

INTRODUCTION

Colombia is the country with the second-highest number of victims of antipersonnel mines (APMs) in the world, resulting from more than five decades of conflict (ICBL-CMC 10/11/2021; EE 04/04/2021). In 2016, the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) signed the Peace Agreement, which established guidelines for the identification of mined areas and an ambitious humanitarian demining programme. Since then, there has been a notable decline in APM and explosive remnants of war (ERW) events in the country (UNMAS 02/2022).

Despite the decline, there were still at least 4,300 APM and ERW events between 2016–2021 (Descontamina Colombia 28/11/2021 accessed 18/04/2022). In 2020, Colombia had the fourth-highest number of improvised landmine casualties in the world (ICBL-CMC 12/11/2020; LCMM 11/2021). 479,000 people in need of humanitarian assistance live in areas contaminated by APMs or ERW (OCHA 22/02/2022).

Although the number of events involving APMs and ERW has been steadily decreasing, the number of victims has been increasing since 2016 (UNMAS 02/2022). Since the FARC-EP's demobilisation, the proportion of civilian APM and ERW victims has also increased (Descontamina Colombia 28/11/2021 accessed 18/04/2022). New disputes between different armed groups across Colombia put conflict-affected areas at risk of recontamination with APMs and ERW.

APM and ERW events have a major impact on the lives of victims. When they do not lead to death, they can leave long-term physical and mental health consequences, aggravated by the remoteness of hospitals from the population centres where accidents often occur. Nearly two-fifths of the victims are children; the long-term impacts on them are even more noticeable because of the disruption to their life projects.

An increase in APM events not only affects those wounded and killed but entire communities as well, restricting people's mobility and safe access to livelihood activities. APM and ERW presence also limits humanitarian access to communities in contaminated areas, restricting people's access to humanitarian aid.

Key findings

- Since the signing of the Peace Agreement in Colombia in 2016, the number of events involving APMs and ERW in the country has decreased. On the other hand, the number of casualties and the proportion of civilian casualties have increased.
- The subregions most affected by APMs and ERW are the Pacific, the northern Amazon, those along the Colombian-Venezuelan border, Urabá, and Bajo Cauca.
- APM and ERW events significantly affect survivors and the access of their families and communities to livelihoods, social and cultural areas, schools, and health centres, which can lead to confinement and displacement. Between 2016 and 2021, more than 25,000 people were confined due to the presence of APMs and ERW.
- 18 out of every 100 APM and ERW victims in Colombia are children or adolescents. The contamination of roads to schools or parks affects their activities and puts them at risk.

About this report

Aim: this report analyses events involving APMs and ERW in Colombia since the signing of the Peace Agreement with the FARC-EP in 2016 and their humanitarian impact. It also highlights the existing and growing risk of casualties from APMs and ERW.

Methodology: this report relied on the databases of Colombia's Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH) and the Directorate for Comprehensive Action against Antipersonnel Mines (Descontamina Colombia), the Colombian national mine action authority. ACAPS analysed the data to observe regional trends, effects on humanitarian needs, and victim and survivor profiles, then triangulated the information with reports from official entities, NGOs, press reports, interviews with humanitarian workers, and assessments done by the MIRE Consortium.

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KEY MESSAGES

- **The number of APM and ERW event victims has increased, as has the proportion of civilian casualties** (Descontamina Colombia 28/11/2021 accessed 18/04/2022). Potential reasons include the arrival in contaminated regions of new migrant or refugee populations unaware of the risks, as well as the recent use of APMs in areas already declared mine-free.
- The increase in APM and ERW casualties and in the proportion of civilian casualties generates the need to **strengthen mine and ERW risk education**, not only in areas with a historical presence of APMs and ERW but also in uncontaminated areas with disputes between armed groups (MIRE 04/03/2022 and 26/01/2022).
- Although indigenous people and Afro-Colombians make up 11.1% of Colombia's population, **they made up 28.5% of all APM and ERW victims in 2021**.
- The presence of APMs and ERW prevents access to a community's social and cultural areas, water sources, schools, and health centres. In many cases, it also prevents safe access to crops or income-generating activities. Weapon contamination affects people's livelihoods and daily activities, which can lead to confinement or displacement.
- Survivors' access to psychosocial and psychological support is difficult, given the concentration of medical facilities and health specialists in urban centres, far from the main areas where accidents occur. **APM and ERW accidents often have long-term effects on the mental and physical health of the survivors. Lack of access to healthcare has a re-victimising effect.**

- Armed groups use APMs or ERW along strategic routes or corridors to delay the advance of rivals, protect crops from eradication, or prevent communities from using their land.
- **Parts of Colombia with active disputes between armed groups could be at risk of increasing levels of APM and ERW events.** The mere presence of an armed group does not necessarily indicate the risk of APM use, but APMs and ERW are often used in areas where armed groups are fighting for territorial control. Areas of concern include Putumayo, southern Bolivar, and Vichada (ACAPS 31/03/2022; El Tiempo 23/03/2021; El Colombiano 24/12/2021; La Silla Vacía 27/07/2021).

