



OJJDP FACT SHEET

J. Robert Flores, Administrator

July 2008 #05

Highlights of the 2006 National Youth Gang Survey

by Arlen Egley, Jr., and Christina E. O'Donnell

Annually since 1995, the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) has conducted the National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS) of law enforcement agencies across the United States regarding the presence and characteristics of local gang problems. This Fact Sheet summarizes NYGS findings from the 2006 survey. The current nationally representative sample was selected in 2002 and includes the following agencies:

- ◆ All police departments that serve cities with populations of 50,000 or more ($n=624$) (larger cities).
- ◆ All suburban county police and sheriffs' departments ($n=740$) (suburban counties).
- ◆ A randomly selected sample of police departments that serve cities with populations between 2,500 and 49,999 ($n=695$) (smaller cities).
- ◆ A randomly selected sample of rural county police and sheriffs' departments ($n=492$) (rural counties).

NYGC asked survey recipients to report information solely 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 as a 'gang.'" Motorcycle gangs, hate or ideology groups, prison gangs, and exclusively adult gangs were excluded from the survey.

Survey Findings

Of the 2,551 survey recipients, 2,199 (86 percent) responded to the 2006 survey. Table 1 shows the percentage of agencies that reported gang problems by area type. Overall, it is estimated that 3,400 jurisdictions served by city (population of 2,500 or more) and county law enforcement agencies experienced gang problems in 2006. Based on survey results, it is estimated that approximately 785,000 gang members and 26,500 gangs were active in the United States in 2006.

Readily available and reliable gang-crime data are difficult to obtain on a national level. Previous NYGC surveys reveal that

Table 1. Percentage of Law Enforcement Agencies Reporting Gang Problems, 2002–2006

	Gang Problems Reported in 2006 (%)	Gang Problems Ever Reported, 2002–2006 (%)
Rural Counties	14.9	27.4
Smaller Cities	32.6	48.3
Suburban Counties	51.0	61.5
Larger Cities	86.4	90.5
Overall Estimate in Study Population	33.3	47.3

agencies with gang problems often do not regularly record local offenses, with the exception of homicides, as "gang-related." With these data limitations in mind, the 2006 NYGS requested each respondent to provide both specific gang-homicide data (i.e., number of homicides involving a gang member as either the perpetrator and/or the victim) and general trends (i.e., increasing, decreasing) for other serious gang-related crimes in the respondent's jurisdiction. Among agencies reporting gang problems in smaller cities and rural counties, a large majority (89 and 86 percent respectively) recorded zero gang-related homicides in 2006. By comparison, most cities with populations over 100,000 experienced one or more gang homicides during the year.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of gang-problem agencies reporting that incidences of the specified gang crime had "increased" in the respondent's jurisdictions in 2006 compared with 2004 and 2005. For two offenses, aggravated assault and drug sales, more than half of the agencies reported an increase in 2006. These two offenses were followed, in descending order, by robbery, larceny/theft, burglary, and auto theft.

The 2006 NYGS requested each respondent to indicate the factor(s) that influenced gang-related violence in the respondent's jurisdiction. More than half of the law enforcement agencies reported that intergang conflict (between-gang conflict) and drug-related factors directly affected levels of gang-related



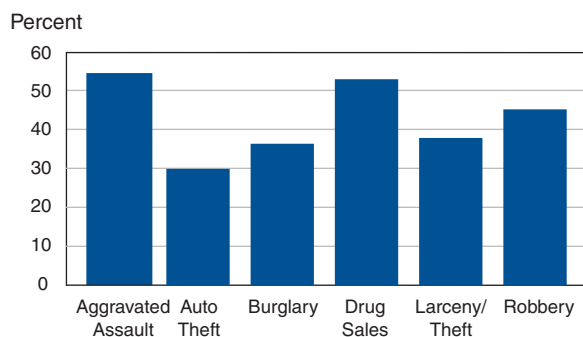
Washington, DC 20531

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300

OJJDP Fact Sheet

FS-200805

Figure 1. Percentage of Agencies With Gang Problems That Reported an Increase in Gang-Related Crime, 2006



violence in their jurisdictions in 2006. Somewhat frequently reported (25–50 percent of the agencies) were the following three factors: gang-member migration across U.S. jurisdictions, emergence of new gangs, and the return of gang members from secure confinement. Infrequently reported (less than one-quarter of the agencies) were factors associated with intragang conflict (within-gang conflict) and gang-member migration from outside the United States.

OJJDP's Gang Prevention Activities

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) supports several initiatives to prevent and reduce gang activity. OJJDP's **Gang Reduction Program** is designed to reduce gang activity in targeted neighborhoods by incorporating a broad spectrum of research-based interventions to address the range of personal, family, and community factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency and gang activity. The program integrates local, State, and Federal resources to incorporate state-of-the-art practices in prevention, intervention, and suppression. In April 2007, Los Angeles announced the launch of a \$168 million anti-gang initiative model based on the Gang Reduction Program.

Other OJJDP gang prevention activities include:

- ◆ **Gang-Free Schools and Communities Program** seeks to reduce youth gang crime and violence in schools and communities.
- ◆ **National Youth Gang Center**, funded by OJJDP, conducts assessments of the scope and characteristics of youth gang activity in the United States, develops resources and makes them available to the field, and provides training and technical assistance in support of community-based prevention, intervention, and suppression efforts.
- ◆ **Gang Prevention Coordination Assistance Program** provides funding to enhance coordination of local, State, and Federal resources in support of community partnerships implementing two or more of the following anti-gang strategies: primary prevention, secondary prevention, gang intervention, and gang enforcement.

The latest gang-related resources may be found on OJJDP's Web site (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ojjdp>) by searching using the keyword "gang."

For Further Information

For additional information about youth gangs, call OJJDP's Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse at 800-851-3420, or contact NYGC at 800-446-0912 or <http://www.iir.com/nygc/>.

Arlen Egly, Jr., Ph.D., is a Senior Research Associate and Christina E. O'Donnell, M.S., is a Research Associate 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 Community Capacity Development Office; the National Institute of Justice; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART).