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INDIANA HIDTA THREAT ASSESSMENT



2025

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Prepared for the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)



Zachary Myers
United States Attorney
Southern District of Indiana
Chairman

Garrett Ciszewski
Chief of Police
Hobart Police Department
Vice-Chairman

Charles Porucznik
Director
Indiana HIDTA

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SCOPE

The purpose of the Indiana High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Threat Assessment is to identify current and emerging drug-related trends within the designated area and deliver accurate and timely strategic intelligence to assist law enforcement agencies in developing drug enforcement strategies. This document provides a threat activity overview depicting the regional extent of illicit drug abuse and activities, actors and organizations, smuggling methods and routes of transportation, and evolutions in trends, tactics, and procedures. This document also fulfills statutory and grant requirements issued by the Office of National Drug Control Policy and has been approved by the Indiana HIDTA Executive Board.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Indiana HIDTA extends its thanks and appreciation to the Indiana National Guard Counterdrug Task Force, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Indiana State Police (ISP), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and numerous federal, state, local, and private and public health/public safety partners whose collective efforts and talents made this assessment possible. We also extend a special note of appreciation to the State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW) team for their assistance.

In cooperation with the Indiana State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup, a visual depiction of the data contained in this report may be found at:

<https://www.in.gov/fssa/dmha/substance-misuse-prevention-and-mental-health-promotion/prevention-partners/state-epidemiological-outcomes-workgroup/dashboards>

INFORMATION SOURCING

The primary sources of information utilized to produce the 2025 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment include the Indiana HIDTA's 2024 Drug Trends Survey (IN HIDTA Drug Survey), data from the HIDTA's Performance Management Process (PMP) System, and the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) drug-related death and substance abuse/substance use disorder treatment admission reporting. General information and non-statistical data may not be specifically cited as they may have been obtained via interviews, survey responses, or documentation provided by participating agencies.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Indiana High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (IN HIDTA) Threat Assessment identifies the current and emerging threats posed to the seven HIDTA-designated counties throughout the state.

In addition to the survey data discussed below, numerous field interviews were conducted with investigators and analysts. These interviews form the foundation of this assessment which seeks to provide decision-makers with frontline information and the realities faced by investigators.

The illicit drug landscape in Indiana is multifaceted, with opioids, notably synthetic opioids like fentanyl, emerging as the predominant concern due to their significant threat level. The drug trafficking organizations (DTO) known as the Cartel de Sinaloa (CDS) and Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG) remain the primary sources of illicit drugs entering Indiana. Both fentanyl and methamphetamine are manufactured in laboratories, freeing their production from reliance on traditional growing seasons. Consequently, their production is not subject to the seasonal variations that often affect natural crops, allowing for a continuous and uninterrupted supply chain to meet the demands of illicit drug markets.

Respondents were asked to consider the prevalence of the drug and its perceived propensity for harm when ranking drug threats for their area. Considering this criterion, IN HIDTA Drug Survey respondents indicated fentanyl and methamphetamine were the most significant drug threats in their Area of Responsibility (AOR).

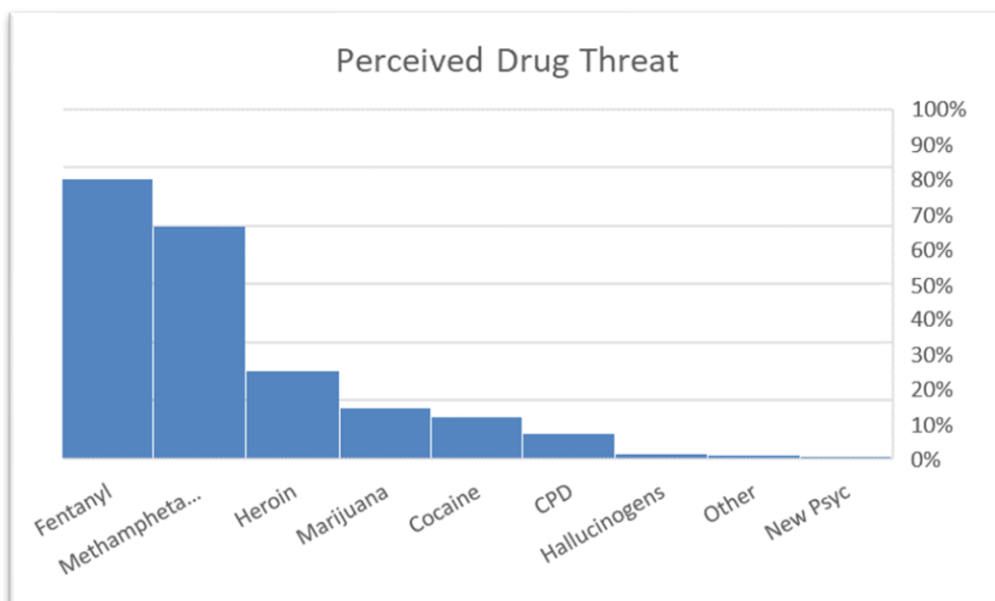


Figure 1- Perceived Threat Ranking. Source: IN HIDTA Drug Survey

In 2023, Indiana HIDTA enforcement initiatives seized lower quantities of illicit drugs and currency than the previous year. A notable exception is psilocybin mushroom seizures which rose dramatically in 2023.

Based on findings from the IN HIDTA Drug Survey, the general accessibility of fentanyl, methamphetamine, and marijuana saw notable rises or significant increases, whereas cocaine, controlled prescription drugs (CPDs), and hallucinogens mostly stayed stable or experienced slight increases. Similar results were reported for the demand change, year over year (2022 to 2023).

The following key findings were derived from a thorough review of all submitted survey responses, interviews with investigators, and drug seizure data:

- ❖ Numerous drug sellers seem to be broadening their operations, aiming to become comprehensive 'one-stop shops' offering customers various products instead of focusing on a single drug. This increased demand for a diverse range of drugs has led to numerous seizures involving multiple types of substances and prompted distributors to keep stocks of various substances.
- ❖ Marijuana continues to be the most popular recreational drug abused within the state. Indiana is surrounded by states that legalized recreational use (IL, MI, and OH); Indiana's laws regarding the delta compounds have created an apparent loophole in an otherwise anti-marijuana legalization state.
- ❖ Fentanyl drug trafficking continues to threaten Indiana. Often sold as heroin and combined surreptitiously with other drugs, fentanyl has been identified in cocaine, methamphetamine, and counterfeited prescription drug exhibits.
- ❖ Using technology alongside privately owned vehicles and commercial parcel delivery services improves the effectiveness of communication, transportation, and distribution networks for illegal drugs across the state, making these activities more accessible to individuals and smaller organizations alike.
- ❖ DTOs will persist in leveraging emerging technologies to evade investigations and enforcement efforts. The expanding landscape of social media platforms, encrypted messaging services, digital payment apps, and cryptocurrencies provide ample avenues for DTOs to communicate within their networks and launder proceeds from drug trafficking activities.
- ❖ Methamphetamine is a continuing and growing threat, namely because of its high availability and lower price point compared to other illicit drugs.

- ❖ Heroin is still in high demand by users; however, fentanyl has almost completely replaced heroin in the illicit opioid marketplace throughout Indiana.
- ❖ Mexican DTOs and Money Laundering Organizations (MLOs) continue to infiltrate several Indiana communities, especially in HIDTA-designated counties. However, an increasing number of independent DTOs seem to be assuming control of distribution, which historically has been controlled by larger street gangs and DTO's in open-air drug markets.
- ❖ Fake or counterfeit pills¹ manufactured both domestically and internationally are an increasing threat in the illicit drug market. DTOs deliberately market illicit fentanyl in pill form to mimic trademarked prescription medications.

According to IN HIDTA Performance Management Process (PMP) entries, IN HIDTA initiatives seized less fentanyl, methamphetamine, and cocaine by weight than the previous year; however, the number of individual seizures rose. IN HIDTA initiatives recovered approximately 656 kilograms of methamphetamine which represents over 6.5 million dosage units in 2023.² For fentanyl, IN HIDTA initiatives seized approximately 35 kilograms representing over 23.5 million dosage units.³

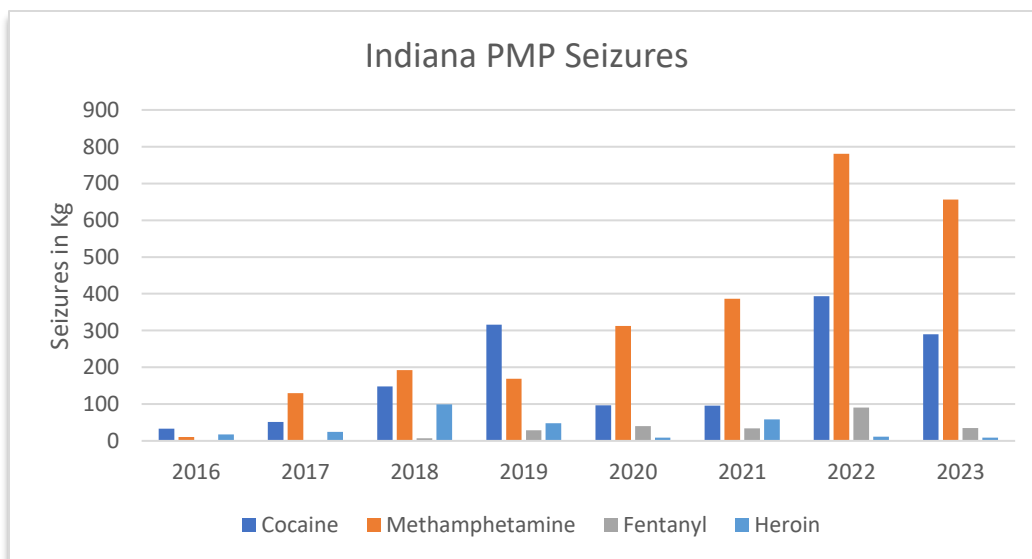


Figure 2- Indiana HIDTA kilogram seizures. Source: PMP

¹ The terms fake and counterfeit are used interchangeably to describe pills that may contain no active ingredient, the wrong active ingredient, or the right ingredient but in an incorrect quantity to pills made to resemble legitimate pharmaceuticals.

² HIDTA Performance Management Process (PMP)

³ Ibid.

INDIANA HIDTA REGION



Figure 3- IN HIDTA Counties. Source: IN HIDTA

Indiana is the 17th most populous state in the nation with a population of over 6.8 million people. Indiana's population grew 4.9% from the 6.5 million people who lived there in 2010. The northern belt along Lake Michigan is industrialized, while most of the central and southern areas support a rural, agricultural lifestyle. Most interstates in Indiana cross through Indianapolis, the state's largest city. Indiana is surrounded by several larger cities that act as drug distribution centers including Chicago, IL, Cincinnati, OH, and Louisville, KY.

The Indiana HIDTA AOR is comprised of Allen, Lake, La Porte, Marion, Porter, Vanderburgh, and Vigo counties. Together these counties make up 26% of the population of Indiana, and include the top three populous counties: Marion, Lake, and Allen.

The Indiana HIDTA was created in 1996 and began operations in 1997. In January 2017, the Executive Board changed the name from Lake County HIDTA to the Indiana HIDTA to better reflect the expansion of drug trafficking across the state. In accordance with the National HIDTA mission, the HIDTA was founded to combat illicit drug trafficking in and transiting Indiana. The following counties were added to our AOR: Porter County (2011), La Porte and Marion Counties (2017), Allen County (2019), Vanderburgh County (2020) and Vigo County (2022). This expanded the Indiana HIDTA focus beyond Northwest Indiana to assist regional law enforcement and better support the National Drug Control Strategy. In 2023, the HIDTA had nineteen primary law enforcement initiatives, each, in turn, focusing on drug trafficking, gangs, illegal firearms, money laundering, and fugitives.

The proximity of Lake, La Porte, and Porter Counties to the Chicago metropolitan area and the major highway systems that intersect these counties significantly impact and affect drug trafficking in the region. The more urban cities of Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Terre Haute, and Evansville contribute to much of the drug trafficking in the other HIDTA counties.

INDIANA HIDTA AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (AOR)

ALLEN COUNTY

Allen County has a total area of 660.02 square miles, the largest county in Indiana. It borders the state of Ohio and is within a 200-mile radius of major population centers, including Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Detroit, Indianapolis, Louisville, and Milwaukee. As of the 2023 US Census Bureau estimate, Allen County had a population of 394,545.⁴ The three largest cities are Fort Wayne, New Haven, and Woodburn. The major interstates include I-69 and I-4691. The U.S. highways include US-24, US-27, US-30, and US-33 (See Figure 4). Allen County HIDTA enforcement initiatives include FBI-led Fort Wayne Safe Streets Task Force (FWSSTF), DEA-led Northeast Indiana Drug Task Force (NEIDTF), and ATF-led Project Bullet - BATFE (PB).

LAKE COUNTY

Lake County, the home of the Indiana HIDTA in Crown Point, is approximately 500 square miles in size. It is situated in the northwestern corner of Indiana and has a population of 500,598.⁵ It is heavily populated and industrialized to the north, which borders Lake Michigan. The area contains major railroad lines, and two airports, and is home to several riverboat gambling casinos. The three largest cities in the northern region are Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago. Lake County serves as a major transshipment and distribution point for drug shipments destined for the Great Lakes region. The major interstates include I-65, I-80, I-90, and I-94 (See Figure 4). Lake County HIDTA enforcement initiatives



Figure 4- Major roadways in Indiana, Source: Geology.com

⁴ Population estimates, July 1, 2023", U.S. Census Bureau, QuickFacts, [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/)

⁵ Ibid

include ATF-led Firearms Interdiction Regional Enforcement (FIRE), FBI-led Gang Response Investigative Team (GRIT), DEA-led Lake County Combined Task Force (LCCTF), Indiana State Police-led Highway Enforcement Team (DHE), US Marshalls led Marshal's Fugitive Task Force (MFTF), IRS led Money Laundering and Financial Crimes (MLFC), Lake County Sheriff's Office led Regional Enforcement Team (RET). The Indiana HIDTA Investigative Support Center (ISC) and management initiatives are also located in Lake County.

LAPORTE COUNTY

Laporte County has a total area of 613 square miles of which 598 square miles are land and 15 square miles are water. It is located east of Porter County, borders the state of Michigan and Lake Michigan, and has a population of 111,706.⁶ The largest cities are Michigan City and La Porte City. In addition to the Indiana Toll Road, the Interstate highways in Laporte County include I-80, I-90, and I-94 (See Figure 4). Laporte County includes the Michigan Police Department-led LaPorte County Drug Task Force (LPCDTF) HIDTA enforcement initiative.

MARION COUNTY

Marion County is the most populous county in the state with a population of 968,460.⁷ Indianapolis is the county seat as well as the capital of the state. The county covers 403 square miles with 396 square miles of land and 7 square miles of water. The major highways include I-65, I-69, I-70, I-74, I-465 and I-865. As the fifteenth most populous city in the U.S., it is a prime target for illegal drug activity (See Figure 4) Marian County HIDTA enforcement initiatives include the ATF-led ATF Achilles Unit/ Crime Gun Intel Center (AAU), the DEA-led Central Indiana Drug Task Force (CIDTF), the IMPD led Indianapolis Hotel Interdiction and Truck Stops (IHITS). Marion County also includes the Marion County Prosecutor's Office (MCPO) and the Marion County Sheriff's Office Criminal Intelligence initiatives.

PORTER COUNTY

Porter County is 418 square miles and borders Lake County in northwest Indiana. It has a population of 175,335.⁸ Like its western neighbor Lake County, the area contains major railroad lines, major industrialized areas including the Port of Indiana, and an airport. Of the 22 cities and towns, Chesterton, Portage, and Valparaiso are the largest by population (See Figure 4) Porter County includes the Porter County Multi-Enforcement Group (PCMEG) HIDTA enforcement initiative.

⁶ Population estimates, July 1, 2023", U.S. Census Bureau, QuickFacts, [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/)

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

VANDERBURGH COUNTY

Vanderburgh County is the eighth smallest county, in area, at 236 square miles in Indiana. It borders the Ohio River and Henderson County, Kentucky to the south. It has a population of 179,810.⁹ The area is a transportation hub for rail, trucking, barge and container transport. The county is also designated as a U.S. Customs Port of Entry. It has major industrialized areas, two airports, and five universities/colleges. The following major roads cross the county: I-64, I-69, and U.S. Route 41. The county is close to major cities: Louisville, KY (120 miles), St. Louis, MO (150 miles), Nashville, TN (160 miles), and Indianapolis, IN (170 miles). Of the 33 cities and towns, Evansville and Darmstadt are the largest (See Figure 4). Vanderburgh County includes the River City Drug Task Force (RCDTF) HIDTA enforcement initiative.

VIGO COUNTY

Vigo County is 403 square miles and borders Illinois to the west. It has a population of 106,153.¹⁰ The county seat is in Terre Haute. Interstate 70 passes through the southern part of Terre Haute from east to west, from Indianapolis to Saint Louis, Missouri; U.S. Route 40 roughly parallels Interstate 70 and passes through the middle of the city. Both highways intersect U.S. Route 41, from Chicago to the north (See Figure 4). Vigo County includes the Wabash Valley Drug Task Force (WVDTF) HIDTA enforcement initiative.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Population estimates, July 1, 2023", U.S. Census Bureau, QuickFacts, [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States](#)

DRUG THREATS

FENTANYL

OVERVIEW

Fentanyl continues to be the largest drug threat in Indiana, ranking number one for the 5th year in a row, according to the 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Survey.¹¹ Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is much more potent than heroin and morphine, making it extremely dangerous, especially when mixed with other drugs or used unknowingly. Survey data and interviews with investigators confirm that fentanyl has largely taken the place of heroin, either openly or surreptitiously in the Indiana drug market. As an investigator from Northwest Indiana explained, “It used to be heroin tainted with fentanyl, now it’s more like fentanyl tainted with heroin.”¹²

“It used to be heroin tainted with fentanyl, now it’s more like fentanyl tainted with heroin”.

LEO Interview 24-007

A major factor contributing to fentanyl being ranked the greatest drug threat in Indiana is its extremely high availability, which increased again from the previous year.¹³ It is also increasingly used as an additive to or consumption with many other illicit drugs. The mixture of stimulants like cocaine and methamphetamine with opioids like fentanyl is a fast-growing driver of fatal drug overdoses.¹⁴

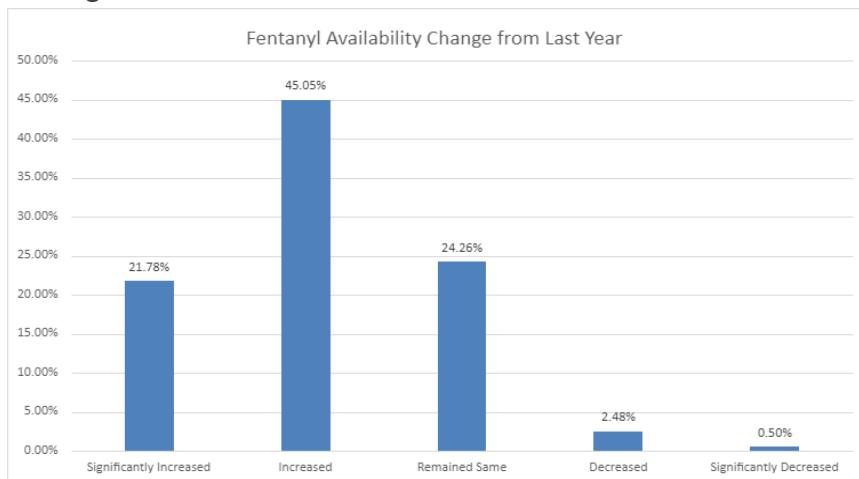


Figure 3- Fentanyl Availability Perception. Source: 2024 IN HIDTA Drug Survey

¹¹ 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Survey

¹² LEO Interview conducted on 2-21-24, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (18 years at position), 24-007

¹³ 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Survey

¹⁴ Maucione, S. (2023). Fentanyl mixed with cocaine or meth is driving the ‘4th wave’ of the overdose crisis. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2023/09/14/1199396794/fentanyl-mixed-with-cocaine-or-meth-is-driving-the-4th-wave-of-the-overdose-crises>

According to a narcotics investigator in Indianapolis: “Marion County had 800+ overdoses (OD) last year and almost all of them were fentanyl. A recent case involved a double OD where the victims believed they were purchasing cocaine, but it was cut with fentanyl. Almost all OD cases have some percentage of fentanyl. Most drugs aren’t causing ODs without fentanyl.”¹⁵

According to the Marion County Coroner’s Office (MCCO) there were 852 reported drug overdose deaths in Marion County and 701 drug deaths in 2023, 77% of which involved fentanyl and 22% involved multiple illicit drugs¹⁶.

A further contributing factor to the fentanyl threat in Indiana is fentanyl’s large footprint in fake or counterfeit pills. The DEA has estimated that over 70% of fake opioid pills contain a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl.¹⁷ A narcotics investigator from Indianapolis described a case in which the dealer stated he doesn’t sell fentanyl pills produced and shipped in large quantities (1,000+) because they are the most dangerous and likely to cause ODs.¹⁸

AVAILABILITY AND USE

According to survey respondents, both availability and demand for fentanyl are high in Indiana. Over 68% indicated fentanyl availability was high and over 73% categorized fentanyl demand as high. The survey results further indicated that over 66% of respondents believed fentanyl availability increased or significantly increased over the preceding year and 59% indicated that demand increased or significantly increased as well. Survey respondents reported roughly equal availability of fentanyl in both powder (89%) and pill (76%) forms. Noticeable differences between regions were not noted in survey responses.¹⁹

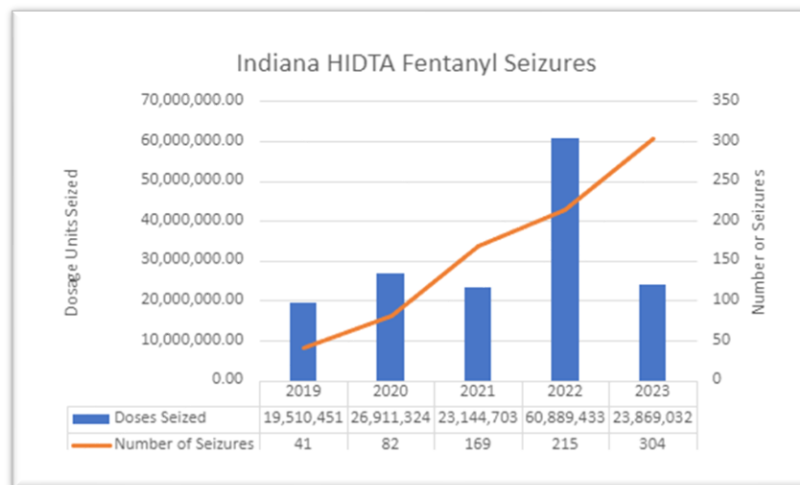


Figure 4 - Indiana HIDTA fentanyl seizures in 2023. Source: HIDTA PMP

¹⁵ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (10+ years experience), 24-002

¹⁶ Marion County Coroner’s Office (MCCO) 2023 Annual Report, [indy.gov: Annual Reports and Data](https://indy.gov/Annual-Reports-and-Data)

¹⁷ DEA (2024) One pill can kill, <https://www.dea.gov/onepill>

¹⁸ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (8 months at position), 24-003

¹⁹ 2024 Drug Threat Survey

Indiana HIDTA fentanyl seizures by weight have returned to previously seen levels following the spike in 2022; however, the number of seizures of fentanyl has steadily increased since 2019. This steady increase corresponds with fentanyl being found as an adulterant in many drug samples purported to be other products. A query of DEA lab exhibits for the Chicago Field Division in 2023 revealed over 14% of all analyzed drug exhibits contained two or more illicit drugs (polydrug) and just under half of those included fentanyl as the primary drug.²⁰

Fentanyl is primarily produced illicitly in clandestine laboratories, particularly in Mexico. It is then trafficked into the United States, through various channels such as international mail, shipping, and smuggling routes. Once within the United States, fentanyl may be further processed or mixed with other substances before being sold on the illicit drug market.²¹ With each transaction, the product undergoes cutting and stretching, leading to a decline in quality and consequently, inconsistency in potency across batches. The following illustration is a general summary of the distribution of fentanyl from Mexico to Indiana. The potential profit of one kilogram of fentanyl is almost \$100,000 when considering the price is typically around \$4.50 per gram in Mexico to \$70 or more per gram at the retail level.

