

SECURITY & RISK MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY
 'Safe in our hands'

DIRECTOR'S SUMMARY

Companies operating in Mexico should have no problems if basic security was adhered to. The main threat is in large cities with drug gangs warring over controlled areas for their operations. Contingency planning for natural disasters during the Hurricane season.



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RISK INDICES

Country Risk Rating

The Country Risk Rating for Mexico is 'three'.



Out of the 160 countries analyzed by RMI's *Country Risk Assessment Index* Mexico is ranked #76 (the higher the ranking the better). For reference the United States of America is ranked #114.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Internal Stability Index	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Conflict Index	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Terrorism Index	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Corruption Index	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Travel Safety Index	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Crime Index	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK



INTERNAL STABILITY INDEX

The *Internal Stability Index* rating for Mexico is 'moderate risk' with a score of 74.3.

LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
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For reference other countries with a similar score for internal stability are China (74.7) and Tunisia (74.2).

Mexico has an established multiparty democracy. Political demonstrations are common in Mexico City and can occur across the country. These can be tense and confrontational and could potentially turn violent. Onlookers can be quickly drawn in. There has been a recent increase of outbursts of politically motivated violence in the states of Guerrero and Mexico City. You should monitor local media and avoid all demonstrations. The Mexican constitution prohibits political activities by foreigners. Participation in demonstrations may result in detention and deportation.

The socio-economic gap in Mexico remains wide. Rural areas are often neglected, and huge shanty towns ring the cities. Many poor Mexicans have sought to cross the 3,000-km border with the US in search of a job, but in recent years more Mexicans immigrants have returned to Mexico than migrated to the US.

Outbursts of politically-motivated violence can occur across the country, with a recent increase in the states of Guerrero and Mexico City.

There are currently large numbers of migrants moving en masse from Honduras through Guatemala to Mexico and beyond. This is having an impact on border crossings. The situation is fluid but borders crossings at Tecun Uman (Guatemala/Mexico), Agua Caliente (Honduras/Guatemala) and Tijuana (Mexico/USA) are currently affected and subject to periodic closures. You're advised to check with local authorities and tour operators before attempting to cross land borders.

Civil unrest, violent crime and border disputes characterized the last year in the Central American region. Refugees fleeing violence in the region have congregated on Mexico's southern border with Guatemala, seeking access to Mexico and the United States.

CONFLICT INDEX

The *Conflict Index* rating for Mexico is 'moderate risk' with a score of 2.646.

LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
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For reference other countries with a similar score for conflict are Turkey (2.777) and Mali (2.596).

Mexico is renowned for organized crime. Mexican law enforcement and the military have struggled to curb crime-related violence. In 2018, the number of drug-related homicides in Mexico rose to 33,341, a fifteen percent increase from the previous year—and a record high; their highest homicide rate in 21 years. Moreover, Mexican cartels killed at least 130 candidates and politicians in the lead-up to Mexico's 2018 presidential elections.

Mexico's crime groups and drug traffickers have distinct regional areas of control for each group and have established networks and trafficking routes. However, as production and distribution has increased, the groups fight for territorial control and access to markets, leading to an increase in violence across Mexico.

The Mexican government officially declared war on criminal organizations in 2006, when former President Felipe Calderon launched an initiative to combat cartels using military force. In 2012, President Enrique Peña Nieto revised the Calderon government's strategy, shifting efforts away from violent exchanges and toward improving law enforcement capacity and supporting public safety.

Recognizing widespread assertions that the use of military force has only increased the level of crime-related violence in Mexico; newly President Andres Manuel López Obrador is working towards revolutionizing the fight against cartels and reverting to a civilian-led police force.

Mexico benefits from friendly relations with neighboring countries which makes geopolitical risk very low.

TERRORISM INDEX

The *Terrorism Index* rating for Mexico is 'low risk' with a score of 3.292.

LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
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For reference other countries with a similar score for terrorism are Malaysia (3.334) and Madagascar (3.287).

