

GANGS IN NORTH CAROLINA

An Analysis of GangNET Data



**Governor's Crime Commission
North Carolina Department of Public Safety
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Since 1997 the North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center (NCCJAC) of the Governor's Crime Commission (GCC) has investigated and published more than a dozen reports on the existence and extent of criminal gangs in North Carolina. Once thought of as a juvenile activity or somehow either not worth investigating or reporting to



the public, these activities earned a dominant role in criminal justice activities in the first decade of the 21st century. In the past 12 years, a codified definition of what constitutes a criminal gang has been established. New laws and enhancements to existing laws and sanctions were added and tremendous state and community funding has been exerted in efforts to deter, prevent, divert, investigate and suppress gang activities. Communications across jurisdictions, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, both state and federal, and corrections have been greatly advanced with the growth of the N.C. Gang Investigators Association, NC GangNET, Project Safe Neighborhoods, the High Point Model and other efforts all designed to confront the issue of criminal gangs. The ability for this agency to collect meaningful data has strengthened as nearly all communities are now willing to identify and report on the activities of criminal gang members and the gangs they represent either via NC GangNET, informal meetings, or surveys. Today, in North Carolina, the data provides a meaningful snapshot of the status of criminal gangs and their members.

The NCCJAC does not attempt to be experts on gangs and criminal gang activities. This can only be accomplished by local law enforcement when talking about the groups and individuals within their respective jurisdictions. This sociological and criminological topic is too broad to afford topical expertise, but there is opportunity for specialization in specific elements of the multifarious components that make up the subject of criminal gangs and their activities. This agency has made great efforts to specialize in the demographic composition and geographical disbursement of gangs and their members as reported via several data sources, most recently relying on the NC GangNET database.

A Fallacy of Comparisons

Nearly every report on gangs in North Carolina has been used to compare to previous reports. As mentioned in previous gang reports, this could be a mistake and lead to a misrepresentation of what the data actually states. The NCCJAC provides snapshots of what the current identified gang and gang member activity is within NC GangNET. It can be said that at a given point in

time there are X number of gangs and Y number of gang members as reported by responding agencies. This does not account for potential under reporting or over reporting of responding agencies; it merely reflects what their gang intelligence officers report. Because of certain federal guidelines, individuals in law enforcement intelligence databases like NC GangNET must be removed if there has been nothing new entered on them for a five year period. In our past reports, this was not the case. Often, an agency responding to one of our surveys would provide information on all gangs and gang members being followed since their gang unit was formed. This could have been 10 years' worth of gang intelligence, but only a portion was still active as gangs or gang members. The point is the data presented in this report is as of March 2012 and offers no comparison to our reports of 10 years, five years or one year ago, given that the gang members entered more than five years ago into the GangNET records who have no more recent activity have now been purged

The State of Gangs in North Carolina as of March 2012

Methodology

The NCCJAC utilizes data as it exists in the NC GangNET central database. A brief history and explanation of the NC GangNET data reveal its strengths and weaknesses. The foremost weakness is without the full participation of all law enforcement and correctional agencies the data is less than complete; secondly, the database was designed to track gang members at an individual level and not to provide aggregate data which must be ferreted out via data manipulation. There are also limitations in the data gathered such as home address, correct race or ethnicity, and the agency entering the person may be in a different county than the individual's home. The last example provides a unique issue that one county may have no participation in NC GangNET, but because there is a gang member that has been documented as living in that county, a count for the non-participating county will appear in an aggregate listing by gang member county of residence. Another limitation is that while the Division of Adult Correction "security threat group" information is being bridged from their prison data into NC GangNET, the community corrections or probation information on "community threat groups" has yet to be included.

The primary strengths of these data are that there are more than 230 agencies providing information on gang members operating in 59 counties inclusive of our most populous counties. The system provides a standardized method for entering data that validates gang membership and their connections with other validated gang members, associates and non-validated suspected gang members. It is because of the strict definitional criteria for validation as a gang or gang member that NCCJAC prefers this data when addressing the demographic and geographic descriptors of North Carolina gangs and their members.