INFORMATION AVAILABLE AND INFORMATION GAPS

There are limited attempts to systematically measure the number and impact of APM and ERW events in Colombia. There is also likely an underreporting of the number of events and victims. One reason is they generally occur in isolated locations far from the state agencies and health facilities to which they should be reported (Descontamina Colombia accessed 10/03/2022). Another is that people who report events often do not clearly distinguish between APM and UXO. Some events and accidents also go unreported for fear of reprisals by armed groups (CNMH 26/04/2017).

This report is primarily based on data collected by Descontamina Colombia, the Colombian national mine action authority attached to the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, which reports to the Presidency of the Republic of Colombia. Descontamina collects, systematises, and centralises all information related to APMs and ERW received by the Colombian State from state officials and civil society organisations. This database is the most complete source in Colombia on the subject and includes data systematically collected since 2001 from reports since 1990.

There are some limitations with the data. For example, it does not include the nationalities of victims, making it impossible to verify the hypothesis gathered in some interviews that many accidents involve Venezuelan citizens and refugees. There is also no systematic record of what happens to survivors after an accident, making it difficult to understand the full extent of their health needs or their return to the labour market. Other organisations collect this information through qualitative methods.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) collects information on explosive ordnance events, and their figures are often higher than those reported by Descontamina (ICRC 08/07/2021). Their dataset is not publicly available, so this report uses ICRC analysis but not their data.

The CNMH is an independent state organism that conducts research and educational activities on the conflict in Colombia (CNMH accessed 10/03/2022).

The CNMH seeks to construct narratives that contribute to understanding victimisation processes, not to systematically track events (CNMH 14/12/2013). The MIRE Consortium, within the assessments of the emergencies it attends, also includes relevant information on the presence of APMs and ERW (MIRE accessed 11/05/2022). In this report, MIRE and CNMH reports were used to understand the humanitarian impacts of the use of APMs and ERW.

One of the main information gaps on this issue is that it is difficult to link APM and ERW events to secondary impacts, such as displacement and confinement (KII 12/02/2022). Most datasets in Colombia record APM and ERW accidents as individual matters (focusing on the individual injured or killed) without exploring consequences within the community. Existing data also does not allow for a comprehensive understanding of the varying effects of APM and ERW events on different households.

Based on existing gender norms and imbalance in care work, women presumably take on the burden of additional care work after an event, but there is very little quantitative data to support this assumption. The effects of an APM or ERW accident are also varied and affected by different conditions (such as gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity), but there is little data to understand these dynamics.

DEFINITIONS

These definitions are based on UNMAS (02/2019), UN (accessed 19/04/2022), CNMH (26/04/2017), and Descontamina Colombia (03/2012):

- **Abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO):** unused ordnance that has been dumped or left behind by an armed party to a conflict and is no longer under their control.
- **Accident:** an event caused by APMs or ERW that causes physical or psychological harm to one or more people.
- **Antipersonnel mine (APM):** mine designed to explode from the presence, proximity, or contact of a person and that would incapacitate, injure, or kill one or more people. In the Colombian context, the term APM describes all explosive devices activated by the victim.
- **Clearance:** tasks or actions that ensure the safe removal or destruction of all explosive ordnance in a specified area to a specified depth or other agreed parameters as stipulated by the national mine action authority or designated tasking authority.
- **Contaminated area:** an area known or suspected to contain explosive ordnance.
- **Event:** collective term for accidents and incidents caused by APMs and ERW.
- **Explosive remnants of war: (ERW)** collective term for UXO and AXO. In Colombia, while authorities distinguish between UXO and AXO, databases simply use UXO (or MUSE in Spanish) as a catch-all term. Accordingly, this report uses ERW to refer to MUSE.

- **Incident:** an event related to APMs or ERW that has the potential to lead to an accident but does not result in harm to any person.
- **Survivor:** a person who survived an accident with an APM or ERW.
- **Unexploded ordnance (UXO):** ordnance that has been primed and prepared for use or that has been used but for some reason (usually malfunction), has not yet exploded and still poses a risk of detonation.
- **Victim:** a person injured or killed by an APM or ERW explosion. Although APMs and ERW can affect people in other ways, such as through displacement or confinement, in Colombia, only injured or killed people are recognised as APM or ERW victims.

