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Prevalence and Patterns of Troublesome Youth Groups in the Caribbean: Implications for Policy and Practice

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Introduction

Only in recent decades have policymakers, criminal justice officials, and researchers begun to take seriously the existence of troublesome youth groups (TYGs; see text box p. 1) in the Caribbean. Over this time, the region has experienced a substantial rise in the rates of homicide and other forms of violence. In 2000, the murder rate in the Caribbean was about 14 per 100,000 residents; by 2010, the rate had doubled to about 28 per 100,000 (Seepersad 2013). Many Caribbean nations, such as Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, were experiencing historic highs in their numbers of murders (Hill 2013). This has been largely attributed to the increase in TYGs and TYG violence (Hill 2013; UNODC 2014).

Despite increases in violence in general and in TYG violence in particular, there has not been much systematic examination of TYG violence, nor has there been a substantial increase in the region's criminal justice systems' capacity to collect, maintain, and disseminate TYG intelligence. This dearth of data and crime intelligence is the result of decades of neglect on the part of research institutions within criminal justice agencies (such as police crime analysis units) and universities (such as criminology and criminal justice departments). Consequently, criminal justice agencies have little capacity to analyze crime in general, much less to analyze TYG-related phenomena, which require greater capacity and more specialization. There remains much uncertainty about the existence of the region's TYGs and lack of clarity about their prevalence, proliferation, and migration or the conditions conducive to TYG formation and TYG violence.

In 2010, recognizing the growing threat, the Regional Security System (RSS) partnered with Arizona State University (ASU) to conduct rigorous research in pursuit of an understanding of the scope and nature of TYGs and TYG violence in the Eastern Caribbean—a mandate given to them by the Council of Ministers. The seven nations comprising the RSS (Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, Commonwealth of Dominica, and Grenada) requested that the RSS conduct an assessment to determine whether resources should be dedicated to addressing the problem and, if so, that it recommend a course of action. Following initiation of the RSS TYG assessment, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) engaged the RSS to fund and expand the scope of activity to include Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

The primary purpose of this assessment is to examine the scope and nature of the TYG problem in RSS member states, as well as Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, to assess their capacity for responding to TYG problems and to offer definitive recommendations for national and regional responses. The specific objective is to provide an understanding of (1) the prevalence of TYGs, (2) factors associated with TYG joining, (3) the relationship between TYGs and offending and drugs, (4) organizational attributes and structures of TYGs, (5) transnational links between TYGs in the Caribbean and other nations, (6) factors associated with members leaving TYGs, and (7) the relationship between TYGs and gender.

The TYG assessment relied on a multi-methodological approach that included surveys of school youth, juvenile detainees, and police experts; interviews with key stakeholders; and official homicide data, along with data previously collected through the Latin American Public Opinion Survey. (See the technical report for a full description of research methodology.)

Defining Troublesome Youth Groups

The term “gang” means different things to different people in different contexts. The ambiguity of this term can result in real differences when studying gangs in the international context. For this reason, we rely on terminology and definitions developed by the Eurogang working group, an international program comprised of academics and practitioners from around the world.

We define a street gang, which the Eurogang work group calls a troublesome youth group (TYG), as “any durable street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity.” “Durable” means that a group has continued to exist for several months or more despite turnover of participants. “Street-oriented” means that group members spend a lot of group time together outside home, work, and school—often on streets, in shopping areas, in parks, in cars, and so on. “Youth group” refers to a membership whose average age is in the teens or early twenties. “Illegal activity” means generally delinquent or criminal behavior, not merely bothersome activity. Finally, “identity” refers to the group, not to individual self-image (Klein 2005, 136; Van Gemert 2005, 148).

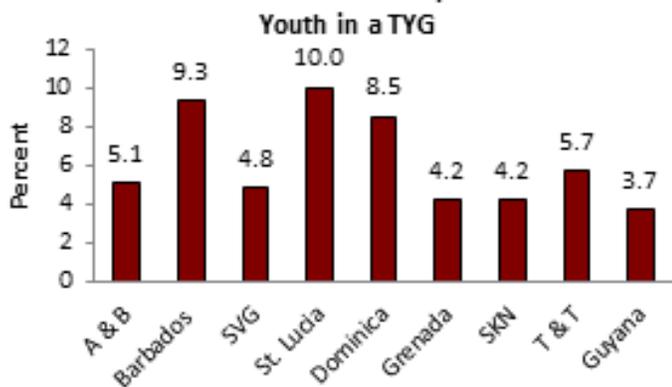
Prevalence of TYGs

The region's TYG problem is not homogenous, but varies considerably across the study sites. The data suggest that the presence of TYGs in Guyana and Grenada is limited. School youth and stakeholders in both countries reported relatively low levels of TYG involvement. For example, only 3.7% of school youth in Guyana and 4.2% of school youth in Grenada self-reported involvement in a TYG (ex. 1). Likewise, in Grenada few residents (7.1-8.1%) reported TYGs in their neighborhood (ex. 2).

