



OJJDP FACT SHEET

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Highlights of the 2001 National Youth Gang Survey

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The 2001 National Youth Gang Survey is the seventh annual survey conducted by the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) since 1995. The 2001 survey used the same nationally representative sample as the surveys conducted since 1996, which consists of the following:

- ◆ A total of 1,216 police departments serving cities with a population of 25,000 or more (larger cities).
- ◆ A total of 661 suburban county police and sheriff's departments (suburban counties).
- ◆ A randomly selected sample ($n=398$) of police departments serving cities with a population between 2,500 and 25,000 (smaller cities).
- ◆ A randomly selected sample ($n=743$) of rural county police and sheriff's departments (rural counties).

Survey recipients were asked to report information only for youth gangs, defined as "a group of youths or young adults in your jurisdiction that you or other responsible persons in your agency or community are willing to identify or classify as a 'gang.'" Motorcycle gangs, hate or ideology groups, prison gangs, and exclusively adult gangs were excluded from the survey.

Survey Findings

Of 3,018 survey recipients, 2,560 (85 percent) responded to the 2001 survey. All cities with a population of 250,000 or more reported gang activity in 2001, as did 85 percent of cities with a population between 100,000 and 249,999; 65 percent of cities with a population between 50,000 and 99,999; 44 percent of cities with a population between 25,000 and 49,999; and 20 percent of cities with a population between 2,500 and 24,999. Thirty-five percent of suburban counties and 11 percent of rural counties reported gang activity in 2001. Additionally, 95 percent of the jurisdictions reporting gang activity in 2001 also reported gang activity in previous survey years. Based on survey results, it is estimated that nearly 3,000 jurisdictions across the United States experienced gang activity in 2001.

Available data for gang-problem cities with a population of 25,000 or more show that 42 percent reported an increase in the number of gang members, and 45 percent reported an increase in the number of gangs from the previous 2 survey years. The largest gang-problem cities (i.e., those with a population of 100,000 or more) have consistently reported greater numbers of gang members over the years the survey has been conducted. A majority (56 percent) of these cities reported either an increase or no significant change in the number of gang members in 2001.

A significant number of gang-problem cities across the United States reported gang-related homicides in 2001, including 69 percent of those with a population of 100,000 or more and 37 percent of those with a population between 50,000 and 99,999. More than half of all homicides in Los Angeles and Chicago were reported to be gang related in 2001 (59 percent and 53 percent, respectively). The total number of gang-related homicides (698) in these two cities alone was greater than the total number of gang-related homicides (637) reported by 130 other gang-problem cities with a population of 100,000 or more.

Sixty-three percent of gang-problem jurisdictions reported the return of gang members from confinement to their jurisdiction in 2001.¹ More than two-thirds (69 percent) of these jurisdictions reported that gang members returning from confinement considerably affected their jurisdictions' gang problem in 2001. A large proportion of these jurisdictions reported that returning members noticeably contributed to an increase in violent crime (63 percent of respondents) and drug trafficking (68 percent) by local gangs. Additionally, more than one-third (34 percent) of these jurisdictions reported the absence of community programs to assist members returning from confinement, and 35 percent could not provide information regarding these types of programs.

¹ An additional 26 percent could not make a determination, possibly reflecting a lack of information or difficulties associated with assessing available information related to this growing concern. Most of these responses were received from agencies serving less-populated areas. Unless otherwise noted, "do not know" responses are excluded from analysis in this Fact Sheet.



The proportion of law enforcement agencies that reported recording criminal offenses as “gang related” varied by jurisdiction size, ranging from 60 percent of gang-problem jurisdictions with a population of 100,000 or more to 32 percent of those with a population of less than 25,000. Among these agencies, offenses most often recorded as gang related were violent offenses (85 percent of respondents), property offenses (75 percent), and drug offenses (74 percent).

The majority (80 percent) of all gang-problem jurisdictions reported maintaining intelligence records on gang members, with 72 percent of these agencies reporting computerized record storage. A majority of respondents also reported that their intelligence information differentiates between categories of gang membership (66 percent of respondents) and is subject to a retention period (65 percent). Less than half (39 percent) reported that their agency’s intelligence information is currently part of a larger (e.g., regional or state) system.

Respondents were asked about various strategies currently used to combat their jurisdiction’s youth gang problem. A curfew ordinance, or other similar restriction prohibiting nighttime congregation of youth, was reported by a majority (62 percent) of gang-problem areas. The majority (86 percent) of these jurisdictions estimated that this strategy has demonstrated at least some degree of effectiveness. The use of a firearm suppression initiative was reported by 20 percent of all gang-problem jurisdictions, but by nearly one-half (47 percent) of cities with a population of 100,000 or more. Infrequently reported were the use of

abatement ordinances (12 percent of respondents) and civil injunctions (6 percent), although these strategies were more prevalent in larger areas. Nearly one-third (32 percent) of gang-problem jurisdictions (located predominantly in less populated areas) did not report using any of the aforementioned strategies to combat their local gang problem in 2001. Among those who responded in the affirmative, 68 percent reported only one such strategy (predominantly a curfew ordinance), indicating a greater prevalence of general, rather than specific, strategies.

For Further Information

Extensive analysis of the 2001 survey is ongoing and will be combined with the 1999 and 2000 surveys in a comprehensive report examining nationwide trends pertaining to patterns of gang activity, characteristics of gangs and gang members, and the impact of gangs across jurisdictions. For additional information about youth gangs, call the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s (OJJDP’s) Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse at 800-638-8736 or contact NYGC at 800-446-0912 or www.iir.com/nygc/.

Arlen Egley, Jr., and Aline K. Major are Research Associates with NYGC, which is operated for OJJDP by the Institute for Intergovernmental Research in Tallahassee, FL.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime.