UNDER THE RADAR

Territorial and Regulatory Security Risks
in the Brazilian and Colombian Amazon

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Executive Summary

The Amazon faces a growing convergence of environmental, territorial, and governance threats — driven by illegal economies, extractive pressure, and weak state presence — that jeopardize sustainable development and climate goals. Addressing them requires strengthening territorial governance, empowering local and Indigenous communities, and aligning political ambition with the experience of those on the front lines.

Physical security threats, land tenure conflicts, environmental degradation, and weak state presence are among the most pressing challenges facing organizations working on the frontlines of the Amazon. These risks are compounded by global, regional, and national demand for commodities, including timber, gold, beef, and soy, which intensifies pressure on territories, undermines regulatory safeguards, and fuels predatory extractive practices.

In this context, physical threats represent just one manifestation of insecurity. Equally pervasive are the actions of criminal networks seeking to consolidate territorial control and political influence, often through intimidation, corruption, and the co-optation of local governance structures, shaping an "environmental crime ecosystem"[1] in which illegal economies, institutional capture, and environmental degradation mutually reinforce each other.

In Brazil, environmental and financial risks, especially illegal deforestation and funding instability, are dominant concerns. In Colombia, insecurity linked to criminal governance, illegal economies, and restricted mobility emerged as a top threat. Across both countries, civil society actors reported significantly higher exposure to territorial insecurity than their private sector counterparts, and consistently called for stronger institutions, improved governance, and inclusive development models rooted in local realities.

These findings are drawn from a structured online survey and a series of key informant interviews led by the Igarapé Institute between October 2024 and April 2025. The research sought to better assess the perceptions of risks and proposed solutions from research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and private sector actors active in the Amazon. In total, 33 semi-structured interviews were conducted between October 2024 and March 2025. Online surveys conducted in Colombia and Brazil between March and April 2025 yielded another 57 responses from Brazil and 31 from Colombia. Despite the modest sample size, the responses provide valuable qualitative insights into Amazonian security and sustainability, capturing both the systemic challenges faced and the strategies employed to navigate them.

Taken together, the findings underline how the Amazon is facing an escalating convergence of territorial, environmental, and governance risks that undermine sustainable development and long-term climate and biodiversity goals. The assessment highlights a number of interconnected policy recommendations, rooted in the lived experience and operational realities of individuals and organizations on the frontlines. These emphasize the urgent need to reinforce territorial governance through enhanced state presence, strengthened judicial capacity, and more effective enforcement of environmental and land tenure laws. At the same time, empowering Indigenous and local communities through legal recognition, participatory governance, and access to sustainable livelihoods is essential for fostering resilience and reducing vulnerability to criminal and extractive pressures.

Respondents consistently identified structural drivers such as land tenure insecurity, corruption, and regulatory fragmentation — especially acute in frontier border areas and territories affected by organized crime. To address these issues, the report calls for a dual strategy: strengthening formal institutions while embracing hybrid governance models that reflect local realities. Impact investors,

public authorities, and donors must also adapt, incorporating territorial and regulatory risk assessments into project planning and investing in capacity-building for project developers. Community-led monitoring, digital innovation, and strategic political commitments — such as the Belém Declaration, Brazil's Amazon Plan, and Colombia's *Visión Amazonía* — are seen as promising avenues for aligning environmental protection with rule of law and sustainable development.

The recommendations also underline the need to consider and confront more controversial or under-acknowledged dynamics, such as informal negotiations with armed actors and the normalization of extortion. These are symptoms of absent or weak governance, limited regulatory enforcement, and high levels of informality. Strategic and rights-based engagement, combined with robust safeguards and accountability mechanisms, is critical to managing these challenges without reinforcing illicit power structures. The Amazon's future depends on integrated, place-based, and high-integrity investments that bridge policy ambition with frontline operational knowledge. These recommendations are directed at national and subnational governments, philanthropic organizations, international donors, and above all, the communities who depend on and defend the forest.

Introduction

Protecting the Amazon and the people who depend on it requires a robust commitment to both the rule of law and the growth of a vibrant green economy. These objectives reinforce rather than undermine one another. Across the basin, public agencies, private enterprises, and civil society groups are increasingly mobilizing resources toward conservation, ecological restoration, and sustainable bioeconomic initiatives. Yet, investments in policing, judicial institutions, and human-rights protections remain woefully inadequate. Such neglect is hardly surprising: confronting organized crime and systemic corruption is politically sensitive and frequently avoided. But sidestepping these uncomfortable truths is hazardous. In Brazil, over 93% of deforestation in 2023 occurred without legal authorization, indicating a high prevalence of illegal deforestation activities.[2] In Colombia, a large share of deforestation is linked to illegal land appropriation, unauthorized road building, extensive cattle ranching, illicit crops, and unregulated mining — particularly on public lands such as protected areas and indigenous reserves.[3] These findings underscore the urgency of integrating security, transparency, and justice into any meaningful strategy to safeguard the region's future.

Several hurdles deter governments, companies, and philanthropists from strengthening the rule of law in the Amazon. Measures such as improved policing or judicial reform are often viewed as cost centers rather than value creators, and are thus left to under-resourced state institutions. Public-security initiatives also carry reputational and operational risks that make many investors cautious. Compounding these challenges is the vast scale and geographic complexity of the Amazon, an area larger than Western Europe, where maintaining a sustained physical presence of law enforcement is both costly and logistically daunting. In such a setting, conventional interpretations of the rule of law — centered on state authority,

institutional presence, and formal deterrence — often prove inadequate. At the same time, there is limited understanding of the breadth and depth of rule-of-law deficits: baseline assessments and ongoing monitoring are inconsistent, and due diligence tends to fixate narrowly on corruption or overt human rights violations such as slave labor. The result is that rule of law concerns are routinely sidelined, and their externalities written off as simply "the cost of doing business."

In response to mounting threats from organized crime and environmental crime, the Amazon Investor Coalition and the Igarapé Institute launched this comprehensive study of territorial and regulatory insecurity in the Brazilian and Colombian Amazon. Drawing on a desk review and expert interviews, the first section lays out a conceptual framework of key drivers and risks. Sections two and three examine these risks in Brazil and Colombia, respectively, based on key informant interviews with 33 practitioners. The fourth section summarizes the findings of a structured online survey of 88 respondents in both countries, focusing both on challenges and solutions. The report concludes with strategic recommendations for public, private and civil-society stakeholders.

Section I. Conceptualizing Insecurity Drivers and Risks

There are several drivers of territorial and regulatory insecurity in the Brazilian and Colombian Amazon. Based on a review of the literature, key informant interviews, and a short survey with selected stakeholders in Brazil and Colombia, eight stand out: political instability, weak economic conditions, institutional fragilities, uncertainty over land ownership, environmental disruptions, corruption and lack of transparency, tensions with Indigenous and local communities, and the presence and persistence of organized and interpersonal crime (Figure 1 and Annex 1). These eight drivers and risks served as a rudimentary framework for the assessment, helping to shape the design of interview guides and survey questionnaires. While not exhaustive, they provide an empirical foundation for the report's analysis and recommendations in the subsequent sections.

For the purposes of this assessment, "drivers" refer to entrenched, structural forces — such as political volatility, land ownership uncertainties, and corruption — that create fertile ground for territorial incursions and environmental harm, and demand systemic reform. By contrast, "risks" are more immediate and proximate events stemming from these drivers, including sudden leadership changes, violent intimidation by organized criminal networks, and opportunistic encroachment following new road openings. Risks can be anticipated and potentially mitigated through targeted measures, including, for example, the rapid deployment of law enforcement, temporary freezes on permits, or community-led conflict mediation. It is important to note that drivers and risks are not always mutually exclusive and often overlap, with certain structural drivers simultaneously manifesting as acute risks in a rapidly shifting territorial context.

Figure 1. Conceptualizing drivers and risks (generic)

Driver	Selected risk
Political instability	Regulatory and policy shifts, social protest and unrest, changes in leadership.
Weak economic conditions	Fluctuations in global commodity prices and exchange rates, uneven and poor infrastructure, poverty, inequality, and informality.
Regulatory weaknesses	Inconsistent and unclear regulation, lack of enforcement, co-optation of regulatory institutions.
Uncertainty over land ownership	Land tenure and ownership disputes, encroachment and occupation, absent or incomplete land registries.
Environmental disruptions	Illegal deforestation and degradation, biodiversity and conservation threats, climate change vulnerabilities, limited capacity to comply with climate and environmental standards.
Corruption and lack of transparency	Corruption in natural resource management, weak accountability and transparency, involvement of external state and non-state actors.
Tensions with Indigenous and traditional populations	Intra-community tensions over governance, social and community conflicts over land and resources.
Organized and interpersonal crime	Penetration and territorial control by organized crime networks, extent of environmental crime, incidence of extortion, harassment and intimidation, frequency of targeted violence against protected classes.

- **Political instability** often takes the form of abrupt changes in federal, state or municipal leadership. Such upheavals unsettle environmental and land rights policies, leaving conservation agencies and traditional communities in limbo.[4] They also trigger protests or unrest that can turn violent, deterring investment in nature-based solutions.[5]

- **Weak economic conditions —** notably dependence on volatile commodity markets, patchy infrastructure and high poverty — breeds social instability. Incomes in much of the Amazon hinge on informal, extractive activities that promise quick payoffs. This, in turn, fuels resistance to development models that yield slower, sustainable gains.[6]

- **Regulatory weaknesses** emerge especially when laws on land-use and environmental protection are poorly enforced. They may also be a result of conflicting court decisions and uneven penalization of infractions.[7] Gaps in regulation encourage land-grabbing, illegal logging and unregulated mining. Powerful actors, whether official or rogue, exploit these vacuums, eroding accountability and heightening conflict.[8]

- **Uncertain land tenure** stems from incomplete and missing registries, undesignated public forests, overlapping claims, and mistrust of authorities. Disputes among private firms, settlers, ranchers and Indigenous Peoples and local communities frequently escalate into legal battles or outright violence. Weak property rights enforcement further incentivizes unauthorized occupation.[9]

- **Environmental disruption** from agriculture, ranching, logging or mining can trigger local clashes and harsher crackdowns by security forces. Biodiversity loss raises tensions over resource access, delays projects and drives up compliance costs. Meanwhile climate shocks such as floods, droughts and rising temperatures compound these strains amid lax enforcement of environmental standards.[10]

- **Corruption and lack of transparency** fatally undermine rule-of-law measures. Fraud, collusion, money laundering, and conflicts of interest flourish in the absence of oversight. Restricted access to public information sows mismanagement and fuels community grievances, further eroding trust.[11]

- **Tensions with Indigenous and local communities** are exacerbated by historical grievances and external pressures from extractive industries. Poor consultation and disregard for free, prior, and informed consent often spark protests, court cases and project delays, including within communities themselves over leadership and resource-control disputes.[12]

- **Organized and environmental crime** acts as a destabilizing undercurrent. Drug-trafficking networks now increasingly traffic wood, gold and wildlife, financing themselves through extortion and corruption.[13] Their presence often involves collusion with corrupt officials, direct threats against human rights defenders, and chronic uncertainty over land governance, undermining any hope of lasting, nature-based investment.

Section II. Insecurity Drivers and Risks in the Brazilian Amazon

Brazil's territorial regulation in its 772 Amazonian municipalities is marked by striking particularities and challenges. This analysis draws on 17 key informant interviews with a cross-section of actors, including civil-society professionals, federal and state prosecutors, federal and military police, *quilombola*[14] and Indigenous leaders, academics and public managers from Pará, Amazonas, Acre, Rondônia and Maranhão.[15]

Despite boasting one of Latin America's most comprehensive legal frameworks to fight environmental crime — spanning municipal, state and federal levels — Brazil struggles to enforce its rules on the ground. As one federal police officer admitted: "Brazil's formal regulation is very good, Brazil is much better than other American countries in regulation. […] But in terms of state presence, which is the body to enforce these rules, we fail a lot. I arrive at these locations to conduct inspections, I take a long time to get there, when I arrive the guy hides and all I'm left with is burning illegal miners' shacks. The action on this is very inadequate."

Brazil's Legal Amazon presents a mosaic of regulatory realities. Urban centers and state capitals enjoy consolidated formal regulation, while remote rural areas — such as communities two days by boat from Itaituba, for example — are far more vulnerable to informal or illegal actors and economies. As a Public Ministry prosecutor explained: "There are regulatory gradients, it's not just one thing, but understand it as gradients. There are places where state facilities are more present, in capitals and surroundings, in some large municipalities. In these spaces, formal regulation happens. […] But if you go to Itaituba (Pará),

they're two days away by boat, there's no equipment available, the capital is far away. Then the informal takes over, if not the illegal."

Civil-society representatives further noted that "operational arrangements" often operate outside formal law. "The regulatory frameworks cannot regulate everything," said one. "There are things that have no rules and that you operate despite them; the irregular predominates." Even in better-served areas, governance gaps persist. A Pará State prosecutor recalled: "Influence peddling is a problem. That establishment is not inspected because the owner favours the local politician in some way. Helps in the campaign, helps in the election. He offers permits and licenses, but that's all he does. There is no inspection. There are instructions from superiors not to find that location. There are huge enterprises without any inspection."

Political resistance and interference in regulations from federal ministries down to municipal councils exacerbate these frailties. Executives and legislators routinely push to weaken environmental and land laws for short-term gain. As one public prosecutor warned: "State and municipal governors frequently issue normative acts to change the rules. The Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) needs to be alert to subsequently file for nullification of these acts and request a declaration of unconstitutionality. There was a state decree from the governor that almost completely excluded public participation in the councils that manage climate funds."

Digital divides in the Amazon compound these woes. With only 20% of Pará's municipalities offering online licensing, most applications still crawl through paper-based back offices, if they reach an office at all.[16] In practice, unauthorized outfits routinely peddle forged permits and deeds, while genuine applicants face opaque processes, unpredictable fees, and interminable waits. The opacity of land and license records not only stifles *bona fide* investment in sustainable

ventures, but also deprives governments of revenue and leaves local communities unable to vindicate their rights. The result is a grey economy built on legal fog, where the only certainty is uncertainty.

Land insecurity lies at the heart of the problem. Vast swathes remain without clear title, while overlapping claims, invasions and land grabbing stall orderly planning and embolden predatory actors. As one civil-society representative warned: "There are agrarian conflicts that are very present. These conflicts are historical and have guided actions for many years … Lack of land regularization in Brazil … leaves these territories threatened by invaders, land grabbing, by land concentrators."

Tangled claims, land-grabbing and vast unregistered estates have clouded tenure security, stalling any coherent land-use planning and, as interviewees note, fueled predatory practices and agrarian conflict. That legal haze also underwrites real-estate speculation and illicit clearing — proof that in the Amazon, land disputes and environmental degradation are inseparable.

Socioeconomic precarity and infrastructure gaps deepen that insecurity. The regional grid and road network were built to serve large agribusiness and hydroelectric schemes, while internet coverage remains sporadic.[17] Seasonal flooding can render roads impassable for weeks, excluding communities from basic services and formal markets. Faced with few viable alternatives, many turn to extractive or illicit livelihoods. As one interviewee noted: "The Amazon was thought of and structured for agro-exploitation and electrical energy — not for family farming. There are places that become inaccessible during the rainy season. Many places have no internet access. This impacts the eventual result of any investment." In this frontier vacuum, where state services are weak, monitoring is negligible, and accountability a distant promise, black markets flourish to meet local demand.[18]

Corruption and opacity compound enforcement gaps. Licensing and land-title processes are opaque, and understaffed municipalities lack the resources to inspect or guide applicants. Political interference ensures that well-connected operators escape scrutiny, while smallholders receive no support. In the words of a Public Ministry prosecutor: "[T]he system we have today favors informality, favors non-inspection, which is currently far below the level it should be, and becomes rigid at the wrong time. There are many small enterprises that would not cause degradation if they had more support — if they were guided."

Municipal regulators, hamstrung by understaffing, poor training, high turnover, and political meddling, often turn a blind eye to well-connected enterprises, privileging private gain over the public good. Meanwhile, endemic corruption across all levels of government corrodes efforts at land protection, conservation and regeneration.

Organized crime now permeates frontier economies. Criminal groups such as Comando Vermelho, the PCC and northern networks have diversified into illegal logging, gold mining and wildlife trafficking, often coercing locals and co-opting public officials. A federal prosecutor reported: "Our state is infested with criminal organizations … Here, mainly the CV [Comando Vermelho], it's the biggest operation. But there's also the PCC [Primeiro Comando Capital] and, to some extent, the northern factions."

Afro-Brazilian leaders, including *Quilombola* representatives, attest that even on demarcated lands, "informality and dispute prevail," while Indigenous communities struggle to contain traffickers despite having control over mining and forestry concessions.[19]

Frontline environmental defenders operate under constant threat. Brazil records one of the world's highest tallies of attacks on environmental advocates[20] — both physical and, increasingly, what many call "virtual death" by online harassment. A public official

observed: "Death is no longer just physical. Virtual death and massacres on social networks is currently very common."

Civil society representatives decry the absence of social-media regulation and warn of "virtual lynching" and "collective hatred," all while state protection schemes remain under-resourced. As one prosecutor adds: "The legal risk is that when working with administrative impropriety directly related to environmental law, one can suffer representation from those who have been fined."