International humanitarian law prohibits APM use as it prohibits the use of any weapon that cannot distinguish between members of armed groups and civilians (ICRC 03/12/1997).

IMPACT ON SPECIFIC GROUPS

Children

APM and ERW events usually affect children and adolescents who may be attracted to artefacts (bullets, grenades, or mortars) that remain along or on the roads they use (ICBF accessed 01/03/2022). Testimonies collected by the CNMH show that some adolescents consider the possession of ERW artefacts as a symbol of power (CNMH 26/04/2017).

The proportion of child APM and ERW victims has increased over the last decade. In 2010, six in 100 victims were children. By 2021, this number had tripled to 18 in 100. 84% of child APM and ERW victims (at least 84 children) between 2016–2021 were in Antioquia, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, Norte de Santander, and Valle del Cauca, where there are open disputes between armed groups (Descontamina Colombia 31/01/2022 accessed 19/04/2022).

APM and ERW presence also indirectly affects children. As APMs and ERW are often located along roads to ensure that the population only travels through areas under the surveillance of armed groups, children are at greater risk since slight deviations from the path can lead to explosions (CNMH 26/04/2017). Between 2016–2021, at least five children were reported to have been playing when they experienced an APM or ERW event (Descontamina Colombia 31/01/2022). APMs and ERW take away safe spaces for recreation and put children at risk during their everyday activities (Coalico 06/2020; KII 09/03/2022). They also affect access to education because armed groups have mined schools or their surrounding areas. Clashes between armed groups also leave ERW near schools that children can unintentionally set off (Coalico 12/2021; KII 08/03/2022).

Indigenous people and Afro-Colombians

Although indigenous people and Afro-Colombians only make up 11.1% of Colombia's population, they made up 28.5% of all APM and ERW victims in 2021 (UNMAS 02/2022; Colombian Ministry of Health and Social Protection accessed 09/03/2022). Indigenous people and Afro-Colombians generally live in areas with some autonomy that are administered collectively and in accordance with their traditions and customs (Humboldt Institute accessed 19/04/2022). Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations have expelled armed groups from their lands and challenged their presence. As a result, armed groups have systematically attacked them with the goal of weakening their collective organisation and expanding onto their lands (Hernández Delgado 06/2006; HRW 10/02/2021). Armed groups use APMs to target or confine communities, gain control over their activities, and create an overall sense of instability (CNMH 26/04/2017).

Contamination damages the environment and is a challenge to conservation, meaning APM and ERW presence not only has a direct impact on indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities but also has an indirect impact on the environment. It also undermines the social and cultural fabric built to maintain the harmonious relationship of these communities with the ecosystem (OCHA 22/02/2022).

Women

Although most APM and ERW victims between 2016–2021 were men (93.4%), the indirect effects on women were severe. Women and girls play a fundamental role in Colombian society as caregivers, and the toll of caring for survivors often falls on them. In Colombia, women spend, on average, 7.1 hours a day on care work in the home, which is 78.4% of all care work in the country annually (Quanta Cuidado y Género accessed 09/03/2022). In rural areas, women take on 92.5% of care work (La Javeriana 22/09/2021). Any additional care work needed by survivors of APM and ERW events will presumably fall primarily on women, who will also have to worry about income generation given the difficulties survivors face reintegrating into the labour market and the added cost of care (UNMAS 02/2022).

HUMANITARIAN IMPACTS

Limitations to mobility, confinement, and displacement

APM and ERW presence affects not only individuals but also entire communities (ICRC 02/2021). Between 2016–2021, APM and ERW presence confined at least 25,100 people in 18 communities. Since the Peace Agreement with the FARC-EP, confinement related to APM and ERW presence has markedly increased. Between 2020–2021, related incidents increased by 296% (ACAPS 22/02/2022; OCHA accessed 08/03/2022).

According to OCHA's definition, forced confinement is the restriction a population's mobility and access to at least three basic services or goods over a period of at least one week. Restrictions that last under a week are considered a restriction on mobility (OCHA 27/04/2015; ACAPS 18/02/2022).

Limitations to mobility limit the access of citizens to many regular goods and services, including protection mechanisms. When prolonged, access to food, livelihoods (such as crops or livestock), education, or health is limited. People are also limited in their communication with humanitarian agencies or government authorities, which delays reporting. As a result, armed groups sometimes use APMs for social control, preventing community members from denouncing their activities or moving to safer places (CNMH 26/04/2017; InSight Crime 20/10/2020).

