

Risk Radar 2026: Americas

Resilience amid volatility

February 2026



Research overview

This Americas edition of Risk Radar is a focused extension of our annual Heaxil Risk Radar report, designed to provide deeper insight into the evolving risk landscape across North, Central and South America.

Building on the global themes identified in our 2026 edition, this regional report examines how recent developments are reshaping operational resilience for organizations with interests in the Americas.

Using the original survey data from Risk Radar, which surveyed 500 respondents across various sectors, we've pulled out the themes that matter most to organizations working across the Americas and shown how risk is changing across the region.

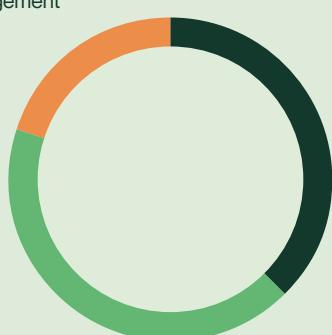
We hope this regional edition serves as a valuable resource for your planning and resilience strategies in 2026 and beyond.

Below, you can see findings from the wider report and survey, alongside a closer look at the issues shaping the region.

Our respondents

Seniority

Middle management
20%



Senior management
42%

Job title



Organizations operating internationally, carrying out international travel with interests in:



17%
Africa



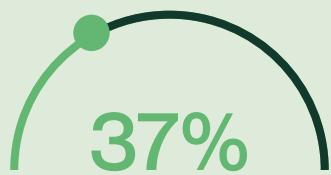
82%
Americas



45%
APAC



86%
Europe CIS



37%
MENA

Americas In Focus



Edited by:
Felipe Wagner
Senior Intelligence Analyst – Americas

Key themes for 2026

01

Organized crime in Latin America and the Caribbean

Organized crime is becoming more complex across Latin America and the Caribbean. Groups like Brazil's PCC are embedding themselves in legitimate sectors, while Ecuador faces record-breaking violence. In Colombia and Peru, criminal networks are expanding near borders, driving up extortion and homicide rates. Even where violence is falling – like parts of the Caribbean – risks remain high due to gang rivalries and opportunistic crime. Businesses must plan for spillover risks and adapt security protocols to fast-changing criminal tactics.

02

Political instability across the Andean Region

Governments across the Andean region are struggling to govern. Gridlock, corruption and executive overreach are weakening democratic institutions. Violent unrest, especially around elections, is disrupting supply chains and undermining state legitimacy. In Bolivia, a political reset offers some hope, though some of the new administration's proposed changes have sparked protests and strikes, underscoring the region's persistent risk of unrest.

03

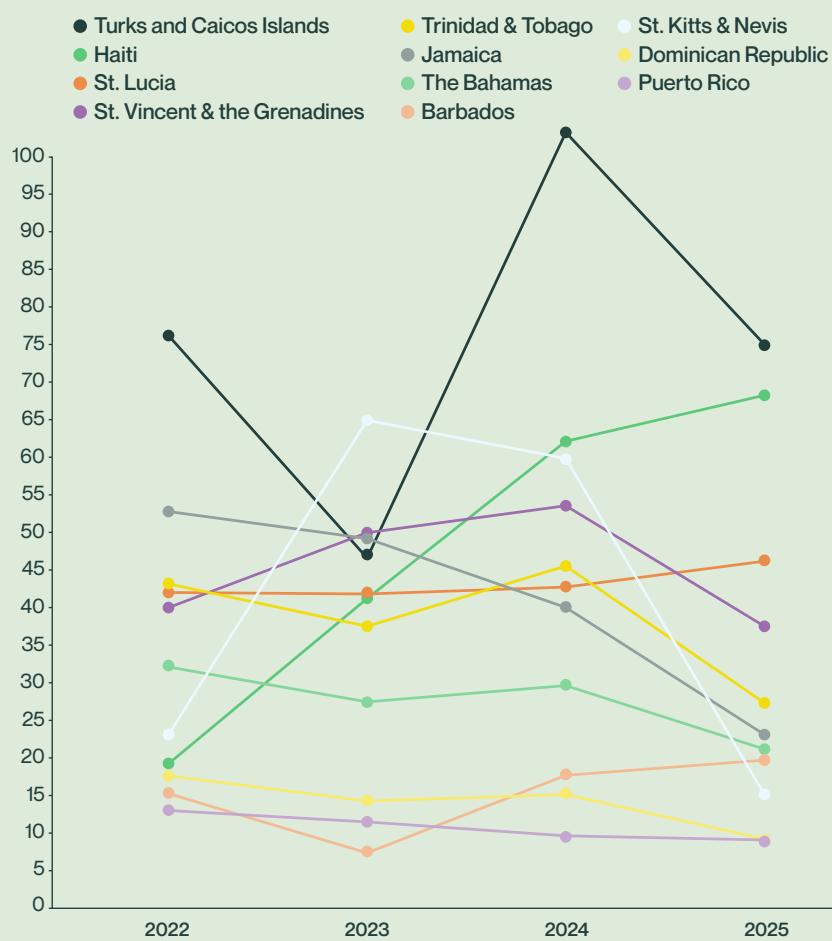
The Trump Administration and its impacts across the Americas

The Trump Administration's security-first foreign policy is increasing tensions across the Americas. Military deployments, sanctions and tariffs are straining US relations with key allies. The region is becoming a testing ground for assertive diplomacy – raising risks for trade, compliance and reputation. Businesses must track foreign policy shifts and assess exposure to economic coercion and diplomatic breakdowns.

Organized crime in Latin America and the Caribbean

Organized crime continues to evolve across Latin America and the Caribbean, posing risks to travelers through direct exposure and indirectly through the unrest and political instability that stems from widespread perceptions of insecurity.

Homicide rate per capita – Caribbean



In Brazil, the First Capital Command (PCC) has evolved from a prison gang into a transnational network that uses legitimate sectors to launder money and finance conflict with rivals. Ecuador remains in “a state of internal armed conflict” with over 20 criminal groups, and 2025 finished as the country’s most violent year on record. In Colombia, paramilitary and militant groups are increasingly operating as profit-driven criminal organizations, expanding near the Venezuelan and Ecuadorian borders. Peru is also seeing a sharp rise in crime risks and extortion, with record-high violence leading to ‘Generation Z’ protests and the removal of President Dina Boluarte.

