



# ISSUE DESCRIPTION



COMMITTEE Economic And Social Council

ISSUE Preventing And Reducing Gang Violence

SUBMITTED BY Milán Gömöri, Co-Chair of Economic And Social Council

APPROVED BY Kiara Gábor, President of the General Assembly

## Introduction

Gang violence is nowadays and always has been a very popular form of crime. Shaping pop culture and social tensions, it has been imminently important throughout history and with its legality, has been at crossroads with authorities since as long as in ancient times. Gang, also called street gang or youth gang, is a group of people, usually youths, who share a common identity and who generally engage in criminal behavior. In contrast to the criminal behavior of other youths, the activities of gangs are characterized by some level of organization and continuity over time. However, there is no consensus on the exact definition of a gang, and scholars have debated whether the definition should expressly include involvement in crime. Groups of young adults have existed throughout recorded history, and gangs in some ancient societies engaged in very much the same kind of activities as those associated with gangs today. Violent street gangs — which generated the same kind of concern as their modern-day successors — also can be identified in the 17th and 18th centuries, for example: the Mohocks of Georgian England were feared in their time much as the Crips and Bloods of Los Angeles were in the 1990s.

To fight against these organizations, many countries have specifically established task forces or their own branches of jurisdiction, and have enacted laws that prohibit or restrict the criminal activities of these gangs.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Mafia** - A group of people belonging to a criminal organization and following a very strict rule based on old Italian or Sicilian traditions, with a hierarchy and having other distinctive groups in other territories, led by a different group.

**Biker Gangs** - A group of people also kin to criminal activity, are associated with each other with the distinct culture and usually seen riding motorcycles and dressing the same as the other members of the group.

**Organized Crime** - Complex of highly centralized and transnational or international enterprises set up for the purpose of engaging in illegal activities.

**The Eurogang Paradox** - The first comprehensive collection of original research reports on the status of street gangs and problematic youth groups in Europe.

**Secret Societies** - An organization whose activities, events, inner functioning, or membership are concealed.

**Protection payment/money** - This is a sum of money that is paid to a gang leader or criminal that will ensure that a business is safe from attack by other gangs and criminals operating in the area.

## General Overview

Since the mid-20th century, gang violence has become widespread: gang problems and reports have increased in the past years. Despite the steady growth in the number and size of gangs and the criminal behavior and violence they spawn, little is known about the dynamics that drive gangs and how to best combat their growth. For instance, no consensus exists on how gangs form, and few gang prevention programs have been rigorously evaluated. But how did these gangs first appear?

Gangs flourished in colonial America, and the story of the American Revolution cannot be understood without stressing the activism of Boston's violent street gangs, which were allied with the patriot leadership. This pattern of alliance between criminal and political structures would characterize the history of American gangs well into the 20th century. In the classic model of the political machine, street gangs served to intimidate opponents, mobilize the vote, and recruit future leaders for both politics and the criminal underworld. From the 19th century onward, gangs in the United States were most active in urban centers, such as Philadelphia, which had over 100 street gangs in 1870, and Chicago, which had in excess of 1,000 gangs in the 1920s. Often, gangs operated to defend and assert the interests of ethnic groups new to the

local society or region; thus, the most visible and violent gangs in each period had their roots in the latest wave of immigration. For example, Irish gangs were prevalent in the United States in the mid-19th century, followed by Jewish gangs in the early 20th century, and Asian and Latino gangs in the late 20th and early 21st century.

The tremendous growth in crime in the United States during Prohibition (1920–33) led to the formation of a national organization. Such organizations engage in offenses such as cargo theft, fraud, robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and the demanding of “protection” payments. The main source of income for these criminal syndicates is the supply of goods and services that are illegal but for which there is continued public demand, such as drugs, prostitution, loan-sharking and gambling.

Gangs largely faded from the American landscape during the Great Depression and World War II only to reemerge in the late 1950s. In the 1980s and '90s, some U.S. law-enforcement officials contended that gangs posed a greater threat to public safety than ever before. Crime statistics in the 1990s suggested that gangs were responsible for a large percentage of homicide cases and for about two-fifths of illegal drug sales in urban areas. By the turn of the 21st century, researchers estimated that there were 750,000 active gang members in the United States participating in roughly 25,000 gangs.

Significant gang activity also has taken place in Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, and France, as well as in Russia and the countries of eastern and central Europe following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Across the globe, youth gangs exist wherever there are cities, and they often operate in association with adult organized-crime syndicates. In the late 20th century, gangs appeared in Africa and Latin America. Gangs in Asia — particularly the Tongs, the Chinese Triads, and various secret societies — can be linked to similar groups in the United States.

Specifically in Latin America many drug cartels started to form. These groups are also extremely well-organized, well-financed, efficient, and ruthless. Since the 1980s, they have dominated the international narcotics trade.

The U.S. government estimated that at the turn of the 21st century nearly half of all gang members in the country were Hispanic, about one-third were African American, about one-eighth were white, and about one-twentieth were Asian. Research has consistently indicated that fewer than one-tenth of gang members are female, though some surveys suggested that females account for more than one-fourth of gang membership. Few gangs, however, are female dominated. About two-fifths of gang members are under the age of 17, and almost nine-tenths

are under 25. Gang involvement seems to be related to the gang member's relationships to the social institutions that are most important to all youths — family, schools, peer groups, and the labor market. Thus, gang members are more likely than other youths to come from broken homes, to perform poorly in school, to have peers who are inclined to engage in criminal behavior and are unemployed or underemployed.