Although there's no recent history of terrorism in Mexico, attacks can't be ruled out. Drug cartels are likely to target public and security force installations, local politicians, or members of the security forces with firearms in violent hotspots such as Guerrero, Michoacán, and Tamaulipas

state. The intensity of conflict between security forces and the cartels, as well as turf wars between different organized crime groups, varies by region and often shifts geographically. The strengthening of the New Generation Cartel in Jalisco increases the risk of drug-related violence rising there, as well as in Colima, Guanajuato, and Veracruz states. Extortion risks are also rising as cartels seek to diversify their revenue streams.



CORRUPTION INDEX

The *Corruption Index* rating for Mexico is 'moderate risk' with a score of 30.



For reference other countries with a similar score for corruption are Malawi (31) and Ukraine (29).

Corruption is a significant risk for companies operating in Mexico. Bribery is widespread in the country's judiciary and police. Business registration processes, including getting construction permits and licenses, are negatively influenced by corruption. Organized crime continues to be a very problematic factor for business, imposing large costs on companies. Collusion between the police, judges and criminal groups is extensive, leading to widespread crime, theft, impunity and weak law enforcement. Gifts and hospitality are not forbidden by law and may be permissible, depending on intent. Attempted bribery, extortion, abuse of office, bribery of foreign public officials and facilitation payments are criminalized under Mexico's Federal Penal Code (Código Penal Federal, in Spanish). However, Mexico's anti-corruption laws are almost never enforced, and public officials are rarely held liable for illegal acts. New anti-corruption laws were passed in 2017 and implemented in July 2017, but their effectiveness has not been proven yet.

There have been a number of high-profile allegations involving representatives from Mexico's main political parties. There has been important improvement in recent years, and Mexico is a signatory of the 2016 London Anti-Corruption Global Agreement. In 2018, there were 10 former Governors currently under investigation, one in jail, and another being prosecuted. Government tendering guidelines are being strengthened to reduce the risk of corruption in the awarding of contracts: but this can lead to the lowest bid winning without consideration of quality, and also there are of course loopholes that many can exploit.

Corruption in Mexico is sometimes referred to as endemic, and public dissatisfaction is high. Despite the advances in Mexico's anti-corruption legislation and the creation of a new anti-corruption system, doubts remain about high level political will to tackle the problem.

According to the Global Peace Index 2019, in Central America, confidence in the local police is lowest in Mexico with only 38% of respondents claiming confidence in the local police.



TRAVEL SAFETY INDEX

The *Travel Safety Index* rating for Mexico is 'moderate risk'.

LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
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Travel safety is affected by turf wars between the different organizations that compete for control of trafficking routes into the US. Drug-related violence in Mexico has increased over recent years. The violence is concentrated in specific areas, and some regions are almost completely spared. Drug-related violence is a particular problem in the northern states of Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, Sinaloa and Durango. Armed clashes between security forces and drug groups can occur at any time without warning.

You should take precautions in the state of Baja California, including Tijuana. There has been a rise in drug-related crime in Baja California Sur, including Los Cabos.

You should take care when travelling to Ciudad Juarez or other cities in Northern States. Travel during daylight hours when possible and use reputable hotels only.

There have been reports of increased security incidents in the states of Tabasco and Veracruz. There has been a recent increase in violence in the State of Veracruz, including the city of Veracruz.

Illegal roadblocks have been reported more frequently, particularly in the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca and Chiapas. If you're driving in these states, travel during daylight hours and use toll roads where possible, although you may still encounter disruptions.

Drug-related violence is also a problem in Michoacán, Guerrero, Jalisco and Nayarit.

The Mexican government makes efforts to protect major tourist destinations like Cancun, Playa del Carmen, Cozumel, Los Cabos, Puerto Vallarta and Nuevo Vallarta. These areas have mostly not seen the levels of drug-related violence and crime experienced elsewhere in Mexico. However, since 2017 there have been a number of reported shooting incidents and other incidents of violence in these areas, including in locations popular with tourists. There is currently an increased police presence in the Cancun area, including in the hotel zone. While tourists have not been the target of such incidents, anyone in the vicinity of an incident could be affected.

