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Chapter 4: Community Perceptions Data

More than 200 students, 150 community residents, and 100 community leaders took surveys for this assessment. This included more than 200 youth, adult policymakers, and community leaders at the Multnomah Youth Commission’s Annual Youth Summit Against Violence on April 5, 2014, who completed an abbreviated version of the survey. Fewer respondents representing youth-serving agencies, parents and family members of gang-affiliated youth, and school staff took the survey (43, 25, and seven people, respectively). More than 80 gang-involved individuals participated in one-on-one interviews. And a total of nine focus groups with gang-affiliated parents and family members and gang-involved individuals were conducted at seven different locations.

General Observations of Community Perceptions Data

- Community respondents disagreed about whether gangs are present at school or in the community:
 - 25% of students said yes.
 - 40% of teachers said yes.
 - 80% of community residents and community leaders said yes.
 - 90% of parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth said yes.
- Parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth described gang-related activities as being a problem in the community

more frequently than did community leaders, community residents, and youth-serving agencies.

- Violent crime and fear consistently ranked high as gang-related problems identified by community leaders, community residents, and parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth.

Top Six Gang-related Problems in the Community, According to ...

... Community Leaders	... Community Residents	... Parents/ Families of Gang-Affiliated Youth	...Gang-involved Individuals
1. Violent crime	1. Drug crimes	1. Violent crime	1. Gang to gang confrontations
2. Fear	2. Fear	2. Fear	2. Alcohol use
3. Family disruption	3. Violent crime	3. Weapons crimes	3. Drug crimes
4. School disruption	4. Weapons crimes	4. Drug crimes	4. Weapons crimes
5. Weapons crimes	5. Public nuisance	5. Vandalism/graffiti	5. Robbery
6. Drug crimes	6. Fighting	6. Property crimes	6. Assault/Battery

- Community leaders cited family and school disruption as top gang-related problems in the community more frequently than did community residents and parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth.

- Community residents did not identify vandalism/graffiti as a top gang-related problem, even though both students and school staff described graffiti as their main indicator of gang presence.
- Among adult respondents, poverty and having a friend or family member in a gang were the most common explanations for why a young person would join a gang. For students who describe themselves as being in a gang, money, fun, respect, and protection were cited as the top reasons.¹
- Both community residents and parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth identified “gang members moving in from other areas” as a top reason for joining a gang.

- Jobs or job training ranked high as a strategy for reducing gang activity.
- Community residents and parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth would like to see more police presence or protection as a way of preventing gang membership and gang activity.
- Parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth named “more parental involvement” as the top strategy for reducing gang activity.

Top Six Things That Should Be Done to Reduce Gang Activity (in Order), According to ...

Top Six Reasons Young People Join Gangs (in Order), According to ...				
... Students Who Say They're in a Gang	... Community Leaders	... Community Residents	...Parents/Families of Gang-Affiliated Youth	...Gang-involved Individuals
1. Money	1. Poverty	1. Poverty	1. Friend/family member is in a gang	1. Friend/family member is in a gang
2. Fun	2. Friend/family member is in a gang	2. Friend/family member is in a gang	2. Poverty	7. Poverty
3. Respect	3. Feel loved or belong	3. Gang members move in from other areas	3. Gang members move in from other places	8. Family problems
4. Protection	4. Family problems	4. Lack of activities	4. Family problems	9. Not feeling accepted
5. Family member is in a gang	5. Lack of activities	5. Feel loved or belong	5. Lack of activities	10. Gang members move in from other places
6. Fit in better	6. School problems	6. Family problems	6. Boredom	11. Lack of activities

... Community Leaders	... Community Residents	... Parents/Families of Gang-Affiliated Youth	...Gang-involved Individuals
1. Jobs/job training	1. Jobs/job provision	1. More parental involvement	1. Recreation programs / activities
2. Mentoring	2. Mentoring	2. Jobs/job training	2. Mentoring
3. Recreation programs	3. Quality education and educational success	3. School programs	3. Jobs/job training
4. School programs	4. Child and youth programming	4. Recreation programs	4. 4. More community involvement
5. More parental involvement	5. Health services	5. Mentoring	5. More police presence
6. Tutoring	6. More police protection	6. More police presence	6. I don't know

¹ Although these questions were similar, adult and youth respondents had different multiple choice answers from which to chose.

Data Sources

Data Display	Source
Community Leaders Survey (Appendix 6)	Tailored OJJDP Gang Assessment Community Leader Survey (Appendix 4)
Community Resident Survey (Appendix 7)	Tailored OJJDP Gang Assessment Community Resident Survey (Appendix 5)
Multnomah County Youth Commission: Youth Summit Against Violence Survey (Appendix 8)	Extracted OJJDP Community Resident Survey Questions (Appendix 6)
Youth-Serving Agency Survey (Appendix 9)	Tailored OJJDP Gang Assessment Youth-serving Agency Survey (Appendix 7)
Parents/Family Members of Gang-Affiliated Youth Survey (Appendix 10)	Tailored OJJDP Gang Assessment Parents/Family Member Survey (Appendix 8)
School Staff Survey (Appendix 11)	Tailored OJJDP Gang Assessment School Staff Surveys (Appendix 9)
School Student Survey (Appendix 11)	Tailored OJJDP Gang Assessment Student Surveys (Appendix 9)
Gang Interview Tools and Data (Appendix 12)	OJJDP Gang Assessment Gang Interview Tool, Tailored Interview Tool, and Interview Data (Appendix 10)
Focus Group Youth & Family Survey and Focus Group Themes (Appendix 13)	Tailored OJJDP Gang Assessment Focus Group Guide (Appendix 11)

Question 8: Do community leaders perceive a gang problem? If so, what is the problem? Are they prepared to respond?

Approximately 100 community leaders took the survey, which was distributed and completed both electronically and in hard copy. Completed paper surveys were mailed or hand delivered to the project lead team members, and the data were entered by county staff. The survey tool and complete survey results are included in Appendix 6.

Community leaders who took the survey primarily represent non-profit organizations and city or county government. One-third are managers or supervisors, while 24% are directly involved in service delivery. More women than men took the survey (55% vs. 38%), and 70% of the respondents are white. Almost two-thirds (62%) of the community leader respondents are between 40 and 64 years of age, and another 23% are 30 to 39 years old. Most commonly, respondents have worked in their field for more than 20 years. At least 40% have had personal experience with a gang member, often in a professional capacity.

The organizations that community leaders represent partner with many other types of organizations in addressing gang activity: non-profit organizations, law enforcement, youth-serving organizations, city or county government, faith-based communities, state government, local business, and the media. The organizations work in every part of the county, with the greatest focus being in Gresham and the Rockwood/Rosewood area.

Observations of Community Leader Data

- A total of 80% of the community leaders believe that gangs are a problem in the community.

