



executive summary

Interrupted Routes

effects of armed violence in the mobility of children and adolescents in Rio de Janeiro

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Historic Map of Armed Groups

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This report, produced in partnership by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Fogo Cruzado Institute and the Study Group on New Illegalisms (GENI/UFF), combines and systematizes data from transport, public security and education databases to analyze how armed violence disrupts urban mobility in Rio de Janeiro and its implications for children and adolescents. The objective is to transform interruptions largely associated with armed violence into territorially comparable evidence, supporting preventive planning, coordination across sectors and protective measures that preserve continuous access to rights-guaranteeing services, particularly schools. The study engages with recent evidence on the effects of armed violence, including the series “Education Under Siege” (2025). By linking mobility, territory, and access to rights, the report seeks to support protection strategies and public policies aimed at reducing vulnerabilities affecting children, adolescents, and their communities.

Mobility is an essential condition for accessing other basic rights, such as health, education, work, and leisure.¹ Mobility structures opportunities, defines possibilities for social participation, and shapes citizenship itself. Law No. 12,587/2012, which established the National Urban Mobility Policy, provides that municipalities are responsible for planning and implementing mobility plans aimed at universal access to the city and the widespread democratic use of urban space. The right to urban mobility, acknowledged as a fundamental social right by Constitutional Amendment 90 (2015), goes beyond simple physical travel. Therefore, the mobility plans must prioritize collective transportation, mode integration, universal accessibility and social participation, aiming at ensuring equity in access and overcoming territorial inequalities.²

Armed violence affects urban mobility across multiple dimensions, restricting circulation both directly — through blockades, shootings, barricades and police operations — and indirectly, by altering schedules, routes and everyday decisions regarding movement. Evidence produced in different Latin American cities indicates that, in contexts of persistent violence, mobility ceases to be a predictable practice and begins to involve constant risk assessment, with impacts on work, access to healthcare, community life and school attendance. In Rio de Janeiro, this dynamic manifests in a territorially unequal manner: public transport interruptions are concentrated in specific areas, where circulation uncertainty becomes a structural part of everyday life. For children and adolescents, these effects are more significant, given their dependence on regular routes to access school, healthcare, and protection networks. When circulation becomes unpredictable or unsafe, access to essential services is compromised, with potential repercussions for school attendance, continuity of care, and development opportunities.

¹ Brandt, 2022; AMANAJÁS KLUG 2018; Cidade, Leão Júnior 2016; Lorenzetti, 2015; Vaccari, Fanini, 2011; ARAUJO et al. 2011 Abramovich, Curtis, C.2002

² Herkert et al., 2020

In this report, the term **mobility interruption** refers to temporary suspensions or restrictions in public transport circulation associated with events occurring in the territory, lasting up to two days, which directly or indirectly affect the population's daily mobility. These interruptions include both actual operational blockages and situations in which transport functioning is reduced or becomes unpredictable, compromising regular access to essential services, especially school.

The analysis of the various causes indicates the prevalence of dynamics associated to urban armed conflict. During the school period and hours, barricades account for 32.4% of records and police actions or operations for 22.7%, highlighting the central role of these factors in generating interruptions. In smaller proportions, protests (12.9%), localized criminal actions (9.6%), and records of gunfire or gunfights (7.2%) appear. This pattern suggests that interruptions do not mainly stem from operational failures or isolated events, but from territorial contexts marked by recurring instability.

The available records indicate that disruptions to urban mobility associated with armed violence constitute a recurrent and territorially concentrated phenomenon in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro. Between January 2023 and July 2025, 2,228 interruptions in public transport were recorded, with an average duration of approximately seven hours. The persistence and duration of these episodes demonstrate that interruptions in mobility are not configured as exceptional events, but rather as part of everyday life in certain territories of the city. Neighborhoods such as Penha, Bangu, and Jacarepaguá stand out as epicenters of interrupted mobility, accumulating, respectively, 633, 175, and 161 interruptions over the analyzed period. In these neighborhoods, daily circulation occurs under a higher level of uncertainty compared to other regions of the city.

This pattern intensifies when considering only interruptions occurring on school days and during school hours (6:30 A.M – 6:30 P.M). Within this scope, 1,084 episodes were recorded in the analyzed period, with an average duration exceeding eight hours. 96 neighborhoods in the city recorded at least one incident; however, only ten neighborhoods concentrate nearly the full amount of lost time. Penha and Jacarepaguá account for 296 and 108 occurrences, respectively, together corresponding to approximately 88 school days of interruption. In contrast, 70 of the municipality's 166 neighborhoods show no record of interruption during the analyzed school period and hours.