NC GangNET is a web-based set of databases that exist in three nodes; the western node, located with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department which replicates up to the central node located at the State Bureau of Investigation Fusion Center; the eastern node located with the Durham County Sheriff's Office which also replicates to the central node; and the N.C. Division of Adult Correction (DAC) is defined as a user whose data, until 2011, was bridged

to the central node via the eastern node team. With the loss of technical support personnel in Durham County, the DAC data has not been updated and is not current beyond 2011. While the DAC threat groups are validated utilizing DAC criteria, their information is important because most of these individuals will at some point be released into our communities where it will be important for law enforcement to understand their potential relationships with local gangs.

NC GangNET was originally funded by the GCC in 2003 to assist the Durham County Sheriff's Office and the Durham Police Department in providing a centralized criminal gang intelligence database to identify and track gang members and their activity in Durham County. This software was originally developed for the military to track potential terrorists and has since been adapted and is used by many states and federal law enforcement agencies to track gang member activities by showing a common linkage with people, automobiles and locations. When Durham County made it known that they had to ability to track gang activity, other law enforcement agencies requested training on and access to the system. The Durham County Sheriff's Office is now the designated base for the Eastern Node of the system, while the Western Node of the system is housed within the Charlotte/Mecklenburg Police Department. Currently more than 230 agencies in 59 counties have personnel certified in the use of NC GangNET.

The Data

A review of NCCJAC reports on the subject reveal that gang activity has been present in North Carolina communities since well before the analysis center began researching the topic in 1997 and in many communities before law enforcement was willing to accept or acknowledge its existence. Today, NC GangNET provides a resource to tap into to obtain a snapshot of gang activity in the state. The picture continues to be a bit fuzzy as there are law enforcement agencies that do not have the personnel resources to enter information into the NC GangNET system or do not have investigators trained to recognize and document these types of individuals. This is not due to a lack of access to gang training, NC GangNET training or access to NC GangNET. All of these have been made available to law enforcement through funding from the GCC. Given these caveats, the gang data for the state as of March 22, 2012 is provided below.

The Number of Gang Members

The number of individual validated gang members within North Carolina communities being tracked in NC GangNET is 10,445 in North Carolina. An additional 3,700 have been bridged from DAC inmates meeting the security threat group validation into NC GangNET. The total validated gang members, accounting for both those in communities and incarcerated, is greater than 14,000. To be validated in the GangNET system as a gang member, a person must meet at least two of ten criteria, such as showing gang colors, gang signs, or having gang tattoos. A gang member may also be validated if they admit — or self-report — that they are a member of a gang.

Specific numbers for a total might include duplicate entries occurring in both law enforcement gang intelligence data and in DAC security threat group data that could not be eliminated because of data limitations. This year's data is inclusive of validated gang members or security threat groups and does not contain suspected members, gang associates or the community threat groups as defined by DAC Community Corrections.

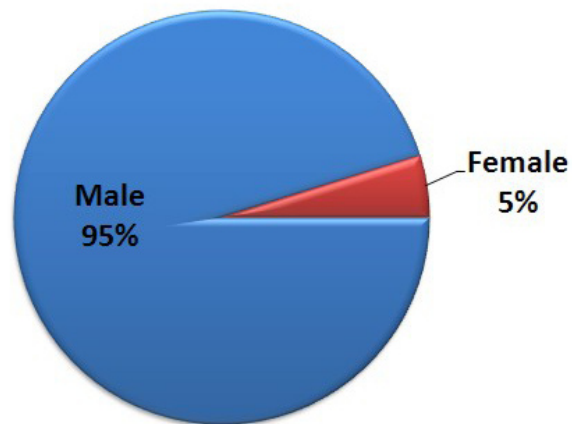
There are an additional 2,656 suspected gang members or gang associates in the NC GangNET data. These are individuals that do not meet the necessary criteria to be validated as gang members, but do meet at least some components of the requirements for validation.

Gang Member Gender

Data has continually revealed that gang membership in North Carolina is predominately a male activity. Among the data analyzed this year for validated gang members only, excluding the DAC data, there are 9,946 validated male gang members and 499 female gang members. Table 1 illustrates validated gang member gender data.

