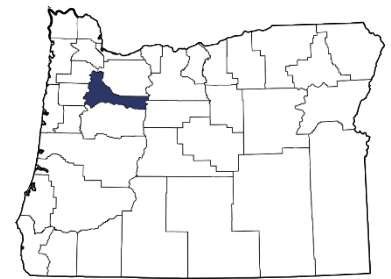




Marion County Drug Trends

This report summarizes major trends related to illicit drug use and trafficking in Marion County, Oregon based on available open-source statistics and High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) supported law enforcement efforts.



HIDTA DESIGNATED - 1999

County Snapshot

Marion County is nearly 1,181 square miles, is located on the Interstate 5 corridor, south of the Portland metropolitan area and the county seat is Salem, the state capital. Based on census data reported by the United States Census Bureau, Marion County is home to an estimated 346,703 residents, which is 8% of the state's population, making it the fifth most populous county in the state.³⁸ This report summarizes the impact of illicit drug use and trafficking throughout the county.

Based on law enforcement and public health data reported during 2023, fentanyl and methamphetamine continue to impact communities throughout Marion County. According to law enforcement survey data, methamphetamine and fentanyl remain the principal drug threat in the county due to high availability and high demand. Fentanyl has significantly increased in use and availability in the county, impacting local communities as overdose incidents continue to rise. Heroin availability has 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 Oregon 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 throughout the United States and the presence in the local drug supply reflect this change in fentanyl use and add additional public health and safety concerns throughout the county.

Drug Availability and Use Trends

According to statistics provided by the OHA using the SUDORS, unintentional drug overdose deaths in Marion County have continued to rise over the past several years.³⁹ In 2020, 51 drug overdose deaths were confirmed, and continued to rise, reaching a high of 92 total drug overdose deaths in 2021 and slightly decreasing to 85 in 2022. During the first half of the year 2023, 53 drug overdose deaths have been confirmed and the number is anticipated to increase as mortality data for 2023 is completed.

HIDTA-designated task forces in Marion County seized an annual average of 80.1 kilograms of methamphetamine each year between 2019 and 2023.⁴⁰ Counterfeit pills containing fentanyl emerged as a threat during this same time, with 184,207 pills seized in 2023. Starting in 2021, task forces began seizing notable quantities of powder fentanyl along with the pills, reporting 26.6 kilograms seized in 2023. Cocaine has risen slightly over the past three years with 28 kilograms seized in 2023 (see Figure 1, page 2). Heroin seizures had

³⁸ [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States](#)

³⁹ [CDC's State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System \(SUDORS\) | Drug Overdose | CDC Injury Center](#) – Oregon Health Authority

