



PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

I. PLANNING PHASE

A. Partnerships for the Planning Phase

The planning strategy was led by the United States Attorney's Office and is based heavily upon the USAO's prior experience with the PSN initiative. The USAO team worked collaboratively with ATF, the San Diego County District Attorney's Office, the formerly designated PSN research partner and fiscal agent (San Diego Association of Governments), and the PSN Executive Committee to develop the strategic plan. A roster, including biographical information, of the PSN Executive Committee is listed in Appendix A, attached hereto.

The strategic plan was presented to the members of the PSN Executive Committee, who gave input and suggestions. The Executive Committee determined that the goal of their ultimate distribution of grant funds would be 50% for law enforcement efforts, 20% for outreach/prevention, 20% for research, and 10% for the fiscal agent administrative fee.¹

Since July 2018, the Executive Committee has held quarterly meetings (five in total). The PSN Task Force has been primarily engaged in the selection of an eligible fiscal agent. At every meeting, however, they also reviewed and discussed crimes statistics from the Southern District of California (SDCA), the U.S. Attorney's Office enforcement strategy and performance, and the potential deployment of the PSN grant funding.

¹ The Executive Committee recognizes that law enforcement funding remains challenging given the certification obstacle but plans to explore Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) programs, including gun buyback efforts, that meet traditional enforcement goals.

B. Problem Analysis to Develop Targeted and Prioritized Enforcement Strategies:

The Southern District of California is comprised of two counties: San Diego and Imperial. They both encompass a wide geographic region.

San Diego County – as of the 2010 census – had a population of 3,095,313, making it California’s second-most populous county. It includes the City of San Diego, the eighth-most populous city in the United States. San Diego County has a crime rate of 20.34 crimes per one thousand residents. This number represents the Part I crimes which includes homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. However, there are many more crimes that are not tracked in a standardized manner nationwide by the FBI in the UCR, which are considered Part II crimes. Part II crimes are tracked locally but because they are not standardized, these numbers are often not included in crime reports even though they can make a sizable amount of crimes taking place in the community.

In San Diego County specifically, in 2018, there were:

- 67,876 Part I crimes in the San Diego region;
- 17,513 domestic violence incidents were reported, which equates to almost 48 per day and was a 1 percent increase from 2017;
- 8,267 burglaries – 41% of these reported burglaries were committed with forced entry, and 57% were residential, which equates to about 1 in every 163 households being burglarized in the county;
- 11,381 total Part I violent crimes, or on average 31 per day reported to law enforcement;
- 2,970 robberies - this represented a 1% decline from 2017 and 15% of all robberies in 2018 involved a firearm;
- 1,161 rapes- 84% completed and 16% attempted;
- 7,163 aggravated assaults – this is the second year in a row there has been an increase in this type of crime in San Diego, 12 % of all aggravated assaults in 2018 involved a firearm;
- 87 homicides, which is an increase from 80 homicides from 2017.

Imperial County – as of the 2010 census – had a population of 174,528. It is located in the Imperial Valley, in the far southeast of California, bordering both Arizona and Mexico. Imperial County is home to 7 different cities and 8 unincorporated communities. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Imperial County had the highest rate of unemployment for any metropolitan area with a labor force over 3,000 in 2018. Agriculture is one of the largest industries in Imperial County. The area includes over 400,000 acres of irrigated farmland that is among the most productive agricultural regions in the world. The county has three ports of entry into the U.S. from Mexico, two of which are located in Calexico, and the third port is at Andrade in eastern Imperial County. Hispanics are the majority group in Imperial County, accounting for over 84% of the population. The median income was \$44,779 in 2017, compared to \$67,169 across the whole state of California. Crime statistics for Imperial County reveal that in 2017, there were 628 violent crimes and 4,836 property crimes reported.

According to the San Diego Association of Government’s (SANDAG) most recent crime report, between 2015 and 2019, the violent crime rate rose significantly in the following communities: Carlsbad (42% increase); El Cajon (70% increase); Lemon Grove (32% increase); Lakeside (53% increase); Vista (25%) and Spring Valley (32% increase).

The SDCA PSN enforcement program will target: gang members and violent street groups; geographic hot spot areas; felons in possession; and chronic violent offenders. It will also implement prevention efforts in at-risk communities.

C. What data were used in the analysis? How many years of data were examined?

The data above was taken from: San Diego Association of Government's (SANDAG) crime reports from 2015 to 2019; FBI Uniform Crime Reports; local crime statistics; and Shot Spotter related-intelligence.

D. Describe other sources of information about the gun and violence problem

On September 3, 2019, the San Diego Union Tribune published an article entitled "Gang Crimes Spike in San Diego." The article detailed how a spate of shootings, retaliation attacks, and other crimes had put gang-related crimes in 2019 on a pace to exceed the totals from 2018. A bar graph showing a month-by-month comparison of gang-related crime in San Diego between 2017 and 2019 is attached as Appendix B. The PSN Task Force discussed this article and its impact on the community at the October 2019 Task Force meeting. An increase in gang activity appears to be a large source of our problem.

The Task Force has also discussed a story published on March 28, 2019, entitled "Crime Counts: As crime falls to record lows, some neighborhoods are left behind." In sum, the story detailed how certain neighborhoods in San Diego were experiencing an increase in violent crime, in contrast to the overall violent crime rate decrease.

E. Violence Reduction Assessment Tool (VRAT)

The SDCA has not participated in VRAT.

II. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

A. Goal Identification

The goals of the SDCA PSN strategy are to: 1) mitigate gun and gang violence within the areas of the San Diego that have the highest concentration of gang-related activity, as well as in the District overall; 2) enhance collaboration and information sharing between the USAO, federal and local law enforcement agencies, and local prosecutors; 3) increase the federal prosecution rate of the most violent offenders and gang members; 4) promote and support meaningful anti-gang and anti-violence measures; 5) promote and support effective prevention and reentry strategies to break the cycle of crime and to keep youth from becoming involved in gangs and crime; and 6) ultimately provide – and be able to show through the assistance of a research partner – a positive qualitative impact on the District at large.

B. Proposed Strategies to Address the Drivers of Gun Violence

The SDCA USAO intends to take a collaborative approach to foster safer neighborhoods by utilizing best practice crime reduction strategies and programs that demonstrate sustained impact. The PSN Task Force

will utilize Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) to implement the programs and strategies to reduce violence, foster safer neighborhoods and utilize research to measure effectiveness.

The SDCA PSN Task Force will focus its enforcement efforts on the most violent individuals as well as specific SDCA neighborhoods where gangs are prevalent and/or where violent crime is rising. The SDCA PSN enforcement program will target gangs and violent street groups; geographic hot spot areas; felons in possession; and chronic violent offenders. It will also implement prevention efforts in at risk communities.

To date, SDCA has engaged in significant enforcement and prevention efforts. The district's enforcement approach has focused on taking guns and violent felons off the street by identifying and prosecuting dangerous felons in possession. We have strengthened our partnership with both the District Attorney's Office and ATF, which has improved targeted and prioritized enforcement. Specifically, the district implemented an embedded ATF liaison program through which ATF provided a full-time special agent co-located at the USAO. The ATF special agent and PSN Coordinator work together to quickly identify and charge cases appropriate for federal adoption. The addition of a full-time, in-house ATF liaison has exponentially increased the USAO's ability to identify and adopt a high volume of cases while also focusing on prioritized enforcement. SDCA's partnership uses a specialized search algorithm to identify firearms defendants, capturing cases throughout the county reflecting the most prolific criminal history. Between FY 2017 and 2018, the district's PSN cases rose 75%, from 79 cases in FY 2017 to 139 cases in FY 2018. In addition, SDCA created a new section, the Violent Crimes and Human Trafficking Section, led by a former PSN Coordinator. This section was created to ensure appropriate resources, training and expertise in the area of violent crime prosecutions.

Moving forward, the SDCA plans to build upon these established enforcement practices and to make additional strides in two specific areas. First, the SDCA – through the FBI's Violent Crimes Section – has begun to target gang members who are engaged in armed robberies (via Hobbs Act prosecutions). Second, the SDCA intends to refresh or initiate prosecutorial collaboration relationships with the San Diego City Attorney's Office and the Imperial Valley District Attorney's Office. The San Diego City Attorney handles all misdemeanor offense in the City of San Diego and has begun a Gang Violence Restraining Order (GVRO) program that is a likely PSN partner. The Imperial Valley District Attorney's Office is the only local prosecuting office in that region. Both avenues have the potential to broaden the impact of the SDCA PSN program.

SDCA, however, does face enforcement and collaboration challenges. The District's heavy load of reactive immigration and drug cases continually strains prosecutorial resources. Moreover, the ability to collaborate with local law enforcement by supporting their enforcement efforts with PSN funding has been significantly hampered by the PSN immigration certification requirement.

C. Prevention Strategies to Compliment Enforcement

On the prevention side, the district has implemented two mentoring programs (Project LEAD and Success Agents) for at risk youth in gang-ridden communities. Through Project LEAD, law enforcement representatives provide an eight-week instructional program that teaches fifth grade students to make wise choices. The program also creates opportunities for informal mentoring relationships, as students are

guided by volunteer instructors with government, law enforcement, criminal justice, and/or military backgrounds. These volunteer instructors encourage the students to explore their dreams and aim high when setting their goals. Currently, Project LEAD has reached more than 2,000 students at local elementary schools. Lessons include: An overview of the criminal justice system; Rules of Law (criminal statutes and the consequences of breaking them); Down for the Neighborhood (consequences of joining gangs); Staying Cool (refusal skills for at-risk behaviors); Alcohol, Drug and Consequences (reinforcing refusal skills); Don't Judge a Book by its Cover (the dangers of bias, prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination); The Pay Off, (financial benefits of staying in school); and Conflict Resolution (problem solving skills). The program receives uniformly positive feedback from students, teachers and instructors.

