



OJJDP FACT SHEET

Jeff Slowikowski, Acting Administrator March 2010

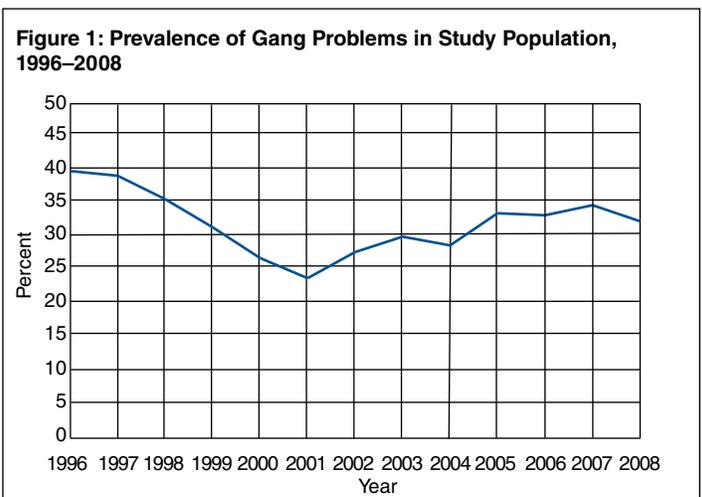
Highlights of the 2008 National Youth Gang Survey

by Arlen Egley, Jr., James C. Howell, and John P. Moore

Gang activity remains a widespread problem across the United States, with prevalence rates remaining significantly elevated in 2008 compared with recorded lows in the early 2000s. Approximately one-third of the jurisdictions in the National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS) study population¹ reported gang problems in 2008. This is a significant change over the 2002 estimate, but a statistically negligible one from 2007. The 13-year trend is shown in figure 1.

The National Gang Center estimates that 32.4 percent of all cities, suburban areas, towns, and rural counties (more than 3,330 jurisdictions served by city and county law enforcement agencies) experienced gang problems in 2008. This represents a 15-percent increase from the 2002 figure. Approximately 774,000 gang members and 27,900 gangs are estimated to have been active in the United States in 2008. The number of gangs increased by 28 percent, and the number of gang members increased by 6 percent from 2002 to 2008 (see table 1).

Furthermore, sizable increases are most pronounced for the number of gangs across all population categories over this 7-year span.



¹For a description of the NYGS study population and sample methodology see www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Survey-Analysis/Methodology.

Table 1: Percentage Change in Gang Estimates From 2002 to 2008

	Percentage Change, 2002–2008			Percentage Change, 2007–2008		
	Gang-Problem Jurisdictions	Gangs	Gang Members	Gang-Problem Jurisdictions	Gangs	Gang Members
Rural Counties	+16.4	+26.3	+7.8	-6.2	-23.2	-20.9
Smaller Cities	+15.0	+35.0	+14.6	-9.7	-4.2	-14.5
Suburban Counties	+21.8	+30.1	+9.6	-8.6	+11.2	-2.2
Larger Cities	+12.5	+23.3	+2.2	+0.4	+7.0	+3.0
Overall Estimate in Study Population	+15.4	+28.4	+5.8	-7.7	+2.3	-1.8

U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Washington, DC 20531

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use \$300



PRESORTED STANDARD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
DOJ/OJJDP
PERMIT NO. G-91



Fact Sheet

NCJ 229249

As table 1 shows, compared with changes from 2002 to 2008, changes from 2007 to 2008 for most measures are relatively small. Overall estimates of both gangs and gang members remain virtually unchanged from 2007 to 2008. However, increases in both gangs and gang members are observed in larger cities. Moreover, in results not shown, the largest increases in gangs and gang members from 2007 to 2008 occurred in cities with populations of more than 250,000, which is significant because these cities continue to be the predominant location of both gangs and gang members in the United States.

Rural counties reported declines of more than 20 percent in the number of gangs and gang members from 2007 to 2008; however, less than 5 percent of the total number of gangs and gang members nationally are in rural areas. Smaller cities also reported declines for each gang-problem measure. These results are consistent with a fluctuating, less persistent gang problem outside larger cities that has been firmly documented and discussed in previous NYGS results. The majority of agencies outside larger cities that reported gang activity anytime between 2002 and 2008 do not consistently report a gang problem.

Law enforcement respondents estimated year-to-year changes regarding gang-related crime and violence in their jurisdictions. Among respondents who reported gang activity in 2008, 44 percent reported an increase in gang-related aggravated assaults, 41 percent reported an increase in drug sales, and 41 percent reported an increase in firearms use compared with the previous year. Nearly one in five agencies in larger cities reported an increase in gang-related homicides in 2008. Additionally, among cities with populations of more than 250,000, the reported number of gang-related homicides increased by 10 percent from 2002 to 2008.

Among agencies reporting a gang problem in 2008, 45 percent characterized their gang problem as “getting worse,” a 5-percent drop from the previous year. In contrast, less than 1 in 10 respondents said their gang problem was “getting better.” Suburban

counties and rural counties reported higher percentages of “getting worse” compared with the other population categories.

For Further Information

In October 2009, the National Youth Gang Center, which had been funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) since 1995, merged with the National Gang Center, which had been funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) since 2003. Consolidation of the centers has leveraged resources and resulted in a single, more efficient entity that is responsive to the needs of researchers, practitioners, and the public.

For additional information about youth gangs, call OJJDP’s Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse at 800–851–3420, or contact the National Gang Center at 800–446–0912 or www.nationalgangcenter.gov.

Arlen Egley, Jr., Ph.D., and James C. Howell, Ph.D., are Senior Research Associates with the National Gang Center, which is operated for OJJDP and BJA by the Institute for Intergovernmental Research in Tallahassee, FL. John P. Moore is Director of the National Gang Center.

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).