Compared to the total set of interruptions, those occurring on school days and within school hours have longer durations: the mean was 493 minutes (8 hours and 13 minutes) and the median 270 minutes (4 hours and 30 minutes). This combination of high frequency and long durations produces radically different school calendars across neighborhoods, deepening territorial inequali-

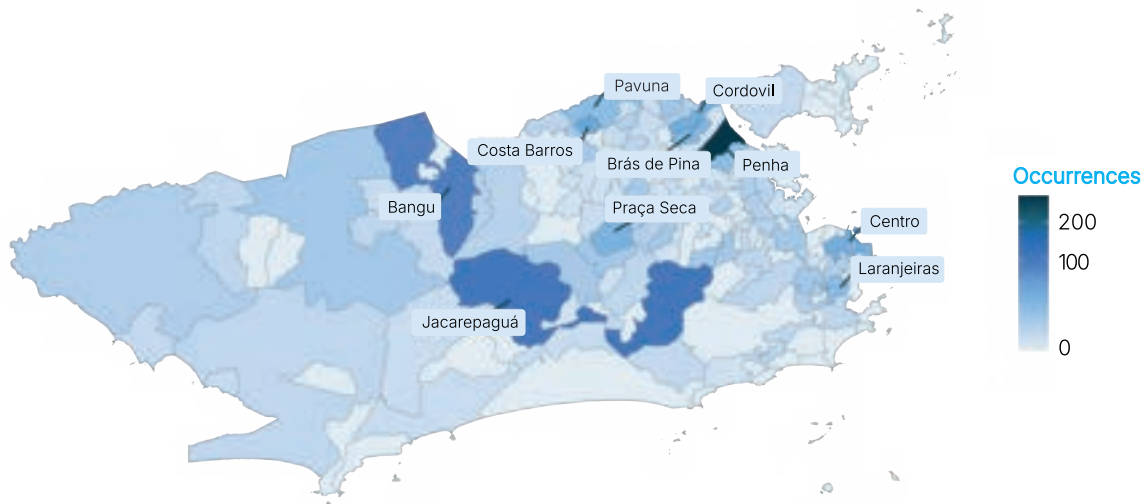


ties in access to instructional time. This scenario produces unequal conditions of access to instructional time and other essential services, deepening preexisting differences between territories. Map 1 illustrates this territorial concentration by presenting the ten neighborhoods with the highest number of interruptions during the school period and hours, highlighting Penha, followed by Jacarepaguá and Bangu.

MAP 1

Interruptions per neighborhood - number of occurrences during school hours and school year

Rio de Janeiro | Jan/2023 - Jul/2025



Source: SPPD, Fogo Cruzado, Metrô Rio, SuperVia, BRT

Impacts on the municipal education network are widespread. Of the 4,008 active school units in 2024, about 95% (3,825 schools) recorded at least one public transport interruption in their surroundings over the analyzed period. Although exposure is widespread, the intensity of effects is not distributed homogeneously across units. It is estimated that approximately 190,000 children and adolescents had their home–school commute potentially affected at least once during this period and, considering the recurrence of records, interruptions correspond to more than one million school journeys impacted over time, indicating cumulative effects on the continuity of access to school and the predictability of educational routines.

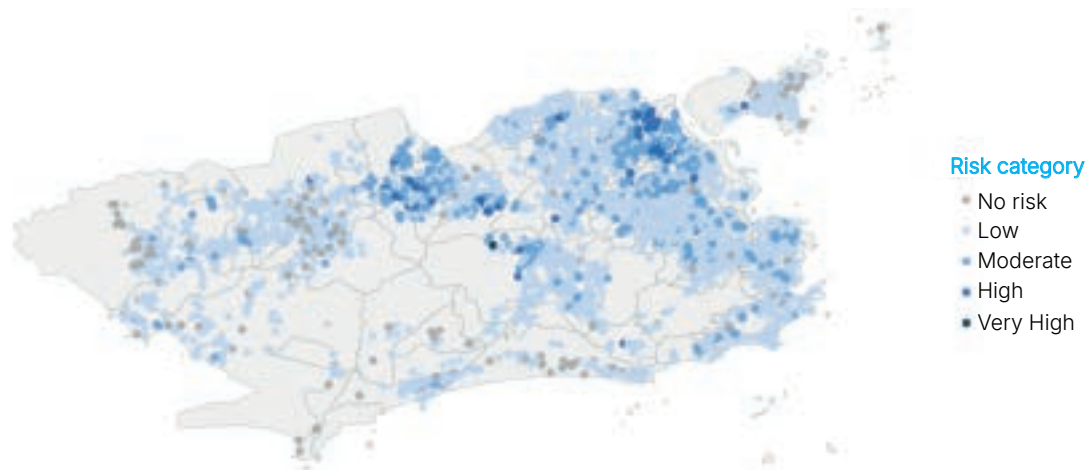
The risk rating of schools showcases this heterogeneity. Most enrollments are concentrated in units classified as having lower risk of exposure to interruptions (911,216 enrollments; 72.5%). Even so, a significant share—25.8% of enrollments, equivalent to 323,359 children and adolescents—is linked to schools classified as Moderate, High, or Very High risk. In total, 120 schools show high exposure to interruptions associated with armed violence, concentrated mainly in the North Zone (71 units; 59.2%), followed by the West Zone (48 units; 40%) and Ilha do Governador (1 unit;

0.8%), while the South Zone and part of the city center register only sparse cases. Map 2 shows the distribution of schools according to their risk classification.

