



## 2011 Workplace and Equal Opportunity Survey of Reserve Component Members: Qualitative Analysis on Extremist Groups, Hate Crimes, and Gangs

### Overview of Study

To capture the full range of attitudes and opinions of Reserve component members, open-ended questions were included in the *2011 Workplace and Equal Opportunity Survey of Reserve Component Members (2011 WEOR)*, which was conducted from December 29, 2011 to April 16, 2012.<sup>1</sup>

Completed surveys were received from 16,453 eligible respondents (15,641 Department of Defense [DoD] and 812 U. S. Coast Guard Reserve [USCGR]).<sup>2</sup> The overall weighted response rate for eligible respondents, corrected for nonproportional sampling was 25% (25% for DoD and 23% for USCGR).<sup>3</sup>

The *2011 WEOR* included two questions asking members about the extent to which racist/extremist organizations, hate crimes, and gangs are a problem at their installation/ship or in the local community around where they live. The presence of these groups and activities may impact the members' sense of safety for themselves and/or their family, subsequently effecting military readiness and well-being. As this information is critical for the Department and the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity (ODMEO), DMDC conducts qualitative analyses on these open-ended questions.

The response options for the base questions on whether racist/extremist organizations, hate crimes, and gangs were a problem at the member's installation/ship or in the local community around where they live ranged on a five point scale from "Not at all" to "Very large extent." While the majority of members did not report problems, about one percent of members indicated problems, to a *large* or *very large extent*, with racist/extremist organizations (1%), hate crimes (1%), and gangs (2%) at their installation/ship. A slightly greater percentage of members indicated problems occurred in the local community around where they live. Specifically, Reserve component members indicated there were problems in their local community to a *large* or *very large extent* with racist/extremist organizations (2%), hate crimes (2%), and gangs (7%).

<sup>1</sup> Data for USCGR were collected between May and June 2012.

<sup>2</sup> The target population for the *2011 WEOR* consisted of members from the Selected Reserve in Reserve Unit, Active Guard/Reserve (AGR/FTS/AR; Title 10 and Title 32), or Individual Mobilization Augmentee programs from the Army National Guard, U.S. Army Reserve, U.S. Navy Reserve, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard, and U.S. Air Force Reserve who (1) have at least six months of service and (2) are below flag rank. To be considered an eligible respondent, members of the sample had to answer a minimum of 50% of the survey items, including at least one valid response on the critical questions Q61 and Q64, and indicate that they were in a Reserve component when the survey was first fielded.

<sup>3</sup> Additional information can be found in the *2011 Workplace and Equal Opportunity Survey of Reserve Component Members: Statistical methodology report* (Report No. 2012-054). Alexandria, VA: DMDC.

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Respondents who indicated there were problems to a *large* or *very large extent*, either at their installation or in their community, were asked to describe the nature of these problems.<sup>4</sup> Reserve component members provided 1,105 comments in response to these open-ended questions.

Comments were analyzed qualitatively to identify the major themes and ideas conveyed across the responses. No attempt was made to quantify the number of comments made in reference to a specific theme, and responses cannot be generalized to the full population of Reserve component members who experience problems with gangs, hate crimes, and/or extremist groups. Findings may be viewed as a general perspective on Reserve component members' experiences of problems within their installation and community. The order of presentation does not imply that any one theme is more important than any other. For each theme, supporting comments from members are included. The supporting comments do not include every comment made on a particular theme; rather they exemplify the themes in the words of the members. Although the results cannot be generalized to the entire population of Reserve component members, they do provide insight into specific issues and ideas for future research.

### Summary of Major Themes

Overall, the 2011 WEOR comments included a number of recurrent themes regarding extremist groups, hate crimes, and gang-related problems at their installation/ship or in the local community around where they live. The insights from the comment analysis are grouped into four major themes, which repeated throughout the comments.

- ❖ *Problems With Gang Activity*
- ❖ *Problems With Hate Crimes and Extremist Groups*
- ❖ *Military Member Recruitment*
- ❖ *Violence and Drug Trafficking*

### Themes in Comments

#### *Problems With Gang Activity*

##### *Gang Activity on Installations*

About 2% of Reserve component members indicated that gang activity was a problem at their installation. These members felt that much of the indicated gang activity is related to their unit's location. As the community around the installation may have problems with gang activity, members report this may in turn lead to issues within the installation. Often there is concern about whether this may eventually impact the actual unit.

