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Criminal Dynamics Study

Regional Report

Latin America and the Caribbean Learning and
Rapid Response (LACLEARN)

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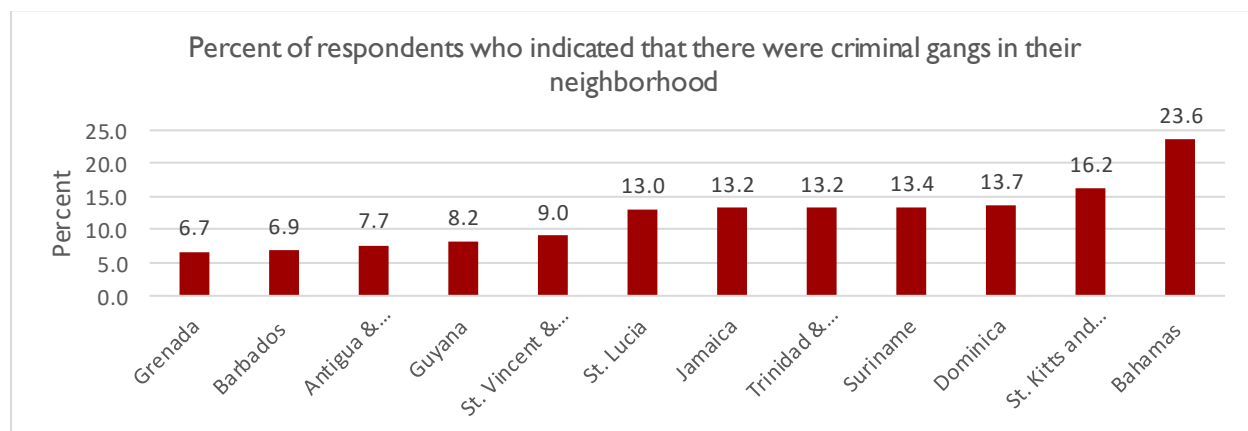
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● EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an examination of gangs in eleven countries in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean. The countries are Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. The report was organized around several themes which included the prevalence of the gang problem, the history of gangs in each country, gang involvement in crime, risk factors for gang involvement, and transnational links between gangs and criminal enterprises.

Primary data were collected for three countries in 2023 (Trinidad and Tobago, St. Kitts & Nevis, and St. Vincent & the Grenadines), and included police expert data, and surveys of school and detained youth.¹ Secondary data derived from a range of sources were also used to complement the primary data, and included data from national security agencies, including the police and intelligence agencies, research agencies, and other relevant bodies in each of the focus countries. This Executive Summary will provide a brief overview of some of the core findings, but each section of the report provides greater detail on each of the study countries.

Various sources allowed for an estimate of the prevalence of gangs in Caribbean countries. Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) data, for example, show that in The Bahamas 23.6 percent of respondents from a nationally representative sample indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods. This was followed by St. Kitts and Nevis (16.2 percent), Dominica (13.7 percent) and Suriname (13.4 percent). Countries with the lowest proportion reporting the presence of gangs were Grenada (6.7 percent) and Barbados (6.9 percent) - see figure below. Preliminary data are available for 2023 for Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname. The 2023 data show that 24 percent of respondents in Trinidad and Tobago and 19.4 percent in Suriname reported that there are criminal gangs in their neighborhoods.



Source: LAPOP²

Data from other sources provide information on the number of gangs and gang members in Caribbean countries, though the estimates vary depending on the source and year that the data were gathered (see Table below). In Antigua and Barbuda, estimates range from 8 to 15 gangs, with the estimated number of

¹ While the research team conducted data quality assurance checks, some quality control tests were not possible due to a flood at the data collection partner's offices in Trinidad that destroyed the paper questionnaires. Nonetheless, our review of the data found no evidence of irregular patterns that would be indicative of data quality problems.

² Data shown are for the most recent LAPOP surveys: Antigua and Barbuda 2016, Bahamas 2014, Barbados 2014, Dominica 2016, Grenada 2016, Guyana 2016, Jamaica 2014, St. Kitts and Nevis 2016, St. Lucia 2016, St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2016, Suriname 2014, Trinidad and Tobago 2014.

gang members ranging from 85 to 570. In The Bahamas, estimates indicate that there are around 48 to 50 gangs and 10,000 gang members. In Barbados, estimates for the number of gangs range from 10 to 150, with estimates of the number of gang members ranging from 299 to 4000. Disparities exist across most countries in the Caribbean region, and this is not surprising given the lack of consistent definitions coupled with the ever-changing nature of gang dynamics in the region.

Number of gangs and gang members in Caribbean countries

Country	# gangs	# gang members	Source of data
Antigua & Barbuda	8	133	Katz & Nuno (2017)
	15	264-570	Katz (2008): Estimate from police
	6	85-160	Katz (2008): Estimate from school professionals
	14	148-310	Katz (2008): Estimate from NGOs
The Bahamas	50	10,000	Reid (2019)
	48	10,000	Corporal Davey Pratt (2008)
Barbados	10	4000	Hill (2013): Estimate from police
	150		Delegation of Barbados ³
	50	Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit	
	40	299	Katz & Nuno (2017)
Dominica	10	113	Katz & Nuno (2017)
Grenada	22	299	Katz & Nuno (2017)
Guyana	9	335	Katz & Nuno (2017)
St. Kitts & Nevis	15	323	LACLEARN 2023 survey of police experts
	22	343	Katz & Nuno (2017)
St. Lucia	13	140	Katz & Nuno (2017)
	12-15		InSight Crime 2023
St. Vincent & Grenadines	16	235	LACLEARN 2023 survey of police experts
	23	251	Katz & Nuno (2017)
Suriname	Unknown	Unknown	
Trinidad & Tobago	186	1750	Special Investigations Unit (TTPS) 2023
	97	1623	Katz & Nuno (2017)

Quite importantly, research on gangs in the region has discovered that school-attending youth are also involved in gangs. The table below provides information on the percent of youths in various Caribbean countries who self-reported that they belonged to a gang. St. Lucia (18 percent), Guyana (18 percent) and Barbados (15 percent) have the highest rates of self-reported gang membership among school youth, while St. Vincent and the Grenadines (3.7 percent) and Tobago (3.7 percent) have the lowest rates.

Percent of school youth in Caribbean countries who report that they are gang members

Country	Percent of school youth in gangs	Source of data
Antigua & Barbuda	6.0	Katz et al. (2023)
The Bahamas	11.3	2011 Bahamas Secondary School Drug Prevalence Survey
Barbados	15.0	Katz et al. (2023)
Dominica	8.5	Katz & Nuno (2017)
Grenada	9.0	Katz et al. (2023)
Guyana	18.0	Katz et al. (2023)

³ Statement by the Delegation of Barbados at the Special Meeting of the OAS Committee on Hemispheric Security on the Phenomenon of Criminal Gangs in the Americas January 17, 2008, Washington D.C., p. 6.

Country	Percent of school youth in gangs	Source of data
St. Kitts & Nevis	6.5	LACLEARN 2023 survey of school youth
St. Lucia	18.0	Katz et al. (2023)
St. Vincent & Grenadines	3.7	LACLEARN 2023 survey of school youth
Suriname	Unknown	
Tobago ⁴	3.7	LACLEARN 2023 survey of school youth
Trinidad & Tobago	8.0	Katz et al. (2023)

One of the aims of the current study involved documenting those variables which were predictors of gang outcomes in each of the study countries. The analysis focused on predictors which lend themselves to the development of interventions aimed at reducing gang presence and violence. Regression models were computed using primary as well as secondary data, and the results presented under each of the countries. The conclusion section of this report combines the regression models to show the results of all countries. Tables 13.3 through 13.7 show the full regression models with coefficients and significance levels, while the table below presents a simplified version of the results using checkmarks instead of regression coefficients to identify significant predictors.

The results from the LAPOP data suggest that neighborhood decay is one of the predictors most closely related to gang outcomes. The results suggest that across the Caribbean region, neighborhoods with higher levels of decay (litter or garbage lying around, graffiti, poor sanitation, etc.) are more likely to have gangs and to be affected by gangs. Neighborhoods with a high level of decay suggest a level of vulnerability to would-be offenders, and are therefore more likely to be targeted for criminal activity than neighborhoods which are well-kept, since in such locations higher levels of guardianship are implied by the well-kept nature of the neighborhoods. Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles suggest that cleaning up neighborhoods and ensuring that they are well-kept can serve as a deterrent to criminal activity.

The LAPOP as well as the UNDP data suggest that improved police performance has an impact on gang outcomes. The results suggest that better police performance may reduce the impact of gangs on neighborhoods.

The UNDP (2012) data, which were available for six of the countries in this study, suggest that economic deprivation (indicators used were unemployment, poverty, the cost of food, and the cost of living) were important predictors of gang outcomes in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. The results suggest that measures aimed at reducing economic deprivation (for example, by reducing unemployment rates) could serve to reduce the impact of gangs in these countries.

Access to schooling was found to be important in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, and suggest that interventions aimed at reducing the prevalence and impact of gangs should attempt to improve access to schooling as well as educational attainment, especially in communities which are affected by gangs.

Predictors of gang variables in Caribbean countries

⁴ The research team was unable to get access to administer the survey to schools in Trinidad.

	Antigua & Barbuda	The Bahamas	Barbados	Dominica	Grenada	Guyana	St. Kitts & Nevis	St. Lucia	St. Vincent & the Grenadines	Suriname	Trinidad & Tobago
GANG PRESENCE (LAPOP)											
Social Cohesion		✓					✓				
Social Control		✓	✓								
Neighborhood Decay	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Police Performance			✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓
GANG IMPACT (LAPOP)											
Social Cohesion		✓								✓	
Social Control		✓	✓							✓	
Neighborhood Decay	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Police Performance	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
YOUTH IN GANGS (LAPOP)											
Social Cohesion		✓							✓		
Social Control		✓	✓			✓					
Neighborhood Decay		✓	✓			✓				✓	✓
Police Performance	✓		✓							✓	
GANG PRESENCE (UNDP 2012)											
Unemployment	✓										
Access to schooling						✓					✓
Cost of food											
Cost of living	✓										
Poverty											
Residential mobility	✓										
Adequate sanitation											
Social Cohesion	✓					✓		✓			✓
Informal social control	✓							✓			
Police performance	✓		✓								✓
GANG VIOLENCE (UNDP 2012)											
Unemployment										✓	
Access to schooling						✓					✓
Cost of food	✓		✓							✓	✓
Cost of living											

	Antigua & Barbuda	The Bahamas	Barbados	Dominica	Grenada	Guyana	St. Kitts & Nevis	St. Lucia	St. Vincent & the Grenadines	Suriname	Trinidad & Tobago
Poverty	✓										✓
Residential mobility			✓								✓
Adequate sanitation											
Social Cohesion	✓		✓			✓		✓			✓
Informal social control	✓					✓		✓			✓
Police performance	✓		✓			✓		✓			✓

LAPOP⁵ and UNDP (2012)

Social cohesion and social control were not as strongly related to gang outcomes in the majority of countries based on the LAPOP data, but these variables appear to be operational in The Bahamas, and to a lesser extent in Suriname, St. Kitts and Nevis, Guyana and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Informal social control, but not social cohesion, was important in Barbados, based on the LAPOP data. Quite interestingly, informal social control and social cohesion appeared to be more important based on the UNDP (2012) data. Both variables were significant predictors of gang outcomes in Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago. The results suggest that interventions aimed at reducing the impact of gangs can attempt to improve social cohesion and informal social controls in neighborhoods in those countries where these variables were found to be important.

This executive summary provided a brief overview of some of the core findings in this report. Detailed findings for each of the study countries are provided within this report.

⁵ Data shown are for the most recent LAPOP surveys: Antigua and Barbuda 2016, Bahamas 2014, Barbados 2014, Dominica 2016, Grenada 2016, Guyana 2016, St. Kitts and Nevis 2016, St. Lucia 2016, St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2016, Suriname 2014, Trinidad and Tobago 2014.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Caribbean region collectively has one of the world's highest crime and violence rates (Harriott & Katz, 2015). Table 1.1 shows the number of murders per 100,000 inhabitants from 2017 to 2021 for each of the countries included in this study. For this period, St. Kitts and Nevis had the highest average annual murder rate with 34.2 murders per 100,000. This was followed by Trinidad and Tobago with a rate of 31.4 per 100,000, St. Vincent and the Grenadines (30) and St. Lucia (28.6). The countries with the lowest average annual rates were Suriname (6.4) and Grenada (9.6). By way of comparison, Jamaica, which is often considered to be one of the most violent countries in the Caribbean, had an average annual murder rate of 50.4 murders per 100,000 inhabitants from 2017 to 2021. In contrast, the United States had an average annual rate of 5.7 murders per 100,000 during the same time period.

Table 1.1: Murder rates per 100,000 in Caribbean countries (2017-2021)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Average
St. Kitts & Nevis	48	48	25	21	29	34.2
Trinidad & Tobago	33	34	35	26	29	31.4
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	37	32	18	32	31	30.0
St. Lucia	28	21	26	29	39	28.6
Bahamas	31	23	23	18	29	24.8
Dominica	27	18	18	21	14	19.6
Guyana	15	14	17	20	16	16.4
Antigua & Barbuda	22	13	3	10	17	13.0
Barbados	11	10	17	15	11	12.8
Grenada	10	10	13	11	4	9.6
Suriname	6	6	5	9	6	6.4

Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/>

High levels of crime and violence in the Caribbean have partly been attributed to increasing and high levels of gang violence (Maguire et al., 2010). Research in the Caribbean and around the world demonstrates the negative impact of gang activity on individuals, families, and communities. Gang members contribute disproportionately to crime and violence (Katz et al., 2012). For instance, data from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service show that 33.3 percent of homicides in Trinidad and Tobago from 2000 to 2022 were gang-related, although other evidence suggests that police may under-estimate the proportion of homicides which are gang-related (Katz & Maguire, 2006). As such, governments and international organizations need to invest considerable attention and resources to combating gangs and gang violence to improve citizens' security.

Table 1.2 provides information which compares the scale of the gang problem in the countries being considered in this study, and derive from the most recent Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP⁶) survey estimates. The results suggest that the Bahamas, and St. Kitts and Nevis have the most serious criminal gang problem. For example, in the Bahamas in 2014 23.6 percent of respondents indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhoods, while in 2016 16.2 percent of respondents in St. Kitts and Nevis indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhoods. Preliminary data are available for 2023 for Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname. The 2023 data show that 24 percent of respondents in Trinidad and Tobago and 19.4 percent in Suriname reported that there are criminal gangs in their neighborhoods. This suggests that the gang situation has worsened in both countries since the previous LAPOP surveys were

⁶ The Americas Barometer by the LAPOP Lab, www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop

administered. Table 1.2 also provides information on public perceptions of whether the gang problem has become more or less of a problem within the last year, and on the extent to which gangs interfere with daily life in each of the study countries.

Table 1.2: Perceptions of gangs in the neighborhood⁷

	Gangs in neighborhood	Gangs change from prior year			Gangs interfere with daily life			
		More of a problem	Less of a problem	About the same	A lot	Some	Little	None
Antigua & Barbuda	7.7	0.9	3.5	3.3	0.5	0.7	2.8	96.0
Bahamas	23.6	6.9	7.1	8.9	1.0	6.5	7.5	85.0
Barbados	6.9	1.5	1.7	3.7	1.0	0.6	1.0	97.4
Dominica	13.7	3.2	5.0	5.1	0.4	1.9	4.5	93.2
Grenada	6.7	1.4	2.9	2.3	0.1	0.5	2.0	97.4
Guyana	8.2	2.2	2.0	3.9	1.6	1.2	2.3	94.9
Jamaica	13.2	2.7	5.1	5.3	1.2	2.4	3.0	93.4
St. Kitts and Nevis	16.2	5.3	4.0	6.5	0.6	2.7	3.6	93.1
St. Lucia	13.0	4.2	4.0	4.5	1.8	1.1	2.4	94.7
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	9.0	2.3	2.7	4.0	0.7	1.0	2.2	96.1
Suriname	13.4	5.5	3.6	4.0	2.1	3.3	1.9	92.7
Trinidad & Tobago	13.2	4.9	2.4	5.4	1.0	3.0	4.9	91.1

Source: LAPOP⁸

The UNDP (2012) also provides an estimate of the prevalence of gangs in Caribbean countries. Findings from this survey of seven nations revealed that St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Antigua & Barbuda held the top positions with respect to the prevalence of gangs. More specifically, in St. Lucia 17.9 percent of respondents indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods, compared to 13.9 percent in Trinidad and Tobago, 13.2 percent in Guyana, and 12.4 percent in Antigua and Barbuda. In Jamaica 10.8 percent responded similarly, while the figure stood at 10.3 percent in Suriname and 9.2 percent in Barbados.

Katz and Nuno (2017) conducted a survey of police experts and attempted, among other things, to determine the number of gangs in Caribbean countries. The results (Table 1.3) show that Trinidad and Tobago had the highest estimated number of gangs with 97 identified gangs. This was followed by Barbados (with 40 gangs), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (23), Grenada (22) and St. Kitts and Nevis (22). With respect to the number of gang members, the countries at the top were Trinidad and Tobago (with an estimated 1623 members), St. Kitts and Nevis (343), Guyana (335) and Barbados (299).

Table 1.3: Number of gangs and gang members by country

	Year gangs formed	Number of gangs	Number of gang members
Antigua and Barbuda	2000	8	133
Barbados	1994	40	299
Dominica	1996	10	113

⁷ Percentages are shown.

⁸ Data shown are for the most recent LAPOP surveys: Antigua and Barbuda 2016, Bahamas 2014, Barbados 2014, Dominica 2016, Grenada 2016, Guyana 2016, Jamaica 2014, St. Kitts and Nevis 2016, St. Lucia 2016, St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2016, Suriname 2014, Trinidad and Tobago 2014. Preliminary data are available for Trinidad and Tobago for 2023. The findings indicate that 24 percent of respondents indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhood in 2023.

	Year gangs formed	Number of gangs	Number of gang members
Grenada	1990	22	299
Guyana	2002	9	335
St. Kitts and Nevis	1998	22	343
St. Lucia	-	13	140
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	2005	23	251
Trinidad and Tobago	1995	97	1,623

Source: Katz & Nuno (2017)

The ability to diagnose and adequately respond to delinquency, crime, and gang problems requires current and reliable data (Katz & Maguire, 2015; Katz et al., 2012). Without this, stakeholders cannot determine whether policies and programs to reduce gang membership and violence function as intended. The body of research on Caribbean gangs, gang members, and gang violence has grown in the past two decades, with more recent research focusing on Trinidad and Tobago and comparative studies conducted across the Eastern and Southern Caribbean. Despite the strengths of previous research, estimates on the prevalence of gangs and gang members are dated; the most extensive cross-national datasets were collected more than eight years ago (see, for example, LAPOP, 2016; Katz et al., 2023).

The Caribbean comprises 16 nations and several territories. This report primarily focuses on English-speaking Caribbean nations and Suriname in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean. These nations vary in population, from about 46,000 residents in St. Kitts and Nevis to 1.3 million in Trinidad and Tobago (United Nations, 2019). Most of these nations are ethnically comprised of people of Afro-Caribbean or mixed-race descent – except for Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, which are more racially and ethnically diverse. Racial and ethnic diversity in the region is primarily a result of these nations' colonial past. Initially populated by native tribes (Amerindians), Afro-Caribbean individuals were brought to the region as enslaved people through the mid-1800s. The reliance on slave labor was followed by the indentured servitude of individuals mainly from India and later China and Indonesia, most often to Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Historical, racial, and ethnic divisions, and social and political challenges exist across the region. Governments largely lack the institutional capacity to respond to crime problems, citizens do not trust their government or the police, and financial capital and resources are insufficient to target problems. For instance, only about half of crimes are reported to police across the region (Sutton & Ruprah, 2017). Further, while the region is frequently discussed collectively, there is variation among nations in their laws, crimes, and how data on crimes are collected, stored, disseminated, and addressed (Katz et al., 2021).

One of the most significant hurdles in understanding the street gang problem in the English-speaking Caribbean is the lack of consensus among researchers and policymakers on the definition of a “gang,” “gang member,” and “gang crime.” Differing operationalizations of these terms limit the ability to identify the scope of the problem, compare the prevalence and characteristics of gangs across time and place, and develop targeted interventions to reduce gang involvement. Street gangs can sometimes be confused with organized crime. For this review, street gangs are defined as:

“any durable street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity. ‘Durability’ means several months or more and refers to the group, which continues despite turnover of participants. ‘Street-oriented’ means spending a lot of group time outside home, work and school – often on streets, in shopping areas, in parks, in cars, and so on. ‘Youth’ refers to average ages in the teens or early twenties or so. ‘Illegal activity’ generally means delinquent or criminal behavior, not just bothersome activity. ‘Identity’ refers to the group, not individual self-image” (Van Gemert, 2005, p. 148).

In contrast, organized crime groups are often focused on providing illegal goods and services through actual or threatened violence and corruption. These groups are typically more organized with structured leadership and commit more economically-motivated crime than street gangs (Katz, 2015).

Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers measure gang status in several ways, and it often depends on the source of data, whether official, administrative, or self-report. For instance, an individual may be flagged as a gang member by police or prison officials based on specific organizational criteria. However, the individual may not self-identify as a gang member. In research, gang status is most commonly measured using self-report data (Katz et al., 2015). At the broadest level, gang status is often determined by asking individuals if they have ever belonged to a gang. Other approaches have included asking respondents about their peers' participation in gangs, if they are currently part of a gang, or are a former gang member. Prior research suggests that self-report data collected from gang members is valid and reliable (Webb et al., 2006).

These measures assume that the term 'gang' is universally recognized. In reality, the term gang does not always translate to locations where youth may refer to similar groups as 'cliques' or 'posses' – terms utilized by some youth in the Caribbean. This limitation has been the focus of the Eurogang Working Group – a collection of more than 100 gang scholars primarily from Western Europe and the United States. The group has developed an instrument to measure street gang involvement without using the term 'gang.'

The Eurogang measure of gang membership relies on a funnel approach, where respondents must answer affirmatively to a series of questions. If respondents answer "yes" to each of the following indicators, they meet the criteria for Eurogang membership. First, they must indicate that they spend time with an informal group of friends. Second, this group of friends must be between 12 and 25 years old. Third, the group needs to spend time together in public places. Fourth, the group needs to have existed for at least three or more months. Fifth, the group has to have three or more members. Sixth, the respondent has to indicate that crime is accepted by the group. Finally, the respondent has to indicate that group members engage in illegal activities together.

Variation in definitions of gang membership is also evident in criminal legal codes. Before 2011, gangs and gang membership were not legally defined in any English-speaking Caribbean nation nor in Suriname. Increasing gang violence in these nations spurred political action and anti-gang legislation in many nations. However, most Eastern and Southern Caribbean nations still do not have specific legislation defining a gang or gang membership. Table 1.4 briefly reviews the relevant laws and definitions for gang and gang membership as of November 2022.

Table 1.4: The legal definition of gangs in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean

Nation	Law	Definition
Antigua & Barbuda	Not defined	
Barbados	Not defined	
Dominica	Not defined	
Grenada	Not defined	
Guyana	Not defined	
St. Kitts & Nevis	Gang (Prohibition and Prevention) Act (No. 24 of 2011)	"gang" means a combination of two or more persons, whether formally or informally organized, which, through its membership or through an agent, engages in any gang-related activity. "member of a gang" means a person who— (a) belongs to a gang; (b) knowingly acts in the capacity of an agent for a gang-related activity, whether in a preparatory, executory or

Nation	Law	Definition
		concealment phase of any such activity; (c) is an accessory to a gang-related activity, whether in a preparatory, executory or concealment phase of any such activity; (d) is legally accountable for or voluntarily associates himself or herself with any gang-related activity, whether in a preparatory, executory or concealment phase of any such activity; (e) who knowingly performs, aids, or abets any gang-related activity.
St. Lucia	Anti-Gang Act (No. 4 of 2014)	“gang” means a group, however organized, that – (a) is composed of three or more persons in or outside of Saint Lucia; and (b) has as one of its main purposes or main activities the facilitation of a criminal offense or the commission of a criminal offense. “gang member” means one of the persons who constitutes a gang and includes a person who knowingly – (a) participates in, aids or abets, or associates with, one or more gang-related activities, whether by an act or omission; (b) acts as an agent for, or as an accessory to, a gang; or (c) participates in or associates with a gang.
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	Not defined	
Suriname	Not defined	
Trinidad & Tobago	Anti-Gang Act (No. 10 of 2011)	“gang” means a combination of two or more persons, whether formally or informally organized, that, through its membership or through an agent, engages in any gang-related activity. “gang member” means a person who belongs to a gang, or a person who knowingly acts in the capacity of an agent for or an accessory to, or voluntarily associates himself with any gang-related activity, whether in a preparatory, executory or concealment phase of any such activity, or a person who knowingly performs, aids, or abets any such activity.

Source: Definitions drawn from legal codes in each nation.

Given that very little is known about gangs in the majority of Caribbean nations, coupled with the increasing concern expressed in the media and by law enforcement agencies about the contribution of gangs to crime and violence across the region, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has commissioned a study on criminal gangs in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean. Eleven countries were included in the study as follows: Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. The core objectives which guided the study were as follows:

Key Objectives

I. Conduct a comprehensive literature review in eleven Caribbean countries, that will compile and analyze existing publications, studies, and policies. The literature review will identify relationships, trends, and other significant data that enhance understanding of gang-related crime and violence from a country and regional perspective.

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2. Provide comprehensive data analysis for eleven countries that will include crime statistics. This component will further document criminal gang activity and analyze the contribution of gangs to crime (especially murder) in the selected countries – and where possible, disaggregate findings by geographic zones (communities, towns, and/or parishes).
3. Compile an inventory of current responses (interventions, strategies, etc.) to gang-related violence by national, regional, and international institutions in eleven countries.
4. Conduct detailed gang analysis and mapping in three (3) priority countries: Trinidad & Tobago, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, and Saint Kitts & Nevis. This analysis will entail a deep dive into gangs and associated criminal dynamics, including key issues such as history and evolution, organizational structure, territorial influence, involvement in illegal economies, links to transnational organized crime, use of violence, interaction with local population, and links to state actors.
5. Examine how gangs in the three priority countries (from #4) engage in transnational crime in the ESC region (e.g., trafficking in persons, drugs, and weapons) and affiliations with Venezuela, Belize, the remaining ESC countries, and Jamaica.
6. Identify risk and protective factors for youth joining gangs to inform the development and implementation of prevention and intervention strategies, in three priority countries.
7. Recommend a set of strategic and programmatic approaches to help inform potential new activities aimed at strengthening citizen security in the Caribbean region, with a focus on youth at risk of gang involvement.

The study utilized a mixed methods approach and collected primary as well as secondary data. Primary data derived from a survey of police gang experts in the three core countries mentioned above, as well as a survey of school and detained youth in these countries. Secondary data derived from police and intelligence agencies, from various Ministries, from past surveys, police reports, published research and other sources of information on gangs in each of the eleven countries. This paper presents details on gangs in each of the eleven countries which were included in the USAID study.

2. ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Prevalence of the gang problem

Three significant efforts were made by researchers, one in 2007 and the others in 2012 and 2016 to gather information on the prevalence of street gangs in Antigua and Barbuda. In 2007, Katz (2008) surveyed three stakeholder groups: law enforcement officers of the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda, school professionals, and non-governmental organization (NGO) personnel. The survey aimed to capture information on known gangs and their members in Antigua and Barbuda. The prevalence of gangs varied across all three groups: Law enforcement officials indicated they were aware of 15 street gangs in the nation and estimated there were between 264 to 570 gang members; school professionals identified 6 gangs and estimated there were 85 to 160 gang members; and NGO's, similar to law enforcement, identified 14 gangs but estimated there were 148 to 310 gang members (p. 2-3). The majority of members were reported to be African/Antiguan and comprised primarily of males, ranging between the ages of 16 and 25 years old. Some key characteristics that law enforcement officials noted was that these street gangs identified themselves by a name/moniker and claimed turf (i.e., geographical regions such as neighborhood blocks, parks, public spaces, etc.). Overall, the scope of gangs in Antigua and Barbuda was characterized as minor but "emerging" and comprised of small, unorganized groups of youth (p. 4).

The 2016 LAPOP dataset provides additional insights into the scale of the gang problem in Antigua and Barbuda. Respondents (N = 1002 randomly selected adults) were asked to indicate whether there were criminal gangs in their neighborhoods. In Antigua and Barbuda as a whole 7.7 percent said "yes". In St. John 8.7 percent indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhoods, while in the rest of Antigua and Barbuda, 6.1 percent indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods.

Respondents in the 2016 LAPOP survey were also asked to indicate the extent to which their neighborhoods were affected by gangs (Figure 2.1). In Antigua and Barbuda as a whole, 1.6 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were affected "a lot" by gangs, while 6.1 percent indicated that gangs "somewhat" affected their neighborhoods. Another 20.9 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were affected a "little" by gangs, while 71.5 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were not affected by gangs. In St. John, 2.2 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were affected a lot by gangs, while 7.7 percent said somewhat, 19.5 percent said a little, and 70.6 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were not affected by gangs.

Respondents in the 2016 LAPOP survey were also asked to indicate the extent to which gangs got in the way of them doing everyday things like shopping and going out. The results indicate that 0.5 percent felt that gangs got in the way "a lot", while 0.7 percent felt that they got in the way "somewhat" and 2.8 percent felt that they got in the way "a little".

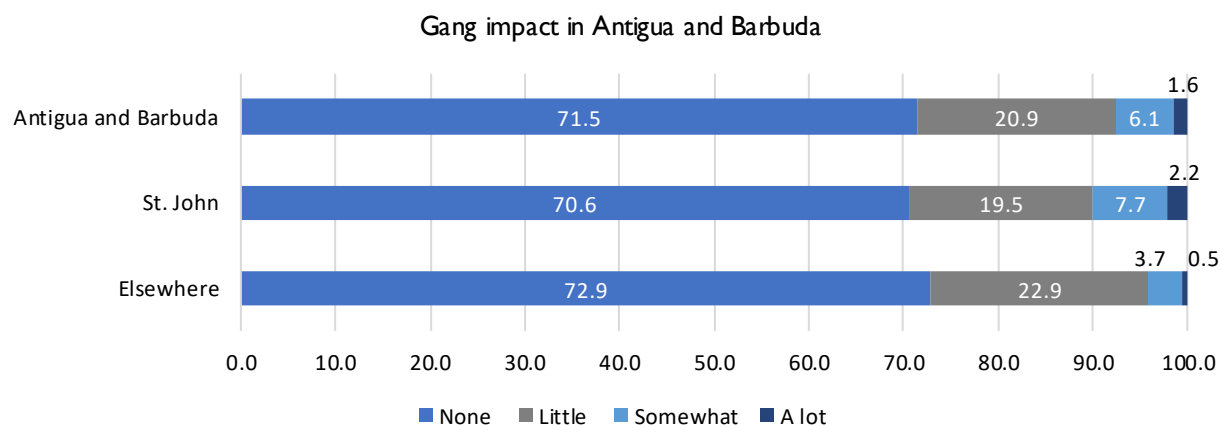
Respondents were also asked to indicate whether, compared to one year ago, gangs in their neighborhood had become more or less of a problem. The results suggest that 0.9 percent felt that gangs had become "more of a problem", while 3.5 percent indicated that they had become "less of a problem", and 3.3 percent felt that they had remained "about the same".

Respondents in the LAPOP survey were also asked to indicate whether youths or children in gangs were a problem in their neighborhoods. The results show that 3.9 percent indicated that this had become a very serious problem, while 5.4 percent indicated that this was a somewhat serious problem, and 10.6 percent said that this was a little serious, 13.9 said that this was not serious at all, and 66.2 percent said that this was not a problem at all.

Overall, the results from the 2016 LAPOP survey indicate that in Antigua and Barbuda as a whole 7.7 percent of residents said that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhoods, with 1.6 percent indicating that their

neighborhoods were affected a lot by gangs, and 20.9 percent indicating that their neighborhoods were somewhat affected by gangs. Very few respondents (0.9 percent) felt that gangs had become more of a problem than the year before, though 9.3 percent indicated that children or young persons in gangs have become a very or somewhat serious problem in their neighborhood.

Figure 2.1

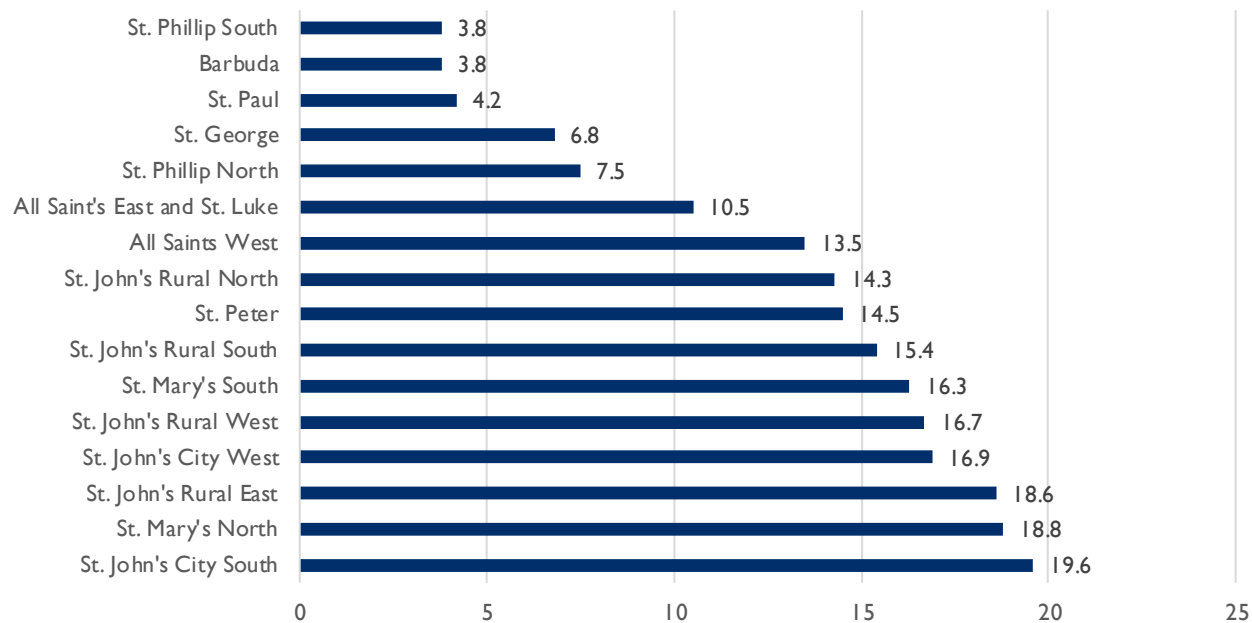


Source: LAPOP 2016

The UNDP (2012) survey, which collected data from a random representative sample of 1511 adults in Antigua and Barbuda provided additional insights into the prevalence of the gang problem. When asked whether there was a criminal gang or gangs in their neighborhood, 12.4 percent of respondents (12.7 percent in Antigua and 3.8 percent in Barbuda) responded “yes”. Figure 2.2 shows the proportion of respondents who responded “yes” in various geographic areas. The results suggest that the areas with the largest proportion of respondents indicating that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhood were St. John’s City South (where 19.6 percent indicated that there were criminal gangs), St. Mary’s North (18.8 percent), St. John’s Rural East (18.6 percent), St. John’s City West (16.9 percent), and St. John’s Rural West (16.7 percent).

Respondents in the UNDP (2012) survey were also asked to indicate the extent to which there was a criminal gang problem in their neighborhood. Four point seven percent said that gangs were a “big problem” (4.9 percent in Antigua and 0 percent in Barbuda), while 7.6 percent (7.8 percent in Antigua and 3.8 percent in Barbuda) said that it was a “slight problem”. Areas with the largest proportion of respondents indicating that criminal gangs were a “big problem” in their neighborhood were St. John’s Rural East (where 8.6 percent responded this way), St. John’s Rural North (8.6 percent), St. John’s Rural West (7.9 percent), St. Peter (6.6 percent), St. John’s City South (6.1 percent), St. John’s City West (6.1 percent), and St. Mary’s North (5.8 percent).

Figure 2.2: Proportion of residents in Antigua and Barbuda who said that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhood



Source: UNDP (2012)

More recently, Katz and Nuño (2017) utilized a multi-methodological approach to examine the extent of Troublesome Youth Groups (TYG) across Regional Security System member states, including Antigua and Barbuda. Their approach consisted of administering self-report surveys to students, surveying police officers, and interviewing key stakeholders. The data collection period was between 2015 to 2016, and participation was obtained across nine nations, with more than 300 schools, 18,000 students, 240 police experts, and 104 stakeholders (e.g., administrative leaders, superintendents, probation officers) participating. The results of the survey found that 31 of the 806 (3.8 percent) Antiguan school students who responded to the survey self-reported TYG membership. The mean age of TYG members was 16.5 years old, and the average age of TYG onset was 10.4 years old. Eight of the 11 (73 percent) police stations in Antigua & Barbuda reported a TYG problem (p. 6). Each police station also identified one unique TYG in their assigned jurisdiction, with total membership ranging from 1 to 32 members. In sum, eight gangs and 133 TYG members in Antigua and Barbuda were identified by police officials.

A short history of gangs

Antigua and Barbuda, like other Caribbean countries, has serious limitations in the systematic collection and dissemination of crime data (Seepersad, 2018). Consequently, the state of knowledge on gangs in the country has been limited to a handful of data collection efforts by criminologists in the past fifteen years. Public discourse on gangs, however, can be seen through local media outlets as early as 2006 (see 'Gang Members Tell Tales', Matthews, 2021, p. 291).

Local news articles in Antigua and Barbuda reveal recent but persistent calls by parents, school officials, and other community members to address a growing trend in youth violence (Emmanuel, 2022a, 2022b; Antonio, 2022; Lebruin, 2022). In one high-profile incident that was shared across various media outlets, a 15-year-old student sustained severe bodily injuries following a premeditated attack by a group of young men, one of whom was armed with a machete. This, along with other similar acts of violence being perpetrated by teenagers in Antigua and Barbuda, has brought renewed attention to gangs and public safety, leading local officials to discuss intervention strategies (Emmanuel, 2022c). In a statement released earlier this year, the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda at the St. John's Police Station announced they would be

proactively arresting any person found to be in possession of a weapon that could not provide a reasonable explanation for its immediate purpose (“Antigua police crackdown on youth violence,” 2023).

Despite the above, reservations have been expressed with the use of the term “gang” in Antigua and Barbuda. For example, an officer attached to the Youth Intervention Unit as part of the development of the UNDP’s Caribbean Human Development Report on Citizen Security, when interviewed said:

“Yes, things have been reported to us where we might have had to deal with some groups. But, as far as an established gang... we don’t have that. We copy a lot of what happens in the US and a group of guys will come together and try to mimic what is happening in America and I think basically that is what we’re seeing. Perhaps they are getting a bit more organized but to say established gangs, and the turf war and those sorts of things that happen in Jamaica, I don’t think it has reached that stage. If you want to say it is in the embryonic stage, you can say that, but that’s all [you] can say. Whatever [these gangs] do is relatively minor. They don’t kill, there are no rival gangs”.

The Director of Youth Affairs at the time shared similar sentiments as she said “yes, there may be young people doing bad things together but does that constitute a gang?”

Gang involvement in crime

One out of 29 homicides (3.4 percent), in the years 2006 and 2007, was found to be gang-related (Katz, 2008). From 2000 to 2010, Antigua and Barbuda experienced, on average, 13 homicides per year, and had one of the lowest homicide rates when compared to other Caribbean nations. The proportion of homicides that are gang-related is not known, nor are they noted in publicly available crime data supplied by government officials. Regarding less serious forms of crime, self-report data from the Caribbean School Youth Survey administered in 2015 and 2016 revealed that the students who self-reported gang membership, when compared to non-gang members, were more likely to report having committed property and violent crime in the past 12 months (p. 14); were more likely to report using alcohol and marijuana (p. 18); and were more likely to report engaging in drug sales and trafficking activities (Katz & Nuño, 2017, p. 19).

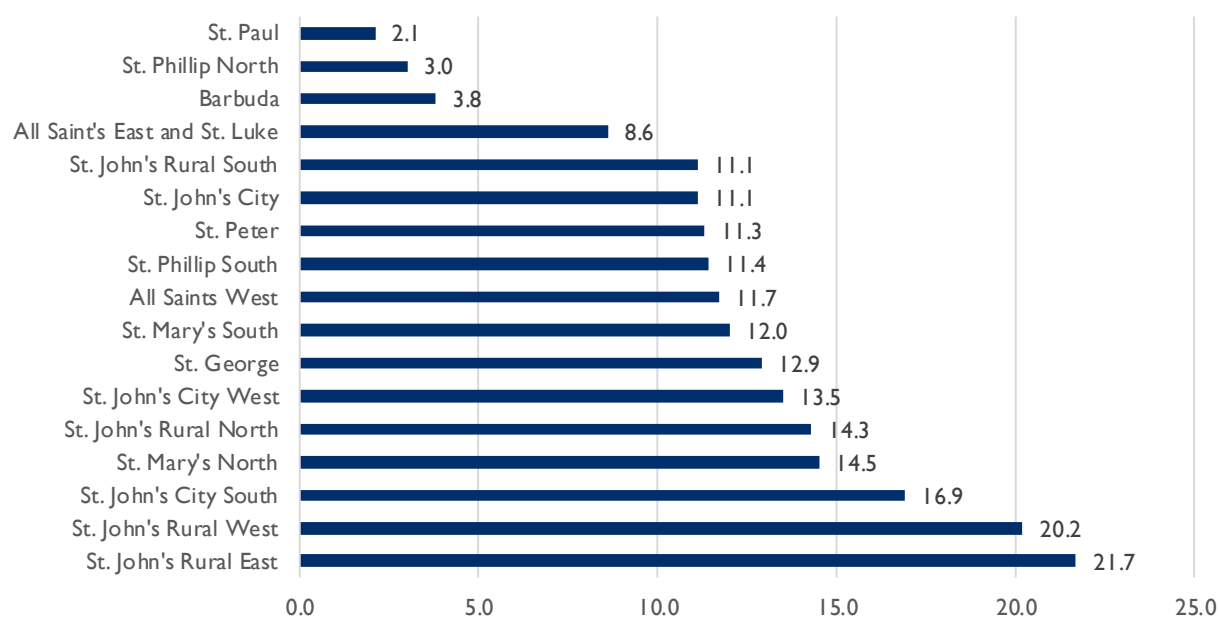
Local law enforcement and media outlets have connected two gangs in Antigua and Barbuda to the recent and ongoing threats of violence against students in St. John’s: “2Drilly” and “700 Bones” (“Gangs 2Drilly and 700 Bone put on notice”, 2022). In early 2023, prison officials suggested these two gangs were in conflict and utilized social media accounts to communicate future attacks (private correspondence). Local media outlets have confirmed these activities, with distraught parents calling on city officials to intervene before more children are injured (see Emmanuel, 2023b).⁹ The Antigua Newsroom, a prominent local news outlet, has reported extensively on the activities and growing concerns by parents. Within these news articles are screenshots from the social media accounts of gang members and affiliates who are seen posing with knives and other weapons (e.g., machetes, daggers).

Social media platforms have served as a stage for gang members to publicly announce future victims and invoke fear among gang social networks. Beyond psychological intimidation, 2Drilly members have been implicated in aggravated assaults against teenagers and children described as ambush-style. No information via publicly accessible websites describes any additional criminal involvement by these two gangs (e.g., aggravated robberies, burglaries, larceny). However, all respondents in the Caribbean School Youth Survey who indicated they were gang members also admitted to engaging in property and/or violent offenses in the preceding 12 months to the survey. Moreover, gang members who responded to the survey indicated involvement in serious offenses such as gun and drug sales (Katz & Nuño, 2017, p. 26).

⁹ Photos of TYGs and their social media activity can be publicly accessed using the following Boolean operators in online search engines (e.g., “2Drilly” “Antigua” site:www.instagram.com/site:www.facebook.com).

Data from the UNDP (2012) survey also allow for an assessment of gang violence in Antigua and Barbuda. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which their neighborhoods experienced gang violence. The results showed that 3.6 percent (3.7 percent in Antigua and 0 percent in Barbuda) indicated that there was “a large amount” of gang violence in their neighborhoods. Another 8.3 percent (8.4 percent in Antigua and 3.8 percent in Barbuda) indicated that there was “some” gang violence in their neighborhoods, while 18.7 percent (19.3 percent in Antigua and 3.8 percent in Barbuda) indicated that there was “a little” gang violence in their neighborhoods. Figure 2.3 shows the proportion of respondents who indicated that their neighborhoods experienced “a large amount” or “some” gang violence. The areas with the largest proportion so indicating were St. John’s Rural East (where 21.7 percent of respondents said that this area experienced a large amount or some gang violence), St. John’s Rural West (20.2 percent), St. John’s City South (16.9 percent), and St. Mary’s North (14.5 percent).

Figure 2.3: Proportion of respondents in Antigua and Barbuda who indicated that their neighborhoods experienced a large amount or some gang violence



Source: UNDP (2012)

Risk factors for gang involvement

Much of the research conducted in the United States points to risk factors such as antisocial attitudes and behavior, association with antisocial peers, and having peers who use drugs being related to gang joining. Caribbean youth have shown that gang membership is associated with similar risk factors as those in the United States, Canada, and Europe. A study by Cheon et al. (2023) tested the conceptual validity of measures for social control, self-control, and social learning, and found that these constructs were related to self-reported gang membership in Antigua and Barbuda (p. 17). Further evidence that peer influence might lead youth to join a gang comes from Katz & Nuño (2017), where more than half of the total Antiguan students who self-reported TYG membership ($n = 31$) indicated the reasons for joining were for protection, to make friends, because someone in their family was already a member, or to meet others of the opposite sex. Regarding desistance from gang involvement, the two most salient reasons for why a student decided to leave the TYG was to avoid violence (18.2 percent) and/or because they were “tired of it” (15.2 percent).

The 2016 LAPOP data also allow for an assessment of risk factors for several gang outcomes (Table 2.1). Gang presence, the extent to which neighborhoods are affected by gangs, and youth involvement in gangs were used as dependent variables to determine whether associations existed with other variables which could potentially serve as predictors. Variables which were used as predictors in regression modeling included neighborhood social cohesion, neighborhood social control, neighborhood decay and police performance in the neighborhood. Several variables which were expected to be closely related to the dependent variables were used as controls in the regression models. These included perceptions of neighborhood safety, assaults in the neighborhood, shootings in the neighborhood and drug trafficking and use in the neighborhood.

The results from the 2016 LAPOP data suggest that neighborhood decay and police performance were the most important. The results suggest that neighborhoods with a high level of decay are more likely to have criminal gangs and are more likely to be affected by gangs, when compared to neighborhoods with low or no decay. The results also suggest that effective police performance is associated with lower levels of gang activity in the neighborhood and lower levels of youth involvement in gangs. Contrary to expectations, social cohesion and social control were unrelated to the gang variables in Antigua and Barbuda.

Among the control variables, drug use and trafficking were the most important. Not surprisingly, neighborhoods with gangs, or with higher levels of gang activity as well as greater levels of youth involvement in gangs had higher levels of drug use and trafficking. Greater levels of gang activity as well as youth involvement in gangs were related to higher levels of assaults in the community. However, the gang variables were not associated with the level of shootings in the community, which suggests that while gang violence occurs, gang members may not frequently use firearms. As expected, persons who resided in communities with gangs felt unsafe when compared to persons who resided in communities without gangs.

Table 2.1: Predictors of gang variables in Antigua and Barbuda¹⁰

	Gangs in neighborhood	Extent to which neighborhood affected by gangs	Young persons in gangs
Social Cohesion	.169	.016	.004
Social Control	-.070	-.004	.018
Neighborhood Decay	***.492	***.075	.043
Police Performance	-.144	*-.031	**-.054
Perceptions of Safety	*.168	***.042	.018
Assaults in the community	-.255	** .079	***.163
Shootings in the community	-.051	-.017	***.209
Drug use and trafficking	***.567	***.110	***.215
R²	¹¹ .336	.246	.381

Source: LAPOP (2016)

The UNDP (2012) dataset also allowed for an analysis of risk factors for gang presence and violence in Antigua and Barbuda (Table 2.2) and six other Caribbean countries. In Antigua and Barbuda, communities with a higher level of social cohesion, those with more effective informal social controls, and those which experienced better police performance had a reduced gang presence and lower levels of gang violence. Higher rates of residential mobility and higher rates of unemployment were related to increased gang presence. The cost of

¹⁰ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

¹¹ Nagelkerke R Square

food (used as an indicator of deprivation) as well as higher levels of poverty were significant predictors of gang violence, while the cost of living was related to increased gang presence in the neighborhood. As expected, the results suggest that gangs are related to higher crime levels in Antigua and Barbuda.

The results of the UNDP (2012) survey suggest that interventions aimed at reducing gang presence and violence in Antigua and Barbuda should focus on reducing unemployment, the cost of living, poverty and residential mobility, and should aim to increase neighborhood social cohesion, neighborhood informal social control, and improve police performance. The results further suggest that a reduction in gangs should result in a reduction in crime.

Table 2.2: Predictors of gang presence and violence in Antigua and Barbuda¹²

	Gang presence in neighborhood	Gang violence in neighborhood
Unemployment	** .198	-.002
Access to schooling	.053	¹³ .043
Cost of food	-.118	*-.060
Cost of living	** .290	.032
Poverty	¹⁴ -.139	** .081
Level of migration ¹⁵	** .179	.033
Adequate sanitation	-.023	-.034
Social Cohesion	*-.033	***-.094
Informal social control	**-.086	*-.048
Police performance	***-.062	***-.127
Crime in the Community	***.416	***.476
	Nagelkerke R ² = .361	Adjusted R ² = .351

Source: UNDP (2012)

Transnational links between gangs and criminal enterprises

According to a comprehensive report published in 2018 by the Financial Action Task Force, Antigua and Barbuda is a high-risk nation for international money laundering and narcotics trafficking (p. 8). International criminal enterprises operating in the Caribbean use the strategic location of the island for drug transshipments, arms and ammunition, as well as forced labor or prostitution (Realuyo et al., 2017, p. 6). Although not directly linked to street gangs, the international criminal enterprises operating in Antigua and Barbuda may be organizations that appeal to at-risk youth motivated by the prospect of monetary gain.

Katz and Nuño (2017) reported that both police experts and school youth acknowledged the existence of formal relationships between Antigua and Barbuda gang members and criminal organizations in other countries (p. 31). According to police officials, 62.5 percent of gangs in the nation have at least one foreign-born gang member, with the countries of origin being the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Despite the majority of gang members potentially having direct ties to other nations, interviewed stakeholders did not believe migration by gangs was undertaken for purposes of broadening criminal opportunities or engaging with international criminal enterprises (p. 29). Stakeholders and police officials have, however,

¹² Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

¹³ p < .063

¹⁴ p < .058

¹⁵ Used as an indicator for residential mobility.

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speculated that the proliferation of gangs in Antigua and Barbuda is, in part, caused by the cultural transmission of gang culture from the United States.

3. THE BAHAMAS

Prevalence of the gang problem

Several sources allow for an estimation of the prevalence of the gang problem in The Bahamas. Dr. Carlos Reid (2019), a former gang member and author of “The Bahamas Gang Culture” estimated that there were 24 gangs in The Bahamas in 1996 (see Table 3.1). Reid later estimated that in 2002 there were approximately 50 gangs and 10,000 gang members. He estimated that around 10 percent of school youths were affiliated with gangs in 2002. In 2008, Corporal Davey Pratt, a gang expert in The Bahamas indicated that there were 46 known gangs and approximately 10,000 gang members.¹⁶ In 2010 the OAS estimated that there were around 6,000 to 10,000 gang members in The Bahamas. The 2011 Bahamas Secondary School Drug Prevalence Survey later revealed that 11.3 percent of secondary school children (15 percent of males and 7.7 percent of females) reported belonging to a violent group (National-Anti Drug Secretariat, Ministry of National Security, 2012, p. 24). In 2016 the University of The Bahamas in a study on Violence in The Bahamas estimated that there were more than 20,000 gang members in The Bahamas. More recent estimates of the number of gangs and gang members are not available.

The 2014 Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)¹⁷ collected data from a random representative sample of 3,429 adults, with an average age of 39.1 years (SD = 14.9), of whom 49.6 percent were males and 50.4 percent were females. The results show that in The Bahamas as a whole, 23.6 percent of respondents indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhood. In New Providence, 27.7 percent indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods, compared to 15.7 percent in Grand Bahama, and 7.8 percent in the remaining Family Islands.

Respondents were also asked “To what extent do you think your neighborhood is affected by gangs?” (Figure 3.1). In The Bahamas as a whole, 4.4 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were affected “a lot” by gangs, while 14.9 percent said “somewhat”, 23.2 percent said “a little”, and 57.5 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were not affected by gangs. In New Providence, 5.7 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were affected a lot by gangs, while 18.7 percent said somewhat. In Grand Bahama, 0.9 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were affected a lot by gangs, while 12.5 percent said “somewhat”, while in the remaining islands, 1.1 percent said that their neighborhoods were affected a lot, and 2.1 percent said somewhat.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the extent to which gangs get in the way of them being able to do everyday things like going to the store or going out at night. The results show that 1 percent indicated that gangs get in the way “a lot”, while 6.5 percent indicated that gangs get in the way “to some extent”, and 7.5 percent said that gangs get in the way “a little”. The area with a largest proportion of respondents indicating that gangs affected their daily lives “a lot” or “to some extent” was New Providence (8.8 percent). This was followed by Grand Bahama (6.1 percent) and the remaining islands (1 percent).

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether in their neighborhood gangs were “more of a problem”, “less of a problem”, or “about the same” as they were a year ago. The results indicate that in The Bahamas as a whole, 6.9 percent indicated that gangs have become more of a problem, while 7.1 percent indicated that they have become less of a problem, and 8.9 percent indicated that they were about the same. The location where the largest proportion indicated that gangs have become more of a problem was New Providence (9 percent), followed by Grand Bahama (1.7 percent) and the remaining islands (0.5 percent).

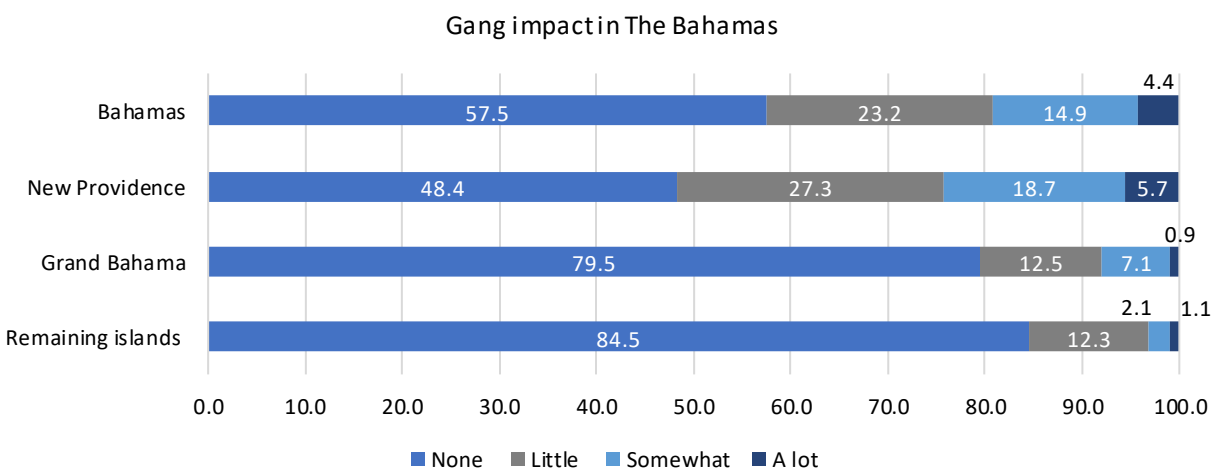
¹⁶ The Tribune. April 11, 2008. Page 6.

¹⁷ The Americas Barometer by the LAPOP Lab, www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether young people or children who were in gangs were a problem in their neighborhood. The results show that 4.2 percent of respondents indicated that this posed a “very serious” problem in their neighborhood, while 12 percent responded, “somewhat serious”, and 12.3 percent responded, “a little serious”. The area with the largest proportion responding “very” or “somewhat serious” was New Providence (19.2 percent). This was followed by Grand Bahama (9.6 percent) and the remaining islands (5.3 percent).

Overall, the results indicate that in The Bahamas as a whole, 23.6 percent of respondents indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhood. The findings further suggest that New Providence is the most heavily affected by gangs since the largest proportion of respondents in this location indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods, and this location came out ahead of the other locations in terms of all of the gang indicators in the LAPOP survey. It is important to note here that as per the 2022 census, New Providence accounts for 74.3 percent of the population of The Bahamas.

Figure 3.1



Source: LAPOP 2014

In 2018 the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) collected data from a random, representative sample of inmates in The Bahamas (N = 365). This dataset provides some insight into the locations with gangs in The Bahamas, though it should be borne in mind that inmates are different from typical population samples in that they are more likely to reside in communities where there are risk factors for involvement in criminal activity. One such risk factor is gangs in the community. As such, while estimates of the prevalence of gangs in communities provided by inmates would exceed estimates provided by general population samples, data from inmates can still be used to identify locations with gangs. When asked whether there were gangs in the community in which they grew up, 60.2 percent of the inmates from New Providence responded “yes”. This compares to 48.1 percent in Grand Bahama and 8.3 percent in Andros. The sample of inmates in Abaco and Eleuthera was too small to make generalizations about the presence of gangs in these areas. Of the sample as a whole, 52.3 percent of inmates indicated that they grew up in neighborhoods with gangs.

Inmates in the IDB (2018) survey were also asked to indicate whether they were a member of a gang when they were arrested. Of the sample 3.8 percent said “yes”. When the results were disaggregated by location it was found that 4.3 percent of the inmates who resided in New Providence and 5.6 percent of those who resided in Grand Bahama said “yes”. No respondent from Andros said “yes”. The evidence from the IDB (2018) survey is consistent with that of the LAPOP (2014) survey in that both datasets indicate that New Providence, Grand Bahama and Andros are locations with gangs.

A short history of gangs

Dr. Carlos Reid (2019) a former gang leader, and now current Pastor in The Bahamas who runs programs to reduce gang violence, indicated that gangs in The Bahamas began as poorly organized blocks in the 1960s and 70s. Gangs in the 60s and 70s were not involved in criminal activity, but rather were loose associations of youth who congregated for company and friendship. In time, however, groups of youth became more territorial, and the need for respect became important. Disrespecting members from another area could lead to confrontation and fights. Craton and Saunders (1998) reported that the first blocks associated with rival groups included the Farm Road Boys and the Kemp Road Boys. By the late 1970s persons from some areas gained a reputation for beating up others over issues of disrespect. Such areas included The Bottom, Harlem, Warren Street, Strachan's Corner, Kemp Road, the Valley and Montell Heights (Burrows and Reid, 2002).

Although there were one or two groups which arose in the 1970s which could be considered gangs, none really lasted. According to Reid (2019), the first modern gang in The Bahamas was "the Syndicate", which originated from the East Street area in Nassau in the late 1970s. The Syndicate focused on respect, fame, reputation and rebellion (Burrows and Reid, 2002). While they would beat up people and spray graffiti, they were not well-organized. However, they caused trouble as a result of their violence and graffiti, and made an effort to let others know who they were. Gang activities at that time also ranged from crashing parties, to fighting for attention, and committing petty offences. It was as a result of the Syndicate that all other major gangs in The Bahamas emerged (Burrows and Reid, 2002; Reid, 2019).

The Rebellion Raiders, which originated on Strachan's Corner and Thompson Lane, emerged to protect themselves from the Syndicate. The Rebellion Raiders were able to garner a fairly large membership, and were bold enough to make themselves visible. They adopted the LA Raiders' uniform as their own uniform, contributing to their attractiveness among youth. The popularity of the Rebellion Raiders gave them a sense of power and they continued to expand to become the largest gang in The Bahamas. This gang spread to several communities as gang members relocated for various reasons and began to spread the gang culture. Among other things, government housing projects allowed members to migrate to a wider range of communities where they began to spread the gang culture.

Craton and Saunders (1998) described the Rebellion Raiders as a well-structured group whose members would skip school to ride the municipal school buses (jitneys), drink alcohol, and commit minor acts of vandalism that included smashing automobile windows and drawing graffiti. They started out with fights and crashing parties, and assembled a large crew to attend Junkanoo and the Red Cross Fair. However, they eventually engaged in more serious acts, including robbery. The Rebellion Raiders initially used rocks and bottles as weapons, but eventually began to use cutlasses, flare guns, and later on, firearms (Reid, 2019).

The Rebellion Raiders represented the first major youth gang in The Bahamas. Initiations began, and getting "jumped in" (getting physically beat up by existing members if you wanted to join) became a rite of passage for many. In some cases, girls were required to be "sexed in" to the gang. The initiation process was used to weed out those who were not serious about joining the gang. The Rebellion Raiders eventually began to bully students in schools, which led to students developing gangs of their own to protect themselves. This led to a rapid expansion of the gang culture in The Bahamas (Reid, 2019).

During the 1980s, several rival gangs emerged. The Gun Hawks arose in the Bain/Grants Town area as a reaction to the Rebellion Raiders. There were frequent fights between both groups out of disputes for territory and as a result of disrespect issues. Rivalries would occur at Junkanoo, at parties, and whenever the two groups encountered each other. The Rebellion Raiders continued to spread to other areas including Carmichael Road, Elizabeth Estates, Pinewood Gardens, Fox Hill and Centreville. Several gangs also splintered from the existing gangs. For example, the Border Boys broke off from the Rebellion Raiders and the Gun

Dogs splintered from the Gun Hawks. In some cases, groups which splintered off retained the identity of the larger group, for example, the Irish Rebellion, which splintered from the Rebellion Raiders. In addition to splintering from larger gangs, groups also combined into factions. For example, the Gun Hawks linked up with the Border Boys and referred to themselves as the Border Hawks. Such new associations might form as a way of fighting a common enemy (Burrows and Reid, 2002).

Female gangs also began to emerge in the 1980s. Examples included the Trip Out Daughters, Madd Ass Daughters, Head Gone Bitches, Looney Tunes, and Shebellions. Haitian gangs also arose including the Bush Boys and Zoe Pound. The majority of gangs in The Bahamas were influenced by American movies and culture, and adopted colors, symbols, and insignia which were associated with the United States.

During the 1980s, gangs also became increasingly engaged in drug trafficking. International traffickers often paid local groups with drugs, leading to an accumulation of drugs within the country. In turn, gangs became more heavily armed to protect the drugs from being stolen, and drugs were increasingly sold locally. The larger gangs controlled drug distribution in the city and generated income mainly from the sale of cocaine and crack. By 1995 gangs in The Bahamas had become better organized and continued to expand their criminal activities into other communities. The movement of gang members resulted in territorial conflicts. Gangs generally controlled their territory through violence and intimidation. Gangs also sought to increase their numbers through attracting members, who typically came from disadvantaged homes. Reid (2019) noted that a small number of females also began to align themselves with gangs and participated in criminal activities, including drug trafficking.

By the mid-1990s, while some gang members had guns, these were normally kept “stashed” and only rarely used. As time progressed, however, guns began to be carried and used more frequently. Common weapons included 9mm pistols and revolvers, the 357 Magnum and even submachine guns. By the end of the 1990s, many guns were owned by drug dealers, and quite often when firearms were used, they were used in drug disputes.

Gangs in schools are generally considered to be less harmful and involved in lower-level delinquent activities such as fights, property damage, and graffiti. The 2011 Bahamas Secondary School Drug Prevalence Survey revealed that 11.3 percent of secondary school children (15 percent of males and 7.7 percent of females) reported belonging to a violent group (National-Anti Drug Secretariat, Ministry of National Security, 2012, p. 24). Many school gangs are thought to simply be groups of youth who are bonded by similar interests, neighborhoods, or activities and do not necessarily engage in deviant behavior. More sophisticated street gangs, however, may recruit from schools and are more heavily involved in criminal activity. According to the OAS (2010) these gangs are expanding their influence in communities both in New Providence and the Family Islands for a variety of reasons, including expanding their drug distribution territories, increasing illicit revenue, hiding from law enforcement, and escaping other gang rivals. Many suburban communities are also experiencing increased gang-related crimes and violence (OAS, 2010). The same study warns that a rising number of gangs based in New Providence are seeking connections with foreign criminal organizations to obtain more direct access to foreign sources of illicit drugs.

Reid indicated that by 2019 several gangs in The Bahamas became more organized. The drug trade had taken on special significance, and gangs became more focused on generating money. By that time gangs had established connections with drug lords and business persons, and had connections in other Caribbean countries. Reid (2019) argues that much of the revenue generated by gangs derive from the drug and gun trade, as well as human trafficking. He further indicates that the One Order gang stands out as the most organized in The Bahamas, and has a reputation as a very violent gang. The Minister of State for National Security indicated that the One Order gang was responsible for over 200 murders, but did not provide a time frame within which these murders occurred (Freeport News, 28 October, 2015). The One Order gang has ties with the Jamaican One Order gang, and has units across The Bahamas.

The Fire and Theft gang from Nassau Village and Ida Street is another notable gang in The Bahamas, and arose to defend themselves from One Order. There is an ongoing feud between both gangs. Other gangs which emerged after One Order were Madd Ass from Grants Town, Union Village and Peardale, and Dirty South, which was formally Swamper Dogs from the Pinewood and South Beach area. Madd Ass and Fire and Theft merged together since each gang by themselves was not strong enough to contend with One Order. The new merged gang was called Madd Fire. However, some members of Madd Fire eventually returned to their original gangs, but Madd Fire has persisted. Other gangs which have emerged recently include Fire Nation from Nassau Village; Tiger Nation and Crack Teeth Nation from Kemp Road; Monster nation from Pinewood; Brent Nation from Yellow Elder; and Muggy Gang, Ross Corner, and 509 from Cowpen Road. 509 is a Haitian branch of Madd Ass. Tiger Nation, Monster Nation, Crack Teeth Nation and Dirty South arose as a result of a dispute with One Order.

In 2010 the OAS estimated that there were around 6,000 to 10,000 gang members in The Bahamas. The Bahamas Ministry of National Security indicated that the largest and most prominent gangs in The Bahamas were One Order, Fire and Theft, and Madd Ass. Bethel-Bennett and Fielding (2019) later indicated that the main gangs in The Bahamas were One Order, Fire and Theft, Madd Ass, Mad Fire, War Dukes, Dirty South, and Zoe Pound. The only known listing of gangs in The Bahamas was provided by Reid (2019) who listed the major gangs in The Bahamas as of 1996 (see Table 3.1).

Several organizations in The Bahamas provide services and programs to help reduce youth violence and gang involvement. These include Youth Against Violence, the National Lead Institute, Teen Challenge Bahamas, Bash, The Haven and Dean Granger. Several programs have also been implemented in The Bahamas. These include Peace on the Street, Operation Redemption, Shock Treatment, Positive Vibes, and The King's Sons.

Table 3.1: Gangs in The Bahamas in 1996

Gang Name	Headquarters	Other areas	Estimated number	Colors/Symbols	Schools affected
Blue Jays	Unknown	-	Unknown	-	-
Bo guards	Blue Hill South	-	100		A.F. Adderley, S.C. McPherson
Border Cowboys	Hay Street	Market Street	300	Dallas Cowboys	C.R. Walker
Demolishers	Bain Town	-	80	-	C.C. Sweeting
Dukes	Englerston	Montell Heights	Unknown	-	-
Gun Dogs	Bain Town	Grants Town	500	Dog Paraphernalia	C.C. Sweeting
Gun Hawks	Grants Town	Kennedy Subdivision	300	-	-
Hood Rebellion	Centreville	-	200	LA Raiders	D.W. Davis
Hornets	Yellow Elder	-	200	Charlotte Hornets	A.F. Adderley
Hoyas	Kemp Road	-	500	Georgetown Hoyas	C.I Gibson, L.W. Young
Hudson Hawks	Unknown	-	Unknown	-	-
Hurricanes	Miami Street	-	150	University of Miami	C.H. Reeves
Jungles	Ridgeland Park	Yellow Elder, Coconut Grove	200	-	A.F. Adderley
Mason Murderers	Mason's Addition		250	-	C.R. Walker
Monsters	Carmichael Road	Fire Trail Road	100	-	S.C. McPherson
Mud Dogs	Abaco	Freeport, Grand Bahama	Unknown	-	-
Nike	Grove	-	200	Nike	A.F. Adderley
No Mercy Dogs	Culmersville	-	200	-	D.W. Davis
Pirates	Yellow Elder	-	100	-	A.F. Adderley, Government High
Rebellion Raiders	Strachan's Corner	Carmichael, Elizabeth Estates, Nassau	2000	LA Raiders	A.F. Adderley, D.W. Davis, C.I. Gibson
Redskins	Washington Street	-	Unknown	-	-
Sharks	Ida Street	Mannie Street	200	San Jose Sharks	C.H. Reeves, R.M. Bailey
Swamp Dogs	Pinewood	-	250	-	-
War Kings	Englerston	Claridge Road	200	LA Kings	C.H. Reeves

Source: Reid (2019)

In February 2023 the Royal Bahamas Police Force launched the Firearm and Anti-Gang Task Force Unit which utilizes a suppressive approach to dealing with gangs. The Unit includes officers from the Defense Force, Bahamas Customs, Immigration, Department of Inland Revenue, and US partners from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), and Homeland Security. In addition, the 2023 Bahamas Commissioner's Policing Plan, in Priority 5, provides for a Proactive Approach to Youth and Gang Violence. The objectives under Priority 5 include providing activities for youth to reduce their engagement in delinquency, expanding the Police Cadet Program by 100 Police Cadets, engaging students with anti-gang messages and keeping school campuses safe, and expanding the following programs: Law Enforcement Empowerment and Preparedness Program, Students Together Against Negative Decisions Program, Second Chance Program, School Based Policing initiative, Just Adolescent Mentorship Movement, and the Urban Renewal Band. Priority 5 also introduces new programs including community bands, music, arts and craft, Junkanoo and other cultural activities to increase Bahamian pride among youth while keeping them out of trouble. Expected outcomes for these initiatives include reducing gang recruitment and activity and reducing crime.

Gang involvement in crime

Bernard Nottage, the then Minister of National Security, in a 2015 televised national address on crime stated that:

“Another trend we have observed is the proliferation of criminal gangs, which began forming in local communities by gang leaders recruiting young males, many of whom were high school drop-outs. In fact, they have now infected many of our high schools. These criminal gangs include One Order, Fire & Theft, Madd Ass, Mad Fire, War Dukes, Dirty South, Zoe Pound and several others. They have now become more organized and are deeply involved in the illegal drug and gun trades. The drugs they sell and the guns they use to protect their turf result in much of the murder, and mayhem and violence that we are currently experiencing, especially in New Providence. In fact, about 60 percent of the murders are the result of retaliations between rival gang members” (Nottage, 2015, p. 9-10).

Data from The Bahamas annual Crime Statistics Reports provide some insights into gang involvement in crime. In 2022 there were 128 homicides. Of these, 113 occurred in New Providence, 12 in Grand Bahama and 3 in the Family Islands District. There was an overall detection rate of 69 percent. Victims between the ages of 18 and 35 represented 64 percent of all homicides. Retaliation, gangs, drugs and conflict were the most common motives for murder, representing 76 percent collectively. The 2022 report did not specifically indicate what proportion of homicides was solely attributable to gangs. The report goes on to indicate that the Southern, South-Central and Southwestern Police Divisions account for the majority of murders (52 percent). It also states that firearms were used in the commission of 117 homicides, or 91.4 percent of homicides in 2022.

While the 2020 and 2021 Crime Reports do not mention gangs, the 2019 report indicates that of the 95 murders which occurred that year, 8 or 8.4 percent were gang-related. Conflicts (38 percent), retaliation (22 percent), drug-related murders (13 percent) and robbery (5 percent) also account for a notable proportion of all murders in 2019. An examination of weapons used indicate that firearms (used in 83 percent of murders) and knives (13 percent) were most widely used. The majority of victims were 18 to 25 years of age (26 percent), 26 to 35 years of age (29 percent) and 36 to 45 years of age (23 percent), with 94 percent of victims being male. The detection rate in 2019 was 57 percent.

The 2018 Crime Report indicated that no murders were gang-related. However, the 2017 report indicated that 27 of the 122 murders which occurred (22.1 percent) were gang-related. The report also indicated that 21 percent of murders were due to retaliation, 12 percent as a result of conflicts, and 11 percent were drug-related. Firearms were used in the majority of murders (88 percent) in 2017. With respect to the age of

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victims, 34 percent were 18 to 25, 29 percent were 26 to 35, and 16 percent were 36 to 45 years of age. The majority of victims (95 percent) were male. The detection rate in 2017 stood at 56 percent.

Hanna (2017) examined murders from 2010 to 2015 and discovered that 177 of the murders which occurred during this period, or 25 percent of all murders, were based on retaliation or revenge killings. This type of murder demonstrated a steady increase over the study period from 5 in 2010 to 46 in 2015, with the highest number (50 incidents) occurring in 2014. Hanna states that “Further analysis of case files revealed that many of these murders were the end result of ongoing feuds between rival gang members, with a number of the victims being previously threatened with death by their assailant” (p. 25). The results also show that the majority of murders during this period were committed with the use of firearms (78 percent), followed by stab wounds (12 percent). Comparison with data from 2005 to 2009 (see Hanna 2011) revealed that the use of firearms in the commission of murders in The Bahamas has exhibited an increase over time.

Hanna (2017) also examined the characteristics of victims and offenders of murder in The Bahamas from 2010 to 2015, and provided details on the age, gender, and other characteristics. Hanna goes on to state that this type of murder typically involves gang members. He notes that during this time period “31 percent of the murder victims were suspected of being involved in a criminal gang at the time of the offence” (p. 35). He also notes that “The murder victim profile during the study period was a young Bahamian male between ages 18-25, with a prior criminal record” (p. 36). In looking at the characteristics of offenders Hanna (2017) noted that “42 percent of the murder suspects were suspected of being involved in a criminal gang at the time of the offence” (p. 39). In looking more broadly at the characteristics of murder suspects Hanna (2017, p. 40) states that “The profile of the murder suspect during the study period was a Bahamian male between the ages of 18-25, with a prior criminal record involving violence. This profile has remained virtually unchanged for the past fifteen years.”

In coming to terms with the gang situation in The Bahamas, Hanna (2017, p. 96) writes: “In The Bahamas, there are 3 main criminal gangs [One Order, Madd Ass and Fire & Theft]. Many of the revenge/retaliation murders were bi-products of on-going feuds between gang members. These gangs emerged as a result of criminal activity including the stealing of vehicles and illegal drug activities. They have expanded in number and reach and operate in a number of local communities such as Nassau Village, Kemp Road, and Bain & Grants Town. These gangs steal drugs from each other and compete for limited turf in which to operate. These turf disputes have resulted in a spate of retaliation murders where one gang seeks to avenge the death of their fellow gang member.” Hanna argues that reducing criminal gang activity in The Bahamas requires three key strategies including strict enforcement of the anti-gang legislation, gang prevention in schools and communities, and establishment of an Anti-Gang Unit supported by a Gang Task Force. With respect to the latter, the aim is to develop a properly trained and equipped unit within the Police Service to investigate gang activity and to dismantle gang operations and organizations.

In the foreword to Carlos Reid’s 2019 book on The Bahamas Gang Culture, Marvin Dames, Minister of National Security of The Bahamas indicated that gangs are involved in murder, human smuggling and trafficking, small arms trafficking, armed robbery, and aggravated assault. He goes on to note that the “entrenched connections between gangs, cartels and transnational criminal networks” creates cause for concern (Reid, 2019 p. v). Reid (2019) provides additional insights into gang involvement in criminal activity. He notes that gangs are also involved in sexual offences, car theft and house breaking, as well as drug trafficking. Reid further states that there are connections between gang members and politicians as well as businessmen, who may at times approach gangs to get a job done. These “jobs” can include murder and kidnapping (p. 22). Reid goes on to note that a distinguishing feature of modern gangs is the use of guns. He even indicated that in some cases youths who are aligned with gangs were known to have carried guns to school.

Information from other sources corroborate Reid’s (2019) assertions. The US Department of State’s Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) 2016 Crime and Safety Report indicated that gang activity in The Bahamas

includes the illegal importation and smuggling of drugs and weapons, as well as human trafficking (OASC, 2016). The US Department of State's 2016 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report indicated that smuggling in The Bahamas is "enabled and accompanied by organized crime and gang activity" and that drugs are trafficked from Jamaica to the US via The Bahamas. A Chief Superintendent of the Royal Bahamas Police Force further indicated that gang activity in The Bahamas contributes to the homicide rate through "retaliation and gang turf wars, with respect to drugs" (Nassau Guardian, 24 August, 2015).

A study conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank which administered a survey to a random representative sample of 367 inmates in 2016 (89.6 percent male and 10.4 percent female) provides additional insights into gang involvement in crime. The results show that 3.8 percent (4.3 percent of males and 0 percent of females) were members of a gang when they were arrested, while 4.4 percent (4.9 percent of males and 0 percent of females) were members of a gang at the time of the survey. This suggests that some persons joined a gang only after being incarcerated. Inmates who were gang members joined the gang at an average of 15.4 years of age (SD = 4.3, Range = 9-25). When asked where they resided prior to being arrested, the majority of gang members (81.3 percent) resided in New Providence, while 6.3 percent each resided in Grand Bahama, Abaco and Eleuthera.

Gang and non-gang members were asked to indicate the crimes that led to their incarceration (Table 3.2). Offences which stand out as more likely to be committed by gang members, when compared to non-gang members were murder (committed by 31.3 percent of gang members vs. 13.4 percent of non-gang members), manslaughter (12.5 vs. 6.3 percent), injuries (18.8 vs. 13.4 percent), possession of illegal weapons (37.5 vs. 23.4 percent), and scam, misappropriation, fraud (6.3 vs. 4.6 percent). Quite interestingly, non-gang members were more likely to be incarcerated for drug possession and trafficking when compared to gang members (20.5 vs. 18.8 percent).

Offences which stand out for gang members were possession of illegal weapons (37.5 percent of gang members were incarcerated for this offence), murder (31.3 percent), injuries (18.8 percent), and drug possession and trafficking (18.8 percent).

Inmates were also asked to indicate whether victims were injured when they committed the crime for which they were incarcerated. The results show that 68.8 percent of victims were injured in crimes committed by gang members, compared to 35.6 percent of victims who were injured when crimes were committed by non-gang members. Gang members were more likely to ever have possessed a firearm, when compared to non-gang members (87.5 vs. 55 percent) and were more likely to have injured or killed someone with a fire arm (56.3 vs. 19.9 percent). Overall, the results suggest that gang members are more violent than persons who are not in gangs and have a greater likelihood of having and using firearms.

Table 3.2: Crimes committed by gang and non-gang members in The Bahamas¹⁸

Offence	Gang member	Non gang member
Possession of illegal weapons	37.5	23.4
Murder	31.3	13.4
Injuries	18.8	13.4
Drug possession/trafficking	18.8	20.5
Manslaughter	12.5	6.3
Aggravated robbery/Aggravated theft	12.5	22.5
Sexual offences	6.3	6.8
Robbery/Theft	6.3	6.6
Scam, misappropriation, fraud	6.3	4.6

¹⁸ Percentages are shown.

Offence	Gang member	Non gang member
Kidnapping	0	2.6
Extortion	0	0
Burglary/break-in	0	0
Were victims injured?	68.8	35.6
Ever had a firearm	87.5	55.0
Ever injured or killed someone with firearm	56.3	19.9

Source: IDB 2018 Survey of Inmates (N = 367)

Risk factors for gang involvement

Prior research has identified a range of risk factors which may be responsible for the rise of gangs and increasing gang membership in The Bahamas. Duba and Jencius (2004) and Craton and Saunders (1998) indicate that gangs arose as a result of a range of factors including social dynamics, immigration, religion, family life and changes in the moral climate in The Bahamas. They go on to note that social factors include alienation of youth from the formal institutions of society, lack of communication between youth and the police, government, and civil leaders, lack of youth outreach by civic organizations, and infiltration by organized American gangs.

Burrows and Reid (2002) added that drugs, political corruption, violence on television, and a lack of adult attention to the needs of young people also contributed to the gang culture in The Bahamas. The influence of American culture was an important factor according to Reid (2019). He argued that American movies and culture provided a “regular diet of negatives” and portrayed the gang lifestyle as attractive. This had an impact on many youth who later joined gangs. The adoption of insignia and colors associated with American culture by several gangs in The Bahamas provides evidence of the importance of this factor.

Duba and Jencius (2004) argue that the immigration of Haitian refugees and Jamaican residents also had an influence on gang culture in The Bahamas. It was mentioned earlier that Haitian gangs formed in The Bahamas, with the arrival of refugees. Reid (2019) added that there is a “penchant for Haitian-Bahamians to join gangs [and recommends that] the government move to regularize those qualifying, yet stateless persons who are born to Haitian parents” (p. 74). With respect to the Jamaican influence, Duba and Jencius argue that youth were dissatisfied with Bahamian culture and traditional religious beliefs and values, and instead adopted what seemed to be a more permissive Rastafarian culture which was imported by Jamaican immigrants.

Duba and Jencius (2004) also argue that family-related factors were important, and included a lack of parental supervision which often occurred in single-parent households. Reid (2019) agreed with the importance of family factors and identified poor parenting skills and breakup of the extended family which resulted in more unsupervised time. Reid (2019) further noted the importance of violence in the home, drug and alcohol addiction, and family gang membership. Lack of a sense of belonging was also a significant contributing factor according to Craton and Saunders (1998). They argued that gangs provided members with a sense of belonging and identity, and even a sense of family. Gangs also provided a sense of organization, security, loyalty, and individual recognition; something which gang members often did not get from their family or community.

Educational factors are also important and include academic failure, lack of attendance in school, and failure to engage in positive peer relationships (Reid, 2019). Reid also notes that schools may be divided among gang lines, and this can lead to tension and conflict within the school, and creates a situation where school youths may feel the need to join gangs for protection. In a similar manner, gangs within communities creates a situation where youths may feel the need to join gangs for protection. One aspect of this which was discussed previously relates to the formation of new gangs which may emerge as persons attempt to protect themselves from already established gangs (Burrows and Reid, 2002). Reid (2019) also argues against the practice of streaming or tracking of students based on academic performance. He argues that this creates negative labels

for under-performing students, and serves to lower self-esteem and self-confidence. He goes on to note that “If our educational system does not provide these below average students with multiple opportunities to experience success, then they become prime candidates for groups that will” (p. 51).

Reid also notes the importance of community factors including depressed social and economic conditions, gangs in the community, a lack of male role models, and living in communities which lack structured activities for youths, such as sports and extra-curricular activities. He argues that while many people view the gang culture as “senseless”, it is, in fact, a way of life and a means of survival for gang members. He further notes that persons are often of the incorrect view that every person who is in a gang wants to be in a gang. He states, “There are so many persons whom I have met and spoken with who are simply trying to survive” (p. 36).

Corruption is another important factor which Reid (2019) mentions. He indicated that “some law enforcement officers belong to gangs or work with gangs” (p. 6). He goes on to indicate that in some cases businessmen and politicians are associated with gangs. Reid also mentions that cruise ships and yachts may be responsible for transporting many of the firearms which are used by gangs. He indicates that unfortunately vessels traveling to upscale areas such as Lyford Cay are rarely inspected, leaving gaps which can be exploited to bring guns into The Bahamas.

Reid (2019) mentions a range of additional factors which he argues are related to the proliferation of gangs in The Bahamas. These include “teen pregnancies, social disorder, immorality, political corruption, violence on television and in the movies, music with violent and negative messages and the abuse of alcohol” (p. 33). Reid (2019) goes on to argue that “the breakup of the extended family, youth unemployment, dissatisfaction with traditional religious values and ever increasing poverty have all created an ideal atmosphere for gangs to flourish” (p. 35). He notes that “The perception is that gangs can offer protection, respect within the community, money, and a sense of power. This makes gang membership attractive to kids who feel that they do not belong or are a part of society” (p. 35). Duba and Jencius (2004) also sum up the factors that are responsible for youths in The Bahamas joining gangs, and identify four key areas as follows: the need for respect, forming a sense of love, the need for protection, and surviving in their environment.

Reynolds, Rigby and Braithwaite (2015) examined risk factors for youth violence among 588 students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 from four public schools on New Providence island, Bahamas. The self-administered questionnaire assessed school violence, weapons carrying and bullying, as well as a range of other factors including family structure, socioeconomic status, gang membership, attitudes toward school and delinquent behaviour, and delinquent peers. Of the sample, 53 percent were female while 47 percent were male. The median age was 15 years (range 10 to 19). The results showed that 40 percent of students were in a gang. Students who were in gangs had delinquent peers, and felt that delinquent acts were not wrong and were more likely to bully, fight, and carry weapons. Quite interestingly, school connectedness was not associated with gang membership. The results of this study suggest that having delinquent peers as well as antisocial attitudes and values may be associated with an increased likelihood of gang membership.

Data from the 2014 LAPOP survey also allow for an examination of risk factors for gangs at the neighborhood level (Table 3.3). Dependent variables derived from the LAPOP dataset include the presence of gangs in the neighborhood, the extent to which the neighborhood is affected by gangs, and the extent to which youths in gangs are a problem in the neighborhood. In this analysis neighborhood social cohesion, neighborhood informal social control, neighborhood decay, and police performance in the neighborhood are used as predictors, while perceptions of safety in the neighborhood, assaults, shootings and drug use and trafficking in the neighborhood are used as controls.

Table 3.3: Predictors of gang variables in The Bahamas¹⁹

	Gangs in the neighborhood	Extent to which neighborhood affected by gangs	Young persons in gangs
Social Cohesion	***-.129	***-.072	***-.060
Social Control	***-.176	*-.025	*-.035
Neighborhood Decay	***.337	***.056	***.055
Police Performance	.012	*-.022	.015
Perceptions of Safety	***.112	***.051	***.037
Assault in the neighborhood	.034	*.041	***.110
Shootings in neighborhood	***.400	***.169	***.150
Drug trafficking and use	***.326	***.105	***.286
R²	²⁰.416	.388	.522

Source: LAPOP 2014

The results show that neighborhood social cohesion is inversely and significantly related to all three dependent variables. The results suggest that neighborhoods which have higher levels of social cohesion are less likely to have gangs, are less likely to be affected by gangs, and are less likely to have youths who are involved in gangs. In a similar manner, informal social control at the neighborhood level is significantly and inversely related to the three dependent variables. This suggests that neighborhoods where residents are more likely to intervene or take action when there are problems in the neighborhood are less likely to have gangs, are less likely to be affected by gangs, and are less likely to have youths who are involved in gangs. Neighborhood decay was positively and significantly related to the three dependent variables. This suggests that neighborhoods with higher levels of decay (neighborhoods which are run down, have litter lying around, have graffiti, etc.), are more likely to have gangs and be affected by gangs, and are more likely to have youths who are in gangs. The results also show that police performance was inversely related to the extent to which the neighborhood was affected by gangs. The results suggest that greater levels of police effectiveness may have a suppressive effect on gang activity at the neighborhood level.

Several control variables were also related to the dependent variables. The results suggest that residents who reside in neighborhoods with gangs, or where gangs affect their neighborhoods, or where there are youths in gangs, feel unsafe in their neighborhoods. Not surprisingly, the level of assaults, shootings, and drug use and trafficking are higher in neighborhoods which are affected by gangs.

Overall, the results of the LAPOP 2014 survey suggest that strategies to reduce the prevalence and impact of gangs can aim to build social cohesion and informal social controls at the neighborhood level, and can also aim to reduce neighborhood decay. This latter factor is consistent with CPTED principles. Improving police effectiveness is also a factor which can reduce the impact of gangs on the neighborhood. The findings from the control variables suggest that if the impact of gangs is reduced, then communities in the Bahamas should experience a reduction in assaults, shootings, drug use and trafficking.

Transnational links between gangs and criminal enterprises

The information on transnational linkages of Bahamian gangs is limited, but suggests that international ties exist. The preceding discussions have alluded to linkages between gangs in The Bahamas and other countries,

¹⁹ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

²⁰ Nagelkerke R Square.

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including the United States, Haiti, and Jamaica. For example, many of the gangs in The Bahamas have adopted colors and insignia which derive from various organizations in the United States. This is not surprising given the proximity to the United States, and the ready access to US television programming and other avenues for exposure to American culture.

The Tribune, on May 26, 2015 reported that the Zoe Pound gang is well-known in Miami and along the coast of Florida, while the One Order gang is active in Jamaica.²¹ The One Order gang also has other international ties, and has units which are active in many areas of The Bahamas (Reid, 2019). Zoe Pound as well as the Bush Boys are Haitian gangs. Zoe Pound was started in the poorer areas of Miami by residents of Haitian origin, and was imported into The Bahamas by Haitian immigrants and the deportation of Haitian-Bahamians from the US to The Bahamas. According to a news article in The Tribune on April 11, 2008, Corporal Davey Pratt, a gang expert in The Bahamas noted that Zoe Pound membership includes ex-militants and ex-police officers, and the gang generates hundreds of millions per annum from the sale of drugs, gambling and prostitution. Haitian gangs in The Bahamas maintain linkages with their counterparts in the US and in Haiti.

Despite the limited information available on transnational connections, Reid (2019) maintains that there are “entrenched connections between gangs, cartels and transnational criminal networks” (p. v). Indeed, as far back as 2010 the Organization of American States stated that “a rising number of New Providence based gangs are seemingly intent on developing working relationships with US and other foreign-based drug trafficking organizations and other criminal organizations to gain direct access to foreign sources of illicit drugs” (p. 1). Despite this, there seems to be very little systematic information available on the transnational linkages of Bahamian gangs. This is strongly suggestive of the need for additional research and intelligence gathering.

²¹ <http://www.tribune242.com/news/2015/may/26/gangland-bahamas-how-much-violence-can-be-put-down/> Retrieved on 11.22.2023.

4. BARBADOS

Prevalence of the gang problem

The Royal Barbados Police Force (RBPF) views gangs in the context of organized groups that fit a specific set of criteria and distinguishes between “gangs” and “troublesome youth groups” (Bailey, 2016). The latter refers to groups of youths which do not engage in illegal activities, and which are less organized than gangs. Gangs comprise groups with the conditions listed below.

- a) There is a leader, usually a person financing the activity of the group;
- b) There is a code of behaviour;
- c) There is initiation into the group;
- d) There is loyalty to the person financing activities;
- e) Activities are usually drug related;
- f) There is a penalty for being disloyal; and
- g) Members experience difficulty opting out of the group.

Hill (2013) interviewed officers of the Royal Barbados Police Force (RBPF) who indicated that there were at least ten active gangs in Barbados. These included the “Crips”, “Bloods”, “Red Sea”, “Red Square”, “Red Zone”, “Dog Pound”, “Red Beard”, “Academics”, “Gulf” and “Shotta Ville”, some of which have international connections. The RBPF found a low level of organizational structure consisting of a leader and members, but did not find a threat to peace and security. The Barbados government, in contrast, offered a very different assessment of the situation. The Delegation of Barbados, addressing the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States Committee on Hemispheric Security at a special meeting in 2008 stated that “Our intelligence suggests that there are over 150 gangs/groups in Barbados with a total membership of 4000”.²² While these estimates appear high, readers must be cautioned that the estimates include “groups” as well as “gangs”, and it may be the case that many groups which were counted are not necessarily criminal gangs. The authorities also claim that gang members have been convicted of a range of crimes including murder and other serious crimes.

Several data sources allow for an estimation of the prevalence of the gang problem in Barbados. The 2014 LAPOP survey collected data from a random representative sample of 3,766 adults, with an average age of 40.7 years (SD = 17.1), of whom 49.6 percent were males and 50.4 percent were females. The results show that 6.9 percent of respondents indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhood. The location with the largest proportion of respondents indicating that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhood was the Greater Bridgetown area²³ (11.7 percent). This was followed by the Urban Coastal Core²⁴ (5.5 percent) and the rest of the island²⁵ (3.5 percent).

Respondents were also asked “To what extent do you think your neighborhood is affected by gangs?” (Figure 4.1). Two percent indicated that their neighborhoods were affected “a lot” by gangs, while 6.5 percent said “somewhat”, 18.7 percent said “a little”, and 72.8 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were not affected by gangs. The area with the largest proportion indicating that their neighborhood was affected “a lot” by gangs was the Greater Bridgetown area (3.5 percent). This was followed by the Urban Coastal Core (1.7 percent) and other areas in Barbados (0.8 percent).

²² Statement by the Delegation of Barbados at the Special Meeting of the OAS Committee on Hemispheric Security on the Phenomenon of Criminal Gangs in the Americas January 17, 2008, Washington D.C., p. 6.

²³ This includes parts of St. Michael, Christ Church and St. James.

²⁴ This includes parts of St. Michael, Christ Church and St. James, and all of St. Philip.

²⁵ This includes St. George, St. John, St. Thomas, St. Joseph, St. Andrew, St. Peter and St. Lucy.

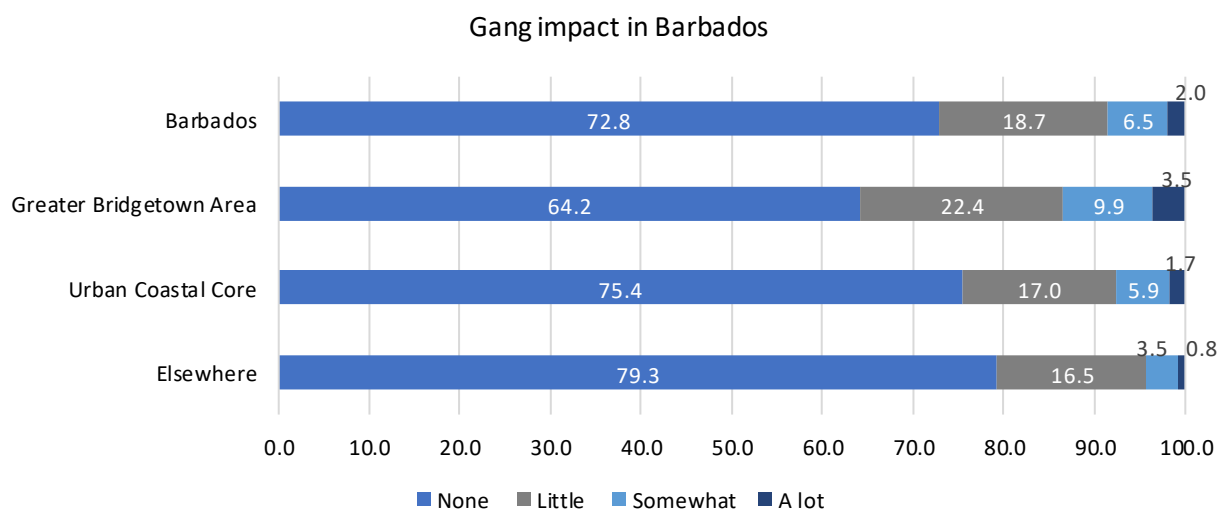
Respondents were then asked to indicate the extent to which gangs get in the way of them being able to do everyday things like going to the store or going out at night. The results show that 0.1 percent indicated that gangs get in the way “a lot”, while 0.6 percent indicated that gangs get in the way “to some extent”, and 1 percent said that gangs get in the way “a little”. The area with the largest proportion of respondents indicating that gangs affect their daily lives “a lot” or “to some extent” was the Greater Bridgetown area (1.4 percent), followed by the Urban Coastal Core (0.4 percent) and the rest of the island (0.4 percent).