Table 1: Validated Gang Members by Gender

Gender	Totals
Male	9,946
Female	499
Totals	10,445



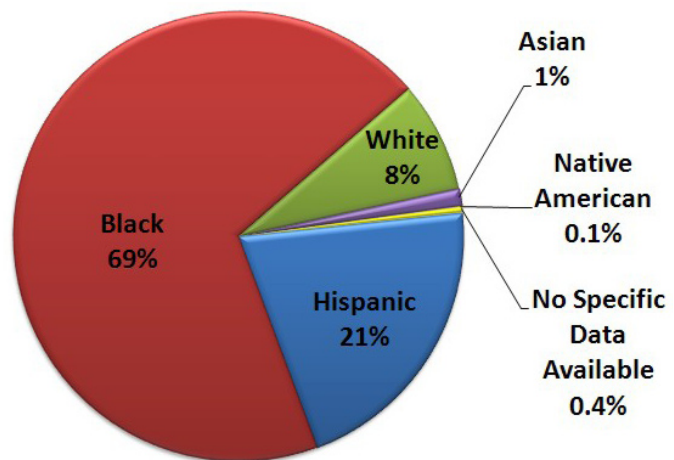
Note: There have been approximately 3,700 Division of Adult Correction security threat group members bridged from the DAC database into the NC GangNET database; however, some of these had previously been documented in NC GangNET data and were already counted. Including DAC threat groups, the actual validated number of gang members in NC GangNET is in excess of 14,000.

Gang Member Race/Ethnicity

The demographic breakdown of race and ethnicity provides information on the makeup of gang members reported in the GangNET system. Table 2 offers a complete breakdown of the validated gang member race/ethnicity for the state.

Table 2: Validated Gang Members by Node and Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Totals
Hispanic	2,176
Black	7,188
White	828
Asian	127
Native American	13
Other	38
Totals	10,370



Note: This data represents information when the documenting officer indicated the race of the gang member in their field report and that data was also entered into the NC GangNET database.

Gang Member Age

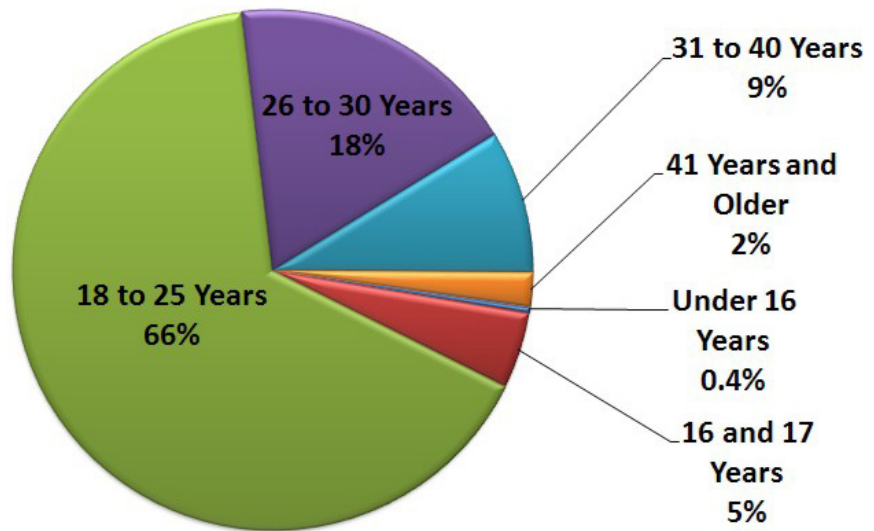
One of the most interesting elements of gang studies observed since utilizing NC GangNET is the age descriptors that have been realized. For the greater part of the past decade, every time criminal gangs are mentioned there is generally an adjective referring to “youth” or “juvenile”. According to the data, this may be an unwarranted description. Also, while the N.C. Attorney General’s Office has provided an opinion that the inclusion of juveniles, those individuals age 15 and younger, into NC GangNET does not violate state law, there could be some individual law enforcement agencies that have policies, either internal or community, of not entering juvenile data. Understanding this potential element of data underreporting, the data reveals that in the six age groups, 95 percent of the validated gang members are age 18 and older. However, 5 percent are what might be deemed as youthful offenders ages 16 to 18. Only 55 or less than 1 percent of all validated criminal gang membership was attributed to juveniles ages 15 and younger. Perhaps the most telling part of this data can be observed in the pie chart associated with Table 3 that illustrates that 71 percent of validated criminal gang members are between the ages of 16 and 25, adult criminals in North Carolina. Table 3 offers validated gang member age group data for the entire state.

