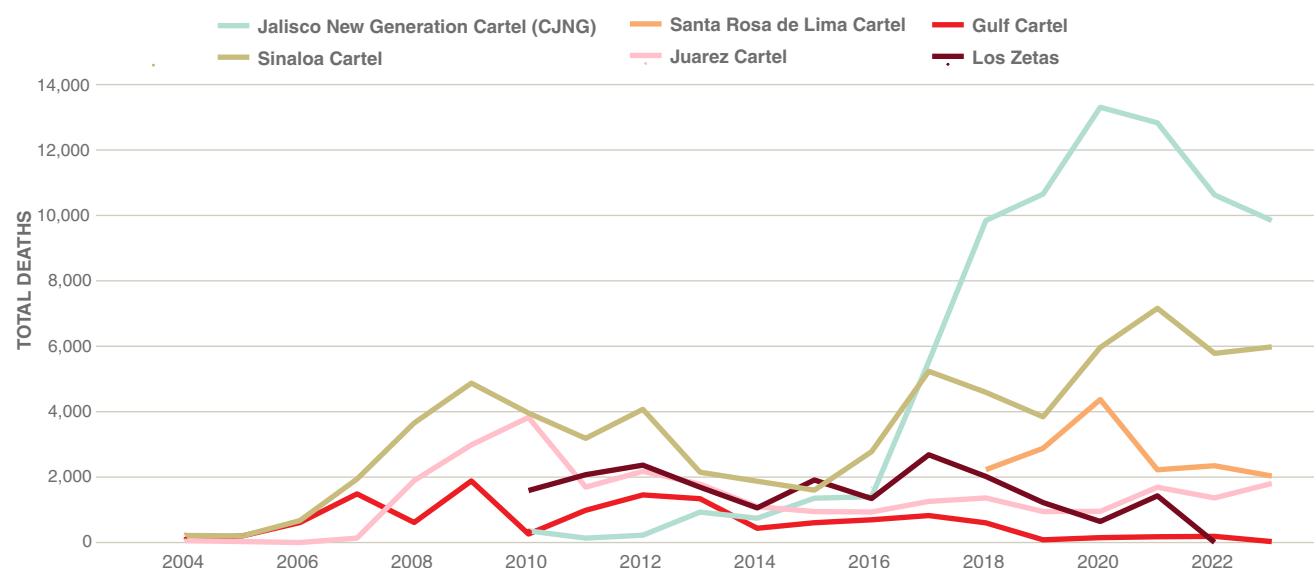
The Sinaloa Cartel is an older group, tracing its origins back to the 1980s. Despite its continued dominant position nationally, the Sinaloa Cartel has experienced a series of violent internal fissures since the 2016 arrest of its former leader, Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán. This arrest prompted the emergence of two main factions within the organization: the Mayiza and the Chapitos. The Chapitos are affiliated with Guzmán's sons, while the Mayiza faction is affiliated with Guzmán's former partner, Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada.<sup>112</sup> After several years of infighting, Zambada was arrested in July 2024 in the United States, following an apparent setup by Joaquín Guzmán López, one of the sons of Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán.<sup>113</sup> This resulted in a dramatic escalation of the rivalry in September of last year, with major armed clashes involving the two factions as well as government security forces erupting in the state of Sinaloa. As a result of this internal war within the Sinaloa Cartel, it is unclear to what degree the organization will continue to represent a single entity. Moreover, the fracturing has the potential to prompt greater inter- and intra-group conflict in more areas of the country.<sup>114</sup>

In addition to the Sinaloa Cartel and the CJNG, the Mexican government has identified at least eight major regional cartels operating throughout the country, though exact numbers are difficult to determine given the ever-shifting compositions, allegiances, and names of these criminal networks.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, there are an unknown number of local gangs and affiliates of these cartels across the country, some of which may rival the cartels in terms of their size and sophistication, posing additional definitional challenges.

FIGURE 1.17

**Cartel conflict deaths associated with Mexico's six most lethal groups, 2004–2023**

Deaths from cartel conflict have risen steeply since 2017, largely driven by conflicts associated with the CJNG and the Sinaloa Cartel.



Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program

Note: Included are the six cartels whose clashes with other groups have resulted in the most total deaths since 2004. Deaths associated with clashes between two of these cartels are shown in the totals of both.

Based on UCDP records, Figure 1.17 shows the number of cartel conflict deaths by year associated with the six most lethal criminal groups in Mexico since 2004. The killings associated with the Sinaloa Cartel and the CJNG – including from their clashes with each other and with other cartels – are several times more numerous than those associated with the other groups. Moreover, the vast majority of both the overall killings and those specifically associated with these two groups have occurred since 2017, the year that an alliance between them reportedly broke down.

According to UCDP records, the number of criminal organizations involved in at least one death increased from just two in 2005 to 23 in 2023. Moreover, in 2013, there were just 173 recorded incidents of cartel clashes that resulted in at least one death, but that number rose to a high of 3,732 in 2021. However, the UCDP data suggests that deaths from cartel conflict have been on the decline in the past few years. Since peaking in 2021, recorded cartel conflict deaths dropped by 18 percent over the next two years, to 2,830 in 2023. A similar trend is observed in the data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), which shows that fatalities associated with cartel violence have dropped by about 15 percent since 2021.

While there are many civilian deaths associated with conflict among cartels, the majority of victims are members of the organizations themselves. As a result, it may be easy to overlook the fact that most of those killed were young people who likely became involved in criminal activities due to limited opportunities elsewhere. Recent studies show that cartels across Mexico have between 160,000 and 185,000 members, making them the fifth largest employer in the country. Given the high

death rate of gang members, it is estimated that cartels must recruit upwards of 350 individuals per week to continue growing and avoid collapsing. Forecasts suggest that decreasing cartels' recruitment abilities by half would reduce weekly casualties by 25 percent by 2027.<sup>116</sup> Common targets of recruitment are children and young people experiencing poverty and abuse, as well as those who may lack aid from supportive social programs.<sup>117</sup> Since cartels are profit-seeking and mainly rely on familial and regional ties, the path to membership is greatly simplified when the prospective recruit has extensive prior exposure to criminality and is seeking economic stability. Additionally, social media is increasingly used to market the lifestyle and brand of criminal groups in Mexico to young people who may be influenced to join.<sup>118</sup>

## CHANGES IN THE US AND MEXICAN DRUG MARKETS

Over the past decade, changes in the US drug market have influenced major shifts in Mexico's drug trafficking organizations. The most significant shift has been a decline in demand for plant-based drugs such as marijuana and heroin, combined with a substantial increase in the demand for synthetic drugs, particularly fentanyl. However, recent data suggests that fentanyl trafficking across the Mexico-US border may have peaked in 2023 and could now be on the decline.

The declining demand for Mexican marijuana is largely due to its legalization and decriminalization in the majority of US states. In 2013, when only a few US states had legalized the recreational use of marijuana, marijuana seizures along the Mexico-US border were just under 1,350 metric tons.<sup>119</sup> By 2024, with marijuana being unconditionally illegal in only one US

state, the volume of border seizures had decreased to about 25.5 metric tons.<sup>120</sup>

With illicit marijuana's massive decline in profitability, drug trafficking organizations have expanded their trafficking of other drugs, with fentanyl being the most prevalent. Increasing fentanyl production has been a lucrative shift, as its extreme potency and relatively cheap production costs make it highly profitable at a low volume. As opposed to plant-based drugs that require land and can be sensitive to weather changes, synthetic drugs can be chemically produced in small spaces.<sup>121</sup> The markup of fentanyl prices when sold can be as much as 2,700 times the price it takes to produce the drug.<sup>122</sup> It is estimated that cartels profit between US\$700 and US\$1 billion annually from the fentanyl trade.<sup>123</sup>

Figure 1.18 shows that the volume of fentanyl seized at the Mexico-US border rose by more than 600 percent between 2019 and 2023, rising from 604 to 4,267 kilograms. For comparison, during the same period, there were drops in the amounts seized for each of the four other main drug categories, ranging from a 5.6 percent decline for cocaine to a 74.8 percent decline for marijuana.

After peaking in 2023, however, the volume of fentanyl seizures experienced a sizable decline in 2024, falling 19.3 percent to

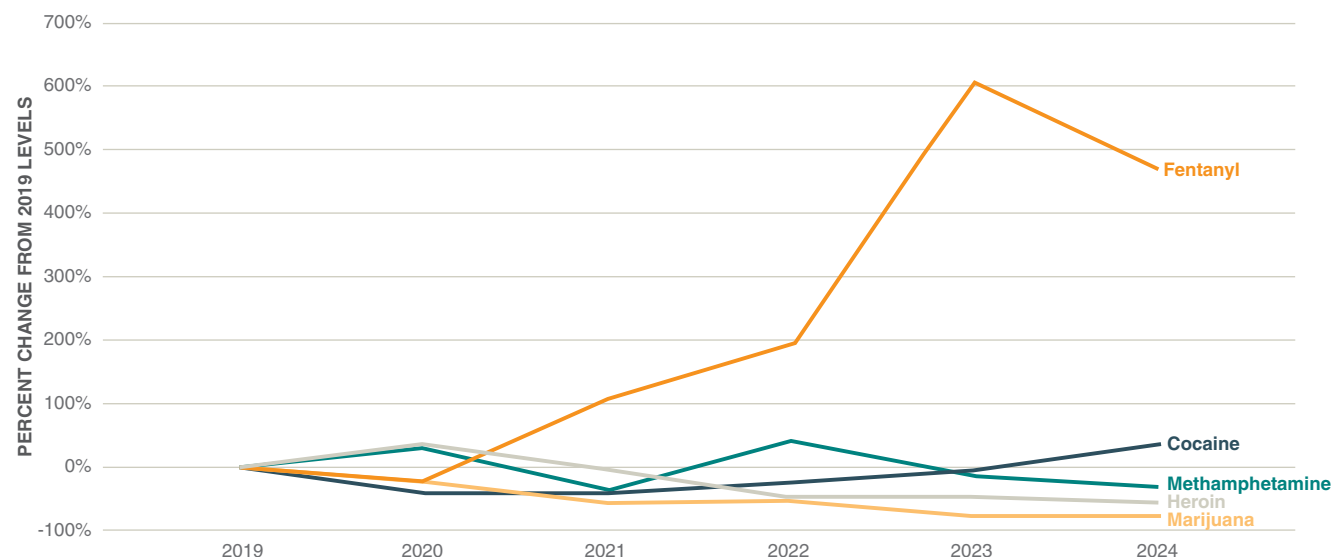
3,443 kilograms. A similar trend has been observed in relation to the number of seizure events in the past several years. After peaking in 2021, the number of fentanyl seizures at the border has steadily declined each year, and it registered its greatest single-year drop in 2024, when the number of seizures fell by 28.7 percent.

Similarly, while fentanyl's high potency has led to a major rise in overdose deaths in the United States in the past decade, last year was the first year on record to register a decline in overdoses involving the drug. As shown in Figure 1.19, drug overdose deaths reached an all-time high of over 110,000 in 2023 but fell to around 87,000 last year. This drop was almost entirely the result of a substantial decline in deaths involving synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl, which fell from around 81,000 deaths to around 59,000.<sup>124</sup> Experts have pointed to a variety of possible causes for the drop in 2024. These include improved addiction healthcare, less potent fentanyl being sold, and the high death rates in recent years having caused a reduction in the population of vulnerable people living with addiction.<sup>125</sup>

FIGURE 1.18

### Indexed change in drug seizure volumes at the Mexico-US border, by drug type, 2019–2024

Between 2019 and 2023, the amount of fentanyl seized at the border rose by more than 600 percent. In 2024, the amount of fentanyl seized decreased by 20 percent.



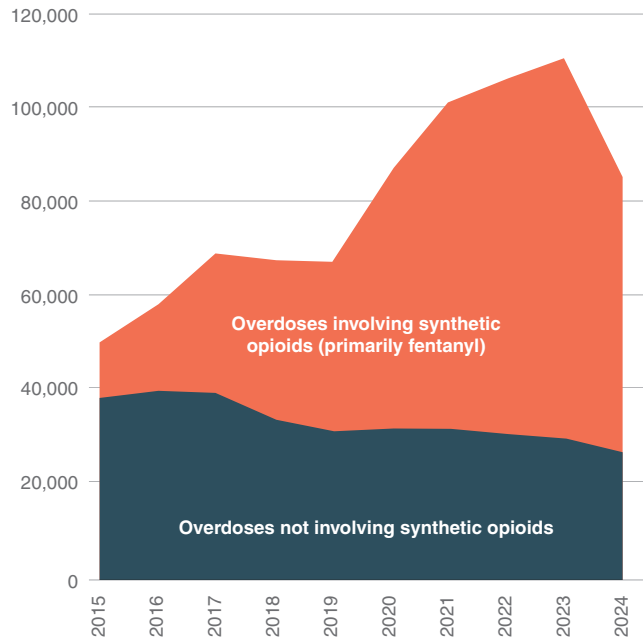
Source: US Customs and Border Protection

Note: Years refer to the fiscal years of US Customs and Border Protection, which run from October to September.

FIGURE 1.19

### Drug overdose deaths in the United States, 2015–2024

The number of drug overdose deaths have more than doubled in the past decade, driven by rising fentanyl-related deaths. However, such deaths declined substantially last year.



Source: US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Note: In this projection, synthetic opioids include methadone.

Not only has fentanyl been highly lethal when consumed on its own, but there has been a rising trend in recent years of dealers mixing the drug into other substances to increase their potency and addictiveness. Often without users' knowledge, fentanyl can be laced into drugs like cocaine, methamphetamine, and counterfeit pills. Even small amounts of fentanyl can cause fatal overdoses, especially for individuals who do not have opioid tolerance. This unintentional exposure has driven a sharp rise in polysubstance-related overdose deaths.

Figure 1.20 shows the indexed trend in overdose deaths associated with four drug types. Overdoses involving synthetic opioids like fentanyl have seen the greatest upsurge, rising by more than 800 percent between 2015 and 2023, before dropping last year. Similarly, overdoses involving cocaine and psychostimulants such as methamphetamine also trended upward until 2023 and then fell markedly last year in line with the decrease in synthetic opioid-related deaths. These aligned trends suggest that the rise in cocaine- and psychostimulant-related deaths may have in part resulted from their mixed use with fentanyl. In contrast, heroin, which as a plant-based opioid has been supplanted by fentanyl among many users, is now associated with far fewer fatal overdoses than it was a decade ago, with such deaths falling by 75.7 percent between 2015 and 2024.

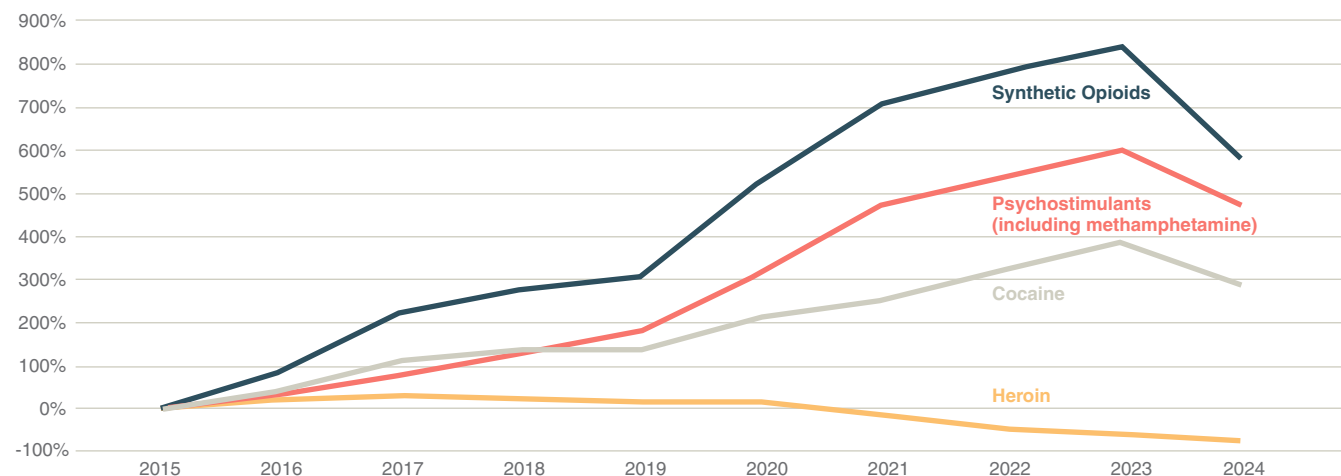
In addition to the mixing of different types of illicit drugs, synthetic narcotics have increasingly been laced into prescription drugs in Mexico. A study conducted in 2021–2022 tested 40 pharmacies in northern Mexico for laced and counterfeit drugs. Among their findings were that 63.7 percent of samples sold as Adderall contained methamphetamine and 29.6 percent of samples sold as Oxycodone contained fentanyl. Tourists are particularly vulnerable to counterfeit drug sales as many Americans seek out cheaper prescription drugs in Mexico.<sup>126</sup>

While Mexico has traditionally been seen as a producer or transit point for drugs destined for the United States, its internal drug market has been growing in recent years. The rate of retail drug crimes was the organized crime sub-indicator to experience by far the largest increase over the past ten years, and the only sub-indicator to consistently rise each year since 2016. This trend reflects the increasing reliance of drug

FIGURE 1.20

### Indexed trend in drug overdose deaths in the United States, by presence of major drug types, 2015–2024

Overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl, rose by more than 800 percent between 2015 and 2023, but dropped last year. The aligned trends for psychostimulants and cocaine suggest that the increase in deaths from these drugs may be due to their mixed use with fentanyl.



Source: US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Note: In this projection, synthetic opioids exclude methadone.



traffickers on sales to local consumers. While in competition with each other to dominate the drug market, criminal groups sell drugs with specific colored packaging to market their territory.<sup>127</sup>

In late 2024, there was an upsurge of fentanyl seizures within Mexico, rising from a daily average seizure volume of 4.4 kilograms in September 2024 to a daily average of 15.3 kilograms in the last four months of the year. Prior to this increase, the daily average seizure volume had not changed significantly since 2019. The largest seizure in Mexico's history occurred in December 2024, when 1,100 kilograms of fentanyl, equivalent to 20 million doses and a market value of about US\$400 million, was seized.<sup>128</sup> This capture came amid the declining rates of fentanyl deaths in the United States and the declining rates of fentanyl seizures at the Mexico-US border.

Data from the Mexican Observatory for Mental Health and Addictions reveals that substance abuse has risen in Mexico in the past decade. The number of people seeking treatment in the country for use of psychoactive substances rose from around 142,000 in 2015 to about 179,000 in 2023. As shown in Figure 1.21, this increase has been driven by growing abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants, which include methamphetamine and ecstasy. The number of people seeking treatment for these stimulants has risen more than fivefold since 2015. In contrast, the number of people seeking treatment for alcohol and marijuana, which used to be the most common

categories, have fallen by 20.9 and 38.3 percent, respectively. Moreover, while much less common overall, there has also been a dramatic rise in fentanyl abuse within Mexico. In 2015, there were just four recorded cases of individuals seeking treatment for fentanyl use, but by 2023 that number had risen to 518.<sup>129</sup>

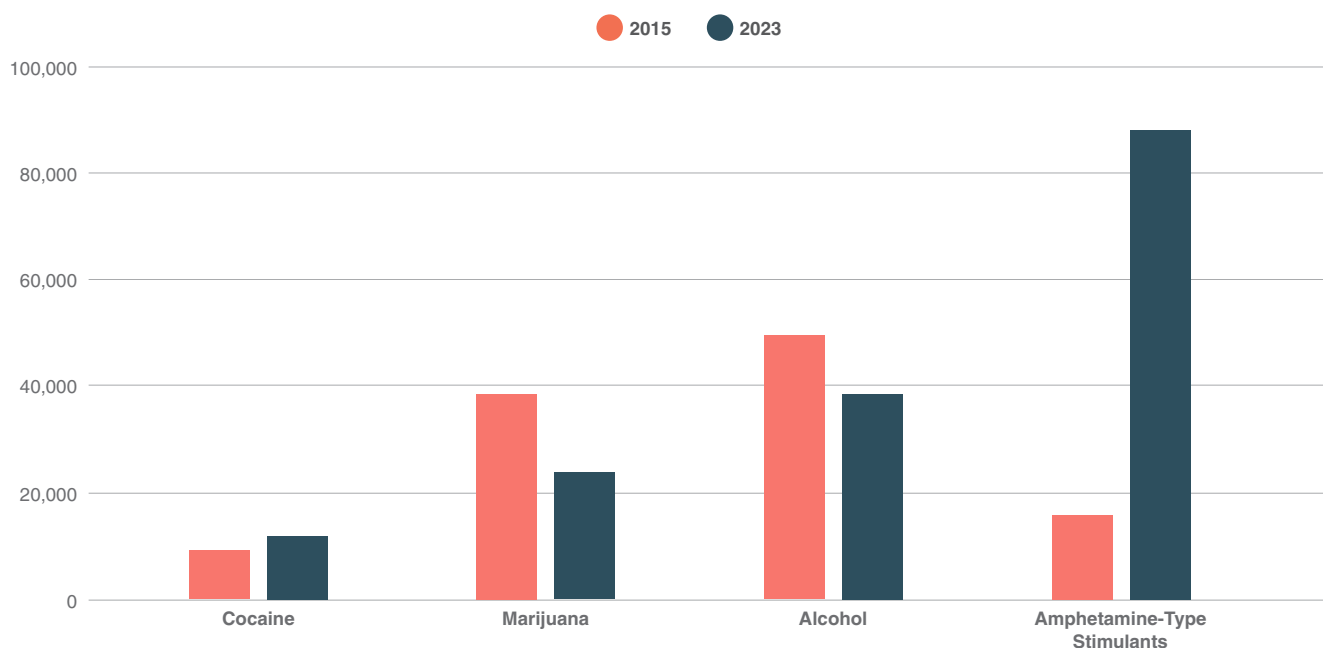
These trends are also reflected in the statistics on the seizure of drugs within Mexico. Between 2019 and 2023, there was roughly 423,000 kilograms of methamphetamine seized within Mexico, far more than the 182,000 kilograms of cocaine or the 7,700 kilograms of fentanyl seized, though less than the 723,000 kilograms of marijuana.<sup>130</sup>

Similar to the United States, these trends suggest a shift within Mexico's internal drug market toward synthetic drugs, primarily methamphetamine. Mexican organized crime groups became the primary producers and suppliers of methamphetamine to the United States after 2005, when legislation was passed which limited the importation of key precursor ingredients for methamphetamine production into the US.<sup>131</sup> The upsurge in synthetic drug consumption, both in Mexico and the United States, has been driven by their extreme addictiveness; the ease with which they can be produced, transported, and sold; and their high profitability for organized crime groups.

