



SECURITY  
COLOMBIA

Security  
Overview

# ***BARRANQUILLA***

August 2024



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“ The Barranquilla Security-Overview 2024 aims to carry out a statistically based analysis of the security situation in the Colombian city in order to build prospective scenarios.

”







# 1. Situational Analysis

In this document the Unidad de Análisis Político y Seguridad Corporativa (UAPSC) of 3+SC will carry out a Security Overview for the city of Barranquilla, analyzing the dynamics that impact security, risk generating factors and criminal behavior based on statistics, with the main objective of making known the security situation of the city in order to establish prospective scenarios and recommendations that are useful for risk management, treatment and control.

So far in 2024, insecurity has probably been the biggest problem of Alejandro Char's administration. Both the occurrence of high-impact crimes and citizen perception of insecurity remain quite high.

Crimes such as extortion of merchants, homicides and theft from persons have a negative impact on citizens. In response, local authorities have resorted to increasing the operational actions of the security forces and have even created more specialized units to combat crime ([El Norte](#), 2024).

Although finding solutions to the problem has been one of Mayor Char's main banners and objectives, the situation persists and the reduction of crime rates continues without success ([El Tiempo](#), 2024).



# 37%

of citizens said they felt unsafe in their neighborhoods

# 30%

of citizens said they felt unsafe in the city.

# 17%

of respondents said they had been victims of some type of crime.

Most serious problems in the neighborhoods:

**68%**  
street muggings

**14%**  
gang presence

**13%**  
drug addiction





165% increase in threats

100% increase in terrorism

25% increase in homicides

15% increase in theft from persons

## 2. Crime Analysis

### High-impact crimes in Barranquilla 2024

Based on figures provided by the National Police, it is possible to show that between January and May 2024, four high impact crimes experienced an increase.

CRIME STATISTICS IN BARRANQUILLA	YEAR 2022	YEAR 2023	VARIATION % 2022 VS 2023	JAN-MAY 2023	JAN-MAY 2024	VARIATION % JAN-MAY 2023 VS 2024
Homicides	333	375	13%	150	187	25%
Theft from persons	11569	12966	12%	5465	6296	15%
Extortion	415	894	115%	457	309	-32%
Kidnapping	3	1	-67%	1	0	-100%
Threats	1248	1300	4%	378	1003	165%
Terrorism	1	0	-100%	0	1	100%
Residential theft	499	662	33%	303	241	-20%
Carjacking	481	437	-9%	226	177	-22%
Motorcycle theft	989	1201	21%	525	428	-18%
Retail theft	1559	1054	-32%	470	466	-1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17097</b>	<b>18890</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>7.975</b>	<b>9108</b>	<b>14%</b>

Resource: Own elaboration with information from the National Police.

Note: Figures subject to change based on updating processes of the source.



**6.296**  
thefts from  
persons in 2024

**2.722**  
were committed  
without the use of  
weapons



**2.608**  
were committed  
with firearms



**725**  
were committed with  
a sharp weapon.



## 2.1 Theft from persons

Theft from persons continues to be a crime with high rates of occurrence in the city of Barranquilla.