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether in their neighborhood gangs were “more of a problem”, “less of a problem”, or “about the same” as they were a year ago. In Barbados as a whole, 1.5 percent indicated that gangs had become more of a problem in their neighborhoods than one year ago, while 1.7 indicated that gangs had become less of a problem, and 3.7 percent indicated that gangs had remained the same. In the Greater Bridgetown area 3.1 percent indicated that gangs had become more of a problem, compared to 0.8 percent in the Urban Coastal Core, and 0.4 percent in the rest of the island.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether young people or children who were in gangs were a problem in their neighborhood. In Barbados as a whole 4 percent indicated that this posed a “very serious” problem in their neighborhood, while 4.2 percent responded, “somewhat serious”, and 6.7 percent said, “a little serious”. The area with the largest proportion responding “very” or “somewhat serious” was the Greater Bridgetown Area (11.5 percent). This was followed by the Urban Coastal Core (9.2 percent) and the rest of the island (4.1 percent).

Overall, 6.9 percent of respondents in Barbados indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhoods, with 11.7 percent in the Greater Bridgetown area indicating similarly. The results suggest that the Greater Bridgetown area is impacted more by gangs, when compared to other areas in Barbados.

Figure 4.1



Source: LAPOP 2014

The UNDP (2012) conducted a survey which also allows for an estimation of the extent of the gang problem in Barbados. Data were collected from a random representative sample of 1,506 adults. Of these 47.2 percent were male and 52.8 percent were female. In terms of age, 9.9 percent were 18-24, 11.1 percent were 25-30, 11.1 percent were 31-35, 22.9 percent were 36-45, and 45 percent were older than 45 years of age.

The results show that 9.2 percent of respondents indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods (Table 4.1). St. Lucy had the largest proportion of respondents (28.2 percent) indicating that there were gangs in their neighborhood. This was followed by St. James (16.4 percent), St. Michael West/Christ Church West (16.2 percent), St. Michael (9.8 percent) and St. John/St. Joseph (6.9 percent).

When asked to indicate the extent to which gangs were a problem in their neighborhood, in Barbados as a whole 1.3 percent indicated that this was a “big problem” while 5.9 percent indicated that it was a “slight problem”. Areas with the largest proportion indicating that gangs were a “big problem” were St. Michael West/Christ Church West (3.8 percent), St. Michael (1.8 percent), St. James (1.4 percent), and St. Lucy (1.3 percent).

Respondents in the UNDP survey were also asked to indicate whether gangs made their neighborhoods “safer” or “less safe”. The results show that 5.1 percent indicated that gangs made their neighborhoods “less safe” while 0.8 percent indicated that gangs made their neighborhoods “safer”. Regions with the largest proportion indicating that gangs made their neighborhoods “less safe” were St. Lucy (15.4 percent), St. James (13.7 percent), St. Michael West/Christ Church West (10.8 percent), and St. Michael (5.7 percent).

Table 4.1: Findings from the UNDP (2012) survey in Barbados²⁶

	Gangs in neighborhood	To what extent is there a criminal gang problem in your neighborhood?		Have the gangs made the neighborhood safer or less safe?	
		Percent who said “yes”	Slight problem	Big problem	Safer
St. Lucy	28.2	23.4	1.3	0.0	15.4
St. James	16.4	9.7	1.4	0.0	13.7
St. Michael W./Christ Church W.	16.2	8.5	3.8	1.5	10.8
St. Michael	9.8	6.9	1.8	0.2	5.7
St. John/St. Joseph	6.9	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
St. Phillip	6.7	2.2	1.1	5.6	1.1
St. Peter/St. Andrew	5.5	3.3	0.0	3.3	0.0
Christ Church	3.4	2.6	0.9	0.4	2.1
St. Thomas/St. James South	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.0	2.2
St. George	1.4	1.4	0.0	0.0	1.4
Barbados	9.2	5.9	1.3	0.8	5.1

Source: UNDP (2012)

The most recent study on gangs in Barbados was conducted in 2016 by the Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit (CJRP) which resides within the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs. The CJRP interviewed law enforcement personnel, members of the judiciary, community resource persons, and prisoners to gain a comprehensive understanding of gangs in Barbados. The Royal Barbados Police Force (RBPF) indicated that gangs were distributed throughout Barbados, in rural as well as urban areas. The RBPF, however, indicated that gangs were most active in the Pine and New Orleans, which are located in the parish of St Michael. Officers of the Anti-Gun and Gang Unit of the RBPF estimated that there were about 50 gangs in Barbados, and cited the gangs listed under as the main ones:

1. Blood Spills
2. Blood Sets
3. Blood Mob

²⁶ Percentages are shown.

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4. Blood Drop- Messiah Street
5. Eastside G-Shine-Venture
6. Westside G-Shine
7. Southside G-Shine
8. Northside G-Shine-Roadview
9. Russian - Belfield Land
10. War Lords- Brittons Hill
11. Inkers - Haynesville
12. B.P Bloods-Belleplaine
13. Gulf City-Brittons Hill
14. Blood Stain-Sturges
15. Red Sea – Deacons
16. Red Zone – Marlhole
17. GKB – Parish Land
18. ABM – Eden Lodge
19. M.O.B. – Crab Hill/Fustic Village
20. B.A.N.T.G. – Swan Street
21. Sand Street – Speightstown
22. Crip City – Speightstown
23. Compton Crips – Speightstown
24. G Unit – Eden Lodge
25. S.S. Crips – Oistins
26. Akademicks - Regent Hill
27. Dog Pound- Orleans
28. Harlem Empire – St. Phillip

Katz and Nuno (2017), who conducted a survey among police officers who were gang experts found that gangs formed in Barbados as early as 1994. Officers indicated that there were 40 gangs in Barbados with an estimated 299 gang members. In terms of the location of gangs by police station district, Katz and Nuno found that 13 gangs (and 55 gang members) were located in Hastings, while 5 gangs (25 gang members) were in Holetown, 5 gangs (17 gang members) were in District F, 3 gangs (20 gang members) were in District C, 2 gangs (52 gang members) were in Central, and 1 gang (25 gang members) was in Blackrock.

Katz and Nuno (2017) found that 18.8 percent of the gangs in Barbados were formed between 1 to 4 years ago, while 43.8 percent were formed 5 to 10 years ago, 31.3 percent were formed 11 to 20 years ago, and 6.3 percent were formed more than 20 years ago. While the majority of the gangs (75 percent) had an identifiable name, none used signs or symbols, specific ways of speaking, identifiable clothing, or specific tattoos which designated their gang. Katz and Nuno further discovered that the gangs in Barbados were either all male (56.3 percent) or mostly male (43.8 percent). In terms of the age of gang members, 6.3 percent were between 16 to 18 years of age, 81.3 percent were between 19 to 25 years of age, and 12.5 percent were over 25 years of age. The findings from police experts also showed that all gangs in Barbados had an area which they considered to be their own, and 62.5 percent defend their territory or turf. The results also showed that doing illegal things was considered acceptable by all gangs, however only 6.3 percent of gangs promoted or supported a particular political issue. The results also suggest that 56.3 percent of gangs spent a lot of time in public places such as parks, the streets, and malls, and 68.8 percent had distinct sub-groups or cliques within their structure.

A short history of gangs

While Katz and Nuno (2017), in interviewing police gang experts found that gangs existed in Barbados as early as 1994, the Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit (CJRP, 2016), in interviewing police officers,

judicial staff, community stakeholders and prisoners discovered that gangs may have existed as early as the late 1970s to early 1980s in Barbados. In the earlier years gangs were involved in criminal activities, including drug trafficking, but were more likely to use weapons such as cutlasses and knives, as opposed to firearms. References were made to gangs such as the CNN, Kool and the Gang, Agony and Greenfield gangs in the parish of St. Michael in the latter part of the 1970s and 80s, as well as gangs in the Pine and Chapman Lane who used cutlasses and also dynamite. One law enforcement officer who was interviewed by the CJRP indicated that in earlier times, gangs did not associate with each other and were very territorial. One police officer who was interviewed stated that “The blocks in the past were made up of unemployed young men who came together to hang out; however, due to their involvement in illegal drug activity, a criminal element emerged which resulted in gangs e.g., the CNN and Lebanon gang.” The CJRP further discovered that gang activity peaked around 2007-2008 in Barbados, however in more recent times firearms were more widely available and gang members became more likely to use firearms in the commission of offences.

Police officers interviewed by the CJRP indicated that the police force began to have more serious problems with gangs in the 1980s, but the issues were different then, than at present. One officer stated: “The gangs back then were about showing muscle, drugs and nuisance crimes, now it is more about drugs, extortion and firearms. For example, the Red Sea [an identified gang in the Black Rock area], is about guns and protection”. Another officer opined that “the gangs here copy the culture in the USA. They follow the Bloods or the Crips which emerged in the late 1990s. Affiliation with the block culture emerged in the early 1990s. The older gangs were more organized and engaged in organized crimes; however, the newer ones are now trying to make a name and establish themselves. The gangs today are more sophisticated, more advanced, as it relates to technology. For example, we now have Skype where they don’t have a phone record. They have codes, bibles and an alphabet. These gangs will do crime, rival each other and protect their turf. It is not as strict as the USA, but if an individual gang member goes by himself in another’s turf, it is trouble. They build structures to hide guns and drugs, and use symbols such as scarves, beads and colours” (CJRP 2016, p. 33).

The Bloods and Crips of the USA have exerted an influence on gangs in Barbados. Persons interviewed by the CJRP indicated that rappers such as 50 Cents, the Game (Blood), Dipset (Blood), Jah Rule and Snoop Dog (Crips) are extremely popular amongst the youth and these artistes sensationalize gang life. A law enforcement official stated that some areas have a mixture of both Bloods and Crips, which are the core gangs in Barbados. Deportees from the USA imported their knowledge concerning the activities of these groups, and transported the values and culture of these gangs to Barbados, where they have established a foothold. Persons in the Bloods and Crips engage in activities such as drug sales, robberies, car thefts, extortions, rapes, and murders.

The original Crips gang in Barbados was known as the YSGC. Members from that gang later merged with the Blue Street Crips to form what is now the Crips in Barbados. They were involved in activities such as robbery, burglaries, theft, beatings, sexual assaults, threats/intimidation, vandalism/graffiti (‘Tagging Walls’), drive-by shootings, drug dealing and use, and fighting with rival gangs, mainly the Bloods. The Crips defended their turf, which was within the Christ Church area, mainly Kendal Hill, Gall Hill, Silver Hill and Lodge Road. The Crips gangs in Barbados were not structured like the Bloods, in that each gang did not have one clear leader. Older Crips members were given respect because of violence committed against rivals and law enforcement officers. In addition to using blue to signify their group, the Crips in Barbados used other colors including grey, orange, and purple.

The CJRP also spoke to police officers about the role of females in gangs in Barbados. They noted that even though most gangs were predominantly male, a small but growing percentage of gang members are female. There were, however, differing views among stakeholders as to the level and role of female involvement in gang activity. While it was noted among some interviewees that there are female gangs in Barbados, and females are also members of unisex gangs, some police officers believed that females are mostly associates, while only a small percentage of them are active gang members. However, other officers were of the belief

that females play a bigger role in gangs than is perceived. “They act as couriers, they carry the weapons and drugs, act as lookouts, as bait by utilizing sex and feminine prowess, are used as recruiters, some are the masterminds and managers as women are more educated. Women are underlooked, but they play all roles, some of which are major roles, some even call the shots in gangs” said one law enforcement official (CJRP 2016, p. 83). Other officers indicated that “Some females are associates, as the majority of them are in relationships with gang members and have markings but are not members as they are not readily welcomed on the block and are in gangs. They are said to be used as ‘stashers’ to conceal drugs and weapons, couriers, lookouts, decoys to deflect attention, distributors and as bait” (CJRP 2016, p. 85). Their role, however, is increasing according to RBPF officers. It was also noted by police that a few secondary schools had female gangs.

The Royal Barbados Police Force has responded to growing public concern about gang-related activity with a number of strategies that include the establishment of the Anti-Gang and Firearms Unit. The Unit was established to serve as a mechanism to divert young people from potential gang-related activity or involvement, while responding to several aspects of firearm related crime. The primary focus of the Anti-Gang and Firearms Unit includes addressing gang-related activity at three levels, namely prevention, intervention and suppression. The mandate of the Anti-Gang and Firearms Unit includes the following:

- To disrupt and dismantle all gang related activity
- To identify and prosecute gang members who are in any way connected to the planning, organizing or effecting of any criminal activity
- To identify at risk youth and divert them from all elements of gang related activity
- To work with at risk communities for the purpose of reducing the impact/influence of gang related activities
- To forge strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Education and Non-Governmental Organizations for the purpose of designing educational and other appropriate interventions for application within the school setting, and
- To provide all relevant assistance to the appropriate agency charged with the responsibility of re-integrating deported gang members back into society.

However, to date there is no legislation in Barbados to effectively prosecute persons who are engaged in gang activity, and therefore such persons will be charged with generic criminal offences such as manslaughter, serious bodily harm, robbery, etc.

Gang involvement in crime

The CJRP (2021) examined murders in Barbados from 2018 to 2020 (Table 4.2). The research showed that with respect to murders, “reprisal associated with gang activity was given by persons accused of murder as the most prevalent reason for committing this act” (p. 32). The data show that in 2018 gang-related activity was attributed to 10 out of 28 murders (35.7 percent), while in 2019 gang related activity was attributed to 16 out of 48 murders (33.3 percent), and in 2020 to 15 out of 41 murders (36.6 percent). From 2018 to 2020, therefore, 35 percent of all murders were gang-related.

Table 4.2: Murders in Barbados

	Number of murders	Gang-Related murders	Percent gang-related
2018	28	10	35.7
2019	48	16	33.3
2020	41	15	36.6
Total	117	41	35.0

Source: CJRP (2021)

The CJRP (2021) indicated that the trends suggest an increase in gang-related murders within recent times. In a previous study conducted in 2015 the CJRP found that 9 percent of all murders from 2010 to 2014 were gang-related. The earlier study found that the main drivers for homicides from 2010 to 2014 were disputes, burglaries/robberies, and domestic violence. A police officer who was interviewed by the CJRP (2021), in commenting on gang-related murders within recent times noted that “From investigations conducted, gang activities/rivalry and easy access to firearms have contributed to the rise in gun related murders and gun violence” (p. 33).

Katz and Nuno (2017) interviewed police gang experts in Barbados to determine the number and characteristics of gangs, as well as their engagement in criminal activity. Of the 40 gangs which were identified, police experts were able to provide details about criminal activities for 16 (Table 4.3). Police experts indicated that 50 percent of gangs “often” engage in criminal activities, while 43.8 percent engage “sometimes” and 6.3 percent engage “rarely”. There were no gangs which did not engage in criminal activities. When asked about engagement in fights with other gangs, the results showed that 12.5 percent “never” engaged in fights, while 37.5 percent engaged “rarely”, 43.8 percent “sometimes”, and 6.3 percent “often”. The results also show that 25 percent of gangs “never” engage in firearms trafficking, while 37.5 percent engage “rarely”, 25 percent “sometimes” and 12.5 percent “often”. No gang in Barbados was known to engage in human trafficking. However, 31.3 percent engaged “sometimes” in drug trafficking, while 68.8 percent engaged “often”. When asked about alcohol usage the results show that 6.3 percent of gangs use alcohol “rarely”, while 31.3 percent use alcohol “sometimes” and 62.5 percent “often”. The results also show that 6.3 percent of gangs use illegal drugs “sometimes” while 93.8 percent use illegal drugs “often”.

Table 4.3: Gang engagement in criminal and other activities in Barbados

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Engages in illegal activity	0.0	6.3	43.8	50.0
Fights with other gangs	12.5	37.5	43.8	6.3
Firearms trafficking	25.0	37.5	25.0	12.5
Human trafficking	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Drug trafficking	0.0	0.0	31.3	68.8
Alcohol use	0.0	6.3	31.3	62.5
Drug use	0.0	0.0	6.3	93.8

Source: Katz and Nuno (2017)

Respondents in the UNDP (2012) survey were asked to indicate the extent to which their neighborhoods experienced gang violence. Twelve point three percent indicated that there was “a little violence”, while 52 percent indicated that there was “some violence” and 0.6 percent indicated that there was “a large amount of violence” (Table 4.4). Areas where the largest proportion reported “a large amount of violence” were St. Michael West/Christ Church West (2.3 percent), St. Phillip (1.1 percent), and St. John/St. Joseph (1 percent). Areas where the largest proportion reported “some violence” were St. Lucy (11.5 percent), St. Michael West/Christ Church West (6.1 percent) and St. Michael (6 percent). A comparison of the findings from the UNDP (2012) and the 2014 LAPOP surveys indicate that in both time periods St. Michaels stands out as a location with a notable gang problem.

Table 4.4: Gang violence in Barbados

	To what extent has your neighborhood experienced gang
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	violence?		
	Large amount of violence	Some violence	Little violence
St. Michael W./Christ Church W.	2.3	6.1	12.2
St. Phillip	1.1	3.3	13.3
St. John/St. Joseph	1.0	4.0	14.0
St. Michael	0.5	6.0	13.3
Christ Church	0.4	3.4	2.1
St. George	0.0	1.4	11.4
St. James	0.0	2.8	12.5
St. Lucy	0.0	11.5	25.6
St. Peter/St. Andrew	0.0	5.5	18.7
St. Thomas/St. James South	0.0	5.4	12.0
Barbados	0.6	5.2	12.3

Source: UNDP (2012)

In 2018 the IDB surveyed a random representative sample of 409 inmates at the Dodds prison facility, the only prison in Barbados. Table 4.5 shows the crimes committed by gang and non-gang members. The results show that gang members were more heavily involved in a range of crimes, when compared to non-gang members. The largest disparities occurred with injuring or killing someone with a firearm (42.2 percent of gang members had done this compared to 10.7 percent of non-gang members), possession of illegal weapons (18.8 percent vs. 11.6 percent), kidnapping (3.1 percent vs. 0.6 percent), burglaries/break-ins (10.9 percent vs. 9.3 percent) and injuries (10.9 percent vs. 9.3 percent). In contrast, non-gang members were more likely than gang members to be incarcerated for drug possession/trafficking, scams, misappropriation and fraud, manslaughter, sexual offences, and aggravated robbery/aggravated theft.

The offences most frequently committed by gang members were owning a firearm (89.1 percent), injuring or killing someone with a firearm (42.2 percent), possession of illegal weapons (35.9 percent), murder (20.3 percent), and robbery/theft (18.8 percent). The results also show that victims were more likely to be injured when gang members committed crimes compared to when crimes were committed by non-gang members (48.4 percent vs. 44.6 percent).

Table 4.5: Crimes committed by gang and non-gang members in Barbados²⁷

Offence	Gang member	Non gang member
Ever had a firearm	89.1	40.3
Ever injured or killed someone with firearm	42.2	10.7
Possession of illegal weapons	35.9	23.2
Murder	20.3	21.4
Robbery/Theft	18.8	11.6
Drug possession/trafficking	12.5	18.8
Injuries	10.9	9.3
Burglary/break-in	10.9	9.3
Aggravated robbery/Aggravated theft	7.8	8.1
Manslaughter	3.1	4.3
Kidnapping	3.1	0.6
Sexual offences	3.1	3.8
Scam, misappropriation, fraud	0.0	2.3

²⁷ Percentages are shown.

Offence	Gang member	Non gang member
Extortion	0.0	0.0
Were victims injured?	48.4	44.6

Source: IDB 2018 Survey of Inmates (N = 409)

The CJRP (2016), in interviewing stakeholders including police officers, judicial officers, and prisoners enquired about gang involvement in crime in Barbados. They discovered that gangs were mainly involved in street and predatory crimes. Crimes such as robbery, theft, aggravated burglary, serious bodily harm and wounding, endangering life, murder and other violent crimes were the most common criminal offences. Other types of crimes included burglary of items such as jewelry and cash, and vandalism. However, firearm and drug trafficking were the main offences according to law enforcement officials. Law enforcement officials noted that gang crimes have become more severe and bold in Barbados in recent times. Officers also noted that not all gangs were violent, but when their turf was threatened, they would often resort to violence to protect their territory.

It was also discovered that in some cases gang violence was related to the “dons” in specific communities. For example, offences may be committed at the request of dons, or if they are disrespected by other gangs or persons. One former gang member who was interviewed by the CJRP (2016) stated that he viewed Lord Evil (an alleged gang leader from the parish of St. Lucy), as a don and his gang New World Order as a cult, as his members were willing to die for him. He also stated: “These groups often have political affiliation and clout, and gain the respect and loyalty of the community” (CJRP 2016, p. 78). Law enforcement officers also stated that many gang-related crimes were either committed for a specific purpose, e.g., initiation, to acquire information, executions or as a product of circumstance. For instance, it was explained that when drug seizures occur, there is an increase in crimes to compensate for the drugs confiscated by the police.

Members of the RBPF also indicated that some gangs and gang members were becoming specialized in terms of the crimes they committed. For example, they noted that some gangs specialized in drug-related crimes, and activities related to this such as money laundering. Other gangs such as the Red Sea and Edgecliff gangs specialized in offences such as serious bodily harm, gun and drug trafficking, and bike transport of illegal items such as drugs and weapons. Yet other officers indicated that “Some gangs specialize in murder. They are hit men in Barbados, who are usually young men who are not very intelligent and if given money would execute a hit” (CJRP 2016, p. 79).

Inter-gang rivalry was also a feature which was becoming prominent in Barbados. An inmate who was interviewed by the CJRP (2016) indicated that the current gang situation was as a result of war over “petty issues... when one person gets away with somebody from another block over guns or drugs. Members pick up fire rage for each other and become enemies for life and send threats and messages” (CJRP 2016, p. 63). Inter-gang conflicts were also known to arise over drug transactions gone wrong.

Members of the RBPF indicated that some gangs were very organized and used businesses as cover for their illegal activity. “The organized ones are the thinkers; they have girls in the banks as accountants and lawyers etc., and are involved in money laundering and have businesses as fronts, for example, clothing boutiques, shoe stores, arcades, minibuses owners, strip clubs and so on” (CJRP 2016, p. 80). However, it was believed that some organized crime is linked to corruption in government entities as well, where there is infiltration of the criminal element into certain government departments, mostly in drug and firearm smuggling. A community resource person interviewed by the CJRP also indicated that “businessmen are linked to the ones that are seen as the bad guys... these businessmen are untouchable because of power and money” (CJRP 2016, p. 80).

While the information provided above offers insight into the criminal activities committed by adult gang members, Katz et al. (2023) collected data which provided insights into the activities committed by youthful

persons who were gang-involved. Katz et al. (2023) administered a survey to over 18,000 Form 5 students in nine English-speaking countries including Barbados, and among other things, examined gang involvement. In Barbados (N = 2,232) students were 15.7 years of age on average, with 56.6 percent of the sample being female and 42.7 percent being male. The results suggest that 15 percent of Form 5 youths in Barbados are involved with gangs. Nations with a lower level of gang involvement were Antigua and Barbuda (6 percent), St. Kitts and Nevis (7 percent), Trinidad and Tobago (8 percent), and Grenada (9 percent). Nations with a higher level of gang involved youth were St. Vincent and the Grenadines (14 percent), Guyana (18 percent), St. Lucia (18 percent), and Dominica (20 percent). When gang-involvement was disaggregated by gender the results show that male students were more likely than female students to be gang-involved (18 percent vs. 13 percent).

Katz and Nuno (2017) examined the school survey data which was used by Katz et al. (2023) and provided findings on the reasons that youths joined gangs. The findings also provide some insight into the criminal involvement of gangs in Barbados (Table 4.6). While a number of initiation requirements were cited by school youth who had joined gangs (n = 178), several of the requirements involved criminal activities. For example, 4.5 percent indicated that they had to fight or shoot someone in order to join the gang, while 2.8 percent had to commit a crime. The results also show that 2.2 percent of youths who joined a gang indicated that they had to kill someone in order to join.

The results from Katz and Nuno (2017) also suggest that youths in gangs are more likely than youths who are not in gangs to engage in criminal activity (Table 4.7). For example, the results show that 87.6 percent of gang-involved youths committed a property offence within the twelve-month period preceding the survey, when compared to 60 percent of non-gang-involved youths. Similarly, 98.9 percent of gang-involved youths committed a violent offence in the twelve-month period preceding the survey, compared to 79.2 percent of non-gang-involved youths. When property and violent offences were combined, the results showed that 98.9 percent of gang-involved youths compared to 85.3 percent of non-gang-involved youths committed offences within the twelve-month period preceding the survey. Katz and Nuno (2017) also found that 35.6 percent of gang-involved youth reported that their group makes money from drug sales, while 23.7 percent reported that their group makes money from gun sales (not shown in Table 4.7).

Katz and Nuno (2017) also examined chronic offending among gang and non-gang involved youth (Table 4.7). Chronic offending was defined as having occurred if a youth committed an offence ten times or more within the last year. The results show that across all offences considered, gang-involved youths were more likely to be chronic offenders, when compared to non-gang-involved youth. For example, while 5.1 percent of non-gang-involved youth were chronic offenders when it came to not paying for things like the movies or bus, 19.9 percent of gang-involved youths were chronic offenders in this category. The results also show that gang-involved youths were 3.5 times more likely than non-gang-involved youths to be engaged in purposefully damaging property, and 6.5 times more likely to be involved in illegally spray painting walls or buildings. Information for several other areas is show in Table 4.7. The results also suggest that some types of illegal activities occur more often than others for gang-involved youths. For example, 39 percent of gang-involved youths very often (10 or more times within the last year) carried a hidden weapon for protection, while 35 percent frequently engaged in hitting others with the intention of hurting them, 21.5 percent frequently damaged property on purpose, and 19.9 percent frequently avoided paying for things such as the movies or bus.

Table 4.6: Initiation requirements for youths who joined gangs in Barbados

Initiation requirement	Percent
Nothing	46.1
Born into it	7.3
Fight or shoot someone	4.5

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Commit a crime	2.8
Kill someone	2.2
Get sexed in	2.2
Get jumped in/beaten up	1.1
Other	4.5

Source: Katz and Nuno (2017)

Table 4.7: Comparison of gang and non-gang-involved youth in Barbados

	Non-gang-involved youths	Gang-involved youths
Property and Violent Offending		
Property offence in past 12 months	60.0	87.6
Violent offence in past 12 months	79.2	98.9
Property or violent offence in past 12 months	85.3	98.9
Chronic offending (> 10 times in past year)		
Avoid paying for things, e.g., movies or bus	5.1	19.9
Purposefully damaged property	6.1	21.5
Illegally spray painted a wall or building	1.3	8.4
Stole or tried to steal something < EC\$100	2.2	8.0
Stole or tried to steal something > EC\$100	1.6	5.1
Entered building to steal something	0.8	2.8
Hit someone to hurt them	16.1	35.0
Carried hidden weapon for protection	12.1	39.0
Attacked someone with a weapon	2.0	9.6
Used a weapon to get something by force	0.9	2.2
Involved in fights with other groups	3.9	18.1
Drug sales	2.9	10.7

Source: Katz and Nuno (2017)

Risk factors for gang involvement

Prior research in Barbados has examined risk and protective factors for gang involvement. Katz et al. (2023) and Cheon et al. (2023) examined the association between current gang membership and several theoretical concepts among Form 5²⁸ students in nine Caribbean nations (N = 18,312), of which Barbados was one (N = 2,232).²⁹

Using point biserial correlations, Cheon et al. (2023) found that self-reported current gang involvement among school-attending Form 5 youth in Barbados was positively correlated with impulsivity, risk-seeking, self-control, having delinquent peers, moral attitudes/disengagement and social learning. Self-reported current gang involvement was negatively correlated with parental/family attachment, parental monitoring, school commitment, and social control.

²⁸ 10th grade in the United States.

²⁹ Sample characteristics were previously provided.

The findings suggest that youths who had low self-control (i.e., were impulsive or risk-seeking), who experienced weak social control (i.e., who had weak parental/family attachment, who received little parental monitoring, and who had low school commitment), and who had social learning opportunities which encouraged engagement in delinquent behavior (i.e., who had delinquent peers and who had moral attitudes which were supportive of engagement in unacceptable behaviour) were more likely to be gang involved.

The results from Cheon et al. (2023) suggest that interventions which are designed to reduce gang involvement may focus on increasing social control through parental involvement and building school commitment, on building self-control, and on reducing opportunities to develop attitudes and learn behaviors conducive to engagement in delinquent behavior. A limitation of Cheon et al. (2023) is that the analysis was based on bivariate correlations, which increases the likelihood of significant findings, especially since a large sample was used. The data used by Cheon et al. (2023) can be further analyzed using multivariate predictive modeling with the use of control variables to produce a more succinct list of the most important predictor variables.

In examining risk factors for gang involvement, it is also important to consider the reasons that persons join gangs. Form 5 students who were surveyed by Katz et al. (2023) and Cheon et al. (2023), and who had indicated that they had joined a gang (n = 178) were asked to indicate all of the reasons why they joined the gang (Table 4.8). The most frequently cited reason was to make friends, which was cited by 62.9 percent of school youths who had joined a gang. Other important reasons for joining were for protection (47.2 percent), to meet persons of the opposite sex (39.3 percent), to participate in group activities (32 percent), and because a friend was in the gang (27 percent).

Table 4.8: Reasons for joining a gang in Barbados

Reason	Percent
Make friend	62.9
Protection	47.2
Meet members of opposite sex	39.3
Participate in group activities	32.0
Friend was group member	27.0
Get money or other things	25.8
Someone in family was a group member	19.7
Feel like you belong to something	18.0
Feel important	12.9
Get away with illegal activities	12.4
Get money or other things from selling drugs	10.1

Source: Katz et al. (2023) and Cheon et al. (under review)

The LAPOP (2014) Barbados survey contained several variables which allow for an assessment of risk factors for gang involvement. In this analysis, gang presence, the extent to which gangs affected the neighborhood, and youth involvement in gangs were used as dependent variables (Table 4.9). Variables which were used as predictors in regression modeling included neighborhood social cohesion, neighborhood social control, neighborhood decay and police performance in the neighborhood. Several variables were used as controls in the regression models. These included perceptions of neighborhood safety, assaults in the neighborhood, shootings in the neighborhood and drug trafficking in the neighborhood.

Regression analysis indicated that social control as well as police performance in the neighborhood were negatively related to the gang dependent variables, while neighborhood decay was positively related to the gang variables. The results suggest that neighborhoods where informal social controls are effective are less

likely to have gangs, are less likely to be affected by gangs, and are less likely to have young children or youths who are in gangs. The results also suggest that effective policing is associated with a lower likelihood of gangs in the neighborhood, lower impact of gangs in the neighborhood, and the reduced likelihood of children and young persons being involved with gangs. The results further suggest that a high level of neighborhood decay is associated with a greater likelihood of the presence of gangs in the neighborhood, greater impact of gangs in the neighborhood, and an increased likelihood of young children or persons being involved in gangs. Overall, the results suggest that interventions designed to reduce gang activity in Barbados should focus on building informal systems of social control in communities, on reducing neighborhood decay, and on improving the effectiveness of the police.

Several control variables were also significantly related to the gang variables. The results suggest that communities with gangs are more likely to have a drug trafficking and usage problem, and are more likely to have assaults as well as shootings. This suggests that if intervention efforts are able to reduce the prevalence of gangs this would result in a decrease in drug trafficking and use, assaults, and shootings.

Table 4.9: Predictors of gang variables in Barbados³⁰

	Gangs in the neighborhood	Extent to which neighborhood affected by gangs	Young persons in gangs
Social Cohesion	-.032	-.004	-.003
Social Control	***-.169	***-.025	***-.037
Neighborhood Decay	***.229	***.059	***.061
Police performance	***-.134	*-.016	**-.026
Perceptions of Safety	-.031	***-.044	***-.029
Drug trafficking and use	***.597	***.126	***.320
Assaults in the neighborhood	** .190	***.081	***.264
Shootings in the neighborhood	** .178	***.117	***.138
R²	³¹ .279	.267	.394

Source: LAPOP (2014)

The UNDP (2012) collected data in 2010 from random representative samples of adults in seven Caribbean countries (N = 11,207) of which Barbados was one (N = 1,506). The UNDP (2012) survey results allowed for an analysis of predictors of gang presence and violence in neighborhoods. The results suggest that better police performance is related to reduced gang presence and violence, while communities which were more cohesive had lower levels of gang violence. High levels of residential mobility as well as the cost of food (as an indicator of deprivation) were also related to high levels of gang violence. Not surprisingly, gangs were associated with higher levels of crime in Barbados.

The results of the UNDP (2012) survey suggest that gang interventions in Barbados can focus on improving community social cohesion and police effectiveness. A reduction in residential mobility can also have a positive impact in Barbados. The findings further suggest that a reduction in gangs should be associated with a reduction in crime.

³⁰ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

³¹ Nagelkerke R Square.

Table 4.10: Predictors of gang presence and violence in Barbados³²

	Gang presence in neighborhood	Gang violence in neighborhood
Unemployment	.093	-.007
Access to schooling	.058	³³ .050
Cost of food	-.119	*-.072
Cost of living	.067	.010
Poverty	-.073	-.005
Level of migration ³⁴	.078	*.052
Adequate sanitation	.091	.036
Social Cohesion	³⁵ -.026	***-.078
Informal social control	-.001	-.002
Police performance	***-.070	***-.091
Crime in the Community	***.470	***.432
	Nagelkerke R ² = .272	Adjusted R ² = .250

Source: UNDP (2012)

The CJRP (2016), in interviewing law enforcement personnel, members of the judiciary, community resource persons, and prisoners, asked about the causes of gang formation and violence in Barbados. Factors cited include low educational attainment and lack of access to quality education, as well as a high dropout rate from schools. The importance of education was highlighted when inmates who were gang members were asked to give their educational background to which many stated they were expelled, suspended or had little to no qualifications.

The family was also cited as an important factor which encouraged gang membership. Stakeholders interviewed by the CJRP (2016) cited factors such as a lack of parental supervision, breakdown in the family, absentee fathers, lack of extended families, having family members who were in gangs, and a general breakdown of norms and morals which also negatively affected the family. Stakeholders indicated that failures in the family translate to youths seeking friendships and support from outside of the family structure, and thus they may become vulnerable to joining gangs.

Interviews with stakeholders highlighted several societal and community conditions which fostered criminal and gang activity. An important factor which was cited was poor socioeconomic status, of which lack of employment opportunities and poverty were a part, lack of or no access to social programs and services, social exclusion, peer pressure, materialistic ideals, media influence, drug abuse and trafficking. A community member stated, in describing the community of the Pine, that economic deprivation is at a level where there is a sense of hopelessness and fatalism, and that community members feel a sense of social exclusion from mainstream society. He argued that these factors were strong drivers for gang involvement. Relatedly, a prisoner who was a member of the Dog Pound gang indicated that reasons for joining included having friends who were in the gang, the need for a sense of belonging and a sense of acceptance, as well as the need for power, status and respect. Citing the close knit nature of gangs, he stated “A block/gang is a family, we pick up for each other” (CJRP 2016, p. 54).

Related to the above, law enforcement agencies indicated that gangs are attractive because of the promise for material acquisition. One officer stated, “People also join under false hope thinking that if they join, they

³² Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

³³ p < .060

³⁴ Used as an indicator for residential mobility.

³⁵ p < .058

would get the girls, drugs, money and material benefits” (CJRP 2016, p. 93). The officer went on to state that parents also benefit from material things children bring home, quite often without questioning to determine where children may have sourced such things. The officer also stated that “Community conditions which enable these groups to take root are said to be poverty, materialistic ideals, gang glamorization as it relates to money and property” (CJRP 2016, p. 93). Members of the Judiciary further stated that gang leaders or dons display conspicuous wealth, which serves to attract youths. In addition, “Community leaders (dons) step in and provide basic needs and gain their loyalty and socialize them into what they want them to be; which causes a problem for police” (CJRP 2016, p. 96).

Law enforcement officers also stressed that corruption played a role in the perpetuation of gangs. The CJRP (2016, p. 97) stated that “Lower class communities were used as ‘gofers’ to distribute the drugs and guns, while according to the RPBF, the middle and upper class have the businesses and are the organizers.” Echoing these sentiments, an inmate stated, “Corruption of high ranking officials in society is responsible for many of the guns being put on the streets... Ghetto poor people are only responsible for using these firearms” (CJRP 2016, p. 98). Another inmate added that drugs and guns were being brought into Barbados by customs and police officers, and that marijuana which was seized by police officers was sold back into the streets. One inmate even indicated that he had purchased a firearm from a police officer. The CJRP (2016 p. 102) also suggested that in some cases there may be “a symbiotic relationship between politics, some police officers and street criminals.”

It was also discovered that some gangs actively recruited young persons. For example, a prisoner who was a Crips gang member indicated that recruitment from schools was primarily done on the first Saturday after the school term ended, and schools with a large number of students were targeted, for example, Sheraton and Rockley in Christ Church. Recruitment was typically done by the senior members of the gang.

Transnational links between gangs and criminal enterprises

There is very limited information on the transnational linkages between gangs in Barbados, and those in other countries. However, two of the most well-known gangs in Barbados, the Bloods and the Crips, were imported into Barbados. It was indicated earlier that persons who were deported from the United States brought the culture of both gangs back to Barbados, but it is not known whether there are any systematic linkages or cooperation between Barbadian factions of the Bloods and Crips, and their counterparts in the US. An incarcerated member of the Crips, however, noted that some of the members in his gang had migrated to Barbados from St. Vincent, Jamaica and England. One member of the Dog Pound gang who was interviewed by the CJRP (2016) also indicated that while the majority of members were Barbadian, there were members who had migrated to Barbados from other countries such as St. Lucia, Jamaica, St. Vincent, Trinidad, Columbia and Cuba. Some members had also migrated from Barbados to countries like England, USA, and St. Vincent

Law enforcement officers also indicated that gang members migrate to and from other countries. One officer noted that “The Jamaican Posse gang, who are known to be involved in fraud, assaults, money laundering, robbery, home invasions, kidnapping, murder, narcotics and firearm trafficking, has established its links here in Barbados as they recruit Barbadians as contacts on the ground” (CJRP 2016, p. 81). The presence of migratory criminals was also noted by police officers, as it was explained that persons are paid to come into the island to commit a specific criminal offence and then leave. Also highlighted was the illegal entry of gang members into the country by boat as some gang members were running from the law within their own territories.

Another police officer went on to state that gang members from foreign countries “see membership in these groups as an opportunity to make money. ...immigrants from Trinidad, Jamaica, St. Vincent and Guyana migrate to execute hits and gang leaders tend to gravitate towards Jamaicans because they are aggressive and good at concealment” (CJRP 2016, p. 82). He further stated that “Deportees are a major problem as it is

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believed that they are the main initiators of gang activity in Barbados. Deportees return to Barbados, become involved in gang activity and impress their criminal behavior on the youth” (CJRP 2016, p. 82).

5. DOMINICA

Prevalence of the gang problem

While there has been extensive research on gangs, there has been limited research on gang activity in the Caribbean and even less on gangs in the Commonwealth of Dominica. Due to the limited information about gangs in Dominica, it is challenging to assess the scope, nature, and magnitude of gangs, gang membership, and gang activity in the nation.

Katz and Nuño (2017) surveyed police experts in the nation's 16 police station districts, with police experts in all 16 districts responding. The police estimate that the country had ten gangs and 113 gang members. Six of the ten gangs (60 percent) and 91 of the 113 gang members (80.5 percent) were located in Soufriere and Roseau. Of interest, the police reported that one of the gangs in Dominica was comprised of all females, and another gang was comprised of "mostly females." Dominica's gangs were typically comprised of 16 to 25-year-olds. The police reported that gangs were first observed in 1996, and two gangs in the nation have existed for at least 11 to 20 years, with the remainder being in existence for less than five years. Almost all of the gangs had an identifiable name, and 50 percent wore clothing that distinguished them from others and other gangs. The police reported that no other group identifiers distinguished gang members, none of the gangs had foreign-born members, and none promoted or supported a particular political issue.

As part of the same study, Katz and Nuño (2017) surveyed 794 (82.8 percent) of 10th grade students³⁶ in 14 of the nation's 15 public schools—roughly 8.5 percent of the youth self-reported gang membership. Males (14.4 percent) were more likely to self-report gang membership than females (4.8 percent). Those from "other" ethnic groups were the most likely to self-report gang membership (28.6 percent), followed by East Indians (10.5 percent), Afro-Caribbeans (8.2 percent), and those of mixed ethnicity (7.1). Just over 16 percent of immigrants self-reported gang membership compared to 7.7 percent of non-immigrants. This finding was supported by interview data obtained from key stakeholders who stated that immigrants and deportees from the United States were the cause of much of the nation's gang problem.

Among youth who reported gang membership, 9.3 percent indicated that their gang had existed for less than one year, 48.1 percent reported that their gang had existed for one to four years, 29.6 percent reported that their gang had existed for five to ten years, 9.3 percent for 11-20 years, and 3.7 percent for 20+ years. The self-reported gang members indicated that group identifiers were common. More than 73 percent reported that their gang used special colors, symbols, and signs, 72.2 percent had an identifiable name, 42.3 percent used tattoos, and 39.2 percent had identifiable clothing. Just over half of the self-reported gang members reported that their gang held regular meetings (54.7 percent) and claimed territory or turf (51.9 percent), 43.1 percent had rules and codes, and 42 percent had recognized leaders.

The 2016 LAPOP survey in Dominica, which was based on a random representative sample of 1016 adults, provides additional insights into gangs in Dominica. When asked whether there were gangs in their neighborhoods, 13.7 percent of the respondents replied "yes". In St. George 23.9 percent of respondents indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods, compared to 11.2 percent in the Eastern Region³⁷, and 7 percent in the Western Region³⁸.

When asked to indicate the extent to which their neighborhoods were affected by gangs, in Dominica as a whole 3 percent said, "a lot", while 13.1 percent said "somewhat", 24.5 percent said, "a little" and 59.4 percent

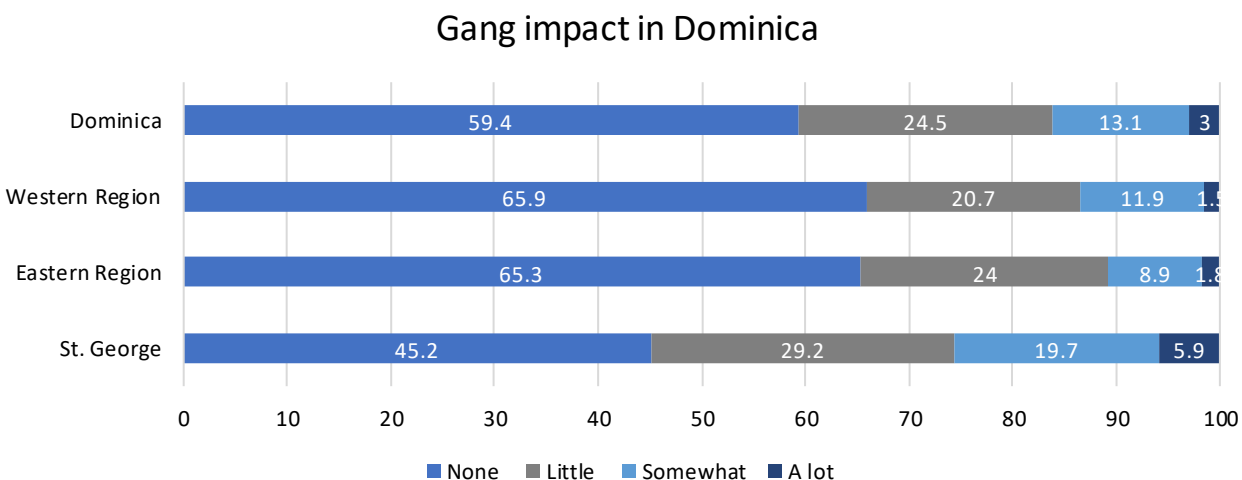
³⁶ 10th grade in the United States.

³⁷ The Eastern Region includes St. Luke, St. Mark, St. Patrick, St. David and St. Andrew.

³⁸ The Western Region includes St. John, St. Peter, St. Joseph and St. Paul.

indicated that their neighborhoods were not affected by gangs (Figure 5.1). In St. George the largest proportion of respondents indicated that their neighborhoods were affected a lot by gangs (5.9 percent). This was followed by the Eastern (1.8 percent) and Western (1.5 percent) Region.

Figure 5.1



Source: LAPOP 2016

Respondents in the 2016 LAPOP survey were also asked to indicate the extent to which gangs get in the way of daily activities such as going out or going to the store. The results show that in Dominica as a whole 0.4 percent said that gangs get in the way a lot, while 1.9 percent said that gangs get in the way to some extent, and 4.5 percent said that gangs get in the way a little. In St. George 3.9 percent indicated that gangs get in the way a lot or somewhat, compared to 2.1 percent in the Western Region and 1 percent in the Eastern Region.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether in their neighborhood gangs were “more of a problem”, “less of a problem”, or “about the same” as they were a year ago. The results indicate that in Dominica as a whole, 3.2 percent indicated that gangs had become more of a problem, while 5 percent indicated that they had become less of a problem, and 5.1 percent indicated that they were about the same. In St. George 5.6 percent indicated that gangs had become more of a problem, compared to 2.4 percent in the Western Region and 2.1 percent in the Eastern Region.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether young people or children who were in gangs were a problem in their neighborhood. In Dominica as a whole 4.1 percent of respondents indicated that this posed a “very serious” problem in their neighborhood, while 7.8 percent responded, “somewhat serious”, and 14.5 percent responded, “a little serious”. In St. George 18.7 percent indicated that young persons in gangs were a very or somewhat serious problem, compared to 9.1 percent in the Western Region and 8.9 percent in the Eastern Region.

Overall, based on the findings of the 2016 LAPOP survey, 13.7 percent of respondents in Dominica indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhoods, with 23.9 percent in St. George indicating similarly. The data suggest that St. George is disproportionately affected by gangs as it exceeds all other locations in terms of the range of indicators which were examined.