The criminal justice system is an important intervening institution for many gang members, but, because it may generate negative attitudes toward the police and legitimate society, its effect is not always positive. Research has also shown that an individual's criminal activity increases when they join a gang and decreases to pre-gang levels when they withdraw from gang activity. In Europe, levels and descriptors of violence among European street gangs are summarized from studies reported primarily under the aegis of the Eurogang Program initiated in 1997 and continuing still. European gang violence is placed in the context of its American counterpart, of European non-gang youth violence, and of the definitional and structural components of the Eurogang Program. European gangs in over a dozen countries reveal a wide pattern of violent behavior and levels of violence that are far greater than among non-gang youth, but largely less serious than in the USA. Some of these latter differences may be attributable to the recentness of European gang development, the lower levels of firearms availability, and lower levels of gang territoriality in Europe.

## Major Parties Involved

**United States of America:** In 1970, the country enacted its notorious policy, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) in order to punish and lawfully gather evidence against members of criminal organizations.

**Brazil:** In 2019, President Bolsonaro has signed an Anti-Crime Bill, which ensured the decrease of corruption, gang activities and organized crime with more focused sentencing policies and toughening laws.

**Colombia:** In 2016, a peace deal between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Colombian government brought an end to nearly five decades of conflict across the country. But reforms promised in the deal to attack the root causes of the violence stalled. New groups have emerged since the deal and the laws around gang violence have yet to be discussed.

**Japan:** Yakuza Exclusion Ordinances is a umbrella-term for all the local and nation-wide laws prohibiting contact with the Yakuza organization. Coming into force in 2010, the laws state that no citizen should help people affiliated or join these groups to avoid harsh consequences.

**China, Mexico, Puerto Rico** and the **United Kingdom** are also very involved in finding solutions to this issue and have made great efforts to stop the spread of gang violence.

To help curb the growth of gangs and related criminal activity, the FBI, at the direction of Congress, established the National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC) in 2005. The NGIC integrates gang intelligence from across federal, state, and local law enforcement on the growth, migration, criminal activity, and association of gangs that pose a significant threat to the U.S. It supports law enforcement by sharing timely and accurate information and by providing intelligence analysis. NGIC identifies those gangs that pose the greatest danger to our communities and targets them with investigative resources and the same federal racketeering statutes, as well as intelligence and investigative techniques that have been used to attack organized crime.

## Timeline of Events

**17th century** - The first usage of the term “street gang” to describe a series of organized crime activities committed by a group of lower-class people

**1783** - The appearance of the first American gangs on the East Coast after the American Revolution

**1920 - 1933** - Prohibition in the USA helps the violent street gangs to emerge

**1950s** - Reappearance of gangs after World War II

**1970s** - The growing demand for cocaine helps to pave the way for drug cartels to form in Latin America, and the USA to fight against drugs

**Late 20th century** - Gangs appear in Africa

**2000** - South Africa enacts the Firearms Control Act

**2001** - The Eurogang Paradox

## Possible Solutions and Approaches

### PREVENTING STREET GANG RECRUITMENTS

Programs and projects focusing on preventing gang recruitment aim to reduce the impact of gangs by reducing the number of new recruits. This can be achieved by addressing the risk factors that make young people susceptible to joining gangs, factors such as socio-economic status, unemployment, discrimination and support for those with the lack of proper family or childhood.

### FAMILY THERAPY OR PARENTAL SUPPORT

Those people with problems aforementioned can be given support whether psychological or financial, depending on the situation itself, and thus preventing further involvement or the idea of joining criminal groups.

### POLICING GANG VIOLENCE

The implementation of preventive policing strategies has the potential to significantly reduce gang crime and violence in a neighborhood. However, police activities may also have unintended consequences and actually contribute to gang crime.

### ENCOURAGING MEMBERS TO LEAVE SUCH GROUPS

As a great strategy of various justice departments to blackmail and protect members of these groups to give information on the other members, it is also a very useful way to reduce gang related crimes. Aiding these people is an essential to not just help but make people leave the organization altogether.

### SOCIAL WORK & WELFARE APPROACHES

Preventing gang recruitment can be achieved by addressing the risk factors that make young people vulnerable to joining gangs: inequality and social exclusion, negative childhood experiences and the proximity of one or more street gangs.

## Bibliography:

### General Information:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/gang-crime>

<https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/violent-crime/gangs>

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1477370806067911>

### Prevention:

<https://youth.gov/feature-article/gang-prevention-overview-research-and-programs>

[https://eucpn.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2206\\_Toolbox%20FR\\_LR.pdf](https://eucpn.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2206_Toolbox%20FR_LR.pdf)

### History of Gangs:

<https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh176/files/jjbulletin/9808/history.html>

[https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/43455\\_1.pdf](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/43455_1.pdf)

<https://oxfordre.com/criminology/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.001.0001/acrefore-e-9780190264079-e-418;jsessionid=6670ABE11AF88FC97A3C5A29E17E12D0>

### Other Sources:

<https://www.met.police.uk/police-forces/metropolitan-police/areas/about-us/about-the-met/gangs-violence-matrix/>

<https://www.justice.gov/criminal-ocgs/about-violent-gangs>

<https://nonprofitrisk.org/resources/articles/perspectives-on-gangs-and-gang-violence/>

[https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/cornwall\\_scilly/p\\_ch\\_affected\\_gang\\_act.html](https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/cornwall_scilly/p_ch_affected_gang_act.html)

<https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/understanding-and-avoiding-gangs>

[https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu\\_gang\\_summative\\_report.pdf](https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_gang_summative_report.pdf)