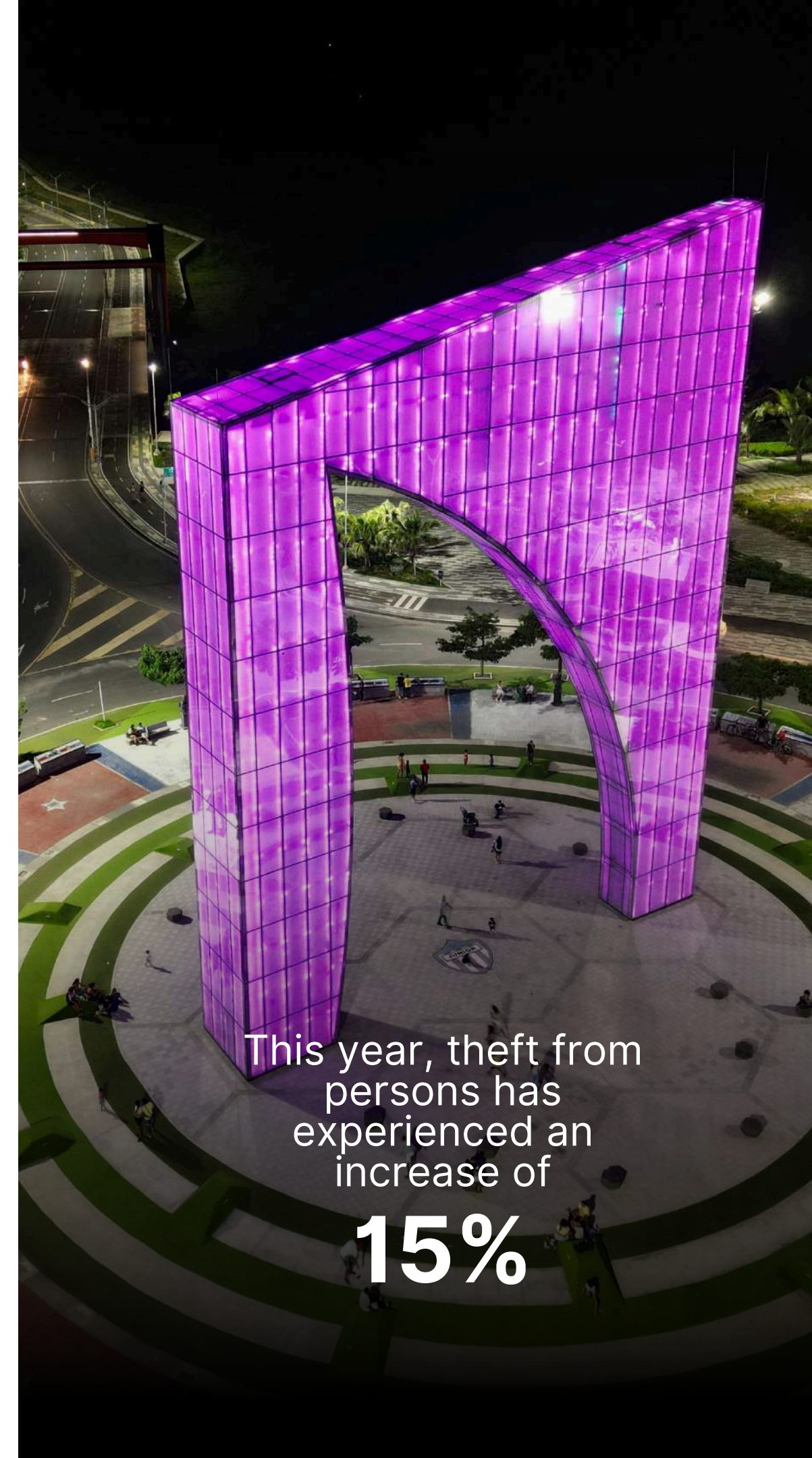
Authorities blame this situation on the criminal gangs present in the territory, although common crime should not be left aside.

In April, the security forces even spoke of an improvement in the panorama thanks to the continuous captures, dismantling and operations against illegal activities ([Zona Cero](#), 2024).

Despite this, the problem has persisted and has worsened, causing citizens to resort to “justice by their own hand” on several occasions ([El Tiempo](#), 2024).

This year, theft from persons has experienced an increase of

**15%**





## 2.2 Theft in different modalities

In addition to theft from persons, in Barranquilla there are different types of theft such as theft from commerce, theft from residences, theft from automobiles and theft from motorcycles. These high-impact crimes affect the security of citizens as they damage people's assets.

In spite of the general decrease in thefts, so far in 2024 there have been relevant events in the city of Barranquilla. In June, the Prosecutor's Office and the Public Force were able to establish the identities of the members of a criminal group dedicated to residential burglary, commercial burglary, as well as other modalities ([Diario La Libertad, 2024](#)).

A month later, four people were captured for a millionaire robbery of a securities company. The delinquents had circumvented the security of the headquarters located in the Rosario neighborhood ([Infobae, 2024](#)).

