

Encuesta Justiciabarómetro: Zona Metropolitana de Guadalajara

Justice-Barometer Survey: Guadalajara Metropolitan Zone



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABOUT THE STUDY

On December 18, 2009, a team of independent U.S. and Mexican researchers presented the results of the study titled *Justiciabarómetro: Zona Metropolitana de Guadalajara* (Justice Barometer: Guadalajara Metropolitan Zone), a survey of local police to incoming elected officials. The *Justiciabarómetro* forms part of the *Justice in Mexico Project* at the University of San Diego's Trans-Border Institute, which provides policy analysis and recommendations concerning the rule of law in Mexico. Other sponsoring institutions included the Instituto de Investigaciones en Innovación y Gobernanza of the Universidad de Guadalajara and the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Occidente. The *Justice in Mexico Project* is generously supported by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and The Tinker Foundation.

Objective: The objective of the *Justiciabarómetro* study is to examine the operation and performance of the criminal justice system in Mexico through the perspective of key actors within the system. The survey constitutes the largest independent study of municipal Mexican police to date, and provides an unprecedented look into the local face of the Mexican state, focusing on the Guadalajara Metropolitan Zone, also known by its Spanish initials as the "ZMG." In addition to Guadalajara, Mexico's 2nd largest city, the ZMG includes the municipalities of El Salto, Tlaquepaque, Tlajamulco de Zúñiga, Tonalá, and Zapopan.

Methodology: The survey was administered to 5,422 respondents, or nearly 80% of all municipal police in the ZMG. Given the high rate of participation in the study, the survey has a margin of error of just +/- .61% for a confidence level of 95%.

Survey Findings: The research team collected data on socio-demographic indicators; professional profiles; technical and legal knowledge; and perceptions of work, crime, and society. Among the

most important findings of the study was the emphasis that officers placed on promoting community engagement in crime prevention and public security matters, compared with other measures such as buying more equipment or hiring more officers:

- Only 14% of the 5,422 local police we interviewed in the ZMG were female; less than half the proportion found in advanced industrial democracies. While the median age of respondents (38) was rather high and 90% had families of their own, there were relatively few homeowners (40%) and half had fewer than 10 years experience on the force.
- While low by international standards, education levels among local police exceeded Mexico's national averages, with ZMG police attaining higher levels of middle school (47%), high school (30%), and university and post-graduate (14%) education.
- Respondents described excessively long working hours (70% work more than 50 hours a week with no overtime); a fifth of the force reported extremely extended shifts (a 24-hour shift for every two days off); and 68% reported 30 minutes or less for meals or breaks.
- More than 80% of the force earns less than \$800 USD per month, which is relatively low compared to other public sector employment. On average, women tend to earn less (\$564 USD monthly) than their male counterparts (\$612 USD monthly). Despite civil service protections in the law, 67% felt that raises and promotions are not based on merit, and 72% felt that the procedures for raises and promotions were unfair.
- A large majority of respondents (60-90%) demonstrated adequate knowledge on jurisdictional and technical questions, though more expressed a desire for directing greater resources towards training than towards equipment.
- Roughly a third of the force perceives severe problems of corruption; 40% showed little trust in their superiors; and 68% say that corruption is concentrated at high levels of local departments. Only about half (52%) felt that there are mechanisms for investigating corruption. Women were significantly more sensitive to issues of corruption. Women were far more likely to observe "high" levels of corruption, and 46% more women than men indicated that fighting corruption is the key to improving local public security.
- 32% indicated that the problem most concerning to citizens is drug trafficking; 29% indicated that the problem most difficult for local police to solve is drug trafficking; and 45% said that the problem in which local police are most likely to be involved is drug trafficking.
- More than better equipment (13%), more police (14%), or reducing police corruption (26%), the largest proportion of respondents (45%) indicated that greater community participation was key to combating crime; a possible indication that local outreach and community-oriented policing programs may be a critical avenue for improving local public security.

Recommendations: The study helps identify concrete recommendations to modernize and professionalize local police forces:

- Increasing female recruitment could have significant and positive impacts on both public service and internal dynamics in local police departments, particularly with regard to identifying and reducing corruption.
- In addition to relatively modest wage increases (ranging between 10% and 50%), police expressed a desire for better working conditions, more reasonable hours, and greater benefits, particularly in terms of assistance with education and housing.
- Promoting greater recruitment of younger cadets and better packages for early retirement would invigorate the force, and increase average education levels (since younger officers were significantly better educated than more senior officers).
- Adopting more transparent and stronger merit-based systems for career advancement could help improve officer morale, increase respect for superiors, and reduce stagnation and incentives for corruption.
- Based on officers' own assessments, moving toward a greater emphasis on community outreach and problem-oriented community policing could improve local crime prevention efforts and overall public security.

Conclusions: The *Justiciabarómetro* study comes at a critical juncture, as Mexico's federal and state officials have begun to consider reforms to eliminate local law enforcement agencies and concentrate police forces at the state level. Researchers believe the results of the study will illuminate the public debate on the strengths and weaknesses of municipal police departments in Mexico. Researchers hope to replicate the study in different municipalities and in future years to establish comparative indicators and benchmarks for evaluating police reform efforts in the future. In the meantime, the *Justiciabarómetro* study of the Guadalajara Metropolitan Zone suggests that Mexico's local police forces face enormous challenges, but that there is also an important foundation and clear directions for future improvement.

Participating Institutions:

