

CENTRAL AMERICA

Analysis of the State of homicidal violence

January to June 2023

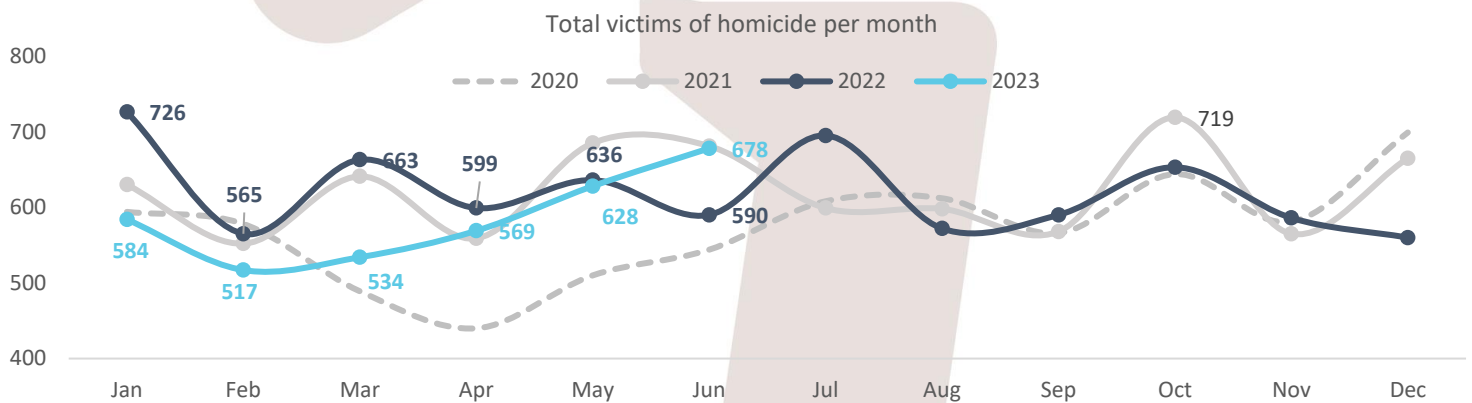


Overview

- Between January and June, records show 3,585 individual victims of homicide, 354 fewer than the same period the previous year.ⁱ
- There were 449 female victims and 3,066 male victims of homicide in the countries where data disaggregated by sex is available.ⁱⁱ
- The main victims of homicide were individuals ages 30 to 49.
- Firearms were used in the large majority (79.9%) of homicides:
- A similar trend was seen among the countries: reductions in Belize, El Salvador and Honduras in homicide totals. Costa Rica and Guatemala registered a rise compared to the same period the previous year.
- Reductions (-58.5%) in departments, provinces and districts in the number of victims of homicidal violence in the first half of 2023 with regard to the same period in 2022. The rest of the territories registered an increase (32.1%) or no change (9.4%).

Evidence

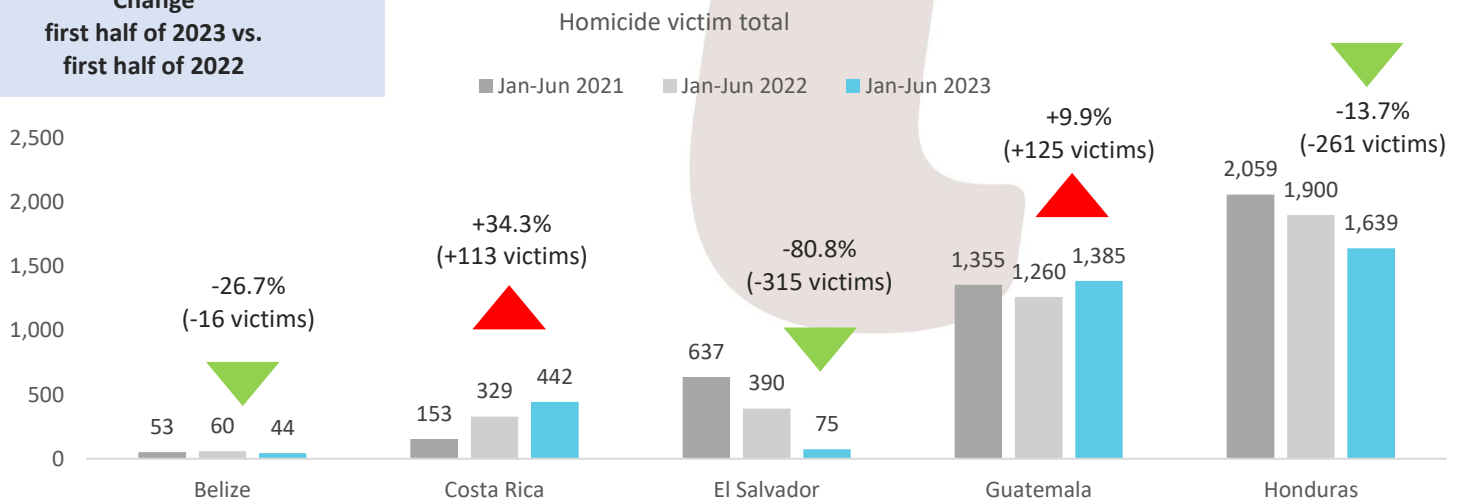
In the first six months of 2023, there were 3,585 victims of homicidal violence recorded in the Central American region—some 20 victims per day and 354 fewer victims than the same period in 2022. There is a noticeable rising trend from February to June 2023. June 2023 is the highest month on record this year with 678 victims.



