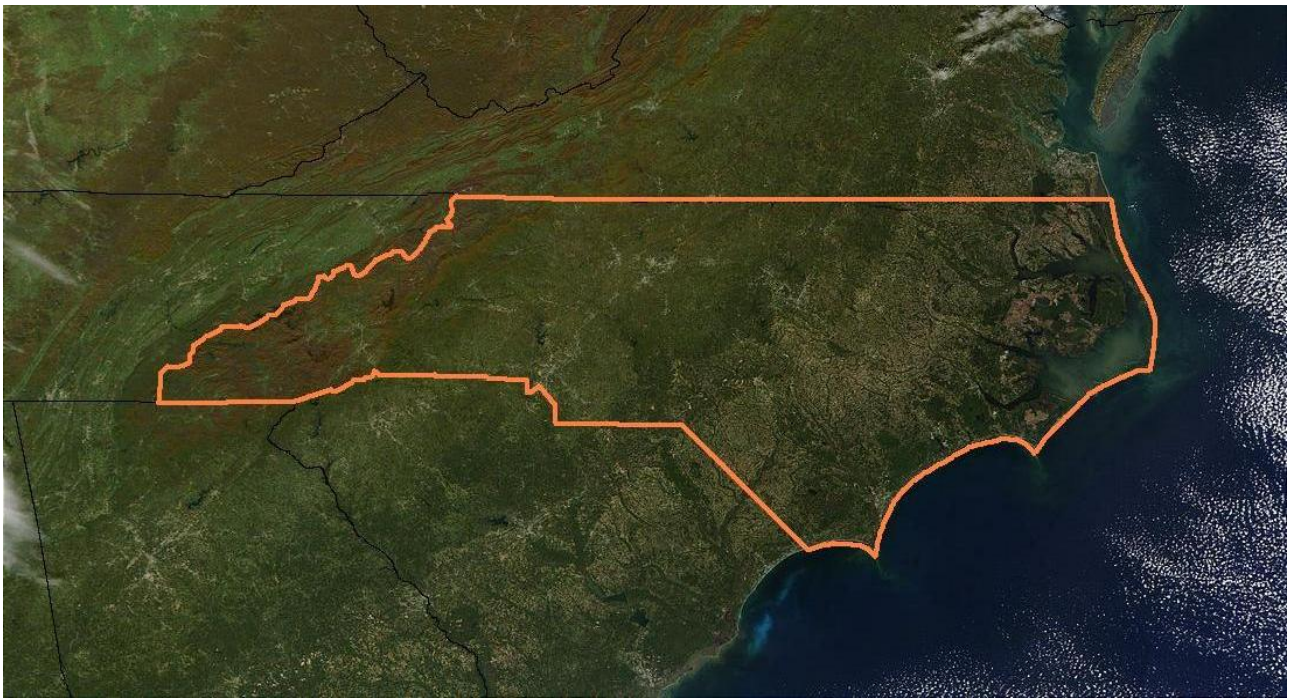


# Scorecard on Crime and Justice in North Carolina



December 2007

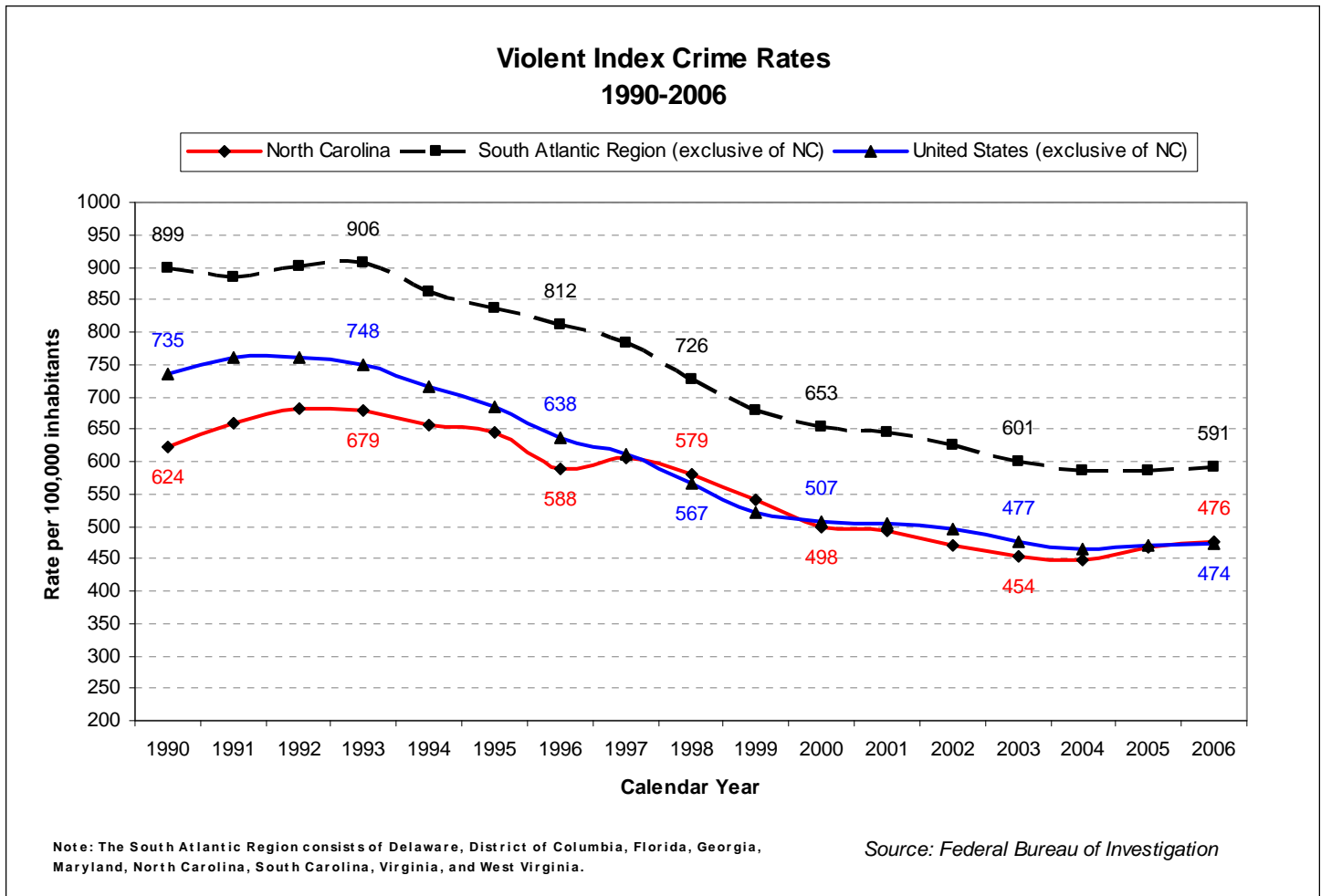
Compiled by: Charlene Coppersmith, Justin Davis, and Yuli Hsu

