



SECURITY OVERVIEW

Quito – Ecuador

Unidad de Análisis Político y Seguridad
Corporativa - UAPSC

November 20 2024.

Security Overview

Quito, Ecuador

1. Situational Analysis

From January to July 2024, Quito has experienced an 8% increase in crime levels, with a notable increase in carjackings and theft from persons. The National Police has noted that these crimes are more frequent in unprotected areas and where pro-owners leave their vehicles in secluded places. In addition, the use of street vendors as a cover for criminal activities has been a common tactic among criminals ([El Comercio](#), 2024). This state of exception allows law enforcement to conduct more aggressive operations against organized crime, which has proliferated in Quito due to the fight between gangs for control of drug trafficking. To combat insecurity, the National Police has intensified its operations and collaborations with other agencies ([El País](#), 2024). Strategies have been implemented to improve citizen coexistence and prevent interpersonal violence, which includes cases of physical aggression and family homicides. However, despite these measures, authorities have warned that violence remains a significant threat. Despite the increase in crime, some reports highlight that Quito is still considered a relatively safe city for tourists. According to a recent analysis, the homicide rate in Quito is significantly lower than in other Latin American cities. However, public perception of safety is affected by recent violent incidents and the state of emergency declared by the government ([El País](#), 2024).

In this document the Unidad de Análisis Político y Seguridad Corporativa (UAPSC) of 3+SC will carry out the Security Overview-Quito, Ecuador, 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 the city of Quito, a crime analysis will be conducted below, showing the figures and trends of variation of seven high-impact crimes for the period between January and June 2023 and January and June 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 QUITO	jan-june 2023	jan-june 2024	Variation % jan-june 2023 vs 2024
HOMICIDES	148	95	-36%
THEFT FROM PERSONS	2993	3121	4%
RESIDENCE THEFT	657	455	-31%
MOTORCYCLE THEFT	430	532	24%
CARJACKING	1852	2581	39%
RETAIL THEFT	697	478	-31%
LAND PIRACY	0	0	0%
TOTAL	6777	7262	7%

Resource: Own elaboration with information from the National Police of Ecuador.

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

According to data from the National Police of Ecuador, crimes increased 7%, going from 6,777 to 7,262 registered cases when comparing the periods from January to June 2023 and January to June 2024. Theft from persons is the crime that increased the most in both periods, with 2993 reports in 2023 and 3121 in 2024, representing a 4% increase. The crime that showed the greatest increase between the two periods was carjacking, which went from 1852 to 2581, representing a 39% increase. Another crime that seriously impacts the well-being of citizens is motorcycle theft, which increased by 24% between 2023 and 2024, from 430 to 532 reports.

2.1 Theft from persons

Theft from persons is the most common crime in the city of Quito, with 3121 cases registered between January and June 2024, compared to 2993 in the same period of the previous year, representing a 4% increase. This increase in thefts from persons has caused the public and authorities to have a perception of security that has deteriorated. According to reports from the National Police authorities in Quito, the northern areas of the city are more affected than the southern areas due to different factors such as the greater number of businesses and commercial establishments, as well as a more prevalent presence of informal commerce, which gives criminals the opportunity to commit crime ([Primicias](#), 2024). Strong

criticism has fallen against the municipality of Quito since, in an effort to recover public space, it installed what it called “Safe Paths” in the city in which lighting was improved, cables were removed, and the space was beautified. In spite of this, the inhabitants of the Historic Center area, affirm that these spaces continue to be unsafe due to the lack of collaboration with the Public Force to avoid assaults, in addition to the fact that on multiple occasions the alarm systems have failed, so the initial purpose has not been fulfilled, and a large sum of money was allocated to this action ([La Hora](#), 2024).

2.2 Theft in different modalities

Between January and June 2024, 455 residence thefts have been reported in Quito, 31% less than in the same period of 2023, which had 657 reports. Similarly, retail theft was reduced by 31% between the time periods compared, going from 697 reports in 2023 to 478 in 2024. On the other hand, carjacking is a crime that occurs frequently in the Ecuadorian capital, showing that between January and June 2024, 2581 crimes of this type were reported, and in the same period, but in 2023 there were 1852, representing an increase of 39%. In August an individual opened a vehicle and stole it in a few seconds using a “master key” in the La Carolina sector, north of Quito, leaving the owner unable to react while he was at a medical appointment. Authorities reported that in the Ñaquito district carjacking have increased by 20%. So far in 2024, 55 vehicles have been reported stolen in different ways ([La República](#), 2024).

On Monday, August 19, a man driving a white car was approached by an unconscious man who appeared to be injured and unable to move. Upon stopping to offer assistance, the driver was surprised by two more men, who threatened him and got into the vehicle. The assailants forced him into the back seat, where they threatened him with a firearm and hit him repeatedly with the handle of the gun. After several minutes of aggression, the criminals forced the victim out of the car and fled in the vehicle ([El Comercio](#), 2024). In July 2024, the National Police dismantled a criminal gang dedicated to robbing banks and homes using the false police operation modality. Fifteen people were captured, including 12 Ecuadorians and three Colombians. Their *modus operandi* was to pretend to be part of private security, medical personnel or transport of valuables to enter the properties without resistance and thus be able to steal money and belongings more easily ([Infobae](#), 2024).

2.3 Land Piracy

Although there are no cases of robbery on roads or highways in the city of Quito, there have been 240 assaults or kidnappings of cargo transport drivers in Ecuador. According to transporters, the most dangerous road is the one that connects Guayaquil, Quevedo and Santo Domingo, where motorcyclists intercept cargo vehicles and shoot at them to make them stop so they can steal the cargo or kidnap the driver or his assistants. Considering that the city of Santo Domingo is located three hours from Quito, and that it is on the road between the Ecuadorian capital and the port of Guayaquil, it is an issue to consider because of its importance for the country's economy and for large companies that may have operations in both cities due to the importance of being the largest population center in the country, and that it has a large number of national and international companies, with the country's main port ([Ecuavisa](#), 2024).

2.4 Homicides

The crime of homicide in Quito has been a concern for the local administration for some time, due to the increasing violence with which they are carried out in the city. According to figures from the National Police between January and June 2023 there were 148 complaints while in 2024 there were 95, meaning a decrease of 36%. For authorities, the violence seen in the most recent cases of homicides in Quito is due to the relocation and growth of local gangs that fight over territories and illegal economies to maintain their operations in the country and the region. In response to the growing violence both in the city and in the country in general, in January President Daniel Noboa declared a state of emergency decree, which included the capital. In recent times, there have been cases of firearms attacks against officials of the SNAI, the institution in charge of the penitentiary system, allegedly as a form of revenge by gang members against the authorities ([El País](#), 2024).

In a case of hired assassination that shocked the population of northern Quito, two men were murdered in a hairdressing salon in the La Roldós neighborhood, apparently by members of a rival criminal gang seeking a “settling of scores” for a similar crime the victims had committed in the past few days in a nearby neighborhood. These types of events clearly illustrate the state of security that Quito is falling into as a result of the city's entry into major drug trafficking routes ([Primicias](#), 2024)

2.5 Extortion, threats and kidnapping

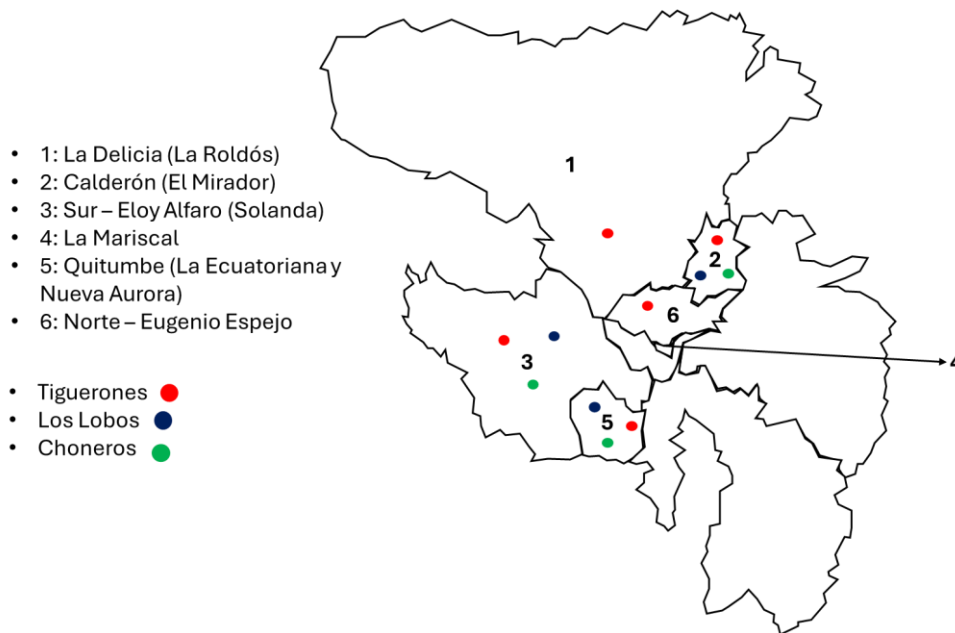
Due to the growing power of drug trafficking in Quito and its surroundings, the dynamics of kidnapping, extortion and threats have emerged with greater force than before, leading the inhabitants to have an even greater perception of insecurity. In the municipality of Valle de Los Chillos, in the metropolitan area of Quito, different types of violent acts such as bomb threats, robbery of armored trucks or extortive kidnappings have been reported as a result of this new criminal dynamic. On May 31, a family suffered an attempted kidnapping in the Conocoto neighborhood, and a woman was robbed of US\$6,000 in the Alangasí parish. Two weeks before these events, a police operation near the parish of Amaguaña uncovered explosive material, money and drugs belonging to a criminal gang. As a consequence of this operation, a shooting was reported in the sector, probably as a revenge after all these items were seized. In addition to this, business owners in the area claim that they are constantly being extorted by individuals who claim to be part of criminal gangs, however, the police have been unable to determine this exactly ([Primicias](#), 2024).

In June 2024 the National Police arrested eight people who were engaged in extortion in the Solanda sector in the south of Quito. The incident occurred while the individuals were trying to extort money from the owners of a local wholesale market in the area, threatening to threaten their lives and safety if they were not handed over US\$5,000. At the time of the capture, firearms, cash and up to seven cell phones were seized with which they completed their criminal acts ([El Telégrafo](#), 2024).

3 Risk Generating Factors

3.1 Micro-trafficking and criminal groups

Distribution of major criminal gangs in Quito



Resource: Policía Nacional del Ecuador, 2024.

Violence in Ecuador has managed to connect regions previously separated by gang control, now extending to cities that until recently seemed alien to organized crime. Quito, the capital, is a clear example of this situation, with 24 violent homicides recorded in just one month. Among these cases, an armed attack against two female employees of SNAI, the entity in charge of the penitentiary system, stands out. This worrying panorama has led the government of Daniel Noboa to include Quito for the first time in the state of exception decree, as a response to the growing insecurity that is already difficult to control. During the last four years, the inhabitants of the capital have observed an increase in violence, concentrated mainly in the cities along the drug trafficking route, which runs from the border areas with Colombia and Peru, through the Amazon and along the Ecuadorian coast to the ports from where the drugs are exported to the United States and Europe. Quito, until recently, was outside of this drug trafficking map, however, in recent months, shootings have become increasingly frequent in some neighborhoods of the city, which has set off all the alerts ([El País](#), 2024).

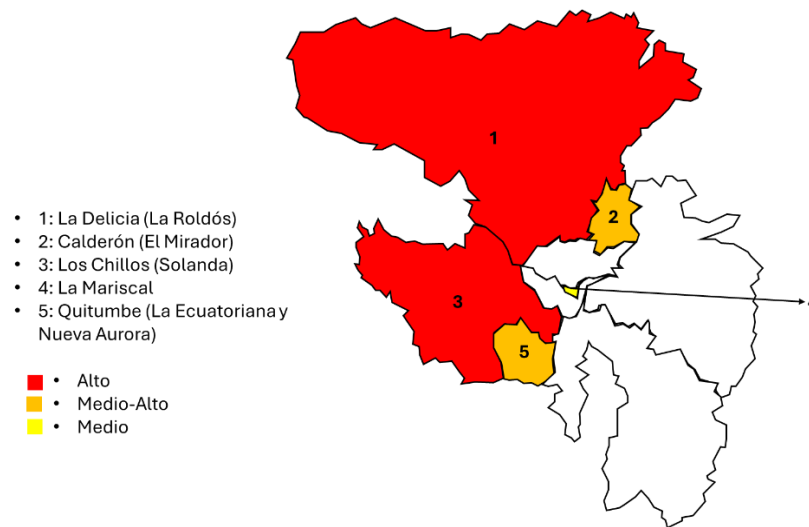
The street known as "La Jota," in the Solanda neighborhood, in the south of Quito, is bustling with informal commerce, where pedestrians look for all kinds of goods along the various shops in the area. However, in August, men riding two motorcycles opened fire on five young people who were trying to escape amidst the chaos and the screams of those seeking refuge from stray bullets. As a result, three of the young men died, and two others were injured. Just days earlier, the community had already been shaken by the murder of a man in front of his house. According to Carolina Andrade, Secretary of Security for the Municipality of Quito, violence in the city is fueled by internal cocaine trafficking networks. "Thirty-two percent of the seized drugs are for local consumption; it is a very strong market, and this fosters criminal violence," she explains. Additionally, since 2022, when the law on the carrying and possession of firearms was relaxed, 80% of homicides and robberies are committed with firearms, a change from the past predominance of bladed weapons. This situation has strengthened the presence of gangs such as "Los Lobos", "Choneros", "Latin Kings", and "Chone Killers", who have brought their fight to the streets of Quito, trying to assert their control just as they do in coastal provinces, where neither states of emergency nor curfews have managed to curb violence in areas dominated by criminal groups ([El País](#), 2024).

3.2 Social Unrest

Social protest in Quito, as well as in the rest of the country, has been a tool for the population to express their discontent and dissatisfaction with certain situations. Recently, the people of Quito have demonstrated against the National Government due to the power outages the country has experienced as a result of low water levels in hydroelectric reservoirs. Citizens have perceived these measures by Daniel Noboa's government as "incompetence" on the part of the executive, prompting them to take to the streets to protest and demand solutions to this distressing situation. On November 15, approximately 1,000 people marched from El Ejido Park in the northern part of the city to Santo Domingo Square in the historic center, where they burned tires. As a result, the police had to intervene using tear gas and stun grenades to disperse the protesters and restore order to public roads ([DW](#), 2024).

4. Risk Level

The risk level analysis aims to identify areas where, according to institutional statistics, there is a higher probability of violence and high-impact crimes occurring. In the case of this Security Overview-Quito, the characterization will be based on security and crime statistics provided by the National Police of Ecuador and the Metropolitan Security Observatory. The most problematic areas of the city will then be outlined using two main indicators: homicide cases and the presence of organized criminal groups.



Resource: Policía Nacional del Ecuador and Observatorio Metropolitano de Seguridad.

Medium Risk-Level: La Mariscal

La Mariscal, despite being a tourist and commercial area, has seen an increase in robberies targeting commercial establishments; however, personal theft has decreased, suggesting an improvement in overall security. Although these areas still face challenges related to crime, violence is not as prevalent as in higher-risk levels.

Medium-High Risk Level: Nueva Aurora, La Ecuatoriana, El Mirador (Comité del Pueblo)

Nueva Aurora has experienced an increase in crimes such as thefts targeting individuals and vehicles, although homicides are not as frequent as in the most critical areas. **La Ecuatoriana** shares similar characteristics, with a rise in violent crimes and robberies but a lower homicide rate. **El Mirador (Comité del Pueblo)** is also classified in this category, as it has seen an increase in thefts

targeting individuals and commercial establishments, although the situation is relatively more controlled compared to higher-risk areas.

High Risk Level: La Roldós and Solanda

The High-Risk category includes **La Roldós**, where several cases of contract-style killings have been reported, reflecting an extremely dangerous environment. **Solanda** also stands out in this category, known for its high criminal activity and gang conflicts over drug trafficking control.

5. Foresight Design

In recent years, Quito has experienced a significant deterioration in public safety, marked by an alarming increase in violence and criminal activity. As of October 2024, over 185 homicides have been reported, representing a notable rise compared to previous years. This surge in violence has been largely driven by the presence of criminal organizations such as “Los Lobos” and “Choneros”, which have established territorial control in various areas of the city, especially in the south, where conflicts over drug trafficking have led to an escalation in homicides and other violent crimes. The most affected administrative zones include Quitumbe, La Roldós, and Solanda, where numerous contract-style killings have been reported. The situation has prompted the government to declare states of emergency and implement police operations to try to restore order. However, these measures have yielded limited results, as a lack of resources and trained personnel has hindered an effective response to organized crime.

In the short term, Quito's security situation is expected to remain critical. Authorities have acknowledged that the resources available to combat crime are insufficient, limiting the police's ability to maintain an effective presence in the most affected areas. Although security operations are being carried out and police patrols increased, these efforts are not enough to address the underlying causes of violence. Public perception of safety is negative; many citizens feel they cannot fully trust the institutions responsible for protecting them. This mistrust may further hinder collaboration between the community and law enforcement, which is essential for effectively combating crime. In the medium term, the future could be more hopeful if strategies designed to improve security are properly implemented. The local government's Security and Citizen Coexistence Plan has a significant budget allocated to strengthening police capabilities and improving video surveillance and patrolling systems. The key to success lies in how these initiatives are executed and whether effective collaboration between authorities and the community is achieved. It is essential to address not only the symptoms of the problem (criminality) but also its root causes, such as poverty, lack of job opportunities, and social exclusion. Programs promoting community development and offering alternatives to young people could be crucial to dismantling criminal networks in the long term. However, if current conditions persist without significant and effective intervention, Quito could face a grim future with levels of violence that might equal or even surpass the highest in the country. Successfully implementing comprehensive policies will be essential to reversing this trend and restoring public trust in security institutions.

