

# Gangs and Sex Trafficking in San Diego

Research Funded by the National Institute of Justice





Co-authored by

**Ami C. Carpenter, PhD — University of San Diego**

**Jamie Gates, PhD — Point Loma Nazarene University**

with research assistance from

Lars Almquist; Natalie Hsieh; Topher McDougal, PhD; Dana Nurge, PhD; and Tasi Rodriguez





# How Big is San Diego's Underground Sex Economy?

**\$810 Million**

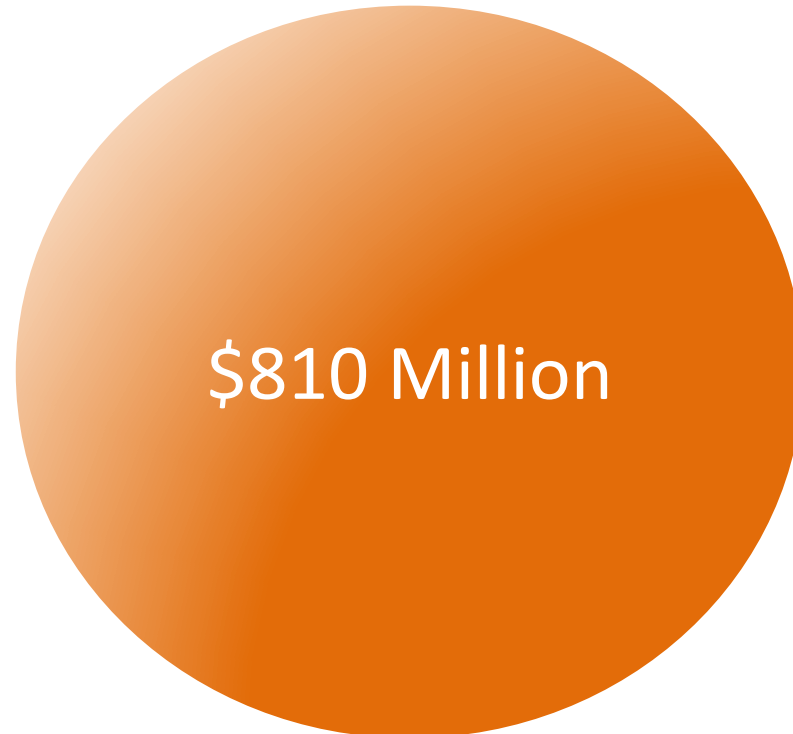
A silhouette of a woman with long hair, blowing a dandelion seed head. The background is a warm, golden sunset with a bright sun low on the horizon, creating a lens flare effect. The scene is captured in profile, with the woman's face and the dandelion stem clearly visible against the bright light.

# 8x Higher than previous study

Urban Institute



This Study



# Size of the Problem

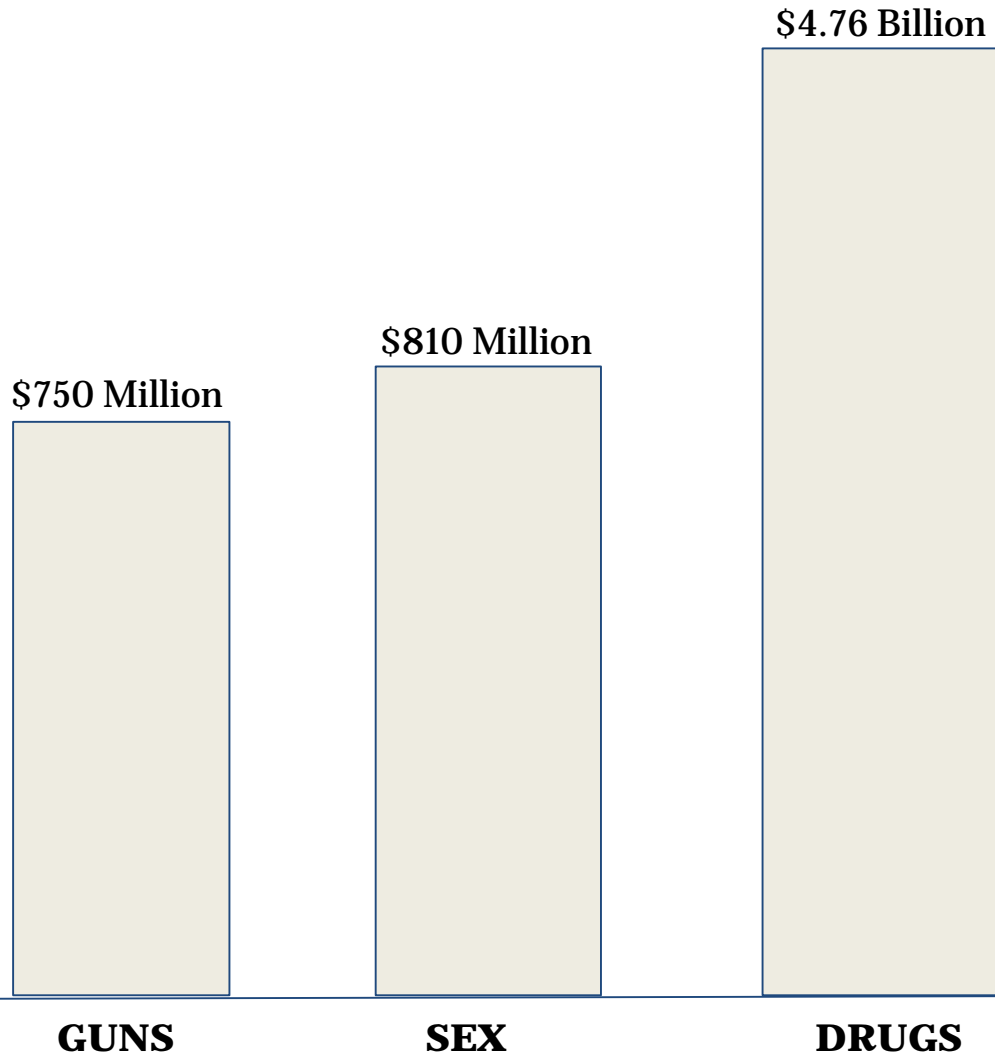
## Annual economic impact:

