



North Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area



JUNE 2022

Drug Threat Assessment for CY2021



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(U) Scope

(U) The purpose of the 2022 North Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NFHIDTA) Threat Assessment is to identify current and emerging drug-related trends within the designated area and deliver accurate and timely strategic intelligence to assist law enforcement agencies in the development of drug enforcement strategies. This document provides a drug threat forecast based on the regional extent of illicit drug use, drug trafficking, money laundering, and the activities of criminal groups and organizations. Smuggling methods, routes of transportation, trafficking trends, tactics, procedures, and public health data are analyzed to further inform the forecasted threat. This document also fulfills statutory and grant requirements issued by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and has been approved by the North Florida HIDTA Executive Board.

(U) Ongoing Effects of COVID-19

(U) In CY2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect virtually all aspects of life. From supply chain issues to labor shortages, the reverberating impact from the pandemic have sent shockwaves through the region and beyond. Consistent with the previous year, CY2021 brought staffing and other challenges to law enforcement agencies. However, law enforcement did not waver in the face of adversity and persevered despite tremendous hardships. Drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) facing supply and transportation challenges identified new routes and methods designed to transport drugs and evade detection. Social media and online communication became paramount to many illicit operations. Although another year has passed, the full impact of COVID-19 on the local drug market is still being evaluated. General conclusions have been drawn based on trend analysis, discussion with law enforcement partners, drug seizure totals, and a review of drug-related deaths.

(U) The initial onset of COVID-19 led to the perceived logistical disruption of the illicit drug trade. However, COVID-19 forced transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) to evolve and alter their use of various smuggling methods. Ultimately, these updated trafficking methods complicated law enforcement efforts and posed new challenges for detection and seizure.

(U) From the perspective of 2021 through the drafting phase of April 2022, the demand for drugs remained high, as evident through increasing drug prices. Fentanyl, although certainly deadly on its own, remains most concerning to unwitting consumers of other substances. Counterfeit pills have become prolific in the region, and as they are often either mixed with deadly opioids, they are claiming the lives of many unknowing users. Law enforcement officers have remained vigilant in the identification of fentanyl in the field for the safety of themselves, bystanders, and animals. Reporting indicates the majority of drugs consumed in the NFHIDTA's area of responsibility (AOR) remained easily accessible and were not impacted by supply shortages. Statewide, the number of total drug-related deaths in CY2020, the most current full-year dataset available, increased 17% from the prior year (FDLE, 2021).

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(U) Executive Summary

(U) For the second consecutive year, **fentanyl** and **fentanyl analogs** remain the top drug threat in the NFHIDTA, largely due to the significant increase in seizures coupled with its potency and lethality. Continuing the upward trend, the NFHIDTA initiatives seized a 189% increase in kilograms of fentanyl compared to CY2020 (PMP, 2022). For CY2020, the Florida Medical Examiner (FME) identified fentanyl to be the drug that *caused* the most deaths in the state of Florida (FDLE, 2021). Furthermore, when viewed collectively, fentanyl and



Figure 1 Source: PMP, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

As fentanyl is often concealed and is frequently used as a cutting agent for other substances, its potential lethality continues to pose a dire concern for the drug user as well as first responders and law enforcement. **Methamphetamine**, essentially all imported crystal, remains the second drug threat in the region. Following a 28% decrease in methamphetamine seizures in CY2020, CY2021 experienced a 69% increase (PMP, 2022). The increase in seizures coupled with survey responses indicates that availability issues due to COVID-19 were no longer a factor in CY2021 (NFHIDTA, 2022). For CY2020, FME reported methamphetamine occurrences increased 47%, and deaths *caused by* methamphetamine increased 55% (FDLE, 2021). While it remains readily available and easily obtained, meth continues to be laced with fentanyl, likely increasing its lethality. Although **heroin** maintained its third-place ranking in the region's drug threat, seizures continued the downward trajectory noted in CY2020 with a 66% decrease in CY2021 (PMP, 2022). CY2020 FME reporting found that occurrences of heroin decreased 11.5%, and deaths *caused by* heroin decreased 12% (FDLE, 2021). Survey respondents reported the decline in heroin seizures is likely due to the infiltration of fentanyl in the marketplace (NFHIDTA, 2022). **Cocaine** and **crack** are ranked fourth and fifth, respectively. Notably, cocaine and crack seizures increased 1,666% in CY2021. However, this significant increase is mostly attributed to two sizeable seizures at the Port of Jacksonville that totaled 1,408 kilograms. For CY2020, FME reported cocaine occurrences increased 24% as deaths *caused by* cocaine increased 30% (FDLE, 2021). The availability of cocaine alone may be worthy of a higher ranking; however, when viewed in conjunction with other factors such as potency and lethality, cocaine and crack rank behind the aforementioned substances. Although **MDMA** seizures only increased by a small margin, MDMA moved up two ranks to the 6th greatest drug threat. The ranking advancement is likely due to an increase in seizures, the identification of MDMA being mixed with other substances, and MDMA being marketed and sold as a different substance (NFHIDTA, 2022). Notably, one survey respondent mentioned that although MDMA use is infrequent, the overdoses (ODs) associated with MDMA use are significant (NFHIDTA, 2022). **Diverted pharmaceuticals, marijuana, and synthetics** round out the drug ranking.

(U) DTOs and criminal groups continue to use messaging applications to streamline communication and evade law enforcement detection. Survey respondents indicated social media has proven to be an effective recruitment tool for both DTOs and gangs operating in the NFHIDTA (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). Traffickers continue to use social media to promote product and reach a broader audience. Applications such as Snapchat, TikTok, and WhatsApp offer dealers a seamless way to promote and deliver product with minimal interaction. In addition, drug-related financial transactions are becoming less cash based as the use of Cash App, Stored Value Cards, and cryptocurrencies are increasing. The advancements in technology coupled with the use of social media and virtual currency for illicit activities continue to convolute drug investigations and create increased challenges for law enforcement detection.

(U) The North Florida HIDTA Region

(U) NFHIDTA Description

(U) The NFHIDTA was established by ONDCP in 2001 with a mission to measurably and accountably disrupt and dismantle DTOs and MLOs through an intelligence-driven process enhanced by cooperative and collaborative multijurisdictional partnerships, information sharing, and deconfliction to reduce the production and trafficking of illegal and diverted drugs and drug-related violent crimes impacting the AOR and other areas of the United States while promoting officer safety. In addition, the NFHIDTA supports ONDCP's goals and objectives while addressing existing and emerging threats. The NFHIDTA forms and maintains collaborative partnerships with other HIDTAs, law enforcement, prevention, and Drug Free communities by participating in national HIDTA initiatives, such as the Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE), National Emerging Threat Initiative (NETI), and Overdose Response Strategy (ORS). The NFHIDTA is composed of 15 initiatives – one management and coordination, 12 law enforcement, an intelligence and information sharing, and a training initiative. There are currently 46 federal, state, and local agencies participating in the NFHIDTA, as of April 2022. The law enforcement initiatives focus on the principal drug trafficking issues within the region's 13 counties. Several initiatives engage in interdiction activities, primarily highway/roadway, parcel, marine, and airport intercepts to address the NFHIDTA's multifaceted transportation threats. Specialized units focus on gangs, fugitives, prescription drug diversion, overdose deaths, and money laundering.

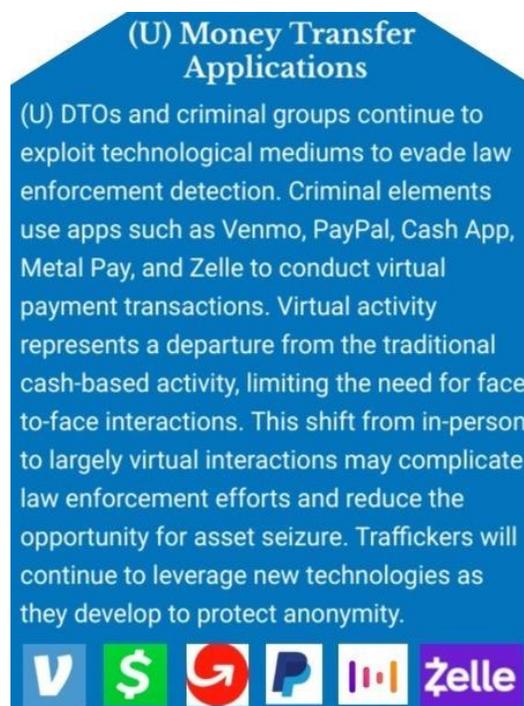


Figure 2 Source: NFHIDTA, 2022

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(U) Geography

(U) Thirteen of Florida’s 67 counties comprise the North Florida HIDTA, as seen in **Figure 3**. Bordered by Georgia to its north and the Atlantic Ocean to its east, the NFHIDTA boasts three major interstate highways, an international airport and various private and commercial airstrips, several seaports and numerous navigable waterways, one of the largest FedEx facilities in the nation, and the CSX railway hub, which spans from south Florida into Canada. From July 2020 to July 2021, Florida experienced an influx of over 220,000 new residents, ranking it the number one state for the most incoming residents (The Next Miami, 2021). An unwelcome effect of

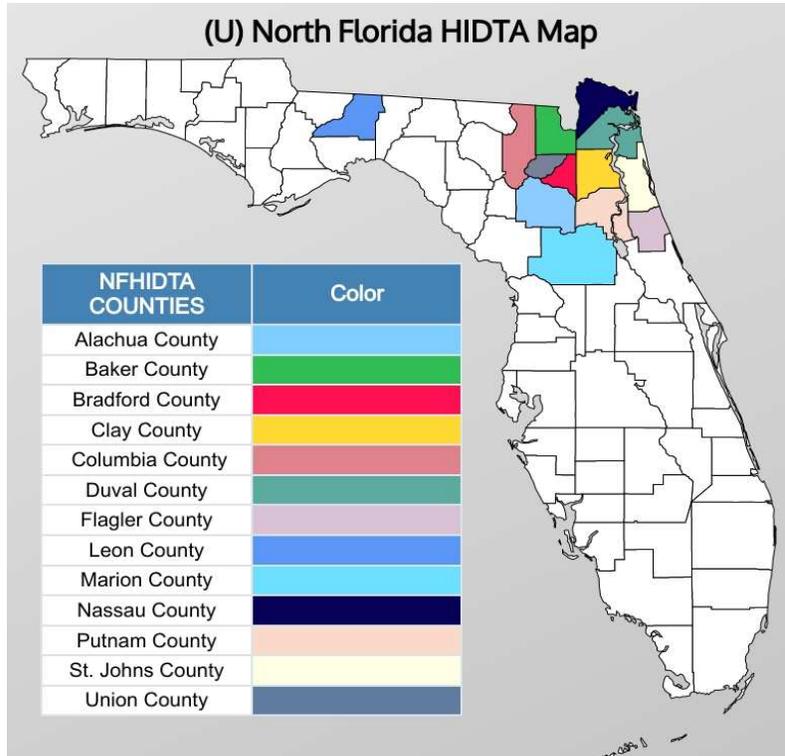


Figure 3 UNCLASSIFIED

of the region’s geography, infrastructure, and increasingly diverse and growing population is that it is attractive to criminals who often exploit these attributes for illicit purposes.

(U) Demographics

(U) The reverberations of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to impact all facets of life. Economic incentives coupled with less stringent pandemic restrictions helped fuel the great migration to Florida. As predicted in the *2021 North Florida HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment*, Florida experienced another year of rapid growth and is expected to continue this upward trend.

(U) As of July 1, 2021, the population estimate for all NFHIDTA counties was 2,905,995 (United States Census Bureau, 2021). Four major population centers in the NFHIDTA are Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Gainesville, and Ocala. From 2010 to 2022, St. Johns County experienced a population growth of 55.42%, the highest in the state of Florida for this time period (World Population Review, 2022). Nassau and Flagler Counties followed closely behind St. Johns, with a 31.53% and 29.15% growth rate, respectively (World Population Review, 2022). Of the thirteen NFHIDTA counties, only Union experienced a decline in the population growth (-3.72%) from 2010 to 2022 (World Population Review, 2022).

(U) Pear et al. (2019) found “across 17 states in 2002–2014, opioid overdoses were concentrated in more economically disadvantaged zip codes, indicated by higher rates of poverty and unemployment as well as lower education and median household income” (Pear et al., 2019, p. 68). As the study indicates, poverty continues to be a contributing factor in illicit drug use. The ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to exacerbate poverty levels and fuel unemployment claims.

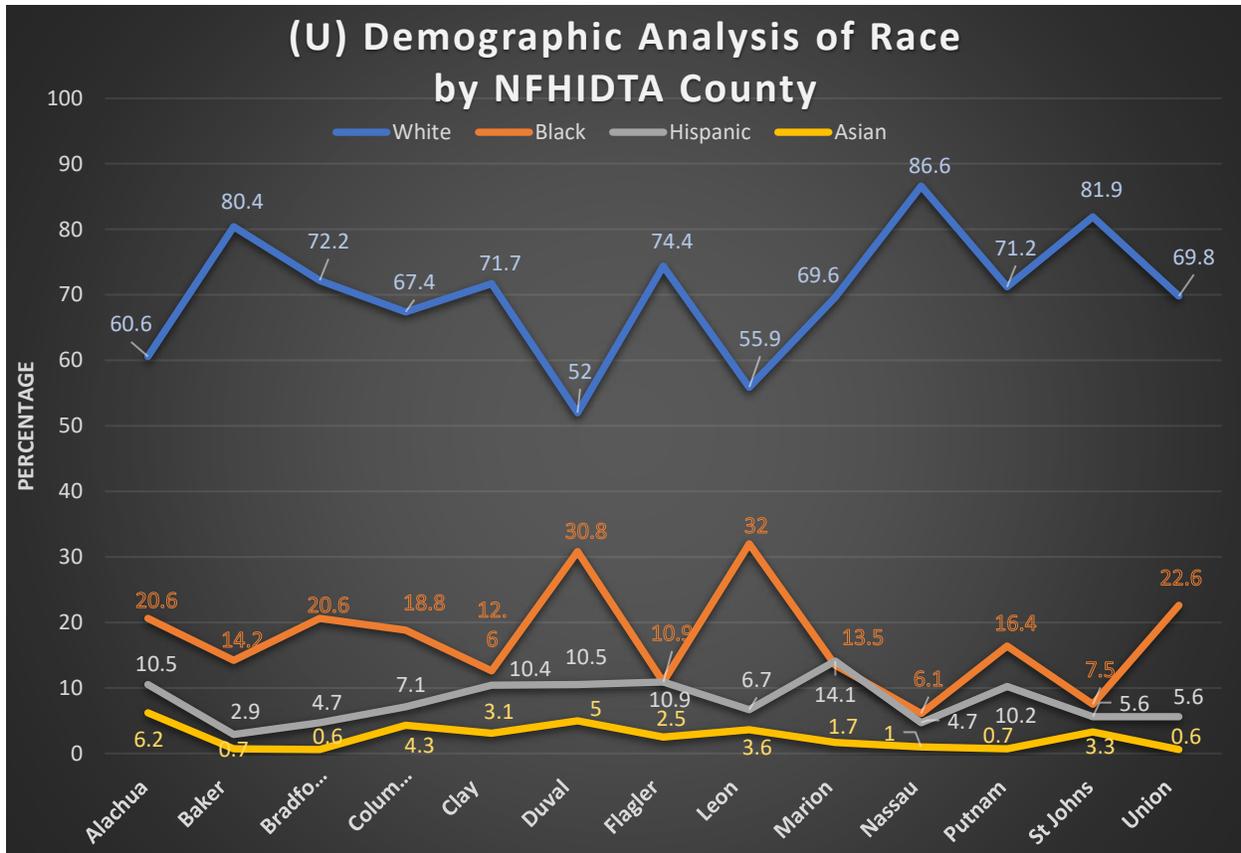


Figure 4 Source: United States Census Bureau, 2020 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) According to the Center for Poverty & Inequality Research (2022), the official poverty rate, based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2019 estimates, is 10.5%. **Eight of the NFHIDTA counties exceeded the official poverty rate.** Putnam County (24.3%) recorded the highest poverty rate in the region followed by Union (20.7%), Leon (17.6%), Bradford (17.5%), Alachua (17.2%), Marion (15.3%), and Duval (15.2%) (United States Census Bureau, 2021). The remaining NFHIDTA counties reported poverty levels below 10%. Due to the correlation between poverty and illicit drug use, it is likely the financial strain resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to exacerbate illicit drug use in the region.

(U) As depicted in **Figure 4**, the NFHIDTA remains culturally diverse, although a large majority of the population is identified as white. Several counties, including Leon (32%), Duval (30.8%), Union (22.6%), Alachua (20.6%), and Bradford (20.6%), have a significant African American or black population (United States Census Bureau, 2021). Notably, Marion County reports a significant Hispanic population (14.1%), which is the highest in the region. Five other NFHIDTA counties, including Flagler (10.9%), Alachua (10.5%), Duval (10.5%), Clay (10.4%), and Putnam (10.2%), report a Hispanic population of at least ten percent (United States Census Bureau, 2021). These statistics support the prevalence of Hispanic and black or African American DTOs operating in the NFHIDTA (PMP, 2022).

