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Violence Impact in Salinas

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Abstract

The Community Safety Program is an agency that focuses on creating methods and analyzing data to decrease violence among youth. The Salinas community completed a survey in which the responses were analyzed to describe the beliefs of youth violence. Violence among youth is a problem that has increased significantly during the last few decades. Some of the contributing factors that create violence are low socioeconomic status, unemployment, and locations prominent by gangs. The consequences of violence are domestic violence or poor neighborhoods, mental health problems, and lack of services and education. Because of this, the majority of the Salinas community still believes that violence is continuously increasing. The purpose of this project is to determine what people think is happening with violence in Salinas and then the information will be provided about the current violence situation. The results demonstrated that the average of 76.5% (Appendix B and C, figure 2.2 and 3.2) of the population “strongly agree” and “agree” that violence has increased over the last few years. However, an average of 4.9 percent of people strongly disagrees that violence has increased. With this information, the City of Salinas Community Safety Division should provide more access to information to educate the community about this social issue.

Keywords: Violence, youth, teenagers, gangs, and community education

Agency & Communities Served

Over the last few years, violence in Salinas and its surroundings has decreased significantly thanks to programs and agencies like the Community Safety Division. The mission of this agency “is to build, support, and sustain a peaceful community through mobilizing a multidisciplinary leadership team to assess, plan, and implement effective strategies, and share resources" (CASP, 2020). Community Safety Division is a non-profit organization that serves teenagers and young adults from the ages of 12 to 24 years old. The majority of the clients served in this program are Hispanics followed by Whites and African Americans. The program is located in Salinas, California and they work with the City of Salinas Office. This program was founded in January of 2009 and it was organized by 30 organizations who work together to plan, assess, and implement new strategies to provide a safe environment for the community. The purpose of this program is to reduce violence among teenagers and provide a better future for children.

The Community Safety Division addresses this problem by working with youth who are part of gangs or are at high risk of becoming gang members. One of the most successful programs at the agency is the Street Outreach Program. The way this program helps youth under the age of 18-years-old is by taking them to field trips, referrals for mental and health care, access to get a high school diploma or GED, crisis intervention, food and clothing, and housing. On the other hand, the way this program helps youth from the ages of 18 to 24 is by providing the same services but in addition, the program helps the clients to apply for jobs, start their credit, problem-solving, and other services that meet the needs of the clients. This program provides help that Salinas youth might not get somewhere else.

Problem Description

Salinas is a small town with a big violence problem. A few decades ago, Salinas experienced an increase in gang violence among teenagers and young adults (Violence Prevention, n.d.). This increase was something that was never experienced before.

Environmental factors that had at risk this community were teen pregnancy, poverty, lack of education, problems at home, and homelessness (Violence Prevention, n.d.). Youth violence is a serious problem in the United States since it is estimated that one of the three causes of death in this group from the age of 15 to 19-years-old is homicide (CDC, 2021). This information has changed over the last few years and violence has started to decrease.

In 2015, Salinas was experiencing one of the highest rates of violence related to homicide, harassment, substance abuse, and assaults. For example, according to the County of Monterey Health Department (2020), there were 22 violent assaults for every 1,000 people in 2007. As the years have passed by, the number of violent assaults has dropped significantly to 8 per every 1,000 people in 2018 (CMHD, 2020). The Salinas Police Department (SPD) and other programs have helped the community to address violence. This information shows that violence has decreased over the last few years but the majority of the Salinas community still believes that violence has been increasing significantly. The history of violence misleads the community to think negatively of their community and lose hope from the Salinas youth.

Contributing Factors

Socioeconomic Status

In the United States, the socioeconomic status of a person and family tends to be one of the contributing factors of violence among poor communities. The income, education, social

status, social class, and occupation of a person can determine the opportunities and privileges they will receive (APA, n.d.). Young adults who live in poor neighborhoods can find it difficult to access any type of service since most of the time services for their well-being are not offered in poor neighborhoods. Also, there is minimal access to job opportunities and if there is access to employment, they tend to be minimum wage. Young adults who are under the age of 20-years-old are the most vulnerable and are at risk of violence because they live in poor neighborhoods where they experience inequities of housing and also the lack of health-care, criminal justice, economic development, workforce, opportunities, and education (Cohen, Davis, Realini, 2016). These factors can lead young people to search for opportunities that might put them at risk of violence like selling drugs and becoming gang members. Because of this, a person who has a good income tends to be in a better position in society and is more likely to obtain services when needed that keep them out of becoming gang members and drug dealers.

