

# **Canadians' Views on Organized Crime**

## **Final Report on the Findings of a Qualitative Study**

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**by**



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## **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC) commissioned Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc. to undertake qualitative research to explore Canadians' views on organized crime. A set of 16 focus groups was conducted in eight urban centres across Canada between June 20 and July 5, 2005. Five of the centres were large cities – Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Montreal and Halifax – while the other three were smaller centres – Red Deer, Sherbrooke, and Cornwall.

**This research was qualitative in nature, not quantitative. As such, the results provide an indication of participants' views about the issues explored, but cannot be generalized to the Canadian population as a whole.**

The main findings are presented thematically below. These themes are directly relevant to the principal research objectives, which were twofold: 1) to identify gaps in the public's understanding and awareness of organized crime; and 2) to provide a more nuanced assessment of how Canadians perceive the phenomenon of organized crime to better direct future quantitative research. These findings tended to be articulated in all locations and by participants with both higher and lower levels of formal education (except where otherwise noted).

### Violent Activity – Overriding Impression of Organized Crime for Many

Violence and violent activity constitute the overriding image or impression that many participants have of organized crime. While participants were able to identify a relatively wide range of characteristics of organized crime (many of which were non-violent), as well as many non-violent criminal activities that they associate with organized crime, they nevertheless had a tendency to focus on the more violent aspects of organized crime (i.e. murder, gang fights, etc.) during subsequent discussions in the focus groups. This may be related to the fact that most say their perceptions are largely shaped by the media, which tends to focus on the more sensational aspects of organized crime as opposed to delving more deeply into its nature (i.e. media focus on gang rivalries, murders/'hits', accidental killings, attempted murder of journalists, etc.).

### High Degree of Consistency in Identification of Organized Crime Actors & Activities

There was a high degree of consistency across all groups in terms of the types of people or groups seen to be involved in organized crime (i.e. biker gangs, ethnic gangs, etc.) and the types of criminal activities most closely associated with organized crime (i.e. drugs, prostitution, identity theft, firearms, pornography). In addition, there was a high degree of consistency regarding the criminal activities considered to be the most important/lucrative (i.e. drugs) and the most serious (i.e. drugs, prostitution, pornography, money laundering). As was the case with the emphasis on violence, this consistency may also be related in part to the fact that most say their perceptions are largely shaped by the media (i.e. people getting their information from the same or similar sources).

### Organized Crime Seen as Root of Other Crimes

The inability to distinguish between organized crime and other types of crime may be due, in part, to the perception (shared by many) that organized crime is connected to other criminal activities or is the root cause of them. This was particularly true of organized crime's involvement in illicit drugs. In fact, drugs were seen to be linked to many/most other activities associated with organized crime (e.g. prostitution as a way to pay for drugs, theft as a way to pay for drugs, street violence/gang fights).

### Organized Crime Viewed as Serious Issue & Growing

Most participants considered organized crime to be a serious problem in Canada. Using a 5-point scale (1 = not serious at all; 5 = very serious), the majority of participants provided scores above the mid-point on the scale (i.e. 4 or 5). Moreover, relatively few provided low scores of 1 or 2, which would indicate a clear lack of seriousness. Approximately one-third offered scores at exactly the midpoint of the scale. This is consistent with recent quantitative research conducted with the general public (Ipsos-Reid; *Omnibus Questions on Organized Crime*; March 2005). There was also a sense that organized crime is increasing in Canada. The main reasons underlying the perceived seriousness of organized crime are perceptions that organized crime now involves a greater number of actors (e.g. proliferation of ethnic gangs, youth gangs, biker gangs) and activities (i.e. broader scope of criminal activities). As the number of actors and activities multiplies, the perception is that more competition or more cooperation will arise between gangs. Either possibility has serious implications: greater competition entails more violence and greater cooperation means greater control and power. Despite the emphasis on violence, there's a sense that as organized crime moves more and more into the area of white collar crime and fraud-related activities (e.g. identity theft), potential victims are no longer likely to be only those who engage in illicit activities (e.g. drugs, prostitution).

### Difficulty Keeping Organized Crime Separate From Other Criminal Activities

Despite the fact that participants were able to identify numerous activities associated with organized crime, and appeared to have a distinct view of organized crime, they nonetheless tended to have difficulty focusing on it when discussing organized crime and issues related to it. Many participants, for example, talked about youth gangs in schools, swarmings, gang fights (not related to profit), and bullying. Moreover, when assessing their level of concern about being a victim of organized crime (either them personally or members of their family) and when assessing the performance of various actors in the fight against organized crime, most participants tended to discuss crime in general as opposed to organized crime in particular. In short, the distinction between organized crime and other crime was blurred, and there was a tendency among participants to revert back to crime in general (not organized crime per se) during various points in the discussion.

### Disconnect Between Perceived Seriousness of OC & Likelihood of Being Victimized, Impacts of OC

Despite the fact that most participants believe that organized crime is a serious problem and is becoming a more serious problem over time, most are not worried that they or their family will become victims of organized crime. Moreover, many of those who express concern are either concerned about their children being targets or are afraid of being at the

wrong place at the wrong time (i.e. an accidental victim, in contrast to an intended victim). In general, there is greater concern about being victimized by other types of crime. When asked directly about this, many participants expressed the view that most criminal activities associated with organized crime are avoidable (i.e. people have a choice whether they take illicit drugs, gamble, are or visit prostitutes, etc.). Unlike the potential for being victimized by 'random' or non-organized crime, many participants felt that there was a significant opportunity to avoid organized crime activities. This apparent disconnect is also seen in the inability of many participants to identify ways that organized crime impacts on our daily lives. This question was often greeted by initial silence; moreover, the perceived impacts were generally described as indirect, not direct (see below).

#### Difficulty Identifying Impacts of Organized Crime

As noted, participants tended to have difficulty assessing the impact of organized crime on our daily lives, with many participants in all groups unable to identify any impacts. This was particularly true in terms of impacts on their personal lives, but also with respect to society more generally. Participants that did identify impacts tended to focus on general repercussions, such as increased costs (i.e. monetary/economic costs and social costs). This includes loss of tax revenues, and increases in insurance rates, service charges, taxes (e.g. to pay for policing), and costs in general (to cover losses associated with criminal activity). Social costs include greater insecurity and fear in society, and the potential breakdown of a sense of community. Some focused on their children or youth in general, focusing on the psychological effects of bullying and intimidation. Specific groups identified as being potentially more susceptible to becoming victims of organized crime included youth, the elderly, young women and the less fortunate.

#### Little Awareness of Government Activities & Initiatives

Participants in all groups in all locations exhibited very limited awareness about what government is doing in the fight against organized crime. Not only do people have little, if any, awareness of what government is doing, relatively few identified it as a key actor in the fight against organized crime (without prompting), and few identified it as a source that they would go to or consider credible in the fight against organized crime. Added to this is the fact that some participants consider government/politicians to be involved in organized crime (e.g. sponsorship scandal). For these people, government is not really involved in the fight against organized crime, but rather is part of the problem. Police was the group cited most often as being involved in the fight against organized crime, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), and special task forces or units set up within police organizations.

#### High Regard for Police Officers

In contrast to perceptions of government and politicians, police officers tend to be held in high regard in terms of their involvement in the fight against organized crime. They tend to be seen as the first line of defence that is doing the best it can with the resources it has. The police in general, and 'local' police and the RCMP in particular, were also identified most often as being the most credible in terms of talking about organized crime and efforts to combat it. In most groups, the police were identified first and most often (by others expressing agreement). By contrast, very few participants identified government or

politicians as credible or trustworthy sources of information. Other credible spokespersons include victims of organized crime, former criminals, the media, NGOs and academics.

#### Difficulty Assessing Performance of Main Players

Most participants had difficulty assessing the performance of key players in the fight against organized crime. When asked to rate the performance of various groups in this area, people tended to focus on crime in general (i.e. not organized crime per se) and to acknowledge that they were offering general perceptions only, and not informed feedback based on actual activities/performance. The groups that were assessed included the police, government at all levels, our courts, our laws and the correctional system. In short, these evaluations tended to be reflections of general perceptions only, and were not linked directly to organized crime or to any evidence of performance in this area. In addition, participants tended to see the courts, the laws, and the correctional system as interrelated or entwined (not as distinct actors), which made offering separate evaluations problematic. All were generally perceived to be too lax or lenient, and therefore not effective in the fight against organized crime. The police was the only group to receive a generally positive assessment in terms of their role in the fight against organized crime.

#### Participants with Post-Secondary Education Appear to be More Removed From OC

Participants with post-secondary education appeared to be somewhat more removed from organized crime than those with less formal education. For instance, they seemed more likely to rely on media information about organized crime, and less likely to have personal experience with organized crime. Conversely, those with high school education or less appeared to be more likely to base their perceptions of organized crime on various aspects of personal experience (although the media was still an important source of information that influences their perceptions). This sense of greater isolation among the higher-educated was not only evident in discussions about what their perceptions of organized crime were based on, but also appeared to be manifested indirectly at various points in the group discussions. The main exception was Sherbrooke, where all participants appeared to be quite aware of organized crime in a more personal way due to the significant presence of the Hells Angels.

#### Main Regional Differences

Perhaps not surprisingly, regional differences were most evident when participants focused on the nature of organized crime in their own region or province. While there was a high degree of consistency across all groups in terms of the types of people or groups seen to be involved in organized crime and the types of criminal activities most closely associated with organized crime, when participants were asked specifically about the activities and actors characteristic of organized crime in their own province or region, differences did emerge.

In terms of activities, participants in port cities (i.e. Vancouver, Montreal, and Halifax) were more likely to identify drug smuggling (as opposed to trafficking) trafficking in human beings, and car theft. Smuggling of alcohol and cigarettes and child pornography were identified most often in Cornwall. While drugs were mentioned by participants in all cities, participants in Vancouver and Sherbrooke were most likely to specifically identify

marihuana grow operations. Participants in the largest cities (i.e. Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto) were somewhat more likely to identify prostitution.

While there was a certain reticence among participants to identify specific ethnic groups involved in organized crime in general, there was less reticence to do so when they focused on groups operating in their own province or region. Participants in the largest cities (i.e. Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto) were somewhat more likely to identify ethnic groups. Among these, participants in Vancouver and Toronto were more likely to identify far-east Asian gangs, while participants in Montreal were the most likely to identify the traditional Italian mafia. Participants in Vancouver were most likely to identify East Indian Asian gangs, while participants in Toronto were more likely to identify Haitian and Jamaican gangs. While the Hells Angels were identified by name by participants in all cities, participants in Montreal and Sherbrooke were most likely to identify it. Native or Aboriginal gangs were identified most often in Cornwall, Red Deer, and Winnipeg. Participants in Cornwall were alone in identifying truckers, while those in Red Deer were alone in identifying radical right-wing groups (e.g. skinheads).

## **2.0 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

Members of the general public, regardless of education or location, seem to have a good basic understanding of the range of actors or groups involved in organized crime. While not top-of-mind, participants were nevertheless readily able to identify a range of groups involved in organized crime. Moreover, the list of actors that were identified largely corresponds to that included in authoritative documentation about organized crime in Canada. In short, participants have a relatively accurate view of who is involved in such activities. To the extent that there is an issue or problem to address in this area, it is not primarily ignorance about which groups are involved, but reticence to identify them publicly when they involve members of ethnic communities. This reluctance points to an understandable apprehension or sensitivity about stereotyping or targeting members of specific ethnic communities. This concern should be taken into account and treated with sensitivity in any communications efforts designed to inform the general public about groups involved in organized crime. Properly addressing this issue is all the more important in that one of the main types of information that Canadians need according to participants in this research is an understanding of who is involved in organized crime.

