

UNCLASSIFIED

# Oregon-Idaho HIDTA



## 2022 Drug Threat Assessment

June 2021

*Oregon-Idaho HIDTA Program*

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## ***I. SCOPE***

The Oregon-Idaho High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) produced this 2021 threat assessment to offer an overview of the current drug threats within Oregon and Idaho and to provide an outlook toward 2022. This document covers illicit drug trafficking and related activities occurring within, or directly impacting, the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA region as well as relevant public health information.

This threat assessment identifies the top five drug threats in the Oregon-Idaho region and addresses availability, use, and transportation of these drugs as well as activities of Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) and Money Laundering Organizations (MLOs) that impact the area. This assessment fulfills the grant requirement issued by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and has been approved by Oregon-Idaho HIDTA's Executive Board.

## ***II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

Each year, Oregon-Idaho HIDTA's Executive Board directs the development of a strategy that focuses its resources on identifying and addressing the most serious drug trafficking threats in the HIDTA's area of operation. This program supports 18 distinctive enforcement task forces (referred to as "initiatives") that operate throughout Oregon and Idaho. Initiatives unite federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement personnel, as well as associated resources, with a common goal - disrupt and dismantle DTOs and MLOs that are adversely impacting the region. Operating together by coordinating enforcement efforts and sharing information through the HIDTA funded Investigative Support Center (ISC) initiative, enables law enforcement agencies to allocate stretched resources more efficiently and effectively.

This document identifies these threats and presents a 12-month outlook based on the following key findings and supporting information:

- Methamphetamine availability and trafficking continues to occur at a high level in the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA and remains the area's greatest drug threat, followed by heroin, fentanyl, and synthetic opioids, illicit marijuana, cocaine, and controlled prescription drugs.
- Over the last seven years, the drug threat environment has shifted in the HIDTA from primarily methamphetamine trafficking and abuse to a dual threat that includes high availability and use of opioid-based drugs.
- The market for synthetic opioid drugs has continued to evolve in the HIDTA. Fentanyl, fentanyl analogs<sup>a</sup>, and other dangerous synthetic opioids have become more common in the region since 2015, with higher availability paralleled by increased overdose deaths. Fentanyl and fentanyl analogs are increasingly transported into the HIDTA in the form of counterfeit pills and often with other drugs, such as methamphetamine, heroin, and cocaine.
- Marijuana use, cultivation, and trafficking occur at high rates in the HIDTA. Illicit manufacture and distribution of marijuana extracts, such as hash oil and marijuana wax, continue to increase in the region.

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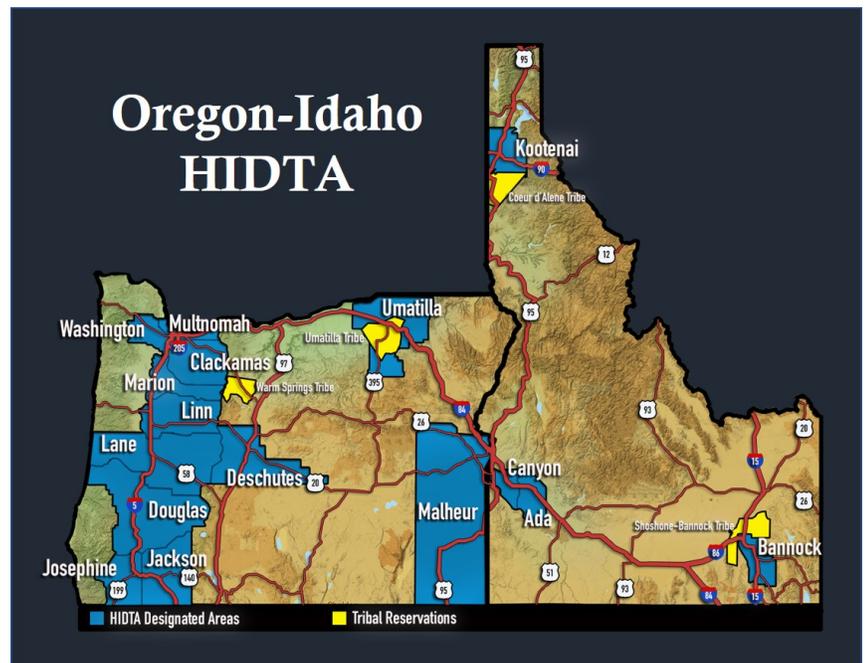
<sup>a</sup> Chemical compounds that are structurally like fentanyl.

- Cocaine availability and use remain low relative to other illicit drugs in the HIDTA. Some indicators, such as task force seizures and law enforcement reporting, suggest increased availability. Despite relative low use rates overall, Oregon ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the nation for self-admitted past use of cocaine according to the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.<sup>1</sup> This is likely due to the availability and low cost of highly potent stimulant alternatives, such as methamphetamine.
- During 2020 participating agencies identified 57 DTOs with foreign and domestic connections that were actively operating in the HIDTA; 6 new DTOs were identified between January 1 and March 2, 2021.<sup>2</sup>
  - Multi-state DTOs represent the greatest criminal drug threat to the HIDTA. Multi-state DTOs identified in 2020 were involved in trafficking methamphetamine, heroin, fentanyl, cocaine, or combinations of those drugs, as well as interstate trafficking of marijuana.
  - International DTOs, specifically, trafficking organizations connected to Mexico, either directly or indirectly through associated trafficking and distribution cells, represent another serious criminal drug threat in Oregon and Idaho.
- Drug trafficking groups in the HIDTA also engage in money laundering activities - the legitimization of illegally obtained proceeds. Bulk cash smuggling, cash-intensive businesses, money service businesses, and bank structuring remain primary methods of transferring drug revenues into, throughout, and out of the HIDTA.

### III. HIDTA REGION

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) established the Oregon HIDTA in June of 1999. Oregon HIDTA was renamed the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA in 2015 with the addition of two counties in Idaho – Ada and Canyon. In total, the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA consists of 16 counties. HIDTA designated counties in Oregon are Clackamas, Deschutes, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Linn, Malheur, Marion, Multnomah, Umatilla, and Washington. HIDTA designated counties in Idaho are Ada, Bannock, Canyon, and Kootenai (Figure 1).

Figure 1



## ***Tribal Lands***

Oregon has nine federally recognized Native American tribes, two of the largest of which are situated in HIDTA designated areas. The Confederated Tribes of Umatilla is entirely in Umatilla County and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs is partially in Clackamas, Jefferson, and Wasco counties. Both tribal law enforcement agencies are active participants in their local HIDTA drug task force initiatives. Idaho has five federally recognized Native American tribes across the state with two of them being in HIDTA designated counties; Coeur d'Alene Tribe in Kootenai County and Shoshone-Bannock Tribe in Bannock County. The Bureau of Indian Affairs Drug Enforcement section works with the local HIDTA drug task force in Kootenai County to provide drug enforcement assistance on Coeur d'Alene and Kootenai tribal lands.

## ***Demographics and Crime***

Oregon encompasses a land area of 95,988 square miles and is the ninth-largest landmass in the nation. Oregon's geography is divided into six areas: the Oregon Coast, Willamette Valley, Cascade Mountain Range, Columbia River Basin, Eastern Oregon Basin, and Range, and the Southern Oregon Basin and Range. Idaho land area of 82,643 square miles and is the fourteenth largest state in the nation. Idaho lies on part of the Columbia Plateau that extends out of Washington and Oregon and includes the Snake River Plain. Nearly half of the state is comprised of national forest land. In total, the designated land area in the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA covers 40,632 square miles, a landmass about the size of Kentucky.

According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, Oregon ranks 27th in the country in population, with nearly 4.2 million residents in 2019.<sup>3</sup> Most of the state's population is concentrated in the Willamette Valley, primarily in the cities of Portland (664,675), Eugene (173,620), and Salem (168,970).<sup>4</sup> Idaho ranks 39th in the nation in population with over 1.7 million residents in 2019. Nearly 40% of Idaho's population resides in the Treasure Valley counties of Ada and Canyon, with the largest concentration of residents in the cities of Boise (228,958), Meridian (114,161), and Nampa (99,277).<sup>5</sup> The combined estimated total population of the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA was over 5.9 million in 2019.<sup>6</sup> The region's population is predominately non-Hispanic Caucasian (77%), followed by Hispanic (13%), Asian (4%), African American (2%), and Native American (1%).

Arrests in Oregon continue to drop and may be an impact of legislation House Bill 2355, eff. 8/15/17.<sup>b,7</sup> Arrest numbers are anticipated to continue declining upon the passage of ballot measure 110 in November 2020, known as the Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act, decriminalizing possession of most personal user-level amounts of all illicit drugs.<sup>c</sup> Despite the decrease in arrests, 9,600 drug-related arrests were made in 2020, with nearly half of the arrests related to methamphetamine and heroin. In Idaho, arrests for all drug offenses continue to increase over the past several years, with a 45% increase reported from 10,189 arrests in 2014 to 14,823 arrests in 2018. Nearly 52% of the drug-related arrests in 2018 were for marijuana (7,695) followed by 26% for methamphetamine (3,913).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>b</sup> HB 2355 reduced the level of punishment for most first-time drug possession offenses in Oregon from various classes of felonies to misdemeanor. The law applies to individuals found with user quantities of drugs including, but not limited to methamphetamine (< 2 grams), cocaine (<2 grams), heroin (<1 gram), oxycodone (<40 DU), and LSD (<40 DU).

<sup>c</sup> Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act (Measure 110) started February 1, 2021 and decriminalized drug possession to a citation for a \$100 fine or the person can complete a health assessment to avoid paying the fine.

Of the over 38,000 clients of the Oregon correctional system (incarcerated, on parole, or probation), in October 2020, the prevalent offense category was drug and “other” (20.2%) followed by assault (18.1%), and theft (12.1%).<sup>d,9</sup> Out of nearly 12,500 offenders housed in Oregon state prisons in February 2021, 3.5% were incarcerated solely based on a drug conviction and 11% were incarcerated due to a combination of drug and other offenses.<sup>10</sup> Oregon Department of Corrections admissions for felony drug offenses in 2020 were primarily due to delivery convictions (80.3%), with a much smaller proportion of convictions related to possession (16.5%) and manufacturing (3.2%).<sup>11</sup> Over 65% of the adults currently in custody have either some identified substance abuse (13%) or dependence/addiction disorder (52.5%). Of over 8,000 inmates in the Idaho Department of Corrections system in June 2020, the largest portion of inmates were incarcerated for drug crimes (34.7%), followed by assault (22.3%) and sex offenses (16.3%). Those individuals on parole or probation were under supervision related to drug crimes (39.2%) followed by property (21.8%) and assault (18.1%) related crimes. During FY2020, 76.3% of those on parole or probation were estimated to need substance use treatment.<sup>12</sup>

The United States Marshals Service (USMS) Portland office, an Oregon-Idaho HIDTA fugitive task force, recently surveyed federal warrants in the District of Oregon and discovered that 18 fugitives were/are tied to Regional Priority Organization Targets (RPOT), 16 fugitives were/are linked to Consolidated Priority Organization Targets (CPOT), and 4 fugitives were/are connected to Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) cases. Thirty-three federal felony drug warrants were active in Oregon at the time of this writing.<sup>13</sup> In 2020, the Oregon USMS apprehended over 640 fugitives and cleared over 700 cases, with 97.5% of arrestees classified as violent offenders and 22% of the cases classified as drug related.<sup>14,15</sup>

### ***Interstate Highways***

The HIDTA contains a network of interstates, highways, secondary roads, and railways that are exploited by traffickers to transport illicit drugs, contraband and proceeds. These routes provide easy access to major population centers, medium-sized cities, and smaller communities in the region. Most of the major cities in the HIDTA are located along the Interstate 5 (I-5) corridor, providing market incentives and abundant opportunities for smuggling illegal drugs and currency through the region. Interdiction seizures reported to the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) by Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE)<sup>e</sup> initiative participants in the region between 2016 and 2020, identified Interstate 5 as the most used route by traffickers in Oregon and Interstate 84 was the most used route in Idaho, followed by Interstate 90. Over \$7.1 million in bulk cash, as well as 22,724 pounds of marijuana, 2,938 pounds of methamphetamine, 432 pounds of heroin, 258 pounds of cocaine, and 56 pounds of fentanyl/fentanyl derivatives have been seized in the past five years. Alternative routes in the region include US Route 97 and Oregon Route 140 in Oregon and Interstate 15 in Idaho.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Rail***

The railway system in Oregon and Idaho includes passenger trains and a combined total of 31 freight railroad companies that operate on more than 4,000 miles of active track. Two transcontinental railways operate in Oregon and Idaho along with one regional and 28 short line or local railways, moving freight throughout the region. Amtrak operates in Oregon and Idaho and is the largest

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<sup>d</sup> Includes offenders in prison, county jails, and those on probation or parole. Based on offenders' most serious active offense and includes categories of possession, manufacturing, and delivery.

<sup>e</sup> The Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE) Strategy promotes collaborative, intelligence-led policing in coordinated multi-jurisdictional law enforcement efforts on U.S. highways.

passenger rail system, with routes running North and South through California, Oregon, and Washington state, primarily traveling parallel to Interstate 5. Passengers can get on and off the train in Klamath Falls, Chemult, Eugene, Albany, Salem, Oregon City, and Portland, OR. Idaho has one Amtrak stop on a route running East and West in Sandpoint, which is between Spokane, WA, and Libby, MT.<sup>17</sup> During 2020, law enforcement agencies in Oregon reported seizing nearly 165 pounds of marijuana and marijuana extracts, 1.2 pounds of methamphetamine, 2 firearms, and nearly \$326,000 in currency from rail passengers originating in or destined to Oregon.

### *Air*

With more than half of the 400 known airfields privately owned, including airports, heliports, and other landing areas in Oregon and Idaho, trafficking by air is a potential vulnerability in the HIDTA.<sup>18</sup> Oregon has over 100 public airports, four of which offer commercial passenger flights in and out of Portland, Eugene, Medford, and Redmond. Idaho has over 120 public airports including, six of which offer commercial passenger flights in and out of Boise, Sun Valley, Idaho Falls, Lewiston, Pocatello, and Twin Falls. Although air travel has reduced significantly due to COVID-19 during 2020, law enforcement agencies in Oregon reported seizing nearly \$1.5 million in cash, 152 pounds of marijuana and marijuana extracts as well as several small seizures of other illicit drugs connected to flights at the Portland International Airport.

