



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Brazil: Organised criminal groups

Version 1.0

March 2025

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Executive summary

As of 2024, more than 80 organised criminal groups (OCGs) exist in Brazil. The largest are the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), based in Sao Paulo, and the Comando Vermelho (CV), based in Rio de Janeiro. Both operate throughout Brazil. Militias, OCGs made up of current and former state agents, also operate in low-income communities (known as favelas) in Rio de Janeiro, where they extort populations under their control. The Amazon, border areas and urban favelas are particularly affected by OCG activity.

A person who fears an armed group or criminal gang is not likely to be able to demonstrate a link to the Refugee Convention on the grounds of political opinion, unless they have been living in a community controlled solely by the PCC or CV.

Those most affected by OCG activity are people living in poor communities. Young, black males from low socio-economic backgrounds are vulnerable to joining OCGs due to the perceived benefits they offer. Indigenous peoples are also affected by the general impacts of OCG activity due to the resource-rich, strategic regions in which these communities generally live. However, they are not likely to be targeted or face persecution or serious harm due to their race alone.

A person is likely to face persecution or serious harm from non-state actors or, in the case of militias, rogue state actors when they have taken, or are perceived to have taken a stand against the group, or: are members or former members of the group who have, or are perceived to have, transgressed the rules of the group. Whether and to what extent a person is at risk from a group will depend on: the reason(s) for the group's interest; the area the person usually resides in and will return to; the group's intent, size, reach and capabilities.

In general, the state is willing and able to provide effective protection, but consideration must be given to the circumstances of the case and the OCG they claim to fear.

Internal relocation is generally possible but will depend on the size, reach, capability and intent of the group or gang the person claims to fear, as well as the reasons why the group has an interest in them.

Where a claim is refused, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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Assessment

Section updated: 27 March 2025

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**, a person:

- faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm from an organised criminal group
- can obtain effective protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- can relocate within a country or territory to avoid persecution/serious harm
- if a claim is refused, it is likely to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

The term ‘organised criminal group’ (OCG) is used in place of ‘gangs’ as sources differentiate between criminal gangs (which generally have no connection to the state) and militia groups (which are made up of current or former state agents).

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1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)
- 1.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 1.1.3 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).
- 1.1.4 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).

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1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 A person who fears an armed group or criminal gang is not likely to be able to demonstrate a link to the Refugee Convention on grounds of political opinion. This is because, while non-state armed groups maintain (and vie for) pockets of territorial control and carry out some state-like functions in areas of control, their presence and capacity are not so pervasive to be considered ‘political’ in nature.
- 2.1.2 In the country guidance case of [EMAP \(Gang violence, Convention Reason\)](#), heard on 27 April and 9 June 2022 and promulgated on 16 November 2022, the Upper Tribunal (UT) considered whether persons who fear a gang in **El Salvador** fall within the scope of the Refugee Convention on the grounds of political opinion and membership of a PSG.
- 2.1.3 The UT in [EMAP](#) held that the main gangs operating in El Salvador, MS-13 and Barrio 18, are ‘political actors’ and that:
 - ‘... (ii) Individuals who hold an opinion, thought or belief relating to the gangs, their policies or methods hold a political opinion about them.
 - ‘(iii) Whether such an individual faces persecution for reasons of that political opinion will always be a question of fact. In the context of El Salvador it is an enquiry that should be informed by the following:
 - ‘(a) The major gangs of El Salvador must now be regarded as political actors;
 - ‘(b) Their criminal and political activities heavily overlap;
 - ‘(c) The less immediately financial in nature the action, the more likely it is to be for reasons of the victim’s perceived opposition to the gangs.’ (Headnote, paragraphs (ii) and (iii))

- 2.1.4 The UT in [EMAP](#) provided further analysis of the applicability of political opinion in paragraphs 112 to 122 of the determination. It considered that there are a range of reasons why a gang (or gangs) target a person, not all of which will fall within the Refugee Convention.
- 2.1.5 The UT's findings in [EMAP](#) **are specific to the circumstances in El Salvador at the time of the ruling**. However, the situations in El Salvador and Brazil have some similarities and merit comparison. Both have high levels of organised crime dominated by gangs which have de facto control over parts of the country (in El Salvador) and certain communities (in Brazil) and have sought to influence the state.
- 2.1.6 However, there are significant differences between the 2 countries:
- Brazil has a more diverse criminal landscape with approximately 80 criminal gangs as well as armed militia groups working and competing with the largest 2 groups, the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) and the Comando Vermelho (CV), for control over territory and drug trafficking routes. Although the PCC and CV have a presence in most states of Brazil and exercise de facto control over the communities they dominate, they are not necessarily as dominant as their equivalents in El Salvador.
 - The PCC and the CV are relatively smaller (approx. 130,000 members altogether, or 0.06% of the population) than the MS-13 and Barrio 18 in El Salvador (60,000 members, 1% of the total population).
 - The PCC, CV and militia groups have sought to influence the state. However, their influence on political affairs is not as extensive as in El Salvador. Whilst corruption exists within state agencies in Brazil, particularly at the local level, the state continues to take action against OCGs, including corrupt officials, at a federal level (see [Risk](#), [Protection](#)).
- 2.1.7 On the available evidence, the situations are sufficiently different to conclude that OCGs in Brazil are not 'political actors' in general, and that the UT's findings in [EMAP](#) **do not generally apply** to a fear of an OCG in Brazil, in relation to political opinion. However, in low-income urban communities or favelas that are controlled by the PCC or CV, the influence of these OCGs is significant and they exercise extensive social control over residents. Therefore, although a person who fears an OCG in Brazil does **not** generally fall within scope of the Refugee Convention on grounds of political opinion, this may be applicable where they have been living in an area controlled by the PCC or CV.
- 2.1.8 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 2.1.9 A person with a well-founded fear of persecution from an OCG for a non-convention reason may still qualify for humanitarian protection.
- 2.1.10 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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3. Risk

- 3.1.1 Those living in favelas and low-income communities dominated by OCGs

are not, in general, likely to face treatment amounting to persecution or serious harm solely by virtue of living there.

- 3.1.2 Persons who fear OCGs in Brazil are not at a general risk of persecution by OCGs. They are likely to face persecution or serious harm when they:
- disrespect a group leader, or take (or are perceived to take) a stand against the organised criminal group, including public figures such as journalists, prosecutors and politicians
 - are, or are perceived to be, an informant
 - have stolen from the group, or owe the group a debt
 - are members or former members of the group who have (or are perceived to have) transgressed the rules of the group
- 3.1.3 Whether a person is at risk from an OCG and the extent of the risk, will depend on:
- their actions, and the reason(s) for the group's interest
 - the area the person usually resides in and will return to
 - the group's intent, size, reach and capabilities
- 3.1.4 In general, family members of targeted persons do not become targets themselves, although there may be some instances in which family members do become targets, including where a major betrayal/transgression has occurred, or if the person had a leadership role. Some indigenous people also face displacement, exploitation and harm due to increasing OCG activity in their territories but in general they do not, as a group, face a real risk of treatment amounting to persecution or serious harm (see [Victims of OCG activity](#), [Environmental crimes](#), [Political violence](#)).
- 3.1.5 Brazil has a diverse criminal landscape, with approximately 80 criminal gangs and militia groups operating alongside and against the 2 largest gangs in the country, the PCC and the CV. The PCC has approximately 100,000 members operating in almost every Brazilian state as well as internationally, with its base in Sao Paulo. The CV has approximately 30,000 members, operating in about 20 Brazilian states and other Latin American countries, and has its base in Rio de Janeiro. The majority of other OCGs are present in 3 states or less and generally ally with either the PCC or the CV (see [Organised Criminal Groups \(OCGs\)](#), [Militias](#)).
- 3.1.6 The PCC and CV are rivals and compete for territory and control of drug trafficking routes. Expanding into the Amazon has led them to branch into environmental crimes such as illegal mining and logging. They are also involved in arms trafficking, kidnap, bank robberies and increasingly in financial crimes such as money laundering through legitimate businesses, extortion and loansharking. The PCC has reportedly begun infiltrating the state, through obtaining public contracts for services and funding candidates for municipal elections (see [OCG activities](#), [Primeiro Comando da Capital \(First Command of the Capital, PCC\)](#), [Comando Vermelho \(Red Command, CV\)](#), [Corruption](#)).
- 3.1.7 Militia groups formed of current and former law enforcement officers compete with the CV for territory in favelas or poor communities in Rio de

Janeiro, and there are reports of such groups developing in other states. Although these groups initially formed to counteract the drug gangs, sources report that they are now indistinguishable, as they also dominate and extort communities under their control, monopolising the provision of essential services and sometimes making alliances with the gangs, leading them to become 'narcomilitias'. It is unclear how many militia groups currently operate and in which states outside of Rio de Janeiro. Due to their connections to state apparatus, sources reported that militias pose more danger to individuals than other OCGs (see [Militias](#)).

- 3.1.8 The PCC and CV both originated in and exercise significant influence over inmates within the country's overcrowded state prison system, where they position themselves in opposition to the state and provide order and resources to inmates which the state cannot. Within Brazil's prisons, they recruit new members and incarcerated leaders continue to issue orders to members on the outside (see [Primeiro Comando da Capital \(First Command of the Capital, PCC\)](#), [Comando Vermelho \(Red Command, CV\)](#), [Recruitment and leaving OCGs](#), [Federal prisons and prisoner transfers](#)).
- 3.1.9 In general, OCGs in Brazil do not engage in forced recruitment. Most recruitment takes place within prisons. Sources stated that most OCG members are young, black males from low socio-economic backgrounds who view joining an OCG as a way to make money and attain a higher level of social status. Alongside those living in poor communities under the 'rule' of OCGs, this demographic are therefore the people most likely to be affected by OCG activity. As OCGs are diversifying their activities, sources reported that they have actively recruited IT and finance professionals and in some cases fund individuals' education to help them secure strategic positions, such as public service roles, which benefit the group. They may also recruit people who work in ports and airports to assist their drug trafficking activities (see [Recruitment and leaving OCGs](#)).
- 3.1.10 In general, the offer to work for an OCG can be refused without repercussion, although some sources suggest that it may be difficult to refuse, particularly in prisons. Generally, a person with a low-level position in an OCG may be able to leave the group. OCGs may also allow a person to leave for religious reasons. Anyone with more than a medium-level role may not be permitted to leave due to their knowledge of the group's operations. Those who owe a debt to the group would also be unable to leave until the debt is repaid. Those who leave the PCC are prohibited from engaging in any further criminal activity and will be monitored to ensure they comply with this rule. If they are found to be taking part in criminal activity, they are likely to be targeted (see [Recruitment and leaving OCGs](#)).
- 3.1.11 In the communities OCGs dominate (generally low-income communities and favelas on the peripheries of large cities), OCGs exercise significant social control. The PCC is highly organised, with a strict set of rules its members must follow. In cases of both rule-breaking by members and disputes brought to them by community members, the CV and PCC impose their own form of justice through 'crime courts', where penalties for perceived wrongdoing are not standardised and can be minimal, or as severe as execution. In neighbourhoods which are under the control of an OCG, residents are generally not permitted to go to the police and are instead

required to bring any disputes to the OCG who will mediate. Examples of accusations that may result in a person being at risk of serious harm include being an informant, personally disrespecting a group leader, stealing drugs or money from the group, and owing and not repaying a debt. People are reportedly also sentenced to death by OCGs for sexual crimes and child abuse (see [OCG 'crime courts' and punishments](#)).

- 3.1.12 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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4. Protection

- 4.1.1 In general, the state is willing and able to provide protection but there may be exceptions to this. Consideration must be given to the circumstances of the case and the OCG a person claims to fear. The onus is on the person to demonstrate that they would not be able to obtain effective protection.
- 4.1.2 Brazilian law criminalises being part of an OCG, and the government speaks out against organised crime. Multiple policy initiatives exist to combat organised crime, including citizen security initiatives, deployment of troops at ports, isolating group leaders in maximum security prisons and increasing resources to fight environmental crime. Police regularly conduct searches and seizures and arrest OCG members (see [Legal context](#), [Government rhetoric](#), [Policy initiatives](#), [Searches, seizures and arrests](#)).
- 4.1.3 High-profile OCG leaders have been arrested and transferred to high security federal prisons across the country, where they are kept in isolation. Sources indicate that this has had a positive effect in disrupting their communications. However, the same leaders have been convicted of crimes they have ordered when they are already in jail (see [Federal prisons and prisoner transfers](#), [Notable decisions](#)).
- 4.1.4 The federal police generally work hard to combat OCGs, but have limited human resource in relation to the size of the country (there are 13,000 federal police officers and Brazil has 16,000 kilometres of land border and a population of approximately 212 million people). A lack of cooperation and communication between federal and state entities challenges the efficacy of combatting OCGs. However, the federal police regularly carry out searches and seizures and investigations into OCG activity (see [Searches, seizures and arrests](#)).
- 4.1.5 State-level law enforcement is heavy-handed. Lengthy, violent confrontations between the police and OCGs in low-income/marginalised areas and favelas, result in local residents confined to those areas, including children, being caught in the crossfire and killed. These community members do not necessarily have any connection to OCGs and are predominantly of Afro-Brazilian descent. Such police operations also restrict the freedom of movement of people in the community. The duration of these operations varies (see [Operations in favelas](#), [Freedom of movement](#), [Witness protection](#)).
- 4.1.6 State police can treat complaints of threats or danger from an OCG with suspicion as such threats can be an indication of the complainant's involvement with the group, and they may not receive protection. Residents

of communities controlled by OCGs are forbidden by the groups to go to the police in general, and must instead bring any issues before the OCG itself (see [OCG 'crime courts' and punishments](#), [Operations in favelas](#), [Searches, seizures and arrests](#)).

- 4.1.7 Sources report that in general the judiciary is independent, but is overburdened and inefficient, with millions of backlogged cases. However, many OCG members have been convicted, and most OCG leaders have been sentenced and are in prison. Approximately 70% of the PCC's members are in prison (see [Judicial response to OCGs](#), [Searches, seizures and arrests](#)).
- 4.1.8 Corruption is widespread, with OCGs, particularly the PCC and militias, having made political connections to state officials, including in the state police and judiciary. The PCC have reportedly funded candidates to municipal elections. Militia members are reported to have official positions in state and local governments. Militia members are put on trial less frequently than gang members, and areas under their control are targeted less frequently in police operations. The federal government works hard to combat corruption but lacks the necessary resources (see [Corruption](#), [Operations in favelas](#)).
- 4.1.9 Brazil has a witness protection programme which is open to all. However, it is hampered by budgetary limitations and is not always effective in protecting a person's identity. Persons of political importance are generally well-protected. Witnesses against corruption and militias face a heightened risk of retribution due to these actors' connection to the state apparatus (see [Witness protection](#)).
- 4.1.10 For background information about the criminal justice system generally and an assessment of its effectiveness in providing protection, see the [Country Policy and Information Note, Brazil: Actors of protection](#).
- 4.1.11 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 In general, internal relocation is likely to be reasonable, particularly to Brasilia in the Federal District. However, decision makers must consider the size, reach, capability and intent of the group or gang the person claims to fear, as well as the reasons why the group has an interest in them.
- 5.1.2 Different factions of the same OCG can and do communicate with each other meaning that the PCC and CV would have the ability to track a person of interest across Brazil, due to their presence throughout the country. Whether they would have a desire to do so would depend on the alleged infraction. In general, stealing from an OCG, informing on them, personally disrespecting a group leader and failure to repay a large debt could result in a person being tracked. What constitutes a large debt would depend on the perception of the creditor. Former group members are monitored and are targeted if they break the conditions of being permitted to leave. Generally, these issues relate to people who have been part of the OCG. However,

prominent public figures such as prosecutors and politicians who attempt to disrupt OCG activity are also likely to be tracked throughout the country ([Political violence](#), [Tracking of persons by OCGs](#), [Leaving an OCG](#)).

- 5.1.3 Persons who do not fall within the above circumstances would generally be able to relocate, either to a different part of the same state or to a different state, depending on the group they are claiming to fear (see [Tracking of persons by OCGs](#)). For 2024 data on which OCGs operate in which states, see [Location of OCGs in Brazil](#). For a map of which neighbourhoods of Rio de Janeiro are occupied by which OCG, see [Rio de Janeiro OCGs](#).
- 5.1.4 OCGs are present in every state of Brazil, and the PCC and CV have near nationwide and international reach. The PCC has approximately 100,000 members operating in almost every Brazilian state as well as internationally, with its base in Sao Paulo. The CV has approximately 30,000 members, operating in about 20 Brazilian states and other Latin American countries, and has its base in Rio de Janeiro. The majority of other OCGs are present in 3 states or less and generally ally with either the PCC or the CV (see [Organised Criminal Groups \(OCGs\)](#)).
- 5.1.5 Brazil has a population of approximately 212 million people. In 2023, sources reported approximately 39,500 homicides (around 0.016% of the population). In 2023, the states with the highest number of murders per 100,000 inhabitants were Amapa, Pernambuco and Alagoas (all in the North and Northeast regions of the country) and the states with the lowest number of murders per 100,000 inhabitants were the Federal District, Santa Catarina and Sao Paulo. Sources do not disaggregate crime data based on the perpetrator, so it is unclear how many crimes are attributable to specifically OCG activity. However, sources reported that homicides were generally higher in areas where OCGs are in conflict and that recently OCGs have been competing for territory in the North and Northeast regions of Brazil (see [Homicides](#), [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 5.1.6 Freedom of movement within Brazil is generally possible. However, it can be restricted in territories where OCGs are in conflict and during police operations against OCGs which tend to be heavily armed. There have been reports of local residents being caught in the crossfire. This is usually in low-income communities and favelas. Local services such as schools and health centres may also close during these events. Residents who live in a neighbourhood dominated by one faction may not be able to cross into a neighbourhood dominated by another. People may also be expelled from their homes if the dominant OCG suspects they are connected to another faction (see [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 5.1.7 While the onus is on the person to establish a well-founded fear of persecution or real risk of serious harm, decision makers must demonstrate that internal relocation is reasonable (or not unduly harsh) having regard to the individual circumstances of the person.
- 5.1.8 For more on internal relocation within Brazil generally, see Country Policy and Information Note, [Brazil: Internal Relocation](#).
- 5.1.9 For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it must be considered for certification under section 94(3) of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as Brazil is listed as a designated state. Such a claim must be certified under section 94(3) if you are satisfied it is clearly unfounded.
- 6.1.2 Where a claim is refused, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 6.1.3 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

Country information

About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment.

The structure and content follow a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to the scope of this note.

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before 26 March 2025. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

Some country information quoted in this CPIN was published in Portuguese or Spanish and has been translated using a free online translation tool. As such 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed. Translated information is clearly signposted throughout.

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7. Geography and population

7.1 Geography and map

- 7.1.1 Brazil is located in South America, bordering: the Atlantic Ocean; Argentina; Bolivia; Colombia; French Guiana; Guyana; Paraguay; Peru; Suriname; Uruguay and Venezuela. It has a land mass covering 8,358,140 square kilometres, plus a further 157,630 sq km of water¹.
- 7.1.2 Brazil is comprised of 26 states and the Federal District. The 26 states are distributed across 5 regions in the country: the South region, Southeast region, North region, Northeast region, and Central-west region. The Federal District is located in the Central-west region².
- 7.1.3 The map below, published by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), shows the capital (Brasilia), other cities, major rivers and international boundaries³.

¹ CIA, [World Factbook: Brazil](#) (Geography), last updated 19 March 2025

² World Population Review, [Brazil States 2024](#), no date

³ CIA, [World Factbook: Brazil](#) (Map), last updated 19 March 2025



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7.2 Population and demography

- 7.2.1 In 2024, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) estimated Brazil's population to be 212,583,750⁴.
- 7.2.2 According to the CIA World Factbook, as of 2022, Brazil's ethnic groups comprised: mixed 45.3%, White 43.5%, Black 10.2%, Indigenous 0.6%, Asian 0.4%⁵.
- 7.2.3 The CIA World Factbook also stated that 'the vast majority of people live along, or relatively near, the Atlantic coast in the east; the population core is in the southeast, anchored by the cities of São Paulo, Brasília, and Rio de Janeiro'.⁶

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8. Organised Criminal Groups (OCGs)

8.1 Number of OCGs in Brazil

- 8.1.1 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2022, Brazilian news agency R7⁷ reported that: '53 criminal factions... operate in Brazil. The data, collected exclusively by Record TV's Investigative Journalism Center based on investigations by different federal and state government agencies, does not include militias. Factions and militias are criminal organizations. What differentiates the two groups, despite similarities, is the intrinsic connection of the factions with the prisons, while the militias have links with the police.'⁸
- 8.1.2 Insight Crime, 'a think tank and media organization that seeks to deepen and inform the debate about organized crime and citizen security in the

⁴ Government of Brazil, [ORDINANCE IBGE-1,041, of August 28, 2024](#), 28 August 2024

⁵ CIA, [World Factbook: Brazil](#) (People and Society), last updated 19 March 2025

⁶ CIA, [World Factbook: Brazil](#) (Geography), last updated 19 March 2025

⁷ R7, [Homepage](#), no date

⁸ R7 Estudio, [The 53 criminal factions in Brazil](#), 2 February 2022

Americas'⁹, published a Brazil profile, dated November 2023, which noted: 'As well as being Latin America's largest country by population, economy, and area, Brazil is also home to some of the region's most powerful criminal organizations...'¹⁰

- 8.1.3 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, news agency CNN Brasil¹¹ reported that: 'There are 72 different criminal factions linked to drug trafficking, according to a survey by the Brazilian Forum on Public Security and Esfera Brasil. The research also states that two of these factions have transnational operations, with characteristics of criminal holdings.'¹²
- 8.1.4 The 72 factions are listed in the below table, which was produced by CPIT based on data from a report published (in Portuguese) in 2024 by Brazil's Secretaria Nacional de Políticas Penais (National Secretariat for Penal Policies, SENAPPEN)¹³:

72 criminal organisations active in the Brazilian prison system		
1. Os Mano	25. Cartel do Norte	49. Os Mano
2. Anti Bala	26. Crias da Triplice	50. Comando Classe A
3. Bala na Cara	27. Revolucionarios do Amazonas	51. Amigo dos Amigos
4. Comando Pelo Certo	28. Raio B	52. Povo de Israel
5. Familia 33	29. Primeiro Comando de Itabuna	53. Milicias
6. Os Abertos	30. DMP	54. Terceiro Comando Puro
7. Os Tauras	31. Comando da Paz	55. Primeiro Comando de Vitoria
8. Os Tauras Pelotas	32. Bonde dos 13	56. Bonde dos Maluco
9. Primeiro Comando Santamariense	33. Comboio do Cao	57. Bonde dos Cachorros
10. PCS	34. Bonde do Maluco	58. Familia do Norte
11. Unidos Pelo Paz	35. Katiara	59. Okaida
12. Conceicao	36. Bonde do Ajeita	60. Trem Bala
13. Primeiro Comando do Interior	37. Primeiro Comando do Panda	61. Guardioes do Estado
14. Alkaida	38. Real	62. Comando Litoral Sul
15. V7-RS	39. Bonde do TG	63. Bonde dos 40
16. Sindicato do Crime	40. Bonde do Antonio Fal	64. Comando Leal
17. Primeiro Comando da Capital	41. Bonde 8 de Ouro	65. Primeiro Crime Revolucionario Catarinense

⁹ Insight Crime, [About Us](#), no date

¹⁰ Insight Crime, [Brazil Profile](#), 24 November 2023

¹¹ CNN Brasil, [About](#), no date

¹² CNN Brasil, [Brazil has 72 criminal factions linked to drug trafficking, study says](#), 9 June 2024

¹³ SENAPPEN, [Relatorio do Mapa de Orcrim](#) (page 12), 2023

18. PCM	42. Bonde do Neguinho	66. Irmaos dos Irmaos
19. Bonde do Cangaco	43. Mercado do Povo Atitude	67. Tudo Neutro/Massa
20. Comando Vermelho	44. Primeiro Comando de Eunapolis	68. EUA
21. Amigos do Estado	45. Primeiro Grupo Catarinense	69. Nova Okaida
22. Familia Terror do Amapa	46. Mafia Paranense	70. Bonde do Cangaco
23. Amigos Para Sempre-Aps	47. Ferro Velho	71. Tercero Comando da Capital
24. Uniao Criminosa do Amapa-UCA	48. Cartel do Sul	72. Comando Revolucionario Brasileiro da Criminalidade

- 8.1.5 In September 2024, UK Home Office (UK HO) officials conducted a fact-finding mission (FFM) to Brazil to gather information from a range of sources about the situation regarding organised criminal groups, particularly the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) and the Comando Vermelho (CV). Members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the immigration division told the UK HO FFM team that ‘We have all sorts of criminal organisations here, I think we have more than 80 now, and new ones arising every day.’¹⁴

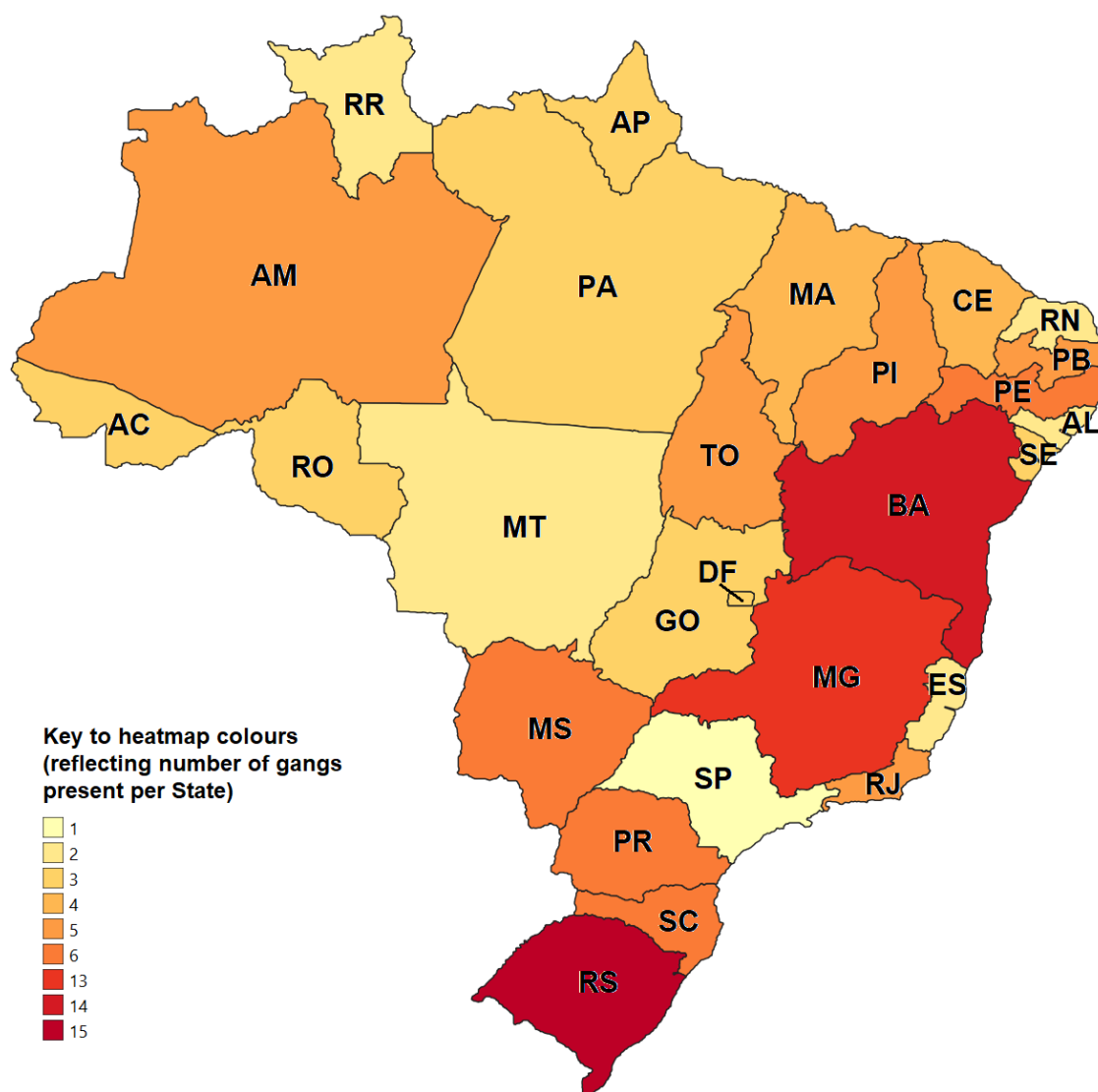
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8.2 Location of OCGs in Brazil

- 8.2.1 The below heatmap of Brazil was created by CPIT based on data from the 2024 SENAPPEN report¹⁵. It shows the acronym for each state, which can be cross-referenced with the table at paragraph 8.2.2, and the number of OCGs present in each state. It shows that OCGs are present in every state of Brazil and that the states with the largest number of OCGs are Bahia, Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul:

