

GANGS & CRIME IN SC: HOW MUCH, HOW BAD?

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Why were we concerned about gangs in South Carolina?

- Gangs are often considered more of an urban problem.
- SC is small, only 3 urban centers.

But.....

- USC survey - law enforcement reported widespread gang activity.
- High levels of publicity and civic concern in recent years.

Data Sources

- SCIBRS - state level NIBRS data
- Corrections – inmate records
- Community Corrections – offender records.
- Dept. of Juvenile Justice – intake screening form.

Who is committing gang related violence?

- Mean age 19.5, Median age 17
- Highest rate among 15 – 16 year olds
- 85% male
- 69% African-American
- Hispanics under-represented

Who are inmate gang members?

- Demographically, similar to SCIBRS profile: disproportionately young, male and minority.
- Gang members were more often convicted of violent offenses.
- Gang members were less often drug offenders.

What about gang members under community corrections?

- Disproportionately young, male and minority.
- 23% had a drug offense as the most serious conviction offense.

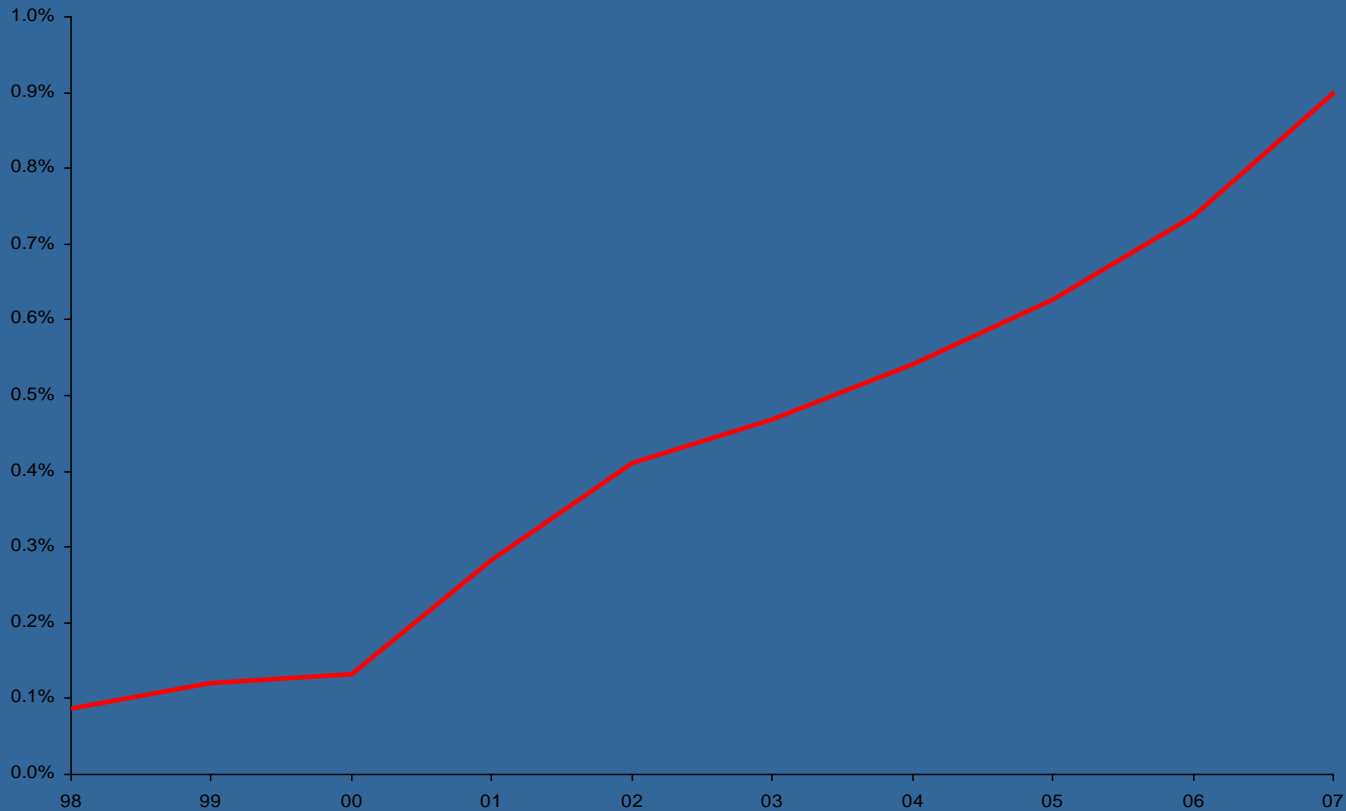
Geographically, gang indicators provide a mixed picture.