- *“Our office is surrounded by a tobacco shop that sells drug paraphilia, where a murder occurred a few months ago, Section 8 housing to our rear that is full of drug addicts and*

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<sup>4</sup> Findings are reported for members who indicated *large* and *very large extent*, which are collapsed here into a single category of “problem.”

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*gang members, and a gambling facility to our other side. We are surrounded by trouble, and have to be on constant watch for violence and illicit activity.” —ARNG, male, senior enlisted, Two or More Races*

- *“My base is located in the Ghetto...Gang violence is well known and crime is always high. To my knowledge there is no known gang relations with any members of my unit but you never know.” —USMCR, male, senior enlisted, White*
- *“In the local area of the Reserve Center there is a high problem of drugs and gangs.” —USAR, female, senior enlisted, Black*
- *“The Guard Base is located in downtown [LOCATION]. You can't drive off the installation without seeing gang bangers.” —ANG, male, senior enlisted, Asian*
- *“My drilling unit is in [LOCATION]. The gang problem is evident just driving around in [LOCATION] when you see graffiti and on the news every night.” —USMCR, male, senior enlisted, White*

### ***Gang Activity in the Community Around Where Members Live***

One of the most common themes throughout the comments was an awareness of gangs and gang-related activities in the community around where members live. About one-tenth (7%) of members indicated gangs were a problem in the local community around where they live. Though gang activity around where members live is not under the purview of the Department, it is important to note that Reservists may be impacted by this while at work if gang-related activity is impacting their home life.

- *“I live in a large metropolitan community and there are gang problems throughout the city ranging from juvenile school gangs to organized gangs.” —USAFR, male, senior enlisted, Hispanic*
- *“In my area are multiple gangs, white supremacists, and multiple motorcycle gangs. These gangs are creating a problem in the community.” —ANG, male, senior enlisted, Hispanic*
- *“There are gang-related activities occurring throughout my community.” —ARNG, male, junior officer, White*
- *“The community in which I live is a vastly growing area where we are getting run-off from a large city in which gangs operate relatively freely. I am a Law Enforcement officer and we are seeing a growth in violent crime and gang activity.” —USMCR, male, junior enlisted, White*
- *“There are local gangs where I live that are causing problems in the community.” —USMCR, male, junior enlisted, Hispanic*
- *“There are over 25 major gangs located within the local community.” —ANG, male, senior enlisted, Asian*

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- *“There are gangs in most of [LOCATION] neighborhoods. They are an inevitable and constant problem for the civilians in our neighborhoods.” —USMCR, male, junior enlisted, Two or More Races*
- *“I live in [LOCATION] there many gangs reside as well. Local schools, neighbor's cars, bridges, etc. have been defaced with gang graphics.” —ANG, female, senior enlisted, Black*
- *“There are many gangs in my area. Different sets and groups constantly walking around in large groups all hours of the day and night.” —ARNG, male, junior enlisted, Black*

### **Gang Activity in Border Locations**

Some members identified their community was prone to gangs and drug-related crime due to their proximity to the border between the United States and Mexico.

- *“There are gangs in [LOCATION] and drug cartels in the area since Mexico is so close. There are problems like pretty much any other community.” —ANG, male, senior enlisted, NR*
- *“There is a large bias against people from Hispanic backgrounds. This is largely in part to the border shared with Mexico and a much larger illegal alien issue in the state. Also, there are many different gangs, not just Latino gangs, but others as well.” —ANG, male, senior enlisted, White*
- *“I live in a border town with Mexico and drugs cause a high gang conflict.” —USAR, female, senior enlisted, Hispanic*
- *“We are in a large populated area with numerous street gangs supporting and participating in the illegal transportation of drugs from Mexico to the United States.” —ANG, male, senior enlisted, White*
- *“I live in [LOCATION], the drugs and violence from the Mexican border keeps influencing the youth in our neighborhoods and schools. There is always drive-by shootings, human trafficking, drug smuggling etc.” —USNR, female, senior enlisted, Hispanic*

### **Gang Activity Targeting Military Members**

Some members indicated gang activity, often in the community around where they live, made them feel uneasy about going out in uniform, or letting locals know they were military members. Respondents noted that military members are sometimes victims of crimes such as vandalism, robbery, property defacement, and assault because of their military affiliation.

