Many types of crime are widely under-reported in Latin America because citizens simply do not trust the police. Yet victimization surveys consistently demonstrate a much higher rate of crime than is reported by national statistics offices. For example, in Peru – the official incidence of robbery is 217 events per 100,000 or 64,000 incidents. Victimization surveys suggest that 23% of Peruvians were robbed or 6.8 million potential incidents.[26] These gaps between administrative data and reported victimization are consistent across virtually all countries of Latin America.

# Theories of crime and violence

Notwithstanding the variations in reporting, there are a number of common characteristics related to crime and victimization in Latin America. For one, crime tends to concentrate in place, time and among specific people.[27] Not only is criminal violence especially concentrated in specific sub-regions – it is also hyper-clustered in specific cities, neighborhoods and households. Researchers often refer to this phenomenon as hot places and hot people.

The first reason crime concentrates has to do with the characteristics of the places in which it occurs. A particular setting´s social organization and collective efficacy provide one explanation for why more crime occurs in some areas as opposed to others. If the social ties within a community are too weak to influence how local people behave, criminality, in particular juvenile crime, is more likely. Likewise, where there is concentrated poverty and inequality, high levels of youth unemployment, and a high turnover of residents, violent crime also becomes more likely.

The second reason why crime concentrates is due to the specific behaviors of people – namely perpetrators and victims. In order for a crime to be committed there must be a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of someone who might intervene. Crime, then, comes down to the routine activities of people. Would-be perpetrators regularly consider the risks and rewards for committing a specific crime, and the opportunities are not equally distributed across space.

Third, crime pattern theory contends that offenders are more likely to carry out acts closer to home and in areas that are familiar. The aggregation of these criminal activities provides a micro-level explanation of why crime concentrates – criminal activities are constrained to the non-random distribution of targets, to places, people, and times when risks are lower, to places that are more familiar, and where and when crime opportunities are more present than others.

Most studies mapping out the characteristics of violent and property-related crime are drawn from western industrialized countries. While these environments are clearly distinct from those in Latin America, the broad theoretical principles of social disorganization, routine activity and crime pattern theory likely apply. Even so, there is still considerable variation when it comes to reporting crime events and in relation to criminal justice capacities. What is more, lethal violence tends to be more erratic than other forms of non-violent crime that often exhibit more predictable peaks and troughs.

Even so, Latin American researchers are making progress in assessing the properties of homicidal violence. A meta-review identified 68 peer-review studies that assessed the spatial,

26 See Clark, Grynspan, and Muñoz (2013).

27 See Muggah, Aguirre and Chainey (2017). See also Vilalta, Castillo and Torres (2016).

demographic and temporal patterns of murder in Latin American cities.[28] While policy makers have been relatively slow to pick-up on the findings from this work, there is clearly growing awareness among law enforcement representatives of the value of mobilizing data to prevent and reduce homicide in Latin America.

# Section III. Prevalence of crime and victimization

Publicly available data indicates that Latin America exhibits the highest homicide rates in the world. The region has just 8% of the world´s population, but 33% of its murders. The regional homicide rate is 21.5 per 100,000, as compared to a global murder rate of roughly 7 per 100,000. The sheer dimensions of homicidal violence are breath-taking. In 2015, an estimated 154,000 Latin Americans were intentionally murdered. Between 2000-2016, an estimated 2,500,000 were victims of homicide. This is likely an under-count given the high levels of disappearances and low clearance rates of criminal violence across the region.

**Figure 3.1** Distribution of homicide (total) and populations in Latin America and global (2015)

| | Homicide (total) | Population |
|---|---|---|
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 145,895 | 588,000,000 |
| World | 437,000 | 7,125,000,000 |
| Percentage | 33 | 8 |

Source: Igarapé Institute, *Homicide Monitor*

The scale of Latin American homicides has increased over the past decades. Indeed, there has been a 12% increase in homicide rates between 2000-2015. These increases occurred while homicide rates stabilized or dropped by more than 50% in virtually all other parts of the world.[29] Many observers have characterized homicide levels in countries such as Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, some Caribbean countries and Venezuela as epidemic, and even exceeding war-time levels (which are defined by WHO as 30 per 100,000).

**Figure 3.2** Homicide rates per 100,000 over time per region (2000-2015)

| Region | 2000-03 | 2004-07 | 2008-11 | 2012-15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Africa | 13.81 | 7.34 | 6.10 | 10.38 |
| Asia | 4.21 | 4.49 | 3.11 | 2.98 |
| Europe | 2.58 | 2.34 | 2.26 | 2.38 |
| Oceania | 3.99 | 3.86 | 3.31 | 1.75 |
| The Americas | 14.76 | 17.69 | 20.84 | 21.70 |
| **Global average** | 7.95 | 8.26 | 7.94 | 11.30 |

Source: Igarapé Institute, *Homicide Monitor*

28 See Muggah, Aguirre and Chainey (2017).

29 See Clark, Grynspan, and Muñoz (2013) .

**Figure 3.3** Projecting homicide rates per 100,000 per region (2000-2030)

| | Latin America | Africa | Asia | Europe | Oceania | Global |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2000 | 19.1 | 4.7 | 2.7 | 2.8 | 15.2 | 8.6 |
| 2005 | 6.4 | 4.8 | 2.6 | 4.4 | 18.1 | 8.5 |
| 2010 | 7.2 | 3.4 | 2.3 | 4.5 | 22.4 | 8.5 |
| 2015* | 7.2 | 3.4 | 2.1 | 5.1 | 23.8 | 8.2 |
| 2020* | 5.6 | 3.1 | 1.9 | 6.4 | 28.2 | 8.1 |
| 2025* | 4.4 | 2.8 | 1.8 | 8.1 | 33.4 | 8.0 |
| 2030* | 3.5 | 2.5 | 1.7 | 10.2 | 39.6 | 7.9 |

Source: *Homicide Monitor* and Vilalta (2015). Values with * are projected

There is considerable heterogeneity in violent crime across the region. There is a high degree of variation in homicide between and within Latin American countries. For example, just four countries – Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela – account for one in four homicides globally. These four countries generated over 114,000 murders in 2012 as compared to 437,000 globally.

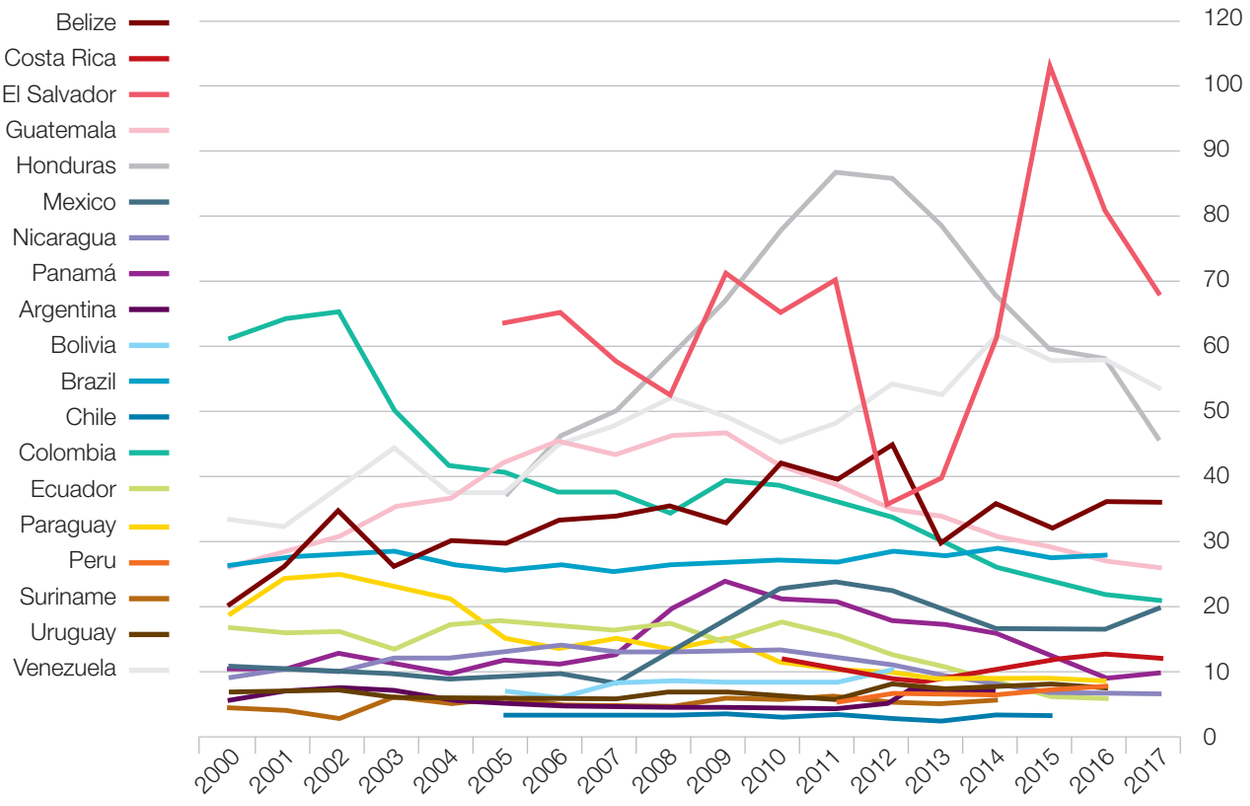
**Figure 3.4** The concentration of homicide in selected Latin American countries

| | Proportion of global homicides | Total number of homicides in 2016 or latest year |
|---|---|---|
| Brazil | 13% | 56,337 |
| Mexico | 6% | 25,967 |
| Venezuela | 4% | 16,072 |
| Colombia | 4% | 15,733 |
| Rest of the world | 74% | 322,891 |
| World | 74% | 437,000 |
| LAC 4 countries | 26% | 114,109 |

Source: Igarapé Institute, *Homicide Monitor*

There are also considerable concentrations of homicide violence within countries. For example, in Mexico there are some states and cities reporting homicide rates above 200 per 100,000 and others with rates below 2 per 100,000. Likewise, in Chile, there are regions with almost 3 homicides per 100,000 and others with roughly 0.5 per 100,000. This variance is important to recognize when designing regional, national and subnational strategies.

