Towards a safer Latin America:

A new perspective for crime prevention and control

RED 2014 –
CAF Development Bank of Latin America
126.456

*Homicides in Latin America in 2010

(*)
Homicide rate in Latin America versus other countries between 1300 and 2010

Homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in Latin America in 2010
Homicide rate in Latin America versus other countries between 1300 and 2010
The average homicide rate in Latin America is 10 times that of the European and North American average in 2009-2011.
Insecurity is Latin Americans’ top concern

Source: CAF survey 2013

- 24% Insecurity
- 13% Poverty
- 9% Unemployment
Change in the homicide rate since 10-15 years ago

- Guatemala 19%
- Mexico 19%
- Nicaragua 94%
- El Salvador 26%
- Panama -7%
- Colombia 93%
- Colombia 93%
- Peru -6%
- Paraguay -22%
- Paraguay -22%
- Argentina -35%
- Venezuela 140%
- Argentina -35%
Change in the homicide rate since 10-15 years ago

- Mexico: 19%
- Guatemala: 19%
- Dominican Republic: 94%
- El Salvador: 26%
- Nicaragua: -7%
- Costa Rica: 98%
- Panama: 93%
- Colombia: -50%
- Peru: -6%
- Venezuela: 140%
Determinants of the criminal event

**Individual** × **Situation** (Environment at a given point in time) = **Criminal Event?**

- **Individual**
  - Propensity
  - Exposure

- **Situation**
  - Physical Space, Social Environment
  - Illegal Markets
  - Criminal Justice System
Determinants of the criminal event

Individual
- Propensity
- Exposure

Situation (Environment at a given point in time)
- Physical Space, Social Environment
- Illegal Markets
- Criminal Justice System

Criminal Event?
People’s personal history conditions the probability that they commit a crime
Victims’ perception of their offender’s age

Source: CAF survey 2013
Intervention examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevention program</th>
<th>Reduction with respect to the control group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent training in child-rearing styles and health best practices</td>
<td>-43% Arrests by age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High quality early stimulation programs</td>
<td>-80% Interpersonal violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-cognitive skill development in adolescents</td>
<td>-64% Involvement in violent crimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-34% Firearm use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension of the school day (20% extra coverage)</td>
<td>-44% Youth violent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of gang activity</td>
<td>-11% / -24% Youth violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better job opportunities for youth</td>
<td>-73% Violent deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-41% Firearm confrontations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-12% Arrests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Determinants of the criminal event

Individual
- Propensity
- Exposure

Situation
- Physical Space, Social Environment
- Illegal Markets
- Criminal Justice System

Criminal Event?
Crime is highly concentrated in time and space
Concentration of **theft** in time and space: the case of La Capuchina in Bogota
Concentration of **theft** in time and space: the case of La Capuchina in Bogota
In the Sucre municipality of Caracas 100% of homicides are concentrated in only 9% of street segments

Source: Kronick and Ortega, 2014
In the Sucre municipality of Caracas 100% of homicides are concentrated in only 9% of street segments

Source: Kronick and Ortega, 2014
Intervention examples

Example:
33% reduction in street violence in Jacksonville, Florida
(Taylor et al. 2011.)
Intervention examples

Hotspot policing

Example:
33% reduction in street violence in Jacksonville, Florida
(Taylor et al. 2011.)

Intervention over the quality of public spaces (lighting and public parks)

Improving lighting favors a reduction in crime of up to 21% 
(Welsh and Farrington, 2007)
Crime does not displace. Moreover, there seems to be a diffusion of benefits to adjacent areas.
Determinants of the criminal event

Individual × Situation (Environment at a given point in time) = Criminal Event?

Individual:
- Propensity
- Exposure

Situation:
- Physical Space, Social Environment
- Illegal Markets
- Criminal Justice System
Illegal markets are key to the incidence of crime and violence in Latin America.
Pharmacological channel
Economic channel
Systemic channel:

Illegal drug markets \(\rightarrow\) Contract enforcement through violence
Colombia would have had 25% fewer homicides in 2008 if cocaine production had not increased as it did since 1994.

Source: Mejía and Restrepo 2013

2008
Homicides per 100,000 inhabitants

36.3
Colombia would have had 25% fewer homicides in 2008 if cocaine production had not increased as it did since 1994.

Source: Mejía and Restrepo 2013
Selective interventions against drug trafficking: attacking the chain links with the greatest rents

27.5%

2008
Determinants of the criminal event

Individual x Situation (Environment at a given point in time) = Criminal Event?

