

Justice in Scotland

Serious Organised Crime: Collation of 2017-18 Research Outputs



Introduction

The purpose of this report is to collate the findings from the Scottish Government's multi-project phased research programme on Serious Organised Crime (SOC) in Scotland, which was delivered during 2017-18. This section will introduce the report by defining SOC, outlining the policy context and providing an overview of the SOC research programme.

WHAT IS SERIOUS ORGANISED CRIME?

Definition of the term 'organised crime' is subject to wide-ranging debate (Maltz 1976; Hagan 2006). Von Lampe (2015) has identified more than a hundred definitions, with variations between academic, policy and law-enforcement approaches. The Scottish Government (2015) defines SOC as crime which:

- involves more than one person;
- is organised, involving a level of control, planning and use of specialist resources;
- causes, or has the potential to cause, significant harm; and
- involves benefit to the individuals concerned, particularly financial gain.

For the purpose of this report, which aims to collate the findings from the Scottish Government's research programme on SOC, the Scottish Government's term SOC and the definition it encompasses will be used.

POLICY CONTEXT

The Scottish Government published *Scotland's Serious Organised Crime Strategy* in 2015. This strategy built on the original Serious Organised Crime strategy for Scotland, *Letting Our Communities Flourish*, published in 2009. The focus of the strategy is on reducing the prevalence and harm of SOC through the pursuit of four core objectives:

	<p>1. DIVERT: To divert people from becoming involved in SOC and using its products</p>		<p>2. DETER: To deter SOC groups by supporting private, public and third sector organisations to protect themselves and each other</p>
	<p>3. DETECT: To identify, detect and prosecute those involved in SOC</p>		<p>4. DISRUPT: To disrupt SOC groups</p>

The strategy notes the need for a detailed, evidence-based understanding of SOC in Scotland, in order to inform approaches aimed at reducing the prevalence of SOC and the extent and severity of its impacts.

As such, in *Scotland's Serious Organised Crime Strategy* the Scottish Government committed to conducting research on the prevalence of SOC in Scotland and its impact on communities, filling gaps in the current evidence base. This commitment was made to ensure an evidence-based understanding of the issue and to help develop an effective programme to counter it, in order to achieve the Scottish Government's strategic vision of a 'safer, fairer and more prosperous country free from the harm caused by serious organised crime'.

RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Given the commitment to conducting research on the extent and nature of SOC in Scotland, during 2017-18 the Scottish Government delivered a multi-project phased research programme on SOC.

Four key research projects were delivered:



- [Community Experiences of Serious Organised Crime in Scotland](#)
- [Public Perceptions of Organised Crime in Scotland](#)
- [Serious Organised Crime in Scotland: A Summary of the Evidence](#)
- [Offending Patterns of Those Involved in Serious Organised Crime](#)

These studies have complemented each other by giving a national picture of the extent, prevalence and nature of SOC. They provide an important contribution to the evidence base in this area and address a number of research gaps.

This report will collate the findings from these studies, including discussion of emerging priorities for further research, exploration and action. It will begin by summarising each of the research outputs, before discussing some of the key findings that emerged as pertinent across the studies.

Specifically, this report will collate findings on:



- The extent and prevalence of SOC
- SOC offenders
- Public perceptions of SOC
- The impacts and harms of SOC

The report will conclude by discussing the subsequent steps for tackling SOC in Scotland.

The Research Outputs



Community Experiences of Serious Organised Crime in Scotland

In 2017 the Scottish Government commissioned a study to explore community experiences of SOC in Scotland. The study sought to provide qualitative research on the lived experiences of people who have an awareness of SOC in their communities and may have been affected by it. The research was led by the University of Glasgow and the University of Stirling, with further input from the University of Abertay and the University of the West of Scotland. The Scottish Community Development Centre was also an active partner in the research.

The study sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the relationships that exist between SOC and communities in Scotland?
- What are the experiences and perceptions of residents, stakeholders and organisations of the scope and nature of SOC within their local area?
- How does SOC impact on community wellbeing, and to what extent can the harms associated with SOC be mitigated?

