

# Understand and Responding to Gangs

United States Conference of Mayors

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Scott Decker, Ph.D.

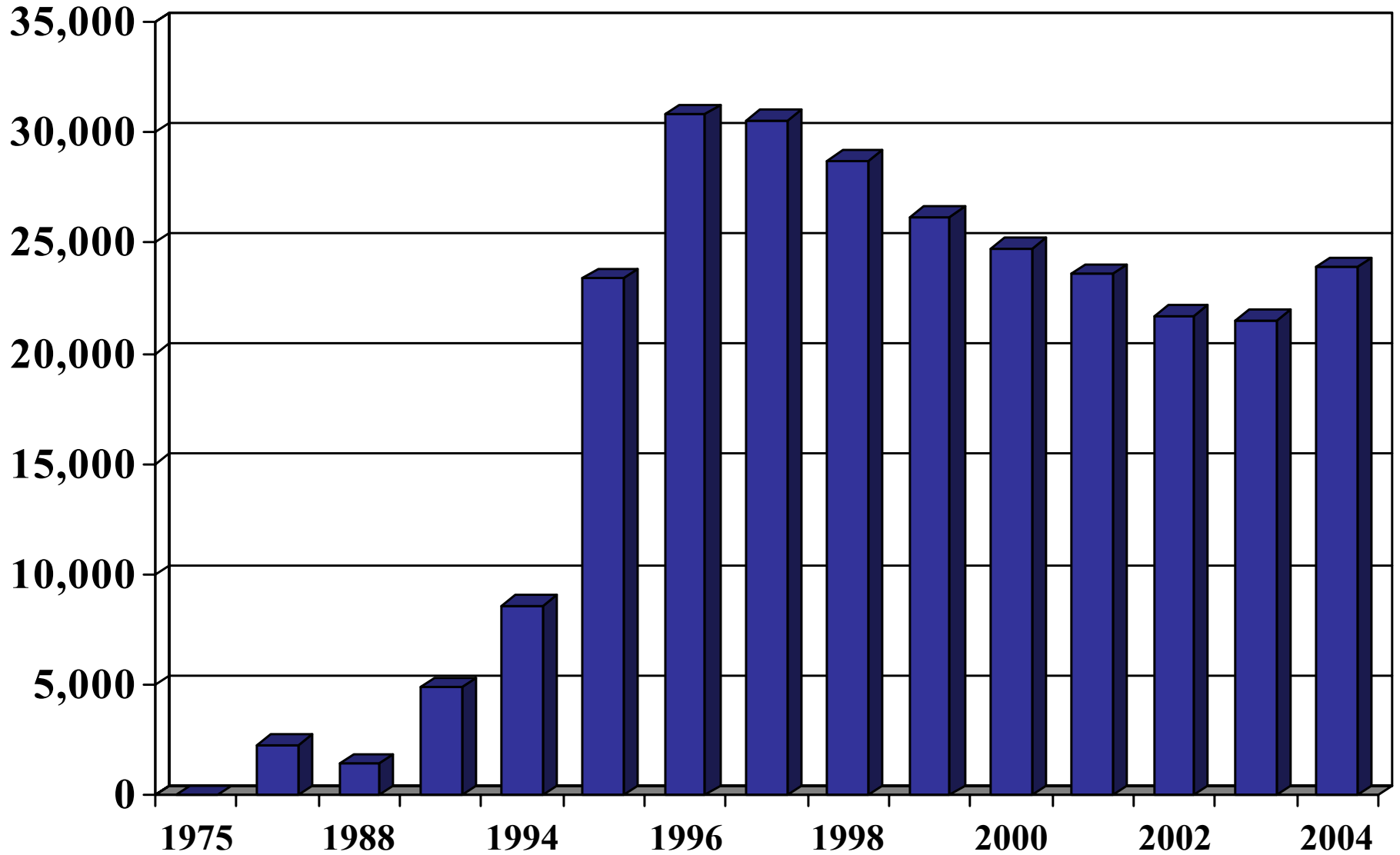
School of Criminal Justice and Criminology

