Typologies of Transnational Organized Crime Groups

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RESULTS OF A PILOT SURVEY OF 40 SELECTED ORGANIZED CRIMINAL GROUPS IN 16 COUNTRIES

Objectives

1. The building of a substantial data-base

2. Comparative study of the phenomena

3. The creation of an organized crime typology

4. "In the Future", monitor Global Organized Crime Trends

In the long term a standardized system for examining trends in transnational organized crime should consist of three components:

1. *Groups*: At the lowest level the collection of data on individual criminal organizations.

2. *Clusters*: The collection of information around the various clusters of criminal groups, often originating from specific geographic localities.

3. *Markets*: Information on regional criminal markets.

Which information is it important to obtain?

The questionnaire itself consisted of approximately 50 variables, under the general themes:

1. **Structure.** Key to the system of rating is the degree of hierarchy present in each group.

2. **Size.** An assessment of the actual number of individuals involved in the various groups.

3. **Activities.** Respondents were asked to provide as comprehensive a list of the criminal activities of the group under examination as possible.

4. **Transborder Operations.** Number of countries in which the group in question was estimated to be active.

5. **Identity.** Etnical and social origin.

6. **Violence.** Level of violence used by the criminal groups.

7. **Corruption.** Whether little or no corruption is used by the group.
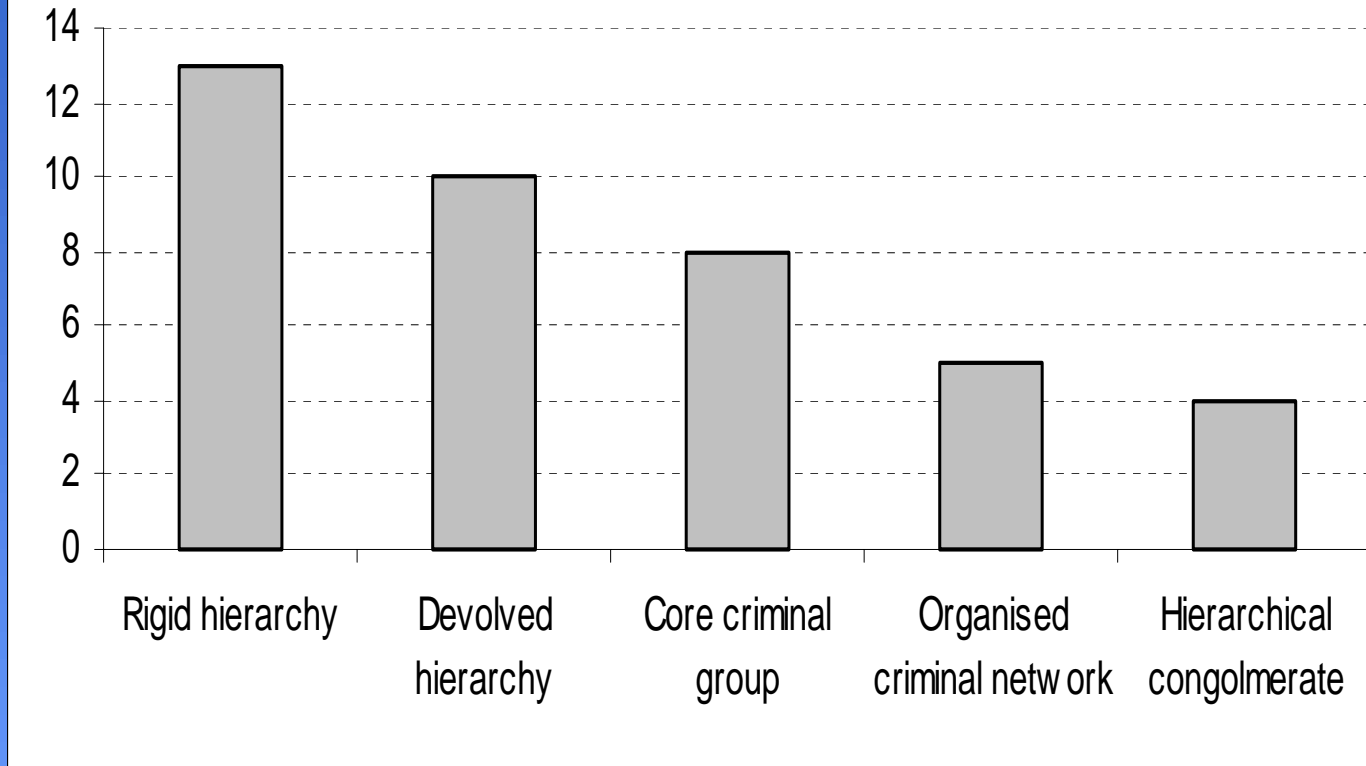
8. **Political influence.** Local or regional/state/provincial level within the country.

9. **Penetration into the legitimate economy.**

10. **Co-operation with other organized crime groups.**

PROFILE OF THE ORGANIZED CRIME GROUPS SURVEYED

Structure

About a third of the groups are loosely organized; either consisting of a core criminal group of individuals or a criminal network. Thus, the overall majority of groups (two thirds) have some form of hierarchy to their structure.