¹⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 22), September 2024

¹⁵ SENAPPEN, [Relatorio do Mapa de Orcrim](#) (page 11), 2023



8.2.2 The below table was created by CPIT based on data in the 2024 SENAPPEN report, which detailed which OCGs are present in each state of Brazil^{16 17}. It shows that and that the PCC and CV are by far the most prolific (with presence in 23 and 20 states respectively), with another 5 groups (Primeiro Grupo Catarinense, Bonde do Maluco, Bonde dos 40, Guardioes do Estado and Os Manos) having a presence in 3-4 Brazilian states:

Brazil and states	OCGs
AC: Acre	CV, PCC, B13
AL: Alagoas	CV, PCC
AP: Amapá	Familia Terror do Amapa, Amigos Para Sempre, Uniao Criminosa do Amapa
AM: Amazonas	CV, PCC, Revolucionarios do Amazonas, Cartel do Norte, Crias da Triplice
BA: Bahia	Raio B, Primero Comando do Itabuna, DMP,

¹⁶ SENAPPEN, [Relatorio do Mapa de Orcrim](#) (page 11), 2023

¹⁷ SENAPPEN, [Relatorio do Mapa de Orcrim](#) (page 15), 2023

	Comando da Paz, Bonde do Maluco, Katiara, Bonde do Ajeita, Real, Bonde do TG, Bonde do Antonio Fal, Bonde 8 de Ouro, Bonde do Neguinho, Mercado do Povo Atitude, Primeiro Comando de Eunapolis
CE: Ceará	PCC, CV, DGE, Tudo Neutro
DF: Distrito Federal (Federal District)	PCC, CV, Comboio do Cao
ES: Espírito Santo	Primeiro Comando do Vitoria, PCC
GO: Goiás	Amigos do Estado, CV, PCC
MA: Maranhão	CV, PCC, Bonde dos 40, Primeiro Comado do Maranhao
MT: Mato Grosso	Comando Vermelho-MT, PCC
MS: Mato Grosso do Sul	CV, PCC, Sindicato do Crime, BDM, Os Mano, PGC
MG: Minas Gerais	PCC, CV, Irmaos dos Irmaos, TCP, PGC, Amigos dos Amigos, Cartel do Norte, TCC, Bonde dos 40, BDM, GDE, Comboio do Cao, CRBC
PA: Pará	CVV, PC, CCA
PB: Paraíba	EUA, Nova Okaida, CV, PCC, Bonde do Cangaco
PR: Paraná	PCC, Mafia Paranaense, Ferro Velho, Cartel do Sul, PGC, CV
PE: Pernambuco	PCC, Trem Bala, Bonde do Cachorros, Familia do Norte, Okaida, Comando Litoral Sul
PI: Piauí	CV, Bonde dos 40, PCC, GDE, BDM
RJ: Rio de Janeiro	CV, Amigos dos Amigos, Povo de Israel, Terceiro Comando Puro, Militias
RN: Rio Grande do Norte	Sindicato do Crime, PCC
RS: Rio Grande do Sul	Os Mano, Anti Bala, Bala na Cara, Comando Pelo Certo, Familia 33, Os Abertos, Os Tauras, Os Tauras Pelotas, Primeiro Comando Santamarinense, PCS, Unidos Pelo Paz, Conceicao, Primeiro Comando do Interior, Alkaida, V7-RS
RO: Rondônia	Primeiro Comando do Panda, PCC, CV
RR: Roraima	PCC, CV
SC: Santa Catarina	PGC, PCC, Comando Leal, Primeiro Crime Revolucionario Catarinense, Os Mano, Bala Na Cara
SP: São Paulo	PCC

SE: Sergipe	Bonde do Maluco, PCC, CV
TO: Tocantins	PCM, CV, PCC, ADE, Bonde do Cangaco-TO

- 8.2.3 In 2021, Insight Crime stated that the state of Rio Grande do Sol is 'Strategically located between Argentina and Uruguay... a hub for contraband and drug smuggling.'¹⁸
- 8.2.4 An Insight Crime article from September 2022 noted that: 'The state of Mato Grosso do Sul... is... vital to transnational criminal enterprise, with its networks of rivers and heavily forested landscape providing the perfect cover for the movement of people, animals, weapons, and drugs. The border region also serves as the primary access point to cocaine from Bolivia for the First Capital Command (Primeiro Comando da Capital – PCC), Brazil's most prominent criminal gang.'¹⁹
- 8.2.5 In 2022, Dialogo Americas, 'a professional digital military magazine published by the U.S. Southern Command'²⁰, reported that:
- 'Five main attributes contribute to the Amazon's strategic importance for criminal groups in Brazil...
- 'The lucrative Solimões route to the Atlantic [a section of the Amazon River that forms an ideal transportation network stemming from Peru and Colombia to the Atlantic Ocean... a golden route for illicit drug shipment.'²¹]....
 - 'Access to the triple border with Colombia and Peru: The largest coca producers in the world...
 - 'The "Rota Caipira" of the south is increasingly consolidated and dominated by the PCC...
 - 'Ungoverned spaces abound in the Amazon...
 - 'Market diversification: From drugs to illegal mining, deforestation, and wildlife...'²²
- 8.2.6 The United States Department of State (USSD)'s Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) provides 'insights on baseline security conditions for every country in the world.'²³ Its Country Security Report on Brazil, published in February (OSAC 2025 report), stated that:
- 'Throughout Brazil, low-income informal housing developments in urban areas known as favelas (sometimes called comunidades, vilas, or conglomerados) are common and easily recognizable. Many of these marginalized areas lack a robust state presence and are controlled by criminal groups. They tend to more frequently see shoot-outs between criminals and police, as well as other illegal activity with a higher frequency. It is not uncommon for these areas to be in close proximity to middle or

¹⁸ Insight Crime, [Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil](#), 4 March 2021

¹⁹ Insight Crime, [Corumbá: The Beating Heart of Bolivia-Brazil Smuggling](#), 9 September 2022

²⁰ Dialogo Americas, [Editorial Guidelines](#), no date

²¹ Dialogo Americas, [Tussle for the Amazon: New Frontiers...](#), 16 November 2022

²² Dialogo Americas, [Tussle for the Amazon: New Frontiers...](#), 16 November 2022

²³ USSD OSAC, [About Us](#), no date

upper-income areas...

'The Tri-Border Area (TBA) of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay is a regional hub for the transit of illicit goods, including narcotics and firearms...

'...Major drug gangs and militias control organized crime in Rio de Janeiro, operating mainly in the favelas and in the country's prison system. All of Rio's neighborhoods are subject to criminal activity...'24

8.2.7 The United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated in 2023:

'The dominant drug trafficking organizations in Brazil have deepened their presence in the Legal Amazon in recent years. CV [Comando Vermelho] and PCC [Primeiro Comando da Capital] have expanded from their strongholds in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, respectively, after several leaders were relocated to Federal and state prisons in the region. Over time, CV and PCC spread to cities, towns and the countryside of the states of Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima and Tocantins. They have aligned with a significant number of local drug trafficking organizations and criminal factions and have expanded their transnational operations, collaborating with partners in Colombia, Peru and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)'.25

8.2.8 The Global Organized Crime Index is a 'multi-dimensional tool that assesses the level of criminality and resilience to organized crime for 193 countries'26. Its 2023 iteration (Global Organized Crime Index 2023), based on data from 202227, noted that 'Criminal networks in Brazil typically ally with either the PCC or the CV and have expanded in recent years, with notable access to weapons contributing to high levels of violence across the country. Violence has particularly increased in the northern and north-eastern states, while in the south networks allied with the main mafia groups are profiting from a newly instituted route for cocaine trafficking.'28

8.2.9 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, BBC Brasil reported that 'A report by the Ministry of Justice pointed out that Rio Grande do Sul has 15 criminal factions active, but only two of them have state coverage: Bala na Cara and Os Manos.'29

8.2.10 Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index assesses movements toward democracy and market economy around the world30. Its 2024 iteration (BTI 2024) covers the period from 1 February 2021 to 31 January 202331. This report noted that 'Organized crime is extremely powerful in several metropolitan areas. Gangs such as Primerio Comando da Capital and Comando Vermelho operate throughout the country and have additionally become a transnational threat in neighboring countries. They operate in the areas of arms and drug trafficking and control many of the country's prisons.

24 USSD OSAC, [Country Security Report Brazil](#), 5 February 2025

25 UNODC, [Contemporary issues on drugs](#) (page 90), June 2023

26 Global Organized Crime Index, [About](#), no date

27 Global Organized Crime Index, [About](#), no date

28 Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Criminal Actors), 2023

29 BBC News Brasil, [Control of shelters and PCC disinterest...](#), 24 May 2024

30 BTI, [Who we are](#), no date

31 BTI, [Brazil Country Report 2024](#) (page 2), 2024

Violent massacres frequently occur in Brazil's overcrowded prisons.³²

- 8.2.11 Members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and organised crime division told the UK HO FFM team that 'Brasilia is very safe, but in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, people have to change their mindset and be alert.'³³

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8.3 Primeiro Comando da Capital (First Command of the Capital, PCC)

a. Origins

- 8.3.1 For information on the origins of the PCC, see:

- Grey Dynamics, [Primeiro Comando da Capital \(PCC\): From São Paulo to the World](#), 28 March 2024
- Perspectives on Terrorism, [The Use of Terrorist Tools by Criminal Organizations: The Case of the Brazilian Primeiro Comando da Capital \(PCC\)](#) (pages 68, 69), August 2020

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b. Size and reach

- 8.3.2 In 2022, The Financial Times reported that:

'...the group [PCC] has today evolved into a multinational mafia, with an estimated 40,000 members...

'...the group has expanded its dominance across Brazil over the past decade, outflanking for the most part its main rival, the Rio de Janeiro-based Red Command, in a violent nationwide turf war...

'...security experts now fear Brazil is at the beginning of a process of state capture, with the syndicate using its wealth to influence and corrupt local and national politics as well as the judiciary and police. Some worry that the PCC has become too big to tackle... Rafael Alcadipani, a crime expert with the Brazilian Forum on Public Security, puts the situation even more starkly: "The PCC is the largest threat to the Brazilian state. If we don't do anything, we can become a narco-state."³⁴

- 8.3.3 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, Brazilian news agency Metropoles³⁵ reported that:

'...the Public Prosecutor's Office of São Paulo (MPSP) calculates that the PCC currently has 100,000 "collaborators", enough to elevate it, if it were a company, to the position of the third largest employer in Brazil, ahead of banks, wholesale giants and mining companies.

'There are about 40 thousand "brothers", those baptized by the PCC, and 60 thousand "companions", the service providers. All subject to the rules and hierarchy of the group...

'The PCC was already active in all states, hegemonically or allied with local

³² BTI, [Brazil Country Report 2024](#) (Stateness), 2024

³³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 25), September 2024

³⁴ Financial Times, [How Brazil's largest crime syndicate built a global drug empire](#), 27 February 2022

³⁵ Metropoles, [About Us](#), no date

factions, in 2016...

'Today, the estimate is that the PCC dominates 85% of the 181 prisons in São Paulo. Its members are also spread across all Brazilian states and other countries. "The government has always underestimated," says Ivana [Ivana David, Brazilian judge³⁶]. "The faction has only grown and become richer. Financially and structurally it overflowed the territorial limits of the country."'37

- 8.3.4 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, Brazilian news portal Veja³⁸ reported that 'the National Secretariat for Penal Policies detected that the main criminal faction in the country, the First Command of the Capital (PCC), has known operations in 24 states.'³⁹

- 8.3.5 Prosecutor Lincoln Gakiya told the UK HO FFM team that:

'Fresh information from January 2024 indicates that the PCC is now present in 26 countries: 12 in South America, 10 in Europe, 1 in the Middle East. It is present in Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia, French Guinea, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela, Mexico, England, Ireland, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia and the United States among other places. A member of the PCC was also located in Lebanon...

'They are still small in Europe - only 15,000 members are known to be outside of Brazil...'40

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c. Leadership

- 8.3.6 Insight Crime, in a 2024 profile of the PCC stated:

'The PCC is run at the highest level by a group of powerful regional leaders, many of whom are incarcerated. It organizes itself with strong independent local leadership working through a franchise system instead of being dependent on a vertical hierarchy. Dues are collected from members of the organization and are used to pay lawyers, buy off prison guards and police, and to purchase drugs and weapons...

'Marcola serves as the group's maximum leader, operating from prison, where he is serving a two-decade drug trafficking sentence...

'The gang's diffuse leadership structure has made it resilient to challenges from rivals, as well as authorities' attempts to disrupt its leadership. Despite tensions among top leaders, the group will likely remain among Latin America's most powerful criminal organizations due to its strong territorial control and its involvement in a multitude of criminal economies.'⁴¹

- 8.3.7 However, the same source also stated that 'In the early years of the 2020s... group's senior leadership was destabilized by authorities' interception of the group's communications, ongoing warfare with rival organizations, and transfers of top leaders to federal penitentiaries.'⁴²

³⁶ Metropoles, [From 8 to 100 Thousand](#), 30 August 2023

³⁷ Metropoles, [From 8 to 100 Thousand](#), 30 August 2023

³⁸ Veja, [Homepage](#), no date

³⁹ Veja, [Government map shows that PCC operates in 24 states; CV in 23](#), 14 July 2024

⁴⁰ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 52), September 2024

⁴¹ Insight Crime, [First Capital Command - PCC](#), 11 October 2024

⁴² Insight Crime, [First Capital Command - PCC](#), 11 October 2024

8.3.8 In 2022, the Financial Times reported that:

‘Unlike traditional Latin American drug cartels, which typically have one clear boss, power in the PCC is diffused through a broader top leadership. At the apex of the pyramid is an advisory board of six or seven senior figures, who must sign off on big decisions, such as whether to launch a war or open a new frontier, says Romanelli [Leonardo Romanelli, intelligence officer at the Sao Paulo state prosecutor’s office⁴³]. This board includes... Marcola, who for decades has been the public face of the PCC. He is serving a sentence of 332 years in prison for crimes including murder and drugs trafficking.

‘In 2019, authorities succeeded in incarcerating every member of this top echelon in federal penitentiaries without access to mobile phones. This has complicated the group’s decision-making, investigators say, and has resulted in power filtering further down the chain of command. Below the advisory board, there are some 50 to 100 regional leaders scattered across South America. Below them are the thousands of often very young, very poor foot soldiers. “There are two PCCs. The base that is very, very poor. They live in slums. They are more than 95 per cent of members. Then there is the second PCC, [the top] they live in the best neighbourhoods of São Paulo, Brazil, Paraguay,” said Romanelli.’⁴⁴

8.3.9 In March 2023, the Wilson Center, a US regional studies think-tank⁴⁵, shared a blog post written by The Brazilian Report, which stated: ‘Almost all of the PCC’s leaders are in prison, controlling the business from inside their cells. This business model was facilitated by the creation of large maximum security prisons in the early 2000s, which brought the incarcerated leaders together, and by the cartels’ reach at the regional level - leading to this “business model” being mimicked throughout most of Brazil.’⁴⁶

8.3.10 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, Metropoles reported that:

‘...Marcola is pointed out as the man behind the transformation of the PCC into a criminal organization with a business structure and vision. Responsible for millionaire robberies, he has been in the penitentiary system since 1986, when he was 18 years old...

‘Marcola’s administration is responsible for directing the PCC’s activities towards cocaine trafficking. He also created the current structure of the faction, organized into cells called “Sintonias”. With well-defined functions and orders transmitted by “salves”, each sector has autonomy in its area and makes decisions on a daily basis.

‘The PCC structure allows for quick adaptations and changes in the chain of command. Decentralized, the decision-making model makes investigations difficult and ensures that the criminal organization continues to collect even when leaders on the streets are arrested.’⁴⁷

8.3.11 The same source noted that: ‘In territories controlled by the PCC, each collaborator has a well-defined position. The first on the leadership scale is the so-called “discipline”, responsible for ensuring that the PCC’s rules are

⁴³ Financial Times, [How Brazil’s largest crime syndicate built a global drug empire](#), 27 February 2022

⁴⁴ Financial Times, [How Brazil’s largest crime syndicate built a global drug empire](#), 27 February 2022

⁴⁵ Wilson Center, [About the Wilson Center](#), no date

⁴⁶ Wilson Center, [Homicides Are Down In Brazil. But It's Not Time For A Victory Lap](#), 14 March 2023

⁴⁷ Metropoles, [The Rise of Marcola](#), 31 August 2023

complied with in a community.’⁴⁸

- 8.3.12 Metropoles also reported that ‘In the hierarchy of the PCC, the “discipline” is accountable to the “general tune”, the person responsible for a set of neighborhoods. This, in turn, owes satisfaction to the “final tune” – the leader of an entire city or region.’⁴⁹

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d. Activities

- 8.3.13 The Financial Times reported in 2022 that the PCC had:

‘...established new revenue streams. Police say it is behind a surge in digital crimes, including WhatsApp scams that every year ensnare millions of Brazilians, typically by cloning their accounts and then requesting money from their contacts. It is also moving into environmental crime, with PCC members an increasingly prominent presence among illegal gold mining groups in the northern reaches of the Amazon rainforest...

‘Investigators in São Paulo estimate the group has an annual turnover of around \$500mn [approx. £397.7 million⁵⁰]... Independent security experts estimate the figure could be even higher given that the size of the Brazilian cocaine market is estimated to be worth billions of dollars and the PCC controls the lion’s share of it... in 2020 federal police tracked more than \$5bn [approx. £3.9 billion⁵¹] in ill-gotten assets - including vehicles, homes and boats...’⁵²

- 8.3.14 The same source reported that:

‘Illegal mining in the Amazon rainforest offers the PCC a trifecta of opportunities: direct profit from the gold, the extortion of miners and opportunities to launder money. “Several members of the PCC are involved in mining and it is suspected that this has to do with a new way of funding the organisation, using an activity that is not as repressed as drug and arms trafficking,” says a federal police officer... “There have also been several complaints from miners about extortion by alleged members of [the PCC] - they are charging for ‘protection’.” The Amazonian gold industry is notoriously unregulated and many experts see it as an obvious way to launder money...’⁵³

- 8.3.15 The OSAC 2025 report stated that the PCC ‘...controls the majority of illegal contraband and drugs coming into/out of the prisons in São Paulo...’⁵⁴

- 8.3.16 The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 noted that the PCC is ‘involved in drug trafficking domestically and internationally, primarily through cargo ships... [and] in various other illegal activities, including illegal mining, arms trafficking, bank robberies, kidnappings and money laundering...’⁵⁵

- 8.3.17 In 2023, Bloomberg reported that ‘...even if the PCC isn’t behind a heist, it

⁴⁸ Metropoles, [The Rise of Marcola](#), 31 August 2023

⁴⁹ Metropoles, [Luxury Tune, Troop in the Trash](#), 3 September 2023

⁵⁰ Xe.com, [500,000,000 USD to GBP](#), 23 December 2024

⁵¹ Xe.com, [5,000,000,000 USD to GBP](#), 23 December 2024

⁵² Financial Times, [How Brazil’s largest crime syndicate built a global drug empire](#), 27 February 2022

⁵³ Financial Times, [How Brazil’s largest crime syndicate built a global drug empire](#), 27 February 2022

⁵⁴ USSD OSAC, [Country Security Report Brazil](#), 5 February 2025

⁵⁵ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Criminal Actors), 2023

might be supplying guns, bomb-making expertise or getaway drivers to unaffiliated freelancers. “If they’re renting out the guns, or financing the robbery, they get a cut,” ...’⁵⁶

- 8.3.18 In 2023, Metropoles reported that the PCC ‘...is a multinational crime company, with well-paid directors and an army of employees at its disposal, supported by billions from cocaine trafficking. To complement the revenue, the faction carries out weapons smuggling and cinematographic robberies. It also has ramifications in the sectors of commerce, services, real estate, mining and even cryptocurrencies.’⁵⁷
- 8.3.19 In 2023, the UNODC stated that the PCC ‘...are increasingly involved in aspects of mining operations in Yanomami in Brazil, the world’s largest Indigenous territory and home to approximately 30,000 Indigenous People. Drug trafficking and sexual exploitation are also increasingly common, with PCC viewed as a key actor. The PCC is also suspected of being involved in providing protection, financing the extraction of gold and using the mines to launder drug profits.’⁵⁸
- 8.3.20 In 2023, Metropoles reported that ‘The PCC has a long history of promoting attacks and threats to authorities, police stations and public buildings. The attacks serve to demand changes in prisons and put pressure on lighter regimes for their leaders.’⁵⁹
- 8.3.21 The same source reported that ‘...the PCC has used its structure to try to grab public contracts and silently infiltrate administrations across the country. Among the sectors that have already appeared under suspicion of involvement of the Brazilian mafia are public transport and urban cleaning, hired by city halls.’⁶⁰
- 8.3.22 Metropoles also reported that ‘In Brazil, the billions from drug trafficking allow the PCC to dominate communities and, if not heeded, resort to violence – just like the mafias do.’⁶¹
- 8.3.23 Considering the reach of the PCC, the Global Organized Crime Index 2023 noted that the PCC ‘have connections with transnational mafias in Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru and Colombia to ensure the shipment and transportation of drugs to Europe...’⁶²
- 8.3.24 Originally published in Portuguese, in May 2024, Brazilian news portal SBT News⁶³ reported that ‘Loan sharks from the First Command of the Capital (PCC) charged debtors with threats, violence, seizure of assets...
‘The loans were made with a monthly interest charge that could range from 10% to 300%. Those who borrowed the money and did not pay it on time were usually charged in the amount of R\$ 1 thousand [approx. £130⁶⁴] per

⁵⁶ Bloomberg, [How a Prison Gang Inspired by Hollywood Heists Stole \\$23 Million](#), 29 June 2023

⁵⁷ Metropoles, [From 8 to 100 Thousand](#), 30 August 2023

⁵⁸ UNODC, [Contemporary issues on drugs](#) (page 75), June 2023

⁵⁹ Metropoles, [The Command Became a Mafia](#), 2 September 2023

⁶⁰ Metropoles, [The Command Became a Mafia](#), 2 September 2023

⁶¹ Metropoles, [The Command Became a Mafia](#), 2 September 2023

⁶² Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Criminal Actors), 2023

⁶³ SBT News, [Homepage](#), no date

⁶⁴ Xe.com, [1,000 BRL to GBP](#), 23 December 2024

day.’⁶⁵

8.3.25 In another 2024 article on the topic, SBT News reported that the PCC:

‘...is accused of moving more than R\$ 20 million [approx. £2.6 million⁶⁶], in 2023 alone, with illegal loans, with abusive interest, late fees, extortion and threats in the collection of amounts...

‘Prosecutor Frederico Silvério... [said] the borrowers were individuals and also legal entities, who needed working capital to invest in medium-sized businesses. The charges were made with violence and under threat.

“...the criminal faction has been becoming more sophisticated in the ways of obtaining income, leaving aside the well-known practices of trafficking and theft to resort to more profitable activities and less subject to state repression. Fraud in bids and loans at astronomical interest rates are some of them,” said Silvério.’⁶⁷

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8.4 Comando Vermelho (Red Command, CV)

a. Origins

8.4.1 For information on the origins of the CV, see Insight Crime, [Red Command](#), 19 November 2024.

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b. Size and reach

8.4.2 Insight Crime’s 2024 profile on the CV stated that:

‘The Red Command is based in Rio de Janeiro, but has a presence in other parts of Brazil. It is particularly strong in the northern state of Amazonas and the western state of Mato Grosso, while also operating in Paraguay and Bolivia. In addition, reports in 2022 suggested it had begun to expand into French Guiana.

‘The Red Command is also engaged in an ongoing turf war in the tri-border region between Colombia, Brazil, and Peru, where the group has expanded its influence...

‘While smaller than the PCC, the Red Command was estimated to have around 30,000 members around Brazil in 2020... with a growing presence in the northeast of Brazil, it is now in a strong position to continue trafficking tons of cocaine from Bolivia and Paraguay.’⁶⁸

8.4.3 In its 2023 profile on Brazil, Insight Crime stated that ‘The Red Command has used its strong presence in its home turf of Rio de Janeiro to gain major influence in prisons across the country.’⁶⁹

8.4.4 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, Brazilian news agency Terra⁷⁰ reported that ‘It is in the North and Midwest regions of the country, where it

⁶⁵ SBT News, [Crime Court, violence and threat...](#), 14 May 2024

⁶⁶ Xe.com, [20,000,000 BRL to GBP](#), 23 December 2024

⁶⁷ SBT News, [PCC loan shark arrested on his way to Rio Grande do Sul...](#), 7 May 2024

⁶⁸ Insight Crime, [Red Command](#), 19 November 2024

⁶⁹ Insight Crime, [Brazil Profile](#), 24 November 2023

⁷⁰ Terra, [Homepage](#), no date

disputes the dominance of local trafficking and the routes used... that the CV has had the greatest success outside Rio. The faction has managed to become hegemonic in Mato Grosso and is present in all states in the North. In Acre, for example, it dominates the Juruá Valley and Cruzeiro do Sul, close to the border with Peru and Bolivia.⁷¹

- 8.4.5 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, Fogo Cruzado, ‘an Institute that uses technology to produce and disseminate open and collaborative data on armed violence’⁷², reported that ‘In 2023 (compared to 2022) all armed groups [in the Greater Rio area] showed a reduction, with the exception of the CV, which increased by 8.4%... the militias, which in 2021 and 2022 were the armed group with the largest territorial dominance, were overtaken by the Red Command, which, in 2023, concentrated 51.9% of the territories controlled by armed groups in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro.’⁷³
- 8.4.6 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, discussing the advancement of the CV into the Amazon, Veja reported that ‘...according to the Civil Police, they control 95% of the areas under the influence of crime, today called “red zones”. Instead of occupying hills, the group is now advancing on poor and violent neighborhoods on the banks of the Rio Negro, through which they can ship the drugs and quickly escape from the police...’⁷⁴

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c. Leadership and organisation

- 8.4.7 Insight Crime’s 2024 profile on the CV stated:
- ‘The Red Command has a relatively loose leadership structure, and has been described as a network of independent actors, rather than a strict hierarchical organization headed by a single leader. The gang’s structure resembles the organization of a franchise, as it has local divisions and separated networks working as allies.
- ‘However, there are prominent bosses within the structure, including Luiz Fernando da Costa, alias “Fernandinho Beira-Mar,” who is currently imprisoned, and Isaías da Costa Rodrigues, alias “Isaías do Borel,” who was in prison for more than 20 years until his release in 2022...’⁷⁵
- 8.4.8 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, Brazilian news agency UOL⁷⁶ reported that:
- ‘Unlike other factions, the CV has the characteristic of being less hierarchical, composed of “owners of the hill” - the expression is used to designate the bosses of drug trafficking... That is, it does not have a leader, but a set of leaders who command territories and who ally with each other.
- ‘According to Carolina Grillo, a researcher... the CV pyramid exists only on a local scale. In Rio, each of the communities dominated by the faction has an “owner of the hill”. In Rocinha, for example, according to the Civil Police, it is John Wallace Viana, Johnny Bravo. In Complexo do Alemão, previously

⁷¹ Terra, [Red Command operates in 13 states and the Federal District...](#), 14 November 2023

⁷² Fogo Cruzado, [Red Command grows in 2023](#), 17 April 2024

⁷³ Fogo Cruzado, [Red Command grows in 2023](#), 17 April 2024

⁷⁴ Veja, [Terror in expansion: the Red Command advances in the North of Brazil](#), 4 June 2024

⁷⁵ Insight Crime, [Red Command](#), 19 November 2024

⁷⁶ UOL, [Homepage](#), no date

headed by Márcio Nepomuceno, Marcinho VP, today it is by Luciano Martiniano da Silva, Pezão, and so on. The same occurs in the states.

‘In the pyramid, below the “owner of the hill” there are: the “front” or “responsible” of the hill, then the “managers” and, at the base, the “soldiers” and “steamers”, according to Grillo.

‘If there is no hierarchy and no leader, then how are CV decisions made? Carolina Grillo... explains that, although there is no authority above the “owner of the hill,” there are leaders with more influence than others. This depends on the territory under your hands.

“...The owner of the drug trade in a small favela has less influence on collective decisions than the owners in large favelas or in several favelas. But they need to form alliances with other favela owners, including to... repress the attempts of “coup d'état” by their subordinates”⁷⁷

- 8.4.9 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, Jornal Opcao, a Brazilian news agency based in Goiás state⁷⁸, reported that ‘The CV... is not as organized, according to Gaeco [special action group to combat organised crime⁷⁹]. Each head of state has the autonomy to make his own decisions. The agency even says that internal disputes and homicides committed among members are common compared to the PCC. In Goiás, the Rio de Janeiro faction is considered the most violent organization.’⁸⁰

- 8.4.10 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, referring to a police report on the organisation of the CV in Amazonas state, Política Livre, a website on politics in Brazil⁸¹, reported that:

‘...The group is commanded by a “Council”...

