



GULF COAST HIDTA INVESTIGATIVE SUPPORT NETWORK

2022 Drug Threat Abstract New Orleans, LA Metropolitan Area June 2021

(U) Scope: The purpose of this abstract is to identify current and emerging drug trends within the New Orleans metropolitan area. The New Orleans, LA metropolitan statistical area includes approximately 1,270,530 residents¹ and is comprised of eight parishes: Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, and St. Tammany.² The report intends to deliver accurate and timely strategic intelligence to assist law enforcement agencies in the development of drug enforcement strategies, as well as drug treatment and prevention organizations in the development of drug prevention and mitigation strategies.

(U) Drug Threats: Below are seven major drug categories ranked by greatest threat. The data is based on the responses to the 2022 GC HIDTA Law Enforcement Survey and 2022 GC HIDTA Treatment and Prevention Survey. Data referenced in this product is from CY2020.

(U) #1 Fentanyl and Other Opioids

- a) Fentanyl and other opioids were ranked as the greatest drug threat by 55% of Law Enforcement Survey respondents in 2020. This drug category was the greatest contributor to law enforcement resources used and one of the greatest contributors to property crime in 2020.
- b) **Availability:** 45% of Law Enforcement Survey respondents indicated availability increased during 2020 and 82% of respondents reported a moderate to high availability of fentanyl and other opioids.
- c) **Abuse:** Fentanyl and other opioids, along with heroin, were the most reported drugs abused in the New Orleans area over the past 12 months. 79% of respondents to the Treatment and Prevention Survey reported a high level of use in their area and 71% of respondents reported an increase in inpatient admissions. The Louisiana Department of Health reported a total of 120 synthetic opioid-involved deaths across Louisiana for the first quarter of 2020, including 31 in Jefferson Parish, 16 in St. Tammany Parish, and 11 in Orleans Parish. Comparatively, the Louisiana Department of Health reported a total of 58 synthetic opioid-involved deaths across Louisiana for the first quarter of 2019, including 14 in Jefferson Parish, 9 in St. Tammany Parish, and 5 in Orleans Parish. In 2019, there were a total of 265 synthetic-opioid deaths in Louisiana.³ New Orleans Medical Services (EMS) and Fire and Police Departments administered 1,518 naloxone doses with evidence of opiate use in 2020, a 47% increase from the previous year.⁴
- d) **Production:** There were no clandestine fentanyl laboratories in Louisiana reported to EPIC in 2020.⁵
- e) **Transportation:** The majority of Law Enforcement Survey respondents indicated that Black American criminal groups were primarily responsible for the transportation, wholesale distribution, and retail distribution of fentanyl and other opioids.

(U) #2 Methamphetamine

- a) Methamphetamine was ranked as the greatest drug threat by 18% of Law Enforcement Survey respondents in 2020. This drug category was reported as one of the greatest contributors to property crime and the second greatest contributor to law enforcement resources used in 2020.
- b) **Availability:** 36% of Law Enforcement Survey respondents reported an increase in availability in 2020. 50% reported a high availability of methamphetamine. 41% of respondents reported an increase in demand for methamphetamine.
- c) **Abuse:** 71% of respondents to the Treatment and Prevention Survey indicated a high level of methamphetamine use in their area. 57% of respondents reported an increase in inpatient admissions due to methamphetamine use. The Louisiana Department of Health reported a total of 73 psychostimulant-involved deaths across Louisiana for the first quarter of 2020, including 13 in Jefferson Parish and 9 in St. Tammany Parish. Comparatively, the Louisiana Department of Health reported a total of 47 psychostimulant-involved deaths across Louisiana for the first quarter of 2019, including 6 in Jefferson Parish. In 2019, there were a total of 335 psychostimulant-involved deaths in Louisiana.⁶

- d) **Production:** There was one methamphetamine laboratory in Louisiana reported to EPIC in 2020.⁷
- e) **Transportation:** Powder and ice methamphetamine are transported into the area from the Southwest Border via the highway system. The majority of Law Enforcement Survey respondents indicated that Caucasian American criminal groups were primarily responsible for the transportation, wholesale distribution, and retail distribution of methamphetamine.