Most Caribbean countries recorded a modestly improving homicide rate in 2025, though targeted violence linked to intra-gang conflicts remains a risk in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, triggering curfews and states of emergency. Despite localized improvements, the region overall remains one of the most violent globally, with homicide rates on most islands several times the global average. Haiti continues to struggle with gang violence despite the deployment of a UN-backed security mission, and its plan to hold elections in 2026 seems increasingly unlikely.

Not the target, still at risk – the impact of criminal presence

Although organized crime groups and associated violence are still pervasive in the region, the greatest risk remains collateral exposure to clashes between rival groups or opportunistic crime, as opposed to targeted attacks.

Most organized crime violence is directed at rival groups or the local security forces, with the targeting of foreign nationals remaining relatively rare. However, the presence of these groups overstretches the security forces and creates security vacuums that drive up overall crime, posing a direct risk to travelers. Their operations often spill into street-level violence and enable other illicit activity, making it harder to avoid exposure.

Outlook for 2026: Persistent drivers, limited progress

Organized crime and associated violence in Latin America and the Caribbean are highly likely to remain the region's main security concern through 2026 and beyond. Long-standing structural problems – reduced state capacity, a lack of economic alternatives, and illicit drug markets – will continue to create persistent incentives for criminal activity.

Arrests of key gang leaders often lead to gang fragmentation and rarely reduce violence. PCC's infiltration into formal sectors has made it more resilient and harder to dismantle, and other groups are likely to adopt similar strategies. US airstrikes against well-known trafficking routes in the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean will force smugglers to find alternative strategies, reshaping trafficking dynamics across the region. Overstretched and politicized justice systems have a limited capacity to prosecute criminal organizations, while institutional corruption remains a significant challenge.

The recent drop in homicide rates across parts of the Caribbean is unlikely to make lasting improvements. Targeted interventions have temporarily reduced violence in some flashpoints, but gains are fragile. Small population sizes mean that even a small decrease in violence can distort perceptions of progress.

The states' responses to criminality are likely to become increasingly militarized across the region, with Brazil and Chile being countries to pay particular attention to. The public support for kinetic anti-gang operations, such as the one that led to over 120 fatalities in Rio de Janeiro in October 2025, suggests that elected officials are likely to favor highly visible operations with immediate results regardless of their long-term efficacy. The election of President Jose Kast in Chile, who ran with a platform of tough-on crime policies, suggest that such a trend is even being reported in countries that have historically remained shielded from significant violent criminality.

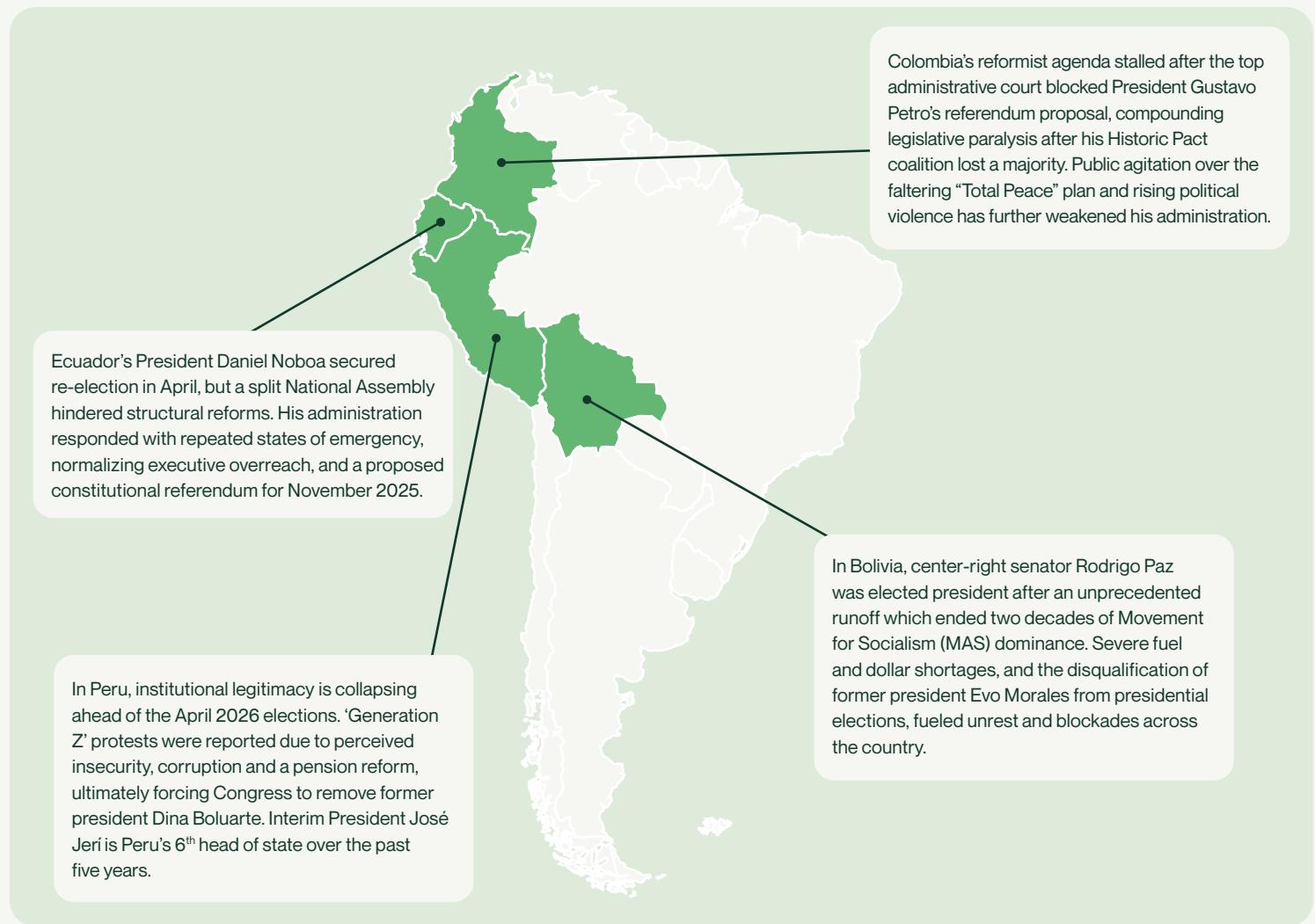
Action

Review travel risk protocols for staff working in or transiting through high-crime areas – especially urban centers and border zones where collateral violence is more likely. Business continuity plans should be tested against potential disruptions from gang-related violence, infrastructure sabotage, or law enforcement operations. Train staff in situational awareness and personal security, particularly in areas with high-levels of opportunistic crime and street-level violence. Security managers should carry out regular site audits and assess proximity to high-risk zones, including gang-controlled neighborhoods, border regions, and areas prone to clashes between criminal groups and security forces.



