

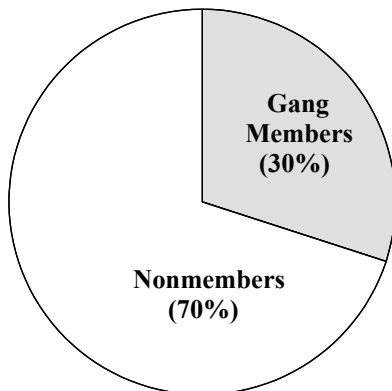
## A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

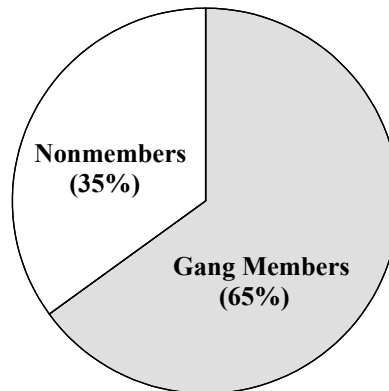
### *Youth Gang Members Responsible for Disproportionate Share of Delinquent Behavior*

According to the Rochester Youth Development Study (RYDS), “gang members account for a disproportionate share of delinquent acts, particularly the more serious offenses” (p. 1). One thousand 7th and 8th grade students attending Rochester, New York public schools in 1988 were interviewed regarding their delinquency, drug use, and related problem behaviors. Subsequent interviews were conducted every six months for four years. While only 30% of the RYDS respondents reported being a gang member at some point prior to the end of high school, gang members accounted for 65% of delinquent acts reported by all youth over the four-year period (see figure below). In addition, 86% of all serious delinquent acts, 63% of all reports of alcohol use, and 61% of all reports of drug use were reported by gang members. The authors conclude that “these findings underline the importance of establishing effective intervention programs for gang-involved youth because failure to do so may result in a failure to make substantial progress in the Nation’s efforts to reduce serious, violent, and chronic delinquency” (p. 3).

**While 30% of All Respondents  
Reported Being a Gang Member . . .**



**65% of All Delinquent Acts Were  
Reported by Gang Members**



NOTE: All data are based on self-reported behaviors. The question asked to determine gang membership was, “Are you a member of a street gang or a posse?”

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from data from Terence Thornberry and James Burch, “Gang Members and Delinquent Behavior,” *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, June 1997. For more information, contact Dr. Thornberry at 518-442-5218. A copy of the Bulletin is available from the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse at [www.ncjrs.org/ojjhome.htm](http://www.ncjrs.org/ojjhome.htm) or 800-638-8736.