Focused Deterrence Strategy for Reducing Domestic Violence in Zacatecas

Since February 2025, the Focused Deterrence Strategy has been implemented in the municipalities of Zacatecas and Guadalupe to reduce **domestic violence**, the **most frequent crime** in the state. The Strategy **intervenes before violence escalates**, with a **response proportional to the level of risk** in each case. To this end, it **applies the law and offers support alternatives**, while it **protects victims.**

The initiative has operated through **coordination** among the Attorney General's Office of the State of Zacatecas, the State Public Security Secretariat, the public security institutions of the municipalities of Zacatecas and Guadalupe, the State Health Secretariat, and the State Secretariat for Women.

After just over a year of operation, the Strategy presents the following results:

1 **No victim assisted by the Strategy was a victim of femicide**

The Strategy identified and assisted **12 femicide-risk cases**. In all of them, institutional intervention halted the escalation of violence and ensured the victims' safety[1].

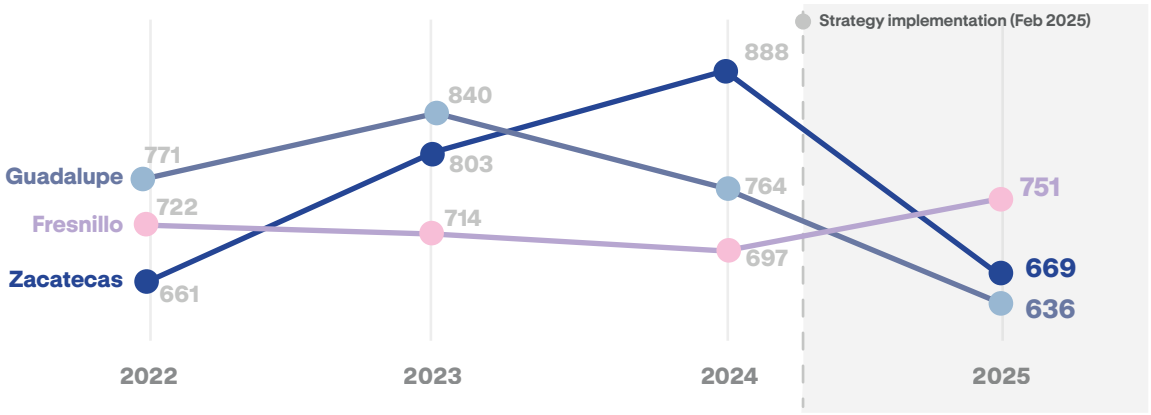
2 **Less than 3% recidivism**

The Strategy recorded only **12** reoffenders among the **456** cases handled, a proportion far **below the recidivism[2] rates commonly observed internationally**, which range from 20% to 50%.

3 **Domestic violence declined for the first time in four years**

Between 2022 and 2024, domestic violence in Zacatecas and Guadalupe followed an upward trend. In 2025, with the Strategy underway, that trajectory changed: both **municipalities recorded their lowest levels in four years.** By contrast, Fresnillo, where the Strategy was not yet operating, recorded an increase.

Figure 1. Incidence of domestic violence cases[3]



[1]The result corresponds to the 12 critical-risk (possible femicide) cases identified and assisted by the Strategy through the Case Registry; none resulted in femicide.
[2]In the Strategy, recidivism is considered to occur when a person added to the Case Registry generates a new domestic violence event: an emergency call, a police report, or an investigation file. The figure covers the period from July 2025 to June 2026.
[3]Open data from the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System.

LABCO Innovación en Políticas Públicas · Zacatecas Ayuntamiento 2024 - 2027 · Secretaría de Seguridad Pública · FGJE Zacatecas · Zacatecas Gobierno del Estado 2021-2027 · Fresnillo Ayuntamiento 2024 - 2027 · Ayuntamiento de Guadalupe 2024 | 2027 · European Union

Cases that reflect the results

Case 1. Acting in time and in coordination prevented a possible femicide

When institutions share information and coordinate their actions, the response is fast and saves lives.

The aggressor was the victim's partner; she depended on him economically and had few options to reach safety. In the early morning he threatened to kill her with a bladed weapon, referring to a recent femicide in her community. These elements constituted a critical risk.

Inter-agency coordination and immediate response. In a community marked by a recent femicide, a woman filed a report in the early morning with the Municipal Police to state that her partner had threatened to repeat what had happened in that case. The severity of the threat, together with that precedent, triggered an immediate response: through direct communication channels, the Municipal Police alerted the Attorney General's Office, and that same night the two coordinated to locate and arrest the aggressor, who was hiding. The victim filed a formal complaint, and protective and precautionary measures were issued that made it possible to mitigate the risk.

Linkage with specialized services. The support did not end there. Because the victim depended economically on the aggressor, the Municipal Police guided her toward the agencies that could help her and, thanks to that guidance, she was able to find a job that allowed her to support herself on her own. Today she lives with her family, has work, and the aggressor remains separated from her under the measures issued. The direct coordination between institutions shortened response times at a critical moment and sustained the support until the victim regained her safety and autonomy.

Case 2. Classifying the risk saved a mother and her two children from an armed aggressor

Each domestic violence case carries a different level of risk and classifying it in time makes it possible to respond in proportion to its severity.

