

Addressing Chronic Violence from a Gendered Perspective

Fostering People-Centered Approaches at the National Level

CASE STUDY: MEXICO

Addressing chronic violence as a multifaceted issue affecting all levels of society

This case study is part of the *Addressing Chronic Violence from a Gendered Perspective: Fostering People-Centered Approaches at the National Level* report created by the Women PeaceMakers program.

Addressing gendered chronic violence

Violence has traditionally been viewed through the lens of armed conflict or specific, concrete violent incidents. However, it is necessary to understand that violence may be a chronic phenomenon— a persistent, deeply ingrained aggression affecting daily lives. Women and marginalized gender groups experience a particular type of chronic violence, stemming from deeply rooted patriarchal structures. These experiences, while diverse, share a common thread: they are manifestations of systemic oppression and inequality, from domestic violence to broader societal discrimination.

The report makes the case for reconceptualizing violence in the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and gender equality fields, building upon feminist conceptions of the continuum of violence to recognize that societal structures, systemic discrimination and even pervasive cultural norms can be sources of violence. Multidimensional strategies, inclusive policies and a global commitment are needed to elevate women's roles across sectors, from community development to high-level peace negotiations. Understanding the deep intricacies of violence can serve as the bedrock for constructing sustainable, equitable peace.

The report is co-created as part of the Women PeaceMakers Fellowship, led by the voices and perspectives of the 2022-2023 Women PeaceMaker Fellows. The report drew from the lived realities of women peacebuilders and their partners, and from experts working in the Women, Peace and Security and violence reduction fields. The full report provides both an international analysis and context-specific case studies.

Since 2002, the Kroc IPJ has hosted the Women PeaceMakers Fellowship program. The Fellowship offers a unique opportunity for women peacebuilders to engage in a cycle of learning, practice, research and participation that strengthens peacebuilding partnerships. The Women PeaceMakers Fellowship facilitates impactful collaborations between women peacebuilders from conflict-affected communities and international partner organizations. The Fellows also co-create research intended to shape the peacebuilding field and highlight good practices for peacebuilding design and implementation. This case study was created as part of this process and is also featured in the full *Addressing Chronic Violence from a Gendered Perspective: Fostering People-Centered Approaches at the National Level* report.

In this case study, Woman PeaceMaker Fellow María Dolores Hernández Montoya critically examines how chronic violence and safety are conceptualized at Mexico's national level, drawing attention to the intersections of these issues with local lived experiences, specifically in Guadalajara, Jalisco. Hernández Montoya's case study unveils the complex nature of chronic violence in Mexico, juxtaposing the data-driven realities presented by authorities with the lived experiences of its citizens.



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Mexico Case Study: Disconnection between national commitments and community experiences in Guadalajara

CASE STUDY

By María Dolores Hernández Montoya

Addressing chronic violence as a multifaceted issue



Context

For years, Mexico has been recognized worldwide for high levels of violence,¹ characterized by the presence of organized crime, particularly drug cartels. International alerts have been issued for travelers to avoid traveling to certain parts of the country, and nine out of the ten cities in the world considered most dangerous in 2022 were in Mexico.²

Communities in Mexico not only experience high rates of criminal activity and violence, but also weak rule of law (ranked 115th out of 140 countries evaluated for the 2022 Rule of Law Index),³ embedded corruption (ranked 128th out of 180 countries evaluated for the 2022 Corruption Perception Index)⁴ and high levels of impunity (ranked 60th out of 69 countries studied for the Global Impunity Index 2020).⁵ Moreover, Mexico faces additional socioeconomic challenges, such as high levels of poverty: 43.9% of the population lives in poverty, with an income of less than 200 USD per month, and 8.5% lives in extreme poverty, with an income of less than 100 USD per month.⁶ Relatedly, the country experiences high income inequality, ranked 45.4 in the 2020 Gini Index, in which zero represents perfect equality and 100 represents perfect inequality.⁷ The understanding of security and safety at the national and international level, and with that, the policy responses, evolved within this context. In Mexico, the national policy level has traditionally addressed the challenges of violence as a “public safety” matter, focusing especially on ensuring public order and protecting material goods.⁸ Relatedly, security strategies have mainly been based on containment, reactive actions and punishment, conducted by institutions at the different levels of government.⁹