FIGURE 1.21

### Mexicans seeking treatment for use of four most common drug types, 2015 vs. 2023

While the number of people seeking treatment for alcohol and marijuana has fallen, requests for treatment for amphetamine-type stimulants such as methamphetamine have risen more than fivefold.



Source: Observatorio Mexicano de Salud Mental y Adicciones



## Violent Crime

**The violent crime indicator comprises four sub-indicators: robbery, assault, family violence and sexual assault. Since 2015, Mexico's violent crime rate has deteriorated by 14.6 percent, driven by significant overall deteriorations in the rates of sexual assault and family violence. However, both sexual assault and family violence recorded improvements in 2024, each for the first time on record.**

Violent crime in Mexico peaked in 2019 at a rate of 2,643 incidents per 100,000 people, as shown in Figure 1.22. In the context of the restrictions on public interactions caused by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the violent crime rate experienced a sharp decline in 2020 but largely rebounded over the next two years. However, since 2022, violent crime has again been on the decline. Between 2023 and 2024, the national violent crime rate improved by 3.7 percent, falling from 2,535 to 2,442 crimes per 100,000 people.

Since 2015, 11 states have recorded overall improvements in violent crime, while 21 states have deteriorated. Tabasco has recorded the largest improvement in its violent crime rate, with its rate dropping from 3,823 to 2,407 crimes per 100,000 people. This positive result was driven by a 40.1 percent decrease in Tabasco's assault rate and a 65.8 percent decrease in its robbery rate.

In contrast, Colima has recorded by far the largest deterioration in violent crime rate over the past decade, with its rate more than quadrupling, rising from 749 to 3,210 incidents per 100,000

people. Since 2015, the state's sexual assault rate has increased more than 11-fold, its family violence rate has increased nearly sevenfold, and its assault rate has increased nearly sixfold. Robbery is the only sub-indicator of violent crime that has improved in the state, falling by 76 percent.

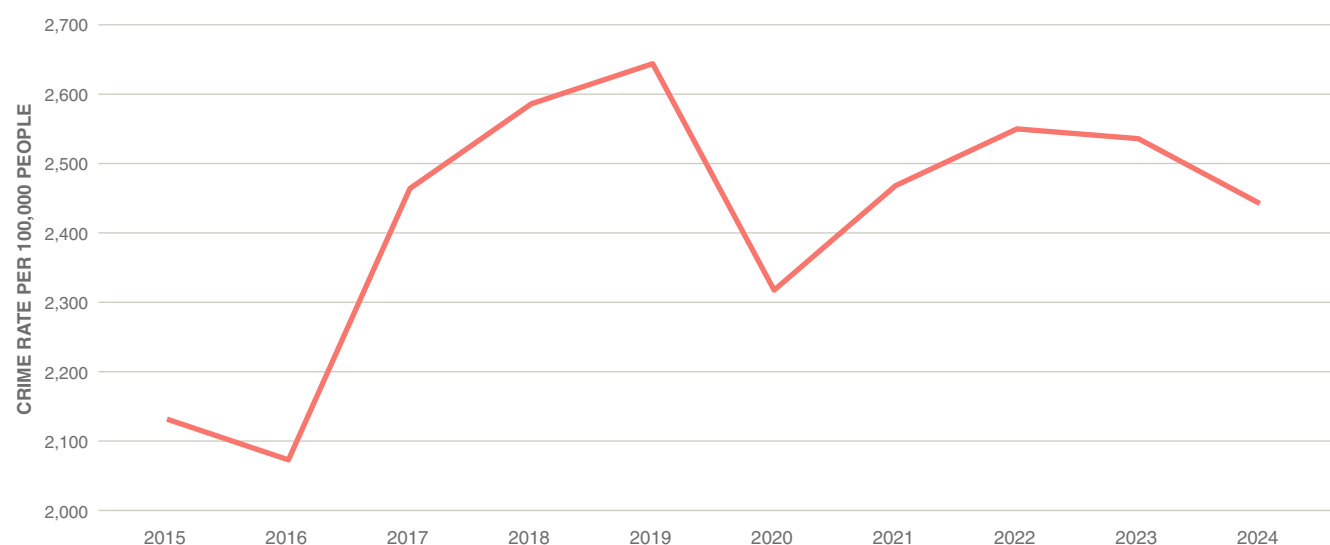
Yucatán has recorded the country's lowest violent crime rate each year since 2019. Last year, the state experienced 132 crimes per 100,000 people, less than half the rate of the second-best ranked state, Tlaxcala. Since 2015, Yucatán's violent crime rate has dropped by 87.4 percent, the second most significant decline in the country. However, while it still has a very low number of incidents of violent crime, 2024 was the second consecutive year that Yucatán experienced a deterioration in this indicator, with its rate increasing by 17 percent in 2023 and again by 14.1 percent in 2024.

For the sixth year in a row, Quintana Roo recorded the highest violent crime rate in the country, with 5,066 crimes per 100,000 people. Since 2015, Quintana Roo's overall violent crime rate has risen by 50 percent, a deterioration driven by a doubling of its

FIGURE 1.22

### Change in violent crime rate, 2015–2024

The national rate of violent crime dropped by nearly four percent in 2024, a change largely driven by improvements in the robbery rate.



Source: SESNSP, INEGI, IEP calculations



sexual assault rate and a near-doubling of its rate of family violence. Additionally, the state recorded some of the highest rates of assault and robbery in the country in 2024.

Over the past ten years, the national assault rate has deteriorated marginally, rising by 3.2 percent. There were about 633 assaults per 100,000 people in 2015, and there were about 653 per 100,000 people last year. With the exception of a notable drop in assaults in 2020, the national assault rate has only experienced minor fluctuations over the past ten years.

In contrast, the country's robbery rate has risen and fallen over the past decade but has recorded a net decline of 25.1 percent since 2015. Since peaking in 2018 at 1,339 robberies per 100,000 people, the national robbery rate has improved in each of the past six years, dropping to 757 robberies per 100,000 people in 2024.

As shown in Figure 1.23, which depicts the country's monthly rates of the four violent crime sub-indicators, robbery used to be by far the most common type of violent crime. However, as a result of its improvements over the past six years, coupled with the substantial increase in family violence and the moderate increase in the rate of assaults, the rate of robberies is now roughly on par with the rates of these other two crimes. The rates of these three sub-indicators have converged to each sit between 650 and 760 cases per 100,000 people per year.

Mexico State recorded the country's highest robbery rate, with 2,019 incidents per 100,000 people in 2024. While Mexico State has recorded the highest robbery rate in the country in nine out of the past ten years, it has made an overall improvement of 37.7 percent in its robbery rate in this same period. Puebla

and Mexico had the second- and third-highest robbery rates in 2024, respectively with 1,218 and 1,194 incidents per 100,000 people.

According to national survey data from 2024, robbery on the street or on public transportation is the most widely experienced type of robbery nationwide, representing 19.6 percent of all crimes reported in the survey. In fact, in Mexico State and Mexico City, the rate of this type of robbery is higher than any other rate of violent crime recorded across the country. Other forms of robbery, including vehicular theft and home burglary, made up an additional 20.5 percent of all crimes recorded in the national survey.<sup>132</sup>

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

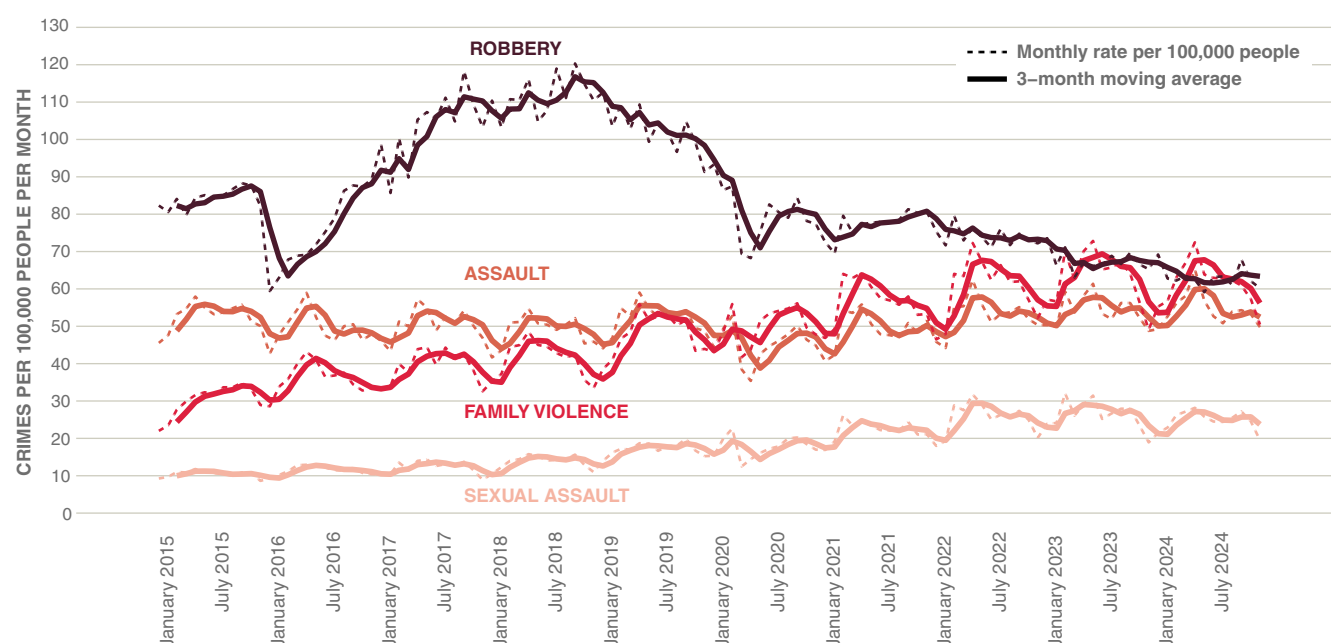
The two violent crime sub-indicators most associated with violence against women are sexual assault and family violence. Gender-based violence in Mexico is deeply rooted in machismo, impunity and socio-cultural norms that perpetuate discrimination against women.<sup>133</sup>

National survey data indicates that for every sexual offense committed against a man, nine are committed against women.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, seven in ten women over the age of 15 report experiencing some form of violence in their lifetimes, including 39.9 percent who had suffered abuse from a partner. Half of women aged 15 and older reported experiencing sexual violence at some point in their lives, and 23.3 percent in the 12 months prior to the survey. Young girls are also disproportionately victimized by these types of crimes, with girls between the ages of five and nine being three times more likely to be sexually abused than boys, while girls between 15 and 17 years old are abused eight times more often than boys of the same age.<sup>135</sup>

FIGURE 1.23

### Monthly violent crime rates, by sub-indicators, 2015-2024

In 2015, rates of assault and family violence were significantly lower than rates of robbery. However, in 2024, the rates of all three of these violent crime sub-indicators were on par with one another.



Source: SESNSP, INEGI, IEP calculations

The official rates of both sexual assault and family violence have more than doubled in the past decade. However, it is difficult to know to what degree the changes in rates may be affected by heightened awareness resulting in these crimes being reported more frequently.

Between 2015 and 2024, the rate of sexual assault in Mexico has increased by 137 percent, rising from 125 to 297 cases per 100,000. Multiple states have experienced extreme deteriorations in this indicator. In relative terms, Colima recorded the greatest deterioration, with its rate increasing more than tenfold, from 45.7 to 523 sexual assaults per 100,000 people. However, in absolute terms, Quintana Roo had the greatest deterioration, with its rate increasing from 879 to 1,834 sexual assaults per 100,000 people, giving it the worst rate in the country last year.

Since 2015, family violence has increased by 102 percent, from 363 to 735 cases per 100,000 people. Last year was the sixth consecutive year in which Colima recorded the worst family violence rate in the country. Since 2015, Colima has experienced the largest deterioration in this sub-indicator, with its rate increasing over fivefold in the last decade. Coahuila, Mexico City, Querétaro and Sinaloa had the next largest deteriorations, with their rates all more than doubling, and jumping more than fourfold in the case of Coahuila.

Impunity and ineffective institutional responses represent a critical challenge for preventing and punishing gender-based violence in Mexico. About 93 percent of sexual violence cases go unreported or do not result in an investigation. Moreover, many victims do not even file complaints, owing to factors such as fear of retaliation and distrust in authorities.<sup>136</sup> In addition to perceptions of inefficiency or indifference from institutions, documented cases have shown that gender prejudices within law enforcement and prosecutors' offices can obstruct access to justice by shifting blame onto victims instead of holding aggressors accountable.<sup>137</sup>

A rising form of violence against women, especially adolescents, is cyber harassment. Like many forms of violence in Mexico, digital harassment is underreported. Between January 2022 and May 2023, only 2,515 cases of digital or cyber violence were officially reported in the country, with the overwhelming majority of victims being adolescents and young adults.<sup>138</sup>

However, national survey data indicates that much larger numbers of people in Mexico, especially young women, are victimized by online harassment than has been reported to authorities. According to the 2021 Cyberbullying Module (MOCIBA) of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), 22.8 percent of women over the age of 12 experienced some form of cyber harassment in the year prior to the survey, affecting approximately 9.7 million women.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, 33.6 percent of girls and adolescents aged 12 to 17 have reported receiving disturbing sexual photos or videos, while 32.3 percent have experienced unsolicited sexual advances online.<sup>140</sup> The most common forms of cyber harassment include contact from fake identities, offensive messages, unsolicited sexual content and unwanted sexual propositions.<sup>141</sup>

Despite the multifaceted and grim realities of violence against women in Mexico, there have been some hopeful signs in recent years. While the rates of sexual assault and family violence have more than doubled since 2015, last year marked the first year since the index's inception in which these sub-indicators reported improvements. Between 2023 and 2024, the national rate of sexual assault fell by 6.1 percent and the rate of family violence fell by 2.9 percent.

Moreover, certain states have been able to maintain comparable low rates family violence and sexual assault in recent years. In 2024, Tlaxcala and Yucatán had the lowest rates in the country for both sub-indicators. Yucatán has also recorded the greatest relative and absolute improvements in both sub-indicators of any state since 2015, while Tlaxcala recorded among the largest improvements in sexual assault and among the smallest deteriorations in family violence.

The substantial gains in women's representation in government also bodes well for the prospect of more effective institutional responses to gender-based violence. The country's journey toward gender equality in politics has been a decades-long process marked by both progress and setbacks. In 1923, Yucatán became the first state to grant women the right to vote, and in 1953 women's suffrage was achieved nationally.<sup>142</sup> Despite initial limitations in political representation, structural reforms and gender quotas implemented in the 2010s gradually increased female participation, leading to a historic near-gender parity in Congress by 2018. Six years later, in 2024, full gender parity was achieved in Congress, and the country also elected its first female president, marking a defining moment in women's political participation.<sup>143</sup>

As political participation increased for women on the national stage, the country implemented reforms aimed at strengthening protections for women, including against violence, pay discrimination, and other forms of vulnerability. For example, certain reforms mandated that public security and investigative institutions operate with a gender perspective and require public prosecutors' offices to have specialized prosecutors for cases involving violence against women.<sup>144</sup> In addition, governments across the country have established a total of 73 women's justice centers in 31 states to provide greater victim support.<sup>145</sup>

While this progress is encouraging, regional bodies have recommended further reforms and innovations for better tackling violence against women. These include improving data collection and information systems, enhancing prevention strategies through greater investment in education, awareness campaigns to challenge harmful gender norms, expanding access to protection and support services, and addressing impunity through better financed and more robust investigative, prosecutorial, and judicial processes.<sup>146</sup>



## Firearms Crime

**In the past ten years, firearms crime has been a principal driver of Mexico's widespread increase in homicides, with more than 200,000 people having been killed with guns in this time. The proportion of homicides committed with a firearm has increased substantially, from 57.4 percent in 2015 to a record 71.6 percent in 2024.**

Since 2015, the firearms crime rate has deteriorated by 71.2 percent, rising from 14.6 to 25.1 incidents per 100,000 people, as shown in Figure 1.24. During this period, 25 states have recorded deteriorations and seven have recorded improvements.

Despite these long-term deteriorations, firearms crime in Mexico has generally been marked by two distinct trends over the past ten years, with a steep deterioration between 2015 and 2019, followed by modest but consistent improvements in each of the next four years. In 2024, however, the firearms crime rate rose once again, by 4.5 percent from 2023.

The firearms crime indicator comprises two sub-indicators: homicides committed with a firearm and assaults committed with a firearm. It is noteworthy that the deterioration of the firearms crime indicator has been primarily driven by homicides and much less by assaults. Since 2015, the rate of homicides with a firearm has increased by 93 percent, while the rate of assaults with a firearm has increased by 39.5 percent.

These trends align with the fact that lethal, firearm-powered cartel conflicts have led to Mexico's major deteriorations in peacefulness in the past decade, while more commonplace

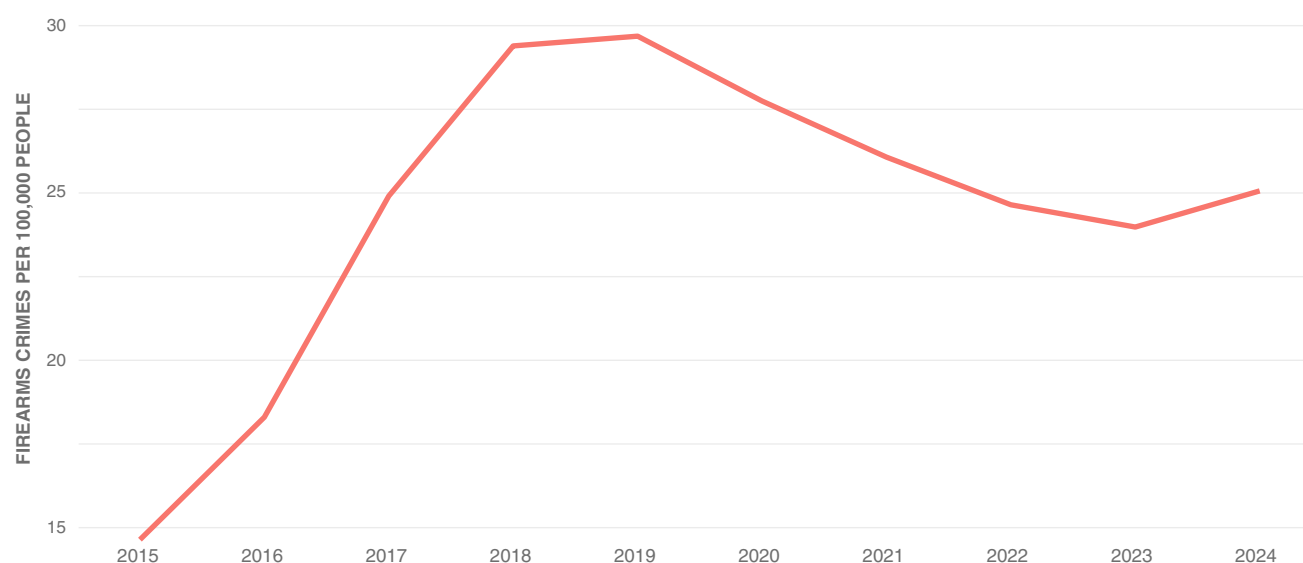
forms of crime and violence – whether involving guns or not – have showed less change. According to national survey data, for example, the proportion of in-person crimes where the perpetrator carried a gun was about 20 percent in 2015. A decade later, this figure had not meaningfully changed, and had even declined slightly, standing at about 18 percent in 2024.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, according to official crime statistics, the percentage of assaults that have been carried out with a firearm has consistently been around five percent in each of the past ten years.

Colima recorded the highest rate of firearms crime in 2024, with 94.5 incidents per 100,000 people, almost entirely driven by its extreme rate of homicides with a firearm. The state had 92.3 homicides with a firearm per 100,000 people, meaning that more than nine in ten killings in Colima were carried out with guns last year, the highest proportion of any state. Colima is also the state that experienced the largest deterioration in firearms crime in the past ten years, with incidents rising from just 21.1 per 100,000 people in 2015. Meanwhile, Guanajuato had the highest rate of assaults with a firearm in 2024.

FIGURE 1.24

### Annual firearms crime rate, 2015–2024

Last year was the first year since 2019 that the rate of firearms crime in Mexico deteriorated.



Source: SESNSP

For the sixth year in a row, Yucatán had the lowest firearms crime rate in Mexico. With just 0.6 incidents per 100,000 people, its rate was 39 times lower than the national rate and more than four times lower than the rate of the second-best ranking state, Durango. This was driven by Yucatán's low number of homicides with a firearm. The state had the lowest overall homicide rate in Mexico last year, and only 11.8 percent of these killings were carried out with guns, the smallest proportion in the country.

Baja California Sur has experienced the largest improvement in firearms crime since 2015, with its rate falling by 83.2 percent. Between 2023 and 2024, the state of Zacatecas, which has been plagued with high levels of gun violence in recent years, registered the country's largest improvement in firearms crime, with its rate dropping by half. In contrast, Tabasco registered by far the largest deterioration, with its rate nearly tripling to 33.6 incidents per 100,000 people, its worst on record.

The deterioration in Tabasco was driven by an upsurge in gang violence. The state saw a fragmentation of its criminal landscape last year, following the splintering of a local group known as La Barredora in December 2023, which exacerbated disputes over control of migrant trafficking routes among local criminal groups and the CJNG.

## FIREARMS CRIME IN ZACATECAS

Between 2023 and 2024, the state of Zacatecas recorded by far the largest improvement in overall peacefulness in Mexico, with its peace score improving by over 22.5 percent. This progress was primarily driven by a substantial decline in the homicide rate, which dropped by nearly 50 percent in 2024, reaching its lowest level since 2015. The rate of homicides with a firearm, which accounted for 72 percent of total homicides in the state, dropped by 52 percent, while the rate of assaults with a firearm also showed marked improvements. As a result, Zacatecas was the most improved in the country for the firearms crime indicator.

Last year was the third year in a row that Zacatecas experienced improvement in firearms crime after deteriorations between 2019 and 2021 saw the rate of incidents more than double. In that same period, the homicide rate rose by 150 percent and the state's peace score fell by one fifth. This past decline can be attributed to a surge in conflict between organized criminal groups in the state, particularly the CJNG and the Sinaloa Cartel, who often operate through local gangs.

Zacatecas is of strategic importance to these groups as it sits in the central north of the country and borders eight different states. In many cases, fentanyl pills are produced in western states such as Nayarit, Jalisco and Sinaloa and then sent to shipping hubs in the east by way of Zacatecas. Additionally, several highways leading to the United States border cross through the state, meaning it is common for drugs to travel north through Zacatecas while guns are sent to the south.<sup>148</sup> As such, the state has experienced battles between rival cartels fighting with each other and with local authorities for territorial control.