Political instability across the Andean Region

Across Andean countries, political instability intensified in 2025, marked by a rise in political violence, increased polarization, political gridlock and unruly electoral periods.



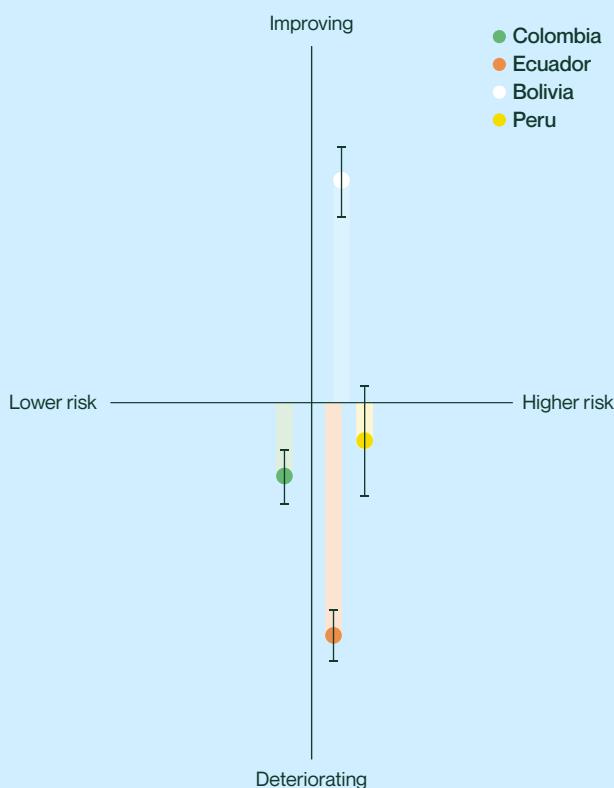
Democratic backsliding and institutional drift

The over-reliance on emergency powers in Ecuador and Colombia shows a drift towards bypassing legislative and judicial scrutiny – weakening democratic principles. In Ecuador, Noboa's failed proposed constitutional changes would reduce the size of the National Assembly, allow the impeachment of Constitutional Court justices and dismantle oversight bodies. Although Ecuadorian voters overwhelmingly rejected the referendum, it raises concerns about authoritarian tendencies among elected officials.

Political violence is increasingly shaping voting patterns and domestic politics. In Colombia, the assassination of a presidential candidate and killings of demobilized Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) militants have weakened state legitimacy, creating conditions where threat actors influence outcomes. In Bolivia, fatal clashes and takeovers of military outposts over Morales' disqualification underscore how political polarization can rapidly escalate into violence targeting civilians and authorities.

Legislative fragmentation and gridlock amid growing polarization are making it harder for governments to pass reforms, leaving fiscal and security crises unanswered. As institutional capacity and credibility erode, unrest and blockades are becoming more frequent – disrupting supply chains across the region. Public disbelief in democratic institutions is creating power vacuums, making space for populist outsiders, authoritarian figures and non-state groups to step in.

Political risk across the Andean region



Trend		Bolivia	Peru	Ecuador	Colombia
Current trend	Improving	Rapidly deteriorating	Deteriorating	Deteriorating	
Sub-Risks					
Judicial	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Transitional	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Public Agitation	Moderate	High	High	High	High
Policy Making	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Representative	Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Low
Institutional	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Cohesion	High	High	High	Low	Low
International	Low	Minimal	Low	Low	Low

Outlook for 2026: Elections, unrest and executive overreach

Political risks are highly likely to remain elevated in the Andean countries compared to the rest of the Americas.

- Following the failed referendum in November 2025, President Daniel Noboa is expected to maintain an adversarial posture towards the Constitutional Court, raising concerns about institutional instability. Noboa will almost certainly continue to govern through executive actions, and although a constitutional reform remains unlikely, new referendums on specific issues are expected.
- Violence linked to Colombian militant groups will contribute to one of the country's most violent election cycles. Although isolated attacks are expected to be reported in urban centers, rural areas will experience significantly higher risks. The presidential election will highly likely go to the second round given the high number of undecided voters and the low polling of all candidates.

- Peru's elections will test the resiliency of its electoral system, with the date serving as a flashpoint for unrest; recent precedent indicates that a transitional crisis cannot be ruled out. The presidential election is likely to go to the second round, extending the window for violent protests. Probes into secret meetings between Chinese businessmen and President José Jerí will heighten instability and add pressure on Congress to impeach him.
- A reset of Bolivia's political order creates an opportunity for coalition-based governance, potentially reducing the concentration of power. The end of a centrally planned economy suggests growing opportunities for foreign investment. However, the countrywide blockades, following the suspension of fuel subsidies reported since December 2025, suggest that new rounds of public agitation are likely if fiscal reforms are pushed too far.

Action

Monitor legislative and judicial developments that could reshape governance frameworks and prepare compliance adjustments. Security protocols should also be enhanced for staff during election periods and in rural corridors where political violence intersects with criminal activity. Evacuation triggers should be considered to assist with decision making if organizations have staff traveling to complex risk environments. Update business continuity plans to address disruptions from protests, blockades, and other election-related disruptions, prioritizing alternative transport routes and inventory buffers for critical goods.

The Trump Administration and its impacts across the Americas



The Trump Administration is adopting a foreign policy prioritizing US security in the Western Hemisphere, what Trump labeled the “Donroe doctrine”. Within a month of his inauguration, Trump declared a national emergency at the Mexican border and designated eight Latin American criminal groups as foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs). The appointment of Marco Rubio as both Secretary of State and National Security Advisor signals that the Americas will be a primary flashpoint for US action, as underscored by the deployment of military vessels off Venezuela's coast and the subsequent raid that captured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife.