Unemployment

In poor neighborhoods, unemployment is one of the causes of crime increase, gang violence, and drug abuse. According to Poutvaara and Priks (2007), if a community has low rates of unemployment they will also have less crime and gang activity because the community members will have more access and privileges for services needed. They are less vulnerable to a lack of opportunities and the members will not see the need to become affiliated with gangs or commit crimes (Poutvaara and Priks, 2007). If a person has a good job and good economic status, they are more likely going to seek a better lifestyle like buying a house or getting a car. Seeking a better social status can keep a person from becoming involved with gangs and violent crimes. Poutvaara and Priks (2007) stated that “reduction in unemployment may encourage

leaders to either marginally moderate their demands or to radically change to smaller gangs with more severe crime” (Poutvaara and Priks, 2007, pg.3). This demonstrates that low unemployment can result in the reduction of violence among young adults but, it can also result in more severe crime which in this case can be drug dealing and murders.

Unemployment is one of the contributing factors that put youth at risk of committing crimes and becoming violent. Providing job opportunities to youth can open new opportunities like getting better housing, services, and more access to better education and lifestyle.

Unfortunately, Idris (2016) stated that youth unemployment tends to be three times higher than adult unemployment which can create stress when experiencing a difficult situation. Having no opportunities to obtain a job can be because of lack of experience, transportation, time, and discrimination. These factors can lead youth and young adults to look for illegal ways to obtain money. Unemployment is a risk factor that should be targeted when trying to reduce violence among youth.

Location

Location can be a contributing factor for violence among young people in the United States. Living in a poor neighborhood can influence young adults to become part of gangs and commit crimes since it is something they are exposed to and might see as “normal.” According to Hailey (2013), when there is persistent violence in an urban community, the community members are more likely to become victims of a crime, develop criminal behaviors, and mental health issues. Being exposed to violence can create fear among the residents which in many cases can lead the young adults to become gang members. One of the reasons why young people become gang members is because they want to seek protection from their rivals that might want

to kill them, stab them, or shoot them. Poor neighborhoods, “often do not have the social services and support available in more affluent communities” (Hailey, 2013, para. 6). Lack of access to services can lead a person from succeeding in a poor community. For example, if there is no access to parks and after-school activities, this vulnerable group will hang out with people who might be doing drugs instead of exercising or doing other extracurricular activities. The environment of a person can determine their future and in many cases keep them from succeeding.

Consequences

Violence

Being part of a low-income household can result in domestic violence which can lead the young person to become affiliated with violence outside their home and vice versa. According to Brown (2007), the statistics of domestic violence have increased significantly among teenagers and young adults. The most affected by this issue are the partners of these young adults since in most of the cases, they decide to stay quiet and don't report the issue. Because these groups of people are involved with gangs, they tend to become violent with their partners and relatives. In most of the cases, this group acts this way with their partners and relatives because one: they are developing these behaviors in the streets, and two: it is because they have seen domestic violence at their homes (Brown, 2007). Being low income can also cause domestic violence because of economic stressors. Brown (2007) explained that when a person experiences stress because of the lack of resources when having a low income, it can result in domestic violence. It is important to understand how living in a poor neighborhood can result in normalizing domestic violence to relatives and partners.

Mental Health Problems

Being unemployed can create mental health problems among young people like substance abuse, depression, and anxiety. A person who becomes unemployed might cope with illegal substances because of the loss of hope. This group of people started to become affiliated with gang members that might share the same substance abuse and in most of the cases the gang members might be delivering the substances. Goldsmith and Diette (2012) stated that after losing a job, a person can develop mental health issues and the mental problems can result in keeping the person from looking for a new job and getting out of the situation. If a person is found in this position, they are more likely to live in a poor neighborhood where rent is more affordable. However, living in a poor neighborhood can result in becoming more exposed to violence and developing criminal behaviors. Macfarlane (2018) explained that some of the mental health problems gang members demonstrate are related to violence. This group of people has the highest rates of behavior problems and violence when compared to other groups. According to Macfarlane (2018), “aside from depression, the rates of psychosis, anxiety, alcohol and drug dependence, antisocial personality disorder and a history of attempted suicide in this study were all significantly higher in gang members” (Macfarlane, 2018, para. 30). Mental health problems among gang members are high and because of it, it is important to decrease the unemployment rates among gang members and provide services like mental and physical care.