However, national data on crime rates show that the public security model is not preventing crime. In 2022, the common law crime rate¹⁰ was 1,729.96 per 100,000 people, and the federal crime¹¹ rate was 67.53 per 100,000 people, with 90 percent of crimes estimated to go unreported.¹² For homicides specifically, the national rate is 30.78 homicides per 100,000 people,¹³ much higher than the global average. In some states in Mexico, the figure rises over 150 homicides per 100,000 people.¹⁴



In urban areas, the problem of chronic violence¹⁵ and safety becomes more complex due to the specific challenges that cities around the world face. In 2007, UN Habitat dedicated its *Global Report on Human Settlements* to highlighting the urgency of addressing the growing problem of violence and crime in cities.¹⁶ The report addresses main threats, causes and impacts of urban crime and violence, insecurity in housing tenure and forced evictions, and natural and human-made hazards. All these elements are inherent to the chronic violence experienced in Mexican cities.¹⁷ The report also identifies addressing poverty as a determining socio-economic element for the construction of safer cities.¹⁸

Using a gender lens, this case study analyzes how chronic violence and safety are understood at the national level in Mexico and identifies the intersections with the local level in order to identify how these issues interact and impact the lives of people at the neighborhood level. This case study focuses specifically on Guadalajara, Jalisco.

Guadalajara was selected as a case study because it is the second largest city in the country and among the twenty largest in Latin America, which makes it a reference for growing middle-size cities, as well as for larger cities in Mexico and the region.¹⁹ Additionally, its inhabitants are a sample of the diversity of Mexicans, with populations of people from across different parts of Mexico who arrived in Guadalajara through internal migration driven by chronic violence and the hope for economic opportunity. Guadalajara is also home to a significant number of foreign residents and visitors.²⁰

Moreover, the urban part of Guadalajara displays significant inequalities and diversities of experience, home to municipalities that are both the richest and most unequal in the country (like Zapopan)²¹ and even the region, with neighborhoods ranked as “the coolest neighborhood in the world” (like the Americana neighborhood in Guadalajara),²² areas ranked as among the poorest (like Tonalá²³ and Tlaquepaque²⁴) and most violent areas (like Tlajomulco de Zuñiga).²⁵ It is also important to note that the context of safety, crime and violence is similar to different urban areas across Mexico and Latin America.

Methodology

The researcher conducted a review of secondary literature and collected primary data in order to identify how chronic violence is understood at the national level and how that corresponds to the lived experiences of chronic violence, especially for women, at the local level. Analysis of this data allowed for the identification of intersections between national level (Mexico) and local level (Jalisco and Guadalajara) efforts to reduce chronic violence and foster peace, and particularly the ways in which neighbors – and especially women – understand and navigate chronically violent contexts in Guadalajara. Three neighborhoods were chosen as sites to collect primary data: Jardines del Bosque, Miravalle and San José Río Verde.²⁶ The selected neighborhoods are categorized at different levels of the state of violence, according to the 2020 Guadalajara Safety Index, which allowed the data analysis to show a contrast across different levels of violence and crime in the city.

Data collection followed two paths. First, the researcher conducted a documentary review of formal records from government, civil society organizations and academic institutions, including reports, censuses, plans and legislations. This review helped grasp the rationale of the national and local institutional and normative foundations in addressing violence and insecurity in Mexico. Second, the researcher collected primary data through interviews and a survey/*sondeo* performed by Demoskópica México. Interviews were conducted with the President of the neighborhood association in Jardines del Bosque, and with experts from the civil society sector (Augusto Chacón, Executive Director of Jalisco Cómo Vamos²⁷ and Laura Iveth López Marín, Executive Director of CorpoCreativo²⁸). Additionally, a focus group discussion was held in Miravalle with three adult women from the neighborhood association.

The survey/*sondeo* at the neighborhood level allowed the researcher to compare the perceptions of violence, environmental conditions, incidence of violence and risk and protection factors of the three neighborhoods. Moreover, the results were reviewed to evaluate correspondence between the figures reported by national and local level authorities and the daily lives and perceptions of people in their neighborhoods. The latter were based on the National Survey of Victimization and Perception of Public Safety (ENVIPE) questionnaire.²⁹ The study universe included the population aged 18 and older residing in the selected neighborhoods. The sampling frame for the survey/*sondeo* was built on the *Population and Housing Census 2020* of the National Institute of Geography and Statistics (INEGI), and the sampling method was a two-stage probabilistic sample by clusters. The sample size, as recommended by the *sondeo* experts who implemented the tool, was 120 cases distributed across three neighborhoods in Guadalajara (40 cases per neighborhood).