- *“The problems are with the local community and that there are over 90 documented gangs and 10,500+ gang members. Therefore there are issues with personnel being targeted at times because of the location of our base and our interaction with the local population.” —USAFR, male, senior enlisted, White*

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- *“Military Members are targeted with vandalism, Military Members personal property is being damaged.” —USMCR, male, senior enlisted, White*
- *“I live near [LOCATION] and we have one of the largest gang activities on the East Coast. At times I am not comfortable wearing my uniform to work.” —USCGR, male, senior officer, White*
- *“There are street gangs like the [GANG] for example that hate soldiers. I feel that they are out to kill me because I am in the Army. I have to constantly be on the lookout to make sure no one sees me in my uniform.” —USAR, male, junior enlisted, Hispanic*
- *“There are areas of gang activities and have been areas targeted by hate crimes. My unit has pointed these areas out and deemed them off limits and prohibited by military personnel.” —USAFR, male, junior enlisted, Black*

### **Gang Activity Targeting Youth**

Some members indicated gangs affected large youth populations, specifically minorities in poorer communities or within schools. Fear for their children’s/family’s safety or potential involvement with gang-related activities may impact a Reservists performance and well-being.

- *“In the local community of my HOR[Home of Record], gangs are an increasing problem for our youth who may be influenced into joining especially in the Hispanic community or may be an innocent bystander when fights erupt. Also the general safety of the streets is an issue with drive-by-shootings, retribution shootings, as well as shooting between Gangs in certain sections of the township. Also there are race-related incidents throughout the County since we have a large population of illegal immigrants who come in from many countries seeking jobs.” —USAR, female, senior officer, Hispanic*
- *“Gangs are everywhere. All the schools.” —ARNG, male, senior enlisted, Black*
- *“There are a lot of kids in our neighborhood that are a part of a gang. They have been robbing homes and cars in our area and doing and selling drugs near our home.” —USMCR, male, junior enlisted, Hispanic*
- *“Gang issues at schools and in the community.” —USAFR, male, senior enlisted, White*
- *“There are young teenagers that are in the gangs. Some of these teens do crimes such as theft or trespassing.” —ANG, male, senior enlisted, Asian*
- *“[LOCATION] is a constant stay for gangs and low income children that often turn to gangs in the absence of adult care/parenting.” —ARNG, male, junior officer, Hispanic*
- *“Gang participation in local high schools rising, causing rift between races.” —ARNG, male, senior enlisted, White*

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### *Gang Activity Targeting Specific Racial/Ethnic Groups*

Members indicated gang-based problems, either on the installation or around the community where the members live, were often motivated by race. While these comments focused on gang activity, there is a clear relationship between gangs and hate crimes/extremist groups.

- *“In high school they would have been called cliques. There are groups of people who constantly interact with each other and always trying to stir up trouble. These groups can easily be identified just by looking to see who is sitting with whom during chow. I have been forced to eat my meals by myself because of my race and sexual orientation.” — USMCR, male, junior enlisted, Asian*
- *“In [LOCATION] there are numerous gangs and such. Many are motivated and organized by race.” —USAFR, male, senior officer, White*
- *“One can easily tell that the neighborhoods are segregated by race. In fact in an adjacent town, only white people are allowed there after dark. It is informally known as a 'sundown town' and people know not to drive there.” —USMCR, male, junior enlisted, Asian*
- *“[LOCATION] is a predominantly race-biased state which presumes Hispanic individuals are illegally entering the country. This prejudice assumes most Hispanics fall into the above category and has extended into the state's and county's law enforcement authorities (which are currently under investigation).” —USMCR, male, junior enlisted, Hispanic*
- *“I live in an area in [LOCATION] where gang influence is very heavy. The gangs are racist towards people not of their color.” —USMCR, male, junior enlisted, Hispanic*
- *“We have gang activity in the area and with that you also get some racially driven problems as well.” —ANG, male, senior enlisted, Two or More Races*
- *“The area is heavily populated by differing ethnicities identifying with gangs.” —ANG, female, senior enlisted, White*
- *“White supremacist, Mexican and black gangs.” —USNR, female, junior officer, Asian*
- *“In the 20 miles surrounding [LOCATION] gangs are serious problem, Asian, Latino, and mixes of Black, White, Asian and Latino. There are a number of local groups that don't like anyone that is not Caucasian.” —ARNG, male, senior enlisted, Black*