**Figure 3.5** Country-level homicide rates in Central and South America per 100,000 (2000-2017)




Source: Igarapé Institute, Homicide Monitor

**Figure 3.6** Homicide rates and counts in The Americas, latest year available, sorted by highest homicide rate

| Rank | Country | Homicide rate (per 100,000) | Absolute number of homicides | Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | El Salvador | 60.0 | 3,954 | 2017 |
| 2 | Jamaica | 56.0 | 1,616 | 2017 |
| 3 | Venezuela | 53.7 | 16,046 | 2017 |
| 4 | Honduras | 42.8 | 3,791 | 2017 |
| 5 | Saint Kitts and Nevis | 42.0 | 23 | 2017 |
| 6 | Belize | 37.2 | 142 | 2017 |
| 7 | Trinidad and Tobago | 36.0 | 494 | 2017 |
| 8 | Saint Vincent and the Grenadines | 35.5 | 39 | 2016 |
| 9 | Saint Lucia | 34.0 | 57 | 2017 |
| 10 | Bahamas | 31.0 | 123 | 2017 |
| 11 | Brazil | 27.8 | 57,395 | 2016 |
| 12 | Guatemala | 26.0 | 4,410 | 2017 |

| Rank | Country | Homicide rate (per 100,000) | Absolute number of homicides | Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | Antigua and Barbuda | 25.0 | 20 | 2017 |
| 14 | Colombia | 22.0 | 10,200 | 2017 |
| 15 | Mexico | 20.4 | 25,339 | 2017 |
| 16 | Puerto Rico | 19.4 | 669 | 2017 |
| 17 | Dominica | 16.7 | 12 | 2013 |
| 18 | Dominican Republic | 16.0 | 1,616 | 2015 |
| 19 | Guyana | 15.0 | 116 | 2017 |
| 20 | Costa Rica | 12.1 | 602 | 2017 |
| 21 | Barbados | 11.0 | 31 | 2017 |
| 22 | Panamá | 10.1 | 421 | 2016 |
| 23 | Haiti | 10.0 | 1,056 | 2015 |
| 24 | Paraguay | 9.4 | 669 | 2016 |
| 25 | Peru | 7.7 | 2,435 | 2016 |
| 26 | Uruguay | 7.6 | 265 | 2016 |
| 27 | Grenada | 7.5 | 8 | 2014 |
| 28 | Nicaragua | 6.8 | 436 | 2017 |
| 29 | Bolivia | 6.4 | 698 | 2016 |
| 30 | Argentina | 6.0 | 2,605 | 2016 |
| 31 | Suriname | 6.0 | 35 | 2017 |
| 32 | Ecuador | 5.7 | 941 | 2016 |
| 33 | Cuba | 5.4 | 609 | 2015 |
| 34 | United States of America | 5.3 | 17,250 | 2016 |
| 35 | Chile | 2.7 | 495 | 2016 |
| 36 | Canada | 1.7 | 611 | 2016 |

Source: Igarapé Institute, *Homicide Monitor*

The demographics of homicide victims share common characteristics across virtually all Latin American countries. Approximately 90% of all Latin American murder victims are male as compared to a global average of 74%. Where overall levels of violence are high, the proportion of males involved as victims tend to also rise higher. Meanwhile, just 1 in 10 homicide victims are female, though there are reports of increasing femicide in some countries such as Chile (19%) and Peru (16%).

**Figure 3.7** Homicide rates (per 100,000) by gender (2015 or latest year)

| Country | Female | Male | Overall national | Ratio male/female |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| El Salvador | 16.99 | 202.99 | 115.9 | 12 |
| Honduras | 12.01 | 125.77 | 68 | 10 |
| Guatemala | 7.60 | 50.49 | 60 | 7 |
| Colombia | 4.80 | 48.62 | 26 | 10 |
| Brazil | 4.68 | 52.28 | 28 | 11 |
| Mexico | 4.19 | 31.91 | 16 | 8 |
| Uruguay | 2.80 | 12.69 | 8 | 5 |
| Cuba | 2.62 | 9.43 | 6 | 4 |
| Costa Rica | 2.28 | 23.88 | 10 | 10 |
| Peru | 2.22 | 11.10 | 6.7 | 5 |
| Panama | 2.18 | 31.72 | 16 | 15 |
| Ecuador | 1.87 | 12.05 | 7 | 6 |
| Nicaragua | 1.75 | 13.12 | 8 | 7 |
| United States | 1.64 | 5.84 | 4.5 | 4 |
| Paraguay | 1.54 | 16.00 | 8 | 10 |
| Argentina | 1.48 | 8.76 | 5.2 | 6 |
| Chile | 1.21 | 5.13 | 2.8 | 4 |

Source: Igarapé Institute, *Homicide Monitor*

Homicide rates are especially concentrated among the youth population. Latin America´s youth homicide rate is more than three times the rate of the general population – reaching 70 per 100,000. Indeed, 46% of all homicide victims in Latin America are between 15 and 29 years old. The proportion of young people that are victims of homicide is highest in Brazil (54% of all victims), El Salvador (52%), Honduras (51%) and Colombia (51%). The next most affected age group are males between 30-45. Young working-age males are also among the most productive group in the population, which also contributes to the high economic burden and future capital formation.

**Figure 3.8** Proportion of homicide by sex, by sub-regions (Average 2000-2016)

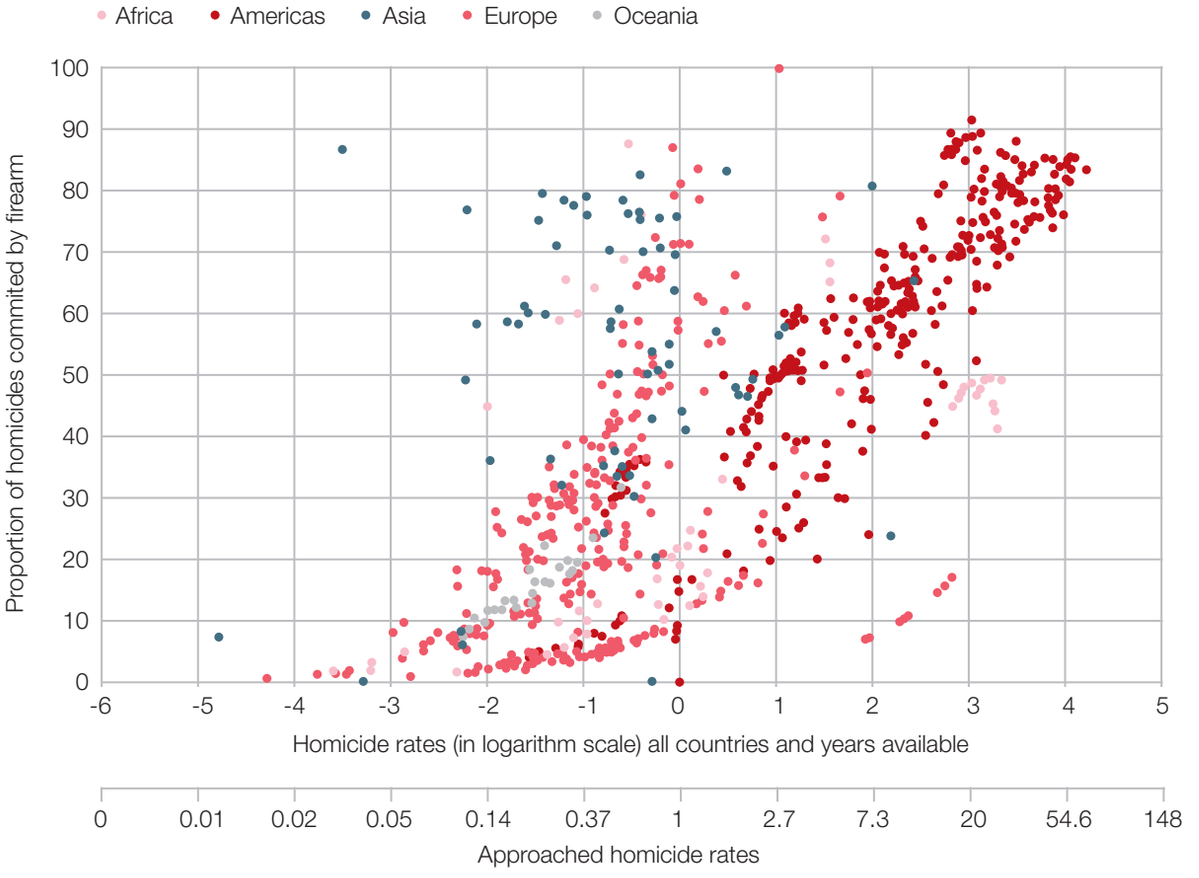
| Sub-region | Female | Male |
|---|---|---|
| **South America** | **12%** | **88%** |
| **The Caribbean** | **15%** | **83%** |
| Northern Africa | 18% | 82% |
| Central Asia | 19% | 81% |
| Eastern Asia & Pacific | 20% | 81% |
| Middle Africa | 20% | 80% |
| **Central America** | **20%** | **80%** |
| Western Asia | 22% | 78% |
| Southern Africa | 22% | 78% |
| Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia | 28% | 75% |
| Eastern Africa | 26% | 74% |

| Sub-region | Female | Male |
|---|---|---|
| **Global** | **25%** | **74%** |
| South-Eastern Asia | 27% | 74% |
| Southern Asia | 27% | 73% |
| Western Africa | 30% | 70% |
| Eastern Europe | 31% | 69% |
| Northern Europe | 31% | 69% |
| Southern Europe | 28% | 65% |
| Western Europe | 38% | 63% |
| Eastern Asia | 38% | 62% |
| Australia and New Zealand | 40% | 60% |
| North America | 13% | 37% |

