

MISSISSIPPI BUREAU OF NARCOTICS

DRUG THREAT ASSESSMENT

March 2024



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Bureau of Narcotics
Intelligence Division



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DRUG THREAT ASSESSMENT
MARCH 2024

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I. SCOPE

The Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics (MBN) Drug Threat Assessment is produced each year to identify, quantify, and prioritize the nature, extent, and scope of the threat of illegal drugs and related crimes in Mississippi. It examines the illicit drug marketplace and threats posed by drug trafficking and money laundering organizations within the state, along with additional contributing factors including geographic location, types of industries, and cultural and economic diversities that may enhance access to illicit drugs. It is also intended to help policymakers, law enforcement and community leaders understand the nature and extent of drug problems in Mississippi, enabling them to formulate effective strategies to allocate resources appropriately to address those challenges. This document fulfills grant requirements issued by the Office of National Drug Control Policy and has been approved by the Gulf Coast HIDTA Executive Board.

(Data throughout this document is preliminary due to delayed reporting and crime lab results)

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DRUG THREATS IN MISSISSIPPI

Fentanyl & Other Opioids	Primary drug threat
Methamphetamine	Major drug threat
Marijuana	Increasing drug threat
Heroin	Constant drug threat
Cocaine and Crack Cocaine	Constant drug threat
Diverted Pharmaceuticals	Constant drug threat
New Psychoactive Substances	Continues to increase

Fentanyl & Other Opioids

Fentanyl and other opioids are considered the greatest drug threat in Mississippi. The seizures of illicit drugs laced with fentanyl and fentanyl laced counterfeit pills are increasing along with overdoses involving fentanyl. Drug cartels are turning to fentanyl as a cheaper alternative to other opioids and it is easier to obtain. The illegal production, transportation and use of fentanyl and other fentanyl-related opioids are constantly evolving with the demand for these potent drugs. Fentanyl is mostly found in counterfeit pill and powder form but has also been found mixed with other drugs and recently in a dark blue/green rock-like form.

Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine remains a serious drug issue in Mississippi, especially methamphetamine originating from Mexico. Mexican drug cartels are still largely involved in the importation of crystal methamphetamine into the United States, along with local gangs and drug trafficking organizations being involved in the distribution. These factors contribute to much of the violence seen across the state. Methamphetamine is also seen in a large percentage of overdoses in Mississippi, mixed with other drugs and on its own. Since the reversal of Mississippi House Bill 512 (2010), MBN has seen a light rise in local clandestine methamphetamine labs, although

methamphetamine imported from Mexico remains the most prevalent form.

Marijuana

Marijuana's evolving forms, the demand for increased THC potency, the potential for adulteration with more harmful substances, and its appeal to younger demographics, make it an increasing threat. Mississippi saw an increase in the trafficking and distribution of marijuana in 2023. Cultivated marijuana, along with products like edibles, oils, wax, and hashish is shipped and transported to Mississippi from Mexico and from legal dispensaries in western states like California, Colorado, and Oklahoma. Currently, medical marijuana in Mississippi is legalized, but the implementation of the law and its impact on Mississippi communities remains unclear. Even with the passing of legalized medical marijuana in Mississippi, MBN seized almost 6,000 pounds of illicit marijuana in 2023, which is up considerably from the previous five years.

Heroin

While heroin seizures and cases decreased in 2023 compared to previous years, heroin remains a significant threat in Mississippi. Alarming, most seized heroin is laced with fentanyl, significantly amplifying its danger. Heroin addiction treatment remains in demand, and tragically, overdose deaths involving the drug still occur. Brown heroin remains the most prominent form seen in Mississippi, followed by white heroin and then black tar. Notably, no black tar heroin was seized by MBN in 2023.

Cocaine

Recent years have seen a concerning rise in cocaine availability in Mississippi, reflected in both the increasing number of MBN investigations and the significant surge in cocaine seizures, particularly powder cocaine, in 2023 – reaching levels not observed since 2016. This growing availability, coupled with cocaine's highly addictive nature, its direct impact on the brain, and its association with violent crime, gangs, and drug cartels, solidifies cocaine as a persistent and significant threat to public safety. Most of the cocaine in Mississippi is transported by American and Mexican DTOs via Texas and the Southwest Border states and distributed by criminal groups, street gangs, and independent dealers.

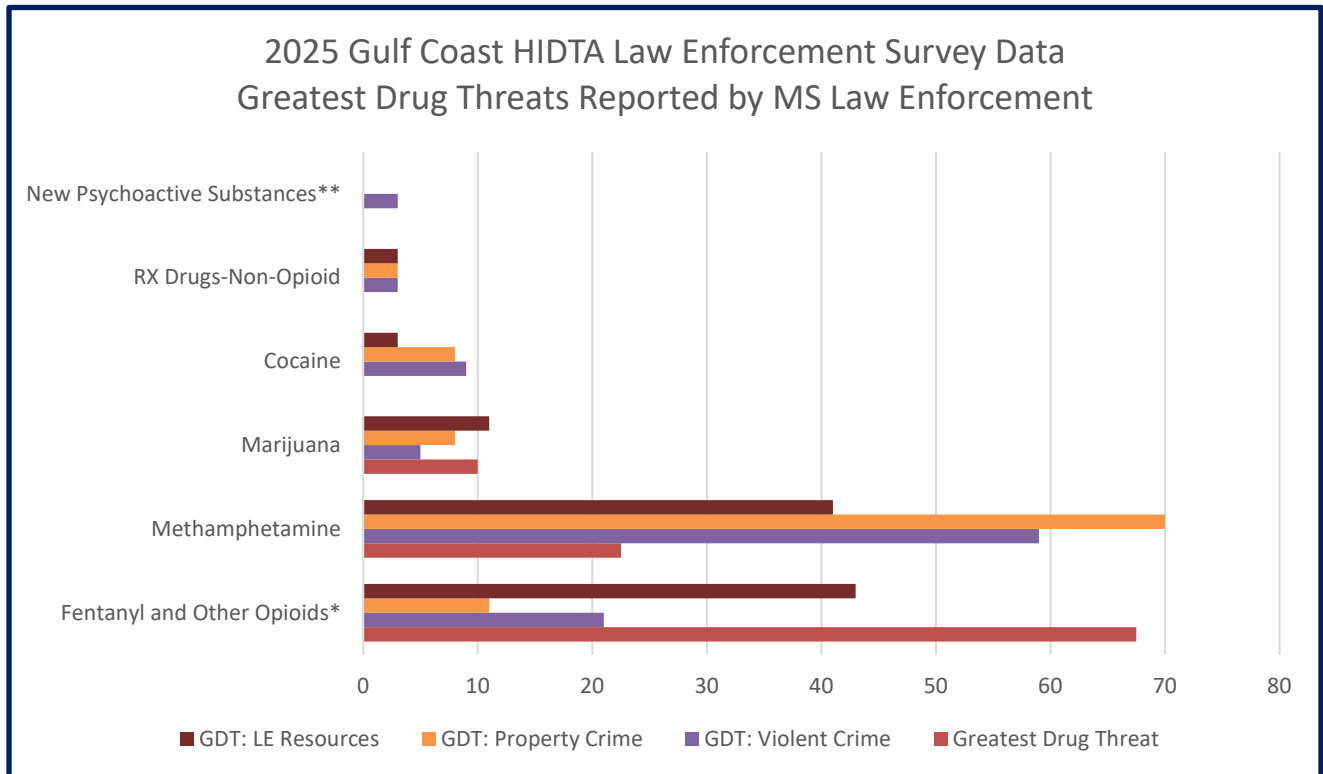
Diverted Pharmaceuticals

Diverted pharmaceuticals remain a constant threat in Mississippi. The demand for opioids is still high, but the shortage of prescription opioids is driving addicts to turn to other more potent illicit forms of opioids, including heroin and counterfeit pills, which often are laced with other dangerous and potentially deadly drugs like fentanyl. Pharmaceutical diversion continues to be the primary method of obtaining pharmaceuticals; however, the internet and pharmaceuticals transported into the state by vehicle or postal packaging services are other illegal means. The threat is intensified by the involvement of drug trafficking organizations, corrupt medical professionals, and pharmacy burglaries.

New Psychoactive Substances

New Psychoactive Substances or “designer drugs” and plant-based hallucinogens, are a concerning threat due to the insufficient understanding of their content and potency, and their addictive quality. They are clandestinely manufactured to mimic other abused drugs, like marijuana and LSD, and the chemical compositions are slightly modified to circumvent government bans on key ingredients.

These drugs usually attract younger adult users and can be bought at gas stations, adult stores, smoke shops and on the internet. These drugs are just as addictive and devastating as pharmaceuticals and methamphetamine.



III. ENVIRONMENTAL AND RELATED THREATS

GEOGRAPHY

The transporting of illegal drugs into and through Mississippi has been a significant problem for law enforcement for a number of years. Mississippi is ideally suited with its interstate system, deep water and river ports, and air and rail systems as the “Crossroads of the South” to facilitate drug movement from the South Texas/Mexico area and Gulf ports to the entire Midwest and Eastern United States. The state is comprised of 82 counties, located within 47,233 square miles, with the majority offering rural agricultural areas. Mississippi has 62 miles of coastline extending from Louisiana to Alabama. Mississippi lies within 500 miles of more than 115 million consumers and 136 major metropolitan areas. Mississippi has an elaborate system of interstate highways and major thoroughfares that make traveling to these metropolitan areas quick and easy. Just like every other state, Mississippi has commercial bus lines that service the state. Mississippi also has seven passenger airports and numerous small or private air strips located within the state. In Mississippi alone, primary rail carriers on the nearly 3,000 miles of train track include the Illinois Central Railroad, Kansas City Southern, Burlington Northern, Columbus & Greenville Railroad Company, and Norfolk Southern System. Amtrak passenger service to and from New Orleans, Louisiana to

Chicago, Illinois, transits the entire state with major stops in-state providing yet another conduit for transporting and distributing large quantities of all types of drugs.

HIGHWAY INTERDICTION IN MISSISSIPPI



Mississippi's numerous highways provide easy avenues to circumvent primary weigh stations situated along the Interstate System. Most drugs transit the state eastbound and northbound, originating in source areas of the Southwest Border and the West Coast. Currency and other forms of proceeds normally move across the state in a westbound direction, destined for the drug source areas.

On July 1, 2020, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was essentially replaced with the United States – Mexico – Canada Agreement (USMCA), which is a mutually beneficial win for North American workers, farmers, ranchers, and businesses. According to the Office of the United States Trade Representative, this agreement continues to create a more balanced, reciprocal trade supporting higher paying jobs for Americans and allows for growth in the North American economy. Like NAFTA, USMCA allows trade and traffic with Mexico and Canada to flourish. Due to the sheer volume of commodities crossing international borders, the opportunities to smuggle drugs from Mexico and Canada have increased and will continue to increase. This trade agreement with our neighbors to the south significantly impacts Mississippi.

Drug traffickers have a complex network for transporting narcotics across the U.S., utilizing interstate highways, U.S. highways, and even state routes. However, the interstate system, with its high speeds and direct routes, is often the preferred choice, including for shipments destined for or passing through Mississippi. This state boasts five major interstates, offering a significant transportation corridor for illicit drugs. Law enforcement officials actively patrol these roadways. In addition, an increasing number of departments have personnel specifically assigned to intercept drug smugglers and criminal activity. Budgetary concerns and resource availability impair a full-scale effort to intercept drug shipments on Mississippi highways. According to Gulf Coast HIDTA/BLOC Watch Center, there were 175 calls involving arrests and/or seizures reported on Mississippi highways during 2023. All major highways in Mississippi were included in these incidents. Mississippi cross-designated officers made 103 drug seizures: marijuana totaling 9,773 pounds; THC products totaling 561 pounds and 3,595,808 dosage units; cocaine totaling 423 pounds; methamphetamine totaling 102 pounds; opioids totaling 20 pounds and 566 dosage units;

other dangerous drugs totaling 1,300 pounds; and 58 seizures in U.S. currency totaling \$3,340,761.00. There were 11 weapons, 25 vehicle seizures, and 106 arrests including 50 aliens. As a result of these stops, many targets were identified, and active investigations were conducted. Some of the investigations have already resulted in the identification and arrests of numerous members of known DTOs.

Most highway interdiction seizures made in Mississippi were transient loads of drugs passing through the state to other areas of the country. However, intelligence reveals that shipments of drugs destined for Mississippi are being interdicted in other states such as Louisiana and Texas. These out-of-state highway interdiction stops indicate that Mississippi-based trucking companies and out-of-state trucking companies are transporting drugs into Mississippi. The increased use of rental vehicles, freight companies, parcel services, and the United States Postal Service continues to be an issue for law enforcement.

Drug trafficking patterns indicate the Interstate Highway System is the preferred method of transporting illegal drugs into and through Mississippi. The Interstate System provides unrestricted access for movement through the state. Mississippi has four major interstates and nine major highways. Law enforcement officials actively patrol these roadways. In addition, an increasing number of departments have personnel specifically assigned to intercept drug smugglers. Budgetary concerns and resource availability impair a full-scale effort to intercept drug shipments on Mississippi highways.

Interstate	Cocaine	Marijuana	Methamphetamine	Heroin	Currency Seized
I-10	48.4	68	N/A	N/A	\$1,435,689
I-20	187	171	N/A	N/A	\$819,813
I-55	44	1.14	0.64	N/A	\$108,538
I-59	142	4886	N/A	N/A	\$0
<i>Drug amounts are in pounds</i>					

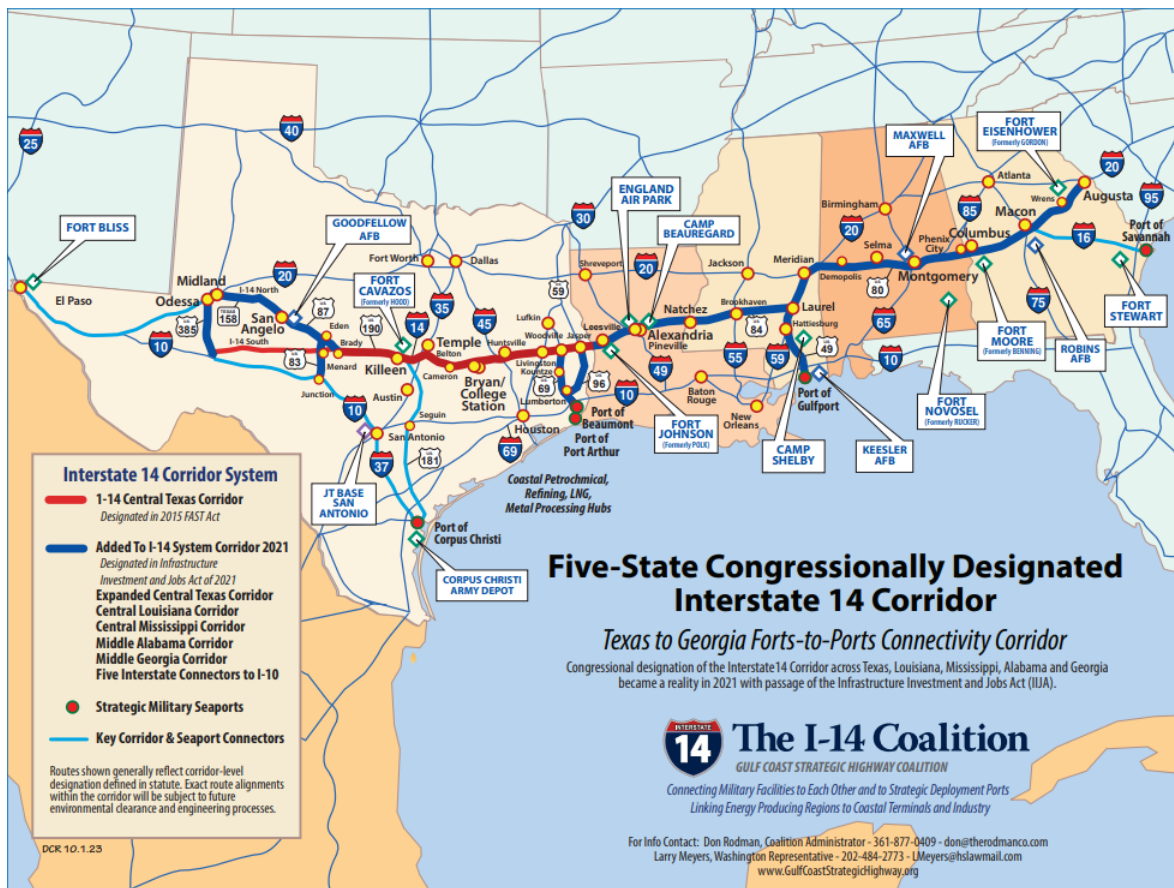
Mississippi Seizures by Interstate Highways; Source: BLOC/Gulf Coast HIDTA

The four major interstates that connect Mississippi to major metropolitan areas in the U.S. are:

- I-55 stretches the entire length of the state, offering a straight route from the Gulf Coast to Chicago and other northeastern cities with high demands for illegal drugs.
- I-20 runs the width of the state, providing an easy route from the West Coast drug-producing cities to the East Coast.
- I-55 and I-20 intersect in Jackson, providing many transportation possibilities for drug traffickers.
- I-59 joins I-20 in Meridian and intersects I-10 in Louisiana.
- I-10 follows the coastal area of Mississippi, giving traffickers access to Birmingham, Mobile, New Orleans, Houston, Montgomery, Miami, Atlanta, and other major drug distribution areas in the southeast.

Interstate 69, or I-69, also called the “NAFTA Superhighway, is proposed to run from Texas to Michigan to help trade with Mexico and Canada. A portion runs through Mississippi at the Tunica and De Soto County line along MS 713 near Tunica, along a rural route to I-55 at the south end of I-239 near Hernando. The route runs concurrently with I-55 to Memphis.

Interstate 14, or I-14, is a proposed interstate that is to run from West Texas through Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama and ends in Georgia. It will help link military bases across these states and help economic growth in these areas. In Mississippi, it originates at the Mississippi River near Natchez, traversing eastward along US 84 to its junction with I-59 in Laurel. It then proceeds northward concurrently with I-59 to I-20 at Meridian and continues eastward on I-20 to the Alabama state boundary. Additionally, a spur segment branches southward on I-59 to Hattiesburg, connecting with US 98 and US 49, and terminating at Gulfport.



Along with the convenience of interstates, Mississippi also has numerous state highways that provide drug traffickers with a variety of avenues of approach to their target areas. State highways 51, 61, 45, and 49 run north/south, and highways 6, 26, 72, 78, 80, 82, 84, 90, and 98 run east/west. These highways intersect the interstates and permit additional opportunities for drug traffickers to transport their drugs undetected.

Highway	Cocaine	Marijuana	Methamphetamine	Heroin	Currency Seized
US 45 / 45Alt	2	0.049	N/A	N/A	\$33,069
US 49	187	0.117	14.6	N/A	\$40,072
US 61	44	1.14	0.64	N/A	\$108,538
US 82	142	4886	N/A	N/A	\$0
<i>Drug amounts are in pounds</i>					

Mississippi Seizures by US and State Highways; Source: BLOC/Gulf Coast HIDTA

Because the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) requires that all trucking company names be displayed on the door of the tractor, some traffickers create trucking firms or companies for the purpose of appearing to comply with these regulations. Only one or two shipments of drugs are made under the company name before it is discarded or replaced with another. This practice prevents any chance of name recognition by law enforcement. The DOT estimates that only half of the tractor-trailers from which drug seizures are made are legitimate trucking companies. Common practices among traffickers are to alter or use someone else's DOT numbers and for drivers to use false documentation and identification. Mississippi is the home of several drug trafficking organizations that utilize trucking companies as independent drug transporters catering to key cities. Mississippi is also the home of a major international poultry industry and lumber industry that transports commodities via local independent commercial truck lines all over the United States. Intelligence reveals that numerous Mississippi trucking companies are the major transporters of assets for several DTOs in the state. These companies may or may not be independent from the drug trafficking organizations, essentially hauling the drugs into the state and charging transportation fees. This practice attempts to shield the organization from the shipment of drugs, if discovered. Intelligence also indicates that the DTOs are paying “up-front” for the shipment of drugs but do not necessarily own the entire load.

DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the United States Census Bureau, Mississippi's population on July 1, 2023, was estimated to be 2,939,690. This is a 0.03% increase from 2022. 2022 was a 0.36% decline from 2021 and 2021 was a 0.3 % decline from 2020. The Population Estimates Program uses current data on births, deaths, and migration to calculate population change since the most recent decennial census date and produces a time series of estimates of population, demographic components of change, and housing units. The annual time series of estimates begins with the most recent decennial census date and extends to the vintage year.

Macrotrends.net shows the current metropolitan area, or metro area, population of Jackson, Mississippi in 2023 was 436,000, a 1.16% increase from 2022. The metro area population of Jackson, Mississippi in 2022 was 431,000, a 1.17% increase from 2021. The metro area population of Jackson, Mississippi in 2021 was 426,000, a 1.43% increase from 2020.

ECONOMICS

Mississippi, along with many other states, faces lingering economic effects from the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses, especially those requiring in-person interaction, struggle to maintain operations due to a hesitant workforce. Despite job openings being abundant and businesses reopening, attracting qualified candidates remains a challenge. Educational services, healthcare, and social assistance make up approximately 24.7% of the state's workforce. Government employees make up 18.5% of the state's workforce, whereas the national average is 14.6%. Agriculture employs approximately 17.4% of the state's workforce, directly or indirectly. Manufacturing (12.9%) and Retail Trade (11.7%) follow these three categories.

Mississippi schools show continued improvement in accountability grades. The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) reported that 87% of schools and 91% of districts earned a C or higher for the 2022-23 school year. This represents an increase from 2021-22 and marks significant progress since 2016, when only 62% of schools and districts met the same benchmark. Strong performance on statewide assessments is a major factor in these improved grades. The 2022-23 school year saw record-high percentages of students scoring proficient or advanced in math, English language arts, science, and U.S. history.

Mississippi is currently ranked 27th in the United States for its economic outlook. This is a forward-looking forecast based on the state's standing (equal-weighted average) in 15 important state policy variables. The data reflects state and local rates and revenues and any effect of federal deductibility.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates shows the median household income for Mississippi was \$52,719 (2018-2022) and the per capita income was \$29,209 (2018-2022) with 19.1% persons in poverty. According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, the unemployment rate for Mississippi as of January 2020 was 5.3% compared to a national rate of 4.0%, with Jefferson County being the highest at 16.7%.

Mississippi's fertile soil and temperate climate make it an ideal state for agriculture. Nurseries, greenhouses, farms producing sweet potatoes, watermelons, and other vegetables, plus many other alternative farming operations contribute greatly to the revenue produced by Mississippi's agriculture industry.