The research involved in-depth qualitative research, to understand both direct and indirect forms of harm. Three case study areas were selected, within which interviews, focus groups and observations were undertaken with residents, schools, local businesses, community organisations, and third sector and statutory organisations providing local services. Focus groups were also conducted in the Scottish prison estate and interviews were conducted with national stakeholders.



Public Perceptions of Organised Crime in Scotland

This study involved a module of questions on the Ipsos MORI Scotland Public Opinion Monitor; a quarterly survey carried out among a representative sample of around 1,000 adults (aged 16+) in Scotland. A total of 1,088 respondents were interviewed between 27 November and 5 December 2017. Respondents were asked about both their awareness of organised crime and their experience of organised crime.

Specifically, respondents were asked about their perceptions of:

- The illegal activities associated with organised crime
- The perceived seriousness and impact of organised crime
- Who has responsibility for tackling organised crime
- The effectiveness of the police in tackling organised crime

Respondents were also asked about their experiences of:

- Organised crime in the last 3 years, including as a victim and witness
- Reporting organised crime

This survey repeated questions which were included on the Ipsos MORI Scotland Public Opinion Monitor in 2013, allowing comparisons to be made between years. As well as highlighting findings that were consistent from 2013 to 2017, the 2017 results provided new insights into the ways that people had been affected by SOC, and the relative proportions of those affected.



Serious Organised Crime in Scotland: A Summary of the Evidence

Published in 2017, this report reviewed the existing evidence base on SOC. The review was based on academic articles, government reports and surveys, primarily from Scotland, England and Wales but also a number of European Union (EU) countries. In addition, the report drew on the 2016 edition of the Scottish Multi-Agency Strategic Threat Assessment, an annually published resource which brings together Scottish specific data on SOC from a wide range of agencies, including Police Scotland.

From the outset, the review emphasised that at the time of writing, there is a lack of evidence on SOC in Scotland, not least because of the inherent difficulties in detecting and measuring this type of crime. Nonetheless, in drawing from a wide range of sources, the review is able to provide an overview of available evidence on SOC, and contribute to developing understanding of the phenomenon in the Scottish context.

In particular, findings were presented on:

- The extent of SOC in Scotland
- An overview of SOC groups
- The prevalence and impacts of SOC in Scotland
- Public perceptions of SOC

The review also highlighted some key gaps in knowledge, with suggestions for developing the evidence base on SOC in Scotland. In particular, the review suggested that further research should seek to explore the reasons why people become involved in SOC; the working of SOC groups (e.g. how SOC groups operate in Scotland and how they are structured); the impacts and harms of particular criminal activities associated with SOC (e.g. cybercrime and fraud); and public perceptions and experiences of SOC (using qualitative methods).

x x x

x x x Offending Patterns of those involved in Serious Organised Crime

x x x

In 2017, a further study was undertaken to enhance understanding of SOC in Scotland. This research was carried out to provide a greater understanding of the offending behaviour of people who are classified as organised criminals (known as 'nominals') by law enforcement agencies.

The project used information about nominals from the Serious Organised Crime Group Mapping Project (SOCGM) – an intelligence database used by law enforcement partners in Scotland, and data on offending from the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS).

The method of analysis involved looking at all of the crimes that were reported for a 10% sample of people who were classified as nominals in a single financial year (2013-2014). Data were examined to enhance understanding of SOC in terms of those involved and the nature of their offending.

Specific research questions included:

- What are the demographics of SOC nominals (age, gender, employment status, location)?
- How much offending is committed by SOC nominals and what types of crimes are they responsible for?
- Do organised criminals undertake only SOC crimes or are there other forms of offending that occur?
- Are there connections between specifically SOC-offending and other types of criminal offending such as anti-social behaviour, violence, property crime?
- What do findings about offending profiles tell us about the nature of SOC offenders?

This study suffered from limitations, mainly as a result of the nature of law enforcement intelligence about organised crime, but still provides an important insight into the characteristics and offending behaviour of those involved in SOC in Scotland.

Further research to build on the exploratory analysis presented is suggested. In particular, it is noted that future research would benefit from the incorporation of appropriately anonymised qualitative indicators drawn from police intelligence (such as an offender's role in SOC and their level of seniority within the group, areas of core criminality etc.).

