GUATEMALA

Analysis of the state of homicidal violence
January-March 2023

Highlights

In the first quarter of 2023, the National Civil Police registered 675 victims of homicide, reporting 16.4 per cent decrease in comparison with the same period the previous year, that is, 132 fewer victims of homicide.

Starting in August 2022 and through March 2023, a change was registered in homicide figures, there was a reversal in the upward trend that started when measures to contain the COVID 19 pandemic were relaxed (July 2020-July 2022). It is possible that this downward trend is due to the territorial control plans the National Civil Police has implemented.

During Q1 2023, there was a noticeable decline in homicides of women of up to 26.1 per cent. These are similar to figures from 2020, a period marked by the pandemic-related containment measures. In addition, there was a 14.7 per cent reduction in homicides of men

As of Q1 2023, homicides in men registered a 25 per cent reduction in very urban areas where 59.1 per cent of homicides were concentrated. However, it must be pointed out that homicides in very rural areas registered an 18.9 per cent increase as compared to Q1 2022. According to observations made during other election years, this is similar to what happened in election years 2011 and 2015[1], when there were cases of political violence, particularly in rural areas, and an overall rise in social conflict. So, this increase could have to do with circumstances surrounding the 2023 election.

The department of Guatemala accounted for 54.1 per cent of the total reduction in homicides in the country, mainly due to reductions in the municipalities of Guatemala, Villa Nueva and Mixco.

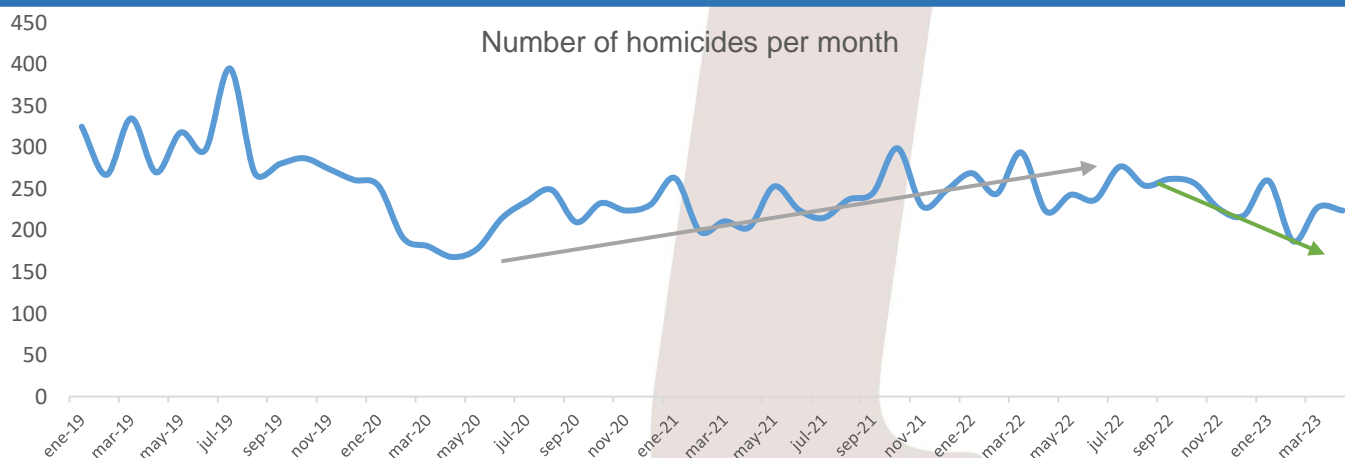During Q1 2023:

675

people died from homicide

590	85
▼ -14.7%	▼ -26.1%
-102	-30

Fewer victims with regard to Q1 2022.

