

# GUATEMALA

## Analysis of the state of homicidal violence

January–June 2023

### Highlights

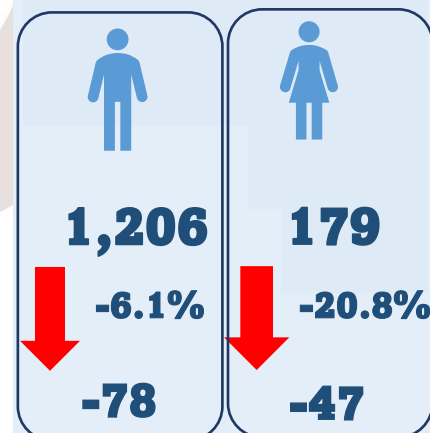
As of the first half of 2023, changes in homicide data seen in National Civil Police records:

- 1,385 people were victims of homicide, an 8.3 per cent reduction as compared to the same period the previous year, which means 125 fewer victims of homicide.
- A noticeable decline in homicides of women, reaching a 20.8 per cent reduction; as for men, there was only a 6.1 per cent reduction.
- There was an 11.1 per cent reduction in homicides in very-urban and urban areas, which accounted for 71.1 per cent of homicides.
- In the very rural area, homicides exhibited a 7.9 per cent increase as compared to the first half of 2022. Observations in other election years have shown that this is similar to what happened in election years 2011 and 2015<sup>1</sup>, when political violence especially broke out in rural areas, as well as a rise in social conflict across the board.
- The department of Guatemala exhibited the greatest reduction in the number of homicides as compared to the same period in 2022, with a 74.6 per cent reduction attributed to this department.
- An increase in the number homicides took place in departments such as Izabal, Alta Verapaz and Huehuetenango, territories that were catalogued as high risk for conflict and electoral violence.
- The rural areas appear to be more susceptible to electoral and political violence, as observed during previous election processes, and in recent behaviour.

During the first half of 2023:

# 1,385

homicide-related deaths

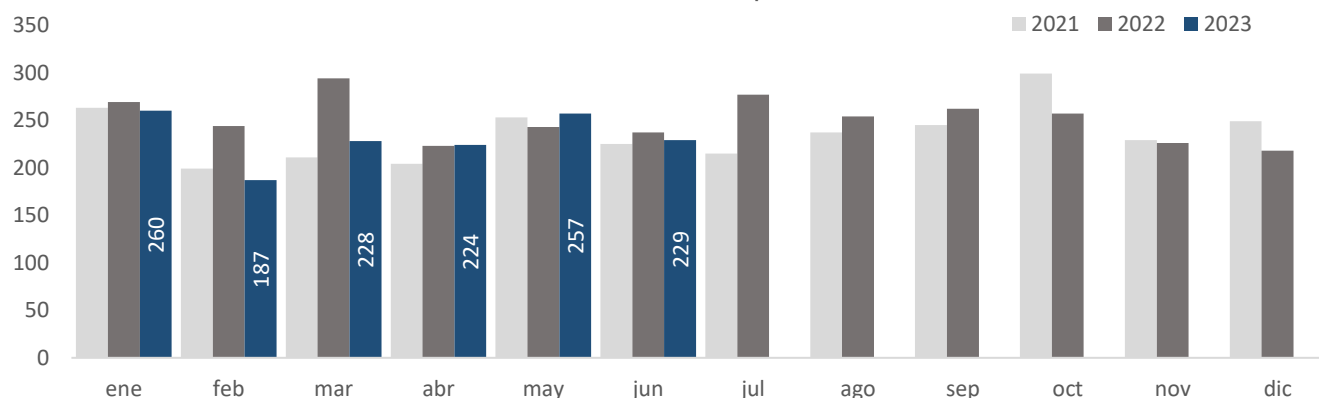


Fewer victims with regard to January-June 2022

## Homicides

Interannual<sup>2</sup> homicide rate in Guatemala as of June 2023 was 16.4 homicides per 100,000 population, some 0.9 points lower than reported in 2022 (17.3) and below the pre-pandemic level (21.5) of 2019.

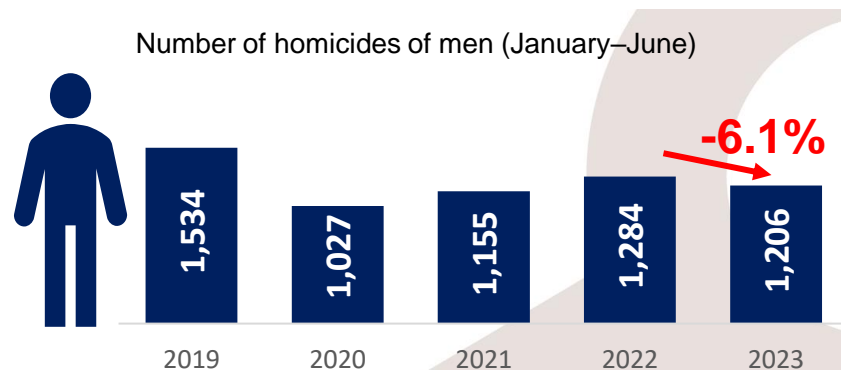
Number of homicides per month



<sup>1</sup> DatAction Analysis of Citizen Security in 2022: Guatemala on the internet: <https://infosegura.org/dataccion/analisis-de-la-seguridad-ciudadana-costa-rica-guatemala>