- Natural Resources & Mining:  
**\$900 million**
- Safe Route to Transit (SR2T):  
**\$700 million**
- Otay Mesa POE:  
**\$800 million**
- San Diego Padres:  
**\$800 million**



# 2nd Largest Underground Economy

\$5,000,000,000  
\$3,000,000,000  
\$1,000,000,000  
\$9,000,000  
\$8,000,000  
\$7,000,000  
\$6,000,000  
\$5,000,000  
\$4,000,000  
\$3,000,000  
\$2,000,000  
\$1,000,000



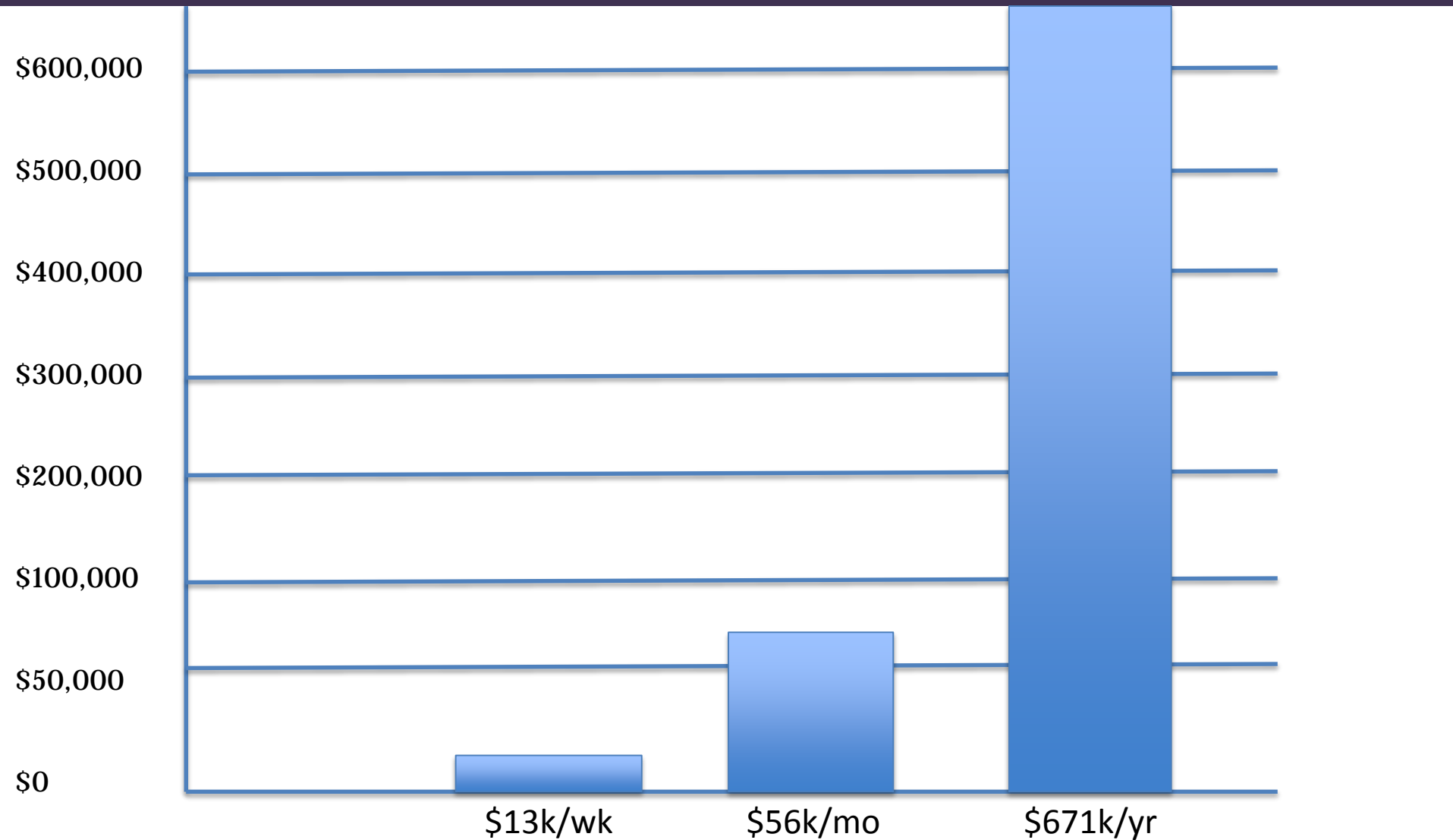
# Gang Members Are Highly Involved

- 85% of facilitators were gang-affiliated
- **110 gangs** involved in underground sex economy





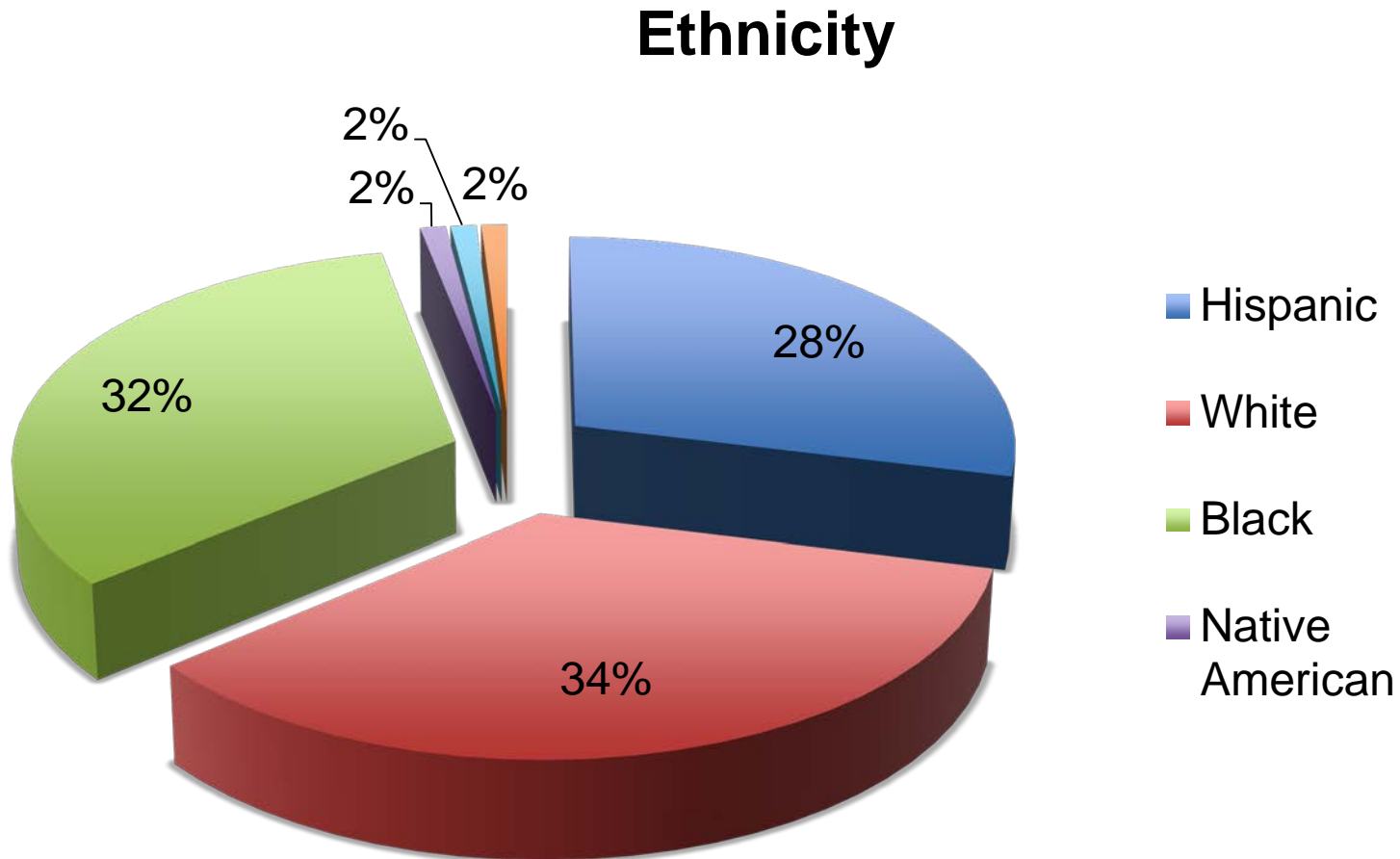
# Annual Estimated Trafficker's Earnings