Size -- includes core membership, plus associated members
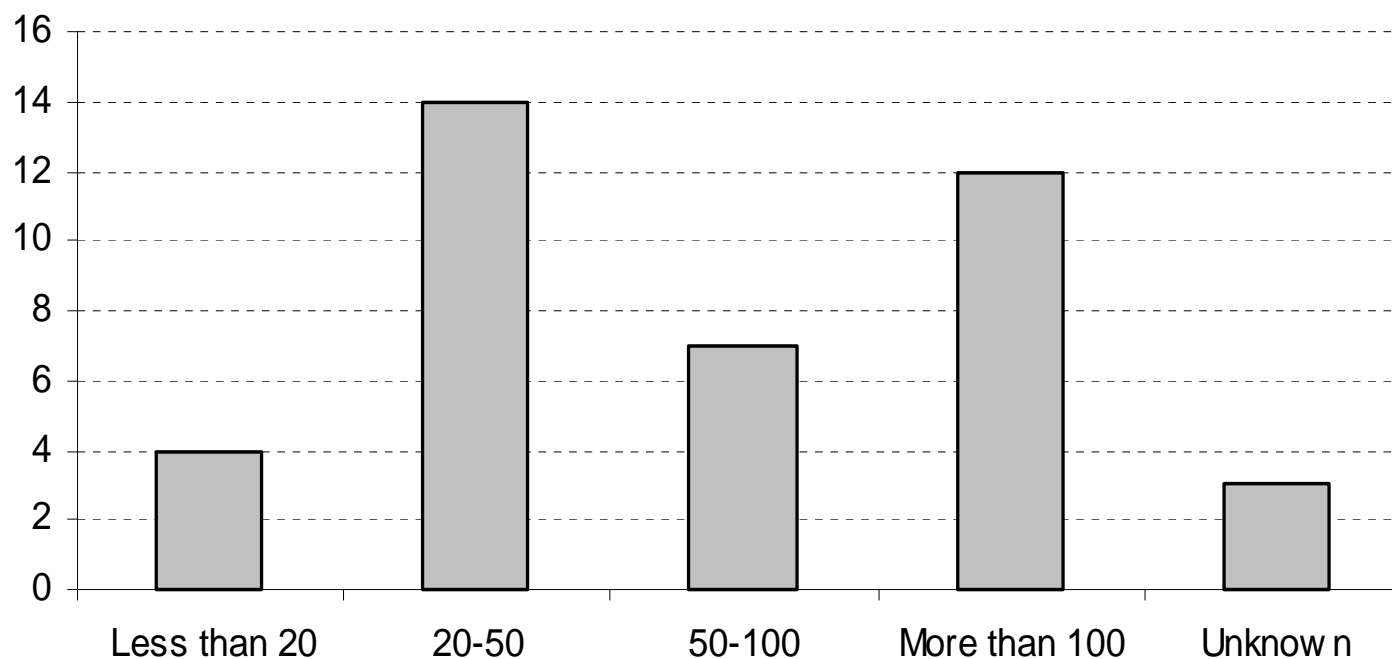
In the largest number of cases (14), the numbers of active individuals in each of the groups concerned was estimated at between 20 and 50. Just fewer than half the groups had more than fifty individuals.
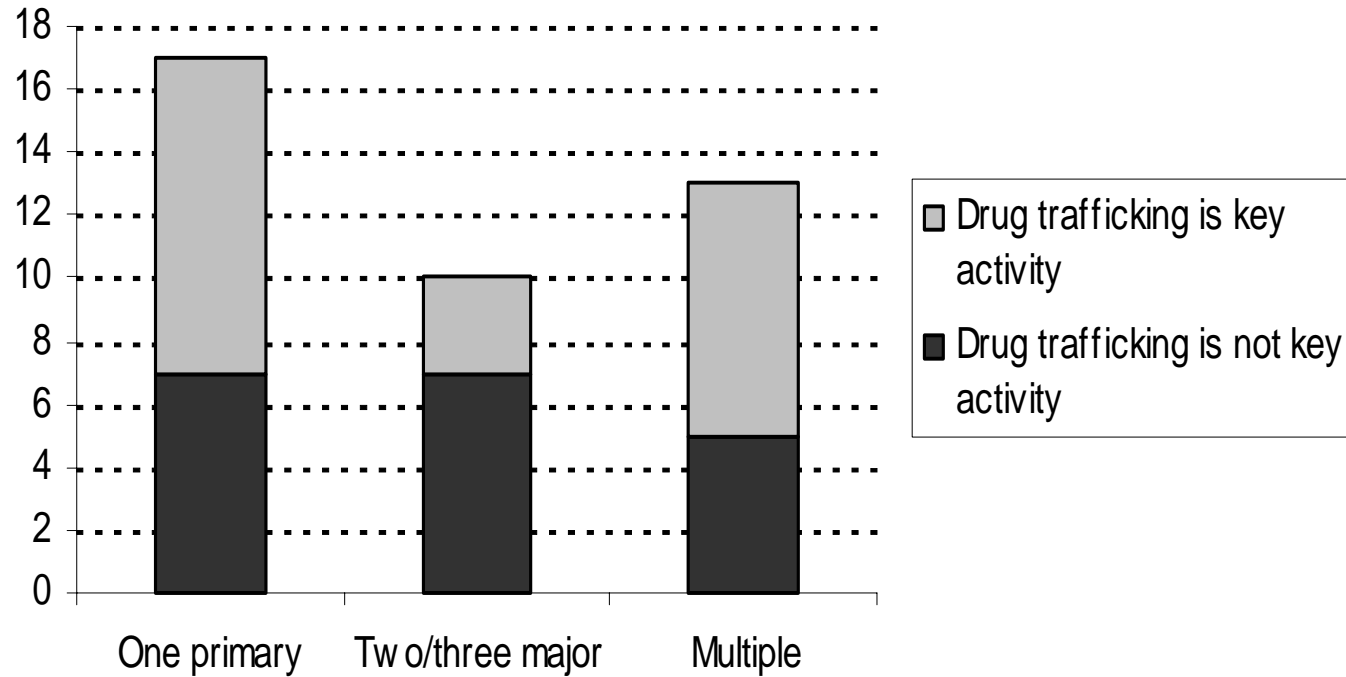