(U) Key Transportation Nodes

(U) The NFHIDTA includes a diverse infrastructure that supports the use of various transport methods, including rail, air, land, and sea, and is home to a significantly connected interstate and highway system, linking the region to the West Coast, along the entire Eastern Seaboard, and beyond its international Atlantic Coast border. The region is home to three national forests, to include Apalachicola, Ocala, and Osceola, and their dense foliage and underdeveloped land offer many concealment opportunities. Its well-used,

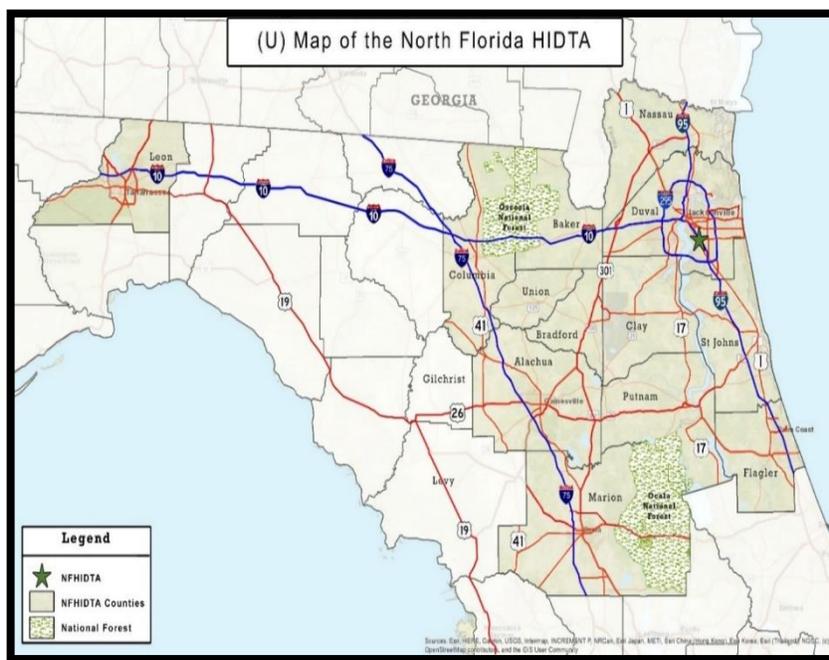


Figure 5 NFHIDTA Roadways UNCLASSIFIED

established, easily accessible, and highly connected transportation infrastructure uniquely exposes the region to various threats, crimes, and hazards. In fact, its transport infrastructure coupled with its centralized location and close proximity to various source and destination locations make it a primary transshipment area for illegal drugs and proceeds.

(U) The City of Jacksonville (2021) reported “Jacksonville is the number one port in the United States for trade with Puerto Rico, handling nearly 90 percent of all sea trade between the island and the U.S. mainland” (City of Jacksonville, 2021, p. 1). Puerto Rico remains the City of Jacksonville’s primary trading partner, accounting for approximately 800,000 container units and thousands of vehicles shipped annually (City of Jacksonville, 2021). Puerto Rico’s designation as a U.S. territory provides an ideal environment for drug traffickers who seek to evade strict customs controls associated with international cargo.

(U) NFHIDTA’s intricate and highly interconnected interstate and roadway system facilitates traffickers’ anonymity. The region is home to three interstate highways (I95, I75, and I10), seven U.S. highways (U.S. 1, 17, 27, 41, 90, 301, and 441), and six State Roads (16, 19, 20, 21, 40, and 100). Specifically, I10, which spans from California to the east coast of Florida, passes through numerous heroin and methamphetamine hotspots. On the south-end, I75 begins in Miami Lakes, FL and runs through six states before ending in the upper peninsula of Michigan (Wikipedia, 2022). Perhaps most notably, five of these six states (Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, and Michigan) ranked in the top twenty states for age-adjusted overdose death rates in 2019 (CDC, 2021). In addition to the numerous interstates and state roads, the region is home to various back roads that offer alternative routes of travel. Survey respondents provided the following routes that are typically used to transport drugs and/or currency through their AOR: State Roads 26, 27, 100, 121, 200, and 238, County Roads 18, 231, and 340, and U.S. Highways 1, 17, 19, 27, 40, 90, 301, and 441 (NFHIDTA, 2022). Drug traffickers and mules also use other, less conspicuous, and at times less direct routes of travel to avoid law enforcement scrutiny often seen on more populated

roadways. The U.S. Marshal Service recalled at least one local incident where a fugitive used less populous roads in an attempt to evade law enforcement detection (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022).

(U) DOMESTIC HIGHWAY ENFORCEMENT (DHE)
North Florida Highways - “All threats, all crimes, all hazards”



(U) Drug trafficker use of interstates and highways is a significant threat to the region. Agencies participating in the national HIDTA DHE program seek to disrupt the flow of drugs, currency, and weapons throughout the NFHIDTA. In CY2021, NFHIDTA DHE participants conducted **57 enforcement operations**, resulting in drug and asset seizures and **227 arrests**, including **176 drug arrests** (Case Explorer, 2022).

(U) Participants seized drugs worth **\$1,561,000**, including **120 kilograms** of marijuana, **16 kilograms** of cocaine and crack, **12 kilograms** of methamphetamine, **4 kilograms** of synthetic hallucinogens and psychostimulants, **3 kilograms** of fentanyl, and **2 kilograms** of heroin (PMP, 2022).

(U) North Florida’s DHE participants also seized **\$61,870 in US currency** (PMP, 2022). This represents a small percentage of all seizures that occurred in the region and only accounts for those made during specific enforcement dates and locations.

Figure 6 Source: CY2021 NFHIDTA DHE Data UNCLASSIFIED

(U) To address the vulnerability and threats posed by the region’s transport infrastructure, the NFHIDTA participates in the national HIDTA DHE program. Nine agencies, covering fourteen counties, including Camden County, GA, coordinate activities to address all threats, all crimes, and all hazards during specified DHE operations. **Figure 6** provides a snapshot of the results from CY2021 NFHIDTA’s DHE operations. A further review of the data collected from these operations indicates a sizeable increase in the number of guns seized in CY2021 when compared to CY2019 and CY2020, as shown in **Chart 1**, potentially indicating an increase in violence related to drug trafficking and/or an increased reliance on weapons for protection during contraband transport.

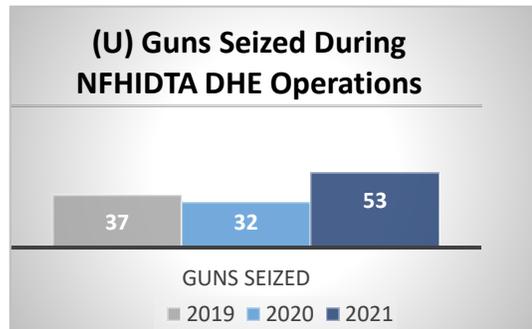


Chart 1 Source: Case Explorer, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Drug-Related Crime Trends

(U) Drug and gang-related activities have been associated with violent crimes, including robberies, aggravated assaults, and murders. A comparison of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) crime index data indicated that two NFHIDTA counties, Union and Baker, reported an increase in the total crime index from CY2019 to CY2020. Alternatively, the remaining eleven counties reported significant decreases in the crime index rate in the same time period. Unfortunately, due to data migration and significant system updates, the UCR data for CY2021 is not available as of the publication of this document. Therefore, it cannot be determined if the significant crime index decrease from CY2019 to CY2020 was due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

(U) One consistent finding among NFHIDTA initiative commanders was the increase in armed dealers or buyers during the commission of drug deals (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). A review of the FDLE supplemental homicide data indicated seven NFHIDTA counties (Alachua, Bradford, Duval, Leon, Marion, Nassau, and St. Johns) reported at least one homicide associated with drug-related activities (FDLE, 2022). Duval and Marion Counties also reported at least one homicide associated with gang-related activities (FDLE, 2022). Consistent with CY2019, in CY2020, Duval County had the highest number of murders associated with known drug and gang-related activities among the NFHIDTA counties (FDLE, 2022). Although the homicide rate in Duval County decreased 24% in CY2021, this trend does not appear to be continuing into early CY2022. In April 2022, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) reported seven shootings that left four dead and four injured in the span of a 35-hour period (Goodridge, 2022a). **Figure 7** depicts the strong correlation between murder incidents and drug arrests in Jacksonville (Duval County).

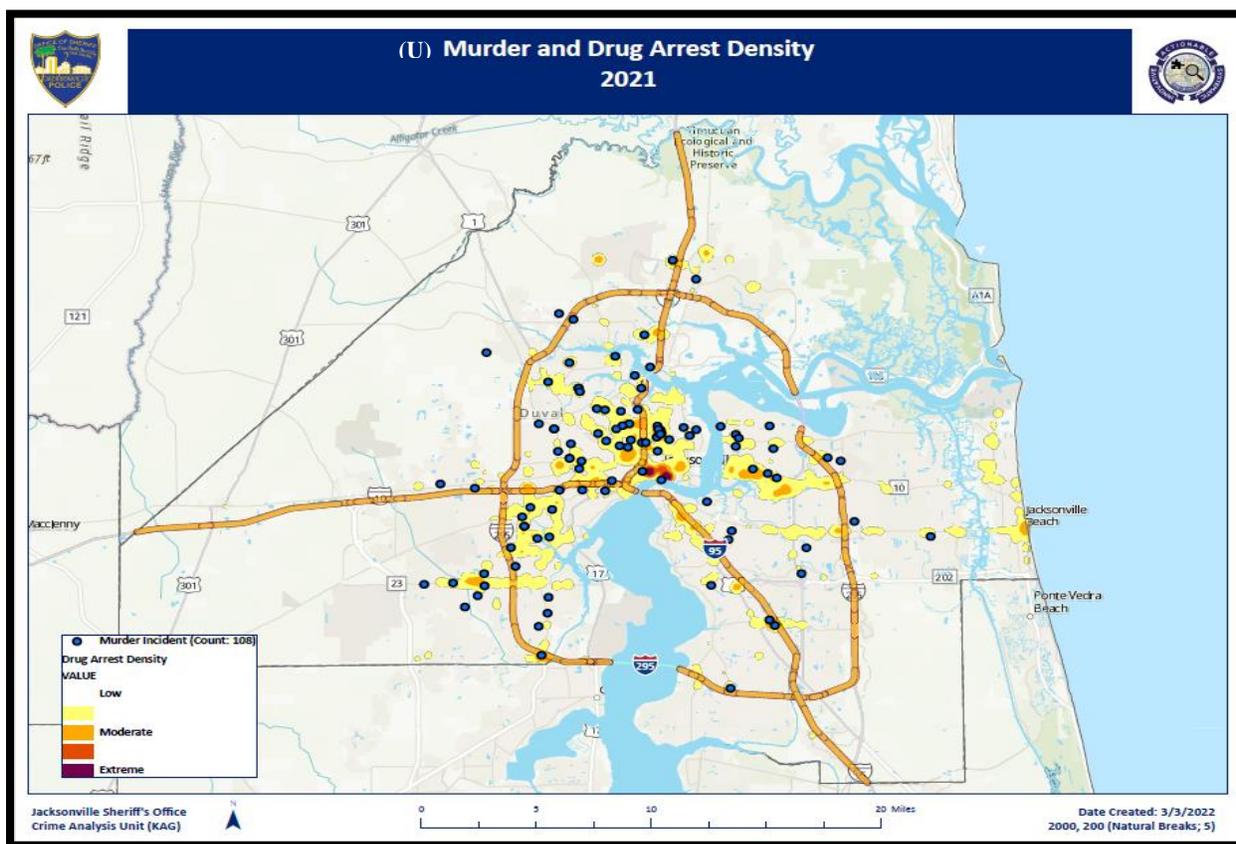


Figure 7 Source: Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Jacksonville's metropolitan area is a hotspot for both murder incidents and drug arrests. As Florida's leader in the per capita murder rate and overall crime index among the state's most populous counties, Duval County's high level of violence has varied little over the past seven years (FDLE, 2020b).

(U) Although the level of violence and high murder rate in Duval County are certainly alarming, the number of deaths *caused by* drugs continues to significantly overshadow violent crimes. In CY2021, the number of murders occurring in Jacksonville (**107**) was significantly overshadowed by the **393** fatal overdoses in the same time period (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). As of May 2022, the NFHIDTA's Narcotics Overdose Death Investigations Task Force (NODITF)

responded to 150 overdose death cases, which led to 35 drug and 7 homicide arrests (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). Ultimately, if CY2022 continues with the projected trajectory, there will be a significant increase in the annual total of overdose deaths in Duval County alone.

(U) Drug Threats

(U) Source Consideration: The following information was developed after reviewing the data collected from the NFHIDTA's Performance Management Process (PMP), DEA Price and Purity report, the Florida Medical Examiner's Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons report, the Florida Department of Health, the NFHIDTA's Public Health Analyst (PHA) and Drug Intelligence Officer (DIO), and the threat assessment survey responses. (See Source Considerations Section in Methodology for a complete list of sources.)

(U) Overview

(U) For estimating relative drug rank and availability, NFHIDTA uses quantitative indicators such as illicit drug seizures and number of associated deaths, qualitative indicators such as the collected responses from the 2022 NFHIDTA Annual Drug Threat Survey, and a composite of regional trafficking awareness.

(U) Major Changes Since the 2021 North Florida HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment

- ◆ (U) Xylazine, a sedative intended for veterinary purposes, has been increasingly identified comingled with other substances. Xylazine is a non-opioid sedative; therefore, opioid overdose treatments such as Narcan are not an effective countermeasure.
- ◆ (U) Counterfeit pills continue to infiltrate the region's drug market, and there is no end in sight yet for this trend.
- ◆ (U) Heroin seizures and occurrences in decedents continue to decline, although with its propensity for being mixed with fentanyl, it remains a high-level drug threat.
- ◆ (U) The FME defines mitragynine as an alkaloid found in the kratom plant, which is consumed for its stimulant and analgesic effects. In CY2020, the FME reported a total of 246 occurrences of mitragynine, where it was listed as the *cause of death* in 166 and present in 80 decedents (FDLE, 2021).

(U) Drug Threat Ranking

(U) Due to potency, lethality, and wide availability, **fentanyl** remains ranked as the top drug threat. **Methamphetamine**, essentially all imported rather than locally produced, remains in second place. Further complicating its threat ranking is the continued identification of meth laced with fentanyl. Although seizures have decreased, **heroin** remains third. Survey respondents indicate the heroin market has been largely overtaken by fentanyl; however, as drug users often seek heroin and receive fentanyl, the threat remains elevated. **Cocaine/Crack** seizures increased exponentially; however, due to the lethality and prevalence of the aforementioned substances, cocaine/crack remain ranked fourth and fifth, respectively. **MDMA** jumped up two spots as its use remains prevalent in certain NFHIDTA areas, primarily in lower income populations. **Diverted pharmaceuticals** moved to seventh, likely due to the decline in seizures for the third straight year. **Marijuana** moved down to eighth, although use and availability remain widespread. **Synthetics**, including cathinones and cannabinoids, are combined for this year's assessment and take ninth place in the drug threat ranking. However, as the use of synthetics is often concentrated to specific areas, the overall threat to the NFHIDTA is not especially high.

Rank	Drug Type	Seized 2021	% Change from 2020	Impact to the NFHIDTA
1	Fentanyl	35 kg 36 d.u.	192% 620%	Greatest drug threat; high level of availability; widely found in drug seizure samples and toxicology reports
2	Meth/Ice	115 kg	69%	Poses major threat; high level of availability
3	Heroin	7 kg	-67%	Remains third in threat level, although seizures decreased; often adulterated; high threat due to its propensity for being cut with fentanyl
4/5	Cocaine Crack	1,766 kg	1666%	Remain fourth and fifth; high level of availability; increased probability of cocaine laced with fentanyl
6	MDMA	5 kg	No Change	Increased two ranks in threat level; remains moderately available; some increased use reported, primarily in lower income areas
7	Diverted Rx Drugs*	260,642 d.u.	5%	Seizures decreased for third consecutive year; remains strong threat due to fentanyl and use of pill presses
8	Marijuana	1,855 kg	19%	Decreased in threat level; high level of availability and use; increased related violence noted; concerns of marijuana laced fentanyl
9	Synthetics*	93,026 d.u.	109%	Moderate level of availability; use level reportedly either increased or remained the same

Table 1 Source: PMP, 2022 *Conversion used: 1 gram=4 d.u. for comparison purposes

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(U) Drug Use

(U) In November 2021, the Florida Medical Examiners Commission published the 2020 Annual Report entitled *Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons by Florida Medical Examiners*. This assessment compares the findings from this report to shed light on drug use in the NFHIDTA. For the discussion of *use* in each drug category, an evaluation of the number of drug-related deaths occurring in the region is applied to estimate the level of drug consumption. The State of Florida Bureau of Vital Statistics reported 243,088 deaths in Florida during CY2020 (FDLE, 2021). It should be noted, this finding represents a significant increase from the 209,729 reported in CY2019 (FDLE, 2020). Florida's medical examiners investigated 208,708 of the 243,088 deaths, and toxicology results determined one or more drugs were present at the time of death in 14,708 deaths, with an overwhelming majority involving more than one drug (FDLE, 2021). This finding demonstrates a 17% increase from CY2019 and speaks to the commonality of commingling substances by either the drug user, drug dealer, or both (FDLE, 2021).

(U) Public Health Perspective

(U) Statistical data regarding drug use and drug seizures are further examined throughout the remainder of this report; however, the information provided thus far shines light on the drug climate in CY2021 and is indicative of an increase in drug-related overdoses and medical intervention from that in CY2020. This data speaks to the gravity of the opioid climate in the NFHIDTA. The examination of Narcan data is essential to fully determine the current level of drug use in the NFHIDTA. With the increased use of Narcan, solely focusing on overdose statistics greatly eliminates a sizeable and pertinent piece of the puzzle.

