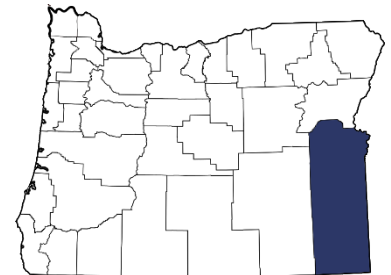




Malheur County Drug Trends

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



HIDTA DESIGNATED - 2014

County Snapshot

Malheur County is nearly 8,887 square miles and one of the largest rural counties in the state, sharing a border with Idaho. Based on census data reported by the United States Census Bureau, Malheur County is home to an estimated 31,879 residents, which is less than 1% of the state's population.³⁵ 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 Malheur County. In April 2023, the High Desert Task Force (HDTF) was established as the HIDTA-designated enforcement initiative. As a county that lies along the border of Idaho, this task force regularly coordinates drug enforcement efforts with Idaho law enforcement partners. According to law enforcement survey data, fentanyl and methamphetamine remain the principal drug threats in the county due to high availability and high demand. Fentanyl seizures continue to increase with a reported increase in powder availability. Cocaine and heroin availability have remained relatively stable based on drug seizures; however, task force officers indicate cocaine has increased while heroin has continued to decrease during 2023.

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 Malheur County have remained low respectively over the past several years, with less than 5 reported during most years.³⁶ In 2020, less than five drug overdose deaths were confirmed, and reached a high of 11 total drug overdose deaths in 2022. During the first half of the year 2023, less than five drug overdose deaths have been confirmed and the number is anticipated to increase as mortality data for 2023 is completed.

HIDTA-designated task forces working in Malheur County seized an annual average of 5.6 kilograms of methamphetamine each year between 2019 and 2023.³⁷ Counterfeit pills containing fentanyl emerged as a threat during this same time, with 4,912 pills seized in 2023. Beginning in 2021, task forces began seeing an increase in

³⁵ [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States](#)

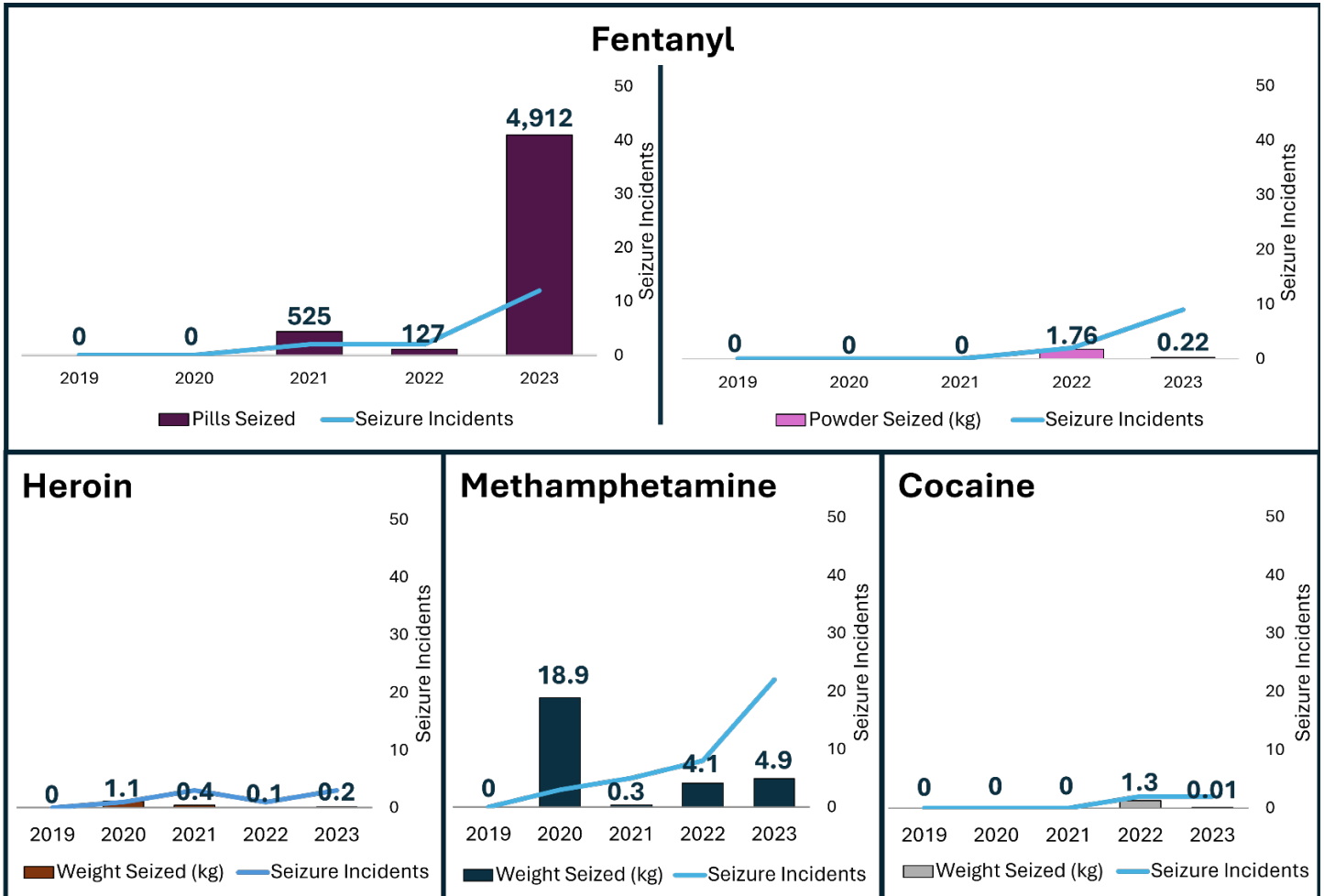
³⁶ [CDC's State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System \(SUDORS\) | Drug Overdose | CDC Injury Center](#) – Oregon Health Authority

³⁷ HIDTA Designated Task Forces: Refer to the Current Countywide Efforts section of this report.

seizures of powder fentanyl with less than 1 kilogram seized in 2023. Cocaine and heroin have remained relatively low in the county over the past five years (see Figure 1). In addition to drug seizures, task force officers conducted 44 drug-related arrests and seized 24 firearms.

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 continues to be the primary source area for 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. Source areas for methamphetamine and fentanyl

HDTF successfully disrupted three drug trafficking organizations (DTO) in 2023, trafficking fentanyl and methamphetamine. All three DTOs were identified as multi-state operations with connections to Idaho.

Current Countywide Efforts

Within Malheur County, local agency resources are extremely limited, and the former HIDTA designated task force was disbanded as a result. Oregon State Police dedicated resources with commitments from local agency partners to re-establish the HDTF, that began in April of 2023. Four 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 while the DEA-Boise in Idaho conducts drug investigations throughout the county in coordination with other law enforcement in the local area and will be the dedicated federal partner in the task force once it is re-established.

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 Malheur 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 Malheur County.

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

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