Use of violence
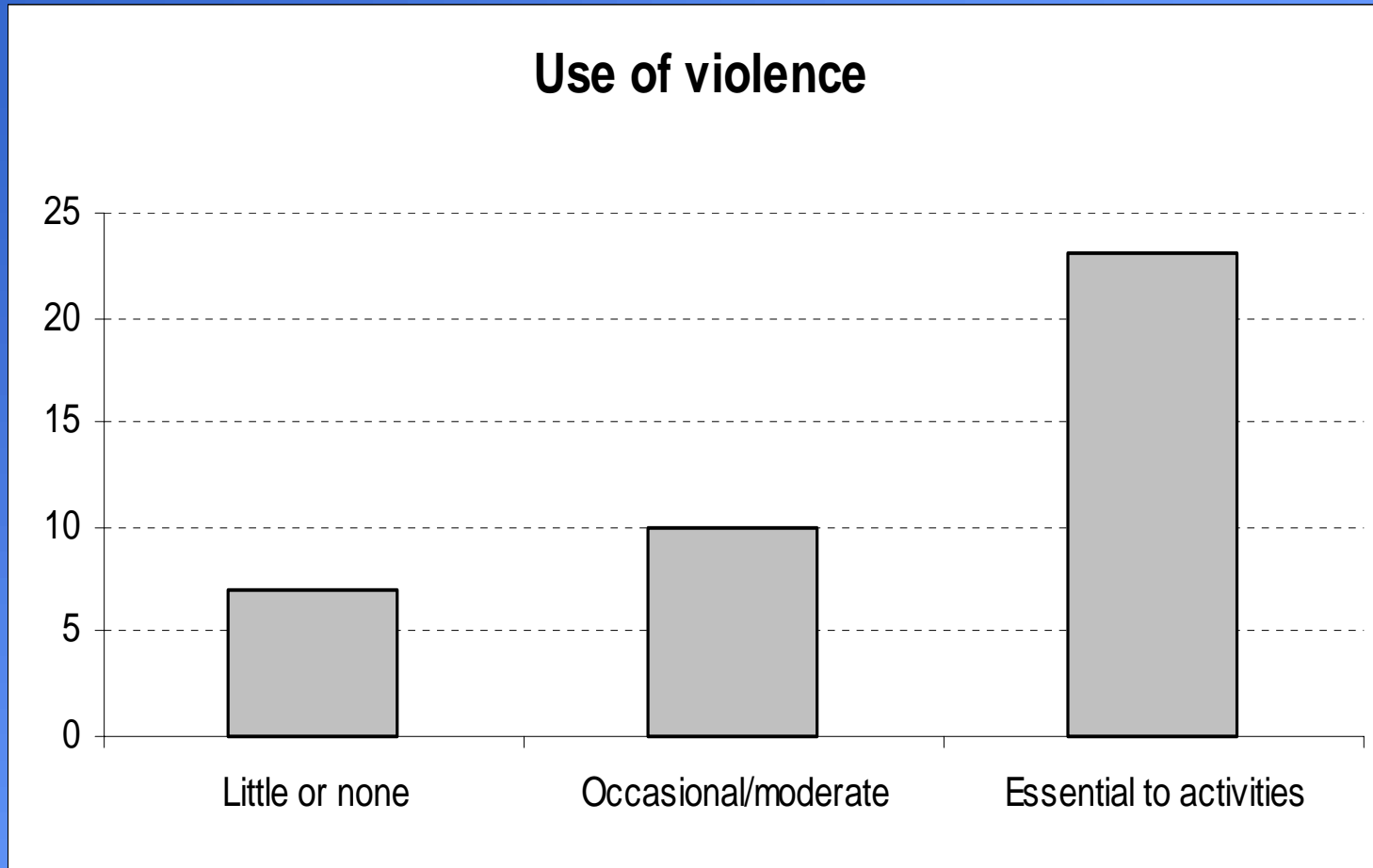
In the largest number of cases (23) violence was classified as being essential to the criminal groups' activities. In an additional 10 cases violence was reflected by the respondents as being used only occasionally or moderately.
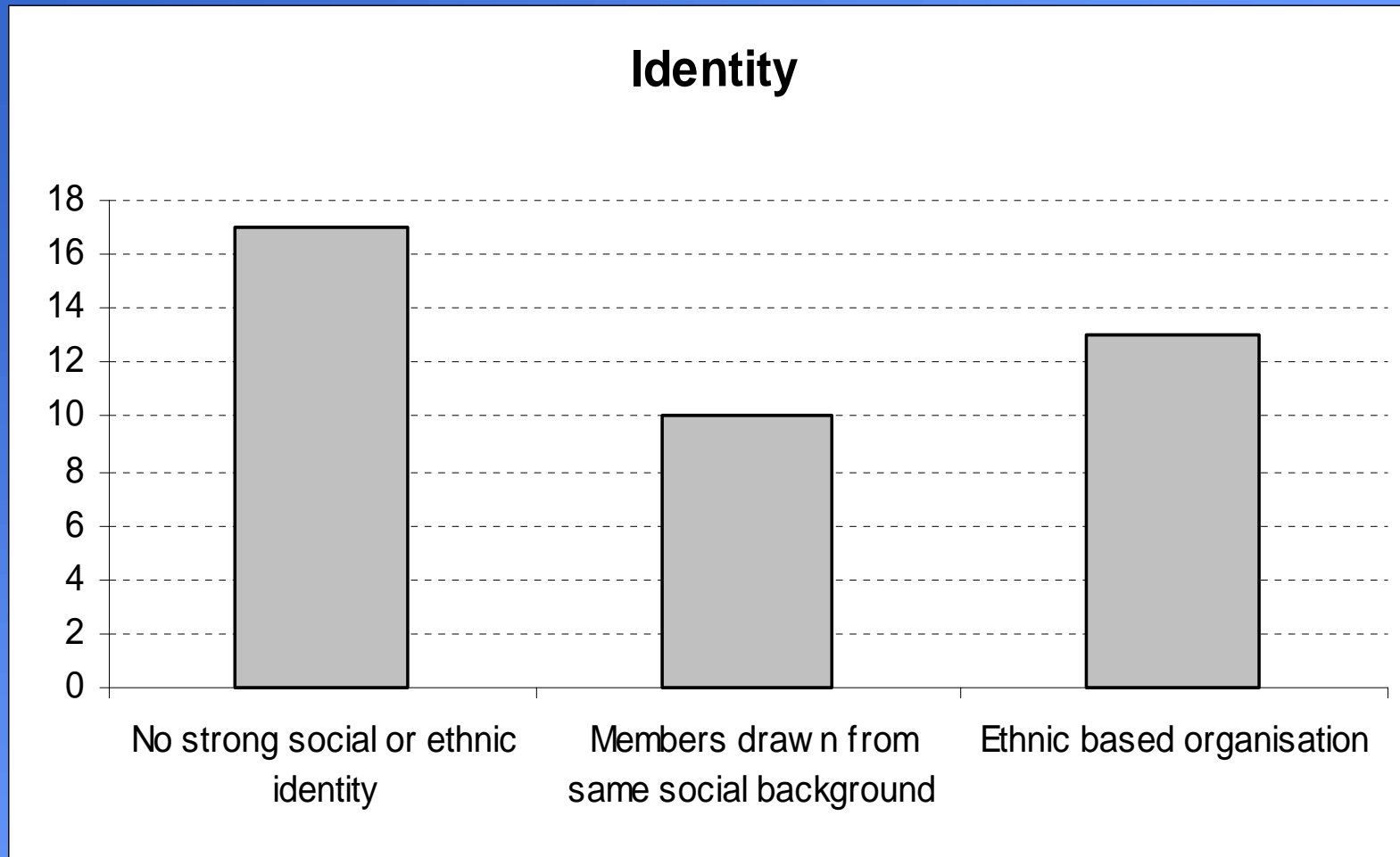
Identity

