



SECURITY OVERVIEW

Medellín – Antioquia

Unidad de Análisis Político y Seguridad Corporativa - UAPSC

December 05 2024.

Security Overview

Medellín, Antioquia

1. Situational Analysis

Although indicators such as high-impact complaints and citizen perception show an improvement in the city's security situation, criminal actors, factors and dynamics that deteriorate public order persist in Medellín. The administration of Federico Gutiérrez has focused on maximizing the operability of the security forces, achieving seizures, arrests, disarticulations and recovery of public space ([La Silla Vacía](#), 2024). Despite this, problems such as poverty, inequality and lack of opportunities continue to fuel phenomena such as the exploitation of minors, sexual exploitation and micro-trafficking. Added to this is the city's nightlife image as a tourist destination, which has been reinforced in recent years, with foreigners associating Medellín with “lack of control,” narcotics and “sex tourism,” a scenario conducive to the development of crime.

According to the Citizen Perception Survey 2024 of “Medellín Cómo Vamos”, 52% of citizens believe that the capital of Antioquia is on the right track. Although the figure is below the historical average, it is higher than the previous year. With respect to the mayor's performance, 74% say they have a favorable image. At a general level, the perception of security has increased, but at a more local level (in the neighborhoods) it has decreased. The total number of people who indicated having been victims of a crime also experienced a decrease and 28% of citizens consider that street muggings are the main security problem in the neighborhoods ([Medellín Cómo Vamos](#), 2024).

In this document the Unidad de Análisis Político y Seguridad Corporativa (UAPSC) of 3+SC will carry out the Security Overview-Medellin Second Semester 2024, 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 the management, treatment and control of risks.

2. Crime Analysis

In order to visualize the percentage changes and dynamics by crime in Medellín, a crime analysis will be carried out below, showing the figures and trends in the variation of ten high-impact crimes for two periods: the years 2022-2023 and the January-October period of 2023 vs. 2024. Subsequently, each phenomenon will be analyzed in depth, as well as the risk scenarios present in the city, associating recent events of insecurity and the areas in which they materialized.

CRIME STATISTICS IN MEDELLÍN	year 2022	year 2023	Variation % 2022 vs 2023	jan-oct 2023	jan-oct 2024	Variation % jan-oct 2023 vs 2024
HOMICIDES	358	358	0%	302	244	-19%
THEFT FROM PERSONS	28685	30953	8%	26405	21644	-18%
EXTORTION	672	894	33%	772	740	-4%
KIDNAPPING	10	17	70%	16	5	-69%
THREATS	1711	1497	-12%	1260	2499	98%
TERRORISM	3	0	-100%	0	0	0%
RESIDENCE THEFT	1679	1673	-1%	1452	1362	-6%
CARJACKING	1032	976	-5%	864	949	10%
MOTORCYCLE THEFT	5926	6201	5%	5483	5065	-8%
RETAIL THEFT	3949	2776	-30%	2655	1838	-31%
TOTAL	44025	45345	3%	39.209	34346	-12%

Resource: Own elaboration with information from the National Police.

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

According to figures from the National Police, by the end of 2023 there was a 3% increase in reports of various high-impact crimes in the city of Medellín, with a total of 45,345 cases compared to 44,025 in 2022. With respect to the comparison between January to October 2023 vs. 2024, there is an overall reduction of 12% with an increase in two of the ten crimes analyzed, threats with 98% and carjacking with 10%. By number of complaints, it is evident that the crime with the greatest materialization in the security of Medellín in 2024 is theft from persons with 21,644 cases, motorcycle theft with 5,065 and threats with 2,499.

2.1 Theft from persons

In 2024, Medellín experienced a reduction in most high-impact crimes, including theft from persons. According to data from the National Police, of the total number of cases, 13,541 were committed without the use of weapons, 3,614 with firearms, and 2,719 with a sharp weapon. The city reports an average of 71 cases of theft from persons per day. Although most are concentrated in commune 10 (La Candelaria), El Poblado, Laureles, Belén, and Aranjuez are also areas highly impacted by crime ([El Colombiano](#), 2024).

The modalities are varied, from “atracos” where violence is used to threaten and rob the victim to “cosquilleos”, where the perpetrator uses the surprise factor and the person's carelessness to steal.

2.2 Theft in different modalities

In addition to theft from persons, there are different types of theft in Medellín, such as retail theft, residence theft, carjacking, and motorcycle theft. These high-impact crimes affect the security of the citizens as they damage people's assets. In 2024, the only one of these crimes that has seen an increase in the city is carjacking. As of November, authorities recovered a total of 485 vehicles in the Valle de Aburrá, reflecting an average of 45 vehicles per month ([El Tiempo](#), 2024).

In Medellín, there are multiple modalities of carjacking. In some cases, criminals resort to violence, creating scenarios in which the victim is left in a highly vulnerable state; in others, they use special tools to force entry to the vehicle, taking advantage of the fact that the driver has left it parked in an unsafe place.

2.3 Homicides

According to institutional statistics, homicides have decreased considerably in Medellín in 2024. The cases of violent deaths this year show a historic reduction. In fact, the research center Observadores Colombia-Data & Analytics, affirms that Medellín reached one of the lowest homicide rates among the country's large cities ([Infobae](#), 2024). In addition, at the beginning of December the city reached more than 150 days without homicides ([Caracol Radio](#), 2024). It should be noted that, with respect to the affected population, 11% of the victims are of Venezuelan origin, which is due to the growing migration but also to the fact that many of the migrants arrive in highly vulnerable conditions, which increases the possibility of living in violent environments ([El Colombiano](#), 2024).

2.4 Extortion, threats and kidnapping

Threats are the crime with the highest percentage increase in the last year in Medellín. The victims are varied: social leaders, soccer players and coaches, and even Mayor Federico Gutiérrez have received threatening messages, calls or pamphlets. In December, Millonarios asked to reinforce security at matches due

to constant intimidations against team members ([Infobae](#), 2024). In October the Ministro de Defensa confirmed that he was aware of a plan to assassinate the mayor of Medellín by GDOs, the official had previously been receiving anonymous threats ([El Colombiano](#), 2024).

Closely linked to the threat is extortion, which despite a decrease in 2024, continues to be a major problem in the capital of Antioquia. Extortion is one of the main financing tools of criminal structures. In Medellín, the “vacuna” modality currently predominates, where criminals demand money in exchange for supposed “protection services” ([El Espectador](#), 2024).

With respect to kidnapping, statistics show a downward trend. Despite this, the crime continues to occur and some cases go unreported. Among the most recent incidents is the kidnapping of 13 officials of the Mayor's Office in the Robledo Villa Sofía neighborhood. According to investigations, the criminals demanded money and information in exchange for their release ([Infobae](#), 2024).

3. Risk Generating Factors

3.1 Micro-trafficking and criminal groups

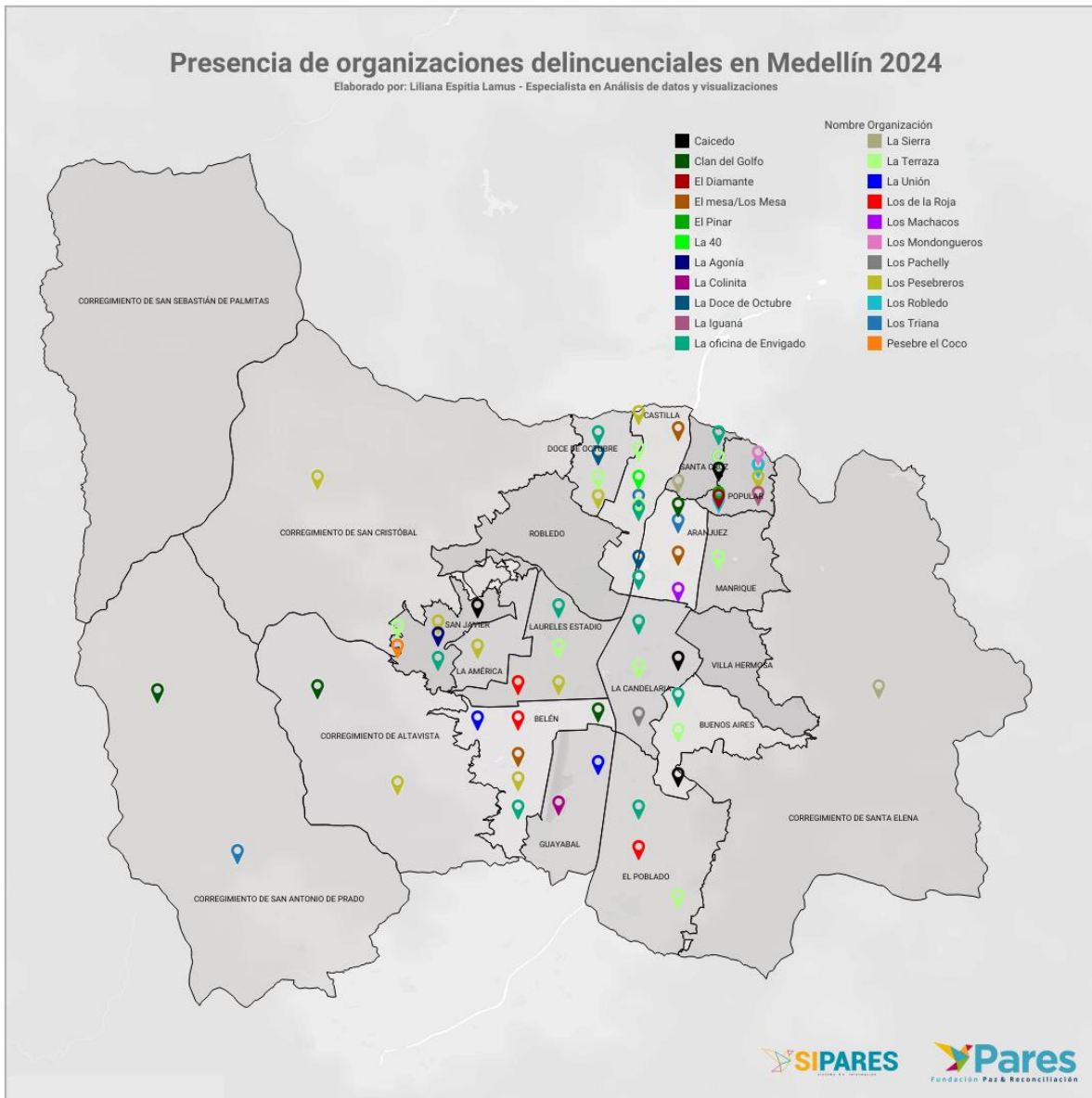
Table reflecting seizures per kg of each type of illicit substance in Medellín

Illicit substance seized	Year 2022 (Kg)	Year 2023 (Kg)	Jan- sept 2024 (Kg)
ECSTASY-TYPE STIMULANTS	24,232	19,969.60	14.265,30
2CB	9,333.50	7,805	5.898,70
PRESSED MARIJUANA	2,801.07	5,410.49	4.242,38
LSD	2,762	603.7	3.753,00
COCAINE PASTE / BASE	115.12	198.59	189,81
COCAINE HYDROCHLORIDE	287.76	599.67	100,18
Total	39,531.45	34,587.05	21,118.13

Resource: Own elaboration with information from the National Police.

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

Distribution of criminal structures in the city of Medellín



Resource: PARES, 2024.

Criminal groups in Medellín have been the main articulators of micro-trafficking in the city. This illicit income has been one of the most lucrative for the organizations, which is why it has remained part of the criminal dynamics over time. This situation has generated high levels of violence in the

neighborhoods, as it has led to the existence of “invisible borders” between gangs to define who has the power to commit crimes in a given territory. Along with micro-trafficking, criminal groups have found financing in other crimes such as extortion of merchants through “vacunas” and contract killings.

Specifically in Medellin and its metropolitan area, there are around 22 criminal organizations that maintain this dynamic, among which stands out an Organized Armed Group (GAO), the “Clan del Golfo” or “AGC”, which has lost presence in the territory, but maintains important alliances with criminal gangs through subcontracting processes (criminal franchises) (PARES, 2024). The Organized Criminal Groups (GDOs), such as “La Oficina de Envigado”, “Los Pachelly”, “Los Pesebreros” or “La Terraza” in turn group together more than 300 combos that operate in the different neighborhoods (Vorágine, 2024). These organizations operate in the 16 communes of Medellín and in areas of the Valle de Aburrá.

In 2024 there has been a reduction in different types of crime, including homicide. Although we should not detract from the new security strategies implemented, the truth is that a large part of this result is also due to the existing truce between the gangs, i.e., there is a decrease outside of institutional action. Added to this is the fact that Total Urban Peace in Medellin has been hindered in 2024 by the lack of a legal framework but also by the scarce participation of the local government, which has been reluctant to negotiate with this type of structures (El Espectador, 2024).

