

Key Facts on U.S.-Sourced Guns and Violence in Mexico

Impacts of Gun Violence in Mexico

- From 2010 through 2022, Mexico experienced more than [214,000 gun homicides](#), constituting more than two every three murders in the country.
- Over 111,000 people in Mexico have been forcibly disappeared, according to an [official Mexican government registry](#).
- On average, [six women are murdered with firearms](#) every day in Mexico.
- Over [two million migrants](#) transited Mexico for the U.S. last year. A recent survey of migrants seeking asylum at the U.S. border found more than half had experienced “persistent and unrelenting gunfire” before arriving to the U.S. This isn’t new. A 2017 [study](#) found that two thirds of migrants in Mexico experienced violence.
- [More than 379,000 people](#) in Mexico have been forced to flee their homes as a result of violent conflict, as of early this year – with record numbers displaced in 2021.
- These are very large numbers, yet every single serious act of gun violence has devastating and traumatic impacts on individuals, families, and entire communities.

Trafficked Firearms / Assault Rifles

- 250,000 firearms are estimated to be purchased annually in the United States for trafficking into Mexico.
- At least 70% of firearms recovered in Mexico and submitted for tracing from 2014-2021 were U.S.-sourced, according to ATF data.
- If 70% of the more than 24,000 gun homicides in Mexico in 2019 were committed with U.S.-sourced firearms, then there were more murders committed with U.S. guns in Mexico that year than in all of the United States.
- About 59% of [all guns traced from outside the United States](#) were recovered in Mexico. It is by far the largest international destination for US crime guns.
- Rifles, especially assault rifles and sniper rifles, play a critical role in the power of criminal organizations in Mexico. A high-ranking official of Mexico’s Prosecutor General’s Office (Fiscalía) told a recent international delegation that more than 80% of firearms used in gun homicides in Mexico are long guns.
- The purchase of assault weapons and high-capacity magazines is illegal in Mexico, but they are widely available at hundreds of retail gun shops in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico.
- As in the United States, most crime guns in Mexico are handguns. However, of 66,011 firearms recovered by the Mexican military between 2006 and March 2018 for which the caliber and make were recorded, more than 12,000 could be positively identified as assault weapons.
- A study published by [American Political Science Review](#) found that the expiration of the federal assault weapons ban in 2004 led to an additional hundreds of gun murders in northern Mexico, independent of competition between drug cartels.
- Texas continues to be the source a very large proportion of guns traced from Mexico to the United States - 43% during 2017-2021, followed by Arizona (17%), California (13%), New Mexico (3%) and Florida (2%).

Firearms Exports

- After the Trump administration transferred oversight for most firearms exports from the State Dept. to the Commerce Department, Commerce approved \$16 billion in firearms exports in the first 16 months – a 30% increase over State’s rate of license approval.
- In Mexico, the Army is the sole authorized importer of firearms, and also the only legal seller of firearms. Nearly all of those imported from the U.S. are sold to state, local and federal police forces or are for military use.
- Mexico has militarized its internal security measures, supported by the importation of more than 305,000 firearms for police from 2006 to 2018.
- Every single end user certificate for more than 147,000 firearms exported from the United States to Mexico for use by police from 2008 through 2019 declares the army as the end user.
- More than 8,200 receipts, also obtained from the Mexican military, show that the Army sold U.S.-exported weapons to police, including state and local police in Tamaulipas, Guerrero, Chihuahua, and other states with extensive documented records of state violence and corruption.

Key Information Sources and Documents

- ATF tracing reports: atf.gov/resource-center/firearms-trace-data-mexico-2016-2021
- Government Accountability Office: *Firearms Trafficking: U.S. Efforts to Disrupt Gun Smuggling into Mexico Would Benefit from Additional Data and Analysis* (GAO-21-322)
- Government Accountability Office: *Firearms Trafficking: More Information is Needed to Inform U.S. Efforts in Central America* (GAO-22-104680)
- ATF, *National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment, 2023*
<https://www.atf.gov/firearms/national-firearms-commerce-and-trafficking-assessment-nfcta-crime-guns-volume-two>
- Litigation by Mexico: *Estados Unidos Mexicanos v. Smith & Wesson et. al*, 1:21-cv-11269-FDS; and *Estados Unidos Mexicanos vs. Diamondback Shooting Sports*.
- *Stop US Arms to Mexico, Invisible Weapons, Indelible Pain: The Urgent Necessity for Transparency in the U.S. and Mexican Gun Trade*, 2021, stopusarmstomexico.org/invisible-weapons-indelible-pain
- Tophier MacDougal, et.al., University of San Diego. *The Way of the Gun: Estimating Firearms Traffic Across the U.S.-Mexico Border*, 2013.
- Violence Policy Center and Washington Office on Latin America, *Gun Running Nation*, 2015.

Key Civil Society Organizations Working on This Issue

Stop US Arms to Mexico, a project of Global Exchange: stopusarmstomexico.org

Forum on the Arms Trade: forumarmstrade.org

Violence Policy Center: vpc.org

Center for American Progress: americanprogress.org

Global Action on Gun Violence: actionguns.org

Latin America Working Group: lawg.org

Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights: cmdpdh.org

Center for Ecumenical Studies: estudiosecumenicos.org

Network for the Prevention of Gun Violence in the Americas:

stopusarmstomexico.org/resources/prevent-gun-violence-americas/