

Contagion or Socioeconomic Disparity? Crime as a Reflection of Inequality between Urban and Rural Areas in Guanajuato

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Abstract

Regional development has diverse socioeconomic outcomes, formed by economic, social, and environmental factors. In developing areas, social organization strives for harmony and coexistence for the community, but barriers may be in the way. Such is the case of crime in recent decades in Guanajuato. Understanding obstacles and their impact is crucial. This project identifies statistical associations between geographic continuity, socioeconomic dynamics, and criminal acts in municipalities of Guanajuato and those bordering them, seeking causality. More deaths from homicide occurred in 2020 in Guanajuato state than in all neighboring states totaled, an alarming rise which sparked our research. However, the Guanajuato government explains away this violence with claims of “contagion” from contact with a more violent neighboring state. We focused on crime at the municipal level in Mexico’s Bajío region to identify connections to socio economic issues, considering both the perspectives and limitations of each philosophical, social, or legal theoretical tool employed. The findings indicate that municipalities with higher urbanization rates and greater economic activity experienced higher rates and intensity of crime. Our hypothesis, that the most important associations between municipalities bordering Guanajuato state are of lesser intensity than the association of those which share borders with municipalities of higher economic activity, was not discarded.

Keywords

Inequality, Crime, Bajío, Urban, Rural

1. Introduction

The geographical distribution of social events is not random. Patterns and behav-

iors are reflected in the territory, which gives insight into what connects them, their hierarchies, dynamics and trends (Buzai & Montes, 2021). Regions, territorial manifestations of this spatial interaction, include various nuances and emphases, particularly when the questions being researched are oriented towards the particular interest of a social problem. This is true of crime, in the areas of public safety and violence, which significantly impact the lives of all inhabitants in both urban and rural areas, in municipal and state spheres.

What does vary is the scale on which they occur and the techniques of observation and analysis. It is not the same to talk about crime at the state level, where any chosen indicator generalizes the situation (and, doing so, obscures processes of greater proximity), as it is to do so at the municipal level, where such dynamics can be appreciated by highlighting trends and behaviors that call for more precise explanations.

This research addresses the issue of crime in a randomly selected region: the Bajío. We investigate whether proximity of areas with presumably high levels of crime provokes a “contagion” of social problems in those areas. In this case, as will be detailed later, state municipalities of Guanajuato, plus those that share contiguity with five other states, were grouped together.

This paper is divided into two main parts. The first identifies academic and political-administrative approaches to the issue of crime, searching for possible explanations for the criminal behavior in the region. The second part explores environments in which criminal processes occur and their connections to social realities traditionally associated with education level and poverty. We do this not to assign causality but to assess the magnitude of the association between these issues and crime.

In our conclusion, we explore possible avenues to reach deeper into the topic and the initial alternatives of using the information, oriented towards public policy recommendations in the region.

2. Crime and Its Theoretical Approach

Punishment has been a part of civilizations since premodern times, the result of actions deemed unacceptable. Whoever committed these actions knew they faced sanctions, but unlike in modern times, the sanctions applied were not homogeneous in all cultures. Therefore, the cultural construction of crime was subjective: crime was not considered universal nor did its homogenization appeal to those who determined punishment.

One pattern that occurred in these civilizations was exile: those who committed an action considered serious were expelled from the community. Thus, begins what is now called deviance in sociological terms (Downes & Rock, 2007) or crime in legal terms (Plascencia, 2004); that is, acts that threaten the community itself and therefore derive from a socio-cultural construction.

As a result of this configuration, in each civilization, the delinquent was judged from a subjective spiritual and mental construction, under criteria defined by

those who did the judging. Thus, the offender and their family were almost always held responsible, since they were thought not to have known how to educate or establish limits. If the crime was serious, the perpetrator and also their family were generally exiled.

This scenario shifted when rationality began to intervene, as it proposes depersonalizing the criteria under which a delinquent is judged. This questioning coincided with the dawn of Enlightenment, giving rise to classical criminology, a tendency which reflects on the responsibility of the actor for their actions, self-consciousness, and on the problem of deviant behavior, because human beings are free to decide and self-regulate. This is the beginning of the reflection on the cause of criminal acts and the responsibility of the perpetrator.

The aim of this reflection was to depersonalize crime, so that those who judge had to do so impartially and without prejudice, homogenizing its characterization and treatment. Seeking a universality of norms and laws, it recovered Roman law, wherein an abstract entity called the State judges and establishes penalty in an impersonal and therefore abstract manner, laying the foundations of restitutive law and civil law.

Cesare Beccaria (XVIII century) advocated for laws written in easy-to-understand language and designed to be equally applicable to all, with no distinctions made. According to this author, the action committed is the responsibility of the person who carries it out, not of any entity or action external to the individual; the family is no longer held responsible for the action committed by the particular individual (Beccaria, 2014).

Another author of this school of thought is Jeremiah Bentham (18th century), who humanizes the offender as part of society and seeks ways to reform and reintegrate them. His treatise on penalties and rewards led to the creation of Bentham's Panopticon (Bentham, 1938). Another author who is an important part of this current is E. Marco Lombroso (XIX and XX century), who led the way towards the positivist school.

The positivist school came out of integrating the positive method of Augusto Comte (18th and 19th centuries). The method, which consolidates Enlightenment proposals, applies a rigorousness focused on objectivity regarding what is called crime. It was created and promoted by a group of intellectuals who claimed that crime is a part of human nature and should be studied as something real and natural. They believed that crime is social, and that the law should be based on rights, on sociology and anthropology, as these sciences specialize in identifying changes in action, conduct, and the institutions that make up society (Molina, 1988).