Security-first foreign policy and regional escalation

Most of Trump's commercial and diplomatic policies are framed under the broader “America First” strategy, aimed at reshoring manufacturing. The 10% blanket tariff imposed on “Liberation Day”, alongside country-specific tariffs with little consideration for long-term strategic partnerships, has damaged relations with regional allies such as Mexico, Canada, Colombia and Brazil. The administration has taken a hard line toward left-leaning government figures, particularly Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro, Colombia's Gustavo Petro and Brazil's Luiz 'Lula' da Silva. Mexico's Claudia Sheinbaum has been the exception, leveraging anti-cartel security cooperation to minimize tariff impacts. Concurrently, a 20 billion USD currency swap with Argentina and deportation agreements with El Salvador indicate that the US has maintained positive relations with politically aligned governments.

The border emergency, FTO designations and military deployments signal new security priorities that channel greater US resources toward the Americas. This recalibration increases exposure to geopolitical frictions, where military posturing, retaliatory economic measures, and the erosion of diplomatic channels could disrupt trade flows, delay cross-border operations, and complicate compliance.

This pivot also risks weakening US readiness in the Indo-Pacific and Europe, raising concerns among allies which could trigger diplomatic realignments, as partners used to US security guarantees reassess their own postures or seek new alliances. Adversaries could also interpret the shift as a window to expand influence in neglected regions, increasing the risk of external conflicts.

Diplomatically, the hardline posture toward left-leaning administrations and the use of the military to address security concerns weakens cooperation across the region. Short-term goals like imposing tariffs and boosting domestic manufacturing undermine decades of integration under free trade agreements and World Trade Organization norms. This potentially erodes trust among key allies while incentivizing some governments to hedge toward China for infrastructure and financing, amplifying the very influence Washington seeks to counter. The result is a more unpredictable environment for businesses, with greater exposure to shifting trade rules and political instability.

Outlook for 2026: Deeper US engagement, higher regional volatility

US military action against Greenland, Colombia, Cuba or Mexico remains highly unlikely despite continuous threats from the Trump Administration. Although Trump is expected to continue using the threat of kinetic action in Greenland, this is primarily to negotiate with Denmark from a position of relative strength, as the US still strongly prefers a negotiated agreement over direct confrontation. Similarly, the threats of strikes against “cartel” targets in Colombia and Mexico should be understood as a calculated mechanism to secure more favorable deals with these countries' leaders instead of signaling imminent strikes. Cuba is highly unlikely to be directly targeted by US military operations, though the expected reduced support from Venezuela following Maduro's capture is likely to further destabilize the Cuban regime and increase the potential for an unscheduled change of power.

The US focus on the Western Hemisphere is highly likely to deepen for the remainder of Trump's second term, as the administration continues to highlight the region's importance to combat transnational crime and China's influence. A heightened military posture in the Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) area and widespread use of economic coercion tools increase the likelihood of unintended escalations. The region is also at risk of increased volatility as it becomes a “testing ground” for a more unilateral and assertive US foreign policy.

ICE protests and domestic disruption

Public protests against Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have grown as deportations and joint operations expand across the United States. Demonstrations in major US cities and near key border crossings have slowed transport, disrupted staffing at

logistics hubs and increased scrutiny of firms linked to government contracts. The unrest adds a domestic layer of uncertainty to an already tense regional picture, as the administration describes the protests as attempts to obstruct border security. For businesses, the immediate risk is delay, alongside reputational pressure if they work with federal agencies or rely on cross-border labor.

Action

Monitor US foreign policy developments and regional military activity closely. Review potential exposure to US sanctions, tariffs and export controls – especially in countries targeted by the “America First” agenda or those with close ties to China or Russia. Assess the resilience of regional supply chains and trade routes and prepare for potential disruption from shifting trade policies and diplomatic breakdowns. Organizations should evaluate the reputational risks of perceived alignment with either US or Chinese strategic interests, particularly in sectors like energy, telecommunications and logistics.



Elections to watch

Midterm Elections United States – 3 November 2026

The vote will serve both as a referendum on President Trump's controversial policies passed during his second term and a litmus test for resilience within the Democratic Party. The administration's push for redistricting manipulation (gerrymandering), requiring voters to show IDs, and threats to mail-in voting have raised transitional risks. While large-scale and violent unrest remains unlikely, localized disruption, particularly in swing states, is highly likely due to Trump's more assertive style and his slipping approval ratings.

Viewpoints

Weaponizing information: How does digital manipulation shape politics?



Andrew Devereux
Global Risk Intelligence Manager

When 2024 was dubbed the ‘year of elections’, half the global population had the opportunity to cast their vote at the ballot box, with no election more significant or divisive than the battle for the US presidency.

The campaign was contentious enough, with ex-President Donald Trump’s ostentatious style of political campaigning coming up against the more measured style of embattled incumbent President Joe Biden, later replaced by Vice-President Kamala Harris. But the election was affected by a contamination of digital manipulation, impacting both campaigns as disinformation and misinformation infected the political discourse.

Disinformation doesn’t just exist in the digital realm; it’s been a part of politics for decades. Attempting to induce or erode support of a particular party or individual using inaccurate or misleading information has been part of electoral campaigns since antiquity. A campaign by the future Emperor Augustus in ancient Rome falsely accusing his opponent Mark Anthony of being a drunk and a traitor has the same malicious

motivation as alleged Russian interference in the 2016 US election; engineering opinion for political gain. The methods may have evolved but the motives have not.

The evolution of disinformation – from Ancient Rome to AI

An important distinction to note is the difference between disinformation and misinformation; disinformation is the deliberate intent to mislead or manipulate, while sharing misinformation is to inadvertently distribute inaccurate information. And the opportunity to exploit both has exponentially exploded due to the technological advances in the digital world.

