

# **Violence in Venezuela: Excess Homicides and Social Pact**



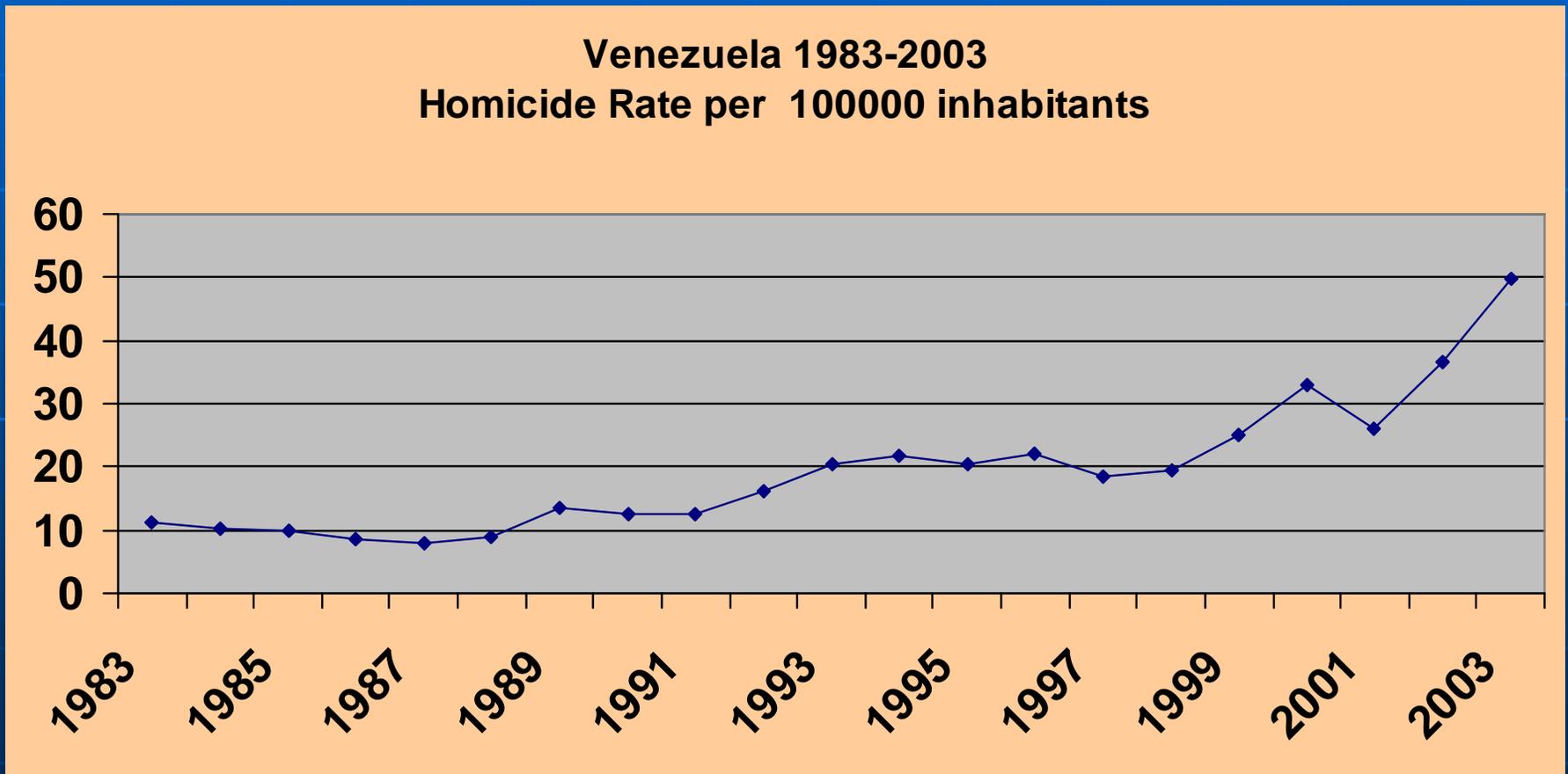
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**Observatorio Venezolano de Violencia**

- Last December 2, 2007, Sonia Gonzalez was president of a voting table during the referendum on the constitutional reform...
- While she was explaining to a person how to vote she received a call that informed her that her 2-year old son had been shot while he was eating breakfast in front of their house, in Campo Rico neighborhood, Petare, Caracas
- The bullet hit him in the middle of a gunfight between different youth gangs ... the child died a few minutes later.....