Lack of Services

The location of a person can determine if they can get the services they need. Poor neighborhoods are the most vulnerable communities because of a lack of access to education and healthcare. Hussein, Diez Roux, and Field (2016) argued that low-income communities have a

lack of receiving services and when they receive them, quality is deficient. Many people decide not to get access to services like health care because they do not have health insurance and the cost of healthcare is high. Medical problems can lead a person to use illegal substances to cope with the health issue which in many cases puts them at risk of violence and criminal behaviors. On the other hand, when receiving access to education, the quality of education is not the same as a person who lives in a rich neighborhood since the funds for education depend on the economic status of the community. According to Howell (2010), when a young person has a lack of education and their math skills are low, they have the highest risk of becoming a gang member. Living in a poor neighborhood can lead a person to have a poor education and lack of services like healthcare. Not having the services they need puts them at risk of becoming gang members, committing crimes, and having criminal behaviors.

Problem Model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
Factor 1: Low-income	Increase of violence among Salinas youth and gang affiliation.	Consequence 1: Domestic Violence, dangerous/poor neighborhoods
Factor 2: Unemployment		Consequence 2: Mental health problems
Factor 3: Location/area prominent by gangs and violence		Consequence 3: lack of services and education

Capstone Project Description and Justification

Capstone Project

Salinas has been categorized as one of the cities with more violence and crime affiliation in Monterey County. Salinas used to be in the Top 100 most dangerous cities of California ranking in 22nd place (McAuliffe, 2018). According to McAuliffe (2018), there are 633.2 offenses committed for every 100,000 people. Knowing this information, people have a bad perspective of how dangerous this city is. Having a bad reputation can result in people believing that some behaviors might be okay to do since it is what others do in this community. However, the reality is different, over the last few years crimes have been decreasing significantly in this community. There have been several efforts made by the police department and other organizations to change this social problem.

The capstone project is to survey on three different events in the Spanish and English communities. The purpose of this project is to obtain information on what is the current perspective of people about violence. This survey will demonstrate what people believe is the “reality” of violence in Salinas and then this information will be compared to the data from the Salinas Police Department (SPD). After the participants conduct the survey, information will be provided about the current violence situation. This information will educate the Salinas community and other organizations of what society believes and it can motivate organizations to continue to create programs and services to reduce violence. The survey will be conducted at three events in Salinas, California by the organizations of Community Safety Division, Amor Salinas, and Street Outreach Program. The data from this project will be also shared at a Community Alliance for Safety and Peace (CASP) meeting through Zoom, where more than 40

organizations will participate. The potential participants of this project are staff members of the City of Salinas Library Department, CASP, Street Outreach Program, Amor Salinas, and the Salinas community. The first event will start on September 11th and the survey results will be shared on a presentation on November 3rd.

Project Purpose

One of the contributing factors to violence in Salinas that affects this community is location. The majority of the crimes happen in low-income communities and people tend to have different opinions depending on the area they live in. This means that if a person lives in a neighborhood where violence, murders, rape, and crimes occur more constantly than in other places, they will have a negative view of their community. Having a negative perspective on their community can result in accepting elicited behaviors and getting used to a violent environment. The purpose of this project is to demonstrate how violence has decreased significantly over the last few years and help other agencies to share this information with their clients who are interested in reducing the violence among youth in Salinas. This will be a great opportunity for this community since this information can awaken the desire to do more, like having higher education, a better economic status, and becoming less engaged with gangs and violence.

Project Justification

Community awareness can help significantly to reduce violence. According to Los Angeles Police Department (n.d.), when a community is educated and aware of a social issue like violence, it can help to have more control and implement strategies to reduce violence. Knowing the statistics of crimes can help the parents and community members to, “dedicate extra

prevention and enforcement efforts in parts of the city where levels of youth gun violence are high” (LAPD, n.d.). Allowing people to learn what is happening in their neighborhoods can help the members to see if the projects currently implemented are working or not. If the community sees that the projects and services are successful, they will want to be more engaged and help to address this problem. Education and awareness can help Salinas to become a safe place for youth.

Project Implementation

The plan for the implementation of this project is to receive approval from Jose Arreola and then continue with the steps that need to be done. Several questions need to be asked to see the community's perspective. The kind of questions that will be asked is related to how safe people feel in their neighborhoods and their opinions about violence increasing or decreasing among youth. After Arreola approves the questions, it will be necessary to create a survey on Google Forms that can be accessible to Spanish and English speakers who live in Salinas. Arreola will review the questions and will suggest any modifications to share them with the public. The participants of this survey will be chosen randomly at three different events and the results will be up after the participants complete the survey. The goal is to receive 100 responses from Salinas community members and then information about the current violence situation will be shared with the participants. Everyone who lives in Salinas will be welcome to complete the survey.

The survey will be provided to the public at three events created by the agencies stated above. Arreola will provide the Ipads materials, and gifts for the client before the events and Arreola will be at the event to supervise the capstone project. A table with the logos of the

Community Safety Division will be set and information about the agency will be provided. After distributing the information of the agency's mission and goals, the participants will be given mugs, pens, small hand sanitizers, color books for children, and flayers. When the participants receive these gifts, they will be asked if they want to complete a survey about violence in Salinas. The participants will have the right to accept or decline their participation. If the clients accept to participate, they will be provided one of the two Ipads with the desired language. If help is needed to use the electronic, Kimberly will be in charge of helping the participants. Once the survey is completed, each client will be provided information written on a poster about youth violence in Salinas. After attending the three events and collecting the data, this information will be shared with Arreola and staff members. Arreola will review the answers from the participants and will determine if it is acceptable to use. Once the review from Arreola is done, the data will be used for a presentation. Kimberly will create the presentation slides and Arreola will revise them before sharing them with other agencies. To prepare the information, the results of the survey will be reviewed and then distributed in the presentation. Other information will be shared in the presentation for example, who is Kimberly Torres, the purpose of the project, the mission of the agency, the method used to collect the data, results and expected outcomes, and recommendations. This presentation will be shared at a CASP meeting on November 3rd.

The goal of the project is to understand what are the opinions of the Salinas community and see if they still believe that the crimes have been increasing. Violence in Salinas has been decreasing significantly and this information will help the community understand that the reality about violence is different than what they think. Kimberly will complete all the work for this project, but Arreola will be in charge of reviewing and submitting the paperwork for approval.

All the events where this survey will be conducted are part of the Community Safety Division, City of Salinas. The Scope Work of this project can be found in “Appendix A” where there is an explanation of the activities that need to be completed, the deliveries, the deadline for each, and the participating staff.

Assessment Plan

The effectiveness of the project will be measured by the client's response after the survey is completed. This assessment will help to understand the clients' perspectives before the survey. The purpose of this project is to see the positive impact of the information provided and pursue people to share this information with others. Receiving the participants' feedback can help to understand the effectiveness of the information shared and understand if it has a positive impact on the Salinas Community and if it does, implement more programs and events where this type of information can be shared.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcome of this project is to change the perspective of people about the crime rates and violence in Salinas among young people who range from the age of 12 to 24-years-old. The purpose is to receive 100 or more survey responses and educate every participant. This project will help to address this social issue and inform the community. If this project works as expected, other agencies can help to share this information and create projects at their agencies to help their clients who are at risk or are part of violence and gangs. The responses on the survey are to gather data for the presentation but also, help the Salinas community reflect if they feel safe and think if they are correct or not on speculating if crimes among youth have been increasing or decreasing.

Project Results

Average

The average in the result section means the combination of the English and Spanish data to combine both populations.

Results

On this project, 102 people completed the survey, 52 English speakers and 50 Spanish speakers. The expected outcomes of this research stated that the majority of the Salinas community have a perspective that violence has been increasing over the last few years. For this research, the survey provided data that help to understand more about what percentages of the population have this concept about violence. The surveys demonstrated that an average of 76.5% (Appendix B and C, figure 2.2 and 3.2) of the population “strongly agree” and “agree” that violence has been increasing over the last few years. On the other hand, an average of 19.6% (Appendix B and C, figure 2.2 and 3.2) of the population “strongly disagrees” and “disagrees” and 3.9% (Appendix B and C, figure 2.2 and 3.2) of the population “neither agrees nor disagrees” on the increment of violence. This evidence demonstrates that the majority of the participants have a perception that violence is a current issue.