Manifestations of chronic violence

Insecurity in Mexico cannot be understood from only one perspective. The high rates of crime are part of a perverse cycle that is fed by different manifestations of multiple forms of violence that are present in a range of spaces at the local and national levels, including households, neighborhoods, communities, public spaces, workplaces and schools, among others. These manifestations including both macro and micro systems, affecting structural processes necessary in the construction of a society free from fear and free from want.

As this case study shows, there are two realities in Mexico: the reality reported by the authorities and the reality that people experience and perceive in their daily life.

Government actors anchor their arguments for improvement of security in official statistics³⁰ and the data provided by the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System. But this data might be contextualized in a way that supports those in political power. For instance, it is common to compare the level of violence and crime incidence to previous years and frame the current state of safety as a consequence of what other authorities did during their time in office.³¹ Another argument frequently used, mainly by local authorities, is that the legal framework does not allow them to act in relation to given events and that even when it is outside their powers to deal with the situation, they work in coordination with other authorities that are responsible for the issue.³² Additionally, the high levels of violence and crime have led to authorities celebrating even minimal reductions in the numbers of homicides or finding dozens of people reported missing, even when they find them as dismembered bodies in plastic bags,³³ which has become a regular situation.³⁴ Furthermore, when the figures painting a different picture are raised in the public discourse, it has not been unusual for government actors to suggest that those who brought it up, such as the media or opposition actors, are overstating violence or “safety events”³⁵ in the country.³⁶ Such behavior invalidates people’s personal experiences, increases the gap between the two realities and damages the citizen-government relationship.

Indeed, official data show that people live a different and tougher reality than the one presented by the authorities. In the 2022 ENVIPE, 61.2 percent of the population aged 18 and over considered insecurity³⁷ the most important problem facing them, followed by the increase in prices with 39.6 percent and unemployment with 32.1 percent. An estimated 75.9 percent of inhabitants reported feeling unsafe in the country.³⁸ This harsh reality is even worse for women, as 70.1 percent of women aged 15 and over have experienced at least one incident of violence³⁹ and over 10 women are victims of femicide daily.⁴⁰ In the case of Guadalajara, Table 1 shows a general picture of the incidence of reported crime in Jalisco for the first quarter of 2023, of which most are concentrated in the Metropolitan Area of Guadalajara.⁴¹

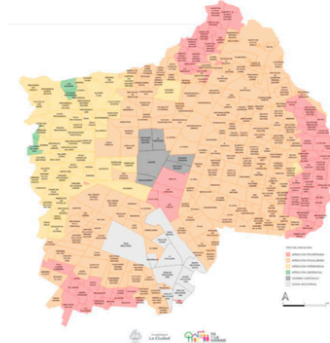


Table 1: Crimes in Jalisco | Comparative 1st trimester 2022 vs. 1st trimester 2023

Crime	1st Trimester 2022	1st Trimester 2023	Rate 1st Trimester 2022	Rate 1st Trimester 2023	Rate Variation
Kidnapping	6	3	0.07	0.03	-50.5
Business robbery	1473	1069	17.28	12.43	-28.1
Femicide (female population)	11	8	0.25	0.28	-28.0
Femicide (general population)	11	8	0.13	0.09	-27.9
Robbery to passerby	2413	1903	28.31	22.13	-21.8
Robbery with violence	4092	3795	48.02	44.13	-8.1
Culpable homicide	374	352	4.39	4.09	-6.7
Homicide	275	293	3.23	2.41	5.6
Vehicle theft	2999	3426	35.19	39.84	13.2
House robbery	668	773	7.84	8.99	14.7
Extortion	132	155	1.55	1.80	16.4
Drug dealing	318	402	3.73	4.67	25.3
Rape	110	154	1.29	1.79	38.7

Source: Jalisco Cómo Vamos | Reporte de Incidencia Delictiva en Jalisco, Primer Trimestre 2023

Figure 1: Neighborhoods Citizen Safety Categorization in Guadalajara (2019 measurement)



Source: Hernández Montoya, M.D.; Bazaldúa Flores, L.A. (2022), from Guadalajara Government.