North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission  
Criminal Justice Analysis Center  
1201 Front Street, Suite 200  
Raleigh, NC 27609  
(919) 733-4564  
[www.ncgccd.org](http://www.ncgccd.org)



*This document is a compilation of criminal justice related trend data obtained from numerous sources. It was written to inform decision makers and the general public about recent system trends in North Carolina. The information can be used as a guide to help shape better policy decisions related to the criminal justice system.*

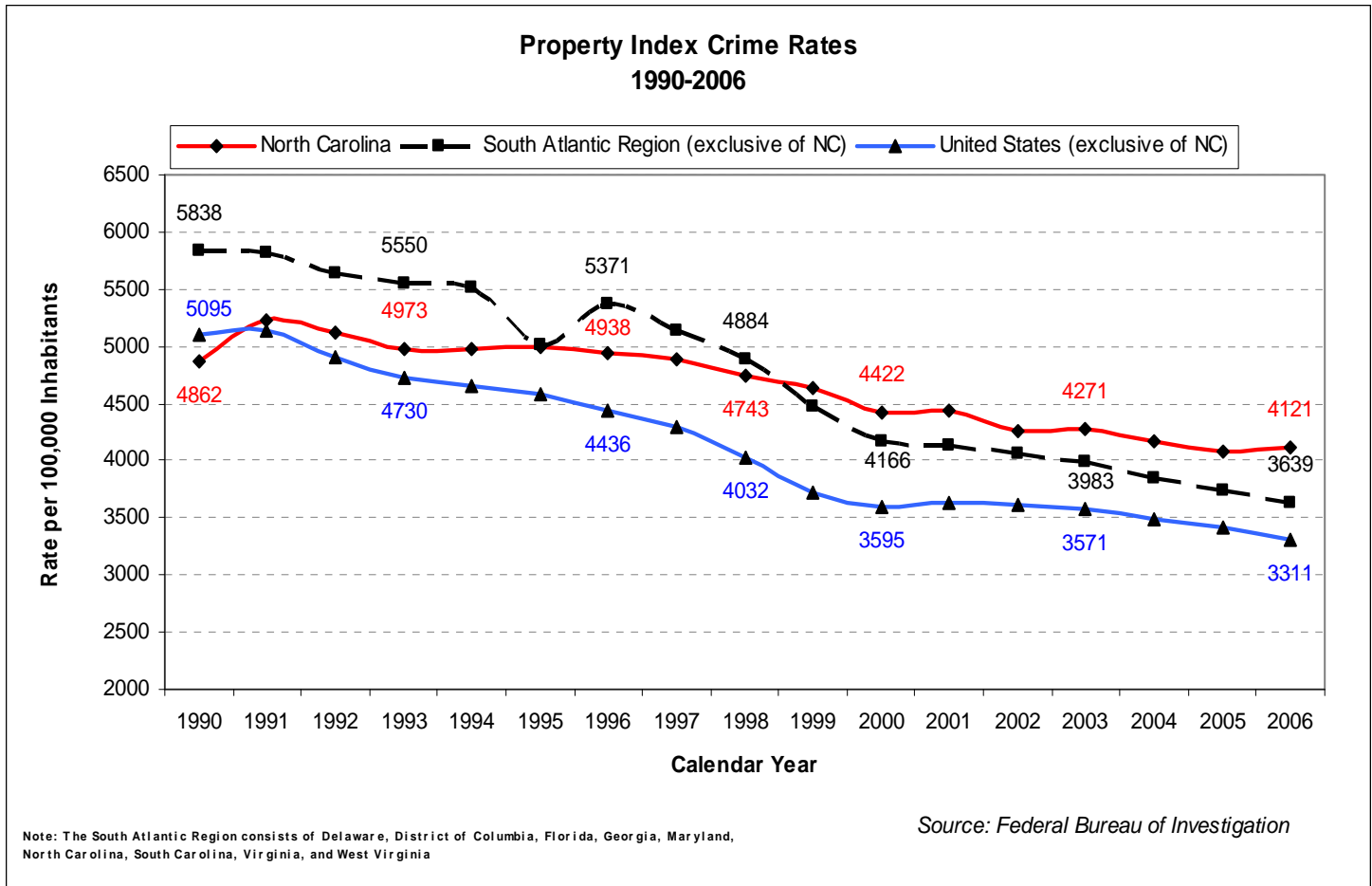
## State's Violent Crime Rate Comparable to National Rate



In general, the violent crime rate has been falling in most places across the country. Violent crime in North Carolina, which includes murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery and aggravated assault, has decreased near 24 percent from 624 offenses per 100,000 inhabitants in 1990 to 476 offenses in 2006. After decreasing steadily from 1997 to 2004, North Carolina's violent crime rate grew slightly in both 2005 and 2006.

Our state's violent crime rate has remained lower than the regional and national rates for the most part. However, the gap between the three rates has narrowed in recent years. Violent crime rates in the South Atlantic Region decreased by nearly 10 percent between 2000 and 2006, while the United States experienced an almost seven percent reduction. Meanwhile, the Tar Heel state experienced a mere four percent reduction in violent crimes during the same period. For the first time in seven years, North Carolina's violent crime rate was higher than the national rate in 2006. North Carolina had the 19<sup>th</sup> highest reported violent index crime rate per 100,000 inhabitants in the nation (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico).