### *Water*

A high amount of cargo transits Oregon's seaports, providing countless opportunities for illicit transport along the region's abundant waterways. Oregon has 22 seaports along the Pacific Coast and Columbia River, two of which are international seaports in Coos Bay and Portland<sup>19</sup>. Idaho has one seaport located in Lewiston along the Columbia River.<sup>20</sup> Millions of tons of cargo and food products, such as seafood and grain, go through these seaports each year. The Pacific Ocean allows for the movement of large quantities of illicit drugs to be moved from Mexico into the United States and Canada. In 2019, the United States Coast Guard intercepted a sailboat off the Oregon coast near Newport and uncovered 28 seven-gallon jugs of methamphetamine suspended in a liquid.<sup>21</sup> The investigation revealed that the drugs had been loaded onto the vessel in the Sea of Cortez, located in Mexico, and were destined for Canada.

### *Parcel*

Criminal groups in the HIDTA have increasingly used parcel delivery services to transport illicit drugs and cash into and out of the region to avoid law enforcement detection and rapidly move contraband to destinations throughout the United States. Cooperative efforts between Oregon-Idaho HIDTA task forces and parcel delivery companies have resulted in numerous seizures of illicit contraband - mainly marijuana and drug-related cash, but also methamphetamine, heroin, synthetic opioids, and controlled prescription drugs. During 2020, HIDTA task forces reported 67 parcel interdictions containing illicit drugs, 60% of which were marijuana related. Roughly 1,795 pounds of illicit substances were confiscated (1,731 pounds of marijuana/marijuana resin alone), as well as over 51,000 dosage units of controlled prescription medications, fentanyl, and designer drugs, plus over \$818,000 in currency.<sup>22</sup>

## IV. DRUG THREATS

### Threat Overview

Methamphetamine accounted for the highest proportion of responses in a 2021 threat indicator survey for the greatest overall threat, prevalence, and impact on caseload for Oregon and Idaho law enforcement. Use and trafficking of methamphetamine have increased in the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA and has remained a top threat in the region over the last six years. More recently, the drug threat situation has evolved to a dual-threat of methamphetamine abuse and trafficking, coupled with widespread availability, and use of opioid-based drugs.<sup>f</sup>

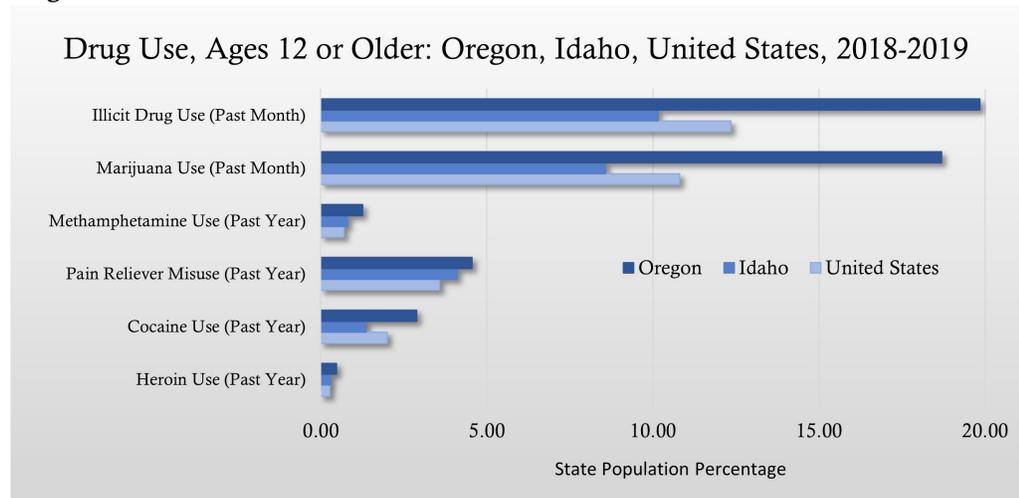
Analysis of drug samples submitted to the Oregon State Police (OSP) forensic laboratory shows that methamphetamine accounted for most samples analyzed in Oregon in 2020 (61%). Additionally, heroin accounted for 20% of samples during the year, followed by other dangerous drugs (6%)<sup>g</sup>, controlled prescription drugs (5%), cocaine (3%), and drug combinations (3%), (the majority of which were methamphetamine combined with heroin),<sup>h</sup> and marijuana (2%).<sup>23</sup>

In Idaho, methamphetamine represented close to half (48%) of the samples analyzed in 2020, followed by marijuana (27%), heroin (13%), controlled prescription drugs (4%), other dangerous drugs (3%), cocaine (2.5%), and drug combinations (1.5%), the majority of which were methamphetamine combined with heroin.<sup>i</sup><sup>24</sup>

According to results from the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), illicit drug use in Oregon continues to exceed the national per capita rate (Figure 2).<sup>25</sup> Oregon remained ranked near the top nationally for past month use of illicit drugs overall (2<sup>nd</sup>), past month use of marijuana (2<sup>nd</sup>), past year use of cocaine (4<sup>th</sup>), past year misuse of prescription pain relievers (6<sup>th</sup>), and past year use of methamphetamine (9<sup>th</sup>).

In contrast, rates in Idaho in 2019 remained above national rates regarding the previous years' use of pain relievers (8<sup>th</sup>), methamphetamine (22<sup>nd</sup>), and heroin (27<sup>th</sup>). (Figure 2)<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 2**



Notes: *Illicit Drug Use* includes misuse of prescription drugs, or use of marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, or inhalants. *Pain Reliever Misuse* is defined as use in any way not directed by a doctor. Per capita rate is based on the estimated population of individuals ages 12 or older. Source: 2018-2019 National Surveys on Drug and Health, SAMHSA.

<sup>f</sup> The rank order of drug threats in the region was assessed through evaluation of data from local law enforcement surveys, national surveys, and indicators of availability and use, such as drug seizures, forensic samples, arrests, deaths, and hospitalizations.

<sup>g</sup> Includes synthetic drugs (e.g., synthetic opioids to include fentanyl and fentanyl analogs, cannabinoids, cathinones) and hallucinogens (psilocybin, LSD, MDMA).

<sup>h</sup> Includes samples where multiple drugs, licit and/or illicit, were detected.

<sup>i</sup> Includes samples where multiple drugs, licit and/or illicit, were detected.

The total number of deaths related to drug use in Oregon rose 22% from 603 in 2018 to 738 in 2019.<sup>j</sup> Drug-related deaths were highest for methamphetamine (289), followed by heroin (137), pharmaceutical opioids (74), fentanyl/analogues (62), and cocaine (61).<sup>27</sup> Fatalities connected to methamphetamine reached a historic high of 289 in 2019, surpassing the combined total for deaths from opioids<sup>k</sup> (273). Preliminary data available from January to June of 2020 identified 337 unintentional or undetermined drug-related deaths in Oregon. Deaths related to fentanyl during this time increased 70% from 62 deaths in 2019 to 106 in the first half of 2020.<sup>1</sup> According to the Oregon Health Authority, there was a reported spike in overdose deaths during April and May 2020. Fentanyl-related and methamphetamine-related deaths accounted for nearly 80% of the total deaths in May 2020.<sup>28</sup>

In Idaho, rates of death from drug poisoning overall and accidental death related to drug use continued to increase, with the death count rising from 261 in 2009 to 280 in 2019.<sup>29</sup> In 2018, deaths related to methamphetamine (78) surpassed the number of deaths related to pharmaceutical opioids (68) as the leading drug involved in overdose deaths and continued to increase in 2019 (97). Heroin (39) and fentanyl (32) drug-related deaths continue to rise, while cocaine-related deaths decreased slightly from 8 in 2018 to 6 in 2019.

According to the 2018 Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) report published October 2020, there was a reported drop in treatment admissions for those aged 12 years and older between 2017 (2,796) and 2018 (1,334) in Idaho, with nearly half admitted for methamphetamine (661), followed by marijuana (183), alcohol (176), and heroin (138).<sup>30</sup> Recent treatment admissions data for Oregon was not received by the time this report was published.

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## ***1. Methamphetamine***

Methamphetamine in the form of crystal methamphetamine, or “ice,” is highly available and widely used in the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA representing the region’s most critical drug threat. Of the law enforcement officers surveyed in 2021, 61% reported methamphetamine as the greatest drug threat to their area.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Availability***

Most methamphetamine available in the region is imported from Mexico, through the Southwest border states, then transported north to Oregon and Idaho. Continued elevated production in Mexico has contributed to an increased flow of highly potent crystal methamphetamine into the United States and the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA region.

Most of the law enforcement officers surveyed in 2021 indicated that crystal methamphetamine was highly available in their area.<sup>32</sup> Mirroring national trends, methamphetamine prices in the region

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<sup>j</sup> Number of deaths includes deaths due to suicide, accidents, or undetermined intent. Counts show deaths where specific drugs were referenced as a cause of death or other significant finding in the death investigation. As some deaths involve multiple drugs, a single death can be included in multiple drug categories.

<sup>k</sup> Includes heroin, fentanyl/analogues, and pharmaceutical opioids.

<sup>1</sup> State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (SUDORS) has been in use in Oregon since June 2019. Overdose data prior to 2020 was obtained from the Medical Examiner’s office and is reportedly less accurate than the new system currently in use.

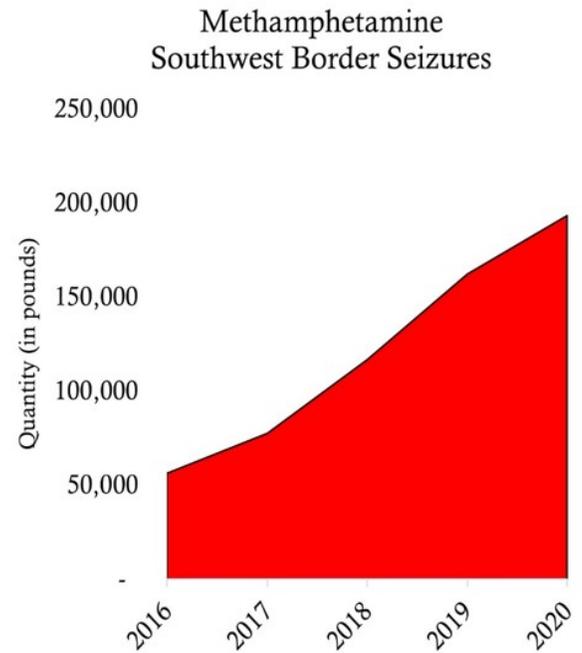
continued to decline in 2020 except for a brief spike due to the COVID-19 related US/Mexico border lockdown in the spring. In the last two years (2019-2020), the price per pound fell by 6% in Oregon overall, with the steepest drop in the Portland Metropolitan region (-14%). The average price per pound for crystal methamphetamine dropped 5% in Idaho between 2019 and 2020.<sup>33,34</sup>

The drug samples submitted to state police forensic labs provides further support for the high availability of crystal methamphetamine in Oregon and Idaho. Of samples submitted to the Oregon State Police (OSP), methamphetamine was by far the most frequent, accounting for 60% of the total.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, samples analyzed by the Idaho State Police (ISP) show that methamphetamine reflected nearly half (48%) of the total in 2020.<sup>36</sup>

The number of seizures and amount of methamphetamine seized by law enforcement agencies at the Southwest Border of the United States have shown a marked increase since 2016, with over 193,000 pounds seized in 2020 (Figure 3) and over 51,000 pounds seized year to date (YTD) in 2021.<sup>37</sup> US Customs and Border Protection (CPB) reported seizing over 35,000 pounds of methamphetamine during the first quarter of 2021, a slight increase from first quarter 2020 (33,588 pounds).<sup>38</sup> Mirroring national trends Oregon-Idaho HIDTA task forces confiscated 1,954 pounds of crystal methamphetamine in 2020 – more than twice the quantity seized in 2016 (959 pounds) (Figure 4). The largest single seizure of methamphetamine was reported in Idaho by the North Idaho Narcotics Enforcement Team (NINE) (211 pounds).<sup>39</sup>

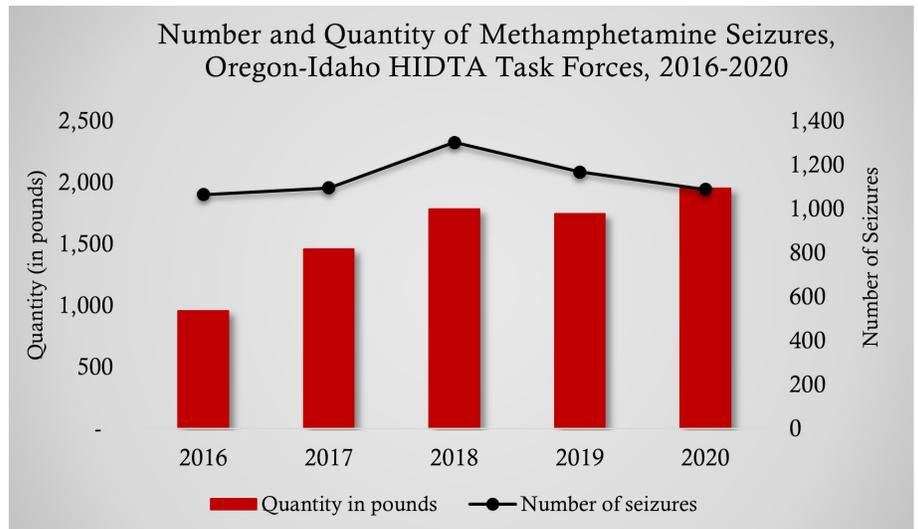
Furthermore, the amount of methamphetamine confiscated on Oregon’s highways has increased in the past five years; the total seized in 2020 (288 pounds) was a 75% increase from seizures in 2016 (164 pounds).<sup>40</sup> While comparatively fewer methamphetamine related interdictions were reported on Idaho highways, the state reported approximately 169 pounds confiscated in 2020, nearly six times the amount seized in 2016 (30 pounds).<sup>41</sup>

Figure 3



Note: Includes incidents reported at and between points-of-entry, investigative events, checkpoints, inspections, mail/parcels, and traffic stops in counties in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas that are within 150 miles of the Southwest Border. Source: EPIC, 4/7/2021.