Relative to other Caribbean nations, school youth and police in Trinidad and Tobago and St. Vincent and the Grenadines reported a moderate presence of TYGs. About 5-6% of school youth in these nations reported TYG membership (ex. 1), and 8-10 per 1,000 residents aged 12-24 years were reported by the police to be involved in a TYG (exhibit not shown).

In Antigua and Barbuda and Barbados, a smaller proportion of residents reported TYGs in their neighborhoods (about 8-9%; ex. 2), and the police reported a modest rate of TYG membership among youth (5.8-7 per 1,000 residents aged 12-24; exhibit not shown). School youth in Antigua and Barbuda reported middling rates of TYG membership (5.1%), while school youth in Barbados reported relatively high rates of TYG membership (9.3%) (ex. 1.)

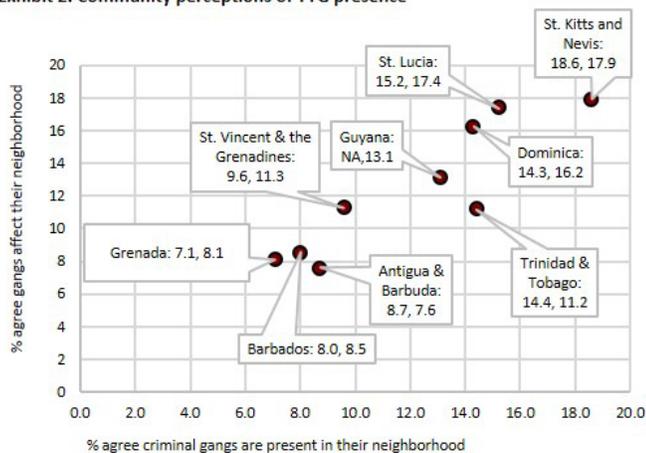
Exhibit 1. Percent of Self-Reported School



Source: Caribbean School Youth Survey

The presence of TYGs in St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and Dominica appeared relatively high when compared with the other study nations. In all three nations, a sizeable proportion of residents claimed that TYGs were present in their neighborhoods (about 14-18%; ex. 2). Additionally, in St. Lucia and Dominica, a relatively high proportion of youth claimed membership in a TYG (10% and 8.5%, respectively; ex. 1), and in St. Kitts, the police reported a very high rate of TYG members (32.24 per 1000 residents aged 12-24; exhibit not shown).

Exhibit 2. Community perceptions of TYG presence



Source: LAPOP and Americas Barometer

With the exception of Antigua and Barbuda, in all of the nations studied, TYG presence was concentrated within a small number of communities. As seen in exhibit 3, for example, in St. Kitts and Nevis about 60 percent of TYGs were concentrated in three station districts, in Dominica 60 percent of TYGs were concentrated in two station districts, and in St. Lucia 46 percent of TYGs were located in one station district. Those findings paralleled findings for Europe, the United States, and Central America, where TYGs and TYG members are concentrated in a relatively small number of “hot spots.” (See exhibit 3.)

Stakeholders in each nation reported little formal capacity to diagnose (or respond to) their nation’s TYG problem. They noted almost no formal institutional capacity to provide policymakers with strategic analysis on the size, magnitude, or location of TYGs in their nation or

to provide tactical analysis on information that would allow for rapid response to TYG-related problems. Related, stakeholders in each nation noted that few police officers had received or continued to receive formal training on matters related to TYGs (exhibit not shown).

Exhibit 3. Concentrations of TYGs by Nation

Nation	Station District	# Station Districts	# TYGs	TYGs %
Barbados		13	40	
	Hastings		13	33.0
	Holetown		5	13.0
	District F		5	13.0
	District C		3	8.0
	Central		2	5.0
	Blackrock		1	2.5
St. Vincent and The Grenadines		21	23	
	Questelles		7	30.0
St. Lucia		14	13	
	Castries District		6	46.0
Dominica		16	10	
	Soufriere		3	30.0
	Roseau		3	30.0
Grenada		12	22	
	Greenville Police Station		7	32.0
	South St. George		3	14.0
	Central Police Station		3	14.0
	Gouyave Police Station		1	4.5
St. Kitts and Nevis		12	22	
	Sandy Point		6	27.0
	Cayon Police Station		4	18.0
	Basseterre and St. Johns		3	14.0
Trinidad and Tobago		70	97	
	Besson Street		18	19.0
	West End		11	11.0
	Four Roads		7	7.0
	Arima		6	6.0
	Belmont		6	6.0
	Carange		5	5.0
Guyana		74	8	
	Agricola		3	38.0
	Vreed-en-hoop		2	25.0
	Ruimveldt		2	25.0
	Mocha		1	12.5
	Providence		1	12.5

Source: Police Expert Survey

1. Recommendation: TYGs are present in each of the study nations. Each nation should develop and implement a strategic plan to address TYGs, and each should establish and maintain a TYG prevention steering committee comprised of police and community leaders.
2. Recommendation: All study nations currently have little capacity to provide strategic or tactical analysis on TYGs and TYG-related problems. Each nation should increase the availability of TYG intelligence. Nations might consider collaborating with the CARICOM Secretariat to develop consensus on policies pertaining to TYGs, TYG members, and TYG-related homicides. National policies do not need to be identical, but should be consistent enough to support sharing valid and reliable TYG intelligence and data.
3. Recommendation: Across nations with substantial TYG problems, there exists little capacity to share TYG intelligence. The RSS, in partnership with the CARICOM Secretariat, should work with police services in St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago to establish a regionally centralized web-based TYG intelligence system.
4. Recommendation: There are few formally trained TYG experts in the study nations. Each nation should develop a cadre of national police experts on TYGs. At a minimum, each nation should train police working in “hot spots” in understanding and responding to their individual TYG problems.

Joining TYGs

We examined four risk factors associated with TYG joining: self-control, commitment to friends, parental supervision, and commitment to school.

Risk factor and delinquency defined

Self-control refers to behavior that seeks immediate gratification without thinking about long-term consequences.

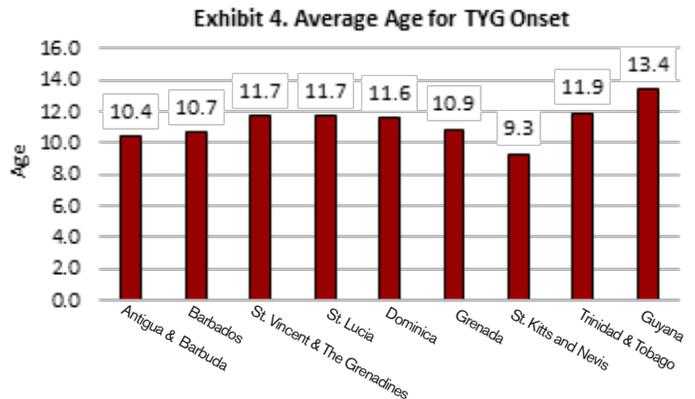
Negative peer commitment indicates the willingness to support peers even when this behavior could be detrimental to one's own well-being.

Parental supervision refers to the parents' level of knowledge and supervision of their youths' daily activities.

Commitment to school refers to youths' general perceptions of school and commitment to do well there.

Delinquent refers to those under 18 years old who have engaged in a property or violent offense in the past 12 months.

Among the risk factors, apart from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, low self-control was the most consistently associated with joining a TYG. Low commitment to school was identified as a risk factor for TYG joining among school youth in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago. Negative peer commitment was widely associated with TYG joining in nations other than Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, and St. Kitts and Nevis. Parental supervision was also unrelated to TYG joining for all study sites except Guyana. (Exhibit not shown.)



The average age of TYG joining varied by nation. On average, TYG members in St. Kitts and Nevis joined their TYGs earliest at about age 9, followed by age 10 in Antigua and Barbuda, age 11 in Barbados and Grenada, age 12 in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Dominica, and Trinidad and Tobago, and age 13 in Guyana (ex. 4). These findings suggest that prevention efforts should be targeted to Caribbean youth who are 8 to 13 years old, depending on the nation.

Reasons reported for TYG joining in the nine Caribbean countries were similar to reasons reported in the United States and Europe. The reasons most often given were to make friends, because a family member was in a TYG, and to meet members of the opposite sex. A substantial proportion of youth in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, and Guyana joined a TYG because they felt threatened by others in their neighborhoods or school (i.e., for protection). Contrary to many stakeholder claims, most youth did not join a TYG for instrumental reasons—that is, not to make money from selling drugs or engaging in other criminal activity.

Most youth were not required to engage in rituals in order to join a TYG. Instead, membership was predicated on familiarity fostered through previous social networks. These findings suggest that prevention and intervention programs should address personal safety and personal and family pro-social development before offering job programs for youth, to reduce TYG joining.

5. Recommendation: TYGs exist in each nation, and TYG joining begins at an early age that varies by country. Each nation should implement school-based TYG prevention programming, at a minimum, in areas with high numbers of TYG members.
6. Recommendation: Risk factors associated with TYG joining vary by nation. Each nation should implement prevention programming to address root causes of TYGs and TYG

membership in “hot spots,” based on its identified risk factors. All of the study nations except St. Vincent and the Grenadines should implement programming that addresses self-control. St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago should implement programming that addresses low commitment to school. Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Dominica, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago should implement programming that addresses negative peer commitment. Guyana should implement programming that addresses parental supervision.