Homicides
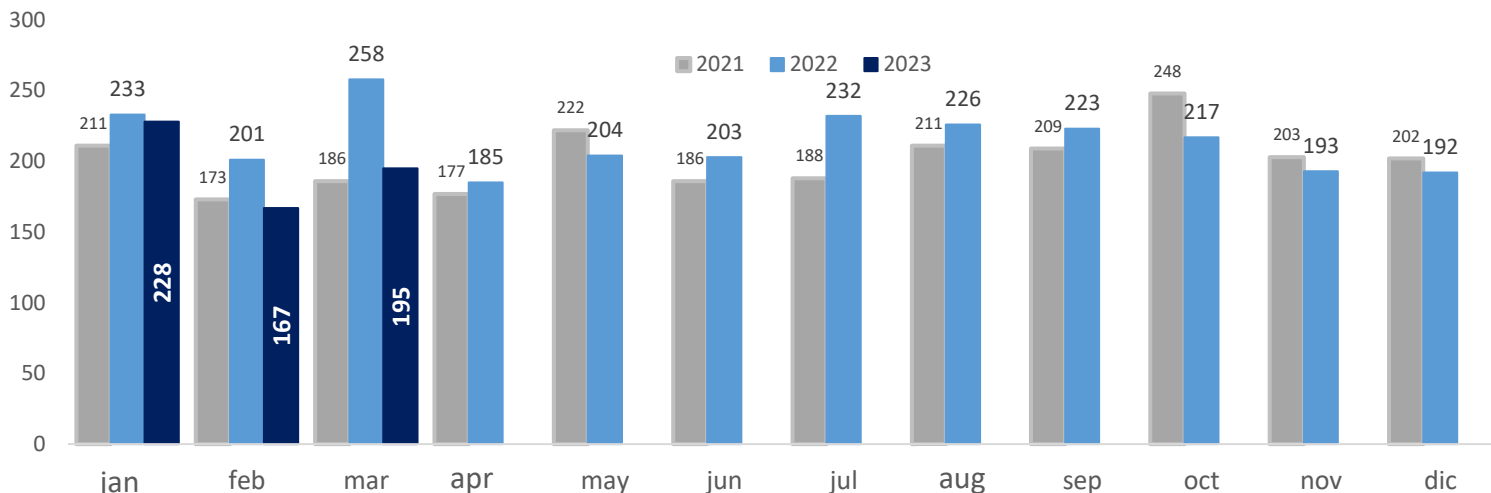
Number of homicides per month

After COVID-19 pandemic-related containment measures eased up, there was a noticeable rise in the number of homicides registered from July 2020 through July 2022.

[1] DatAction Analysis of Citizen Security in 2022: Guatemala on the internet: https://infosegura.org/dataccion/analisis-de-la-seguridad-ciudadana-costa-rica-guatemala
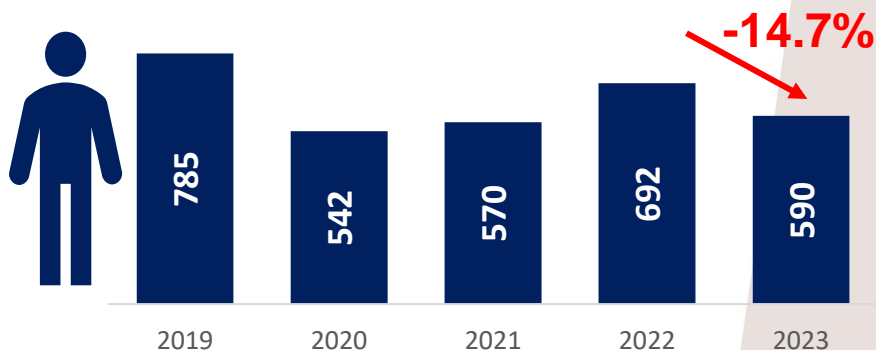
As of August 2022 and through March 2023, there was a reverse in the trend with a decline in recorded homicides. The 39 control plans[2] that the National Civil Police carried out all throughout 2022 and the fact that some of these plans continued into the first quarter of 2023, may have had an impact on reversing the upward trend that had been registered in homicides. Some 85 per cent of homicides in Q1 2023 were perpetrated using firearms, similar to the same period the previous year (Q1 2022: 85.3% of homicides involved firearms).

Number of homicides per month

From January to March 2023, there were a total of 675 victims of homicide, a 16.4 per cent reduction, fewer than there were during the same period in 2022. It is worth noting that the greatest reduction took place in March, with 63 fewer homicides.

Number of homicides of men (January - March)

-14.7%

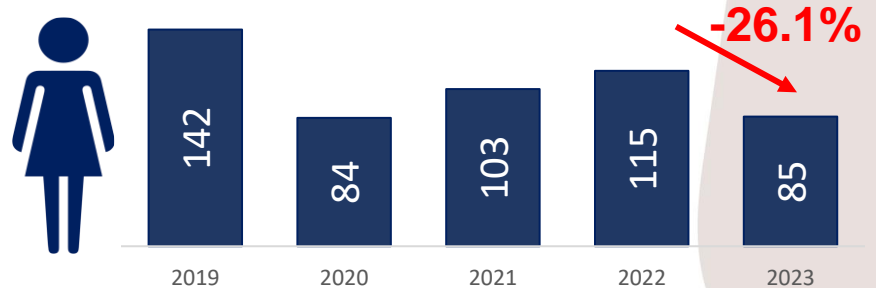| 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| 785 | 542 | 570 | 692 | 590 |

Between January and March 2023, 590 men had violent deaths, 102 fewer victims with regard to 2022.

The departments of Guatemala (-44), Quet-zaltenango (-23) and Zacapa (-16) stand out with the greatest reductions in cases of homicides of men.

As of Q1 del 2023, the primary reduction in cases homicide was observed among 31- to 59-year-old men.

Number of homicides of Women (January - March)

-26.1%

| 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| 142 | 84 | 103 | 115 | 85 |

From January to March 2023, there was a significant reduction in homicides of women, with 30 fewer victims in comparison with the same period the previous year.
This reduction was mainly in the department of Guatemala, with 28 fewer homicides. It is worth noting that these levels are similar to those in 2020, when confinement measures were in force during much of the month of March.

