

## **Crime in Mexico** *(source: multiple Wikipedia articles with citations)*

Crime is among the most urgent concerns facing [Mexico](#), as Mexican [drug trafficking](#) rings play a major role in the flow of [cocaine](#), [heroin](#), and [marijuana](#) transiting between [Latin America](#) and the [United States](#). Drug trafficking has led to [corruption](#), which has had a deleterious effect on Mexico's Federal Representative Republic. Drug trafficking and [organized crime](#) have also been a major source of [violent crime](#) in Mexico.

Mexico has experienced increasingly high [crime rates](#), especially in major urban centers. The country's great economic polarization has stimulated criminal activity in the lower [socioeconomic](#) strata, which include the majority of the country's population. Crime continues at high levels, and is repeatedly marked by violence, especially in the cities of [Tijuana](#) and [Ciudad Juárez](#), and the states of [Baja California](#), [Durango](#), [Sinaloa](#), [Guerrero](#), [Chihuahua](#), [Michoacán](#), [Tamaulipas](#), and [Nuevo León](#). Other metropolitan areas have lower, yet still serious, levels of crime. Low apprehension and conviction rates contribute to the high crime rate.

Many Mexican police officials in border towns have been targets of assassination by drug cartels, who have even threatened local law enforcement in the United States. Drug cartels have even acquired equipment like Mexican Army uniforms, [Humvees](#), grenades and .50 caliber sniper rifles which can penetrate most light armor including armored cars. The United States ambassador launched a formal complaint with the government on this issue.

## **Drug war**

The United States is a lucrative market for [illegal drugs](#). The [United Nations](#) estimates that nearly 90% of [cocaine](#) sold in the United States originates in [South America](#) and is smuggled through Mexico. Mexico is the largest foreign supplier of [marijuana](#) and the second largest source of [heroin](#) for the U.S. market. The majority of methamphetamine sold in the United States is made in Mexico, and Mexican-run [methamphetamine](#) labs that operate north of the border account for much of the remainder.

## **Weapons smuggling**

Mexicans have a constitutional right to own firearms, but legal purchase from the single Mexican gun shop in [Mexico City](#), controlled by the Army, is extremely difficult. According to [U.S.] Justice Department figures, 94,000 weapons were recovered from Mexican drug cartels in the five years between 2006 and 2011, of which 64,000 -- 70 percent -- come from the United States. Once guns are obtained at gun shops in the United States, they are then smuggled into Mexico across the US-Mexico border. In other cases the guns are obtained through [Guatemalan](#) borders or stolen from the police or military.

## Human smuggling

Many individuals who consent to being smuggled are escaping poverty, seeking opportunities abroad, or escaping natural disaster, conflict, or persecution. Others may be seeking [asylum](#). While many who are smuggled are poor and uneducated, there are also others who belong to the educated middle class. As such, perhaps the only generalization that can be made about smuggled individuals is that they are all on a quest for a better life.

Given the clandestine but booming nature of people smuggling operations – especially in places like Mexico – [drug cartels](#) have also begun tapping into the smuggling network. Cartels have made money not only by taxing Coyotes but also directly engaging in the business of smuggling. In the late 1990s, Mexican drug cartels began initially moving into people smuggling by taxing Coyotes for leading bands of smuggled people across cartel-controlled territory. As these drug cartels have gotten more directly involved, however, they are beginning to play a more central role in the business of people smuggling and often exploit individuals - seen as human cargo - and using them by loading them up with backpacks full of marijuana. Sometimes, the costs of the expensive journey may be defrayed as migrants serve as "mules", carrying drugs into Mexico.

## Corruption

High levels of corruption in the police, judiciary, and government in general have contributed greatly to the crime problem. Corruption is a significant obstacle to Mexico's achieving a stable democracy.

The organization of police forces in Mexico is complex; each police force has a different level of jurisdiction and authority, and those levels often overlap. The [Procuraduría General de la República](#) (Federal Attorney General's office) along with the law enforcement agencies [Policia Federal Preventiva](#) and [Agencia Federal de Investigación](#), has responsibility for overseeing law enforcements across the entire country. In addition, there are several police organizations at the state, district, and city level. Since pay is generally poor (US\$285–\$400 per month), police officers are more likely to accept bribes to protect criminals or ignore crime entirely. Law enforcement personnel are often presented with the option of choosing "*Plata o Plomo*"; meaning they can either accept a bribe (*plata*, for silver) or they will be killed (*plomo*, for lead).

