North Carolina Department of Public Safety

North Carolina State Highway Patrol
North Carolina GangNET Project

Gangs In North Carolina

An Analysis of NC GangNET Data

SEPTEMBER 2014

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Forward:

The Governor's Crime Commission (GCC) administered gang surveys and conducted gang research of law enforcement agencies beginning in 1998. The GCC has since produced several reports on gangs and gang membership trends. Session Law 2008-187 Section 7 stated that the Governor's Crime Commission submit an annual update to the General Assembly on the statewide levels of gangs, gang membership and gang associates in the North Carolina.

North Carolina GangNET is a law enforcement database, specific to the individual gang members which originated in the Durham County Sheriff's Office and funded through Governor's Crime Commission grants. By 2004, Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department joined Durham County Sheriff's Office to provide this service to the western counties in North Carolina. Since 2009, NC GangNET has been the source of gang data used in statewide reports to the General Assembly. In 2012 the Governor's Crime Commission consolidated the system into a single central database to allow for more uniform quality control and training. In 2013 the research unit of the GCC, (North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center) was eliminated and all gang related information is now collected by the North Carolina State Highway Patrol (NCSHP) / NC GangNET Project. In 2014, management of NC GangNET moved to the North Carolina State Highway Patrol to be overseen by a certified law enforcement agency. The GangNET certification training includes how to utilize the system, how to properly evaluate the information being entered into the system and how to instruct future participants. This includes remaining members of the North Carolina State Highway Patrol and law enforcement officers from agencies within the Highway Patrols' Troop jurisdictions.

NC GangNET is a means for law enforcement officers and agencies to share non-discoverable and non-evidentiary information on validated gang members and affiliates. This information is protected by federal regulations that govern the use of law enforcement intelligence data. Multiple federal, state and local law enforcement agencies use GangNET software. This facilitates the potential for cross jurisdictional and interstate sharing of information on gang members.

Upon consultation with the analyst and author of GCC gang related publications, this report will provide analysis of the data to offer a historical overview. A NC Gang Fact Sheet, offering gang data only, will be provided as Appendix 1 in this report. The intention is to allow the NC GangNET Project staff to provide Fact Sheets bi-annually and discontinue offering full analytical reporting of the data.

Method of Data Collection:

NC GangNET is a web based database housed on a secure server and managed by the North Carolina State Highway Patrol GangNET Project team. This team instructs sworn law enforcement officers statewide to certify users in laws and procedures of gang member entry into the system. Only certified users may enter or view the information contained in the database. There are three user levels: view only, data entry, and full system administrative rights. Statistics for this report and future Fact Sheets are derived exclusively from NC GangNET data.

Using GangNET, the data helps to produce an understanding of North Carolina gang activity. The representation continues to be slightly unclear primarily due to the lack of 100 percent participation. The NC GangNET Project, through its use of Highway Patrol Troopers, seeks to offer the ability for small and rural law enforcement agencies with limited resources the ability to share their gang member information via the system. This will assist in alleviating many of the reasons agencies do not participate including both limitations of available personnel to enter information into the NC GangNET system and investigators who aren't trained to recognize and document gang members. NC GangNET training and access to the NC GangNET system is a free service to law enforcement provided by the NC GangNET Project.

There are two internal weaknesses of the system. The first weakness is less than 100 percent of law enforcement agencies within the state participate. All major law enforcement agencies (100 officers or greater) are participating, but many smaller agencies are not. There are over 400 law enforcement agencies in North Carolina and many with less than 10 sworn law enforcement officers. The second weakness is a level of resistance that exists among many state and local agencies to submit information into NC GangNET that involve juvenile gang members (ages 15 and under). This prevents an accurate insight of the gang activities with this demographic group. It was discovered that prior to the new certification classes in June of 2013, most agencies assumed they were not allowed to enter juveniles into the system. Given these two caveats, the NC GangNET system provides the most accurate method to determine the amount of gang involvement within North Carolina.

Gangs

Statistics retrieved from NC GangNET on May 9, 2014 revealed 1,041 gangs reported in 61 counties of North Carolina. An additional 27 gangs were reported within the North Carolina Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice.