Members of the general public also appear to have a good basic understanding of the range of activities associated with organized crime. Participants identified the same types of activities in all locations, and the things they identified are largely consistent with criminal activities actually undertaken by organized crime. Moreover, people tend to believe that organized crime is related to other criminal activities or at the root of other crimes, primarily through the drug trade. This perceived interconnectedness of organized crime and other types of crime may help explain why many participants felt that organized crime should receive the same if not more attention as that given to other problems in the area of justice and public security. At the same time, this tendency to draw links between organized crime and other types of crime often translated into a blurring of the distinction between types of crimes. One of the main findings to come out of this research is the difficulty people have keeping organized crime distinct in their minds from other criminal activities (e.g. youth gangs in schools, swarmings, random violence). In this sense, part of the communications challenge may include helping Canadians distinguish between organized crime per se and other criminal activities.

The public's basic awareness of the actors and activities involved in organized crime is counterbalanced by very limited awareness of what government, at any level, is doing in the fight against organized crime, and by limited recognition of government as a key actor in the fight against it. As well, recall that participants had considerable difficulty assessing the performance of the various groups/institutions that have a role in fighting organized crime in Canada. In doing so, only the police were assessed positively, with government, our laws and our courts, generally grouped together and given relatively poor evaluations.

Information about what the government is doing to combat organized crime was identified as an important type of information that citizens should have. In addressing this gap, PSEPC should be mindful of the fact that there is a perception among some Canadians that government/politicians are themselves sometimes involved in organized crime, and that few participants see government/politicians as credible sources of information in this area.



In communications, PSPEC should avoid style and content that might present government efforts and activities in too self-congratulatory or self-promotional a manner, or that might have the feel of a public relations campaign. One way to do this would be to use police as lead spokespersons on this issue (seen to be most credible), or include references to sources of information identified as particularly credible by participants (i.e. police, RCMP, victims, former criminals, NGOs, academics).

Another noteworthy gap in the public's understanding of organized crime is awareness of the impact that organized crime has on their daily lives. There is a significant disconnect between the seriousness that participants attribute to organized crime and their perceptions of the impact that it has on them and Canadian society. Many participants in this research were unable to identify any impacts, while those who could tended to identify very general ones – mostly increases in costs. There was also relatively limited concern about being victimized by organized crime – to many, this is avoidable, unlike being a victim of 'other' types of crime.

There appears to be a need to bridge the gap between perceptions that organized crime is a serious and growing problem in Canada and participants' perceptions that they are not likely to be victims of it and that it does not entail significant cost. This disconnect appears to be particularly prevalent among participants with post-secondary education, who seemed to feel more isolated and insulated from the phenomenon. This might be addressed, in part, by building on peoples' sense that organized crime has moved beyond its traditional character and that potential victims are no longer likely to be only those who engage in illicit activities.

In tailoring communications messages to educate Canadians about the realities and risks of organized crime, information should be broken down, if possible, by province/region, and even community. Many participants in this research noted that it would be important to have information about organized crime in relation to their own community or region (i.e. what is pertinent to where they live). Moreover, this could help address the gap between the perception that organized crime is a serious problem and participants' perceptions that it does not really affect them (i.e. by bringing it close to home).

Overall, the research suggests that communications designed to increase understanding of organized crime would be well received by the general public. In addition to general agreement that public education on organized crime is important and can help reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of these activities, participants readily identified a number of different types of information that they felt would be important for Canadians to know as part of a public awareness/education campaign (see page 30 of the report). As well, the findings have implications for tailoring communications messages and educating Canadians about the realities and risks of organized crime. In this regard, it is important to note that the media, by a wide margin, remains the main source of information about organized crime in Canada.

## **3.0 INTRODUCTION**

Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC) commissioned Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc. to undertake qualitative research to explore Canadians' views on organized crime.

### **3.1 Background and Objectives**

The National Coordination Committee on Organized Crime (NCCOC) has indicated its desire to develop and implement a national communications strategy to educate Canadians about organized crime. For this strategy to be effective, it is imperative that the NCCOC have a clear understanding of how Canadians perceive the phenomenon of organized crime.

A search of previously-conducted public opinion research on the subject of organized crime yielded a number of quantitative studies that have been conducted in recent years. However, it was found that no qualitative research on a national scale has been done since 2001. As such, PSEPC decided to undertake qualitative research in the form of focus groups to explore the Canadian public's views regarding organized crime in Canada.

The main objectives of the research were to:

1. Identify the gaps in the public's understanding and awareness of this issue to better tailor communications messages and educate Canadians about the realities and risks of organized crime; and
2. Provide a more nuanced assessment of how Canadians perceive the phenomenon of organized crime to better direct future quantitative research in this area.

More specifically, the study aimed to explore the following issues:

- The spheres of activity that Canadians perceive organized crime to be involved in;
- The extent to which organized crime represents a personal threat to Canadians, their communities, and the country;
- The public's impressions regarding the effectiveness of government efforts to combat organized crime; and
- The level of confidence Canadians have in the local, provincial and federal police forces in combating organized crime.

### **3.2 Research Design**

To address the research objectives, a set of 16 focus groups were conducted in eight urban centres across Canada between June 20-July 5, 2005. Five of the eight centres were large cities: Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Montreal and Halifax. The other three centres were smaller centres, and included Red Deer, Alberta, Sherbrooke, Quebec, and Cornwall, Ontario.

The following specifications applied to this study:

- In each city, the groups consisted of members of the general public.
- Participants in each group were 18 years of age and older, with a mix by age and an approximate gender split.
- Participants were divided by education level: One group in each city included individuals who had a high school education or less; the other included individuals with at least some post-secondary education, with a mix of those who had taken some college/university courses or had completed college/ university.
- In the larger urban centres, approximately half of the participants were members of visible minorities from a mix of ethnic backgrounds.
- For the smaller locations, approximately half of the participants were drawn from the rural area 25-30 minutes outside of the city centre.
- Turnout for the focus groups was very good – between 8-10 participants took part in each group.
- The groups were allocated as follows:

City	Language	Date	6:00:00 PM	8:00:00 PM
Toronto	English	June 20, 2005	High school	Post-secondary
Winnipeg	English	June 21, 2005	Post-secondary	High school
Red Deer	English	June 22, 2005	High school	Post-secondary
Vancouver	English	June 23, 2005	Post-secondary	High school
Montreal	French	June 21, 2005	Post-secondary	High school
Sherbrooke	French	June 22, 2005	High school	Post-secondary
Halifax	English	June 23, 2005	Post-secondary	High school
Cornwall	English	July 5, 2005	Post-secondary	High school

- The groups were conducted in regular focus group facilities in the five large urban centres. In the three smaller locations, the groups were conducted in hotel meeting rooms, with audio-visual equipment used for observers to monitor the group discussion from another room.
- The groups lasted two hours in length and were conducted in the evening. Participants were paid \$50.
- Participants were informed that the study was sponsored by the Government of Canada.

**This research was qualitative in nature, not quantitative. As such, the results provide an indication of participants' views about the issues explored, but cannot be generalized to the Canadian population as a whole.**

Participants' comments are provided in italics with quotation marks, and are either actual verbatim comments or have been paraphrased to reflect the intent of the remark.

The principal investigator for this study was Stephen Kiar, who moderated the focus groups in Toronto, Winnipeg, Red Deer, Vancouver, and Cornwall and wrote the final report. Philippe Azzie moderated the focus groups in Montreal, Sherbrooke, and Halifax and contributed to the report.

#### General Note on Findings

While there was a high degree of consistency across all regions in much of the feedback provided by participants, regional and educational differences did manifest themselves in some areas. The areas in which these differences manifested themselves are identified in the report.

Appended to the report are the following:

- Recruitment questionnaire use to recruit participants
- Moderator's guide
- Mini-questionnaire completed by participants.

## 4.0 MAIN IMPRESSIONS & PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZED CRIME

This section reports on participants' perceptions of the phenomenon of organized crime. This includes the main impression that comes to mind when thinking about organized crime and the main source(s) of these impressions, perceptions of the seriousness of organized crime, and perceptions about the types of activities and people (i.e. groups) it involves.

### 4.1 Top-of-mind Impressions

#### *'Organized Crime' Evokes Multiple Images – Violence, Gangs & Drugs Predominate*

Participants had no difficulty identifying images or impressions that came to mind when thinking about organized crime in Canada. Moreover, many identified multiple images or impressions. This was apparent not only in the group discussions, but also upon review of the short questionnaires people were asked to complete immediately before the start of the focus group.

One of the main images that recurred often was the impression of violence or violent criminal activity. This included turf wars between rival organizations, executions or 'hits', the killing or injuring of innocent people as a result of these struggles, and the activities of street gangs/youth gangs, including gang fights, intimidation and swarmings. Participants' comments including or focusing on this image of violent activity included the following:

- “Extremely violent criminal activity.”
- “Causing havoc in downtown bars; drive-by shootings, gunning people down outside bars.”
- “Murder.”
- “Some gang people involved in selling drugs and shooting people for money.”
- “Shooting deaths.”
- “Very organized and very violent people.”\*
- “Criminals with guns who have no fear of killing others.”
- “Trying to knock off the competition.”
- “Violence.”
- “Robbery and murder.”
- “Gang wars and people being shot who have nothing to do with the gang.”
- “Intimidation, murder, and violence.”\*
- “Contract killers.”\*
- “Rough and tough underworld types.”

\*Comments followed by an asterisk were originally in French.

While violence was often identified in terms of participants' main image or impression of organized crime, a number of other types of images were routinely identified. These tended to fall into four categories. Mentioned most often were the groups involved in organized crime and the types of criminal activities, particularly but not only drugs. Identified less

often, but still with some regularity were some of the defining aspects or characteristics of organized crime and the effects or impact of organized crime.

Groups Involved in Organized Crime:

Many identified actors or groups that they perceived to be involved in organized crime. This included, in approximate order of the frequency of their expression, the following:

- Hells Angels and other biker gangs
- Street or youth gangs
- Ethnic gangs, either identified generically or with respect to specific ethnic groups
- The mafia
- Government/politicians
- Corporate executives.

Types of Criminal Activities:

One of the main things that came to mind for most participants when they thought about organized crime was the criminal activities or types of activities it involves. This includes the following:

- Drugs/drug trade (this was cited most often by a considerable margin)
- Sex trade/prostitution
- Illegal activities (in general)
- Fraud
- Illegal gambling
- Smuggling
- Intimidation
- Corruption
- Murder.

Key Characteristics of Organized Crime:

Mentioned less often, but identified by one or more participants in most groups, were a number of defining characteristics of organized crime. This included the following:

- Cohesiveness
- Intelligence/craftiness/ingenuity
- Organization/hierarchy
- Shadiness/lack of visibility
- Immunity
- Profit/profitteering
- Lust for or pursuit of power.

Effects of Organized Crime:

Some participants said that when they think about organized crime, the first thing that comes to mind is the impact it has on its victims (e.g. drug addicts, prostitutes, gamblers), in general (i.e. the cost to society), or their own personal reaction or feeling towards it. This sometimes took the form of a feeling of powerlessness and a perceived inability to do

anything about it. Some added that they perceived the phenomenon to be pervasive, which explained why they felt powerless. This was particularly prevalent among participants in Sherbrooke, Quebec, where participants articulated this feeling in relation to the perceived omnipresence of the Hells Angels.