Operational and institutional shortfalls also pose a risk to environmental protection and preservation measures. According to key informants, fuel allowances for patrols are meager, personnel are scarce, and communications blackout once teams leave urban centers. A Military Police officer in Rondônia recounted: "There is a lack of aircraft for inspections, a lack of means to move the troops. When we leave the urban areas, we no longer have radio, internet, or phones. We lose all communication and cannot request logistical support."

Along Brazil's porous borders, Indigenous groups are now forging their own alliances to defend their territories — testimony to the urgent need for a coordinated boost to both rule-of-law institutions and basic infrastructure. According to one civil society representative: "In border regions where there is no state presence, or where those present have no training, no conditions to act, no resources. It's the Indigenous peoples themselves who are trying to protect their territories. They are uniting with allies in the region to try to face this."

Figure 2. Summary of key risks and drivers identified by respondents in Brazil *(n=17)*

Risk	Description
Organized crime	Organized crime groups such as CV and the PCC now fuse drug-running with illegal logging and mining in border and protected zones, co-opting youth and corroding community security.
Climate shocks and stresses	Recurrent droughts and floods upend harvests, disrupt food supplies and mobility, and hit traditional communities hardest and disrupting access to basic services.
Threats to environmental defenders	Activists face physical attack, legal harassment and "virtual death" on social media, while patchy state protection leaves them exposed.
Escalating land conflicts	Territorial disputes among farmers, squatters and traditional communities spill into violence, especially on unregistered *quilombola* and Indigenous lands.
Operational weaknesses and limitations	Under-resourced agencies, with few officers and scant equipment, leave vast tracts beyond the reach of enforcement and monitoring.
Regulatory pressure and rollbacks	Political and commercial interests push to dilute environmental and land-use laws, clearing the way for predatory ventures.
Displacement of traditional communities	Indigenous, *quilombola* and riverside peoples are driven from ancestral lands by violence, economic pressure, and the collapse of basic services.

Driver	Description
Land tenure insecurity	Overlapping titles, land-grabbing and vast unregistered estates sow confusion, stall land-use planning, and fuel predation and agrarian strife.
Socioeconomic and infrastructure deficit	Sparse health, education and sanitation services — coupled with unreliable power, roads, and internet — push locals into extractive or illicit livelihoods.
Corruption and lack of accountability	Opaque licensing and politicised enforcement let well-connected operators evade scrutiny, skew priorities towards private gain, and erode trust in state institutions.
Institutional fragility	Weak state presence, high staff turnover, and manual processes hamper oversight. Few digital systems exist to streamline licensing, track infractions, or provide online records of land ownership to ensure greater security against land grabbing and overlapping land claims.
Political resistance to regulation	Politicians and business lobbies routinely seek to weaken environmental safeguards, delaying or diluting regulations and undermining effective implementation.
Political interference in enforcement and control agencies	Local power brokers exert pressure on enforcement agencies, subordinating technical decisions to partisan interests and curbing autonomous supervision.

Section III. Insecurity Drivers and Risks in the Colombian Amazon

Colombia faces a complex set of regulatory and territorial challenges across its 61 municipalities and 18 special territories (non-municipalized areas)[21]. The following assessment is based on 16 key informant interviews with a diverse group of respondents, including the armed forces, the Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of the Environment, research centers, Indigenous and community leaders, and researchers from several departments, including Amazonas, Caquetá, Guainía, Guaviare, Meta, Putumayo, and Vaupés.[22]

Governance in the Colombian Amazon is at a critical juncture, beset by volatile power dynamics, entrenched criminal factions, and a patchwork of formal and informal rules. Civil society leaders, government officials, and international cooperation agencies agree this is one of the most difficult moments in decades to work in the region. "In the thirty years I've been in the Amazon, this is the first time we've had to evacuate staff for security reasons," said one environmental leader.

As in Brazil, the weak enforcement of regulations forces stakeholders to navigate a complex environment where formal governance structures coexist with illegal and informal systems. Infrastructure deficits and logistical barriers — especially the lack of access to remote areas — further compound these governance gaps, preventing meaningful state presence and control. Security dynamics have long been difficult, but the situation is now being further destabilized by the adaptive behavior of criminal groups. These groups continuously reshape the rules of engagement, impose new forms of territorial control, and co-opt state projects and public investments. "In

zones under the influence of Farc dissidents,[23] only the projects they approve can move forward," noted a practitioner working on community-led initiatives.

The archipelago of regulations and rules varies sharply by region due to inconsistent state presence, socio-economic disparities and the influence of illegal armed groups. In zones long under Farc sway, a single set of guerrilla-imposed directives once held sway. Today, however, multiple groups impose divergent codes — some grudgingly tolerate state programs, while others crush them. The upshot is an unpredictable terrain where government authorities, illegal armed actors, and informal community institutions jostle for supremacy. Criminal factions deepen economic volatility and environmental harm by illegally mining gold, logging timber without permits and extorting local businesses and farmers.

The Colombian Amazon's social fabric complicates the application of any single governance model. While the state's historical presence has been weak, Indigenous peoples and local community organizations have developed their own governance systems. These frameworks have proven resilient and, in many cases, more effective at managing resources and protecting territories. Nonetheless, they are increasingly undermined by the encroachment of illegal actors. Although the Colombian Constitutional Court's 2018 ruling recognizing the Amazon as a subject of rights was a landmark legal achievement, its enforcement remains tenuous.[24] In many Indigenous territories, formal and customary governance now coexist with criminal pressures, eroding their authority.

A curious paradox grips the region. State bodies, donors and NGOs pour resources into coordination platforms, strategic plans and multi-stakeholder initiatives and yet illicit economies persist and adapt with ease. Every newly minted policy seems to spur not compliance, but rather innovations in criminal practice. The persistent gap between policy development and enforcement renders

many legal frameworks ineffective, leaving communities and ecosystems vulnerable. Failure to integrate public-security, judicial reform and human-rights measures demands a wholesale rethink of rule-of-law strategies; without swift, coordinated intervention, the Amazon hurtles toward an ecological and social tipping point, imperiling its forests and the millions who depend on them.

The Amazon faces significant risks from illegal deforestation, driven by cattle ranching, land grabbing, criminal networks, and extractive activities such as illegal mining. Weak government responses, and the co-optation of local institutions by some elites,[25] exacerbate latent social tensions and environmental degradation.[26]

Tensions within Indigenous and local communities, fueled by resource influxes and mismanagement, further destabilize the region. Extortion by criminal factions also threatens both local projects and investments. Combined with the pressures of global commodity demand and transnational crime, these factors create a complex and unstable environment that hinders sustainable development and investment across the region.[27]

Organized crime and armed groups now dominate swaths of the Colombian Amazon, imposing a kind of parallel or "criminal" governance through extortion, checkpoints and veto power over projects. Many are exercising functions ordinarily imposed by the state including mobility restrictions, control over project implementation, and the collection of (illegal) rents. "This slows everything down," one environmental worker shared. "People become afraid and stop participating."

Bankrolled by illicit trades in drugs, timber and gold, these groups sideline official authorities and, in some cases, co-opt community leaders and Indigenous guardians alike. Factional infighting and *ad hoc* ceasefires further hobble any consistent enforcement, while armed groups wield deforestation as a bargaining chip in dealings with Bogotá.

Despite upgraded monitoring systems and enhanced regulatory tools, national and state agencies lack both strategic direction and on-the-ground presence to push back. Ill-equipped military troops and police are spread thin and lack adequate mobility and resources and, worst of all, the Amazon remains a low priority for both.

Weak transnational governance mechanisms and inconsistent domestic regulations further exacerbate these risks. The lack of robust international frameworks to combat environmental crimes allows illegal resources, such as gold, to flow into global markets through countries with lax regulatory controls, increasing reputational hazards for investors.

At the national level, unclear and inconsistent regulations undermine institutional trust and complicate compliance, particularly in Indigenous territories and border regions. For example, the absence of coherent carbon market regulations leaves communities vulnerable and enables companies to operate under self-defined rules.

Economic precarity and infrastructure deficits are closely tied to the limited state presence. The region lacks basic conditions to support long-term, large-scale alternatives to illegal economies, such as sustainable forestry, ecotourism, or bioeconomic ventures. "There are small, scattered initiatives," explained one development official, "but they're not enough to change the trajectory." Without targeted public investment and locally adapted policies, community resilience remains out of reach.

Meanwhile, informal and illegal road construction has opened deep forest frontiers to waves of settlers, facilitating the arrival of new settlements and extractive activities that accelerate deforestation. Armed groups, seizing the initiative, outpace government surveyors in land registration and planning, sowing fresh tensions.

Many smallholders and farmers see agrarian reform and programs such as the Comprehensive Rural Reform[28] as an opportunity to gain access to land and improve their livelihoods, although progress has been limited, Indigenous peoples, for their part, continue to push for the expansion and legal recognition of their territories, in some cases backed by court rulings. A key instrument for both — the Multipurpose Cadastre,[29] designed to update and clarify land ownership records — remains far from full implementation, perpetuating tenure insecurity and hindering territorial planning.

Regulatory frailties across the Colombian Amazon blunt the state's enforcement capacity, allowing illicit actors to flout formal mandates. New environmental statutes have made some progress, patchy implementation and scant resourcing have left them hollow. In most frontier provinces, institutional footprints are ghostly: judges, rangers, and prosecutors lack the teeth to sanction violators or dismantle criminal rings. Ill-equipped security forces, hamstrung by poor mobility, meager budgets, and an urban-centric mandate, leave the region's illegal economies largely unchecked.

Figure 3. Summary of key risks and drivers identified by respondents in Colombia *(n=16)*

Risk	Description
Criminal governance and territorial control	In several territories, armed groups and criminal networks exercise social and territorial control through extortion payments, mobility restrictions, and the imposition of vetoes on external initiatives. These dynamics, combined with internal disputes and opaque leadership structures, generate high levels of uncertainty and risk for project implementation, service delivery, and local governance.
Illegal deforestation	Rampant land grabbing and forest clearing pressures communities and fragments habitat, while government responses remain piecemeal, under-resourced, and lacking a unified strategy.
Extortion and intimidation	Criminal networks extort and siphon funds from Indigenous communities, farmers, and local businesses. They may also force investors and large firms to factor protection payments and private security into their operating costs.
Environmental crime and illegal economies	Surging gold prices fuel unregulated mining, driving rapid deforestation, undermining legal economies, and severing the Andes-Amazon ecological corridor. This activity erodes legal economies, finances criminal networks, and fragments essential ecological corridors that connect the Andes to the Amazon.
Capture of regulatory institutions	Local elites tied to land grabs and illicit economies skew licensing and enforcement decisions to protect their interests, eroding environmental governance.
Intra-community governance tensions	Influxes of project revenues — such as carbon-credit payments — can spark disputes over fund allocation and leadership within Indigenous and traditional communities.
Enforcement deficits	The state lacks strategic direction and capacity: under-resourced security forces and scant mobility leave vast areas effectively outside the rule of law.

Driver	Description
Regulatory frailty	New environmental laws exist, but patchy roll-outs, minimal staffing, and weak sanctioning power over criminal networks and environmental crimes render them largely symbolic.
Economic and infrastructure deficits	Sparse roads, power and digital networks — and the absence of large-scale project infrastructure — stymie bioeconomies and sustainable forestry, trapping communities in extractive livelihoods.
Corruption and opacity	Opaque carbon-credit schemes and "nature-based solutions" can breed mistrust as communities fail to see promised benefits. Bioeconomy initiatives may also lack clarity in their administration.
Commodity-driven demand	Global appetites for beef, cocaine, timber, and gold fuel land-use change and deforestation, exposing investors to regulatory and reputational risks. Weak enforcement of commitments to deforestation-free supply chains exacerbates these issues.
Transnational environmental crime	Cross-border criminal organizations blend illicit trades (mining, logging, poaching, and drug trafficking) with legal investments to launder profits, entrenching a parallel "criminal governance" in the Amazon.
Weak transnational governance	The absence of robust international frameworks against environmental crime lets illegally sourced resources slip into global markets. Weak cross-border cooperation further emboldens criminal networks.
Regulatory inconsistency	Fluctuating and overlapping rules across national statutes, Indigenous norms and municipal bylaws confuse enforcement and erode institutional trust.

Section IV. Mapping Territorial and Regulatory Security Risks

The Amazon is confronting an array of complex territorial and regulatory security challenges. To better understand and address these threats, a structured online survey was conducted between March and April 2025 among strategically selected respondents from Brazil and Colombia. Administered in Portuguese and Spanish,[30] the survey was designed to systematically gather actionable intelligence on security dynamics, identify critical risks and underlying drivers, and — crucially — document practical strategies employed by local stakeholders to mitigate these threats. Two primary respondent groups were targeted: research institutions and non-governmental organizations, as well as private entrepreneurs and business leaders active in the region.

The survey reached 550 individuals in Brazil and 217 in Colombia, yielding 57 completed responses from Brazil and an additional 31 from Colombia, providing essential perspectives from those at the frontline of Amazonian security and sustainability.[31] While the sample size and response rates are limited — constraining broad statistical generalizations — the findings nonetheless offer valuable qualitative and descriptive insights. They shed light on the lived experiences and strategic perspectives of experts and practitioners operating in often-neglected and highly vulnerable areas of the Amazon.

In Brazil, survey participants were predominantly concentrated in the nine states comprising the Legal Amazon, especially Amazonas and Pará.[32] Respondents from Amazonas were based in major urban centers like Manaus and strategically significant river basins such as the Juruá and the Purus.[33] Those from Pará were primarily connected to

initiatives in territories such as Belém, Marabá, Santarém, and Alter do Chão, as well as the Tapajós basin, Xingu territories, Nordeste Paraense, and the Marajó archipelago. There were fewer respondents from Acre, Amapá, Rondônia, and Roraima, with most working primarily in key ecological corridors. Respondents from Maranhão, Tocantins, and Mato Grosso were also involved, with some claiming to operate in transitional zones between the Amazon and Cerrado biomes. Additionally, a number of responses referenced operations in non-Amazonian areas, notably São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Bahia, and Rio Grande do Sul, reflecting broader national networks and organizational headquarters located outside the Amazon region.

In Colombia, the majority of respondents reported activities predominantly focused within the Amazonian departments. Amazonas was highlighted, with numerous projects centered around Leticia and cross-border ecological initiatives. Caquetá was also singled out as a critical region for sustainable land use and conservation efforts, particularly along the Caquetá river, including areas such as El Doncello and Puerto Córdoba. Respondents also reported activities in Guaviare, Putumayo, and Meta, in initiatives related to forest governance, Indigenous territories, and sustainable resource management. Departments like Guainía, Vaupés, and Vichada feature mainly in regional or cross-departmental initiatives. A smaller group of respondents operated from non-Amazonian departments such as Antioquia, Cundinamarca, Cesar, Córdoba, Valle del Cauca, Atlántico, and Nariño, coordinating national-level programs or facilitating Amazon-oriented efforts remotely.

Survey Findings from Brazil

Over half of Brazilian respondents expressed acute concerns about their safety in operational territories across the Amazon: 56% reported feeling unsafe, and an additional 12% said they feel very unsafe (see Figure 4). Alarmingly, perceptions of insecurity were especially pronounced among civil society groups (including non-governmental organizations - NGOs) and research institutions, where approximately two-thirds (66%) reported elevated apprehension. By contrast, private sector respondents displayed a somewhat lower sense of vulnerability, with 37% characterizing their security situation as neutral, highlighting divergent perceptions of risk shaped by differing roles, levels of exposure, and proximity to threats on the ground.