(U) Jacksonville Fire Rescue Department (JFRD) data from CY2019 to CY2021 was reviewed to ascertain a clear picture of Narcan deployment and overdose data, specific to the Jacksonville area. A review of the data depicted in **Chart 2** indicates that the numbers of Narcan administered and opioid related overdoses have been on an upward trajectory for the past three years. However, in both categories, the increase noted from CY2019 to CY2020 slowed considerably when comparing CY2020 to CY2021.

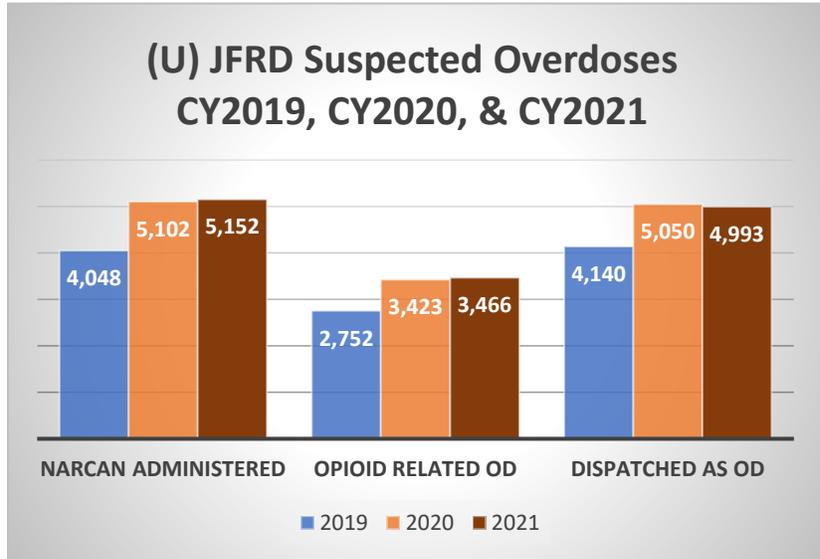


Chart 2 Source: Jacksonville Fire Rescue Department, 2022
 *Note: The JFRD Narcan data may vary from the Biospatial and Essence-FL data due to disparate reporting. UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Expanding the assessment of drug use to include all the NFHIDTA counties is additionally accomplished through an evaluation of all drug overdoses as well as opioid-related overdoses. Data collected from ESSENCE-FL and Biospatial systems are examined to identify drug-related emergency department (ED) visits and Emergency Management Service (EMS) calls for suspected drug overdoses, respectively.

(U) EMS Responses for Suspected Drug Overdoses			
County	2020	2021	Percent Change
Alachua	1,408	1,405	-0.2%
Baker	97	133	37%
Bradford	132	171	30%
Clay	752	796	6%
Columbia	31	29	-6%
Duval	5,394	5,942	10%
Flagler	395	447	13%
Leon	1,205	1,480	23%
Marion	3,136	3,259	4%
Nassau	265	358	35%
Putnam	311	382	23%
St. Johns	724	976	35%
Union	39	57	46%

Table 2 Source: Essence & Biospatial, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) A review of **Table 2** indicates that all but two NFHIDTA counties experienced an increase in the number of EMS responses for suspected drug overdoses. There was a significant increase in suspected drug-involved ED visits among the majority of the NFHIDTA counties from CY2020 to CY2021. Notably, Duval County topped the charts with 10,349 suspected drug-involved ED visits while Columbia County had the highest percent increase. The majority of the NFHIDTA

counties experienced significant increases in the number of EMS responses to opioid overdoses where naloxone was administered. Such comparative reviews indicate that the region overall experienced an increase in drug and opioid use, which led to an increasing number of overdoses, the need for naloxone administration, and the need for medical intervention.

(U) Suspected Drug-Involved Emergency Department Visits by County				(U) EMS Responses to Opioid Overdoses where Naloxone was Administered			
County	2020	2021	Percent Change	County	2020	2021	Percent Change
Alachua	1,886	2,219	18%	Alachua	244	260	7%
Baker	125	133	6%	Baker	50	56	12%
Bradford	104	135	30%	Bradford	14	20	43%
Clay	1,366	1,332	-2%	Clay	359	379	6%
Columbia	541	728	35%	Columbia	Unknown	Unknown	--
Duval	9,191	10,349	13%	Duval	2,870	3,066	7%
Flagler	714	766	7%	Flagler	160	163	2%
Leon	842	1,004	19%	Leon	177	262	48%
Marion	2,620	3,183	21%	Marion	1,196	1,332	11%
Nassau	291	355	22%	Nassau	124	152	23%
Putnam	480	532	11%	Putnam	89	102	15%
St. Johns	689	857	24%	St. Johns	172	235	37%
Union	15	13	-13%	Union	Unknown	Unknown	--

Table 3 Source: Essence-FL & Biospatial, 2022

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(U//FOUO) Treatment data may also provide some insight into the prevalence of drug use. A review of **Chart 3** indicates that marijuana was identified as the primary drug in 30% of treatment admissions within the NFHIDTA AOR. Nearly 40% of treatment admissions were for an opioid-related substance. *Note: Incidents where alcohol was listed as the primary drug and those that did not list a primary substance were excluded. Data may include multiple incidents for individuals who entered treatment more than once during the data collection period.*

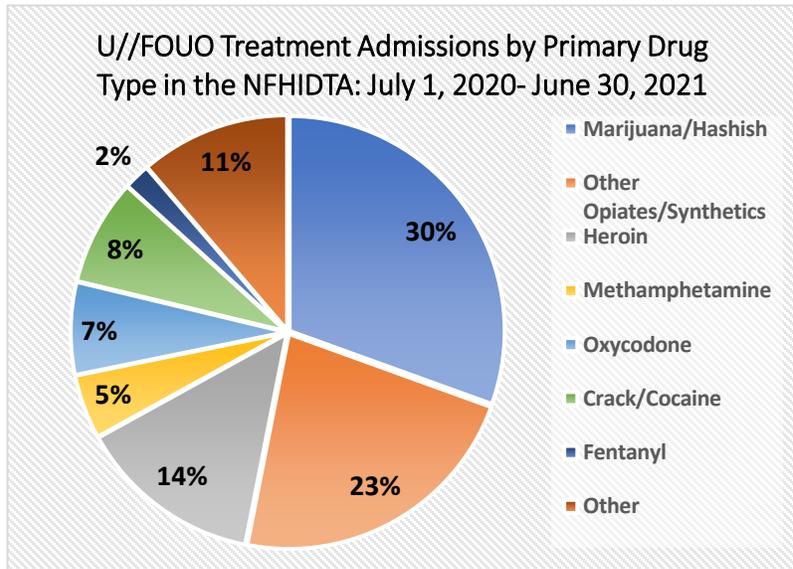


Chart 3 Source: LSF 2022

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(U) Fentanyl

(U) Availability

(U) **Fentanyl**, believed to be a cutting agent for various opioids, has now been identified comingled with other substances such as heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine, and in some instances, it is used to enhance the effects of the other drugs. Fentanyl remains a common cutting agent likely due to its high potency and affordability. Anecdotal reporting indicates users are now seeking out fentanyl and fentanyl laced substances once they have experienced its high. Twenty-seven percent of the survey respondents indicate drug users now prefer fentanyl and will seek it out (NFHIDTA, 2022). Additionally, 24% of respondents indicate users will not attempt to test their drugs and will rely on Narcan to revive them if need be (NFHIDTA, 2022). It is important to note that zero respondents indicate users

would seek ways to detect and avoid fentanyl (NFHIDTA, 2022). The infiltration of fentanyl into the North Florida drug market continues to complicate law enforcement and public health efforts.

(U) A review of the CY2022 threat assessment survey identified 33% of respondents assess that fentanyl (including analogs) poses the greatest threat to the NFHIDTA (NFHIDTA, 2022). Participants overwhelmingly indicate fentanyl is widely available, leads to great harm, and puts a strain on agency resources (NFHIDTA, 2022). In fact, NFHIDTA initiatives seized 35 kilograms and 36 doses of fentanyl in CY2021, compared to the 12 kilograms and 5 doses seized in CY2020 (PMP, 2022). Furthermore, as of June 14, 2022, NFHIDTA initiatives have already seized 12 kilograms and 906 doses of fentanyl during 175 seizure incidents, indicating its high availability in the local market, especially in pill form (PMP, 2022). These findings indicate increasing levels of availability and use of fentanyl.

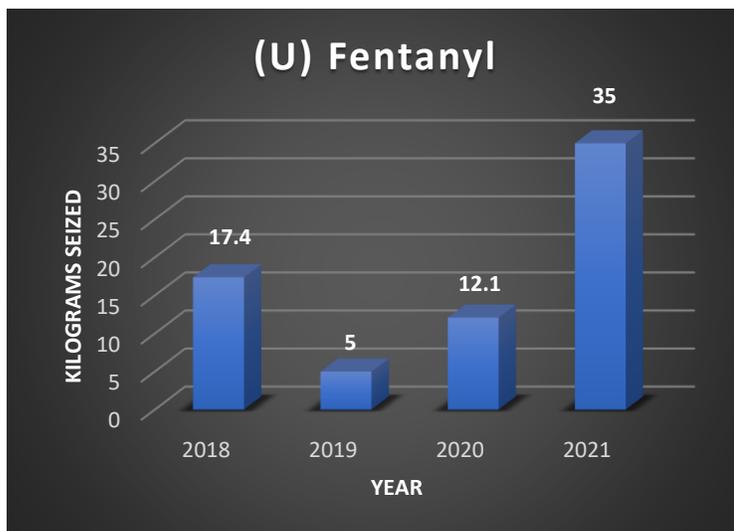


Chart 4 Source: PMP, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

High	Moderate	Low
52.5%	17.5%	5%

Table 4 Source: NFHIDTA, 2022

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to the exclusion of "blank" responses UNCLASSIFIED

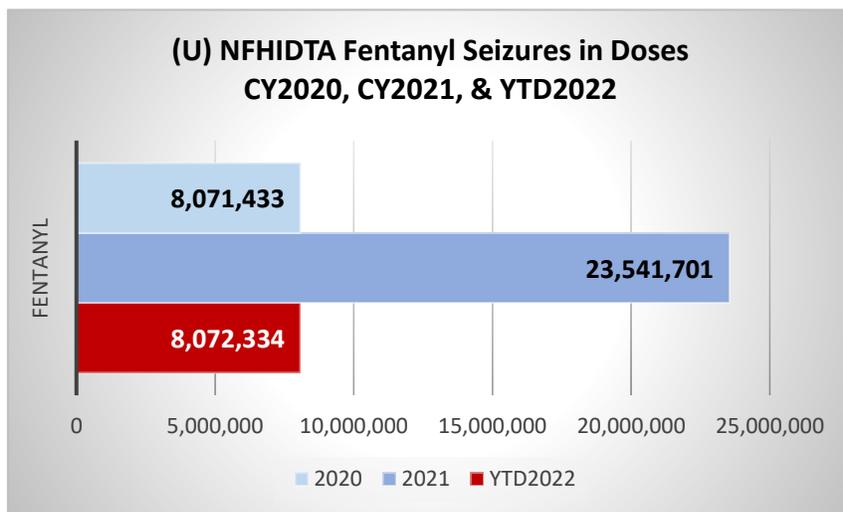


Chart 5 Source: Case Explorer, 2022; PMP, 2022 Note: YTD2022 indicates through June 14, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) A more compelling view of such seizure levels accounts for the number of doses removed from the marketplace so as to reflect the life-saving value of each seizure. Using a conversion factor provided by the National HIDTA’s NETI, one kilogram of fentanyl can yield 672,619 doses (NETI, 2022). As depicted in **Chart 5**, over eight million doses of fentanyl have been seized YTD2022, which already exceeds CY2020 totals. According to the DEA (2021c), approximately two milligrams of fentanyl can be lethal (DEA, 2021c). Therefore, with the total YTD2022 seized fentanyl, over 6 million lethal doses were removed from the market. The DEA (2021c) estimates that one kilogram of fentanyl has the potential to kill 500,000; therefore, in YTD2022 alone, the NFHIDTA has spared over 6 million lives (DEA, 2021c). By way of perspective, the approximate population of the NFHIDTA is 2,905,995 (United States Census Bureau, 2021).

(U) Use

(U) Although fentanyl seizures have continued to increase since CY2019, the likelihood that it remains underreported is high due to its propensity to be comingled or marketed as other substances. One survey respondent noted that fentanyl is primarily sold as heroin while the availability of heroin rapidly declines (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) The threat survey responses indicate a high prevalence of the identified fentanyl is comingled with other substances. Specifically, respondents reported fentanyl was commonly used as a cutting agent for cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine (NFHIDTA, 2022). Survey responses coupled with in-person communication yielded several mentions of fentanyl-laced marijuana (NFHIDTA, 2022; Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). However, it is important to note that such reports have not all been verified through lab results, may be perceived due to adverse reactions to marijuana, or may be due to fentanyl contamination rather than intentional comingling. The adulteration of marijuana with fentanyl is extremely concerning due to marijuana’s widespread use. Additionally, marijuana users may be less exposed to opioid use, and therefore experience stronger adverse reactions to even the most minimal fentanyl exposure.

(U) **Chart 6** depicts the number of survey respondents who reported seizing various forms of fentanyl. Survey respondents indicate fentanyl was most commonly seized in powder and pill form, primarily counterfeit pills (NFHIDTA, 2022). Pill presses continue to be used to emulate prescription pills. The use of pill presses is especially concerning as users may be completely unaware as to the chemical makeup of the substances. Specifically, mixing

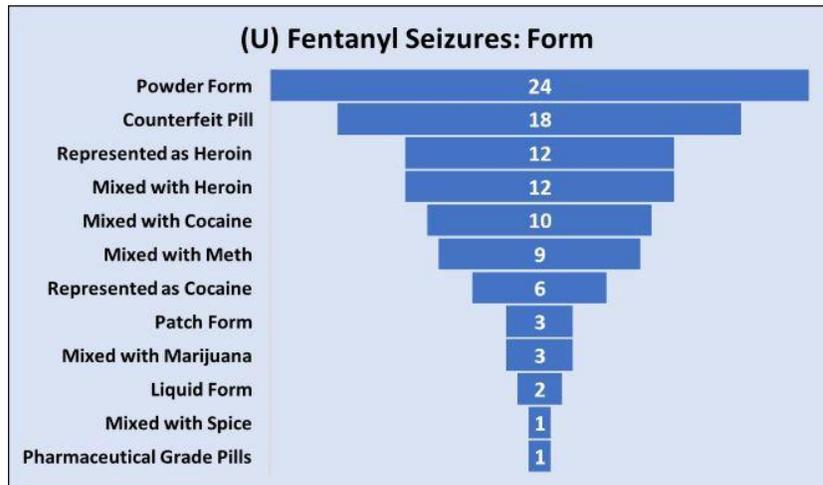


Chart 6 Source: NFHIDTA, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

high potency substances such as fentanyl and designing the pills to appear as lower potency and/or legitimate substances such as pharmaceutical grade medicines, has been increasingly deadly, especially to young users. DEA laboratory testing indicated an alarming increase in the number of counterfeit pills that contained a fatal dose (at least two milligrams) of fentanyl, spurring them to issue a public safety alert in September 2021 (DEA, 2021e).

(U) Although counterfeit pills are primarily produced in Mexico and brought into the United States, there are also domestic dealers and DTOs acquiring pill presses to create their own counterfeit pill operations. In one such example, a Florida man was sentenced to three years in prison for selling hundreds of thousands of counterfeit pharmaceutical drugs through the darknet (DOJ, 2021). In this example, the defendant used a pill press to manufacture pills that he stamped with Xanax. However, it was later identified the pills contained a mixture of various substances including alprazolam (DOJ, 2021). This particular defendant used the darknet; however, in many cases, drug dealers are utilizing social media apps such as Snapchat to reach potential buyers.

(U) Friedman et al. (2022) reported “the rate of overdose deaths among U.S. teenagers nearly doubled in 2020, the first year of the COVID pandemic, and rose another 20% in the first half of 2021 compared with the 10 years before the pandemic, even as drug use remained generally stable during the same period” (Friedman, et al., 2022, p. 1). Ultimately, these findings indicate that although teen drug use is relatively stable, the lethality of use, likely due in large part to fentanyl, is increasing at an alarming rate. This finding is further supported by threat survey respondents who stated counterfeit pills are constantly distributed among unknowing teens (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) According to the statewide FME CY2020 report, fentanyl, combined with fentanyl analogs, accounted for the most frequently occurring drug found in decedents, and fentanyl was overwhelmingly found as the drug that *caused* the most deaths, an alarming 5,302 (FDLE, 2021). Further exemplifying its high use and lethality levels in Florida, **fentanyl-caused deaths exceeded, by nearly 3,000 cases, cocaine-caused deaths** (2,400) in CY2020 (FDLE, 2021). The statewide FME

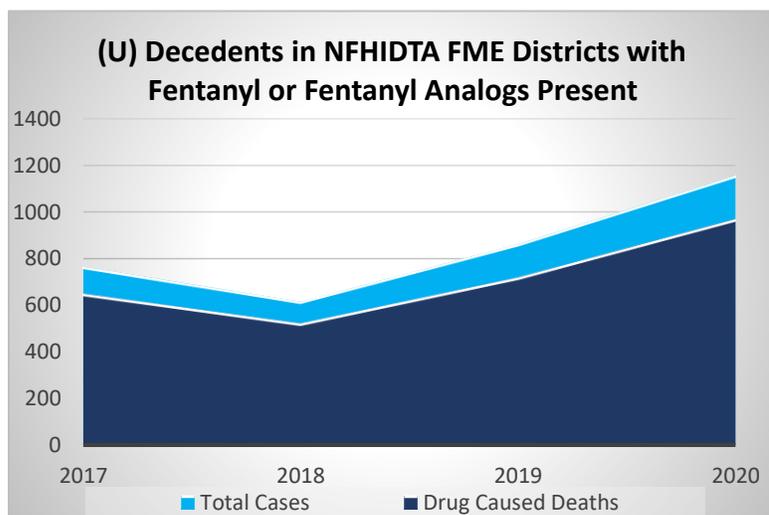


Chart 7 Source: FDLE. 2018-2021 UNCLASSIFIED

CY2020 report identified that the fentanyl-related deaths increased 59%, and deaths *caused by* fentanyl increased 63% (FDLE, 2021). Additionally, total deaths involving fentanyl analogs increased 40%, while deaths *caused by* fentanyl analogs decreased 8%. FME District 4, which includes NFHIDTA’s Clay, Duval, and Nassau Counties reported 588 total fentanyl deaths during CY2020, ranking behind only Ft. Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, and St. Petersburg (FDLE, 2021). Although FME District 4 may have contributed the highest number of total fentanyl deaths in the NFHIDTA FME districts, every NFHIDTA FME district reported an increase in both total fentanyl deaths and fentanyl *caused* deaths from CY2019 to CY2020.