A few participants said it brought to mind a sense of sympathy for the victims of organized crime, particularly, but not only, drug addicts and young women involved in prostitution or the sex trade. Only a few participants identified fear as the main impression that comes to mind when they think about organized crime. Those who did tended to be fearful not for themselves but for their children who might be victims of organized crime or drawn into it. Finally, a few indicated that when they thought about organized crime, it brought to mind a phenomenon that was not seen to really affect them.

## 4.2 Defining Characteristics

### Organization/Structure Seen as Main Defining Characteristic of Organized Crime

As noted above, some participants identified defining aspects or elements of organized crime as the first thing that comes to mind when they think about it. In subsequent questioning, all participants were asked to identify what they took to be defining elements of organized crime. Once it became clear what was being asked (i.e. providing defining elements of organized crime as opposed to examples of it), participants had little difficulty identifying such elements.

Focusing primarily on the expression itself (i.e. 'organized' crime), most participants referred to the organized nature of the criminal activity. This aspect of organization included a number of inter-related aspects:

- *Group activity*: Though perhaps self-evident, a number of participants said that organized crime involves more than one individual and usually a number of individuals (i.e. it is criminal activity carried out by groups, not individuals). That said, it was noted that individual crimes can be related to organized crime. For example, someone may commit burglaries to get money to buy drugs which are provided through organized crime groups.
- *Cohesiveness*: It was noted that organized crime is characterized by cohesiveness. In other words, the group itself is not a sporadic or random association of individuals but a more or less tightly knit association.
- *Hierarchy*: In addition to being cohesive, organized crime was seen to be hierarchical. There is a division of labour and a pyramid-like structure that not only divides superiors and inferiors but also serves to protect the superiors (i.e. the underlings do the dirty work and run the risk of getting caught while the superiors do the strategizing and planning and are relatively immune from capture or prosecution).
- *Hidden/Invisible aspects*: Many participants described organized crime as being based on a solid basis or foundation that tends to be hidden. It was often noted that

organized crime is like an iceberg and that we only ever see the tip of it. What we do see is girded by a massive and well-established infrastructure that never or rarely comes to light. One of the implications of this, articulated by a few participants, was the possibility that they would have no way of knowing whether their neighbours or acquaintances were involved in organized crime or not.

- *Connections*: Another organizational aspect of organized crime was seen to be the existence of webs and networks of activities that extend into a variety of areas. This can include corruption of judges, politicians, prison guards, and police officers, but also investment in legitimate businesses through money laundering activities. Participants in Sherbrooke, for example, stated that the Hells Angels are owners of a number of 'legitimate' establishments or have investments in them.
- *Continuity*: Another characteristic that defines crime as 'organized' is that it is continuous as opposed to sporadic or haphazard. Some noted that organized crime is run as a business (i.e. on a continuous basis).

Other aspects or defining characteristics of organized crime, not necessarily related to its organizational structure, were seen to include:

- *Immunity*: According to some participants, one of the characteristics distinguishing organized crime from other types of crime is a certain amount of immunity, especially among top members in the organization. In addition to a disregard for the law, there was a sense that they are untouchable. It was noted that even if prosecuted and convicted, top mobsters can still retain control of their operations. A few participants in Montreal and Sherbrooke gave the example of Maurice "Mom" Boucher, who even when convicted had a huge grin on his face as if he were still flouting the law. Participants in other locations made similar comments about flouting of the law by people involved in organized crime.
- *Pursuit of profit*: Some participants drew attention to the pursuit of profit or profitability as a distinguishing characteristic of organized crime. A few added that this pursuit of profit means that organized crime has a natural tendency to grow or expand from one activity to another. Related to this was the perception that the leaders of organized crime do not get involved in these activities because of poverty or desperation, but rather out of a desire for power.
- *White collar crime*: Related to the pursuit of profit, it was noted by some participants that organized crime is now more likely to include white-collar crime and involve 'professionals' or 'business-like' people who have a certain standing in the community. As an example, it was noted that televised arrests of people involved in organized crime are now more likely to involve people one would not expect to be criminals. Some also pointed to some of the accounting 'scandals' outside of Canada (e.g. Enron) or the sponsorship 'scandal' in Canada as examples of organized crime operating in white collar environments, and involving business executives and other 'professionals'.



- *International activity*: A few participants said that organized crime tends to be an international activity with connections and links that extend beyond national borders. This characteristic tended to be identified by participants from port cities (i.e. Vancouver, Montreal, Halifax).

### 4.3 Sources of Impressions

#### Perceptions of Organized Crime Influenced Mainly by Media, Personal Experience

There was a virtual consensus among participants in all groups that their perceptions of organized crime are influenced primarily by the media (both print media and television). In addition to the regular news, this included special reports, documentaries and a wide range of police TV shows, including *Law & Order*, *The Sopranos*, *Growing Up Gotti*, *Dateline NBC*, *48 Hours*, *DaVinci's Inquest*, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, and *COPS*. It is worth noting the predominance of American television shows identified by participants. Numerous participants added that they were not sure about the accuracy or validity of media reports because the media tends to be sensationalistic. This was a theme that recurred with some regularity.

Related to this, it was noted by a few participants that the media does not tend to report on organized crime on a regular basis but only when 'something big' happens. A few participants in Montreal gave as an example the attempted murder of Journal de Montreal reporter Michel Auger in 2000. They noted that M. Auger had been investigating organized crime for years but only when he was shot did the issue of organized crime really get media attention. A few others pointed to the example of the young boy in Montreal who was killed by a car explosion a few years ago that was the result of a turf war between rival gangs.

A number of participants said that their perceptions were influenced by movies, a few of whom added that this influence was probably operating at the sub-conscious level. In other words, they felt that their perceptions might be biased in part by movies but they could not say in what way. Others were clearer, and identified films like *The Godfather*, *GoodFellas*, *Casino*, and *Scarface*, stating that this represents one of the main sources of influence in terms of how they have come to view organized crime.

Beyond the media and movies, one other main source of perceptions or impressions identified with considerable frequency was personal experience or word of mouth. While this occurred in all locations, it appeared to be more likely the case in smaller cities like Sherbrooke, Red Deer, and Cornwall, where participants were more likely than those in larger cities to say that their perceptions were based on information provided by friends, family members, and acquaintances. Moreover, these sources were not dismissed as gossip mongers or sensationalizers but tended to be considered legitimate. In addition to being more prevalent in smaller cities, the emphasis on personal experience or word of mouth appeared to be more prevalent among those with lower levels of education (i.e. high school or less).

Sources identified infrequently included the following:

- *School meetings*: A few participants said their perceptions were influenced by meeting organized by schools. These meetings dealt with issues such as drug trafficking, youth gangs, and intimidation of students by other students. Information at such meetings tended to be provided by local law enforcement agents.
- *Community meetings*: A few participants identified community meetings involving presentations from law enforcement officials relating to increased gang and gang-related activities (e.g. types of activities, how to protect children, most dangerous areas/parts of town).
- *The Internet*: A couple of participants said they have looked for information about organized crime on the Internet and that this has influenced their perception of it.

#### **4.4 Perceived Severity of the Issue**

##### *Most View Organized Crime as Serious Problem*

Most participants considered organized crime to be a serious problem in Canada. Using a 5-point scale (1 = not serious at all; 5 = very serious), the majority of participants provided scores above the mid-point on the scale (i.e. 4 or 5). Moreover, relatively few provided scores of 1 or 2, which would indicate a clear lack of seriousness. Approximately one-third offered scores at exactly the midpoint of the scale.

##### *Multiplicity of Actors & Activities – Reasons Why Organized Crime is Serious Issue*

Participants provided a number of reasons to explain their assessment of organized crime being a serious problem. Heading the list were the large number of 'actors' involved in organized crime and the broad range of criminal activities undertaken by organized crime:

- *Multiplicity of actors*: Numerous participants described organized crime as a serious problem because of what they described as the proliferation or multiplicity of actors. There was a sense that organized crime had moved beyond the stage where it could be associated with one specific group (i.e. the traditional mafia) to one where there were many groups involved (i.e. youth gangs/street gangs, bikers, Asian mafia, Russian mafia, Haitian and Jamaican gangs, Middle Eastern gangs). This proliferation of actors, in itself a sign of the seriousness of the problem, also has two related serious consequences in the minds of participants. First, there was a greater likelihood of gang or turf wars, with a corresponding increase in violence. That said, a few participants noted that the multiplicity of actors was an indication of the seriousness of the problem not because of increased competition between groups but because of increased cooperation between them (i.e. dividing up the activities and working together). Second, there was a sense that even if certain groups or gangs were prosecuted and even eliminated through law enforcement, another group would simply move in to fill the vacuum. A number of participants who referred to the proliferation of actors focused specifically on youth gangs or street gangs and their activities in schools.

- *Proliferation of activities*: Many felt that organized crime was a serious problem in Canada because the number of activities in which it was involved was growing. This included activities not widely associated with organized crime, such as identity theft, Internet fraud, and trafficking of humans, as well as many other criminal activities traditionally linked to organized crime, such as auto theft rings, gun and alcohol smuggling, etc. There was a sense that it was becoming omnipresent in terms of reach.

Other reasons identified with some frequency included:

- *Greater sophistication*: Related to the growth in the scope of organized crime's activities, many felt that organized crime was becoming more sophisticated and elaborate in its activities. This included credit card and debit card fraud, Internet fraud, identity theft, false ATM machines, etc. In other words, there was a sense that organized crime no longer affects only those who choose to get involved in criminal activities such as drugs and prostitution. It now has the potential to touch everyone because of its increasing sophistication.
- *Inability to measure full extent*: Some felt that the problem was serious based on the assumption that we only ever see the 'tip of the iceberg when it comes to organized crime'. For these people, organized crime was more serious than it appears to be because they assume that there is much more to it than can be seen.

Participants who did not attribute significant seriousness to the issue of organized crime (providing scores of 3 or less on the 5-point scale) tended to provide one of two rationales to explain their assessment. Most of them specified that their score reflected their own lack of knowledge about the seriousness of organized crime in Canada today. These participants tended to provide 'neutral' scores of 3 on the 5-point scale because they had no basis for assessing it as serious or not.

Most of the others explained that their assessment was based on the fact that they themselves had not been victims of organized crime or did not see the palpable effects of it in their daily lives. In other words, while a reality, organized crime was not seen to affect them directly. A few said that their impression that organized crime was not a serious problem in Canada was comparative in nature. They felt that it was much more serious in countries like the United States and Russia and that, in comparison, the problem was not that serious in Canada.

#### **4.5 Perceptions of Change in Severity Over Time**

##### *Relatively Widespread Perception that Organized Crime has Increased Over Time*

When assessing whether organized crime has increased, decreased, or remained the same during the past 5-10 years, participants appeared to be somewhat more comfortable referring to their own community than their province or the country as a whole. Moreover, they tended to be less certain in their assessments as the frame of reference widened (i.e. from community/region to province to country) That said, there was a general sense that things have gotten worse at all three levels (i.e. community/region, province, and the country as a whole).