‘The Red Command in Amazonas also has... a crime court, formed by the leaders of the group to determine even capital punishments... Below the Council are the representatives of each municipality... called “General”.

‘The “General” of a given locality is assisted by a “Front”. The “fronts” coordinate local work and resolve conflicts among their members... Finally, each location has a treasurer, called by the faction “Tower”. “These are responsible for collecting the money from what they call ‘Caixinha’ (a kind of union contribution from crime),” says the Civil Police report.

‘The faction even distributed, via WhatsApp, information on the balance of the month's accounts, under the title of “CV-AM Transparency”. “The Red Command that articulates things in the Amazon is a different CV from the CV of Rio de Janeiro... explains Aiala Colares [researcher at the University of Para⁸²]. “It is not autonomy, because there is a Council, which is composed of members from the Amazon region and Rio de Janeiro, where the maximum command is. Many decisions come from the general command, from this Council,” he says.’⁸³

⁷⁷ UOL, [‘Influence and owners of hills’: who is the leader of the Red Command?](#), 18 July 2023

⁷⁸ Jornal Opcao, [Homepage](#), no date

⁷⁹ Federal Public Ministry of Brazil, [Gaeco](#), no date

⁸⁰ Jornal Opcao, [...PCC and CV dominate drug trafficking in Goiás](#), 11 December 2023

⁸¹ Política Livre, [Homepage](#), no date

⁸² Política Livre, [Red Command came to dominate Amazonas](#), 2 December 2023

⁸³ Política Livre, [Red Command came to dominate Amazonas](#), 2 December 2023

d. Activities

- 8.4.11 Americas Quarterly, a 'publication dedicated to politics, business and culture in the Americas'⁸⁴, reported in 2021 that the main 'money makers' of the CV were drug trafficking, kidnapping, extortion and weapons smuggling⁸⁵.
- 8.4.12 The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 noted that the CV '...competes with the PCC for control of drug trafficking in certain areas. [It is]... involved in various other illegal activities, including illegal mining, arms trafficking, bank robberies, kidnappings and money laundering...'⁸⁶
- 8.4.13 Originally published in Portuguese, in a 2022 article discussing an interview with 2 members of the CV, R7 reported that 'Both say they don't even remember how many people they've killed. Among the victims, rival factions and police officers.'⁸⁷
- 8.4.14 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, Terra reported that:
'In Amazonas, the faction allegedly carried out attacks on police stations, banks, and buses in June 2021 in retaliation for the death of one of its members, who was allegedly being extorted by corrupt police officers...'
'The faction would also have promoted attacks on agents of the security forces in Pará...'
'The faction's current strategy would involve expanding its business throughout the country, maintaining the dispute of almost a decade for the drug market.'⁸⁸
- 8.4.15 In October 2023, reporting on the murders of 3 doctors who were visiting Rio de Janeiro for a conference, Open Democracy, 'an independent international media platform'⁸⁹, reported that:
'...the doctor Perseu Almeida, due to a strong physical resemblance, could have been mistaken for a member of a rival gang to the killers...'
'The thesis that an informant from the Red Command was "confused" and denounced the presence of "members of the gang" in the restaurant gained strength in the mass media when, just two days later, the murderers of the doctors were found dead. According to the police, the CV, which tried and punished their mistake with the death penalty, notified them and the press of this summary trial.'⁹⁰
- 8.4.16 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, Veja reported on the expansion of the CV into the Amazon:
'In recent years, as the cocaine business has become one of the most lucrative - and dangerous - in the world, the city [Manaus] has become a key outpost. Conquering it means controlling a good part of the so-called "Solimões Route", one of the largest drug corridors that arrive in Brazil from

⁸⁴ Americas Quarterly, [About](#), no date

⁸⁵ Americas Quarterly, [Red Command](#), no date

⁸⁶ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Criminal Actors), 2023

⁸⁷ R7 Estudio, [The 53 criminal factions in Brazil](#), 2 February 2022

⁸⁸ Terra, [Red Command operates in 13 states and the Federal District...](#), 14 November 2023

⁸⁹ Open Democracy, [About](#), no date

⁹⁰ Open Democracy, [...Settling scores, criminal factions and political violence](#), 23 October 2023

Colombia and Peru, producing countries. The importance is even greater for the Red Command, which had been losing territories to its main rival, the PCC, in the so-called “Rota Caipira”, a corridor that connects Bolivia and Paraguay to São Paulo, Paraná and Rio...⁹¹

- 8.4.17 The Global Network on Extremism and Technology (GNET), ‘an academic research initiative... for better understanding, and counteracting, terrorist use of technology’⁹², reported in a 2024 article that:

‘Starting in the 80’s, it [the CV] was able to leverage the relative lawlessness of the favelas (slums) into a safe haven for selling drugs to more affluent citizens. The two major consequences of that territorial control were first, the escalation of violence to defend the turf against police or rivals, with the use of high calibre weapons and irregular warfare methods...

‘The second... was the embeddedness of CV’s criminal group identity with that of locals, even those not involved in crime, partially due to the governance functions performed by the faction. The general perspective of local bosses was that content civilians would make drug sales smoother, with some of the profits being reinvested in the community in the form of social actions, community pools, or simply buying from small businesses... The tradeoff of noncompliance (or the perception of noncompliance) is usually brutal and, in the case of collaboration with the police, lethal...’⁹³

- 8.4.18 The GNET 2024 article also stated that ‘...there is substantial activity by affiliated individuals on X [formerly Twitter] and other platforms. True to their late 70’s roots in the hybridisation of leftist guerrilla with bank robbing gangs, the members not only showcase selling drugs and brandishing rifles, but announce new rules to locals... and engage in anti-government discourse.’⁹⁴

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8.5 Other OCGs

a. Bala na Cara (Bullet in the Face, BNC)

- 8.5.1 For information on Bala na Cara who primarily operate in Rio Grande do Sul, and borderland zones between Brazil and Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay⁹⁵, see:

- Insight Crime, [Bala na Cara](#) 27 July 2021

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b. Os Manos

- 8.5.2 For information on Os Manos, who primarily operate in Rio Grande do Sul⁹⁶, see:

- R7 Estudio, [The 53 criminal factions in Brazil](#), 2 February 2022
- UOL, [Bullet in the Face, Antibala and Manos: RS brings together the largest number of factions in the country](#), 28 July 2023

⁹¹ Veja, [Terror in expansion: the Red Command advances in the North of Brazil](#), 4 June 2024

⁹² GNET, [About](#), 17 June 2024

⁹³ GNET, [...The Social Media Presence of Comando Vermelho](#), 17 June 2024

⁹⁴ GNET, [...The Social Media Presence of Comando Vermelho](#), 17 June 2024

⁹⁵ Insight Crime, [Bala na Cara](#), 27 July 2021

⁹⁶ R7 Estudio, [The 53 criminal factions in Brazil](#), 2 February 2022

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c. Primeiro Grupo Catarinense (First Catarinense Group, PGC)

8.5.3 For information on the PGC, who primarily operate in Santa Catarina⁹⁷, see:

- Insight Crime, [Santa Catarina, Brazil](#), 4 March 2021
- Radio Cidades, [Santa Catarina criminal faction PGC announces "punishment" for those who rob school guards in Vale do Itajaí](#), 20 May 2024

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d. Bonde do Maluco (BDM)

8.5.4 For information on BDM, who primarily operate in Salvador and Bahia⁹⁸, see:

- R7 Estudio, [The 53 criminal factions in Brazil](#), 2 February 2022
- Terra, [Bahia faction allies with PCC and targets new international drug trafficking route, says newspaper](#), 3 March 2024

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e. Bonde dos 40

8.5.5 For information on Bonde dos 40, who primarily operate in São Luis⁹⁹, see:

- UOL, [Factions ally with PCC, CV and Colombian cartels over routes in the Amazon](#), 11 December 2023
- UOL, [Gaeco Maranhão carries out operation against Bonde dos 40 leaders, arrests 20 and takes 34 cell phones](#), 12 August 2024
- GP1, [Manual do Bonde dos 40: the merciless code of the criminal faction](#), 27 July 2023

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f. Guardioes do Estado (Guardians of the State, GDE)

8.5.6 For information on GDE, who primarily operate in Ceará, and communities located in Fortaleza¹⁰⁰, see:

- Metropoles, [Meet the Guardians of the State faction: kingpin was arrested in the Surroundings of the DF](#), 2 August 2023
- Metropoles, [Lords of the Rings: How the PCC's Northeastern Arm Broke with the Faction](#), 20 July 2024

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9. Militias

9.1.1 In a 2021 profile on militia Escritorio do Crime, Insight Crime reported that:

‘Escritório do Crime is one of the largest and most powerful militia groups in... Rio de Janeiro.

‘...[The] group has gained notoriety for a series of high-profile contract

⁹⁷ Insight Crime, [Santa Catarina, Brazil](#), 4 March 2021

⁹⁸ R7 Estudio, [The 53 criminal factions in Brazil](#), 2 February 2022

⁹⁹ UOL, [Gaeco Maranhão carries out operation against Bonde dos 40 leaders...](#), 12 August 2024

¹⁰⁰ Metropoles, [Meet the Guardians of the State faction...](#), 2 August 2023

killings, most notably the murder of councilwoman Marielle Franco in August 2018...

'The membership of Escritório do Crime (Office of Crime) is largely made up of former and serving police officers working primarily as hitmen...

'Rio's infamous militias have their roots in the brutal death squads that emerged during Brazil's military dictatorship from the 1960s to the 1980s. They were initially formed to protect residents living in gang-controlled favelas, but many later became involved in drug trafficking, extortion and other criminal activities. They have also now established a monopoly over internet service, cable TV, public transport and construction.

'Over the past decade, these paramilitary-style groups have expanded dramatically, and today they control large swaths of Rio de Janeiro and other large cities in Brazil...

'...While Rio de Janeiro is widely known as the militia stronghold, several Brazilian news outlets have analyzed data that suggests militias are expanding their territorial control and criminal activities across Brazil.

'According to an analysis of data acquired from Disque 100, a reporting line for Brazil's Human Rights Ministry that records complaints of crimes and human rights violations, militia activity was reported in 15 states across the country between 2016 and 2017.

'Militia groups in Rio de Janeiro have strong ties to public officials and security forces, allowing them to operate with impunity. The country's recent municipal elections were marked by violence as militias sought to infiltrate the electoral process.'¹⁰¹

9.1.2 Insight Crime reported in 2022 that '...having the militias move in often comes at a cost to Rio's poorer citizens. Beyond engaging in extortion and, in some cases, drug trafficking, throughout much of the city, these groups have installed their own form of government. They are often the only providers of basic services, monopolizing Internet and television access, or even building entire apartment buildings.'¹⁰²

9.1.3 Insight Crime also reported in 2022 that:

'The average price of a gas cylinder in favelas controlled by gangs and armed militias is... around 40 percent higher than the average price in the rest of the state, according to Brazilian news site Globo. Residents attempting to bypass the price hike and purchase cheaper gas from legal vendors may face violent reprisals.

"“You can't buy gas anywhere else. You can only buy gas with the militias,” a favela resident told Globo, adding that cylinders bought from different providers would be confiscated. “That's if they don't attack you because in the favela it's forbidden to buy gas from somewhere else,” he said...

'In addition to controlling basic commodities, Rio militias have also set up lucrative extortion rackets targeting local businesses, car parks and real estate companies. The militias are also heavily involved the drug trade and money laundering; the groups boast a vast network of legal businesses used

¹⁰¹ Insight Crime, [Escritório do Crime](#), 13 August 2021

¹⁰² Insight Crime, [Rio's Campaign Against Red Command Achieving Little But...](#), 30 May 2022

to conceal illicit funds.’¹⁰³

9.1.4 In a 2022 article on militias, The Guardian reported that:

‘Cláudio Ferraz, the head of Rio’s organized crime squad from 2007 to 2010, called militias “one of the greatest threats to sovereignty and the democratic rule of law state in this country”....

“Pretty much the only thing they don’t sell is the air we breathe,” said José Cláudio Souza Alves, a sociologist considered one of Rio’s leading experts on the topic.

‘Alves said Rio was now home to dozens of loosely connected militia groups – often called “bondes” (crews) – with a management-style hierarchy and... authority over dozens of low-income communities...

“They impose themselves through tyranny – and their objective is profit...”¹⁰⁴

9.1.5 Originally published in Portuguese, a 2023 article on Brazilian news portal G1¹⁰⁵ stated:

‘The first paramilitary group was formed in Rio das Pedras, in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro, in the late 1980s. It carried the motto of “protecting” citizens from the offensive of drug trafficking...

‘Today, former rivals are allies and impose narco-militias in different regions. The partnerships also aim at the dispute over territories, which invariably leads to shootings, leaving entire communities cornered...

‘There is practically no longer any difference between the methods and actions of militiamen and drug traffickers. They all charge fees, control services, profit from drug sales, and maintain a regime of fear...’¹⁰⁶

9.1.6 In 2023, The Guardian reported that:

‘Criminals reportedly set fire to at least 35 buses and coaches, four lorries and a train on Monday [23 October 2023], during what local media described as one of the biggest criminal attacks in Rio’s history.

‘The attacks were reportedly a retaliation for the killing of a senior paramilitary leader called Matheus da Silva Rezende by police...

‘Footage shared on social media showed dozens of passengers throwing themselves off one bus as criminals prepared to set fire to it...

‘The attacks reportedly took place in at least nine different areas – Cosmos, Campo Grande, Inhoaíba, Guaratiba, Madureira, Paciência, Santa Cruz, Sepetiba and Recreio dos Bandeirantes – where about one million people live...

‘Last year Fogo Cruzado claimed the militias... now controlled an area almost the size of Birmingham, the UK’s second biggest city, where more than 1.7 million people live.’¹⁰⁷

9.1.7 In 2024, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), ‘a

¹⁰³ Insight Crime, [Militias Fleece Locals for Basic Services in Rio Favelas](#), 25 March 2022

¹⁰⁴ The Guardian, [Brazil’s fearsome militias: mafia boom increases threat...](#), 18 October 2022

¹⁰⁵ G1, [Homepage](#), no date

¹⁰⁶ G1, [In 40 years, the militia has changed its face...](#), 24 October 2023

¹⁰⁷ The Guardian, [Paramilitary gangs in Brazil torch more than 35 buses...](#), 24 October 2023

disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping initiative’,¹⁰⁸ stated that:

‘The state’s failure to curb the rise of drug trafficking gangs soon paved the way for the formation of opposing vigilante groups... Now present in several states of Brazil, they have extended their domain to the illegal provision of basic services and the collection of security fees. Violence perpetrated by narco gangs and police militias has become nearly indistinguishable, as both groups engage in corruption, extortion, and extrajudicial killing... The semi-recent development of *narcomilícias* – police militias operating drug selling points... adds to the already complex landscape of criminal violence...

‘Clandestine police militias hold more power than drug trafficking groups because they are organized primarily by current or former public agents and, therefore, have access to powerful positions within the state... they charge a “tax” from residents in return for protection. Lately, these groups have become more violent...

‘...according to a report from the Rio de Janeiro Public Prosecutor Office, as of October 2019, more than 180 localities in the State of Rio de Janeiro are controlled by so-called *narcomilícias*... In these areas, the illegal exploitation of services and the collection of security fees – typical activities of police militias – are often accompanied by agreements with local trafficking and criminal groups and the control of drug selling points.’¹⁰⁹

- 9.1.8 The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 stated that ‘In relation to state-embedded actors, militias... are of particular concern, as they have the ability to infiltrate the three powers of the state and have been linked to politically motivated murders... In recent years, the link between militias and politics has become increasingly evident, with politicians using ties with such groups to assert their interests and silence opponents. Paramilitary violence, especially in Rio, remains a major problem.’¹¹⁰
- 9.1.9 The BTI 2024 stated that: ‘Militias control numerous favelas and operate in many neighborhoods. Several million people live in areas controlled by these criminal actors. They collect protection money, threaten entire neighborhoods and are responsible for numerous extrajudicial killings.’¹¹¹
- 9.1.10 Carolina Grillo, professor and researcher with the Grupo de Estudos dos Novos Ilegalismos, a research group based in the Fluminense Federal University¹¹², told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘The militias used to be led by police officers. Nowadays, police officers and other government officials, like elected members of city council, are often allies to the militias or part of their staff, but are no longer the leaders.

‘In 2008, there was a parliamentary inquiry into this. Police officers, deputies, city councillors, state assembly people, dozens of government officials were arrested, and hundreds were indicted. Militias then became more discreet. Their bosses were no longer public figures. Before, it was ok for you to be a politician and a militia boss. It’s no longer like that. In some specific cases,

¹⁰⁸ ACLED, [About ACLED](#), no date

¹⁰⁹ ACLED, [Brazil](#), last updated 4 November 2024

¹¹⁰ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Criminal Actors), 2023

¹¹¹ BTI, [Brazil Country Report 2024](#) (Stateness), 2024

¹¹² Grupo de Estudos dos Novos Ilegalismos, [About](#), no date

for example in Baixada de Fluminense, some militia bosses are still a police deputy or a politician but not in most cases.

‘However, they have direct connections; their security officials are off-duty police. When they’re not on duty they’re working for militias, a lot of public servants participate.

‘It’s not like that with the drug trafficking factions – they hate the government. They bribe the police or are extorted by them, but they don’t hire police to work for them.

‘Militias are more dangerous as police can intervene in investigations and shut them down. They have access to the new identities of people who are in the witness protection program. They have penetration into the state and so they are very dangerous, way more dangerous than the drug factions.

‘When we look at homicide rates, these are higher in areas controlled by militias as they are more arbitrary with the population. If you interview people living in militia areas they say it’s calmer because the police are not conducting raids in the territory - they don’t have shootouts, therefore in that sense they speak of tranquility. But homicide rates are higher as militias kill inhabitants more often...’¹¹³

- 9.1.11 When asked about the aims of the militias, Professor Carolina Grillo of the Universidade Federale Fluminense stated:

‘[The goal of the militias is] To make money.

‘...they do that [drug trafficking] too. In the ‘90s they would sell themselves as an alternative to drug factions but very soon they expanded and now also sell drugs. However, they have other sources of income that are more important, such as security fees, extorting business owners and people living in the neighbourhoods, and real estate markets.

‘They don’t conquer territories - what they did was expand territories that were never under anyone else’s control by coordinating the urbanisation process. This is why areas such as the West region of Rio de Janeiro and Baixada de Fluminense are places where militias expanded most of their territories. They would land grab, especially land belonging to the federal government or land under environmental protection. They’d parcel it and sell or build and conduct a lot of real estate enterprises on it. This is one of their most important sources of income.

‘They extort every source of income, overtaxing everything in the neighbourhood such as water, gas, electricity, internet, cable TV. You are forced to hire from their enterprises, you can’t get these things from formal enterprises. This happens now in drug faction territories too. They get money from all essential services.’¹¹⁴

- 9.1.12 Professor Carolina Grillo also told the UK HO FFM team that ‘There are copies of the [militia] system in Rio [de Janeiro] in many other places. Militias are very connected to Brazilian clientelism, something rooted in our social political formation. For example, in rural areas we have landowners who have armed men working for them. Militias made this more profitable and

¹¹³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 37), September 2024

¹¹⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 38), September 2024

other groups take the same model. It is common in North and North-East.¹¹⁵

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10. Inter-OCG alliances and rivalries

- 10.1.1 The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 noted that ‘Criminal networks in Brazil typically ally with either the PCC or the CV...’¹¹⁶
- 10.1.2 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2022, R7 reported that: ‘TCP [Terceiro Comando Puro, Pure Third Command] disputes territories with CV in the interior of Rio [de Janeiro state], mainly in the regions of Volta Redonda, Barra Mansa, Angra dos Reis and Paraty. It has ties to the PCC and militias.’¹¹⁷
- 10.1.3 In 2023, ACLED reported that:
- ‘Clashes between gangs and militias were responsible for 28% of reported fatalities and over half of all armed clash events in Rio de Janeiro state in 2021 and 2022...
- ‘...clashes are increasingly deadly – accounting for 280 reported fatalities in 2022, up from 218 reported deaths in 2021...
- ‘Clashes... often revolve around territorial control disputes. Most of the violence takes place in Rio de Janeiro city, notably in the North Zone – where drug trafficking groups have historically controlled territory – and in the West Zone – where police militias are more present...’¹¹⁸
- 10.1.4 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, UOL reported that ‘the CV is also suspected of having entered into an alliance with the largest militia in Rio, which has unleashed a war for territorial control of organized crime responsible for more than 50 murders this year alone.’¹¹⁹
- 10.1.5 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, Fogo Cruzado reported that: ‘...in recent years we have witnessed many emblematic episodes of the conflict between armed groups for territorial control...
- ‘In 2023, of the 466.65 km² of area of Greater Rio dominated by an armed group, 38.9% were under the control of militias, 7.7% of the Pure Third Command, 0.8% of the Friends of Friends [ADA] faction, and 51.9% under the control of the Red Command...’¹²⁰
- 10.1.6 See also Fogo Cruzado’s [map](#) illustrating which areas of Rio de Janeiro are controlled by which armed group.

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11. Recruitment and leaving OCGs

11.1 Recruitment: general

- 11.1.1 In 2022, Dialogo Americas reported that:
- ‘...most of their [OCG’s] top leaders are incarcerated - even as they maintain

¹¹⁵ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 39), September 2024

¹¹⁶ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Criminal Actors), 2023

¹¹⁷ R7 Estudio, [The 53 criminal factions in Brazil](#), 2 February 2022

¹¹⁸ ACLED, [Deadly Rio de Janeiro: Armed Violence and the Civilian Burden](#), 14 February 2023

¹¹⁹ UOL, [Bolivia extradites one of the leaders of the Red Command to Brazil](#), 11 October 2023

¹²⁰ Fogo Cruzado, [Red Command grows in 2023](#), 17 April 2024

an impressive level of control over street-level members...

‘...because they have accrued enough power... to impact the daily lives of prisoners; showing loyalty on the outside could be critical to receiving favorable treatment on the inside...

‘Prisoners often rely on friends and family to provide essentials, but criminal groups can step into the void and offer material goods with the profits from illicit activity. They also permit families the opportunity to visit incarcerated members in far-away prisons and often pay members’ legal fees.

‘...The CV’s main leaders, including the late Marcinho VP, command the group from prison.’¹²¹

- 11.1.2 In 2023, Insight Crime noted that “The main criminal groups in Brazil recruit their members from inside of prisons,” said Arthur Trindade, Council Member of the Brazilian Forum on Public Security... “So the chaos of Brazil’s penitentiary system... greatly worsens the violence and strengthens organized crime.”¹²²
- 11.1.3 Insight Crime’s 2023 Brazil profile noted that Brazil’s prisons ‘are often... controlled by one or more gangs. They are frequently the scene of prisoner abuse and bloody battles between criminal groups, which use them as bases of operations...’¹²³
- 11.1.4 In 2023, ACLED noted that ‘While the federal government tried to curb the spread of criminal groups by arresting individuals involved with illicit activities, it also created a scenario that unintentionally promoted its growth. Incarcerated, these individuals had the opportunity to interact and establish a structured organization inside the relatively secure prison environment.’¹²⁴
- 11.1.5 In 2024, Insight Crime noted that:
- ‘Brazil’s strict drug prohibition policies led to widespread arrests, most of whom were small-time drug dealers or in possession of minor quantities of narcotics. The overcrowding that followed aided the growth of criminal organizations...
- ‘The stigma surrounding people who have been in prison also hinders the possibility of their reintegrating... so former inmates often feel the need to continue in crime to support themselves financially after getting out...
- ‘New inmates, often first-time offenders, may join gangs for self-protection whilst behind bars, or are coerced into becoming members under the threat of violence. As a result, mass incarceration has delivered non-violent inmates into the hands of the PCC and the CV, which have regularly fought behind prison walls and carried out brutal prison massacres.
- “There’s a big chance that people arrested for small thefts – a chicken thief, a drug user, a small-time trafficker – will join a gang to avoid being killed, and end up in a lifetime of involvement with that group,” Cerqueira, the coordinator of the Atlas of Violence, told InSight Crime.
- ‘Prisons have also become epicenters of criminal activity and safe havens

¹²¹ Dialogo Americas, [Tussle for the Amazon: New Frontiers...](#), 16 November 2022

¹²² Insight Crime, [New Money, Old Strategies in Brazil's Anti-Crime Plan](#), 9 October 2023

¹²³ Insight Crime, [Brazil Profile](#), 24 November 2023

¹²⁴ ACLED, [Deadly Rio de Janeiro: Armed Violence and the Civilian Burden](#), 14 February 2023

from which criminal groups can strategize and exert social and economic control over thousands of inmates and ex-inmates.’¹²⁵

- 11.1.6 Instituto Sou da Paz, ‘a non-governmental organization that has worked for over 15 years to reduce levels of violence in Brazil’¹²⁶, told the UK HO FFM team that ‘When you’re arrested, the PCC offers you protection in jail. They help your family at home and pay for them to visit you, all the things the public administration don’t offer. When you leave jail, you then owe them a lot. They are very professional, like a company, and very violent and powerful.’¹²⁷
- 11.1.7 Representatives of Brazil’s National Secretariat of Public Security (SENASP) told the UK HO FFM team that ‘In terms of recruitment, it begins from 10-17 years of age...
‘...they risk dying young. However, you cannot argue with the fact that they will be in a better financial position/situation if they do join. It is a complex phenomenon...
‘Impunity unfortunately still exists in our country, so they remain in crime because nothing will happen to them...’¹²⁸
- 11.1.8 When asked by the UK HO FFM team whether the PCC or CV target any particular demographic for the purposes of recruitment, members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and organised crime division responded that:
‘They are usually young, poor, black, non-educated males.
‘Sometimes the groups pay people to study and become a judge. They also recruit IT guys, they are really diversifying their activities so often they need specialised people, financial advisors for example. They also pay people to become candidates through several levels of public positions – city councillors and sometimes higher levels – we try to track them but it is sometimes difficult to do so.
‘They need corrupt people in airports/ports – they need people who know the procedures for loading cargo into shipping containers. Luggage handlers too. We have carried out several investigations into shipping employees and airplane workers.
‘Truck drivers even can be asked to traffic drugs, and women or elderly people are asked to transport drugs.’¹²⁹
- 11.1.9 Sergio Fernando Senna Pires, a legislative consultant in the Chamber of Deputies of the Brazilian Congress, noting that any views expressed in his interview with the FFM team are independent opinions and do not represent those of the organisation he is affiliated with nor the Brazilian government¹³⁰, told the UK HO FFM team that OCG recruitment is:
‘...bi-directional – they sometimes actively search for new members, but

¹²⁵ Insight Crime, [What a Decade of Data Tells Us About Organized Crime in Brazil](#), 1 July 2024

¹²⁶ Instituto Sou da Paz, [What we do](#), no date

¹²⁷ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 43), September 2024

¹²⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 21), September 2024

¹²⁹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 27), September 2024

¹³⁰ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 28), September 2024

people also seek the organisation for a number of reasons.

‘Some people want power. Some people feel that in a particular region, if you’re associated with a group you are respected because people fear you and you have a whole organisation backing you up...

‘...Those who end up in jail may be forced to join an organisation – in prison you have to pick a side. You may end up going to jail for a menial crime and end up in a gang...

‘...many people who are recruited and contribute informally to these groups come from poor, low socio-economic backgrounds.’¹³¹

11.1.10 When asked by the UK HO FFM team what would happen if someone was approached by an OCG and that person refused to cooperate/work with them, Sergio Fernando Senna Pires responded that ‘They’d die, simple as that... You can’t choose, you’re obligated to do [sic] join.’¹³²

11.1.11 Professor Carolina Grillo of the Universidade Federale Fluminense told the UK HO FFM team that ‘Members of the PCC and CV are mostly poor and male. The poorest people in Brazil are non-white. The composition of people in prisons, living in favelas, being members of gangs also follows these patterns... I don’t think the PCC or CV are racist though... The balance also isn’t gender-oriented - men are more commonly targeted as they are more commonly members.’¹³³

11.1.12 When asked by the UK HO FFM team whether the CV and PCC actively recruit or have enough willing participants, Carolina Grillo responded that:

‘They have enough willing participants... It’s hard for people to ensure their kids are not exposed to traffickers as they might be recruited. Not in a forced sense - they won’t be forced, but they might be attracted to it when they see teens with gold jewellery and assault rifles. Poor teenagers usually have no money and no allowance, so they don’t have any recreational activities available to them as they are not affordable. When you’re 13 or 14, if you start working for trafficking groups you won’t be rich but you might earn some money that you wouldn’t if you weren’t working for them.’¹³⁴

11.1.13 Carolina Grillo further advised the UK HO FFM team that if the CV or PCC approached someone they wanted in their organisation, that person ‘can say no.’¹³⁵

11.1.14 Antonio Carlos Costa, founder of NGO Rio de Paz, told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘Young people from 17 or 18, up to 25 or 27 get involved with gangs. They are poor. Most of them are black. These are young people looking for visibility - if they’re driving a bike to deliver something, they aren’t seen by girls but if they’re in a community holding a gun they are visible. They get money to buy clothes they wouldn’t otherwise afford. They get power and are respected, they have friends. The majority of young people don’t get

¹³¹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 30, 31), September 2024

¹³² UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 30), September 2024

¹³³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 34, 35), September 2024

¹³⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 35), September 2024

¹³⁵ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 35), September 2024

involved...

