

Results of the  
**2002  
Canadian  
Police  
Survey  
on  
Youth  
Gangs**

Astwood Strategy Corporation  
December 2003

This report was made possible through a contribution  
by the Solicitor General Canada, now Public Safety  
and Emergency Preparedness Canada

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Cat. No. PS4-4/2002  
ISBN 0-662-68124-X





## Foreword

Today, youth gang activity is increasingly commonplace in Canada and its existence is of concern to law enforcement officials, provincial, territorial and federal governments and, of course, the community at large.

The 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs, conducted by Astwood Strategy Corporation under contract to the Department of the Solicitor General Canada, is the first of its kind in Canada. The primary purpose of the survey is to assess the extent and characteristics of the youth gang problem in communities throughout Canada, as reported by law enforcement agencies. Since this is the first national statistical “snapshot” of the Canadian youth gang problem, results generated from the 2002 survey can be used as a baseline upon which to measure changes over time in the level of reported youth gang activity by police.

This data is essential to understanding the nature of Canada’s emerging youth gang problem and to developing effective prevention, suppression and community mobilization strategies. We hope that the findings presented herein enhance our country’s collective ability to combat and reduce youth gang activity and victimization.

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## Acknowledgements

Astwood Strategy Corporation gratefully acknowledges the following individuals and agencies that assisted in planning for and conducting the 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs:

- Solicitor General of Canada, in particular Jessica Kerr and Chantal Marion, for their valuable assistance.
- Barbara D'Amico, formerly of Solicitor General Canada, and now with FINTRAC (Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada), for her guidance and support on this project.
- The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, led by Peter Cuthbert, for sharing their membership list.
- Detective Inspector Rob Goodfellow of the Ontario Provincial Police, for providing us with a complete and up-to-date detachment list.
- The Royal Canadian Mounted Police for providing a national list of detachments.
- Representatives from 264 Canadian police services who took the time and attention to respond to this survey.



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Appendix 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs Instrument



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs, conducted by Astwood Strategy Corporation under contract to the Solicitor General of Canada, is the first of its kind in Canada.

The primary purpose of the survey is to assess the extent and characteristics of the youth gang problem in communities throughout Canada, as reported by police agencies. Since there is no common or generally accepted definition of a youth gang, one was offered in the survey instrument in order to facilitate response around a common reference point. For the purposes of the 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs, a “youth gang” was defined as a group of youths or young adults in the respondent’s jurisdiction, under the age of 21, that the respondent or other responsible persons in their agency or community were willing to identify or classify as a gang. As part of this definition, we asked respondents to *exclude* motorcycle gangs, hate or ideology groups, prison gangs, and other exclusively adult gangs.

This survey is intended to complement, on a national basis, youth gang research that is being conducted elsewhere, particularly in the Province of Quebec under the auspices of the Ministère de la Sécurité Publique du Québec, which launched

a similar survey in early 2002<sup>1</sup>. A representative sample of 349 police agencies, situated in every province and territory in the country, was compiled. This survey sample consisted of over 130 municipal police services, over 60 Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) detachments, and almost 150 Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) detachments in urban, rural and First Nations communities. A total of 264 agencies responded to the survey, representing a response rate of almost 76% .

In Section Two of this report, key findings from the 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs are presented. Since this is the first national survey of its kind and no other comprehensive set of baseline data exists in Canada, no statistically valid trends regarding the youth gang issue are revealed. While the reader is encouraged to formulate their own opinions with respect to the meaning and implications associated with the data, the author of this report offers the following points which he believes may be suggested in both the survey data and the research and analysis that was conducted by Astwood during the survey process:

- In absolute terms, the size of the national youth gang problem, expressed in terms of number of

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1. The Ministère de la Sécurité Publique du Québec launched their youth gang survey in collaboration with the Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal. Their survey, targeted to police agencies serving a population base of at least 45,000 inhabitants, featured a selection of questions similar or identical to the 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs.

gangs (434), youth gang members (7,071) or youth gang members per 1,000 population (0.24), may indeed be considered small by some observers. However, we caution the reader that there may be material under-reporting of the actual magnitude of the Canadian youth gang problem, due to several factors: lack of consensus as to what defines a youth gang; limited usage of intelligence tools and databases that can accurately track youth gang involvement within a jurisdiction; political considerations (e.g., denial of existence of a youth gang problem); inherent limitations of law enforcement data (see Section 1.6).

- Expressed relative to the size of the youth gang problem within our nearest neighbour, the United States, the Canadian youth gang problem may similarly be considered a small one. While the Canadian population is some 11% of the U.S. population, our youth gang member population is less than 1% of the U.S. gang member population. The following chart illustrates the differences in the size of the Canadian youth gang problem relative to 2000 U.S. data<sup>2</sup> :

Item	U.S. (2000)	Canada (2001)
Population	281,421,906	30,007,094
% jurisdictions reporting youth gang activity	40%	23.7%
Estimated # of youth gangs	24,500	434
Estimated # of gang members	772,500	7,071
Density/1000 pop.	2.75	0.24

- Notwithstanding the present small size of the Canadian youth gang problem that may be suggested in the data, policy makers and community leaders in Canada may wish to pay attention to the U.S. experience which confirms that once youth gangs become established within communities, they can rapidly proliferate. The

following chart illustrates the growth of the U.S. youth gang problem in the 20-year period from 1980<sup>3</sup> to 2000:

Item	U.S. (1980)	U.S. (2000)	Growth
Population	226,545,805	281,421,906	24%
Estimated # of youth gangs	2,000	24,500	1125%
Estimated # of gang members	100,000	772,500	673%
Density/1000 pop.	0.44	2.75	525%

- Setting aside issues of relative or absolute size, results from the 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs suggest that the youth gang issue in Canada is problematic for several other important reasons. Youth gangs are broadly distributed throughout the country in police service jurisdictions that serve 65% of the population. Moreover, the data indicates that almost half of Canadian youth gang members are young people under the age of 18. There is also tremendous ethnic diversity displayed within the rubric of youth gangs, with a high representation of African Canadian, First Nations and Caucasian members, among others. While youth gangs are composed predominately of young men, parts of the country display a significant youth gang composition involving young women. Since the survey results suggest that youth gangs/youth gang members cut across many ethnic, geographic, demographic and socio-economic lines, a large number of youth may therefore be at-risk of becoming involved in, or impacted by, youth gangs in the future.
- The movement of gang members from one jurisdiction to another, in addition to the return of gang-involved youth or adult inmates from Canadian correctional facilities, appears to be having an impact in a large number of Canadian jurisdictions. This finding is consistent with other

2. Data summarized from the 2000 National Youth Gang Survey, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention  
 3. W.B. Miller, 1992, revised from 1982.



U.S. research, and may suggest that the youth gang problem will continue to remain in a state of flux for the foreseeable future.

- The survey's findings both with respect to the demographic characteristics of Canadian youth gang members, and the behavioural characteristics of youth gangs, suggest that the Canadian youth gangs are largely "hybrid" in nature and are not representative of the community's possible stereotypical conception of the violent youth gang. The chart below highlights some of the

characteristics that are generally regarded in the literature as representative of the traditional versus hybrid youth:

- The largely hybrid nature of Canadian youth gangs may be posing challenges to Canadian police agencies, as hybrid youth gangs defy easy categorization and run counter to the generally understood notion of the violent (stereotypical) youth gang that has been popularized in the media. These challenges include gaining consensus as to what defines a youth gang, youth gang

Item	Traditional or Stereotypical Youth Gang	Hybrid Youth Gang
Location	Inner-city, social housing communities.	Inner-city, social housing communities, but also distributed in suburban areas and elsewhere where there is a high concentration of youth.
Ethnic composition	Relatively homogenous – gangs generally composed of members of one ethnic group.	Multi-ethnic composition.
Modes of communication	Well defined modes of communication including distinct colours, hand signs, ciphers, tattoos, etc.	Less reliance on distinctive modes of communication, in part due to fluid gang affiliations and desire to avoid attracting attention of law enforcement.
Territoriality	High degree of territoriality and protection of geographic "turf".	Less territorial in nature.
Loyalty/affiliations	High degree of loyalty to the gang, especially if aligned along primary ethnic identity; notion of lifetime membership. Business conducted largely within the gang, rather than in partnership with other diverse gangs.	Fluid gang affiliations; youth may enter exit gangs frequently depending on living circumstances, economic opportunities, stage of life, etc. Some youth belong to multiple gangs. Emerging gangs display increasing propensity to partner with other gangs including organized crime groups.
Rites and rituals	Violent entry and exit rites (e.g., "beat-in" and "beat-out").	Less reliance on defined rites and rituals. Little evidence of violent initiations, and it is believed that a majority of gang members in Canada leave a gang without consequence <sup>4</sup> .
Generational composition	Multi-generational – young gang members may have been preceded by older siblings or a parent.	Less evidence of multi-generational participation.
Propensity for violence	Highly violent, especially with respect to protection of turf and economic markets. Visible displays of violence to terrorize and intimidate others.	Still considered violent and dangerous, but evidence suggests that use of extreme violence predominates in older adult gangs and organized crime groups.

4. According to research conducted by Dr. Sylvie Hamel, University of Montreal, 1998.

member and youth gang activity; properly educating the media and the public at-large as to the scope and nature of youth gang activity within a community; and, mobilizing an appropriate community response to an emerging youth gang issue. U.S. research suggests that the hybridization process will continue, both with respect to new gangs in emerging youth gang cities, as well as with respect to established youth gangs. One may assume, from the survey data, that the hybrid Canadian youth gang will continue to predominate in Canada in the future.

- Survey results demonstrate that Canadian youth gang members are active in a number of serious criminal activities such as assault, drug trafficking, burglary and enter and vandalism, to name only a few. These survey results dispel the notion or possible perception, held by some, that Canadian youth gang members are not as dangerous as their U.S. counterparts and rather, are involved largely in “anti-social” activities. Survey results also demonstrate a troubling connection between a large proportion of youth gangs and organized

crime groups, which reinforces the dangerousness inherent in the Canadian youth gang phenomenon.