Figure 4. How safe do you consider the geographic areas in the Amazon where your organization operates? *(n=57)*
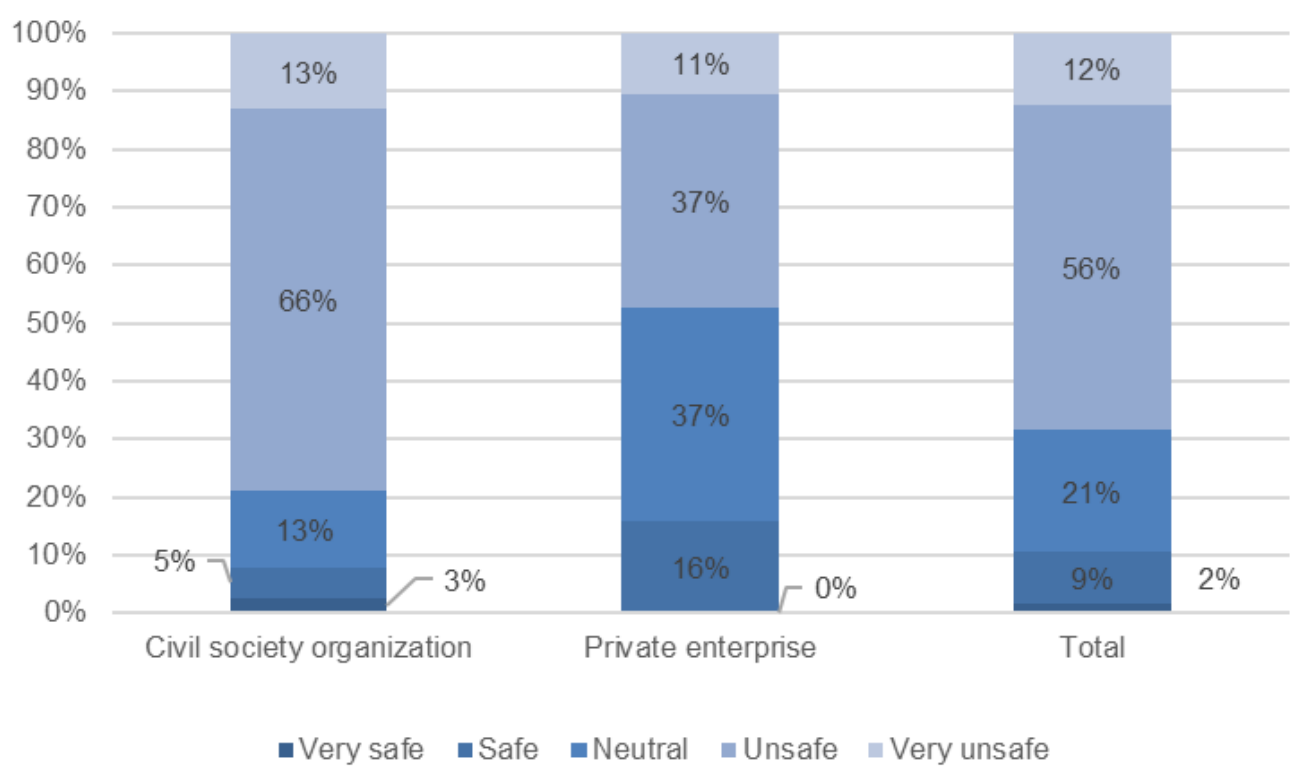
Brazilian respondents provided revealing insights when asked which actors most significantly shape security dynamics in territories where they operate. Using a scale from 1 (no influence) to 5 (highly influential), respondents ranked local political authorities as having the greatest sway, followed by state and national governments (see Figure 5). Indigenous organizations and official security forces were also commanded with substantial influence while state security forces were ranked lower. Notably, illegal armed groups were also ranked comparatively high underscoring a troubling reality. These findings vividly illustrate the complex interplay shaping security in the Amazon, a contested landscape where formal governance, Indigenous leadership, state security apparatuses, and illicit entities coexist in a delicate and frequently volatile balance.

Figure 5. Which actors have the most significant influence on the security dynamics of the geographic areas where your organization operates (for better or worse)? *(n=57)*
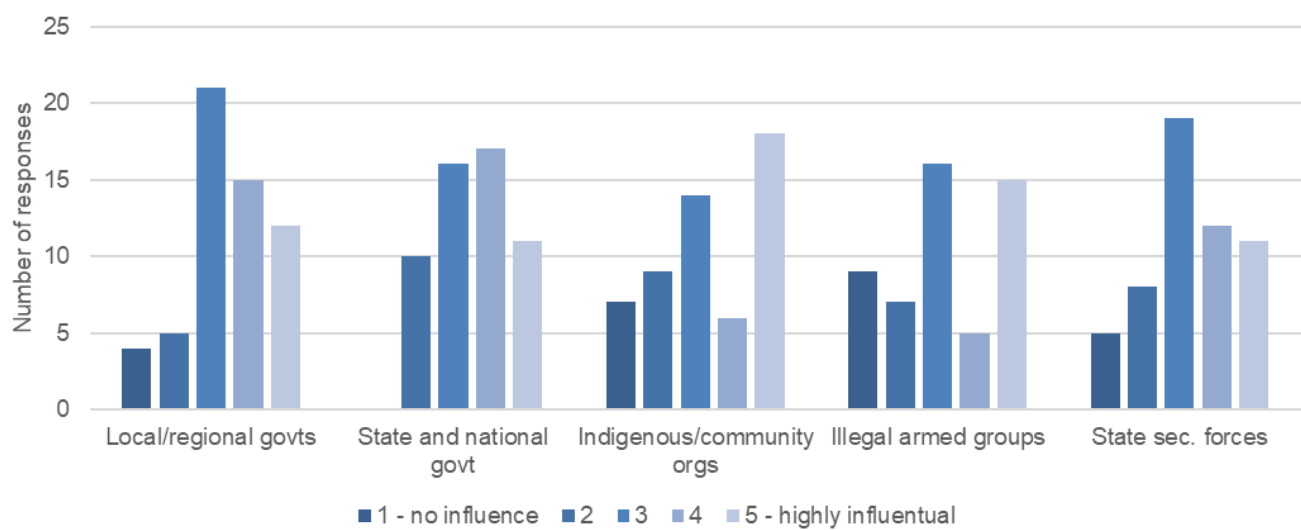
When asked to identify the most significant risks impacting their operations in the Amazon region, respondents most frequently cited environmental risks — including natural disasters, climate change, and environmental degradation — as their primary concern (44 out of 57 respondents). Financial risks, encompassing economic instability, funding shortages, and cash-flow disruptions, closely followed with 42 mentions. Security risks, involving threats from crime, violence, and political instability, were highlighted by 33 respondents. Other risk categories were less frequently cited but still notably: legal risks, such as lawsuits or contractual disputes, were mentioned by 21 respondents; reputational risks and market risks, each cited by 18 respondents, involved concerns about negative publicity and changing economic conditions, respectively. Regulatory risks linked to penalties or policy non-compliance were the least frequently reported, appearing in just 13 responses (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. What are the most significant types of risks that are/could impact your organization's operations in the projects and initiatives you develop in the Amazon region? *(n=189)*
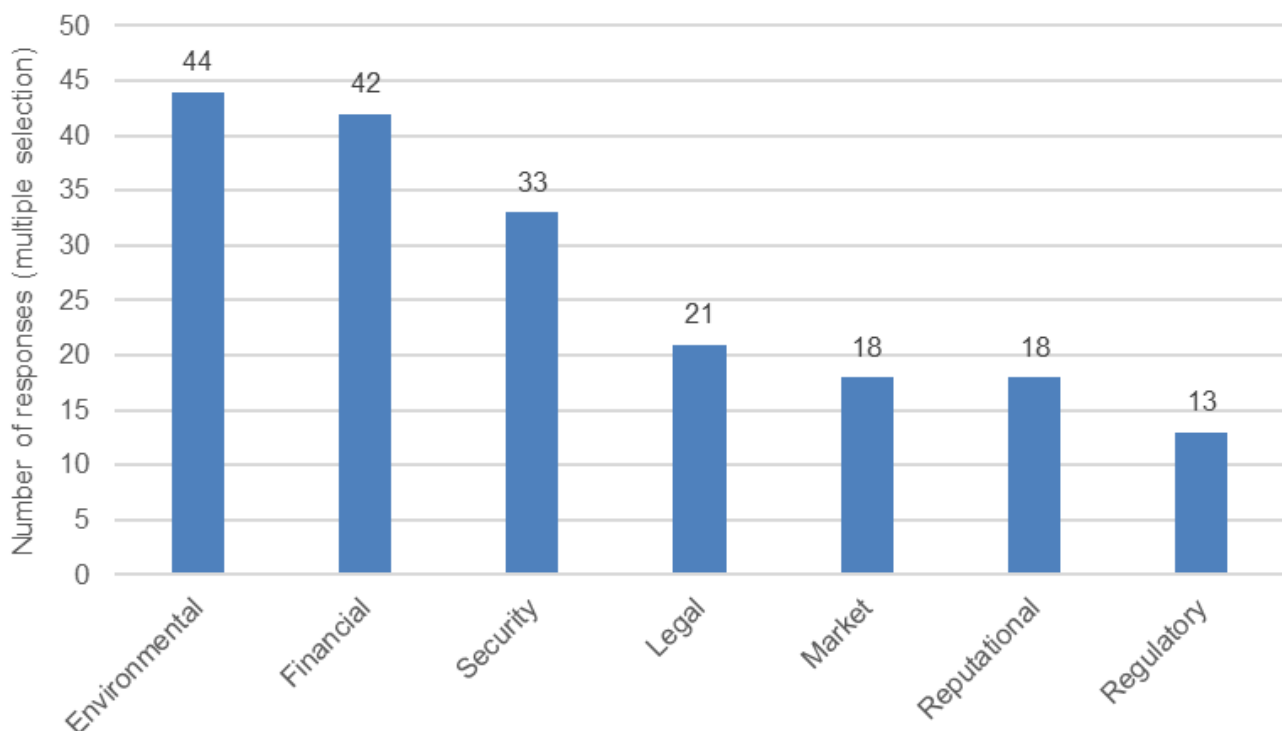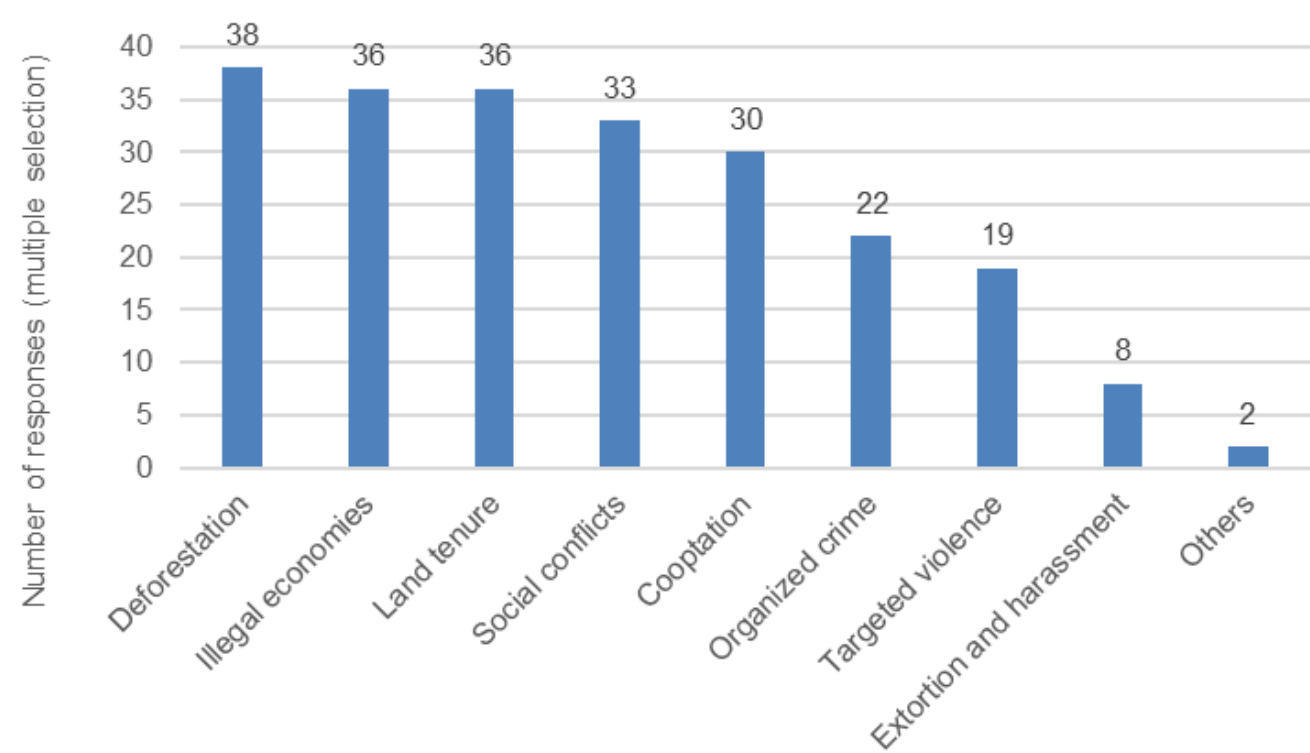

Note: Respondents were allowed to select one or more options.

Organizations operating in the Brazilian Amazon identify illegal deforestation related to unregulated logging, land clearing, and resource extraction as their most pressing security risk, cited by 38 of 57 respondents. They also frequently highlighted a range of interconnected concerns: land tenure and legal uncertainty, driven by overlapping claims or unclear property rights; illegal economies tied to drug trafficking, illegal mining, and wildlife trade; elite capture and co-optation of local regulatory institutions; and social conflicts, especially disputes over land use with Indigenous and local communities. Direct threats related to territorial control by armed groups or organized crime, including targeted violence, extortion, harassment, and intimidation were reported less frequently, suggesting that while serious, they are typically more localized and context-specific to regions where these organizations operate (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. What are the primary security risks that directly impact your organization's activities? *(n=224)*
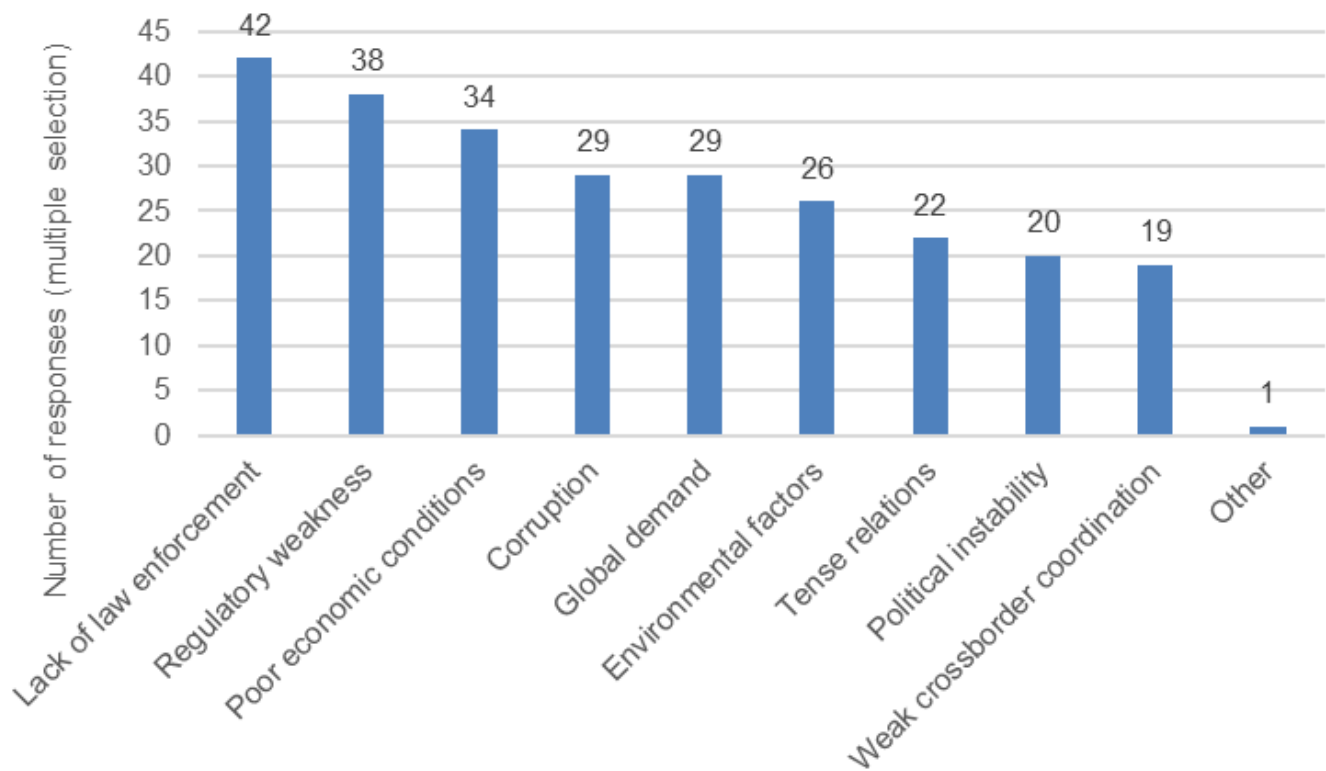

Note: Respondents were allowed to select one or more options.

Brazilian respondents clearly identify Amazon's security risks as deeply rooted in institutional weaknesses. The lack of law enforcement, cited by 42 out of 57 respondents, emerged as the principal driver of insecurity (see Figure 8). Closely associated drivers include regulatory weakness, marked by inadequate or poorly enforced legal frameworks, and widespread economic precarity, characterized by poverty, unemployment, and deficient infrastructure. Respondents also pointed prominently to corruption and lack of transparency, noting how bribery and compromised accountability erode governance and exacerbate vulnerability. Other issues such as tensions with Indigenous and local communities, limited cross-border coordination, and political instability were mentioned less frequently. While still relevant, these risks appear more localized or context-specific when compared to the broader structural and governance deficits.

**Figure 8.** What are the main drivers of these risks? *(n=260)*

Note: Respondents were allowed to select one or more options.

When asked how the above-mentioned risks impact their organization's activities (Figure 9), Brazilian respondents overwhelmingly reported that security, regulatory, and environmental risks most frequently result in project or program delays. At least 43 of 57 respondents observed that such instability disrupted implementation timelines and planning. Closely related consequences include increased operational costs, as organizations are forced to adapt to volatile conditions, and restricted mobility of staff, resources, and products, reflecting tangible logistical and safety constraints. Less commonly, though still notably, respondents identified impacts such as obstructed access to beneficiaries, difficulties in securing funding, and complex legal or compliance challenges, all of which add to the operational burdens. Together, these impacts vividly illustrate how persistent insecurity and instability substantially compromise operational efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability in the Amazon.