'We have lines of young men ready to join crime, given the benefits that a life of crime can give them. Criminals get in a week what others get in a month.'¹³⁶

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11.2 Recruitment: CV

11.2.1 Americas Quarterly, in an undated article on the CV, reported that 'Like most Brazilian groups, their main recruiting process is within the prison system.'¹³⁷

11.2.2 The GNET article stated that:

'...the publicity of such actors [CV members] in social media follows a long-established practice of cultural propaganda, since the early 90's bosses sponsor funk anthems that glorify the lifestyle and the group itself, being intimately attached to its turf. Initially played in public parties and distributed via illegal CDs... Such activity on YouTube is also well established, with multiple propaganda videos reaching millions of views... Dedicated social media platforms have been fertile ground for that same propaganda...'¹³⁸

11.2.3 The same source also shared the following social media post from a CV member, describing it as 'a public recruitment call by which the CV chapter of that region was calling the crias (offspring – what they call those born and raised inside a neighbourhood) that have been away from the group and did not engage in treachery or joined a rival, that they are welcome to join back. The call was retweeted by other CV pages... to gain a broader reach'¹³⁹:



Figure 9: Governance Recruitment

Translation: 'intelligent management, I come to communicate to all the crias in the city that are away from the city of engenheiro pedreira, that want to return to their origin and that remained in purity to come, because CV will receive all of you with open arms, everyone just needs make contact with the +..'

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¹³⁶ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 40, 42), September 2024

¹³⁷ Americas Quarterly, [Red Command](#), no date

¹³⁸ GNET, [...The Social Media Presence of Comando Vermelho](#), 17 June 2024

¹³⁹ GNET, [...The Social Media Presence of Comando Vermelho](#), 17 June 2024

11.3 Recruitment: PCC

- 11.3.1 Originally published in Spanish, El Pais, an international news agency¹⁴⁰, reported in 2020 that the PCC:

'...is entered at the invitation of at least two members who will be the godparents of the baptized, explains anthropologist Karina Biondi... the group is looking for candidates with certain skills. The main one: an enormous power of persuasion. But also good oratory and a track record of loyalty to crime. In the baptism ceremony they promise that brotherhood will be above all else...

'Biondi explains that the band opened the door to women... a few years ago, but that they are still few because it is very difficult to make a space for themselves in such a strongly macho world. The interest in including them reached the point of organizing a campaign in which they offered to exempt them from paying the monthly fee if they were baptized...'141

- 11.3.2 Originally published in Portuguese, UOL reported in 2024 that:

'In practice, baptism is the moment when the new member has formalized his entry into the PCC. In prisons dominated by the gang, an inmate who is not part of the criminal organization is called a "cousin" and has his behavior observed by members of the criminal organization.

'When a cousin stands out from the others - whether by the way he conducts conflicting situations, by oratory or posture - the members of the PCC see him as a potential guest for a baptism...

'To become a brother, however, it is not enough for the cousin to want and show posture. An invitation from at least two godparents, who are members of the PCC, is required. If the proposal is accepted by the cousin after being aware of the functioning of the faction and its rules, baptism is sacramented.

'In formalizing as a brother, the new member also... undertakes to abandon individuality in favor of the collectivity of the criminal organization, such as payment of monthly fees to the cashier, execution of hierarchically imposed missions and... behavior within the rules. It would be a kind of oath.'142

- 11.3.3 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, Metropoles reported that 'Infected by the proposal to pacify the prisons and "revolutionize the country from inside the prison", a good part of the inmates voluntarily joined the faction [PCC]. Opponents, on the other hand, were summarily killed.'143

- 11.3.4 The Center for Strategic Studies of the Army of Peru (CEEPP), 'the Peruvian Army's think tank'¹⁴⁴, noted in a 2023 article that 'The PCC has a significant public social media and cultural presence, using music videos that showcase their access to guns, cars, beautiful women, motorcycles and extravagant jewelry. This use of media for cultural signaling helps create a social legitimacy... among unemployed youth.'145

- 11.3.5 The Wilson Center 2023 blog post stated that 'The largest drug gangs -

¹⁴⁰ El Pais, [Homepage](#), no date

¹⁴¹ El Pais, [PCC, the Brotherhood of Criminals](#), 12 June 2020

¹⁴² UOL, [Godfather, booklet and oath for crime: what the PCC's 'baptism' is like](#), 22 July 2024

¹⁴³ Metropoles, [From 8 to 100 Thousand](#), 30 August 2023

¹⁴⁴ CEEPP, [Welcome](#), no date

¹⁴⁵ CEEPP, [Evolution and Impact of Gangs in Central America and Brazil](#), 23 February 2023

especially the... (PCC) - have taken over local groups. They instituted an internal policy that members would be taken care of if they remained loyal, which brought in new members...'¹⁴⁶

11.3.6 Researchers from the Center for the Study of Violence, a research centre of the University of Sao Paulo¹⁴⁷, told the UK HO FFM team that:

'The PCC recruits mainly inside prisons ... The PCC usually recruit young males – local drug dealers ... it makes partnerships and invites people from territories - local leaders - to be part of their criminal network.

'In addition, PCC also has strategic leaders, gold miners, pilots, rangers, farmers, air strips, airfields, drug producers, refiners. It is a network that brings many people together ...

'They have many capabilities through partnerships. They can hire explosive experts, people who can build tunnels from houses to banks, engineers. They also act as a bank which funds crime. They lend and rent firearms. They bring together explosive experts to create very intricate plans ...

'Their recruiting profile is reflective of the criminal justice system, where they find poor, young, black males. But they try to appeal to all ...

'[Membership] is a negotiation, just like an employment negotiation ... People need to be willing to be a part of the group in order to ensure the success of the group. It needs to make sense to them. People also don't need to be members – they can just be partners.

'You can refuse. You can be just a partner.'¹⁴⁸

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11.4 Leaving an OCG

11.4.1 Regarding leaving the CV, in an article originally published in Portuguese, UOL reported on a 2009 study conducted by the research organisation Oswald Cruz Foundation¹⁴⁹, stating that:

'If he convinces the owner of the hill... his departure is not immediate, but transitory, being forced to "spend some time while still active". It is during this period that the member will be tested in order to find out if he can cause problems to the faction. "He cannot be seen as a "vacillo", as someone capable of transforming himself into an "X-9" (traitor). You cannot owe money for drug consumption, for loss of merchandise (drugs and weapons) or for any other similar reason. In short... cannot have any type of debt, neither monetary nor moral, with the drug dealer.'"¹⁵⁰

11.4.2 The same article noted that:

'...in the PCC... its members are allowed to leave and stay alive, but based on strict rules to be followed outside the world of crime...

'...according to the MPSP (Public Ministry of São Paulo), to leave, the member needs to make the request to his boss, informing the reasons. In

¹⁴⁶ Wilson Center, [Homicides Are Down In Brazil. But It's Not Time For A Victory Lap](#), 14 March 2023

¹⁴⁷ University of Sao Paulo, [Center for the Study of Violence](#), no date

¹⁴⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 47, 48), September 2024

¹⁴⁹ Oswald Cruz Foundation, [About](#), no date

¹⁵⁰ UOL, [Monitoring, testing and even court: can those who join the faction leave?](#), 24 July 2024

case of debt, it must be paid to leave the faction.

‘The main rule when a person leaves the PCC of their own free will is not to return to the world of crime, according to prosecutor Leonardo Romanelli...

‘The former member of the PCC receives the name “zé-povinho” and is monitored so that he does not join a rival faction. If there is non-compliance with the rule, the individual can be taken to the so-called “crime court”...’¹⁵¹

11.4.3 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, Metropoles reported that ‘Today, the PCC allows a member to “rip his shirt” – that is, resign from the criminal group. The requirement is simple: the former member cannot continue in the crime. Otherwise, he pays with his own life.’¹⁵²

11.4.4 When asked whether a person would be able to leave an OCG, members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and organised crime division told the UK HO FFM team that it ‘Depends on their role - if they are higher up, more than a ‘medium role’ – they would not let them go. Lower level, sometimes, though probably better not to try. If the person moves far away, remains quiet, they would be ok.’¹⁵³

11.4.5 When asked by the UK HO FFM team whether people who are bribed or corrupted could stop working for the OCG, the same source responded that ‘It depends on the level of competence or the connections they have... When you decide to work for these organisations, government or not, it will be complicated. It makes everything harder to go back.’¹⁵⁴

11.4.6 When asked by the UK HO FFM team whether someone could leave an OCG they were a part of, Sergio Fernando Senna Pires responded that this would be: ‘Not possible. At all...

‘When you have an affiliation with a territorial organisation, you do not accept that someone can escape. If people start fleeing, the other people in the organisation who may also want to leave can see a way out too. When you join one of these groups there is therefore no way out - if you leave you are going to die. The stability of membership is based on fear.’¹⁵⁵

11.4.7 Professor Carolina Grillo of the Universidade Federale Fluminense told the UK HO FFM team that if a teen boy started working for an OCG, he would later be able to leave the group and would not suffer retribution for this unless he left with a debt¹⁵⁶. She also stated that it ‘Depends how much information he has. If he knows too much it might be more difficult. But normal people, footsoldiers or sellers, they can leave when they want to unless they have a debt.’¹⁵⁷

11.4.8 Regarding students who were sponsored by the PCC to go to university, Carolina Grillo stated that:

‘In this case, they owe them something as they have paid for their education. That’s a debt, that’s different. They have to pay the debt before leaving.

¹⁵¹ UOL, [Monitoring, testing and even court: can those who join the faction leave?](#), 24 July 2024

¹⁵² Metropoles, [Luxury Tune, Troop in the Trash](#), 3 September 2023

¹⁵³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 26, 27), September 2024

¹⁵⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 27, 28), September 2024

¹⁵⁵ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 30, 31), September 2024

¹⁵⁶ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 35), September 2024

¹⁵⁷ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 35), September 2024

‘The PCC is different to the CV. Regarding the PCC, you are not forced to become a brother... A lot of people are considered cousins, not brothers. The cousins run along with PCC but are not members... Cousins follow the PCC’s ethics and business practices but don’t need to be full members. When you do become a member, you have more responsibilities and there are more expectations...

‘When you’re a brother of the PCC it is not as simple to leave as when you’re in the CV.’¹⁵⁸

- 11.4.9 Regarding leaving the PCC, researchers from the Center for the Study of Violence told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘It could be negotiated. You can claim religious reasons to leave. You cannot commit crimes at all, or against the PCC after leaving. If you don’t owe them anything, if you are respected, you can negotiate your exit. I know people who have done their time and negotiated out. Leaving is rare though. Usually, it is commitment for life.

‘There will also be surveillance – these people would be watched over. The PCC will always keep an eye on them. They can use electronic ankle tags. There will be surveillance for the rest of their lives...

‘When you become a part of it, it is an issue to then try to get out.’¹⁵⁹

- 11.4.10 Sao Paulo state Prosecutor Lincoln Gakiya told the UK HO FFM team that ‘[The PCC] don’t let members leave. On occasion, exceptionally, people can leave if they decide to leave crime altogether. It is very common to see religious conversion. Once they join the church, they ask to leave, and this is accepted. However, if they go back to crime in any shape or form they will be killed.’¹⁶⁰

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12. OCG activities

12.1 Drug-related crime

- 12.1.1 The USSD’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, in its International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, dated March 2023 and based on data from calendar year 2022¹⁶¹, noted:

‘Brazil is an important transit country for cocaine bound for Europe but also supplies other destinations.

‘...The proximity to drug-producing countries, particularly Colombia and Peru, and Amazonian rivers that serve as fluvial highways with limited infrastructure and law enforcement personnel have prompted TCOs [transnational criminal organisations] to diversify their routes to transport cocaine and other illicit goods via northern Brazil...

‘Drug trafficking is a key revenue source for Brazil-based transnational criminal organizations... which constitute Brazil’s primary national security

¹⁵⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 35, 36), September 2024

¹⁵⁹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 47, 48), September 2024

¹⁶⁰ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 54), September 2024

¹⁶¹ USSD, [International Narcotics Strategy Report](#) (page 17), March 2023

threat...'¹⁶²

12.1.2 The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 noted that:

'... Brazil's cocaine market is worth billions of dollars, making it one of the top ten markets in the world. Criminal organizations, including local elites, control the main wholesale cocaine entry routes into Brazil, leading to violent conflicts over distribution in urban centres. The retail sale of cocaine is an important source of income for the poor population on the outskirts of large cities, and it has contributed to their involvement in crime...

'Brazil also has a large cannabis market... Domestic organized-crime groups control local cultivation... Trafficking routes for Colombian marijuana often involve passing through Venezuela before entering Brazil through the border with Roraima, or through Peru and Bolivia and entering Brazilian territory through the states of Acre, Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul. Gangs associated with various criminal factions distribute the drug nationally.'¹⁶³

12.1.3 In May 2024, The Brazilian Report stated that:

'Drug trafficking is a growing scourge in the Brazilian Amazon. A November study by the Brazilian Forum on Public Safety, a think tank, points out that at least 22 criminal groups operate in the rainforest – present in roughly one-quarter of municipalities...

'Data shows that, between 2019 and 2022, cocaine seizures made by federal and state police forces jumped by 277 percent to more than 81 tons. Cannabis seizures, meanwhile, were up by 123 percent, to 61.3 tons.'¹⁶⁴

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12.2 Firearms

12.2.1 In 2022, the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), an independent civil-society organization headquartered in Switzerland¹⁶⁵, reported that:

'...the illegal cross-border arms market in the Southern Cone supplies criminals. Brazil is the leading destination, and the country's criminal organizations are the main customers...

'An essential feature... of transnational arms trafficking in the region is that it is associated with other kinds of cross-border criminality, mainly drug trafficking... security professionals consulted stated that hardly any drug seizures occur without arms and ammunition also being seized... arms and ammunition traffickers use the same routes... through which drugs are exported from the drug-producing countries bordering Brazil.

'...the criminal organizations that are able to control routes and territories on the outskirts of large urban centres in Brazil have achieved their current position through access to increasingly sophisticated and powerful firearms...

'The Bolsonaro administration promoted and widened access to arms and ammunition without accompanying advances in the fight against the illegal

¹⁶² USSD, [International Narcotics Strategy Report](#) (page 95), March 2023

¹⁶³ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Drugs), 2023

¹⁶⁴ The Brazilian Report, [Drug gangs are active in one-quarter of Brazil's Amazon](#), 23 May 2024

¹⁶⁵ GI-TOC, [Catalyzing the Building Blocks of a Global Strategy](#), no date

trade and the state's ability to control stockpiles – indeed, it repealed measures that had facilitated control...

'...In 2022 alone, investigations have found cases in which individuals registered with the army purchased arms and ammunition legally in order to subsequently resell them to criminal organizations. In July 2022, the army admitted having (mistakenly) authorized a member of the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), one of the foremost criminal organizations in Brazil... to purchase rifles...

'...firearms are typically sturdy enough to remain in use for many years without requiring much maintenance. It is therefore likely that the huge number of firearms that started circulating during the Bolsonaro years will continue to be... used by criminals for decades to come.'¹⁶⁶

12.2.2 The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 stated that:

'The illegal trafficking of arms in Brazil is a significant problem as the country is a major producer and exporter of small weapons. Firearms are smuggled back into the country from Paraguay, the US, Bolivia and Uruguay. Young criminals have easy access to illegal firearms, and local and transnational networks manage most of the trafficking. This illegal market fuels conflicts between criminal groups and security forces, making Brazil one of the countries with the highest homicide rates in the region.'¹⁶⁷

12.2.3 The OSAC 2025 report stated that 'Despite laws that regulate firearms, weapons such as handguns, rifles, military grade weapons, blades, and improvised weapons are frequently involved [in] criminal activities...'¹⁶⁸

12.2.4 The BTI 2024 stated that 'Restrictions on the purchase of firearms were significantly relaxed by President Bolsonaro... Between 2018 and 2022, the number of registered guns increased by 473%... an estimated 3.8 million weapons are in the hands of criminals. The easy availability of firearms is considered a key contributor to the high number of violent crimes.'¹⁶⁹

12.2.5 Instituto Sou da Paz told the UK HO FFM team that:

'Between 2019 and 2022, Bolsonaro created pieces of legislation enabling easier access to firearms. By the end of 2022, nearly 3 million firearms were legally registered to civilians. 70% of all guns seized in Brazil are Brazilian, stolen from private security companies, or bought and resold on the black market. More assault weapons and pistols are being seized now because these were easier for society to purchase – this is seen as fuelling organised crime. Other arms are imported, through international smuggling. An operation by the Federal Police and the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office in Bahia uncovered a gang smuggling weapons from Europe to Paraguay and then on to Brazil.

'There is an overlap between gun crime and other crime types: drug and arms trafficking and smuggling are always related.'¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ GI-TOC, [Brazil's gun control challenge](#) (pages 15, 19, 20), 20 December 2022

¹⁶⁷ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Trade), 2023

¹⁶⁸ USSD OSAC, [Country Security Report Brazil](#), 5 February 2025

¹⁶⁹ BTI, [Brazil Country Report 2024](#) (Stateness), 2024

¹⁷⁰ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 42, 43), September 2024

12.3 Environmental crimes

12.3.1 The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 stated that:

‘Illegal logging and deforestation have become serious issues in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil... Studies show that nearly all timber leaving the Amazon is illegally or irregularly sourced, and organized-crime groups involved in illegal mining, land grabbing and farming with environmental liabilities are often the driving force behind these activities ... Criminal gangs use environmental crimes as an opportunity to accumulate capital, and their involvement often results in violence against indigenous communities, activists and authorities ...

‘Wildlife trafficking is another major problem in Brazil ... Wildlife traffickers operate both domestic and international markets ...

‘Illegal mining, particularly in the state of Pará, has also become a growing concern in Brazil. Criminal organizations invade protected territories, causing social tensions and human-rights abuses ... Criminal groups and powerful economic entities dominate the national mining landscape, leading to violence, sexual exploitation, hunger and environmental destruction and contamination ...

‘... The situation is particularly perilous for environmental activists and indigenous leaders, who face harassment and threats due to the government’s policy towards the Amazon and indigenous lands.’¹⁷¹

12.3.2 In January 2023, Reuters reported that:

‘Brazil’s federal police said... they had a “strong conviction” a gang leader known as “Colombia” ordered the brutal murders of British journalist Dom Phillips and indigenous expert Bruno Pereira, killed in the Amazon rainforest last June...

‘Villar [gang leader] allegedly planned the killings because Pereira, a former head of isolated and recently contacted tribes at federal indigenous affairs agency Funai, was carrying out inspections of illegal fishing operations, causing major losses to Villar’s criminal group...’¹⁷²

12.3.3 The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), a non-profit investigative journalism organisation aiming to ‘expose crime and corruption’¹⁷³, reported in 2023 that:

‘Experts say much of the illegal fishing industry in the Javari Valley is now run by organized crime gangs. A commission from Brazil’s Chamber of Deputies... said these groups use fishing as a cover for other crimes.

“There is no doubt that the murders of Bruno and Dom are part of a much larger criminal context. There are clearly groups that not only finance illegal fishing but also use it to launder money and traffic drugs,” the commission wrote in a November 2022 report.

‘Alexandre Saraiva, a former senior police chief in the Amazon, said

¹⁷¹ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Environment, Civil society...), 2023

¹⁷² Reuters, [Brazil police say gang leader likely ordered killing of British journalist...](#), 24 January 2023

¹⁷³ OCCRP, [About Us](#), 24 August 2007

investigators would often find cocaine hidden in cargoes of illegally caught fish.¹⁷⁴

12.3.4 In 2023, the UNODC stated, when discussing crime in the Amazon basin, that:

‘Illicit drug trafficking is exacerbating and amplifying an array of other criminal economies in the Amazon Basin...

‘...organised criminal groups, which have traditionally focussed on drug production and trafficking, are diversifying into highly profitable activities related to crimes that affect the environment...

‘... There is growing evidence, for example, of drug traffickers financing and providing logistical support for illegal gold mining operations across the region, including on protected territories, expanding into illegal logging and trafficking in wildlife (including plants, insects and animals). Shipping vessels used to lawfully transport wood or minerals are also routinely loaded with cocaine concealed in consignments destined for foreign markets. These kinds of illicit activity are frequently accompanied by convergent crime, ranging from bribery, extortion, fraud and money-laundering to homicide, violent assault, sexual violence and forced labour...

‘...Some have also observed the clearance of land to establish cannabis plantations in Pará State in Brazil. The scale of these latter activities is considerable: Federal and state police reportedly seized over two million marijuana plants between 2015 and 2020 in the Legal Amazon, over half of them in Pará...

‘According to media reports, drug trafficking groups such as Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) have infiltrated multiple illegal mining operations, offering “protection”, extorting “taxes”, and controlling pits and dredging machinery...’¹⁷⁵

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12.4 Political violence

12.4.1 In 2021, Insight Crime reported that ‘The militia group [Escritório do Crime] made headlines in August 2018 when it was linked to the murder of Marielle Franco and her driver, Anderson Gomes. Franco was a councilwoman who had been an outspoken critic of police brutality in Rio de Janeiro’s marginalized favelas...’¹⁷⁶

12.4.2 A 2023 article in The Guardian discussed Sao Paulo prosecutor Lincoln Gakiya. It stated that: ‘...moving Marcola [leader of the PCC gang, transferred by Gakiya to a federal prison in 2018] turned his life upside down. PCC leaders issued a “decree” calling for the prosecutor’s assassination, condemning Gakiya to a reclusive existence... Gakiya... receives 24-hour protection...

“My big worry is the future. What will my future be like after I retire? Will I have to go into exile outside Brazil to be safe?” he wondered.’¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ OCCRP, [The Last Investigation of the Journalist Who Wanted to Save the Amazon](#), 5 June 2023

¹⁷⁵ UNODC, [Contemporary issues on drugs](#) (pages 61, 63, 68, 70, 71), June 2023

¹⁷⁶ Insight Crime, [Escritório do Crime](#), 13 August 2021

¹⁷⁷ The Guardian, [...prison gang became an international criminal leviathan](#), 11 November 2023

- 12.4.3 In 2023, Insight Crime reported that “In the case of violence targeting local officials and politicians, there is a heavy involvement of police militias due to their close proximity with state agents,” Julia Lins Franciotti, South America Research Manager at ACLED, told InSight Crime.’¹⁷⁸
- 12.4.4 The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 stated that ‘Organized crime has been a persistent issue in all political campaigns and governments.... Furthermore, criminal organizations are involved in democratic processes at regional and local levels, with militias attacking candidates and threatening civilians in certain areas...’¹⁷⁹
- 12.4.5 In 2023, ACLED reported that:
- ‘Violence has affected officials from all levels and branches of the Brazilian government. Violence targeting high-level officials is still rare ... However, threats and violence towards local officials are a widespread and deadly phenomenon. Between 2018 and 2022, ACLED records 273 events involving local officials in Brazil, resulting in an estimated 123 fatalities ...
- ‘... gaps in the Brazilian media landscape mean that the majority of these events are attributed to unidentified perpetrators...
- ‘... the highest levels of violence targeting local government officials have taken place in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo states ... they are also home to the most significant organized crime groups in the country ...
- ‘In these areas, organized crime groups may use violence to ... silence local officials if expectations are not met ...
- ‘ACLED also records high levels of such violence in the northeastern states of Paraíba, Bahia, and Pernambuco ... Acts of violence against local officials in these states are allegedly linked to drug trafficking activities.
- ‘Notably, in the north and northeast regions of the country, drug trafficking groups often engage in acts of vandalism and destruction of public property to intimidate local officials in response to the enforcement of stricter public security measures. In 2018 and 2019, the PCC attempted to burn down city halls in small cities of Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Norte ... while also calling for the resignation of prison directors and security deputies. Similarly, in 2018 several public buildings were shot at or set on fire in Fortaleza and nearby cities in Ceará state as a response from the CV [Comando Vermelho gang] to the death of fellow gang members in clashes with police...’¹⁸⁰
- 12.4.6 Originally published in Portuguese, a 2024 article by Metropoles reported that: ‘The cell phone used by Siciliano [one of the Guardioes dos Estado/GDE gang leaders] was seized and, after being examined, a list of authorities sworn to death and the amount that the GDE would pay for the murders was found on it. The governor of Ceará at the time, Camilo Santana, current Minister of Education, was at the top of the list, with a reward of R\$1 million [approx. £130,735¹⁸¹] for his execution.’¹⁸²
- 12.4.7 Freedom House, in its 2024 ‘Freedom in the World’ report (Freedom House

¹⁷⁸ Insight Crime, [Crime Groups Drive Pre-Election Violence in Mexico, Brazil: Study](#), 29 June 2023

¹⁷⁹ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Leadership..., Criminal justice...), 2023

¹⁸⁰ ACLED, [Organized Crime Exploits Long-Standing Local Feuds](#), 22 June 2023

¹⁸¹ Xe.com, [1,000,000 BRL to GBP](#), 21 December 2024

¹⁸² Metropoles, [...How the PCC's Northeastern Arm Broke with the Faction](#), 20 July 2024

2024 report), covering events throughout 2023, stated that:

‘Criminal groups have carried out attacks against political candidates and representatives...

‘Brazilian voters face high levels of political violence, which increased by 400 percent between 2018 and 2022 according to a survey conducted by two nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In November 2022, Agência Pública recorded 15 murders and 23 attempted murders over that year’s election period... Militias and other criminal organizations—which may exercise significant control over campaigning and other political activity within their territories - have been blamed for a rise in violence...’¹⁸³

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12.5 Homicides

- 12.5.1 The Brazilian Forum of Public Security (Forum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública/FBSP) is ‘a non-governmental... organization... dedicated to building an environment of reference and technical cooperation in the area of Public Security’¹⁸⁴. In 2024, the FBSP published its 18th ‘Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública’ (Brazilian Public Security Yearbook, originally published in Portuguese), based on data from 2023. This publication stated, in relation to ‘intentional violent deaths’, covering the categories: femicide, police intervention leading to death, bodily injury resulting in death, robbery resulting in death and intentional homicide¹⁸⁵, that:

‘Based on the data presented, there are two main explanations for Intentional Violent Deaths in the country, the first being associated with disputes over markets and drug sales points between the various prison-based factions and militias that control territories in an armed and violent manner. There are no national data or studies on the percentage of deaths caused by such disputes, but, according to the Global Study on Homicide 2023, by UNODC [United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime], in the Americas, 50% of all homicides are motivated by organized crime, compared to a global average of 22%. Brazil did not inform the UNODC of its percentage, so the regional average is just reference.’¹⁸⁶

- 12.5.2 A 2022 article in UOL, originally published in Portuguese, reported that a faction’s dominance in a state is associated with lower homicide rates. The article quoted Stephanie Gimenez Stahlberg, an American researcher who noted “‘The monopoly of a single faction tends to reduce violence through two channels: by eliminating competition and the use of violence against rivals, and with the dominant group regulating and curbing the use of violence...”¹⁸⁷

- 12.5.3 Originally published in Portuguese, in a 2024 article about crime in Rio Grande do Sul, Terra reported that:

‘The growth in intentional violent deaths is directly linked to the worsening of conflicts between criminal organizations that seek dominance in the state...

¹⁸³ Freedom House, [Brazil: Freedom in the World 2024](#) (B3), 2024

¹⁸⁴ FBSP, [About Us](#), no date

¹⁸⁵ FBSP, [Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública](#) (page 26), 2024

¹⁸⁶ FBSP, [Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública](#) (page 37), 2024

¹⁸⁷ UOL, [War between factions raises homicide rate by up to 46% in states](#), 15 February 2022

‘...The fragmentation of illegal markets in the state leads to temporary alliances that often result in conflicts and settling scores when traffickers migrate from one group to another...

‘The government attributes most of the violent deaths in the state to drug trafficking and rivalry between criminal groups.’¹⁸⁸

- 12.5.4 Instituto Sou da Paz told the UK HO FFM team that ‘When gangs migrate, new conflicts arise – hence, homicides increase when they fight for power. They fight for territory and a larger market share, and have more presence in the life of the city.’¹⁸⁹

- 12.5.5 The Brazilian Report stated in August 2023 that:

‘The northern state of Amapa is the most violent in the country in per capita terms. There, two organized crime factions are engaging in a war over territory and drug trafficking routes. Experts say that the conflict in Amapa is relatively recent, with the arrival of groups linked to major drug gangs from Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.