Due to Mississippi's reliance on agriculture as the number one industry, it makes a significant contribution to all 82 counties. This industry employs approximately 29% of the state's workforce, either directly or indirectly. Agriculture in Mississippi is a \$7.72 billion-dollar industry with approximately 34,700 farms in the state covering 10.4 million acres. The average size farm is composed of 263 acres. The top five agricultural crops in Mississippi are poultry, forestry, soybeans, cotton, and corn. Farm-raised catfish also impacts Mississippi's economy.

Mississippi ranks first in total U.S. catfish production and processing contributing more than 58% of all catfish consumed in the nation. A full 94% of all U.S. farm raised catfish are raised here in Mississippi, as well as Alabama, Arkansas, and Louisiana. In 1985, the U.S. farm raised catfish industry in these four states employed about 6,000 people and contributed roughly \$2.1 billion to the economies of each state. Today, the industry employs more than 13,000 people, and is

responsible for more than \$4 billion.

Humphreys County has approximately 117 catfish farms with over 36,000 acres of U.S. farm-raised catfish, making it the top production and catfish processing county in the United States. This catfish acreage is more than any other single state in the U.S. Pure fresh water comes from underground wells. Ponds are stocked with 6,000 catfish to the acre. Mississippi farm-raised catfish are fed a “puffed” high-protein floating food pellet, a mixture of soybeans, corn, wheat, vitamins, minerals, and fish meal produced by feed mills located in the Mississippi Delta. Catfish are harvested every week of the year.

In the past 50 years, Mississippi has diversified its economy by concentrating more heavily on industrial activities, attracting a broader spectrum of business, industrial, and technical operations. Numerous businesses throughout the state were scheduled to open in 2021: Lockers Manufacturing (Batesville, MS); Leisure Pools Manufacturing and Distribution Operations (Picayune, MS); Red Land Cotton (Tylertown, MS); Amazon (Marshall County, MS); Cutting Edge Meat Company (CEMCO) (Leakesville, MS); Delta Wind Farm (MS Delta); Edelbrock, LLC (Olive Branch, MS); Camgian Microsystems, Inc. (Starkville, MS); Delta Fuel, LLC (Natchez, MS); Elkay Manufacturing (Olive Branch, MS); Ocean Aero (Gulfport, MS); Voyant Beauty (Olive Branch, MS); German Auto Supplier (Baldwyn, MS); Jones Construction (Hattiesburg, MS); Tony’s Tamales (Flora, MS); Sandman Bedding (Belden, MS). These are a few new businesses opening in the state; however, there are numerous expansions throughout the state.

The Mississippi Lottery was established to benefit statewide infrastructure and education. Net proceeds, up to \$80 million, will be used to support the State’s Highway Fund until June 30, 2028, for repairing, renovating, and maintaining state highways and bridges. Proceeds exceeding \$80 million in a fiscal year will be deposited into the Education Enhancement Fund for Early Childhood Learning Collaborative, the Classroom Supply Fund, and other education purposes. According to www.mslotteryhome.com, record sales generate more than \$138 million in total transfers to the state. Fueled by two new draw-style games, a series of high jackpots and an expanding array of scratch-off tickets, the Mississippi Lottery Corporation completed its final transfer to the state for FY21, bringing the total to \$138,961,541.14.

IV. MISSISSIPPI DRUG THREATS



OVERALL SCOPE OF DRUG THREATS

Fentanyl and other opioids are a growing health and safety threat to citizens and law enforcement. Evolving forms of fentanyl laced products, including heroin and new opioids, are increasing along with fentanyl related overdoses. Heroin seizures declined drastically in 2023 due to the affordability and availability of fentanyl. Methamphetamine continues to be a significant threat because of its accessibility and its association with violent crimes and property crimes, and the necessity of law enforcement resources. Marijuana is rapidly evolving with new products, and THC levels are dangerously high. This and the fact that younger people are attracted to these products make marijuana a main concern. Cocaine has become more available and continues to be a major threat due to the violence and dangerous gangs associated with the trafficking of cocaine and its high addiction rate. There is a high prevalence of the abuse of prescription drugs, so they remain a constant drug threat. Synthetic drugs continue to change and evolve creating a constant battle for law enforcement. Street gangs and more organized gangs continue to grow along with their violence and individuals benefiting from the illegal drug trade persistently adjust their strategies to evade detection. In August 2022, MBN created the Violent Crimes Task Force in north Mississippi with the goal to assist law enforcement agencies with investigating crimes committed by violent offenders involving guns, drugs, terroristic threats, sex trafficking, and human trafficking. It involves joint training, intelligence sharing, resource allocation, and workforce multiplication to ensure that violent offenders are successfully investigated and successfully prosecuted.

FENTANYL AND OTHER OPIOIDS

ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT

Fentanyl is the fastest growing threat in the state of Mississippi. Fentanyl is so cheaply manufactured that it is being used to cut other illicit substances to further the profits of drug dealers and trafficking organizations. Nearly three-quarters of the respondents to the 2025 Gulf Coast HIDTA Threat Assessment said that drug trafficking and availability of fentanyl increased in 2023 and nearly 75% of respondents ranked fentanyl and other opioids, as the greatest drug threat facing Mississippi.



MBN has seen a steady increase in the number of cases initiated involving fentanyl over the past four years. In 2023, MBN initiated 130 cases involving fentanyl compared to 66 cases involving fentanyl in 2022, 39 cases involving fentanyl in 2021, and 19 cases in 2020. MBN is also noticing an increase in the numbers of cases where other drugs, particularly counterfeit prescription pills, have been determined to contain fentanyl. As expected, the counterfeit drugs were believed to be some other drug, but crime lab results indicated the presence of fentanyl. In 2023, MBN seized over 13,000 grams of fentanyl and over 19,000 dosage units of fentanyl as counterfeit pills.

ABUSE

A rapid increase in the prescribing of opioids, started in the 1990s, led to the current opioid epidemic. With prescription opioids now being harder to obtain, fentanyl and other illicit opioids



are more in demand. Cartels and many local drug dealers are cutting other drugs with fentanyl and selling it on the street to increase profits. These drug distributors are selling fentanyl-laced counterfeit pills that appear to be Oxycodone, Xanax, Percocet, or other similar drugs, causing overdose deaths involving fentanyl to rise. There were at least 258 overdose deaths involving fentanyl in 2023, approximately 66% of all the overdose deaths reported to MBN for 2023. There are still overdose deaths that have not been reported, and crime lab results that have not been completed. This number is expected to rise. There were at least 248 overdose deaths involving fentanyl in 2022, which is approximately 63% of all the overdose deaths reported for 2022. There were at least 289 overdose deaths involving fentanyl in 2021, which is approximately 58% of all the overdose deaths reported for 2021. Out

of total opioid deaths, fentanyl was involved in approximately 80% for 2021 and 2022 and 86% for 2023 as reported to MBN.

The use of fentanyl appears to be increasing due to the increase in availability. According to the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH), 450 people sought treatment for fentanyl as their primary substance from January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023. Fentanyl is a major factor in substance abuse cases reported by DMH. The Mississippi Forensics Laboratory analyzed 194 cases of fentanyl during the calendar year for 2023, which may have been submitted for drug analysis prior to 2023.

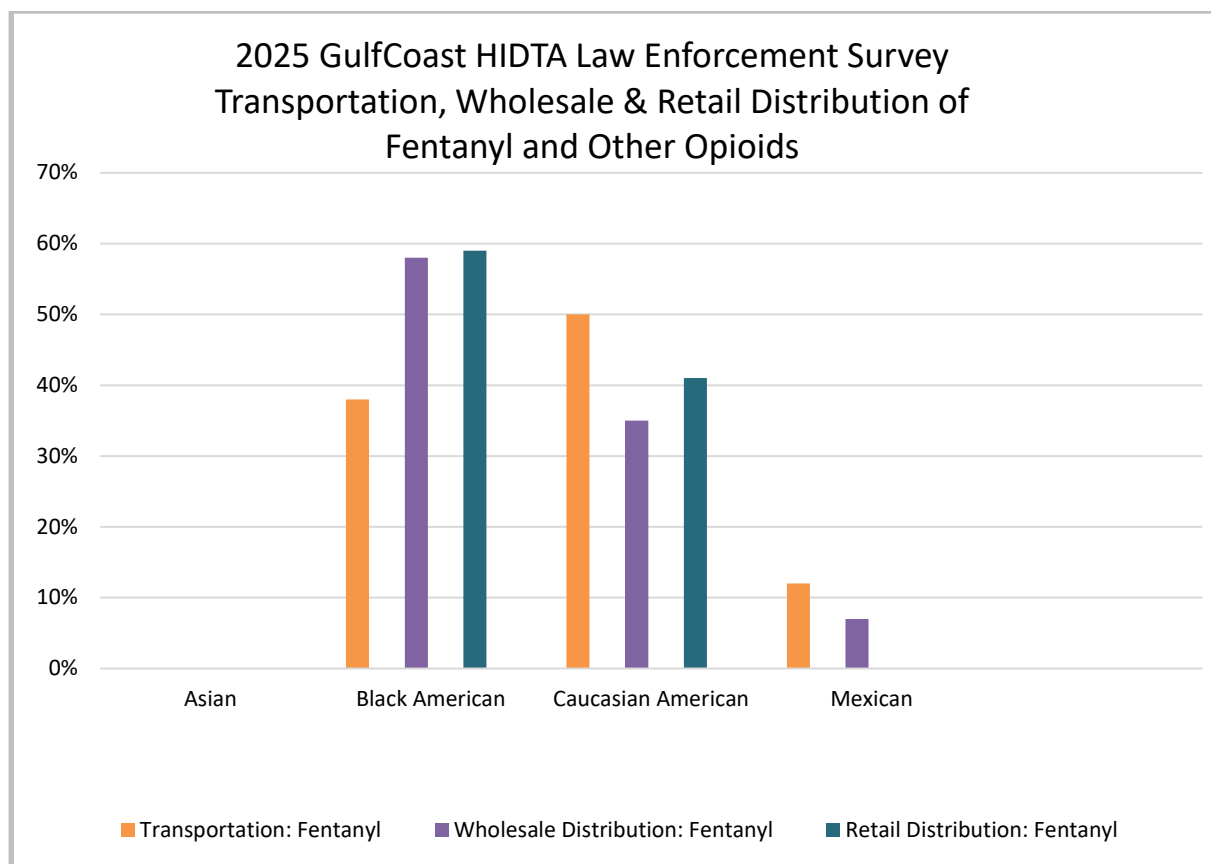
PRODUCTION

Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that can be prescribed to treat patients with chronic pain or severe pain following surgery. It is a Schedule II controlled substance like morphine but 50 to 100 times more potent. Transdermal patches or lozenges are prescribed forms of fentanyl, which can be diverted for misuse and abuse. Fentanyl is also illicitly manufactured primarily in foreign clandestine labs and smuggled through Mexico to the United States. Fentanyl is being mixed with other illicit drugs like methamphetamine, cocaine, and heroin to increase the potency of those drug and is sold as powders, nasal sprays, and counterfeit prescription opioids pills. Counterfeit pills are made without any official supervision or quality control so often counterfeit pills contain lethal doses of fentanyl. A lethal dose of fentanyl may be as small as 2 mg for an adult. 2 mg of fentanyl is comparable in mass to 10-20 grains of salt. According to DEA, 42% of pills tested for fentanyl contain a lethal dose. There is significant risk that illegal drugs have been intentionally contaminated with fentanyl increasing the possibility of death.

TRANSPORTATION AND DISTRIBUTION

China and Mexico are the largest producers of fentanyl that makes its way into the United States. Fentanyl is smuggled into the United States via shipping containers, mail or across the U.S. Mexico border. Once in the US, fentanyl is transported into and through Mississippi via three major routes: Interstate 10, Interstate 20, and Interstate 55.





ASSOCIATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

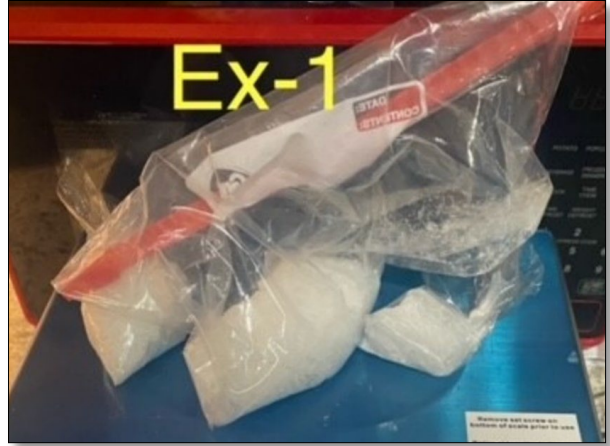
Fentanyl related violence is increasing in Mississippi. To further their drug activities and protect their turf, gangs and drug trafficking organizations commit violent crimes such as assault, burglary, homicide, and robbery. It is common to locate multiple firearms during investigations associated with fentanyl. In the state of Mississippi, local drug dealers and/or regional drug traffickers are dangerous because of the suspects' possible gang and drug cartel affiliations. Abusers are known to commit crimes to purchase these drugs.

METHAMPHETAMINE

ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT

Methamphetamine originated in the early 1900s from its parent substance, amphetamine, and was first used for bronchial inhalers and nasal decongestants. Methamphetamine is a potent stimulant like amphetamines. Methamphetamine can be consumed orally, smoked, injected, or snorted. Methamphetamine is available as crystalline powder or rock-like shards. Smoking or injecting the substance triggers a quick brain reaction, resulting in immense pleasure. Methamphetamine increases dopamine levels in the brain upon intake. Methamphetamine users are more likely to develop substance use disorders (SUD) due to its quick dopamine release and short "rush."

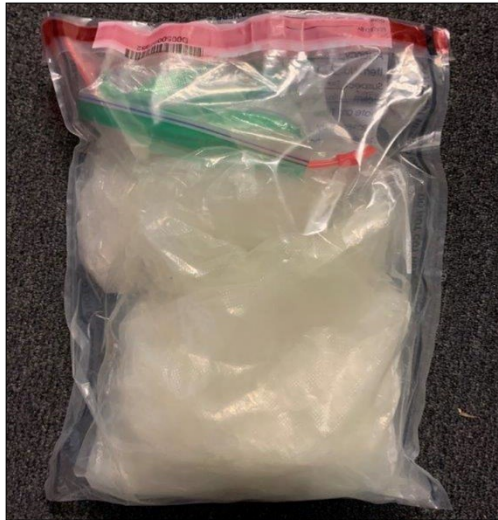
Prolonged use of methamphetamine can alter brain anatomy by disrupting typical dopamine responses. Methamphetamine usage can lead to the spread of HIV, Hepatitis B, and C due to shared needles. Other health consequences include increased wakefulness and physical activity, reduced hunger, increased breathing, quick heart rate, irregular heartbeat, and elevated body temperature.



According to the National Institute of Health, methamphetamine is approved in the United States for the treatment of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children as well as the short-term therapy of obesity. Similarly, amphetamine has been medically authorized to treat narcolepsy and other related medical concerns or diseases, including attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, as outlined by the appropriate authorities of the Federal government. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration classified methamphetamine as a Schedule II stimulant, requiring a non-refillable prescription from a recognized pharmaceutical manufacturer. Given this classification, illegal methamphetamine is also a Schedule II controlled substance.

ABUSE

Illicit methamphetamine usage is an immense danger to public health. Long-term use of methamphetamine can lead to anxiety, paranoia, confusion, psychosis, weight loss, dental issues, and skin sores from scratching. Abusers typically find that to achieve their desired outcome, they



must take the drug in larger dosages, more frequently, or in an alternative manner. Addicts of methamphetamine for an extended period may find it impossible to experience pleasure from anything other than the drug, which encourages usage. People who use methamphetamine long-term may also develop symptoms such as severe anxiety, disorientation, insomnia, mood swings, and violent conduct, in addition to being addicted to the drug. They may also exhibit a variety of psychotic symptoms, including delusions (such as the feeling of insects crawling under the skin), paranoia, and auditory and visual hallucinations. Methamphetamine users who have previously experienced psychosis have been found to relapse spontaneously when under stress. Psychotic symptoms

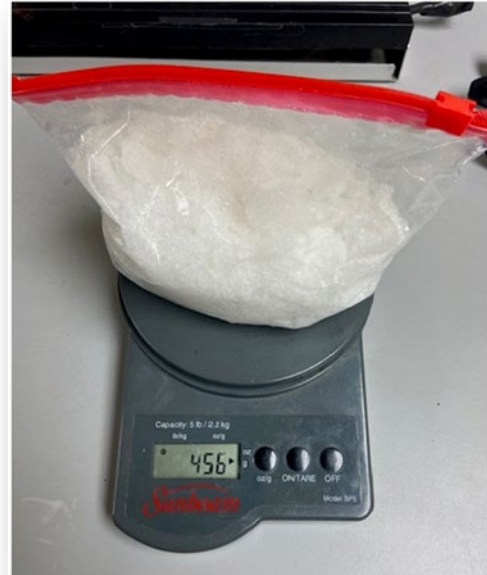
can occasionally linger for months or years after a person stops using methamphetamine.

The majority of methamphetamine in Mississippi is found as crystal methamphetamine, which is the drug's purest form. This form, which is usually produced in small, covert laboratories, is twice as powerful as the powder form and is certified to be at least 85% pure or higher. It is typical for

the final product to have 95–100% pure methamphetamine. Users, which include Caucasian Americans, Black Americans, Hispanics, and other inhabitants in Mississippi and the country, frequently consume the substance over an extended period due to its affordability, accessibility, and high purity.

There were 646 arrests made by MBN for methamphetamine related charges including sale, possession, and manufacture during 2023. The Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics initiated a total of 989 cases involving methamphetamine in 2023. This is an increase from 2022, which had a total of 866 methamphetamine cases. Methamphetamine cases initiated in 2023 by MBN involved the seizure of 62.67 combined pounds of solid methamphetamine, over 746.80 milliliters of methamphetamine in solution, and approximately 10,822.50 dosage units of methamphetamine.

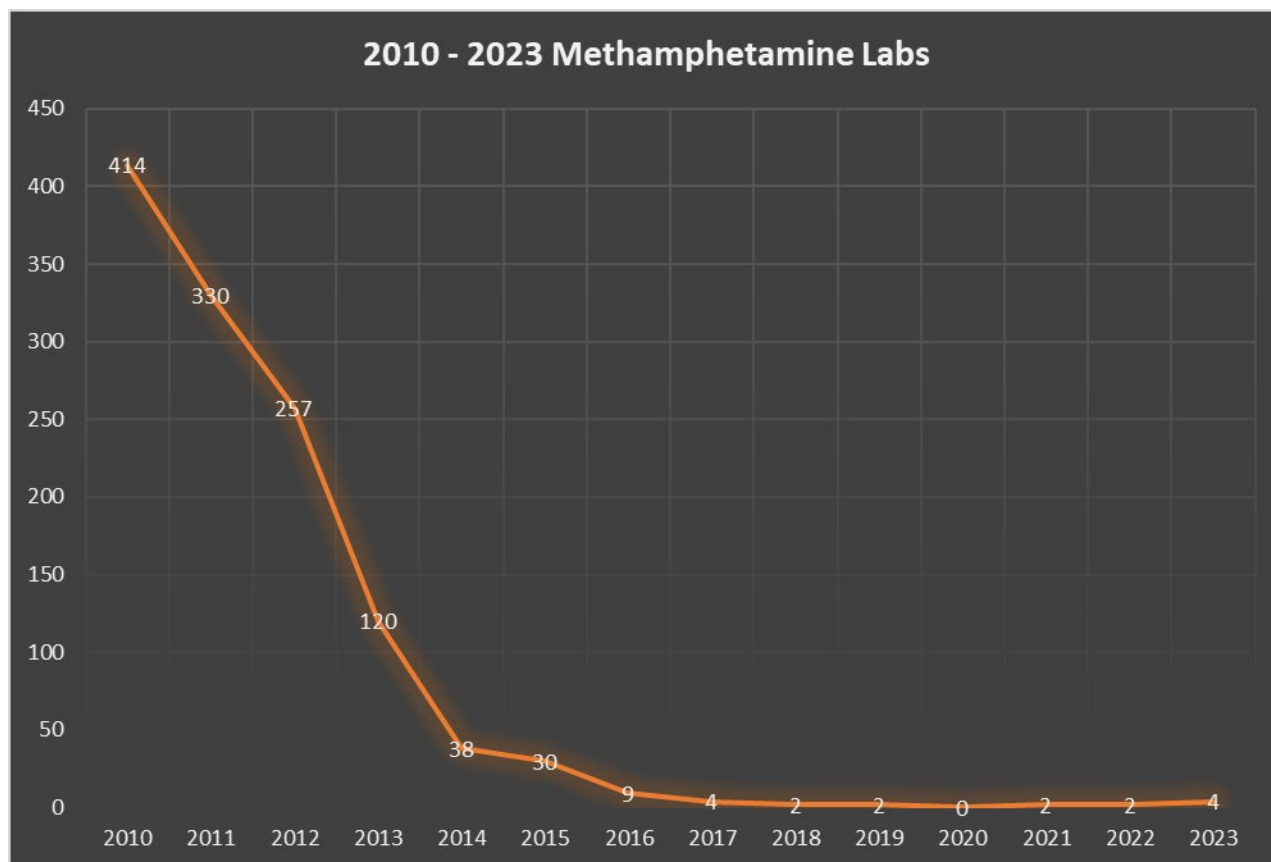
The Mississippi Department of Health reported 376 individuals were admitted for methamphetamine abuse as a primary substance in 2023. This is a decrease from 2022, in which 390 individuals were admitted for abuse of methamphetamine as a primary substance.



AVAILABILITY

Due to its abundance and low cost, crystal methamphetamine is in high demand among distributors because of its purity, which results in continuous and desirable "highs" for their customers or users. Illicit methamphetamine smuggled by Mexican criminal businesses is highly addictive and widely available throughout the state. For a variety of reasons, methamphetamine is widely available in almost every municipality in the United States, including Mississippi. The Mexican drug cartels, particularly the Sinaloa Drug Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), control the wholesale trafficking of methamphetamine and other drugs in the United States. Drug trafficking organizations at the national, regional, and local levels are heavily involved in methamphetamine distribution.

Mississippi saw a significant decline in local clandestine laboratories producing methamphetamine with the passage of House Bill 512 in 2010, which was introduced by the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics and backed by other law enforcement agencies. The law went into effect on July 1, 2010, and the primary ingredient, ephedrine/pseudoephedrine, became a Schedule III controlled substance in Mississippi. This required a medical provider's prescription for medications like Actifed and Sudafed, which were previously available over the counter (OTC).



ASSOCIATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Investigating drug traffickers has become increasingly dangerous due to the suspects' potential ties to drug cartels and gangs. Methamphetamine manufacturers and abusers display agitation and paranoia. This creates situations where violence is more likely to occur. When methamphetamine is created locally, or "homemade," in clandestine laboratories, violence is typically linked to weapons and booby-traps aimed at police enforcement personnel carrying out their official tasks. Mississippi passed into law on July 1, 2005, a sentencing enhancement added to defendants who possess firearms and/or booby-traps on premises or property during an investigation or at the time of arrest, in response to these concerns and the support of law enforcement agencies around the state. Furthermore, methamphetamine labs include flammable ingredients that frequently cause explosions and fires, endangering the public, law enforcement, and the environment.

Undoubtedly, children are involved in methamphetamine-related crimes and violence. There have been kids around meth labs, whether they are found by a search warrant, undercover buy, police raid, or citizen complaint. During the production process, these kids are exposed to hazardous substances. Note that children found in these settings are typically connected to the makers and owners of the laboratories, as well as other participants.

PRODUCTION



To reduce methamphetamine production, the United States Congress passed the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act of 2005, which requires pharmacies and other retail stores to keep records of purchases of products containing ephedrine/pseudoephedrine and limits the amount of those products that an individual can buy per day. These restrictions impacted domestic methamphetamine manufacture. Mississippi implemented legislation scheduling ephedrine/pseudoephedrine in 2010 because of criminals exploiting existing restrictions and the manufacturing of methamphetamine being detrimental to public health and safety. This piece of law significantly impacted Mississippi's domestic methamphetamine production. Whether Mississippi has one or a thousand clandestine laboratories, they pose public health, safety, and environmental risks that necessitate a law enforcement response.

Locally, a simpler one-pot synthesis, often known as a "shake and bake" or "mom and pop" lab, is the most common manufacturing process used. The production procedure can only produce small batches of methamphetamine, making pseudoephedrine limitations less effective. The procedure also employs lower amounts of chemicals, making it easier to obtain without arousing suspicion. Furthermore, this technique





involves fewer "steps" and is faster to complete, yet it is no less dangerous, as some addicts have been caught making the drug while driving. To raise awareness and ensure safety, crushed pseudoephedrine tablets are placed in a non-pressurized container containing ammonium nitrate, water, and a hydrophobic solvent such as Coleman fuel or automotive starting fluid, followed by lye and lithium strips. The hydrogen chloride gas produced by the reaction of salt and sulfuric acid is subsequently utilized to extract crystals for purification. The container must be "burped" on a regular basis to avoid failure due to accumulating pressure, as exposure of the lithium to water can cause a flash fire; thus, an abandoned reaction poses a serious risk to the public as well as first responders such as law enforcement officers and firefighters.

TRANSPORTATION

Methamphetamine distribution has generally been carried out by outlaw motorcycle gangs and other independent trafficking organizations. While these organizations continue to manufacture meth, clandestine laboratories in the Southwest Border states and Mexico have emerged as the primary sources of methamphetamine in Mississippi. Methamphetamine "ice" is produced in Mexico and transported into Mississippi via the West Coast and the Southwest Border. It is mostly controlled by the same major organizations that manufacture and transport other illegal drugs from Mexico to the United States.

Methamphetamine is typically smuggled in disguised compartments on passenger, commercial, and rail vehicles. Individuals and criminal organizations regularly utilize the US Postal Service and next-day delivery services.



DISTRIBUTION

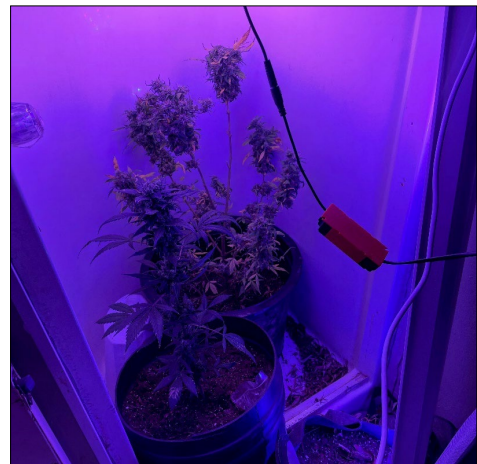
Methamphetamine remains trafficked throughout Mississippi by independent dealers and local drug trafficking organizations. Currently, methamphetamine is distributed everywhere, not just in the usual and expected locations like truck stops, clubs, low-to-medium-income dwellings, mobile home parks, hotels, restaurant parking lots, and other rural regions. Since more people

are eager to try drugs, including methamphetamine, most dealers and distributors try to adapt their delivery methods to accommodate individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Street-level and mid-level dealers are aware that to support their lifestyles, they need to find innovative methods to grow their clientele. While methamphetamine remains primarily accessible as "ice," distributors are also looking for ways to engage with the constantly shifting consumer base. End-user choices have led to the continued availability of pressed pills, liquid, and powder forms of methamphetamine.

MARIJUANA

ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT

In Mississippi, marijuana is still the most easily accessible, commonly abused, and trafficked illegal substance. There is a notion that marijuana is generally safe for everyone due to several factors, including a growing number of goods containing marijuana, a shifting public opinion regarding marijuana usage and its risks, and the apparent support of the mainstream community for marijuana reform or legalization. Society is growing increasingly insensitive to its use, abuse, and risks as a result of these attitudes. Cannabis is still seen as a "gateway" to the realm of illegal drug usage. Professionals in law enforcement and treatment may vouch for this assertion. Crimes are prosecuted differently depending on public opinion, and marijuana cases are getting harder to handle. The rewards that may be made from widespread distribution of marijuana with little chance of jail time are what keep drug traffickers and distributors enamored with the drug.



According to a report on State Medical Cannabis Laws found on the National Conference of State Legislatures (www.ncsl.org) website, there are medicinal marijuana programs in 41 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Of those, 23 have decriminalized cannabis or have comprehensive adult-use programs. Mississippi became the 37th state on February 2, 2022. From available information, 25 states and the District of Columbia have legalized recreational marijuana use, which includes Colorado, Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Ohio, and Minnesota. Marijuana, whether imported from Mexico or grown domestically, continues to be abused across the country, including in Mississippi. Additionally, the National Institutes of Health reports that medical marijuana use has increased in adults among states with and without medical marijuana programs. Mississippi continues to be the recipient of marijuana being sent from states that have medical marijuana programs or legalized marijuana, particularly California and Oklahoma, but also includes other states; however, licensed cultivators in the state of Mississippi can legally grow marijuana plants, per Senate Bill 2095. Processed marijuana is the most prevalent form identified, but vapes, gummies, and other marijuana products continue to increase. In addition to marijuana being brought in from outside of Mississippi's geographic boundaries, marijuana is illegally grown across the state.

Additional analysis of the relationship between marijuana use and violence showed that law enforcement officials still come across people engaged in drug-related crimes who are carrying a variety of weapons, from assault rifles to handguns. In addition, law enforcement personnel frequently come across people who are carrying greater volumes of marijuana meant for distribution, in addition to user quantities of the drug. The growing, trafficking, and illegal use of marijuana will continue to have detrimental effects on our lives in many areas, from public and individual health to community safety and security, state security, and even national security, as legal restrictions loosen.

ABUSE

Marijuana use crosses all racial, social, and economic lines in the country. While some people start abusing drugs as young adults, others do so in their teens. Others, though, start between the ages of 26 and 45. Although there are many reasons why people start abusing drugs, marijuana is frequently the first drug used. Although the public's opinion of marijuana's negative effects is still declining, research groups, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and others do not believe that marijuana is safe. These organizations care about public health and offer useful datasets in the form of booklets, brochures, and other materials.

Several factors, including drug abuse statistics and law enforcement seizure and arrest data, can be used to identify patterns of abuse. First, let's examine the therapy data. 18.7% of adults 12 years of age or older who participated in the 2021 research reported using marijuana in the previous year, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). 35.4% was the highest rate among young adults, who were defined as those between the ages of 18 and 25. Adults 26 years of age or older were included in the middle percentage bracket (17.2%). Teenagers between the ages of 12 and 17 had the lowest rate, 10.5%. These figures remained roughly in line with previous years, according to data analyzed by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, SAMHSA, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Each year, the Monitoring the Future survey is administered to students in grades eight, ten, and twelve who self-report their substance use habits over various timeframes, including the past 30 days, past 12 months, and lifetime. The poll also records the views of harm, disapproval of drug use, and perceived accessibility of drugs among students. In the year when the data is gathered, the results are made public. Monitoring the Future researchers gathered 22,318 surveys from students enrolled in 235 public and private schools in the US between February and June 2023. In the last year, 8.3% of eighth graders, 17.8% of tenth graders, and 29% of twelfth graders reported using cannabis, indicating a steady use pattern across all three grade levels assessed. Notably, a consistent trend was observed across all three grades: 6.5% of eighth graders, 13.1% of tenth graders, and 19.6% of twelfth graders reported vaping cannabis within the previous year.

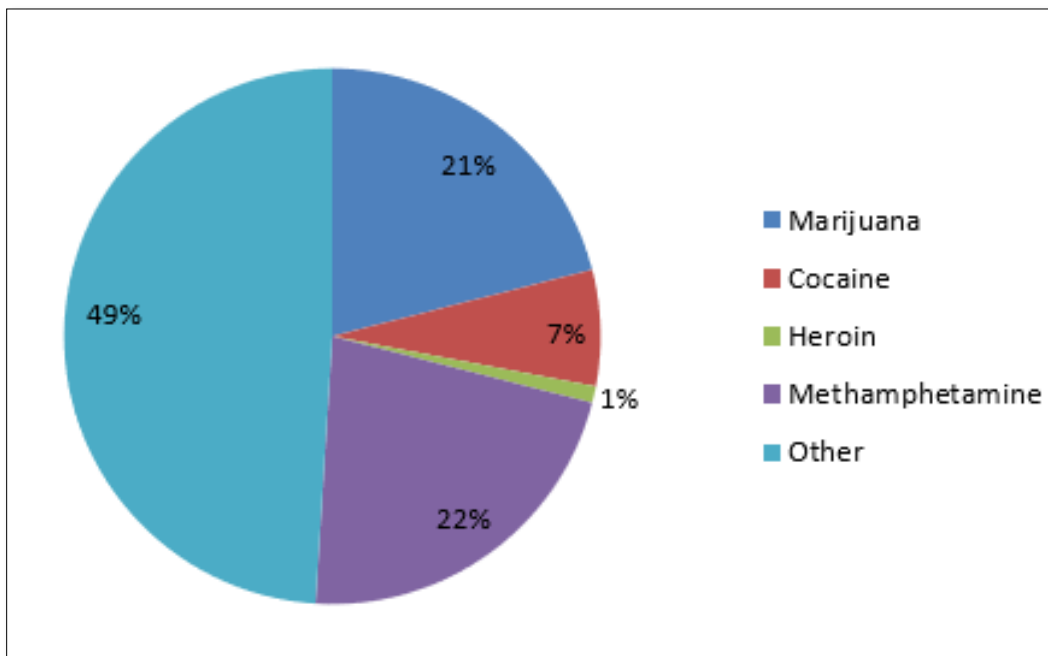
Three (3) out of ten (10) people have marijuana addiction, also known as cannabis use disorder or marijuana use disorder, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The hallmark of this condition is the inability to give up marijuana use, even despite its negative effects on one's health or social life. Compared to people who start using marijuana later in life, individuals who

start using it when they are young are more likely to acquire this disease. Misuse or abuse of any substance will have an impact on life in one or more areas, including the workplace and the judicial system. There are specific reasons why people seek therapy for substance abuse.

According to the National Library of Medicine, cannabis is the most widely used federally illegal substance; 49.6 million persons aged 12 and older, or over 18% of the population, reported using it in the previous year, and 2.8 million new adolescent users began using it. Cannabis use among young adults has increased to all-time highs in the last year, last month, and every day. Furthermore, data from the 2020 NSDUH revealed that more than 14 million adults aged 12 and above satisfied the criteria for cannabis use disorder (CUD), with young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 having the highest percentages. Age-graded disparities in treatment admissions have also been noted, with those under the age of twenty-one accounting for over forty percent of treatment admissions with cannabis as the primary substance and adolescents having higher rates of treatment for cannabis as the predominant substance of abuse.

In addition to statistics and data, parents and other concerned parties can become alarmed by actual, practical circumstances. Examples may be things that are sensed by the five senses. Raw or smoked marijuana odors are frequently detected in public places, including convenience stores, retail establishments, connected parking lots, and other areas, and they may be linked to abuse. Although talking about these circumstances might be difficult, questions and smells can start a conversation regarding drug usage and misuse.

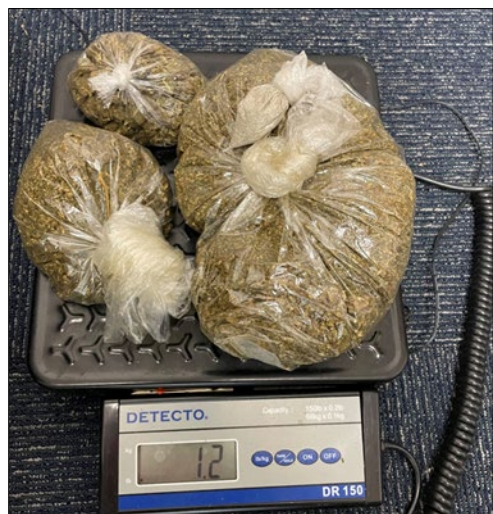
A different method of keeping an eye on Mississippi's marijuana scene is to examine the analysis that the Mississippi Forensics Laboratory conducted in 2023. Around 12,000 cases a year, or almost 50% of all cases submitted to the laboratory, end up in the Controlled Substance Section. The lab looks at a broad range of evidence, including liquids, powders, plant material, and materials that resemble rocks. The below example shows the amount of marijuana evidence that was received for 2023.



Approximately 5,743 pounds of processed marijuana, over 582 marijuana plants, and other amounts of marijuana products were seized by MBN in 2023. MBN received reports of more plants being taken into custody by the local police and sheriff agencies. In 2023, MBN made 247 arrests for marijuana-related offenses and 730 marijuana-related cases were started in 71 out of 82 counties. In 2022, MBN confiscated 286 plants and about 1,717 pounds of processed marijuana, arrested 245 individuals for marijuana violations, and initiated 584 cases involving marijuana in 58 out of 82 counties for the year. Around 320 plants, 331 pounds of processed marijuana and marijuana products, and 396 marijuana-related cases were started by MBN in 2020. MBN made 287, 235, and 227 arrests for marijuana-related offenses in 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively. Like other substances, marijuana seizures vary in Mississippi. This variance can be partially attributed to marijuana being imported from jurisdictions where it is legal and allows for medical usage.

AVAILABILITY

Marijuana remains the most easily accessible illicit substance in the United States. According to data from the 2025 Gulf Coast HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey, 93% of Mississippi law enforcement officials believe marijuana is readily available. For the year 2023, 68% of Mississippi law enforcement survey participants reported a rise in interactions with edibles, 70% said vape pens and cartridges had become more widely available, and 58% said that the amount of high-grade medicinal marijuana they had encountered also increased in 2023. Upon reviewing the statistics, participants in the Mississippi 2025 Gulf Coast HIDTA Threat Assessment Law Enforcement Survey nearly evenly said that the characteristics of drug trafficking—availability, demand, distribution, and transport—were



either increasing or remaining unchanged. Law enforcement responders stated that they saw high-grade hydroponic and domestic marijuana more frequently than any other sort, according to Gulf Coast HIDTA. Mexican, British Columbian, and medicinal marijuana strains come after these two categories. Cannabis of all grades, from low and mid-grade to high grade and strength variations, is still encountered by law enforcement.

Cannabis costs differ depending on its potency, quality, growing region, and whether it's in edible, wax, or flower form. The location of purchase influences the cost of marijuana as well. Prices are lower when buying a product from a source state or on the southwest border than when it is delivered to the distribution center. A pound of marijuana in Mississippi often costs

between \$500 and \$1,200. In Mississippi, premium marijuana costs between \$3,000 and \$7,000 per pound.

In February 2022, Mississippi became the 37th state in the Union to legalize the use of marijuana for specific medical conditions. This came about after a court overturned a petition ballot initiative and the Legislature drafted a measure that would meet the governor's signature requirements. This permits marijuana to be produced, processed, and distributed throughout the state in accordance with legal requirements. Recent sales of medicinal marijuana under this statute have occurred, and dispensaries are becoming more widely apparent around the state. The Mississippi Medical Cannabis Program currently has 189 dispensaries and 132 licensed cultivator facilities operating in the state. There will be a rise in marijuana availability when processed marijuana, edibles, vape pens, and other consumable goods are sold lawfully, as other jurisdictions that have legalized marijuana for either recreational or medical use have observed. Mississippi will experience growing pains while the state's medical cannabis program is still in its infancy and develops further. Given that the state has access to high-quality marijuana, it is expected that people will find means to divert it from its intended use and onto the black market.

ASSOCIATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Marijuana usage is not typically linked to violent crime, especially not among users. To safeguard their product, some marijuana growers and sellers will, however, acquiesce to violent threats or violent crimes. For example, cultivators of cannabis frequently use explosives, trip wires, and counter-surveillance to prevent crop theft or confiscation. Retail marijuana dealers have a history of carrying guns to safeguard their goods and deter potential robberies during marijuana transactions. Mississippi law enforcement officials are coming across an increasing number of people who are in possession of illegal narcotics, including marijuana, and firearms. Various weapons have been encountered when dealing with individuals who are interested in marijuana, as illustrated below. 33% of the weapons seized in 2023 were from cases that involved marijuana.





Law enforcement officers routinely encounter individuals with firearms during drug investigations and other lawful encounters, ranging from simple possession to distribution all over the state. Firearms are becoming more and more prevalent, and they add a dimension to the marijuana drug culture that must be anticipated.

PRODUCTION

The process of making marijuana is expensive in terms of time, materials, and environmental impact. No matter who the final consumer is, growing premium cannabis is expensive. Growing plants successfully takes a significant investment of time, money, and labor. Most horticultural gardeners take great pride in the products they produce. Similarly, law enforcement needs to devote time and resources to fighting the illegal marijuana production sector to lessen these growths and the associated issues. Cannabis can be grown illegally or commercially, indoors or out, hybrid or hydroponically, but both buyers and growers desire the greatest products available. Mississippi currently grows both medical marijuana and commercial hemp on its farms. Unlawful growth techniques are essentially indoor and outdoor grow operations, or "grows" for short. This development can frequently vary from being very simple to being very sophisticated. Law enforcement agencies have detected both indoor and outdoor growth throughout 2023.

Indoor growth, or culture, usually needs careful supervision. Growers are required to supply light, heat, humidity, and fertilizer to their crops. Complex hydroponic growing systems can be installed in garages, closets, individual rooms, or even a complete house. Areas designated for the stages of clandestine manufacture are found in elaborate grows. These kinds of grow shed light on the intricacies of indoor cultivation, particularly for those that function like businesses and generate high-end goods while remaining hidden in the neighborhood for Mississippi law enforcement personnel. There are several risks associated with these operations, including the possibility of mold growth and fire. Less complex practices include moving plants from indoor to outdoor cultivation and growing them in buckets and other gardening tools.

These plants, depending on where they are located, can be quite simple or more sophisticated, as these three photos (left, top right, and bottom right) show. Police have discovered illegal grows hidden in garages, closets, single rooms, and multi-room configurations. Indoor marijuana growth can pose health risks to individuals and the public due to the specific atmosphere required for cultivating the plants. This atmosphere, often characterized by high humidity and limited ventilation, can harbor mold growth, compromise air quality, and expose individuals to harmful chemicals, potentially leading to respiratory problems, allergic reactions, and other health concerns. Indoor grow operations also use advanced techniques for manufacturing and hiding. Homes in neighborhoods with mid- to upper-class residents are frequently bought by organizations. Marijuana harvests can be grown inside residential settings four times or more during a year.



Growers that cultivate cannabis outdoors have more alternatives when it comes to hiding their harvest from law police. The main emphasis of MBN's Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program (DCE/SP) is outdoor cultivation, which might involve single plants or multi-acre fields of illegal marijuana. Drug enforcement authorities have discovered plants planted in buckets, mixed in with other vegetables in gardens, and grown irregularly in backyards.

Secluded farming areas can have a detrimental effect on the environment by using chemical fertilizers, contaminating streams and groundwater, and combining waste and runoff water. Despite not being as common in 2022 and 2023 as they were in prior years, Mexican DTOs are still cultivating using advanced techniques. DTOs utilize elaborate irrigation systems, water pumps, hoses, portable sprayers, portable gas generators, and advanced chemical fertilizer applications.

13 of Mississippi's 88 counties had marijuana plants taken from outdoor grow operations in 2023 by MBN's Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program (DCE/SP). MBN is assisted in these missions by the Mississippi Department of Public Safety Airwing and the Mississippi National Guard. In addition to the aforementioned actions, MBN was informed of marijuana plant seizures carried out by Mississippi law enforcement. 5,315 marijuana plants were taken in during the year thanks to these efforts. According to the latest data available, which the DEA disclosed for Fiscal Year 2022, Mississippi had 46 outdoor grow sites, 4 indoor grow sites, 297 plants, 5,832 pounds of processed marijuana, 5 ounces of THC edibles, and 123 arrests. With regulated outdoor cultivation of industrial hemp and legalized indoor medicinal marijuana production, MBN's Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program unit continues to evolve with the times. The

changes present challenges that impact enforcement efforts, but through continued efforts and expanded partnerships, illicitly grown marijuana will continue to be identified, investigated, and ultimately seized to protect public health and promote public safety.

Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program enforcement operations are grow-season time intensive initiatives with a storied history of a partnership between MBN, the Drug Enforcement Administration, Mississippi National Guard, and local law enforcement. Illicit marijuana grow operations are routinely located throughout the state. Resources, weather, and other challenges impact where illegally cultivated marijuana plants are identified and seized during the growing season.

TRANSPORTATION



Marijuana continues to be transported into and through Mississippi, which includes varieties of domestically grown, Mexico-produced, and high-potency Canadian marijuana. As previously mentioned, Mississippi is the crossroads of the South and illicit drugs enter the state on its roadways as a means for marijuana to arrive at its intended markets inside the state and beyond.

Mexico-produced marijuana enters the country primarily in Arizona, California, and south Texas, while high-potency Canadian marijuana is usually smuggled through and between points of entry in Washington, Michigan, New York, and Vermont. Both forms of marijuana are distributed nationally. Similarly, domestically produced marijuana is transported from grow sites to markets nationwide.

Mississippi is still a significant hub for the transshipment of large amounts of marijuana from the Southwest Border. The 2025 Gulf Coast HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey revealed that respondents from Mississippi stated that marijuana items, including processed marijuana and an increase in the amount of vape pens and edibles found, are still being confiscated. Most of the seizures were caused by people using I-10 and I-20. Most states from which marijuana is trafficked into Mississippi are in the West, where it is legal. These states include Texas, California, Washington, Oregon, Colorado, and Oklahoma. Furthermore, I-22 is being used by drug traffickers as a conduit from the western states. The earnings from this traffic are routed via I-10, I-59, I-55, and I-20 back to Mexico via Mississippi. I-22 is also used by drug traffickers as a route to and from the western states. Drug traffickers also frequently use parcel delivery as a means of drug transportation. In the 2025 Gulf Coast HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey, 60% of Mississippi law enforcement participants stated that marijuana transportation rose in 2023, whereas 28 percent

stated that marijuana transportation stayed constant. According to this survey, Mississippi law enforcement officials are still concerned about marijuana, particularly edibles and vape pens.

DISTRIBUTION

According to the 2025 Gulf Coast HIDTA threat assessment survey, law enforcement respondents in Mississippi said the distribution of marijuana either remained the same or increased. States where marijuana manufacturing is permitted are the sources of the marijuana that is trafficked into Mississippi. Although commercial semi-trucks and tractor trailers are frequently used by drug traffickers, private and rented cars continue to be the most popular means of transporting marijuana. In Mississippi, commercial semi-trucks carrying 100 to 1,000-kilogram payloads have been seen by law enforcement authorities. All socioeconomic groups, from small-time street vendors to large wholesalers, distribute marijuana. Mexican produced marijuana is transported into the United States



across the southwest border while smaller quantities are often trafficked from Canada. Marijuana produced in Mexico is considered “low grade” and of lesser quality than marijuana produced in the United States and Canada. Warehouses along the southwest border are often used to store foreign-produced marijuana once it enters the U.S. The United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Office of Field Operations seized approximately 7,330 pounds of marijuana during fiscal year (FY) 2023 (October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023). In comparison, CBP seized approximately 157,797 pounds of marijuana in FY 2022 and approximately 319,447 pounds in FY 2021. As more states legalize marijuana for either medicinal or recreational purposes, there may be a correlation between this decline and the availability of marijuana grown domestically. Due to an increase in cocaine and fentanyl seizures, there may be a shift in attention towards drugs being transported across the southwest border as a cause of this reduction.

TRENDS

In Mississippi, marijuana will always remain one of the most accessible and commonly used illegal substances. Law enforcement has observed that the push to legalize marijuana for medical and recreational purposes has enhanced the supply of high-grade, or high-potency, products in both the states that pass this legislation and the states that end up being involved in the illegal drug trade. The legalization of medical marijuana in Mississippi is expected to cause a rise in abuse and the availability of diverted products within the state, in addition to the high potency marijuana that is illegally imported, distributed, and abused in the state from other states and foreign sources. Drug trafficking groups and lone criminals will look for ways to circumvent the Mississippi Medical Cannabis Program's standards and regulations to redirect the marijuana grown locally as soon as

it opens for business. Furthermore, it is quite likely that states that do not have legalized marijuana for either medicinal or recreational use will use Mississippi as a source state, taking advantage of the state's medical marijuana program. Other states that have medical cannabis programs have noticed this tendency as well. Following the program's implementation, there have been reports of an increase in marijuana seizures in Oklahoma and other states.

There will be more worries about THC potency and marijuana-infused items in Mississippi as the state's cannabis production grows. Great-quality cannabis, cannabis extracts, and fashionable vaping accessories will remain in great demand, drawing consumers from all over the state. Mississippi law enforcement will endeavor to reduce illicit marijuana-related activities based on insights from other states with comparable programs.

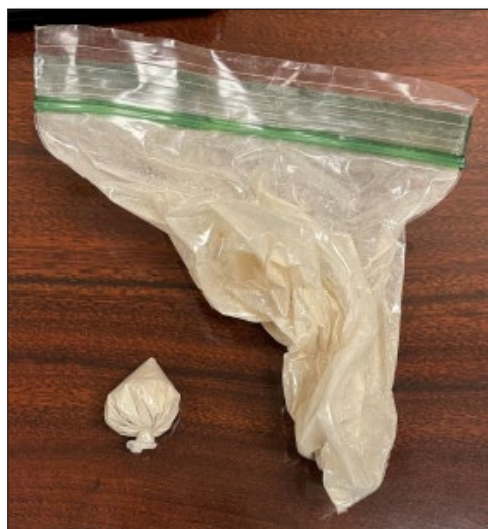
HEROIN

ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT

Heroin continues to be a threat in Mississippi and in surrounding states, but it is on a decline due to the availability of fentanyl. The price of heroin has decreased over the past several years as the purity of heroin has increased. Fentanyl is so cheaply manufactured that it is being used to cut heroin and other opioids to further the profits of drug dealers and trafficking organizations.

MBN Agents worked 22 cases involving heroin in 2023. This is a slight decrease from 2022 with 35 heroin cases. MBN seized over 95 grams of heroin in 2023 as compared to 12,881 grams of heroin in 2022, as compared to 267 grams and 20 milliliters seized in 2021 and 415 grams and 270 milliliters seized in 2020. During the past several years, brown heroin was the predominant form of heroin seen in Mississippi, whereas this trend continued in 2023.

MBN seized 75.72 grams of brown heroin, 19.36 grams of white heroin and zero cases involving black tar heroin. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the 2024 Gulf Coast HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey respondents said the availability of heroin, fentanyl and other opioids has increased or stayed the same in the past year. Additionally, almost all respondents said that the demand has either stayed the same or increased.



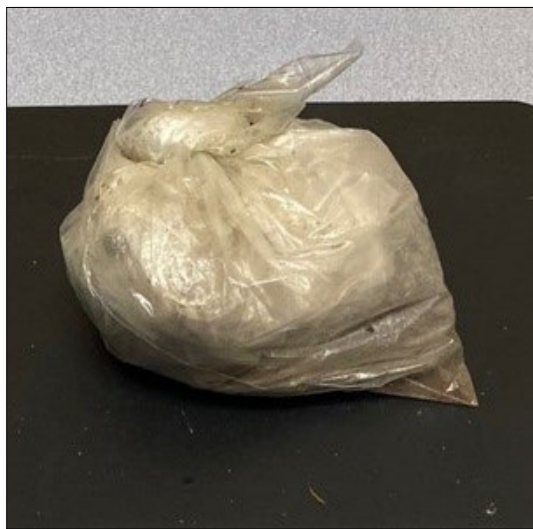
ABUSE

A rapid increase in the prescribing of opioids, started in the 1990s, led to an opioid epidemic. Cartels and some local drug dealers are cutting heroin with fentanyl and selling on the street to increase profits. There were at least 13 overdose deaths involving heroin in 2023. There are still overdose deaths that have not been reported, as well as crime lab results that have not been

completed, whereas this number is expected to rise. There were at least 34 overdose deaths involving heroin in 2022. There were at least 43 overdose deaths involving heroin in 2021.

The Mississippi Department of Mental Health reported that during the year 2023, 111 people were treated for heroin as a primary substance and 30 people were treated for heroin as a secondary substance. This is a decrease from the previous three years. In 2022, 166 people were treated for heroin as a primary substance as compared to 341 admissions in 2021 and 680 admissions in 2020.

The use of heroin appears to be decreasing, due in part to the increase in fentanyl availability. According to the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH), 111 people sought treatment for heroin as their primary substance from January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023. Heroin is also a factor in overdose deaths, whereas roughly 13 of the reported fatal drug overdose deaths involved heroin in 2023.

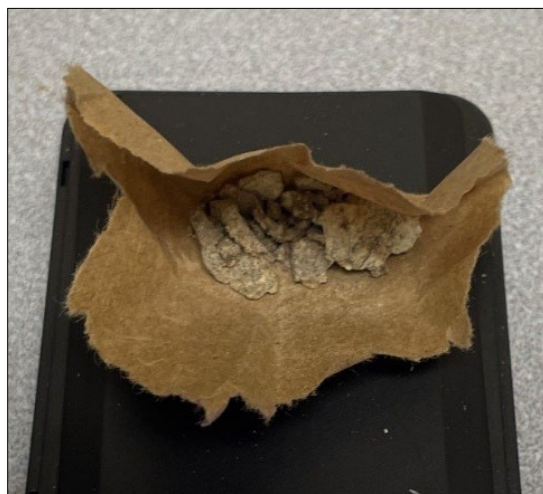


Though the number of cases initiated by MBN have fluctuated and decreased since 2022, it is important to note that of these cases, those individuals found to be in possession of heroin routinely had other controlled substance present, to include marijuana. 14 arrests were made by MBN of the 20 offenders for heroin related charges including sale and possession during 2023. The Mississippi Forensics Laboratory analyzed 13 cases of heroin during the calendar year for 2023, which may have been submitted for drug analysis prior to 2023.

PRODUCTION

Heroin is an opioid derived from morphine which comes from the poppy plant. Heroin generally comes in three different forms in the United States: powder, black tar, and pills. Powder heroin comes in brown and white. White powder heroin is usually the most desirable and originates in Southeast and Southwest Asia. Brown powder originates from Mexico and is darker in color and is usually less powerful. Black tar heroin, which has a black sticky appearance, almost exclusively comes from Mexico and South America. The third, least common form of heroin is pill form.

These are often sold in gel capsules or made with pill presses and mixed with other powders like powdered lactose, quinine, and baby laxative. Usually, these pills mimic an opiate pill. Pills are usually the cheapest and lowest-quality form of the drug.



TRANSPORTATION AND DISTRIBUTION



Mexican DTOs dominate the trafficking of Mexican black tar heroin and Mexican brown powder heroin. Most of the heroin distributed in the United States comes across the southwest border and is controlled by Mexican Cartels. White powder heroin originates in southeast and southwest Asia. Heroin is typically transported by private and commercial vehicles from Mexico, and then across the United States from California, and other southwestern states. Once in the U.S., heroin is transported into and through Mississippi via three major routes: Interstate 10, Interstate 20, and Interstate 55.

ASSOCIATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Heroin violence is minimal in Mississippi. However, gangs that are associated with selling small quantities of heroin, commit violent crimes including: assault, burglary, homicide, and robbery, to further their drug activities and to protect their turf. Most of the violent crime that occurs in Mississippi is not directly attributed directly to heroin use and distribution. It is not uncommon to locate multiple firearms during investigations associated with abusers to manufacturers to street-level dealers to traffickers. It is of great importance to repeat that local drug dealers and/or regional drug traffickers are dangerous because of the suspects' possible gang and drug cartel affiliations. Violence is prevalent when drug abusers are robbed while trying to purchase their drug of choice from drug dealers. Abusers are more closely associated with theft of items to be converted to cash to purchase these drugs.



POWDER AND CRACK COCAINE

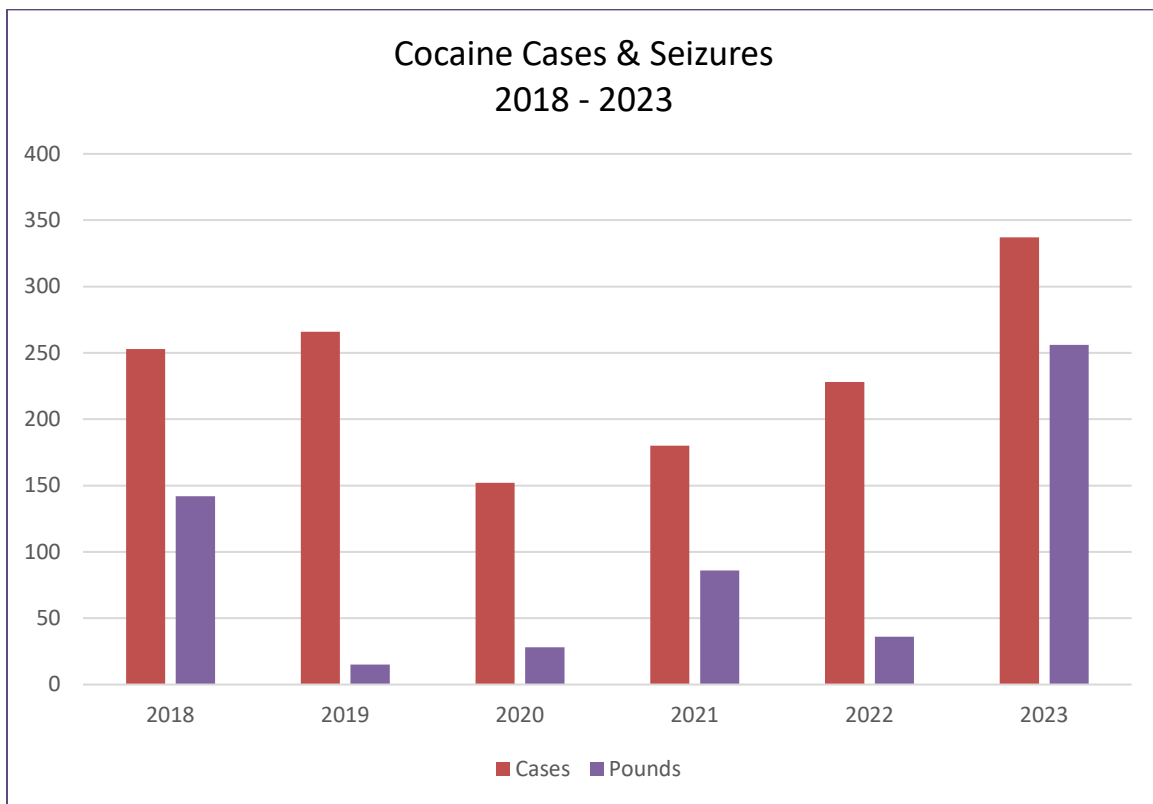
ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT

Mississippi has seen a shift in substance abuse trends, with cocaine use declining and opioid addiction rates increasing. However, compared to past assessments, Mississippi has seen a notable uptick in cocaine availability and local distribution, as evidenced by the increased number of investigations and seizures. While not as widespread as opioid misuse, cocaine's highly addictive nature and detrimental effects pose a significant public health threat in Mississippi. Its use and sale, both directly and indirectly, fuel criminal activity, particularly violent crimes, making it a dangerous and problematic issue for communities and law enforcement.

ABUSE

Cocaine trafficking and abuse transcend racial and socioeconomic boundaries, affecting individuals across all 82 counties in Mississippi. While crack cocaine remains prevalent among black communities in both urban and rural areas, cocaine use and misuse are not confined to any specific demographic group or geographic location.

In 2023, Mississippi saw an increase in the number of cocaine cases and cocaine seized compared to the past several years. In 2023, approximately 15% of all MBN drug cases initiated were for cocaine. There were 173 cases involving crack cocaine and 197 involving powder cocaine in 2023 compared to 88 cases involving crack cocaine and 155 cases involving powder cocaine in 2022, but this is the same in comparison for previous years in which there were 91 cases involving crack cocaine and 106 cases involving powder cocaine in 2021, 69 cases involving crack cocaine and 98 cases involving powder cocaine in 2020, 161 cases involving crack cocaine and 124 cases involving powder cocaine in 2019, and 140 cases involving crack cocaine and 135 cases involving powder cocaine 2018.



Mirroring cocaine cases, the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics reported a significant rise in cocaine seizures in 2023 compared to previous years. MBN agents purchased or seized approximately 265 pounds of cocaine during 2023, 34 pounds of cocaine during 2022, 58 pounds during 2021, 26 pounds during 2020 and 16 pounds in 2019, but in 2018, MBN seized or purchased 265 pounds of cocaine, the same amount as seized or purchased in 2023.



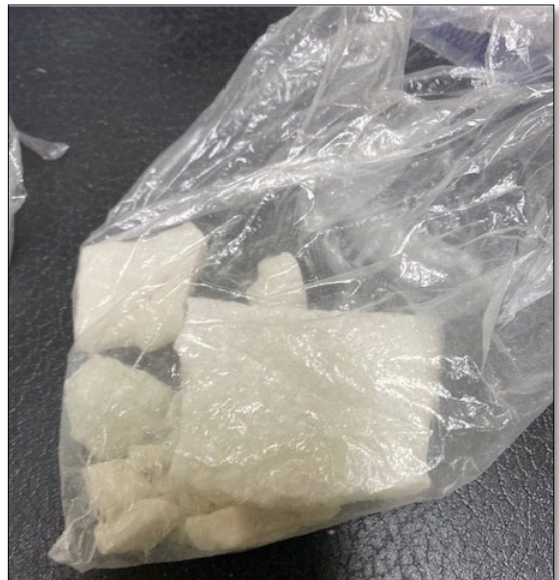
During 2023, MBN arrested a total of 129 individuals for sale and possession of cocaine. This was approximately 9% of all the drug related arrests by MBN in 2023. This is an increase compared to 108 arrests for cocaine in 2022, but a slight decrease when compared to 130 arrests for cocaine in 2021.

Treatment data from the Mississippi Department of Mental Health shows that 196 people were admitted for cocaine abuse as a primary substance in 2023 in comparison to 428 in 2022. This is less than 8% of the total number of individuals

served in 2023. In 2023, of the 196 people, 53% were between 46 and 65 years old, 39% were between 26 and 45 years old, and 6% were 66 years old or older.

AVAILABILITY

Most of the high-level (wholesale) crack cocaine trade in Mississippi is controlled by Black Americans, many of whom are members or affiliates of groups or gangs such as the “Vice Lords,” “Gangster Disciples,” “Wood Street Players,” the “Four Corner Hustlers,” and the “North End Boys.” Unique to the Mississippi Gulf Coast counties of Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson are the Vietnamese gangs involved in drug trafficking. These Vietnamese gangs, primarily operating in the Biloxi area, are heavily involved in the distribution of powder cocaine and the club drug ecstasy. The primary cocaine sources for these Vietnamese dealers are in Texas, Canada, and California. Vietnamese dealers are known to supply some of the Black American dealers with powder cocaine, which is then converted into crack cocaine for local sale.



Mexican traffickers are loosely organized in Mississippi but are believed to be associated with large Mexican DTOs operating in Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas. Overall, the Mexican population in Mississippi is steadily growing, and the presence of Mexican DTOs is increasing in rural agricultural areas of the state.

ASSOCIATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Crack and powder cocaine are significant problems for Mississippi's residents and law enforcement. Cocaine has been responsible for some violence and criminal activity in Mississippi. Cocaine abusers commit thefts and robberies to fund their addictions. Cocaine retail distributors have been known to carry weapons to protect their merchandise and to guard against potential robberies during cocaine transactions. Mexican cocaine DTOs are reputed to be among the most violent in the world.

PRODUCTION

Cocaine is produced almost exclusively in northern and western South America with Colombia as the main producer of illegal cocaine coming to the United States. Cocaine is neither cultivated nor produced in Mississippi. Some crack cocaine is transported to Mississippi from neighboring states; however, most crack cocaine is converted locally prior to retail distribution.

TRANSPORTATION

Most cocaine entering the United States, including Mississippi, originates from Mexico and transits through the Southwest Border in large quantities. Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) play a dominant role in this transportation. Within Mississippi, cocaine is primarily distributed by Mexican or Black American DTOs, often moving from source cities like Houston and Dallas in Texas via personal vehicles or commercial trucks along major highways like I-10, I-55, I-59, and I-20. Concealment methods vary, including hidden compartments in vehicles and electronically controlled false compartments. Additionally, personal carry-on luggage on buses and parcel services are used for transport. Mississippi distributors sometimes travel to Texas to obtain cocaine directly, but Mexican DTOs also utilize "mules" - individuals solely tasked with transporting the drugs - for delivery within the state.

In 2023, the Gulf Coast HIDTA/BLOC Watch Center reported a total of 423 pounds of cocaine seized during 13 traffic stops, primarily from local agency traffic stops on Mississippi interstates and state highways. There were 440 pounds of cocaine seized in 2022, 108 pounds seized in 2019 and 206 pounds in 2018. 70% of the interdiction stops reported by Gulf Coast HIDTA/BLOC Watch Center involving cocaine originated from Texas and 40% were destined for Alabama and 30% for Georgia.

According to the 2025 Gulf Coast HIDTA law enforcement survey, nearly half of the respondents (45%) reported that most of the cocaine they encountered originated in Texas. Mississippi and Louisiana were also identified as sources, with 25% and 18% of respondents, respectively, indicating cocaine coming from these states. Other contributing states included Tennessee, Georgia, Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, and Arizona.

DISTRIBUTION

Most of the local distribution in the state is controlled by miscellaneous independent drug trafficking organizations and is transported into the state in 2-kilogram to 10-kilogram quantities.

Loads of 20 kilograms and greater have been seized in the state, largely bound for Chicago or Atlanta. There is also widespread use of commercial courier services, such as commercial truck lines, independent truckers, and parcel service businesses, to transport drugs into the state and ship currency out. A bulk of Mississippi's cocaine supply comes in through Texas.

Once cocaine is brought into Mississippi, local suppliers tend to mix or "cut" the cocaine with a variety of substances to increase the amount of the cocaine, which in turn increases their profit. Cocaine dealers then distribute the "cut" cocaine in weights ranging from grams to ounces. Local dealers often convert powder cocaine into crack cocaine to be distributed by street-level dealers. Crack cocaine distributors are mostly Black Americans, while powder cocaine distributors include Caucasian Americans and other ethnic groups.

DIVERTED PHARMACEUTICALS

ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT

Pharmaceutical Drug Diversion, also referred to as Pharmaceutical Diversion, is when prescription medications are used by someone other than for whom they were intended or used in a manner other than prescribed. The use and abuse of diverted pharmaceuticals is a serious problem that affects the health, social and economic welfare of all communities, not only in Mississippi but all over the country. Typically, individuals seek to obtain more restricted medications, which are deemed as controlled substances as designated by DEA or state legislatures. These medications are scheduled, Schedule II through Schedule V Controlled Substances, due to the potential for abuse and accepted medical value which Schedule Controlled Substances have a higher risk for abuse. However, some prescription regulated, non-controlled medications are also sought by abusers and drug dealers due to the molecular structure of the medications in which they act like controlled substances. These medications are routinely the most prescribed and in high demand in both the legitimate and illicit markets, such as those that help with pain, anxiety, sleep, hyperactivity, and weight loss. The biggest threat lies in pharmaceuticals that are obtained by forgery and theft, whereas organized groups of individuals focus their efforts on specific drugs of choice to be further distributed. Again, most of the diversion cases that are being investigated are related to prescription forgeries. MBN, along with its law enforcement and regulatory partners, routinely investigate and affect arrests for prescription forgery and fraud, pharmaceutical theft, illegal possession of pharmaceutical medications, and the illicit distribution of these medications in Mississippi. Healthcare professionals, either as a criminal act or merely being less scrupulous, also impact the availability of these drugs to addicts and criminals. Law enforcement encounters all segments of society involved in pharmaceutical diversion activity: young people, older adults, and everyone in between. Furthermore, law enforcement continues to encounter the less fortunate to the wealthy,



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including lawyers, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, doctors, veterinarians, nurses, business professionals, homemakers, and others involved in some aspect of pharmaceutical diversion and distribution of prescription medications. Unlawful acquisition, theft, and distribution of pharmaceutical medications continue to be a primary drug threat in Mississippi.