Most of those who did not think the situation had worsened were unsure whether the problem itself was worse or whether the issue was simply receiving more media attention than it used to receive. Some others said they simply had no way to gauge the situation over time, especially when discussing organized crime in the province or the country as a whole. Only a few participants felt the situation had improved over time. As evidence, they noted that they were hearing less about organized crime in the media and they took this as a sign that it was less serious.

When discussing the issue in the context of their own communities/regions, participants were much more likely to express categorically that the situation had worsened. The main reasons they offered to explain this were the same ones they gave to explain why they thought organized crime was a serious problem (i.e. multiplicity of actors and activities, increased sophistication, etc.). Moreover, these main reasons tended to be offered to explain the worsening situation at all three levels (i.e. community, province, country).

Most of the additional evidence (i.e. other than the main reasons identified above) provided by participants to explain why organized crime has increased or worsened over time tended to focus on the community/region. Such evidence included the following:

- More youth gangs
- More school-related crimes
- More swarmings
- Greater range of illicit drugs available (e.g. ecstasy)
- Increased security in bars and schools (e.g. metal detectors)
- Increased use of security cameras
- Increased crime rate
- Increased police presence in certain areas
- Stories of police corruption/collusion with organized crime.

Note the emphasis on different forms of youth-related activities.

Provincial level:

Other than the main reasons identified above, reasons explaining why organized crime was worse at the provincial level included:

- Gangs appearing in new places, such as the Hells Angels opening up a Bunker House in new communities like Sainte Anne de Beaupré
- More violence/turf wars
- More media/news reports
- Creation of police task forces on crime
- More talk from politicians about getting tough on crime and criminals
- Increased violence against civilians, such as the attempted murder of journalist Michel Auger.

Country as a whole:

As mentioned, participants tended to have more difficulty assessing the trend in organized crime as they moved from their community, to their province, to the country as a whole. Other than the main reasons identified above, reasons to explain their perception of why the situation has worsened at the national level included the following:

- Organized crime has become more common (i.e. white collar crime)
- Increased diversity of population (i.e. more ethnic groups)
- Specific laws put in place to fight organized crime (i.e. anti-gang legislation)
- Lax/open immigration policy
- More media/news reports
- Creation of the national gun registry
- Toughening up of the *Young Offenders Act*
- The government itself is involved in organized crime (i.e. Adscam).

#### **4.6 Types of Criminal Activities**

*Many Criminal Activities Identified, Consistency across All Groups*

There was a remarkable degree of consistency across all groups in both the types and relative importance of organized crime activities. Asked to identify the activities that come to mind when they think of organized crime, drugs were invariably mentioned first and most often. This included various aspects of the drug trade, from importing and selling, to drug production, such as marihuana grow operations or crystal meth labs. Not only were drugs mentioned first and most often, this was also seen to be the most serious issue, the main source of income for organized crime, and the root or cause of many other crimes (see below).

Other activities identified in most or all focus groups included:

- Prostitution
- Identity theft
- Firearms, including selling, using and smuggling
- Pornography, including child pornography
- Car theft, including chop shops and luxury car rings
- Fraud
- Money laundering
- White collar crimes/credit card or ATM fraud
- Extortion/intimidation, including vandalism and arson
- Breaking and entering and home invasions
- Cigarettes and liquor smuggling.

Activities identified less often included the following:

- Illegal trafficking of immigrants/humans
- Gambling
- Counterfeiting
- Government corruption/illegal political activities

- Loan sharking
- Bribery
- Bars/clubs
- Murder for hire (i.e. 'hits')
- Control of unions
- Organ donations.

*Most Serious Activities – Drugs, Prostitution, Pornography & Money Laundering*

There was also a high degree of consistency in all groups when participants were asked to identify what they would characterize as the three most serious criminal activities associated with organized crime. Once again, drugs and drug trafficking led the list, followed by the following group of activities: prostitution, money laundering, and white collar crimes, such as credit card or ATM fraud and identity theft. Other than these activities, other activities included in participants' top three list included illegal trafficking of human beings, gambling, loan sharking, car theft, and firearms trade.

*Most Serious Crimes Have Gravest Consequences on People's Lives, Most Prevalent*

Asked to explain why they thought the activities they identified were the most serious, participants often stated or suggested that these activities tended to have the gravest repercussions on people's lives, either in terms of intensity or in terms of the number of people affected. For example, drug trafficking was often considered to be the most serious activity because of its widespread consequences: it ruins the lives of people who take them, their families and loved ones, increases social and health care costs, and leads to numerous other criminal activities (e.g. thefts to help buy more drugs). The seriousness of illegal gambling was described in a similar way.

Prostitution and pornography (especially child pornography) were considered serious because of the intensity of their impact on those directly involved. While these activities may not have the same widespread consequences as drug trafficking, they ruin the lives of those involved, usually women and children, because they involve direct exploitation of human beings. Although trafficking in human beings was identified infrequently as an activity of organized crime, it was recognized as serious when it was identified for the same reason (i.e. exploitation of human beings).

White collar crimes, credit card or ATM fraud, and Internet fraud were considered serious because of their widespread effect. As criminal activities, they were perceived as netting large numbers of innocent people, often the elderly, and possibly wiping out their life savings in one fell swoop.

Money laundering was considered serious because it legitimized the gains of organized crime (obtained through activities such as drug trafficking, prostitution, pornography, and fraud) and made it impossible or very difficult to disentangle the legal from the illegal. There was a sense that money laundering was the means to make organized criminal activity undetectable and therefore make it impossible to prosecute the criminals.

*Difficulty Assessing Regional Differences, Less so in Terms of Groups Involved*

Participants had some difficulty distinguishing their region from others in the country in terms of the types of activities in which organized crime is involved. Underlying this was a general perception that organized crime is branching out into numerous areas. As such, there was a sense that the types of activities probably did not vary much from region to region except in terms of volume or scale. For example, some participants were of the general opinion that larger cities had a greater range of criminal activities simply by virtue of their larger size.

That said, when participants were asked specifically about the activities and actors characteristic of organized crime in their own province or region, differences did tend to emerge even though they were generally only differences of emphasis or involved a different 'mix' of activities. For example, when identifying activities in their own region, participants in port cities (i.e. Vancouver, Montreal, and Halifax) were more likely to identify drug smuggling (in contrast to selling/trafficking, which was emphasized by participants in all locations), trafficking in human beings, and car theft. Participants in other locations also identified car theft as an important activity, but it was noted that the stolen cars are then shipped to the port cities for export. Smuggling of alcohol and cigarettes and child pornography were identified most often in Cornwall. Participants in Vancouver and Sherbrooke were most likely to emphasize marijuana growth operations, although this was cited in all locations. Participants in the largest cities (i.e. Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto) were more likely to identify prostitution. Some participants in Red Deer were of the opinion that corporate or white collar crime was more characteristic of the eastern part of the country.

In sum, most felt that organized crime was similar across the country, but that the scale or volume of different types of activities varies somewhat by region. As a result, so too does the precise 'mix' of criminal activities in each area. The prevalence of different groups involved in organized crime in specific locations was also seen to vary (see next section).

#### **4.7 Groups Involved in OC**

*Various Groups Seen to be Involved in Organized Crime*

In some locations, participants were reticent when asked to identify groups involved in organized crime, but only insofar as it involved ethnic groups. However, this reticence was not present in all locations. Leading the way in terms of groups identified were biker gangs in general and the Hells Angels in particular. In fact, the Hells Angels was not only the biker gang most often identified as being involved in organized crime, it was the specific group that was identified most often as being involved in organized crime. Other biker groups identified much less often included the Rock Machine, the Banditos and the Los Padres. Gangs in general or street gangs were also identified by numerous participants, as were youth gangs.

While numerous participants, particularly in Montreal, identified the mafia, few referred to it as 'Italian' organized crime. Ethnic groups that were identified with considerable frequency, either in generic terms in locations that were reticent to single out specific groups (i.e. here, participants identified 'ethnic groups' in general) or by name in other

locations. These included Russians and other East Europeans, Chinese triads, East Indian and other Asian gangs, Haitians, Jamaicans, or Blacks in general, and Aboriginal Canadians.

Government and politicians were identified as groups involved in organized crime by one or two participants in most groups, as were business executives or white collar professionals (e.g. Enron). With respect to the former, the sponsorship scandal was cited on numerous occasions.

There was considerable regional variation in terms of the groups identified. Participants in the largest cities (i.e. Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto) were somewhat more likely to identify ethnic groups. Among these, participants in Vancouver and Toronto were more likely to identify Asian gangs, while participants in Montreal were the most likely to identify the traditional Italian mafia. Participants in Vancouver were most likely to identify East Indian and Asian gangs, while participants in Toronto were more likely to identify Haitian and Jamaican gangs.

While the Hells Angels were identified by participants in all cities, participants in Montreal and Sherbrooke were most likely to identify it. Many felt that the Hells Angels were much more established in Quebec than elsewhere in the country. This was especially the case in Sherbrooke. There was a sense that the establishment of the Hells Angels in their province might distinguish them from other parts of Canada. Native or Aboriginal gangs were identified most often in Cornwall, Red Deer, and Winnipeg. Participants in Red Deer were alone in identifying radical right-wing groups (e.g. skinheads), while those in Cornwall were alone in identifying truckers (given the proximity of the border).



## 5.0 IMPACT OF ORGANIZED CRIME

This section reports on participants' perceptions of the impact of organized crime on individuals and society. It includes participants' degree of concern about becoming victims of organized crime, their perceptions regarding what groups are more likely to be victimized, and what, if anything they would do if they ever became victims of organized crime.

### 5.1 Personal Exposure to OC

#### Most Have *Not* Been Victimized by Organized Crime, Some Uncertain

Many participants, sometimes almost everyone in the group, said that they or members of their family have been victims of crime. The types of crimes mentioned most often were things like car theft, break and enter (houses), breaking into cars to steal money or other property, and vandalism. Smaller numbers also identified other crimes, such as assault, sexual assault and identity theft.

Significantly, relatively few linked the crime that victimized them or their family to organized crime, at least before coming to the focus group that night. Some, however, appeared to rethink their previous perception, thinking that it might have involved organized crime. Others were simply unsure (*"How can we tell?"*). Activities most likely to be linked to organized crime included car theft, credit card fraud, and intimidation.

### 5.2 Level of Concern

#### Most *Not* Concerned About Being Victim of Organized Crime

Personal concern about becoming a victim of organized crime tended to vary. That said, despite the fact that most participants believe organized crime to be a serious problem that has become more serious over time, most participants said they were not worried that they or their family will become victims of organized crime. It appeared that more people were concerned about being a victim of 'other' crimes, not organized crime.

When asked directly about their lack of concern, many participants expressed the view that most criminal activities associated with organized crime are avoidable (i.e. people were seen to have a choice of whether or not they take illicit drugs, gamble, become or visit prostitutes, etc.). Unlike the potential for being victimized by 'random' or non-organized crime, many participants felt that there was a significant opportunity to avoid organized crime activities. In addition, some participants from the Winnipeg area and Red Deer commented that they feel safer living in the country than in the city. However, some also noted that there was always the possibility of being an accidental victim, like the young boy in Montreal who was killed as the result of a turf war, but this did not preoccupy them.

