



# NATIONAL CRIME RESEARCH CENTRE

*Fighting Crime Through Research*



## THE PROLIFERATION AND RESILIENCE OF CRIMINAL GANGS IN KENYA



**Stephen Masango Muteti**





**NATIONAL CRIME RESEARCH CENTRE**

**THE PROLIFERATION AND RESILIENCE OF CRIMINAL GANGS IN  
KENYA**

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## FOREWORD

The proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in the country remains a pressing challenge to national security, economic stability, and social cohesion. The findings of this survey highlight the continued fast spreading of organized criminal groups across multiple counties, their deeply entrenched influence, and the serious threat they pose to public safety and good governance. These criminal gangs exploit socio-economic vulnerabilities, engage in violent crimes, and hinder law enforcement efforts through intimidation and concealment.

The Government of Kenya remains steadfast in its commitment to eradicating criminal gangs and ensuring a safe and secure environment for all citizens. This survey provides critical insights into the nature, operations, and expansion of these groups, offering evidence-based recommendations for effective policy and programme interventions. It underscores the need for a multi-sectoral approach that strengthens law enforcement, enhances socio-economic opportunities, and fosters community resilience against criminal activities.

I commend the researchers, stakeholders, and all those who contributed to this survey. The recommendations outlined herein will serve as a blueprint for policy formulation, legislative action, and strategic intervention in tackling organized criminal gangs. We call upon all stakeholders-including security agencies, civil society, and the public, to collaborate in addressing this menace decisively and sustainably.



**HON. Ms. DORCAS ODUOR SC, EBS, OGW**  
**ATTORNEY GENERAL / CHAIRPERSON**  
**GOVERNING COUNCIL**  
**NATIONAL CRIME RESEARCH CENTRE**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to all those who played a role in the successful completion of this crucial survey on the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. The findings of this study provide invaluable insights into the growing threat of criminal gangs and the urgent need for coordinated and strategic interventions to address this menace.

I wish to sincerely thank the NCRC Governing Council under the leadership of the Chairperson Hon. Dorcas A. Oduor, SC, OGW, EBS, for the policy direction offered. As well, I appreciate the invaluable technical support and quality assurance provided by the Research and Development Committee of the Council under the chairmanship of Mr. Samuel Wakanyua that ensured the successful completion of the report.

Special thanks go to our institutional partners, policy makers, and security agencies whose collaboration was instrumental in shaping the scope and execution of this research. Your continued commitment to fostering security and stability in our communities is commendable and appreciated.

I acknowledge the dedication and expertise of our research team, whose rigorous data collection contributed to the findings of this report. My appreciation also goes to the respondents who participated in this survey across the eleven counties, including community members, law enforcement officers, and key stakeholders, for their valuable input and perspectives. Your willingness to share experiences and concerns has enriched our understanding of the complex nature of criminal gang activities and their impact on society.

I commend Mr. Stephen Masango Muteti for the exhaustive analysis of the data and for writing this report.

My gratitude also goes to all the persons who provided insightful comments during the stages of study proposal, methodology development and report validation that ensured this research output.

As we move forward, I call upon all relevant state and non-state actors to work collectively in implementing effective and sustainable solutions. The recommendations derived from this survey should serve as a roadmap for strategic policy formulation and intervention programs aimed at dismantling criminal gang networks and ensuring security and order in affected regions.



**DR. MUTUMA RUTEERE**  
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## ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

AIE	Authority to Incur Expenditure
AU	African Union
EACC	Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoK	Government of Kenya
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
KNA	Kenya News Agency
MCAC	Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center
MI	Members of Inspectorate
MRC	Mombasa Republican Council
NCA	National Crime Agency
NCIC	National Cohesion and Integration Commission
NCOs	Non-Commissioned Officers
NCRC	National Crime Research Centre
UK	United Kingdom
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USA	United States of America
U.S	United States
USIP	United States Institute of Peace

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

### **Criminal gang**

The term was used to refer to a group of three or more people organized to commit unlawful acts either individually or collectively (many a times in an organized crime style) within a community, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, some benefits and other advantage (GoK, 2010; NCRC, 2012; Kibunja and Handa, 2022).

### **Factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

These referred to dynamics such as any deficiency, behaviours or omission on the part of individuals or responsible institutions that are responsible for the mutations as well as the increase and spread of criminal gangs, and their ability to adapt, survive and continue operating.

### **Mitigation measures for addressing criminal gangs**

The mitigation measures refer to the deliberate efforts put in place by various stakeholders with the aim of suppressing, disrupting or dismantling criminal gangs.

### **Proliferation of criminal gangs**

This referred to the mutation as well as the increase and/or spread of criminal gangs in their traditionally known operation areas and new geographical locations based on increased reports of the existence of gangs and gang-orchestrated illegal activities.

Hence, the extent of proliferation of criminal gangs referred to how widely criminal gangs were emerging, expanding and exerting their influence in the society in terms of aspects such as: spread in geographical locations; growth in gang membership; increase in the number of criminal gangs; inter-gang alliance or competition interactions; involvement in criminal activities; gang control and influence on local social structures, politics and economies; and how resilient these gangs are in maintaining their operations against the odds of law enforcement efforts to dismantle them, and how they spread or evolve in response to these challenges.

### **Resilience of criminal gangs**

This referred to the ability of criminal gangs to adapt, survive and continue operating despite efforts by various stakeholders to suppress, disrupt or dismantle them.

### **Visibility of criminal gang activities**

This referred to the extent to which gang-related actions such as violence, recruitment, extortion, drug trafficking, or territorial control were noticeable or apparent to the public, law enforcement agencies and community members.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs present a growing challenge to national security. Across Kenya, these gangs engage in criminal activities such as extortion, drug peddling and/or trafficking, robbery, and political violence, with far-reaching implications on the country's development. Despite numerous government interventions, these groups continue to adapt, evade law enforcement, and expand their influence.

This survey examined the proliferation, activities, contributing factors to gang proliferation and resilience, and mitigation measures against criminal gangs in Kenya. It was undertaken in eleven (11) counties, namely, Nairobi, Mombasa, Kilifi, Nakuru, Bungoma, Kwale, Kiambu, Machakos, Kisumu, Busia and Garissa. These counties were selected based on their vulnerability to gang activities as highlighted in various source documents, including submissions from County Commissioners, which also highlighted the most affected Sub-counties. In addition, the selection of these eleven counties and the specific sub-counties was informed by their strategic, demographic, socio-economic, and security characteristics that reflected both the diversity and intensity of gang-related activity in Kenya. Each county contributes uniquely to understanding the dynamics of criminal gang proliferation and resilience across urban, peri-urban and the border regions.

The survey applied the mixed method approach research design that targeted Law Enforcement Officers (that is, Police Officers in the designation of Chief Inspector, Inspector, Senior Sergeant, Sergeant, Corporal and Constable) and National Government Administrative Officers (in the designation of Chief and Assistant Chief) to form the sample respondents for quantitative data collection. Other senior officers in relevant state and non-state institutions were interviewed as key informants while community youths were the participants in Focus Group Discussions fashioned to extract qualitative data.

To mitigate possible misreporting especially by the sample respondents (that is, Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs and Police Officers) who would want to save face especially in questions that leaned towards gauging their performance with regard to addressing the criminal gangs menace, the survey made use of: triangulation of multiple sources of information; assurance of the respondents of confidentiality and anonymity; pre-testing and revision of the data collection tools; in-depth probing to gauge consistency of the responses; well-trained Research Assistants and Supervisors; and using indirect wording and non-judgmental language for sensitive issues.

### **Key Findings**

The survey findings highlighted the extent to which criminal gangs have spread across various counties, their modes of operation, and the socio-economic and structural factors sustaining their resilience, mitigation measures against criminal gangs and challenges faced in addressing their proliferation and resilience as summarized below.

### **Extent of Proliferation of Criminal Gangs**

This survey found that there was widespread proliferation, persistence, and resilience of criminal gangs across multiple counties in Kenya. This conclusion is supported by findings pointing to the deep entrenchment of criminal gangs in local communities, regional variation in gang proliferation and expansion, high adaptability and resilience of gangs evidenced by the presence of gangs that continue to thrive even in counties where suppression efforts have been intensified, and the growing threat of highly violent and dreaded gangs.

The survey established that criminal gangs had proliferated. This was confirmed by the majority (82.3%) of the overall survey sample respondents. Key indicators of criminal gangs' proliferation included: frequent reports of gang-related crimes; increased violence; growing gang influence among youths; and high reporting on the visibility of gang activities with response rating at 87.6%.

Despite this perceived proliferation of gangs, a significant proportion (53.2%) of the sample respondents indicated that there was a decline in the number of criminal gangs over the past three years. A total of 309 criminal gangs were mapped, with the highest concentration in Mombasa (73), Nairobi (56), and Kilifi (47). Notable gangs with extensive presence included Gaza/Gaza Family, 42 Brothers, Wakali Wao, Panga Boys, Chafu/Squad Chafu/Gang Chafu and Mungiki.

### **Nature of Criminal Gang Activities**

The survey found that criminal gangs in the survey counties had deeply infiltrated multiple sectors, expanded their criminal activities, adopted sophisticated operational tactics, and gained resilience through community complicity. These dynamics made gang-related crime a persistent and complex security threat.

Criminal gangs were found to have affected multiple sectors, with the most affected being; security, counter-illicit drugs and narcotics trafficking and public transport. The survey also identified twelve serious criminal activities perpetrated by these gangs to include: Robberies; Assaults, including of public transport drivers and crew; General Stealing; Illicit drug distribution and trafficking; Burglary and breakings; muggings; Grievous harm; Murder; Rape; attacks on women; extortion in Matatu public transport; and Defilement.

The survey also established that there was complicity among local community members (drawn from peers, family members and larger community members) through failure to report crimes, offering protection and normalizing gang activities, which contribute to gang resilience.

### **Factors Contributing to Proliferation and Resilience**

The survey findings indicated that there was a complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and structural factors that contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs

under the dictates of demographic profiles of gang members, recruitment methods used, the motivations for joining and staying in gangs and the factors sustaining gangs.

The survey found that most gang members were young males with histories of substance abuse and low formal education.

Recruitment of criminal gang members was primarily through peer influence or friends, targeting vulnerable youth and offering financial incentives or benefits, through promises of protection or power and influencing new members using drugs.

The key factors driving youth involvement in gangs were established to include: pressure from peers already in gangs, vulnerabilities of poverty and limited youth employment opportunities, exposure to and/or influence of illicit drugs and substance abuse desire for financial and other incentives or benefits and poor social and/or family support systems.

The factors that significantly contribute to proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs were: peer pressure and influence; vulnerabilities associated with high unemployment and poverty; availability of illegal drugs; broken or poor social and/or family support systems; inadequate formal education among youth; political exploitation; community cultural and social tolerance of criminal gangs; underdevelopment and marginalization; corruption among rogue government officials, including security and law enforcement officers; inadequate social services; weak security policing of criminal gangs; poor coordination among existing criminal justice agencies and other actors; ready markets for stolen items sold as second-hand items; weak prosecution of criminal gang members; and inadequately sustained youth empowerment initiatives.

### **Existing Mitigation Measures and Effectiveness**

The survey found that there were multiple mitigation measures that had been implemented by both state and non-state actors to curb the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs, with law enforcement, intelligence gathering, public sensitization, and youth empowerment initiatives being the most widely utilized. While these measures were perceived to be generally effective, their impact may have been constrained by numerous challenges such as inadequate resources for law enforcement, weak collaboration with communities, lenient judicial processes, and political interference. Therefore, based on the widespread proliferation, persistence, and resilience of criminal gangs across most of the counties, the existing mitigation measures were evidentially not effective in addressing the menace.

The study mapped sixteen existing mitigation measures, with the most highly rated effective measures, with a rating above 83% being: law enforcement presence and patrols; intelligence gathering and surveillance operations; public sensitization fora such as Chief Barazas; education access; community policing structures such as Nyumba Kumi; punitive measures against gang members; youth-targeted interventions such as cultural, sports, and arts programs; and youth employment and empowerment initiatives. The moderately effective



measures, rated between 70% and 85% were: partnerships between local and international actors; religious campaigns against gangs; stricter bail and bond terms for repeat offenders; rehabilitation and reintegration programs for reformed gang members; witness protection programs; and mopping up illicit firearms. The lowest rated measures (below 70.0%) were: support systems for victims of gang activities; and amnesty programs for gang members.

The positive rating of multi-stakeholder collaboration suggests that respondents recognize the value of inter-agency coordination in addressing organized crime. Meanwhile, the effectiveness of stricter bail and bond terms indicates that judicial measures are perceived as a deterrent against recidivism. However, rehabilitation programs for reformed members received a slightly lower rating (77.9%), suggesting that while reintegration efforts exist, they may face challenges in implementation or societal acceptance. The challenges included inadequate law enforcement resources, limited youth economic opportunities, weak community-law enforcement collaboration, and political interference. Corruption within the criminal justice system and fear of retaliation further exacerbated the problem.

In conclusion, the survey findings highlighted that the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs is a factor of multiple determinants. For instance, it is deeply rooted in the exposure to deviant behaviours of peers, community tolerance of gang norms, and social environments that reinforce criminal conduct as espoused in Differential Association Theory. Additionally, socio-economic vulnerabilities, structural deficiencies, and cultural dynamics also contribute to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. Young, unemployed males from marginalized backgrounds, often with a history of substance abuse, are particularly susceptible to gang recruitment, which thrives on peer pressure, financial incentives, and the exploitation of social networks. The resilience of criminal gangs is further reinforced by unemployment, poverty, drug availability, political exploitation, and community tolerance. While various mitigation measures have been implemented, their effectiveness remains limited due to resource constraints, weak law enforcement-community collaboration, and political interference. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-sectoral approach that combines youth empowerment, improved education and employment opportunities, community policing, and policies that disrupt the financial and political networks sustaining gang activities. Without comprehensive and sustained interventions, criminal gangs will continue to pose a significant threat to national security and social stability.

### **Key Policy Recommendations**

This survey underscores the urgent need for change of tact that, among others, incorporates a multi-faceted and evidence-based approach to combat criminal gang proliferation and resilience. This is because the existing mitigation measures are evidentially not fully effective, at least going by the findings on the widespread proliferation, persistence, and resilient nature of the criminal gangs. By strengthening law and order enforcement and criminal justice system responses, addressing socio-economic vulnerabilities, enhancing positive community engagement, combating drug peddling and/or trafficking, enforcing

political and security institutions accountability, leveraging technology, enhancing criminal reintegration and rehabilitation after-care programmes, and improving legal frameworks, the country can effectively curb gang activities and enhance national security. The following specific policy recommendations provide a roadmap for holistic and sustainable interventions.

## **1. Strengthening law and order enforcement and criminal justice system responses**

Criminal gangs were found to be spreading to new areas and their illegal activities were both visible and frequent, thus suggesting that they were undeterred possibly due to some gaps in the criminal justice system. Hence, the need to strengthen criminal justice system response is inevitable. Strengthening law and order enforcement and criminal justice system responses requires:

- i. The National Police Service and the National Intelligence Service to enhance county-specific intelligence gathering and surveillance operations to proactively identify and dismantle criminal gang networks, and to create a national database of identified and emerging gang groups which incorporate biometrics of arrested gang members, which should be shared across all counties to track the gang members and document their criminal gang activities across different counties.
- ii. The National Police Service to increase law enforcement patrols and visibility in gang-prone areas to deter criminal activities, and strengthen collaboration between law enforcement agencies, the community and community policing structures such as Nyumba Kumi Initiatives. This intervention needs to cover the border counties which the survey indicated had a lead in increases in the number of criminal gangs.
- iii. The Judiciary and correctional facilities to undertake reforms aimed at an effective sentencing policy that strikes a balance between deterrence, incapacitation, rehabilitation, and disruption of gang structures. This could include but not limited to: introducing or strengthening sentencing guidelines that differentiate between gang members, leaders, and associates, with graduated penalties based on roles, risk level, and degree of violence or coercion involved; inclusion of mandatory participation in psychosocial therapy, de-radicalization, skills training and gang exit programmes as part of sentencing especially for young, first-time gang members; using non-custodial sentencing and restorative justice approaches for minor gang-affiliated offenses, especially involving young persons; imposing harsher penalties for adults who recruit minors or coerce individuals into gangs; introducing mandatory supervised aftercare for high-risk offenders especially for criminal gang leaders or repeat violent offenders; implementing stricter bail and bond terms for repeat criminal gang offenders to prevent reoffending; and strengthening judicial processes that ensure timely dispensation of criminal justice for gang-related crimes.
- iv. The Witness Protection Agency, in collaboration with the National Police Service, to improve witness and informant protection programmes to encourage the reporting of criminal gang activities.
- v. The National Treasury and Planning, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and National Administration, to increase funding and resources allocation for law

enforcement to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness, which include re-tooling and/or re-training law enforcement officers with skills needed to effectively combat criminal gangs.

- vi. The Ministry of Interior and National Administration to develop comprehensive national policies focused on preventing and disrupting gang recruitment and ensuring effective rehabilitation.

## **2. Enhancing positive community engagement and public awareness**

The survey established that some local community members were to a large extent facilitating the proliferation of criminal gangs through their actions and/or inactions. This, therefore calls for the need to enlist positive participation of the community in dealing with the menace. Some of the specific interventions for enhancing positive community engagement and public awareness include:

- i. Institutions represented in the National Council for the Administration of Justice to conduct continuous public sensitization campaigns to educate communities on the dangers of criminal gangs; and the role of the Witness Protection Agency in the protection of community members who are willing to cooperate with criminal justice system agencies in matters of criminal gangs' suppression.
- ii. The National Government Administration Office together with the National Police Service to encourage active community participation in crime prevention through confidential and easy reporting mechanisms, informer programmes, anonymous tip-off systems and Community Policing Initiatives.
- iii. Resourcing and embedding the Nyumba Kumi Initiative into the security infrastructure.
- iv. The Media to work with security agencies and educational institutions to address the normalization of criminal gang activities by promoting civic education on law and order.
- v. The involvement of religious institutions, civil society organizations, and local community in an enhanced collaboration initiative to promote anti-gang awareness campaigns and the establishment of community conflict mediation frameworks that discourage gang-related impunity.

## **3. Addressing the socioeconomic enablers of recruitment and retention in criminal gangs**

The survey mapped key socio-economic factors that were negatively influencing youth to join and remain in criminal gangs. Hence, there is need to address these factors and those contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. These factors could be addressed through the:

- i. Ministry responsible for youth affairs, and that for trade and industry expanding youth employment and economic empowerment programs to provide alternative livelihoods.

- ii. Ministry responsible for education and vocational training increasing access to formal education and vocational training for vulnerable youths especially from informal settlements.
- iii. Ministries responsible for education, social services and youth affairs strengthening social support systems for at-risk youth, including mentorship and counselling programs.
- iv. Ministry responsible for culture and sports investing in cultural, sports, and arts programs to engage young people in productive activities.
- v. Ministry responsible for trade and industry promoting financial literacy and entrepreneurship programs targeting low-income and marginalized communities.
- vi. State Department for Basic Education enhancing teacher training on early warning signs of gang involvement and working with law enforcement for intervention before youth become fully entrenched in crime.

#### **4. Combating illicit drug peddling and/or trafficking and substance abuse focusing on the at-risk-youth**

Illicit drugs and substances were found to play a significant role in the criminal gang problem. Hence there is need for the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse, in partnership with other relevant agencies to:

- i. Enhance anti-illicit drug peddling and/or trafficking efforts to disrupt supply and demand chains that fuel gang activities.
- ii. Strengthen rehabilitation and treatment programs for substance abuse victims, particularly among the ‘hooked’ youth.
- iii. Enforce strict regulations on the sale and distribution of illicit drugs and substances.
- iv. Foster collaboration between government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in combating illicit drug-related crimes.

#### **5. Identifying, prosecuting and deterrently penalizing political leaders who use, finance and protect gang members for political reasons**

Findings of this survey established political patronage by criminal gangs that involves utilization and financing of the gangs by the political class for their personal, electoral and business gain. Hence, there is need for the National Police Service to identify, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute and the Judiciary to deterrently penalize political leaders who use, finance and protect gang members for political reasons.

#### **6. Strengthening transparency and accountability in dealing with criminal gangs**

Findings of this survey established that corruption among rogue government officials, including security and law enforcement officers was a significant factor contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in the country. Hence, there is need for:

- i. The Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) to strengthen oversight mechanisms to address corruption within the criminal justice system.

- ii. The National Police Service to enhance transparency in law enforcement operations to build public trust and cooperation.
- iii. The Attorney General and the Legislature to strengthen legal and policy frameworks against political and social interference in anti-gang operations.

## **7. Enhancing technological and strategic security approaches**

The survey established permeation of ICT sector and the use of technology by gangs to undertake criminal activities (including recruitment of new members) was found established by the survey. Hence the Ministries responsible for ICT and internal security together with the National Computer and Cybercrimes Coordination Committee (NC4) need to:

- i. Leverage technology for crime monitoring and digital intelligence gathering.
- ii. Strengthen cyber intelligence to counter gang recruitment and coordination through online platforms.
- iii. Strengthen evidence-based and data-driven crime approaches to addressing gang activities
- iv. Develop a comprehensive national approach to address gang problem in a strategic manner.

## **8. Enhancing criminal reintegration and rehabilitation after-care programmes that are informed by a Needs-Risk Assessment of the criminogenic factors of youth involvement in crime**

Inadequate rehabilitation and reintegration programs for reformed gang members was cited as one of the challenges hindering efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. Therefore, the State Department for Correctional Services needs to:

- i. Expand rehabilitation and reintegration programs for former gang members that are cognisant of their criminogenic needs identified through a Needs-Risk Assessment, to help them transition into lawful livelihoods.
- ii. Institute programmes for reducing the stigmatization of and using the reformed criminal gang members as change agents in the disruption of the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs.
- iii. Provide counselling and psychological support for gang-affiliated individuals seeking to exit criminal activities.
- iv. Work with the Office of the Attorney General to strengthen amnesty programs for reformed gang members and provide them with sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- v. Work with the Victims Protection Board to enhance support systems for victims of illegal gang activities in order to aid their recovery and prevent cycles of crime.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Survey

Many countries continue to witness emergence and active operations of criminal gangs with varying degree of sophistication and ferocity. The activities of these criminal gangs pose critical security challenges for many governments all over the world. Criminal gangs engage in illegal activities and even serious crimes against humanity such as kidnappings, armed robberies, murders/assassinations, counterfeiting, money laundering and trafficking of persons, drugs, illicit goods and weapons. Such dangerous gang activities negatively affect the wellbeing of a country's social, economic and political ecosystem. The Kenyan state has recorded existence of numerous criminal gangs and their volatile activities spreading across the country. Activities of some of these criminal gangs have been widely reported in the mainstream media, among various security organs reporting frameworks and at the local community levels. The Kenyan Government and other stakeholders have deployed various mitigation measures aimed at suppressing, disrupting or dismantling criminal gangs, yet these gangs continue to exhibit a seemingly extraordinary ability to grow, mutate, adapt, survive and continue with their operations. This operational resilience characteristic displayed by these criminal gangs raises questions about the underlying factors that sustain their operations and proliferations, as well as the effectiveness of existing mitigation measures aimed at curbing their negative influence. In an effort to make informed policy and effective programme interventions on the subject matter, this survey was instituted to examine the: extent of proliferation of criminal gangs; nature of activities of members of criminal gangs; factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs; and the existing mitigation measures and their effectiveness in addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs.

### 1.1.1 General Context of Criminal Gangs

Many countries are grappling with the problem of growing and resilient criminal gangs that are which are behind the perpetration of most serious crimes. Focus Features (2008) argues that every country has a 'Mafia', a term almost universally taken to refer to an organized and very dangerous criminal group or gang. The gangs pose serious threats to national security, with their activities having far-reaching negative implications on the countries' socio-economic and political development. Katola (2021) argues that organized criminal gangs remain a major challenge for national and international peace and security. According to Local Government Association (2015), organized crimes perpetrated by criminal gangs affects all communities, occurs in public spaces and private dwellings and has profound negative consequences on an individual, family, business, community or nation. The negative consequences of organized crime include: physical harm, injury and loss of lives; psychological trauma, anxiety and stress; loss of money or other assets, or harm to business or personal reputation.

A number of factors appear to facilitate the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. These factors may differ from country to country. For instance, according to the Institute for



Security Studies (ISS) (2000), the growth of the gang subculture in the Western Cape in South Africa is a result of a combination of various factors which include social factors such as unemployment and poverty, cultural persuasions and the globalization of gang culture. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (n.d), organized crime committed by criminal gangs emerges out of factors such as the: power vacuum that is created by the absence of enforcement and good governance (including the inability to implement border controls and enforce laws); and disparities in the distribution of economic assets and income spread as seen in economic failures evident by high rate of unemployment, low standards of living and reliance on illicit trade. The U.S Department of Justice (2007) indicated that organized crime problems in Cambodia happen under the watch of reluctant, compromised and/or corrupt local authorities. Previous studies by the National Crime Research Centre (NCRC, 2012; 2016; 2017) established that some organized criminal gangs thrive due to their political influence and ability to raise funds. Gil (2024) observed that in parts of the Southeast Asia region where the rule of law is weak or non-existent, criminal networks are growing their illegal operations such as the trafficking of people and drugs, money laundering and fraudulent scam activities that are being boosted by technology especially through the use of cryptocurrencies, the dark web, artificial intelligence and social media platforms.

Affected countries indicated to have in place various mitigation measures to combat these organized criminal gangs and their activities. Such measures included: law and order enforcement strategies; rehabilitation of convicted and sentenced gang members; and education, training and employment services for the youth to dissuade them from gang membership (HM Government, 2016; U.S Government, n.d). Despite these efforts, gangs are still operational, appear resilient and at times, have exhibited untypical dynamism in terms of increase in number, spread into different localities in alarming rates, increased permeation into different sectors and heightened engagement in criminal activities in a seemingly undeterred manner.

### **1.1.2 Global Perspective of Criminal Gangs**

Criminal gangs and their activities appear to be a worldwide phenomenon affecting both the developed and developing countries. For instance, in a developed country like Canada: there are observed to be over 3,500 criminal organizations; the number of identified criminal organizations increased by almost a third between 2022 and 2023, indicating an increase growth from 638 to 843; with the groups having international links continuing to broaden their connections and associations, and establishing or strengthening their networks in every corner of the world, and especially in 72 countries; and that at least 77 per cent of these criminal groups (such as the outlaw motorcycle gangs, mafia groups, and street gangs) have reported collaborative links to others, either directly or via common associates (Bolan, 2024).

According to Campbell (2019): the National Crime Agency (NCA) of UK estimates that there are 4,629 criminal gangs in the United Kingdom (UK); the UK organized criminal gangs have a get-rich-quick mentality and are involved in majorly anonymized

polycriminality, committing crimes such as robberies, money laundering, pornography, drug peddling and/or trafficking, gun trafficking and trafficking of women from eastern Europe and Africa for prostitution and children from Vietnam as low-level drug workers. That there is increased internationalization of these organized crimes, for instance, drug imports into Britain are now from over 30 countries up from the previous half a dozen countries; and that the modus operandi of the criminal organizations sometimes entails, among others, threats of violence, debt bondage, isolation, fear and other complex control methods. HM Government (2016) indicates that there have been interventions by the UK Government to address organized criminal gangs that include: tackling the exploitation of vulnerable people by a hard core of gang members to sell drugs; protecting vulnerable locations especially places where vulnerable young people can be targeted; reducing violence and knife crime; safeguarding gang-associated women and girls; promoting early intervention; and promoting meaningful alternatives to gangs such as education, training and employment.

United States of America (USA) has also reported on existence of organized criminal gangs and their activities in the country. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 2011 reported that the country was grappling with over 33,000 gangs with a membership of over 1.4 million gang members. In another study by Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC) in 2023: in indicated that the United States is home to a variety of criminal groups and organizations that have remained an active threat for the security apparatus of the country, with a large memberships; it profiles notorious gangs and crime syndicates currently active in the United States to include: the Jewish Defense League, MS-13, Vice Lords, Barrio Azteca, Mongols Motorcycle Club, Crips and Bloods, Latin Kings, Gangster Disciples, Aryan Brotherhood and Mexican Mafia; and that these gangs are involved in crimes such as terrorist attacks (including bombings), assassinations, extortion, drug and human smuggling and trafficking, assaults, robberies, money laundering, intimidation, burglary, murder and identity theft. There have been concerted efforts to counter the activities of these organized criminal gangs. Brill (2016) argues that special police squads in Germany, Great Britain, Belgium and The Netherlands have been created and accorded local, supra-local and even national operational scope in order to dismantle criminal organizations through the deployment of a wide range or proactive techniques such as surveillance, infiltration, crime pattern analysis and seizing financial assets acquired by the criminal organizations through their illegal activities.

Asian countries, either, have not been spared by gang criminality. A study by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP, n.d) has shown that over the past decade, Southeast Asia has become a major breeding ground for transnational criminal networks with the originating activities source linked especially from China. This criminality appeared to be characterized by a rapid spread and of industrial scam nature that relied on forced labour lured from around the world. The U.S Department of Justice (2007) indicated: the two leading organized crime problems in Cambodia are drugs produced in neighbouring countries being trafficked into Cambodia and the trafficking of Cambodian women into Thailand for commercial sexual activities such as prostitution; it also outlined the gravest organized crime problems in China



in order of seriousness are drug distribution, gambling, prostitution and violence; Hong Kong was observed to be a traditional home to the secretive, ritualistic criminal organizations known as triads, with organized criminality mainly to do with illicit movement of goods, services and people to and from the mainland; in Japan, the notorious Japanese organized crime groups, the 'Yakuza', are involved in gambling, prostitution, amphetamine trafficking, and the victimization of legitimate businesses; and Thailand, Taiwan, Philippines and Macau equally infiltrated by high-profile organized criminal activities such as drug peddling and or trafficking, kidnapping for ransom, hijacking, bank robbery, prostitution, illegal gambling and firearms smuggling.

### **1.1.3 African Perspective of Criminal Gangs**

The African continent, as with the rest of the world, has had its experiences of the menace of criminal gangs. According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) (2009), most criminal gang activities in Africa take the form of theft and smuggling of oil, drug peddling and or trafficking, advanced fee and Internet fraud, human trafficking, diamond smuggling, forgery, cigarette smuggling, illegal manufacture of firearms, trafficking in firearms and armed robbery.

Nigeria continues to grapple with activities of deadly criminal gangs. Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2021): indicated that, for instance, since 2020 criminal gangs in Nigeria's North West region exploiting the limited security sector presence in the region have reportedly been involved in over 350 violent activities resulting in over 1,500 fatalities. This represents an approximately 45.0% increase in attacks and a 65.0% increase in fatalities compared to the 2018- 2019 period. Gangs' activities making global headlines have involved a series of mass kidnapping raids in boarding schools in Kaduna, Katsina, Niger, and Zamfara States where the victims are held in demand for hefty ransoms payments, often bankrupting the affected family. This has witnessed closure of hundreds of schools affected and vulnerable to these gang raids leaving over one million children in the region not attending classes. Some of the counter-measures undertaken by the Nigerian authorities against the criminal gangs' operations have entailed imposing a blackout of mobile telecommunications, restriction of movements and large gatherings in the region. International IDEA (2009) provided an analysis of gang criminality in the West African countries showing that: organized transnational criminal groups pose threats to West Africa's fragile states and to democratic governance processes and institutions; and that family, ethnic, cultural and historical elements contribute to the growth of criminal groups and their activities in these countries. and Ghana and West Africa in general grapples with the problem of organized narcotics traffickers who have managed to survive the onslaught of successive governmental agencies due to the factor of social capital (in the form of associational activity, social networks, trust and behavioural norms) that plays an important role in the process of supply, sale and profits accruing from the sale of drugs.

ENACT (2023) argues that state capture and compromising of key institutions, such as law enforcement agencies and judicial systems across the continent have raised fears of the

declining effectiveness of mitigation mechanisms against gang criminality in certain areas. According to International IDEA (2009), the criminal groups hunt for weak entry points within the state structures and then exploit such institutional weaknesses to their political and economic benefit. Hence in regions such as West Africa, this explains why institutional frameworks and the various initiatives adopted by civil society organizations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) have, over the years, realized little success in tackling the problem.

The Institute for Security Studies (2006), highlighting organized crimes in the Cape Flats of South Africa, indicated that the number of organized crime groups have risen dramatically from 278 syndicates in 1994 to over 800 in 2002, with over 12,000 key members. The earlier proliferation of these criminal activities was linked to the process of forced removals as well as to the social structure created by the apartheid government, which was built on the unequal and racist governance during the colonial era; the current resilience of criminal gangs is a factor of the weakening of the state's crime-fighting capabilities during the country's political transition, where the post-apartheid political power was unable to harness the political environment which allowed organized crime to flourish; with current criminal groups organized in a more flexible way, segmented and decentralized (as opposed to more hierarchical structures), and this allows them to adapt to new opportunities quickly. The study identified radical new measures enacted by the state aimed at combating gangs and other criminal groups to include an underlying shift in law enforcement philosophy that does not mainly rely on arresting individuals for their crimes, but one that targets criminal organizations and their assets and makes it more difficult for the groups to penetrate the legal economy and launder the proceeds of crime.

Countries in the North African region such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, too have become hotspots for criminal gang activities due to their strategic geographic locations bridging sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. Criminal gangs in this region are involved in a wide range of illegal activities including arms trading, human smuggling and trafficking, drug trafficking, and transnational organized crime. Weak governance in certain areas, porous borders and socio-economic disparities have created an enabling environment for these groups to thrive (Interpol, 2023; The Guardian, 2024; The New Yorker, 2023).

In the Central Africa region, the Sahel and East African countries the situation of criminal gangs is no different from other African regions. Obonyo (2023) argues that: in the Sahel countries such as Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and Mauritania, there are terrorist groups which engage in illegal gold mining thus worsening illicit trafficking and terrorist-related security threats; in the Central African countries such as the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Gabon and Congo, illicit trafficking of minerals has become a source of funding for terrorist groups in the region; the East African region ranks highest on the continent for transnational organized crime penetration and threat from groups such as the Al-Shabaab; and that addressing transnational organized crime in Africa will require measures such as

cross-border cooperation and information sharing, disruption of off-shore infrastructures and illicit sources of funds of criminal networks, strengthening governance and transparency, and strengthening and increasing the overall number of legitimate pathways for migration.

#### **1.1.4 Kenyan Perspective of Criminal Gangs**

Kenya experiences the problem of criminal gangs with the presence of these gangs spread across different parts of the country. These gangs' activities pose serious threats to national security with spiralling negative implications on the country's socio-economic and political development. For example, in the Coast Region, a number of organized criminal groups such as Wakali Wao, Wakali Kwanza and Wajukuu wa Bibi, Wakali Sisi and Chafu za Docks, Chaka to Chaka, Empire, Team Somba, Watalia, Panga boys, Darling Magic and Kaburi Moja have been noted to engage in acts of lawlessness. In Western Kenya, such criminal gang identified include 42 Brothers, Cha Usiku Sacco gang, Bulanda Boys and Jobless Corner to perpetrate criminal activities in the region. Some of the dreadful organized criminal gangs that in the recent past been blamed for rising insecurity in the country between May 2022 and 2023 are Kamagira gang in Kiambu; Confirm gang in Nakuru; Mombasa-based gangs Wakali Wao and Panga Boys, Mombasa Republican Council (MRC); Dambel, 26 Sheba, Kayole Jamaican (Nairobi), Mbogi la Islam, 3 Phase, Peaceland and Geta. These organized criminal gangs, which mainly comprised of youths, are indicated to engage in serious criminal activities such as extortion, robbery with or without violence, cross-border smuggling, burglary and house-breakings, cattle rustling, murder, rape, drug peddling and/or trafficking, car theft, assault causing grievous harm, terror attacks, money laundering, counterfeiting, human trafficking, carjacking and kidnappings. These criminal activities result in public fear of attacks, aggravating lawlessness (and thus undermining security), disrupting economic activities and fueling public disaffection towards the Government (NCRC, 2012; Katola, 2021; Mito, 2023).

These organized criminal gangs are observed to be rebranding, evolving and undergoing resurgence if neutered by law enforcement agency. There is also emergence of new criminal gangs, showing increase in the number and resilience of these gangs' activities, and their fast spread into other parts of the country; a development that is undermining security and fomenting a culture of gang impunity with a high negative impact on socio-economic well-being of citizens and thus. For instance, Mungiki, with the aim of concealing its identity has rebranded into Quails and Siafu, changed their identifiable characteristics to that of adopting a clean-shaven head outlook and adorning formal attires such as suits have resurfaced in Central, Nairobi and parts of Rift Valley regions. Confirm, Royal family, Nyuki Squad, Kayole gang, Barisuliek, Mbio Mbaya and Mbogi Genje have re-emerged in parts of Rift Valley, leading to upsurge in criminal activities in the region. There is also an emergence of new gangs in Nairobi which include T9, Kabaridi, Good Samaritan and Trouble Monkey Brothers, and the activities of Sungu Sungu in Kisii, Sangwenya in Migori, China Squad and Swat in Kisumu County are reportedly on an upward trend (National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), 2018).

Effective control of criminal gangs in the country continues to remain elusive since their numbers appear unclear due to a combination of factors such as: under-reporting; camouflage in political patronage activities; their operation being under the radar due to lack of a regularly-updated and comprehensive national database that keeps track of their formation and activities; community protection which makes detection hard; and their mutations taking the form of change of names, splintering into smaller groups to avoid scrutiny by law enforcement, and forming, disbanding or merging based on changing circumstances such as political seasons, law enforcement crackdowns and economic pressures. A National Crime Mapping of 2016 by NCRC established 127 criminal groups operating in the country (NCRC, 2017). A similar study of 2018 established existence of 180 organized criminal gangs portraying a significant increase of 41.7% from 2016, thus indicating an exponential growth of gangs in the country. Gangs that appeared to be widely and fast spreading in the country, comparing their presence between 2010 and 2017 they were about 28 in number and they included Sokoni Youth, Shymbo 12, Alshabab, Mungiki, criminal groups of Boda boda transport operators, Chinkororo, Gaza, Young Turks, Wakali Kwanza, Wakali Wao, Wakali Kabisa, Sungusungu, 40 brothers/thieves, 7 Brothers, Kaya Bombo, 42 Brothers, MRC, South Gang, Syria and Manambas/Touts which were in, at least, one out of five counties. All counties except one had at least two organized criminal groups by 2018, the leading counties each with at least 10 groups being: Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Bungoma, Kisumu, Kakamega, Kwale, Kilifi, Siaya, Kisii, Busia, Narok, Homabay, Isiolo, Garissa and Nyeri. The majority (75.8%) of the criminal groups (that is, 25 out of the 33 groups) that were banned in 2010 were still operating by 2016 and 2017 (NCIC, 2018; NCRC, 2012, 2016, 2017).

The proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in the country is alluded to be as a result of number of factors. Criminal gangs are a key feature of political life in the country. Some of these are reportedly funded by politicians who use them to cause violence and intimidate opponents during electioneering period and being the politicians' eye on the ground making the gangs' activities sustainable and resilient. Hence, these gangs are able to influence the political class and compromise the justice system through bribery and other acts of corruption (Gastrow, 2011). Rebranding and changing identifiable characteristics factor with an aim of concealing identity has contributed to the challenge of inadequate identification, detection and profiling of some organized criminal groups and their activities (NCIC, 2018). Economic vulnerabilities associated with declining economy, poverty and unemployment which directly affect livelihoods, coupled with the allure of financial incentives in monetary form extorted as residential security fee, illegal water and electricity fee, construction sites, public transport sector protection fees and handouts from politicians and businesspersons have contributed to the youth joining and retaining membership into organized criminal gangs (Katola, 2021; Kibunja and Handa, 2022). Peer pressure, low parental control, prohibition from exiting the groups and the punishment that ranges from whipping to murder as a consequence of exiting such groups are other facilitators of the groups' resilience (Mito, 2023; Haysom and Opala, 2020; Mutuku, 2017).

In efforts to address criminal gangs menace in the country, the government and allied partners have continually put in place a number of legal, policy and administrative prevention and intervention measures. Such measures have included: legislation and enactment of the Prevention of Organized Crimes Act of 2010 (Government of Kenya (GoK), 2010); arrest and prosecution of criminal gangs' members, for example of 135 people who were arrested between January 2019 and December 2019 for terror-related offences (Ramadhan and Mungai, 2020), proscribing through gazettelement of names of criminal gangs (Mutahi, 2022), and inventing of programmes for youth economic empowerment (Mito, 2023). Despite these measures, the gangs appear to be ever-growing and more resilient. This continued growth and resilience presents the government and partners, crime deterrents practitioners and scholars with the challenge on the most effective approaches required to satisfactorily suppress criminal gangs. Therefore, a clear understanding of the factors responsible for the proliferation and resilience is essential and how the mitigation measures already in place impact these factors is critical to allow for developing strategic and effective mitigation measures.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The presence and resilience of criminal gangs and their activities in any country poses security risks and developmental challenges. From foregoing discussion Kenya has continued to witness the brunt of these criminal activities in the country. The organized criminal activities in varying scale and in different parts of the country caused public fear of attacks, aggravated lawlessness (and thus undermining security), disruption of economic activities and fuelled public disaffection through serious crimes such as extortion, robbery with or without violence, cross-border smuggling, burglary and house-breakings, cattle rustling, murder, rape, drug peddling and trafficking, car theft, assault causing grievous harm, terror attacks, money laundering, counterfeiting, human trafficking, carjacking and kidnappings.

