

## Organised Crime and Institutional Deterioration: Mexico's Challenges in the 2025 Peace Index

**Mexico City, May 13, 2025** The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) presents the twelfth edition of the Mexico Peace Index (MPI), a comprehensive measure of peace in the country.

- Organised criminal groups remain the primary driver of extreme violence in Mexico, largely due to their efforts to supply the U.S. market with illicit drugs, particularly fentanyl.
- Illicit trafficking of arms and people along the Mexico-United States border has become a core activity within organised crime, and given its transnational scope, poses a growing challenge to the bilateral relationship.
- Strengthening the Pillars of Positive Peace is critical to consolidating gains in peace across Mexico. For example, it is essential to increase public spending on law enforcement and the justice system, which currently represents just 0.7% of Mexico's GDP, less than half the average in OECD and Latin American countries, reflecting a level of investment that falls far short of the country's needs.
- Femicide has risen dramatically in Mexico over the past decade, with the number of reported victims increasing from 428 in 2015 to 829 in 2024 - a 93.7% rise.
- Men account for nine out of ten homicide victims. These deaths are often linked to organised crime, while female deaths are more commonly associated with domestic violence.
- In recent years, the number of missing people has also increased. Jalisco reported the highest number of missing persons and clandestine graves discovered over the past two decades.
- Peace in Mexico improved slightly by 0.7% in 2024. Nevertheless, the country has seen a 13.4% deterioration in peace levels since 2015. However, since hitting its lowest point in 2019, Mexico has recovered 6.4%.
- In 2024 alone, there were 11,700 more homicides than in 2015. Over the past 10 years, the national homicide rate has risen by 55%, from 15 to 23 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, with over 300,000 people murdered during that period.
- Since 2015, the indicator for crimes committed with firearms has shown the most significant deterioration, rising by 71.2%, largely driven by the increase in firearm-related homicides and assaults.
- The year 2024, marked by national elections, was the most violent on record for political figures in Mexico. At least 201 politically motivated assassinations were reported.

- For the third consecutive year, Colima was the least peaceful state in the country, with 101 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. In contrast, Yucatán remained Mexico's most peaceful state for the eighth year in a row, followed by Tlaxcala, Durango, Chiapas, and Nayarit.
- In 2024, Mexico passed a judicial reform that completely transformed the process for selecting judges, shifting from appointments to direct elections. However, it is unclear how this reform will impact the judiciary's capacity and autonomy, as it likely undermines judicial independence.

The rise in violence in Mexico is strongly tied to organised crime, which has evolved over the past decade in response to changing drug consumption trends in the U.S. market. The shift toward synthetic drugs like fentanyl, up to 50 times stronger than heroin and potentially 2,700 times more profitable, has reshaped criminal operations. Arms and human trafficking have also become lucrative transnational activities, affecting Mexico-U.S. relations.

Although peace has improved slightly in the past five years, Mexico remains considerably less peaceful than in 2015. Organised crime continues to drive extreme violence. Since 2007, the estimated number of organised crime-related homicides has increased sixfold, from about 3,000 to nearly 18,000 in 2024. In the last decade alone, Mexico has recorded over 300,000 homicides.

Mexico continues to underinvest in key areas needed to strengthen peace. As of 2024, the country allocated only 0.7% of its GDP to law enforcement and the justice system, far below regional and international benchmarks.

The economic impact of violence in Mexico is alarming. In 2024, it rose for the first time since 2019, reaching an estimated 4.5 trillion pesos (USD 245 billion), equivalent to 18% of GDP. On a per capita basis, the cost was 33,905 pesos, higher than the average monthly salary of a Mexican worker.

This year's Mexico Peace Index highlights how organised crime continues to threaten peace in the country, despite slight recent improvements.

Between 2015 and 2024, peace in Mexico deteriorated by 13.4%, with many crime indicators significantly worse than a decade ago. The homicide rate increased by 54.7%, and firearm-related crimes rose by 71.2%.

As noted earlier, 2024 was the deadliest year on record for political figures in Mexico, with at least 201 politically motivated killings.

Femicide cases nearly doubled over the last decade, from 428 in 2015 to 829 in 2024, a 93.7% increase. Likewise, between 2016 and 2020, homicides targeting LGBTQ+ individuals averaged nearly eight incidents per month, totaling 459 cases.

In 2024, the national sexual violence rate fell by 6.1%, while the family violence rate declined by 2.9%. Despite the continued challenges, these were the first recorded improvements since the Index's inception. This progress is partly attributed to increased women's political participation and legal reforms aimed at protecting women from violence, wage discrimination, and other vulnerabilities.

Meanwhile, the number of missing people continues to grow. The rising number of mass graves and clandestine burial sites discovered across the country suggest that many of the missing may have been victims of homicide. These cases are particularly prevalent in states like Jalisco and Colima.

In 2024, 18 states improved their scores on the Peace Index, while 14 experienced increased violence. Colima remained the least peaceful state, with more than 100 homicides per 100,000 residents - the highest rate in the country.

Guanajuato, Morelos, Baja California, and Quintana Roo followed as the most violent states. Conversely, Yucatán was again ranked as the most peaceful, followed by Tlaxcala, Durango, Chiapas, and Nayarit. In 2024, Zacatecas showed the most improvement in peace, while Tabasco experienced the greatest deterioration.

Mexico's 2024 judicial reform, which changed the selection of judges from appointments to popular elections, remains controversial. Critics warn that it significantly weakens judicial independence, potentially resulting in politically motivated rulings and a decline in the rule of law.

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

The full MPI report, articles, and interactive maps are available at:

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## **About the Mexico Peace Index (MPI)**

The 2025 Mexico Peace Index provides valuable insights for policymakers, business leaders, and civil society organisations seeking to develop better strategies to foster peace

in the country. Produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), the MPI offers the most comprehensive data-based analysis of peace, its economic value, violence trends, and Positive Peace in Mexico.

### **About the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)**

The IEP is an international and independent think tank dedicated to shifting the world's focus toward peace as a positive, achievable, and tangible measure of human wellbeing and progress. The IEP has offices in Sydney, Brussels, New York, The Hague, Mexico City, and Harare.

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