(U) Continuing the upward trajectory, FME CY2021 *interim* report, which compares data collected from January-June 2020 to data collected from January-June 2021, indicated that fentanyl cases increased 11%, and deaths *caused by* fentanyl increased 9% in the state of Florida (FDLE, 2022a). Additionally, occurrences of fentanyl analogs increased 51%, and deaths *caused by* fentanyl analogs increased 40% (FDLE, 2022a). These findings indicate that statewide the use as well as the supply of fentanyl remains high, and the use and supply of fentanyl analogs appears to be increasing.

(U) Price

(U) In NFHIDTA’s drug market, fentanyl is primarily sold in grams and dosage units, followed by ounce and kilogram quantities (NFHIDTA, 2022). It is likely that the noted price decrease is indicative of increased supply and demand. Survey respondents indicated fentanyl remains readily available, and no potential supply issues or shortages were mentioned (NFHIDTA, 2022). NFHIDTA assesses with medium confidence that fentanyl pricing will remain consistent in the second half of CY2022. This assessment is based on DEA reporting, personal communication, threat survey responses, and the current state of affairs.

(U) In Florida, fentanyl has been identified mixed with fluorophenyl, acetaminophen, cocaine, heroin, lidocaine, procaine, tramadol, and **xylazine** (DEA SERL, 2022).

(U) Transportation

(U) Some fentanyl found in the NFHIDTA market came from California, Canada, and Central Florida, although a majority of case records indicate the source area to be North Florida (Case Explorer, 2022). Some survey respondents indicated fentanyl also came from Europe, Mexico, Southwest Border, and Atlanta (NFHIDTA, 2022). One respondent specifically stated fentanyl is shipped from the Southwest Border to Jacksonville via the US Postal Service (USPS) (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Intelligence Gaps

(U) If drug users are actively seeking fentanyl, as mentioned in discussions with various initiative commanders and public health partners, would fentanyl test strips deter or encourage drug use?

(U) What steps, if any, are social media companies taking to better monitor illicit activities on their platforms?

(U) Why did the deaths related to fentanyl analogs significantly increase in the first half of CY2021? Is this indicative of more widespread use of fentanyl analogs? Is the potency of fentanyl analogs increasing? Are TCOs formulating fentanyl analogs to circumvent legal restrictions within their countries?

(U) Xylazine

(U) Xylazine, a non-opioid veterinary muscle relaxant and sedative, has been increasingly identified in overdose toxicology reporting, specifically in conjunction with other substances such as heroin, cocaine, and fentanyl.

(U) Xylazine is an unscheduled drug and has not been approved for use in humans. Unlike opioids, xylazine overdose does not have an approved medical human antidote. As a result, revival efforts may be complex due to the depressive effects of xylazine on the respiratory system.

(U) Several seizures in Northeast Florida were identified as a mixture of powdered xylazine and fentanyl. Although illicit xylazine use is not new in Northeast Florida, the infiltration of fentanyl into the illicit drug market and the comingling of xylazine with other highly potent substances may lead to an increase in fatal outcomes.

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Figure 8 xylazine

(U) Methamphetamine

(U) Availability

(U) Essentially all imported and in crystal form, the second drug threat in the region remains **methamphetamine**. Although 50% of survey respondents denote methamphetamine to be either the highest or the second highest threat to the region, it does not exceed the deadly nature of fentanyl (NFHIDTA, 2022). However, its widespread availability and use, along with its propensity for being comingled with fentanyl causes NFHIDTA to assess with high confidence methamphetamine as a close second in threat level.

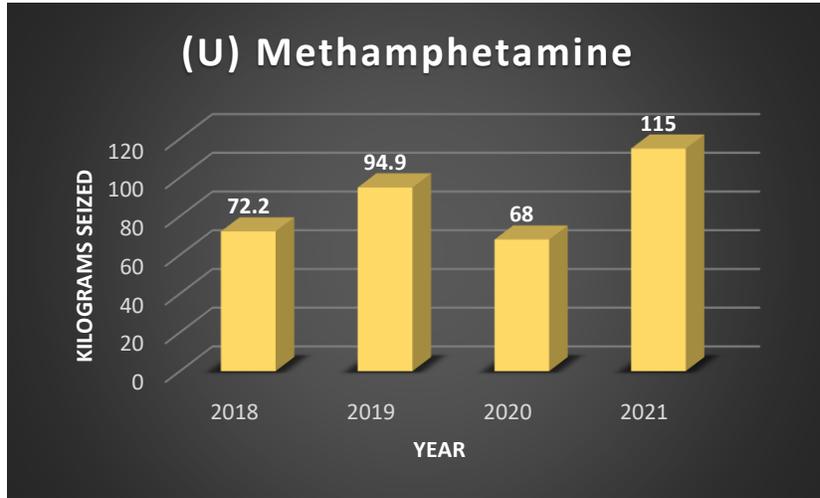


Chart 8 Source: PMP, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) In CY2021, NFHIDTA initiatives seized approximately 115 kilograms of methamphetamine (PMP, 2022). This seizure amount represents a significant increase from the previous three years. After a substantial decline in seizures in CY2020, likely attributed to COVID-19 related supply issues, methamphetamine seizures have now surpassed pre-pandemic levels (PMP, 2022).

(U) The majority of survey respondents indicated meth is widely available, leads to great harm, and puts a strain on agency resources (NFHIDTA, 2022). Crystal meth was reported as widely available and typically offered at lower prices when compared to other drugs in the local market (NFHIDTA, 2022). Many respondents reported that the use of methamphetamine is widespread and remains readily available in most NFHIDTA areas (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Perceived Availability of Methamphetamine by Law Enforcement		
High	Moderate	Low
60%	7.5%	7.5%

Table 5 Source: NFHIDTA, 2022 Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to the exclusion of "blank" responses UNCLASSIFIED

(U) NFHIDTA cases in CY2021 support that there is a continued high availability for smaller quantities of meth. In CY2021, there were 427 gram-level methamphetamine/ice seizures in the NFHIDTA, including 113 in Nassau, 106 in Marion, 88 in Duval, 33 in Leon, 32 in Columbia, and 28 in Alachua Counties (Case Explorer, 2022). The remaining NFHIDTA counties all reported at least one gram-level seizure (Case Explorer, 2022). This trend appears to be continuing in the first five months of CY2022 in which there have been 208 gram-level and no kilogram-level meth/ice seizures (Case Explorer, 2022). A Duval County seizure of 2.3 kilograms of meth/ice, the only location reporting a kilogram-level meth/ice seizure in CY2021, supports the assertion that Duval County is likely continuing to be used as a distribution center.

(U) Production

(U) The production of methamphetamine continues to evolve. While local meth production was a huge threat, it is now virtually undetected in the NFHIDTA. There is a notable shift from local production to Mexican based P2P meth, often produced in "super labs," allowing for fast and cheap production.

(U) Use

(U) The majority of survey respondents (57.5%) indicated methamphetamine use is high in the local market (NFHIDTA, 2022). To support this assertion, a review of the FME CY2020 report revealed that there was a 47% increase in statewide meth-related deaths and a 55% increase in meth-caused deaths (FDLE, 2021). FME District 4, which includes NFHIDTA's Clay, Duval, and Nassau Counties, recorded the second highest number of total meth-related deaths (200) in Florida for CY2020 (FDLE, 2021). Consistent with these findings, meth-related deaths and those *caused by*

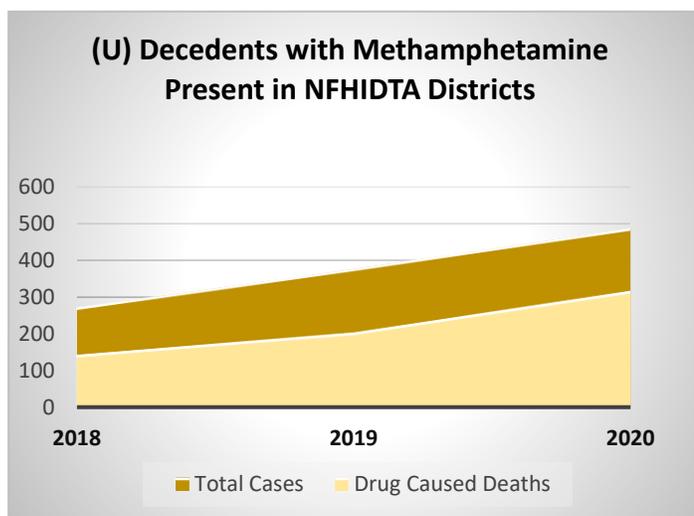


Chart 9 Source FDLE, 2019- 2021 UNCLASSIFIED

meth increased in the first half of CY2021, indicating that local and statewide use of meth is not only high, but also increasing without any indication of slowing. The FME CY2021 *interim* report indicates a 33% increase in statewide meth-related deaths and a 40% increase in meth-caused deaths (FDLE, 2022a). Of the total meth-related deaths in Florida in the first half of CY2021, FME District 4 had the second highest number (142), which is already 71% of that district's annual CY2020 totals, and FME District 5 had the fourth highest number (116) (FDLE, 2022a). It is important to note that once ingested, methamphetamine is metabolized to amphetamine; therefore, it is plausible that the already high meth-related death toll is being underreported (FDLE, 2021).

(U) Notably, of the 2,080 meth-related deaths in Florida for CY2020, a whopping 2,041 were identified in combination with other drugs (FDLE, 2021). This data coupled with the relative high purity levels of meth found in the State speaks to the assertion that meth users are either typically polydrug users or unaware of the potential lethal potency of its adulterants.

(U) Price

(U) The high supply and demand for meth are likely driving the cost down at the ounce level while gram-level prices hold steady, more on par with methamphetamine's pre-pandemic low prices (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). NFHIDTA assesses with medium confidence the methamphetamine prices in the NFHIDTA will remain stable for the second half of CY2022. This assessment is based on the ample meth supply in the region and the lifting of pandemic related restrictions.

(U) Transportation

(U) Survey respondents identified Mexico, Southwest Border, Atlanta, and Central Florida as the most common source areas for meth found in the NFHIDTA (NFHIDTA, 2022). Distribution hubs such as El Paso, Houston, Dallas, and New Orleans also serve as significant sources of meth to the NFHIDTA (Office of Intelligence and Analysis, 2022). North Florida was identified as a source area for meth seized in Columbia, Duval, and Leon Counties, indicating the region is a destination and distribution hub (Case Explorer, 2022). Meth powder and ice transport primarily occur using personal vehicles along the region's interstate and roadway network (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022).

(U) Traffickers are also exploiting mail delivery services to ship methamphetamine into Florida and the local market. Notably, there were four meth parcels destined for Jacksonville that were seized in CY2021 in the NFHIDTA’s Duval County, and three of the four were coming from California while the other did not identify an origin (Case Explorer, 2022). The parcels contained various quantities of meth ranging from 2.3 kilograms to 0.45 pounds (Case Explorer, 2022). Two of the packages were sent via UPS, one via FedEx, and one via USPS (Case Explorer, 2022).

(U) In January 2022, an undercover operation in Clay County led to the seizure of 26 pounds of crystal meth and the arrest of a male California teen (Avanier, 2022b). The suspect reportedly flew from California, took an **Uber** to travel to a grocery store parking lot in Green Cove Springs (Clay County) where he arrived with a suitcase filled with packages of crystal meth, and was arrested on scene (Avanier, 2022b). The suspect admitted he received the drugs from a man in **California** and was instructed to **fly** to Florida to deliver the drugs. The Jacksonville DEA indicated that the crystal meth was likely produced in a **super lab** by a **Mexican based drug cartel** and transported from **Los Angeles**, which has been identified as a popular distribution hub for cartel operatives (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022).

(U) Intelligence Gaps

(U) As meth seizures spiked in CY2021 and appear to be continuing on an upward trajectory, yet the majority of the seizure amounts were gram-level quantities, the inference is that there is a higher frequency of smaller quantities of meth being transported into the region. With only four NFHIDTA meth parcel seizures in CY2021, is the majority being transported via roadway or are the meth parcels so well camouflaged that a majority are escaping law enforcement detection?

(U) Heroin

(U) Availability

(U) For the second consecutive year, **heroin** ranked as the NFHIDTA’s third top drug threat. With 43% of survey respondents identifying heroin as one of their top drug threats, marginally behind fentanyl and meth, the concern surrounding it remains high (NFHIDTA, 2022). Despite the significant decrease in seizure amounts, the threat level remains in part due to the high concern that more potent opioids, such as fentanyl, may likely be sold as heroin, potentially leading to deadly outcomes.

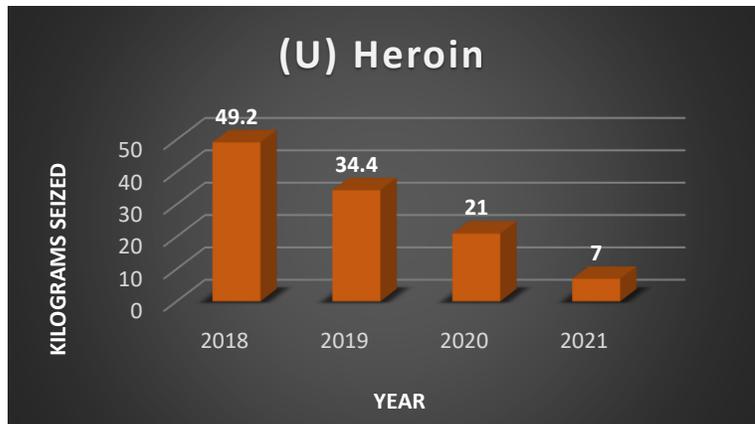


Chart 10 Source: PMP. 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) There was an 86% decrease in heroin seized when comparing NFHIDTA seizure totals from CY2018 to CY2021. It is plausible that the decrease in local heroin seizures is directly correlated to the intrusion of fentanyl and meth into the local heroin market. However, the vast majority of respondents indicated heroin availability either increased or remained the same in CY2021 (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Perceived Availability of Heroin by Law Enforcement		
High	Moderate	Low
37.5%	20%	17.5%

Table 6 Source NFHIDTA, 2022

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to the exclusion of “blank” responses UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Supporting this assertion, heroin was reportedly the **second** most commonly seized opioid in the state of Florida during the first half of CY2021, trailing behind fentanyl (Florida Fusion Center, 2021a). In the NFHIDTA, 87% of heroin seizures occurred in Duval or Marion County for CY2021 (Case Explorer, 2022). The remaining 13% occurred primarily in Nassau, Putnam, or Alachua County (Case Explorer, 2022). A further review of the seizure data identified the majority of seized heroin was at the gram level.

(U) Use

(U) FME reported statewide heroin-related deaths decreased 11.5% and deaths *caused by* heroin decreased 12% in CY2020 (FDLE, 2021). In CY2020, NFHIDTA FME districts experienced a decline in heroin-related deaths, representing only the second decline in the region since CY2012 (FDLE, 2021). Despite the reduction in seizures and related deaths, survey respondents overwhelmingly indicated heroin remains widely available and leads to great harm (NFHIDTA, 2022). Several respondents also reported heroin puts a strain on agency resources (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) For the second consecutive year, FME District 5, which includes Citrus, Hernando, Lake, **Marion**, and Sumter Counties, surpassed FME District 4, which includes **Clay**, **Duval**, and **Nassau** Counties, in the number of total heroin-related deaths (FDLE, 2021). It is important to note that FME reporting indicated there were **zero** incidents in which heroin was listed as the **sole** drug found in the decedent (FDLE, 2021). This finding indicates that pure heroin is a rarity, and drug users are often consuming heroin in conjunction with other substances, either unknowingly or deliberately.