**Figure 9.** How do these risks impact your organization's activities *(n=196)*
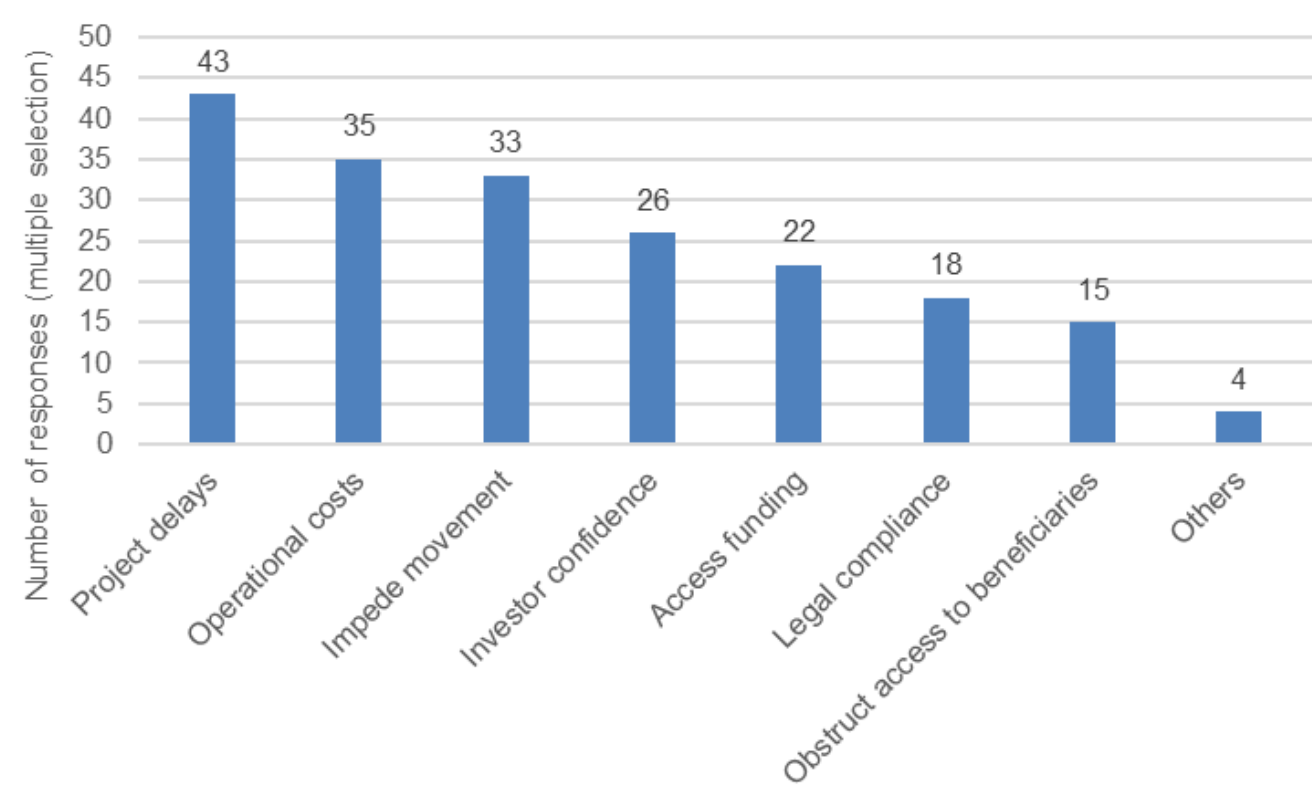
Note: Respondents were allowed to select one or more options.

Responses reveal a highly uneven landscape of collaboration on security challenges in the Amazon. NGOs emerged as the most consistently engaged actors: 46% of respondents reported they "always" collaborate with them, while only 5% said they "never" do (see Figure 10). Conversely, cooperation with private security firms is strikingly rare, with 78% stating they "never" engage with these actors, underscoring their minimal role in addressing regional insecurity. Relationships with public security forces, including police and military, remain notably weak: 86% reported that such collaboration occurs only "sometimes" or "never," highlighting limited institutional alignment. Interactions with elected political authorities appear irregular and unsystematic, with the most common response being "sometimes" (39%). Engagement with public prosecutors varied considerably across respondents, reflecting diverse and context-dependent relationships.

Figure 10. How often does your organization collaborate with the following actors to address security challenges? *(n=57)*
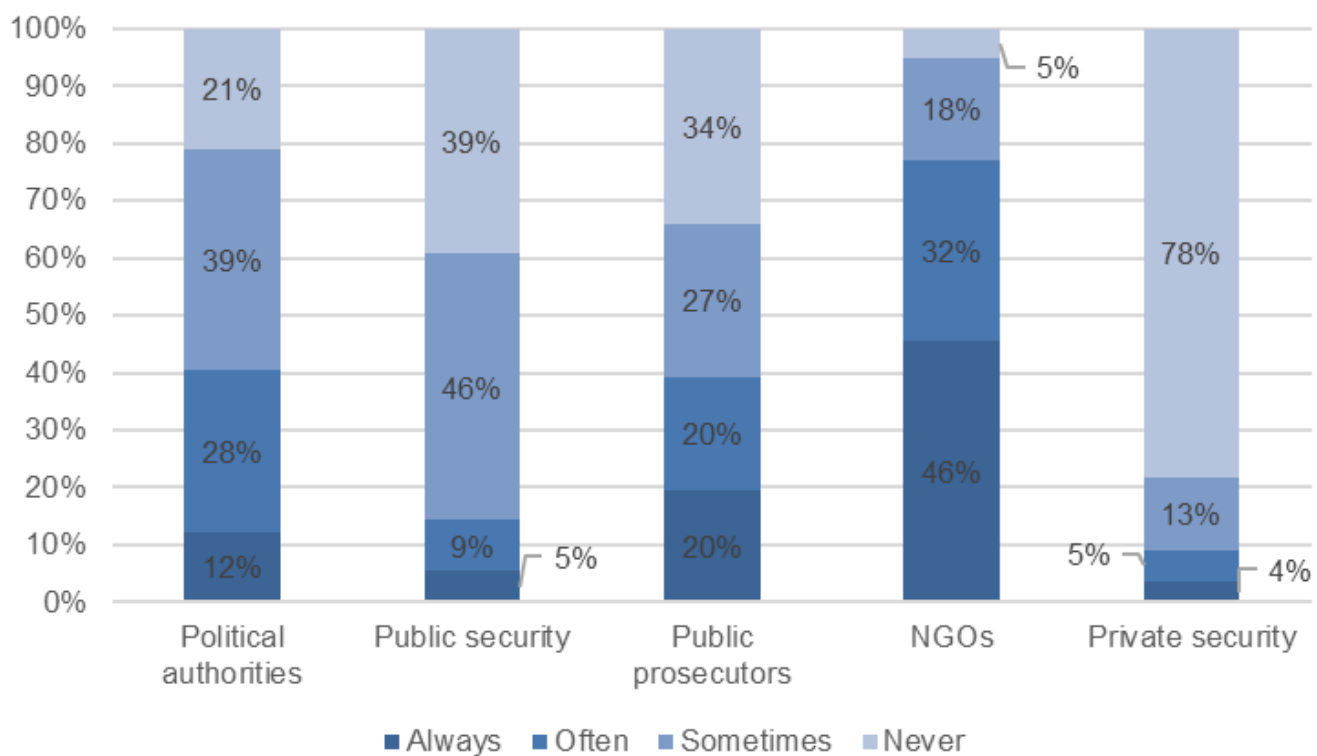
Respondents clearly prioritize local political actors as the most critical players in advancing security and the rule of law in the Amazon, selected by 42 out of 57 participants, followed closely by formal judicial entities — including prosecutors, judges, public defenders and law enforcement personnel — underscoring the perceived centrality of official state institutions (see Figure 11). In contrast, Indigenous and community-based organizations, as well as domestic and international NGOs, were notably less cited, indicating that despite their active presence and frequent collaboration, they are viewed as less structurally influential. Military actors, despite their territorial presence, ranked among the least selected. This gap between the frequency of engagement with grassroots and NGO actors and their perceived influence over governance and security outcomes reveals an underlying acknowledgment by respondents: however challenging, strengthening cooperation with formal political and judicial institutions is seen as essential.

Figure 11. Select the top 3 most critical actors involved in promoting security and the rule of law in areas where your organization operates *(n=176)*
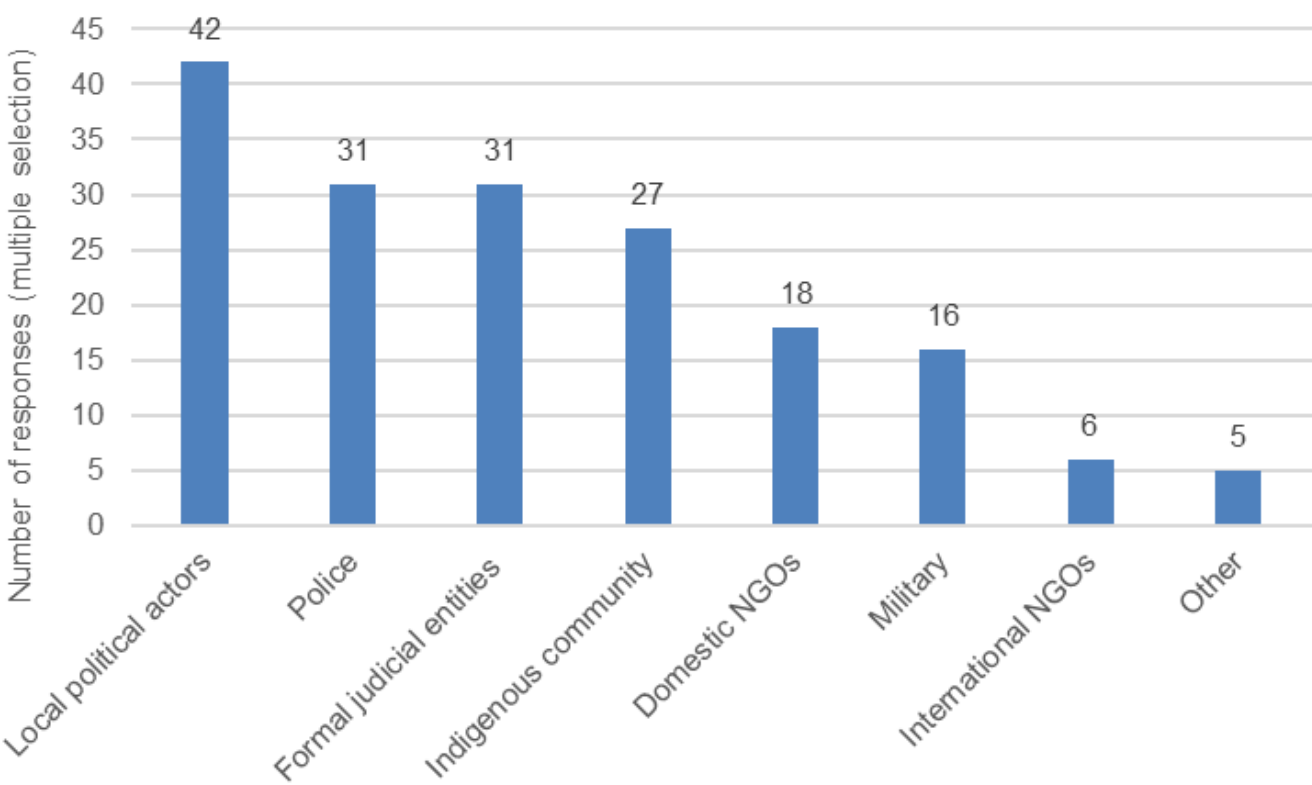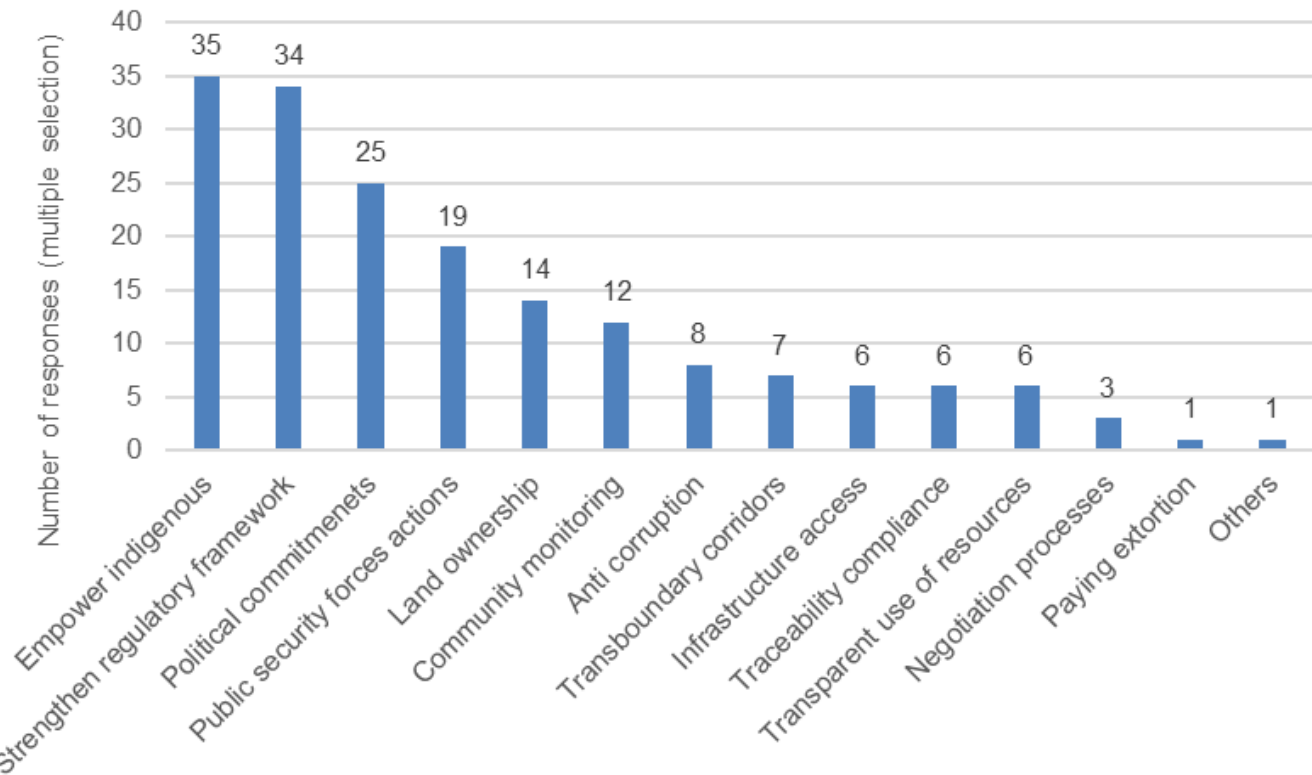

Note: Respondents were allowed to select one or more options.

Brazilian respondents emphasized structural and institutional solutions as the most effective means of mitigating security risks in the Amazon (Figure 12). They highlighted empowerment of Indigenous and local communities, the strengthening of environmental regulatory frameworks, and sustained political commitment across regional, national, and subnational levels. Significantly, informal or extralegal approaches such as negotiating with armed groups or succumbing to extortion were overwhelmingly rejected, with only a single respondent endorsing these strategies. This preference clearly underscores a collective vision in which sustainable security is inseparable from inclusive governance, robust legal institutions, and meaningful community participation, rather than reliance on short-term or coercive measures.

Figure 12. Select the top 3 most effective actions that help mitigate security risks that could affect your activities *(n=176)*


Note: Respondents were allowed to select one or more options.

Respondents clearly emphasize the need for a comprehensive reinforcement of governance and security structures in the Amazon, highlighting improved law enforcement, judicial rigor, intelligence capabilities, and territorial monitoring as urgent priorities (Figure 13).[34] Recommendations consistently call for a stronger and coordinated state presence across federal, state, and local authorities, particularly in Indigenous and protected areas and strategic border regions. Enhanced transparency in managing security resources, curbing corruption, and strengthening accountability mechanisms were also underscored as essential to effective governance. Additionally, respondents stressed the imperative of protecting environmental and human rights defenders, reinforcing public services in neglected territories, and ratifying international environmental agreements to bolster legitimacy and efficacy.