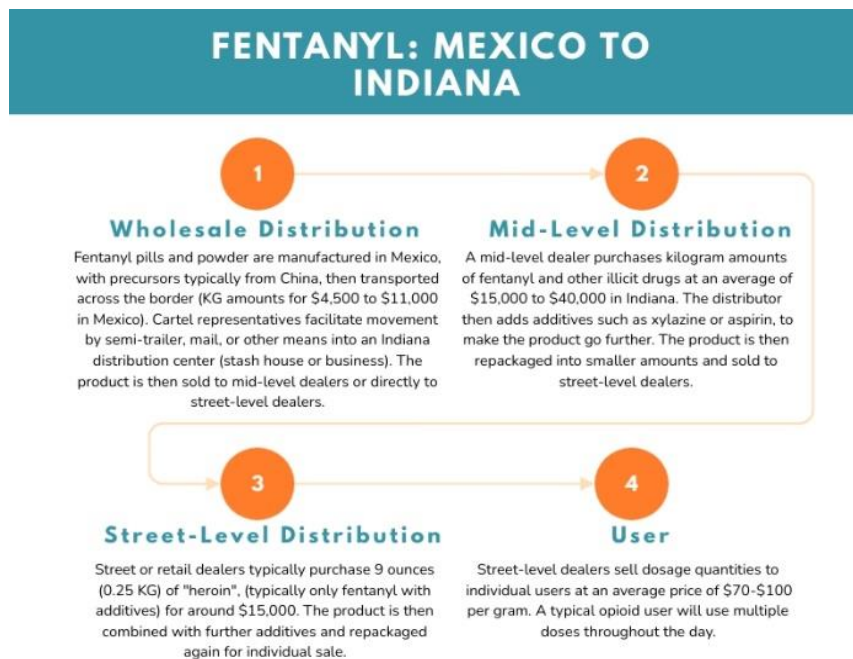


Figure 5- Distribution workflow. Source: IN HIDTA

As drug sellers continue to find ways to stretch their product and make a bigger profit, xylazine is another adulterant that is now being introduced into the illegal drug market. Xylazine, a non-

²⁰ Drug Enforcement Administration Data Query, Accessed 4 June 2024.

²¹ DEA-DCT-DIR-008-20, Fentanyl Flow to the United States, January 2020

controlled sedative used by veterinarians, increasingly is being added to illicit drugs, primarily fentanyl, at the retail level. Expanded distribution of fentanyl/xylazine combinations can result in exacerbated harm to users because it increases the risk of fatal overdose due to respiratory depression. Moreover, the affected user will be less responsive to naloxone as xylazine is not an opioid.²²

A study done by Spadaro, et al. concluded that, at least among the small sample of people on Reddit, xylazine seems to be an unwanted adulterant, common in the Northeast US.²³ However, according to The Center for Forensic Science Research and Education, 61% of Philadelphia area samples contained xylazine in quarters 1 and 2 of 2023.²⁴ Furthermore, according to the Marion County Public Health (MCPHD Safe Syringe Access and Support (SSAS) program, xylazine is now found in as much as 57% of tested syringes in Marion County, up from only 17% in September 2021.²⁵ This data suggests that xylazine, wanted or unwanted, is increasingly present in the illicit drug supply and that trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future in Indiana.²⁶

Key Findings

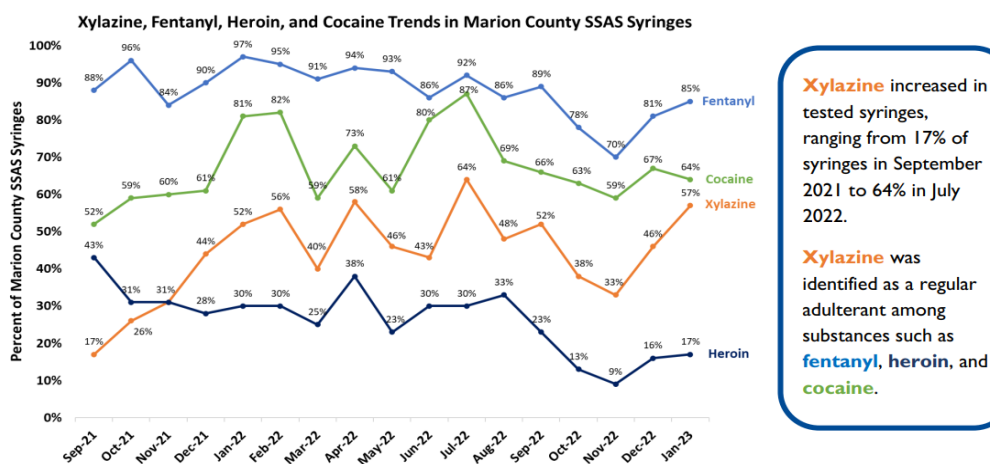


Figure 6- Trends in Marion county SSAS Syringes. Source: Marion County Public Health Department

²² DEA Bulletin, DEA-CHI-BUL-002-23 Rise in Xylazine Encounters in the DEA Chicago Field Division Area of Responsibility.

²³ Spadaro A, Connor KO, Lakamana S, Sarker A, Wightman R, Love JS, Perrone J. Self-reported Xylazine Experiences: A Mixed Methods Study of Reddit Subscribers. medRxiv [Preprint]. 2023 Mar 14:2023.03.13.23287215. doi: 10.1101/2023.03.13.23287215. PMID: 36993695; PMCID: PMC10055471.

²⁴ The Center for Forensic Science Research and Education (2024). Drug checking quarterly report, [Drug Checking \(cfsre.org\)](https://cfsre.org)

²⁵ Indiana Department of Health. Trends in Syringe Data. Data Brief; February 27, 2023,

²⁶ DEA Reports Widespread Threat of Fentanyl Mixed with Xylazine, 4/26/2024, <https://www.dea.gov/alert/dea-reports-widespread-threat-fentanyl-mixed-xylazine>.

In the graphic below, all six depicted categories, except for heroin, show a uniform change. Indiana drug deaths of synthetic opioids, methamphetamines, and cocaine, show similar increases beginning in 2016 with the availability of fentanyl beginning its dramatic increase, and then a slight decrease beginning in 2021 with the increased use of Naloxone throughout Indiana. It's crucial to note that decreases in death rates do not necessarily indicate a reduction in the actual severity of the threat. Although harm reduction methods like Naloxone have had a slight impact on drug-related deaths, the overall threat of fentanyl remains intact. According to a drug investigation supervisor with over 20 years of drug investigative experience:

“Indianapolis has roughly 900-1000 overdose deaths per year and it’s probably 4-5 times that, the people who are revived. The Narcan that is used, we have people that have been revived 10-15 times per year. We don’t track that. The only way they could track it is by the number of uses of Narcan but we don’t”.²⁷

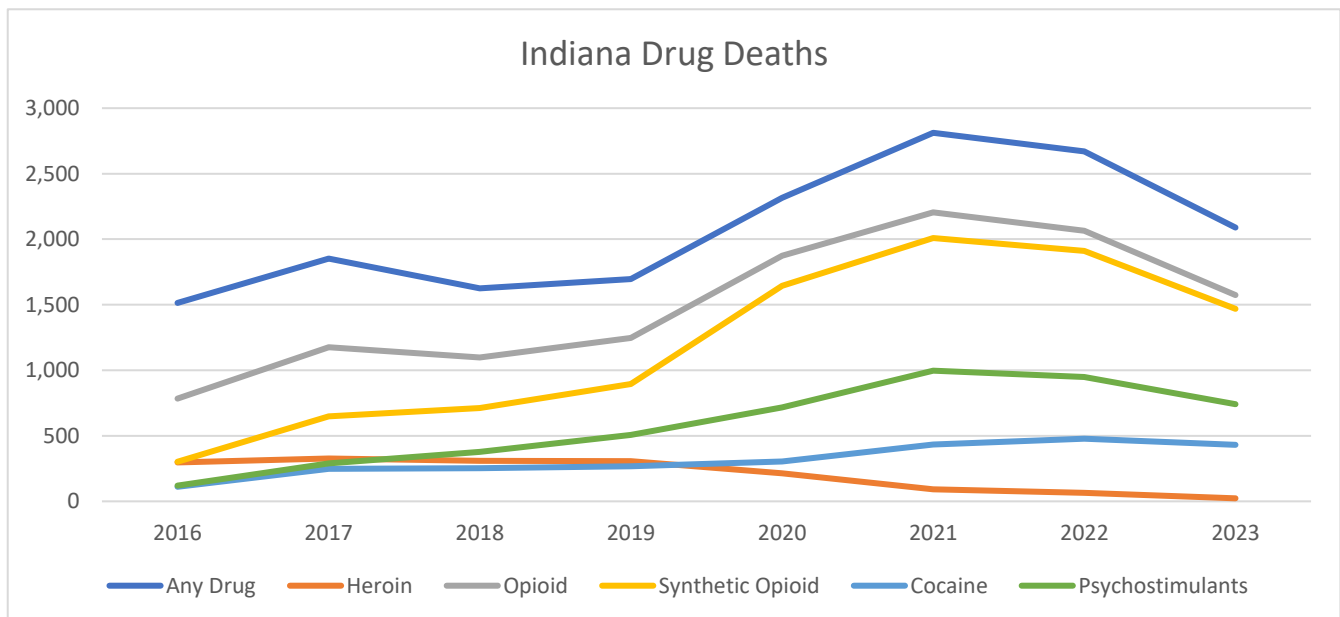


Figure 7- Indiana Drug Related Deaths. Source: Indiana Department of Health

Indiana death rates attributed to opioids decreased by over 6% between 2021 and 2022. Provisional data indicates Indiana suffered 1,574 deaths attributed to opioids in 2023, down from 2,064 in 2022.²⁸ As stated above, the likely contributing factor to the declining opioid death rate is the amount of naloxone distributed by the State. In 2022, the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) provided over 76,000 doses of naloxone, in 2023, IDOH provided an additional 133,000 doses.²⁹

²⁷ LEO Interview conducted on 12-14-23, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (20+ years experience), 24-001.

²⁸ Indiana Department of Health (2024). [in.gov/recovery/data/https://www.in.gov/health/overdose-prevention/overdose-surveillance/Indiana](https://www.in.gov/recovery/data/https://www.in.gov/health/overdose-prevention/overdose-surveillance/Indiana), accessed 5-8-24.

²⁹ Hollowell, L., Indiana Department of Health, Personal correspondence, 1-29-24.

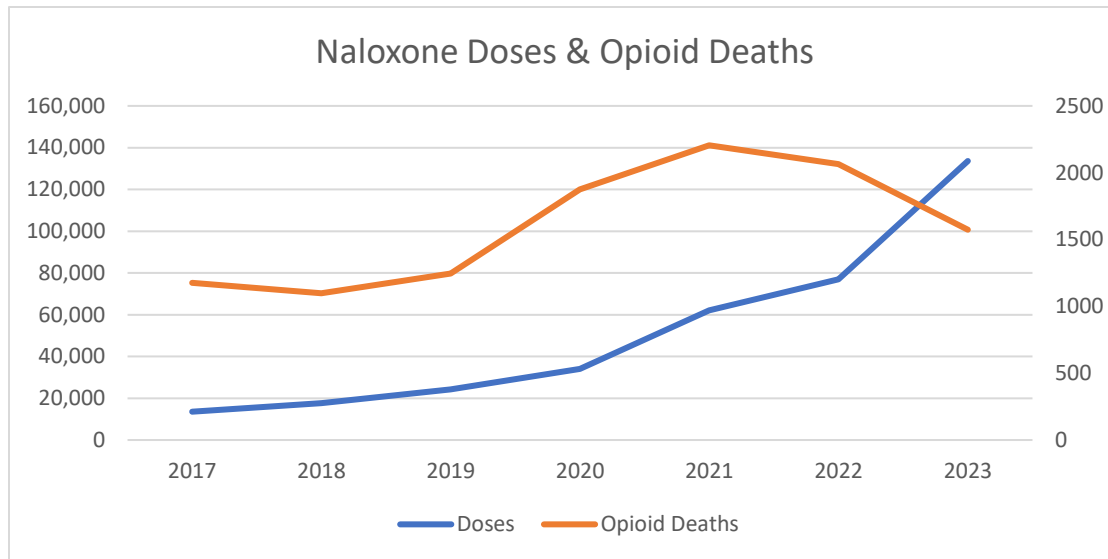


Figure 8- Naloxone Doses vs Opioid Deaths. Source: Indiana Department of Health

PRICING

Fentanyl prices vary significantly, influenced by factors like seller, location, and other variables. For example, in Allen County, 56.8 grams sold for \$900, averaging nearly \$16 per gram, while in La Porte County, 21.22 grams fetched \$1200, around \$57 per gram. Single gram (1) prices

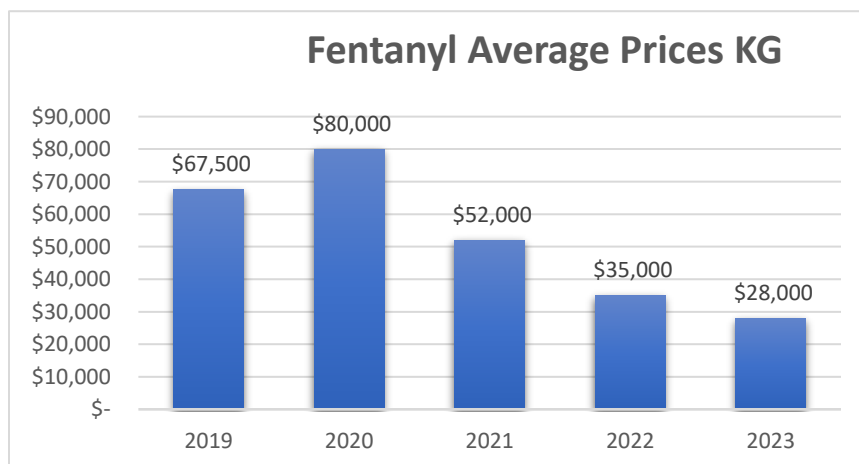


Figure 9- Fentanyl Kilogram Pricing. SOURCE: IN HIDTA Drug Survey

averaged about \$100.

Wholesale fentanyl prices have seen a consistent decline recently, dropping from \$35,000 per kilogram last year to approximately \$28,000 per kilogram presently. For a more thorough summary of drug prices, please refer to Appendix IV.

TRANSPORTATION AND DISTRIBUTION

According to the Drug Threat Survey, 95% of respondents said fentanyl is being transported by personal vehicles, while 35% said fentanyl is being transported by mail. Most law enforcement respondents concentrate on street-level fentanyl investigations, with only a minority involved in postal-related cases, potentially skewing the data due to their investigation biases. Despite hosting the second-largest FedEx Express hub in the US, Indianapolis has limited resources

allocated to monitoring drug shipments, resulting in insufficient data for accurate drug quantity assessment. It is believed that substantially larger amounts of drugs, including fentanyl, are trafficked through mail and parcel services than intercepted by law enforcement. The USPS fentanyl seizures are up 46% from last year; however, this only includes a small number of parcel seizures of fentanyl for 2023.³⁰

CASE HIGHLIGHT

In 2023, the LaPorte County Drug Task Force (LCDTF), an Indiana HIDTA initiative, opened an investigation into a Source of Supply associated with multiple overdoses in Michigan City, Indiana. After executing a residential search warrant and multiple arrests, a Source of Supply out of Gary Indiana was identified. In the weeks that followed, detectives conducted numerous controlled drug buys, purchasing over 200 grams of fentanyl that contained xylazine. It was learned that this mixture had the street name, “Tranq-dope”.



INTELLIGENCE GAPS

To what extent are postal and parcel delivery services being used to move illicit drugs and other materials such as xylazine and pill presses?

How widespread is the presence of xylazine in the illicit drug supply in Indiana?

³⁰ U.S. Postal Seizures 2018-2023, Indiana.

METHAMPHETAMINE

OVERVIEW

Indiana has historically been a hub for methamphetamine production and trafficking. While domestic production has declined, methamphetamine continues to be trafficked into Indiana from other states and countries. Mexican DTO's are known to be significant suppliers of methamphetamine in the state. According to respondents to the annual survey, methamphetamine poses the second greatest drug threat in Indiana, ranking closely behind fentanyl. This is due to the availability of the drug, which 80% of law enforcement respondents say is high, and nearly 50% say has increased or significantly increased compared to 2022.³¹ According to one Task Force Officer who works in Marion County, *"It is the most prevalent and most available and it is very cheap. It has a similar high to cocaine but it's cheaper than cocaine"*.³²

In recent years, there has been a notable shift in Northwest Indiana regarding the prevalence of methamphetamine, which historically hasn't posed a significant threat in the region.³³ According to a supervisor of a narcotics unit in Northwest Indiana for the past three and half years, and over 20 years of drug investigative experience, the cartels have been trying for several years to establish the methamphetamine market in Lake County, Indiana, and have been more successful the last few years: *[About four years ago] we were getting pound samples for free, and it was the Mexican cartels trying to establish a market in this area. And as we all know, it's flooded Elkhart, South Bend, and those areas and it's coming this way. So, they've finally got a lot more users locally than they did in the past. In our area, it was always cocaine or heroin, and then meth really started being pushed.*³⁴

AVAILABILITY AND USE

Methamphetamine use and addiction continue to be significant problems in Indiana. The drug is frequently abused for its stimulant effects, including increased energy, euphoria, and decreased appetite. According to survey results, over 80% of respondents considered methamphetamine availability to be high.

"It's just really easy to get your hands on it".

LEO Interview 24-001

Additionally, more than 67% of respondents reported an increase or significant increase in the

³¹ 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment Survey

³² LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (17 years experience), 24-011.

³³ LEO Interview conducted on 1-30-24, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (20+ years experience), 24-012.

³⁴ LEO Interview conducted on 1-30-24, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (20+ years experience), 24-012.

demand for methamphetamine over the previous year. Law enforcement respondents noted a noticeable rise in demand, with 45% reporting an increase and over 12% reporting a significant increase compared to the previous year. These numbers are similar for the Northwest Indiana region, while 60% of Marion County LE respondents say methamphetamine demand has remained the same from the previous year. However, 92% of LE respondents from Marion County say the demand for Methamphetamine was high in 2023. According to a narcotics supervisor working in the Indianapolis area, *“It’s cheap, there’s plenty of it, it can be put into a capsule form or a tablet form and sold as ecstasy, but it’s meth. It’s just really easy to get your hands on it.”*³⁵

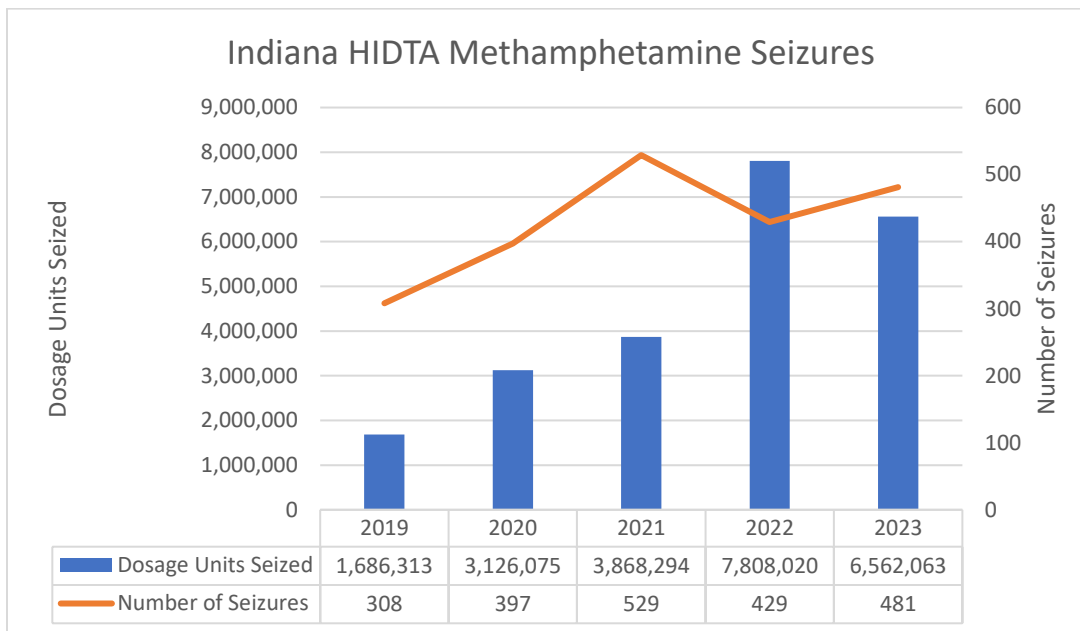


Figure 10- Indiana HIDTA Methamphetamine seizures in 2023. Source: HIDTA PMP

Indiana HIDTA methamphetamine seizures were down 16% in 2023; however, the number of seizures by HIDTA initiatives was up 12%. It is also important to note that aside from the spike in seizures in 2022, 2023 seizures have risen considerably since 2019. Given seizure data remaining high, lower methamphetamine prices, and transportation data discussed below, we assert that the supply of methamphetamine in Indiana has never been stronger.

Historically, methamphetamine has been commonly found in crystalline or powder form, typically ingested by smoking, snorting, or injection. However, the production and distribution of methamphetamine pills have become increasingly prevalent in recent years. In the 2024 HIDTA Drug Survey, over 20% of respondents reported encountering or seizing methamphetamine in pill form in 2023, marking a significant increase from just three percent the previous year.

³⁵ LEO Interview conducted on 12-14-23, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (20+ years experience), 24-001.