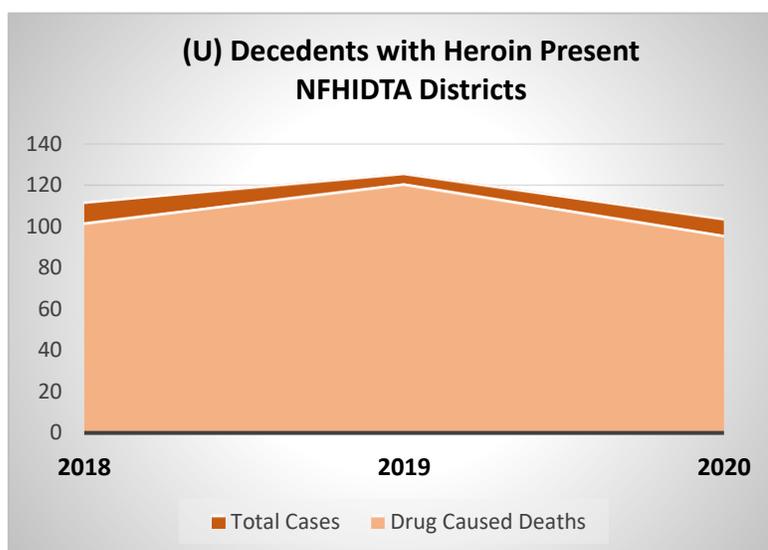


Chart 11 Source: FDLE, 2019- 2021 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Consistent with that of CY2019, the NFHIDTA FME districts' findings for CY2020 indicated the number of heroin-*caused* deaths in relation to the total heroin cases is notably high. In **92%** of the **total** heroin cases within the NFHIDTA, heroin was denoted as the **cause** of death (FDLE, 2021). The continuation of this trend may indicate that the combined potency of the heroin with its comingled substances are either too much for the user or are being consumed unwittingly. The DEA's *2021 Emerging Threat Report* indicated that "fentanyl accounted for approximately 89% of the opioid identifications. 59% of the fentanyl identifications were identified as pure fentanyl, 22% were identified to contain fentanyl and heroin" (DEA, 2021a, p. 1).

(U) FME CY2021 *interim* report indicated occurrences of heroin **decreased** 43%, and deaths *caused by* heroin **decreased** 44% in the state of Florida (FDLE, 2022a). This finding is consistent with the perceived decline in heroin-related deaths in CY2020.

(U) Price

(U) The price of heroin in the local market has changed dramatically from previous years. It is plausible that a noted decrease in pricing may indicate that the influx of fentanyl and other opioids are replacing the demand for heroin in the local market.

(U) Survey respondents overwhelmingly indicated that the most common quantity of heroin distributed within the NFHIDTA is at the gram-level, trailed significantly by ounce-level (NFHIDTA, 2022). This assertion is consistent with the NFHIDTA's CY2021 heroin seizure data where the quantity of the majority of the heroin seized was less than 100 grams (Case Explorer, 2022). It is important to note that there were no survey respondents who reported kilogram-level quantities of heroin commonly distributed within their regions (NFHIDTA, 2022). It is possible TCOs and DTOs are moving smaller quantities of heroin to avoid detection and minimize financial risk; although, it is more plausible that the demand for heroin may be lessening as the influx of more potent opioids continues.

(U) Transportation

(U) Survey respondents indicated the most common source areas for heroin found in the local market are Atlanta, Mexico, and the Southwest Border (NFHIDTA, 2022). A review of the NFHIDTA's CY2021 heroin seizure data shows that New York, Texas, and Thailand were also source areas of the heroin found in the local market (Case Explorer, 2022).

(U) As with other illicit substances, heroin traffickers are exploiting various parcel services to transport heroin. Notably, the largest single seizure of heroin in the NFHIDTA is attributed to a parcel seizure. In June 2021, NFHIDTA's MLIII seized a UPS package that originated in New York and was destined for Duval County (Case Explorer, 2022). The package contained 2.55 pounds of heroin (Case Explorer, 2022).

(U) The NFHIDTA interstate network is a centralized location and coupled with the ease of access to various major interstate routes, drug traffickers exploit the transportation infrastructure to move product in and around the region. Heroin DTOs operating within the NFHIDTA likely use major interstate routes including I95, I10, and I75 to pick up and disperse product to surrounding areas. This assessment is further supported by survey responses, personal communication efforts, and a review of seizure data, which indicated the majority of heroin seizures were reported to occur via traffic stops or identified through a vehicle search (NFHIDTA, 2022; PMP, 2022).

(U) Intelligence Gaps

(U) If heroin was the second most commonly seized opioid in the State, yet the annual NFHIDTA heroin seizure totals are consistently declining and the majority are in gram-level quantities, does this indicate wholesale distribution is occurring within the State but outside the region?

(U) As drug users continue to seek fentanyl and other more potent opioids, will heroin DTOs shift their supplies to accommodate?

(U) Cocaine & Crack

(U) Availability

(U) Consistent with previous years, survey respondents varied in their ranking of the overall threat of **cocaine**. Although several ranked cocaine and crack in their top three, the majority indicated the drugs are of moderate threat to their AOR (NFHIDTA, 2022). However, it is important to note that the vast majority of the respondents reported both cocaine and crack were either highly or moderately available (NFHIDTA, 2022). Additionally, respondents indicated cocaine and crack were widely available, lead to great harm, and put a strain on agency resources (NFHIDTA, 2022). Although remaining in fourth place, **cocaine continues to be the top drug affiliated with DTOs in the region.**

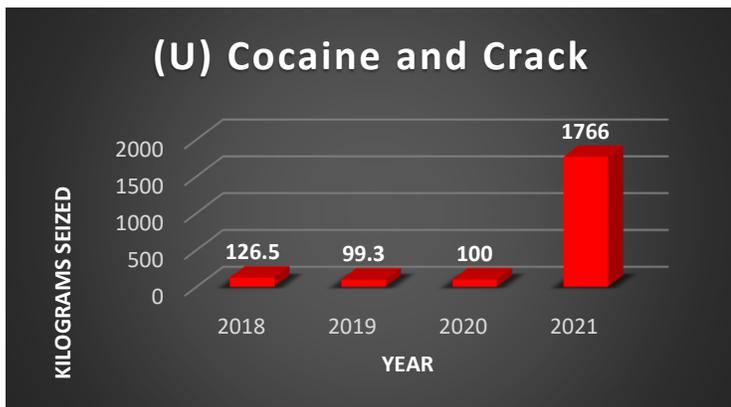


Chart 12 Source: PMP, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Perceived Availability of Cocaine/Crack by Law Enforcement		
High	Moderate	Low
Cocaine		
47.5%	25%	2.5%
Crack		
45%	22.5%	5%

Table 7 Source: NFHIDTA, 2022

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to the exclusion of "blank" responses UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Use

(U) Of the 112 DTOs operating in the NFHIDTA in CY2021, 55 are involved in the trafficking or distribution of cocaine and/or crack, of which 17 operate solely in cocaine trafficking (PMP, 2022). Notably, based on seizure amounts and DTO operations, cocaine/crack is certainly the most widely available and commonly trafficked drug in the NFHIDTA. However, 28% of survey respondents reported seizing fentanyl that was mixed with cocaine, and 17% reported seizing fentanyl that was represented as cocaine (NFHIDTA, 2022). Although, in the past it appeared that fentanyl was typically being used as a cutting agent for various opioids, it has been identified that fentanyl is now comingled with numerous other substances, including cocaine. The mixture of cocaine and fentanyl offers a potentially deadly combination, especially to unknowing users and those with little to no opioid tolerance. For example, in March 2022, six men and one female overdosed in Wilton Manors, FL after ingesting fentanyl-laced cocaine (Crist, 2022). Notably, only four of the seven patients purposefully consumed the substance while the remaining individuals were exposed conducting life-saving measures (Crist, 2022).

(U) A review of the CY2020 FME data showed a 24% increase in occurrences of cocaine and a 30% increase in cocaine-caused deaths statewide (FDLE, 2021). Specific to the NFHIDTA, the CY2020 FME data revealed a 22% increase in total

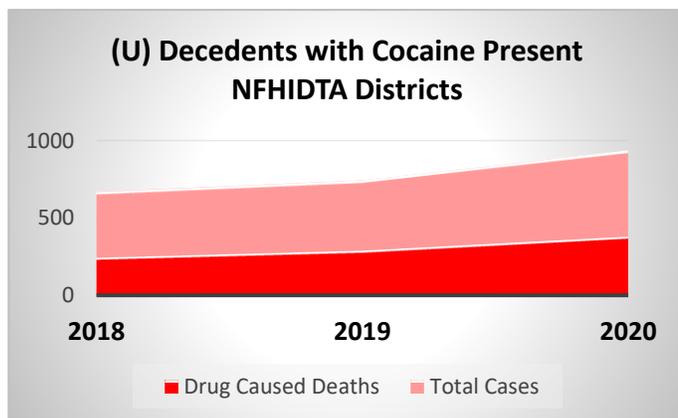


Chart 13 Source: FDLE, 2019- 2021 UNCLASSIFIED

cocaine deaths and a 31% increase in cocaine-caused deaths (FDLE, 2021). In CY2020, Jacksonville's FME district ranked **fourth** in the State in **total cocaine** deaths and **third** in the State in **cocaine-caused** deaths. Notably, in the state of Florida, cocaine was ranked second, trailing only fentanyl, as the drug that **caused** the most deaths in CY2020. Continuing the upward trajectory of cocaine deaths, the FME CY2021 *interim* report indicated total cocaine deaths increased 4% and cocaine-caused deaths increased 3% in the state of Florida (FDLE, 2022a). Although a continued increase, it should be noted that the increase is slowing (FDLE, 2022a).

(U) Price

(U) Survey respondents noted throughout CY2021 that there was heavy price fluctuation for cocaine in the local market, likely due to interruptions in the supply chain and price increases based on COVID-19 stimulus checks (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Survey respondents indicated that crack is typically sold at the gram level in the NFHIDTA (NFHIDTA, 2022). Although there were several higher quantity crack seizures in CY2021, 83% of crack seizures were less than 10 grams (Case Explorer, 2022).

(U) Transportation

(U) NFHIDTA's proximity to major highways, airports, and navigable waterways provides ample entry points for cocaine traffickers. Based on recent seizure data, NFHIDTA is considered a destination and transshipment hub for cocaine. According to survey respondents, all aforementioned entryways are exploited to facilitate cocaine trafficking (NFHIDTA, 2022). Overall, the majority of survey respondents indicated vehicle transport as the most commonly used transport method for cocaine/crack in the NFHIDTA (NFHIDTA, 2022). Survey respondents denoted the following are commonly found concealment methods: metal box secured by a magnet on the frame of the vehicle, tractor trailers with cover loads, false cans, significantly wrapped in plastic wrap, hidden vehicle compartments, and vacuum sealed (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Notably, 35% of survey respondents indicated that traffickers' use of parcels via USPS have increased (NFHIDTA, 2022). Survey respondents reported an increase in the use of other package delivery services and private vehicles (NFHIDTA, 2022). Thirty-six percent of survey respondents reported there has been a noted increase in cocaine coming into the local area (NFHIDTA, 2022). Puerto Rico was overwhelmingly selected as the most common origination point for cocaine shipments to the NFHIDTA, and Atlanta, Central Florida, and Mexico were also noted (NFHIDTA, 2022). Crack was most commonly seen originating in the local North Florida area as it is often produced at the local level and locally distributed; however, Atlanta and Central Florida were also noted as source areas for crack found in the local market (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) The domestic designation of Puerto Rico's outbound cargo coupled with the proximity to the mainland allows cargo packaging with illicit contents to often go undetected. The NFHIDTA is home to JAXPORT, which accounts for more than 85% of the goods shipped between the U.S. mainland and Puerto Rico (JAXPORT, 2022). JAXPORT continues to be utilized by cocaine traffickers to transport product into the U.S.

(U) Parcel shipments are another way cocaine enters the region as evidenced by five parcel intercepts in CY2021 totaling roughly 10.5 kilograms of cocaine (Case Explorer, 2022). Notably, in CY2020, there were nine parcel intercepts containing cocaine, in which nearly 9 kilograms of cocaine was seized. These findings indicate traffickers potentially shipping larger quantities of cocaine through the parcel system. Cocaine is also frequently sent through the mail from Puerto

Rico to Jacksonville for distribution to the local market and surrounding areas. Survey respondents identified Atlanta, Puerto Rico, and Mexico as the primary origins for cocaine entering the region (NFHIDTA, 2022). Jacksonville was the primary destination city for the cocaine seized via package interdiction in CY2021 (Case Explorer, 2022).

(U) Intelligence Gaps

(U) Are cocaine traffickers sending larger quantities of cocaine through the mail system?

(U) MDMA

(U) Availability

(U) Approximately 21,000 dosage units of **MDMA** were seized by NFHIDTA initiatives in CY2021 (PMP, 2022). The seizure totals for CY2021 only slightly exceeded those of CY2020. While seizure numbers remain relatively consistent, the perceived threat surrounding MDMA has increased. Due to its widespread availability, potential harm, and strain on agency resources, MDMA moved up two spots from 8th in CY2020 to 6th (NFHIDTA, 2022). It has been noted that MDMA use by itself in the local market is infrequent, yet the overdoses associated with its use are significant (NFHIDTA, 2022).

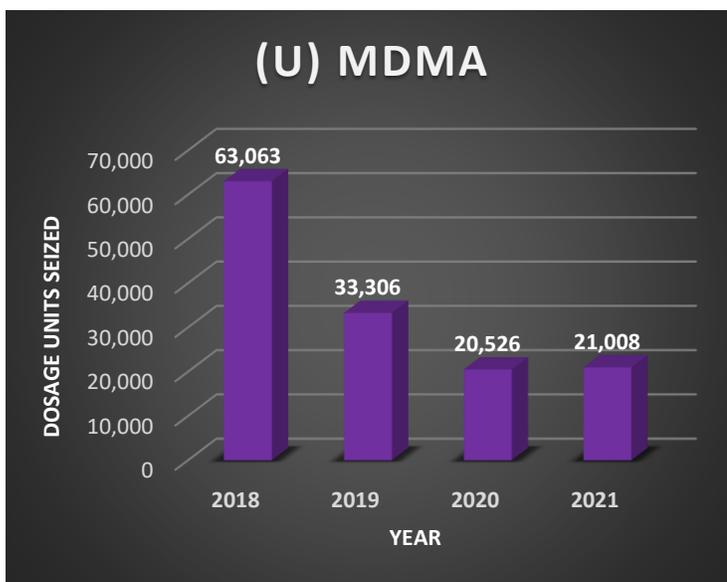


Chart 14 Source: PMP, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Although only 10% of respondents reported MDMA is highly available, 47.5% classified it as moderately available. Additionally, 12.5% of respondents reported MDMA availability has increased (NFHIDTA, 2022). Furthermore, 22% of survey respondents indicated MDMA has been found in the local market mixed with other substances, and 9% indicated it has been found marketed with another drug (NFHIDTA, 2022). As MDMA is a stimulant, which typically raises the heart rate, and fentanyl is a depressant, the comingling of MDMA and fentanyl can have lethal consequences. One survey respondent cited concerns regarding MDMA and fentanyl being used in conjunction either unknowingly or purposefully (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Perceived Availability of MDMA by Law Enforcement		
High	Moderate	Low
10%	47.5%	15%

Table 8 Source: NFHIDTA, 2022
 Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to the exclusion of "blank" responses UNCLASSIFIED

(U) A review of NFHIDTA’s CY2021 seizure data indicated 5.9 total kilograms of synthetic cathinones (PMP, 2022). Synthetic cathinones are chemically similar to MDMA; therefore, products sold as Molly often contain synthetic cathinones instead of MDMA. All but two of the synthetic cathinone seizures in the NFHIDTA occurred in Alachua County, while the remaining seizures occurred in Duval and Marion Counties (PMP, 2022).

(U) Use

(U) The National Drug Early Warning System's (NDEWS) Rapid Street Reporting conducted a survey in April 2022 regarding the use of specific drugs in the Gainesville area. Six percent of respondents reported using MDMA/Ecstasy/Molly in the past three months, and 8% reported use in the past 12 months (NDEWS RSR, 2022). Notably, MDMA/Ecstasy/Molly was the third most commonly used substance, ranked only behind alcohol and marijuana (NDEWS RSR, 2022). This finding is indicative of the use of MDMA in Gainesville, home to the University of Florida, potentially suggesting MDMA use may be more common with college-age users.

(U) While the majority of survey respondents reported that MDMA use in their area is either moderate (40%) or low (22.5%), MDMA use is viewed as a primary threat in Putnam County (NFHIDTA, 2022; Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). This may be an indication that MDMA is sought in lower income areas due to its affordability, since the poverty rate in Putnam County is 24% and the local market price of MDMA has remained relatively stable.

(U) The FME does not report deaths specific to MDMA, rather it is included in the category of hallucinogenics under phenethylamines/piperazines. In Florida, the presence of phenethylamines or piperazines in decedents totaled 115 in CY2020, as compared to 77 in CY2019, and were identified as the *cause* of death in 51 instances (FDLE, 2021, 2021b). Further supporting the increase in MDMA's perceived threat, CY2020's FME data for the state of Florida indicated a 197% increase in cathinone-related deaths and a 263% increase in cathinone-*caused* deaths, where cathinones have been identified as chemically similar to and cousins of MDMA (FDLE, 2021). The majority of these cathinones were reported as eutylone (FDLE, 2021).

(U)Transportation

(U) MDMA transport typically occurs via vehicle and package delivery. A review of NFHIDTA parcel interdiction data for CY2021 identified two packages sent via USPS containing MDMA originated in the Netherlands and were destined for the same location in Palm Coast (Case Explorer, 2022; Flagler County). Survey respondents denoted the most common source areas for MDMA to be Europe, Central Florida, and the local area (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Survey respondents reported that MDMA is often transported via vehicle and concealed in hidden compartments, on person, and in plastic bags or small containers for pills or powder form. The majority of MDMA was seized in Alachua, Columbia, Duval, Leon, Marion, Putnam, and St. Johns Counties (Case Explorer, 2022). Overall, most seizures were in smaller amounts, likely indicating personal use or small-scale distribution quantities. The largest MDMA seizure in CY2021 occurred in December in which UDEST seized 1.6 kilograms (PMP, 2022).