- According to community leaders, the most common problems that gangs cause are (in order) violent crime, fear, family disruption, school disruption, weapons crimes, drug crimes, vandalism/graffiti, property crimes, and public nuisances. Additionally, five community members specifically mentioned human trafficking or gang-related prostitution as a top problem caused by gangs.
- Community leaders cited poverty, a friend or family member being in a gang, wanting to feel loved or have a sense of belonging, and family problems as the main reasons people join gangs.
- The top strategies that community leaders suggested for reducing the gang problem were (in order) jobs/job training, mentoring, recreation programs, school programs, and more parental involvement.
- Community leaders gave mixed reports as to whether they are satisfied with the current response to gangs (by law enforcement, social service agencies, schools, etc.). While 35% are somewhat satisfied, 57% are somewhat or very unsatisfied.

Question 9: How do community residents perceive the gang problem? What do community residents believe should be done?

More than 150 community residents took the survey, which was distributed and completed both electronically and in hard copy. Completed paper surveys were mailed or hand delivered to the project lead team members, and the data were then entered by county staff. The survey tool and complete survey results are included in Appendix 7.

Community resident respondents were mostly white (80%) and female (57%). In terms of marital status, 40% of them are married, 30% never married, and 21% divorced; the rest are separated or widowed. It was most common that community residents were in the 50- to 64-year-old age bracket (35% of respondents). Thirty-five percent of the respondents had completed a college degree.

Observations of Community Resident Data

- More than half (65%) of the community residents said they do not feel safer in their community than they did two years ago. Their top concerns about their community are (in order) drug dealing, burglary/robbery, gang activity, graffiti, vandalism, and unemployment.
- Most residents (80%) think that there are gangs in their community, and that gang activity has stayed about the same during the past year (60% of respondents); 35% think it has increased, and 6% think it has decreased.
- Community residents consider drug crimes, fear, violent crime, weapons crimes, and public nuisances as the top problems caused by gangs in their community. They identify these items as gang-related problems less frequently than do the parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth.
- Community residents cited the following as the top causes of gang activity (in order): poverty, a friend or family member is in a gang, gang members move in from other areas, a lack of activities, wanting to feel loved or have a sense of belonging, family problems, boredom, and wanting power.
- The top strategies that community residents suggested for reducing the gang problem were jobs/job provision, mentoring, quality education and educational success, child and youth programming, health services, more police protection, programs/recreation, and quality housing.

- Community residents consider the family to be the entity that is most responsible for dealing with gangs, followed by (in order) the police, school, and court/criminal justice system. Also cited were service providers, the church, community residents, community centers, neighborhood associations, and the health department.

Youth Summit Attendees

More than 200 youth, adult policymakers, and community leaders attending the Multnomah Youth Summit answered a subset of the questions that constituted the other qualitative surveys summarized in this report. The survey tool and complete survey results are included in Appendix 8. Respondents varied greatly in age (Figure 44), although many fell in the 13-15 and 16-17 age groups (21% and 22% of respondents, respectively). More than 50% of the adult respondents were white; the racial composition of the younger respondents was much more varied, with less than 30% of them being white (Figure 45). Female respondents outnumbered male respondents. Most respondents came from Southeast, Northeast, and North Portland.

Figure 44: Youth Summit: Age

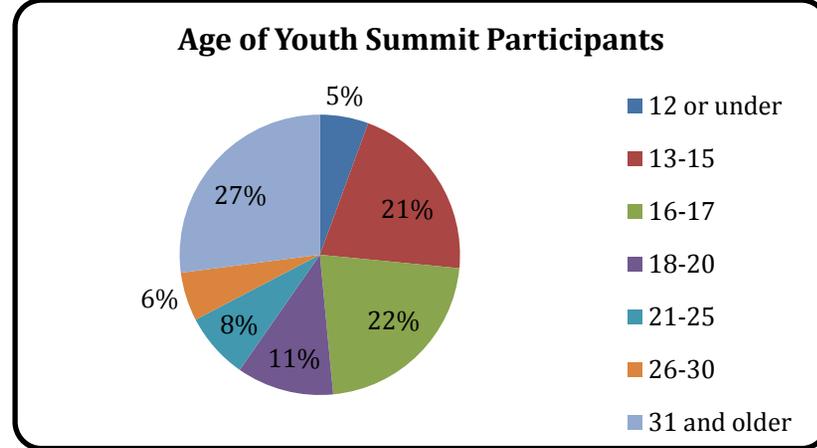
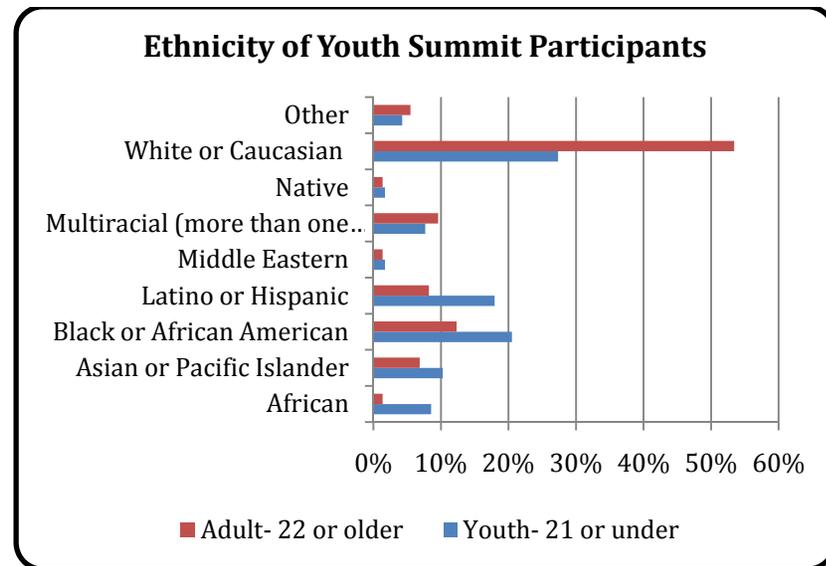


Figure 45: Youth Summit: Ethnicity



Observations of Youth Summit Data

- Both adult respondents and youth respondents (ages 21 and under) see violent crime and fear as the top problems that gangs cause in their community. Youth additionally identified fighting and drug crimes as top problems, while adults identified family disruption and weapons crimes. Some youth (<10%) said that gangs are not a problem in the community, while no adults offered this response.
- Adults and youth both attribute gang activity largely to a desire for love/belonging, the experience of poverty, and having a friend or family member in a gang. But youth also identified protection/power and family problems as major reasons (and identified these latter factors more commonly than did the adults).
- Mentoring and jobs/job training rated high among both adults and youth as ways to reduce the gang problem. Adults also frequently mentioned more parental involvement, while youth frequently mentioned recreation programs. Both adults and youth see mentoring and quality education and educational opportunities as important in preventing gang activity.

Question 10: How do youth workers and youth-serving agencies perceive the problem? What issues are contributing to the area's gang problems? What solutions might be available?

A total of 43 people who represent agencies that serve youth took the survey. The survey was distributed electronically, and all participants completed the survey online. These survey respondents primarily represented non-profit or youth-serving

organizations and state government. The survey tool and complete survey results are included in Appendix 9.