7. Recommendation: None of the study nations possessed the capacity to identify youth at greatest risk for TYG joining or to provide high-risk youth with individualized services. Nations should consider providing programming similar to Proponte Mas, a USAID sponsored intervention program in Honduras. Proponte Mas has developed a systematic method for identifying youth who are at the highest risk for TYG joining and for providing them with specific services targeting their individual and family needs.

Offending and TYGs

Surprisingly, across the nine nations, self-reported delinquency was high regardless of TYG status. In each country, roughly two-thirds to three-fourths of non-TYG respondents self-reported engaging in at least one violent act in the past year. These findings suggest that base-level delinquency rates among Caribbean school youth might be three to ten times higher than those of school youth in Europe and North America (Enzmann et al., 2010; Gatti et al., 2011).

That said, TYG members in the study nations, excepting St. Kitts and Nevis, reported significantly greater involvement in delinquency than non-members. These findings were confirmed in the surveys of police experts and interviews with key stakeholders. For example, compared with non-members, TYG members self-reported chronic involvement (self-reported behavior 10+ times in 12 months) in theft of something worth more than US\$110 about 8 times more often in Antigua and Barbuda, 7 times more often in Guyana, 6 times more often in Grenada, 5 times more often in Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 4 times more often in Trinidad and Tobago, and 3 times more often in Barbados (ex. 5).

Violence. TYG members also reported more frequent involvement in violence. For example, compared with non-TYG members, TYG members self-reported chronic involvement in attacking someone with a weapon about twelve times as often as non-TYG members in Grenada, about seven times as often in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Guyana, about six times as often in Trinidad and Tobago, and about four to five times as often in Dominica, Grenada, Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, and St. Lucia.

Alcohol and Marijuana Use. Across the nine nations, a large proportion of youth reported using alcohol (not shown) and marijuana (ex. 5), with TYG members being more likely than non-members to self-report using them more frequently in the past year.

Drug Sales. Across all of the nations, except St. Kitts and Nevis, TYG members were significantly more likely than non-members to report engaging in chronic drug sales (ex. 5). Police experts (except in Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) reported a relatively high proportion of TYG involvement in drug sales (ex. 6). A substantial number of stakeholders from these nations and St. Vincent’s and the Grenadines reported that TYG members frequently sold drugs to fellow students at school, and that the members’ TYG social networks facilitated access to the marijuana they sold. There was little evidence that many TYGs were involved in transnational drug trafficking.

Guns and Human Trafficking. Police in Antigua and Barbuda, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago reported that more than 75% of TYGs in their nations were sometimes or often involved in firearms trafficking (ex. 6). Likewise, police reported that 44% of TYGs in Guyana, 33% in Antigua and Barbuda, and 19% in Trinidad and Tobago were involved in human trafficking (e.g., labor, sex; ex. 6). Further research is needed to determine the scope and nature of gun and human trafficking in these nations and their economic importance to TYGs.

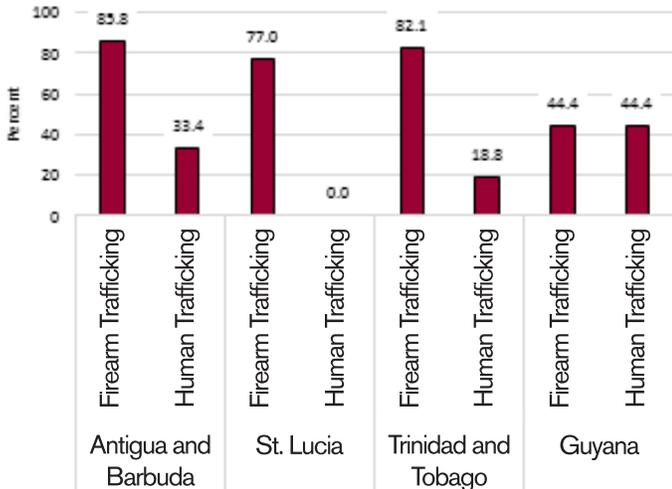
The other nations reported little to no involvement in trafficking humans or guns.

Exhibit 5. Percentage of School Youth Self-Reporting Chronic Involvement in Delinquency by TYG Membership and Nation (Past 12 Months)

	Stolen Something Worth More than US\$110		*	Attacked Someone With a Weapon		*	Drug Sales		*	Marijuana Use		*
	Non-TYG	TYG		Non-TYG	TYG		Non-TYG	TYG		Non-TYG	TYG	
Antigua and Barbuda	1.2	9.7	*	2.1	9.7	*	2.1	25.8	*	13.0	70.0	*
Barbados	1.6	5.1		2.0	9.6	*	2.9	10.7	*	8.6	39.2	*
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	1.4	6.7	*	1.9	13.3	*	2.1	19.0	*	4.9	33.3	*
St. Lucia	1.8	6.9	*	2.6	10.5	*	2.8	19.9	*	9.4	43.0	*
Dominica	1.4	7.4	*	3.7	18.9	*	6.7	25.9	*	10.0	43.4	*
Grenada	0.9	5.4	*	1.1	5.4	*	2.5	8.1	*	5.3	24.3	*
St. Kitts and Nevis	0.0	0.0		1.6	18.8	*	2.7	6.7		13.1	37.5	*
Trinidad & Tobago	1.0	3.7	*	2.3	13.2	*	2.2	14.8	*	5.4	30.5	*
Guyana	1.8	13.4	*	2.2	15.1	*	1.8	14.1	*	3.2	29.7	*