## State Property Crime Rates Remain Higher than National and Regional Rates



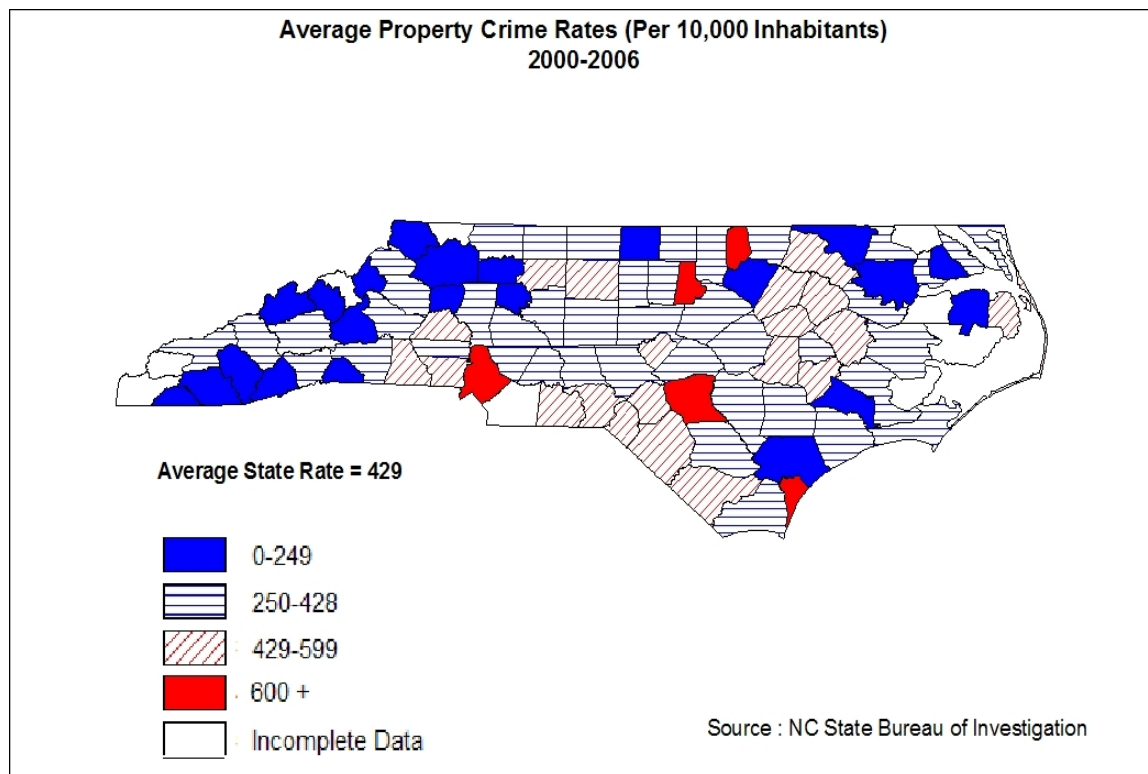
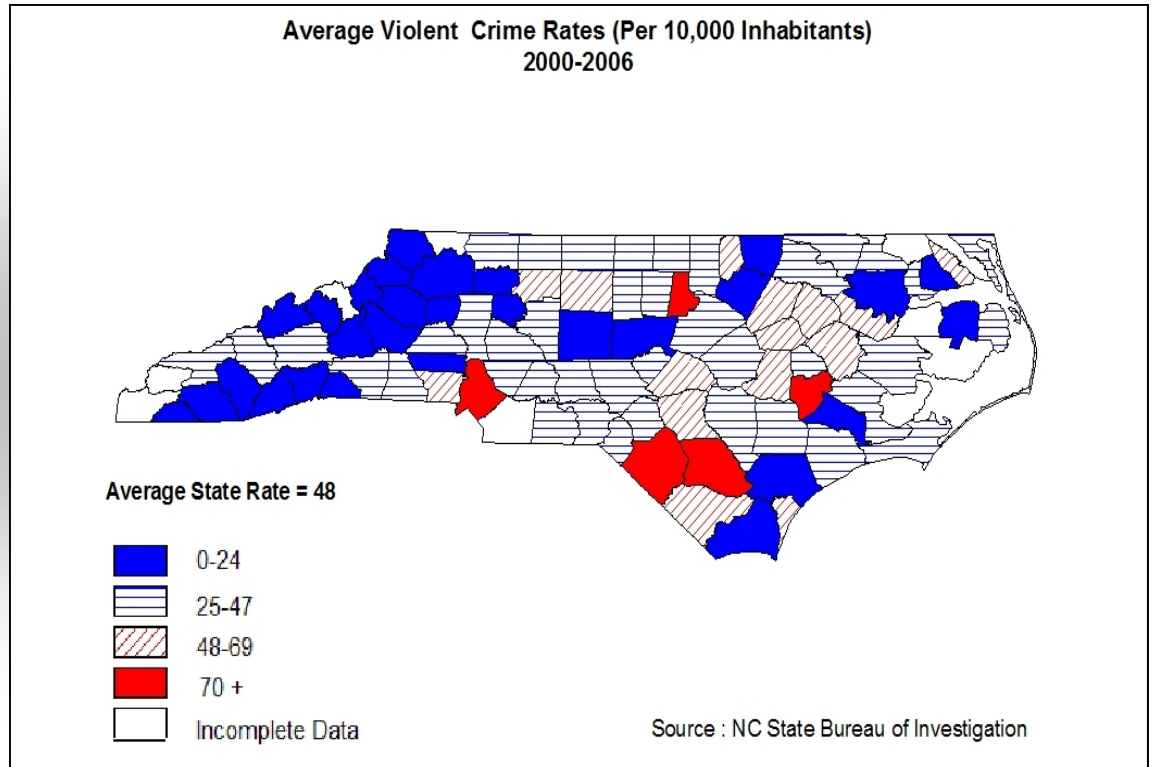
Property index crime, which includes burglary, larceny-theft and motor vehicle theft, decreased 15 percent in North Carolina from 4,862 offenses per 100,000 inhabitants in 1990 to 4,121 offenses in 2006. In 1990, the state's property crime rate was lower than rates in the South Atlantic Region and United States (exclusive of North Carolina). However, starting in 1991, North Carolina's property crime rate exceeded the national, and sometimes regional, rates. In fact, the state's property crime rate has surpassed both regional and national rates since 1999.

While the United States and South Atlantic region saw property crime rates decrease slightly between 2005 and 2006, North Carolina experienced a slight increase in the property crime rate. In 2006, North Carolina had the seventh highest reported property index crime rate per 100,000 inhabitants in the nation (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico). Interestingly, since 1999, North Carolina has had the highest annual reported burglary rate per 100,000 inhabitants in the nation (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico).\*

\* For more information, see the forthcoming *GCC SystemStats* edition on the topic of Burglary in North Carolina.