# In the 1980s Venezuela had a low homicide rate



# In the 90s Venezuela was among the countries with medium-high violence in Latin America

<b>Level of violence</b>	<b>Rates per 100 000/h</b>	<b>Countries</b>
<b>Low violence</b>	<b>Less than 10 homicides</b>	<b>Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Paraguay</b>
<b>Medium violence</b>	<b>From 11 to 20 homicides</b>	<b>Perú, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Panamá, Honduras</b>
<b>Medium-high violence</b>	<b>From 21 to 30 homicides</b>	<b>Brasil, México, Venezuela</b>
<b>Very high violence</b>	<b>More than 31 homicides</b>	<b>Colombia, El Salvador,</b>

Nevertheless, starting in 2000 there is a strong increase in homicides in Venezuela

**VENEZUELA:  
Homicidios 1990-2006**

**2006:  
12 257**



# The homicide rate doubled from 1998 to 2006

	<b>Total de homicidios</b>	<b>Población (en millones)</b>	<b>Tasa por 100000 habitantes</b>
1990	2474	19,7	12,5
1991	2502	20,1	12,8
1992	3366	20,6	16,2
1993	4292	21,1	20,3
1994	4733	21,5	21,9
1995	4481	22,0	20,3
1996	4961	22,9	22,0
1997	4225	23,4	18,4
1998	4550	23,4	19,4
1999	5974	23,8	25,0
2000	8021	24,3	32,9
2001	6432	24,7	25,9
2002	9617	25,2	38,1
2003	11342	25,6	44,3
2004*	9719	26,1	37,2
2005*	9964	26,5	37,6
2006*	12257	27,0	45,3

\*A partir de 2004 se prohibió hacer pública la información oficial a investigadores y periodistas. Las cifras se refieren a los homicidios reconocidos como tales por las autoridades, no incluyen ni los muertos por resistencia a la autoridad, ni los casos en “averiguaciones de muertes”, que sumarían entre dos y cuatro mil homicidios más por año.

# All sources coincide in that increase

Estimates of the homicide rate for 2006

Institution	Rate per 100,000 inhabitants
According to official statistics	<b>45,3</b>
According to CONAREPOL survey	<b>49,6</b>
According to Observatorio Venezolano de Violencia	<b>55,3</b>

But that increase in the  
homicide rate is not the same in  
countries similar to Venezuela

# The homicide rates of Venezuela, Brazil and Mexico

	Homicide rate per 100 000 inhab <b>1994-1998</b>	Homicide rate per 100 000 inhab <b>2006</b>
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>México</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Venezuela</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>49</b>

# How can we explain this situation?

- There is an explanation for the rate of 23 homicides per 100,000 persons that is similar to that of Mexico and Brazil.
- There is another different and specific explanation to account for the other half, the other 23 homicides or more for each 100,000 persons

**The explanation for the first  
23 homicides  
(per 100,000 persons)**

# The sociological theory of violence in Latin America

**Macro social**

**Mezzo Social**

**Micro social**

Each one of these factors is expressed at a different level



# **Factors that originate violence in the city**

- **There is more social inequality**
- **There is more urban poverty**
- **There is more idle time for youth**
- **Loss of the mechanisms of traditional social control: the family and religion**
- **There are more expectations and impossibility to meet them**

# Factors that foment violence in the city

- Ecological organization of cities
- Culture of masculinity: respect and precarious identity
- New market for drugs
- Impunity

# Factors that facilitate violence

- **Capacity to wound through firearms**
- **Excessive consumption of alcohol in a single session**