The aggressor is a foreign national with military training and ties to organized crime, with access to weapons and no roots in the state. He exerted physical and psychological violence against the victim, also a foreign national, and threatened both her and her children with a bladed weapon. This constituted a critical risk of vicarious violence, abduction of the children, and potential femicide.

Risk classification and a response matching its severity. The Attorney General's Office identified that a mother and her two children were in a situation of critical risk from the armed aggressor. That assessment activated the High-Risk Victims Mechanism, and the Investigative Police launched the operation in less than twenty-four hours. The first action was to secure the two children, who were under the aggressor's control in precarious conditions, and reunite them with the mother, who was already under protection. The investigation led to an arrest warrant and to the aggressor's detention.

Referral and follow-up with support networks. Today the victim and her children are safe; they were referred to their support networks in another state, and since then there has been no known act of harassment or recidivism. Intervening in time and with the actions appropriate to the critical risk level prevented the situation from ending in a femicide or in the abduction of the children.

Case 3. A deterrent message halted the escalation of violence

Without waiting for the victim to file a complaint, a timely deterrent warning can contain violence.

The aggressor was unemployed and depended economically on the victim. He displayed pathological jealousy and exerted psychological and sexual violence through demeaning comments and controlling behavior. Although no physical violence had been recorded, these elements constituted a risk that had to be addressed before it escalated.

Identification of the aggressor and a focused warning. Witness interviews documented that the victim was being subjected to violence. Based on this information, the Investigative Police of the Attorney General's Office individualized the aggressor and, together with the Public Prosecutor, informed him of the legal consequences of reoffending. As the victim was hesitant to file a formal complaint, the team placed an official record of the case on file and activated the support of her family network, without making protection conditional on filing an immediate complaint.

Support and follow-up with support networks. The victim filed a formal complaint, and the aggressor was bound over for trial and placed under psychoeducational treatment. Since then no new acts of violence or unwanted contact have been recorded, and the case remains under follow-up. Intervening in time, with inter-agency coordination and the support of close networks, contained the violence and protected the victim before the risk increased.

What makes these results possible?

These results are possible because the Strategy starts from the following premise: **violence is not evenly distributed,** and a small group of aggressors accounts for a large share of the most serious cases. For this reason, instead of treating all cases in the same way, it identifies the risk level of each one and **responds in a differentiated manner:** with immediate deactivation when the risk is critical, or with follow-up and deterrence when it is not, protecting victims in both cases.

The initiative operates in **three steps.** First, it detects cases through emergency calls, police reports, complaints, health services, or victim support services. Then, it **adds them to the Case Registry,** where the Attorney General's Office and the police classify the risk as critical (possible femicide) or non-critical (high or medium risk). Finally, that classification defines the response: for critical risk, immediate deactivation of the aggressor and reinforced protection for the victim; for non-critical risk, deterrent communication, referral of the aggressor, and follow-up with the victim.

1. CASE DETECTION

- Emergency calls
- Confirmed police reports
- Complaints
- Health services
- Victim support services

2. CASE REGISTRY

Critical risk
Possible femicide

Non-critical risk
High or medium risk

3. CASE MANAGEMENT

Critical

Immediate deactivation of aggressors and reinforced protection of victims.

Non-critical

Deterrent communication and referral of aggressors, and attention to victims.

The following sections present the mechanisms that have made the Strategy's operation possible.

Case Registry

The Case Registry is an inter-agency tool shared between the Attorney General's Office and the police that **consolidates the information on each aggressor detected.** At the operational level, the Case Registry makes it possible to:

- Provide inter-agency follow-up on each aggressor, so that an institution other than the one that detected the case can continue handling it.
- Prioritize institutional resources according to the risk level and the trajectory of the case.
- Identify recidivism, even when the new act of violence is reported to an institution other than the one that handled the original case.

High-Risk Victims Mechanism (VAR)

The VAR is the **priority institutional response for critical-risk cases.** Its objective is to **accelerate the investigation and prosecution** of the case in order to protect the victim and deactivate the aggressor. Through the VAR Mechanism, the Attorney General's Office:

- Prioritizes investigative actions and the prompt performance of any necessary forensic examinations.
- Seeks to bring the case before a judge within no more than 72 hours.
- Seeks to obtain a precautionary measure of pretrial detention for the aggressor.
- Seeks a custodial sentence.

The VAR is complemented by **proactive surveillance and investigation** by the police, aimed at gathering evidence that strengthens the activation of the Mechanism itself, as well as by **protective measures for the victim.**

Proactive police monitoring and deterrent communication

When a case is classified as non-critical risk, the Strategy activates proactive police monitoring, a scheme with four components:

1. **Deterrent communication.** Communicate to aggressors the legal and social consequences of domestic violence, the support alternatives available, and the priority attention that institutions provide.
2. **Surveillance of aggressors.** Conduct police visits to verify that the violence has ceased and to detect recidivism or breaches of protective or precautionary measures.
3. **Follow-up and attention to victims.** Accompany victims in their access to specialized services.
4. **Referral of aggressors.** Offer support alternatives, such as psychoeducational treatment, mental health care, and addiction treatment. To this end, the police rely on the *Catalogue of alternatives*, the directory of specialized services for referrals.

To date, **no case** on the Case Registry is left without **proactive police monitoring,** even when there is no formal complaint, in order to prevent new acts of violence.

This publication has been funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of LAB-CO and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Funded by the European Union