Typical comments in this area included the following:

- *"Unless you're involved in those types of activities, you're not likely to get hurt."*

- *“It doesn’t involve or affect me.”*
- *“I don’t bother them and they don’t bother me.”*
- *“As long as you don’t cross them or get involved, you’re not likely to be in any danger.”*
- *“I’m more concerned about being an innocent victim than a targeted one. But that’s no more likely to happen than getting hit by lightning.”*
- *“It doesn’t concern me.”\**
- *“I do not get involved in those types of activities.” \**
- *“If you get involved in those things, you’ll suffer the consequences. But if you’re not involved, you’ve got nothing to fear.”\**
- *“I’m more worried about day-to-day or random crime than organized crime.”*
- *“I don’t think they’re very active in our community.”*

\*Comments followed by an asterisk were originally in French.

Those who indicated that they are worried tended to be concerned for their children, not themselves. Many pointed to the increasing number of ‘shake downs’ and acts of intimidation in schools by youth gangs to explain their concern for their children. According to them, this type of activity constitutes organized crime. Interestingly, some of those who expressed concern for their children were more worried that they will be recruited into organized crime rather than that they will become victims of an organized crime.

Some of those who expressed concern that they might become victims of organized crime worried primarily about being victims of white collar crime, or more specifically credit card and ATM-type of fraud. This fear is based on a sense, as noted earlier, that organized crime no longer affects only those who choose to get involved in criminal activities, such as drugs and prostitution. It now has the potential to touch everyone. Some also worried about being an accidental victim (i.e. being at the wrong place at the wrong time).

### **5.3 Most Vulnerable Groups**

#### *Victimized Groups Seen to Include Youth, Elderly, Women & Less Fortunate*

A number of groups were identified as being potentially more susceptible to becoming victims of organized crime: youth, the elderly, young women and the less fortunate. Youth, primarily teenagers, were considered potential victims, both as victims properly speaking, and as individuals likely to be drawn into organized criminal activity. As victims, youth were considered particularly susceptible to drugs and intimidation. However, there was also a sense that youth could be attracted to organized crime as a way of life and drawn in or recruited through involvement in youth gangs who do the foot work for those higher up in the hierarchy. Various reasons were given to explain this including the fact that youth are impressionable, may be drawn to excitement and danger, may be disillusioned and in search of a sense of belonging, may be attracted by the money, and may suffer from low self-esteem.

The less fortunate were also seen by some as prone to victimization in this sense (i.e. as potential recruits to organized crime). This included lower-income Canadians, those with

less education, people suffering from mental illness, and people with drug addictions. Lower-income Canadians were viewed as susceptible to being drawn into organized crime as a way to increase their income. Those with less education or suffering from mental illness were viewed as potential recruits simply because they might not know better, while a few linked low education to low-income and saw the attraction of increasing income as a draw for the less educated. Finally, those with a drug addiction were considered vulnerable because of the need to feed their addiction.

Young women were considered more likely to become victims through prostitution and pornography, two activities that prey primarily on young women. The elderly were seen to be particularly susceptible to white collar crimes and fraud-related activities. There was a sense that seniors were more trusting, not to say gullible, and therefore a particular target of fraudulent activities. They were also seen to be less able to physically protect themselves, if needed.

Groups mentioned less often as potential victims included the following:

- *Newly-arrived immigrants*: Reasons given to explain their susceptibility to being victims included their lack of integration, their wanting to belong, their need for income, as well as the fact that they may be beholden to members of organized crime groups for getting into the country to begin with.
- *Small business owners*: Small business owners were seen as being susceptible to being forced to provide protection money. One participant in Montreal said she knows a restaurant owner who switched locations in order to avoid being intimidated.
- *Politicians*: Politicians were also seen as susceptible to bribery.
- *Banks and financial institutions*: Banks and financial institutions were seen as prime targets of fraudulent financial activities but also as possibly having individuals/employees working on illegal activities from the inside.
- *Gamblers*: Gamblers were seen as potential victims because their addiction makes them easy targets.

#### **5.4 Perceived Impact of OC**

##### *Difficulty Assessing 'Everyday' Impact of Organized Crime Except in General Terms*

Participants tended to have difficulty assessing the impact of organized crime on our daily lives, with many participants across the various groups unable to identify any impacts. Those who did identify impacts tended to focus on increased costs (i.e. monetary/economic costs). This included loss of tax revenues, increases in insurance rates, service charges, and costs in general, incurred to cover the losses associated with criminal activity. It was noted that the prices of certain items already factor in a cost in anticipation of theft or robbery. Some also pointed to increased costs of increasing surveillance, police resources, and health care costs (e.g. costs associated with treatment of drug addiction).

Some participants referred to the increased security measures in place and the inconveniences associated with this. This includes the need to jump through more and

more security hoops, remember numerous PINs, and be subject to greater scrutiny from credit card agencies. As an example of the latter, one participant noted that she received a call from her credit card company because her expenses for one month seemed out of the ordinary compared to her regular monthly expenses. This also included the increased use of metal detectors in schools and bars/night clubs to detect possible weapons.

Some referred to general social costs, including a greater sense of insecurity and fear in society in general, and a breakdown of a sense of community. Some focused on their children or the young in general and the psychological effects of bullying and intimidation.

## **5.5 Incident Reporting**

### *Most Would Go to Police if Victimized by Organized Crime, Some Less Sure*

Most participants said they would report to the police if they ever became a victim of organized crime. A few said they would go to their city councillor or a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), while a few others said they would go to the RCMP. Some said they were unsure about what they would do, including uncertainty about reporting the crime at all. It was noted that it was all well and good to talk about civic duty and responsibility but that in reporting on organized crime one might leave oneself (and one's family) open to intimidation. For this reason, some participants indicated that they might not report a crime or indicated that it would depend on the circumstances and the particular nature of the crime.

## **6.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

This section reports on participants' perceptions of the actors or groups involved in the fight against organized crime. This includes identification of the main groups involved in the fight, the level of government with lead responsibility, awareness of activities, campaigns or laws relevant to organized crime, and assessments of the performance of the main actors in the fight against organized crime. A number of related communications issues were also explored.

### **6.1 Main Actors in the Fight Against OC**

#### *Numerous Players Seen as Active in Fight against OC, Mainly Police Groups*

Participants identified a number of actors or groups involved in the fight against organized crime. However, they most often identified the police, followed distantly by government. Various different police groups were identified, including the police in general (i.e. generic reference), the RCMP by name, the CSIS, and special task forces or units set up within police organizations to deal specifically with organized crime.

While the police were routinely identified in an unprompted manner, some participants identified government only as a result of prompting (i.e. being asked: "what about government?"). In addition, where 'government' was volunteered as being active in the fight against organized crime, this was often not offered as one of the first or main top-of-mind responses.

Other groups or actors considered to be main players in the fight against organized crime, which were identified with some frequency, included:

- Judges/judiciary
- Immigration services
- The media
- Schools
- Community organizations
- Ordinary citizens
- Parents
- Churches.

Note the predominance in this list of non-governmental players (i.e. the media, schools, community organizations, ordinary citizens, parents, and churches).

Groups identified infrequently (i.e. by one or two participants) included insurance firms, property renters, and Canadian customs officers. Participants in Vancouver identified B.C. Hydro as a main player, explaining that the marijuana grow operations consume a great deal of electricity and that B.C. Hydro has a proposal in place that will enable them to monitor electricity usage as a possible way to detect these operations.

## 6.2 Responsibility Across Levels of Government

### *Sense that Federal Government has **Main** Responsibility or All Levels Together*

As noted, participants identified government as a key player in the fight against organized crime, but often as a result of prompting. When asked which level of government is most responsible for fighting organized crime, many identified the federal government. Many others, however, cited all levels of government together, where the fight against organized crime was seen to require a joint effort between all government levels. A much smaller proportion thought that provincial governments should take the lead because of the local or regional 'on-the-ground' nature of the criminal activities. Others simply did not know.

In explaining why they think the federal government has prime responsibility in the fight against organized crime, participants tended to focus on three reasons:

- *Available resources:* Many participants indicated that the federal government has primary responsibility because it has, or has access to, the resources necessary to fight organized crime. The focus here was mainly on the financial resources and spending power needed to fund activities designed to fight organized crime.
- *Nation-wide and international focus of organized crime:* Many felt that the federal government has the main responsibility because it is responsible for inter-provincial issues and international affairs. Since organized crime has inter-provincial and international dimensions, the federal government is the only level of government in Canada with the jurisdiction to deal with these aspects of organized crime.
- *Jurisdiction over criminal law:* It was also noted that organized crime falls in the sphere of criminal law and that the federal government has jurisdiction over criminal law under the constitution. This reason was identified less frequently than the other two reasons and primarily by participants with post-secondary education.

In explaining why the fight against organized crime should involve all levels of government, participants pointed most often to the need for coordination and cooperation between levels of government. An example of this is cooperation between law enforcement agencies at all three levels (e.g. municipal police, provincial police, and the RCMP). The need for coordination and cooperation was related primarily to the fact that organized crime activities are pervasive, involving all parts of the country and therefore all levels of government.

It was also noted that this type of coordination is necessary to ensure proper sharing of information. For instance, most people will report a crime, including organized crime, to their local police force and not think of going beyond that. It is therefore up to the government agencies to ensure that the information gets passed on to other key players. One participant added that even if you go to the RCMP to report a crime you suspect of being perpetrated by organized crime, they will ask you if you have filed a report with your local police force.

### 6.3 Awareness of Government Activities

#### *Limited Awareness of Government Initiatives, Activities, Laws or Public Campaigns*

Although there was general agreement that the federal government has primary responsibility in the fight against organized crime, or shares such responsibility with other government levels, most participants had little or no awareness of any initiatives, activities, laws, or public awareness campaigns put in place by the federal government. Moreover, there was little awareness of any initiatives put in place by any level of government (i.e. federal, provincial or municipal).

Some participants were aware of the existence of anti-gang legislation, and some made reference to a law allowing the seizure of goods acquired through organized crime. While most of those who identified these measures associated them with the federal government, a few were uncertain about which level of government had implemented them. Other activities or initiatives associated specifically with the federal government included the gun registry, combating cigarette smuggling, a task force on organized crime (unspecified), targeting the Hells Angels, tightening up immigration and border security, and toughening up the *Young Offenders Act*. Note that only a small number of participants identified each of these measures.

The only other specific federal initiative identified by name was cited by a participant in Halifax who works for a financial institution. The initiative in question is the Financial Transactions Reports Analysis Centre of Canada (FINTRAC), which is designed to detect the financing of terrorist activities and threats to the security of Canada. Finally, a few participants identified federal actors (as opposed to initiatives) that they believe are directly involved in the fight against organized crime, including the RCMP and CSIS.

Not surprisingly, identification of provincial initiatives varied by location. Overall, such initiatives tended to be cited by relatively small numbers. A few participants in Montreal and Sherbrooke referred to an initiative named 'Carcajou' designed to combat organized crime, but apparently no longer in operation. Participants in Red Deer referred to a new provincial measure intended to restrict the processing of crystal meth, as well as a 'Report a Poacher' initiative. Participants in Vancouver identified the use of bait cars to catch car thieves and a proposal by B.C. Hydro to monitor electricity use to detect marijuana grow operations. A few participants in most locations suggested that there were joint initiatives between the RCMP and provincial/local police forces, but no specific initiatives were identified.

Although a number of participants in many locations identified local or municipal laws designed to combat crime or organized crime, these tended to be quite general in nature and included such things as curfew laws, laws prohibiting large gatherings in certain areas, restrictions on wearing 'gang colors' or insignia, and the use of metal detectors in city bars.