Research shows that at risk youth are often recruited into gangs before middle school, often as young as 4th-5th grade. In fact, 88% of juvenile arrestees reported that they were 14 or younger when they became involved in gangs. See Appendix C, Gang Association Among San Diego Arrestees. Research shows that both juvenile and adult gang members are far more likely to carry weapons than others. See Appendix C. Researchers concluded that with most gang affiliation starting before high school, it is essential targeted prevention occurs for youth at highest-risk for gang associations earlier when possible. Accordingly, in a concerted effort to discourage harmful gang affiliations, the SDCA USAO launched a program that intervenes early, before a youth's path heads in the wrong direction. In the Success Agents Program, challenged kids are provided law enforcement mentors, incentives and support services -- not just for a few weeks or months -- but for two years, during fourth and fifth grade. In addition, college students are recruited to build relationships and encourage the kids. USAO runs a weekly "personal growth" and mentoring workshop for the students, meets regularly with school staff and parents/grandparents, and also connects families to needed services. The program promotes resilience, self-esteem, conflict-resolution skills and the discipline needed to make smart choices and realize one's dreams. Following the initial pilot project phase, the program was honored by the San Diego Juvenile Justice Commission for impressive teamwork in action. Parents and teachers have noted program's measurable impact. One parent observed that she "saw a great change, a complete turnaround in my child, from being that child who stayed quiet to opening up." A program teacher and mentor wrote, "There's been improvement in the student's behavior. He's getting good grades and no referrals for behavior recently." Likewise, the children have embraced the program. "I learned to treat people the way you want to be treated," one child said. "I learned to be respectful and work very hard," said another. But the most poignant student comment came from a young boy who simply stated "I learned to follow my dreams."

The above programs are integral aspects of SDCA's PSN prevention approach. The district now seeks to build on past success and expand its mentoring capacity by offering PSN micro grant awards to experienced NGO's in gang-challenged areas.

D. Accountability

The Chief of the Violent Crimes Section reviews the PSN enforcement data on a monthly basis and reviews the results with lead local prosecutors. The PSN Task Force meets quarterly and reviews that data, in addition to data provided by the FBI and local research entities. A frequent assessment of the PSN program's effectiveness will be made and adjustments will be applied in an attempt to maximize future success.

E. Next Steps

The next steps for the SDCA PSN program include: 1) achieving access and disbursement of PSN grant funding within the SDCA; 2) selecting and funding a research partner via the grant funding process; 3) encouraging the use of VRAT; and 4) adjusting our efforts based upon the data and outcomes we see in the data and perceive through our local partners.

APPENDIX A

SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA PSN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



David Bejarano has 35 years of experience as a sworn law enforcement officer in San Diego County. After starting his career as a line officer in the San Diego Police Department in 1979, Retired Chief Bejarano was assigned to Special Investigations, the Special Weapons and Tactics Team and the Border Crime Prevention Unit. He was then appointed by President George Bush as U.S. Marshal for San Diego and Imperial Counties. Retired Chief Bejarano was named San Diego's 32nd Police Department Chief in 1999 and served as Chula Vista Police Chief from 2009 to 2016. He was named Police Executive of the Year in 2012 and was selected as President of the California Police Chiefs Association in 2015. Retired Chief Bejarano has wide community and law enforcement support and has remained active on a number of boards and commissions.



Former Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul Cook served as a federal prosecutor for more than 25 years in the Southern District of California. Cook tried dozens of federal criminal cases. He has significant experience prosecuting violent crime matters in federal court, including home invasion and firearms offenses. Cook held several leadership positions within the USAO, to include his service as Chief of the Reactive Crimes Section from 2015 to 2017; the busiest and largest unit in the Southern District at that time. Before joining the USAO, he served as a Deputy District Attorney in Philadelphia. Retired since 2017, Cook is committed to working with the PSN team to find community solutions to lingering violent crime problems in San Diego neighborhoods.



Shelley Zimmerman, a 35-year law enforcement veteran, believes in community policing and that public safety is a shared responsibility. During her tenure as San Diego Police Chief from 2014-2018, San Diego experienced historic low crime rates, including the lowest homicide rate per capita of any of the largest cities in the country, and attained the lowest overall crime in five decades making San Diego the safest large city in America. Some of Former Chief Zimmerman's assignments included Vice, Narcotics, Internal Affairs, and Multi-Cultural Community Relations. Retired Chief Zimmerman has received numerous awards and citations throughout her career which included: The San Diego Press Club Headliner of the year award for her undercover work, the San Diego Business Journal's Woman Who Mean Business Exemplary Award for her civic involvement with both the business and residential communities, and the inaugural San Diego Police Foundation Women in Blue Award for her commitment to public safety. Chief Zimmerman has been recognized widely for her commitment to community outreach and proven technologies in support of public safety. She was recently named a Chancellor appointee serving in the capacity of a public safety and leadership consultant for the private, nonprofit National University.

