

South Carolina: Drug Enforcement Administration Data

Fall 2017 Marijuana Update



DEA
BULLETIN



This DEA Bulletin is based on preliminary reporting and may be subject to updating as additional information becomes available.

DEA-ATL-BUL-095-18
APRIL 2018

First Semi-Annual South Carolina NFLIS Data Marijuana Update

As of October 2017, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) South Carolina-related National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS) data show that marijuana submissions indicate it is the second-most submitted illegal substance by incident by South Carolina law enforcement officials 2015. With preliminary reporting from 2016-17, the ranking of marijuana has slightly decreased.

Significance: Illegal Marijuana Usage in South Carolina Crosses all Demographics

Marijuana continues to be seized regularly by law enforcement authorities and marijuana usage remains a persistent illegal activity. Marijuana continues to be a drug of choice and crosses more demographic lines than other illegal substances. Continued marijuana seizures indicate that South Carolina traffickers and abusers are taking advantage of states in conflict with federal law by legalizing marijuana. South Carolina-based criminal organizations illegally import their marijuana from states that have permissive marijuana laws. Members of criminal organizations are selling high-grade marijuana due to the large profit margin.

(U) Figure 1. The National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS).

NFLIS is a DEA program that systematically collects drug chemistry analysis results, as well as other related information, from cases analyzed by participating state, local, and federal forensic laboratories. These laboratories analyze substances secured in law enforcement operations across the country. NFLIS data are used to support drug regulatory and scheduling efforts as well as to inform drug policy, drug enforcement, and health initiatives both nationally and in local communities.

Source: DEA

(U) Figure 2. South Carolina DEA offices.



Source: DEA

Details: Illegal Marijuana is the Number Two Seized Drug in South Carolina

DEA, along with state and local law enforcement partners, monitors marijuana trafficking throughout South Carolina with the primary focus on the metropolitan areas of Columbia, Florence, Charleston, and Greenville.

Columbia-Area Trafficking

In the Columbia area, the marijuana supply is available to all demographics. Marijuana is primarily shipped from California, Washington, and other states where marijuana has been legalized at the state level. Bulk amounts of marijuana are shipped via mail/package service companies or rental/private owned vehicles to the local area for distribution. Marijuana is flown via privately owned planes to South Carolina. Flights have often been documented from California and Nevada to South Carolina and other states including Oklahoma, Texas, Maryland (to be distributed in Maryland, Pennsylvania and New York), and Massachusetts. Local production of marijuana is limited in South Carolina but does exist. Marijuana is usually packaged in vacuum-sealed bags for larger quantities and in baggies with smaller quantities.

(U) Figure 3. Illegally imported medical marijuana seized during South Carolina investigation.



Source: DEA

Florence-Area Trafficking

In the Florence area, marijuana is available across all demographics. Traffickers of domestic and Mexico-based marijuana use larger drug trafficking cells based in California and Mexico to orchestrate the delivery via automobiles and commercial trucks to the Florence area. In addition, air travel from the West Coast is also used. Myrtle Beach-area individuals receive shipments of marijuana in the mail. In addition, smoke shops and tourist-related vendors are openly selling cannabinoid oils and edibles. Opportunistic businesses are defying federal law by openly selling Schedule I cannabinoids in Myrtle Beach.

Charleston-Area Trafficking

In the Charleston area, marijuana is available across all demographics. It is trafficked into Charleston and the surrounding areas using a variety of vehicle types, some with hidden compartments. Primary trafficking routes include Interstates 20, 26, and 95 into Charleston and the surrounding areas. Historically, marijuana has been trafficked into the Charleston area from California via commercial freight. Marijuana in the Charleston area is typically packaged in plastic baggies. High-grade marijuana has also been contained in sealed cans.

Greenville-Area Trafficking

Marijuana is available in the Greenville area. High-grade indoor marijuana is being seen instead of Mexico-produced products. Marijuana enters the Greenville area primarily via Interstate 85, mail/package service companies, private aircraft, and commercial vehicles. Bulk shipment is through passenger and commercial vehicles from western states to South Carolina. The Greenville area is seeing frequent use of mail and commercial shipping companies to smuggle marijuana to South Carolina from California, Colorado, or other states where marijuana has been legalized. Marijuana use is widespread and crosses all demographics. Marijuana is usually wrapped in plastic packaging.

The NFLIS Data for South Carolina

Figure 4, based upon NFLIS reporting, illustrates analyzed marijuana submissions from South Carolina from 2010 to 2017. Submissions from 2016 and 2017 (January through June) are expected to increase as crime laboratories work through backlogged seizures. Marijuana remains the second-most seized illegal substance by law enforcement officials in South Carolina through 2015. The percentage of all submissions has fluctuated from a low of 12.24 percent in 2012 to a high of 22.74 percent in 2014.

(U) Figure 4. Marijuana Ranking South Carolina 2010-2017* **

Calendar Year	Ranking	Lab Submissions	Percent of All Submissions
2010	2	1,799	19.12
2011	2	951	13.03
2012	2	1,312	12.24
2013	2	1,756	13.27
2014	2	3,684	22.74
2015	2	3,324	18.73
2016*	3	2,608	15.39
2017**	3	876	18.54

4*additional submissions pending. **additional submissions pending (Jan – Jun).

SOURCE: National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS); <https://www.nflis.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/>; October 10, 2017.

(U) This product was prepared by the DEA Atlanta Field Division Office. Comments and questions may be addressed to the Chief, Analysis and Production Section at dea.onsi@usdoj.gov. For media/press inquiries call (202) 307-7977.