Additionally, the study suggests that longitudinal analysis of an offender's data and stratification of the sample would allow greater understanding of an offenders' criminal career trajectories over time, and those involved in more prolific and serious offending. Finally, it is noted that it may be beneficial to explore the records of those not reported for any offences to determine possible differences between the groups.

What do we know about Serious Organised Crime in Scotland?



The extent and prevalence of Serious Organised Crime in Scotland

As noted in the 2017 evidence review on SOC, there are inherent challenges in assessing the scale and nature of SOC, which relate to the rapidly evolving organisation and activity of SOC groups, and the difficulty in detecting some forms of SOC (Scottish Government, 2017a).

However, the research outputs provide some indication of the current extent and prevalence of SOC in Scotland. In 2016, there were 213 SOC groups being investigated in Scotland, comprising 4,033 ‘nominals’ (individuals involved in SOC). 65% of these were located in the West of Scotland, 21% in the East and 14% in the North (Scottish Government, 2017a). SOC is therefore found in all areas of Scotland, with SOC groups located throughout the country. However, there is a concentration of SOC groups in the west of Scotland.

SOC groups are involved in a wide range of diverse criminal activities, which are underpinned by the common goal of the generation of profit (Scottish Government, 2017a). These activities involve both primary and secondary activities. Primary activities are those that generate profit directly.

PRIMARY ACTIVITIES

Drug supply and distribution		Human trafficking	
Fraud		Acquisitive crime	
Counterfeiting		Child sexual exploitation	
Cybercrime		Extortion	
Environmental crime		Immigration crime	

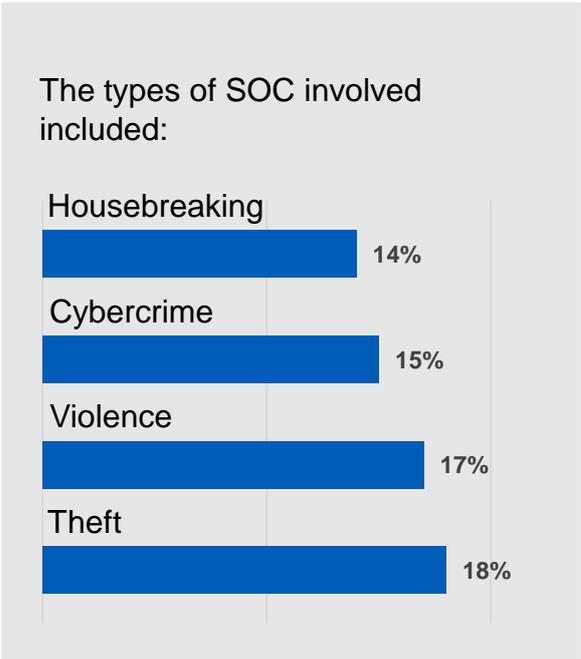
In contrast, secondary activities are not directly profitable in themselves, but are carried out to support SOC groups' work to generate profits and need to maintain influence and profile.

SECONDARY ACTIVITIES

Money laundering 	Violence 
Corruption 	Firearms 
Motor vehicle crime 	Vandalism 

SOC groups are often involved in perpetrating more than one of these at any given time.

The survey on public perceptions of SOC in Scotland also provides some indication of how many people are affected by SOC (Scottish Government, 2018b). In 2017, one in ten people said they had been personally affected by SOC in the last three years. Of this group, around three-quarters reported having been a victim, while 17% said they had been a witness and 12% said they had been affected in some other way. Asked what specific type of organised crime was involved, a wide range of answers were given, though the most common of these were theft (18%), violence (17%), cybercrime (15%) and housebreaking (14%) (Scottish Government, 2018b).



Who are the perpetrators of Serious Organised Crime?

The research outputs also provided important evidence on SOC offenders, including who they are, how SOC groups are structured, and the reasons people come to be involved in SOC.

Demographic Characteristics

The 2017 study on the offending patterns of those involved in SOC provided some insight into the demographic characteristics of SOC offenders in Scotland. This study set out the key demographic characteristics of those who had committed at least one SOC offence in 2013-14 (Scottish Government, 2017b).