APPENDIX B

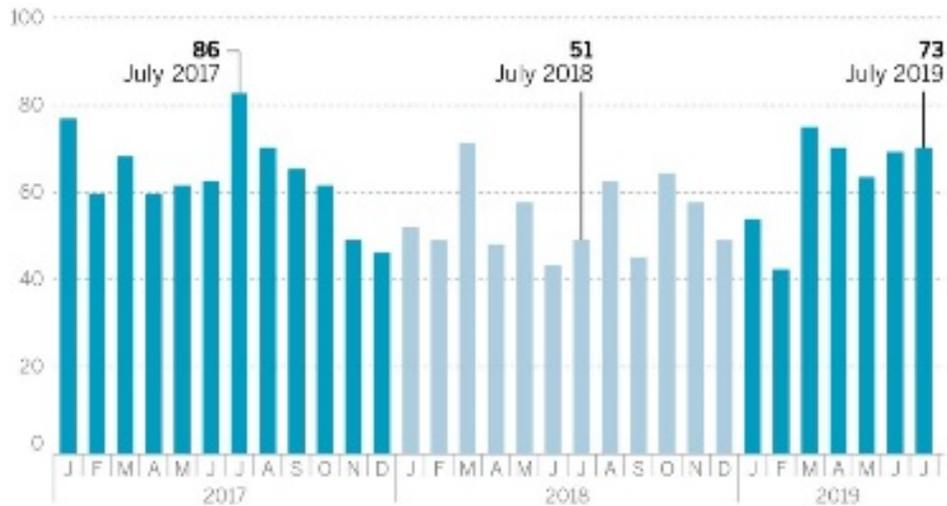
The image below originally appeared in the September 3, 2019, article “Gang Crimes Spike in San Diego” published in the San Diego Union Tribune, which can be found at:

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/public-safety/story/2019-09-02/gang-crimes-spike-in-san-diego>

The image purports that the statistics came from the San Diego Police Department.

Gang-related crime in San Diego

Total gang crimes in 2019 are on pace to exceed totals from the previous year.



Source: San Diego Police Department

MICHELLE GUERRERO U-T



Qj in brief

Gang Association Among San Diego Arrestees



Research findings from the Criminal Justice Clearinghouse



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Introduction

Over the past several decades, research has shown that being recruited into a gang can be associated with where a youth lives, family issues, an under-resourced academic environment, and other individual-level risk factors.¹ Beginning in 2008, adult and juvenile arrestees interviewed as part of the Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program who reported any gang involvement (juveniles) or involvement in the past five years (adults) were asked an additional addendum of questions about gangs. While this instrument was not included in the 2015 survey, it was added back and revised in 2016 with input from local stakeholders.

While more attention than ever has been focused on rehabilitation and reentry, community relationships with law enforcement, and potential bias in policing, gang-related motives have consistently been among the top three homicide motives regionally, and the number of gang-related crimes in San Diego has increased in 2019.² Because gang-association is closely linked with justice-system involvement, this CJ in Brief highlights findings from interviews conducted in 2018 regarding how, why, and when individuals first became involved with gangs; the nature of their involvement; how they differ from other arrestees who do not report any involvement; and whether they see themselves ever disassociating from the gang.

Highlights

- Over 3 in 4 individuals who report a gang affiliation report they became involved because of their family or friends, emphasizing the importance of relationships and the need individuals have for personal connection. Involvement most often started in middle school or earlier.
- While almost 3 in 4 juveniles with a gang affiliation identified as Hispanic, the most common ethnic group for adult arrestees that were interviewed was White.
- Most (63%) of those who reported an affiliation said they were never actually a member, but just hung out with the gang. Males were more likely to report being a member than females.
- While few individuals said they joined the gang to make money, the majority reported committing property and drug-related crimes with the gang, and about 1 in 3 said they work with other gangs on profit-focused enterprises such as drug dealing, property crime, and prostitution/pimping.
- Most individuals who said they were still associated with a gang said they did not want to stop the association now, but that they thought they would at some point. Adults who had stopped association were most likely to say they had simply grown tired of the lifestyle.

¹ Howell, J. C. & Egly, A. Jr. (2005). Moving risk factors into developmental theories of gang membership. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 3 (4), 334-354.

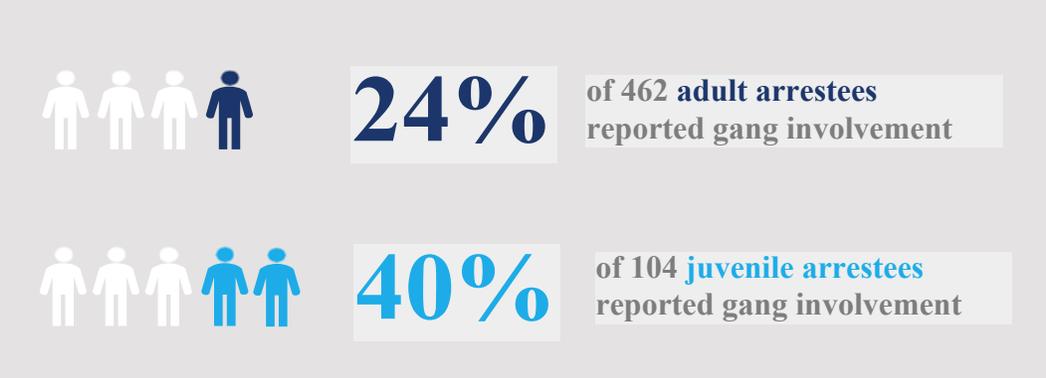
² Moran, G. & Winkley, L. (September 3, 2019). *Gang crimes spike in San Diego*. San Diego Union Tribune. Available online at: sandiegouniontribune.com/news/public-safety/story/2019-09-02/gang-crimes-spike-in-san-diego

How many adult and juvenile arrestees report gang involvement?

