



# OJJDP FACT SHEET

Jeff Slowikowski, Acting Administrator

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## Highlights of the 2007 National Youth Gang Survey

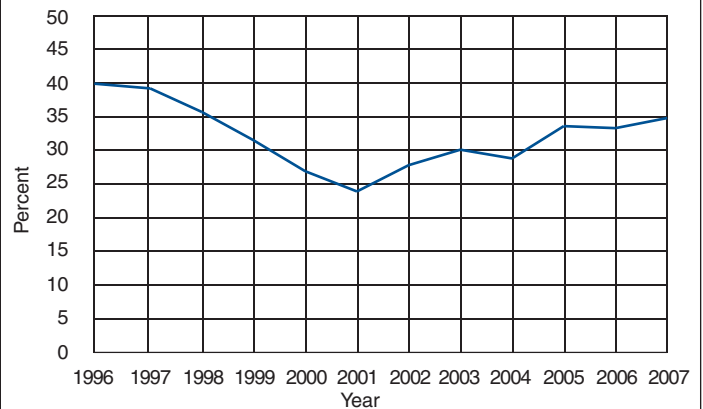
by Arlen Egley, Jr. and Christina E. O'Donnell

### Survey Findings

Following a marked decline from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, a steady resurgence of gang problems has occurred in recent years. As shown in Figure 1, more than one-third of the jurisdictions in the National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS) study population experienced gang problems in 2007, the highest annual estimate since before 2000. Within the four area types surveyed, 86 percent of law enforcement agencies that serve larger cities, 50 percent of agencies that serve suburban counties, 35 percent of agencies that serve smaller cities, and 15 percent of agencies that serve rural counties reported experiencing youth gang problems in 2007.

Overall, an estimated 3,550 jurisdictions served by city (population of 2,500 or more) and county law enforcement agencies experienced gang problems in 2007. These survey results also indicate that an estimated 788,000 gang members and 27,000 gangs were active in the United States in 2007. Table 1 shows

Figure 1: Prevalence of Gang Problems in Study Population, 1996–2007



the percentage change in gang-problem jurisdictions, gangs, and gang members by area type between 2002 and 2007. The data

### Methodology

Annually since 1995, the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) 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 findings from the 2007 National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS). 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 ( $n=739$ ) (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).

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. Of the 2,549 survey recipients, 2,120 (83 percent) responded to the 2007 survey.



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reveal sizable and significant increases across most of these estimates. In rural counties, the number of gang-problem jurisdictions increased by nearly one-quarter, and the overall number of gangs and gang members increased by 64 percent and 36 percent, respectively, between 2002 and 2007. These increases, although noteworthy, must be considered concurrently with the overall distribution of gangs and gang members throughout the study population. As shown in Table 2, larger cities and suburban counties remain the primary location of gangs and gang members, accounting for more than 60 percent of gangs and 80 percent of gang members, with rural counties accounting for a relatively small percentage of each.

To compensate for the commonly known and widespread limitations of officially recorded data on gang crime, law enforcement respondents provided information on general trends regarding gang-related violence in their jurisdictions. As in previous survey years, gang violence was most likely to occur in larger cities and suburban counties, with smaller cities and rural counties disproportionately reporting no incidence of gang-related homicides,

aggravated assaults, robberies, or firearm use in 2007. Moreover, one in five larger cities reported an increase in gang homicides in 2007 compared with 2006, and approximately two in five reported an increase in other violent offenses by gang members.

**Table 2. Distribution of Estimated Gangs and Gang Members by Area Type, 2007**

	Gangs (%)	Gang Members (%)
Rural Counties	5.9	2.3
Smaller Cities	33.5	16.8
Suburban Counties	19.9	25.0
Larger Cities	40.7	55.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### For Further Information

For additional information about youth gangs, call OJJDP's Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse at 800-851-3420, or contact the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) at 800-446-0912 or [www.iir.com/nygc/](http://www.iir.com/nygc/).

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**Table 1. Percentage Change in Gang Problem Estimates From 2002 to 2007**

	Percentage Change, 2002-2007		
	Gang-Problem Jurisdictions	Gangs	Gang Members
Rural Counties	+24.1	+64.4	+36.2
Smaller Cities	+27.4	+40.9	+34.0
Suburban Counties	+33.2	+17.0	+12.2
Larger Cities	+12.1	+15.3	-0.7
Overall Estimate in Study Population	+25.1	+25.5	+7.7

*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).*