Asked specifically what the police were doing to combat organized crime, participants tended to focus on awareness campaigns and enforcement, but primarily the latter. On the enforcement side, it was noted that the police have special units dedicated to organized crime, gang-related activities, and Internet crime. Many participants focused on activities

such as drug busts, increased patrolling of certain areas known for organized crime, patrolling of schools, undercover activities, and investigations of crimes. Many felt that the police's primary responsibility related to these types of activities. It was noted in Halifax, for example, that the police had just broken up a dial-a-drug ring through which people could order crack cocaine by phone.

Public awareness campaigns associated with the police tended to include attempts to raise awareness of crime and school-related activities, such as presentations and seminars to youth. A few referred to special task forces in place, but no specific initiatives associated with them were identified.

While many participants were aware of public awareness campaigns, the ones they identified tended to be designed to combat crime in general as opposed to organized crime. Campaigns that were identified included *Crime Stoppers*, *Neighbourhood Watch*, *Protect Your PIN*, the *D.A.R.E.* Program (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), *Block Parents*, *Rural Crime Watch*, *Shame the John* programs, and anti-bullying campaigns. Some simply referred generally to TV ads and newspaper ads in the area of crime. In general, such public awareness campaigns were seen to be useful because they raised awareness among Canadians, including preventative actions that could be taken, and provided opportunities for individuals to take action.

#### **6.4 Assessing Performance of the Criminal Justice System**

##### *Difficulty Assessing Performance of Main Actors in Fight Against Organized Crime*

Participants were quite forthcoming with assessments of the performance of key groups or organizations in the fight against organized crime. However, many acknowledged that they had no real basis for judging performance in this area. It became clear as participants began assessing the various players that the line between organized crime and crime in general tended to be blurred in their minds. In other words, participants tended to judge players in relation to fighting crime in general as opposed to organized crime. In addition, some noted that they did not have much or any concrete evidence on which to base their assessments. This should be kept in mind when interpreting participants' assessments of the various actors.

- *The police*: The police was the only group to receive a generally positive assessment in terms of their role in the fight against organized crime. There was a widespread sense that the police are the front-line actors in this fight insofar as they are 'on the street' and tend to be the first to respond to and deal with organized crime. There was also a general sense that they work hard and are dedicated, but are limited in their resources. Participants often summarized their assessment by saying that the police are doing "the best they can with the resources they have". A small minority offered criticism of the performance of the police, which generally took the form of suggesting that some police officers are probably in collusion with organized crime. Typical comments included the following:
  - "They're doing the best they can."
  - "They're doing a good job with limited resources."



- *“I have nothing but respect for the police officers but often the gangs are as well organized as they are.”\**
- *“They’re the first line of defence, the thin blue line.”*
- *“I don’t think they get the recognition they deserve.”*
- *“They’re very brave since they’re subject to being targeted or intimidated.”*
- *“You couldn’t pay me enough to do their job.”*
  
- *The courts:* Participants tended to be quite critical of the performance of the courts. Common criticisms included perceptions that courts were slow in terms of process and lax in terms of sentencing. Typical comments included:
  - *“The sentences handed out to these people are laughable.”*
  - *“These things drag on for years and we end up paying the bill.”*
  - *“Look how long it took them to put ‘Mom’ Boucher in prison.”\**
  - *“Most of those people will die of old age before being sent to prison.”\**
  - *“It’s laughable. The courts only encourage these criminals.”\**
  - *“The courts do nothing to take authority away from those who are condemned.”\**
  
- *The laws:* Laws also tended to be assessed critically by participants. Common criticisms included perceptions that the laws are too lax and provide too many loopholes. There was a sense that a good lawyer could always get someone off on a technicality. Some, however, were of the opinion that the laws themselves were good, but not applied. On this issue, criticism again turned to the courts and judges, who tended to be accused of not imposing the law to its full measure. The laws were also criticized by some for being out-of-date. Specifically, it was noted that more and more crime is being conducted via the Internet and that more laws are needed to regulate and deal with inappropriate use of this medium. Finally, some felt that the sentencing provisions in the laws should be made clearer to increase the deterrence value of the laws. Typical comments included:
  - *“With a good lawyer, these criminals can get off on technicalities.”*
  - *“There are too many loopholes in the laws.”*
  - *“We need special laws to deal with these people.”*
  - *“We’re much too concerned with protecting the rights of the accused as opposed to those of the victims.”*
  - *“You need laws with teeth in them. These people flout the law because they are not frightened by it.”*
  - *“The laws are good but not applied strictly enough”\**
  
- *Government at all levels:* Government performance was also assessed critically and tended to be based on a number of factors. Many participants repeated that they had no idea what, if anything, the government was doing in relation to organized crime. A more serious criticism, voiced by a few participants, was that government itself (i.e. specific individuals) was involved in organized crime. Others suggested that government was too concerned with the rights of criminals and needed to get tough on crime. Finally, some suggested that government should be doing more to fight

organized crime. While they admitted that they were not sure what government was doing, they explained that the prevalence of organized crime indicated that more needed to be done to fight it. Some participants were more positive in assessing the performance of RCMP and Canadian customs officials, who tended to be associated with the enforcement side of governmental activity. Typical comments included the following:

- *“There’s no political will to fight these people.”*
  - *“If they ever did something about it they’d have to start in their own back yard.”*
  - *“They have no credibility to speak or do anything on this issue.”*
  - *“There’s no way organized crime could survive if there were not some kind of political support for it.”*
  - *“They talk a lot about getting tough on crime but they do little about it.”*
  - *“The politicians are as corrupt as the criminals.”\**
  - *“They don’t do anything because if they did they would be implicated themselves.”\**
  - *“What’s the sponsorship scandal if not organized crime?”\**
- *Correctional system:* While some participants said that they had no basis for assessing the performance of the correctional system, most were very critical of it. As was the case with the courts and the laws, criticism tended to be general and stereotypical. The most common criticism was the perception that criminals lived well in prison, often better than people on the outside. As such, prisons do not serve as a deterrent. Here, more than in relation to other actors, there tended to be a focus on organized crime in particular. Many participants expressed the view that even when convicted, criminals continue to run their operations from behind bars. As well, some felt that people were recruited to join organized crime while in prison, or were ‘trained’ for it while incarcerated. As was the case with police officers and government, it was suggested that some officials in the correctional system were involved in organized crime. Comments included:
    - *“They live as well in prison as they do on the outside.”*
    - *“They live better in prison than most people do on the outside.”*
    - *“They run the prisons.”*
    - *“Nothing changes. They continue to run their operations from inside.”*
    - *“They simply buy off the prison officials.”*
    - *“They’re always smiling when they’re condemned to prison. That should tell us something.”\**
    - *“We’re too preoccupied with prisoners’ rights. Their life isn’t tough enough.”\**

\* Comments followed by an asterisk were originally in French.

## 6.5 Role of the Private Sector

### Main Role of Private Sector – Increased Security

Most participants felt that the private sector has a role to play in the fight against organized crime, in large part because of the increasing number of white collar crimes and types of fraud involving credit cards, the Internet, and ATMs. The private sector's main role was described as increasing and improving security. This took two forms:

- *Security of systems:* Many participants felt that the private sector (e.g. banks, financial institutions) should improve the security of their electronic systems in order to protect information (and money) and foil attempts to steal information that would allow criminals to commit fraudulent activities. Some felt that the private sector was already doing this and did not need any encouragement. It was noted, however, that the need was for continuous efforts, as each improvement in security is met by a more sophisticated way of bypassing it.
- *Investigation/monitoring of employees:* There was a sense among some participants that white collar crime and security breaches were not only the result of sophisticated techniques, but that, in some instances, there had to be some 'inside' connections facilitating the breach of security. In response to this, some participants felt that the private sector's fight against organized crime requires monitoring and security checks on all employees, including those at the top.

Some suggested that the private sector, especially banks, should mount awareness campaigns for their clients to make them more aware of things they should do or avoid doing in order to ensure their own protection against identity theft. A few suggested that the private sector should provide funds for those combating organized crime. Finally, a few participants in Halifax said that the private sector should stop clamouring for tax cuts since the tax revenue they generate could be used by government to help increase security in general.

## 6.6 Role of the Individual

### Role of Individuals in Fight Against Organized Crime is Mainly to Watch & Report

Most participants appeared to think that individuals have a role to play in the fight against organized crime. Many felt that they have a responsibility to be vigilant in terms of watching for criminal activities, and to report activities that they become aware of. Some also said they have the responsibility to denounce such acts when and if they become victims or witness them. Concretely, this meant coming forth and testifying.

The following roles/responsibilities were also identified:

- *Educating themselves:* Many participants said that individuals have a responsibility to educate themselves about organized crime not only to protect themselves from it but in order to be able to fight it as well. This included learning about who is involved in organized crime, what types of activities it involves, how people might become victims, and what to do if one becomes a victim.

- *Educating youth/raising awareness:* As noted earlier, many participants felt that youth are particularly susceptible to being victims of or getting involved in organized crime. Many felt that individual Canadians have a role to play in sensitizing their children about organized crime, especially as it relates to drug trafficking and prostitution.
- *Refraining from illicit activities:* Many participants said that, as individuals, they should not encourage organized crime by purchasing contraband or smuggled products, such as cigarettes and alcohol. That said, there was a general sense that people would continue to purchase such products in order to save money.
- *Exercising caution:* Some participants said that exercising caution was something ordinary individuals could do to combat organized crime. This included such things as not using ATM machines in convenience stores, not giving out credit card numbers, protecting PINs, tearing up/shredding documents with financial information before throwing them in the garbage, and being vigilant about money-making schemes that promise significant financial rewards or pay-offs.

## **6.7 Importance of Public Education**

### *Public Education Seen to be Important in the Fight Against Organized Crime*

Most participants think that public education and awareness can reduce the likelihood of being a victim of organized crime, while some felt that it could reduce the level of organized crime itself. This was based on a general sense that knowledge is power and that it is better to be informed about such issues than otherwise. More specifically, it was noted that awareness of the types of activities in which organized crime is involved makes one less likely to fall victim to them. This was especially the case in relation to white collar crimes and fraudulent activities.

Some participants saw no necessary connection between increased awareness about organized crime and a reduced likelihood of becoming a victim. As such, the examples of victimization that some of them gave tended to involve being in the wrong place at the wrong time (e.g. becoming an accidental victim of a turf war).

## **6.8 Sources of Credible Information on OC**

### *Many Would Go to Police, Internet for Information on Organized Crime*

Participants looking for information about organized crime would most likely go to the police (including the RCMP) or the Internet. Other sources identified with some frequency included the media in general, community organizations, and academia. A few said they would go to NGOs or international sources (unspecified). Very few identified the government or politicians as a source of information about organized crime.

## 6.9 Types of Information Desired

### Organized Crime Groups & Activities, Protection Tips – Most Important Types of Information

There are a number of different types of information that participants felt would be important for Canadians to have regarding organized crime (as part of a public awareness campaign). Heading the list were the types of activities and the groups involved in organized crime to enable Canadians to spot or know organized crime when they see it. Many also said that it would be important to have this information in relation to their own community or region (i.e. what is pertinent to where they live). Also mentioned with considerable frequency was information on how to protect oneself and one's family from organized crime. This would not only help ensure that individual Canadians are not victimized, but in the aggregate should help reduce the level of organized crime that takes place in Canada.