### Crime variation 2023 vs. 2024



### Complaints between January and May:



241

Residence theft



177

Carjacking



428

Motorcycle Theft



466

Retail theft



## 2.3 Homicides

**According to institutional statistics, homicides have increased considerably in Barranquilla so far this year.**

In fact, the situation has reached such a point that the city's homicide rate exceeds the national rate, which is why in June an elite group of the Gaula was created to address the problem ([Infobae, 2024](#)).

According to the police and security experts, the panorama in Barranquilla responds to a great dispute between criminal gangs for the social and territorial control of the city, which will be reassembled in 2020. With the arrival of the pandemic and the confinement, many criminal spaces were cleared, which over time have become the scene and target of disputes between organizations.

As a result, violence and murders have been on the rise in the capital of the Atlántico.

**In January 14 murders were recorded in less than 48 hours.**



**13%**

Variation homicides  
2022 vs. 2023



**25%**

Variation january-may  
2023 vs. january-may  
2024



**187**

Homicides in 2024

**POLICE LINE**



## 2.4 Extortion and threats

Despite not being new phenomena, extortion and threats continue to be a widespread problem in the capital of Atlántico, in June a street vendor who had previously been harassed was murdered ([El Tiempo](#), 2024).

According to the authorities, the actors involved in these practices are the criminal gangs present in the city, mainly “Los Pepes”, “Los Rastrojos Costeños” and “Los Costeños”. The criminals demand payments from shopkeepers, sex workers or homeowners to finance their organizations.

In most cases, the criminals tell the victims that they are paying for “security services” ([Infobae](#), 2024). The amounts demanded are varied because, depending on the trade union being extorted, the payment can range from 30.000 to 10 million Colombian pesos ([Infobae](#), 2024).

According to President Gustavo Petro, “the phenomenon of extortion in Barranquilla is one of the most intense in the country”. Its geographical position and the lack of effective social policies have resulted in increased insecurity in the territory ([El Tiempo](#), 2024).







# 3. Risk Generating Factors

## 3.1 Micro-trafficking and criminal groups

SEIZED DRUG	YEAR 2022 (kg)	YEAR 2023 (kg)	JAN-MAY 2024(kg)
Cocaine Hydrochloride	12.673,98	6.197,92	3.293,86
Pressed Marijuana	3.693,25	1.636,46	1.558,40
LSD	0	345,00	411,00
Ecstasy-Type Stimulants	745,00	557,00	164,00
2CB	318,00	426,60	163,00
Cocaine Paste / Base	272,03	44,28	20,90
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.702,26</b>	<b>9.207,26</b>	<b>5.611,16</b>

**Resource:** Own elaboration with information from the Observatorio de Drogas de Colombia, 2024.  
**Note:** Figures subject to change based on updating processes of the source.



# Distribution of GDO and GDCO in the city of Barranquilla

Drug trafficking is one of the most consolidated illicit markets in the city of Barranquilla. In fact, the city and the department serve as a strategic corridor for the passage of illicit substances ([Semana, 2024](#)). Currently, criminal organizations with influence in Barranquilla are fighting for the micro-trafficking business, while also acting as logistical operators for larger structures, such as the “Clan del Golfo”, for the export of drugs.

Tensions and conflicts between gangs over territorial control have resulted in increased violence in the city, due to constant “settling of scores” and vengeful actions. In April, authorities recorded a massacre in the Villanueva sector, the result of a “settling of scores” between “Los Costeños” and “Los Pepes” and disputes over micro-trafficking routes in the area ([W Radio, 2024](#)). In addition, one of the most powerful clans in the city recently disappeared, resulting in a war between gangs for the rents left by the extinction of the organization ([Semana, 2024](#)).

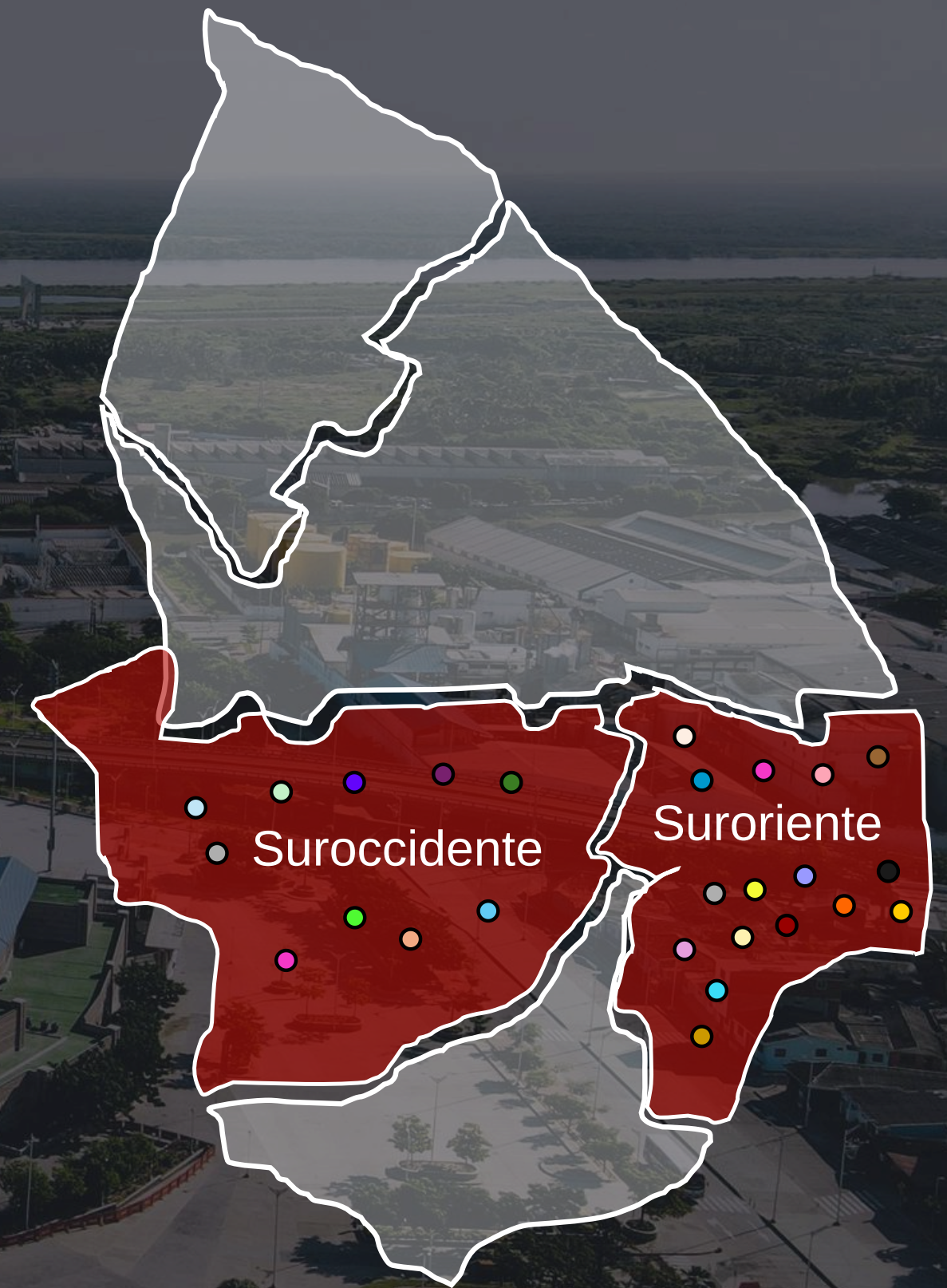
**28**

Organized Criminal Groups (GDO)

**3**

Organized Armed Group (GAO): Clan del Golfo, ELN and Autodefensas Conquistadoras de la Sierra Nevada

- “Los Primos”
- “Los Cazafantasmas”
- “Los Nuevos Malcriados”
- “Los Acanes”
- “Clan Sombra”
- “Los Costeños”
- “Los de Bajito”
- “Los Pegasos”
- “Rastrojos Costeños”
- “Los Papalopez”
- “Los Todo Terreno”
- “Los Teletubbies”
- “Los Huguitos”
- “Los de Aaron”
- “Clan del Golfo”
- “Los Temerarios”
- “K-13”
- “Los Felipitos”
- “Los Corronchos”
- “Los Wasones”
- “Los Mentelocas”
- “Los Piñudos”
- “Los Carambola”
- “Los Malcriados”



Resource: Own elaboration with information from Pares, 2024.