- Looking to the future, survey results show that a majority of law enforcement officials believe that the youth gang problem is going to get worse in Canada. This finding stands in contrast to recent U.S. research which shows both that a majority of law enforcement officials believe the youth gang problem will stay the same or will decline in severity, as well as research that shows a modest decline (8.5%) in the number of youth gang members in the five year period from 1996 to 2002 (which youth gang experts attribute to the magnitude and quality of youth gang prevention, suppression, intervention and community mobilization efforts). Since the data suggests that the Canadian youth gang problem is an emerging one, and since there does not exist a comprehensive range of proven youth gang prevention programs in Canada, the reader may reasonably conclude that the majority view (that the youth gang problem will worsen in Canada) is an accurate one.



## Section One METHODOLOGY

### 1.1 Survey Instrument

In planning this national survey, the research team was principally concerned with gathering the broadest possible range of information vis-à-vis the youth gang issue from a broadly represented base of respondents.

With respect to the first issue, a comprehensive six-page survey instrument was distributed that included several instructions, as follows:

*When completing this survey, we ask you to follow these instructions:*

- 1. Please report only for the jurisdiction served by your police agency.*
- 2. Please report data for Calendar Year 2002 (January 1 to December 31, 2002).*
- 3. Please report on the basis of your personal knowledge, your police agency's records and/or consultations with personnel who are familiar with youth gangs in your jurisdiction. For the purposes of this survey, a "youth gang" is defined as: a group of youth or young adults in your jurisdiction, under the age of 21, that you or other responsible persons in your agency or community are willing to identify or classify as a gang. As part of this definition, we ask you to **exclude** motorcycle gangs, hate or ideology groups, prison gangs, and other exclusively adult gangs.*

Survey respondents were asked first to indicate whether there was youth gang activity in their jurisdiction in 2002. If they indicated "no",

respondents were asked a final follow-up question in respect to the likelihood that youth gang problems would develop in their jurisdiction in the future. If they indicated "yes" to the first question (e.g., that youth gangs were active in their jurisdiction in 2002), the respondent was then presented with an additional 19 questions designed to identify the size and characteristics of the youth gangs in their jurisdiction. The survey form is presented in **Appendix**.

This survey is intended to complement, on a national basis, youth gang research that is being conducted elsewhere, such as in the Province of Quebec, under the auspices of the Ministère de la Sécurité Publique du Québec, which launched a gang survey in early 2002 in collaboration with the Service de police de la ville de Montréal. We should note that at the commencement of this research process, Astwood sent survey packages to sixteen medium and large-sized police agencies in the Province of Quebec. To avoid duplication we were asked to contact the Quebec-based police agencies in our sample and instruct them not to complete our survey, as we were instead to integrate the Province of Quebec data in our survey results where possible. At the time of that request, however, four Quebec police agencies had already forwarded completed surveys to Astwood.

At the completion of this survey process Solicitor General Canada and the Ministère de la Sécurité Publique du Québec elected to not integrate the Province of Quebec's gang survey findings due to

the material differences in the two survey instruments and underlying methodologies. Therefore, only data from the four reporting Quebec agencies has been included in these survey findings. These survey results must not be considered representative of the entire Province of Quebec, as the total population of the four reporting agencies from Quebec (Montreal, Quebec, St. Julie and Gatineau/Hull – total population of approximately 2.6 million) constitutes only some 36% of the total population of the Province.

## 1.2 Survey Population

With respect to the second issue, that is, the size of the respondent population, Astwood compiled a list of potential survey respondents from three different sources, as follows:

- Membership list from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP)
- Detachment list from the Ontario Provincial Police
- Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) National Directory database, which included the above agencies along with RCMP and Sûreté du Québec detachments (comprising a total of 2,218 entries)

With respect to the CPIC database, Astwood should note that the number of entries (2,218) does not represent a count of individual police agencies but rather, a count of what we refer to as police “points of presence”. For example, this list could include entries of several units within a municipal police service (e.g., gang unit, major crime unit, etc.), or several physical locations of a police agency with an installed CPIC terminal. In other words, the size of the CPIC national directory does not reflect an

accurate count of the size of the potential respondent population.

Using these lists, Astwood created a representative sample of 349 police agencies, situated in every province and territory in the country. The representative sample was composed as follows:

- 139 members of the CACP were selected.
- 61 OPP detachments were selected.
- A random sample of 149 RCMP detachments was selected from a total possible population of 390 jurisdictions (198 municipalities plus 192 First Nations Communities) across all provinces and territories except Ontario and Quebec.

The sample for 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs was representative of the entire country, with the exception of the Province of Quebec. Utilizing 2001 Statistics Canada Census data, the entire survey sample, if expressed as a percentage of Canada’s total population of 30,007,094, represents over 74% of the country.

## 1.3 Response Rate

In February 2003, a survey package was mailed to each agency in the survey sample. For city and municipal police services, the survey package was addressed specifically to the Chief or Chief Constable, while for OPP and RCMP detachments, the package was mailed to the detachment commander or commanding officer.

By late March 2003, the response rate on the 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs was approximately 50%. In early April 2003, follow-up telephone calls were conducted to increase the effective response rate.

Of the 349 surveys distributed, 264 were completed and returned, representing a response rate of approximately 76%. Survey response varied by type of agency, as per Table 1 below:

the reporting jurisdictions. To address this data limitation, the percentages were weighted by the total number of gang members reported in each jurisdiction.

**Table 1: Response Rate by Agency Type, Canada, 2002**

Type of Agency	Number Mailed	Number Received	Response Rate
City/Municipal Police Service	139	102	73%
RCMP Detachment	149	113	76%
O.P.P. Detachments	61	49	80%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>77%</b>

### 1.4 Estimation

Of 63 jurisdictions which reported youth gang activity in 2002 (see Section 2.1), 20 did not provide either an estimate of the number of gangs, or the number of gang members in their jurisdiction (or both).

In order to provide the most accurate perspective on the extent of the youth gang problem it was necessary to provide estimates for missing data. To accomplish this, reporting jurisdictions were stratified into appropriate population groups, and an average number of gangs and gang members were calculated for each group. Then, jurisdictions not reporting either the number of gangs or gang members in their jurisdictions were grouped similarly by population strata, then accorded the corresponding average in lieu of missing data.

### 1.5 Weighting of Responses

Several questions within the 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs asked respondents to estimate the percentage of gangs or gang members who met a certain criteria (such as gender, age, ethnicity, etc.). With respect to these kinds of responses, percentages do not reflect differences in the size (total membership) of the gangs across

### 1.6 Data Limitations

While law enforcement agencies are an excellent information source for criminal justice research, data from law enforcement agencies has some inherent limitations:

- There is little standardization in the manner in which law enforcement agencies collect data, especially with respect to gang issues. Less than half of jurisdictions reporting gang activity employ computerized gang databases, although some use paper-based means. Irrespective of the means by which they catalogue data, there is no common national standard in place.
- While the survey package was sent to the Chief of each police service or a commanding officer of an OPP or RCMP detachment, there is no guarantee that the survey was completed by the most appropriate person within that police agency (e.g., the person most knowledgeable about the youth gang situation).
- Political considerations may also impact response, and a gang problem may either be under-reported or exaggerated (Curry, 1995).
- There exists no standard or broadly accepted definition with respect to youth gangs. Moreover, there is little national consensus as to what constitutes a youth gang, youth gang member or gang-related crime. While the survey form

offered a broad definition, there is no guarantee that respondents answered questions with this specific definition in mind. These definitional challenges are similar to those faced by Canadian policy makers and criminal justice officials with respect to other gang issues, in particular those related to organized crime groups<sup>5</sup>.

- The recent trend towards municipal restructuring and so-called “super cities” may mask the extent of gang activity within Canadian cities. For example, the York Regional Police Service,

headquartered in Newmarket, Ontario, indicated that gangs were active in their jurisdiction in 2002 and they were therefore one of 67 jurisdictions that did do. However, York Regional Police serves a total population base of more than 803,000 in several major cities including Markham, Richmond Hill, Aurora, Stouffville, Newmarket and King City, among others. Therefore, it is difficult to determine where precisely York Region’s gang problem is centred (e.g., is it in Markham or Richmond Hill or both?).

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5. See Statistics Canada report, *Organized Crime in Canada: An Investigation into the Feasibility of Collecting Police-level Data* .



## Section Two SURVEY RESULTS

### 2.1 Prevalence of Youth Gangs

Of the 264 agencies that completed a survey, 63, or 24%, reported that they had active youth gangs in

their jurisdiction in 2002. Table 2 summarizes the Canadian police agencies, along with their corresponding city, in which youth gang activity was reported in 2002.

**Table 2: Police Agencies Reporting Active Youth Gangs, Canada, 2002**

Agency	City or Region	Province
Stony Plain RCMP	Stony Plain	Alberta
Fort Saskatchewan RCMP	Fort Saskatchewan	Alberta
Calgary Police Service	Calgary	Alberta
Medicine Hat Police Service	Medicine Hat	Alberta
Edmonton Police Service	Edmonton	Alberta
Victoria City Police	Victoria	British Columbia
Saanich Police Department	Saanich	British Columbia
New Westminster Police Service	New Westminster	British Columbia
Port Alberni RCMP	Port Alberni	British Columbia
Tofino RCMP	Tofino	British Columbia
Coquitlam RCMP	Coquitlam	British Columbia
North Vancouver RCMP	North Vancouver	British Columbia
Burnaby RCMP	Burnaby	British Columbia
Campbell River RCMP	Campbell River	British Columbia
Surrey RCMP	Surrey	British Columbia
Dawson Creek RCMP	Dawson Creek	British Columbia
Vancouver Police Department	Vancouver	British Columbia
Cranberry Portage RCMP Detachment	Cranberry Portage	Manitoba
Winnipeg Police Service	Winnipeg	Manitoba
Thompson RCMP	Thompson	Manitoba
Blue Hills RCMP	Brandon	Manitoba
Brandon Police Service	Brandon	Manitoba
RCMP The Pas	The Pas	Manitoba
Digby RCMP	Digby	Nova Scotia
Halifax Detachment	Lower Sackville	Nova Scotia
Amherst Police Department	Amherst	Nova Scotia
Kenora Police Service	Kenora	Ontario
York Regional Police	York Region <sup>6</sup>	Ontario
Windsor Police Service	Windsor	Ontario
South Simcoe Police Service	Innisfil	Ontario
Peterborough Lakefield Community Police Service	Peterborough	Ontario