MAP 2

Territorial Distribution of Schools Under Risk of Transport Interruptions

Rio de Janeiro | Jan/2023 - July/2025



Source: SPPD, Fogo Cruzado, Metrô Rio, SuperVia, BRT

This unequal territorial pattern indicates that disrupted mobility constitutes a relevant factor in the production and intensification of educational inequalities. The concentration of schools with high and very high risk in territories often marked by greater social vulnerability coincides with a higher presence of non-white students: in schools classified as Very High risk, the median proportion of Black and Brown students reaches 52.8%, while in schools classified as No risk or Low risk this percentage is around 35%. The coexistence in these areas of public security operations, recurring episodes of armed confrontation and mobility disruptions creates a persistent context of instability that affects the daily functioning of the city and access to essential services, especially schools. These findings reinforce the importance of incorporating mobility variables, school functioning and access to social protection networks into the formulation and planning of public policies, expanding the traditional analysis focused exclusively on crime indicators.

This territorial configuration also highlights the relationship between public security strategies, urban functioning, and access to essential services. The data suggest that mobility interruptions are not merely episodic effects of operations or the actions of armed groups, but reflect persistent dynamics in territories marked by recurring disputes and a high presence of coercive state actions.

From a public policy perspective, the results suggest that strictly sectoral approaches tend to have limited reach given the observed territorial complexity. The articulation between public

security, urban mobility and the guarantee of social rights proves relevant to anticipate risks, reduce indirect impacts and preserve the continuity of essential services, especially those aimed at children and adolescents.

Additionally, the unequal territorial distribution of operations and their effects reinforces the need for strategies sensitive to local specificities. National and international evidence indicates that initiatives combining territorial intelligence, intersectoral coordination, community participation and preventive mechanisms can contribute to reducing indirect impacts on the civilian population. In this context, strengthening communication protocols among public security, transport, education and social assistance, combined with improved monitoring and early warning systems, tends to support more coordinated responses and preserve the continuity of essential services in unstable contexts.

Faced with the limits of fragmented approaches and the urgency of protecting access to school and other essential services, this report consolidates data and experiences to point to practical pathways. Given the recurrence of transport interruptions associated with armed violence and their structural impacts, a set of coordinated recommendations is presented, aimed at the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents. More than isolated emergency responses, these are measures capable of restoring predictability to daily mobility, strengthening intersectoral coordination, and reducing territorial inequalities in access to rights.

Recommendations

1. Integrate incident monitoring and operational data in real time to ensure safe mobility for children and adolescents.

Data fragmentation across transport modes, public agencies, and security forces limits the ability to anticipate risks and respond to interruptions in a coordinated manner. The creation of integrated monitoring mechanisms — bringing together information from buses, BRT, trains, metro systems, sectoral departments and public security — can enhance transparency, response capacity and preventive planning to ensure the safe mobility of children and adolescents. The systematization of rail and metro records deserves specific attention, given the current heterogeneity of available information. Making the territorial pattern of interruptions visible is an essential step to guide evidence-based public policies, especially those impacting children and adolescents, and to reduce impacts on school commutes.



2. Establish mobility continuity plans in critical territories, ensuring the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents.

The recurring interruption of public transport compromises the predictability of urban circulation and directly affects access to school, work, healthcare, and other services that guarantee the rights of children and adolescents. In areas where they are recurrent, the adoption of territorialized contingency plans is recommended, with previously mapped alternative routes, emergency transport provision, and rapid communication channels with communities and local institutions. In the case of education, safe mobility to school should be treated as a central component of the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents, preventing episodes of violence from automatically resulting in the suspension of school days or the isolation of students.

3. Strengthen intersectoral governance to protect essential activities for guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents.

The persisting interruptions reveal sector-based isolated response limitations. Protecting access to essential activities, especially education, healthcare, and social assistance, requires permanent coordination protocols among transport, public security, and social policies. Recent experiences demonstrate that security approaches oriented toward the guarantee of rights, particularly for the protection of children and adolescents, require continuous institutional coordination, clear communication flows and shared decision-making mechanisms. Incorporating data and actors from the transport system into this governance expands the capacity to protect daily routes and reduce indirect impacts of security operations.

4. Prioritize structured territorial prevention with the participation of adolescents, youth, and the community.

The sustainable reduction of these impacts depends on strategies that combine public security, urban infrastructure, social protection, and economic development. Targeted investments in the most affected territories should be accompanied by strengthening community participation, including adolescents, youth, the school community, local organizations and territorial leaders, as a source of qualified information, social monitoring and co-production of solutions. National and international experiences indicate that participatory approaches increase the effectiveness of prevention policies, strengthen institutional ties, and contribute to stabilizing daily mobility and access to rights.

5. Ensure educational continuity and psychosocial support for children, adolescents, families, and professionals in the most affected areas.

Disrupted mobility produces effects that go beyond the loss of instructional time, affecting emotional well-being, school engagement, and the educational trajectory of students and professionals. It is recommended to strengthen learning recovery policies, ensure continuous psychosocial support in the most exposed schools, and develop clear operational protocols in contexts of violence. Recognizing the school as a structuring space of social protection is essential to mitigate the cumulative effects of territorial instability on the development of children and adolescents.

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