It showed that the highest proportion of SOC offenders were aged 21-30 (40%), followed by age 31-40 (33%). 16% were aged 41-50 and 6% were aged 51-60. A small minority were under 20 or over 61. This provided support to the finding that it may take longer for individuals to become involved in SOC, or for their involvement to be identified as SOC-related, by police or other agencies, compared with other serious offences (Kleemans and de Poot, 2008).

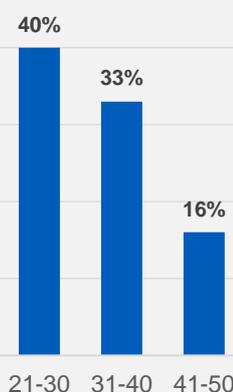
The study also showed that more men were SOC offenders than women. This reflects patterns of crime more generally, with men much more likely to be recorded as perpetrators than women (Scottish Government, 2019).

In addition, most SOC offenders were unemployed. Those who were in work were employed in a broad range of occupations, such as sales and customer service and skilled trade occupations.

Finally, in terms of the spread of SOC offenders across Scotland, the majority resided in Glasgow, followed by Edinburgh and Fife. A correlation between SOC and inequality was observed, with a high proportion of those accused of criminal offending residing in areas characterised by multiple deprivation.

It is important to bear in mind that this study refers to SOC solely in terms of how it was documented within the intelligence base at the time of the research (2013-14). However, it is the most robust data available for assessing the characteristics of those identified as being involved in SOC.

- ▶ The most common age groups involved in SOC:



- ▶ More SOC offenders are men than women



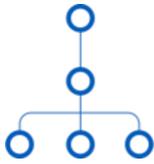
- ▶ The majority of SOC offenders reside in:

- Glasgow
- Edinburgh
- Fife

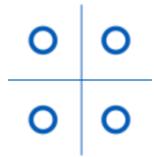


How are SOC groups structured?

The research outputs also provide some insight into how SOC groups are structured. In particular, the 2017 evidence review on SOC described a typology of five categories of SOC groups (Scottish Government, 2017a):



- **Standard hierarchy:** characterised by a formal hierarchy with clear positions of command and defined roles. The group's hierarchy is maintained through violence and the group tends to be comprised of members of the same ethnicity/background.



- **Regional hierarchy:** while the regional hierarchy structure also has a clear chain of command and members with shared common or social identities, it is differentiated by the decentralisation of power, as limited autonomy is given to local leaders.



- **Clustered hierarchy:** comprises groupings of small SOC groups acting under a central body. The groupings or 'clusters' are coordinated in terms of their criminal enterprise by a central coordination body, but retain independence in terms of their activities and identity.



- **Core group:** unstructured groups of criminals who are surrounded by a larger network of associate members. The 'core' itself is small, which makes it easier to maintain internal discipline. These groups may also operate behind the façade of legitimate businesses.



- **Criminal network structure:** highly fluid and adaptable networks, in which individuals have various skills and characteristics and are recruited to undertake particular jobs on the basis of these.

SOC groups therefore vary considerably in terms of their structure and composition. At one end of the scale, groups are very hierarchical with a clear chain of command and are made up of longstanding members. At the other end, groups are very fluid criminal networks whose membership changes in response to emerging criminal demands and opportunities. The review notes that recognising the diverse structures and compositions of SOC groups is critical to understanding how SOC can be tackled (Scottish Government, 2017a).

What are the pathways into SOC?



The evidence review on SOC highlights that there is no single pathway for individuals becoming involved in SOC (Scottish Government, 2017a). Rather, there are a range of risk factors. These are broadly categorised by the Home Office (2015) into four categories: criminality, ability, networks and identity.

Criminality



Firstly, individuals who show certain offending patterns may be at risk of being drawn into SOC. These include those who are involved in 'early prolific' offending and those who are involved in gangs. Involvement in early criminal experiences can result in continued involvement in adulthood, and can escalate into more serious forms of crime, such as organised crime. Involvement in gangs can also lead to involvement in SOC, due to the overlap between local gangs and SOC groups.

Secondly, individuals with specialist skills and access or who work in particular professions are at risk of being targeted by SOC groups for their involvement, to provide key services.