It remains largely unclear why Zacatecas has experienced this steady three-year improvement in firearms crime, especially because the main driver of these offenses, organized criminal groups, continue to be active. Government agencies have credited an increased presence of security forces in urban and rural areas, particularly the metropolitan police of Zacatecas City, members of the Army and the National Guard, and a special rapid response force created in 2023 to combat armed cartel activity in the state.

According to state public security data, these security operations have been effective at neutralizing members of both the CJNG and the Sinaloa Cartel. In 2023 and 2024, CJNG suffered 437 arrests and at least 25 member deaths, while the Sinaloa Cartel saw at least 261 members arrested and 31 killed. The criminal justice system in Zacatecas has also reportedly become more effective, with 2024 data showing that a total of 2,757 individuals were formally charged with a crime and a further 562 received sentences.<sup>149</sup>

It is also possible that the fracturing of the Sinaloa Cartel, particularly in its home state of Sinaloa, could be drawing members of that cartel away from Zacatecas. This dynamic appears to be reflected when comparing homicide rates. Coinciding with the eruption of open conflict in Culiacán between the main factions of the Sinaloa Cartel in September 2024, the drop in homicides in Zacatecas temporarily accelerated, reaching a 10-year low of 28 total deaths that month.

In 2025, the number of homicides in Zacatecas has continued to fall, dropping to 25 in January and to 19 in February, the lowest number on record. However, it is too early to forecast whether these gains can be sustained. It has been reported that the CJNG in Zacatecas could form an alliance with the Chapitos, a faction of the Sinaloa Cartel, to counter the incursion of the Mayiza faction into the state. Such shifting alliances could exacerbate violence in the state.<sup>150</sup>

Additionally, the reported success of security forces in suppressing cartel activity may have heightened the risk of violent retaliatory attacks against police forces. For instance, in May 2024, Sinaloa Cartel members murdered ten people, fired on police buildings, and set multiple vehicles on fire across numerous highways in Zacatecas. The attack was reportedly committed in response to the killing of the Sinaloa Cartel's regional leader, "El Gordo", by state police the week prior.<sup>151</sup> This event underscores the sustained impact of organized criminal groups in Zacatecas and the implications of police containment strategies.



## Fear of Violence

The degree to which citizens perceive the state in which they reside as unsafe is captured in the fear of violence indicator.

Since 2015, around three-quarters of Mexicans have consistently regarded their state as unsafe, though the exact percentage has fluctuated modestly, as shown in Figure 1.25. Overall levels of fear peaked in 2018 at 79.4 percent, but in the past six years they have gradually improved, dropping to 73.6 percent in 2024.

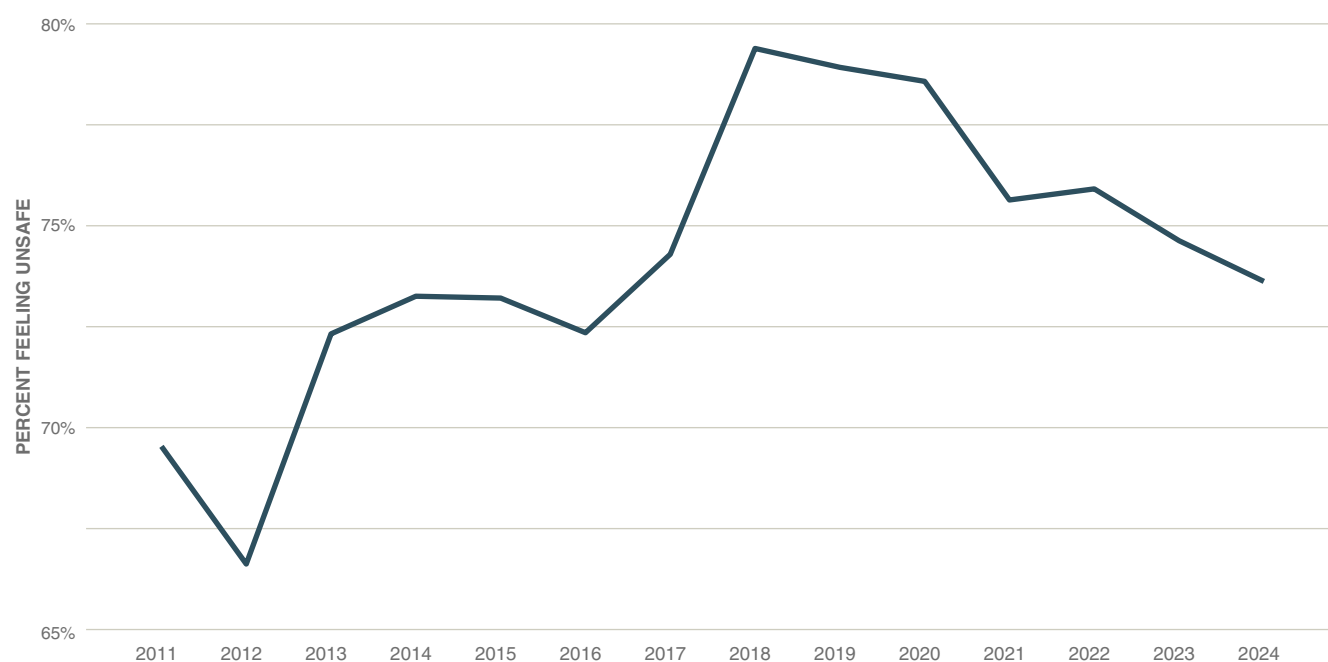
In the past ten years, half of Mexico's states have improved in the fear of violence indicator and half have deteriorated. Coahuila has had the largest improvement since 2015, as the number of people who regard their state as unsafe has halved, falling from 74.9 to 37.6 percent of the population. A comparable dynamic has occurred in Baja California Sur, where feelings of unsafety have fallen from 61.8 to 30.1 percent. In contrast, the state that experienced the largest deterioration was Colima, with 79.7 percent of the population feeling unsafe in 2024, compared to 56.5 percent in 2015.

National trends in perceptions of insecurity have generally followed changes in the country's overall peace score. Like the overall peace score in Mexico, the fear of violence score in Mexico got rapidly worse beginning in 2016, deteriorating by 7.4 percent in the next two years and then gradually improving post 2018. This reciprocal relationship is reflective of IEP's underlying definition of peace, which comprises both the absence of external manifestations of violence as well as the absence of fearfulness about violence.<sup>152</sup>

FIGURE 1.25

### Percentage of people fearing violence in their state of residence, 2011–2024

The proportion of people feeling unsafe peaked in 2018 at 79.4 percent and has fallen in the years since.

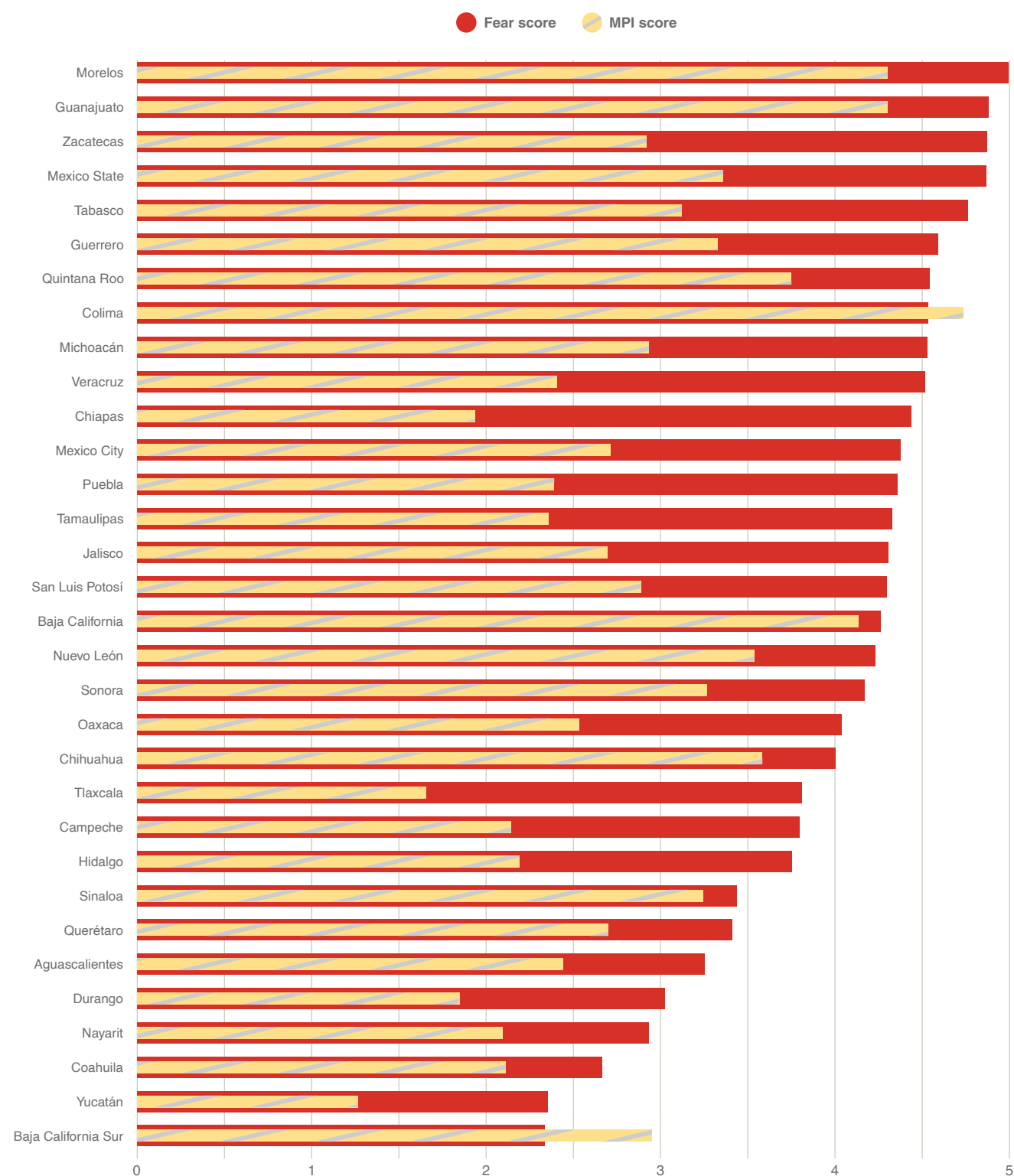


Source: INEGI

FIGURE 1.26

**Peace scores and fear of violence, by state, 2024**

In all but two states, fear of violence scores are higher than overall peace scores. Chiapas recorded the greatest discrepancy between the two, with a fear of violence score of 4.438 and an overall MPI score of 1.936.



Source: IEP

Note: A higher score denotes a lower level of peacefulness.



Figure 1.26 shows states by their fear of violence scores in 2024, along with their overall MPI scores. The state of Baja California Sur performed the best in the fear of violence indicator, with only 30.1 percent of residents reporting that they felt unsafe in their state. Baja California Sur also ranked the highest in this indicator in 2023, the first year since 2015 in which Yucatán did not top the list. Instead, Yucatán ranked second in 2024, with a fear rate of 30.6 percent. For the third consecutive year, Coahuila had the third best rate, with 37.6 percent of residents reporting that they felt unsafe in their home state.

The worst scoring state in 2024 was Morelos, with 90.1 percent of its residents regarding their state as unsafe. This is the first year since 2015 that Morelos has ranked last, but the sixth year in which it has appeared in the bottom five performing states for this indicator. Guanajuato ranked second worst for fear of violence, with 87.5 percent of its residents reportedly feeling unsafe. The third worst performing state was Zacatecas, with a fear rate of 87.4 percent. Zacatecas ranked the worst in this indicator in both 2023 and 2022, when it overtook Mexico State. In 2024, Mexico State had the fourth worst fear of violence score, its best ranking since 2021.

The figure also demonstrates that states' fear of violence scores tend to be worse than their overall peace scores, with only two states – Colima and Baja California Sur – registering worse MPI scores. There is generally a strong correlation between lower levels of peacefulness and higher levels of fear. However, several states score notably worse in this indicator than in overall peace, suggesting that citizens' perceptions of insecurity are substantially higher than recorded levels of crime and violence. With a fear of violence score of 4.4 and an overall MPI score of 1.9, Chiapas recorded the largest discrepancy on this front. It ranked as the fourth most peaceful state in Mexico, but a relatively high proportion (77.5 percent) of its residents reported feeling unsafe in their state in 2024. This marks a 9.5

percentage point jump from 2023, the largest deterioration in the fear of violence indicator of any state. As discussed below, these disparate levels of fear may be partially explained by a growing awareness of national organized crime groups expanding their activities into the state.<sup>153</sup>

Additionally, the role of the media in intensifying perceptions of insecurity cannot be overlooked. Multiple studies have demonstrated coverage of violent crime by the news media often misrepresents its true prevalence, as well as the actual threat of victimization. As a result, a significant relationship has been found between consumption of media and fear of violence. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that organized crime groups exploit the media's fixation on violence to promote their activities and purposefully spread fear.<sup>154</sup>

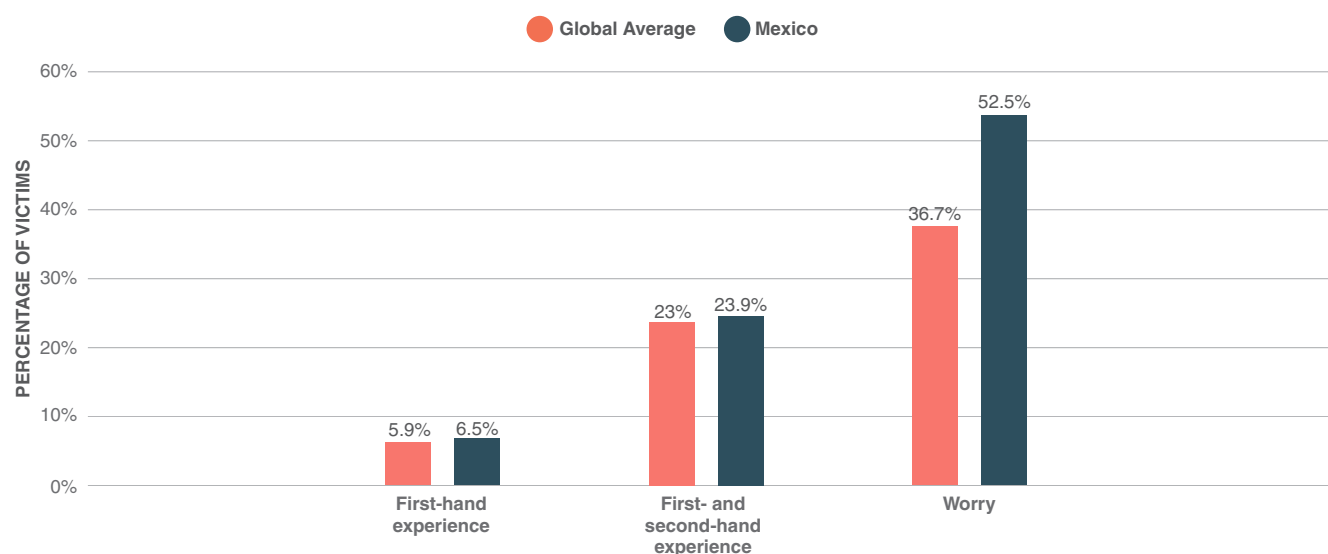
The relationship between overall levels of peacefulness and perceptions of safety is a multifaceted one. Global survey data has revealed, for example, that across an array of domains with the potential to cause a person harm – including road accidents, severe weather, food and water risks, and workplace hazards – violence elicits the most disproportionate levels of worry relative to actual experience.

Figure 1.27 compares the prevalence of experiences of violent crime with rates of worry for both Mexico and the world in 2023. Globally, an average of 36.7 percent of respondents reported being “very worried” about violent crime, while an average of only 5.9 percent reported having had actual first-hand experience with it in the past two years. This equates to more than six times as many people being fearful of violence as having recently experienced it, by far the most significant discrepancy of any domain. This is not necessarily surprising given that the effects of violent crime can be severe, but also because perceptions about the threat of violence are often inflated by the news media.

FIGURE 1.27

### Worry and recent experience with violent crime, Mexico and globally, 2023

Although rates of recent experience with violent crime in Mexico are comparable with global averages, Mexico's rate of worry about violent crime is much higher than the global average.



Source: World Risk Poll

In Mexico, the relationship between experience and worry is even more uneven. With 6.5 percent of respondents reporting first-hand encounters with violent crime and 23.9 percent reporting first- and second-hand encounters, the country’s rates of recent experience with violent crime are comparable to global averages. However, the country’s rate of worry is nearly 16 percentage points higher than the global average, with 52.5 percent of Mexicans reporting that they are very worried about violent crime. Not unexpectedly, “crime and violence” was the single most cited safety concern in Mexico, with 53.6 percent of the population identifying it as the top risk in their everyday lives, a nearly 40-point difference from the global average of 16.2 percent. Table 1.6 demonstrates that only two countries had higher rates of naming “crime and violence” as their primary concern.

There are many explanations for why fear of crime and violence is so acute in Mexico. One reason could be that the potential harm resulting from experiences with violent crime in Mexico would likely be much more severe than in most other countries. Given the pervasiveness of homicides, gun violence, and organized crime in the country, the risks associated with being the victim of even petty crimes in Mexico would likely be much higher than in most of the rest of the world.

Another reason for Mexico’s high worry rates may be the high rates of impunity across the country, which reduce the probability of criminals getting caught and increasing their incentives to commit offenses. This lack of trust in the criminal justice system’s ability to investigate and prosecute offenders leads to increased fear, especially among past victims who recognize that their assailants may still be active in the community. In January 2025, for instance, a mob in Tekit, Yucatán lynched a man accused of attacking a woman with a machete. Residents decided to take justice into their own hands after the victim’s assault, particularly because past crimes committed by the same individual had reportedly gone unpunished by police.<sup>155</sup>

TABLE 1.6  
**Countries with the highest rates of residents citing crime and violence as their top safety concern, 2023**

Mexico has the world’s third highest rate of people ranking crime and violence as their top safety concern.

Rank	Country	Percentage ranking crime and violence as top concern
1	Ecuador	71.5%
2	Chile	54.1%
3	Mexico	53.6%
4	Argentina	49.8%
5	Botswana	49.4%
6	Costa Rica	48.7%
7	Brazil	46.0%
8	Peru	46.0%
9	Dominican Republic	45.8%
10	South Africa	43.7%
Global average		16.2%

Source: World Risk Poll

According to national survey data, Mexicans tend to feel safest in their immediate surroundings, with perceptions of unsafety increasing as the geographic scale expands. Four in ten regard their neighborhood as unsafe, about six in ten regard their municipality as unsafe, and more than seven in ten regard their state as unsafe. This aligns with research that finds that perceptions of safety are often driven by familiarity with a location, which is more likely to occur at the neighborhood level.<sup>156</sup> It also reflects the outsized role of the media in shaping levels of fear, as the unit of analysis moves beyond the areas in which individuals are personally familiar, the more likely they are to assess levels of risk based on media reports, which often suggest pervasive levels of crime.

Across units of analysis, women tend to report higher levels of fear of violence than men. Globally, there are clear gender dimensions to fear of violence, as women consistently report a higher fear of violent crime than their male counterparts, despite having similar overall rates of experience with this type of harm. According to the Safety Perceptions Index 2023, 86.4 percent more women worried about violent crime than had a recent first-hand or second-hand experience with it. In contrast, only 38.3 percent more men worried about violent crime than experienced it. This disparity may be partly influenced by the perceived heightened severity of gender-based physical and sexual violence, and its prevalence both in the home and in public spaces.<sup>157</sup>

**FEAR OF VIOLENCE AND THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZED CRIME IN CHIAPAS**

Chiapas has the largest discrepancy between overall peace score and how unsafe citizens perceive the state to be. Since 2017, Chiapas has consistently ranked among the five most peaceful states in the country, driven by low violent crime and organized crime scores. Despite these indicators of relative safety, Chiapas recorded the largest deterioration of any state in the fear of violence indicator last year, with the percentage of residents regarding the state as unsafe jumping from 68.1 to 77.5 percent, its highest rate on record.

This elevated sense of insecurity among the state’s residents can likely be attributed to the incursion of organized crime groups into Chiapas, demonstrating that even places with a baseline of low levels of violence and organized crime are not immune to the destabilizing influence of such groups.<sup>158</sup>

Chiapas’s growing attractiveness to criminal groups arises primarily from its location as the main border crossing state with Guatemala – and by extension the rest of Central America. Notably, it is an important entry point for cocaine from South America that passes through Mexico on route to the United States.<sup>159</sup> Additionally, the constant flow of migrants crossing into the country by way of Guatemala allows cartels to profit off these vulnerable individuals through extortion and trafficking.<sup>160</sup>

For the past several years, the Sinaloa Cartel has controlled the trafficking activities along large stretches of Chiapas’s border with Guatemala. In 2022, however, internal disputes led to a fracture within the cartel, creating an opportunity for the CJNG to challenge Sinaloa’s position and compete for dominance in

key border areas, a move that has resulted in numerous violent clashes between the two groups.<sup>161</sup>

Since this conflict broke out, the homicide rate in Chiapas has nearly doubled, resulting in its worst figures on record in 2024, with 15.3 homicides per 100,000 people. Of the state's 124 municipalities, five – Suchiate, Benemérito de las Américas, Pantelho, Metapa, and Ixtapangajoyá – recorded extreme homicide rates in 2024. The municipalities of Suchiate, Benemérito de las Américas, and Metapa each sit on the border with Guatemala and their intense homicide rates, reaching as high as a rate of 192 in the small municipality of Suchiate, can likely be attributed to this strategic position.

In areas of Chiapas where the effects of the conflict have been severe, some residents have expressed greater support for the Sinaloa Cartel, as they associate the group's control with a period of stability that was interrupted by the CJNG's incursion.<sup>162</sup>

Alongside the elevated homicide rate, firearms crimes also surged to their highest rate in ten years, having more than doubled since 2022. While the state's organized crime and violent crime indicators have both improved overall in the same period, certain sub-indicators within these indicators have drastically deteriorated. For instance, kidnapping and human trafficking increased more than threefold between 2022 and 2024, major offenses rose by 20.7 percent, and the assault rate rose by 17.1 percent.

The intensifying conflict between cartels has been highly destructive to local populations. It is estimated that, during the

first seven months of 2024, over 12,000 Chiapas residents were driven from their homes because of the violence.<sup>163</sup> In July of 2024, authorities reported that more than 500 people from the Chiapas border town of Amatenango de la Frontera had sought refuge in Guatemala after cartels waged an overnight assault on the town and its residents.<sup>164</sup>

As the conflict between the criminal groups continues to fuel displacements, many residents of Chiapas have expressed concerns about the response of security forces and government authorities, whom they feel are not being proactive enough in addressing the crisis.<sup>165</sup> The displacement of people from Mexico to Guatemala, in particular, is rare and signifies the extent to which residents of Chiapas feel they are in imminent danger due to gang activity.