The Kenyan Government, in response to these emerging challenges posed by organized criminal gangs has progressively and proactively been putting mitigation measures to address this menace of criminal gangs in the country. These measures include: legislation and enactment of Prevention of Organized Crimes Act of 2010, arrest and prosecution of criminal gangs' members, and proscribing through gazettelement of names of organized criminal gangs. For instance, 18, 33 and 89 criminal gangs were proscribed in the years 2002, 2010 and 2016 respectively. Interestingly to note, that in spite of these measures deployed over the years, the problem does not seem to be coming to the end. Instead, there appears to be a resurgence, emergence of new organized gangs, with increase in the number, fast spreading into other parts of the country showing the resilience of criminal gang activities in the country. For instance, although the number of organized criminal groups in the country is elusive, some sources have indicated that they increased from 46 in 2012 to 127 in 2016 and to 180 in 2018 depicting an increase of 176% and 41.7% respectively. The sources also intimated that at least 28 gangs appeared to be spreading fast and widely in the country comparing their presence then in 2010 and 2017; all counties except one had at least two organized criminal groups, 16 counties had at least 10 organized criminal gangs by 2018; and that majority



(75.8%) of the organized criminal groups (that is, 25 out of the 33 groups) that were banned in 2010 were still operating in 2016 and 2017.

It is against this backdrop that this survey sought to explore the underlying factors that contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs, as well as analyze the effectiveness of the existing mitigation measures with a view to providing evidence-based recommendations to relevant policy makers and stakeholders on formulation of strategic policy and programmes for curbing these gangs and neutralized their activities in the country.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Survey**

#### **1.3.1 General objective**

The general objective was to explore the underlying factors that contribute to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs, as well as analyze the effectiveness of the existing mitigation measures with a view to informing relevant policy makers and stakeholders on strategic policy and programmes for formulation and adoption.

#### **1.3.2 Specific objectives**

The specific objectives were to:

- i. Establish the extent of proliferation of criminal gangs.
- ii. Map the nature of activities of members of criminal gangs.
- iii. Identify the factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs.
- iv. Map existing mitigation measures and their effectiveness in addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs.

### **1.4 Justification of the Survey**

This survey was justified on a number of grounds. Criminal gangs jeopardize the country's social, economic and political wellbeing through their illegal activities such as extortion, robbery with or without violence, burglary and house-breakings, murder, rape, drug peddling and/or trafficking, car theft, terror attacks, money laundering, counterfeiting, human trafficking, carjacking and kidnappings. In localities where these gangs are deeply entrenched due to factors playing in their favour, it poses great challenges in efforts to suppress, disrupt or dismantle their operations. Therefore, understanding the underlying factors that contribute to their proliferation and resilience provides invaluable insights which can facilitate designing effective and sustainable counter-measures achieving desirable potential solutions to the problem of criminal gangs.

It is clear a number of measures have been put in place to deal with criminal gangs in the country, which include legal sanctions (such as The Prevention of Organized Crimes Act No. 6 of 2010), proscription, arrests and prosecutions. However, the evident resurgence, mutation, emergence of new, and continued increase in their number and fast spread into the

other parts of the country depicting resilience of these criminal gangs raises pertinent questions on the effectiveness of the existing mitigation measures. This further may appear to suggest that these measures may either be insufficient or misaligned with certain realities on the ground. It therefore becomes critical to assess the effectiveness of the already mitigation measures in place with a view of undertaking any necessary adjustments.

The subject of criminal gangs has received considerable attention at the national and transnational levels and within criminal justice practitioners and academic levels. However, the available literature in the Kenyan context largely fails to adequately profile the phenomenon of criminal gangs' redress especially in the context of existing control measures matching specific factors responsible for the proliferation and resilience of the gangs, but rather it majorly offers general explanations for the emergence of the gangs. This survey therefore specifically undertook to advance the understanding of criminal gangs in the context of linkage between interventions and factors responsible for the proliferation and resilience. As such, the survey is to add to the growing body of knowledge on the subject and provide clearer information to the members of public, scholars and policy makers.

### **1.5 Scope of the Survey**

This survey majorly focused on the factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs, and the mitigation measures and their effectiveness in addressing the proliferation and resilience. It therefore did not lend itself to the examining of factors causing the emergence of criminal gangs and the effectiveness of the measures mitigating against these specific factors. The specific conceptual scope of the survey was the: extent of proliferation of criminal gangs; nature of activities of members of criminal gangs; factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs; and the existing mitigation measures and their effectiveness in addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. The targeted sample respondents were law enforcement and administration officers, specifically the Police Officers (in the non-gazetted officer category), and National Government Administrative Officers (in the designation of Chief and Assistant Chief), in select Sub-Counties where criminal gangs are prominently reported in the counties of Nairobi, Mombasa, Kilifi, Nakuru, Bungoma, Kwale, Kiambu, Machakos, Kisumu, Busia and Garissa.

### **1.6 Theoretical Framework of the Survey**

This survey was anchored on the Differential Association Theory propounded by Edwin Sutherland in 1973. The central thesis of this theory is that criminal behavior is learned and reinforced through continuous interaction with others who share similar values. The theory asserts that: criminal behavior occurs when definitions conducive to the contravention of the law surpass definitions unfavorable to the contravention of the law; the definitions conducive to crime assist in organizing and justifying a criminal line of action in a specific condition; and that each definition aims to validate or stimulate either engaging in criminal activities or refraining from criminal activities. Factors such as deprivation, limited access to legitimate alternatives and exposure to innovative success models may operate to create a proneness to

criminal activities. Criminality, therefore, is a product of a social process where interactions with deviant behavior patterns have a positive influence. Hence to secure law-abiding behaviour requires reversing these negative factors (Sutherland, 1973).

The Differential Association theory is considered relevant to this survey on proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in Kenya. It correlates with a criminal gang's overall resilience which could be a factor of different forms of resilience, all of which are linked to or are facilitated by differential interaction and association factors within the gang. One such forms of resilience is cultural and normative resilience achieved through the reinforcement of cultural transmission and reinforcement, and subcultural identity. The consistent transmission of criminal norms from older to newer criminal gang members helps sustain the group's identity and resilience against external forces like law enforcement. Strategies must therefore be put in place to minimize interactions between hardened criminal gang members and petty offenders (especially in imprisonment settings), and innocent and vulnerable young members of the society. Societal awareness creation and sensitization forums against gang criminality may work to disrupt the internalization and perpetuation of a criminal gang's subculture and values which contribute to the gang's long-term resilience.

Operational resilience of criminal gangs may be achieved through diversification of criminal activities and resource acquisition and management. Some criminal gangs have remained afloat by engaging in adaptation and innovation mechanisms such as re-branding and/or changing their *modus operandi*. Criminal gangs have also affected other sectors of the economy and diversified their sources of funding for financial sustainability. For instance, a 2018 study by NCRC indicates that armed gangs have infiltrated boda boda trade; killing, maiming, kidnapping, raping and robbing innocent people (NCRC, 2018a; Nyamori (n.d)).

Recruitment and retention resilience is also a contributor to sustainability of criminal gangs. This is facilitated by the level of shrewdness of the recruitment process, member retention ability and the loyalty strategies adopted by these groups. Some criminal gangs undertake rigorous and continuous recruitment of young and new members, have incentives for membership and loyalty, and/or enforces member loyalty and cohesion (for instance, through severe punishment of those exiting or betraying the group).

Social and network resilience have as well attributed to thriving and long period of existence of some criminal gangs. Their strong internal social networks facilitate mutual support, communication, and coordination, thus enhancing the gang's overall resilience. Their external networks, including alliances with other criminal organizations, corrupt public officials or community ties are instrumental in providing them with resources, protection, and opportunities that bolster the gangs' resilience. Closely related to the social and network resilience is emotional and psychological resilience. In situations where, individual gang members have high abilities to withstand stress, violence and threats coupled with high levels of cohesion and morale, this can help a gang maintain its resilience in the face of hardship or assault on them.



Criminal gangs that have their tentacles wide spread are regarded as more structurally resilient. This provides them with the capability to operate in cells which are less visible, reducing the impact of targeting any single leader or faction and underpinning them for quick decimation. Previous studies have indicated that some criminal gangs in Kenya appear to be decentralized and have their presence in at least 10 counties (NCRC, 2017; 2018a; 2018b). Further, the studies observed more flexible organizational structures within these gang groups with distributed power and decision-making processes suspected to allow for quicker adaptation to threats or opportunities.

From the foregoing discussion, the Differential Association Theory permits a multi-dimensional framework for analyzing the overall resilience of criminal gangs in Kenya through analysis of the different forms of resilience as hypothesized by the central thesis of the theory. Hence the theory offers a reasonable approach to understanding how these criminal gangs maintain their operations and adapt to challenges over time. This theory could serve as a valuable tool for scholars, researchers, policymakers, and law enforcement agencies aiming to develop strategies to disrupt and dismantle criminal gangs in the country.

While the Differential Association Theory provides valuable insights into the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs, it has several limitations when applied to contemporary gang dynamics. While the theory suggests that individuals exposed to delinquent subcultures will engage in crime, it does not explain why some individuals within the same social environment do not become criminals. In gang-affiliated neighbourhoods, some youths reject criminality despite being exposed to the same influences, suggesting that personal agency and other social controls play a role. The theory as well focuses on direct interpersonal interactions but fails to consider modern means of criminal socialization, such as social media, encrypted communication platforms, and online radicalization. Gangs now recruit and indoctrinate members remotely, making physical proximity and direct interaction less critical than Sutherland's model assumes.

The theory assumes that criminal behaviour is entirely learned through association with others, neglecting other potential influences such as individual psychological traits, genetic predispositions, and broader structural factors like poverty, unemployment and political instability. Criminal gangs often thrive in socio-economic contexts where marginalization and lack of opportunities play a significant role, aspects that Differential Association Theory does not fully address.

Sutherland's theory does not account for the role of systemic inequalities, weak governance, and state failures in fostering gang resilience. In Kenya, for instance, criminal gangs are often sustained by political patronage, economic hardship, and weak law enforcement rather than mere peer influence. Differential Association does not adequately explain how these external factors shape gang membership and longevity.

## **CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter covers the research design; sampling of counties and respondents; methods and tools of data collection and management; and data analysis. It also highlights the ethical considerations which were adhered to during the implementation of this survey.

### **2.2 Research Design**

This survey employed a mixed research design. This design was appropriate because it presented an opportunity to fuse both quantitative and qualitative approaches to realize the survey objectives. This methodological fusion offered a multidimensional lens through which the complex and dynamic nature of gang activity in Kenya could be better understood.

#### **2.2.1 Study site and population**

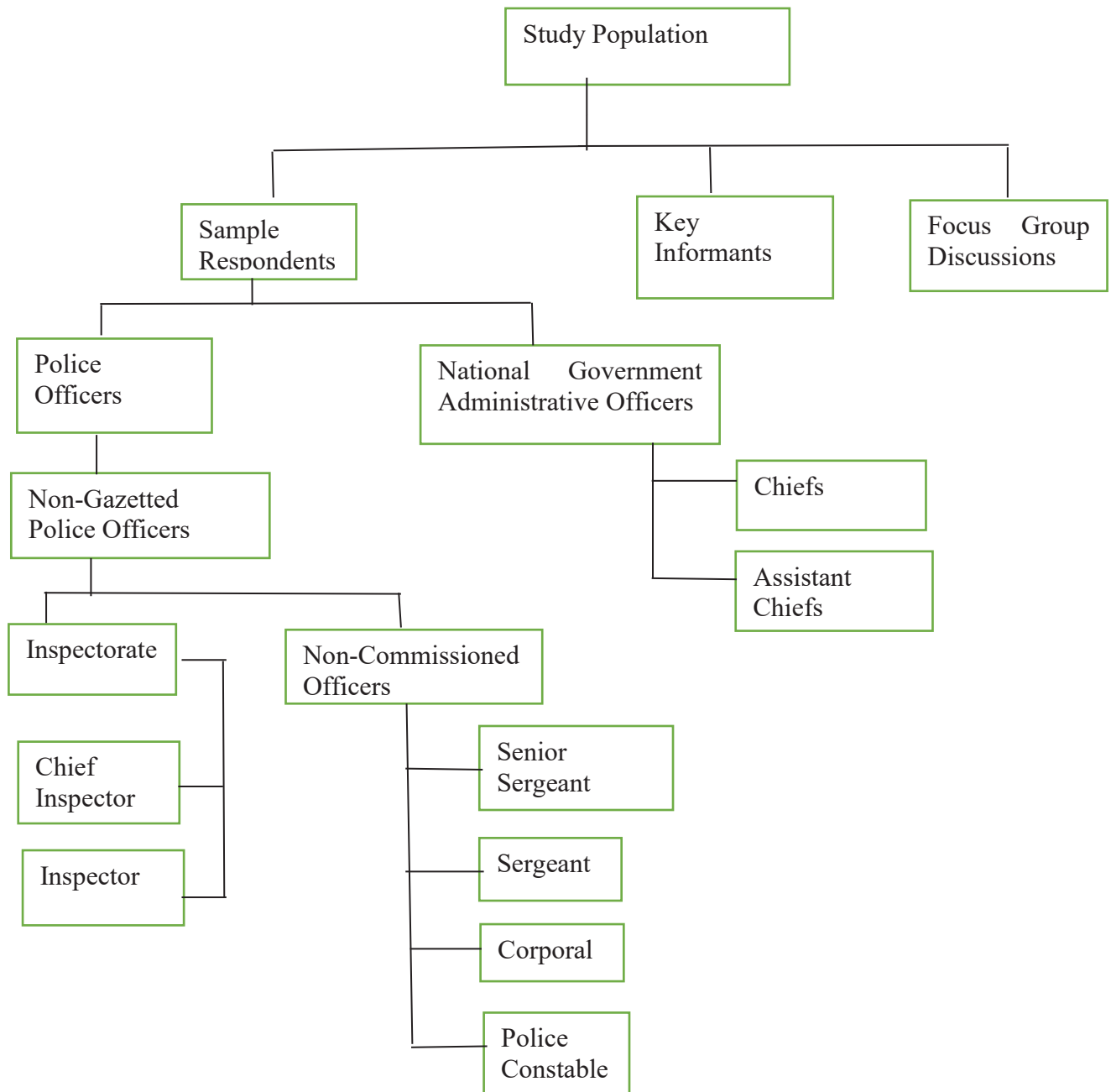
The survey covered eleven (11) counties namely Nairobi, Mombasa, Kilifi, Nakuru, Bungoma, Kwale, Kiambu, Machakos, Kisumu, Busia and Garissa. Specific Sub-counties, locations and Sub-locations for the study were identified from these counties. The survey targeted a total sample size of 1,314 respondents in the eleven (11) study counties, but only 1,119 respondents were reached, representing a response rate of 85.2%. The targeted sample size for the National Government Administrative Officers was 80 Chiefs and 160 Assistant Chiefs but only 66 Chiefs and 98 Assistant chiefs were reached. This study population size represented 20% of the total population of this cadre in the targeted study sites' population. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2013), a sample size of 10% to 30% of the target population is good enough to represent the target population.

The primary target sample population were Police Officers and National Government Administrative Officers (see Figure 1 below). These formed the key categories of sample respondents. The sample population for Police Officers comprised of non-gazetted Police Officers in the ranks of inspectorate and non-commissioned Police Officer categories. The target members of inspectorate (MI) were that of Inspector and Chief Inspector. Members of inspectorate supervise the Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) which comprise of the following ranks: Senior Sergeant, Sergeants, Corporals and Police Constables. Members of the inspectorate plan, manage and monitor operational policing activities and make decisions regarding deployment of available resources. The Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) are members of Police Service usually below the rank of Inspector. NCOs are mandated to ensure that the assignment and orders given to them by the members of inspectorate and gazetted officers are undertaken (as stipulated in the National Police Service Act, 2011). The sample population category for the National Government Administrative Officers comprised of officers in the designation of Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs. Incorporating Police Officers, and Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs as respondents in the survey on the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs ensured a comprehensive understanding of the issue from both a law enforcement and community governance perspective. The direct involvement of these duty bearers in crime prevention purposed to help deepen the understanding of local socio-

economic dynamics, and provide insights into the effectiveness of current interventions. Further, Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs are particularly crucial in daily consumption of intelligence reports on activities taking place right at the grass root administrative unit levels as well as their regular involvement in the local governance activities.

Key informants were persons deemed to have relevant knowledge and/or experience in the subject of criminal gangs. The targeted key informants included: Senior Police Officers in the gazetted officer's category (that is, from Assistant Superintendent and above); Senior National Government Administrative Officers from the designation of Assistant County Commissioners and above; community leaders and other relevant non-state actors.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with youths aged between 18 and 34 years mainly because it is the population segment that forms majority of gang members. They were identified by relevant state and non-state institutions working with youth groups and selected based on their availability and knowledge on the subject. This group facilitated a richer dialogue, highlighting both the systemic issues and individual factors that contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs.



**Figure 1: Categorization of survey respondents**

### 2.2.2 Sampling techniques and procedure

The study utilized both non-probability and probability sampling techniques. The eleven (11) Counties and Sub-counties were purposively selected based on their vulnerability to gang activities as highlighted in various source documents, including submissions from County Commissioners which also indicated the most affected sub-counties. In addition, the selection of these eleven counties and the specific sub-counties was informed by their strategic, demographic, socio-economic and security characteristics, that reflected both the diversity and intensity of gang-related activity in Kenya. It was presumed that each county contributes uniquely to understanding the dynamics of criminal gang proliferation and resilience across

urban, peri-urban and border regions. The locations and sub-locations were randomly selected based on the information on the gang criminality obtained from selected County Commissioners' offices. The locations and sub-locations served as national government service delivery units and hence the non-gazetted Police Officers, and Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs sample respondents were drawn from these units. A further selection of the specific study sites was conducted as follows: two (2) sub-counties were targeted for selection from each of the 11 Counties; four (4) locations were selected from each of the selected sub-counties; and two (2) sub-locations were selected from each of the selected locations.

Key informants and FGD participants were purposively sampled using criterion of their potentiality to provide detailed and accurate information drawing from their in-depth knowledge and/or experience on the subject of study.

Stratified random sampling techniques was applied in drawing the sample respondents for the non-gazetted Police Officers, and Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs. Stratified random sampling allowed attainment of a sample size that is proportional to the total population targeted for each category, while it ensured a greater precision and a small error margin. Thus, the non-gazetted Police Officers were divided into six (6) strata, namely; Chief Inspector, Inspector, Senior Sergeant, Sergeants, Corporals and Police Constables. There were also two (2) strata for the National Government Administrative Officers, consisting of, Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs. A Chief manages one Location and an Assistant Chief manages one Sub-location. Hence the random selection of locations and sub-locations implied stratification of National Government Administrative Officers and random selection (without replacement) of Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs. Two Police Stations were randomly selected from each of the twenty (20) selected Sub-counties where the Non-commissioned officers were selected.

Further, the sample size for each stratum of non-gazetted Police Officers was determined through proportional sampling, relative to the total population of non-gazetted Police Officers in each of the stratum in the selected Sub-County. In selecting the specific non-gazetted Police Officer to be interviewed, random sampling was applied on each of the stratum having been assigned numerical identifiers.

The target sample size for non-gazetted Police Officers was determined using the Slovin's formula:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

Where:

n: Target sample size

N: total number of non-gazetted Police Officers in each of the 20 Sub-counties of the eleven (11) sampled study counties.

e: margin of error (0.03).

Table 2.1 below captures the distribution of the sample respondents by county, while Table 2.2 highlights the distribution of the targeted sample respondents across the various strata or study population categories.

**Table 2. 1: Distribution of the sample respondents by county**

County	Targeted sample size	Sample size achieved		Percentage response rate achieved
		Frequency	Percentage	
Mombasa	138	127	11.3	92.0
Kwale	126	97	8.7	77.0
Kilifi	150	115	10.3	76.7
Garissa	108	102	9.1	94.4
Machakos	114	114	10.2	100.0
Kiambu	96	72	6.4	75.0
Nakuru	174	160	14.3	92.0
Bungoma	72	69	6.2	95.8
Busia	66	62	5.5	93.9
Kisumu	138	75	6.7	54.3
Nairobi City	132	126	11.3	95.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1314</b>	<b>1119</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>85.2</b>

**Table 2. 2: Distribution of the targeted sample respondents across the sample categories**

Category of sample respondent	Specific designation	Frequency	Percentage of the total sample
National Government Administrative Officers	Chief	66	5.9
	Assistant Chief	98	8.8
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>164</b>	<b>14.7</b>
Police Officers 1. Kenya Police Service 2. Administration Police Service 3. Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) Officer	Chief Inspector	26	2.3
	Inspector	71	6.3
	Senior Sergeant	20	1.8
	Sergeant	41	3.7
	Corporal	192	17.2
	Constable	605	54.1
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>955</b>	<b>85.3</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>1119</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## **2.3 Methods and Tools of Data Collection**

### **2.3.1 Sources of Data**

The survey utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was collected from sample respondents, key informants and focus group discussants. Secondary data was collected by way of reviewing and mining relevant literature on the subject matter using document analysis method. Secondary sources of data used in this survey included previous NCRC survey reports and data requested from select County Commissioners' offices.

### **2.3.2 Data collection methods**

The survey employed both quantitative and qualitative methods in the collection of primary data. Quantitative method was used in collecting data from the sample respondents, while qualitative method was utilized in data collection from key informants and focus group discussants. All sample respondents and key informants were interviewed using face-to-face interviews, an approach that offered opportunity verify and achieve validity of the data collected.

### **2.3.3 Data collection tools**

The study employed a number of data collection tools which included: interview schedule, key informant and focus group discussion guides. An interview schedule (in a digital form and uploaded in computer tablets) was used to collect data from the sample respondents. Key informant guide and focus group discussion guide were administered in data collection from the key informants and focus group discussants respectively.

## **2.4 Data Collection and Management Procedures**

The National Crime Research Centre (NCRC) worked closely with the relevant state and non-state actors in efforts to conduct and realize the objectives of the survey. In addition, NCRC sought for authority and consent from key institutions to allow their staff to participate in the survey.

Competent Research Assistants (holding a minimum of a Bachelor's degree in the Humanities and Social Sciences) were identified and trained before the actual data collection exercise. They were then allocated study sites and provided with requisite resources for the field work and data collection exercise.

The collected data was received, organized and analyzed at the NCRC's offices, after which a draft report of the survey was prepared. The draft was then subjected to review by the NCRC's Research and Development Committee, the full Governing Council. Thereafter, the report was subjected to peer review, editing and then validation by stakeholders. A final report was prepared, and its findings and recommendations disseminated to relevant government agencies and the general public.

## **2.5 Methods of Data Analysis**

This survey utilized both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. Quantitative data were analyzed by way of descriptive statistics using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel. The analyzed data was then presented using figures, and frequency and percentage tables. On the other hand, qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis and then presented thematically in narrations guided by the survey objectives.

## **2.6 Ethical Considerations**

The following ethical considerations were adhered to while conducting this survey:

- i. Authority to collect data was sought from the relevant institutions before commencement of interviews.
- ii. Consent of the respondents was sought before commencement of interviews.
- iii. The language of the interviews was that which respected socio-cultural diversities of and that well understood by the respondents.
- iv. Confidentiality of respondents' identity and information was safeguarded.



## CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the findings. The socio-demographic characteristics of the sample respondents are first outlined and then followed by the discussion of the study findings thematically presented guided by the specific objectives.

### 3.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Sample Respondents

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were as presented in Table 3.1 below. On the gender of the sample respondents, the male respondents were 78.5% and the female respondents were 21.5%. In regards to age, majority of the respondents were between 18 years and 51 years (88.5%), while 11.5% were aged 52 years and above.

Majority (88.1%) of the respondents were married and a significant segment of the respondents were either single or never married (10.0%). On the level of education attained, most (43.3%) of the sample respondents had Secondary School education qualification, 34.5% had middle-level college qualifications, while those with university education qualifications were 25.9%.

In regard to the institution of employment, majority (85.3%) of the respondents worked with the National Police Service as Police Officers while the rest worked with the National Government Administration Office either as Chiefs or Assistant Chiefs. Most (48.9%) of these respondents had worked in the localities of the survey for periods of between 1 and 3 years. These details are shown in Table 3.1 below among other highlights.

**Table 3. 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Sample Respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	878	78.5
	Female	241	21.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,119</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age</b>	18-34	399	35.7
	35-51	591	52.8
	52 and above	129	11.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,119</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single/Never Married	112	10.0
	Married	986	88.1
	Separated	8	0.7
	Divorced	3	0.3
	Widowed	10	0.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,119</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>	None	1	0.1
	Primary	6	0.5
	Secondary	484	43.3
	Middle level College	386	34.5
	University	241	21.5

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	Other	1	0.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,119</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Institution of employment</b>			
National Government Administration Office	Chief	66	5.9
	Assistant Chief	98	8.8
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>164</b>	<b>14.7</b>
National Police Service	Chief Inspector	26	2.3
	Inspector	71	6.3
1. Kenya Police Service	Senior Sergeant	20	1.8
	Sergeant	41	3.7
2. Administration Police Service	Corporal	192	17.2
	Constable	605	54.1
3. Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) Officer			
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>955</b>	<b>85.3</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>1119</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Period worked (length of service) in the locality</b>	Below 1 year	215	19.2
	1-3 years	547	48.9
	4-6 years	195	17.4
	7-9 years	65	5.8
	10-12 years	34	3.0
	13 years and above	63	5.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,119</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The finding that most sample respondents were male is consistent with the assertion of KIPPRA (2024) that males have slightly higher employment rates than females across all age groups in Kenya. Hence gaps in gender equity and inclusivity in employment including in the security sector in the country needs to be addressed.

The finding that majority (52.8%) of the sample respondents were aged between 35 and 51 years is consistent with Kenya's population demographics which indicate that about 54.2% of the population is within the early and prime working age (Index Mundi, 2020).

### 3.3 Extent of Proliferation of Criminal Gangs

#### 3.3.1 Perceptions on the extent of proliferation of criminal gangs

One of the key objectives of this survey was to establish the perceptions of the respondents on the extent of proliferation of criminal gangs in their localities. On this finding, as shown in Figure 1 below, majority (82.3%) of the sample respondents agreed that criminal gangs had

proliferated in their localities. As shown in Figure 2 below, the findings among the National Government Administrative Officers (89.7%) and Police Officers (81.1%) also concurred that there had been proliferation of criminal gangs.

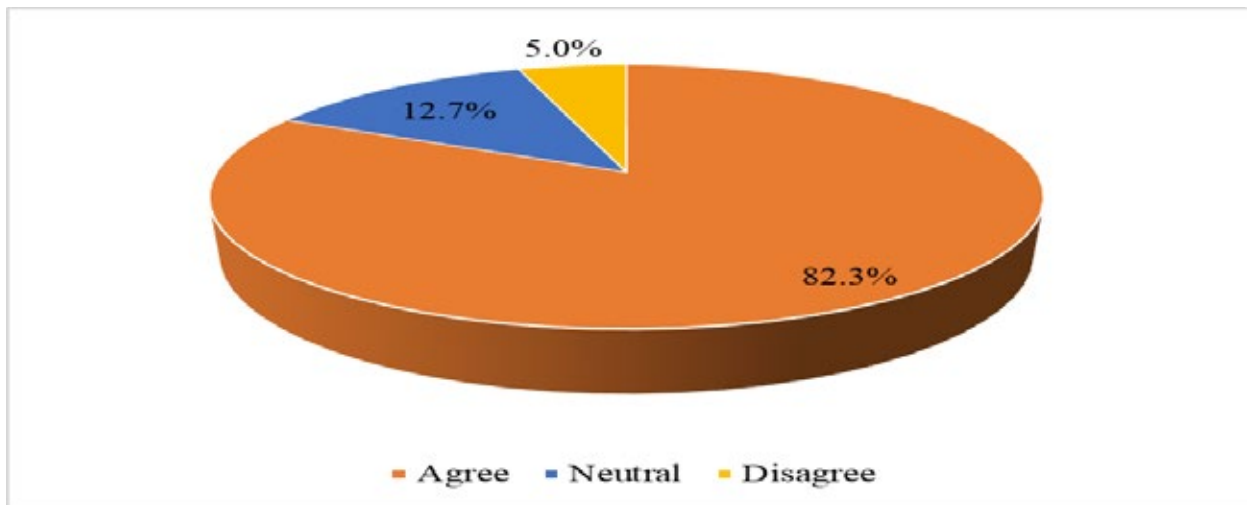


Figure 2: Level of agreement with the statement that criminal gangs had proliferated in the localities

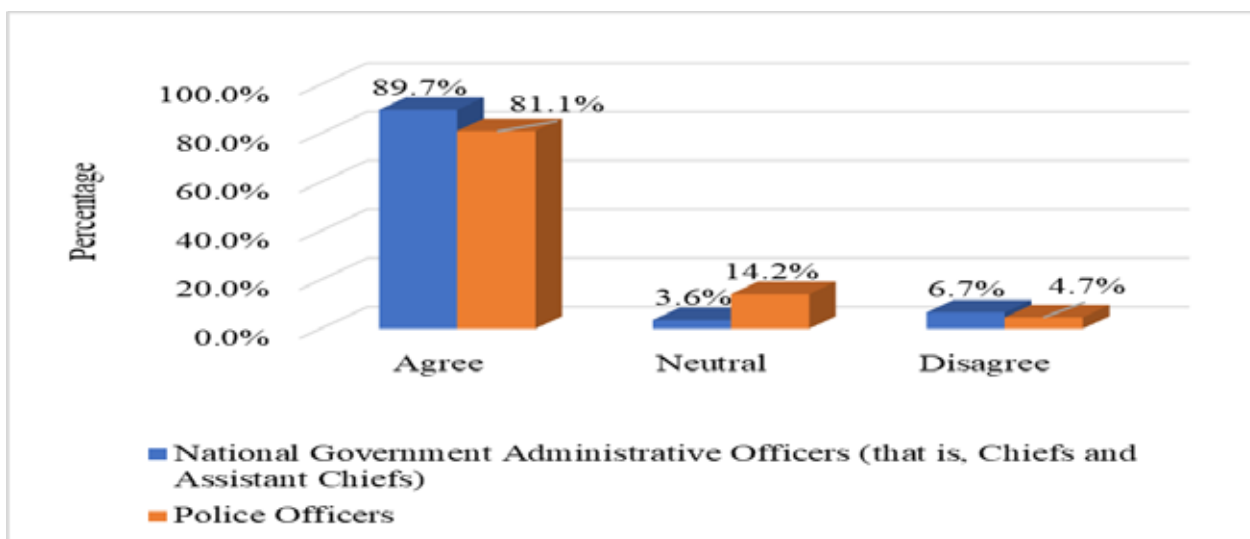


Figure 3: Level of agreement with the statement that criminal gangs had proliferated in the localities by category of sample respondents

County-specific analysis presented in Table 3.2 below showed that over 67.0% of all the sample respondents in all the eleven (11) survey counties were of the view that criminal gangs had proliferated in their localities, with a 100 percent reporting in Busia County and a reporting of between 80.0% and 98.0% being recorded in the counties of Nairobi, Mombasa, Machakos, Kilifi, Garissa, Bungoma and Kisumu.

**Table 3. 2: County analysis of level of agreement with the statement that criminal gangs had proliferated in the localities**

County	Percentage level of agreement with the statement that criminal gangs had proliferated in the localities		
	Agreed	Neutral	Disagree
Busia	100.0	0.0	0.0
Kisumu	98.7	0.0	1.3
Bungoma	98.6	0.0	1.4
Garissa	89.2	9.8	1.0
Kilifi	84.3	9.6	6.1
Machakos	84.2	13.2	2.6
Mombasa	82.7	2.4	15.0
Nairobi	80.9	15.1	4.0
Kwale	70.1	14.4	15.5
Kiambu	69.5	29.2	1.4
Nakuru	67.5	30.6	1.9

Further, the findings from at least a third of the sample respondents showed that there were nine (9) key indicators or signs to suggest that criminal gangs had proliferated in their localities. These indicators or signs were: frequent reports of gang-related crimes (80.2%); rise in criminal gang-related violence and crimes (53.8%); intimidation or threats against local community members (53.4%); expansion of criminal gang influence in youth groups (42.5%); witness accounts of criminal gang activities at odd hours (42.4%); increased visibility of criminal gang activities in public spaces (41.7%); rising fear or reluctance among local community members to report crimes (40.5%); spread of criminal gang activities to previously unaffected areas (40.1%); and increased recruitment of vulnerable individuals into criminal gangs (38.6%). These details are captured in Table 3.3 below.

**Table 3. 3: Indicators or signs suggesting that criminal gangs had proliferated in the localities**

Indicators or signs suggesting that criminal gangs had proliferated in the localities	Percentage
Frequent reports of gang-related crimes	80.2
Rise in criminal gang-related violence and crimes	53.8
Intimidation or threats against local community members	53.4
Expansion of criminal gang influence in youth groups	42.5
Witness accounts of criminal gang activities at odd hours	42.4
Increased visibility of criminal gang activities in public spaces	41.7
Rising fear or reluctance among local community members to report crimes	40.5
Spread of criminal gang activities to previously unaffected areas	40.1
Increased recruitment of vulnerable individuals into criminal gangs	38.6
Involvement of gangs in local economic systems	23.6
Reports of criminal gang and/or counter gang conflicts	23.2
Criminal gang gatherings or patrols in specific neighborhoods	22.4

<b>Indicators or signs suggesting that criminal gangs had proliferated in the localities</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Collaboration between gangs and local business or political actors	19.7
Greater access to weapons and other resources by criminal gangs	19.4
Influence of criminal gangs in local politics	11.1
Presence of informal justice systems enforced by criminal gangs	3.6

County analysis reporting on the nine (9) key indicators or signs that criminal gangs had proliferated were prominent as follows: frequent reports of gang-related crimes was reported in all the eleven (11) counties; rise in criminal gang-related violence and crimes reported in all the counties; intimidation or threats against local community members in 90.9% of the counties; expansion of criminal gang influence in youth groups in 81.8% of the counties; witness accounts of criminal gang activities at odd hours in 72.7% of the counties; increased visibility of criminal gang activities in public spaces in 63.6% of the counties; rising fear or reluctance among local community members to report crimes in 63.6% of the counties; spread of criminal gang activities to previously unaffected areas in 63.6% of the counties; and increased recruitment of vulnerable individuals into criminal gangs in 45.5% of the counties.

The four leading counties in each of the nine (9) key indicators or signs of proliferation of criminal gangs were as follows: frequent reports of gang-related crimes was most in the counties of Bungoma (92.8%), Busia (91.9%), Kisumu (86.7%) and Kilifi (84.3%); rise in criminal gang-related violence and crimes was most common in Nairobi (66.7%), Kisumu (61.3%), Kiambu (55.6%) and Bungoma (55.1%) counties; intimidation or threats against local community members was most prevalent in Garissa (65.7%), Mombasa (64.6%), Kilifi (64.3%) and Nakuru (57.5%) counties; expansion of criminal gang influence in youth groups was mainly in Nairobi (65.0%), Kiambu (50.0%), Nakuru (50.0%) and Kilifi counties; witness accounts of criminal gang activities at odd hours was mainly reported in Kiambu (59.7%), Nakuru (55.0%), Bungoma (53.6%) and Mombasa (52.0%) counties; increased visibility of criminal gang activities in public spaces was most prominent in Nairobi (65.1%), Mombasa (59.1%), Kiambu (52.8%) and Nakuru (52.5%) counties; rising fear or reluctance among local community members to report crimes was most evident in Nairobi (62.7%), Nakuru (60.0%), Kiambu (48.6%) and Bungoma (40.6%) counties; spread of criminal gang activities to previously unaffected areas was most prominent in Nakuru (60.0%), Nairobi (52.4%), Kilifi (48.7%) and Kiambu (48.6%) counties; and increased recruitment of vulnerable individuals into criminal gangs is a problem majorly in Nairobi (66.7%), Kiambu (62.5%), Nakuru (54.4%) and Bungoma (39.1%) counties. These findings are captured in Table 3.4 below.

**Table 3. 4: County responses (in percentage) on indicators or signs suggesting that criminal gangs had proliferated in the localities**

Indicators or signs suggesting that criminal gangs had proliferated in the localities	County responses (in percentage) on indicators or signs suggesting that criminal gangs had proliferated in the localities										Number of counties (and percentage) where at least a third of the sample respondents reported the specific indicator	
	Bungoma	Busia	Kisumu	Kilifi	Machakos	Garissa	Nairobi	Mombasa	Kiambu	Nakuru		Kwale
Frequent reports of gang-related crimes	92.8	91.9	86.7	84.3	82.5	81.4	80.2	76.4	75.0	73.8	69.1	11 (100.0%)
Rise in criminal gang-related violence and crimes	55.1	53.2	61.3	52.2	53.5	53.9	66.7	48.0	55.6	51.2	43.3	11 (100.0%)
Witness accounts of criminal gang activities at odd hours	53.6	51.6	25.3	45.2	13.2	31.4	44.4	52.0	59.7	55.0	35.1	8 (72.7%)
Increased visibility of criminal gang activities in public spaces	46.4	35.5	22.7	43.5	17.5	18.6	65.1	59.1	52.8	52.5	28.9	7 (63.3%)
Intimidation or threats against local community members	44.9	43.5	30.7	64.3	48.2	65.7	57.1	64.6	54.2	57.5	37.1	10 (90.9%)
Rising fear or reluctance among local community members to report crimes	40.6	32.3	36.0	24.3	28.9	36.3	62.7	39.4	48.6	60.0	20.6	7 (63.3%)
Spread of criminal gang activities to previously unaffected areas	39.1	35.5	28.0	48.7	26.3	17.6	52.4	37.8	48.6	60.0	30.9	7 (63.3%)
Increased recruitment of vulnerable individuals into criminal gangs	39.1	27.4	24.0	29.6	36.8	19.6	66.7	31.5	62.5	54.4	18.6	5 (45.5%)
Expansion of criminal gang influence in youth groups	39.1	25.8	26.7	44.3	38.6	38.2	65.1	37.0	50.0	50.0	35.1	9 (81.8%)
Criminal gang gatherings or patrols in specific neighborhoods	31.9	29.0	28.0	32.2	20.2	17.6	6.3	26.0	9.7	28.1	19.6	
Involvement of gangs in local economic systems	17.4	17.7	13.3	8.7	15.8	24.5	49.2	16.5	38.9	40.0	3.1	3 (27.3%)
Greater access to weapons and other resources by criminal gangs	15.9	16.1	10.7	19.1	9.6	19.6	31.0	22.8	13.9	26.3	15.5	
Reports of criminal gang and/or counter gang conflicts	11.6	11.3	10.7	18.3	18.4	16.7	33.3	23.6	18.1	49.4	14.4	2 (18.2%)
Collaboration between gangs and local business or political actors	10.1	16.1	14.7	3.5	19.3	33.3	36.5	17.3	34.7	23.8	1.0	3 (27.3%)
Influence of criminal gangs in local politics	4.3	16.1	8.0	2.6	11.4	20.6	7.9	12.6	23.6	13.8	3.1	
Presence of informal justice systems enforced by criminal gangs	2.9	8.1	2.7	0.9	2.6	1.0	7.1	1.6	5.6	6.3	1.0	

These findings from sample respondents on proliferation of criminal gangs were confirmed by those of key informants and participants in Focus Group Discussions. For instance, an Assistant County Commissioner in one of the Sub-counties in Garissa County remarked as follows:

*“Researcher from NCRC, please take it from me that criminal gangs in this County have proliferated and we have about 5 to 6 notorious gangs like Gaza, Squad Chafu, Scoris, Bulla Mzuri gang, Kayole gang, Squad Marashi and Bada that are giving security officers a headache. We have had increased reports of criminal gang activities in the locality. There is closure of business activities as early as 5.00pm in the evening for fear of being robbed by members of these gangs. Intimidation and threats against local community members is very common. We have witness account of criminal gang activities at odd hours, increased attacks on business premises and public outcry that raised concern on safety especially from those who attending morning prayers in nearby Mosques.”*

A participant in a Focus Group Discussion held in Garissa County reported that:

*“Yes, with the increase of drug abuse and theft, I would say that criminal gangs have proliferated in this locality. Some signs are like a rise in criminal gang activities such as murder, robberies and rape that involves minors and school drop outs.”*

In Chetambe Location in Webuye East Sub-county of Bungoma County, a community leader had this to say:

*“There are criminal gangs in this locality, and yes they have increased. The indicators are many. Frequent reports of gang-related crimes from community members; rise in criminal gang-related violence and crimes; expansion of criminal gang influence in youth groups, i.e., the newly formed 11 brothers involving young boys; increased recruitment of vulnerable individuals into criminal gangs; witness accounts of criminal gang activities at odd hours, e.g., harvesting of farm produce at night by gangs; involvement of gangs in local political systems; intimidation or threats against local community members; rising fear or reluctance among local community members to report crimes; community members forming vigilante groups for their own protection and the protection of their properties; collaboration between gangs and local business or political actors, e.g., Kapchai Defense Force that is used by local political actors to settle their scores; and increased visibility of criminal gang*



*activities in public spaces, e.g., numerous attacks on MPESA business points by members of the criminal gangs.”*

A participant in a Focus Group Discussion held in Bokoli Location of Webuye West Sub-County in Bungoma County said the following:

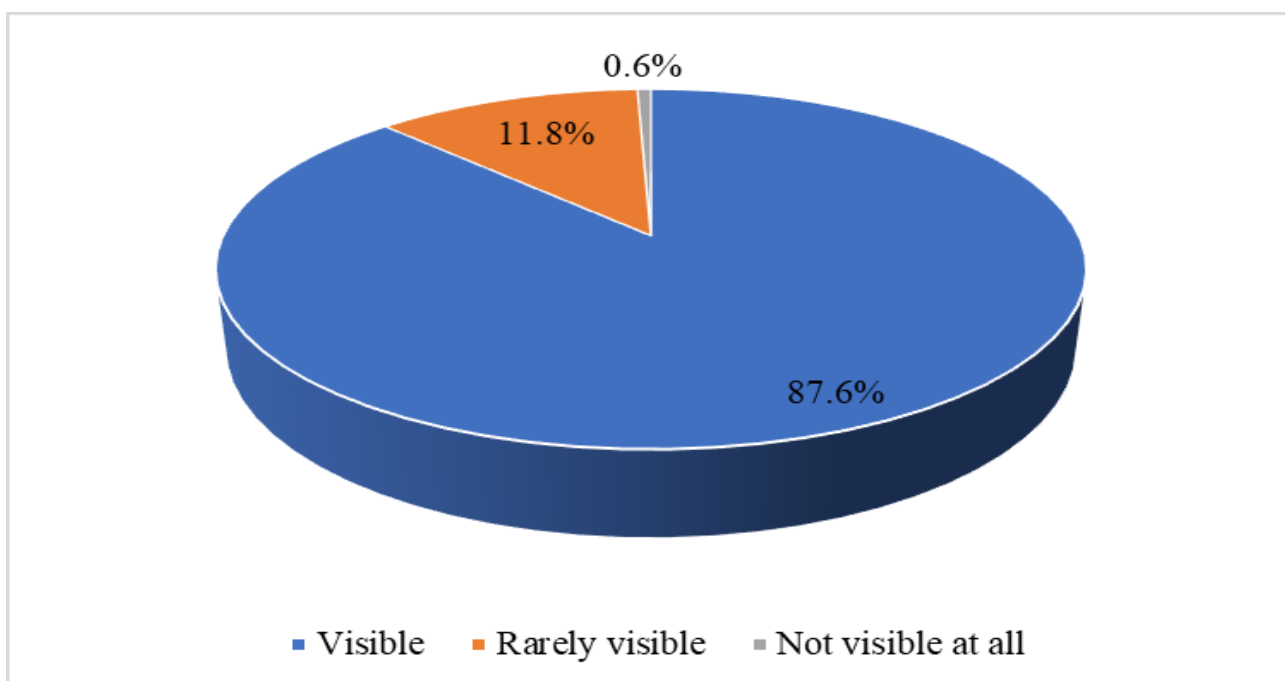
*“There is evident growth of criminal gangs in our area. We can see it from the rise in criminal-related violence and crimes, i.e., they snatch valuables from people during late hours of the day; robberies; greater access to weapons and other resources by criminal gangs, i.e., some members of the gangs walk in public armed with pistols, others use bows and arrows, brown spears, machetes, sharp objects, small axes, wooden clubs with nails attached to it, chain whips, ropes for pulling their potential target backwards; burglary and breakings, i.e., targeting shops which has seen early closure of businesses in the locality; rising fear or reluctance among local community members to report crimes; intimidation or threats against local community members; collaboration between gangs and law enforcers (police officers).”*

The above findings indicate the need for a strategy for monitoring of all the indicators with a special focus on the nine (9) key indicators or signs of proliferation of criminal gangs in all the counties, and a prioritized focus in the counties (in order of high to low priority) of Kiambu, Nakuru, Nairobi, Bungoma, Kilifi, Kisumu, Garissa and Busia.