6. Recommendations

- Always maintain a high degree of situational awareness, which allows you to identify risks or threats arising 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 neighborhoods and zonal administrations with a high risk level. This in order to foresee safety and self-care plans.
- In the case of traveling in a private vehicle, carry out a route analysis and have alternative routes that allow you to resolve developments on the route.
- Try to make your trips during daylight hours.
- For the movement of expatriates or foreigners to the interior of Quito, evaluate the probability of having systems to monitor movements remotely from a Command Center.
- If you are in spaces with a high influx of people such as restaurants, shopping centers or bars, always remain attentive to the care of your personal belongings and avoid starting conversations with people who suddenly request favors or want to approach you.
- Avoid having detailed or sensitive information on your mobile phone about your family members, as well as the organization for which you work.
- Be careful with the information you publish through your social networks, taking into account that the less privacy you have, the greater your exposure to the risk of extortion or kidnapping.
- If you are a victim of telephone extortion, do not hang up, try to take notes, do not give your name or your identification number and, if possible, record the call.
- If you are a victim of threats in any of their forms, immediately contact the authorities and do not give in to the requests of criminals.
- Train yourself if possible in defensive and evasive driving, increasing 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 prone to being a victim of robbery or express kidnapping, do not put up any resistance.

References

Beltrán, D. (24 de julio de 2024). Así operaba banda de colombianos que robaban bancos y casas en Ecuador vestidos como policías. Obtenido de Infobae: <https://www.infobae.com/colombia/2024/07/24/en-ecuador-tres-colombianos-fueron-detenidos-por-pasarse-por-policias-para-robar-bancos-y-casas/>

DW. (16 de noviembre de 2024). Protesta en Ecuador para exigir salida a crisis energética. Obtenido de DW: <https://www.dw.com/es/protesta-en-ecuador-para-exigir-salida-a-crisis-energ%C3%A9tica/a-70799020>

El Comercio. (10 de julio de 2024). ¿Cómo está la seguridad de Quito en los primeros seis meses de 2024? Obtenido de El Comercio: <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/quito/seguridad-delincuencia-homicidios-quito-policia-robos.html>

El Comercio. (20 de agosto de 2024). Conductor fue víctima de una nueva modalidad de robo en Quito. Obtenido de El Comercio: <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/conductor-victima-robo-modalidad-quito.html>

El Telégrafo. (21 de junio de 2024). Policía Nacional capturó a ocho 'vacunadores' en el Mercado Mayorista de Quito. Obtenido de El Telégrafo: https://www.eltelegrafo.com.ec/noticias/seguridad/44/policia-nacional-capturo-vacunadores-quito-mercado#google_vignette

González, A. (3 de octubre de 2024). Quito en estado de excepción: En un solo mes hubo 22 muertes violentas en la capital. Obtenido de Primicias: <https://www.primicias.ec/seguridad/quito-excepcion-incremento-asesinatos-80402/>

La Hora. (23 de agosto de 2024). Quito: La delincuencia común ha crecido un 4% ¿qué pasa con los senderos seguros? Obtenido de La Hora: <https://www.lahora.com.ec/pais/quito-la-delincuencia-comun-ha-crecido-un-4-que-pasa-con-los-senderos-seguros/>

La República. (21 de agosto de 2024). El robo de vehículos en Quito se incrementó 83% este 2024. Obtenido de La República: <https://www.larepublica.ec/blog/2024/08/21/el-robo-de-vehiculos-en-quito-se-incremento-en-un-83/>

Machado, J. (16 de julio de 2024). ¿Por qué en el norte de Quito se están registrando más robos que en el sur? Obtenido de Primicias: <https://www.primicias.ec/noticias/quito/sector-norte-robos-vehiculos-delincuencia/>

Machado, J. (15 de junio de 2024). Secuestros, robos y extorsiones le quitan la tranquilidad al valle de Los Chillos. Obtenido de Primicias: <https://www.primicias.ec/noticias/quito/robos-secuestros-valle-chillos-delincuencia/>

Mella, C. (12 de octubre de 2024). El crimen organizado echa raíces en Quito. Obtenido de El País: <https://elpais.com/america/2024-10-13/el-crimen-organizado-echa-raices-en-quito.html>

Televistazo. (2 de julio de 2024). Los transportistas de carga pesada de Ecuador han sufrido 240 asaltos desde 2023, señala un gremio. Obtenido de Ecuavisa: <https://www.ecuavisa.com/noticias/seguridad/2-7-2024-transportistas-carga-pesada-asaltos-gremio-GD7588392>