Ability



Thirdly, those who have access to criminal networks through links in various contexts (for example, via families, friendships, and relationships) may be at risk of becoming involved in SOC.

Networks



The Community Experiences research supports this categorisation (Scottish Government, 2018a). This research explored the factors that motivated involvement in SOC in the case-study sites, and found that a common narrative emerged relating to family, mentoring and recruitment. The intergenerational aspect of SOC was emphasised, with some families being notorious for having several family members involved. Relatedly, participants discussed young people being 'mentored' into organised criminality. Young people were viewed as ideal recruits because they can be controlled and dominated easily.

Identity

Finally, an individual's upbringing and lifestyle can increase the likelihood of their involvement in SOC. For example, individuals who lack a sense of belonging may be drawn into a SOC group to provide this, and the experience of potentially disruptive events during upbringing such as poverty, parental break up or parental drug use may be risk factors.

The Community Experiences research also highlights the importance of poverty and inequality in driving engagement with SOC (Scottish Government, 2018a). Participants expressed that poor opportunities for employment meant that the pull of income through illegal activities was perceived to be greater than those from legitimate employment, with a perception that a career in SOC is a viable route to wealth and success.

The struggle to afford basic goods can also lead people to purchasing stolen or counterfeit goods, thereby contributing to the profits of SOC groups. In addition, lack of leisure space and activities for young people in deprived areas is a factor in driving young people onto the streets in search of alternative sources of entertainment. This can lead to participation in low-level anti-social behaviour and, in some cases, vulnerability to being mentored for involvement in SOC (Scottish Government, 2018a).

The research outputs therefore provide an important insight into the perpetrators of SOC, including their demographic characteristics, how SOC groups are structured and the pathways into SOC. It is highlighted that future research could examine SOC offenders in more detail, including how SOC groups operate in Scotland, how they are structured, and patterns of SOC offending, particularly whether patterns in Scotland replicate those found elsewhere. Moreover, it is suggested that research draw further on qualitative data sources, for example of the characteristics of different types of criminal career trajectory.

How do the public perceive Serious Organised Crime?

The 2017 evidence review on SOC highlights that a key part of addressing SOC relies on having a full understanding of how the public perceive it. Given the diverse and far reaching harms associated with SOC, it is important that the public are able to identify and report it. Moreover, if the public are aware of these harms, this may help to deter them from engaging with SOC markets: for example, from purchasing counterfeit goods. Having an understanding of public perceptions of SOC also helps us to ensure that we have a reliable sense of the problem, directly from the people who experience it.

Several key findings emerged from the research outputs on public perceptions of SOC. Of particular relevance is the survey conducted by Ipsos MORI, which measured the public's awareness and experience of SOC both in 2017 and 2013 (Scottish Government, 2018b).

This research showed that respondents associated a range of types of illegal activity with the term SOC, which were broadly the same as in 2013:



In terms of perceptions of the severity of SOC, the majority of respondents thought that SOC was not very or not at all serious in their local area (67%), but 87% regarded it as a serious problem in Scotland as a whole. These results are similar to those recorded in 2013.

The groups perceived to be most affected by SOC in Scotland were the young, the old and the economically disadvantaged. The main perceived impacts of organised crime were drug taking or increased drug use and fear in the community, followed by damage to victims' health, a reduction in the money available for public services, and violence.

When asked who they thought had a role to play in tackling SOC in Scotland, respondents most commonly said the Police (87%). Around a third also mentioned the Scottish Government, and around a quarter said 'everyone'.

In terms of experiences of SOC, as in 2013, one in ten respondents said they had personally been affected by organised crime in the last three years. Of this group, around three-quarters reported having been a victim, while 17% said they had been a witness and 12% said they had been affected in some other way. Asked what specific type of organised crime was involved, respondents gave a wide range of answers, though the most common of these were theft, violence, cybercrime, and housebreaking.

Overall, the findings from 2017 were consistent with those for 2013, though the latest survey provided new insights into the ways people had been affected.

The Community Experiences research also provided some understanding of public perceptions of SOC, particularly in deprived areas (Scottish Government, 2018a). While these findings are not generalizable, they provide important insights into perceptions of the scope and nature of SOC in communities who have been affected by it.

