



Home Office

# Local perspectives in Ending Gang and Youth Violence Areas

Perceptions of the nature of urban street gangs

Research Report 88

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Disclaimer: 'The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Home Office (nor do they represent Government policy).'

## Executive summary

The aim of this study was to understand perceptions of the nature of urban street gangs and whether these gangs have changed in recent years in the 33 areas<sup>1</sup> that make up the Government's Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) programme (HM Government, 2011a). The EGYV programme aims to improve the way that gangs are tackled locally through providing peer support to local areas to help prevent young people becoming involved in violence; providing exit routes for those already involved in gangs; and ensuring that appropriate enforcement responses are put in place to address challenges associated with gangs.

The study was based on the perceptions of practitioners working on gang-related issues as well as individuals who were current or ex-gang members, or associated with, or affiliated to gangs (referred to throughout as gang associates). It investigated the extent to which there were perceived similarities or differences in the nature of street gangs in EGYV areas and whether or not gangs were thought to have changed in the last two years. It also explored the extent to which there were common or divergent trends in perceptions at national or local levels.

It was not the purpose of this study to evaluate the effectiveness of the EGYV programme or local measures to address gang and youth violence. The findings, based largely on practitioners' perceptions, highlight issues and possible trends that could be more fully explored and investigated locally or nationally, using a wider range of evidence and information.

## Key messages

**There were between and within-area variations in practitioners' perceptions of the extent and nature of gangs and whether they had changed.** This study was the first to collect information about perceptions of gangs in so many areas of England. Variation between respondents from different EGYV areas was expected, given evidence of the heterogeneity of gangs.<sup>2</sup> However, the study findings show that practitioners from the same area often had different views on issues such as estimating the number of gangs in the area, the use of weapons by gang members and how visible gangs were.

**There were some perceived changes in the nature of gangs.** When asked to comment on whether, 'overall, the nature of gangs in their area had changed over the last two years', 70% of survey respondents thought that gangs had changed, at least to some extent. For many topics there were disagreements about whether change had happened (or consensus that there was no change). Findings indicated that practitioners perceived the following changes to gangs in their area.

- Gangs were generally thought to be less visible - spending less time on the street and

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<sup>1</sup> In October 2014 the EGYV programme was extended to ten additional areas (Home Office, 2014a).

<sup>2</sup> Densley (2013, p 5).

conducting criminal activities more covertly (though this did not necessarily mean there was less gang-related criminal activity). Practitioners and gang associates thought the decline may, in part, be in response to law enforcement activities and other interventions to prevent and respond to gang activities and violence.

- Linked to declining visibility, it was reported that some gangs were becoming more like (or linked to) organised crime groups, especially in relation to involvement in drug markets.
- Practitioners reported that they were increasingly concerned about young people being used to transport and sell drugs, and the sexual exploitation of women and girls, and there was some evidence that these issues were perceived to be more prevalent now than two years ago. However, practitioners also recognised that there was increased awareness and prioritisation of these issues locally through the work of the EGYV programme, which could have influenced perceptions about the extent of the problem.

## Findings

### Numbers of gangs<sup>3</sup> and gang members

*Overall, the majority of survey respondents reported that there were between three and eight gangs in their EGYV area and more than 100 gang members.* However, the reliability of these estimates is unclear as (in most areas) different practitioners from the same area gave differing responses.

*The number of gangs was perceived to have remained static or decreased in the last two years, but practitioners from the same area again often had divergent views.* Survey respondents in London areas were more likely to say the number of gangs had increased while those outside London were more likely to report a decrease.

*Estimates of change in the number of gang members (as opposed to gangs overall) were mixed.* There was an even split between those who thought that the number had increased, decreased and stayed the same. Respondents from London generally reported higher numbers of gang members than those outside London.

*Gang membership was reported by practitioners and gang associates to be a highly fluid concept.* Gang members were said to shift allegiances between gangs and have links to more than one gang. Gangs were also reported to take on a more solid form at certain points in time, and to split and/or fragment to form new gangs. All of these factors pose challenges for counting gangs and gang members.

### Age of gang members and involvement of young people in gangs

*There was some tentative evidence that the perceived age-range of gang members was widening (although not substantially), compared with two years ago.* Overall, the majority of gang members were thought to be older now, compared with two years ago and gang members outside London were perceived to be older than those in London. But a minority of practitioners also thought that there was more involvement in gangs by young people under the age of 11.

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<sup>3</sup> The following definition of a gang was used in research tools: *A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, and (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence. They may also have any or all of the following features: (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, (5) are in conflict with other similar gangs* (HM Government, 2011b, p 17).

*The involvement of young people under the age of 11 in gangs was thought to be relatively rare. Reports of gang members aged nine or younger were almost exclusively from a small number of survey respondents in London.*

*Concern was expressed about young people being recruited by gangs (particularly in London) to transport drugs around the country. In some instances this was reported to result in young people being away from their home or from care for several days. Some practitioners felt that this was linked to the increased organisation of gangs, as more senior gang members' recruited young people to transport and deal drugs at street-level.*

## Indicators of gang structure

*The majority of practitioners reported that gangs in their area had a leader and a hierarchical structure, but gang structure was seen as highly unstable, with frequent changes. Gang associates were more equivocal about the existence of a structure to gangs and gave mixed accounts of the use of initiation into gangs (some said it never happened while others gave accounts of their own experiences of initiation).*

*Overall, the structure of gangs was not thought to have changed in the last two years, although there were indications from a small number of survey respondents that gangs were becoming less structured, and more loosely associated. This indicates a different trend to that identified by some practitioners who reported that gangs were becoming more organised. This variability acts as a reminder of the potential differences between gangs and the difficulty of generalising findings.*

## Cooperation and conflict between gangs

*There was agreement between practitioners that gangs often cooperated with other gangs, but conflict was thought to be more common. Cooperation might occur in respect to participation in illicit drugs markets or to join forces in conflicts with other gangs. Retaliation and disputes over territory linked to drug dealing were the most often reported reasons for conflict between gangs, sometimes leading to cycles of violence spanning years. This was reported by both practitioners and gang associates. Gang-related disputes in custody were also perceived to be a problem and a driver of conflict in the community.*

## Visibility, identifiers and social media

*There was a perception that gangs were less visible now than two years ago. Practitioners and gang associates reported that gangs spend less time on the street, commit fewer acts of violence in public, and were more cautious in the use of signs of affiliation. However, this was not necessarily thought to correspond with there being less gang-related activity, just that it was less visible. Reduced visibility was attributed, to some extent, to attempts by gangs to avoid increased policing and enforcement measures.*

*Gangs were said to have a substantial online presence, and the use of social media was thought to be increasing in some areas. However, other (perhaps more organised gangs) were said to be becoming more cautious about going online for the same reasons as they were less visible in public places - to avoid drawing attention to gang-related activities.*

## Criminal activities, including organised criminal activities

*Drugs supply was reported to be the main criminal activity for gangs in EGYV areas. A wide range of criminal activities including violence and robbery, drug production and sexual violence/exploitation were also reported with some indications that involvement in the latter was increasing.*

*There were some indications that more gangs were thought to be defined by involvement in drug markets now compared with two years ago. This corresponds with findings that gangs are increasingly reported to be involved in crime that is organised.*

*Gangs were perceived to be involved in organised criminal activities, such as drugs supply and enforcement activities to a considerable extent. It was reported that some gang offending was directed and coordinated by more organised, older criminals. Survey respondents spoke of gangs in their area being more 'professional' than two years ago, operating in more 'intelligent' ways and having financial or commercial motivations.*

## Involvement of women and girls in gangs

*Practitioners reported that women and girls were involved in the commission and facilitation of gang-related crime, for example through storing drugs or firearms, or setting up attacks on rival gang members. From the data collected it was not possible to get a sense of the extent to which this is wide spread.*

*There was evidence of increasing awareness among practitioners of issues related to women and girls associated with gangs, in particular, risks of sexual exploitation and physical and sexual violence. Sexual or physical violence against women and girls affiliated with gangs, and sexual exploitation were reported to happen sometimes or often in EGYV areas. Overall, practitioners reported that the situation around sexual violence and exploitation had worsened, but this must be interpreted carefully, as it is not clear whether the extent of these problems have increased, or whether practitioners were simply more aware of these problems now compared with two years ago.*

## Approach

The methods employed for the research were:

- a rapid evidence assessment<sup>4</sup> of recent UK research on gangs;
- interviews with 15 key informants connected to the EGYV programme;
- a web-based survey of 290 practitioners (from a range of agencies including police, youth offending teams, probation, voluntary and community sector agencies, local authorities, and health services) in the 33 EGYV areas;
- case studies in four EGYV areas which included interviews with 31 practitioners and a review of local documentation; and,
- interviews with 30 individuals who were current or ex-gang members, associated or affiliated with gangs (referred to as 'gang associates').

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<sup>4</sup> Rapid evidence assessments are reviews that are rigorous and explicit in method and thus systematic, but given restrictions of time and/or budget, limit their scope by constraining particular aspects of the full systematic review process.

## Limitations

The findings were based primarily on practitioners' perceptions of the nature of gangs in their area. All of the practitioners taking part worked locally on gang-related issues and to this extent were knowledgeable informants. However, it is possible that some practitioner-reported views were limited in scope by the particular focus, area or specialism of the respondent and therefore did not accurately reflect the gang situation. It was not within the scope of the study to collect more objective information regarding the nature of gangs (such as police intelligence, recorded crime data or hospital admission statistics). Interviews with gang associates were conducted to provide an additional perspective on the current gang situation and potential changes that may have occurred in recent years.

Further, particular limitations apply when relying on perceptions about change in the nature of gangs. Even for practitioners who were in post two years ago, it may be difficult to recall the situation at that time.

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# 1. Introduction

The Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) programme was established in 2011. The programme put gangs on the agenda of statutory bodies beyond the police and offender management services in an attempt “*to improve the way gangs are tackled locally*” (HM Government, 2011a). The EGYV programme provides peer support to 33 areas<sup>5</sup> in England identified as facing the “*biggest challenges in relation to youth violence and gangs*” (HM Government, 2012b, p.7). The peer support is provided by over 80 “*independent advisers from a range of backgrounds including safeguarding, health, education, youth justice, policing and community engagement*” (*ibid*, p 8).<sup>6</sup>

The need for policy responses to gangs and youth violence arises most immediately from the harm directly caused to victims of gang-related crime and to the communities in which gangs operate. There is evidence that gang membership can increase the risk of delinquent behavior, including gun and weapon possession (Bjerregaard and Lizotte, 1995; Melde, *et al.*, 2009a; Melde, *et al.*, 2009b; Watkins *et al.*, 2008), drug sales and use (Bjerregaard, 2010; Gordon *et al.*, 2004) and violence (Battin-Pearson *et al.*, 1998; Decker, 2008; Melde and Esbensen, 2013b; Pyrooz and Decker, 2011). Gang involvement may also increase the risk of violent victimisation for gang members (Melde, *et al.*, 2009b; Taylor *et al.*, 2007), although it is difficult to disentangle the causal relationship between gang membership and violent crime (Melde and Esbensen, 2013a).

## Aim

The research was undertaken to understand perceptions of the nature of urban street gangs and whether these gangs have changed in recent years in the 33 EGYV areas. It was commissioned to build on and update the 2009 report, ‘Dying to Belong’ (Centre for Social Justice, 2009), and in light of reports from local practitioners that suggested that urban street gangs might be changing. The study is the first to collect information about street gangs in so many areas of England. While practitioner perceptions of street gangs are insufficient, alone, as a basis for policy development, the study was intended to highlight issues and potential trends that could be investigated further, nationally or locally. This study did not aim to evaluate the effectiveness of the EGYV programme or local measures to address gang and youth violence.

## Approach

Data were collected through a rapid evidence assessment of the literature on gangs in the UK, a survey of multi-agency partners across the 33 EGYV areas, interviews with practitioners in four case study areas and, interviews with gang associates in five areas as detailed below.

The **rapid evidence assessment** covered empirical research into UK gangs published since 2008. Appendix A sets out the methods used for identifying and assessing sources.

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<sup>5</sup> This was extended to 43 areas in October 2014. See Home Office, 2014a.

<sup>6</sup> For an internal review of the EGYV programme see Home Office, 2013.

**Interviews** were conducted with 15 key informants comprising police officers, Home Office policy officials, members of the EGYV peer review network and representatives from local authorities, youth justice services and organisations providing services to young people (see Appendix A for more information about interviewees). The interviews covered the policy context and key issues related to tackling gang and youth violence. Interviewees were selected by the research team and the Home Office on the basis of their knowledge of the EGYV programme, or other specific fields of expertise. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or by telephone.

A **web based survey** of practitioners in the 33 EGYV areas (these are co-terminus with Community Safety Partnership areas)<sup>7</sup> was carried out in April and May 2014. The survey gathered practitioner perspectives on a range of topics including the number of gangs and gang members, the involvement of gangs in criminal activities, and the role of women, girls and young people in gangs (Appendix A lists topics covered and further information about how the data were analysed). The survey included questions about the current situation in relation to these topics and whether respondents thought there had been any change in the last two years (see Appendix B for survey instrument).

The 'core' target group for the survey was a local authority representative (usually a community safety coordinator) and a strategic police representative in each EGYV area (selected because they have the main responsibility for gang issues). The survey was also sent to a wider range of practitioners working in police gang units, voluntary and community sector agencies. A calculation of response rates was not possible because some areas 'cascaded' the survey themselves and some respondents opted out or were not able to complete it (for example, because they had moved on from their post).<sup>8</sup> A total of 290 responses were included in the analysis (although the bases for each question and some sub-questions varied depending on the number of responses and the number of don't knows).<sup>9</sup> There was at least one response from every area, 76% had responses from at least one community safety representative, and 58% from both police and community safety.

Survey responses were analysed in three ways: overall: all responses across the areas; by area: comparing each of the 33 areas; and comparing areas within and outside London. Differences found in the analyses are highlighted in the report. Where no area-level differences or differences between London and non-London areas are reported, this is either because none emerged or the number of responses per area was low (often only one respondent) thus being an insufficient basis for comparison.

**Interviews with practitioners in four case study areas** were conducted to provide further insight into the nature of the gang situation locally and to aid interpretation of the survey. The four case study areas include two London areas and two areas outside London (reported anonymously in the report). They were selected in discussion with the Home Office, taking account of: the relevance to topics of particular interest (e.g., organised crime or drugs); the

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<sup>7</sup> EGYV areas are co-terminus with Community Safety Partnership areas. Community Safety Partnership are local, multi-agency partnerships including representatives from the police, local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, and the probation and health services. There are around 300 Community Safety Partnership in England, tasked with preventing and addressing local crime and disorder issues.

<sup>8</sup> The survey was initially sent to 637 practitioners and responses were received from 290 people. Information about the number of respondents and the agencies represented is in Appendix A.

<sup>9</sup> The following approach is taken when presenting findings from the survey in this report: The 'number of responses' to the question or sub-question (out of the 290 respondents) is reported. This varied between questions as respondents either provided no answer or (on selected sections) were given the option to 'skip' topics outside their field of expertise. 'Don't know' responses are excluded when results are presented in the text and graphs with the number of don't knows reported separately.

need to include EGYV areas in London and outside of London; whether there was other research into gangs ongoing in the area; and the feasibility of conducting interviews with current or ex-gang members, or affiliates.

Interviews were conducted with 31 practitioners across the case study sites. Interviewees were selected purposively to include representatives from a range of agencies working on, and knowledgeable about, local challenges around gangs (including the police, local authority children's services, early intervention teams and community safety teams, mental health services, organisations providing interventions for gang members, teachers and youth offending teams). Appendix A provides further details about the interviews.

**Interviews with gang associates** were conducted in the four case study areas and one other EGYV area (neighbouring a case study area) to provide an additional perspective on the current gang situation, potential changes, and to provide validation or challenge to the views of practitioners. The interviewees were 29 current or ex-gang members and people associated with or affiliated to gangs (including the mother of a current gang member). Throughout the report these interviewees are referred to as 'gang associates'. Appendix A provides more information about how these interviews were conducted.

## Definition

The definition of a gang is contested (see Appendix A for a brief discussion). To aid consistency the following definition was used in research tools where needed.

*A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, and (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence. They may also have any or all of the following features: (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, (5) are in conflict with other similar gangs.* (HM Government, 2012b, p 11).

## Reporting and anonymity

Findings from interviews and the survey are reported anonymously. The number of practitioners responding to each question (and sometimes sub-questions) in the survey varied. All percentages quoted in the report were from questions with at least 50 responses. Where there were less than 50 responses the number of respondents is given, rather than a percentage.

## Limitations

**Findings are based on practitioner perceptions of the nature of gangs.** Practitioner perceptions were not necessarily an accurate reflection of the gang situation in an area. Some practitioners may have been more knowledgeable about some gangs and gang-related issues than others. It was not within the scope of this study to collect additional, more objective information (for example, police intelligence or recorded crime data) to verify or challenge these perceptions. Practitioners who participated in this research were in roles that involved working on gang-related issues, and to this extent they were knowledgeable about the gangs in their area. They were also drawn from a variety of agencies giving a range of perspectives and expertise. The survey allowed respondents to skip sections or select a 'don't know' option if they

felt unable to answer a question.<sup>10</sup>

**Assessing change retrospectively.** A time frame of change over the last two years was used throughout the research. However, 40% of survey respondents had been in post for less than two years<sup>11</sup> and even those who had been in their current post for more than two years may have experienced difficulty recalling the situation two years ago.

**Separating actual changes from changing knowledge and understanding.** Changes to the priority and attention given to an issue at a particular time can affect perceptions of whether the nature and prevalence of the issue has changed.<sup>12</sup> Survey respondents were asked whether their perceptions of change were as a result of an improved understanding of gang issues in the last two years, or because the nature of the gang situation had actually changed. Just under half of survey respondents thought that there had been *both* an improvement in their understanding *and* a change in the gang situation (see Appendix A for further information).

**Representativeness of survey respondents.** The research team relied on EGYV leads in each area to suggest an appropriate range of respondents (in addition to the core respondents) to take part in the survey. This ensured the survey reached those with suitable knowledge of the area but meant that lists of potential respondents varied in size and content across areas complicating analysis.

**Selection of gang associates.** Local practitioners facilitated access to potential interviewees. This meant that that only gang associates known to local services were interviewed, and they may not have been representative of others in contact with the services, or of gang associates locally.<sup>13</sup>

The following sections of the report outline the findings from the study.

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<sup>10</sup> Appendix A shows how many respondents selected the 'skip' options.

<sup>11</sup> Analysis of responses did not indicate notable differences in the answers by the respondents' length of time in post. Those who had been in post for less than two years were less likely to answer questions in the survey about change (they either provided no answer or selected 'don't know').

<sup>12</sup> For example, the EGYV programme included a focus on issues facing women and girls since 2011 (HM Government, 2011a, p 18; HM Government, 2013, pp 32-34) and included a focus on drugs in its second year (HM Government, 2013, p 39).

<sup>13</sup> None of the gang associates identified themselves as a gang member during interviews. However, they were able to speak about the issues related to gangs that were of interest to this study.

## 2. Estimated numbers of gangs and gang members

Robust estimates of the number of gangs and gang members in England are not readily available. The Dying to Belong report estimated that 50,000 young people had some involvement in youth gangs (Centre for Social Justice, 2009) and the Metropolitan Police included over 3,600 young people on their list of gang-associated individuals in 2012 (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012). This study aimed to gather practitioner estimates as to the numbers of gangs and gang members in Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) areas, and whether this was perceived to have changed in the last two years.

### Key findings

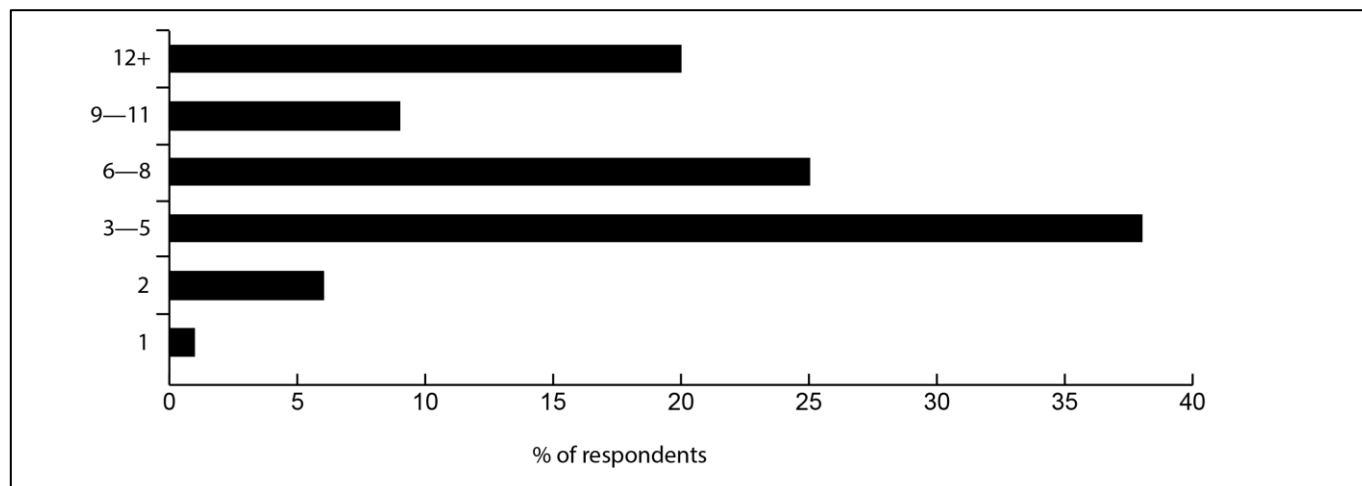
- Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents estimated that there were between three and eight gangs in their area and overall the number of gangs was perceived to have remained static or decreased in the EGYV areas in the last two years. However there were variations in the estimates provided by respondents from the same area, which urges caution in interpreting these findings.
- Survey respondents in London were more likely to say that the number of gangs had increased and those outside London to say that gang numbers had decreased.
- The majority of survey respondents estimated that there were over 100 gang members in their area. There was a greater degree of consensus in practitioners' estimates of the numbers of gang members than in estimates of the number of gangs.
- Gang membership was perceived to be very fluid. This is because individuals associate with more than one gang, association can change rapidly and gangs splinter into new groups. Even those identified by the police, local authorities and other agencies as gang members did not always identify themselves as such. This posed challenges for counting gangs and gang members.

### Estimates of the numbers of gangs and gang members

Nearly two-thirds of those responding to this survey question (63%) estimated that there were between three and eight gangs in their area. A fifth of survey respondents (20%) estimated that there were over 12 gangs in their area (Figure 2.1).<sup>14</sup> However, there was considerable variation in responses from practitioners in the same area. For example, responses in one London area ranged from '3-5' to '12+'. Police and youth offending team respondents were more likely than other respondent groups to say that there were '12+' gangs in their area.

<sup>14</sup> 267 responses, 35 don't know. Respondents were presented with the definition of gangs set out at page 11.

**Figure 2.1: Approximately how many gangs are there currently in your Community Safety Partnership area?**



Regarding the number of gang *members*, over half of survey respondents (56%) answered that there were more than 100 in their area and responses were generally consistent within areas.<sup>15</sup> Survey respondents from London areas generally reported higher numbers of gang members than those outside London.<sup>16</sup>

## Perceptions of change in the numbers of gangs and gang members

The picture regarding change in the numbers of gangs and gang members in EGYV areas is unclear from the survey. Overall, survey respondents were fairly evenly split between those who perceived the number of gangs to have remained static (31%) decreased (35%) and increased (33%).<sup>17</sup>

Survey respondents in London were more likely to say that the number of gangs had increased (41%) and those outside London were more likely to say that the number had decreased (49%). Analysis at area level shows considerable variation in responses within areas, particularly among respondents from London areas (for example, in some areas different respondents reported an increase, a decrease and others no change). Therefore caution must be exercised in interpreting these findings.

<sup>15</sup> Respondents were asked, 'Approximately how many gang members in total do you think there are currently across all gangs in your Community Safety Partnership area?' 264 responses, 72 don't know.

<sup>16</sup> London: 177 respondents, 40 don't know. 65% of respondents answered that there were 'more than 100' gang members in their area. Non-London: 90 respondents, 35 don't know, 35% of respondents answered that there were 'more than 100' gang members in their area.

<sup>17</sup> Respondents were asked: 'Over the last two years would you say the number of gangs in your community safety partnership area has increased/decreased/stayed the same?' 263 respondents, 64 don't know. The majority of non-responses to this question came from respondents who had not been in their role for two years.

Regarding the number of gang members, responses were evenly split between those who thought there were more (34%), fewer (35%) or the same (31%) now compared with two years ago.<sup>18</sup>

## Interpreting within-area variation in estimates

Key informants and case study interviewees were invited to reflect on the term 'gang', and survey respondents volunteered further comments to explain the difficulty of providing estimates of the number of gangs and gang members. Three challenges emerge from these comments that aid interpretation of the findings.

### Flexibility and fluidity in membership and affiliation

Several survey respondents referred to the "fluidity" of gangs, where allegiances are "frequently changing"<sup>19</sup> leaving professionals feeling uncertain about the number of gangs at any given time.<sup>20</sup> The following quotation shows how this might have affected responses:

*I think the situation is very fluid and very changeable in relation to numbers of individuals involved and the number of groups. I don't feel there are large, long-standing established street based gangs. Very often the link is fluid and fluctuates ... (Survey respondent 177, non-London area 25)*

These comments were supported by gang associates from three areas,<sup>21</sup> all of whom rejected the notion of a gang and said that the groups of people they spent time with were friends and family. As one of them commented:

*... if you've got three or four associates you associate with constantly, in the eyes of the law you'd be determined a gang ... when... truth be told, you're not a gang. You don't claim to be a gang. You don't call yourselves any specific name ... they're just a group of friends doing what they're doing. (Gang associate 90, non-London area 31)*

This interviewee went on to comment that the group of associates would "come together" to deal with a problem (such as a disagreement between gangs), supporting descriptions from a survey respondent that gangs can take on a more solid shape for some periods of time<sup>22</sup>. In another area, an associate described how he was no longer linked with the gang, but did not see himself as having left:

*There's no chance of me ever getting out of it fully unless I can move out of [the area]. There's a saying out of sight, out of mind. Right now, I'm staying out of sight, yeah, but I'm still in people's minds because it's... only seven years later. (Gang associate 95, non-London area 31)*

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<sup>18</sup> Respondents were asked: 'Over the last two years would you say the number of gang members in your Community Safety Partnership area has increased/decreased/stayed the same?' 263 responses, 64 don't know.

<sup>19</sup> Survey respondent 100, London area 16.

<sup>20</sup> Survey respondent 302, London area 16

<sup>21</sup> Gang associate 02, London, area 19; gang associate 80, non-London area 21, gang associate 90, non-London area 31.

<sup>22</sup> Survey respondent 51, London area 3

Comments from this gang associate support the notion of gang ‘embeddedness’ (Pyrooz, *et al.*, 2013a; Pyrooz and Decker, 2011), which describes the extent of ties to other gang members and explains differential patterns of desistance from gangs. Former gang members who maintained gang ties were found (in US studies) to be less likely to desist completely or exit gangs: “Some gang members, even those who express a desire to leave their gang and change their lives, remain enmeshed in a series of ties to their former network of gang members” (Pyrooz *et al.*, 2014, p 509). Staying in the area, as the gang associate quoted above mentioned, means that ties with the gang are maintained and the boundaries of membership are blurred (see also Sweeten *et al.*, 2012).

## The status of affiliates and associates

In line with other research (Aldridge and Medina, 2008; Pitts, 2008), findings suggest the role of gang affiliates or associates was another way in which gang membership was flexible. This could complicate counting exercises, as this respondent commented:

*The scale of gang associates and nominals is impossible to guess. We work from a matrix which are the gang nominals police have interest in. However, there are other affiliates that are known and unknown. To take a guess would be unrepresentative of the potential scale of the issue.* (Survey respondent 373, London area 20)

Previous research suggests that gang members socialise with other gang members as well as with non-gang members, which has implications for estimating membership levels, “since socialising with gang members is considered by the intelligence community ... as a key indicator of ‘membership’” (Aldridge and Medina, 2008, p 17).

## Splintering, splitting and multiple allegiances

Counting the number of gangs and recording the affiliation of gang members was reported to be difficult due to the reported splitting and splintering of gangs. For example, case study interviewees (in London area 5) identified two main gangs, but noted that there were also small groups that were “splinters” from one of these but were still part of the gang “in many ways and report to a group of elders”<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Case study interviewee 32, London area 5.



### 3. Perceptions of the defining features of gangs

This section presents findings about the basis for gang membership and whether this has changed in the last two years. Practitioners were asked whether gangs in their area were defined by a number of features (nationality, ethnicity, geography, family, violence and involvement in drugs markets). These are discussed in this section in order of the importance that interviewees placed on them.

#### Key findings

- Involvement in drugs markets, violence and geography were perceived to be defining features of the majority of gangs across Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) areas.
- There were indications that more gangs are defined by involvement with drugs markets now compared with two years ago, but other defining features were not reported to have changed.
- Nationality and ethnicity were less often perceived to be defining features. While there are gangs whose members are drawn predominantly from a single ethnic or national group, this was considered to reflect the composition of the local community, rather than being a condition of membership. There was some evidence from a small number of areas that gang membership that was previously drawn from a single ethnic or national group was diversifying.
- Family ties were considered to be less important as a defining feature (compared with the other features listed), but it was thought to be common for siblings, parents and children to be members of the same gang.

#### Involvement in drugs markets

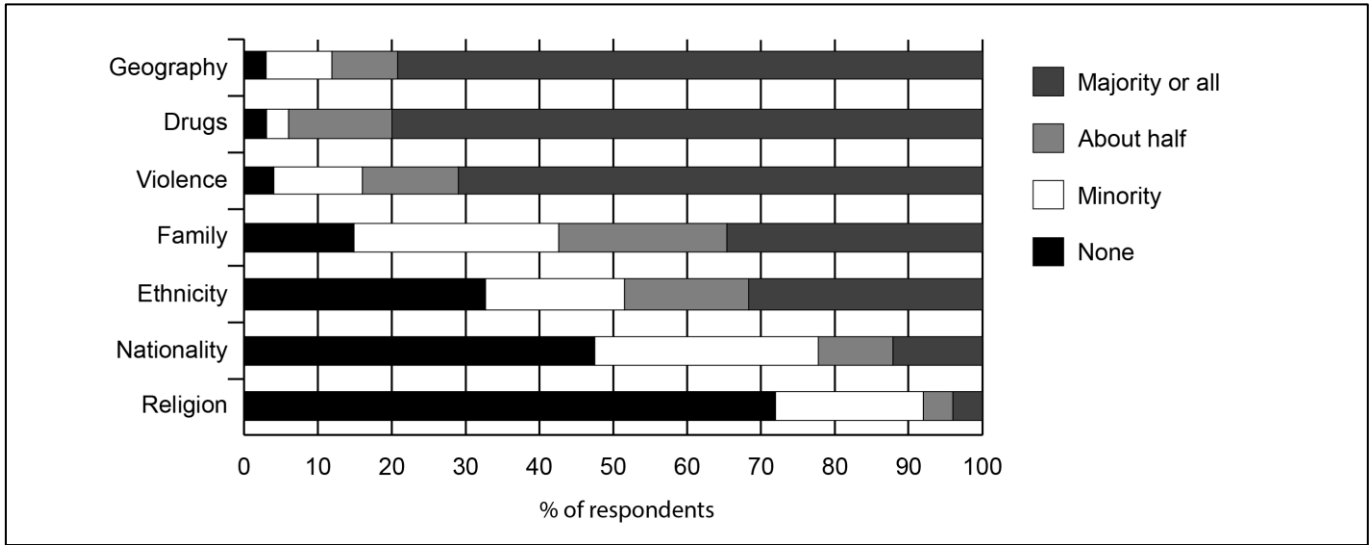
Involvement in drugs markets was the most commonly identified defining feature of gangs (Figure 3.1). Among those who answered this question, 80% of survey respondents said that this was a defining feature of 'a majority' or 'all', gangs in the area. A further 14% said that it was a defining feature of about half of the gangs in the area. Area-level analysis shows that, overall, there was consensus within and between areas that gangs were defined by involvement in drugs markets,<sup>24</sup> although in a few areas there were variations between survey respondents.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The view of respondents that drugs were a defining feature challenges some conventional gang definitions which deliberately separate 'street gangs' from "drug gangs" (Klein, 2001). Eurogang researchers generally see drugs more as a "descriptor" rather than a "definer" of gangs (Esbensen and Maxson, 2011). One possibility is that some respondents were answering on the basis that many gangs were involved in drug supply, rather than because they thought that gangs were defined by drugs in the sense that drug dealing was the main reason for the existence of the gang.

<sup>25</sup> For example, in one London area a respondent answered that 'no gangs' were defined by drugs, while several others answered that 'all gangs' were defined by drugs. In another London area some respondents thought that 'no gangs' were

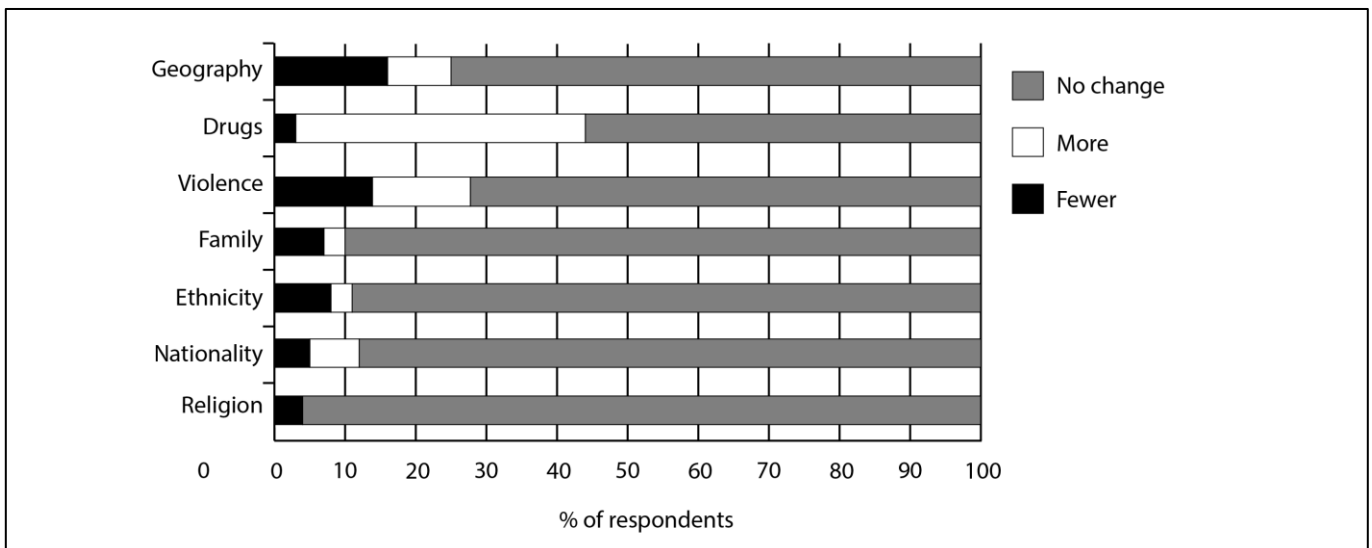
Responses from London and areas outside London were similar, showing no substantial differences.<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 3.1: Are the following defining features of current gangs in your Community Safety Partnership area?**



When asked about change, a substantial minority of survey respondents answering the question (40%) thought that more gangs were involved in drugs markets now compared with two years ago (Figure 3.2).<sup>27</sup> Only a small minority of survey respondents reported that other defining features had increased in importance.

**Figure 3.2: Compared with gangs in your Community Safety Partnership area two years ago, how have the following defining features of membership changed?**



## Geography

The second most important defining feature was perceived to be geography. Gang membership was frequently reported to be defined by living in a particular area, with 80% of survey

defined by drugs, while other respondents thought that a 'majority' were.  
<sup>26</sup> Non-London areas: 'no gangs' 0%; 'minority of gangs' 8%; 'about half' or a 'majority' of gangs 71%; 'all' gangs 22%. London areas: 'no gangs' 3%; 'minority' of gangs 1%; 'about half' or 'majority' of gangs 66%; 'all' gangs 29%.  
<sup>27</sup> 92 responses, 26 don't know.

respondents indicating that geography was a defining feature of all, or the majority, of gangs, and 8% saying that it was a defining feature of 'about half of gangs'.<sup>28</sup> Responses were similar between practitioners in and outside of London.<sup>29</sup>

Case study interviewees in one London area and a gang associate referred to housing estates as a defining feature and a risk factor for membership<sup>30</sup> and spoke of the importance of place.

*You don't really choose [to join a gang]. You don't go and fill in an application to go and join. You get involved in a certain activity, criminal activity. It's your group of friends, generally. ... it was almost accepted that one side of the estate is [gang A].... They call that the [gang A] side and call this [gang B] side. There's a lot of pressure on young people to be on one side or the other. If they weren't one side or the other, each gang might rob them, so there was a lot of protection. There was a lot of bullying that went on. (Case study interviewee 06, non-London area 27)*

*It's the environment, it's the community. If you're brought up in a gang-affiliated community, you are going to know gang members. (Gang associate 77, non-London area 21)*

Previous research also highlights the importance of neighbourhood influences on gang membership. For example, Ralphs *et al.* (2009) suggest that, "in areas with established gang associations, it is difficult, if not impossible, for young people to avoid association with gang members" (p 496).<sup>31</sup>

The majority of participants (75%) reported that there was no change in geography as a defining feature of gangs,<sup>32</sup> and there was a particularly strong consensus among survey respondents outside London that there was 'no change'.<sup>33</sup>

## Violence

According to survey respondents, violence was considered to be a defining feature of a majority of gangs. Respondents showed agreement within areas on this question and 71% said that violence was a defining feature of 'all', or of 'a majority' of gangs. The majority of survey respondents (72%) reported no change in violence as a defining feature.<sup>34</sup> There was slightly more intra-area disagreement between responses from areas in London compared with those outside of London, and more consensus that there was 'no change' among non-London respondents. Conflict, including violent conflict, is discussed further in Section 6.

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<sup>28</sup> 210 responses, 12 don't know.

<sup>29</sup> Non-London areas: 58 responses, 6 don't know. London: 152 responses, 6 don't know. For both London and non-London areas the most common response was 'Geography is a defining feature of the majority of gangs in this area'. 69% of non-London respondents and 57% of London respondents gave this answer.

<sup>30</sup> Case study interviewee 02, Case study interviewee 09 and Case study interviewee 11 all from London area 19.

<sup>31</sup> Medina *et al.* (2013a) did not find that neighbourhood features were strong predictors of gang membership, but, as the authors note, this may be due to the methodological approach (as the youth offending survey they analysed may not be the best tool to provide information about such elements).

<sup>32</sup> 92 responses, 24 don't know. The importance of neighbourhood and place features in broader criminological theory, beyond explanation of gang membership. For example, see Bottoms (2007).

<sup>33</sup> Out of 40 non-London respondents who answered this question (excluding 20 who said don't know) 38 said that there was no change.

<sup>34</sup> 90 responses, 24 don't know.

## Family

Family ties were seen as an important defining feature of 'all', or of a 'majority' of gangs by around a third of survey respondents (35%). An additional 23% thought that they were a defining feature of half of the gangs in the area.<sup>35</sup> The involvement of siblings in gangs was mentioned particularly as a risk factor for gang membership (e.g. Gang associate 03, non-London area 19). Gang associates from two areas reported how family links had been central to their joining a gang:

*I've been involved since I was, like, 13. And it's not because I grew up and thought, "oh, I like the look of them boys over there. I wanna go and show with them". My whole family's involved, my Dad, nine of my uncles, my Grandad, all been to prison, all labelled as gang members ... as I was growing up, I weren't really interested. Didn't bother me at all. But then people started shooting at me because of who my family were. (Gang associate 95, non-London area 31).*

*I had a lot of problems with [rival gang members] due to the fact that my family were who they were. Because of my family name, because, like, who I was related to, it made it a bit of an issue for me. So from there it went from just being because of who I'm associated to, to who I roll with. And then I had to roll with certain people because it was safety. It was like, "right, well I'm officially under pressure with these guys, just because of who I am. Now I have to roll with these people." (Gang associate 86a, non-London area 27).*

The importance of family is supported by other research. For example, Medina et al. (2013a) concluded that one of the predictors for gang membership was having a sibling who is already a gang member. The majority of survey respondents from both London and non-London areas reported no change in the role of family as a defining feature.<sup>36</sup>

## Nationality and ethnicity

Around half of survey respondents indicated that no gangs in their area were defined by nationality (46%)<sup>37</sup> and a third said that no gangs in their area were defined by ethnicity (33%).<sup>38</sup> For most EGYV areas there was a variation in the responses in relation to both ethnicity and nationality, including some areas where survey respondents selected both 'extremes' of the possible response categories (i.e. both 'none' and 'majority'). One reason for this variation could be that some respondents interpreted this question as asking about ethnic or national composition and others interpreted it as asking about an essential criterion for admission to the group. Survey respondents from outside London were slightly more likely to say that 'half' or a 'majority' of gangs were defined by ethnicity or nationality than those from London areas.<sup>39</sup>

Analysis of case study interviews and further comments made by survey respondents indicate that there were gangs that were said to consist of particular ethnic or national groups,<sup>40</sup> but that

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<sup>35</sup> 207 responses, 52 don't know.

<sup>36</sup> 88 responses, 28 don't know. 90% said 'no change'.

<sup>37</sup> 208 responses, 45 don't know. Two respondents said 'nationality' was a defining feature of 'all gangs in this area'; 12% said the 'majority of gangs'; 10% said 'about half of all gangs'; 31% said 'minority of gangs'; 46% said 'no gangs'.

<sup>38</sup> 205 responses, 31 don't know. 4% said 'ethnicity' was a defining feature of 'all gangs'; 28% said the 'majority of gangs'; 17% said 'about half of all gangs'; 19% said 'minority of gangs'; 33% said 'no gangs'.

<sup>39</sup> 30% of non-London respondents said 'half' or 'a majority of gangs' were defined by 'nationality' compared with 20% of London respondents. 52% of non-London respondents said that 'half' or 'a majority of gangs' were defined by 'ethnicity' compared with 42% of London respondents.

<sup>40</sup> Respondents across a range of areas mentioned gangs that were predominantly Afghani, Albanian, Asian, Somali, Sri

these groups were not necessarily thought to be defined by these features. The ethnic composition of gangs may merely represent the ethnic composition of the community, rather than being a “*driving factor for a gang’s identity or a membership criterion*”<sup>41</sup>. A gang associate reported that gangs in his area formed ‘*on the street*’, reflecting the make-up of the area, and had members from a mix of nationalities and religions<sup>42</sup>.

Overall, no change was reported in the last two years in the extent to which gangs were based on ethnicity or nationality.<sup>43</sup> There was particularly strong consensus on this from survey respondents outside London. However, in two London areas, responses indicated a possible perceived trend for the ethnic or national mix of gangs to become more heterogeneous. In one London area,<sup>44</sup> two survey respondents reported that a gang, which previously consisted of one nationality, had “*no w recruited young people from all walks of life and area locations so as to represent the community they are selling drugs in*”<sup>45</sup>. A similar point was made by a respondent from another London area<sup>46</sup> that more White British members were being recruited into gangs where members traditionally came from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds.

These findings correspond with those from a recent study into the role of ethnicity in one London gang (Grund and Densley, 2012). Based on police data and interviews with gang members, the study found there was ethnic heterogeneity within the gang, but that members of the same ethnicity were more likely to co-offend. The authors suggest that the role of ethnicity in the internal workings of a gang is potentially important but not fully understood (*Ibid*.p 401).

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Lankan/Tamil, and Turkish.

<sup>41</sup> Survey respondent 76, non-London area 29.

<sup>42</sup> Gang associate 60, London area 19.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Nationality’: 88 responses, 29 don’t know. 88% said ‘no change’. ‘Ethnicity’: 89 responses, 28 don’t know. 88% said ‘no change’.

<sup>44</sup> London area 9.

<sup>45</sup> Survey respondent 159, London area 9.

<sup>46</sup> Survey respondent 36, London area 7.

## 4. Age of gang members and involvement of young people in gangs

To understand whether the nature of gangs is changing, issues relating to the age of gang members were explored, including whether gang members were perceived to be getting younger or older, and the roles played by members of different ages within gangs.

### Key findings

- Practitioners from areas outside London reported that gang members were older compared with responses from practitioners in London areas. There was however, intra-area variation in the perception of the age profiles of gang members (practitioners from the same EGYV areas reported different perceptions of the age profile of gangs).
- There is some evidence that the perceived age range of gang members may be widening. Overall, practitioners estimated that the majority of gang members may be slightly older now than two years ago. However, they also thought that there was more involvement in gangs by young people (between 9 and 14 years old) now compared with two years ago. The involvement of young people under the age of nine was almost exclusively mentioned by survey respondents from London. These perceived changes do not appear to be substantial.
- The use of young, often vulnerable, people to transport illicit drugs to other parts of the country was mentioned as being of major concern to practitioners, predominantly in London.

### Age of gang members

The survey asked respondents to 'estimate the age of the majority of gang members', two years ago (Figure 4.1) and now (Figure 4.2).<sup>47</sup> The most common response for the age of the majority of gang members now was '15-17' (37%), closely followed by '20-24' (34%). Overall, practitioners from areas outside London reported that gang members were older, compared with responses from London areas.<sup>48</sup> However, age estimates varied within areas.

<sup>47</sup> Age now: 209 responses, 22 don't know. Age two years ago: 209 responses, 69 don't know.

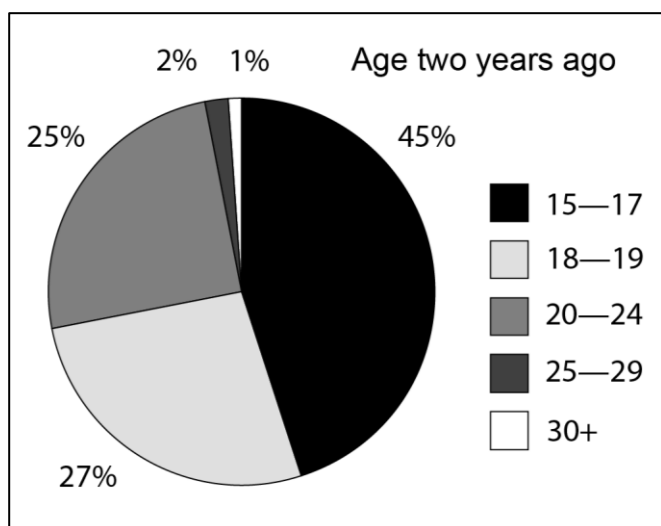
<sup>48</sup> The most common response from London respondents was that the age of the majority of gang members was '15-17' (36%) (in non-London areas: 26%). Outside London, the most common response was '20-24' (46%) (in London areas 24%).

Possible explanations for this variation are that a single gang might have members from a range of ages<sup>49</sup> making it difficult to identify a ‘majority’ age, or because the average age differs between gangs in the same area. Previous research into London gangs has consistently identified the presence of a range of age ranges within gangs<sup>50</sup> and a case study interviewee said there had always “*been elders and youngers*” in local gangs (C13-L19). A survey respondent highlighted the difficulty they had responding about the age of the majority of gang members:

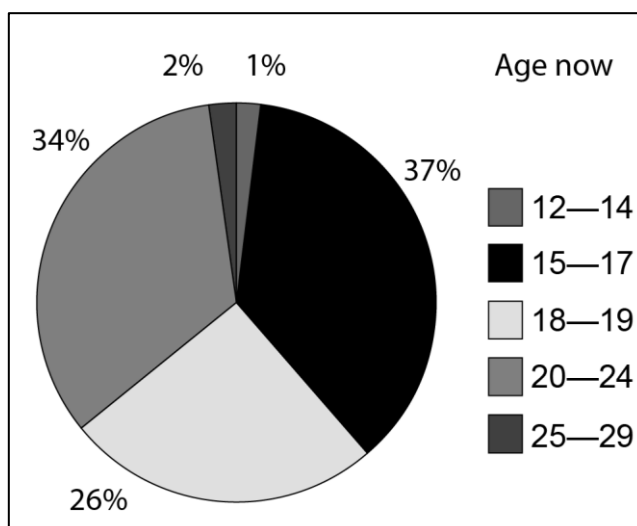
*I think it is difficult to answer these questions ... members of organised crime groups and associates are generally older - 19-25 years; urban street gangs 16-19; problematic peer groups may be from 12-16 and above. It would be more helpful to look at each of these categories in turn. The answers to the questions above are different depending on which sub category you are talking about. (Survey respondent 105, non-London area 32).*

It might be, therefore, that differences in response within areas are not necessarily inconsistent, just focusing on different gangs or different groups within gangs.

**Figure 4.1: Thinking about two years ago, what would you estimate was the age of the majority of gang members in your Community Safety Partnership area?**



**Figure 4.2: What would you estimate is the age of the majority of current gang members in your Community Safety Partnership area?**



## Change in the age of gang members

There is some evidence that the age of the majority of gang members was perceived to be slightly older now, compared with two years ago, although again there was variation in responses within areas. Compared with two years ago a higher proportion of survey respondents estimated that the majority of gang members were aged ‘20 -24’. This increase was largely accounted for by a reduction in the numbers of practitioners who estimated that the majority were aged ‘15- 17’ years. The other categories remained stable although responses in the ‘12-14’ years bracket appeared in estimates now when there were none two years ago.

<sup>49</sup> As suggested by survey respondent 51, London area 3.

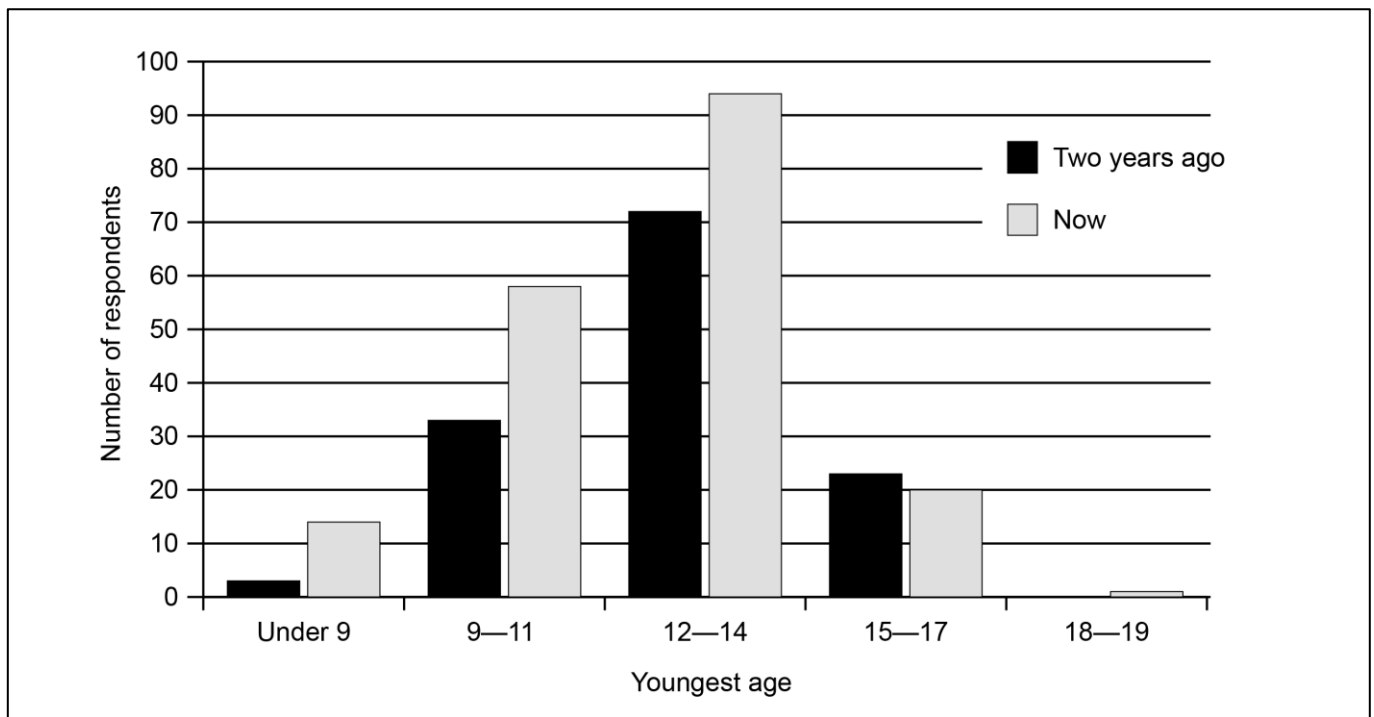
<sup>50</sup> For example, Densley (2012) distinguishes the most senior gang members, “in their mid to late twenties and above” (p 52); “gang elders” who are between 17 and 24 years old on average and “responsible for running the gang’s business” (p 53); and the “youngers” who are between 12 and 16 years old. Similar findings of a range of ages were reported by Harding (2014, p 280) and Pitts (2008, p 32).

## Perceptions of the age of the youngest gang members

Survey respondents were also asked to ‘estimate the youngest age of gang members’ in their area (Figure 4.3).<sup>51</sup> The youngest gang members were most commonly thought to be aged ‘12-14’ years (50%), although around a third of all survey respondents said that the youngest members were aged ‘9-11’ years (31%). A small number of survey respondents (7%) thought that there were gang members aged ‘under 9’ years. This was supported by insights from one case study area where some gang members were reported to be as young as 11 or 12,<sup>52</sup> but most were over 14.<sup>53</sup>

Area-level analysis shows that survey respondents reporting gang members ‘under 9’ years’ old were almost entirely from London (only one respondent outside London reported gang members aged ‘under 9’). Figure 4.3 shows that more practitioners thought that the youngest gang members are in the 3 youngest categories (‘under 9’ years’, ‘9-11’ years and ‘12-14’ years) now compared with two years ago.<sup>54</sup>

**Figure 4.3: What would you estimate is the youngest age of gang members in your area – now and two years’ ago?**



The results suggest a *possible* widening of the perceived age range in the last two years. Respondents reported that gangs included more young children (under 11 years old) and reported shifts in the age of the majority of gang members, with more members aged ‘20-24’ years old (and fewer aged ‘15-17’). This finding is tentative, given the variation in responses within areas, but is supported by other studies into gangs in London that found evidence that the age range of gangs could be expanding (Pitts, 2008; Harding, 2014).<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> 201 responses, 20 don’t know.

<sup>52</sup> Case study interviewee 32 and case study interviewee 22 in London area 5.

<sup>53</sup> Case study interviewee 34 and case study interviewee 35 in London area 5.

<sup>54</sup> 208 responses, 75 don’t know.

<sup>55</sup> Pitts (2008) found some evidence that gang members were desisting from crime at later ages in areas of “acute social deprivation” (p 19), leading to an expanding age-range. Harding (2014) similarly suggests (based on his research into South

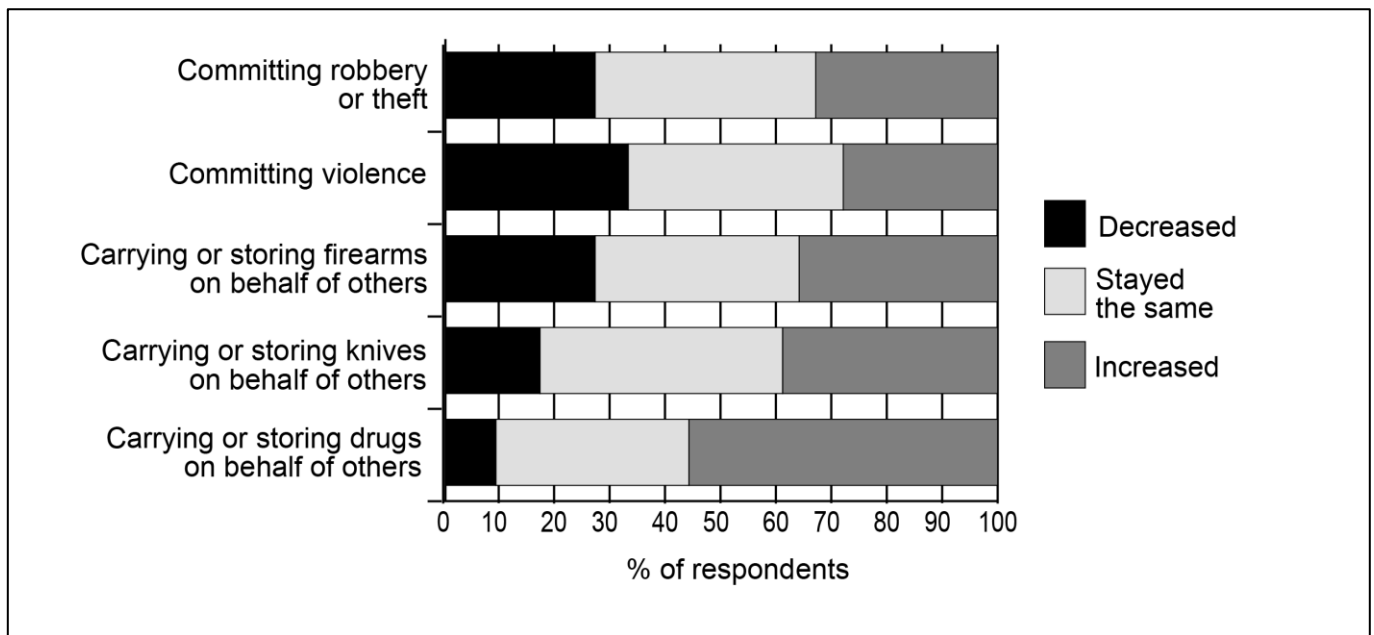


## Recruitment of young people to carry out gang-related activities

Survey respondents were asked whether they thought that there was any change in the recruitment or use of young people to undertake gang-related activities. As shown in Figure 4.4, overall, there was no consensus on these issues (with practitioners reporting an increase, decrease and no change),<sup>56</sup> except, perhaps, in relation to ‘carrying or storing drugs’, where the most common response was a perceived increase (55%).

Area-level analysis shows that more survey respondents from London (63%) said there had been an increase in young people carrying or storing drugs on behalf of others compared with respondents outside London (33%).

**Figure 4.4: Compared with two years ago, in your Community Safety Partnership area has the recruitment or use of young people to undertake the following activities increased, decreased or stayed the same?**



## Involvement of young people in transportation of drugs

The use of young, often vulnerable, people to transport drugs to other parts of the country was mentioned as being a major concern to practitioners, predominantly those practitioners based in London. Accounts from practitioners (in both the survey and case study interviews) indicated that the use of young people in drug transportation was an organised activity, directed by local gangs. Young people were said to be given targets for selling and punished if the targets were not met. Train tickets would be bought in advance by “the elders”, and the fact that young people had valid train tickets for these journeys, which they would not normally be able to afford, provided evidence that their trips were organised<sup>57</sup>. Two interviewees from a London area reported that gangs recruited young people specifically for this purpose:

*The method of recruitment ... is to target young, easily influenced youths as young as 12*

London gangs) that the lack of employment and education opportunities for young people may contribute to extending gangs’ age range.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Committing robbery or theft’: 202 responses, 74 don’t know; ‘Committing violence’: 201 responses, 77 don’t know; ‘Carrying or storing firearms on behalf of others’: 204 responses, 102 don’t know; ‘Carrying or storing knives on behalf of others’: 204 responses, 87 don’t know; Carrying or storing drugs on behalf of others’: 206 responses, 84 don’t know.

<sup>57</sup> Case study interviewee 32 and case study interviewee 33 from London area 5.

*years old from local schools and the surrounding area. They [gang members] recruit them with the lure of earning money or being given new trainers, tracksuits etc. [and] then use these runners to deal for them. (Survey respondent 192, London area 7).*

*The ... borough ... has three gangs ... the first two groups fit the profile of a street gang, but the [third] are an organised criminal group whose main motivation is financial gain through drugs supply [they] ... actively recruit young people to run drug lines into other areas across the country. (Survey respondent 40, London area 7).*

The locations where young people sell drugs were reported to be distant from London. There were reports from two areas<sup>58</sup> that young people would be away from home or care for as much as a week. In one of these areas, a survey respondent reported that the involvement of young people in drug transportation was the cause of a “*significant*” increase in the number of young people reported missing over the last two years.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> London areas 5 and 7.

<sup>59</sup> Survey respondent 40, London area 7.

## 5. Gang structure and initiation

The presence of ‘some form of identifying structural feature’ is included as an optional element in the definition of a gang used in this research. This study explored whether gangs in Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) areas were perceived to have structural features, namely an identifiable leader, internal hierarchies, a cohesive structure, rules about behaviours, punishments for breaking those rules, or initiations. Perceived changes in these features were also explored.

### Key findings

- In line with previous gang research in the UK, most practitioners thought the majority of gangs in their area had a leader and some form of hierarchical structure. However, structure was thought to be unstable.
- Gang associates were more sceptical than practitioners about the indicators of structure, such as appointment or promotion to designated roles. Instead, associates reported that members’ positions and activities within the gang resulted from skill at a particular task, or natural progression as members gained experience.
- The extent to which gangs use initiation and have rules governing members’ behaviour was not clear from the findings. The majority of practitioners responding to these questions reported that rules and initiations were common, but gang associates gave differing accounts; some gang associates reported that they had experienced initiation, others said that initiations did not exist.
- There was no substantial perceived change in the structure of gangs over the last two years, although comments from a small number of practitioners and associates provide some indication of a reduction in the extent to which gangs have an internal hierarchical or cohesive structure.

### Practitioner perceptions of gang structure, rules and initiations

The majority of survey respondents reported that gangs in their area had a leader (85%), a hierarchical structure (79%) and a cohesive structure (64%)<sup>60</sup> (Figure 5.1).<sup>61</sup> This supports findings from previous research which found evidence that London gangs had leaders and a degree of internal organisation (Densley, 2013).

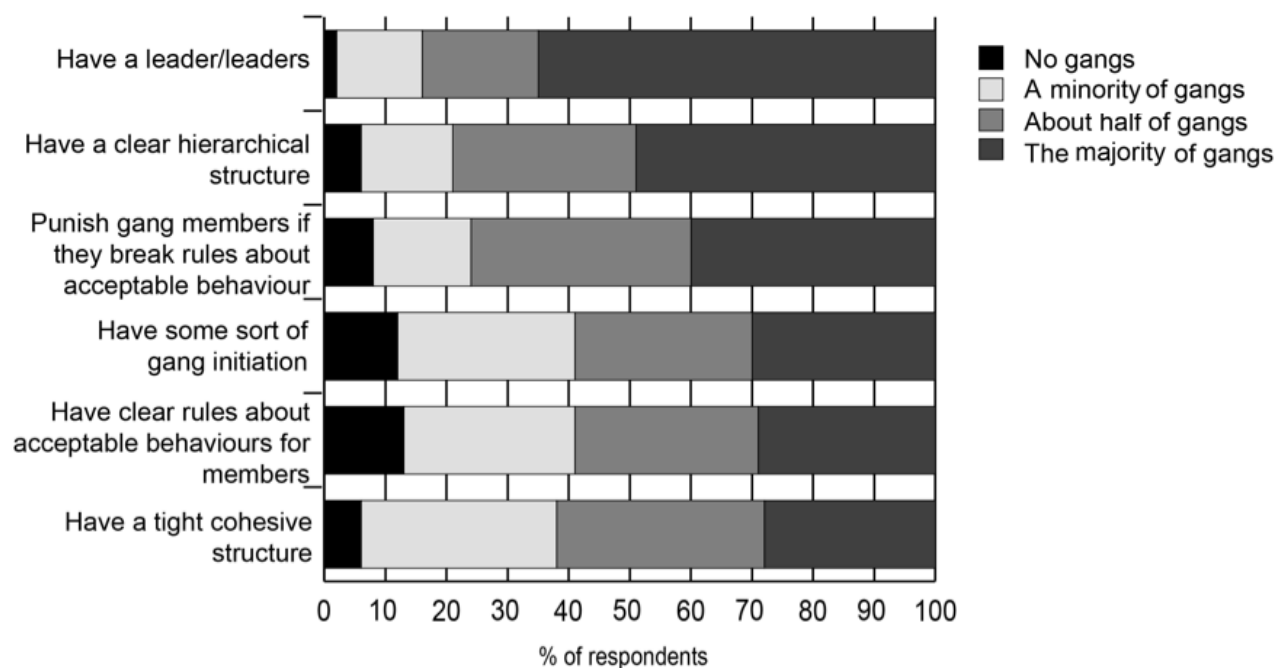
Practitioners commented that structure, in particular leadership, can differ considerably between gangs and over time, and can change rapidly. It can also vary within a gang, for example, with a

<sup>60</sup> Grouping respondents who answered that ‘about half’ and ‘a majority’ of gangs in the area had these features.

<sup>61</sup> Respondents were asked, ‘What proportion of gangs in your Community Safety Partnership area currently have or do the following?’ ‘Have a leader/s’: 172 responses, 38 don’t know; ‘Have a clear hierarchical structure’: 171 responses, 39 don’t know; ‘Punish gang members if they break rules about acceptable behaviour’: 172 responses, 74 don’t know; ‘Have some sort of gang initiation’: 172 responses, 98 don’t know; ‘Have clear rules about acceptable behaviours for members’: 172 responses, 88 don’t know; ‘Have a tight cohesive structure’: 171 responses, 48 don’t know.

clear structure at the top but less organisation at the lower levels.<sup>62</sup> Structure can also be disrupted. For example, the imprisonment of a gang member can result in an absence of leadership or a position within the group becoming available. Survey respondents from London areas reported that others move into these roles, sometimes after competition and violence. Harding (2014, p 103) found similar ‘turbulence’ in the internal structure within the gangs he studied in South London.

**Figure 5.1: What proportion of gangs in your Community Safety Partnership area currently have or do the following?**



Survey respondents were less well informed about rules, punishments and initiations (there were greater numbers of ‘don’t know’ responses to these questions). Just over half of those who gave an answer thought that there were rules (58%)<sup>63</sup> and initiations (59%).<sup>64</sup> A higher proportion believed that there were systems of punishments (76%).<sup>65</sup> Examples of initiations mentioned by practitioners were carrying out robberies<sup>66</sup> or committing acts of violence,<sup>67</sup> but one survey respondent specifically commented on a knowledge gap in this respect:

*[there is an] intelligence gap regarding punishments and gang initiations. Evidence of minor stabbings, photos distributed on social media of youths in compromising positions (naked, threatened with knife etc.) in the past but no victims willing to substantiate. (Survey respondent 210, London area 3).*

## Views of gang associates on gang structure, rules and initiations

Gang associates gave more equivocal accounts of gang structure compared with practitioners.

<sup>62</sup> Case study interviewee 32, London area 5.

<sup>63</sup> 30% said that ‘about half of the gangs’ in their area ‘had clear rules about acceptable behaviours for members’ and 29% said ‘all of the gangs’.

<sup>64</sup> 28% said that ‘about half of the gangs’ in their area ‘had some sort of gang initiation’ and 31% said ‘all of the gangs’.

<sup>65</sup> 36% said that ‘about half of the gangs’ in their area ‘punish members if they break rules about acceptable behaviour’ and 40% said ‘all of the gangs’.

<sup>66</sup> Case study interviewee 39, London area 5.

<sup>67</sup> Survey respondent 371, non-London area 29.

associate<sup>68</sup> said that there were no ‘bosses’ of the gangs he had been involved with. Comments suggest that there is not always a clear system of ‘promotion’ or assigning roles within gangs and that an individual’s position and role in a gang is in part determined by their skills. The associate gave an example of someone who is successful in the drugs market, whom others in the gang might ‘look up’ to.<sup>69</sup> The importance of gang members’ skills has been highlighted by Harding (2014). He reported that gang members with social (and other) skills were more likely to progress within the South London gangs that were the focus of his research. Mirroring practitioners’ views that gang structure was unstable, a gang associate noted that members can go down the ‘rankings’ as well as up.<sup>70,71</sup>

In relation to initiations, one gang associate reported that his initiation into a gang had involved being “*beaten up*”:

Interviewer: *Did you have initiations?*

Interviewee: *Yeah, getting beat up by about four boxers. It well hurt ... most painful experience of my life...*

Interviewer: *But you agreed to it?*

Interviewee: *Yeah ... I wanted to be one of the boys.*

(Gang associate 97, non-London area 31).

Two gang associates from one area outside London reported that gang initiation did not normally happen, because members were “*born into*” gangs as a result of growing up in a particular area so there was no need for any initiation<sup>72</sup>. However, they reported that when new gangs “*spun off*” from existing groups, there might be some kind of initiation into the new group. Two other gang associates said that they had never heard of a gang initiation.<sup>73</sup>

The gang associates interviewed did not believe that there were rules against, or punishments for, leaving gangs.

*I’ve never heard that [people being prevented from leaving]. I’ve never seen it. If there is evidence of it I’d like to see it, I’d like to see these people saying, “Listen, see these guys, they will never leave my gang. They have to be in my gang. I said so”.* (Gang associate 02, London area 19).

Another gang associate reported that members could leave the gang if they wanted to.<sup>74</sup> This finding is supported by previous research that concluded that gangs did not directly oppose exit by members or have ‘rules’ against it (Medina *et al.*, 2013b), although gang members wishing to exit faced significant other barriers, such as members of rival gangs not acknowledging exit, leading to a real or perceived vulnerability to attacks from rival gangs.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Gang associate 61, London area 19.

<sup>69</sup> (A02-L19)

<sup>70</sup> Gang associate 86a, non-London area 27.

<sup>71</sup> See Densley, 2013 and Harding, 2014 on hierarchies within gangs in England.

<sup>72</sup> Gang associate 90 and gang associate 91 both from non-London area 31.

<sup>73</sup> Gang associate 02, London area 19 and gang associate 85b, non-London area 27.

<sup>74</sup> Gang associate 91, non-London area 31.

<sup>75</sup> The barriers to gang exit were not further explored in this study. Other research to look at these issues includes Densley,

Overall, interview data did not indicate the extent to which initiation and rules are wide-spread, organised or systematic and it appears that the use of initiation differs between gangs. Similarly, gang structure appears to differ across time and different gangs.

## Change in gang structure

The majority of survey respondents reported that there had been no change in relation to indicators of gang structure in the last two years (although many were not able to answer this).<sup>76</sup> A minority of respondents reported a decline in structure; around a fifth of survey respondents thought that fewer gangs had a leader, a clear hierarchical structure or a cohesive structure now compared with two years' ago. A few survey respondents offered descriptions of these kinds of changes in leadership or structure they thought were happening in their areas.

*As I said before the structure of gangs have changed dramatically; it's most small groups of young people and there are no visible leaders or structure, there is much more secrecy involved and in so doing much less violence. (Survey respondent 302, London area 16).*

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2013 and Harding, 2014.

<sup>76</sup> Respondents were asked 'Compared to two years ago, has there been a change in the extent to which gangs in your community safety partnership area have or do the following?' 'Had a leader/leaders': 184 responses, 79 don't know; 'Had a clear hierarchical structure': 181 responses, 79 don't know; 'Punished gang members if they broke rules about acceptable behaviour': 181 responses, 98 don't know; 'Had some sort of gang initiation': 179 responses, 101 don't know; 'Had clear rules about acceptable behaviours for members': 182 responses, 106 don't know; 'Have a tight cohesive structure': 182 responses, 84 don't know.

## 6. Inter-gang cooperation and conflict in custody and the community

This section of the report focuses on perceptions about relationships between gangs. Both conflict and cooperation between and within gangs were investigated, along with the nature of conflict and cooperation – including the spill-over effects felt in the community, as a result of disputes between gang members while in custody.

### Key findings

- Cooperation and conflict between gangs were perceived to be very common, albeit with conflict being more prevalent. Practitioners thought that gangs may work together for commercial reasons and, on occasions, join forces against other groups or gangs. It was not unusual, according to survey respondents, for gang members to have an affiliation to more than one gang, or for different gangs to have links.
- Conflict between gangs was most commonly thought to be driven by retaliation for previous violence and disputes over territory linked to drug dealing. There were some differences between the views of practitioners in London compared with areas outside London. For example, London survey respondents were more likely to perceive conflicts to be drug and postcode-related than those outside London.
- Overall, there was no substantial perceived change in the reasons behind inter-gang conflict, but respondents from London reported that ‘conflict and violence over drugs’ and ‘postcode conflicts’ were more often a cause of conflict now compared with two years ago.
- ‘Disputes in custody generating violence in the community’ were seen as only a minor problem, although examples of violent spill-over were reported.

### Cooperation between gangs

There was a strong finding from the survey that gangs from the same area were perceived to cooperate with each other.<sup>77</sup> There was also agreement that gangs formed and shifted allegiances with other gangs.<sup>78</sup> This finding was supported by previous research which found alliances between, for example, small gangs and larger gangs in response to conflict with gangs from a different area, or in order to facilitate access to illegal commodities (Densley, 2012; Harding, 2014; Pitts, 2008). Case study interviewees talked about ‘friendly links’ between gangs, and individuals who were members of more than one gang:

<sup>77</sup> Respondents were asked: ‘To what extent do gangs in your community safety partnership area cooperate with each other?’ 67 responses, 42 don’t know. 88% said that gangs cooperated ‘to some extent’ or ‘to a great extent’.

<sup>78</sup> Respondents were asked: ‘To what extent do gangs in your community safety partnership area shift allegiances?’ 166 responses, 39 don’t know. 82% said that gangs shifted allegiances ‘to some extent’ or ‘to a great extent’.

*Sometimes these people belong to gangs but may belong to more than one gang ... and of course, gangs may decide to affiliate with another gang at a certain time because criminal activity or whatever is the way to do it, or to protect an area. (Case study interviewee 08, London area 19).*

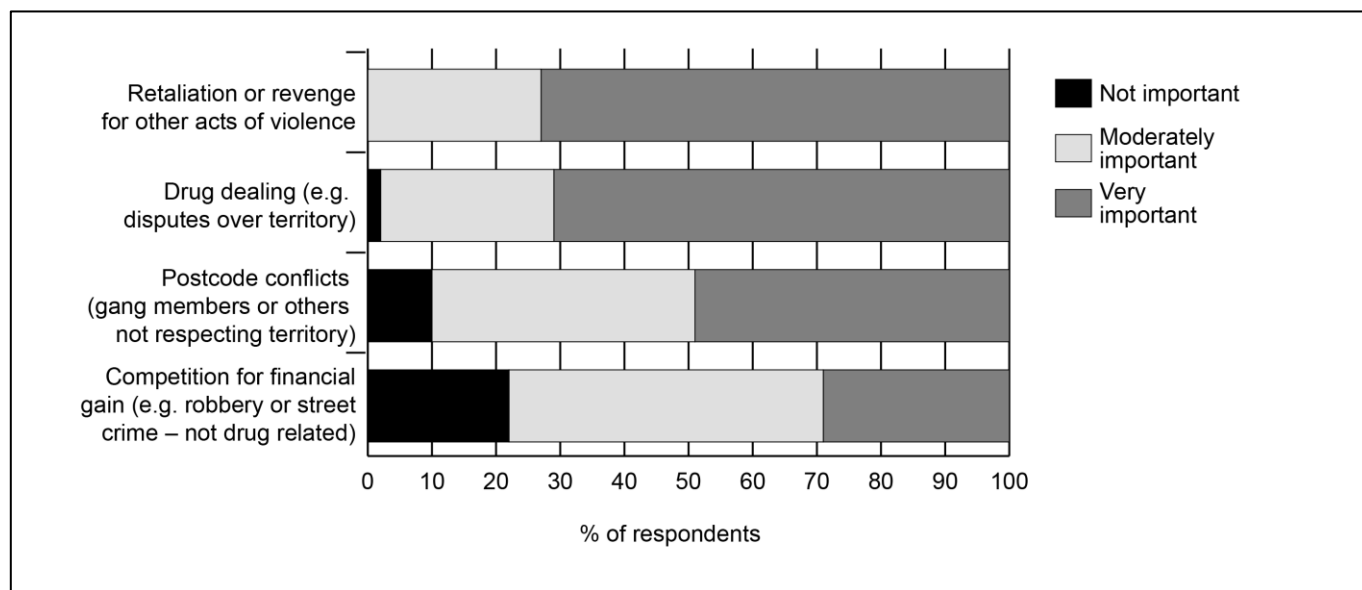
*Everyone works together ... it's like in businesses, you'll always get the head man, the director ... he will always have to talk or contact another businessman ... "I've got a black gang that steals cars, you've got an Asian gang that sells heroin. You need something to transport their heroin in, I need drugs to make me extra money. You give me some heroin, I get you some cars." (Gang associate 79, non-London area 21).*

## Inter-gang conflict

Conflict between gangs was thought to be more prevalent than cooperation. Survey respondents regarded conflict or violence to be a key feature of relationships between gangs, with 99% answering that they thought that this happened to some extent or to a great extent.<sup>79</sup>

Retaliation for other acts of violence and drug dealing (for example disputes over territory) were the most commonly reported reasons for inter-gang conflict or violence. This was closely followed by conflict generated by postcode violations (failure to respect territory) (Figure 6.1).<sup>80</sup> Three-quarters (76%) of survey respondents also thought that inter-gang violence happened, to some extent, for no particular reason.<sup>81</sup>

**Figure 6.1: How important are the following reasons for inter-gang conflict or violence?**



<sup>79</sup> Respondents were asked 'To what extent is there inter-gang conflict or violence between gangs in your community safety partnership area?' 161 responses, 17 don't know. 56% said 'to some extent;' and 42% said 'to a great extent'.

<sup>80</sup> 'Drug dealing (e.g. disputes over territory)': 140 responses, 17 don't know; 'Postcode conflicts (gang members or others not respecting territory)': 140 responses, 9 don't know; 'Retaliation or revenge for other acts of violence': 140 responses, 5 don't know; 'Competition for financial gain (e.g. robbery or street crime not drug related)': 140 responses, 39 don't know.

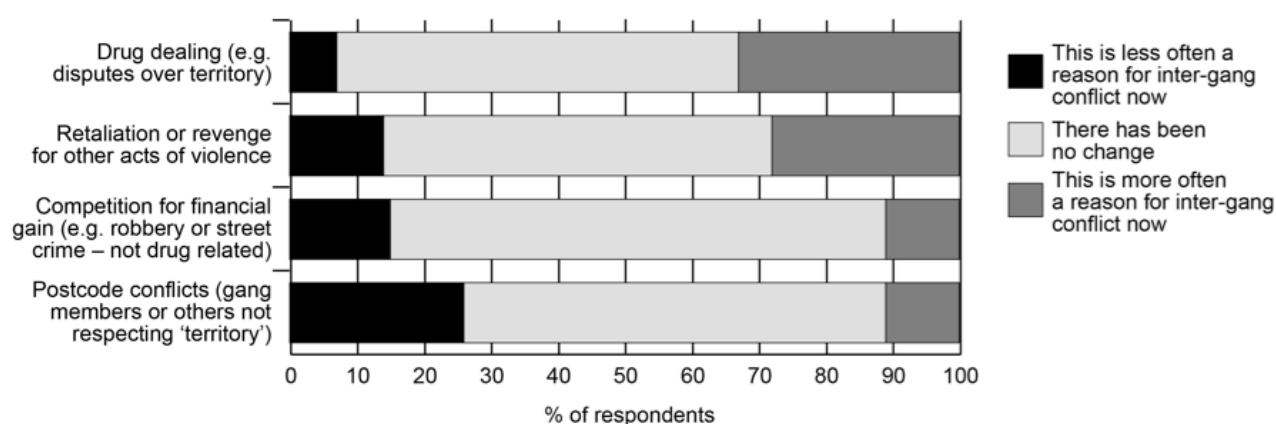
<sup>81</sup> Respondents were asked 'To what extent does inter-gang violence happen for no particular reason?' 165 responses, 62 don't know. 15% said 'not at all'; 76% said 'to some extent' or 'to a great extent'.



London survey respondents were slightly more likely to perceive drug dealing (e.g. disputes over territory) and postcode conflicts as 'very important' than those outside London.<sup>82</sup> Those outside London more often reported that retaliation or revenge for other acts of violence was 'not important' than those in London.<sup>83</sup> Providing one point of support for practitioners' views, disputes over drugs and money were mentioned by a gang associate as being causes of conflict.<sup>84</sup>

Overall, practitioners did not think that there had been much change in the reasons for conflict over the last two years, although a minority reported postcode conflicts had decreased and retaliation and revenge for other acts of violence had increased somewhat (Figure 6.2).<sup>85</sup> Conflict and violence over drug dealing and postcode conflicts were perceived to have increased more in London areas than those outside.<sup>86</sup>

**Figure 6.2: Compared with two years ago, has there been a change in the reasons for inter-gang conflict or violence?**



## Conflict within, or spilling over from, custody

Disputes in custody having effects in the community were perceived to be a minor problem by just under 60% of survey respondents who answered this question (although there were only 84 responses, 19 of which were from EGYV areas outside London).<sup>87</sup> In additional comments in the survey, one respondent provided an example of violent spill-over: an assault in a young offenders' institution on a young person reported to be 'affiliated' to a gang in a London area.<sup>88</sup> It was reported that this was in 'retaliation' for a murder earlier the same day (the respondent did

<sup>82</sup> 'Drug dealing (e.g. disputes over territory)': London: 107 responses, 13 don't know: 73% said 'very important'. Non-London: 33 responses, 4 don't know: 62% said 'very important'. 'Postcode conflicts': London: 107 responses, 8 don't know: 52% said 'very important'. Non-London: 33 responses, 1 don't know: 41% said 'very important'.

<sup>83</sup> Non-London: 66 responses, 2 don't know: 25% said 'retaliation or revenge for other acts of violence' was 'not important'. London: 214 responses, 2 don't know: 9% said this was 'not important'.

<sup>84</sup> Gang associate 90, non-London area 31.

<sup>85</sup> 'Drug dealing (e.g. disputes over territory)': 164 responses, 60 don't know; 'Postcode conflicts (gang members or others not respecting 'territory)': 164 responses, 58 don't know. 'Retaliation or revenge for other acts of violence': 165 responses, 59 don't know. 'Competition for financial gain (e.g. robbery or street crime – not drug related)': 160 responses, 76 don't know.

<sup>86</sup> 'Drug dealing (e.g. disputes over territory)': London: 122 responses, 44 don't know: 37% said 'more often a reason for inter-gang conflict now'. Non-London: 42 responses, 16 don't know: 5 respondents said 'more often a reason for inter-gang conflict now'. 'Postcode conflicts (gang members or others not respecting territory)': London: 122 responses, 42 don't know: 14% said 'more often a reason for inter-gang conflict now'. Non-London: 42 responses, 16 don't know: 1 respondent said 'more often a reason for inter-gang conflict now'.

<sup>87</sup> Respondents were asked 'how much of a problem disputes in custody causing parallel violence or revenge attacks in the community are (and vice versa)'. 84 responses, 8 don't know: 5% said 'not a problem'; 59% said 'minor problem'; 36% said 'major problem'.

<sup>88</sup> London area 12.

not elaborate whether the murder was gang-related, but that was the implication). This assault in the young offenders' institution was filmed and posted on social media.<sup>89</sup>

In response to a survey question about the main threats and issues related to work with gangs, another respondent mentioned the challenges of managing gang members on release from custody so that possible acts of retaliation and violence on release could be 'managed; and 'monitored'.<sup>90</sup> A substantial minority of survey respondents (44%) thought that 'disputes in custody causing parallel violence or revenge attacks in the community' had increased in the last two years.<sup>91</sup>

Survey respondents from two London areas mentioned that a reduction in the number of young offender institutions in the area had led to a "rise in violence", as it was now more difficult to separate rival gang members,<sup>92</sup> and because fewer local prison places meant gang members were held in establishments far from home, which could lead to violence "as a way of asserting themselves in new establishments".<sup>93,94</sup>

## Respect

The need for gang members to obtain and maintain "respect", or punish behaviour considered disrespectful was mentioned by practitioners and gang associates. This was seen as being a key cause of inter-gang conflict. The importance of respect has been noted in other gang studies as a central element of the "code of the street", regulating interactions between gang members (Anderson, 1999). A gang associate interviewee described links between respect and escalating violence as:

*It's pride, that's what it is. If someone punched me in my face now, I'm going to be thinking, "I'm going to kill this geezer," because of my pride. ... Pride takes it to that level where a guy wants to go and get a knife and go and get a gun ... you have an image to maintain to people ... they're just thinking, "You know what? He's fought me, he's disrespected me, so this is what I need to do. I need to go and get a gun and I need to go show him that he can't do that again. (Gang associate 77, non-London area 21).*

## Cycles of retaliation in gang violence

As well as the notion of respect, much inter-gang violence was reported to have historical causes, stemming from initial acts of violence or disagreements that occurred years ago, sometimes before current members were associated with the gang. Research in the US emphasised retaliation as a driving factor for inter-gang violence and conflict (Papachristos, 2009) and Densley (2013, p 70) found similar evidence of ongoing local rivalries in his London research. This accords with the description of the historical, 'tit for tat' nature of inter-gang conflict described by some interviewees:

*... there are issues that have come through a number of years, because it's about your status, about this group. You might have a friendship over there, you fall out, you're all*

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<sup>89</sup> Survey respondent 156, London area 14.

<sup>90</sup> Survey respondent 106, non-London area 31.

<sup>91</sup> Respondents were asked 'Compared to two years ago, has there been a change in the extent to which disputes in custody causing parallel violence or revenge attacks in the community (and vice versa) is a problem in your community safety partnership area?' 83 responses, 31 'don't know'. 48% said 'no change' and 8% said 'less of a problem'.

<sup>92</sup> Survey respondent 379, London area 5 and survey respondent 87, London area 9.

<sup>93</sup> Survey respondent 87, London area 9.

<sup>94</sup> It should be noted that none of the survey respondents worked in prisons.

*involved in negative activity. They become your enemy. Your friend gets beat up. It's tit for tat and before you know it someone's lost a life. .... How do you go back? It just gets worse and worse until people are getting machine gunned in pubs. (Case study interviewee 06, non-London area 27).*

*Now it's about our war ... you're in that gang, I'm in this gang ... really and truly, they've not done anything to each other personally ... they know there's been ongoing beef for years and years and years and generations. ... no it's not even about drugs. It's not even about money. It's about stupidity. It's about ... they've got no reason. For all the younger generations who don't even know each other ... (Gang associate 9, non-London area 31).*

## 7. Visibility, identifiers and use of social media

This study aimed to explore trends in the extent to which gangs are present in public places or make their existence visible through, for example, graffiti, colours or clothes. The extent to which gangs are visible via social media – in particular YouTube – was also of interest.

### Key findings

- There was some evidence that gang visibility, in terms of street presence and the use of identifiers, was thought to have declined in the last two years. Gangs were thought to be operating more covertly, in part in response to the use of gang injunctions and other enforcement tactics as gangs try to avoid detection. But practitioners and associates also suggested that reduced visibility could be a sign of gangs evolving into more organised groups (a trend reported in other research into gangs in the UK) who avoid public signs of gang affiliation on the grounds that it is “*bad for business*”.
- A minority of gangs in Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) areas are thought to meet in public places, use graffiti to mark territory, or make use of marks or symbols of affiliation. It was suggested that younger gang members (or ‘wannabe’ members) were more likely to use such visible signs of gang membership.
- While practitioners and associates reported that street visibility appeared to be declining, the use of social media was widespread and thought to be increasing, at least in some areas. Online presence was thought by practitioners to be used to promote the gang and its reputation.
- However, as with street presence, a minority of gangs were said to be cautious about using social media as it could attract attention from law enforcement.

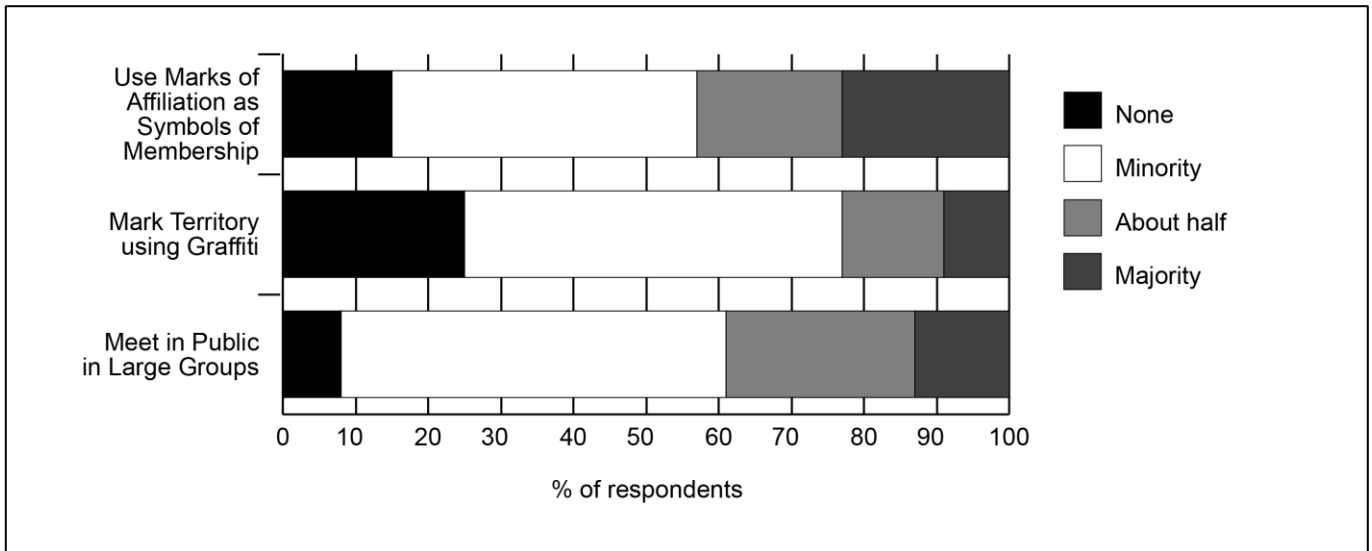
### Visible street presence

Survey respondents were asked to estimate the proportion of gangs in their area that ‘meet in public places in large numbers’, ‘mark territory using graffiti’ and ‘use marks of affiliation as symbols of membership (for example, colours/clothing/tattoos/bandanas)’. Most survey respondents answering this question said that a minority of gangs did these things (Figure 7.1).<sup>95</sup> A gang associate said that there was no use of gang colours in the area and the lack of street presence was confirmed by another associate of a different gang who commented that they met with their friends in people’s houses, off the street.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>95</sup> ‘Meet in public places in large groups’: 184 responses, 45 don’t know. ‘Mark territory using graffiti’: 184 responses, 56 don’t know. ‘Use marks of affiliation as symbols of membership (e.g. colours/clothing/tattoos/bandanas)’: 186 responses, 43 don’t know.

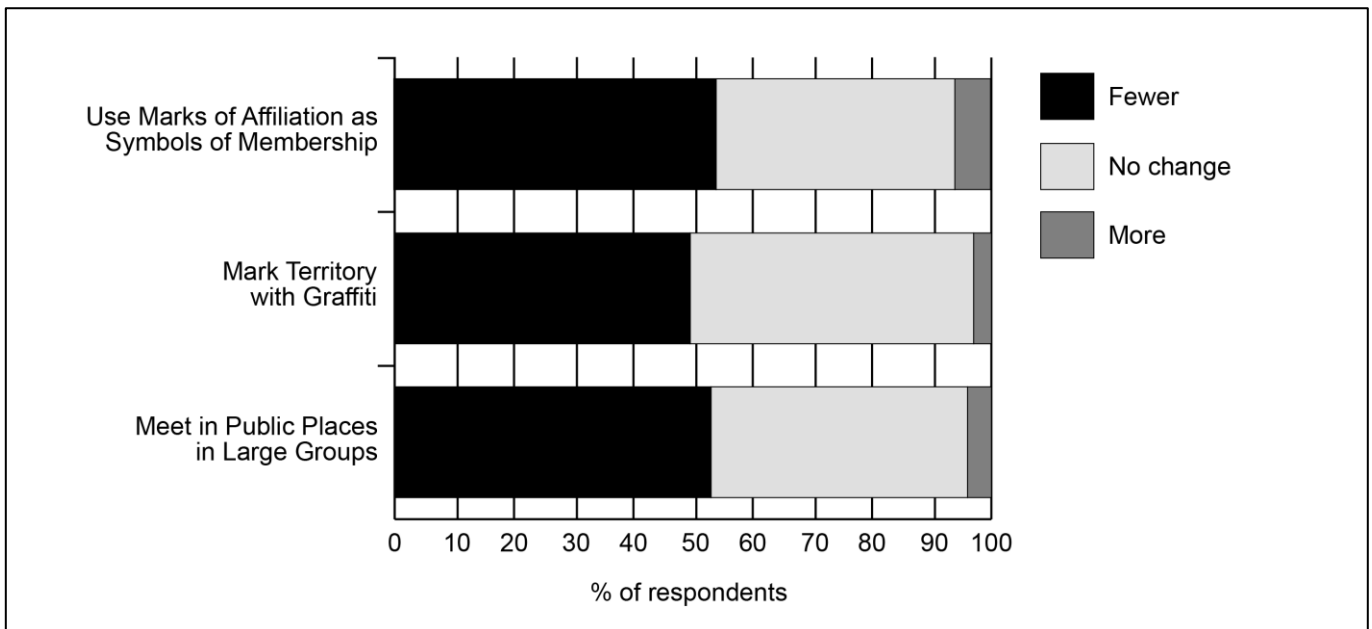
<sup>96</sup> Gang associate 74, London area 5 and gang associate 91, non-London area 31.

**Figure 7.1: What proportion of gangs in your Community Safety Partnership area currently do the following?**



When asked about change, the majority of survey respondents answering these questions reported that fewer gangs meet in public, mark territory and use symbols of affiliation now compared with two years ago, although just under 50% thought that there was no change (Figure 7.2).<sup>97</sup> Additional comments made by survey respondents noted that gangs were not displaying “shows of strength” in public as much now and were not wearing colours as much as before.<sup>98</sup>

**Figure 7.2: Compared with two years ago, has there been a change in the extent to which gangs in your Community Safety Partnership area do following?**



<sup>97</sup> ‘Meet in public places in large groups’: 195 responses, 80 don’t know; ‘Mark territory using graffiti’: 193 responses, 88 don’t know; ‘use marks of affiliation as symbols of membership (e.g. colours/clothing/tattoos/bandanas)’: 192 responses, 75 don’t know.

<sup>98</sup> Survey respondent 28, London area 8 and Survey respondent 39, non-London area 21.

## Some affiliation with colours and occasional displays of membership

Even though visibility was generally thought to be declining, visible displays were still apparent in some places (and around 40% of survey respondents said that ‘about half’ or ‘a majority’ of gangs met in public or used marks of affiliation). Survey respondents and case study interviewees from one area<sup>99</sup> recognised that gangs identified with particular colours, and a gang associate from another area<sup>100</sup> reported the occasional use of colours (but said that this was less common than in the past). In an example of a visible display of gang membership, a practitioner described gang-associated individuals meeting at the site where a gang member had died in a shooting, wearing T-shirts to commemorate the victim.

A key informant interviewee suggested that older gang members were less likely to be on the streets drawing attention to themselves. A case study interviewee similarly reported that this behaviour was more likely to be seen among young people who were on the periphery of the gang:

*... wearing gang colours is generally the wannabes. The ones who are desperate to be a part of the gang. They do stupid things like that. (Case study interviewee 04, London area 19)*

Similar comments were made by survey respondents that younger gang members may affiliate to colours but the majority of individuals involved do not.<sup>101</sup>

## Possible drivers of declining street visibility

Those who felt there that was a reduction in gangs’ visibility did not think that this necessarily corresponded with reduced gang activities. Data from case study interviewees, gang associates and survey respondents identified two main perceived reasons for reduced visibility. The first is that gangs are less visible in response to law enforcement activities and other interventions to prevent and respond to gang activities and violence. This includes increased surveillance (CCTV), gang membership being treated as an aggravating factor in sentencing leading to harsher penalties, and the use of gang injunctions.<sup>102</sup> Practitioners explained that gangs that show visible signs are more likely to be detected, so take steps to be more discreet, especially in the face of these changes in law enforcement activities and other forms of surveillance. One gang associate commented that increased surveillance and enforcement could potentially be behind this change:

*You see like CCTV and stuff, that makes a big difference because people will generally know now that if you do anything under a camera, you are gonna go to jail ... before when there was no cameras, you stab someone here and no-one’s gonna snitch, you’re good. (Gang associate 61, London area 19).*

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<sup>99</sup> Non-London area 27.

<sup>100</sup> London area 19.

<sup>101</sup> Survey respondent 31, non-London area 29.

<sup>102</sup> Introduced in the Policing and Crime Act 2009 and available since January 2011, gang injunctions serve to prevent an individual from entering certain places, being with particular persons and doing certain things such as wearing particular clothing (Home Office, 2009, 2014b). As such, persons are prevented from “engaging in, encouraging or assisting gang-related violence and to protect them from gang-related violence” (Home Office, 2014b, p 3). For discussion see (Densley, 2013).

Another gang associate made a similar comment about gang members employing different, more covert approaches:

*... people are getting smart. People aren't hanging out on the streets like they was. People have had to [adapt], because of how it's been. ... Just when you think it's quiet, it's never quiet, it's just moving in a different way. They're just not going down that same route as what they was before. It's just now it's a different one. It's just more under wraps. Being big and out there, people are learning it's not the way, let's put it like that. (Gang associate 53, non-London area 27).*

This case study interviewee explained the effect of the imposition of harsher sentences.

*The police [have] done really well in locking [gang members] up ... so people know in [the N27 area], you're gonna get a heavy sentence, not just a standard four years for carrying a weapon, you're gonna get a heavy sentence, especially if it's gang related. So people aren't prepared to take that any more, to just start shooting at people. (Case study interviewee 53, non-London area 27).*

The second explanation for reduced visibility was that gangs were becoming more like organised crime groups, for whom visible activities were bad for business. The evolution of street gangs from groups of peers to more organised criminal enterprises has been reported on the basis of previous empirical research in the UK (Densley, 2014), and this is discussed further in Section 8.

It is not possible to verify these varied perceptions as to the causes of any decline in visibility. Claims that interventions such as gang injunctions and law enforcement activities have had an effect should be treated cautiously without further evaluation evidence,<sup>103</sup> although the fact that this was mentioned by both practitioners and gang associates lends some weight to the view.

## Use of social media and online presence

Whether or not the use of social media is increasing, there was a perception among survey respondents that gangs and gang members have a considerable online presence. Just under three quarters of respondents (71%) thought that 'a majority' or 'half of gangs' in their area used social media to organise gang activity and used video sharing (77%).<sup>104</sup>

Intimidation and recruitment were mentioned as the two main ways in which social media was used. Survey respondents from four London areas described the use of social media as a tool for gangs to promote themselves and discredit rival gang members, to threaten and intimidate others, brag about successes and encourage recruitment. The use of YouTube to promote music videos (often rap music about life in a gang) was mentioned by several survey respondents from London. A gang associate reported that they had previously been arrested after being identified on a YouTube video, and another associate described how a rival gang had attacked them after they appeared in a YouTube video.<sup>105</sup>

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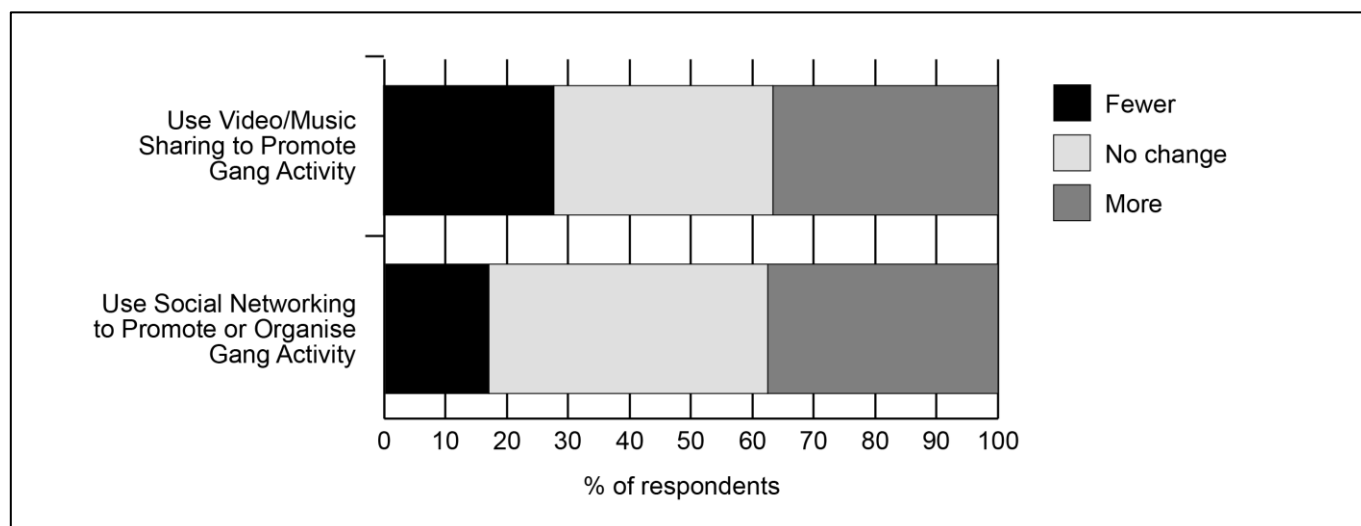
<sup>103</sup> This study did not look at interventions to prevent or reduce gang violence. A pilot of gang injunctions in a UK city found positive effects. However, research in the US into measures similar to gang injunctions suggests that they may displace gang-related activities and that the effects could be short-lived (Densley, 2013, pp 152-3).

<sup>104</sup> Respondents were asked: 'What proportion of gangs in your community safety partnership area currently do the following?' 'Use social networking to promote or organise gang activity': 183 responses, 45 don't know; 'Use video or music sharing to promote gang activity': 185 responses, 31 don't know.

<sup>105</sup> Gang associate 95, non-London area 31 and gang associate 79, non-London area 21.

While street visibility appears to be declining, there is some evidence that use of social media (through video sharing and social networking) may be increasing, at least in some areas (Figure 7.3).<sup>106</sup> The most common answer given by survey respondents (46%) was that there was no perceived change in the use of social networking to organise gang activity. However, a substantial minority (38%) thought that more gangs were doing this now compared with two years ago. Similarly, 37% of survey respondents thought that the use of video and music sharing to promote gang activity was increasing.

**Figure 7.3: Compared with two years ago, has there been a change in the extent to which gangs in your Community Safety Partnership area do the following?**



The use of online displays of gang membership or affiliation was mentioned as increasing in three London areas, replacing other visible signs of gang affiliation, as this comment illustrates:

*The use of online videos has increased hugely and seems to have taken the place of graffiti in terms of publicly getting the name and activities of the gang out there... the use of general social media chat has ... led to an increase in tensions. (Survey respondent 268, London area 19).*

Declines in traditional public displays of affiliation and increases in online displays have been noted in previous research in the UK (Densley, 2013; Densley, 2014; Harding, 2014) and the US (Moule *et al.*, 2014; Pyrooz, *et al.*, 2013b).

## Some groups are more cautious in their use of social media

A few survey respondents<sup>107</sup> commented that gangs were curtailing their use of social media because of an awareness that it could be used in court, by the police and other professionals and could lead to acts of retaliation or violence by other gangs. Some gangs were reported to be aware that posting videos on YouTube could be used to prove that they are in a gang:

<sup>106</sup> 'Use social networking to promote or organise gang activity': 191 responses, 82 don't know. 'Use of video and music sharing to promote gang activity': 192 responses, 72 don't know.

<sup>107</sup> Survey respondent 97, non-London area 21; survey respondent 40, London area 07; survey respondent 307, London area 06; and survey respondent 233, London area 20.



*Gang use of YouTube and other prominent social networking to promote activities has reduced significantly. In part this is believed to be linked to a move towards more organised drug supply and a desire to stay under the radar, but also to reduce likelihood of so-called "tit-for-tat" violence. (Survey respondent 233, London area L20)*

A gang associate similarly described how posting on YouTube might damage business interests and would therefore be avoided:

*You're drawing attention to yourself, aren't you? You're being in a gang and telling 'em well, I'm this, I'm that. I'm in this gang. I'm doing this. .... Why would you want to do that? You can't make money ... you can't get away with anything while the focus is on you, so maybe they're wising up. (Gang associate 90, non-London area 31).*

## 8. Criminal activities including organised criminal activities and use of weapons

Involvement in a range of criminal activities is a definitional feature of street gangs, and the study asked practitioners about the types of criminal activities in which gangs were involved. The study also aimed to understand the perceived links between street gangs and organised criminality and the use and carrying of weapons by gang members across Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) areas.

### Key findings

- Drug supply was reported to be the main criminal activity for gangs in EGYV areas, supporting findings from other research in the UK. The majority of survey respondents believed that gangs dealt drugs in other areas, sometimes in towns and cities a considerable distance from the area in which the gang was based.
- After drug supply, the main criminal activities in which gangs were reported to be involved were violence, robbery and sexual violence, but they were also involved in theft, fraud and burglary.
- Gang involvement in organised criminal activities, such as drug supply and carrying out enforcement activities for criminal groups, was reported in a large proportion of gangs. This was not reported to have changed substantially in the last two years.
- There was general agreement that the use of firearms outside London had decreased in the last two years, but little consensus on this point from practitioners in London. Overall, there was no perceived increase or decrease in the use of knives and knife carrying, but, again, there was considerable variation in the views of practitioners from the same area.

### Gang involvement in criminal activities

Gangs were thought to be involved in a range of crime types (Figure 8.1),<sup>108</sup> with the possession and supply of drugs, violence, and robbery perceived as the most common (97%, 88% and 86% of survey respondents thought that half or a majority of the gangs in their area were involved in those activities respectively). Previous research in the UK provides evidence for the widespread involvement of gangs in drug dealing (Aldridge and Medina, 2008; Densley, 2013; Harding, 2014; Pitts, 2008).

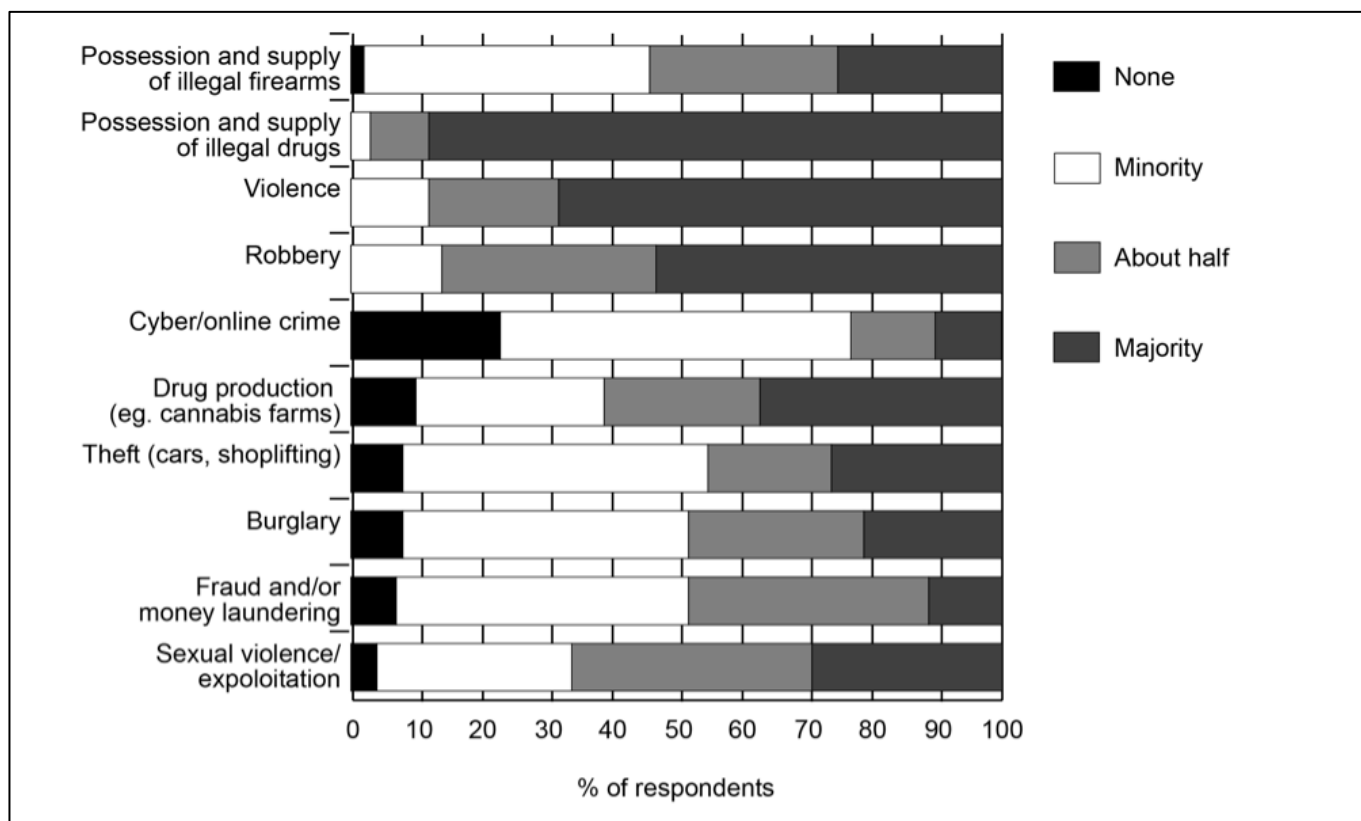
Involvement in sexual violence/exploitation and drug production were seen as slightly less common than possession and supply of illegal drugs, violence and robbery. None the less,

<sup>108</sup> 'Possession and supply of illegal firearms': 161 responses, 65 don't know; 'Possession and supply of illegal drugs': 162 responses, 14 don't know; 'Violence': 159 responses, 16 don't know; 'Robbery': 161 responses, 23 don't know; 'Cyber/online crime': 162, 110 don't know; 'Drug production (e.g. cannabis farms)': 162 responses, 79 don't know; 'Theft (cars, shoplifting)': 161 responses, 59 don't know; 'Burglary': 159 responses, 61 don't know; 'Fraud and/or money laundering': 161 responses, 85 don't know; 'Sexual violence/exploitation': 162 responses, 53 don't know.

around two thirds of survey respondents reported that ‘half’ or a ‘majority of gangs’ were involved in these activities (66% and 61% respectively).

Survey respondents appeared to be less well informed about the involvement of gangs in cyber /online crime (with 110 respondents answering don’t know). Of those who did answer, 77% thought that there was at least some gang involvement in such activities, and respondents from one London area had a high level of agreement that cybercrime and fraud and/or money laundering were gang-related activities in their area (respondents did not elaborate on how gangs were involved in these types of activities).

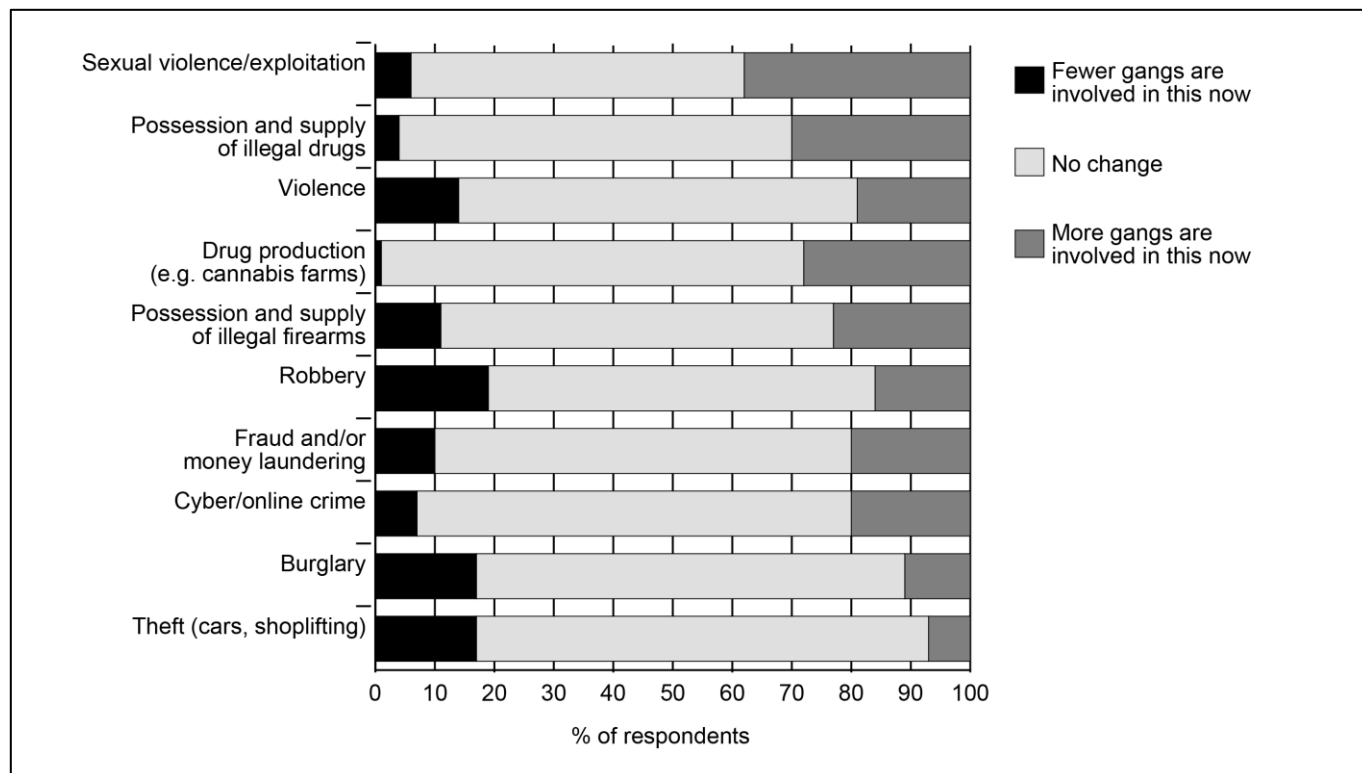
**Figure 8.1: To what extent are gangs from your Community Safety Partnership area currently involved in the following criminal activities?**



Practitioners thought that more gangs were involved in sexual violence/exploitation and possession and supply of illegal drugs now compared with two years ago (Figure 8.2),<sup>109</sup> although the overall picture is one of no major change in the profile of gangs’ criminal activities.

<sup>109</sup> ‘Possession and supply of illegal firearms’: 166 responses, 88 don’t know; ‘Possession and supply of illegal drugs’: 162 responses, 61 don’t know; ‘Violence’: 165 responses, 59 don’t know; ‘Robbery’: 62 responses, 167 don’t know; ‘Cyber/online crime’: 168 responses, 109 don’t know; ‘Drug production (e.g. cannabis farms)’: 167 responses, 97 don’t know; ‘Theft (cars, shoplifting)’: 167 responses, 85 don’t know; ‘Burglary’: 168 responses, 85 don’t know; ‘Fraud and/or money laundering’: 166 responses, 93 don’t know; ‘Sexual violence/exploitation’: 167 responses, 77 don’t know.

**Figure 8.2: Compared with two years ago, has there been a change in the extent to which gangs from your Community Safety Partnership area are involved in the following criminal activities**



## Gang involvement in drug supply

Cannabis and cocaine were reported to be the main drugs supplied by gangs: 79% of survey respondents said that the majority of gangs dealt cannabis; 65% said the majority dealt cocaine and 49% said the majority dealt heroin.<sup>110</sup> Further analysis comparing London and non-London areas did not indicate any perceived differences. However, the numbers of respondents outside London were very low (16 for heroin, 21 for cocaine, 21 for cannabis).

Questions about change in gang involvement in drug markets also had a relatively small number of responses,<sup>111</sup> and there were particularly small numbers from survey respondents outside London.<sup>112</sup> Among those who did respond, there does not appear to have been a substantial perceived change in the number of gangs supplying cannabis, cocaine or heroin overall, in the past two years. However, a substantial minority of London respondents thought that there was an increase in the number of gangs supplying cocaine and heroin now compared with two years ago (19 and 16 respondents respectively).

Involvement in drug markets was strongly perceived to be a cross area activity: 94% of survey respondents said that gangs from their area were involved in drug markets outside the area.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Cannabis: 81 responses, 3 don't know; Cocaine: 82 responses, 7 don't know; Heroin: 81 responses, 16 don't know.

<sup>111</sup> Cannabis: 80 responses, 19 don't know; Cocaine: 80 responses, 20 don't know; Heroin: 80 responses, 25 don't know.

<sup>112</sup> For non-London areas: Cannabis: 22 responses, 4 don't know; Cocaine: 22 responses, 5 don't know; Heroin: 22 responses, 6 don't know.

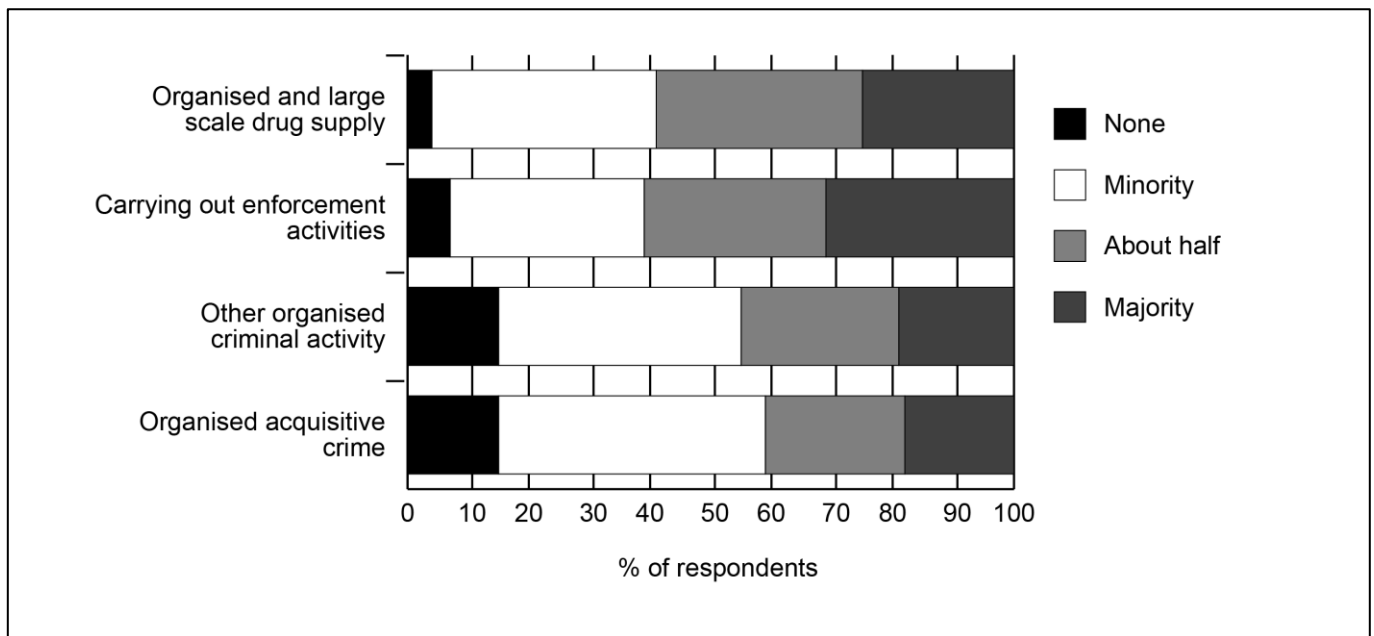
<sup>113</sup> 81 responses, 14 don't know.

## Gang involvement in organised criminal activities

In order to overcome ambiguity around the term ‘organised crime’ survey respondents were asked about perceptions of gang involvement in particular types of criminal activities which could be considered to be organised, for example, organised and large scale drug supply. The survey also asked about involvement in other organised criminal activity such as firearms supply, fraud, trafficking of women or children.<sup>114</sup>

Evidence collected in this study suggests that street gangs are perceived to be involved in some organised criminal activities (50% of respondents said ‘half’ or a ‘majority of gangs’ were involved in some kind of organised criminal activity). Carrying out enforcement activities for criminal groups and organised and large scale drug supply were the most common activities reported (Figure 8.3).<sup>115</sup> Analysis comparing responses from areas inside and outside of London shows very similar patterns (within-area analysis was not possible, since most areas had responses from just one or two respondents).

**Figure 8.3: What proportion of street gangs in your area are currently involved in the following?**



Questions about change in involvement in organised criminal activities had small numbers of responses. Among those who did respond, overall there does not appear to have been a perceived change in the last two years in the extent to which gangs were involved in the different types of organised criminal activities specified in the survey (Figure 8.4).<sup>116</sup> A

<sup>114</sup> No definition of organised crime was provided in the research tools. In the literature on organised crime a distinction is drawn between “crime that is organised” and “organised crime” (Gambetta, 1993). The former encompasses crime that involves cooperation, functional role division, planning, and specialisation. The latter has been given several definitions, often including monopolistic control exerted by one criminal group over “the production and distribution of a given commodity or service unlawfully” (Varese, 2010, p 14).

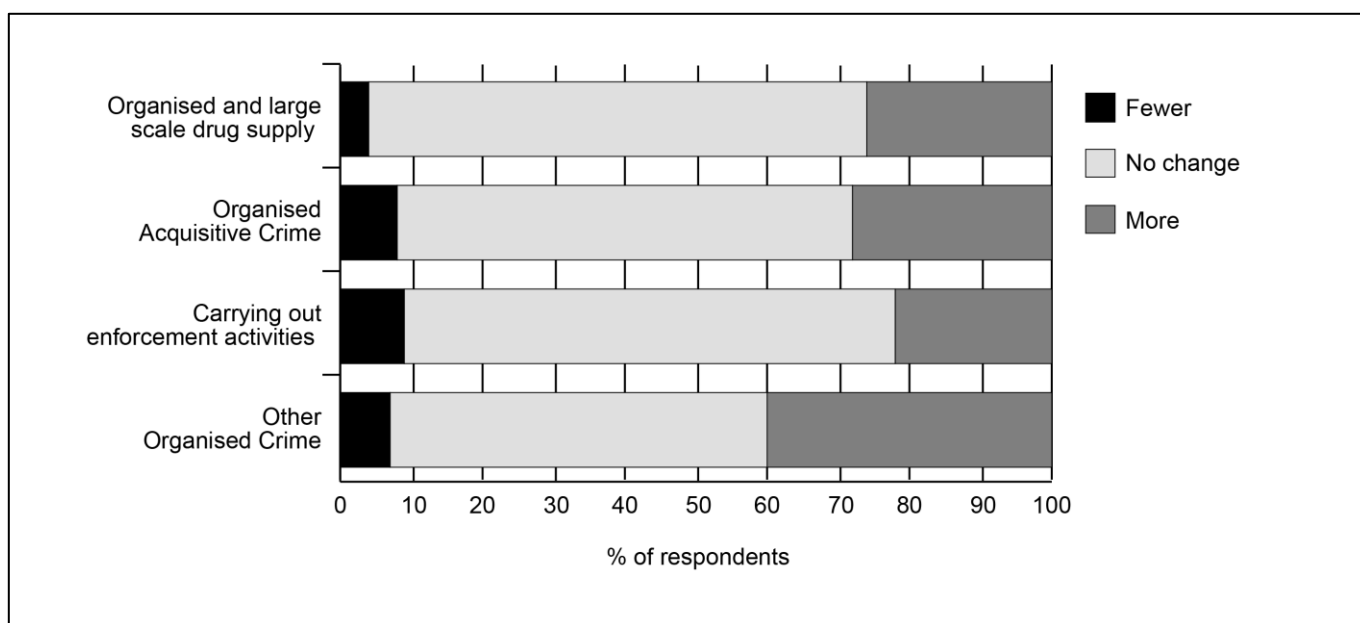
<sup>115</sup> ‘Organised and large scale drug supply’: 61 responses, 19 don’t know; ‘Carrying out enforcement activities (e.g. violence or intimidation) for criminal groups’: 61 responses, 25 don’t know; ‘Organised acquisitive crime’: 61 responses, 22 don’t know; ‘Other organised criminal activity (e.g. firearms supply, fraud, trafficking of women or children)’: 61 responses, 21 don’t know.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Organised and large scale drug supply’: 61 responses, 19 don’t know; ‘Carrying out enforcement activities’: 61 responses, 25 don’t know; ‘Organised acquisitive crime’: 61 responses, 25 don’t know; ‘Other organised criminal activity (e.g. firearms supply, fraud, trafficking of women or children)’: 61 responses, 27 don’t know.

substantial minority of survey respondents, however,<sup>117</sup> reported that a greater proportion of gangs were involved in the various organised criminal activities. Response patterns were similar for London and non-London respondents. The only notable differences were in relation to 'organised and large scale drug supply' where survey respondents from London were more likely to report an increase.<sup>118</sup> In response to the survey questions about overall change (see Section 11), respondents spoke of gangs being more 'professional', operating in more 'intelligent' ways and having financial or commercial motivations.

Additionally, survey respondents were asked whether street gangs in their areas were 'overall more likely to get involved in organised criminal activity than they were two years ago'.<sup>119</sup> Of those who answered, 60% said there was 'no change' and 30% said that they were 'more likely'. Survey respondents from London more often answered that gangs were 'more likely' to be involved in organised criminal activity than respondents from outside London.<sup>120</sup>

**Figure 8.4: Compared with two years ago, to what extent has the involvement of gangs in your Community Safety Partnership area in the following changed?**



The views of the minority of practitioners who reported that gangs were more involved in organised criminal activities now compared with two years ago, appear to support findings from other research into gangs in London. Densley (2013) found evidence of the 'evolution' of street gangs from "recreational" groups to "more corporate entities" (p 66), with each stage of evolution building on each other and cumulating in groups that resemble organised crime groups (Densley, 2014). Densley suggested this phenomena is not necessarily unique to London gangs (2013, p 67), but that further research was needed to test this. On the basis of information collected in this study there is no suggestion that London gangs are substantially different.

<sup>117</sup> 17 out of 61 respondents thought that more gangs were involved in 'other organised criminal activity'; 8 thought more gangs were involved in 'enforcement activities'; 10 thought more gangs were involved in 'organised acquisitive crime'; 9 thought more gangs were involved in 'large scale drug supply'.

<sup>118</sup> London: 43 responses, 13 don't know. 15 answered 'more gangs'. Non London: 18 responses, 6 don't know. 2 answered 'more gangs';

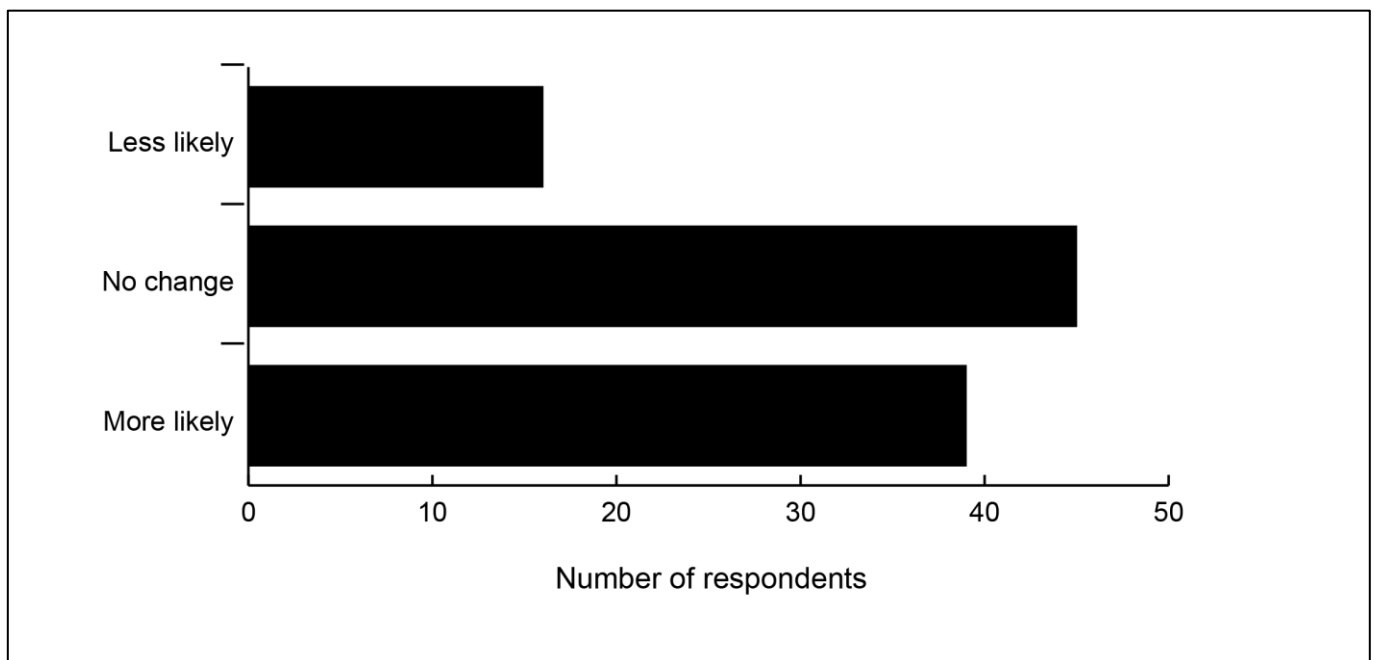
<sup>119</sup> 79 responses, 12 don't know.

<sup>120</sup> London: 61 responses, 11 don't know. 27% said 'more likely'. Non London: 18 responses, 1 don't know. 18% said 'more likely'.

## Involvement of individual gang members in organised criminal activities

Given evidence of the fluid nature of gang membership and that individuals can affiliate with different gangs, survey respondents were also asked whether there had been a change in the number of *individual street gang members* who were involved in organised criminal activities. There were a relatively small number of responses to this question,<sup>121</sup> but among those who answered, the most common response was that there was no change. Among respondents who did indicate a change (19 respondents thought that such involvement was more likely and only 8 respondents thought that this was less likely (Figure 8.5).

**Figure 8.5: In your area, are individual street gangs members more likely to get involved in organised criminal activity than they were two years ago?**



## The nature of gang involvement in organised criminal activities

Comments from survey respondents and case study interviewees provide some insight into the perceived nature of the involvement of gangs in organised criminal activities. Responses indicated that gang offending was thought to be directed and coordinated by more organised, older criminals. For example, a case study interviewee commented:

*One thing I heard is them robbing the security vans. Getting all of the youngers to get all of the money. Then the youngers are sent out to feed the notes through the self-service train ticket machines.... That's how it filters do wn. ... you've got the serious gang members who will then recruit a team. That team will be involved in the robbery and then involved in changing the money over. (Case study interviewee 04, London area 19).*

Another interviewee from the same area said that there are ...

*[Gang members who] are approaching their 30s, who are involved in the importation of Class A [drugs] and then it filters down to streets through the hierarchy system... generals*

<sup>121</sup> 61 responses, 12 don't know.

*[more senior members] ... [who] coordinate people to steal cars through going into burglary, number plate [theft], commit cash in transit robbery offences that generate more money, so you can buy more drugs... generally the older gang members are the ones driving it through organised planning, conspiracies ... (Case study interviewee 05, London area 19).*

It has already been mentioned in Section 4 that concerns were voiced about young people being recruited to transport drugs. Accounts from gang-associated interviewees confirm links between street gangs and organised crime:

*Organised crime is a gang, but it's a gang that ain't active. ... they're not out on the streets shooting people, they're not out on the streets selling drugs. They're pulling strings. They're the puppet masters. All the gang members are the puppets... they're infantry. Like in the army, they're infantry, the front line... whereas organised crime are, like, the corporals and whatever, or whoever they are sat in their offices... (Gang associate 90, non-London area 31).*

*The street gang's distracted by anything. ... organised crime you're focussing on the organised crime... I've been part of the organised crime scene; I've been part of just being a normal street gang. There's definitely a difference. I didn't make money in a street gang. Organised crime, I was making money so there's a big difference. (Gang associate 86a, non-London area 27).*

## Use of weapons

The use and carrying of weapons, particularly knives and guns, by gangs is of significant concern to the public and policy makers. There was a high degree of consensus among the small number of survey respondents from outside London that firearm use had decreased in the last two years (Figure 8.6).<sup>122</sup> This was also supported by comments from a case study interviewee and gang associates. In contrast, within London, respondents were fairly evenly split among those who thought that firearm use had increased, decreased or stayed the same, and it appears that there were different trends in different areas.<sup>123</sup>

Perceptions of change in knife carrying and knife use differed within areas.<sup>124</sup> There were no notable differences between responses from practitioners inside and outside of London. Several of the gang associates interviewed reported being stabbed (some on more than one occasion), and carrying knives, indicating this may be an issue of concern, at least in some areas:

*If someone comes up to you and pulls out a knife, you want something to defend yourself. You're not just going to let people rob you every single day ... say out of 50 people I know, I'd say only about five of them carry a knife because they feel like they have to carry a knife. If they don't carry a knife they don't feel comfortable in themselves. They could go out on to the road and anything could happen. Trust me, it is madness. (Gang associate 83, non-London area 21).*

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<sup>122</sup> Knife use: 174 responses, 43 don't know; Knife carrying: 171 responses, 32 don't know; Firearms: 175 responses, 57 don't know. London: 129 responses, 45 don't know; Non-London: 46 responses, 12 don't know.

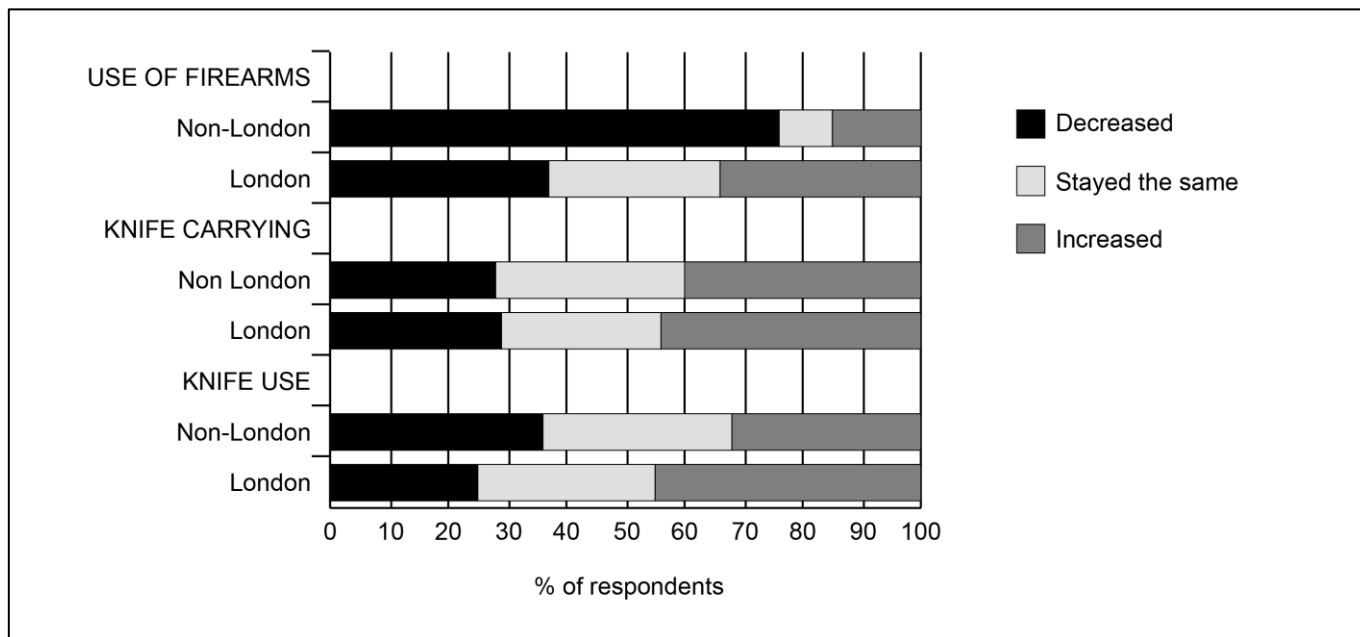
<sup>123</sup> London: 129 responses, 45 don't know. 'Decreased' 37%, 'Increased' 35%, 'Stayed the same' 29%.

<sup>124</sup> For example, in relation to knife carrying: in only seven areas respondents all provided the same answer. In nine areas different respondents selected all the available response categories – that knife carrying had 'increased', 'decreased' and 'stayed the same'. Similarly for knife use, in 11 areas respondents selected all the available response categories.



In relation to the use of firearms, knife carrying and knife use, the data did not provide further insight into the drivers behind these trends or behind differences between areas.

**Figure 8.6: Over the last two years has knife carrying, knife use or use of firearms by gang members in your area increased, decreased or stayed the same?**



## 9. Involvement of women and girls in gangs

Previous research has provided evidence of women and girls who are gang members themselves, or who are involved in facilitating gang-related criminal activities, for example, by storing or carrying drugs or money (Beckett *et al.*, 2013; Medina *et al.*, 2012; Pitts, 2008). There are also findings relating to the sexual exploitation of women and girls by gang members (Firmin, 2011). This research sought to understand perceptions of the nature and scale of these problems in Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) areas, and whether or not there was evidence that they are changing in any way.

### Key findings

- Practitioners reported that women and girls were involved to a great extent in gang-related criminal activities, including carrying or storing drugs and being used to set-up attacks on rival gang members.
- The vast majority of survey respondents said that sexual or physical violence against women and girls affiliated with gangs and sexual exploitation happened sometimes or often in relation to gangs in their area. Examples were given of the use of sexual violence to exact punishment or revenge on rival gangs.
- Concern was expressed about women's and girl's capacities to consent to or avoid involvement with gangs and gang-related activities and to sexual activities with gang members. Interviewees strongly questioned whether women and girls were free to choose, given their underlying vulnerabilities, social situation and the dominant social norms and pressures that they may experience. Findings resonate with previous research evidence that both males and females associated with gangs were confused about consent.
- There was a perception among a majority of EGYV practitioners that the situation relating to the role of women and girls in gangs has deteriorated – with sexual exploitation becoming more common. However, this perception could be driven by increasing awareness of the issue, as sexual exploitation and violence was reported to be increasingly on the agenda of local multi-agency groups involved in the EGYV programme.

### Involvement in gang activities by women and girls

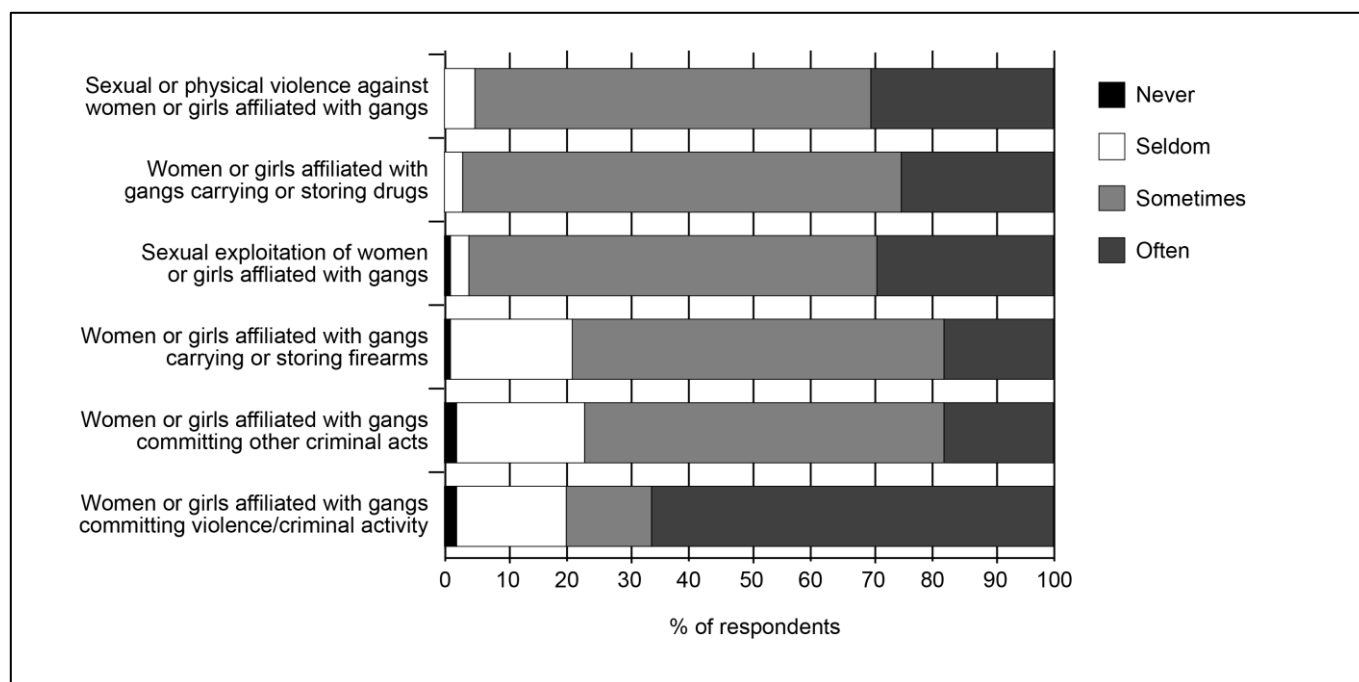
Survey questions about women and girls received relatively low numbers of responses. Among those who did respond, practitioners reported extensive participation by women and girls in gang-related criminal activities (Figure 9.1).<sup>125</sup> Women and girls carrying or storing drugs was said to be happening 'sometimes' or 'often' by 97% of those who answered this question.

<sup>125</sup> 'Sexual exploitation of women or girls affiliated with gangs': 101 responses, 12 don't know. 'Sexual or physical violence against women or girls affiliated with gangs': 101 responses, 12 don't know. 'Women or girls affiliated with gangs committing violence/criminal activity': 101 responses, 14 don't know. 'Women or girls affiliated with gangs carrying or storing drugs': 100 responses, 11 don't know. 'Women or girls affiliated with gangs carrying or storing firearms': 101 responses, 19 don't know. 'Women or girls affiliated with gangs committing other criminal acts': 93 responses, 42 don't know. 41 respondents chose the "skip" option for the section dealing with issues concerning women and girls and gangs.

Women and girls committing violence, carrying or storing firearms and committing other crime was said to be happening sometimes or often by 76%, 79% and 76% of survey respondents respectively.

Area-level analysis shows that London survey respondents were more likely to perceive all of these issues as problems compared with respondents outside London (however, numbers of responses from areas outside of London were smaller than those inside).

**Figure 9.1: To what extent do the following take place in relation to gangs in your area?**



A case study interviewee<sup>126</sup> said that women and girls were used to carry and hide weapons and take prohibited items into prison. This was, similarly, reported by the mother of a gang associate who described how girls were used to transport drugs,<sup>127</sup> and this was corroborated by a gang associate from the same area:

*Say if you're going out on the road with loads of drugs and whatever, you give it to a girl to hold ... she won't get searched. You will get searched ... most of the time police officers who are stopping are men and a man can't search a woman.*<sup>128</sup> (Gang associate 8, non-London area 21).

This is supported by previous gang research, which found examples of women and girls affiliated with gangs being involved in the storage and carrying of drugs and weapons. Pitts (2008) found that “girlfriends” of gang members had carried or hidden drugs and girls who were “loosely associated with the gangs” (p 39) were involved in violent street crime. Medina et al. (2012) found evidence of girls’ and women’s participation in a range of criminal activities related to gangs, including “stashing money, drugs, or guns, providing an alibi when needed, selling

<sup>126</sup> Case study interviewee 12, non-London area 27.

<sup>127</sup> Gang associate 78, non-London area 21.

<sup>128</sup> Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, any search involving the removal of more than an outer coat, jacket, gloves, headgear or footwear, or any other item concealing identity, may only be made by an officer of the same sex as the person searched and may not be made in the presence of anyone of the opposite sex unless the person being searched specifically requests it. If there is no officer of the same sex present, the stopped person maybe detained until an officer of the same sex is available to conduct the search.

*stolen goods and setting up 'honey-traps' against rival gang members*” (p 655). Harding (2014) discussed the skills of women and girls which allow some to progress and hold power within the group.

There was some mention of women and girls being used to set-up or trigger violent encounters in EGYV areas. A gang associate described being attacked by members of a rival gang after arranging to meet a girl at a cinema<sup>129</sup> and other gang associates in the same area made reference to “*set-up chicks*.”<sup>130</sup>

A female gang associate in one of the case study areas described cases of this kind:

*I know guys that have actually died because girls have set them up. Girls are not always the victims in that sense. There was quite a big incident in a local pub in [N27] the girl actually set them up. Once they got to the pub, the girls scouted out, let the people know that they was there, made that phone call.* (Gang associate 53, non-London area 27).

Women and girls were reported to play senior roles in some gangs. The mother of a gang associate interviewed reported that women in gangs in the area “*have power ... dress good, have big cars and men respect them.*”<sup>131</sup> It is not possible to say on the basis of the evidence collected whether this was widespread.

## Violence, sexual violence and sexual exploitation

The vast majority of survey respondents said that ‘sexual or physical violence against women and girls affiliated with gangs’ and sexual exploitation happened ‘sometimes’ or ‘often’ ‘in relation to gangs in their area’ (97% and 96% respectively, (Figure 9.1). This included examples of sexual violence, including rape, as a way of punishing other gangs as reported by a case study interviewee.<sup>132</sup> Three survey respondents made specific reference to a perceived increase in instances of sexual violence and exploitation as a form of initiation into gangs. This was said to be targeted at girlfriends, sisters, mothers, and cousins of gang members.

Findings that sexual and physical violence are widespread are in line with those from previous research. Police and other practitioners interviewed in a study by Pitts (2008) reported sexual exploitation of the girlfriends of gang members, “*sometimes in exchange for drugs*” (p 39).<sup>133</sup> A recent study found high levels of sexual victimisation within gang environments (Beckett *et al.*, 2013), with virtually all of the 150 young people (male and female) interviewed sharing examples of sexual violence or exploitation of women.<sup>134</sup>

Women and girls associated with gangs may also be at risk of physical violence. A gang associate reported that as a result of his gang involvement his sisters and mother felt under threat from rival gang members.<sup>135</sup> The mother of a gang member reported that young people in

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<sup>129</sup> Gang associate 79, non-London area 21.

<sup>130</sup> Gang associate 80, gang associate 81 and gang associate 84 from non-London area 21.

<sup>131</sup> Gang associate 78, non-London area 21.

<sup>132</sup> Case study interviewee 12, non-London area 27.

<sup>133</sup> See also Firmin, 2011.

<sup>134</sup> Beckett *et al.*'s study involved interviews with 150 young people aged between 13 and 28. Fifty percent of the respondents gave examples of sex being given in return for protection or status, 39% described examples of sex being given in exchange for tangible goods (such as drugs or alcohol), 41% described examples of rape involving individual perpetrators, and 34% gave examples of rape involving multiple perpetrators.

<sup>135</sup> Gang associate 97, non-London area 31.

the area had threatened to kill her because her son was affiliated with a rival gang.<sup>136</sup>

Survey respondents reported that ‘sexual exploitation of women or girls affiliated with gangs’ and ‘sexual or physical violence against women or girls affiliated with gangs’ had increased in the last two years.<sup>137</sup> Although a perceived worsening of the problem could be due to the increased attention on this issue in the last few years, as these quotations illustrate:

*We have recently had more girls affected by sexual exploitation within gangs identified and referred to us. This seems to be a growing, more prevalent issue.* (Survey respondent 450, London area 18).

*The number of violent incidents between gang-affiliated females has increased. Additionally there has been an increase in the number of females coming forward stating that they have been sexually abused by young gang-affiliated males.* (Survey respondent 28, London area 8).

## Identification challenges

Local partnerships faced challenges in identifying the extent to which women and girls were involved in gang activities – survey respondents noted that “*the full picture is not known*”<sup>138</sup> and that sexual violence and exploitation were rarely reported. Under-reporting of sexual exploitation of women and girls in gang environments has also been found in previous research (for example, Beckett *et al.*, 2013). However, women’s and girl’s involvement in gangs was increasingly on the agenda for EGYV practitioners, several of whom mentioned that they were working to improve their understanding and that the issue had recently become a focus.

## The perceived vulnerabilities of women and girls affiliated with gangs

In keeping with previous research (Beckett *et al.*, 2013; Firmin, 2011), case study interviewees commented on the characteristics of women and girls that may make them more vulnerable to involvement in gangs and gang related activities:

*I mean, a lot of the young girls that we work with, they’re coming from dysfunctional families. I think in most areas where there’s poverty, poor housing, lack of employment, there’s a lot of dysfunction ... dad may have been in prison. Mum may have been in prison. There’s alcohol abuse, drug abuse.* (Case study interviewee 10, non-London area 27).

*So the young people that end up in those street based gangs are going to be more vulnerable anyway, as are the young women who get drawn into those circles. They are the most vulnerable and it’s not surprising that they then get used in the way that they do.* (Case study interviewee 13, London area 19).

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<sup>136</sup> Gang associate 78, non-London area 21.

<sup>137</sup> Respondents were asked ‘In the last two years, have there been any changes in the extent of the above activities in your area?’ 100 responses, 38 don’t know. 71% (38) said ‘Yes’ there was change. All but four respondents went on to describe these changes. Only three described changes as ‘improvements’; the vast majority felt that things had worsened. In relation to questions in another part of the survey, asking about overall change in gangs, six respondents made specific reference to sexual exploitation or the involvement of girls or women in gangs generally, and in relation to questions about the ‘main threats or issues’ for work with gangs 32 made specific reference to issues concerning the involvement of girls or young women in gangs (and in particular, their sexual exploitation).

<sup>138</sup> For example, Survey respondent 192, London area 7.

Previous research found that often vulnerable girls affiliated with gangs were confused about their ability to consent to sexual activity (Beckett *et al.*, 2013; Firmin, 2011, p 42), and comments from case study interviewees similarly problematise the notion of women and girls' consent to such activity:

*The worrying thing for me is that you'll get the guys that will be talking about having group sex with vulnerable girls. Then you'll have the girls talking about it as well, but both will refer to it as though it was a normal thing. If you were to suggest it was rape or exploitation, they'd be horrified. The norms and values of some of the young people seem to have changed quite a bit.* (Case study interviewee 04, London area 19).

As the following quotation indicates, consent is very problematic in a context that is essentially coercive:

*For instance, you could have a group of boys, and there might be maybe one or two girls within that group. That girl may sleep with maybe five within that group. Even though she may not see it – she may see it as it's her choice to sleep with these individuals – but the fact is, you could argue that maybe she's kind of cornered. Why would you sleep with maybe five boys within that same group? It's about how the females view it as well. If they're not aware, then they're not going to know it's happening.* (Case study interviewee 34, London area 05).

Several survey respondents described the way in which the treatment of women and girls in a gang context needs to be understood in the context of the shared attitudes and norms among some gangs in relation to women (see also Densley *et al.*, 2013).

In the following quotation gang associates explain why they believe girls (who the associates refer to as "a fox") might be motivated to perform sexual acts with gang members.

Respondent 1: *You could have a fox that does the whole team.*

Interviewer: *Do you have to pay them?*

Respondent 1: *No, they just do it.*

Interviewer: *Why would they do it....?*

Respondent 1: *Because of your reputation, because of your name.*

Interviewer: *She doesn't get anything out of [the sexual act] with ten blokes?*

Respondent 1: *She does.*

Interviewer: *What does she get?*

Respondent 1: *She gets to brag about it.*

Respondent 2: *She gets to brag about it with her brethren.*

Respondent 1: *Yes, she gets to brag about it.*

(Gang associate 80 and Gang associate 81, non-London area 21).

This raises serious concerns about male gang members' attitudes towards women and girls and their understanding of consent, and should be interpreted in light of the comments from case study interviewees regarding girls' vulnerabilities in these contexts. It also resonates with previous research findings that girls in gangs may use sex to enhance their status, believing (often mistakenly) that relationships with gang members will raise their profile and enhance or maintain their access to the social network of the gang (Harding, 2014).

# 10. Radicalisation

As part of the UK's approach to counter-terrorism, the Government's Prevent Strategy aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism (HM Government, 2011c, p 5). An area of concern for the Home Office, in the context of this study, was that gang members and affiliates might be influenced by individuals or groups holding extremist views. The research aimed to get a sense of the extent to which this was perceived as a problem by asking survey respondents whether they 'face any issues in relation to radicalisation of gang members'. No further definition of radicalisation was provided (in order to capture a range of possible forms of radicalisation), but those indicating it was an issue were invited to describe 'the nature of the problem and whether it has changed in the last two years'.

## Key findings

- The majority of practitioners did not report facing issues in relation to 'radicalisation' connected to street gangs in their area, and there was no perceived change in the extent to which this was a problem.
- However, the vulnerabilities of gang members were thought to put them at risk of influence by extremist groups.

A large proportion of survey respondents (60%)<sup>139</sup> said that they had not faced issues related to radicalisation. Almost all survey respondents who reported that they had faced issues made a further comment.<sup>140</sup> The majority of the comments explained that radicalisation was perceived to have the potential to be an issue in the area,<sup>141</sup> to the extent that young people were susceptible to radicalisation as well as gang membership. Several interviewees and survey respondents commented that characteristics associated with joining gangs were somewhat similar to those associated with being recruited into extremist groups (young people with family breakdown issues, children from immigrant families, children with learning difficulties), and that both gangs and extremist groups can appear to satisfy a need to belong, for affirmation and support.<sup>142</sup> Interviewees from one area mentioned that gang members, and especially those who are excluded from school and not in contact with services, tend to see themselves as being anti-establishment and may be more inclined to support extremist ideas and get involved with radical groups.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>139</sup> 154 responses, 57 don't know.

<sup>140</sup> Only four respondents who reported that radicalisation was an issue did not provide a comment.

<sup>141</sup> This was mentioned by single respondents from 8 London area and one non-London area.

<sup>142</sup> See Decker and Pyrooz, 2011 on the relationship between gangs and radicalised groups.

<sup>143</sup> Case study interviewee 04 and case study interviewee 05 from London area 19.



Overall, where cases of radicalisation (or suspected radicalisation) of gang members were reported, these were individual cases, rather than many cases in one area that might indicate a more widespread problem. Two survey respondents mentioned that gang nominals had been referred to the Channel project.<sup>144</sup> The further comments made by survey respondents do not indicate that there had been any perceived change in the last two years in relation to radicalisation.

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<sup>144</sup> A 'multi-agency approach to protect people at risk from radicalisation' which aims to ' identify individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism; assess the nature and extent of that risk; and develop the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned' (HM Government, 2012a).

# 11. Discussion

This study aimed to improve understanding of the nature of street gangs in the 33 Ending Gang Youth Violence (EGYV) areas, and investigate whether gangs in these areas were changing. It did this primarily through interviews and a survey of practitioners in those areas, as well as interviews with people who were associated with gangs (current and ex-members of gangs or those affiliated with gangs). Given that the findings presented in this report are based largely on practitioners' perceptions, this study highlights issues and possible trends which could be more fully explored and investigated either nationally or locally, using a wider range of evidence and information.

## Differences in perceptions between and within areas

This study is the first to collect information about gangs in so many areas of the country. The highly local nature of street gangs has been documented in previous research and it would not have been surprising to find that the perceptions of the nature of gangs, and whether or not they had changed, varied between areas. A finding that was not expected, however, was that survey respondents from the same area often had quite different views on the extent and nature of gangs, and about whether gangs had changed. Possible explanations for intra-area differences could include the following, which should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings from the study.

- Practitioners were thinking about different gangs within their area when responding (most participants reported more than one gang in their area).
- Practitioners' different experiences and backgrounds led to differences in the extent to which they are informed about different gangs and gang members in their area.
- Differences of opinion as to whether individuals are gang members, given that there are disagreements over the concept and definition of a gang.

## Perceptions of overall change and features of gangs perceived to be changing

Survey respondents were asked to comment on 'overall' change and stability in the nature of gangs in their area.<sup>145</sup> In answer to this question, 43% of survey respondents thought that gangs had 'changed a lot' and 27% thought they had 'changed a little' in the last two years, compared with 30% who thought gangs had stayed the same.

Among respondents who further explained their answers about overall change, the most commonly mentioned changes related to the organisation of gangs, their visibility, and the involvement of young people. Changes in these features (and some others) have also been outlined in other sections of this report, as follows:

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<sup>145</sup> Survey respondents were asked: 'Overall, would you say that the nature of gangs in your Community Safety Partnership area has changed over the last two years?' 152 responses 45 don't know.

- gangs were thought to be less visible – spending less time on the street and conducting criminal activities more covertly. Practitioners and gang associates commented that this was (at least in part) in response to law enforcement activities and other interventions to prevent and respond to gang activities and violence;
- linked to this, across all areas there were reports that some gangs may be becoming more like (or linked to) organised crime groups, especially in relation to involvement in drug markets;
- as highlighted in previous reports and studies, there was increased concern about young people used to transport and sell drugs, and the sexual exploitation of women and girls.

## Features of gangs perceived to be common across EGYV areas

The study found some features of gangs that were perceived to be somewhat common across EGYV areas (and these were broadly in line with findings from other recent empirical studies of gangs in London). For example, gangs were perceived to be characterised by involvement in drugs markets (and a range of other criminal activities) and by inter-gang conflict *and* cooperation. They were thought to draw members from particular geographical areas and to involve members from a range of ages. Practitioners reported that gang members had a considerable on-line presence.

## Features of gangs perceived to differ between London and areas outside of London

Analysis of survey responses suggests some differences in responses from survey respondents from EGYV areas in London compared with those in areas outside of London, although these findings should be treated carefully given often low numbers of respondents from outside of London:

- gang members were thought to be slightly older outside the capital, and the involvement of members under the age of nine was primarily mentioned by a small number of practitioners within London;
- the use of young, often vulnerable, people to transport illicit drugs to other parts of the country was mentioned as being of major concern to practitioners, predominantly in London. Supporting this, more survey respondents from London said there had been an increase in young people carrying or storing drugs on behalf of others compared with respondents outside London;
- although response numbers were low, there was general agreement that the use of firearms outside London had decreased in the last two years;
- survey respondents from London more often answered that gangs were ‘more likely’ to be involved in organised criminal activity than respondents from outside London.

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# Appendix A: Methods and approach

## Definitions of gangs and gang members used in this study

This study used the following definition:

*“A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, and (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence. They may also have any or all of the following features: (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, (5) are in conflict with other similar gangs.”* (HM Government, 2011b, p 17)

There is still a great deal of disagreement among practitioners, academics and researchers about what a gang is (Esbensen and Weerman, 2005). Some researchers argue, on the basis of empirical work with gangs, that it is more helpful to conceptualise street gangs along a spectrum, with unstructured groups of young people who are involved in some anti-social behaviour at the lower end of the spectrum, and organised crime groups at the other end (Pitts, 2008). This spectrum approach has itself been challenged on the ground that it links non-criminal ‘hanging around’ with serious crime. At the lower end of such a spectrum, researchers have questioned the application of the term ‘gang’ or ‘gang crime’ to much youth offending, instead arguing that ‘group offending’ (which is endemic to youth crime), *“troublesome youth groups”* or *“delinquent youth groups”* (Klein, 2001; Sharp *et al.*, 2006) are better descriptors.

## Rapid evidence assessment

Rapid evidence assessments (REAs) are reviews that are rigorous and explicit in method and thus systematic, but given restrictions of time and/or budget limit the scope of the process by constraining particular aspects of the full systematic review process. This appendix outlines the approach taken to the REA to support this study.

## Identifying relevant sources

The approach to identifying relevant sources involved:

- review of key sources known to the research team and the expert adviser;
- 'snowball' to follow up relevant references from those sources;
- review of specialist websites (Project Oracle, National Gang Centre, Campbell Collaboration);
- key word search of bibliographic databases (EBSCO host, Social Science Abstracts).

An Endnote library of identified sources was maintained throughout the search. Initial inclusion in the Endnote library was decided by members of the research team by reviewing the title and abstract against the inclusion criteria.



## Inclusion criteria

- Empirical research into UK gangs – i.e. must be based on primary or secondary data collection.
- Published since 2008.
- Published in English.
- Both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed sources.

## Reading and data extraction

Sources judged initially relevant were read in full. A data extraction template was used to systematically record information about each study to facilitate both description and quality assessment. Fields in the data extraction template area are set out below.

**Figure A1: Data extraction template**

<p><b>Study background</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim of the study and research questions</li> <li>• Country/location in which the study was conducted</li> </ul> <p><b>Methods: Data collection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methods used to collect data</li> <li>• Date of data collection</li> <li>• Any issues about validity of tools, problems with data collection methods</li> </ul> <p><b>Methods: Data analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methods used to analyse qualitative data</li> <li>• Methods used to analyse quantitative data</li> <li>• Limitations, issues</li> </ul> <p><b>Definitional issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition of gangs used in study</li> <li>• Discussion of definitional issues</li> </ul>	<p><b>Findings on topics of interest</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age of gang members</li> <li>• Number of gangs</li> <li>• Number of gang members</li> <li>• Role of ethnicity, nationality, geography, family, religion in defining gangs.</li> <li>• Structure of gangs (hierarchy, rules, initiations, punishments)</li> <li>• Cooperation between gangs</li> <li>• Conflict between gangs</li> <li>• Use of violence by gangs</li> <li>• Gangs and organised criminal activities</li> <li>• Gangs and illicit drugs markets</li> <li>• Other criminal activities of gangs</li> <li>• Issues related to girls and women in gangs</li> <li>• Sexual/physical violence and sexual exploitation</li> <li>• Challenges of working with gang members with mental health problems</li> </ul> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of other issues relevant to nature of gangs and conducting research into gangs</li> </ul>
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## Assessment

Due to the nature of the topic (understanding the nature of gangs) the identified research was largely qualitative and descriptive. It was therefore not appropriate to use the Maryland Scale or similar to assess quality (since the studies did not aim to evaluate interventions). The review therefore employed a narrative approach to reviewing the sources identified, where the strengths and limitations of the evidence base were described and taken into account when previous research was drawn upon to interpret the findings of the research into gangs in Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) areas.

## Overview of sources identified

The following research studies met the inclusion criteria – UK research with some empirical element – primary or secondary data collection and analysis. Multiple publications drawing on the same original research are not listed here. The majority, but not all, of these are cited in the main report).

1. **Aldridge, J. and Medina, J.** (2008) 'Youth Gangs in an English City: Social Exclusion, Drugs and Violence' Full Research Report ESRC End of Award Report. Swindon: ESRC.
2. **Alleyne, E. and Wood, J. L.** (2010) 'Gang involvement: psychological and behavioral characteristics of gang members, peripheral youth and non gang youth', *Aggressive Behavior*, 36, pp 423–436.
3. **Beckett, H., Brodie, I., Factor, F., Melrose, M., Pearce, J., Pitts, J., Shuker, L. and Warrington, C.** (2013) *It's wrong... but you get used to it – a qualitative study of gang-associated sexual violence towards, and exploitation of, young people in England.* London: Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups.
4. **Densley, J.** (2014) 'It's gang life, but not as we know it: The evolution of gang business', *Crime & Delinquency*, 60 (4), pp 517–546.
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7. **Hallsworth, S. and Duffy, K.** (2011) *Confronting London's Violent Street World: The Gang and Beyond. A report for London Councils' Centre for Social and Evaluation Research.* London: London Metropolitan University.
8. **Harding, S.** (2014) *Street casino: Survival in street gangs.* Bristol: Policy Press.
9. **Medina, J., Cebulla, A., Ross, A., Shute, J. and Aldridge, J.** (2013b) *Children and young people in gangs: a longitudinal analysis.* [http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/Children\\_young\\_people\\_gangs.pdf](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/Children_young_people_gangs.pdf). Pitts, J. (2008) *Reluctant Gangsters: The Changing Face of Youth Crime.* Cullompton: Willan Publishing.
10. **Ralphy, R., Medina, J. and Aldridge, J.** (2009) 'Who needs enemies with friends like these? The importance of place for young people living in known gang areas', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12 (5), pp 483–500.
11. **Smithson, H., Ralphy, R. and Williams, P.** (2012) 'Used and abused: the problematic usage of gang terminology in the United Kingdom and its implications for ethnic minority youth', *British Journal of Criminology*, 53: 113–28.
12. **Young, T.** (2009) 'Girls and Gangs: "Shemale" Gangsters in the UK?', *Youth Justice*, 9 (3), pp 224–238.