Figure 4



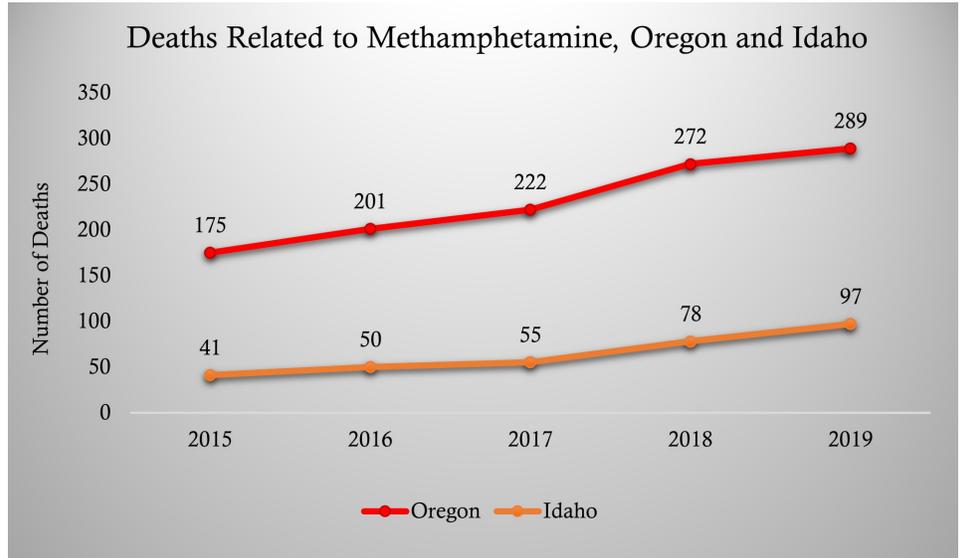
Source: HIDTA Performance Management Process Database, 3/17/21.

## Use

The use of methamphetamine remains high in the HIDTA, evidenced by recent data on reported use, as well as the high number of related deaths, drug use survey data, and arrests in the region. According to the 2019 NSDUH results, past year methamphetamine use rate in Oregon remained high and increased between 2018 (1.00%) and 2019 (1.26%), remaining 9<sup>th</sup> nationally.<sup>42</sup> Use in Idaho increased slightly from 2018 (0.78%) to 2019 (0.81%), with the state remaining 22<sup>nd</sup> nationally.<sup>43</sup>

The number of deaths tied to methamphetamine use follows trends in availability and use in the region. According to recent medical examiner data in Oregon, the rate of fatalities connected to methamphetamine use has continued to increase since 2016 (Figure 5). The number of methamphetamine related deaths in the state rose 43% from 201 to 289 deaths in 2019.<sup>44</sup> Preliminary data from the Oregon Health Authority between January and June of 2020, identified 165 deaths, nearly half the total for 2019. In Idaho, the rate of methamphetamine-related deaths has continued to rise over the past five years, increasing from 41 in 2015 to 97 in 2019, exceeding deaths from pharmaceutical opioids for the first time in 2018 (68).<sup>45</sup>

**Figure 5**



Notes: 1) Rate includes deaths due to suicide, natural causes, accidents, and criminal or undetermined intent 2015-2018; 2019 excludes natural causes and criminal intent; 2) Deaths tied to specific drug categories are underreported in Idaho because specific drug type is not required reporting. Sources: Oregon Health Authority; Idaho Department of Health and Welfare.

In Oregon, the number of accidental deaths involving methamphetamine combined with one or more other drugs rose nearly 93% between 2016 (149) and 2019 (289). Of those deaths, 25% of which included the use of heroin, the most common combination detected.<sup>46</sup>

## Production

Precursor chemical controls at the state and federal level along with sustained law enforcement pressure have contributed to a decline in reported methamphetamine lab seizures in Oregon. The number of clandestine methamphetamine labs in Oregon has continued to drop from a total of 9 in 2014 to none in 2020.<sup>47</sup> Methamphetamine production has remained low in Idaho, with 4 labs seized between 2014 and 2020.<sup>48</sup>

## Transportation

Methamphetamine is primarily transported into Oregon and Idaho from Mexico through California. Mexican Transnational Criminal Operations (TCOs)<sup>m</sup> control most of the transportation of the drug

<sup>m</sup> TCOs are groups of individuals who operate transnationally for the purpose of obtaining power, influence, and monetary and/or commercial gains, wholly or in part by illegal means, which includes Mexican drug cartels according to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

into the region mainly using private and commercial vehicles, bus, train, and package delivery services.<sup>49</sup> Preferred routes in Oregon include Interstate 5, and to a lesser extent, Interstate 84, and U.S. Highway 97. Common routes in Idaho include Interstate 15 and 90. Mexican TCOs also supply methamphetamine to multi-state and local DTOs operating in the region, facilitating distribution in the HIDTA and surrounding region. Nearly half of officers surveyed in 2021 reported California (42%) to be the domestic point of origin for methamphetamine seizures in the last two years, followed by Arizona (18%), Washington (15%), Nevada (13%), and Utah (8%).<sup>50</sup>

### *Intelligence Gaps*

- The number of methamphetamine related deaths caused by overdose in Idaho
- The amount of methamphetamine trafficked through parcel post, by rail, by air, or by waterways

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## *2. Heroin*

Heroin availability has grown in the HIDTA in the last decade, fueling a rise in the number of heroin seizures, the number of new users, and the rate of associated overdoses. Elevated heroin availability, trafficking, and use in the HIDTA suggest that heroin remains a critical threat and represents a close second to methamphetamine as the region's most serious drug threat.

### *Availability*

Over half (55%) of law enforcement officers surveyed in Oregon and Idaho in 2021 reported that heroin was the second major drug threat to their area due to concerns mainly related to high or increased availability and high overdose potential.<sup>n,51</sup> Most officers reported drug threats of heroin combined with methamphetamine and the emerging threat of counterfeit pills containing fentanyl. Most officers reported that a high level of heroin, mostly black tar, was available in their area in 2020. One-third (33%) of the officers surveyed indicated heroin availability rose in their jurisdiction in the last year. Increased availability was reported in Oregon's Southern (Douglas), and Central (Deschutes) regions, as well as in Idaho's Western (Ada and Canyon) and Eastern (Bannock) regions.<sup>52</sup>

Results of analysis of forensic drug samples in Oregon and Idaho are also supportive of increased heroin availability. The number of samples testing positive for heroin in Oregon rose from 2,338 in 2019 to 2,387 in 2020. Heroin made up 20% of all drug samples analyzed in 2020.<sup>53</sup> In Idaho, the number of drug samples identified as heroin continues to remain high, with 823 submitted in 2020, which is a slight reduction from 2019 (1,005). Heroin accounts for 13% of drug samples submitted, third after methamphetamine and marijuana.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>n</sup> Officers who responded that heroin was their area's greatest drug threat represented agencies in Clackamas, Clatsop, Josephine, Washington counties in Oregon and Bannock, Kootenai, and Lewiston counties in Idaho.

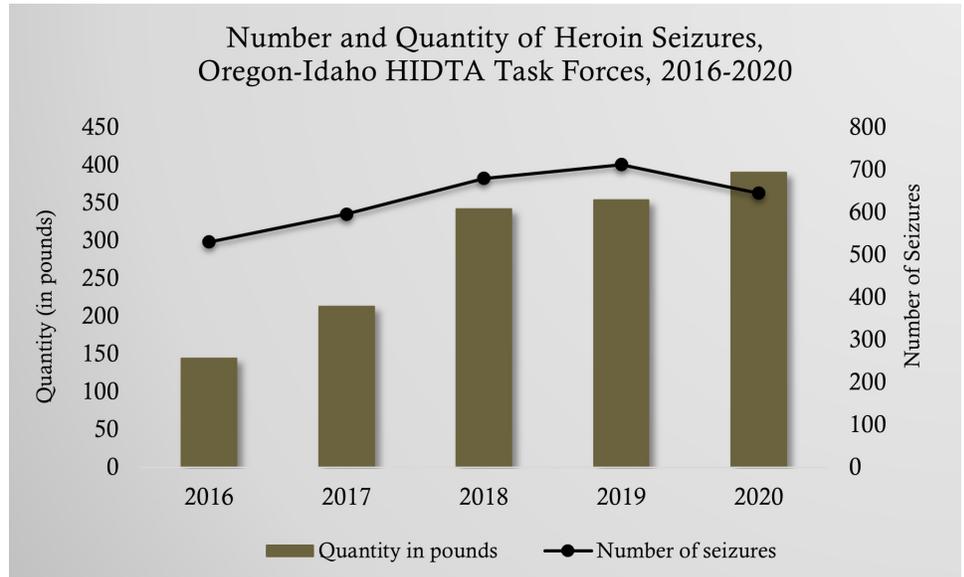
Access to heroin continues to remain high in the HIDTA, which is evidenced, in part, by an increase in the amount seized by HIDTA task forces. Although the number of heroin seizures decreased slightly from 2019 (712) to 2020 (645); the quantity seized increased 10% during this same period (Figure 6).<sup>55</sup> The average kilogram price of heroin in the region increased slightly (3%), with retail prices increasing 5% per ounce in 2020.<sup>56</sup>

Southwest Border seizures of heroin by law enforcement agencies have risen since 2016, with nearly 8,000 pounds seized in 2020 (Figure 7).<sup>57</sup> Seizures reported by CBP are down slightly during first quarter 2021 (925 pounds) compared to the first quarter seizures in 2020 (1,038 pounds).<sup>58</sup>

**Use**

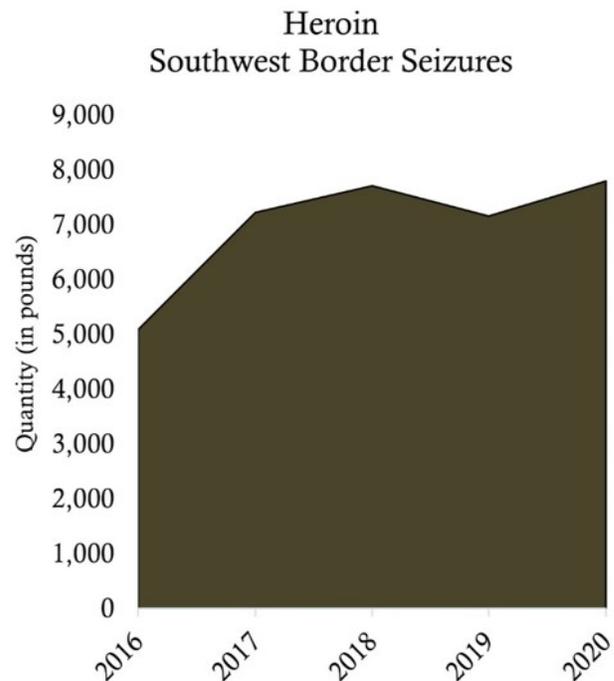
In the HIDTA, widespread availability, and low cost of heroin, both tar and powder form, continue to drive the demand for heroin, especially among individuals addicted to prescription opioids. According to 2019 NSDUH survey results, heroin use in the past year in Oregon increased from 0.38% in 2018 to 0.48% in 2019 but remained ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in the nation.<sup>59</sup> While Idaho’s heroin use in the past year decreased slightly in 2019 (0.30%), remaining just above the national average (0.28%), and ranking 27<sup>th</sup> in the nation.<sup>60</sup>

**Figure 6**



Source: HIDTA Performance Management Process Database, 3/17/21.

**Figure 7**



Note: Includes incidents reported at and between points-of-entry, investigative events, checkpoints, inspections, mail/parcels, and traffic stops in counties in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas that are within 150 miles of the Southwest Border.  
Source: EPIC, 4/7/2021.

In Oregon, the number of heroin deaths has steadily increased since 2015 (115), with a slight drop in 2019 (137).<sup>61</sup> Preliminary data for January to June 2020, identified 94 heroin-related drug overdose deaths, nearly 74% of the total number of deaths in 2019.<sup>62</sup> The rate of heroin-related deaths has also increased in Idaho, rising over 100% from 2015 (17) to 2019 (39). (Figure 8)<sup>63</sup>

### Production

The latest government estimates show that 92% of wholesale heroin imported into the United States originates from Mexico.<sup>64</sup> According to federal estimates, the cultivation of opium fell 27% from 41,800 hectares in 2018 to 30,400 hectares in 2019, with the estimated pure potential production of heroin also decreasing from 106 metric tons in 2018 to 78 metric tons in 2019.<sup>65</sup> According to the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) 2020 National Drug Threat Assessment, the decline is likely a result of an increase in fentanyl production and low prices paid to poppy farmers in Mexico.<sup>66</sup> No local production of heroin has been reported in the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA region.