The positivist school believed that punishment should combat crime, as it is a social phenomenon, responsible to the social sphere, and not a moral responsibility. It theorizes that there are different types of crimes and each type should have a sanction proportional to the damage caused. According to positivism, some sanctions deserve a temporary or restitutive punishment but others are serious penalties that should last a lifetime, to protect society from the offender. This dis-

cussion on crime and delinquency gave rise to other schools that we call social.

The social schools have the positive Enlightenment and Emilio Durkheim (19th and 20th centuries) as their main precedents. The first trend incorporates a critical view of the social contract that seeks to analyze, not only describe the crime and the offender. It states that society is responsible for acts committed by its members and that they must be understood in their individual complexity articulated to the social.

The second social school of thought is the anomic school, also known as critical criminology, and it builds on Durkheim's work. Here, the focus is on explaining crime as a result of inequality; in its view, criminality emerges from lack of options, opportunities, and benefits, as well as barriers to access these, imposed on the most excluded segment of society by the community. This school states that each society has the criminals and crimes it deserves and establishes that, if inequality is maintained for a long time and increases, it can create anomie.

The anomic school centers on social control, which is disrupted because institutions fail to meet the majority of society members' needs, giving rise to alternative subcultures that compete with dominant culture. Each of these subcultures seeks to legitimize its actions. According to this school of thought, the point of rupture lies not in the individuals themselves—who represent an expression of society's need for change—but in the criminal actions that signify the necessity of modifying the established order. The increase in criminal activity reflects the tensions and limitations of the institutions that shape the State, which must transform for its own benefit. Anomie typically occurs in societies undergoing transitional processes. Furthermore, if these actions are not acknowledged and addressed, the society risks self-destruction, thereby excluding its members from the opportunities it offers (Molina, 1988; Downes & Rock, 2007).

As we can observe, these theoretical trends and schools of thought debate whether criminal expression should be the responsibility of the individual or society. This leads to defining whether to apply a punishment that penalizes the individual and isolates them, to prevent societal contamination, or whether the focus should be on holding society accountable for failing to care for and guide the individual who committed the crime. In this view, society is also responsible for creating strategies that facilitate reform and reintegration of individuals into society.

Recently, alternative viewpoints have emerged, such as the environmental or ecological school. Moving beyond the aforementioned debate, it argues that the focus should be on preventing criminal acts, with attention on situational analysis of both the offender and the crime. Originating in the Chicago School (20th century), this school of thought aimed to identify various types of social problems and construct territorial typologies defined by the social issues that characterize them. In this way, it proposes that society be viewed as an ecosystem, where environmental factors impact individuals and predispose them to act in specific ways (Buil, 2016). Here, the social system seeks to restore order in areas where conflicts

have increased due to environmental degradation. To achieve this, it must implement actions designed to restore favorable conditions within its own ecosystem.

Within the environmental school, social engineering formed the foundation for efforts to implement actions that would impact the ecosystem. On one hand, these efforts attempted to improve living conditions for residents of problematic areas, and on the other, to incorporate new actors who reside in areas further removed from social order (Lamnek, 1980). In this perspective, the legal system should play a key role in this engineering process. Furthermore, it begins to deconstruct the territory based on the specific issues that characterize each zone, contributing to the situational analysis of crime.

This current aims to prevent criminal events, because contemporary studies have demonstrated that prevention is more cost-effective than intervention for offenders who commit criminal acts (Waller, 2007). Another preventive theory, known as the learning theory, suggests that the probability of an individual becoming a criminal depends on the circumstances surrounding them. It can be used as a model to design actions and implement preventive measures that address future generations.

Another school of thought is clinical criminology, rooted in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis (20th century). Clinical criminology centers on the individual and diagnoses delinquents based on two main axes: first, listening to the individual to understand their motivations and justifications for their actions; and second, examining the context in which the individual developed (Molina, 1988).

It proposes using multidisciplinary analysis to assess how dangerous an individual is, detect their likelihood of recidivism, and suggest actions for reintegration, while also identifying cases in which reintegration is inadvisable due to the degree of harm they may cause. This school of thought led to studies labeling individuals as generators of violence.

Finally, a more recent proposal is the rational choice theory or school. This perspective is centered on offenders rather than the crimes themselves, theorizing that individuals evaluate the cost of committing a crime. Therefore, these decisions are unrelated to the individual's history or context (Álvarez, 2015).

These aforementioned schools have developed in Europe, the United States, and Canada; the Latin American contribution has been marginal, as the models that have been replicated as part of the inheritance from colonial times. Further, little has been analyzed or materialized from the reality of our countries, not just in the area of criminality and delinquency, but also in terms of jurisdictional principles (Sandoval y Martínez, 2008).

Some decades ago, countries like Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica and Venezuela made significant contributions to this topic, generating original but partial public policies that fall short of an established integral model at the country level, let alone a regional-level model. These data allowed us to account for the causes and types of crime and offenders in Latin America. This is why we continue to utilize and/or experiment with models and actions from other latitudes (Buffington, 2001).

Mexico has not been the exception, and we haven't been able to explain what is the anomalous or deviant in our penitentiary system or, in a broader sense, in how society understands, characterizes, evaluates, and sanctions crime. This is why we haven't been efficient in our ability to establish a system of effective societal reinsertion according to our reality, which is demonstrated by the level of corruption and violence prevailing in our judicial and penitentiary systems.