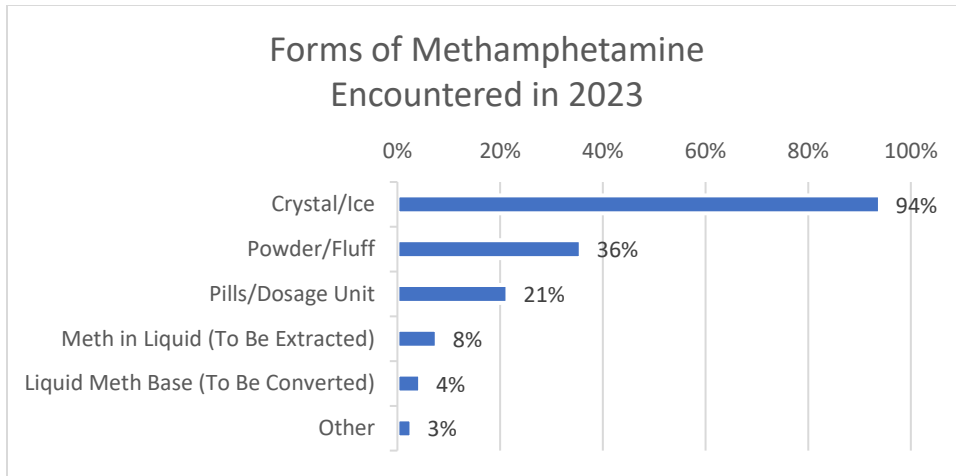


Figure 11- Forms of Methamphetamine encountered; Source: 2024 Indiana HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey

Indiana psychostimulant deaths began to rise steadily beginning in 2016 and peaking in 2021. 2022 saw an approximately five percent decrease from the previous year. While 2023 death data is still provisional, psychostimulant deaths appear to be down nearly 8% in 2023³⁶.

Fentanyl has made its way into the methamphetamine supply, either by ingesting a premixed concoction or taking methamphetamine with fentanyl. It is unknown how much of either scenario is occurring. Indiana State Police (ISP) labs have found seized samples of methamphetamine mixed with fentanyl to a small degree.³⁷ The correlation between the decline in methamphetamine-related deaths and the decrease in fentanyl-related deaths implies that the reduction in methamphetamine fatalities is likely attributable to the use of naloxone. It is important to note that naloxone reverses the effects of fentanyl, not methamphetamine.

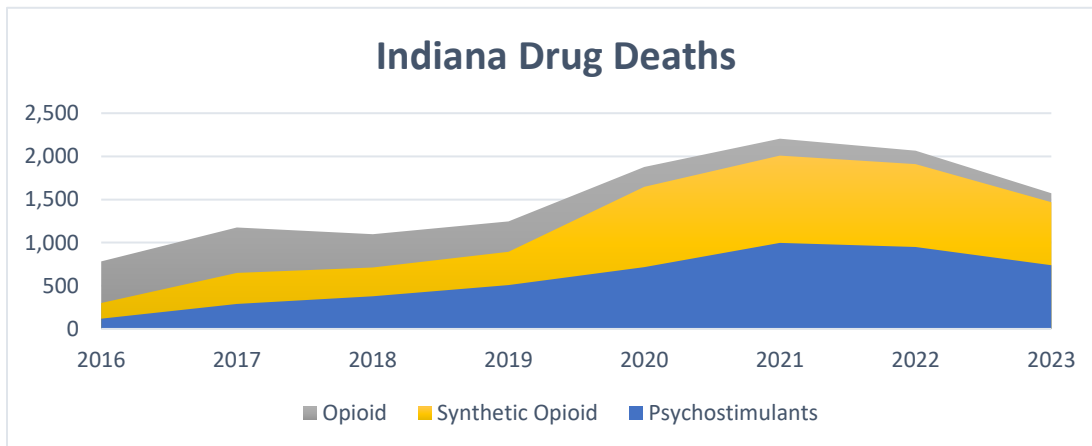


Figure 12- Indiana Drug Related Deaths; Source: Indiana Department of Health

³⁶ Indiana Department of Health (2024). [in.gov/recovery/data/https://www.in.gov/health/overdose-prevention/overdose-surveillance/Indiana](https://www.in.gov/recovery/data/https://www.in.gov/health/overdose-prevention/overdose-surveillance/Indiana), accessed 5-8-24.

³⁷ Indiana State Police lab data received on 6/5/2024.

PRICING

Prices for methamphetamine appear to have dropped slightly over the past year.³⁸ Retail prices for one gram typically hover around \$50, while wholesale prices exhibit more variability depending on location and other factors, averaging approximately \$2000 per pound.³⁹

According to a narcotics investigator in Indianapolis, *“The further away from the urban area the more expensive it is and also how many hands it has been through. Prices can still vary based on supplier.”*⁴⁰ For a more thorough look at drug pricing please refer to Appendix IV.

TRANSPORTATION AND DISTRIBUTION

It is widely believed that a considerable volume of methamphetamine, in addition to other illicit substances, is being transported through the various United States Postal systems. The ability to ship multiple packages through mail cheaply exposes traffickers to less risk than other potential forms of wholesale delivery. The emerging pattern of employing smaller-sized packages dispatched via the United States Postal Service (USPS) and mainstream carriers, instead of larger bulk shipments transported in private vehicles, could potentially account for the observed increase in seizure incidents, despite a decrease in the total weight of confiscated drugs. A narcotics detective who has worked with an Indianapolis-based drug task force for more than 15 years describes the postal operations of traffickers: *Usually, the meth parcels are between 4-10 pounds, but sometimes they are 20 plus pounds. Meth parcels are usually shipped from California, Arizona, and San Francisco. Shipping fees for the meth parcels are usually paid in cash. Ninety percent of the time the package is not sent to its final, intended destination. Sometimes the dealers rent an Airbnb and then have the parcel shipped to the Airbnb. Or a patsy or relative or girlfriend receives the parcel for the dealer. Usually, the parcels are addressed to fake names and have fake return addresses. Sometimes dealers also use third-party shippers like Stamps.com and Box City. Sometimes shipping fees for parcels are paid for in bitcoin.*⁴¹

According to Indiana HIDTA Survey data, 86% of respondents say methamphetamine is transported by passenger vehicle, while over 64% say it’s transported through the mail, up from 50% the previous year.⁴² This is noteworthy because most drug investigators do not work on postal investigations.

³⁸ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (17 years experience), 24-011.

³⁹ 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Survey

⁴⁰ LEO Interview conducted on 2-22-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (12 years experience), 24-015.

⁴¹ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (15 years experience) 24-013.

⁴² 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment Survey

CASE HIGHLIGHT

In 2023, the DEA-led River City Drug Task Force executed a federal search warrant on a storage unit and seized approximately 34 pounds of methamphetamine, one kilogram of cocaine, and 15,000 blue “counterfeit” M-30 fentanyl pills (Figure 1). DEA lab analysis confirmed the presence of fentanyl and heroin within the seized pills.



INTELLIGENCE GAPS

Will seizures of methamphetamine adulterated with fentanyl increase?

Will methamphetamine wholesale prices continue to drop?

HEROIN

OVERVIEW

The assessment of the heroin threat echoes the findings of the previous year, revealing a complex intertwining of factors. Notably, the perceived impact of heroin appears deeply entwined with the persistent presence of fentanyl. While our survey data indicates there is a strong demand for heroin, seizure and lab analysis data imply there is very little actual heroin available in the AOR. Instead, products sold as heroin are blends containing primarily fentanyl as the active ingredient, sometimes along with xylazine. However, the perceived threat of heroin remains high, ranking as the third greatest drug threat on the Drug Threat Assessment Survey.⁴³ While 68% of drug investigators on the street say fentanyl availability is high, only 45% perceive heroin availability as being high. Most, or all officers, know the actual threat is fentanyl; however, drug distributors, drug users, and confidential sources mostly refer to it as heroin, so it is treated as heroin until it comes back from the lab as mostly or all fentanyl. As a narcotic investigator working in Indianapolis stated *“Right now, you could lay heroin and fentanyl next to each other and you wouldn’t be able to tell the difference. A lot of the distributors in Indy don’t know the difference. And so, if you think you are buying heroin there’s a good chance you’re buying fentanyl, almost a 100% there’s a mixture in there”*.⁴⁴

AVAILABILITY AND USE

There appears to be little actual heroin being seized locally or at the border. Indiana HIDTA heroin seizures continue to decrease, down 23% from 2022 to 2023. CPB seizures of heroin also continue to fall, down another 40,000 lbs. from 2022 to 2023⁴⁵, which implies less heroin is coming across the border. Dealers seem to have transitioned to fentanyl due to its lower cost, heightened potency, and greater accessibility compared to heroin. Using fentanyl as a replacement for heroin affords sellers the ability to stretch the limited supply of heroin, or replace heroin completely, and still deliver a highly intoxicating product. As one drug investigator explains about drug users: *“all they care about is the high. They just know it’s a better quality. ‘I’m giving you my \$50, how far is that gonna stretch my high.’ And that’s all they care about. Obviously, meth, for simple terms being speed, and your fentanyl and heroin, to slow you down a little bit, they don’t care, they just know it feels good.”*⁴⁶

⁴³ 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment Survey

⁴⁴ LEO Interview conducted on 12-14-23, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (20+ years experience), 24-001

⁴⁵ [Drug Seizure Statistics | U.S. Customs and Border Protection \(cbp.gov\)](https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/drug-seizure-statistics)

⁴⁶ LEO Interview conducted on 12-14-23, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (20+ years experience), 24-001.

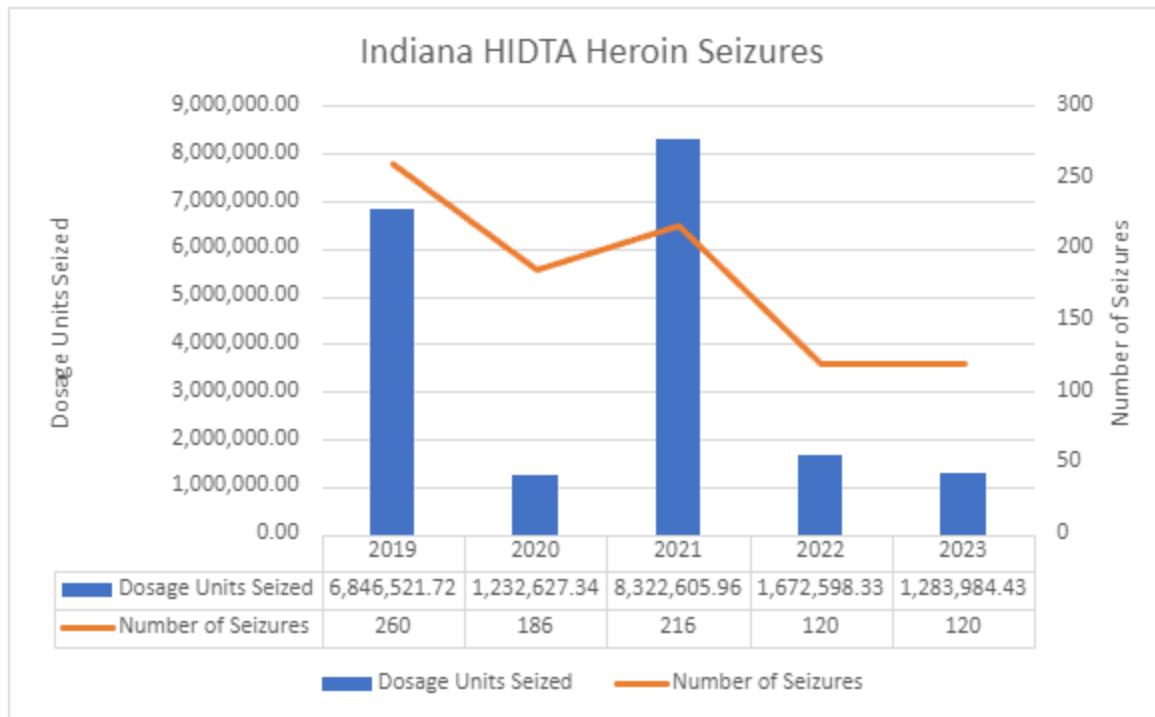


Figure 13- Indiana HIDTA Heroin seizures in 2023. Source: HIDTA PMP

Drug distributors market fentanyl as heroin because heroin is the more desired product, thus allowing them to demand higher prices. According to a supervisor working in Lake County with over 20 years of drug investigative experience: *“Almost all of our cases we work now involve fentanyl, that are supposed to be heroin. We never set out with the purpose of buying fentanyl, we have not encountered at our local levels someone selling anything purported to be just fentanyl, it’s generally purported to be heroin. When we get it and test it, then we know it’s fentanyl. We have never set up a deal, in the last 3 ½ years since I’ve run the group, specifically to buy fentanyl. We’ve bought heroin that ended up being fentanyl, we’ve bought prescription pills that ended up being fentanyl, we’ve never set out and/or been offered to buy just fentanyl, it’s always been something else”.*⁴⁷

PRICING

Determining the actual cost of heroin in the AOR is challenging due to the minimal quantity of genuine heroin present in the supply chain. Limited interview data indicates that fentanyl typically is sold as heroin at the retail level. As a result, heroin is priced comparably to fentanyl because they are considered interchangeable. For a more thorough summary of drug prices, please refer to Appendix IV.

⁴⁷ LEO Interview conducted on 1-30-24, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (20+ years experience), 24-012

TRANSPORTATION AND DISTRIBUTION

In 2023, 77 grams of heroin were seized by United States Postal Service (USPS) in Indiana. There were no heroin seizures made by USPS in Indiana for 2021 and 2022.⁴⁸ According to the 2023 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Survey, 97% of LEOs surveyed said heroin is transported by passenger vehicle, while only 20% say it is transported by mail.

CASE HIGHLIGHT



In 2023, the DEA-led HIDTA Lake County Combined Task Force (LCCTF), conducted multiple undercover controlled purchases and seized two (2) ounces of alleged heroin. DEA lab analysis confirmed the presence of fentanyl and heroin. Upon arrest of both the retail dealer and supplier, it was discovered that both believed they were distributing heroin and were unaware that the product contained any fentanyl.

INTELLIGENCE GAPS

Will the supply of actual heroin continue to decline?

Will demand for actual heroin increase as a user response to fentanyl overdoses?

⁴⁸ U.S. Postal Seizures 2018-2023, Indiana.

MARIJUANA

OVERVIEW

In previous Threat Assessments, marijuana's impact on Indiana was explored in its own dedicated chapter. However, upon reviewing the data for this document, it became clear that the narrative on marijuana in Indiana was closely linked with hallucinogens, particularly psilocybin mushrooms. As a result, we decided to integrate information about psilocybin mushrooms into this section for a more comprehensive view of the threat.

Marijuana ranked fourth and Hallucinogens ranked seventh, as the greatest drug threat in the state of Indiana, making marijuana a greater perceived threat than cocaine, according to law enforcement respondents to the 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Survey.⁴⁹ The ongoing prevalence of marijuana, alongside the perceived risks associated with its use and the violence associated with its trafficking, underscores its status as a noteworthy threat in Indiana, meriting ongoing monitoring. Much of the reason marijuana has ranked higher this year than in the past is likely due to the violence surrounding it. Based on interviews with several drug enforcement officers, it has been noted that a considerable number of shootings occur because of the substantial monetary incentives associated with the marijuana trade.⁵⁰ ⁵¹ As one officer said, *"You gotta have a gun if you're selling weed."*⁵²

"You gotta have a gun if you're selling weed".
LEO Interview 24-018

Indiana stands in contrast to its neighboring states in terms of cannabis policy. While three out of its four neighboring states—Michigan, Illinois, and Ohio—have legalized cannabis for adults aged 21 and older, Indiana remains one of ten states where cannabis is illegal (see Figure 14). Over 80% of the Indiana HIDTA Drug Survey respondents indicated that marijuana products diverted from legal states were seen in 2023.⁵³ A drug investigator from Northeast Indiana explained that Indiana is seeing more commercial-grade marijuana, along with mushrooms from Michigan because of changing laws and enforcement in surrounding states.⁵⁴ Mushrooms, being mailed from West Coast states like Oregon, California, and Washington,⁵⁵ are being seized many times in conjunction with marijuana because of similar sources of supply and

⁴⁹ 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment Survey

⁵⁰ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (17 years experience), 24-011.

⁵¹ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (11 years experience), 24-014.

⁵² LEO Interview conducted on 2-9-24, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (12 years experience), 24-018.

⁵³ 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment Survey

⁵⁴ LEO Interview conducted on 2-7-24, Northeast Indiana Narcotics Investigator (13 years experience), 24-017.

⁵⁵ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (15 years experience), 24-013.

similar users. A narcotics investigator working in Indianapolis stated, “[We are] seeing more than we used to see [hallucinogens], but mostly with weed dealers, sourcing from same locations they are getting weed from, psilocybin mostly.”⁵⁶

AVAILABILITY AND USE

According to the 2024 Drug Threat Survey, 89% of law enforcement respondents viewed marijuana availability as high, while 47% say it increased or significantly increased from the previous year.⁵⁷ Hallucinogen availability remains low around the state, with only 10% of respondents saying the availability of hallucinogens is high, and 22% of Marion County respondents say it is high.⁵⁸ However, a drug investigator working in the Indianapolis area explained that mushrooms are becoming more common, and can be found in chocolate bars for example. The investigator continued explaining that mushrooms used to be found mostly in neighborhoods with “hippy culture” but are now more widespread.⁵⁹

Marijuana is still the most popular illegal drug used within the state. According to the 2021 - 2022 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) survey, 18%-21% of Hoosiers aged 12 or older reported using marijuana in the past year, compared to illicit drug use other than marijuana, which was only around 3% of users⁶⁰.

Indiana has some of the most restrictive marijuana laws in the U.S. Possession of less than 2 ounces is classified as a Class B misdemeanor and punishable with a fine of \$1,000 on top of 180 days in jail. Delta-8 THC is, however, legal in Indiana. In 2019, Indiana adapted its hemp laws to comply with the federal government Farm Bill Act of 2018 through Senate Bill 516. The Bill removed certain hemp-derived compounds, including Delta-8, from the list of controlled substances and created the legal framework for hemp cultivation, production, and regulation in the state.⁶¹ Delta 8 THC is widely available in local stores in Indiana, including hemp shops, vape stores, wellness centers, and gas stations.⁶²

⁵⁶ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (11 years experience), 24-014.

⁵⁷ 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment Survey

⁵⁸ 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment Survey

⁵⁹ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (15 years experience), 24-013.

⁶⁰ 2021-2022 NSDUH National Maps of Prevalence Estimates, by State | CBHSQ Data (samhsa.gov)

⁶¹ Indiana Criminal Code 35-48-4-11, accessed 4-22-24

⁶² <https://www.indyjustice.com/blog/criminal-defense/cannabis-laws-indiana/>, accessed 4-22-24

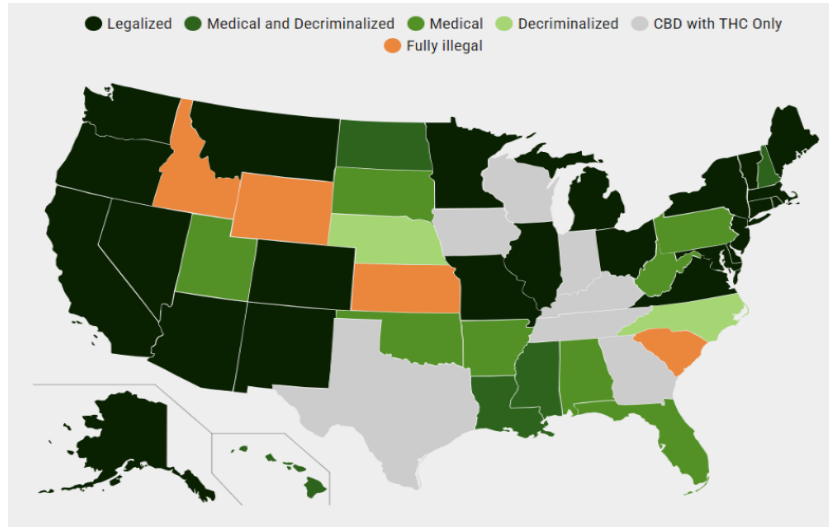


Figure 14- Marijuana Legality by State - Updated March 1, 2024 | DISA

The number of marijuana seizures for the Indiana HIDTA has also increased from 2022 to 2023, however, the total weight of marijuana seizures is down slightly.⁶³ The number of marijuana seizures by U.S. Customs and Border Protection has increased as well, from 15,020 seizure incidents in 2022 to 18,595 in 2023. However, the total weight (lbs.) seized has dropped by 5000 pounds, from 2022 to 2023.⁶⁴

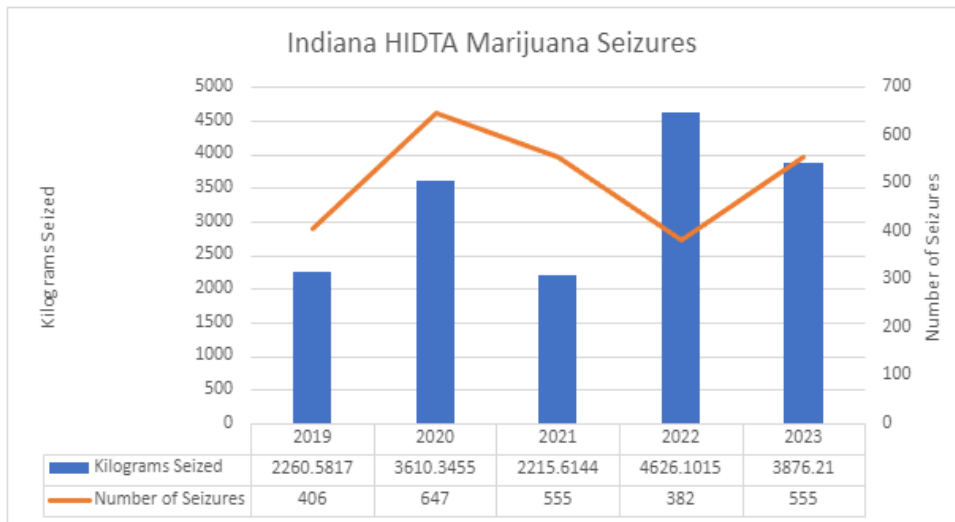


Figure 15- Indiana HIDTA Marijuana Seizures in 2023. Source: HIDTA PMP

⁶³ Indiana HIDTA PMP

⁶⁴ [Drug Seizure Statistics | U.S. Customs and Border Protection \(cbp.gov\)](https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/drug-seizure-statistics)

Marijuana's increased availability and use, especially among a younger demographic, has increased the violence surrounding the trade. An Indianapolis narcotics investigator explained that they are seeing so many shootings and it's just over marijuana. The investigator stated, *"If you want to make a lot of money, you sell marijuana. Because there is next to zero prosecution, and it's easy to get your hands on. They will kill each other over a pound of marijuana, and it doesn't make any sense"*.⁶⁵ Another drug investigator from Indianapolis explained that marijuana drives a lot of violent robberies and is a huge cash crop, with a younger demographic selling it. These 17-22-year-olds, as he describes them, are driving around with cash and flashing it on Instagram.⁶⁶

Mushrooms, like marijuana, are illegal in Indiana, but are becoming legalized to various degrees in surrounding states. Psilocybin mushrooms or "magic mushrooms", which contain the psychoactive compound psilocybin, are classified as Schedule I controlled substances in Indiana. This classification means that they are considered to have a high potential for abuse and no accepted medical use, placing them in the same legal category as substances like heroin and LSD.