(U) Intelligence Gaps

(U) Is the rise of synthetic cathinone seizures in the NFHIDTA directly correlated to the continued decrease in MDMA seizures since their height in CY2018?

(U) Diverted Pharmaceutical Drugs

(U) Availability

(U) Continuing the downward trajectory identified in CY2020, there was an 18% decrease in the total amount of **diverted pharmaceuticals** seized by the NFHIDTA in CY2021 (PMP, 2022). While prescription pill diversion is decreasing in the local market, it is imperative to highlight the current state of counterfeit pill operations. In September 2021, the DEA issued a Public Safety Alert warning Americans of the “alarming increase in the lethality and availability of fake prescription pills containing fentanyl and methamphetamine” (DEA, 2021e, p. 1). Although prescription drug diversion was ranked seventh by survey respondents, the concern regarding counterfeit pills is a clear threat in the region. A review of survey responses indicates prescription drug diversion is prevalent, although the majority of associated overdoses are attributed to counterfeit pills involving fentanyl (NFHIDTA, 2022).

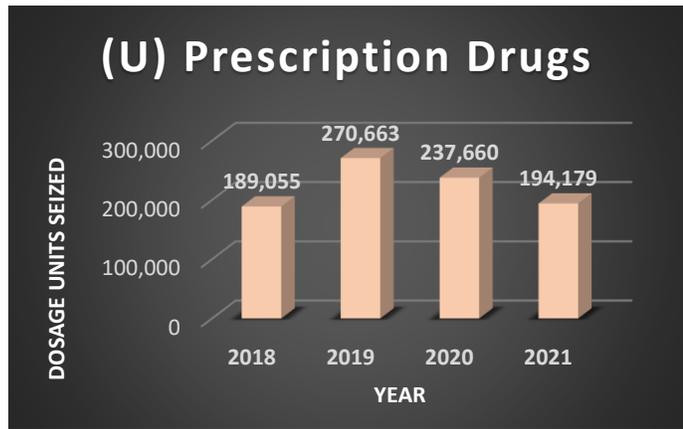


Chart 15 Source: PMP, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) The majority of survey respondents indicated the level of availability for diverted pharmaceuticals to be moderate (32.5%) while a significant percentage reported it to be high (25%) (NFHIDTA, 2022). Ultimately, it appears the use and availability of diverted pharmaceuticals likely varies by specific county or region. Fifty-five percent of survey respondents indicated the level of availability for diverted pharmaceuticals remained the same from the previous year (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Perceived Availability of Diverted Pharmaceuticals by Law Enforcement		
High	Moderate	Low
25%	32.5%	17.5%

Table 9 Source: NFHIDTA, 2022

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to the exclusion of “blank” responses UNCLASSIFIED

(U) In CY2019, 169,424 dosage units of Viagra and Cialis were seized in the NFHIDTA, comprising the top drugs seized within the diverted pharmaceutical category (PMP, 2020). For the past two years, there has been a significant decrease in the seizures of erectile dysfunction pills. In CY2020, NFHIDTA initiatives seized a combined 89,921 dosage units of Viagra and Cialis (PMP, 2022). The decline continued through CY2021 when a total of 11,338 dosage units were seized (PMP, 2022).

(U) The overwhelming majority of these seizures listed India as the source area (PMP, 2022). In CY2021, the bulk of the pharmaceutical drugs seized by the NFHIDTA was alprazolam with 92,148 dosage units, followed by tapentadol (Nucynta), a prescription opioid for moderate to severe pain, at 18,472 du (PMP, 2022). India was listed as the primary source area for the aforementioned erectile dysfunction pills and now for the bulk of the tapentadol pills seized in the NFHIDTA (PMP, 2022). It is plausible that since tapentadol is not regulated in India, traffickers are shifting to fill the demand for opioids in the U.S. by supplying tapentadol vs. Viagra/Cialis (Wikipedia Tapentadol, 2022).

(U) Use

(U) In CY2021, alprazolam was the top seized diverted pharmaceutical, followed by tapentadol (Nucynta) (PMP, 2022). The numerous high-quantity seizures of primarily alprazolam and Nucynta may be indicative of widespread distribution. Additionally, in just 29 total seizure incidents, 12,542 dosage units of hydrocodone was seized (PMP, 2022). This represents a monumental increase from the 542 dosage units seized in CY2020 (PMP, 2022). Cialis, promethazine, tramadol, and Viagra seizure totals decreased significantly from CY2020 to CY2021 (PMP, 2022). However, the remaining substances seized, as outlined in **Table 10**, increased significantly (PMP, 2022).

(U) NFHIDTA Diverted Pharmaceutical Seizure Totals in Dosage Units			
	2020	2021	% Change
Alprazolam*	18,340	96,148	424%
Cialis	11,265	1,308	-88%
Hydrocodone	542	12,542	2214%
Methadone	39	1,085	2682%
Morphine	71	7,263	10,130%
Nucynta	11,484	18,472	61%
Oxycodone	4,223	9,621	128%
Promethazine*	32,083	16,000	-50%
Tramadol	46,595	1,409	-97%
Viagra	78,656	10,030	-87%

Table 10 Source: PMP, 2022 *Conversion of 1 gram=4 d.u.
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(U) Consistent with the prior year’s assessment, the statewide CY2020 FME reporting indicated prescription drugs and all opioids, excluding heroin, fentanyl analogs, and U-47700, were found more often than illicit drugs, both as the *cause* of death and present in decedents (FDLE, 2021b). This report further stated there was a **26.5%** increase in CY2020 regarding the number of individuals who died with at least one or more prescription drug in their system (FDLE, 2021b). Additionally, there was a **43%** increase in the number of individuals who died with at least one prescription drug in their system that was ruled as the *cause* of death (FDLE, 2021b).

(U) In CY2020, all NFHIDTA FME districts noted an increase in the total prescription drug deaths (FDLE, 2021b). FME District 3, which includes **Columbia**, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, and Suwannee Counties reported a 62% increase in the total prescription drug deaths (FDLE, 2021b). FME District 23, which includes **Flagler**, **Putnam**, and **St. Johns Counties** reported a 49% increase in the same category (FDLE, 2021b). Overall, the data displayed in **Chart 16**, indicates that the number of deaths *caused by* the referenced prescription drugs remained relatively stable from CY2019 to CY2020.

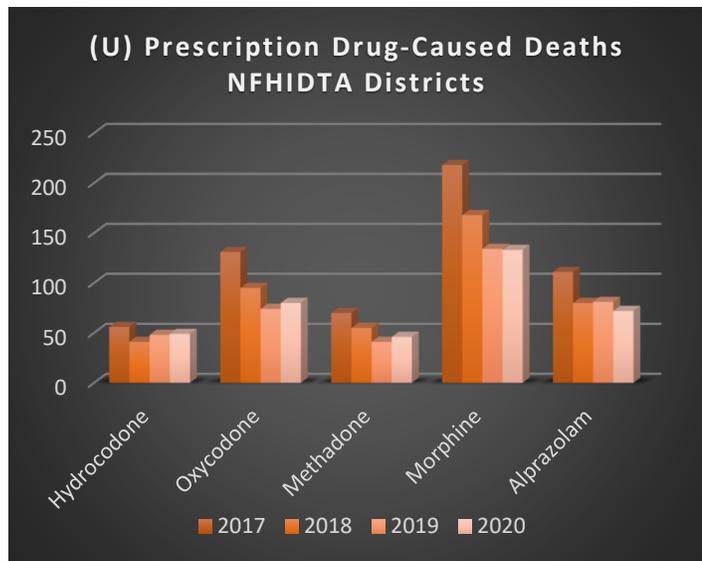


Chart 16 Source: FDLE, 2018-2021 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Price

(U) The decreased pricing for alprazolam, and to a lesser extent hydrocodone, coupled with their significantly increased seizure amounts likely indicate an increased supply and availability, especially in Jacksonville; however, oxycodone’s availability may be slightly decreasing as demand may be increasing.

(U) Transportation

(U) Pharmaceuticals, especially those classified as a lower schedule, are often shipped through various parcel services for destination to the NFHIDTA. The majority of survey respondents indicated pharmaceuticals are primarily distributed through street-level distributors and Internet sales (NFHIDTA, 2022). Several survey respondents also reported hospitals, pill mills/pain management clinics, conventional pharmacies, mom and pop pharmacies, and prescription fraud were additional sources of pharmaceutical diversion (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Trailing only marijuana, Nucynta was the second most commonly seized drug through NFHIDTA's parcel interdiction efforts in CY2021 (Case Explorer, 2022). Notably, Viagra and Modafinil were third and fourth, respectively (Case Explorer, 2022). Nearly 40% of the seized parcels in CY2021 contained diverted pharmaceuticals (Case Explorer, 2022). This supports the assertion that international sources often exploit parcel delivery services to transport and divert pharmaceutical drugs. All but one of the 52 Nucynta seizures that occurred via parcel interdiction originated in India (Case Explorer, 2022). Although Jacksonville was the final destination for 10 of these parcels, the remaining parcels were destined for various areas located within the NFHIDTA (Case Explorer, 2022). All of the 45 seized Viagra parcels originated in India and a little over half were destined for the Jacksonville area (Case Explorer, 2022).

(U) In November 2021, NFHIDTA's Tri-County Initiative seized a USPS package containing **84,000** dosage units of **alprazolam** (Case Explorer, 2022). This package originated in **India** and was destined for **St. Johns County** (Case Explorer, 2022). The package was sent to a UPS store and the intended recipient denied ownership or knowledge of the package (Case Explorer, 2022). According to the case summary, there was no attempt to further conceal the contents of the package (Case Explorer, 2022).

(U) Survey respondents also reported the trafficking of pharmaceuticals via automobile. In one example where it appeared pharmaceuticals were being transported within a silver Nissan Rogue SUV; however, the pills were actually fentanyl and heroin (FHP CIU, 2021). In this case, the **counterfeit pills** were designed to look like **Penicillin** and **Amoxicillin**, and the traffickers were blatantly speeding as they transported them along the region's I10 heading westbound, reportedly enroute to St. Petersburg, Florida, and poorly concealing the drugs in a bag under a shoebox (FHP CIU, 2021).

(U) Intelligence Gaps

(U) Has the rise in counterfeit pills reduced the availability and/or demand for pharmaceutical grade diverted prescription drugs?

(U) In general, how has the rise in counterfeit pill operations affected the pharmaceutical landscape? Are users seeking rogue doctors, medical professionals, and pharmacies in an attempt to avoid unwittingly obtaining counterfeit pills?

(U) Marijuana

(U) Availability

(U) **Marijuana** represents a complex phenomenon in the NFHIDTA. Ten percent of survey respondents indicated marijuana posed the highest threat to the region, whereas 32.5% ranked it as the lowest threat (NFHIDTA, 2022). However, there was a unified response regarding marijuana’s wide availability (NFHIDTA, 2022). Several survey respondents also indicated it leads to great harm and puts a strain on agency resources (NFHIDTA, 2022). The majority of survey respondents were consistent in their reports of violence associated with the trafficking and distribution of marijuana, and several indicated that violent crimes have significantly increased in correlation to marijuana distribution involving cash payments, including robberies and homicides specifically in Marion County (NFHIDTA, 2022).

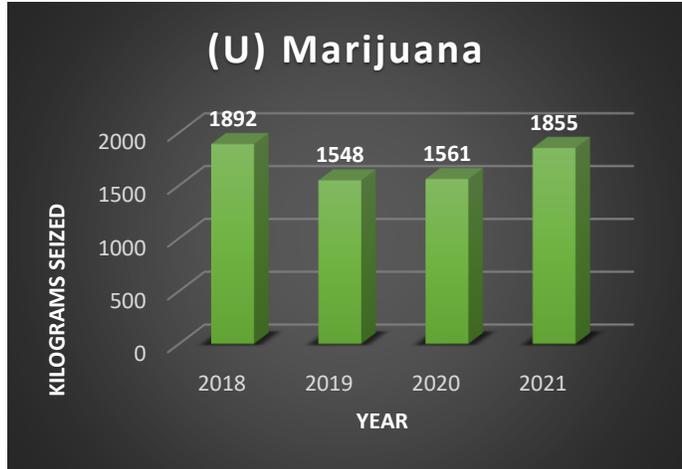


Chart 17 Source: PMP, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) The legalization of medical marijuana coupled with illicit DTO activity continues to facilitate the widespread availability of marijuana throughout the NFHIDTA. With all survey respondents indicating marijuana is highly available, 75% indicated its availability either increased or remained the same in CY2021, while no respondents indicated a decrease in availability (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Perceived Availability of Marijuana by Law Enforcement		
High	Moderate	Low
75%	0%	0%

Table 11 Source: NFHIDTA, 2022

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to the exclusion of “blank” responses UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Consistent with last year’s findings, various marijuana derivatives such as concentrates, edibles, and THC wax, liquids, and resins, are becoming increasingly more common in the local market (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) As mentioned in previous years, the legalization of medical marijuana continues to complicate law enforcement investigations, increasing the strain on law enforcement resources (NFHIDTA, 2022). Yet, NFHIDTA continues to address its threat of illicit marijuana importation and production. Following a modest increase in CY2020, there was a 19% increase in marijuana seized for CY2021 in the NFHIDTA (PMP, 2022). While there were fewer marijuana seizure incidents, the quantity seized overall was higher, indicating traffickers are transporting larger quantities of specifically more potent marijuana into the region. In fact, in November 2021, FHP working with DEA conducted a traffic stop and seized **240 pounds of hydroponic marijuana** (News4Jax, 2021a; Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). According to DEA, the marijuana was transported from **California to Jacksonville**, and one of the suspects was identified as an **Orlando** resident (News4Jax, 2021a).

(U) NFHIDTA reported 112 open and active DTOs throughout CY2021 – 27 were classified as polydrug organizations **with the inclusion of marijuana** and two were identified as **solely trafficking marijuana**, a decrease from the six solely marijuana trafficking organizations

identified in CY2020 (PMP, 2022). This finding suggests that marijuana DTOs may be shifting towards polydrug trafficking.

(U) Production

(U) According to Florida’s Domestic Marijuana Eradication (DME) CY2021 report, the seizure of marijuana from outdoor grow sites outnumbered seizures from indoor grow sites, based on the voluntary reporting from 11 Florida law enforcement agencies representing 11 counties (FDACS, 2022). A review of this reporting indicated that 5 outdoor grow sites, consisting of a total of 109 plants and 90 pounds of processed plant material, were eradicated in Columbia and Leon Counties (FDACS, 2022). Survey respondents indicated at least 19 indoor marijuana grow houses were seized in the NFHIDTA during CY2021, a slight increase over the 15 seized in CY2020 (NFHIDTA, 2022). In total, 346 kilograms of indoor marijuana plants were seized in CY2021, a modest 2% decrease over that in CY2020 (PMP, 2022). The majority of these seizures occurred in Marion, Alachua, Duval, Columbia, and Nassau Counties (PMP, 2022). Only Columbia County reported the identification and eradication of an outdoor grow site for CY20201 (NFHIDTA, 2022). Notably, there were seven seizures that totaled 59 kilograms of outdoor marijuana plants (PMP, 2022). These seizures occurred in Columbia and Duval Counties (PMP, 2022). It should be noted, this finding represents a significant decline from the 141 kilograms of outdoor marijuana plants seized in CY2020. Marion County reported the identification of one THC extraction lab in CY2021 (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Use

(U) An overwhelming majority of survey respondents indicated a high level of marijuana use (NFHIDTA, 2022). According to the DEA’s *CY2020 National Drug Threat Assessment* (NDTA), the domestic use of marijuana remains high and is likely increasing as state legalization continues and its perception of risk decreases (DEA, 2021b). The Office of Medical Marijuana Use (OMMU)

(U) Florida Medical Marijuana Statewide Data			
	Number of Qualified Patients	Number of Registered Physicians	Number of Dispensing Locations
Dec 2018	167,211	1,917	86
Dec 2019	299,914	2,619	212
Dec 2020	456,594	2,733	301
Dec 2021	656,370	2,838	396

Table 12 Source: OMMU, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021
UNCLASSIFIED

reported that as of **December 31, 2021** the number of patients in Florida with an active **medical marijuana card** was **656,370**, a **significant increase** from the **456,594 patients** recorded in **December 2020**, and the number of qualified **prescribing physicians** was **2,838**, compared to **2,733 in CY2020** (OMMU, 2021). These numbers have steadily increased since the legalization of medical marijuana in 2016. Furthermore, in December 2021, OMMU (2021) reported 396 dispensing locations were active in the state of Florida, up from 301 as of December 2020. In just a seven-day span from December 24-30, 2021, **207 kilograms (206,789,485 mgs) of THC were dispensed across Florida** (OMMU, 2021). It not surprising that survey respondents indicate that qualified patients are obtaining their supply and sharing it with others and/or illegally diverting it for profit (NFHIDTA, 2022). In fact, the seven-day December 24-30, 2021 dispensing findings indicate that for every qualified patient, 315 mgs of THC were dispensed in one week, which exceeds the recommended daily use maximum of 40 mgs of THC per day (Guarnotta, 2021). That means, if every qualified patient consumed the daily recommended maximum of THC for one week, there would still be an excess of 3.3 kilograms of dispensed THC in one week.