On 21 February 2018, an explosive device detonated on a tourist ferry operating between Playa del Carmen and Cozumel, Quintana Roo. The explosion injured 20 people, including tourists. On 1 March, local authorities found an undetonated device on another ferry operating on the same route. The Mexican authorities are continuing to investigate the incident.

There have been several instances of armed crime both within and outside tourist areas in Acapulco. If possible, travel by air if you're visiting a major tourist destination in Guerrero. Due to an increase in violent crime in recent months, you should be extra vigilant in Acapulco and surrounding areas.

A recent attack (27 June 2020) on the Mexico City police chief close to Lomas de Chapultepec neighbourhood, an exclusive area, shows an increase in confidence by the Jalisco New Generation Cartel. This could indicate a higher risk in once relatively secure areas.



CRIME INDEX

The *Crime Index* rating for Mexico is 'moderate risk'.

LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
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Crime and violence are serious problems in Mexico and the security situation can pose a risk for foreigners. Many Mexican and foreign businesses choose to hire private security. You should research your destination thoroughly and only travel during daylight hours when possible. Monitor local media and inform trusted contacts of your travel plans.

The presence of drug cartels and related gangs brings risk of crime throughout the country, though the threat is particularly pronounced in states such as Guanajuato, Guerrero, Puebla, Tamaulipas, Michoacán, and Veracruz. Extortion and kidnapping risks have increased as drug cartels have fractured, encouraging small criminal groups to look for new sources of illicit income. The primary risks in the capital, Mexico City, are petty crime and express kidnappings. Robbery risks also persist, with several recent reports of thieves targeting upmarket restaurants in the Condesa district in order to steal all their customers' valuables.

When driving, avoid isolated roads and use toll roads ('cuotas') whenever possible. Keep car doors locked and windows closed, especially at traffic lights. There have been a number of violent car-jackings and robberies along the Pacific Highway and you should be careful when travelling on this route. Those travelling in large camper vans or sports utility vehicles (SUVs) have been targeted in the past. If you suspect you're being followed or watched, drive to a police station or other safe place.

Be particularly alert on public transport, at airports and in bus stations; theft on buses is common. Buses have also been hijacked in conflict areas. Where possible, travel on first-class buses using toll roads, which have a lower rate of incidents. Most first-class bus companies perform security checks when passengers board the bus.

Passengers have been robbed and assaulted by unlicensed taxi drivers including in Mexico City. In Mexico City, use the

better regulated 'sitio' taxis from authorized cab ranks or ask your hotel concierge to order you a taxi. At airports, use only authorized pre-paid airport taxi services.

Women travelling on their own should be particularly alert when travelling on public transport. There have been incidents of rape on urban buses ('micros') on routes in the south of Mexico City. Most attacks have occurred early in the morning or late at night. Several serious sexual offences have also occurred in tourist areas outside of Mexico City.

Street crime is a serious problem in major cities and tourist resort areas. Pick-pocketing is common on the Mexico City Metro. Dress down and avoid wearing expensive jewellery or watches. Limit the amount of cash or credit/debit cards you carry with you. Keep a close watch on briefcases and luggage, even in apparently secure places like the lobby of your hotel.

Be wary of people presenting themselves as police officers trying to fine or arrest you for no apparent reason. If in doubt, ask for identification and if possible, note the officer's name, badge number, and patrol car number. Foreign visitors and residents may be targeted by scam artists. Be wary of strangers approaching you or contacting you by phone asking for personal information or financial help.

Short-term opportunistic kidnapping - called 'express kidnapping' - can occur, particularly in urban areas. Victims are forced to withdraw funds from credit or debit cards at a cash point to secure their release. Where victims have friends or relatives living locally, a ransom may be demanded from them.

