

# Erie County Gun Violence Environmental Scan

University at Buffalo School of Social Work

Mickey Sperlich, Patricia Logan-Greene, Christopher St. Vil, Denise Lillvis, Ogechi Kalu, & Rebecca Rasnake

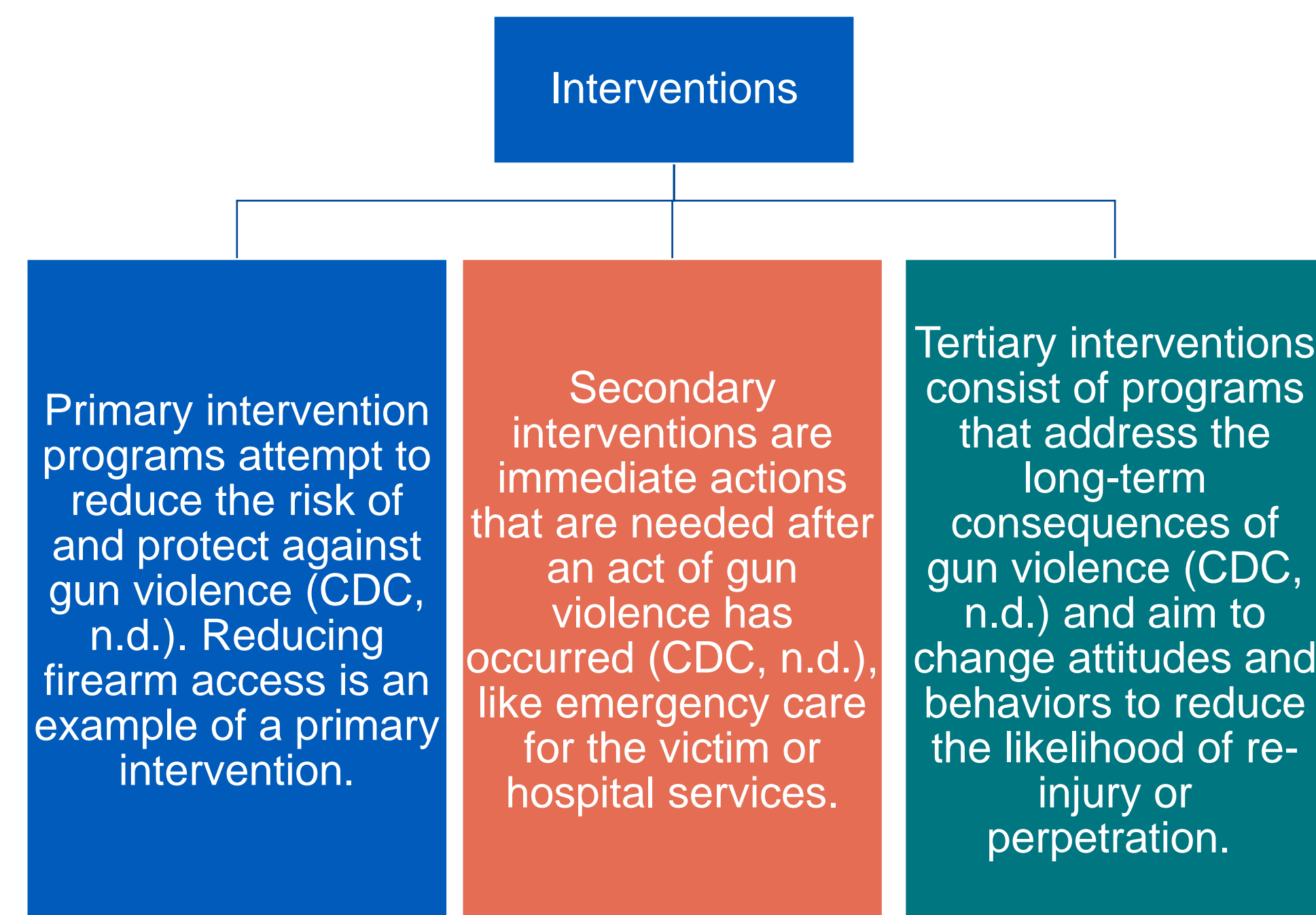


## Abstract

Research literature related to community gun violence prevention is sparse. To address the escalating nature of this problem in Erie County, an environmental scan was conducted of all agencies with related programming. We identified 97 organizations, and 29 representatives completed interviews. Information was gathered about the populations served, funding sources, program design, intended outcomes, staffing, and the role in addressing gun violence. Funding varied widely from non to multi-million-dollar budgets. Programs typically approached gun violence comprehensively, with even distribution among primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention categories. Half of the programs specifically served the City of Buffalo