MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS OF CITIZEN SECURITY: BELIZE

Análisis multidimensional de BELIZE de seguridad ciudadana

JANUARY TO SEPTEMBER 2021
enero a septiembre 2021

14 OCTOBER 2021
CONTEXT: Social, político, económico, cultural, geográfico

COVID-19 Health Crisis
Education
Social Services
Change in administration (Nov. 2020)
Poverty – 52% (2018)
Unemployment – 11.2% (2021)

POLITICAL

CULTURAL
multi-ethnic population

ECONOMIC

GEOGRAPHIC
Disparities across communities

Hon. Kareem Musa - New Minister responsible for Police / Home Affairs

Belize has reopened to cruise tourism
HIGHLIGHTS

MURDERS

90

-7%

relative to 2019

CRIMES AGAINST PROPERTY

539

-31%

relative to 2019

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

1,600+

Change varies by category

INCARCERATION

1,047

-10%

relative to 2019

FORENSIC ANALYSIS

267

-27

relative to 2019

* Based on most recent available data

Data Sources: Belize Central Prison, Belize Police Department & National Forensic Science Service
Murders *(Homicidios dolosos)*

"Every person who intentionally causes the death of another person by unlawful harm is guilty of **MURDER.**"

*(Belize Criminal Code, Chapter 101 of the Laws of Belize)*

*Murder is one of six categories of Major Crimes, prioritized by Belize’s law enforcement authorities.*
AFTER THREE CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF DECLINE (2018-2020), THE MURDER RATE IS FORECASTED TO RISE IN 2021, BASED ON THE CURRENT TRAJECTORY.

Murder Count and Rate for 2009-2020 (2021 Forecast included)


FORECASTS

BZ: 28.80
LAC: 20.8
CA / RD: 19.6

Data Source: Belize Police Department
Just before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Belize, gang-related States of Emergencies (SOE) began to be imposed to suppress urban violence. The most recent gang-related SOE was implemented in August 2021.

**BELIZE MURDER COUNT**

*JAN 2019 - SEPT 2021*

**Period of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Data Source: Belize Police Department
The gap between 2019 and 2021 narrowed between July and September 2021, approaching pre-COVID-19 levels.

Belize registered the third largest percent decline in murders among InfoSegura countries during January to June 2021. However, the situation has since been deteriorating.

**Data Source:** Belize Police Department
In Belize, there was a marked increase in the number of males murdered during January to September 2021. Comparatively, the number of females murdered declined in 2020 to a greater extent than did the number of males.

Data Source: Belize Police Department
There was a notable increase in the number of male minors under the age of 18 who were murdered during Jan-Sept 2021. The killing of two minors (ages 14 and 16) by Police were excluded from the murder count. Incidents involving females will be elaborated in the section on gender-based violence.

**Police-involved killings***

Data Source: Belize Police Department
SUMMARY STATS
MURDERS (January to September 2021)

SEX
- 94% male
- 6% female

AGE
- 34 average
- 6 yrs. min

WEAPON
- 74% firearm
- 15% knife

DISTRICT
- 50% Belize
- 30% Cayo
- 30% Rural

AREA
- 70% Urban

Data Source: Belize Police Department
CENTRAL BELIZE is the area of primary concern.

CAYO DISTRICT:
Population 105,190

40% of murders happened in Belize City and 50% in the Belize District.

30% of murders happened in the Cayo District, which is home to 24% of the nation’s population.

Belize City:
Population 66,083

Data Sources: Belize Police Department (crime data) & Statistical Institute of Belize (demographic data)
MEASURES ANNOUNCED

May to June 2021

- Multi-pronged gang intervention
- Gang mediation
- Relocation of a City Precinct, and
- Multi-agency collaboration to address socioeconomic issues
INTERVENTIONS TARGETING GANGS

INTERVENCIONES DIRIGIDAS A LAS PANDILLAS

- Localized curfew
- Two-week mediation
- 30-day localized State of Emergency
  
  16 August - 17 September, 2021

Other proposed measures:
- Targeting of gang financiers
- Extend duration of detention
- Gun control

At the end of 2020, the Gang Suppression Unit (GSU) was renamed the Gang Intelligence, Investigation and Interdiction Unit (GI3).
Acts Against Property (Actos contra la propiedad)

Robbery, burglary and theft are the three categories of Acts Against Property included in the Major Crimes classification utilized by the Belize Police Department.

Although there has been an overall decline in these categories of crime, portions of southern Belize have registered a notable increase in burglary.

The Belize District registered an increase in all three categories.

Data Source: Belize Police Department
Burglaries constituted approximately two-thirds of Crimes Against Property.

The upward trend in burglaries registered during May to September for the years 2019 and 2020 was not observed during 2021.

**Crimes Against Property (Jan 2019 to Sept 2021)**

**Data Source: Belize Police Department**
Gender-based Violence (La violencia de género)

1,618 Domestic Violence reports (Jan-Aug 2021)
45 cases of sexual Violence* (Jan-Sept 2021)
6 Females murdered (Jan-Sept 2021)

A female police officer and her teenaged daughter were murdered in what Police ruled to be an incident of domestic violence.