Longer-term kidnapping for financial gain also occurs, and there have been allegations of police officers being involved. Be discreet about discussing your financial or business affairs in places where you may be overheard by others.



Recent Major Incidents

18 October 2019 – Riots, Culiacán

Ovidio Guzmán López, part of the Sinaloa cartel, was seized at a house on a judge's warrant in the city of Culiacán. As a result, heavy fighting broke out with cartel gunmen fighting street battles with security forces. At least eight people were reportedly killed and 21 wounded, with vehicles left burning in the streets.

SUMMARY OF RECENT MINOR INCIDENTS - SEA

Date	Fatalities	Description
19 Apr 2020	0	Around 12nm North of Ciudad del Carmen, Mexico. Around six persons armed with automatic weapons and pistols boarded an anchored accommodation construction barge. They attempted to enter into the accommodation without success and opened fire towards the superstructure causing damage to three windows. Master raised the alarm, sent distress message, informed CSO, and crew mustered in the citadel. The incident was reported to the Marine Control via VHF ch.16 and a naval boat was dispatched to the location. The persons stole the barge's high value project equipment and escaped. One crew was injured during the incident.
14 Apr 2020	0	Around 13nm NW of Puerto Dos Bocas, Mexico. Eight armed robbers boarded a drifting offshore supply ship. They fired several warning shots and later left the vessel. No injuries to crew members. Authorities have been informed.
09 Apr 2020	0	Hokchi Field, Offshore Puerto Dos Bocas, Mexico. Duty crew onboard a dynamic positioning pipelaying vessel noticed two boats with seven armed persons approaching at high speed. Alarm raised, PA announcement made and crew mustered in the citadel. Three persons managed to board the vessel. Master activated SSAS, increased speed, and commenced maneuvers resulting in the persons escaping. Port Control notified and a patrol boat was dispatched to assist the vessel. After the crew emerged from the citadel a security search was carried out. Crew and vessel reported safe.
04 Apr 2020	0	HSP Platform, Offshore Dos Bocas, Mexico. Crew onboard a pipelaying vessel noticed a boat with eight armed persons approaching at high speed. Alarm sounded, accommodation locked down and all crew mustered. As the boat approached from the stern it started firing at the vessel. Using the thrusters the Master was able to prevent the boat from coming alongside resulting in the boat aborting and moving away. Port Control notified via VHF and a patrol boat was dispatched to the location.
11 Nov 19	0	An anchored supply vessel 7.2nm North of Ciudad del Carmen, Mexico, was boarded by eight armed men arriving by boats. Upon boarding the vessel shots were fired, the 35 crew managed to fend off the attackers who fled with some of the crew's valuables. One crew member was shot in the leg and another was assaulted.
04 Nov 19	0	Number of armed robbers in boats boarded an oil platform off Paraiso, Tabasco using the stairs. Once on board the robbers threatened the crew and tied several crew members up. Upon the Master announcing over the PA system that the Mexican Navy was on its way, the robbers escaped taking food supplies with them. The report states that shots were fired during this incident but there were no casualties.
04 Aug 19	0	Maintenance pontoon at Ciudad Del Carmen anchorage reported that ships stores had been stolen. A machete was found close to the store room. The Master was later informed from another vessel that robbers had made an attempt to board their vessel also.



SECURITY POSTURE

MODERATE RISK

An incident/attack is possible but not likely

Clients can operate safely in Mexico if security measures and risk controls are implemented in accordance with the Remote Medical International *Security and Risk Management Plan* for Mexico.

HEALTH

General

Individuals should visit their health professional 4 - 6 weeks before deployment to discuss their detailed requirements for medical support, vaccinations, etc. based on their specific health circumstances (e.g., medical history). **The information in this *Country Brief* for Mexico is NOT a substitute for this advice.**

All personnel deploying to Mexico should be covered by adequate health insurance.

As of 11 September 2020, Mexico has 647,507 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and has suffered 69,095 deaths.

On arrival in Mexico City and other high-altitude areas, you may feel a lack of energy, shortness of breath or headaches. High levels of air pollution can occur in Mexico City and may aggravate heart, lung or respiratory conditions.