A short history of gangs

In 1996, Dominica began to study and document gang activity soon after other Caribbean countries recognized a gang problem. Many residents and stakeholders believe that their nation's gang problems resulted from the exportation of American popular culture and consumption of American media, such as MTV, biographical documentaries, and television shows (Katz & Nuño, 2017). Other stakeholders, however, reported that immigrants might have been responsible for the emergence of the gang problem in Dominica. Katz and Nuño (2017) reported that stakeholders often referenced a belief that immigrant youth who relocated due to personal and financial reasons brought gang behavior from their home country and into the Caribbean (Katz & 2017). Others noted that they believed some youth had been deported back to the Caribbean from the United States, where they had been exposed to gangs and gang behavior and then spread gang culture in the Caribbean (Katz & Nuño, 2017).

Gang involvement in crime

While school youth in Dominica self-reported very high levels of delinquency in general, self-reported gang members reported significantly more delinquency than non-gang members. For example, 60.1 percent of non-gang members self-reported engaging in property crime in the past 12 months compared to 87 percent of gang members; and 76.1 percent of non-gang members self-reported engaging in violent crime in the past 12 months compared to 94.6 percent of gang members (Katz & Nuño, 2017). Gang members were also roughly five times more likely to self-report chronic (10+ times) involvement in attacking someone with a weapon (18.9 percent vs. 3.7 percent), about nine times more likely to use a weapon or force to get money or things from people (9.6 vs. 1.1 percent), and about four times more likely to sell drugs chronically (25.9 vs. 6.7 percent) than non-gang members (Katz & Nuño, 2017).

Police experts noted that all ten gangs in Dominica sometimes or often used alcohol and illegal drugs. They also noted that six gangs were sometimes involved in drug trafficking, two to three gangs were sometimes involved in firearms trafficking, and no gangs were involved in human trafficking (Katz & Nuño, 2017).

Risk factors for gang involvement

On average, self-reported gang members in Dominica reported joining their gang at 11.6 years of age. Most of the self-reported gang members stated that they joined their gang to make friends (63 percent), and about half reported that they joined because someone in their family was a gang member (53.7 percent) and/or they were seeking protection (50 percent). A minority of gang members joined their gang to get away with illegal things (22.2 percent) and/or get money or things from selling drugs (25.9 percent) (Katz & Nuño, 2017).

In Dominica, among self-reported gang members, 90.7 percent reported feeling they could depend on one another, and 96.3 percent believed they could stand up for each other (Katz & Nuño, 2017). In addition to feeling that the gang provided protection and kinship, 72.5 percent of gang youth stated that the gang made them feel useful, 71.7 percent said that the gang gave them a sense of importance, and 65.4 percent felt that the gang made them feel they belonged somewhere (Katz & Nuño, 2017).

The 2016 LAPOP data allow for an examination of risk factors for several gang variables (Table 5.1). Dependent variables used in the analysis included the presence of gangs in the neighborhood, the extent to which neighborhoods were affected by gangs, and the extent to which young children or persons in gangs are a problem in the neighborhood. Independent variables included neighborhood social cohesion, neighborhood social control, neighborhood decay and police performance. Control variables included perceptions of safety, drug trafficking and use in the neighborhood, as well as assaults and shootings in the neighborhood.

Neighborhood decay was related to the extent to which the neighborhood was affected by gangs. More specifically, neighborhoods with greater levels of decay were affected by gangs to a greater extent. Police performance was inversely related to the presence of gangs in the neighborhood. The results suggest that

better performance of the police is related to reduced gang presence in the neighborhood. The results suggest that reducing neighborhood decay and improving police performance may have an impact on gangs in Dominica.

With respect to the control variables, persons who resided in neighborhoods with gangs, or where neighborhoods were affected by gangs to a greater extent, or where youths in gangs were a problem were more fearful. In addition, all three gang variables were related to drug trafficking and use. The results suggest that neighborhoods with gangs are likely to have higher levels of drug trafficking and use. Assaults and shootings were not related to the gang variables. This suggests that gangs in Dominica may not engage in these activities to the extent that reliable statistical effects are detected.

Table 5.1: Predictors of gang variables in Dominica³⁹

	Gangs in the neighborhood	Extent to which neighborhood affected by gangs	Young persons in gangs
Social Cohesion	.040	.013	-.016
Social Control	.056	.031	-.022
Neighborhood Decay	.147	***.081	.044
Police performance	*-.117	⁴⁰ -.026	.006
Perceptions of Safety	***.214	***.082	** .039
Drug trafficking and use	***.257	***.108	***.232
Assaults in the neighborhood	.133	.019	***.139
Shootings in the neighborhood	.181	.139	** .133
R²	⁴¹.239	.297	.402

Source: LAPOP 2016

Katz et al. (2023) and Cheon et al. (2023) examined the association between current gang membership and several theoretical concepts among Form 5⁴² students in nine Caribbean nations (N = 18,312), of which Dominica was one (N = 835). The findings from these studies provide additional insights into risk factors for gang membership.

Using point biserial correlations, Cheon et al. (2023) found that self-reported current gang involvement among school-attending Form 5 youth in Dominica was positively correlated with impulsivity, risk-seeking, having delinquent peers, and moral attitudes/disengagement. Self-reported current gang involvement was negatively correlated with parental/family attachment, parental monitoring and school commitment.

The findings suggest that youths who have low self-control (i.e., are impulsive or risk-seeking), who have weak parental/family attachment, who received little parental monitoring, who have low school commitment, who have delinquent peers, and who have moral attitudes which were supportive of engagement in unacceptable behaviour are more likely to be gang involved.

The results from Cheon et al. (2023) suggest that interventions which are designed to reduce gang involvement in Dominica can focus on increasing self-control, in improving parental supervision and

³⁹ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

⁴⁰ p < .061

⁴¹ Nagelkerke R Square.

⁴² 10th grade in the United States.

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attachment, in improving school commitment, in reducing opportunities for engagement with delinquent peers, and in improving moral attitudes.

Transnational links between gangs and criminal enterprises

The 2021 Global Organized Crime Index Report noted that there are no large gangs in Dominica, but only small gangs that operate at a local level and deal in the trafficking of local drugs. They further reported that gangs in Dominica are small in size, maintain a low profile, and are relatively unorganized (GOCI, 2021). The Global Organized Crime Index emphasizes that while cocaine and cannabis are the main drug markets in Dominica, the nation is a “transit country,” where drugs are trafficked through and stored for short periods of time (GOCI, 2021).

Katz and Nuño (2017) reported that while the police estimated that one of the gangs in Dominica had a formal relationship with gangs or criminal enterprises in other countries, 50 percent of self-reported gang members attending school reported that their gang had a formal relationship with gangs or criminal enterprises in other countries. The authors provided no additional information.

6. GRENADA

Prevalence of the gang problem

Relative to other Caribbean countries examined, Grenada exhibited a comparatively lower presence of gang activity. The Grenada police authorities reported the existence of 22 gangs within the nation, comprising 299 gang members (Katz & Nuno, 2017). Grenada's students reported a lower prevalence of gang members (9 percent) when compared to other countries (Katz et al. 2023), and a small portion of the populace expressed concerns about gangs (Figure 6.1). Ninety seven percent of those surveyed in the most recent LAPOP survey reported that gangs did not interfere with their daily life, and only 6.7 percent reported gangs in their neighborhood.

Katz and Nuno (2017) also discerned diverse stakeholder perspectives concerning gangs. Generally, stakeholders were inclined to describe the characteristics and attributes of gangs rather than delineating what gangs were not. In contrast to their American counterparts, these stakeholders characterized Caribbean gangs as less organized, less motivated by financial gain, and possessing limited organizational functionality. Stakeholders frequently asserted their nations' inability to effectively address gang-related issues or formulate mitigation strategies. They cited deficiencies in formal institutional capacity, hindering the provision of crucial information, such as the size, geographic distribution, and activities of gangs to policymakers. Additionally, stakeholders frequently reported a lack of formal training in matters pertaining to gangs.

Like the United States (Decker & Weerman, 2005), gang activity in Grenada exhibited spatial concentration. While gangs were observed in 67 percent of Grenada's police station districts (eight out of twelve), Katz and Nuno (2017) noted that they were predominantly concentrated in specific areas. Most gangs emanated from the Greenville police station district (32 percent), whereas the Gouyave Police Station district reported only one gang (4.5 percent).

In February 2023, a news report issued by *The New Today Grenada* drew attention to a surge in gang activity within the nation, originating from a conflict emerging among Saigon, The Carenage, and 4-roads. Notably, this escalation in gang tensions was observed to stem not predominantly from illicit drug trade but rather from longstanding rivalries among factions such as the Bloods, Ginger Crew Days, and similar groups. It was reported that the return of a prominent Bloods member from the United States heightening tensions. It was also reported that the Carenage and the 4-Roads gangs have entered into an alliance (The New Today Grenada, 2023). Some of the violence in Grenada is believed to be due to retaliation between these gangs.

Many Caribbean countries have active street gangs, but activity varies across nations. Hill (2013) reported that Grenada had moderate gang violence. Gang members were commonly identified by red, blue, and black scarves. Gang members frequently engaged in violence with rival gang members. They tended to utilize cutlasses and maiming, according to the Royal Grenada Police Force (Memorandum from the Royal Grenada Police Force August 2008).

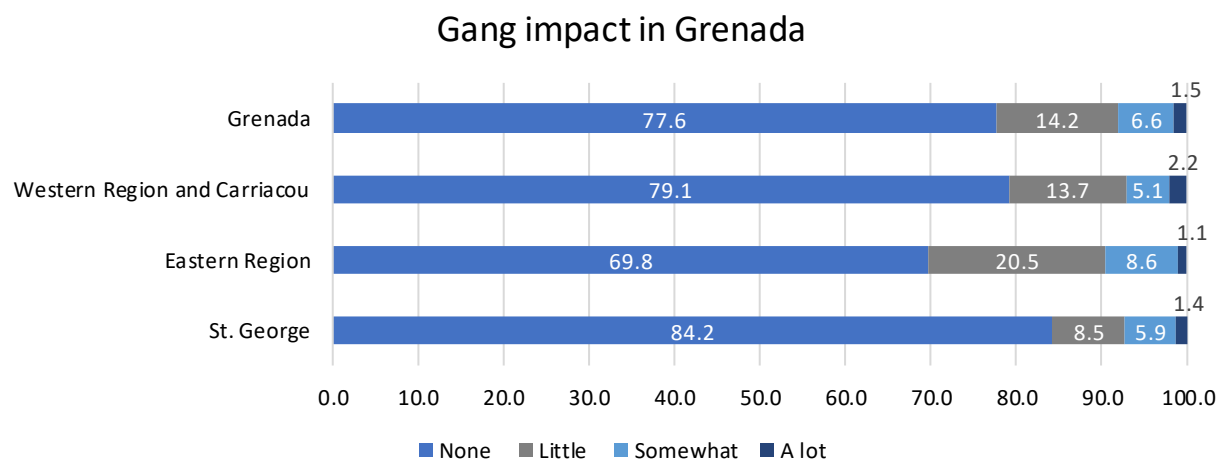
Data from the 2016 LAPOP survey which was administered to a random representative sample of 1004 adults provide additional insights into gangs in Grenada. When asked whether there were criminal gangs in their neighborhoods, 6.7 percent of all respondents said "yes". In St. George 4.4 percent indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods, compared to 7.6 percent in the Eastern Region⁴³ and 8.3 percent in the Western Region and Carriacou⁴⁴.

⁴³ This includes St. Andrew and St. David.

⁴⁴ This includes St. John, St. Mark, St. Patrick, and Carriacou.

Overall, 1.5 percent of LAPOP respondents in Grenada indicated that their neighborhoods were affected “a lot” by gangs, while 6.6 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were affected “somewhat” and 14.2 percent said that their neighborhoods were affected “a little” (Figure 6.1). In the Western Region and Carriacou, 2.2 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were affected a lot by gangs, compared to 1.4 percent in St. George and 1.1 percent in the Eastern Region.

Figure 6.1



Source: LAPOP 2016

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether gangs get in the way of daily activities such as going out or going shopping. In Grenada as a whole 0.1 percent indicated that gangs get in the way of daily activities “a lot”, while 0.5 percent indicated that gangs get in the way “to some extent”, and 2 percent indicated that gangs get in the way “a little”. Fully 97.4 percent of respondents in Grenada indicated that gangs did not get in the way of their daily life at all. In the Eastern region 1.4 percent indicated that gangs get in the way of daily activities a lot or somewhat, compared to 0.3 percent in the Western Region and Carriacou, and 0 percent in St. George.

When asked whether gangs had become more or less of a problem than they were one year ago, 1.4 percent of respondents in Grenada indicated that they had become “more of a problem” while 2.9 percent indicated that they had become “less of a problem” and 2.3 percent indicated that they were “about the same”. In the Eastern Region 3.4 percent indicated that gangs had become more of a problem, compared to 0.7 percent in the Western Region and Carriacou, and 0 percent in St. George.

Respondents were finally asked to indicate whether children and youths in gangs were a problem in their neighborhood. The results show that in Grenada as a whole, 4.8 percent indicated that this was a “very serious” problem in their neighborhood, while 4.4 percent indicated that this was “somewhat serious”, 6.1 percent said “a little serious”, 8.1 percent said “not serious at all”, and 76.6 percent indicated that this was “not a problem”. In the Eastern Region 13.8 percent indicated that young persons in gangs was a very or somewhat serious problem in their neighborhoods, compared to 6.6 percent in the Western Region and Carriacou, and 6.6 percent in St. George.

Overall, the findings from the 2016 LAPOP survey indicate that 6.7 percent of respondents in Grenada indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhoods. The Eastern Region and Carriacou had the largest proportion of respondents who indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhood, as well as the largest proportion indicating that gangs affected their communities a lot. In contrast, the Eastern region took

the top position with respect to gangs getting in the way of daily life, becoming more of a problem than the previous year, and in terms of children and young persons in gangs being a serious problem.

The Grenada Prison Service provided the home addresses of all inmates in Grenada as of January 2023 (N = 357). The parishes within which inmates resided are presented in Table 6.1, while Figure 6.2 maps each inmate's home address, and indicates which inmates are gang members and which are non-gang members.

When all inmates were considered, the majority resided in St. George (5.6 percent in the Town of St. George and 41.5 percent in other areas of St. George), St. Andrew (19.2 percent), St. David (10.6 percent) and St. John (7.6 percent). Five point six percent of the inmates resided in St. Patrick before they were incarcerated, while 2.2 percent resided in St. Mark and 1.7 percent in Carriacou. The home addresses of another 5.9 percent of inmates were unknown. Prisoner rates were highest in the Town of St. George (which had a rate of 630.7 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants), the rest of St. George (421.9 per 100,000), St. John (318.1) and St. David (295.1).

Table 6.1 also shows the number and percent of inmates who were gang members in each parish. The parish with the largest proportion who were gang members prior to being incarcerated was St. John. Of all inmates who resided in St. John, 22.2 percent were gang members. This was followed by St. Patrick (15 percent) and St. Andrew (11.6 percent). In terms of the number of inmates who were gang members, the largest number (n = 15 or 44.1 percent of all incarcerated gang members) came from St. George.

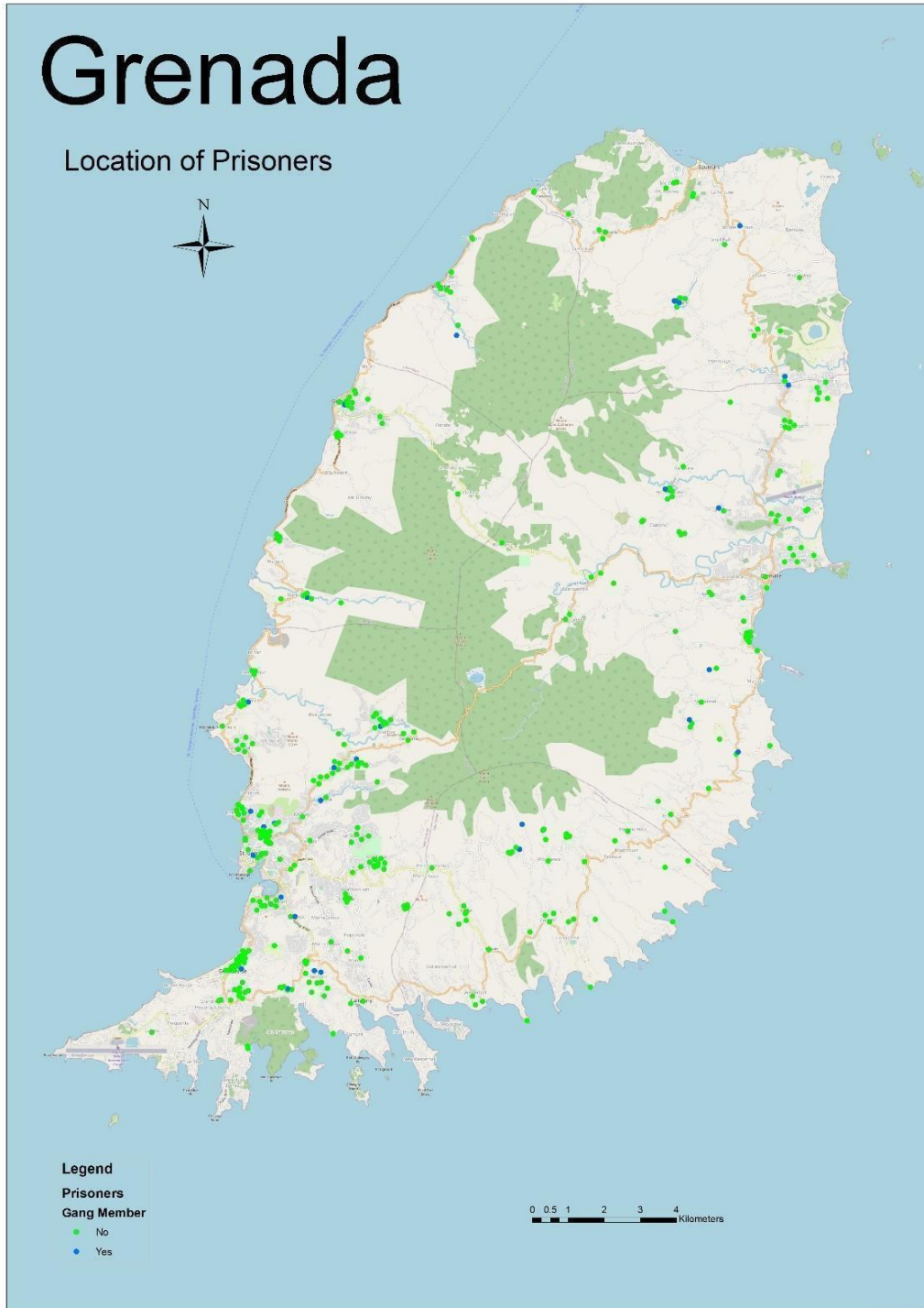
Table 6.1: Parishes in which inmates in Grenada resided prior to being incarcerated

Parish	No. of Prisoners	Number who are gang members	Percent who are gang members
St. John	27	6	22.2
St. Patrick	20	3	15.0
St. Andrew	69	8	11.6
St. George	168	15	8.9
St. David	38	2	5.3
St. Mark	8	0	0.0
Carriacou	6	0	0.0
Unknown	21	0	0.0
Grand Total	357	34	9.5

Source: Grenada Prison Service

Figure 6.2: Map of Grenada showing the home addresses of inmates who are gang and non-gang members⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Based on the prison population as of January 2023 (N = 357 inmates).



Source: Grenada Prison Service

A short history of gangs

The "Mongoose Gang," instigated under the leadership of Sir Eric Gairy, served as a quasi-law enforcement entity deployed to quell dissent and protests during the years spanning from 1967 to 1979, as documented by Olson in 1991. Sir Eric Gairy held the position of Prime Minister in Grenada during this period (Olson,

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1991). Functioning as a clandestine paramilitary organization, the Mongoose Gang operated for nearly a decade, commencing its activities in 1971. Regrettably, historical records pertaining to this enigmatic group remain limited. However, it is postulated that the gang constituted a 30-member police unit, featuring individuals with criminal backgrounds who had sought refuge abroad. These members were alternatively identified as "Special Reserve Police" (S.R.P.) or "Volunteer Constables" (Bloody Monday, 2019).

The Mongoose Gang is widely believed to have been responsible for numerous acts of violence against opposition leaders and the suppression of critical voices, as reported by the Canada Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada in 1989. It is pertinent to mention that members of the Mongoose Gang did not display any distinct or identifiable attire, as elucidated by Nangwaya and Truscello in 2017. Their armament varied, with occasional instances of carrying rifles, but their primary choice of weaponry typically consisted of "thick pieces of wood" (Nangwaya & Truscello, 2017).

After achieving independence in 1974, the nation witnessed the inception of street gangs that occasionally engaged in activities associated with illicit drugs. These entities did not manifest as highly structured criminal enterprises but operated as loose affiliations. The focal point of gang involvement predominantly encompassed minor criminal infractions, notably cases of larceny. Other gangs were believed to have emerged in 1990.

Gang involvement in crime

Street gangs in Grenada tend to participate in petty crimes and occasionally have control over specific neighborhoods. These gangs tend to have limited access to guns and frequently rely on other loose criminal networks in Guyana, Venezuela and St. Vincent (The Organized Crime Index, 2021).

Street gang behavior frequently contributes to the prevalence of crime and violence. As Katz and Nuno (2017) reported, Grenada exhibited a relatively high incidence of self-reported delinquency among gang members and non-members. A notable proportion of non-gang members, comprising 68.6 percent, acknowledged their involvement in property offenses within the past year, while 70.2 percent of non-members self-reported committing violent offenses during the same period. Existing literature underscores a disparity in the propensity for Caribbean school youth to engage in violent behavior, with rates ranging from 3 to 10 times higher in comparison to their North American and European counterparts (Enzmann et al., 2010; Gatti, Haymoz, & Schadee, 2011).

Katz and Nuno's (2017) study found that the ratio of violent crimes committed by gang members compared to non-gang members in Grenada was less than 2 to 1. In contrast, youth in Europe and the United States exhibited a more pronounced disparity, with a ratio of about 4 to 1 (Gatti, Haymoz, & Schadee, 2011). Grenadian gang members demonstrated a nearly 15 percent higher likelihood of engaging in delinquent activities within the past year, accompanied by a significantly heightened frequency of criminal acts, ranging from 5 to 6 times more frequent than non-gang youth. Furthermore, gang members displayed a 4 to 5-fold greater propensity for employing weapons in acts of aggression. As Katz and Nuno (2017) reported, stakeholders predominantly attributed gang-related violence to territorial disputes and retaliatory actions between gang factions. Notably, gang members were found to be unlikely participants in firearm or human trafficking, with 81 percent of surveyed gang members reporting no involvement in firearm trafficking and 100 percent abstaining from human trafficking. In contrast, approximately half of Grenada's gang members self-reported selling drugs, which was 2 to 3 times the amount self-reported by non-members.

In contrast to several other Caribbean nations, Grenada exhibits comparatively lower homicide rates. Over the period spanning from 2017 to 2021, Grenada maintained an average murder rate of 9.6 per 100,000 inhabitants, notably contrasting with St. Kitts & Nevis, where the corresponding murder rate stood at 34.2. Grenada encounters challenges in the comprehensive reporting of homicide data, consequently impeding the capacity to draw definitive inferences regarding the association between gangs and violence.

Data from the Grenada Prison Service provide additional insights into crimes committed by gang members (Table 6.2). Data from the prison population as of January 2023 (N = 357 inmates) show that when all gang members were considered (n = 35) the largest proportion (28.6 percent) was incarcerated for murder. This was followed by woundings (22.9 percent), robbery (17.1 percent), stealing (11.4 percent) and sexual offences (8.6 percent). Non-gang members committed a wider range of offences than gang members. When all non-gang members were considered (n = 322), the largest proportion were incarcerated for sexual offences (23.3 percent), murder (20.2 percent), stealing (18.3 percent), wounding (10.9 percent) and burglary/house breaking (7.1 percent). While non-gang members committed a wider range of crimes than gang members, the data suggest that the most prevalent crimes for both groups are similar. The crimes most likely to be committed by both groups include murder, wounding, stealing, and sexual offences. At the same time, gang members appear to be more heavily involved in robberies than non-gang members.

Table 6.2: Crimes committed by gang and non-gang members in Grenada⁴⁶

	Gang Member	Non-gang member
Murder	28.6	20.2
Wounding	22.9	10.9
Robbery	17.1	3.7
Stealing	11.4	18.3
Sexual Offence	8.6	23.3
Burglary/House Breaking	5.7	7.1
Drug Offence	5.7	5.6
Assault	0.0	1.6
Arson	0.0	1.6
Manslaughter	0.0	1.2
Attempted Murder	0.0	0.9
Other	0.0	5.6

Source: Grenada Prison Service

Risk factors for gang involvement

As demonstrated by the empirical findings of Katz and Nuno (2017), gang membership in Grenada was characterized by distinct demographic attributes. Predominantly, gang membership exhibited a pronounced male predominance, with no gangs reporting an equitable gender distribution or a majority of female members. The police reported that more than 70 percent of gangs were exclusively male collectives. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that 3.7 percent of female youth reported gang membership compared to 4.7 percent of males.

Furthermore, police experts reported that 77.3 percent of gangs were primarily comprised of 19 to 25-year-olds, 13.6 percent of gangs were primarily comprised of youth 25 years old and older, and 9.1 percent were comprised of 16 to 18-year-olds. On average, school youth who self-reported gang membership reported that they joined their gang at approximately 16 years of age (Katz and Nuno, 2017).

Police experts reported that most gang members were Afro-Caribbean. However, youth self-report data did not show that Afro-Caribbean youth were more likely to self-report gang membership than other ethnic backgrounds. For example, among those surveyed by Katz and Nuno (2017), youth of mixed ethnicity (9.5

⁴⁶ Based on the prison population as of January 2023 (N = 357 inmates). Column percentages are shown.

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percent) and other ethnicities (7.1 percent) demonstrated a higher likelihood of self-identifying as gang members. Foreign-born youth (5.7 percent) were more likely to self-report gang membership when contrasted with native-born youth (4.0 percent).

Self-reported gang members in Grenada were more likely to originate from non-traditional family structures. Specifically, gang members in Grenada displayed a 25 percent greater likelihood of residing in non-conventional household settings when compared to non-gang members.

Gang-affiliated youth in Grenada were more likely to possess lower levels of self-control. Self-control, in this context, pertains to "the inclination to refrain from engaging in actions whose long-term consequences outweigh their immediate advantages" (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1994, p. 3). It is plausible that gang members may recognize the immediate benefits of gang affiliation, such as companionship and protection, while possibly underestimating the long-term risks associated with heightened victimization rates and diminished academic performance. Interestingly, gang-affiliated youth did not exhibit an increased likelihood of experiencing inadequate parental supervision, a phenomenon attributed by Katz and Nuno (2017) to the elevated levels of neighborhood cohesion prevalent in Caribbean nations.

The most frequently cited reasons for gang membership in Grenada were to cultivate friendships (64.9 percent) and to establish connections with the opposite sex (51.4 percent). Additionally, a significant proportion of youth indicated that family members' involvement in a gang (56.8 percent) and the pursuit of personal protection (59.5 percent) were influential factors driving their membership. A substantial number of the youth asserted that they were "compelled" to join a gang as a means of safeguarding themselves, believing that gang affiliation lessened their likelihood of victimization. Notably, the majority of youth did not report joining their gang with the intent of engaging in criminal activities, including generating income through drug distribution, as only 8.1 percent indicated such motives (Katz and Nuno, 2017).

In contrast to the United States, many Grenadian youth involved in gangs did not undergo a formalized initiation process. Katz and Nuno's (2017) research found that approximately 24.3 percent of youth respondents indicated the absence of any initiation rituals or procedures. Furthermore, a mere 2.7 percent of gang members reported being subjected to physical initiation rites, commonly called "getting jumped in," and an additional 2.7 percent reported engaging in physical altercations as an initiation requirement. Additionally, a small fraction, approximately 5.4 percent of gang members, claimed to have been born into gang involvement. An additional 5.4 percent stated that they had to commit a criminal act as a prerequisite for gang membership.

Data from the 2016 LAPOP survey provide additional insights into variables which predict gang outcomes (Table 6.3). Neighborhood decay was a significant predictor of the presence of gangs in the neighborhood and the extent to which gangs affected the neighborhood. The results suggest that neighborhoods which exhibit signs of decay are more likely to have criminal gangs, and are more likely to be affected by gangs. Police performance was inversely related to the impact of gangs on neighborhoods. The results suggest that neighborhoods which benefit from better police performance are less likely to be affected by gangs.

Several control variables were also significant in the regression models in Table 6.3. Drug trafficking and use was related to all three gang variables, while assaults were related to two of the gang variables and shootings to one of the gang variables. This generally suggests that gangs in an area are related to an increased likelihood of drug trafficking and use, assaults, and shootings. Of these, shootings were the least important as it was a significant predictor of only one of the gang outcomes. Not surprisingly, the results also suggest that persons who reside in neighborhoods with gangs feel more unsafe.

Overall, the results of the 2016 LAPOP survey in Grenada suggest that interventions which are designed to reduce the presence or impact of gangs can focus on reducing neighborhood decay and improving police

performance. Success in reducing the presence or impact of gangs should lead to a reduction in drug trafficking and use, assaults and shootings, and should lead to improved perceptions of safety.

Table 6.3: Predictors of gang variables in Grenada⁴⁷

	Gangs in the neighborhood	Extent to which neighborhood affected by gangs	Young persons in gangs
Social Cohesion	.191	.019	-.002
Social Control	.054	.015	.013
Neighborhood Decay	** .487	* .052	-.004
Police performance	-.031	*** -.044	⁴⁸ -.039
Perceptions of Safety	** .222	*** .059	** .051
Drug trafficking and use	*** .289	*** .077	*** .203
Assaults in the neighborhood	** .367	*** .097	.034
Shootings in the neighborhood	.026	.002	*** .262
R²	⁴⁹ .281	.248	.303

Source: LAPOP 2016

Using point biserial correlations, Cheon et al. (2023) found that self-reported current gang involvement among school-attending Form 5 youth in Grenada was positively correlated with impulsivity, risk-seeking, having delinquent peers, and moral attitudes/disengagement. Self-reported current gang involvement was negatively correlated with parental monitoring and school commitment.

The findings suggest that youths who have low self-control (i.e., are impulsive or risk-seeking), who received little parental monitoring, who have low school commitment, who have delinquent peers, and who have moral attitudes which were supportive of engagement in unacceptable behaviour are more likely to be gang involved.

The results from Cheon et al. (2023) suggest that interventions which are designed to reduce gang involvement in Grenada can focus on increasing self-control, in improving parental supervision, in improving school commitment, in reducing opportunities for engagement with delinquent peers, and in improving moral attitudes.

Transnational links between gangs and criminal enterprises

The Globalized Organized Crime Index for 2021 noted that Grenada does not host significant “mafia-style” criminal organizations within its borders. Instead, the criminal landscape primarily comprises loosely connected street gangs. Grenada maintains loose criminal networks with neighboring countries such as Guyana, Venezuela, and St. Vincent. These neighboring nations serve as the primary sources for the supply of cannabis and cocaine, which are subsequently routed for distribution in Europe and the United States. Notably, Venezuela and Guyana exert a significant influence in Grenada's drug trafficking activities.

Within Grenada, the Customs authority maintains a presence in St. George and predominantly conducts inspections related to import duties. In addition to their primary responsibilities, they also undertake inspections to identify and interdict illicit drug shipments. Collaborating closely with the Royal Grenada Police,

⁴⁷ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

⁴⁸ P < .066

⁴⁹ Nagelkerke R Square.

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Customs plays an integral role in confiscating illegal narcotics. Furthermore, the Globalized Organized Crime Index for 2021 underscores Grenada's susceptibility to the trans-shipment of cocaine due to its geographical proximity to South America.

7. GUYANA

Prevalence of the gang problem

While not as high as some of its Caribbean neighbors, Guyana experienced a moderately high homicide rate, with an average of 16.4 homicides per 100,000 population between 2017 and 2021. Past scholarship suggests that Guyana has a moderate level of gang violence; however, researchers note very little data is available on the problem (Hill, 2013; Hill & Morris, 2017). As of 2015, little systematic information on gangs had been collected in Guyana; police estimate of the street gang problem were unavailable in the nation and limited news reports mentioned gang homicides (Katz, 2015).

The most extensive effort to document the scope and nature of gang problems in Guyana was based on a project carried out by the Regional Security System (RSS) and Arizona State University (ASU) (Katz & Nuño, 2017; Katz et al., 2023). The study surveyed police experts in the 74 police districts, 3,666 Form 5 students, and 89 detained youth in 2015. Results from the police expert survey identified 9 gangs and 335 gang members concentrated in five police station districts (Katz & Nuño, 2017). No gangs had existed less than a year or over 20 years. A third had existed from 1 to 4 years, a third from 5 to 10 years, and a third from 11 to 20 years. Just under half of the gangs (44.4 percent) had an identifiable name, 22.2 percent used signs as identifiers, 55.6 percent had identifiable clothing, 22.2 percent had identifiable tattoos, and 44.4 percent had an identifiable way of speaking. About 11.1 percent of gangs were identified by police experts as promoting or supporting a particular political issue. In a survey of Form 5 school-attending youth in the same year, Katz et al. (2023) report that 18 percent of youth identified as a current gang member.

According to the most recent LAPOP survey conducted in Guyana in 2016 (N = 1577 adults), the public perceives a moderate level of gang activity in the nation. The results show that 8.2 percent of all persons surveyed indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods. Areas with the highest proportion of respondents indicating that there were gangs in their neighborhoods were Regions 2, 5 and 6 (10.4 percent), Greater Georgetown (9.5 percent), and Regions 3 and the rest of Region 4 apart from Greater Georgetown (8.3 percent). In Regions 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10, 2.8 percent of residents indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhood.

The LAPOP respondents were also asked to indicate the extent to which their neighborhoods were affected by gangs. In Guyana as a whole, 6.2 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were affected “a lot”, while 7.8 percent said “somewhat”, and 24.7 percent said, “a little” and 61.3 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were not affected by gangs (Figure 7.1). The area which stood out with the largest proportion reporting that neighborhoods were affected a lot by gangs was Regions 2, 5 and 6 (8.2 percent). This was followed by Greater Georgetown (5.7 percent), Region 3 and the rest of Region 4 (5.7 percent), and Regions 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10 (5.2 percent).

Respondents were also asked to indicate the extent to which gangs get in the way of daily activities such as going out or going to the store. The results show that 1.6 percent said that gangs get in the way “a lot”, while 1.2 percent said that gangs get in the way “to some extent”, and 2.3 percent said that gangs get in the way “a little”. The results further show that in Regions 2, 5 and 6, 3.4 percent indicated that gangs get in the way a lot or somewhat, compared to 3 percent in Region 3 and the rest of Region 4, 2.8 percent in Greater Georgetown, and 1.2 percent in Regions 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether gangs in their neighborhood had become more or less of a problem within the last year. The results show that 2.2 percent indicated that gangs had become more of a problem, while 2 percent said that gangs were less of a problem, and 3.9 percent indicated that gangs were about the same. In Regions 2, 5 and 6, 4.1 percent indicated that gangs had become more of a problem within

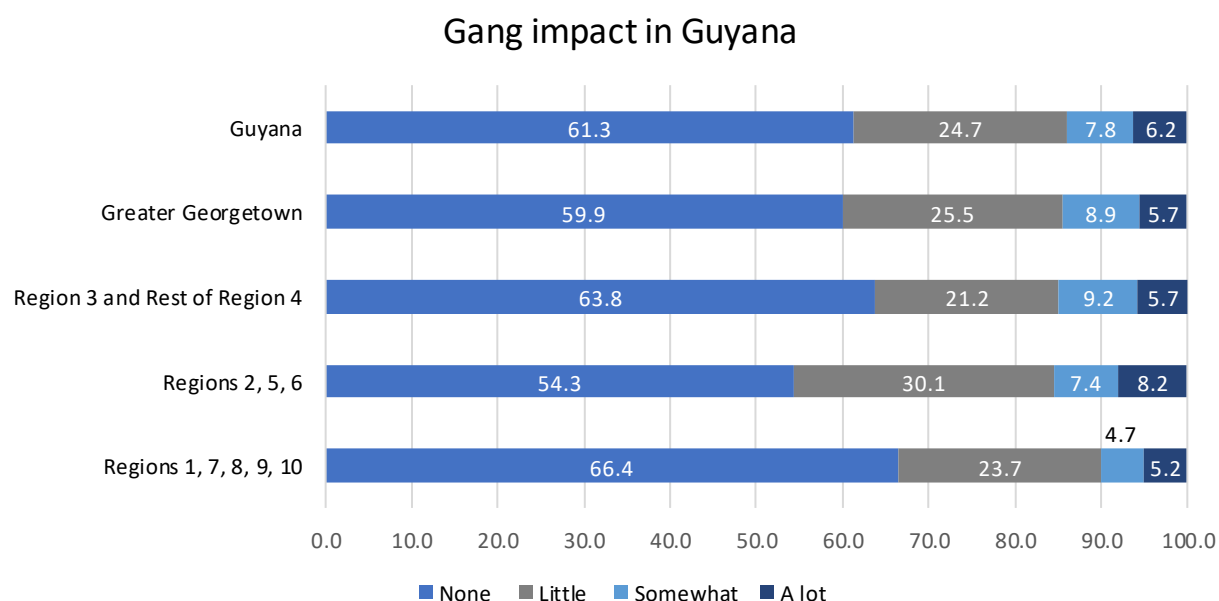
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the last year. This compares to 1.4 percent in Region 3 and the rest of Region 4, 1.2 percent in Greater Georgetown, and 1.2 percent in Regions 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Respondents were finally asked to indicate whether youth or children in gangs were a problem in their neighborhood. Eleven percent indicated that this was a “very serious problem” in their neighborhood, while 6.1 percent indicated that this was a “somewhat serious problem”, 10.4 percent said that it was a “little serious”, and 13.2 percent said that this was “not serious at all”. Another 59.3 percent indicated that this was “not a problem” in their neighborhoods. In Regions 2, 5 and 6, 18.6 percent indicated that youths in gangs was a very or somewhat serious problem, compared to 18.2 percent in Regions 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10, 15.9 percent in Greater Georgetown, and 15.9 percent in Region 3 and the rest of Region 4.

Overall, the results of the 2016 LAPOP survey show that 8.2 percent of residents in Guyana indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhoods, with the highest presence in Regions 2, 5 and 6 (10.4 percent) and Greater Georgetown (9.5 percent). Regions 2, 5 and 6 stand out as most affected by gangs as it holds first place in terms of all of the indicators which were examined.

Figure 7.1



Source: LAPOP 2016

The UNDP (2012) collected data from a representative sample of 1569 adults in Guyana which provide additional insights into gangs (Table 7.1). The results show that 13.3 percent of respondents indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods. Regions where the highest proportion indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods were Region 5 (20.7 percent), Region 2 (19 percent) and Region 4 (18.2 percent).

When asked to indicate the extent to which there was a gang problem in their neighborhood, 4.6 percent indicated that there was a “big” problem, while 8.5 percent indicated that there was a “slight” problem. Regions with the largest proportion indicating that gangs were a big problem were Region 10 (9.1 percent), Region 2 (8.6 percent) and Region 4 (5.8 percent).

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether gangs made their neighborhoods safer or less safe. In Guyana as a whole 1.2 percent indicated that gangs made their neighborhoods “safer”, while 11.1 percent

indicated that gangs made their neighborhoods “less safe”. Regions with the largest proportion indicating that gangs made their neighborhoods less safe were Region 10 (18.5 percent), Region 2 (16 percent) and Region 4 (16 percent).

Areas which stand out in the UNDP (2012) data are Regions 2, 4 and 10 as they are among the top in all indicators which were considered. In addition, Region 5 has the highest proportion indicating that there were gangs in their neighborhood, though they are not among the top areas indicating that gangs are a big problem, or make the neighborhoods less safe.

Table 7.1: Findings from the UNDP (2012) survey in Guyana⁵⁰

	Gangs in neighborhood	To what extent is there a criminal gang problem in your neighborhood?		Have the gangs made the neighborhood safer or less safe?	
		Percent who said “yes”	Slight problem	Big problem	Safer
Region 1	3.2	1.1	4.3	0.0	4.3
Region 2	19.0	11.1	8.6	3.7	16.0
Region 3	16.5	11.7	5.6	0.0	15.1
Region 4	18.2	12.4	5.8	0.9	16.0
Region 5	20.7	6.9	4.6	11.5	10.3
Region 6	3.5	2.5	1.5	0.0	2.5
Region 7	10.3	7.5	2.8	0.9	10.3
Region 8	13.1	8.5	3.9	0.8	7.7
Region 9	6.9	5.6	1.4	0.0	4.2
Region 10	15.4	7.6	9.1	0.0	18.5
Guyana	13.3	8.5	4.6	1.2	11.1

Source: UNDP (2012)

A study conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank which administered a survey to a random representative sample of 760 inmates in 2017 (88.4 percent male and 11.6 percent female) provides additional insights into the prevalence of gangs. The results show that 1.2 percent (1.4 percent of males and 0 percent of females) were members of a gang when they were arrested, while 2 percent (2.1 percent of males and 1.1 percent of females) were members of a gang at the time of the survey. This suggests that some persons joined a gang only after being incarcerated. Inmates who were gang members joined the gang at an average of 15.5 years of age (SD = 3.8, Range = 12-24). Of the six countries in the IDB survey, Guyana had the lowest proportion of persons who were gang members when they were arrested (i.e., 1.2 percent). This compares to 12.5 percent in Barbados, 9.4 percent in Jamaica, 5 percent in Suriname, 4.7 percent in Trinidad and Tobago, and 3.8 percent in The Bahamas. The low prevalence of gang membership among inmates is consistent with other findings in this report which suggest that Guyana does not have a serious gang problem.

A short history of gangs

Owen and Grigsby (2012) provided the first description of Guyanese gangs for an InTransit report. They described three types of gangs in the nation: small local gangs, political gangs, and large-scale criminal gangs. They note that local gangs were loosely organized, with a leader and members, typically comprised of males between their mid-20s and 30s with no identifiable gang signs, symbols, tattoos, clothes, or rituals. According to the authors it was unclear whether local gangs had a designated area or turf they spent time in or protected.

⁵⁰ Percentages are shown.

While youth gangs existed, these groups were less widespread than in other locations and were “seen as a reflection of normal youth – rather than gang – culture” (Owen & Grigsby, 2012, p. 30). Some of these youth groups emerged out of schools or dance hall culture (UNDP Guyana report). There are some criminal organizations, some have called gangs, that operate in the hinterland or on high seas with little oversight given the difficulty in policing these locations (UNDP Guyana report).

In 2002, five detainees (who subsequently called themselves the ‘Five for Freedom’ gang) broke out of prison and were involved in a string of violent crimes and murders. At least four of the five detainees were killed not long after their escape by what has been dubbed ‘phantom death squads’ linked to Guyanese government officials (a phenomenon that highlighted potential corruption in the nation and exacerbated racial and ethnic tensions). The vigilante killings of gang members continued, and an estimated 200 to 500 people were killed or injured by phantom gangs around this period (Owen and Grigsby, 2012). A second wave of gang violence occurred in 2008. The Rawlins gang was responsible for attacking two villages (Bartica and Lusignan) and three police stations killing 23 people in 2008 when their leader Rondell Rawlins (connected to the 2002 gang activity) suspected the government had kidnaped his pregnant girlfriend. Rawlins was shot and killed by security forces several months later.

Political gangs also featured historically in Guyana (Owen and Grigsby, 2012). “The primary motivation of a political gang is to compel others to support or endorse a particular political party or policy through intimidation. While political gangs do not routinely commit illegal acts, their expressed goal is to fortify support for a political platform, which often results in violence. In the Guyanese case, episodes of political gang violence generally occur in the run-up to national elections” (Owen and Grigsby, 2012, p. 17).

Gang involvement in crime

Gang problems have an impact on crime and violence in Guyana (Hill, 2013). For instance, past research suggests that local gangs play a role in drugs and arms trafficking in coordination with larger trafficking organizations and engage in opportunistic crimes (Owen & Grigsby, 2012). Police experts surveyed in the 2015 RSS and ASU survey noted that about half of Guyanese gangs were involved in firearms (55.5 percent) and human trafficking (44.4 percent) (Katz & Nuño, 2016). There are also reports of larger trafficking organizations paying local gangs to maintain security in the Georgetown area (Owen & Grigsby, 2012).

However, only 1.2 percent of prison inmates (N = 9) self-identified as gang members based on surveys conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in 2018. Most of these individuals were incarcerated for violent offenses; three individuals were detained for murder and four for aggravated robbery or theft. Two of these individuals were detained for drug possession or drug dealing. The Guyana Police Force boasts moderate success dismantling gangs and targeting gang-related violence (Hill, 2013). However, 45.2 percent of respondents to a 2009 UNDP survey had low or very low confidence in the police to effectively control gang violence.

In the 2015 RSS and ASU survey, youth who were involved in a gang reported substantially higher engagement in violence (90.6 percent vs 66.3 percent) and property offending (82 percent vs. 51.5 percent) in the past 12 months than non-gang-involved youth (Katz & Nuño, 2017). Gang-involved youth also had higher chronic violence levels – as measured through engaging in offences 10 or more times in the past 12 months. Most gang members had used alcohol (81.3 percent) and marijuana (54.7 percent) in the past year; chronic alcohol and drug use were also higher for gang members compared to non-gang members. Further, 38.3 percent of gang members were involved in drug sales compared to 6.5 percent of non-gang members (Katz & Nuño, 2017).

Risk factors for gang involvement

According to the police expert surveys, gangs in Guyana were all or mostly male and comprised youth aged 16 to 18 (67 percent), followed by 12 to 15 (22 percent), and 19 to 25 (11 percent) (Katz & Nuño, 2017). Based on the Form 5 student surveys the same year, males were more likely to report gang involvement than their female counterparts (24 percent vs 13 percent) (Katz et al., 2023). Students of African and East Indian descent were more likely to report gang membership compared to youth of other or mixed race (19 percent vs. 15 percent and 14 percent) (Katz et al., 2023). The average age for gang joining in Guyana was 13.4 (Katz & Nuño, 2017). Most reported they joined the gang to make friends (68.8 percent), participate in group activities (56.3 percent), because someone in their family was a group member (50.8 percent), for protection (49.2 percent), and to meet members of the opposite sex (41.4 percent). Youth most often left gangs to avoid violence (39 percent), because they got tired of it (20 percent), or because they got a job (18 percent) (Katz & Nuño, 2017).

The LAPOP 2016 data also allow for an examination of risk factors for gang outcomes. Table 7.2 shows the results regression modeling which utilizes several variables as predictors of gang outcomes in Guyana. The results suggest that predictors which may be considered for use in the development of gang interventions include physical disorder and police performance. Physical disorder in the neighborhood is related to greater gang presence and greater impact of gangs in the neighborhood, and suggests that CPTED principles may be applicable in the case of Guyana. The findings for police performance suggests that an improvement in police performance may be associated with a decrease in gang presence and impact. The results also suggest that social cohesion and informal social control are not important predictors of gang outcomes in Guyana. Not surprisingly, gangs affect perceptions of safety, and are related to increased assaults, shootings and drug use and trafficking.