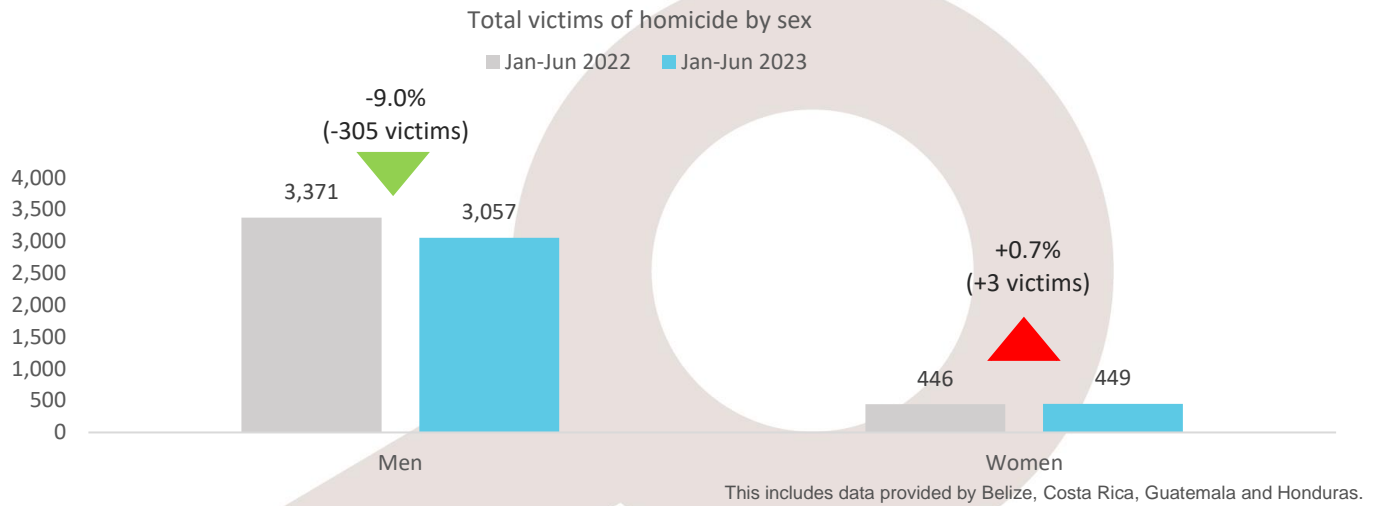
This includes data from Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

A similar trend observed among countries: In Belize (-16 victims), El Salvador (-315 victims) and Honduras (-261 victims) records show a downward trend in the number of victims of homicide in the first half of 2023 with regard to the previous year. Costa Rica (+113 victims) and Guatemala (+125 victims) recorded a rise in the number of victims of homicide.

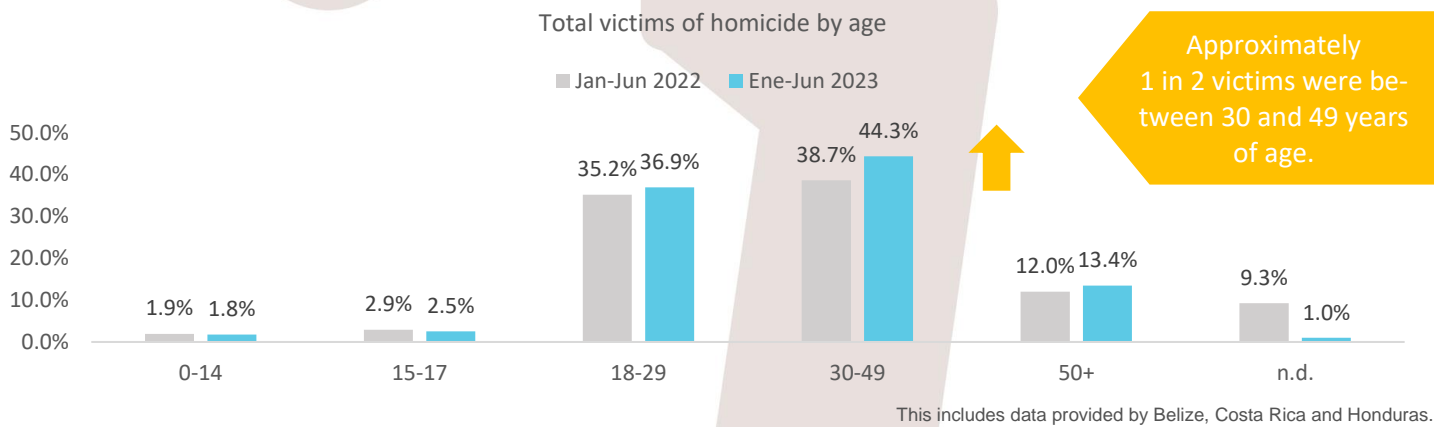
Change first half of 2023 vs. first half of 2022