Observations

Just under half of these respondents (48%) believe that gang activity is increasing among the youth serve, 40% think it is staying about the same, and 10% think it is decreasing.

Quotes regarding prevalence and impact:

- "I think the level is decreasing, primarily because of the interventions we have in place. At the same time, extracting youth from gangs takes times, so some of the work is still in progress."
- "We have experienced higher cases of anti-social behavior referrals from the families we serve, and the numbers of complaints from our communities."
- "We have seen over the past few years an increase in the numbers of gangs becoming involved in the sex industry."
- "It seems gang activity remains the same due to systems and support or lack of support remaining the same."
- "We can see gang activity in the community. Sometimes it's subtle: colors, looks passing between people, evidence of drug deals. And shootings and other violent behavior."
- "We see it, and kids talk about it."
- "There is increased visibility of gang indicators (i.e., students wearing colors, graffiti, tagging, etc.). There is also a perceived emulation of gang-like activities among non-affiliated middle school students."
- "The kids tell me. There are tattoos with the gang name, dots, tear drops, etc. Kids show their membership in photos where they do a combination of showing gang

signs, wearing their colors, showing weapons, showing gang tattoos/markings/graffiti, etc.”

- “We see the results of gang involvement not only in the community but also in Youth Correctional Facilities.”

Quotes regarding indicators:

- “Younger students are becoming involved in gangs.”
- “Poverty, school retention/drop out, racial inequities, learned behavior, and reduced employment opportunities contribute to gang activity in the youth served by our project.”
- “It’s families, changing neighborhood dynamics, and the potentially cyclical nature of gang involvement.”
- “The limited number of alternative opportunities for engagement with positive community activity and employment may be a factor in youth not avoiding gang involvement.”
- “There is a ‘coolness’ associated with gang involvement ... Even a non-fatal gunshot wound can be an increase in social status. Ultimately, I must step out of my own cultural lens and attempt to understand why youth ‘want’ to be a part of this. It may not be a value system I share, but I cannot deny that it is one that holds significant influence over some of the youth I serve.”

Quotes regarding solutions:

- “There should be more jobs, more adult supervision, more parental involvement, and schools.”
- “Almost every youth I have worked with has said they want a job. Giving them the skills and opportunity to join the work force is the best investment and gang prevention service we can provide.”

- “We should increase the prevention side of things for younger youth to prevent future membership. We need to teach youth how to meet their needs without gangs.”
- “Comprehensive employment readiness, entrepreneurship exposure, career exploration, life skill training, coaching and mentoring (and significant resources to really deliver this).”
- “More activities, more parent and family involvement.”
- “More patrol, more supervision.”
- “Awareness, pro-social activities, working to combat poverty and drug abuse, creating a community that eliminates the demand for prostitution.”
- “Provide a wider range of educational options starting in the elementary years ... Provide a wider range of vocational training options ... Work with new parents immediately after birth of a new child to provide proactive supports for nursing, positive parenting, bonding, and engagement in community activities ... Invest in mentoring of youth from an early age ... Help kids in foster care find permanent homes quickly.”

Question 11: Do parents of gang-affiliated youth perceive their children to be involved in or at risk of involvement in gangs? Why? What should be done?

A total of 25 parents and family members of gang-affiliated youth took the survey. No demographic data were collected about parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth. The survey tool and complete survey results are included in Appendix 10.

Observations of Parent/Family Data

- Almost all (90%) of the parent/family respondents believe that gangs are a problem in their community, as evidenced by (in order) violent crime, fear, weapons crimes, drug crimes, vandalism/graffiti, and property crimes. Between 55% and 85% of the parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth cited these feelings or activities as indicators of gang activity.
- Compared to community leaders, more parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth see gang-related problems in the community and think something should be done to reduce gang activity.
- Less than half of the parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth see gangs as contributing to school or family disruption or causing a public nuisance.
- Parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth consider the main causes of gang activity to be (in order) a friend or family member is in a gang, poverty, family problems, gang members moving to the community from other places, a lack of activities, boredom, protection, school problems, a desire to feel loved or have a sense of belonging, wanting power, or being labeled by the police.
- Top strategies that parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth cited for reducing the gang problem are (in order) more parental involvement, jobs/job training, school programs, recreation programs, mentoring, more police presence, and tutoring. The strategy that was mentioned the least was tutoring, at 44%.
- While 30% of the parents/family members think that their own children are at risk of gang membership, 45% of them do not.

Many parents/family members of gang-affiliated youth offered personal reflections on questions such as the following:

- Who is responsible for taking action to reduce gang activity?
 - “All of us”
 - “The entire community”
 - “Parents”
 - “Parents, schools, community organizations”
 - “Families and service providers”
- What effect has your child’s gang membership had on your family?
 - “Shame, guilt, worry, constant fear, family arguments”
 - “Hostile environment”
 - “My son being labeled a gang member opened my eyes to how vulnerable our youth are. Law enforcement needs to look at how they treat our community. The DA’s office needs to stop overcharging our youth and we need to repeal Measure 11.”
 - “Eventually I kicked him out of the home. He stole from me and became violent. It caused fear for my other two children. I still parented him, although he was in another home. I let him know I loved him, not his choices.”
 - “Family disruption”

Question 12: What about students and school staff?

- ⇒ *What delinquent behaviors are students involved in?*
- ⇒ *What are the characteristics of students involved in gangs?*
- ⇒ *What issues seem to be contributing to student gang involvement or risk for gang involvement?*
- ⇒ *What risk and protective factors are affecting local youth? What are in-school youths' perceptions about gangs?*

School Staff Respondents

Seven school staff members – all of them from the Leadership and Entrepreneurship (LEP) Charter High School – completed the survey, in hard copy. The copies were hand delivered to project leads, and the data were entered by county staff. The survey tool and complete survey results are included in Appendix 11.

Observations of School Staff Data

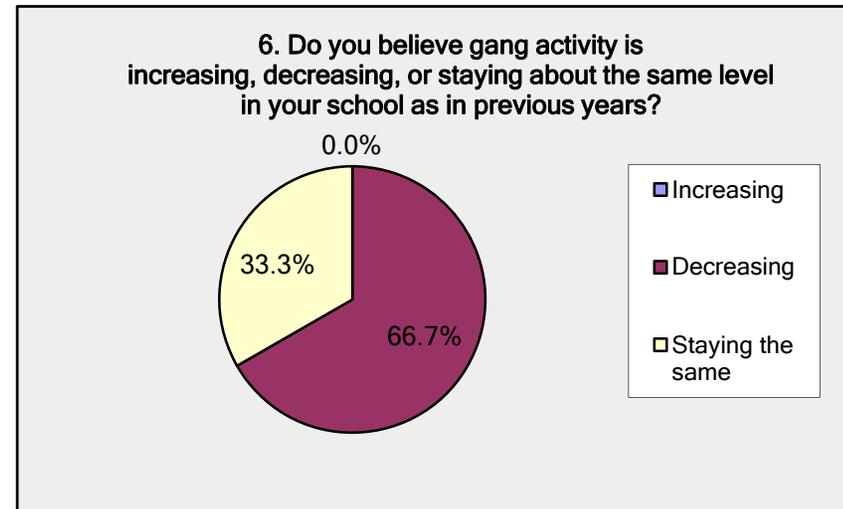
- While 40% of the school staff respondents said that there is not a gang problem at their school, 30% of the school staff members think that there is a problem, based on their observation of graffiti in and around the school.
- School staff do not think that gang activity is increasing (Figure 46). Instead, two-thirds of them (66%) believe that gang activity is decreasing, while the rest (33%) believe it is staying about the same.
- School staff gave quite varied responses about when and where gang activity takes place, the types of problems gang members cause in and around school (other than graffiti), and

issues that contribute to gang activity. There was no clear pattern among these responses.