# But these factors are the same for Mexico, Brazil and Venezuela

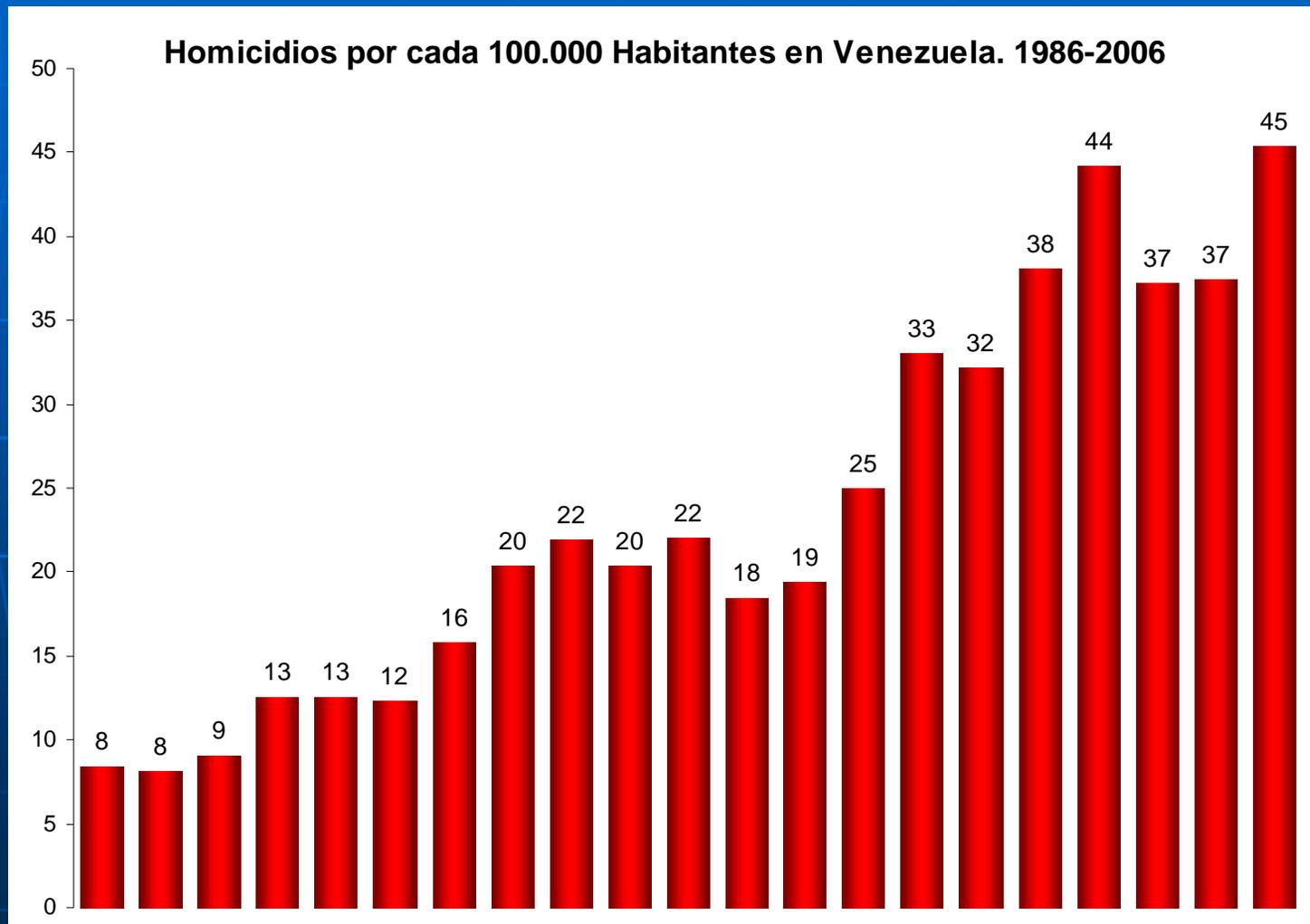
- Even more, if the official figures are accepted, in Venezuela income rose, unemployment decreased, social inequality was reduced...
- Therefore, the figures of violence **should be lower**
- **But they are greater... Why?**

