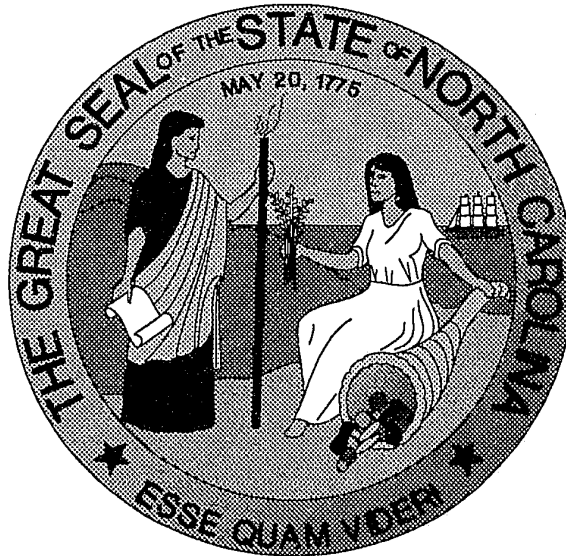


# Illicit Drugs in North Carolina



A Perspective  
from  
The Governor's Crime Commission

James B. Hunt Jr.  
Governor

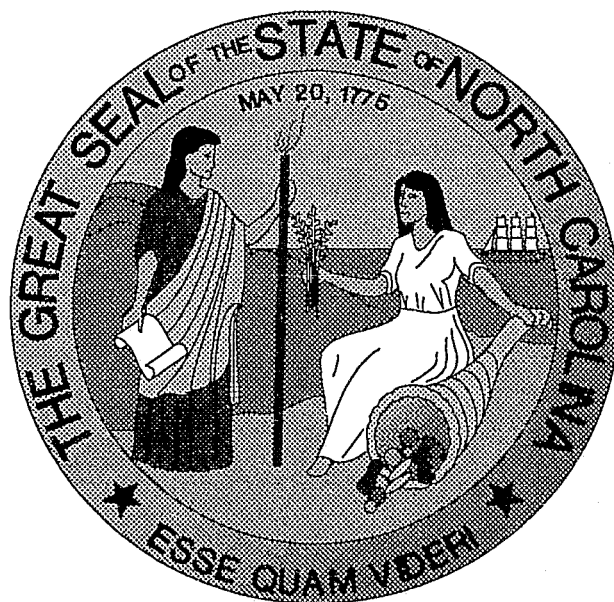
Thurman B. Hampton, Secretary  
Crime Control and Public Safety

Compiled and Edited by  
The Criminal Justice Analysis Center

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## Preface

A major task for the GCC staff is to produce the annual state block grant application for Drug Control and System Improvement Act funds from the U.S. Department of Justice. The second half of that larger document is the "Nature and Extent of the Problem" which is an area of interest detailed by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

This year Analysis undertook a complete rewrite of "The Nature and Extent of The Problem" to include some major studies we did plus get the current snapshot of how illegal substances are transported and distributed through our state. Many professionals statewide were interviewed to thoroughly understand the current state of illegal drugs. The document is most informative in its depth of analysis and explanation of how illegal drugs are distributed and how they affect our citizens.

James Klopovic  
Dec 1992

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# Nature and Extent of The Problem

## Introduction

On August 29, 1992, two young men kidnaped two young females from their home. The kidnappers dictated their demands in the most brutal terms: money and drugs or the young women would die. Although the exchange was set, the crime was halted as law enforcement officers arrested the kidnappers without their threats being carried out. Now the story begins ....

The two youthful kidnappers, hardly out of their teens, were part of a self styled gang of just fourteen men, boys really, who called themselves the "Posse." They constructed themselves into a loose-knit gang that preyed on other drug dealers and associates by robbing them of money and drugs. During initial questioning they related a world where life, family, community, and honest work never mattered. Within the previous year, just a matter of a few months, these fourteen boys were responsible for *at least* five murders, several shootings, many robberies, a car jacking, a bank robbery and burglary. Each instance was an example of wantonness and cruelty:

- Murder of a male subject during a robbery of drugs and money
- Murder of a female subject, probably punitive due to her association with a rival drug dealer
- Murder of a male subject; gunned down in the middle of a street and robbed of drugs and money

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- Murder of a male subject; the defendants fatally shot the victim in a bar due to a feud over a bad drug deal
- Murder of a female subject; the defendants killed the subject over drug turf
- Shooting of a male subject; victim shot for his involvement in a previous drug robbery
- Shooting and robbery of a male subject; victim shot by a gang member during a robbery of drug money in a prearranged drug deal
- Shooting and robbery of two male subjects; two victims were shot and seriously injured during a robbery of drugs

The investigation continues ....

This story is one of many that relates the severity of illegal drug activity and the toll that it exacts. North Carolina's problem with crime and violence is especially significant because, as the facts, figures and stories that follow will relate, crime and violence are spreading quickly. Illicit drug crimes are the most significant crime problem. Controlled substances continue as the root of an inordinate amount of crime. In the middle district of North Carolina, which typifies the state, federally prosecuted drug offenses rose from 51% to 58.4% from 1990-1991. Moreover, 65% of all federal defendants during that time were using or otherwise involved in drugs.

There is no precise "profile" of the common drug user because more people abuse illegal substances. There is no precise "profile" of the common drug trafficker because a range of groups, younger and older, are risking the hazards of trafficking illegal drugs. We have no precise "pattern" of trafficking because traffickers are becoming much more

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creative, sophisticated and blatant as law enforcement and the courts continue to pressure them. There is no community that is "free" from the effects of illegal substances because many users are affluent and addicts are becoming bolder in their robberies and burglaries.



## I. Estimate of Availability of Drugs

### A. Level and Type of Production

1. **Marijuana:** Although Cannabis has taken a back seat due to the proliferation of crack cocaine and powder cocaine, it is making a comeback as proven by some disturbing observations. Though the amount of marijuana seems to hold constant, more is being grown indoors by people who cultivate a small plot. They usually grow only five to 10 plants to supplement income or for personal use. In addition, quality is dramatically better. Local producers can get hybrid seed from Amsterdam and propagate hot house plants that can produce six to seven *pounds* of marijuana per plant. When the select portion of the female plant, sinsemilla, is prepared for trafficking, the active ingredient, THC, can rise to 19%. Just five years ago, THC content was usually about 3%. Since domestic North Carolina marijuana, superior to imported cannabis, can be grown indoors and sold for upwards of \$3,000 per pound, increasing numbers of people are becoming involved.

