

# Teens and gangs

[Law](#), [Criminology](#)



Teens & Gangs : Why are teens involved in gangs Since the beginning of the decade, teenage homicides increased by one hundred and fifty percent This sharp increase is largely due to the rapid formation of gang activity throughout the United States. In today's larger cities, gang violence is a reality that people have to deal with every day. As gang related crimes increase, officials are trying to find out why people join and remain loyal to gangs. Unfortunately, experts can only hypothesize explanations for gang involvement. However, by studying societies influence on humans, there is evidence to blame several forces. These speculations include the forces of peer pressure, broken families, gang loyalty, protection, and the media. First of all, most teens become attracted to gangs by peer pressure and greed. Estimates show that forty percent of all gang members joined because their friends influenced them. Teen gangsters will pressure peers into becoming part of a gang by making it sound glamorous. Recruiters will often promise popularity in exchange for their loyalty. Although most gang members find popularity, it often means losing close friends to rival gangs. Another crucial factor is the need for money. A 6 year old kid, who is not yet a member, receives impressions that he or she could make \$200 to \$400 for a small gang job. In August of 1996, an eleven year old Compton child received \$400 for killing a rival classmate. Although money and popularity are important factors, they are not strong enough to persuade kids to do things that are strongly against their morals. Other stronger force such as broken families and the media, along with peer pressure, works together to persuade young kids to join a gang. For instance, now we have a 6 year kid who potently will become a gang member just because he wants to earn money the easy way.

Teens are a major part of gangs being that the average age for a gang member in the U. S. is 17-18 years old meaning that they are still in their teens. These are teens that are seeking to belong somewhere; they claim that they don't have a family to go to so they turn to gangs to accept them as " brothers". Second of all, the formation of gangs in cities, and most recently in suburbs, is facilitated by the lack of community upbringing among parents. In a fully developed community, a network of relations can be found among several parents. The relationship could be a parent, teacher, and minister, depending on the child's circumstances. In South Central Los Angeles, this communication cannot be found, so students turn to gangs for companionship. In a classroom with no security, students could be distracted from learning, and thus distracted from the network. Furthermore, in poor families with many children, or upper- middle class families where parents are always working, children will often feel deprived of love. Parents often feel that putting food on the table is enough love. Children from families often go to the gang out of boredom. As time goes on, a form of kinship develops between the gang members and the child. It is then that the bond between the kid and the gang is completed because the gang has effectively replaced the family. Although this may be a feeling for belonging, statistics show that seventy percent of gang members cheat and steal from the people they call friends. In every gang, problems occur as each male tries to be the most courageous. This often leads to all members participating in " one-up-manship." Quite often this starts a domino effect where each member tries to commit a bigger and more violent crime. With all members participating in this sort of activity, it makes a never ending, unorganized violence spree. In

gangs with organization, members feed off these feelings, and each member desires to be the star when the group commits a crime. This makes a gang much more organized and improves the morals of members. It also makes the gang more dangerous and very hard for the police to deal with and catch. There is nothing harder to find and deal with than organized teens that are dedicated to the group. According to the LA Times, 30% of all organized crime goes unsolved, This form of gang is usually common with the middle or upper class. Furthermore, the same forms have been reported near the projects and other low rent districts too. This "one-up-manship" is often the reason for rival gangs fighting. Gangs want to feel powerful and feared. To do this they establish themselves as the only gang in a certain neighborhood. After several gang fights, hatred forms then the desire to murder ends in drive-by-shootings. When two or more gangs are at war, it makes life very dangerous for citizens in the area. Less than 40% of drive-by-shootings kill their intended victim, yet over 60% do kill someone. In addition, one of the great factors in determining to joining a gang is protection. In slums such as the Bronx, children will be beaten and robbed if they do not participate in a gang. Most people see that joining a gang brings danger. However, this is not the way it is seen by kids. Gang leaders also provide money for member who need to feed their families. After members receive money, they often feel that the leaders are watching out for them and keeping them safe. After a gang provides shelter and money, a person has a 18% chance of leaving a gang. Another reason kids think gangs will keep them safe is from propaganda gangs use to attract members. Gang members will promise no one will be hurt and make a public show of revenge

if a member is hurt or killed. People in low rent areas are often being repressed due to poverty. This result in an attitude that motivates a person to base his or her life on doing what the system failed to provide them. Although this accomplishes little, it is a big factor in gang enrollment. Finally, kids' morals are becoming bent because gang violence is more acceptable by the influence of television and movies. The average child spends more time in front of a TV than he or she spends in a classroom. Many shows on television today are extremely violent and shown with a gang's perspective. Normal adults can see how foully that gangs are living. However, recent studies show that children think television gang violence is acceptable. 'The Ends Justifies the Means' mentality is also taught through many shows where the " goody guy" captures the " bad guy" through violence and is then being commended. A young child sees this as perfectly acceptable because he knows that the " bad guy" was wrong but has no idea of what acceptable apprehension techniques are. Gore in television also takes a big part in influencing young minds. Children see gory scenes and are fascinated by these things that they have not seen before. Older viewers see gore and are not concerned with the blood, but rather with the pain the victim must feel. A young mind does not make this connection. Thus, a gore fascination is formed and has been seen in every elementary school across America. In a study conducted in the Cleveland Ohio school district, teachers found that students become more attentive as blood and gore are introduced. Unfortunately kids raised with this sort of television end up growing up with a stronger propensity to becoming a violent gang member or 'violent-acceptant' person. So, as anyone can see, if TV leads a child to believe that

violence is the norm this will manifest itself in the actions of a child in a gang situation. This is especially the case when parents do not spend much time with their kids explaining what is right and what is wrong in front of a TV. Quite often newer books and some types of music will enforce this type of thought and ideas. In order to curb violence, the system must change. So, as stated, gangs are a product of the environment the world has created for ourselves. Some of these factors include peer pressure, broken families, gang loyalty, protection, and the media. There seems to be no way to end the problem of gangs without totally restructuring the modern media and value system. Since the chance of this happening is minimal, we must learn to cope with gangs and try to keep their following to a minimum.

Unfortunately, there is no organized force to effectively help fight gangs. As a community, people must bond, talk to children, enforce positive peer pressure, and censor the media in order to prevent gang growth in America's cities. Works Cited : [http://www. dc. state. fl. us/pub/gangs/](http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/gangs/) [http://www. nationalgangcenter. gov/About/FAQ#q1](http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/FAQ#q1) [http://www. nationalgangcenter. gov/About/FAQ#q16](http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/FAQ#q16) [http://people. howstuffworks. com/street-gang. htm](http://people.howstuffworks.com/street-gang.htm)