Student Respondents

More than 200 students, from four different alternative schools (LEP, POIC East, POIC North, and Alpha), took the survey. Students completed the survey in hard copy at each school. The copies were hand delivered to project leads, and the data were entered by county staff. The survey tool and complete survey results are included in Appendix 11.

Figure 46: School Staff: Trends in Gang Activity



Most of the students (72%) were 16 to 18 years old. The ratio of males to females among students taking the survey was 54% to 43%. More than half of the students (52%) identified as white, 39% identified as African American, and 16% identified as Latino, Hispanic, or Spanish. Some students (18%) said they speak

Spanish at home. Three-quarters of the students (75%) live in a home with their mother. For 40% of the students, a father is present in the home.

Academically, 55% of the student respondents said they get mostly Bs and Cs in school. Between 33% and 41% of them described themselves as “sometimes” enjoying school and feeling valued there.

Observations of Student Data

- Most of the students (75% or more) usually feel safe at school, going to and from school, and in their neighborhood. However, about 10% of them rarely or never feel safe at school, and 15% do not feel safe in their neighborhood.
- Most of the students reported that their best friends have not engaged in risky behaviors. For students who said that their friends have engaged in risky behaviors, all four of their best friends have done so. The most common risky behaviors among best friends are:
 - selling illegal drugs
 - being sexually active
 - drinking alcohol regularly
 - stealing
- Much less common among best friends are:
 - being suspended from school
 - dropping out
 - carrying a weapon to school
 - being arrested
 - being a member of a gang
- Half the students (52%) said they do not know if there are gangs in their school (Figure 47). The rest are almost evenly

split between believing that there are gangs (24%) and that there aren't (26%).

Students described various indicators of gang activity around their school in the last year (Figure 48):

- graffiti (40% of respondents had noticed)
- selling drugs (29%)
- physical violence/bullying (22%)
- violence with a weapon (10%)

Figure 47: Students: Gangs at School

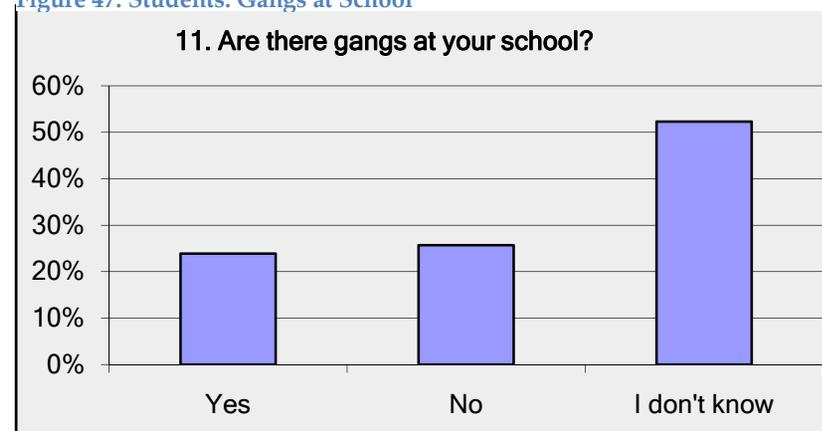
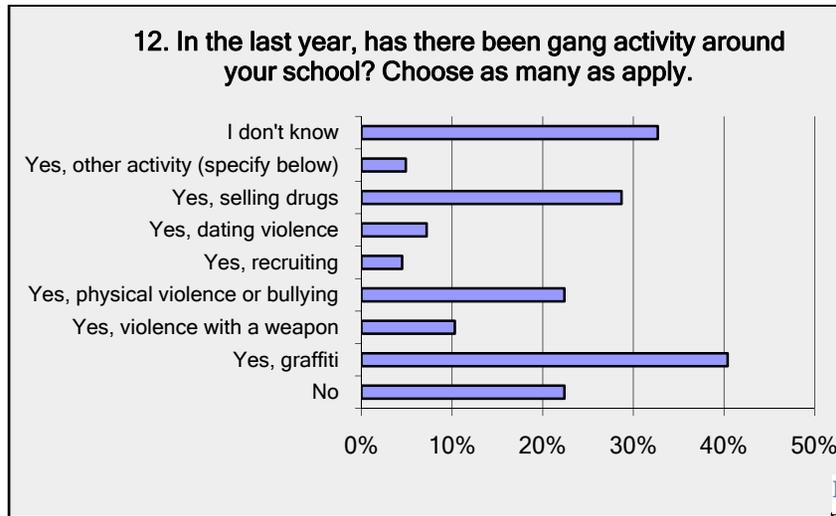


Figure 48: Students: Gang Activity at Schools

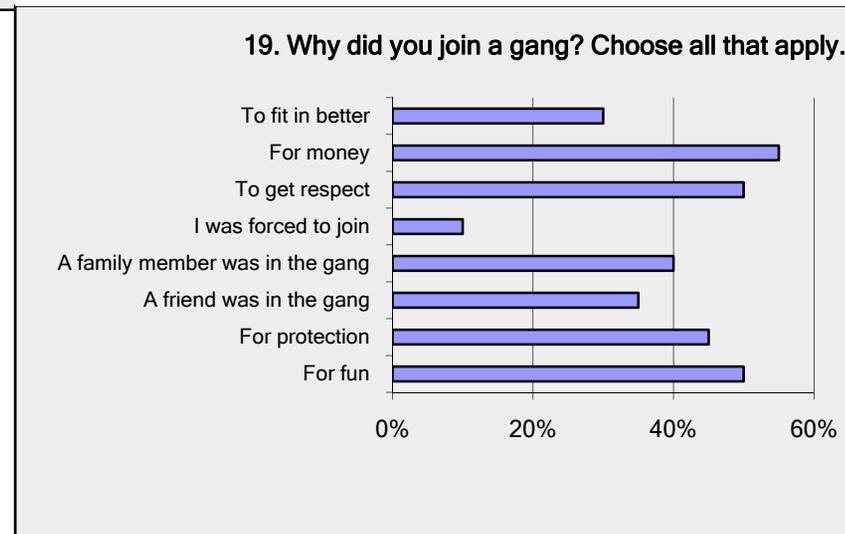


- While 8% of the students reported that they have been a member of a gang at some point in their life, 5% said they are a member now. Of those who currently are members, 34% described themselves as the leader.
- Money (55%), fun (50%), respect (50%), and protection (45%) were the top reasons students cited for joining a gang. Other reasons were because a family member or friend was in a gang, the student wanted to fit in better, and the student was forced to join (Figure 49).
- More than half of the students (60%) consider it “very easy” to get cigarettes and marijuana, while other drugs and alcohol are more difficult to get. Between 30% and 39% of the students

describe alcohol and drugs other than marijuana as “very easy” to get.