# North Carolina County Index Crime Rate Averages

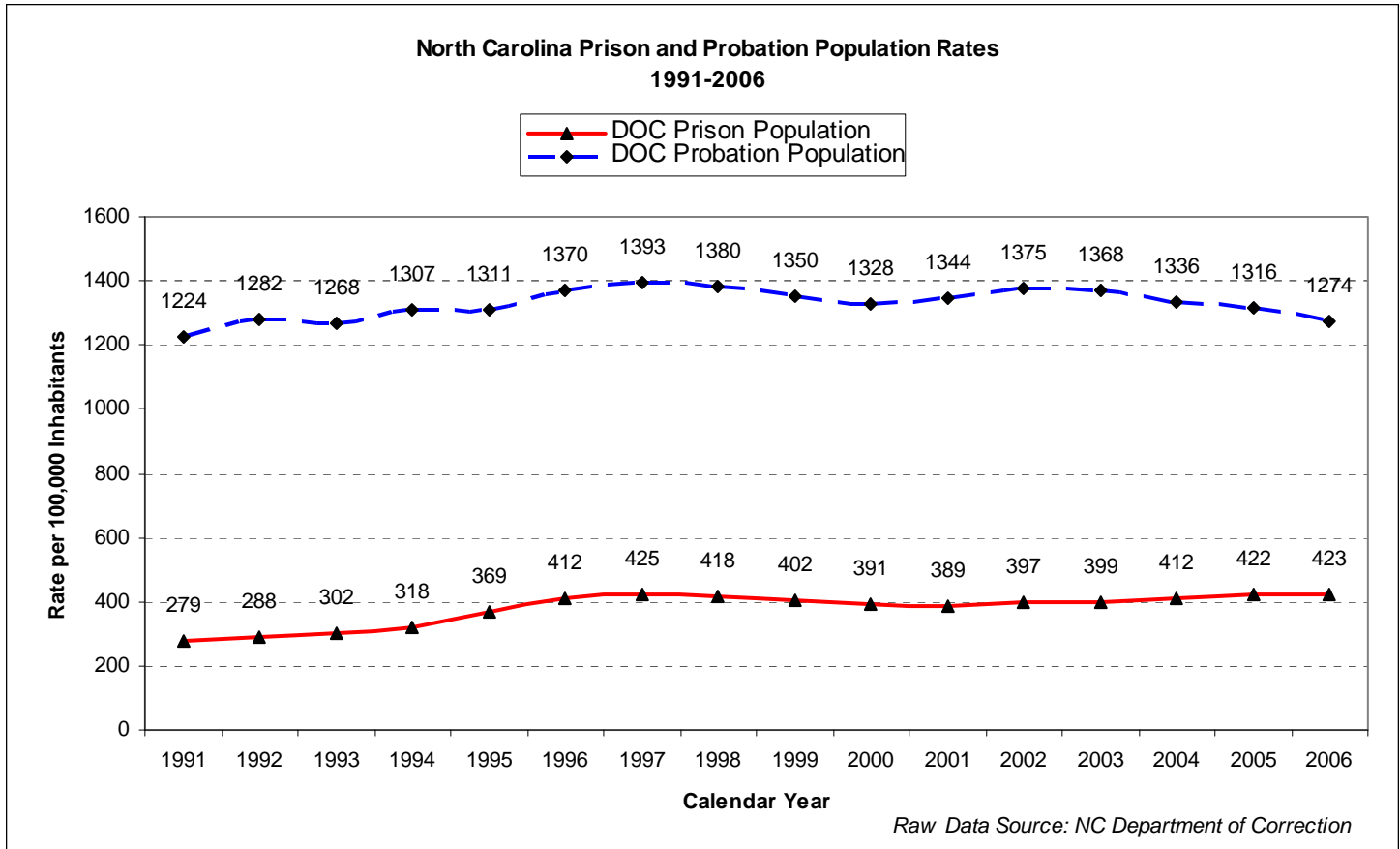
Twenty counties had an average violent crime rate that was equal to or greater than the state's average rate while 70 counties had an average rate that was lower than the state. Ten counties failed to report complete data for all seven years (2000-2006).



Twenty-five counties had an average property crime rate that was equal to or greater than the state's rate, while 65 counties had an average rate that was lower than the state. Ten counties failed to report complete data for all seven years (2000-2006).



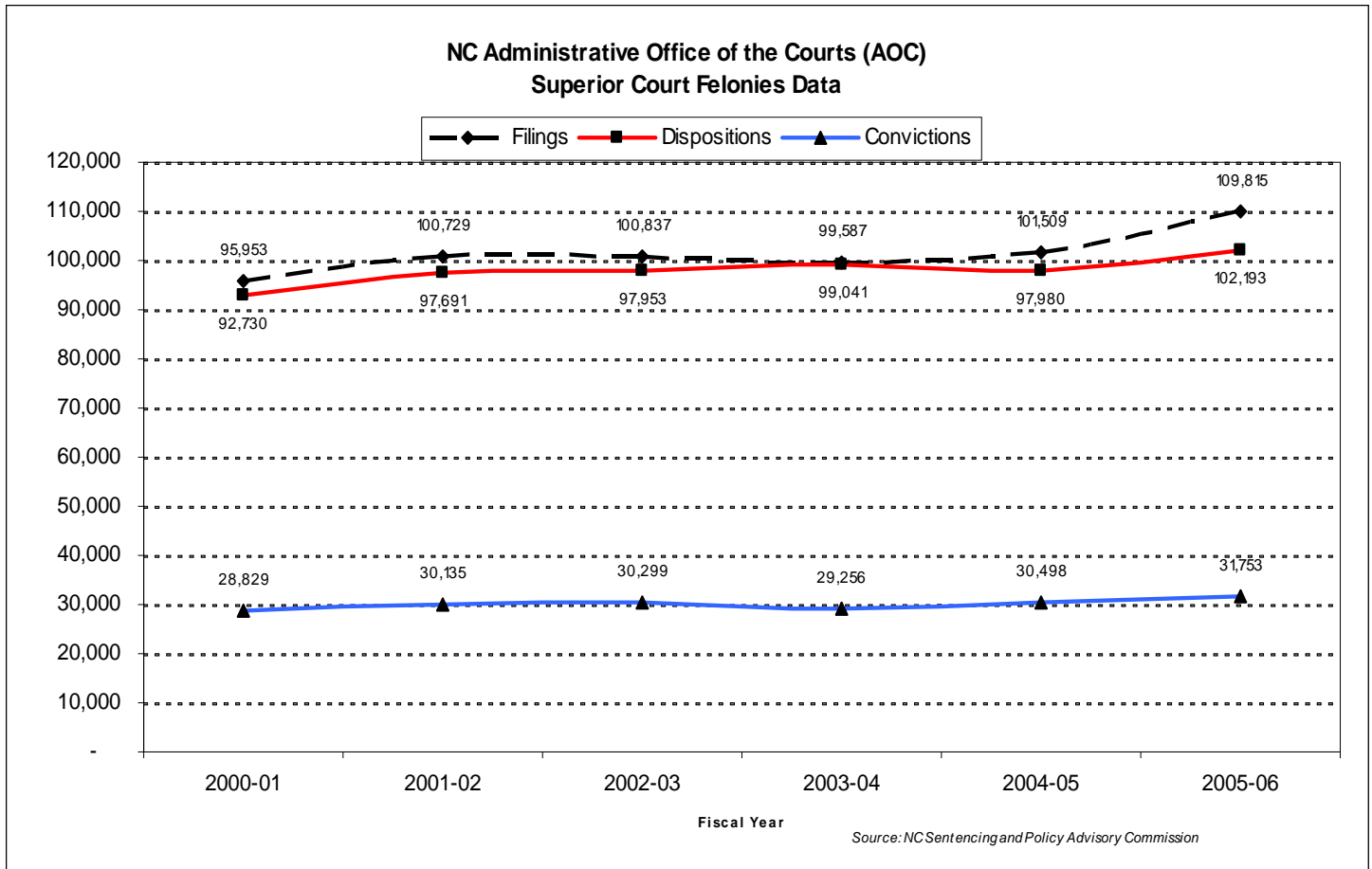
## Prison Population Rate Increases More than 51 Percent in 15 Years