Arizona State University

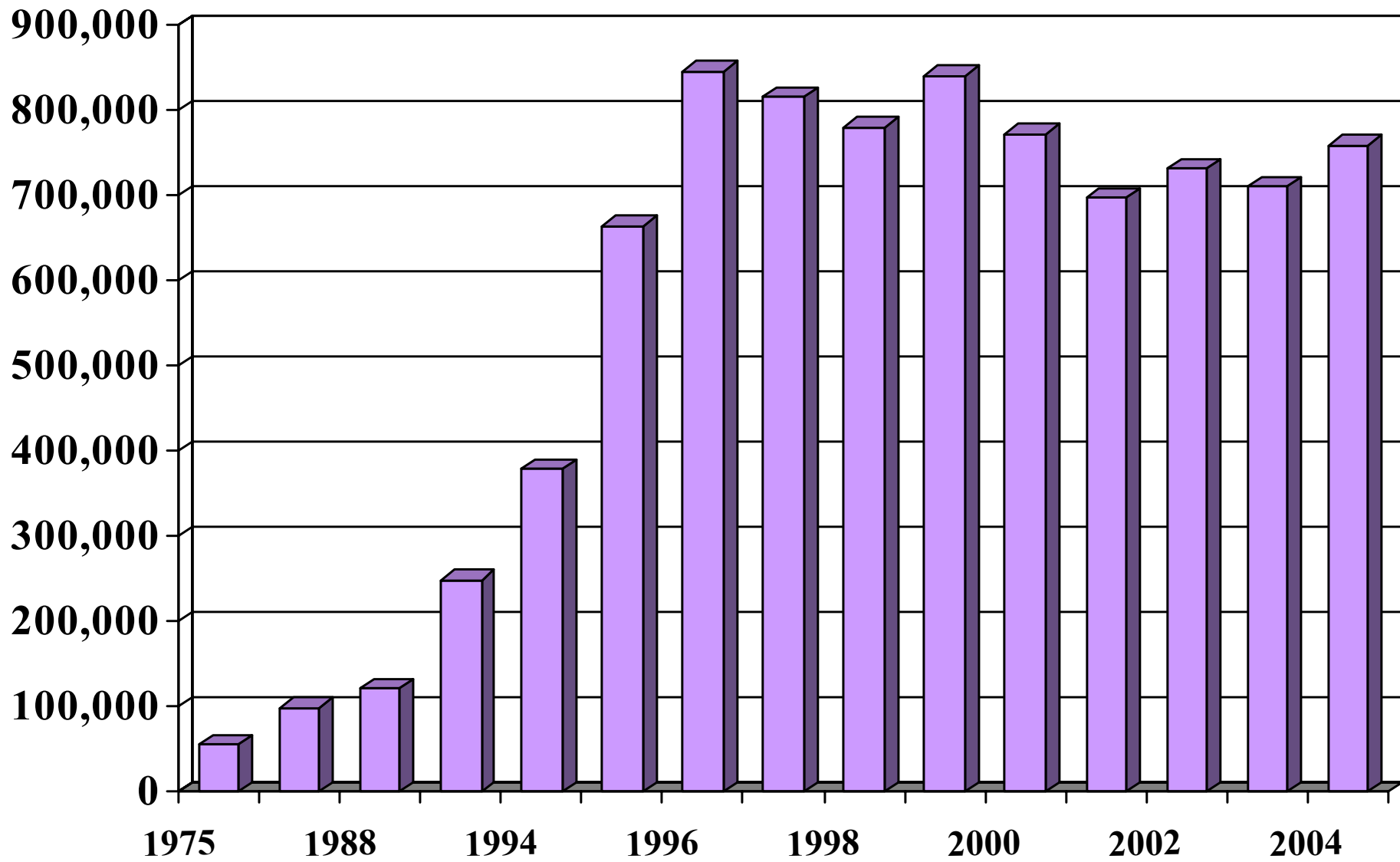
(602) 543-8067

Scott.Decker@asu.edu

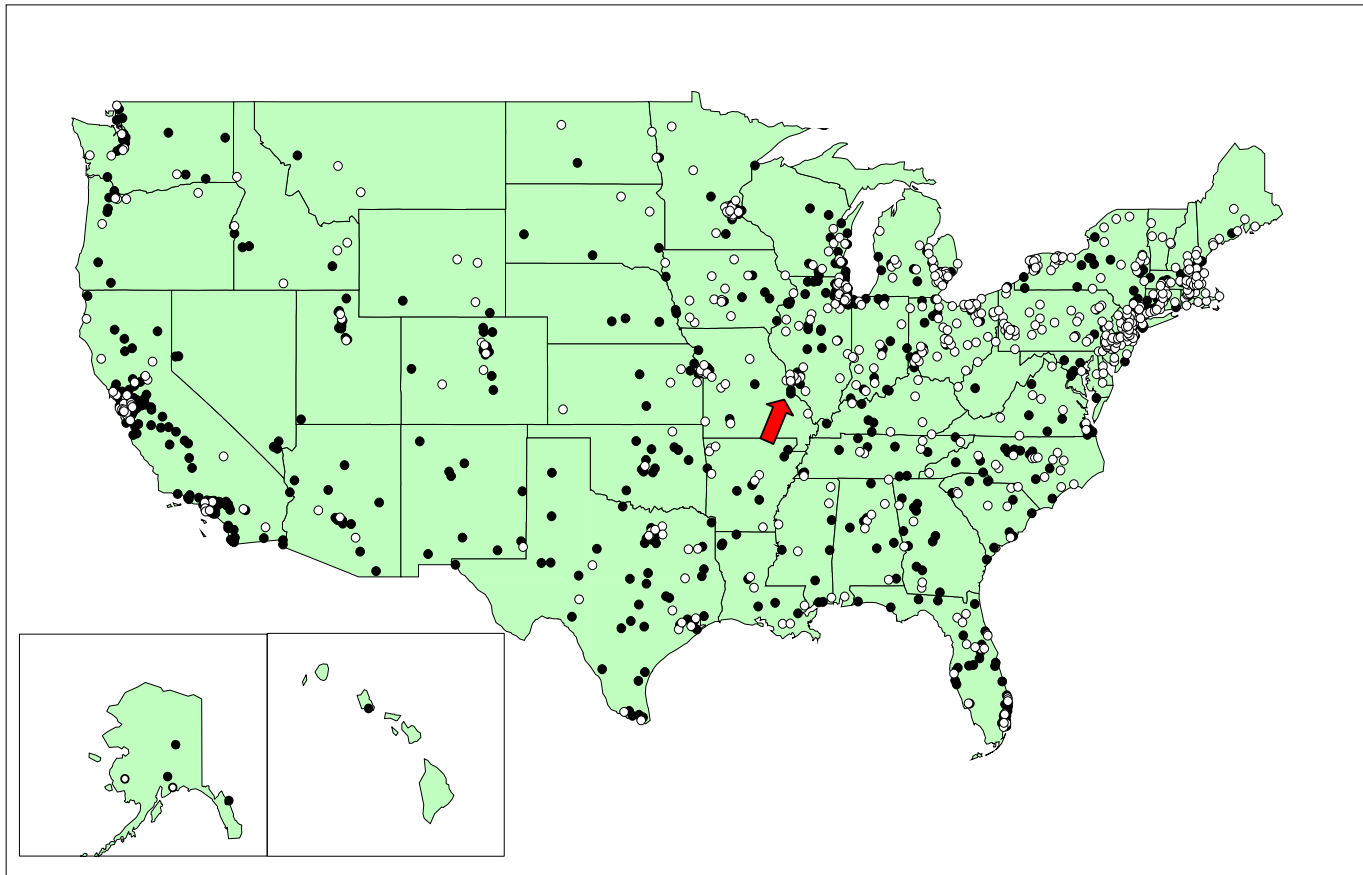
# Estimated Number of Gangs Based on Reports by City and County Law Enforcement, 1975-2004



# Estimated Number of Gang Members Based on Reports by City and County