

The Terrible Trade-Off: Why Governments Must Choose Between More Violence or Stronger Gangs

Description

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Nearly every neighborhood in Medell  n, Colombia, has a *combo*, or local street gang  [almost four hundred in all](#). They earn most of their money from local drug sales. Some also run protection rackets, while others market legal goods  arepas, eggs, and even cooking gas  to locals. All these revenues make each Medell  n neighborhood a valuable prize for combos to control.

That competition for prime territory should be a recipe for violence. Yet the city has an annual homicide rate far lower than that of cities like Chicago. Why?

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Image credit: [National Police of Colombia](#)

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