Figure 13. If you could make recommendations to federal, state or local authorities, can you specify up to 3 actions that could address drivers of insecurity in areas where your organization operates? Summary of 81 responses into thematic areas
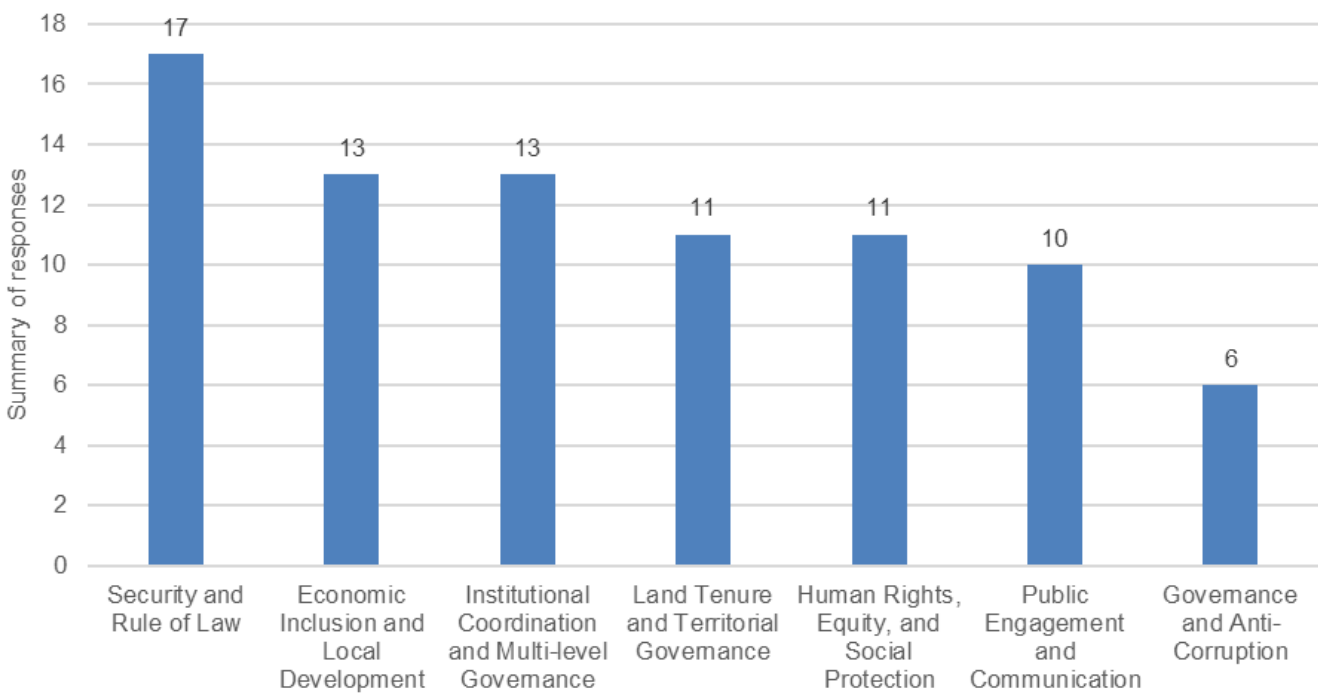
Alongside institutional reinforcement, respondents advocated extensively for inclusive and sustainable economic development as a cornerstone of long-term stability. Proposals included targeted investments in infrastructure, education, and viable economic alternatives that empower local communities, cooperatives, and particularly women-led initiatives. Accelerating land titling, resolving land disputes, and clarifying territorial governance emerged as critical actions to mitigate conflicts and ensure sustainable resource management. Respondents also emphasized the importance of bottom-up community engagement, stronger local leadership, the incorporation of traditional knowledge, and robust citizen oversight mechanisms as necessary strategies for achieving meaningful and enduring security in the region.

Survey Findings from Colombia

In Colombia, perceptions of insecurity among stakeholders operating in vulnerable territories are significant, although comparatively lower than reported in Brazil. Overall, 39% of Colombian respondents reported feeling unsafe and another 16% very unsafe, compared to Brazil's higher figures of 56% (unsafe) and 12% (very unsafe), as shown in Figure 14. Notably, civil society organizations in Colombia experience elevated insecurity, with 47% feeling unsafe and 11% very unsafe, markedly higher than their private-sector counterparts (25% unsafe, 25% very unsafe). This pattern echoes conditions in Brazil, underscoring that civil society actors across both nations consistently face greater exposure and vulnerability to territorial risks, despite country-specific variations in overall perceived security levels.

Figure 14. How safe do you consider the geographic areas in the Amazon where your organization operates? *(n=31)*
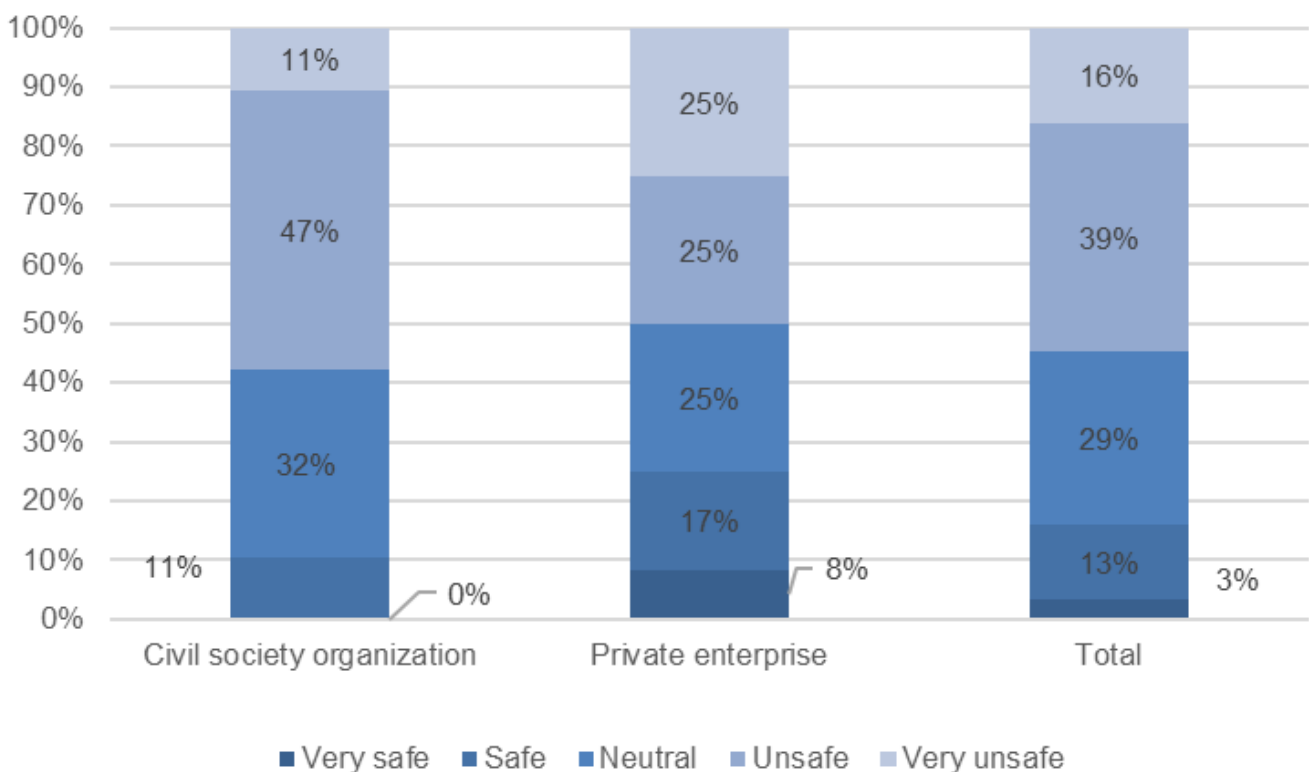
In Colombia, the security landscape is largely shaped by illegal armed groups, which respondents identified as the most influential, closely followed by Indigenous communities (see Figure 15). In contrast, formal institutions — including local authorities, and especially state and national governments — were rated as less influential. This stands in marked contrast to Brazil, where respondents consistently placed state institutions and local political actors at the forefront. The Colombian case thus underscores a governance scenario where non-state actors and community structures, rather than formal authorities, define the realities of territorial security and stability, highlighting a critical divergence between the two Amazonian contexts.

Figure 15. Which actors have the most significant influence on the security dynamics of the geographic areas where your organization operates (for better or worse)? *(n=31)*
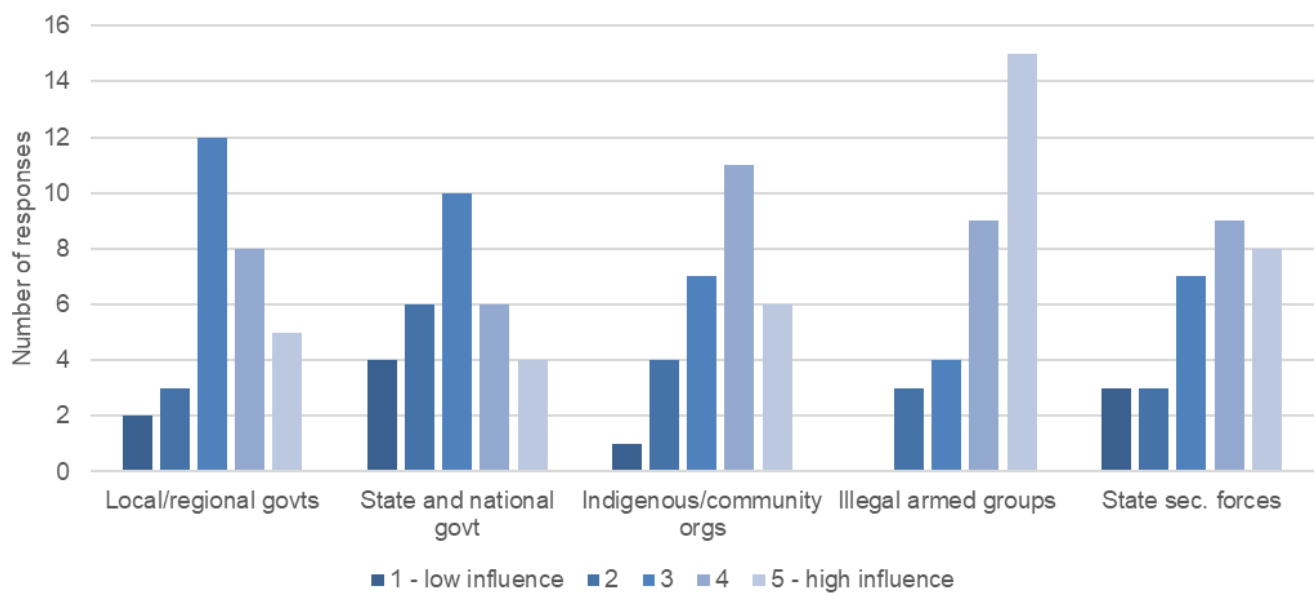
In Colombia, respondents emphasized security threats — including violence and crime, to political instability — as the most significant risks in the Amazon, cited by 23 participants (see Figure 16). Financial vulnerabilities, such as economic instability and funding shortfalls, followed closely (20 responses), while environmental risks, including natural disasters and climate-driven disruptions, were also prominently mentioned (18 responses).

Market (12) and regulatory risks (9) appeared less frequently, with legal and reputational issues cited least. This pattern contrasts with Brazil, where environmental and financial concerns predominate, underlining Colombia's heightened vulnerability to violence, the prevalence of illicit markets, and political volatility, reflecting distinct territorial dynamics and governance challenges across the Amazon basin.

Figure 16. What are the most significant types of risks that are/could impact your organization's operations in the projects and initiatives you develop in the Amazon region? *(n=96)*
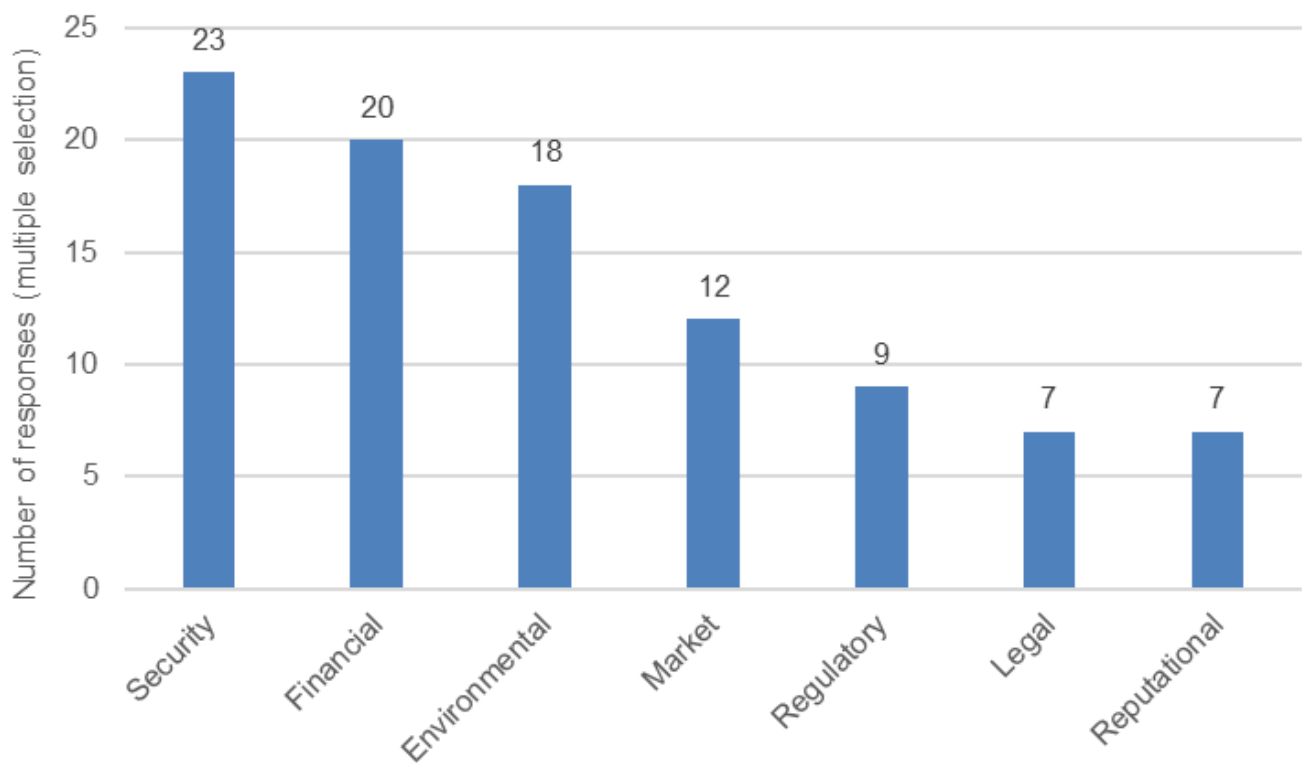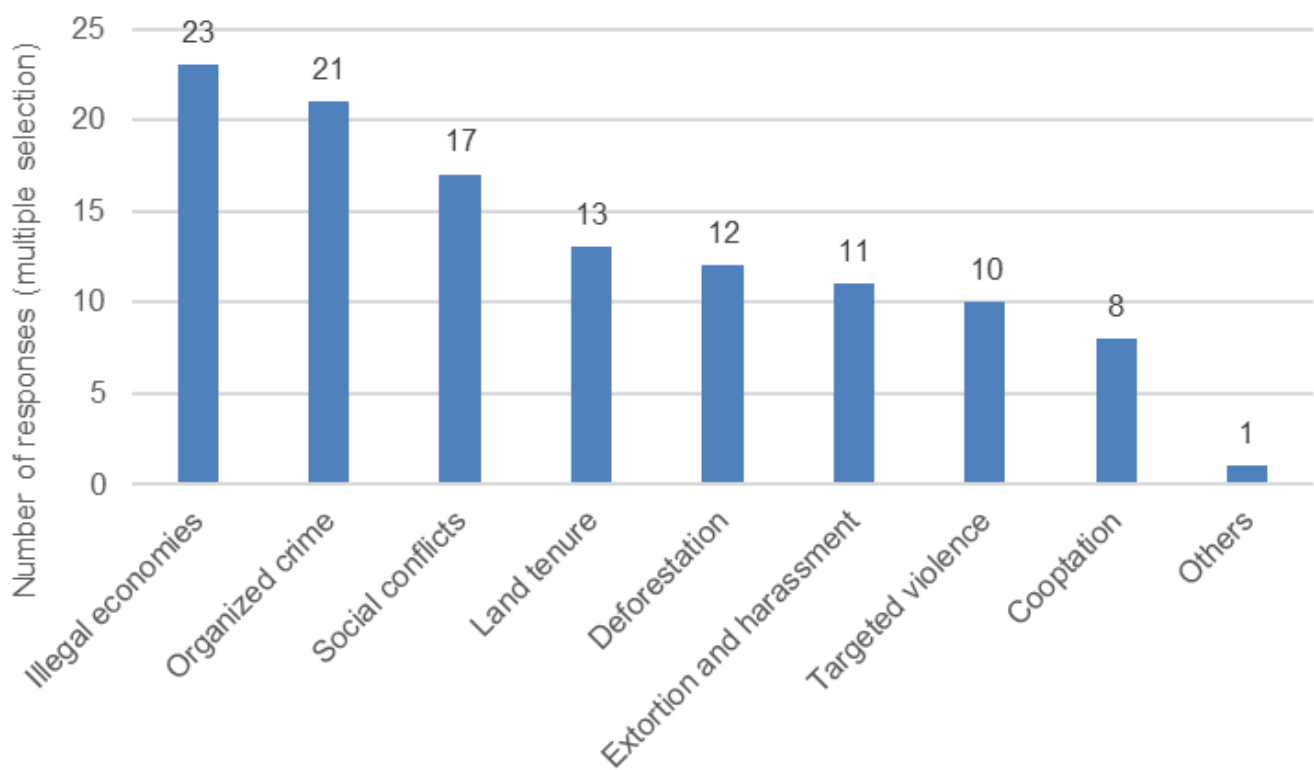

Note: Respondents were allowed to select one or more options.

In Colombia, security risks dominate the concerns of organizations operating across the Amazon, particularly those linked to illegal economies (23 mentions), organized crime (21 mentions), and social conflicts involving territorial disputes and community tensions (17 mentions). Unlike Brazil, where environmental degradation and financial vulnerabilities are now more frequently highlighted — with illegal deforestation identified as the foremost threat — Colombia's risk landscape reflects a pronounced concentration of violent and illicit dynamics. This difference underscores how governance gaps, pervasive criminality, and localized violence critically shape perceptions of insecurity in Colombia, contrasting with Brazil's predominant emphasis on ecological degradation (Figure 17).