Individual:
- Propensity
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- Physical Space, Social Environment
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Better to deter than to punish
Certainty of punishment: Police officers, prosecutors, courts

A 10% increase in police presence reduces crime 3%
Certainty of punishment: Police officers, prosecutors, courts

- A 10% increase in police presence reduces crime 3%
- The main channel is deterrence (and not the greater number of arrests)
Police officers per 100 thousand inhabitants

Source: Kronick (2014) and OEA (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Police Officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
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</tr>
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<td>351</td>
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<td>336</td>
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<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>186</td>
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Certainty of punishment: Police officers, prosecutors, courts

- A 10% increase in police presence reduces crime 3%
- The main channel is deterrence (and not the greater number of arrests)
- Police is not enough. Prosecutors and courts are key. Of every 100 reported crimes in Latin America there are only 4 sentences (versus 9 in North America and 15 in Europe)
4 out of every 5 Latin Americans does not trust the police.
Inmates per 100 thousand inhabitants

Source: ICPS (2014)

- USA: 716
- El Salvador: 425
- Panama: 392
- Costa Rica: 314
- Uruguay: 279
- Brasil: 276
- Chile: 270
- Trinidad & Tobago: 259
- Colombia: 240
- Dominican R.: 210
- Mexico: 209
- Peru: 198
- Venezuela: 169
- Honduras: 159
- Argentina: 145
- Nicaragua: 122
- Canada: 114
- Bolivia: 112
- Paraguay: 97
- Guatemala: 87
- Ecuador: 86
Inmates per 100 thousand inhabitants
Source: ICPS (2014)

Severity of punishment: sentences and prisons

- The prison population increased 163% in the past two decades
Inmates per 100 thousand inhabitants
Source: ICPS (2014)

Severity of punishment: sentences and prisons

- The prison population increased 163% in the past two decades

Incapacitation: To put criminals in jail mechanically reduces crime
**Severity of punishment: sentences and prisons**

- The prison population increased 163% in the past two decades
- Incapacitation: To put criminals in jail mechanically reduces crime
- More severe sentences are hardly effective as deterrence
Prison occupancy rate (optimal %)

Source: ICPS (2014)

- El Salvador: 325%
- Venezuela: 270%
- Bolivia: 270%
- Guatemala: 252%
- Peru: 224%
- Dominican R.: 196%
- Panama: 173%
- Brazil: 172%
- Colombia: 157%
- Honduras: 151%
- Paraguay: 145%
- Ecuador: 139%
- Nicaragua: 128%
- Mexico: 123%
- Uruguay: 120%
- Chile: 119%
- Trinidad & Tobago: 119%
- Costa Rica: 117%
- Argentina: 102%
- USA: 99%
- Canada: 96%

Rehabilitation... or schools of crime

There are two people for every sleeping space

- 64% feel less safe in prison than outside

- Only 1 every 4 inmates takes part in educational activities

Source: PNUD (2013)
### Prison occupancy rate (optimal %)

Source: ICPS (2014)

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### Rehabilitation...
or schools of crime

- There are two people for every sleeping space
- 64% feel less safe in prison than outside
- Only 1 every 4 inmates takes part in educational activities

Source: PNUD (2013)

- Alternative mechanisms to imprisonment?
  - Electronic monitoring reduces re-offending by 48% (Buenos Aires, Argentina)

Source: Di Tella and Schargrodsky 2013
Towards a safer
Latin America

Implement policies in a wide range of directions

Critical areas:

- Public officials (e.g. police ranks) with technical capacity
- Programs designed to strengthen cognitive and non-cognitive abilities of youth at risk
- Youth employment programs
- Spatially targeted interventions for urban upgrading, social cohesion and policing services
How to prioritize interventions?
How to prioritize interventions?
Effect size vs temporal horizon

Crime reduction

Implementation

Time

- Early stimulation and nutrition
- Effective police presence
- Strengthening non-cognitive abilities and job opportunities for the young
- Urban upgrading
- Improving prison infrastructure

TODAY
Problems in the implementation of policies

- Early stimulation and nutrition
- Effective police presence
- Strengthening non-cognitive abilities and job opportunities for the young
- Urban upgrading
- Improving prison infrastructure

TODAY
Problems in the legitimacy of criminal justice institutions

- Early stimulation and nutrition
- Effective police presence
- Strengthening non-cognitive abilities and job opportunities for the young
- Urban upgrading
- Improving prison infrastructure

Time

Crime reduction

Implementation

Today
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