- Handguns and other weapons are described as “very easy” to get by 15% and 25% of the students, respectively.
- 70% of students state that there are people in the neighborhood who encourage them to do their best. More than half of the students have access to art classes/ clubs, student leadership, volunteer/ service clubs at school. A smaller number of students (27% to 38%) describe having access to mentoring organizations, sports clubs, acting/ drama clubs, and conflict resolution programs.

Figure 49: Students: Why Join a Gang?



Question 13: Who is involved in gangs?

- ⇒ *What crimes are gang youth committing?*
- ⇒ *Why did youth join a gang? Why would they leave?*
- ⇒ *What factors are contributing to the gang problem?*

We involved gang members in this assessment not to obtain information about criminal activity but to have a conversation with individuals who have direct, lived experience with gangs about what gangs mean to them and what they recommend be done to reduce gang membership and criminal activity in our In keeping with the public health approach of this assessment, we conducted the interviews with the assumption that, in spite of the negative behaviors associated with gangs, gangs meet needs for youth who are experiencing high levels of risk in their lives and are seeking a sense of trust, relationship, and caring they are having difficulty finding in more pro-social ways. The following information was gathered from individuals who have experienced gang involvement and who were willing to share their expertise. We appreciate their willingness to participate and will ensure that their voices are included in the implementation planning phase of this project.

Demographic Data on Gang Members Who Were Interviewed

A total of 80 gang-involved individuals participated in one-on-one in-person interviews conducted by community health workers from the Multnomah County Health Department and staff from Oregon Youth Authority and the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office. The interview tools and complete survey results are included in Appendix 12. At the time of the interviews, most of the interviewees (75%) were living in the community, and 25% were in a correctional institution.

Figure 50: Gang-Involved Youth: Age

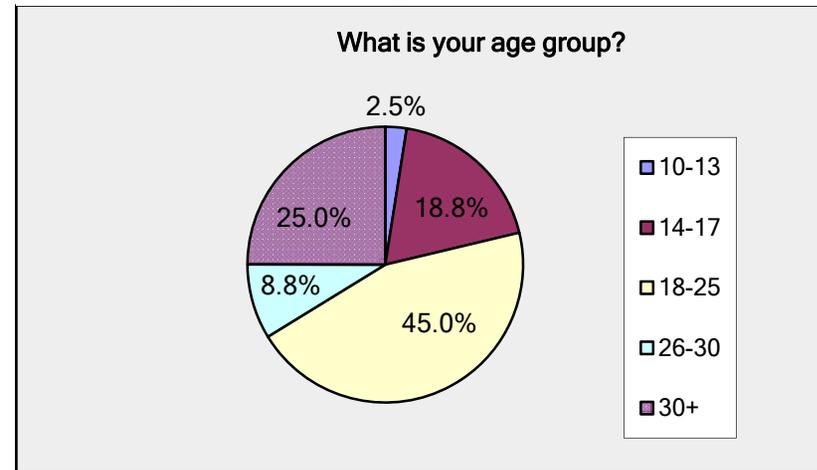
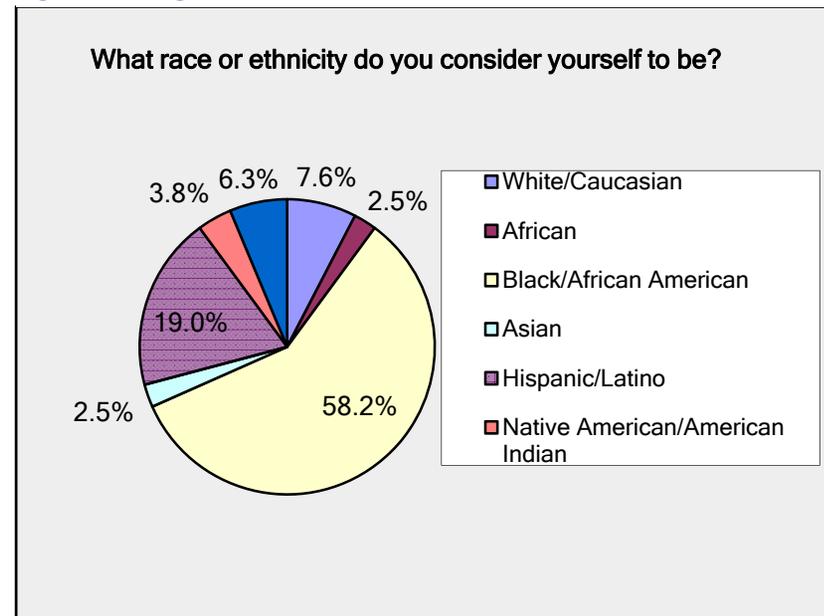


Figure 51: Gang-Involved Youth: Race



Male interviewees significantly outnumbered females (82% to 18%), and the largest age group represented was 18 to 25 years (45% of the interviewees) (Figure 50). A total of 92% of the interviewees were people of color, with African Americans and Hispanics constituting the largest racial/ethnic groups (58% and 19% of respondents, respectively) (Figure 51). For 11% of the interviewees, Spanish is the language they use most often at home.

Responses—Family, Work, and School

In terms of marital status, 9% of the interviewees described themselves as married, 11% as married but separated, and 5% divorced. Widows/widowers represented 1% of the interviewees. Most interviewees (74%) have never been married.

A total of 48 interviewees—60%—indicated that they have children.

Most interviewees (89%) indicated that a family member has been involved in gangs, but 96% said they would not want their own children to be gang members. Reasons for this response included:

- “I don’t want them to get locked up like I did.”
- “I would want something better for them.”
- “It’s not the life I would want my child to live.”
- “It’s not safe.”
- “This life is dangerous.”
- “I want them to live.”
- “I love them.”
- “I expect more from them.”
- “It is a very violent and dangerous situation.”
- “I don’t want my kids hurt.”

Two-thirds of the interviewees (53 of them) said they are not currently employed.

Statistics regarding school experience are as follows:

- 32% of the interviewees are currently attending school.
- 53% dropped out of school at some point.
- 83% were suspending or expelled from school at some point. Of those, 60% indicated that they were expelled for fighting.
- 70% expressed interest in returning to school. Of those, more than half (52%) are interested in attending college.

