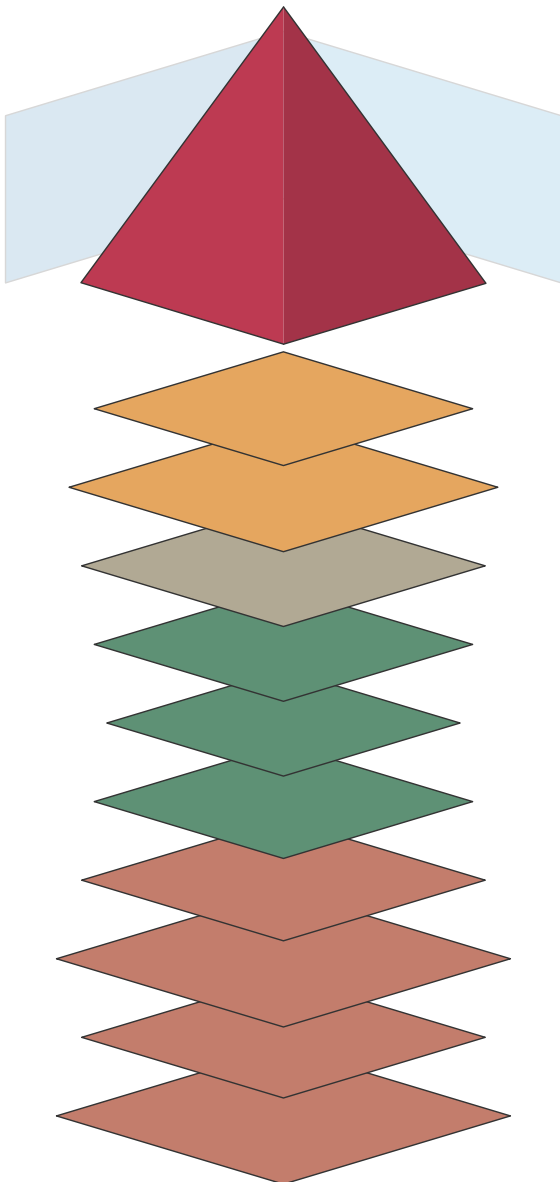


 **MEXICO**



 **7.56**
CRIMINALITY SCORE

4th of 193 countries
2nd of 35 American countries
1st of 8 Central American countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **8.00**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	7.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	8.50
ARMS TRAFFICKING	8.00
FLORA CRIMES	7.50
FAUNA CRIMES	7.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	7.50
HEROIN TRADE	8.00
COCAINE TRADE	9.00
CANNABIS TRADE	8.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	9.00

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **7.13**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	9.00
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	9.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	7.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	3.50

 **4.46**
RESILIENCE SCORE

112th of 193 countries
24th of 35 American countries
3rd of 8 Central American countries



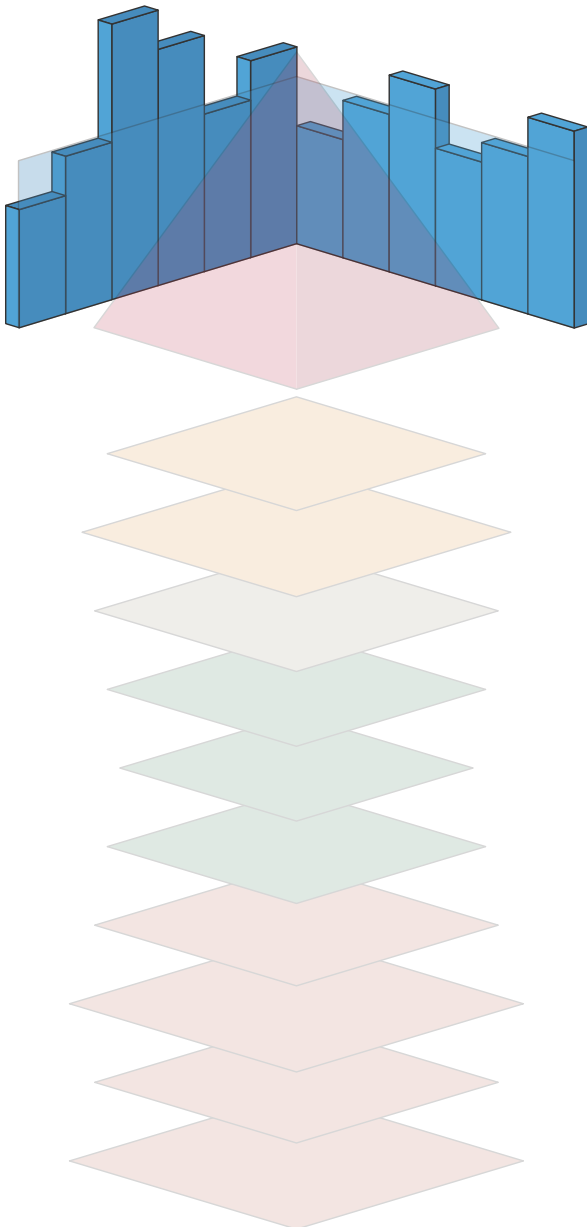
Funding provided by the United States Government.



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MEXICO




4.46 RESILIENCE SCORE

112th of 193 countries
24th of 35 American countries
3rd of 8 Central American countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	3.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	4.00
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	4.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	5.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	3.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	4.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	5.00
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	3.50
PREVENTION	4.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	5.00



7.56 CRIMINALITY SCORE

4th of 193 countries
2nd of 35 American countries
1st of 8 Central American countries

 CRIMINAL MARKETS	8.00
 CRIMINAL ACTORS	7.13

CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Mexico is a transit country for human trafficking, primarily for northbound Central American victims. Sex trafficking within Mexico and to the US is also substantial. Strict border regulations due to COVID-19 disrupted trafficking operations across the US–Mexico border, resulting in fewer victims but at a higher value. However, domestic restrictions have not had a significant impact on Mexico's internal market, as lockdowns were poorly observed. Instead, the pandemic exacerbated collusion between corrupt officials and traffickers preying on migrants through forced engagement in criminal economies or extortion, with officials relying less on bribery and more on organized-crimelinks for profits.

Mexico's human-smuggling market is the largest and most sophisticated in the region, as it is a large country and serves as a source and transit country, primarily to the US. Although increasingly strict US border policies reduced demand, COVID-19 lockdowns exacerbated poverty, unemployment and violence across Central America, increasing irregular migration to the US via Mexico, primarily from the Northern Triangle countries. Smugglers reportedly stopped operating along certain border areas at the start of COVID-19 but resumed activities using US partners. The market's impact remains localized along the northern border and in cities along the southern border. Smugglers from southern Mexico are often local community members, smuggling individuals in cars, buses or trailers, while those in north-eastern Mexico are often part of larger organized groups that control smuggling networks. Smugglers frequently have links to transnational criminal groups, drug cartels and corrupt officials.

TRADE

Mexico has a well-consolidated arms-trafficking market. High demand for firearms from the US and Central America exists among criminal groups and civilians, while well-established mechanisms enable easy reach. Firearms cannot be lawfully purchased in Mexico, but citizens and drug cartels purchase US firearms and smuggle them across the border. The immense flow of illicit weapons from the US, coupled with grenades and RPG-7s from Central America and gun leakage from corrupt domestic-security forces, exacerbates gun violence and criminal armament.

ENVIRONMENT

Flora and fauna crimes are substantial in Mexico, with traffickers often active in other criminal markets. Drug traffickers control timber trafficking in Jalisco, forcing communities to pay quotas for protection, with protesters facing kidnapping or disappearance. Mexico is a source and transit country for regional flora commodities, especially between Brazil and the US. The illicit timber market has grown in the past three decades, affecting rural communities. Most timber sold is illegally sourced, generating hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Rosewood trafficking, controlled by Chinese mafias and other groups operating locally and regionally, is significant, and dozens of shipments, primarily destined for the Chinese furniture market, are seized annually across Pacific ports and the Yucatán Peninsula. Violence occurs between competing criminal groups, while local populations, including indigenous communities, experience violence, displacement and disappearances at the hands of armed groups or corrupt law enforcement.

Fauna crime is facilitated by corrupt authorities. Although traditionally a transit hub for wildlife trafficked to the US, Europe, China and elsewhere, Mexico is also a source and destination country. The market generates significant profits, and demand for Mexican wildlife has risen. Sought-after species include jaguars, golden eagles, parrots, macaws and reptiles. Totoaba fish are primarily destined for mainland China, with Chinese mafia involvement, and violence is seen in this economy, especially along the upper Gulf of California. The trade generates hundreds of millions of dollars annually, with one pound of totoaba swim bladder more valuable than cocaine. Mexico's illicit seacucumber trade is also significant, causing violence in Yucatán and Campeche.

Oil theft is increasing in Mexico, with some groups focused exclusively on these operations. Corrupt officials in the state oil company facilitate deals between oil executives and criminal groups, enabling theft and redistributing illicit profits. There is also illegal gold and silver mining, and formal companies face armed robberies, allegedly by cartels, as well as extortion and kidnapping of mining personnel. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, mining operations became an easy target due to weakened state capacity. Moreover, Mexico is the only country that produces cinnabar, the brick-red form of mercury, and cartels traffic mercury to be used in the gold mining process to South American countries where illicit gold-mining is prevalent.

DRUGS

Most US heroin originates in Mexico, particularly in the Golden Triangle drug-producing region. Increased demand from US drug users shifting from prescription

painkiller consumption to street heroin, due to the opioid epidemic, resulted in a production surge in Mexico. However, increasing poppy cultivation and oversupply is eroding the value of poppy paste. Mexican cartels also partake in the production and transportation of methamphetamine and, increasingly, fentanyl. Both are increasingly popular in the US, where fentanyl claims tens of thousands of lives annually. Fentanyl and its precursors are predominantly produced in China, with Mexican cartels importing and trafficking the products into the US, although domestic production also occurs. Fentanyl consumption is rising in Mexico, as a significant portion of street heroin in white powder and black tar forms is combined with fentanyl for longer-lasting effects. Nonetheless, COVID-19 disrupted fentanyl supply chains, pressuring cartels to seek new revenue streams.

Although cannabis trafficking between Central America and the US has declined, Mexico still serves as America's largest foreign provider. However, cannabis legalization in some US states and Canada significantly damaged the market for Mexican cartels. As it is no longer a major cash crop, many farmers are shifting towards poppy cultivation. In Mexico, there are calls for legalization amid rising domestic demand for cannabis and cannabis products. Mexico's cocaine trade is less consolidated, due to internal fragmentation, but the market is large. Mexican actors serve as key brokers and transporters, and cartels have become more active in the Colombian and Central American cocaine industries. Much of the rival cartel violence relates to control of the north bound shipment routes.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Mexico's drug-trafficking organizations are among the most sophisticated mafia-style groups in the world. Although cartel fragmentation reduced the number of

groups with large international operations, those remaining have networks spanning most of the Americas, even stretching into Europe and Asia. Although drug-trafficking organizations interact with foreign actors, these generally lack a significant foothold in Mexico and their presence usually relates to collaborative business with Mexican groups. Drug-trafficking organizations focus on international drug trafficking, generating billions of dollars in revenue annually, but numerous revenue streams, including oil theft, illegal logging, human trafficking, kidnapping and extortion, are deeply entrenched. Mexican drug cartels possess firearms, including military-grade weapons, and conflict is widespread between competing groups and state security forces, with some groups marking their territory by displaying beheaded and mutilated corpses. Drug cartels control territory in much of Mexico, co-opting the state through bribery and intimidation with the aim of facilitating illicit activity and influencing the democratic process. Politicians are frequently murdered or threatened by mafias attempting to ensure that cooperative politicians hold office.