Table 7.2: Predictors of gang variables in Guyana⁵¹

	Gangs in neighborhood	Extent to which neighborhood affected by gangs	Young persons in gangs
Social Cohesion	-.084	.004	.024
Social Control	.038	-.007	***-.081
Neighborhood Decay	***.268	***.074	***.075
Police Performance	**-.151	**-.030	-.004
Perceptions of Safety	***.179	***.068	** .037
Assaults in the community	.036	***.101	***.163
Shootings in the community	.047	.030	***.130
Drug use and trafficking	***.264	***.057	***.192
R²	⁵² .246	.214	.352

Source: LAPOP (2016)

Data from the UNDP (2012) also allow for an examination of the predictors of gang outcomes in Guyana (Table 7.3). The results suggest that access to schooling and social cohesion are important predictors of gang presence, while access to schooling, social cohesion, informal social control, and police performance are important predictors for gang violence. The findings indicate that inadequate access to schooling is related to greater gang presence and violence, while greater levels of social cohesion are related to reduced gang presence and violence. Informal social control and better police performance are related to lower levels of gang violence. While the cost of food (used as an indicator of deprivation) was a significant predictor of gang violence, the direction of the relationship was contrary to expectations. Not surprisingly, the presence of gangs is related to higher levels of crime in the community. The results from the UNDP (2012) suggest that gang

⁵¹ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

⁵² Nagelkerke R Square

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interventions in Guyana can focus on improving access to schooling, building social cohesion and informal systems of social control in communities, and improving police performance.

Table 7.3: Predictors of gang presence and violence in Guyana⁵³

	Gang presence in neighborhood	Gang violence in neighborhood
Unemployment	.076	.006
Access to schooling	***.156	** .076
Cost of food	-.023	** .088
Cost of living	⁵⁴ .166	-.029
Poverty	-.043	-.020
Level of migration ⁵⁵	-.047	-.024
Adequate sanitation	.027	.018
Social Cohesion	***-.056	***-.091
Informal social control	⁵⁶ -.055	***-.101
Police performance	-.003	**-.067
Crime in the Community	***.412	***.346
	Nagelkerke R ² = .300	Adjusted R ² = .198

Source: UNDP (2012)

Transnational links between gangs and criminal enterprises

The country has also faced problems from organized crime stemming from narcotics trafficking (primarily cocaine) from the Andean region through Guyana (UNDP country report). Destination locations from Guyana include the United States, Canada, Europe, other Caribbean nations, West Africa, and the Far East (Guyana National Drug, 2014). Marijuana is grown within and widely used within Guyana. Cocaine or other drug use is relatively uncommon in Guyana (Guyana National Drug, 2014). The Brazilian-based prison gang PCC also has active members in Guyana (InSight Crime and American University, 2020). Owen and Grigsby (2012) note these organizations (i.e., large-scale organized crime groups) are a more serious challenge to citizen security compared to local gangs given these groups political connections and the weak law enforcement capacity of the nation. According to local news reports, Venezuelan gangs have also been involved in attacks on Guyanese residents working near the border between nations (Kaieteur News, 2021). The police expert surveys administered in 2015 revealed that about 10 percent of gangs had foreign-born members.

⁵³ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

⁵⁴ p < .076

⁵⁵ Used as an indicator for residential mobility.

⁵⁶ p < .064

8. SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

Prevalence of the gang problem

There have been several recent assessments of the prevalence of gangs and gang members in St. Kitts and Nevis, which have all provided fairly similar results. For example, in March 2023, the government estimated there were approximately 550 gang members, primarily split between eight gangs: Killa Mafia Squad (KMS01), Killa Mafia Squad Subset 2 (KMS02), Tek Life, Black Bloody Murders (BBM), Ghost, Sandy Point, Cayon, and Newtown Bloodz (Gumbs-Taylor, 2023). Similarly, recent gang assessments using police expert data estimate that there are 15 gangs and 323 gang members in St. Kitts and Nevis (Katz, Freemon, & Seepersad, 2024). The above figures compare to an estimate of 22 gangs and 343 gang members, which were collected using a similar methodology, roughly ten years ago (Katz and Nuno, 2017). These findings suggest that the number of gangs and gang members has remained reasonably stable over the past decade or so.

The 2016 LAPOP survey, which was administered to a random representative sample of 1008 adults in St. Kitts and Nevis, provides additional insights into the prevalence of gangs, and provides information on the spatial distribution of gangs. The results show that 16.2 percent of respondents indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhoods. In St. George, this figure stood at 21.6 percent, compared to 18.6 percent in the Eastern Region⁵⁷, 14.6 percent in the Western Region⁵⁸, and 8.7 percent in Nevis.

When asked to indicate the extent to which their neighborhoods were affected by gangs, 7.2 percent of respondents in St. Kitts and Nevis said, “a lot”, while 10.7 percent said “somewhat”, 21.6 percent said “a little”, and 60.5 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were not affected by gangs (Figure 8.1). In St. George, 10.9 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were affected a lot by gangs. This compares to 8.5 percent in the Eastern Region, 5 percent in the Western Region, and 3.4 percent in Nevis.

When asked to indicate the extent to which gangs get in the way of daily activities such as going out or going shopping, in St. Kitts and Nevis as a whole, 0.6 percent of respondents said, “a lot”, while 2.7 percent said “somewhat”, 3.6 percent said “a little”, and 93.1 percent indicated that gangs did not get in the way at all. Residents in St. George were more likely to indicate that gangs got in the way of daily life a lot or somewhat (4.6 percent), compared to residents in the Eastern Region (4.5 percent), Western Region (2.9 percent) and Nevis (0.8 percent).

When asked to indicate whether gangs had become more or less of a problem than the year before, in St. Kitts and Nevis as a whole, 5.3 percent indicated that gangs had become more of a problem, while 4 percent said that gangs had become less of a problem, and 6.5 percent indicated that gangs were about the same as they were a year ago. Residents in the Eastern Region were more likely to indicate that gangs had become more of a problem (8.2 percent), compared to residents in the Western Region (5.9 percent), St. George (5.7 percent), and Nevis (1.2 percent).

Respondents in the 2016 LAPOP survey were finally asked to indicate whether children and young persons in gangs were a problem in their neighborhoods. The results show that in St. Kitts and Nevis as a whole, 17.4 percent said that this was a “very serious” problem in their neighborhoods, compared to 6.3 percent who said that this was a “somewhat serious” problem, 10.1 percent who said that this was “a little serious”, 8.7 percent who said that this was “not serious at all”, and 57.5 percent who indicated that this was “not a

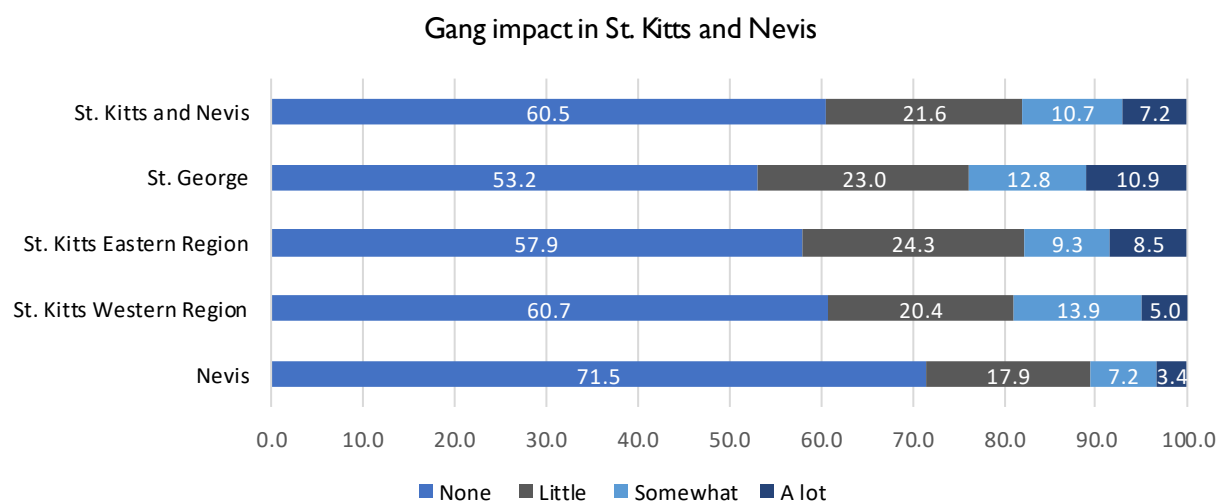
⁵⁷ This is comprised of St. John, Christ Church, St. Mary and St. Peter.

⁵⁸ This is comprised of Trinity, St. Thomas, St. Anne and St. Paul.

problem”. In the Eastern Region 27.1 percent of residents indicated that this was a very serious problem. This compares to 20.2 percent in St. George, 13.7 percent in the Western Region, and 6.7 percent in Nevis.

Overall, when the results of the 2016 LAPOP survey were considered, 16.2 percent of respondents indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhoods, with the largest proportion in St. George (21.6 percent) indicating similarly. Residents in St. George were also more likely than residents in other parts of the country to indicate that their neighborhoods were affected by gangs. However, residents in the Eastern Region were more likely to indicate that gangs had become more of a problem within the last year, when compared to other parts of the country, and were also more likely to indicate that young persons in gangs posed a serious problem in their neighborhoods. The findings suggest that while St. George is affected by gangs to a greater degree than other parts of the country, there may be an emerging gang problem in the Eastern Region.

Figure 8.1

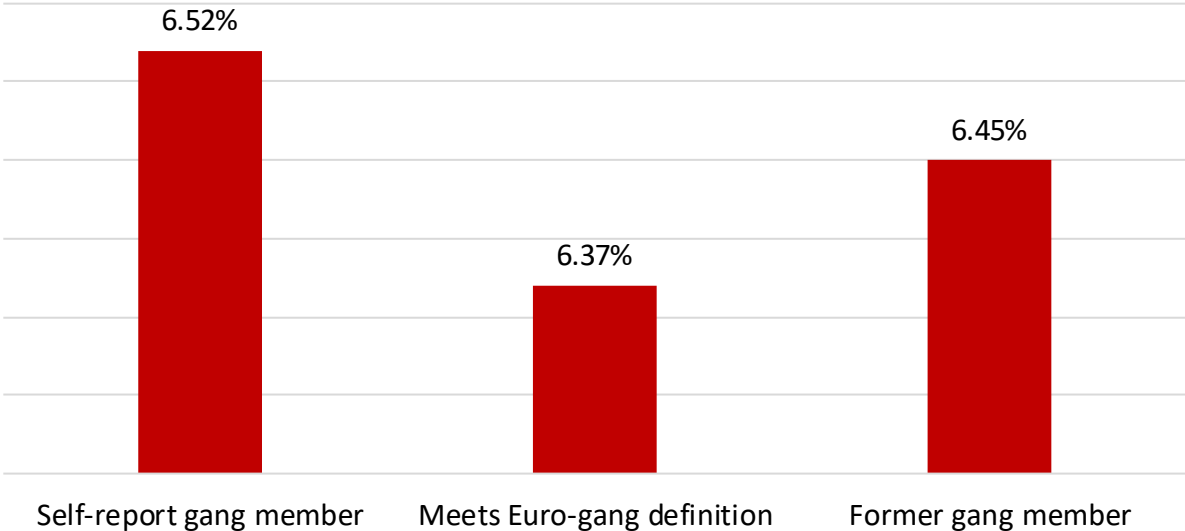


Source: LAPOP 2016

A 2023 LACLEARN survey that included over 760 (or 57 percent of eligible youth) Form 4 and 5 school-attending youth from all nine of the nation’s public schools indicated that about 6.5 percent of youth self-nominated themselves as gang members, and about 6.4 percent of youth self-reported meeting the criteria for Eurogang membership⁵⁹, a designation for gang membership that does not rely on the word “gang” (Figure 8.2). Additionally, approximately 6.5 percent of school-attending youth self-nominated themselves as “formerly” belonging to a gang. These findings were similar to those reported by Katz and Nuno (2017) who found that about 4 percent of Form 5 school youth self-reported being a current gang member (Katz & Nuno, 2017).

⁵⁹ The Eurogang membership measure of gang membership uses a funnel approach recommended by the Eurogang program, where respondents must answer affirmatively to a series of questions in order to be considered a Eurogang member (Esbensen & Maxson, 2012; Klein et al., 2001). This operationalization of gang membership was developed to allow researchers and policymakers a means of identifying youth involved in gangs without using the word “gang” to increase comparability across nations and to reduce problems around the meaning of the term “gang.” When respondents answered “yes” to each of the following indicators, they met the criteria for Eurogang membership. First, they had to indicate that they had an informal group of friends they spent time with. Second, this group of friends needs to be between the ages of 12 and 25. Third, the group needs to spend time together in public places. Fourth, the group needs to have existed for three or more months. Fifth, the group has three or more members. Sixth, the respondent must indicate that the group accepts crime. Finally, seventh, the respondent has to indicate that group members engage in illegal activities together.

Figure 8.2: Percent of school youth reporting gang membership in St. Kitts and Nevis



Source: LACLEARN school youth data, 2023

Gangs in St. Kitts and Nevis vary in size from 25 to 150 members and are primarily comprised of males aged 10 to 40 (Gumbs-Taylor, 2023), although a recent survey of police experts suggested that the typical gang in St. Kitts and Nevis is comprised mostly of 19- to 25-year-olds (Katz et al. 2024).

Two prior studies examining data on gangs from police experts across the country noted that all of the gangs in the nation are comprised of mostly or all males, however, self-report data from school youth is somewhat inconsistent on the issue (Katz & Nuno, 2017; Katz et al., 2024). Katz et al. (2023) reported that among Form 5 school youth, roughly 5 percent of females and 11 percent of males self-reported gang membership, while a recent USAID sponsored project indicated that males were only slightly more likely to self-report gang membership than non-gang members (Katz et al., 2024).

In terms of the organizational attributes of gangs, prior research using data collected from police experts indicated that most gangs in the nation claim turf, defend the area against other groups, and spend a lot of time together in public places (Table 8.1). Results from 2023, compared to findings from a similar study conducted in 2014, indicate that members of gangs might be less likely to be accepting of illegal things (53.3 percent versus 95.5 percent) and report that their gangs have subgroups that spend time together (26.7 percent vs 60 percent). Only a small proportion of gangs in the nation promote or support a particular political issue (Katz & Nuno, 2017; Katz et al. 2024).

Table 8.1: Organization and structure of gangs in St. Kitts and Nevis⁶⁰

	2014 n= 12	2023 n= 15
Does this group have an area or place it calls its own?	90.9	93.3
Does this group defend this area or place against other groups?	78.9	60.0
Is doing illegal things acceptable by, or okay for this group?	95.5	53.3
Does this group promote or support a particular political issue?	23.8	33.3

⁶⁰ Percentages are shown.

Does this group spend a lot of time together in public places like the park, the street, shopping areas or the neighborhood?	95.5	80.0
Within this group, are their distinct subgroups or cliques that especially spend time together?	60.0	26.7

Source: Police expert data, Katz and Nuno, 2017 and Katz et al., 2024.

Police experts explained that while eight of the 13 police station districts have gangs and gang members, most of the gangs and gang members are present in only three to four station districts. For example, Basseterre and Cayon police station districts account for 7 of the nation's 15 gangs, and Basseterre, Frigate Bay, and Old Road police station districts account for 76 percent of the nation's gang members. Likewise, gang homicides were concentrated (72.3 percent) in three of the 13 police station districts: Basseterre (57.4 percent), Cayon (7.9 percent), and Charlestown (6.9 percent).

A short history of gangs

The police estimated that among gangs currently in existence, the earliest was formed in St. Kitts and Nevis in 2003 (Katz et al., 2024). Several local reports have discussed the emergence of gangs in St. Kitts and Nevis. One report indicated that gangs emerged in St. Kitts and Nevis in the early 1980s with the "Real People Gang." The report noted that the gang was comprised of "educated and mature" individuals involved in drug trafficking and money laundering. However, prior research suggests that a group whose members possess these types of characteristics would most likely not be a gang (see Spergel, 1995). Later in the late 1990s, the "Acid Crew" gang was established, which was comprised of "troubled youths" who conflicted with "non-crew members." The report notes that internal gang conflicts resulted in the emergence of three gangs—Acid Crew, the Bloods, and the Crips—in the nation by the early 2000s. It was noted that the Bloods were older and more organized, and the Crips were mostly members under 18. The two gangs frequently fought over turf (Gumbs-Taylor, 2023). In 2010, it was reported that there were four major gangs in the nation: Crips, Black Night, Brown Street, and Riverside, which evolved into six gangs when the Crips partitioned into two different gangs—Tek Life and Killer Man Squad (KMS) (Greauz, 2010). In 2023, a government report presented a slightly different version of the evolution of the gangs noting that the Crips transformed into the "Killer Mafia Squad" (KMS) and "Tek Life" split off from the Bloods (Gumbs-Taylor, 2023).

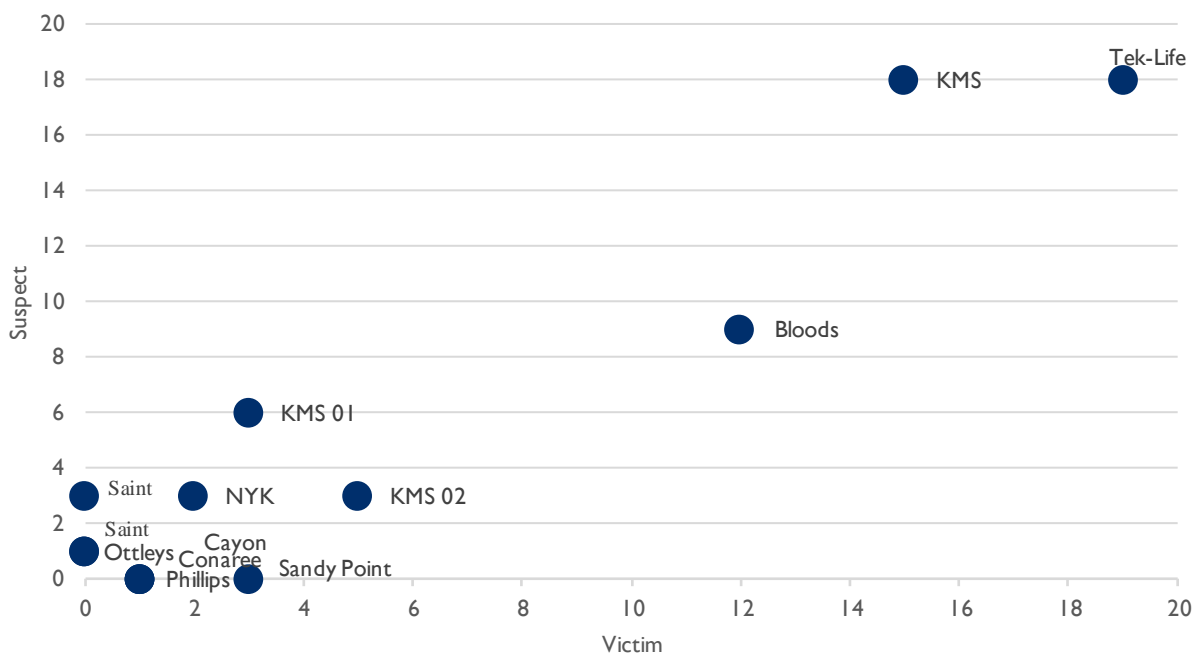
Gang involvement in crime

All available data from St. Kitts and Nevis suggest that gang involved youth are significantly more likely to be involved in crime and delinquency than non-gang involved youth. For example, LACLEARN survey data collected in 2023 from school attending youth showed that regardless of the operationalization of gang membership, gang youth, with few exceptions, were significantly more likely to self-report property crime, violence, drug sales, and substance use. Roughly 46 percent of non-gang members self-reported ever engaging in any offense, compared to about 80.5 percent for self-nominated gang members and 88.6 percent of Eurogang members. Likewise, 9.2 percent of non-gang members, 43.9 percent of self-reported gang members, and 34.1 percent of Eurogang members reported ever having prior police contact, being arrested, or being detained (Katz et al., 2024).

Police experts from St. Kitts and Nevis reported in 2023 that about 60 percent of gangs sometimes or often engage in illegal things together, about 53 percent of gangs sometimes or often get into fights or have problems with other groups, 53.3 percent sometimes or often engage in firearms trafficking, and none of the gangs were known to be involved in human trafficking. Additionally, police experts noted that 86.7 percent of the gangs sometimes or often use alcohol, 86.7 percent sometimes or often use illegal drugs, and 73.3 percent of the gangs sometimes or often traffic drugs (Katz et al., 2024).

Katz et al. (2024) analyzed the nation’s homicide data and reported that about 50 percent of homicides were gang-related, excluding those with unknown motive. The data showed that victims of gang homicides were significantly more likely to be male (81.2 percent vs. 98 percent, respectively) and younger (38.5 years old vs. 27.96 years old, respectively). Gang-related homicides were also significantly more likely to involve a firearm (100 percent versus 62.4 percent) and take place at a “public place” (66.3 percent vs. 47.5 percent). Additionally, it was reported that about 52.8 percent of gang-related homicides were “expressive,” and 27.8 percent were “instrumental,” indicating that most gang homicides were not economically motivated. The below scatter plot shows the number of homicide victims and suspects for each gang included in the nation’s homicide network (Figure 8.3). Tek-Life had the highest number of homicide victims (19) and suspects (18), followed by KMS, and Bloods.

Figure 8.3: Gang homicides in St. Kitts and Nevis, 2010-2023



Source: LACLEARN 2023

Risk factors for gang involvement

Katz and Nuno (2017) reported that on average, school youth in St. Kitts and Nevis first join a gang when they are about nine years old. About 75 percent of those in St. Kitts and Nevis who joined a gang did so to make friends, 56 percent because someone in their family was in the gang, 38 percent to get away with illegal activities, 25 percent for protection, and less than 20 percent joined to belong to something, to get money or other things, or to make money from selling drugs.

The 2016 LAPOP survey provides additional insights into predictors for gang outcomes in St. Kitts and Nevis (Table 8.2). In this analysis the presence of gangs in the neighborhood, the extent to which the neighborhood is affected by gangs, and the extent to which young persons in gangs are a problem in the neighborhood are used as dependent variables. Neighborhood social cohesion, neighborhood social control, neighborhood decay, and police performance in the neighborhood are used as predictors. Control variables include perceptions of safety, assaults, shootings, and drug use and trafficking in the neighborhood.

The results suggest that neighborhoods which are more cohesive have a lower gang presence, while better police performance is related to lower levels of gang impact on the neighborhood. In addition, neighborhoods with higher levels of decay are more likely to have gangs than neighborhoods with minimal to no decay. Contrary to expectations, an increase in informal social control was related to higher levels of gang impact in the neighborhood.

With respect to the control variables, the results suggest that residents in communities with gangs, or which are affected by gangs, feel more unsafe than residents in communities without gangs. Gangs are also associated with higher levels of shootings and drug use and trafficking. Contrary to expectations, however, gangs were associated with lower levels of assaults.

The results of the 2016 LAPOP survey suggest that interventions designed to reduce the presence or impact of gangs can focus on building social cohesion and improving police performance, while reducing neighborhood decay. A reduction in gangs is likely to be associated with a reduction in shootings and drug use and trafficking.

Table 8.2: Predictors of gang variables in St. Kitts and Nevis⁶¹

	Gangs in neighborhood	Extent to which neighborhood affected by gangs	Young persons in gangs
Social Cohesion	**-.184	-.029	-.027
Social Control	.099	*.041	.036
Neighborhood Decay	** .330	.050	.040
Police Performance	-.075	***-.074	.025
Perceptions of Safety	*.098	***.088	.020
Assaults in the community	***-.772	***-.224	-.044
Shootings in the community	***.685	***.215	***.372
Drug use and trafficking	***.354	***.105	***.306
R²	⁶² .380	.315	.680

Source: LAPOP (2016)

As part of this study, LACLEARN surveyed Form 4 and 5 school-attending youth in St. Kitts and Nevis. The survey instrument contained 160 questions and collected information on demographics, risk and protective factors, gang membership, delinquency, and drug use. Students completed the survey in November 2023 in their classrooms. All nine public schools enrolling Form 4 and Form 5 students participated in the study (i.e., 100 percent of available schools). Among the 1,344 enrolled Form 4 and 5 students, 767 agreed to participate for a student-level response rate of 57.07 percent.⁶³ The data provide additional insights into risk factors for gang membership.

LACLEARN utilized logistic regression modeling to examine the relationship between a range of risk and protective factors, and self-reported gang membership, as well as Eurogang membership (Table 8.3). Respondents who identified less as a minority were less likely to self-report gang membership, while those who reported more adverse childhood experiences were more likely to self-report gang membership. Respondents who reported higher levels of risk-seeking, higher socio-economic status based on the wealth

⁶¹ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

⁶² Nagelkerke R Square

⁶³ While LACLEARN intended to collect data from detained youth, at the time of data collection there were no detained youth in Saint Kitts and Nevis. The only youth detention center, the New Horizons Rehabilitation Center, was closed and under renovation. All youth who were at the facility were released prior to the start of renovations.

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scale, higher levels of peer drug use, and greater perceived gun availability were more likely to meet the criteria for the Eurogang definition.

Table 8.3: Predictors of self-reported and Eurogang membership among school youth in St. Kitts and Nevis⁶⁴

	Model 1: Self-report gang member		Model 2: Eurogang member	
	b	SE	b	SE
Demographics				
Male	0.085	0.427	-0.467	0.441
Race (ref. African descent)				
East Indian	0.478	0.840	-0.155	1.167
Mixed	0.082	0.459	0.437	0.464
Other	0.300	0.802	0.749	0.815
Age	-0.204	0.318	0.183	0.290
Foreign-born	0.214	0.443	0.065	0.452
Individual				
Impulsivity	-0.159	0.085	-0.077	0.095
Risk-seeking	0.034	0.081	0.177*	0.089
Street code	0.044	0.061	-0.019	0.056
Poverty	0.153	0.144	0.325*	0.164
Intention to use drugs	0.212	0.184	-0.046	0.183
Minority identity	-0.679*	0.197	0.060	0.205
ACEs	0.130*	0.061	0.107	0.059
Family				
Parental monitoring	0.015	0.085	-0.073	0.084
Parental attitudes favorable to anti-social behavior	-0.100	0.103	0.091	0.113
Family opportunities for prosocial involvement	-0.162	0.083	0.089	0.082
Family gang involvement	0.773	0.541	0.080	0.538
Peers				
Anti-social peers	0.087	0.045	-0.025	0.054
Peer drug use	-0.046	0.174	0.528*	0.153
Peer pressure	0.109	0.075	0.042	0.068
Moral order	-0.133	0.095	0.036	0.096
Prosocial friends	-0.013	0.046	0.060	0.052
School				
Low school commitment	-0.004	0.202	0.167	0.210
Opportunities for prosocial involvement	0.110	0.069	-0.056	0.061
Community				
Mobility	-0.306	0.500	-0.344	0.538
Perceived gun accessibility	0.139	0.192	0.684*	0.217
N	577		606	

Source: LACLEARN 2023 Survey of school youth

⁶⁴ Note: * p < 0.05

Transnational links between gangs and criminal enterprises

There is little information to suggest that there are formal transnational linkages between gangs and criminal enterprises in St. Kitts and Nevis. In 2023, police experts reported that about 7 percent of gangs (n=1) had at least one foreign-born gang member and roughly 60 percent of gangs had members who migrated from or to other countries. The police reported that 20 percent (n=3) collaborated with other criminal organizations/gangs in other nations (Katz et al., 2024). InSight Crime reported that these links primarily revolved around firearms and drug trafficking, as well as some murder for hire schemes, however, there was little data provided to substantiate these claims (McDermott et al., 2023).

It should be noted, however, that St. Kitts and Nevis does have a sizeable foreign-born population, at least among school youth. School youth survey data suggested that about 29 percent of non-gang involved youth were foreign born, compared to about 41 percent of self-reported gang members and about 38 percent of Eurogang members. While these findings suggest that there might be an emerging relationship between the foreign born and gang membership, it should be emphasized that being foreign born was significantly but negatively associated with delinquency. Meaning that foreign born is a protective factor against delinquency (Katz et al., 2024).

9. SAINT LUCIA

Prevalence of the gang problem

Katz and Nuno (2017) collected data from police experts in St. Lucia and reported that there were 13 gangs and 140 gang members, while Katz et al. (2023) who surveyed 1996 Form 5 students, or 74.7 percent of all Form 5 students in St. Lucia, found that 18 percent were involved with gangs (26 percent of males vs. 13 percent of females). InSight Crime (2023), who interviewed law enforcement agencies, found that there were approximately 12 to 15 active gangs in St. Lucia, the majority of which are located in Castries and Vieux Fort

Data collected by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2012) also allow for an examination of the prevalence of gangs in St. Lucia. Data were collected from a random representative sample of 1514 adults. When asked whether there was a criminal gang in their neighborhood, 17.9 percent of the sample said “yes” (Table 9.1). Areas with the largest proportion indicating that there were gangs in their neighborhood were Castries Central, where 44.7 percent of respondents so indicated, Babonneau (22.7 percent), Castries excluding Central (19 percent), and Dennery (17.4 percent). Areas with the lowest proportion reporting that there were gangs in their neighborhoods were Anse La Raye (3.2 percent) and Gros Islet (9.5 percent).

Respondents were also asked to indicate the extent to which gangs were a problem in their neighborhood. The results show that 8.7 percent said that gangs were a “big problem” in their neighborhood, while 7.6 percent said that gangs were a “slight problem”. Areas with the largest proportion responding that gangs were a “big problem” were Castries Central (where 36.6 percent reported that gangs were a big problem), Dennery (11.6 percent), Babonneau (10.7 percent) and Castries excluding Central (8.2 percent).

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether gangs made their neighborhoods safer or less safe. Very few respondents (0.4 percent) indicated that gangs made their neighborhoods “safer”. In contrast, 15.1 percent indicated that gangs made their neighborhoods “less safe”. Areas with the largest proportion indicating that gangs made their neighborhoods “less safe” were Castries Central (39.4 percent), Babonneau (18.2 percent), Dennery (17.4 percent) and Castries excluding Central (16.4 percent).

Respondents were also asked to indicate the extent to which their neighborhoods had experienced gang violence. In St. Lucia as a whole, 4.6 percent indicated that gangs engaged in a “large amount of violence” in their neighborhoods, while 13.5 percent indicated that gangs engaged in “some violence” and 25 percent indicated that gangs engaged in a “little violence”. Areas with the largest proportion indicating that gangs engaged in a “large amount of violence” were Castries Central (where 20.6 percent so indicated), Dennery (5.2 percent), Castries excluding Central (4.6 percent), and Gros Islet (4 percent).

Table 9.1: UNDP (2012) findings for St. Lucia⁶⁵

	Gangs in neighborhood	To what extent is there a criminal gang problem in your neighborhood?		Have the gangs made the neighborhood safer or less safe?		To what extent has your neighborhood experienced gang violence?		
		Percent who said "yes"	Slight problem	Big problem	Safer	Less safe	Large amount of violence	Some violence
Castries Central	44.7	8.4	36.6	0.8	39.4	20.6	25.2	29.0
Babonneau	22.7	5.3	10.7	0.0	18.2	3.0	25.8	22.0
Castries (excluding central)	19.0	10.4	8.2	0.0	16.4	4.6	14.9	26.5
Dennerly	17.4	7.1	11.6	0.6	17.4	5.2	12.9	19.4
Laborie	15.3	4.2	4.2	0.0	9.7	0.0	8.3	16.7
Choiseul	13.3	8.6	3.8	0.0	9.5	0.9	10.4	32.1
Vieux Fort	12.8	8.3	2.8	0.9	8.2	1.9	9.3	24.1
Soufriere	12.4	6.3	2.1	2.1	8.4	3.1	9.4	11.5
Micoud	12.3	10.0	0.8	0.8	10.8	1.5	9.2	33.1
Gros Islet	9.5	4.1	5.5	0.0	11.0	4.0	6.7	34.7
Anse La Raye	3.2	0.0	1.1	0.0	1.1	1.1	2.1	20.0
St. Lucia	17.9	7.6	8.7	0.4	15.1	4.6	13.5	25.0

Source: UNDP (2012)

⁶⁵ Percentages are shown.

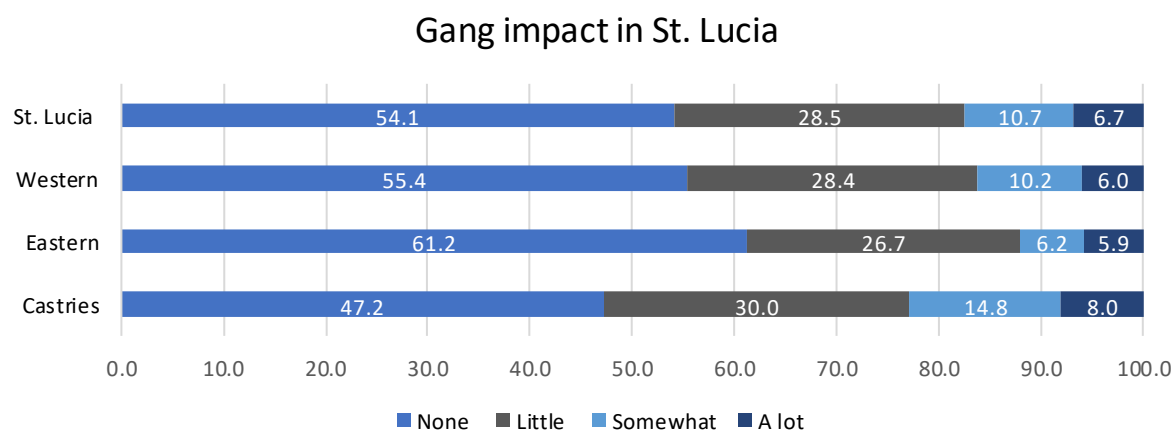
When all of the indicators in Table 9.1 are considered, the results show that Castries (Central and areas outside of Central), Dennery and Babonneau have the highest proportion of respondents who indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhood, that gangs were a big problem, and that gangs made their neighborhoods less safe. Of these, Castries (Central and areas outside of Central) and Dennery were among the top areas where respondents indicated that gangs engaged in a large amount of violence. While Gros Islet was on the lower end with respect to the proportion of respondents who indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhood, this area was within the top four areas in terms of gangs engaging in a “large amount of violence”.

More recent data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), conducted in 2016, gathered information from a nationally representative sample in St. Lucia (N = 1019). Of the sample, 50 percent were male, while 50 percent were female. Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 96 years of age, with a mean age of 40.1 years (SD=15.9).

Of the persons surveyed, 13 percent indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods. In Castries 17 percent indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods, compared to 13.1 percent in the Eastern Region⁶⁶, and 7.3 percent in the Western Region⁶⁷.

Respondents were also asked: “To what extent do you think your neighborhood is affected by gangs?” (Figure 9.1). In St. Lucia as a whole, 6.7 percent responded “a lot”, while 10.7 percent said “somewhat” and 28.5 percent said “a little”, and 54.1 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were not affected by gangs. In Castries, 8 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were affected a lot by gangs, compared to 6 percent in Western St. Lucia and 5.9 percent in Eastern St. Lucia.

Figure 9.1



Source: LAPOP 2016

Participants in the 2016 LAPOP survey were also asked to indicate their perception of the extent to which gangs get in the way of their daily routines and activities such as going to the store or going out at night. In St. Lucia as a whole 1.8 percent indicated that gangs interfered with their daily lives “a lot”, while 1.1 percent responded “somewhat”, and 2.4 percent responded “a little”, and 94.7 percent indicated that gangs did not get in the way at all. In Castries 4.5 percent indicated that gangs get in the way of daily activities a lot or somewhat, compared to 1.7 percent in Western St. Lucia and 1.8 percent in Eastern St. Lucia.

⁶⁶ This includes Micoud, Dennery and Gros Islet.

⁶⁷ This includes Anse La Raye, Canaries, Soufriere, Choiseul, Laborie and Vieux Fort.

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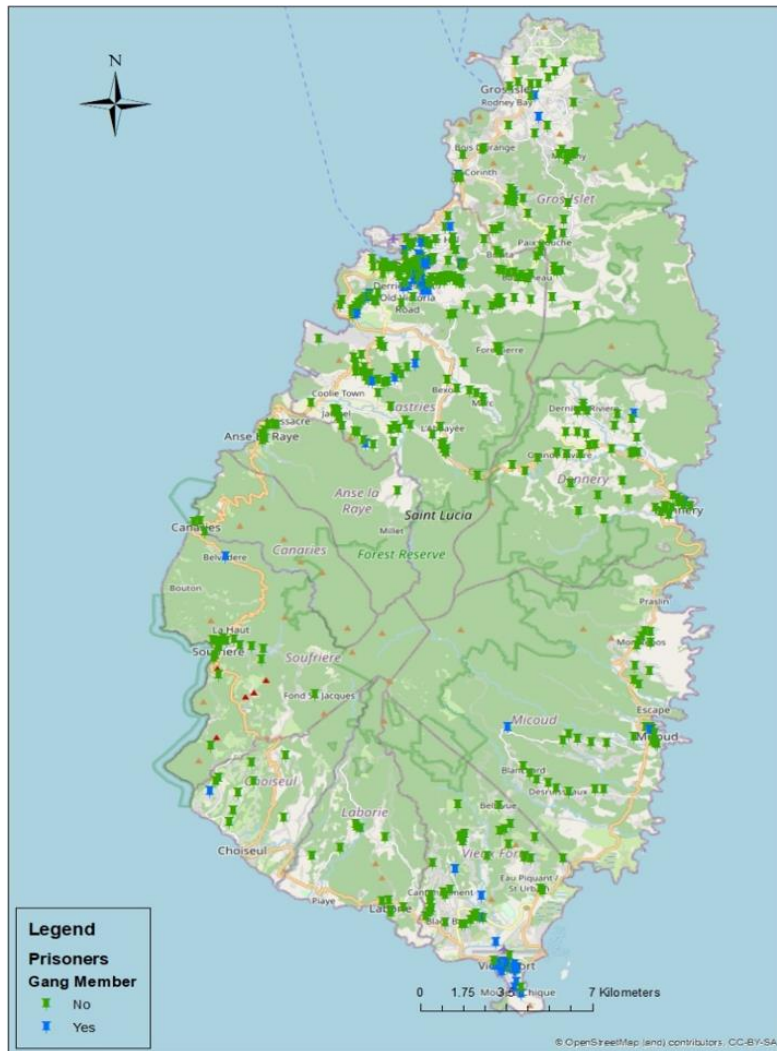
Respondents were also asked to indicate how much of a problem they perceived gangs to be in their neighborhood, in comparison to the previous year. In St. Lucia as a whole 4.2 percent indicated that gangs became ‘more of a problem’, while 4 percent felt that gangs were ‘less of a problem’, and 4.5 percent indicated gangs were ‘about the same’ as the previous year. In Castries 5.7 percent indicated that gangs had become more of a problem, compared to 4.3 percent in Eastern St. Lucia and 2.1 percent in Western St. Lucia.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether young people or children who were in gangs were a problem in their neighborhood. In St. Lucia as a whole 8.9 percent of respondents indicated that this posed a “very serious” problem in their neighborhood, while 7.9 percent responded “somewhat serious”, and 13.8 percent “a little serious”. In Castries 19.5 percent indicated that young persons in gangs were a very or somewhat serious problem, compared to 16.1 percent in Eastern St. Lucia and 14.2 percent in Western St. Lucia.

Overall, the results of the 2016 LAPOP survey indicate that 13 percent of respondents in St. Lucia reported that there were gangs in their neighborhoods. The rate was highest in Castries where this figure stood at 17 percent. Castries stands out as the most affected by gangs since it holds the number one spot on all indicators considered in the LAPOP survey.

The Bordelais Correctional Facility, the only prison in St. Lucia, provided information on all prisoners who were incarcerated as of December 2022 (N = 532). Among other things, the addresses at which inmates resided prior to being incarcerated, as well as whether they were gang members prior to being incarcerated were provided. The home addresses of all inmates were mapped, with gang members represented by blue pins (Figure 9.2). The results show that the majority of inmates who were gang members resided in only two places, Castries and Vieux Fort. The data from the Bordelais Correctional Facility is consistent with the findings of InSight Crime (2023) which found that the majority of gangs in St. Lucia are located in Castries and Vieux Fort. The UNDP (2012) and LAPOP (2016) data indicate that Castries is an area of concern where gangs are considered. Vieux Fort does not come in at the top in the 2012 or 2016 data, but features prominently in the 2023 data from Bordelais and InSight Crime. This suggests that the gang problem in Vieux Fort may have worsened after 2016.

Figure 9.2: Home addresses of all inmates in St. Lucia, with gang members highlighted

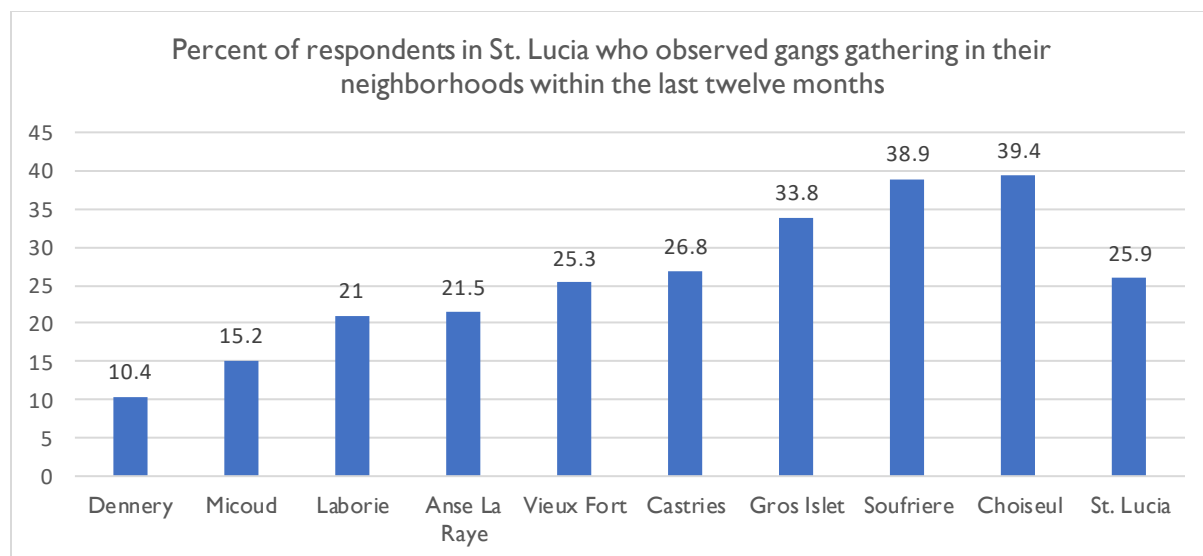


Source: Bordelais Correctional Facility (December 2022)

St. Lucia National Crime Victimization Survey (2020) collected data from a representative sample of 1730 adults and asked respondents whether they had experienced gangs gathering in their neighborhood within the last 12 months. Twenty five point nine percent of respondents responded in the affirmative (Figure 9.3). Areas with the highest proportion responding similarly were Choiseul (39.4 percent), Soufriere (38.9 percent), Gros Islet (33.8 percent) and Castries (26.8 percent).

It is important to note that the question asked in the St. Lucia victimization survey is somewhat different from the questions asked in other surveys, which typically ask whether there are gangs in the neighborhood. The St. Lucia survey specifically asked about gangs “gathering” in the neighborhood within the last year. As such, a neighborhood can have gangs, but without the additional gathering of gangs as measured in the St. Lucia survey. The data from the St. Lucia survey, therefore, suggest that Choiseul, Soufriere, Gros Islet and Castries are areas for concern as the number of gangs may be increasing in these areas.

Figure 9.3



Source: St. Lucia National Crime Victimization Survey (2020)

A short history of gangs

With the demise of the agricultural sector and exports of bananas quickly dwindling, due to a myriad of issues stemming from natural disasters, changes in the environment, and international trade conditions (Moberg 2008), the cocaine and drug industry became a lucrative endeavor in St. Lucia by the late 1980s and early 1990s. Individuals who entered the drug business gained status in their communities, attracted followers, and this led to the creation of the first gangs. Castries, the capital, and Vieux Fort, a fishing town located at the south of the island, were the main urban centers where drug trafficking was taking place and where gangs initially formed.

With the decline of the formal business sector, including the banana industry in the 1990s, a new generation started to rely increasingly on the expanding drug trade. As arms trafficking to the Caribbean increased, gangs strengthened their arsenal and feuds became more violent. Gang feuds were driven by competition over the drug business, territory, or petty problems between gang members. This led to an increase in homicides in the late 2000s and into the 2010s. While inter-gang rivalry and warfare continues in St. Lucia, assistance and networks among gangs are also evident with the loans of firearms, the use of 'hitmen', providing financial assistance to each other to help 'cashflow' and the engagement of lawyers (George 2011). With respect to the drug trade, gang leaders running narcotics operations improved their connections to transnational drug traffickers in South America and Europe, as well as making new connections with drug trafficking networks in the Caribbean, especially from Trinidad and Tobago and Martinique.

George (2011: 19) interviewed Donovan Williams, the then Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Transformation, Youth and Sports who indicated that in addition to poverty and financial issues, it was a detachment of individuals from the core values and principles of the society which also contributed to the formation of gangs. According to Williams, "The gang must be seen as organized and mobilizing force providing belonging, identity, rewards and commitment. They are groups with varying degrees of influence, networks and activities and emerged from the needs for employment, recognition, respect, badness, identity and rewards. There exists a gap between the core values of society and non-formal groups."

St. Lucia's gangs are closely connected to the communities where they have influence. Almost all territories controlled by gangs are in low-income neighborhoods where unemployment rates are high. Faced with bleak employment prospects, some residents view gangs as a realistic source of income. Gangs often regulate access to neighborhoods under their control using street lookouts to surveil residents and rivals. They frequently

extort businesses such as restaurants and grocery stores. Gangs also aid residents, for example, by providing financial support for children to attend school or for house repairs. In return, citizens are expected to protect the gang and obey its rules, chief among these being non-cooperation with the police. Breaking this rule is usually punished with a beating.

Although most gangs recruit members from the territories under their control, some gangs also have cells scattered throughout the island. Gangs have also been known to recruit children as young as 12 years old for tasks that include selling drugs and running errands. As a result, gang feuds sometimes play out in schools. The UNDP St. Lucia country report (George 2011: 14) stated that “there is a proliferation of ‘school gangs’ in many secondary schools with strong allegiances to established ‘community gangs’. Members of the school gangs are typically children and young persons between the ages of 9-16 years; who have identity crisis issues and lack a sense of belonging and affiliation, which they find by their participation in gang activities.”

Although gangs in St. Lucia may be considered non-formal groupings, there is the presence of clear leadership within the gangs. According to George (2011) the gang leader is seen as a father who welcomes truant youth as soldiers within his army, and who provides for the needs of those under his care. Individual charisma, influence, access to resources (money, drugs, guns, vehicles) and networks provide valuable indicators of leadership within gangs. Leaders are also defined by their ability to command the respect and loyalty of members within the gangs.

Members are recruited or enticed into gangs for various reasons including aptitude, aspiration, lucrative lifestyles and perceptions of easy financial gain. The gang provides a sense of belonging, identity, status and a source of income to its members but also demands their allegiance and loyalty. Gangs foster numerous transactions for its members including social or recreational activities, business or economic opportunities, psycho-social support, and leadership. Gang members move together and there is a flow of goods, services and information/intelligence within the gang.

The participation of women in gangs is also evident in St. Lucia. According to George (2011), females provide leadership, intelligence and shielding of guns, drugs and cash for gangs. Women also instigate conflict and facilitate networking or connections between gangs. The attraction of women to gang leaders and their membership is also attributed to the easy money, excitement or adventure, association with strong or powerful men who provide security, status and respect within economically deprived communities.