- Gang violence - highest rates in rural counties.
- SCDC – inmates come from rural and suburban counties.
- Community Corrections – followed population patterns.

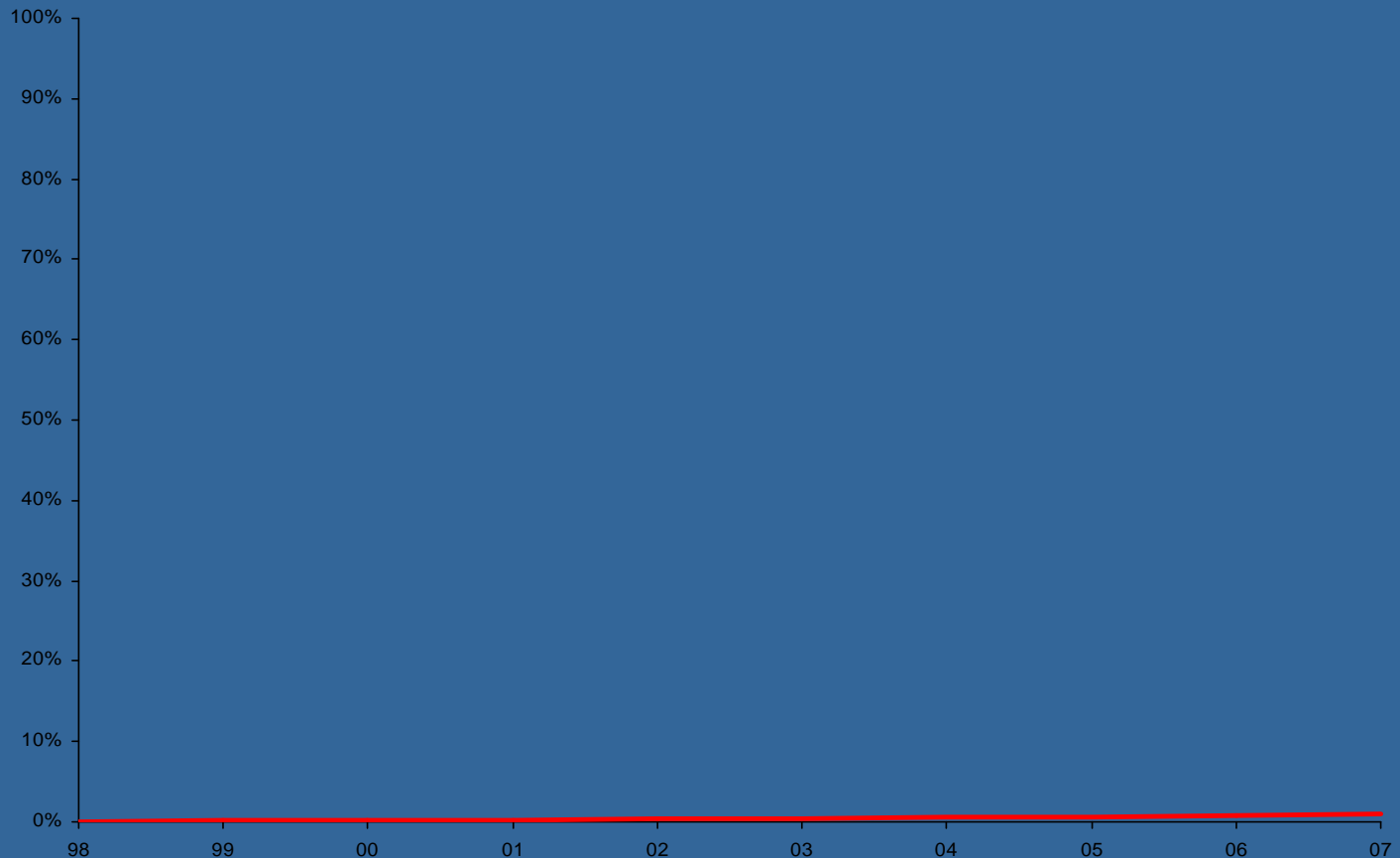
Who are the victims of gang violence?

- Similar demographically to offenders; predominately young, male, minority.
- 75% knew the offender.
- 58% were casual acquaintances of the offender.

Gang violence increased rapidly over 10 year period.