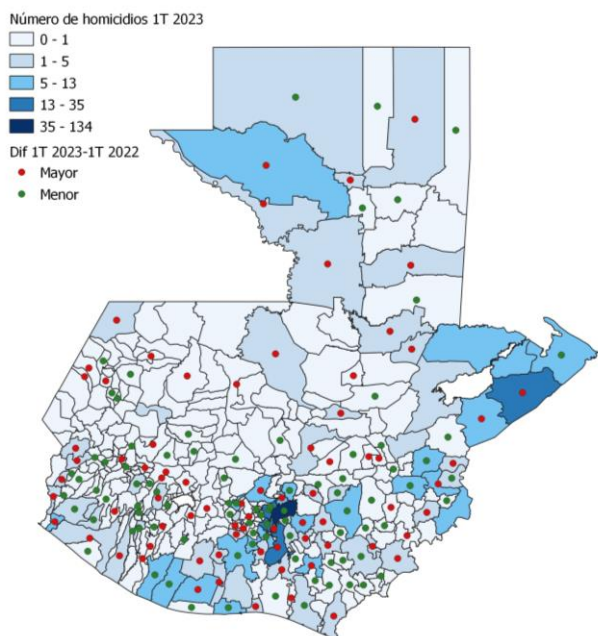The reduction in the number of homicides of women was primarily in the 19 to 30 year-old age bracket.

[2] The National Civil Police pursue different objectives in their Plans, all primarily related to reducing homicides. "Plan 30" consisted of setting up check-points and registering strategic locations, patrolling, perimeter patrols, among others.

When the data is disaggregated by geographic areas, it shows a greater reduction in the number of homicides registered in very urban areas. However, upon entering more rural municipalities, there is less of a reduction in cases of homicide, and there was even a rise in the number of homicides in very rural areas.

It is important to keep in mind that Guatemala is undergoing an electoral process in 2023, which could pose a risk factor due to political and social tensions at the local level, that are compounded with citizen insecurity. Throughout election years, there is a real possibility for instances of political violence to emerge, particularly in rural areas, adding to the level of social conflict.

January to March	Q1 2023	Q1 2022	Dif Q1 2023/Q1 2022
Very urban[3] (>75%)	398	531	-25.0%
Urban (50%>75%)	68	79	-13.9%
Rural (25%>50%)	95	102	-6.9%
Very rural (<25%)	113	95	18.9%
Total[4]	674	807	-16.5%

If we compare the homicide trends during election periods in previous years, like 2011 and 2015,[5] there is a noticeable rise in homicides out in the rural and very rural areas. This coincides with behavior exhibited during the first quarter 2023.

Número de homicidios 1T 2023
- 0 - 1
- 1 - 5
- 5 - 13
- 13 - 35
- 35 - 134

Dif 1T 2023-1T 2022
- Mayor
- Menor

From January to March 2023, in 25.9 per cent of municipalities (88/340) there were fewer homicides than during the same period the year before; in 25.9 per cent of municipalities (88/340) there was an increase in the number of homicides (21.8%); and in over half (52.4%) of the municipalities around country, the number of female homicides remained the same.

The department of Guatemala accounted for 54.1 per cent of the total reduction in homicides in the country, mainly in the municipalities of Guatemala, Villa Nueva and Mixco, which explains the reduction in very urban areas in the country. In municipalities where there was a rise, there was no definite geographic pattern, with instances distributed over different parts of the country. The municipalities of Morales, Villa Canales, Jocotán, Jocotenango and La Blanca are the most remarkable with the highest increases in registered homicides as compared to Q1 2022.

Source: *2010-2021 INE with data provided by National Civil Police. 2022 Guatemala National Civil Police (PNC)-Statistics Section, validation by INE pending Q1 2023 National Civil Police with data downloaded on April 10, 2023 on the internet: https://pladeic.mingob.gob.gt/ output tables submitted May 5 by the Statistics Section at the National Civil Police.*

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[3] The 2018 Census defines urban area as: cities, villages, towns (county and municipal seats), populated areas that are in the category of neighborhood or condominium and those with over 2,000 inhabitants, as long as 51per cent or more households have are connected to electric power grid and water by pipe (faucet) in their living quarters (housing). As in previous censuses, the entire municipality of Guatemala was taken as an urban area. The proportion of people divided by the total number of residents in the municipality who live in areas with an urban population greater than 75 per cent. Very rural area: Municipalities with less than 25 per cent of the population living in urban areas.

[4] There is a one case discrepancy in municipal data due to the delay in data base expansion published in PLADEIC and the output tables provided by the National Civil Police Statistics Section.

[5] DatAction Analysis of Citizen Security in 2022: Guatemala on the internet: https://infosegura.org/dataccion/analisis-de-la-seguridad-ciudadana-costa-rica-guatemala.
During the elections in 2019, in the urban and rural areas, homicide registered a rise, which did not coincide with the behavior observed in elections in 2011 and 2015.
The map ranges were generated using the Jenks Natural Break method according to the number of homicides.