and the other half served all or other areas of Erie County. Most programs were aimed at youth and there were fewer services for adults. These findings were elicited by local experts to guide potential interventions and a report has been given to the Erie County Task Force.

## Introduction

- Americans own 46% of the world's privately owned firearms (Fox et al., 2021).
- From 1996 to 2018, federally funded gun research was prohibited (Rostron, 2018), contributing to a lack of evidence-based interventions.
- In 2017, there were 109 firearm deaths per day (Amnesty International, 2021).
- In 2020, there were 358 people injured by firearms and 46 deaths in Buffalo (New York State, 2021).



## Methods

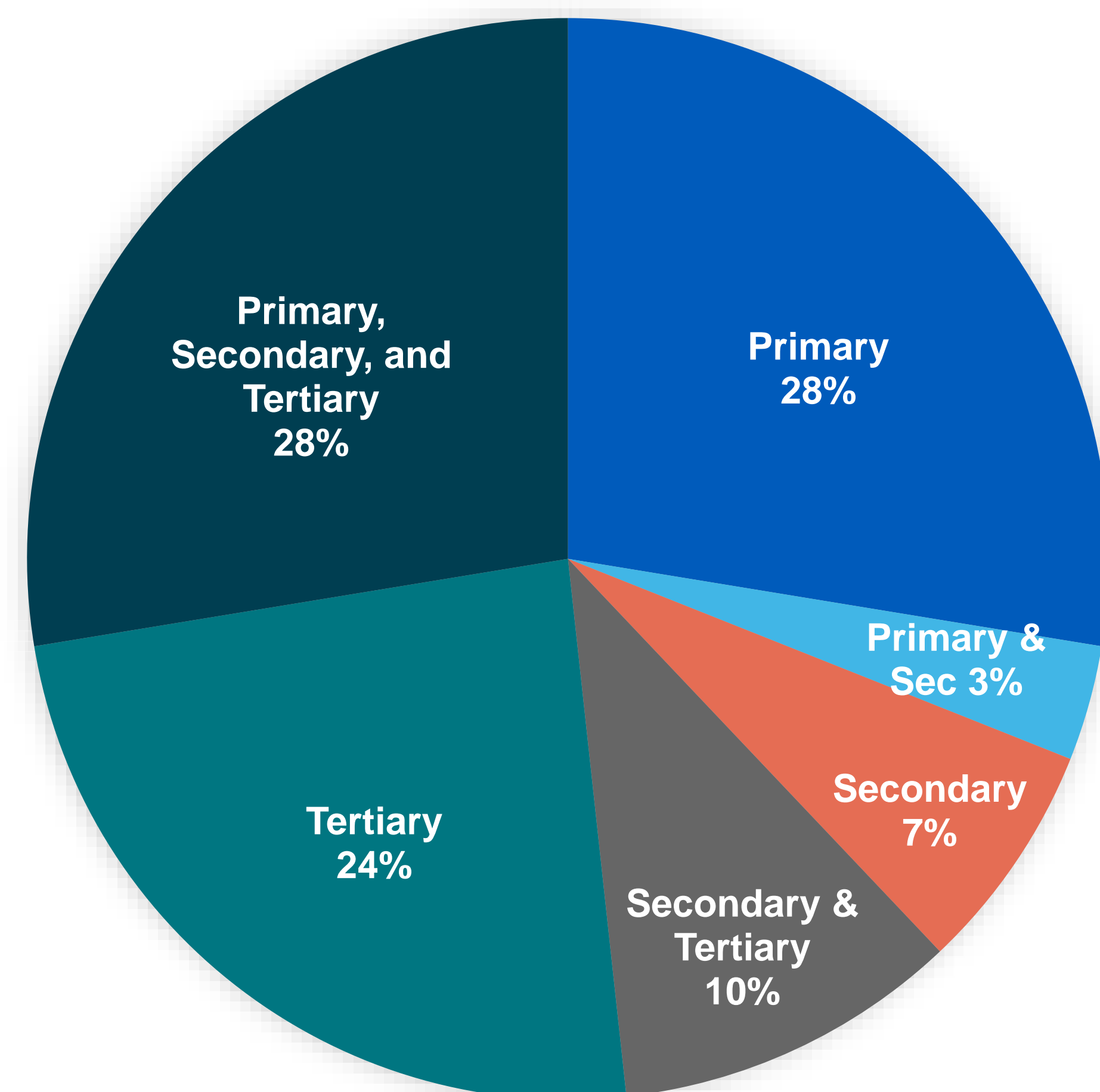
Through internet search engines and professional networking, we created a master list of 97 agencies in Erie County with gun violence-related programming. Twenty-nine agencies were represented in the study and interviews were conducted with 34 people.

