

18th Street

Also known as: Dieciocho, Barrio 18, Mara 18

History: The 18th Street Gang is one of the largest street gangs in the United States, Mexico, and Central America. 18th Street originated in the 1960s near 18th Street and Union Avenue in downtown Los Angeles, California.

Membership/Hierarchy: Membership was originally open to Mexican nationals. Although most members tend to be of Mexican descent, membership has opened to other backgrounds, including Central American, African American, Middle Eastern, Asian, Caucasian, and Native American. Currently, 18th Street has a loose hierarchical structure. Although the gang is well networked throughout the nation, Mexico, and Central America, there is no known central leadership nationally or internationally. Cliques generally function independently, but will join forces when combating rival gangs or law enforcement. The latest figures from the NDIC estimate 18th Street membership at 30,000 to 50,000 nationwide, with 5,000 to 7,000 based in the Los Angeles area.

Location: The majority of 18th Street cliques operating throughout the United States and abroad are the result of Los Angeles members' migrating to other areas and establishing cliques under their leadership. Members originally from Los Angeles tend to be more respected than those in other areas. 18th Street cliques have been identified in 27 states and the District of Columbia in the United States, as well as 10 foreign countries.

Criminal Activity: 18th Street members are involved in a multitude of criminal activities including murder, rape, assaults, drug trafficking, extortion, robbery, and prostitution.

Gang Identifiers: Tattoos and graffiti will often include the words "Dieciocho," "Sureño," or "SUR," the numbers "18" or "666," and/or the roman numeral number "XVIII." 18th street members maintain the traditional Sureño colors of blue and white in most jurisdictions. In regions where other gangs use those colors, 18th Street members have been known to use black and white, red, or other neutral colors.