6. Includes principal cities/municipalities of Markham, Richmond Hill, Aurora, Newmarket, King City and Vaughan.

**Table 2: Police Agencies Reporting Active Youth Gangs, Canada, 2002**

Agency	City or Region	Province
Lambton Detachment	Petrolia	Ontario
Hamilton Police Service	Hamilton/Ancaster	Ontario
Kanata OPP	Kanata	Ontario
Thunder Bay Police Service	Thunder Bay	Ontario
Ottawa Police Service	Ottawa	Ontario
UCCM Anishnaabe	M'Chigeeng	Ontario
Orillia OPP	Orillia	Ontario
Kenora OPP Detachment	Kenora	Ontario
Nottawasaga OPP	Beeton	Ontario
Sault Ste. Marie Police Service	Sault Ste. Marie	Ontario
Peel Regional Police	Peel Region <sup>7</sup>	Ontario
Halton Regional Police	Oakville <sup>8</sup>	Ontario
St. Thomas Police Service	St. Thomas	Ontario
Barrie Police Service	Barrie	Ontario
West Parry Sound OPP	Parry Sound	Ontario
Waterloo Regional Police	Cambridge <sup>9</sup>	Ontario
Toronto Police Service	Toronto	Ontario
Durham Regional Police	Oshawa	Ontario
Stratford Police Service	Stratford	Ontario
London Police Service	London	Ontario
Québec City Municipal Police	Quebec	Quebec
Montréal Police Service	Montreal	Quebec
Gatineau Police Service	Gatineau	Quebec
Sécurité publique de Ste-Julie	Ste. Julie	Quebec
Prince Albert Police Service	Prince Albert	Saskatchewan
Tisdale RCMP	Tisdale	Saskatchewan
Saskatoon RCMP	Saskatoon	Saskatchewan
Saskatoon Police Service	Saskatoon	Saskatchewan
Yorkton RCMP Detachment	Yorkton	Saskatchewan
Regina Police Service	Regina	Saskatchewan
Regina RCMP Detachment	Regina	Saskatchewan
Moose Jaw Police Service	Moose Jaw	Saskatchewan

**Note:** Includes data from the Province of Quebec survey.

As can be seen from Table 2, no youth gang activity was reported in the Provinces of Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick, nor in the Yukon Territories, the Northwest Territories, or Nunavut.

7. Includes principal cities of Brampton and Mississauga.

8. Includes principal cities of Oakville, Burlington, and Milton.

9. Includes principal cities of Waterloo, Kitchener and Cambridge.



## 2.2 Percentage of Provincial Jurisdictions Reporting Active Youth Gangs

Table 3 shows the percentage of jurisdictions reporting active youth gangs by province in 2002.

The Provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia have the highest percentage of jurisdictions reporting active youth gangs at 35%, 30% and 27% respectively, followed closely by Ontario (26%). In absolute terms, Ontario has the largest concentration of jurisdictions reporting youth gang activity, at 25. To reiterate a point made earlier, Table 3 shows that no youth gang activity was reported in Northern Canadian Territories and all of the Maritimes, with the exception of Nova Scotia.

Please note that because data was collected on only four police agencies in the Province of Quebec, the results with respect to the percentage of jurisdictions reporting active youth gangs in Quebec (100%) must not be considered representative of the entire Province.

## 2.3 Population Characteristics

Utilizing 2001 Statistics Canada census data, jurisdictions reporting active youth gangs were accorded their population figure and then grouped by province. Table 4 below shows the extent of each province's total population that is served by police agencies reporting active youth gangs in 2001, which could be considered essentially a measure of youth gang distribution or penetration by province.

As Table 4 shows, nationally approximately 59% of the population is served by law enforcement agencies reporting active youth gangs. Stated another way, survey results show that 59% of the Canadian populations resides within geographical police jurisdictions that report youth gang activity in 2002. Cross tabulations by Province reveal that British Columbia (83%) and Ontario (74%) have the largest extent of population served by police agencies reporting active youth gangs.

**Table 3: Percentage of Respondent Jurisdictions Reporting Youth Gang Activity, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	Number of Jurisdictions Reporting	Number of Jurisdictions Reporting Active Youth Gangs	% of Jurisdictions Reporting Active Youth Gangs
Canada	264	63	24
British Columbia	44	12	27
Alberta	23	5	21
Saskatchewan	23	8	35
Manitoba	20	6	30
Ontario	98	25	26
Quebec	4	4	100
Nova Scotia	17	3	18
New Brunswick	11	0	0
Prince Edward Island	4	0	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	8	0	0
Yukon	5	0	0
Northwest Territories	3	0	0
Nunavut	4	0	0

**Note:** Includes data from the Province of Quebec survey.

**Table 4: Population Served by Police Agencies Reporting Active Youth Gangs, Canada, 2002**

Area	2001 Population	Population served by police agencies reporting active youth gangs	% of total population
Canada	30,007,094	17,606,211	59%
British Columbia	3,907,738	3,237,601	83
Alberta	2,974,807	1,966,576	66
Saskatchewan	978,933	507,605	52
Manitoba	1,119,583	732,710	65
Ontario	11,410,046	8,491,770	74
Quebec	7,237,479	2,628,260	36
Nova Scotia	908,007	41,689	5
New Brunswick	729,498	0	0
Prince Edward Island	135,294	0	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	512,930	0	0
Yukon	28,674	0	0
Northwest Territories	37,360	0	0
Nunavut	26,745	0	0

**Note:** Includes data from the Province of Quebec survey.

## 2.4 Year of Onset

Respondents that indicated youth gang activity within their jurisdiction in 2002 were also asked to report the date of onset of gang activity. Table 5 shows the onset of youth gangs by jurisdiction,

and reveals that Surrey and Vancouver (1975 and 1979 respectively) had the earliest reported onset of youth gang activity in the country. Prior to 1989, youth gang activity was found entirely in western Canada with the exception of the City of Montreal.

**Table 5: Year of Onset of Youth Gang Activity, by Jurisdiction, Canada, 2002**

Year of Onset	City/Region	Province	Year of Onset	City/Region	Province
1975	Surrey	British Columbia	1999	Digby	Nova Scotia
1979	Vancouver	British Columbia	1999	London	Ontario
1985	Calgary	Alberta	2000	Port Alberni	British Columbia
1985	North Vancouver	British Columbia	2000	Lower Sackville	Nova Scotia
1985	Montreal	Quebec	2000	Petrolia	Ontario
1988	Winnipeg	Manitoba	2000	Orillia	Ontario
1989	Oshawa	Ontario	2000	Beeton	Ontario
1990	Tofino	British Columbia	2000	Stratford	Ontario
1990	Ottawa	Ontario	2000	Quebec	Quebec
1992	Hamilton	Ontario	2000	Yorkton	Saskatchewan
1992	Kanata	Ontario	2001	Stony Plain	Alberta
1993	Burnaby	British Columbia	2001	Fort Saskatchewan	Alberta
1993	Brampton	Ontario	2001	Medicine Hat	Alberta
1994	Saskatoon	Saskatchewan	2001	Peterborough	Ontario
1995	Thompson	Manitoba	2001	Sault Ste. Marie	Ontario
1995	Kenora	Ontario	2001	Oakville	Ontario
1995	Windsor	Ontario	2001	Tisdale	Saskatchewan
1995	Thunder Bay	Ontario	2002	Dawson Creek	British Columbia
1995	Cambridge	Ontario	2002	St. Thomas	Ontario
1995	Toronto	Ontario	2002	Parry Sound	Ontario
1995	Regina	Saskatchewan	2002	Ste. Julie	Quebec
1996	Victoria	British Columbia	2002	Moose Jaw	Saskatchewan
1996	Saanich	British Columbia	Do not know	Coquitlam	British Columbia
1996	Brandon	Manitoba	Do not know	Campbell River	British Columbia
1996	The Pas	Manitoba	Do not know	Innisfil	Ontario
1996	York Region	Ontario	Do not know	M'Chigeeng	Ontario
1996	Kenora	Ontario	Do not know	Barrie	Ontario
1997	Edmonton	Alberta	Do not know	Terrebonne	Quebec
1997	Cranberry Portage	Manitoba	Do not know	Longueuil	Quebec
1997	Amherst	Nova Scotia	Do not know	Drummondville	Quebec
1997	Prince Albert	Saskatchewan	Do not know	Laval	Quebec
1998	New Westminster	British Columbia	Do not know	Gatineau	Quebec

## 2.5 Number of Youth Gangs and Gang Members

Prior to this survey, there has been no reliable measure of the number of youth gangs or youth gang members in Canada. Even with the administration of the 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs, due to the data limitations highlighted in the Methodology section, the numbers that follow must be considered an approximation of the actual size of the Canadian youth gang problem.

Table 6 shows an estimated or reported 434 youth gangs nationally, comprising some 7,071 members. Cross tabulations by Province reveal that the largest concentration of youth gangs and youth gang members is in Ontario, at 216 youth gangs and 3,320 respectively, followed by Saskatchewan (28 and 1315 respectively) and British Columbia (102 and 1027 respectively). Survey results show also that the Provinces of Nova Scotia (37), Manitoba (171) and Quebec (533) have the lowest number of reported or estimated youth gang members, with none reported in the three Canadian Territories or the three remaining Provinces in Eastern Canada.

Expressed on a per capita basis, that is, the number of youth gang members per 1,000 population, Saskatchewan has the highest concentration of youth gang members (1.34 per 1,000 population), followed by Ontario (0.29 per 1,000) and British Columbia (0.26 per 1,000 population). For provinces reporting youth gang activity in 2002, youth gang member concentration per 1,000 population is lowest in Nova Scotia (0.04) followed by Quebec (0.07).

Table 7 reveals that nationally, 57% of respondents believe that the youth gang problem was getting worse in their jurisdiction, while just over one-third (37%) suggesting that it was staying the same. Cross tabulations by Province reveal that respondents were most negative about the future prospects of the youth gang problem (e.g., that it is getting worse) in Nova Scotia (100%), Alberta (80%), Quebec (75%) and Saskatchewan (63%). Aggregating the responses “getting better” and

**Table 6: Estimated Number of Youth Gangs and Youth Gang Members, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	Number of Youth Gangs	Number of Youth Gang Members	Youth Gang Members per 1,000 population
Canada	434	7071	0.24
British Columbia	102	1027	0.26
Alberta	42	668	0.22
Saskatchewan	28	1315	1.34
Manitoba	15	171	0.15
Ontario	216	3320	0.29
Quebec	25	533	0.07
Nova Scotia	6	37	0.04
New Brunswick	0	0	0
Prince Edward Island	0	0	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	0	0	0
Yukon	0	0	0
Northwest Territories	0	0	0
Nunavut	0	0	0

**Note:** Includes data from the Province of Quebec survey.

**2.6 Perception of the Youth Gang Problem**

In this survey, respondents reporting active youth gangs in 2002 were asked to make a general assessment as to whether the youth gang problem in their jurisdiction was “getting worse”, “getting better” or “staying the same”.

“staying the same” by province shows that Manitoba (67%) and British Columbia (67%) are most hopeful that the youth gang problem in their jurisdictions will not get any worse than existing levels.

**Table 7: Perception of the Youth Gang Problem, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	Getting Worse	Getting Better	Staying the Same
Canada	57% (n=36)	6% (n=4)	37% (n=23)
British Columbia	33 (n=4)	8 (n=1)	58 (n=7)
Alberta	80 (n=4)	0	20 (n=1)
Saskatchewan	63 (n=5)	0	38 (n=3)
Manitoba	33 (n=2)	17 (n=1)	50 (n=3)
Ontario	60 (n=15)	8 (n=2)	32 (n=8)
Quebec	75 (n=3)	0	38 (n=1)
Nova Scotia	100 (n=3)	0	0
New Brunswick	n/a	n/a	n/a
Prince Edward Island	n/a	n/a	n/a
Newfoundland and Labrador	n/a	n/a	n/a
Yukon	n/a	n/a	n/a
Northwest Territories	n/a	n/a	n/a
Nunavut	n/a	n/a	n/a

**Note:** The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding. Includes data from the Province of Quebec survey.

## 2.7 Likelihood of Youth Gang Formation

In this survey, respondents who did not report active youth gangs in 2002 were asked to make a general assessment as to the likelihood that youth gangs will develop in their jurisdiction in the future.

Table 8 reveals that nationally, a strong majority of respondents (82%) believe that the likelihood of youth gang formation in their jurisdictions is low or none. Cross tabulations by Province reveal that

with the exception of the Yukon Territory, 100% of respondents in all Maritime provinces, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut believe that the likelihood of youth gang formation in their jurisdiction is low or none.

In contrast, a large number of respondents in Alberta (41%) and Ontario (24%), that is, those that live within jurisdictions not reporting active youth gangs in 2002, believe that there is a medium to high likelihood of youth gang formation in their jurisdictions in the future.

**Table 8: Likelihood of Future Youth Gang Formation, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	High	Medium	Low	None
Canada	2% (n=3)	16% (n=31)	71% (n=139)	11% (n=22)
British Columbia	0	19 (n=6)	75 (n=24)	6 (n=2)
Alberta	6 (n=1)	35 (n=6)	53 (n=9)	6 (n=1)
Saskatchewan	0	7 (n=1)	79 (n=11)	14 (n=2)
Manitoba	8 (n=1)	8 (n=1)	83 (n=10)	0
Ontario	1 (n=1)	23 (n=16)	65 (n=46)	11 (n=8)
Quebec	0	0	0	0
Nova Scotia	0	0	93 (n=13)	7 (n=1)
New Brunswick	0	0	80 (n=8)	20 (n=2)
Prince Edward Island	0	0	100 (n=4)	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	0	0	75 (n=6)	25 (n=2)
Yukon	0	20 (n=1)	60 (n=3)	20 (n=1)
Northwest Territories	0	0	67 (n=2)	33 (n=1)
Nunavut	0	0	75 (n=3)	25 (n=1)

**Note:** The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

## 2.8 Youth Gang Member Demographics

Respondents indicating that there were active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were asked about the demographic characteristics (gender, age, and race/ethnicity) of gang members within their jurisdiction. Data has been weighted to account for the number of gang members reported in each jurisdiction. Results are as follows:

### 2.8.1 Gender of Youth Gang Members

Most research conducted in North America suggests that males dominate youth gang membership. For example, according to the 1998 National Youth Gang Survey, published by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, respondents reported that 92% of youth gang members were male. We should note, however, that some researchers contend (Curry 1998) that law enforcement agencies may be less likely to identify females as gang members because of females' lower levels of criminality.

As Table 9 indicates, nationally the vast majority of youth gang members are male (94%). Cross tabulations by Province reveal that male gang members are dominant in Nova Scotia (100%), Ontario (97%), Alberta (96%) and Quebec (95%). Table 9 also shows that relative to the national average (6%), there is a strong representation of female gang members in western Canadian provinces including British Columbia (12%), Manitoba (10%) and Saskatchewan (9%).

### 2.8.2 Age of Youth Gang Members

Respondents indicating active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were asked to estimate the percentage of gang members that fell within the age categories of under 16, 16 to 18, 19 to 21, and 22+. As Chart 1 illustrates, for the country as a whole, youth gang members predominately fall within the age range of 16 to 18 years (39%), and that almost half (48%) of all youth gang members are under the age of 18 years.

**Table 9: Gender of Youth Gang Members, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	Male	Female	Number of Observations
Canada	94%	6%	35
British Columbia	88	12	8
Alberta	96	4	2
Saskatchewan	91	9	4
Manitoba	91	9	4
Ontario	97	3	12
Quebec	95	5	4
Nova Scotia	100	0	1
New Brunswick	0	0	0
Prince Edward Island	0	0	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	0	0	0
Yukon	0	0	0
Northwest Territories	0	0	0
Nunavut	0	0	0

**Note:** Data are weighted to account for the number of gangs reported in each jurisdiction.

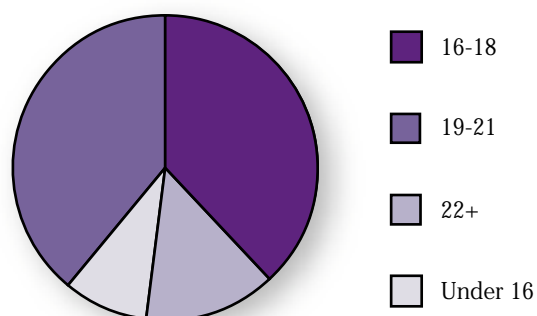
**Figure 1: Age of Youth Gang Members, Canada, 2002**

Table 10 reveals that the majority of youth gang members that live in Saskatchewan (67%), Nova Scotia (66%), British Columbia (62%) and

Manitoba (52%) are under the age of 18 years. Survey results also indicate that the majority of youth gang members in Alberta (87%) and Ontario (59%) are over the age of 19.

### 2.8.3 Ethnicity/Race of Youth Gang Members

Respondents indicating active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were asked to estimate the percentage of youth gang members that fell within a selection of principal ethnic categories.

Nationally, Table 11 reveals that the largest proportion of youth gang members in Canada are African Canadian/Black (25%), followed by First Nations (22%) and Caucasian/White (18%).

**Table 10 : Age of Youth Gang Members, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	< 16	16 to 18	19 to 21	22+	Number of Observations
Canada	10%	39%	37%	14%	41
British Columbia	17	45	32	6	11
Alberta	3	11	30	57	2
Saskatchewan	15	52	24	9	5
Manitoba	16	36	37	12	4
Ontario	4	37	46	13	13
Quebec	23	29	30	18	4
Nova Scotia	3	63	32	2	2
New Brunswick	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Prince Edward Island	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Yukon	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Northwest Territories	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Nunavut	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0

**Note:** Data are weighted to account for the number of gangs reported in each jurisdiction. The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

**Table 11: Ethnicity/Race of Youth Gang Members, Canada, 2002**

Race/Ethnicity	%
African Canadian/Black	25%
First Nations	22
Caucasian/White	18
East Indian/Pakistani	14
Asian	12
Latino/Hispanic	6
Middle Eastern/Arabic	3

**Note:** Data are weighted to account for the number of gangs reported in each jurisdiction.

In Table 12, cross tabulations by Province reveal that African Canadian/Black youth gang members predominate in Quebec (51%), Nova Scotia (48%) and Ontario (36%), but have no or little presence in Manitoba (9%), British Columbia (5%), Saskatchewan and Alberta (both 0). With respect to First Nations youth gang members, they are concentrated largely in the Western provinces of Saskatchewan (96%), Manitoba (58%) and Alberta (58%). Table 12 also shows a high concentration of Asian youth gang members in British Columbia (37%), as well as a material concentration of East Indian/Pakistani youth gang members in Ontario (21%). Caucasian/ White youth gang members are

broadly distributed throughout the country, with the exception of Saskatchewan (2%) and Alberta (8%), but the survey shows a large concentration in Nova Scotia (47%). Table 12 also shows that as of 2002, the concentration of Latino/Hispanic and Middle Eastern youth gang members is still quite small relative to other races/ethnicities.

### 2.8.4 Racial Diversity of Youth Gangs

Respondents indicating active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were asked to estimate the percentage of youth gangs that had a significant mixture of two or more racial/ethnic groups.

Table 13 shows nationally that 36% of youth gangs features a mixture of two or more racial/ethnic groups. Cross tabulations by Province show that racial diversity within youth gangs is most prevalent in Ontario (51%), followed by British Columbia (46%) and Manitoba (24%). Youth gangs in Nova Scotia (less than 1%) and Saskatchewan (7%) appear to be most homogeneous in the country based on these survey results.

**Table 12: Ethnicity/Race of Youth Gang Members, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	African Canadian	Latino/ Hispanic	Caucasian/ White	E. Indian/ Pakistani	Asian	Middle Eastern	First Nations	Number of Observations
Canada	25%	6%	18%	14%	12%	3%	22%	39
British Columbia	5	8	22	14	37	5	10	11
Alberta	0	33	8	0	0	0	58	1
Saskatchewan	0	2	2	0	0	0	96	5
Manitoba	9	3	26	3	0	0	58	4
Ontario	36	6	21	21	8	4	4	12
Quebec	51	12	21	2	9	5	0	4
Nova Scotia	48	0	47	0	0	0	9	2
New Brunswick	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Prince Edward Island	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Yukon	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Northwest Territories	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Nunavut	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0

**Note:** Data are weighted to account for the number of gangs reported in each jurisdiction. The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding



**Table 13: Percentage of Youth Gangs Displaying Mixture of Two or More Ethnic/Racial Groups, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	%	Number of Observations
Canada	36%	53
British Columbia	46	11
Alberta	25	2
Saskatchewan	7	7
Manitoba	24	4
Ontario	51	19
Quebec	14	7
Nova Scotia	<1	3
New Brunswick	0	0
Prince Edward Island	0	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	0	0
Yukon	0	0
Northwest Territories	0	0
Nunavut	0	0

**Note:** Includes data from the Province of Quebec survey.

## 2.9 Impact of Returning Inmates From Prison

Respondents indicating active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were asked to indicate the extent to which their jurisdiction's youth gang

problem has been affected in the past few years by the return of adult or youth gang-involved inmates from prison.

Table 14 reveals nationally that 40% of respondents believe that the return of adult or youth gang-involved inmates from prison has affected youth gangs very much. Based on combined "very much" and "somewhat" responses, nationally 76% of respondents believe that the return of adult or youth gang-involved inmates from prison is having a material effect on youth gangs. Cross tabulations by province reveal (again based on combined "very much" and "somewhat" responses), that the return of adult or youth gang-involved inmates from prison is having the greatest effect on youth gangs in Alberta (100%), Quebec (100%), Saskatchewan (100%) and Manitoba (80%). The least effect (based on combining "very little" and "not at all" responses) was reported in the Province of Ontario (42%), Nova Scotia (33%) and British Columbia (30%).

**Table 14: Jurisdictions Reporting Effect of Adult or Youth Gang-Involved Inmates From Prison on Youth Gangs, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	Very Much	Somewhat	Very Little	Not At All	Total # of Observations
Canada	40% (n=19)	37% (n=18)	16% (n=8)	8% (n=4)	49
British Columbia	30 (n=3)	40 (n=4)	30 (n=3)	0	10
Alberta	100 (n=4)	0	0	0	4
Saskatchewan	86 (n=6)	14 (n=1)	0	0	7
Manitoba	40 (n=2)	40 (n=2)	0	10 (n=1)	5
Ontario	12 (n=2)	47 (n=8)	24 (n=4)	18 (n=3)	17
Quebec	67 (n=2)	33 (n=1)	0	0	3
Nova Scotia	0	67 (n=2)	33 (n=1)	0	3
New Brunswick	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Prince Edward Island	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Yukon	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Northwest Territories	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Nunavut	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0

**Note:** The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

## 2.10 Impact of Migration of Gang Members From Other Jurisdictions

Respondents indicating active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were asked to indicate the extent to which their jurisdiction's youth gang problem has been affected in the past few years by the migration of gang members to their jurisdiction from other jurisdictions.

As Table 15 reveals, nationally 35% of respondents believe that youth gang member migration has affected their jurisdiction's youth gang problem very much. Based on combined

“very much” and “somewhat” responses, nationally 85% of respondents believe that youth gang member migration is producing a material affect on their jurisdiction's youth gang problem. Cross tabulations by Province (again based on combined “very much” and “somewhat” responses) reveal that the impact of youth gang member migration is greatest in British Columbia (100%), Manitoba (100%), Saskatchewan (88%) and Ontario (86%), and is least felt (based on combined “not at all” and “very little” responses) in Nova Scotia (33%), Alberta (27%) and Quebec (25%).

**Table 15: Jurisdictions Reporting Effect of Youth Gang Member Migration From Other Jurisdictions on Youth Gang Problem, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	Very Much	Somewhat	Very Little	Not At All	Total # of Observations
Canada	35% (n=20)	50% (n=29)	9% (n=5)	7% (n=4)	58
British Columbia	20 (n=1)	80 (n=4)	0	0	5
Alberta	46 (n=5)	27 (n=3)	18 (n=2)	9 (n=1)	11
Saskatchewan	25 (n=2)	63 (n=5)	13 (n=1)	0	8
Manitoba	17 (n=1)	83 (n=5)	0	0	6
Ontario	48 (n=10)	38 (n=8)	5 (n=1)	10 (n=2)	21
Quebec	25 (n=1)	50 (n=2)	25 (n=1)	0	4
Nova Scotia	0	67 (n=2)	0	33 (n=1)	3
New Brunswick	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Prince Edward Island	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Yukon	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Northwest Territories	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Nunavut	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0

**Note:**The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

## 2.11 Youth Gang Characteristics

The 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs attempted to identify the key characteristics of youth gangs. Respondents indicating active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were asked to indicate the extent to which their jurisdiction's youth exhibit a number of specific characteristics in respect to their formation or operation, using a scale that included "very much", "somewhat", "very little" and "not at all".

Table 16 presents findings for the entire country. Combining the response "very much" with

"somewhat", the four most prevalent gang characteristics in the national sample were "lack of respect for authority" (95%), "participation in illegal activities" (91%), "use of monikers and nicknames" (88%) and "code of silence" (85%). In contrast, combining the response "not at all" with "very little" reveals that the four least prevalent gang characteristics are "recruitment of females to work in sex trade" (57%), "violent initiation rites" (49%), "affiliation with organized crime groups/syndicates" (48%), and "recruitment of females to assist in commission of crimes" (47%).

**Table 16: Principal Characteristics of Youth Gangs, Canada, 2002**

Gang Characteristic	Very much	Somewhat	Very Little	Not at all	# of observations
Code of silence	58%	27%	9%	7%	45
Participation in illegal activities	53	38	7	2	60
Lack of respect for authority	52	43	3	2	58
Gang-specific dress code/colours	47	26	17	10	58
Use of monikers/nicknames	42	46	11	2	55
Defined cliques/posses/sets	38	31	23	8	48
Use of violence during commission of crimes	36	42	20	2	59
Violent exit rites	36	19	29	16	31
Violent initiation rites	31	21	31	18	39
Use of gang communications methods (graffiti, hand signs)	29	39	27	5	56
Fluid gang affiliations	23	47	19	12	43
Intimidation of crime witnesses	23	50	19	8	52
Established hierarchy/leadership	23	44	27	6	52
Recruitment of females to work in sex trade	23	21	27	30	44
Rivalries with other gangs	18	43	25	14	49
Affiliation with organized crime groups/syndicates	17	35	30	19	48
Aggressive recruitment of members	15	43	36	6	53
Territorial in nature	12	54	29	5	56
Recruitment of females to assist in commission of crimes	10	43	39	8	51

**Note:** The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

**2.12 Youth Gang Definitions**

As noted in the Methodology section, there is no consistent and widely held definition as to what constitutes a youth gang in Canada. Identifying the characteristics that define a youth gang is challenging because each law enforcement agency perceives gangs differently based on their agency’s policies, experiences and observations. Many agencies do not have a formal written definition of gangs, which complicates this matter further.

To help address this problem, the 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs asked respondents about the characteristics they consider important in defining a youth gang. Specifically, respondents were presented with a list of seven characteristics, and were asked to rank their importance as criteria

in defining a youth gang, with 1 being the most important and 7 being the least important.

Table 17 below lists the seven characteristics. Results in the first column, Average Numerical Score, have been computed by taking the sum of the scores and dividing it by the number of observations (n=59), which can be considered an indicator of the strength of response (e.g., scores closest to 1.0 indicate higher importance as criteria to define a youth gang). The second and third column respectively shows the number and percentage of first-place selections each received as a criterion for defining a youth gang. As can be seen, “The group commits crimes together” (2.1) followed by “The group hangs out/assembles together” (3.0) were the two top criteria used by law enforcement agencies to define a youth gang.

**Table 17: Criteria Used by Law Enforcement Agencies to Define a Youth Gang, Top Choices, Canada, 2002**

Gang Characteristic	Average Numerical Score	Number of First Place Selections	% of First Place Selections
The group commits crimes together	2.1	29	49.2%
The group hangs out/assembles together	3.0	9	15.3
It has leader(s) or an established leadership structure	3.9	6	10.2
The group displays/wears common colours or other insignia	4.1	7	11.9
The group claims a territory or turf of some sort	4.2	1	1.7
It has a name	4.4	5	8.5
The group is of a certain size	5.6	1	1.7

**Note:** Data are weighted to account for the number of gangs reported in each jurisdiction.

Table 18 represents a frequency analysis for the six characteristics, showing the number of respondents (n=59) who selected each characteristic as most important, along with the frequency spread between choice 1 (most important) and choice 7 (least important).

While Charts 17 and 18 illustrate that there is some agreement in respect to the most and least important youth gang defining characteristic, beyond this there is no general agreement on how to define a gang. For example, in Table 18 the characteristic “the group displays or wears common

**Table 18: Criteria Used by Law Enforcement Agencies to Define a Youth Gang: Analysis of Choices, Canada, 2002**

Gang Characteristic	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4	Choice 5	Choice 6	Choice 7	Spread
The group commits crimes together	29	12	8	7	1	2	0	29
The group hangs out/assembles together	9	17	16	7	4	4	2	15
It has leader(s) or an established leadership structure	6	9	10	6	14	12	2	12
The group displays/wears common colours or other insignia	7	7	10	6	11	10	8	5
The group claims a territory or turf of some sort	1	8	13	11	11	12	3	12
It has a name	5	9	6	9	7	11	12	7
The group is of a certain size	1	4	5	9	3	5	32	31

“The group commits crimes together” clearly received the most ranking of 1 (most important) relative to the other characteristics, with almost one-half of respondents assigning it a 1. The relevance of this characteristic is clear when one reviews the frequency distributions: its highest frequency (Choice 1) is very high; its lowest frequency (Choice 7) is very low, and its spread is therefore quite large (29 votes). In the converse, “The group is of a certain size” is deemed to be least important, and its frequency spread is similarly high at 31 (in other words, the responses are closely concentrated, in this case around Choice 7, “Least important”).

colours or other insignia” earned 7 first place votes while 8 last place votes, and displayed a frequency spread of only 5 (meaning that responses were very dispersed). This contradiction reinforces the notion that there is a diversity of opinion with respect to what defines a youth gang.

With respect to the characteristic, “The group is of a certain size”, respondents were asked, as a follow-on question, to specify the minimum size that defines a youth gang for their agency. The vast majority of responses ranged from a minimum group size of 3 to 5 individuals. In addition, respondents were asked to identify any additional characteristics used by their agency to define a youth gang. A summary of these responses is found in Table 19 below.

**Table 19: Additional Characteristics Used to Define a Youth Gangs, Canada, 2002**


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Corroboration of affiliations or members of gangs through proven sources
Recognized by other youth as youth gangs
Admits to being a gang member; types of crimes committed; types of clothes and colours.
Group of youth who gather together to intimidate or harass or damage property.
Self-acknowledgement
Street gang mentality displayed
Create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation within the community.
Level of violence, possession of firearms
Association to established organized crime groups
Self admission of membership, specific types of crimes committed (e.g. home invasions)
Intimidation tactics, use of violence to achieve their goals
Commit specific crimes - fraud, prostitution, narcotics
Seriousness of crimes - counterfeit money, assaults
Reliable source information, association with known gang members, acknowledgement of gang membership, involvement in gang motivated crime, court ruling; wears gang identification

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### 2.13 Youth Gang Resources

Respondents indicating active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were asked to indicate from a list of four specific youth gang resources (both physical and human), those that their police agency has deployed.

Table 20 shows that nationally, almost half of respondents (46%) employ some form of computerized gang intelligence database. In addition, approximately one-third of agencies (35%) have a dedicated gang unit and/or gang

officers in place, or have sworn officers with gang-related duties (41%). Nationally, very few agencies (14%) have established a gang prevention unit or have dedicated gang prevention officers.

Cross tabulations reveal that the Province of Saskatchewan (88%), Ontario (52%) and Quebec (50%) utilize gang intelligence databases more than the national average. Also of note, British Columbia (50%), Manitoba (50%) and Ontario (40%) utilize dedicated gang units or gang officers above the national average (35%).

**Table 20: Youth Gang Resources Utilized by Police Agencies, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	Gang Unit or Officers	Gang Prevention Unit/Officers	Officers with Gang-Related Duties	Gang Intelligence Database	Number of Observations
Canada	35% (n=22)	14% (n=9)	41% (n=26)	46% (n=29)	63
British Columbia	50 (n=6)	0	42 (n=5)	25 (n=3)	12
Alberta	20 (n=1)	0	20 (n=1)	40 (n=2)	5
Saskatchewan	13 (n=1)	38 (n=3)	63 (n=5)	88 (n=7)	8
Manitoba	50 (n=3)	0	17 (n=1)	33 (n=2)	6
Ontario	40 (n=10)	20 (n=5)	52 (n=13)	52 (n=13)	25
Quebec	25 (n=1)	25 (n=1)	25 (n=1)	50 (n=2)	4
Nova Scotia	0	0	0	0	3
New Brunswick	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Prince Edward Island	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Newfoundland and Labrador	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Yukon	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Northwest Territories	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Nunavut	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

**Note:** The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

Respondents were also provided with the opportunity to indicate other resources they had in place to address youth gangs. Responses are summarized in Table 21.

**Table 21: Other Youth Gang Resources, Canada, 2002**

"Scorpion" agent planted within major gang
Dedicated youth crime unit
Utilization of RCMP's DARE program
Non-computerized gang intelligence files
Weekly gang intelligence meetings
School Resource Officers (SROs) tasked with gang identification and prevention (several responses)
Specific policies established in respect to youth gangs (several responses)

## 2.14 Criminal Activities

### 2.14.1 Youth Gang Member Involvement in Criminal Activity

Since the earliest reports of youth gang activities in North America were made, youth gangs typically have been associated with criminal activities (Asbury, 1927).

In the 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs, respondents indicating active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were asked the degree to which youth gangs in their jurisdiction involved themselves in criminal activities in 2002, as well as whether youth gangs were involved in these criminal activities in collaboration with organized crime.

Table 22 shows that 40% of youth gang members had a high degree of involvement in assault, followed by drug trafficking (32%), vandalism/graffiti/tagging (24%) burglary/break and enter (21%). Based on combined "medium" and "high" responses, a large proportion of youth gang members are involved in assault (72%), drug trafficking (69%), burglary/break and enter (68%), vandalism/graffiti/tagging (64%), and intimidation/extortion (56%). Youth gang member collaboration with organized crime groups is highest with respect to drug trafficking (43%) and intimidation/extortion (23%), followed closely by theft of auto/exportation (19%).

In contrast, based on combined “none” and “low” responses, youth gang member involvement is low in criminal activities such as immigration fraud (98%), smuggling of consumer goods (96%), money laundering (93%), chemical drug manufacture (92%) and murder (91%). Survey results indicated that there is little collaboration with organized crime groups with respect to crimes such as smuggling of consumer goods (93%), immigration fraud (91%) and murder (86%).

the combined provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba<sup>10</sup>.

Table 23 shows survey results for the Province of Ontario. Some 43% of youth gang members had a high degree of involvement in assault, followed by vandalism/graffiti/tagging (29%), burglary/break and enter, home invasions and robbery (all at 24%). Based on combined “medium” and “high” responses, a large proportion of youth gang members are involved in vandalism/graffiti/tagging

**Table 22: Involvement of Youth Gang Members in Criminal Activity and Collaboration with Organized Crime Groups, Canada, 2002**

Type of Criminal Activity/ Criminal Offence	Degree of Youth Gang Member Involvement				Collaboration with Organized Crime Groups		
	None	Low	Medium	High	Yes	No	Unsure
Drug trafficking (n=59)	0	29%	37%	32%	43%	21%	36%
Chemical drug manufacture (n=50)	68	24	6	2	14	76	10
Intimidation/extortion (n=57)	11	33	37	19	23	42	35
Robbery (n=58)	21	31	28	21	10	65	25
Burglary/break and enter (n=57)	6	26	47	21	9	51	40
Murder (n=57)	74	18	4	5	5	86	9
Assault (n=57)	5	23	32	40	12	49	39
Sexual Assault/Rape (n=57)	54	32	11	4	5	83	12
Weapons trafficking (n=57)	54	26	18	2	14	65	21
Weapons possession offences (n=57)	25	30	26	19	14	56	30
Prostitution (n=57)	51	26	14	9	16	65	19
Theft of auto/exportation (n=58)	21	33	31	16	19	52	29
Home invasions (n=58)	41	26	21	12	16	64	21
Kidnapping/abduction (n=57)	75	14	11	0	11	83	7
Arson (n=55)	76	15	9	0	4	84	13
Fraud (n=57)	47	32	10	11	16	61	23
Immigration fraud (n=55)	83	15	2	0	2	91	7
Smuggling of consumer goods (n=55)	80	16	2	2	0	93	7
Vandalism/graffiti/tagging (n=58)	12	24	40	24	10	62	28
Money laundering (n=54)	72	20	6	2	11	76	13
Forgery/uttering (n=54)	48	32	17	4	9	70	20

**Note:** The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

To determine any material regional differences with respect to the involvement of youth gang members in criminal activity, cross tabulations were completed for Ontario, British Columbia and

(72%), drug trafficking (72%), burglary/break and enter (72%), and assault (67%). Youth gang member collaboration with organized crime groups is highest with respect to drug trafficking

10. Individually, there were insufficient observations from each province to render a meaningful analysis. Since these three Provinces are geographically proximal to one another, the results were aggregated and analyzed accordingly.



(38%), fraud (16%), weapons possession offences and theft of auto/exportation (15%).

In contrast, based on combined “none” and “low” responses, youth gang member involvement is low in criminal activities such as immigration fraud, smuggling of consumer goods, money laundering, chemical drug manufacture and arson (100%), followed closely by murder and prostitution (95%).

intimidation/extortion (92%), vandalism/graffiti/tagging (84%), robbery (84%), and drug trafficking and weapons possession offences (75%). Youth gang member collaboration in British Columbia with organized crime groups is highest with respect to drug trafficking (42%), intimidation/ extortion and prostitution (33%), and theft of auto/exportation and weapons trafficking (25%).

**Table 23: Involvement of Youth Gang Members in Criminal Activity and Collaboration with Organized Crime Groups, Ontario, 2002**

Type of Criminal Activity/ Criminal Offence	Degree of Youth Gang Member Involvement				Collaboration with Organized Crime Groups		
	None	Low	Medium	High	Yes	No	Unsure
Drug trafficking (n=21)	0	29%	52%	19%	38%	14%	48%
Chemical drug manufacture (n=18)	83	17	0	0	11	61	28
Intimidation/extortion (n=21)	19	38	24	19	10	33	57
Robbery (n=21)	29	33	14	24	5	57	38
Burglary/break and enter (n=21)	0	29	48	24	0	38	62
Murder (n=20)	80	15	5	0	0	75	25
Assault (n=21)	0	33	24	43	0	52	48
Sexual Assault/Rape (n=20)	60	30	10	0	0	75	25
Weapons trafficking (n=20)	55	25	20	0	10	55	35
Weapons possession offences (n=20)	15	50	20	15	15	40	45
Prostitution (n=20)	85	10	5	0	0	65	35
Theft of auto/exportation (n=20)	10	40	50	0	15	40	45
Home invasions (n=21)	48	24	5	24	5	62	33
Kidnapping/abduction (n=20)	90	10	0	0	5	65	30
Arson (n=19)	90	11	0	0	0	84	16
Fraud (n=19)	47	42	11	0	16	53	32
Immigration fraud (n=19)	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Smuggling of consumer goods (n=19)	95	5	0	0	0	95	5
Vandalism/graffiti/tagging (n=21)	14	14	43	29	0	48	52
Money laundering (n=19)	84	16	0	0	5	68	26
Forgery/uttering (n=18)	61	17	22	0	6	67	28

**Note:** The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

Table 24 shows survey results for the Province of British Columbia. Some 64% of youth gang members had a high degree of involvement in assault, followed by drug trafficking (50%) and vandalism/graffiti/tagging (42%). Based on combined “medium” and “high” responses, a large proportion of youth gang members are involved in assault (100%),

In contrast, based on combined “none” and “low” responses, youth gang member involvement is low in criminal activities such as immigration fraud, smuggling of consumer goods, arson and murder (100%), followed closely by kidnapping/abduction and chemical drug manufacture (92%).

**Table 24: Involvement of Youth Gang Members in Criminal Activity and Collaboration with Organized Crime Groups, British Columbia, 2002**

Type of Criminal Activity/ Criminal Offence	Degree of Youth Gang Member Involvement				Collaboration with Organized Crime Groups		
	None	Low	Medium	High	Yes	No	Unsure
Drug trafficking (n=12)	0	25%	25%	50%	42%	25%	33%
Chemical drug manufacture (n=12)	42	50	8	0	17	50	33
Intimidation/extortion (n=12)	0	8	75	17	33	42	25
Robbery (n=12)	0	17	58	25	8	58	33
Burglary/break and enter (n=11)	0	36	36	27	0	73	27
Murder (n=12)	58	43	0	0	0	67	33
Assault (n=11)	0	0	36	64	0	64	36
Sexual Assault/Rape (n=12)	0	50	17	33	8	58	33
Weapons trafficking (n=12)	42	50	8	0	25	42	33
Weapons possession offences (n=12)	17	8	50	25	17	50	33
Prostitution (n=12)	25	33	25	17	33	42	25
Theft of auto/exportation (n=12)	25	42	8	25	25	50	25
Home invasions (n=12)	33	25	42	0	17	53	25
Kidnapping/abduction (n=12)	67	25	8	0	0	75	25
Arson (n=11)	73	27	0	0	0	73	27
Fraud (n=12)	50	17	17	17	17	42	42
Immigration fraud (n=11)	64	36	0	0	0	55	46
Smuggling of consumer goods (n=11)	73	27	9	0	0	64	36
Vandalism/graffiti/tagging (n=12)	0	17	42	42	0	75	25
Money laundering (n=11)	55	36	9	0	9	46	46
Forgery/uttering (n=11)	23	46	27	0	0	55	5

**Note:** The percentages within each criminal activity/offence category may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

Table 25 shows the aggregate survey results for the Provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Some 42% of youth gang members had a high degree of involvement in drug trafficking, followed by theft of auto/exportation (28%) and assault (26%). Based on combined “medium” and “high” responses, a large proportion of youth gang members are involved in drug trafficking (74%), burglary/break and enter, and assault (68%) and theft of auto/exportation (55%). Youth gang member

collaboration in these three provinces with organized crime groups is highest with respect to drug trafficking (42%) and assault (32%).

In contrast, based on combined “none” and “low” responses, youth gang member involvement is low in criminal activities such as immigration fraud, smuggling of consumer goods and fraud (95%), followed by forgery/uttering and sexual assault/rape (90%), and chemical drug manufacture (88%).

**Table 25: Involvement of Youth Gang Members in Criminal Activity and Collaboration with Organized Crime Groups, Alberta/Saskatchewan/Manitoba, 2002**

Type of Criminal Activity/ Criminal Offence	Degree of Youth Gang Member Involvement				Collaboration with Organized Crime Groups		
	None	Low	Medium	High	Yes	No	Unsure
Drug trafficking (n=19)	0	26%	32%	42%	42%	16%	42%
Chemical drug manufacture (n=17)	82	6	6	6	18	47	35
Intimidation/extortion (n=18)	6	44	33	17	28	39	33
Robbery (n=19)	16	37	32	16	21	42	37
Burglary/break and enter (n=19)	5	26	47	21	26	47	26
Murder (n=19)	74	11	5	11	16	63	21
Assault (n=19)	11	21	42	26	32	26	42
Sexual Assault/Rape (n=19)	58	32	11	0	5	74	21
Weapons trafficking (n=19)	53	21	21	5	16	47	37
Weapons possession offences (n=19)	32	21	26	21	16	53	32
Prostitution (n=19)	42	37	21	0	11	47	42
Theft of auto/exportation (n=18)	28	17	28	28	22	50	28
Home invasions (n=19)	37	26	26	11	26	47	26
Kidnapping/abduction (n=19)	74	11	16	0	16	63	21
Arson (n=19)	68	11	21	0	11	63	26
Fraud (n=19)	58	37	0	5	11	63	26
Immigration fraud (n=19)	79	16	5	0	5	58	37
Smuggling of consumer goods (n=19)	79	16	0	5	0	63	37
Vandalism/graffiti/tagging (n=19)	16	37	37	11	32	47	21
Money laundering (n=19)	68	16	11	5	21	53	26
Forgery/uttering (n=19)	53	37	5	5	16	58	26

**Note:** The percentages within each criminal activity/offence category may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

Table 26 below shows the top criminal activities nationally (as ranked by degree of youth gang member involvement), and highlights the respective placing of these criminal activities in

the regions/provinces where cross tabulations were performed, namely Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta/Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

**Table 26: Ranking of Leading Criminal Activities by Degree of Youth Gang Member Involvement, Nationally and by Region, 2002**

Criminal Activity/Offence	Canada	Ontario	B.C.	Alta/ Sask/Man
Assault	1 (72%)	3 (67%)	1 (100%)	T2 (68%)
Drug trafficking	2 (70)	T2 (71)	5 (75)	1 (74)
Burglary/break and enter	3 (68)	T2 (71)	6 (64)	T2 (68)
Vandalism/graffiti/tagging	4 (64)	1 (72)	3 (83)	T5 (47)
Intimidation/extortion	5 (56)	5 (43)	2 (92)	4 (50)
Theft of auto/expotation	6 (47)	4 (50)	10 (33)	3 (55)

**Note:** The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

### 2.14.2 Street Sales of Illicit Drugs

Respondents indicating active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were asked what percent of the street sales of a selection of drugs were made by youth gang members. For the purposes of this survey, “street sales” was defined as the sale of drugs in small quantities that have already been prepared for consumption.

As Table 27 shows, respondents nationally indicated that youth gang members were responsible for more than one-third (36%) of the street sales of marijuana, followed by 17% of street sales of crack cocaine and 11% of powder cocaine. Across the country, respondents

**Table 27: Jurisdictions Reporting Youth Gang Member Participation in Street Sales of Illicit Drugs, Canada, 2002**

Type of Drug	%	Number of Observations
Marijuana	36%	34
Crack cocaine	17	28
Powder cocaine	11	29
Ecstasy	7	31
Methamphetamine/crystal	6	30
Heroin	5	30
MDA	5	30
Other club drugs: Ketamine, GHB, etc.	3	30
LSD	1	20
Anabolic steroids	1	30
PCP	1	28

**Note:** The percentages may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

indicated that youth gang members were responsible for a negligible percentage of drugs such as Heroin (5%) and chemical drugs such as Ecstasy (7%), MDA (5%) and other “club drugs” (3%), among others.

### 2.14.3 Relationships With Organized Crime Groups

An important objective of the 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs was to determine the extent to which Canadian youth gangs had established relationships with organized crime groups and syndicates.

Respondents indicating active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were therefore asked if the youth gangs in their community had collaborated with organized crime groups in 2002, and if so, what were the percentage distributions of these relationships. As well, the survey asked respondents to indicate the nature of the relationship between youth gangs and organized crime groups across three categories: subordinate (e.g., youth gangs “reported to” or were subordinate to the organized crime group); affiliate (e.g., youth gangs had a peer or partnership relationship with organized crime groups) or leadership (youth gangs played a leadership role in regards to a specific organized crime group).

Nationally, of 63 respondents indicating youth gang activity in their jurisdiction in 2002, 44% (n=28) indicated that youth gangs had established relationships with organized crime groups. Table 28 shows the results from these respondents. Nationally, the largest proportion of these relationships (40%) are with Aboriginal/Native Canadian organized crime groups, followed by Asian organized crime groups (22%) and Outlaw Motorcycle organized crime groups (22%). Youth Gang relationships are less evident with traditional organized crime groups (7%), Eastern European/Russian organized crime groups and Mexican/Central American organized crime groups. With respect to the nature of relationships, survey results show that there are essentially an equal distribution of subordinate and affiliate relationships across the major organized crime group categories.

#### 2.14.4 Diversification into Legitimate Economic Activity

Respondents indicating active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were asked the extent to which youth gang in their jurisdiction diversified into legitimate economic activities in 2002.

Nationally, the majority of respondents (61%) said that youth gangs did not diversify into legitimate economic activity, while 39% said that they had done so “very little” or “somewhat”. Cross tabulations by Province (Table 29) reveal that such diversification is least prevalent in Saskatchewan and Ontario, where 100% and 67% respectively of respondents indicating that no such diversification occurred within their jurisdictions in 2002. In contrast, cross tabulations reveal that the Province of Manitoba

**Table 28: Jurisdictions Reporting Youth Gang Relationships With Organized Crime Groups, Canada, 2002**

Category of Organized Crime Group	%	Subordinate Relationship	Affiliate Relationship
Aboriginal/Native Canadian	40%	50%	50%
Asian	22	46	55
Outlaw Motorcycle	22	56	44
Traditional	7	57	43
Eastern European/Russian	4	63	38
Mexican/Central American	4	38	63
Other: Sri Lankan	2	0	100

**Note:** The percentages within each criminal activity/offence category may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

had the most prevalent extent of diversification in legitimate activity in 2002, with one-third of respondents indicating that youth gangs did so “somewhat”.

Table 30 reveals that nationally, almost one-half (46%) of respondents indicated that firearms were not used in assaultive crimes by youth gang members in 2002, while 43% of respondents

**Table 29: Jurisdictions Reporting Diversification Into Legitimate Economic Activity, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	Very Much	Some-what	Very Little	Not At All	Number of Observations
Canada	0	6% (n=3)	33% (n=17)	61% (n=31)	51
British Columbia	0	0	56 (n=5)	44(n=4)	9
Alberta	0	0	50 (n=2)	50 (n=2)	4
Saskatchewan	0	0	0	100 (n=7)	7
Manitoba	0	33 (n=2)	33 (n=2)	33 (n=2)	6
Ontario	0	6 (n=1)	28 (n=5)	67 (n=12)	18
Quebec	0	0	50 (n=2)	50 (n=2)	4
Nova Scotia	0	0	33 (n=1)	66 (n=2)	3
New Brunswick	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Prince Edward Island	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Yukon	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Northwest Territories	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Nunavut	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0

**Note:** The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

### 2.14.5 Use of Firearms in Assaultive Crimes

Respondents indicating active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were asked how often youth gang members used firearms in assaultive crimes in their jurisdiction in 2002.

indicated that youth gang members used firearms in assaultive crimes “rarely” or “sometimes”. Only 11% of respondents in the national sample said that youth gang members used firearms “often” in conjunction with assaults.