### *Problems With Hate Crimes and Extremist Groups*

In addition to gang activities, members also reported problems with extremist groups and hate crimes, though, as indicated in the previous section, often the comments link these activities back to gangs and were more often reported in the local community. Overall, less than one-tenth of members indicated extremist groups (2%) and hate crimes (2%) exist in the local communities around where they live. Less than one-tenth of members indicated extremist groups (1%) and hate crimes (1%) were a problem at their installation/ship.



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- “Community has lots of gang members in the local area and [LOCATION] has the largest group of White supremacists, making it a problem in the community.” —USAFR, male, senior enlisted, White
- “There are many gangs and racial extremist groups in the greater [LOCATION] area.” —ARNG, female, junior enlisted, Two or More Races
- “[LOCATION] metro has a large gang population to include both Hispanic/black gangs, and white supremacy groups as well.” —ANG, female, senior enlisted, White
- “I live in a big city so gangs, hate crimes and racists/extremist are somewhat a problem.” —USCGR, male, Warrant Officer, Hispanic
- “They have a couple of local gangs in the area and a couple of racist hate groups in the local area.” —USAFR, male, senior enlisted, Black
- “Extremist organizations are common in [LOCATION] and conduct several attacks annually within the city limits.” —USNR, male, senior officer, Black
- “Several hate groups thrive in my local community. There are several gangs and gang related activity in my local community. Activities include shootings, robberies, domestic violence, etc.” —ANG, male, senior enlisted, Black
- “There are local rallies by [HATE GROUP] and [GANG] organizations within the local community along with gang violence in the ethnic community as well.” —USMCR, female, senior enlisted, Two or More Races

Some comments highlighted hate crimes based on sexual orientation as well as race/ethnicity.

- “We have people trying to start race/hate problem and gangs.” —USAR, female, senior enlisted, Black
- “Typical hate crimes: slurs against gays, comments about non-Christian people, etc. This is an extremely right wing/conservative region.” —USAFR, female, junior officer, Hispanic
- “A lot of hate crimes, especially in the Lesbian, Gay, Transsexual community.” —ANG, male, junior enlisted, Hispanic
- “I live in [LOCATION] well in this town we have a lot hates crimes not only for the diversity of races located here but also for differences between gangs.” —USAFR, male, junior enlisted, Hispanic
- “There are gang violence and several gang-affiliated drug dealers in my community. There have also been several instances of hates crimes, mostly against homosexuals.” —ARNG, male, junior enlisted, Hispanic

### ***Military Member Recruitment Issues***

Respondents noted two primary recruitment issues: 1) the military often recruits from the local community, which includes members of gangs, and 2) members are often targeted for recruitment by local gangs. These two issues are discussed below.

#### ***Recruitment of Gang Members into the Military***

Respondents indicated that military tends to recruit from the communities around the installation. Where there are gang problems in these communities, potential exists for gang members to be inadvertently recruited. Alternatively, gang members may initiate military recruitment in order to learn military skills and train gang members outside the installation.