During the last year, a number of interviewees have frequently witnessed gang-related activities—including violence—at school (Figure 52). The most commonly observed gang-related activities were gang members being on school grounds, gang members selling drugs, fights between members of different gangs, and gang intimidation.

Figure 52: Gang-Involved Youth: Witnessing Gang Activity



Responses—Community Safety, Community Problems, and Witnessing Violence

Roughly two-thirds of the interviewees (51 of them, or 64%) said that there are areas in their community where they feel targeted or in danger when walking. Approximately one-third of the interviewees (27 of them, or 36%) described the following as problems in their community:

- Alcohol use—a “very serious” problem
- Gang-to-gang confrontations—a “serious” problem

Forty-seven interviewees (62%) described vandalism/graffiti as ranging from “no problem” to a “small” problem in their community. The remaining interviewees (38%) indicated that it represented a moderate to very serious problem in the community.

Interviewees had witnessed various types of gang activities (Figure 52), including violence, during the past year. Frequently observed activities (i.e., observed by an individual more than 26 times during the past year) included the following:

- Gang members selling drugs—witnessed by 25 interviewees (34%)
- Fights between members of different gangs—witnessed by 19 interviewees (26%)

Less frequently observed were drive-by shootings and fights between members of their own gangs:

- 30 interviewees (42%) had not witnessed any drive-by shootings in the past year; however, 42 interviewees (58%) had observed at least one incident. Only 6% indicated they had

witnessed this type of incident more than 26 times during the past year.

- 22 interviewees (31%) had not witnessed any fights between members of their own gang; however, 49 interviewees (70%) had witnessed at least one incident. Only 6% indicated they had witnessed this type of incident more than 26 times during the past year.

Figure 53: Gang-Involved Youth: Witnessing Events in the Community

In the past year, how often have you seen these events occur in your community?						
Answer Options	Number of Observations					Response Count
	0	1-3	4-10	11-26	>26	
Gang member selling drugs.	8%	15%	18%	26%	34%	74
Fights between members of different gangs.	12%	10%	25%	27%	26%	73
Fights between members of your own gang.	31%	27%	20%	16%	6%	70
A drive-by shooting	42%	32%	14%	7%	6%	72
Gang intimidation	22%	27%	15%	16%	20%	74
Gang recruiting	27%	15%	31%	12%	15%	74
Gang members in community gathering places	7%	12%	16%	26%	39%	74
answered question						75
skipped question						5

Responses—Gangs and the Community

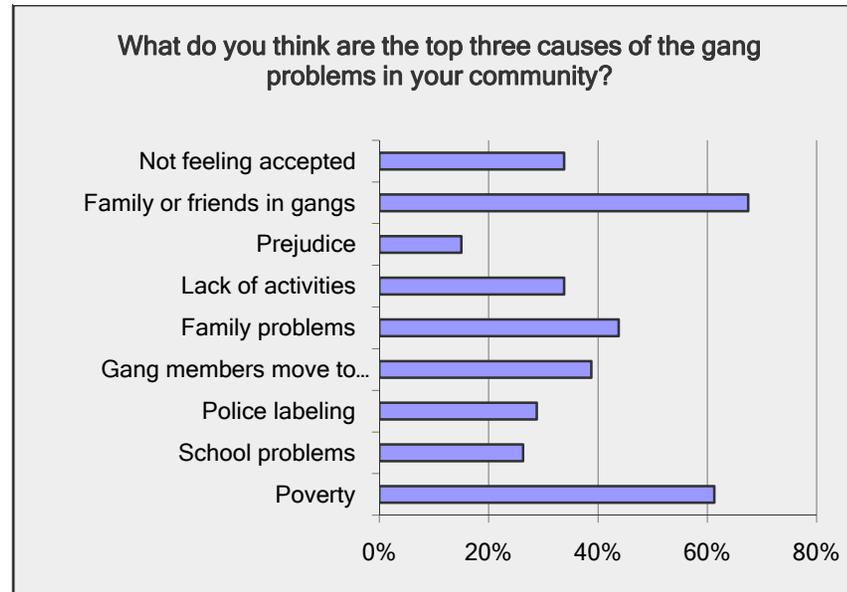
When describing how gangs affect their community, 33% of interviewees said that gangs reduce community safety, and 43% described gangs as having a generally negative effect on the community:

- “Kids in my community can’t be kids for fear of violence.”
- “They make elders feel unsafe.”
- “They bring crime but also support each other.”
- “They destroy community, make people feel isolated.”
- “They bring about negativity, hold you back.”
- “They are horrible for the community because they entice and encourage young adults to commit crimes and view illegal activity as a way of life.”
- “I think we as people need to have more things and jobs to keep them out of the streets or it’s never going to stop.”

Interviewees identified the following as the top three causes of gang problems in their communities (Figure 54):

1. Family or friends in gangs (68%)
2. Poverty (61%)
3. Family problems (44%)

Figure 54: Gang-Involved Youth: Gang Causes

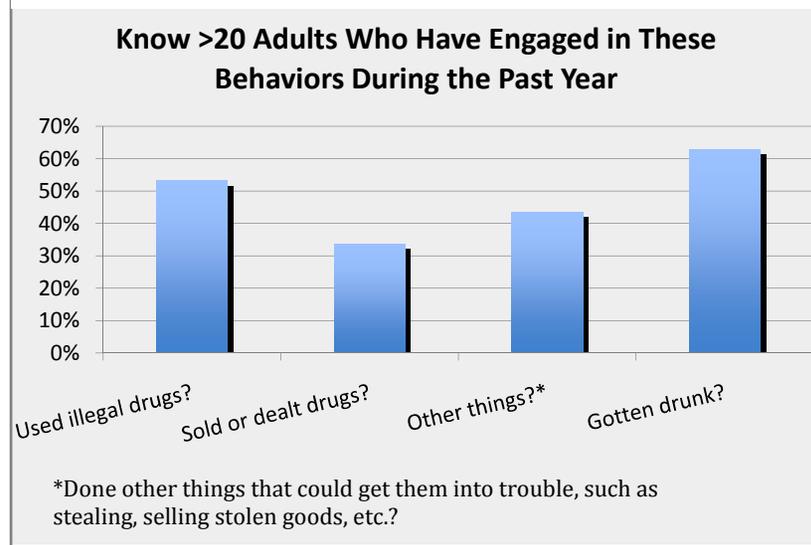


Responses—Gang Membership, Drugs/Alcohol and Hand Guns, and Police Fairness

Interviewees were intentionally asked less about their own behavior than about that of their friends and acquaintances. The vast majority of interviewees (90%) have friends who are gang members. Between 30% and 65% know more than 20 adults who have gotten drunk, used illegal drugs, sold drugs, or done other things during the past year that could have gotten them into trouble (Figure 56).

More than half of the interviewees (56%) describe it as “very easy” to get a hand gun, while 67% consider drugs like cocaine, LSD, amphetamines, heroin, and crack “very easy” to get. More than three-quarters of the interviewees (77%) indicated that they had used alcohol in the past year (this includes individuals residing in correctional institutions).