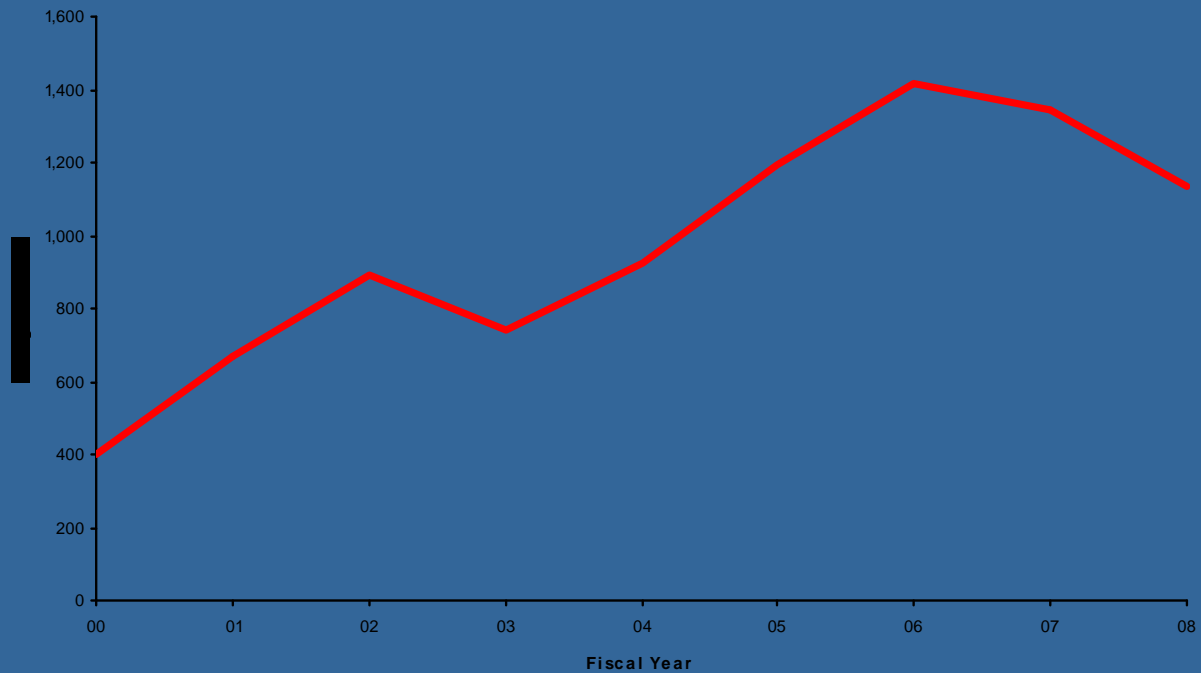
However, if you look at it within the context of overall violence:



So putting gang violence into the proper context:

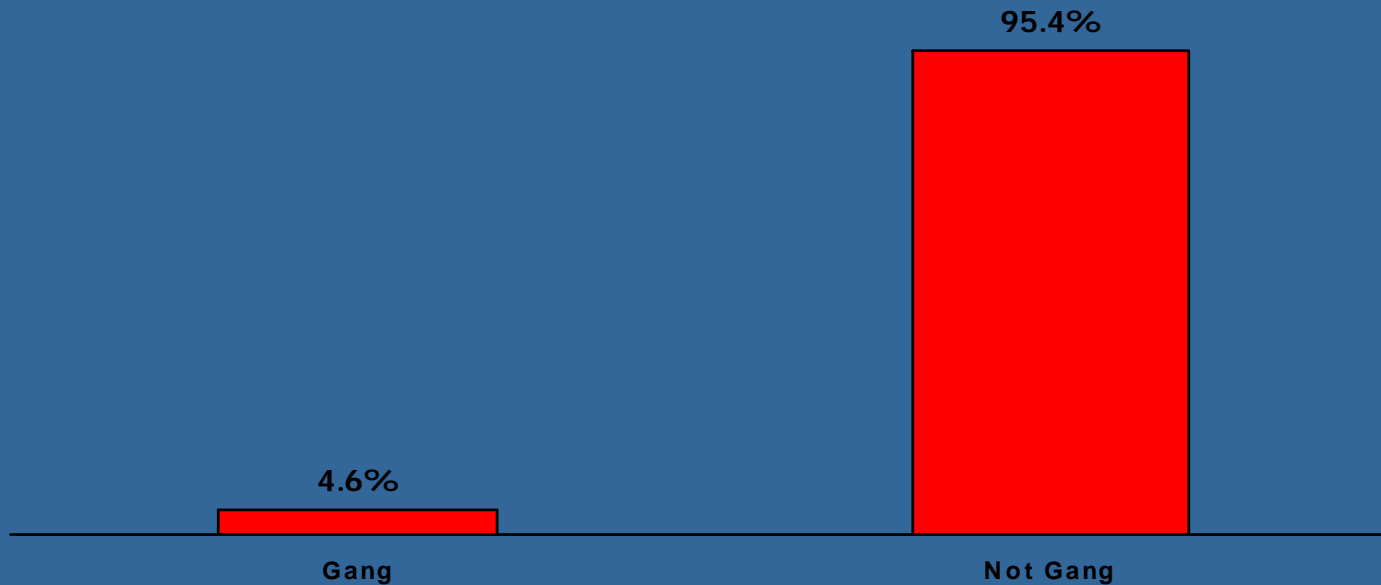
- Despite a dramatic increase, gang crime still accounted for less than 1% of reported criminal violence in 2007.
- Violent crime decreased 13.5% statewide during the same time period.