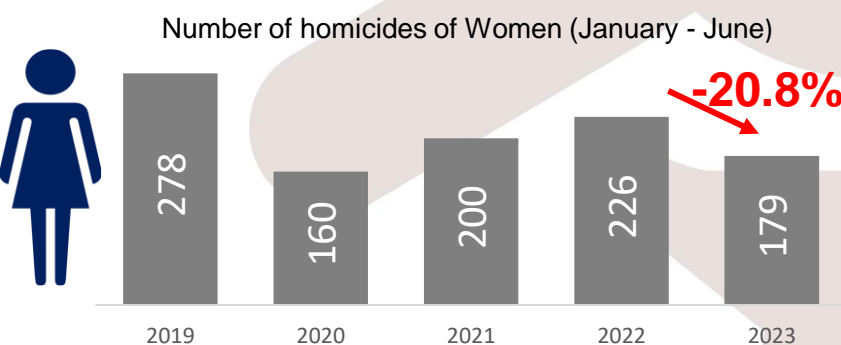
<sup>2</sup> The interannual rate was calculated using data as of June 2023, the sum of the last twelve months (sum of July 2022 through June 2023)/Estimated population for 2023

The period from January to June 2023, registered 1,385 victims of homicide in all, which represents an 8.3 per cent reduction with regard to 2022, that is 125 fewer homicides. Except for the months of April and May, monthly recorded figures in 2023 have been lower than those in 2022. The months of February and March are particularly notable, with a reduction of over 50 homicides as compared to the previous month. It is important to note that, during the first half of the year, the Ministry of Governance implemented the 2023 General Elections Integrated Strategic Action Plan to guarantee order and public security throughout the election process.



Between January and June 2023, 1,206 men died violently, 78 fewer victims with regard to 2022.

The departments of Guatemala (-36), Quetzaltenango (-33) and Escuintla (-30) stand out with the steepest reductions in cases of homicides of men.



The aggregate as of June 2023 shows a significant reduction in homicides of women, with 47 fewer victims compared to the same period the previous year.

This reduction was mainly in the department of Guatemala, with 58 fewer homicides. However, in each of the departments of Zacapa, Escuintla, Alta Verapaz, Izabal and Sololá there were five more homicides of women.

Between January and June 2023, approximately **9** out of every **10** homicides were committed with firearms, a higher proportion than reported during the same period the previous year (8 in 10)

When the data is disaggregated geographically, it shows that there has been a greater reduction in the number of homicides registered in areas that are very urban and urban. However, as we look into more rural municipalities, a smaller reduction in cases of homicide is observed, and in very rural areas there is even a rise in the number of homicides.