Figure 55: Gang-Involved Youth: Adults Engaging in Behaviors



Most interviewees agreed or strongly agreed that:

- A gang is like family to some (92% of interviewees).
- Some enjoy being a member of a gang (78%).
- Being a member of a gang makes someone feel respected (77%).

Money is a driver of gang-involvement: about half (48%) of interviewees agreed that “being in a gang is a good way to make money,” and 61% indicated that poverty is one of the top causes of gang problems in the community (Figure 54).

When asked why someone would leave a gang, interviewees identified the following as the top reasons (Figure 55):

1. Becoming a parent (74%)
2. Family responsibilities, i.e., taking care of children, sick relatives, and employment (65%)

3. Getting married (58%)
4. Advice/pressure from a family member (54%)

Interviewees varied in their perceptions of their treatment by police officers (Figure 57). The largest percentage of interviewees (47%) feel that they are not treated fairly by the police most of the time, while 10% feel that they are treated fairly most of the time.

Responses—Positive Influences

When asked what would make their community more positive, interviewees responded as follows:

- Jobs and activities (58% of interviewees)
- Mentors and other caring adults (22%)
- Don’t know (11%)

Figure 56: Gang-Involved Youth: Reasons to Leave a Gang

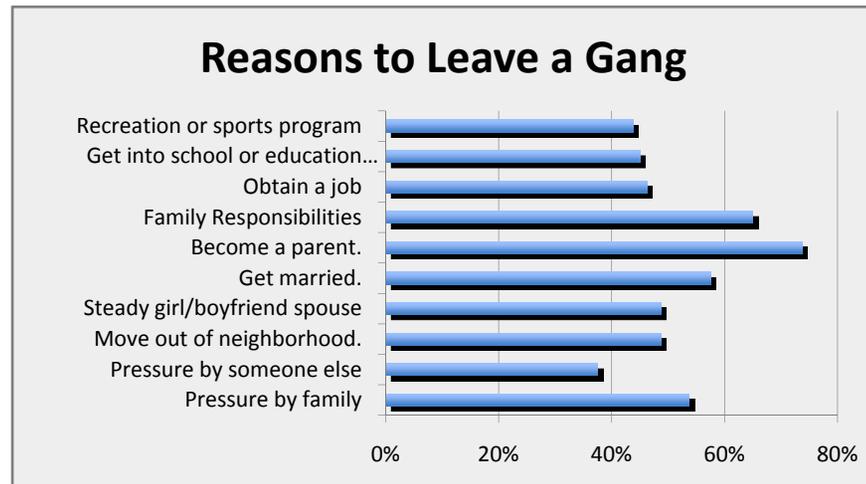
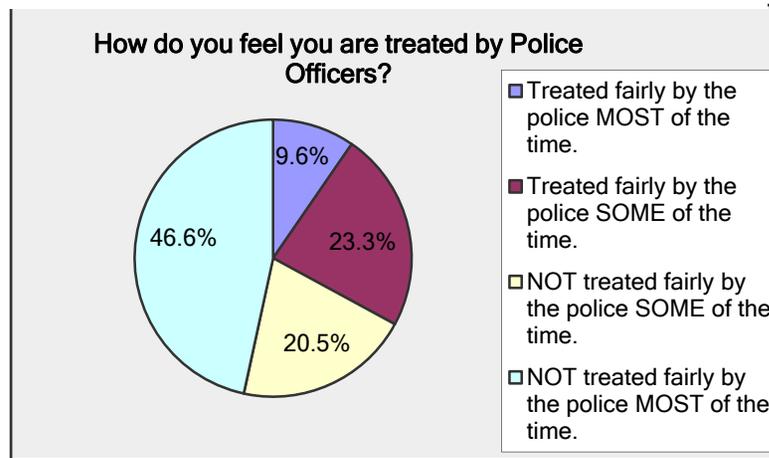


Figure 57: Gang-Involved Youth: Police Treatment



Interviewees said that the following people have had a positive influence on their life:

- Parents and other family members (44%)
- Coaches (12%)
- Mentors (11)
- Teachers (10%)
- Friends (9%)
- Probation officer, parole officer, lawyer, or counselor (8%)
- Pastor (4%)
- Boss or other community member (3%)

Most interviewees (60%) said that there are adults in their neighborhood that they can talk to about something important.

Responses from Focus Groups and Youth and Family Survey

There was great commitment to reach out to community members who have had personal or family involvement in gangs. This resulted in a series of focus groups, a majority of which took place within a correctional institution. The conversations not only

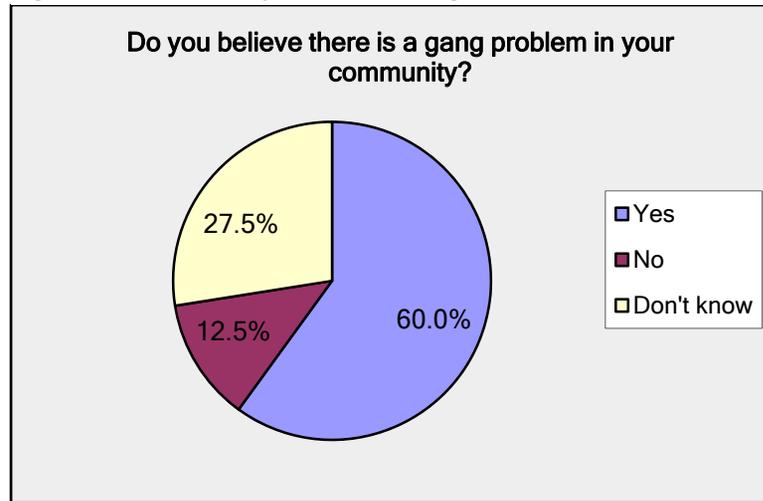
contributed to the assessment, but brought an important perspective and humanity to the process. Without the participation of these individuals who were willing to share their own personal experiences, we would not have been able to complete a comprehensive assessment that addresses the depth of impact gang involvement has on a person’s life. It is with great thanks that we include themes from these groups.

Nine focus groups were completed with a total of 83 participants. Focus groups were held at the following locations:

- Helensview School
- Oregon Youth Authority MacLaren Facility (two groups)
- Latino Network
- Dept. of Community Justice – Adult Probation and Parole
- Dept. of Community Justice – Juvenile Detention (two groups)
- Columbia River Correctional Institution
- Rosewood Initiative

A total of 48 individuals completed a brief survey before participating in a focus group. Surveys were gathered from participating individuals at all sites, except for Columbia River Correctional Institution. The survey tool and complete results, and focus group themes are included in Appendix 13.

Figure 60: Parent Survey: Is There a Gang Problem?