An undercover agent observed that very soon indoor production will surpass outdoor production though outdoor growers are bold and creative. An example of their creativity is that they have propagated a low growing cannabis plant that resembles a small juniper. Obviously this plant is much harder to see from the ground and the air when grown in more but *smaller* plots. The shrub-like cannabis plant grows well in an attic as reported by interdiction team members.

Perhaps most disturbing is that frequently people fail to see marijuana as a problem when compared to "hard" drugs and the violence associated with cocaine and crack. One interdiction arrest concerned an elderly, 71 year old, infirm, retired farmer who tried to grow a few marijuana plants to supplement his income. He didn't even

know how to process the leaf into a usable product; he did know that it was an easy way to make money.

2. **Powder Cocaine and Crack Cocaine:** Production and availability of these forms of cocaine are increasing. The main culprit is crack cocaine. Crack's addictiveness, its ready availability, its affordability and its phenomenal profitability make it irresistible to more and more people. They are trapped in its use or are drawn to the money, excitement and "prestige" of its trade. Powder and crack cocaine continue to proliferate as the trends show. An urban law enforcement official said that five years ago it was impossible to find crack in his town. Now street corner crack markets are similar in number and operation to drive up fast food windows. Some neighborhoods have open air markets on every other corner. Ten years ago it was sensational news to publicize the arrest of a one kilo cocaine dealer; now it is not even newsworthy.

The tremendous profitability of crack cocaine, upwards of 3000%, as it is traded from source to street, proves irresistible to many groups of people. Anyone can get a \$900 ounce of cocaine out of state and sell it on the street for \$2000. Undercover agents have the most graphic observations. In a western North Carolina town undercover officers observed the dealing of \$60,000 of crack on *one corner* in *one day*. Anyone can "cook" cocaine into crack inexpensively with supplies from the grocery store and an oven or microwave. With this ease of access into the crack "business" it is not difficult to see why an official estimated street corner sales in his town approached 10kg (\$140,000) of cocaine *per week*. A young dealer, 21 years old, was arrested for trafficking illegal substances. Although he had been in business for just over two years, he had 20 "employees" and was distributing 10kg of cocaine, crack and powder, per week. Cocaine in 1983 sold for about \$60,000 per kilo in North Carolina. Today a kilo costs about \$14,000.

As in any business, market availability determines price. When there is more available, the commodity costs less. It is obvious by price alone that cocaine is more prevalent than ever. According to undercover agents, anyone who sells a dose today can deliver a kilo in a matter of a week or two. Crack, its price, properties and proliferation have completely changed the tactics and the urgent need to fight it.

3. **Methamphetamine (Crank):** This illegal substance is no where near the problem that cocaine is. Yet it is troublesome that the Highway Patrol made a recent Methamphetamine seizure and confiscated enough equipment for *two* crank labs.

## **B. Importation and Transshipment of Illegal Substances**

The most distressing trend in importation and transshipment is that no matter who comments, whether it is the Drug Enforcement Agency, the postal inspector, a federal attorney, a sheriff or an undercover man, they all observe that North Carolina is a major destination for illegal substances. This means that many illegal substances are headed for our state in increasing quantities.

"Cocaine importation and distribution continue to be the most serious drug problems that confront the state of North Carolina. The state's territorial boundaries are within maximum range of the northern regions of Colombia, South America. This enables smugglers to fly direct cocaine loads to clandestine airports located in North Carolina. Smuggling operations continue to use the large North Carolina coastline, due to its many potential off-load sites. Distribution and sale of cocaine are ever increasing problems in North Carolina. This can best be gauged by the fact that the retail price of cocaine has *not* gone up, which would

accompany any lessening of supply. The typical North Carolina organization responsible for trafficking cocaine in North Carolina includes local individuals supplied by sophisticated groups in Florida and from the northern United States." (North Carolina National Guard)

1. **Who:** So who is trafficking, importing and transshipping illegal substances within North Carolina? Disturbingly more people from every age group are arrested for involvement with illegal substances. Moreover, there is a notable trend of the older generation, even retirees, growing marijuana or smuggling a small amount of cocaine for sale in their hometown. Crack is marketed primarily by black men between the ages of eighteen and thirty. Eastern North Carolina is witnessing a trend of middle-aged people, between the ages of thirty and fifty, who set up legal auto businesses as fronts for the illegal drug trade.

Illegal aliens throughout North Carolina are also establishing large networks of operatives that are responsible for transshipping cocaine in very large amounts. What is disturbing about this group of people is that they quickly move up or begin as middle or upper lever dealers/distributors because they have expertise and contacts developed out of the country. This group is proving to be particularly difficult to deal with because they are quite clever, sophisticated and intelligent as observed by Immigration and Naturalization Service officials. Not as serious, but plaguing no less, is the trend of North Carolina natives who skirt the law with illegal liquor and are now including marijuana and cocaine trafficking in their "business." To summarize who is transshipping illegal substances, one western North Carolina undercover officer commented: "If you stop any twenty cars, you will find someone with an illegal substance."

2.     **What:**         The "what" of what is being transshipped to and around North Carolina is easily answered: Number one is cocaine, in particular crack cocaine, then cannabis, heroin and increasingly LSD. Crack cocaine is the major drug of choice in both rural and metropolitan areas according to the Drug Enforcement Agency. They further comment: "The price index for cocaine reveals that the price has not increased significantly which suggests the cocaine is getting through to its final destination." Heroin is beginning to rise in popularity among drug users as is LSD that is making a return as shown by its increasing use on an eastern North Carolina college campus.

3.     **How:**         As one can imagine, traffickers, driven by easy and huge profits are on the one hand, blatant and on the other clever and polished in the methods they devise to import and move illegal drugs. Our local DEA official has some pertinent comments:

- The state of North Carolina has noted an ever increasing amount of crack cocaine from its primary source: New York City. Defendants arrested enroute to North Carolina with cocaine are equally divided between residents of North Carolina and New York City.
- A primary means of transshipment is by tractor trailer using Interstates 77, 85, and 95 through North Carolina. (Note that our Highway Patrol seized 775 kilograms, 1703 pounds, of cocaine on I-85, December 15, 1992. This seizure is the largest in our state's history with a street value of \$87 *million*.)

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- The preferred route from California and Texas to the major eastern states is via Interstate 70 while Interstate 95 is the major route from Florida to the eastern seaboard states.

At the most common level, a few ounces of marijuana or an ounce of cocaine is smuggled in privately operated vehicles with no attempt at concealment. The methods of concealment and deception usually escalate in sophistication as the amounts increase. Recently a highway patrol officer seized a large shipment of cannabis that was "built" into the frame and door panels of a van. Door sectionals were packed with the substance then sealed in with auto body putty and a factory-fresh coat of paint. Even more intricate than that was a case where blue water smugglers rigged their boat with subsurface pontoons. These pontoons, or torpedoes where the contraband was loaded, were jettisonable from the cockpit. The pods were equipped with a radio beacon device that means they are locatable via surface vessel at any convenient time.

Serious dealers have many means to get drugs to North Carolina. Body carriers are common. Frequently migrant workers hand carry shipments from the south and west. A recently discovered ring of Nigerian heroin dealers would hire naturalized Nigerians, recruited locally, to return to Nigeria for a load of ingested pellets packed with heroin. Each "mule" earned about \$13,000 to make the round trip and disgorge the heroin that appeared encased in a black substance that made the pellets look like large jelly beans. Furthermore, police in a large urban area report they confiscated coke in disposable diapers, balloons, cadavers, car tires and in containers of pepper.

Other disturbing trafficking trends have been observed. Traffickers are often becoming legitimate business owners. An eastern North Carolina dealer opened forty window tinting and auto repair shops to at once cover his illegal activities in legitimacy,

provide a marketplace for illegal drugs and launder the "dirty" money. Although most seizures of drugs are in long haul trucks and private vehicles, uncontrolled and unattended airfields continue to have activity according to the North Carolina National Guard. Engines off, lights out, night landings continue; they can only be for one purpose. Then there is the serious problem of smuggling via mail. Although the Charlotte postal inspection office is a "small" division of 35 inspectors, it *leads the nation* in seizures of narcotics. The Charlotte regional postal inspection office logged 160 seizures from October 1991 through September 1992. Of the 160 arrests, 75% were in North Carolina. More narcotics are mailed to North Carolina than any other state according to the postal inspector. The number one illegal substance that comes through the mail is cocaine, crack and powder.

Recently, inspectors intercepted a mailed package in Charlotte that contained *seven pounds* of cocaine. It comes from all over the country and even from some foreign addresses. In one current case a ring of traffickers bootlegged 400 to 500kg of cocaine from Panama in cheap stereo radios before they were finally stopped. The chief postal inspector for the Charlotte region put it all in perspective for North Carolina. He observed that the most worrisome problem is that North Carolina is *the* destination, not a point en route, for all these substances. Drug traffickers see our state as exploitable.

### **C. Availability of Drugs by Type, Now versus Five Years Ago**

When we talk to North Carolinians combating illegal drug activities, we hear such words as (amounts are) "sky high," (coke is) "deluging" the system," and "anyone and everyone is involved." These words describe how this almost immediately addicting drug has spread throughout so many communities and continues to spread at a quickening pace.

1. **Cocaine:** There are numerous indicators that show availability is way up. The invention of a simple process for cracking cocaine, which anyone can do, opened new markets since the high is cheap and addicting. According to undercover agents the temptation is irresistible to many; anyone can get a \$1,300 ounce of coke, crack it and turn a huge profit for a few days' trouble and little work.

Another sign of availability is the competition for markets. An eastern North Carolina law enforcement official reports that street sellers are flagging down drivers or jumping in front of cars just to have a captive prospect for a drug sale. Now kilogram quantity dealers are common in this state. Contrary to economic principles, as the demand increased price decreased. The \$60,000 kilo in 1983 now costs approximately \$14,000 in North Carolina. *Again*, the quality is very high. As the price decreased, the supply increased. There are ready supplies of potent cocaine for a market wherever a dealer initially establishes or eventually expands.

2. **Marijuana:** An informal survey of law enforcement and criminal justice system professionals yields a common comment: "While crack cocaine is the number one problem, marijuana continues to be North Carolina's number one cash crop." The crop flourishes whether it is in the mountains, the piedmont, the coast or indoors. Take as evidence the huge success of our Highway Patrol's helicopter eradication campaign: During the six-month growing season they seized 10,982 plants from 743 plots that were conservatively worth \$26,356,800. This record was accomplished with only sixty-nine flights!

Supply has risen to meet demand over the years. This is probably because the increasing quality of North Carolina cannabis enables it to compete well with foreign and out-of-state cannabis, thus the export market is strong. Law enforcement observed



that there is little importation compared to the amounts grown locally. They remark that traffickers willing to risk transshipping illegal substances prefer to import into North Carolina cocaine that is pound for pound vastly more profitable. Ready statewide availability makes interstate importation less attractive. Yet, as mentioned before, marijuana moves on our highways; the Highway Patrol alone seized 183 pounds on North Carolina highways in 1992.

Another indicator of its prevalence is that prices have been dropping. An eastern North Carolina police chief watched the local sinsemilla price slide from \$1,800 per pound to nearly \$1,200 per pound over the last two years. It bears repeating that this decrease in price is in the face of dramatic increases in potency.

Then too there is a change in the attitude of people. Most people oppose the abuse of any illegal substance. Yet there is a growing tolerance for marijuana because it is "yesterday's news" for over thirty years and is surely overshadowed by the dramatic culture of powder and crack cocaine. In some circles it is common place; one man, stopped by a police officer, was genuinely surprised that his marijuana was a "problem" because he said he liked to use it instead of beer. He thought beer was more harmful especially while driving. When crack houses are raided, law enforcement nearly always finds cannabis that is available for the crack abusers if they choose. A police officer in a large urban area commented: "These things go in cycles and marijuana is definitely on the way back."

3.     **Heroin:**     The next most troublesome illegal substance in North Carolina, in terms of its availability, is heroin. Statewide heroin is making a noticeable comeback, though not nearly the difficult problem that cocaine is according to the State Bureau of Investigation. It is surfacing enough that law enforcement officials are

concerned. One major city has a significant problem with it since a major trafficking ring saw and exploited a ready market. Officials observed the sale of 500 "bindles" (doses) by *one* dealer from *one* house in *one* evening. Hopefully this is not foreshadowing the trend with heroin. Probably the most disturbing fact, again, is that with its resurgence, purity has risen to "deadly" levels. Five years ago heroin was at 6% purity. Now seized heroin tests at 50% purity. Considering that a "normal" dosage purity is about 2%, this trend is particularly worrisome.

4.     **Pharmaceuticals:**   An eastern North Carolina police chief observed: "(Pharmaceutical abuse) is starting to come back very strongly, particularly in the area of 'script' fraud for schedule II and IV substances." There are some veterinarians misusing prescription privileges and some pharmacists falsifying inventories. Federal attorneys are seeing some steroid cases and observe that the problem of medical doctors falsifying prescriptions continues at the same level it was five years ago.

5.     **Hallucinogens:**    LSD is making a sharp increase in western North Carolina. A recent arrestee had a 10,000 dose shipment of LSD in possession on arrest. He was responsible for distributing ten to twelve such shipments per year. Law enforcement reports the drug is making a "limited" comeback on campuses within their jurisdictions. Similarly the SBI notes that LSD is more available now than five years ago.