Source: Igarapé Institute, *Homicide Monitor*

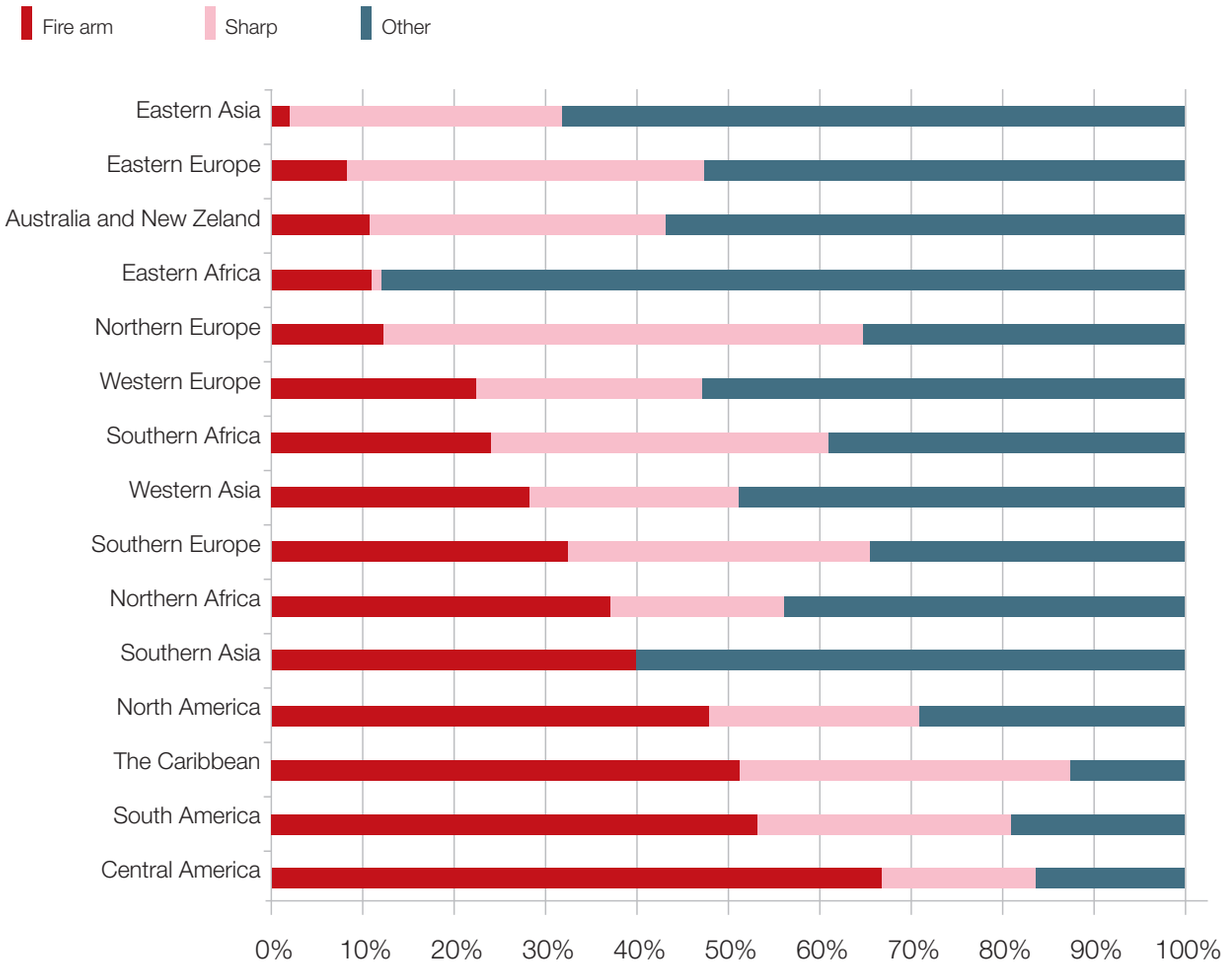
The proportion of homicides involving firearms is astonishingly high in Latin America. Globally, roughly 32% of all homicides are committed with a firearm (2000-2016). The proportion is twice as high in Central America (78%) and considerable higher in South America (53%) and the Caribbean (51%). In some countries and cities, the distribution can rise above 80% as in Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and Venezuela. There is also a relationship between countries with high proportions of gun-related homicides and high rates of murder.

**Figure 3.9** Scatter plot of proportion of homicides by firearm vs. homicide rates. All countries by region, 2000-2016




Source: Igarapé Institute, *Homicide Monitor*

**Figure 3.10** Proportion of homicides by instrument per sub-region (average 2000-2016)




Source: Igarapé Institute, *Homicide Monitor*

**Figure 3.11** Mapping the most homicidal cities (top 50, latest year)

| Ranking | City | Country | Rate | Number | Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | San Salvador | El Salvador | 136.7 | 432 | 2016 |
| 2 | Acapulco de Juarez | Mexico | 108.1 | 918 | 2016 |
| 3 | San Pedro Sula | Honduras | 104.3 | 807 | 2016 |
| 4 | Soyapango | El Salvador | 91.1 | 220 | 2016 |
| 5 | Chilpancingo de los Bravo (Guerrero) | Mexico | 88.1 | 994 | 2016 |
| 6 | Distrito Central | Honduras | 79.9 | 994 | 2016 |
| 7 | Marabá | Brazil | 76.7 | 207 | 2015 |
| 8 | Grande Sao Luís | Brazil | 74.5 | 868 | 2015 |
| 9 | Guatemala | Guatemala | 70.8 | 704 | 2016 |
| 10 | Ananindeua | Brazil | 69.6 | 616 | 2015 |
| 11 | Choloma | Honduras | 65.5 | 231 | 2016 |
| 12 | Serra | Brazil | 64.7 | 353 | 2015 |
| 13 | Caruaru | Brazil | 64.0 | 235 | 2015 |

| Ranking | City | Country | Rate | Number | Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | Viamão | Brazil | 61.9 | 138 | 2015 |
| 15 | Cape Town | South Africa | 61.5 | 2,469 | 2016 |
| 16 | Belém | Brazil | 60.9 | 710 | 2015 |
| 17 | Victoria | Mexico | 60.5 | 216 | 2016 |
| 18 | Mossoró | Brazil | 59.3 | 181 | 2015 |
| 19 | St. Louis | US | 59.3 | 188 | 2016 |
| 20 | Aparecida de Goainia | Brazil | 58.8 | 299 | 2015 |
| 21 | Caucaia | Brazil | 58.8 | 164 | 2015 |
| 22 | Aracaju | Brazil | 58.5 | 458 | 2015 |
| 23 | Santa Ana | El Salvador | 55.4 | 136 | 2016 |
| 24 | Imperatriz | Brazil | 54.5 | 169 | 2015 |
| 25 | Manaus | Brazil | 54.3 | 1,123 | 2015 |
| 26 | Cali | Colombia | 53.2 | 1,273 | 2016 |
| 27 | Nelson Mandela Bay | South Africa | 53.1 | 668 | 2016 |
| 28 | Camacari | Brazil | 53.0 | 168 | 2015 |
| 29 | Baltimore | US | 52.1 | 318 | 2016 |
| 30 | Maceió | Brazil | 51.8 | 655 | 2015 |
| 31 | Betim | Brazil | 51.5 | 228 | 2015 |
| 32 | Cariacica | Brazil | 51.1 | 169 | 2015 |
| 33 | Natal | Brazil | 50.9 | 470 | 2015 |
| 34 | Villa Nueva | Guatemala | 50.7 | 292 | 2016 |
| 35 | Tijuana | Mexico | 49.8 | 871 | 2016 |
| 36 | Vitória da Conquista | Brazil | 49.5 | 170 | 2015 |
| 37 | Juazeiro do Norte | Brazil | 47.4 | 142 | 2015 |
| 38 | Buffalo City | South Africa | 46.5 | 388 | 2016 |
| 39 | Palmira | Colombia | 46.3 | 142 | 2016 |
| 40 | Culiacán | Mexico | 46.3 | 439 | 2016 |
| 41 | Mazatlán | Mexico | 46.3 | 224 | 2016 |
| 42 | Porto Alegre | Brazil | 46.0 | 746 | 2015 |
| 43 | Canoas | Brazil | 45.4 | 164 | 2015 |
| 44 | Detroit | US | 44.9 | 303 | 2016 |
| 45 | New Orleans | US | 44.5 | 174 | 2006 |
| 46 | Cuiabá | Brazil | 43.8 | 268 | 2015 |
| 47 | Joao Pessoa | Brazil | 43.7 | 518 | 2015 |
| 48 | San Juan (City in Puerto Rico) | Puerto Rico | 43.4 | 155 | 2016 |
| 49 | Kingston (city in Jamaica) | Jamaica | 43.2 | 158 | 2016 |
| 50 | Jaboatão dos Guararapes | Brazil | 42.4 | 291 | 2015 |

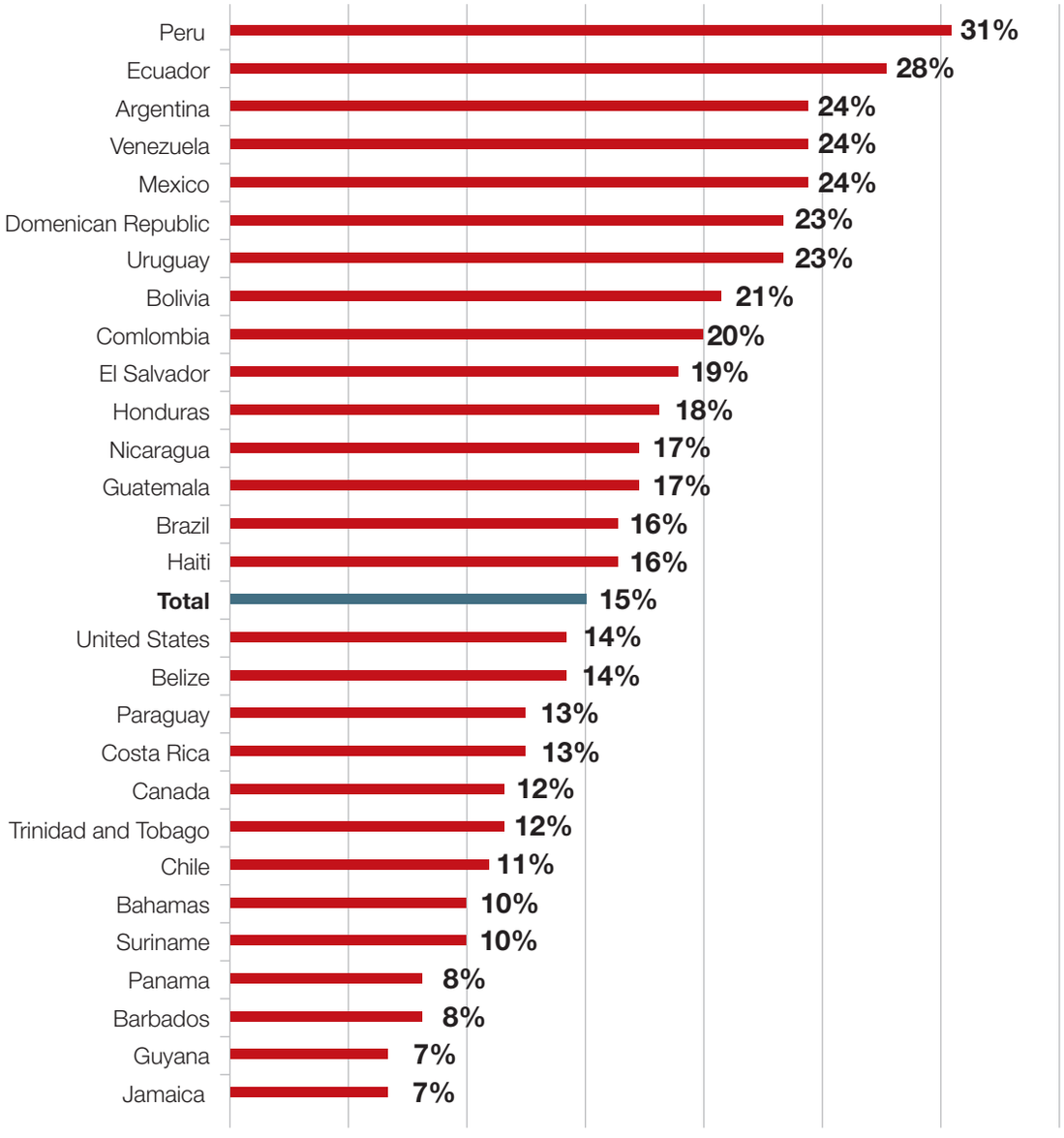
Source: Igarapé Institute, *Homicide Monitor*

Latin America is not just a global leader in homicide, but in several forms of violent crime in the world such as physical assault and robbery. There is a particularly high level of reported crime – especially property-related and interpersonal incidents – in the Caribbean and Central America. Violent crime – committed with both firearms and bladed weapons – are also disproportionately common (see Annex).

Latin Americans are extremely preoccupied with violent robbery. Surveys suggest that one in five Latin Americans experienced some form of violent or non-violent robbery in the past year.[30] Such crimes are routinely ranked by Latin Americans as their number one security concern, above organized crime and gang-related violence. In contrast to other regions that have experienced steady declines in robbery, Latin America has registered a 25-year increase in all forms of robbery.

Surveys conducted by LAPOP[31] track the level of revealed victimization. They consider the types of crime reported by victims over the previous 12 months. They are by definition subjective, and tend to report higher levels of criminality than is reported to the police. Surveys conducted in 2014 reveal exceedingly high levels of victimization in Latin America: 15% of all respondents reported being a victim of crime. The proportion ranges from 25% of respondents in Peru and Ecuador to 10% of all respondents in Guyana, Jamaica and Panama.

**Figure 3.12** Victim of Crime in the previous 12 months (Percentage) 2014




Source: Vanderbilt University, Latin American Public Opinion Project

30 See Vanderbilt University, *LAPOP Survey Data.*

31See Vanderbilt University, *Latin American Public Opinion Project.*

Almost half of all respondents to LAPOP surveys indicated being victims of robbery (both armed and unarmed). The countries reporting the highest percentage of armed robbery were Venezuela, Honduras and El Salvador. Countries that commonly reported as less violent report the highest proportions of unarmed robbery, including Bolivia, Chile and Panama. LAPOP surveys also highlights the high proportion of rape and sexual assault in Caribbean countries such as Haiti and Barbados, and extortion in Mexico and El Salvador.

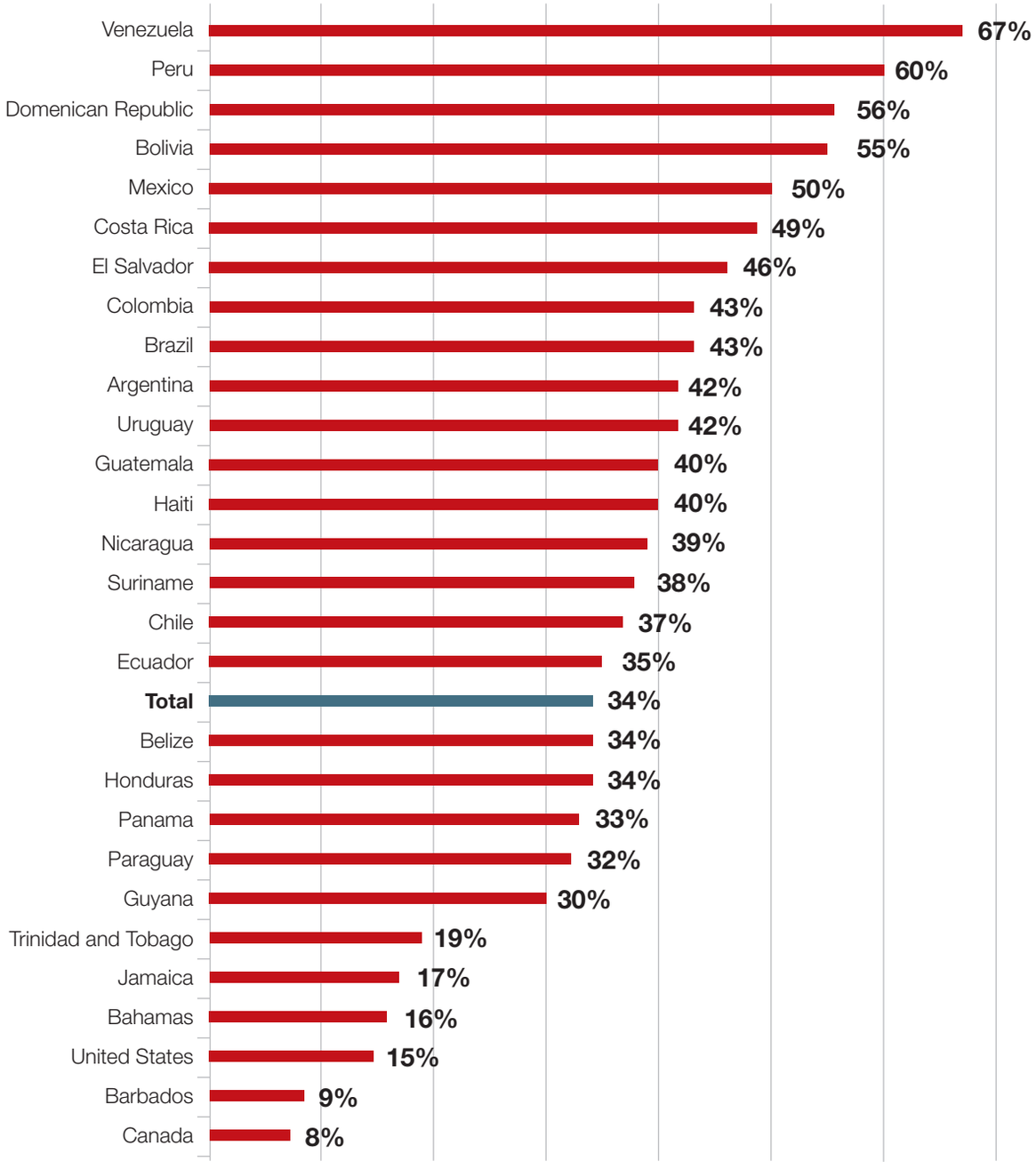
**Figure 3.13** Victim of Crime in the previous 12 months (Percentage) 2014

| Country | Low | Average | High |
|---|---|---|---|
| Venezuela | 45% | 40% | 15% |
| Dominican Republic | 45% | 41% | 14% |
| Guyana | 43% | 44% | 13% |
| Belize | 41% | 42% | 17% |
| Paraguay | 38% | 44% | 19% |
| Mexico | 37% | 50% | 13% |
| Jamaica | 37% | 50% | 13% |
| Guatemala | 36% | 51% | 13% |
| Peru | 36% | 53% | 11% |
| Bolivia | 33% | 59% | 8% |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 33% | 54% | 14% |
| Brazil | 31% | 47% | 22% |
| Honduras | 28% | 51% | 21% |
| Argentina | 28% | 54% | 18% |
| AVERAGE | 26% | 51% | 23% |
| Colombia | 25% | 54% | 21% |
| Costa Rica | 25% | 57% | 19% |
| El Salvador | 23% | 52% | 25% |
| Barbados | 22% | 56% | 22% |
| Nicaragua | 20% | 44% | 36% |
| Uruguay | 20% | 54% | 27% |
| USA | 17% | 58% | 25% |
| Bahamas | 15% | 48% | 37% |
| Haiti | 15% | 55% | 30% |
| Ecuador | 15% | 55% | 31% |
| Panama | 14% | 60% | 26% |
| Chile | 10% | 46% | 44% |
| Suriname | 10% | 50% | 40% |
| Canada | 8% | 49% | 43% |

