

Project PAR
Prostitution Abatement/Rehabilitation



Project Abstract

Fresno Police Department
Fresno California

Project P.A.R.
Prostitution Abatement and Rehabilitation First Offender Program

The Fresno Police Department's Central Policing District serves an ethnically diverse community that is mostly medium to lower income. The District's Commander wanted the community to nominate those issues that most negatively affected their quality of life. Neighborhood and business meetings were convened and overwhelmingly the consensus was that street prostitution, and the blight and dangers created by it, was their number one problem and concern.

Female prostitutes and their male customers frequent four main thoroughfares within central Fresno. Crime data, patrol officer observations and community feedback confirmed prostitution as a problem. Some of the greatest harm and concern was to children who observed open sex acts and found used condoms and discarded hypodermic needles.

The traditional model of policing provided few responses to prostitution besides arrest of either male and/or female violator. Interviews with male and female offenders revealed many reasons why they engaged in prostitution activity. This information, coupled with information from public and private social service agencies led to the formation of a First Offender diversion program modeled after a similar effort in San Francisco. A public/private partnership developed that provided direction and synergy for a new response to the problems associated with prostitution.

The First Offender Program provides an opportunity for men arrested the first time for prostitution related offences to attend a one day class to learn about the impact of their behavior on the community, the prostitute and themselves. They pay a \$500.00 fee which

covers the cost of the class and the fee also helps defray enforcement costs to tax payers. Program revenues will also be used for female offender prostitution programs in the near future. Increased traditional street enforcement is also a component of the program.

The impact of the First Offender Program is both effective and positive as shown through community satisfaction surveys, analysis of calls for service, offender interviews and evaluations, and observations from patrol officers, business owners and neighborhood residents. The community feels less troubled and impacted by prostitution and the male offender is made more accountable and is shouldering a greater portion of the financial costs of their behavior. First offenders are given both an educational experience for self improvement and a diversionary opportunity which allows them to avoid the Criminal Justice System and potentially remove an arrest from their record.

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Project Document

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SCANNING:

Prostitution activities contribute to an increase in blight and an increase in both incidents of crime and fear of crime. The impact of prostitution is especially felt in neighborhoods and the business districts of the community. This is a drain on law enforcement resources.

Most prostitutes need to support drug and alcohol addictions. Many have deficiencies in education and job skills which contribute to their unwillingness and/or inability to seek legitimate employment. Some have mental or social problems, and feel this is the only way they can earn money. Others are placed on the streets by pimps (sometimes called boyfriends). When pimps are involved, the prostitutes receive little or no money from their efforts and instead receive beatings and other physical abuse.

Prostitutes tend to continue to work even after numerous police contacts and arrests. Law enforcement's traditional efforts to stop this activity generates many outstanding warrants and case load back logs in the courts. The prostitutes are then often back out on the streets before police reports are completed.

This problem became a major concern to the police department through calls for service and community outrage expressed at Neighborhood Watch meetings in central Fresno. The citizens were concerned with the increased traffic around their homes. They stated their children were finding condoms and needles left behind from the prostitutes and their "Johns." All this contributed to reducing the quality of life for the neighborhood and

businesses in and around the areas of prostitution.

Due to this ominous and seemingly omnipresent prostitution problem in central Fresno, the Central Policing District's Problem Oriented Policing Team began a comprehensive project in an attempt to abate this escalating nuisance;

ANALYSIS:

In 1982, Fresno's street prostitution problem had been mostly confined to one location within the city. An enforcement "crackdown", however, moved it to central Fresno where it stayed, flourished and spread to four main thoroughfares. Street level prostitution and street level drug use became synonymous issues. Blight and crime that accompanied this was a community concern voiced to both the Police Department and City Hall. Prostitution problems gravitated toward lower socioeconomic residential and business locations. The areas that we designated as target zones for our project in central Fresno were:

- Blackstone Avenue, between Belmont Avenue and Shields Avenue
- Parkway Drive, between Belmont Avenue and Olive Avenue
- Motel Drive, between Olive Avenue and McKinley Avenue
- Belmont Avenue, between Parkway Avenue and 5th Street

Since the escalation of street prostitution, multiple attempts had been made through traditional law enforcement tactics to address the prostitution problem and other related crimes. The tactics included, concentrated patrol and enforcement, inconsistent and infrequent "John" operations (arresting male customers) and public exposure of violators

through the media. These methods were labor intensive, not cost effective and only short term solutions that did not address root causes of the problem.

In 1996, the Central District's Problem Oriented Policing Team began to apply a number of nontraditional tactics to street prostitution. We used decoy cameras at problem locations and signs which warned that the area was under surveillance. Streets were posted, "No Stopping" to prevent "Johns" from stopping their cars to pick up prostitutes. A legal process known as S.O.A.P. (Stay Ot of Areas of Prostitution) Probation was implemented. S.O.A.P. is a condition of probation placed by the courts on those convicted of prostitution related crimes, both male and female. The condition restricts convicted offenders from loitering in areas defined by the courts as high prostitution areas.

In the past, officers from the Central Problem Oriented Policing Team had attempted to use restraining orders against prostitutes. These were not only time consuming, but also were not upheld by our local courts. Concentrated patrol and enforcement worked while officers remained in the areas, but other duties often took them elsewhere. The decoy cameras were usually overlooked by offenders and went unnoticed. Street posting allowed officers to stop suspected "Johns" who stopped in the roadway to contact prostitutes, however, officers often did not have time to linger for violations. S.O.A.P. Probation was being placed on convicted prostitutes, but the distribution network for this information was awkward and checking probation status was not easy. The "John" operations made an impact on the problem, but they were labor intensive and had to be conducted frequently. At one point the media published the names of men arrested for solicitation, and even showed uncensored footage of arrests. Unfortunately many of the prostitutes and "Johns" were from out of town and local news coverage rarely impacted them.

A variety of methods were used to gather information for our problem analysis. They included running police calls for service within the areas heavily impacted by prostitution, observations from patrol officers, interviewing residents and business owners through surveys and attending community meetings. We interviewed outreach workers and community groups working with prostitutes, as well as prostitutes themselves. Our goal was to gain a deeper understanding of the issues affecting them and to learn what was needed to address their rehabilitation. A door to door survey was also administered to residents and businesses in our target areas.

Past enforcement of prostitution often involved confrontations with groups who conducted health assessment and AIDS awareness outreach with prostitutes. Some officers felt that these groups were encouraging prostitution by handing out condoms and otherwise catering to their personal needs. We found that by working together with these and other groups, we were able to learn helpful information about prostitution and what perpetuates it.

Prostitution is far from being the victimless crime that some would like to believe. Many are adversely affected, including the community, police resources and the criminal justice system. Offenders include both the prostitutes and male customer or "John." Most prostitutes are controlled by a pimp, or are addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. The male customers come from all walks of life and can have many dysfunctional issues.

When researching root issues, we learned that there were many factors that kept prostitutes on the streets. These issues often result in social isolation, substance abuse, self esteem deficiencies and an overall inability to function in mainstream society. We learned that many women had been introduced to prostitution at an early age by pimps and/or had

been victims of repeated sexual abuse. Few engaged in prostitution to merely make fast money.

Expedient sexual gratification without commitment, marital relationship problems and sexual perversions are only a few of the reasons why the male customer seeks out a prostitute. Most male customers give little thought to the consequences of prostitution. For twenty dollars and a few minutes, a man visiting a prostitute can lose his family and health.

"Johns" and prostitutes do not consider the economic impact on the community. Businesses and neighborhoods alike were badly impacted by loitering street prostitutes. We found that people were less likely to patronize a business, or buy a home in an area frequented by prostitutes. Tourists will not stay at the motels in these areas due to blight and fear of crime, as well as the annoyance of being accosted by prostitutes looking for business. In residential communities, families often had lewd acts occurring in front of their homes as well as condoms and drug paraphernalia scattered about for children to find. Traffic congestion increased because "Johns" were cruising for prostitutes.

Fresno is the urban hub of Fresno County. Men come from all parts of the county to find a prostitute in our city. Prostitutes know that Fresno County jails will not keep them due to overcrowding. Traditionally, prostitutes would receive only a citation in the street by a police officer, or be cited at the jail within an hour of booking.

There were no comprehensive rehabilitation programs for prostitutes existing in Fresno, or educational programs for their male customers. Several community groups were working independently to do outreach to help prostitutes but none of these efforts were coordinated. No one was working with the men.

During 1997 the Fresno City Attorney handled approximately 800 court cases

involving prostitution. Most of the cases were for violations of Fresno Municipal Code Section 8-107, which prohibits loitering for the purposes of prostitution and/or soliciting acts of prostitution. In 1997, the Fresno County District Attorneys Office handled approximately 200 prostitution cases submitted by the Fresno Police Department for violations of the state law prohibiting prostitution and/or solicitation. Only one Assistant City Attorney was dividing his time as Police Department Legal Advisor and prosecuting prostitution related Municipal Code violations. More and more of his time was occupied with prostitution matters and less was available for his other duties.

We decided upon a combination of options to address prostitution. They included an improved and more effective use of S.O.A.P. probation, more frequent and more efficient "John" operations, the formation of a diversion programs, and collaborating with the courts for stiffer sentencing. Intensified officer training of S.O.A.P. procedures and a S.O.A.P. probationers' list was established and more widely distributed monthly. It was updated monthly by the legal advisor.

