

# Latin America Public Security Index 2013

Key  
1 (Safe) — 5 (Dangerous)

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1



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**Regional Summary**





Due to its relatively strong growth over the past years, Latin America has made some advancement as a whole in social inclusion, as well as in the fight against crime, in certain countries, leading to an improvement in public security.

Growth slowed somewhat in 2012 and, at the beginning of 2013, lagged behind other emerging markets. However, growth in Latin America still is ahead of the developed world, and the region is more stable now than it has been in many decades.

Drug trafficking and the cartels that spring from such activity continue to wreak havoc on a number of Central American countries, as well as on Mexico. This is not expected to change in the short term, although it appears President Enrique Peña Nieto will try to apply new strategies to attack the problem that should lower the level of overall cartel-related violence in the country. Political instability, another problem that historically has plagued the region, has dropped significantly over the past several years and currently is not a major factor in public insecurity in most Latin American countries.

**Country Specific Comments**

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|  <p><b>Haiti</b></p>  | <p><b>Public Insecurity</b></p> <p><b>5</b></p> | <p><b>Public Insecurity Trend</b></p>  <p>Public insecurity is increasing</p> |
| <p>The situation has improved since the earthquake of January 2010, but there remains a lot of damage to infrastructure, including electricity, health services, roads and water supplies. More than half a million earthquake victims continue to live in tents and other temporary structures. The areas most affected are the center of Port-au-Prince and outward. Despite peacekeeping efforts (conducted by the United Nations), there are high levels of criminal activity and violence throughout the country, including a growing risk of kidnapping. Port-au-Prince in February of last year reached 60.9 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, the highest rate since 2006. Governance of the country is tenuous at best. Companies in the construction industry continue to use private executive protection firms due to the high risk of kidnapping and violence.</p> |   |  |




# Honduras

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| <p><b>Public Insecurity</b></p> <h2 style="font-size: 2em;">5</h2> | <p><b>Public Insecurity Trend</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Public insecurity is increasing</p> </div> </div> |
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At the beginning of 2012, Operation Hammer was launched. It is a multinational initiative that is part of the strategy of regional security supported by the U.S. government to combat transnational organized crime in Honduras. Due to heavy drug cartel activity, Honduras is losing control of large portions of its national territory, similar to what happened to Colombia in past decades. Statistics in the country indicate that by the end of 2011, just 23 months after President Porfirio Lobo took office, there had been 12,838 homicides. Some studies report that of the 3 million weapons circulating illegally in Central America, 800,000 are in Honduras. In 2012, the total number of homicides increased, the rate sitting at 85.5 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. This establishes 2012 as Honduras' most violent year on record.



# El Salvador

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| <p><b>Public Insecurity</b></p> <h2 style="font-size: 2em;">4</h2> | <p><b>Public Insecurity Trend</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Public security is fairly stable but change possible</p> </div> </div> |
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During 2012, the National Civil Police registered 2,576 murders. If we compare this rate with 2011 (4,371 homicides), that represents a reduction of 41 percent. The decline is due to a sort of truce between the largest gang bosses and representatives from church and government. In April 2012, a statement was declared to end violence and a pledge was made to freeze recruitment of new adolescent members. Criminal rates are decreasing to approximately five a day from more than a dozen prior to the truce. April 14, 2012 marked the first day in three years that El Salvador recorded no homicides. Nevertheless, the country remains one of the five most dangerous countries in Central America. The private sector has low levels of trust in law enforcement authorities and the judicial system.




# Venezuela

**Public Insecurity**

## 5



**Public Insecurity Trend**



Public insecurity is increasing

To an already spiraling public insecurity problem, we now can add political uncertainty — since the death of President Chávez — to the equation when evaluating the stability of Venezuela. Escalating levels of violence are placing increasing unfulfilled demands on the Venezuelan government, as well as a high depreciation of the bolívar along with fiscal tightening measures. The Venezuelan Observatory on Violence has released its study on homicides during 2012, which put the national rate at 73 per 100,000 of the population, with Caracas registering 122 per 100,000.



The study was conducted by the NGO working with six national universities. Statistics show that total homicides during 2012 were 21,692, a significant increase from 2011 (19,336 murders), which was the most violent year on record. Further, there is an increasing number in all categories of kidnappings but, specifically, those considered to be of a violent or fatal nature.