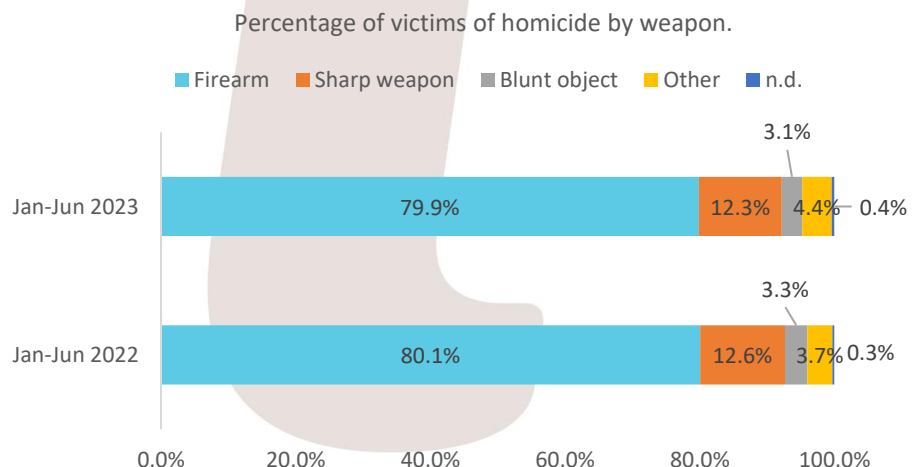
Between January and June 2023, an average of 17 men and two women died daily due to homicidal violence.ⁱⁱⁱ in the region. Male homicide declined 9.0% (-305 victims) with regard to the same period the previous year, while female homicides trended upward 0.7 per cent (+3 victims).



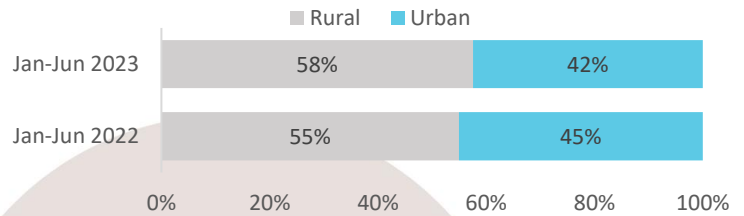
Between January and June 2023, 44.3 per cent of victims on record were 30 to 49 years old. This is an increase with regard to the previous year, when the total number of victims in that age group represented 38.7 per cent of all homicides. For the first half of 2023, age-specific data are only available for three countries: Belize, Costa Rica and Honduras.



Firearms were involved in four out of every five homicides during the first half of 2023. This is a similar percentage to the same period in 2022.



Percentage of homicide victims by area



This includes Guatemala and Honduras.

58 per cent of homicides were recorded to have taken place in rural areas in the first half of 2023. This represents an increase with respect to the same period in the previous year, where 55 per cent of homicides were registered in rural areas and 45 per cent in rural areas.

In most territories (departments, provinces and districts) (50.9%), the number of victims of homicidal violence decreased in the first half of 2023, with regard to the same period in 2022. In the rest of the territories, this number rose (39.6%) or remained the same (9.4%).