3.2 Extortion

Although police data show a decrease in extortion cases in Medellín, authorities and experts on the subject point out that it could be a combination of under-reporting of the figures and normalization of the crime on the part of the victims. According to data from universities such as EAFIT and the University of Chicago, approximately 150,000 households in Medellín pay extortion between \$2,000 and \$5,000 per week, while businesses pay between \$15,000 and \$100,000. In these cases, extortion occurs mainly through “vaccines”, where criminals charge for supposed protection services, when in reality they only demand the money so that the victims can carry out their daily activities and not suffer retaliation (El Espectador, 2024).

As the criminal organizations become increasingly consolidated as a financing tool for criminals, there may be a normalization of the dynamics in the communities, to the point that the victims believe they are paying for a legitimate service. This is intensified by the lack of institutional presence, where the State is not present, criminal organizations come to occupy the space and operate as if they were the law, this is called “criminal governance”. As Sebastián Londoño, researcher at the Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP) says, “Behind all this there is a kind of provision of justice, conflict resolution

or security services by armed criminal actors, which ends up being a transition towards criminal governance (...)” ([El Espectador](#), 2024).

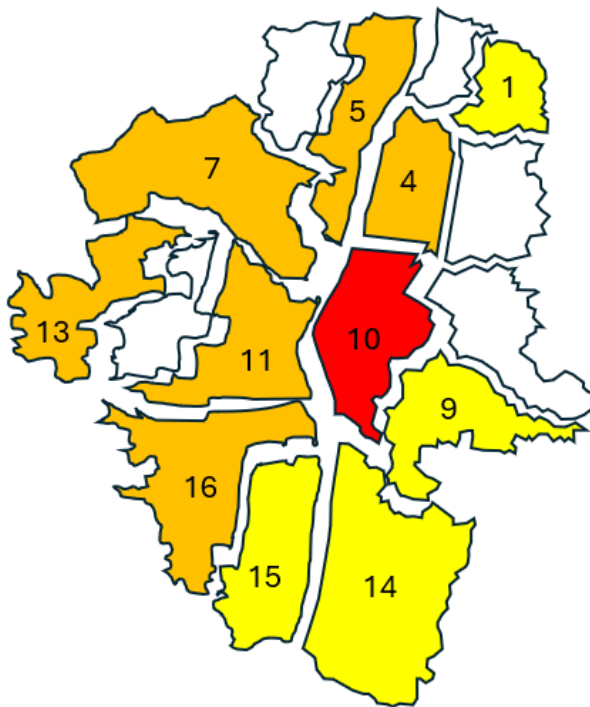
3.3 Instrumentalization of minors and sexual exploitation

The exploitation of minors and sexual exploitation are problems that have attracted the attention of the media and citizens in the capital of Antioquia in 2024. Recently, two cases of foreigners with minors were reported again in less than 24 hours, which sets off alarm bells despite the efforts of the authorities. According to statistics from the Secretaría de Inclusion Social, 900 children and adolescents have suffered from violation of their rights between January and August 2024, 139 of which have been for issues related to sexual exploitation. Popular, Santa Cruz, Manrique, Villa Hermosa and La Candelaria are the communities most affected by the exploitation of minors (([El Tiempo](#), 2024).

The issue is not limited to sexual exploitation; minors are also used to commit crimes, such as the sale of narcotics, or for begging. Most of the time, criminals take advantage of children's vulnerable conditions, related to the socio-economic environment and drug addiction, to lure them into the world of illegality ([Infobae](#), 2024). According to the Secretaría de Seguridad de Medellín, 100% of the illegal groups use minors, who recruit close to 1,000 young people per year. In schools in lower-income neighborhoods, between 8% and 10% of seventh and eighth grade students express their desire to join the illegal groups ([El Tiempo](#), 2024).

4. Risk Level

The objective of the risk level analysis is to identify the areas where, according to institutional statistics, there is a greater possibility of violence and high-impact crimes. In the case of this Security Overview-Medellín Second Semester 2024, the characterization will be based on the security and statistics of the Sistema de Información para la Seguridad y la Convivencia (SISC) of the Mayor's Office of Medellín. The most problematic areas of the city will be identified through three indicators: homicide, robbery and extortion.