‘...counterintuitively, the consolidation of organized crime helps push down homicide rates. Data shows that violence increases when rival gangs are at war, and murder figures drop significantly when a crime faction obtains dominance over a given region.’¹⁹⁰

- 12.5.6 The Wilson Center 2023 blog post stated:

‘With control already divided and established over the territories of southeastern states — where violent deaths were concentrated in the 1980s and 1990s — the drug gangs turned to the coveted and poorly policed forest routes.

‘Cities in the Amazon began to record above-average homicide rates. It was the only region where murders actually increased last year...

‘In Macapá, the capital of Amapá state, for example, there were more than 60 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2021. That is a higher rate than in any of the world's most violent countries...’¹⁹¹

- 12.5.7 In 2023, the UNODC stated that:

‘Indigenous Peoples and other minorities are disproportionately affected by the criminal nexus in the Amazon Basin, as they suffer... health-related impacts, increased exposure to violence and victimization...

‘...Organized criminal groups are increasingly encroaching upon... Indigenous territories... Indigenous populations registered a more than 20 per cent increase in homicidal violence between 2009 and 2019 in Brazil... Illegal mining has further precipitated devastating outbreaks of disease and malnutrition in local communities.’¹⁹²

- 12.5.8 The below table was reproduced by CPIT using 2023 data from the Violence Monitor (a partnership between the G1 news portal, the Center for the Study

¹⁸⁸ Terra, [Rio Grande do Sul... the largest number of criminal factions in Brazil](#), 27 October 2023

¹⁸⁹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 42), September 2024

¹⁹⁰ The Brazilian Report, [Homicide rate continues to decrease...](#), 17 August 2023

¹⁹¹ Wilson Center, [Homicides Are Down In Brazil. But It's Not Time For A Victory Lap](#), 14 March 2023

¹⁹² UNODC, [Contemporary issues on drugs](#) (pages 61, 74, 75), June 2023

of Violence and the FBSP¹⁹³)¹⁹⁴. It shows in the left column the individual states of Brazil; in the middle column the 2023 murder rate per 100,000 of that state's population; and in the right column the absolute number of murders in that state in 2023. It shows that, in 2023, the states with the highest number of murders per 100,000 inhabitants were Amapa, Pernambuco and Alagoas (all in the North and Northeast regions) and the states with the lowest number of murders per 100,000 inhabitants were the Federal District, Santa Catarina and Sao Paulo. These figures do not include deaths resulting from police violence:

Brazil and states	Number of murders per 100,000 inhabitants	Absolute number of murders
Brazil	19.4	39,492
Amapa	45.2	332
Pernambuco	38.8	3,518
Alagoas	36.2	1,131
Bahia	34.3	4,848
Amazonas	34.1	1,346
Ceara	33.8	2,970
Rio Grande do Norte	28.8	951
Rondonia	28.0	443
Maranhao	27.1	1,837
Espirito Santo	26.9	1,030
Roraima	25.6	163
Mato Grosso	25.6	936
Para	25.5	2,068
Paraiba	25.0	995
Acre	24.8	206
Tocantins	23.4	353
Piaui	21.7	711
Rio de Janeiro	21.1	3,388
Sergipe	20.7	458
Parana	16.8	1,922
Rio Grande do Sul	16.5	1,796
Mato Grosso do Sul	16.2	446
Goiias	15.4	1,086
Minas Gerais	13.1	2,700
Distrito Federal	9.9	279
Santa Catarina	7.9	602
Sao Paulo	6.7	2,977

12.5.9 In the sources consulted, CPIT was unable to find statistics relating to how many homicides were attributed to organised criminal activity (see [Bibliography](#)).

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¹⁹³ University of Sao Paulo, [Violence Monitor](#), no date

¹⁹⁴ G1, [...RJ registers more murders than SP; see the rankings of the states](#), 12 March 2024

12.6 Other crime types

12.6.1 The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 stated that ‘Many criminal networks specialize in tax evasion and loan-sharking.’¹⁹⁵

12.6.2 The same source also noted that: ‘Extortion in Brazil is difficult to quantify as there are no nationwide estimates, but mafia-style organizations frequently engage in extortion during their activities. Extortion has become more widespread in recent years due to the expansion of militias, which charge local businesses and the population protection fees for the use of various services.’¹⁹⁶

12.6.3 The USSD’s ‘2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Brazil’, covering ‘government efforts undertaken from April 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023’¹⁹⁷, noted that:

‘Gangs and organized criminal groups have subjected women and girls to sex trafficking in the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina...

‘Traffickers exploit Brazilian men – notably Afro-Brazilian men – and, to a lesser extent, women and children, in situations that could amount to labor trafficking in both rural areas (including in ranching, agriculture, charcoal production, salt industries, logging, and mining) and cities (construction, factories, restaurants, and hospitality)... Traffickers force Brazilian and foreign victims, especially from Bolivia, South Africa, and Venezuela, to engage in criminal activity, including drug trafficking...’¹⁹⁸

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13. Victims of OCG activity

13.1 Low-income communities

13.1.1 ACLED stated in 2023 that:

‘As of 2021, more than 4.4 million people in Rio de Janeiro state were living in areas dominated by organized crime groups... Civilians often bear the brunt of violence as criminal groups dispute control of favelas and neighborhoods, and state forces engage in operations to battle these groups. In 2022, ACLED records 338 violent events targeting civilians in Rio de Janeiro state, with 258 reported fatalities. These figures are reflective of two years of consecutive growth...

‘In 2022, ACLED records the reported deaths of at least 212 civilians in targeted attacks perpetrated by drug trafficking gangs or police militias, compared to at least 106 reported fatalities in 2020 and 174 in 2021. The majority of events... are attributed to unidentified groups. In some cases, the perpetrators are indeed unknown; however, major media broadcasters in Brazil tend to not report the name of organized criminal groups even when they are confirmed to be perpetrators...’¹⁹⁹

13.1.2 Members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and organised crime division told the UK HO FFM team that:

¹⁹⁵ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Financial Crimes), 2023

¹⁹⁶ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (People), 2023

¹⁹⁷ USSD, [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report](#), June 2023

¹⁹⁸ USSD, [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Brazil](#), June 2023

¹⁹⁹ ACLED, [Deadly Rio de Janeiro: Armed Violence and the Civilian Burden](#), 14 February 2023

'[Everyday people] are directly affected [by OCG activity], especially the poor - they feel the effects of violence, up close and personal ...

'Communities can be controlled by militias and organised criminal groups ...

'In some places, the organised criminal groups take the place of the government, especially in the Rio favelas.

'These effects are felt more in the bigger cities and in the urban peripheries, and less in rural areas.'²⁰⁰

13.1.3 Sergio Fernando Senna Pires told the UK HO FFM team that 'Brazil is a country with a lot of violence for people on the streets. The people in the favelas (we call them communities) are subjected to abuse every day.'²⁰¹

13.1.4 Antonio Carlos Costa, founder of Rio de Paz, told the UK HO FFM team that 'Many children are victims of stray bullets, during shootouts between different OCGs or between OCGs and the police. Sometimes police operations happen during school hours... Mainly it's poor and black people who die, who are living in slums.'²⁰²

13.1.5 Instituto Sou da Paz told the UK HO FFM team that 'The specific group with the highest risk of being murdered is 15-29 year old black men. They are more likely to be involved in organised crime or incarcerated... Minorities are highly impacted... Young black people always impacted...'²⁰³

13.1.6 Prosecutor Lincoln Gakiya told the UK HO FFM team that:

'Those living in ghettos, outskirts, favelas in Sao Paulo and the metropolitan area – their lives are harshly affected. The PCC is part of their every day lives. It is the PCC who act as law enforcement in those areas, they exercise social control. The poor are directly affected. They are not able to call the police – they have to request the help of the dealers themselves. Organised crime groups distribute food, goods, hold parties - they need the sympathy of the poor. Organised crime will establish itself where the state is missing...'²⁰⁴

13.4.1 An article of October 2024 published by InSight Crime stated:

'Brazil has seen a surge in the number of... women rescued from forced labor conditions, a form of human trafficking also known as modern slavery, according to a new report. The annual human trafficking report from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública) also highlights the rise of invisible trafficking networks, such as illegal adoption and forced criminal recruitment and their modus operandi... Forced criminal recruitment is a fairly new type of human trafficking in Brazil and internationally. Brazil has no legislation with which to prosecute it, which is key to avoid criminalizing the victims.

'This type of trafficking usually affects women, and victims are people in dire financial need or individuals forced through threats to traffic drugs outside the country who are subsequently arrested and convicted for that crime.'²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 24, 25), September 2024

²⁰¹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 28), September 2024

²⁰² UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 40), September 2024

²⁰³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 45), September 2024

²⁰⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 53), September 2024

²⁰⁵ InSight Crime, [Modern Slavery in Brazil Is Targeting More Women...](#), 21 October 2024

13.2 Informants

- 13.2.1 ACLED stated in 2023 that ‘...civilians who cooperate in investigations into organized criminal activity are vulnerable to being targeted by these groups...’²⁰⁶
- 13.2.2 Members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and organised crime division told the UK HO FFM team that:
- ‘They don’t just go after random people. People that go against the group might be targeted. People fighting against environmental crimes can be targeted. It’s a huge place, if you fight hard against them then you may be on their list.
- ‘... we have newspapers reporting on these groups, people being interviewed about them saying crime isn’t a good thing, and they’re ok. That would be more of a risk for local people, people living there, not those researching or journalists.’²⁰⁷
- 13.2.3 Instituto Sou da Paz told the UK HO FFM team that ‘Those who whistleblow can be at risk, for example human rights defenders. Usually the police are involved with these cases. These people... would likely die.’²⁰⁸
- 13.2.4 Prosecutor Lincoln Gakiya told the UK HO FFM team that: ‘Whistle-blowing [would be punished with death]. It is like the mafia – no one can be a snitch. It will be punishable by death. This is the most serious crime.’²⁰⁹
- 13.2.5 Officers from the criminal investigation division of the Sao Paulo civil police told the UK HO FFM team that ‘...The bodies that are found are usually those of informants, or snitches, who work with police. The victims of the PCC today are the people who help the authorities...’²¹⁰
- 13.2.6 Professor Carolina Grillo of the Universidade Federale Fluminense told the UK HO FFM team that ‘It might happen that if you live in a favela and your son becomes a police officer, and you don’t leave, you might be accused of being an informant even if you have no information at all. Its like accusations of witchcraft, they don’t need to have empirical evidence to accuse someone of something.’²¹¹

13.3 Indigenous people

- 13.3.1 The UNODC told the UK HO FFM team that:
- ‘Indigenous people are more and more vulnerable, their social structures are affected. The youth are more involved with the OCGs...
- ‘Riverine communities are important and many people are living there. They are further from urban centres so law enforcement has difficulties reaching them. Since rivers are so important for cocaine trafficking, OCGs go and

²⁰⁶ ACLED, [Deadly Rio de Janeiro: Armed Violence and the Civilian Burden](#), 14 February 2023

²⁰⁷ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 26, 27), September 2024

²⁰⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 45), September 2024

²⁰⁹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 53), September 2024

²¹⁰ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 56), September 2024

²¹¹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 36), September 2024

threaten communities and tell them they need to store weapons and drugs. The Yanomami indigenous area had a health crisis, including mercury poisoning from contamination. There were approximately 20,000 illegal miners there who had very sophisticated operations including illegal landing strips and supplies. There are still approximately 10,000 illegal miners there. The Ministry of Defence has just published information on which indigenous territories have the most illegal mining and environmental crime. It shows that if you try to stop them in one place they'll come out in another...'²¹²

13.3.2 Instituto Sou da Paz told the UK HO FFM team that 'In the North and Central West regions, indigenous people are impacted...'²¹³

13.3.3 For further information, see [Environmental crimes](#).

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13.4 Family members

13.4.1 When asked by the UK HO FFM team whether it is in the nature of the PCC or CV to target family members, Professor Carolina Grillo of the Universidade Federal Fluminense responded: 'Not usually, no. I've never heard of it, but it is possible. If I were the sibling of a witness, however, I wouldn't stay living in the same place; I'd feel much safer far away from it. '...Their codes of honour are strict in that people are held accountable for their own actions but not the actions of those they know or their siblings.'²¹⁴

13.4.2 Researchers from the Center for the Study of Violence told the UK HO FFM team that 'I know of one case where the PCC set fire to a person's house and his dad was killed. Another example, a traitor of the PCC – his wife was also killed because he betrayed them. It is rare though, only really in cases of major treachery [will the PCC target family members of a person of interest]'.²¹⁵

13.4.3 Prosecutor Lincoln Gakiya told the UK HO FFM team that: '...They [PCC] will only go after family if the member had a leadership role. Because of that role, they'd have a lot of information. If they switch sides and inform, and the PCC can't find the actual criminal (due to them being protected or arrested) then they will go for the family. There has been some cases of the wives and daughters of criminals who left and whistle-blow being murdered.'²¹⁶

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13.5 OCG 'justice system'

13.5.1 A 2020 article by El Pais, originally published in Spanish, stated that the PCC:

'...applies its own code of justice... and boasts of being behind the drastic drop in murders in the last two decades in [Sao Paulo]...

'...the PCC has created its own sophisticated justice system based on three pillars that it applies inside and outside prisons: the accused has the right to defend himself, it is forbidden to kill without authorization and verdicts are

²¹² UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 18), September 2024

²¹³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 45), September 2024

²¹⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 34), September 2024

²¹⁵ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 50), September 2024

²¹⁶ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 54), September 2024

debated until a consensus is reached. They resolve disputes of all kinds, explains Rodrigo... a 42-year-old filmmaker who lives in Brasilândia, a group of favelas in São Paulo with 280,000 residents... In neighborhoods like that, they don't trust the police, Rodrigo says. There, conflicts are resolved in the PCC way. "Everyone makes do with the brothers. Am I going to call the police to solve my problem? No, I take it to the PCC."...

'This brotherhood of criminals also solves everyday problems... complaints about a badly parked car that prevents passage; a mother who asks them to talk to her son, who is addicted to drugs; another who protests because the dentist does not appear at the outpatient clinic...

'Despite the fact that it is a system dictated by criminals, sociologist Feltran stresses that it is the closest thing to a fast, effective and free justice system in many of the poorest and most abandoned neighborhoods in Brazil...' ²¹⁷

13.5.2 Originally published in Portuguese, a 2022 article by UOL reported that:

"... The PCC is gaining predominance in several states, it has strict discipline rules that curb the use of violence,"...

"Unauthorized homicides are prohibited by the PCC and conflicts must be resolved in dialogue. Keeping the peace in the community and keeping the police out is good for the traffickers' business. In order not to be punished by the faction, the members (called brothers) and others who live under the PCC's rule must respect the rules"... ²¹⁸

13.5.3 In 2022, the Financial Times reported that:

'Members are still known as "brothers" and they implement laws and rules in the communities they control. This includes so-called crime tribunals, where PCC members judge cases and hand out sentences, including the death penalty... many living in these communities argue it brings order where there was none before. "Did the PCC make the community more organised, less violent? Yes, I think so," says a pastor of an evangelical church in Paraisópolis, one of the largest favelas in São Paulo. "...It brought organisation. It managed to do what the government couldn't." ²¹⁹

13.5.4 Originally published in Portuguese, Metrópoles reported in 2023 that:

'...It is up to the "discipline" to send a member of the organization who is accused of misconduct to the "Crime Court", or "Board".

'With cruel methods, the PCC's parallel justice beats, mutilates and kills from those who embezzle money to those who are the pivot of banal conflicts. Punishments include gouging out the eyes of those suspected of robbing the organization, fracturing members with clubs, and killing by impalement.

'There are also cases of people forced to admit crimes they did not commit and records of victims who open their own grave, where they are killed and then buried...' ²²⁰

13.5.5 Metrópoles also reported in 2023 that: 'The PCC currently imposes 45 rules that must be followed by its members and by all people who live in the areas

²¹⁷ El País, [PCC, the Brotherhood of Criminals](#), 12 June 2020

²¹⁸ UOL, [War between factions raises homicide rate by up to 46% in states](#), 15 February 2022

²¹⁹ Financial Times, [How Brazil's largest crime syndicate built a global drug empire](#), 27 February 2022

²²⁰ Metrópoles, [The Rise of Marcola](#), 31 August 2023

dominated by the faction. In addition to maintaining control of the regions, the code serves to avoid situations that may hinder trafficking. The penalty for those who disrespect it ranges from exclusion to summary execution...'²²¹

13.5.6 The USSD noted in its '2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Brazil' (USSD 2023 report), published in 2024 and covering events throughout 2023, that: 'Drug-trafficking organizations and other groups contributed to societal violence, according to media reports and observers. There was evidence these heavily armed organizations participated in vigilante justice, holding "trials" and executing persons accused of wrongdoing. A victim was typically kidnapped at gunpoint and brought before a tribunal of gang members, who then tortured and executed the victim.'²²²

13.5.7 Officers from the criminal investigation division of the Sao Paulo civil police told the UK HO FFM team that:

'The PCC created a parallel justice system in which they represent the people in these areas [the peripheries of the city]. The PCC presents itself as a state: motherly, welcoming, sheltering people. But if anyone goes against their rules, these people pay with their lives. One example is sexual assaults in those communities: if someone claims they've been a victim of this in any way, the PCC will be the judges. The people who committed the crime are kidnapped and the PCC create kind of a court in which the victims are face to face with the criminals and the criminals are tried. They have a system with 3 layers of judges. The people accused generally have no way of defending themselves. Regardless of being found guilty or innocent, they are executed. The bodies are not given to police or family. They are buried in shallow graves or sometimes incinerated.

'...The victims of the PCC today are... criminals within the organisation that cause some harm to the organisation, for example if they steal from it. What concerns police are the people who break the rules imposed by the organisation. These people do not have the necessary funds to leave...

'The PCC's objective is to have the power to rule over people so that people don't require assistance from the actual state.

'There's a vacuum of power and they took over with their rules, which are focussed on behaviour. The community does turn to them because they are quick and they can interfere in domestic problems. They settle many issues, usually family or relationship-based crimes. For example, a conflict between husband and wife who are separating, or if someone accuses of someone of abuse, of sexual crimes, of paedophilia. Just the accusation could result in execution, even if it's not true. They won't necessarily hold a trial, sometimes they beat people up or drug them or spike their drinks to get the truth out of them. There is a lot of back and forth. Eventually they find out the truth. People are hardly ever found innocent – if you are found guilty there will be no mercy...

'...they have a fully standardised code of conduct. It's not dependent on territory, it's fully standardised. They have hierarchy, a chain of command overseeing what happens and what decisions are being made. Usually, the

²²¹ Metropoles, [From 8 to 100 Thousand](#), 30 August 2023

²²² USSD, [Human Rights Report Brazil 2023](#) (Section 6), 22 April 2024

sentence is death. Capital punishment is the preferred sentence.²²³

- 13.5.8 Researchers from the Center for the Study of Violence told the UK HO FFM team that the PCC:

'...create rules, and everyone has to respect them. They have a code of conduct. Whoever disrespects their code will be punished. You cannot be deceitful, all contracts must be respected. The code is based on morals. They have ultimately profited from regulating crime...

'[If someone broke one of the PCC's rules] It depends. It could be death, but penalties vary according to the local authority... They do have a moral aspect. When there are inefficiencies in the public state, people go to them.

'They say that everyone is equal. No one has more rights than someone else...

'They [PCC] mediate so no-one needs to call the police. You can stay away from PCC and ask nothing of them. Most people manage to. But still, if you have an issue and need to call the police, you can't - you have to speak to the 'brother' first...

'[If someone went to the police instead of the PCC] They could suffer some kind of punishment. The first time, maybe they'd say "don't call them again, you come to us".²²⁴

- 13.5.9 Prosecutor Lincoln Gakiya told the UK HO FFM team that: 'Enforcement [of the PCC's rules] is strict and violent. People who live in low income areas know what they can and cannot do. Usually they cannot call the police. If a crime happens, they will ask a PCC representative or local drug dealer and they run their criminal trials. It's a justice process, a due process, they have to apply their law accordingly...²²⁵

- 13.5.10 Members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and organised crime division told the UK HO FFM team that 'If someone doesn't follow the rules of the group [the PCC or CV], or if they want to leave the group, the group will hold a court – it is dangerous, and they could be killed.'²²⁶

- 13.5.11 When asked by the UK HO FFM team what kind of infraction would prompt a response from an OCG, Professor Carolina Grillo of the Universidade Federale Fluminense responded:

'If someone is accused of being an informant, of going out with someone's wife, or of hitting on the big guy's wife. This would get someone beaten, killed, or expelled from the territory.

'Market disputes about land - because traffickers and militias conduct land grabbing, they might accuse you of anything to force you out and take your home, or destroy it so they can put real estate on it. This is a great business for them right now.

'Particularly in the case of militias, unpaid extortion tax.

²²³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 56), September 2024

²²⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 48, 51), September 2024

²²⁵ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 53), September 2024

²²⁶ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 26), September 2024

‘...people are often punished for not paying illegal tax...

‘It’s very arbitrary the informal law, the informal tribunals that are set up in the favelas. People can be punished for many different reasons. The most serious infractions are related to people who take part in the organisation, for example stealing drugs or money, telling the police where they hide firearms. Being informants. They are more prone to this situation than those who simply live in the territories but are not closely connected to them.’²²⁷

13.5.12 When asked by the UK HO FFM team whether punishments in the informal tribunals are standardised, Carolina Grillo responded:

‘No, they’re not standardised.

‘Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo differ on this.

‘In Rio de Janeiro, factions are decentralised in that there’s a hill owner commanding drug trafficking activities and other cultural activities in that territory. There is no hierarchy above the hill owners in the CV. There is a network of solidarity between them. Some are more prominent as have more money and more firearms. They don’t interfere with another hill owner’s local issues.

‘Hill owners will decide how to conduct the tribunals. They do have moral and ethical standards, but no written law about what is reasonable. If you live in a favela controlled by the CV and have nothing to do with drug trafficking, but you get into trouble, you might need someone from the CV to stand for you in the “tribunal”. There is no judge. People present their case and if you are accused you should have someone to stand for you as a common citizen does not know the criminal language. They have some specific moral standards and dialect and way of formulating things. In most cases no-one is punished. If it happens that you live in a favela where a hill owner is very arbitrary, the conflict will more likely result in violent punishment – but usually most do not.’²²⁸

13.5.13 When asked by the UK HO FFM team what kind of infraction would result in death or serious punishment by the PCC, the researchers from the Center for the Study of Violence responded that:

‘Owing and not repaying a debt, sexual crimes. Child abusers and rapists get very bad punishment – they deserve death according to PCC. Snitches also get a very bad punishment. These are extreme cases. They only give death for extreme cases...

‘... [Regarding having a debt to the PCC] There is nothing in writing on this... They may want to kill someone for this reason... There is no standardisation on punishments.’²²⁹

13.5.14 Instituto Sou da Paz told the UK HO FFM team that ‘Murder is now an extreme punishment – in the 1990s and 2000s, someone would be killed over anything. Now it’s more regulated, meaning violence levels have gone down. We see regulatory work by the PCC in the outskirts of the city: the PCC doesn’t want police there, so there is a pact in the community for peace

²²⁷ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 36), September 2024

²²⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 36, 37), September 2024

²²⁹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 49), September 2024

– but everyone is under their tyranny.’²³⁰

13.5.15 Antonio Carlos Costa, founder of Rio de Paz, told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘If you don’t respect the codes [of the OCGs], death is certain but never quick. For example, if you pass on information to the police, the police will pass this information to the traffickers and you will be killed. But before you die you’ll suffer.

‘There are social codes: be careful if you’re with a woman who could be with the head of a gang. Do not post anything that will expose dealers.

‘A lot of people die from being in the wrong place at the wrong time...’²³¹

13.5.16 Prosecutor Lincoln Gakiya told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘There are other [serious crimes that might result in death] – rape, abuse of children, or to steal from their group, embezzle their money...

‘PCC don’t actually lend money to ordinary citizens. They have funding lines for drugs trafficking for members. They’ll offer payment plans. Sometimes the drugs will be seized and then they will have to pay the money back. If they don’t pay, they can be excluded from organised crime, or it can be punishable by death. They will recover all their assets...

‘If you don’t pay [a debt], let’s say the money belongs to the PCC. In most cases it isn’t a loan, most cases are when a member has stolen some money. When you deceive the organisation you will be punished...’²³²

13.5.17 Members of the Federal Police of Brazil in Sao Paulo told the UK HO FFM team that ‘When someone say they are threatened by a group, it’s because they are or were part of that group. It’s not just normal people.’²³³

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14. State protection

14.1 Criminal justice system

14.1.1 For background information about the criminal justice system generally and an assessment of its effectiveness in providing protection, see the [Country Policy and Information Note, Brazil: Actors of protection](#).

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14.2 Legal context

14.2.1 The Brazilian Penal Code, enacted in 1941, can be found here: [Brazilian Penal Code](#) (in Portuguese). Articles 288 and 288A of Brazil’s Penal Code criminalise the following:

‘Art. 288. To associate 3 (three) or more persons, for the specific purpose of commit[ting] crimes...

‘Penalty - imprisonment, from 1 (one) to 3 (three) years...

‘...The penalty is increased by up to half if the association is armed or if

²³⁰ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 44, 45), September 2024

²³¹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 40), September 2024

²³² UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 53, 54), September 2024

²³³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 59), September 2024

there is the participation of a child or adolescent...

‘Article 288-A. Constitute, organize, integrate, maintain or fund paramilitary organization, militia individual, group or squad with the purpose of committing any of the crimes provided for in this Code...

‘Penalty - imprisonment, from 4 (four) to 8 (eight) years...’²³⁴

- 14.2.2 A 2022 article on the United States Library of Congress website described Brazil’s 2013 ‘Criminal Organization Law... which... defines a criminal organization as “the association of four or more people[,] structurally organized and characterized by the division of tasks... with the objective of obtaining... an advantage... through the perpetration of criminal offenses...’²³⁵. That law sets out a penalty of 3 to 8 years imprisonment for ‘promoting, constituting, financing or integrating, personally or through an intermediary, a criminal organization.’²³⁶
- 14.2.3 In 2004, Brazil ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime²³⁷.
- 14.2.4 The 2023 Global Organised Crime Index noted that ‘Brazil has been actively participating in international cooperation efforts to tackle organized crime, including signing and ratifying treaties and conventions on drugs, arms and human trafficking, and having extradition treaties with many countries. It ... also ... has several cooperation agreements with international agencies and governments to exchange experiences on public-security policies and strategies to fight crime.’²³⁸
- 14.2.5 Originally published in Portuguese, in December 2024, the Chamber of Deputies of the Brazilian Congress reported on legislative proposal 4120/2024, which aims to strengthen collaborative approaches and strategies to combat organised crime:
- ‘The Chamber of Deputies approved on Thursday (12 [December 2024]) a bill that provides for the existence of an interfederative association to confront transnational organized crime. The bill creates, among others, a reward program for whistleblowers. The proposal will be sent to the Senate...
- ‘According to the text, a transnational criminal organization is considered to be one that has one or more of several characteristics, such as coordinated action in two or more countries; systematic use of violence and intimidation at borders; involvement in global criminal activities; recruitment and recruitment of members in two or more countries; and carrying out cyberattacks, cyberespionage or cybersabotage.
- ‘The intention is to create an association bringing together the federal government and state governments to act in a coordinated way against the crimes committed by these groups...
- ‘PL 4120/24 typifies crimes related to the theme of transnational criminal organization. Anyone who promotes, integrates or finances the organization

²³⁴ Govt of Brazil, [Penal Code](#), 7 December 1940

²³⁵ US Library of Congress, [Brazil: Two New Criminal Courts Created...](#), 26 September 2022

²³⁶ Government of Brazil, [Law No. 12,850](#), 2 August 2013

²³⁷ United Nations Treaty Collection, [Penal Matters](#), 19 August 2024

²³⁸ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Leadership and governance), 2023

will have a prison sentence of 8 to 20 years.

‘Those who only act as executors of orders will not be considered members of the organization, such as the so-called "mules", people who try to enter another country with drugs on their bodies or luggage at the behest of criminals.

‘As for the crime of leading the transnational organization, the text provides for imprisonment from 15 years to 40 years...

‘A very common situation in the city of Rio de Janeiro, the text typifies the crime of exercising domination, social control or power parallel to the State in a neighborhood, zone, area or territorial space...

‘The penalty will be imprisonment from 10 to 20 years...

‘Anyone who reveals the identity of a protected public agent, informant or collaborator or dismisses the informant without observing the project procedures, allowing their identification, may face 6 to 10 years in prison.’²³⁹

14.2.6 Representatives from the National Council of the Public Prosecutor’s Office (CNMP) told the UK HO FFM team that

‘There is specific legislation to enable the prosecution of numerous crimes, including money laundering, homicide, human trafficking, drugs trafficking, weapons trafficking. There are also specific laws regarding OCGs, including the organised crime law and money laundering law. The legal system ensures we can prosecute. The fact an individual is associated with a criminal organisation is itself a crime.

