

# Improving Citizen Security in Latin America: The Case for a Local Approach

Recent trends in urbanization in Latin America have presented a number of challenges, including increased levels of crime and violence. To address these problems effectively, policymakers in the United States and Latin America should take an urban, local approach.



of the world's 50 most dangerous cities are in Latin America

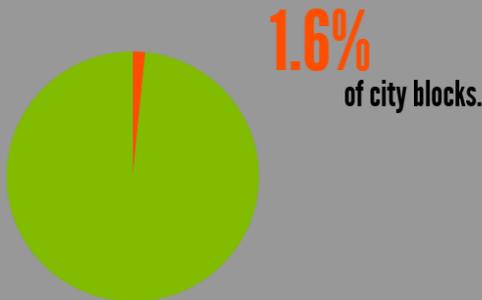


of Latin America's population live in urban areas

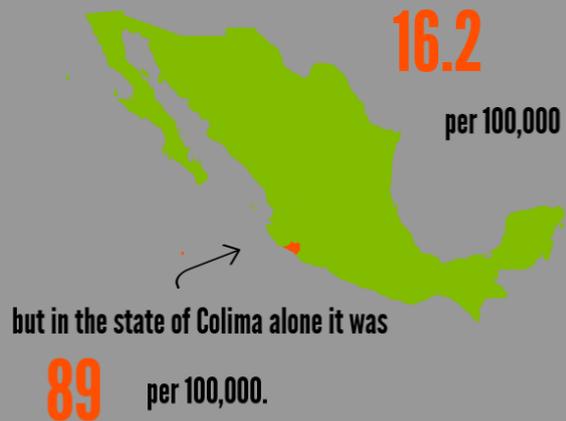


of offenders commit about 75 percent of crimes and aggressive behaviors

Crime tends to concentrate in specific locations. In a 2014 study of several Latin American cities by the Inter-American Development Bank, it was found that half of all homicides happen in only



National-level homicide statistics can mask local patterns. According to Insight Crime, in 2014 Mexico's overall homicide rate was only



## Preventing Urban Violence: A Success Story from Cali, Colombia

When Dr. Rodrigo Guerrero was elected mayor of Cali, Colombia, in the early 1990s, the city suffered from high levels of violence. Guerrero, an epidemiologist by training, collected and analyzed data to create a strategy for preventing crime & violence.



He found the main causes of violence were not drug trafficking and organized crime, but rather alcohol consumption and the availability of firearms.

His approach focused on curtailing these factors.



**30%**

Guerrero's method was extremely effective, resulting in a 30% reduction in the city's murder rate between 1994 and 1998.

## Policy Recommendations



**Emphasize urban & local solutions to crime and violence, since it tends to be concentrated in specific locations, behaviors, and among individuals.**



**Prioritize addressing violence caused by common crime, which many experts believe is responsible for the majority of violence that citizens experience.**



**Improve data collection on crime and violence to better understand and prevent it. This means improving police-community relations to increase crime reporting rates.**



**Use data analysis to inform policymaking and the design of intervention and prevention programs.**



**Address structural causes of high crime levels in the region such as poverty, inequality, and the lack of social support networks.**