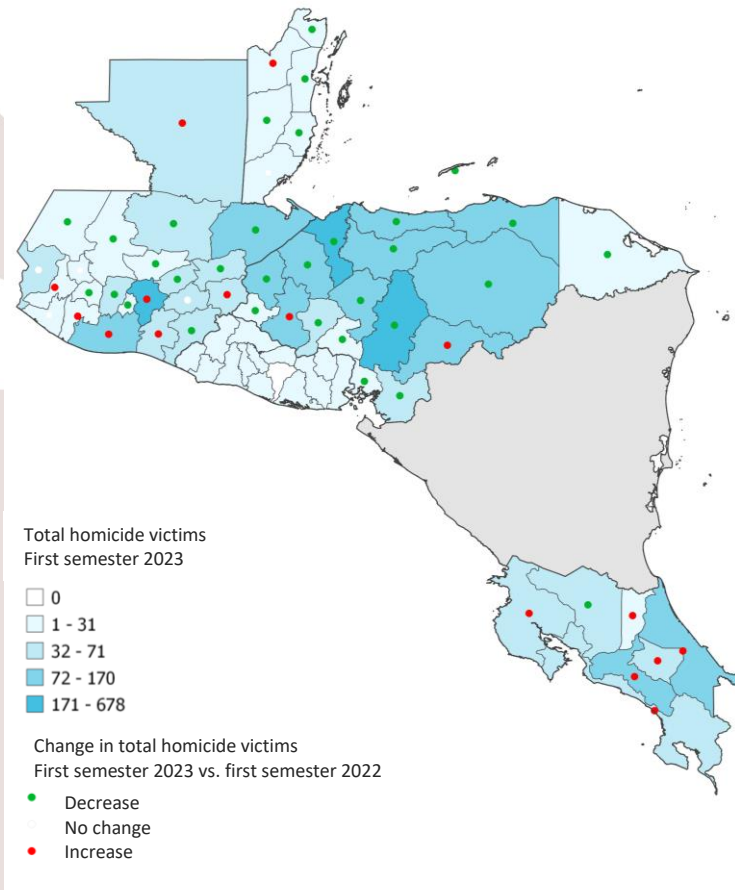
In Belize, three in four murders took place in Belize and Cayo districts. Four districts recorded declines: Belize (-12 victims), Cayo (-2 victims), Corozal (-2 victims), Stann Creek (-2 victims). There was an increase (+2 victims) in Orange Walk on the border with Guatemala and Mexico, while Toledo recorded a single victim in January and in June 2022 and in the same period in 2023.

In Guatemala, 42.2 percent of homicides around the country recorded between January and June occurred in the department of Guatemala. This department also reported the greatest decrease in the number of homicides compared to the period from January to June 2022 (-94 victims). In the departments of Izabal, Alta Verapaz and Huehuetenango the number of homicides rose—these territories were tagged for high risk due to conflict and electoral violence.^{iv}

In the case of Honduras, records in 17 of the 18 departments show a decline in the number of homicide victims, while records in Copan show three more victims and Cortes has 7 more victims on record.

In El Salvador, one in three homicides took place in La Libertad and San Salvador. San Vicente was the only department where records show no homicide occurring between January and June 2023.

Records for six provinces in Costa Rica show an increase compared to the first half of 2022, the only exception being Alajuela where there were seven fewer victims. One in two homicides were recorded in either San Jose or Limon. The sharpest overall increase in victims was recorded in San José province, with 53 more victims than the same period one year earlier; Puntarenas and Limón reported increases of 24 and 33 victims, respectively. The overall increase around the country is mostly explained by homicides linked to organized crime (victims of score settling or revenge, and contract killing).



ⁱ This includes data from Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

ⁱⁱ There is data for the following countries: Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Honduras.

ⁱⁱⁱ The sum equals 17 victims per day because it is based only on data disaggregated by sex available in the subregion.

^{iv} This classification corresponds to the Seventh Report, Election Observation Mission of Guatemala (2023), which constitutes a consortium of seven civil society organizations, available at: <https://dialogos.org.gt/2023/08/17/lamision-de-observacion-electoral-de-guatemala-moe-gt-presento-su-informe-sobre-las-condiciones-previas-al-balotaje-presidencial/>



Source: Prepared by UNDP InfoSegura with information from Belize provided by Belize Police Department (BPD) provided by the Belize Crime Observatory (BCO); Costa Rica, Judicial Investigation Department (OIJ); El Salvador, Working Group on Homicide Facts and Figures, National Civil Police (PNC) and Prosecutor General of the Republic (FGR); Guatemala, National Civil Police (PNC) Statistics Section, INE validation of data pending); Honduras, preliminary data from the Working Group on Violent Deaths: National Police, Public Ministry/Directorate of Forensic Medicine, National Registry of Persons, Citizen Coexistence and Security Observatories, National Statistics Institute, IUDPAS/UNAH, Technical Inter-Institutional Coordination Unit (UTECI)/Sub-Secretary for Inter-Institutional Affairs.

This analysis is based on data available on the following dates:

- Belize: 13 July 2023
- Guatemala: 2 August 2023
- El Salvador: 31 July 2023.
- Honduras: September 2023
- Costa Rica: September 2023