For example, in July 2021, 2,400 indigenous people from the Embera Eyabidá community (located between Dabeiba, Frontino, and Murindó, Antioquia) were confined because from 2020 until then, ten members of their community had been killed by the explosion of APMs in their territory (El Espectador 15/07/2021; OCHA Monitor accessed 11/05/2022). During confinement (which for some communities lasted for months), people had no access to their crops, and humanitarian access was restricted, as humanitarian workers could only reach these communities by air (El Colombiano 30/09/2021; Blu Radio 01/10/2021).

APM and ERW presence is also associated with an increase in displacement. It is estimated that for every APM or ERW event recorded between 2006–2014 in the country, there were 41 more people displaced during this year (CNMH 26/04/2017). APM and ERW events affect displacement directly and indirectly. The direct impact is the decision made by individuals or families to move because APM or ERW events have victimised people or reduced livelihoods (CNMH 26/04/2017). For example, around 970 members of the Embera Eyabidá community were displaced in September 2021, following months of confinement as the presence of APMs prevented them from accessing their crops and restricted their access to basic goods (Infobae 29/09/2021; El Espectador 29/09/2021).

The indirect impact is on people's ability to move safely. Armed groups sometimes install APMs along displacement routes, normally during fighting, to avoid pursuit by other armed groups. Such a situation puts people displaced for other reasons (often conflict but not directly linked to APM or ERW presence) in dangerous conditions (CNMH 26/04/2017). In these cases, communities are not necessarily displaced because of the presence of APMs or ERW, but the fact that they are on the roads may hinder both their fleeing and the return process. This makes the presence of APMs and ERW an aggravating factor in crises because they prolong displacement. One such case occurred in Argelia, Cauca, in August 2021, when more than 570 people were displaced by clashes between armed groups but were unable to return after the fighting ended because these groups used APMs (RNC 02/08/2021; W Radio 04/08/2021).

Livelihoods

Between 2017–2021, nearly 40% of APM and ERW victims were struck while engaged in livelihood activities, including farming, hunting, fishing, the collection of food, water, or wood, and related travelling along roads (Descontamina Colombia 31/01/2022). 98% of APM and ERW events between 2016–2021 occurred in rural areas. The eight municipalities most affected by APMs and ERW in 2021 were Argelia (Cauca), Tumaco (Nariño), Istmina, Medio Baudó, and Murindó (Chocó), Sardinata and Tibú (Norte de Santander), and Buenaventura (Valle del Cauca) (UNMAS 02/2022). These municipalities rely primarily on agriculture, fishing, and livestock farming. APM and ERW presence poses a direct risk to the livelihoods of residents. Aside from the direct effects on agricultural production, the contamination of roads used to transport products also increases costs and reduces farmers' incomes (Unianandes 05/2011; ICRC 02/11/2009).

After an event, regardless of whether or not there were casualties, communities often pause some of their activities out of fear of further events, causing them to lose some of their livelihoods (MIRE 25/02/2022 a). Agriculture, the collection of water, and herding are among the most affected activities (ICRC 02/11/2009; Comisión de la Verdad 10/07/2019). When armed groups announce mining an area, the effects are similar even if no event occurs (HRW 24/07/2007; KII 08/03/2022).

Direct victims of APMs and ERW also face severe livelihood consequences. Approximately half of all survivors are left with long-term consequences, such as hearing loss, sight loss, or amputation, limiting their subsequent re-entry into the labour market (El País 27/04/2017; CNMH 26/04/2017). As a result, victims often become unable to carry out various activities or be employed in certain sectors. In some cases, stigma related to the physical consequences of events also prevents their employability (CNMH 26/04/2017). As at 30 September 2018, 70% of APM and ERW survivors were poor, and 73% were economically active prior to the accident (Camacho-Ramírez and Vargas Rodríguez 12/2019).

Health

Between 2016–2021, APMs and ERW injured at least 689 people in Colombia. 380 survivors suffered partial or total hearing loss, 140 suffered permanent visual loss, and 139 suffered amputations. During this same period, at least 86 people died from an APM or ERW event (Descontamina Colombia 31/01/2022). Injuries resulting from an APM or ERW event require immediate attention (Manzano-Núñez et al. 03/12/2020). Survivors of APM and ERW explosions often require amputations and the removal of shrapnel, both of which may require multiple operations and are highly complex procedures.

In some municipalities in conflict zones, there are no health posts, and more than half of the population has no health coverage (Colombian Ministry of Health and Social Protection 07/2018). In others, getting to a hospital can take up to five hours or even days because of

distance and the lack of roads. Some medical services are only available on certain days or at certain times (Hernández Gene and Berrocal 19/12/2017). There have also been documented cases of people falling into solitary minefields and waiting for hours before being found and transported to hospitals capable of treating them (EE 12/11/2018). In rural Colombia, where most events occur, there are fewer health facilities and personnel to serve the population than in urban areas.