Inmate gang membership has increased.



Once again, putting the increase into context

SCDC Inmates - FY 08



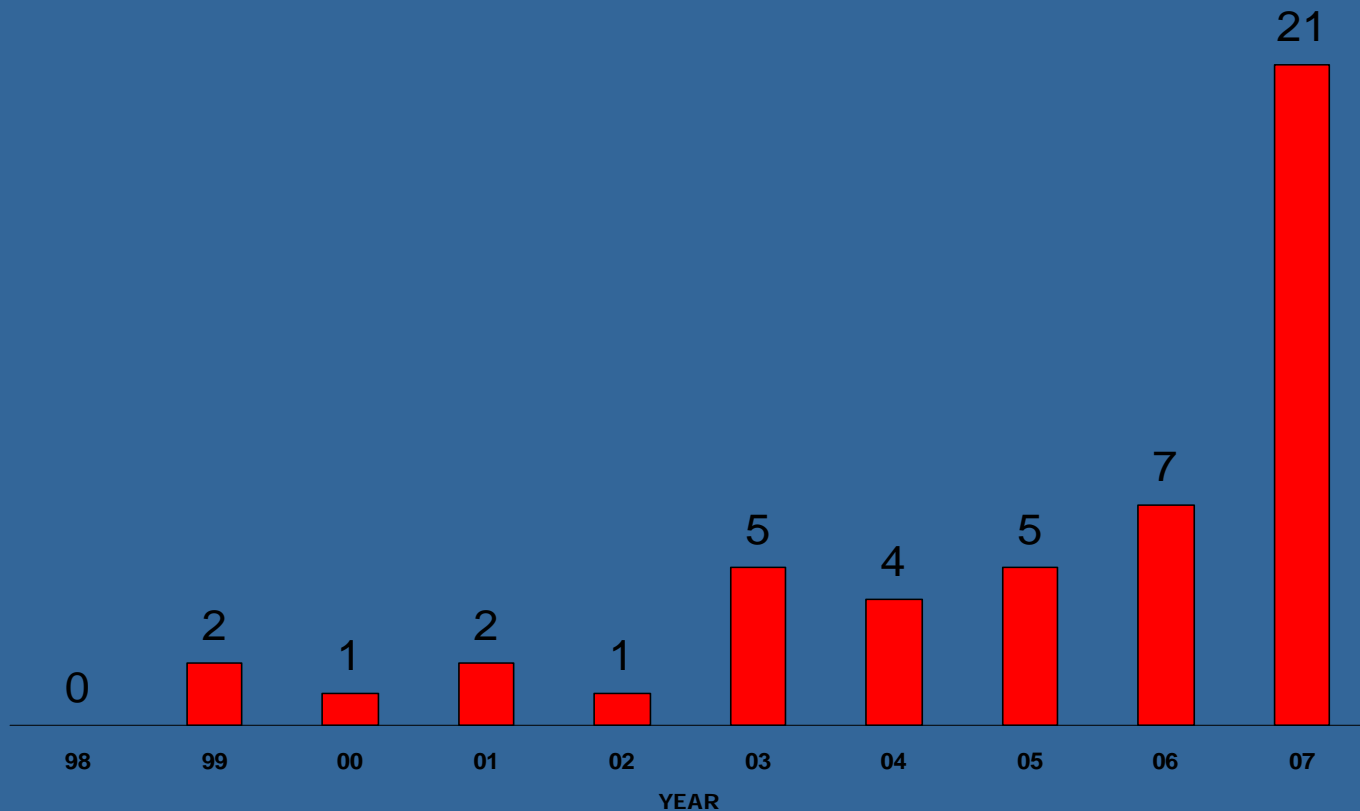
Gangs in Community Corrections

- Historical data not available to determine growth trend.
- 2.9% of community corrections clients were identified as gang members.

