



Underestimation of Crime in Mexico:

Crisis in Citizens' Reporting and Manipulation/Concealment of Information

I. **Objective:** To detect, classify, and explain anomalies on crime statistics that may reflect underestimation, manipulation, or concealment.

II. Data

The analysis considers the monthly crime statistics released by the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System (SESNSP, by its acronym in Spanish) which, in turn, is based on local prosecutors' offices' information. Seven crimes are analysed between December, 2018 and August, 2020:

- Homicide
- Femicide
- Kidnapping
- Extortion
- Robbery with violence
- Car theft with violence
- Domestic violence

III. Context

To address Mexico's security crisis, it is necessary to generate trustworthy statistics. However, official crime statistics are seriously flawed, because an extremely high proportion of crimes are not reported by citizens, and/or because authorities manipulate or conceal information. One of the consequences of this underreporting and manipulation, is that it generates the false idea that authorities and policies actually have an impact on crime.

IV. Main findings

- a) **Reduced number of registered crimes:** some states presented a much lower crime incidence between December, 2018 and August, 2020 than expected. For example:
- Baja California Sur and Tlaxcala only reported four femicides.



- Michoacán presented 15 cases of extortion and Tlaxcala, three. It is remarkable that Nayarit did not present records for extortion for twelve consecutive months (April 2019 - April 2020).
 - Yucatán and Colima did not report any car thefts with violence.
 - Tlaxcala reported only 25 cases of domestic violence.
- b) Drastic reductions in the number of registered crimes:** some states had reductions of more than 50% in certain crimes between the first eight months of 2019 and the same period of 2020. For example, Colima “reduced” by 80% its investigations of robberies with violence.
- c) Duplicate numbers of registered crimes:** some states presented the same number of crime records in consecutive months, in the same month of different years, or in different periods. For example:
- Morelos submitted 10 kidnapping records each month for three consecutive months: December, 2018; January, 2019; and February, 2019.
 - Coahuila presented 47 investigations of robberies with violence in March, 2019 and 47 in March, 2020.
 - Baja California Sur had 74 investigations of robberies with violence in February, 2019 and in February, 2020.
 - Michoacán registered 1,780 car thefts with violence from January to August, 2019 and 1,780, from January to August, 2020.
- d) Possible registry of serious crimes as less serious crimes:** some states had a decrease in serious crimes, but an increase in less serious crimes. For example, some of them presented significant reductions in the number of intentional homicides registered between the first eight months of 2019 and the first eight months of 2020, but a significant increase in the number of manslaughters:
- Jalisco registered 99 less intentional homicides (-5%), but 136 more manslaughters (+27%).
 - Sinaloa reported 34 less intentional homicides (-6%), but 43 more manslaughters (+11%).
- e) Others:** Between December, 2018 and August, 2020, the SESNSP reported 24% more murders than those reported by the security cabinet.

V. *Causa en Común* proposes:

- To reverse the current trend towards increased militarisation, and to implement a long-term development plan for local police corporations and public attorneys’ offices.



- To promote reports by citizens, creating permanent campaigns for that purpose; to multiply the mechanisms and channels for making reports; and to provide special support to vulnerable people, such as women and children victims of domestic violence.
- Training courses can be provided in all states to improve the collection of crime statistics. Legal, administrative, and budgetary sanctions should also be contemplated for those individuals, corporations, public prosecutors' offices and federal institutions, which hide or manipulate information.