Electoral campaigns are essentially a series of microevents to sway the electorate to lend their vote to a favored candidate or party on election day. The 2024 US election campaign was no different. Images were released showing Taylor Swift had endorsed the Trump campaign. Claims were made online that Kamala Harris adopted the Nazi slogan “Strength through Joy”. Joe Biden reportedly called up voters in New Hampshire telling them not to vote in the primary election. Except,

none of this actually happened. Taylor Swift did not endorse Donald Trump – in fact she publicly backed Kamala Harris, who did not use Nazi slogans. The calls received by voters in New Hampshire were artificially generated. It was all false.¹⁻³

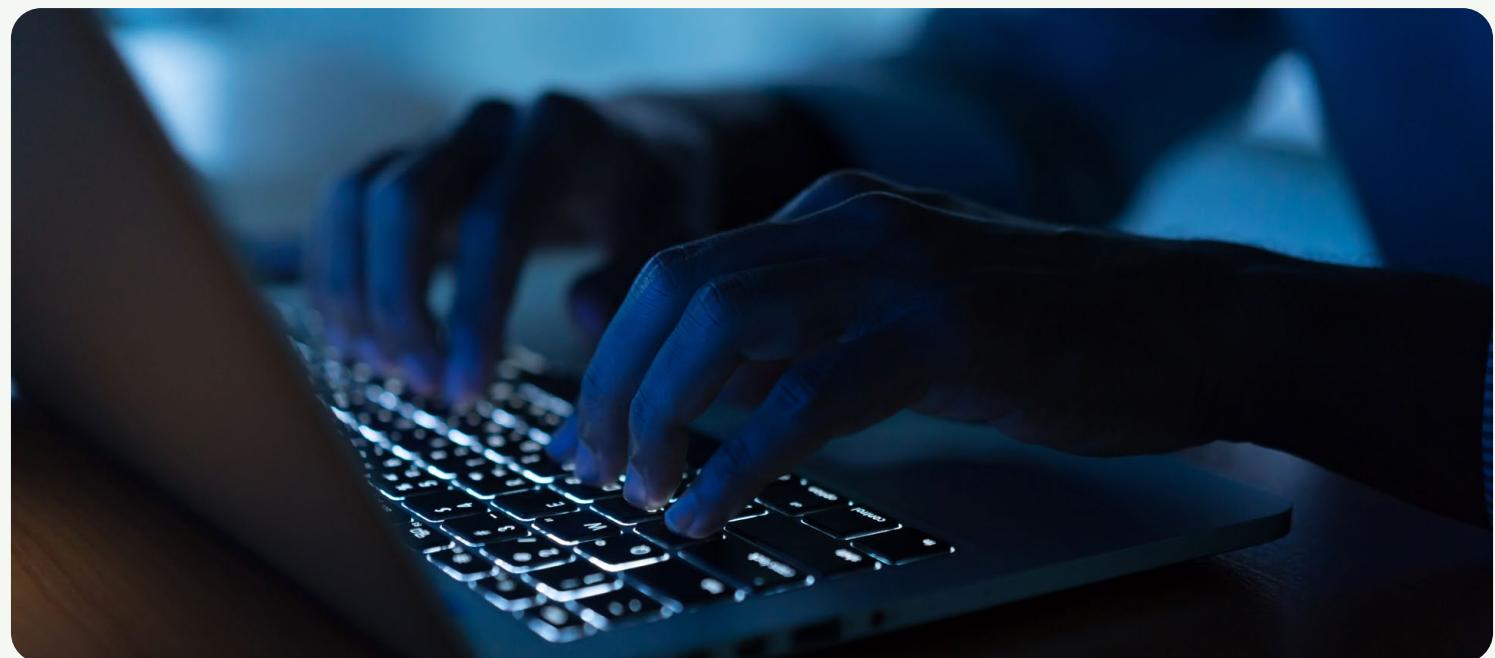
The reasons and rationale for creating, spreading, or amplifying disinformation are myriad. Digital manipulation is a primary way of trying to exert political influence in a malicious manner. If the public believe that your opponent is displaying behavior, opinions, language, ideology, or any other trait that they disagree with, then they are less likely to vote for them. Digital manipulation commonly exists to spread negative, hostile, or derogatory information about an individual or party, as this is easier to make look authentic than a positive story to bolster support. Controversy sells in our digital age, and echo chambers are more likely to latch onto a negative story than a positive one.⁴

One of the contradictions of disinformation is that it often affects those who already share the belief it supports; it energizes those who already agree, rather than converting the opposition.

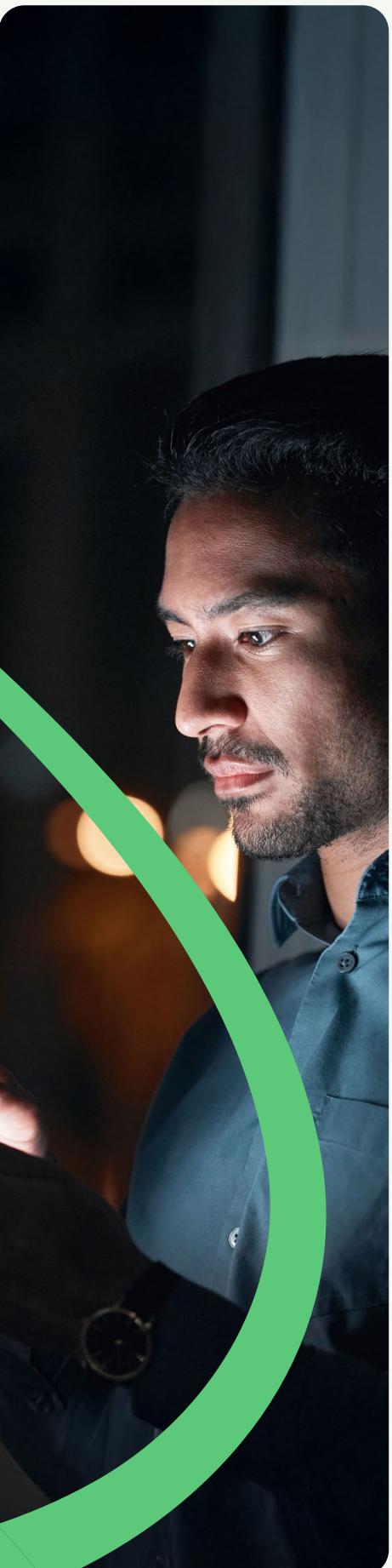
A Republican who believes in gun ownership that sees a Democrat-attributed quote on Second Amendment rights is more likely to believe and share it than someone more neutral. These stories then circulate among like-minded groups, creating a self-perpetuating cycle. This is not to discount its potentially harmful effects, but we are yet to witness a truly campaign-defining falsehood that moves the dial significantly during an election – at least, as far as we know.