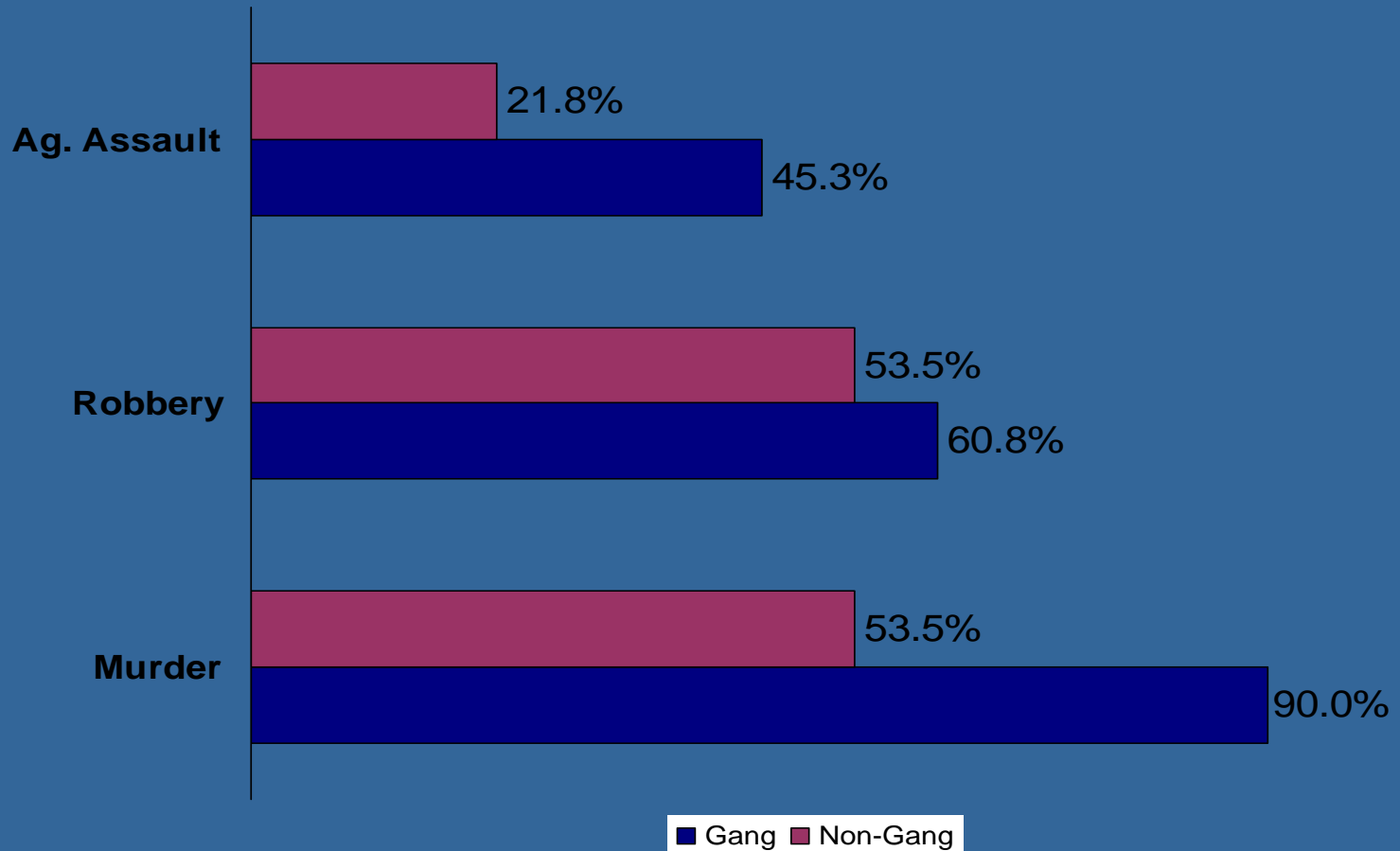
Still, there are two areas of serious concern:

- The increase in gang related murders over 10 year period.
- The comparatively high level of firearm involvement in gang violence.

There were 21 gang murders in 2007.



Firearm involvement was more likely in gang violence.



So what does all this tell us?

- Gang violence is not a major contributor to overall violence.
- Gang murder could become a major factor.
- Gang violence often involves guns.
- A core of known gang members can be found in prison and under supervision.

Implications for Future Research

- Definition of gang
- Re-entry issues for gang members
- Lack of qualitative research
- Need to monitor gang violence, especially murder.

QUESTIONS?

- Report can be viewed at:
<http://www.scdps.org/ojp/statistics.asp>
- Email questions or concerns to:
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