In less than half of all the groups examined the organized crime groups have no strong social or ethnic identity. In the remainder of cases, members are drawn from either the same ethnic group (13 cases) or from the same social background (10 cases).

Activities

Legend:
- Drug trafficking is key activity
- Drug trafficking is not key activity

Categories: One primary, Two/three major, Multiple

The largest number of groups engaged in only *one* primary criminal activity (such as the smuggling of people or illegal narcotics) and although there may be some sub-activities (for example, forgery) essential to the overall goal.

Level of transborder activities

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1 to 2 countries	3 to 4 countries	Extensive (5 or more)
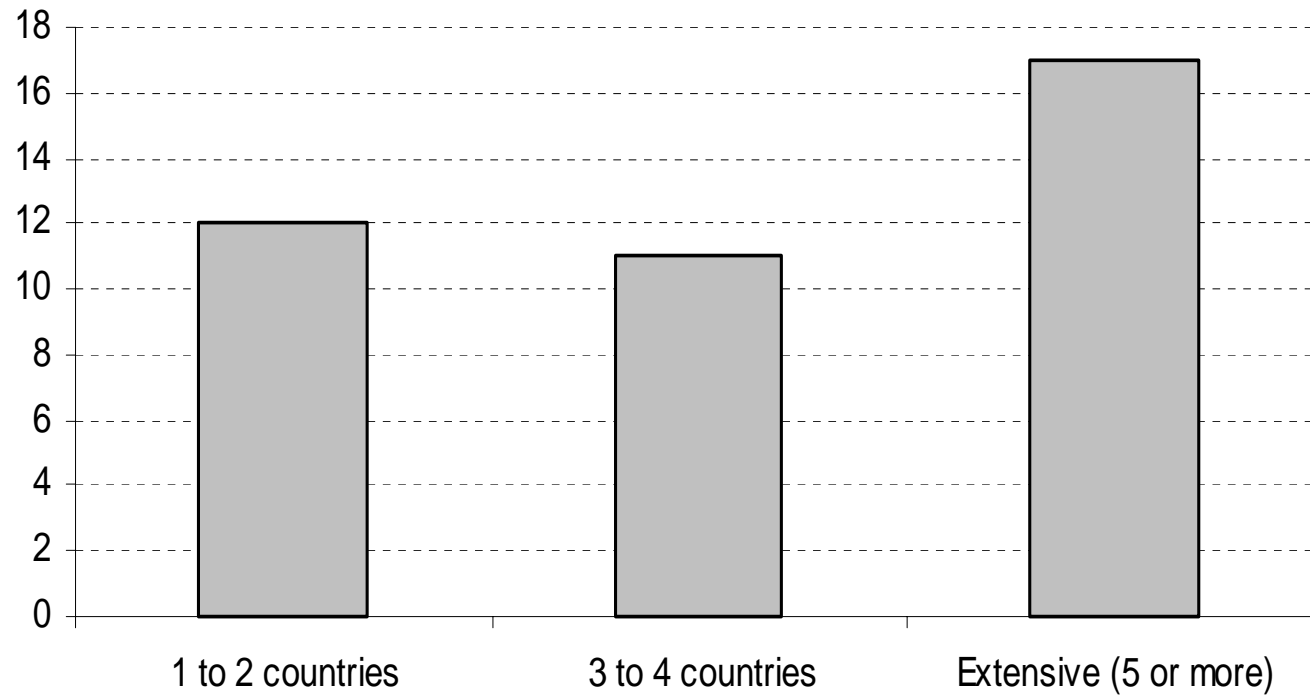
In the largest number of cases (just under half of the total number), the criminal groups in question spread their activities across five or more states.

