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**The upsurge of homicides in Mexico is slowing down life expectancy and increasing inequality of lifespans**

[800 words]

Life expectancy is usually used to monitor population health. In Mexico, life expectancy increased for more than six decades but then slowed down between 2005 and 2015. This decade coincides with the unprecedented rise in violence. The number of homicides per 100,000 males increased by more than 50% between 2005 and 2015 (from 20.4 to 31.2 per 100,000 males). As a result, gains in life expectancy for young males due to reductions in other causes of death, such as infectious and respiratory diseases, were reversed[https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2015.0068] in this period.

Life expectancy is informative and important. However, this indicator masks substantial variation in length of life. Inequality in length of life is the most fundamental of all inequalities as it refers to individuals’ age at death. Larger variation in lifespans implies greater uncertainty in the timing of death at the individual level and has implications for the planning of life’s events. In Mexico, although lifespan inequality declined substantially between 1995 and 2005, a decade later, this progress was stagnant[[http://dx.doi.org/](http://dx.doi.org/10.1130/G32273.1)10.2105/AJPH.2018.304878]. The increase in homicide mortality among young males accounted for most of this outcome. From a public health perspective, larger lifespan inequality implies increasing vulnerability at the societal level, which suggests ineffectiveness of policies aiming to protect individuals against life’s downturns. For example, in Mexico, the expected years lived vulnerable to becoming victim of violence increased by 30.5 million person-years between 2005 and 2014[<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jech-2015-207015>].

At the subnational level, the strongest effect occurred in Guerrero, a state in the southern region where 43 students disappeared in 2014, where life expectancy was reduced by 2 years and lifespan inequality increased substantially. Followed by Chihuahua and Sinaloa in the north, with life expectancy losses of 1 year each. To put these figures in perspective, in 2010, males aged 15 to 50 years in Chihuahua (bordering state with Texas, USA) had 3 times higher mortality than the US troops in Iraq between 2003 and 2006. As a result, males in these states not only live less on average, as shown by life expectancy, but also face more uncertainty about their eventual death.

The sudden increase of violence in Mexico is associated with military interventions that aimed at mitigating drug-cartels operations and organized crime. This, along with increased territorial competition, and higher profitability in the drug-trade flow led to an unfinished violent cycle- the so-called War on Drugs. [more on war on drugs, link with drug policy, and current perspectives: Froylán]

Mexico has failed to recognize and correct the detrimental consequences in health and human rights that suppressive and drug prohibition policies have had on the population. Rather than military action against drug cartels the Mexican government should re-focus on improving social and human capital through education, community support and employment programs.