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|  <h2 style="margin: 0;">Mexico</h2>  |   |
| <p><b>Public Insecurity</b></p> <h1 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">5</h1>   | <p><b>Public Insecurity Trend</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <p>Public insecurity is increasing</p> </div> |
| <p>In 2012, five of the 10 most dangerous cities in the world were located in Mexico according to the Mexican Citizen Council for Public Safety and Criminal Justice. The country saw an average of 72 kidnappings per day throughout 2012 according to specialized non-governmental organizations (NGO), presenting a large discrepancy with official statistics, also giving it one of the highest kidnapping rates in the world. Enrique Peña Nieto, the new president of Mexico, has made security an administration priority. He has retained the services of Gen. Naranjo of Colombia to advise on combatting the drug cartels. Peña Nieto's Plan Nacional de Seguridad is focused on prevention, intelligence and the creation of a gendarmerie numbering 10,000. He has stated he will seek to protect the population and thus distance himself from the violence seen during the Calderón administration.</p> <p>The Peña Nieto administration has taken aggressive early steps in battling insecurity that have led to some indicators improving such as the homicide rate, as well as an upgrade in the public perception. However, sustainable advancement implies a long-term process that may take years.</p> |   |

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|  <h2 style="margin: 0;">Brazil</h2>   |  |
| <p><b>Public Insecurity</b></p> <h1 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">4</h1>   | <p><b>Public Insecurity Trend</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <p>Public security is fairly stable but change possible</p> </div> |
| <p>Brazil continues carrying out a fight against organized crime in the sectors considered hotspots in terms of criminality such as Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and major metropolitan areas in the northeast. While there was a slowdown in the macroeconomic growth rates in the country in 2012 (1 percent of gross domestic product), Brazil remains the largest economy in South America, and 2013 should be better in terms of economic growth (closer to 3 percent). President Dilma Rousseff's government plans to continue to implement initiatives on social inclusion, allocate greater investment in education and health, and outline a clear line of action toward public security. There has been a marked reduction in homicides and criminality in general in southern Brazil. Unfortunately, this has been accompanied by a marked increase in both categories in the northeast area of the country. At the national level, the State Department of Social Defense reported that violent crime rose 7.8 percent in 2012 compared with 2011. Over 71,500 violent crimes were registered in 2012, nearly 5,700 more than the previous year. Some regions of Brazil reported high crime levels for 2012 and the beginning of 2013 as well. São Paulo saw a dramatic 18.2 percent rise in homicides, the majority of which were the result of conflicts between local gangs and the police.</p> |  |

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| <div style="text-align: center;">  <h2 style="margin: 0;">Guatemala</h2> </div>   | <p><b>Public Insecurity</b></p> <h1 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">5</h1> | <p><b>Public Insecurity Trend</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <p>Public insecurity is increasing</p> </div> |
| <p>Corruption, drug trafficking, juvenile violence, Maras and a largely failed police reform continue to be at the center of public insecurity. The president of Guatemala, Otto Pérez, has "militarized" the fight against public insecurity by putting troops on the streets, especially near the northern border, to stop the Mexican cartels' activities. This may bring short-term benefits but has been severely criticized by the international community due to incidents of violence and repression of protests that have led to deaths. The war of the powerful Mexican drug cartels to gain territory to deliver drugs from South America to the United States and Europe has resulted in spreading the cartels' tactics to Guatemala, contributing to high crime rates all over the country.</p> |   |   |

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|  <h2>Nicaragua</h2>   |   |
| <p><b>Public Insecurity</b></p> <h1>3</h1>   | <p><b>Public Insecurity Trend</b></p>  <p>Public security is fairly stable but change possible</p> |
| <p>Nicaragua, despite its persistent poverty, continues to differentiate itself from neighboring countries El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala in terms of overall crime and homicide rates and is making some progress due to community policing and public-private partnerships.</p> |   |

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|  <h2>Colombia</h2>   |   |
| <p><b>Public Insecurity</b></p> <h1>4</h1>   | <p><b>Public Insecurity Trend</b></p>  <p>Public security is fairly stable but change possible</p> |
| <p>Colombia is undergoing a complex process of disarming the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) combined with the emergence of groups of organized crime formed by former paramilitaries that are expanding into drug trafficking. There was an increase in 2012 of attacks on infrastructure and on public security forces, although, in general, the indices of public security are rising in most metropolitan areas. Despite these issues in 2012, Colombia is the Latin American country with the most improvement in its public security over the past decade.</p> |   |