Continuing with the analysis, Figure 1 shows a 2019 diagnosis of citizen safety performed by the Guadalajara government. It categorizes 441 neighborhoods into four types of neighborhoods based on their relative vulnerability and risk for residents of the neighborhoods to become a victim of crime/violence:

1. Priority attention – red
2. Focused attention – orange
3. Medium attention – yellow, and
4. Management attention – green

This exercise was part of the Prevention of Violence and Crime Program and became the City Safety Index (created with the technical support of UN Habitat). These results indicate that most neighborhoods need to be prioritized and receive specific attention. It was the first instrument of its type that measured these issues at the neighborhood level, using 66 indicators to understand objective measures and people’s subjective perceptions related to social integration, urban environment and public spaces, and vulnerability and risks.⁴² Unfortunately, the tool is no longer being implemented at the time of writing, due to government administration changes.

Contrasting Table 1 and Figure 1, the official data appear to show slight improvement (identified by the green color), but when it is complemented by a complete review of the development status of each area and people’s perceptions of safety, the reality is more complicated (identified with yellow, orange and red colors). For example, by 2022 over 80 percent of people in Guadalajara felt satisfied with their life quality, although satisfaction decreased in comparison with previous years.⁴³ However, people show generalized dissatisfaction in regards to specific issues, such as the economy (inflation, rising prices, low wages), health (insufficient and low quality infrastructure, lack of medicines), education (low levels of quality and high school dropout rates), housing (real estate speculation), mobility (insufficient coverage, poor quality, long transfer times), environment (poor air quality, floods, heat waves, insufficient green areas, water crisis), public spaces (insufficient and abandoned spaces, spaces taken for criminal behavior), urban infrastructure and public services (poor condition of the streets, lack of public lighting, poor waste management), government performance (lack of representation, low citizen participation, high levels of corruption and impunity) and of course, safety (above-average crime rates and a high perception of insecurity).⁴⁴

Interviews performed for this study revealed that people have normalized violence in their neighborhoods by comparing the situation in their neighborhood to other neighborhoods that are in worse condition, stereotyping people that live in high levels of violence and insecurity (This can also be seen in Figure 1, as such measurements include both official data and perception). The normalization of chronic violence and stereotyping also have an intergenerational aspect: adults stereotype young people as drug users or perpetrators of crimes or offenses,⁴⁵ and the youth who were born and raised in a context of chronic violence have developed and normalized self-protection habits and the individualized struggle for survival.⁴⁶

Finally, when people live for a long time with such manifestations of violence and high levels of criminal incidence, it becomes internalized as part of the social dynamics, which perpetuates the perverse cycle.⁴⁷ This exacerbates chronic violence, making harder to achieve peace in Mexico. It is assumed that only the government can change this situation, but individuals adopt coping mechanisms and strategies to protect themselves through individualism, isolation, silence, collective fear, apathy and lack of caring, adapting the habits to an unchangeable reality and thereby not getting involved in developing constructive social relations.⁴⁸ But everything is not lost; community members are leading responses to change this complex reality on different fronts, as subsequent sections show.

Gendered impact and/or responses to chronic violence

In Mexico, it might seem that there are solid foundations from the national to the local level to address chronic violence and insecurity ; however, there is no clear strategy, effective policies, sufficient budget or transparent monitoring and evaluation of policies and practices. Although there is a general acknowledgment in the national and local development plans that violence prevention from a peacebuilding perspective and addressing key structural aspects should be and are priorities,⁴⁹ most actions are still based on a traditional approach to public security, resulting in no notable advances.⁵⁰ The limitations of this approach, as this case study shows, lead to the gendered perceptions and experiences of violence and insecurity not being taken into consideration, which furthers the gap between the authorities' reality and the people's reality.

Authorities' reality: the institutional and regulatory framework

Mexico has created a broad normative framework to address and prevent crime and certain types of violence, from the national to the local level. This framework sets the terms of reference and obligations of national and local authorities in addressing violence and insecurity.