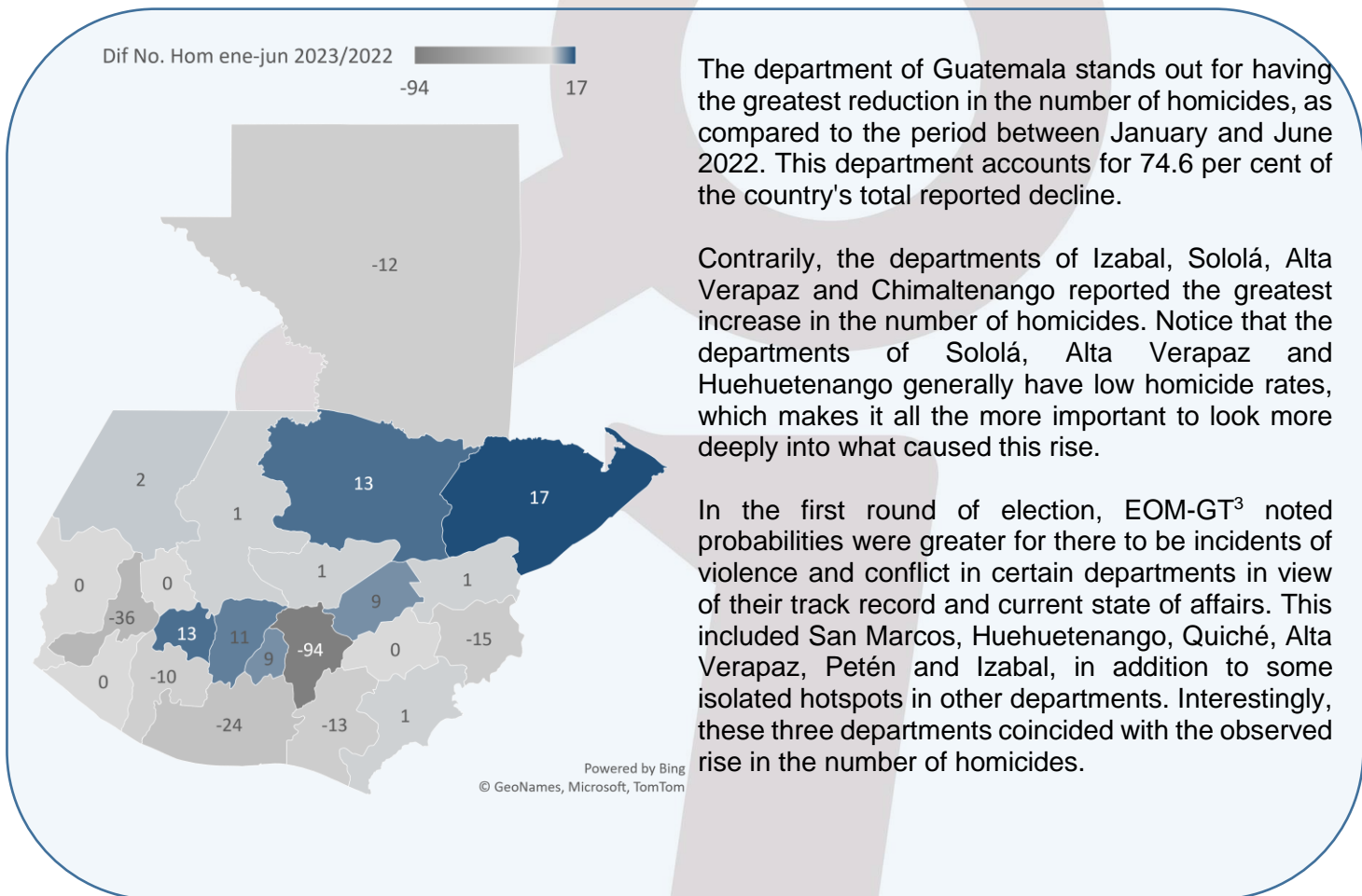
It is important to keep in mind that 2023 is an election year in Guatemala, as this could pose a risk in terms of local-level political and social tensions that add to citizen insecurity. In election years, political violence could occur, particularly in rural areas, with a rise in the level of social unrest.

Territorial Approach

January to June	1S 2023	1S 2022	Diff S1 2023/S1 2022
<b>Very urban (&gt;75%)</b>	840	945	-11.1%
<b>Urban (50%&gt;75%)</b>	144	163	-11.7%
<b>Rural (25%&gt;50%)</b>	195	212	-8.0%
<b>Very rural (&lt;25%)</b>	205	190	7.9%

According to the seventh report by the Election Observation Mission in Guatemala (EOM-GT)<sup>3</sup> between January 1 and August 5, there were 114 acts of violence registered, and 151 incidents of election-related conflict. Records show serious incidents, from the destruction of material property to verbal attacks, threats, protests, road blockades, as well as attempted and completed murder.

If we compare the homicide trends during election periods in previous years, like 2011 and 2015,<sup>4</sup> there is a noticeable rise in homicides out in the rural and very rural areas. This coincides with behaviour observed during the first quarter of 2023. Against the background of the election, there could be a rise in political violence, particularly in rural areas, where social conflict already takes on different forms.



The department of Guatemala stands out for having the greatest reduction in the number of homicides, as compared to the period between January and June 2022. This department accounts for 74.6 per cent of the country's total reported decline.

Contrarily, the departments of Izabal, Sololá, Alta Verapaz and Chimaltenango reported the greatest increase in the number of homicides. Notice that the departments of Sololá, Alta Verapaz and Huehuetenango generally have low homicide rates, which makes it all the more important to look more deeply into what caused this rise.

In the first round of election, EOM-GT<sup>3</sup> noted probabilities were greater for there to be incidents of violence and conflict in certain departments in view of their track record and current state of affairs. This included San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Quiché, Alta Verapaz, Petén and Izabal, in addition to some isolated hotspots in other departments. Interestingly, these three departments coincided with the observed rise in the number of homicides.

Source: 2010-2021 INE with data provided by National Civil Police. 2022 Guatemala National Civil Police (PNC)-Statistics Section, validation by INE pending S1 2023 National Civil Police with data downloaded on August 2, 2023 from: <https://pladeic.minqob.gob.gt/> and output table received July 7 by the Statistics Section of the National Civil Police.

Note: There is a difference of one case when using municipal data due to the delay in the adjustments in the databases published in PLADEIC and the output tables provided by the Statistics Section of the National Civil Police.

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<sup>3</sup> Seventh Report of the Election Observation Mission in Guatemala (2023), made up of a consortium of seven civil society organizations operating as a network: <https://dialogos.org.gt/2023/08/17/la-mision-de-observacion-electoral-de-guatemala-moe-gt-presento-su-informe-sobre-las-condiciones-previas-al-balotaje-presidencial/>

<sup>4</sup> DatAction Analysis of Citizen Security in 2022: Guatemala on the internet: <https://infosegura.org/guatemala/presentacion-analisis-multidimensional-de-la-seguridad-ciudadana-guatemala-2021>. 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 Breaks method according to the number of homicides.