Cartel fragmentation spawned smaller, loosely networked groups that lack a permanent power structure and are harder to track, causing security concerns as turf wars become more common place and localized. These groups generally lack the resources to manage transnational drug-trafficking networks, instead partaking in activities such as extortion, kidnapping, vehicle theft, oil smuggling, human smuggling and trafficking, retail drug sales and illegal mineral mining. They play crucial roles in the drug-trafficking supply chain, providing local transportation or security within larger networks. While state-embedded actors do not control criminal markets, corruption within government and law-enforcement agencies facilitates criminal networks and influences illicit activities, providing income for high-ranking public officials.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

A militarized, strong-arm approach to tackling organized crime has produced mixed results in Mexico. Corruption is rife, causing collusion between law enforcement, judges and criminals. Organized-crime-related violence and criminal impunity are at a record high, with poor access to legal proceedings, while the measures adopted to curb corruption and increase transparency lack implementation. Nonetheless, access to information regarding the legal framework appears strong. The government lacks a cohesive security strategy, with attempts to address corruption and organized crime seen as highly politicized or as efforts to

embarrass past governments. The president is centralizing control across national institutions and has proposed new, technically illegal policies, such as having Marines in charge of port customs activities.

Structural deficiencies in Mexico's legal system hamper its ability to fight organized crime. Although the country has ratified a range of international treaties and has numerous laws pertaining to organized crime, these are not well enforced and crippled by corruption. However, there is a history of strong anti-organized-crime cooperation with the US, with mutual extradition agreements and

information-sharing by intelligence agencies. While the president has been flexible on issues such as migration with the US, there is uncertainty around the approach to security and organized crime.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Mexico has a law-enforcement unit and a judiciary unit specifically mandated to counter organized crime. Nonetheless, corruption, inefficiency and lack of case investigation weaken the structures for prosecuting organized crime. Despite recent judicial reform, the country struggles to investigate and prosecute most serious crimes. Cases are often over-reliant on single eyewitness testimonies, allowing prosecutors to manipulate results. Tens of thousands are in pre-trial or remand imprisonment, suggesting a significant judicial deficiency in processing cases. Nonetheless, Mexico has made financial investments and structural changes to improve law-enforcement capacity against organized crime, and significant US donations aim to improve the country's security apparatus, as well as provide training, intelligence and planning. There is, however, substantial corruption within the police and, to a lesser extent, the military, with both accused of human-rights abuses. Public confidence is low, except in the Armed Forces. When top cartel leaders have been apprehended, the ensuing fragmentation has led to violence.

Mexico's proximity to the US also makes it a major transit point for illegal drugs and a hub for activities such as human smuggling and arms trafficking, which thrive despite bilateral law-enforcement efforts. Large swathes of territory and ports are controlled by organized groups who operate above, or as, the law, acting as parallel or replacement powers. The president's National Guard, created to increase national security and tackle organized crime, is more focused on policing irregular migrants.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Mexico is at high risk for money laundering and terrorist financing. Although a law exists, money laundering is not proactively investigated or prosecuted, particularly in transnational cases, resulting in low conviction rates. Mexico's Financial Investigations Prosecutor has spearheaded investigations into money laundering, corruption and the misuse of funds, but some investigations were politically motivated. Organized crime boosts money laundering while corruption undermines law-enforcement capacity. With businesses targeted for extortion and kidnapping, corruption is a significant risk for companies, making it difficult to attract foreign investors. The government has attempted to reassure investors, but has not yet instilled confidence.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Although some mechanisms exist to help victims exit slavery, more is needed to improve victim-support frameworks. Witness-protection programmes are also weak. Resources have been dedicated to reducing drug demand and improving treatment programmes, but efforts to deter youth from engaging in organized crime lack substance. Some community engagement efforts have proved successful, especially in tourist centres, but areas where drug cultivation is a traditional livelihood have yet to be addressed.

Civil-society protection remains weak and, due to a lack of government support, no real efforts exist to promote a strong, independent democracy with independent media, respected NGOs and effective peaceful public protest. Hundreds of active non-profit organizations were hit by the corruption crusade of the president, which froze federal funding on accusations of corruption and abuse. The media are seen as a threat and maligned by the administration, green-lighting long-standing violence against the media and making Mexico one of the deadliest countries for journalists. Civil-society leaders are regularly threatened and journalists covering sensitive stories are threatened, abducted, flee abroad or are gunned down in cold blood.

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