Source: Vanderbilt University, *Latin American Public Opinion Project*

There is also a pervasive sense of neighborhood insecurity among Latin Americans. According to LAPOP surveys, 34% of Latin American residents perceive their neighborhood to be insecure. There are inevitably large variations across individual countries and cities. The countries where respondents reported the highest levels of victimization included Venezuela (49%), Mexico (46%) and Argentina (41%). Those countries registering the lowest reported victimization include Ecuador (29%), Bolivia (30%) and Nicaragua (31%). There is frequently a disjuncture between "reported" crime and "perceptions" as noted above.

**Figure 3.14** Perception of insecurity in the neighborhood 2014




Source: Vanderbilt University, Latin American Public Opinion Project

There is a high concentration of young people involved as perpetrators of homicide and other forms of criminal violence. The profile for victims of homicide is similar to perpetrators – young and unemployed. There is a hyper-concentration among 18-25 year old males[32], with a considerable number of young people inhabiting Latin America´s famously violent and over-crowded prisons.

Cartel and gang-related violence is a significant contributor to high violence rates in Latin America. According to the UN, homicidal violence perpetrated by gangs accounts for 26% of all lethal violence in the Americas (57% of its known causes). By way of contrast, in Asia and Europe, intimate partner and family-related violence accounts for a much higher share of homicide – 28% in Asia (46% of known causes) and 27% in Europe (73% of known causes).

**Figure 3.15** Disaggregating motivations for criminal violence in the Americas 2011

| | Americas (n: 11 countries) | Asia (n: 6 countries) | Europe (n: 9 countries) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gangs and organized crime | 26 | 14 | 6 |
| Robbery and theft | 11 | 18 | 4 |
| Intimate partner and family | 8 | 28 | 27 |
| Other | 35 | 31 | 38 |
| Unknown | 21 | 9 | 23 |

Source: Krause, Muggah and Gilgen (2011)

Latin America is facing a major crisis with its penal system. Virtually every country in Latin America is facing a challenge with prison overpopulation, excessive pre-trial detention, and a deterioration in services. Prison violence is explosive – especially in Central America and South America. In Chile, Mexico and Peru, over 75% of surveyed inmates report feeling less safe in prison then where they lived before being incarcerated. There are also major challenges with recidivism.

Latin America is one of the planet's most urbanized regions. Three of its mega-cities are among the world's largest – Buenos Aires, Mexico and Sao Paulo. Sprawling metropolises like Bogota, Lima and Rio de Janeiro are not far behind. These cities are complex, competitive and dynamic. Many Latin American cities also suffer from what some scholars refer to as "peripheralization" – they are fragmented, segregated and exclusionary. In a word, they are fragile.

The bulk of Latin America's urbanization is not occurring in mega-cities. In addition to the massive cities and conurbations up and down Latin America's Atlantic and Pacific coastlines, there are another 310 cities with populations over 250,000 and another 16,000 smaller towns. Today, 82% of the population lives in cities. Already some 93% of Venezuelans, 92.5% of Argentinians and Uruguayans, 90.6% of Brazilians, and 89.3% of Chileans live in cities.

Owing to high rates of urbanization, there is a high level of concentration of criminal violence in Latin American cities. Not surprisingly, there are comparatively high rates of crime in urban and peri-urban areas.[33] By 2016, the region was home to 44 of the 50 most murderous cities on earth. Cities in El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and Guatemala were at the top of the charts. Meanwhile, Brazil featured 27 cities on the list in 2016, most of them clustered along the northern and eastern coast. Not surprisingly, urban dwellers single out insecurity as their over-riding priority.

32 See Ortega and Sanguinetti (2014) (p. 55).

33 See Muggah and Szabó (2016).

There are some Latin American countries and cities reporting significantly lower than average levels of criminal violence. It is important to underline that countries such as Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru and Nicaragua report comparatively low levels of homicide. There are also many cities registering extremely low levels of homicide – 100 times below the regional average (see Annex). Even so, a significant proportion of Latin Americans are concerned about insecurity. Public polling shows that half of all Latin Americans believe that security in their country has deteriorated.[34] In the past year, more than 65% of all Latin Americans decided against going out at night because of fears of insecurity and another 13% decided to relocate because of fear of becoming a victim of crime.[35]

Latin America consistently reports the highest levels of fear and insecurity in the world, according to major perception surveys. Between 2008-2015 Latin America consistently scored as the region where residents felt the least secure in their communities. By contrast, residents of Southeast Asia, North America, East Asia and Europe scored as the most secure. Latin Americans report feeling unsafe in their countries.[36] Latin America features five of the ten most unsafe countries for citizens. When asked if they feel safe, just 14% of Venezuelans, 36% of Salvadorans, 36% of Dominicans, 40% of Peruvians and 40% Mexicans responded affirmatively.

According to polling companies, Latin Americans also express exceedingly low confidence in their police forces. Just 19% of Venezuelans reported being confident in the police in 2015 – the lowest score of any country on the planet. By comparison, 32% of Afghans and 32% of Syrians report being confident in their police. These low scores have been confirmed by a range of researchers, including the International Police Science Association, which ranks Venezuela and Mexico at the bottom of its list.[37]

One of the reasons Latin Americans have a low opinion of their police and justice systems is because of the chronic levels of impunity. There is an exceedingly high rate of impunity associated with homicide (and many other crimes) in Latin America. To put the challenge in perspective, consider that roughly 80% of European homicides are “solved”. In Latin America, the proportion drops to around 50%, and even as low as 8% in some countries.

**Figure 3.16** Persons suspected and convicted per 100,000 homicides by region (2011 or latest year)

| Region | Suspected | Convicted |
|---|---|---|
| Americas (14 countries) | 52 | 24 |
| Asia (13 countries) | 155 | 48 |
| Europe (30 countries) | 100 | 81 |
| Global (60 countries) | 95 | 44 |

Source: UNCTS (2014)

More positively, there are some Latin American countries demonstrating improvements in the legitimacy of its institutions and citizen confidence. For example, Uruguay and Chile have registered important improvements – ranking 21 and 23 out of 169 countries tracked by transparency groups.[38] By contrast, Venezuela is ranked near the bottom at 158th.

34 See Vanderbilt University, *LAPOP Survey Data.*

35 See Clark, Grynspan and Muñoz (2013).

36 See Ray (2016).

37 See IPSA (2016).

38 See Navarez (2016).

**Figure 3.17** Ranking of selected Latin American countries by transparency (2016)

| Country | Ranking in transparency (out of 169) |
|---|---|
| Uruguay | 21 |
| Chile | 23 |
| Costa Rica | 37 |
| Cuba | 38 |
| El Salvador | 42 |
| Panama | 42 |
| Brazil | 76 |
| Peru | 88 |
| Mexico | 89 |
| Bolivia | 90 |
| Argentina | 91 |
| Ecuador | 92 |
| Honduras | 112 |
| Guatemala | 114 |
| Nicaragua | 115 |
| Paraguay | 115 |
| Venezuela | 158 |

Source: Navarez (2016)

# Section IV. Causes of crime and violence

There is a paradox at the center of Latin American´s criminal violence challenge. During the 2000s, there were important improvements – reductions in poverty (more than 80 million people rose above the poverty line from 2003-2012), declines in income inequality (over 14 countries experienced declines in Gini coefficient) and the expansion of the middle class and wider social and economic well-being. Yet at the same time, the prevalence of violence also rose in most countries, with few exceptions.[39] This contradiction – rising well-being and rising violence – suggests a high degree of complexity.[40]

A key finding is that the relationship between violent crime and overall development is not linear. According to the World Bank "homicide rates first increase as per capita income rises and then decline at high levels of per capital income".[41] This is because as income grows, the opportunity costs of crime also increase. There is also likely an increased demand for security and safety as levels of crime rise, forcing more investment in controlling crime.

Another key insight is that investments in social and economic development alone cannot necessarily reduce criminal violence. It turns out that the size of the middle class and levels of poverty are not on their own statistical determinants of violence trends. What seems to matter is the speed of development: a 1% increase in the growth rate of GDP correlates with 0.24 fewer homicides per 100,000. This suggests that the speed of growth is a "protective factor", reducing the benefits of crime.

39 See Muggah (2015).

40 See Chioda (2017) and Muggah (2015).

41 See Chioda (2017).

The factors shaping crime incidence are of course multi-causal. And while there is no single monolithic cause, several factors stand out. One of them is the relationship between youth unemployment and violent crime. Panel surveys have shown that a 1% increase in youth unemployment leads to an additional 0.34 additional homicides per 100,000 people.[42] The reason for this is that youth are especially susceptible to predation and criminal behavior, and the benefits of engagement in the criminal market are higher than the formal market. It is important to stress, however, that employment alone may be insufficient to deter involvement in crime. There is research suggesting that it is not just the quantity, but more the quality, of labor that matters.