Juveniles were more than 1.5 times more likely to report gang involvement, compared to adults (Figure 1). For the purpose of this report, gang involvement is defined as ever being in a gang or hanging out with one.

Figure 1

Frequency gang involvement was reported by adult and juvenile arrestees

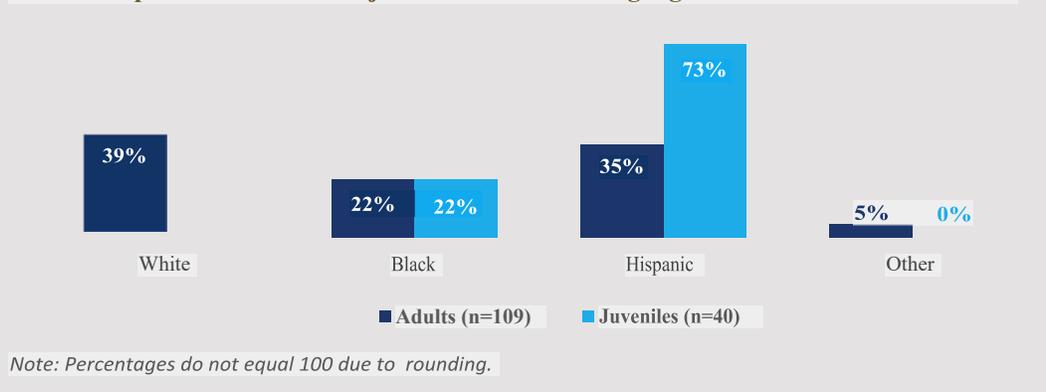


How did the race of adults and juveniles who reported gang involvement differ?

In terms of self-described race/ethnicity, there were some distinct differences between the adults and juveniles, with more than 1 in 3 (39%) adults with a gang association describing themselves as White, compared to 5% of the juveniles. In addition, while almost 3 in 4 (73%) of the juveniles described themselves as Hispanic, only around 1 in 3 (35%) of the adults did. Around 1 in 5 (22%) of both adults and juveniles described themselves as Black (Figure 2). When interpreting these statistics, it is important to consider the racial/ethnic distribution of the region.³

Figure 2

Racial composition of adult and juvenile arrestees with gang involvement varied



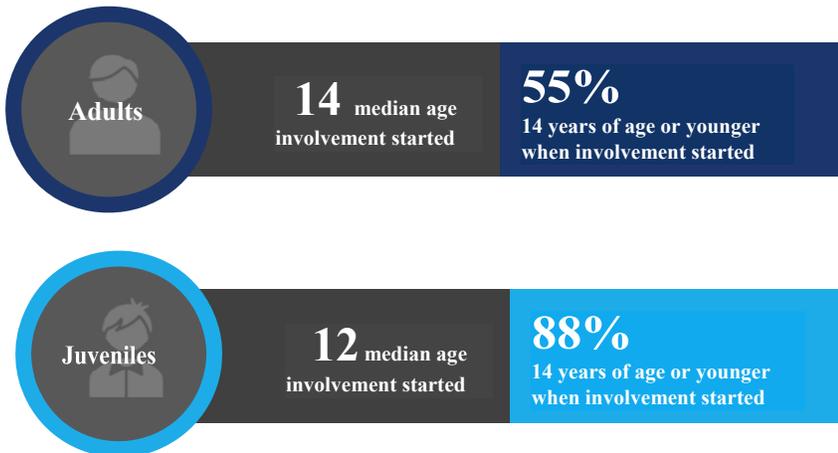
³ According to regional estimates, 46% of the region's population is White, 35% Hispanic, 4% Black, and 15% Other.

When did these individuals first start associating with the gang?

For both adults and juveniles, gang involvement started on average (median) before high school, at the age of 14 for the adults and 12 for the juveniles (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Age gang involvement started

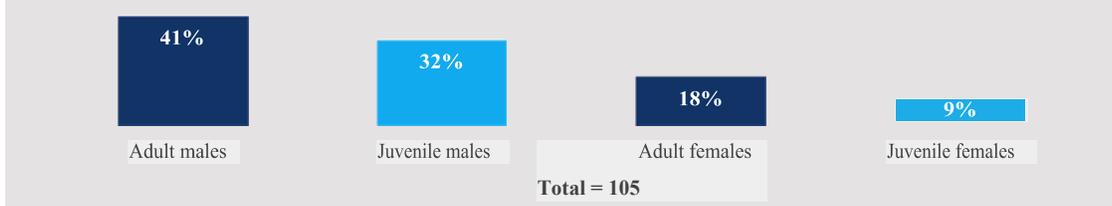


How did the gender of those who completed the gang addendum vary?

A total of 105 gang addenda were completed with juveniles who reported ever having a gang affiliation, as well as adults who reported any affiliation in the previous five years. Almost three in four of these individuals were male, with the remaining quarter female (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Gender of arrestees who completed a gang addendum

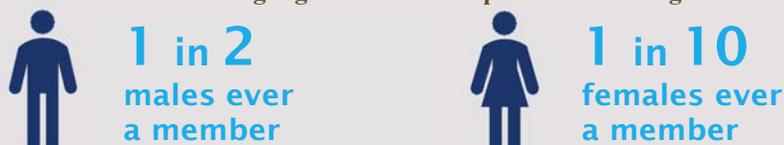


How many of these individuals reported gang membership?