Use of corruption
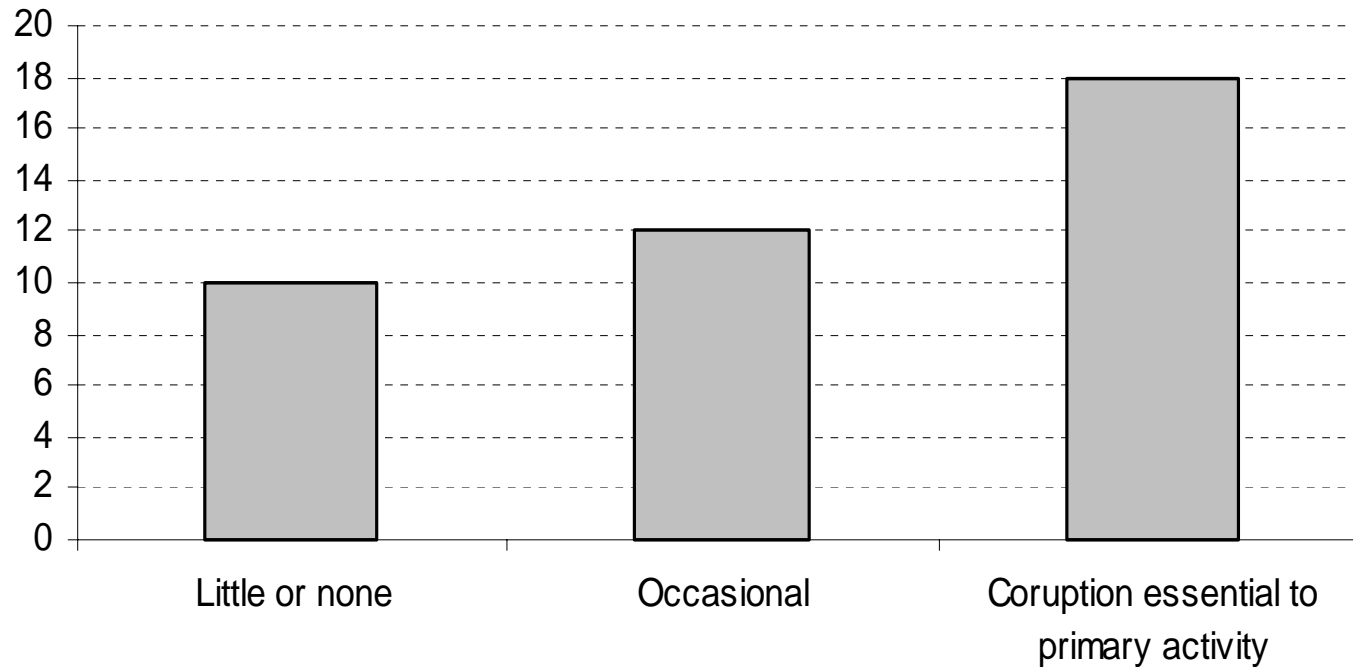
In just under half of the groups (18 cases), corruption was essential to the primary activity of the criminal group. In just under one third of the groups (12 cases), the groups made use of corruption occasionally. In the remaining instances (10 cases), there was evidence of little or no corruption.

Political influence
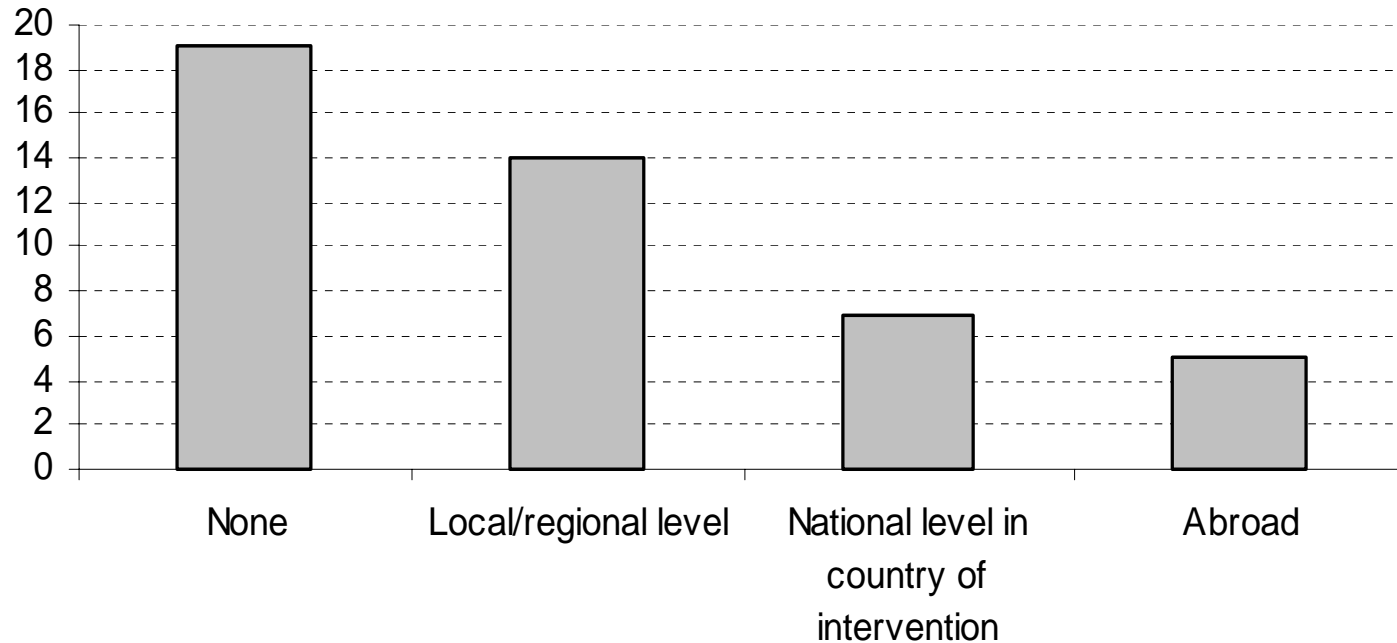
In just under half of the surveyed groups, respondents regarded there to be no evidence of any political influence. However one third of the groups were said to have political influence at the local or regional level (14 cases).