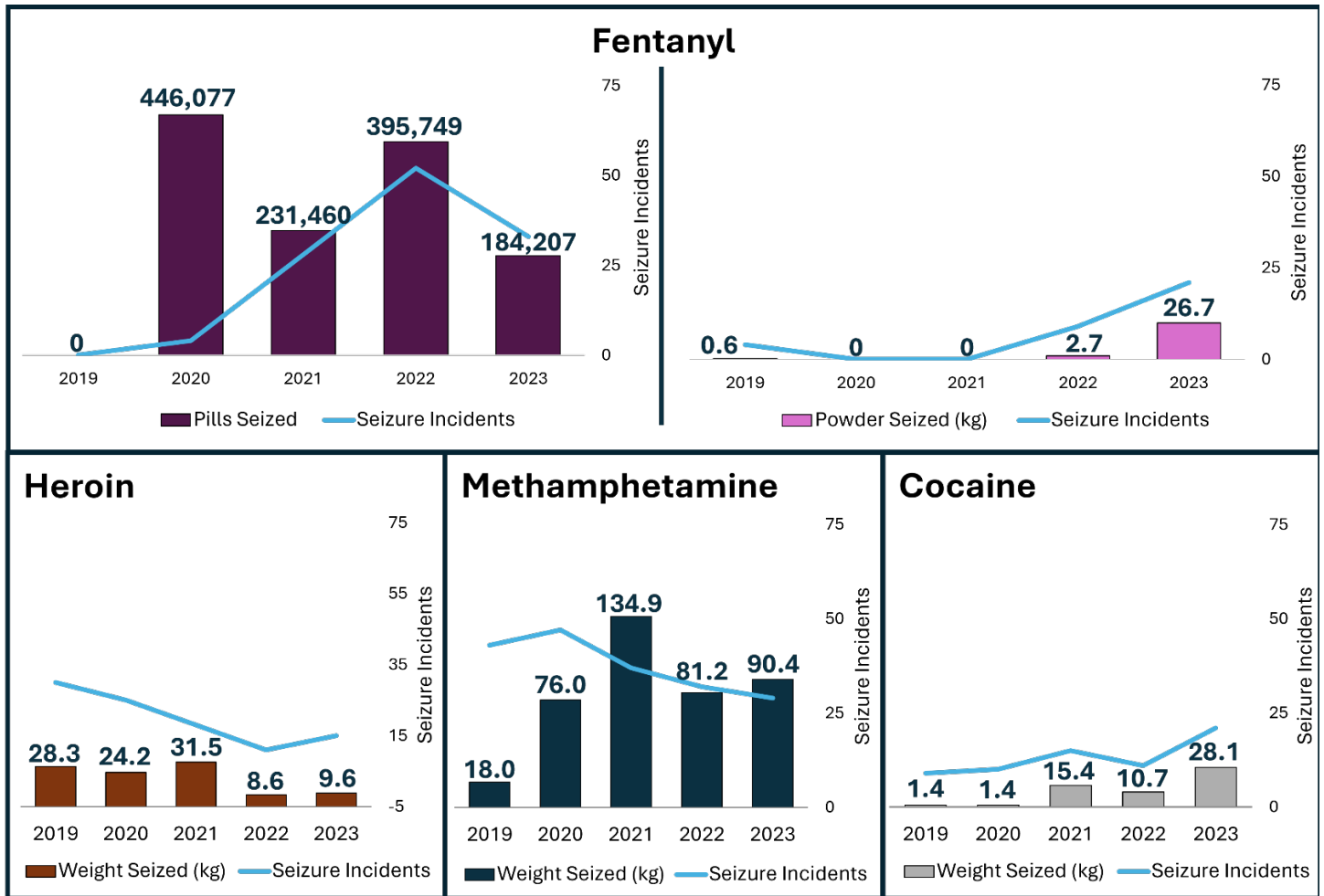
⁴⁰ HIDTA Designated Task Forces: Refer to the Current Countywide Efforts section of this report.

been steadily increasing since 2018 until last year when seizures dropped 73% to 8.6 kilograms in 2022 and stabilized with 9.6 kilograms seized in 2023. Illicit marijuana seizures remain relatively low in the county with 4 kilograms of bulk and 4,234 plants seized in 2023.

In addition to drug seizures, HIDTA task force officers conducted 22 drug-related arrests and seized 7 firearms. Cash and assets seized in Marion County by the DEA Salem Resident Office (DEA-Salem) and Oregon State Police (OSP) Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE) are captured under the statewide initiatives and not broken out by location in the HIDTA Performance Management Process (PMP).

Figure 1

Total of Illicit Drugs Seized by Oregon HIDTA Designated Enforcement Initiatives



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

Drug Trafficking Trends

Mexico is the primary source area for the methamphetamine, fentanyl, heroin, and transited cocaine that is trafficked throughout the state. Once across the southwest border of the United States, illicit drugs are transported through California and Arizona to Oregon either directly or through the neighboring states of California and Washington. From active drug investigations and survey responses, areas such as Portland and various areas in California have been identified as local supply areas for many of the HIDTA task forces operating in the county.

DEA-Salem disrupted or dismantled six drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) in 2023, nearly all were trafficking fentanyl and methamphetamine. Nearly all the DTOs impacted were identified as international in scope with operational connections to Mexico and one was multi-state in scope with operation connections in Washington and California.

Current Countywide Efforts

Within Marion County, DEA-Salem is the HIDTA-designated task force that receives federal funding and support from the HIDTA Program. Along with enforcement efforts by this task force, two statewide HIDTA initiatives assist in investigations throughout the county and coordinate efforts with other HIDTA task forces. OSP DHE and the United States Marshals Service Fugitive Task Force (USMS FTF) assist with highway interdiction and fugitive apprehension in coordination with DEA-Salem and other law enforcement agencies in Marion County.

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 Oregon and Marion County. With supply and demand increasing annually and a consistent supply of methamphetamine and cocaine, the need for resources to support law enforcement efforts is critical. This support includes the focus on supply reduction through law enforcement efforts and public health's focus on demand reduction through prevention, treatment, and harm reduction. Participation by local, state, and federal law enforcement in multi-agency task force initiatives combined with federal resources has proven to be successful in targeting organizations responsible for 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 residents with timely information and resources to combat the drug threats facing all communities in Marion County.

Your feedback regarding this report is important to us and is a measured performance metric.

Please complete and submit the brief survey by following this link: [ISACC Strategic Report Survey](#)

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