The impact of disinformation is almost impossible to calculate. How much impact did the above false narratives have on the 2024 election? We'll never know, as we can't know the results if those stories

were never created and shared. In the battle against disinformation, trying to disprove, remove or dispel misleading content as quickly as possible is paramount. Amplification gives fuel to any narrative and makes it harder to extinguish. And amplification is exactly what social media offers. A vast network of users who can view, like and share a post, leading to hundreds, maybe thousands, of other users viewing the same content. Within an hour, an image, video or audio clip could have been seen millions of times – with next to no verification on authenticity, accuracy, or provenance. Even if the clip is removed, the content debunked and a warning retrospectively attached, the damage may already be done. A falsehood has become fact in the mind of the user and that falsehood is being used to shape political opinion. As George Orwell once said: "Political language [...] is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." Disinformation only amplifies that view.



1. Taylor Swift: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/19/us/politics/trump-taylor-swift-ai-images.html>
2. Kamala Harris: <https://www.reuters.com/fact-check/no-evidence-harris-campaign-used-nazi-era-phrase-slogan-2024-08-27/>
3. Joe Biden: <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/01/22/politics/fake-joe-biden-robocall>
4. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/common-sense-science/202503/why-are-we-captivated-by-bad-news>



The digital battleground – why manipulation matters now

The concern around digital manipulation has increased due to AI making it more accessible than ever. Doctoring audio or video clips used to reside in the domain of a few technology-savvy individuals, but the rise in generative AI means it is now available to a wider market; essentially anyone with an internet connection and a device. And when a tool becomes more accessible, so does volume and adoption. Creating deep fakes of any individual with a public profile has never been easier. Owing to the resources, materials and skillset required, destabilization campaigns used to reside almost exclusively in the hand of state-sponsored actors, but now, individuals with access to the necessary technology and a grudge to bare can create a deep fake with the intention of sabotaging a campaign. The zone is now flooded, and those committed to the conservation of truth, authenticity, and fact must fight against the increasing noise created by digital manipulation.

The hard truth is that these deep fakes are only going to get more realistic, duping people into believing they are engaging with accurate and original content. The volume is only going to increase simultaneously, with the accessibility creating a wider and deeper environment for false content creation. Which brings us back to the original question ‘How does digital manipulation shape politics?’. The answer is that despite the initial barrage, politics has done a fair job of protecting its most important institutions from the malicious intent of digital manipulation, but owing to the

spiraling risks, these guardrails and controls must remain robust. Falsehoods need to be exposed as rapidly as possible, narratives debunked before spreading like wildfire, and inaccuracies corrected before spreading into public opinion. Politics is under fire from digital manipulation and to withstand its integrity, it must protect and expand the principles of truth and fact which will allow its fundamental values of fairness and competition to continue undisturbed.

While the challenges discussed have been at a macro-level, there are a range of issues that governments need to address and quickly, while at a personal level there are steps we can take to counter disinformation.

We can become our own fact-checkers; many fact checking websites now exist which can be used to check the veracity of information. We can be natural skeptics; we should be cautious about claims from sources that we deem as unauthentic or untrustworthy. We should be investigators; although they are improving, there are telltale signs of AI intervention in content, such as imperfections, errors and oddities. And we should be careful about what we share; think before you link, otherwise we are just fanning the flames of disinformation. This is not an issue that is going to disappear soon, and we'll continue to monitor how much strain it puts on free and fair elections. The Midterm elections in 2026 will be a further challenge, as malicious actors try to influence the result. Although the impact of these challenges is yet to be determined, the tools available to disrupt political processes are more accessible than ever, putting pressure on the integrity of political institutions.

Recognizing the warning signs: Understanding the patterns that signal danger



Matthew Carvalho
Regional Security Manager – Americas

Active shooter incidents in the US rose 70% between 2020 and 2025 compared to the previous five years, according to FBI data.¹

Most attacks happen in open spaces, but this is closely followed by commercial settings such as malls, offices, or stores. On average, there are 4.8 casualties (not fatalities) per incident, and 22% meet the definition of a mass shooting – three or more killed.

There is no single “profile” of an active shooter. The only clear trend is gender – 95% are male. An overwhelming majority of adult active shooters have no violent criminal history. Around 25% of active shooters are reported to suffer from mental health disorders, which is about the same as the general population.² This makes it hard to distinguish cause from correlation. Did mental health drive the violence, or did stressors trigger both? The key point: it is neither accurate nor responsible to label anyone with mental health disorders as more likely to become an active shooter.

Both individuals and organizations have a role to play in reducing risk. The most effective strategies combine prevention and response – and some measures overlap.

For individuals, it's about staying alert, reporting concerns and knowing how

to react. For organizations, it means creating systems that make reporting easy, planning for crises and building physical and procedural safeguards. In the center are shared priorities: training and drills that prepare everyone to act when seconds count.



1. <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-releases-2024-active-shooter-incidents-in-the-united-states-report>
2. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>

Scenario: A case study of escalating risk

John was a long-standing employee, known to be quiet, capable, and generally well-liked. But things began to change after he was passed over for a promotion he had been openly vying for. He had been counting on that promotion to ease growing financial pressure at home, and the disappointment only deepened existing marital tensions. At first, the shift was subtle. John started making offhand comments to colleagues, expressing frustration and resentment toward senior management. Over time, those comments escalated into explicit threats, masked as jokes but laced with anger: "One day, they'll regret ignoring me." He began talking openly about purchasing firearms, mentioning a new gun license and showing coworkers photos of his newly acquired weapons on his phone. Some brushed it off as a hobby. Others felt uneasy—but no one reported it. His personal appearance deteriorated. He came to work disheveled, often smelling of alcohol. His behavior became erratic—mood swings, isolation, and frequent absences. Still, the signs were dismissed as stress or burnout. Then, one morning, John didn't show up for work. Instead, he arrived at the building heavily armed.

John experienced several stressors and showed concerning behaviors often linked to active shooter incidents. An FBI study of 160 incidents found most attackers typically had three to four separate stressors in the year before they attacked and displayed four to five observable concerning behaviors.³

Key measures that can make a difference

Anonymous reporting systems

One of the most effective tools for prevention is anonymous reporting. The FBI's study of pre-attack behaviors found that many perpetrators gave warning signs—but these were scattered across different people and settings. On their own, each comment or action seemed harmless. Together, they revealed a pattern.

Having taken part in several active shooter trainings and seminars – including those with survivor testimonies – one thing stood out: the vital importance of anonymous reporting systems. Almost every victim we spoke to recalled an interaction with the perpetrator that seemed harmless at the time. On its own, it didn't look like a threat. But when these accounts are combined with others, only possible through reporting tools, they can reveal a disturbing pattern of behavior that signals someone on a path towards violence.