## II. Patterns of Drug Trafficking and Drug Use

The professionals concerned with halting the flow of illegal substances and administering justice to those trafficking illegal substances all make a similar comment about patterns of trafficking: "All illegal drug trafficking takes organization." While there is traditional, established organized crime in North Carolina, the drug trade is producing a different criminal who operates in an organization different from traditionally organized crime. Just to show the contrast between the stereotypical criminal and the drug criminal in the streets, courts, prisons and jails today, it is appropriate to define our common conception of organized crime. The Internal Revenue Service definition suffices. The organized crime / criminal is:

"Those self-perpetuating structured and disciplined associations of individuals or groups, combined to obtain monetary or commercial gains or profits, wholly, or in part, by illegal means while protecting their activities through a pattern of graft and corruption."

The illegal drug criminal and his organization who are seen today are not the "Mafioso" who usually come to mind. He is more violent and single-mindedly directed to illegal drug trading and his survival in that trade. People who traffic illegal substances in North Carolina operate more individually and are more prone to violence. Furthermore, they are more transitory and less organized in a business sense than the organized criminal defined previously. Their groups are disciplined only so far as punishment can be administered. The goal is the lure of the life style of the drug culture, not long term gains. As always, they protect their "business" with harsh violence.

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The most anti-social trafficker is a career criminal or "criminal entrepreneur." Bayer's definition fits the individual whom North Carolina law enforcement is confronting:<sup>1</sup> That individual:

- exhibits an internal, not external, locus of control,
- believes that he can control his own destiny,
- will take huge risks if the rewards are great,
- is generally dissatisfied and discontented,
- has a personal life that is isolated and lonely, and
- has difficulty maintaining stable relationships.

North Carolina researchers did an extensive analysis of drug traffickers admitted to the Department of Correction in 1989-1990.<sup>2</sup> This general profile from that study of criminals sent to prison for violating North Carolina Drug Trafficking statutes further defines the North Carolina illegal drug trafficker. The offender is:

- Older than the average offender,
- in early-to-mid 30s,
- more often single than other offenders,
- overwhelmingly male (89%). But there are more females than expected compared to the general population of North Carolina,
- predominantly black,

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<sup>1</sup>Bayer, A. (1989). Psychological and Behavioral Traits of Entrepreneurs. Unpublished "draft" report prepared for the Police Executive Research Forum.

<sup>2</sup>Pelfrey, W. (1991). Characteristics of Drug Traffickers Admitted to The North Carolina Department of Correction 1989 and 1990, pp. 27-28.

- predominantly poor and an urban resident,
- weak in educational achievement,
- of low or average intelligence,
- frequently having a drug problem, and
- far more likely to be trafficking cocaine than other drugs.

The subsequent discussion elaborates on how the trafficker operates in and around North Carolina.

### **A. The Role of Organized Crime in Drug Trafficking**

Nearly all drug dealing is done via an organizational structure centered on illegal drug commerce though the trafficker profile is changing as noted above. As the new "dope" dealer emerges, his organization in North Carolina is evolving. Now it appears organization is external to the state either in its actual hierarchy of key figures or in its expertise. That is, the necessary infrastructure to transship illegal substances is mainly from northern locales. Similarly, some expertise comes from offshore and foreign countries, vis á vis, the Caribbean and South America. North Carolina shows no overarching organizational control. The people responsible for getting illegal substances (mainly cocaine and heroin) into the state are largely from New York and South America. Local distribution is done by offshoots of various self-styled groups. Locals also organize street level marketing and street sales.

Undercover officers from western North Carolina note: "(They, the local authorities) don't confront dealers with real expertise ... Most of the criminals dealing are crude in their ability to market drugs compared to New York dealers." They gave the example of a young, 21 years old, mid-level drug dealer, mentioned earlier in this

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report, who was so sloppy with his deals and money that an informant simply pocketed \$40,000 of the dealer's money; he never missed it. The dealer was regularly bilked of large sums of money and quantities of cocaine. Though he was dealing nearly 10kg of cocaine per *week*, on arrest, he had little to show for the money that represented so much destruction to North Carolina communities. This lack of expertise has an ominous implication: The officers see this marketing confusion as an environment ripe for a sophisticated, high level drug "business" man. Demand is high. Drugs are available. People have an insatiable drive for the illegal drug lifestyle. Moreover, the North Carolina market needs a person or people to organize it.

These emerging illegal drug organizations are developing differently than what we might expect. For example, an Immigration and Naturalization Service agent commented that the Jamaican group was more powerful and difficult to deter than traditional organized criminals. For one thing they are more clandestine and anonymous because publicity means deportation. So they organize specifically for the importation of a specific illegal substance, usually cocaine and keep a very tight, closed operation with select people. They quickly become the mid-to-upper level dealers which removes them even further from street level activities and violence.

This is also the pattern of long time North Carolina residents who have expertise trading illegal liquor or goods like hijacked cigarettes. A federal attorney for eastern North Carolina noted a case where a family that had been in the moonshine business for nearly three decades simply transferred their expertise to cocaine and marijuana trafficking. Similar to the Jamaican gangs, they dealt in secrecy via connections built around a very small closed neighborhood group.

The organization of North Carolina traffickers has taken another step in its evolution. Western, central and eastern law enforcement officers have observed an idea in illegal drug marketing they call "franchising." Simply, a territory is divided among local franchisees. Out of state distributors recruit local people, usually black youths, who are responsible for hiring street sellers and completing the transshipping process by marketing the final product to the user. A very clever aspect of this trend is that the franchiser rotates the franchisee to a different location when it suits the upper level distributor. This usually occurred when the franchisee became known to law enforcement. An eastern North Carolina police chief observed that in these organizations, the "franchiser" also provides protection and profit assurance. North Carolina does not have the level of sophistication associated with traditional organized crime. However, illegal drug networks and their operating procedures are developing in ways that will make them even more violent and difficult to deal with than they are today.

## **B. The Role of Motorcycle and Other Gangs in Illicit Drug Trafficking**

The gang or non-traditional criminal organization is becoming more of a problem for several reasons. They are responsible for most crimes and the escalation of violence, much of which is wanton. They involve increasing numbers of neighborhood youth. They perpetuate and complicate the problems surrounding illicit drug crimes due to their highly organized and effective methods of operation.

Like much of the United States, North Carolina is experiencing an increase in gang activity. The state currently has three active chapters of nationally known outlaw motorcycle gangs and possibly as many as forty to fifty smaller gangs. Additionally,

North Carolina is beginning to see the evolution of youth gangs. The youth gang, though described as a "wannabe," is not less dangerous than the highly organized, mature motorcycle gang. This phenomenon will be the topic of the following section.