In addition to the threat of violence, residents of Chiapas also fear forced recruitment into criminal groups, which are constantly looking to fill their ranks with new members in order to compensate for high death rates.<sup>166</sup> Common targets of recruitment are children and young people who live in poverty and lack the necessary support from social programs to improve their circumstances.<sup>167</sup> As the poorest state in the country, Chiapas's population is especially susceptible to this form of exploitation.<sup>168</sup> In 2024, residents in multiple municipalities were threatened at gunpoint by gang members into participating in road blockades to disrupt the approach of both security forces and rival organized crime groups.<sup>169</sup> While forced recruitment does not necessarily include the kidnapping of the victim, it is not uncommon for these events to happen concurrently, which could explain the elevated kidnapping rate ever since gang activity escalated in the state.





## 2 | Economic Value of Peace



The economic impact of violence in Mexico was 4.5 trillion pesos (US\$245 billion) in 2024, equivalent to 18 percent of the country's GDP.

Overall, the total cost of violence in the past decade increased by 32 percent, or 1.1 trillion pesos.

The economic impact of violence increased in 2024, rising by 3.4 percent, or 149 billion pesos.



**30% | 12%**

Spending on domestic security decreased by 30 percent from 2015 to 2024, while spending on the justice system decreased by 12 percent.

Mexico's spending on domestic security and the justice system in 2024 was equal to 0.7 percent of its GDP, less than half of the average for both Latin America and other members of the OECD.



**6x | 5x**

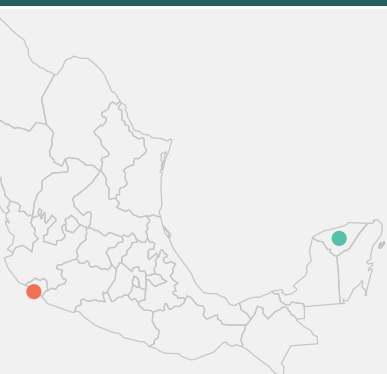
The economic impact of violence was six times higher than public investments made in healthcare and more than five times higher than those made in education in 2024.

**10%**

A ten percent reduction in the economic impact of violence is more than the federal government's total spending on physical infrastructure, including transport, schools, hospitals, information technology, utilities and urban infrastructure.

# Key Findings

The per capita economic impact varied significantly from state-to-state last year, ranging from 12,309 pesos in Yucatán to 89,916 pesos in Colima.



There were three states where the economic cost of violence was substantially higher than in all others. In Morelos, Colima and Guerrero, the cost represented more than 35 percent of the state's GDP.

**1.7 trillion**

In 2024, homicide constituted 38 percent of the economic impact of violence. This is equivalent to 1.7 trillion pesos.



Protection costs peaked in 2020 but increased by six percent over the 2015-2024 period.





# Economic Impact of Violence in 2024

**In 2024, the estimated economic impact of violence in Mexico was 4.5 trillion pesos (US\$245 billion). This is equivalent to 18 percent of Mexico's gross domestic product (GDP) or 33,905 pesos per person, more than the average monthly salary in Mexico.<sup>1</sup>**

The economic impact of violence increased in 2024 by 3.4 percent, or 149 billion pesos, from the previous year. The peak of the economic impact of violence occurred in 2019, at approximately 4.7 trillion pesos. Over the next four years, it gradually declined, falling to 4.3 trillion pesos in 2023, before bouncing back slightly in 2024. The economic impact of violence is equivalent to more than three times the government's expenditure on economic development.<sup>2</sup>

Box 2.1 gives a brief explanation of the economic costing model. This edition of the Mexico Peace Index includes minor methodological updates to the economic costing model for greater simplicity and interpretability. A comprehensive explanation of how the economic impact of violence is calculated is provided in Section 4.

Table 2.2 presents a full breakdown of the 2024 economic impact of violence cost estimates. This outlines the direct costs, the indirect costs, and the multiplier effect for each indicator that, combined, gives the total economic impact of violence.

BOX 2.1

**The economic impact of violence definition and model**

The economic impact of violence is defined as the expenditure and economic effect related to "containing, preventing and dealing with the consequences of violence." It comprises the **economic cost of violence** – both direct and indirect – plus a multiplier effect (Table 2.1).

The total economic impact of violence includes:

- I. The direct cost of violence
- II. The indirect cost of violence
- III. The multiplier effect

**Direct costs** are incurred by the victim, the perpetrator and the government. These include medical expenses, policing costs and expenses associated with the justice system. **Indirect costs** accrue after the fact and include the current value of long-term costs arising from incidents of crime, such as lost future income and physical and psychological trauma.

The **multiplier effect** represents the economic benefits that would have been generated if all relevant expenditure had been directed into more productive alternatives.

TABLE 2.1

**Components of the economic impact of violence model**

The economic impact of violence comprises the economic cost of violence plus a multiplier effect.

Impact			Commentary
Economic impact of violence	Economic cost of violence	i) Direct costs	Costs directly attributable to violence or its prevention
		ii) Indirect costs	Medium- and long-term losses arising from acts of violence
	iii) Multiplier effect		Economic benefits forgone by investing in violence containment and not in other more productive activities.

Source: IEP



TABLE 2.2

**The economic impact of violence, billions of pesos, 2024**

Last year, the total economic losses amounted to 4.5 trillion pesos.

Indicator	Direct	Indirect	Multiplier Effect	Total Economic Impact of Violence
Homicide	200	1,316	200	1,716
Violent crime	275	925	275	1,475
Fear of violence		61		61
Protection costs	214		214	428
Military and national security spending	217		217	434
Domestic security spending	55		55	110
Justice system and incarceration spending	126	9	126	261
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,087</b>	<b>2,311</b>	<b>1,087</b>	<b>4,485</b>

Source: IEP

Note: Totals may not be exact due to rounding.

In all but one year from 2019 to 2023, Mexico saw annual decreases in the economic impact of violence, after experiencing five years of consecutive increases. However, in 2024, the economic impact of violence rebounded, reversing a substantial proportion of the progress made in previous years.

In 2024, there was a three percent decline in the economic impact of violent crime. However, this improvement was partially offset by a one percent increase in the economic impact of homicide. Moreover, as captured by military and national security funding allocated by the federal government to states,<sup>3</sup> there was a significant increase in military expenditure,

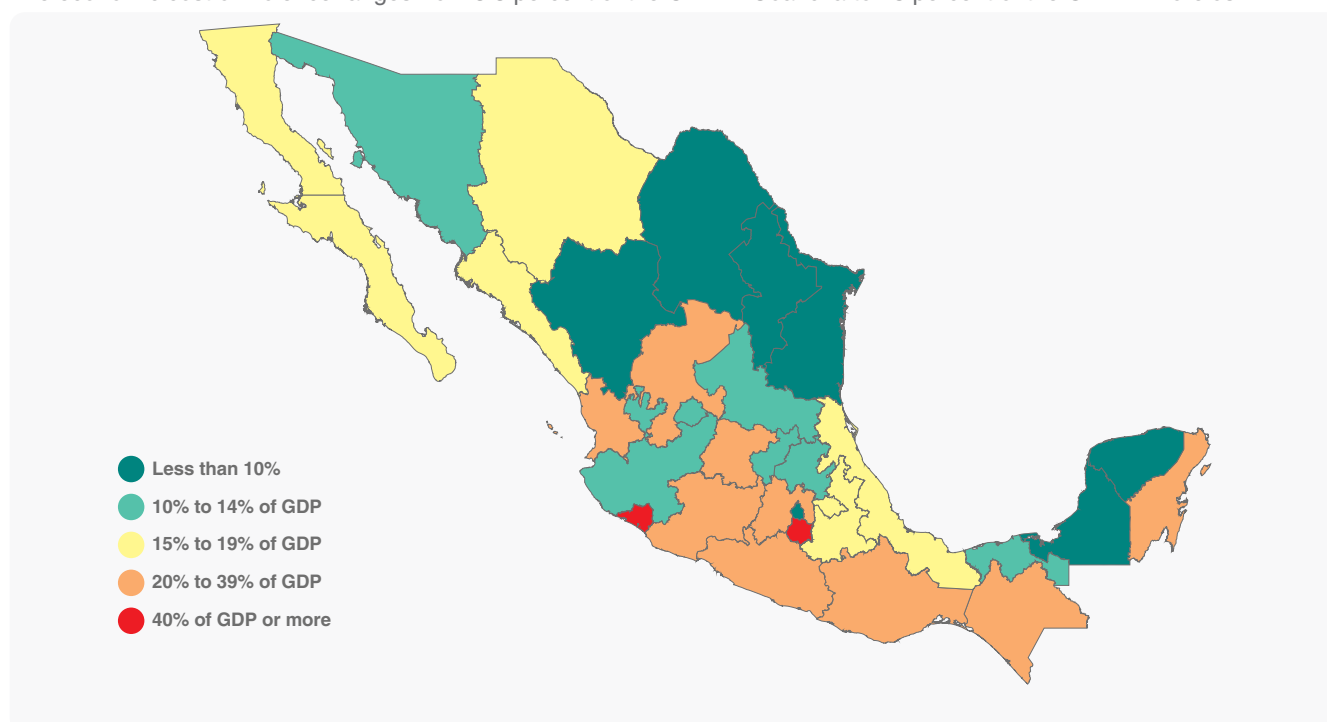
which contributed to the largest increase in the economic impact of violence in 2024. Spending on domestic security and the justice system also recorded increases compared to 2023.

The map in Figure 2.1 displays the economic cost of violence by state as a percentage of state GDP in 2024. Three states – Morelos, Colima and Guerrero – had economic costs that were substantially higher than all other states. In these states, the cost of violence represented more than 35 percent of the state's GDP. In contrast, Yucatán, which ranks first in the Mexico Peace Index (MPI), had a substantially lower cost, only six percent of the state's GDP.

FIGURE 2.1

**The economic cost of violence by state, percentage of state's GDP, 2024**

The economic cost of violence ranges from 5.5 percent of the GDP in Coahuila to 43 percent of the GDP in Morelos.



Source: IEP

Violence and the fear of violence create significant economic disruptions. Violent incidents incur costs in the form of property damage, physical injury and psychological trauma. Fear of violence also alters economic behavior, primarily by changing investment and consumption patterns, which diverts public and private resources away from productive activities and towards protective measures. These generate significant losses in the form of productivity shortfalls and foregone earnings. Therefore, measuring the scale and cost of violence has important implications for assessing its effects on economic activity.

Figure 2.2 illustrates the share of the total economic impact of violence in 2024 by the categories used in the model. The data also shows that the costs from homicide and violent crimes in Mexico are significantly greater than government expenditure on violence containment. In 2024, 28 percent of Mexico's economic impact from violence was in government expenditures and private protection expenditures, whereas 72 percent was associated with homicide, violent crime, and the fear of violence. This differs significantly to global metrics, in which 80.3 percent of the impact is made up of government and private expenditures on containing and preventing violence.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, spending on violence containment in Mexico (398 billion pesos) represents under six percent of total government spending. In contrast, healthcare and education represent, respectively, 20 and 15 percent of total government spending.<sup>5</sup> These figures suggest that violence containment expenditure is disproportionately low in Mexico.

In 2024, 38 percent of the economic impact of violence was a result of homicide, costing the country 1.7 trillion pesos (US\$92 billion). This is equivalent to 6.7 percent of Mexico's GDP. By contrast, in the global economic impact model, homicide is 6.5 percent of the total, equal to 0.85 percent of global GDP.<sup>6</sup> If Mexico were to achieve a ten percent decline in its homicide rate, the economic impact of violence would decrease by 170 billion pesos – more than three times what the government spent on science, technology and innovation in 2024.<sup>7</sup>

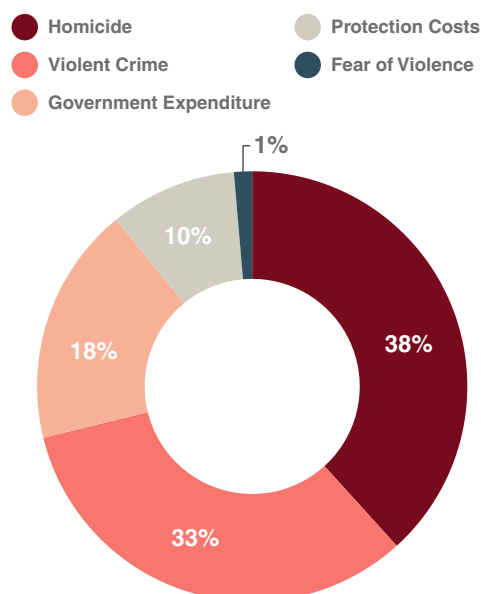
Violent crime, which comprises robbery, assault, sexual violence and firearm crimes, was the second most expensive form of violence, representing 33 percent of the total economic impact or 1.5 trillion pesos.

The economic effect of government spending on activities aimed at reducing violence – domestic security, the military, and the justice system – amounted to 805 billion pesos, or 18 percent of the total economic impact. Also included in government

FIGURE 2.2

### Breakdown of the economic impact of violence, 2024

Homicide, violent crime, and fear of violence represent 72 percent of the economic impact of violence.



Source: IEP

spending is the economic impact of incarceration, calculated as the lost wages of those imprisoned. Prisoners' lost wages are assumed to equal the Mexican minimum wage of 89,615 pesos per year in 2024. In 2024, the cost of incarceration was estimated at nine billion pesos.

The economic impact model includes the costs households and businesses incur in protecting themselves from crime and violence. Protection costs amounted to 428 billion pesos in 2024 – almost 10 percent of the total economic impact.<sup>8</sup> This indicator includes insurance, private security spending, the cost of firearms for protection, changing place of residence or business due to violence, and the installation of alarms, locks, doors, windows, bars and fences. Protection costs peaked in 2020 and have fallen over the past several years.

The remaining one percent of economic losses are related to the fear of violence. Fear of violence affects consumer and business behavior, which in turn causes economic losses. These losses were calculated at 61 billion pesos in 2024.<sup>9</sup>



## Trends in the Economic Impact of Violence

**Since 2015, the economic impact of violence has increased by 32 percent, reflecting the deterioration in peacefulness in Mexico over the same period.**

Last year witnessed a significant increase in the economic impact of violence, which rose by 149 billion pesos. This increase was primarily driven by a sharp rise in military and national security expenditures, which grew by 38 percent between 2023 and 2024, from 157 to 217 billion pesos.

In 2024, for the first time since 2019, homicides increased, leading to a one percent increase in its economic cost. Protection costs have slightly increased over the past decade. While domestic security and judicial system spending have experienced declines overall since 2015, they rose slightly in 2024.

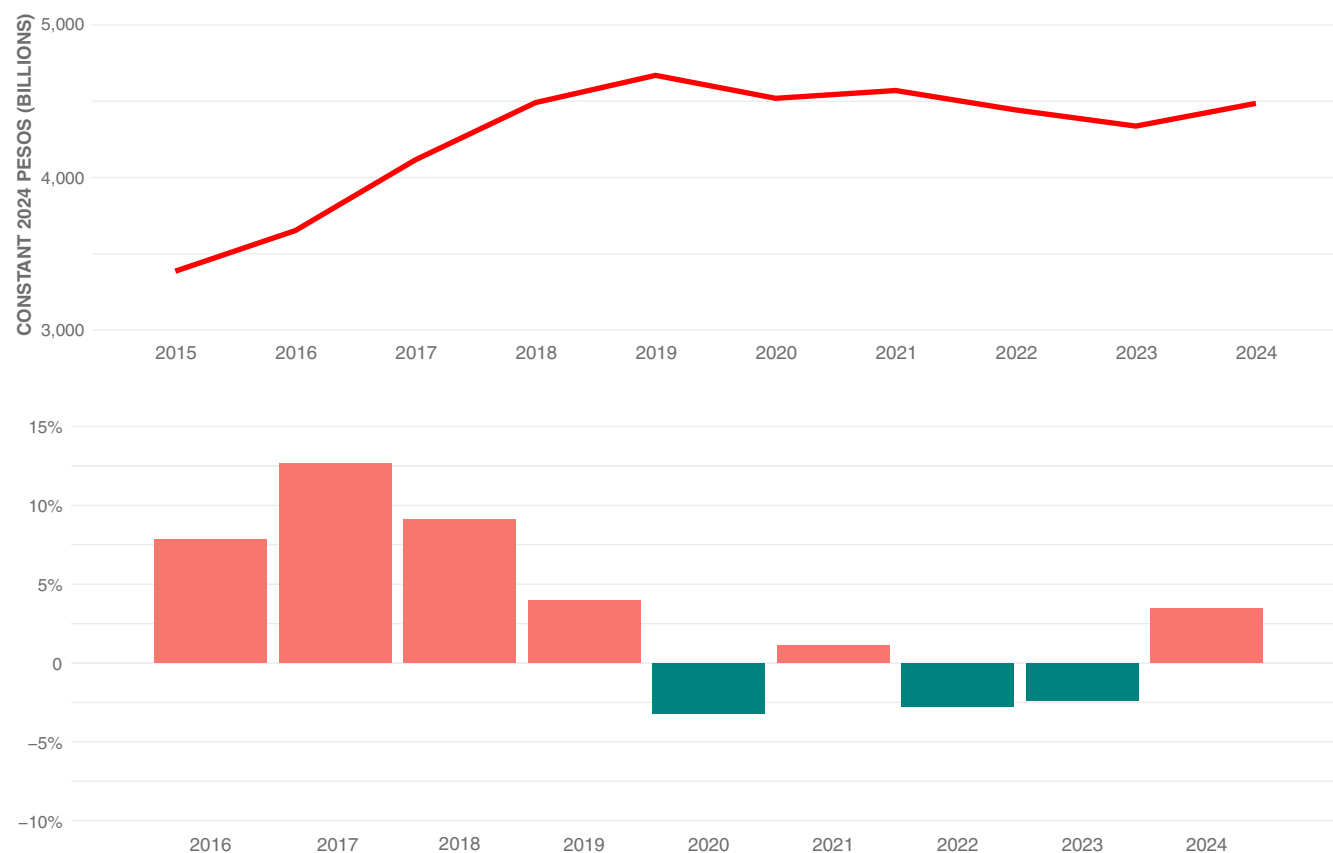
Violent crimes saw a decline in 2024, resulting in a 46 billion peso reduction in violent crime costs (Table 2.3). Figure 2.3 illustrates the trend in Mexico's economic impact of violence. Overall, the total cost of violence in the past decade increased by 32 percent, or 1.1 trillion pesos.

Between 2015 and 2019, the economic impact of violence rose each year, in total by 38 percent. These four years of continuous increases coincided with Mexico's rising homicide rate and an overall deterioration in peacefulness.

FIGURE 2.3

### Trend in the economic impact of violence and year-on-year percentage change, 2015–2024

After several years of modest declines, the cost of violence in Mexico increased by 3.4 percent in 2024.



Source: IEP

TABLE 2.3

**Trend in the economic impact of violence, billions of constant pesos, 2015–2024**

Homicide costs and military expenditures have seen the largest increases in real terms over the past decade, while domestic security and judicial system expenses were the only cost items to decline since 2015.

Indicator	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Change: 2015–2024	Percentage Change
Homicide	1,018	1,289	1,647	1,927	1,984	1,976	1,911	1,776	1,699	1,717	+699	+69%
Violent crime	1,140	1,101	1,275	1,344	1,422	1,260	1,400	1,503	1,521	1,475	+335	+29%
Fear of violence	55	55	57	61	61	61	60	61	61	61	+6	+11%
Protection costs	405	458	458	456	501	517	468	411	400	428	+23	+6%
Military and national security spending	315	291	274	280	318	338	384	348	313	433	+118	+37%
Domestic security spending	158	140	123	124	108	102	92	85	87	110	-48	-30%
Justice system and incarceration spending	295	319	281	298	275	265	255	257	255	261	-34	-12%

Source: IEP

Note: Totals may not be exact due to rounding.

Figure 2.4 shows the trend in the economic impact of violence in Mexico across three categories: personal and business protection costs, interpersonal violence, and government expenditure. The category to experience by far the biggest increase in cost was interpersonal violence, which has risen by 48 percent since 2015. This is almost entirely due to the increase in homicides over the past decade.

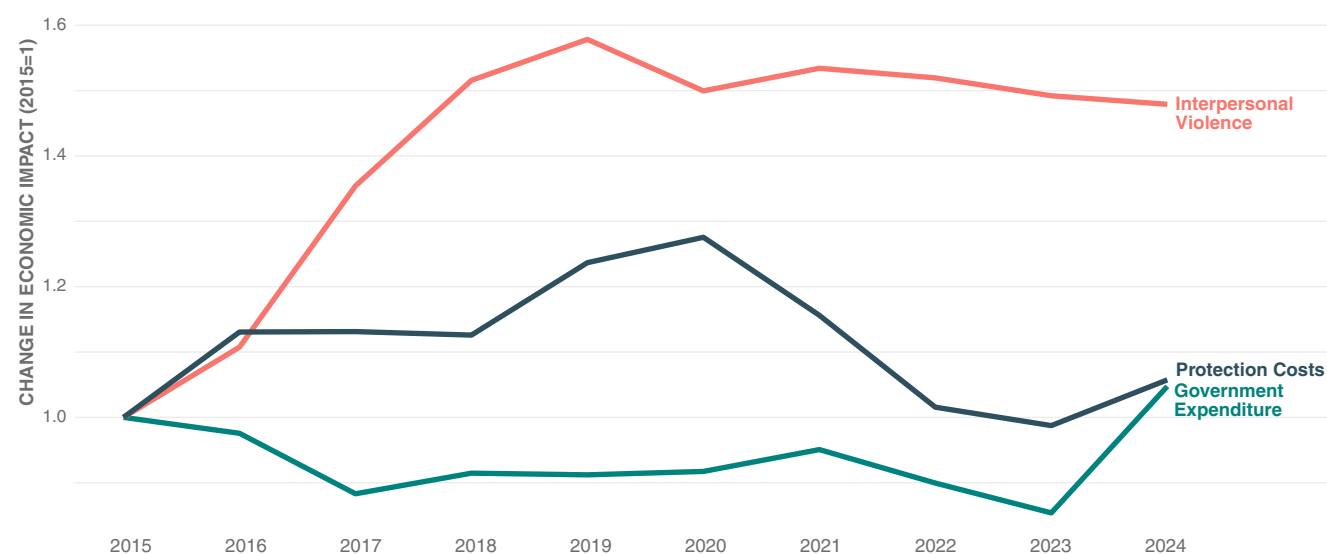
Government spending on violence containment stayed below its 2015 level until 2023. In 2024 it surpassed its 2015 level as the result of a major increase in military and national security spending.

