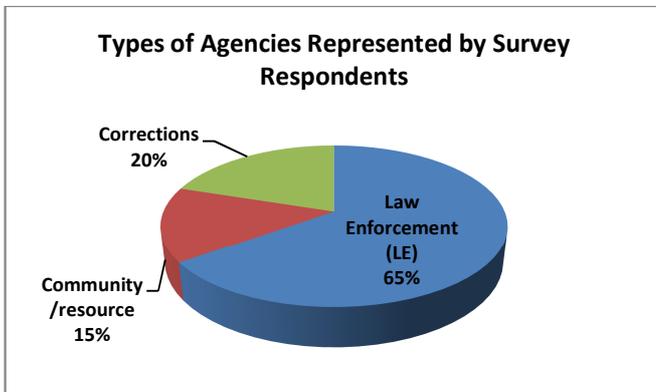




Preliminary Findings from the 2015 NCGIA Survey

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A survey was created to assess current gang/group dynamics in communities across the State. The web-based survey was disseminated via email to attendees of the 2015 North Carolina Gang Investigators Conference and the Gang Free North Carolina Academy. 394 respondents completed the survey and represented nearly every county in North Carolina.

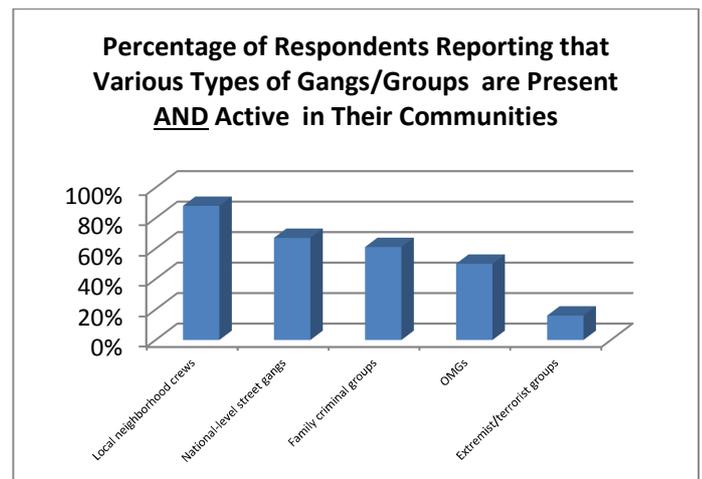


57% of respondents reported that their agency participated in a multi-agency gang taskforce or partnership. Law enforcement (LE) and corrections agencies were the most likely to report taskforce participation, suggesting that community partners such as schools, and resource providers who often work with gang-involved or at-risk individuals could be more involved in addressing gang activity within communities. Multi-disciplinary approaches to gang suppression approaches, such as focused deterrence, and better sharing of information about active gangs and members may stem from such multi-disciplinary partnership.

Only 39% of LE respondents reported that their agency has a full-time gang unit or personnel. Furthermore, 22% of respondents reported that additional LEO's/gang units are resources they feel they need to better address gangs in their communities. Respondents from smaller departments, in particular, stated that lack of personnel was an issue. LE agencies may need funding to dedicate gang personnel, though departmental and community leadership must acknowledge that gangs exist and are active in their communities—a denial which some respondents reported in the survey. 64% of corrections agency respondents reported

having gang personnel, which is important because correctional agency respondents also reported having the most day-to-day contact with gang-involved individuals and 70% of corrections respondents also believe gangs pose a *high* threat to corrections staff.

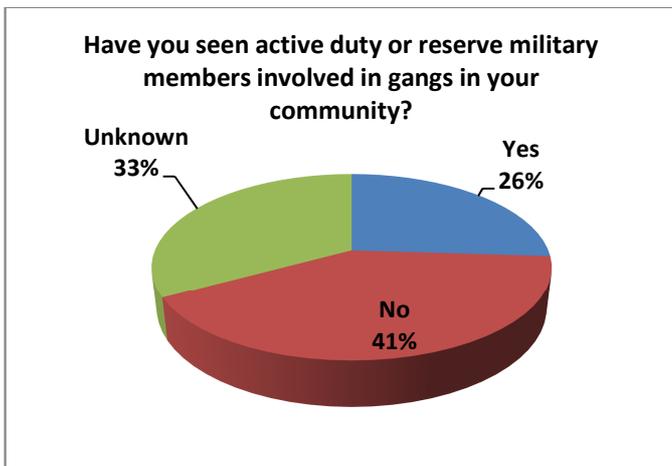
All types of gangs are present and active in NC communities, though local neighborhood crews were the most commonly reported. 68% of respondents reported that gang membership in their community has increased over the past two years, while 26% of respondents reported that gang membership has stayed the same.



When asked about the most violent group in their community, national-level street groups were most often identified, as mentioned by 49% of respondents. Local crews were identified as the most violent group type by 45% of respondents. These local neighborhood groups are prevalent, active, and often violent in communities, meaning they need the same level of LE and resource attention as more organized, hierarchical national-level gangs. One issue, however, is that respondents have reported a recent trend of loose group affiliations, meaning that groups are now intermingling more than in the past. Loose group associations leading to members constantly moving around may exacerbate a barrier that LE identified in dealing with gangs—that it is often difficult to identify and track gang members.

Respondents revealed that gangs are present in schools in 74% of communities. Of those communities with a gang presence in schools, 25% reported gangs are present in elementary schools, 78% reported gangs are present in middle/junior high schools, and 80% reported gangs are present in high schools. The trend toward increased recruitment of younger individuals into gangs was reported by both LE and community/resource respondents.

When asked about recent trends in gang activity, LE intelligence about active or reserve military gang member involvement may be sparse, as the answer to this question was unknown in many communities. 26% of respondents have seen military members active in gangs.



Over half of respondents reported that there is an OMG clubhouse in their jurisdiction, though 30% of respondents stated that even though OMGs were present, they were not criminally active in their area. A few respondents reported as a recent trend that clubhouses have been established and support clubs have come into the community. Overall, however, criminal activity and violence associated with OMGs was not as heavily reported or discussed by respondents in this survey.

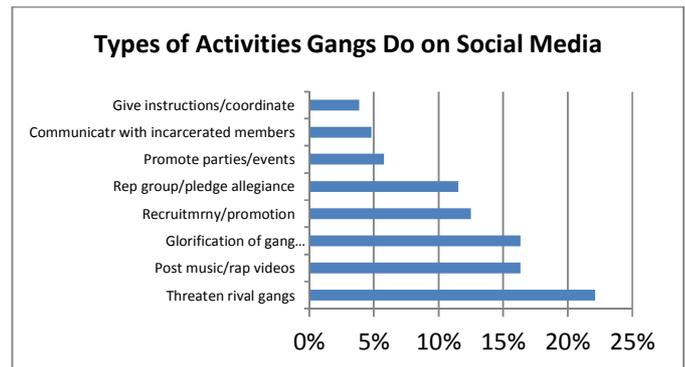
1.3% of respondents reported an increase in their community in international terrorist groups, 26% have seen an increase in Sovereign groups, and 13% have seen an increase in hate-motivated group activity. Several respondents mentioned that individuals, often defendants in criminal cases or those pulled in traffic stops, are using Sovereign-type language and tactics, acting more as wanna-bes rather than being actually involved in or invested in the Sovereign movement. Respondents reported Sovereigns were clogging the court system with paperwork and filing motions, but most of their activity was just a nuisance. Sovereigns were reported more often to be involved in identity theft/fraud rather than being involved in violent activity. However, a few respondents did report a recent increase in violence and weapons possession among Sovereigns. A rise in individuals identifying with the

Moorish Nation, specifically, was mentioned by several respondents as related to recent Sovereign activity.

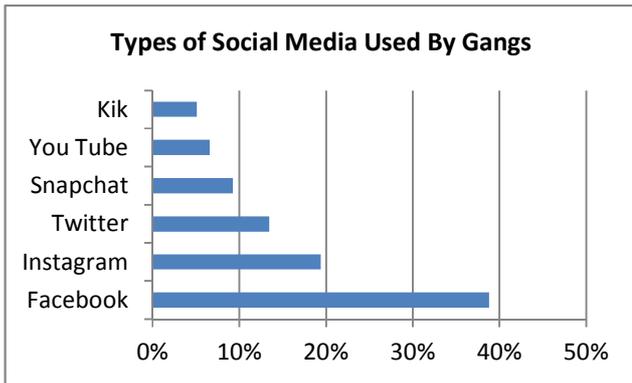
Racial tension was cited a reason for the increase in recent hate group activity seen in some communities. White Supremacist groups, including the KKK specifically, were often mentioned as involved in recent activity, in part due to the recent Confederate flag debate. Many respondents also mentioned the Black Lives Matter movement calling for violence against LEOs. Several mentioned Aryan Brotherhood members being released from prison and coming to their communities. Many hate groups have been seen handing out literature and actively recruiting within communities.