Diversion and outreach programs had never before been considered by the Police Department as a long term problem solving tool. One obstacle seemed to be how to get "Johns" and prostitutes into programs. What would make them choose such a program and what incentives would be both effective and appropriate? The Court's punishment for prostitution related crimes varied from judge to judge. Most judges believed if they decreed sentences of more than a few days, the jail would release the defendants due to over crowding. As a result, light sentencing became the norm.

Based on our analysis of the prostitution problem, we decided the most effective response would have to include community involvement and a public/private partnership of

both existing programs and programs we would have to form.

RESPONSE:

Community Leaders from several organizations were drawn together to work with the Central Problem Oriented Policing Team to develop this project. The collaboration included:

- The Fresno Police Department, Central District Problem Oriented Policing Team
- The Central California AIDS Foundation/ Central Valley AIDS Team
- California School of Professional Psychology
- Fresno County District Attorneys Office
- Fresno County Public Defenders Office
- Eleventh Hour Rehabilitation Program
- National Organization for Women
- Fresno County Detention Facility
- Fresno County Courts

Our program needed to address the issues of both the prostitute and the male customer. We developed goals and a mission statement to outline our efforts and stay focused on our objectives. The goals which were as follows:

- Reduce prostitution related calls for service by 20% from 1998 to 1999.
- Develop a program to educate the "Johns" about the hazards and risks of prostitution by July 1,1998
- Provide a rehabilitation program for women involved in prostitution from revenues developed from the First Offender Program by Jan.1,1999.
- Increase the quality of life for the residents and businesses in the target area.

Our Mission Statement simply read:

Our collaborative mission is to reduce prostitution offenses, lewd public sex acts and their negative consequences on the community through the development of correctional efforts by offering without prejudice support, education and opportunities for new life.

The committee knew there were many existing social programs in our community to address most of the needs of persons participating in prostitution. Our goal was to bring these existing programs together under one umbrella and develop a response that reflected our mission statement.

Our efforts resulted in two programs, the first of which addresses "First Offenders." It is modeled after an existing program in San Francisco originated and developed by Norma Hotaling, Director of SAGE, Standing Against Global Exploitation and Lieutenant Dutto of the San Francisco Police Department.

As the name implies, only male customers caught violating prostitution related offenses for the first time are eligible for this "First Offender Program." Its primary components are enforcement and diversion for those who qualify. This program provides an alternative to the traditions of merely arresting, jailing, fining, and sentencing to community service convicted male customers.

The First Offender program allows persons charged with 647(b) of the penal code (soliciting or agreeing to the act of prostitution) and 8-107 of the Fresno Municipal Code (loitering for the purpose of prostitution), who have had limited and less serious criminal contact, to bypass the court system by participating in a one-day course. One of the most

attractive components and incentives for participation in the First Offender Program is the participants' diversion from the Criminal Justice System. If they do not commit another prostitution related offense within a year of their initial arrest, they become eligible to have their arrest reduced to a detention. This is an important distinction in California law. If a participant re-offends within one year, they are not eligible for the program again and both of their arrests (original and re-offense) are forwarded for prosecution.

Some objectives of the program were to reduce the number of arraignments in Fresno County Municipal Court, reduce the influx of bench warrants being issued on these cases, and create an alternative for those who may learn from a mistake in judgement. The First Offender Program one day class curriculum consists of six sessions as follows:

- Attendees first learn "Prostitution Laws and Street Facts". The legal risks and consequences of continued criminal conduct are discussed by an Assistant District Attorney and a member of the Fresno Police Department.
- Session two is a presentation given by a member of the Central California Aids Foundation/Central Valley Aids Team about the risks and prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Session Three is a testimonial from former prostitutes about prostitution, their personal story of survival and rehabilitation and the stark realities of the sex industry. Their presentation includes childhood risk factors, violence, drugs and reintegration into society.
- Session Four is titled 'Pimp Dynamics'. This session educates attendees about the tactics that pimps use to draw young girls into prostitution and bring attention to the worldwide exploitation and enslavement of women and girls through prostitution.

- Session Five is given by community members and business owners who are impacted by the blight and crime caused by prostitution and the overall harm to their quality of life and economic survival.
- Session Six is presented by members of the California School of Professional Psychology and discusses sex addiction, its definition and its management. Class members are also given resource information for professional follow-up.