For instance, from the international arena, Mexico has signed and integrated into the national legal framework instruments such as Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals,⁵¹ *United Nations System-Wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements*,⁵² *New Urban Agenda Habitat III*,⁵³ *UN Habitat International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning*,⁵⁴ *OHCHR Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power*,⁵⁵ *UNODC Guidelines for Crime Prevention*,⁵⁶ *Guidelines for Cooperation and Technical Assistance in the Field of Urban Crime Prevention*,⁵⁷ *UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines)*,⁵⁸ *Doha Declaration on Integrating Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice into the Wider UN Agenda*,⁵⁹ the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*,⁶⁰ and the UN Women Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls Global Initiative,⁶¹ among others. At the national level, this framework includes the *Constitution of the United Mexican States*,⁶² the *General Law on National Public Security*⁶³ and the *General Law for Social Prevention of Violence and Crime*,⁶⁴ alongside their specific regulations and programs that determine authorities' framework for action, the *State of Jalisco Constitution*, related laws, regulations and sectoral state and municipal regulations, and programs and guidelines at the local level.⁶⁵ Additionally, considering the importance gender plays in relation to safety and chronic violence, gender-specific instruments have also been integrated into the institutional and legal framework, such as the *Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women*,⁶⁶ the *Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará)*,⁶⁷ the *Mexican General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence*⁶⁸ and its Guidelines, and the *General Law for Equality between Women and Men*,⁶⁹ as well as their equivalent state and municipal laws, regulations and guidelines, to say nothing of Mexico having declared a feminist foreign policy.⁷⁰

Implementing these frameworks, however, is challenging due to opposition at different levels of government, and because safety and violence issues can be politically controversial. This institutional scaffolding does not respond effectively to chronic violence because actions are not coordinated and are not founded on a clear and shared understanding of how multiple forms of violence impact people what how safety is understood. Also, in Mexico the institutional and regulatory framework seems to be a *letra muerta*;⁷¹ contrasting a framework that is both broad and specific framework with the current perception and state of safety and violence in the country indicates that something is amiss.



According to the respondents in this study, most people identified the role of the national and municipal authorities in mitigating violence as being done through police patrols, which corresponds with a traditional security approach. In the Miravalle neighborhood, from the survey and focus group performed for this study, it was identified that where there was a recognition of police presence in the neighborhood, there were higher levels of trust in authorities also reported. Nevertheless, even with such presence, interviewees have also witnessed people committing crimes without facing any consequences. Impunity plays an important role in undermining trust in the authorities.⁷² In Mexico, an estimated 6.4 percent of total committed crimes were reported, and only 0.47 percent were resolved.⁷³ The rates for violence against women are even worse. And while most authorities do recognize and respond to gender-based violence, the prosecution process often revictimizes women.^{74 75}

People’s reality: How chronic violence impacts the local level

Trust in authorities is broken, as the survey/*sondeo* showed that approximately 45 percent of people reported trust in the authorities. However, over 70 percent across the three neighborhoods reported trust in their neighbors, relatives or friends, compared with over 45 percent who reported trust in the authorities.

Figure 2: Perception of safety in specific places within the neighborhood

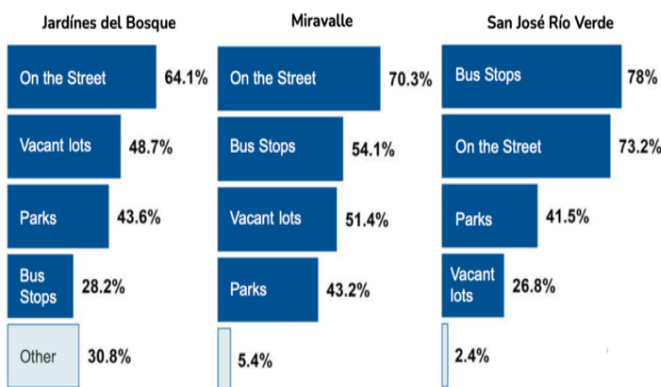
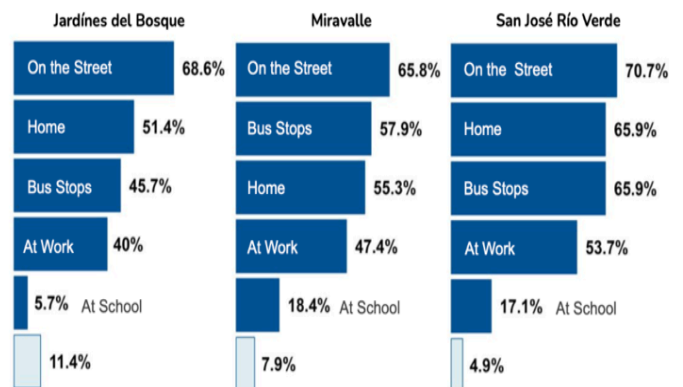