Given the increase in recent activity by certain types of groups, LE officers and community service providers need to be trained to identify these group members and be prepared to address issues that may be specific to these types of group members in terms of differences in attitudes, belief systems, and psychology that may make them somewhat unique deal with.

Gangs are using social media readily. 76% of LE respondents were aware of gangs using social media to communicate with one another. 51% of LE respondents stated that their agency frequently integrates social media for gang investigations. 18% rarely or never do. For the LE agencies that are not using social media to investigate gangs, there may be need for training in this area, particularly given the large percentage of gangs that are using these platforms. Gangs use social media frequently to glorify the gang lifestyle in the case of flaunting money, weapons, or even posting video of recent crimes, and also to pose direct threats to rival gangs. Gangs also use social media as a recruitment tool. Many respondents mentioned the frequent use of videos by gangs for multiple purposes.



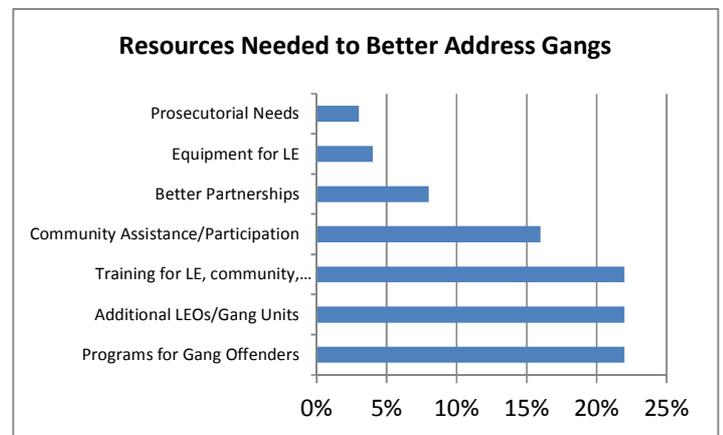
The most popular social media platform used by gangs was reported to be Facebook, though fifteen different social platforms were identified as used by gangs, including the use of video game chatrooms, Craigslist/Backpage particularly for use in human sex trafficking, Vine, Hood Up, and Pinger. The most commonly mentioned platforms are included in the figure below.



Respondents were asked about recent trends they have seen in gang activity. The most commonly mentioned trend was that new gangs were forming in their communities and that there was rapid expansion of particular gangs, which differed by community. Many respondents mentioned that the level of violence associated with gangs has increased in their communities. Several respondents mentioned recent trends in gang involvement in human trafficking. Another frequently mentioned trend was gangs doing break-ins to look for weapons to steal. Several respondents mentioned that gangs are frequently getting involved in the rap music industry and posting music videos online. This was also a common theme identified by respondents when asked how gangs are using social media. Now, more than in the past, many gang members are flying under the radar by not admitting to gang involvement, not repping their gang through colors/tattoos, and sometimes tying themselves to religious organizations, establishing businesses, or having “legitimate” careers. In some jurisdictions, arrests of key leaders have caused disorganization making gangs more violent due to lack of order and structure within gangs.