**The explanation for the  
excessive rate of 23 homicides  
(per 100,000 persons)  
in Venezuela**

# The excess of homicides in Venezuela has a political explanation

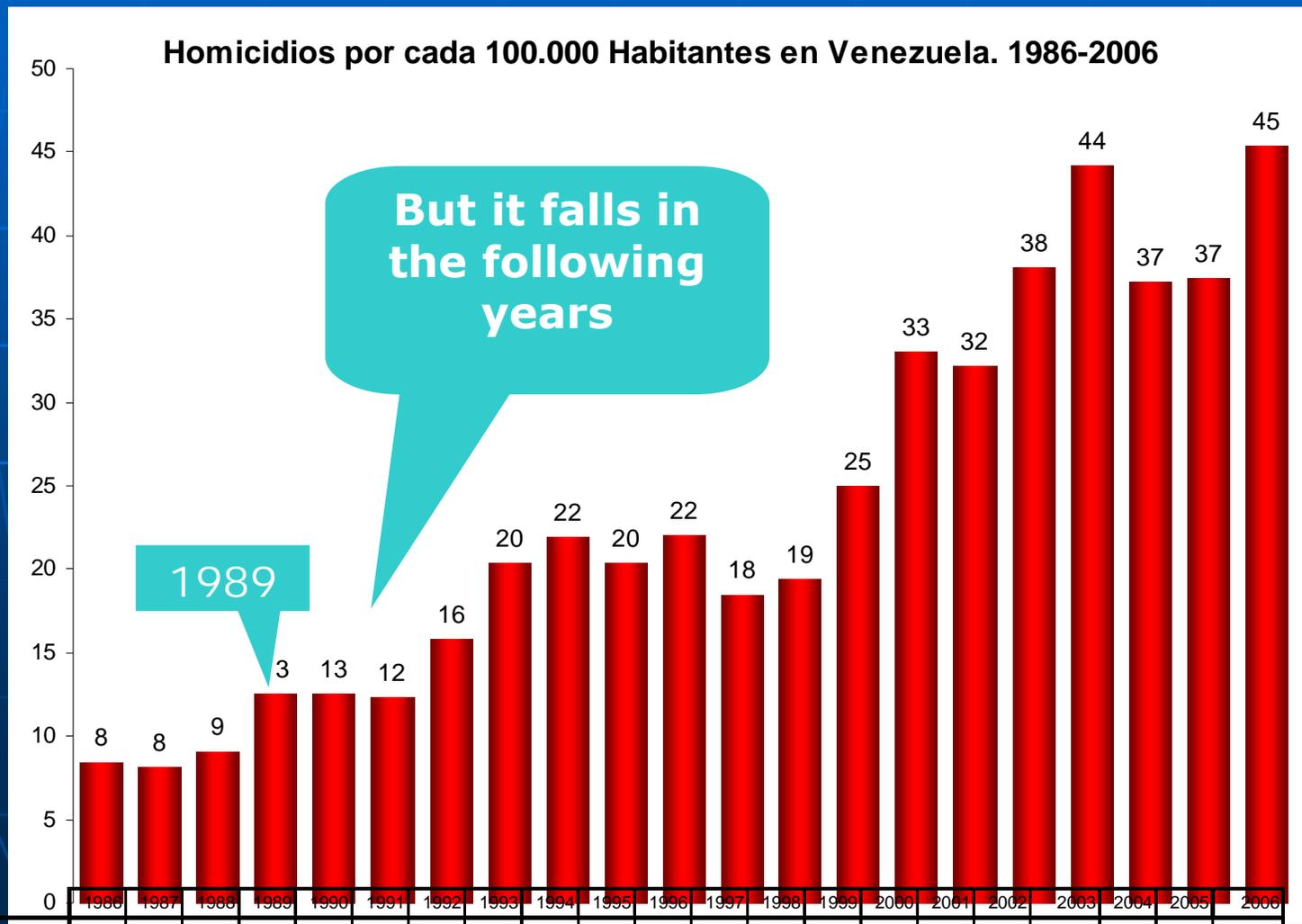
- Political in the sense of the agreement and social and political pact
- Political because it refers to forms of governing the society
- Political because it refers to a fracture of citizens' coexistence (civic harmony)