Now, based on this account, the question is: In 21st-century Mexico, what constitutes a crime and who constitutes a criminal? It can be argued that *a crime is a harmful or undesirable sociocultural construct that addresses problems that manifest in a specific society at a particular time and place*. As such, crime responds to the reality of each society, to the interactions and exchanges within each of these societies within states, extending to part or the entirety of countries. Additionally, it is important to mention that the criminal does not exist per se, but rather the right opportunity or the environment that facilitates committing the crime, especially when there are no social learnings to prevent it. Global processes in economics and political organization also help us understand that many current crimes are beginning to reveal homogeneity, not only from country to country but also from region to region.

Some examples of this homogeneity include homicides, suicides, femicides, rape, sexual abuse, drug trafficking, among others; most of which are categorized as high-impact offenses and often escalate to such an extent that they are labeled as "violent crimes" and form a higher category of criminal activity. However, in Mexico, progress has also been made in constructing an extensive and homogeneous typology of crimes, as well as in establishing age limits determining eligibility to face judgement, for each of the crimes outlined in the Penal Code, although there are still some crimes where conceptual differences exist from one state entity to another.

There is a clear and established set of criteria for high-impact crimes, shared by all states in the country, which is why we refer to the definitions of these crimes, which form the basis of this research. The point of reference is the Technical Standard for the National Classification of Crimes for Statistical Purposes (DOF, 2018; INEGI, 2023). Therein, the conceptualization of a crime as "a statistic" in essence, something that we find initially critiqueable.

3. Crime Tendencies in the Bajío Region

The Bajío is considered prosperous, as it is home to agriculture, livestock, and mining sectors. This lowlands region is limited to 84 municipalities: 46 in Guanajuato; and the others in areas that border these: 7 in the state of Jalisco; 15 in Michoacán; 9 in Querétaro, 6 in San Luis Potosí; and one municipality in Zacatecas. These entities are very diverse. What they have in common is that they are located along Guanajuato state borders (See [Map 1](#)).

On a state level, of the six states in the Bajío region, crime records show a clear trend, with Guanajuato standing out due to having the highest incidence over the

past 14 years. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), in 2010, there were 445 recorded homicides in Guanajuato. By 2020, this number had risen to 5370 deaths (ONC, 2023). Over the same ten-year period, combined homicides in the states of Jalisco, Michoacán, Querétaro, and San Luis Potosí went from 2235 to 5141, nearly matching the number of homicide deaths in Guanajuato alone. To this day, the increase in that state remains the highest homicide rate increase in the country. Further, there are marked contrasts in the distribution of homicides within the state of Guanajuato (Coronado, Vega, & Valerdi, 2022).¹

According to the National Citizen Observatory (ONC), if incidence per 100,000 inhabitants is analyzed, there were 7.86 intentional homicides in Guanajuato in 2010 and 17.32 culpable homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. In 2020, the rates reached 55.99 and 26.2 respectively (ONC, 2023). This is a sevenfold increase for intentional homicide, the highest rates in central Mexico. All of the neighboring states mentioned saw increases, but the greatest change was in Guanajuato.

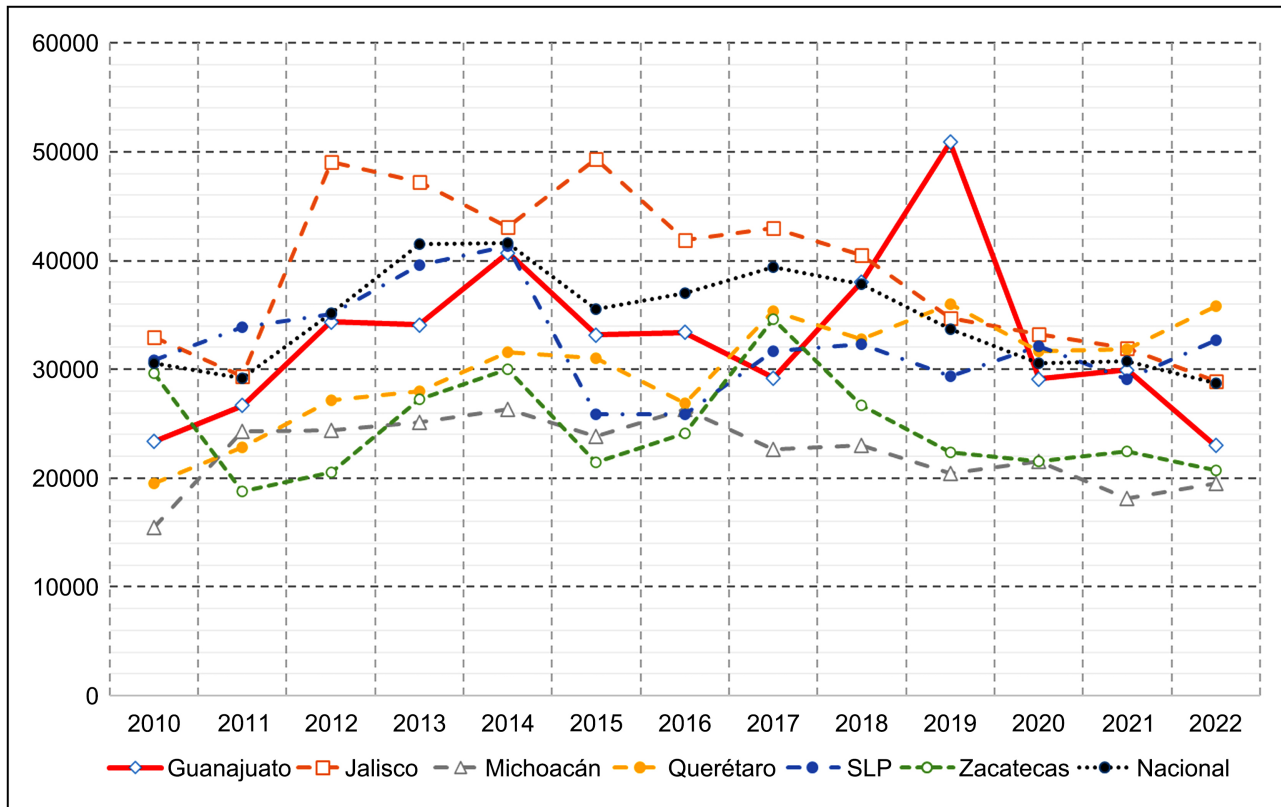
The difference in crime incidence on the state level is clear. However, this level of analysis does not help much in observing the areas of the Bajío where crime is higher. In any generalization, there is a tendency to lose information. The dynamics of crime (incidence rates per 100,000 inhabitants each year) observed as shown in **Graph 1**. From 2010 and 2022 the changes at state levels are confusing, because the time sequence and the oscillation of each entity surely responds to state public policies that operate independently of each other.