It should be noted that any discussion of the number of gangs in a state, county or jurisdiction can be complicated by definitions. Traditionally the term "gangs" indicates umbrella names for a gang such as Crips, Bloods and others. The term "sets" would be the local operational body with a specific name such as "Rolling 60's Crip" or "Sex Money Murder." "Rolling 60's Crip" would be a local set falling under the banner of a Crip gang-related set. Likewise, "Sex Money Murder" would be a local set falling under the banner of a Blood gang-related set. While all sets fall under a particular "gang" banner by definition, according to Article 13A of the North Carolina Street Gang Suppression Act, each set fits that definitional criteria for a gang and thus

is treated as an individual gang. While "set" is used to describe local entities of traditional Black gangs (Bloods, Crip, Folk, People, etc.), Hispanic gangs (MS-13, Sureño, Norte-14, etc.) use the term "clique" and Hybrid gangs tend to use the term "crew." While these terms all represent the local operational grouping of specific umbrella gangs, the gang members of each "set", "clique", and "crew" find distinct meaning for the term they use.

The North Carolina Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice provides an additional listing of gang members in 27 "Security Threat Groups," which is the term used by its reporting system to designate a gang. It does not report individual sets, cliques or crews but only the 27 umbrella organizations. Thus, these groups would have names such as Bloods, Crips, Hells Angels, United Blood Nations, MS-13 and Aryan Brotherhood.

Gang Membership

While the data appears to indicate a continual growth in the number of gangs in North Carolina, the greater likelihood is that with more agencies being trained and entering data into the system, NC GangNET is reflecting the statistics that are associated with increased data entry. While it is likely a combination of both, some growth in gang membership in existing participant jurisdictions along with the newly added participating agencies, the data does not offer supported significant inference that there is any large development in gang membership. NC GangNET system's strength is the number of agencies participating. Currently only 54 law enforcement agencies are participating in the system.
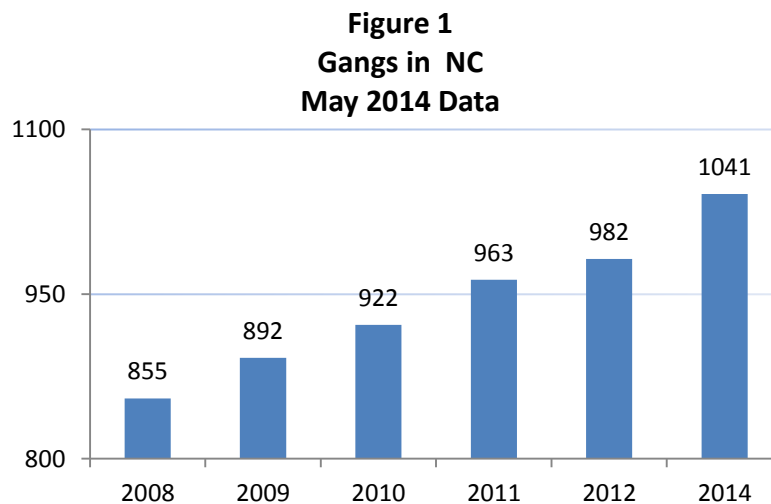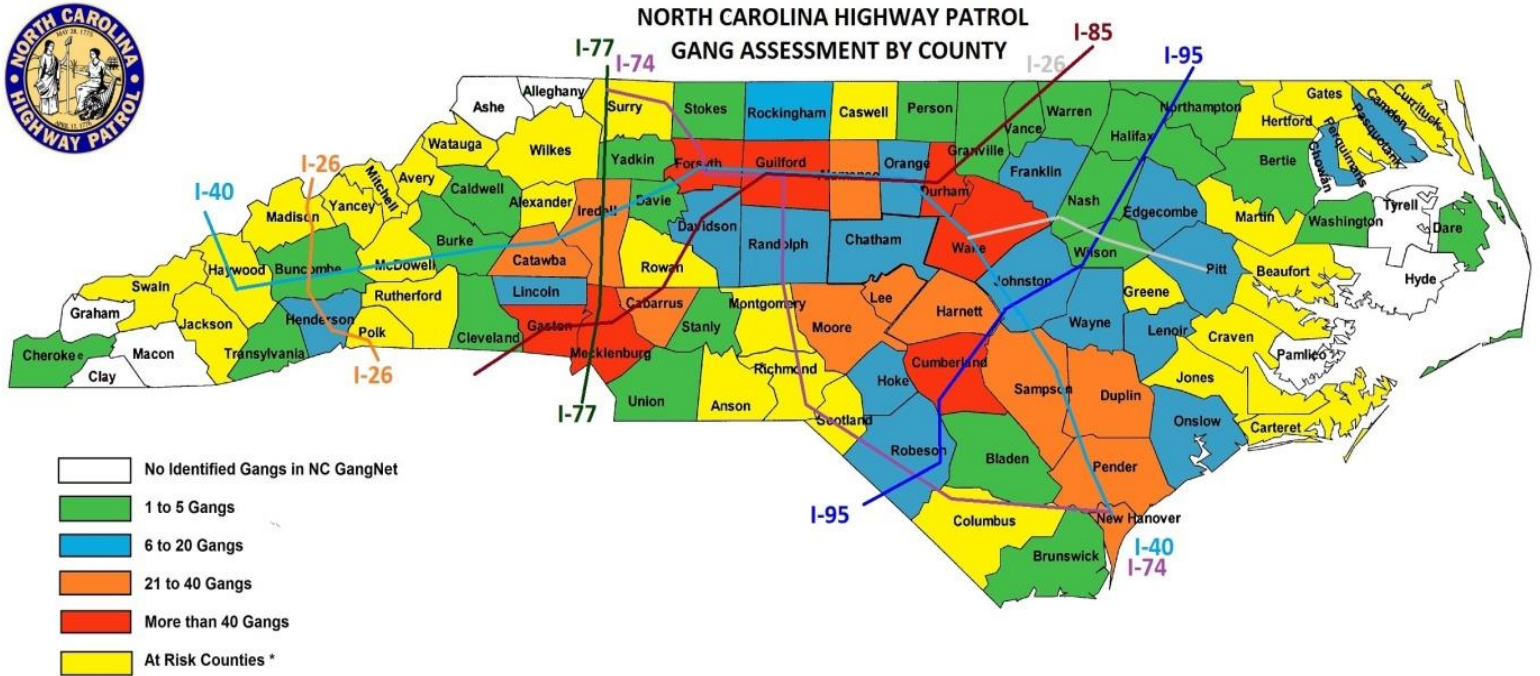
Figure 1
Gangs in NC
May 2014 Data