Overall, only 37% of those interviewed said they were ever a member, with the rest saying they just hung out with the gang. Males were significantly more likely to report they had ever been a member (and not just an associate), compared to females (47% versus 11%) (Figure 5).

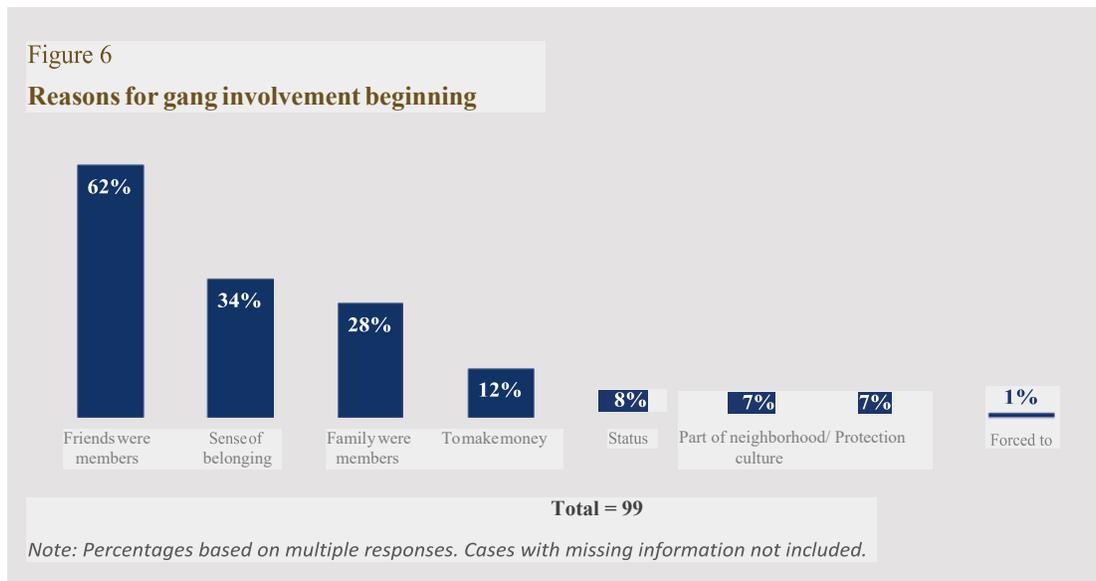
Figure 5

How many males and females with gang involvement reported ever being a member



What reasons were given for why gang involvement started?

Adults and juveniles alike were most likely to say they became involved with a gang because their peers or family were already involved, or they were seeking a sense of belonging (Figure 6).

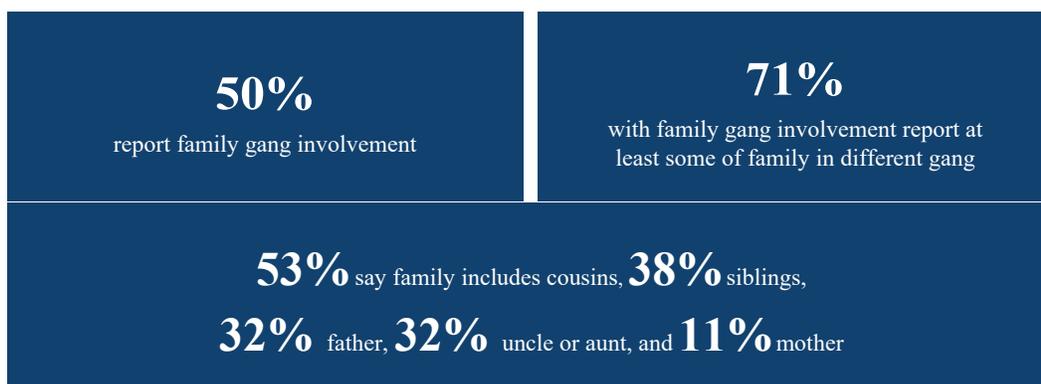


What else do we know about family member gang involvement?

When asked if their family was also involved in a gang, there was an even split, with half saying they were, and half saying they were not. Of those who reported family involvement, almost three-quarters (71%) said that some or all of these family members were in different gangs. When asked to describe how they were related to these family members, the most common answers included cousins, siblings, their father, and an uncle or aunt.

Figure 7

Reported family involvement in gangs

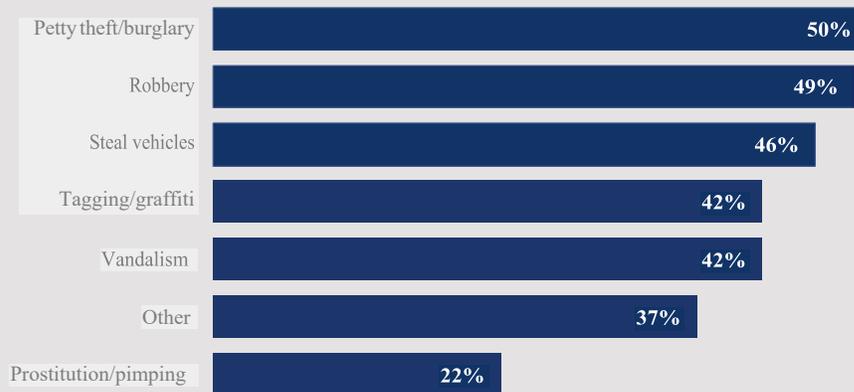


What do these individuals do with the gang?