### **3.3.2 Visibility of criminal gang activities**

Respondents were asked to rate the visibility of criminal gangs in their localities. As shown in Figure 3 below, 87.6% of the sample respondents reported that criminal gangs were visible in their localities. However, 11.8% of the sample respondents were of the view that the gangs were rarely visible.





**Figure 4: Responses on rating of visibility of criminal gang activities in the localities**

County-specific analysis, as presented in Table 3.5 below, showed that criminal gangs were visible, with a reporting by over 76.0% of the sample respondents in each of the eleven (11) counties of survey. The leading counties with a visibility reporting of over 90.0 percent were: Busia (98.4%), Bungoma (95.7%), Kisumu (94.7%), Nairobi (93.7%) and Kiambu (90.3%).

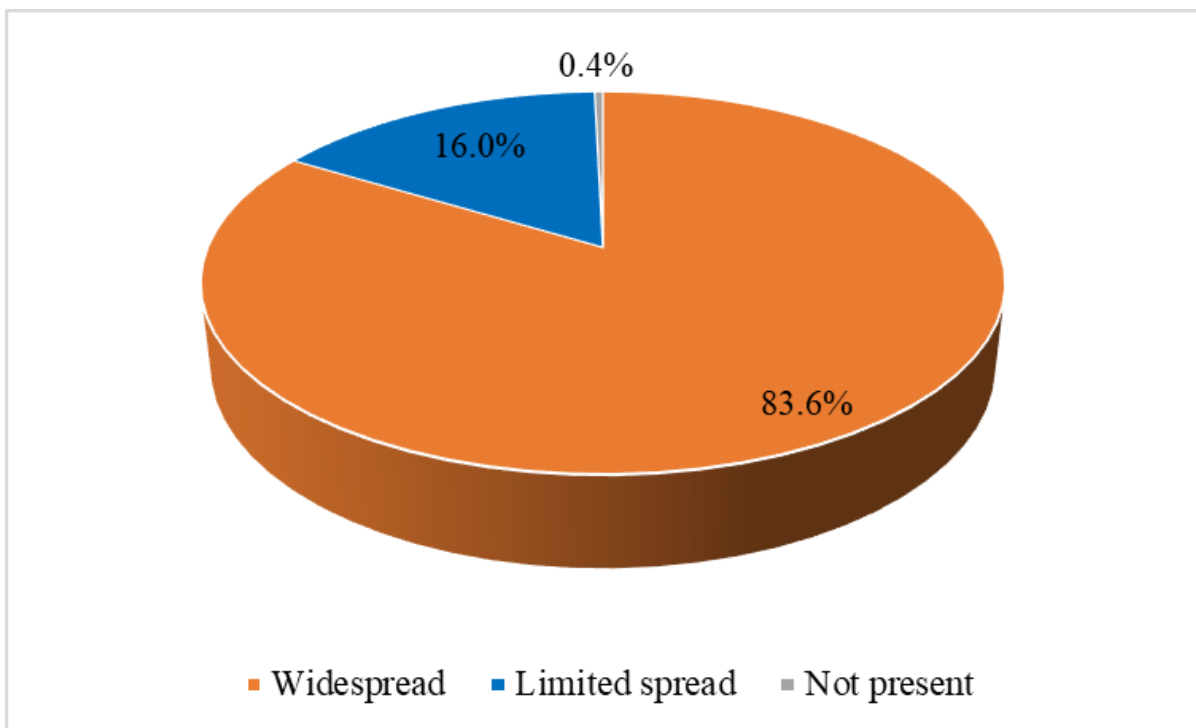
**Table 3. 5: County-specific rating of visibility of criminal gang activities**

County	County responses (in percentage) on the rating of visibility of criminal gang activities in the localities		
	Visible	Rarely visible	Not visible at all
Busia	98.4	0.0	1.6
Bungoma	95.7	4.3	0.0
Kisumu	94.7	5.3	0.0
Nairobi	93.7	4.0	2.4
Kiambu	90.3	9.7	0.0
Nakuru	88.8	10.6	0.6
Garissa	86.2	13.7	0.0
Mombasa	87.4	12.6	0.0
Machakos	83.3	14.9	1.8
Kilifi	77.4	22.6	0.0
Kwale	76.3	23.7	0.0

The above findings are consistent with other results of this survey. For instance, Busia (100.0%), Kisumu (98.7%) and Bungoma (98.6%) were leading in the percentage of sample respondents who agreed that criminal gangs had proliferated their localities. Further, increased visibility of criminal gang activities in public spaces as an indicator or sign of proliferation of criminal gangs was prominently reported in Nairobi (65.1%), Kiambu (52.8%) and Nakuru (52.5%) counties.

### 3.3.3 The spread of criminal gangs

With regard to the spread of criminal gangs in the localities, majority (83.6%) of the sample respondents were of the view that the gangs were widespread. However, 16.0% of the respondents indicated that the criminal gangs had a limited spread in their localities. Figure 4 below illustrates these findings.



**Figure 5: Responses on how spread criminal gangs were in the localities**

As indicated in Table 3.6 below, over 70.0% of the sample respondents in each of the eleven (11) survey counties attested to the widespread nature of criminal gangs in their localities, with Kisumu (89.3%), Busia (88.7%) and Bungoma (88.4%) counties recording the highest reporting of the spread of the gangs.

**Table 3. 6: County-specific responses on the spread of criminal gangs**

County	County responses (in percentage) on how widespread criminal gangs are in the localities		
	Widespread	Limited spread	Not present
Kisumu	89.3	10.7	0.0
Busia	88.7	11.3	0.0
Bungoma	88.4	11.6	0.0
Garissa	88.2	11.8	0.0
Nairobi	88.1	9.5	2.4
Nakuru	84.4	15.0	0.6
Mombasa	83.4	16.5	0.0
Machakos	82.5	17.5	0.0
Kiambu	80.5	19.4	0.0
Kilifi	78.2	21.7	0.0
Kwale	71.1	28.9	0.0

Some findings from Key informants and Focus Group Discussants on the spread of criminal gangs corroborated the findings of sample respondents. For instance, in Athi River Sub-County of Machakos County, a Police Officer working with the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) reported the following about the spread of criminal gangs:

*“Here, we have gangs and the most notorious is Gaza. In this area, it is estimated to have about 100 members and it is spread all over. The recruitment is done outside Athi River town and it is not done in public.”*

A Senior Probation Officer in Nakuru County remarked the following on spread of criminal gangs:

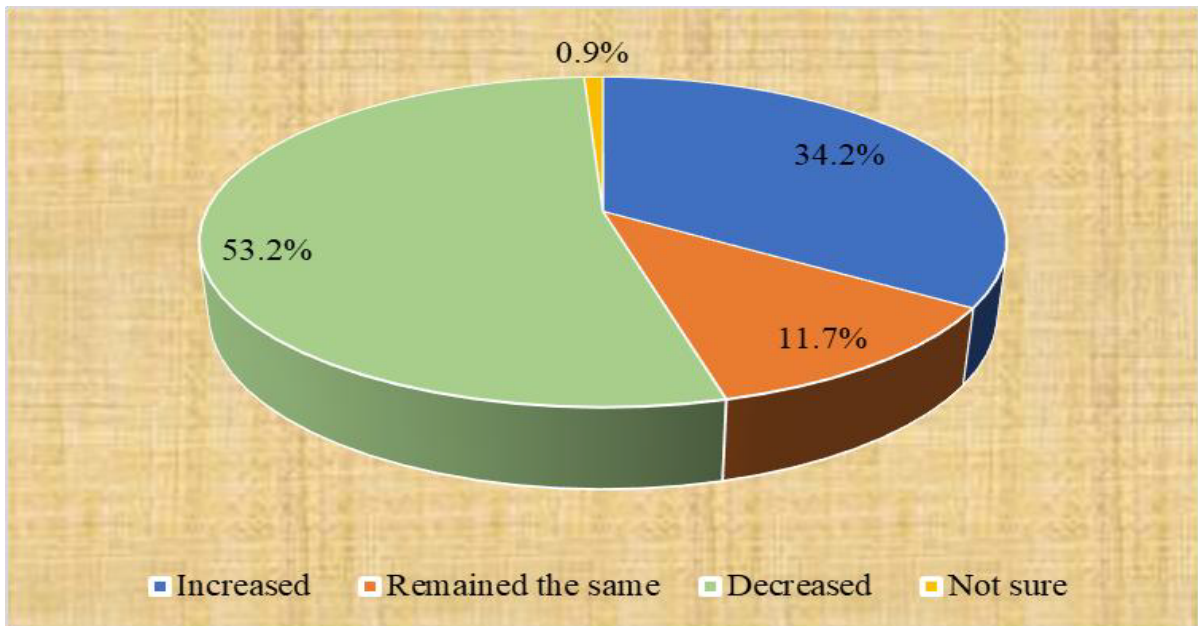
*“Criminal gangs in this area are around ten in number. Most of them are concentrated around town and estates. Therefore, I would say they are spread in multiple areas within the County.”*

The above findings point to a possible widespread nature of criminal gangs across the counties and hence the need to design effective strategies for curbing the spread. According to Olouch (2023), Kenya is experiencing a resurgence of organised gangs that were banned 20 years ago.

### **3.3.4 Perceptions on how the number of criminal gangs has changed in the last 3 years**

Another focus of this survey was how the number of criminal gangs in the communities had changed (in terms of either increase or decrease in numbers) in the last three (3) years. As shown in Figure 5 below, majority (53.2%) of the sample respondents were of the view that the number of gangs had gone down in their localities. However, a significant proportion

(34.2%) of the respondents held the view that the number of criminal gangs had increased.



**Figure 6: Responses on how the number of criminal gangs in communities had changed in the last 3 years**

Most sample respondents in eight (8) out of eleven (11) counties (that is, 72.7% of the counties) had greater perception that the number of criminal gangs in their localities had decreased. Only in Bungoma (53.6%), Busia (51.6%) and Kisumu (50.7%) counties where there was high perception that the number of criminal gangs had increased in the last 3 years. These results are highlighted in Table 3.7 below.

**Table 3. 7: County-based analysis on how the number of criminal gangs in communities had changed in the last 3 years**

County	County responses (in percentage) on how the number of criminal gangs in communities had changed in the last 3 years			
	Increased	Remained the same	Decreased	Not sure
Bungoma	53.6	13.0	33.3	0.0
Busia	51.6	0.0	45.2	3.2
Kisumu	50.7	9.3	40.0	0.0
Kiambu	38.9	11.1	50.0	0.0
Kilifi	35.6	13.9	50.5	0.0
Nairobi	33.3	7.9	56.3	2.4
Machakos	31.6	11.4	56.2	0.9
Garissa	29.4	13.7	55.9	1.0
Kwale	27.8	20.6	50.5	1.0
Mombasa	27.5	13.4	59.1	0.0
Nakuru	23.2	10.6	65.0	1.3

In Busia County, a Magistrate at the Busia Law Courts observed the following on increase in the number of criminal gangs:

*“Many people here know the Jobless criminal gang whose stronghold is in Marachi area. Generally, criminal gangs have increased after the Gen Z protests of June, 2024.”*

In Machakos County, one participant in a Focus Group Discussion was of the opinion that the number of criminal gangs in the locality had increased, saying that:

*“Criminal gangs have increased in number due to their influencing of the youths to join especially during social gatherings. We now have new gangs such as Muli gang and Okoa Wendano gang which have added to Gaza that has been operating in this locality.”*

A Prosecution Counsel in Nairobi County observed the following:

*“Yes, the number of gangs has gone up and they are spread in multiple areas. However, I cannot estimate their number. These gangs are lethal. For instance, Gaza is brutal if one fails to pay levy, they charge at you to the extent of killing you. Mauki gang, they kill if one doesn’t cooperate.”*

A Prosecution Counsel in Kiambu East Sub-county of Kiambu County opined that:

*“Gangs have been increasing in this locality and they are about ten now. They are growing each month because recruitment is monthly. They have also spread over multiple areas within this locality and in other neighbouring counties.”*

A participant in a Focus Group Discussion in Nakuru County indicated that the gangs had reduced in the area, stating the following:

*“In my view as a resident of Flamingo Ward, I would say they have reduced. We have experienced many criminal gang cases (murders) in the past years because our area used to be the neutral ground, where these rival gangs meet. However, in the past one year there has been a total silence in terms of criminal gang cases recorded in the area.”*

A Senior Magistrate in Mombasa County observed the following on or not the number of gangs had increased in the last 3 years:

*“I have been around for now around six years. Coast region let me say six years. I would say there is a slight difference. They are kind of reduced*

*compared to the time when I came here. And again, they tend to be so active during electioneering period. Towards elections like a year or two before elections. They are out and open because they are sponsored by, sorry for this, the politicians. So, they keep fluctuating. You might say right now there is some sort of peace in the area. But towards election time they come out so much, yes so much during elections because they are involved in political patronage.”*

From the above findings, it is apparent that some counties were experiencing increases in the number of criminal gangs, while others were witnessing decreases. Notably, the border counties of Bungoma and Busia were leading in terms of perceived increase in the number of criminal gangs with Kisumu as well, thus suggesting a possible nexus between cross-border security dynamics and proliferation of criminal gangs. In a study on borderland-related crimes and security threats in Kenya (NCRC, 2018b), the counties of Kisumu, Busia, Bungoma and Mombasa were tops in the number of criminal gangs. What these findings portend is that interventions need to be county-specific as much as possible.

### **3.3.5 Criminal gangs that have grown in membership, spread across various counties, are resilient and are dreaded**

This survey also sought to map, by name, the criminal gangs in the eleven (11) counties and to categorize them in terms of those that: had grown in terms of membership in the last 3 years; had spread across various counties; were resilient; and those that were most dreaded (feared).

The findings presented in Table 3.8 below showed that there was a total of 309 criminal gangs distributed across the eleven (11) survey counties. Of these gangs, 254 were each present in one county, 42 were each present in two counties and 7 were each present in three counties.

**Table 3. 8: Summary of the spread of the 309 criminal gangs in the 11 survey counties**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Number of criminal gangs</b>	<b>Number of counties they are present</b>
1.	254	1
2.	42	2
3.	7	3
4.	3	4
5.	1	5
6.	1	6
7.	1	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>309</b>	

Further findings as shown in Table 3.9 below (and Annex 1) revealed that the criminal gangs that were leading in terms of their presence in at least a third of the counties (that is, 4 counties) were: Gaza/Gaza Family (in 8 out of 11 counties or 72.7%); 42 Brothers (in 6 counties or 54.5%); Wakali Wao (in 5 counties or 45.5%); and Panga Boys, Chafu/Squad Chafu/Gang Chafu and Mungiki (each in 4 counties or 36.4%).

**Table 3. 9: Criminal gangs and their spread across the counties**

No.	Name of known criminal gang	Presence of known criminal gangs in the counties										Total number of counties criminal gang is present	
		Mombasa	Nakuru	Kilifi	Garissa	Kwale	Machakos	Nairobi	Busia	Bungoma	Kiambu		Kisumu
1.	Gaza/Gaza Family	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	8
2.	42 Brothers	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
3.	Wakali Wao	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓					5
4.	Panga Boys	✓		✓	✓	✓							4
5.	Chafu/Squad Chafu/Gang Chafu	✓			✓	✓		✓					4
6.	Mungiki		✓				✓	✓			✓		4

Government, scholarly and Non-Governmental Organization research, and journalistic reporting confirms that some criminal gangs with shared names like Gaza/Gaza Family and 42 Brothers operating in counties such as Nairobi, Murang’a, Nakuru, Mombasa, do not operate as isolated groups but function as coordinated networks of cells spread across multiple counties. This supports the assertion that some criminal gangs in Kenya deliberately maintain identical group names across counties, operate through cell-based, coordinated structures with central leadership and shift locations strategically to evade law enforcement thus indicating that the criminal gangs are national networks with local outposts, and not isolated county-specific phenomena (Human Rights Watch, 2014; Ngunyi and Katumanga, 2014; The African Crime and Conflict Journal, 2022; The Star, 2023; Republic of Kenya, 2024). The above assertion notwithstanding, similar names across counties of most criminal gangs usually indicate ‘cultural symbolic association or copycat behaviour’, which is more about emulation than direct command or unified chain of command, as true inter-county command is usually rare. Hence the policy relevance of the finding on criminal gangs with shared names across the various counties is that countering such criminal gangs requires evidence of their coordinated planning, communication, or resource sharing and cross-county security intelligence sharing.



The distribution of the number of known criminal gangs across the counties of survey (as indicated in Table 3.10 below) was as follows: Mombasa (73); Nairobi (56); Kilifi (47); Garissa (31); Kwale (29); Busia (29); Bungoma (28); Machakos (28); Nakuru (27); Kisumu (22); and Kiambu (20). The distribution of the number of criminal gangs that were believed to have rapidly grown in terms of membership in the last 3 years (as reported by at least 10% of the sample respondents) was as follows: Mombasa (11); Nakuru (8); Kiambu (7); Garissa (7); Nairobi (6); Kilifi (6); Busia (6); Kisumu (6); Kwale (5); Bungoma (4); and Machakos (4).

The number of criminal gangs that were believed to have their presence in other counties, that is, had grown in terms of expanding into other counties (as reported by at least 10% of the sample respondents) across the survey counties were as follows: Mombasa (5); Machakos (5); Kilifi (4); Kwale (4); Bungoma (3); Kisumu (3); Kiambu (3); Garissa (3); Busia (2); Nairobi (2); and Nakuru (2). The number of criminal gangs that were said to be more resilient, that is, had been able to adapt, survive, and continue operating despite efforts to dismantle or suppress them (as reported by at least 10% of the sample respondents) was distributed as follows: Mombasa (6); Kiambu (6); Busia (6); Nakuru (5); Garissa (5); Kisumu (4); Kilifi (4); Nairobi (3); Kwale (3); Bungoma (3); and Machakos (3). The number of most dreaded criminal gangs reported across the eleven (11) counties were as follows: Garissa and Nakuru counties each had five (5) criminal gangs; Kiambu, Kisumu, Machakos and Kilifi counties each had four (4) gangs; Mombasa, Nairobi, Bungoma and Busia counties each had three (3) gangs; and Kwale County had one (1) most dreaded criminal gang.

The summary in Table 3.10 below (and Annex 2) presents the 309 criminal gangs in the eleven (11) counties as perceived by the sample respondents in terms of growth in membership, spread across various counties, resilience and being most dreaded.

**Table 3. 10: Summary per county of the number of gangs: known by name; believed to have rapidly grown in terms of membership; have their presence in other counties; said to be more resilient; and are most dreaded (feared)**

County	Number of gangs known by name in each county	Number of criminal gangs that are believed to have rapidly grown in terms of membership in the last 3 years (as reported by at least 10% of the sample respondents)	Number of criminal gangs that are believed to have their presence in other counties, that is, have grown in terms of expanding into other counties (as reported by at least 10% of the sample respondents)	Number of criminal gangs that are said to be more resilient, that is, have been able to adapt, survive, and continue operating despite efforts to dismantle or suppress them (as reported by at least 10% of the sample respondents)	Number of most dreaded (feared) criminal gangs in the localities (as reported by at least 10% of the sample respondents)
Mombasa	73	11	5	6	3
Nairobi	56	6	2	3	3
Kilifi	47	6	4	4	4
Garissa	31	7	3	5	5
Kwale	29	5	4	3	1
Busia	29	6	2	6	3
Bungoma	28	4	3	3	3
Machakos	28	4	5	3	4
Nakuru	27	8	2	5	5
Kisumu	22	6	3	4	4
Kiambu	20	7	3	6	4

Key informants' findings on criminal gangs that have grown in membership, spread across various counties, are resilient and are dreaded largely concurred with a number of sampled remarks. For instance, a participant in a Focus Group Discussion held in Burumba Location of Busia Township Sub-County in Busia County observed:

*“Some of the criminal gangs we know in this locality are Jobless, 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, G7 and Bulanda Blue Battalion. The gangs, especially the Jobless criminal gang is widely spread all over the county and extending its areas of operation to Uganda and other counties in Kenya, particularly Kisumu and Kakamega. Other gangs operate locally.”*

A participant in a Focus Group Discussion in Machakos reported the following:

*“The criminal gangs in this locality that have spread to other areas include Single Brothers and Gaza.”*

One of the Assistant County Commissioners in Matungulu Sub-county of Machakos County observed:

*“There exist about 3 different gangs, that is, one associated with Wendano Farm, one that engages in robberies, theft and others and a group of 6 gang members that usually wears police attire terrorizing and intimidating people. Of late there is an increased report of gang activities in the locality”*

The most dreaded criminal gangs were also reported by key informants and FGD participants across the counties. For instance, an official with the Mathare Peace Initiative in Nairobi County reported the following:

*“The two most dreaded criminal gangs in this locality are Mungiki which is well organised, spread and crude in punishing those who don't abide to their rules, and Gaza who use crude weapons in their operations and don't fear police officers since they work together. Gangs here have continued grow despite efforts to dismantle them”*

An official with Youth Network in Kiambu County reported on dreaded criminal gangs and said:

*“Mungiki is dreaded because they maim and kill and burn down family houses. Gaza is another one because they also destroy and burn down owners' businesses if the owners don't cooperate with them. These gangs have spread to multiple places, and also, they have presence in other counties. They have continued to be more resilient and mutate becoming more brutal in their operations.”*

The above findings underscore the need to effectively tame all criminal gangs in the country, with a special focus on Gaza/Gaza Family, 42 Brothers, Wakali Wao, Panga Boys, Chafu/Squad Chafu/Gang Chafu and Mungiki, which have all spread their tentacles across numerous counties and were likely to continue spreading further if not effectively checked. Moreover, County Security Teams need to design county-specific interventions to deal with criminal gangs in their jurisdictions.

The sample respondents who had listed the most dreaded criminal gangs were further probed to indicate the reasons why the criminal gangs were most dreaded. From the findings presented in Table 3.11 below, there were ten (10) main reasons that were reported by at least a third of the respondents and these were: use of sharp bladed weapons such as pangas (87.2%); use of extreme violence (78.3%); involvement in drug peddling and/or trafficking and abuse (65.9%); intimidation of local leaders and residents (65.5%); engagement in serious crimes (61.8%); ability to recruit vulnerable individuals with relative ease (50.0%); strong network and coordination among members (39.5%); rapid expansion of their membership and/or coverage (37.2%); use of crude weapons (35.0%); and ability to secure support and/or protection from either law enforcement officers, politicians or business persons (31.6%).

**Table 3. 11: Reasons why some criminal gangs were most dreaded**

<b>Reasons why some criminal gangs were most dreaded in the localities</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Use of sharp bladed weapons such as pangas	87.2
Use of extreme violence	78.3
Involvement in drug peddling and/or trafficking and abuse	65.9
Intimidation of local leaders and residents	65.5
Engagement in serious crimes	61.8
Ability to recruit vulnerable individuals with relative ease	50.0
Strong network and coordination among members	39.5
Rapid expansion of their membership and/or coverage	37.2
Use of crude weapons	35.0
Ability to secure support and/or protection from either law enforcement officers, politicians or business persons	31.6
Ability to evade law enforcement actions	27.1
Ability to intimidate law enforcement officers	24.3
Possession of illegal firearms	15.6
Control over key economic activities	13.7
Disruption of funeral vigils	7.3
Use of poisoned arrows	0.9

County analysis of the ten (10) main reasons why the criminal gangs were feared (dreaded) showed outcomes as shown in Table 3.12 below. A summary of four leading counties (that is, a third of the counties) for each of the reasons showed that: Nakuru (93.1%), Mombasa (90.6%), Kilifi (90.4%) and Garissa (89.2%) counties were leading in the fear of dreaded gangs due to the gangs' use of sharp bladed weapons such as pangas; Garissa (96.1%), Nakuru (90.0%), Busia (88.7%) and Kilifi (83.5%) counties were leading in the fear of dreaded gangs due to their use of extreme violence; Kiambu (88.9%), Nairobi (83.3%),

Nakuru (77.5%) and Garissa (72.5%) counties were leading in the fear of dreaded gangs because of their involvement in drug peddling and/or trafficking and abuse; Mombasa (81.9%), Busia (77.4%), Kilifi (76.5%) and Kiambu (70.8%) counties topped in the fear of dreaded gangs because of intimidation of local leaders and residents; Garissa (86.3%), Kiambu (77.8%), Nairobi (66.7%) and Nakuru (65.0%) counties were leading in the fear of gangs due to their engagement in serious crimes; counties leading in fear of dreaded gangs due to their ability to recruit vulnerable individuals with relative ease were Kiambu (81.9%), Nairobi (80.2%), Nakuru (71.9%) and Machakos (49.1%); Kiambu (70.8%), Nakuru (66.9%), Nairobi (62.7%) and Bungoma (40.6%) counties were leading in fear of dreaded gangs as result of their strong network and coordination among members; Nairobi (51.6%), Kiambu (50.0%), Nakuru (43.1%) and Mombasa (40.2%) counties were top in fear of dreaded gangs due to their rapid expansion of their membership and/or coverage; Bungoma (74.0%), Busia (69.4%), Kiambu (57.7%) and Nairobi (56.0%) counties were leading in the fear of dreaded criminal gangs due to the use of crude weapons; and the leading counties that fear dreaded gangs because of their ability to secure support and/or protection from either law enforcement officers, politicians or business persons were Kiambu (61.1%), Nairobi (57.1%), Nakuru (44.4%) and Busia (38.5%).

**Table 3. 12: County-based analysis of the reasons why the criminal gangs were dreaded**

Reasons why the criminal gangs are most dreaded in the localities	County responses (in percentage)										
	Nakuru	Mombasa	Kilifi	Garissa	Kwale	Machakos	Nairobi	Busia	Kiambu	Bungoma	Kisumu
Use of sharp bladed weapons such as pangas	93.1	90.6	90.4	89.2	88.7	88.6	88.1	82.3	81.9	79.7	72.0
Use of extreme violence	90.0	73.2	83.5	96.1	67.0	68.4	81.0	88.7	65.3	75.4	61.3
Involvement in drug peddling and/or trafficking and abuse	77.5	63.0	60.0	72.5	43.3	71.9	83.3	59.7	88.9	44.9	38.7
Ability to recruit vulnerable individuals with relative ease	71.9	47.2	28.7	34.3	24.7	49.1	80.2	46.8	81.9	39.1	28.0
Strong network and coordination among members	66.9	34.6	20.9	25.5	20.6	11.4	62.7	35.5	70.8	40.6	37.3
Engagement in serious crimes	65.0	53.5	50.4	86.3	45.4	63.2	66.7	64.5	77.8	58.0	49.3
Intimidation of local leaders and residents	59.4	81.9	76.5	63.7	37.1	66.7	65.9	77.4	70.8	63.8	57.3
Ability to secure support and/or protection from either law enforcement	44.4	23.6	15.7	37.3	9.3	25.4	57.1	38.7	61.1	13.0	13.3

Reasons why the criminal gangs are most dreaded in the localities	County responses (in percentage)										
	Nakuru	Mombasa	Kilifi	Garissa	Kwale	Machakos	Nairobi	Busia	Kiambu	Bungoma	Kisumu
officers, politicians or business persons											
Rapid expansion of their membership and/or coverage	43.1	40.2	33.9	38.2	27.8	26.3	51.6	30.6	50.0	33.3	24.0
Ability to evade law enforcement actions	37.5	28.3	29.6	39.2	24.7	16.7	27.8	22.6	30.6	11.6	14.7
Ability to intimidate law enforcement officers	27.5	18.9	23.5	37.3	10.3	12.3	21.4	46.8	23.6	30.4	28.0
Control over key economic activities	18.8	4.7	2.6	7.8	8.2	6.1	34.1	11.3	43.1	4.3	9.3
Use of crude weapons	16.9	48.8	30.9	45.6	4.1	0.5	56.0	69.4	57.7	74.0	13.4
Possession of illegal firearms	13.1	1.6	0.9	26.5	4.1	13.2	50.8	27.4	23.6	1.4	8.0
Disruption of funeral vigils	2.5	9.4	12.2	0.0	1.0	0.0	2.4	21.0	11.1	31.9	6.7
Use of poisoned arrows	0.0	0.8	3.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	3.2	1.4	1.4	0.0

Key informants' findings on why some of the criminal gangs were dreaded were wide ranging, but they captured some of the findings from the sample respondents.

An official working with a Community Service Organization in Likoni area of Mombasa County narrated how the criminal gangs had caused pain to residents and hence were very dreaded. The official observed:

*“Out of the 37 criminal gangs I have mentioned to you, the most dreaded are Shiranga, Russia and Jamaica. Why they are dreaded it is because they mug, they waylay, they snatch, they continue snatching to date, there is robbery with violence, they kill, they rape, they sodomize, they have street fights, there is burglary and breakings. All these things they do. Even at the moment, when we started defining them by the groups, they started now operating in small individual groups. This is simply because most of them are taken to the rehabilitation centers or prison for instance Shimo la Tewa. What simply happens there is that they network with others from other areas. So, when they get pardoned or they finish their sentencing, when they come back here they network. They now start being in a group of three people, four people; depending on who knows the area so they use that one to continue with some of those things. So, they are growing up with that impunity.”*

One participant in a Focus Group Discussion in Kilifi County observed the following:

*“There are things that we witness, they have increased because of the weakness of government agencies especially Directorate of Criminal investigations (DCI) because for example Bughatti gang, it’s widespread in the area, well dressed they investigate or patrols the neighbourhood before they attack, you can report them to the police and nothing happens, they steal phones, television and deliver to the buyers. They keep on influencing their peers to join because no action is taken against them. Vitembe drug sold in Chemist “blue pills” it interferes with one’s normal functioning (mind) while the bhang alters normal functioning.”*

A Prosecution Counsel in Mombasa County observed:

*“A gang known as Mjukuu wa Nyanya is very dreaded. Then in Kisauni there is another I am forgetting about the name. It is also a notorious gang in Kisauni area. The way they act is just spontaneous that I said they are on and off. So, at some certain times of the year. They normally actually range between 17 years to around 22 there. So, you find these young boys, they regroup numbering about 10 there. So, during the day, they normally operate during the day around evening. The Kisauni one normally comes out around evening between 3pm, 4pm up to around 8pm. Then they just attack members of the public. They are always armed in machete. They just roam and then they attack members of the public. Apparently, the ones that I have seen in Mombasa Likoni, Kisauni area, majorly it is just robbing people their phones, their bags and attacking them.”*

The above findings on the main reasons why some criminal gangs were dreaded point to serious consequences of these gangs in their localities and call a special and decisive actions on the affected counties to neutralise these gangs, in preferential priority consideration: Kiambu and Nakuru (which are among the four leading counties in 8 of the 10 main reasons); Nairobi and Garissa (which are among the four leading counties in 7 of the 10 main reasons); Busia (which is among the four leading counties in 4 of the 10 main reasons) Mombasa and Kilifi (which are among the four leading counties in 3 of the 10 main reasons); Bungoma (which is among the four leading counties in 2 of the 10 main reasons); and Machakos (which is among the four leading counties in 1 of the 10 main reasons). These findings are consistent with those of Mutahi (2022) which indicated that every region in the country had several local gangs that operated with impunity. These gangs included Wakali Wao, Watalia, Gaza, Wakali Kwanza and Confirm, with the last one being responsible for insecurity in parts such as Nakuru (Matara, 2022).



In summary, the results on extent of proliferation of criminal gangs point towards a possible widespread proliferation, persistence, and resilience of criminal gangs across multiple counties in Kenya. This conclusion is supported by findings pointing to the deep entrenchment of criminal gangs in local communities, regional variation in gang proliferation and expansion, high adaptability and resilience of gangs evidenced by the presence of gangs that continue to thrive even in counties where suppression efforts have been intensified, and the growing threat of highly violent and dreaded gangs.

### 3.4 Nature of Activities of Criminal Gangs

This section of the survey mainly focused on: sectors affected by criminal gangs; specific criminal activities of the gangs and their frequency; how criminal gangs undertook their activities (that is, mode of operation); and the extent to which local community members had contributed in the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs.

#### 3.4.1 Sectors affected by criminal gangs

The survey findings showed that criminal gangs had affected at least fourteen (14) specific sectors according to reporting by one (1) out of every ten (10) sample respondents. As shown in Table 3.13 below, the ten (10) most affected sectors were: Security (90.8%); Counter-illicit Drugs and Narcotics Trafficking (70.5%); Business and Entrepreneurship (62.0%); Public Transport Service (53.1%); Political (38.7%); Information and Communication Technology (31.1%); Land and Natural Resources (22.1%); Financial (20.6%); Hospitality and Entertainment (18.2%); and Education (17.2%).

**Table 3. 13: Sectors affected by criminal gangs**

Sector	Percentage
Security	90.8
Counter-illicit Drugs and Narcotics Trafficking	70.5
Business and Entrepreneurship	62.0
Public Transport Service	53.1
Political	38.7
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	31.1
Land and Natural Resources	22.1
Financial	20.6
Hospitality and entertainment	18.2
Education	17.2
Informal Economy	7.9
Construction	5.9
Agricultural	4.1
Health	2.9

The ten (10) sectors most affected by criminal gangs were further analyzed as per the counties. The highlights on the four leading counties (that is, a third of the counties) in the most affected sectors were: Security indicated Garissa (99.0%), Mombasa (97.6%), Kiambu

(97.2%) and Nakuru (96.3%); Counter-illicit Drugs and Narcotics Trafficking observed Kiambu (94.4%), Garissa (89.2%), Nairobi (88.9%) and Machakos (80.7%); Business and Entrepreneurship spotlighted Garissa (85.3%), Kiambu (81.9%), Nairobi (77.8%) and Busia (75.8%); Public Transport Service tipped Kiambu (91.7%), Nairobi (87.3%), Nakuru (76.3%) and Machakos (67.5%); Political sector it was Busia (74.2%), Kiambu (58.3%), Nairobi (54.8%) and Garissa (52.0%); Information and Communication Technology indicated Nakuru (66.3%), Kiambu (56.9%), Nairobi (54.0%) and Garissa (43.1%); Land and Natural Resources enlisted as Machakos (68.4%), Kilifi (48.7%), Mombasa (28.3%) and Garissa (26.5%); Financial sector included Nairobi (47.6%), Kiambu (43.1%), Garissa (39.2%) and Nakuru (28.8%); Hospitality and Entertainment designated as Nairobi (38.9%), Kiambu (36.1%), Kisumu (30.7%) and Bungoma (24.6%); and Education sector showed Nairobi (37.3%), Nakuru (35.6%), Kiambu (29.2%) and Kwale (17.5%). The detailed results are captured in Table 3.14 below.

**Table 3. 14: Sectors affected by criminal gangs by county**

Sector	County responses in percentage										
	Garissa	Mombasa	Kiambu	Nakuru	Kilifi	Machakos	Kwale	Nairobi	Busia	Bungoma	Kisumu
Security	99.0	97.6	97.2	96.3	94.8	94.7	92.8	88.9	88.7	76.8	53.3
Counter-illicit Drugs and Narcotics Trafficking	89.2	74.0	94.4	80.6	57.4	80.7	45.4	88.9	58.1	47.8	32.0
Business and Entrepreneurship	85.3	60.6	81.9	62.5	33.9	66.7	40.2	77.8	75.8	53.6	46.7
Political	52.0	38.6	58.3	45.0	20.0	30.7	9.3	54.8	74.2	23.2	25.3
Public Transport Service	52.0	27.6	91.7	76.3	26.1	67.5	32.0	87.3	30.6	36.2	34.7
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	43.1	22.8	56.9	66.3	11.3	21.9	11.3	54.0	16.1	0.0	1.3
Financial	39.2	17.3	43.1	28.8	0.9	12.3	6.2	47.6	16.1	0.0	1.3
Land and Natural Resources	26.5	28.3	9.7	4.4	48.7	68.4	9.3	6.3	9.7	1.4	16.0
Informal Economy	11.8	11.0	5.6	11.3	4.3	1.8	10.3	14.3	1.6	1.4	4.0
Agricultural	11.8	0.0	0.0	7.5	4.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.1	15.9	1.3
Education	6.9	17.3	29.2	35.6	8.7	6.1	17.5	37.3	1.6	0.0	4.0
Health	2.0	0.0	8.3	6.9	3.5	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	10.1	1.3
Construction	1.0	5.5	19.4	2.5	0.9	10.5	2.1	18.3	3.2	0.0	0.0
Hospitality and Entertainment	0.0	18.1	36.1	18.8	8.7	4.4	8.2	38.9	21.0	24.6	30.7

The findings from the sample respondents on sectors affected by criminal gangs were also corroborated by key informants' findings. For instance, a senior Police Officer in Katani area of Athi River Sub-county in Machakos commented the following:

*“Gangs like Gaza have penetrated the land and natural resources, drugs and narcotics and the security sector. They are feared because they intimidate and threaten local community members, are hired by land grabbers to cause havoc, cause forcible detainer of land, engage in robberies and other serious crimes, use crude weapons to kill and even maim, and are involved in drug and substance abuse.”*

An official with a community organization in Mathare area of Nairobi County said that:

*“Gangs in Nairobi, you will find them in Markets/Business, Transport, ICT, Education, Financial and Housing sectors. Their activities include gambling, perpetuating Mpesa fraud, cyber-bullying, sending threatening messages, control of matatu and motorbike stages, extortion of traders in the markets, charging construction materials at construction sites and radicalization of young school going boys”*

A senior Probation Officer in Nakuru East Sub-county of Nakuru County listed several sectors affected by criminal gangs in the following statement:

*“You will find criminal gangs in Nakuru County in sectors such as transport especially matatu and bodabodas, ICT/financial (especially fraud through Mpesa), education (recruiting young boys to their gangs), fishing sector, wildlife sector and business (especially in markets).”*

These findings clearly show that criminal gangs had affected a number of key sectors of the country's economy. Hence there is need for measures aimed at protecting all the sectors from criminal gang influence, with a special focus on the ten (10) most affected sectors.