The data demonstrated that an average of 59.8% (Appendix B and C, figure 2.3 and 3.3) of the respondents “strongly agree” and “agree” that juveniles are part of the crimes and the average of 73.8% (Appendix B and C, figure 2.4 and 3.4) stated that they “strongly agree” and “agree” that homicides have increased against teenagers. In addition, an average of 74.4% (Appendix B and C, figure 2.5 and 3.5) of the participants “strongly agree” and “agree” that there is an increase of gang members in the community. On the other hand, an average of 50.5%

(Appendix B and C, figure 2.6 and 3.6) of the participants stated that they “strongly agree” and “agree” that there is an increase in crimes in their neighborhoods. According to the evidence provided in the surveys, the majority of the Salinas population believes that violence has increased over the last few years, and youth are part of this issue. The research in this project achieves the expected outcomes of violence in this community.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Salinas is a community where violence has been decreasing over the last few years and some data and statistics that support this statement. Many programs and strategies like the Street Outreach Program have been created to continue to decrease violence among youth and provide a safe environment for everyone. Salinas has a community where everyone is willing to learn new information and share their opinions. This project demonstrated that this research should be continued since according to World Population (2021), Salinas has 155,101 people. This research was conducted only on 102 people meaning that 154,999 are not aware of the current violence situation. There is a big journey left to educate the rest of the Salinas community. The recommendations of this project are to create more workshops for the community to reduce the amount of misunderstanding on this social issue and create a positive view of Salinas. Something that can be done to improve the project is to look for a different way to deliver this information. One strategy could be sharing this survey on social media and after each participant completes the survey, the current violence information and statistics will be shared to review. This will facilitate the education of the community and the participants will be able to complete the survey at their own time and preferred location.

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Appendix A

Scope of Work

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline/Deadlines	Supporting Staff
Capstone Approval	Capstone projects should be approved or declined.	May 14, 2021	Jose Arreola
Staff Discussion of Project Implementation	Staff will discuss the implementation of the survey at future events.	August 31, 2021	Jose Arreola Karina Silva Kimberly Torres Marley Morales Capry Downs
Survey Review	Discussion and analysis of survey questions.	September 9, 2021	Jose Arreola
Capstone Project Survey at the End of Summer Celebration	Deliver surveys to participants for capstone project research.	September 11, 2021	Jose Arreola, Karina Silva, Kimberly Torres
Capstone Project Surve at Community Resources Fair	Deliver surveys to participants for capstone project research.	October 2, 2021	Kimberly Torres, Jose Arreola
Capstone Project Survey at Habbron Food Bank	Deliver surveys to participants for capstone project research.	October 14, 2021	Kimberly Torres
Capstone Project Survey at Bread Box Food Bank	Deliver surveys to participants for capstone project research.	October 21, 2021	Kimberly Torres
Review of Survey	Jose will review the outcome of the survey and will determine if the data is okay to use for the presentation and project.	October 26, 2021	Jose Arreola, Kimberly Torres
Results Analysis	After the results are gathered, a presentation will be built with the results .	October 29, 2021	Kimberly Torres

Capstone Project Presentation and Research at CASP Meeting.	Present research to CASP members	November 3rd/10th, 2021	Jose Arreola, Karina Silva, Kimberly Torres, Capry Downs, and Community Members
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Appendix B

English Speakers

Survey link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1tdMwF7RrEN7udYugd-bCjrkCiAHJik8ujRbAdEMJqUs/edit>