While violent crime rates and property crime rates have decreased during the past 15 years, the state's prison and probation rates have increased. Overall, the prison population rate increased nearly 52 percent from 279 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants in 1991, to 423 inmates in 2006. During the same period, the probation population rate increased four percent from 1,224 probationers per 100,000 inhabitants in 1991, to 1,274 probationers in 2006.

After the Structured Sentencing Act went effective in late 1994, the state's prison population rate increased by 15 percent, while the probation population rate actually decreased by three percent. The Structured Sentencing Act intended to reduce the number of needed beds by diverting less serious offenders to intermediate and community punishments. At the same time, it hoped to increase the likelihood that more serious offenders would serve longer sentences by abolishing early release mechanisms, such as parole. According to the NC Criminal Justice Analysis Center report "A Discussion of Incarceration and Its Alternatives in North Carolina," felons stayed in prison an average 16 months in 1993 (before Structured Sentencing) compared to an average 39 months in FY 04-05. The longer sentences have partly contributed to the increase in the state's prison population rate and ironically, have contributed to prison overcrowding rather than helping to alleviate it. Our state must keep a vigilant eye on the impacts of Structured Sentencing.

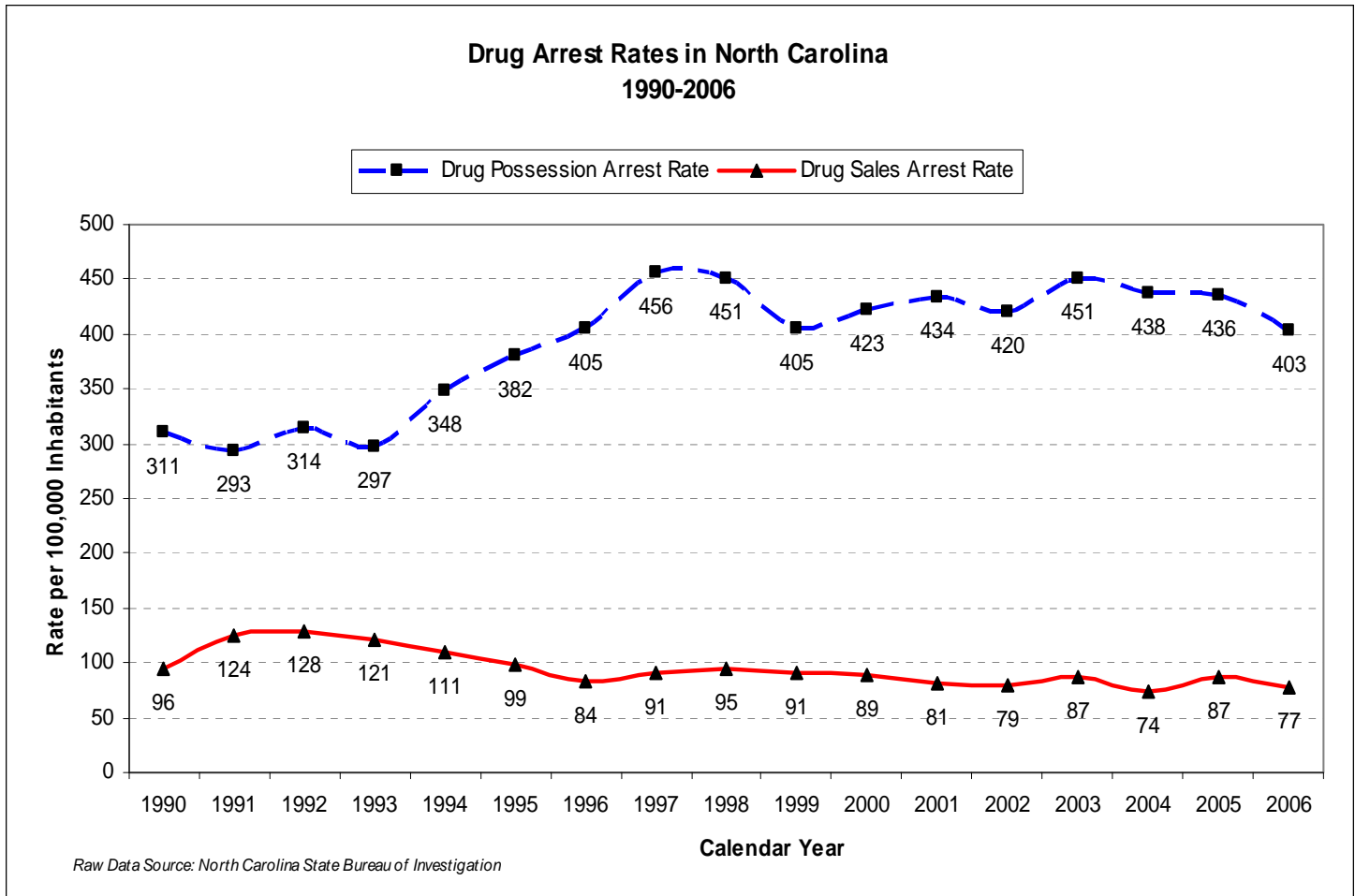
## Felony Filings Outgrow Dispositions by Almost 2:1 Ratio in One Year



As expected, the number of Superior Court felony filings, dispositions and convictions all increased during the past six years. The number of filings increased 14 percent, while the number of dispositions and convictions increased 10 percent each. The gap between the number of filings and dispositions actually decreased from FY 00-01 to FY 03-04 then began to increase again.

North Carolina must ensure that the state's judicial system is fair and quick or citizens could lose faith in the system. To address the "lagging behind" issue, the NC General Assembly in recent years has slightly increased judicial branch appropriations from the state General Fund. The state's judicial branch will require much larger legislative increases in coming years if it is to adequately fulfill its mission to "protect and preserve the rights and liberties of all the people...by providing a fair, independent and accessible forum for the just, timely and economical resolution of their legal affairs."

