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## Section 6 – School data

This section covers school suspension data and the perceptions and opinions of school personnel in Tacoma.

### SCHOOL STAFF SURVEY

Due to the teacher strike that occurred in September 2018, we were unable to conduct a thorough school staff survey in Tacoma Public Schools. However, 34 education professionals voluntarily responded to an online school survey through Tacoma Public Schools and Teach for America, and the results are posted below.

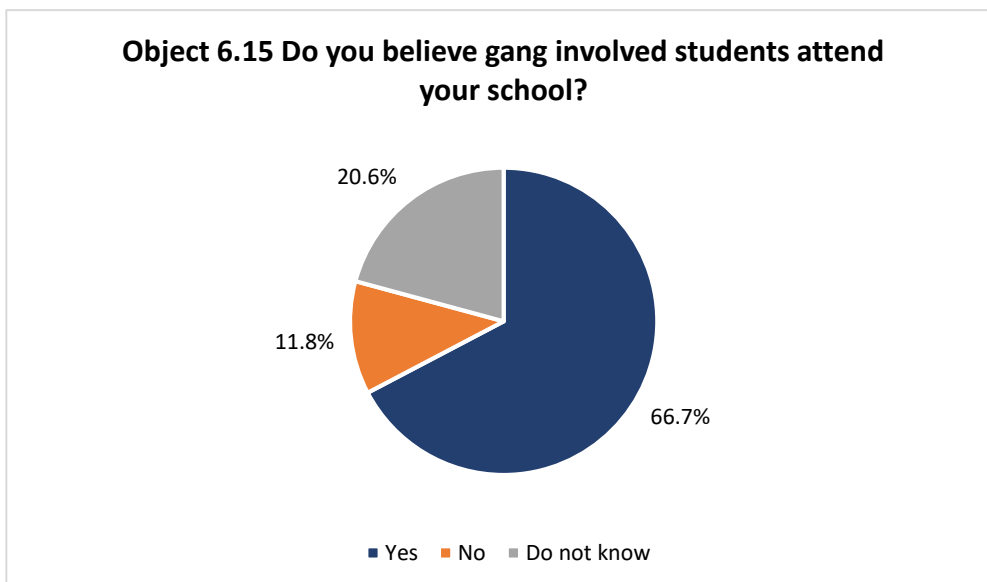
Personnel from the following schools participated in the voluntary survey:

- Larchmont Elementary
- Washington Elementary
- Lincoln High School
- McCarver Elementary School
- Central Administration
- Gray Middle School
- Sherman Elementary
- Bryant Montessori School
- Transportation Department, TPS
- Foss High School
- Oakland High School
- Birney Elementary
- Wilson High School
- Whittier Elementary
- Jason Lee Middle School
- Truman Middle School
- Wainwright Intermediate

School personnel included transportation personnel, teachers, administrators and safety/security personnel.

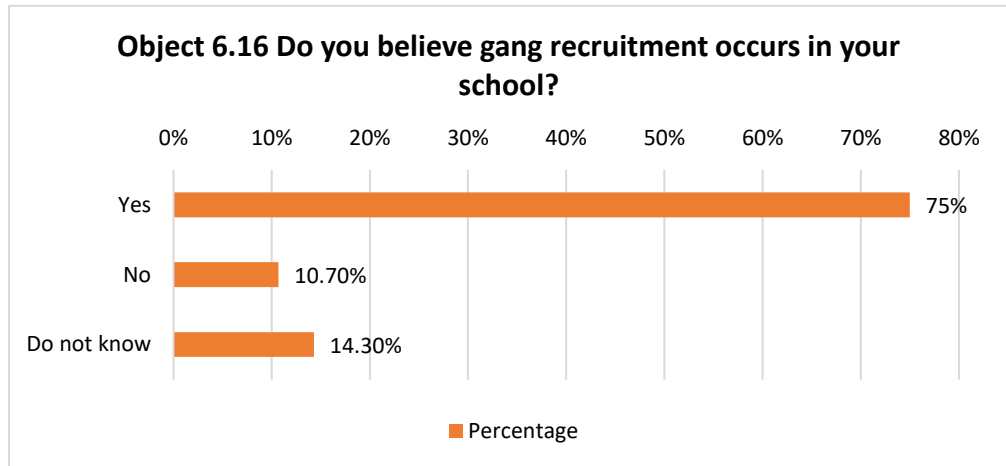
#### Question: Do you believe that gang-involved students attend your school?

Two-thirds of respondents (66.7%) reported that they believe that gang-involved students attend their school. One in ten respondents (11.8%) reported that they do not believe gang-involved students attend their school. One in five respondents (20.6%) reported that they do not know.