As such, it is necessary to analyze the impact of socioeconomic conditions at the municipal level. To do so, information was needed from two sources in addition to INEGI. The National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval, 2024), measures the different types of poverty at municipal and state levels, maintaining an important time series, and the National Citizen Observatory has an interactive portal that allows recovery of crime data on the municipal level, also demonstrating important time series.

This research supports the hypothesis that the most important association between bordering municipalities in Guanajuato state is not as strong as the association of contiguous municipalities with greater economic dynamics. If the general objective of the project is to find if there is statistical association in geographic contiguity, the municipal level is of obligatory analysis, because the economic dynamics will probably provide an understanding of the weight of the causality involved with incidence of crime.

Using only information provided by the National Survey on Victimization and Public Security Perception (ENVIPE) of INEGI, we are guided towards various associations and explanations, however when key social conditions such as poverty and illiteracy are also considered, it becomes possible to link the contexts in which crimes occur.

¹Since 2020, most high-impact crime figures have risen, maintaining Guanajuato among the states with the highest rates of violence.

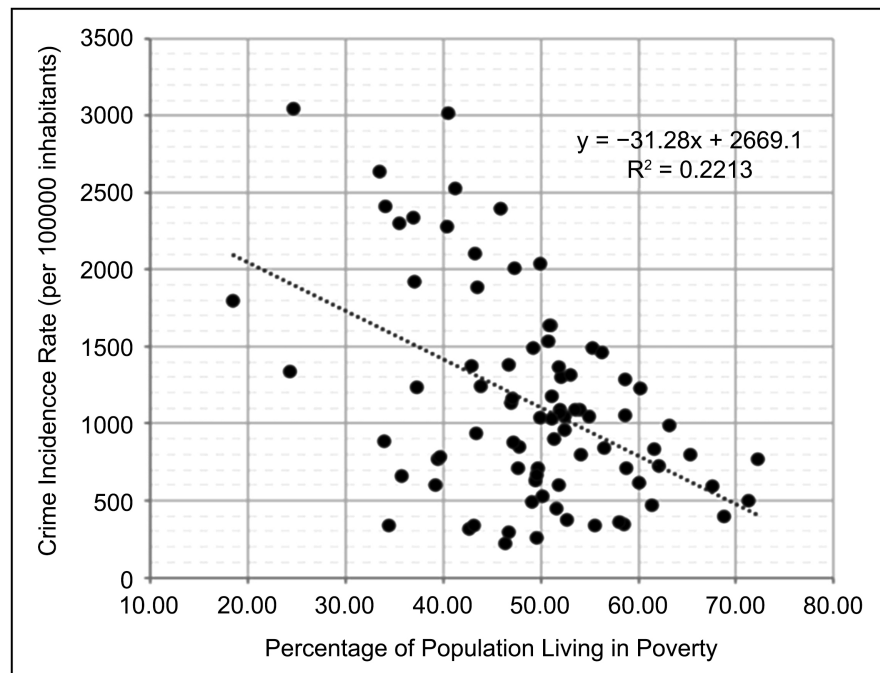


Source: Created by the authors with data from INEGI. ENVIPE. Incidence of Crime. From 19 June 2024, <https://www.inegi.org.mx/temas/incidencia/>.

Graph 1. Rate of crime incidence according to selected federal entities, from 2010 to 2022 (per 100,000 inhabitants).

Poverty is traditionally associated with a lack of safety and increase in crime and vice versa (Agudelo, 1990). As previously discussed, this is due to thinking such as the anomie school, which directly links the potential causes of social violence to socioeconomic inequality and the limited ability to fully enjoy rights and opportunities for honest progress. However, in the case of the 84 municipalities in our study area, a clear association, shown in **Graph 2**, displays negative correlation (-0.4704). This means that high poverty rate corresponds to lower crime rate, with municipalities experiencing higher poverty also seeing lower incidence of crime. This is seemingly contradictory, as using the percentage instead of absolute poverty values reverses the trend. Consider that León, a central city in the Bajío region, is located in the municipality with the highest number of poor people in the country (SSPC, 2024: p. 6).

