



Webinar | Criminal Leviathans: How Prison Gangs Organize Crime and Threaten the State from Behind Bars

This webinar was the second webinar in <u>a series presenting innovative research on crime and violence in Latin America and the Caribbean</u>. If you would like to receive updates via email on future webinars in this series, sign up for the series mailing list here.

From Brazil to El Salvador, prison gangs have transformed the state's disciplinary institutions into headquarters for their criminal activities. At the same time, they govern—providing order and physical safety for millions of low-income residents across vast informal peripheries



neglected by governments. The leading example is Brazil's Primerio Comando da Capital (PCC), which since the early 2000s has enjoyed a criminal monopoly in São Paulo, imposing a peaceful social order in the urban periphery. Its subsequent expansion into every state in Brazil triggered the rise of local prison gangs that emulate and often confront the PCC. The PCC's superior organization gives it advantages over rivals; however, it has also faced setbacks and resistance. But has the PCC's power come about 'naturally' or is it in some ways enabled by existing government policies?

On March 31, 2021, Innovations for Poverty Action, the Becker Friedman Institute at the University of Chicago, and Princeton University held the second webinar in a series presenting innovative research on crime and violence in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this webinar, **Benjamin Lessing** (University of Chicago) presented his research on prison gangs in Brazil. **Joana Monteiro** (Rio de Janeiro's Prosecutor Office/ FGV) then discussed the policy implications of this work. The presentations were followed by Q&A. This webinar was held in both English and Spanish, with translation from English to Spanish (and vice versa) provided.

Speaker

• Benjamin Lessing, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago

Policy Discussant

• Joana Monteiro, Head of Research at the Rio de Janeiro's Prosecutor Office and Professor at the Brazilian School of Public and Business Administration at Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV/EBAPE)

Moderator

• Laura Rodríguez, Regional Research Manager, IPA Latin America & Caribbean (IPA LAC)

Watch the webinar recording below:

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Spanish recording:

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Webinar



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