Penetration into the legitimate economy
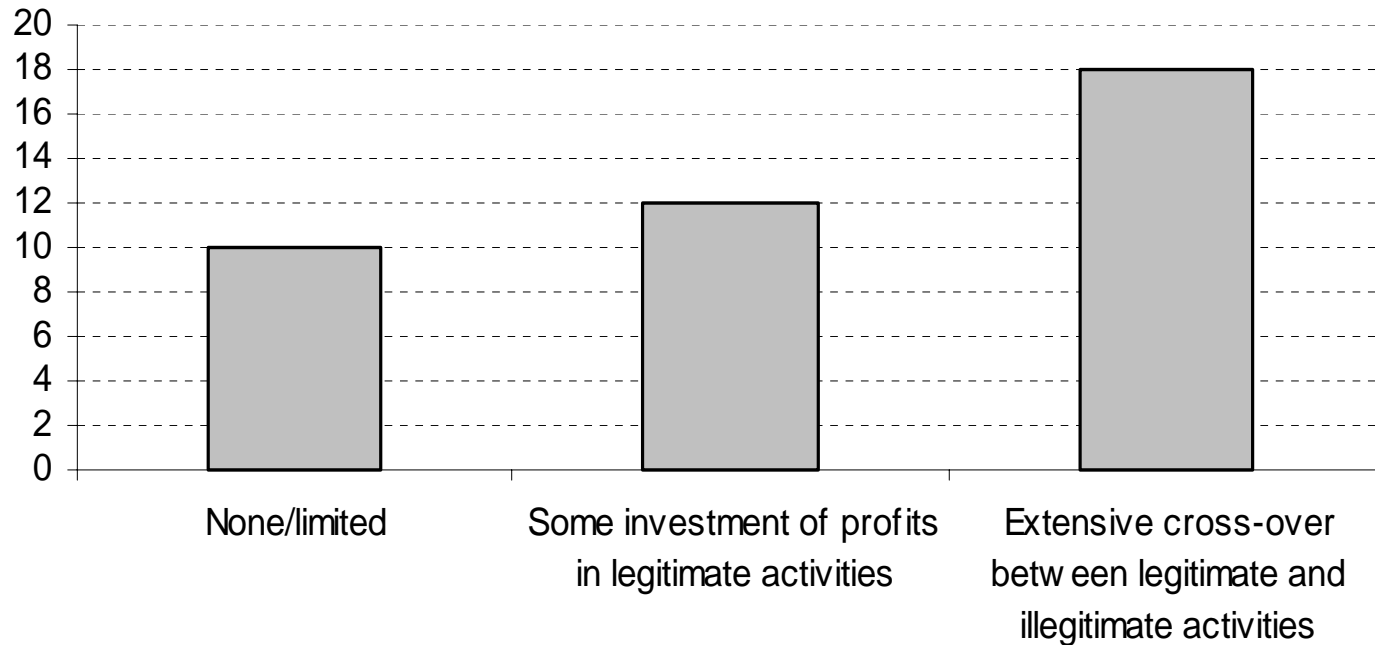
In the largest number of cases (18) it was recorded that there was extensive cross-over between legitimate and illegitimate activities. In an additional 12 countries there was evidence of the investment of profits from illegitimate activities into some form of legitimate business activity.
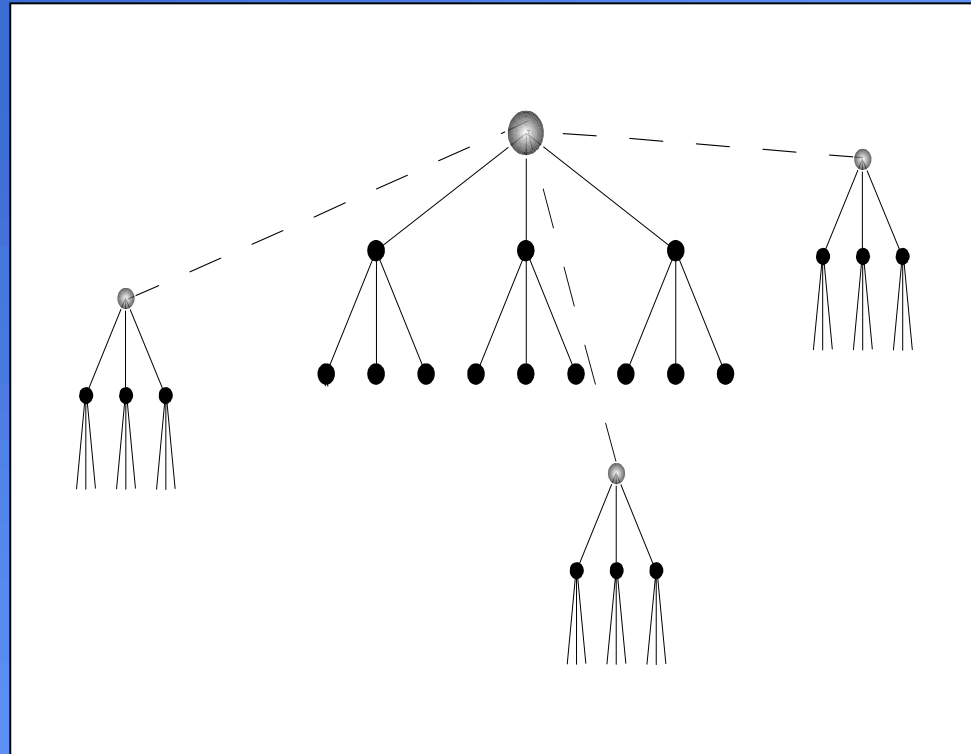
TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF ORGANIZED CRIME GROUPS
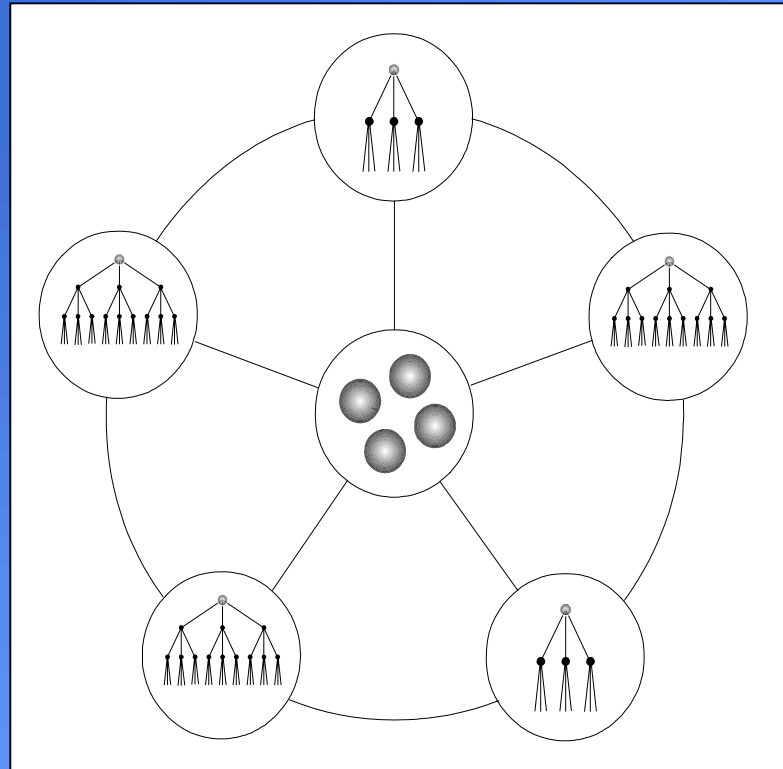
1. Standard Hierarchy
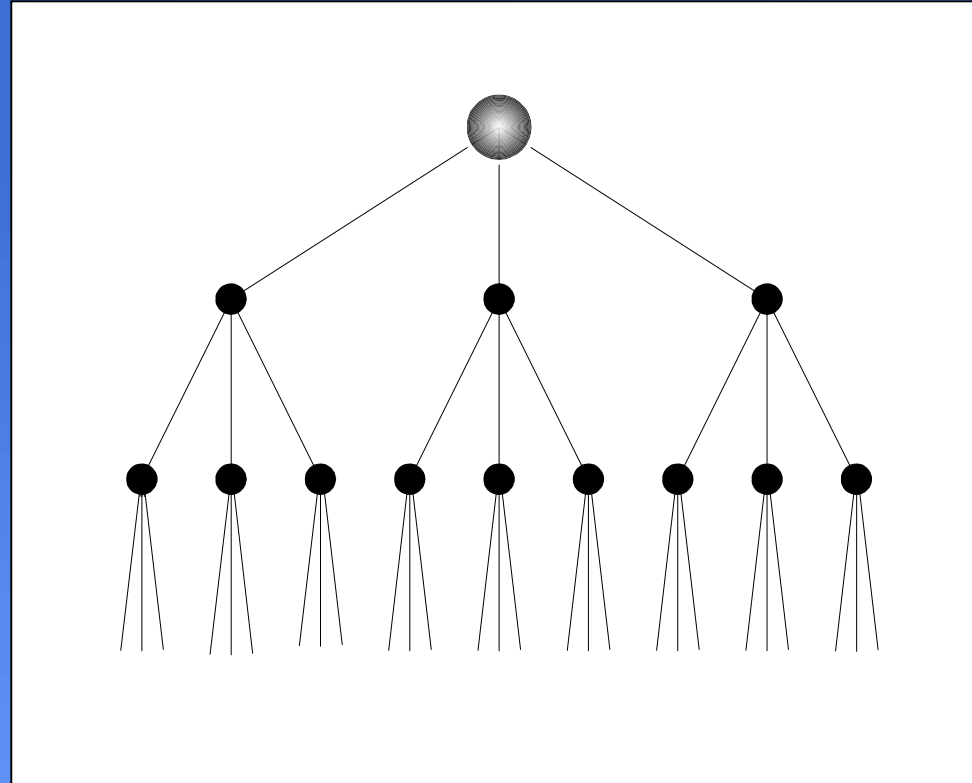
*It is the most common form of organized criminal group, it is characterized by a single leader and a relatively clearly defined hierarchy. Systems of internal discipline are strict. Strong social or ethnic identities can be present.