‘Law 12,850 of 2013 contains special investigation techniques specific to organised crime, for example wire-tapping.’²⁴⁰

14.2.7 Officers in the criminal Investigation department of the Sao Paulo Civil Police told the UK HO FFM team that ‘Every year the penal code is updated so that investigation police can keep up with the dynamics of organised crime.’²⁴¹

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14.3 Government rhetoric

14.3.1 In 2023, The Guardian reported that: ‘Rio de Janeiro’s state governor, Cláudio Castro, has vowed to strike back against organised crime after paramilitary gangsters launched an unprecedented assault on Rio’s public transport system, torching dozens of vehicles in what the politician called “terrorist acts”.’²⁴²

14.3.2 In 2023, ACLED reported that ‘...President Lula claimed he would reinstate the Ministry of Public Security to create coordinated actions with the state governors to fight organized crime, drug trafficking, and weapons smuggling... On 9 December, however, Lula broke his campaign promise and announced the Public Security agenda will continue under the Ministry of Justice, with the name of the institution changing to “Ministry of Justice

²³⁹ Chamber of Deputies, [Chamber approves bill...](#), 12 December 2024

²⁴⁰ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 13), September 2024

²⁴¹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 55), September 2024

²⁴² The Guardian, [Paramilitary gangs in Brazil torch more than 35 buses...](#), 24 October 2023

and Public Security.”²⁴³

- 14.3.3 In 2024, Amnesty International reported that ‘...the executive secretary of the Ministry of Justice, and Public Security, referring to Bahia, reportedly commented: “You don’t fight organized crime with a rifle with roses.”’²⁴⁴
- 14.3.4 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, news agency Brasil de Fato²⁴⁵ reported that ‘The increase in robberies [in Rio Grande do Sul] has already led the state’s Secretary of Security, Sérgio Caron, to declare that “We are going to arrest everyone”.’²⁴⁶
- 14.3.5 In 2024, Reuters reported that:
‘Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Monday urged his government to speed up actions in the Amazon to combat organized crime...
‘Lula complained that it had taken a year for a security plan for the Amazon... to get off the ground, and said there was still much to be done...
“We need to speed up the process, because my term is only four years. If we cannot execute this plan, someone else will come along and do nothing,” he said at an event...’²⁴⁷
- 14.3.6 A 2024 report from the Brazilian government quoted the Minister of Justice and Public Security: “...The idea that we have a doctrinal position that is weak in the fight against organized crime is false. What we advocate is the proportional use of force, in which more serious crimes receive an equally serious criminal response.”²⁴⁸

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14.4 Policy initiatives

- 14.4.1 In 2024, ACLED opined that ‘...a lack of coordinated national public security policies continues to undermine the fight against criminality. Root causes of drug trafficking – such as overcrowded prisons and poverty – remain unaddressed. Instead, past and present administrations have invested in a militarized approach to crime reduction, encouraging excessive use of force by state authorities and frequent patrols aimed at instilling fear.’²⁴⁹
- 14.4.2 In its 2023 Annual Report, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) noted that:
‘...in March 2023, it [the state] launched PRONASCI 2, a national citizen security program... this program aims to improve public security through cooperation among the federal government, states, the Federal District, and the municipalities, with the additional involvement of families and the community. The program focuses on preventing, controlling, and curbing crime, and promotes human rights, peace culture, disarmament, and the fight against prejudice. The priority groups include young people ages 15 to 24, vulnerable people, victims of violence, and people living in urban areas

²⁴³ ACLED, [Deadly Rio de Janeiro: Armed Violence and the Civilian Burden](#), 14 February 2023

²⁴⁴ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights](#) (Brazil), 2024

²⁴⁵ Brasil de Fato, [About](#), no date

²⁴⁶ Brasil de Fato, [Organized crime promises ‘consequences’ for those who loot homes...](#), 9 May 2024

²⁴⁷ Reuters, [Brazil’s Lula demands faster action against organized crime in the Amazon](#), 17 June 2024

²⁴⁸ Brazilian Government, [Brazil has the lowest number of murders in 14 years](#), 2 February 2024

²⁴⁹ ACLED, [Brazil](#), updated 4 November 2024

with high crime rates... emphasizing the fight against organized crime.’²⁵⁰

- 14.4.3 Referring to a recommendation from its previous Annual Report in 2022, the IACHR stated in its 2023 Annual Report that:

‘Recommendation No. 11: Prioritize the allocation of funds to intelligence actions needed to fight organized crime, criminal gangs, and militias, rather than to armed clashes with them....

‘In 2023, the State did not provide specific information on compliance with this recommendation. However, it did point out the National Campaign for Disarmament, which entails the voluntary surrender of arms... from January 1 to August 31, 2023, 7,506 firearms were surrendered, for a total value of R\$1,459,660.92 [approx. £189,683²⁵¹].’²⁵²

- 14.4.4 In October 2023, Insight Crime reported that:

‘Brazil’s Justice and Public Security Minister Flávio Dino presented on October 2, the first major anti-crime program since President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s return to power in January.

‘The new plan revolves around five axes: raising the efficiency of the police; improving interagency security cooperation; bettering information sharing among authorities; improving the efficiency of the judiciary; and fortifying the country’s points of entry. For this, authorities have allocated 900 million reais [approx. £116.9 million²⁵³]... across three years...

‘Brazil’s federalist system places responsibility for public security in the hands of state governments. But a lack of information sharing between states, and state-specific security operations, have hampered the effectiveness of efforts against organized crime groups that are often multi-state or nationwide threats...

‘...although the investment... is significant, much of the money is destined for problematic strategies... the proposal includes plans for building more prisons, which... could worsen the country’s security situation...

‘The reasons for this... are related to how... prisons in Brazil are exploited by organized crime to build up its forces...

‘New prisons may temporarily reduce overcrowding, but improvements are likely to be short-lived if Brazil continues its... use of pretrial detention, which puts people who have not been convicted into gang-controlled prisons...’²⁵⁴

- 14.4.5 The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 stated: ‘...complex mechanisms for the prevention of organized crime remain challenging to implement, and socio-economic development policies aimed at low-income urban areas are rare.’²⁵⁵

- 14.4.6 The same source stated that ‘Punitive strategies, which are the main focus of initiatives, have only increased violence in the country...’²⁵⁶

²⁵⁰ IACHR, [Annual Report 2023](#) (page 835), 31 December 2023

²⁵¹ Xe.com, [1,459,660.92 BRL to GBP](#), 23 December 2024

²⁵² IACHR, [Annual Report 2023](#) (page 838), 31 December 2023

²⁵³ Xe.com, [900,000,000 BRL to GBP](#), 23 December 2024

²⁵⁴ Insight Crime, [New Money, Old Strategies in Brazil's Anti-Crime Plan](#), 9 October 2023

²⁵⁵ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Civil society and social protection), 2023

²⁵⁶ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Leadership and governance), 2023

14.4.7 Originally published in Portuguese, in November 2023 the Brazilian government reported on a tri-border intelligence workshop with Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina:

‘Authorities from the Federal Criminal Police, criminal enforcement officials, and police officers from Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina actively participated in the event, discussing strategies to improve prison intelligence and strengthening cooperation ties between the countries of the Triple Border...

‘The Tri-Border Intelligence Workshop addressed crucial topics, such as the exchange of information between penitentiary systems... the adoption of integrated actions in the area of security... the development of protocols to deal with high-risk situations in the fight against organized crime.’²⁵⁷

14.4.8 The Guardian reported on 6 November 2023 that:

‘Thousands of troops have taken up position in the ports and airports of Rio and São Paulo and along Brazil’s western border as part of efforts to “asphyxiate” organized crime amid an upsurge in bloodshed and violence.

‘The military intervention – ordered last Friday [3 November 2023] by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva – will last until next May [2024] and is reportedly designed to cut off the drug and gun smuggling routes...

‘...Lula said the federal government was determined to help Brazil “free itself from organized crime, gangs, drug trafficking and gun trafficking”. “The violence we have been witnessing, has been worsening day after day,” Lula told reporters...

‘Security expert Pablo Nunes... said... he was unconvinced a military deployment would work.

“We don’t have a plan. We have a gigantic problem – but what we see are impromptu movements from each of the different spheres of government to show that they are doing something. The state government says it is taking some actions. The federal government says it is taking others.”²⁵⁸

14.4.9 In a 2024 article, Mongabay, ‘a U.S.-based non-profit conservation and environmental science news platform’²⁵⁹, discussed government efforts to respond to organised crime in the Amazon:

‘...In January 2023, a federal government entourage... promised a greater state presence in the region to fight organized crime. Specific actions to punish environmental crimes were taken, and the budgets of environmental protection agencies were initially increased... a floating base was installed...

‘Lula also revoked a decree from the Bolsonaro administration that relaxed the rules for illegal mining on Indigenous lands... the government announced the launch of a plan... to suppress crimes, expel invaders, destroy illegal facilities and ensure full monitoring of the territory...

‘...anthropologist Beatriz de Almeida Matos... told Mongabay... “The land is not completely abandoned: There are people in the government... committed to the Indigenous cause. There are also efforts to reestablish

²⁵⁷ Govt of Brazil, [Tri-Border Intelligence Workshop Strengthens Cooperation...](#), 28 November 2023

²⁵⁸ The Guardian, [Brazil: Lula deploys troops to ports and airports...](#), 6 November 2023

²⁵⁹ Mongabay, [About](#), no date

environmental agencies, which were completely run down,”...

‘...“There is still a lot to improve. We still feel very insecure in that region. We need to intensify protection because organized crime took over,” she said. Also, according to the anthropologist, the resources assigned to environmental agencies are still insufficient...

“...we have not yet had a response from the state that is up to the task. When we ask for answers, they say they are prioritizing other demands,”...

‘Brazil’s Ministry of Indigenous Peoples told Mongabay the federal government recently created The Javari Valley Integrated Single Command to improve security in the area. The local body has power to coordinate actions with representatives from five ministries...’²⁶⁰

14.4.10 In a February 2024 report, the Brazilian government stated: ‘Dino [Minister of Justice and Public Security] stressed that there has been a 13% increase in the amount invested in public security...’²⁶¹

14.4.11 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, Terra reported that:

‘The Secretariat of Public Security [in the state of Bahia] (SSP-BA) said that operations to combat gangs are a priority... the Bahian government highlighted the hiring of about 2.5 thousand police officers... the acquisition of intelligence software, weapons and semi-armored vehicles, as well as the provision of training courses.

‘The ministry also stated that it invests in intelligence. With this, it has already located 33 faction leaders in 2023...

‘The Federal Public Ministry (MPF) reported that there are two active procedures related to Bonde do Maluco... it cannot, due to confidentiality, inform the content.’²⁶²

14.4.12 The CNMP told the UK HO FFM team that ‘Each state has a GAECO [Grupo de Atuação Especial de Combate ao Crime Organizado, Special Action Group to Combat Organized Crime], which are organised into a national group. They meet and discuss joint actions and coordinate actions of the prosecutor’s office. Each acts in their own state according to that state’s challenges.’²⁶³

14.4.13 The CNMP also told the UK FFM team that:

‘We seek to coordinate with other public security agencies so that in a joint and integrated manner we can effectively and efficiently fight organised crime...

‘The prosecutor’s office as a whole is very concerned with the fight against organised crime.

‘Main operations are done through GAECOs together with civil police forces - prosecutor’s offices are always behind these large main actions.’²⁶⁴

14.4.14 Members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the immigration division

²⁶⁰ Mongabay, [2 years after Bruno & Dom’s murders, Amazon region still rife...](#), 10 June 2024

²⁶¹ Brazilian Government, [Brazil has the lowest number of murders in 14 years](#), 2 February 2024

²⁶² Terra, [Bahia faction allies with PCC...](#), 3 March 2024

²⁶³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 12), September 2024

²⁶⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 12, 13), September 2024

told the UK HO FFM team that ‘We are trying to establish cooperation agreements with foreign governments, to exchange information that can be used in court against members of the criminal factions.’²⁶⁵

14.4.15 The UNODC told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘In the Amazon region it is complex to make policies, as it is a huge region with a lack of communications and a lack of technology, as well as borders with the main cocaine producing areas of the world. The convergence of crimes and how organised crime is increasing its scope is a challenge. Maybe a few years ago it was more concentrated in a few areas, like Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, now it is spreading across Brazil, including into the Amazon. Regarding convergence of crimes, OCGs may be venturing into illegal mining, people trafficking, drug trafficking, into many activities. The population is vulnerable in these areas – inequalities are very high, and this makes it a good place for organised crime to increase. Some remote areas have less government presence, which allows organised crime to flourish.

‘...In the Amazon, we have a lot of these crimes and very few public servants, helicopters, equipment. The territory is so vast and there are highly specialised criminal factions who know all the routes around it. The river is like an ocean and there is very little monitoring or systemic inspection of it. This poses a huge challenge. Belem has a big international port, and areas controlled by organised crime.

‘Another issue is the extent of Brazil’s land borders – Brazil borders almost every other country in South America and alongside that, there is a huge coastline making it very difficult for law enforcement to monitor. OCGs are becoming more powerful and connected with OCGs in other countries, including in Europe, which is facilitating drug trafficking and in turn makes it more difficult to combat. It’s a dynamic situation – there are many challenges.’²⁶⁶

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14.5 Police response to OCGs

a. Searches, seizures and arrests

14.5.1 In the sources consulted, CPIT was unable to find statistics relating to arrests of organised criminal group members (see [Bibliography](#)).

14.5.2 In April 2022, the OCCRP reported that:

‘In a massive operation that spanned four Brazilian states, authorities cracked down on a sophisticated money laundering network of the criminal gang Os Manos, arresting nearly 60 suspects.

‘More than 1,300 law enforcement officers targeted members of the Os Manos... Investigation focused on more than 200 suspects...

“‘The idea is not only to arrest low-level gang members, but members of all its levels...” Brazilian Civil Police Chief Gabriel Borges told local media.

‘Locations in some 40 cities were raided. Officers seized one airplane, 40 luxury cars—including Maseratis, Audis, Cadillacs, and Porsches—as well

²⁶⁵ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 22), September 2024

²⁶⁶ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 16), September 2024

as assets worth about US\$10 million [approx. £7.9 million²⁶⁷]...²⁶⁸

14.5.3 The USSD 2023 report stated that:

‘...in April Santa Catarina state police continued serving arrest and search-and-seizure warrants to mayors and other high-level public servants involved in a widespread corruption network. Police arrested 15 mayors in five months on suspicion of fraud in bidding and contracting services, which included bribes to criminal organizations and money laundering in trash collection contracts... The Public Ministry of Santa Catarina planned to serve municipal secretaries, businessmen, and civil servants with warrants...’²⁶⁹

14.5.4 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, Metropoles reported that:

‘One of the leaders of Bonde do Maluco is arrested by the Federal Police...

‘...police officers took to the streets to serve 35 preventive arrest warrants and 46 search and seizure warrants in homes and prisons located in the states of Bahia, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso do Sul, Goiás, Paraná and Santa Catarina.

‘The court also ordered the seizure and seizure of various movable and immovable assets belonging to the members of the faction, as well as the blocking of 40 bank accounts used by them...’²⁷⁰

14.5.5 Originally published in Portuguese, in July 2023, the Brazilian government reported that:

‘...Operation Favens... in Rio Grande do Norte [RN] and Paraíba [PB] to combat crimes of criminal organization, drug trafficking and association for trafficking... carried out... 47 warrants in five cities...

‘Among the targets of the operation are three lawyers, as well as leaders of the faction appointed as responsible for coordinating... recent attacks... in several municipalities in Rio Grande do Norte. These lawyers would be responsible for taking and bringing information from convicts...’²⁷¹

14.5.6 Originally published in Portuguese, in October 2023, the Brazilian government reported that:

‘...17 preventive arrest warrants, four temporary arrest warrants and 41 search and seizure warrants were served in São Paulo, Ceará, Paraná, Rio Grande do Norte and Santa Catarina. Those investigated will answer for the crimes of... drug trafficking, criminal organization and money laundering...

‘...investigations began in April 2022, with the interception of a Brazilian fishing boat off the African coast loaded with 5.4 tons of cocaine. In another seizure... a fishing vessel that departed from Fortaleza was boarded on the high seas with 1.2 tons, totaling 6.6 tons...

‘For the investigation... an unprecedented agreement was signed... the Agreement for the Constitution of a Joint Investigation Team between the

²⁶⁷ Xe.com, [10,000,000 USD to GBP](#), 23 December 2024

²⁶⁸ OCCRP, [Brazil Arrests 58 in Massive Operation against Gang Members](#), 27 April 2022

²⁶⁹ USSD, [Human Rights Report Brazil 2023](#) (Section 4), 22 April 2024

²⁷⁰ Metropoles, [One of the leaders of Bonde do Maluco is arrested...](#), 4 October 2023

²⁷¹ Govt of Brazil, [Federal Criminal Police participates in Operation Favens...](#), 4 July 2023

Federative Republic of Brazil... and the Republic of Cape Verde...²⁷²

14.5.7 In 2023, Insight Crime reported that:

‘On October 31 [2023], federal police arrested Dalmir Barbosa, and his son, Taillon, alleged leaders of the Rio das Pedras militia... Two police officers and an ex-army sergeant working as bodyguards for the pair were also arrested...

‘On October 23 [2023], Matheus da Silva Rezende, alias “Faustão,” was shot dead by Rio’s state police... Faustão was the second-in-command of Justice League (Liga da Justiça), Brazil’s most powerful militia, and the nephew of its leader, Luís Antônio da Silva Braga, alias “Zinho.”...

‘Police officers in Rio are regularly arrested for links to militia groups...

“The efficiency of state police is hampered by the participation of hundreds of their agents in organized crime,” said Carolina Grillo, a sociology professor at the Federal Fluminense University in Rio who closely studies militia groups...

“The federal police are doing a great job... It is good at arresting high-level criminals, at being able to put together the kind of evidence to prosecute these sorts of crimes,” said Lessing [Benjamin Lessing, an expert on criminal conflict and corruption in Brazil²⁷³].

‘Still, federal police have limitations in terms of manpower and mandate.

“Occupying neighborhoods and re-establishing public security is the responsibility of the state police,” Lessing pointed out.²⁷⁴

14.5.8 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, Terra reported that “The investigative work and qualified repression [in Bahia] resulted in the record seizure of 55 rifles in 2023, the location of 11 tons of drugs, the dismantling of 18 cocaine laboratories, 15,600 arrests, and the seizure of 5 thousand firearms,” said the secretariat, which also highlighted... the 6% reduction in violent deaths in the state.²⁷⁵

14.5.9 In a February 2024 report, the Brazilian government stated that ‘...the new policy of restricting firearms, which has reduced their circulation in national territory, has led to a 25.5% increase in seizures of illegal weapons. There were 10,600 seized in 2023 compared to 8,500 seized in 2022...²⁷⁶

14.5.10 In February 2024, the Brazilian government reported that: ‘From November 6, 2023 to January 23, 2024, 109,437 vehicles were searched, 286,234 passengers were searched and around 9,100 cargo trucks were inspected. The federal government also seized 77 tons of drugs and arrested 1,017 people during the period. The total value of the decapitalization of organized crime through the GLO [above-mentioned initiative placing troops at ports and airports] reached BRL 1.4 billion [approx. £181.9 million²⁷⁷].²⁷⁸

²⁷² Govt of Brazil, [...Integrated Force to Combat Organized Crime \(FICCO\)...](#), 6 October 2023

²⁷³ Insight Crime, [Local Police Could Disrupt Attempts to Remove Militias from...](#), 9 November 2023

²⁷⁴ Insight Crime, [Local Police Could Disrupt Attempts to Remove Militias from...](#), 9 November 2023

²⁷⁵ Terra, [Bahia faction allies with PCC...](#), 3 March 2024

²⁷⁶ Brazilian Government, [Brazil has the lowest number of murders in 14 years](#), 2 February 2024

²⁷⁷ Xe.com, [1,400,000,000 BRL to GBP](#), 23 December 2024

²⁷⁸ Brazilian Government, [Brazil has the lowest number of murders in 14 years](#), 2 February 2024

14.5.11 In a 2024 article, Mongabay discussed the deaths of Dom Phillips and Bruno Pereira and government efforts to respond to organised crime in the Amazon:

“After the resumption of the State’s presence in the Javari Valley... the Federal Police carried out 34 operations against environmental crimes (...),” the ministry wrote in a statement. “In total, 134 people were arrested and R\$470,000 [approx. £61,071²⁷⁹]... were seized in 118 operations against drug trafficking in the region.”...

‘In addition to the three defendants, two other people allegedly involved in the crime are in jail: Rubén Dario da Silva Villar, known as “Colombia,” accused of being the mastermind behind the murders; and Jânio Freitas de Souza, suspected of being his informant and ally.

‘...Colombia is suspected as the leader of an illegal transnational fishing network that operated in the tri-border region of Brazil, Colombia and Peru...

‘Recently, investigators also discovered important links between the double homicide and the execution of another Indigenous activist, Maxciel Pereira dos Santos, a Funai employee who was shot dead in 2019... The two investigations are moving forward together, with evidence and statements being shared. For the Federal Police, the organization behind the murders is transnational and is involved in illegal fishing and hunting, money laundering, tax evasion, misappropriation of public funds and corruption.’²⁸⁰

14.5.12 Originally published in Portuguese, in April 2024, SENAPPEN reported on ‘Operation Mute’:

‘The objective is to identify and remove cell phones located in prison units as a way to combat the illicit communication of organized crime and reduce the rates of violence nationwide. The operation has the participation of federal and state criminal police in 51 prison units...

‘...Operation Mute is the largest carried out by SENAPPEN in the context of combating organized crime, due to the number of participating states, the number of federal and state criminal police officers involved and state prison units searched.’²⁸¹

14.5.13 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, UOL reported that ‘Prosecutors from the Public Ministry of Maranhão launched... an offensive against Bonde dos 40... The action is led by prosecutors from Gaeco, the arm of the Public Ministry of Maranhão that fights organized crime. The task force arrested 20 suspects, in Maranhão and... in Piauí and Mato Grosso...

‘During the operation, six vehicles, including cars and motorcycles, and 34 cell phones were seized...’²⁸²

14.5.14 Originally published in Portuguese, in May 2024, CNN Brasil reported that: ‘In Porto Seguro, Bahia, one of the main leaders of one of the largest criminal organizations in the country was arrested on Tuesday night (21 [May 2024]). Marcio Tadeu Lopes Coelho, known as Marcinho VP, is the leader of the Red Command in Minas Gerais. The man was transferred on

²⁷⁹ Xe.com, [470,000 BRL to GBP](#), 23 December 2024

²⁸⁰ Mongabay, [2 years after Bruno & Dom's murders, Amazon region still rife...](#), 10 June 2024

²⁸¹ Govt of Brazil, [...largest operation to combat illicit communication in prisons](#), 24 April 2024

²⁸² UOL, [Gaeco Maranhão carries out operation against Bonde dos 40 leaders...](#), 12 August 2024

Wednesday (22 [May 2024]) to Minas Gerais.²⁸³

14.5.15 In 2024, The Guardian reported that 'Earlier this year... federal police accused Rio's former civil police chief, Rivaldo Barbosa, of being one of the three masterminds of [Marielle] Franco's murder, alongside two powerful local politicians.'²⁸⁴

14.5.16 Representatives of SENASP told the UK HO FFM team that:

'...state police forces often don't have the capability to operate in other states, so criminals often flee to other states to elude police forces. Efforts are being made to try and to improve communications and intelligence exchange, and conduct joint operations with specific aims – for example more protection in border areas and using more modern technology tools – there is an operational side and technological side...

'... since 2019, there has been an almost 200% increase in the number of seizures of drugs.'²⁸⁵

14.5.17 Members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the immigration division told the UK HO FFM team that: '...The federal police have jurisdiction over the whole country, but we have a limited number of officers for 27 states. State police are therefore closer to what happens on the ground... Until recently we had challenges with sharing information... Overcoming this barrier is a challenge in fighting organised crime because, for example, the leaders of the criminal factions are present in Southern states but are running activities in the Northern states.'²⁸⁶

14.5.18 Members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and organised crime division told the UK HO FFM team that:

'We have an office in each state in Brazil, with lots of intelligence officers in large cities where criminal factions preside, and other intel bases at strategic points such as borders.

'We coordinate investigations. We have a maritime traffic unit which looks at ports - international relations are very strong here especially regarding containers. There is an air traffic side monitoring planes across South America, especially small planes. We have operations with Peru (regarding drug laboratories) and Paraguay (regarding drug trafficking) and exchange information.

'We also have directives to tackle money laundering and arrest leaders that facilitate crime. We carry out drug and weapons seizures...

'The federal police are the main unit responsible for tackling it [organised crime]... Officers in the Federal police have more training, are more prepared, handle bigger cases and use specific investigation techniques such as wiretapping, internet tracking, drones and accessing banking records. There is a financial intelligence unit which we have a strong relationship with. We follow directives to investigate leaders. Local offices also conduct local and regional investigations...

²⁸³ CNN Brasil, [Leader of the Red Command in Minas Gerais is arrested](#), 22 May 2024

²⁸⁴ The Guardian, ['My hands went cold': Rio's reporters risk death to reveal criminal...](#), 28 April 2024

²⁸⁵ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 19, 20), September 2024

²⁸⁶ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 22), September 2024

‘...There is a lot of international cooperation and contact – the victims are our number one concern.’²⁸⁷

14.5.19 The same source also told the UK HO FFM team that ‘There are currently 600,000 people in prison for offences related to organised crime.’²⁸⁸

14.5.20 Antonio Carlos Costa, founder of Rio de Paz, told the UK HO FFM team that ‘Civil and military police (civil police do the investigating and military police are in the streets) hate each other. They will not help each other. So clarifying crimes is something that happens to a minimum degree. Killers knows they won’t be punished. Murderers are never caught, except in high profile cases like Marielle Franco. That was an exception.’²⁸⁹

14.5.21 Instituto Sou da Paz told the UK HO FFM team that ‘The state is failing to give an adequate response to organised crime...

‘It took 5 years to complete an investigation into organised crime conducted by the Sao Paulo Public Prosecutor’s Office. Agencies need to put together more intelligent operations without leaking information to criminals, which often happens. Law enforcement agencies don’t talk to each other because they don’t trust each other.’²⁹⁰

14.5.22 Researchers from the Center for the Study of Violence told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘...the police could help [someone who had been threatened by an OCG due to owing the group money] but at the same time, the police could say sorry, not my problem, I already have enough to do. I understand some people would be afraid to do this, in case the police inform the PCC what they have said...

‘Police can be effective... However, whilst the law is good, trust in institutions in practice is low. Law enforcement would possibly say “well, you had it coming” if someone said they owed money to the PCC.’²⁹¹

14.5.23 Prosecutor Lincoln Gakiya told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘In Brazil, we have 640,000 people arrested and in prisons. Of those, 202,000 are in the state of Sao Paulo. Out of those, in the state of Sao Paulo, approximately 8,000 are PCC. Out of the PCC’s 40,000 members, most of them are in prison. Approximately 30% are actually free...

‘The PCC acts in the darkness. No-one says “I am a PCC member”. Unless we have evidence that they are involved in organised crime, they will only be arrested for the specific crime they have committed. There is no self-declaration, so numbers aren’t that reliable.’²⁹²

14.5.24 Officers from the Criminal Investigation department of the Sao Paulo Civil Police told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘We used to have double the amount of officers, but in the last 24 years our personnel has been depleted. The Government has stopped investing in

²⁸⁷ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 23, 24), September 2024

²⁸⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 24), September 2024

²⁸⁹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 41), September 2024

²⁹⁰ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 43, 44), September 2024

²⁹¹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 49), September 2024

²⁹² UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 55), September 2024

investigation police and instead invests in preventive police (the military police). From 2017, the national congress has been seeing more of a need to invest in the civil police.

‘...We wish we could do more to combat money laundering by organised criminal groups, but we don’t have the necessary human resources. Today, we have 120 ongoing investigations into money laundering – this is a technical job involving other organisations and public departments.’²⁹³

14.5.25 The UNODC told the UK HO FFM team that ‘One of the main difficulties is co-operation between entities at federal and state levels, as well as between municipalities. Crime here is organised which is challenging to law enforcement...

‘Lack of human resources is an issue in every institution, some more than others. The Federal Police have a huge mandate but limited human resource. Cooperation between institutions is therefore tricky.’²⁹⁴

14.5.26 Members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and organised crime division told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘Ultimately it is the size of Brazil – it is the size of a continent. Our borders are very hard to patrol and to monitor. There are 16,000km of land border with only 13,000 federal police officers. It is a huge task to keep the borders secure, it is basically impossible. We also have a large population of 220 million people.

‘There is also the geo-political issue: Brazil is one of the main players in global drug trafficking. We are neighbours to large drug producers – Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and Paraguay. These countries produce cannabis and cocaine, which then enters Brazil. Brazil is an exit point on drug routes to Europe, Australia and even China. There is also large-scale drug consumption in Brazil.