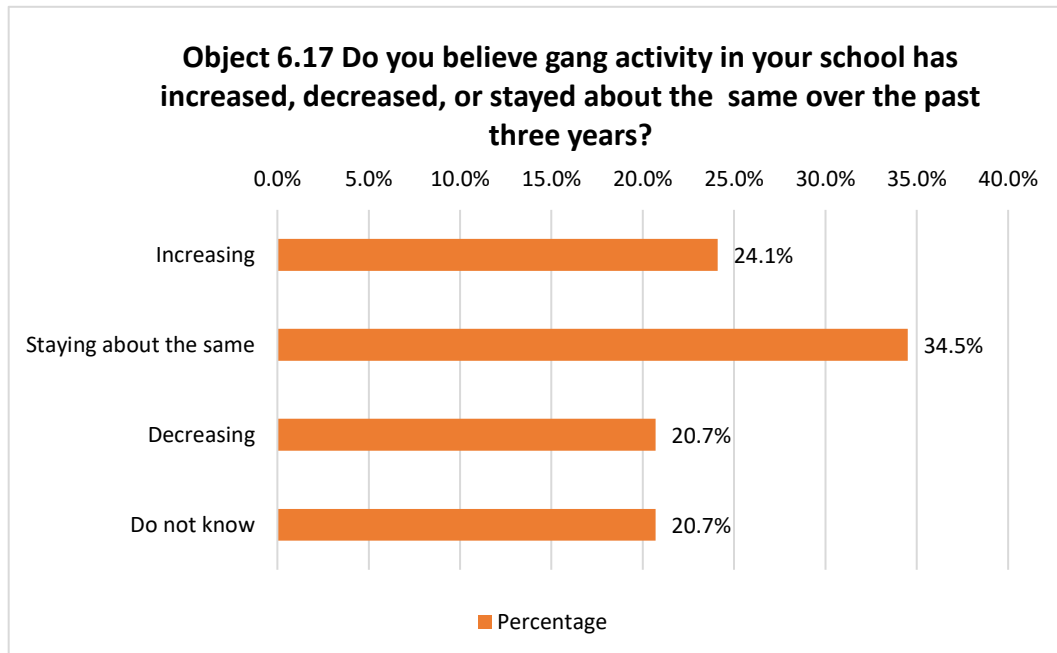
**Question: Do you believe that gang recruitment is occurring in your school?**

Three-fourths of respondents (75%) reported that they believe that gang recruitment occurs in their school. One in ten respondents (10.7%) reported that they do not believe gang recruitment is occurring in their school and 14.3% of respondents stated that they do not know.



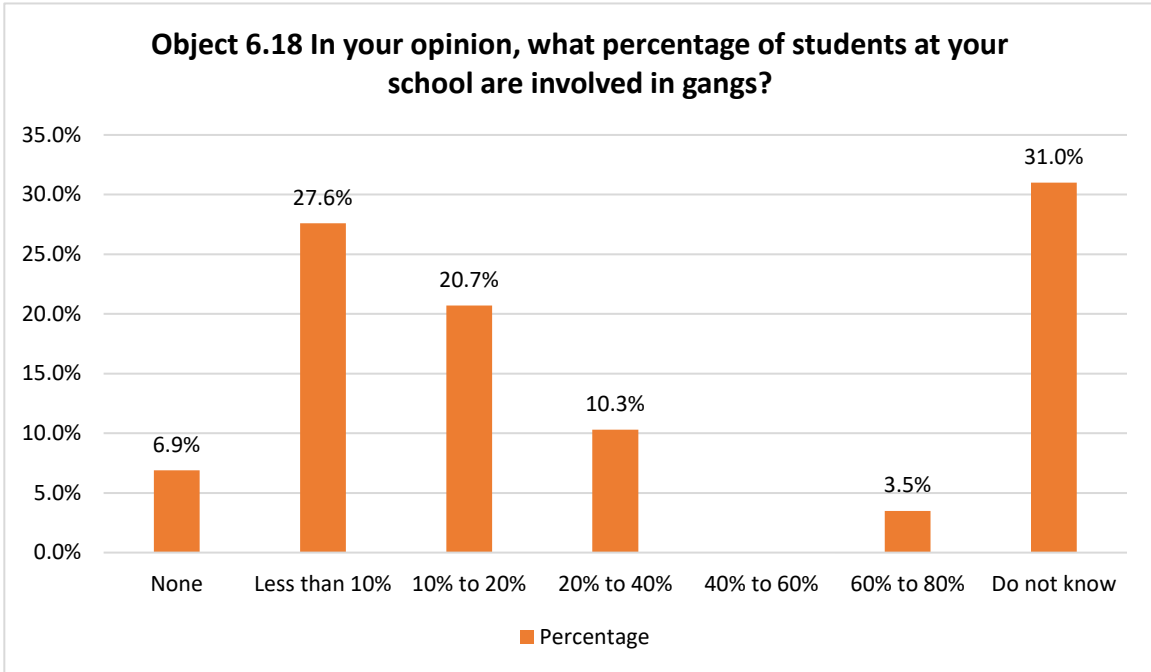
**Question: Do you believe gang activity in your school is increasing, decreasing or staying about the same?**