Figure 2

NORTH CAROLINA HIGHWAY PATROL GANG ASSESSMENT BY COUNTY

Legend:
- No Identified Gangs in NC GangNet
- 1 to 5 Gangs
- 6 to 20 Gangs
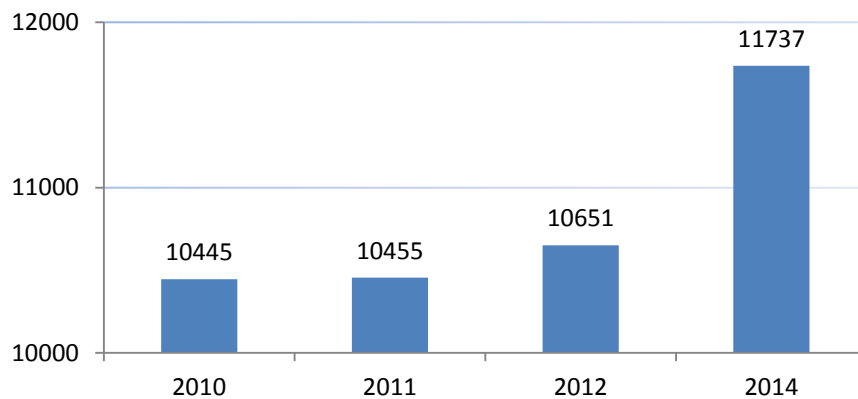- 21 to 40 Gangs
- More than 40 Gangs
- At Risk Counties *

* At Risk Counties are those counties with no identified gangs, but are adjacent to counties with identified gangs, on an interstate corridor, or that have a significant metropolitan population.

Some inconsistent information exists due to errors in data entry, i.e., a single name with multiple birthdates or the absence of race or gender information. These errors account for some data being inconsistent with total gang members. The total number of validated gang members currently in the NC GangNET system is 11,737, as shown in *Figure 3*. Data indicates 11,338 male and 388 female gang members. There are an additional 3,229 non-validated (suspected) gang members or affiliates in the system. Total suspected gang activity, as reflected in NC GangNET, is 14,966.

Attempting to compare the number of gang members in previous GCC reports with this year's reported levels of gang membership is problematic. As NC GangNET gained popularity, a great number of gang investigators sought to have their information on gang members entered into the system to share and view information from other jurisdictions. This meant that the system was rapidly populated. As part of the rules governed under 28 CFR Part 23 compliance, when a person in an intelligence database has not had any new activity entered for five years, that data is to be expunged from the system. As a result, each year a number of validated gang members from past years are purged from the system as new gang members are being entered. There has been no tracking of the volume of validated gang members expunged due to five years of inactivity in the system; thus it is difficult to determine how large the rise in validated gang membership is in any given year. *Figure 3* depicts the number of validated gang members since 2010. A large disparity shows in the number of validated gang members in the system over several years. The spike in 2014 was likely due to programming language that included both validated gang members and suspected gang members in the gang member category.
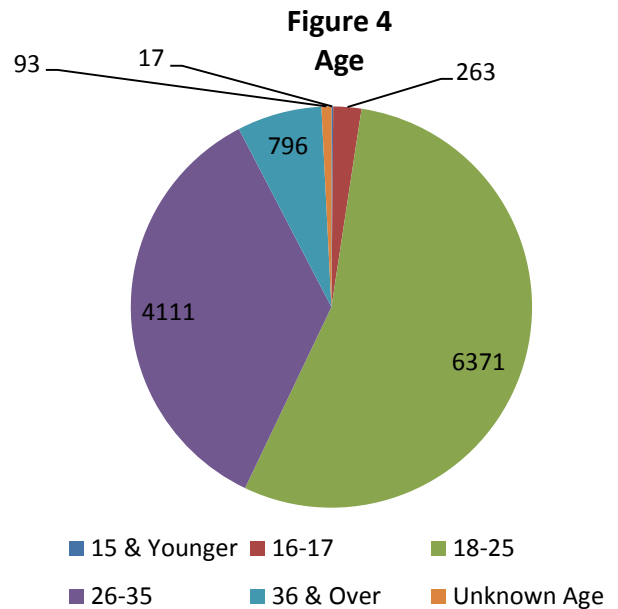
Figure 3
Gang Involvement

Note: 2014 data indicates that the North Carolina State Highway Patrol GangNET Project's efforts to train and add new agencies are reflected in the spike in gang involvement.

Without jurisdictions entering juvenile gang members information on individuals 15 years of age and younger, the ability to determine the level of juvenile involvement in gangs relies on data entered in the North Carolina Juvenile Online Information Network (NC-JOIN) or anecdotal information from gang investigators, gang prevention and intervention program staff. This report has little ability to provide a clear picture of juvenile gang involvement. Since the system is governed as a 'right to know and need to know' database and is not used for any primary labeling of juveniles, NC GangNET would serve as an effective tool for officer information and officer/public safety on gang involved juveniles.
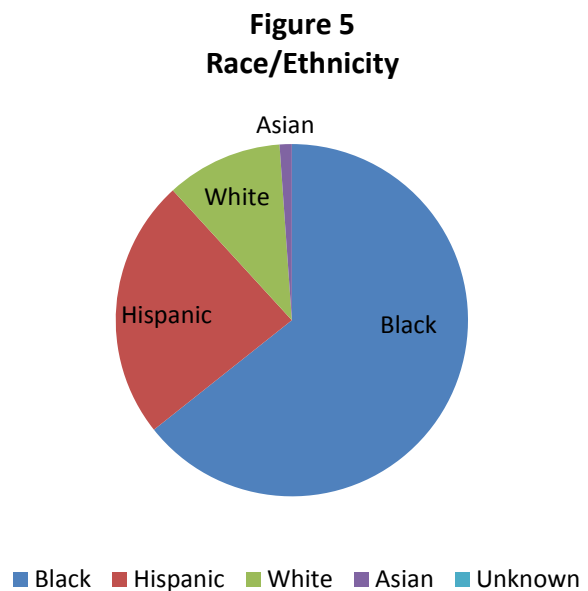
Figure 4 illustrates that the age group of 18 to 25 year olds make up 66 percent of the validated gang members in the system. That same age grouping made up 71 percent of the validated gang members in the March 2012 GCC report and 73 percent of those reported in the March 2011 report. The age group of 26 to 35 years has risen from 20 percent in the March 2011 report to 28 percent in 2014. This data could indicate a trend to an aging population of gang-involved individuals.

