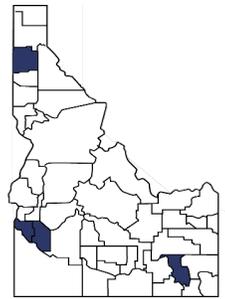




# Idaho Drug Trends

*This report summarizes major trends related to illicit drug use and trafficking in Idaho based on available open-source statistics and law enforcement efforts in High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) designated counties.*



## State Snapshot

Idaho is the fourteenth largest landmass state in the nation, encompassing 82,645 square miles, with a population of just over 1.93 million residents based on population estimates reported by the United States Census Bureau in 2022. Approximately 54% of residents live within the HIDTA-designated counties of Ada, Bannock, Canyon, and Kootenai.<sup>1</sup> This report summarizes the impact of illicit drug use and trafficking throughout the state.

Based on law enforcement and public health data reported during 2023, fentanyl and methamphetamine continue to impact communities throughout Idaho. According to law enforcement survey data, fentanyl and methamphetamine remain the principal drug threat in the state due to high availability and high demand. Fentanyl has significantly increased in use and availability in the state, impacting local communities as overdose incidents continue to rise. Heroin availability has significantly decreased over the past year but has yet to be directly connected to the increase in fentanyl beyond anecdotal information.

Fatal and non-fatal overdose incidents continue to impact communities in Idaho from pill and powder forms of fentanyl present in the illicit drug supply lines. Informal reporting by law enforcement and public health partners indicates people who use drugs (PWUD) desire to use fentanyl in powder form continues to be popular due to the unpredictable dosing of fentanyl in pill form. According to harm reduction partners, the PWUD community reports concern over the number of overdoses related to pill use and believes the powder is safer, allowing for more control over consistent dosing. Rising seizures of powder fentanyl and the significant increase in the local drug supply are being reported throughout the United States and more specifically in Idaho.

## Drug Availability and Use Trends

Fentanyl seizures have significantly increased over the past five years, while incidents involving heroin seizures have decreased proportionately. Several factors drive the shift from heroin to fentanyl by opioid users according to law enforcement and public health partners. Anecdotal information identified fentanyl as having a lower purchase cost and being easier to obtain compared to heroin. Also, the possibility exists of the user's tolerance level increasing from fentanyl use, making heroin less appealing to the user.

Substance use disorders in Idaho continue to impact communities through the rising number of deaths related to drug use. According to the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare website, drug-induced deaths in the state rose 8% between 2021 (353) and 2022 (381), with preliminary reporting of 251 deaths occurring as of September 2023.<sup>2</sup> Fentanyl was identified in 188 overdose deaths in 2022, up 24% from the 152 deaths reported in 2021. Methamphetamine was identified in 133 overdose deaths and when combined with fentanyl numbers, the two were identified in nearly 87% of reported overdose deaths in 2022. Preliminary numbers published in November 2023 identified 148 fentanyl-related deaths so far in 2023 in the state, a slight decrease from the same time frame in 2022 (164) but is expected to rise once the 2023 coroner report data is finalized.

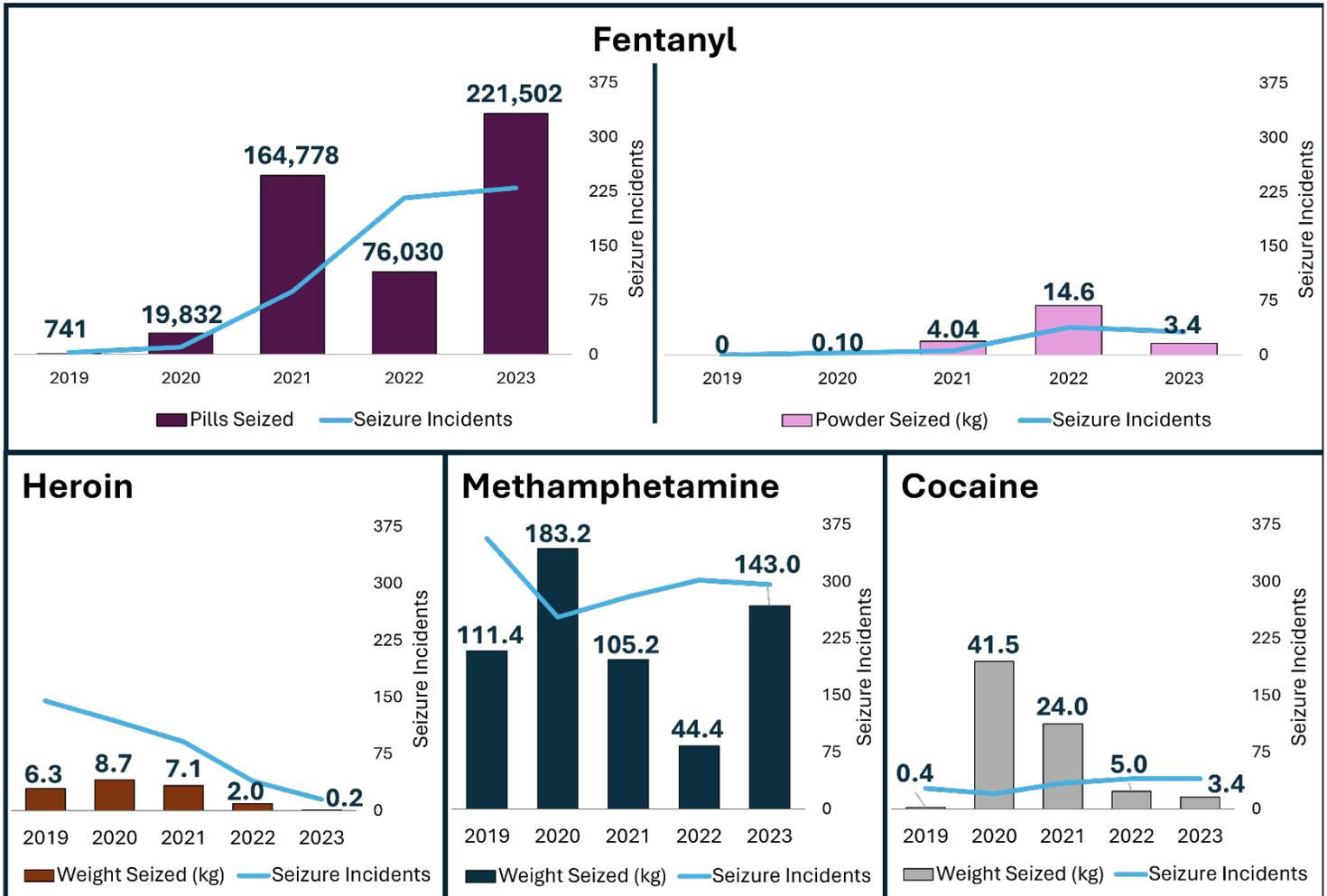
<sup>1</sup> [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Drug Overdose Prevention Program | Idaho – Idaho Department of Health and Welfare – Accessed 2/1/24](#)

During 2023, HIDTA designated task forces in Ada, Bannock, Canyon, and Kootenai Counties, Idaho seized 143 kilograms of methamphetamine, 3.4 kilograms of powder fentanyl, 221,502 fentanyl pills, 3.4 kilograms of cocaine, and nearly 98 kilograms of marijuana (see Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> According to task force officers surveyed, most of the marijuana trafficked in the state is imported from the neighboring production states Oregon, California, and Washington. In addition to the drugs seized, task forces conducted 432 drug-related arrests and seized \$363,886 in cash and assets. Additionally, 138 firearms were seized through enforcement activities.

Figure 1

Total of Illicit Drugs Seized by Idaho HIDTA Designated Enforcement Initiatives



Source: Oregon-Idaho HIDTA Performance Management Process (PMP) – Accessed 01/31/24

### Drug Trafficking Trends

Mexico is the primary source country for methamphetamine, fentanyl, heroin, and transited cocaine trafficked throughout Idaho. Once across the southwest border of the United States, illicit drugs are transported through California and Arizona to the neighboring northern states. From active drug investigations and survey responses, areas such as Spokane, Washington, and Salt Lake City, Utah have been identified as local supply areas for many of the HIDTA task forces in Idaho.

<sup>3</sup> HIDTA Designated Task Forces: Ada – DEA Boise Resident Office, Idaho State Police Domestic Highway Enforcement, Canyon- FBI Treasure Valley Violent Crimes Safe Streets Task Force, Bannock – Bannock Area Group Drug Enforcement, and Kootenai – North Idaho Narcotics Enforcement

HIDTA task forces in Idaho, specifically the Bannock Area Drug Group Enforcement Squad (BADGES), North Idaho Narcotics Enforcement (NINE), DEA Boise Task Force, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Treasure Valley Metro Violent Crimes Safe Streets Task Force, and the newly formed City-County Narcotics Unit FBI Metro Task Force investigated 19 drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) in 2023, 70% of which had multi-state connections. The others were international in scope, operationally connected to Mexico, or locally controlled and operated. In 2023, Over 60% of the DTOs investigated by HIDTA task forces were found to distribute fentanyl with methamphetamine and other illicit drugs; a notable change compared to the previous year's reporting where fentanyl was trafficked by only a few DTOs.

### **Current Statewide Efforts**

Idaho has four HIDTA-designated counties that receive federal funding and support from the HIDTA Program; Ada, Bannock, Canyon, and Kootenai. Within these counties, five sponsored task forces conduct drug investigations for prosecution. Ada and Canyon Counties are both supported by the DEA Boise Task Force and the FBI Treasure Valley Metro Safe Streets Task Force. In July 2023, the FBI task force combined with the City-County Narcotics Unit (CCNU) to form the CCNU FBI Metro Task Force in Canyon County. The District of Idaho US Attorney's Office supports all federal investigations conducted by the HIDTA task forces with a HIDTA-funded Special Assistant US Attorney (SAUSA). Idaho State Police (ISP) Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE) conducts interdiction efforts throughout the state and coordinates with other HIDTA task forces to assist in long-term investigations. BADGES operates in Bannock County with support from state and local agencies along with members from the DEA Boise Task Force. NINE operates in Kootenai County, with members from several state and local agencies, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and DEA Spokane, Washington.

In addition to the enforcement initiatives, the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA program provides resources and support for a public health analyst, funded by the Center for Disease Control Foundation, and a drug intelligence officer who collaborate to bring public health and law enforcement partners together focusing on overdose reduction and responses to overdoses as a part of the Overdose Response Strategy (ORS) and prevention. Through this cooperative effort these professional fields, which have traditionally operated separately, work to increase the sharing of real-time trends and emerging drug threats that impact communities.

### **Outlook**

The fentanyl crisis continues to increase across the nation which is also consistent throughout Idaho. With supply and demand increasing annually as well as a consistent supply of methamphetamine and cocaine, the need for resources to support law enforcement efforts to focus on the supply and public health to focus on demand through prevention and treatment are critical. Participation in multi-agency task forces combined with federal resources has proven to be successful in targeting the organizations importing and trafficking illicit drugs within the state. Cooperative efforts through public safety and prevention messaging among public health and law enforcement are necessary to help provide the residents with timely information and resources to combat the drug threats facing all communities in Idaho.

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*This product was created by the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA Information Sharing and Analytical Coordination Center (ISACC)*