There were several notable gangs in St. Lucia as of 2023. Young Faith is one of the biggest and most powerful gangs. It primarily earns money from the drug trade. The group buys cocaine from Colombian and Venezuelan suppliers and sells it to European drug trafficking networks, according to police sources (InSight Crime 2023). It also transports drugs to and from the island as a subcontractor for other transnational criminal networks, especially those from Venezuela. The group was founded by Ronald Kendall John, alias “Banan,” in the early 2000s. It has an estimated 50 core members divided into specialized groups for specific criminal activities, like drug trafficking and money laundering. Additionally, three small gangs act as permanent factions within Young Faith: Pepper Yard, No Side, and One Link. The group also contracts other gangs for minor jobs. Young Faith has a strong presence in Bruceville and several other communities in the east of Vieux Fort. The killing of a Young Faith member in March 2023 led to a feud with Death Trap, the other main gang in Vieux Fort, that sparked a series of murders in the town as the gangs accused one another of being behind the murder.

Grass Street, a gang named after the street where it is based in Castries, is the country’s second-largest group in terms of membership, influence, and finances. Grass Street has proved difficult for police intelligence to assess, and so the gang’s membership figures and political ties are unconfirmed. However, intelligence officers suggested the gang could have up to 50 members (InSight Crime 2023). The gang has been active for over 20 years and is led by the Richardson brothers, Prince and Richard, who inherited the gang from their father, Ronald Richardson. Richardson senior was a prominent drug trafficker of cocaine and marijuana in the Eastern

Caribbean. The brothers inherited their father's drug trafficking contacts and routes through the Caribbean. Previously one of the most well-known gangs on the island, Grass Street lost influence during a years-long conflict with other gangs in Castries. Violence was eventually reduced after negotiations between imprisoned gang leaders in the Bordelais Correctional Facility in 2015, and an initiative of RISE, a non-profit organization dedicated to anti-violence initiatives which provided mediation services to the different gangs outside of prison.

Death Trap is a gang based in Vieux Fort. The group buys and sells narcotics and works as a subcontractor, moving drugs for transnational networks. The gang purportedly subcontracts a smaller gang, Critical, for contract killings. The alliance with Critical has also increased Death Trap's membership, which, at about 30, is reportedly smaller than their main rival gang, Young Faith. Larry Cadette, the gang's leader, is a former accountant. He owns a series of legitimate companies, including a scrap metal business allegedly used to launder drug trafficking profits. Death Trap has influence over the population in Westall Group which it has gained by instilling fear and handing out gifts and money. The gang uses residents' houses to hide guns and forbids them from talking to the police. Deadly shootouts make the streets that mark borders between Death Trap and Young Faith territories dangerous areas for local residents.

The Death Row Crew came into existence in the late 1980s to early 1990s and has approximately 20 members. Among their activities are drug peddling and crimes with the use of firearms, including robbery, aggravated assault, and rape. The Death Row Crew is in a state of warfare with smaller gangs, most notably the Border Line Crew, headquartered in Southern Castries around Hospital Road and Faux-A-Chaux.

Bagatelle earned a reputation for violence in the 2000s under the leadership of Ronald Sylvester, alias "Bage," who allegedly carried out contract killings for other groups. Following Sylvester's death in 2010, Marlon Feman took over and expanded into the drug trade, using fishing boats to transport narcotics for transnational drug traffickers.

Graveyard has operated in St. Lucia for over 20 years. The gang was considered the most violent on the island between 2009 and 2012, when it acted as an enforcer for other gangs and carried out multiple killings. Only three members from that era remain, including the group's current leader, Zane Pierre, alias "Tiba." Many others were killed by rival gangs. The gang's use of violence dwindled after it moved into drug trafficking and as a consequence of the 2015 resolution between several gangs in Castries.

Gangs in St. Lucia are closely interwoven with narcotics and violence. Communities are supported by the drug trade, and several communities have an affiliation with drugs and gangs. While the main geographical areas with gangs are Castries and Vieux Fort, other communities such as Grass Street, Conway, Bagatelle, Marchand Boulevard, Graveyard, Maynard Hill, Hospital Road, Wilton's Yard, Le Clery, Leslie Land, Bois Patat, Faux-a-Chaud and their environs have also been plagued by street gangs. There is also a proliferation of youth gangs in many secondary schools. Members of the gangs are typically between the ages of 15-25; have identity crisis issues; and lack a sense of belonging and affiliation (George 2011).

Gang Involvement in Crime

InSight Crime (2023) found that gangs in St. Lucia engage in drug trafficking, arms trafficking, murder-for-hire, drug peddling, contraband smuggling, extortion and petty crime. Drug trafficking is one of the most lucrative businesses for gangs in St. Lucia and they have been involved in transnational drug trafficking for decades. St. Lucia is a significant transshipment point for cocaine and marijuana coming from Colombia and Venezuela. Gangs mostly move cocaine shipments to Martinique. From there, drugs are transported to Europe. St. Lucia's gangs also traffic marijuana to other Caribbean islands. St. Lucia police estimate that 60-75 percent of the drugs passing through the Eastern Caribbean are transported by criminal groups from St. Lucia (InSight Crime 2023).

Cocaine trafficking represents the most lucrative criminal economy for St. Lucia's gangs. The gangs largely work as subcontractors, picking up shipments of cocaine at sea, frequently delivered by Venezuelan networks, or going directly to Venezuela for pickup. The cocaine is then brought back to St. Lucia and stashed before being shipped elsewhere. Most cocaine passing through St. Lucia is moved by fishing vessels to Martinique and Guadeloupe. Human courier networks also export cocaine directly to Europe from St. Lucia, especially via London, one of the main flight destinations from the island. Gangs also smuggle marijuana produced in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Colombia, and Jamaica, to St. Lucia, either for local sale or transit to Martinique and other neighboring countries.

InSight Crime (2023) also discovered that violence between gangs is an important driver of homicides in the country, with disputes over territory and criminal economies, as well as personal feuds between rival gang members frequently resulting in violence. In 2022, St. Lucia had a record 76 homicides, or 42.3 per 100,000 inhabitants. The number for the first nine months of 2023 was even higher with 64 homicides (48 per 100,000). The fragmentation of gangs and the wide availability of guns on the island has contributed significantly to the high murder rates. The main gangs subcontract groups of smaller, less-organized criminals to carry out roles like hitmen and enforcers. InSight Crime (2023) found that these smaller groups were an important cause of violence in St. Lucia. Their lack of structure and weak leadership contributed to violent feuds between criminals over turf and income. Some of the smaller gangs were once part of larger gangs. For example, factions warring in Castries, Jacmel, Soufriere, Gros Islet and Dennery were part of a gang known as Only the Family Gang (OTF). Each of these factions, while still calling themselves OTF, are now independent and work as subcontractors for larger gangs. The OTF, Bois Patat and Marigot Bay are three of the most violent small gangs in St. Lucia.

The use of firearms in the commission of crimes, particularly murder, also represents an important dimension of the gang problem in St. Lucia. In 2019, 31 of 53 homicides in St. Lucia (58.5 percent) were committed with a firearm. In 2020, that number rose to 40 out of 52 (76.9 percent). At least one firearm is present in 10.8 percent of the 61,600 households on the island, suggesting that there are many more firearms on the island than the 2,701 registered (Central Statistical Office of St. Lucia 2020). The high demand for arms is mainly driven by gang activity, though citizens also purchase illicit arms for self-protection. As St. Lucia's gun laws are restrictive, most buyers purchase arms that enter St. Lucia illegally. Firearms from the United States enter St. Lucia through legal ports, aided by lax oversight and alleged corruption in the Customs and Excise Department.

Gangs mostly import firearms from the United States, aided by St. Lucian migrants who have settled there. Migrants ship weapons and ammunition to the island which enter through legal ports of entry, hidden in shipments among large appliances, parcels and construction materials. Though gang members often purchase the weapons, their relatives or collaborators may receive the shipments. InSight Crime (2023) discovered that corrupt customs officials facilitate firearms smuggling into St. Lucia by sabotaging scanners at the ports and approving the entry of items with firearms hidden inside. Police officers took partial control of Customs at the start of 2023 as authorities attempted to tackle the problem. Since then, seizures of arms have increased.

Several sources of data allow for a more systematic examination of the contribution of gangs to crime in St. Lucia. For example, population data from the Bordelais Correctional Facility, the only prison in St. Lucia, allow for an examination of crimes committed by gang members. As of December 2022, the facility housed 537 inmates, of whom 85 or 15.8 percent were gang members. All gang members were male, while 3 percent of the overall prison population was female.

Table 9.2 provides information on the crimes committed by gang and non-gang members, and includes information for all persons incarcerated in St. Lucia as of December 2022. When the entire prison population was considered, the results show that the most frequently committed crimes were murder, which was

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committed by 31.5 percent of all persons who were incarcerated, sexual offences (16.2 percent), possession of arms or ammunition (11.2 percent), stealing (6 percent) and robbery (5.6 percent).

When only gang members were considered, the crimes most often committed were murder (36.5 percent of gang members were incarcerated for this offence), robbery (14.1 percent), possession of arms or ammunition (12.9 percent), wounding (7.1 percent), and attempted murder (5.9 percent).

The proportion of gang members who were incarcerated for these offences exceeded the proportion of non-gang members who were incarcerated for the same offences. For example, while 36.5 percent of gang members were incarcerated for murder, 30.5 percent of non-gang members were incarcerated for murder. Other crimes which were more likely to be committed by gang members, when compared to non-gang members were assault, causing damage, gang association, stealing of motor vehicles and handling stolen goods.

In contrast, non-gang members were more likely than gang members to be involved in sexual offences, stealing drug offences, burglary, manslaughter, default in payments, kidnapping and causing dangerous harm. The results suggest that apart from kidnapping, gang members are more likely than non-gang members to be involved in violent offences, with the largest disparities between gang and non-gang members occurring for robbery, murder, attempted murder and woundings.

Table 9.2: Crimes committed by gang and non-gang members in St. Lucia⁶⁸

	Non gang member	Gang member	Total
Murder	30.5	36.5	31.5
Robbery	4.0	14.1	5.6
Possession of arms/ammunition	10.8	12.9	11.2
Wounding	4.4	7.1	4.8
Attempted murder	3.1	5.9	3.5
Assault	1.1	3.5	1.5
Sexual offence	18.8	2.4	16.2
Burglary	4.4	2.4	4.1
Dangerous harm	2.9	2.4	2.8
Causing damage	0.7	2.4	0.9
Stealing	6.9	1.2	6.0
Handling stolen goods	1.1	1.2	1.1
Stealing motor vehicle	0.9	1.2	0.9
Gang association	0	1.2	0.2
Drug offence	2.0	0	1.7
Default in Payment	1.3	0	1.1
Manslaughter	1.3	0	1.1
Kidnapping	0.7	0	0.6
Other	5.1	5.6	5.2

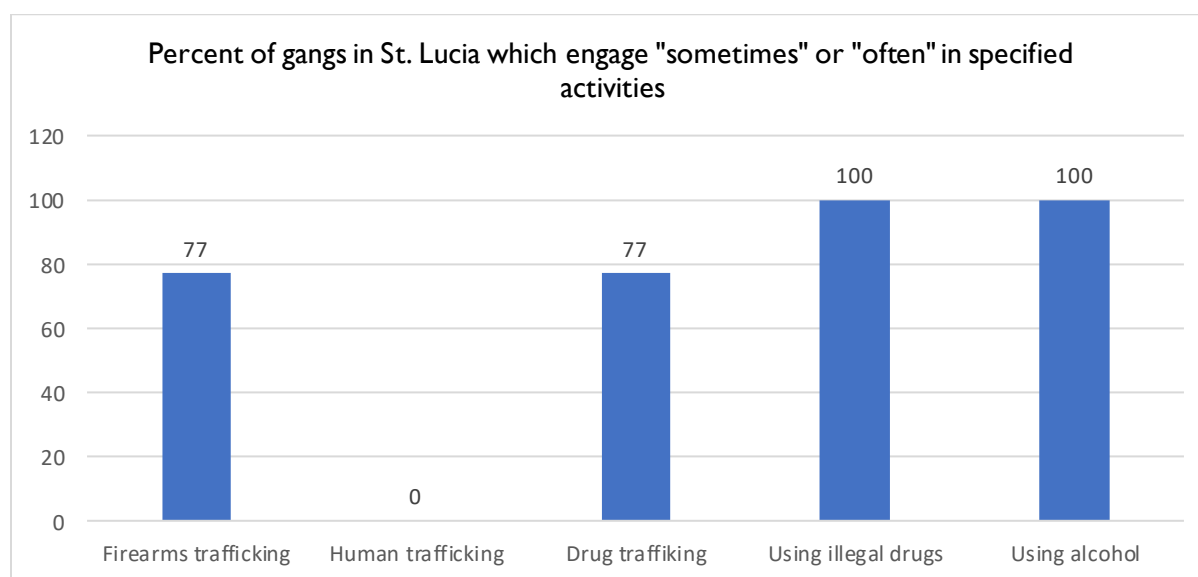
Source: Bordelais Correctional Facility, St. Lucia

In an effort to find out more about adult gangs, Katz and Nuno (2017) administered a police expert survey to officers who were gang experts, and discovered that there were 13 gangs in St. Lucia. They collected

⁶⁸ Percentages are shown. Findings are based on the total prison population as of December 2022.

detailed information on each of these gangs, including information on their involvement in criminal and other activities (Figure 9.4). They discovered that 23.1 percent of gangs in St. Lucia engaged rarely in firearms trafficking, while 46.2 percent engaged sometimes, and 30.8 percent engaged often. When asked about human trafficking, Katz and Nuno discovered that 61.5 percent of gangs never engage in this activity, while 38.5 percent engage only rarely in human trafficking. Katz and Nuno also discovered that all gangs engaged in drug trafficking, with 23.1 percent engaging rarely, 38.5 percent engaging sometimes, and 38.5 percent engaging often in this activity. All gangs used illegal drugs, with 23.1 percent using illegal drugs sometimes, and 76.9 percent using illegal drugs often. All gangs also engaged in alcohol consumption, with 23.1 percent using alcohol sometimes and 76.9 percent using alcohol often.

Figure 9.4



Source: Katz and Nuno (2017)

The involvement of school-aged youths with gangs is a troubling emergence in St. Lucia. George (2011) indicated that there was a proliferation of school gangs in several secondary schools in St. Lucia with strong allegiances to established community gangs. He further indicated that members of school gangs are typically children and young persons between the ages of 9-16 years who have identity crisis issues and lack a sense of belonging and affiliation, which they find by their participation in gang activities. In an effort to find out about the involvement of school youths in gangs, Katz and Nuno (2017) administered a school youth survey to 1996 Form 5 students, or 74.7 percent of all Form 5 students enrolled in St. Lucia. They discovered that 18 percent were involved with gangs (26 percent of males vs. 13 percent of females).

Among other things, Katz and Nuno (2017) collected data which showed the involvement of school youths in criminal activities. Table 9.3 disaggregates this data by gang membership and shows the percent of gang and non-gang members who were involved in various illegal activities within the twelve-month period preceding

the administration of the survey. The results show that gang members were more heavily involved in the commission of offences than non-gang members. For example, while 18.7 percent of gang members avoided paying for things such as movies or the bus, only 5.2 percent of non-gang members did the same. Likewise, 6.9 percent of gang members compared to 1.8 percent of non-gang members stole something worth more than EC\$ 100 within the last year. When all property offences were considered simultaneously, it was found that 87.9 percent of gang members compared to 65.5 percent of non-gang members engaged in such offences within the last year.

Gang members also engaged in violent offences to a greater degree than non-gang members (Table 9.3). For example, 25.7 percent of gang members hit someone with the intention of hurting them compared to 10.9 percent of non-gang members who did the same. Similarly, while 29.5 percent of gang members carried a hidden weapon for protection, only 9.3 percent of non-gang members did the same. When all violent offences were considered simultaneously, the results show that 90.8 percent of gang members compared to 74.7 percent of non-gang members engage in violent offences within the last year.

When property and violent offences are considered together, the results show that 95.4 percent of gang members, compared to 84.1 percent of non-gang members were involved in offending within the one year period preceding the survey.

Information on drug and alcohol usage, as well as drug trafficking is also shown in Table 9.3. The results show that 97.1 percent of gang members used alcohol compared to 82.4 percent of non-gang members. Similarly, 75 percent of gang members compared to 32.2 percent of non-gang members used marijuana. The results also show that 38 percent of gang members were engaged in drug sales compared to 9.3 percent of non-gang members.

When all property and violent offences were considered, the results show that gang members were most likely to be involved in carrying concealed weapons (29.5 percent did so within the last year), assaulting others (25.7 percent), avoiding paying for things (18.7 percent), purposefully damaging property which did not belong to them (16.2 percent) and involvement in fights with other groups (13.3 percent). The proportion of gang members involved in drug sales (38 percent), using marijuana (75 percent) and using alcohol (97.1 percent) also stood out.

Table 9.3: Involvement of gang and non-gang school youths in illegal activities in St. Lucia ⁶⁹

	Non-gang members	Gang members
Property Offences		
Avoided paying for something such as movies	5.2	18.7
Purposefully damaged property	3.9	16.2
Illegally spray painted wall or building	2.4	10.5
Stole something worth less than EC\$ 100	3.2	12.9
Stole something worth more than EC\$ 100	1.8	6.9
Went or tried to go into a building to steal something	1.0	5.2
Violent offences		
Hit someone to hurt them	10.9	25.7
Carried a hidden weapon for protection	9.3	29.5
Attacked someone with a weapon	2.6	10.5
Used a weapon to get money or things	0.9	3.5
Was involved in fights with other groups	4.3	13.3
Overall involvement in offending		

⁶⁹ Percentages are shown.

Property offences (past 12 months)	65.5	87.9
Violent offences (past 12 months)	74.7	90.8
Property and violent offences (past 12 months)	84.1	95.4
Drugs and alcohol		
Alcohol use	82.4	97.1
Marijuana use	32.2	75.0
Drug sales	9.3	38.0

Source: Katz and Nuno (2017)

Data collected by the UNDP (2012), which collected data from a nationally representative sample of 1514 adults, also provide additional insights into gang violence (Table 9.4). The results show that in St. Lucia as a whole, 4.6 percent of respondents indicated that there was a large amount of gang violence in their neighborhoods, while 13.5 percent indicated that there was some gang violence, and 25 percent indicated that there was a little gang violence. Areas with the largest proportion indicating that there was a large amount of gang violence were Central Castries (20.6 percent), Dennery (5.2 percent) and other areas of Castries apart from Central Castries (4.6 percent).

Table 9.4: Gang violence in St. Lucia

	To what extent has your neighborhood experienced gang violence?		
	Large amount of violence	Some violence	Little violence
Central Castries	20.6	25.2	29.0
Dennery	5.2	12.9	19.4
Castries (excluding central)	4.6	14.9	26.5
Gros Islet	4.0	6.7	34.7
Soufriere	3.1	9.4	11.5
Babonneau	3.0	25.8	22.0
Vieux Fort	1.9	9.3	24.1
Micoud	1.5	9.2	33.1
Anse La Raye	1.1	2.1	20.0
Choiseul	0.9	10.4	32.1
Laborie	0.0	8.3	16.7
St. Lucia	4.6	13.5	25.0

Source: UNDP (2012)

Risk factors for gang involvement

Cheon et al. (2023) used point-biserial correlations to examine the relationship between gang involvement and a number of risk and protective factors, using data from 1996 Form 5 students, or 74.7 percent of all enrolled Form 5 students in St. Lucia. Cheon et al. found that variables associated with social control (i.e. parental/family attachment, parental monitoring, and school commitment), self-control (impulsivity and risk-seeking) and social learning (commitment to delinquent peers and attitudes of moral disengagement) were related to gang involvement among Form 5 youth in St. Lucia. The results suggest that greater levels of parental and family attachment, as well as greater levels of parental monitoring were related to lower levels of gang involvement among youth. Higher levels of school commitment were also associated with lower levels of gang involvement. In contrast, low self-control, commitment to delinquent peers and attitudes of moral disengagement were related to greater levels of gang involvement. The results of Cheon et al. (2023) suggest that interventions to reduce gang membership in St. Lucia can focus on improving parental monitoring and attachment, improving school commitment, increasing self-control, improving moral attitudes, and reducing engagement with delinquent peers.

Data from the 2016 LAPOP survey also allow for an examination of risk factors for gangs at the neighborhood level (Table 9.5). Dependent variables derived from the LAPOP dataset include the presence of gangs in the neighborhood, the extent to which the neighborhood is affected by gangs, and the extent to which youths in gangs are a problem in the neighborhood. In this analysis neighborhood social cohesion, neighborhood informal social control, neighborhood decay, and police performance in the neighborhood were used as predictors, while perceptions of safety, assaults, shootings and drug use and trafficking in the neighborhood were used as controls.

The results show that neighborhood decay is a significant predictor of the presence of gangs in the neighborhood and the extent to which neighborhoods are affected by gangs. The results suggest that neighborhoods with higher levels of decay are more likely to have gangs, and are more likely to be affected by gangs. Police performance was inversely related to the presence of gangs in neighborhoods and the extent to which gangs affected the neighborhood. The results suggest that better police performance is associated with a decreased presence of gangs in the neighborhood, and reduces the impact of gangs in the neighborhood.

Each of the three control variables were significant predictors of all dependent variables in the expected direction. The results suggest that neighborhoods with gangs, neighborhoods which are affected by gangs, and neighborhoods in which young persons in gangs are a serious problem have higher levels of assaults, shootings, and drug use and trafficking.

Overall, the results suggest that interventions to reduce gangs in neighborhoods may focus on reducing neighborhood decay, and on improving police performance. The reduction of neighborhood decay is consistent with CPTED principles.

Table 9.5: Predictors of gang variables in St. Lucia⁷⁰

	Gangs in the neighborhood	Extent to which neighborhood affected by gangs	Young persons in gangs
Social Cohesion	-.066	-.010	-.026
Social Control	-.021	-.026	-.025
Neighborhood Decay	** .310	*** .087	.028
Police Performance	** -.192	* -.036	.019
Perceptions of Safety	* .096	*** .069	*** .071
Assault in the neighborhood	* .184	*** .132	*** .133
Shootings in neighborhood	*** .309	*** .112	*** .172
Drug trafficking and use	** .133	*** .085	*** .216
R²	⁷¹.230	.335	.357

Source: LAPOP 2016

Data collected from the UNDP (2012) also allow for an examination of predictors of gang presence and gang violence in the community (N= 1514 adults). The results suggest that social cohesion is an important predictor of gang presence and violence in the community (Table 9.6). The negative coefficients suggest that neighborhoods with a higher level of social cohesion are less likely to have gangs, and are less likely to be affected by gang violence. Informal social control was also a significant predictor of each of the dependent variables. The findings indicate that neighborhoods with higher levels of informal social control, that is,

⁷⁰ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

⁷¹ Nagelkerke R Square.

neighborhoods in which residents are more likely to intervene to solve problems when they arise, are less likely to have gangs, and are less likely to be affected by gang violence. While police performance was unrelated to the presence of gangs, it was a significant predictor of gang violence. The results suggest that while better police performance may not necessarily reduce the number of gangs in a community, better performance is associated with lower levels of gang violence. Crime in the community was used as a control variable, and was found to be related to the dependent variables. The results suggest that the presence of gangs is associated with higher levels of crime in the community.

The results from the UNDP (2012) suggest that intervention efforts which aim to reduce gang violence in St. Lucia can focus on building community social cohesion and informal social controls. Improving police performance is also important. The results also suggest that a reduction in the number of gangs would be accompanied by a reduction in crime. Of the variables which were examined, social cohesion and informal social control were the most important as predictors of gang presence and gang violence in St. Lucia.

Table 9.6: Predictors of gang presence and violence in St. Lucia⁷²

	Gang presence in neighborhood	Gang violence in neighborhood
Unemployment	.037	-.002
Access to schooling	.019	-.012
Cost of food	-.002	-.003
Cost of living	-.021	-.033
Poverty	.023	.040
Level of migration ⁷³	-.019	.016
Adequate sanitation	.023	.000
Social Cohesion	***-.038	***-.111
Informal social control	***-.138	***-.200
Police performance	-.008	**-.067
Crime in the Community	***.383	***.502
	Nagelkerke R ² = .307	Adjusted R ² = .405

Source: UNDP (2012)

Taken as a whole, the results from Cheon et al. (2023), LAPOP (2016), and UNDP (2012) suggest that interventions aimed at reducing gang involvement and gang violence in St. Lucia can focus on reducing neighborhood decay, improving police performance, building community social cohesion and informal social controls, building school commitment, improving parental monitoring and building parental attachment, improving self-control, reducing engagement with delinquent peers, and building morals and values among youths.

Transnational links between gangs and criminal enterprises

Katz (2017) in interviewing police gang experts across the Caribbean region discovered that international linkages among gangs and gang members develop in several ways. One way relates to the migratory experiences of Caribbean youth who may migrate to other countries in the region, or to other parts of the world such as the US, Canada and the UK. Migrants from the US are particularly important. When such migrants return to the Caribbean they typically import culture, including gang subcultures. Police experts reported that that American popular culture and media programming, news, and other television shows play an important role in the proliferation of gangs in the Caribbean. Other stakeholders interviewed by Katz (2017) expressed the view that the proliferation was a consequence of the direct gang involvement of native

⁷² Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

⁷³ Used as an indicator for residential mobility.

youth who migrated with their families, typically to the United States, for personal and non-gang related reasons, and who then transmitted gang culture and behavior to their peers upon returning to the Caribbean. Another important dimension of the migratory experience relates to returning deportees, many of whom return from the United States. Quite often persons are deported for involvement in criminal activity, including gang-involvement. Such persons can become gang-involved upon their return.

In speaking with police experts in St. Lucia Katz (2017) discovered that gang members either returned from or originated in a wide range of countries. These included the USA, Canada, the UK, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago, Martinique and Jamaica. The findings for adult gangs were mirrored when school youths were surveyed. Katz (2017) found that around 11 percent of school youth who self-reported that they were gang members were foreign born. This compares to 33 percent in Barbados, 18.9 percent in Dominica, 13.9 percent in Grenada, 5.5 percent in Guyana, 18.8 percent in St. Kitts and Nevis, 11.4 percent in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and 4.8 percent in Trinidad and Tobago. The large proportion of adult as well as youthful gang members in St. Lucia who are foreign born suggests the possibility of easy linkages with a wide range of countries. These linkages can serve to import gang culture into St. Lucia, but can also serve to export the gang culture when St. Lucian migrants return to their countries of origin.

Katz (2017) also collected data from police experts on formal relationships between gangs in St. Lucia and criminal enterprises in other nations. Katz discovered that in St. Lucia both police experts and school youth reported that more than 25 percent of gangs had a formal relationship with gangs or other criminal enterprises in other countries. This compares to 50 percent in Antigua and Barbuda and 25 percent in St. Kitts and Nevis.

More recently in 2023 InSight Crime interviewed police and other stakeholders in St. Lucia and found that gangs in St. Lucia have been involved in transnational drug trafficking for decades, and have become increasingly violent in recent years. St. Lucia is a significant transshipment point for cocaine and marijuana coming from Colombia and Venezuela. Gangs mostly move cocaine shipments to Martinique. From there, drugs are transported to Europe. St. Lucia's gangs also traffic marijuana to other Caribbean islands. The magnitude of the drug trade is of concern as St. Lucia police estimate that 60 to 75 percent of the drugs passing through the Eastern Caribbean are transported by criminal groups from St. Lucia (InSight Crime, 2023).

Cocaine trafficking represents the most lucrative criminal economy for St. Lucia's gangs. The gangs largely work as subcontractors, picking up shipments of cocaine at sea, frequently delivered by Venezuelan networks, or going directly to Venezuela for pickup. The cocaine is then brought back to St. Lucia and stashed before being shipped elsewhere. Most cocaine passing through St. Lucia is moved by fishing vessel to Martinique and Guadeloupe. One source which spoke to InSight Crime said that authorities struggle to intercept shipments because there are many legitimate fishing vessels also working in the area. Human courier networks export cocaine directly to Europe from St. Lucia, especially via London. Gangs also smuggle marijuana produced in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Colombia, and Jamaica, to St. Lucia, either for local sale or transit to Martinique and other neighboring countries.

Young Faith gang is one of the biggest and most powerful gangs in St. Lucia. It primarily earns money from the drug trade. The group buys cocaine from Colombian and Venezuelan suppliers and sells it to European drug trafficking networks, according to police sources. It also transports drugs to and from the island as a subcontractor for other transnational criminal networks, especially those from Venezuela (InSight Crime, 2023). The Grass Street gang, which is based in Castries, is also a known trafficker of marijuana and cocaine, and transships illicit drugs within the Eastern Caribbean. Other gangs which are known to be involved in the transnational drug trade include Bagatelle, which is based in Castries, and Death Trap, which is based in the Westall Group, Vieux Fort.

InSight Crime also discovered that firearms from the United States enter St. Lucia through legal ports, aided by lax oversight and alleged corruption in the Customs and Excise Department. The demand for weapons is

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driven by gang activity, although gangs also sell guns in Martinique. Gangs mostly import firearms from the United States, aided by St. Lucian migrants who have settled there. Migrants ship weapons and ammunition to the island which enter through legal ports of entry, hidden in shipments among large appliances, parcels, and construction materials. Though gang members often purchase the weapons, their relatives or collaborators may receive the shipments.

The findings suggest that law enforcement agencies in St. Lucia as well as the region should increase their operational coordination to identify and respond to transnational threats to security from criminal gangs. St. Lucia should also increase its capacity to collect, maintain, and disseminate intelligence on transnational criminal groups and their criminal activity in order to more effectively engage in collaborative cross-border criminal investigations.

10. SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Prevalence of the gang problem

While St. Vincent and the Grenadines consistently ranks as one of the most violent places in the world based on its homicide rate, and gangs and youth violence have been linked to public safety in the region, the nation has been subject to little rigorous research related to the prevalence and extent of its gang problem or ways to prevent gang joining (World Bank, 2023; Williams, 2009). Importantly also, St. Vincent and the Grenadines does not have legislation defining gang or gang membership.

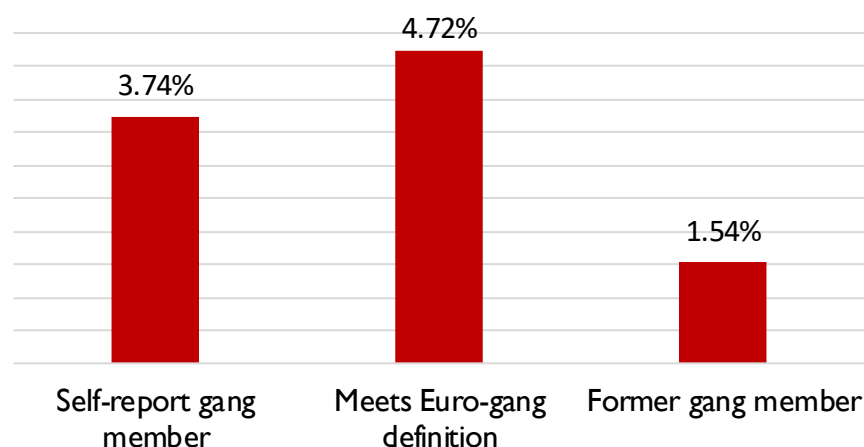
The scope and nature of gang problems in St. Vincent and the Grenadines was documented in a project funded by USAID and carried out by the Regional Security System (RSS) and Arizona State University (ASU) (Katz & Nuño, 2017; Katz et al., 2023). The study surveyed police experts in the 21 police districts (in 2011), 1,101 Form 5 students (in 2013), and 20 detained youth (in 2014). Results from the police expert survey identified 23 gangs and 251 gang members concentrated in police station districts (Katz & Nuño, 2017). Based on this project, approximately 18 percent of school-attending youth self-reported gang membership at the time of the survey (Katz et al., 2023).

In 2023 and 2024, LACLEARN conducted similar surveys with police experts in the 22 police districts (100 percent response rate, collected January 2024), Form 4 and 5 school-attending youth in all 18 public schools (with 1,491 students participating—a student level response rate of 66.89 percent, collected December 2023), and detained youth (collected April and May 2023).

The police estimate that gangs formed in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2004 and that there are 16 gangs and 235 gang members in the nation as of 2024. The average gang includes 14 to 15 active members. None of the gangs existed for less than a year. A quarter existed for 1 to 4 years, 56.3 percent existed for 5 to 10 years, 6.3 percent for 11 to 20 years, and 12.5 percent for 20 years or longer. The police reported that 40 percent of gangs in St. Vincent and the Grenadines used signs, 12.5 percent used symbols, 37.5 percent used particular ways of speaking, 25 percent wore distinctive clothing, 12.5 percent had distinctive tattoos, and 62.5 percent had an identifiable name as a means of group identification.

Police experts explained that while 10 of the 22 police station districts contain gangs and gang members, most of the gangs and gang members are present in four station districts. Biabou and Calliaqua police station districts account for 6 of the nation's ten gangs, and five police station districts (Central, Biabou, Calliaqua, Mesopotamia, and Georgetown) districts account for 79.2 percent of the nation's gang members. Gang-related homicides are also geographically concentrated in 2 of the 22 police station districts: Central (69 percent) and Calliaqua (17.7 percent).

Similarly, data from school-attending youth in the nation confirmed the presence of gangs in the nation. As shown in Figure 10.1, about 3.7 percent of youth in the nation self-nominated themselves as gang members, and about 4.7 percent of youth in the nation self-reported Eurogang membership, which relies on a method of self-reported gang membership without using the word "gang." Approximately 1.5 percent of school-attending youth indicated that they were former gang members. This suggests that the prevalence of gang membership in the nation is relatively low among school youth. At the time of the detention survey, out of the 32 detained youth surveyed, none identified as a current gang member (one youth refused to answer the question). Four youth were identified as a former gang member (with one refusing to answer again).

Figure 10.1: Percent of school youth reporting gang membership in St. Vincent and the Grenadines⁷⁴

Source: LACLEARN school youth data, 2023

Data from the Latin American Public Opinion (LAPOP) survey, which was administered to a representative sample of 1,017 adults in 2016, provide additional insights into gangs in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, suggesting that St. Vincent and the Grenadines has a modest gang problem, with less of a gang problem than many other nations in the region. In the nation as a whole, 9 percent indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhoods. The rate was highest in St. George (12.1 percent), followed by the rest of St. Vincent (7.6 percent), and lowest in the Grenadines (1 percent).

As shown in Figure 10.2, 11.3 percent of the residents in St. Vincent and the Grenadines perceived that their neighborhood is “somewhat” or “a lot” affected by gangs. Residents in the St. George district are slightly more likely to note their neighborhood is affected by gangs, with 9.4 percent saying gangs “somewhat” affect their neighborhood and 4.6 percent saying their neighborhood is affected “a lot” by gangs. This compares to 6.4 percent believing gangs affect their neighborhood “somewhat or a lot” in the Grenadines region and 9.6 percent in other regions.

When asked to rate the extent to which gangs get in the way of daily activities such as going out or shopping in the nation as a whole, 0.7 percent indicated that they get in the way “a lot”, while 1 percent said “somewhat”, 2.2 percent said, “a little” and 96.1 percent indicated that gangs did not get in the way at all. In St. George 1.7 percent indicated that gangs get in the way a lot or somewhat, compared to 2 percent in the rest of St. Vincent, and 0 percent in the Grenadines.

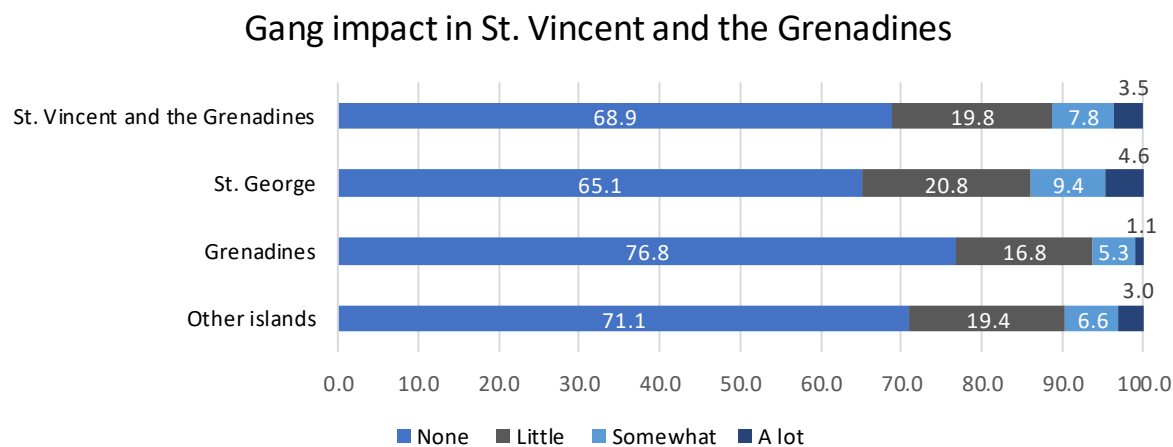
When respondents in the LAPOP survey were asked to indicate whether gangs had become more or less of a problem than the year before, in the nation as a whole 2.3 percent indicated that they had become more of a problem, while 2.7 percent said that they had become less of a problem, and 4 percent said that they were about the same. In St. George as well as the rest of St. Vincent, 2.5 percent indicated that gangs had become more of a problem than the previous year, while in the Grenadines 0 percent indicated that gangs had become more of a problem.

When asked whether children and young persons in gangs were a problem in their neighborhoods, in the country as a whole, 11.2 percent indicated that this was a “very serious problem”, while 6.6 percent responded, “somewhat serious”, 10.3 percent said “a little serious”, 16.3 percent said “not serious at all”, and

⁷⁴ Notes: N = 1,457; Ninety-five (6.52 percent of the total) respondents did not answer the question on current gang membership, and responses were missing for 100 cases (6.86 percent) for the Euro-gang membership.

55.6 percent said that this was “not a problem”. In St. George 19.7 percent indicated that young persons in gangs was a very or somewhat serious problem, compared to 18.3 percent in the rest of St. Vincent, and 62 percent in the Grenadines.

Figure 10.2:



Source: LAPOP 2016

A short history of gangs

A recent InSight Crime investigation of gangs in St. Vincent and the Grenadines suggests that the nation has a gang problem, but it is modest in magnitude when compared to other countries examined in this report (McDermott et al., 2023).⁷⁵ As reported, gang activity is concentrated in a small number of urban neighborhoods with no clear gang structures or territories. Few gangs can be identified by name. Exceptions include the Bee Hive Crew, Ocho Cinco, and the Soowoo Crew. The Bee Hive Crew operates by St. Paul's Avenue in Kingston, and some have pointed to ties between this group and the current ULP government. The Ocho Cinco gang operates in Georgetown (the second largest city in St. Vincent). The Soowoo Crew, which may be connected to Ocho Cinco, primarily operates out of Chester Cottage, a village south of Georgetown. There is also some limited evidence that individuals associated with the Bloods and Crips are in Bequia – one of the islands south of St. Vincent.

Other inquiries into the gang problem in St. Vincent and the Grenadines are dated. In the “Youth on the Bloc” survey conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), St. Vincent and the Grenadines Youth Affairs Department representatives administered surveys to youth hanging out in public places in 21 communities. Respondent's attributed gang warfare, something people noted was one of the biggest challenges facing youth in their communities, to drug problems, the lack of employment, and poverty among youth (UNFPA, 2011).

Gang involvement in crime

Regardless of the operationalization of gang membership among school-attending youth in 2023, gang youth, with few exceptions, were significantly more likely to self-report property crime, violence, drug sales, and substance use. Roughly 54.7 percent of non-gang members self-reported ever engaging in any offense, compared to about 96.1 percent for self-nominated gang members and 90.6 percent of Eurogang members. Likewise, self-nominated gang members self-reported engaging in a greater variety of offenses. For example,

⁷⁵ Other countries studied by InSight Crime include St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

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self-nominated gang members self-reported engaging in about 6.3 different types of offenses, and Eurogang members reported committing about 4.8 different offense types in their lifetime compared to non-gang members who self-reported only engaging in about 1.6 different offense types.

Gang youth were significantly more likely to self-report contact with the police and criminal justice system. About 8.4 percent of non-gang members, 47.1 percent of self-reported gang members, and 34.4 percent of Eurogang members reported ever having prior police contact, being arrested, or being detained.

Consistent with prior research, there was a great deal of overlap between offending and victimization among youth in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. About 21.8 percent of non-gang youth stated that they had been threatened, threatened with a gun, shot or shot at, injured without a gun, or attacked without a weapon, compared to 64.7 percent of self-reported gang members and 40.3 percent of Eurogang members.

Police experts in 2024 reported that about 81.3 percent of gangs sometimes or often engage in illegal things together, about 62.5 percent sometimes or often get into fights or have problems with other groups, and 31.3 percent sometimes or often engage in firearms trafficking. However, none of the gangs were known to be involved in human trafficking. Additionally, police experts noted that 100 percent of the gangs sometimes or often use alcohol, 100 percent sometimes or often use illegal drugs, and 62.5 percent of the gangs sometimes or often traffic drugs.

LACLEARN also examined gang involvement in police homicide records to explore the motives behind homicides in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the differences between gang- and non-gang-related homicides. When unknown homicides were excluded from the analysis, about 37.7 percent of the nation's homicides were gang-related. Victims of gang homicides are significantly more likely to be younger (i.e., between the ages of 15 and 44 years old) and the homicide is more likely to involve a firearm (98 percent versus 56 percent).

In addition to examining the characteristics of gang homicides, we also present information on how these homicides change over time and the social dynamics between different gangs involved in homicides, based on data collected by LACLEARN in 2024. Only two gangs in St. Vincent and the Grenadines have been identified as involved either by victim or suspect in a gang homicide. Among all gang-related homicide victims, Bee Hive gang members were the victim in 34 percent of incidents, and Saints gang members were victims in 33 percent of incidents. However, in 4 percent of cases, both the victim and suspect were Bee Hive gang members, suggesting some internal conflict in the group. In contrast, all victims affiliated with the Saints gang were associated with a member of the Bee Hive gang as a suspect. This suggests that gang homicides are confined to a very small number of gangs in the nation.

Risk factors for gang involvement

Based on the 2013 school youth surveys (Katz & Nuño, 2017; Katz et al., 2023), males reported a higher level of gang involvement; 17 percent of males reported gang membership compared to 11 percent of females. There was no significant variation in gang involvement by race; 12 percent of African descent youth reported gang involvement compared to 15 percent among mixed-race youth, and 17 percent among other race youth (Katz et al., 2023). The average age youth joined their gang in St. Vincent and the Grenadines was 11.7 (Katz & Nuño, 2017). Most reported they joined the gang to make friends (63 percent), followed by because someone in their family was a group member (56.5 percent), for protection (41.3 percent), to participate in group activities (28.3 percent), and to meet members of the opposite sex (21.7 percent).

Data from the 2016 LAPOP survey were used to examine the predictors of several gang variables. The results (Table 10.1) indicate that more closely knit neighborhoods (i.e., those with higher social cohesion) have a reduced likelihood of young children and youths being associated with gangs. Neighborhoods with higher

levels of decay are more likely to have gangs, and better police performance is related to lower gang impact on the neighborhood. Contrary to expectations, informal social control was unrelated to the gang outcomes.

With respect to the control variables, gangs in the neighborhood were associated with higher levels of assaults, shootings, and drug use and trafficking. Interestingly, gangs did not affect perceptions of safety.

The findings suggest that interventions to reduce gang presence may focus on reducing neighborhood disorder (this is consistent with CPTED principles), improving police performance, and building social cohesion. The results also suggest that a reduction in gang presence may result in a reduction in neighborhood crime.

Table 10.1: Predictors of gang variables in St. Vincent & the Grenadines⁷⁶

	Gangs in neighborhood	Extent to which neighborhood affected by gangs	Young persons in gangs
Social Cohesion	-.084	-.013	*-.051
Social Control	.022	.002	.010
Neighborhood Decay	*.285	⁷⁷ .045	-.025
Police Performance	⁷⁸ -.133	***-.058	-.022
Perceptions of Safety	.079	.019	.007
Assaults in the community	.186	***.126	***.233
Shootings in the community	***.557	***.143	***.254
Drug use and trafficking	.074	***.068	***.187
R²	⁷⁹ .224	.268	.332

Source: LAPOP (2016)

Using point biserial correlations, Cheon et al. (2023) found that self-reported current gang involvement among school-attending Form 5 youth in St. Vincent and the Grenadines was positively correlated with impulsivity, risk-seeking, having delinquent peers, and moral attitudes/disengagement. Self-reported current gang involvement was negatively correlated with parental/family attachment, parental monitoring, and school commitment.

The findings suggest that youths who had low self-control (i.e., were impulsive or risk-seeking), who experienced weak parental/family attachment, who received little parental monitoring, who had low school commitment, who had delinquent peers and who had moral attitudes which were supportive of engagement in unacceptable behaviour were more likely to be gang involved.

The results from Cheon et al. (2023) suggest that interventions which are designed to reduce gang involvement may focus on increasing parental involvement and building school commitment, on building self-control, and on reducing opportunities to develop attitudes and learn behaviors conducive to engagement in delinquent behavior.

LACLEARN collected primary data from Form 4 and 5 school-attending youth as part of this project. The survey instrument contained 160 questions and collected information on demographics, risk and protective factors, gang membership, delinquency, and drug use. Students completed the survey in December 2023 in

⁷⁶ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

⁷⁷ $p < .068$.

⁷⁸ $p < .065$.

⁷⁹ Nagelkerke R Square

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their classrooms. All 18 public schools enrolling Form 4 and 5 students participated in the study (i.e., 100 percent of available schools). Among the 2,229 enrolled Form 4 and 5 students, 1,491 agreed to participate for a student-level response rate of 66.9 percent.

The data provided additional insights into risk factors for gang membership (Table 10.2). The results show that respondents who identified as another race compared to those of African descent, those who scored higher on the risk-seeking scale, those with other family members involved in a gang, and those who had more antisocial peers were more likely to self-report gang membership. Respondents who were male, reported higher socio-economic status based on the wealth scale, and who have peers who used drugs were more likely to meet the criteria for the Eurogang definition.