Figure 17. What are the primary security risks that directly impact your organization's activities? *(n=116)*
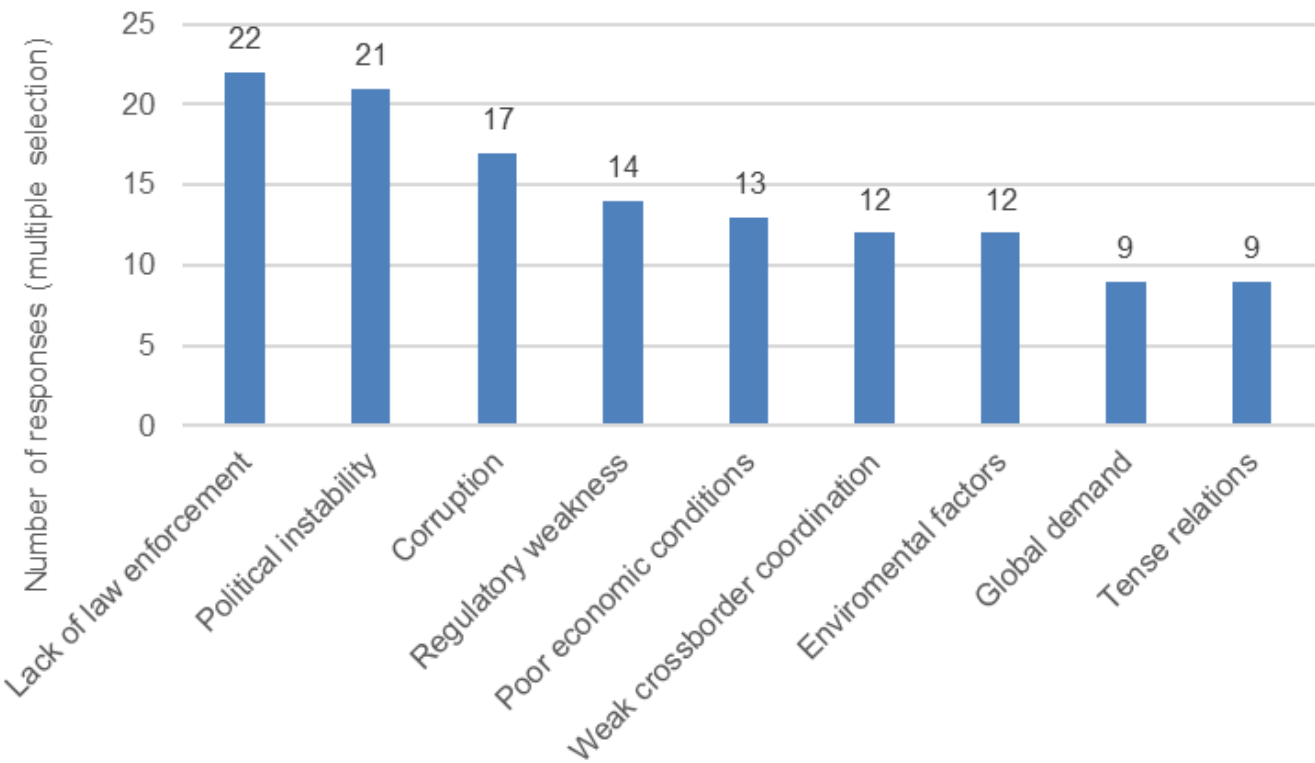

Note: Respondents were allowed to select one or more options.

In Colombia, respondents identified weak law enforcement (22 mentions) and political instability (21 mentions) as the primary drivers of risk, closely followed by corruption (17 mentions). These findings underscore a landscape shaped profoundly by fragile state institutions, governance volatility, and declining public trust. In contrast, Brazilian respondents emphasized structural factors such as regulatory deficiencies — particularly in land governance — and environmental degradation, indicating risks grounded in policy gaps and ecological vulnerabilities. This divergence reinforces earlier observations: while Brazil's risk environment is predominantly environmental and regulatory, Colombia's threats emerge directly from deeper political insecurity, institutional erosion, and pervasive criminality.

Figure 18. What are the main drivers of these risks? *(n=129)*
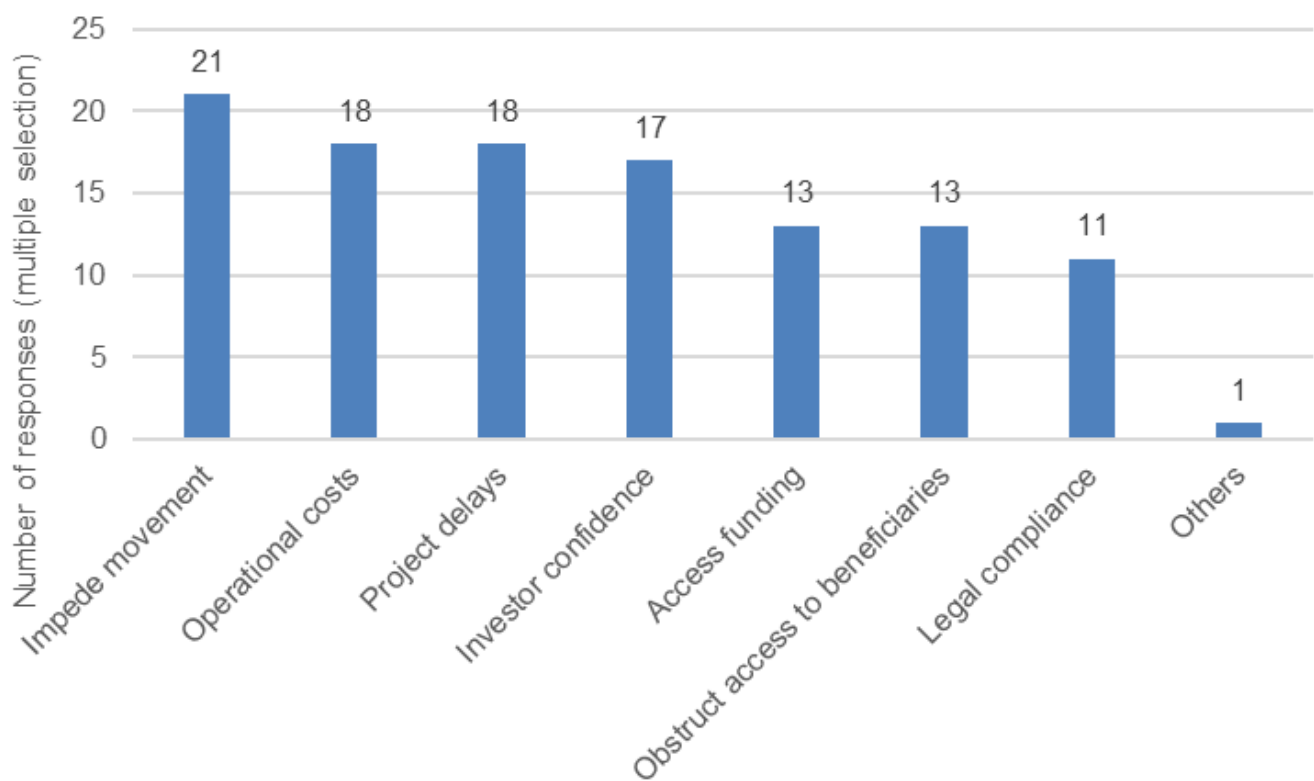

Note: Respondents were allowed to select one or more options.

In Colombia, the most frequently reported consequence of territorial risk is restricted mobility, cited by 21 respondents. This underscores the persistent logistical and security barriers that limit the movement of staff, goods, and services, many of which are rooted in unresolved conflict-era dynamics. Other prominent impacts include increased operational costs and project delays (18 mentions each), along with reduced investor confidence (17) and access to funding (13), reflecting the compounded effect of insecurity and weak infrastructure on implementation and financial viability (see Figure 19). By comparison, in Brazil, project and program delays were the most frequently cited consequence, pointing more to structural and environmental disruptions than to direct territorial constraints. This contrast highlights the extent to which Colombia's operational challenges are shaped by ongoing insecurity and contested access, making the daily realities of working in the Amazon more precarious and risk-intensive than in Brazil.

Figure 19. How do these risks impact your organization's activities? *(n=112)*


Note: Respondents were allowed to select one or more options.

In Colombia, NGOs are the most consistently engaged actors in efforts to address security challenges, with only 10% of respondents reporting "never" collaborating, while a combined 55% indicated "sometimes" or "always," reflecting a strong reliance on community-based networks and mutual support mechanisms. By contrast, engagement with public security forces remains limited — 39% mentioned "never" and just 3% "always" — highlighting a persistent gap in state-led security coordination. Political authorities are involved more sporadically, with 42% indicating occasional collaboration, while interactions with public prosecutors vary, likely reflecting regional disparities or case-specific contexts. A striking divergence from Brazil emerges in the role of private security: in Colombia, 10% of respondents said "often" collaborating with private firms, compared to just 5% in Brazil, where nearly 80% stated no engagement. This suggests that in Colombia, private security actors play a more central role in navigating complex territorial threats, often stepping in where state capacity is limited or absent.

Figure 20. How often does your organization collaborate with the following actors to address security challenges? *(n=31)*
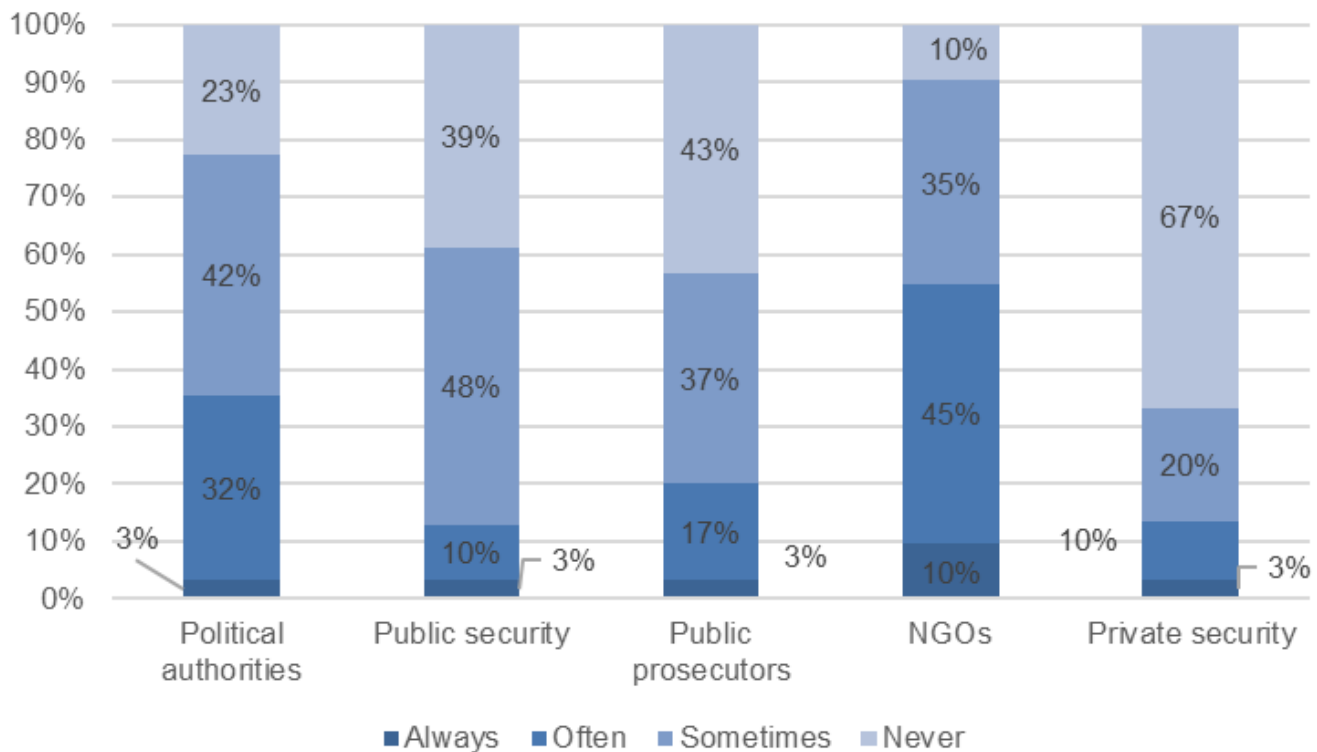
When asked to identify the most critical actors for promoting security and the rule of law, Colombian respondents most frequently cited the military (22 mentions), followed by Indigenous and community-based organizations (17), as well as local political authorities and police (13 each). Domestic NGOs were also commonly mentioned (11), while prosecutors and judges received slightly fewer mentions (10). International NGOs were seen as less influential (4 mentions), and a few respondents pointed to other actors (2).

This stands in sharp contrast to Brazil, where political and judicial institutions are viewed as the principal forces shaping security outcomes. Colombia's responses reveal a distinct dynamic: while collaboration with NGOs and private security actors is relatively common, real influence is attributed more to community-led and hybrid actors — particularly in territories where the state remains weak or fragmented. The prominence of non-state and military actors reflects the enduring legacy of armed conflict and the uneven consolidation of state authority across Colombia's Amazonian frontier.

Figure 21. Select the top 3 most critical actors involved in promoting security and the rule of law in areas where your organization operates *(n=92)*
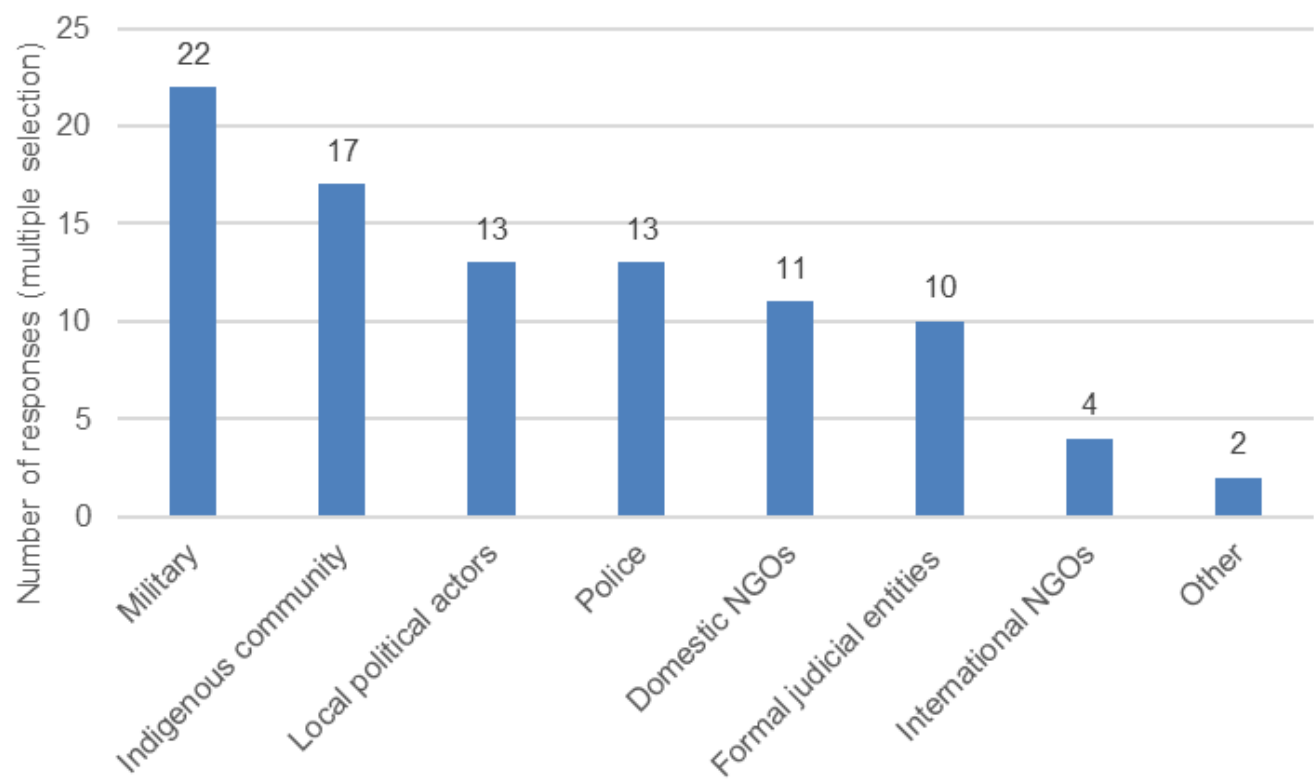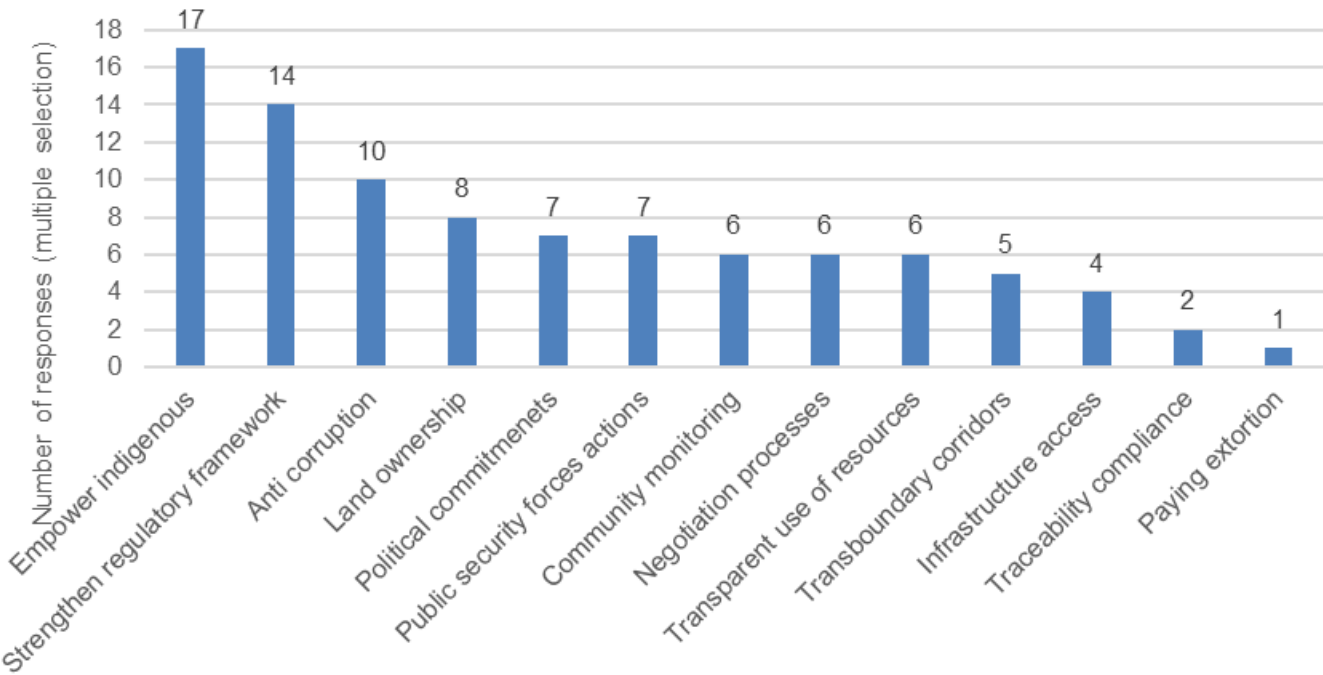

Note: Respondents were allowed to select one or more options.