## 3.2 Social unrest and road blockades

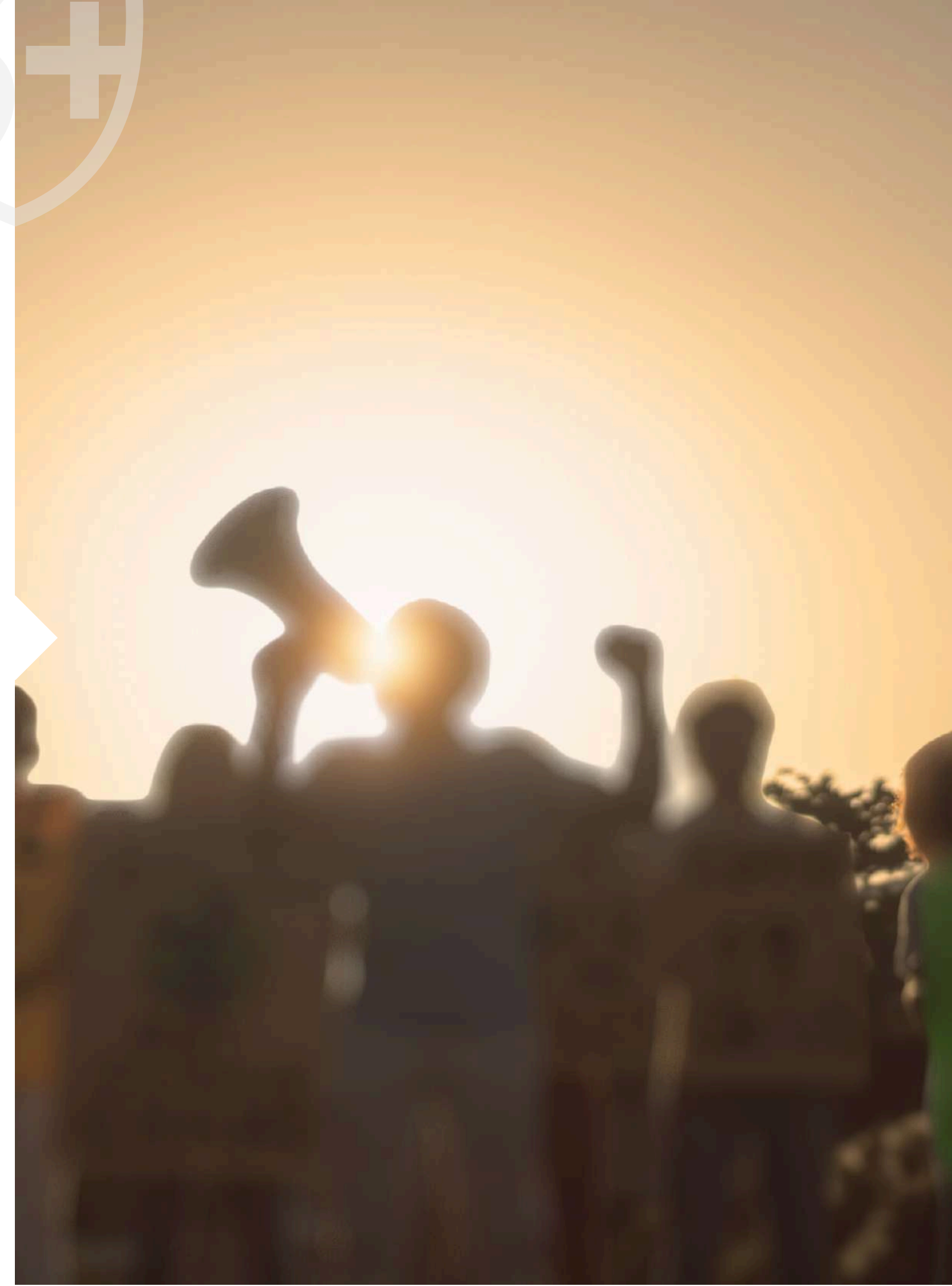
Although social protest is a right and a legitimate action that reflects the existence of a functioning democracy, in certain cases demonstrations can become violent or simply affect the mobility of citizens. In these cases, the mobilization may end up impacting the safety and rights of the other inhabitants of the city.

