



## SECURITY OVERVIEW

Panama City – Panamá

Unidad de Análisis Político y Seguridad Corporativa - UAPSC

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## Security Overview

### Panama City, Panamá

#### 1. Situational Analysis

The security situation in Panama City for the year 2025 is characterized by an upward trend in the incidence of crime, especially in high-impact crimes such as homicides, robberies and thefts. During 2024, theft cases increased by 10% and robberies by 3%, while homicides reached 581 cases, with a rate of 13 per 100,000 inhabitants, with the capital city being one of the most affected areas ([Ministerio de Seguridad Pública](#), 2024). The beginning of 2025 was marked by violent episodes, such as the four homicides registered on the first day of the year, reflecting the persistence of violence and the presence of gangs in various urban sectors ([Mi Diario](#), 2025). Despite police efforts and the implementation of operations, crime continues to challenge the authorities' response capacity, underscoring the urgency of more effective and sustainable strategies ([JAP](#), 2025).

In terms of citizen perception, insecurity continues to be one of the main concerns of the population in Panama City. According to the latest Gallup Panama survey, conducted in February 2023, 80% of Panamanians believe that crime and delinquency have increased, reaching the highest level of negative perception in the past 20 months. Only 1% of those surveyed perceive a decrease in crime and 20% believe that the situation has remained the same. In addition, 15% of households report that at least one member has been a victim of robbery or assault in recent months, which reinforces the feeling of vulnerability in daily life. This perception of insecurity is aggravated by widespread concern about the increase in drug trafficking, which 60% of the population identifies as a growing problem in recent years ([Panamá América](#), 2025).

In this document the Unidad de Análisis Político y Seguridad Corporativa (UAPSC) of 3+SC will carry out the Security Overview-Panama City, analyzing the dynamics that impact security, risk generating factors and crime 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 Panama City, a crime analysis will be conducted below, showing the figures and trends of variation of four high-impact crimes for the period between January and March 2024 and 2025. Subsequently, each phenomenon will be analyzed in depth, as well as the pre-existing risk scenarios in the city, associating recent events of insecurity and the areas in which they materialized.

CRIME STATISTICS IN PANAMA CITY	jan-march 2024	jan-march 2025	Variation % jan-march 2024 vs 2025
HOMICIDES	78	89	14%
THEFT FROM PERSONS	2135	2284	7%
VIOLENT THEFT	1021	788	-23%
PERSONAL INJURIES	846	773	-9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4080</b>	<b>3934</b>	<b>-4%</b>

**Resource:** Own elaboration with information from the Ministerio de Seguridad Pública and the Dirección del Sistema Nacional Integrado de Estadísticas Criminales.

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

According to data from the Ministerio de Seguridad Pública, the crimes taken into account decreased by 4%, going from 4,080 to 3,934 registered cases when comparing the period between January and March 2024 and 2025. Theft from persons is the crime that most materialized at both times, with 2135 reports in the period of 2024 and 2284 in 2025, representing a 7% increase. Robberies are the second most reported crime, reaching 1021 in 2024 and 788 in 2025, with a reduction of 23%. Homicides increased by 14%, from 78 cases between January and March 2024 to 89 in 2025.

### 2.1 Theft from persons

Theft from persons and robbery in Panama City are crimes that occur quite regularly, as they are the crimes with the highest number of cases in both time periods studied. Between January and March 2024, between January and March 2024, 3156 cases were reported and in 2025, 3072 cases were reported. Thefts increased by 9% compared to the previous year, reaching 17,161 cases nationwide, of which 55% are concentrated in the province of Panama, especially in districts such as Bella Vista, Betania, San Francisco, Juan Díaz and Ancón. Meanwhile, robberies grew by 3%, with 5,623 incidents reported, with Calidonia, Juan Díaz, Pacora, Santa Ana, Tocumen and Curundú being the most affected sectors ([Ministerio de Seguridad Pública](#), 2025). In addition, car thefts and robberies have maintained their incidence, with 91 robberies and 163 vehicle thefts reported so far in 2025, with Panama East and the metropolitan area being the most vulnerable areas ([TVN](#), 2025).

