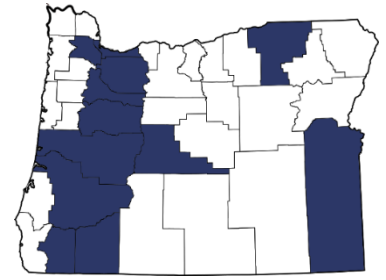




Oregon Drug Trends

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



State Snapshot

Oregon is the ninth largest landmass state in the nation, covering 95,996 square miles, with a population of just over 4.2 million residents based on population estimates reported by the United States Census Bureau in 2022. Nearly 80% of Oregon's residents live within the HIDTA-designated counties of Clackamas, Deschutes, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Linn, Malheur, Marion, Multnomah, Umatilla, and Washington.¹² 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 most severely throughout Oregon. 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 rise related to fentanyl with counterfeit pill and powder forms emerging 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 Oregon.

Drug Availability and Use Trends

Fentanyl seizures have significantly increased in 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 of the user's tolerance level increasing from fentanyl use, making heroin less appealing to the user.

According to statistics provided by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) using the State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (SUDORS), unintentional drug overdose deaths have continued to rise over the past several years.¹³ In 2020, 701 drug overdose deaths were confirmed, 227 of which were identified as related to fentanyl and 399 related to stimulants, primarily methamphetamine. These numbers continued to rise, reaching a high of 1,289 total drug overdose deaths in 2022, of which 839 were listed as fentanyl-related and 837 related to stimulants, primarily methamphetamine. During the first half of the year in 2023, 791 drug overdose deaths have been confirmed, with 607 listing fentanyl as the cause of death and 528 listing stimulants as the cause of

¹² [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States](#)

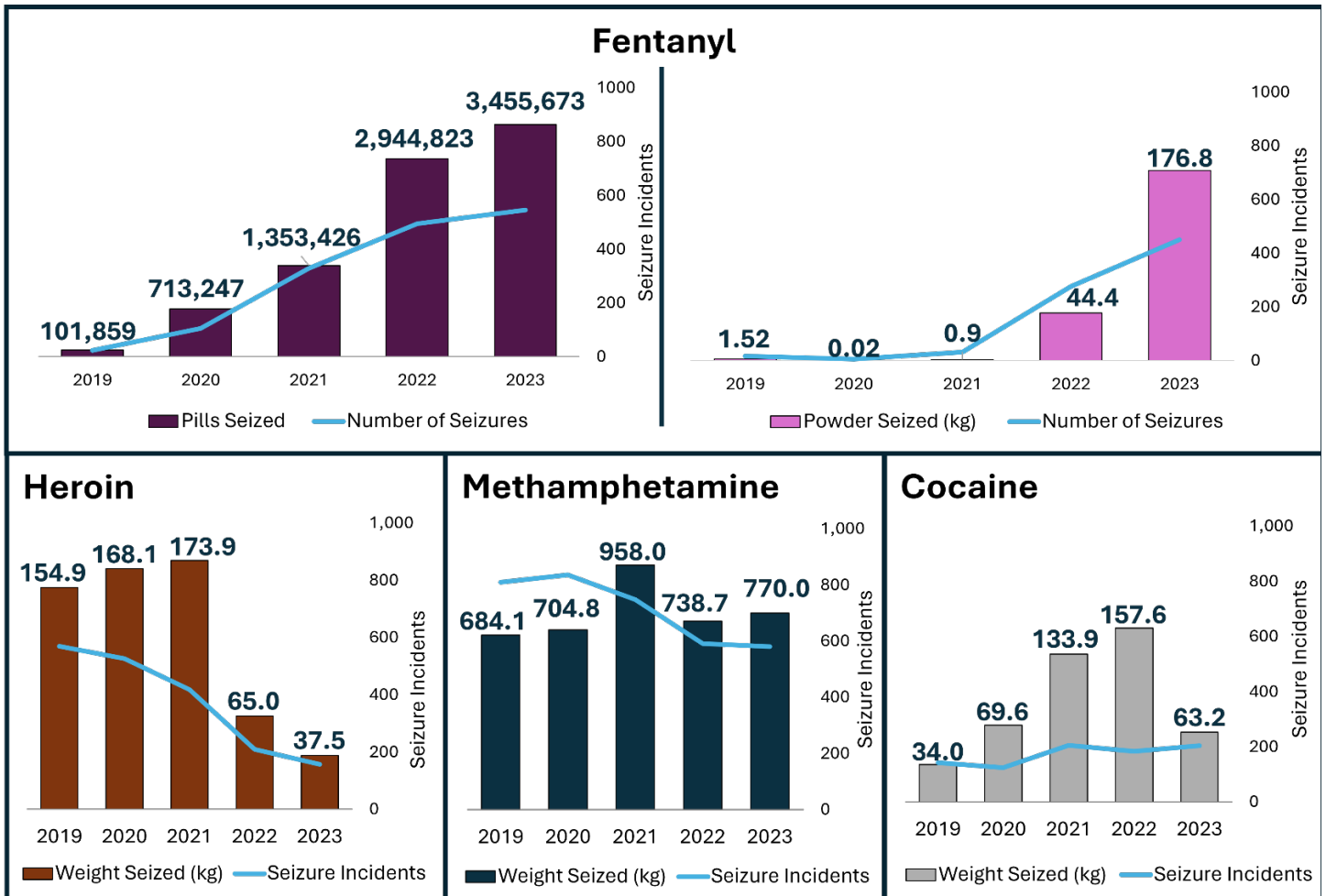
¹³ [CDC's State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System \(SUDORS\) | Drug Overdose | CDC Injury Center](#)