This year the citizens of Barranquilla have taken to the streets on different occasions. Sitins and marches have been the favorite social manifestations of Barranquilleros.

Recurrent meeting points: Joe Arroyo statue, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán monument and Plaza de la Paz.

Atlántico is among the five departments that registered the highest number of blockades due to social demonstrations between January and April 2024

One of the areas most affected by this type of events is the Troncal del Caribe, which extends through Córdoba, Sucre, Atlántico, Magdalena and La Guajira





# 4. Risk Level

## City risk level

These risk level analyses are aimed at identifying the areas where, according to institutional statistics, there is a greater possibility of violence and high-impact crimes occurring. In the case of this Security Overview-Barranquilla, the characterization will be based on the statistics of the Security Observatory of the Universidad del Norte published in April 2024 and on the geo-referencing of criminal organizations of the Fundación Paz y Reconciliación (Peace and Reconciliation Foundation). The most problematic areas of the city will then be enunciated through three indicators: homicide cases, extortion and the number of criminal groups per locality.

### Barranquilla Risk Level Map by localities


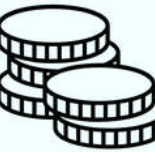


- HIGH
- MEDIUM-HIGH
- MEDIUM



*Resource: Own elaboration based on Observatorio de Seguridad de la Universidad del Norte and Pares, 2024.*



# Analysis of the dynamics of risks in the city of Barranquilla so that companies can evaluate their operations (qualification based on ISO 31000 and quantitative risk analysis).

Risk	Main factors that generate risk	Consequences	Implications for private companies	Risk Level
 <p><b>Deterioration in the security situation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployment.</li> <li>• Consolidated presence of groups such as common crime, gangs, organized groups.</li> <li>• Influence of the micro-trafficking phenomenon in common and organized crime, developing networks of hired killings and their strengthening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen distrust</li> <li>• Decrease in local and foreign investment in the city.</li> <li>• Affectation of small and medium-sized businesses.</li> <li>• Decrease in tourism potential.</li> <li>• Increase in complaints of extortion, threats and homicides.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential impact on the supply or value chain due to the permeability of crime.</li> <li>• Non-fulfillment of services or commitments.</li> <li>• Leakage of personnel with intentions of harming companies.</li> <li>• Fear of market expansion due to criminal networks.</li> </ul>	<p><b>High</b></p>
 <p><b>Impact on the economic and financial system</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corruption in the public and private sector.</li> <li>• Increasing poverty and inequality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in foreign investment in the city.</li> <li>• Low wages.</li> <li>• Labor informality.</li> <li>• Inflation.</li> <li>• Limitation and inadequate use of public space.</li> <li>• Low business generation.</li> <li>• Increased recruitment of criminal groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced demand for services and products.</li> <li>• Decrease in revenues.</li> <li>• Increased costs due to phenomena such as inflation.</li> <li>• Limitation of operating capacities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Medium-High</b></p>
 <p><b>Social protest</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissatisfied communities</li> <li>• Failure to comply with agreements between citizens and the government.</li> <li>• Insufficient government management and lack of public resources.</li> <li>• Unresolved or ongoing territorial claims.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governmental destabilization.</li> <li>• Interruption of economic activities.</li> <li>• Increase in public spending.</li> <li>• Increased violence.</li> <li>• Resurgence of social conflicts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial losses.</li> <li>• Affectations in the supply chain.</li> <li>• Unfavorable business climate.</li> <li>• Loss of business opportunities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>
 <p><b>Political instability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corruption.</li> <li>• Deepening inequalities.</li> <li>• Mistrust in institutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polarization.</li> <li>• Social conflict.</li> <li>• Strengthening and increase of organized groups.</li> <li>• Low productivity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in foreign clients due to political uncertainty.</li> <li>• Reduced revenues due to periods of inflation and recession.</li> <li>• Uncertainty in creating long-term plans and projects.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>