Information was gathered on where program services are provided, what services are offered, funding sources, fees for service, populations served, partnering organizations, staffing, the role of the interviewee at the agency, and their personal experience with gun violence. SPSS was used to analyze the data.

## Key Findings

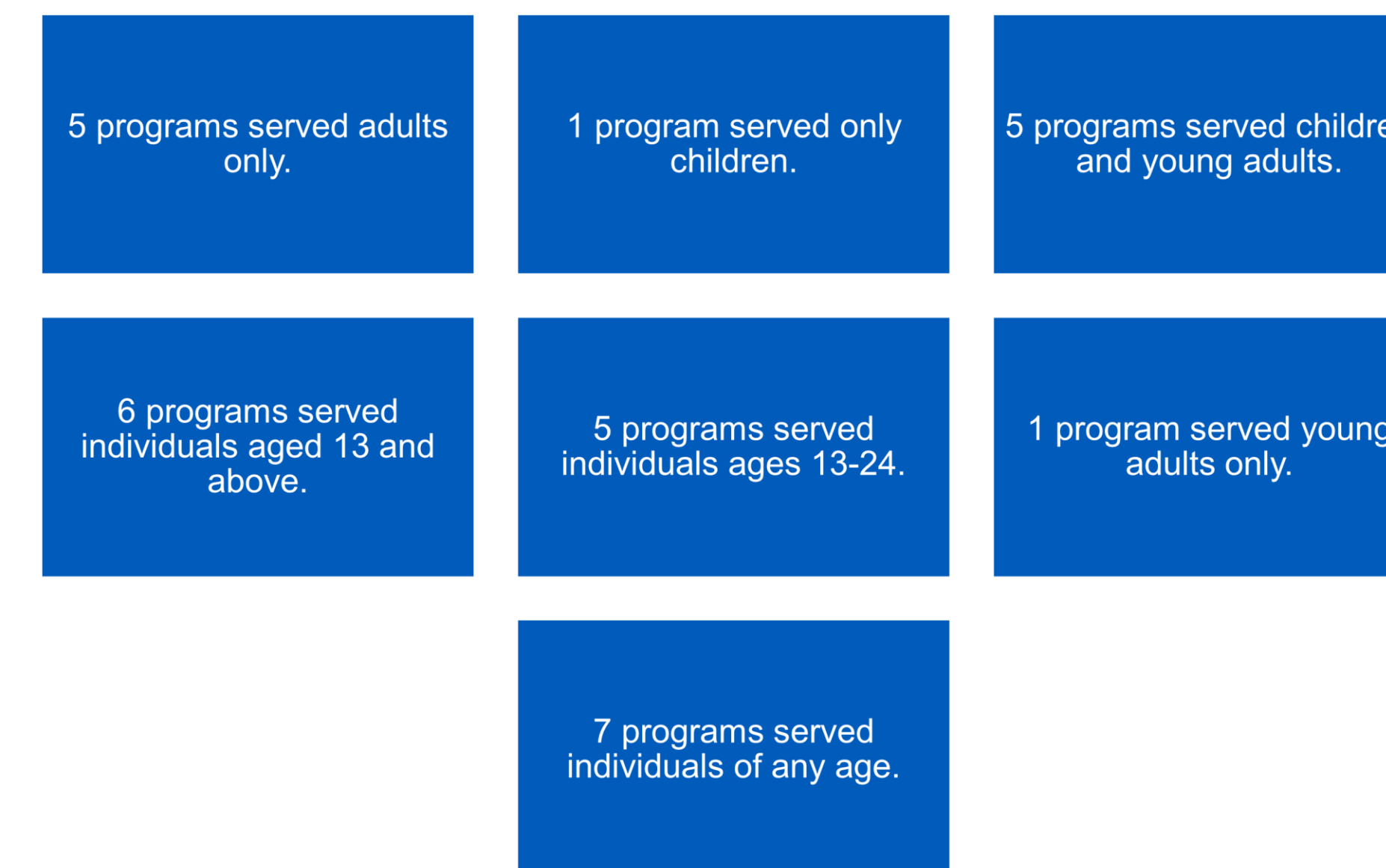
- Programs depicted a broad spectrum of funding, from self-funded non-profit programs to multi-million-dollar budgets.
- 35% of programs were in Buffalo and about half were spread throughout the county.
- Most programs focused on a combination of changing behavior, increasing knowledge, and shifting attitudes related to gun violence.
- Most programs did not explicitly focus on reducing gun violence as a program objective, but their services indirectly addressed the issue.
- 35% of interviewees reported that gun violence survivors held positions in their organizations.