In terms of physical rehabilitation, survivors require mobility recovery sessions (ICRC 11/2005; Colombian Ministry of Health 2016). There are very few surgical and physiotherapy professionals in rural Colombia, both of whom are fundamental to the recovery of survivors (Colombian Ministry of Health and Social Protection 07/2018; Así Vamos en Salud 25/06/2018). Although physical recovery sessions are available for survivors, attendance depends on their ability to mobilise themselves and their families over long distances (KII 11/02/2022). For example, patients in Chocó are often referred to distant cities, such as Bogotá, Cali, Medellín, and Pereira (Semana Rural 22/05/2018).

There are similar challenges for survivors in accessing psychological and psychosocial support. In Colombia, there are about 1.3 therapists per 100,000 inhabitants. Most of these therapists are concentrated in urban centres (Cerosetenta 28/02/2020). As most survivors live in rural areas, attending therapy usually involves long and expensive journeys for them and their companions (Semana accessed 25/03/2022; KII 11/02/2022). There tends to be a higher prevalence of depression, anger, and anxiety among survivors of armed conflict in Colombia, putting them in need of mental health support (Herrera Merchán 22/06/2016; MSF 12/02/2019).

Education

APM and ERW presence directly affects access to education. Armed groups contaminate roads leading to schools and, in some cases, schools themselves (SWI 05/06/2015; ICBF 12/2012; KII 08/03/2022). As a result, parents often stop sending their children to school out of fear for their safety, directly linking APM and ERW presence to children dropping out of school (KII 02/03/2022; ICRC 03/2012; Campaña Colombiana Contra Minas 13/02/2013). For every APM that explodes, the school dropout rate in that municipality increases by approximately 1.2% (Chaves Narváez 2017).

When APMs and ERW are identified near schools, possibly resulting from nearby confrontations between armed groups, schools must suspend their academic activities or conduct them with the risk of children being harmed (El Tiempo 07/02/2022 and 22/05/2019; KII 08/03/2022; Caracol Radio 11/11/2020; France 24 21/11/2019).

Schools are places of protection for children. When APM and ERW presence in a territory prevents them from attending school, it increases their risk of forced recruitment (TNH 10/09/2020; InSight Crime 22/02/2022; KII 11/03/2022). Dropping out of school also

has long-term effects on their livelihoods. Children who do not complete their education have less access to employment in the future, and they are more likely to live in poverty (Parche Maestro 06/11/2021; Casey 06/2014; Adelman and Szekely 20/04/2016).

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

Contamination restricts humanitarian access by preventing people from accessing humanitarian assistance and humanitarian organisations from maintaining a presence in a community (KII 09/03/2022).

APM and ERW events can result in the confinement of a community or create significant dangers for people fleeing violence (CNMH 26/04/2017; MIRE 01/12/2021). APM and ERW presence also impedes the mobility of the population in terms of their daily activities and when it comes to accessing humanitarian assistance. In areas where there is fighting or other situations of violence, contamination restricts people from alerting the authorities or humanitarian organisations (MIRE 17/12/2021).

Mine contamination also prevents humanitarian organisations from being present in a community as they have to follow certain protocols to keep their staff safe (KII 09/03/2022). In Colombia, at least 20% of municipalities are contaminated (El Colombiano 22/12/2021). While contamination may not cut off an entire area, there are also other impediments (such as impassable roads) to accessing many villages throughout the country.

RESPONSE CAPACITY

The Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, which reports to the Presidency of the Republic of Colombia, is responsible for three core functions related to APMs and ERW: humanitarian demining, victim assistance, and mine risk education. The legal framework used in Colombia is essentially based on the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. Colombia adopted this treaty through Laws 554/2000 and 759/2002 and Sentence C-991/2000. By ratifying this treaty, Colombia committed itself, among other things, to mine clearance and victim assistance, which gave rise to Law 1448/2011 (Descontamina Colombia accessed 27/04/2022 a; Descontamina Colombia accessed 27/04/2022 b).

Humanitarian demining in areas with the presence of armed groups is complex and likely faces resistance from the groups who lay the mines (El Colombiano 22/12/2021; KII 09/02/2022). Between 2004–2022, more than 10,339,000m² of land were cleared through demining operations (Descontamina Colombia 28/02/2022). 71% of this decontamination took place after

the signing of the Peace Agreement with the FARC-EP in 2016. Victim assistance is regulated by Law 1448 of 2011, which mandates the Colombian State to provide immediate medical care, rehabilitation, administrative compensation, and non-repetition guarantees to APM and ERW survivors (Descontamina Colombia 2015). There are currently 12,040 registered APM and ERW survivors, 10,018 of whom receive some type of assistance from the Colombian Government (Víctims Unit accessed 28/03/2022).