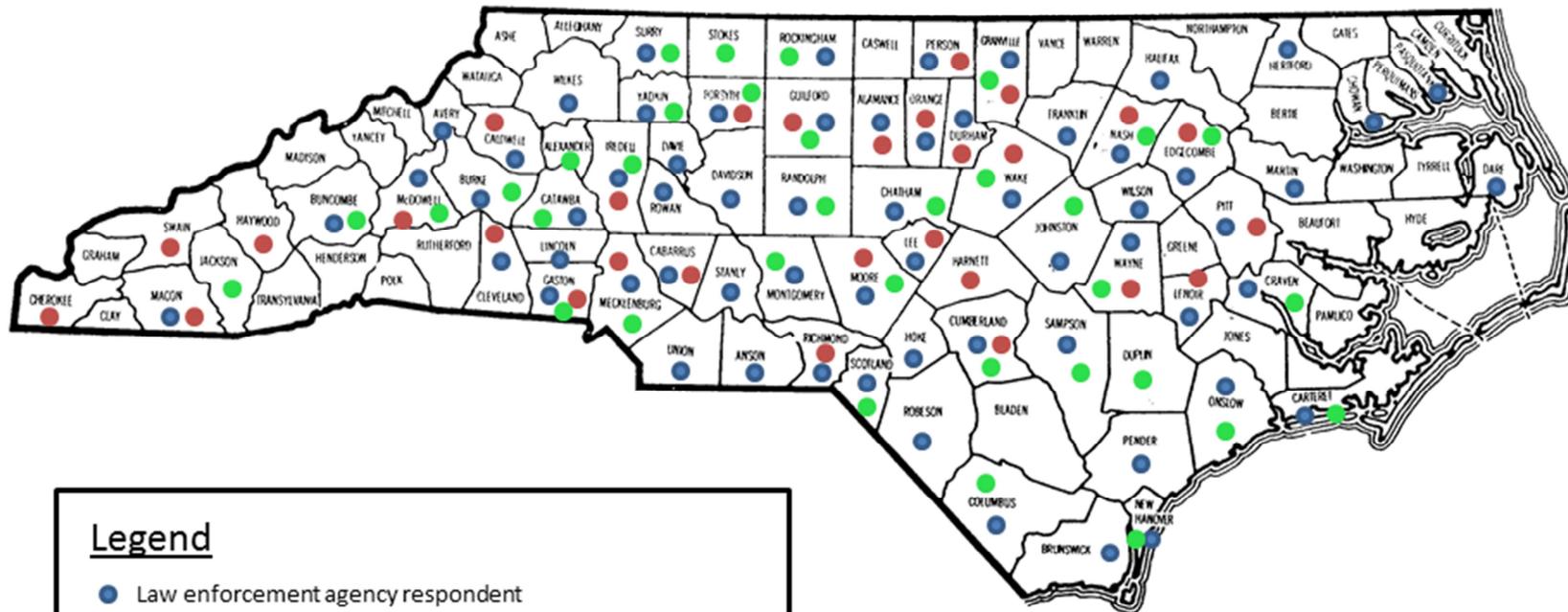
Several barriers to gang member arrest and/or conviction were identified. The most common barrier was lack of victim/witness cooperation due to fear of retaliation, codes about not snitching, and the fact that many witnesses/victims are often involved in criminal activity themselves. Many respondents mentioned overburdened systems as barriers. Sometimes cases are dismissed or pled down due to heavy dockets. Other times, cases are not prosecuted using gang enhancements, which is sometimes due to lack of proper documentation at time of arrest, suggesting a need for more LE training on identification and handling of gang-involved cases. Other respondents mentioned that sentencing for gang members is too lenient, partly due to overcrowded jails/prisons, the need for more federal prosecutions of gang members, and the fact that some gang offenders are juveniles.

The most common services respondents reported providing to gang-involved individuals were often youth-oriented, including pro-social activities, after-school programs, and positive alternatives. Employment services and vocational training were also commonly mentioned. Unfortunately, 38% of all respondents, regardless of agency type, reported that they rarely feel they have the resources needed to address gang-related issues and 32% stated they only sometimes have what they need. LE respondents were the most likely to say that they rarely have what they need. Respondents were asked directly what they would need to better address gangs in their communities. The most frequently mentioned needs were programs for gang offenders, additional LEO’s/gang units, and training which would include training for LE, community, prosecutors, and parents.



In summary, gangs are present and active in NC communities and their level of violence may be on the rise, though community leaders may be in denial. LE and community agencies do not feel they have resources needed to adequately deal with gangs. This trend may continue to increase as levels of violence rise and as new, fringe group types are becoming more active. Both LE and community agencies need to be trained in gang identification. Systems need to be in place for inter-agency communication and cooperation. Resource providers and other vested community partners can be involved more with LE by way of multi-disciplinary taskforces to better address gang problems. Technology has increased gang members’ ability to communicate with one another and to directly threaten rival gangs. Important evidence and investigative leads can often be identified using social media as a tool. Barriers to successful gang arrests/convictions may be heavily systems-related. Again, partnerships and taskforces could not only focus on specific criminal gang activity but also identify gaps which may allow gang members to skate through the criminal justice system without due recourse.

Counties Represented by NCGIA Survey Respondents



Legend

- Law enforcement agency respondent
- Community or service agency respondent
- Detention/prison/community supervision agency respondent