*p<.05, Source: Caribbean School Youth Survey

Exhibit 6. Police Reports of Whether the Group Often or Sometimes Engages in Firearm and Human Trafficking by Nation



Source: Police Expert Survey

8. Recommendation: Across the nine nations, self-reported delinquency was high regardless of TYG status. Each nation should deliver evidence-based prevention programming, examples of which can be found at crimesolutions.gov, a U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) initiative that uses rigorous research standards to identify and provide resources about effective criminal justice programs and practices.
9. Recommendation: Youth in all of the nations self-reported high rates of violence regardless of their TYG status. All of the study nations should deliver evidence-based violence intervention programming to aggressive and violent youth; examples can be found at crimesolutions.gov.
10. Recommendation: With the exception of Trinidad and Tobago, police services in each of the study nations had little capacity to conduct analysis on violence. RSS nations and Guyana should increase this capacity to collect and analyze data and intelligence for the purposes of strategically and tactically responding to violence.
11. Recommendation: Violence is disproportionately associated with TYGs in all of the study nations. We recommend that each nation increase its police capacity to engage in Problem-oriented Policing, which emphasizes a data-driven response to crime. Problem-oriented Policing is one of the few evidence-based practices known to reduce TYG violence.
12. Recommendation: The preponderance of the data suggests that in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago, the number and concentration of TYG homicides are emerging or substantial. With the exception of Trinidad and Tobago, which already employs violence interrupters to help reduce violent conflicts between gangs, each of the above nations should select, train, and dispatch violence interrupters. Violence interrupters, as featured in Cure Violence programs, have been preliminarily shown to reduce TYG-related violence in Trinidad; they are relatively inexpensive to employ and can be easily evaluated.

13. Recommendation: Drug sales in schools were identified as a problem in each nation except Grenada. These nations should implement school-based problem-solving programs that address drug sales in schools located in TYG “hot spots.”

Understanding TYGs through homicide & intelligence data

Our analysis of each nation’s homicide data, which typically serve as the gold standard for accurate and reliable data, suggests that many of the study nations lack the capacity to readily produce information related to homicides. Police services in St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, and St. Lucia, however, have developed moderate (St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia) to strong (Trinidad and Tobago) capacities for collecting and recording data on homicides, including TYG-related homicides. None of the nine nations had a significant capacity to collect, maintain, and disseminate intelligence related to its TYG problems, however.

According to the limited data, from 2010 through 2014 TYGs were responsible for 17.2% of homicides in St. Lucia, 25.5% of homicides in St. Kitts and Nevis, and 32.3% of homicides in Trinidad and Tobago. This compares with about 33% in Jamaica (Katz, 2015), 13% in the United States (National Gang Center, n.d.), and 70% in El Salvador (Katz et al., 2011). However, the figures from St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago should be viewed as conservative estimates because of the lack of TYG intelligence systems.

Due to limitations in police homicide data, we could only examine the relationship between numbers of homicides and TYG members per district in St. Kitts and Nevis, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago. In academic parlance, the Pearson’s r for the correlation between the number of TYG members and the number of homicides in each station district across the three countries was .806 ($n=97$; sig. 000). This figure indicates that the number of TYG members in each nation is strongly associated with its number of homicides and that higher rates of gang membership might be related to higher levels of homicide. Further research is needed to determine the precise nature and magnitude of the relationship.

Organization and TYGs

Police experts in Dominica and Grenada noted that their TYGs averaged 13 members compared with 37 in Guyana and 16 to 26 in each of the other six nations. The majority of school and detained youth similarly reported that their TYGs were comprised of 3 to 20 members. This suggests that the typical TYG is small in terms of membership, which allows for targeted yet manageable response options.

When compared with the data obtained from school and detained youth, stakeholders exhibited very little knowledge about TYG attributes, organizational structures, or levels of cohesiveness. Police, while more informed than stakeholders, often appeared to overstate the organizational sophistication of TYGs in their nations and exhibited only a limited understanding of the TYGs' organizational attributes. For example, other than in Antigua and Barbuda, police generally reported that many TYGs in their nations did not identify with signs, symbols, or distinct ways of speaking, while about 25% to 75% of school and detained youth in these nations reported using special symbols and signs. Likewise, police in Antigua and Barbuda and St. Vincent and the Grenadines reported that more than half of the TYGs in their nations used identifying tattoos, although relatively few TYG members in these nations reported using identifying tattoos. These findings suggest that police in these nations might not recognize those attributes most associated with a TYG.

Based on these data, compared with those in the U.S. and El Salvador, TYGs in the nine study nations appeared to be somewhat less structured and organized with respect to having recognized leaders, rules and codes, and regular meetings. When compared with TYGs in the Netherlands (one of the few European nations where the same data have been collected and analyzed), however, the Caribbean nations' TYGs were somewhat more structured when examining these same measures.

We found consistency between youth and police reports in Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana that some TYGs promoted or supported a particular political issue. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, and Grenada, however, a moderate proportion of youth reported that their TYGs did promote or support a particular political issue, while police in these same nations did not report such a relationship for any TYG.

School and detained youth frequently self-reported that their TYGs sold drugs and guns. More than a third of TYG members in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana reported that their TYGs made money from drug and gun sales.

About 80% of detained TYG members in RSS nations and Trinidad and Tobago reported their TYGs making money from drug sales. These findings are similar to those reported by detained youth in the United States (Decker, Katz, & Webb, 2007). Similar findings were reported by detained Caribbean youth for gun sales, but to a lesser extent.

We used regression analysis to predict chronic involvement in violence based on members' reports of their TYGs' organizational structure, cohesiveness, and involvement in instrumental activity, and the members' social identification with their TYGs. Chronic involvement in violence was associated with cohesion in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, with social identity in Guyana, with organizational structure in Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago, and with drug and gun sales in Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, and Grenada.

The totality of the data presented above suggests that the Caribbean TYGs, like TYGs in other nations, are not typically hierarchically organized with a corporate-like structure. Instead, they are comprised of a loose confederation of individuals united through

shared expressive (e.g., protection, turf, reputation) and near-term instrumental (e.g., money for entertainment, clothing) concerns, and whose leadership is informally recognized based on the situation (Decker & Van Winkle, 1994, 602). With the above said, even modest increases in TYG structure were associated with increased violence in about half of the study nations.

14. Recommendation: Our data suggest that TYG involvement in gun, drug and human trafficking is a problem in Antigua and Barbuda, St. Lucia, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago. These nations should increase police capacity to investigate TYG involvement in these crimes.
15. Recommendation: TYG organizational structure is associated with violence in Barbados, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. These nations should consider implementing "pulling levers" programming to reduce TYG-related violence by leveraging the organizational structure of TYGs. Pulling levers strategies, a recognized best practice, identify a small number of chronic offenders to be confronted and informed that if they and/or their group continue to offend, police and prosecutors will target them.

Transnational Links of TYGs

Key stakeholders explained that the TYG problem proliferated relatively slowly across the Caribbean, largely as a consequence of the importation of American culture and the transmission of TYG subculture through the migratory experiences of Caribbean youth. Many believed that American popular culture and media programming presented by MTV, biographical documentaries, and news and other television shows have played an influential role. Others thought that TYG proliferation has been a consequence of the direct TYG experiences of youth who were either foreign born or who migrated with their families for personal non-TYG-related reasons to America and who then transmitted TYG culture and behavior to their peers upon returning to the Caribbean. In particular, stakeholders in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, St. Kitts, and Trinidad and Tobago held the latter belief.

Survey data from youth and the police provided little support for stakeholder perceptions of immigrant involvement in TYGs except in Antigua and Barbuda and St. Kitts and Nevis, where about 33% and 19%, respectively, of TYG members in school reported being foreign born, and where police reported that 62% and 30% of TYGs had a foreign-born member. About 20% of Dominican school-based TYG members reported being foreign born.

Overall, our findings suggest that the proliferation of gangs in the Caribbean is typically congenital and is most often the consequence of local conditions, including popular culture and media programming. In Antigua and Barbuda and St. Kitts and Nevis (and perhaps Dominica), however, there is some evidence that immigrants are comparatively more involved in TYGs.

For the most part, school youth and police experts were inconsistent in their respective reporting on formal relationships between TYGs in their communities and TYGs or criminal enterprises in other countries. In Antigua and Barbuda, however, school youth and police experts both reported that 50% or more of their TYGs have a relationship

with TYGs or criminal enterprises in other counties, and in St. Lucia and St. Kitts and Nevis, school youth and police experts reported that more than 25% of their TYGs have a relationship with TYGs or criminal enterprises in other countries. These figures are lower, for example, when compared with TYGs in El Salvador, where police experts reported that about 75% of TYGs have a formal relationship with other TYGs, or with criminal enterprises in other counties (Katz et al., 2011), but they are most likely much higher when compared with TYGs in the United States (Decker & Pyrooz, 2015). Further research is needed to understand the scope and nature of these transnational linkages.

16. Recommendation: There are transnational linkages between some TYGs in Antigua and Barbuda, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana, and TYGs in other nations. Law enforcement agencies in these nations should increase their operational coordination to identify and respond to transnational threats to security by TYGs.

Leaving TYGs

Our data from school youth in the nine study nations suggest that most members leave their TYGs for reasons similar to those that lead them to join in the first place—for example, to avoid violence. Some reported simply getting tired of TYG life. Still others reported leaving when they acquired a job or wanted to start a family. Most school youth did not report leaving because of being detained, jailed, or imprisoned (ex. 7). These findings suggest that most youth leave their TYGs on their own, with little need for intervention.

Our sample of detained youth, conversely, reported having left their TYGs due to being detained, jailed, or imprisoned. As has been shown elsewhere, a small number of youth are highly attracted to TYGs and remain committed for a lengthy period of time. Such individuals are more prone to violence and a criminal lifestyle. For them, suppression-oriented strategies may be necessary to reduce violence in the community.

School-based TYG members most frequently reported leaving their TYGs simply by quitting. The second most frequent method of leaving the TYG was to move out of the area. Only a small number of school youth reported being beaten out or having to commit a crime to leave their TYGs (ex. 7). The same trends were generally observed among detained youth, albeit with a much higher proportion reporting needing to commit a crime to leave. These findings contradict stakeholder beliefs that youth face serious consequences or retaliation if they leave their TYGs.

17. Recommendation: Most TYG members in school reported leaving TYGs on their own for personal reasons (e.g., to avoid violence, tiring of it). Each nation should review legislation, policies, and programs for opportunities to remove obstacles for youth who want to leave TYGs. These might include strengthening pro-social support outside of the TYG (e.g., pro-social friends and family) and providing assistance with removing external identifiers of prior TYG membership (e.g., tattoo removal, clothing).

18. Recommendation: Most TYG members in detention reported leaving their TYG because of being detained, jailed, or imprisoned. All of the nine study nations should provide pre- and post-release programming to help detained youth overcome problems associated with TYGs, violence, crime, and drug use. Reintegration programming should be provided for at least 12 months post-release to support successful transition to the community.

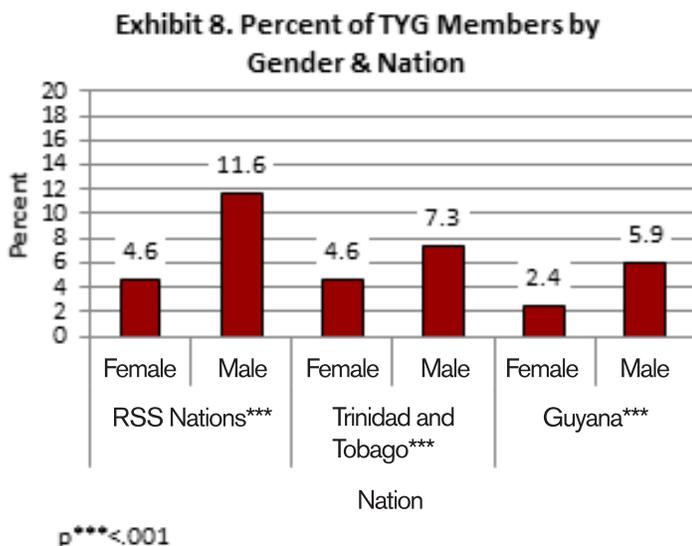
Exhibit 7. School Youths' Self-Reported Reasons for Leaving TYGs

	Former TYG	To Avoid Violence	Got Tired of It	Got a Job	Started a Family	Went to Jail or Prison	Other
Country (n)	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Antigua and Barbuda (35)	5.1	18.2	15.2	6.1	6.1	3.0	18.2
Barbados (214)	11.2	29.9	17.8	5.1	4.7	4.7	15.9
St. Vincent and the Grenadines (132)	13.6	32.6	18.2	3.8	3.8	2.3	15.2
St. Lucia (292)	16.5	29.5	18.5	9.2	5.1	4.5	10.6
Dominica (124)	19.1	34.7	20.2	8.1	4.0	7.3	8.1
Grenada (91)	10.4	29.7	20.9	8.8	0.0	3.3	13.2
St. Kitts and Nevis (18)	4.8	27.8	11.1	16.7	5.6	0.0	16.7
Trinidad and Tobago (329)	7.2	20.1	17.9	9.7	5.8	9.7	17.3
Guyana (851)	22.2	38.5	20.4	17.9	8.7	3.6	13.1

Source: Caribbean School Youth Survey

Gender and TYGs

Gender differences in TYG prevalence were most pronounced in the RSS nations, where surveyed male students were almost three times more likely than their female peers to be in a TYG (11.6% vs. 4.6%). In Trinidad and Tobago and in Guyana, surveyed male students were about twice as likely as females to be in a TYG (7.3% vs. 4.6% and 5.9% vs. 2.4%, respectively). (See exhibit 8.) Still, our findings suggest that the surveyed female students comprised a relatively large proportion of all TYG members. For example, roughly 35-46% of TYG members in the school-based sample were female.



