

Methodology

Annually since 1995, the National Gang Center (NGC) has conducted a systematic survey of law enforcement agencies across the United States regarding the presence and characteristics of local gang problems. This Fact Sheet summarizes the National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS) findings from the 2008 survey. The sample was drawn from approximately 50 percent of the total universe of cities, towns, and counties in the United States that have active local governing bodies, including local police or sheriffs' departments. Further, the current nationally representative sample was selected in 2002 and was stratified by four area types, which include 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 ($n=739$) (suburban counties).
- A randomly selected sample of police departments that serve cities with populations between 2,500 and 49,999 ($n=694$) (smaller cities).
- A randomly selected sample of rural county police and sheriffs' departments ($n=492$) (rural counties).

A standardized definition of "youth gang" does not exist nationally. For the purposes of the NYGS, survey recipients are asked 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. Of the 2,546 survey recipients, 2,076 (81 percent) responded to the 2008 survey.