## 2.2 Theft in different modalities

In 2025, thefts from vehicles, motorcycles and businesses in Panama City continue to increase, reflecting a worrying crime trend that affects urban security. Vehicle thefts registered an 11% increase in 2024, with 819 reported cases, and so far in 2025 there are already 163 thefts and 91 car thefts, concentrated mainly in Panama East, Betania and the metropolitan area. Drivers of digital platforms are a particularly vulnerable group, since criminals take advantage of areas with little traffic to commit thefts, using methods such as breaking windows and manipulating the ignition system to steal vehicles. In addition, the illegal commercialization of stolen vehicles has been detected through social networks, with falsified documents that make recovery difficult and increase the risk for buyers ([Panamá América](#), 2025). A relevant case occurred in March 2025 in Nuevo Tocumen, where an aggravated robbery of a driver and his daughter generated social alarm and reinforced the demand for greater surveillance and police presence in parking lots and commercial areas ([TVN](#), 2025). Although there are no recent exact figures available, there is still a significant incidence of shoplifting in commercial areas and urban centers, where frequent cases of petty theft and opportunistic robberies are reported, affecting both shopkeepers and consumers. Among the most relevant recent cases is the robbery perpetrated in December 2024 at the “Breitling” jewelry store in the Multiplaza shopping center, where a group of five criminals broke into the store in the early hours of the morning, causing concern among shopkeepers and visitors, and demonstrating that even the areas considered the safest are not free of risk ([La Estrella de Panamá](#), 2024).

## 2.3 Land piracy

In 2025, thefts and robberies of cargo vehicles in Panama City have increased significantly, affecting both the safety of drivers and the integrity of the goods being transported. This type of crime has increased by nearly 30% in the last year, with increasingly sophisticated methods that include the use of jammers to block communications and hinder police response. Group robberies are concentrated mainly in sparsely populated areas or on access routes to the city, where criminals take advantage of the vulnerability of vehicles stopped for loading and unloading. Among the most relevant recent cases is the increase in robberies on highways connecting the capital with industrial and port areas, generating significant economic losses and putting the physical safety of drivers at risk ([ReportAcero](#), 2025). The authorities have intensified operations and training for drivers, but the persistence of these crimes demonstrates the need to strengthen surveillance at critical points and improve interinstitutional coordination to protect cargo transportation in the Panamanian capital ([TVN](#), 2025).

## 2.4 Homicides

In 2025, homicides in Panama City have shown a slight decrease of 4% during the first quarter compared to the same period in 2024, with 139 victims recorded compared to 145 previous cases. Despite this reduction, homicidal violence remains a significant challenge, concentrated mainly in the province of Panama, which reported 41% of cases, followed by San Miguelito and Colón. Ninety-two percent of the victims are men, predominantly between 18 and 34 years of age, and 89% of the homicides are committed with firearms. An alarming fact is that 9% of the victims are minors, including very young children, which demonstrates the seriousness of the phenomenon. Although in 2024 there was a 4.4% increase in homicides at the

national level, with 581 cases, recent police operations have managed to reduce the incidence in specific months, such as November and December, suggesting progress in the fight against violence, although there are still hotspots in certain urban areas ([TVN, 2025](#)).

## 2.5 Extortion, threats and kidnappings

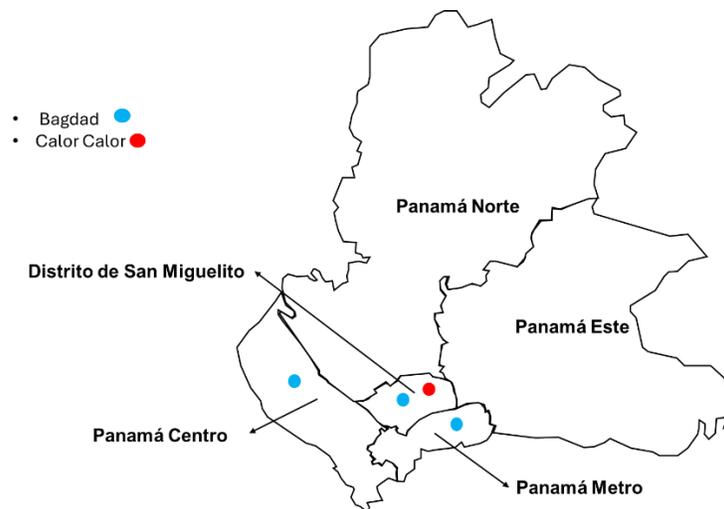
In 2025, the incidence of kidnappings in Panama City remains low but persistent, with a particular prevalence of express kidnapping, in which the victim is held for a short period of time to steal valuables and demand immediate cash withdrawals at ATMs. According to recent data, most of these cases are not reported due to direct threats to the victims and their families, which makes it difficult to accurately measure the phenomenon /TVN, 2024. Authorities have noted that traditional kidnapping, which involves prolonged retention and ransom demands, is rare, with just seven reports in the last year and five convictions. However, the linkage of these crimes to criminal organizations and the occasional involvement of foreigners alongside nationals indicate a latent risk that requires continued attention by security forces ([TVN, 2024](#)).