# An interpretation of twenty years of the homicide rate in Venezuela

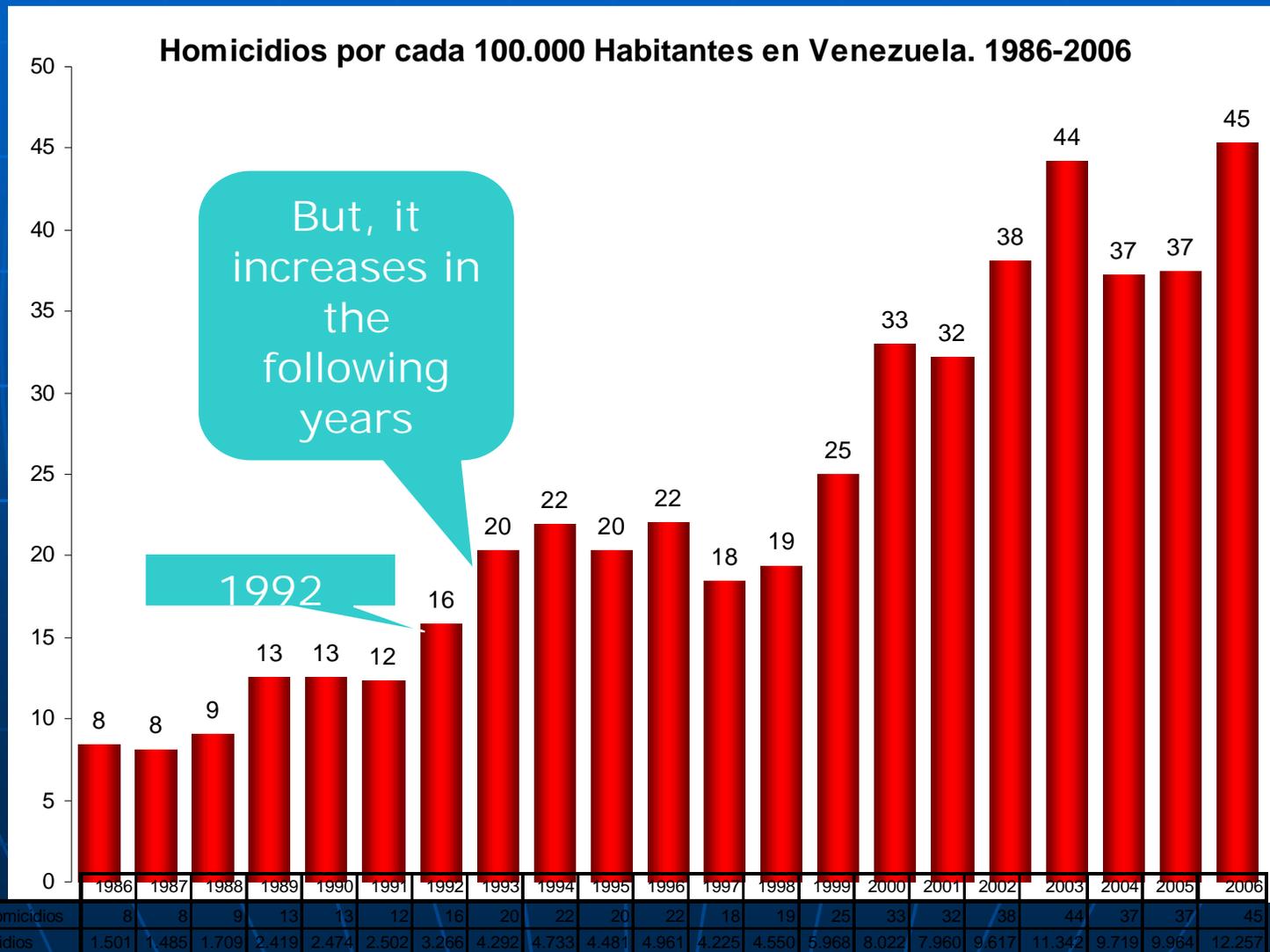


	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
*Tasa de homicidios	8	8	9	13	13	12	16	20	22	20	22	18	19	25	33	32	38	44	37	37	45
Total homicidios	1.501	1.485	1.709	2.419	2.474	2.502	3.266	4.292	4.733	4.481	4.961	4.225	4.550	5.968	8.022	7.960	9.617	11.342	9.719	9.964	12.257

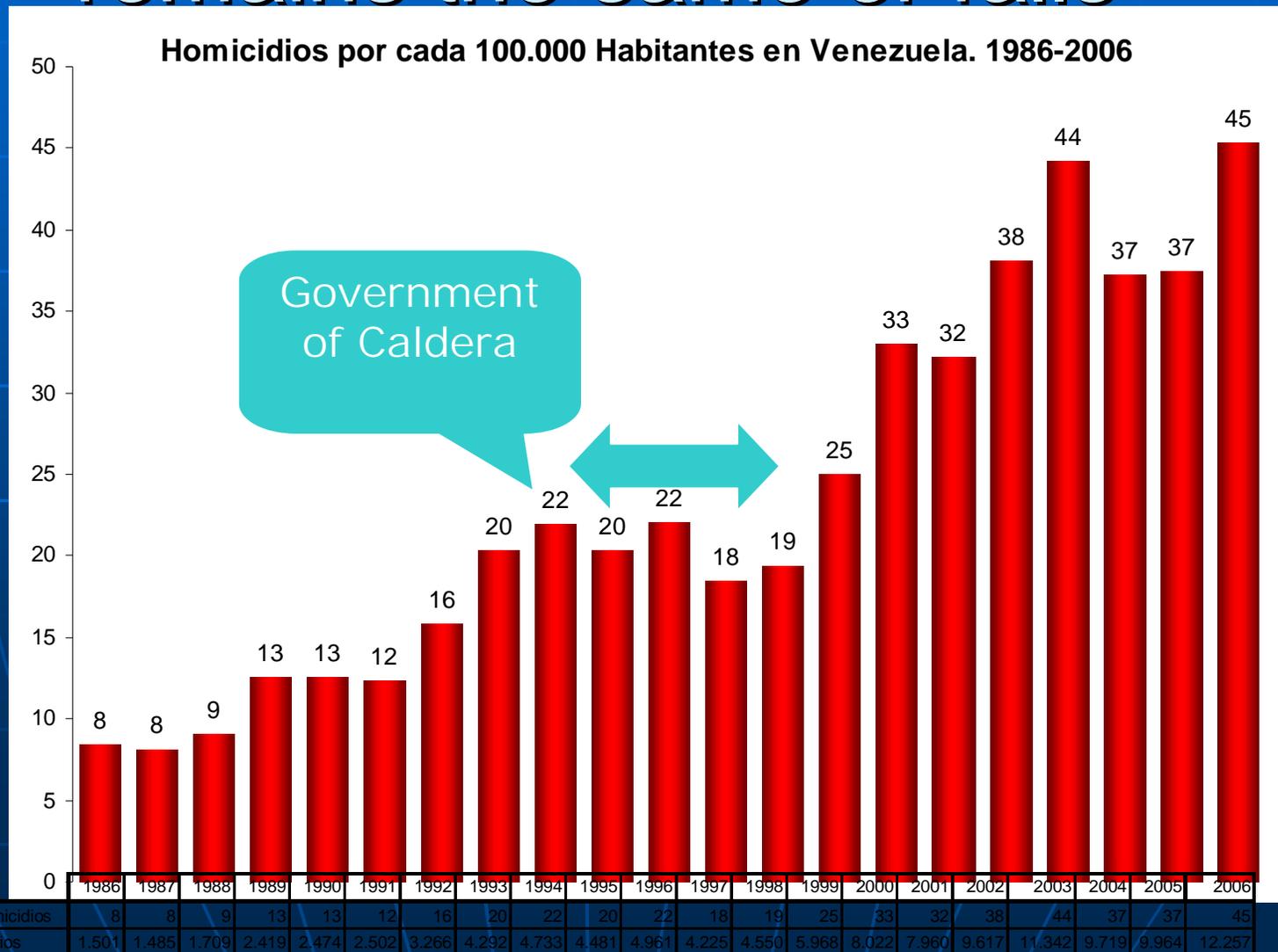
# The evolution of the homicide rate: There is an increase because of the Caracazo (1989)



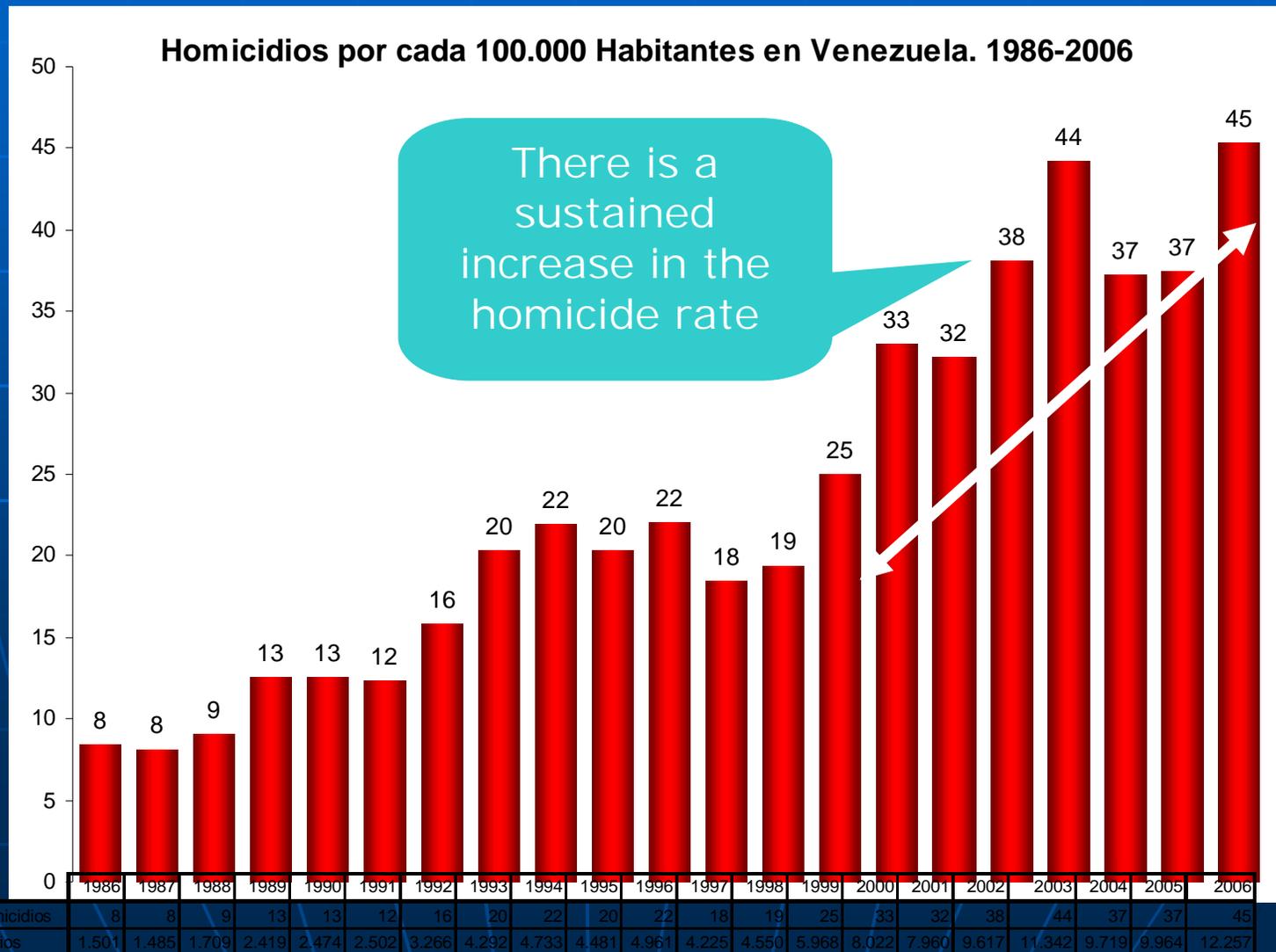
# The impact of the 1992 coups d'etat is low