(U) #3 Heroin

- a) Heroin was ranked as the greatest drug threat by 14% of Law Enforcement Survey respondents in 2020. It was the drug that contributed the most to violent crime and one of the greatest contributors to property crime according to respondents.
- b) **Availability:** 50% of respondents indicated heroin availability remained the same in 2020 and 72% of respondents reported a moderate to high availability of heroin. 64% of respondents reported the demand for heroin remained the same over the past 12 months.
- c) **Abuse:** Heroin, along with fentanyl and other opioids, were the most reported drugs abused in the New Orleans area over the past 12 months. 79% of respondents to the Treatment and Prevention Survey reported a high level of use in their area. 57% of respondents reported an increase in inpatient admissions due to heroin use. The Louisiana Department of Health reported 74 heroin-involved deaths in Louisiana for the first quarter of 2020, including in 22 in Jefferson Parish and 14 in St. Tammany Parish.^{ab} Comparatively, the Louisiana Department of Health reported a total of 47 heroin-involved deaths in Louisiana for the first quarter of 2019, including 11 in Jefferson Parish, 11 in St. Tammany Parish, and 5 in Orleans Parish. In 2019, there were a total of 229 heroin-involved deaths in Louisiana.⁸
- d) **Production:** Heroin is neither produced nor cultivated in Louisiana.
- e) **Transportation:** Heroin is trafficked from the Southwest Border to the Houston area, where it is transported into and through Southeastern Louisiana. Black American criminal groups control the transportation, wholesale, and retail distribution of heroin.

(U) #3 Marijuana

- a) Marijuana was ranked as the greatest drug threat by 14% of Law Enforcement Survey respondents in 2020. It was reported as the second greatest contributor to property crime and the third greatest contributor to law enforcement resources used.
- b) **Availability:** Marijuana was reported as the most available drug with 55% of respondents indicating a high availability of marijuana. 55% of respondents also indicated the availability of marijuana remained the same over the past 12 months. Domestically-produced and high-grade hydroponic marijuana are the most commonly encountered forms in the area.
- c) **Abuse:** 71% of Treatment and Prevention Survey respondents reported a high level of marijuana abuse. 79% of respondents reported inpatient admissions remained the same in 2020.
- d) **Production:** Louisiana's temperate climate enables marijuana cultivators to illegally grow their own plants during most of the year. Most locally grown marijuana is intended for in-state consumption. According the most recent data provided by the DEA Cannabis Eradication program, there were 7 eradicated outdoor grow sites, 25 eradicated indoor grow sites, and 274 indoor and outdoor cultivated plants in Louisiana in 2019.
- e) **Transportation:** Law Enforcement Survey data indicated that California is primarily responsible for the majority of high-grade marijuana found in New Orleans. Marijuana was the most commonly seized illicit drug in Louisiana in 2020 as reported by the Louisiana State Police Narcotics and Criminal Patrol seizures and purchases statistics.⁹ Caucasian American criminal groups dominated the transportation and retail distribution of marijuana. Caucasian American criminal groups and Black American criminal groups equally controlled the wholesale distribution of marijuana in the New Orleans area.

^a Methamphetamine-related deaths are included in the psychostimulant -involved deaths category along with caffeine, phenethylamines, and cathinones.

^b Data for Orleans Parish is suppressed due to the number of reported heroin-involved deaths being less than 5.

(U) #4 Cocaine (Powder, Crack)

- a) **Availability:** 82% of Law Enforcement Survey respondents reported cocaine availability remained the same in 2020. 64% of respondents indicated a moderate availability of cocaine.^c
- b) **Abuse:** 71% of Treatment and Prevention Survey respondents reported a moderate level of cocaine abuse. Additionally, 71% of respondents reported inpatient admissions remained the same in 2020. The Louisiana Department of Health reported 53 cocaine-involved deaths in Louisiana for the first quarter of 2020, including 12 in Jefferson Parish and 10 in Orleans Parish.^d Comparatively, the Louisiana Department of Health reported a total of 32 cocaine-involved deaths in Louisiana for the first quarter of 2019, including 11 in Jefferson Parish and 10 in Orleans Parish.^e In 2019, there were a total of 131 cocaine-involved deaths in Louisiana.¹⁰
- c) **Production:** Cocaine is neither cultivated nor produced in the GC HIDTA, but originates in South America.
- d) **Transportation:** Black American criminal groups were primarily responsible for the transportation, wholesale distribution, and retail distribution of cocaine in 2020.

(U) #4 Controlled Prescription Drugs (CPDs)

- a) **Availability:** 55% of Law Enforcement Survey respondents reported moderate availability of CPDs and 68% of respondents reported the availability of cocaine remained the same in 2020.
- b) **Abuse:** Fentanyl, Oxycodone, and Hydrocodone were the most diverted drugs according to Law Enforcement, followed by Suboxone and Subutex. 71% of Treatment and Prevention Survey respondents reported moderate level of CPDs abuse and an additional 14% of respondents reported a high level of CPDs abuse.
- c) **Production:** CPDs are commonly obtained via the internet, doctor shopping, and fraudulent prescriptions.
- d) **Transportation:** Caucasian American criminal groups dominated the transportation, wholesale distribution, and retail distribution of CPDs over the past 12 months.

