EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the eleventh edition of the Global Peace Index (GPI), which ranks 163 independent states and territories according to their level of peacefulness. Produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), the GPI is the world’s leading measure of global peacefulness. This report presents the most comprehensive data-driven analysis to-date on trends in peace, its economic value, and how to develop peaceful societies.

The GPI covers 99.7 per cent of the world’s population, using 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators from highly respected sources and measures the state of peace using three thematic domains: the level of Societal Safety and Security; the extent of Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict; and the degree of Militarisation.

In addition to presenting the findings from the 2017 GPI, this year’s report includes analysis of the Positive Peace factors that are most important for transitioning to higher levels of peace and how deteriorations in Positive Peace are linked to the rise of populism in Europe. The report also assesses the trends in peacekeeping and militarisation, including a cost-benefit analysis highlighting the positive economic benefits from early peacemaking interventions.

The results of the 2017 GPI show that the global level of peace has slightly improved this year by 0.19 per cent, with 53 countries improving, while 68 countries deteriorated.

Iceland remains the most peaceful country in the world, a position it has held since 2008. It is joined at the top of the index by New Zealand, Portugal, Austria, and Denmark, all of which were ranked highly in last year’s GPI. There was also very little change at the bottom of the index. Syria remains the least peaceful country in the world, preceded by Afghanistan, Iraq, South Sudan, and Yemen.

Six of the nine regions in the world improved. South America registered the largest improvement, overtaking Central America and the Caribbean as the fourth most peaceful region. South America’s score benefited from improvements across all three domains, with particularly strong gains in Societal Safety and Security.

The largest regional deteriorations in score occurred in North America, followed by sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The score for North America deteriorated entirely as a result of the US, which more than offset a mild improvement in Canada. The US score has been dragged down largely because of a deterioration in two indicators: level of perceived criminality in society and the intensity of organised internal conflict. The latter measure has deteriorated because of the increased levels of political polarisation within the US political system. The US also has experienced the fourth largest drop in Positive Peace globally, after Syria, Greece and Hungary in the ten years to 2015.

Europe remains the most peaceful region in the world, with eight of the ten most peaceful countries coming from this region. However, while 23 of the 36 countries improved, the average peace score did not change notably, due to the substantial deterioration in Turkey, the impact of the terrorist attacks in Brussels, Nice, and Paris, and deteriorating relations between Russia and its Nordic neighbours.

MENA is the least peaceful region in the world for the fifth consecutive year. Saudi Arabia, followed by Libya, recorded the largest deteriorations in the region. Saudi Arabia fell because of its involvement in the Syrian and Yemen conflicts and increased terrorist activity, mainly conducted by ISIS, and its affiliate. Morocco, the fall for Libya was due to its increased level of internal conflict.

The indicator with the largest improvement was number, duration and role in external conflicts. This was mainly due to many countries winding down their involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. While in most cases the withdrawal of troops occurred some years ago, the indicator is lagging in order to capture the lingering effect of conflict. The indicator measuring political terror also significantly improved in all regions except sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA. There were also general reductions in the number of homicides per 100,000 people and the level of violent crime.

Of the three GPI domains, both Militarisation and Safety and Security improved. However, there was a deterioration in the Ongoing Conflict domain, owing to an increase in the intensity of conflicts in the MENA region.
MEXICO PEACE INDEX
2017
MAPPING THE EVOLUTION OF PEACE AND ITS DRIVERS
The 2017 Mexico Peace Index (MPI), produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), provides a comprehensive measure of peacefulness in Mexico. The MPI is based on the work of the Global Peace Index, the leading measure of global peacefulness that has been produced by IEP every year since 2007. It is part of a series of national peace indices, which includes the United States Peace Index and the United Kingdom Peace Index.

This research, now in its fifth year, aims to identify the key trends, patterns and drivers of peace while highlighting policy opportunities. The MPI report includes an analysis of the economic benefits that will flow from a more peaceful society and provides a backdrop for strategic discussions among policymakers, researchers, business leaders and the general public on building peace in Mexico.

Mexico’s peacefulness deteriorated by 4.3 percent in 2016. Last year marks both the ten-year anniversary of the declaration of the war on drugs and the first deterioration in peacefulness since the recovery began in 2012. Mexico’s most violent year was 2011, when domestic military deployments peaked and the homicide rate rose to double that of 2006. In 2012, the country began to recover — an improving trend that was maintained for the next four years. However, in 2016, the homicide rate rose 18 percent and the use and availability of firearms increased, resulting in a less peaceful overall MPI score.

Yucatán was the most peaceful state in Mexico in 2016, followed by Nayarit, Tlaxcala, Hidalgo and Coahuila. Guerrero was Mexico’s least peaceful state for the fourth year in a row, followed by Colima, Sinaloa, Baja California and Baja California Sur.

Mexico’s northern region, along the border with the United States, is the least peaceful of the five regions. Violence is also escalating in a number of states along the Pacific coast, especially Baja California Sur, Colima and Guerrero.