death either alone or in combination with other drugs. These numbers are anticipated to increase as mortality data for 2023 is completed.

In 2023, HIDTA-designated task forces in Clackamas, Deschutes, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Linn, Malheur, Marion, Multnomah, Umatilla, and Washington counties seized 770 kilograms of methamphetamine, a slight increase from the 738.7 kilograms seized in 2022 (see Figure 1). Counterfeit pills containing fentanyl continued to surge, reaching a high of 3,455,673 pills seized in 2023. Fentanyl in powder form significantly increased in the drug supply, with 176.8 kilograms seized in Oregon, with nearly all of it seized from the HIDTA task forces on the west side of the state operating along the I-5 corridor. Cocaine seizures decreased to 63.2 kilograms seized but the number of seizures and overall five-year trend remained stable. Heroin seizures continued to decrease with 75% less seized in 2023 (37.5 kg) compared to 2019 (154.9 kg). In addition to drug seizures, HIDTA task forces conducted 1,192 drug-related arrests and seized 935 firearms and \$8,874,160 in cash and assets.

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. Once across the southwest border of the United States, narcotics are transported through California and Arizona to the neighboring northern states. From active drug investigations and survey responses, various areas in California were identified as the primary local supply areas for many of the drug trafficking operations operating in the state.

During 2023, 69 drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) were disrupted or dismantled by HIDTA task forces. Nearly half (49%) of the DTOs trafficked multiple illicit drugs, with most of them trafficking fentanyl and/or methamphetamine along with heroin and/or cocaine. Two DTOs involved large illicit psilocybin and marijuana grow operations. A total of 15 conversion-style clandestine labs were seized in the state in 2023, eight of which were cannabis extraction labs related to butane honey oil (BHO) seized primarily in Southern and Central Oregon and three were fentanyl pill press operations. Conversion labs for DMT and psilocybin production were also seized in addition to a dumpsite connected to heroin suspended in a liquid.

Current Statewide Efforts

Within Oregon, twelve HIDTA-designated counties receive federal funding and support from the HIDTA Program; Clackamas, Deschutes, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Linn, Malheur, Marion, Multnomah, Umatilla, and Washington. Within these counties, thirteen designated task forces conduct drug investigations and interdictions. Three of the task forces are statewide initiatives that assist in investigations throughout the state and coordinate efforts with other HIDTA task forces. OSP Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE) and the United States Marshals Service Fugitive Task Force (USMS FTF) assist with interdiction and fugitive apprehension for all HIDTA teams. DEA Oregon has a district office in Portland and four resident offices in Salem, Eugene, Medford, and Bend that conduct drug investigations throughout the state and coordinate with other HIDTA teams. The remaining ten teams operate at a county level within the designated counties and are teams comprised of state, local, tribal, and federal partners, including members from DEA, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and/or Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Two task forces have local area tribal officers as part of their team. The Blue Mountain Enforcement Narcotics Team (BENT), located in Umatilla County, partners with members from the Umatilla Tribal Police Department, and the Central Oregon Drug Enforcement (CODE) team in Deschutes County, partners with members from the Warm Springs Tribal Police Department. The other eight county-level task forces are Clackamas County Interagency Task Force (CCITF), Douglas Interagency Narcotics Team (DINT), Multnomah County Dangerous Drugs Team (DDT), HIDTA Interdiction Team (HIT) in Multnomah County, Linn Interagency Narcotics Team (LINE), Medford Area Drug and Gang Enforcement (MADGE) in Jackson County, Rogue Area Drug Enforcement (RADE) in Josephine County, and Washington Interagency Narcotics (WIN).

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 consistent throughout Oregon. 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 the residents with timely information and resources to combat the drug threats facing all communities in Oregon.

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