Figure 3: Perception of where in the neighborhood women suffer the most violence



Source: Prepared by Demoskópica México based on the results of the exploratory survey on chronic violence

The survey/*sondeo* in the three neighborhoods in Guadalajara showed that over 60 percent of the respondents feel unsafe, and as the level of neighborhood development improves, the perception of insecurity decreases. Respondents reported that streets, bus stops and parks are considered the most unsafe places in the neighborhood.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, over 67 percent consider their homes a safe place (see figure 2).

When people were asked about how frequently women suffer some type of violence in their neighborhood, percentages of respondents ranging from 65 percent in one neighborhood to 86 percent in another neighborhood consider that women are victims of violence in some degree. Respondents noted that women experience violence most commonly on the streets and at bus stops, similar to the general responses discussed previously. However, the home was listed as the second or third most dangerous place for women – the place considered safest for the overall population was considered among the most dangerous for women. Respondents reported that violence against women most commonly happens through hitting/shoving, insults/verbal violence, sexual assaults, bans/threats, financial control and humiliation.

From these trends, it is possible to see how chronic violence is a condition that “undermines social relations, and provokes destructive behaviors that become perverse norms among vulnerable populations, some of which can be transmitted intergenerationally.”⁷⁷ In this context, UN Women considers that it is key to take into consideration women’s experiences and address chronic violence through a gender-sensitive lens to produce a greater impact for all.⁷⁸ Women’s reality, as a vulnerable group that has experienced or is likely to experience some type of violence at some point during their lives, can be considered a reference to build safer spaces for all.

The *Being a Woman in Guadalajara* report by Jalisco Cómo Vamos documents the perspectives and experiences of women in navigating their environments and the impact of gender gaps and inequalities on their quality of life.⁷⁹ Mostly, women perceive their quality of life as being lower than that of men in the same age group. This perceived quality of life sinks even lower in the case of women in low- and medium-income levels.⁸⁰ Although the report shows that over 95 percent of women have a source of income, there is a wage gap with men that increases as the number of children women have increases and decreases as women achieve higher levels of education.⁸¹ Yet more women are forced to drop out of school to take care of the household (women dedicate an average of 30 hours a week for their jobs and over 60 hours of unpaid work in their households).⁸² Women feel more worried than men did about their health, and mental health was also a concern; around 50 percent have sad or depressing thoughts and/or anxiety.⁸³ In terms of mobility, public spaces and safety, there is a general perception of deficiency in the city.

In conclusion, in order to close the gap between the two realities it is important to consider people's perceptions of violence and crime at the neighborhood level to (re)build social relations from the grassroots.

Closing the gap: women's leadership

Based on the data gathered through interviews and a focus group in the three neighborhoods under consideration, women's leadership proved to be key in fostering social cohesion and healing from chronic violence trauma. Respondents emphasized that learning from women's leadership experiences can contribute to changing community realities, and they stressed that "women had to take over leadership due to necessity."⁸⁴ Therefore, strategies on how to address chronic violence ought to consider not only how women live, how they perceive their family, social and professional life, how they perceive and navigate their neighborhoods, but also how women take leadership in addressing chronic violence.

Interview participants emphasized that women often overcome harsh situations with compassion and often, as respondents explicitly stated, kindness. When thinking about chronic violence as an intergenerational trauma, offering solutions based on empathy and kindness can inspire others' leadership. Some of the inspiring phrases used by the women interviewed included: "*en el pedir está el dar*"⁸⁵ ("how you ask for something is proportional to how you are going to get what you asked for") and "*con miedo no se puede vivir*"⁸⁶ ("you cannot live with fear, you must act to get away of fear in order to live").

Therefore, there is a need to shift to designing solutions that are tailor-made, considering its transversality to the gendered needs in a particular context. An alternative is to move from traditional public security approaches to efforts that recognize and work from individual and community intervention spaces.