The participants are asked to give an evaluation of the program at the end of the day. Much background work was necessary to make the First Offender Program a reality. It had to be both attractive to participants and financially feasible. It was decided that the program would mimic the San Francisco model and require participants to pay a \$500.00 fee to both reap the benefits of the class and shoulder the cost. The fee is a bargain compared to legal costs. The Fresno City Attorney's Office drafted a contract with the Central Valley AIDS Team to facilitate the First Offender Prostitution class curriculum and manage the money generated from the project. It was also crucial that we gain approval and buy-in from both the local Superior and Municipal Courts. We met with all judges affected by the program and received their cooperation and endorsement.

The program was also endorsed by Fresno Police Chief Ed Winchester at which time a Department Standing Order was developed to educate and ensure Department-wide compliance to the program. Fresno Mayor Jim Patterson and the Fresno City Council also enthusiastically endorsed our new problem solving effort. The program was well received by the community and the media when we released it publicly in July, 1998. We stressed the long term problem solving strategy to reduce prostitution through both education and enforcement.

The first arrests for those eligible for the program began in August, 1998. The bulk of our operations were in the target locations previously mentioned. We continue using traditional methods to address prostitution through sting operations during which time we assess those arrested for eligibility for the First Offender Program. We now routinely train both line and newly hired Police Officers about the numerous tools available to them to enforce street level prostitution offenses.

ASSESSMENT:

Several methods were used to measure the results of this project. First we looked at those who have participated in the First Offender Program. To date we have made approximately two hundred arrests of men who have solicited for the purposes of prostitution or loitered for the purposes of prostitution. Of those arrested, eighty-nine (89) persons have elected to take the First Offender one day class. Of those who did not take the class, one half were not eligible due to past criminal histories and the other one half elected to take their case to court.

From those who took the class we reviewed participant evaluations to see how the information was useful to them. Their responses were as follows:

On a scale of 1 to 5, one being the lowest and five being the highest:

Overall useful information for the day:

- Ninety two percent (92%) rated the class as 4 or 5.

Prostitution Laws and Street Facts Session:

- Eighty nine percent (89%) rated this section as a 4 or 5.

HIV/STD Session:

- Eighty nine percent (89%) rated this section as a 4 or 5.

Women in Prostitution Session:

- Eighty seven (87%) rated this section as a 4 or 5.

Community Member Session:

- Seventy six (76%) rated this section as a 4 or 5.

Pimping Dynamics Session:

- Eighty two percent (82%) rated this section as a 4 or 5.

Sexual Addictions Session:

- Sixty eight percent (68%) rated this section as a 4 or 5.

When asked if they were going to change their behavior, we received a wide range of responses. Some stated that they are going to be 100% faithful in their relationship. A common sentiment expressed by one participant read that he used to laugh at prostitutes and did not see them as people, but after the class he saw them as people with feelings. When asked what they would tell a son or daughter about prostitution, we received statements like, "I would try to teach my daughter to respect herself and to understand that it may seem glamorous to her, but it really is not a good thing to get into." Although certainly not the norm, we did receive negative responses to the class. One participant wrote, "I now know how not to get caught." Another wrote, "I have learned nothing." To date we have not re-arrested anyone who has completed the First Offender Class.

Community satisfaction and improved feelings about quality of life were crucial objectives of our efforts. We used satisfaction surveys to measure our effectiveness in business districts and community feedback through the Central Districts Fresno Police and Neighborhood Watch Association to assess the community's feelings of safety and

improvement of overall quality of life.

We asked more than 90 businesses in our target locations to rate the prostitution problem from 1997 to 1999, on a scale from one to five (one the lowest concern and five the highest). We received the following overall results:

In 1997, fifty six percent (56%) rated prostitution as a 4 or 5 in their area. In 1998, forty seven percent (47%) rated prostitution as a 4 or 5 in their area. In the first four months of 1999, seventeen percent (17%) rated prostitution as a 4 or 5 in their area. The survey indicated a decreasing concern with prostitution.

Comments made by surveyed business owners or employees included, "We appreciate all the Police Department has done to decrease these (prostitution) problems. We have a lot of women customers to whom we wish to feel safe." and, "I really appreciate the improvement. I had many confrontations with the prostitutes and the pimps. It is much better. Keep up the good work."

Police Department Statistics showed a decrease in calls for service in targeted locations from 479 in 1997, as compared to 451 in 1998. The significance here is that our increased police presence, such as officer initiated contacts with both suspected prostitutes and customers, registers as a call for service. Therefore, overall calls for service from the community decreased and their perception of improvement and overall satisfaction with police efforts increased.

Both our patrol officers and community members tell us that the visible blight of prostitution has decreased. Neighborhood Watch meetings were once a solid voice of concern about prostitution and related issues. The problem is now second or third to traffic problems and code enforcement issues. Prostitutes themselves also tell us it is more difficult

to ply their trade because of the sting operations which target them and their customers.