# Profiles of Sex Trafficking Facilitators

- **Protector/Business Partner:** Rejects the 'Pimp' label. Contractual arrangement: driver, bodyguard. Revenue is split. **63%**
- **Traditional Facilitator:** 'Pimp' identity tied to the desire for social recognition and status. Controls money. **34%**
  - **Vicious-Violent** : People who use extreme tactics of physical and psychological control. Prefer to recruit minors. Defeat of self-worth and value is a key strategy. **3%**
- **Organized Crime:** Highly secretive rings and trafficking operations. **At least 12 such rings** work in the San Diego-Tijuana border region

# 'Pimping' is Mostly Associated with African American Street Gangs



# Racial-Ethnic Representation in California Prisons and Jails

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>% of California Population</b>	<b>% of California Incarcerated Population</b>
White (non-Hispanic)	40%	26%
Hispanic	38%	41%
Black	6%	27%

## California Incarceration Rates

Data Source: U.S. Census 2010, Summary File 1. (Graph: Leah Sakala, May 2014)

# Annual Number of Victim/Survivors

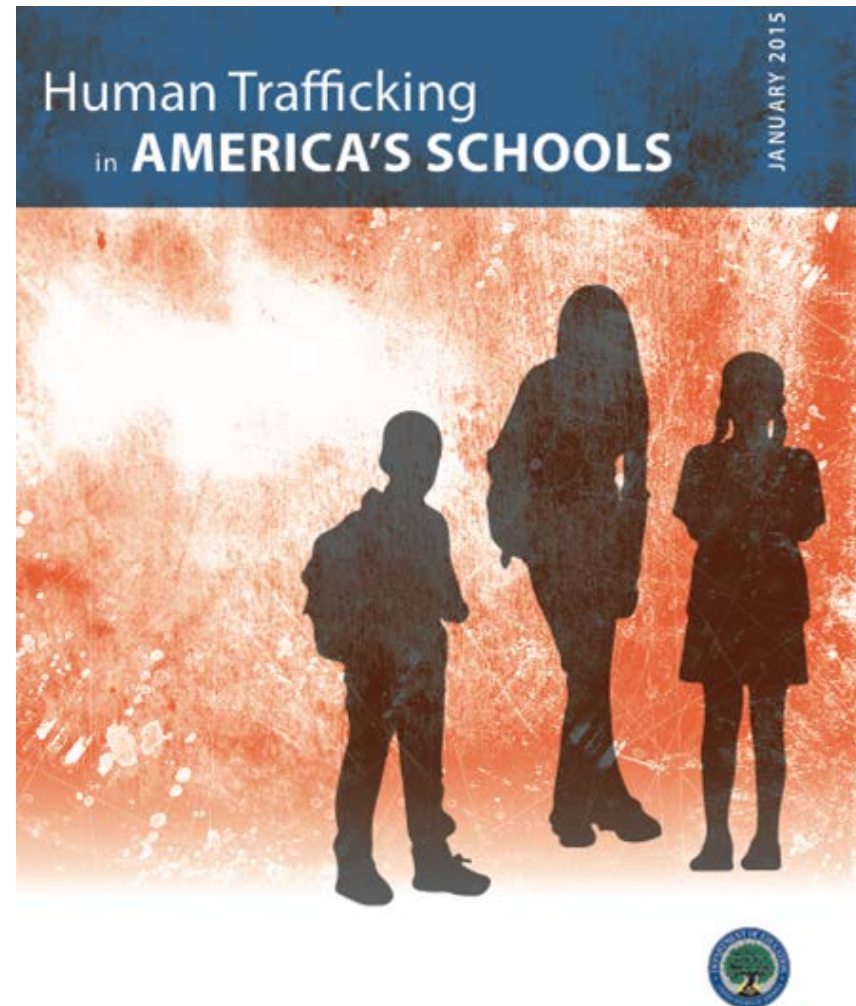
## 3417-8108

- Based on facilitators who come in contact with law enforcement
- 70 victims treated by 8 agencies
- 29 total beds available for human trafficking survivors
  - No beds for LGBT
  - No beds for men
  - No HT specific beds for children

# Human Trafficking in San Diego's Schools

## County-wide recruitment in middle schools and high schools

- Focus groups from all **20 schools** identified suspected victims; **90% confirmed CSEC cases**
- **30% of facilitators** witnessed or participated in sex trafficking recruitment related to schools