The other indicator to look at on the municipal level is illiteracy. Citizens in the 21st century need more than nine years of education, at least high school, especially as this level has been legally mandatory since 2012. However, there are tens of thousands of individuals surviving without any post-primary education, or without literacy skills. This is a reflection of low salaries and a precarious quality of life. Illiteracy has strong ties to poverty, to marginalization, and interestingly, to the risks of lack of public safety in many senses.



Sources: Created by authors based on data from CONEVAL, Measures of poverty. Statistical annex, 2010-2020. From 19 June 2024,

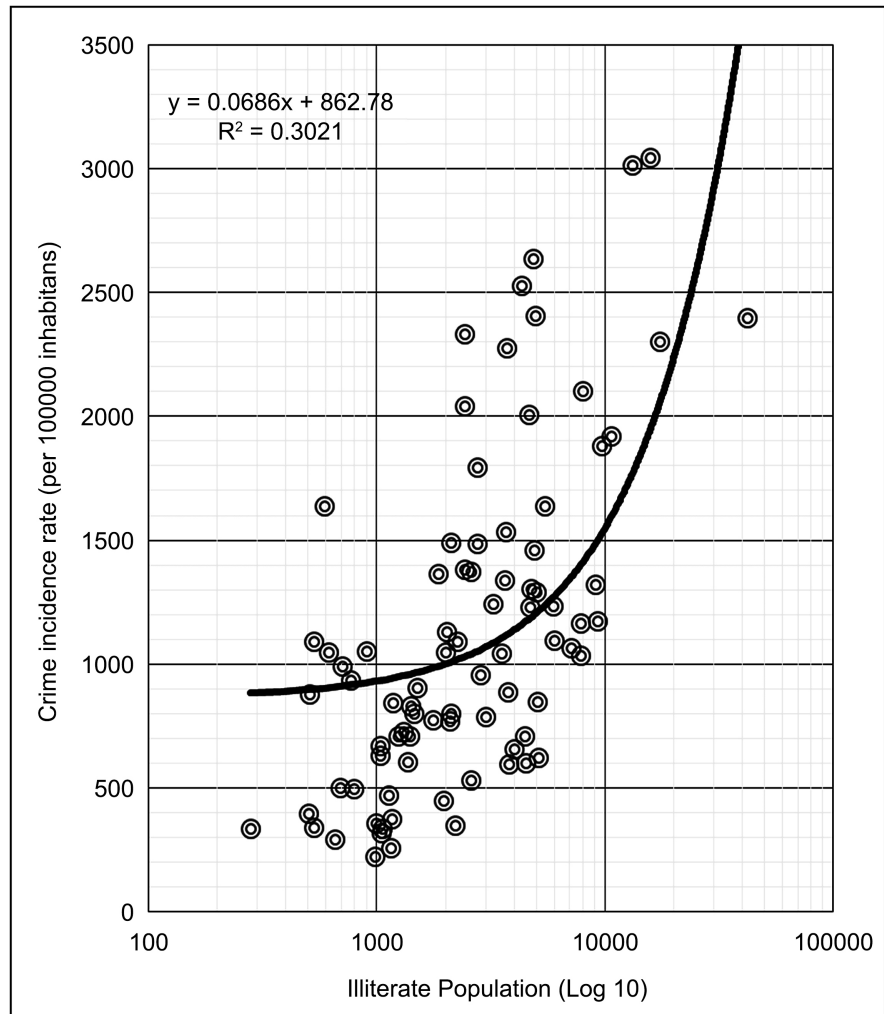
<https://www.coneval.org.mx/Medicion/Paginas/Pobreza-municipio-2010-2020.aspx> and National Citizen Observatory (ONC). Interactive Observatory of Criminal Incidence. From 19 June 2024, <https://delitosmexico.onc.org.mx/>

Graph 2. Percentage of population living in poverty according to the municipal crime incidence rate in the Bajío region, 2020.

In **Graph 3**, a clear positive correlation can be observed (0.5476). This indicates that with greater illiteracy, there is a greater incidence of crime. Paradoxically, this counters the findings in **Graph 2**. If it's generally accepted that illiteracy is high in municipalities with a high poverty rate, why then would high crime rate, low poverty rate, also seem to be the case? In the first place, the answer is that urban poverty (where illiteracy is high) is different from rural poverty. If the statistical association between poverty and illiteracy is measured in the same municipalities of the studied Bajío region, the surprise is that the association is inexistent or negative (with values under -0.2500), which indicates that, with higher poverty, comes lower illiteracy rates, at least for the 2020 data². This is difficult to accept.

Living conditions in urban and rural areas continue to exhibit significant inequalities. It is notable that in rural areas, there is a lower propensity of “common” crime, which is handled on a local level. This does not mean that such crimes do not exist, but rather that, even when poverty and illiteracy coincide, rural poverty does not automatically drive criminal acts, which is shown more evidently in urban areas. In fact, the criminal propensity of the urban population in Guanajuato (and the Bajío region) is high, exceeding 72% (Inegi, 2020).

²Studies on Mexico have linked urban areas with crime and its impact on migration and poverty, but have not considered education level.