# When there is political stability (from 1994 to 1998), the homicide rate remains the same or falls



# The political crisis after 1999



# The fear of being a victim has increased

Venezuela  
Sentimiento de Temor en Distintas zonas de la Ciudad  
1996, 2004 y 2007

Ha sentido temor en...		Caracas 1996 (n: 1297)	Venezuela 2004 (n: 1199)	Venezuela 2007 (n:1089)
<b>Su casa o apartamento</b>	<b>Mucho</b>	36.8	44.4	37.8
	<b>Algo</b>	38.6	29.6	39.7
	<b>Nada</b>	24.6	25.7	22,2
<b>En las calles de su comunidad</b>	<b>Mucho</b>	37.6	44.0	44,0
	<b>Algo</b>	35.5	29.0	41,1
	<b>Nada</b>	25.0	26.0	24,1
<b>En su lugar de trabajo</b>	<b>mucho</b>	26.2	34.6	29,7
	<b>algo</b>	32.9	29.6	36.8
	<b>nada</b>	40.9	35.8	16,3
<b>En los medios de Transporte</b>	<b>Mucho</b>	61.0	56.8	55,5
	<b>Algo</b>	29.2	25.6	31.4
	<b>Nada</b>	9.8	16.2	13,1

77,5

85,1

66,5

86,9

# And freedom is lost, because people become inhibited

## Venezuela Conducta de Inhibición por Miedo a la Violencia 1996, 2004 y 2007

Por temor a ser víctima usted ha restringido en lugar o en horario ...	Caracas 1996 (n: 1297)	Caracas 2004 (n. 196)	Venezuela 2004 (n: 1199)	Venezuela 2007 (n:1089)
...donde va de compras	62.1	63.8	65.8	65.3
...de estudios	19.0	26.3	32.3	n/i
...de sus actividades de trabajo	25.1	30.9	37.1	45.0
...de sus diversiones	71.8	61.6	58.5	67.0

What has happened after 1999?

# There has been ambiguity in the policies against crime and violence

- The president says that it is ok to rob because of hunger
- The vice minister of security says that they have killed "more than two-thousand pre-delinquents"
- The Minister announces a disarmament plan for 2007
- The same week the president delivers AK47 rifles to civilians

# There has been discontinuity in security policies

- The creation of the National Commission for Police Reform (CONAREPOL) was an important advancement: broad participation and four books of analysis and proposals for a civilian and democratic police
- But one month later, the new Minister said: "it is a report of the right-wing, it is not socialist"

# There is a political decision in favor of non-repression

- The government decided that it is not going to “repress” delinquency
- It does not want to appear to be a repressive government before the country and poor sectors
- There is a confusion between “repression” as application of the law and lack of respect for human rights
- The government does not want to enter into conflict with “strategic allies”

# There has been continuous praise for violence

- The president says in his speeches:
  - *"violence is not bad"*
  - *"it isn't true that violence is the weapon of those who are not right"*
- Military language is used in politics: battalions, commands, war, enemies
- "Fourth-generation warfare" is promoted and the country is prepared for it
- Some politicians quote Marx referring to violence as "the midwife of history"