The high involvement of criminal gangs on the security sector (90.8%) is a possible suggestion that criminal gangs are undeterred by security measures against them and/or have established networks within law enforcement agencies, leading to possible compromised investigations, protection of criminals and potential misuse of state resources. Hence, there is need for frequent internal vetting or surveillance of security personnel, stronger oversight mechanisms and enhanced anti-corruption measures within the security sector to prevent law enforcement collaboration with criminal gangs. For instance, an earlier report by the National Crime Research Centre showed that kidnapping incidents in the country were likely to escalate if corrupt security officers continued colluding with kidnappers or get compromised (NCRC, 2017; Kenya West, 2021).

The high influence on the counter-illicit drugs and narcotics trafficking efforts by criminal gangs (70.5%) indicates that criminal gangs play a central role in the illegal drug market, resulting in addiction, violence, and even cross-border drug peddling and/or trafficking. According to the Institute for Security Studies (2020), gangs have become the foot soldiers in Mombasa's drug trade, keeping the city's narco image alive, providing grassroots reach for drug lords as well as businessmen and politicians. Hence, enhanced inter-agency collaboration among various stakeholders which include law enforcement, health authorities and rehabilitation centers is crucial to help disrupt drug supply chains and dealing blow to drug cartels, while offering alternative pathways for youth empowerment and livelihood are necessary.

The finding on gang effects into the business and entrepreneurship (62.0%) indicates that gang crime is exploiting both formal and informal markets, engaging in extortion, illegal trade, and money laundering activities. According to the Kenya News Agency (KNA) (2025) and NCRC (2012), organized criminal gangs in Kenya have wide influence on the formal and informal business sectors. Hence, enhanced oversight on financial transactions, and protection of small businesses from extortion is needed. Public-private partnerships can be leveraged on to develop crime-free economic zones and offer alternative livelihoods to individuals vulnerable to gang recruitment.



**Members of the business community in Embu protesting the reign of terror by criminal gangs in May 2025**

The matatu public transport sector in the country occupies a central place in Kenya's economy. The infiltration of the public transport service sector by gangs (53.1%) is a clear indicator that gangs control significant portion of the Matatu industry, engaging in extortion, protection rackets and targeted violence (NCRC, 2012). This distorts and disrupts the smooth flow of the transport revenue and employment opportunities in that sector of the economy. Strengthening public transport sector regulation, digital fare collection systems to minimize cash transactions and law enforcement oversight is crucial in breaking criminal networks.

Collaborative efforts between law enforcement, transport associations and local governments units has the potential to enhance security and reduce gang-related extortion in the sector.

The penetration of the political sector by criminal gangs (38.7%) signals the use of gangs for political violence, intimidation, and manipulation especially during elections and other governance processes. This points to the need to criminalize political engagement with gangs, strict vetting of political candidates and increased transparency in campaign financing. Monitoring and disrupting political networks that fund or mobilize criminal gangs during election periods could also be pursued. Gastrow (2011) argues that some criminal gangs that are funded by politicians able to influence the political class and compromise the justice system through bribery and other acts of corruption.

Gang involvement in land and natural resources (22.1%) highlights their possible role in land grabbing, illegal mining, and forced evictions, and hence the need for stronger land governance policies, digitization of land records and community-led land protection initiatives to curb gang influence. An earlier report by the National Police Service pointed to ways gangs extorted legal land owners in the guise of approvals in the full glare of the police (Kenya West, 2021). There is need for crack down on illegal land brokers, fraudulent transactions and intimidation tactics used by criminal gangs in property disputes.

The financial sector's infiltration by criminal gangs (20.6%) suggests that gangs are using banks, mobile money platforms and other financial systems for money laundering and illicit financial activities. Mutahi (2022) argues that Confirm' gang in 2018 was largely engaged in mobile money fraud. Strengthening anti-money laundering policies, financial transaction monitoring, and regulatory oversight is crucial in identifying and dismantling gang-linked financial operations. Increased collaboration between financial institutions, regulatory bodies and law enforcement can enhance the tracking of suspicious transactions.

The finding on the penetration of hospitality and entertainment by the criminal gangs (18.2%) suggests that gangs use clubs, casinos and recreational facilities as hubs for crimes such as drug distribution, human trafficking and money laundering. For instance, some gangs in Mombasa County have been reported to target hotels and restaurants where they rob customers (K24TV, n.d). This should necessitate stricter licensing and regulatory controls on entertainment businesses, alongside law enforcement monitoring of criminal activities within these establishments.

The finding that there is influence of the education sector by criminal gangs (17.2%) suggests possible gangs' involvement in recruiting youth attending schools, and influencing students to engage in crime and drug use. According to SALEM (2023), young boys drop out of school to join criminal gangs. Strengthening school-based mentorship programs, youth empowerment initiatives, and student counselling services can help deter gangs' activities in this sector. In addition, enhancing teacher training on early warning signs of gang influences



and working with law enforcement for early interventions will deter youth full entrenchment in the crimes.

### 3.4.2 Specific criminal activities that gangs engaged in and their frequency

#### 3.4.2.1 Specific criminal activities that gangs engaged in

Twelve criminal activities that gangs engaged in were identified from the findings mentioned by at least a third of the sample respondents. These were: Robberies (84.5%); Assaults, including of public transport drivers and crew (80.9%); General Stealing (80.6%); Illicit drug distribution and trafficking (70.2%); Burglary and breakings (64.8%); muggings (62.6%); Grievous harm (48.2%); Murder (41.0%); Rape (38.3%); attacks on women (35.2%); extortion in Matatu public transport (34.4%); and Defilement (33.9%). The full details of the criminal activities are as presented in Table 3.15 below.

**Table 3. 15: Specific criminal activities that gangs engaged in**

<b>Specific criminal activities that gangs engage in</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Robberies	84.5
Assaults (including of public transport drivers and crew)	80.9
General Stealing	80.6
Illicit drug distribution and trafficking	70.2
Burglary and breakings	64.8
Muggings	62.6
Grievous harm	48.2
Murder	41.0
Rape	38.3
Attacks on women	35.2
Extortion in Matatu public transport	34.4
Defilement	33.9
Theft and resale of business merchandise	31.5
Theft of motor cycles/boda boda	24.3
Undue political patronage and control over local political processes (including influencing political decisions, offering protection and intimidation of opponents for money during elections)	22.5
Corruption within agencies in criminal justice	21.2
Infiltration of community policing initiatives	20.3
Malicious damages (including vandalism of property)	18.2
Running recruitment activities for radicalization and drug peddling and/or trafficking in educational and training institutions	18.0
Mpesa Fraud	15.2
Cybercrime (including computer crime, internet fraud and perpetration of crime using social media)	14.6
Extortion of and running illegal protection rackets fees for businesses	13.5
Infiltration of legitimate business for illegal activities	13.2
Illegal acquisition of land (including through intimidation or force)	12.4
Illicit trade (including Smuggling of contraband goods)	10.1
Illegal taxation of traders and control of markets (including informal markets)	9.3
Money laundering	9.1
Illegal activities in prostitution	8.8
Sabotaging competitor's business operations	7.6

Specific criminal activities that gangs engage in	Percentage
Running illegal social joints such as bars in late night hours	7.5
Raiding people's home	7.1
Illicit firearms trafficking and smuggling	6.6
Extortion in construction and real estate industry	5.5
Running illegal utilities, such as water or electricity connections	5.0
Carjacking	4.9
Counterfeiting	4.6
Car theft	4.6
Abduction/ kidnapping for ransom	4.6
Contract killing (assassination)	4.2
Human trafficking (including trafficking for sex, labour and organs)	4.3
Attempted rape	4.1
Attacking tourists	3.6
Stealing of livestock	3.4
Intimidation and threatening to kill	3.3
Goons for hire	2.9
Perpetuating environmental crimes (including illegal natural resource exploitation such as illegal logging, mining, and charcoal burning)	2.5
Obtaining by false pretense	2.1
Forgery of government documents (such as Certificates of Good Conduct)	2.1
Forced control of supply chain/goods distribution	2.0
Illegal micro-finance and loan sharking (that is, unregulated money-lending)	1.7
Disruption of social gatherings like weddings and religious crusades	1.3
Illegal trafficking of explosives	1.3
Racketeering and coercion in contracts/ tenders	0.9
Advocating for and carrying out female genital mutilation	0.5
Illegal administration of justice in the community (that is, presiding over Kangaroo courts within the community)	0.4



**Some items (including weapons) used by gangs to commit criminal activities recovered by the Police in parts of Nairobi and Western Kenya**



A further county analysis was conducted on the twenty-five (25) criminal activities reported by at least 10.0% of all the survey sample respondents. Based on responses by a third of the sample respondents (that is, 33.3%) in each of the eleven (11) counties, the analytical results showed that there were fourteen (14) prominent criminal activities in at least a third of the counties (that is, 4 counties), and these were: Robberies (in all counties); Assaults, including of public transport drivers and crew (in all counties); General Stealing (in all counties); Illicit drug distribution and trafficking (in all counties); Burglary and breakings (in all counties); Muggings (in 90.9% of the counties); Grievous harm (in 63.6% of the counties); Murder (in 72.7% of the counties); Rape (in 72.7% of the counties); Defilement (in 72.7% of the counties); Theft and resale of business merchandise (in 54.5% of the counties); attacks on women (in 45.5% of the counties); and Theft of motor cycles/boda boda (in 36.4% of the counties). The detailed findings are presented in Table 3.16 below.

**Table 3. 16: County analysis of key specific criminal activities that gangs engage in**

Specific criminal activities that gangs engage in	County responses (in percentage) of key specific criminal activities that gangs engage in											Number (and percentage) of counties where at least a third (33.3%) of the sample respondents reported the criminal activity
	Garissa	Machakos	Nairobi	Nakuru	Kiambu	Kwale	Busia	Mombasa	Kisumu	Bungoma	Kilifi	
Robberies	94.1	89.5	88.9	87.5	87.5	86.6	83.9	81.9	80.0	73.9	71.3	11 (100.0%)
Illicit drug distribution and trafficking	90.2	82.5	84.9	73.8	86.1	52.6	59.7	74.8	42.7	46.4	57.4	11 (100.0%)
Assaults (including of public transport drivers and crew)	85.3	75.4	81.0	79.4	80.6	83.5	75.8	88.2	68.0	68.1	93.0	11 (100.0%)
General Stealing	70.6	78.9	89.7	92.5	91.7	71.1	79.0	81.9	58.7	85.5	76.5	11 (100.0%)
Burglary and breakings	68.6	81.6	80.2	78.1	87.5	25.8	64.5	60.6	45.3	58.0	49.6	11 (100.0%)
Rape	66.7	50.0	38.1	44.4	34.7	10.3	38.7	37.0	29.3	34.8	28.7	8 (72.7%)
Muggings	57.8	53.5	84.9	75.6	84.7	53.6	40.3	70.1	28.0	34.8	70.4	10 (90.9%)
Attacks on women	55.9	49.1	36.5	41.9	26.4	26.8	11.3	44.9	14.7	17.4	31.3	5 (45.5%)
Illicit trade (including of Smuggling of contraband goods)	53.9	4.4	4.0	1.3	5.6	1.0	58.1	0.8	0.0	0.0	3.5	2 (18.2%)
Defilement	52.9	17.5	46.0	40.0	36.1	5.2	33.9	35.4	28.0	34.8	35.7	8 (72.7%)
Theft of motor cycles/boda boda	51.0	1.8	58.7	16.3	54.2	1.0	45.2	14.2	2.7	14.5	17.4	4 (36.4%)
Murder	48.0	26.3	47.6	50.0	37.5	49.5	32.3	38.6	40.0	23.2	43.5	8 (72.7%)
Corruption within agencies in criminal justice	41.2	13.2	42.1	25.6	41.7	3.1	17.7	18.1	5.3	11.6	6.1	3 (27.3%)
Grievous harm	38.2	32.5	75.4	70.6	76.4	26.8	45.2	31.5	32.0	37.7	48.7	7 (63.6%)
Theft and resale of business merchandise	36.3	12.3	50.8	31.3	45.8	10.3	56.5	36.2	14.7	34.8	25.2	6 (54.5%)
Mpesa Fraud	36.3	0.0	41.3	3.8	40.3	0.0	14.5	19.7	0.0	7.2	6.1	3 (27.3%)
Extortion in Matatu public transport	21.6	59.6	65.1	29.4	76.4	33.0	8.1	26.8	4.0	11.6	25.2	3 (27.3%)
Undue political patronage and control over local political processes (including influencing political	20.9	19.3	29.8	24.1	33.3	6.2	42.8	26.4	14.0	12.3	11.3	2 (18.2%)

Specific criminal activities that gangs engage in	County responses (in percentage) of key specific criminal activities that gangs engage in										Number (and percentage) of counties where at least a third (33.3%) of the sample respondents reported the criminal activity	
	Garissa	Machakos	Nairobi	Nakuru	Kiambu	Kwale	Busia	Mombasa	Kisumu	Bungoma		Kitui
decisions, offering protection and intimidation of opponents for money during elections)												
Illegal acquisition of land (including through intimidation or force)	19.1	30.7	4.4	1.6	7.6	6.2	3.2	20.1	1.4	1.5	30.0	<b>0 (0.0%)</b>
Malicious damages (including vandalism of property)	17.7	4.4	49.6	11.6	48.6	0.5	24.7	6.7	4.0	21.8	13.5	<b>2 (18.2%)</b>
Extortion of and running illegal protection rackets fees for businesses	17.2	16.2	31.0	6.0	36.8	11.9	8.1	9.8	0.7	0.0	9.2	<b>1 (9.1%)</b>
Cybercrime (including computer crime, internet fraud and perpetration of crime using social media)	16.2	11.0	34.2	32.2	23.6	4.7	2.4	5.5	0.7	4.4	5.7	<b>1 (9.1%)</b>
Running recruitment for activities radicalization and drug peddling and/or trafficking in educational and training institutions	7.8	9.6	34.9	35.6	37.5	17.5	1.6	17.3	1.3	0.0	11.3	<b>3 (27.3%)</b>
Infiltration of legitimate business for illegal activities	6.9	3.5	38.1	13.8	30.6	10.3	3.2	15.0	1.3	0.0	11.3	<b>1 (9.1%)</b>
Infiltration of community policing initiatives	2.0	1.8	54.8	46.3	45.8	4.1	6.5	11.0	13.3	11.6	6.1	<b>3 (27.3%)</b>

These findings were affirmed by the key informant responses as sampled below. A senior Police Officer in Athi River Sub-county in Machakos commented the following:

*“The primary activities of criminal gangs in this locality include being hired as goons by land grabbers, illicit drug trafficking and distribution, engaging in robbery with violence, breaking and burglary, mugging, illegal possession of land or forcibly detain land and corrupting security and law enforcement agencies.”*

Commenting on specific activities of criminal gangs, a Probation Officer in Nakuru County observed that:

*“Criminal gang members in this area are involved in activities spanning several sectors and some of their activities are illegal poaching and fishing, muggings, phone snatching, extortion in markets, Mpesa frauds, recruitment of school going boys, and collecting some illegal levies in motorbike stages.”*

The above findings on specific criminal activities that gangs engaged in were related with the other findings which showed that the security sector was the most affected by criminal gangs (Mito, 2023). Since gangs committed serious crimes such as robberies, murders, rape and defilement which have far-reaching ramifications in the society, the findings further reinforced the urgency required in taming criminal gangs in the country.

The findings on criminal activities that gangs engage in have a number of specific implications. The high prevalence of robberies (84.5%), assaults (80.9%), general stealing (80.6%), and burglaries (64.8%) suggests that gangs engage in both street-level and organized crimes, making them a persistent threat to public safety and security. There is therefore a need to prioritize intelligence-led policing, increased patrols in crime hotspots, and enhanced response mechanisms to disrupt these crimes before they occur.

The involvement of gangs in drug distribution and trafficking (70.2%), a finding that relates with that of the Institute for Security Studies (2020), suggests a strong link between drug-related crimes and gang activities, which fuels further violence and addiction problems. Strengthening surveillance at trafficking points, and dismantle drug supply chains that empower criminal gangs would minimize the effects of these criminal gang activities. The demand for drugs among vulnerable youth can also be reduced through expanded community-based drug rehabilitation and prevention programs.

The high incidence of grievous harm (48.2%), murder (41.0%), and rape (38.3%) signals increasing levels of extreme violence by gangs. Law and order enforcement agencies therefore need to prioritize the investigation and prosecution of violent gang members to

deter future offenses. Victim support mechanisms, including trauma counselling, medical assistance, and legal aid services need to be expanded to assist survivors of gang crime.

The findings that gangs attack women (35.2%) and engage in defilement (33.9%) highlight gender-based violence (GBV) as a gang-related crime, raising concerns about the safety of women and girls. Strengthening GBV reporting mechanisms, and ensuring swift legal action against perpetrators are necessary to deter these crimes. The creation of safe spaces and emergency response units for at-risk individuals is also critical.

The extortion of Matatu operators (34.4%) indicates that gangs are deeply embedded in public transport sector corruption and intimidation, thus affecting the economic livelihoods especially of the business owners (Kenya News Agency, 2025). This finding calls for regulatory reforms, stricter enforcement of anti-extortion laws, and protection of public transport stakeholders from gang-related violence. Law enforcement must collaborate with Matatu Sacco organizations in the affected counties to identify, report, and dismantle gang networks controlling public transport routes.

#### 3.4.2.2 Frequency of criminal gang activities in the localities

Majority (66.5%) of the sample respondents as highlighted in Figure 6 below indicated that criminal gang activities in their localities occurred frequently.

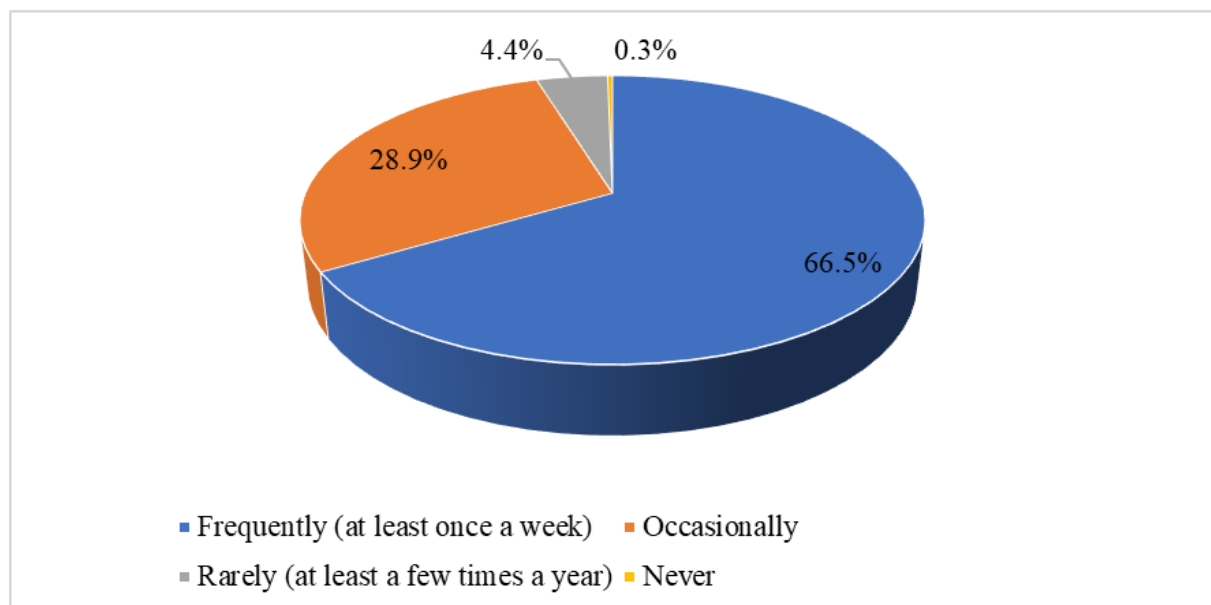


Figure 7: Responses on how frequently criminal gang activities occurred in the localities

The frequent occurrences of criminal gang activities in the localities were observed in nine (9) counties (that is, 81.8% of the counties) and only in two (2) counties (Kisumu and Machakos) that the incidences mainly occurred occasionally. Table 3.17 below presents these findings.

**Table 3. 17: Frequency of occurrence of criminal gang activities in the counties**

County	Responses in percentage on how frequently criminal gang activities occurred in the counties			
	Frequently (at least once a week)	Occasionally	Rarely (at least a few times a year)	Never
Nairobi	88.9	6.3	3.2	1.6
Kiambu	80.5	15.3	4.2	0.0
Mombasa	77.2	22.0	0.8	0.0
Garissa	74.5	24.5	1.0	0.0
Nakuru	73.8	17.5	8.1	0.6
Kilifi	71.3	26.1	2.6	0.0
Kwale	61.9	30.9	7.2	0.0
Bungoma	50.7	39.1	10.1	0.0
Busia	48.4	43.5	8.1	0.0
Kisumu	41.4	53.3	5.3	0.0
Machakos	38.6	60.5	0.9	0.0

The above findings are consistent with the other findings of this survey which highlighted frequent reports of gang-related crimes (80.2%) and increased visibility of criminal gang activities in public spaces (41.7%) as some of the top indicators or signs of proliferation of criminal gangs in the localities.

### 3.4.3 Mode of operation of criminal gangs

The survey as well sought to establish how the criminal gangs carried out their activities in the localities, that is, the mode of operation. Eight (8) prominent modes of operation of criminal gangs were reported by at least a third of all the sample respondents, and these were: carrying out attacks (92.2%); using violence and intimidation (including threats, beatings and killings) to assert control, settle disputes, and instill fear among community members and rival gangs (79.9%); use of motor cycles (boda boda) to ease their mobility (71.1%); exploiting vulnerabilities occasioned by poverty, youth unemployment, and marginalization and underdevelopment to recruit members and exploiting them for various criminal activities (60.1%); active recruitment of new members, especially youth, by offering financial/economic incentives, a sense of belonging, or protection against other threats (48.7%); intelligence gathering on potential targets, law enforcement activities and rival gangs through surveillance and informants (41.6%); use of technology for communication and coordination, including coded messaging to plan criminal activities without or with minimal detection (36.3%); and recruitment and use of informants within communities to provide information on law enforcement activities, rival gangs and potential targets (34.8%). The full list of mode of operation is as shown in Table 3.18 below.

**Table 3. 18: Mode of operation of criminal gangs**

<b>Mode of operation of criminal gangs</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Carrying out attacks	92.2
Using violence and intimidation (including threats, beatings and killings) to assert control, settle disputes, and instill fear among community members and rival gangs	79.9
Use of motor cycles (bodaboda) to ease their mobility	71.1
Exploiting vulnerabilities occasioned by poverty, youth unemployment, and marginalization and underdevelopment to recruit members and exploiting them for various criminal activities	60.1
Active recruitment of new members, especially youth, by offering financial/economic incentives, a sense of belonging, or protection against other threats	48.7
Intelligence gathering on potential targets, law enforcement activities, and rival gangs through surveillance and informants	41.6
Use of technology for communication and coordination, including coded messaging to plan criminal activities without or with minimal detection	36.3
Recruitment and use of informants within communities to provide information on law enforcement activities, rival gangs, and potential targets	34.8
Enticing (with incentives) youthful males and women to remain in the gangs	28.2
Corrupting authorities to avoid prosecution, gain protection, or facilitate their operations	25.0
Controlling public transportation routes and bus stops by charging illegal fees	22.3
Controlling access to land and housing in informal settlements and engaging in illegal land allocation and evictions	18.5
Formation of alliances with other criminal groups, sharing resources, information, and strategies to enhance their illegal operations	16.8
Enforcing gang norms through punishment of rebellious gang members	16.7
Establishing or taking over legitimate businesses as fronts for conducting illegal activities	14.5
Use of young females as a cover and manoeuvre of their operations	14.1
Exploiting legal loopholes and insufficient regulation within the informal sector to conduct their activities with minimal disruptions	10.7
Impersonating Police Officers	9.3
Capitalization on community influence to disguise their illegal activities by providing services or support to communities, such as protection	7.5
Wearing Police regalia and carrying tools of work resembling those of the Police	7.5
Accessing of target areas by foot	7.5
Abducting/kidnapping especially wealthy or prominent individuals and demanding ransom from their families	6.0
Use of Taxi Cabs	5.1
Spiking drinks of revelers in entertainment and beer drinking joints	5.1
Acquiring, selling and distributing illicit firearms within local communities	4.3



<b>Mode of operation of criminal gangs</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Use of poisoned sprays on target victims	3.2
They have an organized leadership structure that direct their criminal activities	3.1
Disconnecting and/or switching off lights during their operation	2.6
Making fake currency	1.7
Attacking majorly during rainy seasons	1.6
Renting of several apartments used as scamming centres	1.3
Use of spotlight torches to distort good sight during attack of victims	0.9
They target idle and/or unregistered land and plots for illegal acquisition	0.9
Promoting norms that are against the law such as FGM	0.5
Unique blowing of whistles to alert on presence of security/law enforcers	0.4
Use of dogs to threaten people	0.3

Further, the modes of operation of criminal gangs that had been reported by at least 10.0% of all the sample respondents were analyzed by counties as presented in Table 3.19 below. The most prominent modes of operation that were reported by at least 50.0% of the sample respondents featured in the eleven (11) counties as follows: carrying out attacks (in all the 11 counties); using violence and intimidation (including threats, beatings and killings) to assert control, settle disputes, and instill fear among community members and rival gangs (in counties except in Kisumu); use of motor cycles (bodaboda) to ease their mobility (in counties except in Bungoma); exploiting vulnerabilities occasioned by poverty, youth unemployment, and marginalization and underdevelopment to recruit members and exploiting them for various criminal activities (in 6 counties of Garissa, Mombasa, Machakos, Nakuru, Nairobi and Kiambu); active recruitment of new members, especially youth, by offering financial/economic incentives, a sense of belonging, or protection against other threats (in 3 counties of Nakuru, Nairobi and Kiambu); intelligence gathering on potential targets, law enforcement activities, and rival gangs through surveillance and informants (in 3 counties of Garissa, Nairobi and Kiambu); use of technology for communication and coordination, including coded messaging to plan criminal activities without or with minimal detection (in 3 counties of Nakuru, Nairobi and Kiambu); and recruitment and use of informants within communities to provide information on law enforcement activities, rival gangs, and potential targets (in Garissa County); enticing (with incentives) youthful males and women to remain in the gangs (in Nairobi County); corrupting authorities to avoid prosecution, gain protection, or facilitate their operations (in Garissa County); controlling public transportation routes and bus stops by charging illegal fees (in Kiambu County); controlling access to land and housing in informal settlements and engaging in illegal land allocation and evictions (in Machakos County); and use of young females as a cover and manoeuvre of their operations (in 2 counties of Nairobi and Kiambu).

**Table 3. 19: County-specific mode of operation of criminal gangs**

Mode of operation of criminal gangs	County responses in percentage										
	Kilifi	Busia	Garissa	Kwale	Mombasa	Kisumu	Bungoma	Machakos	Nakuru	Nairobi	Kiambu
Carrying out attacks	100.0	98.4	98.0	97.9	96.9	96.0	92.8	90.4	88.1	86.5	68.1
Using violence and intimidation (including threats, beatings and killings) to assert control, settle disputes, and instill fear among community members and rival gangs	82.6	75.8	89.2	79.4	89.8	42.7	62.3	84.2	82.5	81.0	90.3
Use of motor cycles (bodaboda) to ease their mobility	68.7	74.2	78.4	61.9	55.9	64.0	39.1	71.9	85.0	80.2	91.7
Exploiting vulnerabilities occasioned by poverty, youth unemployment, and marginalization and underdevelopment to recruit members and exploit them for various criminal activities	40.0	38.7	51.0	33.0	58.3	28.0	37.7	66.7	86.9	89.7	95.8
Recruitment and use of informants within communities to provide information on law enforcement activities, rival gangs, and potential targets	36.5	33.9	58.8	20.6	44.9	17.3	26.1	40.4	27.5	36.5	30.6
Active recruitment of new members, especially youth, by offering financial/economic incentives, a sense of belonging, or protection against other threats	33.9	30.6	41.2	33.0	45.7	24.0	27.5	41.2	77.5	77.0	69.4
Controlling access to land and housing in informal settlements and engaging in illegal land allocation and evictions	33.0	8.1	25.5	9.3	24.4	10.7	1.4	62.3	1.9	7.9	6.9
Intelligence gathering on potential targets, law enforcement activities, and rival gangs through surveillance and informants	24.3	37.1	52.9	28.9	40.2	22.7	44.9	39.5	48.8	54.0	59.7
Formation of alliances with other criminal groups, sharing resources, information, and strategies to enhance their illegal operations	24.3	22.6	8.8	23.7	23.6	10.7	23.2	4.4	17.5	14.3	12.5
Use of technology for communication and coordination, including coded messaging to plan criminal activities without or with minimal detection	17.4	27.4	44.1	20.6	7.9	21.3	26.1	28.1	60.6	68.3	62.5
Controlling public transportation routes and bus stops by charging illegal fees	16.5	9.7	9.8	23.7	14.2	10.7	8.7	48.2	19.4	25.4	56.9
Enticing (with incentives) youthful males and women to remain in the gangs	13.0	4.8	22.5	15.5	15.7	12.0	4.3	38.6	47.5	56.3	50.0
Enforcing gang norms through punishment of rebellious gang members	13.0	3.2	6.9	6.2	12.6	8.0	0.0	7.0	28.8	39.7	43.1
Corrupting authorities to avoid prosecution, gain protection, or facilitate their operations	12.2	16.1	51.0	4.1	18.1	17.3	13.0	26.3	35.0	28.6	45.8
Establishing or taking over legitimate businesses as fronts for conducting illegal activities	8.7	4.8	9.8	19.6	11.8	5.3	1.4	6.1	15.6	37.3	29.2
Exploiting legal loopholes and insufficient regulation within the informal sector to conduct their activities with minimal disruptions	5.2	22.6	4.9	0.0	6.3	4.0	18.8	0.0	14.4	18.3	34.7
Use of young females as a cover and manoeuvre of their operations	2.6	4.8	17.6	0.0	10.2	0.0	13.0	0.0	4.4	50.8	56.9

The findings from key informants concurred with a number of responses from sample respondents on the mode of operation of gangs. For example, a senior officer with a Non-Governmental Organization by the name MIDRIFT in Nakuru County observed the following with regard to what criminal gangs were doing in undertaking their activities in the locality:

*“Gang members use of phones to perpetrate Mpesa frauds, use of boats for fishing, use computers for cyber bullying, engage in hawking as cahoots to charges matatu and motorbike stages, use motorbikes for getting away while snatching phones and use arrows and bows to hunt wild animals. In other words, sectors affected by these gangs in Nakuru County include fishing, financial, wildlife, transport, ICT, housing, business and farming.”*

In a Kilifi County Focus Group Discussion held in Mtwapa area of Kilifi South Sub-county, a youthful participant had this to say:

*“There is a group called Wahasi Kolongo, the group is dangerous because they use boda boda to move, four members using one boda boda, their timing is at night and late from work. They use pangas to attack, the group comprises of minors. I come from Matundo Kanjoni, along Mwatete road at around 6:00 in the morning they attack women chasing people, killing and committing serious crimes using Pangas. However, we thank Chief for the support in fighting these gangs. Another thing is that in the transport sector-boda boda sector, they use it to commit crimes. They mostly hang around boda boda stage, sleeping during the day and committing their activities at night. They pretend to be boda boda riders. They give you a ride but they take you to a shortcut route until a point the rider raises a false mechanical issue that the boda boda has a mechanical problem. After stopping at that point, that’s when other gang members emerge to attack.”*

In a Kwale County Focus Group Discussion, a participant highlighted the following on how females participate criminal gang operations:

*“At some point female, are used to do surveillance and intelligence gathering, ladies are used to spot the target let us say I want to steal phone so I use female to identify mostly those ladies used to life in gangs’ operation base (in Swahili called maskani), so they are used to cause chaos before the real attackers emerge from somewhere.”*

The high prevalence of attacks (92.2%) and violence/intimidation (79.9%) indicates that criminal gangs primarily use force to assert dominance (Olouch, 2023). Security agencies must therefore endeavour to increase patrols, enhance rapid response mechanisms and deploy

intelligence-led policing to prevent attacks before they occur. There is also a need to strengthen legal frameworks to ensure gang-related violence attracts penalties that are strict and deterrent.



**Victims of attacks by Confirm gang in Bondeni area of Nakuru town in Nakuru County**

The use of motorcycles (boda boda) for mobility (71.1%) suggests that gangs exploit the informal transport sector for quick getaways and operational efficiency. According to Nandi and Muna (2025), motorcycle riders engage in criminal activities or get paid a commission for enter or as a getaway from crime scenes. A structured registration and tracking system for motorcycles, including mandatory licensing and digital monitoring mechanisms to track their movements in crime-prone areas could be explored. Consistent with the recommendations highlighted by NCRC (2018a), relevant authorities also need to work with boda boda associations to prevent the continued infiltration of the sector by criminal elements.

The exploitation of poverty, youth unemployment, and marginalization (60.1%) as a mode of operation of criminal gangs highlights the strong socio-economic drivers of gang activity in the country. Effective crime prevention strategies must go beyond policing to include job creation, skills development, and economic empowerment programmes targeting at-risk youth. Relevant state and non-state actors need to prioritize intervention programmes that provide alternatives to gang membership, such as entrepreneurship training, microfinance support, and community-based social initiatives (Institute for Security Studies, 2000).

The finding on active recruitment of new members (48.7%) suggests a deliberate effort by gangs to expand their influence by offering economic or social incentives. This calls for monitoring and disrupting recruitment activities by enhancing school-based mentorship programmes, engaging youth in constructive activities (such as sports, arts, and community service), and strengthening community sensitization on the dangers of gang involvement.

Law and order enforcement officers also need to track and dismantle gang leaders and recruiters while ensuring former members have pathways to reintegration through effective rehabilitation programmes (NCRC, 2024).

The finding that gang members use surveillance and informants (41.6%) in their operations indicates that gangs actively gather intelligence on law enforcement activities and potential targets, making it harder to dismantle them. This requires investing in counter-surveillance technologies, undercover operations, and anonymous tip-off mechanisms to counter gang intelligence networks. For instance, Katz and Webb (2004) highlight the need for a Gang Intelligence Unit within law enforcement agencies in the effective crackdown of criminal gangs. In addition, strengthening community policing and informant protection mechanisms can encourage local residents to provide credible information without fear of retaliation.

The use of technology for communication and coordination (36.3%) suggests that some gangs are leveraging on digital platforms, including social media and encrypted messaging, to plan and execute crimes discreetly. According to Gil (2024) and Cognyte (n.d), criminal gangs are using digital platforms to scale a wide range of criminal activities, such as drug trafficking, extortion and money laundering, and to coordinate across borders with minimal physical presence. Hence, enhanced cybercrime capabilities, including digital forensics, social media monitoring, and tracking of coded gang communication are essential in areas where this mode of operation is gaining traction.

The recruitment and use of informants (34.8%) within communities suggest that gangs have deep-rooted local networks that provide critical intelligence, thus complicating law enforcement operations. Strengthening witness protection initiatives and incentivizing community cooperation can help counter gang informants. Implementation of strategic misinformation tactics to disrupt gang intelligence while ensuring that genuine informants are protected is recommended (Katz and Webb, 2004).

Overall, implementation of county-specific strategies for disrupting especially the most prominent modes of operation of criminal gangs is recommended.

#### **3.4.4 Contribution of local community members in the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

Majority (84.6%) of the sample respondents agreed that some local community members had contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. However, 7.0% were of the contrary opinion and another 8.4% were neutral in their responses.

In all the counties, over 68.0% of the sample respondents held the view that some local community members had contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in their localities, with the leading counties being Busia (96.8%), Kilifi (96.6%), Mombasa (96.0%) and Bungoma (91.6%). These findings are captured in Table 3.20 below.

**Table 3. 20: County-specific confirmations that some local community members had contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

County	County responses in percentage		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Busia	96.8	0.0	3.2
Kilifi	96.6	1.7	1.7
Mombasa	96.0	1.6	2.4
Bungoma	91.6	1.4	7.2
Kwale	89.7	3.1	7.2
Kisumu	89.3	1.3	9.3
Nairobi	84.1	8.7	7.1
Garissa	78.4	14.7	6.9
Nakuru	74.4	19.4	6.2
Kiambu	73.6	13.9	12.5
Machakos	68.4	15.8	15.8

The findings established that the local community members had contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in their localities in some major ways that included: failing to report gang activities to authorities (71.2%); offering protection or concealment from law enforcement (67.0%); normalizing or accepting gang activities as part of community life (50.5%); collaborating with gangs for mutual benefit (36.0%); resolving gang-crime cases using local community conflict mediation systems which facilitates criminal gang impunity (24.9%); and failure to share information with the police (22.9%).

Table 3.21 below shows these findings.

**Table 3. 21: Ways some local community members had contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

Ways some local community members had contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in the localities	Percentage
Failing to report gang activities to authorities	71.2
Offering protection or concealment from law enforcement	67.0
Normalizing or accepting gang activities as part of community life	50.5
Collaborating with gangs for mutual benefit	36.0
Resolving gang-crime cases using local community conflict mediation systems which facilitates criminal gang impunity	24.9
Failure to share criminal gang-related information with the police	22.9
Providing financial support or resources	18.1
Participating in gang-related activities or operations	17.9
Influencing youth to join gangs	13.5
Poor and/or irresponsible child parenting practices	1.2

County analysis of the findings shown in Table 3.22 below indicated that: failing to report gang activities to authorities was prominent in all the eleven (11) counties; offering protection or concealment from law enforcement was common in all the counties except in Kisumu and Machakos; normalizing or accepting gang activities as part of community life



was most prevalent in Nairobi, Busia, Mombasa and Nakuru; it was mainly in Kilifi, Nairobi and Mombasa where some local community members were collaborating with gangs for mutual benefit; resolving gang-crime cases using local community conflict mediation systems which facilitates criminal gang impunity was a common feature in Garissa County; and failure to share criminal gang-related information with the police was prominent in Busia, Mombasa and Kiambu counties.

**Table 3. 22: County-analysis of ways some local community members had contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in the localities**

Ways some local community members had contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in the localities	County responses in percentage										
	Bungoma	Kilifi	Nairobi	Kwale	Busia	Kisumu	Mombasa	Nakuru	Kiambu	Machakos	Garissa
Failing to report criminal gang activities to authorities	82.6	77.4	74.6	74.2	74.2	73.3	73.2	70.0	68.1	63.2	56.9
Offering protection or concealment from law enforcement	63.8	77.4	72.2	74.2	79.0	45.3	76.4	66.9	58.3	49.1	67.6
Normalizing or accepting gang activities as part of community life	39.1	44.3	70.6	39.2	50.0	30.7	62.2	60.6	47.2	43.0	46.1
Resolving gang-crime cases using local community conflict mediation systems which facilitates criminal gang impunity	27.5	27.0	38.1	5.2	37.1	5.3	39.4	10.0	19.4	0.0	67.6
Influencing youth to join gangs	15.9	27.8	10.3	19.6	8.1	14.7	22.0	7.5	6.9	7.0	6.9
Participating in gang-related activities or operations	11.6	34.8	15.9	16.5	12.9	12.0	33.9	16.9	19.4	6.1	7.8
Collaborating with gangs for mutual benefit	10.1	53.0	52.4	23.7	21.0	25.3	59.1	44.4	38.9	20.2	16.7
Providing financial support or resources	4.3	26.1	26.2	10.3	6.5	4.0	32.3	15.0	25.0	11.4	22.5
Poor and/or irresponsible child parenting practices	2.9	0.0	2.4	4.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.8	0.9	1.0
Failure to share criminal gang-related information with the police	0.0	0.0	32.5	8.2	64.5	0.0	65.4	0.0	63.9	0.0	37.3



The findings from Key Informants corroborated those of sample respondents as illustrated with the following sampled remarks.