ABUSE

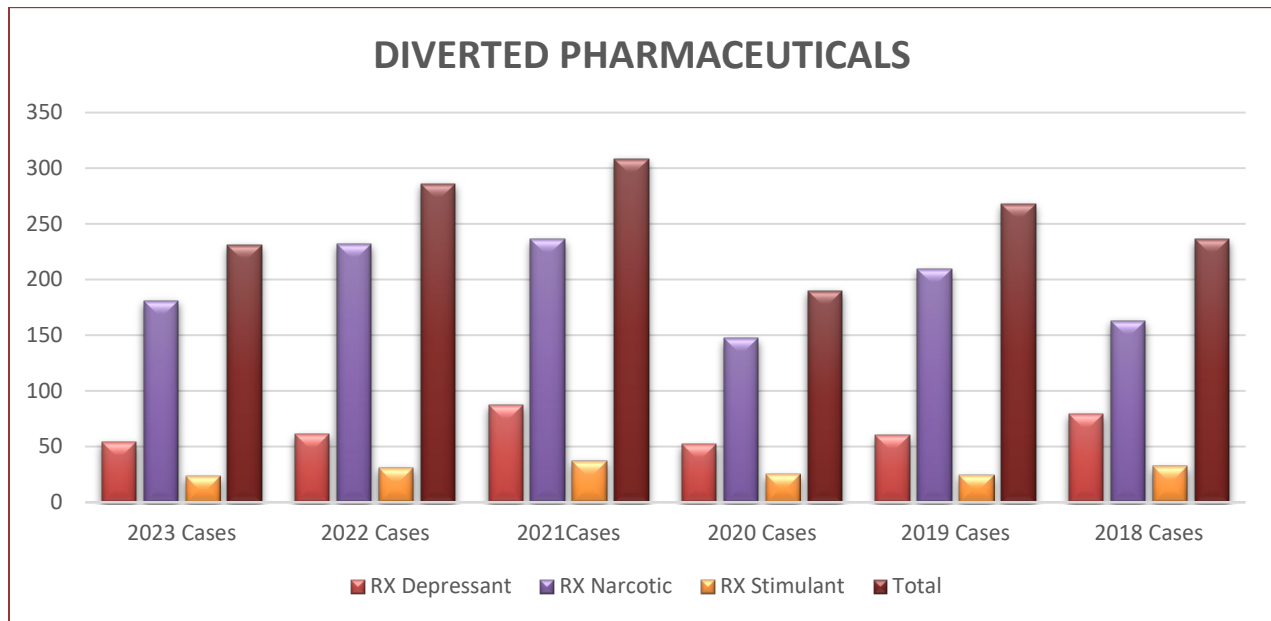
Prescription medication abuse can be best illustrated by the number of cases initiated involving diverted medications and/or even based on the Mississippi Prescription Monitoring Program's (MS PMP) provisional data. According to the MS PMP, data analysis identifies the "Top Ten" list of medications prescribed in the state during specified periods. An initial review of these sources indicates that the following classes, or categories, of drugs are the most prevalent, which includes narcotics, stimulants, and depressants. To unpack the categories before moving forward, there are essentially five classes of drugs which are narcotics, stimulants, depressants, hallucinogens, and cannabis. To regress, let's look at the three that are very applicable to diverted pharmaceuticals.

Drug users, abusers, and dealers seek the commonly prescribed pharmaceuticals due to familiarity with them such as the following medications: hydrocodone (trade, or brand, names include: Vicodin, Norco, Lortab, Lorcet, Hycodan, Vicoprofen, and others); oxycodone (trade, or brand, names include: Oxycontin, Roxicet, Roxicodone, Tylox, Percocet, and others); hydromorphone (trade, or brand, names include: Dilaudid, Exalgo, and others); tramadol (trade, or brand, names include: Ultram, Ultracet); methylphenidate (trade, or brand names include: Ritalin, Metadate CD, Concerta, and others); dextroamphetamine (trade, or brand, names include: Dexedrine, Adderall (combo with amphetamines), and others); amphetamine (trade, or brand, names include: Evekeo, Dynavel, and others); alprazolam (trade, or brand, names include: Xanax, Niravam, and others); clonazepam (trade, or brand, names include: Klonopin); zolpidem (trade, or brand, names include: Ambien, Zolpimist, and others); diazepam (trade, or brand, names include: Valium, Diastat, and others); and others. From that short, but familiar list, it is apparent that law enforcement in Mississippi must be concerned and actively investigate crimes of pharmaceutical diversion. Once considered "kiddy dope", pharmaceuticals encapsulated to include narcotics, depressants, and stimulants lead to the slippery slope of drug abuse that can lead to using harder drugs and death. For law enforcement, pharmaceutical diversion, specifically prescription forgery and pharmacy burglary cases seem to hit in droves and then become almost non-existent until the next spurt. However, diversion by healthcare professionals, to include writing illegal prescriptions, stealing from patients, or theft from stock bottles and dispensing machines, occurs in a steady flow, as opposed to ebbs and flows. Let's look at some numbers.

During 2023, MBN initiated 231 investigations involving prescription drugs. Of these, 181 cases involved prescription narcotics (ex. Hydrocodone), 54 cases involved prescription depressants (ex. alprazolam), and 23 involved prescription stimulants (ex. amphetamine). Similarly, MBN initiated 286 investigations involving prescription drugs in 2022. Of these, 232 cases involved prescription narcotics (ex. hydrocodone), 61 cases involved prescription depressants (ex. alprazolam), and 31 involved prescription stimulants (ex. amphetamine). MBN initiated 236 cases involving prescription narcotics, 87 cases involving prescription depressants, and 37 cases involving prescription stimulants in 2021, which tallies up to 308 investigations. MBN initiated 190 cases involving pharmaceuticals in 2020, 268 pharmaceutical-related cases in 2019, and 236 similar

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cases in 2018. Prescription forgeries, thefts, possession, and distribution are the primary means MBN initiates investigations involving diverted pharmaceuticals. These figures are consistent with the ebbs and flows that are typically observed with this activity.



The Mississippi Prescription Monitoring Program (MS PMP), which is housed under the Mississippi Board of Pharmacy, maintains a wealth of data as it relates to medications that are prescribed and dispensed. This valuable program provides a litmus test of current drugs that are being prescribed, and more than likely, being abused and diverted into the black market.

According to the Mississippi Prescription Monitoring Program (MS PMP), the “Top 10” medications prescribed in Mississippi during Calendar Year 2023 reflected a slight change from Calendar Year 2022. During Calendar Year 2023, Hydrocodone continues to be the most prescribed medication during this time followed by oxycodone and dextroamphetamine being ranked as third, a change from last year. Similarly, the “Top 10” medications prescribed in Mississippi during Calendar Year 2022 reflected a slight change from Calendar Year 2021. This list continued to be dominated by an assortment of narcotics, stimulants, and benzodiazepines. Hydrocodone continues to be the most prescribed medication during this time followed by dextroamphetamine and oxycodone being ranked as third, a change from last year. Dextroamphetamine and oxycodone swapped places in the “Top 10” in 2022 from 2021 based on the provisional data. During Calendar Year 2020, the top three medications in the “Top 10” included hydrocodone, oxycodone, and dextroamphetamine, respectively. Review the charts below for more information relating to the “Top 10” lists of prescribed controlled pharmaceuticals with prescription counts and quantities dispensed for calendar years 2018 through 2023.

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Calendar Year 2023

Active Ingredient	Prescription Count	Quantity
Hydrocodone	1,034,079	53,912,975
Oxycodone	514,065	32,157,987
Dextroamphetamine	513,139	26,631,071
Tramadol	366,031	20,283,058
Alprazolam	329,902	17,778,931
Zolpidem	299,688	10,090,528
Methylphenidate	265,061	10,668,242
Clonazepam	238,749	12,493,665
Pregabalin	204,551	15,848,557
Buprenorphine	195,796	7,548,294

Calendar Year 2022

Active Ingredient	Prescription Count	Quantity
Hydrocodone	1,063,300	55,708,793
Dextroamphetamine	499,385	25,337,303
Oxycodone	496,219	31,302,819
Tramadol	368,917	20,845,061
Alprazolam	336,198	18,210,316
Zolpidem	303,895	10,183,152
Methylphenidate	244,549	9,735,412
Clonazepam	244,296	12,918,034
Buprenorphine	195,385	7,211,626
Pregabalin	195,082	14,958,580

Calendar Year 2021

Active Ingredient	Prescription Count	Quantity
Hydrocodone	1,116,773	57,788,185
Oxycodone	484,635	30,378,841
Dextroamphetamine	446,923	23,015,630
Tramadol	391,033	22,057,134
Alprazolam	347,467	18,974,357
Zolpidem	315,415	10,426,725
Clonazepam	254,153	13,460,734
Methylphenidate	217,342	8,634,094
Buprenorphine	199,514	7,085,613
Amphetamine	192,578	6,117,278

Calendar Year 2020

Active Ingredient	Prescription Count	Quantity
Hydrocodone	1,126,739	59,312,395
Oxycodone	463,188	29,417,728
Dextroamphetamine	405,074	21,068,028
Tramadol	402,847	22,977,108
Alprazolam	359,901	19,598,290
Zolpidem	325,144	10,661,947
Clonazepam	260,609	13,756,350
Buprenorphine	211,365	6,740,051
Methylphenidate	205,357	8,388,694
Amphetamine	191,056	6,020,031

Provisional data for “Top 10” pharmaceutical medications by prescription count with dispensed quantities (in dosage units) for 2018-2023. Source: Mississippi Prescription Monitoring Program (MS PMP).

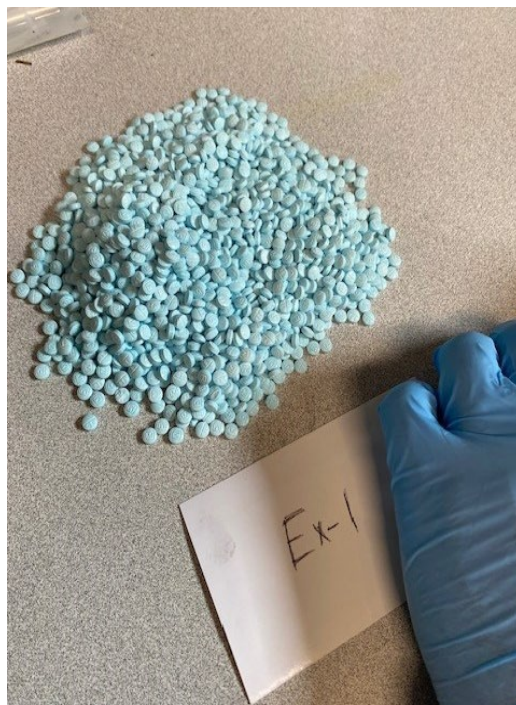
Medical providers in Mississippi are writing a lot of prescriptions for medications that are situated firmly in the most prescribed and abused categories across the nation. Americans have an affinity for pain medications, benzodiazepines, and stimulants. Although the number of prescriptions written for these medications is alarming when viewed in black and white, the quantities have shown a downward turn in almost, if not all categories, over the past several years. However, to put American’s belief that medications are needed and necessary to survive, the Minnesota Department of Health released an updated snapshot of our country’s use of pain medications in October 2022. This update reflected data that has been previously reported where the United States consumes over 80% of the world’s opioids, yet Americans only make up 4.4% of the world’s population. Additionally, the U.S. consumes approximately 99% of the world’s hydrocodone supply. These are facts and the prescribing information is consistent with this situation the U.S. faces with legal and illicit use of pharmaceutical medications.

MBN has found that some abusers were lawfully prescribed their medication or medications, of choice and had a desire to continue to feel the effects produced by this drug after the prescription was depleted. Other abusers were introduced to a drug by a family member or acquaintance and enjoyed the feeling that it caused. Furthermore, abusers continued to seek to find this medication from sources including licensed medical providers, prescription forgery activity, stealing from family and friend’s medicine cabinets, purchasing quantities of friends and acquaintances’ legitimate supply, and seeking an illicit source on the street. Like “street drugs”, abusers seek to

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obtain the elusive high that got them hooked in the beginning. As supply and demand impacts the availability of hydrocodone, oxycodone, alprazolam, and other pharmaceuticals, illicitly pressed pills, containing fentanyl and other substances that mimic or appear to be the desired pill, continue to be sold to users seeking particularly marked pharmaceutical medications. Unfortunately, these counterfeit pills can have lethal consequences. To combat this dangerous situation, MBN Agents continue to investigate the increasing numbers of diverted pharmaceuticals and overdose-related cases throughout the state. MBN maintains a valued partnership with DEA's Tactical Diversion Squad based in Jackson, Mississippi. Additionally, MBN and DEA seek to identify ways to increase our collective efforts to make a greater impact for all Mississippians.

As MBN continues to investigate allegations of wrongdoing as it pertains to pharmaceutical medications, MBN believes it is necessary to conduct training for increased awareness and expanded partnerships with local, state, and Federal law enforcement agencies. We continue to see the abuse of opioids and other pharmaceutically manufactured controlled substances diverted from their legitimate use and introduced into the black market across our state. This continued pattern forces law enforcement to focus and refine their training, policies, and procedures to proactively combat this dangerous situation of epic proportions. Additionally, the introduction of substances and continued use of known cutting agents is a significant concern for law enforcement, as well as overdose response strategy experts. However, the adulteration of medications with more deadly medications or other substances, such as fentanyl, xylazine, dimethyltryptamine, eutylone, bromazolam, and clonazepam, needs to be pressed into the minds of abusers and family members alike due to the potentially fatal outcome.



So, how do we identify the abuser or the drug dealer of pharmaceutical medications? As previously mentioned, abusers and drug dealers come from all segments of society. The abuser can look like anyone: a grandparent, a business professional, a student, a healthcare professional, and a professional athlete. Diverted pharmaceuticals are primarily obtained by three distinctly different types of criminals. The first criminal is an individual who has become addicted to the medication or medications and seeks to fraudulently obtain the medication with the primary objective being for personal use and self-medication. The second criminal is more likely to be an individual who seeks medication and sells part of the prescription to provide financial means to continue the addiction driven behavior. The third criminal is an individual, or a group of individuals, who illegally obtain specific medications that are in high demand in the black market for the sole purpose of further distributing and profiting from the criminal activity. The only difference between an abuser and a drug dealer based on a legal definition is one maintains exclusive possession and use of the drug and the other gives or sells all or any portion of these pharmaceutical medications to an individual who doesn't have a legal reason to possess them. MBN and other

law enforcement partners investigate complaints of diversion, charges are brought against those involved, arrests are made for the diversion and distribution of pharmaceuticals in Mississippi, and convictions are inevitable. Surprising to some, criminal fraud, theft, possession, and distribution charges and convictions are levied against individuals including lawyers, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, doctors, nurses, business professionals, homemakers, and others, who are not typically considered to be drug dealers. Let's examine the availability of pharmaceuticals as it relates to legitimate supply chains, as well as questionable acquisition practices and the black market.

AVAILABILITY

The availability of legitimate pharmaceutical medication is directly and indirectly correlated with the established supply chain, as well as mandates imposed by the United States Federal Government, particularly the Food and Drug Administration and the Drug Enforcement Administration. The manufacturers of controlled pharmaceuticals have many restrictions that impact the availability of these medications. For example, mandated manufacturer restrictions on quantities produced to the quantities that are allowed to be ordered by wholesale distributors and down to the percentage allowed to be allocated to retail and non-retail pharmacies impact every community. The continued shortage of prescription medications and high demand are forcing some addicts to turn to the street to obtain prescription medications, which have a higher probability of being laced with fentanyl or other substances and can be deadly. As routinely mentioned, the illicit use of legally available pharmaceutical medications obtained from pharmacies, such as those that help with pain, anxiety, sleep, hyperactivity, and weight loss, remains prevalent. To meet the illicit supply and demand, "lone wolf" individuals and organized groups of individuals seek to obtain these medications illegally for personal use and distribution. Some methods for obtaining pharmaceutical medications include: 1) legitimately obtaining prescriptions then diverting a portion for abuse or financial gain; 2) being given by, bought from, or taken from a friend or relative; 3) stealing medical providers' prescription pads; 4) producing counterfeit prescriptions; 5) purchasing from internet pharmacies; and 6) calling pharmacists impersonating medical providers for unlawful "orders". Some abusers and organized groups intentionally seek prescriptions from multiple medical providers, which is often referred to as "doctor shopping" or "doctor hopping", to obtain larger quantities of medications. This is routinely done by complaining of the same ailment in an effort to obtain duplicate prescriptions for personal use. Other abusers steal prescription blanks or fraudulently call-in prescriptions to secure quantities of desired medications to support their habit. Additionally, some physicians, and other medical providers, willingly help individuals abuse prescription drugs by writing prescriptions when there is no medical need, usually associated with some personal gain. MBN continues to see intrastate and interstate organized groups who utilize high quality fraudulently manufactured prescriptions to secure large quantities of pharmaceuticals to illegally distribute inside and outside of Mississippi's borders.

INTERNET PHARMACIES

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), purchasing pharmaceuticals from online pharmacies can have dangerous or deadly consequences. Some of the risks of purchasing from an online pharmacy are:

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- Receiving counterfeit, contaminated, expired or unsafe pharmaceuticals
- Putting yourself at risk for adverse side-effects, especially with other medications being taken
- Jeopardizing the security of your personal and financial information
- Opening yourself up to an overwhelming amount of spam phone calls and emails

An easy way to determine if the online pharmacy is high risk is if they:

- Do not require a prescription
- Do not provide contact information such as an address or phone number
- Advertise extremely low prices
- Fail to participate in any insurance plan, instead, requiring payment up front by credit card or cash on delivery (COD)
- Offer a limited selection of medications for sale, mostly controlled substances
- Are willing to deliver drugs to a post office box or other location to avoid detection by authorities
- Deceptively and inaccurately advise about the law and why it is permissible to obtain controlled pharmaceutical substances from foreign countries via the internet

MBN continues working alongside the DEA and other government entities to combat the illegal distribution of pharmaceuticals in the state from sources located within or outside of the United States' borders.

Alternate means of illegal acquisition aside from Internet Pharmacies includes acquisition from pharmacies and non-pharmacies in Mexico and southwest border towns. These options of obtaining desired pharmaceuticals are hazardous because the drug is possibly contaminated, expired, counterfeit, or otherwise unsafe. To drive that point home, it has been reported in the media that Mexican pharmacies are selling counterfeit pills in popular tourist destinations.

ASSOCIATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

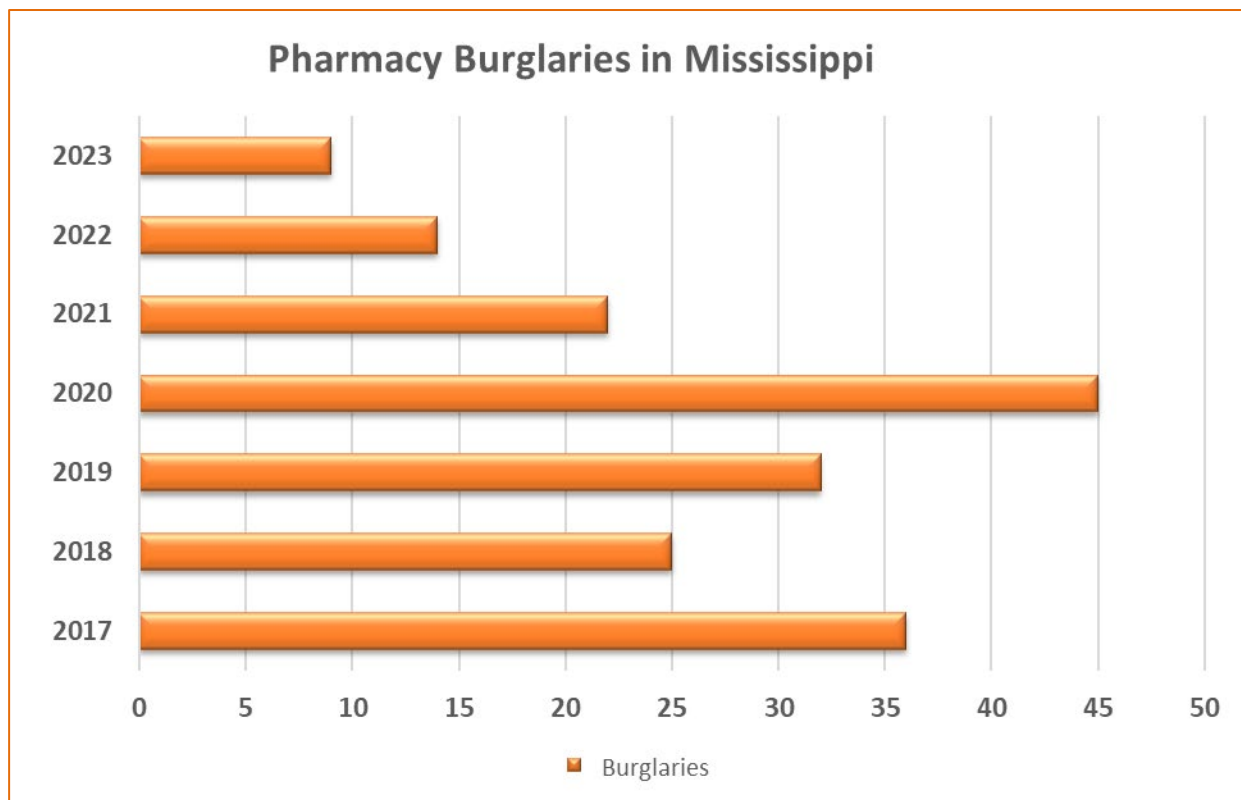
Pharmacy burglaries, armed robberies of pharmacies, healthcare fraud, and other criminal activity are directly associated with pharmaceutical drug diversion. The most common criminal activity is prescription forgery and fraud, as well as “doctor shopping”, whereas the medications are from pharmacies with legitimate supply chains with less overall risk. Due to the increase in technology and collective experience, criminals exploit the manners in which citizens legally get medicines from pharmacies from simple, time proven methods to manufacturing authentic-looking prescriptions. Both of which have been found to successfully achieve unlawful acquisitions. If medications are not obtained from the legitimate supply chain, what kind of pills are really being obtained? Are the pills stolen from pharmacies, the wholesale drug distributors, imported from non-U.S. regulated entities, or counterfeit?