Phase two of project PAR is well underway and is expected to be online by its target date of January 1, 1999. Phase two will provide services and an educational program to women who choose to leave prostitution. Funding is already projected to be in place from revenues generated from the First Offender Program.

AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION:

This project was begun at the line officer level and eventually implemented Department wide and applied throughout the City of Fresno. All five Policing District Problem Oriented Policing Teams within the Fresno Police Department's Field Operations Division have been trained in PAR procedures and philosophy. The San Francisco model of PAR was used as a guide to formulate and tailor our program. The program generates its own funding and no other funding has been dedicated to it beyond the existing Department budget.

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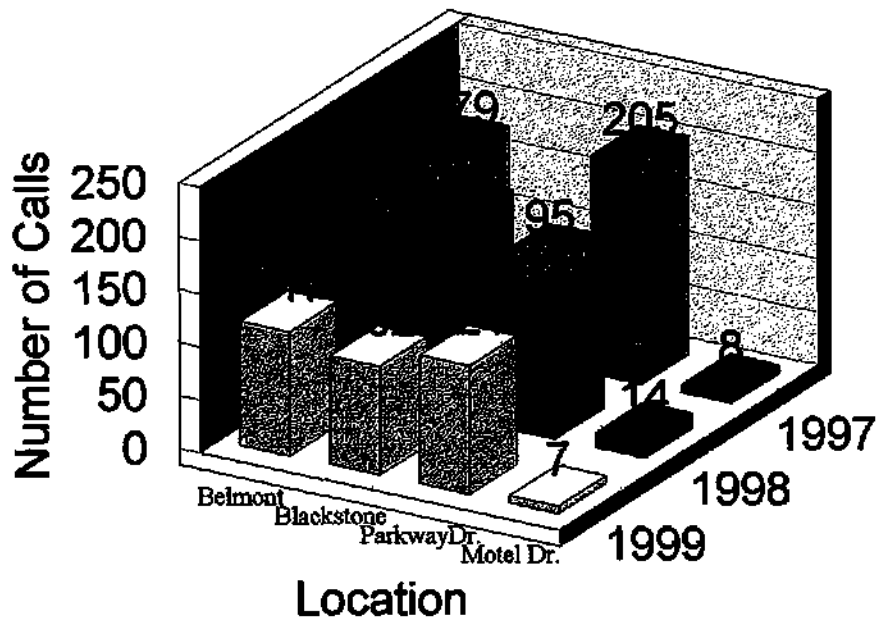
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Supplemental Information

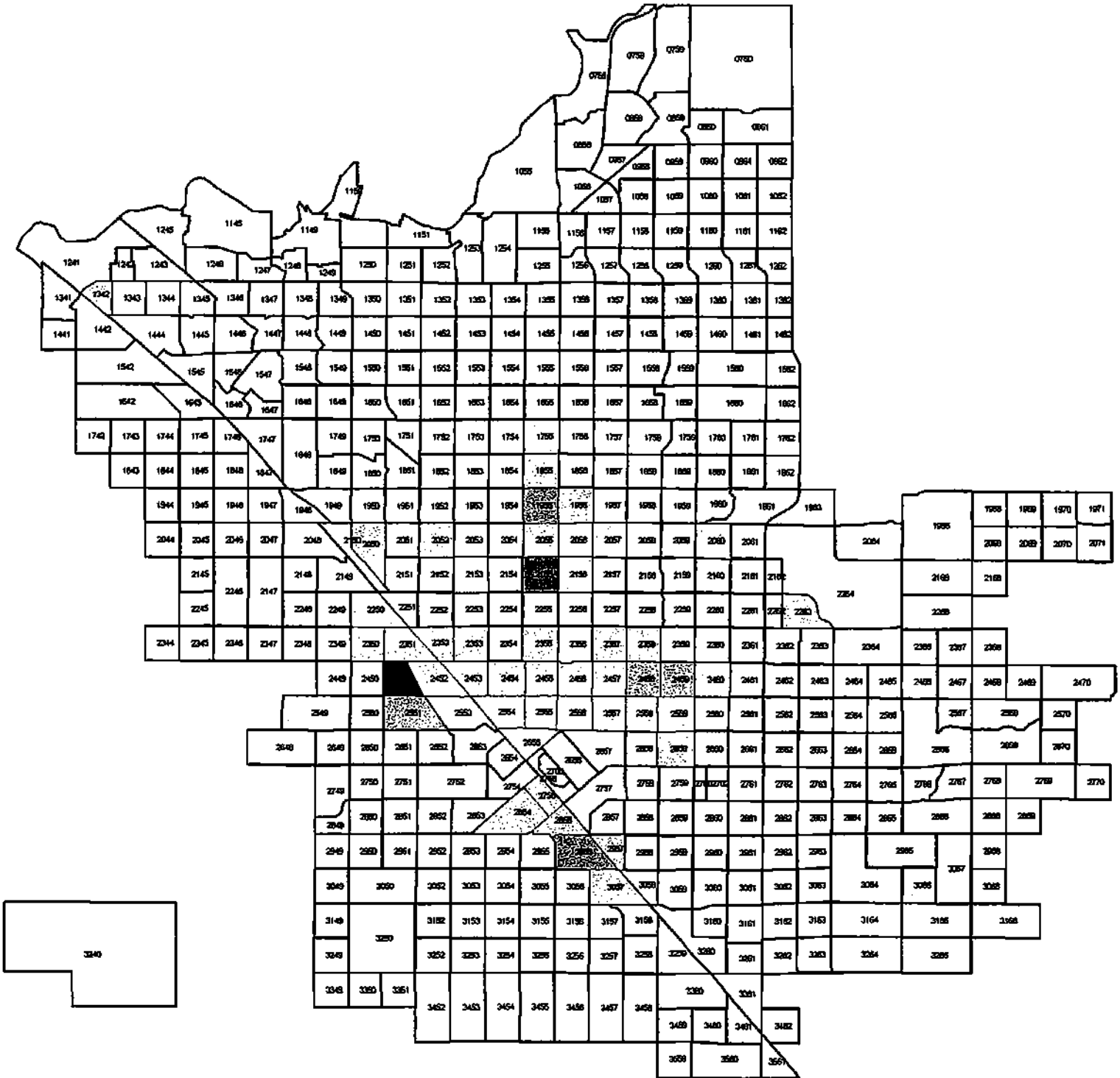
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Fresno California