Low rates of education achievement are also frequently correlated with higher exposure to criminal violence. Latin America has expanded access to schools and improved literacy rates, but drop-out rates are still high and school quality is low. The non-completion of school – especially secondary education – is strongly correlated with delinquency. Studies from Bogota indicate that age and educational attainment are key factors shaping violent crime exposure, and that targeted support for permanent income can play an important deterrent role in criminal involvement.

There have been demographic changes, including in number of single-headed female households. Number of households headed by single mothers has doubled from 7.3% in 1970 to 15% in 2000. This has resulted in a larger rate of parental absence and abandonment, including lower supervision of children. Without adequate childcare options as well as educational, recreational and social programs, children are more prone to negative peer-influences and high risk behavior. Children that are systematically neglected and exposed to delinquent peer groups are more likely to end up in prisons. Interventions that focus on supporting positive early childhood development, parenting skills, and engagement in social programs (particularly for adolescents) can be cost-effective.

It is often clusters of factors that contribute to rising criminal violence. Certain socio-economic factors significantly influence criminal violence. In Mexico City[43], for example, economic inequality and broken families play a strong role, while in Monterrey[44] youth unemployment, the absence of schools, and the concentration of young males are especially salient. In Ciudad Juarez being a migrant, over 15 years old, living near vacant housing and in areas with limited access to water are all strongly correlated with high homicide rates.[45] In Medellin, crowded, cluttered and smaller dwellings are especially vulnerable to homicide. Another study from Medellin revealed that a 1% increase in permanent income produces an average 0.4% decrease in the homicide rate.[46]

There are also several factors that while often associated with crime, do not have a strong statistical influence. For example, there is not necessarily a strong empirical relationship between criminal violence and illegal drug consumption. Indeed, there is often a false association between people involved with drugs and their propensity to commit crimes. Rather, there may be a stronger relationship between people involved with growing, producing and selling drugs on the one hand, and the negative consequences and collateral damage of the state´s war on drugs.

There is, however, a strong relationship between alcohol abuse and violent behavior. These relationships are present in neighborhood and household surveys, as well as in prison studies. Surveys in 12 Latin American countries show a heavy involvement of alcohol in cases where women were victims of intimate partner violence. Where restrictions on alcohol consumption were introduced – as in Diadema (Brazil) or Bogota (Colombia) – there were corresponding decreases in violent crime.

42 See Chioda (2017).

43 See Vilalta and Muggah (2016).

44 See Téllez and Medellín (2014).

45 See Vilalta and Muggah (2016).

46 See Urrego, Gómez and Velasquez (2016).

The relative strength of governance and state institutions also plays a role in shaping criminal violence in several Latin American cities. There is some evidence that where law enforcement institutions are overwhelmed - as in a case reported in Sao Paulo - homicide rates can escalate.[47] By contrast, where police deployments are carefully targeted, as the case of Bogota and Barranquilla shows, homicide rates can be diminished.[48] Confidence in public institutions – especially the police – is exceedingly low. LAPOP surveys in 2014 indicate that just 16% of Latin American respondents have no confidence in police. In Belize, Guyana and Venezuela, the ratio rises to 30%. The police forces are also consistently ranked as the least valued public institution by young Latin Americans.

**Figure 4.1** Confidence in Latin American institutions (2015-2016)

| | 2015 | 2016 | 1995-2016 (average) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Church | 69 | 66 | 69 |
| Armed forces | 44 | 50 | NA |
| Police | 36 | 38 | 39 |
| Electoral institutions | 44 | 32 | NA |
| Government | 33 | 28 | 37 |
| Judicial system | 30 | 26 | 32 |
| Congress | 27 | 26 | 31 |
| Political parties | 20 | 17 | 22 |

Source: Corporación Latinobarómetro (2016)

Throughout Latin America, public confidence in the criminal justice system is also exceedingly low – with the exception of the Dominican Republic, Panama and Nicaragua, over half of all Latin Americans expressed little to no faith in their court systems. A measure of faith in criminal justice is the extent of reporting of crime. As previously noted, there is a low level of reporting in crime in Latin America. Only a tiny proportion of women involved in sexual violence report the incident to law enforcement.

Partly as a result of this crisis of confidence, Latin Americans are turning increasingly to private institutions – especially private security guards – to shore-up their safety. There is a higher ratio of security guards than police across Latin America: 3.8 million private guards to an estimated 2.6 million police officers. In countries such as Guatemala the ratio is even more extreme – there are 19,900 officers as compared to 120,000 private security guards.

There is a widespread acceptance for punitive approaches to dealing with crime. For example, growing numbers of citizens are calling for the lowering of the age of criminal responsibility. Likewise, vigilantism continues to be a common practice, with over 30% of the population accepting “taking the law into their own hands” in Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic.[49]

47 See Clark and McGrath (2007).

48 See Garza, Nieto, and Gutiérrez (2009).

49 See Vanderbilt University, *Latin American Public Opinion Project.*

# Section V. Costs of crime and violence

There is a statistically significant relationship between higher levels of insecurity and lower levels of development. Where levels of violence are higher, there tends to be less economic productivity and growth.[50] There are also signs that countries and cities exhibiting high rates of inequality and low growth are susceptible to above-average rates of crime.[51] Many Latin Americans also associate various forms of violence with under-development.

Specifically, when asked what kinds of violence are most disruptive to development in their country, 63% of Latin Americans cited intimate partner violence, 60% noted violence against children, 59% mentioned street violence and 51% emphasized organized crime and gangs. By way of contrast, when asked what types of violence were most common, 35% cited street violence, 23% cited armed gangs, 22% noted intimate partner violence and 16% pointed to violence against children.[52]

There are several ways to measure the economic costs of criminal violence. They can be based on the expenditures devoted to police and private security as well as the attendant social and economic – both welfare and productivity - losses associated with crime and victimization. By every estimate, the costs are exceedingly high in Latin America. Indeed, the share of public expenditures on law enforcement and private security as a function of total spending in Latin America is double that of OECD countries.[53]

**Figure 5.1** Mean crime costs of Latin American in perspective (2015)

| Country | Percentage of GDP |
|---|---|
| Germany | 1.34 |
| Canada | 1.39 |
| Australia | 1.76 |
| France | 1.87 |
| United Kingdom | 2.55 |
| United States | 2.75 |
| LAC | 3.55 |

Source: Jaitman et al. (2015)

The economic burden of criminal violence in Latin America is considerable. This can be assessed by examining the costs, expenditures, losses and investments incurred by households, firms and public agencies. The regional costs for 2010-14 average 3.5% of GDP, double that of developed regions. They range from 1.9-6.5% of GDP, though they range from country to country. In some Central American countries, for example, the cost of violence is double the regional average. In Honduras, the costs rise to 6.5% of GDP and in El Salvador 6.1%. By contrast, in some South American countries they are less than half the regional average. Meanwhile, some countries are at the other end, including Mexico (1.9%) and Uruguay (2.2%).[54]

50 See Krause, Muggah and Gilgen (2011).

51 See Krause, Muggah and Gilgen (2011).

52 See Corporación Latinobarómeter (2016).

53 See Jaitman et al. (2015).

54 See Jaitman (2017).

**Figure 5.2** Overall crime-related costs by subregion (2014, per cent of GDP)

| Region | % |
|---|---|
| Central America | 4.2 |
| Caribbean | 3.6 |
| Andean Region | 3.1 |
| Southern Cone | 3.0 |
| LAC Average | 3.5 |

Source: Jaitman (2017)

In monetary terms, the costs of criminal violence run into the hundreds of billions of dollars for the region. The total costs of criminal violence for seventeen countries in the region are estimated at between $114.5 and $170.4 billion a year. This translates into roughly $300 per capita. In Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas the costs rise to $1,189 and $1,176 per capita respectively). Countries like Argentina, Chile, Brazil and El Salvador are all double the per capita average.[55] Taken together, the costs of crime in the region are twice the average costs in developed countries.[56] Central America exhibits the highest costs of crime, followed by the Caribbean.

Investments in citizen security across Latin America appear to be inefficient. A recent study estimates that Latin American governments spent between $55 and $70 billion on public security – police, justice and prisons – in 2014, with a much smaller proportion devoted to "citizen security" measures.[57] Government spending on public security across Latin America is on average a third of the amount spent on health and education[58], but still between two and three times higher than in developed countries. While spending on health and education is positively correlated with improved outcomes in most Latin American countries, there have not been similar gains in public security and safety. Countries with equivalent levels of expenditure on public security may have radically divergent security outcomes.

There is steadily increasing expenditure on prisons in Latin America. These costs are due to both public spending on prison administration and foregone income of inmate population. Prison costs are rising because of the expansion of mass incarceration across the region: the prison population rose from 101.2 inmates per 100,000 in 1995 to 218.5 per 100,000 by 2012 – an increase of 116%.[59] Over the same period expenditures on prisons increased from $4.3 billion in 2010 to $7.8 billion in 2014. Meanwhile the costs of incarceration also increased from roughly $5.8 billion in 2010 to more than $8.4 billion in 2014 – a 45% increase. Taken together, the overall losses are on average $13.8 billion a year to the region, or 0.39% of GDP.[60]

55 See Jaitman et al. (2015).

56 Specific clusters of countries are driving the high costs in each sub-region. In Central America, the high expenditures on private security is shaped by El Salvador and Honduras. In the Andean region Colombia is the key driver, while in South America, it is Brazil and Venezuela that are driving up expenditures. See Jaitman et al. (2015).