A key finding from this research is that public perceptions of SOC are complex. For many, SOC was deeply interwoven into community life, with drug dealing and theft the most visible manifestations. Respondents expressed frustration, anger, fear and resignation towards the presence of SOC, as well as anxieties about reporting SOC to the police for fear of repercussions. In addition, respondents reflected on 'area stigma' and stereotype as a result of the presence of SOC.

87% 

think that the **Police** have a role to play in tackling SOC

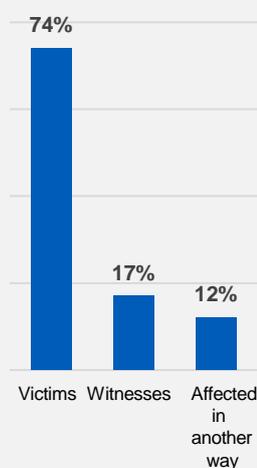
37% 

think that the **Scottish Government** has a role to play in tackling SOC

26% 

think that **everyone** has a role to play in tackling SOC

► The ways people had been **affected** by SOC included:



However, despite this fear and recognition of harms, SOC was also perceived to generate some benefits. For example, participants discussed benefitting from cheaper consumer goods (that are stolen, smuggled or counterfeit). Further, in the context of high levels of unemployment, poverty, precarious work and zero-hours contracts, there was a perception that a ‘career’ in organised crime was a viable route to wealth and success. The ‘pull’ of income through illegal activities was perceived to be greater than those gained from legitimate employment.

To a significant extent, ‘positive’ narratives and perceptions of SOC represented a mismatch with reality. In fact, the prospects for young people who become involved in organised crime are bleak. However, despite the fact that the negative impacts of organised crime were well-known and discussed, there were a lack of ‘counter-narratives’ against participation in the communities.

The research outputs therefore provide an important indication of how the public perceives SOC. Going forward, it will be important to continue to monitor the public’s awareness and experiences of SOC, particularly whether (i) public awareness of SOC increases and (ii) perceptions of the severity and extent of SOC change over time. This in turn will contribute to an understanding of the progress being made towards the aims of Scotland’s Serious Organised Crime Strategy.

What are the impacts and harms associated with Serious Organised Crime?

As noted in the 2017 evidence review, given that SOC encompasses a range of criminal activities, it in turn impacts a diverse range of victims, and is responsible for a wide range of harms (Scottish Government, 2017a). While it is difficult to fully ascertain all of the harms and impacts associated with SOC due to its hidden nature, the research outputs give an indication of the serious effects SOC has on Scotland.

This section will discuss some of the main criminal activities SOC groups are involved in and the harm caused by these, as well as some of the wider impacts of SOC.



Drug supply and distribution

Given that around two thirds of SOC groups are involved in the supply and distribution of illegal drugs, the harms associated with the sale and consumption of illegal drugs are one of the main harms of SOC (Scottish Government, 2017a).

Indeed, in the Community Experiences research, there was consensus that the main community impact of SOC in Scotland continues to result from the illicit drugs market (Scottish Government, 2018a). The illicit drugs market was viewed as embedding a range of harmful consequences for users, their families, and the general fabric of community life, including the entrenchment of vulnerabilities such as addiction and debt.

Child Sexual Exploitation



This type of SOC causes a wide range of often long lasting harms to the young victims as well as to their parents and families, and wider society (Scottish Government, 2017a). Organised child sexual exploitation has been estimated to cost the UK £1.1 billion per year (Home Office, 2013).

Human Trafficking



The Home Office (2013) estimates that the total social and economic cost to the UK of human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation alone are £890 million; other forms of human trafficking include criminal exploitation, domestic servitude and forced labour. Often those who are trafficked are already vulnerable, and stay hidden through physical isolation, language or cultural barriers (Scottish Government, 2017a). Victims of trafficking report experiencing extreme levels of trauma, fear, anxiety alongside physical and other mental health problems.