The economic impact of protection costs has also increased 5.7 percent since 2015. Protection costs are an aggregate of surveyed responses on expenditures made by businesses and citizens to protect themselves and are sourced from the National Survey of Business Victimization (ENVE) and the National Survey of Victimization and Perception of Public Security (ENVIPE). Business expenditures include higher insurance premiums and installing additional locks, alarms, video surveillance cameras and tracking devices.

FIGURE 2.4

**Indexed trend in the economic impact of violence, 2015–2024**

Government expenditures and protection costs increased substantially in 2024, while interpersonal violence costs have recorded the largest percentage increase since 2015.



Source: IEP



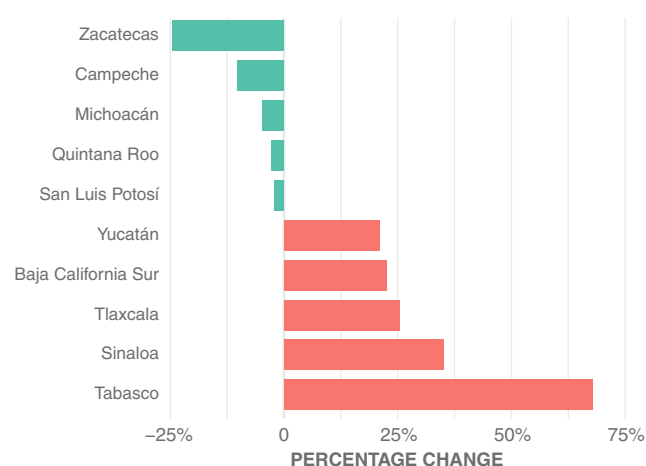
## Economic Impact of Violence by State

In 2024, Tabasco experienced the largest percentage increase in the economic impact of violence, at 68 percent, followed by Sinaloa, at 35 percent. The increases in Tabasco and Sinaloa can be attributed to the spikes in their homicide rates last year. In contrast, Zacatecas had the largest decrease, with the economic impact of violence in the state declining by 25 percent, as its homicide rate fell by half last year. Figure 2.5 displays the five states with the largest decreases in their economic impact from 2023 to 2024 and the five states with the largest increases.

FIGURE 2.5

### Changes in the economic impact of violence by state, 2023–2024

Tabasco recorded the largest increase in the economic impact of violence of any state, increasing by 68 percent from the previous year.



Source: IEP calculations

The economic impact of violence differs significantly between states. Of the 32 Mexican states, Morelos recorded the highest impact, equivalent to 43 percent of its GDP. Table 2.4 lists the five most and least affected states as a percentage of their GDPs. States with higher costs as a percentage of their GDPs all have higher homicide rates compared to the five states with the lowest economic cost from violence.

TABLE 2.4

### The five most and least affected states, percentage of state's GDP, 2024

The five states with the highest economic cost of violence are less peaceful than the states with the lowest cost.

State	Economic cost of violence
Morelos	43.2%
Colima	40.8%
Guerrero	36.4%
Quintana Roo	26.8%
Zacatecas	24.7%
Coahuila	5.5%
Mexico City	5.5%
Campeche	5.6%
Yucatán	6.2%
Nuevo León	8.9%

Source: IEP

In Morelos and Colima, which had the highest homicide rates in the country in 2024, the economic impact of violence represented more than 40 percent of the states' GDPs. Alongside homicide, the main driver of higher economic impact is violent crime. Table 2.5 presents the per capita and total economic impact of violence by state.

Colima recorded by far the highest per capita impact from violence, with the financial impact reaching almost 90,000 pesos per person in 2024. Colima also had the highest per capita spending on violence containment and per capita impact of interpersonal violence. The per capita economic impact of interpersonal violence in Colima was over six times greater than the state's expenditure on violence containment, indicating the disproportionately low spending by the state on curbing violence. In contrast, Yucatán's per capita spending on violence containment was greater than the per capita impact of interpersonal violence.

TABLE 2.5

**Per capita economic impact of violence, constant pesos, 2024**

The per capita economic impact of violence varies significantly across states, from 12,309 pesos per person in Yucatán to 89,916 pesos per person in Colima.

Rank	State	Per Capita Economic Impact	Total Economic Impact (Billions of Pesos)	Percentage Change: 2015–2024
1	Yucatán	12,309	29	-29%
2	Tlaxcala	20,897	30	25%
3	Durango	19,023	37	-24%
4	Chiapas	19,512	118	10%
5	Nayarit	33,844	46	77%
6	Coahuila	18,269	62	-11%
7	Campeche	29,612	32	79%
8	Hidalgo	21,739	70	41%
9	Tamaulipas	22,199	84	-29%
10	Puebla	26,988	184	38%
11	Veracruz	23,713	207	56%
12	Aguascalientes	28,157	42	54%
13	Oaxaca	28,939	122	126%
14	Jalisco	31,048	271	45%
15	Querétaro	33,535	82	58%
16	Mexico City	28,544	255	9%
17	San Luis Potosí	27,924	82	49%
18	Zacatecas	42,294	72	58%
19	Michoacán	33,673	167	39%
20	Baja California Sur	50,759	44	35%
21	Tabasco	37,698	101	31%
22	Sinaloa	37,583	122	12%
23	Sonora	46,695	150	65%
24	Guerrero	41,895	155	-10%
25	Mexico State	34,638	627	-1%
26	Nuevo León	38,693	228	67%
27	Chihuahua	49,117	193	55%
28	Quintana Roo	69,542	130	98%
29	Baja California	56,715	218	54%
30	Morelos	69,318	147	67%
31	Guanajuato	47,138	303	105%
32	Colima	89,916	75	220%
<b>National</b>		<b>33,905</b>	<b>4,486</b>	<b>32%</b>

Source: IEP





## Increases and Decreases in the Economic Impact of Violence

Over the last ten years, the economic impact of violence has decreased in only six states and increased in 26. This has led to the national economic impact of violence being 32 percent higher in 2024 than in 2015. The increases in the economic impact of violence have been much larger in states that were less peaceful to begin with, which has led to an increase in the 'economic impact gap' between the most peaceful and least peaceful states.

Since 2015, only eight states have recorded improvements in the MPI while all remaining states saw their peace scores decline. Table 2.6 displays the economic impact in 2015 and 2024 for the five states with the greatest improvements and the five states with the greatest deteriorations in the MPI over the past decade.

Tamaulipas has seen the largest improvement since 2015, with a 29 percent reduction in the economic impact of violence. Despite historically being an epicenter of organized crime and a major transport site for drugs into the United States, the state's

decline in levels of organized crime drove its improvement in overall peacefulness. Tamaulipas ranked as the fourth least peaceful state in 2015 and as the ninth most peaceful state in 2024.

On average, the five states with the greatest improvements in peacefulness have seen their economic impact of violence decrease by 12 percent since 2015. Among the five states with the largest improvements in peacefulness, Sinaloa is the only one that has experienced an overall increase in the economic impact of violence since 2015.

The five states that recorded the largest deteriorations in the MPI were Colima, Guanajuato, Morelos, Quintana Roo and Nuevo León. On average, the economic impact of violence in these states increased by 111 percent. Colima recorded the largest deterioration and ranks as the least peaceful state in the MPI. Since 2015, its economic impact of violence has more than tripled to 75 billion pesos.

TABLE 2.6

### The economic impact in the states with the largest improvements and deteriorations in peacefulness, billions of constant pesos, 2015–2024

On average, the impact of violence fell by 12 percent across the five states with the largest improvements in the MPI while that of the states with largest deteriorations rose by 111 percent.

State	Change in MPI	Economic impact			
		2015	2024	Change (billions of pesos)	Percentage change
Tamaulipas	Improved	118	84	-34	-29%
Durango	Improved	48	37	-12	-24%
Coahuila	Improved	70	62	-8	-11%
Guerrero	Improved	173	155	-18	-10%
Sinaloa	Improved	109	122	13	12%
Colima	Deteriorated	23	75	51	220%
Guanajuato	Deteriorated	148	303	155	105%
Morelos	Deteriorated	88	147	59	67%
Quintana Roo	Deteriorated	66	130	64	98%
Nuevo León	Deteriorated	137	228	92	67%

Source: IEP



## Government Expenditure on Violence Containment

Government expenditure on containing and dealing with violence accounted for 18 percent of Mexico's economic impact in 2024, equivalent to 805 billion pesos. This was its highest level in at least a decade. Violence containment spending comprises government expenditures in three areas: domestic security, the justice system, and the military and national security. In 2024, expenditures across these three areas increased by 23 percent from the previous year.

Between 2008 and 2024, accounting for inflation, federal violence containment expenditure increased by 67 percent. While the government's expenditure has risen on the military, the justice system, and domestic security, the funding increases have differed. Of the three, military expenditure has had the largest increase, increasing by 120 percent since 2008. This is followed by the expenditure on the justice system, which has increased by 37 percent. Expenditure on domestic security has increased by 17 percent.

The overall increase in government spending since 2015 has been driven by expenditure on the military. Since 2015, the government has cut funding for the justice system and domestic security. The government's expenditure on domestic security fell by 30 percent. However, it was slightly higher in 2024 than in 2008. Furthermore, spending on the justice system fell by 20 percent since its peak in 2016. It has gradually declined in the years since. In 2024 it stood at 126 billion pesos, just 1.6 percent higher than the previous year.

In contrast, expenditure on the military steadily increased until 2021. In the following two years, it fell, but it then rebounded sharply in 2024, reaching its highest level since at least 2008. Most of the rise in military spending took place first between 2018 and 2021 and then again in 2024. During the first period, it grew from 140 billion pesos to 192 billion pesos, or by 37 percent, the largest increase of the three categories. However, in 2022 and 2023, military spending declined. This short-term downward trend reversed sharply in 2024, with military spending rising by 61 billion pesos.<sup>10</sup>

This overall upward trend is striking, especially as it comes in the context of rising concerns about the militarization of domestic security and other social services in Mexico.<sup>11</sup>

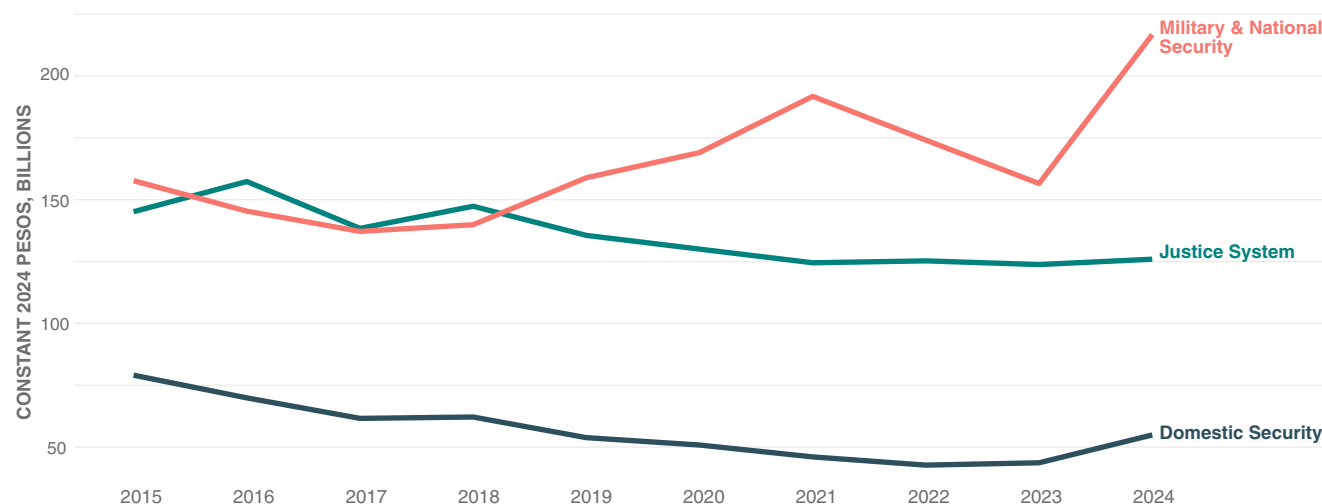
Since 2015, military and national security spending has increased by an average of 5.9 billion pesos annually. However, on average, government spending on the justice system and domestic security has decreased by 1.9 and 2.5 billion pesos, respectively, each year over the same period.

The higher levels of expenditure coincide with the increased use of the military to fight organized crime. Despite this, Mexico's expenditure on the military is equivalent to 0.85 percent of its GDP, well under the global average of 2.4 percent.<sup>12</sup> Figure 2.6 shows the government's expenditure on violence containment from 2015 to 2024.

FIGURE 2.6

### Trend in government spending on violence containment, 2015–2024

Mexico's expenditure on violence containment was at its highest level in 2024, driven by increases in military spending.



Sources: Mexican Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP), IEP calculations

Similarly, Mexican public spending on the justice system and domestic security are well below regional and international levels. Mexico spent 0.7 percent of its GDP on the justice system and domestic security in 2024, less than half of the OECD average, which currently stands at 1.72 percent of GDP. Moreover, the Latin American average on public order and safety spending is 1.5 percent of GDP, also more than twice that of Mexico.

While violence containment may be underfunded across spending categories, investment is particularly needed to build Mexico's judicial system. Mexico has an average of 4.4 judges and magistrates per 100,000 people, one-fourth the global average. This deficit limits the judicial system's capacity to process cases and creates backlogs of unsolved cases and persons incarcerated without a sentence. Through greater investment in the judiciary to increase the number of judges, the capacity of Mexico's legal system may improve, leading to reductions in overcrowding in prisons and the number of those incarcerated without sentences.<sup>13</sup>

In 2024, Mexico passed a major judicial reform, which overhauls the process for selecting judges, shifting from an appointment system to direct elections by popular vote, while also introducing measures aimed at increasing judicial

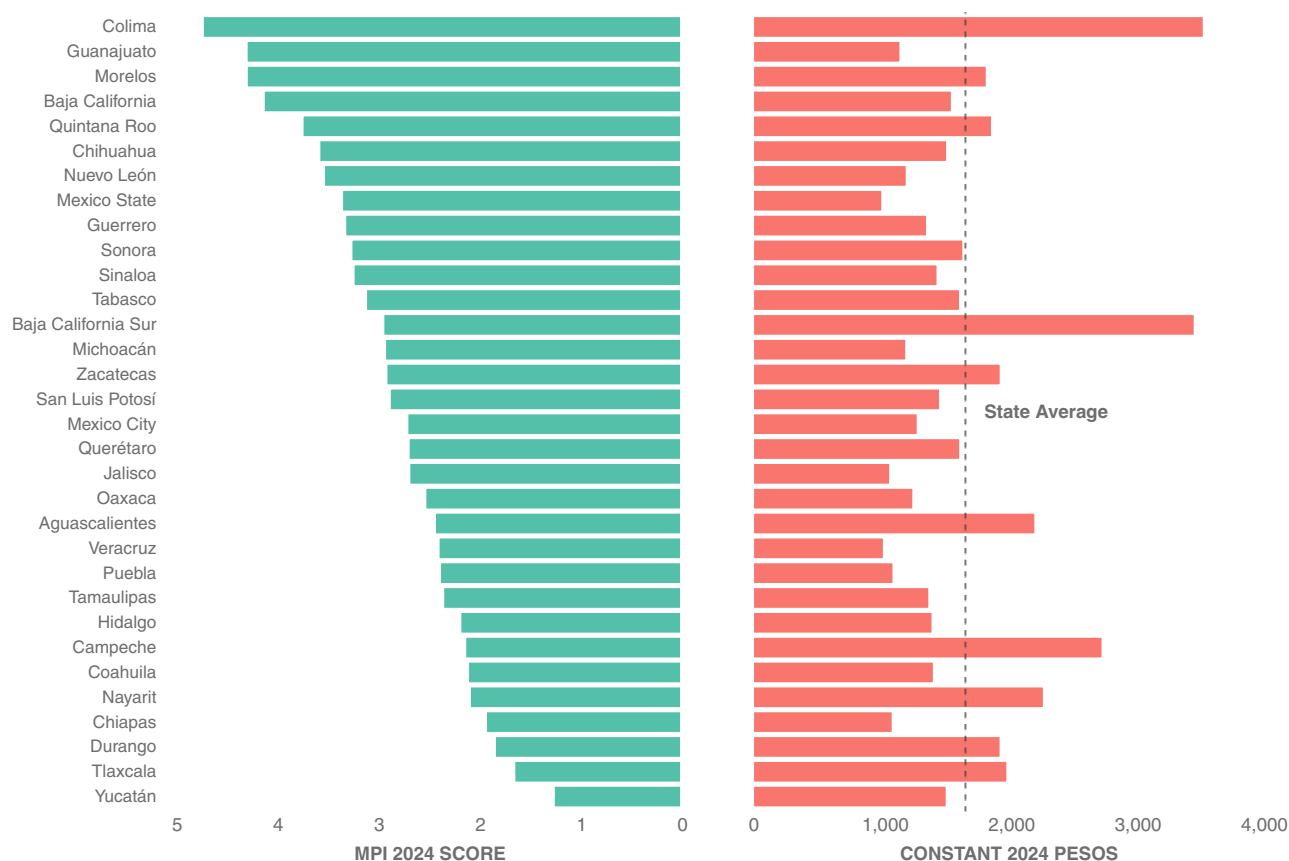
accountability and streamlining court proceedings. However, it is unclear how this reform will affect the ability of the judiciary to effectively prosecute criminals and reduce the country's high levels of impunity. Experts have argued that the reform substantially weakens judicial independence, making judges more vulnerable to electoral influence – potentially making prosecutions and rulings more selective and politically motivated, by favoring public opinion or the interests of ruling parties over upholding the rule of law. Some have argued that, rather than focus on judges, reforms should seek to improve prosecutors' offices, calling them the “weakest link” in Mexico's judiciary.<sup>14</sup>

The pattern of federal expenditure on domestic security and the justice system by state does not match the levels of violence as captured by state MPI scores. States such as Baja California, Guanajuato, Nuevo León and Chihuahua experience high levels of violence, yet they receive below-average per capita spending on domestic security and the justice system. In contrast, Campeche, Baja California Sur, Aguascalientes and Tlaxcala are relatively peaceful, yet they continue to receive above-average levels of per capita spending on domestic security and the justice system. Figure 2.7 shows the level of peacefulness and per capita domestic security and justice system expenditure by state.

FIGURE 2.7

### State MPI scores and per capita expenditure on domestic security and justice, 2024

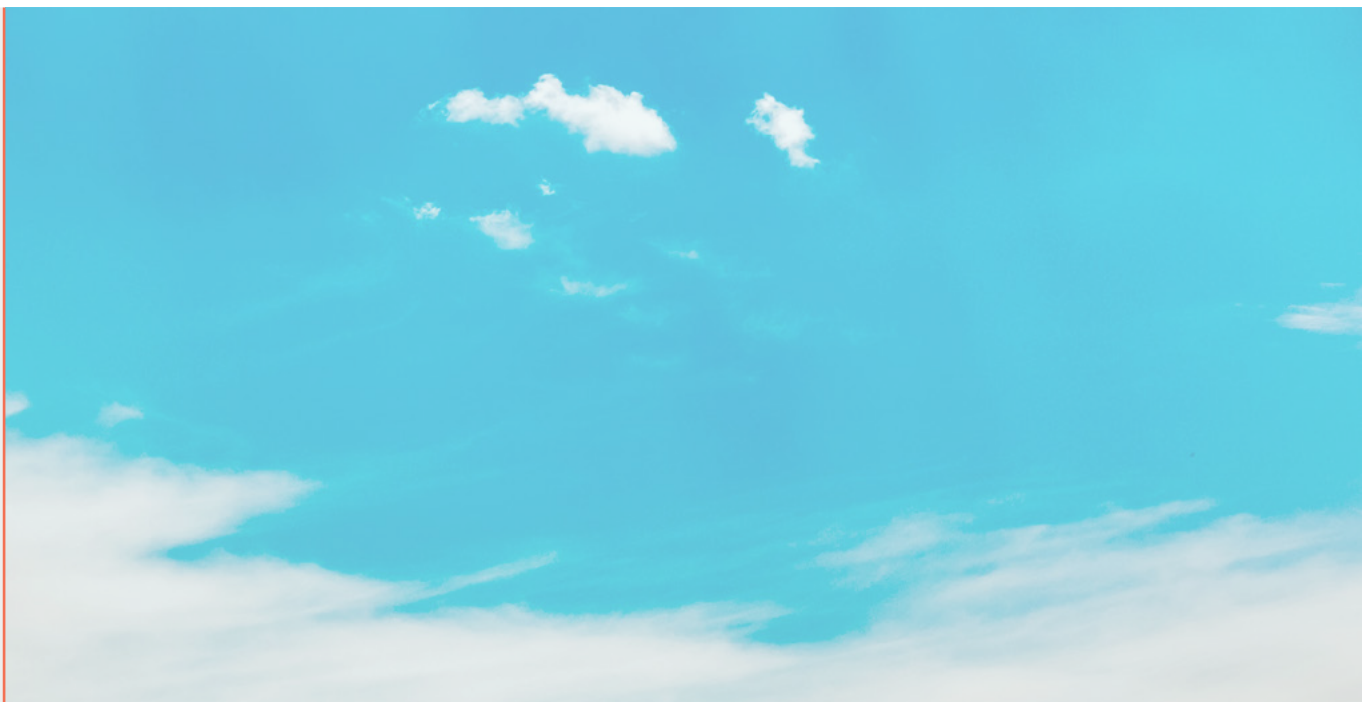
States that experience the lowest levels of peace do not necessarily receive higher per capita funds for domestic security and the justice system.



Sources: INEGI, IEP

Note: State MPI Scores for 2024. Per capita expenditure reflects federal expenditures in 2024.





# 3 | Positive Peace



# 2.4%

Nationally, Mexico's Positive Peace Index (PPI) score has deteriorated by 2.4 percent over the past decade.

Positive Peace in Mexico has recorded substantial deteriorations since 2015. This coincides with the substantial increases in violence across the country.



Since 2015, the Pillar of Positive Peace to record the largest improvement was *Equitable Distribution of Resources*, largely driven by Mexico's successful efforts in reducing inequalities in education, income, and life expectancy.

## Key Findings



The MPPI Pillars with the strongest associations with negative peace, as measured by the MPI and its five indicators, are *Low Levels of Corruption* and *Well-Functioning Government*. This suggests that corruption and administrative ineffectiveness are key drivers of violence in Mexico, as they contribute to impunity and reduce the resources available to combat crime.



At the sub-national level, the Mexico Positive Peace Index (MPPI) identifies variations in societal resilience across the country's 32 states. Nuevo León, Nayarit, Yucatán, Querétaro and Sinaloa recorded the best levels of Positive Peace.



In contrast, Morelos, Guerrero, Tabasco, Puebla and Oaxaca recorded the worst levels of Positive Peace.