‘There are 27 states all with their own state police forces, but only 1 Federal police – the Federal police have several different responsibilities but only a small amount of personnel.’²⁹⁵

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b. Operations in favelas

14.5.27 In 2022, Insight Crime reported:

‘On January 19 [2022], over 1,200 military police officers marched into Jacarezinho, a favela of over 60,000 residents in northern Rio de Janeiro...

‘During the raids, police searched homes and patrolled streets to impede potential resistance from the Red Command...

‘There were similar scenes in the Muzema favela, in the east of the city, where military police made 30 arrests in a bid to wrest control of the area from militia groups active throughout Rio de Janeiro...

‘Already, the move in Jacarezinho has been met with public outcry. Brasil 247 reported that residents have alleged warrantless home invasions from

²⁹³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 55), September 2024

²⁹⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 16), September 2024

²⁹⁵ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 24), September 2024

police and interrogations without the presence of witnesses or lawyers.’²⁹⁶

14.5.28 In May 2022, Insight Crime reported that:

‘On May 24 [2022], military police led a 12-hour operation into the northern Rio favela of Vila Cruzeiro, a neighborhood controlled by the... Red Command...

‘The result: at least 23 dead, amid allegations of torture, executions and a terrified population. At least one victim, Gabrielle Ferreira da Cunha, was confirmed to have been killed by a stray bullet while inside her home...

‘...Last February, Vila Cruzeiro saw nine people killed in another operation.

‘And a year ago, another raid targeting CV, in the neighborhood of Jacarezinho, saw 28 people killed...

‘Joana Monteiro, an expert in public security at the Getulio Vargas Foundation think tank, told InSight Crime that... “there is more violence in the areas controlled by drug traffickers both because there are more disputes between them and because the police intervene more.”²⁹⁷

14.5.29 In its 2022 ‘Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Brazil’, covering events throughout 2022, the USSD noted regarding the same operation that it ‘lasted more than 12 hours, and of the 23 individuals killed, only 10 were confirmed to be targets of the operation... Media reported that one of the victims was a young male who suffered multiple stab wounds...’²⁹⁸

14.5.30 Sources including Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported the death of at least 18 people following an operation by civil and military police in the Rio de Janeiro favela Complexo do Alemão on 21 July 2022²⁹⁹. Reuters stated that victims were mostly criminal gang members³⁰⁰. HRW added that there were ‘... reports of serious human rights violations, including home invasions, beatings, torture, threats, and failure to rescue injured people.’³⁰¹

14.5.31 The USSD 2023 report stated: ‘... a police raid conducted in the favela of Salgueiro, Niteroi, in Rio de Janeiro State, resulted in the death of 13 suspects...

‘Authorities stated the case regarding an operation in May 2022 to arrest Commando Vermelho gang members... remained open and no one had been charged or arrested. The... operation... resulted in 23 deaths...’³⁰²

14.5.32 In its 2023 Annual Report, the IACHR noted that:

‘The United Nations Committee against Torture... mentioned the use of lethal force by law enforcement and military officials in connection with security operations to combat organized crime, and addressed the grave human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions, torture, sexual violence and beatings, perpetrated mostly against Afro-Brazilians during raids in favelas... On August 8, 2023, the IACHR condemned the violent

²⁹⁶ Insight Crime, [Brazil Tries to Reclaim Rio's Favelas - Ad Infinitum](#), 27 January 2022

²⁹⁷ Insight Crime, [Rio's Campaign Against Red Command Achieving Little But...](#), 30 May 2022

²⁹⁸ USSD, [Human Rights Report Brazil 2022](#) (Section 1), 2022

²⁹⁹ Human Rights Watch, [Brazil: Deadly Police Operation in Complexo do Alemão](#), 22 July 2022

³⁰⁰ Reuters, [At least 18 killed in latest deadly police raid in Rio de Janeiro](#), 22 July 2022

³⁰¹ Human Rights Watch, [Brazil: Deadly Police Operation in Complexo do Alemão](#), 22 July 2022

³⁰² USSD, [Human Rights Report Brazil 2023](#) (Section 1), 22 April 2024

death of at least 16 people in police raids in Brazil... the IACHR... stressed that police violence in Brazil responds to the context of systemic racial discrimination, in which law enforcement conducts raids in socioeconomically vulnerable areas with high concentrations of young people and persons of African descent and does not adhere to international human rights standards.³⁰³

14.5.33 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, Fogo Cruzado noted, in relation to a study covering the period from 2017 to 2023, that ‘... territories dominated by drug gangs are more affected by police actions (more than 70% of localities recorded confrontations with the police) than militia areas (31.6% of localities recorded confrontations with the police). Of the total number of shootings mapped in police actions and/or operations, 40.2% of them occurred in trafficking areas... Only 4.3% of shootings with the presence of the police took place in militia areas.’³⁰⁴

14.5.34 In 2024, Amnesty International reported that:

‘A 2019 Federal Supreme Court ruling that introduced measures to reduce police violence continued to be disregarded. Heavily armed police operations oriented towards the “war on drugs” in favelas and marginalized neighbourhoods resulted in intense shootouts, unlawful killings and extrajudicial executions, unlawful entry into and destruction of property, torture and other ill treatment... In October [2023], more than 120,000 residents of the favela Complexo da Maré in Rio de Janeiro city were impacted by six days of police operations...

‘In Baixada Santista... a police operation... resulted in the arrest of 958 people and 30 deaths and unlawful raids. Amnesty International, in partnership with the National Council for Human Rights, documented 11 cases of serious human rights violations perpetrated by state agents, including extrajudicial executions, unlawful entry of homes, and torture and other ill-treatment. In the state of Rio de Janeiro, a police operation in the neighbourhood of Vila Cruzeiro... resulted in 10 deaths and four injuries.

‘Police intervention continued to cause the deaths of children and adolescents. On 7 August [2023], Thiago Menezes, 13 years old, was unlawfully killed by police while riding a motorcycle. On 4 September [2023], the Rio de Janeiro state court ordered the preventive detention of four police officers involved in the killing. On 12 August [2023], five-year-old Eloah Passos was hit by a stray bullet while playing inside her home. On 16 August [2023], three-year old Heloísa Santos died after being shot by a police officer while in a car with her family.’³⁰⁵

14.5.35 Professor Carolina Grillo of the Universidade Federale Fluminense told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘The state has been very ineffective [in combatting OCGs]... For the most part, their idea of fighting it is conducting police operations which produce a lot of casualties and collateral damage and contribute to the continued poverty of those who are already poor as health facilities and schools cannot function, and people can’t go to work so they get fired. It’s ineffective as

³⁰³ IACHR, [Annual Report 2023](#) (pages 833, 834), 31 December 2023

³⁰⁴ Fogo Cruzado, [Greater Rio under dispute: mapping the clashes](#), 13 June 2024

³⁰⁵ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights](#) (Brazil), 2024

traffickers stop selling drugs for a few hours and then resume, same with militias.

‘You conduct an operation and you arrest someone, but the organisation is still there because there is no intelligent strategy regarding the economic base of the market. For example, they don’t think to regulate and control real estate markets in these areas. When you raise a building, it is a visible structure - someone in the government is getting money or is very afraid of taking down the building. Same with gas - we have some regulatory agencies responsible for controlling who can sell it, not anyone can do that. Prices are controlled, but in militia areas this control is not applied. There are ways to deal with it that don’t necessarily involve police, for example through the agencies responsible for these markets. It would be interesting if they could follow the money.

‘GAECO have conducted some interesting investigations, as have the federal police, using data from regulatory agencies. Sometimes they are able to trace money and establish the OCG’s connection with legal markets. In the last couple years there have been some initiatives that are more intelligence-led but they aren’t yet structured.’³⁰⁶

14.5.36 When asked by the UK HO FFM team what would happen if someone who owed money to an OCG was threatened and went to the police, Carolina Grillo responded that:

‘They would probably be arrested. If you owe money to these groups you’d be tortured to give information regarding their business. The police might be interested in getting part of the money and taking part of the business. We are talking about corrupt state civil and military police - they are not all corrupt but there are several corrupt people in these agencies...

‘[If someone was threatened because of flirting with a gang member’s partner]... The police won’t do anything. They would say “Why don’t you move?”. They won’t protect you. They might register the complaint. But nobody goes to the police. You would get into more trouble by doing that – first, you’re accused of the thing that got you threatened and then you’d be accused of being an informant, which is much more serious. I wouldn’t go to the police. People wouldn’t.’³⁰⁷

14.5.37 Carolina Grillo also told the UK HO FFM team that: ‘I’ve heard of siblings being killed by the police...

‘In the case of siblings, sometimes they are attacked by police for intimidation. It happened in one favela, 6 people were killed by police, including the brother of one witness, to intimidate him.’³⁰⁸

14.5.38 Instituto Sou da Paz told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘In Rio de Janeiro, police are heavily armed, cause deaths, and tackle retail traffickers... This is a deep-rooted problem in Brazilian law enforcement. They kill the retail dealer, but kingpins are still there laundering money. In recent years, police intelligence and investigation efforts have been increasing; they are trying to follow the money. These operations can be

³⁰⁶ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 38), September 2024

³⁰⁷ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 38, 39), September 2024

³⁰⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 34), September 2024

expensive. Some determined prosecutors conduct these operations looking at financial transactions, following the money.’³⁰⁹

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14.6 Judicial response to OCGs

a. General

14.6.1 The 2021 Global Organized Crime Index stated that ‘Although courts are independent and clash frequently with Brazil’s executive branch... their instruments of prosecution are not very effective in deterring corruption or organized crime.’³¹⁰

14.6.2 The USSD 2023 report stated that:

‘The constitution provided for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence and impartiality...

‘The constitution provided for the right to a fair and public trial, and the judiciary generally enforced this right, although NGOs reported that in some rural regions... police, prosecutors, and the judiciary were perceived to be susceptible to external influences, including fear of reprisals. Investigations, prosecutions, and trials in these cases often were delayed.

‘Although the law required trials be held within a set time, there were millions of backlogged cases at state, federal, and appellate courts, and cases often took many years to be concluded.’³¹¹

14.6.3 The BTI 2024 stated that the ‘efficiency [of the Brazilian judiciary] is somewhat restricted by limited capacity and corruption. The system is heavily overburdened. Brazilian law is heavily procedural. Despite repeated attempts at reform, the legal system still operates with these weaknesses.’³¹²

14.6.4 The Freedom House 2024 report stated that ‘The judiciary, though largely independent... is overburdened, inefficient, and often subject to intimidation and other external influences.’³¹³

14.6.5 Members of the Federal Police of Brazil in Sao Paulo told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘...some segments of the judiciary are also inefficient in providing protection to those who need it. If you need state protection it is hard to get. Some authorities are very slow to respond as they don’t have a lot of resources...

‘[The amount of time that passes between a charge and sentencing] depends on the judge and the crime in question. We’ve had cases of kidnap that had sentences delivered very fast, within 1-2 years. If the crime is very violent the judiciary seem to care a little bit more...

‘Each judge is completely independent in the way they handle cases...

‘No, I don’t think so [that members of the judiciary are subject to

³⁰⁹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 43), September 2024

³¹⁰ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil profile](#) (Leadership and governance), 2021

³¹¹ USSD, [Human Rights Report Brazil 2023](#) (Section 1), 22 April 2024

³¹² BTI, [Brazil Country Report 2024](#) (Rule of Law), 2024

³¹³ Freedom House, [Brazil: Freedom in the World 2024](#) (F1), 2024

intimidation].³¹⁴

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b. Federal prisons and prisoner transfers

14.6.6 Originally published in Spanish, in 2024, El Pais reported that:

‘There are five federal prisons and they are located in as many states. They were created to better isolate and monitor the top leaders of Brazil's main criminal gangs...

‘The federal prison system is also the counterpoint to the ordinary network of prisons, which depends on the states, and which often translates into prisons run by the criminals themselves in which there is too much violence and even the most basic things, sometimes even food, are lacking...³¹⁵

14.6.7 In 2020, Brazilian news agency The Rio Times³¹⁶ reported that ‘The federal system’s sentence enforcement is harsh: 22 hours locked up in the cell (no TV in most units) and two hours in the sun. Visitors and attorneys are controlled by means of body x-ray systems to prevent cell phones, drugs, and weapons from entering, which is common in state prisons.³¹⁷

14.6.8 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, CNN Brasil reported that:

‘...up to two hours of sunbathing and an individual cell of 7m² without contact with the outside world or electricity. This is how the... leaders of criminal factions live inside Brazil's federal prisons...

‘Not just any prisoner considered dangerous is taken from a state prison to a federal prison. The requirements of the 2008 law that provides for transfer, lists that inmates must play a leadership role in gangs, for example...

“The separation of these leaders by faction contributes to the reduction of conflicts and violence within prison units, in addition to undermining the hierarchical structure of factions and their ability to perpetuate crimes,”...

‘Rio's security summit identified a factional war inside and outside state prisons and asked the leaders to go to other states. The objective... is to cease contact with members of the factions.³¹⁸

14.6.9 Originally published in Portuguese, in June 2023, the Brazilian government reported that:

‘Federal Criminal Police officers transferred 13 prisoners from the Rio de Janeiro penitentiary system to prison units of the Federal Penitentiary System (SPF)...

‘...The SPF is a proven tool in the fight against organized crime...

‘The five federal penitentiaries - Catanduvas (PR), Campo Grande (MS), Mossoró (RN), Porto Velho (RO) and Brasília (DF) - effectively isolate criminals, avoiding contact and communication with the outside world...

‘...the State has absolute control of everything that will reach the prisoner

³¹⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 59), September 2024

³¹⁵ El Pais, [...escape puts Brazil's maximum-security prisons to the test](#), 15 February 2024

³¹⁶ The Rio Times, [About](#), no date

³¹⁷ The Rio Times, [Brazil's Federal Prisons Host Its Most Deadly...](#), 21 July 2020

³¹⁸ CNN Brasil, [...the 5 main leaders of the factions in maximum security prisons](#), 10 July 2023

and no external contact occurs without permission...'³¹⁹

14.6.10 Originally published in Portuguese, Metropoles reported in a 2023 article on the rise of the PCC that '...in order to dismantle the group's leadership, São Paulo negotiated a kind of exchange of prisoners... The strategy, however, helped spread the PCC to other states...

'With telephone exchanges in full operation, the strategy of sending factions away also did not prevent attacks on the streets from being coordinated from the prisons...'³²⁰

14.6.11 In 2024, The Guardian reported that:

'Brazil's prison system... has also been blamed for helping south-eastern criminal groups set up camp in the Amazon. "One of the factors that led to the expansion of these criminal organizations to other states... was the prison system, mass incarceration and the growth of the prison population; and also the transfer of prisoners from state to federal prisons," said Couto [a researcher from FBSP³²¹].

'Criminal leaders from different corners of Brazil were inadvertently united after being moved from prisons in their home states to high-security prisons elsewhere. "This led to contact between these organisations that allowed them to spread and disseminate their activities throughout Brazil," said Couto. At the same time, organisations that had previously only dominated their own states now had "representatives" in other regions...'³²²

14.6.12 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, CNN Brasil reported that 'Since he was appointed as the PCC's top leader, Marcola has been accused of committing several crimes from inside prison. He was convicted of a series of homicides committed when he was already behind bars...'³²³

14.6.13 The USSD 2023 report stated that 'Media reports indicated that incarcerated leaders of major criminal gangs continued to control their expanding transnational criminal enterprises from inside prisons.'³²⁴

14.6.14 Originally published in Portuguese, in a 2023 article on Bonde do Maluco, Metropoles reported that 'it was found that most of the orders for the commission of various serious and violent crimes were issued from inside prisons.'³²⁵

14.6.15 The CNMP told the UK HO FFM team that 'Overcrowding in prisons has been greatly reduced. OCG leaders issue directions from prisons, so when you isolate them you reduce and hinder this communication. It hasn't solved the problem, but has reduced it... Isolation of leaders like Beira Mar and Marcola has been effective. Intelligence has established through intercepted communications that it's had an effect.'³²⁶

14.6.16 Members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and

³¹⁹ Govt of Brazil, [...prisoners from Rio de Janeiro to the Federal Penitentiary System](#), 28 June 2023

³²⁰ Metropoles, [From 8 to 100 Thousand](#), 30 August 2023

³²¹ The Guardian, [...dramatic expansion of two main gangs into Amazon](#), 11 April 2024

³²² The Guardian, [...dramatic expansion of two main gangs into Amazon](#), 11 April 2024

³²³ CNN Brasil, [...the 5 main leaders of the factions in maximum security prisons](#), 10 July 2023

³²⁴ USSD, [Human Rights Report Brazil 2023](#) (Section 1), 22 April 2024

³²⁵ Metropoles, [One of the leaders of Bonde do Maluco is arrested...](#), 4 October 2023

³²⁶ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 15), September 2024

organised crime division told the UK HO FFM team that ‘Their [the PCC’s] leader is in Brasilia federal prison, but he continues to run the organisation by passing messages through his lawyers during visitations.’³²⁷

14.6.17 The same source also told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘There are 5 federal prisons in Brazil. They have fewer inmates and there is no overcrowding unlike in state prisons. The most dangerous criminals are placed in federal prisons and spread out in prisons across the national territory. We have a different regime for these prisoners – they cannot have conjugal visits, there are cameras watching them 24/7, their visitations are different.

‘They work well. The problem is that 600,000 other inmates are in state facilities which are not so rigorous.

‘Prisoners in federal prisons can be moved around based on intelligence. Inmates from different groups remain separate otherwise they would get killed. Not just rival groups, but sometimes members from the same groups are separated due to internal power struggles within the groups.

‘Under Brazilian law, an inmate can talk with their lawyer. They can’t leave, but they can talk about anything. Leaders can get messages out and continue their operations in that way.

‘We do have recordings of conversations – we record those between lawyers and inmates which means they have to speak in code. Prisoners also talk to other inmates who pass on their messages. No system is perfect - they all have their loopholes, and it makes it more difficult.

‘Separating them usually helps from a psychological aspect - when some prisoners are in isolation, they lose some of their power when they can’t communicate as easily with others. This is a strategy to try and reduce their power and influence.’³²⁸

14.6.18 Researchers from the Center for the Study of Violence told the UK HO FFM team that ‘The PCC is not hierarchical. It is very pervasive - it is present in nearly every neighbourhood. Having a few maximum-security prisons is not enough. These groups are now inserted into the formal economy. They now have a very strong connection to formal and legitimate businesses.’³²⁹

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c. Notable decisions

14.6.19 In the sources consulted, CPIT was unable to find statistics relating to convictions or prosecutions of organised criminal group members (see [Bibliography](#)).

14.6.20 CIVICUS (World Alliance for Citizen Participation), ‘a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world’³³⁰, in a March 2022 Joint Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review, stated that ‘Radio journalist Jairo de Sousa was executed by armed assailants on 21 June 2018 as he arrived at

³²⁷ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 25), September 2024

³²⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 25, 26), September 2024

³²⁹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 47), September 2024

³³⁰ CIVICUS, [Who we are](#), no date

the headquarters of Rádio Pérola in Pará. Sousa reported on corruption, homicide and drug trafficking. A police investigation showed that the killing was ordered by a city council member in coordination with criminal groups. Prosecutors charged the councillor and 10 others with homicide... The resolution of Sousa's case was an exception...³³¹

14.6.21 Originally published in Portuguese, in August 2022, Brazilian news portal Zero Hora³³² reported that:

‘...two defendants were convicted and one acquitted... for the murder of a 12-year-old girl in Porto Alegre. Laisa Manganeli Remédios disappeared in September 2016 and, according to the prosecution, was decapitated by a criminal faction.

‘Douglas de Sá Gomes, known as Faísca, received a sentence of 37 years and nine months in prison. Gustavo da Luz Marques, known as Buguinha, was sentenced to 26 years and six months and 10 days.

‘José Dalvani Nunes Rodrigues, known as Minhoca, was acquitted. He - who is appointed as one of the leaders of a faction... in the Bom Jesus neighborhood - received a release permit in the case, but remains in prison answering for other crimes...

‘According to the prosecution, Laisa was brutally killed, after the faction suspected that she was passing on confidential information to a rival group. The night before, she was at a drug dealer's house, when she was caught talking to a member of an enemy faction.’³³³

14.6.22 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, CNN Brasil listed the prison sentences of 5 prominent OCG leaders:

- Marcola [leader of the PCC]: 338 years
- Beira-mar [a leader of the CV]: 317 years
- Cabeça Branca [a prominent drug trafficker]: 100 years
- Nem da Rocinha [leader of Amigos dos Amigos]: 96 years
- Marcinho VP [a leader of the CV]: 44 years³³⁴

14.6.23 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, G1 reported that:

‘In July last year [2022], Taillon de Alcântara Pereira Barbosa was sentenced to 8 years and 4 months in prison... due to his participation in a militia...

‘Although the sentence pointed to Taillon's violent behavior, the Criminal Execution Court granted the militiaman conditional release in September.

‘Ricardo Cappelli, executive secretary of the Institutional Security Office of the Presidency of the Republic, criticized... a decision that favored a faction leader in Bahia.

“Leader of the main criminal faction in Bahia was released on judicial duty by a judge, on a Sunday, at 8:42 pm. When another judge revoked the

³³¹ CIVICUS, [Brazil: Joint Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\) Submissions...](#) (page 11), 31 March 2022

³³² Zero Hora, [Homepage](#), no date

³³³ Zero Hora, [Faction leader is acquitted, and two other defendants are convicted...](#), 12 August 2022

³³⁴ CNN Brasil, [...the 5 main leaders of the factions in maximum security prisons](#), 10 July 2023

decision, it was too late, he had disappeared. Is it normal? Is it acceptable?" he wrote.³³⁵

14.6.24 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2023, Brazilian newspaper Estadão³³⁶ reported that:

'...one of the main leaders... of the... PCC, Roberto Soriano was sentenced to 31 years and 6 months in prison for the death of... Melissa de Almeida Araújo...

'The crime occurred in May 2017, in Cascavel, Paraná, when Melissa worked as a psychologist at the Federal Penitentiary of Catanduvas... Soriano was considered the mastermind of the murder...

'Also known as "Tiriça", the convict is just below the main leader of the PCC, Marco Willians Herbas Camacho, "Marcola". Soriano is already serving time for other crimes in the federal penitentiary system in Brasília...

'On the day of the crime, she had gone to pick up her son from school and was shot in the face...

'The investigation pointed out that Soriano had been ordering, from within the penitentiary system, executions against security agents. Melissa became a target for her work as a servant of the federal penitentiary...³³⁷

14.6.25 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, Brazil's National Council of Justice (CNJ) reported that it:

'...will investigate... the conduct of the judge of the Criminal Execution Court of Amapá... The magistrate would have issued decisions that benefited leaders of criminal organizations without due observance of legal requirements. The CNJ also approved the precautionary removal of the magistrate from his jurisdictional functions...

'...the judge's performance was related to cases in which his then-wife acted as a lawyer. The ex-partner was sentenced to 10 years and six months in prison for active corruption, use of a false document and criminal organization – crimes committed... for the benefit of gang members...³³⁸

14.6.26 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, CNN Brasil reported that:

'...Rogério Avelino da Silva, known as "Rogério 157", was sentenced... to 64 years in prison for triple homicide and association for drug trafficking...

'Rogério 157 is identified as one of the leaders of the Comando Vermelho criminal faction in the Rocinha community.

'The sentence was given... seven years after Rogério ordered the deaths of rival drug traffickers... in August 2017.³³⁹

14.6.27 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, the Public Ministry of Rio Grande do Sul reported that:

'The defendant José Dalvani Nunes Rodrigues, known as "Minhoca", appointed as the leader of a criminal faction, was sentenced on Tuesday,

³³⁵ G1, [Ministry of Justice charges judiciary against gang leaders and complains...](#), 16 October 2023

³³⁶ Estadão, [Homepage](#), no date

³³⁷ Estadão, [PCC leader convicted of ordering the killing of a federal prison...](#), 28 August 2023

³³⁸ National Council of Justice, [...suspected of benefiting leaders of criminal factions](#), 21 May 2024

³³⁹ CNN Brasil, [Leader of the Red Command "Rogério 157" is sentenced...](#), 14 August 2024

July 9 [2024]... to 24 years, 10 months and 3 days in prison... for the crimes of qualified homicide and criminal association. "Minhoca" is already in the prison system as a result of other facts.

'The crime occurred in July 2016... motivated by a disagreement involving drug trafficking practiced by the criminal organization.'³⁴⁰

14.6.28 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, Brazilian digital newspaper Tribuna do Norte³⁴¹ reported that: 'The... Court of Justice of Rio Grande do Norte (TJRN) upheld the sentence of a man accused of leading a criminal organization... The sentence... is just over seven years in prison...

"...interceptions revealed that the appellant held a leadership position within the organization and gave orders through a lawyer to be executed by other hierarchically lower members," the rapporteur points out.'³⁴²

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14.7 Corruption

14.7.1 In 2022, The Financial Times reported that:

'...experts say the PCC has begun to infiltrate and corrupt elements of the Brazilian state... "It has been especially successful corrupting police and prison guards. But now it is infiltrating even the judiciary and the prosecutor's office," says Gakiya [Lincoln Gakiya, public prosecutor in Sao Paulo³⁴³]. "They are operating more in the corruption style," Alcadipani [Rafael Alcadipani, associate at the FBSP³⁴⁴] adds. "They are getting involved in parliament. They have a lot of money: they corrupt police, politicians, judges..."³⁴⁵

14.7.2 A 2022 article in the Guardian reported that:

'...the militias have made influential friends and entered the world of politics.

"If you want to talk to a [mafia] leader today you'll need to go to the town councils, where they run departments. You'll need to go to the state legislature. You need to go to the city hall and to congress - that's where you'll find the leaders," Ferraz [Claudio Ferraz, head of Rio de Janeiro's organised crime police team between 2007 and 2010³⁴⁶] said.

"They won't introduce themselves as such – but those who know, know."...

'Ferraz pointed to the four former Rio state governors who had been jailed for corruption and the senior police officers imprisoned for wrongdoing. Last month, the former head of Rio's civil police... who was seeking election to congress... was arrested for allegedly colluding with Rio's mafia bosses.'³⁴⁷

14.7.3 In a 2022 article on militias, The Guardian quoted Cláudio Souza Alves, a sociologist, as stating: "They get elected, they cut deals, they have inside information that helps them avoid being arrested or killed. They kill each

³⁴⁰ Public Ministry of Rio Grande do Sul, [..."Minhoca", is sentenced...](#), 9 July 2024

³⁴¹ Tribuna do Norte, [Homepage](#), no date

³⁴² Tribuna do Norte, [Leader of faction... has sentence upheld](#), 31 July 2024

³⁴³ Financial Times, [How Brazil's largest crime syndicate built a global drug empire](#), 27 February 2022

³⁴⁴ Financial Times, [How Brazil's largest crime syndicate built a global drug empire](#), 27 February 2022

³⁴⁵ Financial Times, [How Brazil's largest crime syndicate built a global drug empire](#), 27 February 2022

³⁴⁶ The Guardian, [Brazil's fearsome militias: mafia boom increases threat...](#), 18 October 2022

³⁴⁷ The Guardian, [Brazil's fearsome militias: mafia boom increases threat...](#), 18 October 2022

other when their agreements collapse but the state hardly targets them. Just look at the number of militia members who are put on trial. It's minuscule."³⁴⁸

14.7.4 In 2023, ACLED reported that:

'Brazil's organized criminal groups establish mutually beneficial networks of financial and political sponsorship with state officials. In more extreme cases of collaboration, organized crime becomes part of the administrative apparatus... Police militias in Rio de Janeiro, which are organized primarily by state law enforcement agents and local officials, are one such example...

'Areas under the control of militias and organized criminal groups have thus become electorally significant, leading to the establishment of collusive relationships with local politicians. This dynamic further blurs the line between organized crime and local politics...