Figure 2.1

Zip Code
27 responses

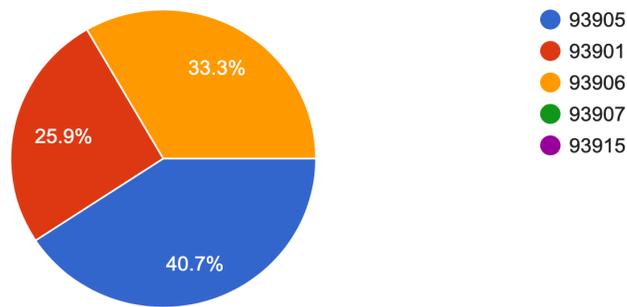


Figure 2.2

Has violence increased over the last few years?
52 responses

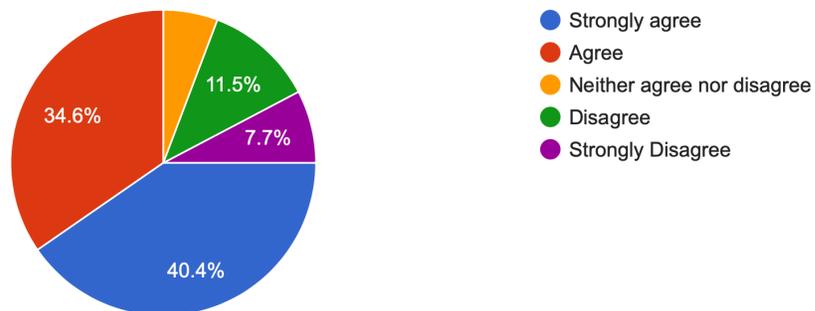


Figure 2.3

Do you think that juveniles are part of the violence or crimes?

52 responses

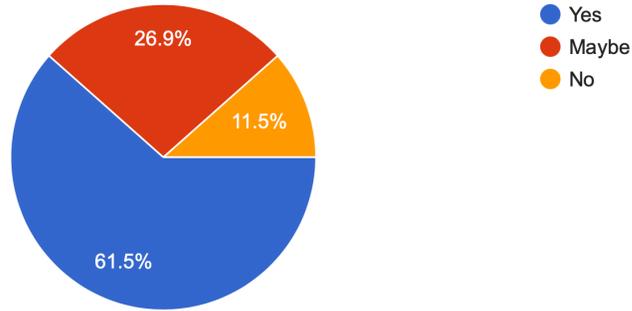


Figure 2.4

Do you think that homicides have increased among teenagers?

52 responses

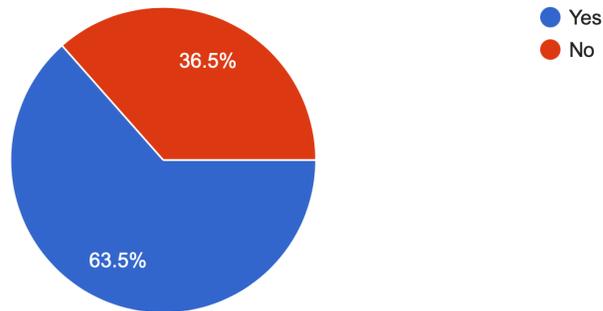


Figure 2.5

Do you think there is an increase of gang members than before?

52 responses

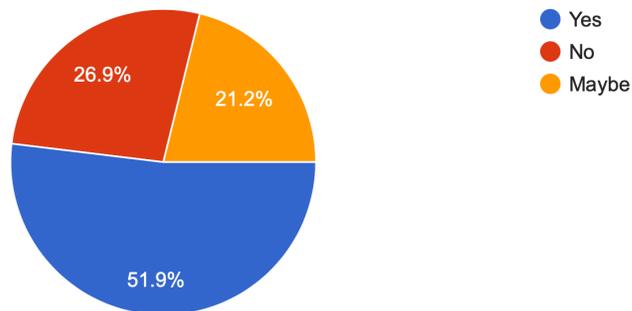
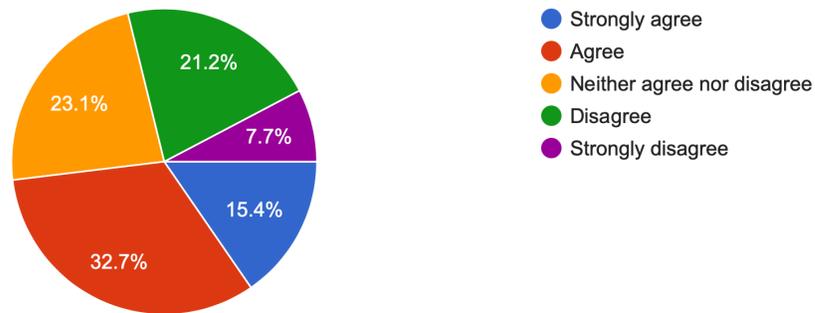


Figure 2.6

Have you seen an increase in crimes in your neighborhood?