## 5. Foresight Design



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As in other major cities, the future outlook for Barranquilla does not seem to be encouraging. With the arrival of Alejandro Char to the mayor's office, citizens expected that crime would be destabilized, even more after the complex year that was 2023 in terms of security in the capital of Atlántico.

Despite the numerous measures and strategies implemented by the new mayor, according to institutional statistics, the materialization of high impact crimes has experienced an increase compared to last year.

Crimes such as extortion, threats, homicides and robbery show high rates of materialization. In addition to the above, citizens do not feel safe in the city, the perception of insecurity is high, particularly with respect to the crime of theft in its different modalities.

Experts and authorities attribute responsibility for the situation to the war between criminal groups. In 2024, several leaders of criminal organizations have been captured and killed, a situation that has generated power vacuums that the different illegal structures are seeking to coopt.

At the national level, the groups are getting stronger and Barranquilla is no exception to this phenomenon. At the same time, the strategies implemented by the new mayor have not been effective. In fact, security is one of the few issues that Barranquilleros are not satisfied with in this new mayor's office.

Although Char has reinforced the operations of the security forces, it seems that he is implementing tactics that had already been used in the past and had not been very successful, such as the use of helicopters for monitoring and the patrolling of military units.

Considering that the actions taken by the mayor's office to mitigate and counteract crime have been inefficient, that the statistical trend shows a deterioration of security and that the organizations are becoming stronger at the local and national level, it is expected that the security situation in Barranquilla will continue to be problematic in the short and medium term.





As long as these three factors are not addressed in a timely manner, it is almost impossible for the panorama to see a substantial improvement.






***Find the full  
version of this  
document here:***









# 6. Recommendations

-  Always maintain a high degree of situational awareness, which allows you to identify risks or threats derived from situations external to the place or areas where you travel.
-  Taking into account the description of the Risk Level provided in this document, identify the localities with a high risk level in the city. This in order not to transit through them or to foresee safety and self-care plans.
-  In case of traveling by means of a private vehicle, make a route analysis and have alternate routes that allow you to resolve any new developments on the route.
-  Do not travel or travel late at night in areas that, according to this document, have registered some type of criminal phenomenon or have a high incidence of criminal actors, such as the southeastern area.

-  For the movement of expatriates or foreigners within Barranquilla, evaluate the likelihood of having systems to monitor their movements remotely from a Command Center.
-  Identify and share the license plates of vehicles, such as cabs or private vehicles, that you use as a means of transportation.
-  If you are in crowded places such as restaurants, shopping malls or bars, always take care of your personal belongings and avoid engaging in conversations with people who suddenly ask for favors or want to approach you.
-  Avoid having detailed or sensitive information about your family members and the organization you work for on your cell phone.
-  Be careful with the information you publish through your social networks, taking into account that, with less privacy, your work and personal data and those of your family members are exposed on the network, which can lend itself to extortion or kidnapping processes.

-  If you are a victim of telephone extortion, do not hang up, try to take notes, do not give your name or ID number and, if possible, record the call.
-  In case of being a victim of threats in any of its modalities, immediately contact the authorities and do not give in to the requests of the offender.
-  If possible, train yourself in defensive and evasive driving to increase your ability to save your life or that of your family in the event of an assault on public roads.
-  If you are in a highly vulnerable situation and are likely to be a victim of robbery, mugging or carjacking, do not put up any resistance.







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