

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

What We Know About Security Threat Groups (STGs)

An overarching understanding of STG affiliated offenders informs CSC's National STG Strategy in order to identify and manage these offenders, as well as prevent STG affiliation and encourage disengagement/disaffiliation.

Introduction

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) defines Security Threat Groups (STGs) as "any formal or informal on-going inmate/offender group, gang, organization or association consisting of three or more members" (Commissioner's Directive 568-3, 2016).¹ Offenders affiliated with STGs can pose population management and operational security concerns for CSC. Understanding various aspects of the history and characteristics of these offenders assists CSC in its identification, prevention, management, and disengagement strategies. This special report synthesizes high level information based on 16 research publications (two full reports and 14 one-pagers). Infographics are also included.

What you will find

To ensure a current understanding of the STG affiliated sub-population, recently completed research focused on:

Pathways/Trajectories to STG affiliation. Explored the literature which identified the following areas: social networks (family, friends, intimate partners); marginalization factors (poverty/low socioeconomic status, lack of cultural identity, lack of employment opportunities, racism/discrimination, etc.); and childhood adversity factors (family fragmentation, history of abuse/trauma, etc.). The existence of these precursors were explored for STG affiliated offenders in federal custody.

Prevalence. STG affiliation was identified in 11% of the general men offender's population and 4% of the women's population, with higher rates observed among Indigenous individuals.

Comparison studies. Examined demographics, sentence/offence information, criminogenic risk and need information, indicators of institutional behaviour and participation in pro-social initiatives during incarceration, as well as post-release outcomes. Comparisons were undertaken separately for men and women offenders as well as for offenders in-custody and in the community.

Comparison publications included:

- comparisons across STG subgroups (e.g., street gangs with separate analyses for Indigenous gangs, other street gangs, prison gangs, and Asian gangs; outlaw motorcycle gangs/traditional organized crime; and all other STGs),
- comparisons between STG affiliated and non-STG affiliated offenders,
- regional comparisons of STGs,
- examination of STGs by involvement status (active/inactive),
- sub-population results (e.g., separate findings presented for men and women offenders as well as for Indigenous and Black offenders).

Disengagement/disaffiliation. A variety of push (internal to the STG; e.g. STG disbanding, violence within the STG, fear of incarceration, etc.) and pull (external to the STG; e.g., pro-social family and friends, parenthood, employment responsibilities, etc.) factors can motivate an individual to disengage or disaffiliate from an STG. An examination of the characteristics of offenders whose STG affiliation was terminated and the reasons for the termination was undertaken.

List of research publications. Lists of the CSC research publications synthesized in this special report, as well as all previously published CSC research regarding STGs, gangs, organized crime, and radicalized offenders are included.

For more information

Farrell MacDonald, S., Cram, S., Smeth, A., & Derksen, D. (2026). *What we know about Security Threat Groups (STGs)* (Special Report SR-26-01). Ottawa, Ontario: CSC.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, or for other inquiries, please e-mail the Research Branch at research@csc-scc.gc.ca.

You can also visit the [Research Publications](#) section for a full list of reports and one-page summaries.

¹ CSC is currently reviewing and updating the policy and this definition.