Corruption plagues the various levels of police, and is frequently difficult to track down and prosecute since police officers may be protected by district attorneys and other members of the judiciary. The problem is especially pronounced in northern border areas such as Tijuana, where police are engaged by drug traffickers to protect and enforce their illicit interests.

The Mexican police force often do not investigate crimes, will generally randomly select someone to be the guilty party then fabricate the evidence. This issue is a major problem throughout Mexico as many of the actual police force are the ones involved in the crimes or are trying to cover up their poor police work.

A [United Nations Special Rapporteur](#) undertook a mission to Mexico in 2002 to investigate reports by the [United Nations Commission on Human Rights](#) that the country's [judiciary](#) and administration of law was not independent. During the course of his visit to a number of cities, the rapporteur observed that corruption in the judiciary had not been reduced significantly. One of the principal issues is that, because the federal courts operate at a relatively high level, most citizens are compelled to seek justice in the inadequate state courts.

Additionally, the rapporteur expressed concerns about such issues as disorganization in the [legal profession](#), difficulties and harassment faced by lawyers, poor [trial](#) procedures, poor access to the justice system for [indigenous peoples](#) and minors, and lackluster [investigation](#) of many crimes.

### **Reasons for crime and cartels**

One of the main factors driving the Mexican Drug war is the willingness of, mainly lower-class people, to earn easy money joining criminal organizations, and the failure of the government to provide the legal means for the creation of well paid jobs. From 2004 to 2008 the portion of the population who received less than half of the median income rose from 17% to 21% and the proportion of population living in extreme or moderate poverty rose from 35 to 46% (52 million persons) between 2006 and 2010.

Illiteracy and lack of education have haunted Mexico for much of its history. In 1940, 58% of all Mexicans over the age of six were illiterate; in 1960, 38% were illiterate. The 1960 national census found that as to all Mexicans over the age of five, 43.7% had not completed one year of school, 50.7% had completed six years or less of school, and only the remaining 5.6% had continued their education beyond six years of school.

### **Mexican attempts to stop cartels**

In 1996, Mexico changed its policy to allow [extradition](#) of its citizens to the United States to face [trial](#). Previously, the [Constitution](#) had forbidden its citizens to be extradited.

President [Vicente Fox](#) took power in December 2000 promising to crack down on crime and improve a [judicial system](#) rife with corruption and ineptitude. Upon taking office, he established a new ministry of Security and Police, doubled the pay for police officers, and committed to other ethics reforms. President Fox also cited [drug trafficking](#) and drug consumption as the top cross-border priority issue.

During the first three years of Fox's government, the official number of reported kidnappings showed a slight decrease, from 505 in 2001 to 438 in 2003. The new Federal Investigation Agency (*Procuraduría de Justicia*) reported dismantling 48 kidnapping rings and saving 419 victims.

In June 2005, the government deployed federal forces to three [states](#) to contain surging violence linked to organized crime. At a news conference in Mexico City, presidential spokesman [Rubén Aguilar](#) told reporters that the new deployment was the result of evidence that organized crime has penetrated some local police departments.

In response to a rise in violent crime in the region of [Tijuana](#), considered one of the five most violent areas of the country by the [U.S. State Department](#), mayor [Jorge Hank Rhon](#) deployed a massive technology update to the city's police force in February 2006. The technology includes surveillance equipment, handheld computers, and alarm systems. Since tourism is a staple of the economy in Tijuana, the mayor has tried to make reforms to highlight the safety of tourist areas.

### **Civilian responses to crime and cartels**

In June 2004, at least a million people marched through the Mexican capital and other cities to protest the failure of federal and local governments to control crime in one of the world's most crime-ridden countries.

In 2008, a second civilian protest was made after independent [NGOs](#) exhorted the public, again, at least one million people attended over Mexico City and other major cities all across Mexico. On this second march candles were lit and the national anthem was played. The protest generated more public attention perhaps because in this same year, a 12-year-old son of the Marti family, owners of a prominent well-known sports gear business, was abducted and murdered. In the same year, a similar situation occurred to the 19-year-old daughter of Nelson Vargas, a businessman and former government representative. These two cases brought great public attention since the scale of crime and violence was very rare to hit over certain social groups, being these amongst the most remarkable exemptions.