One example of women overcoming harsh situations and leading in addressing chronic violence from the grassroots is that of Sandra López, housewife and President of Colonos in the Miravalle neighborhood.⁸⁷ After Sandra became quadriplegic due to an illness, she did not think about becoming actively involved in her neighborhood again. But, in her own words, "if [she] didn't move, no one was going to move for [her]".⁸⁸ She is still recovering and heads the neighborhood organization. The organization is about to start working on rehabilitating public spaces to recover Miravalle. Sandra hopes that when the neighborhood starts overcoming its challenges, more people will get involved. She affirms that "we must encourage more young people to get involved, to not be afraid and to be empathetic. If we are only a few people, those few people can do it. We will not stop out of fear. Little by little everything is possible."⁸⁹ Sandra hopes that her neighbors can see that Miravalle is not defined by violence, as it has been historically, and that people see the value of the neighborhood and its people.

Indeed, chronic violence is a complex matter that affects all: men, women, LGBTQ+ people, elders, youth, children, poor and rich. Chronic violence threatens individual capacity to thrive and undermines social relations, endangering the ability to assume civic responsibilities and weakening participation.⁹⁰ But people want their families and children to thrive, and their collective/community knowledge anchored in their roots, their sense of belonging, and love for their neighborhood are the first ingredients to start healing violence trauma and (re)build social relationships for a peaceful coexistence.



Conclusion and recommendations

As shown in this case study, the problem of violence in Mexico is not only about common law crimes or organized crime, but a set of intersecting factors that contribute to chronic violence and create high levels of insecurity. Sustained violence in Mexico happens in all spaces – private and public – and it is a consequence of different factors such as poverty, inequality, unemployment and impunity, among others.

Given such a complex reality, a first key step is to openly redefine violence and safety. It is imperative not only to make visible all the violent realities that Mexicans across different genders and other identities face every day, but to understand that people are experiencing a systemic phenomenon with multiple causes and effects. It is also necessary to approach the situation according to the reality that is experienced by different people, affected by different existing identities and systems of power, so that response strategies can address their needs effectively and comprehensively. This is the real value of re-conceptualizing violence as chronic violence.⁹¹

A people-centered narrative tells a story of collective and individual trauma in which families and communities need to work together to pave paths of healing and diminishing such context of chronic violence. And one of the key lessons in this research journey is that in order to build inclusive peace paths, it is important not only to close the gap between the authorities' and the people's realities, but also to work for and from a diversity of spaces, as they are all necessary for long-term impact.

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this case study.

Recommendations for national and local authorities

- Update, harmonize and effectively implement institutional and legal frameworks.
- Promote work on community violence that considers the individual/collective perceptions at the neighborhood level, as well as the gendered aspects of community violence.
- Foster meeting spaces with citizens, guaranteeing representation of marginalized people, in which dialogue and reflection are facilitated through active listening.
- Design people-centered and gender-aware policies and programs, and foster community leaderships.

Recommendations for civil society and academia

- Develop a deeper understanding of chronic violence, including its gendered aspects, to design effective strategic innovative interventions.
- Advocate for evidence-based decision-making processes related to chronic violence and create processes for monitoring and evaluation.

Recommendations for communities, particularly the youth

- Connect with people and groups that you feel share your interests to find ways to address your concerns.
- Center women's experiences and leaderships to build inclusive community initiatives that contribute to healing the trauma left by chronic violence.
- Relate to your neighbors in a way that is informed by the visions you have for a better life for yourself and your loved ones.

Endnotes

- 1 Mexico is also well known worldwide as a cosmopolitan country with significant history, cultural heritage, cuisine, biodiversity and natural resources, and as a great tourist destination. It is also the 10th most populous country in the world, with a population of almost 130 million inhabitants and has an economy worth 1.41 trillion dollars, ranking it among the top 20 largest economies, all of which contrasts such a chronic violence context. For more information, see: "The World Bank in Mexico," The World Bank, April 4, 2023, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mexico/overview>.
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- 4 "Corruption Perceptions Index," Transparency International, accessed June 1, 2023, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022>.
- 5 Juan Antonio Le Clercq, "Mexico: Measuring Impunity through the 2020 Global Impunity Index," *Global Americans*, January 11, 2021, <https://theglobalamericans.org/2021/01/mexico-measuring-impunity-through-the-2020-global-impunity-index/>.
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