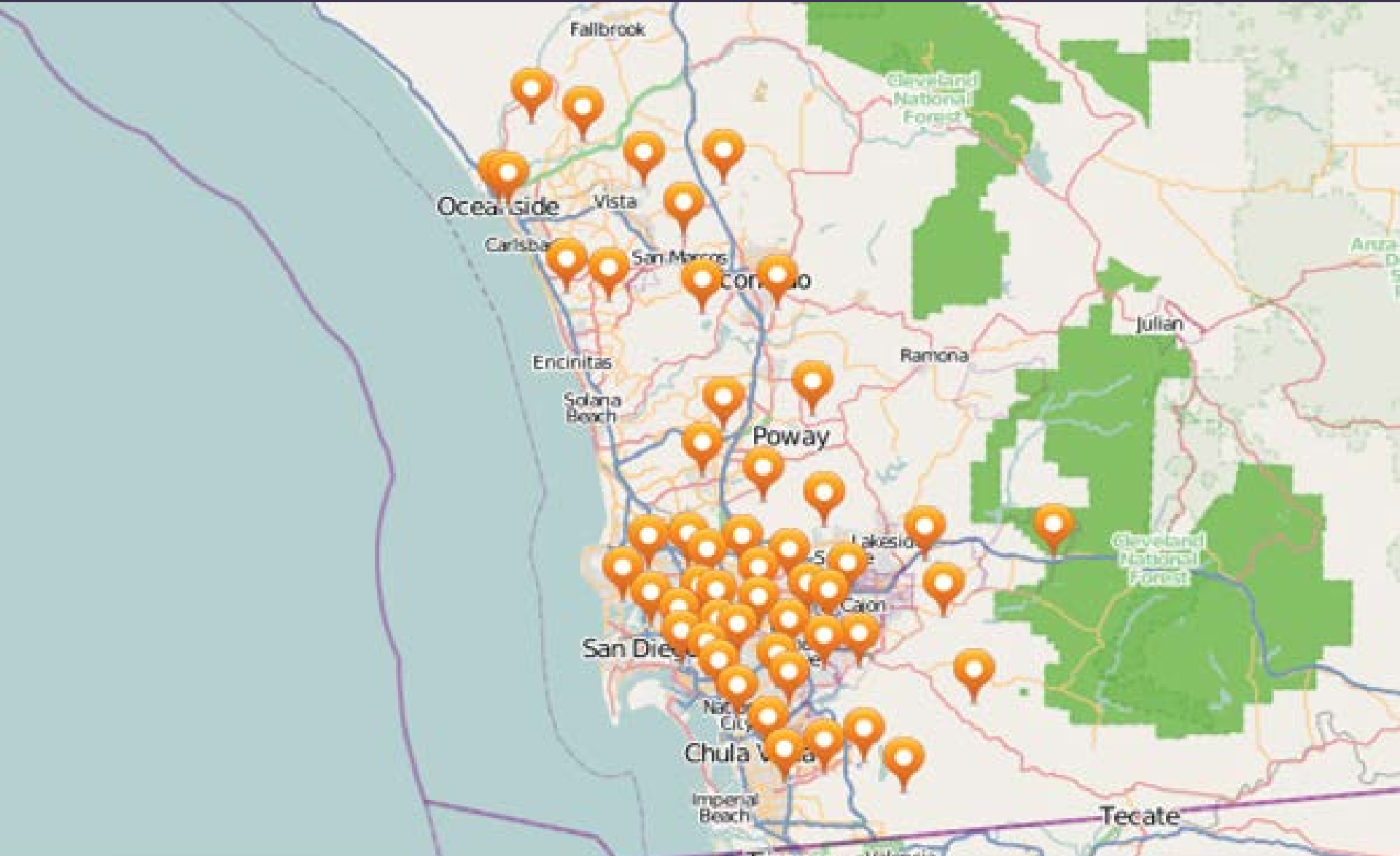
# Targeted Schools

20 schools visited represent sites from the entire San Diego County region



# County-Wide Problem

## Residence of Victims/Survivors





# Evidence from a trafficker

**Q: Do you know if people recruit girls out of high schools? Middle schools?**

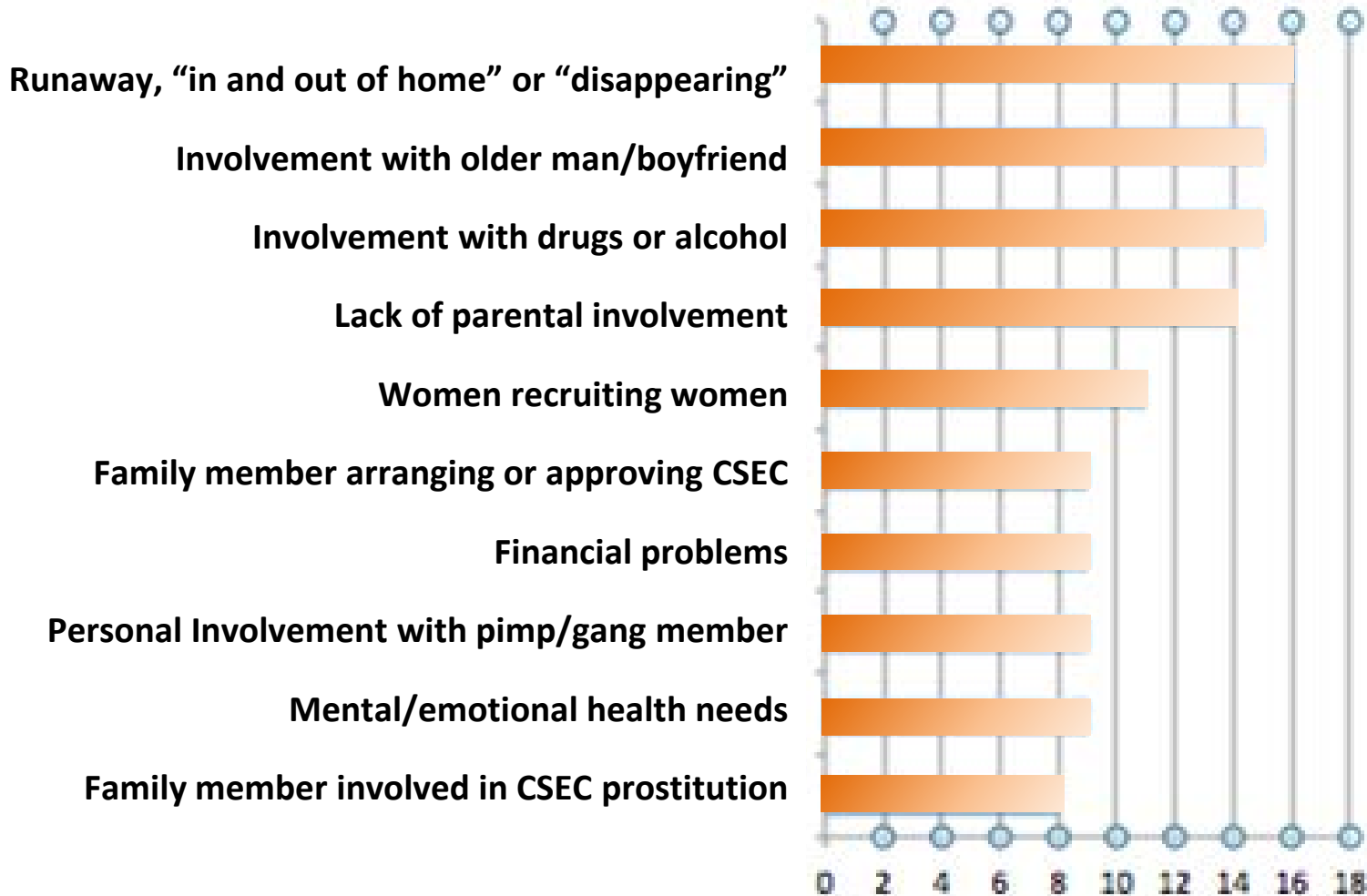
*“Yeah, just pulling up on them, going up to the high schools, going to these little dances, going to beach, seeing them in traffic, uh, it can start real young with a female, it starts young. Depends on, up to them, what they feel, what they’re up to, and how they’re living.”*

*“A lot of ‘em have moms and dads who are hos and pimps, or don’t have a mom and dad. Maybe one or the other. A lot of situations at home, all kind of angles that lead up to street life activity. A lot of things.”*

*– “Prison Interview, 2014”*



# Top 10 Recruitment Risk Factors



# How Children are Recruited

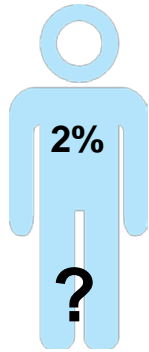
- **“Boyfriend”** asks his girl “just this one time” ...
- **Social Media**
- **Girl recruiters**
- **Material enticements**
- Involvement with **drugs**, payment for drugs
- Fraudulent **job offers**
- **Parents offering their kids** to friends/associates for money
- **Family members (generational or cultural ties)**
- **Gang members** “swooping” in on newcomers to school
- Some gang-organized **massage parlors**
- Participation in **prostitution rings**