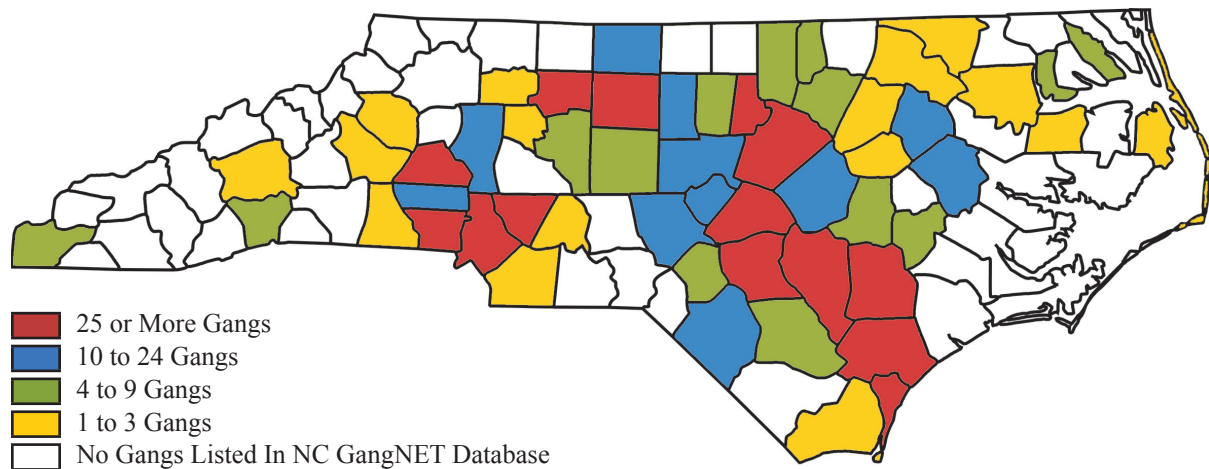
Table 3: Validated Gang Members by Node and Age Group

Age Group	Total	Percent of Total
Under 16 Years	55	<1%
16 and 17 Years	643	5%
18 to 25 Years	8,914	66%
26 to 30 Years	2,464	18%
31 to 40 Years	1,199	9%
41 Years and Older	286	2%
Total	13,561	



Note: These totals differ from other totals because many gang members have given differing birth dates during police interviews. So, some gang members are counted more than one time due to variance in birth dates.



Map 1: Counties With Gangs Listed In NC GangNET Database

Gangs by Geographic Location

One of the most important issues for the Governor's Crime Commission has been identifying areas that need gang prevention and intervention resources. The geographic data assists in their efforts to ensure that communities with an identified, data driven need are given appropriate consideration when they submit a grant proposal. As the GCC's statistical branch, the NCCJAC has always strived to accurately depict the nature and extent of gangs across North Carolina. NC GangNET has made this a far more standardized task than in earlier years. Map 1 provides a graphic illustration of the extent of gangs within our State's counties. The areas that make up the interstate corridors for I-40, I-95, I-85, I-77 and I-26 which transverse the most populous communities and the surrounding areas that have experienced urban sprawl, also serve as feeder counties for metropolitan workforces tend to have the largest number of gangs. The less populated and more rural counties report low numbers of gangs active in their jurisdictions; it is unclear if they do not have the manpower, access or desire to enter information into the NC GangNET system.

While we do not attempt to identify all of the gang sets located in each county or to offer the number of validated gang members in each county, it was determined the best information to provide would be the number of validated gangs within counties participating in NC GangNET.

