

Commission

Gangs in Arizona 2002 High Level Overview/Fact Sheet

Our mission is to sustain and enhance the coordination, cohesiveness, productivity and effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Arizona



Methodology:

Surveys were distributed to 168 criminal justice agencies throughout Arizona in June 2002. Fifteen county sheriffs, 79 municipal law enforcement agencies, 12 federal agencies, 22 probation agencies, 18 tribal prosecutors and 22 tribal police agencies were surveyed. Of the 168 surveys distributed, 148 (88 percent) of the surveys were returned.

Fifty-three percent of the criminal justice agencies responding to this year's survey indicated that gangs are either "one of the serious public safety issues they face" or a "medium serious public safety issue" in their jurisdiction. More than half of the participating criminal justice agencies indicated that gang members participate in drug activities, aggravated assault, robbery, larceny theft, burglaries and motor vehicle thefts.

Gang Member Identification Criteria (GMIC)

A statewide standard designed to assist criminal justice agencies objectively identify gang members. In order to be identified as a gang member in Arizona, an individual must meet at least two of the following criteria:

- (1) Self Proclamation;
- (2) Witness Testimony or Official Statement;
- (3) Written or Electronic Correspondence;
- (4) Paraphernalia or Photographs;
- (5) Tattoos;
- (6) Clothing or Colors; and
- (7) Any Other Indicia of Street Gang Membership.

Perception of Youth Gang Problem

	National	Arizona
Staying the Same	50	52
Getting Better	28	19
Getting Worse	22	28
Unable to Determine	--	1

Prevalence of Youth Gangs

Nationally, 40 percent of law enforcement agencies surveyed by the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) indicated that there were gangs active in the city, town or county served by their agency. In Arizona, 56 percent of law enforcement agencies indicated they had active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2001. This is 16 percent higher than the reported national percentage in 2000 (40 percent).

Prevalence of Youth Gangs

Arizona	56%
National	40%

Perception of Youth Gang Problem

In Arizona, 52 percent of Arizona law enforcement agencies indicated that, when compared to 2000, their youth gang problem in 2001 remained about the same, 19 percent reported that the gang problem had improved, 28 percent reported that the gang problem had worsened and one percent of agencies were unable to respond to this question. The percentage of Arizona law enforcement agencies that indicated when compared to 2000, the gang problem in 2001 was "staying the same," or "getting worse" was similar to national findings. In contrast, Arizona was lower than the national percentage of states reporting that the gang problem was "getting better."

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Review full report at: www.acjc.state.az.us

Gang Member Demographics

Law enforcement agencies were asked to provide information regarding the race and gender of gang members in their area.

Hispanics represent 12.5 percent of the total national population and 25.3 percent of Arizona's total population.

Nationally, law enforcement agencies reported that 47 percent of gang members in their area were Hispanic, whereas Arizona's law enforcement agencies reported 62 percent.

Blacks represent 12.1 percent of the national population and account for 31 percent of gang members nationally.

In Arizona, blacks represent 2.9 percent of the state's population and account for 10 percent of the gang members.

On a national level whites represent 69.1 percent of the total population and account for 13 percent of gang members nationwide.

In Arizona whites represent 63.8 percent of the total population and account for 21 percent of the gang members in the state.

In 2000, law enforcement agencies nationally reported that 94 percent of the gang members in their area were male, whereas six percent were female. This rate is comparable to results from

Arizona agencies, which reported 89 percent of gang members as male and 11 percent as female.

Gender Demographics		
	M	F
Arizona	89	11
National	94	6

Population Increase

Since 1991, Arizona's population has been increasing at a rate nearly three times faster than the rest of the nation. This population increase is likely to result in an increase in gangs and gang activity. The problems resulting from the increase in gangs and gang-related crime will be further compounded by the absence of the Gang Intelligence Team Enforcement Mission (GITEM) in rural counties. Therefore, it is imperative that criminal justice agencies continue to develop and implement strategies that will effectively respond to the increase in gangs and gang-related crime that is likely to occur over the next few years.

Corrections Department

Arizona's corrections departments will also be impacted by the population increases. Over the past 10 years, the adult corrections population has increased 81.5 percent. Similarly, the juvenile corrections population has also increased in recent years. In fact, four of the five juvenile correction facilities are operating at 87 to 97 percent

of capacity. The increases in both the adult and juvenile corrections population over the past few years represents an additional area in which greater attention and resources must be extended to ensure that Arizona's correctional facilities continue to operate both efficiently and effectively.

Prosecution Agencies

Prosecution agencies will face several challenges related to gang prosecution. As the nature and extent of gang prosecution varies throughout Arizona, the challenges to prosecution are also unique for each county. The one challenge expressed by most Arizona prosecution agencies was the unwillingness of witnesses to testify in gang-related cases. Identifying gang membership, lack of evidence, and proving that a crime was committed to further a gang were also mentioned as challenges to prosecuting gang cases. Although not expressed by all counties, some prosecution agencies identified extraditing defendants

who have fled to other countries, attorney safety and obtaining adequate resources as major challenges.

Geographical Location

Arizona's geographical location and current criminal trends make it an ideal target for illegal economic profits. Since 1991, Arizona has maintained a high crime ranking and is currently ranked number one in the nation. This is noteworthy because many of the crimes in which Arizona currently ranks within the top ten in the nation are also the same crimes that surveyed law enforcement agencies reported as high gang member involvement crimes (e.g. motor vehicle theft, burglary and robbery). As a result of Arizona's current crime trends, and because of the predicted increase in gangs, it is imperative that criminal justice agencies throughout the state continue to receive the resources necessary to effectively respond to the problem of gangs in Arizona.