# ... and praises for the violent ones

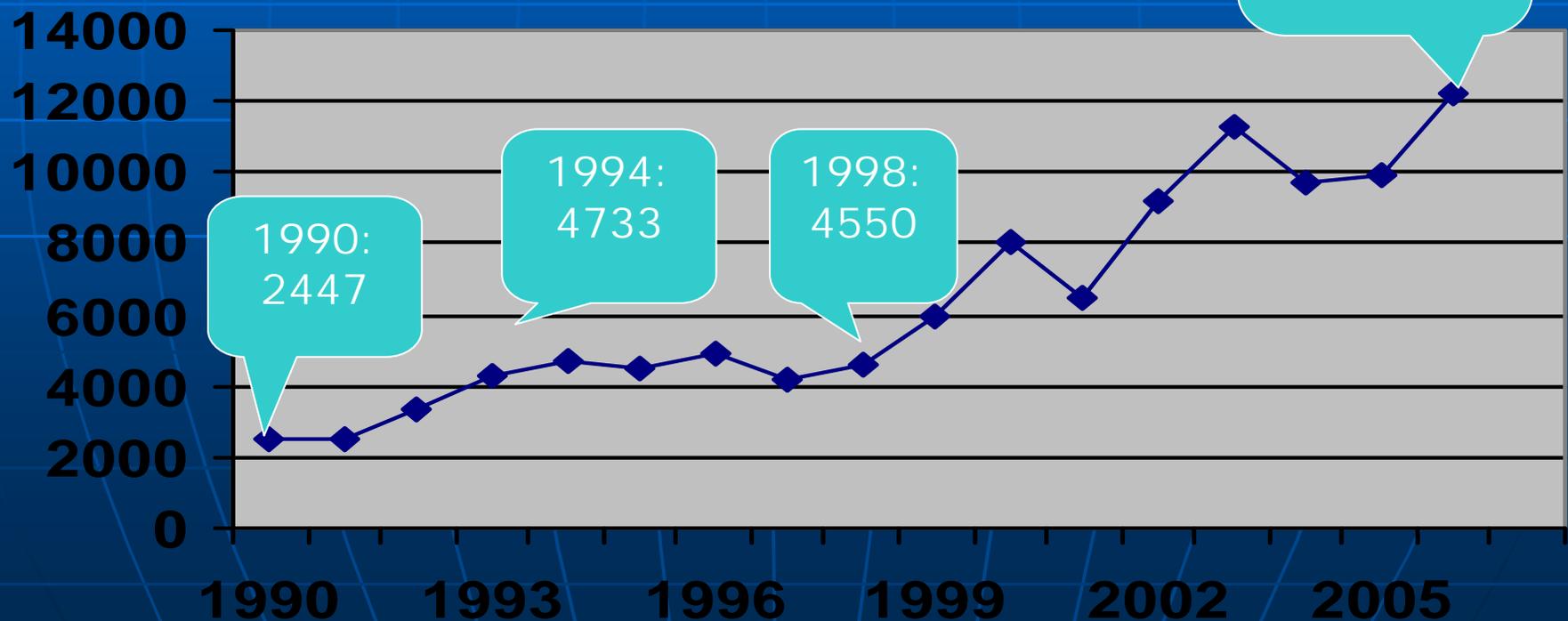
- Figures from the guerrilla become models: (*Che Guevara (jobs) Mission*"; monument to Che in Merida; "*Fabricio Ojeda*" endogenous mission; "*Argimiro Gabaldon*" Agriculture Center)
- The gunman who shot members of the opposition is called "Mr. Joao"
- The gunmen who fired in Puente Llaguno against the police on April 11, 2002 in front of television cameras have a monument built to honor them, while the police chiefs are in jail.
- The ward "Order of February 4" is created to commemorate those who fomented the coup  
( Gaceta oficial 38618, del 2/2/2007 creada por Decreto Presidencial con rango, valor y fuerza de ley N° 5.161)

# There has been action by the government to discredit and demoralize the police

- There have been continuous campaigns to discredit the police: *For months a film was publicized that contained a scene in which the police were called assassins, and it was never presented*
- The police of Caracas and Maracaibo were disarmed
- The gunmen who fired in Puente Llaguno against the police on April 11, 2002 in front of television cameras have a monument built to honor them, while the police chiefs are in jail
- -On July 14, 2007, the personnel of the investigative police (CIPC) held a raffle to collect funds to pay for the surgery of an officer

# This is what explains that excessive increase of homicides

## VENEZUELA: Homicidios 1990-2006



What must be done?

As a consequence: if the explanation has two levels, there must be two types of policies

- A policy for the factors that are common to the different countries in the levels that originate, foment or facilitate violence
- A policy of a political order, to restore the social pact, the capacity for governance, and coexistence

# The response of government should be different

- Clarity in policies toward violence
- Continuity of programs
- Actions involving prevention and repression
- Criticism of violent actions
- Censure of violent people
- Support to police forces

# Social and political harmony must be reinforced in the social pact

- Acceptance of the different other
- Non-violent mechanisms for conflict resolution
- Relevance of the law as abstract third party and not as personal will
- Restore the role of the state as arbiter that has the monopoly of violence



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