(U) FME data pertaining to marijuana is provided at the state level rather than by region. For this reason, it is difficult to ascertain the impact of illicit marijuana use specific to NFHIDTA, yet general trends can be derived from a comparative review of statewide data. According to the FME's CY2020 Annual Report, cannabinoids were the fifth most frequently occurring drug found in decedents, the same ranking as in CY2019, with less than 2% of those listed as the *cause* of death (FDLE, 2021).

(U) Cannabinoids Identified in Deceased Persons in Florida			
	Cause	Present	Total
2018	15	2,575	2,590
2019	49	2,661	2,710
2020	42	3,400	3,442

Table 13 Source: FDLE, 2019-2021 *Medical Examiner Note: Total occurrences for cannabinoids are underreported due to the variability in analytical protocols in place at medical examiners offices.

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(U) Price

(U) The pricing for a pound of hydroponic marijuana in Jacksonville remains consistent over the past year. The implication is that marijuana availability remains high in the NFHIDTA as the region is likely a primary destination for multi-pound quantities of especially high-grade marijuana.

(U) Transportation

(U) In the NFHIDTA, there continues to be a flood of domestically produced marijuana transported in, primarily from western states where marijuana is legal. In fact, NFHIDTA has identified individuals in the West Coast, who are involved in unregulated marijuana production, are producing product with elevated amounts of THC and transporting the product through a variety of transportation methods, most commonly aircraft, parcel services, and automobiles, for delivery to the NFHIDTA (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). There have been numerous DTOs identified using commercial airlines to transport large quantities of hydroponic marijuana from the west coast to the Jacksonville area for distribution (NFHIDTA, 2022). Survey responses and recent seizures indicate that narcotics, especially high-grade marijuana, are commonly transported into the region via commercial aircraft (NFHIDTA, 2022). For example, DEA suspected the presence of marijuana in luggage on a flight destined for the **Jacksonville International Airport (JIA)**, and with the assistance of a Nassau County Sheriff's Office K9 unit, **40 pounds of marijuana** were seized (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). In December 2021, **FHP** conducted a traffic stop on a speeding vehicle near JIA, where the subject informed that had flown in the day prior and had to return to the airport to retrieve his luggage that arrived on a different flight (Avanier, 2021b). The subject stated he was carrying a handgun and a concealed carry permit, and a probable cause search of the car identified **four suitcases** filled with **60 pounds of marijuana** (Avanier, 2021b; Radomski Personal Communication, 2022).

(U) Marijuana traffickers also exploit various parcel services to traffic their product into the NFHIDTA. Of the 304 parcel intercepts that occurred by the NFHIDTA in CY2021, marijuana was seized in nearly half (Case Explorer, 2022). In CY2021, NFHIDTA initiatives **intercepted 145 parcels containing marijuana**, which is a significant increase from the 25 seized in CY2020 (Case Explorer, 2022). The 145 marijuana parcels contained 443 kilograms, which accounts for 24% of the total marijuana seized by the NFHIDTA in CY2021. Half of the parcels originated from various cities in California and the majority of the remaining parcels originated from various

cities in Colorado, Florida, New York, Oregon, Michigan, and Washington (Case Explorer, 2022). Notably, with the exception of Florida, all of the aforementioned states have decriminalized marijuana use (DISA, 2022).

(U) Amtrak trains also serve as a transportation mechanism for marijuana traffickers. Amtrak makes frequent stops in Jacksonville from a variety of connection points along the East Coast. Train travel allows drug traffickers minimal law enforcement interaction, without the daunting security checks associated with airline travel. For example, in May 2021, Jacksonville DEA agents, acting on a tip that a **New York** drug courier was trafficking a large quantity of illicit drugs onboard an Amtrak train destined for **Jacksonville**, seized **46 pounds of hydroponic marijuana** that was concealed inside the subject’s suitcases (Avanier, 2021; Radomski Personal Communication, 2022).

(U) Intelligence Gaps

(U) Is marijuana being laced with fentanyl in the NFHIDTA? If so, is this an intentional mixture or contaminated marijuana? Are users in the NFHIDTA seeking marijuana mixed with fentanyl?

(U) Synthetic Cannabinoids

(U) Availability

(U) Following a notable decline in in CY2020, the NFHIDTA seizures of **synthetic cannabinoids** more than doubled in CY2021 (PMP, 2022). Synthetic cannabinoids, also known as K2 or spice, are known to be associated with homeless users (NFHIDTA, 2021). Furthermore, users within correctional institutions have been identified where 246 incidents involving K2 were found in correctional facilities located in the NFHIDTA in CY2021 (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022).

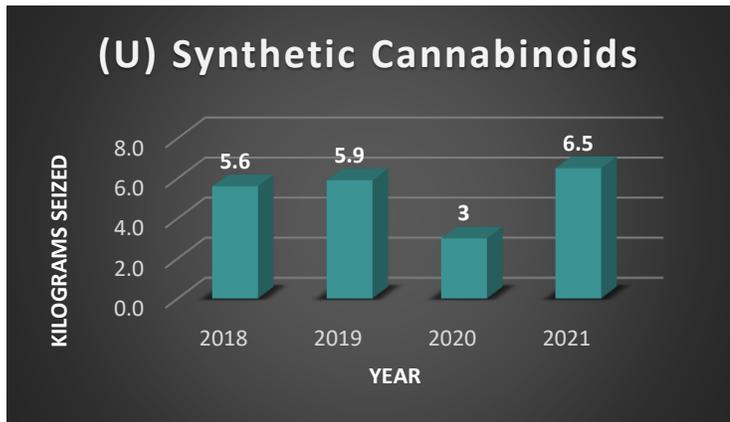


Chart 18 Source: PMP, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Thirty-five percent of survey respondents indicated synthetics, including cannabinoids and cathinones, were widely available (NFHIDTA, 2022). Several respondents also reported synthetics lead to great harm and put a strain on agency resources (NFHIDTA, 2022). Notably, 17.5% of respondents classified synthetics as emerging or new, likely indicating the presence of a new type of synthetic identified in a specific region (NFHIDTA, 2022). A small portion of survey respondents (10%) indicated a noted increase in the amount of spice found in the local market, and one reported that the dark web is often used to purchase the spice (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Perceived Availability of Synthetic Cannabinoids by Law Enforcement		
High	Moderate	Low
17.5%	35%	15%

Table 14 Source: NFHIDTA, 2022
 Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to the exclusion of "blank" responses UNCLASSIFIED

(U) In CY2021, there were 15 total K2 seizures in the NFHIDTA, where 60% occurred in Marion, 20% in Columbia, 13.3% in Alachua, and 6.7% in Leon (PMP, 2022). The largest K2 seizure occurred in December 2021 in Marion County (4.779 kilograms) (PMP, 2022). There were two synthetic cannabinoid production labs seized in Marion County in CY2021 (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Use

(U) Only reported by FME as a combined statistic for the whole state, occurrences of synthetic cannabinoids in decedents declined 8% from CY2019 to CY2020, and deaths *caused by* synthetic cannabinoids increased 8% in the same time period. The majority of the synthetic cannabinoids reported were 5-fluoro-MDMB-PICA. FME CY2021 *interim* report indicated occurrences of synthetic cannabinoids decreased 71% and deaths *caused by* synthetic cannabinoids decreased 71% (FDLE, 2022). Thirty-five percent of respondents classified synthetic use to be moderate in their region, followed by 17.5% who classified use as high (NFHIDTA, 2022). One survey respondent reported the identification of fentanyl mixed with spice (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Intelligence Gaps

(U) How has the legalization of marijuana in certain states and the decriminalization of medical marijuana in Florida affected the synthetic cannabinoid market?

(U) Emerging Drugs

(U) Consistent among survey respondents is the concern surrounding counterfeit pills in the NFHIDTA (NFHIDTA, 2022). Although not necessarily new or emerging in theory, counterfeit pills continue to expand beyond the emulation of typical pharmaceuticals such as oxycodone and Percocet. In recent months, there have been numerous instances of individuals overdosing after taking a counterfeit Adderall pill. The expansion of the counterfeit pill market into substances such as Adderall potentially opens the door to a wider range of unsuspecting clientele.

(U//FOUO) Nitazenes are a category of opioids with no approved medical use and a high potential for addiction and abuse (Florida Fusion Center, 2022). The first identification in Florida occurred in CY2020, and since that time, 268 cases of nitazenes have been identified in Florida, of which 171 occurred in CY2021 and 84 occurred January 1-March 18, 2022 (Florida Fusion Center, 2022). Emerging reports indicate nitazenes are mostly produced in China and shipped to the United States via parcel services (Florida Fusion Center, 2022).

Nitazene	Est. Potency Relative to Morphine	Est. Potency Relative to Fentanyl
N-pyrrolidino etonitazene	1,000x more potent	10x more potent
Isotonitazene	500x more potent	5x more potent
Protonitazene	200x more potent	2x more potent
Metonitazene	100x more potent	Equipotent
Butonitazene	5x more potent	20x less potent
Flunitazene	Equipotent	100x less potent

Table 15 Source: Florida Fusion Center, 2022 *Analyst note: This table was sourced from the referenced document. However, only nitazenes that were identified in the state of Florida since 2020 were included.

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(U) Tianeptine, often sold under the brand names of Stablon and Coaxil, is a prescription drug in various European countries; however, it is not approved for medical use in the United States. Tianeptine, although controlled in Michigan and Alabama, remains available for over-the-counter purchase in Florida as well as online. Both the FDA and the CDC have issued warnings regarding the potential dangers of tianeptine; however, this substance is not regulated nationally or locally in Florida. As highly potent fentanyl and its analogs continue to saturate the illicit drug market, it is plausible users may seek a “safer” alternative such as tianeptine.

(U) Xylazine is a non-opioid sedative and is only approved for veterinary use. Xylazine use

typically involves the injection or inhalation of the substance and is commonly used as a cutting agent in fentanyl or heroin. Xylazine cannot be counteracted with the use of opioid overdose treatments, such as Narcan. Medications that counter xylazine sedation are currently only approved for veterinary use, not for human use. Although illicit xylazine use is not new in Northeast Florida, the comingling of xylazine with highly potent substances may lead to an increase in fatal outcomes. Several seizures in Northeast Florida were identified as a mixture of powder xylazine and fentanyl.

(U) Intelligence Gaps

(U) How has the potency of nitazenes affected naloxone administration? Has there been an increase in the number of naloxone doses needed to counteract an overdose?

(U) Drug Trafficking Organizations

(U) Source Consideration: Sources included in-person interviews of the NFHIDTA initiative commanders, NFHIDTA Performance Management Process (PMP), CY2022 North Florida HIDTA Drug Threat Survey responses, Case Explorer, DEA Price and Purity data, Florida Medical Examiner Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons reports, and the Florida Department of Health. (See Source Considerations Section in Methodology for a complete list of sources).

(U) Analyst Note: In an effort to provide a unified and cohesive report while maintaining data integrity, a couple of modifications were made to the DTO reporting. (1) Certain ethnicities used to reference the composition of a DTO were combined to facilitate a general understanding of the data. African American and Black will be viewed as one in the same and will be referred to as African American, White and Caucasian will be viewed as one in the same and will be referred to as Caucasian, and individuals from Spanish speaking countries or territories, including but not limited to Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Mexico, will be referred to as Hispanic. (2) Furthermore, to ensure the most accurate and up-to-date portrayal of DTOs, DTO data was exported from the PMP on April 5, 2022 using viewing year 2021 and another export using viewing year 2022 with only those DTOs identified in 2022. Therefore, the DTO data covers those DTOs under investigation in CY2021 and newly identified through April 5, 2022. It should be noted, there were 23 DTOs that were manually excluded from the analysis due to being administratively closed prior to CY2021.

(U) Overview

(U) Regional trends indicate that DTOs operating in the NFHIDTA are primarily polydrug, multiethnic, and local or multistate in scope. In CY2021 and through April 5, 2022, there were 112 DTOs *under investigation* in the NFHIDTA with 82 classified as local, 24 as multistate, and 6 as international (PMP, 2022). **Cocaine** was the most commonly trafficked drug by DTOs as 18 DTOs solely trafficked cocaine and 31 polydrug DTOs also trafficked cocaine (PMP, 2022).

(U) Of the 112 DTOs, 27 were involved in marijuana trafficking, two of which solely trafficked marijuana (PMP, 2022). This is a slight decline from those *under investigation* during CY2020 where 33 DTOs were involved in marijuana trafficking, six of which solely trafficked marijuana (PMP, 2022). However, of the 63 *newly identified* DTOs, 13 were involved in marijuana trafficking, indicating it is still a primary commodity in the local market (PMP, 2022). The remainder of the 112 DTOs were involved in trafficking a multitude of substances; however, **methamphetamine/ice** was the sole drug trafficked by 18 DTOs (PMP, 2022).

(U) DTOs continue to use existing and emerging technologies to elevate communication methods and evade detection. Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp were the most common apps identified as being used by DTOs in the NFHIDTA (NFHIDTA, 2022). The use of these apps offers DTOs and dealers the opportunity to exploit encrypted technology, communicate via photos and various emojis and symbols, and reach a broader audience of customers. However, the world of social media and technology is rapidly and ever evolving. As law enforcement struggles to identify and learn these new technologies and overcome legal roadblocks to pursue cases involving these app-based communication, DTOs continue to identify new and updated apps to streamline, protect, and encrypt communication.

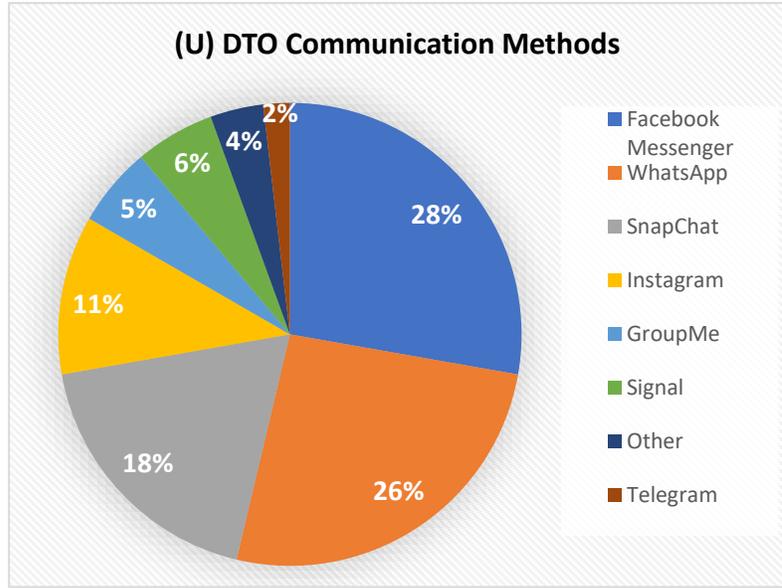


Chart 19 Source: NFHIDTA, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Consistent among survey respondents was the intersection between money laundering and drug trafficking organizations. Specifically, 43% of survey respondents reported the identified DTOs were also engaged in money laundering or financial fraud activities, 37% reported DTOs were also engaged in violent crime, 20% reported they were also engaged in property crime, and 7% reported they were also engaged in quality-of-life crimes (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) International DTOs

(U) Overview

(U) Of the 112 DTOs operating within the NFHIDTA, there were six small-sized, international DTOs, primarily multi-ethnic, including Caucasian and Hispanic members, or solely Caucasian, and primarily polydrug (PMP, 2022). Mexico was identified as the primary source country for five DTOs (PMP, 2022). The largest international DTO identified consisted of six members and one leader, and none of the international DTOs had more than two identified leaders (PMP, 2022). The most common drugs trafficked by these mostly polydrug international DTOs were cocaine, fentanyl, and methamphetamine (PMP, 2022). However, two organizations solely trafficked in cocaine and oxycodone, respectively (PMP, 2022).

(U) International DTOs Identified by the NFHIDTA	
Characteristics	
Total International DTOs	6
▪ Multi-Ethnic	3
▪ Caucasian	2
▪ Romanian	1
Total Members (Leaders)	36 (8)
Average DTO Size	6
Gang-Related	1
Violent	2
Polydrug	4
Money Laundering Activities	0
Federal Case Designations	
OCDETF	0
CPOT	0
RPOT	0
PTO	0

Table 16 Source PMP, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Affiliations & Membership

(U) In 2021, UDEST, located in Marion County, seized over a dozen bricks of heroin and fentanyl stamped with markings from a Mexican drug cartel (see [Figure 9](#)).



Figure 9 Source: UDEST, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Activities & Methods

(U) International DTOs, especially those involved in the trafficking of cocaine, use JAXPORT to traffic large quantities of cocaine from Puerto Rico. The cargo from Puerto Rico is designated as domestic, thus exempting it from the scrutiny required of international cargo. Based on recent seizures, large quantities of cocaine are disguised as “home goods” or other miscellaneous items for entry into JAXPORT for further dissemination throughout the NFHIDTA region and beyond (PMP, 2022; Radomski Personal Communication, 2022).

(U) The far-reaching effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact drug trafficking operations. As a result, DTOs worked to establish alternative routes, methods, and activities designed to overcome pandemic-related regulations and various supply issues. Consistent with the prior year, the dark web has continued to serve as a platform for DTOs to sell their illicit substances to users and then leverage parcel delivery services to facilitate dissemination (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022).