Another point of interest is that a validated gang could be a motorcycle club, street gang, white supremacist group, or any number of separatist groups or militias that have been validated as gangs according to criteria defined in NC GangNET bylaws and N.C. state statute. The vast majority of gangs and individuals within the NC GangNET system fall under what is generally perceived as a street gang.



Gangs in North Carolina

Table 4: Gangs, Members and Suspects by Node and by County

Eastern Node Counties				Western Node Counties			
County	Validated Gangs	Validated Gang Members	Suspected Gang Members	County	Validated Gangs	Validated Gang Members	Suspected Gang Members
Alamance	24	21	13	Buncombe	1	4	
Bertie	1	1		Burke	1	3	2
Bladen	4	4		Cabarrus	27	138	25
Brunswick	1			Caldwell	2	3	
Chatham	11	39	2	Catawba	27	135	27
Chowan	6	10	12	Cherokee	5	7	
Cumberland	49	750	296	Cleveland	1	5	
Dare	1	2		Davidson	7	83	2
Davie	1	2		Forsyth	58	669	99
Duplin	25	37	9	Gaston	35	204	57
Durham	41	1,277	188	Guilford	88	463	88
Edgecombe	20	81	7	Henderson	8	64	8
Franklin	5	10	1	Iredell	23	225	61
Granville	5	23	3	Lincoln	10	38	
Halifax	1			Mecklenburg	55	1,403	468
Harnett	38	348	27	Randolph	6	28	1
Hoke	8	2		Rockingham	12	38	3
Johnston	17	2	46	Stanly	3	5	
Lee	17	101	14	Union	1	8	1
Lenoir	9	10	2	Yadkin	1	4	
Moore	22	61	11	Total	371	3,527	
Nash	3	11		There are 23 security threat groups — the DAC designation for gangs — within the state prison system.			
New Hanover	42	470	61	Fifty-eight counties reported 963 Validated Gangs in the NC GangNET database. This total does not include the 23 Security Threat Groups or Community Threat Groups as designated by the Department of Public Safety’s Division of Adult Correction, Prisons and Community Corrections sections. There are a total of 10,105 validated gang members accounted for by the variable ‘home county.’			
Northampton	2						
Onslow		2					
Orange	7	10	5				
Pasquotank	9	13	3				
Pender	39	182	35				
Person	3	5					
Pitt	18	148	31				
Robeson	12	43	7				
Sampson	29	114	32				
Stokes	1	5	2				
Vance	4	1					
Wake	99	2,619	955				
Warren	2	1					
Washington	1	13					
Wayne	7	147	19				
Wilson	1	13					
Total	592	6,578					

Governor's Gang Task Force

The proliferation of gangs within North Carolina has led to the formation of a gang task force within the Governor's Crime Commission. The Governor's Gang Task Force was established pursuant to Executive Order 69, which was enacted on October 4, 2010, to enhance anti-gang law enforcement efforts and develop gang prevention policies in North Carolina. As set forth in this proclamation, the Task Force has been charged with the following: the development of a comprehensive plan to ensure a well-coordinated, statewide enforcement program. The program should increase the flow of gang-related information among various law enforcement agencies, correctional institutions, and the judicial system; the investigation and identification of current and emerging gang issues; the investigation and identification of policy changes to better prevent, mitigate and address gang activity; and the recommendation of legislative and executive action necessary to implement a comprehensive, coordinated plan and to make identified policy changes.

The GCC utilized two criminal justice planners to oversee planning and research within the Governor's Gang Task Force. They began by conducting a comprehensive literature review of gang-related works, research and a comprehensive review of existing gang programming within the state. The literature researched included a number of research endeavors designed to identify risk factors, trends, and evaluations of program frameworks. The review of existing literature allowed the planners to focus upon areas that received support in the academic and research communities, rather than reliance upon generally accepted standards that were not necessarily based upon empirical data.

