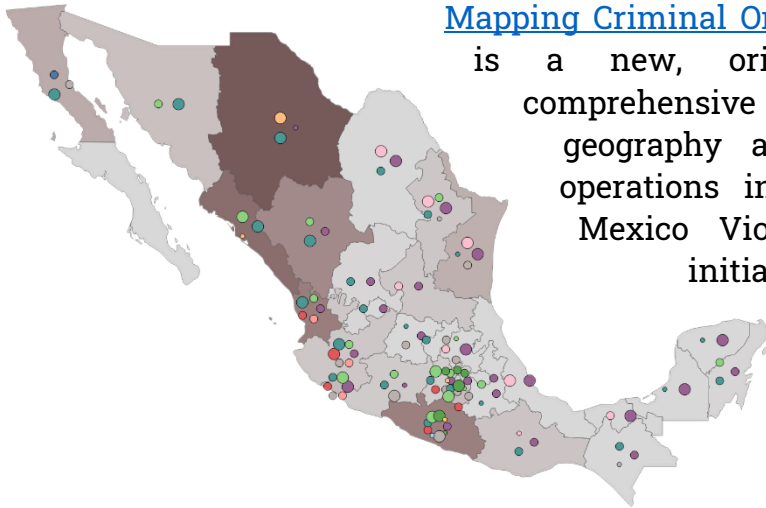# MEXICO VIOLENCE RESOURCE PROJECT

PROJECT LAUNCH:

MAPPING CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS IN MEXICO

Where do Mexico's criminal groups operate? This fundamental question is essential to understanding the country's drug war violence, yet there is no reliable data on where drug trafficking organizations and organized crime groups are active, nor how these groups have expanded or diminished over time.

Mapping Criminal Organizations in Mexico (MCO) is a new, original effort to generate comprehensive information about the geography and chronology of criminal operations in Mexico. It is part of the Mexico Violence Resource Project, an initiative that promotes nuanced analysis and creative insights about violence and criminality in Mexico.

MCO was founded in 2018 and was born out of need by an international team of scholars based at multiple institutions who required this information for their own work.

We also seek to advance and deepen the conversation on organized crime in Mexico making our data and methods accessible to other academics, journalists, and the general public.

Our Data, Maps, and Visualizations
This first release includes maps, visuals, and data on the presence at the state level per month for a total of 38 groups for the years 2007-2015.

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With this release you can explore:

- A national map of where criminal groups were active on a quarterly basis from 2007 to 2015.
- State-focused charts of criminal group presence from 2007 to 2015, along with quarterly state homicide rates.
- A national chart of how overall group extension and strength changed over time from 2007 to 2015.

What are some interesting findings?

1. Group fragmentation is not the only dynamic driving violence. States with multiple smaller groups were not necessarily those with the worst levels of lethal violence. In 2010 and 2011 the number of groups present in Jalisco, Michoacán, and Mexico State steadily increased, as did homicide rates in those places, but levels of violence remained moderate compared to other moments in the drug war.

2. The trajectory of organized criminal groups is not homogenous across the country. Certain regions experienced splintering and subsequent consolidation, while others saw continual fragmentation.

3. Specific local dynamics can be hard to capture with big-picture data. Yet, state-level charts are useful for understanding fragmentation and what it means for security. For example, in Veracruz, the appearance of the fully independent Zetas in 2010 (split off from Cartel del Golfo) and CJNG in 2011 help explain why the administration of Javier Duarte (2010-2016) was particularly fraught even as overall levels of violence remained low (though invisible violence, such as disappearances, were high).

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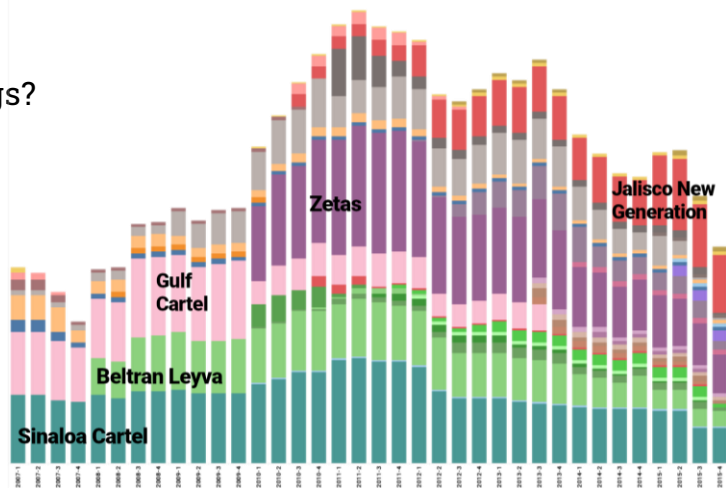
4. After 2012, the sheer number of groups increased, but their combined footprint across Mexican states decreased, and with it the levels of overall violence. This story challenges the narrative that the fragmentation of groups necessarily produced violence and that enforcement strategies that produced it were complete failures. Rather, it suggests a more complex picture where the specific characteristics of groups and the particular contours of enforcement can shape better or worse outcomes.

How did we do it?

It takes a village! Or at the very least a group of dedicated scholars. This release is based on combined and processed information from over 60 documents from 11 streams including Mexican and U.S. government sources and expert sources with a nationwide scope.

If you are a geek (like us) we have prepared a very detailed document explaining our methodology, and you can download the full dataset from the project website. We highly encourage you to send feedback to mexicocrimemaps@gmail.com and tell us what you are using the data for so we can improve future releases.

About Us

The team is composed of five principal investigators: Patrick Signoret (founder and lead investigator), Marco Alcocer, Cecilia Farfán-Méndez, Michael Lettieri, and Fernanda Sobrino.

We have also greatly benefited from our advisors and collaborators Brian Phillips and Víctor Manuel Sánchez Valdés.

You can read more about us here.

This project is supported by the Center for U.S.–Mexican Studies at UCSD's School of Global Policy and Strategy, the Empirical Studies of Conflict Project and the Data-Driven Social Science Initiative at Princeton University. It has also received funding from the Mamdouha S. Bobst Center for Peace and Justice at Princeton University. Visualizations are supported by the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime.

MEXICO VIOLENCE RESOURCE PROJECT

<u>FAQs</u>

Is the data free to reuse?
Yes! We kindly request you give proper attribution.

Recommended citation: Signoret, Patrick; Marco Alcocer; Cecilia Farfan-Mendez; Fernanda Sobrino, 2021, "Mapping Criminal Organizations in Mexico: State Panel 2007 2015", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/N0KGCZ, Harvard Dataverse, V1.

What about the maps and data visualizations?
These may be shared and embedded, with attribution.

Recommended citation: Data from Mapping Criminal Organizations in Mexico. Visualization by Michael Lettieri for the Mexico Violence Resource Project: www.mexicocrimemaps.org.

Can we quote your analysis?
Of course! Please attribute it to the Mapping Criminal Organizations in Mexico team.

Will there be more releases?
Future updates will include continuously updated maps and data from our other projects, including municipal-level presence and criminal group profiles, factions, and relationships.

If you download the data, please make sure to fill out our short survey: we want to know how you use the data so we can improve future releases.

<u>Contact</u>

Please direct all press inquiries by filling out this contact form or email Dr. Cecilia Farfán at mexicocrimemaps@gmail.com.

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