Law Enforcement, 1975-2004



*Gang and Nongang Cities Year 2000 National Youth Gang Survey*



● Yes      ○ No

# Characteristics of Gang Definitions

Group characteristics.

Symbols of membership.

Persistence of membership.

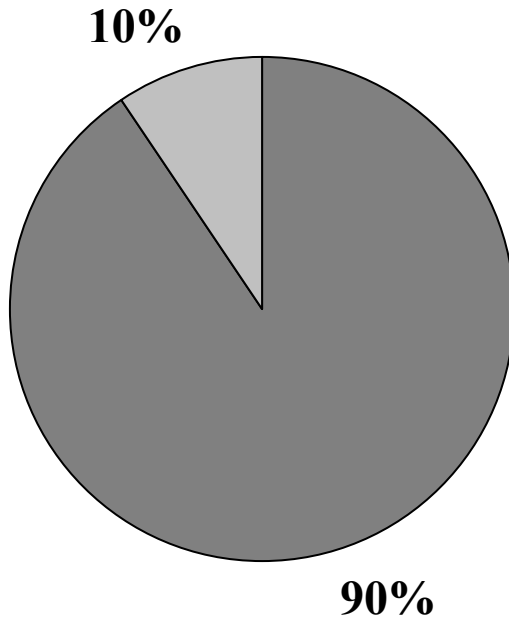
Self-identification.

Criminal involvement.