**Figure 4
Age**

93, 17, 263, 796, 4111, 6371

Legend: 15 & Younger, 16-17, 18-25, 26-35, 36 & Over, Unknown Age

Gang Member Race and Ethnicity

Figure 5 illustrates a demographic breakdown of race and ethnicity data. There continues to be a disproportionate representation of Black and Hispanic involvement as validated gang members. There are 9,596 Black gang members, 3,562 Hispanic gang members, 1,594 White gang members, 167 Asian gang members and 47 whose race and/or ethnicity are unknown.

This disproportionate representation may be due to socioeconomic variables unique to these communities. The data emphasizes the need for gang prevention, intervention and suppression programs targeted to the needs of these at-risk populations.

**Figure 5
Race/Ethnicity**

Asian, White, Hispanic, Black

Legend: Black, Hispanic, White, Asian, Unknown

Additional Gang Intelligence:

The NC GangNET Project has now added the capability for broader use of the GangNET tool for law enforcement officers certified in its use. A bridge to the GangNET data of the Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), a specialized law enforcement task force, allows sharing of gang member intelligence information between North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. The states of South Carolina, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, and Florida are currently on this system and the necessary agreements and database bridges will be developed to allow greater sharing capabilities. Additionally, the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives also utilizes the HIDTA connection. The ultimate goal would be to have all jurisdiction gang intelligence systems tied in together. With the mobility of gang members across county and state boundaries, the intelligence information must be equally mobile to provide for community and officer safety. Currently, NC GangNET is able to view an additional 19,256 gang member's information via the Washington/Baltimore HIDTA connection.

Another connection is through the Criminal Justice Law Enforcement Automated Data Services (CJ Leads) web-based application. CJ Leads is an offender based application developed to meet two objectives; to provide a comprehensive view of an offender's North Carolina criminal information and to allow users to develop a watch list of persons of interest. CJ Leads provides a hyperlink to NC GangNET so certified GangNET officers can rapidly check to determine if the suspect has any documented gang activity.

These two systems are providing officers with information that is useful to determine gang affiliation and activities of individuals from other jurisdictions. This allows officers to make informed decisions when interacting with the subjects.

Summary

With the NC GangNET Project finding a permanent home within the North Carolina State Highway Patrol, the training schedule has become more active than in previous years. The number of certified users and participating agencies is growing. It is conceivable that the vast majority of known gang members within the state could soon have information available in NC GangNET.

Demographic data in this report will assist where to direct funding when it becomes available. Efforts should continue to deter people under 18 years of age from joining gangs. The most efficient method of accomplishing deterrence would be to offer gang prevention programs in schools and identify the youth most at-risk to focus intensive prevention programs towards those individuals. More programs aimed at intervention and suppression should be directed at the current gang members age 18 and older. Innovative programs and evidence-based programs should be implemented. Continued gang suppression through law enforcement and prosecution of existing laws is advised.

