



VIOLENCE PREVENTION COALITION OF GREATER LOS ANGELES
A Project of Community Partners®

FACT SHEET: Gang Violence

Myths	Facts
Gang killings in Los Angeles County are the result of drug wars.	Most gang homicides are not random, nor are they only disputes over drugs or some other crime. The vast majority of violent incidents involving gang members continue to result from fights over turf, status, and revenge.
Gangs are only an inner city problem.	Different types of cities (urban, suburban, etc) in Los Angeles County have local street gangs. While a majority of the gang related slayings were in the urban core, in the San Fernando Valley, the murder rate spiked 60% in 2001 because of gang related killings. <i>Streetgangs.com, 2002.</i>
Los Angeles is the gang capital of the world and will never again be a place to raise children and live a civilized life.	Over the last several hundred years, a number of cities in the world have been proclaimed the "gang capital". London, England, was first given this title. Just before our civil war, New York was reported to have approximately 30,000 street gang members. At other times, Philadelphia and Chicago were proclaimed gang capitals. All of these cities, with degrees of success, have dealt with the problem and passed the title on to other cities.
Youth join gangs to sell drugs, commit crime, and make money.	Youth join gangs for many reasons. However, while gang members commit more types of crime (and more often) than non-gang youth, many gang members are not heavily involved in crime. Most gang members are not drug dealers and most Los Angeles gangs are not organized drug distribution rings.
Gangs are tightly organized, cohesive units with stable powerful leadership.	Most gangs are loosely knit, with several members who fill leadership roles, depending on age and situation. Membership fluctuates and gang members have varying degrees of commitment to the gang. Gang cohesiveness is highest when the gang is challenged by other groups or by outsiders.
Ever since there have been street gangs there have been drive by shootings. Guns don't kill people; people kill people.	Shootings by gang members have increased as guns on the streets have proliferated. Drive-by killings are a direct result of the availability of firearms. People injure people; guns kill people.
Gang violence is purely a law enforcement problem.	Most law enforcement officials agree that gangs are a community problem that must be dealt with in a variety of approaches implemented by police, schools, community-based organizations, public health professionals and others in an interactive and cooperative approach to gang prevention and intervention.

"Report on the State of Los Angeles Street Gangs," Los Angeles County Interagency Gang Task Force, 1999-2000.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

- ❖ In Los Angeles County, law enforcement officials are aware of more than 1300 street gangs with over 150,000 members. In the City of Los Angeles alone, there are over 400 separate gangs and an estimated 39,000 gang members. *"Annual Report to Congress: Creating a Safer America," US Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2000. "Gang Reduction Strategy," City of Los Angeles, 2007.*
- ❖ Gangs account for approximately 43% of all homicides in Los Angeles County. Of the 1038 homicides in 2004, 454 were gang-related. *Review of Homicide Crime Statistics, Criminal Justice Center, 2005.*
- ❖ Los Angeles has long been recognized as the epicenter of gang activity nationwide. Recent estimates indicate approximately 1,350 street gangs, with as many as 175,000 members in the FBI Los Angeles' seven-county area of responsibility (San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Orange). Many gangs which today have a nationwide presence, such as the Bloods, the Crips, Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), and 18th

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Street, can trace their roots to Los Angeles. *"Combating youth violence: What federal, state, and local governments are doing to deter youth crime," US Congress Proceedings, 2006.*

- ❖ The migration of gang members from Los Angeles to other regions of the United States has led to a rapid proliferation of these gangs in many smaller suburban and rural areas not accustomed to gang activity and its related crimes. *"Combating youth violence: What federal, state, and local governments are doing to deter youth crime," US Congress Proceedings, 2006.*

UNITED STATES

Recruitment and Expansion

- ❖ Local neighborhoods, prisons, the Internet, and schools have been targeted as "hot-spots" for gang recruitment. *"Combating youth violence: What federal, state, and local governments are doing to deter youth crime," US Congress Proceedings, 2006.*
- ❖ The process wherein gangs maintain and expand their territory often entails violence such as drive-by shootings and gang-related homicides. *"Combating youth violence: What federal, state, and local governments are doing to deter youth crime," US Congress Proceedings, 2006.*

Criminal Acts

- ❖ Gangs remain the primary distributors of drugs throughout the U.S. *National Gang Threat Assessment, US Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2005.*
- ❖ Gangs in the west are employing an increased level of sophistication in the planning and execution of criminal acts, especially against law enforcement officers. *National Gang Threat Assessment, US Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2005.*

Victims

- ❖ Gang members were more likely to victimize younger persons than older persons. *"Violence By Gang Members," US Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993-2003.*
- ❖ Between 1993 and 2003, younger victims of violence were more likely than older victims to believe the perpetrator was a gang member. *"Violence By Gang Members," US Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993-2003.*
- ❖ Urban victims were more likely than suburban or rural victims to identify offenders as gang members. *"Violence By Gang Members," US Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993-2003.*
- ❖ Hispanics were more likely than non-Hispanics to be victims of violent crimes committed by gang members. *"Violence By Gang Members," US Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993-2003.*
- ❖ Hispanic victims of violence identified the offenders as gang members at a higher rate than non-Hispanic victims, and blacks at a higher rate than whites, for the period between 1993 and 2003. *"Violence By Gang Members," US Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993-2003.*
- ❖ Police were as likely to be notified when the victims believed the offender not to be a gang member (45% of violence reported to the police) as when they believed the offender belonged to a gang (47% reported). *"Violence By Gang Members," US Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993-2003.*
- ❖ Of the violence that victims believed gang members committed between 1993 and 2003, a lone offender accounted for about 54% and more than one offender, 46%. *"Violence By Gang Members," US Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993-2003.*

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