- *“There are known members of various Mexican gangs in some units. It was reported but as of today, they are still in the military.” —ARNG, male, senior enlisted, White*
- *“There is a lot of gang violence and drug pushing in the local community around [LOCATION]. Additionally, much of the gang problems from [LOCATION] filter down into [LOCATION] and by extension onto the installation. Many of the Active Duty and Reserve Marines are recruited from these communities and as a result, a lot of drug problems and some gang violence follows them into the Corps.” —USMCR, male, junior officer, White*
- *“There have been some recruiting problems as some undesirable candidates sometimes make it thru the initial recruitment process. The personnel are a reflection of our community, and if the community as a whole has issues, those issues will trickle down to and including the recruitment process. And once their true colors shine thru it is a lengthy process to discharge them.” —ANG, male, senior enlisted, Asian*
- *“We have gangs and some of these gang members join the Guard.” —ANG, female, senior enlisted, White*

#### ***Recruitment of Military Members into Gangs***

Respondents also indicated that members are often *targeted* for recruitment by local gangs as military members are considered valuable recruits due to their specialized knowledge and skill sets.

- *“Street gangs are becoming a bigger problem. A lot of street gangs prey on military members because of the training that military members receive. A lot of street gangs look to recruit military members because of the things that we learn.” —USAFR, male, senior enlisted, Black*
- *“Local gangs are in the area, and they do try to recruit military members, especially youth, but we are warned about the activity.” —USAFR, female, senior enlisted, Black*
- *“Unfortunately there are many people that work for the federal government that are members of gangs.” —USMCR, male, senior enlisted, White*



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- *“Out-of-state gangs that attempt recruitment and crimes.”* —**USMCR, male, senior enlisted, White**
- *“Gangs have moved into the area. Army folks assigned locally are getting involved with them.”* —**USAFR, male, junior officer, White**

### ***Gang-Related Violence and Drug Trafficking***

Finally, some Service members noted that drug and gang-related violence, often between gangs, is a major safety concern which impacts feelings of safety for themselves and/or their family.

- *“There are several active Hispanic gangs ([GANG]) in the city I reside in. They are responsible for vandalism, graffiti, intimidation, thefts, and sometimes assaults or strong arm robbery. Occasionally they severely injure or mortally wound each other.”* —**USMCR, male, senior enlisted, Two or More Races**
- *“Gangs and violence are prevalent in [LOCATION]. Each week there are shootings and stabbings reported in the local papers with ties to drugs and gangs in the city and in some of the surrounding counties.”* —**ANG, female, senior enlisted, Two or More Races**
- *“[LOCATION] has a problem with crimes involving gangs and their members committing heinous crimes in the community. They participate in illegal activities that endanger people and damage property.”* —**ANG, male, senior enlisted, White**
- *“Gang and drug violence is rampant in the city where I reside. All I can do about it is to move even further outside of the city limits.”* —**USAR, female, senior enlisted, Two or More Races**
- *“There has been a growing amount of violence in the local community including different shootings, murders, robberies, and other volatile acts.”* —**ARNG, female, junior enlisted, Asian**
- *“Just by checking the news you will find daily shootings, crimes, domestic violence and an extremely alarming increase in violence against pets and animals.”* —**ANG, female, senior officer, Hispanic**
- *“There appears to be a general increase in the amount of gang related violence and drug trafficking.”* —**USAFR, male, senior officer, White**
- *“Gang members fighting and killing each other for drugs.”* —**USMCR, male, junior enlisted, Hispanic**
- *“Marines get stabbed in uniform. People get shot right outside our gates in broad day light. Just the other day a man was shot for trying to help another lady who was being robbed in her car. This city is disgusting and terrible. Lot of the Reservists are local and bring that attitude of 'street' with them and its to an extent accepted.”* —**USMCR, female, senior enlisted, Hispanic**

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- *“The town surrounding the military facility has significant gang and crime problems. Local law enforcement is unable to control the problem. Luckily many (but not all) of their crimes are focused on themselves. Gang against gang. But their need to fund their organizations is what likely leads to the burglary and theft problems plaguing the town.”*  
—ANG, male, senior enlisted, White
- *“There are drug related gang killings.”* —ARNG, male, senior enlisted, Hispanic
- *“A lot drugs dealers, and people related to them. I can't even take my family to play outside the way other families do, because feel unsafe for us.”* —ARNG, male, junior enlisted, Hispanic
- *“There is a very large presence of violent gang members operating within the county I live in.”* —USAR, male, senior officer, White

### Analysis of Location

From comments, the majority of respondents indicated that of the three issues examined (extremist groups, hate crimes, and gangs), problems, specifically with gangs, were more likely to be a function of their installation's location.