13. **Young, T., Fitzgibbon, W. and Silverstone, D.** (2012) The role of the family in facilitating gang membership, criminality and exit. The Catch22 Dawes Unit.

## Key informant interviews

The interviews aimed to ensure that the research team were familiar with the policy context. There were 15 interviews conducted with the following individuals:

- two police officers working on gangs issues in two UK police forces;
- five policy officials working on the EGYV programme in the Home Office;
- four members of the EGYV peer review network;
- one representative from youth support services in a local authority;
- two representatives from voluntary and community sector organisations providing mental health and youth services;
- one representative from the Youth Justice Board.

Notes of the interview discussions were imported into Nvivo for analysis along with the other qualitative data collected in the study. The approach to analysis of qualitative data throughout the study (for key informant interviews, case study interview, interviews with gang associates and free text responses to the survey) was first to code transcripts looking for themes drawn from the research questions. Researchers then returned to the interviews to identify any ideas, issues, information and concerns that did not correspond to particular research questions but that interviewees had raised as important and of interest for the research.

## Case study interviews

Interviews were conducted face-to-face or by telephone (at the convenience of the interviewee). With interviewees' permission the interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed. Notes were taken by the interviewer where audio recording was not possible. The transcripts and notes were imported into Nvivo for analysis. The interviews were semi-structured, and covered the following topics:

- background to the EGYV programme (and if relevant the implementation of the programme in the local area with which the interviewee was familiar);
- identification and management of gang members and affiliates;
- features of gangs and gang members, including age, gender and nationality;
- particular features of activities and links, including crime, drugs and radicalisation;
- nature and prevalence of mental health problems among gang members;
- current and future challenges and opportunities relating to youth gangs.

**Table A1: Case study interviewees**

Area	Number and agency of interviewees
NL21	8 including representatives from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police gangs task force</li> <li>• Department of Work and Pensions</li> <li>• Voluntary and community sector organisations providing services to gang members and associates</li> </ul>
L5	9 including representatives from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Offending Service</li> <li>• Police gangs task force</li> <li>• Voluntary and community sector organisations providing services to gang members and associates</li> <li>• Mental health nurse</li> </ul>
NL27	8 including representatives from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police gang unit</li> <li>• Voluntary and community sector organisations providing services to gang members and associates</li> <li>• Gang Management Unit, local authority children's services</li> <li>• Crime and Disorder Team</li> <li>• Probation Service</li> <li>• State secondary school</li> </ul>
L19	6 including representatives from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voluntary and community sector organisations providing services to gang members and associates</li> <li>• Community Safety Team</li> <li>• Borough council</li> <li>• Police</li> <li>• Youth Offending Team</li> </ul>

## Web-based survey

The survey aimed to gather feedback from a wide range of professionals involved in the EGYV programme or related activities in each of the areas. The survey was intended to generate a broad data-set, which would allow for some comparison of views by area and supplement the more detailed feedback from interviews with case study interviewees.

## Survey content and design

The survey contained questions on:

- numbers of gang members;
- basis for gang membership;
- young people and gangs;

- visible signs and identifiers used by gangs and use of social media;
- structure of gangs;
- gang-related criminal activities by local gangs in the Community Safety Partnership area;
- gangs and weapons;
- cooperation, violence and conflict between gangs in the Community Safety Partnership area;
- drug markets;
- organised crime;
- radicalisation;
- gang members in custody;
- girls and women associated with gangs;
- overall views on change;
- future EGYV work in the area – priorities and challenges;
- basis for respondent’s answers in this survey;
- changes in knowledge about gangs in the last two years.

The design of the instrument included:

- opt-out or ‘skip section’ facilities that would allow respondents to bypass entire pages of the survey if they did not feel knowledgeable enough to respond to questions on a particular topic;
- a facility for saving an incomplete questionnaire and returning to it later to complete;
- ‘don’t know’ options for all sections of the questionnaire; and
- text boxes in which respondents could elaborate or qualify their responses to particular questions or to entire subject areas.

## Survey implementation

The survey link was sent by email in early April 2014 to named representatives with a covering email that was tailored to each area and person and included details about the research. All respondents were sent at least one reminder and were advised about an extension of the survey deadline. The survey closed at the end of May 2014.

## Survey respondents

There was considerable variation in numbers of respondents from each area (ranging from 1 to 17) with an average of 8.6 respondents per area. The number of respondents from each area is shown in Table A2.

**Table A2: Number of respondents per area**

London areas	Number of respondents	Non-London areas	Number of respondents
L1	10	NL21	12
L2	10	NL22	1
L3	12	NL23	10
L4	5	NL24	4
L5	8	NL25	8

L6	8	NL26	6
L7	7	NL27	2
L8	13	NL28	17
L9	12	NL29	10
L10	14	NL30	8
L11	8	NL31	1
L12	9	NL32	10
L13	6	NL33	13
L14	9		
L15	15		
L16	9		
L17	3		
L18	14		
L19	9		
L20	4		

The range of agencies from which interviewees were drawn is shown below.

**Table A3: Agencies of respondents**

Agency	Number selecting category
Local authority – community safety	64
Local authority – adult services	4
Local authority children’s services	49
Youth Offending Service	26
Police	64
Education	7
Health	9
Job Centre Plus/employment services	18
Voluntary and community sector	34
Probation	6
Housing	11
Other	18

To note the total =288, but respondents were allowed to select more than one response, since some were located in more than one agency or sector. Not all respondents listed their agency.

Respondents were asked whether they worked in a dedicated/specialist gang role:

- 39% said that they did not work in a specialist role;
- 61% said that they did work in a specialist role.

**Table A4: Length of time that respondents had been in post**

Category	Percentage responding
6 months or less	11%
More than 6 months but less than 1 year	11%
From 1 to 2 years	19%
Over 2 years but less than 5 years	34%
5 years or more	25%

Total =287

### Routing for those who thought there were no gangs

There was a key filtering question asked early on in the questionnaire, which was designed to ensure that only those respondents who felt that there actually were gangs currently in their area (as defined in the introduction to the questionnaire) completed the main study questions. After being asked about the organisation and role respondents were asked whether they felt that there were any gangs in their Community Safety Partnership (CSP) area. Those respondents who answered 'yes' were routed into the remaining sections of the questionnaire. The majority (95%, n=275) answered 'yes' to the filter question and were routed to the remaining questions in the questionnaire.

Those who responded 'no' or 'don't know' were routed to a follow-up question: 'Were there any gangs in your area over the last two years?'

Those who answered 'yes' to the follow-up question were then asked if they would mind being approached again by telephone to follow up the response. They were then routed to the thank you page, as were respondents who answered either 'no' or 'don't know' to the follow-up question.

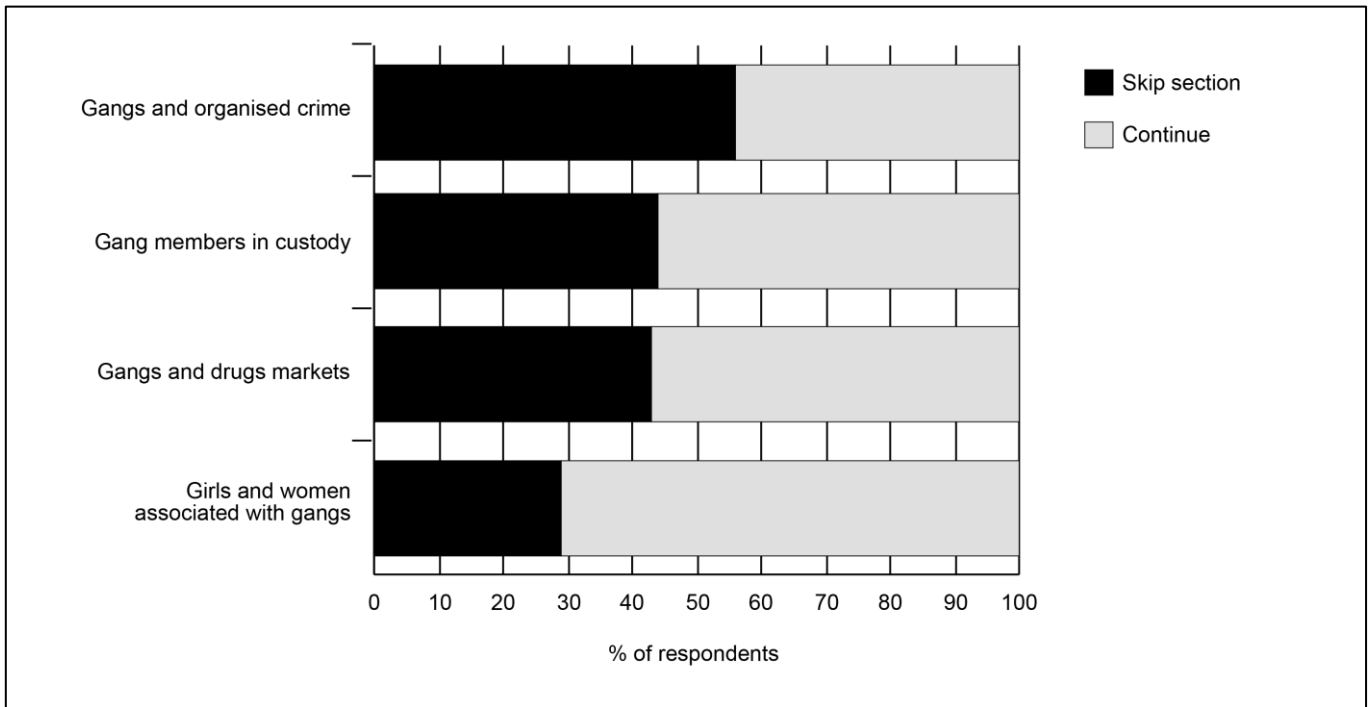
### Survey fall off

An analysis of exit points shows where particular groups of respondents left the survey. For example, 20% of those who opened the survey exited the questionnaire after reading the introductory pages, and a further 12% exited the survey after describing their organisational role. Just under 40% of those who opened the questionnaire continued to the end and submitted.

### Skip sections

Respondents could preview the questions in a section of the survey without answering them, and if they did not feel able to respond, they could choose the 'skip section' option to be routed to the next pages of the questionnaire. The proportion of respondents who elected to skip particular sections are summarised below, in Figure A2.

**Figure A2: Proportion of respondents 'skipping' sections of the questionnaire**



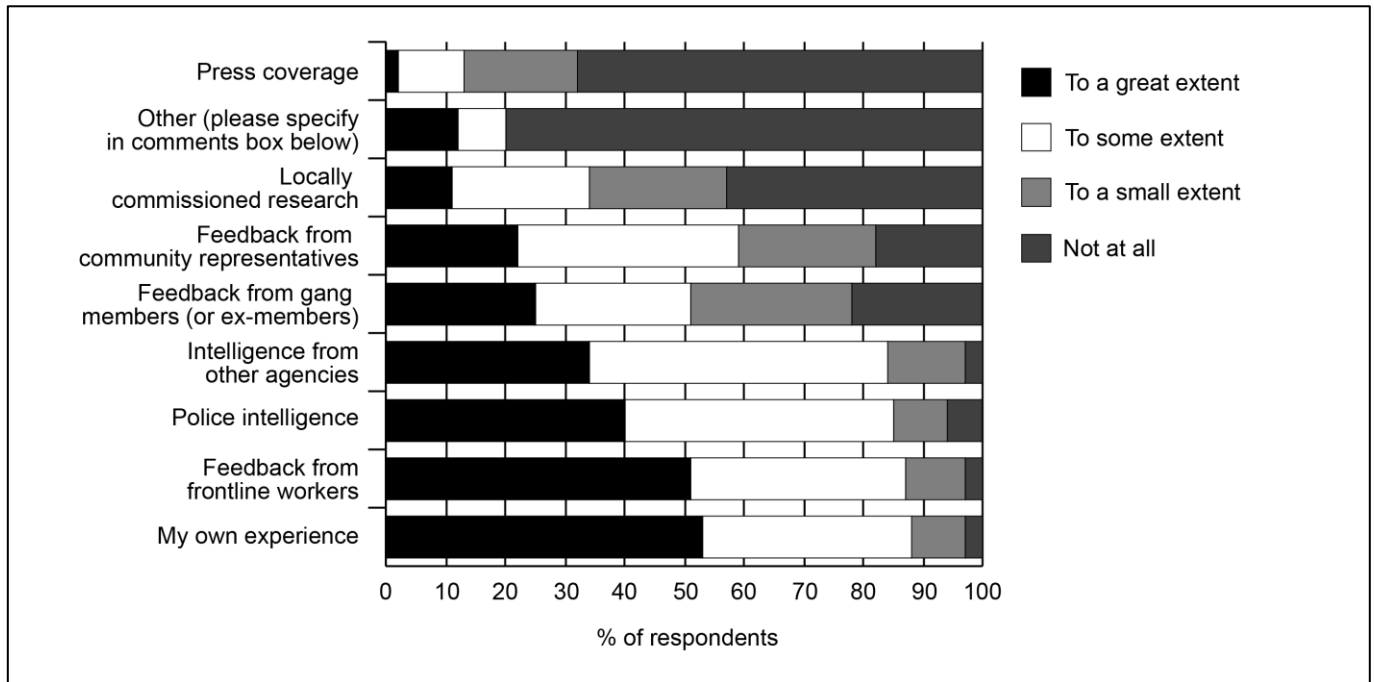
### Calculating response rates

There was some internal cascading of the survey link by named EGYV representatives, and this means that it was not possible to calculate response rates. In some cases representatives informed the research team that they were sending the link to other individuals, and even provided details of these to the team, but in some other cases the research team was not notified. It was apparent that some of the returns came from individuals who were not on the original distribution lists. While this did not appear to have happened very often, it was difficult to calculate precisely because the survey did not require respondents to give their names.



## The basis for respondents' answers

**Figure A3: Respondents were asked 'In responding to the questions in this survey, to what extent have you based your answers on the following sources of information?'**



**Table A5: Respondents were asked 'In responding to the questions in this survey, to what extent have you based your answers on the following sources of information?'**

	To a great extent	To some extent	To a small extent	Not at all	Total
My own experience	79	52	13	6	150
Feedback from frontline workers	76	53	15	5	149
Police intelligence	60	67	13	10	150
Intelligence from other agencies	50	74	19	6	149
Feedback from gang members (or ex-members)	37	38	40	32	147
Feedback from community representatives	33	54	34	26	147
Locally commissioned research	16	34	34	62	146
Other	6	4	0	41	51
Press coverage	3	16	27	97	143

## Analysis of survey data

Survey data were imported into Excel and SPSS for analysis. Responses from each question were analysed in four ways:

- taking all responses together;
- separating responses by area;
- comparing responses from London boroughs with those from non-London areas; and
- looking only at responses from the police and local authority community safety representatives (the ‘core’ respondents).

Responses to free text questions were imported into Nvivo and subjected to thematic analysis, as described above in relation to data from key informant interviews.

## Interviews with gang associates

Interviews with (30) gang-associated individuals were undertaken in four case study areas, and in one other EGYV area (neighbouring one of the case study areas). The interviews were designed to generate feedback concerning perceived changes in gang characteristics and activities in recent years, from the perspective of those who are (or have been) associated in some way with gangs.

### Approach to interviewing

Given the fairly short timescales associated with the work, the research team gained access to potential interviewees through key practitioner contacts in each EGYV case study area. These were professionals involved in working directly with gang members or those associated in some way with gangs, sometimes from within key agencies or local authority departments, and in some cases from voluntary sector organisations.

Members of the research team liaised usually with one main contact in each area, to identify potential respondents but also to agree some of the practicalities of arranging and conducting the interviews (including the identification of safe and neutral venues for the discussions to take place, and details concerning transport and the accessibility of such venues for potential respondents). Contacts also discussed issues with the research team concerning the suitability of potential interviewees, and whether an interview with a particular gang-associated individual might involve unacceptable risks to them at the time of the research. In one case, for example, the team was informed that someone close to a potential interviewee had recently been killed, and that it would therefore not be advisable to interview that person. In another case a particular gang member was said to be ‘lying low’ because of intensive police surveillance, and that there would be too many risks involved in attempting to contact him.

It was accepted by the research team that this approach to identifying potential interviewees would to some extent bias the interview sample, since there would obviously be gang-associated individuals who were either not known to professionals working in the area, or who were rejected as possible interviewees for reasons such as those referred to above. One advantage of using professional local knowledge to assist the team in this manner, however, is that these contacts could provide fairly precise information concerning the links between potential respondents and local gang activity. This local knowledge proved to be useful given that some respondents did not feel comfortable in describing themselves as gang members and resisted the label during interview. In short, dialogue between the research team and key local contacts allowed the team to determine with greater accuracy than could have otherwise have been possible, in what sense each respondent was ‘gang-associated’. Densley (2013, p 9) describes this approach as relying on “vouching” that the interviewee is a gang associate (although in Densley’s study gang associates vouched for each other, whereas the present study relied on practitioners to identify gang-associated individuals).

Given the particular risks involved in interviewing gang-associated individuals, the team was

careful to make arrangements for the interviews to take place in suitable venues. 'Suitable venues' in this case meant offices managed by key local authority or other public sector agencies, or venues associated with known local projects. Venues of the latter sort, in particular, can reduce the risk to potential respondents who 'have eyes on them', as one professional expressed it. There are of course also issues concerning interviewer safety when conducting research of this kind, and so neutral venues that also have a professional staff presence are usually preferred to community locations that do not.

## Consent, confidentiality and anonymity

Details concerning the research were provided to potential interviewees at two stages:

- first, local contacts discussed the research with potential interviewees and provided details both verbally and in writing to them; and
- at the point of interview, the field researchers again provided details verbally and in writing to respondents and gave them the opportunity to ask questions.

In particular, details concerning confidentiality and anonymity were described to interviewees, along with a clear description of the limits to this confidentiality. Interviewees were required to give clear agreement to have the discussion recorded. They were also advised that they could end the discussion at any time, and that they could decline to comment on any issues that they would prefer not to discuss with the interviewer. Once all of these issues had been covered appropriately and the interviewee had been given the opportunity to raise questions or concerns they were invited to sign a consent form, which was also signed by the researcher. The form committed the researcher to take steps to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of all data collected as part of the interview research.

## Data recording and analysis

With the interviewee's permission, interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed. Where an audio recording was not made, the interviewer made notes that were written-up immediately following the interview. Transcripts and notes were imported into Nvivo and subjected to thematic qualitative analysis.

# Appendix B: Survey instrument



## Improving Understanding of Urban Street Gangs: An Assessment of Local Experiences in Ending Gang and Youth Violence Areas

### Introduction

RAND Europe has been commissioned by the Home Office to deliver research focusing on the changing nature of street gangs. The proposed study has been designed to help us describe both the current characteristics and activities of street gangs, and trends and developments that have taken shape over the last few years.

The aim is to gather evidence about these trends and developments to support strategic decisions around future work to address issues concerning gangs. As a practitioner and professional working in this field, your experience and input is central to the research and highly valued by the research team and the Home Office.

### What is this survey for?

In this survey we would like to get your input, based on your experience and observations, about:

- whether urban street gangs have changed over recent years and, if so, how;
- emerging issues or threats suggested by recent trends, and
- what these changes might mean for the way in which EGYV work in your area is designed and delivered.

### Definition of a gang

When answering questions in this survey we would like you to use the definition of street gang offered used by the College of Policing:

*A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, and (2) Engage in a range of criminal activity and violence. They may also have any or all of the following features: (3) Identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) Have some form of identifying structural feature, (5) Are in conflict with other similar gangs”.*

We are aware that this definition has limitations, and that there are a large number of ways in which a gang and a gang member can be defined. However, for clarity, the survey must use some definition of a gang.

## Definition of a gang member

For the purposes of this survey, a “gang member” is an individual who is associated with a gang (though not necessarily the same gang for a long period of time) through regular antisocial or criminal activity and close social links, and who identifies strongly with that gang. This definition includes more peripheral individuals who can influence and/or be influenced by the actions of other gang members.

## Who should complete this survey?

Survey links are being sent to named participants only in each EGYV area. These are people who are involved in multi-agency work focusing on issues concerning gangs, and professionals who are involved in other work focusing on gangs in EGYV areas.

## When should this questionnaire be completed?

The survey will remain “live” until 6th May 2014, but we would be very grateful for responses as soon as possible. It should take about half an hour of your time to complete the questionnaire. Please note that the survey has been set up to allow you to save your questionnaire for completion later, if you are not able to complete it all at once (the facility for allowing this is at the top of each page of the questionnaire).

## Who can I contact if I have any questions about the survey?

If you have any questions about the survey, or if you’d like to discuss if you are the most appropriate person to complete it, please feel free to contact us by email at [research@arcs-ltd.com](mailto:research@arcs-ltd.com), or by phone using one of the contact numbers provided on the "Project Summary" that was emailed with the survey link.

**Please note:** All responses will be treated as confidential, and individuals and organisations will **not** be identified in any findings.

Thank you for your participation.

## 1. Your organisation, role

- 1.1. Which agency/organisation do you work for? [Local Authority – Community safety / Local Authority – Adult services / Local Authority – Children’s services / Youth Offending Service / Police / Education / Health / Job Centre Plus / Employment services / Voluntary and community sector / Probation / Housing / Other (please specify) [text box]]
- 1.2. In which local authority area are you based? [drop down list of all 33 EGYV areas plus option of ‘none of these areas’].
- 1.3. If you are based in an area not listed on the above list, please specify below. [text box]]
- 1.4. What is your role/responsibility in relation to gangs and youth violence in your Community Safety Partnership area? [text box]
- 1.5. Is this a dedicated/specialist gangs role? [Yes/No]
- 1.6. How long have you worked on gang-related issues in your CSP area overall? [6 months or less, more than 6 months but less than one year, from 1 to 2 years, over 2 years but less than 5 years, 5 years or more]
- 1.7. Are there any gangs in your CSP area?\* (yes, no, don’t know)
- 1.8. [If "Are there any gangs in your CSP area?" = no or "Are there any gangs in your CSP area?" = don't know] Were there any gangs in your area over the last two years? \* (yes, no, don’t know)

*\*In answering this question please use the same definition of "gang" referred to earlier: "A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, and (2) Engage in a range of criminal activity and violence. They may also have any or all of the following features: (3) Identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) Have some form of identifying structural feature, (5) Are in conflict with other similar gangs".*

## 2. Number of gangs, and gang members

*In this section we are interested in estimates of the scale of the gang problem in your CSP area, and whether this has changed over time.*

- 2.1. Approximately how many **gangs** are there currently in your CSP area? (Please continue to use the definition of "gang" outlined on the previous page.) \* [Don't know, 0, 1, 2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-11, 12+]

**If respondent says there are 0 gangs in their area, routed to question:**

If there are no gangs in your area now, please use the box below to indicate if there were gangs in your CSP area two years ago, and if so, why you think this has changed?

**If respondent says there is only 1 gang in their area, routed to version of the survey worded for 'gang' (singular) and giving appropriate response categories**

**If respondent says there are 2 or more gangs, routed to version of the survey worded for 'both gangs' and giving appropriate response categories questions in blue and black**

- 2.2. Over the last two years would you say the number of **gangs** in your CSP area has [increased/decreased/stayed the same/don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)]
- 2.3. Approximately how many **gang members\*** in total do you think there are currently across all gangs in your CSP area? [don't know; 1-5; 6-10; 11-20; 21-50; 51-100; more than 100]
- 2.4. Over the last two years would you say the number of **gang members** in your CSP area has [increased/decreased/stayed the same/don't know? (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)]
- 2.5. Please add any further details about the scale of the gang problem in your CSP area, below.

Comments:

*\*As stated in the introduction a "gang member" is defined here as an individual who is associated with a gang (though not necessarily the same one for a long period of time) through regular antisocial/criminal activity and close social links, and who identifies strongly with that gang. This definition therefore includes more peripheral individuals who can influence and/or be influenced by the actions of other gang members*

### 3. The basis for gang membership

In this section we are interested in understanding more about the defining features of gangs in your CSP area and the extent to which these have changed, if at all.

3.1. Are the following defining features of current gangs in your CSP area? (Please tick one response for each feature specified.)

	Don't know	This is not a defining feature of gangs in this area	This is a defining feature of a minority of gangs in this area	This is a defining feature of about half of gangs in this area	This is a defining feature of the majority of gangs in this area	This is a defining feature of all gangs in this area
Nationality						
Ethnicity						
Religion						

If you have indicated that gang membership is based on nationality, ethnicity, or religion, please provide further details below:

Geography (e.g. gang members live or attend school in a certain area)						
Family ties						
Violence						
Involvement in drugs markets/ supply						

If there are other defining features of current gangs in your CSP area not referred to above (including other criminal activities), please provide further details below:



**3.2.** Compared to gangs in your CSP area two years ago, how have the following defining features of membership changed? (please tick one for each feature specified)

	Don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)	This is a defining feature of <b>fewer</b> gangs now	This is a defining feature of the <b>same number</b> of gangs now	This is a defining feature of <b>more</b> gangs now
Nationality				
Ethnicity				
Religion				

If you have indicated a change in the extent to which gang membership is based on nationality, ethnicity, or religion, please provide further details below:

Geography (e.g. gang members live or attend school in a certain area)				
Family ties				
Violence				
Involvement in drugs markets/ supply				

If you have indicated a change in the extent to which gang membership is based on nationality, ethnicity, or religion, please provide further details below:

If there are other defining features of gangs in your CSP area not referred to above which have changed over the last two years (including other criminal activities), please provide further details below:

## 4. Young people and gangs

*In this section we are interested in exploring issues around the age of gang members AND young people's involvement in gangs in your CSP area.*

*In answering these questions please bear in mind the definition of gangs provided at the beginning of the survey which includes an individual who is associated with a gang through regular antisocial or criminal activity and close social links, and who identifies strongly with that gang. This definition includes more peripheral individuals who can influence and/or be influenced by the actions of other gang members.*

- 4.1. What would you estimate is the age of the **majority** of current gang members in your CSP area? [(don't know, (under 9) (9-11) (12-14) (15-17) (18-19) (20-24) (25-29) (30 or older)]
- 4.2. Thinking about two years ago, what would you estimate was the age of the **majority** of gang members in your CSP area? [(don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)) (under 9) (9-11) (12-14) (15-17) (18-19) (20-24) (25-29) (older)]
- 4.3. What would you estimate is the **youngest** age of current gang members in your CSP area? [(don't know), (under 9) (9-11) (12-14) (15-17) (18-19) (20-24) (25-29) (30 or older)]
- 4.4. Thinking about two years ago, what would you estimate was the youngest age of gang members in your CSP area? [don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago) , (under 9) (9-11) (12-14) (15-17) (18-19) (20-24) (25-29) (30 or older)]
- 4.5. Compared to two years ago, in your CSP area has the recruitment or use of young people to undertake the following activities increased, decreased or stayed the same?

	Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same	Don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)
Carrying or storing drugs on behalf of others				
Carrying or storing knives on behalf of others				
Carrying or storing firearms on behalf of others				
Committing violence				
Committing robbery or theft				
Other (please specify below)				
Comments:				

4.6. Please add any further comments about young people's involvement in gangs in your CSP area below [text box]

## 5. Visible signs and identifiers used by gangs and use of social media

*In this section we want to explore whether the use of identifiers, use of social media etc. by gangs has changed in recent years.*

5.1. What proportion of gangs in your CSP area currently do the following?

	No gangs	A <b>minority</b> of gangs	About <b>half</b> of gangs	The <b>majority</b> of gangs	Don't know
Meet in public places in large numbers					
Mark territory using graffiti					
Use marks of affiliation as symbols of membership (e.g. colours/ clothing/ tattoos/ bandanas)					
Use social networking to promote or organise gang activity (e.g. Facebook)					
Use video sharing or music videos to promote gang activity (e.g. YouTube)					

5.2. Compared to two years ago, has there been a change in the extent to which gangs in your CSP area do following?

	Don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)	<b>More</b> gangs do this now	No change	<b>Fewer</b> gangs do this now
Meet in public places in large numbers				
Mark their territory using graffiti				
Use marks of affiliation as symbols of membership (e.g. colours/clothing/tattoos/ bandanas)				

Use social networking to promote or organise gang activity (e.g. Facebook)				
Use video sharing or music videos) to promote gang activity(e.g. YouTube)				

5.3. Please add any further comments you may have about visible signs and identifiers used by gangs and use of social media in your CSP area [text box].

## 6. The structure of gangs

6.1. What proportion of gangs in your CSP area currently have or do the following?

	Don't know	No gangs	A minority of gangs	About half of gangs	The majority of gangs
Have a leader/leaders					
Have a clear hierarchical structure					
Have a tight cohesive structure					
Have clear rules about acceptable behaviours for members					
Punish gang members if they break rules about acceptable behaviour					
Have some sort of gang initiation					

6.2. Compared to two years ago, has there been a change in the extent to which gangs in your CSP area had or did the following?

	Don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)	Fewer gangs have or do this now	The same number of gangs have or do this now	More gangs have or do this now
Had a leader/leaders				

Had a clear hierarchical structure				
Have a tight cohesive structure				
Had clear rules about acceptable behaviours for members				
Punished gang members if they broke rules about acceptable behaviour				
Had some sort of gang initiation				

**6.3.** Please add any further comments you may have about the structure of gangs in your CSP area. [text box]

## 7. Gang-related criminal activities by local gangs in your CSP area

*In this section we are interested in understanding the range of criminal activities that gangs in your CSP area are involved in and whether this has changed over time.*

**7.1.** To what extent are gangs from your CSP area currently involved in the following criminal activities?

	Don't know	No gangs	a minority of gangs	About half of gangs	The majority of gangs
Possession and supply of illegal drugs					
Drug production (e.g. cannabis farms)					
Robbery					
Violence					
Sexual violence/exploitation					
Burglary					
Theft (cars, shoplifting)					
Cyber/online crime					
Fraud and/or money laundering					
Possession and supply of illegal firearms					
Other criminal activities (please specify below)					
Comments:					

**7.2.** Compared to two years ago, has there been a change in the extent to which gangs from your CSP area are involved in the following criminal activities?

	Don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)	Fewer gangs are involved in this now	The same number of gangs are involved in this now	More gangs are involved in this now
Possession and supply of illegal drugs				
Drug production (e.g. cannabis farms)				
Robbery				
Violence				
Sexual violence/exploitation				
Burglary				
Theft (cars, shoplifting)				
Cyber/online crime				
Fraud and/or money laundering				
Possession and supply of illegal firearms				
Other criminal activities (please specify below)				
Comments:				

**7.3.** Please add any further comments you might have about criminal activities of gangs in your CSP area.

Comments:

## 8. Gangs and weapons

*In this section we are interested in understanding gang activities in your CSP area that involve knives or weapons, and whether these activities have changed over time.*

- 8.1. Over the last two years has the **use of knives** by gang members in your CSP area [Increased/decreased/stayed the same/don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)]?
- 8.2. Over the last two years has the number of gang members **carrying knives** in your local area [Increased/decreased/stayed the same/don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)]?
- 8.3. Over the last two years has the **use of firearms** by gang members in your CSP area [Increased/decreased/stayed the same/don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)]?
- 8.4. Over the last two years has the **use of other weapons** by gang members in your CSP area [Increased/decreased/stayed the same/don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)]? comments

Comments:

## 9. Cooperation, violence and conflict between gangs in your CSP area

*In this section we are interested in looking at the extent of cooperation and/or conflict between gangs in your CSP area and the reasons for violence and conflict between gangs in your CSP area.*

*Please answer these questions only about gangs in your area. Please do not answer about gangs from other areas*

- 9.1. To what extent do gangs in your CSP area cooperate with each other [not at all, to some extent, to a great extent, don't know]
- 9.2. what extent do gangs in your CSP area shift allegiances [not at all, to some extent, to a great extent, don't know ]
- 9.3. To what extent is there inter-gang conflict or violence between gangs in your CSP area? [not at all, to some extent, to a great extent, don't know]
- 9.4. [If to some extent or to a great extent] How important are the following reasons for inter-gang conflict or violence?

	Don't know	Not important	Moderately important	Very important
Drug dealing (e.g. disputes over territory)				
Postcode conflicts (gang members or others not respecting territory)				
Retaliation or revenge for other acts of violence				
Competition for financial gain (e.g. robbery or street crime – not drug related)				

If there are other reasons for inter-gang conflict that you think are important in your area (not referred to above), please describe below:

- 9.5. To what extent does inter-gang violence happen for no particular reason? [not all, to some extent, to a great extent, don't know]



**9.6.** Compared to two years ago, has there been a change in the reasons for inter-gang conflict or violence?

	Don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)	This is less often a reason for inter-gang conflict now	There has been no change	This is more often a reason for inter-gang conflict now
Drug dealing (e.g. disputes over territory)				
Postcode conflicts (gang members or others not respecting 'territory')				
Retaliation or revenge for other acts of violence				
Competition for financial gain (e.g. robbery or street crime – not drug related)				
If there have been any other changes in reasons for inter-gang conflict since two years ago, please describe below:				

## 10. Drug markets

*This section explores the involvement of gangs from your CSP area in drug markets both within your CSP area and outside e.g. regionally or nationally.*

**10.1.** In order to decide whether you are familiar enough with the issues covered in this section to respond to the questions, simply click on the “continue” button below, to view them first. If after seeing the questions you would prefer to skip the section entirely, tick the button for "skip section" and then press the "next" button at the bottom of the page to move on to the next section. You should also feel free to answer those questions that you feel able to respond to, and click “don’t know” where appropriate. [skip section/continue]

**10.2.** To what extent are gangs in your CSP area involved in the following drug markets within in your CSP area?

	Don't know	No gangs	A minority of gangs	About half of gangs	The majority of gangs
Cannabis					
Cocaine (powder & crack)					
Heroin					
Other drugs (please specify below)					

**10.3.** If the gangs in your CSP area are involved in other drug markets (not referred to above) within your CSP area, please provide details below [text box]

**10.4.** If there has been a change over the last two years in the extent to which the gangs in your CSP area has been involved in other drug markets (not referred to above) within your CSP area, please provide details below. [text box]

**10.5.** Are the gangs from your CSP area involved in drug markets outside your CSP area? [yes, no, don't know]

**10.6.** If yes, please provide brief details below including types of drugs involved. [text box]

**10.7.** Has the involvement by the gangs from your CSP area in drug markets outside your CSP area changed at all in the last two years? [yes, no, don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)]

**10.8.** If yes, please provide brief details below including types of drugs involved. [text box]

**10.9.** Are there any gangs involved in drug markets in your CSP area that are from outside of your CSP area? [yes, no, don't know]

**10.10.** If yes, please provide brief details below including types of drugs involved.



## 11. Organised crime

*In this section we are interested in understanding the links between street gangs and organised criminality. Organised crime takes many different forms and covers a variety of crime types. We are interested in whether street gangs are involved in organised criminal activities in your area.*

**11.1.** In order to decide whether you are familiar enough with the issues covered in this section to respond to the questions, simply click on the “continue” button below, to view them first. If after seeing the questions you would prefer to skip the section entirely, tick the button for "skip section" and then press the "next" button at the bottom of the page to move on to the next section. You should also feel free to answer those questions that you feel able to respond to, and click “don’t know” where appropriate. [skip section / continue]

**11.2.** What proportion of street gangs in your area are currently involved in the following?

	Don't know	No gangs	A minority of gangs	About half of gangs	The majority of gangs
Organised and large scale drug supply					
Organised acquisitive crime					
Carrying out enforcement activities (e.g. violence or intimidation) for criminal groups					
Other organised criminal activity (e.g. firearms supply, fraud, trafficking of women or children), please below					
Comments:					

**11.3.** Compared to two years ago, to what extent has the involvement of gangs in your CSP area in the following changed?

	Don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)	More gangs are involved in this now	No change	Fewer gangs are involved in this now
Organised and large scale drug supply				
Organised acquisitive crime				
Carrying out enforcement activities (e.g. violence or intimidation) for criminal groups				
Other organised criminal activity (e.g. firearms supply, fraud, trafficking of women or children), please specify below				
Comments:				

**11.4.** In your area, are **individual street gang members** more likely to get involved in organised criminal activity than they were two years ago? (More likely/no change/Less likely/don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago))


**11.5.** If you responded "more likely" or "less likely", could you please explain why you think this. [text box]

**11.6.** In cases where individual street gang members have become involved in organised criminal activity, has this then impacted on the criminality of their gang e.g. led to an increase in the availability of firearms or led to the exploitation of younger gang members? Please comment below [text box]

**11.7.** In your area, are street gangs overall more likely to get involved in organised criminal activity than they were two years ago?

- 11.8.** [More likely/no change/less likely/don't know(use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago) ]
- 11.9.** If you responded "more likely" or "less likely", could you please explain why you think this. [text box]
- 11.10.** Please add any further comments about the relationship between street gangs and organised crime groups in your area.

Comments:



## 12. Radicalisation

**12.1.** Do you face any issues in relation to radicalisation of gang members in your CSP area?  
[Y N don't know]

**12.2.** If yes, please describe the nature of the problem and whether it has changed in the last two years.

Comments:

## 13. Gang members in custody

Questions in this section ask about the impact of time spent in custody on gangs and gang members in your area.

**13.1.** In order to decide whether you are familiar enough with the issues covered in this section to respond to the questions, simply click on the “continue” button below, to view them first. If after seeing the questions you would prefer to skip the section entirely, tick the button for “skip section” and then press the “next” button at the bottom of the page to move on to the next section. You should also feel free to answer those questions that you feel able to respond to, and click “don’t know” where appropriate.[skip section/continue]

**13.2.** In your CSP area, how much of a problem are the following issues concerning gang members in custody?

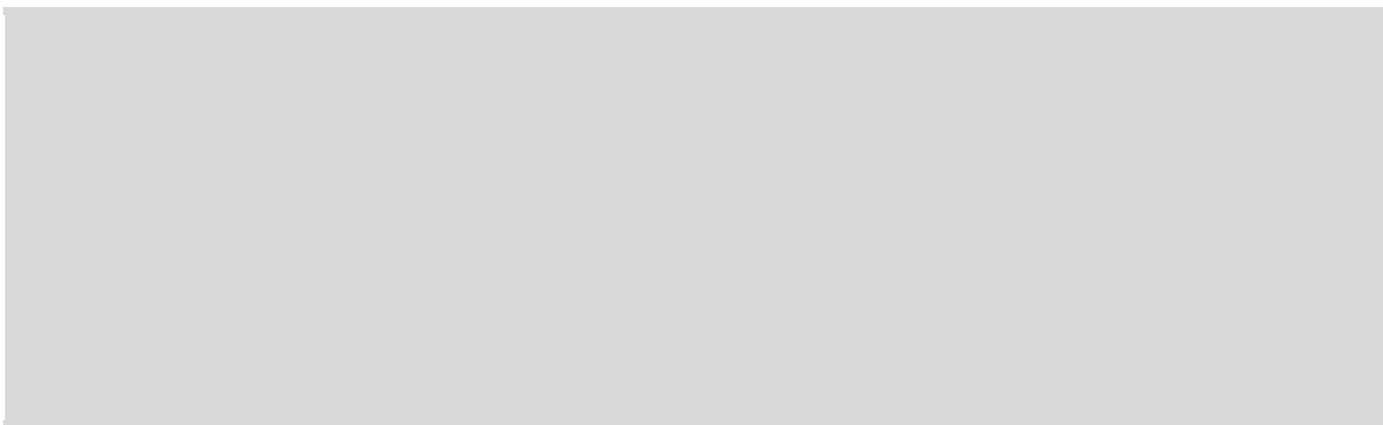
	Don't know	Major problem	minor problem	Not a problem
Young people joining gangs in custody;				
Young people shifting gang allegiances in custody;				
Disputes in custody causing parallel violence or revenge attacks in the community (and vice versa)				
Young people being influenced by more serious or organised criminals whilst in custody;				

**13.3.** Compared to two years ago, has there been a change in the extent to which the following area a problem in your CSP area?

	Don't know(use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)	More of a problem now	No change	Less of a problem now
Young people joining gangs in custody;				
Young people shifting gang allegiances in custody;				
Disputes in custody causing parallel violence or revenge attacks in the community (and vice versa)				
Young people being influenced by more serious or organised criminals whilst in custody;				



**13.4.** Please add any further comments about gang members in custody.



## 14. Girls and women associated with gangs

*This section is about girls and young women's involvement in or with gangs.*

**14.1.** In order to decide whether you are familiar enough with the issues covered in this section to respond to the questions, simply click on the "continue" button below, to view them first. If after seeing the questions you would prefer to skip the section entirely, tick the button for "skip section" and then press the "next" button at the bottom of the page to move on to the next section. You should also feel free to answer those questions that you feel able to respond to, and click "don't know" where appropriate. [skip section/continue]

**14.2.** To what extent do the following take place in relation to gang/s in your area?

	Don't know	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often
Sexual <b>exploitation</b> of women or girls affiliated with gangs					
Sexual or physical <b>violence</b> against women or girls affiliated with gangs					
Women or girls affiliated with gangs committing violence/criminal activity					
Women or girls affiliated with gangs carrying or storing drugs					
Women or girls affiliated with gangs carrying or storing firearms					
Women or girls affiliated with gangs committing other criminal acts (please specify below)					
Comments:					

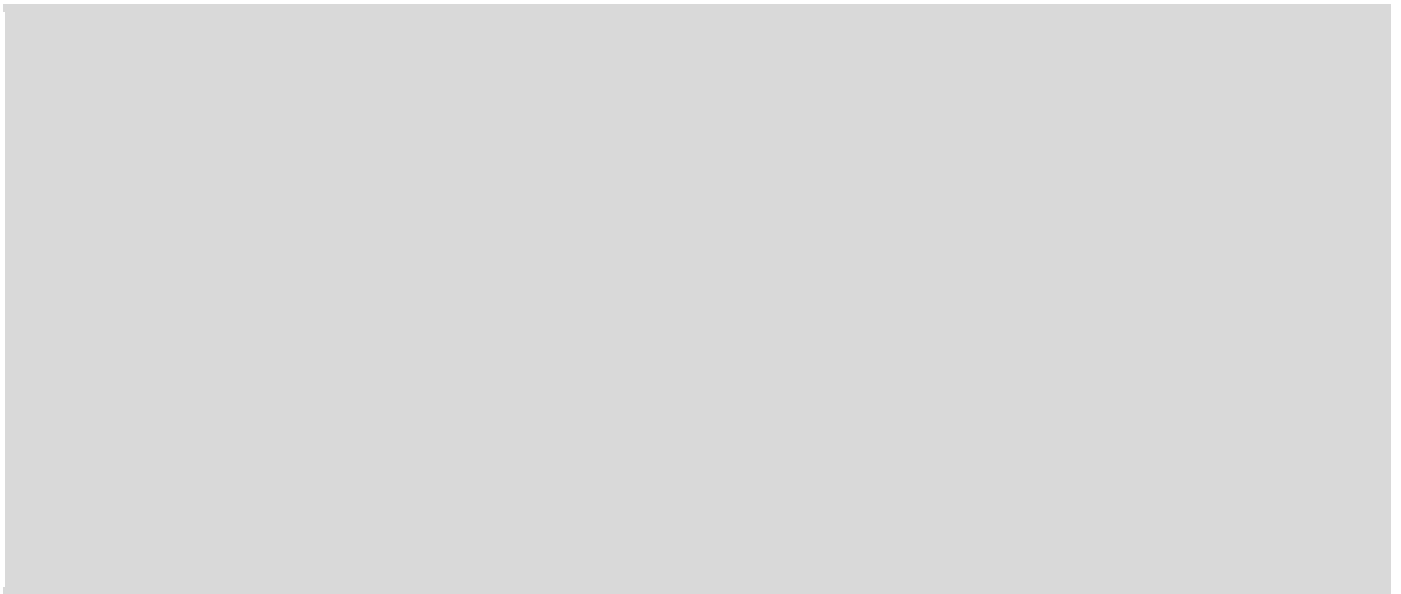
**14.3.** In the last two years, have there been any changes in the extent of the above activities in your area? [Don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago) /Yes/No]

**14.4.** *If yes*, please provide details of the nature of the change [text box]

**14.5.** Are there any female-only gangs in your CSP area? [don't know, yes, no]

**14.6.** *If yes*, how many female-only gangs are there in your area [don't know, 1, 2; 3-5; 6-8; 9-11; 12+]

**14.7.** *If yes, please provide details of the characteristics and activities of female-only gangs in your area.*

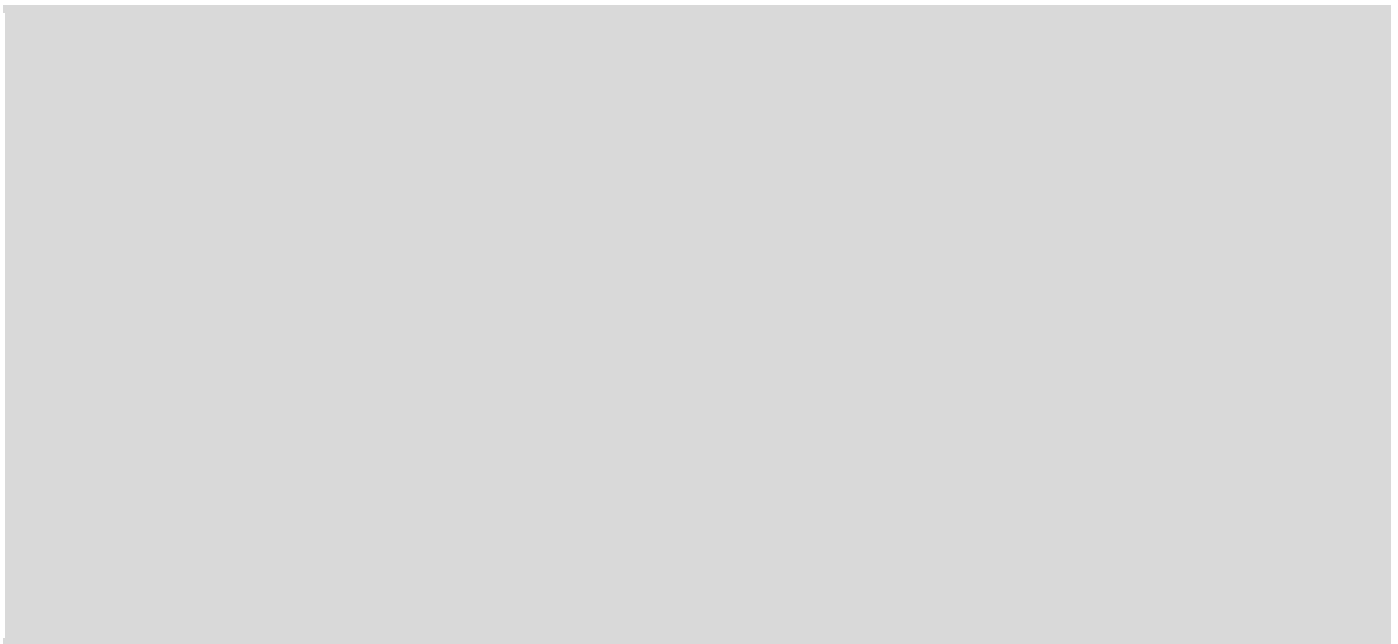


## 15. Overall views on change

*This section is about whether you think the nature of gangs has changed overall over the last two years in your CSP area.*

**15.1.** Overall, would you say that the nature of gangs in your CSP area has changed over the last two years? [Changed a lot/changed a little/stayed the same/Don't know (use this option if you are unsure about what the situation was two years ago)]

**15.2.** [If changed a lot/changed a *little*] Please provide further details of what has changed.



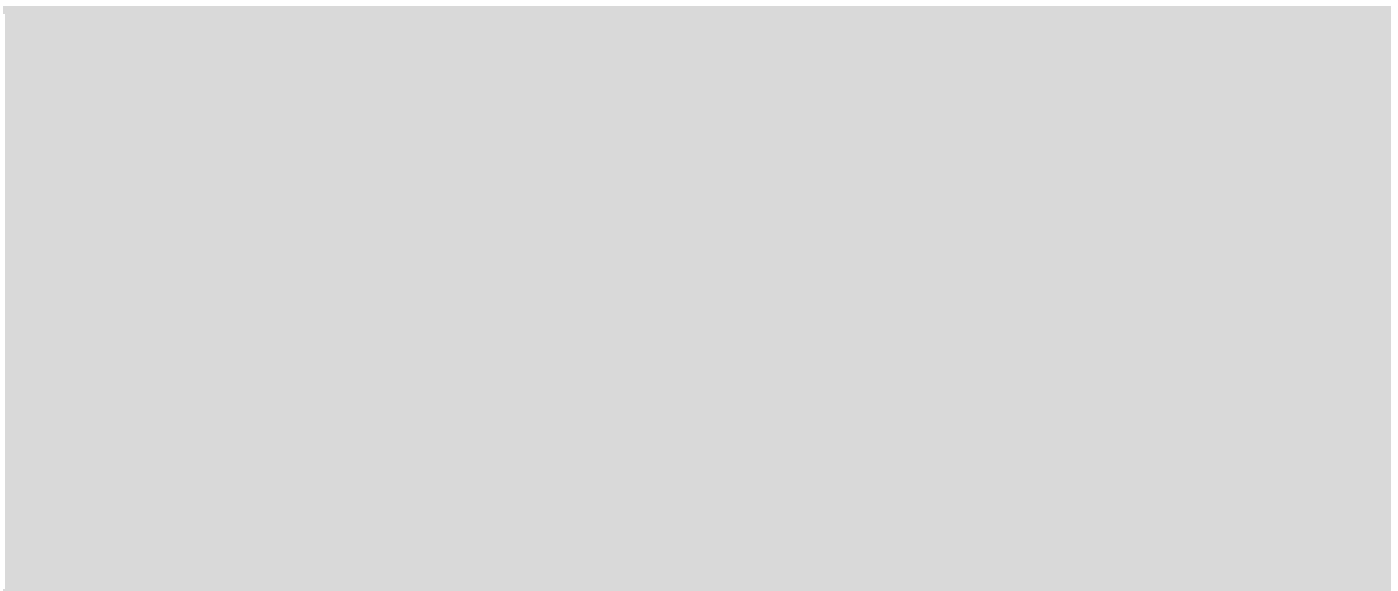
## 16. Future EGYV work in your area – priorities and challenges

*This section is about emerging risks or challenges in dealing with gang and youth violence in your area*

- 16.1.** What do you see as being the main threats or issues for work with gangs in your CSP area in the next two years?



- 16.2.** Please add any further comments about the nature of gangs in your area (or your work) that you have not had the opportunity to include elsewhere in this survey:



## 17. The basis for your answers in this survey

Answers to this question help us understand the information available about gangs in your CSP area

17.1. In responding to the questions in this survey, to what extent have you based your answers on the following sources of information.

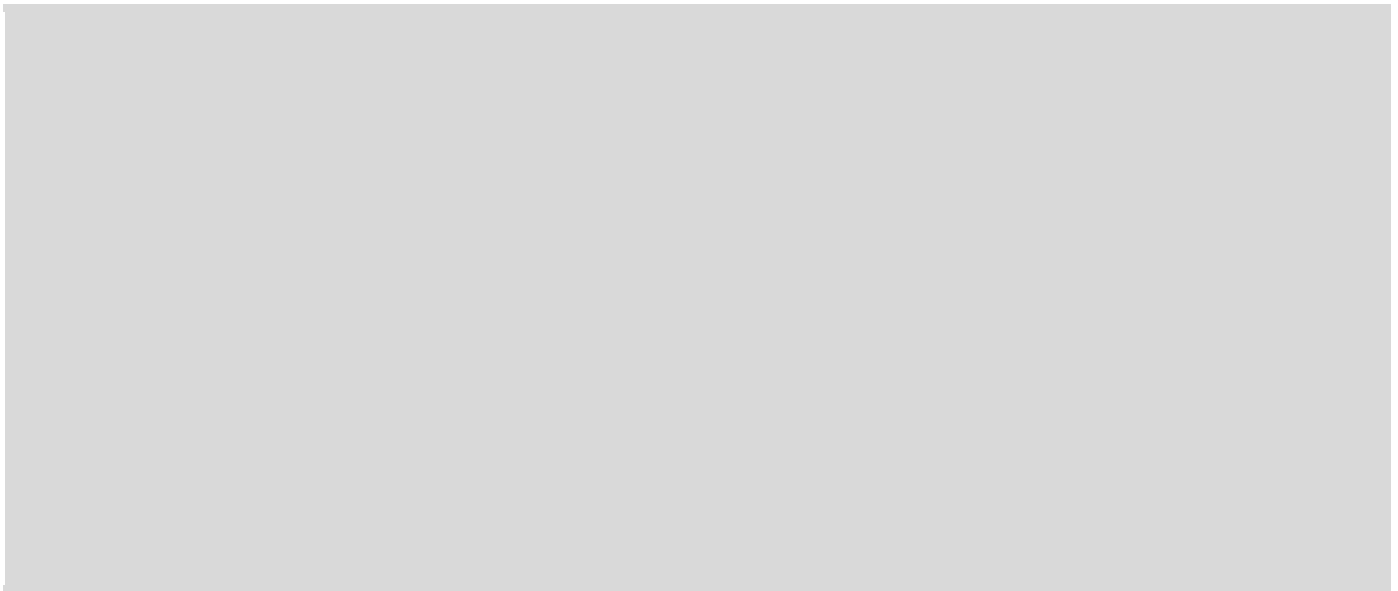
	To a great extent	To some extent	To a small extent	Not at all
Police intelligence				
Intelligence from other agencies				
Feedback from gang members (or ex-members)				
Feedback from community representatives				
Feedback from frontline workers				
Locally commissioned research				
My own experience				
Press coverage				
Other (please specify below)				
Comments:				

## 18. Changes in knowledge about gangs in the last two years

*Answers to this question help us understand whether your answers reflect the fact that gangs have changed or whether those working with gangs have improved their knowledge*

**18.1.** In your opinion, if you feel that the nature of the gang problem in your area has changed over the last two years, is this because [The nature of gangs has actually changed/Our understanding of gang issues has improved/Both of these]?

**18.2.** Use the box below if you wish to further explain your response.



## 19. Next steps for the research

19.1. Would you be willing to be contacted again for a brief telephone conversation if we have questions about the information that you have provided? [Yes/No] [If yes - please enter a contact phone number that we could use] [text box]

**Thank you for taking part in the survey. We appreciate you taking the time to complete it as your views are important to us.**





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