A senior Police Officer in Machakos County weighed in on the contribution of the local community in the problem of criminal gangs and observed that:

*“Community members offer protection to the criminal gangs or conceal their identity, they fail to report to the authorities about suspected gang activities while some community members use gangs to outshine their opponents, especially the business and political class.”*

Asked whether community members contribute to the problem of gangs in the locality, a Sub-county Probation Officer in Nakuru County had the following to say:

*“Yes, the criminal gangs collaborate with local residents and politicians to secure protection for their interests, and easily bailed when they get into trouble.”*

A senior official with Youth Network in Kiambu County argued that the community was contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. The official observed that:

*“The community is not supportive in addressing the problem of gangs because they fail to report gang activities, they protect members of the gangs from prosecution and also benefit from the groups’ activities.”*

A Court Administrator in one of the Law Courts in Kilifi County observed the following:

*“Local community members have not become united to condemn or to fight these criminal gangs. The gangs are as if they are being protected by their relatives. If families wanted them out of such criminal activities, gangs would stop but by families keeping quiet it shows that they are supporting them. It is also said that some of the gangs support their families using the proceeds from the crimes.”*

The serious indictment against community members on failure to report gang activities (71.2%) and withholding information from the police (22.9%) could suggest a lack of trust in law enforcement or fear of retaliation. Law and order enforcement agencies need to prioritize strengthened community policing initiatives, improve response time, and ensure the safety of informants to encourage reporting. Moreover, anti-corruption measures within the security agencies require strengthening in order to restore confidence in these agencies (Musoi and Omboto, 2025).

The significant percentage of community members offering protection or concealment to gangs (67.0%) indicates fear, coercion, or even economic dependency on gang networks. This finding calls for strengthening witness protection programs and promoting anonymous crime reporting platforms so as to encourage residents to share intelligence without fear of reprisals. In addition, law enforcement needs to dismantle protection networks within communities, ensuring that informants are shielded from gang retaliation (NCRC, 2024).

The normalization of gang activities (50.5%) indicates a cultural shift where crime is increasingly seen as an inevitable part of daily life in society. This has the potential to increase lawlessness in the country. According to UNODC (n.d), pro-gang cultural persuasions among some community members complicate counter-gang measures. The finding therefore suggests the need for intensive community sensitization initiatives to counter gang glorification and promote alternative narratives, especially among the youth. Educational institutions, religious institutions and local community organizations could be engaged to shift social norms that tolerate or accept gang presence.

The fact that some community members collaborate with gangs for mutual benefit (36.0%) points to a complex relationship where criminal gangs provide financial or social incentives in exchange for community protection. Hence this finding underscores the need for economic empowerment initiatives, including job creation and small-business support, to reduce economic dependency on gangs and disrupt the potentially harmful gang-community collaborations and partnerships.

Community conflict resolution systems being used to settle gang-related crimes (24.9%) points to a possible failure of the formal justice system, leading communities to seek extrajudicial solutions. Strengthening the existing formal justice structures and ensuring that community members see tangible legal consequences for gang crimes can help to discourage reliance on informal resolutions that promote impunity. In addition, law and order enforcement agencies need to work with community elders and religious leaders to ensure that traditional mediation structures do not protect criminal elements.

Given the high levels of passive or active community support for gangs, a multi-stakeholder approach involving local leaders, law enforcement, civil society, and government agencies is necessary. Establishing community-based watch groups, strengthening neighbourhood security associations, and involving local leaders in crime prevention efforts has the potential to reduce gang influence in the country. The findings also call for strategic measures to strengthen citizen participation in and 'sense of local community-ownership' of efforts for addressing insecurity in general and the challenge of criminal gangs in particular. As highlighted by NCRC (2024), families of offenders and the community at large are expected to play an integral and active role in the offender's rehabilitation and reintegration process by providing emotional and financial support to the offender.

The conclusion from the foregoing discussion on nature of activities of criminal gangs is that criminal gangs in the survey counties had deeply infiltrated multiple sectors, expanded their criminal activities, adopted sophisticated operational tactics, and gained resilience through community complicity. These dynamics made gang-related crime a persistent and complex security threat.

### 3.5 Factors Contributing to the Proliferation and Resilience of Criminal Gangs

One of the survey objectives was to identify factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. To effectively address this objective, the survey sought to examine the: characteristics that typically describe most members of criminal gangs; how criminal gangs recruited their members; factors influencing young people to join and remain in criminal gangs; and factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs.

#### 3.5.1 Characteristics that typically describe most members of criminal gangs

Results from at least 1 out of 10 sample respondents showed that most members of criminal gangs: were of male gender (84.2%); had a history of substance abuse or addiction (76.1%); were young-aged persons of between 18 to 34 years (75.8%); were unemployed or underemployed (73.6%); had low level formal educational attainment or were school dropouts (73.3%); had experienced influence of peers or family members in gangs (60.2%); were from low-income families and/or marginalized communities (56.1%); had previously been involved in petty crimes (37.7%); and had unique and/or specific identification marks such as tattoos, mohawk hairstyle, dreadlocks, silver or gold-coated tooth (32.5%). The full details of the typical characteristics of most members of criminal gangs are captured in Table 3.23 below.

**Table 3. 23: Characteristics that typically describe most members of criminal gangs**

<b>Characteristics that typically describe most members of criminal gangs</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Are of male gender	84.2
Have a history of substance abuse or addiction	76.1
Are young-aged persons (e.g. 18 to 34 years)	75.8
Are unemployed or underemployed	73.6
Have low level educational attainment or are school dropouts	73.3
Experience influence of peers or family members in gangs	60.2
Are from low-income families and/or marginalized communities	56.1
Have previous involvement in petty crimes	37.7
Have unique and/or specific identification marks (e.g. tattoos, mohawk hairstyle, dreadlocks; silver or gold-coated tooth)	32.5
Are minors (below 18 years)	27.7
They conceal their true identity	27.7
Have strong loyalty to criminal gang culture and identity	24.4
Desire for power, recognition, or status	17.1
Are from single parent	9.8
Are persons suffering from psychological issues such as low self-esteem or trauma	6.2

The following were sampled findings from key informants that largely concurred with those of sample respondents as indicated above.

A religious leader in Kombani Sub-location of Kwale County observed the following on the characteristics of members of criminal gangs:

*“I have been a Pastor for 8 years in this locality. In my 8 years, these gangs have reduced because at first when we started the Church here, Al-Shabab was disturbing and MRC. These days, we have Wakali Wao and the Mapanga (at times called Panga) Boys criminal gang. They have spread because these gangs are going with villages. There is a gang that is for Kombani, there is a gang for Maganya and there is a gang that is for Dinyeye. Because these are groups that formulate for their protection because of the other group. So, they are gangs that fear each other. In all these gangs, the males are many and mostly they are young boys, teenagers, very young boys of 15 years mostly, 15 or 16.”*

A senior Police Officer in Machakos County described members of criminal gangs in Athi River Sub-County as follows:

*“Members of criminal gangs in this locality have physical mark like silver tooth, have dreadlocks or Rasta, mostly are of male gender, majority are young aged persons under 30 years, unemployed and uneducated.”*

In a Focus Group Discussion held in Nakuru County, one participant described criminal gang members as follows:

*“They have fancy dressing code, gold or silver-plated teeth, move in over loaded motorbikes with youth (3-4), fancy motorbikes, are young males, put on long gold-plated chains, use coded language and are drug and substance abuse users.”*

A senior Police Officer working with DCI Office in Mathare North area of Nairobi County described gang members as follows:

*“Most of them are young males, are addicted to drugs and other substances, have pierced their ears and other body parts, others are youth driving noisy fancy motorbikes, they chew khat and smoke other hard stuff, use highly coded language and signs, have fancy hair styles and are school drop-outs or failed to attend school.”*

A community leader in Kwale County observed the following:

*“By the way, we know members of criminal gangs as users of drugs, that is where they get the energy that they work with”*

The finding that majority of criminal gang members were male could be tied to their culturally-assigned role of a breadwinner of the family. This seems to agree with other findings which suggested that young men could be pushed to join and remain in criminal gang activities as a means of fending for their families (Wamue-Ngare and Njoroge, 2011; UN-Habitat, 2016).

The above characteristics of members of criminal gangs are important in ways that are not limited to the following: the fact that gang members are male highlights the need for targeted interventions for young men, such as mentorship programmes, vocational training, and rehabilitation programmes aimed at reducing gang recruitment; the high rate of substance abuse among gang members suggests the need for integrated crime and drug control policies, including increased funding for rehabilitation centers and harm reduction programmes; the use of unique identification marks, such as tattoos and specific hairstyles, could aid in identifying active gang members. However, security and law enforcement agents must balance profiling with human rights considerations to avoid harassment of individuals based on appearance alone; the predominance of 18-34-year-olds in gangs suggests that policies should focus on early intervention programmes, such as school retention strategies, skills training, and job placement programmes; economic vulnerability of unemployment or underemployment is a major driver of gang membership, hence Government and its sectoral partners should prioritize job creation, with special employment programmes targeting at-risk youth; since most gang members have a low level of formal education, policies should emphasize school retention and re-entry programmes, vocational training, and alternative education pathways to prevent dropout rates; influence of peers and family underscores the intergenerational transmission of gang culture, suggesting the need for family-based interventions and community engagement programmes to break the cycle; the fact that many gang members were involved in petty crimes suggests that early intervention programs for first-time offenders could help divert them from deeper criminal involvement; and the finding on marginalized communities imply that addressing gang-related issues requires a broader policy shift to reduce inequalities in low-income areas by improving social infrastructure, access to quality education, and youth empowerment initiatives.





**Suspected youthful gang members arrested in Kisauni Sub-County, Mombasa**

### 3.5.2 How criminal gangs recruit their members

The findings established that criminal gangs recruited their members mainly: through peer influence or friends (90.6%); by targeting vulnerable youths such as school/college dropouts and unemployed youth (70.9%); by offering financial and other incentives or benefits (60.3%); through promises of protection or power (43.6%); influencing new members using drugs (42.3%); through local community social networks (28.2%); through recruitment at social and/or political events or gatherings(26.8%); via social media or online platforms(18.8%); through family or relatives (17.2%); and by coercion, threats or intimidation (14.2%). Table 3.24 below captures these findings in detail.

**Table 3. 24: How criminal gangs recruit their members**

<b>How criminal gangs recruit their members</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Through peer influence or friends	90.6
By targeting vulnerable youths (eg, school/college dropouts and unemployed youth)	70.9
By offering financial and other incentives or benefits	60.3
Through promises of protection or power	43.6
Influencing new members using drugs	42.3
Through local community social networks	28.2
Recruitment at social and/or political events or gatherings	26.8
Via social media or online platforms	18.8
Through family or relatives	17.2
By coercion, threats or intimidation	14.2
Recruiting new members while in prisons and remands	8.3
Through religious Influence	3.6

The most prominent ways criminal gangs use to recruit their members, reported by at least 50.0% of the sample respondents in at least a third of the eleven (11) counties (that is, 4 counties or 33.3%), were as follows: through peer influence or friends (in all the 11 counties); by targeting vulnerable youths such as school/college dropouts and unemployed youth (in all the 11 counties); through promises of protection or power (in 81.8% of the counties); by offering financial and other incentives or benefits (in 63.6% of the counties); influencing new members using drugs (in 54.5% of the counties); through local community social networks (in 36.4% of the counties); and recruitment at social and/or political events or gatherings (in 36.4% of the counties). Table 3.25 below presents these findings in detail.

**Table 3. 25: County-analysis on how criminal gangs recruit their members**

How criminal gangs recruit their members	County responses in percentage											Number (and percentage) of counties where at least a third (33.3%) of the sample respondents reported the recruitment method
	Kiambu	Kilifi	Bungoma	Kwale	Nakuru	Busia	Mombasa	Nairobi	Kisumu	Garissa	Machakos	
Through peer influence or friends	100.0	97.4	94.2	93.8	93.1	91.9	91.3	90.5	88.0	80.4	78.9	<b>11 (100.0%)</b>
Influencing new members using drugs	91.7	30.4	49.3	6.2	9.4	54.8	85.0	78.6	0.0	72.5	1.8	<b>6 (54.5%)</b>
By targeting vulnerable youths (eg, school/college dropouts and unemployed youth)	81.9	73.0	50.7	52.6	80.0	62.9	74.0	81.7	46.7	71.6	80.7	<b>11 (100.0%)</b>
By offering financial and other incentives or benefits	73.6	47.0	29.0	33.0	80.0	32.3	70.1	81.0	25.3	67.6	78.1	<b>7 (63.6%)</b>
Through promises of protection or power	59.7	43.5	42.0	54.6	47.5	37.1	39.4	65.9	45.3	25.5	18.4	<b>9 (81.8%)</b>
Recruitment at social and/or political events or gatherings	40.3	27.8	2.9	11.3	43.1	3.2	39.4	52.4	8.0	19.6	11.4	<b>4 (36.4%)</b>
Via social media or online platforms	27.8	8.7	0.0	6.2	44.4	1.6	0.8	53.2	18.7	14.7	4.4	<b>2 (18.2%)</b>
Through family or relatives	25.0	12.2	18.8	19.6	23.1	27.4	14.2	23.0	10.7	14.7	3.5	<b>0 (0.0%)</b>
Through local community social networks	16.7	25.2	36.2	17.5	33.1	43.5	33.1	34.1	36.0	28.4	9.6	<b>4 (36.4%)</b>
By coercion, threats or intimidation	9.7	17.4	13.0	12.4	12.5	3.2	19.7	6.3	12.0	13.7	28.9	<b>0 (0.0%)</b>
Recruiting new members while in prisons and remands	8.3	0.9	13.0	2.1	8.8	4.8	1.6	14.3	9.3	10.8	17.5	<b>0 (0.0%)</b>
Through Religious Influence	5.6	0.0	0.0	7.2	0.6	3.2	2.4	4.8	2.7	11.8	2.6	<b>0 (0.0%)</b>



Findings from key informants were akin to those highlighted by sample respondents on how criminal gangs recruit their members. For example, a participant in a Focus Group Discussion in Garissa County observed the following in regard to recruitment into gangs:

*“Older gang members target vulnerable groups of youth, especially the unemployed, and they threaten them with violence if they don’t join their gang. They also approach young people from poor broken families enticing them with financial benefits and promise them that they will improve their finances. They also influence peers by showing them lavish lifestyle and materials obtained from illegal operation such smart phones and other accessories. They recruit members by offering them money or gifts that entice them. They threaten to harm family members if someone does not join the gang.”*

A key informant who worked as a Court Administrator in a Law Court in Kilifi County commented as follows:

*“I am not very sure of all the processes of recruitment of new members into gangs but what happens for you to know is that older members of gangs invite new youths and take them as friends and eventually they check them in their group. Mostly, they start smoking bhang and using drugs together. Once someone has started being taught on how to smoke bhang, so they take them into these groups.”*

In a Nakuru County Focus Group Discussion, a participant indicated the following:

*“There is self-recruitment due to unemployment. One also decides it to be a way of life through family members. There is also the aspect of being pressured by peers to join the gangs. In schools, in order to recruit members, they mostly go for the gullible and young ones who will definitely fall for peer pressure and sweet words. Manipulation works, more so to young people especially teens and controlling these ones is easier due to peer pressure.”*

These findings on criminal gang recruitment methods have significant implications for policy formulation, law enforcement and community interventions. Peer influence as the primary recruitment method highlights the need for community-based anti-gang programmes that engage positive peer role models to counteract gang influence. Hence schools, youth centres, and religious institutions have a significant role in creating alternative social networks for at-risk youth.

The finding on vulnerable youth as prime targets calls for Government and other stakeholder efforts focusing on skills development, employment creation, and educational support for school dropouts and unemployed youth to prevent them from being lured into gangs. In addition, the economic motivations for joining gangs suggest that poverty alleviation

policies, entrepreneurship programmes, and social welfare support are essential in reducing the appeal of gang life.

The finding on protection and power promises suggests that many individuals join gangs out of fear or a desire for security. Hence strengthening community policing initiatives and restoring public trust in law enforcement can reduce reliance on gangs for protection.

Some older gang members initiate new and young members into their groups in illicit drug use 'ceremonies'. The drugs are meant to harden and instil some sense of confidence. Hence, the use of drugs as a recruitment tool suggests that addressing gang-related crime must be integrated with substance abuse prevention and rehabilitation programmes.

Other findings of this survey indicated that some local community members contributed in the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs through ways such as normalization or acceptance of gang activities as part of community life, and poor and/or irresponsible child parenting practices. Other findings also showed that one of the major typical characteristics of criminal gang members was their experience of influence of peers or family members in gangs. Hence, recruitment through existing community ties suggests the need for family-based interventions, such as parental awareness programmes, mentorship initiatives, and neighbourhood watch groups to prevent youth from being absorbed into gangs.

Criminal gangs have catchment points for new members. These points include public social events with attendance of persons who could be vulnerable. A show of prowess by older members could work to entice potential targets. Hence, the fact that gangs recruit at public events suggests a need for closer monitoring of such gatherings, especially in areas prone to gang activity.

Criminal gangs are popular with some politicians who use them for personal gain especially during electoral processes. Gang members are hired as goons to offer security to these politicians and/or to intimidate political competitors. Olouch (2023) has indicated that those seeking political positions create or finance organised criminal gangs to propel them to power, thus turning violence into one of the tools that determine the course of politics in the country. This finding therefore points to the need for political leaders to be held accountable for their role in directly and/or indirectly enabling gangs.

Recruitment through social media indicates the emerging role of digital platforms in gang expansion. Hence, law and order enforcement agencies should strengthen cybercrime units to track and counteract online recruitment efforts. Public awareness campaigns on digital safety for youth can also be a preventive measure.

Though a less common method, the fact that some members are forced into gangs suggests that victim protection programmes and gang-denouncement and exit mechanisms should be strengthened to help those who want to leave gang life.

### 3.5.3 Factors influencing young people to join and remain in criminal gangs

The survey results established that there were at least nineteen (19) factors influencing young people to join and remain in criminal gangs. The most prominent factors influencing young people to join and remain in criminal gangs, as reported by at least one (1) out of ten (10) sample respondents were: pressure from peers already in gangs (85.3%); vulnerabilities of poverty and limited youth employment opportunities (84.3%); exposure to and/or influence of illicit drugs and substance abuse (72.4%); desire for financial and other incentives or benefits (70.2%); broken or poor social and/or family support systems (65.8%); limited access to formal education and/or vocational training (44.0%); family or community influence (30.4%); fear of retaliation or consequences of leaving (28.8%); cultural or traditional practices that appear to tolerate or normalize criminal gang activities (25.1%); desire for recognition, power and status (22.9%); lack of recreational or productive activities for youth (21.0%); weak law and order enforcement (19.9%); hero-worship/glorification of criminal gang life (18.1%); identity crisis and the desire for a sense of belonging (15.9%); negative online social media influence (14.4%); need for protection or security from rival criminal gangs (12.4%); and influence of gambling (12.0%). Table 3.26 below shows the findings on factors influencing young people to join and remain in criminal gangs.

**Table 3. 26: Factors influencing young people to join and remain in criminal gangs**

<b>Factors influencing young people to join and remain in criminal gangs</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Pressure from peers already in gangs	85.3
Vulnerabilities of poverty and limited youth employment opportunities	84.3
Exposure to and/or influence of illicit drugs and substance abuse	72.4
Desire for financial and other incentives or benefits	70.2
Broken or poor social and/or family support systems	65.8
Limited access to formal education and/or vocational training	44.0
Family or community influence	30.4
Fear of retaliation or consequences of leaving	28.8
Cultural or traditional practices that appear to tolerate or normalize criminal gang activities	25.1
Desire for recognition, power and status	22.9
Lack of recreational or productive activities for youth	21.0
Weak law and order enforcement	19.9
Hero-worship/glorification of criminal gang life	18.1
Identity crisis and the desire for a sense of belonging	15.9
Negative online social media influence	14.4
Need for protection or security from rival criminal gangs	12.4
Influence of gambling	12.0
Low self-esteem or lack of confidence	9.7
Unresolved mental health issues and/or psychological trauma	7.4

The factors influencing young people to join and remain in criminal gangs were further analyzed county-wise, the results showing that all the seven (7) factors that had been listed by at least 3 out of 10 of all the survey respondents, were known to at least a third (33.3%) of the sample respondents in at least a third of the counties (that is, at least 33.3% of the counties). Additionally, the survey results showed the prominence of the factors in the counties as follows: pressure from peers already in gangs was prominent in all the eleven (11) counties; vulnerabilities of poverty and limited youth employment opportunities was prominent in all the eleven (11) counties; exposure to and/or influence of illicit drugs and substance abuse was prominent in all the eleven (11) counties; broken or poor social and/or family support systems was prominent in all the eleven (11) counties; desire for financial and other incentives or benefits was prominent in 90.9% of all the counties; limited access to formal education and/or vocational training was prominent in 72.7% of all the counties; and family or community influence was prominent in 45.5% of all the counties. These findings are detailed in Table 3.27 below.

**Table 3. 27: County analysis on factors influencing young people to join and remain in criminal gangs**

Factors influencing young people to join and remain in criminal gangs	County responses in percentage										Number (and percentage) of counties where at least a third (33.3%) of the sample respondents reported the recruitment method	
	Kiambu	Busia	Nakuru	Bungoma	Nairobi	Kisumu	Mombasa	Kwale	Kilifi	Garissa		Machakos
Pressure from peers already in gangs	98.6	96.8	91.9	91.3	91.3	89.3	86.6	85.6	82.6	71.6	62.3	<b>11 (100.0%)</b>
Vulnerabilities of poverty and limited youth employment opportunities	97.2	96.8	95.0	94.2	92.1	86.7	67.7	51.5	77.4	85.3	90.4	<b>11 (100.0%)</b>
Desire for financial and other incentives or benefits	88.9	74.2	90.0	36.2	88.1	28.0	74.8	56.7	54.8	67.6	81.6	<b>10 (90.9%)</b>
Exposure to and/or influence of illicit drugs and substance abuse	82.7	61.3	72.9	63.1	85.7	53.3	73.6	65.5	69.6	83.3	72.4	<b>11 (100.0%)</b>
Broken or poor social and/or family support systems	76.4	45.2	75.0	56.5	82.5	46.7	73.2	49.5	70.4	57.8	64.9	<b>11 (100.0%)</b>
Desire for recognition, power and status	48.6	12.9	36.9	10.1	43.7	21.3	22.0	8.2	14.8	10.8	10.5	<b>3 (27.3%)</b>
Family or community influence	38.9	29.0	31.3	23.2	38.9	25.3	35.4	39.2	39.1	26.5	4.4	<b>5 (45.5%)</b>
Negative online social media influence	37.5	1.6	28.1	1.4	46.8	4.0	5.5	4.1	4.3	6.9	1.8	<b>2 (18.2%)</b>
Limited access to formal education and/or vocational training	36.1	75.8	47.5	75.4	56.3	42.7	54.3	29.9	46.1	22.5	12.3	<b>8 (72.7%)</b>
Influence of gambling	34.7	0.0	13.1	15.9	27.8	13.3	1.6	2.1	0.0	1.0	23.7	<b>1 (9.1%)</b>
Lack of recreational or productive activities for youth	30.6	6.5	25.0	17.4	42.1	17.3	24.4	19.6	23.5	4.9	7.9	
Cultural or traditional practices that appear to tolerate or normalize criminal gang activities	29.2	40.3	17.5	44.9	17.5	28.0	29.1	21.6	19.1	48.0	3.5	<b>3 (27.3%)</b>
Fear of retaliation or consequences of leaving	29.2	22.6	41.9	8.7	50.0	6.7	29.9	24.7	24.3	18.6	32.5	<b>2 (18.2%)</b>
Hero-worship/glorification of criminal gang life	29.2	9.7	26.9	4.3	44.4	9.3	26.8	4.1	9.6	8.8	7.0	<b>1 (9.1%)</b>
Weak law and order enforcement	26.4	19.4	33.8	18.8	32.5	17.3	5.5	10.3	11.3	26.5	12.3	<b>1 (9.1%)</b>
Need for protection or security from rival criminal gangs	18.1	4.8	24.4	1.4	12.4	6.7	16.5	5.2	11.3	5.9	3.5	
Identity crisis and the desire for a sense of belonging	16.7	6.5	29.4	10.1	38.9	10.7	11.8	5.2	3.5	8.8	15.8	<b>1 (9.1%)</b>
Unresolved mental health issues and/or psychological trauma	8.3	0.0	12.5	1.4	11.9	2.7	10.2	3.1	7.0	7.8	6.1	
Low self-esteem or lack of confidence	5.6	12.9	11.3	17.4	12.7	13.3	7.9	12.4	12.2	2.0	2.6	

The findings from the key informants aligned with those of sample respondents. For instance, during a Focus Group Discussion session with a group of youth in Mathare area of Nairobi County, a participant mentioned that:

*“Youth are influenced to join and remain in criminal gangs due to a number of factors that include drugs and substance abuse, lack of education system and schools, unemployment, broken families or single parenting, peer pressure, financial troubles, and fear of the gangs and the need for protection.”*

A participant in an FGD meeting with the youth in Nakuru County observed:

*“Youths join and remain in criminal gangs due to factors such as desire for flashy lifestyles, peer pressure, desire for easy money, poor family background, lack of money, bad leadership, lack of role models, political influence, poor parental/teachers’ guidance and poor intelligence gathering by police officers.”*

A Prosecution Counsel in Mombasa County laid blame on drugs as one of the main facilitating factors for youth joining gangs saying that:

*“Drugs, the major challenge in Mombasa is drugs - availability of it. So, the earlier these children get exposed to drugs, they are risking. It is easy for them to join some of these gangs due to drugs.”*

Peer pressure emerged as the most influential factor in youth gang involvement, a finding consistent with those of Mito (2023), Haysom and Opala (2020) and Mutuku (2017 who cited peer pressure as facilitators of criminal gang resilience. Many young people join gangs due to pressure from friends who are already members, making it difficult to resist recruitment. Gangs often project a lifestyle of power, wealth, and influence, making them attractive to vulnerable youth, hence young people who lack a sense of achievement or status in society may turn to gangs for validation. Youth experiencing identity struggles, especially in urban settings, may seek belonging in gangs because gangs are seen to provide a sense of brotherhood and community while offering the youth a sense of power, control, and respect. Hence, this finding highlights the need for counter-narrative campaigns, youth mentorship programs (including by reformed gang members), counseling services and social inclusion programs that offer alternative support structures. Here, schools and community centres could implement gang awareness programmes to equip youth with resistance skills against peer pressure, and promote youth leadership, positive role models, self-development and alternative means of self-worth.

Economic hardship and lack of stable employment push many young people toward gangs as a means of survival. Again, idle youth are more susceptible to criminal influences due to



boredom and lack of engagement in meaningful activities. The promise of money, material possessions, and other incentives attracts many young people to gangs. In environments where economic opportunities are scarce, gangs present themselves as a means of financial security. Criminal gangs provide financial incentives through illegal activities, making them attractive to struggling youth. According to the Institute for Security Studies (2000), the growth of the gang subculture is a result of a combination of various factors which include social factors such as unemployment and poverty. Addressing this issue requires job creation programs, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support to offer young people legitimate economic opportunities. Investing in financial literacy programs, youth employment schemes, and income-generating projects could reduce this economic pull. Expanding sports programs, creative arts, community service projects, and youth clubs could also serve as constructive alternatives to gang life.

Substance abuse is a key driver of gang involvement, both as a cause and an effect. Many gangs thrive on drug trafficking, while drug dependency keeps members reliant on criminal activities to sustain their habits (Matara, 2022). Strengthening anti-drug education, rehabilitation programs, and stricter enforcement against drug supply networks can help reduce this influence.

When youth have limited access to formal education and/or vocational training, they are more likely to turn to criminal activities. SALEM (2023) has shown that some youth drop out of school to join criminal gangs. Education and skills training provide pathways to stable livelihoods. This calls upon the Government to increase funding for school retention programmes and expand access to affordable vocational training to ensure that at-risk youth have viable alternatives to gang life. Expanding technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes (with a component of mandatory tooling of graduates) and linking youth to sustainable income-generating opportunities could be effective deterrents.

NCRC (2024) indicates that some cultural or traditional beliefs such as hero-worship and masculinity ideals either passively tolerate or indirectly support gang activities. This could be through practices that glorify violence or reinforce organized crime as a means of social or economic survival (UNODC, n.d). In some other cases, families or communities indirectly promote gang involvement by tolerating criminal activities or having a history of gang participation. Dysfunctional families, absent parental guidance, and weak social structures also leave young people vulnerable to gang recruitment. Without strong family support, youth often seek belonging in gangs. This normalization of crime and the lack of positive social support makes it difficult for young people to break free. Public sensitization and awareness campaigns and community engagement initiatives (such as cultural reformation efforts and intergenerational dialogue) can challenge retrogressive norms and shift perceptions and discourage youth from following such patterns. Further, strengthening family counseling services, community-based support networks, and parenting programs can help address the gang menace.



Once inside a gang, many members stay due to fear of violence or punishment for attempting to leave. Gangs enforce loyalty through intimidation, making exit strategies difficult. According to Sadulski (2023), it is very dangerous to escape a gang because it is normally not tolerated, consistent with the saying that ‘once a gang member, always a gang member.’ Establishing gang exit programs, witness protection mechanisms, and rehabilitation services can help members safely disengage from criminal networks.

The U.S Department of Justice (2007) has highlighted that ineffective policing, corruption, and lack of accountability enable gangs to thrive. Weak enforcement allows criminal activities to persist without consequences. Strengthening law enforcement capacity, anti-corruption measures, and community policing programs can improve security responses to gang-related crimes.

Social media platforms often expose youth to criminal networks, violent content, and gang recruitment strategies. As highlighted by Gil (2024) and Cogyte (n.d), some gangs use online spaces for propaganda and recruitment. Implementing digital literacy education, content regulation policies, and parental monitoring initiatives can reduce the negative influence of online platforms.

In areas with multiple rival gangs, youth may feel pressured to join for self-defense. Fear of victimization forces them into gang affiliations. For instance, Nakuru and Nairobi counties have witnessed incidents of rival gangs fighting over control of some locations that are mainly hubs for narcotics and illicit brews (Musasia, 2020; Kiage, 2023). Strengthening community policing, conflict resolution programs, and safe spaces for at-risk youth could mitigate this trend.

The rise of gambling addiction among youth has contributed to criminal behavior. Some turn to gangs as a way to fund gambling habits or recover losses. Again, the desire for flashy lifestyle pushes some to engage in such activities like betting with a view to getting money and satisfying the spirit of ‘YOLO’ (You Live only Once). According to Kryszajtys and Matheson (2017), some people who gamble turn to criminal activities when legitimate sources of income no longer support their gambling activities or when it helps them pay off their financial debts, thus causing pressure on them to obtain income illegally. Regulating gambling industries, promoting financial literacy, and offering alternative recreational activities could address this emerging concern.

Overall, the above findings underscore how young individuals are drawn into gang activity not merely due to structural factors like poverty or unemployment, but also because of exposure to deviant peers, community tolerance of gang norms, and social environments that reinforce criminal conduct. By highlighting the importance of social networks, peer influence, and value transmission, this study affirms the relevance of Differential Association Theory in explaining why gangs continue to thrive in Kenyan communities. It also points to

the need for intervention strategies that disrupt criminal socialization, promote pro-social associations, and rebuild local community structures that are anti-criminal gang activities.

### 3.5.4 Factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs

The findings of the survey established eighteen (18) factors that contribute to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. The most prominent ones reported by at least one (1) out of ten (10) sample respondents were: peer pressure and influence (91.5%); vulnerabilities associated with high unemployment and poverty (88.5%); availability of illegal drugs (79.7%); broken or poor social and/or family support systems (67.3%); inadequate formal education among youth (53.9%); political exploitation (42.9%); community cultural and social tolerance of criminal gangs (38.3%); underdevelopment and marginalization (29.7%); corruption among rogue government officials, including security and law enforcement officers (27.5%); inadequate social services (22.9%); weak security policing of criminal gangs (22.2%); poor coordination among existing criminal justice agencies and other actors (15.6%); ready markets for stolen items sold as second-hand items (14.8%); weak prosecution of criminal gang members (12.2%); and inadequately sustained youth empowerment initiatives (12.2%). These findings are captured in Table 3.28 below.

**Table 3. 28: Factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

<b>Factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Peer pressure and influence	91.5
Vulnerabilities associated with high unemployment and poverty	88.5
Availability of illegal drugs	79.7
Broken or poor social and/or family support systems	67.3
Inadequate formal education among youth	53.9
Political exploitation	42.9
Community cultural and social tolerance of criminal gangs	38.3
Underdevelopment and marginalization	29.7
Corruption among rogue government officials (including security and law enforcement officers)	27.5
Inadequate social services	22.9
Weak security policing of criminal gangs	22.2
Poor coordination among existing criminal justice agencies and other actors eg between national police, NGAO and DCI	15.6
Ready markets for stolen items sold as second-hand items	14.8
Weak prosecution of criminal gang members	12.2
Inadequately sustained youth empowerment initiatives	12.2
Availability of illegal firearms	8.0
Weak protection of informers	7.6
Influence of international criminal networks	4.1

The eighteen (18) factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs were further analyzed by county. Among others, the results showed that there were six (6) prominent factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs that were

reported by at least 50.0% of the sample respondents in at least a third of the eleven (11) counties (that is, 4 counties) as follows: peer pressure and influence (in all the counties); vulnerabilities associated with high unemployment and poverty (in all the counties); availability of illegal drugs (in all the counties); broken or poor social and/or family support systems (in 10 counties, that is, 90.9%); inadequate formal education among youth (in 9 counties, that is, 81.8%); and political exploitation (in 5 counties, that is, 45.5%). Table 3.29 below provides a county-wise analysis of all the factors.

**Table 3. 29: County-based analysis of factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

Factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs	County responses in percentage											Number and percentage of the counties the factor was reported by at least 50.0% of the sample respondents
	Busia	Kiambu	Kitui	Nakuru	Kwale	Mombasa	Nairobi	Bungoma	Kisumu	Garissa	Machakos	
Vulnerabilities associated with high unemployment and poverty	100.0	97.2	85.2	96.3	67.0	84.3	93.7	89.9	86.7	83.3	91.2	11 (100.0%)
Peer pressure and influence	98.4	97.2	96.5	96.3	95.9	94.5	94.4	94.2	88.0	79.4	73.7	11 (100.0%)
Political exploitation	77.4	70.8	22.6	51.9	18.6	34.6	72.2	30.4	25.3	50.0	24.6	5 (45.5%)
Availability of illegal drugs	75.8	97.2	83.5	73.1	77.3	85.8	84.9	71.0	61.3	88.2	75.4	11 (100.0%)
Inadequate formal education among youth	71.0	52.8	60.0	56.9	52.6	63.8	69.8	73.9	60.0	26.5	15.8	9 (81.8%)
Broken or poor social and/or family support systems	46.8	69.4	70.4	76.3	64.9	69.3	77.8	63.8	61.3	52.9	68.4	10 (90.9%)
Community cultural and social tolerance of criminal gangs	46.8	40.3	33.9	45.6	28.9	51.2	54.0	34.8	22.7	45.1	9.6	2 (18.2%)
Ready markets for stolen items sold as second-hand items	43.5	43.1	0.9	0.0	1.0	25.2	47.6	18.8	0.0	1.0	0.0	
Corruption among rogue government officials (including security and law enforcement officers)	22.6	65.3	4.3	32.5	10.3	13.4	54.0	17.4	10.7	46.1	24.6	2 (18.2%)
Weak security policing of criminal gangs	19.4	23.6	15.7	35.0	15.5	6.3	25.4	17.4	22.7	34.3	22.8	
Availability of illegal firearms	16.1	9.7	1.7	3.8	2.1	0.8	23.0	1.4	5.3	19.6	7.0	

Factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs	County responses in percentage											Number and percentage of the counties the factor was reported by at least 50.0% of the sample respondents
	Busia	Kiambu	Kiifi	Nakuru	Kwale	Mombasa	Nairobi	Bungoma	Kisumu	Garissa	Machakos	
Inadequately sustained youth empowerment initiatives	8.1	54.2	1.7	0.0	4.1	31.5	30.2	10.1	0.0	1.0	0.0	<b>1 (9.1%)</b>
Inadequate social services	8.1	52.8	10.4	46.3	9.3	5.5	54.0	23.2	20.0	4.9	6.1	<b>2 (18.2%)</b>
Weak prosecution of criminal gang members	8.1	27.8	2.6	5.0	1.0	23.6	32.5	14.5	0.0	17.6	0.0	
Poor coordination among existing criminal justice agencies and other actors e.g. between national police, NGAO and DCI	8.1	23.6	20.9	23.1	3.1	15.7	34.9	17.4	2.7	7.8	2.6	
Weak protection of informers	8.1	22.2	7.8	0.6	1.0	18.9	12.7	14.5	0.0	2.9	0.0	
Underdevelopment and marginalization	3.2	63.9	15.7	51.3	14.4	18.9	64.3	26.1	22.7	28.4	0.9	<b>3 (27.3%)</b>
Influence of international criminal networks	1.6	12.5	2.6	6.3	1.0	5.5	9.5	0.0	0.0	2.9	0.0	

Findings from key informants were generally similar to the responses by sample respondents. For instance, a participant in an FGD conducted in Machakos County highlighted the following:

*“The important factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in this locality include weak and law enforcement and corruption where in some cases gangs exert influence over local authorities, law enforcement, or political leaders either through bribery or intimidation. Community gangs have strong roots in local community where they may have been seen as providers of social protection. We also have unemployment and other vulnerabilities, availability or exposure to drugs and substance as other factors. High levels of poverty and unemployment are significant factors. Criminal gangs often provide economic opportunities, though illegal, for individuals who might not otherwise have an opportunity. The gap between the rich and poor communities can foster a sense of deprivation, leading some individuals to join gangs as a way of seeking power, status, or financial gain.”*

A senior official in the High Court in Nakuru County observed the following with regard to the factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in the county:

*“The factors behind gang proliferation include easy availability of drugs and substances, failed education system, peer pressure, limited economic activities for youth, drug and substance abuse and lack of political goodwill.”*

In Nakuru County, one Assistant County Commissioner mentioned the following:

*“Factors behind proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in this place include political influence and support, high poverty levels, easy availability of drugs and substance, laxity of security to tame the criminal gangs (they don’t put much effort to deal with the problem), poor parenting and corruption amongst security sector players.”*

A senior Prisons Officer in Garissa County observed that:

*“Economic hardships, lack of employment, exposure to drugs and the desire for easy money among the youth contributes to criminal gang resilience and proliferation in this area.”*

Peer pressure emerged as the most significant driver of criminal gang recruitment. Many youths are drawn into gangs due to the influence of their peers, often in environments where gang membership is perceived as a means of gaining social status, protection, or financial

benefits. This underscores the need for targeted interventions focusing on youth mentorship and community engagement programs to counteract gang recruitment (Mito, 2023).

While youth empowerment programmes exist, their impact is often limited due to inconsistent funding and implementation challenges. Hence, economic hardship and lack of employment opportunities are critical push factors leading youth to join gangs. Many young people turn to criminal activities such as extortion, robbery, and drug peddling as alternative means of livelihood. This finding highlights the necessity for economic empowerment programs, vocational training, and job creation initiatives aimed at reducing youth susceptibility to gang recruitment. Sustained investment in youth empowerment, including entrepreneurship training and financial support, is needed to offer long-term alternatives to criminal activities (Institute for Security Studies, 2000).

The easy access to illicit drugs fuels gang activities by promoting substance abuse, which often leads to violent behavior and dependency-driven crimes. Gangs also exploit drug markets for financial gain, reinforcing their operations (Matara, 2022). Strengthening anti-narcotics policies and law enforcement efforts is essential to reducing the influence of drugs on criminal gangs.

As earlier indicated, dysfunctional families and weak parental guidance contribute significantly to youth delinquency. In households where parental supervision is minimal, young people are more likely to seek belonging and support in criminal gangs (NCRC, 2024; UNODC, n.d). Strengthening family-based interventions, parenting programs, and community support systems could mitigate this vulnerability.

The lack of adequate education limits employment prospects, making criminal activities a viable alternative for many young people. This highlights the importance of improving access to quality education, retention rates in schools, and skill-based training to provide viable career pathways for at-risk youth. According to Mazuri, Mwaeke and Bor (2022), enabling young people to access requisite education and skills needed to pursue other sustainable livelihoods is key in shifting them away from crime.

The manipulation of criminal gangs by political actors for electoral violence and other illicit purposes sustains their operations (Olouch, 2023, Institute for Security Studies, 2020). Studies by the National Crime Research Centre (NCRC, 2012; 2016; 2017) have shown that some organized criminal gangs thrive due to their political influence and ability to raise funds. After elections, gang members are left by their political sponsors without any economic support thus becoming economically vulnerable, a factor that pushes them to engage in criminal activities for their survival and/or livelihoods. This finding points to the need for stronger legal and institutional frameworks to curb the politicization of criminal groups and hold accountable those who engage in such practices.



