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Venezuela Perceived As Most Dangerous Country In the World



Written by Kyra Gurney Friday, 22 August 2014

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A homicide victim in Venezuela

Venezuela ranked the lowest in the world for perceptions of security in a recent Gallup poll, while citizens in Ecuador reported feeling considerably safer than four years ago, illustrating changing security perceptions amid constant shifts in the region's criminal landscape.

According to the results of Gallup's 2013 Law and Order Index (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/175082/latin-america-scores-lowest-security.aspx>) -- which is based on a poll measuring self-reported theft, confidence in local police,

and perceptions of personal safety -- fewer citizens in Latin America and the Caribbean reported feeling safe in their communities than residents of any other region in the world.

Means (0=lowest score, 100=highest score)

	2009	2013	Difference
Nicaragua	58	67	+9
Panama	60	67	+7
Chile	59	66	+7
Ecuador	49	63	+14
Uruguay	59	62	+3
Jamaica	na	61	na
Colombia	58	60	+2
Costa Rica	57	60	+3
Trinidad & Tobago	na	60	na
El Salvador	63	59	-4
Mexico	53	59	+6
Haiti	na	58	na
Guatemala	50	57	+7
Argentina	53	56	+3
Honduras	60	56	-4
Brazil	55	56	+1
Dominican Republic	50	53	+3
Paraguay	55	52	-3
Peru	47	48	+1
Bolivia	42	47	+5
Venezuela	45	41	-4

Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, and Haiti were not surveyed in 2009.

GALLUP

(<http://media2.gallup.com/GallupSpaces/Production/Cms/POLL/xi9lmkselucvjtd1snzmpw.png>)

Venezuelans reported feeling the least secure of any country worldwide, with fewer than 20 percent of respondents saying they felt safe walking alone at night in their community. Additionally, 22 percent of respondents said they or someone in their household had been a victim of theft in the past 12 months.

Venezuela, Honduras (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/66-honduras>) and El Salvador (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/32-el-salvador>) all saw four-point drops in their index ratings compared to 2009 (see Gallup chart). Bolivia (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/68-bolivia>) and Peru (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/61-peru>) saw improvements in their scores, but both countries still ranked near the bottom of the regional list.

On the other end of the spectrum, Ecuador's index rating shot up 14 points compared to 2009, and Nicaragua, Panama (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/58-panama>), and Chile also improved their scores considerably, coming in at the top of the list.

InSight Crime Analysis

Perceptions of security are formed from of a complex set of factors and do not always correlate with homicide rates and other crime indicators. Depending on the questions asked and the population surveyed, different polls can also produce drastically different results. A 2012 survey conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP - pdf (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/ab2012/AB2012-comparative-Report-V7-Final-Cover-01.25.13.pdf>)), for example, found Ecuador to have the fifth worst perception of security in the region, after Peru

(<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/61-peru>), Venezuela, Bolivia (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/68-bolivia>), and Haiti, while Honduras (<http://www.insightcrime.org/component/tags/tag/66-honduras>) had one of the best.

Venezuela's ranking as one of the countries perceived as most dangerous according to both polls is unsurprising. It has one of the highest homicide rates (<http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/discrepancy-venezuela-homicides-among-world-highest>) in the world, with 79 murders per 100,000 people in 2013, according to the Venezuelan Observatory of Violence. Feelings of insecurity have also likely been fueled by an ongoing political and economic crisis (<http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/as-colombia-homicides-fall-venezuela-security-spirals-out-of-control>) as opposition groups seek to oust the current administration.

SEE ALSO: [Venezuela News and Profiles \(/venezuela-organized-crime-news\)](/venezuela-organized-crime-news)

The five countries with the best security perceptions in the Gallup poll are also those with the lowest murder rates in the region. However, even here the correlation is not always straightforward, as seen with the conflicting results for Ecuador in the Gallup and LAPOP polls. This could be partly due to differing security indicators. Although Ecuador has a relatively low homicide rate, the country saw one of the highest numbers of kidnappings (<http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/the-complex-relationship-of-organized-crime-and-violence-in-latam>) in the region between 2009 and 2011, and last year robberies were the most common cause of homicides (<http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/why-are-robbery-related-killings-rising-in-quito-ecuador>) in capital city Quito.



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