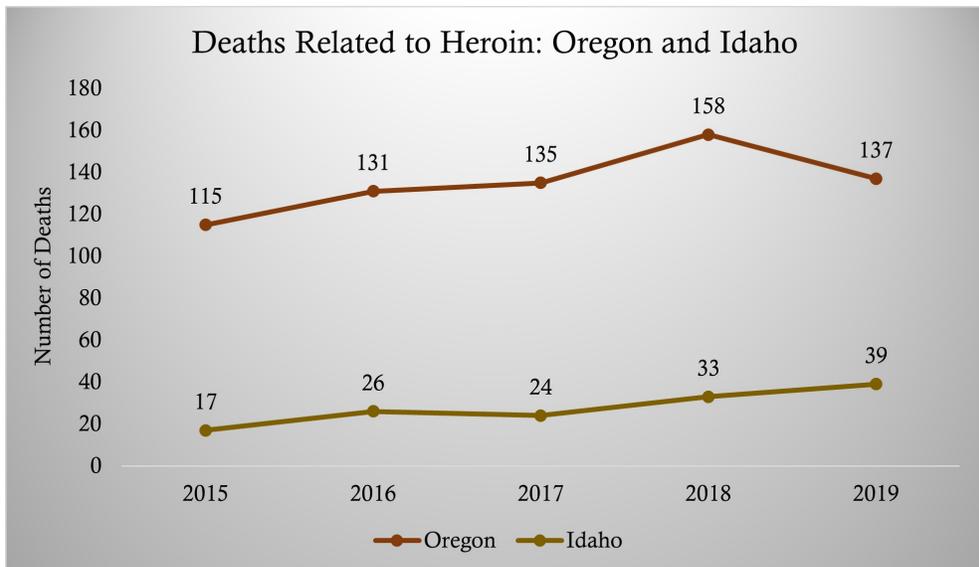
### Transportation

Mexican TCOs dominate the trafficking of black tar and brown powder heroin into and through Oregon and Idaho. Heroin is transported into or through the region from California and, increasingly, from Southwest states including Arizona and Nevada. Product is typically transported via private and commercial vehicles from Mexico, California, and Southwest states using the Interstate 5 corridor, and to a lesser extent, alternate routes such as Interstates 84 and 15 as well as U.S. Highways 97 and 395. Multi-state and local DTOs operating in Oregon and Idaho acquire the product from Mexican TCOs<sup>67</sup>, facilitating transportation to the HIDTA and surrounding region. According to 2021 survey results, domestic points of origin for heroin seized in the last two years were largely California (40%), followed by Washington (25%), Nevada (11%), Utah (9%), and Arizona (9%).<sup>68</sup>

### Intelligence Gaps

- Relationship between polydrug use and heroin-related deaths in Idaho
- The amount of heroin trafficked through parcel post, by rail, by air, or through use of waterways

**Figure 8**



Notes: 1) Rate includes deaths due to suicide, natural causes, accidents, and criminal or undetermined intent 2015-2018; 2019 excludes natural causes and criminal intent; 2) Deaths tied to specific drug categories are underreported in Idaho because specific drug type is not required reporting. Sources: Oregon Health Authority; Idaho Department of Health and Welfare.

### 3. Fentanyl and Synthetic Opioids

Availability and use of fentanyl, fentanyl analogs, and other synthetic opioids are expanding in the United States and are a growing trend in the HIDTA region. Fentanyl analogs and other synthetic opioids have increased in prevalence as illicit producers continue to develop new derivative forms to supply an expanding market.

#### Availability

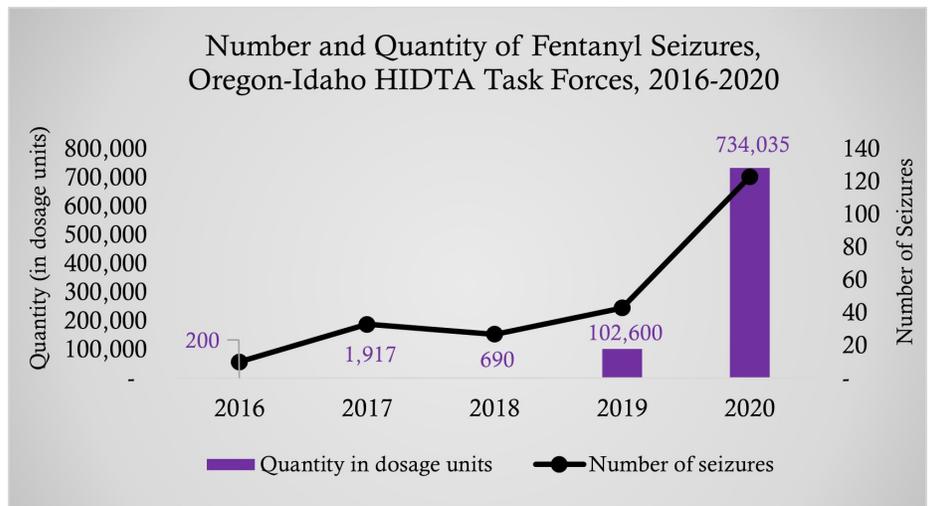
Illicitly manufactured fentanyl and fentanyl analogs are increasingly found in counterfeit prescription pills that are being produced in large quantities by Mexican TCOs, specifically the Sinaloa and the New Generation Jalisco (CJNG) drug cartels; the two largest organizations responsible for most of the drug distribution to independent DTOs in the United States.<sup>69,70</sup>

Approximately 55% of officers surveyed in 2021 reported that fentanyl availability, predominately in the form of counterfeit pills, increased in their jurisdictions in 2020, across Oregon (Deschutes, Douglas, Jackson, Multnomah, Umatilla, and Washington Counties) and in Idaho (Ada, Bannock, Canyon, and Kootenai Counties). Nearly all officers reported fentanyl being identified in most oxycodone or alprazolam pills seized in their respective areas.<sup>71</sup> User-level prices (per dosage unit) remained unchanged for counterfeit oxycodone pills across the region.

Since 2016, there has been a marked increase in the number of fentanyl and fentanyl analog samples analyzed, with a higher incidence of single substances submitted since 2018. In 2020, 285 drug samples were submitted that contained fentanyl or fentanyl analogs, a 149% increase from 2018 (108), of which, 256 were fentanyl, 13 were fentanyl analogs and 16 were heroin mixed with fentanyl. Drug samples analyzed between 2016 and 2020 in Idaho containing fentanyl increased more than 250%, with 64 in 2020 compared to 18 in 2016.<sup>72</sup> Mirroring the trend seen in Oregon, 62 of the 64 of the samples contained only fentanyl, with the remaining two also containing cocaine.

Fentanyl seizures in dosage units continued to rise exponentially over the past five years. In 2020, most fentanyl seized was reported to be in the form of counterfeit prescription pills, such as oxycodone and alprazolam, with over 730,000 pills seized by law enforcement agencies in the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA region (Figure 9). An additional 20,218 pills identified as controlled prescription drugs (oxycodone, alprazolam, and amphetamine) were suspected by law enforcement officers to contain fentanyl based on investigations but are still pending forensic testing to confirm.

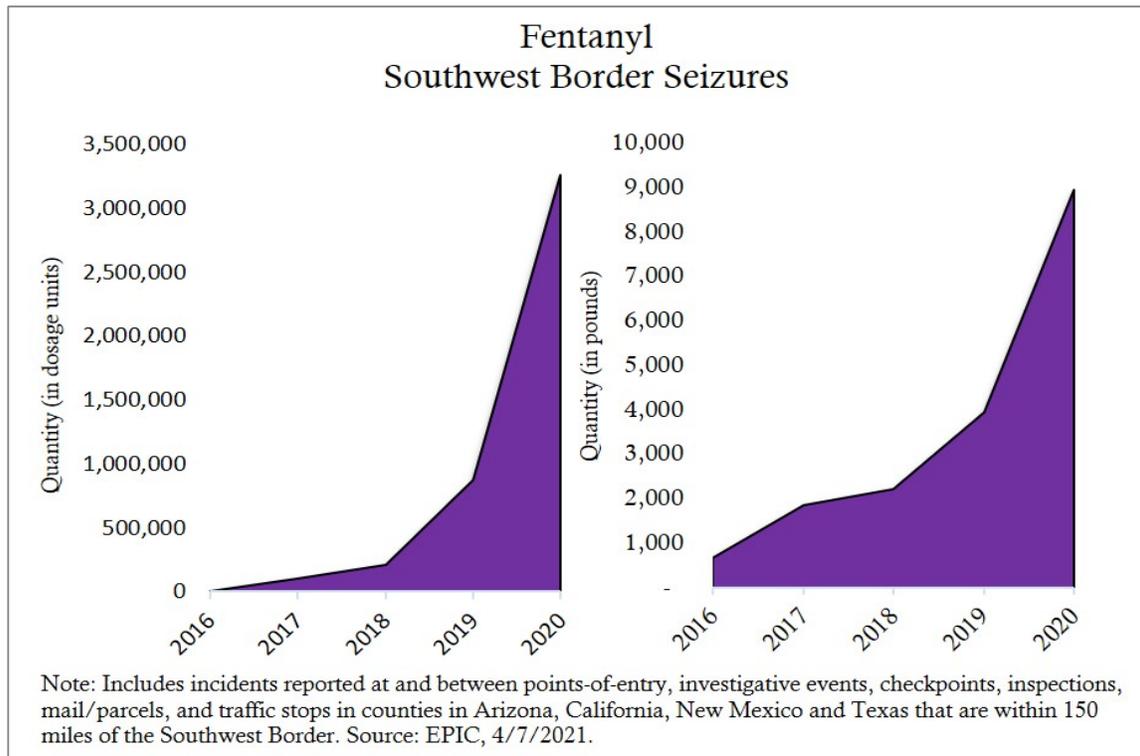
Figure 9



Source: HIDTA Performance Management Process Database, 3/30/21.

Mirroring regional trends, fentanyl seizures both in bulk kilogram weight as well as dosage units, primarily in the form of counterfeit pills, significantly increased in 2020. Law enforcement agencies along the Southwest Border seized over 3.2 million dosage units, a 272% increase from 2019 (over 875,000) and over 8,900 pounds, a 127% increase from 2019 (over 3,900 pounds)(Figure 10).<sup>73</sup> According to recent seizure data released by the CBP, 2,098 pounds have been seized during the first quarter of 2021 at the Southwest Border, a 233% increase from first quarter 2020 (629 pounds).<sup>74</sup>

Figure 10



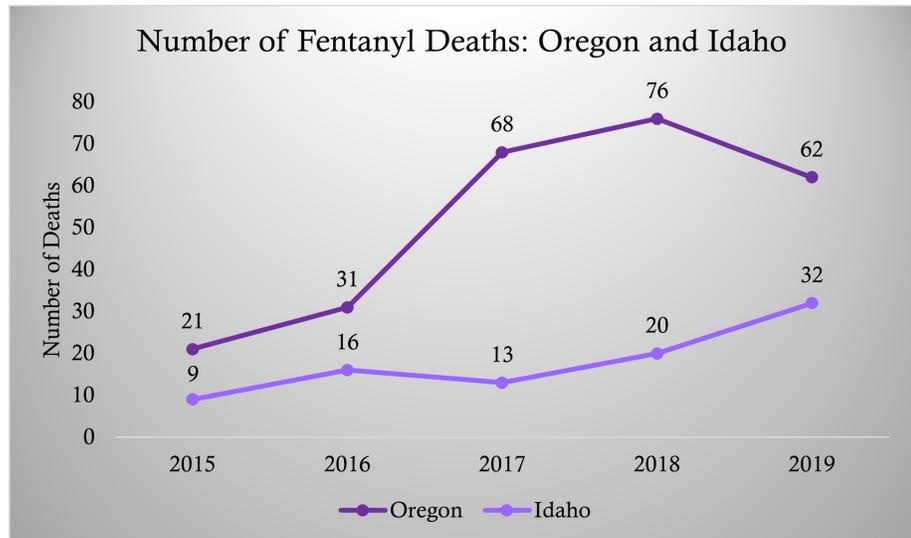
### Use

Counterfeit prescription pills containing fentanyl is the primary means of ingestion by users in the region. According to the DEA, more high potency fentanyl is being transported into the Pacific Northwest in the form of counterfeit pills that are disguised as prescription drugs.<sup>75</sup> More than two-thirds (77%) of law enforcement officers surveyed in Oregon and Idaho reported seizing counterfeit pills in the last year, including counterfeit oxycodone and alprazolam.<sup>76</sup> Exactly half of law enforcement officers surveyed reported that trafficking groups added counterfeit prescription pills to their inventory during the last year.

In Oregon and Idaho, law enforcement officers surveyed in 2021 reported that acquisition of counterfeit drugs occurs mainly through direct sales – most often bought in person or purchased through social media. Officers surveyed indicated that direct transportation and mail/parcel delivery were used in the last year to distribute counterfeit drugs in their jurisdictions.<sup>77</sup>

The number of overdoses connected to synthetic opioids has grown in the United States in the last five years. In 24 states and the District of Columbia, non-pharmaceutical fentanyl and fentanyl analogs accounted for 19.8% of drug overdoses between January and June 2019. Synthetic opioids were also found in more than 32% of overdose deaths combined with other drugs.<sup>78</sup> Fentanyl-related overdose deaths in Oregon have doubled between 2016 (31) and 2019 (62) (Figure 11).<sup>79</sup> Preliminary data supplied by the Oregon Health Authority has revealed 106 fentanyl related deaths during the first half of 2020. Deaths related to fentanyl in Idaho have also doubled between 2016 (16) and 2019 (32).

Figure 11



Notes: 1) Rate includes deaths due to suicide, natural causes, accidents, and criminal or undetermined intent 2015-2018, 2019 excludes natural causes and criminal intent; 2) Deaths tied to specific drug categories are underreported in Idaho because specific drug type is not required reporting. Sources: Oregon Health Authority; Idaho Department of Health and Welfare.

### Production

Most non-pharmaceutical fentanyl, fentanyl analogs, and synthetic opioids that are available in the HIDTA are illicitly manufactured in foreign countries such as China or Mexico and are then imported into the region.<sup>80</sup> Still, local production in the form of pill processing labs has been reported in the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA. Since 2017, a total of 9 pill press operations have been seized in the region with the most recent reported seizure in Idaho in 2020.<sup>81</sup> The pills were designed to resemble legitimate prescription pills such as oxycodone and alprazolam, but contained various mixtures of fentanyl, alprazolam, and other substances.<sup>82</sup>

### Transportation

According to the DEA, existing supply lines for heroin have been utilized by Mexican TCOs to import fentanyl into the United States through the Southwest Border states.<sup>83</sup> Southwest Border seizures continue to rise with 4,466 kilograms of fentanyl seized in 2020, a 62% increase from 2018 (745 kilograms)(Appendix B). Seizures of fentanyl disguised as prescription pills increased 272% between 2019 (875,541 DU) and 2020 (3,261,125 DU).<sup>84</sup> This significant increase in pill seizures, mirrors trends identified in the region.