Some communities passively or actively tolerate criminal gangs due to economic dependencies, fear, or social acceptance. This social tolerance allows gangs to thrive (UNODC, n.d). Public awareness campaigns, community policing, and collaborative efforts between law enforcement and local communities can help change attitudes toward criminality.

Areas that experience economic and social marginalization often become breeding grounds for criminal gangs. Limited access to infrastructure, education, and economic opportunities fosters an environment where gangs provide alternative structures of economic and social support. Addressing regional disparities through development initiatives is crucial (NCRC, 2024).

Corruption within security agencies, law enforcement, and other government institutions weakens efforts to dismantle criminal gangs. Some officials provide protection to gang leaders, leak intelligence, or engage in bribery, allowing gang activities to persist. Weak governance systems have been blamed for the proliferation of criminal gangs. For instance, the U.S Department of Justice (2007) has shown that organized crime problems happen under the watch of reluctant, compromised and/or corrupt local authorities. Strengthening accountability mechanisms and enhancing the integrity of security and judicial institutions are critical measures to curb corruption.

The lack of sufficient recreational facilities, and rehabilitation programmes for at-risk youth contributes to gang membership. Strengthening social service delivery, especially in low-income areas, could offer alternatives that divert youth away from crime.

Ineffective law enforcement responses, including inadequate patrols, intelligence gathering, and community policing, enable gangs to operate with impunity. There is a need for enhanced police capacity, intelligence-sharing mechanisms, and proactive policing strategies to disrupt gang networks. Fragmentation in the criminal justice system, including weak collaboration between police, prosecutors, and correctional services, limits the effectiveness of interventions. Strengthening inter-agency coordination and communication is essential for a holistic approach to combating organized crime. Inefficiencies in the judicial process, including weak investigations, lack of evidence, and lenient sentencing, contribute to the persistence of gang activities. Strengthening the prosecution process, ensuring witness protection, and imposing stricter legal consequences for gang-related offenses are necessary reforms (U.S Department of Justice, 2007).

Like in other jurisdictions, the existence of thriving markets for stolen goods sustains criminal enterprises in the country through the proceeds of the stolen goods. There is therefore need for strategic efforts to reduce stolen goods markets by making it more difficult and riskier for gang members to trade in the stolen goods, thereby muzzling their financial muscle. As highlighted by the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing (2009), addressing the problem of stealing of goods requires strategic measures targeting the chain of transactions in

stolen goods markets as regards the supply and demand, that is, the theft, concealing, disguising, marketing and disposing of the goods. Efforts such as regulating second-hand markets, enhancing traceability and seizure of stolen goods, and imposing stricter penalties on buyers of stolen items could help curb this trend.

From the foregoing discussions, it is evident that there is a complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and structural factors that contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs under the dictates of demographic profiles of gang members, recruitment methods used, the motivations for joining and staying in gangs and the factors sustaining gangs.

### **3.6 Mitigation Measures and their Effectiveness, and Challenges in Addressing the Proliferation and Resilience of Criminal Gangs**

This section of the survey highlights the: existing mitigation measures employed to deal with the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs; the perceived effectiveness of the measures; and the challenges hindering the efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. The section was organized into the sub-sections outlined below.

#### **3.6.1 Mitigation measures and their effectiveness in addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

This survey sought to map the existing mitigation measures and their effectiveness in addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. The findings showed that there were at least sixteen (16) existing measures all of which were perceived by majority of the sample respondents as generally effective. The measures perceived as most effective and which were reported by at least 8 out of 10 sample respondents were: law enforcement presence and patrols (96.1%); intelligence gathering and surveillance operations (95.9%); public sensitization fora, including Chief Barazas (91.4%); improved access to basic education (89.0%); deployment of local Nyumba Kumi Initiatives and community policing structures (87.4%); meting out punishment and/or sanctions to criminal gang members (86.3%); implementation of cultural, sports and arts programs that engage youth in positive and productive activities to keep them out of gangs (86.1%); youth employment and empowerment initiatives (83.5%); partnerships between relevant local and international state and non-state actors to coordinate efforts in addressing criminal gangs (83.4%); religious campaigns against criminal gang activity (82.9%); and application of stricter bail and bond terms for repeat criminal gang offenders (81.7%). The detailed findings are presented in Table 3.30 below.

**Table 3. 30: Mitigation measures and their effectiveness in addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

Existing mitigation measure	Responses in percentage		
	Effective	Not Effective	Not Sure
Law enforcement presence and patrols	96.1	3.9	0.0
Intelligence gathering and surveillance operations	95.9	4.0	0.1
Public sensitization for a (including Chief Barazas)	91.4	7.2	1.4
Improved access to basic education	89.0	8.8	2.2
Deployment of local Nyumba Kumi Initiatives and community policing structures	87.4	11.7	0.9
Meting out punishment and/or sanctions to criminal gang members	86.3	13.3	0.4
Implementation of cultural, sports and arts programs that engage youth in positive and productive activities to keep them out of gangs	86.1	11.5	2.4
Youth employment and empowerment initiatives	83.5	13.8	2.8
Partnerships between relevant local and international state and non-state actors to coordinate efforts in addressing criminal gangs	83.4	11.8	4.8
Religious campaigns against criminal gang activity	82.9	13.4	3.7
Application of stricter bail and bond terms for repeat criminal gang offenders	81.7	16.9	1.4
Rehabilitation and reintegration programs for reformed gang members	77.9	19.0	3.1
Protection programs for witnesses and informants to reduce the fear of testifying against gang members	72.9	23.4	3.7
Mopping up of illicit firearms	70.7	14.6	14.6
Support systems for victims of illegal gang activities	59.6	31.2	9.2
Amnesty programs for gang members	57.1	26.9	16.0

County-specific analysis was undertaken to gauge the perceived effectiveness of the existing measures in the different counties. The findings showed that almost all the existing measures were perceived as effective in almost all of the counties save for only a few exceptions as follows: the measure on application for stricter bail and bond terms for repeat criminal gang offenders was perceived by all (100.0%) the sample respondents in Kwale County as not effective; in Bungoma County, the rehabilitation and reintegration programs for reformed gang members were perceived not effective by 50.0% (against a rating of 25.0% effective) of the sample respondents; in Mombasa County, 55.6% of the sample respondents perceived as not effective the existing measure on support systems for victims of illegal gang activities; and the measure on amnesty programs for gang members was perceived by 55.6 % and 100.0% of the sample respondents in Kiambu and Busia County respectively. These results are presented in Table 3.31 below.

**Table 3. 31: County-specific rating of general effectiveness of existing mitigation measures for addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

Existing mitigation measure	County responses in percentage																																											
	Kiambu		Bungoma		Nairobi		Nakuru		Garissa		Busia		Mombasa		Kwale		Machakos		Kilifi		Kisumu																							
Law enforcement presence and patrols	Effective	100.0	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	98.4	Not Effective	1.6	Effective	98.3	Not Effective	1.7	Effective	98.0	Not Effective	2.0	Effective	97.0	Not Effective	3.0	Effective	96.7	Not Effective	3.3	Effective	96.4	Not Effective	3.6	Effective	95.6	Not Effective	4.4	Effective	93.5	Not Effective	6.5	Effective	93.3	Not Effective	6.7	Effective	88.7	Not Effective	11.3
Application for stricter bail and bond terms for repeat criminal gang offenders	Effective	100.0	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	75.0	Not Effective	25.0	Effective	94.4	Not Effective	5.6	Effective	-	Not Effective	7.1	Effective	68.0	Not Effective	32.0	Effective	92.9	Not Effective	7.1	Effective	68.0	Not Effective	32.0	Effective	0.0	Not Effective	100.0	Effective	-	Not Effective	66.7	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	-	Not Effective	-	Not Effective	-
Support systems for victims of illegal gang activities	Effective	100.0	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	-	Not Effective	-	Effective	71.4	Not Effective	14.3	Effective	79.2	Not Effective	12.5	Effective	44.4	Not Effective	33.3	Effective	100.0	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	44.4	Not Effective	55.6	Effective	45.2	Not Effective	41.9	Effective	42.9	Not Effective	14.3	Effective	68.2	Not Effective	31.8	Effective	100.0	Not Effective	0.0
Intelligence gathering and surveillance operations	Effective	98.4	Not Effective	1.6	Effective	100.0	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	98.1	Not Effective	1.9	Effective	97.3	Not Effective	2.7	Effective	93.7	Not Effective	5.1	Effective	96.1	Not Effective	3.9	Effective	98.7	Not Effective	1.3	Effective	89.4	Not Effective	10.6	Effective	97.2	Not Effective	2.8	Effective	91.9	Not Effective	8.1	Effective	84.6	Not Effective	15.4
Implementation of cultural, sports and arts programs that engage youth in positive and productive activities to keep them out of gangs	Effective	94.7	Not Effective	5.3	Effective	66.7	Not Effective	16.7	Effective	87.3	Not Effective	10.1	Effective	95.1	Not Effective	4.9	Effective	87.5	Not Effective	8.3	Effective	75.0	Not Effective	25.0	Effective	90.6	Not Effective	9.4	Effective	80.5	Not Effective	17.1	Effective	78.6	Not Effective	11.9	Effective	77.8	Not Effective	22.2	Effective	71.4	Not Effective	23.8
Public sensitization for a (including Chief barazas)	Effective	92.4	Not Effective	6.6	Effective	93.2	Not Effective	4.0	Effective	89.1	Not Effective	7.5	Effective	95.0	Not Effective	5.0	Effective	88.3	Not Effective	11.0	Effective	88.5	Not Effective	16.3	Effective	96.1	Not Effective	3.9	Effective	70.0	Not Effective	30.0	Effective	94.5	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	91.2	Not Effective	7.2	Effective	91.7	Not Effective	8.4
Improved access to basic education	Effective	92.3	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	73.3	Not Effective	26.7	Effective	94.1	Not Effective	5.9	Effective	90.9	Not Effective	6.8	Effective	71.4	Not Effective	28.6	Effective	85.7	Not Effective	14.3	Effective	100.0	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	87.5	Not Effective	8.3	Effective	75.0	Not Effective	16.7	Effective	91.5	Not Effective	6.4	Effective	81.8	Not Effective	18.2
Mopping up of illicit firearms	Effective	90.9	Not Effective	9.1	Effective	100.0	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	73.3	Not Effective	20.0	Effective	78.3	Not Effective	13.0	Effective	63.6	Not Effective	18.2	Effective	0.0	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	100.0	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	54.5	Not Effective	9.1	Effective	20.0	Not Effective	20.0	Effective	76.9	Not Effective	23.1	Effective	100.0	Not Effective	0.0
Religious campaigns against criminal gang activity	Effective	90.9	Not Effective	9.1	Effective	66.7	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	70.0	Not Effective	20.0	Effective	100.0	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	85.7	Not Effective	14.3	Effective	66.7	Not Effective	33.3	Effective	94.1	Not Effective	5.9	Effective	100.0	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	-	Not Effective	57.1	Not Effective	28.6	Effective	-	Not Effective	-		
Meting out punishment	Effective	90.8	Not Effective	9.2	Effective	100.0	Not Effective	0.0	Effective	93.8	Not Effective	5.3	Effective	93.4	Not Effective	5.9	Effective	53.7	Not Effective	44.4	Effective	94.7	Not Effective	5.3	Effective	91.9	Not Effective	8.1	Effective	81.6	Not Effective	18.4	Effective	77.0	Not Effective	23.0	Effective	86.5	Not Effective	13.5	Effective	64.3	Not Effective	35.7

Existing mitigation measure		County responses in percentage																					
		Kiambu		Bungoma		Nairobi		Nakuru		Garissa		Busia		Mombasa		Kwale		Machakos		Kiifi		Kisumu	
		Effective	Not Effective	Effective	Not Effective	Effective	Not Effective	Effective	Not Effective	Effective	Not Effective	Effective	Not Effective	Effective	Not Effective	Effective	Not Effective	Effective	Not Effective	Effective	Not Effective	Effective	Not Effective
and/or sanctions to criminal gang members																							
Deployment of local Nyumba Kumi Initiatives and community policing structures		89.4	10.6	88.5	11.5	90.6	8.5	92.3	7.7	70.1	25.3	90.5	7.1	94.8	5.2	71.6	25.9	92.5	6.6	88.3	11.7	85.5	14.5
Protection programs for witnesses and informants to reduce the fear of testifying against gang members		82.4	11.8	33.3	33.3	88.9	3.7	71.8	25.6	60.0	33.3	100.0	0.0	82.6	17.4	55.0	42.5	76.7	13.3	69.4	30.6	40.0	40.0
Partnerships between relevant local and international state and non-state actors to coordinate efforts in addressing criminal gangs		80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	82.9	17.1	75.6	11.1	91.3	8.7	100.0	0.0	95.8	4.2	81.8	9.1	94.7	0.0	67.6	26.5	87.5	12.5
Youth employment and empowerment initiatives		66.7	27.8	80.0	20.0	96.4	1.8	82.5	12.3	81.5	18.5	75.0	25.0	95.6	4.4	78.3	21.7	75.0	19.2	86.4	13.6	88.0	4.0
Rehabilitation and reintegration programs for reformed gang members		61.1	33.3	25.0	50.0	79.4	17.6	86.0	14.0	69.2	15.4	100.0	0.0	94.6	5.4	73.7	26.3	71.8	23.1	75.0	20.0	81.8	18.2
Amnesty programs for gang members		44.4	55.6	50.0	0.0	60.0	33.3	48.1	37.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	100.0	93.3	6.7	54.2	16.7	33.3	11.1	69.2	23.1	50.0	50.0

Findings from key informants on existing mitigation measures and their effectiveness had some semblance with those of sample respondents though varied from county to county and with a show of different ratings. For instances, a senior Probation Officer in Ifiti area of Garissa County had this to say on measures to deal with criminal gangs and their effectiveness:

*“What has worked well in Garissa County with regard to combating criminal gangs includes: religious leaders engaging in sensitization of the public in mosques. The collaboration offered by the Sheikhs was so instrumental in curbing criminal activities in town; establishment of social network and the multi-agency approach within criminal justice system where information is shared. This enhanced collaboration between agencies dealing with criminal gangs; empowerment program by the Department of Probation has seen several youths previously engaged in criminal gang activities reforming and shunning the vice; crime prevention activities like public meetings (barazas) organized by the Chiefs enlighten the members of the community that they need to work with government in the fight against gangs; and punitive sanctions acted as measure of deterrence. We also have some street lighting program by the County Government which I believe is helping some extent. Generally, I would say the measures are effective to some extent although more needs to be done.”*

A community leader who had lived in Burumba area of Busia County for 28 years opined:

*“Existing mitigation measures to deal with the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs has involved engaging young people in creative arts by the church; skills development of the youth by the county government and or politicians, e.g. in the areas of painting, plumbing, tailoring, catering, etc.; and presence of police and police patrols. On what has worked, the creative arts have worked well because it offers the youths financial benefits to sustain themselves.”*

A Human Rights Defender in Kisumu County had this to say:

*“What has worked effectively in dealing with gangs in this area is that forums have worked well. Some members of such gangs often feel embraced and has seen them change their way of life for a peaceful coexistence; Counselling of women who have been raped has helped them get back to normal lifestyle; Police Officers no longer reveal the identity of informers as it used to happen before.”*

A Principal Magistrate in one of the Law Courts in Bungoma County observed:

*“The measures in place to deal with gangs in this area include: the deployment of community policing structures; law enforcement agents making arrests of the perpetrators through their coordination with the community policing team; Court Users’ Committee have a Probation Department training the young men on skills development. On what has worked, Community Policing team and Police Officers have been effective because of the collaborative approach to crime prevention; the Probation Department has been in the forefront empowering the probationers on necessary skills that has resulted in many starting their own businesses.”*

A senior Police Officer in Masalani Sub-county of Garissa had this to say:

*“The measures that appear to be a bit effective and bearing some results in dealing with criminal gangs in this county are: intelligence gathering and surveillance. This has enabled the security agents to lay ambush to the militant in their makeshift camps; trailing and counter attacking using special forcers where they were neutralized and their storage of food destroyed several times; well-motivated and intensified patrols deep into the forest cover; absorption of local youth by the government to fight alongside the forces. They are given incentives as a sort of motivation to de-radicalize them; use of informers that are given monthly stipend to motivate them; prosecution and conviction of several gang groups that engaged in game meat or pouching; and public sensitization by the local administration enlightened the members of the public.”*

The effectiveness ratings of these measures offer key insights into the strengths and gaps in current strategies.

The most highly rated measures, all above 85% effectiveness, included law enforcement presence and patrols (96.1%), intelligence gathering and surveillance operations (95.9%), and public sensitization fora such as Chief Barazas (91.4%). These findings underscore the critical role of proactive policing, intelligence-driven operations, and community engagement in countering criminal gangs. The strong ratings suggest that respondents perceive security agencies as crucial in deterring gang activity. This further suggests a need for sustained or enhanced investment in policing, surveillance, and intelligence-sharing mechanisms.

One of the highly rated existing mitigation measures for addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs was education access. The survey revealed a paradoxical but complementary relationship between education and gang dynamics. On one side, education access (89.0%) emerged as one of the most effective mitigation measures, demonstrating that



when young people are meaningfully engaged in formal schooling, their vulnerability to gang recruitment is drastically reduced. On the other side, the same survey showed that inadequate formal education among youth (81.8%) was a significant driver of gang proliferation and resilience, as it fostered unemployment, idleness, and susceptibility to peer influence. These findings highlight education as a double-edged factor-its availability shields youth from gang involvement, while its absence or inadequacy exposes them to criminal networks. Thus, improving both access to and quality of education is not just a preventive measure but also a direct response to one of the root causes of gang proliferation in Kenya.

The other highly rated existing mitigation measures for addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs were community policing structures such as Nyumba Kumi (87.4%), and punitive measures against gang members (86.3%). These results affirm the positive preventive function of community involvement in security, alongside the deterrent effect of legal sanctions. The Community Policing and Nyumba Kumi initiative (87.4%), public sensitization (91.4%), and religious campaigns (82.9%) highlight the importance of grassroots engagement. Community policing has been credited with enhancing information sharing between the police and the community in matters security (Mwenda, 2017). On the other hand, the Nyumba Kumi Initiative is an approach to policing that anchors community policing at the household level. Its emphasis is on citizen participation in security with the main aim of bringing security interventions to the level of the household by creating clusters of ten houses. Due to its important role in security management, the Government of Kenya has prioritized its utilization and directed Chiefs and their Assistants to work closely with Nyumba Kumi elders in a bid to address some of the security challenges in the country (Mamo, 2023). This illustrates why Nyumba Kumi and Community Policing measures were ranked highly as an existing mitigation measure for addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. Strengthening local collaboration between communities and authorities could further enhance gang prevention efforts.

Additionally, youth-targeted interventions such as cultural, sports, and arts programs (86.1%) and youth employment and empowerment initiatives (83.5%), received high ratings, indicating that social and economic alternatives play a crucial role in discouraging gang involvement. Hence, these point to the need for a balanced intervention approach that combines enforcement with socio-economic support.

A second cluster of measures (with moderate effectiveness), that rated between 70% and 85%, included: partnerships between local and international actors (83.4%), religious campaigns against gangs (82.9%), stricter bail and bond terms for repeat offenders (81.7%), and rehabilitation and reintegration programs for reformed gang members (77.9%). The positive rating of multi-stakeholder collaboration suggests that respondents recognize the value of inter-agency coordination in addressing organized crime. The recognition of partnerships between state and non-state actors (83.4%) indicates that tackling criminal gangs requires coordinated efforts beyond law enforcement, which should involve civil society, religious groups, and international partners.

On the good rating on effectiveness of stricter bail and bond terms is a consideration that judicial measures are perceived as a deterrent against recidivism which implies that respondents view legal deterrence as a critical mitigation measure against gang activities. The use of rehabilitation programs for re-integration of reformed members into the community received a slightly lower rating (77.9%), which could suggest that while reintegration efforts exist, they may be facing challenges in the implementation or societal acceptance.

Other moderately effective measures included witness protection programs (72.9%) and mopping up illicit firearms (70.7%), reflecting concerns about retaliation against witnesses and persistent challenges in disarmament.

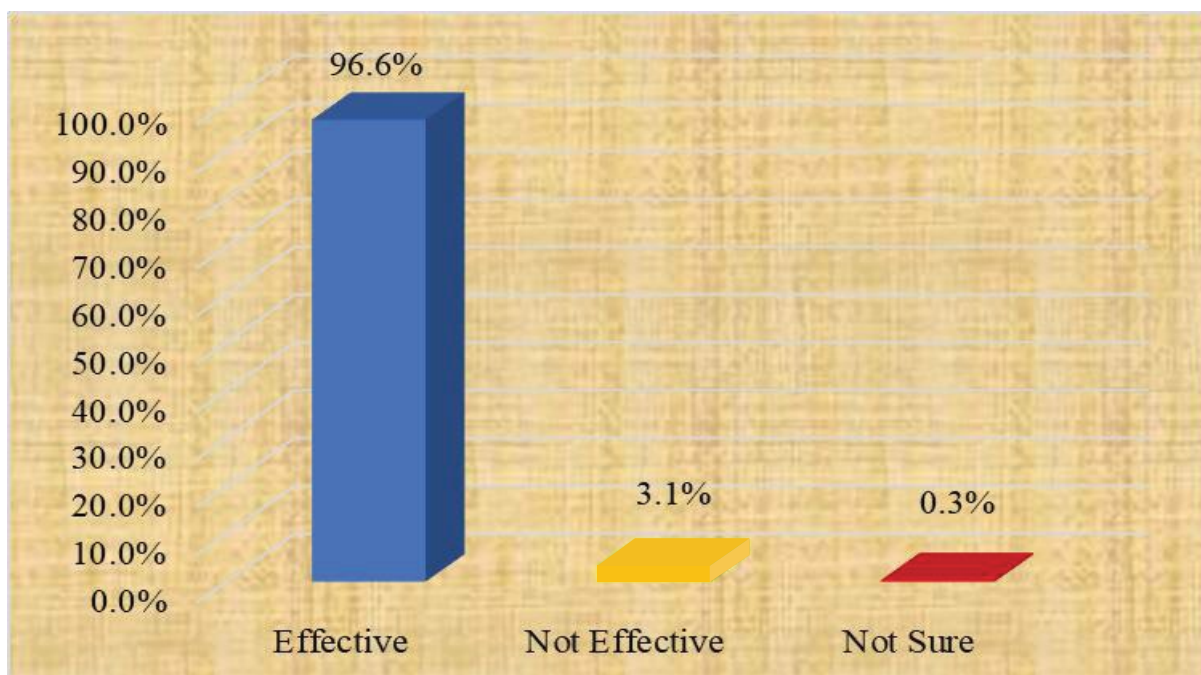
Two measures received slightly lower ratings: support systems for victims of gang activities (59.6%) and amnesty programs for gang members (57.1%). The relatively low effectiveness rating for victim support systems suggests that such programs may be inadequate, underfunded, or inaccessible. Victims may struggle with long-term trauma, economic instability, or fear of retaliation, factors that could limit the perceived impact of available support. The low effectiveness rating for amnesty programs bring to fore the skepticism regarding their success in convincing gang members to abandon crime. Challenges such as lack of trust in security agencies, difficulty in reintegration, and economic barriers may hinder the effectiveness of amnesty initiatives.



**Suspected machete-wielding ('Panga Boys') gang members arrested by the police in Likoni, Mombasa County**

Overall, this survey sought to gauge the perceptions of sample respondents on the general effectiveness of the existing mitigation measures in addressing the proliferation and

resilience of criminal gangs. As indicated in Figure 12 below, majority (96.6%) of them indicated that the existing mitigation measures were generally effective in addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs.



**Figure 8: Perceptions on the general effectiveness of all the existing mitigation measures for addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

County-specific analysis of the general effectiveness of the existing mitigation measures as captured in Table 3.32 below also showed high rating results, with the lowest rating on effectiveness at 93.2% for Kisumu County and the highest rating at 99.2% for Mombasa County.

**Table 3. 32: County-specific rating of general effectiveness of existing mitigation measures for addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

County	County responses in percentage		
	Effective	Not effective	Not sure
Mombasa	99.2	0.8	0.0
Machakos	99.1	0.9	0.0
Bungoma	98.5	1.5	0.0
Nakuru	98.1	1.3	0.6
Garissa	96.0	4.0	0.0
Kiambu	95.8	4.2	0.0
Kilifi	95.7	4.3	0.0
Nairobi	95.2	3.2	1.6
Busia	95.2	4.8	0.0
Kwale	94.8	5.2	0.0
Kisumu	93.2	6.8	0.0

Although most of the sample respondents argued that the existing mitigation measures for addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs were generally effective, the finding that there is continued proliferation and resilience of the gangs and persistence occurrence of criminal gang activities in virtually all the counties put into doubt the validity of the rating provided by the sample respondents. Hence their positive rating could have been an attempt to save face since also their responsibility included how they were addressing criminality in their areas, and a negative rating would appear to confirm failure on their part. In a study conducted by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission, 48.3% of the respondents were of the view that measures put in place to deal with organized gangs were not effective (NCIC, 2018). According to Sang (2023), the Kenyan government has made efforts to combat organized crime, including establishing specialized law enforcement agencies such as the Anti-Narcotics Unit and the Directorate of Criminal Investigations but there are concerns about the effectiveness of these measures.

### **3.6.2 Challenges hindering efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

The survey findings established a number of challenges in effort to address proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. The challenges that were reported by at least 3 out of 10 sample respondents were: inadequate resources for law enforcement (76.9%); limited economic opportunities for the youth (62.7%); weak collaboration between law enforcement and local communities (58.7%); lenient bail and bond terms to the arrested suspected criminal gang members (49.4%); political interference and/or protection of criminal gangs (45.6%); fear of retaliation from criminal gang members (42.4%); less punitive sentences to gang members (39.4%); inadequate community policing and law enforcement presence (38.9%); limited access to formal education and vocational training (38.3%); corruption within the criminal justice system (38.1%); withdrawal of cases by victims of gang crime (37.7%); difficulty in tracing criminal gangs due to concealment of identity and mode of operation (36.9%); lack of sufficient evidence to prosecute criminal gang members (33.2%); inadequate youth engagement through sports, arts, and cultural initiatives (32.9%); and limited witness protection and support for informants (32.5%). Table 3.33 below shows the full listing of the challenges hindering efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs.

**Table 3. 33: Challenges hindering efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

<b>Challenges hindering efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Inadequate resources for law enforcement	76.9
Limited economic opportunities for the youth	62.7
Weak collaboration between law enforcement and local communities	58.7
Lenient bail and bond terms to the arrested suspected criminal gang members	49.4
Political interference and/or protection of criminal gangs	45.6
Fear of retaliation from criminal gang members	42.4



<b>Challenges hindering efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less punitive sentences to gang members	39.4
Inadequate community policing and law enforcement presence	38.9
Limited access to formal education and vocational training	38.3
Corruption within the criminal justice system	38.1
Withdrawal of cases by victims of gang crime	37.7
Difficulty in tracing criminal gangs due to concealment of identity and mode of operation	36.9
Lack of sufficient evidence to prosecute criminal gang members	33.2
Inadequate youth engagement through sports, arts, and cultural initiatives	32.9
Limited witness protection and support for informants	32.5
Insufficient intelligence gathering and sharing, and monitoring of gang activities	29.6
Inadequate collaboration between relevant public institutions	26.5
Socio-cultural norms supporting criminal gang activities	22.1
Inadequate rehabilitation and reintegration programs for reformed gang members	20.8
Weak implementation of legal frameworks and enforcement of laws against criminal gangs	19.7
Inadequate Government accountability and anti-corruption efforts	18.4
Poor infrastructure	18.3
Inadequate public awareness on criminal gangs	16.7
Leakage of security intelligence by rogue law enforcement officials	13.1
Limited support for victims of illegal gang activities	12.6
Inadequate collaboration between public and non-state institutions	10.4
Weak disarmament and control of illegal weapons	5.1
Propagation of false information on criminal gangs using social media platforms	4.8

The challenges hindering efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs were further analyzed by county. The most prominent challenges that were reported by at least 50.0% of the sample respondents in at least a third of the counties (that is, 4 counties) were seven (7) as follows: inadequate resources for law enforcement (in all the counties); weak collaboration between law enforcement and local communities (in 72.7% of the counties); limited economic opportunities for the youth (in 54.5% of the counties); political interference and/or protection of criminal gangs (in 45.5% of the counties); withdrawal of cases by victims of gang crime (in 45.5% of the counties); lenient bail and bond terms to the arrested suspected criminal gang members (in 36.4% of the counties); and inadequate community policing and law enforcement presence (in 36.4% of the counties). These findings are captured in Table 3.34 below.

**Table 3. 34: County-specific challenges hindering efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

Challenges hindering efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs	County responses in percentage										Number and percentage of the counties the challenge was reported by at least 50.0% of the sample respondents	
	Bungoma	Kiambu	Nairobi	Kiiti	Mombasa	Busia	Nakuru	Machakos	Garissa	Kisumu		Kwale
Inadequate resources for law enforcement	91.3	86.1	83.3	82.6	78.7	77.4	76.3	72.8	72.5	66.7	60.8	<b>11 (100.0%)</b>
Limited economic opportunities for the youth	63.8	91.7	88.9	53.9	62.2	48.4	91.3	49.1	42.2	33.3	40.2	<b>6 (54.5%)</b>
Limited access to formal education and vocational training	63.8	37.5	53.2	37.4	29.9	59.7	48.1	7.0	27.5	41.3	29.9	<b>3 (27.3%)</b>
Poor infrastructure	60.9	33.3	29.4	19.1	20.5	24.2	6.3	0.0	15.7	13.3	3.1	<b>1 (9.1%)</b>
Inadequate community policing and law enforcement presence	49.3	51.4	61.1	30.4	28.3	53.2	59.4	16.7	12.7	37.3	28.9	<b>4 (36.4%)</b>
Weak collaboration between law enforcement and local communities	47.8	59.7	56.3	62.6	77.2	51.6	63.8	36.8	68.6	46.7	60.8	<b>8 (72.7%)</b>
Withdrawal of cases by victims of gang crime	47.8	56.9	54.0	39.1	61.4	51.6	25.6	8.8	63.7	10.7	1.0	<b>5 (45.5%)</b>
Lack of sufficient evidence to prosecute criminal gang members	40.6	51.4	54.0	48.7	66.9	35.5	27.5	1.8	17.6	14.7	1.0	<b>3 (27.3%)</b>
Lenient bail and bond terms to the arrested suspected criminal gang members	39.1	76.4	72.2	49.6	55.9	27.4	58.1	39.5	42.2	30.7	32.0	<b>4 (36.4%)</b>
Political interference and/or protection of criminal gangs	36.2	73.6	66.7	21.7	42.5	80.6	56.3	30.7	53.9	32.0	15.5	<b>5 (45.5%)</b>
Less punitive sentences to gang members	34.8	66.7	70.6	20.9	21.3	25.8	51.9	33.3	48.0	28.0	22.7	<b>3 (27.3%)</b>
Insufficient intelligence gathering and sharing, and monitoring of gang activities	34.8	31.9	48.4	29.6	38.6	17.7	38.1	14.0	9.8	24.0	24.7	
Inadequate collaboration between relevant public institutions	33.3	40.3	47.6	17.4	19.7	35.5	34.4	14.9	18.6	17.3	13.4	
Limited witness protection and support for informants	31.9	34.7	42.1	33.9	46.5	30.6	43.1	21.1	8.8	26.7	25.8	
Leakage of security intelligence by rogue law enforcement officials	31.9	34.7	23.8	0.9	7.9	35.5	8.1	2.6	16.7	5.3	0.0	
Inadequate youth engagement through sports, arts, and cultural initiatives	29.0	47.2	53.2	23.5	26.0	9.7	56.9	28.9	11.8	26.7	25.8	<b>2 (18.2%)</b>
Corruption within the criminal justice	24.6	76.4	62.7	14.8	27.6	22.6	56.3	36.0	49.0	20.0	13.4	<b>3 (27.3%)</b>

Challenges hindering efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs	County responses in percentage										Number and percentage of the counties the challenge was reported by at least 50.0% of the sample respondents	
	Bungoma	Kiambu	Nairobi	Kilifi	Mombasa	Busia	Nakuru	Machakos	Garissa	Kisumu		Kwale
system	23.2	43.1	56.3	37.4	45.7	38.7	58.8	39.5	25.5	37.3	39.2	2 (18.2%)
Fear of retaliation from criminal gang members	23.2	30.6	39.7	7.8	13.4	35.5	18.8	8.8	50.0	17.3	7.2	1 (9.1%)
Socio-cultural norms supporting criminal gang activities	21.7	44.4	47.6	39.1	59.8	27.4	42.5	36.8	17.6	8.0	35.1	1 (9.1%)
Difficulty in tracing criminal gangs due to concealment of identity and mode of operation	17.4	23.6	27.0	12.2	14.2	16.1	24.4	21.1	25.5	14.7	16.5	
Weak implementation of legal frameworks and enforcement of laws against criminal gangs	11.6	36.1	42.9	1.7	6.3	1.6	23.8	23.7	32.4	5.3	5.2	
Inadequate Government accountability and anti-corruption efforts	10.1	41.7	49.2	8.7	22.0	1.6	33.1	12.3	2.9	12.0	16.5	
Inadequate rehabilitation and reintegration programs for reformed gang members	8.7	20.8	12.7	13.0	22.8	4.8	16.9	3.5	5.9	8.0	14.4	
Limited support for victims of illegal gang activities	7.2	16.7	15.9	27.8	26.0	8.1	10.0	10.5	5.9	17.3	34.0	
Inadequate public awareness on criminal gangs	2.9	19.4	11.9	14.8	22.0	1.6	11.9	2.6	3.9	4.0	10.3	
Inadequate collaboration between public and non-state institutions	0.0	19.4	19.0	1.7	5.5	1.6	0.6	0.0	4.9	0.0	0.0	
Propagation of false information on criminal gangs using social media platforms	0.0	8.3	13.5	5.2	1.6	3.2	3.8	3.5	9.8	2.7	2.1	
Weak disarmament and control of illegal weapons												



Findings from key informants and FGD discussants also indicated there were a number of challenges hindering efforts in addressing proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. For instance, a senior Police Officer in Masalani area of Garissa County had this to say:

*“Lack of enough personnel in all formations in the Police Department, inadequate resources allocation for intelligence gathering and operation, that is, the Authority to Incur Expenditure (AIE) is inadequate, Lack of armoured vehicles for the police and lack of network coverage in some areas are challenges in policing the criminal gangs.”*

In Nyando Law Courts in Kisumu County, a senior Magistrate cited the challenges experienced in combating criminal gangs as follows:

*“Challenges to deal with criminal gangs effectively are numerous and include: a general lack of mentorship among high school children and who have nothing to do at home but to join the gangs for their survival; lack of follow-up on the mitigation measures put in place by the court, i.e., in terms of the cases being filed, we have seen a tremendous rise in a number of children between 17-19 years involved in crimes; limited witness protection and support for informants, i.e., the children are aware of adults (who are either relatives or siblings) committing crimes in the locality and they are afraid to report them or to become witnesses for fear of retaliation; limited access to formal education and vocational training; limited economic opportunities for the youth; and inadequate youth engagement.”*

In a Machakos County FGD session, a participant made the following remarks on challenges encountered in addressing the criminal gang problem:

*“Challenges include: inadequate sensitization due to lack of resources; lack of educational facilities for the youth; lack of witness and victim protection; limited opportunities for youth; high levels of poverty; unemployment; limited social recreational facility; political interference by offering support and protection; and corruption - criminal gangs have deep ties to law enforcement, political institutions, or local authorities.”*

The high percentage (76.9%) indicating inadequate resources for law enforcement implies that security agencies are unable to adequately meet expenses related to personnel, equipment, intelligence gathering, and operational logistics. According to Musoi and Omboto (2025), inadequate resources to the law enforcement agencies are part of the major challenges negating elimination of organized criminal gangs and their activities in Nairobi City County and hence the government should increase funding to the police and enhance its

independence to curb external meddling in their operations to fight crime. The finding therefore calls for prioritized budgetary allocations to enhance crime prevention and intervention efforts.

As highlighted in other findings of this survey, limited economic opportunities for the youth (62.7%) underscores the role of unemployment and poverty in gang recruitment. Hence, there is a need to integrate economic empowerment programs, including vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and job creation initiatives, to divert youth from criminal activities.

The finding on weak collaboration (58.7%) as a major challenge in addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs suggests a lack of trust between law enforcement and communities, thus hindering intelligence-sharing and collective security efforts. Musoi and Omboto (2025) argue that the police need to enhance collaboration in the fight against criminal gangs. This calls for the reinvigoration of the Nyumba Kumi and community policing initiatives, with efforts to build trust and encourage citizen participation in security.

Lenient bail/bond terms (49.4%) and less punitive sentences (39.4%) indicate loopholes that allow criminal gangs to evade justice and possibly develop impunity in their actions. According to NCRC (2012), the rewards in organized criminal gangs outweigh the punishments and that this partly explains their proliferation in many parts of the country and increment in membership. Hence, judicial reforms should focus on proportional and balanced sentencing, stricter bail conditions for gang-related crimes, and fast-tracking of gang-related cases.

Political interference was reported by 45.6% of the sample respondents thus suggesting a nexus between criminal gangs and political actors. As highlighted by Katola (2021) and Kibunja and Handa (2022), gangs thrive on handouts from politicians. This finding necessitates policy, legislative and administrative measures to prevent politicians from exploiting gangs especially for electoral or personal gains, along with stringent penalties for such engagements.

Fear of retaliation (42.4%) and withdrawal of cases (37.7%) highlight the risks faced by informants and victims of gang crime, thus deterring legal action against gangs. Further, limited witness protection (32.5%) indicates vulnerabilities that discourage community members from aiding law enforcement. For instance, Olouch (2023) argues that those in public transport are scared to point gang members out due to fear of losing their ability to operate in certain routes or more, their lives for the latter assault drivers accusing them of paying the daily toll. Strengthening witness protection and victim support programmes and mechanisms has the potential to encourage more individuals to come forward and testify against gang crime. Investment in anonymous reporting mechanisms and structured protection programmes can encourage whistleblowing and intelligence-sharing.

Difficulty in tracing gangs (36.9%) and lack of sufficient evidence for prosecution (33.2%) indicate challenges in intelligence gathering and case-building. In the U.S, dealing with gang homicides is hampered by challenges such as the lack of valid rosters of gang members (U.S Department of Justice, 2002). Investment in forensic capabilities, digital surveillance, and undercover operations can enhance law enforcement's ability to dismantle gang networks.

Corruption within the criminal justice system (38.1%) hampers efforts to combat criminal gangs by enabling bribery, case dismissals, and compromised investigations. Strict enforcement of anti-corruption laws and oversight mechanisms within the criminal justice system becomes paramount. Mazuri et al. (2022) advocate for the creation of a corruption free zone in the work place as a way of ensuring that no officer is compromised through the receipt of bribes.

Inadequate youth engagement (32.9%) and limited access to formal education and vocational training (38.3%) reinforce the need for proactive youth development strategies. Sports, arts, and cultural initiatives can serve as alternative avenues for youth to channel their energy away from crime. Mazuri et al. (2022) argue that affording young people the requisite education and skills needed to pursue other sustainable livelihoods would provide a sustainable solution to cattle rustling in North Rift. The importance of literacy (which is attained through acquisition of education) is reinforced by the observations of Growe and Montgomery (2003) who said that education *'is a great equalizer of conditions of men, the balance wheel of the social machinery'*, and the philosophy of former South African President Nelson Mandela who once said that *'education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world'* (Punjab Colleges, 2020).

Overall, this survey found that there were multiple mitigation measures that had been implemented by both state and non-state actors to curb the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs, with law enforcement, intelligence gathering, public sensitization, and youth empowerment initiatives being the most widely utilized. While these measures were perceived to be generally effective, their impact may have been constrained by persistent challenges such as inadequate resources for law enforcement, weak collaboration with communities, lenient judicial processes, and political interference. Therefore, based on the widespread proliferation, persistence, and resilience of criminal gangs across most of the counties, the existing mitigation measures were evidentially not effective in addressing the menace.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the summary of the major findings of the survey with regard to the: extent of proliferation of criminal gangs; nature of activities of members of criminal gangs; factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs; and the existing mitigation measures and their effectiveness in addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. The chapter also provides: the conclusion; key recommendations arising from the findings; and areas of further research that could be pursued by future studies.

### **4.2 Summary of Major Findings**

#### **4.2.1 Extent of proliferation of criminal gangs**

This survey found that there was widespread proliferation, persistence, and resilience of criminal gangs across the counties in Kenya. This finding is supported by evidence that established the deep entrenchment of criminal gangs in local communities, varied spread of gang in various counties, high adaptability and resilience of gangs demonstrated by the continued thriving of gangs even in counties where suppression efforts have been intensified, and the growing threat of highly violent and dreaded gangs.