Table 10.2: Predictors of self-reported and Eurogang membership among school youth in St. Vincent & the Grenadines⁸⁰

	Model 1: Self-report gang member		Model 2: Euro-gang member	
	b	SE	b	SE
Demographics				
Male	0.120	0.353	0.736*	0.349
Race (ref. African descent)				
East Indian	0.096	0.706	0.133	0.552
Mixed	0.152	0.388	-0.375	0.335
Other	1.387*	0.593	0.695	0.560
Age	0.334	0.199	-0.033	0.173
Foreign-born	0.100	0.423	0.135	0.356
Individual				
Impulsivity	0.007	0.069	-0.037	0.055
Risk-seeking	0.186*	0.071	0.084	0.054
Street code	0.053	0.048	0.066	0.037
Wealth scale	0.048	0.096	0.212*	0.096
Intention to use drugs	0.005	0.143	0.307*	0.124
Minority identity	-0.005	0.154	0.019	0.135
ACEs	0.047	0.045	0.016	0.037
Family				
Parental monitoring	-0.026	0.064	0.004	0.058
Parental attitudes favorable to anti-social behavior	-0.173	0.088	0.078	0.083
Family opportunities for prosocial involvement	0.046	0.066	-0.051	0.054
Family gang involvement	1.188*	0.420	-0.038	0.338
Peers				
Anti-social peers	0.100*	0.036	0.042	0.035
Peer drug use	0.142	0.128	0.369*	0.105
Peer pressure	0.055	0.052	-0.004	0.046
Moral order	0.002	0.070	-0.046	0.057
Prosocial friends	-0.054	0.036	-0.012	0.030
School				
Low school commitment	-0.156	0.179	-0.220	0.151

⁸⁰ Note: * p < 0.05

	Model 1: Self-report gang member		Model 2: Euro-gang member	
	b	SE	b	SE
Opportunities for prosocial involvement	0.081	0.059	-0.039	0.043
Community				
Mobility	-0.366	0.423	-0.417	0.394
Perceived gun accessibility	0.190	0.163	0.067	0.140
N	1,241		1,238	

Source: LACLEARN 2023 Survey of school youth

Finally, gang-related problems are the most common motive for homicides in the nation (after unknown motives). When including unknown motives in the analysis, we found that about 12.5 percent of the nation's homicides were gang related. When unknown homicides were excluded from the analysis, 37.7 percent of the nation's homicides were gang related. Excluding cases with "unknown" motives, the next most prevalent types of homicide in St. Vincent and the Grenadines were homicides involving a dispute or altercation (34 percent) and domestic violence (15.1 percent). Most victims of homicide, regardless of whether they were gang-related, were male (94 percent and 97 percent for gang-related and non-gang-related homicides, respectively). When compared to victims of non-gang homicides, victims of gang homicides were significantly more likely to be younger and between the ages of 15 and 44 years old. Gang violence in the nation is primarily related to retaliatory gun violence; almost all gang homicides involve a gun (98 percent versus 56 percent, respectively). Further, a small number of gangs (two gangs) appear to be disproportionately responsible for violence in the nation – the Bee Hive gang and the Saints gang.

Transnational links between gangs and criminal enterprises

In 2023, based on data collected from police experts and school attending youth, while approximately 22 to 27 percent of school-attending gang members were foreign-born (a similar amount as reported among non-gang youth), police experts did not identify any foreign-born members or migration of gang members to or from other nations.

Freemon et al. (2023) used the same data reported in Katz et al. (2023) to examine the relationship between migration status and gang involvement in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Foreign-born youth were significantly more likely to self-report gang membership than third generation youth (i.e., both parents also born in St. Vincent and the Grenadines; 23.6 percent vs. 13.5 percent). There was not a significant difference between foreign-born youth and second-generation youth (i.e., with one parent born out of the nation, 15.1 percent). However, once other factors were factored into the analysis, the relationship with migration status and gang involvement was no longer statistically significant.

According to the 2023 InSight Crime report, no gangs in St. Vincent and the Grenadines meet the definition of serious organized criminal organizations (McDermott et al., 2023). There is also little evidence that government officials are associated with organized crime or gang activity. Notably, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a transit point for cocaine and marijuana going to North America, Europe, or elsewhere in the Caribbean and for arms moving to South America. Almost 400 kilograms of cocaine were confiscated in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2011 – the highest amount on record (McDermott et al., 2023). The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (2023) suggests Venezuelan criminal organizations have some presence in the nation, particularly in the Grenadine islands, to facilitate cocaine shipments. Overall, however, there is little indication the nation is a major transshipment point for cocaine. Marijuana, however, is grown, widely consumed, and generally tolerated in the nation. Personal consumption of the drug is not legal; legislation to make it legal has passed Parliament (it still needs to be signed into law by the Governor-General) (McDermott et al., 2023). Medical marijuana is legal and is exported abroad (Henry, 2022).

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II. SURINAME

Prevalence of the gang problem

Suriname differs from other Caribbean nations as a former Dutch colony with Dutch as the official language. The homicide rate in Suriname is also comparatively lower than other Caribbean nations with an average intentional homicide rate of 6.4 per 100,000 inhabitants from 2017 to 2021. Little information is available on gangs in Suriname (Sutton & Ruprah, 2017). However, data indicate that there are gangs present in Suriname.

Data from the 2023 LAPOP survey provide insights into the prevalence of gangs in Suriname. Data were collected from a random representative sample of 1539 adults. The results showed that in Suriname as a whole, 19.4 percent of respondents indicated that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhood. This compares to 13.4 percent who reported similarly in the 2014 LAPOP survey. Areas with the largest proportion indicating that there were gangs in their neighborhoods in 2023 were Paramaribo (24.9 percent, compared to 15.1 percent in 2014) and Brokopondo / Sipaliwini (24.5 percent, compared to 10.8 percent in 2014). This was followed by Wanica / Para (17.2 percent, compared to 13.4 percent in 2014), Commewijne / Marowijne (13.5 percent, compared to 11.5 percent in 2014) and Nickerie / Coronie / Saramacca (12.4 percent, compared to 10.4 percent in 2014).

When asked to indicate the extent to which their neighborhoods were affected by gangs, in the nation as a whole in 2023 10.3 percent of respondents responded, “a lot”, while 19 percent said “somewhat”, 19.2 percent said, “a little” and 51.5 percent indicated that their neighborhoods were not affected by gangs (Figure 11.1). Areas where the largest proportion indicated that their neighborhoods were affected “a lot” by gangs were Brokopondo / Sipaliwini (14.4 percent) and Paramaribo (11.6 percent). This was followed by Wanica/Para (10.1 percent), Commewijne / Marowijne (9.4 percent), and Nickerie / Coronie / Saramacca (5 percent). In the previous LAPOP survey in 2014 2.5 percent in Brokopondo / Sipaliwini and 7.3 percent in Paramaribo said that their neighborhoods were affected a lot by gangs.

Respondents in the 2023 LAPOP survey were also asked to indicate whether young people or children in gangs were a problem in their neighborhood. In Suriname as a whole 17.4 percent indicated that this was a “very serious” problem, while 14.4 percent said, “somewhat serious”, 10.7 percent said “a little serious”, 6.6 percent said “not serious at all”, and 50.9 percent indicated that this was “not a problem” in their neighborhood. By way of comparison, in the 2014 LAPOP survey 10.7 percent indicated that gangs were a “very serious” problem, while 4.2 percent indicated that this was a somewhat “serious problem”.

Areas with the largest proportion who indicated that youths in gangs were a very or somewhat serious problem in 2023 were Paramaribo (34.3 percent, compared to 13.5 percent in 2014) and Wanica / Para (32 percent, compared to 14 percent in 2014). This was followed by Commewijne / Marowijne (30.5 percent, compared to 21.5 percent in 2014), Nickerie / Coronie / Saramacca (29.9 percent, compared to 22.3 percent in 2014) and Brokopondo / Sipaliwini (29.6 percent, compared to 10.8 percent in 2014).

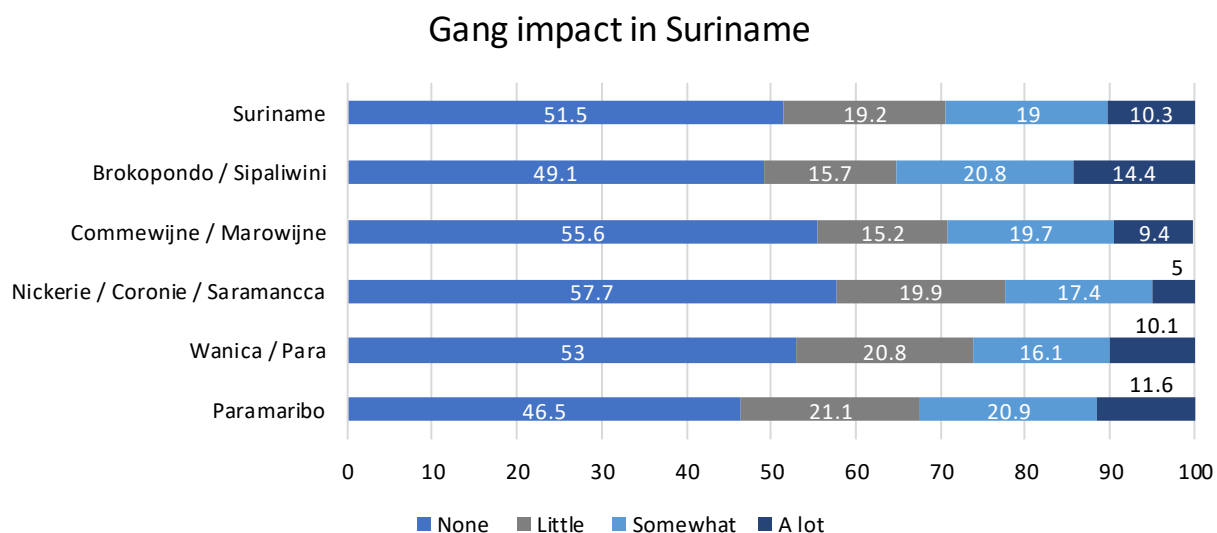
Respondents in the 2023 LAPOP survey were asked to indicate whether anyone in their neighborhood was murdered or injured as a result of gang violence within the last year (Figure 12.2). The results show that in Suriname as a whole 6.4 percent indicated that neighbors were killed as a result of gang violence while 9.9 percent indicated that neighbors were injured. The areas with the largest proportion reporting that neighbors were killed were Brokopondo / Sipaliwini (13.9 percent) and Paramaribo (8.9 percent). This was followed by Wanica / Para (3.6 percent), Commewijne / Marowijne (2.7 percent) and Nickerie / Coronie / Saramacca (2.5 percent).

Areas with the largest proportion reporting that neighbors were injured as a result of gang violence were Paramaribo (14.4 percent) and Brokopondo / Sipaliwini (12.5 percent). In Wanica / Para 6.8 percent reported

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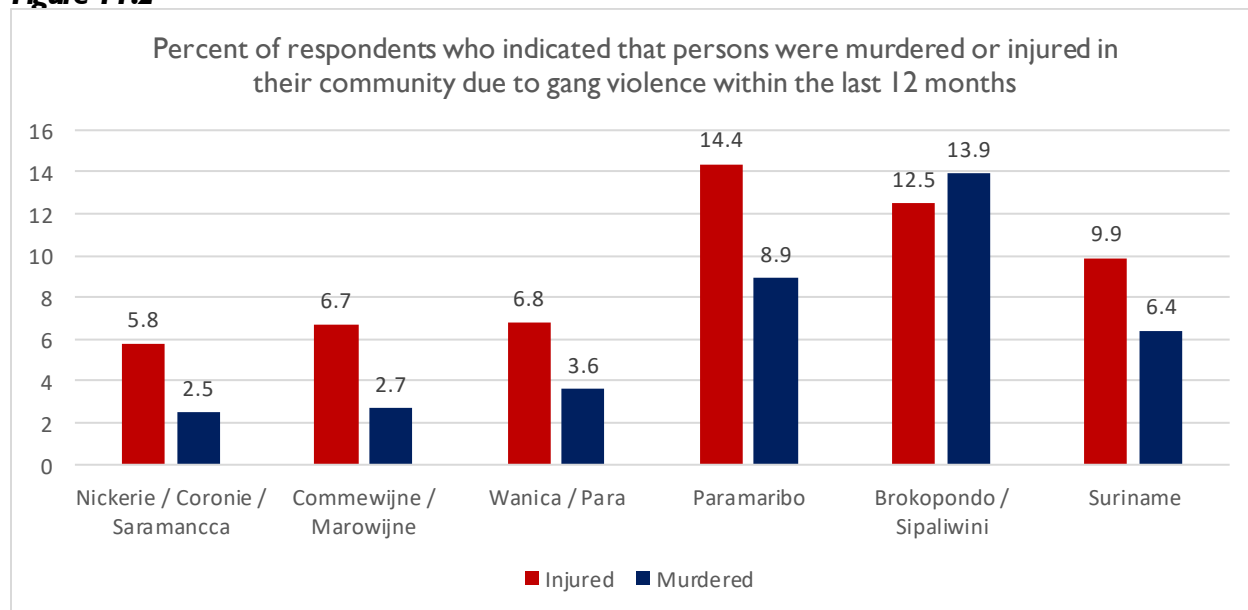
similarly, compared to 6.7 percent in Commewijne / Marowijne and 5.8 percent in Nickerie / Coronie / Saramancca.

Figure 11.1



Source: LAPOP 2023

Figure 11.2

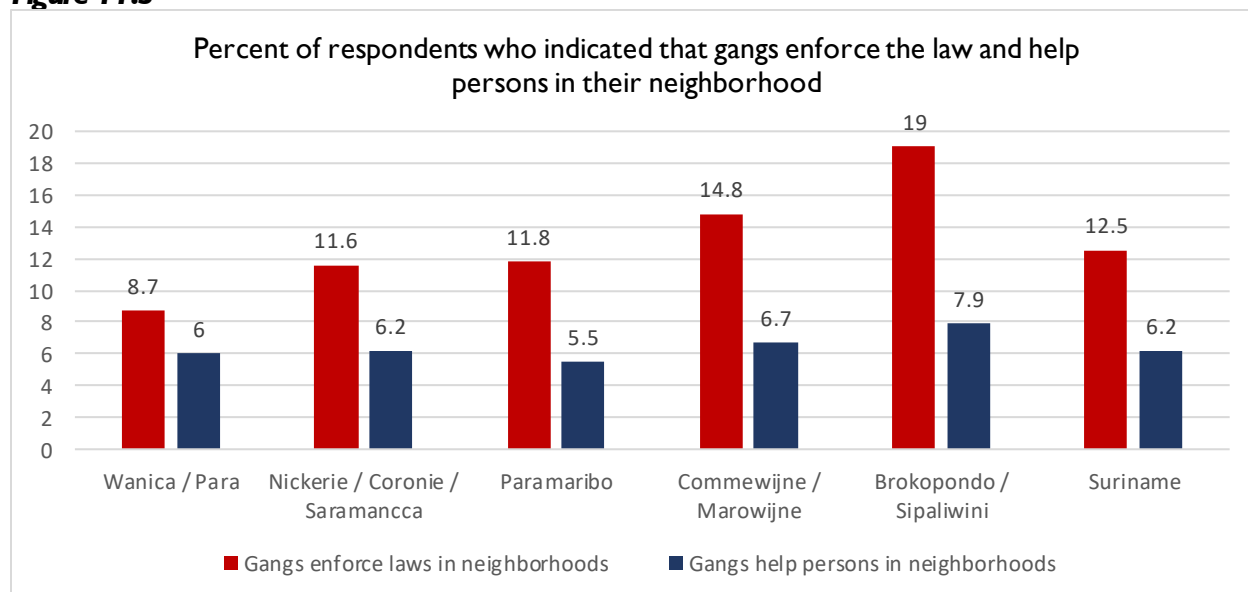


Source: LAPOP 2023

Respondents in Suriname were also asked to indicate whether gangs enforce the laws in their neighborhoods (Figure 11.3). In the country as a whole, 12.5% said “yes”. Areas with the highest proportion responding similarly were Brokopondo / Sipaliwini (19 percent) and Commewijne / Marowijne (14.8 percent). These were followed by, Paramaribo (11.8 percent), Nickerie / Coronie / Saramancca (11.6 percent) and Wanica / Para (8.7 percent).

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether gangs helped persons in their neighborhoods, for example, by providing school supplies for children or by providing jobs (Figure 11.3). In Suriname as a whole 6.2 percent said “yes”. Areas with the highest proportion responding similarly were Brokopondo / Sipaliwini (7.9 percent), Commewijne / Marowijne (6.7%) and Nickerie / Coronie / Saramancca (6.2 percent). These were followed by Wanica / Para (6 percent) and Paramaribo (5.5 percent).

Figure 11.3



Source: LAPOP 2023

Overall, the findings from the LAPOP surveys suggest that the gang problem has worsened from 2014 to 2023. In 2014 13.4 percent reported that there were criminal gangs in their neighborhood, compared to 19.4 percent in 2023. The gravity of the gang problem was underscored by the finding that 6.4 percent of respondents in the 2023 LAPOP survey reported that neighbors were murdered as a result of gang violence in their neighborhoods, while 9.9 percent reported that neighbors were injured as a result of gang violence. The areas which stand out as being disproportionately affected by gangs were Brokopondo / Sipaliwini and Paramaribo as these areas are among the top in almost every gang indicator which was considered.

Data from the UNDP (2012) survey which was administered to a random representative sample of 1512 adults in Suriname provide additional insights into gangs (Table 11.1). Of the entire sample, 10.3 percent said that there were gangs in their neighborhoods. Areas with the largest proportion indicating that there were gangs in their neighborhoods were Brownsveg (31.3 percent), Albina (25 percent), Houttuin (23.8 percent) and Pontbuiten (22.2 percent).

When asked to indicate the extent to which there was a criminal gang problem in their neighborhood, 4 percent of respondents in Suriname as a whole indicated that there was a big problem, while 5.5 percent said that there was a slight problem. Areas where the largest proportion indicated that there was a big problem were Brownsveg (15.6 percent), Albina (13.9 percent), Jarikaba (11.1 percent) and Houttuin (9.5 percent).

When asked whether gangs made their neighborhoods safer or less safe, the results show that in Suriname as a whole 0.5 percent indicated that gangs made their neighborhoods safer, while 8.6 percent indicated that gangs made their neighborhood less safe. Areas with the largest proportion indicating that gangs made their neighborhoods less safe were Houttuin (23.8 percent), Brownsveg (21.9 percent), Pontbuiten (19.4 percent) and Moengo (18 percent).

When all of the indicators in Table 11.1 are considered, areas which stand out as being among the top for several indicators included Brownsweg, Albina, Houttuin and Pontbuiten.

Table 11.1: Findings from the UNDP (2012) survey in Suriname

	Gangs in neighborhood	To what extent is there a criminal gang problem in your neighborhood?		Have the gangs made the neighborhood safer or less safe?	
	Percent who said "yes"	Slight problem	Big problem	Safer	Less safe
Brownsweg	31.3	9.4	15.6	3.1	21.9
Albina	25.0	8.3	13.9	0.0	16.7
Houttuin	23.8	9.5	9.5	0.0	23.8
Pontbuiten	22.2	5.6	8.3	0.0	19.4
Moengo	18.0	6.6	8.2	0.0	18.0
Latour	16.7	10.7	6.0	1.2	17.9
Jarikaba	16.7	5.6	11.1	0.0	16.7
Flora	15.8	9.2	5.3	2.6	5.3
Munder	12.7	8.2	2.7	1.8	10.9
Alkmaar	11.1	0.0	5.6	0.0	8.3
Centrum	8.9	4.5	3.6	0.0	8.0
Rainville	8.8	5.9	2.9	0.0	5.9
Koewarasan	8.3	2.8	5.6	0.0	5.6
Livorno	6.9	4.2	2.8	0.0	6.9
Wageningen	6.7	6.7	0.0	6.7	13.3
Tamanredjo	5.6	2.8	2.8	0.0	5.6
Domburg	5.6	5.6	0.0	0.0	5.6
Totness	5.6	5.6	0.0	0.0	5.6
Beekhuizen	5.6	4.2	1.4	1.4	4.2
Nieuw Nickerie	4.9	3.7	2.5	0.0	3.7
Lelydorp	4.2	4.2	0.0	0.0	1.4
Blauwgrond	2.9	1.4	2.9	0.0	4.3
Johanna Maria	2.8	0.0	2.8	0.0	2.8
De Nieuw Grond	2.8	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Klaaskreek	2.8	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Meerzorg	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nieuw Amsterdam	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Weg Naar Zee	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Suriname	10.3	5.5	4.0	0.5	8.6

Source: UNDP (2012)

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB2018) conducted a survey which collected data from a nationally representative sample of 520 inmates in Suriname. Almost 35 percent (34.8 percent) of respondents noted that there were gangs or criminal groups in the neighborhood they lived in while growing up. When asked whether they were a member of a gang when they were arrested, 5 percent of the inmates said "yes". When asked whether they were currently in a gang (i.e., while incarcerated) 6.5 percent said "yes". Persons who were gang members had joined the gang at an average of 17.5 years of age. It is noteworthy that the 2012 UNDP survey found that 10.3 percent of respondents indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods, compared to 16.6 percent in the 2014 LAPOP survey. In contrast, 34.8 percent of inmates in Suriname indicated that there were gangs in the neighborhoods in which they grew up. This suggest that inmates are

more likely to be exposed to environments with gangs than members of the general population. This is not surprising as environments with gangs are more likely to be affected by factors which may encourage criminogenic behavior.

Data collected from youths also suggest the presence of youthful gangs in Suriname. The National Assembly of Suriname and UNICEF conducted a study of violence against children in Suriname, and collected data from a sample of 111 detained youth and 26 youths who were previously detained (de Vries 2017). A service provider at the Opa Doelie detention center, one of the locations in which the study was conducted, indicated that in that community there are youths in gangs, and when different groups meet, fights may occur between the groups. Some of the detainees at the institutions which were surveyed indicated that they joined gangs for protection. The youths believed that it was important to belong to a gang, both outside of and within the institution, as they were also in need of protection while detained. Of the detained youths who were surveyed, 16 percent indicated that they were bullied by youths who were in gangs.

A short history of gangs

Youth gangs in general were not thought to be a serious problem in Suriname (Caribbean Human Development Report on Citizens' Security, 2012). When they exist, they are generally loosely organized among youth in the same neighborhoods. Past surveys indicate there is limited confidence in law enforcement to adequately respond to gangs in the nation. About 32 percent of respondents to a 2009 UNDP survey had low or very low confidence in the police to effectively control gang violence.

The Ministry of Justice and Police have recognized that within more recent times some youth groups are becoming a problem in Suriname. In an effort to classify the types of youth groups that exist, the Ministry, along with the police have developed a typology of youth groups which include the following classifications. The *acceptable youth group*: this includes youths who move in groups, but behave within the norms set by the social environment. They cause little nuisance, but can contribute to a reduced sense of security among local residents. The *nuisance youth group*: this group hangs around the neighborhood, is occasionally noisy and does not care much about the environment. This group can get out of hand, and can be involved in things like vandalism. In general, it is a group that is still sufficiently "authority-sensitive" and can be held accountable for their behaviour. The *nuisance-causing youth group*: they can act provocatively, sometimes harass bystanders, regularly cause destruction and are much less concerned about other people. The "lesser" forms of crime they are guilty of are committed deliberately. This group of young people is difficult to correct. They are said to do everything in their power not to be caught. It is also claimed that they often show early signs of problems, for example, with excessive alcohol or drug use. This can also occur in the first two groups mentioned above, but to a much lesser extent. It is believed that youths in this group have to deal with problems at home and/or at school, and sometimes they may be influenced by the criminal world. *Criminal youth group*: this group consists, at least in part, of young people who have fallen on the criminal path. They have already come into contact with the police several times. Characteristic of such groups is that they commit crimes for financial gain. It is also believed that they are not easily deterred from the use of violence. The Ministry of Justice and Police is mainly interested in the last two types of youth groups. Compared to the first two types of youth groups, group members in the latter two types have a greater risk of coming into contact with the law and being recidivistic.

The above suggests that while there isn't a documented history of gangs in Suriname, that youths may engage in crime within a group structure. The 2023 LAPOP data cited earlier suggest that criminal gangs exist in Suriname as the findings indicate that 19.4 percent of surveyed residents indicated that there are criminal gangs in their neighborhoods, with 6.4 percent indicating that residents in their communities were murdered and 9.9 percent indicating that residents were injured due to gang violence. Despite this, communications with persons in the Ministry of Justice and Police revealed that there are no established gangs with specific gang names, or which control specific territories, as in some of the other countries examined in this report. The

situation in Suriname appears to be more fluid with youth groups who commit crimes, as opposed to long-standing established gangs.

Gang involvement in crime

Data from the 2012 UNDP survey of a random representative sample of 1512 adults in Suriname provide insights into gang violence (Table 11.2). Respondents were asked to indicate the level of gang violence in their communities. In Suriname as a whole, 2.1 percent indicated that there was a large amount of gang violence in their communities, while 10.3 percent indicated that there was some gang violence, 15.3 percent indicated that there was little gang violence, and 72.3 percent indicated that there was no gang violence in their communities. Areas with the largest proportion indicating that there was a large amount of gang violence were Brownsweg (12.5 percent), Albina (11.1 percent) and Moengo (6.6 percent). Areas with the largest proportion indicating that there was some gang violence were Koewarasan (33.3 percent), Albina (19.4 percent) and Pontbuiten (16.7 percent).

Table 11.2: Gang violence in Suriname

	Large amount of violence	Some violence	Little violence	No violence
Brownsweg	12.5	9.4	34.4	43.7
Albina	11.1	19.4	2.8	66.7
Moengo	6.6	9.8	19.7	63.9
Jarikaba	5.6	8.3	22.2	63.9
Houttuin	4.8	14.3	9.5	71.4
Flora	3.9	11.8	18.4	65.9
Alkmaar	2.8	5.6	8.3	83.3
Johanna Maria	2.8	11.1	25.0	61.1
Koewarasan	2.8	33.3	13.9	50.0
Lelydorp	2.8	2.8	11.1	83.3
Latour	2.4	15.5	22.6	59.5
Centrum	1.8	13.4	19.6	65.2
Welgelegen	1.5	16.4	20.9	61.2
Nieuw Nickerie	1.2	8.6	16.0	74.2
Munder	0.9	15.5	13.6	70.0
Beekhuizen	0.0	5.6	12.5	81.9
Blauwgrond	0.0	8.7	11.6	79.7
De Nieuw Grond	0.0	5.6	27.8	66.6
Domburg	0.0	3.7	7.4	88.9
Klaaskreek	0.0	0.0	13.9	86.1
Livorno	0.0	2.8	11.1	86.1
Meerzorg	0.0	8.3	0.0	91.7
Nieuw Amsterdam	0.0	9.1	0.0	90.9
Pontbuiten	0.0	16.7	19.4	63.9
Rainville	0.0	11.8	14.7	73.5
Tamanredjo	0.0	2.8	22.2	75.0
Totness	0.0	11.1	19.4	69.5
Weg Naar Zee	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Suriname	2.1	10.3	15.3	72.3

Source: UNDP (2012)

In 2018 the IDB surveyed a random representative sample of 520 inmates from Suriname (94.2 percent male and 5.8 percent female). The results show that 5 percent (5.1 percent of males and 3.3 percent of females) were members of a gang when they were arrested, while 6.5 percent (6.7 percent of males and 3.3 percent of females) were members of a gang at the time of the survey. This suggests that some persons joined a gang only after being incarcerated. Inmates who were gang members joined the gang at an average of 18.6 years of age (SD = 3.8, Range = 12-30).

Table 11.3 shows the crimes committed by gang and non-gang members. The results show that gang members were more heavily involved in several offences, when compared to non-gang members. The largest disparities occurred with aggravated robbery/aggravated theft (50 percent of gang members had committed this offence compared to 26.3 percent of non-gang members), possession of a firearm (55.9 percent vs. 40.7 percent), robbery/theft (23.5 percent vs. 17.7 percent), and possession of illegal weapons (5.9 percent vs. 1.9 percent). In contrast, non-gang members were more likely than gang members to be incarcerated for injuries, sexual offences, scam, misappropriation and fraud, drug trafficking or possession. The level of engagement of gang and non-gang members for the other offences listed were very similar (i.e., less than 2 percent difference). The offences most frequently committed by gang members were owning a firearm (55.9 percent), aggravated robbery/aggravated theft (50 percent), and robbery/theft (23.5 percent). The results suggest that gang members in Suriname are more likely to be involved in violent offences when compared to non-gang members, and are more likely to possess weapons. This is consistent with the finding that a larger proportion of victims were injured when gang members committed offences, when compared to non-gang members (38.2 percent vs. 29.8 percent).

Table 11.3: Crimes committed by gang and non-gang members in Suriname⁸¹

Offence	Gang member	Non gang member
Murder	5.9	7.2
Manslaughter	8.8	5.3
Kidnapping	0	1.2
Injuries	2.9	9.5
Sexual offences	5.9	9.5
Aggravated robbery/Aggravated theft	50.0	26.3
Drug possession/trafficking	8.8	11.9
Possession of illegal weapons	5.9	1.9
Robbery/Theft	23.5	17.7
Scam, misappropriation, fraud	2.9	6.2
Extortion	0	0.4
Burglary/break-in	2.9	2.5
Ever had a firearm	55.9	40.7
Ever injured or killed someone with firearm	8.8	7.4
Were victims injured?	38.2	29.8

Source: IDB 2018 Survey of Inmates (N = 520)

Risk factors for gang involvement

While the 2023 LAPOP dataset included a wider range of gang variables than previous iterations of the survey, the range of predictor variables, particularly at the neighborhood level, were reduced. For example, variables such as social control, social cohesion, and neighborhood decay which appeared in previous surveys, are not

⁸¹ Percentages are shown.

available in the 2023 survey. As a result, we present results using the 2023 LAPOP data (Table 11.4) as well as the 2014 survey (Table 11.5).

Regression analysis using the 2023 LAPOP data (Table 11.4) was used to examine predictors of several gang outcomes including the presence of gangs in the neighborhood, whether persons in the neighborhood were injured or murdered as a result of gang violence, the extent to which the neighborhood was affected by gangs, and the extent to which young persons or children in gangs were a problem in the neighborhood. Predictors included perceptions of safety, the extent to which residents attended community improvement meetings, the level of trust for others in the community, crime victimization, and neighborhood violence.

Table 11.4: Predictors of gang variables in Suriname (LAPOP 2023)⁸²

	Gangs in neighborhood	Persons injured or murdered by gangs	Extent to which neighborhood affected by gangs	Young persons in gangs
Attends community improvement meetings	.017	.169	** .096	.058
Community trust	** -.220	⁸³ -.157	*** -.138	* -.110
Perceptions of safety	*** .457	** .228	*** .199	*** .213
Crime victim in last year	*** .669	*** .643	** .169	* .241
Neighborhood violence	*** .699	*** .547	*** .365	*** .237
R Square ⁸⁴	.193	.101	.169	.053

Source: LAPOP 2023

Community trust was inversely related to all four dependent variables, with the relationship achieving statistical significance for three of the four dependent variables, and almost achieving significance for the fourth. The results suggest that communities in which the level of interpersonal trust among residents is high are less likely to have gangs, are less likely to be affected by gangs, and are less likely to have young persons or children who are in gangs. These findings suggest that building interpersonal trust among community residents can be used as a strategy to reduce the presence and impact of gangs in Suriname.

The extent to which residents attended community improvement meetings was related to the impact of gangs in the neighborhood. The positive coefficient suggests that persons who reside in neighborhoods which are affected by gangs are more likely to attend meetings to improve their community.

Several control variables were significantly related to the gang outcomes. Perceptions of safety, crime victimization, and neighborhood violence were related to each of the gang variables in the expected direction.

⁸² Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown.

⁸³ $P < .061$

⁸⁴ Nagelkerke R^2 is provided for equations 1 and 2, while adjusted R^2 is provided for equations 3 and 4.

Not surprisingly, the results indicate that gang presence and impact are related to higher levels of fear. The results also indicate that neighborhood violence as well as victimization levels are higher in neighborhoods which are affected by gangs.

Data from the 2014 LAPOP survey which was administered to a random representative sample of 3998 adults in Suriname also provide insights into risk factors for gang variables (Table 11.5). The presence of gangs in the neighborhood, the extent to which neighborhoods are affected by gangs, and the extent to which young persons in gangs are a problem in the neighborhood were used as dependent variables, while neighborhood social cohesion, social control and decay, as well as police performance in the neighborhood were used as independent variables. Perceptions of safety, drug use and trafficking, assaults and shootings in the neighborhood were used as controls.

The results (Table 11.5) indicate that the most important predictors were neighborhood decay and police performance. The findings suggest that neighborhoods with higher levels of decay are more likely to have gangs, are more likely to be affected by gangs, and are more likely to have a serious problem with young persons or children in gangs. The results also suggest that better police performance is related to a decline in gang presence, impact, and having young persons or children involved in gangs. Social cohesion and social control were both inversely related to the impact of gangs on neighborhoods, which suggest that neighborhoods which have higher levels of social cohesion, or in which there is higher social control, are less likely to be impacted by gangs.

Several of the gang variables were positively related to the control variables, which suggest that gangs are associated with higher levels of drug use and trafficking, as well as assaults and shootings in the neighborhood.

Overall, the results suggest that interventions to reduce the impact of gangs in Suriname can focus on reducing neighborhood decay, improving police performance, building social cohesion, and increasing neighborhood social control. The results also suggest that a reduction in gangs in Suriname should result in a decline in drug use and trafficking, assaults and shootings.

Table 11.5: Predictors of gang variables in Suriname (LAPOP 2014)⁸⁵

	Gangs in the neighborhood	Extent to which neighborhood affected by gangs	Young persons in gangs
Social Cohesion	-.052	***-.040	-.003
Social Control	.013	*.028	.019
Neighborhood Decay	***.240	***.102	*.030
Police performance	***-.233	***-.074	**-.033
Perceptions of Safety	***.177	***.069	-.001
Drug trafficking and use	***.170	***.023	***.148
Assaults in the neighborhood	.072	***.106	***.180
Shootings in the neighborhood	-.067	-.018	***.278
R²	⁸⁶ .181	.147	.406

Source: LAPOP (2014)

Data from the UNDP (2012) which administered a survey to a random representative sample of 1512 adults in Suriname provide additional insights into the predictors of gang outcomes. The results (Table 11.6) suggest

⁸⁵ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

⁸⁶ Nagelkerke R Square.

that higher levels of unemployment as well as higher food costs (used as an indicator of deprivation) are related to higher levels of gang violence. While the level of sanitation (used as an indicator of community decay) was related to gang presence, the direction of the relationship was contrary to what was expected. Not surprisingly, gangs were associated with higher levels of crime in the community. The results of the 2012 UNDP survey suggest that interventions aimed at reducing the impact of gangs in Suriname can focus on increasing levels of employment. The results further suggest that reducing the number of gangs should result in a decline in crime.

Table 11.6: Predictors of gang presence and violence in Suriname⁸⁷

	Gang presence in neighborhood	Gang violence in neighborhood
Unemployment	.075	***.097
Access to schooling	-.026	-.016
Cost of food	.065	*.075
Cost of living	-.038	.001
Poverty	.050	.035
Level of migration ⁸⁸	.075	.038
Adequate sanitation	*.141	.033
Social Cohesion	-.012	.014
Informal social control	-.029	-.033
Police performance	-.018	-.019
Crime in the Community	***.224	***.328
	Nagelkerke R ² = .079	Adjusted R ² = .134

Source: UNDP (2012)

Transnational links between gangs and criminal enterprises

While Suriname has a limited street gang problem, it has wide connections to organized crime in part due to its porous borders. Suriname is a trans-shipment point for narcotics trafficking to the United States and Europe, though the nation is used less as a storehouse compared to neighboring Guyana (Caribbean Human Development Report on Citizens' Security, Draft, 2011). Cocaine is most commonly moved through the nation, but marijuana is also shipped. Arms and human trafficking also occur through and in Suriname. While marijuana is illegal in the nation, enforcement is low in Suriname. Most narcotics trafficking is from Brazil, with Brazilian organized criminal group involvement. Colombian gangs also have ties in the nation. There have been suggestions that organized crime has infiltrated government institutions through the support of political parties, however, little evidence supports this claim (Caribbean Human Development Report on Citizens' Security, Draft, 2011). However, suspected corruption ties extend up to former President Bouterse's (in office from 2010 to 2020). The current vice president Ronnie Brunswijk was convicted in absentia for drug trafficking by the Netherlands where an Interpol arrest warrant is still outstanding.

⁸⁷ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

⁸⁸ Used as an indicator for residential mobility.

12. TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Prevalence of the gang problem

Data from the Police Service and other intelligence agencies indicate that there was a total of 60 gangs in 2009, compared to 102 in 2012, 92 in 2014, and 211 in 2019 (Table 12.1). The SIU estimated that in 2020 Trinidad and Tobago had 130 gangs and 1014 gang members, while in 2022 the country had 186 gangs and 1750 gang members (SIU 2023).

Figure 12.1 shows the number of gangs and gang members in each police division in Trinidad and Tobago as of December 2022. In 2022 the division with the largest number of gangs was the Western Division, which had 45 gangs or 24.2 percent of all gangs in Trinidad and Tobago. Tobago had the second highest number of gangs with 28 or 15.1 percent of the national total. It is notable that if combined the Northern (North) and Northern (Central) divisions, which prior to 2022 was single division, would have held second place with 31 gangs or 16.7 percent of the national total.¹ The North Eastern division had the third highest number of gangs in 2022, with a total of 24 or 12.9 percent of the national total. This was followed by the Port of Spain division with 21 gangs or 11.3 percent of the national total. The divisions with the smallest number of gangs in 2022 were the South Western division (with 4 gangs or 2.2 percent of the national total) and the Eastern division (8 gangs or 4.3 percent).

When the number of gang members in 2022 was considered the Port of Spain division held the top spot with 321 gang members or 18.3 percent of the national total. This is followed by the North Eastern division (312 gang members or 17.8 percent), Western division (285 gang members or 16.3 percent) and Tobago (173 gang members or 9.9 percent). If the Northern (North) and (Central) divisions were combined it would have held second place with a total of 317 gang members or 18.1 percent of the national total. The divisions with the smallest number of gang members in 2022 were the South Western division (with 29 gang members or 1.7 percent of the national total) and the Eastern division (58 gang members or 3.3 percent).

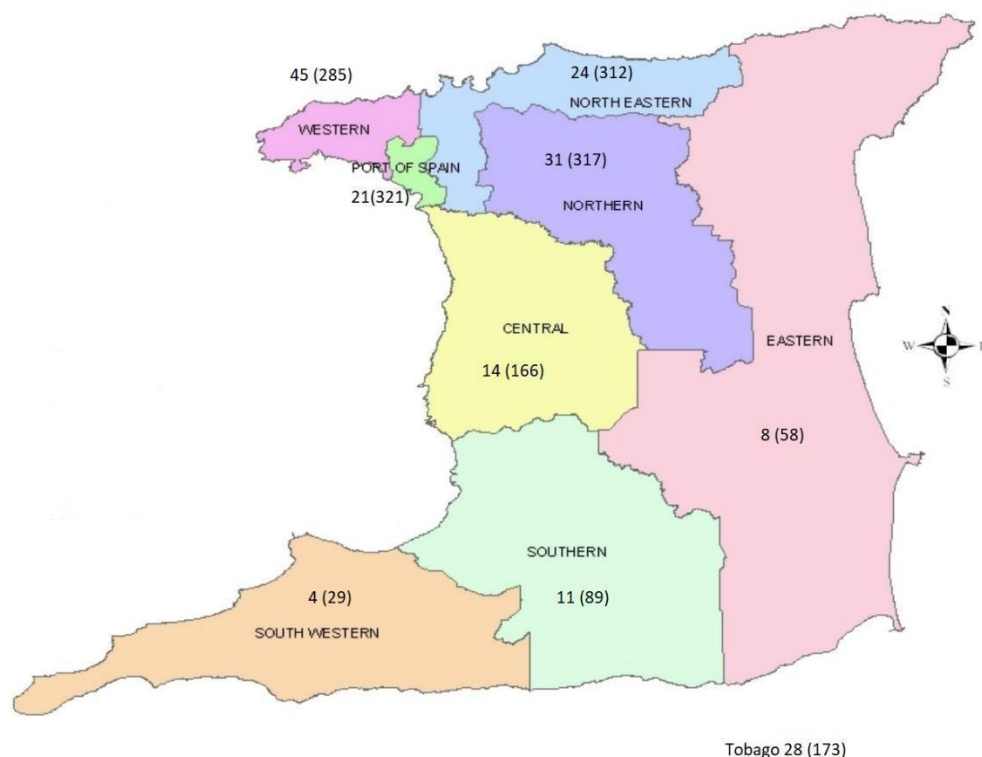
Table 12.1: Number of gangs in Trinidad and Tobago, by Police Division

Police Division	2009	2012	2014	2019	2022
Port of Spain	16	44	23	41	21
Southern	3	4	8	19	11
Western	12	16	18	49	45
Northern ⁸⁹	12	13	13	23	31
Central	2	3	4	10	14
South Western	1	2	5	21	4
Eastern	6	3	2	9	8
North Eastern	5	12	10	15	24
Tobago	3	5	9	24	28
Total	60	102	92	211	186

Source: Special Investigations Unit, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

⁸⁹ In 2022 the Northern Division was split into the Northern (North) and Northern (Central) Divisions. In this year there were 17 gangs and 165 gang members in the Northern (North) Division and 14 gangs and 152 gang members in the Northern (Central) Division.

Figure 12.1: Number of Gangs and Gang Members in Trinidad and Tobago as of December 2022, by Police Division⁹⁰



Source: Special Investigations Unit, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

A short history of gangs

The earliest precursor to gangs in Trinidad and Tobago could be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th century. During this time persons from smaller, less developed Caribbean countries, including Grenada, Barbados, St. Vincent, St. Lucia and Antigua migrated to Trinidad. Many of these migrants came to Trinidad in search of economic opportunities and settled in the foothills of the capital city, Port-of-Spain (Aymer 1997, Wallace 2018). These immigrants set up small enclaves in various communities based on their nationalities, and sought to protect their spaces from perceived outsiders. Wallace (2018) argues that this social isolation based on nationality, and the need to protect specific areas or turf represents an important precursor to gangs in Trinidad and Tobago.

The history of gangs also dates to the 1950s when “steel band gangs” emerged. Gangs emerged in the context of steel band rivalries which resulted in the need to protect steel band members. Bands of men, often referred to as “bad johns” or “enforcers” would often attack other bands and their respective gang members (Covey 2010, SSA 2012). These persons, together with other gang members, would arm themselves with pieces of wood, cutlasses, stones and other implements in an effort to protect themselves and other band members from rival gangs.

⁹⁰ The number of gang members is shown in parentheses.

An important factor which resulted in the reemergence of gangs in Trinidad and Tobago was structural adjustment (Bissessar 2013). Among other things, the government embarked on a rationalization of public utilities and government enterprises, wide ranging tax reforms, divestment, or in several cases closure of a large number of state-owned companies, and several other measures aimed to stimulate the economy and increase revenue generation. Bissessar (2013) contends that the structural adjustment which occurred in the 1980s resulted in rising unemployment and economic hardships, and served as a primary driver that led to the proliferation of gangs and the concomitant expansion of the drug trade.

The SSA (2012) argues that by the 1980s local gangs were heavily involved in government-sponsored programs such as the Unemployment Relief Program (URP). Such national assistance programs were designed to provide employment in poverty stricken neighborhoods and to serve as a social safety net for underprivileged classes of persons. Even earlier than that, in the 1950s, other programs with similar intent such as the Development Employment Work Division (DEWD) program, were manipulated by gangs who established “ghost gangs” where groups of persons who did not work received salaries. Competition for access to these programs has led to deadly rivalries among gangs. More importantly, over the years millions of dollars in Government funding has been channeled through gang leaders, known as “community leaders” and has led to their entrenchment within communities since such persons are the ones who are seen as providing jobs within the community. This has also created a situation which facilitates gang recruitment since youths in many communities must interact with gang leaders in order to be employed.

The Jamaat al Muslimeen (Jamaat) also played a significant role in the gang landscape in Trinidad and Tobago. Disenfranchised with the political management of the country they attempted a coup in 1990. Several smaller gangs splintered off from the Jamaat to form what is collectively known as the “Muslims”. The expansion and dominance of the Muslim gangs in the 1990s drew backlash and encouraged the emergence of rival factions. The main rival faction which emerged labeled itself “Rasta City”. The main focus of Rasta City gangs is acquiring finances from legal as well as illegal activities (CGUI 2014). Around 2017 the Sixx (sometimes written as “6ixx”) gang splintered from Rasta City and now serves as a major rival (SSA 2022). The ABG or Anybody Gets It Gang, which began with prison inmates, was also another recent emergence and was born out of the need to have a gang which was neither aligned to Rasta City or the Muslims (SSA 2022). There are also several non-affiliated gangs which are groups which are not aligned with any of the major gangs mentioned above.

At present criminal gangs have established a social media presence, utilizing the display of media content for the expressed purpose of lauding the gang lifestyle, taunting rival gang members using music with lyrics detailing actual attacks on their enemies, and showing off the acquisition of firearms, money and even women. This content is broadcast through social media platforms such as YouTube and has found a niche in the local market through a conversion of the Jamaican Dancehall to ‘Trinibad’ music which the SSA (2022) argues easily influences impressionable and vulnerable young persons.

While gangs in Trinidad and Tobago originally evolved as a result of national differences, economic deprivation and other factors discussed in this section, more recent scholarship has shifted to looking at the problem from a public health perspective, and has begun to examine risk and protective factors which affect gang membership and violence. Risk factors are factors which increase the likelihood of gang membership and violence, while protective factors reduce such likelihood. Generally speaking, the research has focused on factors within several domains including the individual/peer, family, school, and community domains. A subsequent section of this report will examine risk and protective factors in Trinidad and Tobago.

Gang involvement in crime

Katz and Maguire (2015) demonstrated that the dramatic increase in crime which occurred after 2000 in Trinidad and Tobago was related to gang violence, and coincided with a period in which the majority of gangs

were formed.⁹¹ Gang involvement in crime is in part a function of gang-alignment as well as the location of the gang. As such, the area of control for each gang in part determines its engagement in crime. For example, some gangs control the coastal area and are more prone to narcotic and firearm trafficking. Other gangs that have assumed control inland are notably more violent, and are more inclined to commit crimes such as shootings and wounding and homicides. A large percentage of violent crimes are also due to turf wars for control of territory and the narcotic trade. Overall, gangs in Trinidad and Tobago have been engaged in homicides, larceny of motor vehicles, robberies, narcotic trafficking and illegal quarrying, among other offences.

Gang-related murders were examined to provide additional insight into crimes committed by gang members (Figure 12.2). Murders are classified as gang-related when either the perpetrator or victim is a known gang member, or when gang issues are related to the murder, even where the perpetrator or victim is not a known gang member. From 2000 to 2022 there were 9,057 murders, of which 3,018 or 33.3 percent were gang-related. From 2000 to 2022, the divisions with the largest proportion of gang-related murders were Port of Spain (where 61.1 percent of murders were gang-related), North (Central) (50.9 percent), Western (49.2 percent), and the North Eastern division (41 percent). When the data are restricted to the last five years (i.e., from 2018 to 2022) the results show that the divisions with the highest proportion of murders which were gang-related were Port of Spain (where 74.7 percent of all murders within this period were gang-related), Western (65.6 percent), North (Central) (50.9 percent) and Northern (41.8 percent).