Prostitution Calls Comparison January through April



FRESNO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Prostitution Calls 1/1/97 - 4/19/97

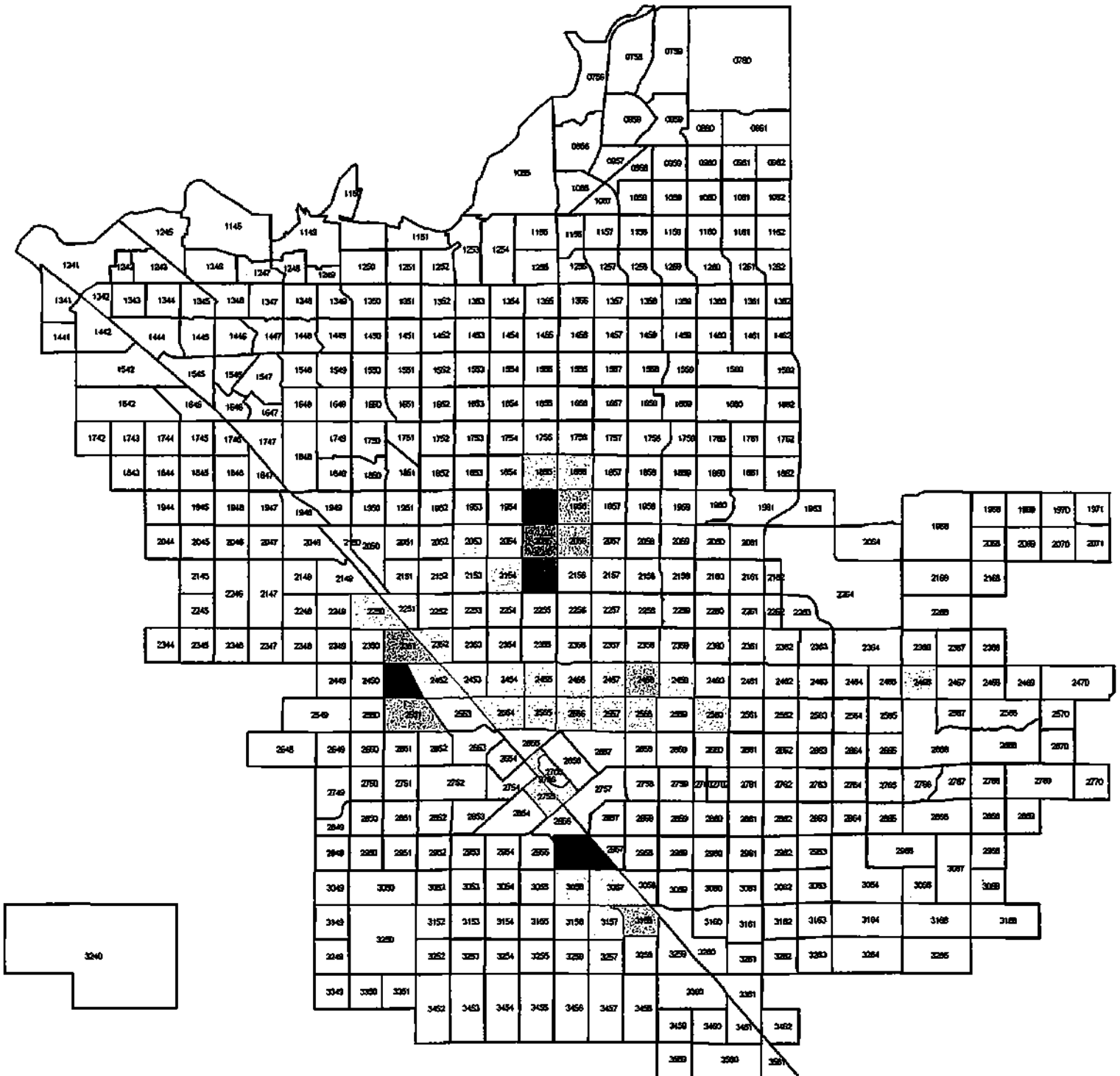


Numbers Of Calls 1997

- 1 - 15
- 16 - 29
- 30 - 43
- 44 - 58
- 59 - 72
- 73 - 86
- 87 - 100
- 101 - 115
- 116 - 129
- 130 - 143
- 144 - 157
- 158 - 172

FRESNO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Prostitution Calls 1/1/98 - 4/19/98