Subsequently, a comprehensive review of existing programs in order to identify gang prevention, intervention, and suppression programs within North Carolina, as well as identifying nationally recognized programs, was conducted. Through this examination the planners developed a listing of national gang programs, by state, which provided program overviews and implementation information. Additional information was reviewed to reference various state wide gang reduction plans. They were specifically interested in researching program components, implementation and evaluations. Based upon this examination, the planners scheduled site visits to those programs that reported notable results and which were highly



recognized across the state in order to gather additional programmatic information and interview key staff regarding operations and effectiveness of programs.

The Task Force planners also developed a site visit questionnaire to administer in an effort to gather uniform data to include in a site visit log. The questionnaire provided a number of advantages, most specifically organization of responses, a consideration of cost-effectiveness and sustainability, and a running, comprehensive list of existing programming. The survey questionnaire also provided a means for “snowballing” by developing new information regarding programming not known to them. The data collected, as well as the developed program examination, allowed the planners to create a compendium of gang programs for future use.

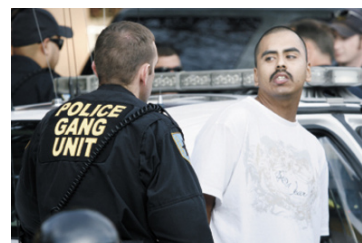
Since its inaugural meeting in November 2011, the Task Force has worked with specific sub-committees to focus on investigating existing and emerging gang issues within our state as well as working to develop recommendations to address the four integral components of a comprehensive gang reduction strategy: prevention, intervention, suppression and reentry. The Task Force has tapped into national and local resources which have informed on effective practices and strategies while also highlighting areas of need and gaps within communities. The Task Force is considering using components of the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model as a framework for statewide gang reduction initiatives.

A panel discussion was held at a recent Task Force meeting addressing current and emerging gang trends. Members of the panel consisted of former gang members who have made positive changes in their lives and were able to provide insight into the course of their lives to identify factors leading to gang involvement, as well the factors that assisted them in eventually desisting from gangs. Other members included community gang reductions specialists whose input allowed for a ground up perspective on problem areas that should be the focus of the Task Force’s work. The panel discussions helped to highlight several key issues that most communities are battling with in their fight against gangs. These key issues include, but are not limited to: inefficient resources available within communities to address existing and/or emerging gang problems; need for increased educational and employment opportunities for individuals looking to leave the gang lifestyle, improved collaboration among community partners and law enforcement, which would pave the way for effective leveraging of existing resources; and proper identification of gaps to streamline funding to areas of need.

As the Task Force works to complete its objectives by June 2013, additional meetings, panels and community forums will direct members of the Task Force in developing a comprehensive plan to ensure a coordinated statewide enforcement program, investigate and identify emerging gang issues, and recommend legislative and executive actions necessary for implementation of this plan.

Summary

The NCCJAC had expected to see a leveling off of the increased counts of gangs across the state as more agencies developed specialized gang units and gang investigators, as more agencies began using NC GangNET and as more community resources have engaged in gang prevention and intervention strategies.



This seems to be occurring. There is a realization that the data presented in this report could be an understatement of the extent of gangs and gang members, but is a very good portrayal of the situation. There are major agencies that have not entered data for extended periods. This could be because they have entered all the gangs and gang members they have identified and little new intelligence has become available; they could have had personnel changes with their GangNET certified person leaving their gang unit, or any number of other reasons. NC GangNET is not a perfect system for developing statewide gang data, but it far exceeds any other methodology because it relies on data entered by the most active gang investigators in the state.



North Carolina is not only fortunate that the Attorney General's Office offered an opinion that allows the inclusion of juveniles (ages 15 and younger) but also because, unlike other states, 16 and 17 year old gang members are included without any restrictions. There are likely some agencies, who on advice of their agency or city/county attorney are not including those age 15 and below. However, this policy is likely not enough to greatly skew the percentages of gang members under age 18 much higher than the 6 percent as depicted in Table 3. What we can see is that the age group that is under 18 years of age represents just 10 percent of the validated gang members. So much focus has been on "juvenile" or "youth" gangs that often people lose sight that the vast majority of validated gang members in North Carolina are adults. This does not distract from the continued need to address the problems that lead to youth involvement in gangs.