Local independent dealers and abusers, who might be one and the same, commit crimes against property, such as burglary and theft. These individuals burglarize pharmacies and the homes of legitimate prescription holders to obtain drugs. Pharmacy employees also are known to steal products directly from the shelves, to self-medicate or provide to drug dealers. Intrastate and Interstate criminal groups are involved in drug-targeted burglaries. The threat of diverted pharmaceutical medication is enhanced through drug-targeted burglaries and robberies, which adds threats of violence and acts of violence into the mix. Let's review pharmacy burglaries and

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armed robberies, crimes against property.

Drug-targeted pharmacy burglaries, or break-ins, occur during hours when the business is closed, whereas criminals are anticipating a non-confrontational environment to take what is desired. In 2023, Nine (9) Mississippi pharmacies were targeted for burglary activity, including attempts, entry was not made without acquisition of medications, and successfully stealing medication. In 2022, 14 Mississippi pharmacies were burglarized, whereas two were attempts and entry was not made. Five (5) of them had successful entry but resulted in no loss of medications. This is a decrease from 2021 when 22 Mississippi pharmacies were burglarized, whereas nine (9) were documented as entries not made. Forty-five (45) drug-targeted pharmacy burglaries were reported in 2020, whereas fifteen were deemed as attempts only. Looking back a few more years, 32 pharmacies were reported to have been burglarized in 2019, 25 burglaries in 2018, and 36 burglaries in 2017. Drug-targeted pharmacy burglaries also ebb and flow with trends and drug availability. It may be a utilized option when street quantities are low and worth the risk to obtain any quantity of desirable medications. MBN continues to educate pharmacy employees about best practices to reduce pharmacy burglaries across the state.



We have explored crimes against property, so it would be shortsighted to overlook crimes against persons. Armed robbery of a pharmacy adds the threat and use of violence to a very volatile situation. Armed robberies are acts of desperation, which speaks for itself. It is important to

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recognize that drug-targeted armed robberies are rare, but they have and do occur in Mississippi. The continued shortage of prescription opioids, as well as, other prescription medications, such as stimulants, forces individuals to make decisions that impact the associated crime and violence as it pertains to pharmaceutical diversion. Pharmacy burglaries and armed robberies are expected to remain a means for abusers and local dealers to obtain quantities of these desired medications.



Furthermore, additional elements of crimes against persons essentially come in the form of assault and murder. The abuser can be a victim of these crimes and the perpetrator. Abusers who take pills that come from a plethora of potential sources and locales, or even engaged in criminal drug activity, could become the victim of the most serious crime, murder. Abusers, and dealers, who use deadly force against others can become the most notorious criminal, a murderer. Law enforcement officers, particularly MBN Agents, understand the danger of pharmaceutical diversion investigations and do not discount the abusers' and drug dealers' ability to use deadly force against those enforcing the law.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation of diverted pharmaceuticals is usually by privately owned vehicles and parcel service businesses. MBN continues to be involved in interdiction stop investigations involving diverted pharmaceuticals. In 2023, MBN conducted 674 interdiction stops, resulting in the seizure of diverted pharmaceuticals in 86 of them. During 2022, 156 out of 784 stops resulted in the seizure of diverted pharmaceuticals and similarly in 2021, MBN was involved in 733 interdiction stops resulting in the seizure of diverted pharmaceuticals in 141 of them. In 2020, 93 out of 587 interdiction stops resulted in the seizure of diverted pharmaceuticals, in 2019, 114 out of 667 and 2018, 114 out of 631. As with previous years, MBN intercepted numerous packages containing illegal pharmaceuticals from the United States Postal Service, FedEx, UPS, and other parcel services in 2023.

DISTRIBUTION

Most diverted pharmaceuticals in Mississippi continue to be for individual use, especially when involving self-medicating by healthcare professionals and others. Sometimes, these individuals sell medications that are obtained through legitimate and diverted means to supplement and/or finance their own illicit drug habit(s). While other individuals, deliberately and intentionally, sell quantities of lawfully obtained medications to supplement their income and “make ends meet” while living on a fixed income. Abusers also obtain pharmaceuticals through pain clinics throughout the state. While MBN is seeing a decrease in the number of general practitioners’ issuing opioid prescriptions, the prescriptions written by doctors at pain management clinics have increased substantially. Whether working traditional street drugs or pharmaceuticals, criminal investigators seek to identify and make prosecutable cases on those involved in illicit drug distribution. Sometimes, the sources of supply are those who are unsuspecting. Through available resources, such as the prescription monitoring program (PMP) and interactions with professionals in all aspects of the medical community, law enforcement officers identify problematic prescribers and the most desired drugs. An increasing number of bad actors are utilizing fraudulently manufactured prescriptions, identifying individuals who will accommodate unethical and illegal behavior, and profiting from the acquisition of increased quantities of legitimate medications from the regulated supply chain. The continued shortage of prescription opioids, as well as, other prescription medications, such as stimulants, is forcing some addicts to turn to the street to obtain prescription medications, which have a higher probability of being laced with fentanyl or other substances and can be deadly. Pharmaceutical diversion will continue, but the resolve of those who investigate these crimes doesn’t diminish. This statewide abuse of opioids and other pharmaceutically manufactured controlled substances and associated diversion activity has forced law enforcement throughout the state to revise their training, policies, and procedures to mitigate this deadly epidemic.

NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT

Terms like “herbal highs,” “herbal psychoactive substances,” “novel psychoactive substances,” “research chemicals,” “designer drugs,” and “NPS” have all been used to refer to substances that have been engineered to replicate the effects of illegal drugs that are regulated or scheduled. Out of all NPS, synthetic cathinones and synthetic cannabinoids are the most misused. Although these drugs are called “new,” it doesn’t mean they are newly produced; rather, it just means that they are being abused and found on the black market recently. Furthermore, the scientific and regulatory sectors have previously documented the occurrence of several NPS.

Apart from being extensively accessible on the internet, these chemicals can also be easily found in petrol stations, adult stores, and smoke shops. Several classes of NPS are commonly



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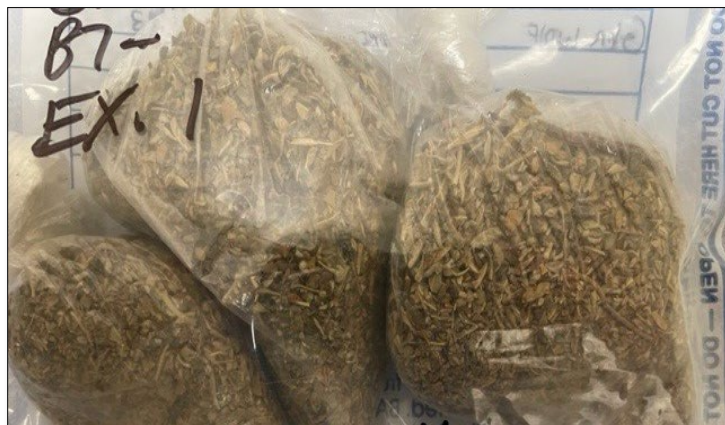
encountered, including synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic cathinones, MDMA (ecstasy), GHB, LSD, DMT, PCP, psilocybin (mushrooms), and emerging designer benzodiazepines.

ABUSE

Opioids, methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana attract a lot of attention from law enforcement and the media, but there are other deadly narcotics known as NPS that are equally addictive and detrimental to society. NPS are still widely used by people of all ages, but they are mostly promoted to young individuals and the homeless community. While some are used frequently by a select few users, new drugs frequently surface briefly before going away once again. Since drug tests frequently fail to detect all NPS, NPS may be especially appealing to drug users who are subject to drug screening, such as prisoners, parolees, and probationers. The ignorance of the composition and strength of the substance being eaten is one of the most concerning features of NPS.

SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS (SPICE)

Although they connect to the body's cannabinoid receptors, synthetic cannabinoids are not the same as the naturally occurring cannabinoids found in cannabis plants. There are several ways to use or consume synthetic cannabinoids, such as: 1) spraying or otherwise soaking into a plant or other base material before smoking it; 2) suspending it in an oil form to use in e-cigarettes; or 3) pressing it into fake prescription tablets. Sometimes, inaccurately, the mixture of substance, oil, or tablet is called synthetic marijuana.



MBN initiated 13 cases involving synthetic cannabinoids in 2023, which resulted in 6 arrests and the seizure of 6,958 containers, 7,108 grams, and 210 milliliters. In contrast, in 2022, MBN initiated 17 cases involving synthetic cannabinoids, 3 people were arrested, and 142 containers, 281 grams, 266 milliliters, and 2 dosage units of the drug were seized. In 2021, MBN initiated 44 cases, made 4 arrests, and seized 407 containers, 1644 grams, 1418 milliliters and 320 dosage units of the substance.

MDMA (ECSTASY)

MDMA, often known as ecstasy or 3,4-methyldioxymethamphetamine, is a psychoactive substance that is used recreationally. It produces feelings of enhanced energy, pleasure, emotional warmth, and skewed sensory and temporal perception. Chemically, it is comparable to both stimulants and hallucinogens. Although it was first well-liked by nightclub goers and "raves," the substance is now more widely used and goes by the names Molly and Ecstasy.



In 2023, there were 123 occurrences that resulted in 52 arrests and the seizure of roughly 1,540 grams and 14,287 dosage units of MDMA. This is comparable to data from 2022, when MBN initiated 74 cases that led to 43 arrests and the seizure of 3,057 grams and roughly 15,277 dosage units of MDMA. In 2021, there were 65 cases initiated, 51 arrests, and the seizure of 3,386 grams and about 23,499 dosage units.

OTHER HALLUCINOGENS

In 2023, MBN initiated 27 cases involving hallucinogens and seized 355 pounds of mostly psilocybin mushrooms, 82 dosage units of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and 2 milliliters of phencyclidine (PCP). Compared to 9 in 2022 and 7 in 2021, there has been a significant increase in cases.

Acid, commonly known as lysergic acid diethylamide, or LSD, is a psychedelic substance that is well-known for its hallucinogenic effects. These effects can include altered awareness of one's surroundings, thoughts, and moods, as well as real feeling but unreal sensations and visuals. LSD is primarily offered on the black market as a recreational drug in the form of tiny tablets known as "microdots," capsules, or squares of gelatin called "windowpanes." Occasionally, it is mixed with absorbent paper and then cut into tiny pieces that are adorned with patterns or animated figures, dubbed "loony toons." LSD can be injected, however, it is usually eaten or held under the tongue.

One member of a polyphyletic group of mushrooms that can contain both psilocin and other psychedelic substances is the psilocybin mushroom. Mushrooms can cause euphoria, altered thought processes, closed and open-eye images, synesthesia, an altered sense of time, and spiritual experiences when taken or brewed into a tea.

AVAILABILITY

Although the internet is the most popular source for NPS, they can also be easily found on college campuses, in nightclubs, and at rave parties—especially when MDMA and LSD are involved. Individuals continue to seek NPS in stores offering adult products, smoking and drug supplies, and in gas stations and convenience stores. This poses a risk because these substances are unregulated and products that appear to be identical but are sold in stores may contain entirely different amounts of cannabinoids, cathinones, or other substances, or they may be contaminated with other substances like fentanyl.

ASSOCIATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Nationwide overdose deaths and violent incidents have been connected to the use of synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones. The use of steroids, PCP, bath salts, and other synthetic drugs has also been connected to violence. GHB can cause victims to lose their memories, get confused, or become amnesic, which can make it harder to prosecute them. Sales have shifted closer to the streets as law enforcement and policymakers have started to target shops selling synthetic

cannabis.

PRODUCTION

NPS are synthetic substances that are designed to replicate the effects of other illegal drugs. They are generated from chemicals and do not require any plant material. A lack of standards means that consumers frequently aren't sure what they're getting. For instance, synthetic cannabis, which is frequently imported from China, is marketed in vibrant packaging meant to bolster the notion that it is "safe" to consume. Despite being created in 1912 by a German pharmaceutical business, MDMA's primary source of supply is currently less clear. It takes laboratory equipment and knowledge of organic chemistry to manufacture LSD. NPS that has already been synthesized is widely accessible in China and other Asian and European nations. It is frequently sent by mail carriers for domestic processing and packaging.

TRANSPORTATION

Privately owned cars and online parcel delivery services like the United States Postal Service (USPS), Federal Express (FedEx), and United Parcel Service (UPS) are typically used for the transportation of these different hallucinogens and synthetics.

DISTRIBUTION

In addition to being widely accessible online, gas stations and smoke shops are selling an increasing amount of NPS. Synthetic cannabis is now widely available for purchase as vape oils or legal e-liquids. The sales of these e-liquids are moving toward street sales as law enforcement pursues these kinds of stores. The distribution of MDMA and LSD usually takes place at private events and in the vicinity of college and high school campuses. These illegal narcotics are also distributed by certain Mississippi street gang members.

V. DRUG OVERDOSES

The Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated, Section 41-29-159 (2012), requires that healthcare providers, coroners, and law enforcement officers notify the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics of all drug overdose deaths or suspected drug overdose deaths within 24 hours. Similarly, Section 41-61-59 (2012) mandates that MBN is informed of deaths that are caused by drug overdose or believed to be caused by drug overdose.

2023 – 395 cases were reported involving 395 individuals experiencing fatal overdoses.

2022 – 395 cases were reported involving 395 individuals experiencing fatal overdoses.

2021 - 493 cases were reported involving 496 individuals experiencing fatal overdoses.

2020 - 531 cases were reported involving 533 individuals experiencing fatal overdoses.

(Intelligence Division note: Although many coroners are reporting these deaths since the passage of this bill, there is no penalty for failure to report an overdose. Therefore, these figures may not be an accurate reflection of the actual number of overdose deaths in the State.)

MBN speculates that the distribution of NARCAN® (naloxone HCl) to first responders has resulted in a reduction of deaths secondary to drug (opiates) overdoses in our state. NARCAN® (naloxone HCl) Nasal Spray is used for the treatment of an opioid emergency or a possible opioid overdose with signs of breathing problems and severe sleepiness or not being able to respond. These statistics by no means represent the alarming numbers of non-fatal overdose cases not reported to MBN that, by speculation, could be in the thousands.

The misuse of and addiction to opioids, including prescription pain relievers, heroin, and synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, is a serious national crisis that affects public health as well as social and economic welfare. Pew, www.pewtrusts.org, estimated in August 2021 that the total "economic burden" of opioid overdose, misuse, and dependence in the United States costs \$141.8 billion a year, including the costs of healthcare, lost productivity, addiction treatment, and criminal justice involvement.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the opioid overdose epidemic has occurred in three waves. They identify Wave One as an increase in prescription opioid overdose deaths in 1999. Wave Two began in 2010, with an increase in heroin overdose deaths. Wave Three began in 2013, with an increase in synthetic overdose deaths. Some say the United States is still in Wave Three and that Wave Four is just around the corner. Fentanyl, fentanyl analogues, and non-opioid synthetic substances continue to make their way into the United States. Furthermore, municipal, state, and federal analyses are revealing new classifications of synthetic chemicals. Some of these drugs are synthetic benzodiazepines. Additionally, counterfeit substances continue to plague our communities, whereas medications that are not approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration for medical use in this country are being consumed by Americans on American soil.

VI. ILLICIT FINANCE

The 2022 National Strategy for combatting Terrorist and Other Illicit Financing (2022 Strategy), released by the U.S. Department of Treasury in 2022, outlines steps to fortify the country's anti-money laundering/counter the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) efforts and promote transparency in the financial system. "There are similarities between illicit finance and Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs). Both define the flow of money across borders that is obtained, transferred, or spent unlawfully. It makes it possible for terrorists and criminals to benefit from the most horrific acts and atrocities, which poses a serious danger to the security and prosperity of all nations.

The Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes stated that Russia's war on Ukraine, which has been fueled by decades of Russian corruption, is a prime example of that. Money laundering, bribery, tax evasion, and trade mispricing are some of the techniques and behaviors associated with illicit finance. In certain nations, poorly administered

trade zones and anonymously held legal organizations support it. The global financial system and a nation's ability to maintain economic stability are both significantly impacted by illicit finance.

FINANCE/MONEY LAUNDERING

The act of transferring substantial sums of money obtained through illicit activities into accounts that seem to originate from legitimate sources is known as money laundering. Every year, almost \$300 billion is laundered in the United States. Nevertheless, that figure rises to a global total of \$800 billion to \$2 trillion. Money laundering costs the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between 2% and 5% annually. GDP is the total monetary value of all completed products and services produced in a nation over a given time. It offers a country's economic perspective, which is useful for calculating an economy's size and growth rate. Despite not being the world leader in money laundering, the United States accounts for 15% to 38% of all money laundered worldwide.

Although money laundering can occur in three steps, the most popular method is called "smurfing" or "structuring," which entails dividing large sums of cash into smaller installments. Large cash deposits, transactions, and any other questionable activity must be reported by banks. These three processes are included in the money laundering process. The "dirty money" is inserted into the reputable financial system through placement. Layering uses a sequence of transactions and bookkeeping techniques to hide the source of the funds. The money that has been laundered in Integration is taken out of the authorized account and spent for any reason.

In 2023, MBN conducted investigations that resulted in the seizure of illicit funds during criminal interdiction stops and other investigations from subjects of drug distribution investigations to the sum of \$475,401.00 in MBN initiated investigations. MBN Agents assisted other agencies with the seizure of approximately \$1,339,422.00. \$1,780.00 in buy money was recovered in a search warrant. According to Gulf Coast HIDTA/BLOC data, participating agencies seized approximately \$3,340,761.00 from drug violators in Mississippi for a combined total of \$5,157,364.00. The seizure of these funds has greatly impacted the drug trade within the state.

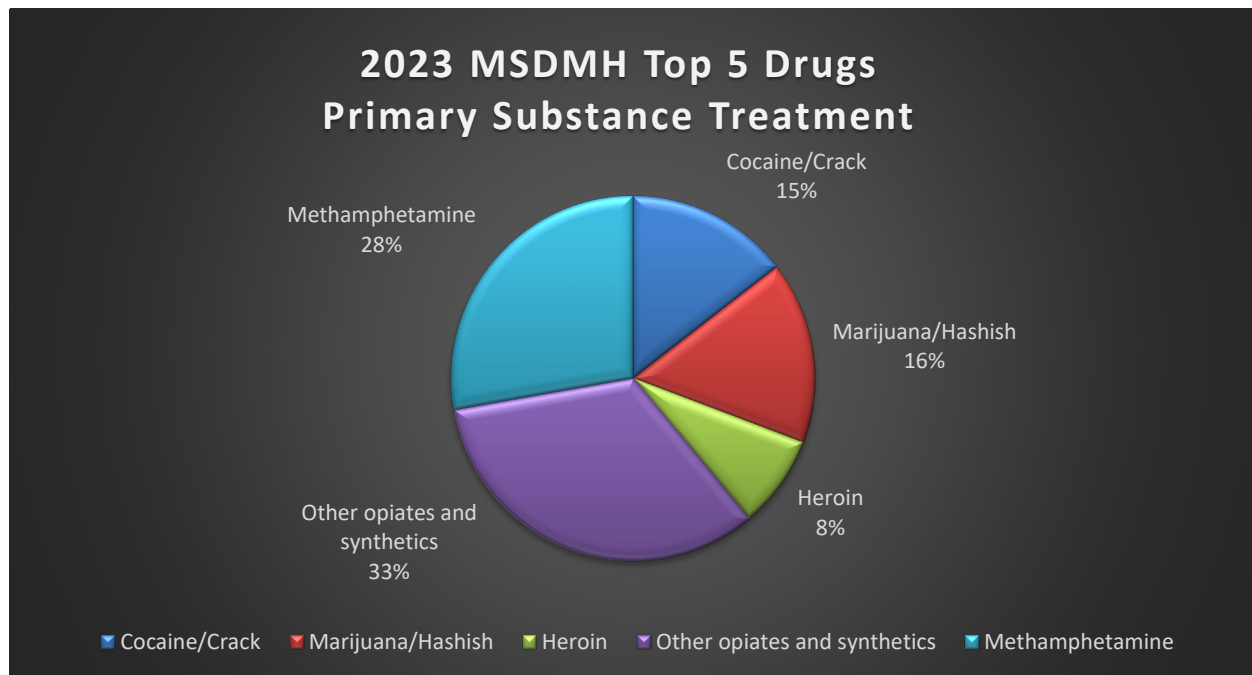
Law enforcement utilizes the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FINCEN) to assist in identifying assets of drug dealers. The Suspicious Activity Report (SAR), Currency Transaction Report (CTR) and Currency Transaction Report for Casinos (CTR-C) are the most utilized by law enforcement. Although FINCEN helps address the difficulties of tracking wired monies and/or monies moved via financial institution, the bulk movement of currency out of the United States and into transit and source countries remains a problem for law enforcement.

VII. TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

The devastating consequences of drug use know no geographic, economic, social, or ethnic boundaries. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people around the globe – rich, poor, educated, illiterate, male, female, and even young children – die from substance use disorders, and many are victims of drug-fueled violence (state.gov). The Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics (MBN) has played a vital role in the defense against the abuse, misuse, sale, and trafficking of controlled

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substances since 1971. During the “war on drug,” MBN has taken a collaborative approach to enhance public health and public safety by establishing and expanding purposeful partnerships with other disciplines such as the Mississippi Public Health Institute, the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, the Mississippi State Department of Health, and other entities, both public and private. These agencies and entities work together to build a focus on treatment programs and initiatives that enhance the lives of those who need treatment for substance abuse or other medical issues and the prevention of drug abuse and misuse while promoting public awareness and education. Mississippi can provide treatment and prevention relating to substance abuse, mental health, or other medical issues as rapidly as possible through collaborative efforts of entities such as these.



TREATMENT

The Mississippi Department of Health administers the public system of substance use assessment, referral, prevention, treatment, and recovery support services for individuals in Mississippi. Service providers include state-operated programs, regional Community Mental Health Centers, and other non-profit community-based programs. The overall goal of the state’s substance use disorder service system is to provide quality care within a continuum of accessible, community-based services, including prevention, outpatient, withdrawal management, intensive outpatient, high-intensity and low-intensity residential treatment, opioid treatment services and recovery support” (dmh.ms.gov). Inpatient chemical dependency units for female inpatients (25 beds) are located at the Mississippi State Hospital (msh.state.ms.us) and for male inpatients (50 beds) are located at the East Mississippi State Hospital (emsh.ms.gov).

These Community Mental Health Centers operate substance use services by providing the following (Department of Mental Health Information Booklet):

- Prevention Services

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- Employee Assistance Programs
- Individual, Group, and Family Counseling
- Recovery Support Services
- Primary Residential Services (Including Withdrawal Management)
- Transitional Residential Services
- Vocational Counseling
- Mobile Crisis Response Teams

The Substance Use Disorder Services applies person-centered recovery for everyone. This program uses the combination of Dialectical Behavior Therapy and the 12 Step Recovery Model for patients to develop a relapse prevention plan, coping skills, and social support.