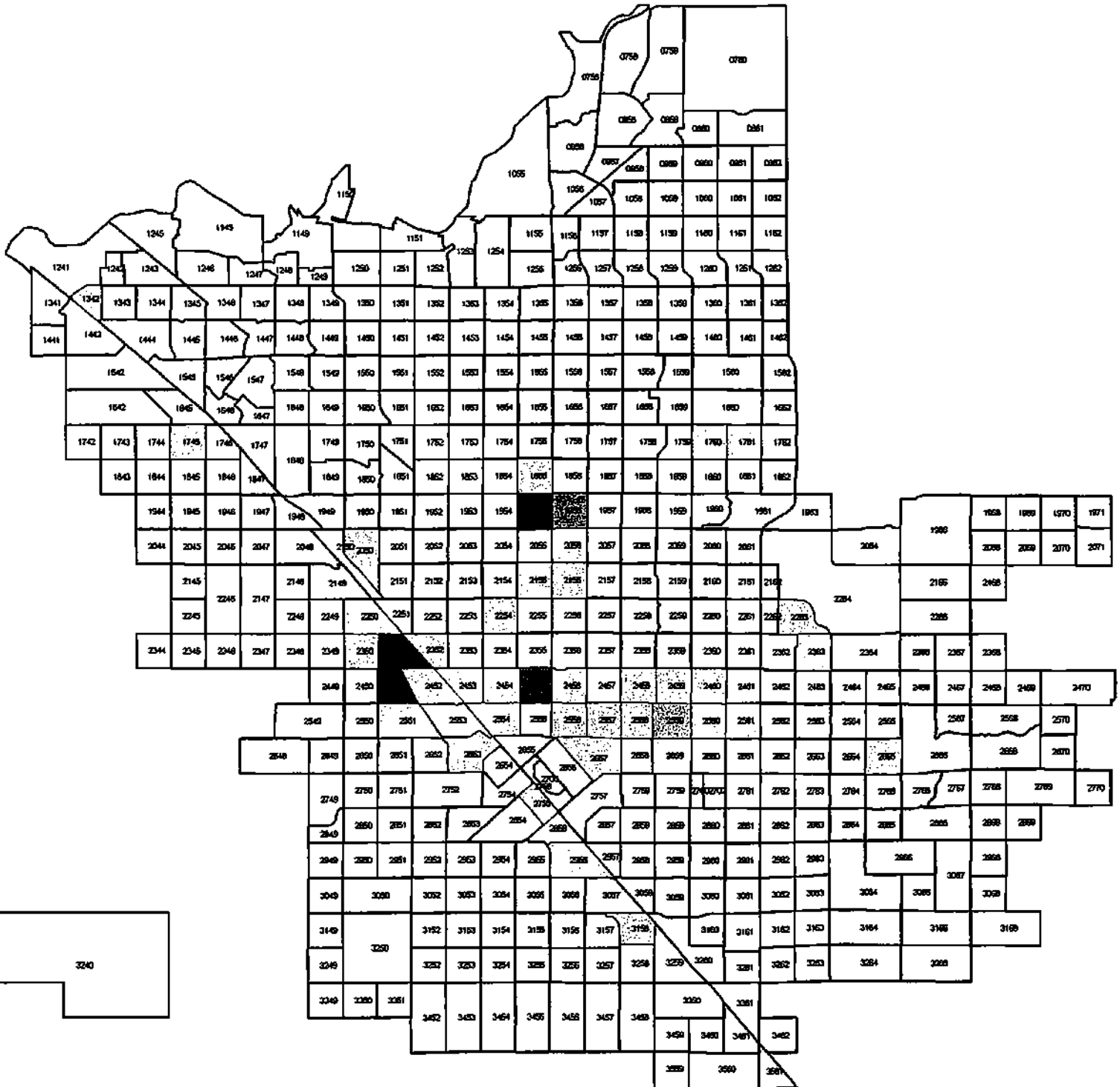


Number Of Calls 1998

- 1 - 10
- 11 - 20
- 21 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 48
- 49 - 58
- 59 - 67
- 68 - 77
- 78 - 86
- 87 - 96

FRESNO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Prostitution Calls 1/1/99 - 4/19/99