There are two things that can be determined by the map showing the numbers of gangs within counties. First is that the largest concentrations of gangs are in some of our most populated or easily accessible counties with major roadways and interstate highways. Law enforcement in those counties have some of the most active gang units and are eager to share their intelligence among other law enforcement agencies in efforts to keep themselves, our communities and citizens safe.



One of the primary reasons that this demographic data is important at a state level is to have a picture of where and at whom to direct funding, if and when it becomes available. We know that it would be wise to continue efforts to deter and prevent young people under age 18 from joining gangs, since this group makes up a relatively low percentage of the total gang membership. The most efficient method of accomplishing this would be to provide gang prevention programs in schools that identify youth who are most at-risk for joining gangs and focus more intensive prevention programs on them. More programs aimed at intervention and suppression should be directed at the current gang members that are age 18 and over. Examples of such efforts include the High Point Model as described by David Kennedy of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and utilized by North Carolina's U.S.

Attorney's Offices through Project Safe Neighborhoods, continued suppression by standard law enforcement officials, and prosecutorial use of existing laws to intervene and suppress criminal activities.

Additional efforts should utilize the data provided to focus additional efforts on the communities most affected by gang involvement. In North Carolina, a gang member is most likely to be a black male under age 30 who resides in a more populous county in close proximity to a major highway. There are some pockets of Asian gang membership in or around the Charlotte area and it would make sense to develop some programs that focus on this population. Likewise, there are a significant number of Hispanic gang members across the state. Possibly the most difficult problem encountered in developing programs for this population is that they consist of large and culturally diverse groups of people. Programs designed with a Mexican population in mind might not be appropriate for a Honduran or Puerto Rican population. However, the single largest area of concern would be to identify the causes of the disproportionate involvement of young black men in gangs. Understanding the complexities that have created this social phenomenon would likely provide the information necessary to develop meaningful programs for this population.

The data indicated that, when including Division of Adult Correction data, there are over 14,000 validated gang members in our communities and incarcerated in prisons. There are an additional 2,634 affiliates or suspected members that do not yet meet the criteria set for validation. These would be the most at-risk for joining because of their close association with validated gang members. Given this group (1,293 eastern and 1,341 western nodes) there are close to 18,000 people either in gangs or closely associated with gangs in the NC GangNET system.

NC GangNET is an evolving system that will likely find a new central home within the next year. As funding diminishes at the eastern and western nodes for programmers, the ability to run reports such as this will be greatly diminished unless there are programmers and data management personnel assigned to the central node. The data will continue to be useful to the gang officers who enter and view the data, as long as the project is funded.



Special Addendum: Addressing the Low Volume of Juvenile and Youthful Gang Members in the North Carolina GangNET System

As identified in this report of the state of gangs in North Carolina, there are a startlingly low number of validated gang members under the age of 18 years in the GangNET System. The GCC's Criminal Justice Analysis Center has addressed this issue by conducting a brief online survey of members of the North Carolina Gang Investigators Association sent via email through the association's ListServ. This was a purposeful sampling designed to provide timely anecdotal insight into possible causes of this under-reporting of the most youthful gang members.

Since other states consider youth under 18 years of age to be juvenile, there is little inclusion of juveniles in many of those states' GangNET intelligence data. The NC GangNET governing

board was fortunate to have an opinion offered by the Office of the Attorney General indicating that NC GangNET is an intelligence database and not subject to “public information” laws. Rather, it is covered by federal code 28CFR that governs law enforcement intelligence or “right to know or need to know” data. This is an important distinction because intelligence information has a very limited usefulness to only those law enforcement personnel who are certified to use the system and must be expunged from the system if there is no new activity entered within a specified period. The information is generally contained to the field notes on an individual as entered by the reporting officer. That opinion determined that since this data is not public and has no evidentiary value, it is appropriate to submit juveniles age 15 and under into this law enforcement intelligence system with the exception of photographs. The Governing Board saw this as a necessary element to ensure that law enforcement agencies share intelligence on even the most youthful gang members.