The outlaw "bikers," or "1%ers," are regularly involved in murder, rape, assault, burglary, narcotics, auto and cycle thefts, prostitution, weapons offenses and intimidation of citizens and witnesses. Western North Carolina officers say that they regularly transport cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine for themselves and narcotics dealers. Because of their demonstrated willingness to use violence, charges are often not filed and cases not prosecuted because witnesses fear retribution. Often, other club members perjure themselves for fellow club members. They pose an especially formidable threat to society and to law enforcement in particular because of their possession of and expertise in the use of weapons and their intricate intelligence networks. Durham officials commented that the local chapter of the Hells Angels is "... quiet, strong and sophisticated." They import and distribute large volumes of crack in rural areas thus keep a "low profile" by being away from congested areas. They are as anonymous as they want or need to be.

Outlaw motorcycle gangs evolve as they perpetuate their careers in crime. They no longer wear their "colors" all the time, and they are seen driving cars and trucks more than their trademark motorcycles. Although most members still wear long hair and beards, some have been seen with short, neat haircuts and even, on occasion, wearing suits. They have learned that by maintaining a low profile, they attract less attention to themselves and their activities. In one large metropolitan area, the predominant outlaw gang has members who are legitimate and prosperous second generation hardware business people. Outlaw motorcycle gangs are in a constant state of change. At this



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time they are as developed and well organized as the Mafia was in the 1950s according to the SBI.

Like the Mafia, outlaw motorcycle gangs prefer to participate in "victimless" criminal enterprises such as prostitution and drug trafficking. However, they also commit acts of violence, such as contract murders, bombings and debt collection for drug dealers. They commit rapes and acts of extortion that go unreported due to the fear instilled in their victims. In 1991, the SBI reported that these gangs committed ten known bombings and one murder. As one metropolitan police officer said: "When the bikers commit a murder, someone just disappears."

The narcotics trade continues to be the main source of income for outlaw motorcycle gangs and the drug of choice varies by the region. In the east, cocaine has been the drug of choice; however, methamphetamine is becoming more popular. Gang violence from internal conflict, gang rivalries and power struggles increased although it is not a prominent concern due to the overwhelming concern with crack cocaine.

Most North Carolina outlaw motorcycle gangs are "home-brewed" outfits according to a western North Carolina federal attorney. Many of these are traditionally called "duck clubs" which are associated with a larger gang. Most of these clubs operate for one of the larger clubs by selling their drugs, carrying their weapons, etc. It is from these clubs that many new chapters are formed for the "Big Four" gangs. The Rebel Rousers motorcycle gang out of High Point is one example of this. They have been linked with the Hells Angels for years. Also, the former Southern Cross motorcycle gang out of Charlotte became members of the Outlaws several years ago. Though the presence of outlaw motorcycle gangs will no doubt continue, grow and be felt, the most

disturbing development in illegal gang and group activity is with non-traditional groups of foreign nationals and indigenous youths as explained below.

### **C. Illicit Activity by Non-Traditional and Youth Groups**

1. **Non-Traditional Organized Groups:** Non-traditional groups and their drug related activities are the driving force behind the proliferation of illegal substances and the escalation of violence in North Carolina. These groups are as loose and unsophisticated as just some neighbors pooling their money to send a runner to New York City for a kilo of cocaine. Then a group can be as omnipresent as the "cans," Jamaicans, Dominicans and many other black nationals who ride the coattails of the perceived and actual violence associated with these effective groups. A current INS case illustrates how one non-traditional group proliferated, profited and affected the state.

The INS is currently working a major case that began with the observation of the "Catawba house," a known crack distribution center in a large metropolitan area. This led to a trail of, at last count, 350 aliens involved in trafficking illegal substances, mainly cocaine. The group represents fourteen nationalities where 90% of the current cases relate to three main nationalities, Dominicans, Jamaicans and Guyanese. To date, the INS arrested 145 aliens on drug, gun and other INS charges. Of those, 81 were convicted so far. There are forty more convictions in progress. Also, federal officials deported 64 aliens and three more await deportation according to an INS officer. This one non-traditional gang was responsible for distributing, by one estimate, at least 1,200 *pounds* of cocaine hydrochloride and crack cocaine in just three years. Agents were quick to mention that the success of this operation is no reason for celebration because these groups will continue to proliferate and poison our communities.

The emergence of this radically new kind of group is significant for several reasons, not the least of which is that they are here to stay and they evolve in effectiveness and efficiency rapidly. These aliens quickly move or initially establish as mid to upper level distributors who control territories and hire local people to do the visible, more dangerous activities as sales and enforcement. They are elevated from the notoriety and activity that are more likely to result in arrest. Besides, they are tightly insulated from public (law enforcement) awareness by the nature of their culture. Their language, their habits and their fear of deportation keep all members and especially key figures well insulated from investigation. Curiously, the one common thing they had in their coming together is baseball. The initial group came to this country, central North Carolina, ostensibly, to play minor league baseball, liked what they saw and resorted to the only means they could to stay and maintain a lifestyle: illegal drug trafficking.

An offshoot similar to alien groups is the emergence of street gangs who group specifically to deal illegal substances. These are not the "Crips" nor the "Bloods" of Los Angeles fame. They are not as well organized as the "cans" but they pose a significant social threat for several reasons. They are aware the courts are at least reluctant to prosecute assault and murder cases of another drug dealer. So these groups tend to discipline or intimidate in the most extreme way, murder.

Their violence has taken a particularly wicked turn; some of these groups had, on arrest, an arsenal of military weapons. Their caches included hand grenades, C4 explosives, an AK 47 and remarkably enough, artillery simulators used for fire bombings according to a U.S. attorney.

These groups come and fade but never go away. When they reemerge they are more sophisticated, more violent and more impervious to attempts to halt or curtail their activities. The fuel for their crimes is the easy money and life-style surrounding cocaine.

**2. Juvenile Groups:** While North Carolina does not appear to have any highly organized youth gangs, the gangs operating in the state are unorganized and may be called "wannabes." This does not make them any less dangerous because they are anxious to prove themselves by acts of violence. Juveniles, teenagers and youngsters from age 10 to their late 20s are being drawn into groups and activities focused on trafficking illegal substances, especially crack cocaine. There is not one concentrated area of the state where youth or street gangs are most active. Instead, the problem seems to exist throughout the state.

In North Carolina there are two types of youth gangs, both of which exacerbate the problem of drug trafficking. One type of gang organizes solely for drug trafficking. These drug gangs are not well-organized nor very stable. They are known to carry weapons plus commit shootings and murders. The drug gangs usually have a leader who is in his 20s or 30s, all members sell drugs for him. Most of the affiliates of the drug gangs are black and most center on public housing projects.