About one third of respondents (34.5%) reported that gang activity is staying about the same in their school. About one fourth of respondents (24.1%) noted that gang activity is increasing and one in five (20.7%) reported that it is decreasing. One in five respondents (20.7%) also stated that they do not know whether gang activity is increasing or decreasing at their school.



**Question: In your opinion, what percentage of students at your school are involved in gangs?**

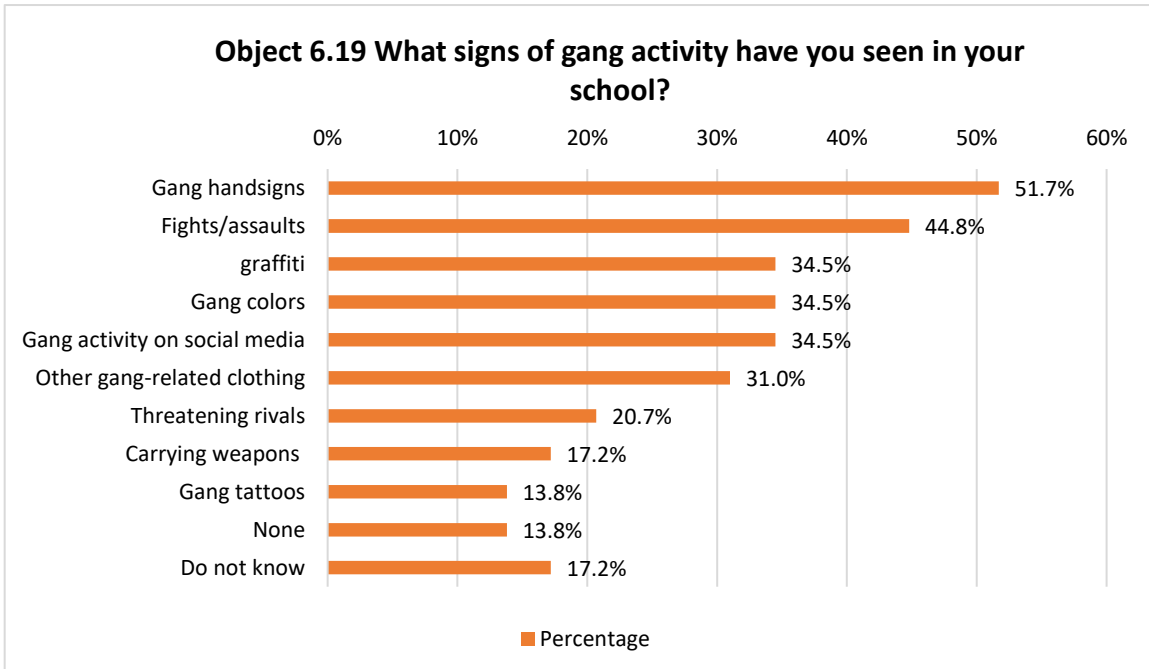
A little less than half (48.3%) of respondents reported that up to 20% of the students in their school are involved in gangs. One third of respondents stated that they do not know what percentage of students in their school are involved in gangs. One in ten respondents noted that 20% to 40% of students in their school are involved in gangs.



**Question: What signs of gang activity do you see in your school?**

School personnel were provided with a list of possible gang identifiers and could also write in a custom response. They could select all applicable identifiers that applied.

The most common response by school personnel was gang hand signs (51.7%), followed by fights/assaults (44.8%) and graffiti (34.5%), gang colors (34.5%) and gang activity on social media (34.5%). One in five respondents (20.7%) reported that they had observed gang members threatening rivals, and a similar percentage reported seeing gang members carrying weapons at school (17.2%).