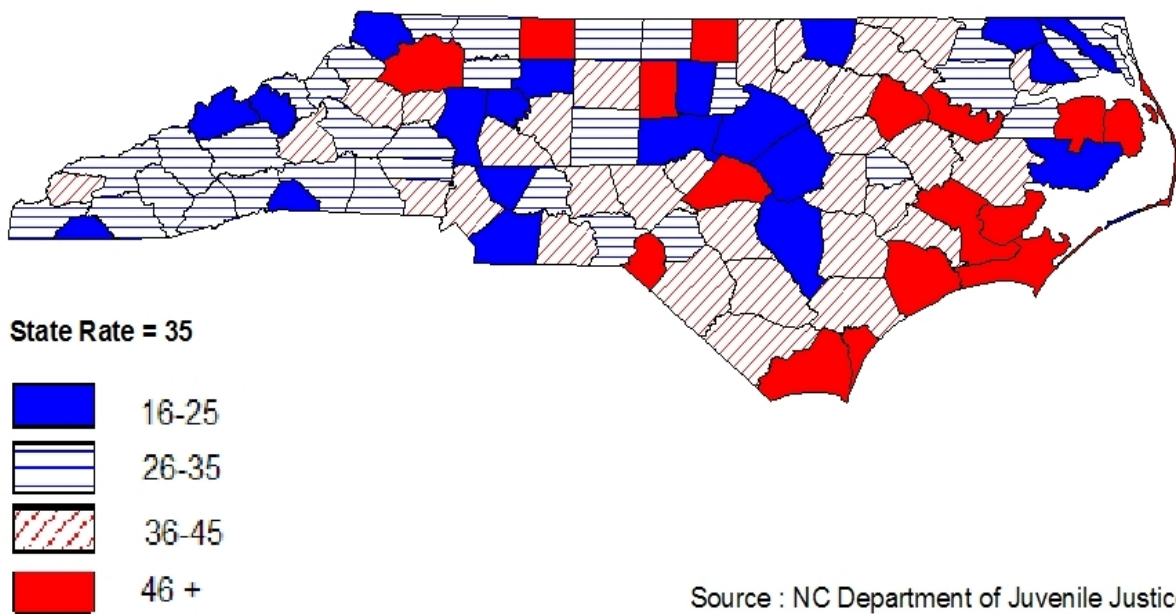
## Drug Arrest Rates Down in 2006



North Carolina's drug arrest data during the past 16 years presents an interesting paradox. While the drug sales arrest rate declined by about 20 percent, the drug possession arrest rate actually rose by almost 30 percent. The overall drug arrest rate (possession and sales arrest rate combined) peaked in 1997 with a rate of 547 arrests per 100,000 inhabitants. Since 1990, the overall drug arrest rate per 100,000 inhabitants in North Carolina has increased by roughly 18 percent. However, our state experienced an eight percent decrease in the overall drug arrest rate between 2005 and 2006. That begs the question. Are we really losing the "war on drugs" by means of increased arrests, or are there simply more drug arrests being made as a result of improved law enforcement tactics?

## County Juvenile Delinquency Complaint Rate Averages

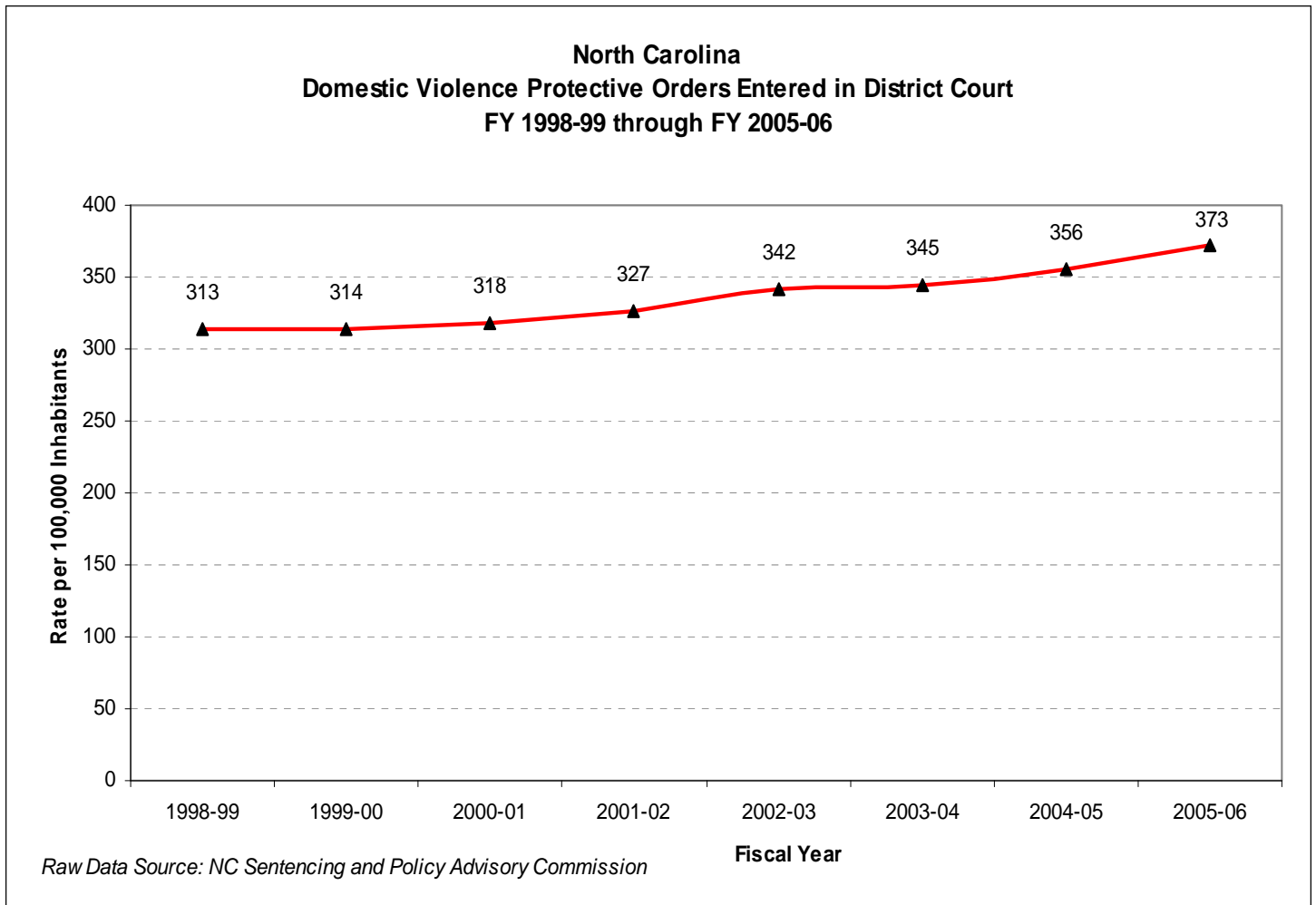
Average Juvenile Delinquency Complaint Rates (Per 1,000 Age 6-15)  
FY 2001-02 through CY 2006



Fifty-three counties had an average juvenile delinquency complaint rate that was greater than the state's average rate of 35 delinquency complaints per 1,000 individuals between the ages of six and 15, while 47 counties had a below average complaint rate. The highest rates were found primarily in eastern North Carolina, while the lowest rates generally occurred in the western and central parts of North Carolina. The counties that saw the largest rate drops between 2005 and 2006 were (in alphabetical order): Anson, Clay, Lee, Tyrrell and Watauga. During the same period, the counties experiencing the largest rate increases were (in alphabetical order): Alleghany, Avery, Caldwell, Granville and Richmond.