57 Ibid.

58 See Jaitman et al. (2015).

59 Yet crime also doubled during this period from a regional homicide rate of 13 to 26 per 100,000.

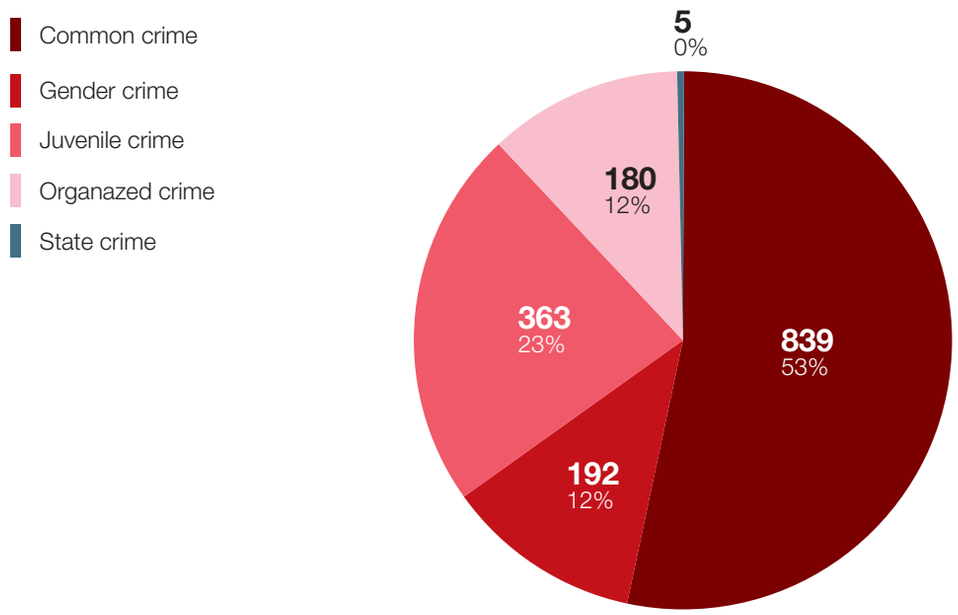
60 The costs obviously vary from country to country. In countries such as Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, the costs of prison administration are higher than the losses arising from incarceration. In other countries such as Brazil, Ecuador, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru and El Salvador, income losses are higher than spending on prisons.

There are comparatively few empirically robust evaluations of citizen security measures in Latin America. From sample of 304 interventions (23% of the total), only 20 (7%) were designated as 'formal' scientific impact evaluations.[61] Impact evaluations of citizen security interventions were most commonly pursued in Colombia, Chile and Brazil. All but one of the evaluations identified a positive outcome. Another 67 interventions featured monitoring systems that 'reported results' in a standardized and convincing (21% of the sub-sample) manner. In these cases, the supporters of the intervention maintained documentation of outcomes (such as the number of beneficiaries, or some statement on results).

# Section VI. Strategies

Although affected by high rates of criminal violence, there are a growing number of examples of Latin American countries, states and cities registering improvements. Many of these strategies were initiated at the municipal scale, demonstrating positive reductions in homicide, violent crime and victimization. Virtually all of these citizen security initiatives were accompanied with a clear set of over-arching objectives and targets, an integrated and inter-sector strategy, a strong data-collection capability, and clearly defined responsibilities across implementing partners.[62]

**Figure 5.3** Citizen security interventions in Latin America, by target threat (1998-2015, n: 1,100+)

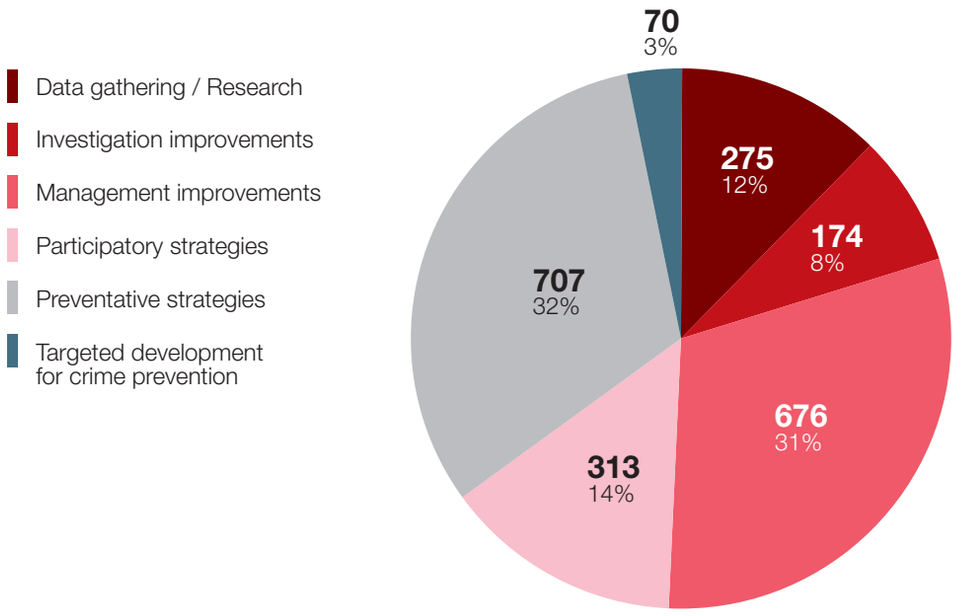



Source: See Igarapé Institute, *Citizen Security Dashboard*

61 By *formal* evaluations we mean evaluations employing a 'scientific methodology' using a counterfactual (e.g. experimental, quasi-experimental, and case study-based design). To be included, the findings of a given evaluation must detect a positive effect of the intervention in achieving the objective (cause–effect).

62 See Muggah and Szabó (2016). See also Cano and Rojido (2016).

**Figure 5.4** Citizen security interventions in Latin America, by strategies (1998-2015, n: 1,100+)




Source: See Igarapé Institute, *Citizen Security Dashboard*

**Figure 6.1** Distribution of citizen security interventions in LAC (1998-2015, n: 1,100+)

| Country | Rate |
|---|---|
| Colombia | 271 |
| Regional | 229 |
| Brazil | 202 |
| Guatemala | 100 |
| Nicaragua | 81 |
| Honduras | 69 |
| El Salvador | 65 |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 31 |
| Mexico | 29 |
| Chile | 29 |
| Jamaica | 24 |
| Argentina | 22 |
| Panama | 21 |
| Costa Rica | 17 |

| Country | Rate |
|---|---|
| Peru | 15 |
| Venezuela | 11 |
| Uruguay | 9 |
| Ecuador | 9 |
| Bolivia | 8 |
| Belize | 6 |
| Guyana | 4 |
| Haiti | 4 |
| Paraguay | 3 |
| Dominican Republic | 2 |
| The Bahamas | 2 |
| Barbados | 1 |
| Saint Kitts and Nevis | 1 |
| Puerto Rico | 1 |

Source: Muggah and Szabó (2016)

Citizen security initiatives are often pursued at the regional, national, state and municipal levels. The most effective are aligned – bringing together a combination of financial and institutional resources from all levels. A review of citizen security programs in over 20 countries suggests that the majority – approximately 43% - are "national" level interventions. The next most common level of intervention are municipal interventions – accounting for roughly 27%. The remainder of interventions were pursued at the regional (18%) and state (12%) scale. This also reflects financing structures which tend to prefer national level bodies.

**Figure 6.2** Levels of citizen security engagement (1998-2015, n: 1,100+)

| | Interventions |
|---|---|
| City | 347 |
| National | 537 |
| Regional | 229 |
| State | 152 |

Source: Muggah and Szabó (2016)

For example, Colombia´s 'Plan Nacional de Vigilancia Comunitaria por Cuadrantes' shows how focused police interventions, real-time crime monitoring, and prevention can help prevent and contain local crime. The program applied community-driven and problem-oriented policing approaches to strengthen neighborhood trust. Evaluations have shown that the strategy led to an 18% reduction in homicide, an 11% decline in personal assault and a 22% decline in car thefts. [63]

Meanwhile, Rio de Janeiro's Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora (UPP) also involved a combination of proximity policing and social interventions to curb homicidal violence. These strategies mobilized metrics focused on murder reduction, improvements in police training, and strategies to better outreach to poorly serviced communities. Between 2009 and 2014 the intervention is associated with reductions of homicide of between 50 and 78.[64] What is more, police killings also declined precipitously, though have climbed back somewhat in recent years.[65]

Another comprehensive intervention is "Todos Somos Juárez" which was initiated in 2010 to address violence in Ciudad Juárez. The program adopted a range of strategies, including community policing and targeted social prevention. It is considered to have significantly reduced homicide in the metropolitan area.[66]According to local government officials, homicides have been reduced by 70% since the program was launched.[67]