In the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA, law enforcement reporting suggests that the supply of illicit fentanyl from Mexico in the region has become more prevalent. More than 50% of officers surveyed in 2021 reported that investigations involving fentanyl were directly tied to sources in Mexico.<sup>85</sup> Buyers and sellers use online connections, such as the dark web, to arrange purchases and delivery into the region using mail or parcel delivery services.<sup>86</sup>

### Intelligence Gaps

- The degree to which synthetic opioids are processed locally

## 4. Marijuana

Oregon remains a source area for marijuana produced and trafficked outside the legal framework of the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program (OMMP), existing recreational laws, and hemp regulation. In contrast, Idaho marijuana laws remain some of the toughest in the nation with all possession, manufacture, and sale of the drug is strictly prohibited.<sup>87</sup>

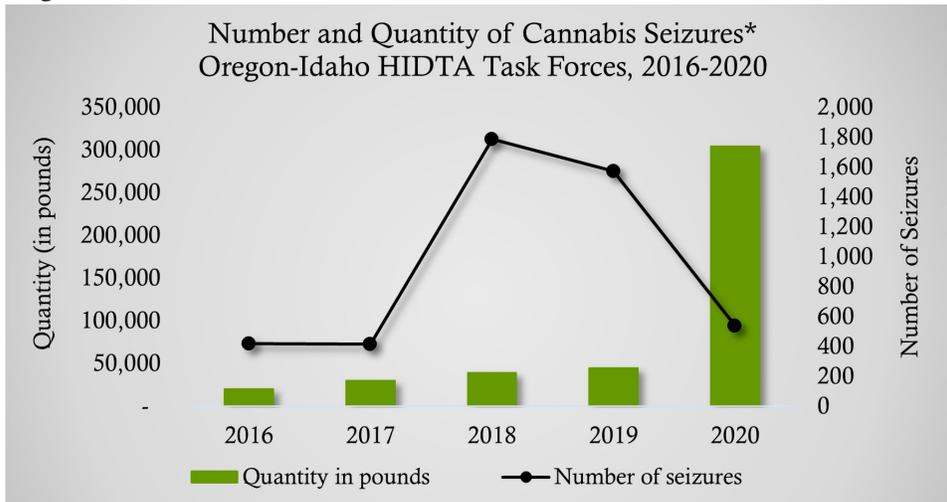
### Availability

Most Oregon and Idaho law enforcement officers surveyed in 2021 reported a high level of illicit marijuana and extracts available in the last year (88%), with more than a quarter (27%) indicating a rise in prevalence.<sup>88</sup> Ounce and pound prices for marijuana continue to fall in the region, with some of the cheapest prices reported in the Southern Oregon region.

Analysis of forensic lab data in Idaho shows that marijuana submissions remain the second-highest substance analyzed in 2020, representing nearly one-third (1,656) of total submissions during the year.<sup>89</sup> In comparison, Oregon forensic data revealed that marijuana represented only 2% of total drug samples in 2020 (198), an 87% decrease in samples analyzed from 2016 (370).<sup>90</sup> Of the marijuana submissions processed by the labs in Oregon and Idaho, 42% were submitted by agencies within the designated HIDTA counties.

The amount of marijuana seized by HIDTA task forces has been steadily increasing since 2016, with a significant increase in 2020 (Figure 12). In 2017, Oregon marijuana tax revenue funded three dedicated marijuana teams, two of which are collocated with HIDTA task forces.<sup>91</sup> The collective efforts resulted in over 275,000 pounds of marijuana and marijuana extract products being seized in 2020. The amount of marijuana seized increased 520% from 2019 to 2020, with the majority (67%) attributed to efforts by HIDTA’s Rogue Area Drug Enforcement (RADE) task force, followed by the Medford Area Drug and Gang Enforcement (MADGE) (25%) and Oregon State Police Domestic Highway Enforcement (OSP DHE) (4%). Idaho State Police Domestic Highway Enforcement (ISP DHE) accounted for less than 1% (257 pounds) of the HIDTA total but 96% of the total seized in Idaho.<sup>92</sup>

Figure 12



\*Includes bulk marijuana, hashish, hash oil, THC liquid, THC resin, edibles, and indoor plants. Table excludes seizures reported in dosage units or liters. Source: HIDTA PMP database, 3/17/21.

The massive quantity of marijuana produced in Oregon since legalization, coupled with insufficient resources for monitoring compliance and the sale of the surplus product on the black market, continue to encourage prolific trafficking of product across state borders. According to a recent analysis of national highway interdiction data, marijuana originating in Oregon is frequently seized in other states.<sup>93</sup> Much of the marijuana seized was destined to the black market in the eastern

half of the United States. The states where the greatest amount of Oregon marijuana was most frequently seized during 2020 was Ohio, followed by Tennessee, Massachusetts, and Florida. Jackson, Josephine, Lane, and Multnomah Counties in Oregon were the most frequently identified points of origin for marijuana seized in other states.<sup>94</sup>

**Use**

2019 NSDHU data indicates that past year use of marijuana by people 12 years or older has expanded in the United States. Surveyed use rates in 2018 were 15.47% and 2019 use rates were 16.71%.<sup>95</sup> Oregon use rates were down slightly in 2019 but the state continued to rank 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation for marijuana use in the past month by people ages 12 or older.<sup>96</sup> Marijuana use across all age groups in the state was consistently well above the national average in 2019 with the highest use reported for people between the ages of 18 and 25. Marijuana use in the past month in Idaho rose to 8.57% in the state; however, the state remained ranked lower than most other states in 2019 (44<sup>th</sup>) and is below the national average.<sup>97</sup>

**Production**

Most of the marijuana available in the HIDTA is produced locally in Oregon from outdoor methods on private property and in greenhouses. Conditions in Oregon’s Southern region are particularly favorable to cultivating marijuana, with experienced growers capable of producing multiple marijuana harvests per growing season.

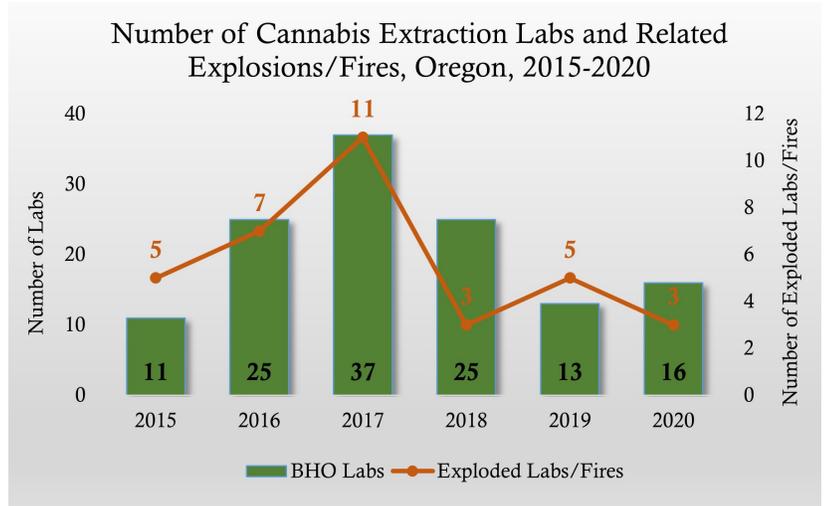
Since 2016, large marijuana grows on public lands have decreased, impacted by federal prosecution initially, then further impacted by legalization in Oregon and decreased funding dedicated to marijuana eradication. In 2020, three large-scale marijuana grows were located on public lands connected to a drug trafficking organization based out of state. The three sites yielded a total seizure of approximately 13,000 plants.

Between 2015 and 2020, 127 marijuana extraction labs were seized in Oregon, reaching a high of 37 in 2017.<sup>98</sup> Thirty-four major explosions or fires related to the production of marijuana extracts occurred in Oregon between 2015 and 2020, mostly in HIDTA designated counties (Figure 13).<sup>99</sup>

**Transportation**

Marijuana either grown illegally or diverted from licensed cultivation sites in Oregon, is transported to markets within the region by local DTOs or transported across state borders by out-of-state

Figure 13



Source: Oregon Department of Justice.

<sup>94</sup> Based on participants’ self-report of marijuana use in past month. States ranking higher in use in 2016 were Vermont, Alaska, and Colorado.

marijuana traffickers. Most of the marijuana grown locally is primarily trafficked through the highway system, as well as parcel post and ground freight.

A continued vulnerability is the passage of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018<sup>p</sup>, which defined hemp as an agricultural commodity and removed it from the list of federally controlled substances.<sup>100</sup> Interstate transportation of hemp, now legal, is complicated by the fact that the only way to distinguish hemp from marijuana is to measure the level of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) through quantitative testing at a lab (quantitative field testing is not widely yet available), as marijuana and hemp have the same appearance and smell.

### *Intelligence Gaps*

- The amount of marijuana produced outside of the legal market in Oregon
  - The amount of marijuana diverted from the legal market to destinations outside of Oregon
  - The extent to which marijuana traffickers exploit the industrial hemp industry as a strategy to avoid law enforcement detection
- 

## *5. Cocaine*

Mirroring national trends, the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA region continues to experience an increase in cocaine availability and use, primarily in powder form. This increase is likely due to expanding cocoa production in South America according to the DEA.<sup>101</sup> Although not considered one of the main drug threats to the region by law enforcement officers, close to half (44%) of officers surveyed in 2021 indicated that a moderate level of powder cocaine was available in their jurisdiction in the last year with over 20% of respondents reporting an increase in availability.

### *Availability*

In the HIDTA, the prevalence of crack cocaine remains at a low level in the region, with most products concentrated in Oregon's Portland Metropolitan area.<sup>102</sup> Cocaine prices varied depending on the region. In Oregon, the pound price of cocaine decreased (10%) between 2019 and 2020, while the ounce price increased 18%. Pound price in Idaho decreased slightly (3%), while the ounce price increased 23%.<sup>103</sup>

Over 20% of law enforcement officers surveyed in the last year reported an increase in powder cocaine availability in Josephine (OR), Washington (OR) and Bannock (ID) Counties, while 55% reported no change and one team in Portland reported a decrease.<sup>104</sup> More than 25% of officers surveyed indicated that DTOs trafficking in other drugs added cocaine to their supply in the last year.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>p</sup> The Agriculture Improvement Act was passed into law on 12/20/2018.

The number of seizures and weight of cocaine seized by HIDTA task forces has varied widely since 2016. There has however been a significant increase in pounds seized between 2019 (76) and 2020 (245) (Figure 14), which mirrors trends reported at the southwest border.<sup>106</sup> Additionally, while low compared to other major illicit drugs, the percentage of cocaine samples submitted for forensic analysis in Oregon continues to fluctuate, while Idaho reflected a slight rise in proportion analyzed since 2016.<sup>107,108</sup>

Figure 14

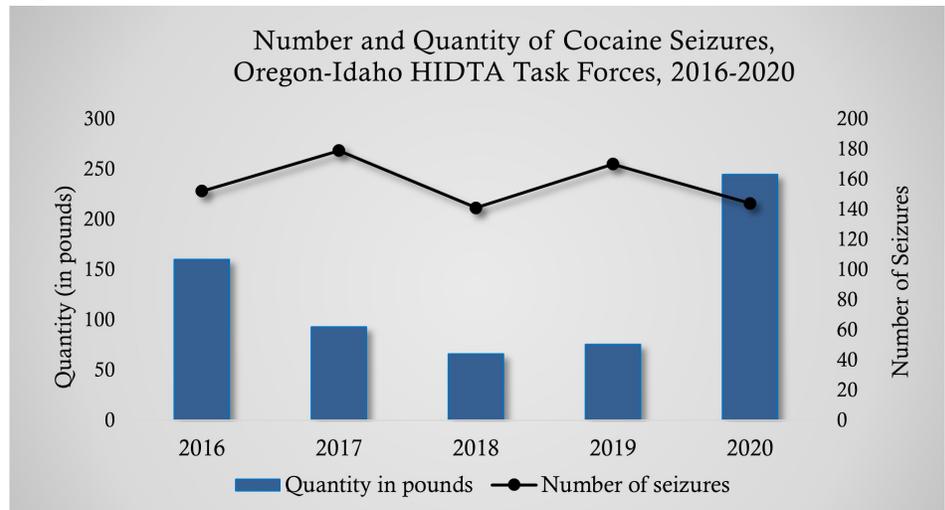
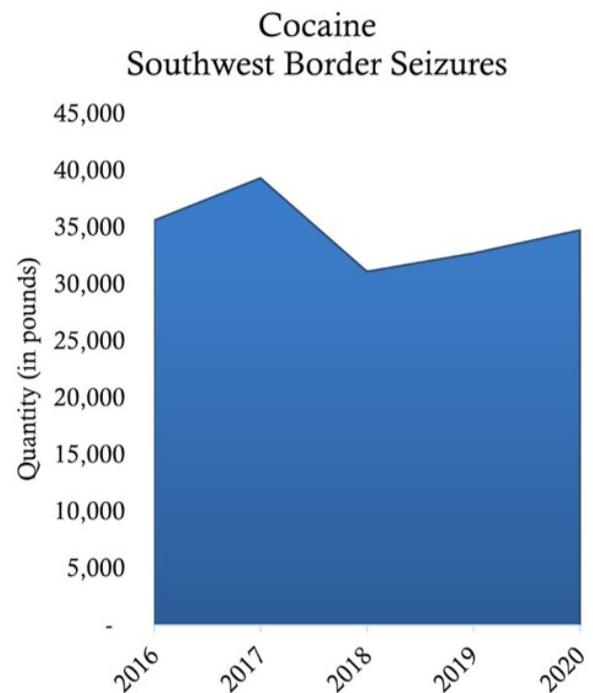


Table data includes powder and crack cocaine. Source: HIDTA Performance Management Process database, 3/17/21.