Other types of information judged to be useful included the following:

- The impact of organized crime on society and the economy
- How these groups organize themselves
- Laws in place to combat organized crime
- Organizations involved in the fight against organized crime
- What government is doing to fight organized crime
- What to do if one becomes a victim of organized crime
- How organized criminals recruit members
- Who is most likely to be victimized and how organized criminals approach their victims
- Signs or indications that point to the existence of organized criminal activity
- Lists of so-called 'legitimate' businesses/enterprises with links to organized crime.

## 6.10 Credible Spokespersons

### Police Top List of Credible Information Sources on Organized Crime

The police in general, and 'local' police and the RCMP in particular, were identified most often as being the most credible in terms of talking about organized crime and efforts to combat it.

While many identified the police, the following were also put forward as credible information sources/spokespersons:

- *Victims*: Some identified former victims of organized crime as credible spokespersons. It was noted that their testimonials and personal experience could be valuable in helping individuals avoid becoming victims themselves.
- *Media/journalists*: While some participants had suggested earlier that they were not sure how credible or accurate media reporting on organized crime was, many nonetheless identified it as a source of information they would trust. Some participants in Montreal and Sherbrooke specified that they would trust journalists like Michel Auger and Claude Poirier, both of whom have been threatened by

organized criminals. This was taken as a sign that they were doing a good job in investigating the phenomenon. Moreover, it was suggested that such individuals were not intimidated, which added to their credibility.

- *Former criminals*: Some participants identified former members of organized crime as credible sources of information. The sense was that these individuals know the system from the inside, having been directly involved in it, and are therefore trustworthy sources of information.
- *NGOs/academics*: Some felt that NGOs and academics investigating the phenomenon of organized crime are credible sources due primarily to their impartiality and expertise. There was a feeling that these sources would tend to be objective and therefore trustworthy.

Sources or spokespersons identified by no more than a couple of participants included MLAs, INTERPOL, CSIS, undercover agents, teachers, church groups, sports celebrities, and front-line health care workers, such as doctors and nurses who have to deal with some of the direct effects and consequences of organized crime.

It is noteworthy that few participants identified government or politicians as credible or trustworthy sources of information. That said, government departments and ministries (i.e. the bureaucracy) tended to be considered more credible than the government (i.e. the party in power) or politicians.

## **7.0 POTENTIAL MEASURES TO COMBAT ORGANIZED CRIME**

This section reports on participant perceptions of potential measures that could be taken by government to combat organized crime.

### **7.1 Views on Efficacy of Measures to Combat OC**

#### *Most Effective Measures to Fight OC – Tougher Sentencing, More Police & Seizing Proceeds*

Participants were asked to identify measures that they thought would be effective in terms of combating organized crime in Canada. On an unaided basis, participants focused most often on the need for tougher laws or sentences, followed by increasing the number of police and seizing property and other proceeds that resulted from organized crime. Smaller numbers identified the following measures on an unaided basis: tougher immigration laws, creation of special police units to fight organized crime, public awareness campaigns, restitution to communities affected by organized crime, and increasing social programs.

When participants in groups were unable to identify more than one or two measures, they were read a list of potential measures that could be adopted and asked to identify those that they think would be most effective. Potential measures included:

- Increasing crime prevention practices
- Providing more police officers
- Increased training of police officers
- Tougher sentencing
- Increasing rehabilitation programs
- Seizing the proceeds of crime (i.e. money/property gained through OC)
- More stringent/tougher immigration policies
- Putting more laws in place
- Increasing social programs, such as education, job training, drug treatment, recreation, and job creation
- Partnerships between government, police, and the private sector.

All of these measures tended to be supported by at least some participants in the group, and in some locations, all were widely supported. Consistent with their open-ended feedback, it appeared that participants were most likely to support tougher sentencing, providing more police, and seizing the proceeds of crime. Most participants supported these measures and many did so enthusiastically. Regarding the seizure of the proceeds of crime, a number of participants specified that these proceeds should be used to finance the fight against organized crime.

While at least a few participants in all groups supported increasing the training of police officers and putting more laws in place, the general impression seemed to be that the problem did not lie in these areas. It was noted, for example, that putting in place new laws would not be as effective as fully exploiting the current laws and police resources. Support

for increasing social and rehabilitation programs tended to vary. In some groups, these measures received the support of only a few participants, while in others many participants favoured such measures. Many of those who supported the measures perceived poverty as a root cause drawing people into organized crime.

Despite the already-noted reticence of some participants to identify specific ethnic groups involved in organized crime, many participants supported tougher immigration policies. A few added that any immigrant convicted of organized criminal activity should be deported immediately. That said, some participants worried that this could lead to racial profiling and racist immigration policies.

Encouraging crime prevention practices and developing partnerships between government, police, and the private sector tended to be supported, but primarily as basic, common-sense approaches to the issue. In other words, some felt that these things should be done automatically.

In addition to measures they were asked about specifically, additional government measures suggested by participants for fighting organized crime included the following:

- Increase security at border crossings
- Review/monitor police forces for possible connections to organized crime
- Inform citizens about programs already in place to fight organized crime.

## **7.2 Fight Against OC as a Government Priority**

### *Many Attribute Less Priority to Organized Crime than Other Government Priorities*

Despite the fact that most participants regard organized crime as a serious problem that has gotten worse over time, it is generally not considered to be as important as other governmental priorities. Many participants felt that issues such as health care and education were more important than, and therefore took priority over, the fight against organized crime. In response to this, however, some participants who felt that the fight against organized crime was a top priority pointed out that these issues were all interconnected. It was noted, for example, that organized crime probably has an impact on health care costs and that it cannot be separated from the latter or for that matter from other social issues.

In general, comparing the priority that should be attributed to the fight against organized crime to other government priorities was a question that participants had difficulty answering. It was too broad, and involved an 'apples to oranges' type of comparison.

## **7.3 OC vs. Other Types of Crime**

### *Most Attribute Same Priority to Organized Crime as Other Types of Crime*

Most participants felt that organized crime should have the same if not higher priority than other public-security-type issues (i.e. other types of crime). In explaining why, many participants tended to focus on the interconnectedness of organized crime with other types of crimes, such as youth crime and violent crime. From this perspective, it is not possible



to effectively address other problems that society faces in the area of justice and public security without according priority to fighting organized crime. Others felt it is more serious precisely because it is organized, and therefore presents a more serious threat.

While not explicitly articulated, there may be another reason why at least some participants felt that organized crime is as important if not more important than other types of crime. In the course of the discussions on organized crime, it became clear that many participants do not clearly distinguish between organized crime and crime in general including actions of youth gangs, such as swarmings and bullying. To the extent that they do not distinguish organized crime from these types of crime, it is likely to acquire a similar importance in their eyes.

Some participants felt that priority should be given to 'other' types of crime over organized crime because of their belief that 'normal' crime was more likely to affect them and their families. This perception was directly related to the 'disconnect' between the perceived seriousness of organized crime and the view that many expressed that they were not concerned about being victimized by it.

#### **7.4 OC vs. Terrorism**

##### *General Consensus Fight Against OC Higher Priority Than Fight Against Terrorism*

There was a general consensus among participants that the fight against organized crime was more important than the fight against terrorism. The former was viewed as a significant problem in Canada, while the latter generally was not. However, some participants were of the opinion that the two might be interconnected with organized crime providing resources and financing to terrorists. For these participants, the fight against one could not be separated from the fight against the other.

A small number expressed greater concern about terrorism, feeling that they and other Canadians were more likely to become victims of terrorism because of its random nature (i.e. not usually targeted at specific individuals) than they were of becoming victims of organized crime (which was largely seen to be avoidable).

**APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT SCREENER**

## Recruitment Screener

### Profile characteristics:

- 14 focus groups to be conducted in seven locations: Halifax, Montreal (French), Sherbrooke (French), Toronto, Winnipeg, Red Deer and Vancouver.
- The composition of the focus groups to be as follows:
  - Participants would be 18+ years, with a mix by age, and an approximate gender split.
  - The two groups in each location to be recruited according to education level: Group 1 – high school or less; Group 2 – post-secondary education (i.e. mix of those who have taken some college/university or completed college/ university).
  - For the larger urban centres, approximately half of the participants to be members of visible minorities from a mix of ethnic backgrounds.
  - For the two smaller locations, approximately half of the participants to be drawn from the rural area 25-30 minutes outside of the city centre.
- 12 participants to be recruited for 8-10 to show per group.
- Participants to be paid \$50.
- The groups to be allocated as follows:

	Toronto	Winnipeg	Red Deer	Vancouver	Montreal	Sherbrooke	Halifax
	English	English	English	English	French	French	English
<b>Date</b>	<b>June 20</b>	<b>June 21</b>	<b>June 22</b>	<b>June 23</b>	<b>June 21</b>	<b>June 22</b>	<b>June 23</b>
6:00 pm	High school	Post-secondary	High school	Post-secondary	Post-secondary	High school	Post-secondary
8:00 pm	Post-secondary	High school	Post-secondary	High school	High school	Post-secondary	High school

- The groups would be conducted in regular focus group facilities in the five larger urban centres. In the two smaller locations, the groups would be conducted in hotel meeting rooms.
- The groups would last two hours in length.
- If respondent does not qualify, discontinue screener after completing 2-3 more questions.
- All respondents should be able to clearly articulate themselves (screen out if this is not the case).
- Sponsorship of study to be revealed (Government of Canada). The topic for the focus groups (i.e. organized crime) must not be identified to potential recruits.

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm calling on behalf of Phoenix, a public opinion research firm. We've been commissioned by the Government of Canada to conduct a series of discussion groups with Canadians to explore current issues of interest to Canadians.

Each discussion group will last two hours. People who take part will be paid \$50 in cash for their time, and refreshments will be served. Your participation in the research is completely voluntary and your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect any dealings you may have with the Government of Canada. All information collected will be used for research purposes only in accordance with laws designed to protect your privacy.

May I ask you a few questions to see whether you qualify for the discussion group?

- |     |   |                         |
|-----|---|-------------------------|
| Yes | 1 | (CONTINUE)              |
| No  | 2 | (THANK AND DISCONTINUE) |

IF RESPONDENT QUESTIONS VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH, INVITE HIM/HER TO CONTACT PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS CANADA MEDIA RELATIONS AT 613-991-0657.

---

1. Could you please tell me which of the following age groups you fall into...? (READ LIST; GET GOOD MIX)

- |              |   |                         |
|--------------|---|-------------------------|
| Less than 18 | 1 | (THANK AND DISCONTINUE) |
| 18-30        | 2 |                         |
| 31-40        | 3 |                         |
| 41-54        | 4 |                         |
| 55 and over  | 5 |                         |

2. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (READ LIST IF NECESSARY; PUT IN APPROPRIATE GROUPS)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Less than high school                    | 1 |
| High school                              | 2 |
| Some college/technical school/CEGEP      | 3 |
| Graduated college/technical school/CEGEP | 4 |
| Some university                          | 5 |
| Graduated university                     | 6 |

**ASK IN TORONTO, WINNIPEG, VANCOUVER, MONTREAL AND HALIFAX:**

3. For this research, we want to talk with people of different backgrounds. Do you consider yourself to be a member of a visible minority in Canada? (WATCH QUOTAS)

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| Yes | 1 |
| No  | 2 |

IF YES, ASK:

4. Do you consider yourself to be a member of any of the following groups? (READ LIST; ACCEPT ONE RESPONSE ONLY)

Black (e.g. African, Caribbean)  
Chinese  
Japanese  
South Asian (e.g. East Indian, Pakistani)  
South-East Asian (e.g. Vietnamese, Cambodia, Indonesian)  
Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

ASK IN RED DEER, ALBERTA AND SHERBROOKE, QUEBEC:

5. Do you live in the city of (INSERT NAME) or in the surrounding area? By surrounding area, we mean a smaller town or rural area 25-30 minutes outside the city centre. (WATCH QUOTAS).