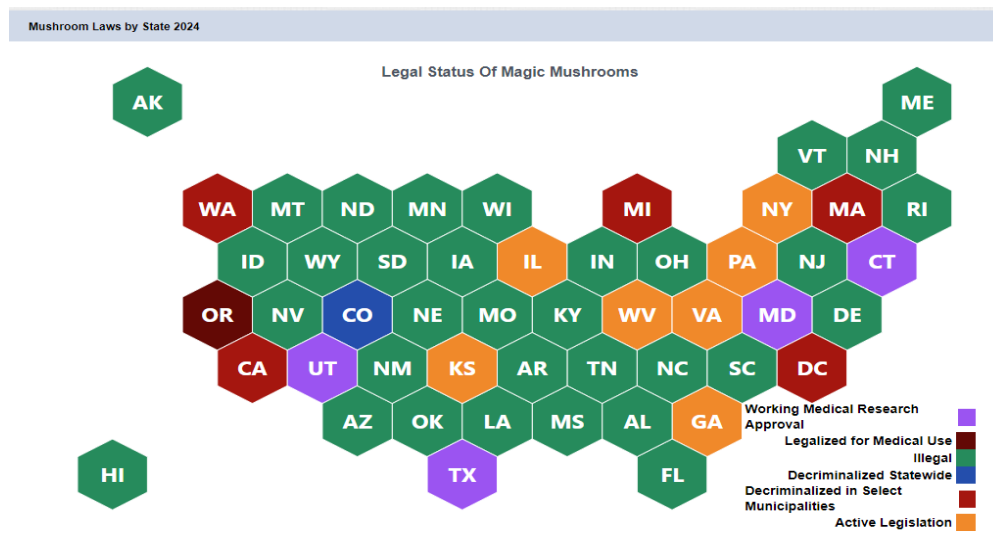


Figure 16- Mushroom Legality by State. Source: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/mushroom-laws-by-state>

Indiana HIDTA Kilogram mushroom seizures have surged in 2023, increasing by more than 1212% since 2022.⁶⁷ It is important to note drug investigators typically don't concentrate solely on mushroom or hallucinogen cases. Instead, the majority, if not all mushroom seizures occur as a result of other drug investigations.

⁶⁵ LEO Interview conducted on 12-14-23, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (20+ years experience), 24-001.

⁶⁶ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (15 years experience), 24-013.

⁶⁷ Indiana HIDTA PMP

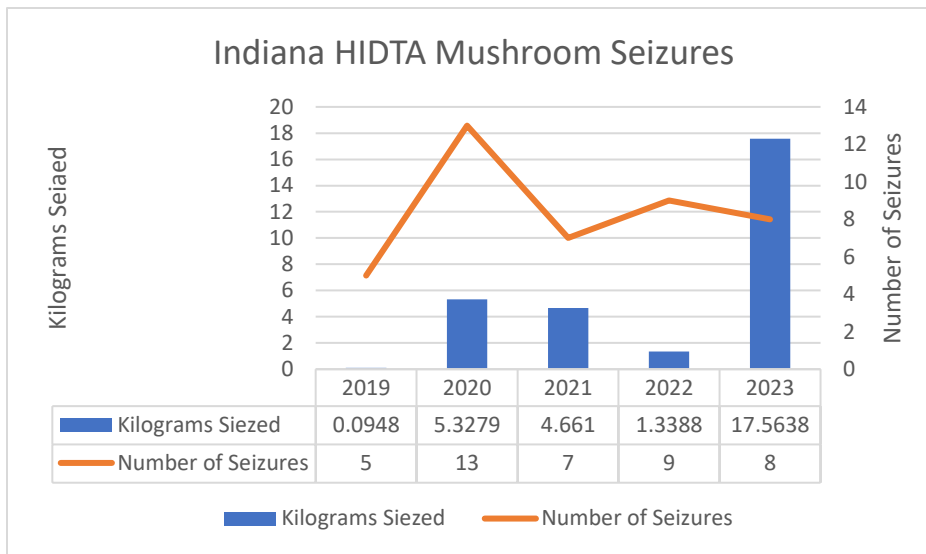


Figure 17- Indiana HIDTA Mushroom Seizures in 2023. Source: HIDTA PMP

PRICING

Wholesale marijuana prices in Indiana range widely based on origin, quality, seller, and buyer with a most frequently reported price of approximately \$1000 per pound.⁶⁸ When comparing price points between illegally sourced marijuana and marijuana purchased at Michigan dispensaries, the black market product was found to be comparable to high-quality dispensary ounce prices.⁶⁹ An open-source marijuana pricing site indicated an ounce of high-quality marijuana in Indiana was around \$330 whereas the Michigan price was \$289.⁷⁰ For a more thorough summary of drug prices, please refer to Appendix IV.

TRANSPORTATION AND DISTRIBUTION

According to the 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Survey, 93% of law enforcement respondents say marijuana is being transported by passenger vehicles, and 41% say it's transported through the mail delivery system. With less Mexican-sourced marijuana reported in Indiana, and more commercial-grade, or domestically-sourced marijuana,⁷¹ less marijuana is crossing the border.⁷² While a large portion of the marijuana seen by law enforcement in Indiana is bud, flower, and/or leaf form, marijuana edibles are encountered just as much by law enforcement

⁶⁸ Indiana HIDTA Drug Price Database, accessed 5-6-24.

⁶⁹ <https://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/local/2024/04/19/michigan-pot-industry-cheap-prices-higher-sales-tax-revenue/73373776007/>, accessed 5-6-24.

⁷⁰ <https://www.priceofweed.com/prices/United-States>, accessed 5-4-24.

⁷¹ LEO Interview conducted on 2-7-24, Northeast Indiana Narcotics Investigator (13 years experience), 24-017.

⁷² [Drug Seizure Statistics | U.S. Customs and Border Protection \(cbp.gov\)](https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/topics/drug-seizure-statistics)

officers.⁷³ Also, most respondents of the drug threat survey say marijuana is coming from Michigan and Illinois, while some say it is coming from California, Oregon, and Washington.⁷⁴ This is similar to hallucinogens, as they have been seized together having common sources and users. A narcotics investigator working in northern Indiana explained, “As far as hallucinogens like acid and stuff, we’re seeing that more because simply some of the legislation in Michigan is riding that fine line of what is and isn’t legal”.⁷⁵

CASE HIGHLIGHT

In August 2023, the DEA-led HIDTA Lake County Combined Task Force (LCCTF), conducted surveillance that led to a state search warrant at a residence in Gary, IN. The warrant resulted in the seizure of 201.4 grams of suspected marijuana, eight (8) suspected Xanax pills, and one (1) bag of suspected mushrooms/psilocybin (photographed below). All property was handled and processed by the Gary Police Department. In a post-arrest interview of the resident, s/he advised they were addicted to M-30 pills and are now utilizing Xanax and marijuana to overcome the M-30 addiction.



INTELLIGENCE GAPS

Is Indiana heading towards the legalization of marijuana and mushrooms like surrounding states?

Will falling prices of legal marijuana in Michigan drive down black-market prices in Indiana?

⁷³ 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment Survey

⁷⁴ 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment Survey

⁷⁵ LEO Interview conducted on 2-7-24, Northeast Indiana Narcotics Investigator (13 years experience), 24-017.

COCAINE

OVERVIEW

Cocaine ranked the fifth greatest drug threat in Indiana, according to the HIDTA Drug Threat Survey.⁷⁶ The cocaine threat in Indiana varies in nature and scope depending on factors like location and demographics. Most cocaine is produced in Colombia and Peru, and then is trafficked north through Mexico or other water routes. Once in Indiana, cocaine is often distributed through major cities including Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, and Evansville. Additionally, Chicago is seen as a primary source city for Northwest Indiana.

Although cocaine is still readily available in Indiana and remains a viable threat, it has been overshadowed by methamphetamine and fentanyl in recent years. One persistent threat revolves around dealers surreptitiously adding fentanyl to cocaine, often unbeknownst to their customers. This deceitful tactic is presumed to play a part in the over three-fold increase in Indiana cocaine deaths since 2016.⁷⁷ Consequently, dealers stand to reap considerable profits from this scenario, as individuals unwittingly exposed to fentanyl may develop dependencies requiring frequent, often daily, purchases. According to author Sam Quinones, who reported:

But Sundell told me that the dealers she knew quickly saw that with fentanyl they could create opioid addicts who would buy daily, instead of occasionally, as many cocaine users do. Once one dealer did it, they all did it. ‘They do it because fentanyl is so addictive,’ she said. ‘They do it just enough for you to become addicted. You’re not addicted to coke, you’re addicted to the fentanyl—but you think it’s coke. I don’t think [customers] knew that it was mixed.’⁷⁸

According to DEA’s State and Territory Report on Enduring and Emerging Threats (STREET), fentanyl and fentanyl related compounds were found in over 41% of drug samples in 2023, up from over 31% in 2019.⁷⁹ The presence of fentanyl in Indiana’s cocaine supply and the additional danger to users it creates was explained by an Indianapolis-based investigator describing the cocaine threat as, “*serious based on commonly being cut with fentanyl. Pure cocaine has not been as common in the last 10-13 years*”. Also, according to this same officer, “*cocaine availability is on the rise*”.⁸⁰ It is also reported by several other law enforcement officers that cocaine is “*on the rise*” and “*crack is coming back*” in Indiana.⁸¹

⁷⁶ 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment Survey.

⁷⁷ <https://www.in.gov/recovery/data/> accessed on 4-29-24

⁷⁸ Quinones, Sam, *The Least of Us: True Tales of America and Hope in the Time of Fentanyl and Meth*,

⁷⁹ DEA NFLIS-Drug, March 14, 2024, from STREET Bulletin NIIP-029-24, May 2024.

⁸⁰ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (13 years experience), 24-006.

⁸¹ 2023 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Survey.

AVAILABILITY AND USE

When considering the data gathered from the drug threat survey, seizure data, and investigator interviews, the true state of cocaine's supply and demand in Indiana is difficult to discern. Increases in seizure size at the border and seizure frequency locally seem to imply a growing supply; however, this conclusion is not supported by survey responses. The introduction of fentanyl into the cocaine supply implies that forces in the supply chain are working toward increasing the cocaine market share. Based on interviews and survey data, this *may* be working, but cannot be confirmed. What is clear is that cocaine's reputation as a 'party drug' is still intact and it is still viewed as a drug of choice in those situations.⁸²

Thirty-five percent of survey respondents indicated cocaine availability was high and 51% believed that availability had remained the same over the previous year. Cocaine demand was viewed as moderate by a plurality of respondents (39%) with most respondents (58%) indicating demand had not changed over the previous year.⁸³ However, when considering responses from those in HIDTA-designated counties, some differences are noted. Sixty-four percent of HIDTA county respondents indicated cocaine availability was high, and 55% said demand was high.⁸⁴

Cocaine, like other drugs, has seen an increase in the number of seizures (up 14%) by Indiana HIDTA law enforcement initiatives, but a decrease (down 26%) in the total weight of the seizures. Moreover, although there has been a slight decrease in the weight of cocaine seizures within Indiana HIDTA enforcement initiatives over the past year, the overall figure remains significantly higher than in 2021.⁸⁵ Even with many investigations focusing on fentanyl and methamphetamine, law enforcement encounters a considerable number of polydrug traffickers and continues to seize sizeable quantities of cocaine. The seizure statistics along the southwest border over the past year illustrate a contrasting scenario: While the number of seizures has decreased, there has been a corresponding increase in the total weight of seizures in 2023⁸⁶. This suggests that cartels are trafficking larger quantities across the border in response to heightened demand or desire to increase the footprint of cocaine. Additionally, a potential resurgence of crack cocaine will further contribute to the demand for powder cocaine.

⁸² LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (18 years experience), 24-011.

⁸³ 2023 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Survey.

⁸⁴ 2023 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Survey.

⁸⁵ Indiana HIDTA PMP, accessed on 4-15-24

⁸⁶ [Drug Seizure Statistics | U.S. Customs and Border Protection \(cbp.gov\)](https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/drug-seizure-statistics)

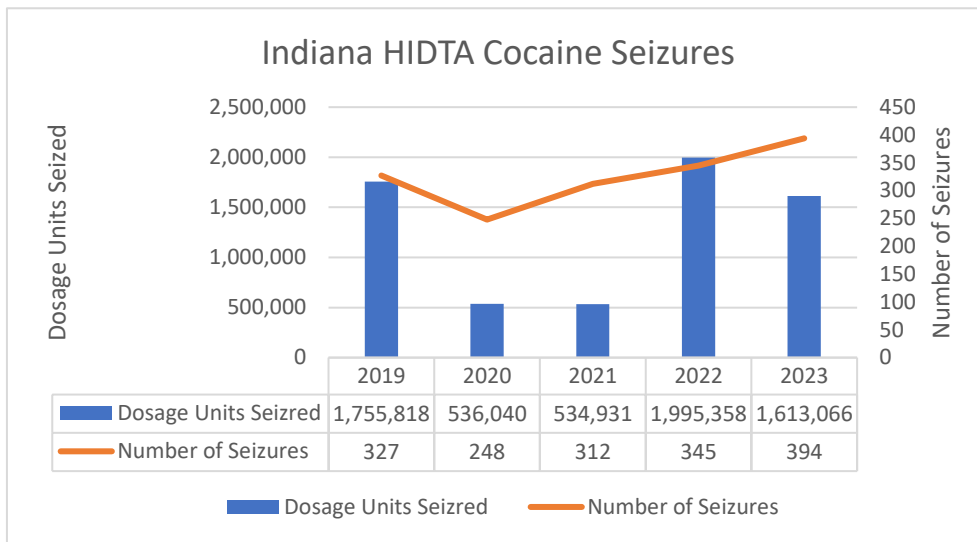


Figure 18- Indiana HIDTA Heroin seizures in 2023. Source: HIDTA PMP

According to the Drug Threat Survey, 40% of law enforcement respondents have seen cocaine converted to crack in their jurisdiction; over 71% of respondents from HIDTA counties have encountered cocaine conversion.⁸⁷ Additionally, while 85% of law enforcement report seizing cocaine in powder form, the percentage of those seizing cocaine in crack form has risen to over 65%, up from 45% the previous year.⁸⁸ The number claiming crack seizures in HIDTA counties is even higher at 90%. In the Gary area, law enforcement has seen an increase in crack post-COVID. A law enforcement officer working in the area stated: *"We were seeing a few cases where people were trying to buy heroin, and a dealer would push crack on them as well. And that was the only way they would sell to them, if you buy a gram of heroin, you would have to buy a gram of crack and make you pay for it or you weren't getting anything. They were trying to get it back out there and it's started to take off again".*⁸⁹

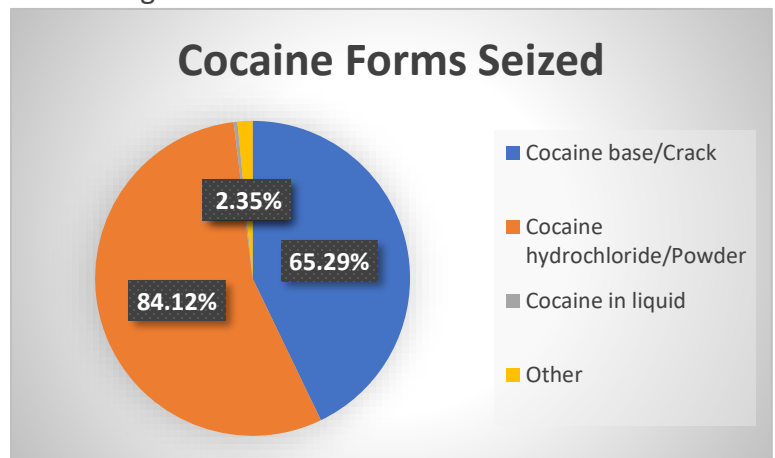


Figure 19- Forms of Cocaine seized; Source: 2024 Indiana HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey

⁸⁷ 2024 Drug Threat Assessment Survey

⁸⁸ 2024 Drug Threat Assessment Survey

⁸⁹ LEO Interview conducted on 1-30-2024, Narcotics Investigator Manager (3.5 yrs at Position), 24-012.

However, cocaine's traditional status as a party drug has seen an increase, although this could be tempered as dealers continue to lace cocaine with fentanyl, as a narcotics investigator in the Indianapolis area stated: *"There has been an uptick in cocaine usage in clubs and bars in the last few years and more recently cocaine has been laced with fentanyl which has contributed to the overdose crisis because cocaine users are not expecting their coke to be cut with fentanyl. We had a case involving a triple overdose where the victims ordered up cocaine and ended up overdosing because their cocaine had been cut with fentanyl"*.⁹⁰

"There has been an uptick in powdered cocaine use for personal use at clubs and parties".

LEO Interview 24-011

Fatal overdoses involving cocaine have increased 270% from 2016 to 2023 in Marion County, and 357% in Lake County during the same period. In Indiana overall, fatal overdoses involving cocaine have more than tripled since 2016. In 2023, fatal overdoses involving cocaine accounted for 20% of the total drug overdoses, up from 17% in 2022. While 2023 data is still provisional, it appears Indiana cocaine deaths fell 9% from 2022.⁹¹ This decrease is most likely attributable to the increased availability of naloxone, reversing the effects of the fentanyl in the cocaine.

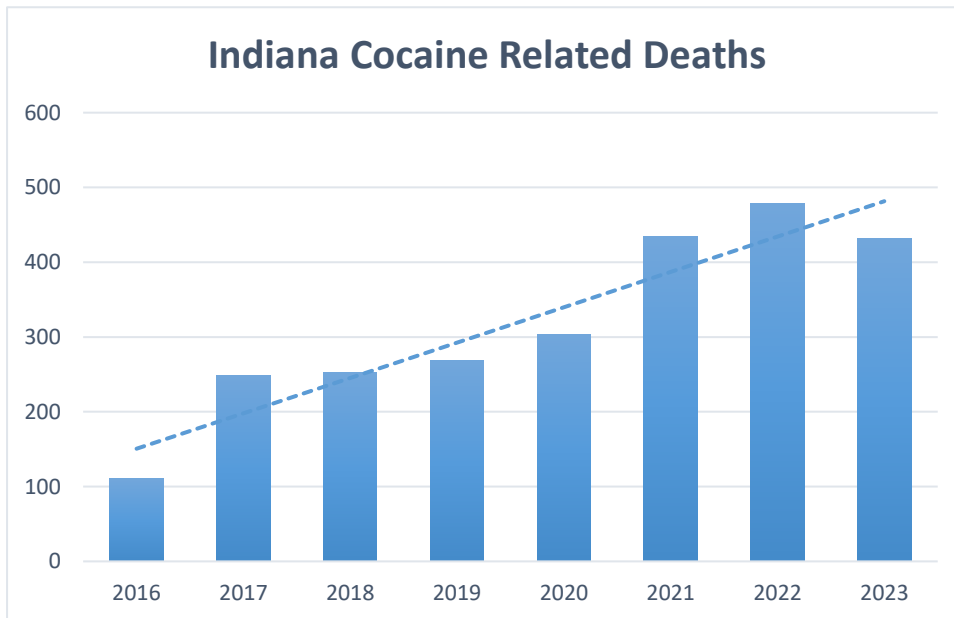


Figure 20- Indiana Cocaine Related Deaths. Source: Indiana Department of Health

⁹⁰ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis based Narcotics Investigator (18 Years at Position), 24-011.

⁹¹ <https://www.in.gov/health/overdose-prevention/overdose-surveillance/indiana/>. 4/10/2024.

PRICING

The street price for cocaine varies based on such things as the distance from a distribution hub, the number of transactions between that hub and the end user, and the market forces upon individual suppliers.⁹² Cocaine is in market competition with methamphetamine, with methamphetamine being the less expensive substitute. One case agent described a case where a cartel connection in California was providing meth to the target's associate in California at the rate of 25-50 pounds every few days. The target also ordered 2-5 kilograms of cocaine each week at the cost of about \$22,000 per kilogram. Some of the kilograms were marked "A10", "CAT", and "Corona", and they were all referred to as "A1" cocaine. The "A1" cocaine, , cost \$26,000 per kilo and tested positive for fentanyl with subsequent analysis.⁹³ The average HIDTA cocaine kilogram price is \$24,500 but has been reported as low as \$15,000 when purchasing multiple kilograms. For a more thorough summary of drug prices, please refer to Appendix IV.

TRANSPORTATION AND DISTRIBUTION

Chicago is commonly recognized as the primary hub for drug trafficking in the Midwest, particularly for cocaine.⁹⁴ As a result of Indiana's proximity to Chicago and other major cities, transporting cocaine into Indiana via passenger vehicles is notably high. However, 22% of law enforcement respondents, up from 15% the year before, say cocaine is coming through the mail⁹⁵.

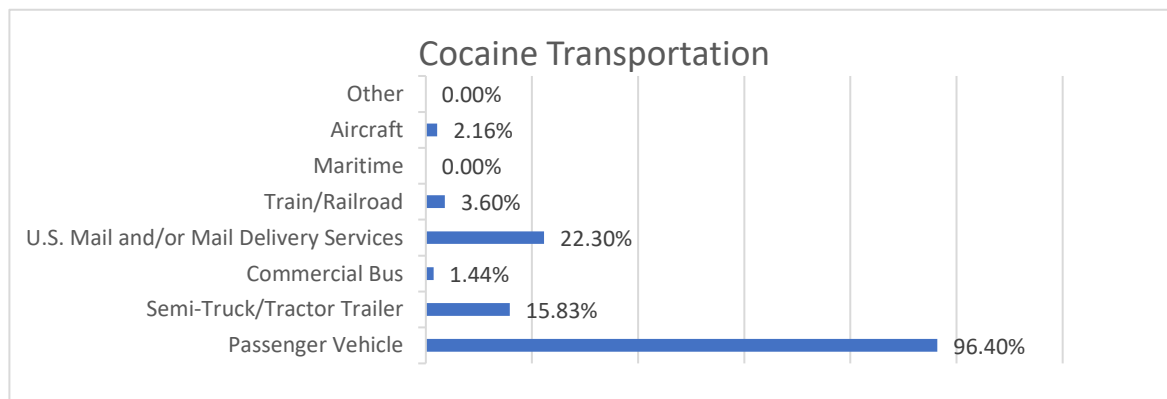


Figure 21- Cocaine Transportation Methods Encountered; Source:2024 Indiana HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey

⁹² LEO Interview conducted on 2-22-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (12 years experience), 24-015.