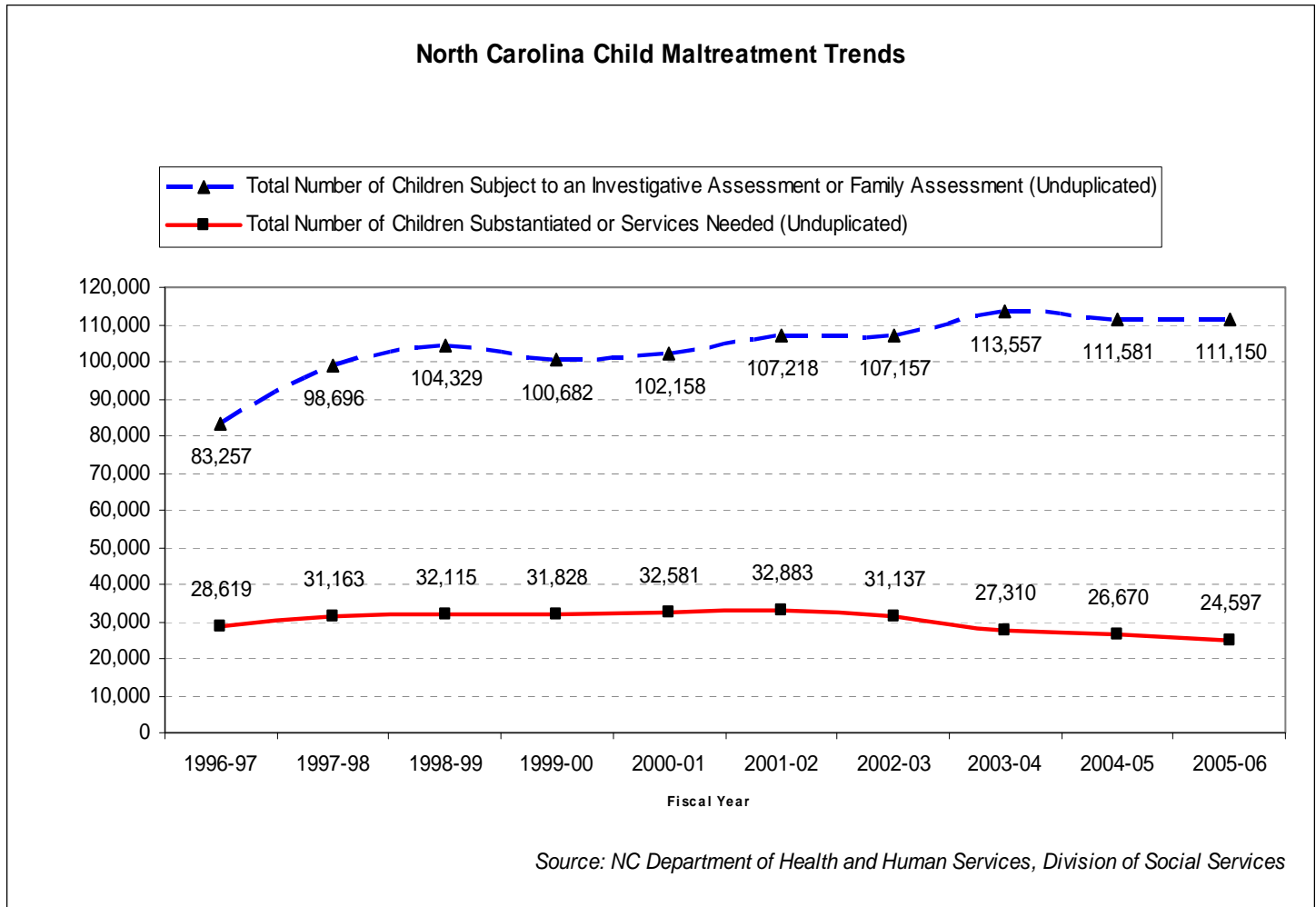


## Rate of Domestic Violence Protective Orders on the Rise



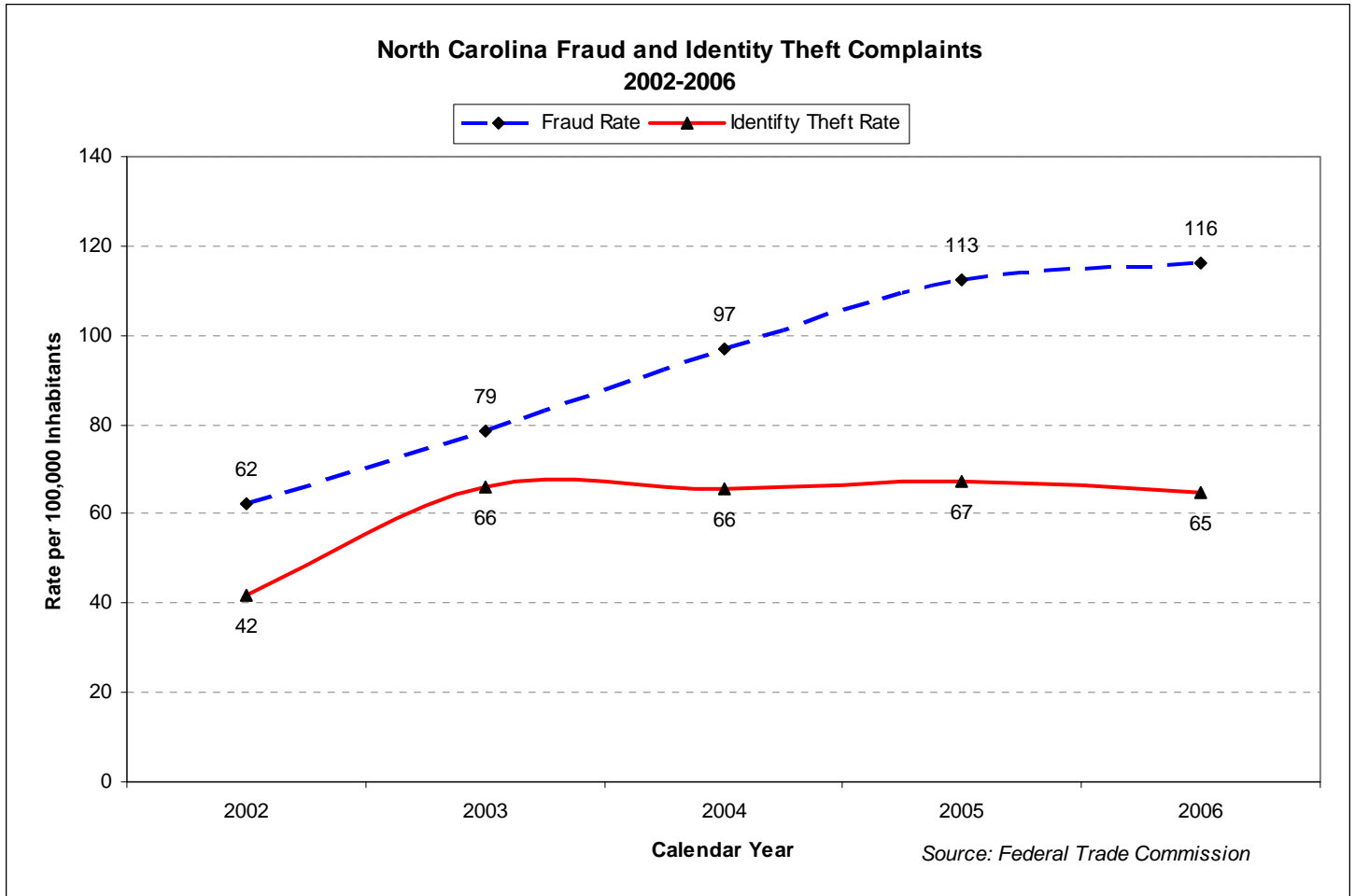
North Carolina has seen an increase in domestic violence protective orders entered in district court during the last several years. During FY 98-99, there were 313 protective orders entered per 100,000 inhabitants. That rate grew more than 19 percent in seven years with 373 protective orders being entered per 100,000 inhabitants in FY 05-06. The rise in domestic violence protective orders entered in district court should make criminal justice practitioners and decision makers question whether this upward trend will continue in upcoming years. Decision makers should also inquire as to whether the increase in domestic violence protective orders has been caused by an actual increase in domestic violence throughout our state, or whether it simply means that citizens are seeking out protection more often than in the past.

## Number of Children Subject to a Maltreatment Assessment Increases 34 Percent in Ten Years



The number of children substantiated for maltreatment or in need of services increased between FY 96-97 and FY 01-02, before dropping steadily the past four years. In FY 96-97, 34 percent of reported children subject to an investigative assessment were substantiated or in need of services, whereas in FY 05-06, 22 percent were substantiated or in need of services. The significant changes in substantiation rates could possibly be explained by the implementation in 2002 of the Multiple Response System (MRS) which uses a non-traditional investigational approach in child welfare cases. The MRS is a more family-centered way of meeting the needs of a family from the time the report comes in through the decision making process. No perpetrator of maltreatment is named when needed services are discovered.

## Special Focal Point: Fraud and Identity Theft In The Tarheel State



Fraud and identity theft remain problematic throughout the country causing numerous costly and time-consuming headaches for many consumers. According to the Federal Trade Commission, the total number of fraud and identity theft complaints from North Carolina consumers almost doubled over a five-year span. In 2002, there were 8,402 total complaints, whereas, a total of 16,048 complaints were reported in 2006. Over the five-year period, the fraud rate rose by 87 percent in our state. Meanwhile, the identity theft rate rose sharply (57 percent) between 2002 and 2003. Since then, the identity theft rate has remained relatively the same.