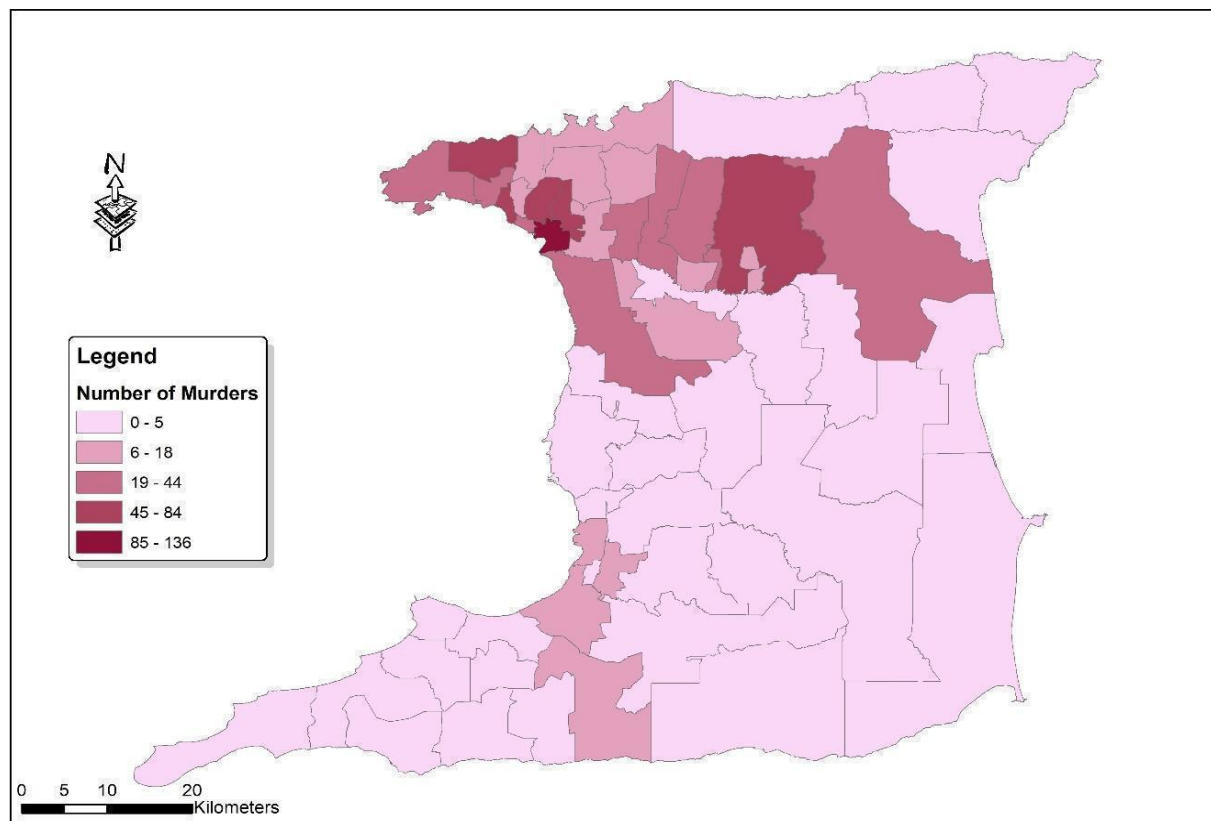
Available data also allow for the identification of the police station districts with the highest number of gang-related murders from 2000 to 2022. The data show that the Besson Street police station district was ranked at the top, with 922 gang-related murders, or 30.6 percent of all gang-related murders which occurred from 2000 to 2022. This was followed by Morvant, with 293 gang-related murders or 9.7 percent, West End with 191 gang-related murders or 6.3 percent, and Belmont with 167 gang-related murders or 5.5 percent. When these data are restricted to the last five years (i.e., from 2018 to 2022) the findings show that the districts with the highest number of gang-related murders were Besson Street (with 156 or 16.6 percent of all gang-related murders), St. James (68 or 7.2 percent of all gang-related murders), Arima and Morvant (each with 64 or 6.8 percent of all gang-related murders) and West End (54 or 5.8 percent of all gang-related murders). Figure 6 shows the number of gang related murders in each police station district in Trinidad from 2018 to 2022. During this period there were 7 gang-related murders in Tobago.

In the nation as a whole each gang was responsible for an average of 1.3 murders in 2022. The division with the most violent gangs was the Port of Spain division where each gang was responsible for an average of 2.6 murders in 2022. This was followed by the Eastern division (2.3), the Northern (Central) division (1.9) and the Northern (North) division (1.9). The data also show that from 2000 to 2022, firearms were used in 97.7 percent of gang-related murders compared to 64.9 percent of non-gang-related murders. Police data also show that the detection rate for gang-related murders is lower than that for non-gang-related murders. More specifically, from 2012 to 2021 the detection rate for gang-related murders stood at 9.8 percent while the detection rate for non-gang-related murders stood at 16.5 percent.

Figure 12.2: Gang-related murders in Trinidad and Tobago, 2018-2023

⁹¹ Police experts who were interviewed by Katz and Maguire indicated that 74.2 percent of gangs in Trinidad and Tobago were formed in 2000 or later.

2018 - 2023 Gang Related Murders



It is worth noting that the nature of gang involvement in crime is very different in Tobago, when compared to Trinidad. At present Gangs in Tobago are not aligned with the gangs in Trinidad, and as such, inter-gang rivalries which exist in Trinidad as a result of gang affiliation does not exist in Tobago. This is reflected, for example, in murder statistics. From 2000 to 2022, 33.8 percent of murders in Trinidad were gang-related compared to 6.1 percent in Tobago. Gangs in Tobago have been noted to facilitate criminals from Trinidad who seek places to hide from law enforcement and rival gangs. While the depth of infiltration of the more notable gangs like Sixx, Rasta City and Muslim factions remains minimal, this appears to be increasing. Much of the criminal activity exerted by gangs in Tobago involves narcotics trafficking. There have also been intermittent occurrences of violence against tourists but only occasionally are such incidents committed by gang members.

Risk factors for gang involvement

Primary data collected in 2023 from a sample of detained youths (N = 68 at the St. Jude's Home for Girls and N = 23 male detainees from the Youth Training and Rehabilitation Center) as well as data from a sample of school youth in Tobago (N = 777 Form 4 and 5 students) allow for an examination of risk factors for gang involvement in Trinidad and Tobago. The findings from the detained youth showed that persons who had been expelled from school had a greater likelihood of being in gangs which accepted engaging in, and actually engaged in illegal activity, while persons who were committed to school were less likely to be present or former gang members. Persons who changed their place of residence more frequently were more likely to have friends who were gang members. Not surprisingly, persons who had other family members who were

in gangs or who experienced family neglect were also more likely to be gang members. Having antisocial peers was also a strong predictor of gang involvement.

Data from the school youth survey in Tobago suggested that the most important risk factors for gang involvement were drug and alcohol usage, having antisocial tendencies, and family gang involvement. Other predictors which stood out were poverty, low self-control, having antisocial peers, commitment to antisocial peers, handgun availability, residing in homes with domestic violence, and family prosocial involvement.

Data from several data sources as well as past research also allow for an examination of risk factors for gang involvement in Trinidad and Tobago. Katz et al. (2023) and Cheon et al. (2023) examined risk factors for gang involvement using a sample of 5,601 Form 5 students from 99 government secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The findings suggest that youths who had low self-control (i.e., were impulsive or risk-seeking), who experienced weak social control (i.e., who had weak parental/family attachment, who received little parental monitoring, and who had low school commitment), and who had social learning opportunities which encouraged engagement in delinquent behavior (i.e., who had delinquent peers and who had moral attitudes which were supportive of engagement in unacceptable behaviour) were more likely to be gang involved.

In a study conducted by the Ministry of National Security in 2015, based on a random representative sample of 4,245 adults, it was discovered that gang impact was weaker in higher income neighborhoods, in neighborhoods with higher levels of social control and in neighborhoods in which the police were more effective. The results also suggest that police surveillance was higher in neighborhoods which experienced greater levels of gang impact.

The LAPOP 2014 survey, conducted by Vanderbilt University, which collected data from a random representative sample of 4,198 adults can also be used to assess risk factors for gang involvement (Table 12.2). The data suggest that neighborhoods with a higher level of decay (litter, broken bottles and trash lying around, graffiti and vacant lots or houses) are more likely to have criminal gangs, are affected to a greater degree by gangs, and are more likely to have youths involved in gangs. In addition, better police performance was related to the lower likelihood of the presence of gangs and lower likelihood that neighborhoods were affected by gangs. Interestingly, social cohesion and informal social control were unrelated to the gang outcomes in Trinidad and Tobago. Not surprisingly, gangs were associated with higher levels of assaults, shootings, drug use and trafficking, and reduced perceptions of safety.

Table 12.2: Predictors of gang variables in Trinidad and Tobago⁹²

	Gangs in neighborhood	Extent to which neighborhood affected by gangs	Young persons in gangs
Social Cohesion	.008	-.003	-.003
Social Control	-.038	-.003	.010
Neighborhood Decay	***.299	***.044	***.079
Police Performance	***-.293	***-.039	-.011
Perceptions of Safety	.045	***.033	***.031
Assaults in the community	***.261	***.073	***.210
Shootings in the community	***.467	***.241	***.329
Drug use and trafficking	***.249	***.061	***.149
R²	⁹³ .466	.449	.595

Source: LAPOP (2014)

⁹² Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

⁹³ Nagelkerke R Square

Data from the UNDP (2012), which conducted a survey using a random representative sample of 1,595 adults, also provide insights into the factors which may affect gang presence and violence. The results indicate that greater levels of social cohesion, as well as better police performance are related to reduced gang presence and violence. The results also suggest that a lack of access to schooling is related to increased gang presence and violence, while greater levels of informal social control in neighborhoods is related to lower levels of gang violence. Higher levels of poverty and higher food costs (used as an indicator of deprivation) were related to higher levels of gang violence. Not surprisingly, gangs were associated with higher levels of crime in the neighborhood.

Table 12.3: Predictors of gang presence and violence in Trinidad and Tobago⁹⁴

	Gang presence in neighborhood	Gang violence in neighborhood
Unemployment	-.009	-.007
Access to schooling	*.123	***.078
Cost of food	-.097	*-.067
Cost of living	-.022	-.006
Poverty	.045	*.053
Level of migration ⁹⁵	.007	*.060
Adequate sanitation	.054	.006
Social Cohesion	***-.035	*-.054
Informal social control	-.005	*-.050
Police performance	**-.042	***-.093
Crime in the Community	***.327	***.452
	Nagelkerke R ² = .273	Adjusted R ² = .289

Source: UNDP (2012)

Katz and Fox (2010), utilizing data from a sample of 2,206 students in 22 high risk urban schools in Trinidad and Tobago, examined the prevalence of gang involvement, risk and protective factors associated with gang involvement, and the effects of multiple risk factors for gang involvement. Risk factors which were associated with gang involvement included increased availability of handguns, residential mobility, having parents who favor antisocial behavior, early initiation of antisocial behavior, intention to use drugs, having antisocial peers, and having peers who use drugs. Several protective factors were also found to reduce the likelihood of gang involvement. These include having social skills, belief in moral order, and having more opportunities for prosocial development. Katz and Fox (2010) also found that the probability of gang involvement increased as the number of risk factors increased.

The research cited above suggests that interventions which are designed to reduce gang involvement and violence can focus on increasing social control through parental involvement and building school commitment, on building self-control, and on reducing opportunities to develop attitudes and learn behaviors conducive to engagement in delinquent behavior. Disorder and decay at the neighborhood level were also related to gang involvement and violence. CPTED principles can be applied to remedy decay issues, while measures can be taken to reduce levels of neighborhood disorder. Police effectiveness was also related to gang outcome variables, and suggest that targeted and intelligence-led policing which focuses energies on crime-prone places and people, and which utilizes reliable intelligence could have an impact on gang activity. Social cohesion was also an important predictor. The results suggest that building community cohesiveness could serve to reduce

⁹⁴ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

⁹⁵ Used as an indicator for residential mobility.

gang engagement and violence. The results also suggest that economic deprivation, poor educational attainment, and residential instability or mobility increase gang involvement and criminality.

Transnational links between gangs and criminal enterprises

Primary data gathered through a LACLEARN survey of police experts in Trinidad and Tobago in 2023 indicate that local gangs have linkages to other countries. For example, police experts indicated that 5.9 percent of gangs have members who were foreign born, while 27.4 percent of gangs have members who either migrated to, or from foreign countries. In addition, police experts indicated that 66.7 percent of gangs collaborate with criminal organizations or gangs in other countries.

As it relates to criminal networking with Latin American gangs/illicit suppliers, while this is not a new phenomenon, the recent influx of Latin Americans to Trinidad in the past 3-5 years has fostered a closer relationship with Latin American gangs and significantly affected the availability of arms and ammunition. Intelligence officials noted that in May 2019 several members of a large Venezuelan gang migrated to Trinidad, while on May 18, 2019, Trinidadian authorities arrested El Culon, the leader of the Evander Gang, also known as the Deltano Liberation Front which originated from the Delta Amacuro, Venezuela. Intelligence officials indicated that several hundred members of the Evander Gang are currently residing illegally in Trinidad, and are engaged in illegal activities. Evander members in Trinidad have embedded themselves within local gangs, and have sought employment within the construction industry. Venezuelan gang members as well as unemployed Venezuelans have affiliated themselves with gangs in Port of Spain, especially with two main ones which cite Islam as their religion, as well as in Point Fortin, and to a lesser extent in Chaguanas (Mahabir, 2022).

Members of other smaller Venezuelan gangs have also migrated to Trinidad, and like members from the Evander gang have been engaged in narcotics and arms trafficking. Intelligence data also suggest that gangs in the Southwestern and Southern police divisions have been involved in human trafficking and smuggling, mainly from Venezuela and the South American mainland, and these activities have been facilitated by linkages with Venezuelan gangs. In addition, Venezuelan gang members have been able to attract other Venezuelan nationals who are experiencing difficulty finding employment, and there is conflict between Venezuelan and local gang members. The influx of Venezuelan gang members coincides with an increase in the import and use of more deadly semiautomatic and automatic weapons which have occurred in recent times. While the weapons trade was part of the narcotics trade from Venezuela and Columbia to Trinidad and Tobago, recent intelligence data suggest that there is also a direct trade with both the USA and Canada for guns, drugs, ammunition and component parts.

Gang evolution may also be impacted by the pending return of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). Any combination or merger of ideologies could further affect the country's serious crime landscape and the already declining levels of public safety. While decisions are yet to be made about the possible return of FTFs, the potential dissemination of radical ideologies could usher in a new age of gang violence. While FTFs may align with Muslim gangs, it is entirely possible that their ideologies could also spread to non-Muslim gangs. In addition, returning FTFs may be able to train local gang members in tactics and strategies of warfare as well as weapons usage, and may have the potential to develop linkages between local gangs and extremists in foreign countries.

13. CONCLUSION

This report provided an examination of gangs in 11 countries in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean. The report was organized around several themes which included the prevalence of the gang problem, the history of gangs in each country, gang involvement in crime, risk factors for gang involvement, and transnational links between gangs and criminal enterprises. Primary data were collected for three countries (Trinidad and Tobago, St. Kitts & Nevis, and St. Vincent & the Grenadines), and included police expert data, and surveys of school and detained youth. Secondary data derived from a range of sources were also used to complement the primary data, and included data from national security agencies, including the police and intelligence agencies, research agencies, and other relevant bodies in each of the focus countries.

Various sources allowed for an estimate of the prevalence of gangs in Caribbean countries. LAPOP data, for example, show that in The Bahamas 23.6 percent of respondents from a nationally representative sample indicated that there were gangs in their neighborhoods (Table 13.1). This was followed by Suriname (19.4 percent), St. Kitts and Nevis (16.2 percent), Dominica (13.7 percent). Countries in which the lowest proportion reported the presence of gangs were Grenada (6.7 percent) and Barbados (6.9 percent).

Public perceptions of the gang problem may differ from estimates derived from other sources. Part of this discrepancy relate to different understandings of what constitutes a gang. Public surveys typically use the phrase “gang” without providing a definition, while other sources such as the police may utilize a specific definition, usually based on the laws in each country. In Barbados, for example, the 2014 LAPOP survey found that 6.9 percent of respondents indicated that there were gangs in their community. Previously the UNDP (2012) provided a slightly higher estimate with 9.2 percent indicating that there were gangs in their community. Around the same time Hill (2013) interviewed officers from the Royal Barbados Police Force who indicated that there were 10 active gangs in Barbados. Later in 2016, the Criminal Justice Research and Planning Unit (CJRP) which is located within the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs estimated that there were about 50 gangs in Barbados. Katz and Nuno in 2017 conducted a survey among police officers who were gang experts and found that there were about 40 gangs in Barbados with an estimated 299 gang members. In contrast, the Delegation of Barbados, addressing the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States Committee on Hemispheric Security at a special meeting in 2008 stated that “Our intelligence suggests that there are over 150 gangs/groups in Barbados with a total membership of 4000”.⁹⁶

One of the issues that was encountered during the data collection phase of this project was that in many countries there was no specific units or entities with the responsibility of collecting data on gangs. Some countries such as The Bahamas, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago have such units. In other cases, police officers in the field may be “experts” on gangs, but no information is documented. Apart from the LAPOP and UNDP (2012) surveys, systematic surveys are also lacking across the region, and so there is a lack of comparable data across countries.

Table 13.1: Perceptions of gangs in the neighborhood⁹⁷

	Gangs in neighborhood	Gangs change from prior year			Gangs interfere with daily life			
		More of a problem	Less of a problem	About the same	A lot	Some	Little	None
Antigua & Barbuda	7.7	0.9	3.5	3.3	0.5	0.7	2.8	96.0

⁹⁶ Statement by the Delegation of Barbados at the Special Meeting of the OAS Committee on Hemispheric Security on the Phenomenon of Criminal Gangs in the Americas January 17, 2008, Washington D.C., p. 6.

⁹⁷ Percentages are shown.

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Bahamas	23.6	6.9	7.1	8.9	1.0	6.5	7.5	85.0
Barbados	6.9	1.5	1.7	3.7	1.0	0.6	1.0	97.4
Dominica	13.7	3.2	5.0	5.1	0.4	1.9	4.5	93.2
Grenada	6.7	1.4	2.9	2.3	0.1	0.5	2.0	97.4
Guyana	8.2	2.2	2.0	3.9	1.6	1.2	2.3	94.9
Jamaica	13.2	2.7	5.1	5.3	1.2	2.4	3.0	93.4
St. Lucia	13.0	4.2	4.0	4.5	1.8	1.1	2.4	94.7
St. Kitts and Nevis	16.2	5.3	4.0	6.5	0.6	2.7	3.6	93.1
SVG	9.0	2.3	2.7	4.0	0.7	1.0	2.2	96.1
Suriname	13.4	5.5	3.6	4.0	2.1	3.3	1.9	92.7
Trinidad & Tobago	13.2	4.9	2.4	5.4	1.0	3.0	4.9	91.1

Source: LAPOP⁹⁸

An important element in examining the issue of gangs involves an examination of youth involvement in gangs. Primary data were collected from Form 4 and 5 youths in Tobago, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and among other things, allowed for an assessment of the prevalence of gang membership among school-aged youth (Figure 13.1), as well as an examination of the characteristics of gang and non-gang members (Table 13.2).

The results show that gang membership among school youth was highest in St. Kitts and Nevis, and lowest in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. More specifically, in St. Kitts and Nevis 5.9 percent of school youth indicated that they were current gang members, compared to 3.7 percent in Tobago and 3.3 percent in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. When asked whether they were former gang members, 7.9 percent in St. Kitts and Nevis replied “yes”, compared to 3 percent in Tobago and 2.6 percent in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The characteristics of gang and non-gang school youth are shown in Table 13.2. The results show that males are more likely to be current or former gang members in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Tobago, but in St. Kitts and Nevis, females were slightly more likely to be current or former gang members. The average age of current or former gang members was slightly older than the average age of non-gang members in all three countries.

With respect to ethnicity, it is expected that the overall proportion of persons of various ethnicities would be reflective of the ethnic composition in each of the countries. However, comparisons of the ethnic composition of gang and non-gang members is possible. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the ethnic composition of gang and non-gang members is fairly similar, except with respect to persons of East Indian and White descent. The results show that 11.4 percent of non-gang members were of East Indian descent, compared to only 4.5 percent of current or former gang members. The results also show that 1.2 percent of Whites were non-gang members compared to 6.1 percent of Whites who were current or former gang members. This suggests that East Indians are under-represented, while Whites are over-represented among gang members in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Importantly, however, there were only 16 Whites in the St. Vincent and the Grenadines sample, so this finding should be interpreted with caution.

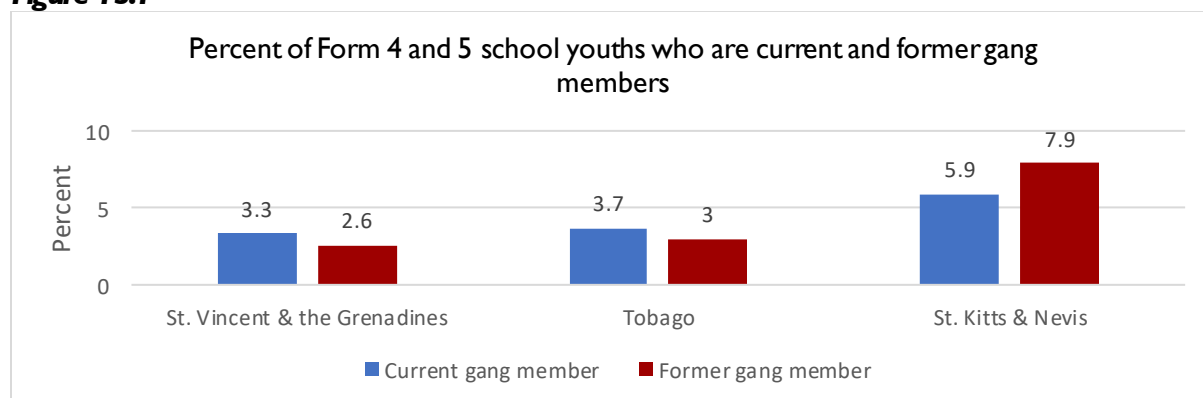
In Tobago the ethnic composition of gang and non-gang members was similar, except with respect to persons of “other” ethnicities. While this is so, there were only 17 persons of “other” ethnicities in Tobago, so this finding should also be interpreted with caution.

⁹⁸ Data shown are for the most recent LAPOP surveys: Antigua and Barbuda 2016, Bahamas 2014, Barbados 2014, Dominica 2016, Grenada 2016, Guyana 2016, Jamaica 2014, St. Kitts and Nevis 2016, St. Lucia 2016, St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2016, Suriname 2014, Trinidad and Tobago 2014. Preliminary data are available for 2023 for Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname. The 2023 data show that 24 percent of respondents in Trinidad and Tobago and 19.4 percent in Suriname reported that there are criminal gangs in their neighborhoods.

The largest ethnic disparities among gang and non-gang members were observed in St. Kitts and Nevis. A lower proportion of persons of African descent were gang members (46.3 percent) than non-gang members (53.9 percent), while a larger proportion of persons of East Indian (8.5 percent), Mixed (34.1 percent), White (3.7 percent) and “other” ethnicities (6.1 percent) were gang members, compared to their respective representation among non-gang members. This suggests that among school youths in St. Kitts and Nevis, persons of African descent are under-represented among gang members, while persons from other ethnic backgrounds are over-represented.

Table 13.2 also provides information on family background, and for each country, indicates the proportion of gang and non-gang members who lived with neither their mother nor father, the mother *or* the father, and the mother *and* the father. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a larger proportion of gang members lived with neither mother nor father (30.3 percent) compared to non-gang members (15.2 percent). In contrast, a larger proportion of non-gang members lived with their mother and father (40 percent) than gang members (16.7 percent). The same pattern was observed in Tobago and St. Kitts and Nevis. The results suggest that gang members are more likely to live without their mothers and fathers, when compared to non-gang members who are more likely to live with both mother *and* father. The data also indicate that in all three countries, gang members are more likely than non-gang members to live with either the mother *or* the father. This suggests that having one parent alone does not have a suppressive impact on gang membership, since indeed gang members are more likely to live in single-parent households than non-gang members. The findings suggest that having both parents in the household is associated with a reduced likelihood of gang membership, whereas having one parent or no parent is associated with a higher likelihood of gang membership.

Figure 13.1



Source: LACLEARN 2023 Survey of school youths

Table 13.2: Characteristics of gang and non-gang members among school youths⁹⁹

		Non gang member	Current or former gang member
SVG	Male	44.4	53.0
	Female	54.9	45.5
	Average age (years)	15.9	16.2
	Other	2.5	3.0
	African descent	45.9	45.5
	East Indian descent	11.4	4.5
	Mixed	35.2	37.9

⁹⁹ Percentages are shown, except where stated.

		Non gang member	Current or former gang member	
	White	1.2	6.1	
	Neither mother nor father	15.2	30.3	
	Mother or father	44.8	53.0	
	Mother and father	40.0	16.7	
Tobago	Male	43.6	61.5	
	Female	55.6	38.5	
	Average age (years)	15.6	16.0	
	Other	1.9	7.7	
	African descent	57.7	56.4	
	East Indian descent	2.3	2.6	
	Mixed	30.9	33.3	
	White	1.2	0.0	
	Neither mother nor father	13.0	15.4	
	Mother or father	51.5	64.1	
	Mother and father	35.5	20.5	
	SKN	Male	44.2	47.6
		Female	55.5	51.2
Average age (years)		15.4	15.5	
Other		4.9	6.1	
African descent		53.9	46.3	
East Indian descent		6.4	8.5	
Mixed		27.1	34.1	
White		1.6	3.7	
Neither mother nor father		9.8	13.4	
Mother or father		60.0	64.6	
Mother and father		30.3	22.0	

Source: LACLEARN 2023 Survey of school youths

With respect to gang involvement in crime, a varied picture emerged. In some countries like Trinidad and Tobago, careful records are kept for some crimes, and include data on gang engagement. Such data allow for precise estimates of gang engagement, at least for some types of offences. In other countries, for example, Barbados, such data are not collected with any regularity, while in the majority of countries it is not collected at all. The experiences of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica suggest that gangs play a significant role in the commission of criminal offences, and where gangs become a problem, this can lead to rapidly increasing crime rates. This suggests that countries with an emerging gang problem must take measures to ensure that the gang problem is eliminated or controlled in the early stages before it reaches the point where it becomes unmanageable.

The experience of Trinidad and Tobago suggests that in their efforts to control the gang problem governments must not channel funds into communities through the hands of gangs or gang leaders. While governments may do this in an effort to provide employment, this approach has the unintended consequence of legitimizing gangs and especially gang leaders who could then become *de facto* “community leaders”. Among other things, this creates a situation where younger community members must approach gang leaders for employment, and is a situation in which gang recruitment is likely to occur. Unfortunately, this is one of the key factors which has led to the entrenchment of gangs, and to an increase in gangs in Trinidad and Tobago.

Risk factors for gang involvement, as well as other gang outcomes were assessed using primary data derived from Form 4 and 5 school youths in Tobago, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and

from detained youths in Trinidad and Tobago. In Tobago the most important predictors of gang membership were drug and alcohol usage, having antisocial tendencies, and family gang involvement. Other predictors which stood out were poverty, low self-control, having antisocial peers, commitment to antisocial peers, handgun availability, residing in homes with domestic violence, and family prosocial involvement. Data were also collected from a sample of detained youth in Trinidad and Tobago (68 females from the St. Jude's Home for Girls, and 23 males from the Youth Training and Rehabilitation Center). These data suggest that persons who had been expelled from school had a greater likelihood of being in gangs, while persons who were committed to school were less likely to be present or former gang members. Persons who experienced higher levels of residential mobility were more likely to have friends who were gang members. Not surprisingly, persons who had other family members who were in gangs or who experienced family neglect were also more likely to be gang members. Having antisocial peers was also a strong predictor of gang involvement among detained youth.

In St. Kitts and Nevis logistic regression modeling showed that those who reported more adverse childhood experiences were more likely to self-report gang membership. In addition, respondents who reported higher levels of risk-seeking, higher socio-economic status, higher levels of peer drug use, and greater perceived gun availability were more likely to meet the criteria for the Eurogang definition. Apart from the finding on socioeconomic status, the other findings were consistent with expectations. The results in St. Kitts and Nevis suggest that interventions to reduce gang membership among youth can provide services to counteract the psychological effects of adverse childhood experiences, or prevent them from happening in the first place, can attempt to improve self-control among youth, reduce drug use and reduce the availability of firearms.

In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the results of logistic regression modeling indicated that respondents who identified as another race compared to persons of African descent, those who scored higher on the risk-seeking scale, and those with other family members involved in a gang were more likely to self-report gang membership. Respondents who were male, reported higher socio-economic status, or had higher intentions to use drugs were more likely to meet the criteria for the Eurogang definition. Having more anti-social peers was statistically related to both types of gang membership. Apart from the finding on socioeconomic status, the other findings were consistent with expectations. The results suggest that in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, interventions to reduce gang membership among young persons can focus on improving self-control, reducing family gang membership, reducing drug use or the intention to use drugs, and reducing opportunities for engagement with antisocial peers.

The LAPOP surveys which were administered in all 11 countries included in the current study also allowed for an examination of risk factors for gang outcomes. An advantage of these surveys is that the same instrument was administered in all countries, and therefore allow for comparison of findings across countries. Regression analysis was conducted for each of the countries in this report to examine risk factors for gang outcomes. Gang outcomes included the presence of gangs in the neighborhood (Table 13.3), the impact of gangs on neighborhoods (Table 13.4) and the extent to which young persons in gangs are a problem in the neighborhood (Table 13.5). Risk factors which were examined included neighborhood social cohesion, neighborhood social control, neighborhood decay, and police performance. Perceptions of safety, assaults, shootings and drug use and trafficking in the neighborhood were used as controls.

Neighborhood decay and police performance were the most consistent predictors across the target countries. Neighborhood decay was a significant predictor of gang presence within neighborhoods in 10 countries of the extent to which gangs affected neighborhoods in 9 countries, and of the extent to which youths in gangs pose a problem in neighborhoods in 5 countries. The results suggest that neighborhood decay is related to increased gang presence and impact. These results, consistent with CPTED principles, suggest that interventions aimed at reducing neighborhood decay may serve to reduce gang presence and impact in the Caribbean.

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Improved police performance was related to a reduction in gang presence in 6 countries, to a reduction of gang impact in 10 countries, and to a reduction of the impact of young persons in gangs in 3 countries. The results suggest that better police performance can have a suppressive effect on adult gangs, but that among the target countries, young persons and children who are in gangs are not consistently focused upon by the police, hence the weaker impact on this age group.

Contrary to expectations, social cohesion and social control were not consistently related to the gang variables in the majority of countries. However, increased social cohesion was related to a reduction in gang presence in The Bahamas and St. Kitts and Nevis, to a reduction in gang impact in The Bahamas and Suriname, and to a reduction of the impact of youths in gangs in The Bahamas and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The only consistent impact, therefore, occurred in The Bahamas. This suggests that in the Bahamas, interventions to reduce gang presence and impact can focus on building neighborhood social cohesion.

Informal social control was related to a reduction in gang presence in The Bahamas and Barbados, to a reduction in gang impact in The Bahamas, Barbados and Suriname, and to a reduction of the impact of young persons in gangs in The Bahamas, Barbados and Guyana. Consistent effects for informal social control, therefore, appear to exist only in The Bahamas and Barbados, and suggest that building informal systems of social control in neighborhoods in these two countries may have a suppressive impact on gangs.

With respect to the control variables, the findings were as expected. Generally speaking, persons in neighborhoods with gangs, or with a greater gang impact felt more unsafe. Gangs were also associated with increased rates of assaults, shootings, and drug use and trafficking. The results suggest that a reduction in the number of gangs within Caribbean countries should result in increased perceptions of safety, and in a reduction in assaults, shootings, and drug use and trafficking.

The UNDP (2012) administered a survey in six of the countries considered in the present study, which allowed for an examination of risk factors for gang presence (Table 13.6) and gang violence (Table 13.7). Social cohesion was the most consistent predictor of gang presence (Table 13.6) and was significant for 4 countries, and almost achieved significance for a fifth. The results suggest that communities with higher levels of social cohesion are less likely to have criminal gangs. Social cohesion was also significant as a predictor of gang violence for five countries (Table 13.7). The results suggest that communities with higher levels of social cohesion experience lower levels of gang violence. The only country for which social cohesion was not significant for both dependent variables was Suriname.

Informal social control in the community was a significant predictor of gang violence in four countries, and was a significant predictor of gang presence in two countries. The results suggest that while higher levels of informal social control in neighborhoods may not have consistent effects in terms of reducing the number of gangs, such informal systems of control may serve to reduce gang violence. Better police performance was related to lower levels of gang violence in five countries, and was related to reduced gang presence in three countries.

The cost of food was used as an indicator of deprivation, and was related to gang violence in four countries. The results suggest that areas with higher food costs have higher levels of gang violence. The cost of food, however, was not related to gang presence in any of the countries. Despite this, unemployment and the cost of living was related to gang presence in Antigua and Barbuda, while unemployment was related to gang violence in Suriname. The results suggest that higher levels of unemployment and higher cost of living is associated with greater gang presence in Antigua and Barbuda, while higher levels of unemployment are related to higher levels of gang violence in Suriname.

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Inadequate access to schooling was related to gang presence and violence in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, but not in other countries. The results suggest that improved access to schooling may be utilized as a means of reducing gang presence and violence in these countries.

Finally, the results from the UNDP (2012) survey suggest that high levels of residential mobility are related to increased gang presence in Antigua and Barbuda, and is related to greater levels of gang violence in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. The results suggest that reducing internal migration may have a suppressive effect on gangs in these countries.

The most robust predictors from the UNDP (2012) data were social cohesion, informal social control, and police performance. The results suggest that strategies aimed at reducing gang presence and violence can focus on improving social cohesion, in building systems of informal social control in communities, and in improving police performance. Other predictors specific to various countries were also identified, and should be considered in the design of interventions in the respective countries.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that gangs represent a serious problem in some countries, and an emerging problem in others. Measures must be put in place to systematically collect information which would allow for diagnosis of the gang problem, and which can provide insights useful for the development of interventions.

Table 13.3: Predictors of gang presence in Caribbean countries¹⁰⁰

	Antigua & Barbuda	The Bahamas	Barbados	Dominica	Grenada	Guyana	St. Kitts & Nevis	St. Lucia	St. Vincent & Grenadines	Suriname	Trinidad & Tobago
Social Cohesion	.169	***-.129	-.032	.040	.191	-.084	**-.184	-.066	-.084	-.052	.008
Social Control	-.070	***-.176	***-.169	.056	.054	.038	.099	-.021	.022	.013	-.038
Neighborhood Decay	***.492	***.337	***.229	.147	** .487	***.268	** .330	** .310	*.285	***.240	***.299
Police Performance	-.144	.012	***-.134	*-.117	-.031	**-.151	-.075	**-.192	¹⁰¹ -.133	***-.233	***-.293
Perceptions of Safety	*.168	***.112	-.031	***.214	** .222	***.179	*.098	*.096	.079	***.177	.045
Assaults	-.255	.034	** .190	.133	** .367	.036	***-.772	*.184	.186	.072	***.261
Shootings	-.051	***.400	** .178	.181	.026	.047	***.685	***.309	***.557	-.067	***.467
Drug use and trafficking	***.567	***.326	***.597	***.257	***.289	***.264	***.354	** .133	.074	***.170	***.249
Nagelkerke R²	.336	.416	.279	.239	.281	.246	.380	.230	.224	.181	.466

Source: LAPOP¹⁰²¹⁰⁰ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.¹⁰¹ p < .065.¹⁰² Findings are based on the most recent LAPOP surveys: Antigua and Barbuda 2016, Bahamas 2014, Barbados 2014, Dominica 2016, Grenada 2016, Guyana 2016, St. Kitts and Nevis 2016, St. Lucia 2016, St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2016, Suriname 2014, Trinidad and Tobago 2014.

Table 13.4: Predictors of gang impact on neighborhoods in Caribbean countries¹⁰³

	Antigua & Barbuda	The Bahamas	Barbados	Dominica	Grenada	Guyana	St. Kitts & Nevis	St. Lucia	St. Vincent & Grenadines	Suriname	Trinidad & Tobago
Social Cohesion	.016	***-.072	-.004	.013	.019	.004	-.029	-.010	-.013	***-.040	-.003
Social Control	-.004	*.025	***.025	.031	.015	-.007	*.041	-.026	.002	*.028	-.003
Neighborhood Decay	***.075	***.056	***.059	***.081	*.052	***.074	.050	***.087	¹⁰⁴ .045	***.102	***.044
Police Performance	*.031	*.022	*.016	¹⁰⁵ -.026	***.044	**-.030	***.074	*.036	***.058	***.074	***.039
Perceptions of Safety	***.042	***.051	***.044	***.082	***.059	***.068	***.088	***.069	.019	***.069	***.033
Assaults	**079	*.041	***.081	.019	***.097	***.101	***.224	***.132	***.126	***.106	***.073
Shootings	-.017	***.169	***.117	.139	.002	.030	***.215	***.112	***.143	-.018	***.241
Drug use and trafficking	***.110	***.105	***.126	***.108	***.077	***.057	***.105	***.085	***.068	***.023	***.061
Adjusted R²	.246	.388	.267	.297	.248	.214	.315	.335	.268	.147	.449

Source: LAPOP¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

¹⁰⁴ p < .068.

¹⁰⁵ p < .061

¹⁰⁶ Findings are based on the most recent LAPOP surveys: Antigua and Barbuda 2016, Bahamas 2014, Barbados 2014, Dominica 2016, Grenada 2016, Guyana 2016, St. Kitts and Nevis 2016, St. Lucia 2016, St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2016, Suriname 2014, Trinidad and Tobago 2014.

Table 13.5: Predictors of the extent to which young persons in gangs are a problem in neighborhoods in Caribbean countries¹⁰⁷

	Antigua & Barbuda	The Bahamas	Barbados	Dominica	Grenada	Guyana	St. Kitts & Nevis	St. Lucia	St. Vincent & Grenadines	Suriname	Trinidad & Tobago
Social Cohesion	.004	***-.060	-.003	-.016	-.002	.024	-.027	-.026	*-.051	-.003	-.003
Social Control	.018	*-.035	***-.037	-.022	.013	***-.081	.036	-.025	.010	.019	.010
Neighborhood Decay	.043	***.055	***.061	.044	-.004	***.075	.040	.028	-.025	*.030	***.079
Police Performance	**-.054	.015	**-.026	.006	¹⁰⁸ -.039	-.004	.025	.019	-.022	**-.033	-.011
Perceptions of Safety	.018	***.037	***.029	**-.039	**-.051	**-.037	.020	***.071	.007	-.001	***.031
Assaults	***.163	***.110	***.264	***.139	.034	***.163	-.044	***.133	***.233	***.180	***.210
Shootings	***.209	***.150	***.138	**-.133	***.262	***.130	***.372	***.172	***.254	***.278	***.329
Drug use and trafficking	***.215	***.286	***.320	***.232	***.203	***.192	***.306	***.216	***.187	***.148	***.149
Adjusted R²	.381	.522	.394	.402	.303	.352	.680	.357	.332	.406	.595

Source: LAPOP¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

¹⁰⁸ $p < .066$

¹⁰⁹ Findings are based on the most recent LAPOP surveys: Antigua and Barbuda 2016, Bahamas 2014, Barbados 2014, Dominica 2016, Grenada 2016, Guyana 2016, St. Kitts and Nevis 2016, St. Lucia 2016, St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2016, Suriname 2014, Trinidad and Tobago 2014.

Table 13.6: Predictors of gang presence in Caribbean countries¹¹⁰

	Antigua & Barbuda	Barbados	St. Lucia	Guyana	Trinidad & Tobago	Suriname
Unemployment	** .198	.093	.037	.076	-.009	.075
Access to schooling	.053	.058	.019	*** .156	* .123	-.026
Cost of food	-.118	-.119	-.002	-.023	-.097	.065
Cost of living	** .290	.067	-.021	¹¹¹ .166	-.022	-.038
Poverty	¹¹² -.139	-.073	.023	-.043	.045	.050
Residential mobility	** .179	.078	-.019	-.047	.007	.075
Adequate sanitation	-.023	.091	.023	.027	.054	* -.141
Social Cohesion	* -.033	¹¹³ -.026	*** -.038	*** -.056	*** -.035	-.012
Informal social control	** -.086	-.001	*** -.138	¹¹⁴ -.055	-.005	-.029
Police performance	*** -.062	*** -.070	-.008	-.003	** -.042	-.018
Crime in the Community	*** .416	*** .470	*** .383	*** .412	*** .327	*** .224
Nagelkerke R Square	.361	.272	.307	.300	.273	.079
N	1511	1506	1514	1569	1595	1512

Source: UNDP (2012)

¹¹⁰ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * $p > .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

¹¹¹ $p < .076$

¹¹² $p < .058$

¹¹³ $p < .058$

¹¹⁴ $p < .064$

Table 13.7: Predictors of the level of gang violence in Caribbean countries¹¹⁵

	Antigua & Barbuda	Barbados	St. Lucia	Guyana	Trinidad & Tobago	Suriname
Unemployment	-.002	-.007	-.002	.006	-.007	***.097
Access to schooling	¹¹⁶ .043	¹¹⁷ .050	-.012	** .076	***.078	-.016
Cost of food	*-.060	*-.072	-.003	** .088	*-.067	*-.075
Cost of living	.032	.010	-.033	-.029	-.006	.001
Poverty	** .081	-.005	.040	-.020	*.053	.035
Residential mobility	.033	*.052	.016	-.024	*.060	.038
Adequate sanitation	-.034	.036	.000	.018	.006	.033
Social Cohesion	***-.094	***-.078	***-.111	***-.091	*-.054	.014
Informal social control	*-.048	-.002	***-.200	***-.101	*-.050	-.033
Police performance	***-.127	***-.091	**-.067	**-.067	***-.093	-.019
Crime in the Community	***.476	***.432	***.502	***.346	***.452	***.328
Adjusted R²	.351	.250	.405	.198	.289	.134
N	1511	1506	1514	1569	1595	1512

Source: UNDP (2012)

¹¹⁵ Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. * p > .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

¹¹⁶ p < .063

¹¹⁷ p < .060

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

- With very few exceptions, such as in Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, there are no specialized units to collect information on gangs. It is recommended that specialized units be set up, and data collection instruments and protocols be developed to collect systematic data on gangs. Such units can be situated within the police service, but could also be located within intelligence agencies or research units.
- Measures should be put in place to increase gang intelligence within Caribbean countries. Very few countries have intelligence units which focus on criminal gangs.
- Countries within the region should improve their capacity to collect, maintain, and disseminate intelligence on transnational criminal groups and their criminal activity in order to more effectively engage in collaborative cross-border criminal investigations.
- There should also be a mechanism in place, and relevant protocols, to allow for the sharing of gang information across Caribbean countries. Entities such as the Regional Security System (RSS), the Regional Intelligence Fusion Center (RIFC) or CARICOM IMPACS may play a role in this.
- Very few countries collect data to indicate whether crimes are gang-related. A definition of “gang-related” should be formulated in each country, and agencies which collect crime data, such as the police, should collect data which allow for an assessment of the proportion of offences which are gang-related. They should also capture data on the location of gang-related offences.
- The involvement of school youth in gangs appears to be an emerging problem in the Caribbean. Based on primary data collected by LACLEARN in 2023, school youth involvement in St. Kitts and Nevis was comparatively high, when compared to other countries. Data from Katz et al. (2023) also suggest high rates of gang membership among school youth in Barbados (15 percent), Dominica (20 percent), Guyana (18 percent), St. Lucia (18 percent), and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (14 percent). Interventions should be implemented in schools to provide social skills necessary for youths to resist gang recruitment. The Gang Resistance Education And Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program is one which should be considered for use in Caribbean schools.¹¹⁸ School youths who are already in gangs should receive secondary prevention interventions aimed at getting them out of the gang.
- In countries with an established gang presence, such as Trinidad and Tobago and The Bahamas, interventions which can result in a rapid decline in gang violence, such as the CureViolence model, should be considered for implementation. A reduction in inter-gang rivalries will create the space for more sustained interventions aimed at reducing gang violence and allowing gang members to leave gangs. Once that space is created, interventions can be developed based on risk and protective factors which have an empirical link to gang outcomes, including gang violence.
- In countries with a relatively less established gang presence, such as Guyana and Grenada, attempts should be made to understand the risk and protective factors which relate to gang formation and violence, and interventions designed so that the gang problem could be managed before it reaches a stage where it becomes more difficult to control.

¹¹⁸ <https://www.great-online.org/GREAT-Home>

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- An examination of risk factors in this report suggests that interventions to reduce the presence and impact of gangs can focus on building social cohesion and informal systems of social control, reducing neighborhood decay, improving police performance, reducing economic deprivation, and increasing access to schooling. Specific factors applicable to each country within the region were outlined in this report.¹¹⁹
- Implement focused deterrence strategies which increase the threat, both actual and perceived, of formal sanctions against gangs and gang members. If police and other officials focus their efforts on the right places, groups and people, then this could result in a rapid decline in offending. The findings on the relationship between police performance and gang outcomes in this report support this proposition.
- When focusing on proximate risk factors, focus on those gangs and gang communities which are responsible for the most violence. When focusing on distal risk factors, all gangs and communities with gangs should be given emphasis. Gang prevention programming should be based on the specific needs of the selected communities and those who are at risk for gang membership.
- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation should be employed for all gang intervention programs.
- More research is needed on risk and protective factors for gang membership in the Caribbean. It is suggested that instruments similar to the ones used in the primary countries in this study, which collected data on over 30 risk and protective factors in several domains (e.g. the individual/peer, family, school, and community) be used in the region in an effort to empirically document the factors which affect gang membership, thereby providing information which can be used in developing interventions to reduce gang membership.
- Systematic reviews should be undertaken to identify barriers to youth leaving gangs. These can include such obstacles as poor education and lack of economic opportunities, threats of violence from the gang, threats to self-image and identity, and labelling by school, police, and employers.
- There is some evidence of transnational linkages among gangs examined in this report. This suggests the need for a coordinated effort among Ministries of National Security, Immigration agencies, Financial Intelligence agencies, and other relevant bodies to track the movement of persons and funds throughout the region, and especially in cases where criminal gang or organized crime activity is suspected.
- In some countries, such as St. Vincent and the Grenadines and St. Kitts and Nevis, a very small number of gangs and gang members are responsible for the majority of gang-related murders. Law enforcement efforts should consistently target these gangs and gang members. This should result in a rapid decline in the number of gang-related murders.
- With the exception of the Community, Family and Youth Resilience (CFYR) countries (i.e., Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis), and the Youth Resilience, Inclusion and Empowerment (Y-RIE) countries (i.e., Guyana, St. Lucia, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago), risk assessment instruments are not used. Such instruments allow for the identification of youth who are most at risk of joining gangs and engaging in criminal activities, and therefore, who are most in need of intervention.

¹¹⁹ It is cautioned that the cross-sectional data used in this study for an assessment of risk factors does not allow for the establishment of causal relationships with gang outcomes.

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- Many countries in the Caribbean region do not possess anti-gang legislation. It is suggested that countries without legislation should develop such legislation.
- Anti-gang legislation may not be effective without the requisite means to gather intelligence and evidence which can be used to secure convictions. It is suggested that law enforcement and judicial authorities in Caribbean countries should determine what types of evidence are required, and how such evidence should be gathered, as well as the means and training required to gather such evidence, so that anti-gang legislation can have the intended effect.
- Conduct a gap analysis of the criminal justice system in each country, as it relates to the detection and prosecution of gang members and gang-related illegal activities. Develop a phased implementation plan to remedy the gaps which are identified in each country. An exercise such as this can be done in a centralized way, for example, via a study of criminal justice systems within the region.
- Caribbean governments should not channel state funds through the hands of gang leaders, and should not develop linkages with gangs. Funding and associating with gangs have led to the proliferation of gangs in places like Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Governments, therefore, need to find other ways to provide employment and funding to impoverished and marginalized communities.
- Governments across the region should increase collaboration with international agencies such as USAID and the Inter-American Development Bank in an effort to obtain technical support for the provision of gang interventions.

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