Cocaine seizures by law enforcement at the Southwest Border have varied widely over the past ten years but has been steadily rising since 2018, with over 34,000 pounds seized in 2020 (Figure 15).<sup>109</sup> CBP reported seizing 29,200 pounds of cocaine during the first quarter of 2021, a 155% increase from seizures reported during first quarter 2020 (11,444 pounds).<sup>110</sup>

Figure 15



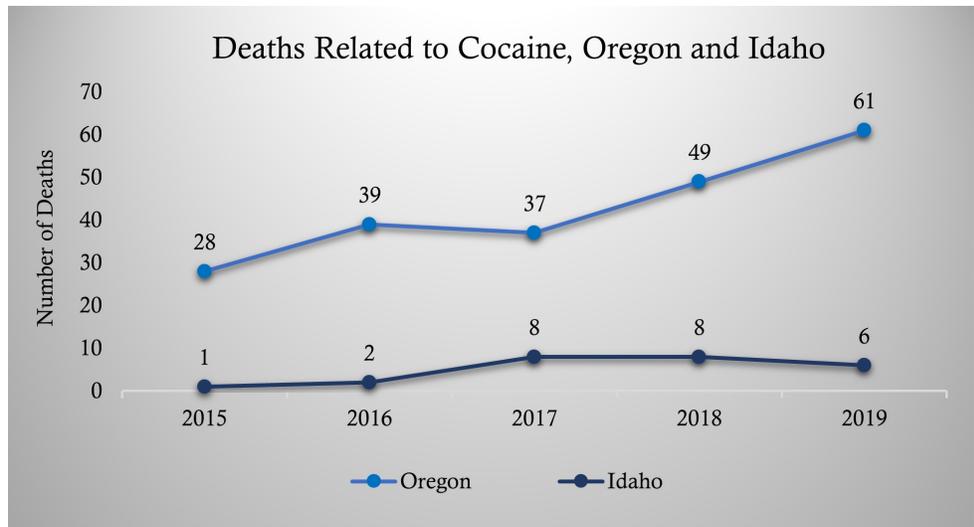
Note: Includes incidents reported at and between points-of-entry, investigative events, checkpoints, inspections, mail/parcels, and traffic stops in counties in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas that are within 150 miles of the Southwest Border. Source: EPIC, 4/7/2021.

**Use**

According to the 2019 NSDUH survey results, Oregon echoed national trends with a small decrease in use rates between 2018 (3.1%) and 2019 (2.89%). Cocaine use in Idaho also decreased a nominal 0.01% to 1.36% for ages 12 and older. National rankings for Oregon (4<sup>th</sup>) remained unchanged, while Idaho (47<sup>th</sup>) rose slightly for 2019.<sup>111</sup> This corresponds to law enforcement reporting that indicates the user base in most areas has remained unchanged despite the increased availability of cocaine. The price of cocaine is high compared to other more potent stimulants, such as methamphetamine, and likely inhibits demand.<sup>112</sup>

Fatalities associated with cocaine use are lower than other major illicit drugs in Oregon. The latest figures show that despite the relatively low incidence of use in the state, the number of cocaine deaths nearly doubled since 2015.<sup>113</sup> Preliminary data for January to June 2020, identified 34 cocaine-related drug overdose deaths, more than 55% of the total number of deaths in 2019.<sup>114</sup> In Idaho, the rate of deaths tied to cocaine use remains comparatively low, dropping 25% from 8 in 2018 to 6 in 2019 (Figure 16).<sup>115</sup>

Figure 16



Notes: 1) Rate includes deaths due to suicide, natural causes, accidents, and criminal or undetermined intent 2015-2018, 2019 excludes natural causes and criminal intent; 2) Deaths tied to specific drug categories are underreported in Idaho because specific drug type is not required reporting. Sources: Oregon Health Authority. Idaho Department of Health and Welfare.

### *Production*

Most of the world's cocaine supply is cultivated and produced in South America and is the primary source area for cocaine seized in the United States.<sup>116</sup> No local production has been reported by law enforcement agencies in the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA region.

### *Transportation*

Most cocaine in the area is transported overland from Mexico by Mexican TCOs through California and other Southwest Border states by private and commercial vehicles via Interstates 5, 84, and 15, as well as U.S. Highways 97 and 395. Multi-state and locally based DTOs operating in Oregon and Idaho obtain cocaine from Mexican TCOs, transporting the product throughout the HIDTA and the surrounding region. More than half of officers surveyed in 2021 reported domestic points of origin for cocaine seized in the last two years were primarily California (59%), followed by Washington (23%), Arizona (9%), Nevada (4%), and locally in Oregon (4%).<sup>117</sup>

### *Intelligence Gaps*

- Prevalence of cocaine trafficking in rural areas in Oregon and Idaho
- Relationship between the rise in cocaine availability and increased cocaine-related deaths in the region

## 6. Pharmaceuticals and Designer Drugs

The threat posed by the misuse of controlled prescription drugs (CPDs), specifically prescription opioids<sup>9</sup>, has steadily declined since 2017 in the Oregon and Idaho region.<sup>118</sup> Although opioid prescriptions have continued to decline in Oregon, there has been a steady increase over the past eight years in prescription stimulants.

An additional emerging threat that surfaced during 2020 is the surge in new psychoactive substances (NPS), primarily designer benzodiazepines, being found in counterfeit prescription pills, more commonly alprazolam.

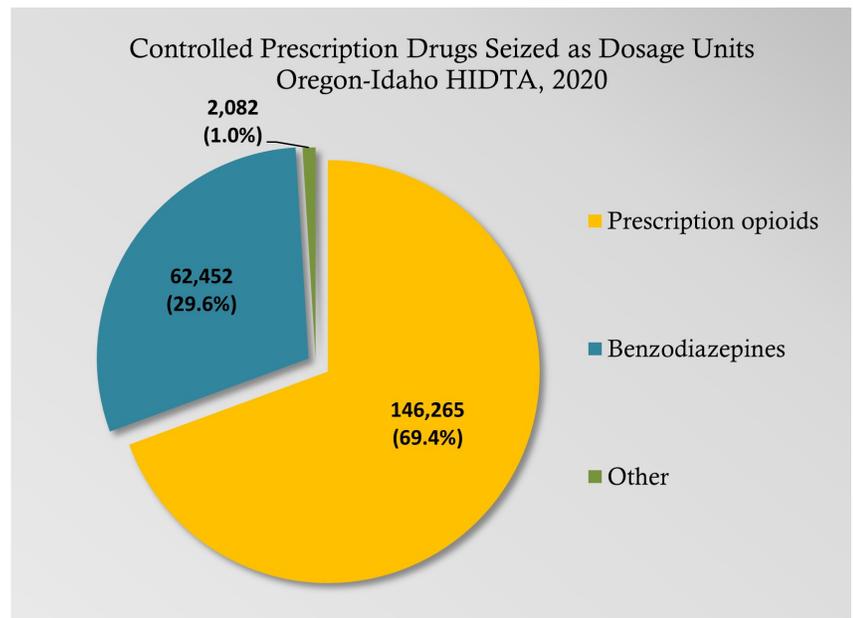
### Availability

Diversion of pharmaceutical drugs is becoming less common in the HIDTA as a direct result of changes in traditional prescribing practices. Three-quarters (75%) of Oregon and Idaho law enforcement officers surveyed in 2021 reported seizures of prescription drugs were rare or did not occur in their area.<sup>119</sup> HIDTA task force reporting shows that of CPD dosage units seized in 2020, more than half (69%) were prescription opioids and just under one-third (30%) were benzodiazepines (Figure 17), however 20,218 of these seizures were suspected by law enforcement officers of being counterfeit pills based on appearance and investigative information.<sup>120</sup> Due to the delay in forensic testing to confirm the presence of fentanyl or other designer drugs, these pills were entered into the HIDTA PMP system as the CPD they visually represented at the time of seizure.

While opioid prescribing rates continue to decline, prescriptions filled per 1,000 residents for stimulants have increased steadily for the past eight years.<sup>1</sup> According to the Oregon Health Authority prescribing and drug overdose data, the prescription rate increased 23% between quarter 1 in 2016 (48.54) and quarter 1 in 2020 (59.62). The highest increase was among those between the ages of 30 and 44, increasing 48% between Quarter 1 in 2016 (57.22) and Quarter 1 in 2020 (84.56), becoming the top-ranked age group since 2018.<sup>121</sup>

New psychoactive substances (NPS) are an emerging threat throughout the United States, often found in counterfeit oxycodone or alprazolam pills.<sup>122</sup> In 2020, 150 lab samples submitted to Oregon

Figure 17



*Other* includes muscle relaxants, and various other prescription drugs.  
Source: Oregon-Idaho HIDTA PMP database, 3/30/21.

<sup>9</sup> Controlled prescription drugs are regulated under the Federal Controlled Substances Act (CSA) that classifies drugs under five schedules according to their potential for abuse, their use in accepted medical treatment in the United States, and their potential for physical or psychological dependence.

<sup>1</sup> Stimulants include prescriptions such as methylphenidate, amphetamines, and related drugs.

and Idaho forensic labs were identified as containing an NPS. Of these samples, 60% were identified as flualprazolam followed by clonazolam (32%), etizolam (28%), and flubromazolam (3%).<sup>123</sup>

### *Use*

The number of substances submitted to the Oregon crime lab that tested positive for CPDs continues to decline, dropping by more than 40% from 881 submissions in 2016 to 519 submissions in 2020, an indication that the illicit use of pharmaceutical drugs is declining in the state.<sup>124</sup> In Idaho, the number of CPD submissions analyzed by the Idaho crime lab declined 42% from 495 in 2016 to 271 in 2020.<sup>125</sup>

The rate of misuse of prescription pain relievers remains high in Oregon, with the state ranking 6th in the nation, with a slight increase from 4.53% to 4.56% of respondents stating use in the past year.<sup>126</sup> In contrast, the rate of misuse in Idaho showed a slight decrease from 4.58% in 2018 to 4.26% in 2019, remaining 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation for reported use in the past year.<sup>127</sup>

Between the first quarter of 2016 and the first quarter of 2020, the number of opioid prescriptions filled per 1,000 residence dropped 30% from 221.95 prescriptions filled in 2016 to 152.42 prescriptions in 2020.<sup>128</sup> In Idaho, while still above the national average, the most recent reported prescribing rate declined to the lowest rate recorded in the last decade – 53.4 opioid prescriptions written for every 100 individuals in 2019 compared to the national rate of 46.7.<sup>129</sup>

While drug-related deaths in Oregon have historically been connected to pharmaceutical opioids, that rate has declined overall since 2011, reaching a historic low in 2019 (74).<sup>130</sup> Preliminary data from January to June 2020 identified 51 deaths related to prescription opioids. If this trend continues, Oregon will likely see a slight increase in prescription opioid-related deaths in 2020. In Idaho, deaths tied to pharmaceutical opioids<sup>s</sup> continue to represent a high proportion of total drug-induced deaths in the state. The number of deaths rose from 62 in 2016 to 77 in 2019. Idaho's per capita CPD death rate was nearly 2.5 times the rate of Oregon's in 2019.<sup>131</sup>

### *Intelligence Gaps*

- In what form are NPSs being seized in the region.
- Will the increase in stimulant prescriptions lead to an increase in illicit stimulants

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## *7. Other Dangerous Drugs*

Several other illicit drugs, including designer drugs and plant-based hallucinogens, are available in the HIDTA. “Designer drugs” belong to a group of clandestinely manufactured substances that are deliberately created, or “designed,” to mimic other drugs of abuse but with a slightly modified chemical structure. Manufacturers frequently alter the chemical compositions of these substances to

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<sup>s</sup> Category includes oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, and methadone.

circumvent government bans<sup>t</sup> on key ingredients. The continually changing mix of chemicals used in manufacturing processes, along with a lack of quality controls and consistent dosage, leads to physical and psychological effects that are highly unpredictable and dangerous.

### ***Availability and Use***

Most law enforcement officers (70%) surveyed in 2021 reported low to moderate levels of designer drugs in their area. Most common being 3,4-Methylenedioxyamphetamine (MDMA), lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and N, N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT).<sup>132</sup> Forensic samples analyzed in Oregon reveal that the highest proportion of designer drugs analyzed in 2020 were NPSs (137) followed by MDMA (99) and LSD (63).<sup>133</sup> In Idaho, designer drug samples submitted were highest for LSD (52), followed by MDMA, (46), synthetic cathinones (44), and NPSs (13).<sup>134</sup>

MDMA, a common designer stimulant, is a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substance Act and is commonly distributed in powder form or pressed into pills and sold as “Ecstasy.” Over 13 pounds and 13,800 dosage units of MDMA were seized by HIDTA task forces in 2020, primarily in the Portland Metropolitan and Willamette Valley regions in Oregon.<sup>135</sup> Seizures have rapidly increased since 2016 when task forces seized less than 1 pound and 10 dosage units of MDMA.

Psychedelic designer hallucinogens, such as DMT and LSD, are also available in the HIDTA. Between 2016 and 2020, seizures of DMT and LSD have fluctuated but remained present in the HIDTA region. HIDTA task forces seized roughly one-half pound of LSD and over 15,000 dosage units along with less than a pound of DMT during 2020, mostly from Oregon’s Southern region.<sup>136</sup>

### ***Production***

DMT is produced to a limited extent in the HIDTA. The drug is manufactured synthetically but can also be produced from amphibians or plants. The root bark, *Mimosa Tenuiflora* (*Hostilis*), is a major source of DMT and is widely available for purchase on the internet. A total of 1 DMT lab was discovered and reported between 2016 and 2020 in Oregon in Jackson County.<sup>137</sup> In Idaho, 1 DMT lab was reported seized in Canyon County in 2019.<sup>138</sup>

Law enforcement reporting indicates that MDMA is rarely manufactured in the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA but is commonly imported from Canada.<sup>139</sup> No MDMA labs were seized between 2016 and 2020 in Oregon or Idaho (Appendix I).<sup>140,141</sup>

### ***Transportation***

Other dangerous drugs that are not produced locally in the HIDTA, are manufactured in other countries, commonly China, and distributed in the HIDTA through online marketplaces and dark web marketplace purchases.<sup>142</sup> These substances are also imported into the region via private vehicles and via parcel delivery services.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>t</sup> On January 4, 2013, the Synthetic Drug Abuse Prevention Act of 2012 went into effect permanently placing 26 types of synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones into Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act. In January 2015, the DEA added three new forms of synthetic cannabinoids to its list of banned substances.

***Intelligence Gaps***

- The degree to which criminal trafficking organizations in the region acquire and distribute synthetic drugs through internet sites such as online classifieds or the dark web
- The extent to which synthetic drugs are produced in the region

***V. DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS******Overview***

Criminal organizations engage in the production, transportation, and distribution of illegal drugs in Oregon and Idaho. The Oregon-Idaho HIDTA region has a sophisticated transportation infrastructure that facilitates the distribution of illicit drugs from foreign and domestic source areas.