On average, the state has had the 34<sup>th</sup> highest fraud complaint rate nationally between 2002 and 2006. North Carolinians have begun to experience more financial loss per fraud complaint with an average \$1,685 loss in 2002 to \$4,196 in 2006. Roughly 20 percent of all fraud complaints in North Carolina between 2002 and 2005 were related to Internet auctions. By 2006, however, Internet auctions comprised only six percent of all fraud complaints. It appears that fraud is now becoming more diverse in North Carolina. Between 2002 and 2005, the top five fraud complaint types made up 60-70 percent of all fraud complaints in North Carolina, but by 2006, the top five types made up only 42 percent of all fraud complaints.

On average between 2002 and 2006, North Carolina has ranked 20<sup>th</sup> nationally in terms of having the highest identity theft rate. While credit card fraud tends to be the source for most identity theft in the state, the number of complaints in this category has declined slowly since 2003. As with fraud, types of identity theft have become increasingly diverse. In 2002, credit card fraud accounted for 44 percent of all North Carolina identity theft complaints compared to only 22 percent of complaints in 2006. On the contrary, employment-related fraud was the source of six percent of identity theft complaints in 2002. This source of identity theft has slowly become much more common. Employment-related fraud was the source of 12 percent of all identity theft complaints in 2006.

In 2006, several North Carolina communities ranked among the top 50 metropolitan areas – including both metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas – for worst fraud and identity theft complaint rates in the United States. The following tables illustrate those North Carolina communities with high rates of fraud and identity theft:

<b>2006 North Carolina Communities with High Rates of Fraud Consumer Complaints</b>		
<i>Rank</i>	<i>Metropolitan Area</i>	<i>Complaints per 100,000 Inhabitants</i>
6	Dunn, NC Micropolitan Statistical Area	347.6
10	Thomasville-Lexington, NC Micropolitan Statistical Area	335.6
19	Salisbury, NC Micropolitan Statistical Area	316.4
34	Statesville-Mooresville, NC Micropolitan Statistical Area	273.1
44	New Bern, NC Micropolitan Statistical Area	256.9
45	Durham, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area	256.4
Source: Federal Trade Commission		

<b>2006 North Carolina Communities with High Rates of Identity Theft Consumer Complaints</b>		
<i>Rank</i>	<i>Metropolitan Area</i>	<i>Complaints per 100,000 Inhabitants</i>
12	Thomasville-Lexington, NC Micropolitan Statistical Area	195.7
19	Dunn, NC Micropolitan Statistical Area	174.3
32	Durham, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area	145.6
39	Salisbury, NC Micropolitan Statistical Area	140.7
42	Goldsboro, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area	138.3
Source: Federal Trade Commission		