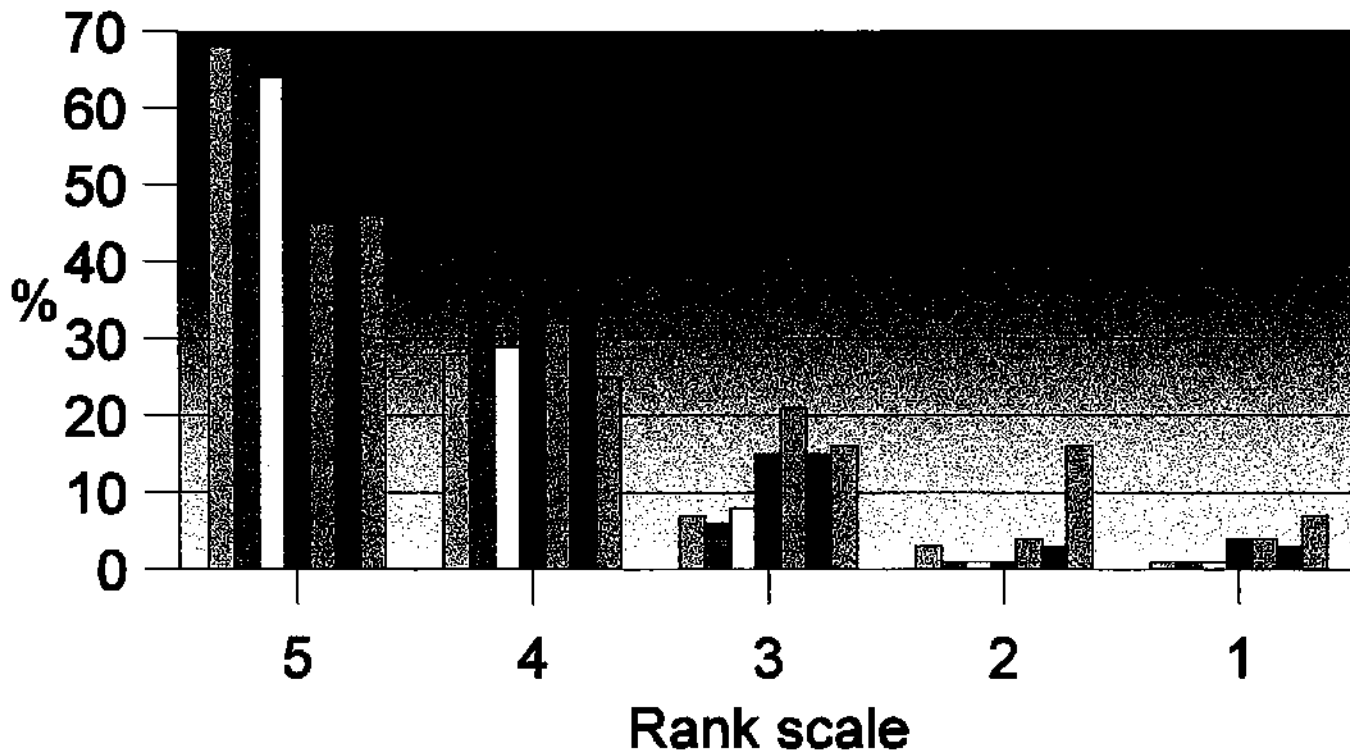
Number Of Calls 1999

- 1 - 8
- 9 - 16
- 17 - 24
- 25 - 32
- 33 - 40
- 41 - 47
- 48 - 55
- 56 - 63
- 64 - 71
- 72 - 79

Overall Class Evaluation

November, February & April

Total participants to date: 83



Overall Laws HIV/STD Women
Neighbors Pimping Sexual