⁹³ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (11 years experience), 24-014.

⁹⁴ <https://www.chicagotribune.com/2018/12/19/how-chicago-became-a-key-hub-in-el-chapos-massive-us-drug-operation-chicago-twin-testifies-in-historic-trial/>, accessed on 5-6-24.

⁹⁵ 2024 IN HIDTA Drug Survey

CASE HIGHLIGHT

In August 2023, the DEA-led Northeast Indiana Drug Task Force (NEIDTF), conducted several controlled buys from a Fort Wayne-based cocaine distributor. Throughout the buys, DEA Fort Wayne seized a total of 1,245.6g of cocaine for \$27,600. The highest amount purchased at one given time from the target was 636.6g for \$13,000. DEA Fort Wayne conducted a search warrant on the target's place of residence and stash house and seized an additional 3,392.4g of cocaine.



INTELLIGENCE GAPS

Is the cocaine market driven by supply or demand?

CONTROLLED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS (CPDs)

OVERVIEW

While the threat from controlled prescription drugs (CPD) is still present, the threat from counterfeit pills has astronomically exceeded it. As a drug investigator from the Indianapolis area described, *“fake Percocet pills are most common; not seeing a large distribution of controlled prescription drugs.”*⁹⁶ A majority of these fake and counterfeit pills contain fentanyl, along with other dangerous or deadly substances like methamphetamine, household chemicals, or xylazine. According to an investigator with over 17 years of law enforcement experience, working in Indianapolis, *“Counterfeit fentanyl pills have taken a hold on the market.”*⁹⁷

Due to the increased threat of counterfeit pills, the CPD threat is difficult to determine. According to the Indiana HIDTA 2024 Drug Threat Survey, CPDs were ranked sixth in our AOR, moving down one

“Counterfeit fentanyl pills have taken a hold on the market”.

LEO Interview 24-005

position from the previous year.⁹⁸ CPDs continue to be a threat throughout the country, as well as in Indiana but due to increased diversion actions and lawsuits, CPDs are being more carefully prescribed. One of the primary reasons for the diversion of prescription drugs in Indiana is the high demand for these drugs, particularly opioids. Opioid drugs like oxycodone and hydrocodone are highly addictive and can be easily abused, leading to a significant risk of overdose and death.⁹⁹

The diversion of CPDs and the purchase of fake pills are significant issues in drug misuse, each with distinct processes and risks. Diversion involves illegally distributing or using, legally prescribed drugs through methods such as doctor shopping, prescription forgery, theft, and improper prescribing. In contrast, purchasing fake pills involves acquiring counterfeit medications from sources like illegitimate online pharmacies or street dealers. Fake pills often contain harmful or incorrect ingredients, posing severe health risks, including potential death.

⁹⁶ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (13 years experience), 24-006.

⁹⁷ LEO Interview conducted on 2-13-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (17 years experience), 24-005.

⁹⁸ Indiana HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey 2024.

⁹⁹ [Prescription Opioids DrugFacts](#) | [National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\) \(nih.gov\)](#)

AVAILABILITY AND USE

Determining the threat level of diverted CPDs has become increasingly complex due to the proliferation of counterfeit pills that closely resemble legitimate prescription medications. End users often cannot distinguish between authentic prescription pills and fake ones because counterfeit drugs are designed to mimic the appearance, shape, and markings of legitimate medications. This makes it exceptionally difficult for users to identify whether they are consuming a genuine product or a potentially deadly counterfeit.



Figure 22- DEA Spot the Fake. Source: <https://www.dea.gov/onepill>

According to the Indiana HIDTA's 2024 Threat Assessment Survey, 35% of law enforcement respondents indicated availability of CPDs was high, and 12% indicated that availability increased or significantly increased from the previous year. Indiana HIDTA does not distinguish between diverted CPDs and fake pills in the reporting of seizures. In 2023, there were over 40,000 controlled prescription narcotic pills seized by HIDTA initiatives, however, these could have been reported as CPDs, but lab results show later they were fentanyl pills. Fentanyl pills, reported as dosage units, increased dramatically from 2022 to 2023, going from over 6,000 in 2022, to over 336,000 in 2023.

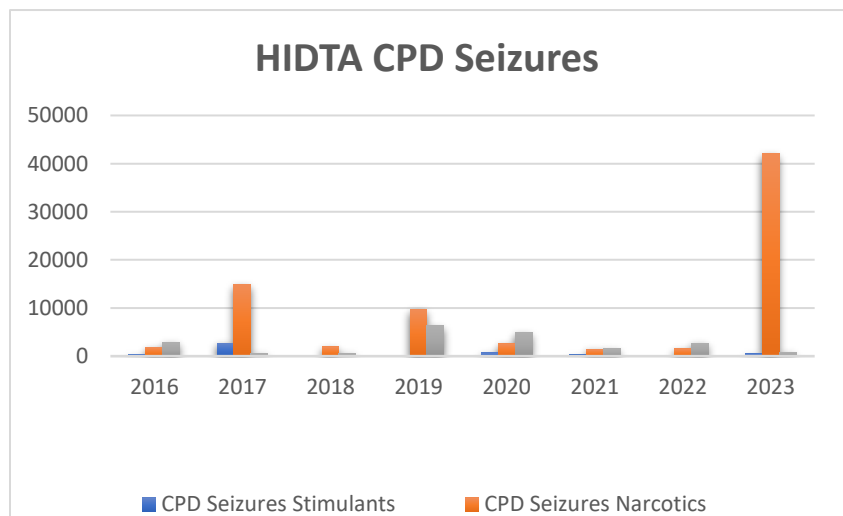


Figure 23- Controlled Prescription Drug seizures by HIDTA Initiatives. Source: PMP

Drug traffickers use pill presses to mold fentanyl and other drugs into pill form and employ punches and dies to imprint markings and logos, creating pills that appear to be legitimate medications such as oxycodone, Xanax, and Adderall. However, these counterfeit pills typically contain fentanyl, methamphetamine, and other dangerous substances. In 2023, the DEA seized over 79 million fake pills containing fentanyl—a more than 33% increase from the year before. DEA laboratory testing currently indicates that 7 out of 10 pills contain a potentially deadly dose of fentanyl.¹⁰⁰

Survey respondents noted an uptick in the prevalence of domestic pill presses encountered during their investigations compared to previous years. Drug investigators have observed a rise in pill presses or illicit pill manufacturing facilities, with over 10% of respondents reporting encountering such facilities during their investigations.¹⁰¹ Additionally, many respondents discussed seizing pill presses during their drug investigations. According to a narcotics investigator with over 18 years of drug investigative experience, law enforcement is witnessing a significant influx of pill presses and counterfeit Percocet 30 tablets being shipped through the mail from dealers across the country, primarily from Arizona and New Mexico.¹⁰² A Customs and Border Patrol query indicated the seizure of at least five stamps and one pill press that were destined for Indiana in 2023.¹⁰³

PRICING

Pricing of illicit prescription drugs can vary depending on the strength, dosage, and type. The average price of oxycodone ranges between \$10-\$30 per 30mg pill. The average price for alprazolam pills ranges between \$10-\$20 per 2mg pill.¹⁰⁴ Fentanyl pills range from \$2 to \$40 per pill, with the most reported retail price of \$10 per pill. Methamphetamine pills range from \$5 to \$30 per pill, and \$20 as the most commonly reported retail price.

INTELLIGENCE GAPS

Will the diversion of legitimate prescription pills decrease as fake pills and pill presses become more easily accessible in the supply chain?

¹⁰⁰ [Pill Press Resources \(dea.gov\)](https://www.dea.gov/pill-press-resources)

¹⁰¹ 2024 IN HIDTA Drug Survey

¹⁰² LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (13 years experience), 24-006.

¹⁰³ Customs and Border Patrol seizure data queried 05-23-2024

¹⁰⁴ Threat Assessment Interview, May 18, 2023

DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS (DTOs)

OVERVIEW

The Cartel de Sinaloa (CDS) and Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG) DTOs remain the primary sources of illicit drugs infiltrating Indiana. Their extensive influence in U.S. communities is expanded through wholesale traffickers and street-level dealers who distribute the cartels' drugs, occasionally concocting their own lethal drug blends. They leverage social media platforms and messaging applications to promote and sell their products to customers.

Profits generated from these products are largely funneled back to Mexico. As a drug investigator from Indianapolis stated, *"If you're over here, there are people way above you. Most of the important people are not in the United States."*¹⁰⁵ These organizations in Mexico, along with numerous others, cooperate

across all facets of the drug trade to supply users in the U.S. and Indiana with unprecedented quantities of dangerous and potentially lethal products. Drug epidemics commonly feature either stimulants or

*"If your over here, there are people way above you.
Most of the important people are not in the US".*

LEO Interview 24-0015

opioids. However, the proliferation of "superlabs" in Mexico has enabled the mass production of synthetic versions of both types, leading to a surge of these substances flooding the streets of the U.S.

Indiana HIDTA initiatives investigated a total of 90 DTOs in 2023, only eight of those 90 were trafficking a single drug; the rest were poly-drug traffickers. Furthermore, 58 were violent DTOs, seven were International DTOs, 25 were Multi-State DTOs, and 58 were Local DTOs.¹⁰⁶

INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS

OVERVIEW

In Indiana, Mexican cartels or their representatives are dealing directly with the local DTOs. According to the 2024 Drug Threat Survey, CJNG is the major source of supply in Indiana, with CDS a close second. The Gulf Cartel is a source of supply for DTOs in Indiana as well, according to 11% of law enforcement respondents.¹⁰⁷ When asked who was responsible for the retail distribution of illegal drugs into the Indianapolis region, a narcotics investigator from Indianapolis stated, *"Sinaloa, CJNG, the gulf cartel (International), locally – Indianapolis has*

¹⁰⁵ LEO Interview conducted on 2-22-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (12 years experience), 24-015.

¹⁰⁶ Indiana HIDTA PMP, accessed on 4-16-24

¹⁰⁷ 2023 Drug Threat Assessment Survey

*more block gangs than nationwide gangs. The cartels supply the local distributors. One guy is a known drug trafficker who has connections to the cartel, the known drug trafficker will bring his buddies in".*¹⁰⁸

AFFILIATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP

All seven International Drug Trafficking Organizations (IDTOs) were considered violent, five were gang-related, and three were cartel-affiliated.¹⁰⁹ Six of the seven IDTO's source areas were in Mexico, the seventh is unknown. It is common knowledge that most illegal drugs in the U.S. come from Mexico, and it is usually assumed that one of the cartels manufactures and ships them to the U.S.¹¹⁰ While this is true, the reality is much more complicated. According to the Drug Threat Survey, 54% of law enforcement respondents indicated no connections identified, when asked about Cartel Sources of Supply.¹¹¹ This is because it is difficult to know exactly which Cartel or organization the drugs are coming from, or how that organization is structured. As a Task Force Officer in Indianapolis puts it, *"At our level it kind of gets distorted, most of America and policy makers think it's this big hierarchy in the U.S., but in reality, you have a bunch of midlevel distributors here in Indianapolis. [For example], One day you maybe small time, you meet someone at a club, and now you have a direct source, and you're up here, and then that source gets picked off, and you are back down here. It's always clouded."*¹¹²

The individuals encountered at the local level in Indiana are typically not members of the cartel but rather associates or affiliates connected to the cartel. An investigator in Indianapolis stated, *"More commonly there is a family member with a connection back home that will mail the product in. Indianapolis commonly deals with more local community members. It more depends on where a person is from in which cartel they could be affiliated to".*¹¹³

International DTOs Identified by the Indiana HIDTA Characteristics

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Total International DTOs | 7 |
| Total Members (Leaders) | 257 (12) |
| Average DTO Size | 36.7 |
| Multi-Ethnic | |
| Gang Related | 5 |
| Cartel Affiliated | 3 |
| Violent | 7 |
| Polydrug | 3 |
| Money Laundering Activities | 1 |

Federal Case Designations

| | |
|---------------|----------|
| OCDETF | 5 |
| CPOT | 2 |
| RPOT | 0 |
| PTO | 0 |

¹⁰⁸ LEO Interview conducted on 2-13-24, Indianapolis Criminal Investigator (13.5 years experience), 24-005.

¹⁰⁹ Indiana HIDTA PMP accessed on 4-16-2024

¹¹⁰ <https://www.npr.org/2019/04/06/710712195/how-do-illegal-drugs-cross-the-u-s-mexico-border>, accessed on 4-29-24

¹¹¹ 2024 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Survey

¹¹² LEO Interview conducted on 12-14-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (22 years experience), 24-001.

¹¹³ LEO Interview conducted on 2-22-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (12 years experience), 24-015.

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS

An Indianapolis-based narcotics investigator summarized the Cartel presence in Indiana saying *“Sinaloa, MS13, Gulf, and CJNG cartels have representatives in the AOR. The cartels run sectors or regions and have local representatives known as ‘plaza bosses.’ These representatives are normally laid back and business-oriented”* ¹¹⁴.

Operating mainly from Mexico, they send representatives to Indiana, primarily Indianapolis and other larger cities. These representatives are high-level businessmen who facilitate drug transactions with local DTOs like neighborhood-based gangs, or independent DTOs. A narcotics investigator in Indianapolis summarized the makeup of Indiana DTOs as a mix of both local and international members. Local groups primarily consist of individuals from the same neighborhoods. While they don't qualify as gangs, they often share common backgrounds, such as growing up together, living on the same block, or attending the same high school. In contrast, members of International DTOs are typically individuals residing in the U.S. illegally, responsible for distributing drugs on behalf of cartel members in Mexico. They are not cartel members per se but are associated with cartel members and may be working off a debt or doing it to send money to their families in Mexico. CJNG seems to be the most frequently encountered cartel linked to drug cases in Indianapolis. ¹¹⁵

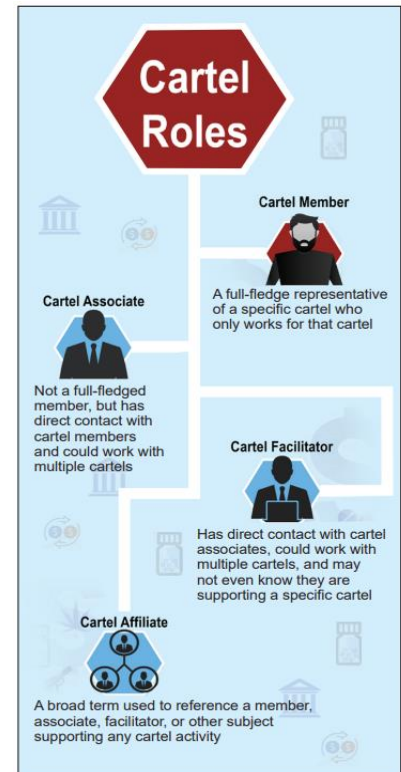


Figure 24- Cartel Roles. Source: Dea.gov

The money is then laundered in Indiana, or elsewhere in the US or shipped back to Mexico in bulk cash via mail or other means. According to a narcotics investigator in Indianapolis who stated, *“Money is laundered through businesses such as mechanic and auto body shops or grocery stores. Money is also being transferred to Mexico through packages and Western Union. The Sinaloa middleman would wire the money via Western Union to Mexico”*. ¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (10 years experience), 24-002.

¹¹⁵ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (18 years experience), 24-011

¹¹⁶ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Criminal Enterprise Investigator (10 years experience), 24-002.

MULTI-STATE DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS

OVERVIEW

Multi-state DTOs are regional distributors that transport illicit drugs into Indiana from various other states, with the primary source originating in Mexico. Much of the illegal drugs that make their way to Indiana via mail and parcel services come from the southwest border states of California, Arizona, and Texas.¹¹⁷ Cartels smuggle drugs across the border using various methods, then their representatives facilitate the logistics of distributing the drugs to the retail dealers. This happens by mail, semi-truck, or passenger car. As stated by a narcotics investigator in Indianapolis, *“Cartel does the manufacturing and logistics across the border and into the AOR. Then the Cartels possibly have a trusted person that they rely on to distribute their product once it reaches the AOR”*.¹¹⁸

Indiana HIDTA Enforcement Initiatives investigated 25 multi-state DTOs in 2023; 13 of those were polydrug DTOs and 11 were violent.¹¹⁹ None of these DTOs operate in the NWI region, six operate in the Indianapolis area, three in the Fort Wayne area, and five in Southern Indiana.

AFFILIATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP

Of the 25 multi-state DTOs, nine were identified as gang-related, and none identified a cartel affiliation. It is reported that many of these cartel representatives are not technically cartel members but rather work for the cartels. A narcotics investigator working in Indianapolis stated that they work normal jobs and may use their family and/or young females to facilitate drug operations. The investigator also stated that these cartel operations involve business fronts such as clubs, restaurants, horse racing, farms, and car dealerships.¹²⁰

Multi-State DTOs Identified by the Indiana HIDTA Characteristics

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Total Multi-State DTOs | 25 |
| Total Members (Leaders) | 412 (50) |
| Average DTO Size | 16.5 |
| Multi-Ethnic | |
| Gang Related | 9 |
| Cartel Affiliated | 0 |
| Violent | 11 |
| Polydrug | 13 |
| Money Laundering Activities | 1 |

Federal Case Designations

| | |
|--------------|-----------|
| OCDTF | 10 |
| CPOT | 2 |
| RPOT | 2 |
| PTO | |

¹¹⁷ Indiana HIDTA PMP, Accessed on 4-16-2024.

¹¹⁸ LEO Interview conducted on 2-22-24, Indianapolis Criminal/Narcotics Investigator (14 Years at Position), 24-019.

¹¹⁹ Indiana HIDTA PMP, Accessed on 4-16-2024.

¹²⁰ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (13 years experience), 24-006.

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS

The use of parcels has diversified drug shipments entering the U.S. and money shipments leaving the country. Traditional methods remain used, with suppliers employing independent trucking companies to transport products and bulk cash across state lines. So far, the trucking companies are being cooperative and working to recognize possible illegal shipments.¹²¹ In the Indianapolis area, bulk shipments have come via shipping containers. According to a drug investigator who works in Indianapolis: *“In the last year, we have seen on several occasions using shipping containers either on trains or shipping companies. The containers are half the size of a semi and are shipped on trains or commercial vehicles. It is not a semi-trailer but a pod that sits on top of a semi-trailer. The shipping containers are usually coming from California, Texas, Arizona, and possibly also from Mexico. We have seen cocaine and fentanyl shipped this way. We had three cases in 2023 using this method. The method requires a flatbed tow truck or commercial transportation. The product is slid on rails and winched up onto a truck like an F350 or F450. Once the customer picks up and unloads his shipping container, he brings the empty container back to the warehouse. Black dealers are using this method. The assumption is that Hispanics are loading shipping containers in California. The shipping containers also have a legitimate load. Usually, the load is about 100 – 200 kilos at a time. Sometimes, not all the product ends up in Indianapolis. In one case two of the shipping containers stayed in Indianapolis, one went to North Carolina, and one to Pennsylvania. Sometimes dealers might pool money together to ship 5 or 6 containers at a time.”*¹²²

LOCAL DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS

OVERVIEW

Once the drugs make their way to Indiana, they are primarily distributed to Independent DTOs or neighborhood-based gangs, which can sometimes be the same thing. According to the 2024 Drug Threat Assessment Survey, 71% of law enforcement respondents say Independent DTOs are the main street distributors of methamphetamine. The numbers are similar for other illegal drugs coming across the southern border, fentanyl, cocaine, and heroin. The neighborhood-based gangs are a paradigm shift from the National Level Gangs (NLG), who were the primary street-level distributors until recently. As an Indianapolis narcotics investigator explains it, *“the DTOs are neighborhood-based gangs and local groups, mainly guys who grew up together.”*

¹²¹ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (13 years experience), 24-006.

¹²² LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (11 years experience), 24-014.

Some of the DTO members may have associations to national-level gangs, but we are not seeing these gangs operating in the area”.¹²³

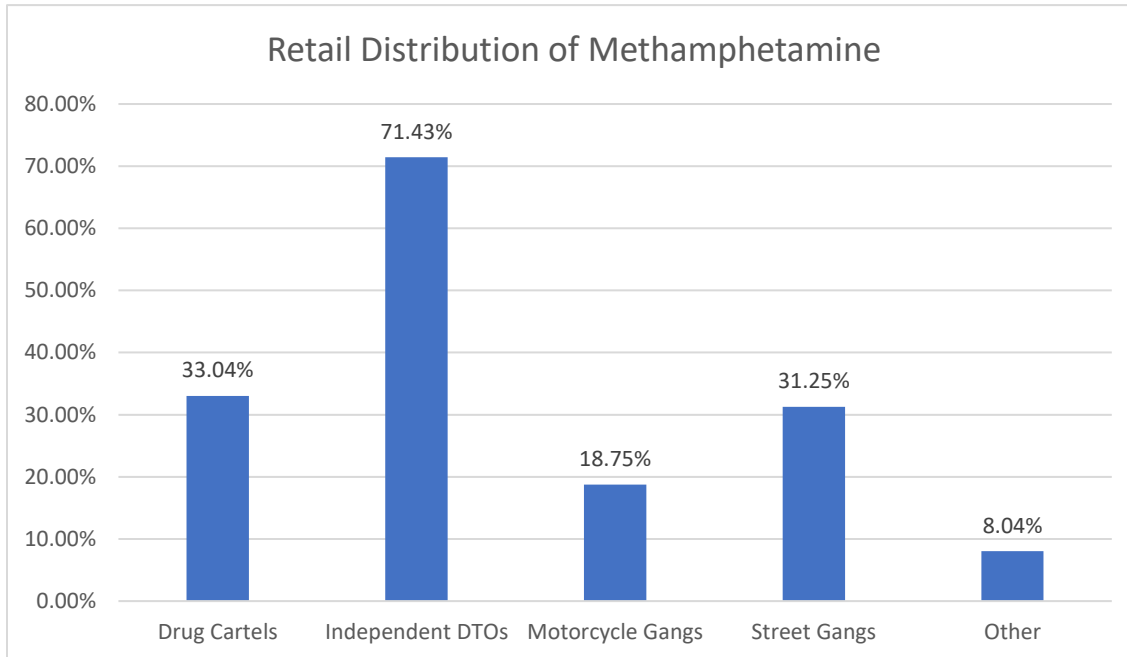


Figure 25- Retail Distribution Breakdown; Source:2024 Indiana HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey

According to a drug investigator working in La Porte County, there has been an “increase in local level DTOs”.¹²⁴ Another narcotics investigator working in the Indianapolis area stated, “less ‘gangs’ or DTOs at the mid-level distributors. It’s become more of a cooperative where local distributors pool resources, get a large supply, and divide before sales”.¹²⁵

Another trend occurring at the local level is the ‘sole proprietor,’ or individual trafficker. A narcotics investigator from Northwest Indiana explained, “last year we worked a lot of individual drug dealers. Organized groups have faded quite a bit. Not like years ago when we had Vice Lords, GD’s, etc. I would say none of our gangs have the “national” base like some used to”. Technological advancements have facilitated the emergence of the sole proprietor drug dealer concept, akin to an individual having all the necessary tools at their disposal to initiate a legitimate business. Operating from the convenience of their own home, individuals can establish connections with suppliers from Mexico or China and arrange for shipments to their address or a vacant location. Payment to the supplier can be facilitated through cash apps, cryptocurrency, or traditional cash sent via mail. Upon acquiring the illegal drugs, the sole proprietor can execute marketing and sales strategies through platforms such as Instagram,

¹²³ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (13 years experience), 24-006.