Situational awareness

Employing situational awareness is critical – not only for recognizing the early signs of violence, but for making quick and effective decisions during an active shooter event. The goal is to maintain a state of relaxed alertness, where you're calmly aware of your surroundings: who is nearby, what they're carrying, and where they've come from. In this state, there's no immediate threat, but you're prepared to react if needed. It should feel natural and sustainable – something you can maintain whenever you're awake, especially in public or crowded spaces. Think

of it like a patrol craft scanning 360° with its radar. Unfortunately, many of us spend too much time looking down at our phones or wearing earbuds in public, which limits awareness.

Since active shooter incidents typically start with little warning and are over within minutes, staying alert can buy you precious time to respond. In fact, situational awareness is arguably the single most effective defense you have against these kinds of incidents.

Active shooter preparedness training

Dwight D. Eisenhower famously said that "In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable", referring to the fact that even though rigid, specific plans often fail once conflict begins, the mental readiness, resource planning and strategic awareness that comes with it is invaluable. Good active shooter training should take an in-depth, holistic approach, with an emphasis on prevention and actions-on specific to your office location.

Why these conversations matter

Active shooter preparedness is a challenging subject, especially in the context of the workplace. Interestingly, the education sector has taken a more proactive stance; many participants I've trained have shared that their children routinely take part in school drills, an unfortunate yet necessary reality in today's environment. As security professionals, we have a duty to initiate these difficult conversations with organizational leadership and advocate for integrating workplace violence preparedness into broader crisis contingency planning.

3. <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/pre-attack-behaviors-of-active-shooters-in-us-2000-2013.pdf>

Three Nations, Three Risk Realities at the FIFA 2026 World Cup



Spencer Haslam
Regional Security Coordinator – Americas



This summer marks a historic moment for the FIFA World Cup. For the first time since 2002, the tournament will be co-hosted, and for the first time ever it will span three countries. With 48 teams playing 105 matches across 16 host cities across the United States, Canada and Mexico, the 2026 edition will be the biggest World Cup in history.

Three distinct risk environments

Previous tournaments generally required travelers to prepare for one set of local risks. Even the joint Japan–South Korea World Cup involved two countries with broadly similar environments. This year is different; organizations will be dealing with three nations that each have their own mix of security concerns, operational challenges and travel restrictions.

Balancing these differing risk profiles, while also tailoring plans to individual travel itineraries, will be essential. A joined-up approach can help protect travelers, local personnel and company assets throughout the tournament period.

The United States: Diverse cities and heightened scrutiny

With eleven host cities and 78 matches, the United States will be the center of the World Cup. Across the country, petty and violent crime remain credible risks, particularly in busy areas, transport hubs and nightlife districts. These concerns increase after dark and outside stadiums, especially during matches involving large or passionate fanbases.

Risk levels vary significantly between host cities. Crime rates, protest activity and local dynamics differ markedly, which means tailoring plans city by city is vital. Downtown stadiums, such as those in Atlanta and Seattle, can bring higher levels of petty crime and scams on matchdays. Politically significant cities on both coasts face increased chances of unrest, and tensions have grown nationwide in recent years due to political rhetoric and immigration enforcement.

Travel disruption risks are also shaped by White House policy. Several nationalities already face travel bans or visa freezes. Iran and Haiti have been under a full ban since June 2025, and a further 18 countries were affected by the visa freeze implemented in January 2026. All travelers, regardless of nationality, should be prepared for additional questioning at the border. Steps such as avoiding clothing that might be misinterpreted as political or

extremist, and ensuring documents are entirely in order can help minimize delays or denial of entry.

Organizations should remain adaptable to shifting local conditions. Tools like Healix's City Profiles can help teams avoid higher risk neighborhoods, understand unrest flashpoints and identify reliable transport and medical facilities.

Canada: Safer but not without challenges

Canada will host 13 matches across Toronto and Vancouver. Both cities carry risks around petty crime, unrest and crowded matchday environments, even though Canada's overall security landscape is lower risk than its neighbors. It is still important that organizations avoid becoming complacent, as incidents near stadiums or within fan zones can develop quickly.

Operational considerations will be particularly important. Both Canadian stadiums are close to their city centers, so road closures and matchday congestion are likely to affect a larger number of business itineraries. Demand for Canadian matchdays is also expected to rise due to US travel restrictions,

including interest from fans who may not have tickets but plan to join fan zones and public screenings.

Canada's healthcare system is another factor for organizations to consider. Long wait times for non urgent treatment are common, and private healthcare options are limited. Travelers may need to factor in potential delays if they require medical attention during their visit.

Mexico: Embedded risks and city specific pressures

Mexico's three host cities will stage 13 matches. Here, the main risks facing fans and business travelers are rooted in the country's general security environment rather than the World Cup itself. Violent crime rates are higher than in the United States or Canada, and foreign nationals can be targeted by petty criminals who perceive them as wealthy.

Guadalajara carries the highest crime risk of the Mexican host cities due to ongoing, though limited, cartel activity. While cartels are very unlikely to target visitors during the tournament, particularly as a result of the World Cup's heightened security, incidental violence remains a concern in certain areas. Mexico

City, on the other hand, has the highest risk of unrest, driven by activists criticizing government spending on the World Cup, at the expense of other projects.

Medical risks in Mexico are also more pronounced. Public hospitals and ambulance services are often lower quality, and accessing higher standard private care can be costly and logistically challenging.

Taking a tailored, location specific approach

Major sporting events always bring increased demand for transport and accommodation, heightened security presence, fan related violence and widespread road closures. However, the 2026 World Cup's tri nation format means risk levels vary significantly between countries and even between cities within the same country.

A security plan for Mexico City will look very different from one designed for Toronto or Los Angeles. The key for organizations is to adapt their approach to each destination, ensuring that personnel are well prepared for the unique environment they will encounter.



1. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/common-sense-science/202503/why-are-we-captivated-by-bad-news>

Summary

The Americas entered 2026 facing a more complex and uncertain security landscape, shaped by intertwined political shocks and persistent criminal threats. The region closed the year under heightened pressure, with governments and international actors adjusting rapidly to events that tested institutional resilience and regional stability.