# Recruitment Hotspots

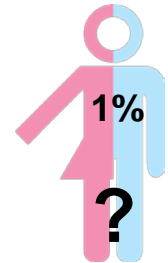
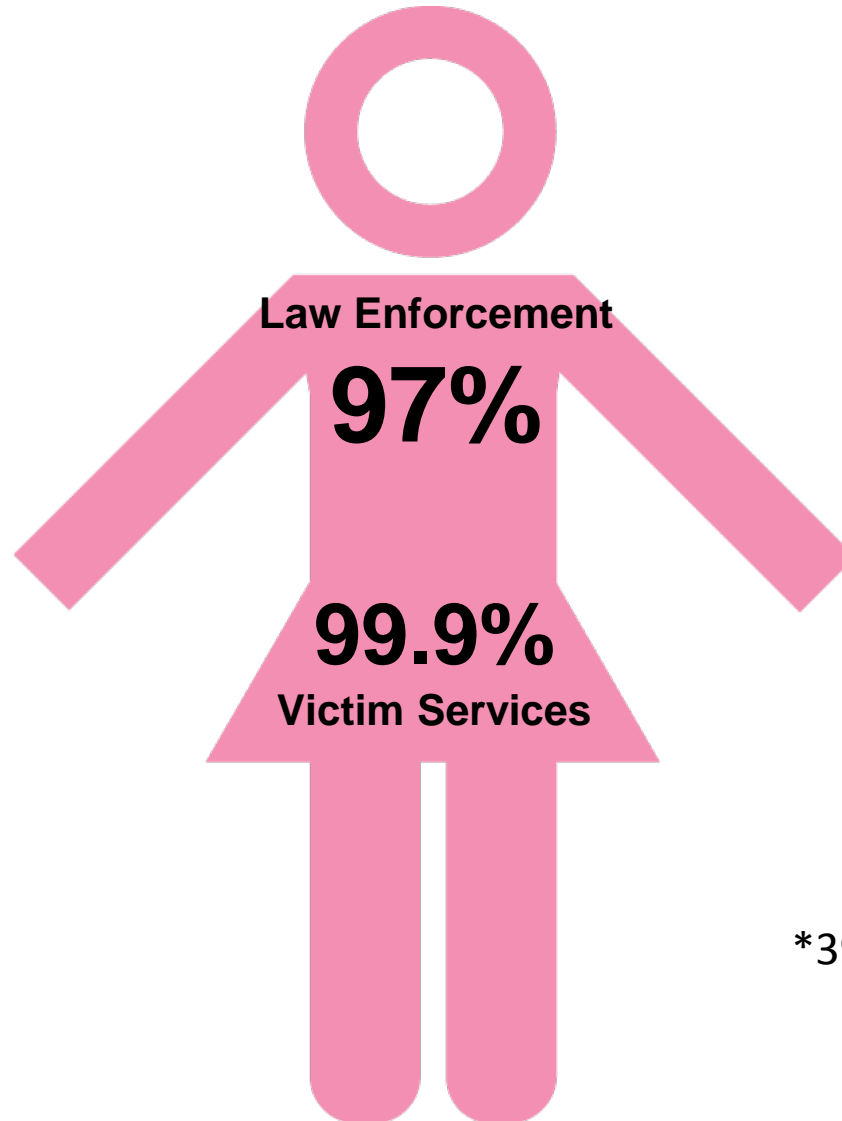
- Trolley and bus stops
- House parties
- Neighborhood parks near schools
- Alternative high schools
- Open field in National City
- El Cajon Blvd
- Social media
- Tattoo parlors
- Churches
- Malls



# Gender of Victims/Survivors



**MALE**



**LGBTQ+**

\*39 labor trafficking cases,  
69% female  
31% male.

# Average Age of Entry into Sex Trafficking 16



# Ethnicity and Nationality

Country Of Origin	Percentage
----------------------	------------

United States:	80%
----------------	-----

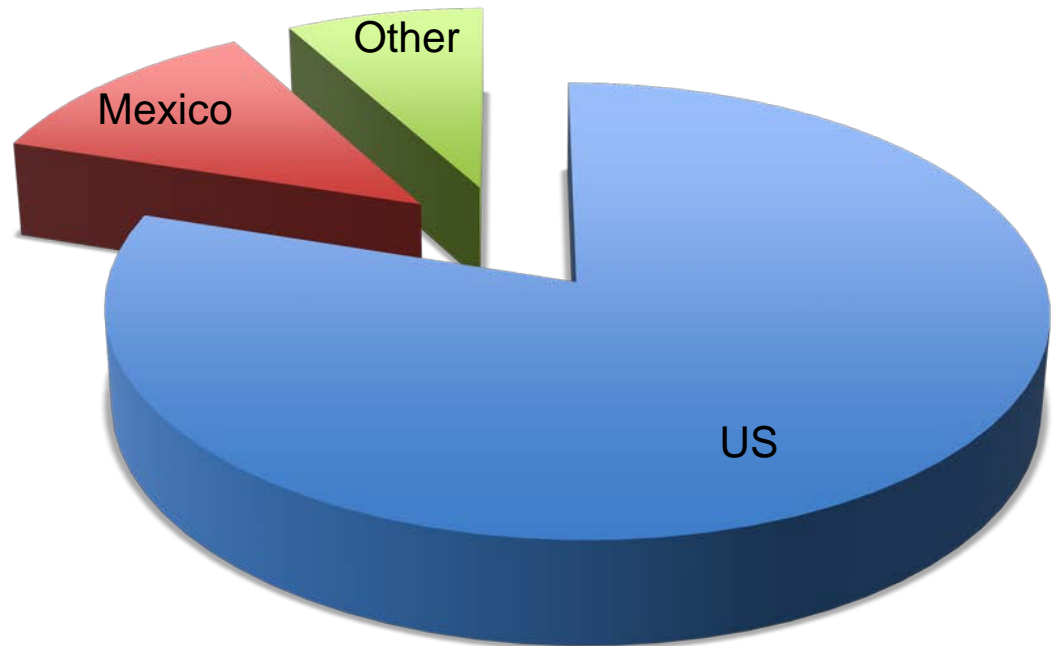
Mexico:	12%
---------	-----

Other:	8%
--------	----

Including:  
Taiwan, Russia,  
China, Korea  
Philippines,  
Honduras,  
Germany,  
Puerto Rico,  
Colombia,  
Cameroon

