



Police Shifts in Mexico

Insights on Working Conditions in Police Corporations

I. Objective

In 2019, *Causa en Común* conducted the survey “What Do Policemen Think?”. This research had the purpose of approaching the perception of police officers in Mexico regarding their professional situation. The survey has a special submodule focused on working conditions. Data shows the outrageous workloads in most corporations. This project also compares and analyzes, the remarkable differences in working conditions among states.

II. Context

In Mexico, policemen have, generally, long shifts and low salaries. On average, they work consecutive 24 hours, facing contexts of high crime and violence rates. The heavy workloads can generate negative effects on physical and mental health, with a set of symptoms known as “burnout” syndrome.

Police corporations suffer the lack of government’s attention, expressed in scarce infrastructure, inadequate equipment, and insufficient training. These factors contribute to work environments characterized by emotional fatigue, depersonalization, and a weak empathy with citizens.

III. Main findings

- The most reported shift (hours of work vs hours of rest) is 24 x 24 (29%). Other shifts are: 12 x 24, mentioned by 24%; 12 x 12 by 14%; 8 x 16 by 8%; and 24 x 48 by 5%. Around 4% report working in barracks.
- In 15 states, the most common shift is 12 x 12. In 12 states, the most common is 24 x 24. Only, in Baja California, police officers work 8 x 16 (the optimal shift).
- Even though the majority of states report workdays of 12 x 12, the most reported workday by officers is 24 x 24. This confirms that in the same corporation can coexist different schedules.
- Additionally to their working shifts, officers must work overtime. On average –and independently of the shift-, officers work four extra hours, daily. The reasons reported for this overtime, are: service duties (70%), “events” (16%), lack of personnel (15%), commissions (8%), filling out forms (7%), and as a punishment (2%), and others (5%).
- Some officers reported that they must perform activities not related to their job, such as personal “favors” for their chiefs (21%). This percentage is 5% higher than the 2018 survey result, and reflects that this situation not only persists, but also increases.
- Regarding compliance of established shifts, in Zacatecas, 86% of the officers report working overtime; in Mexico City, 76%; in Aguascalientes, 67%; and in Hidalgo, Baja California Sur, and



Oaxaca, 66% each. The states with a lower level of incomppliance are Yucatán, 23%; Coahuila, 36%; and Guanajuato, 37%.

- The majority of policemen suffer, in different grades, “burnout” syndrome, manifested, specifically, through emotional fatigue. The variables that influence, significantly, on emotional fatigue are lack of vocation; lack of working incentives; insufficient training; working schedules (strenuous workdays, overtime hours, no shifts by contract); and age.
- The states with the highest rates of emotional fatigue are Zacatecas, Sonora, Nuevo León, Chihuahua, and Hidalgo. The ones with the lowest rates are Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, and Baja California. It is not surprising that all of these states have, predominantly, shifts where resting hours double the working ones (24 x 48, 12 x 24, and 8 x 16 hours of work vs hours of rest, respectively).

IV. Basic proposals

- It is clear that working shifts for Mexican policemen must be modified by law.
- Labor rights must be established also by law, eliminating the constitutional provisions that place security personnel under a very restrictive scheme.
- However, these actions would be part of a long list of measures, like higher salaries and social benefits, sufficient and adequate equipment and infrastructure, and a meritocratic career, based on high level training and promotions.