2. Regional Hierarchy

*Although a hierarchical criminal group, with relatively strict lines of command from the centre, there is a degree of autonomy present in regional organizations under the control of the group.

3. Clustered Hierarchy

*A clustered hierarchy is an association of organized crime groups with a governing or oversight body. The groups in question may themselves have a diversity of structures, but generally they are of the 'standard hierarchy' type outlined above.

4. Core Group
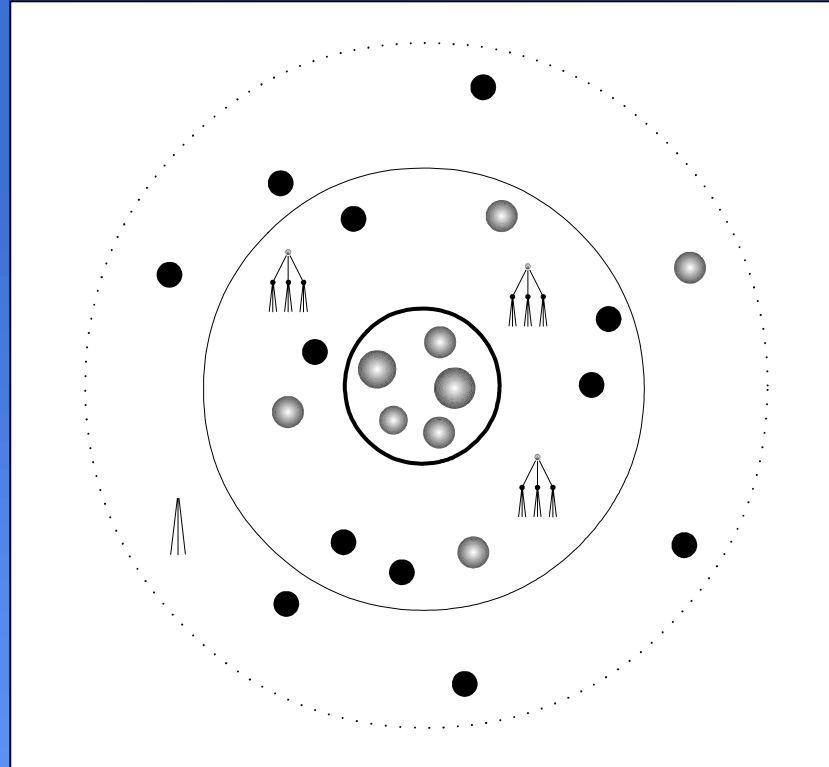
* Generally consists of a limited number of individuals who form a relatively tight and structured group to conduct criminal business. Around this 'core group' there may be a large number of associate members or a network which are used from time to time and depending on the criminal activity in question.

5. Criminal Network
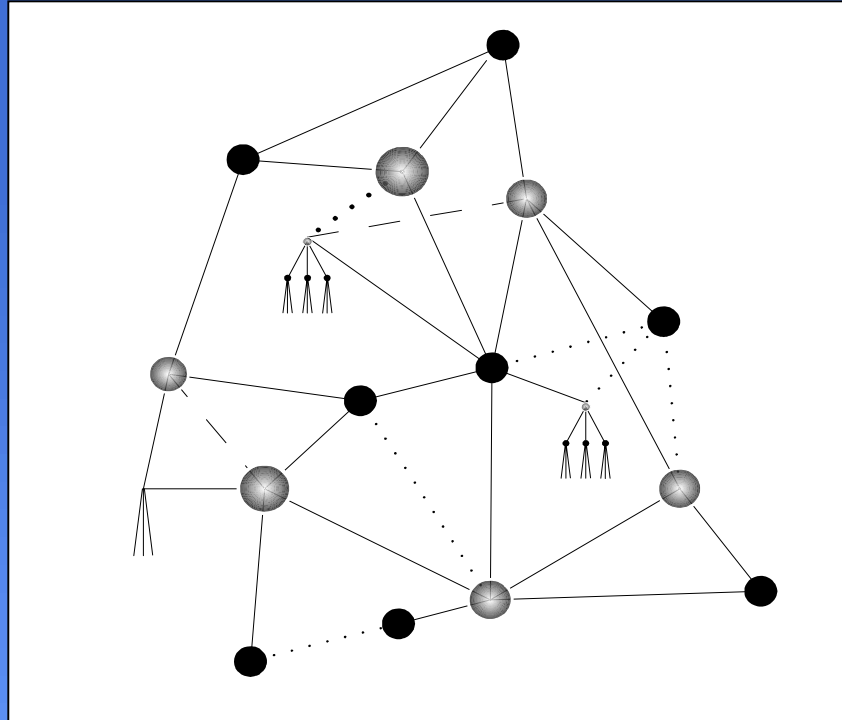
* Are defined by the activities of key individuals who engage in illicit activity in often shifting alliances. Such individuals may not regard themselves as being members of a criminal group, and may not be regarded as being a criminal group by outsiders. Nevertheless they coalesce around a series of criminal projects.