DTOs with a multi-state operational scope present the greatest criminal drug threat to the region, followed by international and local DTOs. HIDTA task forces identified 66 DTOs during 2020, with half of the investigations focused on larger-scale organizations with a multi-state or international scope (Table 1). The total number of DTO members identified exceeded 300 individuals, with 66 known leaders. Organizational size ranged from 5 to 10 members and averaged roughly 5 members per DTO. DTOs identified in 2020 were nearly even between single drug DTOs and polydrug DTOs. Of the DTOs that trafficked in single drugs (35), most were involved in methamphetamine trafficking and distribution (20), followed by heroin (6), marijuana (4), fentanyl (2), and cocaine (1). The remaining half (31) of DTOs identified in 2020 were polydrug, largely trafficking in methamphetamine and heroin (16), followed by fentanyl, heroin, and methamphetamine (9) and 4 DTOs were trafficking cocaine with either heroin and/or methamphetamine. Additional combinations included marijuana and methamphetamine, as well as fentanyl along with benzodiazepines and raw opium.<sup>144</sup>

Table 1

<b>DTO Threat Ranking by Operational Scope Newly Identified DTOs in 2020</b>			
	<b>1) International DTOs</b>	<b>2) Multi-State DTOs</b>	<b>3) Local DTOs</b>
<b>Total Identified</b>	18	30	18
<b>Total Members (Leaders)</b>	108 (18)	191 (39)	107 (20)
<b>Drugs Trafficked</b>	Ice, heroin, fentanyl, cocaine, raw opium, prescription drugs	Ice, heroin, cocaine, fentanyl, marijuana, marijuana plants (indoor), amphetamine	Ice, heroin, cocaine, fentanyl, marijuana, amphetamine
<b>Violent</b>	4	0	1
<b>Gang-Related</b>	2	0	0
<b>Polydrug</b>	16	14	10

Source: HIDTA Performance Management Process database. Accessed 3/25/21.

## Multi-State Drug Trafficking Organizations

Based on HIDTA task force reporting and law enforcement survey results, multi-state DTOs<sup>u</sup> represent the most serious criminal drug threat in the region.<sup>145,146</sup> DTOs with a multi-state operational scope are involved in the transport and distribution of illicit drugs within Oregon and Idaho but also impact the drug market in other states. These DTOs are involved in trafficking methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, fentanyl, or a combination of those, as well as trafficking marijuana grown in Oregon across state borders.

A total of 58 multi-state DTOs were under investigation by HIDTA task forces in 2020, with 30 new DTOs identified during the year (Table 2).

### Affiliation and Membership

Multi-state DTOs identified in 2020 were mostly comprised of people of Mexican (12) or Caucasian (12) ethnicity. Of the multi-state DTOs identified, two were multi-ethnic. The total membership of identified multi-state DTOs was 152 members<sup>v</sup> and 39 leaders<sup>w</sup> (Table 2).

According to task force investigations into the multi-state DTOs identified during 2020, California was identified as the primary source location for the drugs trafficked into the HIDTA region (63%), followed by Oregon (17%) and Mexico (13%). Seventy percent of the multi-state DTOs were sourced from Mexican drug trafficking organizations.

### Activities and Methods

Over 35% of multi-state DTOs under investigation in 2020 were polydrug organizations (22), 11 of which trafficked methamphetamine and heroin, and 11 DTOs trafficked various combinations of methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, marijuana, fentanyl, and controlled prescription drugs. Single drug DTOs with a multi-state scope (36) primarily trafficked crystal methamphetamine (18), heroin (6), marijuana (9), fentanyl (2), and cocaine (1). Of multi-state DTOs newly identified in 2020, nearly half trafficked in multiple drugs (12). Six of which trafficked heroin and methamphetamine, while

<sup>u</sup> A multi-state DTO is an organization that regularly carries out illegal drug trafficking activities in more than one state. A DTO is not considered to be multi-state if it conducts activities within a single metropolitan area, even if that area includes parts of more than one state.

<sup>v</sup> The HIDTA defines a “member” as an individual who is part of a DTO organization and who takes direction from the organization’s leader(s) to facilitate or carry out the organization’s activities.

<sup>w</sup> The HIDTA defines a “leader” as an individual who directs the operation of the DTO under investigation. The leader may be the head of an entire DTO or the leader of a DTO cell.

Table 2

Multi-State DTOs, Oregon-Idaho HIDTA		
	Newly Identified in 2020	Under Investigation in 2020*
<b>Characteristics</b>		
Total Multi-State DTOs	30	58
<b>Local Area Characteristics</b>		
<i>African American</i>	1	2
<i>Asian</i>	0	1
<i>Caucasian</i>	12	18
<i>Caucasian, Hispanic</i>	0	1
<i>Chinese</i>	1	1
<i>Cuban, Mexican</i>	0	1
<i>Hispanic</i>	2	11
<i>Hispanic, Italian</i>	0	1
<i>Hispanic, Native American</i>	0	1
<i>Hmong</i>	0	1
<i>Mexican/Mexican National</i>	12	16
<i>Multi-Ethnic</i>	2	5
<i>Russian</i>	0	1
Total Members (Leaders)	191 (39)	377 (72)
Average DTO Size	6.3	6.5
Gang-Related	0	2
Violent	0	1
Polydrug	12	22
Money Laundering Activities	0	0
<b>Federal Case Designations</b>		
CPOT	0	0
PTO	0	1
OCDETF	0	0

\*Includes open cases identified prior to 2020. Source: HIDTA Performance Management Process database, 3/25/21.

the other six trafficked different combinations of heroin, methamphetamine, fentanyl, cocaine, and marijuana (Table 2).<sup>147</sup>

Passenger vehicles were identified by officers as the most common mode of transportation to move drugs and bulk cash into and throughout the region for most of the DTOs under investigation during 2020. Nearly one quarter (23%) of law enforcement officers surveyed identified the use of legitimate businesses to launder drug proceeds and the use of parcel services such as the U.S. Postal Service, to ship marijuana, methamphetamine, and/or bulk currency into and out of the region. One investigation impacted tribal lands in Central Oregon and two involved the use of commercial vehicles to transport drugs from source areas into the HIDTA region.

### *Intelligence Gaps*

- The extent to which the dark web is used to advance the trafficking operations of multi-state DTOs
- The degree to which multi-state DTOs have connections to Mexican cartels
- Level of involvement of multi-state DTOs in mid-level transportation of synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl or fentanyl analogs

#### *Multi-State DTO - Case Highlight*

In October 2020, the Douglas Interagency Narcotics Team arrested three California men in a traffic stop as part of an investigation into an interstate drug trafficking organization. The primary suspect was responsible for trafficking large quantities of methamphetamine and heroin from Southern California into Douglas, Coos and Lane Counties.

During the execution of a search warrant on the vehicle, 46.5 pounds of methamphetamine and 1.4 pounds of heroin were located concealed in the vehicle along with several firearms.

*The News-Review, 10/13/20*



## Local Drug Trafficking Organizations

Based on HIDTA task force reporting and law enforcement survey data, local DTOs<sup>x</sup> pose another criminal drug threat in Oregon and Idaho.<sup>148,149</sup> Local DTOs transport and distribute crystal methamphetamine and heroin, and to a lesser extent, cocaine, marijuana, and pharmaceutical drugs in the region. A total of 29 local DTOs were under investigation by HIDTA task forces in 2020, with 18 new DTOs identified during the year (Table 3).<sup>150</sup>

### Affiliation and Membership

Local DTOs identified during 2020 were mainly comprised of people of Caucasian (12) ethnicity. The total membership of identified local DTOs consisted of 107 members, including 20 leaders (Table 3). Investigators identified California as the main source for drugs trafficked into the region (31%), closely followed by Oregon (28%) and Mexico (24%). Of the source organizations identified, 58% were described as Mexican drug trafficking organizations.

### Activities and Methods

Over 30% of local DTOs under investigation in 2020 were polydrug organizations (9), six of which trafficked methamphetamine and heroin, and four DTOs trafficked various combinations of methamphetamine, heroin, and cocaine. Single drug DTOs under investigation with a local scope (20) trafficked methamphetamine (11), heroin (5), cocaine (2), fentanyl (1), and marijuana (1). Newly identified single drug DTOs operating locally trafficked crystal methamphetamine (7), heroin (3), cocaine (1), fentanyl (1), and marijuana (1).<sup>151</sup> Local DTOs that transport methamphetamine, heroin, and cocaine are typically supplied by multi-state or international DTOs in the region.

HIDTA task forces identified the use of passenger vehicles as the most common mode of

Table 3

Local DTOs, Oregon-Idaho HIDTA		
	Newly Identified in 2020	Under Investigation in 2020*
<b>Characteristics</b>		
Total Local DTOs	18	29
<b>Local Area Characteristics</b>		
<i>African American</i>	0	1
<i>Caucasian</i>	12	15
<i>Family Enterprise</i>	1	1
<i>Hispanic</i>	1	4
<i>Honduran</i>	1	1
<i>Mexican / Mexican National</i>	3	6
<i>Multi-Ethnic</i>	0	1
Total Members (Leaders)	107 (20)	172 (33)
Average DTO Size	5.9	5.9
Gang-Related	0	3
Violent	0	4
Polydrug	5	9
Money Laundering Activities	0	0
<b>Federal Case Designations</b>		
CPOT	0	0
PTO	0	0
OCDETF	0	0

\*Includes open cases identified prior to 2020. Source: HIDTA Performance Management Process database, 3/25/21.

### Local DTO - Case Highlight

In 2020, the Bannock Area Drug Group Enforcement Squad (BADGES) successfully indicted several members of a large methamphetamine drug trafficking organization operating in Eastern Idaho.

During the investigation, over 6 pounds of methamphetamine, 3 ounces of heroin, nearly \$20,000 and several firearms were seized from members of the organization. At least one suspect involved was suspected of trafficking fentanyl and was arrested after shooting at police to avoid capture.

*Idaho State Journal – April 6, 2020*

<sup>x</sup> A local DTO is an organization whose illegal drug trafficking activity is generally, but not always, limited to the same metropolitan area, or are limited to an easily defined region or small number of geographically proximate counties. A local DTO can include a metropolitan area that comprises parts of more than one state.

transportation to move drugs and money into and out of the region. At least three investigations were gang-related, with two of them identified as using violence and/or intimidation to facilitate their drug trafficking. Two of the local DTO investigations involved drug trafficking organizations that were also involved in illicit firearms trafficking.

### *Intelligence Gaps*

- The extent to which locally based DTOs sell and distribute illicit drugs online
- The degree to which drug distribution by criminal street gang members fund street gang activity in the region

## *International Drug Trafficking Organizations*

International DTOs<sup>y</sup>, specifically, trafficking organizations connected to Mexico, either directly or indirectly through allied trafficking and distribution cells, represent a serious criminal drug threat to the HIDTA based on an analytical assessment of task force and law enforcement survey data. These criminal organizations control the transportation and distribution of crystal methamphetamine, heroin, fentanyl, and cocaine into the region.

A total of 28 international DTOs were under investigation by HIDTA task forces in 2020, with 18 DTOs newly identified during the year (Table 4).

### *Affiliation and Membership*

Most international DTOs identified in 2020 were comprised of people with Hispanic ethnicity (13), with two DTOs characterized as Caucasian, one as Honduran, and one as Iranian. The total membership of identified international DTOs consisted of 108 members, 18 of which were leaders.

Table 4

<b>International DTOs, Oregon-Idaho HIDTA</b>		
	<b>Newly Identified in 2020</b>	<b>Under Investigation in 2020*</b>
<b>Characteristics</b>		
Total International DTOs	18	28
<b>Local Area Ethnicity/Nationality</b>		
<i>Caucasian</i>	2	2
<i>Hispanic</i>	0	4
<i>Honduran</i>	1	1
<i>Iranian</i>	1	1
<i>Mexican/Mexican American</i>	13	18
<i>Middle Eastern</i>	0	1
<i>Outlaw Motorcycle Gang</i>	1	1
Total Members (Leaders)	108 (18)	168 (30)
Average DTO Size	6	6
Multi-Ethnic Total	0	0
Gang-Related	2	3
Violent	4	4
Polydrug	14	22
Money Laundering Activities	0	0
<b>Federal Case Designations</b>		
CPOT	0	0
PTO	2	2
OCDETF	2	2

\*Includes open cases identified prior to 2020. Source: HIDTA Performance Management Process database, 3/25/21.

<sup>y</sup> An international DTO is an organization, or identifiable cell of an organization, that regularly conducts illegal drug trafficking in more than one country, or that is based in one country and conducts or coordinates illegal activities in another.

Over three-quarters, (89%) of the international DTOs identified in 2020 had a direct operational connection to Mexico, specifically, the Sinaloa and Tijuana areas. Of the DTOs investigated during 2020, nearly all (24) identified Mexico as the source country for drugs trafficked into the region using established vehicle trafficking routes from the southern border of the United States (23) or through the northern border from Canada (1).

### *Activities and Methods*

Over two-thirds of the international DTOs under investigation by HIDTA task forces were polydrug organizations (20), eight of which trafficked crystal methamphetamine and heroin, five trafficked fentanyl, heroin, and methamphetamine, and seven trafficked various combinations of methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, fentanyl in the form of counterfeit prescription pills, MDMA, steroids, and/or raw opium. Single drug DTOs with an international scope were largely involved in trafficking methamphetamine (6), followed by heroin (1) and marijuana (1). Of the 18 international DTOs identified in 2019, 14 trafficked multiple drugs, including various combinations of heroin, crystal methamphetamine, cocaine, MDMA, and/or fentanyl. Single drug DTOs with an international scope identified in 2020 trafficked mainly crystal methamphetamine (3) and marijuana (1) (Table 4).<sup>152</sup>

International DTOs, specifically Mexican DTOs, operating in the HIDTA employ a variety of methods to transport methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, and recently fentanyl to and through the region, including use of private and commercial vehicles, trains, and mail/parcel delivery services (to a lesser extent). Mexican DTOs are also the primary wholesale distributors of crystal methamphetamine, heroin, and powder cocaine in the HIDTA. These organizations coordinate with multi-state and local DTOs, independent dealers, and criminal street gangs to facilitate retail level distribution in and through the HIDTA. Mexican DTOs also distribute retail quantities of crystal methamphetamine, heroin, and cocaine through direct exchange and social networking sites.<sup>153</sup>

### *Intelligence Gaps*

- Relationship between Mexican DTOs and criminal street gangs in drug transport and distribution
- The extent to which Mexican TCOs partner with other DTOs to facilitate drug trafficking and distribution

#### *International DTO - Case Highlight*

In October 2020, federal, state, and local law enforcement in Lane County prosecuted 35 individuals responsible for distributing methamphetamine, heroin, and fentanyl into Oregon since 2018.