Fraud



Fraud can be categorised into seven distinct types: identity fraud, fraudulent sales (occur when a victim purchases a good or service - these often occur through online auction or selling websites), mass marketing fraud, fraudulent sales in person (when a victim purchases a good or service from the perpetrator in person), abuse of trust, fraudulent applications and investment fraud. Fraud causes great financial harm, resulting in losses to the public, private and voluntary sector, and is also widespread at the individual level (Scottish Government, 2017a).

Counterfeit goods



The use of counterfeit goods has significant economic and social costs, resulting from: loss of profit and sales to business; lost revenue to the exchequer; loss of jobs; and enforcement costs by media stakeholders for pirated CDs and DVDs. The Home Office estimates the total economic and social cost (i.e. in terms of total harm) of this type of SOC activity to the UK to be £400 million (2013). These costs include the harms sustained by victims as a result of using poor quality counterfeit goods, which pose a range of health and safety risks to users due to lack of adequate testing, unsafe ingredients or components etc.

Wider harms



As well as the specific impacts and harms associated with particular types of SOC, the cumulative effects of the range of activities SOC groups are involved in lead to wider impacts on society. An important impact is increased fear of crime, which is reflected in both the Ipsos MORI research and the Community Experiences research. In the Ipsos MORI research, 23% of respondents perceived fear in the community to be one of the main impacts of SOC, which had increased since 2013. In the Community Experiences research, respondents expressed that fear and intimidation formed part of the background to their everyday life (Scottish Government, 2018b).

Further impacts were noted by communities. A persistent theme was the impact of victimisation on community life. Victimisation came in multiple forms, from direct forms of sexual exploitation and indentured labour, to more indirect forms, where debts and coercion were used to exploit vulnerability. As well as effects such as exploitation, participants also reflected on indirect consequences such as ‘area stigma’ and stereotype.

It is therefore clear from the available evidence that the harms and impacts associated with SOC are complex and diverse. The evidence review notes that further research on the nature of harms, particularly in the Scottish context, is required to inform efforts to tackle SOC.

Subsequent Steps

The 2017-18 research outputs were intended to inform work to deliver the Scottish Government's strategic vision of a 'safer, fairer and more prosperous country free from the harm caused by serious organised crime'.

The studies provide a detailed, evidence-based understanding of SOC in Scotland. They also point to areas where further research may be beneficial. In particular, the outputs suggest that future research should seek to explore:

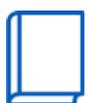
- The reasons why people become involved in SOC
- The working of SOC groups (how SOC groups operate in Scotland and how they are structured)
- Patterns of SOC offending
- The impacts and harms of particular criminal activities associated with SOC (e.g. cybercrime and fraud)

In addition, the outputs also highlight areas for policy action. Notably, the report on Community Experiences of Serious Organised Crime in Scotland put forward a range of policy recommendations for reducing the impact and harms associated with SOC. These include:



Developing Resilient Communities:

the study recommended the addition of a fifth D to the Scottish Government SOC strategy – Develop – which is premised on community development as a means of responding to the harms associated with SOC.



Changing the Narrative:

the research argues that the narrative supporting the persistence of organised crime should be challenged, at the national, community and individual level.



Addressing Vulnerability:

the study recommended that local service providers develop strategies focused on the prevention of exploitation of vulnerable residents.



Broadening Community Partnership:

it was suggested that a coordinated police, community and statutory partnership approach be taken to address organised crime, which would enable the development of cohesive forms of intervention and responses.

These recommendations are helping to inform approaches aimed at reducing the prevalence of SOC and the extent and severity of its impacts in Scotland. In particular, the Community Experiences report was followed up by a conference at Murrayfield stadium on the 21st of June 2018 which explored the themes and recommendations emerging from the research.

It was agreed that follow-up work again prioritise Community Experiences of organised crime and engage with community members directly to identify issues and harms with a view to exploring possible actions to reduce those harms.

Since then, a small number of pilot communities in different parts of Scotland have been identified and community groups are being established in each community in order to identify issues relating to SOC in that particular community and explore possible actions to address those issues.

Work is also continuing to share the recommendations and findings of the Community Experiences research with policy-makers and practitioners in related sectors (e.g. community safety, housing) to look at how they can contribute to reducing the harm caused by SOC.

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