As at February 2022, more than 688,000 people had participated in mine risk education in Colombia, 82% of whom received mine risk education after the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016 (Descontamina Colombia accessed 28/03/2022). Armed groups sometimes oppose mine risk education because of the strategic nature of mines in protecting them from enemies or securing their coca crops (KII 09/02/2022; KII 06/02/2022).

ANALYSIS OF THE DYNAMICS OF THE ARMED CONFLICT AND WEAPON CONTAMINATION

The current use of APMs and ERW in Colombia is concentrated in four subregions of the country. The use of APMs and improvised explosive devices is at risk of increasing in these areas in the short term as disputes persist between armed groups that have knowledge in using these explosives. These areas are:

1. **The Colombian Pacific region:** Chocó and Nariño departments have exits to the Pacific Ocean, allowing them to function as strategic corridors for drug trafficking (ACAPS 30/09/2021 and 22/12/2021). Nariño is also the department with the second-highest coca cultivation in Colombia, and coca is grown in some municipalities in Chocó (Colombian Drugs Observatory accessed 06/03/2022). Armed groups also exploit other irregular economic activities, such as illegal mining, in the region (UNODC 10/2020). Other departments in this region, such as Cauca and Valle del Cauca, are also cultivation, transport, and export routes for coca and marijuana (ACAPS 06/08/2021; La Silla Vacía 16/04/2021).
2. **Urabá:** Urabá is a subregion between northwest Antioquia and north Chocó. This subregion is strategically important to armed groups for three reasons. First, it connects exits to the Caribbean Sea with the coca cultivation and processing areas in Bajo Cauca and south Córdoba (El Colombiano 14/11/2021; CNMH accessed 06/03/2022). Second, it borders Panama, allowing the passage of arms and chemical resources and the trafficking and smuggling of migrants (Colombian Ministry of Health and Social Protection 16/07/2021; Government of Colombia 27/10/2004). Third, jungle conditions guard armed groups against armed and military offensives (UNDP 06/2010; Verdad Abierta 15/02/2016). Armed groups also exploit other irregular economies, such as illegal mining, in the area (UNODC 10/2020).

3. **Border areas with Venezuela:** Norte de Santander and Arauca departments are among those with the highest number of related events since the signing of the Peace Agreement with the FARC-EP. In Arauca, coca crops have largely disappeared since 2018, and fighting is primarily exerting influence on oil companies, mainly through extortion (Colombian Drugs Observatory accessed 06/03/2022; Ombudsman's Office 01/10/2021; FIP 06/2014). Norte de Santander, on the other hand, was the department with the most hectares of coca planted in 2020. Fighting in that department is primarily related to drug trafficking (EE 14/10/2020; DW 20/07/2020; Colombian Drugs Observatory accessed 06/03/2022). Both departments share a large border with Venezuela, where armed groups have a sustained presence, making them strategic for the transport of arms, contraband, chemical resources, and drugs (Ombudsman's Office 17/02/2022).
4. **Northern Amazon:** Caquetá, Guaviare, and Meta departments, located partially or entirely in the northern part of the Amazon region, have registered many APM and ERW events in recent years in relation to coca cultivation (Colombian Drugs Observatory accessed 06/03/2022). The departments also serve as strategic corridors for the exit of drugs to the Colombian Pacific region and Brazil (ACAPS 22/12/2021 b). River corridors between these departments and their connections with the central and western regions of the country have also attracted various armed groups. These armed groups also benefit from extorting money from traders, cattle ranchers, and farmers (Ombudsman's Office 07/01/2021 and 28/04/2020; FIP 04/07/2014).

Affected areas

Departments with the most APM and ERW events

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2017-2021
NARIÑO	157	181	147	175	120	780
META	66	95	124	76	38	399
NORTE DE SANTANDER	88	69	67	32	5	261
ANTIOQUIA	44	51	55	73	23	246
ARAUCA	52	39	33	28	34	186
CAQUETA	36	37	34	32	15	154
CHOCÓ	27	19	18	20	35	119

Source: ACAPS using data from Descontamina Colombia 30/11/2021

Comparison of APM and ERW events before and after the Peace Agreement with the FARC-EP (2016) in the most affected departments