¹²⁴ 2024 Drug Threat Assessment Survey (Comment field)

¹²⁵ 2024 Drug Threat Assessment Survey (Comment field)

Facebook, or various other social media applications. Subsequently, product delivery and payment transactions can be managed using mail services and cash apps, respectively. Despite the anonymity afforded by these methods, such activities increasingly occur openly on the internet. With organized DTOs experiencing a decline and individual traffickers on the rise, the Indiana HIDTA anticipates the sole proprietor concept gaining prominence. This aligns with the cultural transformation witnessed in the U.S. and globally in recent times. Just as individuals can launch their own legitimate businesses, careers such as blogging, independent journalism, influencing, and podcasting have gained popularity among young people. These professions offer autonomy and reflect evolving preferences and opportunities in the job market.

AFFILIATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP

Out of the 58 total Local DTOs investigated by Indiana HIDTA Enforcement Initiatives in 2023, 40 were considered violent, 25 gang related, and none were cartel affiliated. The neighborhood-based gangs or independent DTOs that are distributing to the users on the streets are typically smaller organizations in size, averaging 8.8 members across all Indiana HIDTA initiatives. These groups tend to be individuals from the same geographic area that grew up together. While these groups may come from or claim NLG-affiliation, they are not necessarily loyal to the group. One investigator described the operations this way: *The cartels possibly have a trusted person that they rely on to distribute their product once it reaches the AOR.*

*Once you get down to the selling of the product to the consumer it will be DTOs and informal gangs (People that grew up together or know each other from small gangs). Cartels normally only sell a kilo or more at a time where as the DTOs and street gangs distribute lesser amounts to the end user.*¹²⁶

ACTIVITIES AND METHODS

Law enforcement struggles to stay abreast of technological changes that incorporate the digital world into the real one.¹²⁷ End-to-end encryption communication apps such as Signal, Telegram, Whatsapp, and Facetime, to name a few, are an increasing impediment to drug

| Local DTOs Identified by the Indiana HIDTA Characteristics | |
|--|----------|
| Total Local DTOs | 58 |
| Total Members (Leaders) | 510 (72) |
| Average DTO Size | 8.8 |
| Multi-Ethnic | |
| Gang Related | 25 |
| Cartel Affiliated | 0 |
| Violent | 40 |
| Polydrug | 25 |
| Money Laundering Activities | 0 |
| Federal Case Designations | |
| OCDTF | 4 |
| CPOT | 0 |
| RPOT | 0 |
| PTO | |

¹²⁶ LEO Interview conducted on 2-22-24, Indianapolis Criminal/Narcotics Investigator (14 years experience), 24-019.

¹²⁷ LEO Interview conducted on 12-14-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (22 years experience), 24-001.

investigations throughout Indiana. As a Task Force Officer out of Indianapolis states, *“Any new end-to-end encryption communication apps, such as Signal. These apps are significantly diminishing TIII wire cases”*.¹²⁸ Another officer stated that encryption has started becoming an issue with phone providers. Investigators are now unable to intercept iMessages due to encryption. Consequently, when messages are exchanged between iPhones and other devices, their content cannot be intercepted even with a wiretap. Although investigators may observe that a message was sent, they won't have access to its content. Moreover, encryption is increasingly affecting Android devices as well, making intercepts more challenging. Even platforms like Facetime and potentially Facebook have adopted encryption, rendering them inaccessible to interception.¹²⁹

Similarly, digital banking apps pose difficulties in investigations. According to a drug investigator in Northwest Indiana when discussing cash apps, *“They know it usually makes it more difficult for us to [spot these things]; sometimes that eliminates law enforcement because they know we won’t deal with those apps and number two; they get their money fast and it’s harder for us to get access to it”*.¹³⁰

Indiana drug investigators have also seen an increase in the use of social media apps like TikTok to sell drugs and make connections along with the use of Apple Air Tags to track drug shipments and cash shipments.^{131 132} They have also seen the use of messaging services within gaming consoles and online gaming communities such as Discord and Twitch used for illegal drug transactions.¹³³

Members of the illegal drug trade also have an easier time researching information on how to evade law enforcement and seem to be getting wiser about law enforcement tactics and procedures. An Indianapolis-based narcotics investigator said drug distributors are reading affidavits to learn how profiling works in parcel service investigations so they can adapt their methods to law enforcement investigative tactics.¹³⁴ In a case conducted in Porter County, a dealer asked the informant about a mug with a hidden camera that was used and made the comment, *“I’ve done my research”*.¹³⁵ Some users of the encrypted apps have even started switching between various apps mid-conversation to further evade law enforcement.¹³⁶

¹²⁸ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (8 months experience), 24-003.

¹²⁹ LEO Interview conducted on 2-22-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (12 years experience), 24-015.

¹³⁰ LEO Interview conducted on 12-14-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (22 years experience), 24-001.

¹³¹ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (15 years experience) 24-013.

¹³² LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (11 years experience), 24-014.

¹³³ LEO Interview conducted on 1-22-2024, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Analyst (2 years experience), 24-008

¹³⁴ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (15 years experience) 24-013.

¹³⁵ LEO Interview conducted on 1-31-2024, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (3 years experience), 24-016

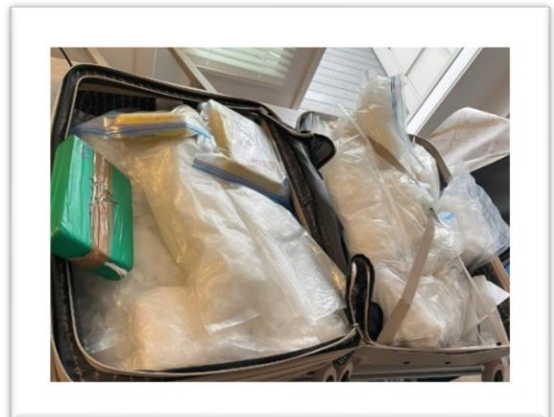
¹³⁶ LEO Interview conducted on 2-22-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (12 years experience), 24-015.

Drug traffickers have significantly escalated their utilization of postal services for shipping drugs and money. Shipments containing fentanyl pills typically consist of one- or two-pound packages, while fentanyl powder is typically transported in kilogram brick forms, originating from either Arizona or California. These packages are commonly concealed in small postal packages, with traffickers often employing air tags for tracking purposes.¹³⁷ Suppliers dispatch these packages to vacant residences or associates and utilize all major parcel carriers for distribution.¹³⁸ Additionally, parcels serve as a means to send money back to the seller, with partial payments of \$10,000 or \$20,000 frequently dispatched via parcel shipments, while the remainder may be sent through commercial vehicles.¹³⁹

The one-stop-shop concept is emerging as a trend across Indiana and may be a major factor driving the increase in polydrug seizures. Northwest Indiana experienced a diversification in street-level dealers where sellers are offering many different drugs rather than specializing in only one. It is believed that this is based on user demand, according to a Northwest Indiana investigator: *When they are getting people from outside, they want one-stop, if they are doing just cold drug buys, people driving from outside the area trying to find someone on the corner to buy from or whatever when someone calls, they want to have what they are asking for, whether it's heroin, whether it's cocaine, whether it's ice.*¹⁴⁰

CASE HIGHLIGHT

In March 2024, the DEA-led Central Indiana Drug Task Force (CIDTF), and the Indiana State Police Drug Enforcement Section, executed a federal search warrant at the residence of an individual who had been identified as a serious violent felon, and was the target of an ongoing DEA investigation. CIDTF seized approximately 283 grams of suspected heroin, 608 grams of suspected fentanyl, 92 pounds of suspected methamphetamine, and approximately 3.55 kilograms of cocaine. CIHIDTA-Group 52 personnel also recovered a kilo press, pill/capsule packaging materials, a Glock 27 firearm, approximately \$38,600 in US Currency, and other packaging/distribution materials.



¹³⁷ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (15 years experience) 24-013.

¹³⁸ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (13 years experience), 24-006.

¹³⁹ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (11 years experience), 24-014.

¹⁴⁰ LEO Interview conducted on 1-30-24, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (20+ years experience), 24-012.

MONEY LAUNDERING ORGANIZATIONS (MLOs)

OVERVIEW

According to the IN HIDTA Drug Survey, bulk cash movement is still the preferred method to move illicit drug funds, although bulk cash encountered by law enforcement went from 90% in 2022 to 73% in 2023 and digital currency went from 40% in 2022 to 46% in 2023. “Bulk cash movement will continue to decrease”, stated a narcotics investigator in the Indianapolis Area.¹⁴¹ Indiana HIDTA bulk cash seizures have continued to decrease since 2020.¹⁴²

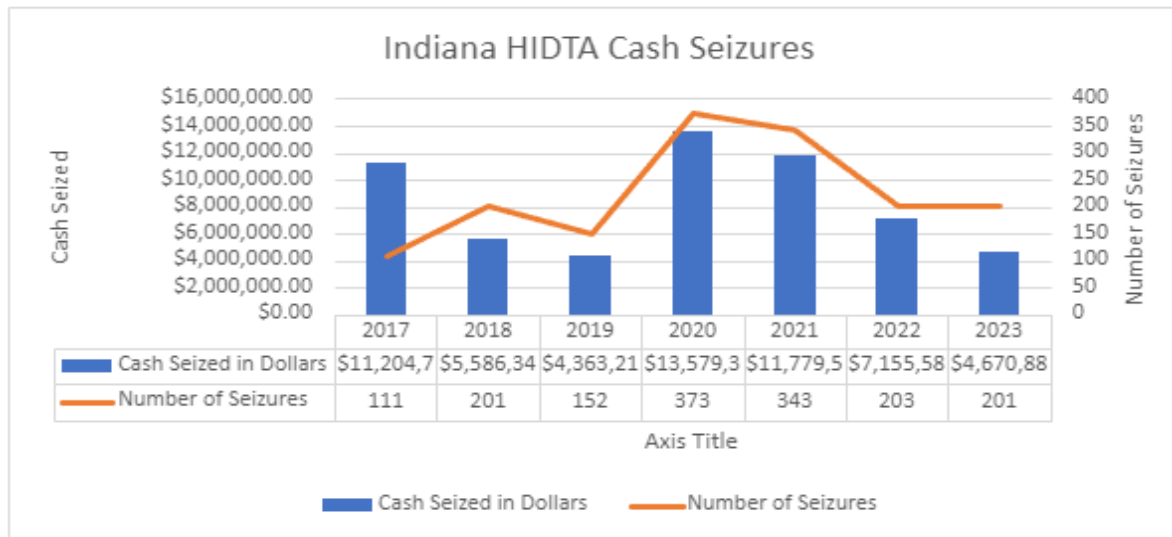


Figure 26- Indiana HIDTA Bulk Cash seizures in 2024. Source: HIDTA PMP

Drug trafficking and payment using internet apps are occurring throughout Indiana across urban, suburban, and rural communities. Drug traffickers advertise on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat using known code words and emojis. Prospective buyers will typically respond using encrypted communication apps like WhatsApp, Signal, and Telegram. After the deal is agreed upon, the buyer will pay using one-click apps like Zelle, Cash App, and Remitly.¹⁴³ Narcotics investigators are seeing smartphone applications used more frequently for payment in small-scale drug sales. Traditional money laundering techniques, including bulk currency transportation, washing money through LLCs, or purchasing properties, continue to be seen for larger drug operations and sales.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Narcotics Investigator (18 years experience), 24-006.

¹⁴² Indiana HIDTA PMP.

¹⁴³ [20220208-DEA20220208-DEA Social Media Drug Trafficking Threat Overview](#)

¹⁴⁴ LEO Interview conducted on 2-1-24, Northwest Indiana Financial Crimes Investigators (3.5 and 12 years experience respectively), 24-025

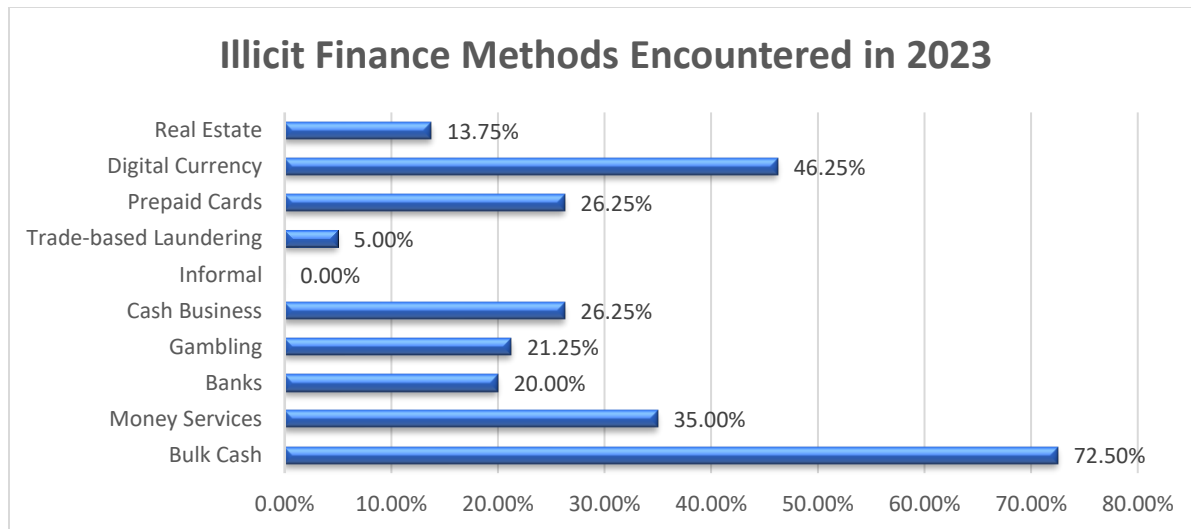


Figure 27- Illicit Finance Methods Encountered; Source: 2024 Indiana HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey

Mexican cartels and other DTOs are increasingly turning to cryptocurrencies to launder their illicit proceeds. This shift is driven by the significant advantages of cryptocurrencies, allowing for the quick transfer of funds across international borders without the need for traditional banking systems. Money launderers within these organizations typically receive bulk cash from drug traffickers and exchange it for cryptocurrency. The drug traffickers can then promptly transfer the cryptocurrency to their counterparts in Mexico or other countries, where it is often exchanged back into local currency¹⁴⁵. The highly encrypted nature of these transactions, coupled with the challenge of tracing them without access to the trafficker's encryption key, renders it exceedingly difficult to quantify the extent of this money laundering technique in Indiana.

Chinese Money Laundering Organizations (CMLO) are still prevalent in Indiana HIDTA's AOR. According to the IN HIDTA Drug Survey, 9% of respondents encountered Chinese-based couriers and/or money laundering organizations in 2023. According to a drug investigator out of Indianapolis, "Asian groups are moving lots of cash for the cartels based on surveillance and money seizures".¹⁴⁶ Another drug investigator stated, "Chinese couriers, who are mostly Chinese citizens, are moving illicit funds from east to west, or from Chicago to the west, for MLOs"¹⁴⁷. CMLOs not only assist drug cartels in moving and laundering their illicit funds, but they are also helping wealthy Chinese get their money out of China as part of the scheme.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Drug Enforcement Administration 2024 National Drug Threat Assessment, Illicit Finance, [NDTA 2024.pdf \(dea.gov\)](https://www.dea.gov/nda-2024.pdf)

¹⁴⁶ 2023 Indiana HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey (Comment Field).

¹⁴⁷ Indiana HIDTA Threat Assessment Interview, 3/14/2023.

¹⁴⁸ Sebastian Rotella and Kirsten Berg, ProPublica, "How a Chinese American Gangster Transformed Money Laundering for Drug Cartels", Oct. 11, 2022, <https://www.propublica.org/article/china-cartels-xizhi-li-money-laundering>.

OUTLOOK AND EMERGING TRENDS

The outlook on illicit drug threats in Indiana, like in many states, can vary depending on various factors such as law enforcement efforts, drug trafficking routes, availability of treatment and prevention programs, socioeconomic conditions, and cultural attitudes towards drug use.

In our previous threat assessment, we predicted a rise in the demand for fentanyl within the AOR, and subsequent data confirmed this trend. We assess with high confidence that fentanyl availability will continue to rise in the AOR. This assertion is supported by various factors, such as price point, targeted marketing efforts by cartels and DTOs, and its prevalence in illicit polydrug products, including fake pills. Furthermore, seizure data, investigator interviews, and laboratory testing suggest that fentanyl is replacing heroin at the street level.

In our previous year's assessment, we indicated that heroin availability would likely decrease. While survey data indicated that availability increased or stayed the same, qualitative data coupled with HIDTA seizures make for an incongruent picture. Taking all data into consideration, we conclude actual heroin availability decreased the previous year. The HIDTA assesses with high confidence that heroin availability will decrease throughout the AOR in the coming year. This assessment is founded on interviews suggesting that fentanyl continues to be distributed at street level disguised as heroin. Furthermore, laboratory analyses corroborate the assertions made in these interviews. Additionally, the synthetic nature of fentanyl largely frees producers from environmental impacts to which agriculture-based products such as heroin are tied. Furthermore, the low-dosage nature of fentanyl continues to make it an easier product to transport in a dose-to-dose comparison with heroin. The HIDTA further assesses with high confidence that heroin demand will remain high. We assert this demand will be met by non-heroin narcotics, particularly fentanyl, sold to users as heroin.

The HIDTA assesses with high confidence methamphetamine demand and availability will remain elevated in the AOR. This sustained demand is attributed to a combination of pricing dynamics and ample supply. Notably, seizures of cartel-manufactured methamphetamine in the AOR have increased in four out of the past five years, while prices have concurrently decreased, indicating robust supply. Moreover, the proliferation of polydrug mixtures incorporating methamphetamine is on the rise, contributing further to increased demand and consequent accessibility to a broader pool of potential users.

Last year we assessed that the availability and demand for cocaine would continue to be strong. Although HIDTA cocaine seizures experienced a slight decline in 2023, the survey responses upon which this assessment relies continue to indicate sustained demand and supply for cocaine. Moreover, the median price for kilogram and ounce quantities decreased from the previous year, suggesting increased availability across the state. This information, coupled with

interviews with investigators, leads us to conclude that our previous assessment was correct. Seeing no contradictory data, the HIDTA assesses with high confidence that cocaine availability and demand will continue to be strong in the coming year.

The HIDTA assesses with high confidence the demand and use of controlled prescription drugs will continue in the AOR, but with a caveat. The rise of counterfeit, or 'fake,' pills within the illicit drug supply of the region is evident. Users seem to believe that these pills provide a safer option since they can be consumed orally and often resemble diverted prescription medications. However, it is vital to understand that these counterfeit products frequently differ significantly from their perceived composition. While we expect demand and usage to remain considerable, it is important to acknowledge that the actual contents of these pills are unlikely to be authentic.

The HIDTA assesses with high confidence that the use of social media and communication applications will continue to gain broader usage in illegal drug marketing. This assessment stems from the ongoing evolution of the social media landscape, coupled with advancements in encryption and anonymization technologies, as well as the transient nature of data within many applications. The characteristics of these evolving technologies will pose challenges for law enforcement in leveraging seized devices effectively.

Last year, we assessed dimethyltryptamine (DMT) availability would increase in the AOR. While two known DMT labs were processed in 2023, seizures of DMT by HIDTA initiatives were not seen; however, sizeable seizures of DMT continue at ports of entry. Because of this, we cannot claim that our previous assessment was correct, but hallucinogens as a class remain a point of interest and concern.

Open-source reporting indicates that there is an interest in hallucinogenic substances. Various states and localities have shown interest in decriminalizing or legalizing at least some hallucinogens. As discussed in previous sections, mushroom seizures in the AOR dramatically rose over the past year and have been generally trending upward since 2019. Therefore, the HIDTA assesses with high confidence that hallucinogenic compounds will increase their presence in local drug markets. This conclusion is based on a rise of seized hallucinogens by HIDTA initiatives coupled with societal change in the perceived dangers of these drugs. Additionally, if diversification by drug sellers continues, hallucinogens such as mushrooms will be more readily available to consumers.

The HIDTA assesses with high confidence marijuana demand in the AOR will increase. Indiana is surrounded on three sides by states with legal recreational use of marijuana. Open-source information detailing Michigan marijuana dispensary ounce prices show a decline over time making store-bought marijuana competitive with black market products. This offers Indiana citizens ready access to commercially grown products and implies broad social acceptance.

Seizures of illicitly transported bulk quantities of marijuana by HIDTA initiatives exceeded pre-pandemic levels indicating a strong supply stream and implying strong demand.

In last year's assessment, we predicted that cash seizures would remain at reduced levels. Our assessment has been corroborated by seizure data, demonstrating a decline in cash seizures through Indiana HIDTA initiatives annually since the peak observed in 2020. Meanwhile, the development and adoption of cryptocurrencies persist, alongside the widespread use of apps such as Cash App, Zelle and Venmo. Although predictions regarding the utilization of cryptocurrency and cashless transactions pose challenges for validation, insights from investigators suggest an increasing trend in the use of cash apps. This uptick in alternative transaction methods may partially account for the diminished cash seizures. Consequently, we assess with high confidence that cash seizures will not revert to 2020 levels and medium confidence that they will continue to decline in 2024. These assessments and their associated certainty are founded on the plethora of money-moving options available to drug traffickers.

In our previous assessment, we assessed the prevalence of Xylazine would increase. Data proved that the assessment was accurate. Xylazine has been consistently detected in drug samples analyzed in Indiana, and data from Indiana coroners unequivocally links Xylazine to overdose deaths in the state. Consequently, based on this evidence, we project that Xylazine will persist as an escalating threat in Indiana.

The HIDTA assesses with a high level of confidence that polydrug products will persist in being widely available. Fake pills have been shown in laboratory testing to be a pharmacological potpourri containing a myriad of substances. Moreover, we assess with high confidence that the composition of these products will continue to undergo evolution. The recent introduction of Xylazine into these mixtures by cartels and traffickers serves as a notable demonstration of this evolving trend. It is reasonable to anticipate that this trend will persist as new compounds emerge or are diverted, and nations enact changes to their respective drug legislation.

Last year, we predicted opioid deaths would decrease in 2023; data shows our assessment was correct. Indiana has relaxed restrictions on naloxone, making it available without a prescription and the Department of Health increased the free doses released for public use over the previous year. Therefore, the HIDTA assesses with high confidence opioid-related deaths in Indiana will decrease or plateau in the coming year. The outlook for deaths due to any drug is more difficult to discern. Over past years, overall deaths closely followed opioid deaths as most fatalities were linked to opioids. We view the introduction of Xylazine and other novel compounds as complicating factors in the assessment of drug-related deaths for the coming year. As more data becomes available regarding the presence of Xylazine in the Indiana drug supply, a more concrete prediction may be possible.