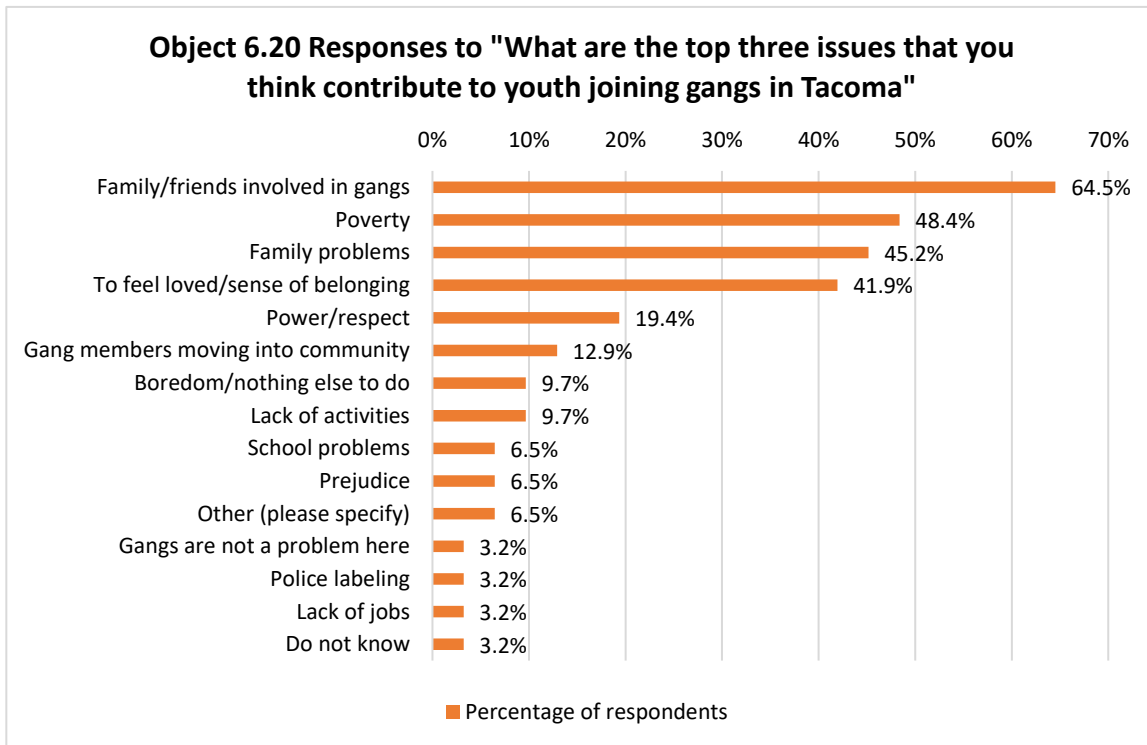
Custom responses to this question included:

- Older siblings/parents encouraging gang affiliation
- Gang slang such as cuz, “that’s on the set ni@@a”
- Catching students with weed
- They brag about their gang affiliation and activities

**Question: What are the top three issues that you think contribute to youth joining gangs in Tacoma?**

The top responses to this question by school personnel are:

- Family/friends involved in gangs (64.2%)
- Poverty (48.4%)
- Family problems (45.2%)
- To feel loved/sense of belonging (41.9%)



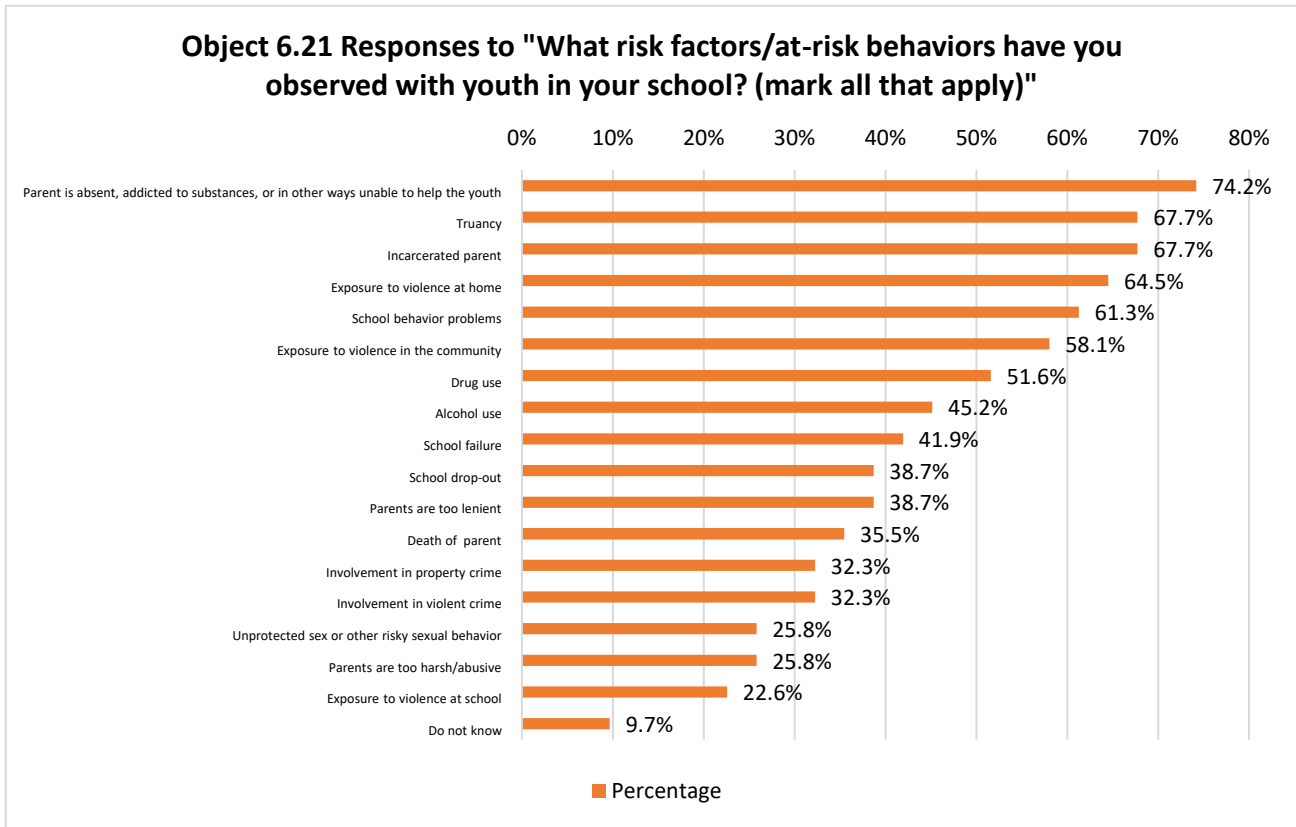
Other custom responses to this question include:

- Not enough funding for after school and athletic activities. Bad coaching and adult involvement.
- Intimidation

**Question: What risk factors/at-risk behaviors have you observed with youth in your school?**

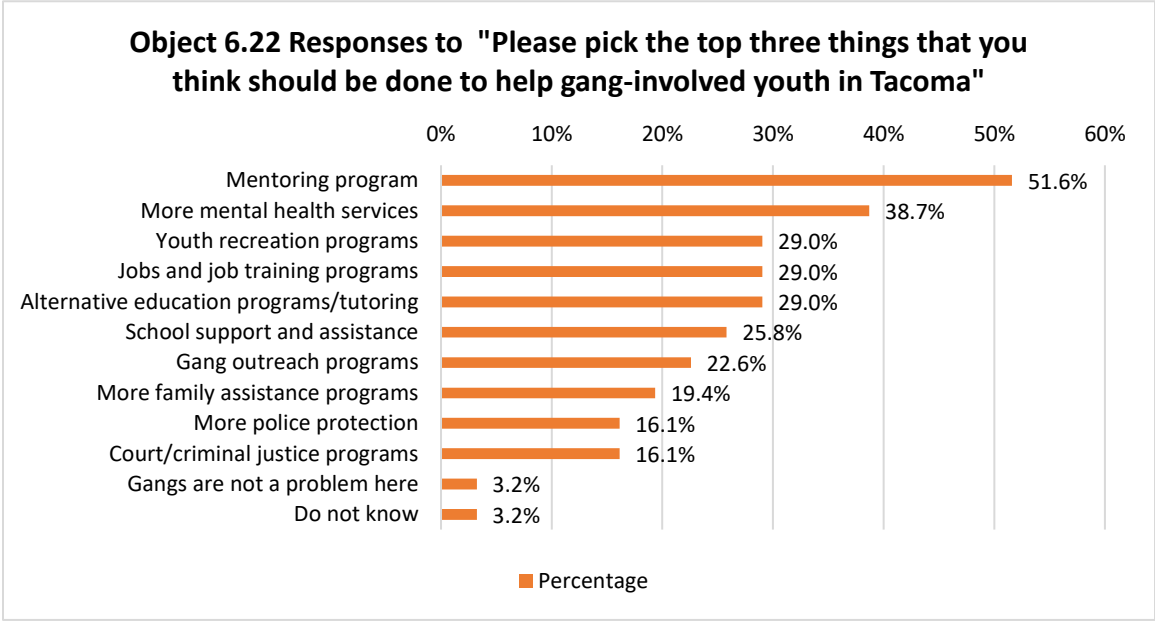
More than three fourths of respondents (74.2%) reported that youth in their school have parents who are absent, addicted to substances or in other ways unable to supervise their children. More than two thirds (67.7%) of respondents reported that students at their school are truant or have an incarcerated parent. Almost two-thirds of respondents (64.5%) reported that students are exposed

to violence at home. More than half of respondents reported that students at their school have behavior problems (61.3%), exposure to violence in the community (58.1%), and drug use (51.6%).