## What is Positive Peace?

Positive Peace is defined as the *attitudes, institutions and structures* that create and sustain peaceful societies (Figure 3.1). The same factors also lead to many other desirable socio-economic outcomes. Higher levels of Positive Peace are statistically linked to greater income growth, better environmental outcomes, higher levels of well-being, better developmental outcomes, and stronger societal resilience.

IEP has empirically derived the Positive Peace Index (PPI) through the analysis of almost 25,000 economic and social progress indicators to determine which ones have statistically significant relationships with peace as measured by the Global Peace Index (GPI).

FIGURE 3.1

### What is Positive Peace?

Positive Peace is a complementary concept to negative peace.



Source: IEP

## The Pillars of Positive Peace

Positive Peace is based on eight key factors, or Pillars, that describe the workings of the socio-economic system:

**Well-Functioning Government** – A well-functioning government delivers high-quality public and civil services, engenders trust and participation, demonstrates political stability and upholds the rule of law.

**Sound Business Environment** – The strength of economic conditions as well as the formal institutions that support the operation of the private sector. Business competitiveness and economic productivity are both associated with the most peaceful countries.

**Equitable Distribution of Resources** – Peaceful countries tend to ensure equity in access to resources such as education, health, and economic opportunity.

**Acceptance of the Rights of Others** – Peaceful countries often have formal laws that guarantee basic human rights and freedoms, and informal social and cultural norms that relate to the behaviors of citizens.

**Good Relations with Neighbors** – Peaceful relations with other countries are as important as good relations between groups within a country. Countries with positive external relations are more peaceful and tend to be more politically stable, have better functioning governments, are regionally integrated and have lower levels of organized internal conflict.

**Free Flow of Information** – Free and independent media disseminates information in a way that leads to greater knowledge and helps individuals, businesses and civil society make better decisions. This results in better outcomes and more effective responses in times of crisis.

**High Levels of Human Capital** – A skilled human capital base reflects the extent to which societies educate citizens and promote the development of knowledge, thereby improving economic productivity, care for the young, and promotion of political participation and social capital.

**Low Levels of Corruption** – In societies with high levels of corruption, resources are inefficiently allocated, often leading to a lack of funding for essential services. Low corruption can enhance confidence and trust in institutions.



FIGURE 3.2

### The Pillars of Positive Peace

All eight factors are highly interconnected and interact in complex ways.



Source: IEP

The Pillars of Positive Peace interact systemically to support the *attitudes*, *institutions* and *structures* that underpin development and peacebuilding (Figure 3.2). High levels of Positive Peace occur when attitudes make violence less tolerated, institutions are resilient and more responsive to society's needs, and structures create the environment for the nonviolent resolution of grievances.

In addition to the framework of eight Pillars, Positive Peace can also be studied through the lenses of its three domains:

- **Attitudes** describes how members of a society view and relate to one another.
- **Institutions** measures the effectiveness, transparency and inclusiveness of administrative organizations.
- **Structures** gauges the technological, scientific and economic foundations that support social development.

The Positive Peace Index uses 24 indicators of socio-economic development produced by reputable sources of publicly available data. The data for the indicators covers 163 nations worldwide, corresponding to 99.7 percent of the global population. These statistical indicators are selected for having high correlations with actual peace as measured by the GPI internal peace score.

Each indicator is allocated to a Pillar and a domain according to the nature of the information it conveys. The indicators are harmonized in their directionality, meaning scores close to 5 indicate less socioeconomic resilience and scores close to 1 indicate more socioeconomic resilience. A more detailed discussion of the indicators, concepts, methodology and results of the PPI can be found in the 2024 Positive Peace Report.

### MEASURING POSITIVE PEACE IN MEXICO

This section assesses the state of Positive Peace in Mexico in two different, but complementary ways. The first – presented in the sub-section ‘Positive Peace in Mexico’ – is an assessment of Mexico's strength globally in Positive Peace. This approach uses data and insight derived from the Positive Peace Index and allows for comparisons with neighbors or other comparable countries.<sup>1</sup> The objective of comparing and ranking countries is to give policymakers insight into which socio-economic trends, developments and initiatives have been effective in creating and supporting peaceful societies around the world.

The second approach is the development of a sub-national Positive Peace Index for Mexico – presented in the sub-section “Positive Peace by State”. The sub-national Positive Peace Index uses Mexico-specific data, produced by the national statistical agency and third-party sources, to assess the level of Positive Peace in each of Mexico's 32 states.

It is currently not possible to replicate the 24 indicators of the global Positive Peace Index at the sub-national level in Mexico (see Section 4: Methodology). For the sub-national analysis section, data has therefore been obtained from various statistical sources and selected based on their statistical relationships with the MPI and their ability to, as closely as possible, capture elements of the eight Pillars of Peace.



# Positive Peace in Mexico: Results from the Global Positive Peace Index

Positive Peace has deteriorated by 2.4 percent in Mexico since 2015. This means that the country has become less socially and economically resilient than in the early 2010s, both in absolute terms and relative to neighboring countries.<sup>2</sup>

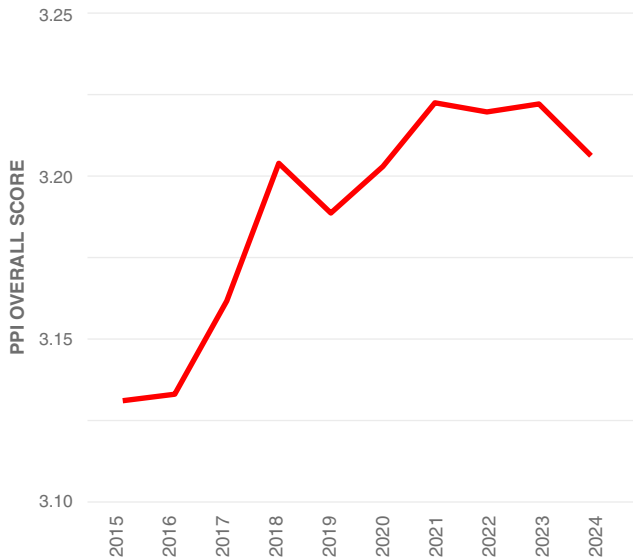
As shown in Table 3.1, in 2024, Mexico ranked 77<sup>th</sup> out of the 163 countries assessed in the PPI. This is eight places lower than its position in 2015. Over the past decade, Mexico's rank in Positive Peace dropped from fifth to sixth out of the 12 countries in the Central America and the Caribbean region.

### TRENDS IN POSITIVE PEACE

Mexico's deterioration in Positive Peace has increased since 2016 (Figure 3.3). This deterioration was driven by worsening scores for the *Institutions* domain, which measures the effectiveness of administrative organizations, and the *Attitudes* domain, which captures how citizens and social groups interrelate (Figure 3.4).

FIGURE 3.3  
**Overall Positive Peace score in Mexico, 2015–2024**

Over the past decade, Mexico's national Positive Peace score deteriorated by 2.4 percent. A higher score represents a lower level of Positive Peace.



Source: IEP

TABLE 3.1  
**Positive Peace Index – Central America and the Caribbean rankings, 2024**  
Mexico ranked sixth in Positive Peace in the Central America and the Caribbean region.

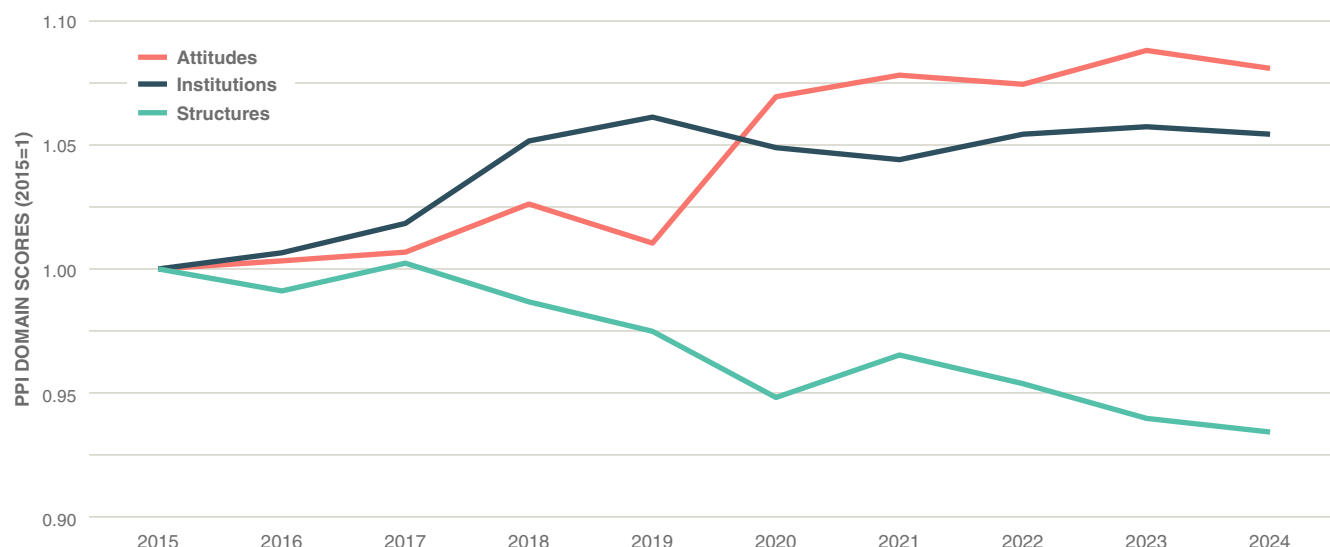
Country	Status in 2024				Change in Score 2015–2024
	Regional Rank	Global Rank	Score in 2024	Positive Peace Category	
Costa Rica	1	38	2.37	Very High	-0.2%
Jamaica	2	45	2.69	High	-5.8%
Trinidad and Tobago	3	48	2.70	High	-3.7%
Panama	4	54	2.85	High	0.7%
Dominican Republic	5	68	3.12	High	-4.9%
Mexico	6	77	3.21	High	2.4%
El Salvador	7	90	3.38	Medium	6.3%
Cuba	8	92	3.39	Medium	-2.5%
Honduras	9	105	3.54	Medium	0.7%
Nicaragua	10	120	3.72	Medium	9.0%
Guatemala	11	127	3.79	Low	5.0%
Haiti	12	145	4.08	Low	2.2%
Regional Average	-	-	3.24	-	0.8%

Source: IEP

FIGURE 3.4

### Positive Peace domain scores in Mexico, 2015–2024

In the last decade, progress in the *Structures* domain was offset by steep deteriorations in the *Institutions* and *Attitudes* domains. Higher scores represent lower levels of Positive Peace.



Source: IEP

Mexico's deterioration in Positive Peace over the past decade was driven by sharp movements in three indicators within the *Attitudes* domain: a 33.3 percent deterioration in *law to support the rights of population segments* – which measures the adoption and enforcement of laws that support equal treatment across various social, political, ethnic and economic groups within a country – a 22.7 percent deterioration in the *quality of information* disseminated by the government domestically, and a 12.4 percent deterioration in *factionalized elites*. These indicators reflect several developments that have taken place in Mexico.

The 5.4 percent deterioration over the 2015 to 2024 period in Mexico's *Institutions* domain was heavily influenced by worsening scores in the *government openness and transparency*, *regulatory quality* and *rule of law* indicators, which declined by 50, 19.4 and 13.3 percent, respectively.

Finally, the *Structures* domain improved almost uninterruptedly over the past decade, by 6.6 percent in total. Though the domain experienced some losses between 2020 and 2021 – primarily due to a sharp COVID-19-related decline in the *healthy life expectancy* indicator – it successfully recovered in the subsequent years.

### POSITIVE PEACE PILLARS

Since 2015, the Pillar with the largest improvement in Mexico was *Equitable Distribution of Resources* (Figure 3.5). It was primarily driven by gains in *education and income inequality* and *inequality-adjusted life expectancy* indicators, as a result of increased social spending that reduced the levels of poverty and inequality in the country. These indicators improved by 16.9 percent and 7.3 percent, respectively, over the past decade (Figure 3.6). Government programs such as *Prospera*, *Pensión para Adultos Mayores* and *Proagro* have contributed to a reduction in poverty in urban and rural areas. The World Bank

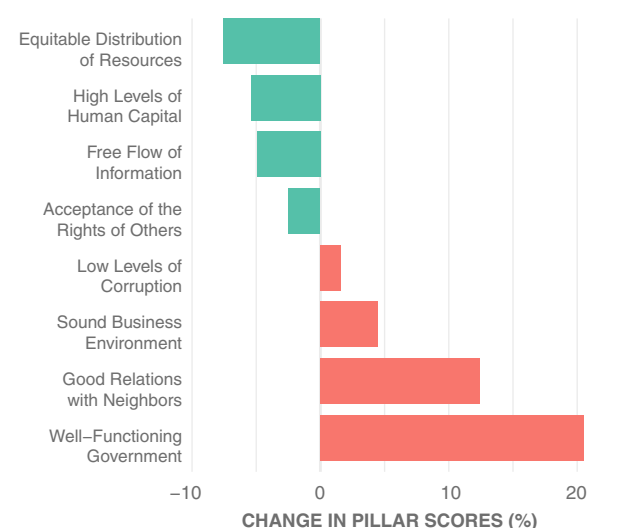
estimates that Mexico's poverty rate – the number of persons living on US\$3.65 per day or less – fell from 18 percent of the population in 2005 to five percent in 2022.<sup>3</sup>

The *High Levels of Human Capital* Pillar improved by 5.4 percent between 2015 and 2024, primarily driven by substantial improvement in *youth not in employment, education or training*. The percentage of young people not engaged in work, education or training fell from 20.3 percent in 2015 to 16.4

FIGURE 3.5

### Positive Peace changes by Pillar, Mexico, 2015–2024

There was substantial improvement in the *Equitable Distribution of Resources* Pillar, while *Well-Functioning Government*, *Good Relations with Neighbors* and *Sound Business Environment* had the largest deteriorations.



Source: IEP

percent in 2024. This is noteworthy progress, given that the global average rate only slightly improved in the same period.

*Free Flow of Information* improved by 4.9 percent as a result of the substantial gains in the *telecom infrastructure* indicator. However, a substantial part of this improvement was offset by steep deteriorations in the *quality of information* disseminated by the authorities domestically and *freedom of the press*, the other two indicators in the *Free Flow of Information* Pillar.

The rise in disinformation has been a global phenomenon, with an average of 56 percent of people around the world reporting concern about the legitimacy of the news they encounter on the internet. However, in Mexico, levels of concern about fake news are slightly higher than the global average, with 60 percent of people reporting concern.<sup>4</sup> The *quality of information* indicator deteriorated by 21 percent in the past decade, and *freedom of the press* declined by 13.2 percent (Figure 3.6). Mexico has

experienced its most violent period for journalists in the past six years, with at least 44 murders, five disappearances, and 3,200 recorded attacks.<sup>5</sup> The lack of government action to curb violence and impunity has not only endangered journalists but also eroded press freedom, weakened democracy and created zones of silence where fear stifles reporting.

The *Acceptance of the Rights of Others* Pillar recorded gains in the 2015 to 2024 period. The Pillar improved by 2.5 percent on the back of efforts to reduce gender disparities. Mexico made continuous progress in supporting women's rights, especially in political representation at the federal level. Gender quota laws have helped create gender parity in Mexico's national legislature. As of 2024, women occupy 50 percent of the seats in the country's Senate and just over 50 percent of the seats in its Chamber of Deputies.<sup>6</sup> In 2024, the country elected its first female president.

FIGURE 3.6

### Positive Peace changes by indicator, Mexico, 2015–2024

Positive Peace in Mexico has benefitted from improvements in *telecom infrastructure* among the population. However, it was more than offset by deteriorations in several other indicators, including *government openness* and *law supporting equal treatment of population segments*.



Source: IEP

The *Low Levels of Corruption* Pillar fell 1.6 percent over the past decade, with two of the three indicators in this Pillar, *control of corruption* and *factionalized elites* deteriorating. In Mexico, corruption is strongly linked with organized crime and drug trafficking, as cartels often use the official economy to launder money and bribe authorities to facilitate that process. Since 2015, the national organized crime rate has increased by 59.1 percent. Contributing to high levels of crime and corruption, impunity is common across the country, reducing the probability of criminals getting caught and increasing their incentives to commit offenses. According to *Impunidad Cero*, since 2016, about 93 percent of homicides in Mexico have gone unsolved.<sup>7</sup>

Corruption also affects individuals in Mexico. Acts of petty corruption experienced by ordinary citizens have increased in recent years. The proportion of people reporting such acts in their contact with public servants rose from 12.1 percent in 2013 to a high of 15.7 percent in 2019, before falling slightly to 14.7 percent in 2021 and to 14 percent as of 2023.<sup>8</sup> However, recent surveys indicate that around 86 percent of Mexican citizens report that acts of corruption are commonplace in interactions with the government, and approximately 80 percent of public contracts are still granted without going through a tendering process.<sup>9</sup>

The *Sound Business Environment* Pillar also deteriorated in the 2015 to 2024 period. Although the *financial institution index* indicator slightly improved, it was outweighed by substantial losses in the *regulatory quality* indicator, which deteriorated by almost 20 percent.

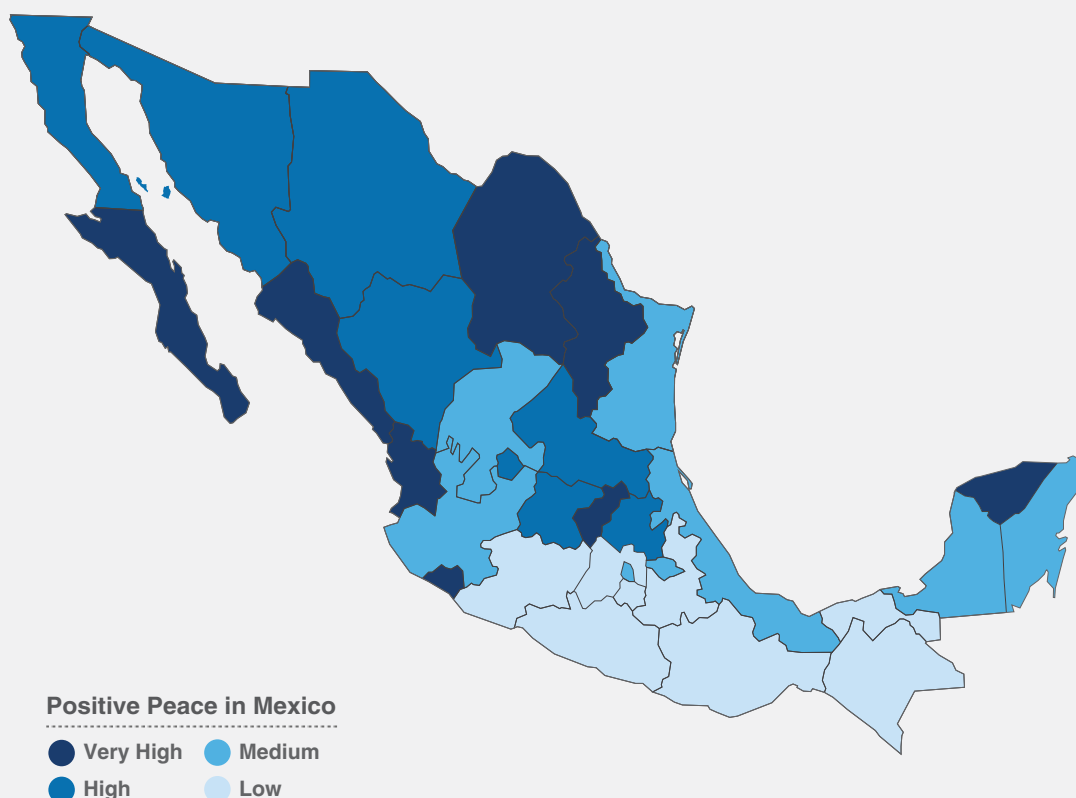
*Good Relations with Neighbors* deteriorated noticeably, driven by the poor result of the *law to support equal treatment of population segments* indicator. This result in part reflects the heightened tensions between some Mexican residents and the refugees and international migrants passing through the country on their way to the United States.<sup>10</sup>

*Well-Functioning Government* recorded the steepest deterioration of all Pillars, registering a 20.5 percent change since 2015. All three indicators of this Pillar deteriorated in the period, with *government openness and transparency* and *rule of law* deteriorating by 50 percent and 13.2 percent, respectively. There was also a 12.6 percent decline in the *government effectiveness* indicator. Since 2006, Mexico has employed its military to combat drug trafficking and organized crime. While this added resources and personnel to the effort, it has also meant that the military has taken on responsibilities that were previously managed by civilian agencies. In this shift, there have been many reports of infringements of human rights.<sup>11</sup> Between 2018 and 2021, the number of complaints regarding alleged abuses by the military received by Mexico's National Human Rights Commission / *Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos* (CNDH) steadily increased, reaching its peak of 941 complaints in 2021.<sup>12</sup>



## Positive Peace by State: The Mexico Positive Peace Index

The Mexico Positive Peace Index (MPPI) is calculated using an adapted version of the global Positive Peace Index (PPI) methodology. It uses state-level economic, governance, social and attitudinal data sourced primarily from Mexican government statistics and national surveys, along with several other sources, including the Mexico Democratic Development Index / *Índice de Desarrollo Democrático de México* (IDD-Mex), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Article 19, *Impunidad Cero*, and the State Competitiveness Index / *Índice de Competitividad Estatal* (ICE).



Source: IEP



This section outlines the sub-national Mexico Positive Peace Index (MPPI), which uses state-level statistical indicators of socio-economic development. The MPPI includes 24 indicators grouped along the eight Pillars of Positive Peace (Table 3.2). These sub-national indicators align with the global Positive Peace Index as closely as possible. However, due to specific issues in the Mexican sub-national context as well as some data limitations, some indicators have had to be slightly adapted.

Like the methodology of the global Positive Peace Index, MPPI indicator scores are harmonized, meaning scores close to 5 indicate less socio-economic resilience and scores close to 1 indicate more socio-economic resilience.

The states of Nuevo León, Nayarit, Yucatán, Querétaro and Sinaloa recorded the strongest performance in the MPPI (Figure 3.7). The states of Oaxaca, Puebla, Tabasco, Guerrero and Morelos had the lowest levels of Positive Peace in the country.

TABLE 3.2

### Indicators in the sub-national Mexico Positive Peace Index, 2024

Mexico's sub-national Positive Peace Index was calculated from 24 indicators produced by national and international agencies.