As was noted in previous GCC reports, additional efforts should concentrate on using the data provided to focus additional efforts on the communities most affected by gang involvement. In North Carolina, data indicates that a gang member is most likely to be a black male under the age of 30 who resides in a more populous county in close proximity to a major highway. There are some pockets of Asian gang membership in the Charlotte area. It would be logical to develop programs that focus on multiple ethnic populations with substantial localized gang activity. There are a significant number of Hispanic gang members across the state. The most difficult problem confronting the development of programs for this population is that the term 'Hispanic' represents a large, culturally diverse group. The single largest area of concern would be identifying the causes of the disproportionate involvement of young black men in gangs. Understanding the complexities that created this social phenomenon would likely provide information necessary to develop meaningful programs for affected communities.

APPENDIX

The North Carolina GangNET Project staff consists of database administrators that run data reports and audit the use of the system and purge records when necessary, as well as trainers who instruct the user certification classes. These staff, while understanding the information contained within NC GangNET, are not trained in providing statewide social and policy analysis of the data. For this reason, the GangNET Fact Sheet on the following pages will be provided every six months to show the changes in the data and use of the NC GangNET Project. For contextual purposes, it is suggested that any social or policy analysis of the NC GangNET data rely heavily on this publication and the historical Gang and GangNET reports published by the Governor's Crime Commission.

FACT SHEET
The North Carolina GangNET Project

Participation in NC GangNET

	2013 *	05/2014	12/2014	06/2015	12/2015	06/2016	12/2016
NC Agencies	230	254					
WB HIDTA[1]	NA	114					
NC Certified Users	NA	4,982					
NC Counties	59	66					
Interstate [2]	NA	3					

[1]Agencies sharing view-only information with NC GangNET via the Washington/Baltimore HIDTA.
[2]Interstate Compacts: NC GangNET is currently sharing two-way view-only access with Virginia, Maryland and Washington, DC.
*For reference, the NC GangNET Project is providing information from the 2013 Governor's Crime Commission "Gangs In North Carolina" report. NA indicates data was not provided in the GCC report.

Gang, Members, Associates, Monikers, Vehicles, Phone Numbers and Addresses

	2013 *	05/2014	12/2014	06/2015	12/2015	06/2016	12/2016
Gangs	982	1,041					
Gang Members	10,651	11,737					
Gang Associates	2,681	3,229					
Gang Monikers[1]	NA	10,765					
Vehicles[2]	NA	2,252					
Phone Numbers[2]	NA	17,604					
Addresses[2]	NA	26,337					
WB HIDTA[3]	NA	19,256					

[1]Monikers refers to nicknames or street names and not the legal names of gang members.
[2]Vehicles, Phone Numbers and Addresses that are associated with gang members. There can be multiple entries for each subject.
[3]Gang members shared with NC GangNET via the Washington/Baltimore HIDTA
*For reference, the NC GangNET Project is providing information from the 2013 Governor's Crime Commission "Gangs In North Carolina" report. NA indicates data was not provided in the GCC report.

Gang Member Age Groupings

	2013 *	05/2014	12/2014	06/2015	12/2015	06/2016	12/2016
15 and younger[1]	79	17					
Ages 16 and 17[2]	337	263					
Ages 18 to 25	6,681	6,317					
Ages 26 to 35	3,048	4,111					
36 and older	522	796					
Unknown	NA	93					

[1]North Carolina statute provides that individuals 15 years and younger are juveniles.
[2]While other states consider 16 and 17 year olds to be juveniles, this age grouping added with juveniles provides for comparison to other states.
*For reference, the NC GangNET Project is providing information from the 2013 Governor's Crime Commission "Gangs In North Carolina" report. NA indicates data was not provided in the GCC report.

Gang Member Race and Ethnicity

	2013 *	05/2014	12/2014	06/2015	12/2015	06/2016	12/2016
Black	7,471	9,596					
White	831	1,594					
Asian	121	167					
Hispanic	2,113	3,562					
Other	131	47					

*For reference, the NC GangNET Project is providing information from the 2013 Governor's Crime Commission "Gangs In North Carolina" report. NA indicates data was not provided in the GCC report.

Gang Member Gender

	2013 *	05/2014	12/2014	06/2015	12/2015	06/2016	12/2016
Male	10,164	11,338					
Female	490	388					

*For reference, the NC GangNET Project is providing information from the 2013 Governor's Crime Commission "Gangs In North Carolina" report. NA indicates data was not provided in the GCC report.