63 See FIP (2012).

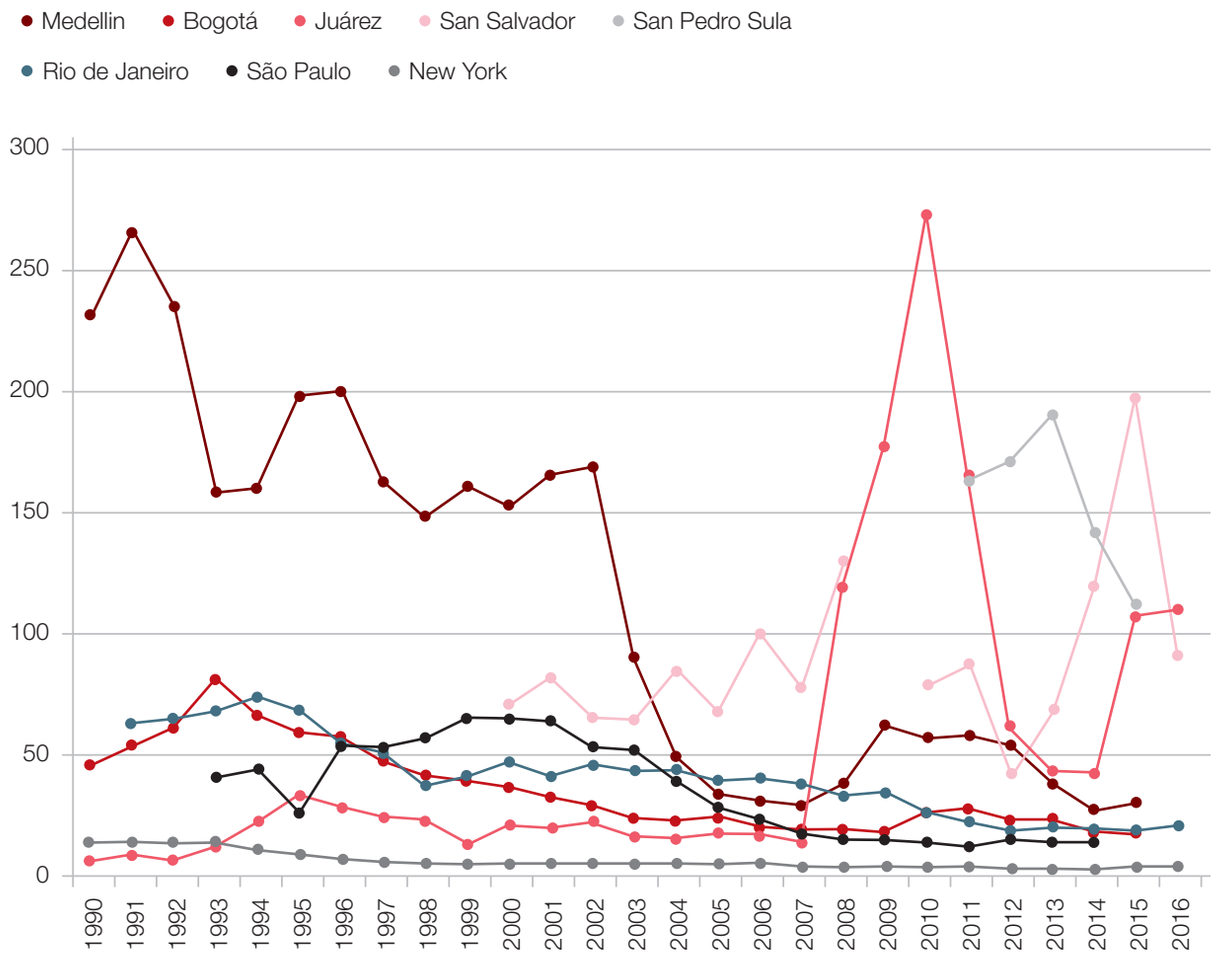
64 See Averbuck (2012) and Cano et al. (2012).

65 See Magaloni, Melo and Franco (2015).

66 See Cano and Rojido, (2016).

67 See Martínez (2013).

**Figure 6.3** Homicide rates (per 100,000) in selected Latin American cities (1990-latest year)




Source: Igarapé Institute, Homicide Monitor

Notwithstanding the spread of citizen security innovations across Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico over the past decade, there is still persistent support for punitive and repressive approaches to fighting crime in Latin America. Many governments still pursue policies that favor mass incarceration, emphasizing the importance of lowering the age of criminal responsibility, building prisons and stiffening penalties. There also continues to be a disproportionate focus on penalizing drug-related crimes, including possession and consumption. This has resulted in sky-rocketing prison populations, including non-violent male and female offenders.

Even so, citizen security efforts have generated remarkable successes across Latin America.[68] Once notoriously violent cities such as Bogota, San Pedro Sula, Sao Paulo and Medellin have witnessed a 70-90% drop in murder over the past two decades.[69] While offering a glimpse of what is possible, these experiences are still rare. The challenges are monumental: half of the region's 300 largest cities feature homicide rates that are at least five times the global average. What is required is a comprehensive vision of citizen security that accounts for multiple levels of government and multi-sector interventions. These measures require reliable and high-quality data and analysis, developed in partnership with affected communities.

68 See Muggah and Szabó (2016) and Muggah et al. (2016).

69 See Muggah and Alvarado (2016).

What are the ingredients of success? While every situation is different, key ingredients include crafting a clear strategy with a determined focus on high-risk places, people and behaviors. A significant part of the solution requires addressing the specific risks– persistent inequality, youth unemployment, weak security and justice institutions, and organized crime groups fueled by drug trafficking. There are also several practices - including focused deterrence strategies, cognitive therapy for at risk youth, early childhood and parenting support and targeted efforts to reduce concentrated poverty – with a positive track record.[70]

There are signs of a shift to more citizen security oriented approaches, but they need more support.[71] Their usefulness needs to be demonstrated on both empirical and cost-effectiveness grounds. Robust impact evaluations are critical, as are opportunities for Latin American policy makers to share experiences. Innovative financing mechanisms are also urgently required if the funding gaps are to be bridged. A number of core principles for citizen security programming stand out.

**Define a clear vision, set of priorities and targets.** The most successful citizen security measures articulated a coherent vision, defined clear objectives, and set out targets and metrics to measure outcomes. Measuring and communicating results to the public is equally important so as to demonstrate a high degree of accountability and transparency. Ensuring sustained commitment to plans, programs and projects – and adjusting where necessary – is virtually always a key ingredient to achieving positive results.

**Move beyond the law and order approach**. Criminal justice – especially police, courts and prisons – are unable to deter and contain violent crime on their own. Indeed, there is growing evidence that the severity of sanctions has a weak deterrent effect on criminal offending. Longer sentences and harsher prison conditions also have unintended consequences, including increased recidivism. To reduce reoffending, it is essential that inmates receive more education and support in life-skills, self-discipline and job training.

**Invest in preventive measures.** Interventions that focus on primary, secondary and tertiary prevention can have both short- and medium- to longer-term impacts on reducing criminal violence. Programs that invest in quality job training, specific skills development, youth mentoring, rehabilitative therapy, school retention, preventing early teenage pregnancy, especially women´s empowerment are especially effective.

**Emphasize specific types of employment opportunities for high-risk groups**. Not all employment has the same "protective" benefits. The quality of employment for young male youth – especially jobs that are formal, offer opportunities for wage growth and advancement and intensive skills formation - is key. By way of contrast, early, transient and low-quality employment (e.g. low-skill and low-paying informal jobs) can actually be a risk factor. Put another way, early intensive attachment to the labor market can be counterproductive.

**Experiment with alternatives to incarceration**. There are signs that prisons can do more harm than good for offenders, especially young people. This is because of the costs in terms of lost education and productivity, but also because of criminogenic effects – the fact that young people tend to be more susceptible to organized crime networks in prisons. The decriminalization of low levels of drug possession and consumption together with proportionate and alternate sentencing procedures is critical. Likewise, electronic monitoring of convicts also appears to have a more positive effect than incarceration leading to a 50% drop in recidivism in Argentina, a massive saving to society.[72]

70 See Muggah et al. (2016).

71 See Ortega and Sanguinetti (2014).

72 See Di Tella and Schargrodsky (2013).

**Focus resources on hot spots.** Where there is social disorganization and opportunities for crime, it is likely to be more prolific. Owing to the way crime is hyper-concentrated, resources are best spent targeting specific high-risk places, people and behaviors. This in turn depends on having access to quality information on the distribution of criminal violence and underlying correlates. What is also exceedingly important is strengthening institutions to build positive relationships with affected neighborhoods.[73]

**Invest in focused deterrence and problem-oriented policing.** The refocusing of policing assets on areas of high concentration of crime is widely associated with reductions in criminal violence. It is critical, however, that police are appropriately sized and that sanctions are enforced – the certainty of sanctions has a more robust deterrent effect than their severity. Likewise, policing strategies that privilege the identification, analysis, response to and evaluation of strategies to address crime are also to be supported. Activities that improve the likelihood of apprehension and reduce criminal activity are key.[74]

**Reinforce social cohesion and collective efficacy in communities**. Because of the hyper-concentrated nature of crime and violence, it is important to build resilience in chronically affected areas. Strengthening community pride, social cohesion and neighborhood controls - including the relationships and norms shaping behavior – is critical.[75] This can be enhanced through specific changes in the built environment – CPTED – especially creating open/safe public spaces, high quality housing, and even street lights which can improve community pride and cohesion.

**Enhance citizen participation in the selection, design, implementation and evaluation of interventions**. Civil society – including social movements, neighborhood groups, scholars, the private sector and media – all have a central role to play in citizen security. Citizens must be consulted in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of interventions. Civic groups can reinforce government accountability and play a watch-dog function, support monitoring and surveillance of interventions, communicate campaigns and messages that emphasize anti-stigmatization, and strengthen skills of public sector counterparts.

**Explore innovative financing mechanism**. Given tightening austerity around the world, Latin American government and societies need to develop new tools and partnerships to finance citizen security. Cities will need to use greater discretion to issue debt, introduce taxes and establish strategic public-private partnerships. Social impact bonds – there are already 20 around the world targeting criminal justice reform, domestic violence prevention and recidivism reduction – will be key. There are already examples in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Mexico.[76]

**Invest in new technologies for public safety, but be sure to evaluate outcomes**. The revolution in technology and processing is also precipitating a radical upgrade of law enforcement and prevention. Big data analytics – including COMPSTAT-style data monitoring systems, predictive policing, gunshot detection systems, together with body-worn cameras are changing how police work is conducted. There is a rapid spread of real-time crime monitoring platforms across the Americas as well as experimentation with new ways to improve police accountability. A major priority is evaluating them using robust methods to assess their overall impact and cost-effectiveness.

73 See Muggah et al (2017).

74 By contrast, rapid-response policing and broken window approaches are less effective.

75 See Chioda (2017).

76 See Social Finance, *Impact Bond Global Database.*