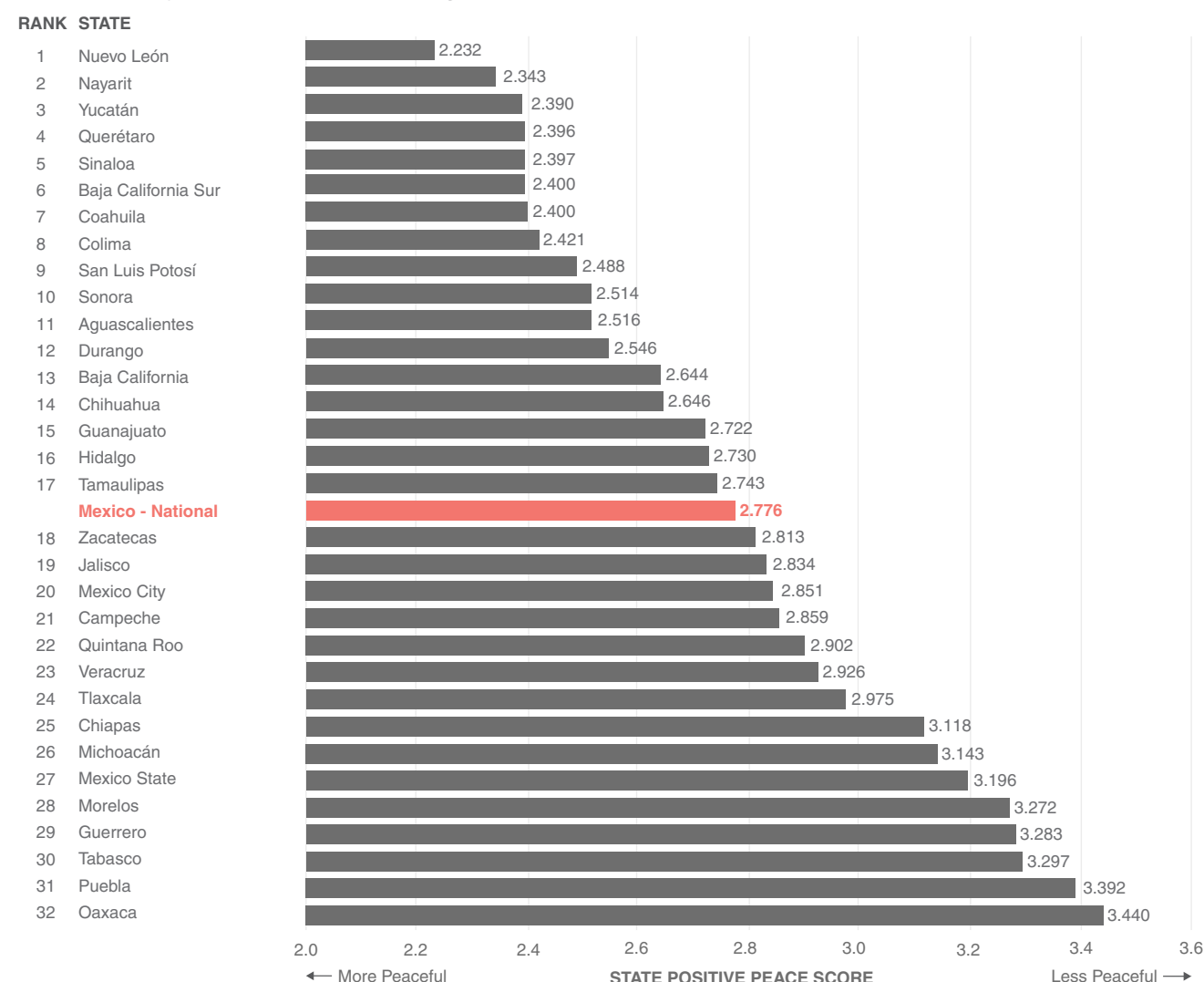
PILLAR	INDICATOR	SOURCE*
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Civil Liberties	IDD-Mex
	Gender Inequality	UNDP HDI-S
	Denial of Rights	ENADIS
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Access to Nutritious and Quality Food	CONEVAL
	Extreme Poverty	CONEVAL
	Inequality	IDD-Mex
Free Flow of Information	Attacks on Journalists	Article 19
	Internet Access	INEGI ENDUTIH
	Proportion of Public Institutions That Have a Website	INEGI CNGSPSPE
Good Relations with Neighbors	Confidence In Neighbors	ENVIPE
	Organized Neighbors to Address Issue of Theft	ENVIPE
	Prevalence of Discrimination	INEGI
High Levels of Human Capital	Access To Health Services	CONEVAL
	Illiteracy Rate	INEGI
	Public Expenditure on Education	IDD-Mex
Low Levels of Corruption	Judicial Corruption	ENVIPE
	Perception of State Government Corruption	ENCIG
	State Government Corruption	ENCIG
Sound Business Environment	Income per capita (2022 pesos)	CONEVAL
	Unemployment Rate	INEGI
	State Competitiveness	ICE
Well-Functioning Government	Trust in state government	ENCIG
	Political Commitment	IDD-Mex
	Homicide Impunity	Impunidad Cero

Note: \*Índice de Desarrollo Democrático de México (IDD-Mex), Subnational Human Development Index (HDI-S), Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social (CONEVAL), Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI), Encuesta Nacional sobre Disponibilidad y Uso de Tecnologías de la Información en los Hogares (ENDUTIH), Censo Nacional de Gobierno, Seguridad Pública y Sistema Penitenciario Estatales (CNGSPSPE), Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción sobre Seguridad Pública (ENVIPE), Encuesta Nacional sobre Discriminación (ENADIS), Encuesta Nacional de Calidad e Impacto Gubernamental (ENCIG), Índice de Competitividad Estatal (ICE).

FIGURE 3.7

**Positive Peace by State, 2024**

Nuevo León, Nayarit and Yucatán have the highest levels of Positive Peace.



Source: IEP

More than half of Mexico's 32 states recorded MPPI scores within one standard deviation (0.35 points) of the national average. This is a relatively high degree of homogeneity and is to be expected in a sub-national analysis since many of the indicators of Positive Peace are influenced by laws and administrative programs implemented nationally. This means developmental successes and failures are more likely connected to state performance.

In addition, within domestic borders, individuals and groups may migrate from one state to another largely unimpeded. The relative freedom of movement of people, resources and capital across state borders also contributes to sub-national Positive Peace indices such as the MPPI being more homogeneous than the global PPI.

This relative uniformity of state-by-state Positive Peace outcomes is one of the reasons the relationship between Positive Peace and negative peace, which is defined as the absence of violence or fear of violence (and measured by the MPI within Mexico), is not as strong at the sub-national level as it is

globally. In the case of Mexico, certain characteristics of violence and conflict further distort the relationship between peace and societal resilience.

**SUB-NATIONAL POSITIVE PEACE AND THE MPI**

Figure 3.8 illustrates the relationships between the Pillars of the MPPI and the indicators of the MPI. The correlations in blue represent factors that are inversely related with violence. That is, in states where these MPPI Pillars are stronger, violence tends to be lower. *Low Levels of Corruption* and *Well-Functioning Government* show direct correlations across almost all types of crime in the MPI. A possible explanation is that corruption and administrative ineffectiveness enable crime and violence through misallocating funds that could otherwise have been dedicated to public security.

Conversely, Positive Peace Pillars such as *Free Flow of Information*, *Acceptance of the Rights of Others* and *Sound Business Environment* show an inverse relationship with crime and violence in Mexico. That is, states that perform well in

these Pillars actually tend to have higher levels of violence. This result may seem counterintuitive, but it likely arises from the fact that organized crime tends to be drawn to areas with greater wealth, and wealthier states tend to perform better across many Positive Peace and human development measures, including health, education, social equity, and higher quality social services.

As such, organized crime distorts the relationship between levels of violence and Positive Peace in Mexico. Among MPI indicators, the organized crime indicator shows by far the strongest negative correlation with the MPPI, correlating negatively with all but two of the MPPI's Pillars: *Well-Functioning Government* and *Good Relations with Neighbors*. States with higher levels of socio-economic resilience, as measured by the MPPI and its Pillars, also have greater markets for drugs and more suitable infrastructure of roads and ports through which criminal organizations may transport illegal substances.

Wealth in Mexico also tends to be disproportionately concentrated in the north of the country, where higher levels of trade and industrialization tied to the economy of the United States have spurred economic growth over decades. The strategic value of border regions for drug trafficking organizations drives up violence and crime in these areas, which in turn drives down peacefulness.

In some circumstances, the presence of organized crime may also facilitate other types of crime. For instance, regions where

drug cartels operate more intensely will also support retail drug crimes, which can be associated with firearms crime. Violent individuals involved in the sale of illicit drugs also be more likely than others to engage in extortion, kidnapping, and other crimes. Dynamics like these further contribute to the lack of correlation between internal security and Positive Peace in Mexico.

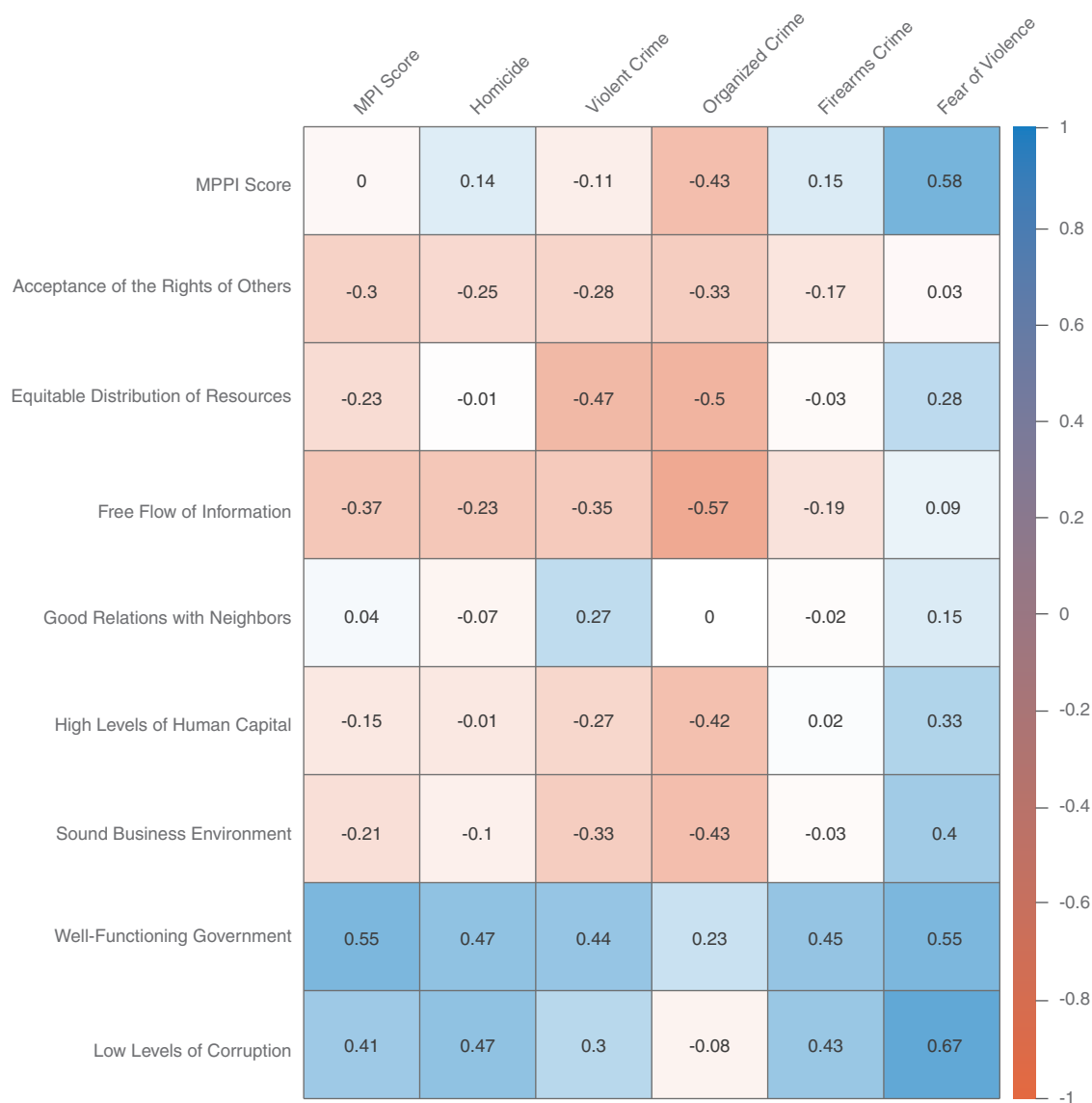
The link between wealth and organized crime has important implications for corruption. A recent study indicates that Mexican police officers are underpaid, and in some cases, severely so, suggesting that low police wages could compel officers to resort to corrupt practices to supplement their income.<sup>13</sup> However, the Positive Peace analysis presented here suggests that strongest levels of correlation between corruption and violence are at the political and judicial level.

Among the MPI indicators, fear of violence, which measures the degree to which citizens perceive the state in which they live to be unsafe, shows by far the highest level of correlation with the MPPI and almost all of its individual Pillars. This is a striking finding, as peacefulness refers not only to the absence of external manifestations of violence but also to people's perceptions that they live in environments that are secure. The fear of violence indicator correlates most strongly with *Low Levels of Corruption* and *Well-Functioning Government*, underscoring the necessity of addressing those issues to bolster citizen confidence about their safety, even when external peace conditions may be degraded.

FIGURE 3.8

**Correlations between Positive Peace Pillars and the MPI indicators**

*Well-Functioning Government* and *Low Levels of Corruption* are associated with lower levels of violence broadly. Improvements in all Positive Peace Pillars exhibit a positive correlation with lower levels of fear of violence.



Source: IEP

# 4 | 2025 Mexico Peace Index Methodology

The Mexico Peace Index (MPI) is based on the concepts and framework of the Global Peace Index (GPI), the leading global measure of peacefulness, produced annually by IEP since 2007. As an internal analysis of a single country, the MPI adapts the GPI methodology for a sub-national application. Both indices measure negative peace - that is, the "absence of violence or fear of violence".

The 2025 edition is the 12<sup>th</sup> iteration of the MPI and uses data published by the Executive Secretary of the National System for Public Security / *Secretariado Ejecutivo de Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública* (SESNSP).

The MPI measures peacefulness at the state level in Mexico. A key reason for choosing this unit of analysis is that Mexico's state governments have wide-ranging autonomous powers, allowing them to have a significant impact on the levels of violence within their states. The response to violence may therefore differ significantly from state to state.

The MPI is composed of five indicators. The homicide and violent crime indicators are based on those used in the IEP's United Kingdom Peace Index (UKPI) and United States Peace Index (USPI), using the US Federal Bureau of Investigation's standard definition of violent crime. The fear of violence indicator in the MPI captures the degree to which citizens feel unsafe in the states in which they reside. The firearms crime indicator represents gun use and availability, using the best available data. This is similar to

the approach used in the USPI. Lastly, the organized crime indicator is specific to Mexico because of the problems the country faces with organized criminal activity.

All crime data used to calculate the MPI comes from government bodies in Mexico. IEP then uses survey data collected by the national statistics office to adjust certain crime figures for underreporting.

## 2025 MPI INDICATORS

### DATA SOURCES

The MPI is composed of the following five indicators, scored between 1 and 5, where 1 represents the most peaceful score and 5 the least peaceful. Population data is used for estimating rates per 100,000 people. The data runs from 2015 to 2024.

#### Homicide

The number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 people.

Source: SESNSP

#### Violent Crime

The number of robbery, sexual assault, and family violence cases and the number of violent assault victims per 100,000 people, adjusted for underreporting. Robbery cases must meet one of two criteria to be included:

- types of robbery that rely on the threat of violence, such as a mugging, or
- robbery incidents where the database indicates violence was used.

Source: SESNSP

#### Organized Crime

The number of extortions, drug trade related crimes, and kidnapping or human trafficking investigations per 100,000 people. Extortion, kidnapping and human trafficking rates are adjusted for underreporting. Drug trade and major organized crime offenses include:

- the federal crimes of production, transport, trafficking, trade, supply, or possession of drugs or other crimes under the Crimes Against Public Health Law / *Los Delitos contra La Salud Pública*
- retail drug crimes, as a proxy indicator of the size of the market fueled by illegal drug production and distribution
- and crimes classed under the Law Against Organized Crime / *La Ley Contra El Crimen Organizada*, which includes all of the above crimes when three or more people conspire to commit them.

Source: SESNSP

#### Firearms Crime

The number of victims of an intentional or negligent homicide or assault committed with a firearm per 100,000 people.

Source: SESNSP

#### Fear of Violence

The percentage of people that perceive the state in which they reside as unsafe.

Source: ENVIPE

#### Population data

The estimated population of each state in each year.

Population data is used to calculate the rate per 100,000 people for homicide, violent crime, organized crime and weapons crime.

Source: National Population Council / Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO)

### UNDERREPORTING

Only about ten percent of crimes in Mexico are reported to the authorities. As such, two of the MPI indicators – violent crime and organized crime – are adjusted for underreporting. IEP uses ENVIPE data to calculate underreporting rates for each state and adjusts the official statistics for robbery, assault, family violence, sexual violence, extortion, and kidnapping and human trafficking to better reflect actual rates of violence. This approach helps to counterbalance the high rates of underreporting in Mexico.

IEP calculated the underreporting rates for each state and crime based on the information from ENVIPE. The survey asks each respondent if they were a victim of a particular type of crime and



whether or not they reported it to the authorities. IEP sourced this data from each victimization survey for the years 2019 to 2024 and took the total number of each crime in each state for the five years. IEP then divided the total numbers of crimes reported by survey respondents by the number of crimes that survey respondents said they reported to the authorities. This produces a multiplier for adjusting the official statistics. The adjustments are made for the crimes of robbery, assault, family violence, sexual violence, extortion, and kidnapping and human trafficking.

The underreporting rates use five years of data because, in some states, there were crimes where none of the victims reported the crime to the authorities. If none of the crimes were reported, the reporting rate of zero percent cannot be used to adjust the police-recorded numbers. Additionally, combining the data over time smooths out any large fluctuations in underreporting rates that may be the result of complex and imperfect surveying

methodologies, rather than a true change in reporting. Reporting rates have not changed significantly in Mexico over the last five years.

### Underreporting rate

**Definition:** Number of crimes reported by victims on the victimization survey divided by the number of those crimes that victims stated they reported to the authorities.

Source: ENVIPE

## INDICATOR SCORE & OVERALL CALCULATIONS

The MPI indicators are scored between 1 and 5, with 5 being the least peaceful score and 1 being the most peaceful score. Banded indicator scores are calculated by normalizing the range of raw values based on each state's average value over the period 2015 to 2024. First, the average value for each state over the nine years of the study is calculated. Then the outliers are removed from the range of average state values in order to identify the min and max of normally distributed average values. Outliers in this case are defined as data points that are more than three standard deviations greater than the mean. Next, the values for each year are normalized using the min and max of the normal range and are banded between 1 and 5. The calculation for banded scores is:

$$\text{Banded score}_x = \left( \frac{\text{raw value}_x - \min_{\text{sample}}}{\max_{\text{sample}} - \min_{\text{sample}}} \times 4 \right) + 1$$

Finally, if any of the banded values are above 5, the state is assigned a score of 5 and if any values are below 1, the state is assigned a score of 1.

There is one additional step used to calculate the organized crime and firearms crime score. In the case of the organized crime indicator, raw values are multiplied by the indicator sub-weights listed in Table 4.2. The sub-weights are used so that the indicator score reflects the more serious societal impact of particular crimes and to correct for the uneven distribution of offenses. In 2024, extortion and retail drug crimes made up 94.5 percent of crimes,

which means that the trend in these offenses would overshadow any changes in kidnapping, human trafficking or major drug crime rates.

Major organized crime offenses, such as drug trafficking and kidnapping and human trafficking have the highest weights in the organized crime score. These crimes reflect more severe acts of violence and provide an indication of the strength and presence of major criminal organizations. Retail drug crimes serve as a proxy indication of the size of the drug market. However, some portion of the retail drug market will represent small individual sellers or reflect personal drug use, both of which are of less concern. Human trafficking and major drug trafficking offenses are more destabilizing to Mexican society because these crimes:

- reflect large revenue sources for criminal organizations
- absorb more human and physical resources into violent, illicit economic activity
- depend upon a greater level of corruption
- indicate the presence of organizations that pose a greater threat to the Mexican state.

In the case of firearms crime, there are also sub-weights for its two sub-indicators. The first sub-indicator, assault with a firearm, is weighted twice as heavily as the second, homicide with a firearm. This sub-weighting is applied to reduce the effects of double-counting with the homicide indicator, as the majority of homicides in Mexico are committed with guns.

After the score for each indicator has been calculated, weights are applied to each of the five indicators in order to calculate the overall MPI score. The overall score is calculated by multiplying each indicator score by its index weight and then summing the weighted indicator scores.

There are many methods for choosing the weights to be applied to a composite index. In order to maintain consistency across IEP’s various peace indices, the weights in the MPI mirror those used in the GPI, USPI and UKPI as closely as possible.

The weights for the GPI indicators were agreed upon by an international panel of independent peace and conflict experts and are based on a consensus view of their relative importance. To complement this approach and reflect the local context of Mexico, a second expert panel was formed consisting of leading Mexican academics and researchers to determine the final weights for the five indicators in the MPI. With direction from the expert panel at

the time of the design of the index, a number of different methods, such as equal weighting, principal component analysis and analytical hierarchical processing, were used to test the robustness of the results. The final weights as determined by the IEP research team and the expert panel are shown in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1  
Indicator weights in the MPI

Indicator	% of index
Homicide	30%
Violent Crime	22%
Organized Crime	22%
Firearms Crime	16%
Fear of Violence	10%

TABLE 4.2  
Composition of the MPI organized crime score

MPI indicator	Description	Weight as % of overall MPI score	Indicator sub-type	Variables included	Sub-weight relative to other crimes in the indicator
Organized crime	Extortions, kidnappings and cases of human trafficking, and narcotics crimes per 100,000 people	22%	Extortion (adjusted for underreporting)	Extortion	3
			Kidnapping & human trafficking (adjusted for underreporting)	Kidnapping	5
				Human trafficking	
				Trafficking of minors	
			Retail drug crimes	Possession, commerce and supply in small amounts	1
			Major organized crime offenses	Violations of the law prohibiting crimes against public health, which criminalizes drug trafficking	20
				Violations of the organized crime law, which criminalizes organized crime related offenses committed by three or more people	

Source: IEP



## Methodology for Calculating the Economic Impact of Violence

The economic impact of violence is defined as the expenditure and economic activity related to "containing, preventing and dealing with the consequences of violence." The **economic impact of violence** refers to the total cost (direct and indirect) of violence plus an economic peace multiplier. The **economic cost of violence** refers to the direct and indirect costs of violence.