## Levels of Intervention in Erie County Gun-Violence Related Programming



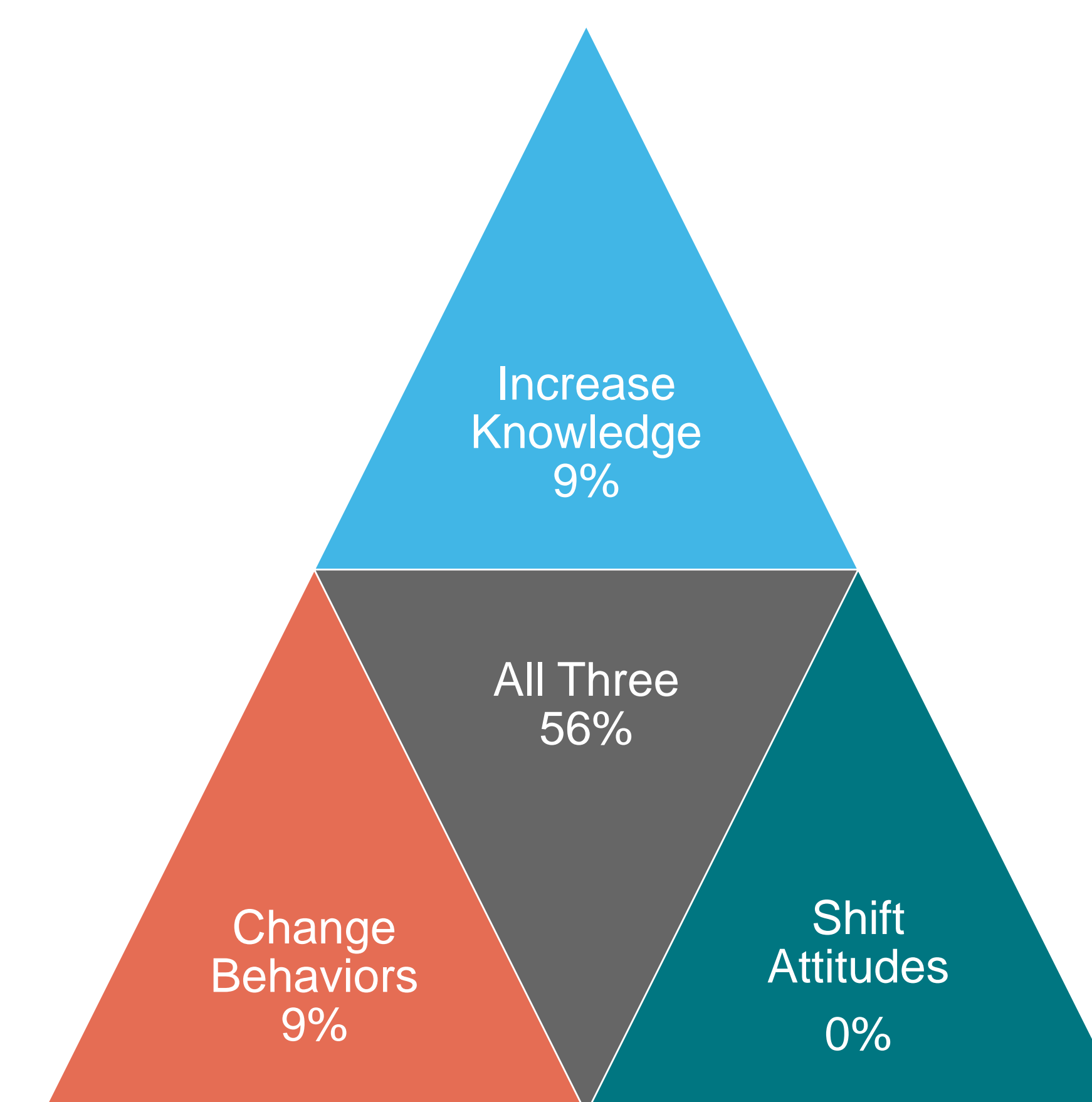
**"These acts of violence make no sense. I think we are transitioning into a phase where we are trying to catch this before it happens and be proactive." - Tim Carney Erie County Sherriff's Department**

## Ages Served by Gun-Violence Related Programming



**"Hearing gunshots while they are in bed in their neighborhood... losing friends and loved ones to gun violence, this is not something that can be dealt with overnight"- Jeanette Miles, Confident Girl Mentoring, Inc.**

## Program Outcomes



Program endorsed the goal of collectively targeting a change in attitudes, knowledge and behaviors (56%) while others endorsed the goal of changing behaviors (9%) and increasing knowledge (9%) respectively.

## Limitations

The polarizing view of gun ownership, debates about gun access, the distressing relationship between law enforcement and communities of color, and agency hardships due to COVID all present challenges to this type of research. There were a few key individuals that were unresponsive who we believe could contribute further to the discussion of gun violence in Erie County.

## Future Directions

The Erie County Task Force will utilize findings from the scan to identify interventions on a county level and allocate funding. Half of the individuals interviewed stated they were willing to speak with the task force to further support the identification of appropriate responses to gun violence.

Researchers received IRB approval to conduct more in-depth interviews and many interviewees agreed to participate. They provided their perspectives on what is causing gun violence in Erie County and thoughts/suggestions on how to approach reducing gun violence. These responses are currently being analyzed. Findings will be reported to the task force and submitted for peer-reviewed publication.

**"From my personal view, guns are seen as signs of power not as risk of death." - Sterling South, BRAVE**

**"What we have done is to support policies that reduce access to guns." -Pastor Giles, Back to Basics Ministry**

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