The primary source resided in Mexico and ran a large-scale drug trafficking distribution network. Drugs were imported from Mexico into California where it was then transported, hidden in passenger vehicles, into Lane County, Oregon. It was then distributed throughout Oregon by members of the organization.

Over 260 pounds of methamphetamine, 16 pounds of heroin, 6 pounds of fentanyl in the form of counterfeit pills and more than \$760,000 in cash was seized along with 76 firearms, 1 grenade and multiple vehicles from the organization.

*Drug Enforcement Administration Seattle Division,  
Press Release, 10/29/20*

## VI. MONEY LAUNDERING ORGANIZATIONS

### Overview

Legitimization of illegally obtained money, or money laundering, allows criminals to transform illicit gain into seemingly lawful funds or assets. As in other areas, investigators find that MLOs in Oregon and Idaho engage in money laundering activities based upon the size and scope of the organization and are often connected to drug trafficking organizations operating in the region.<sup>154</sup> The following information is based on Oregon-Idaho HIDTA task force investigations in 2020, as well as information collected from the 2021 HIDTA law enforcement survey.

**Table 5**

Money Laundering Organizations, Oregon-Idaho HIDTA				
	Total	International	Multi-State	Local
Newly Identified in 2020	1	1	0	0
Under Investigation in 2020*	4	1	2	1

\*Includes open cases identified prior to 2020. Source: HIDTA Performance Management Process database, 3/25/21.

### Affiliation and Membership

Of the four MLOs<sup>z</sup> under investigation by HIDTA task forces in 2020, one was newly identified during the year and determined to be international in operational scope (Table 5). The four MLOs under investigation by HIDTA task forces during 2020 ranged in size from 3 to 18 members, with a total of 28 members, including 4 leaders. The newly identified MLO in 2020 consists of 2 members and 1 leader.<sup>155</sup> In addition to money laundering activities, these MLOs trafficked crystal methamphetamine (1), cocaine and heroin (1), and marijuana (2).<sup>156</sup> The newly identified MLO in 2020 is also reportedly involved in cocaine and heroin trafficking.<sup>157</sup>

Three officers among those surveyed in 2021 reported investigating money laundering organizations in the last two years. Local (2) and multi-state (2) MLOs were equally ranked as a money laundering threat to their area, followed by international (1).

Of officers reporting investigations of multi-state MLOs, approximately half indicated membership was based on familial connections (50%) and/or a shared native culture (50%) with an equal portion indicating operational ties to a foreign source country (50%). Additionally, half of the officers surveyed reported multi-state MLOs were based on business relationships (50%), including associations with Mexican DTOs and marijuana trafficking organizations.<sup>158</sup> Officers reported the international MLOs were based on familial connections with direct ties to Mexican drug trafficking organizations.

Local MLOs investigated were identified as groups mainly based on business relationships (60%) and to a lesser extent family connection (40%). Far fewer MLOs were reported to be based on native culture or locality/neighborhood.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>z</sup> A MLO is an organization of two or more individuals engaged in processing illegal drug proceeds through a continuing series of illicit activities to disguise the source of money and to cause the illegal profits to appear as legitimate income.

**Intelligence Gaps**

- The extent MLOs are involved in the international movement of currency

**VII. ILLICIT FINANCING**

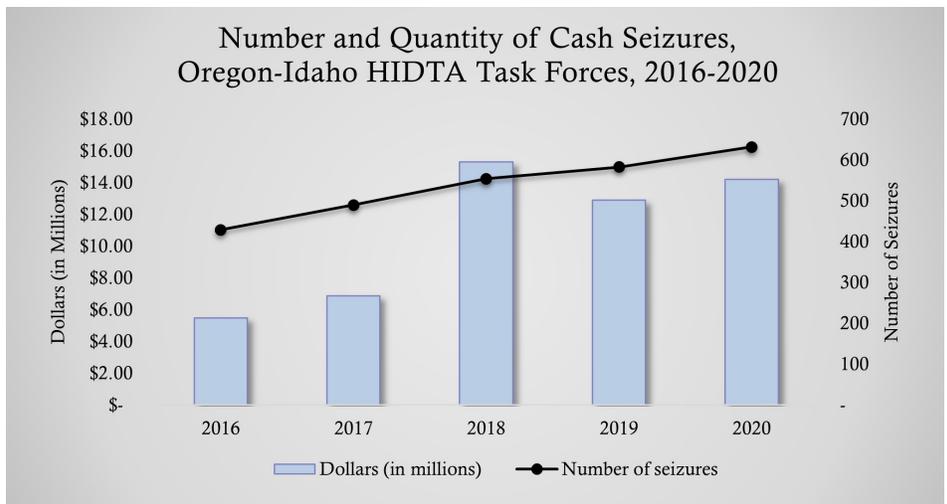
Drug trafficking is unquestionably centered on monetary gain. Common strategies in the region include bulk cash smuggling, structuring bank deposits, and funneling illicit proceeds through front companies<sup>aa</sup>.<sup>160</sup>

Survey results in 2021 revealed that bulk cash smuggling continued to be a primary method for moving illicit proceeds in the region. Other money laundering strategies reported being most prevalent in the region were the use of cash-intensive businesses, money service businesses, banks, and prepaid cards.<sup>161</sup> In 2020, HIDTA task forces seized over \$15.8 million in drug-related assets, including \$14.2 million in currency and over \$1.5 million in other assets (e.g., vehicles, firearms).<sup>162</sup>

Drug trafficking and money laundering organizations commonly use structured money transfers through money remitter services or banks to launder drug proceeds and transfer profits outside of the country. New financial products and technology, such as stored value cards and virtual currency, have become attractive methods for the cross-border movement of illicit drug proceeds. Virtual currencies such as bitcoin<sup>bb</sup> are common forms of payment on dark websites and are used by criminals to transfer value anonymously to other countries.<sup>163</sup>

Smuggling bulk cash out of the United States is a well-established method utilized by traffickers to bypass financial transparency reporting requirements.<sup>cc</sup> Large amounts of cash are easily concealed in vehicles, commercial shipments, express packages, and on private aircraft or boats. Mexican DTOs and other criminal groups transport cash in bulk to southwestern states where funds are often aggregated and then smuggled to Mexico.<sup>164</sup>

**Figure 18**



Source: HIDTA Performance Management Process database, accessed 3/29/21.

and then smuggled to Mexico.<sup>164</sup> The number of cash seizures made by HIDTA task

<sup>aa</sup> A subsidiary or surrogate company used to shield another company from liability or scrutiny, often as a cover to conceal illegal activities.

<sup>bb</sup> Bitcoin is a digital currency that operates without a central bank or single administrator and can be exchanged for other currencies, goods, or services.

<sup>cc</sup> Bank Secrecy Act filing requirements state that individuals who physically transport, ship, mail, or receive currency or monetary instruments more than \$10,000 across U.S. borders must file FINCEN form 105, *Report of International Transportation of Currency or Monetary Instruments (CMIR)*.

forces during investigations increased nearly 50% between 2016 (429) and 2020 (632) (Figure 18). The amount of cash seized by task forces averaged roughly \$10.9 million annually between 2016 and 2020. Since 2018, a large number of cash seizures above \$100,000 have been reported, with a seizure of cryptocurrency valued at \$580,000 seized in 2020.<sup>165</sup> Between 2016 and 2020, 368 bulk cash seizures were reported on Oregon and Idaho highways, totaling \$7.2 million.

While Oregon and Idaho were pass-through states for most seizures of cash, 32 seizures were destined for Oregon or Idaho and 27 originated from the region. Between 2016 and 2020, the largest cash seizure that was destined for Oregon was from Virginia in 2019 (\$170,000). The largest cash seizure in Idaho in 2020 was \$20,400 destined for another location in the state. Additionally, large currency seizures (over \$100,000) occurring on Oregon highways totaled \$2.7 million, with most seizures conducted in the southern region of the state from vehicles with out of state plates, mainly from California, Texas, Kansas, Florida, Wisconsin, Illinois, Virginia, Arizona, and Pennsylvania.<sup>166</sup>

Over the past five years, Oregon and Idaho State Police continue to seize millions of dollars from the region’s highways, with Oregon officers seizing an annual average of \$1.2 million and Idaho officers seizing an annual average of \$208,000. Oregon’s currency value seizures increased nearly 335% from \$257,611 in 2016 to \$1.5 million in 2020 and Idaho’s currency value seizures increased 88% from \$155,964 in 2016 to \$293,361 in 2020. (Figure 19)<sup>167</sup>

Figure 19



Source: EPIC Domestic Highway Enforcement Statistics 2016-2020

### Intelligence Gaps

- The extent emerging technologies such as online environments, the dark web, and web-based apps are used to facilitate money laundering in the region
- The degree cryptocurrencies are used as a technique by money launderers to disguise illicit proceeds in the region
- The extent bulk cash is transferred using the parcel delivery system in the region

## ***VIII. OUTLOOK***

The Oregon-Idaho HIDTA assesses the following outlook for 2022 with high confidence as it relates to the drug threats identified during 2020 in Oregon and Idaho.

- Based on the findings from this threat assessment, there are strong indications that crystal methamphetamine and heroin will remain the most serious drug threats in the HIDTA due to sustained availability and the societal impact of abuse and associated criminal activity.
- Availability of extremely powerful synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl and fentanyl analogs will continue to rise nationally. The Oregon-Idaho HIDTA assesses with high confidence that, the use of synthetic opioids mixed with or disguised as other drugs, will increase, and will contribute to more overdose deaths in the region.
- With the use of new psychoactive substances (NPS) increasing throughout the United States, the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA assesses with a high level of confidence that the identification of NPSs in illicit drugs seized will continue to rise in Oregon and Idaho.
- The Oregon-Idaho HIDTA assesses with high confidence that overproduction of marijuana in Oregon, in tandem with inadequate resources for monitoring compliance with state marijuana laws, will continue to contribute to illegal sales of excess product and a high amount of marijuana and marijuana products trafficked across state borders.
- Based on the continued increase in cocaine seizures in the region, the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA assesses with moderate confidence that the availability of cocaine in the region will continue to increase and use in the HIDTA will remain low in the near term due to the availability and low cost of potent alternatives, such as methamphetamine.
- The Oregon-Idaho HIDTA assesses with high confidence that multi-state DTOs will continue to present the most serious criminal drug threat to the region. These DTOs will remain active in trafficking methamphetamine, heroin, fentanyl, and cocaine within the region and will continue to influence the drug market in other states. Multi-state DTOs involved in illegal marijuana cultivation operations in Oregon will continue to export wholesale quantities of the product across state borders.
- The Oregon-Idaho HIDTA assesses with high confidence that Mexican DTOs with Mexico connections, will continue to control the transportation and distribution of methamphetamine, heroin, fentanyl and cocaine into the HIDTA and the surrounding region. These DTOs will likely continue to expand fentanyl trafficking in the region.
- Bulk cash smuggling, cash-intensive businesses, and money service businesses will remain the primary methods of transferring drug revenues into, throughout, and out of the region. The Oregon-Idaho HIDTA assesses with low confidence that investigations into the money laundering activities of drug trafficking organizations by law enforcement officers, will continue to impede the flow of drug proceeds through the region, impacting organizations that rely on these funds to operate.
- The Oregon-Idaho HIDTA is unable to currently determine the potential impact of the Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act as it relates to user rates, overdose deaths and drug threats. Trends will be monitored over the next year working with public health and harm reduction partners to identify any potential impact.

## ***IX. APPENDIX***

### ***A. Methodology***

This report was developed through consideration of quantitative and qualitative information from federal, state, and local law enforcement reporting and data, public health data, and open-source reporting to provide a balanced approach to determining the most critical drug threats and the most significant drug trafficking organization threats to the region. Quantitative data was collected and reviewed from a variety of drug-related measures such as use, seizures, arrests, drug testing, forensic lab submissions, deaths, treatment, hospitalizations, and impaired driving.

The 2021 Oregon-Idaho HIDTA Drug Threat Survey was a primary source for qualitative information related to drug demand and supply, drug trafficking organizations, money laundering activity, and organizations operating in the HIDTA. Survey interviews were conducted with Oregon-Idaho HIDTA initiative task force commanders and team members yielding a 95% response rate (n=18). The survey form requested information on regional drug threats, including trends in availability and use, transportation, and distribution methods, as well as characteristics and activities of drug trafficking and money laundering organizations.

The HIDTA Performance Management Process (PMP) database was accessed for information on drug seizures and the presence and level of involvement of organized criminal groups in drug trafficking and distribution, money laundering, and criminal activity in the HIDTA and neighboring region.

## IX. ENDNOTES

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- <sup>3</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2020). *Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for the United States, Regions, States, and Puerto Rico: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019*.
- <sup>4</sup> Population Research Center, College of Urban and Public Affairs, Portland State University (2019). *Certified Population Estimates, July 1, 2020*. Accessed 1/27/2021.
- <sup>5</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2020). *QuickFacts*. Population Estimates, July 1, 2019 (v2019). Accessed, 1/27/2021.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> HB 2355, 79<sup>th</sup> Oregon Legislative Assembly. (2017).
- <sup>8</sup> Idaho State Police - Idaho Statistical Analysis Center (2021) *Idaho Drug and Alcohol Arrest Trends, 2009-2018*
- <sup>9</sup> Oregon Department of Corrections. (2021). *Population Demographics, November 1, 2020*.
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- <sup>11</sup> Oregon Department of Corrections. (2021). *DOC Admissions for Drug Possession /Manufacturing/Delivery, Theft, and ID Theft*. Data request received 3/5/21.
- <sup>12</sup> Idaho Department of Corrections (2021). *Annual Community Gap Analysis FY 2020*
- <sup>13</sup> United States Marshal's Service, District of Oregon. E-mail correspondence, 3/25/21.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> HIDTA Performance Management Process database. Accessed 3/25/21.
- <sup>16</sup> EPIC. (2020). *Domestic Highway Enforcement Program Report*, accessed 3/12/21.
- <sup>17</sup> Amtrak - <https://www.amtrak.com/regions/northwest.html> , accessed 3/8/21.
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