Given the Attorney General’s opinion and the low volume of gang members under 18 years of age, the NCCJAC advises caution when looking at the NC GangNET data when juvenile or youthful gang membership is being addressed. To better understand this, gang investigators were asked a few questions about their agencies and law enforcement reporting of juvenile and youthful gang members into the NC GangNET system.

The first question asked was to determine if they actively entered juvenile gang members age 15 and under into GangNET. The majority of participants responded that they do not enter juveniles. A follow-up question was asked of those who indicated they do not enter juveniles to determine if their agency had policies, either written or unwritten, to not enter juveniles into GangNET. While a majority indicated their agency does not, there are over 40 percent that indicated there is such a policy at their particular agency.



The same questions were then asked about youthful gang members ages 16 and 17. The vast majority responded they do enter such gang involved youth and none indicated any policies, written or unwritten, that would preclude them from entering such youth.

A third question sought to obtain information from school resource officers to determine if their agencies, local school boards or individual school principals had policies precluding identifying students as gang members. No school resource officers responded to this time-constrained survey. The NCCJAC shall follow-up with this type of law enforcement officer to try and better understand any constraints they may face when providing intelligence information within and between other law enforcement officers and/or within the NC GangNET system.

The final element of the survey provided the gang investigators an opportunity to provide anecdotal information as to why they think there is such a low number of juvenile and youthful offenders contained in the NC GangNET database. Below are listed some of those results:

- “Laws and policies that prohibit or dissuade you from doing so due to their youthfulness.”
- “I still think there is a great need for education to officers on gangs. I believe that since North Carolina has begun documenting and keeping track of members, they are not, in

some areas, as easily identifiable. Officers have to go beyond getting basic information and know how to engage the person in a conversation about gangs.”

- “People/officers are scared to enter them in GangNET and honestly don’t want to tag them as a gang member. Everyone needs to remember they will come out after 5 years and if the evidence doesn’t back it up they will not be labeled but this system could and will assist LEO if used the right way.”
- “Because most agencies are concerned with the juvenile status and violating rights. If the laws were clearer, officers would understand what they are able to do better.”
- “Because there isn’t any tech support to those users who are experiencing problems. And everyone knows that the GangNET system isn’t a priority to anyone so why should they continue to support the system.”

Summary

Caution is advised when attempting to understand the nature and scope of juvenile gang membership in North Carolina from NC GangNET. More needs to be done to understand why law enforcement officers and/or agencies are failing to enter validated gang members without regard for age into NC GangNET. While the scope of this abbreviated study concentrates on juvenile and youthful gang members, data seems to indicate the need for concerted educational efforts on the scope of NC GangNET and the inclusion of all gang members. The anecdotal evidence is that rules or laws governing the protection of juvenile information are being broadly defined as a defensive measure by jurisdictions, agencies or even gang investigators. It is recommended that a copy of the Attorney General’s opinion concerning juvenile inclusion in NC GangNET be published and provided to all gang investigators and to have this electronically placed within a screen of the NC GangNET system. It may also prove useful for the General Assembly to provide a statute further indicating that, for the purposes of intelligence, NC GangNET is excluded from being identified as “public data” and appropriate for entry. There is also concern that until the NC GangNET system finds a permanent home with personnel to respond to technical and training needs, the momentum experienced by the development of NC GangNET may be lost.

While there are a low number of juveniles and youthful offenders contained within the NC GangNET data, this continues to remain the best data for estimating overall gang activity in communities across the state. Information on juveniles that have been adjudicated within our juvenile system can be gleaned by JJDP data; however, it does not allow for the additional information on individuals that have not committed an infraction. Likewise, correctional information on community threat group or security threat group membership requires that individuals have a conviction and be identified within the Division of Adult Correction as a threat. NC GangNET as an intelligence database provides a broader understanding of gang members since there is only a need for a field contact and/or information and no conviction or status offense is required. NC GangNET provides the best opportunity for law enforcement, community planners, and the General Assembly to have an indication of the state of gangs and their demographics. All efforts should be made to encourage the use of NC GangNET and educate law enforcement on juvenile inclusion.

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