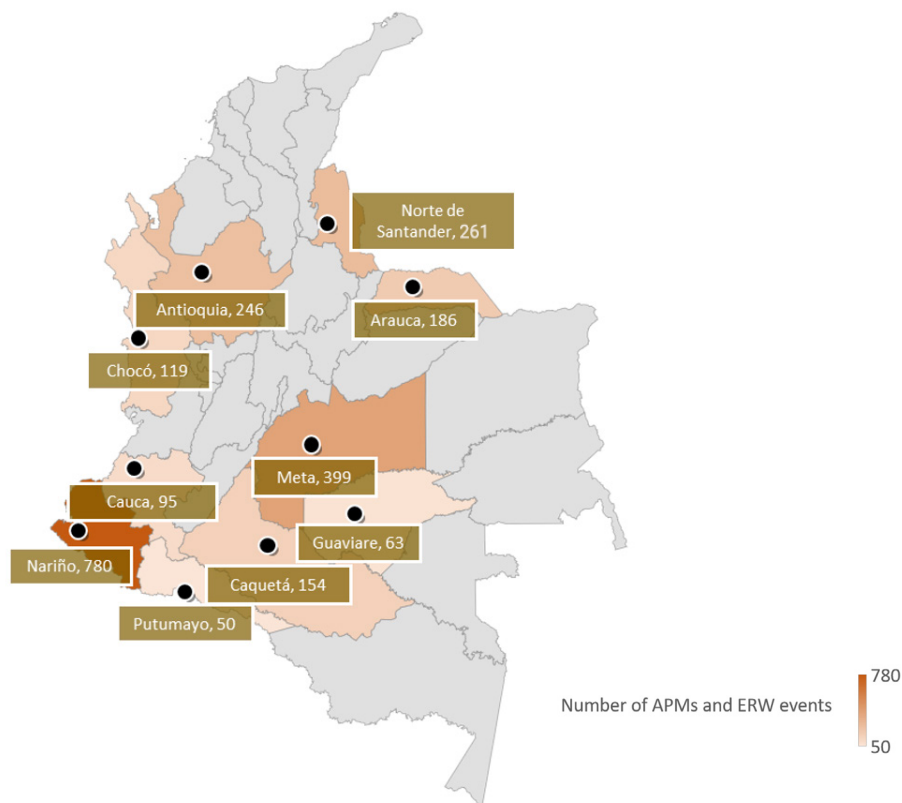
	2010-2016	2017-2021	PERCENTAGE OF REDUCTION
NARIÑO	1,016	780	23%
CHOCÓ	276	119	57%
NORTE DE SANTANDER	1,027	261	75%
ARAUCA	1,364	186	86%
META	3,382	399	88%
ANTIOQUIA	2,669	246	91%
CAUCA	1,223	95	92%
CAQUETÁ	1,855	154	92%
PUTUMAYO	1,155	50	96%
TOLIMA	1,089	17	98%

Source: ACAPS using data from Descontamina Colombia 30/11/2021

Disclaimer: since the starting point for the analysis is the Peace Agreement (signed in 2016), events over seven years (2010-2016) are being compared against events over five years (2017-2021); this could explain the reductions observed.

The departments that have had the most events with MAP and MUSE between 2017 and 2021 are Nariño, Meta, Norte de Santander, Antioquia, Arauca, Caquetá and Chocó. Although there is a significant reduction in the number of events related to APL and UXO, in some departments (Nariño, Chocó and Norte de Santander) this decrease has been lower than the national average. With the exception of Tolima and Putumayo, the departments most affected by APL and UXO events are the same as those recorded prior to 2016, suggesting that it is possible that many of these events are related to previously laid mines.

Departments of Colombia with the highest number of APM and ERW events (2016–2021).



Sources: ACAPS using data from Descontamina Colombia 30/11/2021 and OpenStreetMap accessed 19/04/2022