Of the 90 individuals who answered a question regarding what the gang they are involved with does together, the majority reported engaging in some type of illegal activity, including petty theft/burglary, robbery, and stealing vehicles (Figure 8). Other activities noted by 37% of the arrestees included using drugs (14), just hanging out (11), dealing drugs (8), and fighting (3).

Figure 8

Arrestees with gang affiliations reported committing different types of illegal acts



Total = 90

Note: Percentages based on multiple responses. Cases with missing information not included.

How often do different gangs work with one another to make money?

Overall, around 1 in 3 (35%) gang-affiliated arrestees reported working with other gangs to make money. As Figure 9 shows, the most common way involved the sale or distribution of drugs.

Figure 9

Most common gang partnerships to make money



What else did these individuals tell us about how their gang was organized?

- Most (80%) say they have never been taxed by a gang or taxed others.
- Around one-third (36%) report there are female leaders in their gang.
- Over half (56%) said they have official meetings.
- Almost one in five (16%) said they pay dues to the gang.
- One-fourth (25%) have been involved with gangs in jail or prison.

What else do we know about law enforcement interaction with these individuals?

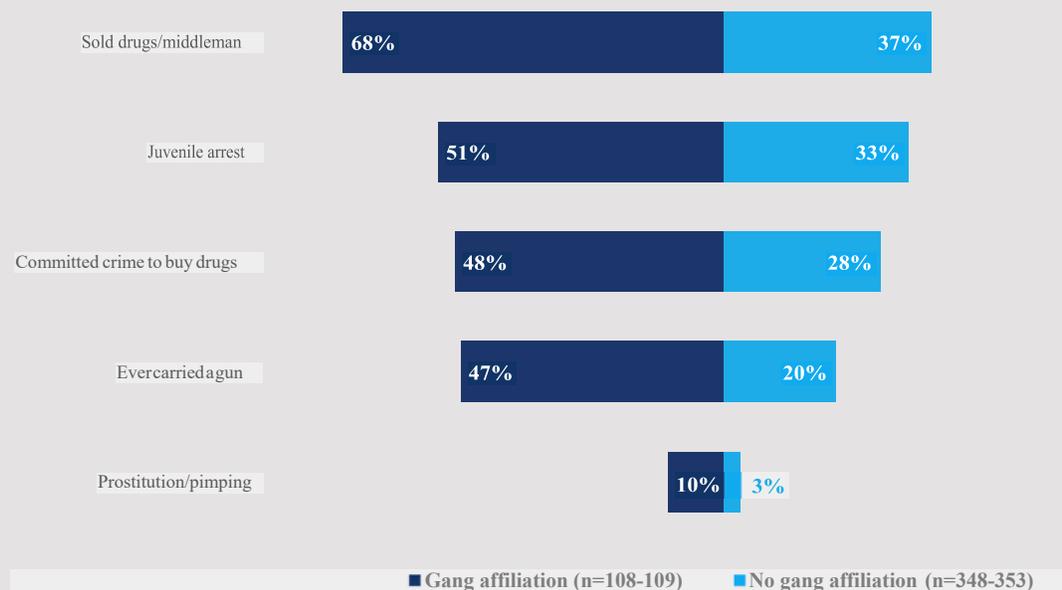
- One in ten (11%) have moved to different parts of San Diego County because of law enforcement activity related to their gang.
- Around one-third (36%) reported they had been documented as a gang member by law enforcement.

How do adult arrestees with a gang involvement differ from those who do not report one?

As Figure 10 shows, adults with gang involvement were significantly more likely to report involvement in drug distribution, a history of justice system contact as a juvenile, committing a crime to be able to buy drugs, a history with firearms, and involvement in prostitution/pimping.

Figure 10

Adult arrestees with gang involvement differ from other arrestees



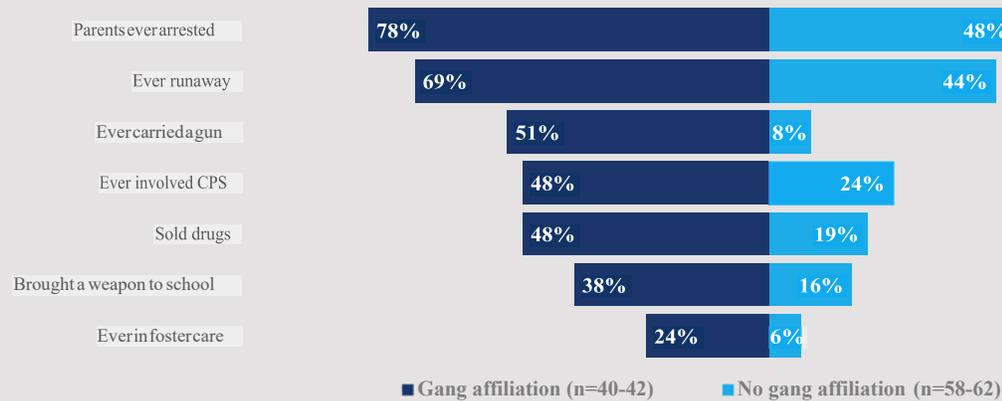
Note: Cases with missing information not included. Significant at $p < .05$ level.