52 responses



Appendix C

Spanish Speakers

Survey Link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1UagWiV8sabpUVv5L8WL9ergAJ2RTEOnKPQt38KErI5g/edit>

Figure 3.1

Codigo Postal

37 responses

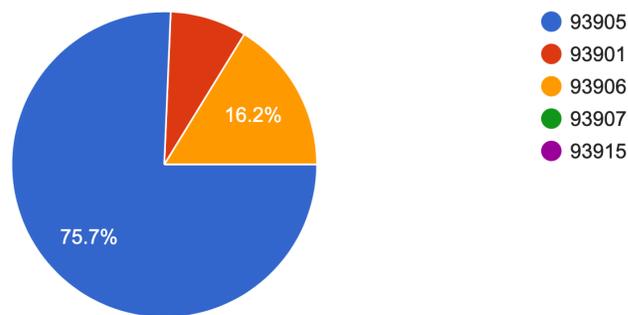


Figure 3.2

¿Creé que la violencia a aumentado en los últimos años?
50 responses

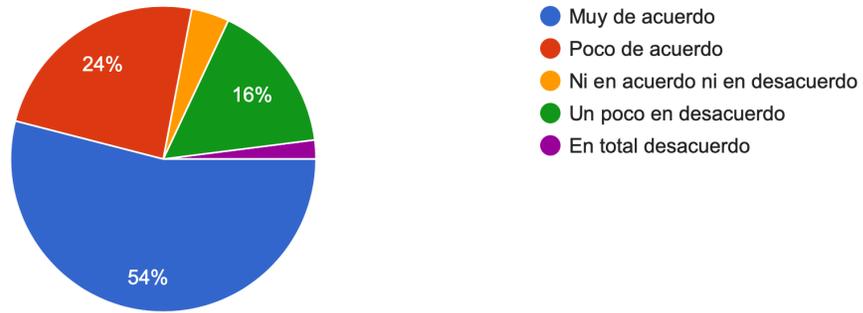


Figure 3.3

¿Creé que los jóvenes son parte de la violencia o los crímenes?
50 responses

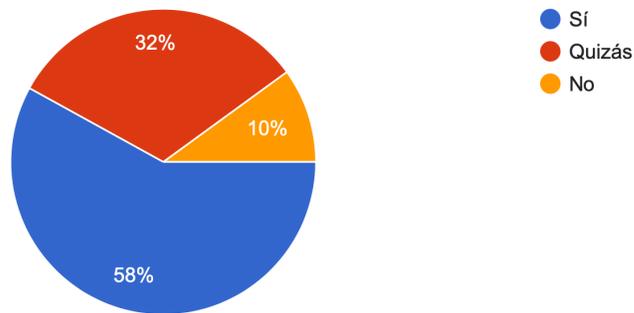


Figure 3.4

¿Cree que los homicidios contra jóvenes an incrementado?
50 responses

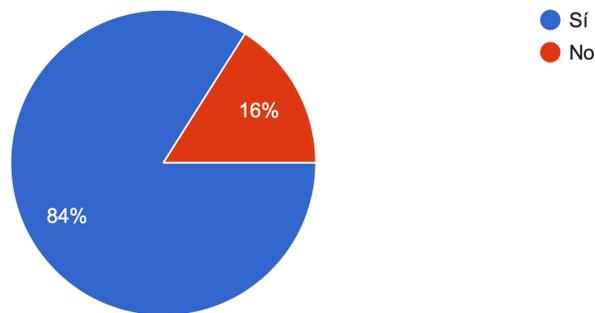


Figure 3.5

¿Piensa que hay más miembros de pandillas que antes?
50 responses

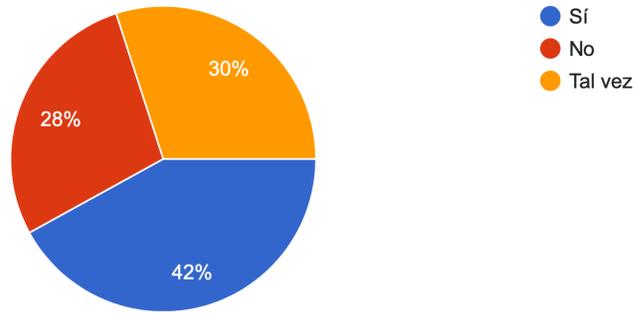


Figure 3.6

¿A visto un incremento de crímenes en su vecindario?
50 responses