The HIDTA assesses with medium confidence that drug traffickers will escalate their utilization of parcel shippers and the USPS for the transportation of both products and proceeds. This assertion is primarily derived from interviews with investigators and anecdotal evidence, specifically the discovery of shipping boxes at known drug trafficking locations. Although we are confident in the accuracy of our assessment, we categorize it as medium confidence due to uncertainties regarding the availability of sufficiently accurate information to substantiate our assessment in the forthcoming year.

The HIDTA assesses with high confidence that street-level dealers will continue to diversify their product offerings by carrying multiple illegal substances rather than specializing in just one or two products. This theme has been consistently emphasized throughout this document, and we posit that this trend will persist in the coming year. Our assessment is based on numerous cases involving the seizure of multiple drug types, as well as information obtained through interviews with individuals involved in drug investigations. This assertion is further supported by the increasing capability of dealers to source products via the internet, rather than relying on known suppliers. Additionally, this diversification is enhanced by the growing ability to electronically transfer payments and proceeds, rather than relying on cash transactions. These diversified sellers need not necessarily be part of a larger organization, but rather may operate as a drug trafficking sole proprietor.

Of the many novel compounds entering Indiana's illegal drug supply, nitazene-related compounds are of special interest. While becoming more prevalent in other parts of the country, these drugs have thus far only made limited penetration into Indiana based on analytical results from the Indiana State Police Laboratory system. Based on available data, we suspect that nitazenes will continue to be present in the state. However given the limited data available, we are unable to confidently assess as to if these compounds are an emerging threat or a brief 'blip' in the state's drug supply.

The Indiana HIDTA defines confidence levels as either high or medium. High confidence generally indicates that the judgments are based on high-quality information or that the nature of the issue makes it possible to render a solid judgment. Medium confidence generally means that the information is credibly sourced and plausible but can be interpreted in various ways or is not of sufficient quality or corroborated sufficiently to warrant a higher level of confidence.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I – METHODOLOGY

The 2025 Indiana HIDTA Threat Assessment was organized and drafted by the Indiana HIDTA Investigative Support Center (ISC). The quantitative data collected for this assessment was primarily obtained from the annual Indiana HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey. This survey was designed to request information on the availability and demand of different drugs, drug trends, drug production, criminal organizations involved in trafficking, transportation methods, DTO/MLO threat, and methods of illicit finance within the Indiana HIDTA AOR. Follow up interviews were conducted with subject matter experts and task force officers based off the analysis and findings of 2024 survey submissions.

Additional data sets include the Indiana HIDTA Performance Management Process, Drug Enforcement Administration reporting, and Indiana Department of Health. The seizure data does not reflect analyzed findings, only the suspected drug type at the time of seizure. Secondary qualitative analysis was conducted on information obtained through standardized open-ended interviews with multiple Subject Matter Experts in selected participating agencies and initiatives. Information from open-source websites and local media reporting was also utilized in the creation of this assessment.

APPENDIX II – HIDTA OVERDOSE SUMMARY

In this section, we provide an overview of overdose trends for Indiana, focusing on Indiana HIDTA counties. The data includes multiple measures of overdose, including fatal overdoses, hospital discharges for non-fatal overdoses, and naloxone administrations by Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Additionally, we discuss community touchpoints for decedents in the 12 months before death.

Overall, 2023 data suggests a modest decrease in overdose fatalities statewide. This mirrors trends in other states.¹⁴⁹ However, overdose rates remain at record highs. Additionally, taken together with other measures of overdose such as hospital discharges and naloxone administrations by EMS, overdoses remain a serious public health concern.

Factors that possibly accounted for fewer deaths and hospital discharges are EMS-administered naloxone incidents. Increased naloxone distribution in communities and distribution of safe-use supplies such as fentanyl test strips have played a major role in harm reduction efforts.

FATAL DRUG OVERDOSES

Figure 28 illustrates fatal overdoses for Indiana and all seven HIDTA counties for 2019-2023. Please note not all overdose death investigations are complete in Indiana, therefore, complete numbers for 2023 are not available.

| Indiana Fatal Drug Overdoses | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| County | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023* |
| Indiana | 1695 | 2316 | 2812 | 2670 | * |
| Allen | 112 | 116 | 151 | 137 | 95 |
| Lake | 151 | 170 | 222 | 195 | 163 |
| LaPorte | 28 | 48 | 54 | 55 | 22 |
| Marion | 377 | 589 | 714 | 691 | 669 |
| Porter | 40 | 45 | 52 | 46 | 33 |
| Vanderburgh | 35 | 48 | 89 | 73 | 54 |
| Vigo | 20 | 17 | 32 | 33 | 31 |

Figure 28- Indiana Fatal Overdoses; Source: IDOH and County Coroners offices.

¹⁴⁹ The Commonwealth Fund. (2023, Mar 13). *Overdose deaths declined but remained near record levels during the first nine months of 2022 as states cope with synthetic opioids*. Retrieved <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2023/overdose-deaths-declined-remained-near-record-levels-during-first-nine-months-2022-states>

TOXICOLOGY BREAKDOWN

Figure 29 shows the two most common substances identified at time of death with the respective substance for each HIDTA county. The most common substance identified was fentanyl for all HIDTA counties except for Vigo, where methamphetamine was most common. The most common mix of substances identified was fentanyl and a stimulant (i.e., cocaine or methamphetamine), except in Porter County where heroin and cocaine were tied for the second most common substance.

| Two most common substances identified | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Allen | Fentanyl (74%), and cocaine (29%) |
| Lake | Fentanyl (64%) and cocaine (39%) |
| LaPorte | Fentanyl (63%) and methamphetamine (33%) |
| Marion | Fentanyl (74%) and methamphetamine (32%) |
| Porter | Fentanyl (60%) and heroin (25%) or cocaine (25%) |
| Vanderburgh | Fentanyl (56%) and methamphetamine (36%) |
| Vigo | Methamphetamine (45%) and fentanyl (33%) |

Figure 29- Two Most Common Substances Identified in 2023 Mortality Data. Source: IDOH

HOSPITAL DISCHARGES

Emergency department visits and hospitalizations for visits billed for drug overdoses provide another indicator of the drug problem throughout Indiana. Figure X shows the percentage of hospital discharges that insurance billed for drug overdose-related incidents from 2020 to 2023 by quarter. These rates have remained relatively stable since the beginning of 2020.

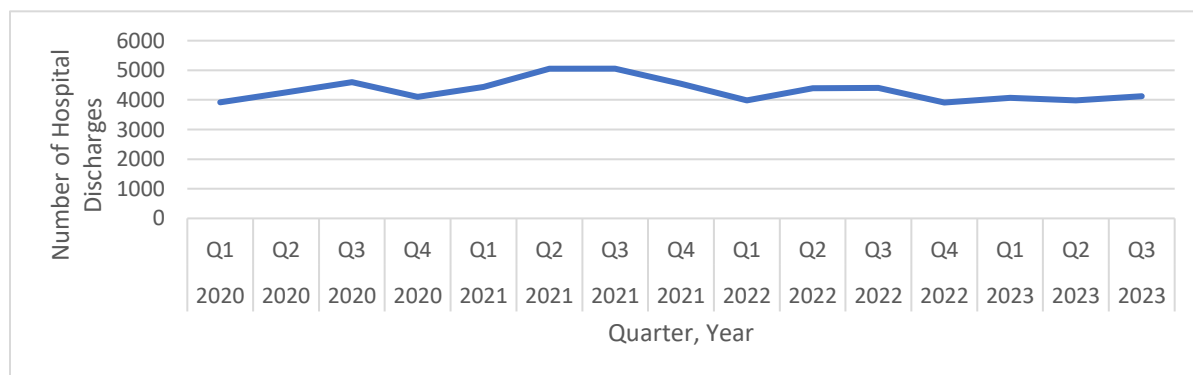


Figure 30- Hospital Discharges for Overdose-Related Incidents 2020-Q3 2023. Source: IDOH

NALOXONE ADMINISTRATIONS

In Indiana, naloxone is accessible to the public through various avenues, including pharmacies without requiring a prescription, community organizations providing complimentary or affordable kits, state-run programs, online platforms, and occasionally, directly from healthcare providers. Furthermore, Indiana legislation permits school districts to maintain naloxone as an emergency medication, like how albuterol and epinephrine are kept in stock. Overdose Lifeline, the nonprofit responsible for supplying much of the state with naloxone, sends out more than 24,000 kits a month across the state, including to Indiana's schools. The increase in naloxone to the public through various means likely accounts for the decrease in EMS naloxone administrations since its peak in 2021. The number of doses distributed by IDOH jumped from around 75,000 in 2022 to over 130,000 in 2023 ¹⁵⁰.

The utilization of naloxone by Emergency Medical Services (EMS) serves as a valuable marker for drug abuse and has played a role in the modest reduction of drug overdoses in Indiana. Figure 31 depicts the rate of EMS-administered naloxone incidents per 10,000 county residents, comparing Indiana to all HIDTA counties. Marion County consistently reported the highest naloxone administration rates of all HIDTA counties.

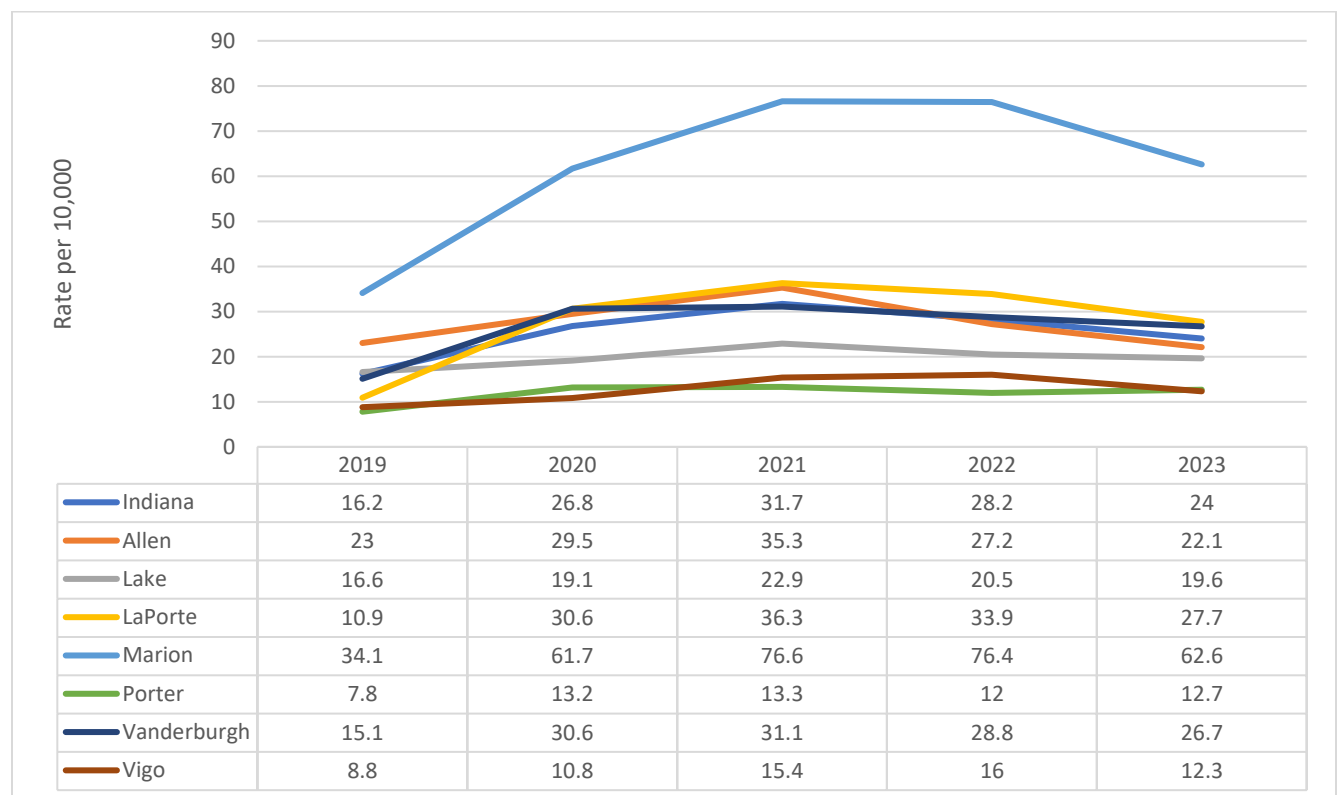


Figure 31- Reported Naloxone Events by EMS, 2019-2023. Source: Indiana Management Performance Hub

¹⁵⁰ Indiana Department of Health (IDOH)

HIDTA COUNTY FORTRESS TOUCHPOINTS

The Fatal Overdose Review Teams Research to Enhance Surveillance Systems (FORTRESS) project created an innovative real-time public-facing data dashboard that displays touchpoints that occurred prior to fatal overdoses in Indiana. This is a partnership between the Indiana University School of Medicine, RTI International, the Indiana Department of Health, the Department of Homeland Security, the Indiana State Police, the Professional Licensing Agency, the Department of Correction, and the Governor's Drug Prevention, Treatment, and Enforcement (DPTE) Office. IN HIDTA's Overdose Response Strategy provided technical assistance for this project.

Figure 32 demonstrates that for Indiana, emergency department visits were consistently the most frequent touchpoint for decedents, with more than half (64%) going to the emergency department within 12 months of their death. EMS interactions became the second most frequent touchpoint in 2021. Prescription dispensation started as the most common touchpoint in 2015 and dropped to the third most frequent touchpoint. Correctional touchpoints remained consistent, with about one in five decedents (21%) being booked into jail and less than one in twenty (3%) being released from prison. In Indiana, 64% of ED visits involved a drug overdose and 46% of EMS interactions in Marion County involved a drug overdose.

For most HIDTA counties, the emergency department was the most frequent touchpoint, except for Vigo, where prescription dispensation was the most frequent. For all HIDTA counties except Marion, prescription dispensation was the second most frequent touchpoint; in Marion County, EMS interaction was the second most frequent.

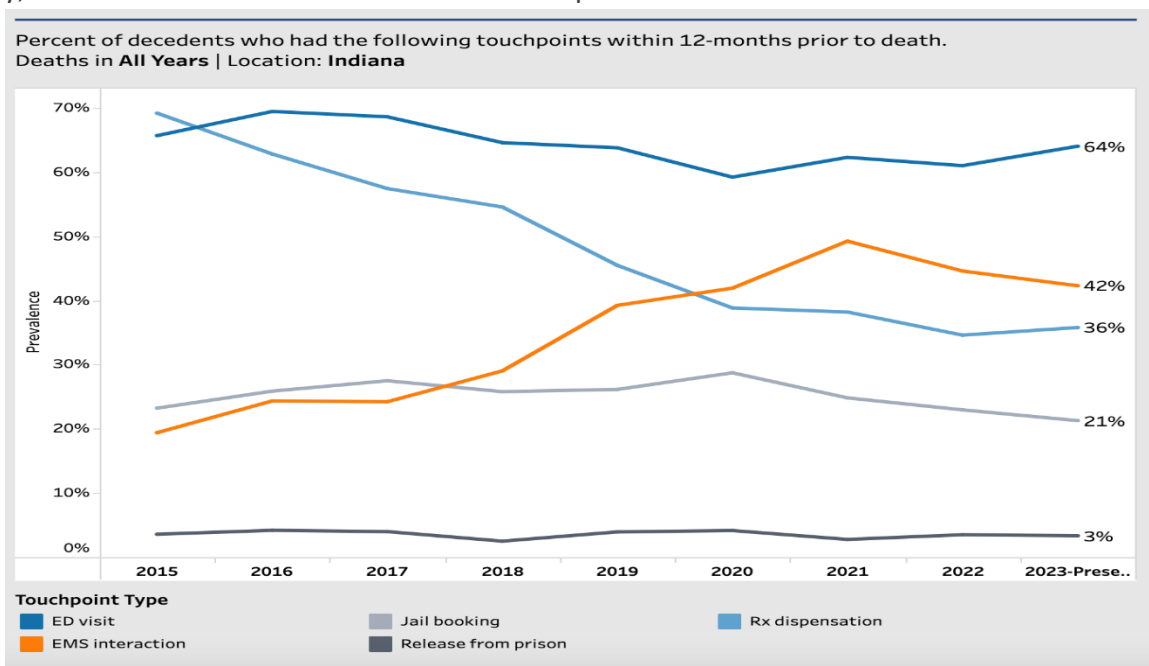


Figure 32- Proportion of Decedents with Touchpoints Before Death. Source: Indiana Management Performance Hub

APPENDIX III – PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

FEDERAL

Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) - Indiana

Department Homeland Security (DHS-HSI-ICE) - Indiana

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) – Indiana

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) – Indiana

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) - Indiana

U.S. Attorney's Office – Northern District of Indiana

U.S. Marshals – Northern District of Indiana

U.S. Attorney's Office – Southern District of Indiana

U.S. Postal Inspection Service

STATE

Indiana Department of Corrections

Indiana National Guard Counterdrug Task Force

Indiana State Police

Indiana State Excise Police

LOCAL

Allen County Police Department
 Anderson Police Department
 Angola City Police Department
 Auburn Police Department
 Bartholomew County Sheriff's Office
 Beverly Shores Police Department
 Bloomington Police Department
 Bluffton Police Department
 Bremen Police Department
 Brownstown Police Department
 Carmel Police Department
 Carroll County Sheriff's Office
 Cass County Sheriff's Office
 Cayuga Town Marshals Office
 Chesterton Police Department
 City of Gary Police
 Clark County Sheriff's Office
 Clarksville Police Department
 Clay County Sheriff's Office
 Clinton County Prosecutors Office
 Columbia City Police Department
 Converse Police Department
 Corydon Police Department
 Crawfordsville Police Department
 Crown Point Police Department
 Daviess County Sheriff's Office
 Dearborn County Sheriff's Department
 Dearborn/Ohio County Prosecutor's Office
 Decatur County Sheriff's Department
 DeKalb County Sheriff's Office
 DeMotte Police Department
 Dubois County Sheriff's Office
 East Chicago Police Department
 Elkhart County Prosecutor's Office
 Evansville Police Department
 Farmland Police Department
 Fayette County Sheriff's Office
 Fishers Police Department
 Floyd County Sheriff's Office
 Fort Wayne Police Department
 Frankfort Police Department
 Gibson County Prosecutor's Office
 Grant County Sheriff's Office
 Greensburg Police Department
 Griffith Police Department
 Hagerstown Police Department
 Hamilton County Sheriff's Office
 Hammond Police Department
 Hancock County Sheriff's Department
 Hartford City Police Department
 Highland Police Department
 Hobart Police Department
 Howard County Sheriff's Office
 Huntington City Police Department
 Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department
 Jackson County Sheriff's Department
 Jasper County Sheriff's Office
 Jay County Prosecutor's Office
 Jeffersonville Police Department
 Johnson County Sheriff's Office

Lafayette Police Department
 Lagrange County Sheriff's Office
 Lake County Sheriff's Department
 LaPorte County Drug Task Force
 Lebanon Police Department
 Logansport Police Department
 Long Beach Police Department
 Lowell Police Department
 Lynn Police Department
 Madison County Sheriff's Department
 Marion County Sheriff's Office
 Markleville Police Department
 Marshall County Police
 Miami County Sheriff's Office
 Middletown Police Department
 Mishawaka Police Department
 Montezuma Police Department
 Morgan County Sheriff's Office
 Newton County Prosecutor's Office
 Newton County Sheriff's Office
 Noble County Prosecutor's Office
 Noble County Sheriff's Department
 Parke County Sheriff's Department
 Peru Police Department
 Pike County Sheriff's Office
 Plainfield Police Department
 Pokagon Tribal Police Department
 Portage Police Department
 Porter County Sheriff's Department
 Portland Police Department
 Posey County Sheriff's Office
 Pulaski County Sheriff's Department
 Richmond Police Department
 Rush County Sheriff's Department
 Rushville Police Department
 Schererville Police Department
 Shelby County Sheriff's Department
 South Bend Police Department
 Southport Police Department
 Spencer County Sheriff's Office
 St. John Police Department
 Starke County Sheriff's Office
 Sullivan County Sheriff's Office
 Switzerland County Sheriff's Office
 Tell City Police Department
 Tippecanoe County Drug Task Force
 Valparaiso Police Department
 Vanderburgh County Sheriff's Office
 Vermillion County Sheriff's Office
 Versailles Police Department
 Vincennes Police Department
 Warrick County Sheriff's Office
 Wayne County Sheriff's Office
 Wells County Sheriff's Office
 West Lafayette Police Department
 West Terre Haute Police Department
 White County Environmental
 Whitley County Sheriff's Department
 Winona Lake Police Department

APPENDIX IV – DRUG PRICING

INDIANA

| | Cocaine | | Fentanyl | | Heroin | | Methamphetamine | | Marijuana | |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| | Low | High | Low | High | Low | High | Low | High | Low | High |
| NORTHERN | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gram | 40.00 | 100.00 | 45.00 | 100.00 | 70.00 | 100.00 | 5.00 | 25.00 | 10.00 | 20.00 |
| Kilogram | 15,000.00 | 23,000.00 | 28,000.00 | 32,000.00 | 25,000.00 | 30,000.00 | 2,000.00 | 3,000.00 | - | - |
| Ounce | 800.00 | 1,000.00 | 1,200.00 | 2,000.00 | 900.00 | 2,000.00 | 250.00 | 350.00 | 100.00 | 300.00 |
| Pound | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1,400.00 | 2,400.00 | 2,000.00 | 2,000.00 |
| CENTRAL | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gram | 20.00 | 100.00 | 50.00 | 100.00 | 50.00 | 70.00 | 5.00 | 10.00 | - | - |
| Kilogram | 14,000.00 | 20,000.00 | 28,000.00 | 45,000.00 | 19,000.00 | 22,000.00 | 4,500.00 | 8,000.00 | - | - |
| Ounce | 800.00 | 1,100.00 | 2,500.00 | 2,700.00 | 900.00 | 1,500.00 | 200.00 | 400.00 | 150.00 | 150.00 |
| Pound | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1,800.00 | 3,000.00 | 1,000.00 | 4,000.00 |
| SOUTHERN | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gram | 15.00 | 20.00 | 50.00 | 100.00 | 50.00 | 125.00 | 8.00 | 10.00 | 10.00 | 15.00 |
| Kilogram | 30,000.00 | 40,000.00 | - | - | - | - | 8,000.00 | 11,000.00 | - | - |
| Ounce | 800.00 | 900.00 | 2,240.00 | 3,000.00 | 1,400.00 | 3,500.00 | 200.00 | 350.00 | 200.00 | 500.00 |
| Pound | 12,800.00 | 14,400.00 | - | - | - | - | 1,800.00 | 2,500.00 | 3,200.00 | 8,000.00 |

Figure 33- Average Pricing per Region. Source: 2024 IN HIDTA Survey

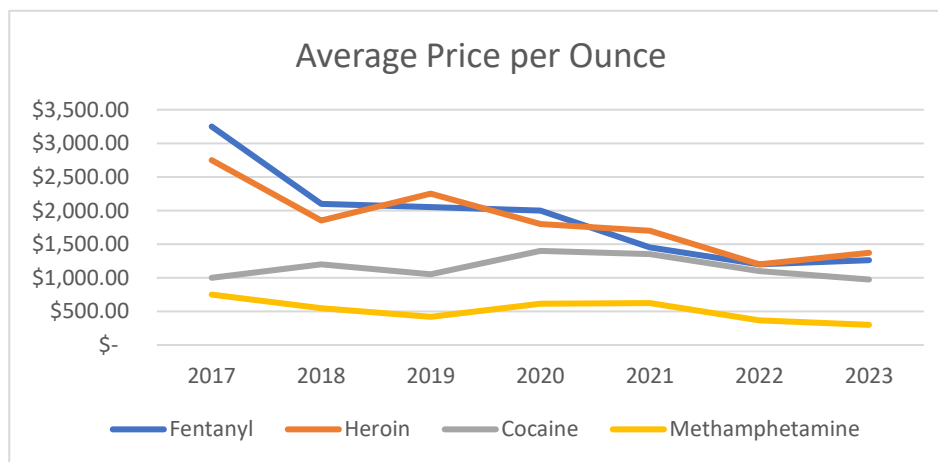


Figure 34- Average Price Per Ounce. Source: IN HIDTA



APPENDIX V – DRUGS AND VIOLENCE

OVERVIEW

With 65% of the U.S. prison population estimated to have a substance abuse disorder, the link between drugs and crime appears to be established.¹⁵¹ Crimes committed by individuals to obtain drugs, crimes perpetrated by drug users while under the influence, and conflicts between dealers

“The users have to pay for their habit and the dealers are shooting each other”.