How do juvenile arrestees with gang involvement differ from those who do not report one?

The juveniles who reported gang involvement also differed from the juvenile arrestees who did not report an affiliation, including having parents who had ever been arrested, ever running away from home, ever carrying a gun, prior family involvement with Child Protection Services (CPS), selling drugs, bringing a weapon to school, and having a prior foster care placement (Figure 11).

Figure 11

Juvenile arrestees with gang affiliation differ from other arrestees in certain ways



Note: Cases with missing information not included. Significant at $p < .05$ level.

How many of these individuals reported being approached and offered help to get out of a gang?

Only about one in five (21%) of the adults and juveniles who completed the gang addendum said they had ever been approached and offered help to get out of a gang (Figure 12). When asked who offered help, 8 said family, 5 said friends, 5 said church, 4 said an intervention group, 4 said law enforcement, and 1 said school.

Figure 12

One in five arrestees have been approached and offered help to get out of a gang

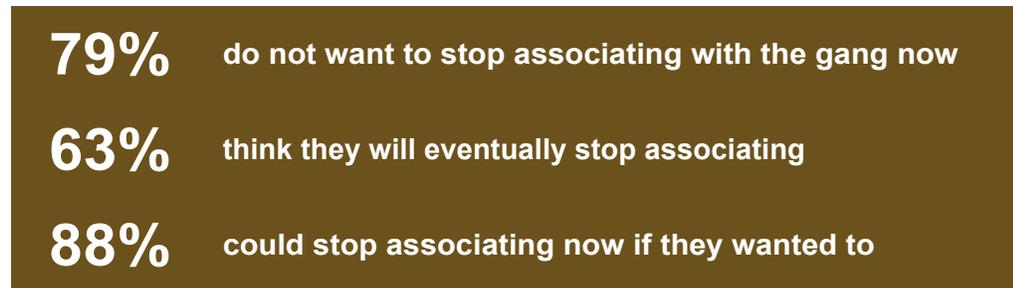


Of those who are still involved with a gang, how many think they will stop the association at some point?

As Figure 13 shows, while the majority (79%) of those arrestees who reported they were currently involved with the gang said they did not want to stop their association now, around two-thirds (63%) thought they eventually would and almost all (88%) said if they wanted to get out now they could.

Figure 13

Current gang-involved individuals views on disassociating

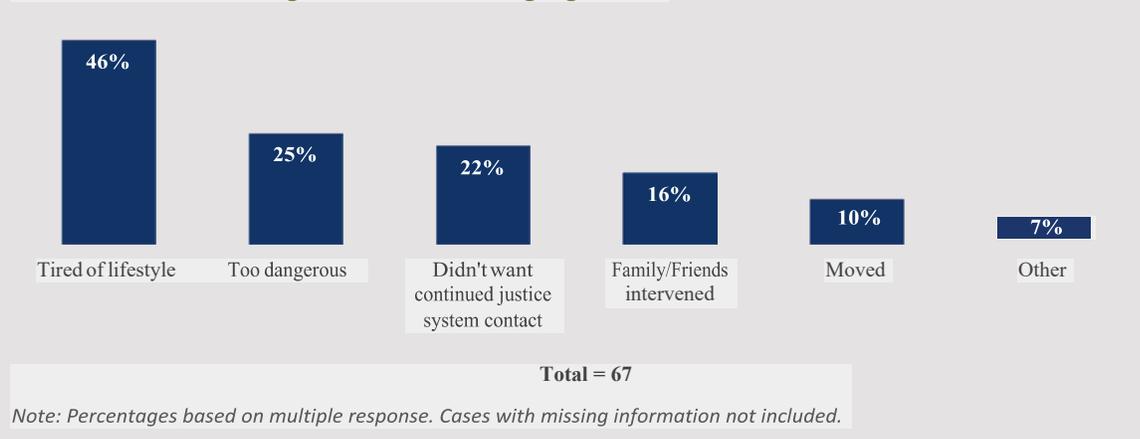


What reasons did adults who had stopped associating with a gang give?

As Figure 14 shows, the most common reason given by adults who had already stopped associating with a gang was that they had just grown tired of the lifestyle, reported by 46% of the respondents.

Figure 14

Reasons for discontinuing association with the gang



Takeaways

With most gang affiliation starting before high school, it is essential targeted prevention occurs for youth at highest-risk for gang associations earlier when possible. It is also important that family involvement and the importance of peer connections is understood and acknowledged.

Gangs commit many crimes for profit, including drug sales, property crime, and prostitution/pimping. While offering alternatives to a potentially lucrative criminal lifestyle is not easy, it is important our communities work collaboratively to offer alternatives to at-risk youth.

Even though gang association is related to the family and friends individuals have, most individuals who associate with gangs say they envision this association ending at some point. Continuing to offer opportunities for alternative choices and directions is important.