Mobile Crisis Response Teams

REGION 2 866-837-7521	REGION 3 866-255-9986	REGION 4 888-287-4443
REGION 6 866-453-6216	REGION 7 866-866-6505	REGION 8 877-657-4098
REGION 9 601-955-6381	REGION 10 800-803-0245	REGION 12 (NORTH TEAM) 888-330-7772 Covington, Forrest, Greene, Jeff Davis, Jones, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Wayne
REGION 12 (WEST TEAM) 877-353-8689 Amite, Franklin, Lawrence, Pike, Walthall	REGION 12 (COAST TEAM) 800-681-0798 Hancock, Harrison, Stone	REGION 14 866-497-0690
REGION 15 888-558-2077 Warren, Yazoo	REGION 15 601-437-8185 Claiborne County	REGION 15 601-786-8091 Jefferson County
REGION 15 601-446-6634 Adams County	REGION 15 601-890-5440 Wilkinson County	



Funded by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and provided by the Community Mental Health Centers, the Mobile Crisis Response Teams work closely with law enforcement to provide guidance and support to both children and adults experiencing a mental health crisis. According to the Mississippi Department of Mental Health's website (dmh.ms.gov), "a Mobile Crisis Response Teams can help people who are experiencing a situation where the person's behavioral health needs exceed the person's resources to effectively handle the circumstances. Teams consist of

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mental health professionals who can provide support to people experiencing a mental health, alcohol and drug, or intellectual and development disabilities crisis.” More information regarding the Mobile Crisis Response Team is available online (mentalhealthms.com/mobile-crisis-response-teams) or by calling the toll-free numbers listed.

The Mississippi State Department of Health has a program that focuses specifically on opioid and prescription drug abuse. According to the Mississippi State Department of Health website (msdh.ms.gov), “the Opioid and Substance Use Disorder Program works to prevent overdose deaths in Mississippi and end the drug overdose epidemic in the state.”

Naloxone, aka Narcan, when given in time to those suffering from an opioid overdose, can reverse the effects of drugs, including heroin, fentanyl, and other prescription opioid medications. Naloxone is available upon request at pharmacies and through the Mississippi State Department of Health. Individuals can request Naloxone kits at no cost and learn more about this life-saving medication by visiting the Mississippi Public Health Institute website (odfree.org).



The State of Mississippi not only has public and private in-patient and out-patient treatment programs, but it also has drug intervention court programs. According to the State of Mississippi Administrative Office of Courts website, “an intervention court is a special court given the responsibility to handle cases involving drug-using offenders through comprehensive supervision, drug testing, treatment services and immediate sanctions and incentives” (courts.ms.gov). Everyone enrolled in the intervention courts must submit to and successfully complete long-term treatment and counseling, sanctions, incentives, and frequent court appearances. Intervention courts benefit graduates not only by resulting in charges being dismissed, charges reduced, lesser penalties, or a combination of these, but also by rehabilitating them, allowing them to obtain the means to restore their lives (courts.ms.gov).



The Intervention Court model consists of the key components listed below (courts.ms.gov).

- Incorporating drug testing into case processing.
- Creating a non-adversarial relationship between the defendant and the court.
- Identifying defendants in need of treatment and referring them to treatment as soon as possible after arrest.
- Providing access to a continuum of treatment and rehabilitation services.
- Monitoring abstinence through frequent, mandatory drug testing.
- Establishing a coordinated strategy to govern Intervention Court responses to participants' compliance.

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- Maintaining judicial interaction with each Intervention Court participant.
- Monitoring and evaluating program goals and gauging their effectiveness.
- Continuing interdisciplinary education to promote effective Intervention Court planning, implementation, and operations.
- Forging partnerships among Intervention Courts, public agencies, and community-based organizations to generate local support and enhance Intervention Court effectiveness.

The Mississippi Administration of Courts recently reported 41 drug courts. This includes 23 adult felony drug courts, 4 adult misdemeanor drug courts, 14 juvenile drug courts, and 4 family drug courts.

PREVENTION

Created by a collaboration between the Mississippi State Department of Health, the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, the Mississippi Public Health Initiative, the Mississippi Board of Pharmacy, and the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, the Mississippi Opioid and Heroin Data Collaborative delivers a wide range of data in a collaborative effort to provide insight to Mississippi's opioid and heroin abuse problem.

“This report summarizes data on opioid prescriptions dispensed in Mississippi, fatal drug overdoses reported to the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, naloxone administrations by Emergency Medical Services for suspected overdoses, drug-related arrests, and treatment services for opioid-related disorders within facilities certified by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health” (msdh.ms.gov; Provisional Data Report). “The goal of this report is to provide timely and accurate information to the public and policy makers on key indicators measuring the scope of the opioid epidemic in Mississippi” (msdh.ms.gov; Provisional Data Report).



Mississippi Prescription Monitoring Program

The Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP), also known as the Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP), continues to prevent drug abuse in

Mississippi. This program “is an electronic database that tracks controlled substance prescriptions in a state. PDMPs can provide health authorities timely information about prescribing and patient behaviors that contribute to the epidemic and facilitate a nimble and targeted response” (cdc.gov).

“The Mississippi Prescription Monitoring Program (MS PMP) is an electronic tracking program managed by the Mississippi Board of Pharmacy to aid practitioners and dispensers in providing proper pharmaceutical care relating to controlled substances” (pmp.mbp.ms.gov). Due to the legalization of medicinal marijuana in the State of Mississippi, healthcare providers are required

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to use the MS PMP to report medical cannabis every 24 hours (pmp.mbp.ms.gov; Data Submission Guide for Medical Cannabis Dispensers).

Grant funding by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and the Mississippi Partnership Projects allows access and the utilization of prescription drop boxes in the State of Mississippi. These drop boxes located throughout the state have been made available for citizens to dispose of expired or unwanted prescriptions. According to the Mississippi Department of Public Safety website, there are 36 drop boxes located at the state agencies listed below (dps.ms.gov).

- Bay St. Louis Police Department
- Biloxi Police Department
- Brandon Police Department
- Byram Police Department
- Columbus Police Department
- D'Iberville Police Department
- Gulfport Police Department
- Jackson Police Department – JPD Headquarters
- Jackson Police Department – Precinct 1
- Jackson Police Department – Precinct 2
- Jackson Police Department – Precinct 3
- Jackson Police Department – Precinct 4
- Kemper County School District
- Long Beach Police Department
- Louisville Police Department
- McComb Police Department
- MHP – Batesville
- MHP – Biloxi
- MHP – Brookhaven
- MHP – Hattiesburg
- MHP – Jackson I-55
- MHP – Meridian
- MHP – Pearl
- MHP – Starkville
- MHP – Tupelo
- Moss Point Police Department
- MSU Campus Police Department
- Ocean Springs Police Department
- Oxford Police Department
- Pascagoula Police Department
- Pass Christian Police Department
- Pearl Police Department
- Ridgeland Police Department
- Smith County Sheriff's Department
- Vicksburg Police Department
- Waveland Police Department

In conjunction with treatment initiatives and collaborative working groups, MBN seeks to create and expand programs that are focused on prevention. Some of the initiatives include the Drug Demand Reduction Program, which aims to promote public awareness and education across the state. This program also engages in working group meetings on a bi-weekly basis to discuss current issues, advances, and ideas to improve and expand prevention and treatment opportunities.

As it has been stated before, societal problems cannot be addressed merely by enforcement efforts by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement is only one approach to societal issues. A collaborative approach through joining law enforcement, public health, mental health, treatment, and other professions together to share data across this variety of disciplines is being practiced in Mississippi by public and private entities. These collaborative efforts allow for

timely and relevant information to be shared across multiple disciplines and found by the public in multiple formats, to include being found through queries of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, Mississippi State Department of Health, and partnerships.

VIII. STREET AND OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE GANGS



STREET GANGS

Mississippi's legal definition of a "street gang," "gang," "organized gang," or "criminal street gang" is defined as any combination, confederation, alliance, network, conspiracy, understanding, or other similar conjoining, in law or in fact, of three (3) or more persons with an established hierarchy that, through its membership or through the agency of any member, engages in felonious criminal activity.

Mississippi Code Title 97-44-3 Definitions states: For this purposes, it shall not be necessary to show that a particular conspiracy, combination or conjoining of persons possesses, acknowledges or is known by any common name, insignia, flag, means of recognition, secret signal or code, creed, belief, structure, leadership or command structure, method of operation or criminal enterprise, concentration or specialty, membership, age or other qualifications, initiation rites, geographical or territorial situs or boundary or location, or other unifying mark, manner, protocol or method of expressing or indicating membership when the conspiracy's existence, in law or in fact, can be demonstrated by a preponderance of the competent evidence.

"Street gang member" or "gang member" means any person who actually and in fact belongs to a gang, and any person who knowingly acts in the capacity of an agent for or accessory to, or is

legally accountable for, or voluntarily associates himself with a gang-related criminal activity, whether in a preparatory, executory or cover-up phase of any activity, or who knowingly performs, aids or abets any such activity.

(d) "Street gang related" or "gang-related" means any criminal activity, enterprise, pursuit or undertaking directed by, ordered by, authorized by, consented to, agreed to, requested by, acquiesced in, or ratified by any gang leader, officer or governing or policymaking person or authority, or by any agent, representative or deputy of any such officer, person or authority:

With intent to increase the gang's size, membership, prestige, dominance or control in any geographical area; or

(ii) With intent to exact revenge or retribution for the gang or any member of the gang; or

(iii) With intent to provide the gang with any advantage in, or any control or dominance over, any criminal market sector, including but not limited to the unlawful manufacture, delivery, possession or sale of controlled substances; arson; traffic in stolen property or stolen credit cards; traffic in prostitution, obscenity or pornography; or that involves robbery, armed robbery, burglary or larceny; or

(iv) With intent to obstruct justice, or intimidate or eliminate any witness against the gang or any member of the gang; or

(v) With intent to otherwise, directly or indirectly, cause any benefit, aggrandizement, gain, profit or other advantage whatsoever to or for the gang, its reputation, influence or membership.

This sets the street gangs apart from any other type of group. Street gangs are turf oriented and will go to great lengths to protect their territory. Experts say teens joining young is all too common; gangs recruit children as young as eight years old. Social media and the use of apps continue to be primary means of communication, promotion, and conducting business. Gangs focus on integration and acceptance in the community. Based on conversations among law enforcement officers, juvenile cliques that identify themselves as a group or gang are a serious problem in Mississippi, and a variety of crimes can be attributed to these groups. It is important to recognize that neighborhood-based gangs pose the highest rate of significant threat for violent crimes in the United States, versus national-level street gangs, prison gangs, and outlaw motorcycle gangs, according to www.dosomething.org.

The long term, loosely organized street gangs threaten to increase their role in trafficking drugs, particularly involving the smuggling of drugs into the United States, and develop relationships with international criminal organizations and drug-trafficking organizations (DTOs).

The formation of neighborhood hybrid gangs and cliques contributes to the large variation of gang subsets within the state. Hybrid gangs are new youth gangs engaged in illegal activities. Such gangs are found throughout the United States. Unlike traditional gangs based on race or neighborhood loyalty, the new generations of gangsters are devoted to making money through illegal activities such as drugs, robbery, and prostitution.

Hybrid gang culture is characterized by mixed racial and ethnic participation within a single gang, participation in multiple gangs by a single individual, vague rules and codes of conduct for gang members, the use of symbols and colors from multiple gangs, collaboration by rival gangs in criminal activities, and the merger of smaller gangs into larger ones. (US Dept of Justice; Office of Justice Programs)

Hybrid gangs are characterized by their young, multi-ethnic, mixed-gender demographics, fluid gang affiliation and their use of social media. Members are typically between 14 and 19 years old. Groups of youth started getting together “and essentially creating their own gang monikers” to commit crimes like shoplifting, armed robbery, aggravated assault, drive-by shootings and others. Hybrid gangs are difficult to track, identify, and target as they are transient and continuously evolving. (The Tucson Police Department’s Gang Investigative Unit)



Hybrid gangs modify traditional gang culture with their personal interpretations and agendas. Presently, hybrid gangs have become a big criminal and societal problem in local communities. These young adults are trying to find somewhere to fit in or find something to identify with.

Cliques are semi-autonomous and not necessarily tied to a formal structure, which allows them to have a certain level of independence in controlling their criminal portfolios. Their illegal activities include micro-trafficking, car theft, prostitution, human smuggling, human trafficking, firearms trafficking, hitmen for hire, money laundering and extortion. Extortion and local drug trafficking are their most significant sources of income.

The cliques’ degree of independence varies and is dependent on geography, the social fabric, and the political makeup of the places where each operates. It can be contingent on the personal histories of the heads of each clique and their relationships to other gang leaders. Vast differences in the size of cliques and their respective criminal sophistication is also due, in part, to their semi-independent status.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) indicates there are now over 1.4 million gang members involved in the 33,000 active gangs inside the United States. These gangs consist of violent street gangs, motorcycle gangs, and prison gangs. Some of the most dangerous gangs in the United States are Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), Latin Kings, Crips, 18th Street Gang, Bloods, Nuestra Familia, Mexican Mafia, and the Aryan Brotherhood. Six of those ten have been identified in Mississippi: MS-13, Latin Kings, Crips, Bloods, Mexican Mafia and Aryan Brotherhood. The southernmost counties in Mississippi are influenced by the Simon City Royals, Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, Vice Lord and Subsets.

The **Simon City Royals** have expanded their influence across the Southern United States. Especially the states of Mississippi and Alabama. They are reportedly one of four of the most prominent gangs in Mississippi. The other three are the Gangster Disciples, Vice Lord and Aryan Brotherhood of Mississippi.



Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter offer free live streaming services that gangs utilize. It has been reported that gang members use these streaming services to identify real time locations of targeted individuals for assault or retaliation. Various social media platforms, such as Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook are utilized to advertise various illicit drugs. Additionally, these groups utilize encrypted messaging apps, such as WhatsApp and Signal, to communicate. Online payment systems, such as PayPal, Venmo, Cash App, and Green Dot, are facilitating payment arrangements among individuals and groups for illicit drugs. Sellers and buyers often communicate in code by using emojis, hashtags, and acronyms to make transactions.

The Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics initiated 144 cases associated with gang affiliations in the year 2023 compared to 88 cases in the year 2022. There were 37 cases initiated with gang affiliations in the year 2021 compared to 36 cases in 2020. There was a slight increase in the number of arrests of members belonging to the Vice Lords and Gangster Disciples street gangs. There were 52 arrests for members of the Gangster Disciples and 13 arrests for members of the Vice Lord street gang. The Gangster Disciples were charged with possession of drugs, including but not limited to fentanyl, powder and crack cocaine, and methamphetamine and the trafficking of marijuana. Charges also stemmed from sale of fentanyl, methamphetamine, trafficking of marijuana and MDMA (Ecstasy), possession of narcotics, possession of depressants and possession of firearm by convicted felon.

	# of Gangs	Total Cases	Total Subjects	Total Arrests	Total Charges
2019 Totals	8	27	37	11	55
2020 Totals	5	36	49	16	88
2021 Totals	4	37	44	14	74
2022 Totals	8	88	130	69	167
2023 Totals	8	144	207	89	300



Joining the military has been found to be an increasing trend among gang members. They receive combat training, in addition to other skills, then utilize this training in order to instruct and educate other gang members. They also have access to dangerous and deadly weapons as well as other tools of destruction. Gangster Disciples have been documented in the U.S. military, found in both U.S. and overseas bases.

Known Gangster Disciples graffiti has been reportedly seen on US military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan. Gang members have also begun to infiltrate police departments, using tactics and information they learn there to both outsmart and confront law enforcement and rival gangs.

Gang members are also using technology to monitor, target, and conduct counter-surveillance of law enforcement. Utilizing such tools as the internet, smartphones, drones, GPS devices, confidential informants, VoIP, PlayStation and Xbox, gang members can identify, locate, and disrupt law enforcement operations.



Gangster Disciples "represent" with the colors black and blue. Gang members are known to wear Georgetown Hoyas, Florida Gators, and Duke Blue Devils apparel. The predominant symbol used to represent them is the six-pointed Star of David

(☆). The symbol pays homage to founder David Barksdale. The Gangster Disciples are active in 110 cities and 31 states, predominantly in the midwestern and southeastern United States. The gang consists of approximately 30,000 to 35,000 members. Their most notable criminal activities include drug trafficking, robbery, extortion, murder, and prostitution.

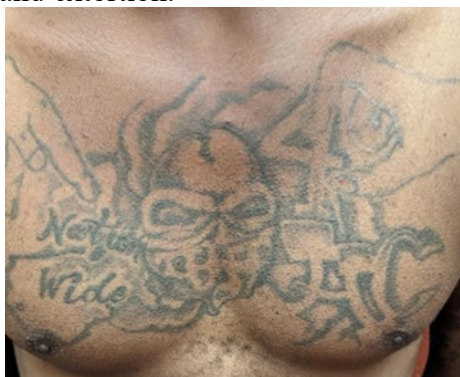


Symbols often used to characterize the Vice Lords are hats cocked to the left side, rabbits wearing a bow tie (The Playboy logo), martini glasses, gloves, top hats, canes, five-point stars (points representing Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom and Justice), crescent moons, pitchforks pointing down, broken hearts with wings, pyramids with eyes above them, and five-point crowns. They're comprised



of approximately 30,000 to 45,000 members. As reported by the Harrison County, Mississippi Sheriff's Office, Vice Lords use local juveniles and the music industry to recruit new members. Their criminal activities include drug trafficking, robbery, extortion, fraud, money laundering, boosting, and murder.

The color red is the color for Bloods, although some sets may use green. Bloods refer to each other as Dawg, Damu, or Piru. Numbers and symbols depend on a set affiliation. The word "Piru" refers to the original Blood gang. Bloods use a crossed out "c" in words as disrespect for Crips. The word MOB means "Money Over Bitches." Bloods are comprised of approximately 15,000 to 20,000 members. Criminal activities include drug trafficking, robbery, murder, burglary, prostitution, theft and extortion.



The Crips are one of the largest and most violent associations of street gangs in the United States with an estimated 30,000 to 35,000 members. The Crips are a primarily Black American gang. Crips will misspell words in an attempt to avoid using certain letter combinations that are viewed as disrespectful to the vandalizing gang. For instance, the letters "C" and "K" together stand for "Crip Killer", therefore, the Crips will avoid using this letter combination and instead spell words that would normally end in "-ck" with two "C's" so that the word "luck" is spelled "lucc." Crips represent

themselves by wearing blue; some sets may dress in purple. Crips refer to each other as Cuzz or Loc, which itself is sometimes used as a moniker for Crip. “Crab” is the most disrespectful epithet to call a Crip and can warrant fatal retaliation. Numbers and symbols depend on a set affiliation. Crips use the letter “c” in place of “b” as a way of disrespecting the rival gang, Bloods. Crips call themselves “Blood Killas” (BK) and wear British Knight (BK) tennis shoes. Criminal activities include drug trafficking, robbery, murder, burglary, prostitution, and theft.

Symbols common to the Black P. (Prince) Nation, or the Black P. Stones, are a pyramid with 21 bricks, a rising sun, an eye, the number 7, five-point star, and the crescent moon. Their colors are red, black and green. They have approximately 30,000 to 42,000 members nationwide. The Black P. Stones are also allied with the Almighty Latin Kings Nation, the most organized Hispanic street gang in the U.S., known for murder, drug trafficking, and robberies. The BPSN finances itself through an array of criminal activities including drug trafficking, robbery, extortion, murder and domestic terrorism.



The Simon City Royals is one of the predominant gangs in Mississippi. They were formally the Almighty Simon City Royal Nation, a greaser gang affiliated with a Chicago street gang instituted in the late 1950's known as Simon City. Having 10,000 to 15,000 members, this organization is known by city, state, and federal officials, as well as the media, to have once been the largest Caucasian gang. The Simon City Royals are now an affiliate of the All Folk Nation. As of 2003, Royal recruits in Mississippi are required to be sponsored by a member, serve a six-month probationary period (during which time they are referred to as "prospects"), and ultimately declare

a lifetime commitment to the gang. The Simon City Royals have recently made a notable split creating a new set known as Sip City or Thirteen Dreams (a 501(c)(3) organization). Simon City Royals' symbols include a shield with an R for Royal, a 6-pointed star, a cross, a 3-pointed crown, and the royal knight. This organization is represented by the colors black, white, and blue. Criminal activities include dealing of illegal drugs and other contraband, particularly in prison where members are incarcerated. They are also involved in racketeering and loan sharking.





The Latin Kings (also known as the Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation) is the most sizable Hispanic and Latino street gang across the globe. The gang was founded in Chicago, Illinois in 1954. The colors for the Latin Kings are black and gold. This gang makes use of a 5 or 3-point “sacred crown,” drawings of a lion and/or the “King Master,” and the acronyms LK, ALK, ALKN, ALKQN. Unlike most street gangs, the acceptance of female members is commonplace in most factions. Criminal activities include battery, extortion, robbery, murder, arms trafficking and drug trafficking.

The Aryan Brotherhood (AB), also known as the Brand, is a white supremacist prison gang and organized crime syndicate in the United States with roughly 20,000 members. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the gang makes up less than one-tenth of a percent of the prison population, but it is responsible for as many as 20% of the murders in the federal prison system. Throughout the state of Mississippi, there are approximately 400 known Aryan Brotherhood members consisting mostly of young white males. The Mississippi Brotherhood calls itself “the Family” and is ruled by a three-man “Wheel” that divides the state into nine zones. The Wheel appoints a captain to oversee each zone and prison, with a network of sergeants-at-arms who enforce order and discipline, a treasurer to handle finances and numerous soldiers.



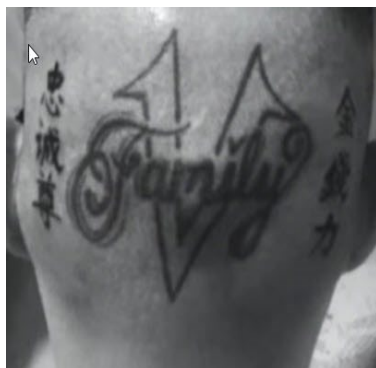
Recruits are in “prospect status” for six months before they can be assigned a “blood in mission.” The gang was disrupted in 2016 when 42 members and associates were convicted of racketeering conspiracy, murder, and conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine. Representations common to the Aryan Brotherhood are: “Aryan Brotherhood,” “AB,” 666, Nazi symbolism such as SS, sig runes, and swastikas, as well as shamrocks and Celtic iconography. Criminal activities include drug trafficking, extortion, inmate prostitution and murder-for-hire.