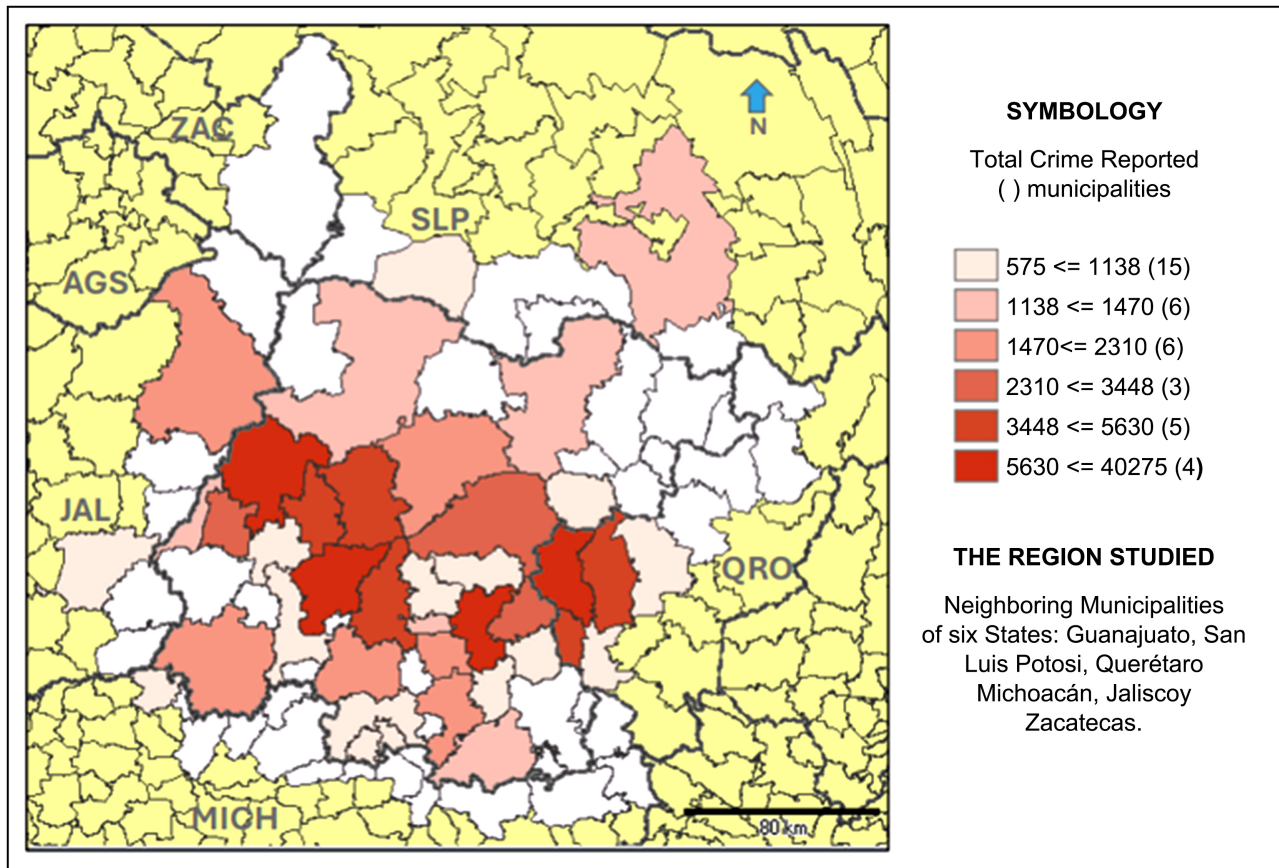


Sources: Created by authors with INEGI data. Population and Housing Census, 2020a. From 19 June 2024, <https://www.inegi.org.mx/programas/ccpv/2020/> and National Criminal Observatory (ONC), Interactive Observatory of Criminal Incidence. From 19 June 2024, <https://delitosmexico.onc.org.mx/>

Graph 3. Municipal crime rate of the illiterate population in the Bajío region, 2020.

To explain this apparent paradox, a cartographic analysis was conducted to observe the geographical distribution of crime within the municipal scope of the study area, using descriptive statistical cartography (Buzai & Montes, 2021).

As shown in **Map 1** of the study area, there is a concentration of municipalities with high crime rates in what is known as the industrial corridor of Guanajuato, marked in red on the map, with values ranging from over 3400 crimes annually, to as high as 40,000 (in León, Guanajuato). Additionally, it is clear that most municipalities that border Guanajuato experience few crimes yearly (less than 500, indicated in white or light shades). The exceptions are Querétaro, Corregidora, and El Marqués, all bordering Guanajuato, which all have high crime rates. These municipalities all belong to the state of Querétaro and have experienced significant demographic and industrial growth in recent decades.



Source: Created by authors based on data from INEGI, CGPV 2020 y ONC, 2020. MDM V6.3.

Map 1. Total crime reported in the region studied, 2020.