Colombian respondents also pointed to empowering Indigenous and local communities (11 mentions), strengthening regulatory frameworks (8), and anti-corruption efforts (7) as the most effective actions to mitigate security risks. Land tenure regularization and political commitments followed closely, each with six responses. These priorities reflect a strong preference for institutional, rights-based approaches over coercive or extralegal measures — only three respondents referenced negotiations with armed groups, and none endorsed the payment of extortion. As in Brazil, there is a shared understanding that long-term security in the Amazon depends not on militarized control, but on inclusive governance, territorial rights, and the resilience of local communities.

Figure 22. Select the top 3 most effective actions that help mitigate security risks that could affect your activities. *(n=93)*


Note: Respondents were allowed to select one or more options.

In Colombia, respondents of open-ended recommendations prioritized inclusive development, local investment, and stronger institutional presence as foundational strategies for reducing insecurity in Amazonian territories. The most frequently cited recommendation centered on economic inclusion and local development, with recurring calls for improved infrastructure, education, healthcare, and sustainable livelihood opportunities aimed at bolstering long-term community resilience.

Closely following were proposals related to public engagement and communication, emphasizing the empowerment of Indigenous and community leadership as essential for stabilizing conflict-affected areas. Though less commonly mentioned, one respondent explicitly underscored the importance of fully implementing the 2016 Farc peace agreement, signaling its continued salience in shaping territorial dynamics in post-conflict zones.

Figure 23. If you could make recommendations to federal, state, or local authorities, can you specify up to 3 actions that could address drivers of insecurity in areas where your organization operates? Summary of 38 responses into thematic areas
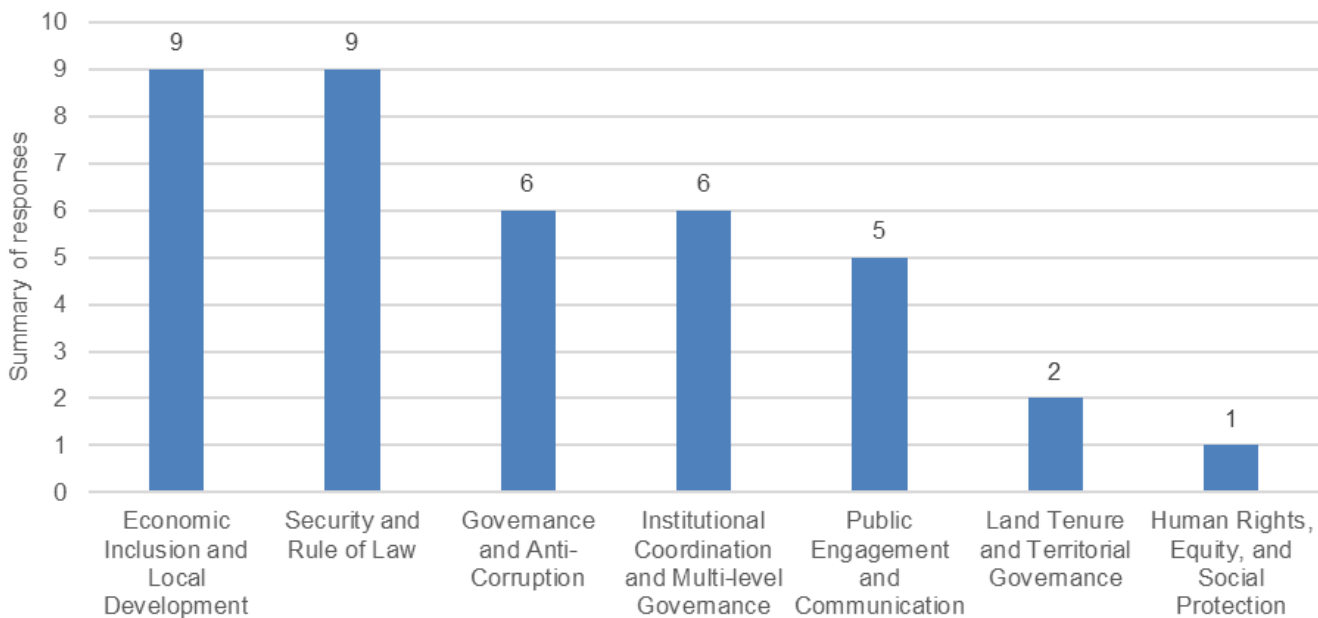
A second major cluster of recommendations focused on security and the rule of law, including the need to reinforce public security forces, expand judicial access, and safeguard environmental defenders. While corruption did not dominate the responses, it was cited — particularly in relation to local governance and the growing influence of illicit actors in zones of weak state presence. Respondents underscored the importance of transparency, institutional oversight, and coordinated governance to restore public trust and contain criminal infiltration. In contrast to Brazil, where emphasis leaned toward land titling, environmental enforcement, and conflicts over natural resources, Colombian respondents placed greater weight on governance reform, legitimacy, and social investment, highlighting the need to rebuild trust between communities and the state through inclusive service delivery and participatory governance.

Comparing Brazil and Colombia

Notwithstanding many similar security risks, Brazil and Colombia exhibit distinct institution and territorial dynamics. In Brazil, many threats are linked to structural factors: weak law enforcement, environmental degradation, and the capture of local institutions. State actors, especially local governments and judicial authorities, are viewed as central to improving governance and advancing security, indicating stronger expectations for formal state leadership. In contrast, Colombia's risks are more directly associated with illegal economies tied to drugs, armed groups, and fragile institutions. There, community leaders, Indigenous organizations, and military forces are seen as more influential than civil authorities, underscoring a governance landscape shaped by informality, violence, and the legacy of armed conflict.

These contrasts are also evident in how public, private, and nonprofit organizations respond to security and regulatory challenges. In Brazil, much of the focus is on structural and institutional reforms, including stronger environmental regulations, land titling, and long-term community empowerment. While many Colombian respondents share similar concerns, their emphasis is more on stabilizing vulnerable territories through social and economic investment, expanding the implementation of the peace agreement, and rebuilding trust in state institutions. Put simply, Brazilian respondents focus on strengthening existing capacities while Colombian counterparts claim to face deeper deficits in state presence and legitimacy. Despite these differences, respondents in both countries reject extralegal strategies and highlight the importance of inclusive local governance and resilient local communities in ensuring lasting security in the Amazon.

Section V.
Policy Implications in Brazil and Colombia

The following high-level policy implications distill the lived experiences and insights of those working on the front lines of the Amazon — researchers, local entrepreneurs, community leaders and officials — navigating some of the world's most complex and contested environments. Some recommendations are more conventional than others, but none are abstract: they represent grounded priorities voiced by stakeholders who operate daily in territories marked by overlapping legal voids, environmental challenges, and violent competition over land and resources. The shortlist is designed not only for national and subnational governments, but also for impact investors, international donors, and, most crucially, the community-based organizations risking their safety and futures to defend the Amazon.

- **Reinforce territorial governance and institutional presence:** Both Brazil and Colombia urgently require a stronger state presence and enhanced judicial and law enforcement capabilities. In Brazil, despite having robust environmental legislation at the municipal, state, and federal levels, enforcement remains weak. Federal police report significant logistical and operational gaps, including inadequate transport and limited enforcement capabilities outside major urban centers. As one Brazilian prosecutor highlighted, regulation functions unevenly, creating gradients of governance that range from effective urban regulation to nearly absent rural oversight. Colombia shares similar enforcement deficits, compounded by criminal factions that have imposed their own parallel governance structures, undermining state authority.

Respondents in both countries stress that strengthening institutions and their legitimacy is fundamental to reclaiming territorial control and governance legitimacy.

- **Empower Indigenous, traditional, and local communities:** Survey responses from both countries strongly emphasize the critical role of Indigenous and local communities in fostering territorial security. Brazilian stakeholders underscore the importance of participatory governance, citing legal frameworks like the Statute of Indigenous Peoples. Colombian respondents pointed to the success of Indigenous Reserves (*resguardos indígenas*) and community-driven territorial Environmental Management Plans (PGATs), supported by organizations such as Organización Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas de Colombia (ONIC) and Fundación Gaia Amazonas. Empowering these groups, through formal recognition of rights and inclusive governance structures, have proven to be essential in reducing vulnerabilities to external threats and curbing illegal activities.

- **Advance inclusive economic development to address drivers:** Economic precarity emerged as a significant driver of insecurity in both Brazil and Colombia. Brazilian respondents highlighted inadequate infrastructure, internet coverage, and essential public services that disproportionately favor large agribusiness and hydropower projects over local family farms. In Colombia, respondents similarly cited weak infrastructure, such as poor roads and limited connectivity, which exacerbates economic isolation and encourages dependence on illicit economies. Both countries call for targeted investments in sustainable livelihoods, education, healthcare, and infrastructure, particularly prioritizing cooperatives, small producers, and women-led initiatives to mitigate economic vulnerabilities and enhance local resilience.

- **Enhance environmental governance and regulatory enforcement:** Brazilian respondents consistently identified environmental risks — particularly illegal deforestation and illicit resource extraction — as central threats to territorial security. Although Brazil has a comprehensive legal framework in place, systemic failures in enforcement, corruption, and logistical limitations (such as inadequate patrol resources) severely undermine environmental protections.[35] In Colombia, while environmental risks were recognized, respondents expressed more immediate concern with pervasive criminal threats, underscoring the need for environmental governance to integrate closely with security operations against illegal economies, including illicit mining and logging.

- **Address corruption and improve institutional transparency:** Corruption is consistently cited by stakeholders in both Brazil and Colombia as a critical impediment to effective territorial governance. Brazilian respondents highlighted the widespread issue of influence peddling, opaque licensing procedures, and deliberate regulatory sabotage by political actors. In Colombia, respondents emphasized similar issues, including corruption and co-optation involving local elites. Across both countries, stakeholders advocated for increased transparency, the implementation of accountability mechanisms, and stronger oversight to counter elite capture and corruption.

- **Strengthen community and state collaboration:** Key informant interviews and survey responses reveal distinct national dynamics in terms of actor engagement. Brazilian stakeholders prioritized formal institutions such as local political authorities, judges, and prosecutors as the most influential actors, emphasizing the need to reinforce these

relationships. Colombian respondents, however, emphasize the critical role of informal, community-based, and hybrid governance actors, including Indigenous organizations, NGOs, and even private security firms, reflecting historical patterns of weak state consolidation and the lasting legacy of conflict-related governance fragmentation.

- **Clarify and secure land tenure:** Land insecurity remains a prominent driver of conflict in both nations. Brazilian respondents in interviews and surveys underscored the urgency of accelerating land regularization, as overlapping claims and insecure tenure underpin agrarian conflicts, land grabbing, and illicit environmental practices. The complexity of Brazil's land registry systems exacerbates these vulnerabilities.[36] Colombian respondents also emphasized tenure security but with a sharper focus on stabilizing territorial disputes rooted in historical conflicts and facilitating community governance structures, emphasizing mechanisms like the Multipurpose Cadastre.

- **Expand and safeguard civil society and environmental defenders:** Both Brazilian and Colombian respondents emphasized the vulnerability of civil society actors and environmental defenders. In Brazil, threats include physical violence and growing "virtual lynching" on social media. In Colombia, respondents reported targeted violence from illegal armed groups as especially severe. Policymakers in both countries must urgently implement dedicated protection mechanisms and strengthen existing legal frameworks to safeguard defenders operating in high-risk environments.[37]

- **Build capacity for risk monitoring and intelligence:** Brazilian respondents stressed the need to bolster institutional capabilities for intelligence-led environmental and criminal risk monitoring, highlighting inadequacies, such as insufficient logistical support and poor inter-agency coordination. In Colombia, stakeholders similarly advocated enhancing intelligence and monitoring efforts, but emphasized the disruption of organized criminal networks deeply embedded in local governance and economic activities, particularly illicit logging, mining, and drug trafficking.

- **Implement and support international agreements and peace accords:** Brazilian stakeholders frequently advocated ratifying and implementing international environmental commitments, like the Belém Declaration, to bolster environmental governance. Colombian respondents continue to emphasize the need for negotiated solutions to the conflict and the demobilization of armed groups (including those linked to the 2016 Agreement), noting that armed factions continue to exploit territorial insecurity and governance vacuums. This divergence highlights how historical trajectories shape national priorities - Brazil's focus on ecological sustainability and Colombia's emphasis on peacebuilding and governance stabilization.

- **Mobilize political leaderships through regional and national commitments:** High-level political commitments from the regional to the national and subnational levels are essential to set the tone for deeper engagement with territorial and regulatory risks. Declarations such as the 2023 Belém Declaration, which empowered the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) to take on rule-of-law challenges and Brazil's Amazon Plan for Security and Sovereignty - AMAS (2024) illustrated the growing recognition that green economy agendas must be anchored in legal and institutional stability.[38]

In Colombia, the *Visión Amazonía* strategy exemplifies how deforestation targets can be linked to international funding mechanisms under frameworks like the Joint Declaration of Intent.[39] These plans must be backed by financing, cross-sector coordination, and political will.

- **Integrate community monitoring and technological innovation:** Community-led environmental monitoring using GPS, drones, and mobile data platforms has been gaining traction as a vital tool for territorial defense. In Colombia, for example, the Mesa Institucional de Monitoreo Comunitario, coordinated by Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (Ideam), bridges community-collected data with national environmental systems. NGOs like the Amazon Conservation Team (ACT) and Fundación Gaia Amazonas have helped train Indigenous communities in digital mapping and ecological monitoring. These initiatives not only enhance real-time surveillance but also reinforce community autonomy, local governance, and territorial legitimacy in areas where formal oversight is weak or absent.

- **Recognize and engage with possible informal and hybrid governance arrangements:** Interviews in both Brazil and Colombia revealed the widespread presence of hybrid governance systems, where state authority overlaps — and sometimes competes — with informal institutions, community norms, and criminal controls. In Brazil, initiatives such as Collective Use Territories (TUCs) and participatory conflict resolution mechanisms represent innovative models that blend formal regulation with community oversight. From a short-term perspective, engaging with these actors might appear pragmatic,

offering immediate benefits or smoother business operations. However, the long-term risks for investors are significant: such engagement could inadvertently legitimize illegal structures, potentially leading to greater instability, legal challenges, and reputational damage.

- **Analyze and address the role of armed groups and informal negotiations in governance:** In Colombia, while they present a range of reputational risks and legal liabilities, informal negotiations with armed groups remain a reality in many regions. Some communities notify armed actors before implementing projects, while factions like the *Estado Mayor Central* (EMC)[40] have enforced environmental controls in areas lacking state presence. In 2023, deforestation reportedly dropped by over 50% in some territories under EMC control. While controversial, these dynamics reflect a governance vacuum and call for creative, rights-based strategies to transition from de facto criminal governance to legitimate public authority, particularly in zones where reintegration has faltered post-2016 peace accord.

- **Never normalize extortion and coercive economies:** Extortion — referred to as vacunas and caixinhas in Spanish and Portuguese, respectively — has become an entrenched "operating cost" for many actors in the Brazilian and Colombian Amazon. While such payments may ensure short-term continuity of operations, they ultimately fuel criminal economies, compromise ethical standards, and undermine long-term governance and security. Policymakers, donors, and investors must acknowledge these realities and design context-aware interventions that protect communities without reinforcing coercive financial flows or legitimizing illegal power structures.