80% of sex-trafficking victim/survivors  
are **domestically trafficked**

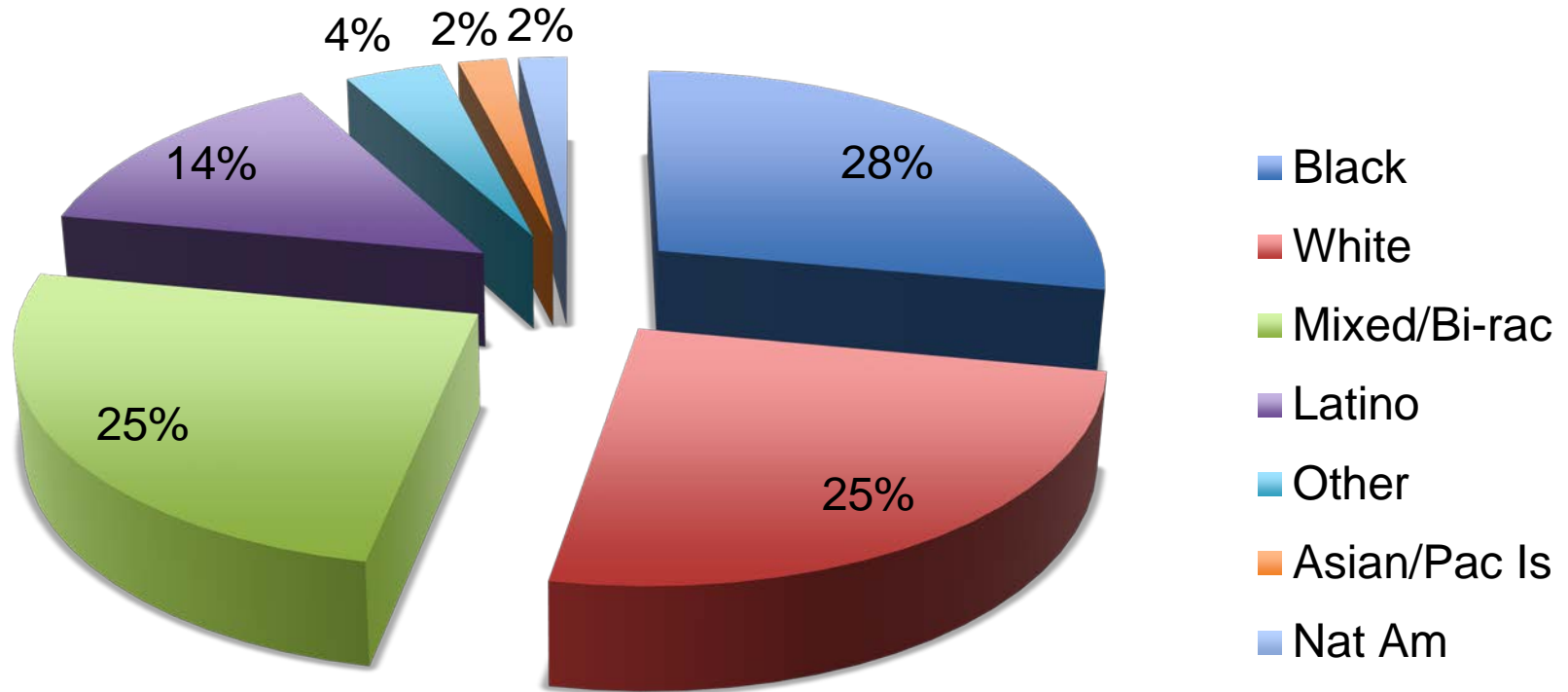
**20% are foreign born**



# Ethnicity of Survivors

The majority are Black, White and mixed ethnicity

## Ethnicity of Survivors





# Particularly vulnerable populations

- 55% had experienced **homelessness**
- 28% had been in the **Foster Care system**

*"So many people are doing it, everybody and their mom is doing it, and the money is too good and too easy and too guaranteed. It's really not hard to turn any female out. If she hasn't done it, it wouldn't be hard to turn her out once she'd see how good and easy the money was. "*

~ Field Interview, 2015



# Thank You

**Dr. Ami C. Carpenter**  
University of San Diego

**Dr. Jamie Gates**  
Point Loma Nazarene University

**National Institute of Justice**

Award 2012-R2-CA-0028, PI: Ami Carpenter, Proposal #F12096

U.S. Department of Justice | 810 Seventh Street, NW | Washington, DC 20531

*“Measuring the Scope and Nature of Gang Involved Sex Trafficking  
In the San Diego – Tijuana Region”*