'...investigations on the interference of organized crime in the latest election in the states of Piauí and Rio de Janeiro points to continuous involvement of gangs and militias... During the last elections, at least 70 candidates were linked to illegal mining, most... connected to former president Bolsonaro...' ³⁴⁹

14.7.5 The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 stated that 'Brazil has been struggling with corruption... in recent years. Despite the existence of independent investigation and prosecution bodies, the government is heavily influenced by private and criminal interests... transparency mechanisms have not been effective in deterring... organized crime...' ³⁵⁰

14.7.6 The Freedom House 2024 report stated that 'Widespread corruption undermines the government's ability to make and implement policy without undue influence from private or criminal interests.' ³⁵¹

14.7.7 In 2024, The Guardian reported that 'Rio's former security chief, Luiz Eduardo Soares, said its police forces undoubtedly contained "decent and honest professionals". But he believed police institutions had been "taken over by criminals" in recent years. "We are not talking about a criminal infiltration because these criminal operators are police chiefs, they are officers. They are the criminal protagonists. It's not crime coming in. It's a process of institutional decay..." ³⁵²

14.7.8 When asked by the UK HO FFM team where corruption is most prevalent, members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and organised crime division responded 'In big cities and at borders. Opportunities present themselves in these areas. Sometimes it may be a one-time thing. A continuing situation of corruption is much more complicated. The Federal police work as hard as possible against it - we carry out lots of investigations and seizures but then the organisations will just migrate elsewhere.' ³⁵³

14.7.9 Sergio Fernando Senna Pires told the UK HO FFM team that 'the police need to be seen to be seizing drugs, so sometimes the organised groups tell

³⁴⁸ The Guardian, [Brazil's fearsome militias: mafia boom increases threat...](#), 18 October 2022

³⁴⁹ ACLED, [Organized Crime Exploits Long-Standing Local Feuds](#), 22 June 2023

³⁵⁰ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Leadership and governance), 2023

³⁵¹ Freedom House, [Brazil: Freedom in the World 2024](#) (C1), 2024

³⁵² The Guardian, ['My hands went cold': Rio's reporters risk death to reveal criminal...](#), 28 April 2024

³⁵³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 28), September 2024

the police about a mule so they can arrest them.’³⁵⁴

14.7.10 The same source also told the UK HO FFM team that ‘There is also an issue of corruption and we discuss it frequently. In the current municipal elections, the PCC have been awarded a number of contracts for public services and as a result of investigations many mayors have been arrested. We are trying to find out who is connected to these groups.’³⁵⁵

14.7.11 When asked whether the state is effective at combatting corruption, Professor Carolina Grillo of the Universidade Federale Fluminense told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘In Rio de Janeiro, no.

‘In the federal government, yes, but they don’t have the means. You need the police to investigate the police and with no grassroots contact it is harder to conduct investigations.

‘In the civil police, everyone knows who is corrupt and who isn’t. They won’t mess with someone else’s business as it’s too dangerous. If you tried to investigate, you and your family would be in trouble and should flee. Some police deputies have investigated criminal organisations involving other police officers, but they had protection all the time. Other trusted police officers follow them and their wives and children as they are not safe. When you’re someone important and are investigating organised crime, you actually get the protection you need. But even so, certain politicians (for example Marcelo Freixo) had to move away from Brazil for some periods due to being threatened as they were investigating organised crime inside the police. But they can come back, as they have access to armed protection.’³⁵⁶

14.7.12 Antonio Carlos Costa, founder of Rio de Paz, told the UK HO FFM team that ‘It is impossible to be a political candidate without asking permission, they already have decided who will win. They bought out the executive, the judiciary, judges, lawyers. It has permeated the whole system.’³⁵⁷

14.7.13 The same source told the UK HO FFM tea that ‘Organised crime can only flourish if they can rely on the police. Those in favelas see the police going in and getting money from drug lords. Criminals also pay off politicians. Organised crime has spread out into various sections of society. OCGs are involved in services, have agents in the 3 branches of power (executive, legislature and judiciary).’³⁵⁸

14.7.14 Instituto Sou da Paz told the UK HO FFM team that: ‘Police officers and law enforcement agents are involved [in organised crime] – state agents benefit from corruption schemes and bribery, and facilitate this type of criminal action, which affects the local population.’³⁵⁹

14.7.15 The same source told the UK HO FFM team that ‘Abusive use of force gives

³⁵⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 30), September 2024

³⁵⁵ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 31), September 2024

³⁵⁶ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 39), September 2024

³⁵⁷ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 41), September 2024

³⁵⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 41), September 2024

³⁵⁹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 43), September 2024

rise to police corruption; they get involved in militias.’³⁶⁰

14.7.16 Instituto Sou da Paz also told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘A recent operation by the Sao Paulo Public Prosecutor’s Office showed that two large city bus companies have employees involved with the PCC: they are being investigated. The PCC is infiltrating public services in this way: companies participate in a public call for tenders, and the owner of the company will be in the PCC. They can defraud the system. Organised crime is everywhere and is very pervasive. Public authorities are not prepared to assess the bidders in tenders. There is a shortage and deficit in inspection efforts... Many legal enterprises like bus companies and scrap collectors can be connected to organised crime groups and there is no oversight by public authorities...

‘...OCGs are also involved with official political parties – candidates are funded, especially in the 2024 municipal elections, for mayors. They work closely with citizens and local services, so it is easy for the criminals to make these connections. They sponsor candidates, community leaders, who when elected will support the criminals. Municipal elections are huge: there are over 5,000 municipalities in Brazil, over 5,000 mayoral candidates, plus council people. The judiciary does not have enough tools to oversee all that – and this is a gap organised crime can fill. Criminals are gaining strength from political connections not just in Sao Paulo, it is happening across the country. This enables OCG leaders to play a leading role across society...

‘... there is nothing in place [to respond to OCGs becoming involved in municipal elections] yet...

‘There’s often fraud and corruption in services - city hall agents can be corrupt and make these contracts. It depends on local prosecutors and judges, there is no national policy for that. Some bills are being discussed but nothing has been organised for this year’s election. It’s very occasional to have initiatives of this kind. Our legal system is very slow – there’s a lifetime between pressing charges and a person being sentenced, and in the meantime they can run for office...

‘...the state police in Sao Paulo are much better than the state police in Rio de Janeiro. There is corruption, but it is not as institutionalised as in Rio de Janeiro... State police officers are selling protection in the Port of Santos, Latin America’s largest seaport.’³⁶¹

14.7.17 Researchers from the Center for the Study of Violence told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘You don’t know who is a criminal anymore. Municipal elections are a hot topic now – no-one knows who is corrupted by the PCC or to what extent. Maybe they are involved with a business affiliated with PCC. The PCC are everywhere, they are like water. They are part of the state. They are not there to defend drug trafficking, they are there to facilitate business, to ask favours of judges and prosecutors. It’s subtle, but it’s truly happening. There needs to be a system of monitoring of election candidates. We want to be

³⁶⁰ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 43), September 2024

³⁶¹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 43, 44, 45, 46), September 2024

able to understand this.³⁶²

14.7.18 Members of the Federal Police of Brazil in Sao Paulo told the UK HO FFM team that 'Here in Sao Paulo, we don't usually work with the civil state police. I cannot generalise but they have significant problems with corruption. It's a grey area, we never know if we can trust the person we're talking to, so we prefer to work by ourselves...'³⁶³

14.7.19 The CNMP told the UK HO FFM team that 'In the past few years, we have been investigating how to prevent organised crime from infiltrating spheres of power, especially state and municipal governments. When this happens, it creates a protection systems for OCGs. This a big challenge with aspects of personnel, hierarchy, and the diversification of organised crime. This has been fought intensively and we would say successfully.'³⁶⁴

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14.8 Witness protection

14.8.1 Originally published in Portuguese, the Brazilian government's webpage on the Program for the Protection of Victims and Threatened Witnesses (PROVITA), updated March 2024, stated:

'Created in 1999, through Federal Law No. 9,807/99, the policy of protection for victims and threatened witnesses meets the demand of the entire federation, whether through the State Programs or the Federal Program, which with the strong support of Civil Society Organizations, currently protect about 500 people, including witnesses and their families.

'The Federal Program for Assistance to Victims and Threatened Witnesses - PROVITA consists of the set of measures adopted by the Federal Government with the objective of providing protection and assistance to people threatened or coerced due to their collaboration with criminal investigations or proceedings.

'...Social, psychological and legal aspects are taken into account from the moment candidates seek protection through the Program.'³⁶⁵

14.8.2 The government's webpage on PROVITA provides contact details for PROVITA-related support in 16 states³⁶⁶.

14.8.3 Originally published in Portuguese, the Sao Paulo Secretariat of Justice and Citizenship's website stated that 'The Federal Program for the Protection of Victims and Witnesses, managed by the Special Secretariat for Human Rights of the Federal Government, works to protect cases from states that do not have local protection programs.'³⁶⁷

14.8.4 Originally published in Portuguese, the National Council of the Public Prosecutor's Office website stated, regarding PROVITA, that:

'This initiative seeks to provide protection and social reintegration of people at risk in new community spaces, in a confidential way and with the effective

³⁶² UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 51), September 2024

³⁶³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 60), September 2024

³⁶⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 13), September 2024

³⁶⁵ Government of Brazil, [Program for the Protection of Threatened Victims...](#), 7 March 2024

³⁶⁶ Government of Brazil, [PROVITA: Contact List](#), 13 March 2024

³⁶⁷ Sao Paulo Secretariat of Justice and Citizenship, [National Program](#), no date

participation of civil society...

'Before requesting... the inclusion of victims, family members or witnesses, the guidelines are:

'Make sure the threat is serious;

'Alert the victim or witness of the restriction that their freedom will suffer when entering Provita: they and the family nucleus that accompanies them will have to abandon their current activities, leave friends behind, see relatives at most once a year, lose at least one year of their life;

'Make sure the victim or witness agrees...

'Talk to the representative of the Public Prosecutor's Office in Provita, if any.'³⁶⁸

14.8.5 The same webpage has instructions on how to apply for PROVITA³⁶⁹.

14.8.6 The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 stated that:

'Brazil has a victim and witness protection programme that offers support, health care and psychological assistance to hundreds of people annually. However, the programme has been criticized for not providing adequate guidance and support regarding anonymity. Furthermore, modern slavery, human trafficking and smuggling continue to be notable issues in the poorest areas, with police tactics in cities... resulting in organized-crime victims being treated as criminals or extrajudicially killed by the police... relatives of victims and witnesses often report a lack of support...'³⁷⁰

14.8.7 The CNMP told the UK HO FFM team that:

'Through Resolution 243 we have a national institutional policy for prosecutor's offices to support and protect victims. The CNMP fostered this initiative and change in approach, establishing and disseminating base rules so that local prosecutor's offices can provide services to victims and incentivise victims to report crimes. Victims are given social and psychological assistance, made to feel welcomed and heard, and receive the correct advice – this is all done on a local level...

'Some prosecutor's offices have interesting projects, for example in Minas Gerais they opened Casa Lilian (Lilian House) which is a physical structure with a multi-disciplinary team acting to care for victims. This can be accessed through Minas Gerais prosecutor's office.

'There are other witness protection programs for people who face a high degree of risk, which involves changing their names and addresses. The executive branch manages these...

'In theory [this is open to any victim], but practice doesn't always follow. We can't always handle the volume of persons who need it, but all can seek it. There is no barrier or legal exclusion of certain victims from protection systems. What exists are structural limitations, such as budgetary ones...

'We have victims of organised crime that come to us, and ones that don't get

³⁶⁸ National Council of the Public Prosecutor's Office, [Protective Services](#), no date

³⁶⁹ National Council of the Public Prosecutor's Office, [Protective Services](#), no date

³⁷⁰ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Civil society and social protection), 2023

to us because they are executed.’³⁷¹

14.8.8 When asked whether someone would be able to receive protection from the police against OCGs, members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and organised crime division told the UK HO FFM team that ‘The state cannot protect all of the people, it’s a very big population. People with political importance might be protected.’³⁷²

14.8.9 Sergio Fernando Senna Pires told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘Brazil has witness protection legislation which is combined with plea bargain legislation. Former members, or people who want to leave, can contribute to justice with facts – however, they know that they’ll be targeted by leaders and other members. The legislation states that protection needs to be provided but practically, providing that protection is difficult.

‘In the Brazilian Constitution, anyone who is accused of a crime has the right to have their accuser there in the courtroom - they have to testify in the presence of the accused. This makes it easy to follow and eliminate the accuser. We are trying to change this legislation, however it is a fundamental right and one that can only be changed when we write a whole new constitution. We cannot untie the knot...

‘I would not use the witness protection programme. I would prefer to handle the situation myself. We have legal proceedings that end up identifying people and where they are. There is legislation that says you can hide, and protects the witness, but also legislation saying that you can’t hide the accuser. They are often found and murdered...

‘...The current witness protection programme is very primitive – I would not join it...

‘Witness protection programmes need money – hiding someone is expensive – but they have insufficient resources, so the policy won’t work.’³⁷³

14.8.10 Professor Carolina Grillo of the Universidade Federale Fluminense told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘...the witness protection program is very poor. People go through a lot of difficulties because they have no protection from the government when they witness a crime. You might easily be found elsewhere in the country, especially if you have witnessed police violence. The police can access people’s records and have more resources. Witnesses against corruption and militias are particularly at risk for these reasons, as these are people with power who can search national databases...

‘Witnesses... would not be safe in Brazil. The Witness Protection Program is not at all effective.’³⁷⁴

14.8.11 Instituto Sou da Paz told the UK HO FFM team that ‘The witness protection program has never been enough. Some people do have to leave the country, for example human rights defenders and people who face police

³⁷¹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 14), September 2024

³⁷² UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 27), September 2024

³⁷³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 31, 32), September 2024

³⁷⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 33, 34), September 2024

brutality. In Sao Paulo this is not as prevalent as it is in other states.³⁷⁵

14.8.12 The CNMP explained to the UK HO FFM team with regard to the protection of members of prosecutor's offices that: 'There's also an institutional security policy to protect members of prosecutor's offices. Many have to be escorted everywhere and protected due to their actions in the field.'³⁷⁶

14.8.13 Members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and organised crime division told the UK HO FFM team that:

'People under federal protection get new identities, new address, new jobs, new lives. This is for witnesses, not victims. It is expensive. There are state witness protection programmes, and we don't have detailed knowledge of those. The federal witness protection programme is a lot smaller. There are very few people who are interested in it because they are afraid of being isolated and giving up family and friends, and they are scared about what they want to say.'³⁷⁷

14.8.14 Prosecutor Lincoln Gakiya told the UK HO FFM team that:

'It is really difficult to protect witnesses. People don't cooperate. I have had two witnesses who were killed – the witness and their family, because they snitched on a PCC operation. We have had cases here, defendants and witnesses protected by the programme and the programme is not efficient enough... We had a PCC leader who cooperated with us. He was protected and was moved out of Brazil forever because they made an assassination attempt.'³⁷⁸

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15. NGO response

15.1.1 The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 stated that:

'... Non-state institutions are also involved in implementing prevention strategies....

'... Civil-society organizations have proliferated in low-income urban areas, providing assistance to communities through legal advice and awareness campaigns, and education, health services and small business support. Nevertheless, the Brazilian state's capacity and willingness to protect non-governmental actors have continued to deteriorate.'³⁷⁹

15.1.2 Some NGOs working to combat violence/provide opportunities in favelas include:

- [The Brazilian Forum on Public Security](#) 'a non-governmental... organization... dedicated to building an environment of reference and technical cooperation in the area of Public Security'³⁸⁰
- [Catalytic Communities](#) 'Programs include strategic trainings for favela organizers; developing forums and networks to bring support and visibility

³⁷⁵ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 44), September 2024

³⁷⁶ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 13), September 2024

³⁷⁷ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 26), September 2024

³⁷⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 54), September 2024

³⁷⁹ Global Organized Crime Index, [Brazil Profile](#) (Civil society and social protection), 2023

³⁸⁰ FBSP, [About Us](#), no date

to community struggles, solutions and perspectives³⁸¹

- [Conectas](#) ‘Monitors and denounces violations committed by the State, especially regarding the prison system, police violence, impacts of the “war on drugs” and right to protest.’³⁸²
- [The Favela Foundation](#) ‘aims to support grassroots educational projects in Brazil’s favelas’³⁸³
- [Fogo Cruzado](#) aims to ‘make cities safer through the use of open and collaborative technologies to address gun violence, promote social transformation, and save lives.’³⁸⁴
- [Igarape Institute](#) ‘supports the implementation of evidence-based public policies to ensure that everyone has access to security’³⁸⁵
- [Instituto Sou da Paz](#) ‘is a non-governmental organization that has worked for over 15 years to reduce levels of violence in Brazil.’³⁸⁶
- [Minority Rights Group](#) works ‘with minority and indigenous communities in defence of their rights.’³⁸⁷

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16. Freedom of movement

- 16.1.1 For background geographical and demographical information on Brazil, as well as an assessment of freedom of movement in Brazil generally, see Country Policy and Information Note, [Brazil: Internal Relocation](#).
- 16.1.2 The USSD 2023 report noted that ‘The constitution provided for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.’³⁸⁸
- 16.1.3 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2022, G1 reported on a police operation in Vila Cruzeiro: ‘As a precaution, 17 schools in the municipal network have not opened and will have classes only online. The Felipe Cardoso, Aloísio Novis and Klebel de Oliveira Family Clinics suspended external activities.
- ‘On social networks, residents reported clashes and fear of leaving their homes. “No way to go out to work in this rain of bullets!”, said one.’³⁸⁹
- 16.1.4 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2022, R7 reported that:
- ‘In the periphery of Ceará, being free does not mean... being free. You can study, work, and have a well-established family. And even then, not being free enough to cross a street, attend a school or go to a health center. This happens if you live in a neighborhood dominated by one faction and need to go to a neighborhood dominated by another faction. This is the main criminal

³⁸¹ Catalytic Communities, [Mission](#), no date

³⁸² Conectas, [Fighting Institutional Violence](#), no date

³⁸³ The Favela Foundation, [What we do](#), no date

³⁸⁴ Fogo Cruzado, [About](#), no date

³⁸⁵ Igarape Institute, [Citizen Security](#), no date

³⁸⁶ Instituto Sou da Paz, [What we do](#), no date

³⁸⁷ Minority Rights Group, [Brazil](#), no date

³⁸⁸ USSD, [Human Rights Report Brazil 2023](#) (Section 2), 22 April 2024

³⁸⁹ G1, [Police operation in Vila Cruzeiro leaves 8 dead and closes schools...](#), 2 November 2022

phenomenon stipulated by the GDE... PCC and CV factions in the state...

'The control of territories does not occur only through neighborhoods. The division is even smaller: by blocks. The movement of the residents is observed by scouts from each of the groups. They question why a person is simply transiting through an area and may kill them if they are not satisfied with the person's response. These are the so-called "deaths for nothing."...

'Record TV went to the scene. In one favela... two people said that they were expelled from their homes by members of the CV, because the traffickers thought they had a connection with another faction... Cases like these are common in Ceará.'³⁹⁰

16.1.5 In 2023, The Guardian reported that 'The eruption of violence ['Criminals reportedly set fire to at least 36 buses, four lorries and a train'³⁹¹] – dramatic even for a state that has spent decades grappling with crime that claims thousands of lives each year – brought parts of Brazil's most famous city to a standstill and forced at least 45 schools to close, affecting thousands.'³⁹²

16.1.6 Originally published in Portuguese, in 2024, CNN Brasil reported: 'What are the main consequences, then, of the confrontations?... fear, closed schools and interrupted transport... said the director of data and transparency of the Crossfire Institute...'³⁹³

16.1.7 In 2024, Amnesty International reported that:

'Heavily armed police operations oriented towards the "war on drugs" in favelas and marginalized neighbourhoods resulted in... restrictions on freedom of movement... and the suspension of essential services such as schools and health clinics. In October, more than 120,000 residents of the favela Complexo da Maré in Rio de Janeiro city were impacted by six days of police operations. During this period, more than 17,000 students did not have access to school and more than 3,000 medical service appointments were suspended.'³⁹⁴

16.1.8 In 2024, Freedom House noted that:

'Gang violence, militias, and police violence in some parts of the country, especially favelas, have impeded free movement and access to education. According to a report by Fogo Cruzado... there were 673 shootings in the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area in the first five months of 2023; 460 occurred near schools, prompting lower attendance and school closures. Movement within the state of Bahia and especially in the state capital of Salvador was affected by organized criminal groups that engaged in violent clashes with each other and with police during the year.'³⁹⁵

16.1.9 Representatives of SENASP told the UK HO FFM team that:

'...one of the biggest impacts [of OCG activity] is on people's right to come and go, particularly for people who live and work in areas dominated by OCGs. There are barricades and prohibitions, for example you can't go to

³⁹⁰ R7 Estudio, [The 53 criminal factions in Brazil](#), 2 February 2022

³⁹¹ The Guardian, [Paramilitary gangs in Brazil torch more than 35 buses...](#), 24 October 2023

³⁹² The Guardian, [Paramilitary gangs in Brazil torch more than 35 buses...](#), 24 October 2023

³⁹³ CNN Brasil, [...group that has conquered the most territories in Rio de Janeiro...](#), 5 June 2024

³⁹⁴ Amnesty International, [The State of the World's Human Rights](#) (Brazil), 2024

³⁹⁵ Freedom House, [Brazil: Freedom in the World 2024](#) (G1), 2024

certain places if you're not sympathetic to one OCG or another...

'The freedom of movement of vulnerable communities is affected... Where this is organised crime, they often don't have the right to come and go. Transportation and services, for example utilities and internet, are often controlled by OCGs. Certain services like uber won't reach these communities.'³⁹⁶

16.1.10 Professor Carolina Grillo of the Universidade Federale Fluminense told the UK HO FFM team that:

'It's not safe to let kids play outside, not just due to OCGs but also to the police. They raid favelas and you don't know when it's going to happen. People, including children, are often caught in the crossfire and killed. When you live there, you're always concerned that your family members will be shot for no reason, for simply passing by existing. Even outside their homes they might be shot. Bullets from assault rifles can pierce the walls of their homes. It's unsafe to live in favelas controlled by these organisations.'³⁹⁷

16.1.11 Antonio Carlos Costa, founder of Rio de Paz, told the UK HO FFM team that 'Society doesn't enjoy the right to go back and forth.'³⁹⁸

16.1.12 Instituto Sou da Paz told the UK HO FFM team that:

'People have a curfew [This information was added after the meeting this is more frequent in conflagrated communities which have armed groups in conflict – for example Rio de Janeiro, Fortaleza and other cities at different periods], they can't walk around as they fear crime, physical aggression or have problems when withdrawing money from ATMs. People see armed people in their territory. People are afraid of riding public transport. So the fear of crime directly impacts how people live in the city, people are afraid of walking around, there is permanent fear. People constantly feel insecure and unsafe. People don't trust their neighbours, the community bond is lost.'³⁹⁹

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17. Tracking of persons by OCGs

17.1.1 When asked by the UK HO FFM team whether different factions of the same OCG communicate with each other, Sergio Fernando Senna Pires responded: 'Yes, as they are the same organisation. This is a way in which organised crime has evolved...

'Each faction across the country maintains its individuality, but they are connected as part of a whole.'⁴⁰⁰

17.1.2 Officers from the Criminal Investigation department of the Civil Police in Sao Paulo told the UK HO FFM team that: '[Relocating to another part of Brazil] is actually the most common thing to do [when someone fears the PCC]...

'...the PCC has a network of cells spread all over the country. For example, if someone fled the PCC in Sao Paulo and they knew the person came from Ceara, they would send Whatsapp messages to the other cell raising that

³⁹⁶ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 20), September 2024

³⁹⁷ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 35), September 2024

³⁹⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 41), September 2024

³⁹⁹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 45), September 2024

⁴⁰⁰ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (pages 31, 32), September 2024

this is a person of interest.⁴⁰¹

- 17.1.3 Researchers from the Center for the Study of Violence told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘If you fear for your life then yes, move to another part of Brazil, but they can hunt you down if they want to. The PCC has a footprint in every state. However, it doesn’t seem to be a common problem. If you can move to another state, you can escape your punishment, you can hide there, but I would never say to someone that they would definitely be safe or able to do this. If someone tells me they will be found in another state, I would not disbelieve them.

‘They would have to change names, change jobs. These people are already poor, already vulnerable, if they move to another state it will be hard for them. If you are being persecuted here, you could move to the Amazon, for example, but that is a punishment, having to leave your life and your family behind.’⁴⁰²

- 17.1.4 Prosecutor Lincoln Gakiya told the UK HO FFM team that ‘When we are speaking of people connected to the PCC and they are sworn to die, they will and can find them.’⁴⁰³

- 17.1.5 Members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and organised crime division told the UK HO FFM team that: ‘People trafficked inside the country usually end up working on farms and doing manual labour. More than 60% of these people will end up in slave conditions again after being rescued.

‘If they want to relocate it might not be enough for them. Anyone can go wherever they want – but they like to go back to where they’re from. In Rio [de Janeiro], many people want to leave but can’t.’⁴⁰⁴

- 17.1.6 When asked whether someone could relocate to another part of Brazil to escape an OCG, the same source stated that ‘If an individual is not working for a gang, they would be able to move. However, if an individual was outspoken against the gang, there may be a problem.’⁴⁰⁵

- 17.1.7 When asked whether someone could relocate to another part of Brazil to escape an OCG, Sergio Fernando Senna Pires stated that ‘If someone wanted to leave, they would have to disappear and become somebody else. Being a large country helps, as they would have to move somewhere where nobody knows them.’⁴⁰⁶

- 17.1.8 When asked by the UK HO FFM team what kind of infraction would make the PCC or CV want to track someone across the country, members of the Brazilian Federal Police working in the serious and organised crime division responded ‘Stealing their money, or stealing their drugs, it doesn’t matter what level you are if you do that. Could also be going after the wife of the head of the group. But it is especially money, there is a rule of trust within

⁴⁰¹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 58), September 2024

⁴⁰² UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 48), September 2024

⁴⁰³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 54), September 2024

⁴⁰⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 26), September 2024

⁴⁰⁵ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 26), September 2024

⁴⁰⁶ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 31), September 2024

the groups – they have written rules.

‘There would also be penalties for becoming an informant for another group or the police.’⁴⁰⁷

- 17.1.9 When asked by the UK HO FFM team whether someone who owed money would be a target that would be followed, the same source responded that ‘Yes they would - sometimes they are made to work to pay off the debt or they may get killed.’⁴⁰⁸

- 17.1.10 Sergio Fernando Senna Pires told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘...many people who are recruited and contribute informally to these groups come from poor, low socio-economic backgrounds. Moving and leaving your family, and beginning a new life, is very difficult. Even moving only small distances is difficult. Even within Rio [de Janeiro], moving small areas is difficult. Some areas are dominated by gangs and others by militias – there are agreements that certain areas belong to one group and vice versa. It’s difficult for people moving between these areas, it can cause conflict between the two groups.’⁴⁰⁹

- 17.1.11 Professor Carolina Grillo of the Universidade Federale Fluminense told the UK HO FFM team that:

‘In places controlled by CV or Third Command, people are subject to a lot of violence and are sometimes expelled from their homes. They will lose their homes because they’ve violated some rules or are suspected of treason, or have disrespected the wife of a dealer. People are often killed, beaten or expelled. These people can live elsewhere in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro. Depending on what happened, however, they might not be safe in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro – but they might be safe elsewhere in Brazil.’⁴¹⁰

- 17.1.12 When asked whether the PCC would have the means or desire to track someone who owed them a debt, Carolina Grillo told the UK HO FFM team that: ‘It depends on the debt. If it’s large then yes, they have the means. If you owe 3,000 BRL [approximately £386⁴¹¹] then no, no-one’s going to try to track you for that, it won’t happen. These are national organisations and they have connections in all the states. Groups are local, conflicts are local, but if they wanted to track someone they could.’⁴¹²

- 17.1.13 When asked by the UK HO FFM team what sort of figure would constitute a large debt, Carolina Grillo responded ‘I don’t know, it depends to whom you are indebted. Their sense of what is small and large will change.’⁴¹³ However, she confirmed that, generally, people would be less likely to be pursued for smaller debts⁴¹⁴.

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⁴⁰⁷ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 27), September 2024

⁴⁰⁸ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 27), September 2024

⁴⁰⁹ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 31), September 2024

⁴¹⁰ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 34), September 2024

⁴¹¹ Xe.com, [3,000 BRL to GBP](#), 23 December 2024

⁴¹² UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 36), September 2024

⁴¹³ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 36), September 2024

⁴¹⁴ UK Home Office, [Report of a FFM: OCGs](#) (page 36), September 2024

Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Prevalence of organised crime
- Organised criminal groups
 - Number of gangs/militias
 - Profiles of distinct groups
 - Leadership, structure, hierarchy, size of group
 - Recruitment methods: voluntary/forced, who is typically recruited
 - Repercussions if refusing to join, (perceived) disobedience, if there is an attempt to leave the group
 - Reach/areas of influence
 - Capability, any specific criminal activities
 - Inter-gang rivalry
 - Gangs in prison
- Nature of organised crime
 - Drug-related crime
 - Other criminal activity (firearms, links to land violence/murders of journalists, extortion/money lending)
 - Targets/typical victim profile (if there is one)
- Government response (state and federal levels)
 - Acts/laws
 - Policies/initiatives
- State protection
 - Willingness and ability to tackle organised crime
 - Law enforcement
 - independence and effectiveness
 - statistics on arrests and detention
 - examples of major incidents
 - Judiciary
 - independence and effectiveness
 - statistics on prosecutions and convictions
 - examples of major cases
 - Victims

- Access to protection/justice
 - Statistics on reporting of crimes. If there is thought to be under-reporting, reasons behind this
 - Treatment of victims by law enforcement when they report a crime
 - Witness Protection Programmes
- NGOs
 - Examples of civil society organisations working to tackle gang violence/organised crime at societal level
 - What work they are doing
 - What support they provide to victims/residents of gang-occupied areas
- Freedom of movement
 - Extent to which a victim of gang violence could relocate in Brazil without consequence from the criminal group

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Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **28 March 2025**

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – Start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: Not for disclosure – End of section

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