The most common reason among females for joining a TYG was to facilitate social interactions (i.e., being interested in making friends, looking for company, feeling like they belonged somewhere), while male TYG members in RSS nations were more likely to join for protection or to meet members of the opposite sex. Stakeholders often reported that males joined TYGs to sell and/or use drugs, but that reason was not reported by most TYG males.

Stakeholders offered hyper-sexualized accounts of the methods by which they believed female youths joined TYGs, commonly reporting that females were most likely to be “sexed in” or to join because a boyfriend was a TYG member. Further, responses from stakeholders often associated sex with any role the female played in the TYG, their reasons for joining the TYG, and how they joined the TYG. The data collected from school and detained youth, however, suggested that neither male nor female TYG members typically participated in any ritual to join their TYGs, including being “sexed in.”

Female TYG members in RSS nations reported significantly lower levels of self-control than males, although female members in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana reported significantly higher levels of self-control than male TYG members. Across all study sites, when compared with males, female TYG members reported significantly less commitment to friends, higher levels of parental supervision, and greater commitment to school. (See exhibit 9.)

Exhibit 9. Risk Factors Associated with TYG Joining by Gender

	Self-Control	Commitment to Friends	Parental Supervision	Commitment to School
	Mean Score	Mean Score	Mean Score	Mean Score
RSS Nations				
Female				
Non-TYG	1.34	0.85	1.88	2.18
TYG	1.68	1.33	1.73	1.96
Male				
Non-TYG	1.44	1.13	1.73	2.03
TYG	1.72	1.63	1.54	1.80
Trinidad and Tobago				
Female				
Non-TYG	2.66	0.91	2.08	3.14
TYG	2.26	1.70	1.79	2.86
Male				
Non-TYG	2.52	1.23	1.87	3.01
TYG	2.18	1.81	1.64	2.73
Guyana				
Female				
Non-TYG	2.60	0.75	2.09	3.33
TYG	2.38	1.27	1.79	3.11
Male				
Non-TYG	2.53	0.92	1.98	3.22
TYG	2.32	1.76	1.74	2.95

Source: Caribbean School Youth Survey

Female TYG members in the RSS nations were significantly more likely than female non-members to self-report offending, but significantly less likely than male members to self-report property crime (80.6% vs. 92.1%), violent crime (92.1% vs. 97.3%), substance use (94.2% vs. 98.5%), and drug sales (16.8% vs. 41.7%). Similarly, female TYG members in Trinidad and Tobago were significantly less likely than male members to report violent crime (87.8% vs. 96.5%) and drug sales (16.3% vs. 48.2%). In Guyana, female TYG members were significantly less likely than male members to report substance use (74.5% vs. 89.5%). (See exhibit 10.)

Exhibit 10. Gender Differences in Self-Reported and Offending among TYG Members in School

	Any Property	Any Violent	Any Substance Use	Any Drug Sales
	%	%	%	%
RSS Nations				
Female				
Non-TYG	53.9	70.7	75.2	3.7
TYG	80.6	92.1	94.2	16.8
Male				
Non-TYG	73.4	81.3	81.6	14.4
TYG	92.1	97.3	98.5	41.7
Trinidad and Tobago				
Female				
Non-TYG	37.2	57.0	64.1	2.8
TYG	74.8	87.8	92.7	16.3
Male				
Non-TYG	55.1	74.3	69.1	11.5
TYG	82.5	96.5	93.0	48.2
Guyana				
Female				
Non-TYG	46.0	61.8	54.3	3.7
TYG	74.5	86.3	74.5	31.4
Male				
Non-TYG	60.5	73.9	65.7	11.2
TYG	86.8	93.4	89.5	43.4

Source: Caribbean School Youth Survey

Females in RSS nations were more likely to leave their TYGs for “other” reasons. Although not specifically referring to TYG members, several stakeholders stated that teenage pregnancy had become a problem within their communities. It may be the case within our sample that the “other” reason for which young women often left their groups was related to unexpected pregnancy, but further research would be required to confirm this finding. (Exhibit not shown.)

19. Recommendation: Young female TYG members are present in each nation, and these females have unique experiences in TYGs when compared with males. Each nation should implement gender-specific programming aimed at young female TYG members, providing mentoring, tutoring, and opportunities for engagement in pro-social activities.

Conclusion

There is clear evidence of TYG problems in RSS member states, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago, but the size, scope, magnitude, and causes of the problems vary greatly between nations. With the exception of Trinidad and Tobago, the nations currently have very limited institutional capacity to prevent, intervene in, or suppress problems associated with their TYGs, individually and collectively. Policymakers in RSS nations, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago should begin to plan and implement data-driven empirically proven responses to TYGs.

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