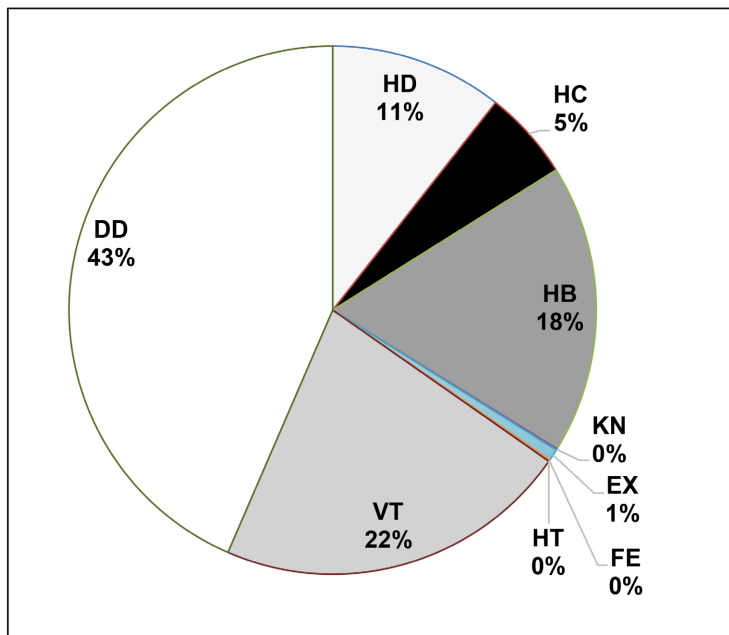
Reported crimes are classified by the ONC to indicate when a formal complaint or official process has a case file subject to the locally applicable laws. The criminal data capture system does not account for information considered “dark figures”—off-the-record, unreported crime. If one seeks greater precision in understanding regional trends, it is crucial that the type of crime is specified.

When specifying the type and nature of a crime, addressing each one would warrant an entire text. The National Classification of Crimes (DOF, 2018) alone lists 102 types of crimes, 59 of which are primary types and 49 are subtypes (DOF, 2018: pp. 5-9), without mentioning variants classified within each crime type such as “others that infringe upon...”: bodily integrity, personal liberty, sexual safety, property, family, free development of personality, society, health, the environment, data security, etc. It constitutes a small universe of offenses targeting various aspects of society, with a complex classification that is very difficult to define and standardize.

Therefore, we selected a group of crimes considered to be indicators of the overall dynamics of the set. Considered high-impact crimes due to their severity, they tend to be highly reported, so we used a low estimate of “dark figure” numbers. The group includes: homicides (intentional and culpable), home robbery, kidnap-

ping, extortion, femicide, human trafficking, vehicular theft, and small-scale drug dealing (*narcomenudeo*). Together, they represented only 21% of all crimes in the Bajío region in 2020 (ONC, 2023).

By examining this small set of crimes, a very heterogeneous frequency among them was observed in the year 2020. Of the nine selected crimes, only five were quantitatively more significant: homicide (both types), vehicle theft, home robbery, and small-scale drug dealing (*narcomenudeo*). The rest accounted for less than one percent each. See **Graph 4**.



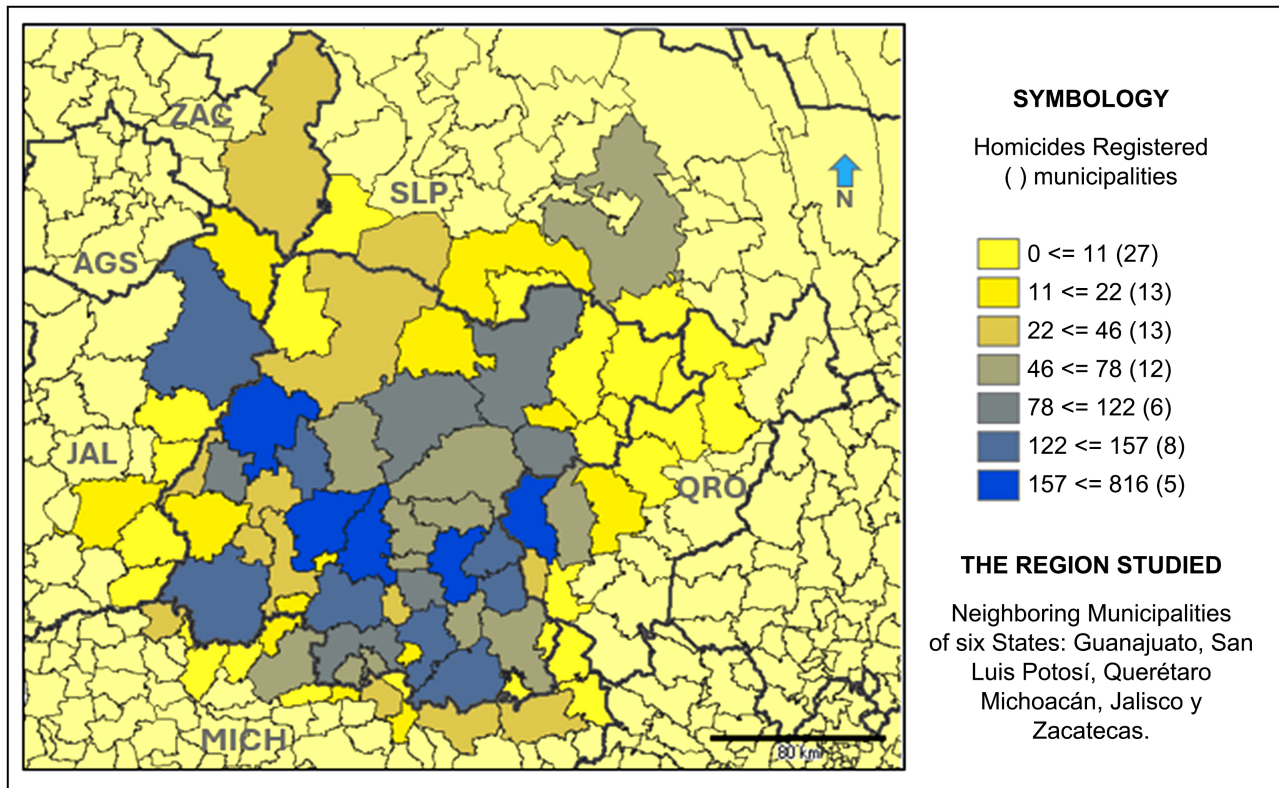
Crime		%
HD	Homicide (doloso)	10.6
HC	Homicide (culposo)	5.5
HB	Home Bulgary	17.7
KN	Kidnaping	0.1
EX	Extortion	0.7
FE	Femicide	0.1
HT	Human Trafficking	0.01
VT	Vehicle Theft	21.8
DD	Drug Dealing	43.5
		100

Source: Created by authors with data from ONC, 2023.