(U) #4 New Psychoactive Substances (NPSs)

- a) **Availability:** The majority (36%) of Law Enforcement Survey respondents reported a moderate availability of NPSs in the area. 50% of respondents reported NPSs availability remained the same in 2020.
- b) **Abuse:** 46% of Treatment and Prevention Survey respondents reported moderate level of NPSs abuse. 79% of respondents reported inpatient admissions remained the same in 2020.
- c) **Production:** NPSs are produced in industrial size laboratories overseas and shipped to the United States for distribution.
- d) **Transportation:** Caucasian American criminal groups were primarily responsible for the transportation, wholesale distribution, and retail distribution of NPSs over the past 12 months.

(U) Significant Issues and Trends: According to law enforcement, fentanyl has become more readily available in the New Orleans area over the past 12 months. The number of synthetic opioid-related deaths have reached a record breaking high in Louisiana. There was a significant increase in the price of methamphetamine from the first quarter to the third quarter of 2020 due to disruptions in the drug trafficking supply chain and marketplace during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Law Enforcement Survey respondents indicated the number of illicit narcotic packages trafficked by mail or parcel transportation has increased in the area. The main source city for drugs is Houston, TX. Bulk cash movement was reported as the most common money laundering method. The Port of New Orleans is used to facilitate smuggling and trafficking operations in and out of the United States.

This bulletin was produced by the Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area. Questions or comments may be directed to Strategic Programs Coordinator Sabrina Perez at (571) 362-4851 or perezs@gchidta.org. Feedback can be provided here: <https://www.nhac.org/SurveySite/SurveyPage.aspx?LMSID=ec72398d-6261-4d4e-aeb5-5ecf0c859b6f>

^c Cocaine, Controlled Prescription Drugs, and New Psychoactive Substances were equally ranked in greatest drug threat in 2020.

^d Data for St. Tammany Parish is suppressed due to the number of reported cocaine-involved deaths being less than 5.

^e Data for St. Tammany Parish is suppressed due to the number of reported cocaine-involved deaths being less than 5.

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- ¹ July 1, 2019 Population Estimate: “Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas Population Totals and Components of Change: 2010-2019.” United States Census Bureau, 20 April 2021. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-total-metro-and-micro-statistical-areas.html>.
- ² “Revised Delineations of Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Micropolitan Statistical Areas, and Combined Statistical Areas, and Guidance on Uses of the Delineations of These Areas.” Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget, 20 April 2021, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/metro-micro/about/omb-bulletins.html>.
- ³ “Louisiana Opioid Data and Surveillance System.” Louisiana Department of Health, 1 November 2019, <https://lodss.ldh.la.gov/>. (Accessed June 1, 2021). Second, third, and fourth quarter 2020 statistics were unavailable as of June 2021.
- ⁴ New Orleans Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Fire and Police Department. “Naloxone Administrations by New Orleans Emergency Medical Service (EMS), Fire and Police Departments: long-term and recent trends” Greater New Orleans Community Substance Use Health Profile, January 2021, Dashboard_NO-EMS_Naloxone_20210201.docx
- ⁵ “Clandestine Lab Report.” El Paso Intelligence Center. <https://esp.usdoj.gov/group/reports-all/report-clan-lab>. (Accessed June 1, 2021).
- ⁶ “Louisiana Opioid Data and Surveillance System.” Louisiana Department of Health, 24 November 2021, <https://lodss.ldh.la.gov/>. (Accessed June 1, 2021). Second, third, and fourth quarter 2020 statistics were unavailable as of June 2021.
- ⁷ “Clandestine Lab Report.” El Paso Intelligence Center. <https://esp.usdoj.gov/group/reports-all/report-clan-lab>. (Accessed June 1, 2020).
- ⁸ “Louisiana Opioid Data and Surveillance System.” Louisiana Department of Health, 24 November 2021, <https://lodss.ldh.la.gov/>. (Accessed June 1, 2021). Second, third, and fourth quarter 2020 statistics were unavailable as of June 2021.
- ⁹ 2022 Louisiana State Police HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment.
- ¹⁰ “Louisiana Opioid Data and Surveillance System.” Louisiana Department of Health, 24 November 2021, <https://lodss.ldh.la.gov/>. (Accessed June 1, 2021). Second, third, and fourth quarter 2020 statistics were unavailable as of June 2021.