Civilian and fighter victims

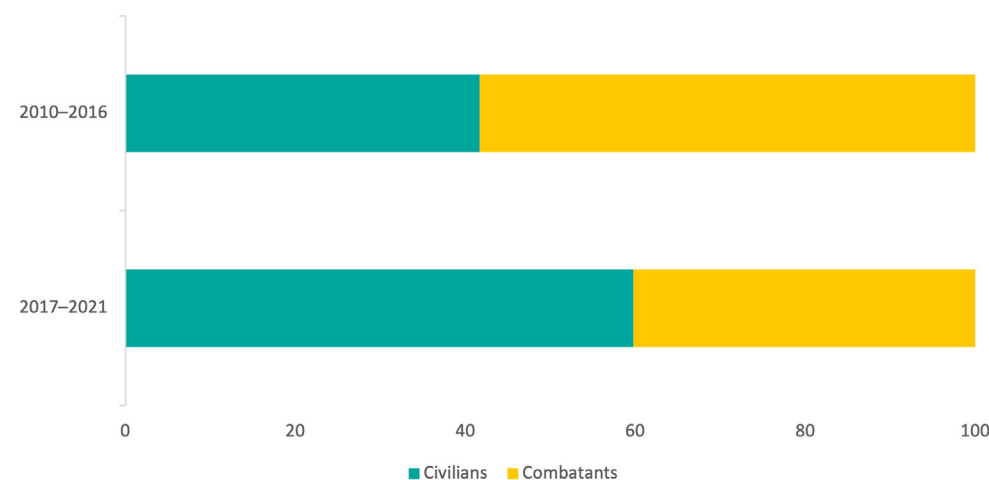
- The number of APM and ERW victims has increased since 2016.
- The proportion of civilian APM and ERW victims relative to combatants has also increased since 2016.
- Newly arrived refugees and migrants may be at higher risk as they do not know the lay of the land, but this assumption cannot be confirmed because existing databases do not record the place of origin of victims.

The number of APM and ERW events has significantly declined since the 2016 signing of the Peace Agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP. In the six years since then, there has been an 83% decrease in events compared to the six years prior to it. There was a downward trend in the number of APM and ERW victims starting in 2012, four years before the Peace Agreement, but the number of victims jumped again to 179 in 2016 from 58 in 2015 (the lowest since 1999). Since then, more than 100 APM and ERW victims have been recorded annually in Colombia.

The proportion of civilian APM and ERW victims has also increased. Between 2010–2016, approximately 58% of the victims were fighters, and 42% were civilians. Between 2017–2021, only 40% were fighters, and 58% were civilians (Descontamina Colombia 30/11/2021).

The increase in the proportion of civilian casualties could indicate the use of mines in areas previously considered mine-free where the civilian population is less cautious (KII 07/03/2022; ABC Group 14/05/2021). A humanitarian worker in Nariño suggested this increase could also be a result of the migration dynamics from Venezuela and between departments, as new arrivals may not have sufficient knowledge about preventing mine events in affected areas. This information cannot be verified as databases do not record the nationality or place of origin of victims (KII 11/03/2022).

Percentage of civilian and fighter APM and ERW victims (2010–2016 and 2017–2021)



Source: ACAPS using data from Descontamina Colombia 30/11/2021

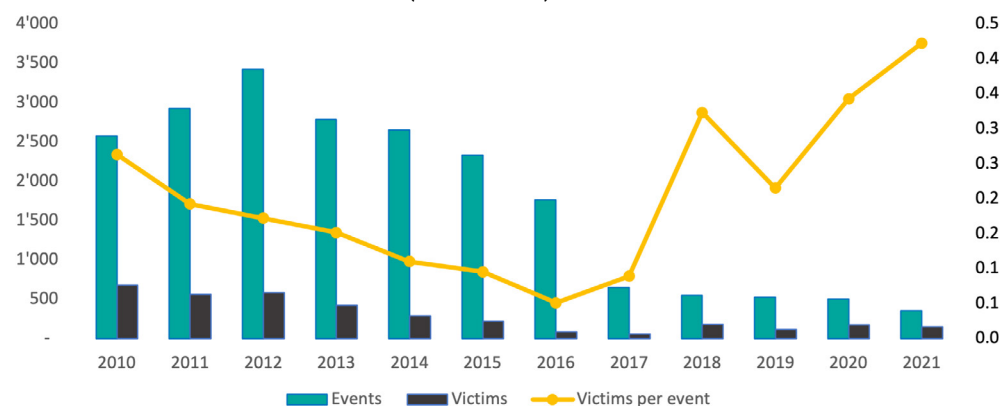
APM and ERW use in Colombia

- APM use as a tactical weapon of war has increased since 2001.
- The number of people affected by APM and ERW events has steadily increased since 2016.
- The number of victims per event has substantially increased.

Until 2001, APM use by armed groups was sporadic and had a minor impact. Armed groups used APMs as a defence mechanism during fighting. From 2001 onwards, APM use in Colombia as a strategy to control territory and protect zones of influence considerably increased (Bejarano Hernández 11/11/2010; CNMH 26/04/2017).

The number of people affected by APM and ERW events has been rising since 2016, even as the number of events has declined. In 2016, there were 90 APM and ERW victims in Colombia, but this number rose to 151 in 2021. The ratio of victims per event has increased by 400%, from 0.1 victim per event in 2016 to 0.4 victims per event in 2021, which is the highest ratio recorded in the country since 2008.

APM and ERW events in Colombia (2010–2021)



Source: ACAPS using data from Descontamina Colombia 30/11/2021

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