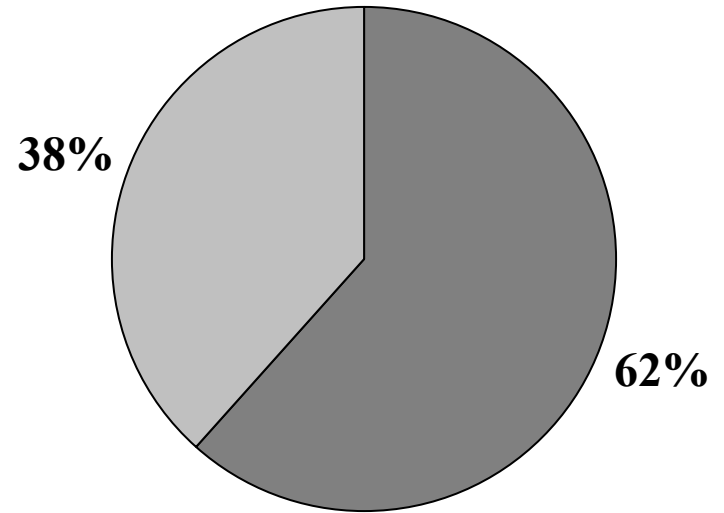
# Characteristics of Gang Members

# Gender of U.S. Gang Members

Law Enforcement Data



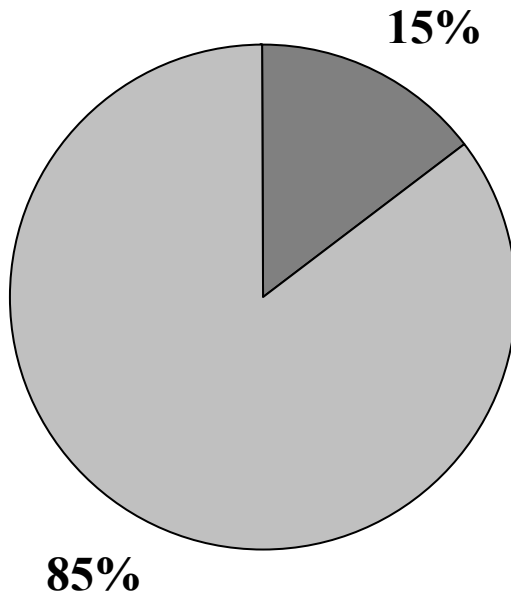
Survey Data



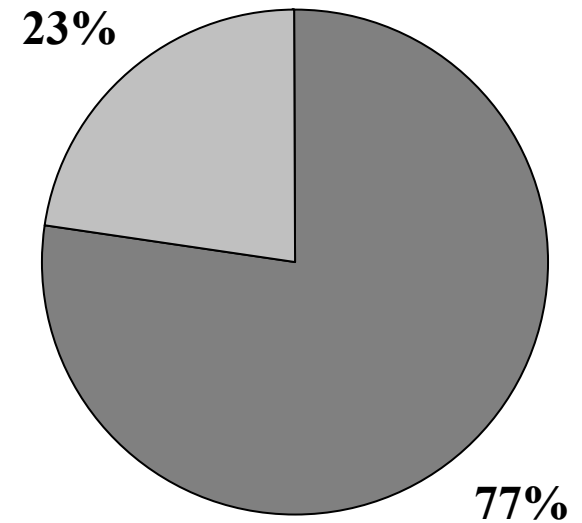
Data Sources: NYGC 1996 Survey, Esbensen & Winfree (1998)

# Age of U.S. Gang Members

Law Enforcement Data



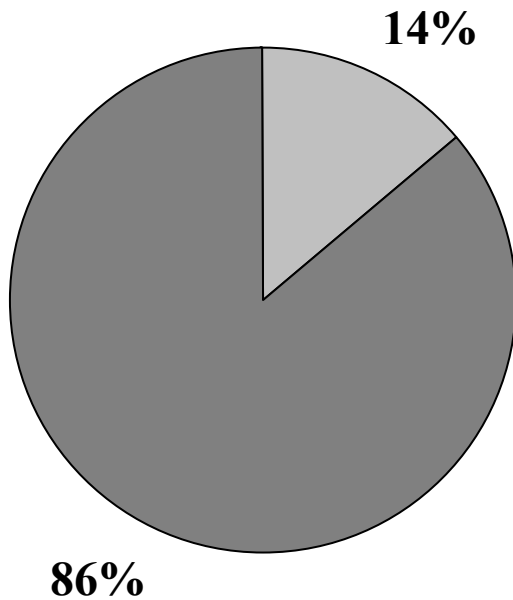
Survey Data



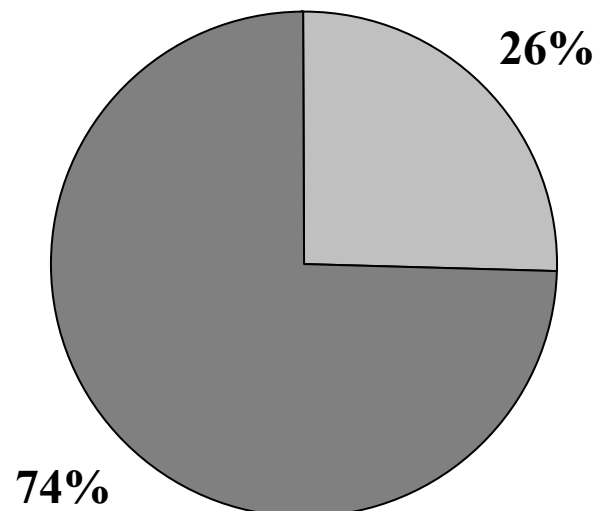
Data Sources: NYGC 1996 Survey, Esbensen & Winfree (1998)

# Ethnicity of U.S. Gang Members

Law Enforcement Data



Survey Data



Data Sources: NYGC 1996 Survey, Esbensen & Winfree (1998)

# Characteristics of Gang Behavior

# What do we need to know to create successful gang Prevention, Intervention, Suppression and Re-entry strategies?

**Community** characteristics, assets, and deficits.

Gang **member** characteristics – race/ethnicity, age, gender, siblings, family structure, neighborhood, education.

**Gang** Characteristics – turf, age of the gang, initiation rites, exit rites, link to prison gangs, hanging out.

Gang **Organizational** Characteristics – rules, roles, leaders, meetings, handling of money.

Gang **Activities** – crime and non-crime.

Gang **Crime** – involvement in gang versus non-gang crime, drugs, guns, violent crime, property crime, rivalries.

# Organizational Structures of Gangs

## Corporate

Super Gangs

National Presence

Older Members

Long life of the Gang

Prison involvement

Profit motives dominate

## Cells

Purposive

Small

Focused

Specialists

Isolated

Criminal events

## Episodic Groups

Local Gangs

Cafeteria offending

Younger members

Non purposive

Hanging out

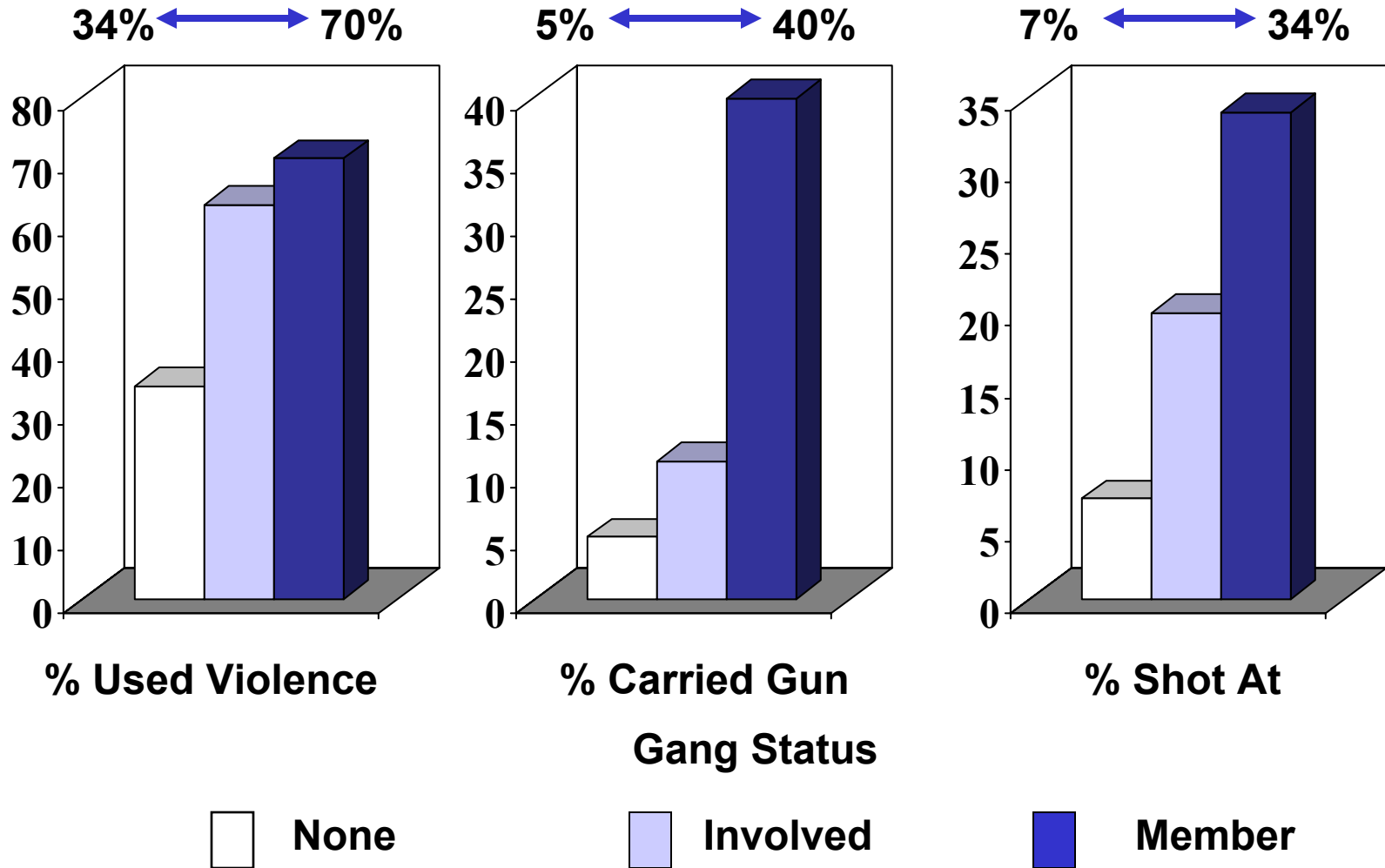
Cafeteria style crime

How are gang members organized in your community? What is your source of information about their organizational structure?

What are the implications for **understanding** gangs? Human Smuggling? Terrorism? Drug Smuggling?

What are the implications for **responding** to gangs by law enforcement, the community, social services and NGOs for each type?

# Why are we interested in gangs rather than just delinquency? Gang Status & Self-Reported Delinquency St. Louis STG Study



# Responding to Gangs

## Community Guide to Helping America's Youth

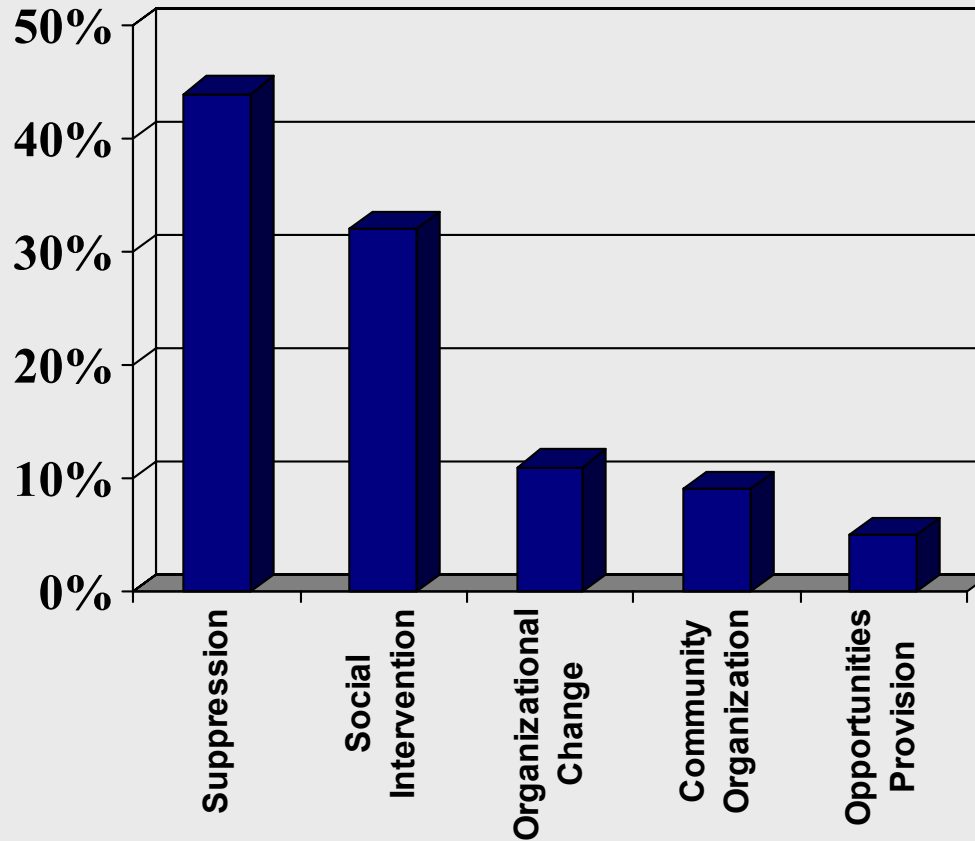
at

[www.helpingamericasyouth.gov](http://www.helpingamericasyouth.gov)

# Five Strategies for Responding to Gangs

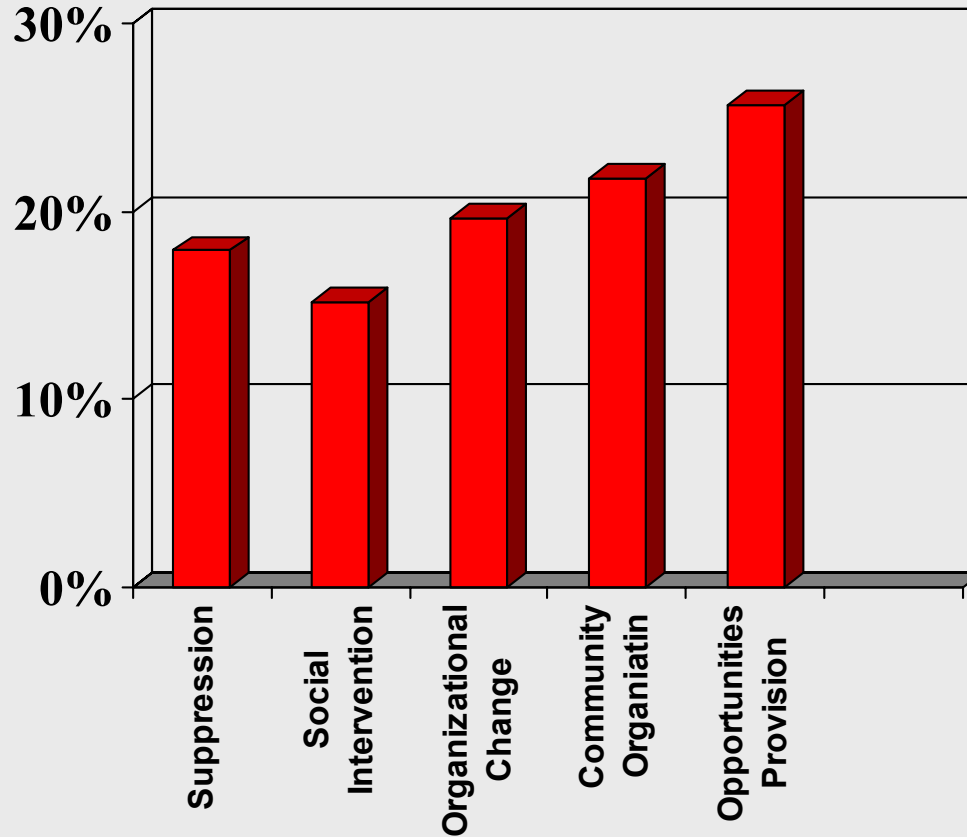


Five Strategies for Responding to Gangs  
Levels of Application as Primary Strategy  
1988 National Youth Gang Survey



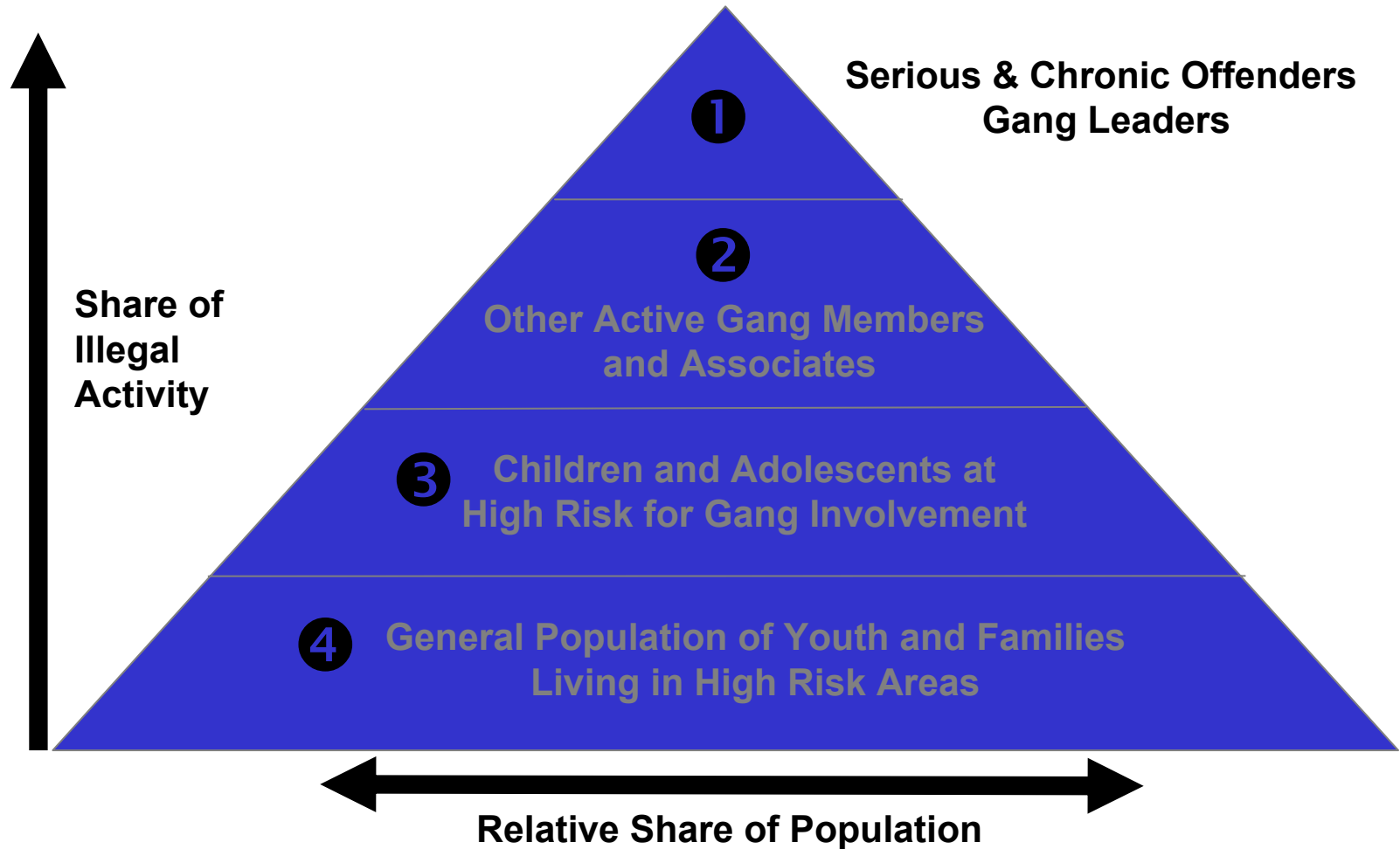
Computed from ICPSR Data Base

Five Strategies for Responding to Gangs  
Perceived Effectiveness Ratings  
1988 National Youth Gang Survey