Most focus group participants (60%) believe there is a gang problem in their community (Figure 60), with the top three gang-related problems being as follows (according to respondents) (Figure 59):

- Increase in weapon crimes (64.5%)
- Increase in violent crime against persons (61.3%)
- Increased fear in community (61.3%)

Respondents identified the following as the top three reasons for gang activity in their community (Figure 58):

- Family/friends in gangs (72.7%)
- Power (66.7%)
- Lack of activities (60.6%)

Figure 59: Parent Survey: Types of Gang Problems

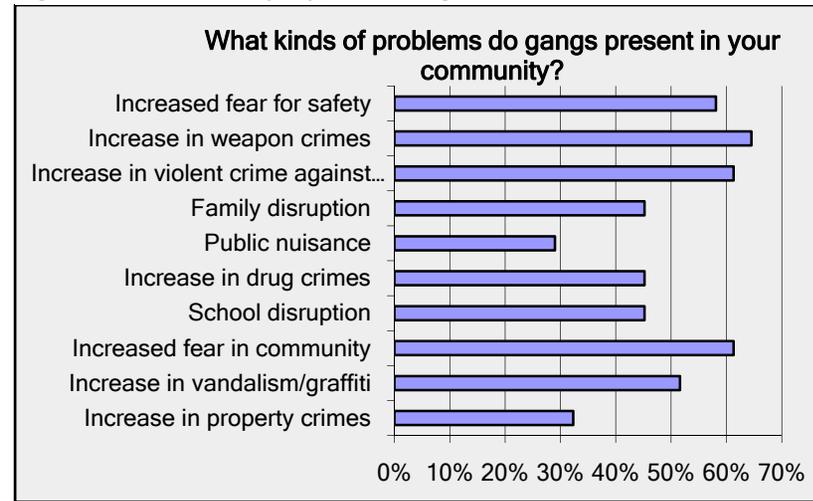
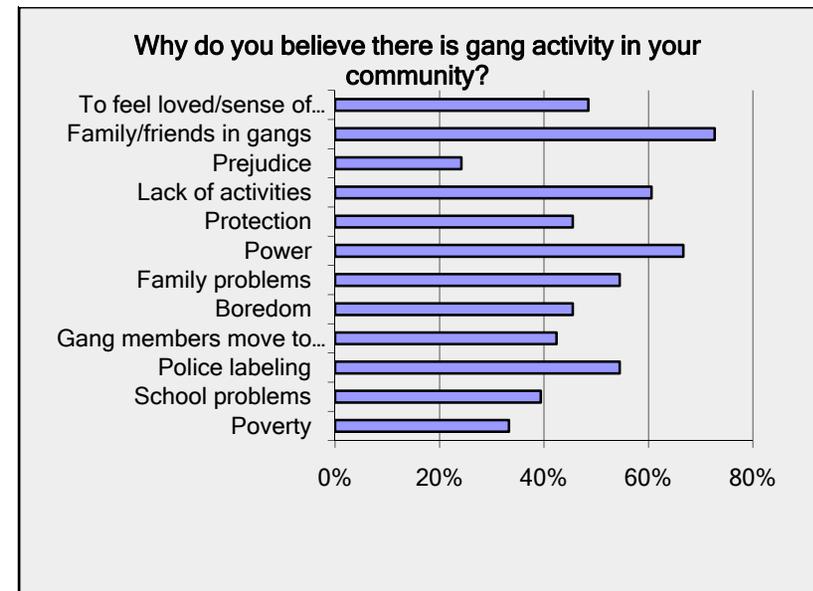


Figure 58: Parent Survey: Gang Causes

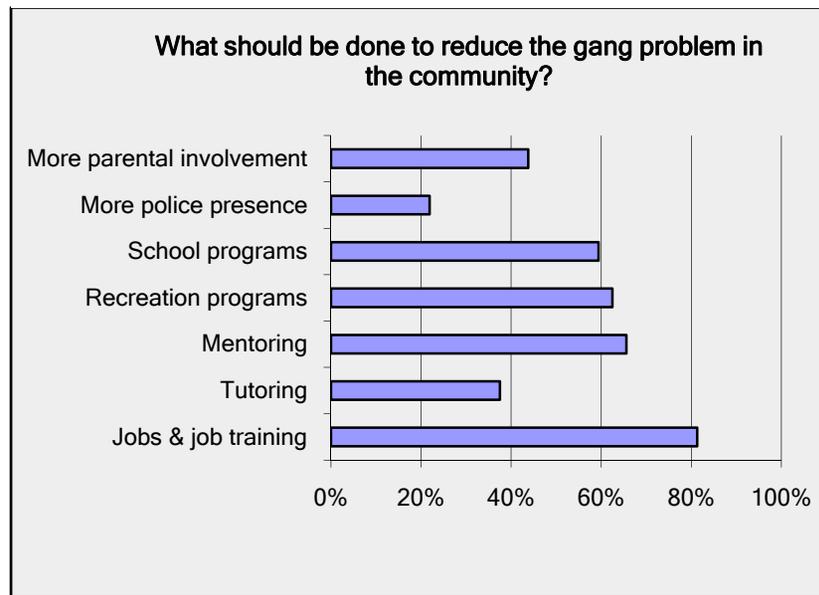


When asked what should be done to reduce the gang problem, most respondents (81.3%) identified jobs and job training as a priority (Figure 61). Other responses included:

- Mentoring (65.6%)
- Recreation programs (62.5%)
- School programs (59.4%)

When asked who is responsible for addressing the gang problem, only 22 respondents replied. Most (41%) indicated that the community is responsible. Individual responsibility was listed by five respondents (23%), and service providers were identified by four respondents (18%).

Figure 61: Parent Survey: Gang Responses



Focus Group Themes

The following themes were identified in the nine focus groups:

1. **What kinds of problems do gangs present in your community?**
 - Perpetuating cycles of violence and family involvement in gangs
 - Fragmented families
 - Youth turning to gangs for support
 - Early entry into the system
 - Increased violence and drug use

2. **Why do you believe there is gang activity in your community?**
 - Lack of opportunities, resources, and mentors who “get it”
 - Lack of hope
 - Barriers in neighborhoods (transportation, food deserts, violence)
 - Lack of employment and housing
 - Systems not meeting needs
 - Instability in family structure
 - Poverty allows for increased criminality
 - Pressure from other gang members
 - Lack of awareness and education about life-changing policies (Measure 11)

- 3. What types of violence have you experienced or witnessed in your community?**
 - Domestic violence
 - Friends and family members who have been shot and killed
 - Robbery and other crimes
 - Physical abuse
- 4. How does it impact your family?**
 - Want to make change but there are so many barriers
 - Allows members to provide for children (money)
 - Fragmented families
- 5. What should we do to reduce gangs in our community?**
 - Include people who have been involved in gangs in the development of the solution
 - We are very interested in policy change, voices of change around Measure 11
 - “We want to be looked at as resources, we’re still part of the community”
 - Enhance family supports
 - Increase connection at school by providing more personal attention
 - Increase mentorship programs to include more mentors who have lived experience with gangs—individuals who can build trust and relationships to support early prevention
 - Increased employment opportunities, skill development, and extracurricular activities
 - Increased community trust and relationship building