The survey established that criminal gangs had proliferated. This was confirmed by majority (82.3%) of the overall survey sample respondents and over 67.0% of all the sample respondents in each of the eleven (11) survey counties. The key indicators or signs to suggest that criminal gangs had proliferated in their localities were: frequent reports of gang-related crimes (80.2%); rise in criminal gang-related violence and crimes (53.8%); intimidation or threats against local community members (53.4%); expansion of criminal gang influence in youth groups (42.5%); witness accounts of criminal gang activities at odd hours (42.4%); increased visibility of criminal gang activities in public spaces (41.7%); rising fear or reluctance among local community members to report crimes (40.5%); spread of criminal gang activities to previously unaffected areas (40.1%); and increased recruitment of vulnerable individuals into criminal gangs (38.6%).

Visibility of criminal gang activities as an indicator of the extent of proliferation of criminal gangs was rated at 87.6%, with over 76.0% of the sample respondents reporting in each of the eleven (11) survey counties. Criminal gangs in the localities were also reported by majority (83.6%) of the sample respondents as being widespread, with over 70.0% of the sample respondents in each of the eleven (11) survey counties attesting to the widespread nature of criminal gangs in their localities, with Kisumu (89.3%), Busia (88.7%) and Bungoma (88.4%) counties recording the highest reporting of the wide spreading of the gangs.

With regard to whether or not the number of criminal gangs had increased in the last three (3) years, findings from majority (53.2%) of the sample respondents indicated that the numbers had gone down, with most sample respondents in eight (8) out of eleven (11) counties (that is, 72.7% of the counties) perceiving that the number of criminal gangs in their localities had decreased. However, a significant proportion (34.2%) of the respondents held a contrary view and argued that the numbers had gone up, with increases being reported in only in Bungoma (53.6%), Busia (51.6%) and Kisumu (50.7%) counties.

Further, this survey mapped a total of 309 criminal gangs to be existing and known by name, being distributed across the eleven (11) survey counties. Of these organized gangs, 254 were each present in a single county, 42 were each present in two counties and 7 were each present in three counties. The criminal gangs that were leading in terms of their presence in at least a third of the counties (that is, 4 counties) were: Gaza/Gaza Family (in 8 out of 11 counties or 72.7%); 42 Brothers (in 6 counties or 54.5%); Wakali Wao (in 5 counties or 45.5%); and Panga Boys, Chafu/Squad Chafu/Gang Chafu and Mungiki (each in 4 counties or 36.4%).

The mapped 309 criminal gangs were distributed across the counties and varied in in regard to growth in membership, spread across various counties, resilience and being most dreaded. The distribution of the number of known criminal gangs across the survey counties was as follows: Mombasa (73); Nairobi (56); Kilifi (47); Garissa (31); Kwale (29); Busia (29); Bungoma (28); Machakos (28); Nakuru (27); Kisumu (22); and Kiambu (20). The distribution of the number of criminal gangs that were believed to have rapidly grown in terms of membership in the last 3 years (as reported by at least 10% of the sample respondents) was as follows: Mombasa (11); Nakuru (8); Kiambu (7); Garissa (7); Nairobi (6); Kilifi (6); Busia (6); Kisumu (6); Kwale (5); Bungoma (4); and Machakos (4).

The number of criminal gangs that were believed to have their presence in other counties, that is, had grown in terms of expanding into other counties (as reported by at least 10% of the sample respondents) were as follows: Mombasa (5); Machakos (5); Kilifi (4); Kwale (4); Bungoma (3); Kisumu (3); Kiambu (3); Garissa (3); Busia (2); Nairobi (2); and Nakuru (2). The number of criminal gangs that were said to be more resilient, that is, had been able to adapt, survive, and continue operating despite efforts to dismantle or suppress them (as reported by at least 10% of the sample respondents) was distributed across the counties were as follows: Mombasa (6); Kiambu (6); Busia (6); Nakuru (5); Garissa (5); Kisumu (4); Kilifi (4); Nairobi (3); Kwale (3); Bungoma (3); and Machakos (3). The number of most dreaded criminal gangs across the eleven (11) counties were as follows: Garissa and Nakuru counties had five (5) criminal gangs each; Kiambu, Kisumu, Machakos and Kilifi counties had four (4) gangs each; Mombasa, Nairobi, Bungoma and Busia counties had three (3) gangs each; and Kwale County had one (1) most dreaded gang.

The survey also established that there were at least ten (10) main reasons why some criminal gangs were most dreaded and these were the: use of sharp bladed weapons such as pangas

(87.2%); use of extreme violence (78.3%); involvement in drug peddling and/or trafficking and abuse (65.9%); intimidation of local leaders and residents (65.5%); engagement in serious crimes (61.8%); ability to recruit vulnerable individuals with relative ease (50.0%); strong network and coordination among members (39.5%); rapid expansion of their membership and/or coverage (37.2%); the use of crude weapons (35.0%); and their ability to secure support and/or protection from either law enforcement officers, politicians or business persons (31.6%).

#### **4.2.2 Nature of activities of members of criminal gangs**

The nature of activities of members of criminal gangs was examined in the context of the: sectors affected by criminal gangs; specific criminal activities of the gangs and their frequency; how criminal gangs undertook their activities (that is, mode of operation); and the extent to which local community members had contributed in the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs.

The survey found that criminal gangs in the survey counties had deeply infiltrated multiple sectors, expanded their criminal activities, adopted sophisticated operational tactics, and gained resilience through community complicity. These dynamics made gang-related crime a persistent and complex security threat.

Criminal gangs were found to have affected at least fourteen (14) specific sectors, with ten (10) of them being the most affected, namely: Security (90.8%); Counter-illicit Drugs and Narcotics Trafficking (70.5%); Business and Entrepreneurship (62.0%); Public Transport Service (53.1%); Political (38.7%); Information and Communication Technology (31.1%); Land and Natural Resources (22.1%); Financial (20.6%); Hospitality and Entertainment (18.2%); and Education (17.2%).

Findings of the survey mapped at least twelve (12) main criminal activities that gangs engaged in, and these were: Robberies (84.5%); Assaults, including of public transport drivers and crew (80.9%); General Stealing (80.6%); Illicit drug distribution and trafficking (70.2%); Burglary and breakings (64.8%); muggings (62.6%); Grievous harm (48.2%); Murder (41.0%); Rape (38.3%); attacks on women (35.2%); extortion in Matatu public transport (34.4%); and Defilement (33.9%). These activities were reported by the majority (66.5%) of the sample respondents to occur frequently, as indicated in nine (9) counties (that is, 81.8% of the counties), and while occurring occasionally in Kisumu and Machakos counties.

The survey established there were about eight (8) most prominent modes of operation of criminal gangs in committing their criminal activities, and these were: carrying out attacks (92.2%); using violence and intimidation (including threats, beatings and killings) to assert control, settle disputes, and instill fear among community members and rival gangs (79.9%); use of motor cycles (boda boda) to ease their mobility (71.1%); exploiting vulnerabilities occasioned by poverty, youth unemployment, and marginalization and underdevelopment to



recruit members and exploiting them for various criminal activities (60.1%); active recruitment of new members, especially youth, by offering financial/economic incentives, a sense of belonging, or protection against other threats (48.7%); intelligence gathering on potential targets, law enforcement activities, and rival gangs through surveillance and informants (41.6%); use of technology for communication and coordination, including coded messaging to plan criminal activities without or with minimal detection (36.3%); and recruitment and use of informants within communities to provide information on law enforcement activities, rival gangs and potential targets (34.8%).

Another important finding of this survey, which was reported by the majority (84.6%) of the sample respondents was that some local community members had contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in the survey locations, a view held by over 68.0% of the sample respondents in each of the eleven (11) survey counties. Further, the community members were found to have contributed majorly through: failing to report gang activities to authorities (71.2%); offering protection or concealment from law enforcement (67.0%); normalizing or accepting gang activities as part of community life (50.5%); collaborating with gangs for mutual benefit (36.0%); resolving gang-crime cases using local community conflict mediation systems which facilitates criminal gang impunity (24.9%); and failure to share information with the police (22.9%).

#### **4.2.3 Factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

The survey objective on identifying factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs was examined in a four-dimensional way namely, the: characteristics that typically describe most members of criminal gangs; how criminal gangs recruited their members; factors influencing young people to join and remain in criminal gangs; and factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs.

The survey showed that most members of criminal gangs: were of male gender (84.2%); had a history of substance abuse or addiction (76.1%); were young-aged persons of between 18 to 34 years (75.8%); were unemployed or underemployed (73.6%); had low level formal educational attainment or were school dropouts (73.3%); had experienced influence of peers or family members in gangs (60.2%); were from low-income families and/or marginalized communities (56.1%); had previously been involved in petty crimes (37.7%); and had unique and/or specific identification marks (32.5%).

Criminal gangs were found to recruit their members mainly: through peer influence or friends (90.6%); by targeting vulnerable youths such as school/college dropouts and unemployed youth (70.9%); by offering financial and other incentives or benefits (60.3%); through promises of protection or power (43.6%); influencing new members using drugs (42.3%); through local community social networks (28.2%); through recruitment at social and/or political events or gatherings (26.8%); via social media or online platforms (18.8%); through family or relatives (17.2%); and by coercion, threats or intimidation (14.2%).



The most prominent factors influencing young people to join and remain in criminal gangs were: pressure from peers already in gangs (85.3%); vulnerabilities of poverty and limited youth employment opportunities (84.3%); exposure to and/or influence of illicit drugs and substance abuse (72.4%); desire for financial and other incentives or benefits (70.2%); broken or poor social and/or family support systems (65.8%); limited access to formal education and/or vocational training (44.0%); family or community influence (30.4%); fear of retaliation or consequences of leaving (28.8%); cultural or traditional practices that appear to tolerate or normalize criminal gang activities (25.1%); desire for recognition, power and status (22.9%); lack of recreational or productive activities for youth (21.0%); weak law and order enforcement (19.9%); hero-worship/glorification of criminal gang life (18.1%); identity crisis and the desire for a sense of belonging (15.9%); negative online social media influence (14.4%); need for protection or security from rival criminal gangs (12.4%); and influence of gambling (12.0%).

The most prominent factors contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs were found to include: peer pressure and influence (91.5%); vulnerabilities associated with high unemployment and poverty (88.5%); availability of illegal drugs (79.7%); broken or poor social and/or family support systems (67.3%); inadequate formal education among youth (53.9%); political exploitation (42.9%); community cultural and social tolerance of criminal gangs (38.3%); underdevelopment and marginalization (29.7%); corruption among rogue government officials, including security and law enforcement officers (27.5%); inadequate social services (22.9%); weak security policing of criminal gangs (22.2%); poor coordination among existing criminal justice agencies and other actors (15.6%); ready markets for stolen items sold as second-hand items (14.8%); weak prosecution of criminal gang members (12.2%); and inadequately sustained youth empowerment initiatives (12.2%).

The survey also observed that there was a complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and structural factors that contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs under the dictates of demographic profiles of gang members, recruitment methods used, the motivations for joining and staying in gangs and the factors sustaining gangs in the counties.

#### **4.2.4 Existing mitigation measures and their effectiveness in addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs**

This survey also sought to map the existing mitigation measures employed to deal with the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs, gauge the effectiveness of the measures and identify the challenges hindering the efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs.

The survey found that there were multiple mitigation measures that had been implemented by both state and non-state actors to curb the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs, with law enforcement, intelligence gathering, public sensitization, and youth empowerment initiatives being the most widely utilized.

This survey, in general, mapped sixteen (16) existing mitigation measures, with the measures being all rated as generally effective as follows: law enforcement presence and patrols (96.1%); intelligence gathering and surveillance operations (95.9%); public sensitization fora, including Chief Barazas (91.4%); improved access to basic education (89.0%); deployment of local Nyumba Kumi Initiatives and community policing structures (87.4%); meting out punishment and/or sanctions to criminal gang members (86.3%); implementation of cultural, sports and arts programs that engage youth in positive and productive activities to keep them out of gangs (86.1%); youth employment and empowerment initiatives (83.5%); partnerships between relevant local and international state and non-state actors to coordinate efforts in addressing criminal gangs (83.4%); religious campaigns against criminal gang activity (82.9%); application of stricter bail and bond terms for repeat criminal gang offenders (81.7%); rehabilitation and reintegration programs for reformed gang members (77.9%); protection programs for witnesses and informants to reduce the fear of testifying against gang members (72.9%); mopping up of illicit firearms (70.7%); support systems for victims of illegal gang activities (59.6%); and amnesty programs for gang members (57.1%).

The above mitigation measures, though, were perceived to be generally effective by significant proportion of the sample respondents, their impact appeared could have been constrained by a number of challenges resulting in the continued widespread proliferation, persistence, and resilience of criminal gangs across most of the survey counties. The most prominent challenges, as reported by sample respondents hindering addressing proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs were: inadequate resources for law enforcement (76.9%); limited economic opportunities for the youth (62.7%); weak collaboration between law enforcement and local communities (58.7%); lenient bail and bond terms to the arrested suspected criminal gang members (49.4%); political interference and/or protection of criminal gangs (45.6%); fear of retaliation from criminal gang members (42.4%); less punitive sentences to gang members (39.4%); inadequate community policing and law enforcement presence (38.9%); limited access to formal education and vocational training (38.3%); corruption within the criminal justice system (38.1%); withdrawal of cases by victims of gang crime (37.7%); difficulty in tracing criminal gangs due to concealment of identity and mode of operation (36.9%); lack of sufficient evidence to prosecute criminal gang members (33.2%); inadequate youth engagement through sports, arts, and cultural initiatives (32.9%); and limited witness protection and support for informants (32.5%).

### **4.3 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the survey highlights that the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs is a factor of multiple determinants. For instance, it is deeply rooted in the exposure to deviant behaviour of peers, community tolerance of gang norms, and social environments that reinforce criminal conduct as espoused in Differential Association Theory. Additionally, socio-economic vulnerabilities, structural deficiencies and cultural dynamics also contribute to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. Young, unemployed males from marginalized and /or vulnerable backgrounds, often with a history of substance abuse, are

particularly highly susceptible to gang recruitment, which thrives on peer pressure, financial incentives and the exploitation of social networks. The resilience of criminal gangs is further reinforced by unemployment, poverty, drug availability, political exploitation and community tolerance. While various mitigation measures have been implemented, their effectiveness remains curtailed due to resource constraints, weak law enforcement and constrained community collaboration, and political interference. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-sectoral approach that combines youth empowerment, improved access to quality education and employment opportunities, community policing, and policies that disrupt the financial and political networks sustaining gang activities. Without comprehensive and sustained interventions, criminal gangs will continue to pose a significant threat to national security and social stability.

## **4.4 Recommendations**

### **4.4.1 Key Policy Recommendations**

This survey underscores the urgent need for change of tact that, among others, incorporates a multi-faceted and evidence-based approach to combat criminal gang proliferation and resilience. This is because the existing mitigation measures are evidentially not fully effective, at least going by the findings on the widespread proliferation, persistence, and resilient nature of the criminal gangs. By strengthening law and order enforcement and criminal justice system responses, addressing socio-economic vulnerabilities, enhancing positive community engagement, combating drug peddling and/or trafficking, enforcing political and security institutions accountability, leveraging on technology, enhancing criminal reintegration and rehabilitation after-care programmes, and improving legal frameworks, the country can effectively curb gang activities and enhance national security. The following specific policy recommendations provide a roadmap for holistic and sustainable interventions on proliferation of gangs in the country.

#### **1. Strengthening law and order enforcement and criminal justice system responses**

Criminal gangs were found to be spreading to new areas and their illegal activities were both visible and frequent, thus suggesting that they were undeterred, possibly due to perhaps some gaps in the criminal justice system. Hence, the need to strengthen criminal justice system response is inevitable. Strengthening law and order enforcement and criminal justice system responses requires:

- i. The National Police Service and the National Intelligence Service to enhance county-specific intelligence gathering and surveillance operations to proactively identify and dismantle criminal gang networks and to create a national database of identified and emerging gang groups incorporating biometrics of arrested gang members; which should be shared across all counties to track the gang members and document their criminal gang activities.

- ii. The National Police Service to increase law enforcement patrols and visibility in gang-prone areas to deter criminal activities, and strengthen collaboration between law enforcement agencies, the community and community policing structures such as Nyumba Kumi Initiatives. This intervention needs to cover the border counties which the survey indicated had a lead in increases in the number of criminal gangs.
- iii. The Judiciary and correctional facilities to undertake reforms aimed at effective sentencing policy that strikes a balance between deterrence, incapacitation, rehabilitation and disruption of gang structures. These include but not limited to: introducing or strengthening sentencing guidelines that differentiate between gang members, leaders, and associates, with graduated penalties based on roles, risk level, and degree of violence or coercion and recidivism; inclusion of mandatory participation in psychosocial therapy, de-radicalization, skills training and gang exit programmes as part of sentencing especially for young, first-time gang members; using non-custodial sentencing and restorative justice approaches for minor gang-affiliated offenses; imposing harsher penalties for adults who recruit minors or coerce individuals into gangs; introducing mandatory supervised aftercare for high-risk offenders especially for criminal gang leaders or repeat offenders; implementing stricter bail and bond terms for repeat criminal gang offenders to prevent reoffending; and strengthening judicial processes to provide timely dispensation of criminal justice for gang-related crimes.
- iv. The Witness Protection Agency, in collaboration with the National Police Service, to improve witness and informant protection programmes to encourage the reporting of criminal gang activities.
- v. The National Treasury and Planning, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and National Administration, to increase funding and resources allocation for law enforcement to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness, which include re-tooling and/or regular re-training of law enforcement officers to equip them with skills needed to effectively combat criminal gangs.
- vi. The Ministry of Interior and National Administration to develop comprehensive national policies focused on preventing and disrupting gang recruitment and ensuring effective rehabilitation.

## **2. Enhancing positive community engagement and public awareness**

The survey established that some local community members were to a large extent facilitating the proliferation of criminal gangs through their actions and/or inactions. This, therefore calls for the need to enlist positive participation of the community in dealing with the menace. Some of the specific interventions for enhancing positive community engagement and public awareness may include:

- i. Institutions represented in the National Council for the Administration of Justice to conduct continuous public sensitization campaigns to educate communities on the dangers of criminal gangs; and the role of the Witness Protection Agency in the

protection of community members who are willing to cooperate with criminal justice system agencies in matters of criminal gangs' suppression.

- ii. The National Government Administration Office together with the National Police Service to encourage active community participation in crime prevention through confidential and easy reporting mechanisms, informer programmes, anonymous tip-off systems and Community Policing Initiatives.
- iii. Resourcing and imbedding the Nyumba Kumi Initiative into the security infrastructure.
- iv. The Media to work with security agencies and educational institutions to address the normalization of criminal gang activities by promoting civic education on law and order.
- v. The involvement of religious institutions, civil society organizations, and local community in an enhanced collaboration initiative to promote anti-gang awareness campaigns and the establishment of community conflict mediation frameworks that discourage gang-related impunity.

### **3. Addressing the socio-economic enablers of recruitment and retention in criminal gangs**

The survey mapped key socio-economic factors that were negatively influencing youth to join and remain in criminal gangs. Hence, there is need to address these factors and those contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. The factors could be addressed through the:

- i. Ministry responsible for youth affairs, and that for trade and industry expanding youth employment and economic empowerment programs to provide alternative livelihoods.
- ii. Ministry responsible for education and vocational training increasing access to formal education and vocational training for vulnerable youths especially from informal settlements.
- iii. Ministries responsible for education, social services and youth affairs strengthening social support systems for at-risk youth, including mentorship and counselling programs.
- iv. Ministry responsible for culture and sports investing in cultural, sports and arts programs to engage young people in productive activities.
- v. Ministry responsible for trade and industry promoting financial literacy and entrepreneurship programs targeting low-income and marginalized communities.
- vi. State Department for Basic Education enhancing teacher training on early warning signs of gang involvement and working with law enforcement for intervention before youth become fully entrenched in crime.

#### **4. Combating illicit drug peddling and/or trafficking and substance abuse focusing on the at-risk-youth**

Illicit drugs and substances were found to play a significant role in the criminal gang problem. Hence there is need for the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse, in partnership with other relevant agencies to:

- i. Enhance anti-illicit drug peddling and/or trafficking efforts to disrupt supply and demand chains that fuel gang activities.
- ii. Strengthen rehabilitation and treatment programs for substance abuse victims, particularly among the ‘hooked’ youth.
- iii. Enforce strict regulations on the sale and distribution of illicit drugs and substances.
- iv. Foster collaboration between government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in awareness campaigns on dangers of drug use and other combat measures against illicit drug-related crimes.

#### **5. Identifying, prosecuting and deterrently penalizing political leaders who use, finance and protect gang members for political reasons**

Findings of this survey established political patronage by criminal gangs that involves utilization and financing of the gangs by the political class for their personal, electoral and business gain. Hence, there is need for the National Police Service to identify, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute and the Judiciary to deterrently penalize political leaders who use, finance and protect gang members for political reasons.

#### **6. Strengthening transparency and accountability in dealing with criminal gangs**

Findings of this survey established that corruption among rogue government officials, including security and law enforcement officers was a significant factor contributing to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in the country. Hence, there is need for:

- i. The Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) to strengthen oversight mechanisms to address corruption within the criminal justice system.
- ii. The National Police Service to enhance transparency in law enforcement operations to build public trust and cooperation.
- iii. The Attorney General and the Legislature to strengthen legal and policy frameworks against political and social interference in anti-gang operations.

#### **7. Enhancing technological and strategic security approaches**

The survey established permeation of ICT sector and the use of technology by gangs to undertake criminal activities (including recruitment of new members). Hence the Ministries



responsible for ICT and internal security together with the National Computer and Cybercrimes Coordination Committee (NC4) need to:

- i. Leverage technology for crime monitoring and digital intelligence gathering.
- ii. Strengthen cyber intelligence to counter gang recruitment and coordination through online platforms.
- iii. Strengthen evidence-based and data-driven crime approaches to addressing gang activities.
- iv. Develop a comprehensive national approach to address gang problem in a strategic manner.

#### **8. Enhancing criminal reintegration and rehabilitation after-care programmes that are informed by Needs-Risk Assessment of the criminogenic factors of youth involvement in crime**

Inadequate rehabilitation and reintegration programs for reformed gang members was cited as one of the challenges hindering efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. Therefore, the State Department for Correctional Services needs to:

- i. Expand rehabilitation and reintegration programs for former gang members that are cognisant of their criminogenic needs identified through Needs-Risk Assessment, to help them transition into lawful livelihoods.
- ii. Institute programmes for reducing the stigmatization of and using the reformed criminal gang members as change agents in the disruption of the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs.
- iii. Provide counselling and psychological support for gang-affiliated individuals seeking to exit criminal activities.
- iv. Work with the Office of the Attorney General to strengthen amnesty programs for reformed gang members and provide them with sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- v. Work with the Victims Protection Board to enhance support systems for victims of illegal gang activities in order to aid their recovery and prevent cycles of crime.

#### **4.4.2 Areas for further research**

This survey scantily and in very general terms examined the effectiveness of the existing mitigation measures for addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs. Hence, an in-depth study focusing on establishing community-driven initiatives that were indicated would be effective in preventing criminal gang involvement is recommended.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1- Interview Schedule for Sample Respondents (Police Officers, Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs)

#### A Survey on Proliferation and Resilience of Criminal Gangs in Kenya

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Sub-County: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Sublocation: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution Respondent is working for (select one option):

1. National Government Administration Office

Specify designation (select one option)

(a) Chief

(b) Assistant Chief

2. National Police Service

- i. Specify National Police Service Unit (select one option)

(a) Kenya Police Service

(b) Administration Police Service

(c) Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI)

- ii. Name of Police Station/Police Patrol Base/Administration Police Camp: \_\_\_\_\_

- iii. Specify designation (select one option)

(a) Chief Inspector

(b) Inspector

(c) Senior Sergeant

(d) Sergeant

(e) Corporal

(f) Constable

Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Start time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Introduction

The **National Crime Research Centre (NCRC)** is a State Corporation established by the National Crime Research Centre Act, 1997. The Centre is conducting a survey on **“Proliferation and Resilience of Criminal Gangs in Kenya”**.

You are, therefore, requested to participate in the exercise by providing relevant information on the subject. Your participation is critical in making this survey a success and helping the Government to address the challenge of Criminal Gangs in Kenya. All information shared will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be used for research purposes only.

Thank you.

**Tick appropriately**

1. Respondent agrees to be interviewed
2. Respondent does not agree to be interviewed

## **Section A: Respondent's Background Information**

1. Sex
  1. Male
  2. Female
  
2. Age category of the respondent
  1. 18-34
  2. 35-51
  3. 52+
  
3. Marital status
  1. Single/Never Married
  2. Married
  3. Separated
  4. Divorced
  5. Widowed
  
4. Highest level of education attained
  1. None
  2. Primary
  3. Secondary
  4. Middle-level college
  5. University
  6. Adult literacy
  7. Other (Specify \_\_\_\_\_)
  
5. How long have you worked in this locality?
  1. Below 1 year
  2. 1-3 years
  3. 4-6 years
  4. 7-9 years
  5. 10-12 years
  6. 13 years and above

## **Section B: Extent of Proliferation of Criminal Gangs**

6. (a) To what extent do you agree with the statement that criminal gangs have proliferated in this locality?
  1. Agree
  2. Neutral
  3. Disagree

(b) If your answer to the previous question was either ‘Strongly Agree,’ ‘Agree,’ or ‘Neutral,’ what indicators or signs suggest that criminal gangs have proliferated in this locality?

1. Spread of criminal gang activities to previously unaffected areas
2. Frequent reports of gang-related crimes
3. Rise in criminal gang-related violence and crimes
4. Increased visibility of criminal gang activities in public spaces
5. Increased recruitment of vulnerable individuals into criminal gangs
6. Expansion of criminal gang influence in youth groups
7. Involvement of gangs in local economic systems
8. Greater access to weapons and other resources by criminal gangs
9. Presence of informal justice systems enforced by criminal gangs
10. Reports of criminal gang and/or counter gang conflicts
11. Witness accounts of criminal gang activities at odd hours
12. Collaboration between gangs and local business or political actors
13. Intimidation or threats against local community members
14. Criminal gang gatherings or patrols in specific neighborhoods
15. Rising fear or reluctance among local community members to report crimes
16. Influence of criminal gangs in local politics
17. Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

7. How would you rate the visibility of criminal gang activities in this locality?

1. Visible
2. Rarely visible
3. Not visible at all

8. How widespread do you think criminal gangs are in this locality?

1. Widespread
2. Limited spread
3. Not present

9. How has the number of criminal gangs in your community changed in the last 3 years?

1. Increased
2. Remained the same
3. Decreased
4. Not sure

10. Which criminal gangs do you believe have rapidly grown in terms of membership in the last 3 years in this locality? \_\_\_\_\_

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11. Which of the criminal gangs in this locality do you believe or know have their presence in other counties (that is, have grown in terms of expanding into other counties outside this county)? \_\_\_\_\_

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12. Which of the criminal gangs in this locality you would say have been more resilient (that is, have been able to adapt, survive, and continue operating despite efforts to dismantle or suppress them)? \_\_\_\_\_

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13. (a) Please list the **TWO** most dreaded (feared) criminal gangs in this locality.

(b) What are the reasons why the two criminal gangs are most dreaded in this locality? (Tick all that apply.)

1. Intimidation of local leaders and residents
2. Ability to intimidate law enforcement officers
3. Possession of illegal firearms
4. Rapid expansion of their membership and/or coverage
5. Ability to recruit vulnerable individuals with relative ease
6. Ability to evade law enforcement actions
7. Ability to secure support and/or protection from either law enforcement officers, politicians or business persons
8. Use of extreme violence
9. Engagement in serious crimes
10. Involvement in drug peddling and/or trafficking and abuse
11. Control over key economic activities
12. Strong network and coordination among members
13. Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Section C: Nature of Activities of Criminal Gangs**

14. Which sectors have criminal gangs affected in this locality? (Select all that apply)

1. Business and Entrepreneurship
2. Transport and Public Service Sector
3. Land and Natural Resources
4. Counter-illicit Drugs and Narcotics Trafficking
5. Financial Sector
6. Security Sector
7. Political patronage
8. Informal Economy

9. Education Sector
10. ICT (Online spaces)
11. Hospitality
12. Construction
13. Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

15. What specific criminal activities have gangs engaged in in this locality? (Select all that apply)
1. Illicit drug distribution and trafficking
  2. Assaults
  3. Cybercrime (including computer crime, internet fraud and perpetration of crime using social media)
  4. Extortion of and running illegal protection rackets fees for businesses
  5. Infiltration of legitimate business for illegal activities
  6. Illegal acquisition of land (including through intimidation or force)
  7. Illicit trade (including Smuggling of contraband goods)
  8. Illegal taxation of traders and control of markets (including informal markets)
  9. Attacks on women
  10. Human trafficking (including trafficking for sex, labour and organs)
  11. Muggings
  12. Illegal activities in prostitution
  13. Robberies
  14. Extortion in Matatu (public transport)
  15. Extortion in construction and real estate industry
  16. Illegal micro-finance and loan sharking (that is, unregulated money-lending)
  17. Illicit firearms trafficking and smuggling
  18. Illegal trafficking of explosives
  19. Undue political patronage and control over local political processes (including influencing political decisions, offering protection and intimidation of opponents for money during elections)
  20. Perpetuating corruption within security and law enforcement agencies
  21. Infiltration of community policing initiatives
  22. Running illegal utilities, such as water or electricity connections
  23. Running recruitment activities for radicalization and drug peddling and/or trafficking especially in educational and training institutions
  24. Perpetuating environmental crimes (including illegal natural resource exploitation such as illegal logging, mining, and charcoal burning)
  25. Money laundering
  26. Contract killing (assassination)
  27. Running illegal protection rackets
  28. Burglary and breakings
  29. Murder

- 30. Rape
- 31. Counterfeiting
- 32. Carjacking
- 33. Car theft
- 34. Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

16. How frequently do criminal gang activities occur in this locality?
- 1. Frequently (at least once a week)
  - 2. Occasionally
  - 3. Rarely (at least a few times a year)
  - 4. Never
17. In undertaking their activities in this locality, what do criminal gangs do? (Select all that apply)
- 1. Carrying out attacks
  - 2. Enticing (with incentives) youthful males and women to remain in the gangs
  - 3. Enforcing gang norms through punishment of rebellious gang members
  - 4. Active recruitment of new members, especially youth, by offering financial/economic incentives, a sense of belonging, or protection against other threats.
  - 5. Recruitment and use of informants within communities to provide information on law enforcement activities, rival gangs, and potential targets.
  - 6. Use of technology for communication and coordination, including coded messaging to plan criminal activities without or with minimal detection.
  - 7. Intelligence gathering on potential targets, law enforcement activities, and rival gangs through surveillance and informants.
  - 8. Capitalization on community influence to disguise their illegal activities by providing services or support to communities, such as protection.
  - 9. Corrupting authorities to avoid prosecution, gain protection, or facilitate their operations.
  - 10. Establishing or taking over legitimate businesses as fronts for conducting illegal activities.
  - 11. Using violence and intimidation (including threats, beatings and killings) to assert control, settle disputes, and instill fear among community members and rival gangs.
  - 12. Exploiting legal loopholes and insufficient regulation within the informal sector to conduct their activities with minimal disruptions.
  - 13. Formation of alliances with other criminal groups, sharing resources, information, and strategies to enhance their illegal operations.
  - 14. Exploiting vulnerabilities occasioned by poverty, youth unemployment, and marginalization and underdevelopment to recruit members and exploit them for various criminal activities.

15. Acquisition, selling and distributing illicit firearms within local communities.
16. Abducting/kidnapping especially wealthy or prominent individuals and demanding ransom from their families.
17. Controlling access to land and housing in informal settlements and engaging in illegal land allocation and evictions.
18. Controlling public transportation routes and bus stops by charging illegal fees.
19. Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

18. (a) To what extent do you agree that some local community members have contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in your area?

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

(b) If your answer to Q 18 above is ‘Strongly agree or ‘Agree’, in what ways do you think some local community members have contributed to the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in your area? (Select all that apply)

1. Collaborating with gangs for mutual benefit
2. Normalizing or accepting gang activities as part of community life
3. Participating in gang-related activities or operations
4. Providing financial support or resources
5. Offering protection or concealment from law enforcement
6. Influencing youth to join gangs
7. Failing to report gang activities to authorities
8. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Section D: Factors Contributing to the Proliferation and Resilience of Criminal Gangs**

19. What characteristics do you think typically describe members of criminal gangs? (Tick all that apply)

1. Majority are of male gender
2. Majority are young-aged persons (e.g., 18 to 34 years)
3. From low-income families and/or marginalized communities
4. Low educational attainment or school dropouts
5. Strong loyalty to criminal gang culture and identity
6. Unemployed or underemployed
7. Desire for power, recognition, or status
8. History of substance abuse or addiction
9. Previous involvement in petty crimes
10. Influence of peers or family members in gangs

11. Are persons suffering from psychological issues such as low self-esteem or trauma
12. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
20. How do criminal gangs in this locality recruit their members? (Tick all that apply)
1. By offering financial and other incentives or benefits
  2. By coercion, threats or intimidation
  3. Via social media or online platforms
  4. Through promises of protection or power
  5. Recruitment at social and/or political events or gatherings
  6. By targeting vulnerable youths (e.g., school/college dropouts and unemployed youth)
  7. Through local community social networks
  8. Through peer influence or friends
  9. Through family or relatives
  10. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
21. In your view, what factors do you think influence young people to join and remain in criminal gangs? (Tick all that apply)
1. Desire for financial and other incentives or benefits
  2. Low self-esteem or lack of confidence
  3. Fear of retaliation or consequences of leaving
  4. Vulnerabilities of poverty and limited youth employment opportunities
  5. Limited access to formal education and/or vocational training
  6. Cultural or traditional practices that appear to tolerate or normalize criminal gang activities
  7. Pressure from peers already in gangs
  8. Unresolved mental health issues and/or psychological trauma
  9. Family or community influence
  10. Influence of illicit drugs and substance abuse
  11. Protection or security from rival criminal gangs
  12. Hero-worship/glorification of criminal gang life
  13. Desire for recognition, power and status
  14. Broken or poor social and/or family support systems
  15. Lack of recreational or productive activities for youth
  16. Weak law and order enforcement
  17. Exposure to illicit drugs and substance abuse
  18. Identity crisis and the desire for a sense of belonging
  19. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

22. Generally, what contributes to the growth (proliferation) and sustenance (resilience) of criminal gangs in this locality? (Select all that apply)

1. Vulnerabilities associated with high unemployment and poverty
2. Weak law enforcement
3. Corruption among rogue government officials (including security and law enforcement officers)
4. Peer pressure and influence
5. Inadequate social services
6. Availability of illegal firearms
7. Availability of illegal drugs
8. Community cultural and social tolerance of criminal gangs
9. Political exploitation
10. Influence of international criminal networks
11. Underdevelopment and marginalization
12. Inadequate education
13. Other (Specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Section E: Mitigation Measures and their Effectiveness**

23. Please list the existing mitigation measures that have been deployed to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in this locality and generally rate their effectiveness? (Select all measures that apply)

1. Meting out punishment and/or sanctions to criminal gang members
  1. Effective
  2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure
2. Youth employment and empowerment initiatives
  1. Effective
  2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure
3. Law enforcement presence and patrols
  1. Effective
  2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure
4. Intelligence gathering and surveillance operations
  1. Effective
  2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure

5. Deployment of local Nyumba Kumi Initiatives and community policing structures
  1. Effective
  2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure
  
6. Mopping up of illicit firearms
  1. Effective
  2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure
  
7. Amnesty programs for gang members
  1. Effective
  2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure
  
8. Rehabilitation and reintegration programs for reformed gang members
  1. Effective
  2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure
  
9. Partnerships between relevant local and international state and non-state actors to coordinate efforts in addressing criminal gangs
  1. Effective
  2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure
  
10. Protection programs for witnesses and informants to reduce the fear of testifying against gang members
  1. Effective
  2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure
  
11. Implementation of cultural, sports and arts programs that engage youth in positive and productive activities to keep them out of gangs
  1. Effective
  2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure
  
12. Support systems for victims of illegal gang activities
  1. Effective



2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure
13. Other (please specify)
1. Effective
  2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure
24. Generally, how effective do you think the existing mitigation measures have been in addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in this locality?
1. Effective
  2. Not Effective
  3. Not Sure
25. What challenges do you think hinder efforts to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in this locality? (Select all that apply)
1. Inadequate community policing and law enforcement presence
  2. Inadequate youth engagement through sports, arts, and cultural initiatives
  3. Weak implementation of legal frameworks and enforcement of laws against criminal gangs
  4. Limited economic opportunities for the youth
  5. Limited access to formal education and vocational training
  6. Inadequate rehabilitation and reintegration programs for reformed gang members
  7. Limited support for victims of illegal gang activities
  8. Insufficient intelligence gathering and sharing, and monitoring of gang activities
  9. Weak collaboration between law enforcement and local communities
  10. Weak disarmament and control of illegal weapons
  11. Limited witness protection and support for informants
  12. Inadequate Government accountability and anti-corruption efforts
  13. Inadequate resources for law enforcement
  14. Corruption within the criminal justice system
  15. Fear of retaliation from criminal gang members
  16. Socio-cultural norms supporting criminal gang activities
  17. Political interference and/or protection of criminal gangs
  18. Other (please specify)
26. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences or views on the mitigation measures against criminal gangs in this locality?
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27. Please ask any questions or concerns you may have about this survey.

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**Thank you for your time and cooperation.**

## **Appendix II: Key Informant Interview Guide**

### **A Survey on Proliferation and Resilience of Criminal Gangs in Kenya**

County: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sub-County: \_\_\_\_\_  
Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sublocation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_  
Start time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of the Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Introduction**

The National Crime Research Centre (NCRC) is a State Corporation established by the National Crime Research Centre Act, 1997. The Centre is conducting a survey on **“Proliferation and Resilience of Criminal Gangs in Kenya”**.

You are, therefore, requested to participate in the exercise by providing relevant information on the subject. Your participation is critical in making this survey a success and helping the Government to address the challenge of Criminal Gangs in Kenya. All information shared will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be used for research purposes only.

Thank you.

#### **Tick appropriately**

1. Respondent agrees to be interviewed
2. Respondent does not agree to be interviewed

## **Section A: Background Information**

Position/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization/Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been working in your current role? \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe your involvement in addressing organized criminal gangs in Kenya.

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## **Section B: Extent of Proliferation of Criminal Gangs**

1. In your view, how prevalent are criminal gangs in this locality? Please respond to the following aspects.
  - a) Are they increasing, decreasing, or remaining the same over time?
  - b) Can you estimate the number of gangs or gang members in the locality?
2. What is the geographical scope of criminal gangs in this locality, that is, are they confined to specific neighborhoods or spread across multiple areas?
3. What trends have you observed in gang membership over the past few years in terms of the following aspects?
  - a) Are more youth joining gangs?
  - b) What changes, if any, have you seen in gang recruitment?

## **Section C: Mapping the Nature of Activities of Gang Members**

4. (a) What are the primary activities that criminal gangs in this locality are involved in?
  - (b) Do these activities vary based on the type of gang or their membership? Please respond along the following lines
    - i. Are different gangs specialized in particular activities?
    - ii. Do older members engage in different activities than younger ones?
5. How do criminal gangs interact with the local community in this locality? Respond along the following:
  - a) Do they control certain businesses or public spaces?
  - b) Are there any forms of collaboration between gangs and local residents?

#### **Section D: Factors Contributing to the Proliferation and Resilience of Criminal Gangs**

6. What are the key factors contributing to the growth and persistence of criminal gangs in this locality?
7. Are there any external factors that influence the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in this locality?
8. How does the community contribute to the proliferation and resilience of these gangs (if at all)?

#### **Section E: Mapping Existing Mitigation Measures and their Effectiveness**

9. What measures are currently in place to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in this locality?
10. In your opinion, how effective are these measures in addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs? Please shade light on the following aspects
  - a) What has worked well, and why?
  - b) What challenges or obstacles hinder the effectiveness of these measures?
11. Are there any gaps or areas where mitigation measures are lacking? Please elaborate
12. What additional measures or changes do you think are needed to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in this locality?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add about the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in this locality?

**Thank you for your time and cooperation.**

## Appendix III: Focus Group Discussion Guide

### A Survey on Proliferation and Resilience of Criminal Gangs in Kenya

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Sub-County: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Focus Group Discussion: \_\_\_\_\_

Start time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the Moderator: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Introduction

The National Crime Research Centre (NCRC) is a State Corporation established by the National Crime Research Centre Act, 1997. The Centre is conducting a survey on “**Proliferation and Resilience of Criminal Gangs in Kenya**”.

You are, therefore, requested to participate in the exercise by providing relevant information on the subject. Your participation is critical in making this survey a success and helping the Government to address the challenge of Criminal Gangs in Kenya. All information shared will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be used for research purposes only.