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|  <h2>Bolivia</h2>   |   |
| <p><b>Public Insecurity</b></p> <h1>4</h1>   | <p><b>Public Insecurity Trend</b></p>  <p>Public security is fairly stable but change possible</p> |
| <p>As much as 85 percent of crimes committed in Bolivia are not reported by their victims because of mistrust toward the police and the national judicial system according to a survey conducted by the Observatory of Public Security. In the drug trafficking landscape, the country continues to suffer a penetration of regional narcotics production and trafficking groups. The rise of drug production in Bolivia makes it the second largest supplier of cocaine to the Mexican cartels, after Colombia, based on information obtained from the Drug Enforcement Administration. The Bolivian government stated that in 2012, many thousands of hectares of coca were destroyed and that anti-narcotics police detained 3,794 people. This clearly is indicative of Bolivia's increasing importance as a supplier of narcotics for international and regional organized crime.</p> |   |

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|  <h2>Argentina</h2>   |   |
| <p><b>Public Insecurity</b></p> <h1>3</h1>  | <p><b>Public Insecurity Trend</b></p>  <p>Public security is fairly stable but change possible</p> |
| <p>Argentina continues to suffer a systematic lack of updated crime statistics. The numbers published are from previous years, and the information has not been updated. Nevertheless, the stable Public Insecurity Trend in relation to the high rates of urban crime continues especially in metropolitan areas. There has been a slight increase in social protests and high-profile kidnappings and robbery attempts, but, overall, rates appear to have remained steady. The presence of drug cartel representatives in the country has become noticeable. Argentina's security minister has stated that Colombian and Mexican drug traffickers operating in the country represent a growing threat.</p> |   |

## Panama

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| <p><b>Public Insecurity</b></p> <h1 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">3</h1> | <p><b>Public Insecurity Trend</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <p>Public security is stable</p> </div> |
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Panama saw improvement in its public insecurity indicators in 2012. Reports from the Integrated National Crime Statistics suggest that in the two years and five months that the office of the Ministry of Public Security has been operational, the crime rate has decreased from 24 to 13.5 for every 100,000 inhabitants, and controls have been implemented to reduce the passage of drugs through Panama. The country is investing heavily in technology to assist in lowering crime rates.

## Chile, Uruguay & Costa Rica

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| <p><b>Public Insecurity</b></p> <h1 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">2</h1> | <p><b>Public Insecurity Trend</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <p>Public security is stable</p> </div> |
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These countries have maintained reasonable levels of public security in their territories and major cities. Uruguay is moving toward a legalization of marijuana, which it hopes will assist in reducing drug-related organized crime. Costa Rica is investing heavily in its police and in a strategy of deterrence and prevention through patrolling the streets, which is having positive results on reducing crime rates in general.

### Latin Security Index Latin American Countries 2012

| Country            | Public Insecurity | Public Insecurity Trend |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Haiti              | 5                 |                         |
| Venezuela          | 5                 |                         |
| Honduras           | 5                 |                         |
| Guatemala          | 5                 |                         |
| Mexico             | 5                 |                         |
| El Salvador        | 4                 |                         |
| Brazil             | 4                 |                         |
| Bolivia            | 4                 |                         |
| Colombia           | 4                 |                         |
| Dominican Republic | 3                 |                         |
| Paraguay           | 3                 |                         |
| Peru               | 3                 |                         |
| Ecuador            | 3                 |                         |
| Nicaragua          | 3                 |                         |
| Argentina          | 3                 |                         |
| Panama             | 3                 |                         |
| Uruguay            | 2                 |                         |
| Chile              | 2                 |                         |
| Costa Rica         | 2                 |                         |

**Index References:**

All rankings are from 1 to 5 by FTI Consulting Ibero America, 1 representing a safe country and 5 representing a very dangerous country. An upward arrow means public insecurity is increasing, zigzag means public security is fairly stable but change possible and a flat line means public security is stable. The ratings are based on official numbers from public security secretariats, local police, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and institutes of crime investigations.

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