The second type of gang is the high school gang. Their members are both black and white and there is usually a gang established in each of a city's high schools. They are primarily involved in assaults, some of which have turned into homicides. There is much violence caused by high school gangs, mainly because their access to weapons is out of control. Evidence of this is the growing number of weapons that were recently confiscated from youths on school property. High school age children are not the only young people caught up in the drug quagmire.

There are many ways juveniles are used by traffickers. Children as young as eight act as "rollers" or lookouts around drug markets or crack houses. Teenagers do much of the street level handling of cocaine transactions. The youth makes the deal, *then* he gets the hit of coke from a nearby stash for the user. Even if he is caught, the penalty for possessing only one dose of cocaine is minor compared to the "glitterati" and exciting lifestyle into which they buy. Metropolitan thirteen-year-olds act like twenty-one-year-olds with expensive clothes, cash in their pockets and of course a gun, comment police officers. The gun is part of the mystique; it's necessary for the trade. The trade is their life, so the gun goes wherever they go, including to school. Access to weapons and the presence of a handgun may mean the difference between a benign argument and a murder. Furthermore, the problem is escalating.

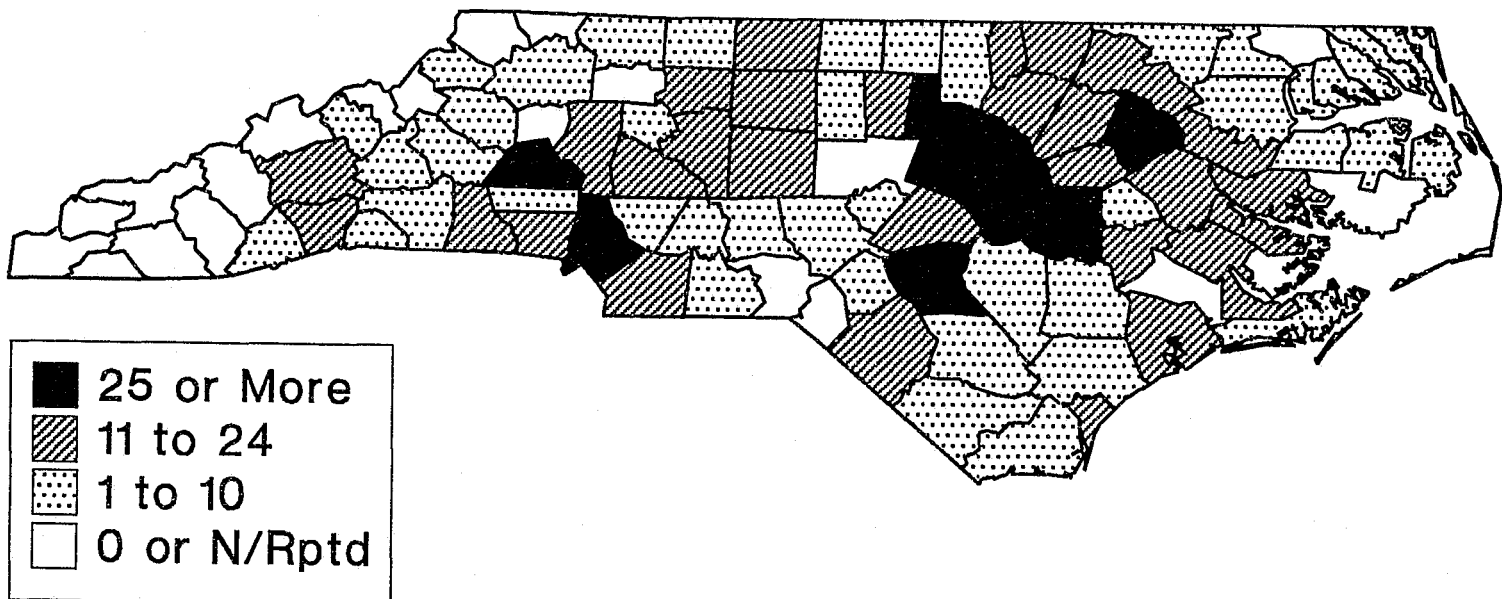
One federal attorney commented that this year they had more juveniles tried as adults than ever before due to the seriousness of their crimes. Also, there are more cases of drug deals happening within 1,000 feet of schools. Often children are lookouts, sellers and mules. Recently officers apprehended a young woman of 16 with two kilograms of cocaine stuffed into her under-garments. These are examples of the trend of more and younger people, boys and girls, getting caught up in crime. It is a trend that will continue.

#### **D. Significant Recent Trends in Drug Trafficking**

A recent trend in drug trafficking is the proliferation of "open air" drug markets in North Carolina. The Governor's Crime Commission, in an attempt to determine the number of open air drug markets in the state, conducted a survey of all police and sheriff's departments in North Carolina. Of the 470 surveys mailed, 297 responded with estimates of local open air markets (See Map: "Open Air Drug Markets" page 28).

Crack is sold primarily in open areas designed as distribution sites where traffickers operate overtly in an outdoor environment usually on a street or sidewalk. A user ready to buy crack can drive to the "market" and conduct the transaction, usually anonymously. Open air crack operations can operate with as few as one dealer or as many as twenty dealers per location. These markets usually operate at a very public place or in areas where it is difficult to observe. There can be as many as 150-200 people in one area where crack dealers blend in well because often they are from the immediate community. They also employ others as lookouts and "bird dogs" for prospective buyers.

## Open Air Drug Markets by County



North Carolina has an estimated 1269 open air markets according to the survey. The piedmont has most with 45% followed by the coastal areas with 38% of the markets. The west reported 17%. Charlotte, the city with most open air drug markets, had 185.

Durham was next with at least 125. One open air crack operation can adversely affect a small community and overwhelm a small to medium size police department much more than multiple operations in a large city. There is little a small or medium sized law enforcement agency can do to close their open air drug markets unless they combine forces with other agencies. Moreover, there is ample reason to be cautious when dealing with the criminals working such a market.

The survey asked if law enforcement officers ignored arrests because of threats to their lives or the safety and security of bystanders. Of the 193 responses to this question, almost 39% answered they would do so "occasionally or frequently," 61% answered "never." Many cities with large police departments and counties with large sheriff's departments expressed the same concern and reported they avoided making arrests because of danger to themselves or others.

The survey also asked if the crack markets serve primarily local or nonresidents. Of the 188 responses, 54 markets were *not* serving mainly locals and 134 markets were serving primarily local people. Those local residents were usually from a low income neighborhood, often public housing. There is a tremendous problem in the public housing communities. The factors that make a successful open air crack market, low income environment and minority population, are invariably present in a public residential community.