The 2016 deterioration in peacefulness led to an estimated additional economic impact of 78 billion pesos, driving the yearly total to 3.07 trillion pesos. This is equivalent to 17.6 percent of Mexico’s GDP or 23,150 pesos per capita, which is more than one month of income for the average Mexican worker.

In some states, the impact is much higher. In Colima, for instance, it is nearly 66,500 pesos. Furthermore, businesses in Mexico identified insecurity and crime as their most pressing concern, well above other issues such as taxation or corruption.

The full analysis of Mexico’s peacefulness shows mixed results. On the one hand, the nationwide peace score deteriorated in 2016, mainly because of the increase in homicides. On the other hand progress has been made in structural reform.

Despite the deterioration in the 2016 score, Mexico remained nearly 14 percent more peaceful in 2016 than in 2011, with improvements being recorded in 21 out of 32 states in 2016. The violent crime rate is at a 14-year low and the homicide rate is 16 percent lower than in 2011. Organized crime related offenses reached a ten year low, having returned to pre-drug war levels. The rate of crimes committed with a firearm was 10 percent lower than in 2011, although recent trends show an increase in the purchase of guns.

Nayarit, Durango, Coahuila, Quintana Roo and Oaxaca have had the largest improvements in peacefulness over the last six years while Colima, Baja California Sur, Zacatecas, Oaxaca and Michoacán have shown the largest deteriorations.

These five states all have rising homicide rates, especially Colima, which had a 2016 homicide rate three times higher than its 2011 levels.

It is too early to determine whether the deterioration recorded in 2016 constitutes the start of a new trend.

The 2017 MPI report details four important policy areas instrumental to building high levels of peacefulness: impunity, policing, strategies to reduce homicide rates, and the role of local governments. Improvements have been recorded in these areas. For example, the percentage of citizens that trust
the police rose by 13 percentage points to reach 50 percent, while the overall perception of corruption in local police forces fell by six percentage points. Nonetheless, local governments still stand to improve the most: the local forces are perceived as the most corrupt and the least trusted.

States have been making investments in professionalizing and strengthening their police forces. Coahuila and Chihuahua have had the largest increases in the size of their forces, at 27% and 47 percent, respectively, from 2015 to 2016. However, increases in the numbers of police need to coincide with professional development to fully gain the benefits of the increased capacity. States that pay higher salaries also tend to spend more on professional training for their officers. Given the high risks associated with the job and the larger payouts often offered by organized crime, salaries need to adequately compensate officers.

Impunity is also a major challenge for Mexico. On average, nine percent of crimes committed are punished. Impunity is a widespread issue across multiple states and law enforcement and justice agencies, including impunity for violence committed by state actors. There is also a high level of impunity for violence against journalists, with 76 media professionals being murdered in 2016.

Mexico needs to improve the overall capacity of its judicial and law enforcement systems. The average rate of justice officials is 3.5 per 100,000 people, roughly four times lower than the global average. However, recent improvements are substantial, with the expenditure on the justice system increasing by 41 percent from 2011 to 2016, to 21.3 billion pesos.

There have been improvements in the collection and accuracy of crime data, although official data quality remains poor. IEP uses a variety of methods to develop an accurate picture of peacefulness in Mexico overall and by state. A composite index of peace directly addresses some of the deficits in measuring violence. In addition, the MPI report includes an annual review of data quality in Mexico.

In 2015 law enforcement agencies undercounted homicide victims by roughly ten percent, but this is an improvement on a year earlier when it was 15 percent. Similarly, more local governments appear to be correctly reporting the number of crimes committed with a weapon. However, four states still report that no assaults are committed with a firearm: Baja California, Morelos, Sonora and Tabasco. Mexico’s official law enforcement homicide database currently includes only eight out of the 37 pieces of information in the Illegality protocol for international data quality standards.

One method of understanding possible future trends in peace is through tracking progress in Positive Peace — the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies. Positive Peace consists of eight pillars or domains that describe the factors most closely associated with highly peaceful societies.

Positive Peace in Mexico is improving, although progress is uneven. Solid improvements are evident in the sound business environment and high levels of human capital pillars. The indicators that improved the most within these pillars were the cost of starting a business, which fell by 14 percent from 2011 to 2016 and high school enrollment, which rose by eight percentage points from 2011 to 2015. There were also improvements in free-flow of information, equitable distribution of resources and acceptance of the rights of others across a variety of indicators. However, violence against journalists remains a risk to free flow of information.

There has been progress in well-functioning government and low levels of corruption, but the pace of improvement is more moderate. An average of 13 percent more citizens reported lower levels of perceived corruption across all law enforcement and justice entities in 2016 compared to 2011. However, this is coming off a high base and levels of corruption are still too high, well above Mexico’s international peers. Good relations with neighbors has deteriorated, most notably for the indicator measuring citizens’ perceptions of safety in their neighborhood, which fell from 60 percent in 2011 to 54 percent in 2016.

Taken all together, the 2017 MPI findings highlight the need to maintain the pace of judicial reform and improve accountability. Mexico has made and continues to make significant strides in improving the rule of law and the quality of governance and law enforcement, but the challenges are formidable and the recent increases in homicides vary concerning.