As for extortion and threats, these crimes have gained strength in recent years, especially in the form of virtual kidnapping, where victims receive false calls reporting the alleged deprivation of liberty of a family member to demand immediate payments. La Fiscalía Contra la Delincuencia Organizada reported more than 360 investigations related to extortion in 2022, many linked to the exploitation of personal information obtained through social networks or sexual services pages, which has broadened the spectrum of victims and criminal trends. These crimes have a significant impact on the population's perception of security, which demands greater effectiveness in the prevention and prosecution of these practices, as well as awareness campaigns to avoid falling into these traps. Interinstitutional collaboration and the use of advanced technology are essential to confront this growing threat in the Panamanian capital ([Panamá América, 2023](#))

### 3 Risk Generating Factors

#### 3.1 Micro-trafficking and criminal groups

Distribution of the main criminal gangs in Panama City



**Resource:** Ministerio de Seguridad Pública and the Dirección del Sistema Nacional Integrado de Estadísticas Criminales, 2025.

In 2025, gangs in Panama City consolidate as the main driver of violent deaths. These groups consider the Panamanian capital a strategic point for illegal economies, especially drug trafficking, due to its location between drug-producing countries in South America and highly lucrative markets in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa. In addition, its extensive port infrastructure and the presence of the Panama Canal make the country a key corridor for drug trafficking. Organized crime maintains a complex and globalized structure, headed by local gangs such as Bagdad and Calor Calor, which operate in alliance with international cartels such as the Sinaloa cartel (Mexico) and the Clan del Golfo (Colombia). These networks control logistical routes that use ports, free trade zones and the canal itself to move cocaine to continents where its value can triple compared to the U.S. market ([Prensa Latina](#), 2024). During 2024, more than 117 tons of drugs were seized in Panama. In addition, there was a 30% increase in cargo theft, often committed with advanced technologies such as signal jammers ([El País](#), 2025). Corruption in public and private institutions facilitates these operations, allowing criminal groups to evade customs controls, manipulate scanning systems and launder money through shell companies.

Micro-trafficking has also grown in urban areas, with youth gangs disputing the control of points of sale in sectors such as San Miguelito, Colón and the metropolitan area. These confrontations generate violence and extortion of merchants ([Índice Global de Crimen Organizado](#), s.f.). Currently,

Panamanian drug trafficking is undergoing a transformation: growing demand in Europe is driving transatlantic routes, while the local market is diversifying its supply with marijuana grown in remote areas and synthetic drugs such as ecstasy and ketamine from Mexico and Colombia. Despite policies such as the legalization of medical marijuana, the lack of transparency and weaknesses in the fight against money laundering limit the impact of these measures ([Prensa Latina](#), 2024). The convergence between local and international actors, coupled with the use of sophisticated technology, positions Panama as a critical node in global drug trafficking. Tackling this phenomenon requires a comprehensive response that combines international cooperation, institutional strengthening and substantial improvements in police intelligence.

### 3.2 Social Unrest

In 2025, social unrest in Panama City has reached unprecedented levels of mobilization, driven mainly by the rejection of Law 462 reforming the Social Security Fund (CSS), the reactivation of mining and security agreements with the United States. The demonstrations have been led by a wide range of social actors, including teachers' unions, construction unions such as SUNTRACS, teachers' associations, health workers, students, transportation workers and indigenous movements, especially the National Coordination of Indigenous Peoples. These groups have formed alliances such as ANA-DEPO and the Alianza Pueblo Unido por la Vida, organizing general strikes, road closures, work stoppages and massive marches that have paralyzed key sectors of the city and affected the distribution of essential goods. In this context, the state response has been marked by episodes of repression, with the use of tear gas, arrests of leaders and denunciations of human rights violations ([Prensa Latina](#), 2025). The authorities justify these actions under the argument of maintaining public order and traffic flow, but the perception of an iron fist and the lack of openness to dialogue have intensified social discontent. There have been clashes between demonstrators and security forces, as well as accusations of crimes against participants in the protests, which has increased tension and the sense of criminalization of social protest ([EFE](#), 2025).

## 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-Panama City, the characterization will be based on the security and crime statistics of the Ministerio de Seguridad Pública and the Dirección del Sistema Nacional Integrado de Estadísticas Criminales. The most problematic areas of the city will then be identified through two indicators: cases of homicide and other crimes of high social impact, as well as the presence of organized criminal groups.



**Resoruce:** Ministerio de Seguridad Pública and la Dirección del Sistema Nacional Integrado de Estadísticas Criminales

**Medium Risk Level:** Panamá Norte

This zone is categorized as medium risk because it contains municipalities such as Alcalde Díaz, Chilibre and Las Cumbres that have a lower crime density, but with occasional thefts and the presence of small groups dedicated to carjacking (11% increase in 2024). In addition, there are mostly residential and semi-urban areas with limited surveillance, which indicates that there is not much need for such a robust security system.

**Medium-High Risk Level:** Panamá Centro and Panamá Metro

The area includes corregimientos such as El Chorrillo, Santa Ana, Calidonia, San Francisco, Betania and Pacora. Although there was a 4.5% reduction in homicides in 2025, crime rates remain high, especially robberies and thefts in commercial areas, with an increase of 22.33% in 2024. Although aggravated robberies decreased by 5.85% that same year, the presence of micro-trafficking and mobile gangs continues. The activity of groups dedicated to cargo theft and drug trafficking has also been detected, especially in port areas. At the national level, 17,161 cases of theft were reported, 55% of which occurred in this region, which has led to frequent police operations.

**High Risk Level:** Panamá Este and Distrito San Miguelito.

The municipalities of Tocumen, Juan Díaz, Las Garzas, Belisario Frías and Victoriano Lorenzo have a high crime rate. This area has a homicide rate of 12 per 100,000 inhabitants and accounts for 41% of homicides at the provincial level, mainly due to territorial disputes between gangs such as Bagdad, Calor Calor and cells associated with drug trafficking. In addition, high levels of aggravated robbery, micro-trafficking and carjacking are reported, accounting for 30% of these crimes in the province. It

is considered a critical area for the occurrence of extortion and express kidnappings, which has led to frequent police operations against organized crime due to its high crime density.

## 5. Foresight Design

Security in Panama City by 2025 is at a complex juncture, marked by significant operational advances, but also by persistent structural challenges that limit sustained improvement. During the first quarter of the year, there has been a slight decrease in homicides and robberies, as a result of more effective police operations, drug and weapons seizures, and increased criminal intelligence. However, these improvements are not reflected homogeneously in all districts, as areas such as El Chorrillo, San Miguel, and Tocumen continue to be hotspots of high violence, with a consolidated presence of organized criminal groups dedicated to drug trafficking, micro-trafficking, extortion, and kidnapping. At the same time, crimes such as express kidnapping, threats, and theft from persons and vehicles continue to have a high incidence, directly affecting the perception of security and the quality of life of citizens. This duality between specific advances and the persistence of crime underscores the need for a comprehensive approach that not only strengthens repressive capacity but also addresses the social and economic causes that fuel crime.

Looking to the short and medium term, the outlook for security in the Panamanian capital calls for the consolidation of a multidimensional strategy that combines advanced technology, interinstitutional cooperation and inclusive social policies. It is essential to strengthen intelligent surveillance systems, improve interoperability between law enforcement agencies and optimize information management to anticipate and neutralize threats. However, security cannot depend exclusively on police action; it requires a sustained commitment to educational programs, job creation and community development, especially aimed at at-risk youth and vulnerable sectors where organized crime recruits more easily. Likewise, the fight against drug trafficking and transnational crime must be strengthened through regional cooperation and rigorous control of strategic points such as ports, free trade zones and logistical corridors, where much of the illicit traffic is concentrated. Only through a balance between prevention, prosecution and effective justice will it be possible to reduce structural crime and improve citizen confidence, moving towards a safer, more resilient Panama City with greater social cohesion in the coming years.

## 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 areas and districts with a high risk level. This in order to foresee safety and self-care plans.
- In case of travel in a private vehicle, make a route analysis and have alternate routes that will allow you to resolve any new developments on the route.
- Try to travel during daylight hours.
- For the movement of expatriates or foreigners within Panama City, evaluate the probability of having systems to monitor their movements remotely from a Command Center.
- If you are in crowded places such as restaurants, shopping malls or bars, always keep an eye on 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 the less privacy you have, the greater the 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 identity 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 requests of the criminals.
- 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 or express kidnapping, do not put up any resistance.



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