

Homicides in Mexico (2019 - 2020)

Exploratory analysis

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The challenge of obtaining recent homicide data

Publishing official homicide data entails a rigorous and extensive process. Before being accounted as a homicide by INEGI, every single case has to be confirmed by the local authorities as an actual crime. Due to this reason, official homicide data takes long to be open to the public. Normally, official data for a specific year is published one year after it ended. That is the reason why, so far, INEGI has only published homicide data for 1990 to 2018.

What to do, then, if one wants to study the phenomenon of homicide in Mexico in the recent 18 months? Luckily, the Secretariat of Security and Citizen Protection (SSPC as its acronym in Spanish) makes preliminary homicide data available on its website. It uses two main sources of information: a daily report produced by an interdisciplinary team (constituted by the own SSPC, the military, the navy and the General Attorney's office); and open sources, constituted by homicide reports in local newspapers. The SSPC publishes daily reports for the numbers obtained from these two sources.

The problem with the reports that the SSPC uploads on its website is that they come in a pdf format, which means that a deep cleaning process is needed. In the first place, the documents have to be web-scraped from the web, then, they have to be transformed into an excel format and checked by a human. The cleaning process also requires orthographic correction and minor but numerous changes. After homicide data is cleaned, population data is added at both the state and municipal level for the estimation of the homicide rate.

Source 1: Interinstitutional group report

The daily reports produced by the interinstitutional group consist in a single table that shows the number of killings in each of the 32 Mexican states, as well as the national toll. This is the descriptive analysis produced after data cleaning.

Source 2: Open sources