- Comuna 1: Popular
- Comuna 4: Aranjuez
- Comuna 5: Castilla
- Comuna 7: Robledo
- Comuna 9: Buenos Aires
- Comuna 10: La Candelaria
- Comuna 11: Laureles
- Comuna 13: San Javier
- Comuna 14: El Poblado
- Comuna 15: Guayabal
- Comuna 16: Belén

Resource: Own elaboration from the SISC of the Alcaldía de Medellín, 2024.

Medium Risk Level: Comuna El Poblado, Guayabal, Buenos Aires and Popular.

The aforementioned municipalities have been classified as Medium Risk Level zones because they have intermediate rates of some high impact crimes. Although El Poblado does not have high homicide or extortion rates, it does have an average rate of theft from persons. Guayabal and Buenos Aires have average rates of extortion. The Popular district is on this list because it is the area with the highest number of criminal structures, despite not having high rates of crime.

Medium-High Risk Level: Comuna Castilla, Robledo, Laureles, Belén, San Javier and Aranjuez.

These neighborhoods have been classified as Medium-High Risk Level zones due to different factors. The Robledo and Laureles districts are among the sectors with the highest homicide and robbery rates. In addition, Robledo is among the districts with the highest extortion reports and Laureles has average rates of the same crime. Castilla and San Javier, despite having low levels of theft, are among the areas of the city with the highest number of violent deaths. Castilla, with 15 cases, is in second place, while San Javier, with 12, is in third place. In addition, Castilla has average rates of extortion. In the case of Aranjuez, the ranking responds to the average rate of theft from persons and the high level of interference of criminal structures in the commune. For its part, the district of Belén, with nine registered cases, is the fifth district with the most violent deaths in 2024, in addition to being the district with the most registered extortions.

High Risk Level: Comuna La Candelaria.

La Candelaria neighborhood is considered by the authorities to be the most problematic and dangerous area of Medellín. Several factors associated with crime converge in this area, which explain the high level of crime in the sector. During the period under consideration, La Candelaria registered 30 cases of homicides, the highest rate of the period and twice as high as the second most reported commune. Likewise, with 2,790 cases, La Candelaria is positioned as the commune with the highest levels of theft from persons in the city and is the second with the second highest reported extortion.

5. Foresight Design

In the second half of 2024, the number of high-impact crimes has generally decreased in the city of Medellin. This is the result of several factors. On the one hand, there are the projects and strategies of the Mayor's Office to mitigate crime, this includes both the strengthening of the operation of the security forces and social programs that seek to create opportunities for young people, such is the case of the “Parceros” project. On the other hand, there is the truce situation, agreed since 2023, that the GDOs have among themselves within the framework of the Total Urban Peace. In this sense, the favorable panorama in the city is not exclusively due to the efforts of the local government but is related to the interactions between criminal organizations.

In addition to the above, despite the efforts of the public administration to address the serious problem of sexual exploitation and instrumentalization of minors in the city, Medellin is now internationally recognized as a nightlife scene with excesses, even associated with “sex tourism”. As long as this image continues, the capital of Antioquia will be the perfect scenario for criminality to develop its illegal markets, such as micro-trafficking, extortion, exploitation and instrumentalization of minors. Particularly with respect to extortion, the crime has become an increasing criminal phenomenon, and although the figures show a decrease in Medellin, authorities and researchers say that it could be more a normalization of crime than a real decrease.

Considering the structural nature of the problems that generate criminal phenomena in the capital of Antioquia, in the short and medium term the security panorama will continue to be challenging for the authorities. Taking into consideration the power of the gangs, their decisions and what will be discussed in the context of Total Urban Peace will be decisive.

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 districts with a high risk level in the city. This in order not to transit through them or to provide safety and self-care plans.
- Do not transit or travel late at night in neighborhoods or districts that, according to this document, have registered some type of criminal phenomena or show high levels of interference by criminal actors.
- For the movement of expatriates or foreigners within Medellin, consider the likelihood of having systems to monitor their movements remotely from a Command Center.
- If you are going out to night entertainment centers, do not go out alone and always keep an eye on your drink or food. Criminals take advantage of these spaces to supply their victims with shotguns.
- 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 suddenly want to approach you.
- Do not date strangers or people you recently met through social networks or dating apps. Criminals use these platforms to carry out express kidnappings and rob their victims.
- Avoid having detailed or sensitive information about your family members, as well as the organization you work for, on your cell phone.
- 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.
- If you are a victim of threats in any of its modalities, contact the authorities immediately and do not give in to the offender's requests.

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