In major cities, open air dealers are almost exclusively black, as are the users. Thus, the crack markets are confined to low income, black sections of a city. Large cities have the resources to put pressure on the dealers. With increased pressure, some dealers are choosing to relocate to rural areas and small towns where law enforcement does not have resources to confront the problem with significant impact. When one dealer leaves

the city, another dealer quickly takes his place. This cycle continues virtually unchecked.

In some rural areas, especially in the western counties, there is a marked increase in the number of white youths using crack cocaine. Reasons are only speculation. However, there is one overriding factor that is present in most crack use: that is, the user's economic status. Poverty seems to be the underlying common factor with crack use in rural areas and in inner city neighborhoods.

There is an obvious correlation between the introduction of crack cocaine and the rise in violent and other crime. For example, the increase in prostitution according to law enforcement officials, is another by-product of crack usage and addiction. We do not know the extent to which increased prostitution will affect health-related issues, only that it will be unfavorable and costly.

As the above perspective on open air markets suggests, the trends in illegal drug trafficking, crime and the impact it has on our citizens continue as significant problems. Each development is either more devastating or more surprising than previous events. Law enforcement, social, legal and correction professionals all note that more people, younger and older, are involved in or are affected by drugs and crime in more ways than ever before. Tomorrow will mean only a worsening of the problem. Almost to underscore this statement, local police arrested a man at the time of this writing who illustrates some desperation of the problem, and the need to continue work against illegal drugs and its violence.

At noon local officers got a call from a nearby businessman who said that a fellow was selling them a microwave oven that may be stolen. Officials detained him for



questioning. The "clean, neatly dressed, mild mannered, white, middle-aged" man related that the microwave oven was stolen to "fence" for his crack habit. He openly discussed how crack drove his life.

His entire day focused on satisfying the need for crack. He walked endlessly within a four-block area from theft to sale to fix and back again. This typical day began about 9a.m. when he entered an office building and took a vacuum cleaner. Within the half hour, he sold it to a secretary in a small business for \$20, the price of a hit. He walked to the adjacent public housing project, bought and consumed the first of about five hits he needed for the day. Within an hour and a half he was back where he began, in an office building, riding the elevator to the 5<sup>th</sup> floor with the staff, looking for anything that would bring \$20. He found it, a piece of electronic gear. It didn't matter that it was worth \$1,800; it brought \$20 and the next hit. By noon, when he was apprehended with the microwave oven, his day's work was only half done. He had nothing but what he was wearing and a day devoted to theft and addiction though he came from a middle class family. The arresting officer commented he seemed relieved he was going to jail.

### **III. Effects on The Community and The Individual**

This report comments thus far on the nature and extent of the availability and trafficking of illegal substances in North Carolina. No such discussion is complete without considering how the culture of illegal drugs and subsequent violent crime really affects our citizenry. Since the milieu of illegal drugs causes and is associated with much of our violent crime, it is fitting to elaborate on a unique study of violent crime completed in North Carolina last year.

#### **Violent Crime in North Carolina**

In January 1992, the North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety and the Governor's Crime Commission began a project designed to assess the nature and extent of violent crime that occurred within the state during 1991.<sup>3</sup> Recognizing that official data as "crimes reported to police" is an incomplete picture due to non-reporting by some victims, the project sought to assess the levels of victimization of crime, especially violent crime. The connection between crime and the illegal drug trade is even more pervasive than "numbers" and subjective narrative suggests. Another aspect of the project was to measure fear of crime. Often as debilitating as the crime is the fear of crime and how it affects the quality of life of many citizens. The report quotes ( Pelfrey, p. 11):

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<sup>3</sup>Pelfrey, William V., et al (1992). "The North Carolina Violent Crime Assessment Project." This project was supported by a grant awarded to the North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, the Governor's Crime Commission.

"Fear . . . can work with other factors to stimulate more rapid neighborhood decline. Together, the spread of fear and other local problems provides a form of positive response that can further increase levels of crime. These feedback processes include (1) physical and psychological withdrawal from community life; (2) a weakening of the informal social control processes that inhibit crime and disorder; (3) a decline in the organizational life and mobilization capacity of the neighborhood; (4) deteriorating business conditions; (5) the importation and domestic production of delinquency and deviance; (6) further dramatic changes in the composition of the population. At the end lies a stage characterized by demographic collapse."

The recognition that violent crime does not exist in a vacuum directs us to examine social and economic factors and test their relationships to violent crime.

Finally, the project surveyed attitudes and opinions regarding violent crime in the past and future. This ambitious project was initiated to understand the phenomenon of violent crime in North Carolina and its effect on our citizenry.

A comment on the quality and thoroughness of this study is appropriate to lend even more credibility to the revealing results. The Assessment Team<sup>4</sup> developed

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<sup>4</sup>The following experts represent some of the best researchers of crime issues:

William V. Pelfrey, Ph.D., Professor, VCU, Team Coordinator

Robert M. Bohm, Ph.D., Professor, UNCC

Charles W. Dean, Ph.D., Professor, UNCC

John A. Humphrey, Ph.D., Professor, UNCC

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Michael L. Vasu, Ph.D., Professor, NCSU

strategies, instruments and methodologies to measure and analyze violent crime. Three methodologies were undertaken: a telephone survey with a large sample; a mailed survey that asked questions related to fear, attitudes and opinions; and evaluations of social and economic data that help explain violent crime. These methodologies helped insure results were reliable and valid. Thus the results estimate, as accurately as possible, victimization, attitudes and opinions about crime and violence.

An obvious issue is the extent of the problem of violent crime. It is necessary to exercise caution when making comparisons. Still it is useful to look at the estimates of violent crimes as shown by the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and the North Carolina Violent Crime Assessment Project.

The NCVS data represent reports of victimization by respondents age twelve and above. The calls to households made in the NCVS study are dependent on the ability of the person interviewed to know about and remember the victimizations of other family members. In the North Carolina survey, the subjects were asked only about their own victimization. The sample included only those age eighteen and above. The most recent UCR and NCVS data at the time of the study are for 1990 while the North Carolina Violent Crime survey is for 1991.

