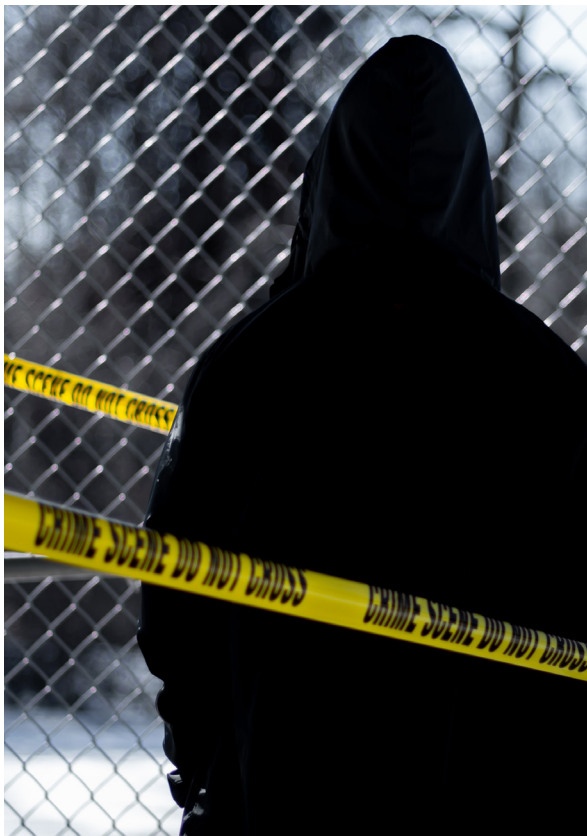


Evidence suggests individual-level factors predict recruitment into organised crime



Being male and having committed prior criminal activity and violence are associated with future organised crime recruitment.

What is the aim of this review?

This Campbell systematic review examines individual-level risk factors related to recruitment into organized crime groups. The review summarizes evidence from 52 studies, including 19 quantitative studies, 28 qualitative studies, and five studies that apply mixed methods.

There is relatively strong evidence that being male and having committed prior criminal activity and violence are associated with future organised crime recruitment. There is weak evidence that prior sanctions, social relations with organised crime-involved subjects and a troubled family environment are associated with recruitment.

What is this review about?

This systematic review examines what individual-level risk factors are associated with recruitment into organised crime.

Despite the increase of policies addressing organised crime activities, little is known about recruitment. Existing knowledge is fragmented and comprises different types of organised criminal groups.

Recruitment refers to the different processes leading individuals to stable involvement in organised criminal groups, including mafia, drug trafficking organisations, adult gangs and outlawed motorcycle gangs. This systematic review excludes youth (street) gangs, prison gangs and terrorist groups.

What studies are included?

This review examines empirical studies of sufficiently well-defined factors associated with involvement in organised crime. Nineteen quantitative, 28 qualitative, and five mixed-methods studies met all eligibility criteria and were included in the systematic review.

Quantitative studies had to compare data on organised crime members and non-organised crime members. The meta-analyses of risk factors associated with recruitment focused on the evidence from 19 quantitative studies.

What are the main findings of this review?

All the included studies presented some important methodological weaknesses. Risk factors were divided into predictors (when the factors occurred prior to recruitment into organised crime) or correlates (factors



How up-to-date is this review?

The review authors searched for studies up to October 2019.

What is the Campbell Collaboration?

Campbell is an international, voluntary, non-profit research network that publishes systematic reviews. We summarise and evaluate the quality of evidence about programmes in the social and behavioural sciences. Our aim is to help people make better choices and better policy decisions.

About this summary

This summary is based on Calderoni, F., Comunale, T., Campedelli, G. M., Marchesi, M., Manzi, D., & Frualdo, N. (2022). Organized crime groups: A systematic review of individual-level risk factors related to recruitment. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 18, e1218. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1218>.

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measured at the same moment or subsequent to recruitment). Most risk factors were correlates, which causes problems in establishing a causal relation with recruitment into organised crime.

Despite the small number of predictors, there is relatively strong evidence that being male and having committed prior criminal activity and violence are associated with higher probability of future organised crime recruitment.

There is weak evidence, although supported by qualitative studies, prior narrative reviews and findings from correlates, that prior sanctions, social relations with organised crime-involved subjects and a troubled family environment are associated with greater likelihood of recruitment.

Evidence from correlates indicates that higher levels of education are associated with lower probability of organised crime recruitment. Conversely, low self-control, sanctions, a troubled family environment, violence, being in a relationship, and poor economic conditions are associated with a higher likelihood of involvement in organised crime. These findings, however, should not be confused with predictors, due to difficulties in establishing a clear causal relation between the correlates and organised crime recruitment.

What do the findings of the review mean?

The available evidence is weak. There was a small number of studies for most factor categories. Most quantitative studies were from the US and the UK. Thus, it may be difficult to apply the findings to organised crime groups in other countries.

Furthermore, this review encompassed a variety of organised crime groups. Different risk factors may drive recruitment into different types of groups, which may affect the quality of the evidence. Notwithstanding these limitations, the findings identify risk factors that may point to areas for possible interventions.