Currently, law enforcement’s most concerning street gang is Mara Salvatrucha, commonly known as MS-13. With approximately 10,000 members in the United States, MS-13 is notorious for its propensity for vicious violence. Initiation requires committing murder and many gang members have been convicted of homicide, some using machetes to behead their victims. Most of the gang is ethnically composed of Central Americans (mostly Salvadorans) who are active in urban and suburban areas. Traditionally, MS-13 gang members wear Chicago Bulls hats in the gang’s official colors blue & white, but members in Massachusetts have been known to wear Chicago Bulls hats in a variety of different colors in an attempt to avoid identification. MS-13 gang members



commonly use Chicago Bulls apparel to identify themselves. Tattoos common to the MS-13 are "MS," "Salvatrucha," "devil horns," the name of their clique, and more. MS-13 utilizes a system of hand signs for purposes of identification and communication. One of the most displayed is the "devil's head" which forms an 'M' when displayed upside down. The hand sign is like the same symbol commonly seen displayed by heavy metal musicians and their fans. Founders of Mara Salvatrucha borrowed the hand sign after attending concerts of heavy metal bands. Criminal activities include drug trafficking, robbery, larceny, human trafficking, extortion, illegal immigration, murder, prostitution, racketeering, battery, kidnapping, and arms trafficking.

The Mississippi Gulf Coast has a population of Asian gangs in the Harrison, Hancock, and Jackson County areas. Some of the Asian gangs known to authorities are: The Dragon Family/Royal Family, True Viet Boys (TVB), and the Viet Boyz (2202 VBZ). Junior members are called "Baby Gangsters" (aka "Boy Gangsters"; "Tiny Baby Gangsters"). The Dragon Family is a known rival of the Viet Boyz. The dragon is most often used to symbolize these gangs. The revenue from organized crime comes mainly from the extortion of brothels, prostitution, money laundering, the distribution of narcotics, and counterfeit merchandise. Criminal activities include extortion, counterfeiting, prostitution, money laundering, drug trafficking, racketeering, murder, assault, robbery, arms trafficking, auto theft, and burglary.



The Viet Boys are known as one of the most violent Asian gangs. They are typically known for their stubbornness and protecting their turf. They have approximately 1,300 to 2,000 members. This gang was created by Cambodians to protect their own people from getting attacked by Mexican gang members. The gang is allied with the Crips. Criminal activities include drug trafficking, robbery, assault, burglary, theft, homicide, and gambling.

Tattoos common to the Mexican Mafia are symbols that include images of a black hand. The gang's primary symbol, which is often used in tattoos by members, is the national symbol of Mexico (an eagle and a snake) atop a flaming circle over crossed knives. The number 13 is used to show allegiance to the Mexican Mafia. M is the 13th letter of the alphabet. The Mexican Mafia did not originate in Mexico and is entirely a U.S. criminal prison organization. Even though homosexuals are barred from entry into the gang, they are heavily engaged in homosexual prostitution in the prison system. Criminal activities both



inside and outside the prison system involve extorting drug distributors outside prison and distributing various narcotics within and outside the penitentiary. Criminal activities include: murder, money laundering, arms trafficking, drug trafficking, kidnapping, pandering, racketeering, extortion, human trafficking, illegal immigration, fraud and illegal gambling.

OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE GANGS



At the present time, Mississippi has three international Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMG), which are the Sons of Silence, the Vagos, and the Bandidos. The Bandidos and the Sons of Silence were the dominant OMG clubs in Mississippi and were two of the “Big Five OMG’s” in the nation. The “Big Five” consists of the five most notorious and violent motorcycle gangs in the United States. The Bandidos have three chapters in the state located on the Gulf Coast, Jackson, and North Mississippi. According to the American Motorcycle Association, 99% of motorcycle riders are law abiding citizens; thus, only one percent of all motorcycle riders are affiliated with a gang.



The FBI asserts that OMG’s support themselves primarily through drug dealing, trafficking in stolen goods, and extortion. They typically fight over territory and the illegal drug trade and collect \$1 billion in illegal income annually.

Many jurisdictions have reported an increase in overall Motorcycle Club and Outlaw Motorcycle Gang activity in recent years. This activity has centered on increasing membership by patching smaller clubs into larger clubs. In some instances, support clubs have been used to increase the visual effect of a dominant club when it rides through an area. Clubs are also displaying colors and support stickers on motor vehicles.



Racketeer Influenced Organizations, and Continuing Criminal Enterprise type violations.

The Pistoleros are a support gang for the Bandidos with five chapters in Mississippi located in Desoto, Lauderdale, Forest, Hinds and Harrison Counties. OMG's strive to initiate young members with no criminal history for the purpose of acquiring a gun permit or to purchase weapons. The criminal activities are the same as the majority of other OMG's which include drug distribution, stolen motorcycles, money laundering, other



The Sons of Silence OMG became a full charter chapter in Rankin County in October 2008. As with most other gangs, a chapter must have five members to receive full status as a chapter. MBN intelligence has identified three members of the Sons of Silence OMG in Rankin and Scott Counties. The Sons of Silence logo is an American eagle superimposed over the letter "A" (similar to, and taken from, the Anheuser-Busch logo) flying under an arch and their motto is "donec mors non separat", Latin for "until death separates us."

The Sons of Silence Motorcycle club was founded by Bruce Richardson in 1966. He served in the US Navy from 1958 to 1960 and then settled in Longmont, California after discharging. Ten years later, Leonard Lloyd "JR" Reed, Jr, also a Navy veteran, became the club president and held the position for the next 22 years. The Sons of Silence are allied with the Hells Angels and Iron Horsemen and are rivals of the Outlaws. They have the backing and protection of Hells Angels but often clash with Mongols motorcycle clubs. The membership of the club has been estimated at between 200 and 500 members. Members have been implicated in numerous criminal activities, including murder, assault, drug trafficking, intimidation, extortion, prostitution operations, money laundering, weapons trafficking, and motorcycle and motorcycle parts theft.



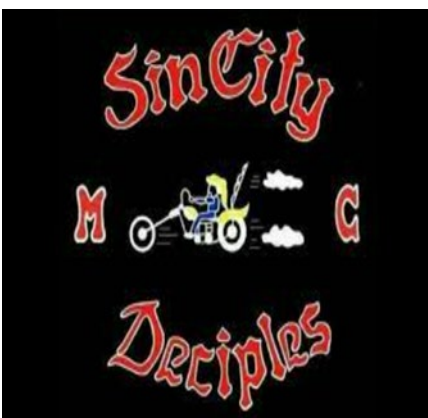
The Galloping Goose motto is: "Often Tested, Always Faithful". Their colors are purple and gold and their patch consists of a set of legs running. The torso on top of the set of legs is a large hand with the middle finger extended. In the background of the patch, you can see an outhouse; this links back to an outhouse which used to be towed on a trailer in the club's early years when they went on runs. The patch has purple writing on a gold background. The Galloping Goose OMG is a one percent club and their rules of behavior sometimes include violent crimes.



The Vagos' (also known as the Green Nation) motto is: "We Give What We Get." The Vagos arrived in Mississippi in 2011 and began wearing nomad cuts. They are an international one percent OMG and, as of late, have been involved in deadly confrontations with the Hells Angels. Vagos members were also confronted by members of the Sons of Silence (SOS) of Mississippi at a local bar and the SOS members took a set of Vagos' colors and assaulted a member. The Vagos Motorcycle Club patch consists of the Norse god of Mischief, Loki. He is depicted riding a motorcycle. One of the Vagos Motorcycle Club abbreviations is 22, referencing the 22nd letter of the alphabet. The Vagos Motorcycle Club color is green, which links back to the Mexican

heritage of the Vagos Motorcycle Club founder. Vagos' also use the motto "VFFV," meaning "Vagos Forever Forever Vagos."

In 2013, the Iron Coffins initiated a local chapter in North Mississippi near Tupelo. The Iron Coffins originated out of Ohio in the 1960s and have chapters in several states in the Midwest, and now in Southern States. The Iron Coffins use the acronym "ICFFIC" which translates to "Iron Coffins Forever Forever Iron Coffins." The patch consists of a skeleton riding a motorcycle with wings. A biker displaying a 13 patch symbolizes that the biker either smokes marijuana, deals in it, or has a contact for methamphetamine. 666 displayed on a patch or tattoo, symbolizes the mark of Satan. 69 displayed on a patch or tattoo is symbolic of the well-known sexual position.



The Sin City Deciples motto is Death before Dishonor. The Club also uses the abbreviation of "DFFD," which stands for "Deciples Forever Forever Deciples." Though most club members are black, the club is open to all men, regardless of race or color. The club is known to have approximately 4,900 members including some military veterans. Members ride Harley Davidson motorcycles. Members pride themselves on the tight-knit brotherhood they have developed over years of riding with each other from state to state. The term "1934 Express" is also used, relating to the 19th, 3rd and 4th letters of the alphabet (S, C, D) for Sin City Deciples.



The Outcast Motorcycle Club is a black one percenter motorcycle club founded in Detroit, Michigan in 1969. They are an all-black one percenter motorcycle club. After starting their Mother Chapter in Detroit, Michigan, they have grown to over 30 chapters in cities throughout the US. They do not have any chapters internationally. The Outcast Motorcycle Club patch is made up of a laughing skull, which has teeth and possibly cornrows. Behind the skull is an iron cross. The Outcast motto is “We Ride for Piece,” making note of the spelling of the word “piece,” rather than “peace.” Also used by the Outcast Motorcycle Club is the acronym “OFFO,” which stands for Outcast Forever, Forever Outcast. The Outcast Motorcycle Gang, which has 67 chapters across the country. A club Outcast Gulfport Chapter, Mississippi has been chartered. The Outcasts is the protagonist club. They are rivals of the Demonic Angels and Jaundice Mafia and allies of the Bloodsuckers and Loyal Inc. “1934 Express” is also used, relating to the 19th, 3rd and 4th letters of the alphabet (S, C, D) for Sin City Deciples.

IX. OUTLOOK

The United States continues to be a place where a person can live and make their dreams come true. While being a land of wealth, opportunity, and prosperity, the U. S. happens to be the most addicted country in the world. The illicit drug market in the United States is one of the most profitable in the world. As such, it attracts the most ruthless, sophisticated, and aggressive drug traffickers. The State of Mississippi, which lies along the Gulf of Mexico with multiple interstates running through it, is experiencing what may be determined as a struggle that is unwinnable. The Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics (MBN) and other law enforcement agencies face an enormous challenge in protecting the citizens of Mississippi and its neighboring states against the perils of dangerous drugs. State and local law enforcement agree, and statistics confirm, that Mississippi has a significant drug problem. Fentanyl is an ever-increasing problem for the entire nation, including Mississippi. Unfortunately, fentanyl use can have lethal consequences. Methamphetamine is also a major problem in the state, while diverted pharmaceuticals are holding on tight behind methamphetamine. Fentanyl, methamphetamine, heroin, and other pharmaceuticals remain closely associated with drug overdose deaths. Over the past few years, fentanyl has claimed more lives in this state than in years prior and is expected to continue. Regarding pharmaceutical diversion, in-state and out-of-state drug trafficking organizations, who specialize in pharmaceuticals, are targeting Mississippi pharmacies to acquire significant quantities of the most desired prescription medications for distribution and resale across the country. MBN believes that this trend will continue primarily due to the low acquisition cost of medications and the American public’s cessation for these drugs. Based on discussions with other law enforcement agencies around the country, Mississippi is not the only state that is being targeted, but certainly one that is very attractive to the DTOs. Marijuana, cocaine, and New Psychoactive Substances follow these. The transportation and distribution of vast quantities of Mexico-produced methamphetamine continues to be readily available in our state. The Mexico-produced methamphetamine is typically of high quality, or purity, and is relatively inexpensive.

Cocaine has taken a back seat to other drugs, but an increase in availability will also be monitored. Current trends indicate that marijuana, which is grown and/or manufactured in-state, is not transported out-of-state, but is used locally in addition to the vast quantities imported from other areas like California, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Washington. However, diversion of medicinal marijuana to out-of-state locations is a legitimate concern. Vaping continues to be an increased concern for the youth in Mississippi. Law enforcement in Mississippi has seized numerous amounts of vaping cartridges containing THC and other synthetic substances. Drug Trafficking Organizations continue to establish distribution routes in Mississippi dealing in bulk shipments. Mississippi continues to experience significant issues with drugs.

The world marketplace impacts every aspect of our lives. The global economy essentially rises and falls through supply and demand. Likewise, the illicit drug market is impacted by supply and demand, as well as trends and availability. Due to multiple factors, the illicit drug market in the United States is one of the most profitable in the world. As such, it attracts the most ruthless, sophisticated, and aggressive drug traffickers. The State of Mississippi, which lies along the Gulf of Mexico with multiple interstates running through it, continues to struggle with drug trafficking, distribution, use, and abuse. The Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics (MBN) and other law enforcement agencies continue to face an enormous challenge in protecting the citizens of Mississippi and its neighboring states against the perils of dangerous drugs. State and local law enforcement agree, and statistics confirm, that Mississippi has a significant drug problem. Methamphetamine (ICE) is a significant problem in the state, while fentanyl and heroin are the next major threat to our citizens, as poisonings are often associated with fentanyl and other substances. Due to the increasing use of fentanyl, both intentional and unintentional, fentanyl continues to be a growing concern in Mississippi with lethal consequences. Over the past few years, fentanyl has claimed more lives in this state than in years prior and is expected to continue. Diverted pharmaceuticals fall in behind fentanyl and heroin ranking third. In-state and out-of-state drug trafficking organizations, who specialize in pharmaceuticals, are targeting Mississippi pharmacies to acquire significant quantities of the most desired prescription medications for distribution and resale across the country. MBN believes that this trend will continue primarily due to the low acquisition cost of medications, such as Promethazine with Codeine, and the lucrative resale value in major cities.

TRENDS

- The importation, distribution, and seizure of methamphetamine “ICE” from outside the state, continue to be readily available.
- Overdose deaths, or poisonings, related to fentanyl continue due to intentional misuse of pharmaceutical products, as well as, by ingesting counterfeit pharmaceuticals (containing fentanyl).
- Mississippi law enforcement continues to see counterfeit pharmaceuticals, containing fentanyl and other substances, sold in both small and large quantities in the Northwest, Delta area, Central, and Coastal Mississippi.
- Diverted pharmaceutical abuse remains constant.

- DTOs target Mississippi's pharmacies to acquire desired controlled medications, such as promethazine with codeine and pain pills, for distribution in our state and out-of-state.
- Vaping continues to be popular among Mississippi's youth.
- The presence of higher-grade marijuana has driven the price and popularity of marijuana higher than in previous years.
- Activity on the Dark Web, where subjects avoid traceable transactions of currency and drugs, continues to grow in Mississippi.
- Kratom and other "legal highs" continue to adversely impact law enforcement efforts in Mississippi's fight for public safety and public health.
- Utilization of parcel services to facilitate the distribution of drugs and move United States Currency across the country.

DEVELOPMENTS

- The Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics continues to strengthen its coalition with the Mississippi Board of Pharmacy, Mississippi State Department of Health, Mississippi Department of Mental Health, and the Mississippi Public Health Institute to help combat drug abuse in the state.
- MBN continues to expand partnerships in the criminal justice field, the medical community, social services, and substance abuse and mental health for combined approaches and solutions to help reduce the increasing problem of drug use and abuse in the State of Mississippi.
- Prior restrictions on ephedrine/pseudoephedrine, an essential component for the production of methamphetamine, have been decreased, whereas the medications will be available over the counter (OTC) and more readily available for the illicit production of methamphetamine.
- MBN has created and continues to expand the Demand Reduction Unit, which is a training and education initiative to keep citizens and other law enforcement entities updated on trends seen across the state.
- Industrial hemp farms, or hemp grows, are continuing to increase in Mississippi.
- The Mississippi Legislature passed a law to allow Medical Marijuana in January 2022 and the state is working to implement this law, whereas the impact is yet to be seen.
- MBN is continuing to work with the medical community to combat public health and safety issues, such as heroin/fentanyl use and prescription drug abuse.

PREDICTIONS

- Vaping will become the most popular way for Mississippi's youth to consume drugs.

- Money laundering will increasingly become harder to discover due to the numerous methods of transferring funds digitally over the internet.
- More drug dealers and traffickers will use virtual currency in efforts to avoid cash seizures from law enforcement.
- An increase and expansion in the use of technology, such as encrypted apps, to conceal drug involved/related communications to thwart law enforcement's efforts to protect public safety and public health.
- MBN expects Mississippi to experience the diversion of Medical Marijuana.
- The production of new chemicals and compositions for manufacturing synthetic fentanyl and other synthetic substances will increase.
- Marijuana will become more readily available, and the industry will be a target for diversion of authorized medical marijuana.
- Interstate transportation using private and public carriers and domestic aircraft will continue to be the primary method of trans-shipping narcotics across the state.
- Mississippi will see more of its youth enrolled in drug treatment programs.
- There will be an increase in availability of counterfeit substances across the state as the demand for pharmaceuticals continues to climb.
- Abuse of synthetic drugs will continue to increase as people seek to obtain a legal high.
- Fentanyl will continue to be a desired drug, even though its use can be fatal, and Mississippi experiences increased fentanyl and other opioid-related overdose deaths.
- More and more drugs will be abused utilizing vape pens.

X. METHODOLOGY

The Mississippi Drug Threat Assessment is produced annually by MBN's Intelligence Division to identify and quantify the nature, extent, and scope of the threat of illegal drugs and related issues in Mississippi. This document includes information from previous MBN Drug Threat Assessments, surveys from local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, open-source documents, law enforcement sensitive information from other investigative agencies, internet websites, and anecdotal information from other reliable sources.

In preparation of this report, MBN Intelligence Analysts collected and analyzed the information required to quantify the threat and identify trafficking trends. The specific drug categories presented in the Mississippi Drug Threat Assessment are diverted pharmaceuticals, cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana, heroin, and New Psychoactive Substances. The identification of specific intelligence gaps and projections for the future by drug type are also included. In addition, the Drug Threat Assessment identifies problems posed by the threat, the actions being taken by participating agencies, and the anticipated impact on the state.

XI. SOURCES

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Federal Drug Administration (FDA)

Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FINCEN)

Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)

Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH)

Mississippi Department of Revenue

Mississippi Forensics Laboratory

Mississippi Gaming Commission (MGC)

Mississippi Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP)

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Mississippi State Hospital (MSH) Substance Use Services

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XII. DRUG PRICES ACROSS MISSISSIPPI

Drug Type	Weight	Jackson	Greenwood	Oxford	Tupelo	Starkville	Meridian	Hattiesburg	Gulfport	McComb
Powder Cocaine	Gram	\$60-\$100	\$80-100	\$60-120	\$100	\$80-100	\$60-80	\$100-120	\$100	\$50
	Eight-Ball	\$175	\$200-250	\$150-250	\$175-225	\$250	\$100-200	\$250-300	\$200	\$160
	Ounce	\$1,000-1,200	\$850	\$1000-1,200	\$900-1,100	\$1,000	\$1,000-1,200	\$1,000-1,200	\$700	\$700
	¼ Kilo	\$5,000	\$6,000-10,000	\$6,000-9,000	\$4,800-6,500	\$6,200	\$7,000-8,000	\$7,000-10,000	\$5,000	N/A
	½ Kilo	\$9,000	\$14,000-19,000	\$15,000	\$9,000-12,000	\$14,000-\$15,000	\$15,000-\$16,000	\$15,000-19,000	\$9,000	N/A
	Kilogram	\$16,000	\$34,000-37,000	\$30,000-37,000	\$18,000-24,000	\$21,000	\$30,000-32,000	\$32,000-36,000	\$18,000-22,000	N/A
Crack Cocaine	Rock	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20
	Gram	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$80-100	\$80-100	\$100	\$100	\$40
	Eight-Ball	\$200-225	\$200-250	\$150 – 175	\$175-250	\$150	\$200-250	\$200	\$200	\$140
	Ounce	\$1,000-1,200	\$750-1,000	\$1,000	\$900-1,100	\$800-1,000	\$1,000-1,300	\$1,400-1,800	\$700	\$700
	¼ Kilo	\$5,000-8,000	\$5,000-8,000	\$6,500	\$6,800-8,500	\$6,500	\$8,000	\$7,000-10,000	\$6,000	N/A
	Kilogram	\$30,000-34,000	\$25,000 - 30,000	\$28,000-36,000	\$28,000	\$27,000-30,000	\$30,000-34,000	\$30,000-34,000	\$30,000	N/A
Marijuana	Dime Bag	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10
	20-Sack	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20
	¼ Ounce	\$35	\$35-40	\$40	\$40	\$40	\$35-40	\$40	\$35	N/A
	Ounce	\$100	\$60-120	\$100-150	\$80-140	\$80	\$60-100	\$50-100	\$100	\$400 high \$250 med \$60 low
	¼ Pound	\$400	\$125-450	\$350	\$180-200	\$250-350	\$250	\$200-300	\$400	N/A
	½ Pound	\$800	\$220-800	\$600-700	\$250-300	\$500-600	\$450	\$250-450	\$800	N/A
	Pound	\$1,200	\$600-800	\$1,000-1,200	\$800-1,200	\$800-1,200	\$800-1,000	\$500-700	\$600	N/A
LSD	Dosage Unit	N/A	\$10	\$10-15	\$12	\$10-12	\$10	\$5-10	N/A	N/A
MDMA	Dosage Unit	N/A	\$2-3	\$25-40	\$25-40	\$25-35	\$2	\$5-25	\$12-15	\$5-10
Fentanyl	Gram	N/A	\$100-150	\$150-250	N/A	N/A	\$200	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Dosage Unit	N/A	\$30-35	\$2.00-35	N/A	\$5-30	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics

Drug Type	Weight	Jackson	Greenwood	Oxford	Tupelo	Starkville	Meridian	Hattiesburg	Gulfport	McComb
Meth	Gram	\$50	\$20	\$50-75	\$80-100	\$80-100	\$50-60	\$30-60	\$80	\$50
	Eight-Ball	\$150	\$60-100	\$150-200	\$150-200	\$150-250	\$100-120	\$75-150	\$150	\$160
	Ounce	\$425	\$150-200	\$400-700	\$700-1,100	\$1,100	\$250-450	\$250-550	\$600	\$300-450
	Pound	\$6,000	\$5,000-8,000	N/A	\$12,000-15,000	\$12,000-15,000	\$1,900 2,200	\$2,000-4,000	\$5,500	\$3,200
Heroin	Gram	\$250	\$100 - 120	\$200-250	\$222-250	\$250	\$200-250	\$100-200	\$200	\$200
	Ounce	\$4,000	\$2,500	\$1,750-3,000	\$3,000	\$1,750-2,000	\$4,000	\$1,400-2,200	\$2,400	\$400-500
	¼ Kilo	N/A	\$15,000-18,000	\$15,000-18,000	\$15,000-18,000	\$15,7500	N/A	\$12,000-16,000	N/A	N/A
	1 Kilo	\$120,000	\$80,000-85,000	\$70,000-75,000	\$30,000-50,000	\$63,000	N/A	\$45,000-65,000	N/A	N/A