City 1  
Outside city 2

6. Have you ever attended a discussion group or interview which was arranged in advance and for which you received a small sum of money?

Yes 1  
No 2 (GO TO Q9)

7. When did you last attend one of these discussion groups or interviews?

Less than 12 months ago 1 (THANK AND DISCONTINUE)  
Over 12 months ago 2

8. Have you attended more than five discussion groups or paid interviews in your lifetime?

Yes 1 (THANK AND DISCONTINUE)  
No 2

9. Do you, or does any member of your household or immediate family, work in any of the following fields? (READ LIST)

Advertising,  
Market research,  
The media (radio, television, newspapers, magazines etc.)  
Law enforcement/criminology\* (police, rcmp, prison guards, etc.)  
The courts or any other part of our legal system\*

[ ] Yes (DISCONTINUE)  
[ ] No (CONTINUE)

\*Anyone involved in these areas and their family members should be screened out (e.g. professors, students, workers). Define this broadly, not narrowly.

*RECORD GENDER BY OBSERVATION (ENSURE APPROXIMATE SPLIT)*

Female 1  
Male 2

The group discussion will take place on (DAY OF WEEK), June (DATE), at (TIME). It will last two hours. As mentioned, people who attend will receive a cash payment of \$50 for their time, and light refreshments will be served. Would you be willing to attend?

Yes 1  
No 2 (THANK AND DISCONTINUE)

Do you have a pen handy so that I can give you the address where the discussion group will be held? It will be held at \_\_\_\_\_. Please tell people you are there for a focus group. I would like to remind you that the group is at (TIME) on (DATE).

The group will be recorded for research purposes and members of the research team may be observing the discussion. You will be asked to sign a waiver to acknowledge that you may be audio or video-taped during the session. All information collected or disclosed will be used for research purposes only and administered in accordance with laws designed to protect your privacy. If you use reading glasses, please bring them to the group with you. Please arrive 15 minutes early.

As we are only inviting a small number of people to attend, your participation is very important to us. If for some reason you are unable to attend, please call so that we can get someone to replace you. You can reach us at \_\_\_\_ at our office. Please ask for \_\_\_\_\_. Someone will call you the day before to remind you about the discussion group.

***Could I please confirm your name and phone number?***

\*\*\*\*\*

RESPONDENT'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE #: HOME \_\_\_\_\_

FOCUS GROUP TIME/LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you.**

**APPENDIX B: MODERATOR'S GUIDE**

## Moderator's Guide

### Introduction (5 minutes)

- ❑ Introduce moderator/Phoenix
- ❑ Thanks for attending/value your being here
- ❑ Explain general purpose of focus group discussions:
  - Gauge *opinions* about issues/ideas/products
  - Not a knowledge test; no right or wrong answers (interested in opinions)
  - Okay to disagree; want people to speak up if hold different view
- ❑ Tonight, we're conducting research on behalf of the Government of Canada. We'll be talking about organized crime, and your views on the current situation in Canada. I want to let you know that none of you are experts in this field, and this evening's discussion does not require any specific knowledge. We are interested in your opinions, not 'professional advice'.
- ❑ Looking for candour and honesty; comments treated in confidence; reporting in aggregate form only; audio-recording for note-taking purposes only; observers behind one-way glass (modify for focus groups in hotel meeting rooms with AV equip.).
- ❑ Please turn off your cell phone, if you have one.
- ❑ Any questions?
- ❑ Roundtable introduction: please tell us your first name and one of your favourite interests or hobbies.

\*asterisks identify most important questions.

### Main Impressions & Perceptions of Organized Crime (45 mins)

We asked you to complete a short questionnaire while you were waiting. Did everyone have a chance to do this? (GET HANDCOUNT, THEN PROCEED).

We'll start by talking about some of the issues identified in the questionnaire.

1. \*What is the main image or impression that comes to mind when you think about organized crime in Canada? Anything else?
2. When we speak of organized crime, what are we talking about? What is a criminal organization? What constitutes a crime group?
3. \*What is your image or impression of organized crime based on? That is, what things influence your perceptions of organized crime in Canada? Anything else? What has the most influence on your perceptions of organized crime in Canada?

Probe:           - probe for specifics  
                  - media: what type (TV, radio, newspapers, etc.); type of stories



- conversations (friends, family); movies/TV shows

4. \*In your opinion, how serious a problem is organized crime at this time? What did you put on the short questionnaire we asked you to complete? (GET HANDCOUNT OF RATINGS, THEN DISCUSS) Why do you say that?
5. \*Over the past 5-10 years, do you think there has been an increase, no change, or a decrease in the amount of organized crime...? (READ LIST) What makes you think that? That is, what type of 'evidence' are you using?
  - a) in Canada?
  - b) in your province?
  - c) in your city or local area?
6. \*When you think about organized crime in Canada, what types of criminal activity do you think of? Anything else?

Probe:           - activities associated with organized crime  
                  - main source of income of organized criminal groups

**IF PARTICIPANTS ARE UNABLE TO IDENTIFY ACTIVITIES, OFFER A FEW OF THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES (RANDOMIZE ITEMS ACROSS THE FOCUS GROUPS):**

I'm going to identify some activities that organized crime may or may not be involved in. For each, I'd like to know whether you think organized crime is active in that area. How about...?

- Car theft
- Break & entering and home invasions
- Prostitution
- Illegal trafficking of immigrants
- Drugs (importing/exporting and street-level trafficking)
- Money laundering (putting illegal cash into legal bank accounts)
- Gambling
- Marijuana grow operations
- Extortion or intimidation (e.g. buying 'protection')
- Pornography, including sexual exploitation of children
- Counterfeiting
- Gangs
- Credit card or ATM fraud
- Cigarette and liquor smuggling
- 'White collar' crimes, like computer/Internet fraud and stock market cheating
- Firearms (trafficking, smuggling, sales of illegal weapons)
- Identity theft

7. \*Please identify the three criminal activities from the list you just provided that you think are the most serious. Why do you think these activities are the most serious?
8. \*Are the activities that organized crime engages in in your province or region any different from the activities of organized crime in other parts of the country? If so, how is this different?
9. \*What about the people involved in organized crime... who do you think is likely to get involved in organized crime? In your view, what types of people or groups are active in organized crime in Canada? How about in your province? In your city or local area?

Probe: - types of groups active in OC (e.g. biker gangs, Asian, Aboriginal, Black, street gangs, East European, Italian Mafia, etc.)

### **Impact of Organized Crime (20 mins)**

10. \*Have you or your family ever been a victim of crime? If so, how? Have you ever been a victim of organized crime? If so, how? (KEEP BRIEF. DO NOT WANT LONG DESCRIPTIONS/STORIES)
11. \*How concerned are you that you or your family may become a victim of organized crime? Has your level of concern increased or decreased in the past 5-10 years? Why?
12. \*Some groups of individuals are victimized more than others by organized crime. In your opinion, which groups in society are particularly vulnerable to being victimized by organized crime? Why? Any others?

Probe: - types of groups commonly victims of OC  
- e.g. youth, seniors, women, members of ethnic group, etc.

13. \*Does organized crime have an impact on our daily lives? If so, in what way(s)?

Probe: - nature and extent of impact

14. What would you do if you became a victim of organized crime? Where would you go for assistance? Would you do anything else?

### **Roles & Responsibilities (35 mins)**

15. \*Who are the main players in terms of fighting organized crime in Canada? Any others? Which level of government do you think is most responsible for fighting organized crime? Why?
16. \*What Government of Canada initiatives or activities have you heard about aimed at combating organized crime? Are you aware of any initiatives or activities by your

provincial government aimed at combating organized crime? If so, what? How about the police... what do you see them doing to combat organized crime?

17. Do you know about any laws in place to combat crime? What about laws to combat organized crime?
18. Do you recall any public awareness campaigns to combat organized crime or for that matter crime in general? If so, which ones? Have they changed your behaviour in any way? If so, in what way(s)?

Probe: - Crime Stoppers, Neighbourhood Watch, Protect your Pin

19. \*There are a number of groups or organizations that have a role in fighting crime in general, and organized crime in particular. Thinking specifically about organized crime, I'd like to know how you'd rate their performance in combating organized crime in Canada. How about...? (READ/ROTATE ORDER)

- The police.
- Our courts.
- Our laws.
- Government at all levels.
- Correctional system

20. What role do you see the private sector playing to help combat organized crime?
21. What role can you as an individual play?
22. \*Do you think that public education can reduce the likelihood of being a victim of organized crime? Why/why not? Where would you go to get information about organized crime now? What types of information would be most important for Canadians to have or know?
23. \*In terms of talking about organized crime and efforts to combat it in Canada, what organizations or officials do you think are most credible or trustworthy? Anyone else?

Probe: - types of groups most credible  
- e.g. chief of police, justice officials (fed/prov), politicians (fed/prov), media commentators, academics/legal experts, etc.

### **Potential Measures to Combat Organized Crime (15 mins)**

24. \*Thinking broadly about government efforts to combat organized crime, do you think governments should be doing more in this area? If so, what else should they be doing?

Probe: - measures most important/effective in fighting organized crime  
- main ingredients in fighting organized crime

IF PARTICIPANTS ARE UNABLE TO IDENTIFY MEASURES, OFFER 4-5 OF THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES (RANDOMIZE ITEMS USED ACROSS THE FOCUS GROUPS) AND SAY:

How effective do you think the following actions would be in reducing the level of organized crime in Canada, including your province?

- Increasing crime prevention practices
- Providing more police officers
- Increased training of police officers
- Tougher sentencing
- Increasing rehabilitation programs
- Seizing the proceeds of crime (i.e. money/property gained through OC)
- More stringent/tougher immigration policies
- Putting more laws in place.
- Increasing social programs, such as education, job training, drug treatment, recreation, and job creation
- Partnerships between government, police, and the private sector

25. \*Given that resources are limited, what priority do you think should be given to fighting organized crime compared to other government priorities? And how about compared to other problems that society faces in the area of justice and public security? And how about compared to the fight against terrorism?

## Conclusion

26. Do you have any final comments or suggestions about anything we have discussed tonight?

**THANK PARTICIPANTS. COLLECT QUESTIONNAIRES.**

**APPENDIX C: MINI-QUESTIONNAIRE**

### Mini Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions.

1. Please identify the main image or impression that comes to mind when you think about organized crime in Canada.

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2. In your opinion, is organized crime a serious problem in Canada at this time? Please use the following 5-point scale.

1                       2                       3                       4                       5

Not serious at all

In between

Very serious

3. Over the past 5-10 years, do you think there has been an increase, no change, or decrease in the amount of organized crime in Canada?

1                       2                       3                       4                       5

Decrease

About the same

Increase

4. How concerned are you personally about organized crime?

1                       2                       3                       4                       5

Not concerned at all

In between

Very concerned

5. What types of activities do you associate with organized crime in Canada?

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6. What groups would you say are most involved in organized crime in Canada, including in your region or province?

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**Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please bring it in the group with you.**