- **Encourage risk-tolerant, adaptive investment strategies:** Philanthropies and impact investors must adopt risk-aware, evidence-informed approaches that recognize the operational complexity of the Amazon. There is broad consensus among stakeholders that no "silver bullet" exists; rather, multiple structural and proximate risks must be addressed in tandem. Investors should incorporate territorial risk registers, condition disbursements on baseline assessments, and co-design mitigation strategies with local actors. The ability to work "with the situation as it is," including supporting hybrid models and participatory governance, is critical for investments to be ethical, effective, and sustainable.

- **Build risk awareness and capacity among impact investors and project developers:** Impact investors must move beyond traditional financial due diligence to systematically assess and manage territorial and regulatory risks. This begins with regular baseline assessments that identify key drivers, vulnerabilities, and mitigation strategies, and evaluate the potential intended and unintended consequences of operating in contested or insecure regions. Relevant investments should include standardized territorial risk registers as part of their due diligence protocols. In parallel, investors and project developers should undergo tailored training — delivered online or in-person — to deepen their understanding of local dynamics and strengthen their duty of care to affected communities. Backed by organizations such as the Amazon Investor Coalition, the Igarapé Institute, and the Inter-American Development Bank, training could be accompanied by strategic advocacy efforts that promote engagement with public institutions and local stakeholders, driving policy reforms and reinforcing regulatory safeguards essential to sustainable, conflict-sensitive investment.

Annex: Examples of Measures to Mitigate Territorial and Regulatory Risks

Measures	Examples from Colombia	Examples from Brazil
Promoting regional, national, and subnational political commitments	The Belém Declaration (2023) empowers the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) to take a more assertive approach to addressing concerns about the rule of law.	
Strengthening regulatory frameworks and institutions to protect the environment	The Comprehensive Plan for Containing Deforestation (Plan Integral de Contención a la Deforestación - PICD), part of Colombia's 2022–2026 National Development Plan, aims to reduce deforestation by 20% through community-based forest economies, territorial planning, criminal enforcement, and biodiversity conservation, while facing challenges from illegal actors and armed groups undermining environmental efforts.	The Environmental Licensing Modernization Program integrates digital systems and training in municipalities, reducing analysis time and increasing detection of irregularities.
Bolster land ownership regime to ensure accountability and transparency	The Multipurpose Cadastre (Catastro Multipropósito), an initiative to create an integrated, up-to-date, and interoperable cadastral system that encompasses physical, legal, and economic information about land parcels across both rural and urban areas. As of early 2025, approximately 26.8% of the national territory has been updated under this system, with a goal to reach 50% by the end of the year.	Pará's Digital Land Regularization Program integrates georeferenced mapping, public title registration, and community mediation chambers.
Enforce environmental protections	The National Council for the Fight Against Deforestation and Other Environmental Crimes (Conaldef), created in 2019, oversees interagency strategies to combat deforestation, particularly in critical areas.	The Integrated Environmental Protection Task Force combines satellite monitoring and multi-agency teams.

Measures	Examples from Colombia	Examples from Brazil
Deepen the rule of law and anti-corruption measures	Territorios Forestales Sostenibles (Tefos), a flagship program under the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) International Climate Finance (ICF), aims to stabilize deforestation frontiers in conflict-affected rural Colombia by strengthening the criminal justice system to more effectively combat environmental crimes in deforestation hotspots.	The Integrated Environmental Licensing Transparency System digitizes municipal processes and performs automated verifications.
Improve infrastructure and accessibility	Introducing satellite internet services like Starlink, which provides high-speed internet to remote areas, offers a promising solution to bridge connectivity gaps in the Amazon, provided that effective monitoring and oversight mechanisms are in place to prevent misuse and ensure equitable benefits.	The Amazon Connectivity Program implements satellite internet networks and logistics routes in 30 isolated communities.
Traceability and compliance with international standards	The Zero Deforestation Agreement (Acuerdo Cero Deforestación) in the beef and dairy sectors, established in May 2019, is a public-private initiative aimed at eliminating deforestation and the transformation of *páramos*[41] in these supply chains by 2025.	The Amazon Traceability System uses blockchain and satellite monitoring to certify 10,000 açaí producers.
Creation of transboundary protected area corridors	The Triple-A Corridor (Andes-Amazon-Atlantic) alliance, driven by the collaboration between Gaia Amazonas, Colombian Indigenous communities, and various NGOs, highlights the role of local stakeholders' role in cross-border conservation efforts.	This point did not emerge from the interviews in Brazil.

continuation

Measures	Examples from Colombia	Examples from Brazil
Monitor Environmental Dynamics	The Environmental Conflict Observatory of the Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development (Fundación para la Conservación y el Desarrollo Sostenible - FCDS) monitors environmental conflicts linked to infrastructure projects, extractive industries, and agricultural expansion.	Acre's Climate Alert System combines meteorological data and community networks to predict extreme events, reducing agricultural losses and protecting vulnerable communities.
The transparent use of resources from local projects and investments	WRI's Global Forest Watch platform offers open-access data and real-time monitoring tools to track deforestation, helping ensure that resources allocated to conservation projects are used effectively.	The Environmental Funds Transparency Portal publishes real-time data on resources and decisions, increasing community participation in local investment management.
Empower Indigenous and local communities.	NGOs such as the Amazon Conservation Team (ACT) and Fundación Gaia Amazonas work closely with Indigenous groups to support land mapping, cultural preservation, and the development of strong governance structures.	The Territorial Management Training Program combines traditional and technical knowledge, enabling Indigenous and *quilombola* communities to directly manage their sustainable projects.
Community monitoring of resources	The Institutional Roundtable on Community Monitoring (Mesa Institucional de Monitoreo Comunitario), led by the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (Ideam), promotes collaboration between government institutions and community organizations, facilitating the incorporation of locally gathered data into national environmental monitoring systems.	The Indigenous Territorial Surveillance Network combines traditional knowledge and digital technology to monitor and protect territories, reducing illegal invasions.

continuation

Measures	Examples from Colombia	Examples from Brazil
Negotiation processes with armed groups	In 2023, the Estado Mayor Central (EMC), a faction of Farc dissidents, implemented a temporary ceasefire and imposed restrictions on logging in Caquetá and Guaviare, leading to a 51% reduction in deforestation in these regions. However, as peace negotiations faltered in 2024, the EMC lifted these restrictions, allowing deforestation to resume, often in exchange for extortion payments, and reinforcing their control over the territory.	This point did not emerge from the interviews in Brazil.
The payment of extortion	While illegal payments to armed groups controlling territories may offer short-term economic benefits, they pose a high risk to investors, as they consolidate illegal activities and threaten both legal compliance and long-term sustainability.	This point was not directly discussed in the interviews in Brazil.

Endnotes

1. Igarapé Institute (2022). Strategic Paper 55, The ecosystem of environmental crime in the Amazon: an analysis of illicit rainforest economies in Brazil

2. MapBiomas (2023). Signs of illegality in deforested areas prevail from north to south of Brazil

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11. Igarapé Institute (2024). Strategic Paper 63, Follow the money: environmental crimes and illicit economic activities in Brazilian Amazon production chains

12. Mueller, B. (2022). Property rights and violence in indigenous land in Brazil, Land Use Policy, Volume 116; and Bispo, D., Bernardy, R., Jacinto, J. and Oliveira, L. (2024). Territorial conflicts and land management in the Amazon: challenges and dynamics in Rondonia, *Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental* 18 (10).

13. Waisbich, L., Risso, M., Husek, T. and L. Brasil (2022). The ecosystem of environmental crime in the Amazon: an analysis of illicit rainforest economies in Brazil, Strategic Paper 55; InSight Crime and Igarapé Institute (2023) Mapping environmental crime in the Colombian Amazon; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Igarapé Institute (2024). The drugs-crime nexus in the Amazon Basin

14. Quilombola refers to members of Afro-Brazilian communities — known as quilombos — founded by descendants of enslaved people who resisted colonial oppression. These communities have distinct cultural, territorial, and collective land rights recognized under Brazilian law.

15. Interviews were conducted between October 2024 and January 2025, following a standard template and lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. They were conducted both in person and by phone. Transcripts were maintained and all data was summarized in matrices. The names and locations of respondents have been withheld to protect their privacy and ensure their security.

16. National Confederation of Municipalities – CNM (2022). Urban planning licensing in 85% of municipalities is not digitized; in the North, the proportion is below 18%.

17. As of 2025, new low-Earth orbit (LEO) satellite systems, such as SpaceX's Starlink and Amazon's Project Kuiper, have significantly expanded internet connectivity in the Amazon Basin, particularly in remote and previously disconnected areas. These technologies offer higher-speed, lower-latency access compared to traditional satellite options, enabling broader digital penetration for Indigenous communities, environmental monitors, and frontline civil society actors. While adoption remains uneven due to cost and regulatory barriers, these systems are beginning to close critical digital gaps, support telemedicine and education, and enhance real-time environmental and security monitoring in hard-to-reach regions.

18. The Amazon's chronic lack of basic services, including health, clinics, education, clean water and sanitation, combined with limited lawful livelihood options, drives many to illicit extraction and predation activities simply to survive. Patchy electricity, impassable roads, and scarce air links hobble sustainable ventures and render state oversight all but impossible.

19. Statement of an Indigenous representative: "Demarcation doesn't prevent illegality. Drug trafficking has advanced. Here, we can stop mining. Large companies don't enter the territory. The big road project that would pass through here didn't succeed. We were able to stop that. But the rest, drug trafficking, we can't."

20. Brazil is the world's second deadliest country for land and environmental defenders, with 25 murdered in 2023, surpassed only by Colombia, which recorded 79 killings. Global Witness. (2024). Standing Firm: The Land and Environmental Defenders Report 2023

21. Instituto SINCHI. Political Administrative Division

22. Interviews were conducted between October 2024 and January 2025, following a standard template and lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. They were conducted both in person and by phone. Transcripts were maintained and all data was summarized in matrices. The names and locations of respondents have been withheld to protect their privacy and ensure their security.

23. Farc refers to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia), a Marxist guerrilla group that emerged in 1964. Originally founded as the armed wing of the Colombian Communist Party, it engaged in armed conflict against the state for over five decades. Following a 2016 peace agreement, the group formally demobilized and became a political party. However, several dissident factions rejected the peace process and remain active, often linked to drug trafficking, illegal mining, and other illicit economies.

24. Colombia's Supreme Court of Justice (2018). Lineamientos para la actualización de las determinantes ambientales: Tercera orden de la Sentencia STC 4360 de 2018 – Amazonía sujeto de derechos

25. The co-optation of regulatory institutions by local elites in the Amazon — especially within the Regional Autonomous Corporations (CARs) — weakens environmental governance by prioritizing personal interests tied to deforestation, land grabbing, and illegal economies. This dynamic fosters corruption and impunity, while projects like carbon credit projects have triggered intra-community conflicts over fund management and leadership, often worsened by a lack of transparency. Although trust funds have helped ease tensions in some cases, many communities still struggle with governance and cohesion. Meanwhile, extortion by criminal groups remains widespread, affecting Indigenous territories and private initiatives alike, to the point that some companies now factor extortion into their operational costs.

26. Illegal deforestation and environmental degradation in the Amazon, fueled by organized criminal networks, land grabbing, and extractive industries such as illegal mining and cattle ranching, place immense pressure on both communities and ecosystems. Weak government responses and the growth of settlements reinforce deforestation over conservation, while the region serves as a "laundering ground" for drug trafficking proceeds. High global demand for gold fuels illegal mining, which accelerates deforestation, disrupts ecological connectivity, and outcompetes legal economies, perpetuating a cycle of forest destruction.

27. Systemic threats in the Colombian Amazon pose significant risks for investors due to the complex interplay of global demand for commodities, transnational crime, and weak governance. The relentless international appetite for both legal and illegal goods drives deforestation and land-use change. Simultaneously, the region has become a hub for transnational organized environmental crime, where illegal mining, drug trafficking, and asset laundering fuel instability. Criminal networks have established forms of "criminal governance," displacing state control over vast areas and fostering economic dependence among local populations, further undermining the prospects for sustainable investment.

28. The Comprehensive Rural Reform was established in the 2016 Peace Accord as a cornerstone for addressing land inequality. Although progress has been made—particularly under the Petro administration, with over 1 million hectares purchased and more than 3 million formalized—implementation has been slowed by bureaucratic bottlenecks, limited local capacity, and persistent conflict in rural zones. Reuters (2024). Colombia makes slow progress on land rights since Farc peace deal

29. The Multipurpose Cadastre, also a product of the Peace Accord, is a key tool to clarify land tenure and improve rural governance. As of 2025, about 26.8% of the national territory has been updated. Yet, coverage gaps and limited coordination with Indigenous and collective territories mean that its full potential remains unrealized. Gobierno de Colombia (2025). Colombia avanza en la implementación del Catastro Multipropósito, 26,8% del territorio nacional actualizado es la cifra que reporta el IGAC para 2025

30. See the Amazon Investor Coalition and Igarapé Institute survey on Territorial and Regulatory Security Risks in the Amazon, with introductions available in Portuguese, Spanish; the English translation is included within the same document. Simply scroll down the page to view it. The survey itself is now closed, but the introductions remain publicly accessible.

31. Of the 57 respondents from Brazil, 38 were affiliated with research institutions and civil society organizations, while 19 were private-sector entrepreneurs. In Colombia, 19 respondents came from research and NGO practitioners, and 12 represented the private sector.

32. There were 20 responses from Amazonas, 18 from Pará, 5 from Acre, 7 from Amapá, 4 from Rondônia, and 4 from Roraima, Maranhão, Mato Grosso and Tocantins.

33. Other areas included São Gabriel da Cachoeira, Careiro Castanho, Manicoré, Alto Solimões, Médio Juruá, Amaturá, Santo Antônio do Içá.

34. Respondents were invited to make open-ended recommendations to federal, state, or local authorities to address the drivers of insecurity in the territories where they operate. These responses were reviewed and synthesized into key thematic areas.

35. Brazil's Forest Code (Law 12.651/2012) regulates land use, including the maintenance of legal reserves and permanent preservation areas. The country's National Environmental System (Sisnama) coordinates environmental protection efforts across federal, state, and municipal levels. Brazil's Institute of Environmental and Renewable Natural Resources, an agency under the Ministry of Environment, is also responsible for enforcing "zero deforestation" policy.

36. In Brazil, the Land Regularization Law (13.465/2017) addresses land tenure issues, including the regularization of land ownership in rural areas and the Rural Environmental Registry (CAR) is the registry of rural properties. The National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Incra) collects and organizes records of rural properties, including their creation, subdivision, unification, and sale. However, the law is unevenly enforced, Incra often has weak capacity, and the CAR has yet to be digitized, all of which facilitates impunity and an array of corrupt and illicit practices.

37. The Brazilian Statute of Indigenous Peoples (1973, updated in 2006) sets out the basic rights of Indigenous populations. In Colombia, recognizing Indigenous land rights through the establishment of resguardos indígenas (Indigenous reserves) has been a crucial step in protecting territories from illegal activities such as deforestation, mining, and land grabbing. Initiatives like the Territorial Environmental Management Plans (Planes de Gestión Ambiental Territorial - PGAT) provide Indigenous communities with legal frameworks to manage their ancestral lands sustainably, strengthening territorial rights and reducing land disputes. National organizations like the Organización Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas de Colombia (ONIC) are vital in advocating for Indigenous rights, shaping national policies, and coordinating efforts to protect Indigenous territories from external threats. NGOs such as the Amazon Conservation Team (ACT) and Fundación Gaia Amazonas work closely with Indigenous groups to support land mapping, cultural preservation, and the development of strong governance structures. Tropenbos Colombia promotes sustainable land use practices and facilitates dialogue between local communities, governments, and other stakeholders.

38. In Brazil, the Amazon Plan for Security and Sovereignty (AMAS), led by the Ministry of Justice and funded partly by the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES), provides a framework in this direction. Likewise, programs such as PAMGIA and Project Sirenejud can mobilize standardized data to support real-time reporting and issuance of fines. Anti-corruption and transparency measures, including Brazil's Anti-Corruption Law (2013), the Gold Mining Act (3025/23) and training programs for prosecutors on money laundering linked to environmental crimes. See Ministry of Justice and Public Security (2023). Plano Amas fortalece presença do Estado na Região Amazônica, and Ministry of Justice and Public Security (2024). Combate à corrupção e à lavagem de dinheiro em crimes ambientais é tema de qualificação na Região Norte

39. This plan includes international financial support, particularly from Norway, Germany, and the United Kingdom, under the Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) on forests, which ties funding to measurable reductions in deforestation.

40. The Estado Mayor Central (EMC) is the largest and most organized dissident faction of the former Farc guerrilla group. It rejected the 2016 peace accord and maintains a presence in several regions of Colombia, particularly in the Amazon and other rural areas. See Reuters (2024). Colombia calls off ceasefire with some units of EMC armed group

41. *Páramos* are unique high-mountain ecosystems found primarily in the Andes region, at altitudes ranging from approximately 3,000 to 4,500 meters above sea level. They are common in countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela.

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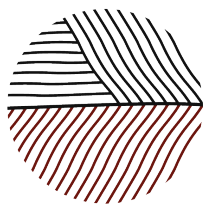## Editing and Translation

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AMAZON INVESTOR COALITION

The Amazon Investor Coalition is a global learning-and-collaboration platform that unites philanthropies, private investors and corporate buyers with governments, nonprofits and allies to reduce deforestation, advance forest-positive economies, and promote the rule of law, across the Amazon region.

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