Graph 4. Selected crimes in the Bajío region according to representation, 2020.

Their spatial distribution responds to the criteria discussed above. For this paper, the distribution of the sum of both types of homicides combined is shown as an example. **Map 2** again shows a concentration of the number of crimes in highly urbanized municipalities, located in the industrial corridor of Guanajuato, with values above 150 homicides. And in some cases, above 800, as in the case of the municipalities of Leon (816), Celaya (599) and Irapuato (599). The aforementioned are also the municipalities with the largest cities in Guanajuato state. On the perimeters of the study region, there are some municipalities that show medium-high levels of homicides, such as Lagos de Morenos in Jalisco; Querétaro in the state of the same name; and Rio Verde, San Luis Potosí. But these do not come close to the numbers of the highest homicide cases.

To think that geographic proximity is an important factor in the dynamics of interstate and intermunicipal crime is to distance oneself from the reality that orients responses toward the links between crime and cities, where one can find both the most intense economic activity and a pernicious, intractable culture of class.



Source: Created by authors based on data from INEGI, CGPV 2020 and ONC, 2020. MDM V6.3.

Map 2. Homicides registered in the region studied, 2020.

The rest of the selected crimes were also analyzed and compared for frequency. Vehicular theft was the clearest, as it was concentrated in municipalities located along Federal Highway 45, in the industrial corridor. It should be noted that, as with the rest of the crimes, when the incidence rates per 100,000 inhabitants are mapped, the distribution of municipalities becomes more dispersed. However, the number of crimes remains considerably high in urban and industrial municipalities.

4. Conclusion

Crime is a social phenomenon, integrally connected to human nature. Understanding its essence, causalities, and evolution is the first task. Any explanation about its manifestations, as we mentioned in the first section, must involve its conceptualization. Various perspectives, focuses, and schools of thought are concerned with containing, preventing, and lessening the effects of crime. From the classical approach to rational choice, through social interest, psychology, ethics and philosophy, efforts to contain and classify crime are placed in the balance of public policies, to first evaluate its impact, then to compensate society for the damages it caused, and finally to castigate undesirable behavior. The anomie school provides the greatest number of tools to aid in comprehension of the Bajío case, because the crimes observed are closely linked to socioeconomic indicators, al-

lowing us to discover preliminary explanations for its manifestations.

In Guanajuato and the immediate geographic area, including bordering states, we can observe very contradictory and apparently chaotic behaviors with respect to crimes committed. Guanajuato stands out clearly as the most serious. Further, if the issue is only dealt with at the state level, the data are coarse statistical aggregates and can only be generalized to each entity. This approach may explain the temptation of government agencies to describe the distribution of crimes as “contagion.” This implies not only the unburdening of responsibilities, but also delinates the attention of the judicial and penitentiary systems. For example, follow-up on programs that seek to return drop-outs to schools, including “*abre la Puerta a tu future (Open the door to your Future)*”³.

However, the distribution of crime becomes clearer if the approach is shifted to a municipal level. The impact of crime in the area begins to show tendencies that demand better explanations, in particular after a brief review of the link to poverty and illiteracy as indicators of social anomie. These allow us to confirm close connections that could turn the direction of public policy of addressing crime towards lessening social inequality, as a first example.

On the graph showing geographic distribution of crimes, a clear concentration where the urbanization and industrialization levels are the highest can be observed in only 12 municipalities. At the same time, on both sides of the state borders, there are far fewer crimes. This leads us to question if economic development is enough to address social problems of high impact, such as the crime that occurs on a daily basis.

It could be argued that in the case of Guanajuato, changes in the social fabric should also be explored, as it has rapidly transformed from a predominantly rural entity to an industrial one in a short period. This factor has slowly impacted behavior and institutional interactions of the various governments attempting to articulate their public safety and judicial policies, generally in a reactive manner or, in the worst-case scenario, in a superficial one. However, reality demands greater efforts in analysis and planning to address this new reality.

Up to this point in the research undertaken, our recommendation is to abandon the idea that crime, and the associated lack of public safety and violence, manifests in Guanajuato due to proximity (“contagion”). Evidence points to an explanation linked to underlying inequality, with disparities in access to basic rights and opportunities for a dignified quality of life. Contrasts between urban and rural areas, as well as the appearance of crimes within these spaces, support this view. Also emerging is a potential complementary explanation: the municipalities form “corridors” which, when viewed in an articulated manner, may reflect the organization of criminal space. This last point will be explored in further depth in upcoming research.

It is proposed to strengthen educational and social programs that address low

³<https://boletines.guanajuato.gob.mx/2025/02/21/voluntarios-recorren-guanajuato-para-reincorporar-%20a-ninas-ninos-y-jovenes-a-la-escuela/>. Retrieved March 13.

schooling, particularly at the high school level, and carry out actions that reduce social contrasts in urban areas.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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