With these cautions and remarks, the table below will compare what we know about crime in North Carolina and the nation before this survey in North Carolina. The newest, most reliable data we can find are the North Carolina Violent Crime Assessment Project's telephone surveys:

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Gary W. Willis, J.D., Professor, PSU  
Margaret A. Zahn, Ph.D., Professor, UNCC

Comparison of Crime Rates <sup>5</sup>			
	1990 UCR	1990 NCVS	1991 NC Violence Survey
Robbery	152	570	<u>1289</u>
Rape <sup>6</sup>	67 <sup>7</sup>	120	<u>1017</u>
Agg Assault	424	790	<u>1411</u>
Assault	NA <sup>8</sup>	1540	<u>2076</u>

This table graphically displays the under reporting of crime using either UCR statistics or the NCVS national statistics. It has always been known that reported crimes underestimated actual crime. Now we gain a better idea of just how deeply people are victimized:

- More than 1 percent of the women in North Carolina were victims of rape or attempted rape in 1991. This rate is *fifteen times* higher than the rate of reported rape in 1990.

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<sup>5</sup>Per 100,000 population

<sup>6</sup>Rates shown are per 100,000 *women*.

<sup>7</sup>Rate is extrapolated from the rate per 100,000 population and the estimated female population of North Carolina.

<sup>8</sup>Data on Assault have not been available through UCR for any years.

- The robbery rate in North Carolina in 1991 was 1289 robberies or attempted robberies per 100,000 citizens; a rate *eight times* that shown by official reports for 1990.
- More than half the victims of robbery or attempted robbery in 1991 were women, a rate far greater than criminological literature suggests.
- Women are more likely than men to suffer multiple victimizations of robbery.
- Almost fifteen of every 1000 North Carolinians were assaulted with weapons in 1991, a rate more than *three times* the rate reported to police in 1990.
- More than two percent of the citizens of North Carolina suffered attacks or beatings in 1991.
- Women are as likely to be attacked with weapons by family members or relatives (34%) as they are by strangers (34%).
- Women are more likely than men to be victims of multiple aggravated and other assaults.
- The people in age group eighteen through twenty-two years were more likely to be victims of rape, aggravated assault and assault than other groups in 1991.

As mentioned in this section, the fear of crime is debilitating and a serious threat to the quality of life. The mailed survey measured North Carolinians' fear and their perceived risk of crime and violence. Almost 57% of North Carolinians were afraid to walk alone at night in areas near their homes. Over half the citizens of the state said that fear of crime prevented them from doing many things they would like to do. In fact, 19% of North Carolinians say that "very often" they are prevented from doing

things because of fear of crime. Almost one third of the citizens of the state (31%) worry "very much" about their loved ones being victimized criminally. Over 13% of the citizens of North Carolina, are "very fearful" of being victims of a violent crime. The picture these statistics paint is one of populations under siege.

Fear of crime is debilitating but the expectation of crime, the perception of risk, is a measure even stronger. About one in four North Carolinians felt that they are "likely" to be the victims of an assault. Almost one in four respondents felt that it is "likely" they will be the victims of a robbery. More than one in five expects to be the victim of an aggravated assault. Citizens are taking action.

The experience of one sheriff's department is most revealing. Local town's people are arming themselves at an alarming rate: In 1991, this sheriff's department issued about 3000 gun permits. In 1992 he issued over 7,000 permits. The department offers a gun safety class since this is the best thing that can be done to at least help the citizenry know the dangers of hand guns. The class has a waiting list of 200 paid new hand gun owners. Every class is attended overwhelmingly by working women and many senior women. Women are simply afraid of being victimized in their own homes. They are willing to take, what is to them, extreme measures to feel a little safer.

North Carolinians in large numbers alter their lifestyles significantly because they expect to be victimized criminally. Where did the citizenry place the blame for their fears? The following hierarchy of causes of crime, as perceived by the people in our neighborhoods, is revealing since the "Use of drugs" is the overwhelming reason perceived as the cause of crime and especially violent crime:

Use of Drugs

95.6%

## Crime in North Carolina: A Perspective from The Governor's Crime Commission

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• Criminal Justice system too easy	75.3%
• Breakdown in family life	74.0%
• Use of alcohol	73.6%
• Moral decay	68.3%
• Parental discipline	66.7%
• Availability of guns	59.7%
• Television and movie violence	54.9%
• Gangs	54.5%
• Economy	53.0%

It is also noteworthy that counties with high rates of arrests for *possession* or *sale* of drugs also have high violent crime rates. Illegal drugs and the activity surrounding the drug trade, play significantly in the proliferation of crime in the community.

There are many implications to infer from this study, some of the more obvious follow. Robbery has been masked by low reporting rates; it is a significant problem in North Carolina. Rape in North Carolina is a problem approaching epidemic proportion. Minorities, especially Native Americans and women are most in need of attention. Young men and women, ages eighteen through twenty-two, are victimized at a much higher rate than expected. The fear of crime is dramatically affecting the quality of life of North Carolinians. Our citizens and these statistics point to the dramatic need to reduce the possession and control the sale of illegal drugs in North Carolina. Without some way of reducing violent crime and the spread of illegal drug activity, the criminal justice system and many of our communities will continue the decline to dysfunction. This dysfunction will reduce the quality of life for all citizens of North Carolina.



## IV. Afterword

This publication graphically relates that our three most serious crime problems, drug-related crimes, violent/firearm crimes and property crimes are all ultimately exacerbated by or related to illegal drugs. Without illegal drug trafficking the other problems would still exist but not to the extent now found. Violence would be less common and citizens would be much more comfortable with their lifestyles and in their communities. This overview is in no way complete without mentioning, if only briefly, that much is going right.

North Carolina has a very strong infrastructure of community, courts, law enforcement and correction staffed with committed, capable and especially confident professionals who make it difficult and frequently impossible for the criminal element to continue. It is logical that criminals move faster than law enforcement, the courts and policy and that fact is what is important: Criminals in the state change tactics frequently because professionals throughout North Carolina effectively counter their every attempt to flout or skirt the law.

Every community has its own success story. Our DARE programs have reduced illegal drug demand significantly among our very vulnerable preteen group. Every federal region successfully and increasingly sends career criminals to prison via project "Triggerlock." More attorneys and more law enforcement officers are coming on staff and into the community. Successful community policing projects are working in many cities; note the Community Based Policing projects in Greensboro and Wilmington. There is a new awareness of the need to reclaim, permanently, our communities from crime, decline and dysfunction. "Weed and Seed" projects are working in five counties right now. They prove "Weed and Seed" works and provide models for how similar programs can work in any neighborhood in need of a way to stand up to criminals,

pushers and thugs. There is a new awareness in the courts and in policy making bodies of the need to revamp policy and coordinate applicable agencies. Moreover, there is a renewed emphasis on prevention.

What is most important, even in the face of growing crime and illegal substance abuse, people everywhere are as resolved and committed as ever to fight and win the fight against crime one case at a time, one neighborhood at a time, one community at a time and one town at a time. North Carolina will continue to prosper, develop and contribute to the strength of its citizens and the country via its innovative, successful approaches to crime and violence.

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