IEP's estimate of the economic impact of violence includes three components:

1. **Direct costs** are the costs of crime or violence to the victim, the perpetrator and the government, including those associated with policing, medical expenses, funerals or incarceration.
2. **Indirect costs** accrue after the fact. These include physical and psychological trauma and the present value of future costs associated with the violent incident, such as the consequential lost future income. There is also a measure of the impact of fear on the economy, as people who fear that they may become a victim of violent crime alter their behavior.
3. The **multiplier effect** is a commonly used economic concept that describes the extent to which additional expenditure has flow-on impacts in the wider economy. Injections of new income into the economy will lead to more spending, which will in turn create employment, further income and encourage additional spending, thereby increasing GDP. This mutually reinforcing economic cycle explains the "multiplier effect," and why a dollar of expenditure can create more than a dollar of economic activity. The multiplier effect calculates the additional economic activity that would have accrued if the direct costs of violence had been avoided. Refer to Box 4.1 for more detail on the multiplier.

### CATEGORIES AND INDICATORS INCLUDED IN THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF VIOLENCE

1. **Violence containment expenditure** refers to the direct and indirect costs associated with preventing or dealing with the consequences of violence. This includes government spending on domestic security, the justice system, and the military and national security.
2. **Protection Costs** refers to the personal and business expenses from the National Survey of Business Victimization (ENVE) and the National Survey of Victimization and Perception of Public Security (ENVIPE) surveys.

3. **Interpersonal Violence** refers to the direct and indirect costs associated with homicide, violent crimes and the fear of victimization.

This study uses a cost accounting methodology to measure the economic impact of violence. Expenditures on containing violence are totaled and unit costs are applied to the MPI estimates for the number of crimes committed. A unit cost is also applied to the estimated level of fear of insecurity. The unit costs estimate the direct (tangible) and indirect (intangible) costs of each crime. Direct unit costs include losses to the victim and perpetrator and exclude costs incurred by law enforcement and health care systems, as these are captured elsewhere in the model. The direct costs for violent crime are obtained from household and business surveys undertaken by the Mexican statistical office, which assesses economic and health costs to the victim of a crime.

Indirect unit costs include the physical and psychological trauma and the present value of future costs associated with the violent incident, such as lost lifetime wages for homicide victims.

The cost estimates provided in this report are in constant 2024 pesos, which facilitates the comparison of the estimates over time. The estimate only includes elements of violence in which reliable data could be obtained. As such, the estimate can be considered conservative. The items listed below are included in the cost of violence methodology:

1. Homicide
2. Violent crime, which includes assault, violence within the family, sexual violence, firearms and robbery
3. Indirect costs of incarceration
4. Fear of insecurity
5. Protections costs, including private security
6. Federal spending on violence containment, which includes the military, domestic security and the justice system
7. Medical costs

The economic impact of violence excludes:

- State level and municipal public spending on security
- The cost of drug trade related crimes such as the production, possession, transport and supply of drugs
- Population displacement due to violence

Although data is available for some of these categories, it is either not fully available for all states or for each year of analysis.

## BOX 4.1

**The multiplier effect**

The multiplier effect is a commonly used economic concept, which describes the extent to which additional expenditure improves the wider economy. Injections of new income into the economy will lead to more spending, which in turn creates employment, further income and additional spending. This mutually reinforcing economic cycle is known as the “multiplier effect” and is the reason that a peso of expenditure can create more than one peso of economic activity.

Although the exact magnitude of this effect is difficult to measure, it is likely to be particularly high in the case of expenditure related to containing violence. For instance, if a community were to become more peaceful, individuals and corporations would spend less time and resources protecting themselves against violence. Due to this decrease in violence, there would likely be substantial flow-on effects for the wider economy, as money is diverted towards more productive areas such as health, business investment, education and infrastructure.

The potential economic benefits from increased peace can be significant. When a homicide is avoided, the direct costs, such as the money spent on medical treatment and a funeral, can be spent elsewhere. The economy also benefits from the victim's lifetime income and expenditure. More generally, there is strong evidence to suggest that violence and the fear of violence can fundamentally alter the incentives for business. For example, Brauer and Marlin (2009) argue that violence or the fear of violence may result in some economic activities not occurring at all. Their analysis of 730 business ventures in Colombia from 1997 to 2001 found that amidst higher levels of violence, new ventures were less likely to survive and profit. Consequently, with greater levels of violence, it is likely that employment rates and economic productivity will fall long-term, due to the disincentives around job creation and long-term investments.

This study assumes that the multiplier is one, signifying that for every peso saved on violence containment, there will be an additional peso of economic activity. This is a relatively conservative multiplier and broadly in line with similar studies.

**ESTIMATION METHODS**

A combination of approaches are used to estimate the economic cost of violence to Mexico's economy. The analysis involved two components:

1. Financial information detailing the level of expenditure on items associated with violence was used wherever possible.
2. Unit costs were used to estimate the cost of violent activities. Specifically, an estimate of the economic cost of a violent act was sourced from the literature and applied to the total number of times such an event occurred to provide an estimate of the total cost of categories of violence. The MPI data are used for the number of homicides, sexual assaults, violent assaults and robberies.

IEP uses federal government expenditure data for military and national security, domestic security and the justice system as federal government violence containment costs. Data are sourced from the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit / *Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público* (SHCP). State and municipal level spending are excluded from the study due to data unavailability.

The federal government expenditure data does not provide details of the spending at the state level. Therefore, a combination of state population size and the state funding allocation from the Public Security Contribution Fund / *Fondo de Aportaciones para la Seguridad Pública* (FASP) is used to estimate the likely distribution between states.

A unit cost approach is used to estimate the economic cost of homicide, violent crime and fear of insecurity. Unit costs for the homicide and violent crimes are based on a study by McCollister

(2010) that estimated the tangible and intangible cost of violent crimes in the United States. The McCollister (2010) direct and indirect costs are applied to the number of homicides to calculate the total cost of homicide. Only the McCollister (2010) intangible (indirect) costs are applied to violent crime. The direct costs of violent crime are taken from the nationally representative victimization surveys (ENVIPE and ENVE) administered by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI). Both surveys collect data on economic and health-related direct costs due to violent crime.

1. Direct costs or tangible costs of crime include medical expenses, cash losses, property theft or damage, and productivity losses.
2. Indirect costs include physical and psychological trauma as well as long-term costs due to a violent incident.

In addition to the breakdown by tangible and intangible costs, McCollister (2010) offers further details of the costs by victim, perpetrator and justice system. Such itemization enables IEP to exclude the justice system costs to avoid double counting with expenditure data used for the justice system and domestic security.

IEP also uses Dolan & Peasgood's (2006) estimate of the unit cost of fear of crime to calculate the cost of perceptions of insecurity in Mexico.

The equivalent cost in Mexico was then calculated based on purchasing power adjusted GDP per capita in PPP constant 2021 international dollars of \$20,987 for Mexico as compared to \$60,798 for the United States in 2008, the year for which the unit costs were estimated. This is called the adjusted unit cost.

All the costs are adjusted to constant 2024 pesos using GDP deflator data from the World Bank. The base year of 2024 was chosen because it is the most recent year for which GDP deflator data was available. Estimating the economic impact in constant prices facilitates comparisons over time.

Any GDP-related analysis uses the most recently available GDP data from INEGI.

### **CALCULATING THE COST OF HOMICIDE AND VIOLENT CRIME**

To calculate the cost for the categories of crime used in this study, IEP uses the data from the MPI.

Data on the incidence of homicide is sourced from the SESNSP. Homicides are multiplied by adjusted unit costs to calculate the total cost of homicide in Mexico.

Violent crime, which includes incidents of sexual violence, robbery and assault, are also sourced from SESNSP and are adjusted for underreporting. The economic costs of each category of violent crime are calculated using the respective adjusted unit costs.

The direct costs for violent and organized crime are sourced from ENVIPE, a national household survey of victimization and perception of public safety and ENVE, a national survey of business victimization. These surveys collect data on the economic and health-related losses to the victim of violent and organized crime.

### **COST OF FEAR OF INSECURITY**

ENVIPE data are used to estimate the perception of insecurity at the state level in Mexico. IEP uses the proportion of respondents who felt insecure, multiplied by the state's population to arrive at the number of people who reported a fear of insecurity. Victimization survey estimates are conducted yearly and are available from 2011 to 2024. Therefore, IEP estimates the fear of insecurity for the years for which data is not available. The unit cost of fear is taken from Dolan and Peasgood (2006), from which the adjusted unit cost is derived.

### **PROTECTION COSTS**

Protection costs represent spending by households and businesses on measures that reduces victimization from violent and organized crime. Both households and businesses take measures such as hiring private security, purchasing firearms or insurance, installing alarms, locks and changing place of residence or business to protect themselves in the face of high levels of crime and violence. This category replaces private security expenditure and the cost of firearms.

Data for protection costs are sourced from INEGI, both for households and businesses. INEGI provides state level summaries of protection costs developed from the ENVIPE (household survey) and ENVE (business survey).

### **CALCULATING THE INDIRECT COST OF INCARCERATION**

The direct cost of incarceration is included in the government expenditure on domestic security and the justice system. Therefore, IEP only includes the indirect cost of incarceration, which is the lost income due to imprisonment. This is calculated using the Mexican minimum wage and the number of inmates that would have been in full-time employment. Data on the minimum wage for Mexico are sourced from the Department of Labor and Social Welfare (*Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social*, STPS). For 2024, the minimum wage of 249 pesos per day is used. This is calculated for a yearly wage of 89,615 pesos. Literature suggests that 60 percent of people who were sentenced to prison had full-time employment prior to being in prison and 20 percent of them have some employment inside prison. Based on this, IEP considers that only 50 percent of the inmates would have been in full-time employment, which is conservative. The minimum wage lost is calculated for 50 percent of the prison population in Mexico.

### **ECONOMIC IMPACT OF VIOLENCE CONTAINMENT**

To estimate the total economic impact of violence, IEP uses a peace multiplier to estimate the additional economic activity that would have resulted if violence was avoided. The conceptual underpinning of the multiplier is the opportunity cost of the resources lost by the victim, perpetrator, and the law enforcement agencies due to the crime. Therefore, the peace multiplier represents the flow-on effects of redirected expenditure from violence containment to more economically enabling activities, such as business investment or education.





# Positive Peace Methodology

Positive Peace is defined as the *attitudes, institutions and structures* that create and sustain peaceful societies. IEP has measured Positive Peace at both the state and national levels in Mexico. The subnational Mexico Positive Peace Index (MPPI) is based on the methodology for the global PPI, described in full in the 2024 Positive Peace Report, available at [www.visionofhumanity.org](http://www.visionofhumanity.org).

## MEXICO POSITIVE PEACE INDEX

The methodology for measuring Positive Peace at the state level is the same as that for the global index, but the indicators in the sub-national MPPI differ slightly for two reasons:

- Sub-national data on Positive Peace is limited
- Considerations specific to the Mexican context require some changes in indicators.

The sub-national MPPI was derived from a different set of indicators using information sourced from reputable Mexican and international sources (Table 4.3). Due to the frequency of data releases for some sources, the sub-national index is updated every two years.

Correlations between sub-national MPPI indicators and negative peace are relatively low. For this reason, all indicators were

weighted equally in building the Pillars and the overall score. Correlations are low presumably because most policies influencing socio-economic outcomes are set up at the national rather than state level. Thus sub-national data may be more prone to statistical noise. That is, variations in the measurement statistic that reflect mostly methodological issues and data-gathering limitations rather than actual differences in the underlying social phenomenon being measured.

Further, in some countries – and this appears to be the case in Mexico – the states or regions with the highest standards of living are sometimes those with greater urbanization and interpersonal violence. In addition, Mexican states with higher levels of socio-economic resilience are typically those where criminal organizations are more active since they have more suitable infrastructure of roads and ports through which criminal organizations may transport illegal substances.

## CALCULATING STATE SCORES

The process for calculating state Positive Peace scores is similar to that described for calculating the MPI, but all indicators in the MPPI are evenly weighted. Thus, the indicators are normalized and banded, and then the arithmetic mean of indicator score is calculated as the score for each Pillar. The arithmetic mean of the Pillar scores is used for each state's overall score.

TABLE 4.3  
Indicators in the sub-national Mexico Positive Peace Index

Pillar	Indicator name	Source*	Correlation coefficient (to the MPI)
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Civil Liberties	IDD-Mex	0.06
	Gender Inequality	UNDP HDI-S	-0.40
	Denial of Rights	ENADIS	-0.16
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Access to Nutritious and Quality Food	CONEVAL	-0.25
	Extreme Poverty	CONEVAL	-0.31
	Inequality	IDD-Mex	-0.03
Free Flow of Information	Attacks on Journalists	Article 19	-0.16
	Internet Access	INEGI ENDUTIH	-0.42
	Proportion of Public Institutions That Have a Website	INEGI CNGSPSPE	-0.07

Good Relations with Neighbors	Confidence In Neighbors	ENVIPE	0.01
	Organized Neighbors to Address Issue of Theft	ENVIPE	0.25
	Prevalence of Discrimination	INEGI	-0.20
High Levels of Human Capital	Access To Health Services	CONEVAL	-0.25
	Illiteracy Rate	INEGI	-0.24
	Public Expenditure on Education	IDD-Mex	0.28
Low Levels of Corruption	Judicial Corruption	ENVIPE	-0.14
	Perception of State Government Corruption	ENCIG	0.52
	State Government Corruption	ENCIG	0.48
Sound Business Environment	Income per capita (2022 pesos)	CONEVAL	-0.34
	Unemployment Rate	INEGI	-0.04
	State Competitiveness	ICE	0.03
Well-Functioning Government	Trust in state government	ENCIG	0.47
	Political Commitment	IDD-Mex	0.17
	Homicide Impunity	Impunidad Cero	0.46

Sources: \*Índice de Desarrollo Democrático de México (IDD-Mex), Sub-national Human Development Index (HDI-S), Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social (CONEVAL), Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI), Encuesta Nacional sobre Disponibilidad y Uso de Tecnologías de la Información en los Hogares (ENDUTIH), Censo Nacional de Gobierno, Seguridad Pública y Sistema Penitenciario Estatales (CNGSPSE), Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción sobre Seguridad Pública (ENVIPE), Censo Nacional de Gobierno (CNG), Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública (SESNSP).

Appendices

# Results Tables

TABLE A

**Overall scores, 2015–2024**

A lower score indicates a higher level of peacefulness.

STATE	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
AGUASCALIENTES	1.934	1.826	2.178	2.381	2.432	2.334	2.170	2.267	2.360	2.440
BAJA CALIFORNIA	3.348	3.347	4.258	4.500	4.625	4.504	4.452	4.464	4.459	4.134
BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR	2.983	3.578	4.635	3.435	3.065	2.893	2.858	2.913	2.850	2.951
CAMPECHE	1.621	1.606	1.595	1.618	2.047	1.675	1.829	2.375	2.427	2.142
CHIAPAS	1.999	1.942	1.983	2.097	1.985	1.816	1.810	1.743	1.737	1.936
CHIHUAHUA	2.904	3.122	3.676	3.806	4.092	4.057	3.940	3.470	3.614	3.584
COAHUILA	2.666	2.062	2.093	2.266	2.311	2.208	2.198	2.180	2.112	2.113
COLIMA	2.402	3.783	4.050	4.244	4.499	4.463	4.335	4.789	4.742	4.736
DURANGO	2.419	2.337	2.407	2.339	2.385	2.248	2.270	2.136	1.950	1.848
GUANAJUATO	2.419	2.461	2.820	3.676	3.836	4.016	4.087	4.109	4.150	4.303
GUERRERO	3.762	4.098	4.056	4.116	3.856	3.382	3.240	3.290	3.321	3.328
HIDALGO	1.725	1.799	2.010	2.181	2.383	2.220	2.156	2.245	2.323	2.190
JALISCO	2.609	2.650	2.869	3.202	3.203	3.071	2.960	2.850	2.796	2.694
MEXICO CITY	2.694	2.727	2.937	3.378	3.432	2.877	2.849	2.714	2.719	2.714
MEXICO STATE	3.147	2.865	3.071	3.178	3.375	3.433	3.473	3.614	3.520	3.359
MICHOACÁN	2.480	2.677	2.870	3.037	3.270	3.350	3.488	3.312	3.019	2.934
MORELOS	3.195	3.261	3.132	3.234	3.717	3.484	3.746	3.810	4.224	4.302
NAYARIT	1.818	1.511	2.201	2.506	1.958	1.842	1.900	2.015	2.134	2.095
NUEVO LEÓN	2.573	2.799	2.841	2.835	2.923	2.804	3.014	3.411	3.517	3.538
OAXACA	1.665	2.367	2.510	2.857	2.793	2.611	2.536	2.618	2.626	2.536
PUEBLA	2.217	2.036	2.256	2.519	2.698	2.402	2.358	2.389	2.409	2.391
QUERÉTARO	1.883	1.991	2.150	2.408	2.735	2.704	2.675	2.706	2.673	2.701
QUINTANA ROO	2.660	2.220	2.872	3.806	4.237	3.674	3.527	3.519	3.713	3.750
SAN LUIS POTOSÍ	2.060	2.289	2.609	2.711	2.892	3.216	3.082	2.817	2.871	2.887
SINALOA	3.561	3.297	3.640	3.266	2.981	2.866	2.757	2.620	2.845	3.245
SONORA	2.861	3.099	2.804	2.604	3.199	3.550	3.979	3.572	3.333	3.267
TABASCO	2.812	2.861	3.179	3.603	3.501	2.956	2.699	2.508	2.331	3.122
TAMAULIPAS	3.219	3.167	3.493	3.293	2.851	2.645	2.522	2.396	2.447	2.359
TLAXCALA	1.589	1.579	1.698	1.767	1.774	1.706	1.626	1.658	1.617	1.656
VERACRUZ	1.811	2.124	2.636	2.541	2.795	2.571	2.501	2.433	2.429	2.405
YUCATÁN	1.573	1.549	1.442	1.353	1.362	1.265	1.269	1.295	1.326	1.265
ZACATECAS	2.584	2.929	3.558	3.759	3.767	4.442	4.563	4.587	3.770	2.921
<b>NATIONAL</b>	<b>2.591</b>	<b>2.602</b>	<b>2.867</b>	<b>3.054</b>	<b>3.140</b>	<b>3.024</b>	<b>3.010</b>	<b>3.000</b>	<b>2.960</b>	<b>2.938</b>

Source: IEP

TABLE B

**The economic impact of violence, 2015–2024, billions of constant 2024 pesos**

STATE	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
AGUASCALIENTES	28	27	31	35	38	36	37	37	38	42
BAJA CALIFORNIA	142	157	213	256	241	238	246	234	220	218
BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR	33	42	70	37	36	34	35	37	36	44
CAMPECHE	18	21	19	21	23	22	26	35	35	32
CHIAPAS	108	109	109	118	110	95	101	94	98	118
CHIHUAHUA	125	140	173	186	212	214	209	181	189	193
COAHUILA	70	64	63	65	63	57	55	55	55	62
COLIMA	23	51	66	62	65	60	55	75	76	75
DURANGO	48	50	47	44	42	41	44	42	37	37
GUANAJUATO	148	161	181	295	320	367	307	294	291	303
GUERRERO	173	188	201	197	163	131	130	130	147	155
HIDALGO	50	54	63	70	76	70	68	72	70	70
JALISCO	187	224	261	300	315	297	283	278	270	271
MEXICO CITY	234	247	274	342	354	341	343	280	260	255
MEXICO STATE	631	555	619	632	649	609	619	650	630	627
MICHOACÁN	120	147	152	164	195	215	232	213	175	167
MORELOS	88	97	92	100	113	107	122	124	142	147
NAYARIT	26	20	35	39	31	32	35	37	41	46
NUEVO LEÓN	137	156	150	163	166	169	192	222	219	228
OAXACA	54	116	120	140	142	124	116	125	122	122
PUEBLA	134	134	152	184	203	176	172	170	169	184
QUERÉTARO	52	54	58	65	76	84	79	72	75	82
QUINTANA ROO	66	50	63	93	113	105	124	129	134	130
SAN LUIS POTOSÍ	55	63	76	77	79	91	95	90	84	82
SINALOA	109	114	137	113	102	95	89	84	90	122
SONORA	91	110	103	105	136	154	180	165	145	150
TABASCO	77	81	87	103	107	90	78	67	60	101
TAMAULIPAS	118	119	130	126	112	96	95	82	84	84
TLAXCALA	24	23	24	27	29	25	26	26	24	30
VERACRUZ	133	178	243	230	256	224	219	203	201	207
YUCATÁN	41	41	35	30	27	25	25	24	24	29
ZACATECAS	46	62	67	70	74	96	131	116	96	72
<b>NATIONAL</b>	<b>3,386</b>	<b>3,653</b>	<b>4,116</b>	<b>4,491</b>	<b>4,669</b>	<b>4,519</b>	<b>4,570</b>	<b>4,443</b>	<b>4,337</b>	<b>4,486</b>

Source: IEP



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## SECTION 2: ECONOMIC VALUE OF PEACE

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- 3 Public Security Contribution Fund / *Fondo de Aportaciones para la Seguridad Pública* (FASP).
- 4 Calculated using the Global Peace Index (GPI) economic impact of violence and includes the indicators military expenditure, internal security expenditure and private security expenditure.
- 5 Estimations are based on the IMF and the World Bank's WDI data on Mexico's government expenditures, and GDP.
- 6 Calculated using the 2024 GPI economic impact of violence homicide indicator.
- 7 Fifty-nine billion pesos were spent on science, innovation and technology in 2023.
- 8 Protection costs are the latest costs reported by ENVE.
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### SECTION 3: POSITIVE PEACE

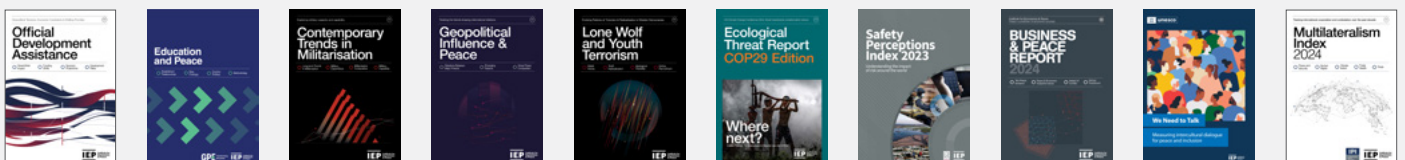
- 1 This data is based on 2025 Positive Peace Index, which has been calculated but not yet released. The 2025 Positive Peace Report will be published later this year.
- 2 Mexico is included in the Central America and the Caribbean region in the global Positive Peace Index based on the regional grouping of the underlying index data sources and because, in terms of peace and security, Mexico has more in common with its Central American neighbors than with the US and Canada, making Central America a more useful analytical category.
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# Our research analyses peace and its economic value.



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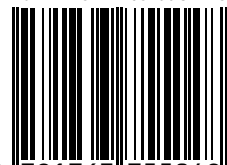
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