In Venezuela, the US raid that captured President Nicolás Maduro marked a dramatic turning point. The operation triggered a national state of emergency and a rapid deterioration of security conditions, which have since stabilized. Despite the raid, the ruling party retained control over state institutions, with Interim President Delcy Rodríguez shaping post-Maduro continuity. While further US kinetic action is unlikely, it remains possible should Rodríguez resist Washington's demands on oil and counter-narcotics cooperation. Early signs, however, suggest a willingness in Caracas to engage selectively with US priorities.

Guatemala faced its most acute security crisis in years, highlighting how organized criminality remains the most significant risk across Latin America for global organizations. Coordinated prison riots led by Barrio 18 and subsequent attacks on police, prompted President Bernardo Arévalo to declare a nationwide state of emergency. The move expanded detention and search powers, reflecting both the scale of the threat and the limited tools available to the state in confronting deeply entrenched criminal networks.

Beyond the Americas, tensions between the United States and Europe added further strain to the international environment. President Trump intensified rhetoric around US ambitions to acquire Greenland, announcing that he reached a "framework of a future deal" following a meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte on January 21st. The announcement temporarily de-escalated the situation by suspending US tariff threats against several European states. While details remain vague, initial reports suggest that it would largely follow the 1951 Defense of Greenland Agreement, which authorized the US to establish, operate, and expand military bases in Greenland. Even with a potential deal under discussion, the episode has strained US-European relations and highlighted growing transatlantic friction.

Advice for organizations:

In this context, organizations should continue to regularly review and update regional and operational risk assessments to identify early warning signs of deteriorating security conditions. Prioritize staff training on personal security, crisis response, and communication protocols to ensure teams can act decisively during periods of heightened uncertainty. Clear organizational risk tolerance levels and escalation thresholds are essential to support timely and confident decision-making. Ensure intelligence functions maintain continuous monitoring of geopolitical, criminal, and regulatory developments, making insights accessible across all levels of the organization. Finally, strengthening journey management, incident reporting, and contingency planning will help ensure operational resilience amid sudden disruptions or the rapid expansion of emergency measures.

The background image is an aerial photograph of a forest fire. The flames are bright orange and red, moving through the trees. Thick, white smoke billows from the fire, contrasting with the dark, charred remains of the forest. The fire appears to be spreading across a hillside.

Resources

Key Dates and Events

2026

New Year's Day January 1 st Transport congestion, reduced staffing, delayed services.	Anniversary of the 2021 US Capitol attack (US) January 6 th Political rallies, counter-protests, heightened security in Washington DC and some state capitals.	Martin Luther King Jr. Day (US) January 19 th Marches and civil-rights rallies, large crowds in major cities.	Women's March Walkout January 20 th Large-scale feminist, reproductive-rights and civil-rights demonstrations.	Women's March Anniversary January 21 st Feminist, reproductive-rights, and broader civil-rights protests.	Black History Month Entire Month Advocacy events, rallies tied to racial justice and education.	General Election (Costa Rica) February 1 st Political risk amid investigation of incumbent, possible run-off on April 5 th .	Super Bowl LX – San Francisco Bay Area (US) February 8 th Travel disruption near Levi's Stadium, airport delays (SFO/SJC).	March for Our Lives anniversary (US) March 24 th Gun-violence prevention demonstrations and remembrance events.
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JANUARY

World Environment Day June 5 th Environmental protests, climate activism, mass demonstrations in urban centers.	Presidential Election (Colombia) May 31 st Possible run-off on June 21 st .	Memorial Day (US) May 25 th Large crowds, occasional military-policy protests.	Anniversary of George Floyd's death (US) May 25 th Black Lives Matter-related protests, vigils, and marches. Elevated risk window spans several days.	Earth Day April 22 nd Environmental protests and climate activism.	General Election (Peru) April 12 th Heightened security and political risks following fatal Gen Z protests in 2025. Possible run-off on June 7 th .	Anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. (US) April 4 th Vigils, civil-rights protests, and racial-justice demonstrations.	Federal Budget Announcements (Canada) Late March Labor, indigenous and social-policy protests, rare snap-election risk.	General Congressional Election (Colombia) March 8 th Flashpoint for politically driven protests and post-election unrest.
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JUNE

Pride Month and LGBTQ+ Rights Observances Entire Month Parades and rallies, counter-protests possible. Pride Day: June 28 th .	US Supreme Court Decision Period (US) Late June Likelihood of spontaneous protests tied to abortion, gun rights, civil liberties.	FIFA World Cup 2026 (Canada, Mexico, US) June – July Major urban disruption, protest activity, transport strain.	Juneteenth (US) June 19 th Large-scale celebrations and rallies in many urban centers.	Independence Day (US) July 4 th Political protests alongside celebrations, large crowds and congestion.	Emancipation Day (Caribbean) August 1 st Parades and cultural events, social-justice demonstrations.	General Election (Haiti) August 30 th (Tentative) Highly volatile security environment, likely postponement.	Labor Day (US) September 7 th Labor-union rallies and worker-rights demonstrations.	81st United Nations General Assembly in New York City September 8 th – 29 th Heightened security and street closures; protests on climate and human rights.
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MAY

Christmas Day December 25 th Transport congestion, reduced staffing, delayed services.	G20 Miami Summit (US) December 14 th – 15 th Restricted movement, large-scale protests, airspace and perimeter security.	International Human Rights Day December 10 th Flashpoint for protests and activism, mass demonstrations in urban centers.	Hanukkah December 4 th – 12 th	Thanksgiving (US) November 26 th Large crowds and travel surge.	Midterm and Gubernatorial Elections (US) November 3 rd Referendum on Trump's domestic and foreign policies.	Quebec General Election (Canada) October 5 th	General election and Gubernatorial Elections (Brazil) October 4 th First presidential vote since Bolsonaro alleged coup plot, possible run-off October 25 th .
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DECEMBER

NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
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NOVEMBER

Risk Map: Americas





You've seen the risks. Now shape the response.

This report has shown how risks are evolving faster, hitting harder and overlapping more than ever. But knowing the risks isn't enough. What matters is what we do next.

Organizations that stay ahead build risk into everyday decisions. They test assumptions. And they make sure the right people have the right information at the right time.

To find out how Healix can help you, contact us.

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This report is intended for informational purposes only. The insights and analysis provided are based on data available at the time of publication. For up-to-date intelligence and tailored guidance, please contact us directly.