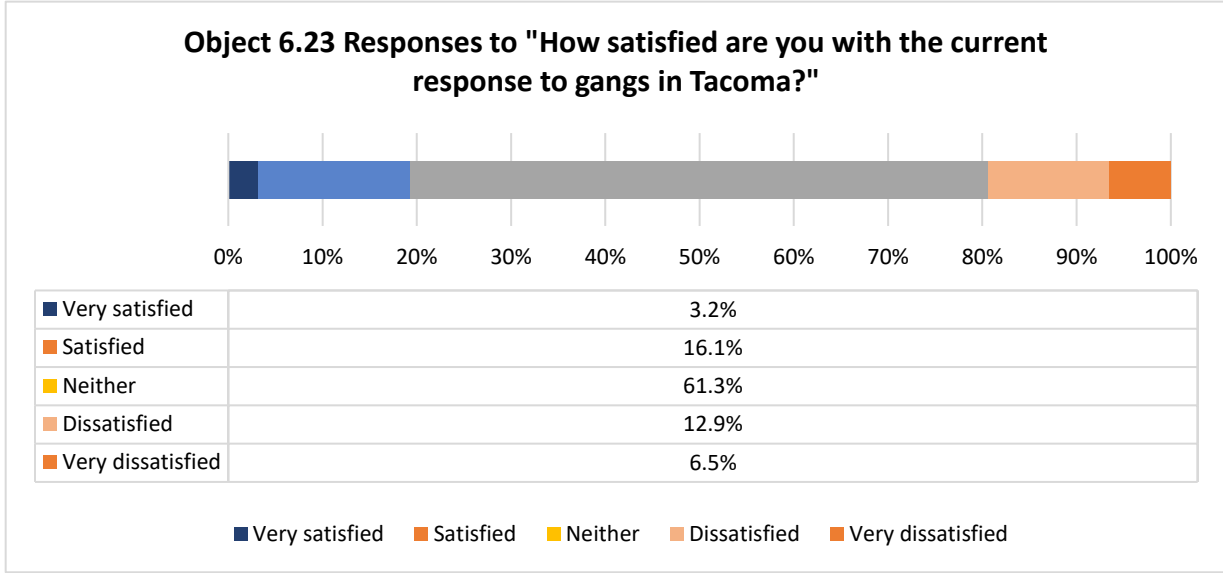
**Question: Please pick the top three things that you think should be done to help gang-involved youth in Tacoma**

Top responses to this question included mentoring programs (51.6%), more mental health services (38.7%), youth recreation programs (29%), jobs and job training programs (29%) and alternative education programs (29%).



**Question: How satisfied are you with the current response to gangs in Tacoma?**

Many respondents (61.3%) reported that they are neither satisfied or dissatisfied with the current response. One in five respondents (19.3%) reported that they are either satisfied or very satisfied and a similar percentage (19.4%) reported that they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