LEO Interview 24-007

and users resulting in violent and property offenses, often ensnare the public in the crossfire. Or as a drug investigator from Northwest Indiana stated, *“The users have to pay for their habit, and the dealers are shooting each other”*.¹⁵² According to Goldstein’s tripartite conceptual framework for the drugs-crime nexus, drugs lead to crime in one of three ways: (1) from the psychopharmacological properties of drugs, (2) from the economic compulsion to acquire money to buy drugs, or (3) from the illicit drug trade.¹⁵³ Looking solely at crime statistics has some major flaws. The greatest of these is the collection of data, as no two departments collect and categorize crime statistics uniformly. Additionally, it is difficult to discern precisely what the crime data means; no two jurisdictions have the same amount of police officers, and no two jurisdictions prosecute crimes to the same extent. Also, it is difficult to parse out the data as crime is an amorphous concept driven by many factors of which illegal drug use is only one. Drugs may be a major contributor to crime, but so are levels of poverty, education, home ownership, etc. Furthermore, a jurisdiction’s overall crime rate can be vastly different for certain areas or neighborhoods within that jurisdiction, as is seen in Contreras’ and Hipp’s study titled, *Drugs, Crime, Space, and Time: A Spatiotemporal Examination of Drug Activity and Crime Rates*.¹⁵⁴ For this drug threat assessment, while examining academic studies and crime statistics, we lean heavily on officers on the street to explain the impact of drugs on crime.

¹⁵¹ NIDA. 2020, June 1. Criminal Justice DrugFacts. Retrieved from <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugfacts/criminal-justice> on 2024, April 30

¹⁵² LEO Interview conducted on 2-23-24, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (18 years experience), 24-007.

¹⁵³ Goldstein, P.J. (1985). The drugs/violence nexus: A tripartite conceptual framework. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 15, 493-506.

¹⁵⁴ Christopher Contreras & John R. Hipp (2020) *Drugs, Crime, Space, and Time: A Spatiotemporal Examination of Drug Activity and Crime Rates*, *Justice Quarterly*, 37:2, 187-209, DOI: 10.1080/07418825.2018.1515318

VIOLENCE TO OBTAIN DRUGS

As the potency of addictive drugs increase, it only makes sense that the addictiveness, and therefore, the desperateness to obtain drugs will also increase. A narcotics investigator from Northwest Indiana explained, *"I do know from speaking to our CIs that a lot of people that are on heroin/fentanyl specifically have dollar-amount habits that might not have enough income to support. They are pretty honest when they say they will steal or do whatever they can to get that money to support their daily habit. It usually begins with stealing from family members, friends, things of that nature to retail theft, burglaries, things like that"*.¹⁵⁵

Crime progression is common in criminality, according to multiple studies. Survey findings from the Rand Corporation Habitual Criminals Program support the contention that crime severity escalates over time. For example, Joan Petersilia found that that *"most criminal careers begin with minor misconduct, sometimes even status offenses. Self-report studies indicate that the most frequent pattern begins with truancy and incorrigibility, followed first by petty theft and auto theft and then by more serious property crimes"*.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, according to research using the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, *"[i]t seemed clear that the average amount stolen [by an individual] increased with age"*.¹⁵⁷ Also, as Contreras and Hipp point out:

*According to the economic compulsive crime model, drugs link to acquisitive crime through drug users' need to acquire money to buy drugs. Given that communities with drug activity necessarily bring in drug users, these communities may become activity nodes for these potentially motivated offenders (Bennett, Holloway, & Farrington, 2008), who therefore familiarize themselves with the community setting and integrate it into their routine activities (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1995). As a consequence, communities with drug transactions taking place one month may experience increases in acquisitive crime by drug users faced with the urge to commit economic crime for drug money (Chaiken & Chaiken, 1990).*¹⁵⁸

In Northwest Indiana, it is becoming more difficult to effectively address these types of activities, as one officer states, *"In the past, we would arrest everyone [at a drug house or scene] to make an impact; get the users out of the neighborhood, and we can't now so we are turning 5-6 people loose at a scene, walking away from the house and we just took their supplier"*.¹⁵⁹ These individuals are often released back into the same neighborhood where they

¹⁵⁵ LEO Interview conducted on 1-30-24, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (20+ years experience) 24-012.

¹⁵⁶ Petersilia, Joan R., Peter W. Greenwood, and Marvin Lavin, Criminal Careers of Habitual Felons. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1977. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R2144.html>. Also available in print form.

¹⁵⁷ LANGAN & FARRINGTON, Two-Track or One-Track Justice? Some Evidence From an English Longitudinal Survey, 74 J. CRIM. L. & CRIMINOLOGY 519, 545 (1983).

¹⁵⁸ Christopher Contreras & John R. Hipp (2020) Drugs, Crime, Space, and Time: A Spatiotemporal Examination of Drug Activity and Crime Rates, Justice Quarterly, 37:2, 187-209, DOI: 10.1080/07418825.2018.1515318

¹⁵⁹ LEO Interview conducted on 1-30-24 Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (20+ years experience) 24-012.

may have previously committed crimes to obtain drugs. Having established a level of comfort in that environment, the deterrent effect of arrest is diminished.

U.S. Victimization Data for Property Crimes shows an increase in property crimes starting in 2015, with a decrease during the COVID-19 years, then an increase in 2022. According to the Department of Justice's Criminal victimization, 2022 report, total property crime reported to police went from 27.8 in 2021 to 32.4 in 2022, and for total property crime not reported to police, 61.3 in 2021 to 68.0 in 2022 (rates are per 1000 households).¹⁶⁰

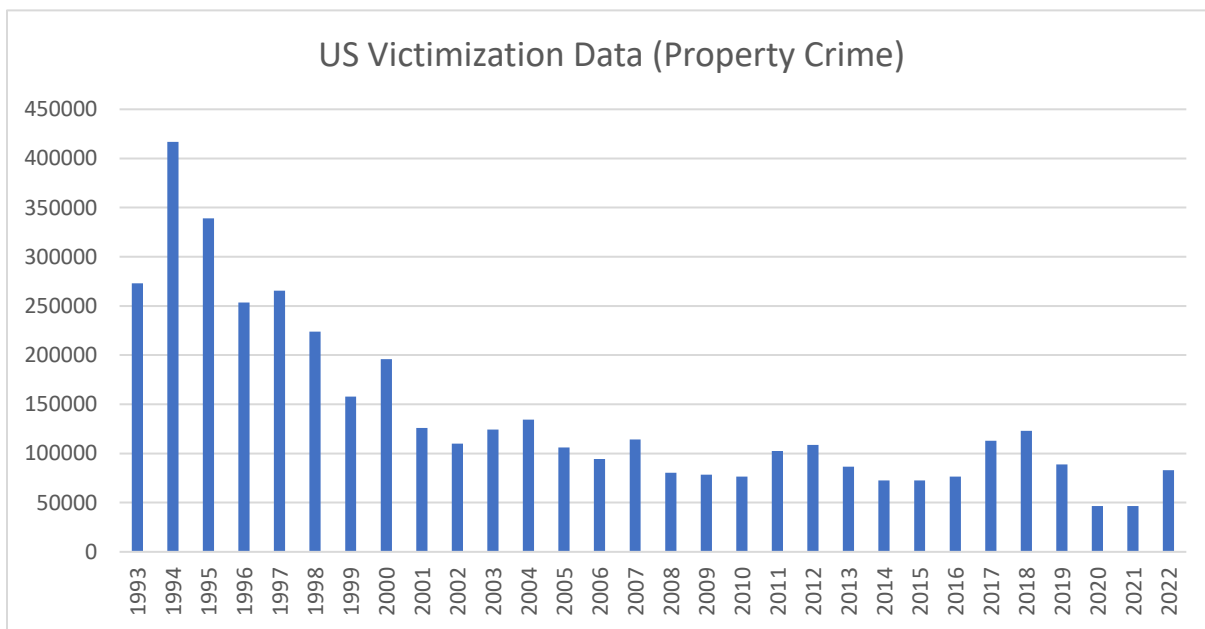


Figure 35- US Victimization of Property Crimes. Source: Criminal Victimization, 2022 | Bureau of Justice Statistics (ojp.gov)

While the rise in unreported crimes is just one aspect contributing to the inaccuracy of crime statistics, a reduction in the presence of police officers on the streets and shifts in enforcement priorities may also influence the level of reported crime data. Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) property crimes (burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft) have shown overall decreases since 2012 but appear to have plateaued from 2020 to 2022. Another factor, particularly in the reporting of property crime, is the fact that certain retail stores do not report thefts under a certain amount or at all to local law enforcement as a matter of policy. This has been confirmed with several chains (names redacted) in the Indianapolis area. Some of these chain stores have not reported thefts since 2022. Some loss prevention departments do not investigate any theft under \$50, with an official saying, *"It is spotty at best and way*

¹⁶⁰ Tapp, Susannah, N. PhD and Thompson, Alexandra, BJS Statisticians, Criminal Victimization, 2022, [Criminal Victimization, 2022 | Bureau of Justice Statistics \(ojp.gov\)](https://ojp.gov)

underreported".¹⁶¹ As the word moves around the street, this becomes another step in the progression of crime by users desperate to fund their daily fix. As an Indianapolis-based officer asserted when asked about the impact of drugs on crime, *"Customers at the street level are acquiring money with smaller crimes to support their habit"*.¹⁶²

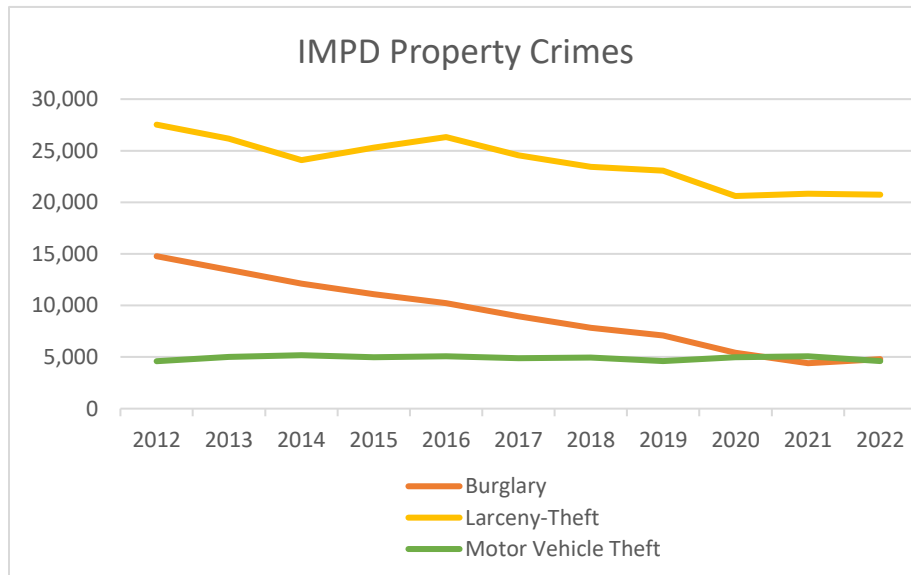


Figure 36- Indianapolis Metro Police Department Property Crimes. Source: IMPD

This appears to be true, particularly with methamphetamine. According to the 2024 Drug Threat Survey, 71% of law enforcement respondents say methamphetamine is responsible for property crimes, while only 59% say fentanyl is responsible for property crimes. According to an officer working in Porter County, *"Meth users usually sell stolen property to have money to purchase the drug"*.¹⁶³ Another officer stated, *"I think there is definitely a trend with meth users committing theft and burglary in order to fund their addiction"*.¹⁶⁴

VIOLENCE WHILE INTOXICATED

There is speculation that methamphetamine may contribute to a rise in mental health disorders. The one-pot-method methamphetamine of the past was made using pseudoephedrine. The methamphetamine of today, which comes primarily from Mexico, is produced most often using phenyl-2-propanone, or the P2P method. According to author and investigative journalist, Sam Quinones, methamphetamine made using ephedrine was, *"kind of a euphoric drug, a party drug, making you want to spend a lot of time around people and so on."* He continues about the new P2P methamphetamine that, *"on the contrary, what it seems*

¹⁶¹ LEO Interview conducted on 3-27-24, Indianapolis Area Criminal Analyst (10 years experience), 24-020.

¹⁶² LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (15 years experience), 24-013.

¹⁶³ LEO Interview conducted on 1-31-24, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (7 years experience), 24-004.

¹⁶⁴ LEO Interview conducted on 1-22-24, Northwest Indiana Criminal Analyst (2 years experience), 24-008.

*to breed is a very sinister kind of schizophrenia, horrible paranoia, great amounts of hallucinations, and with that...comes homelessness.”*¹⁶⁵ While P2P methamphetamine might explain the uptick in mental health problems, another factor could be the significant rise in the availability of methamphetamine over the past five years. As one recently retired law enforcement officer with 25 years of drug investigative experience, including expertise in clandestine methamphetamine labs stated, *“We’ve been seeing users of methamphetamine with hallucinations, many times very similar hallucinations, along with other mental health symptoms years before the new P2P meth became prevalent”*.¹⁶⁶ Another officer when asked about meth and crime stated, *“[Methamphetamine] causes paranoia and can lead to burglary and pawning of stolen items”*.¹⁶⁷ Data indicates that methamphetamine usage either induces or exacerbates mental health disorders, contributing to aggressive violent acts such as domestic violence and engaging in risky sexual behavior.^{168 169 170}

Methamphetamines, along with other drugs, impact the public when they drive on these illegal substances. In the Drug Threat Survey, an officer remarked that *“Meth and other drugs are onboard a driver’s system at least in 70 percent of our DUI arrests”*.¹⁷¹ With the ongoing rise in methamphetamine availability, instances of driving under the influence are likely to escalate, alongside other criminal activities, fueled by the deterioration of mental health among users. A drug investigator working in the Indianapolis area asserts that *Meth is pure adrenaline for these people, it’s go go go, and fentanyl and heroin are the opposite, it calms you down. But yes, the meth drives a lot of more of your lower-level property crimes, people out there breaking into cars, carjacking people, not that those are minor crimes, but when you start doing those types of things that leads to the more aggressive crimes, your carjackings, your aggravated assaults, your homicides, your rapes, etc.*¹⁷²

VIOLENCE BY USERS AND DEALERS

One limitation of crime statistics is the underreporting of crimes, particularly when the victim belongs to a criminal organization, as reporting the crime could potentially incriminate them.

¹⁶⁵ Van Wing, Sage, *The formulation of meth has changed. It may be contributing to this country’s mental health crisis*. Nov 15, 2021, <https://www.opb.org/article/2021/11/01/the-formulation-of-meth-has-changed-it-may-be-contributing-to-this-countrys-mental-health-crisis/>.

¹⁶⁶ LEO Interview conducted on 4-1-24, Northcentral Indiana Drug Investigator (20+ years experience), 24-021.

¹⁶⁷ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Task Force Officer, 10+ years violent crime and drug investigative experience, 24-002

¹⁶⁸ NIDA. 2022, January 12. What are the long-term effects of methamphetamine misuse?. Retrieved from <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/research-reports/methamphetamine/what-are-long-term-effects-methamphetamine-misuse> accessed 5-3-24.

¹⁶⁹ <https://www.samhsa.gov/meth>, accessed 5-3-24.

¹⁷⁰ <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/news/newsroom/news-releases/2020/09/study-explores-link-between-methamphetamine-use-and-risky-sexual-behavior>, accessed 5-3-24.

¹⁷¹ 2023 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Survey comment field.

¹⁷² LEO Interview conducted on 12-14-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (20+ years experience), 24-001.

Most reported home invasions involve violence, yet victims are hesitant to report stolen items. Many of these victims have a background involving marijuana or other drug use and sales, leading officers to suspect that they are targeted specifically for drugs or money.¹⁷³ According to Topalli, Wright, and Fornango, who interviewed 20 recently robbed active drug dealers in St Louis, Missouri for their study published in 2002, *“One of criminology’s dirty little secrets is that much serious crime, perhaps most, takes place beyond the reach of the criminal law because it is perpetrated against individuals who themselves are involved in lawbreaking”*. In their study, they found that direct retaliation is the preferred response because it serves three important aims: reputation maintenance, loss recovery, and vengeance.¹⁷⁴ As an Indianapolis based law enforcement official stated *“Crime on drug dealers tends to happen due to them not reporting the crime because they do not want to draw law enforcement attention. Drugs fuel violent crime. Then there is the example of when a higher dealer fronts a kilo of cocaine to a lower dealer that distributes the product to the end user but never pays the higher dealer for the Kilo, the higher dealer will be looking for a way to make things right”*.¹⁷⁵

It is difficult to know how much crime goes unreported. According to RAINN (Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network), only 62% of robberies and assaults are reported.¹⁷⁶ It would seem safe to conclude that crimes against persons already involved in criminal activity would have lower reporting rates still. Murders, on the other hand, will almost always be reported to the police.¹⁷⁷

While it is difficult to quantify the number of crimes not reported, the increase in illegal immigration¹⁷⁸ has increased the societal stratum not likely to report victimization. Also, it can be quantified, to some extent

“Weed distributors are frequently targeted, leading to robberies and shootings for both drugs and money”.

LEO Interview 24-0011

using the drug threat survey, that availability of all drugs trended upward in 2023. An increase in drug use and the drug trade would likely also correlate with an increase in the societal stratum not likely to report victimization. While some criminal statistics show decreases, that is not necessarily an accurate or complete picture. A significant portion of the violence in the local illicit drug trade seems to revolve around marijuana, primarily because of its profitability

¹⁷³ 2023 Indiana HIDTA Drug Threat Survey comment field

¹⁷⁴ Topalli, Volkan & Wright, Richard & Fornango, Robert. (2015). Drug Dealers, Robbery and Retaliation. Vulnerability, Deterrence and the Contagion of Violence. British Journal of Criminology. 42. 337-351. 10.1093/bjc/42.2.337.

¹⁷⁵ LEO Interview conducted on 2-22-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotic Investigator (14 years experience), 24-019.

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system>, accessed on 4-30-24.

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2023/11/03/violent-crime-property-data-nibrs-ucr-fbi-2022>, accessed on 4-3-24.

¹⁷⁸ [Nationwide Encounters | U.S. Customs and Border Protection \(cbp.gov\)](#).

and the relatively lower priority it receives from law enforcement, given the prevalence of fentanyl and methamphetamine. As a result, *"weed distributors are frequently targeted, leading to robberies and shootings for both drugs and money."*¹⁷⁹ The relationship between marijuana and violence became clearer in interviews with investigators. A common theme was the link between the money associated with marijuana, the *"young guns"* that sell it, and violence.¹⁸⁰ Another officer remarked that those involved *"don't think twice about using guns."*¹⁸¹ Shootings stemming from 'ripped' deals¹⁸² and territorial conflicts¹⁸³ were cited as an example of marijuana-related violence. One officer discussed the younger demographic tending to sell marijuana and their tendency to boast on social media showcasing the money they have subsequently leading to robberies.¹⁸⁴ Another officer remarked that marijuana was the most often found drug in the case of drug-related robberies.¹⁸⁵

While marijuana is likely at the center of much of the drug-related violence in Indiana, other drugs were implicated as well during interviews with investigators. Specifically, one officer noted that methamphetamine and cocaine were the main drivers of violence in his jurisdiction.¹⁸⁶

Cartel-driven violence was also present in the AOR.¹⁸⁷ As a task force officer remarked: *"Cartel-directed violence is often hard to prove. We have had a few over the past few years...for instance, a torso found, a head found, cartels are often really good at getting rid of bodies. Cartels want the border open, so they don't normally advertise violence like they do in Mexico"*.¹⁸⁸

As evident from the examples provided, illegal drugs permeate every aspect of the criminal sphere. Beyond their inherent illegality, drugs are often intertwined with violence, theft, robbery, and sexual offenses. This pervasive influence has inflicted immeasurable harm on Hoosiers and the nation as a whole. Addressing this multifaceted issue likely demands a comprehensive and integrated approach.

¹⁷⁹ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (18 years experience), 24-011.

¹⁸⁰ LEO Interview conducted on 2-23-24, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (18 years experience), 24-007.

¹⁸¹ LEO Interview conducted on 2-9-24, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (12 years experience), 24-018.

¹⁸² LEO Interview conducted on 2-14-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (10+ years experience), 24-002.

¹⁸³ LEO Interview conducted on 2-13-24, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (1 year experience), 24-009.

¹⁸⁴ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (15 years experience), 24-013.

¹⁸⁵ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (15 years experience), 24-013.

¹⁸⁶ LEO Interview conducted on 2-13-24, Northwest Indiana Narcotics Investigator (1 year experience), 24-009.

¹⁸⁷ LEO Interview conducted on 2-7-24, Northeast Indiana Narcotics Investigator (13 years experience), 24-017.

¹⁸⁸ LEO Interview conducted on 2-15-24, Indianapolis Area Narcotics Investigator (11 years experience), 24-014.

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The 2025 Indiana HIDTA Threat Assessment was produced by the Indiana High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Investigative Support Center which consists of personnel from the City of Crown Point, Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Indiana National Guard Counterdrug Program.

This report is limited in scope to Indiana HIDTA jurisdictional boundaries and draws upon a wide variety of sources.

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