Thank you.

#### Section A: Extent of Proliferation of Criminal Gangs

1. In your view, how prevalent are criminal gangs in this locality? Please respond to the following aspects.
  - a) Are they increasing, decreasing, or remaining the same over time?
  - b) Can you estimate the number of gangs or gang members in the locality?
2. What is the geographical scope of criminal gangs in this locality, that is, are they confined to specific neighborhoods or spread across multiple areas?
3. What trends have you observed in gang membership over the past few years in terms of the following aspects?
  - a) Are more youth joining gangs?
  - b) What changes, if any, have you seen in gang recruitment?

#### Section B: Mapping the Nature of Activities of Gang Members

4. (a) What are the primary activities that criminal gangs in this locality are involved in?  
(b) Do these activities vary based on the type of gang or their membership? Please respond along the following lines.

- i. Are different gangs specialized in particular activities?
- ii. Do older members engage in different activities than younger ones?
5. How do criminal gangs interact with the local community in this locality? Respond along the following:
  - a) Do they control certain businesses or public spaces?
  - b) Are there any forms of collaboration between gangs and local residents?

### **Section C: Factors Contributing to the Proliferation and Resilience of Criminal Gangs**

6. What are the key factors contributing to the growth and persistence of criminal gangs in this locality?
7. Are there any external factors that influence the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in this locality?
8. How does the community contribute to the proliferation and resilience of these gangs (if at all)?

### **Section D: Mapping Existing Mitigation Measures and their Effectiveness**

9. What measures are currently in place to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in this locality?
10. In your opinion, how effective are these measures in addressing the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs? Please shade light on the following aspects.
  - a) What has worked well, and why?
  - b) What challenges or obstacles hinder the effectiveness of these measures?
11. Are there any gaps or areas where mitigation measures are lacking? Please elaborate
12. What additional measures or changes do you think are needed to address the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in this locality?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add about the proliferation and resilience of criminal gangs in this locality?

**Thank you for your time and cooperation.**



ANNEXES

Annex 1: Criminal gangs and their spread across the counties

No.	Name of known criminal gang	Presence of known criminal gangs in the counties											Total number of counties criminal gang is present
		Mombasa	Nakuru	Kilifi	Garissa	Kwale	Machakos	Nairobi	Busia	Bungoma	Kiambu	Kisumu	
1.	Gaza/Gaza Family	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	8
2.	42 Brothers	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
3.	Wakali Wao	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓					5
4.	Panga Boys	✓		✓	✓	✓							4
5.	Chafu/Squad Chafu/Gang Chafu	✓			✓	✓		✓					4
6.	Mungiki		✓				✓	✓			✓		4
7.	Wakali Kwanza	✓		✓		✓							3
8.	MRC	✓		✓		✓							3
9.	Jeshi		✓	✓							✓		3
10.	7 Brothers		✓						✓	✓			3
11.	24 Brothers		✓							✓		✓	3
12.	Mbogi		✓				✓					✓	3
13.	Team Kodo			✓		✓	✓						3
14.	Wajukuu wa Babu	✓				✓							2
15.	Young Thugs	✓				✓							2
16.	Vietnam	✓							✓				2
17.	Wrong Turn	✓				✓							2
18.	Confirm		✓								✓		2
19.	Kabaridi		✓								✓		2
20.	Kabrother		✓							✓			2
21.	Fishermen		✓							✓			2
22.	Nyumba ya Mumbi		✓								✓		2
23.	Thai		✓								✓		2
24.	Taliban		✓						✓				2
25.	Eastlandos		✓					✓					2
26.	6 Brothers		✓							✓			2
27.	Team Shamba			✓			✓						2
28.	Bughat Gang			✓			✓						2
29.	Black Mob			✓			✓						2
30.	Weusi Gang			✓			✓						2
31.	Marasta			✓								✓	2
32.	B13			✓			✓						2
33.	Team Woza/Woza Woza			✓		✓							2
34.	Makatura/Makathura Gang			✓			✓						2
35.	Mombasa Raha			✓	✓								2
36.	Kapedo/Team Kapedo			✓					✓				2

No.	Name of known criminal gang	Presence of known criminal gangs in the counties										Total number of counties criminal gang is present	
		Mombasa	Nakuru	Kilifi	Garissa	Kwale	Machakos	Nairobi	Busia	Bungoma	Kiambu		Kisumu
37.	Empire Gang			✓			✓						2
38.	Kayole Gang				✓		✓						2
39.	Madine Operation Force				✓		✓						2
40.	Usiku Sacco						✓	✓					2
41.	Kamjesh						✓			✓			2
42.	Kamangira							✓			✓		2
43.	Boggie Genje/Mbogi Genje							✓			✓		2
44.	Obarore							✓				✓	2
45.	Shakahola							✓				✓	2
46.	Jobless								✓			✓	2
47.	Ongaroi Home Boys								✓			✓	2
48.	Bulanda Boys								✓			✓	2
49.	Jakopa Brothers								✓			✓	2
50.	OCS Group								✓			✓	2
51.	10 Brothers								✓			✓	2
52.	Spartark Security								✓			✓	2
53.	Uplands								✓			✓	2
54.	Network									✓		✓	2
55.	Kenda Muihuru									✓	✓		2
56.	Wajukuu wa Nyanya	✓											1
57.	Wajukuu wa Bibi	✓											1
58.	Team Mashamba	✓											1
59.	One Man Army	✓											1
60.	Wakali Chafu	✓											1
61.	Russia Gang	✓											1
62.	Home Boys	✓											1
63.	Wasafi	✓											1
64.	Watoto wa Mjukuu	✓											1
65.	Chafu za Down	✓											1
66.	Geta/Geta Family	✓											1
67.	Mateja	✓											1
68.	Military	✓											1
69.	Waliotengwa	✓											1
70.	Ghetto Family	✓											1
71.	Highlife	✓											1
72.	Majita	✓											1
73.	Vijana wa Murima	✓											1
74.	Mwananguvuze Area Gang	✓											1
75.	Crazy Boys	✓											1
76.	Spanish Sparta	✓											1

No.	Name of known criminal gang	Presence of known criminal gangs in the counties											Total number of counties criminal gang is present
		Mombasa	Nakuru	Kilifi	Garissa	Kwale	Machakos	Nairobi	Busia	Bungoma	Kiambu	Kisumu	
77.	B13	✓											1
78.	Wasafi Brothers	✓											1
79.	Watoto wa Nyanya	✓											1
80.	Vijiweni Boys	✓											1
81.	Likoni Young Turks	✓											1
82.	Temeka	✓											1
83.	Bilali Gang	✓											1
84.	Vienna	✓											1
85.	Wajukuu wa Kale	✓											1
86.	86th Battalion	✓											1
87.	Mbavu Nene	✓											1
88.	Mshomoroni	✓											1
89.	Buffalos	✓											1
90.	Big Nation	✓											1
91.	TMK	✓											1
92.	Kazi Bur	✓											1
93.	42 Gangs	✓											1
94.	Watalia	✓											1
95.	Bwagabwaga Gang	✓											1
96.	Disaster	✓											1
97.	Akili za Usiku	✓											1
98.	Funga File	✓											1
99.	Wakware Babies	✓											1
100.	Maweni	✓											1
101.	Tua Tugawe	✓											1
102.	Kidogo Basi	✓											1
103.	Ten (10) Down	✓											1
104.	Shiranga	✓											1
105.	Kongo/Congo by Force	✓											1
106.	Big Apple	✓											1
107.	Toroka Uje	✓											1
108.	Omar Tinga (aka Songa)	✓											1
109.	Kasemeni	✓											1
110.	64 Brothers	✓											1
111.	Kijiweni	✓											1
112.	Tel Aviv	✓											1
113.	Shinda	✓											1
114.	Young Mula	✓											1
115.	Kapenguria Six	✓											1
116.	Zibbers	✓											1
117.	Young Turks	✓											1
118.	Mauki		✓										1

No.	Name of known criminal gang	Presence of known criminal gangs in the counties										Total number of counties criminal gang is present	
		Mombasa	Nakuru	Kilifi	Garissa	Kwale	Machakos	Nairobi	Busia	Bungoma	Kiambu		Kisumu
119.	TZ		✓										1
120.	Wanamsamaha		✓										1
121.	Guchunuo ni ini		✓										1
122.	Nyuki		✓										1
123.	Wafaransa		✓										1
124.	White Eagle		✓										1
125.	Panya		✓										1
126.	Zoza		✓										1
127.	Mbogi ya Mulungu		✓										1
128.	Wale Wale		✓										1
129.	Chemasonik		✓										1
130.	Team Tandika			✓									1
131.	Team Tiger			✓									1
132.	Team Mapanga			✓									1
133.	Team Condom			✓									1
134.	Team Dangote			✓									1
135.	Kaburi Moja			✓									1
136.	Team 26			✓									1
137.	Team Pochi			✓									1
138.	Team Chui			✓									1
139.	Bad Lands			✓									1
140.	Team Zaragoza			✓									1
141.	Kavunyalalo Youth			✓									1
142.	Fuck Dolla			✓									1
143.	Wakali Mwisho			✓									1
144.	Team Maweni			✓									1
145.	Vijana wa Mtaa			✓									1
146.	Kunguru			✓									1
147.	Taylor Gang			✓									1
148.	Team Kimoda			✓									1
149.	Yakuza			✓									1
150.	Team Koleza			✓									1
151.	The Raids			✓									1
152.	Bomani Centre Group			✓									1
153.	Team Kalangwanda			✓									1
154.	Team Fujo			✓									1
155.	Team Katalunya			✓									1
156.	Team Salla			✓									1
157.	Jobless Billionaires			✓									1
158.	Team Ahera			✓									1
159.	Scoris				✓								1
160.	Bulla Muzuri Gang				✓								1

No.	Name of known criminal gang	Presence of known criminal gangs in the counties											Total number of counties criminal gang is present
		Mombasa	Nakuru	Kilifi	Garissa	Kwale	Machakos	Nairobi	Busia	Bungoma	Kiambu	Kisumu	
161.	Lemaoyan				✓								1
162.	Squad Marashee				✓								1
163.	Jail Birds				✓								1
164.	Land Cartels				✓								1
165.	Bada Case				✓								1
166.	Bulla Madina				✓								1
167.	Akhiyarta Hafada				✓								1
168.	Al Shabaab				✓								1
169.	Bod-Ass (Whitesen)				✓								1
170.	Red Sea Gang				✓								1
171.	Mulla				✓								1
172.	Masifita				✓								1
173.	Bulawayo sagare				✓								1
174.	Gorgor				✓								1
175.	Wrong Rende				✓								1
176.	Wajukuu Squad				✓								1
177.	Yakuza				✓								1
178.	The Raids				✓								1
179.	Palalumpa				✓								1
180.	Budda				✓								1
181.	Jesus				✓								1
182.	Kambi Moto				✓								1
183.	Taylor Gang				✓								1
184.	Arosto					✓							1
185.	Wachafu					✓							1
186.	Security Boys					✓							1
187.	Returnees					✓							1
188.	Maunga					✓							1
189.	Chama Cha Wana					✓							1
190.	Dandora					✓							1
191.	Grandpa					✓							1
192.	Vitswa Kuluma					✓							1
193.	Dambel					✓							1
194.	Kizazi Jeuri					✓							1
195.	Mwamanga					✓							1
196.	Kibundani					✓							1
197.	Bomb Blast					✓							1
198.	Bongwe					✓							1
199.	Chapatako					✓							1
200.	Ziwani 56					✓							1
201.	Tatu Chafu					✓							1
202.	St. Luke's					✓							1

No.	Name of known criminal gang	Presence of known criminal gangs in the counties											Total number of counties criminal gang is present
		Mombasa	Nakuru	Kilifi	Garissa	Kwale	Machakos	Nairobi	Busia	Bungoma	Kiambu	Kisumu	
203.	Jeshi la Mtaa						✓						1
204.	Full Cannol						✓						1
205.	Wande						✓						1
206.	Terra Squad						✓						1
207.	Jeshi la Rasia						✓						1
208.	Ngululya						✓						1
209.	Young Mulus						✓						1
210.	26 Harsh						✓						1
211.	Mamba Squad						✓						1
212.	Shughuli Warlords						✓						1
213.	Scorpion 3						✓						1
214.	Kidete						✓						1
215.	Superpower							✓					1
216.	Chafua Chafua							✓					1
217.	Soweto							✓					1
218.	Siafu							✓					1
219.	Katombi							✓					1
220.	Buyu							✓					1
221.	Kosovo Sacco							✓					1
222.	Apana Tambua							✓					1
223.	Car Wash							✓					1
224.	32 brothers							✓					1
225.	Kabreeze							✓					1
226.	Viroboto							✓					1
227.	Camp Jeshi							✓					1
228.	Casablanca							✓					1
229.	Forbers							✓					1
230.	12 brothers							✓					1
231.	Reformist							✓					1
232.	Bidii Youth Group							✓					1
233.	Kunguni							✓					1
234.	Power line							✓					1
235.	Nigerian							✓					1
236.	Waras							✓					1
237.	Riverside							✓					1
238.	Sowe sava							✓					1
239.	Eastlando 420							✓					1
240.	Patmore							✓					1
241.	Huku ni kwetu							✓					1
242.	Lazio							✓					1
243.	Savannah							✓					1
244.	Kibera							✓					1

No.	Name of known criminal gang	Presence of known criminal gangs in the counties											Total number of counties criminal gang is present
		Mombasa	Nakuru	Kilifi	Garissa	Kwale	Machakos	Nairobi	Busia	Bungoma	Kiambu	Kisumu	
245.	Underwater							✓					1
246.	4 brothers							✓					1
247.	Caribbean group							✓					1
248.	Gulliside							✓					1
249.	Mayouth							✓					1
250.	Morio							✓					1
251.	Bad Boys							✓					1
252.	Mikuki							✓					1
253.	Mayonde							✓					1
254.	Chigororo							✓					1
255.	Wazaliwa							✓					1
256.	Guzu							✓					1
257.	Hakuna kutambua							✓					1
258.	Sitaki Kujua							✓					1
259.	Kambi Ravin							✓					1
260.	Vietnam Kapedo Brothers								✓				1
261.	43 Brothers								✓				1
262.	Warriors								✓				1
263.	G7								✓				1
264.	Uganda Very Serious								✓				1
265.	Watu wa nomans								✓				1
266.	County 48								✓				1
267.	Wagumu Boys								✓				1
268.	Wararuzi Boys								✓				1
269.	Wanjinga								✓				1
270.	Dager 1								✓				1
271.	46 brothers								✓				1
272.	Jokopai/Vijana Wepesi								✓				1
273.	Teso community								✓				1
274.	Abanja								✓				1
275.	Wandogo Boys								✓				1
276.	Nabuyole Boys									✓			1
277.	Shamba la Mawe									✓			1
278.	47 Brothers									✓			1
279.	Molo Boys									✓			1
280.	17 Brothers									✓			1
281.	Paspalam Defence Brothers									✓			1
282.	Sabasaba									✓			1
283.	14 Brothers									✓			1
284.	16 Brothers									✓			1
285.	8 Brothers									✓			1



No.	Name of known criminal gang	Presence of known criminal gangs in the counties										Total number of counties criminal gang is present	
		Mombasa	Nakuru	Kilifi	Garissa	Kwale	Machakos	Nairobi	Busia	Bungoma	Kiambu		Kisumu
286.	One Sister									✓			1
287.	Armorhous									✓			1
288.	Tiluyonga Defence Forces									✓			1
289.	B-12									✓			1
290.	Pamoja Squad									✓			1
291.	Bagdad Boys									✓			1
292.	Kijana ya Salama									✓			1
293.	Janja Weed									✓			1
294.	Mathare defenders									✓			1
295.	Chokora										✓		1
296.	Gwata Ndai										✓		1
297.	Tesa Tesa										✓		1
298.	Jeshi la Chini ya Maji										✓		1
299.	Mihiriga Kenda										✓		1
300.	Tetema										✓		1
301.	Kanairo										✓		1
302.	2/Tu Brothers										✓		1
303.	Nayo										✓		1
304.	Katalang											✓	1
305.	American Marine											✓	1
306.	Genge Squad											✓	1
307.	Bogiwrong											✓	1
308.	Ofunyu Jerusalem											✓	1
309.	China Squad											✓	1

**Annex 2: County-specific perceptions about criminal gangs in terms of growth in membership, spread across counties, resilience and being dreaded**

County	Name of criminal gang	Responses (in percentage) on criminal gangs that are believed to have rapidly grown in terms of membership in the last 3 years in this locality	Responses (in percentage) on criminal gangs that are believed to have their presence in other counties (that is, have grown in terms of expanding into other counties outside this county)	Responses (in percentage) on criminal gangs that are said to be more resilient (that is, have been able to adapt, survive, and continue operating despite efforts to dismantle or suppress them)	Responses (in percentage) on most dreaded (feared) criminal gangs in the locality
<b>Kisumu</b>	1. Katalang	40.0	28.0	38.7	38.7
	2. 42 Brothers	16.0	12.0	12.0	10.7
	3. American Marine	12.0	10.7	12.0	12.0
	4. Genge Squad	12.0	4.0	6.7	6.7
	5. Ongaroi Home Boys	10.7	9.3	9.3	9.3
	6. Bogiwrong	10.7	8.0	10.7	10.7
	7. Uplands	6.7	4.0	2.7	4.0
	8. Obarore	6.7	1.3	4.0	4.0
	9. 24 brothers	6.7	4.0	2.7	6.7
	10. Ofunyu Jerusalem	5.3	4.0	4.0	4.0
	11. Jakopa Brothers	5.3	5.3	4.0	5.3
	12. Gaza	4.0	1.3	2.7	4.0
	13. Network	2.7	-	1.3	1.3
	14. Jobless	2.7	2.7	2.7	1.3
	15. China Squad	2.7	1.3	1.3	1.3
	16. Spartark Security	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
	17. OCS Group	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
	18. 10 Brothers	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
	19. Mbogi	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
	20. Marasta	1.3	-	1.3	-
	21. Bulanda Boys	-	-	1.3	-
	22. Shakahola	-	-	-	1.3
	Others	17.3	22.7	8.0	6.7
<b>Busia</b>	1. Jobless	67.7	27.4	61.3	58.1
	2. 42 Brothers	53.2	35.5	41.9	32.3

County	Name of criminal gang	Responses (in percentage) on criminal gangs that are believed to have rapidly grown in terms of membership in the last 3 years in this locality	Responses (in percentage) on criminal gangs that are believed to have their presence in other counties (that is, have grown in terms of expanding into other counties outside this county)	Responses (in percentage) on criminal gangs that are said to be more resilient (that is, have been able to adapt, survive, and continue operating despite efforts to dismantle or suppress them)	Responses (in percentage) on most dreaded (feared) criminal gangs in the locality
	3. Ongaroi Home Boys	21.0	9.7	17.7	9.7
	4. Bulanda Boys	21.0	1.6	11.3	4.8
	5. Vietnam Kapedo Brothers	16.1	4.8	12.9	8.1
	6. Kapedo	14.5	3.2	12.9	12.9
	7. 7 Brothers	8.1	3.2	3.2	4.8
	8. Jakopa Brothers	6.5	-	6.5	1.6
	9. 43 Brothers	6.5	3.2	4.8	-
	10. Vietnam	6.5	-	3.2	-
	11. Warriors	4.8	-	4.8	-
	12. Taliban	4.8	-	1.6	-
	13. OCS Group	3.2	3.2	3.2	1.6
	14. 10 Brothers	3.2	-	1.6	-
	15. G7	3.2	-	3.2	-
	16. Uganda Very Serious	3.2	3.2	3.2	1.6
	17. Watu wa nomans	3.2	-	3.2	1.6
	18. County 48	1.6	-	1.6	-
	19. Spartark Security	1.6	-	-	-
	20. Wagumu Boys	1.6	-	1.6	-
	21. Wararuzi Boys	1.6	-	1.6	-
	22. Wanjinga	1.6	-	1.6	-
	23. Uplands	1.6	1.6	1.6	-
	24. Dager 1	1.6	1.6	1.6	-
	25. 46 brothers	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6
	26. Jokopai/Vijana Wepesi	1.6	-	1.6	-
	27. Teso community	1.6	-	1.6	1.6
	28. Abanja	-	-	1.6	-
	29. Wandogo Boys	-	-	-	1.6
	Others	33.9	48.4	25.8	19.4

County	Name of criminal gang	Responses (in percentage) on criminal gangs that are believed to have rapidly grown in terms of membership in the last 3 years in this locality	Responses (in percentage) on criminal gangs that are believed to have their presence in other counties (that is, have grown in terms of expanding into other counties outside this county)	Responses (in percentage) on criminal gangs that are said to be more resilient (that is, have been able to adapt, survive, and continue operating despite efforts to dismantle or suppress them)	Responses (in percentage) on most dreaded (feared) criminal gangs in the locality
<b>Bungoma</b>	1. Nabuyole Boys	37.7	26.1	36.2	30.4
	2. Shamba la Mawe	34.8	24.6	30.4	23.2
	3. 47 Brothers	26.1	21.7	26.1	23.2
	4. 42 Brothers	13.0	7.2	5.8	-
	5. 7 Brothers	8.7	5.8	8.7	2.9
	6. Molo Boys	7.2	5.8	5.8	-
	7. 17 Brothers	7.2	5.8	5.8	2.9
	8. Kamjesh	5.8	4.3	4.3	-
	9. Paspalam Defence Brothers	5.8	4.3	5.8	5.8
	10. Sabasaba	4.3	2.9	2.9	-
	11. 14 Brothers	2.9	1.4	2.9	2.9
	12. 16 Brothers	2.9	2.9	1.4	-
	13. 8 Brothers	2.9	2.9	2.9	1.4
	14. Network	1.4	-	-	-
	15. One Sister	1.4	-	-	-
	16. Armorphous	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
	17. Tilyonga Defence Forces	1.4	1.4	1.4	-
	18. Kenda Muihuru	1.4	-	-	-
	19. 24 Brothers	1.4	1.4	-	-
	20. B-12	1.4	1.4	-	-
	21. Pamoja Squad	1.4	1.4	1.4	-
	22. 6 Brothers	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
	23. Bagdad Boys	1.4	1.4	-	1.4
	24. Kabrother	-	1.4	-	-
	25. Kijana ya Salama	-	1.4	-	-
	26. Janja Weed	-	1.4	-	-
	27. Fishermen				

County	Name of criminal gang	Responses (in percentage) on criminal gangs that are believed to have rapidly grown in terms of membership in the last 3 years in this locality	Responses (in percentage) on criminal gangs that are believed to have their presence in other counties (that is, have grown in terms of expanding into other counties outside this county)	Responses (in percentage) on criminal gangs that are said to be more resilient (that is, have been able to adapt, survive, and continue operating despite efforts to dismantle or suppress them)	Responses (in percentage) on most dreaded (feared) criminal gangs in the locality
	28. Mathare defenders	-	-	1.4	-
	Others	39.1	55.1	36.2	36.2
<b>Garissa</b>	1. Kayole Gang	71.6	72.5	55.9	56.9
	2. Squad Chafu	63.7	26.5	28.4	33.3
	3. Scoris	54.9	8.8	22.5	20.6
	4. Bulla Muzuri Gang	51.0	3.9	26.5	26.5
	5. Gaza	39.2	31.4	15.7	12.7
	6. Lemaoyan	14.7	1.0	4.9	2.0
	7. Squad Marashee	12.7	2.0	2.0	1.0
	8. Jail Birds	9.8	2.9	1.0	-
	9. Land Cartels	7.8	2.9	3.9	2.9
	10. Bada Case	7.8	-	1.0	1.0
	11. Bulla Madina	6.9	-	2.0	1.0
	12. Madine Operation Force	6.9	-	1.0	-
	13. Akhiyarta Hafada	5.9	1.0	-	-
	14. Al Shabaab	5.9	1.0	-	-
	15. Bod-Ass (Whitesen)	4.9	2.0	2.0	-
	16. Red Sea Gang	3.9	2.0	1.0	1.0
	17. Mulla	3.9	-	1.0	-
	18. Masifita	3.9	1.0	-	-
	19. Bulawayo sagare	2.0	-	1.0	-
	20. Gorgor	2.0	-	1.0	1.0
	21. Wrong Rende	2.0	-	1.0	-
	22. Wajukuu Squad	2.0	-	-	-
	23. Yakuza	1.0	1.0	1.0	-
	24. The Raids	1.0	-	-	-
	25. Palalumpa	1.0	-	-	-
	26. Panga Boys	1.0	-	-	-

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	27. Budda	1.0	-	-	-
	28. Jesus	1.0	-	-	-
	29. Kambi Moto	1.0	-	-	-
	30. Mombasa Raha	-	1.0	1.0	-
	31. Taylor Gang	-	1.0	1.0	-
	Others	23.5	9.8	11.8	10.8
<b>Nairobi</b>	1. Gaza	65.9	52.4	61.9	61.1
	2. Mungiki	44.4	39.7	40.5	32.5
	3. Superpower	28.6	4.8	19.8	19.8
	4. Kamangira	20.6	6.3	6.3	4.8
	5. Usiku Sacco	14.3	0.8	8.7	7.1
	6. Boggie Genje/Mbogi Genje	10.3	-	5.6	7.9
	7. Chafua Chafua	9.5	-	4.8	0.8
	8. Wakali Wao	7.9	0.8	4.0	4.8
	9. 42 brothers	7.9	2.4	2.4	1.6
	10. Soweto	7.9	-	1.6	3.2
	11. Siafu	7.1	-	1.6	1.6
	12. Katombi	6.3	-	0.8	2.4
	13. Buyu	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.6
	14. Kosovo Sacco	5.6	0.8	0.8	0.8
	15. Apana Tambua	4.8	0.8	1.6	0.8
	16. Car Wash	4.8	-	0.8	1.6
	17. 32 brothers	4.0	-	0.8	-
	18. Kabreeze	3.2	0.8	2.4	2.4
	19. Viroboti	3.2	-	0.8	-
	20. Camp Jeshi	3.2	-	-	0.8
	21. Casablanca	3.2	-	-	-
	22. Eastlandos	3.2	-	-	-

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	23. Forbers	2.4	3.2	3.2	3.2
	24. 12 brothers	2.4	-	0.8	-
	25. Reformist	2.4	-	-	-
	26. Bidii Youth Group	2.4	-	-	-
	27. Kunguni	2.4	-	-	-
	28. Power line	1.6	0.8	0.8	-
	29. Nigerian	1.6	0.8	-	0.8
	30. Waras	1.6	-	0.8	1.6
	31. Riverside	1.6	-	0.8	0.8
	32. Sowé sava	1.6	-	0.8	-
	33. Eastlando 420	1.6	-	0.8	-
	34. Patmore	1.6	-	-	0.8
	35. Huku ni kwetu	1.6	-	-	-
	36. Gang Chafu	0.8	-	-	-
	37. Obarore	0.8	-	0.8	0.8
	38. Lazio	0.8	-	0.8	0.8
	39. Savannah	0.8	-	0.8	-
	40. Kibera	0.8	-	-	-
	41. Underwater	0.8	-	-	-
	42. 4 brothers	0.8	-	-	-
	43. Carrebian group	0.8	-	-	-
	44. Gullside	0.8	-	-	-
	45. Mayouth	0.8	-	-	-
	46. Morio	0.8	-	-	-
	47. Bad Boys	0.8	-	-	-
	48. Mikuki	0.8	-	-	-
	49. Mayonde	0.8	-	-	-
	50. Chigororo	0.8	-	-	-
	51. Wazaliwa	0.8	-	-	-
	52. Guzu	0.8	-	-	-



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	53. Hakuna kutambua	0.8	-	-	-
	54. Sitaki Kujua	-	0.8	-	-
	55. Kambi Ravin	-	0.8	-	-
	56. Shakahola	-	-	-	0.8
	Others	32.5	21.4	7.1	7.1
<b>Nakuru</b>	1. Confirm	48.1	16.9	41.3	40.6
	2. Mauki	30.6		14.4	18.1
	3. Mungiki	23.1	20.6	20.6	16.9
	4. Kabaridi	18.1	7.5	16.9	15.0
	5. TZ	15.6	0.6	3.8	6.3
	6. Jeshi	12.5	8.1	12.5	11.9
	7. Kabrother	12.5	1.3	5.6	9.4
	8. Gaza	11.9	6.2	8.1	8.1
	9. Fishermen	9.4		5.0	6.3
	10. Wanamsamaha	8.1	8.8		2.5
	11. Guchunuo ni ini	8.1		3.1	3.1
	12. 7 Brothers	6.3	1.3	4.4	4.4
	13. Nyuki	4.4			1.9
	14. Wafaransa	4.4			
	15. Nyumba ya Mumbi	3.8	1.9		
	16. Thai	3.1	3.8	3.1	1.3
	17. 24 Brothers	3.1	3.1	1.9	2.5
	18. Mbogi	3.1		1.9	2.5
	19. White Eagle	1.9		1.9	0.6
	20. Taliban	1.9	0.6		0.6
	21. Eastlandos	1.9	0.6		
	22. 6 Brothers	1.3			
	23. Panya	1.3			
	24. Zoza	1.3			

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	25. Mbogi ya Mulungu	1.3			
	26. Wale Wale	1.3			
	27. Chemasonik	-	0.6		
	Others	15.6	31.2	4.4	7.6
<b>Mombasa</b>	1. Panga Boys	72.4	51.2	69.3	57.5
	2. Wakali Wao	62.2	42.5	44.9	29.9
	3. Wakali Kwanza	60.6	44.9	50.4	35.4
	4. Gaza/Gaza Family	22.8	13.4	14.2	4.7
	5. Wajukuu wa Nyanya	21.3	9.4	5.5	3.1
	6. Wajukuu wa Bibi	21.3	7.1	11.8	3.9
	7. Chafu	18.1	4.0	5.5	3.9
	8. Team Mashamba	17.3	14.2	15.0	4.7
	9. One Man Army	12.6	0.8	6.3	4.7
	10. Wajukuu wa Babu	11.8	3.1	2.4	1.6
	11. Young Thugs	11.8	0.8	3.1	2.4
	12. MRC	7.9	3.1	3.1	-
	13. Wakali Chafu	7.9	3.1	2.4	0.8
	14. Russia Gang	6.3	0.8	3.1	2.4
	15. Home Boys	5.5	2.4	0.8	
	16. Wasafi	5.5	-	0.8	0.8
	17. Watoto wa Mjukuu	4.7	1.6	1.6	-
	18. Chafu za Down	4.7	-	0.8	-
	19. Geta/Geta Family	4.0	0.8	1.6	-
	20. Mateja	3.9	0.8	2.4	1.6
	21. Military	3.9	0.8	0.8	0.8
	22. 42 Brothers	3.9	0.8	-	-
	23. Waliotengwa	3.9	0.8	-	-
	24. Ghetto Family	3.1	0.8	1.6	0.8
	25. Highlife	3.1	0.8	0.8	0.8

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	26. Majita	3.1	0.8	0.8	
	27. Vijana wa Murima	3.1	-	1.6	-
	28. Mwananguvuze Area Gang	3.1	-	0.8	0.8
	29. Crazy Boys	3.1	-	0.8	0.8
	30. Spanish Sparta	3.1	-	-	-
	31. B13	2.4	1.6	0.8	-
	32. Wasafi Brothers	2.4	0.8	-	-
	33. Watoto wa Nyanya	2.4	0.8	-	-
	34. Vijiweni Boys	2.4	0.8	-	-
	35. Likoni Young Turks	2.4	-	2.4	-
	36. Temeka	2.4	-	1.6	-
	37. Bilali Gang	2.4	-	0.8	0.8
	38. Vietnam	2.4	-	0.8	0.8
	39. Vienna	2.4	-	0.8	-
	40. Wajukuu wa Kale	2.4	-	0.8	-
	41. 86th Battalion	2.4	-	-	-
	42. Mbavu Nene	2.4	-	-	-
	43. Mshomoroni	2.4	-	-	-
	44. Buffalos	1.6	0.8	2.4	-
	45. Big Nation	1.6	0.8	1.6	0.8
	46. TMK	1.6	0.8	0.8	0.8
	47. Kazi Bur	1.6	0.8	0.8	-
	48. 42 Gangs	1.6	0.8	-	--
	49. Watalia	1.6	-	0.8	-
	50. Bwagabwaga Gang	1.6	-	-	-
	51. Disaster	1.6	-	-	-
	52. Akili za Usiku	1.6	-	-	-
	53. Funga File	1.6	-	-	-
	54. Wakware Babies	1.6	-	-	-

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	55. Maweni	1.6	-	-	-
	56. Tua Tugawe	1.6	-	-	-
	57. Kidogo Basi	0.8	0.8	-	-
	58. Ten (10) Down	0.8	0.8	-	-
	59. Shiranga	0.8	-	0.8	0.8
	60. Kongo/Congo by Force	0.8	-	-	0.8
	61. Big Apple	0.8	-	-	-
	62. Toroka Uje	0.8	-	-	-
	63. Omar Tinga (aka Songa)	0.8	-	-	-
	64. Kasameni	0.8	-	-	-
	65. Wrong Turn	0.8	-	-	-
	66. 64 Brothers	0.8	-	-	-
	67. Kijweni	0.8	-	-	-
	68. Tel Aviv	0.8	-	-	-
	69. Shinda	0.8	-	-	-
	70. Young Mula	0.8	-	-	-
	71. Kapenguria Six	0.8	-	-	-
	72. Zibbers	0.8	-	-	-
	73. Young Turks	0.8	-	-	-
	Others	25.2	23.6	15.7	9.4
<b>Machakos</b>	1. Gaza	52.6	51.8	51.8	50.0
	2. B13	23.7	23.7	23.7	22.8
	3. Madine Operation Force	14.0	14.0	14.0	13.2
	4. Usiku Sacco	13.2	11.4	8.8	5.3
	5. Jeshi la Mtaa	9.6	3.5	0.9	2.6
	6. Mungiki	8.8	12.3	7.9	10.5

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	7. Full Cannol	8.8	4.4	5.3	6.1
	8. Wande	7.0	2.6	-	0.9
	9. Wakali Wao	6.1	5.3	7.0	5.3
	10. Mbogi	6.1	4.4	1.8	1.8
	11. Terra Squad	4.4	-	-	-
	12. Kamjesh	3.5	2.6	0.9	1.8
	13. Bughat Gang	1.8	0.9	1.8	-
	14. Jeshi la Rasia	1.8	0.9	-	-
	15. Ngululya	1.8	0.9	-	-
	16. Young Mulus	0.9	1.8	0.9	0.9
	17. 26 Harsh	0.9	1.8	0.9	-
	18. Black Mob	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
	19. Weusi Gang	0.9	0.9	0.9	-
	20. Kayole Gang	0.9	0.9	0.9	-
	21. Team Shamba	0.9	0.9	0.9	-
	22. Empire Gang	0.9	0.9	0.9	-
	23. Makatura/Makathura Gang	0.9	0.9	0.9	-
	24. Team Kodo	0.9	0.9	0.9	-
	25. Mamba Squad	0.9	0.9	-	-
	26. Shughuli Warlords	0.9	-	-	-
	27. Scorpion 3	-	1.8	-	-
	28. Kidete	-	-	-	0.9
	Others	21.1	5.3	8.8	8.8
<b>Kiambu</b>	1. Mungiki	75.0	75.0	69.4	66.7
	2. Kamangira	41.7	25.0	20.8	19.4
	3. Gaza	27.8	22.2	23.6	19.4
	4. 42 Brothers	18.1	2.8	12.5	13.9
	5. Chokora	15.3	5.6	12.5	9.7

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	6. Thai	15.3	-	11.1	6.9
	7. Gwata Ndai	12.5	1.4	5.6	6.9
	8. Tesa Tesa	8.3	-	6.9	6.9
	9. Confirm	6.9	4.2	4.2	-
	10. Boggie genje/Mbogi Genje	6.9	1.4	4.2	2.8
	11. Jeshi la Chimi ya Maji	6.9	-	1.4	1.4
	12. Mihiriga Kenda	5.6	-	1.4	1.4
	13. Tetema	2.8	-	-	-
	14. Kanairo	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
	15. 2/Tu Brothers	1.4	-	1.4	1.4
	16. Jeshi	1.4	-	-	-
	17. Nayoy	1.4	-	-	-
	18. Nyumba ya Mumbi	1.4	-	-	-
	19. Kenda Muihuru	1.4	-	-	-
	20. Kabaridi	1.4	-	-	-
	Others	20.8	11.1	8.3	11.1
<b>Kilifi</b>	1. Panga Boys	48.7	40.9	40.9	35.7
	2. Team Shamba	30.4	20.9	30.4	24.3
	3. Team Tandika	24.3	11.3	21.7	21.7
	4. Wakali Wao	11.3	10.4	7.8	3.5
	5. Team Tiger	13.0	7.8	11.3	10.4
	6. Gaza	10.4	2.6	4.3	6.1
	7. Bughat Gang	8.6	2.6	7.8	5.2
	8. Wakali Kwanza	7.8	6.1	5.2	2.6
	9. Team Mapanga	7.8	2.6	4.3	0.9
	10. Black Mob	7.8	1.7	4.3	3.5
	11. Weusi Gang	6.1	0.9	2.6	1.7
	12. Marasta	4.3	4.3	2.6	-

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	13. MRC	4.3	2.6	1.7	-
	14. Team Condom	4.3	-	4.3	3.5
	15. Team Dangote	3.5	1.7	1.7	0.9
	16. B13	3.5	0.9	1.7	-
	17. Kaburi Moja	3.5	-	2.6	0.9
	18. Team Woza/Woza Woza	2.6	1.7	1.7	-
	19. Makatura/Makathura Gang	2.6	0.9	3.5	2.6
	20. Team 26	2.6	-	0.9	1.7
	21. Team Pochi	2.6	-	-	-
	22. Team Chui	1.7	0.9	0.9	-
	23. Bad Lands	1.7	-	1.7	1.7
	24. Team Zaragoza	1.7	-	0.9	0.9
	25. Kavunyalalo Youth	1.7	-	0.9	0.9
	26. Fuck Dolla	1.7	-	-	0.9
	27. Wakali Mwisho	1.7	-	-	-
	28. Team Maweni	1.7	-	-	-
	29. Vijana wa Mtaa	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
	30. Kunguru	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
	31. Taylor Gang	0.9	0.9	-	-
	32. Team Kimoda	0.9	-	0.9	0.9
	33. Yakuza	0.9	-	0.9	0.9
	34. Team Koleza	0.9	-	0.9	-
	35. The Raids	0.9	-	0.9	-
	36. Mombasa Raha	0.9	-	0.9	-
	37. Bomani Centre Group	0.9	-	0.9	-
	38. Team Kalangwanda	0.9	-	-	0.9
	39. Team Kapedo	0.9	-	-	-



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	40. Team Jeshi	0.9	-	-	-
	41. Team Fujo	0.9	-	-	-
	42. Team Katalunya	0.9	-	-	-
	43. Team Salla	0.9	-	-	-
	44. Jobless Billionaires	0.9	-	-	-
	45. Team Ahera	-	-	0.9	-
	46. Empire Gang	-	-	-	0.9
	47. Team Kodo	-	-	-	0.9
	Others	45.2	42.6	25.2	24.3
<b>Kwale</b>	1. Panga Boys	77.3	62.9	73.2	73.2
	2. Wakali Wao	16.5	12.4	13.4	7.2
	3. Arosto	14.4	11.3	10.3	8.2
	4. Wachafu	11.3	6.2	9.3	7.2
	5. Security Boys	10.3	10.3	4.1	4.1
	6. Returnees	9.3	8.2	5.2	4.1
	7. Team Kodo	9.3	5.2	9.3	9.3
	8. Maunga	8.2	8.2	7.2	4.1
	9. MRC	8.2	7.2	3.1	2.1
	10. Wajukuu wa Babu	5.2	5.2	2.1	3.1
	11. Wakali Kwanza	5.2	3.1	3.1	2.1
	12. Chama Cha Wana	4.1	4.1	3.1	2.1
	13. Dandora	4.1	4.1	1.0	1.0
	14. Grandpa	4.1	3.1	3.1	3.1
	15. Vitswa Kuluma	4.1	3.1	3.1	1.0
	16. Dambel	4.1	1.0	3.1	3.1
	17. Kizazi Jeuri	3.1	3.1	2.1	-
	17. Mwamanga	3.1	2.1	-	1.0
	19. Kibundani	3.1	-	-	-
	20. Wrong Turn	2.1	2.1	2.1	-

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	21. Bomb Blast	2.1	1.0	2.1	1.0
	22. Bongwe	2.1	1.0	-	-
	23. Chapatako	2.1	1.0	-	-
	24. Woza Woza	2.1	-	1.0	-
	25. Ziwani 56	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
	26. Chafu	1.0	1.0	1.0	-
	27. Tatu Chafu	1.0	-	-	-
	28. Young Thugs	-	1.0	-	-
	29. St. Luke's	-	1.0	-	-
	Others	8.2	6.2	6.2	6.2





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