In the last 3 years there has been an increase in reported cases of a food and water bug, cyclospora, affecting travellers returning from Mexico, particularly from the Riviera Maya region between the months of May and June.

Cases of Chikungunya virus have been confirmed in Mexico.

UK health authorities have classified Mexico as having a risk of Zika virus transmission.

There is a risk of Dengue fever in this country.

Drink only boiled or bottled water and avoid ice in drinks.

Medical Facilities

Not all hospitals will agree to deal directly with medical insurance companies. You should be prepared to pay for treatment yourself up front and then seek a refund.

If you need emergency medical assistance during your trip, dial 911 and ask for an ambulance. In Mexico City, you can also use the emergency buttons on CCTV cameras visible across the city which will immediately connect you to the emergency services.

DISEASE INDEX

Yellow Fever	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Typhoid	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Hepatitis A	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Rabies	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Tetanus	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Cholera	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Tuberculosis	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Encephalitis	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Meningitis	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Influenza	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Malaria	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Dengue	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
HIV/AIDS	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK
Zika	LOW RISK	MODERATE RISK	HIGH RISK

VACCINATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the assumption that the individual is up-to-date with vaccinations for the following diseases (vaccination baseline): diphtheria, measles, tetanus, whooping cough, rubella, polio, hepatitis B, rotavirus, meningitis B & C, and mumps.

Yellow Fever	NO	Typhoid	OPTIONAL
Hepatitis A	OPTIONAL	Rabies	OPTIONAL
Tetanus (booster)	OPTIONAL	Cholera	OPTIONAL
Tuberculosis	NO	Encephalitis	NO
Meningitis (booster)	NO	Influenza	NO

There is no requirement to take anti-malaria prophylaxis.

There is no requirement for a yellow fever vaccination certificate to enter Mexico.



Other Information

Local Laws and Customs

The Mexican Police have the authority to ask for proof of legal status in Mexico and, on occasion, have detained British nationals without documents. You should carry photocopies of the relevant pages of your passport and of the stamped 'Forma Migratoria Múltiple' (FMM) given to you on arrival in Mexico at all times.

If you're travelling between states or near international borders, you may be stopped by Mexican immigration authorities for immigration checks. You'll need to be able to provide your passport and FMM slip. Copies are not accepted. If you're unable to produce these documents, you may be detained, held at an immigration holding centre, and ultimately deported.

Although civil unions between same-sex partners are now legal in Mexico City and the state of Coahuila, homosexuality in Mexico is generally tolerated, rather than accepted.

Natural Disasters

Following heavy rain and floods in Tamaulipas State (north-eastern Mexico) on 25 June 2019, two people have died. According to media reports, as of 28 June 2019,

92 people have been evacuated to temporary shelters in Victoria (Tamaulipas), and 50 people in Cameron County (Texas). Heavy rainfall also damaged two regional hospitals and the electrical grid in Reynosa Province (Mexico), leaving 100,000 people without power for twelve hours.

The hurricane season in Mexico normally runs from June to November and can affect both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. Be aware that effects of tropical storms and hurricanes can span hundreds of miles from the centre of the storm, causing flooding, landslides and disruption to local services, including transport. Monitor local and international weather updates from the US National Hurricane Center.

Most of Mexico is occasionally subject to earthquakes. Tremors occur regularly, particularly in the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero. If you're travelling in Mexico City you can download the 911 CDMX app, which warns you an earthquake will happen 60 seconds before the movement starts. Although these alarms are very useful, they can't detect every kind of earthquake there can be.

The Popocatepetl and Colima volcanoes are active and closed to the public. There are danger zones around both volcanoes, the size of which can change depending on the current level of activity.

Notes:

1. Maps used in Remote Medical International's Country Briefs are sourced under the Open Government Licence v3.0 from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's foreign travel advice website. Map © Crown Copyright 2017 (FC0363 Edition 4).