**Table 30: Jurisdictions Reporting Gang Member Use of Firearms in Assaultive Crimes, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	Very Much	Some-what	Very Little	Not At All	Number of Observations
Canada	11% (n=6)	19% (n=10)	24% (n=13)	46% (n=25)	54
British Columbia	0	40 (n=4)	40 (n=4)	20 (n=2)	10
Alberta	67 (n=2)	0	0	33 (n=1)	3
Saskatchewan	14 (n=1)	14 (n=1)	29 (n=2)	43 (n=3)	7
Manitoba	17 (n=1)	0	17 (n=1)	67 (n=4)	6
Ontario	5 (n=1)	24 (n=5)	24 (n=5)	48 (n=10)	21
Quebec	25 (n=1)	0	25 (n=1)	50 (n=2)	4
Nova Scotia	0	0	0	100 (n=3)	3
New Brunswick	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Prince Edward Island	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Yukon	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Northwest Territories	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Nunavut	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0

**Note:** The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

Cross tabulations by Province reveal that 67% of respondents in Alberta believe that youth gang members use firearms “often” or “sometimes”. Table 30 also reveals that after Alberta, firearms usage by youth gang members is most prevalent (“used often” + “used sometimes”) in British Columbia (40%), Saskatchewan (29%) and Ontario (29%). Cross tabulations also reveal that gun usage is least prevalent and below the national average (“not used”) in Nova Scotia (100%), Manitoba (67%) and Ontario (48%).

## 2.15 Future Severity of Youth Gang Problem

Respondents indicating active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002 were asked for their opinion in respect to whether the youth gang problem in their

jurisdiction was getting worse, getting better, or staying the same.

As shown in Table 31, the 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs revealed that a majority of respondents across Canada (57%) believe that the youth gang problem is getting worse, while a small number (6%) believe it is getting better. Cross tabulations by Province reveal that a strong majority of respondents in Nova Scotia (100%), Alberta (80%) and Quebec (75%) believe the youth gang problem is getting worse. Cross tabulations also reveal that the majority of respondents in the Provinces of Manitoba (50%) and British Columbia (59%) believe the youth gang problem will stay about the same in the future within their jurisdiction.

**Table 31: Estimate of Future Severity of Youth Gang Problem, Nationally and by Province, 2002**

Area	Getting Worse	Getting Better	Staying the Same	Number of Observations
Canada	57 (n=36)	6 (n=4)	37 (n=23)	63
British Columbia	33 (n=4)	8 (n=1)	58 (n=7)	12
Alberta	80 (n=4)	0	20 (n=1)	5
Saskatchewan	63 (n=5)	0	38 (n=3)	8
Manitoba	33 (n=2)	17 (n=1)	50 (n=3)	6
Ontario	60 (n=15)	8 (n=2)	32 (n=8)	25
Quebec	75 (n=3)	0	25 (n=1)	4
Nova Scotia	100 (n=3)	0	0	3
New Brunswick	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Prince Edward Island	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Yukon	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Northwest Territories	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Nunavut	n/a	n/a	n/a	0

**Note:** The percentages within each area may not total 100 percent because of rounding.



## Section Three SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Of the 264 agencies that completed a survey, 63, or 24%, reported that they had active youth gangs in their jurisdiction in 2002.
- The Provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia have the highest percentage of jurisdictions reporting active youth gangs at 35% and 27% respectively, followed closely by Ontario (26%). In absolute terms, Ontario has the largest concentration of jurisdictions in the country reporting youth gang activity, at 25.
- No youth gang activity was reported in northern Canadian Territories and all of the Maritimes, with the exception of Nova Scotia.
- Nationally, approximately 59% of the population is served by law enforcement agencies reporting active youth gangs. Stated another way, survey results show that 59% of the Canadian populations resides within geographical police jurisdictions that report youth gang activity in 2002. Cross tabulations by Province reveal that British Columbia (83%) and Ontario (74%) have the highest extent of population served by police agencies reporting youth gang activity.
- Surrey and Vancouver, both in British Columbia, reported the earliest onset of youth gang activity in the country (1975 and 1979 respectively).
- In 2002, there were an estimated or reported 434 youth gangs in Canada, comprising some 7,071 members. The largest concentration of youth gangs and youth gang members is in Ontario, at 216 youth gangs and 3,320 respectively, followed by Saskatchewan (28 and 1,315 respectively).
- Survey results show also that the Provinces of Nova Scotia (37), Manitoba (171) and Quebec (533) have the lowest number of reported or estimated youth gang members, with none reported in the three Canadian Territories or the three remaining Provinces in Eastern Canada.
- Expressed on a per capita basis, that is, the number of youth gang members per 1,000 population, Saskatchewan has the highest concentration of youth gang members (1.34 per 1,000 population), followed by Ontario (0.29 per 1,000) and British Columbia (0.26 per 1,000 population).
- Nationally, 57% of respondents believe that the youth gang problem is getting worse in their jurisdiction, while just over one-third (37%) suggests that it is staying the same. Respondents are most negative about the future prospects of the youth gang problem (e.g., that it is getting worse) in Nova Scotia (100%), Alberta (80%), Quebec (75%) and Saskatchewan (63%).
- Nationally, in jurisdictions that did not report youth gang activity in 2002, a strong majority of respondents (82%) believe that the likelihood of youth gang formation in their jurisdictions is low or none.



- Nationally, the vast majority of youth gang members are male (94%). Male gang members are dominant in Nova Scotia (100%), Ontario (97%), Alberta (96%) and Quebec (95%). There is a strong representation of female gang members in western Canadian provinces including British Columbia (12%), Manitoba (10%) and Saskatchewan (9%).
- For the country as a whole, youth gang members predominately fall within the age range of 16 to 18 years (39%), and almost half (48%) of all youth gang members are under the age of 18 years.
- The largest proportion of youth gang members in Canada are African Canadian/Black (25%), followed by First Nations (21%) and Caucasian/White (18%).
- 36% of youth gangs in Canada feature a mixture of two or more racial/ethnic groups. Racial diversity within youth gangs is most prevalent in Ontario (51%), followed by British Columbia (46%) and Manitoba (24%). Youth gangs in Nova Scotia (less than 1%) and Saskatchewan (7%) appear to be most homogeneous in the country based on these survey results.
- Nationally, 40% of respondents believe that the return of adult or youth-involved inmates from prison has affected youth gangs very much. Based on combined “very much” and “somewhat” responses, nationally 76% of respondents believe that the return of adult or youth gang-involved from prison is having a material effect on youth gangs.
- 35% of respondents in Canada believe that youth gang member migration has affected their jurisdiction’s youth gang problem very much. Based on combined “very much” and “somewhat” responses, nationally 85% of respondents believe that youth gang member migration is producing a material affect on their jurisdiction’s youth gang problem.
- Respondents were asked to indicate the specific characteristics that defined youth gang formation or operation in their jurisdiction. Combining the response “very much” with “somewhat”, the four most prevalent gang characteristics in the national sample were “lack of respect for authority” (95%), “participation in illegal activities” (91%), “use of monikers and nicknames” (88%) and “code of silence” (85%).
- Respondents were asked to rank the criteria they use to define a youth gang in their jurisdiction. Nationally, the top four criteria were: the group commits crimes together; the group hangs out/assembles together; it has leader(s) or an established leadership structure and, the group displays or wears common colours or other insignia. There is still a lack of consensus nationally and regionally, however, with respect to the definition of a youth gang.
- Nationally, almost half of respondents (46%) employ some form of computerized gang intelligence database. In addition, approximately one-third of agencies (35%) have a dedicated gang unit and/or gang officers in place, or have sworn officers with gang-related duties (41%).
- Nationally, based on combined “medium” and “high” responses, a large proportion of youth gang members are involved in assault (72%), drug trafficking (69%), burglary/break and enter (68%), vandalism/graffiti/tagging (64%), and intimidation/extortion (56%).
- Youth gang member collaboration with organized crime groups is highest with respect to drug trafficking (43%) and intimidation/ extortion (23%), followed closely by theft of auto/exportation (19%).

- Based on combined “none” and “low” responses, youth gang member involvement is low in criminal activities such as immigration fraud, arson and murder (100%), followed by kidnapping/abduction, smuggling of consumer goods, and chemical drug manufacture (92%).
- Respondents nationally indicated that youth gang members were responsible for more than one-third (36%) of the street sales of marijuana, followed by 17% of street sales of crack cocaine and 11% of powder cocaine. Across the country, respondents indicated that youth gang members were responsible for a negligible percentage of drug sales such as Heroin (5%) and chemical drugs such as Ecstasy (7%), MDA (5%) and other “club drugs” (3%).
- 44% of respondents in Canada indicated that youth gangs had established relationships with organized crime groups. The largest proportion of these relationships (40%) are with aboriginal/Native Canadian organized crime groups, followed by Asian organized crime groups (22%) and Outlaw Motorcycle organized crime groups (22%).
- Nationally, the majority of respondents (61%) said that youth gangs did not diversify into legitimate economic activity in 2002.
- A majority of respondents across Canada (57%) believe that the youth gang problem is getting worse, while a small number (6%) believe it is getting better. Cross tabulations by Province reveal that a strong majority of respondents in Nova Scotia (100%), Alberta (80%) and Quebec (75%) believe the youth gang problem is getting worse. Cross tabulations also reveal that the majority of respondents in the Provinces of Manitoba (50%) and British Columbia (58%) believe the youth gang problem will stay about the same in the future within their jurisdiction.



## Section Four **REFERENCES**

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Section Five  
**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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