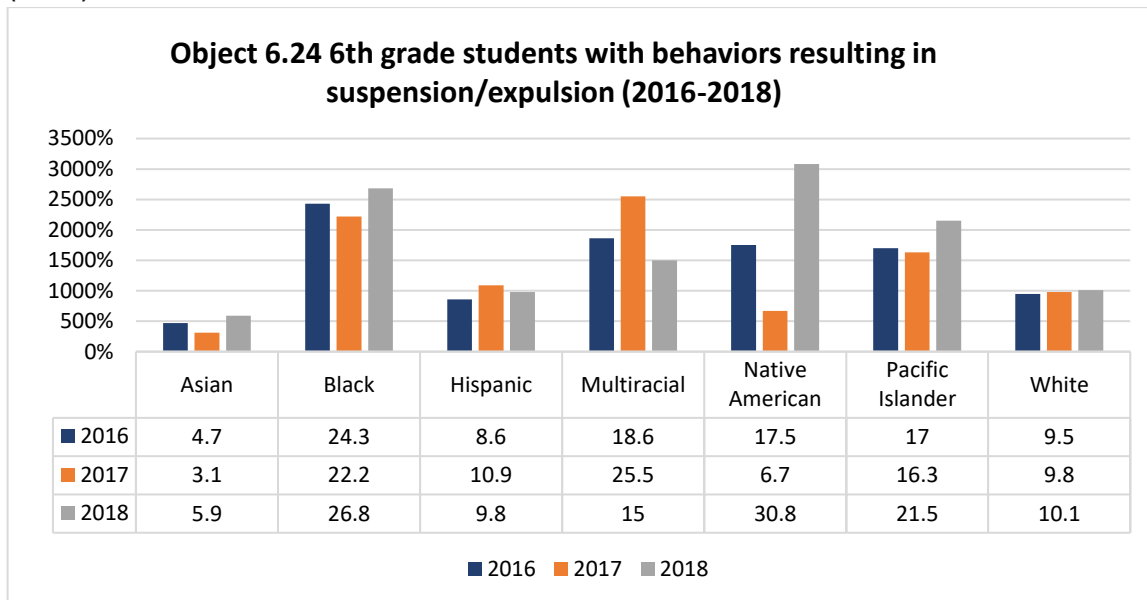


**SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS**

School suspensions/expulsions are reported annually by Tacoma Public Schools. Data reported in this section is from Tacoma Public Schools benchmark reporting for the district’s strategic plan, goal 4 (Tacoma Public Schools, 2018, <https://www.tacomaschools.org/strategic-plan/Pages/goal-4-safety.aspx>). School suspensions and expulsions are an important risk factor that can increase the likelihood of a youth’s future involvement in gangs. The National Gang Center notes:

*Suspensions and expulsions from school often mean that students are removed from adult supervision and, in turn, are exposed to greater association with delinquent peers, which can increase delinquency (Hemphill, Toumborou, Herrenkohl, et al., 2006). Delinquency involvement can increase gang membership and court referral (Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993; Hill et al., 1999; Thornberry et al., 2003) (National Gang Center, nd).*

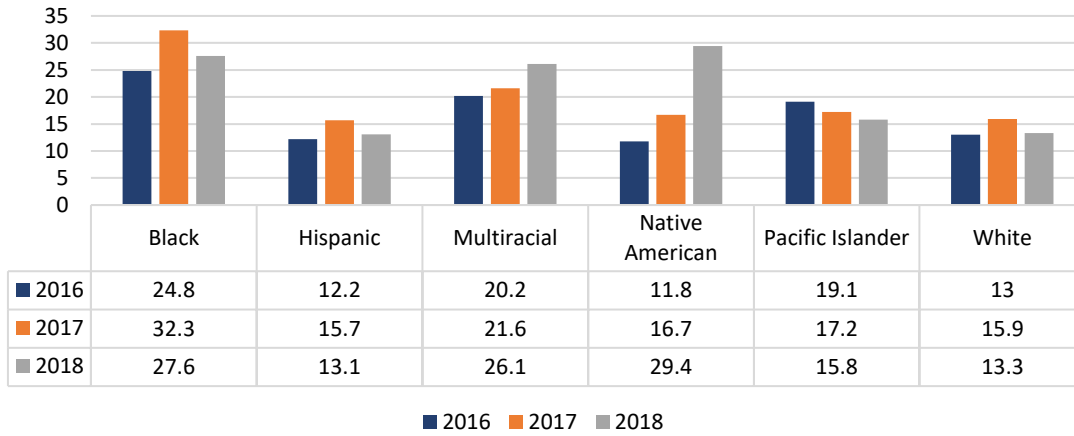
The percentage of students with behaviors resulting in suspension/expulsion by grade and race are reported in this section, and graphics with suspensions by school are found in Appendix B. On average, during 2017-18, black and Pacific Islander students were suspended at a rate that is two to 2.5 times higher than the rate of suspensions for white or Hispanic students. Asian students have on average the lowest rate of suspensions during all three years and for all four grades. More than one-fourth of all black (26.8%) and one fifth of all Pacific Islander (21.5%) 6<sup>th</sup> graders were suspended or expelled during 2018. This represents an increase over the three-year period from school year 2015-16 to school year 2017-18 for both population groups. In contrast, 10.1% of white 6<sup>th</sup> graders and 9.8% of Hispanic 6<sup>th</sup> graders were suspended or expelled during 2018. The highest rate of suspension during 2018 was for Native American 6<sup>th</sup> graders (30.8%) and the lowest rate of suspension was for Asian 6<sup>th</sup> graders (5.9%).



Source: Tacoma Public Schools, 2018

The highest rates of suspension/expulsion during 2018 for 8<sup>th</sup> graders were for Native American students (29.4%), black students (27.6%) and multiracial students (26.1%). These rates were 2 to 2.5 times higher than the rate of suspensions/expulsions for white 8<sup>th</sup> graders (13.3%). The rate of suspensions/expulsions for Pacific Islanders 8<sup>th</sup> graders was 41.4% higher than for white 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The lowest rates of suspension/expulsions were for Asians ( ) and Hispanic students (13.1%).