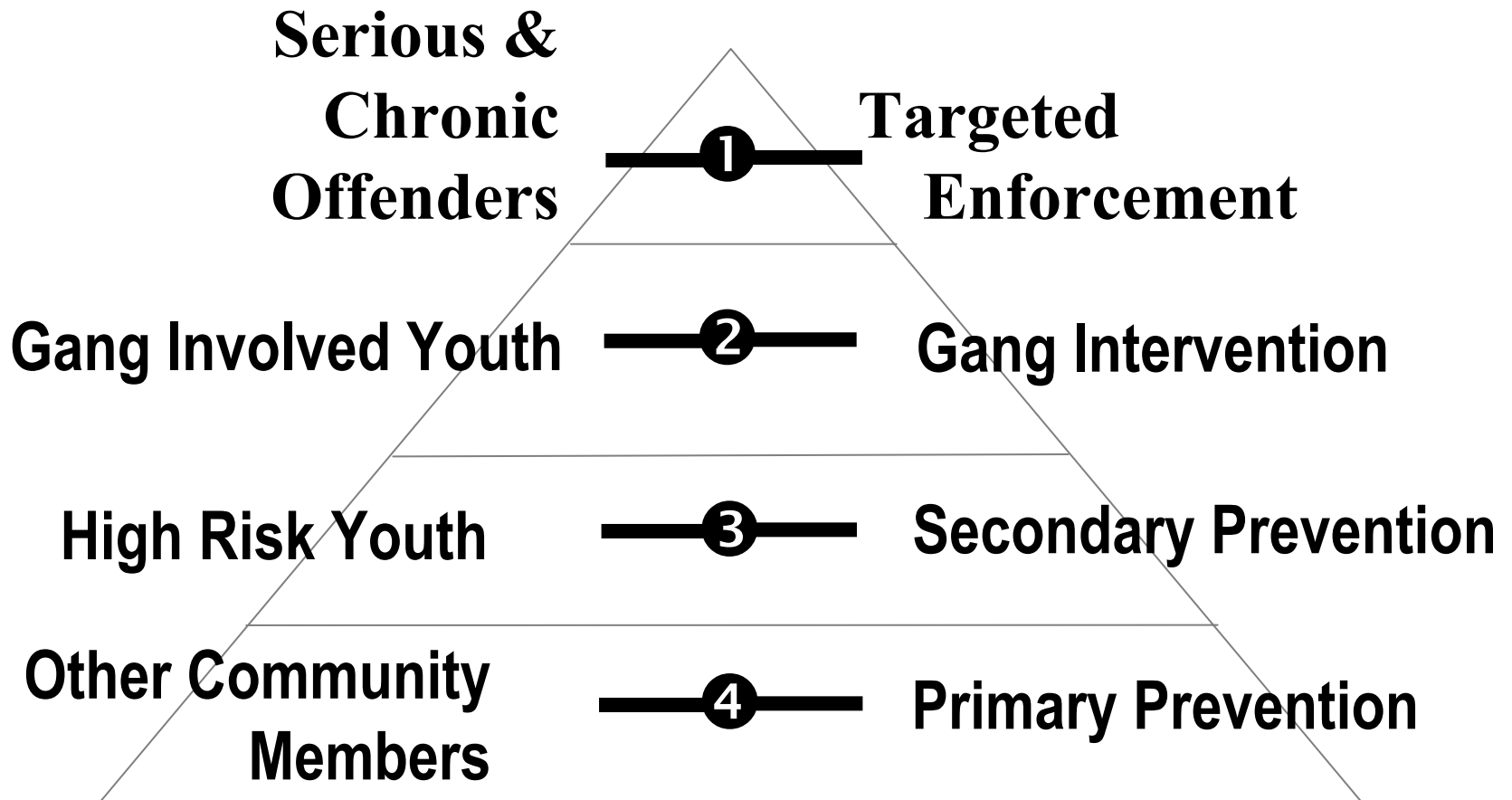


Computed from ICPSR Data Base

# Who is “involved”?



# Focusing Anti-Gang Strategies



# Prevention

1. Neighborhood Development (Weed and Seed)
2. Improving Conditions (Concentrated Poverty, Physical Decline)
3. Creating Opportunities (Jobs, Job Training, School Supports)
4. Early Childhood Programs/Parent Training/Family Support
5. School-Based Prevention Programs like Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT)
6. After School Activities
7. Mentoring (Big Brothers/Big Sisters)

# Intervention

1. Outreach Workers (Boys and Girls Clubs)
2. Crisis Intervention (Emergency Rooms)
3. Consent to Search Programs
4. Operation Nightlight/Nightwatch (Boston, St. Louis)
5. Evening Reporting Centers (Chicago, Orange County, CA)
6. Violence-Free Zones
7. Victim Programs
8. Dealing with Gang Members in Custody and Returning to the Community from Prison, Jail, or Detention
9. Offender Notification

# Suppression

## 1. Prosecution

Vertical Prosecution

Project Safe Neighborhoods Case Review

Gang Prosecution Units

## 2. Police

Directed Patrol

Gun Focused Policing

Gang Task Forces & Surveillance of Gang Members

Information Systems

Most Violent Offender Lists

## 3. Re-entry

Why is it important to understand gangs?

What errors does it lead us to make for policy, practice and programming if we misunderstand gangs?

Who suffers from such a misunderstanding?

Police.

Youth.

Youth Workers.

Society.

Gang members.

Family members.

Community.

Civic culture.

The St. Louis Safe Futures Experience.