* Sexual violence cases include rape and unlawful sexual intercourse, based on the major crimes classification by Police.

Data Source: Belize Police Department
As of the end of August 2021, domestic violence reports were at their second highest level since 2016, for the 9-month period. Reports peaked during the height of the pandemic period in 2020.

Note: not all reports result in court action.

80% on average, 8 in every 10 reports documented by police since 2016 were made by females.

Data Source: Belize Police Department
97% of the complainants documented during January to September 2021 were females.

16 was the average age of persons who had suffered sexual violence in these two major crimes categories.

Data Source: Belize Police Department
FEMICIDES

Between January to September 2021, 6 females were murdered. Based on the circumstances of the incidents, it appears that at least 4 of these were gender-based killings that may be classified as FEMICIDES, and of these, two were reported as cases of Intimate Partner Violence.

Better documentation on femicides or gender-related killings, as well as official guidelines or protocols are needed. The BCO intends to engage inter-agency partners, through the InfoSegura Project, so that a proper classification scheme can be developed and agreed.

The BCO, in collaboration with the National Women’s Commission and the Belize Police Department, contributed data to the UN Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean for the period 2013-2020.

The BCO supports and advocates for the introduction of legislative provisions to include femicides as a specific category of crime in Belize’s Criminal Code.

Data Source: Belize Police Department
Incarceration (Encarcelamiento) peaked in August, after the Government of Belize declared a gang-related state of emergency. The prison population declined a cumulative 10% over the three-year period. Incarceration peaked in August, after the Government of Belize declared a gang-related state of emergency.
Since 2020, the headcount has decreased across virtually all major categories, except for murder and disorders/assaults.

The headcount for persons remanded and/or convicted on drug charges declined notably.

The most drastic decline was noted for illegal entry.

Data Source: Belize Central Prison
The number of forensic autopsies performed during the period January to July 2021 was lower than the number for the same period in both 2019 and 2020. The overall decline relative to 2019 is 27%. Just over half of the autopsies were for:

- Homicides
- Suicides
- Road Traffic Fatalities

84% of the autopsies were for males.
An increase in suicides, drownings, road traffic fatalities was recorded relative to the same period in 2020.

Police registered 60 murders during the period. For 66 autopsies, the manner of death was determined to be ‘homicide’.

For the 7-month period, there was a notable decrease in deaths classified as homicides, for both males and females.
CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENHANCING EVIDENCE FOR POLICIES AND DECISIONS

Mejora de las Pruebas para Políticas y Decisiones
Achieving Citizen Security transcends a focus on crime prevention and interdiction. It must also consider all the myriad factors that breed crime and violence.

The 2013 IDB Report on Citizen Security in Belize identifies several major drivers of Belize’s high crime rates:

- drug trafficking
- the presence of gangs
- the availability of firearms
- low levels of human development
- fragmentation of social ties
- inadequate education for youth
- lack of adequate employment opportunities for youth
- weak rule of law
- institutional functioning of the justice sector.
MORE SPECIFIC, STRATEGIC & SUSTAINABLE INTERVENTIONS ARE NEEDED
Interventions previously identified (in early 2020) as a part of the exercise to develop a new Citizen Security Strategy for Belize include:

- Community-based programs in **high-crime, high-poverty** areas
- Create job opportunities for **low-literacy** populations in **high-crime** areas
- Increase finance and business support for **low-literacy** populations in **high-crime areas**
- Install camera surveillance in **high-crime areas**
MORE INFORMATION NEEDED FOR BETTER BIVARIATE OR MULTIVARIATE ANALYSES

- At the district level, there is no direct positive correlation evident between murder rates and poverty rates.

- Although the Belize District had the highest murder rate in 2018, it also had the lowest poverty rate.

A MORE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL APPROACH NEEDED

- More community-level data are needed to inform community-level interventions.

- Data need to be more granular and provided in a timelier fashion.

- Current population estimates are not readily available for all communities, and the national census was postponed to 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
4 CRITICAL WAYS IN WHICH USAID-UNDP-INFOSEGURA CONTINUES TO SUPPORT THE TRANSFORMATIONS NEEDED

- Strengthening capacity for integrated information management and multidimensional analysis, using innovation and technology
- Broadening the scope of data sharing arrangements and collaboration, to support inter-agency partnerships across the continuum of justice.
- Supporting targeted gang interventions through South-South Cooperation during Phase III of the project
- Bridging the resource and technological gaps within public sector agencies that feed decisions and policies for Government agencies, as well as developmental partners
OFFICIAL DATA SOURCES

- Belize Central Prison
- Belize Police Department
- National Forensic Science Service
BCO’s Data Page: https://bco.gov.bz/data

NEW! Gender-Based Violence Page

Crime Statistics, Maps, Open Data
Dashboard and Hub Site

Major Crimes Comparative ArcGIS Dashboard

Open Data Hub (Maps and Apps)
THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

MIL GRACIAS!

https://bco.gov.bz/

@crimeobservatory.bz   @belizecrime