To get a better understanding of where these activities are taking place, DMDC analyzed the documented location of respondents who indicated there was a problem with any of the three issues. In order to protect the privacy of the respondents, DMDC only reports out location quadrants.<sup>5</sup> As seen in Table 1, those respondents who indicated problems to a large or very large extent lived in the South and West US. This aligns with comments asserting greater issues near the border of Mexico. For those who indicated problems, the survey asked respondents to comment on the specifics of the problem. Of the members who were eligible to leave a comment (e.g., they indicated a problem; n = 1,460), 76% (n = 1,105) chose to do so.<sup>6</sup> Similar to the breakout of those who indicated there was a problem, the majority of comments came from members from the South (417 comments) and West (326 comments), whereas respondents from the Midwest (139 comments), Northeast (130 comments), and Other<sup>7</sup> (93 comments) contributed less. While it cannot be said that the number of comments necessarily indicates greater or more severe issues with extremist groups, hate crimes, and/or gangs, the higher number of comments left by those in the South and West, compared to other CONUS locations, tend to lend credence to greater concern in these locations. Table 1 provides additional summary information.

<sup>5</sup> “West” includes the following states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming; “Midwest” includes the following states: Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin; “Northeast” includes the following states: Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont; and “South” includes the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

<sup>6</sup> 70 members left a comment for both Q97 and Q98. Therefore they are double counted in the number of comments by region.

<sup>7</sup> Responses were rolled up into the four regions, with the territories and missing data falling into the “Other” (e.g., Guam, Puerto Rico) category.

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**Table 1.**  
*Frequency of Those Who Indicated There Was a Problem to a Large or Very Large Extent*

At their installation/ship...	Indicated problem to a “Large or Very large extent”		
	Respondents Eligible to Leave a Comment <sup>d</sup>	Number of Eligible Respondents Who Left a Comment	Percent of Eligible Respondents Who Left a Comment
Other <sup>a</sup>	28	17	11%
West	76	35	22% <sup>b</sup>
Midwest	33	16	10%
Northeast	36	23	14%
South	122	69	43% <sup>b</sup>
Total	295	160	54%
In the local community around where they live...	Respondents Eligible to Leave a Comment <sup>d</sup>	Number of Eligible Respondents Who Left a Comment	Percent of Eligible Respondents Who Left a Comment
Other <sup>a</sup>	93	76	8%
West	364	291	31% <sup>b</sup>
Midwest	149	123	13%
Northeast	128	107	11%
South	431	348	37% <sup>b</sup>
Total	1165	945	81%
Total Percent of Comments Left From Eligible Members <sup>c</sup>			76%

Note. 2011 WEOR Q97, Q98.

<sup>a</sup> Responses were rolled up into the four regions, with the territories and missing data falling into the “Other” (e.g., Guam, Puerto Rico) category.

<sup>b</sup> Indicates the top two regions of the country who indicated problems.

<sup>c</sup> 70 members left a comment for both Q97 and Q98. Therefore they are double counted in the number of comments by region.

<sup>d</sup> Frequency and percentages are from unweighted estimates.

### Summary

In summary, less than five percent (1-2%) of Reserve component members indicated that extremist groups, hate crimes, and gangs were a problem to a *large* or *very large extent* at their installation/ship. A slightly greater number (2-7%) indicated these concerns were a problem in the community around where they live.

Members reported gangs often target youth for recruitment, a concern for those members who may have children. Members also discussed recruitment issues with military members, specifically that often the military is inadvertently recruiting gang members from the community around the installation or gang members are volunteering for military recruitment in order to learn military skills and train

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other gang members. Another issue mentioned is that military members are recruited for gangs specifically for their specialized knowledge and skill sets which are valuable to gang members.

Primary themes from the comments highlighted the relationship between the location of the installation with emphasis on border issues with Mexico. These sentiments were further supported by independent analysis showing greater issues for those living in the South and West. Much of the gang and extremist activities were reported to target specific racial/ethnic groups, though some members also discussed activities against individuals based on sexual orientation.

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