



# OJJDP FACT SHEET

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## Highlights of the 2000 National Youth Gang Survey

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The 2000 National Youth Gang Survey is the sixth annual gang survey conducted since 1995 by the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC). The 2000 survey used the same sample as the surveys conducted from 1996 through 1999, which consisted of the following:

- ◆ A total of 1,216 police departments serving all larger cities (with populations of 25,000 or more).
- ◆ A total of 661 suburban county police and sheriff's departments (all suburban counties).
- ◆ A randomly selected sample ( $n=398$ ) of police departments serving cities with populations between 2,500 and 24,999 (smaller cities).
- ◆ A randomly selected sample ( $n=743$ ) of rural county police and sheriff's departments (rural counties).

Respondents to the 2000 survey were requested 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 adult gangs were excluded from the survey.

### Survey Findings

Of 3,018 survey recipients, 2,542 (84 percent) responded to the 2000 survey. Forty percent of the sampled law enforcement agencies reported active youth gangs in their jurisdictions, 4 percent less than in 1999. Based on survey results, NYGC researchers estimate that more than 24,500 gangs and 772,500 gang members were active in more than 3,330 jurisdictions across the United States in 2000.

Respondents<sup>1</sup> were asked to provide information on the characteristics of gang-related violent crime in their jurisdictions. The percentage of respondents who reported that the majority of gang-related violent crime was committed against members of another gang ranged from 23 percent in smaller areas to 54 percent in larger areas.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, the percentage of respondents

who reported that the majority of gang-related violent crime was committed against persons not involved in gangs ranged from 59 percent in smaller areas to 21 percent in larger areas. Additionally, 84 percent of respondents reported at least one occurrence in which one or more gang members used a firearm in an assault crime. Sixty percent of respondents reported that individual gang members acting alone or with a few other gang members committed the majority of gang-related violent crime, and 46 percent of respondents reported that the majority of gang-related violent crime was committed on the street. These latter two findings varied little across population sizes.

Respondents were asked to identify any gang subgroups within their jurisdictions. Forty-nine percent of respondents reported at least one subgroup based on area or location, followed by 45 percent based on age and 32 percent on gender. A large majority (i.e., more than 75 percent) of respondents indicated that each subgroup has a special name.

Among respondents reporting gang activity in 2000, 95 percent identified activity within one or more high schools in their jurisdictions. Ninety-one percent of respondents reported gang activity within one or more intermediate schools in their jurisdictions.

Seventy-two percent of respondents reported that gang members who returned to the community from prison had a negative impact on youth gang problems, whereas 7 percent reported no impact and 21 percent reported that they could not make a determination.<sup>3</sup> Among agencies that reported an impact, 30 percent reported that returning gang members greatly contributed to the growth of drug trafficking, 19 percent reported that they greatly contributed to an increase in violence among local gangs, and 12 percent reported that they greatly increased local gang access to weapons.

<sup>1</sup> For the remainder of this Fact Sheet, "respondents" refers only to those agencies reporting youth gang activity in 2000.

<sup>2</sup> In this Fact Sheet, "smaller areas" refers to agencies serving jurisdictions with a population of less than 25,000 and "larger areas" refers to agencies serving jurisdictions with a population of more than 100,000.

<sup>3</sup> Agencies reporting "do not know" are presented here because of their appreciable number. Elsewhere in this Fact Sheet, "do not know" responses are excluded from analysis.

Witness intimidation by gang members was reported as a common occurrence by 66 percent of respondents, ranging from 44 percent of respondents in smaller areas to 83 percent of respondents in larger areas. Eighty-two percent reported that measures are currently being taken to remedy the problem of witness intimidation.

Thirty-seven percent of respondents experiencing gang activity in 2000 operated a specialized unit with two or more officers assigned primarily to deal with youth gang matters. More than half of these agencies reported that two to four full-time officers are currently assigned to a gang unit. For a large majority of respondents (83 percent), the activities of patrol/enforcement, intelligence gathering, and investigation accounted for three-fourths or more of gang unit time.

Fifty percent of respondents indicated that, when compared to 1999, their youth gang problems in 2000 remained about the same, whereas 28 percent reported that they had improved and 22 percent reported that they had worsened.

## Summary

Results from the 2000 National Youth Gang Survey indicate that the characteristics of gang-related violent crime varied according to jurisdictional size. More than half of the larger areas reported that the majority of their gang-related violent crime was committed against members of other gangs, whereas more than half of the smaller areas reported that the majority of their gang-related violent crime was committed against individuals not involved in gangs. More than half of all agencies reported that individual members acting alone or with a few other gang members committed the majority of the gang-related violent crime, and gang members returning from prison were reported to have affected local gang problems in a large number of areas. These findings highlight the importance of continuing systematic assessment and response in combating youth gang problems.

## For Further Information

Extensive analysis of the 2000 survey and the 1999 and forthcoming 2001 surveys will be combined in a comprehensive report examining trends related to youth gangs. 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/](http://www.iir.com/nygc/).

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