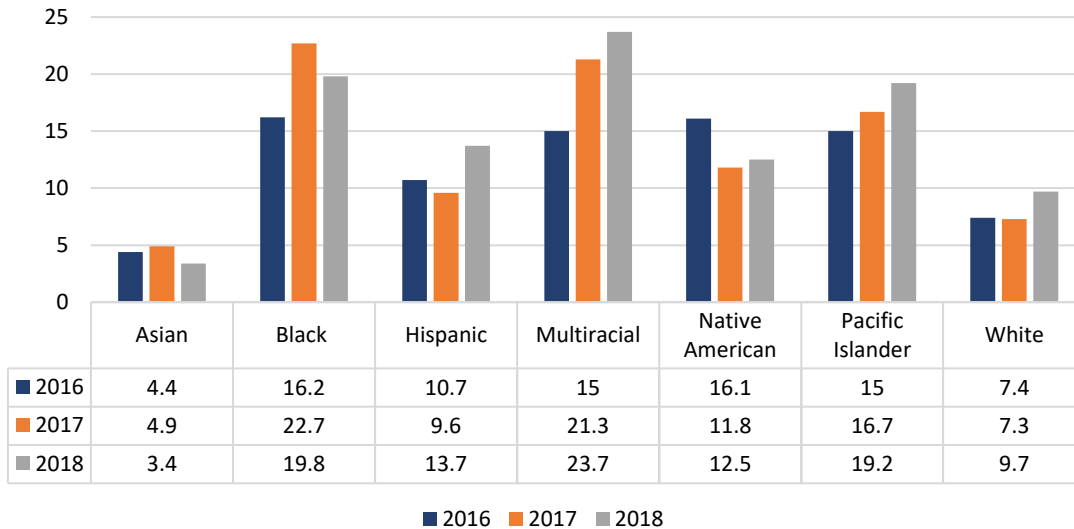
**Object 6.25 8th grade students with behaviors resulting in suspension/expulsion (2016-2018)**



Source: Tacoma Public Schools, 2018

Suspensions for black/African American students decreased by 23.8% between 2017 and 2018. However, overall, school suspensions for African American students increased from 24.8% in 2016 to 27.6% in 2018. Native Americans (29.4%) were the most likely, per capita, to be suspended or expelled during 2018.

**Object 6.26 9th grade students with behaviors resulting in suspension/expulsion (2016-2018)**

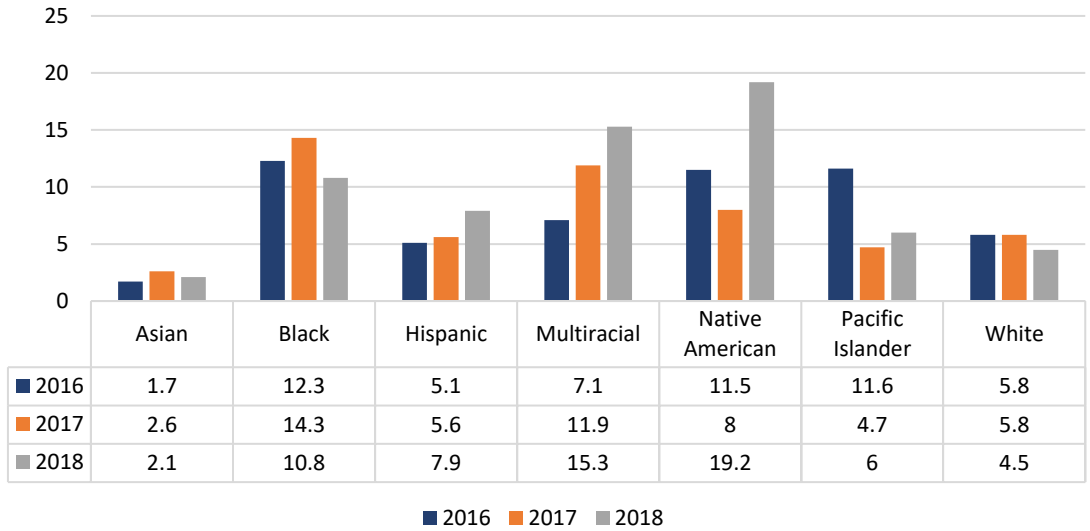


Source: Tacoma Public Schools, 2018

One in five (19.8%) of black/African American students and 19.2% of Pacific Islander students were suspended or expelled in 9<sup>th</sup> grade during 2018. The highest rate of suspension/expulsion for 9<sup>th</sup> graders was for multiracial students (23.7%). One in ten white students were suspended/expelled during 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2018.



**Object 6.23 12th grade students with behaviors resulting in suspension/expulsion (2016-2018)**



Source: Tacoma Public Schools, 2018

Suspension rates for 12<sup>th</sup> graders were significantly lower for most racial/ethnic groups except Native Americans. One in five Native Americans was suspended/expelled in 2019.