(U) Multistate/Regional DTOs

(U) Overview

(U) Compared to the 25 multistate DTOs identified in CY2020, the addition of 15 *newly identified* DTOs to the 9 remaining *under investigation* from the previous year indicates stability in the level of multistate drug trafficking operations in the NFHIDTA (PMP, 2022). Overall, the current trend for multistate DTOs operating in the region is that they are primarily African American single-drug trafficking groups (PMP, 2022). Unlike prior years where multistate DTOs were primarily African American polydrug trafficking groups, the increased focus on single-drug trafficking suggests that multistate DTOs are becoming more specialized in particular drugs trafficked and/or they have established connections requesting a single drug type. Of the single-drug multistate DTOs, five solely trafficked cocaine, followed by three that trafficked meth, two trafficked ice, and one group each trafficked solely marijuana, promethazine, Viagra, fentanyl, and heroin (PMP, 2022).

(U) Multistate DTOs Identified by the NFHIDTA	
Characteristics	
Total Multistate DTOs	24
▪ African American	8
▪ Caucasian	5
▪ Multi-Ethnic	6
▪ Hispanic	5
Total Members (Leaders)	179 (41)
Average DTO Size	7.45
Gang-Related	0
Violent	0
Polydrug	9
Money Laundering Activities	0
Federal Case Designations	
OCDETF	0
CPOT	1
RPOT	0
PTO	5

Table 17 Source: PMP, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) All the identified multistate DTOs were classified as nonviolent with no gang affiliation (PMP, 2022). Seven multistate DTOs were identified with North Florida as their source area, of which three were polydrug DTOs (PMP, 2022). Six were identified with California as their source area, of which three solely trafficked marijuana (PMP, 2022). Four DTOs were identified with Puerto Rico as their source area, of which three solely trafficked cocaine (PMP, 2022).

(U) Affiliations & Membership

(U) Overall, the number of multistate DTOs (24) *under investigation* in the NFHIDTA for CY2021 was relatively consistent with the number of multistate DTOs (25) *under investigation in CY2020* (PMP, 2022). In CY2021, the multistate DTOs were comprised of a range of members, typically 3 to 9, for an average size of 7.45 members, which is a slight increase from the 7.36 average size identified in CY2020 (PMP, 2022). The vast majority of DTOs in this category appear to have either one, two, or three leaders. However, one DTO identified in CY2021 is comprised of 9 members and 5 leaders (PMP, 2022).

(U) Activities & Methods

(U) Consistent with international DTOs, multistate DTOs are using emerging and existing social media platforms to promote product, maintain operations, and potentially recruit members. Additionally, social media provides DTOs and dealers streamlined and secure communication and an advertisement tool for the younger generation of potential buyers or members. Although exact numbers are unknown, there have been numerous cases around the United States in which young teenagers have overdosed on fentanyl-laced substances purchased through Snapchat. For example, in 2021, a 24-year-old Jacksonville native died of an overdose after ingesting a counterfeit pill purchased on Snapchat (Crawford, 2022). The toxicology report later indicated the presence of cocaine, methamphetamine, and fentanyl in the decedent (Crawford, 2022).

(U) A review of the multistate DTOs yields a variety of identified methods used in the sourcing and distribution of illicit drugs in the area. For example, a DTO with leadership ties to **Arizona**, received large quantities of cocaine from its Arizona-based leader, and the cell heads, located in **Jacksonville** and **South Carolina**, then distributed the **bulk cocaine** within their surrounding areas (PMP, 2022).

(U) Local DTOs

(U) Overview

(U) The local DTOs operating in the NFHIDTA are primarily nonviolent, multi-ethnic with African American members, polydrug organizations (PMP, 2022). Cocaine is the most commonly trafficked drug, accounting for 12 single-drug DTOs and 23 polydrug DTOs involved in cocaine trafficking (PMP, 2022). Half the survey respondents reported that local DTOs pose the greatest threat to the region (NFHIDTA, 2022). Additionally, 61% of survey respondents classified local DTOs in the region to be very prevalent (NFHIDTA, 2022). The 82 local DTOs *under investigation* in CY2021 is

(U) Local DTOs Identified by the NFHIDTA	
Characteristics	
Total Local DTOs	82
▪ Multi-Ethnic	45
▪ African American	25
▪ Caucasian	12
▪ Hispanic	1
Total Members (Leaders)	732 (159)
Average DTO Size	8.93
Gang-Related	4
Violent	7
Polydrug	48
Money Laundering Activities	0
Federal Case Designations	
OCDEF	2
CPOT	0
RPOT	0
PTO	11

Table 18 Source: PMP, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

an increase from the 78 *under investigation* in CY2020 (PMP, 2022). The overwhelming majority of identified local DTOs operate out of Duval County, and the local North Florida area was identified as the source area for the majority of the local DTOs (PMP, 2022). Additional source areas include Central and South Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Texas (PMP, 2022).

(U) Consistent with CY2020 findings, the majority of the local DTOs were comprised of 10 or less members and no more than 2 leaders (PMP, 2022). There were 264 members identified operating in Duval, 90 in Alachua, and 65 in Marion (PMP, 2021). The average DTO size of the local DTOs *under investigation* was 8.93 members, a 7% decrease from the average size of those in CY2020 (PMP, 2022).

(U) There were 48 local polydrug DTOs *under investigation* in CY2021, which is a slight increase from the 42 in CY2020 (PMP, 2022). Of the 82 local DTOs, 35 trafficked cocaine, 21 trafficked meth, 20 marijuana, 20 heroin, 18 fentanyl, 13 ice, 10 crack, and 6 trafficked MDMA (PMP, 2022). Note: These referenced drugs may have been part of a single or polydrug organization and, while not exhaustive, were reported as the most commonly identified drugs in local DTO operations.

(U) Affiliations & Membership

(U) Although the majority of the local DTOs were classified as nonviolent, seven were considered violent (PMP, 2022). This finding represents a notable increase from the four violent local DTOs operating in CY2020 (PMP, 2022). Additionally, two of the violent DTOs were gang affiliated (PMP, 2022). A commonality of all the violent local DTOs is that they each include at least one African American member, and two of these violent DTOs are solely comprised of African American operatives (PMP, 2022). The most common drug trafficked by the violent DTOs was cocaine, followed by marijuana and methamphetamine (PMP, 2022). The violent DTOs' operations occurred in Alachua, Columbia, Duval, Marion, Orange, and Putnam Counties (PMP, 2022). Although there was one violent single-drug DTO trafficking solely in cocaine receiving product from Puerto Rico, the remaining violent DTOs were sourced from the local area (PMP, 2022).

(U) Many of the DTOs were classified as multi-ethnic; however, African American members were involved in nearly 80% of the identified local DTOs (PMP, 2022). Eleven were solely comprised of Caucasian members and an additional 41 were multiethnic with Caucasian operatives (PMP, 2022). Additionally, 16 DTOs were comprised of Hispanic operatives, 15 of which were considered multi-ethnic (PMP, 2022).

(U) Activities & Methods

(U) The use of social media remains common among local DTO members. Local DTOs utilize various apps including but not limited to WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook Messenger, Chatroom, and TikTok for communication and advertisement purposes. The app known as Clubhouse allows DTO members to "host" private calls with select members, and when the meeting concludes, the audio is no longer accessible (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). The transition from traditional cell phone or landline communication to app-based calls remains a challenge in law enforcement investigations.

(U) Storage units allow drug dealers and DTOs an offsite location to work or store their products, and many accept cash payments, do not conduct background checks, and maintain 24-hour operations. For example, the NFHIDTA identified a local DTO, which consisted of multiple family

members, operating out of a storage unit facility in Florida that was involved in renting multiple storage units to conceal powder cocaine, a cocaine press, and U.S. currency (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022).

(U) DTOs have continued to evolve and identify new trafficking mechanisms, different routes of travel, and innovative concealment methods. However, the use of airline smuggling, parcel exploitation, and vehicle transport have remained consistent. Additionally, as noted in prior years, Airbnb houses and Uber drivers continue to be used for nefarious purposes (NFHIDTA, 2022).

(U) Gangs

(U) Although not always classified as DTOs due to various structuring parameters, local neighborhood gangs often operate in a similar fashion to local DTOs. For the most part, the gang presence in the Jacksonville region consists of local, neighborhood gangs, although, gang members with ties to nationally affiliated gangs, including the Bloods and Rolling 20s, have also been identified in the region (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). Jacksonville-based gangs such as 6 Block, 1200 Block, ATK, and KTA leverage social media to promote violence, drug use, and gang wars. Additionally, neighborhood gangs engage in fraudulent activities, such as identify theft, to fund their operations (PMP, 2022).

(U) However, perhaps most rampant in the Jacksonville area, is the use of social media to intimidate and retaliate against other local gangs. In one such example, ATK and KTA have been known to create rap music videos, promoted via YouTube, where they taunt opposing gang members, typically regarding the death of their fellow gang members (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). Notably, law enforcement officials have been successful in using these videos and social media posts to identify potential suspects to pursue charges and prosecutions based on findings. For example, one gang member, who was identified as a convicted felon, was holding a suspected gun in a rap video and was later found guilty of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon (Goodridge, 2022). Although law enforcement officials did not actually see this individual in person holding a weapon, the YouTube video was deemed to be enough proof for conviction (Goodridge, 2022). This finding underscores the importance of social media in investigative efforts.

(U) Intelligence Gaps

- (U) Do local neighborhood gang members work in conjunction with local DTOs?
- (U) What social media apps are DTOs utilizing that law enforcement is unaware of or unable to access due to privacy settings?
- (U) What factors are contributing to the increase in the number of violent local DTOs?
- (U) To what extent are pill presses being utilized by local organizations?

(U) Money Laundering Organizations

(U) Source Considerations: Several sources were consulted in writing the Money Laundering Organization (MLO) section, specifically, the Performance Management Process (PMP) data, NFHIDTA threat assessment survey responses, and various open-source outlets.

(U) Money Laundering Organizations Identified by the NFHIDTA			
Total Identified	International	Multistate	Local
2	0	0	2

Table 19 Source: PMP, 2022 UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Overview

(U) Overall, the NFHIDTA has not identified a profusion of large-scale laundering schemes; however, there exists a strong correlation between DTO operations and money laundering activities. Forty percent of survey respondents reported DTOs were also engaging in money laundering activities (NFHIDTA, 2022). Twenty-two percent of survey respondents reported an increase in the use of electronic commerce, including but not limited to Bitcoin and mobile payments such as Cash App (NFHIDTA, 2022). There was also a noted increase in the number of Bitcoin ATMs throughout the NFHIDTA that were seemingly located in areas known to attract illicit activities, such as convenience stores, gas stations, and vape shops (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). Additional money laundering tactics common in the NFHIDTA include bulk cash movement, money service businesses, structuring through banks, cash-intensive businesses, and prepaid gift cards (NFHIDTA, 2022). Criminal organizations continue to use cryptocurrency; however, law enforcement may lack the manpower and resources to adequately track, identify, and seize illicitly obtained cryptocurrency (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022).

(U) Affiliations & Membership

(U) The NFHIDTA initiatives reported that in CY2021 there were two MLOs *under investigation* (PMP, 2022). One MLO, local to Duval County, is known to use third-party money launderers to transmit funds between Florida and California as a means of promoting marijuana trafficking (PMP, 2022). This MLO is comprised of Asian members and maintains connections to San Jose, California (PMP, 2022). To further support such findings, according to the DEA's CY2020 NDTA, "Asian TCOs use their contacts in Asian diaspora communities in the United States and around the world to co-opt or establish businesses to facilitate drug trafficking and money laundering" (DEA, 2021b, p. 75). The other MLO is local to Alachua County and is comprised of Asian, African American, and Caucasian members (PMP, 2022). Both MLOs have been *under investigation* for several years, which is indicative of the complexity and long-scale duration of money laundering schemes in the NFHIDTA.

(U) Activities & Methods

(U) A recent investigation in the NFHIDTA highlights the activities and methods used by DTOs to launder illicit proceeds. In CY2021, the IRS, along with other agency law enforcement officials, identified a Jacksonville gas station owner as concurrently operating a DTO (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). The investigation revealed that two subjects passed more than **one million dollars into multiple bank accounts** in a three-year period (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). Investigators concluded that the subjects earned significant amounts of money through their DTO and laundered those earnings through various limited liability companies, financial institutions, real estate investments, and the BP gas station (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). Both subjects, among others, were charged with conspiracy to distribute and possession with intent to distribute MDMA and Flakka (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022).

(U) In CY2021, the NFHIDTA identified a unique scheme where an individual purchased an aged hotel and immediately evacuated the premises allegedly for renovations, yet the hotel owner laundered drug profits through "renovation companies," which were actually known associates, under the guise of various renovation expenses (Radomski Personal Communication, 2022). This scheme allowed the hotel owner to inconspicuously launder large sums of money through various companies with little oversight.

(U) Intelligence Gaps

(U) How have Bitcoin ATMs impacted money laundering activities and related investigations?

(U) As private property values soar, available private real estate inventory shrinks, and commercial property vacancies continue as a result of the pandemic, will DTOs employ similar unique schemes of purchasing commercial businesses and/or aged private properties and launder drug proceeds through sham renovation or other related businesses?

(U) Outlook

(U//FOUO) Wholesale, mid-level, and retail-level distributors operating in the local market will very likely continue to intentionally mix substances such as cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine with fentanyl and fentanyl analogs to increase the potency, stretch the product, and in turn increase profit. Increased potency and lack of care in mixing will likely result in increased fatal and nonfatal overdoses and emergency medical calls in the NFHIDTA for the remainder of CY2022 and into CY2023. This assessment is made with high confidence and would be supported by an increase in fentanyl seizures, fatal overdoses, EMS calls for suspected overdoses, and naloxone administrations as well as purity data.

(U) NFHIDTA assesses with high confidence that counterfeit pills will continue to infiltrate the local drug market for the remainder of CY2022 into CY2023. Furthermore, the NFHIDTA assesses with medium confidence that the presence of pill presses will increase for local production of counterfeit pills for the remainder of CY2022 into CY2023.

(U) NFHIDTA assesses with high confidence that emerging and new/novel psychoactive substances (NPS), such as nitazenes, will continue to be distributed within the local market as source countries such as China, India, and Mexico continue to profit from the sale of these reimagined or slightly modified synthetic drugs. Indicators of this activity would include seizure data, toxicology reports, and purity data.

(U) NFHIDTA assesses with high confidence that fentanyl use, whether intentional or accidental due to unwitting use, will very likely continue to remain prevalent and likely increase in the region for the remainder of CY2022 into CY2023, leading to a sustained increase in overdoses and emergency medical calls. Indicators of this activity continuing would include an increase in fentanyl seizures and an increase in overdoses with fentanyl present.

(U) NFHIDTA assesses with high confidence that DTOs will very likely continue to utilize the waterways to transport large quantities of cocaine into the Jacksonville area through the Port of Jacksonville (JAXPORT). Indicators of this activity would be evident through CBP reporting and drug seizure data, specifically at JAXPORT. NFHIDTA assesses cocaine transport through Puerto Rico will very likely continue through the remainder of CY2022 and likely into CY2023.

(U) NFHIDTA assesses with high confidence that DTOs and dealers will very likely continue to leverage technological advancements to facilitate communication, location sharing, and potential recruitment activity, complicating detection and law enforcement investigations. This assessment is based on trend analysis, open-source research, and discussions with law enforcement officers.

(U) NFHIDTA assesses with high confidence that the dark web will very likely continue to be used by DTOs and MLOs to evade law enforcement detection, facilitate drug sales, and communicate covertly. This assessment is based on open-source information, investigative data, and discussions with law enforcement officers.

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(U) NFHIDTA assesses marijuana DTOs and dealers located in the west coast, such as in California and Oregon, will continue to leverage the lack of marijuana regulation and produce marijuana with higher THC content. DTOs and dealers will continue to send legally produced marijuana through parcel services and airline smuggling methods for distribution in the NFHIDTA. Indicators of this activity continuing would be a continued increase in marijuana seizures, parcel interdiction statistics, and purity reports.

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(U) Appendix 1 – Methodology

(U) This assessment is representative of the thirteen NFHIDTA member counties, associated Camden County, Georgia, and two counties (Gilchrist and Levy) which have an impact on adjacent NFHIDTA counties. Some references are made to the local offices of the Drug Enforcement Administration. The DEA's Jacksonville District Office covers Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns Counties. Its Gainesville Regional Office covers Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Marion, Union, and non-NFHIDTA Counties, including Gilchrist and Levy. A Resident Office is also located in Tallahassee (Leon County).

(U) Medical examiner reports published by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement were consulted in the writing of this threat assessment. Specifically, annual reports for the following years: 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 were used to examine trends and statistics presented from January to December of the publication year and were used to garner a better understanding of the drug climate on a yearly basis. To provide the most up to date information, the 2021 Interim report was often consulted for an accurate depiction of the current state. The historical interim and annual reports were reviewed and often cited to provide yearly comparisons as well as trend analysis among various categories.

(U) The FME reporting is reported by Medical Examiner district rather than county. For the time being, Columbia and Hamilton Counties are covered by District 4 but reported under District 3. Furthermore, there are additional counties within Districts 2, 3, and 5 that are not included in the NFHIDTA AOR. The following list shows the NFHIDTA member (bold) and non-member counties within six Florida Medical Examiner Districts:

District 2: **Leon**, Jefferson, Taylor, Wakulla, Franklin, Liberty, and Gadsden.

District 3: **Columbia**, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, and Suwannee

District 4: **Duval, Nassau, and Clay**

District 5: Citrus, Hernando, Lake, **Marion**, and Sumter

District 8: **Alachua, Baker, Bradford**, Gilchrist, Levy, and **Union**

District 23: **Flagler, Putnam, and St. Johns**

(U) Source Considerations

(U) Numerous sources were consulted in the compilation of this threat assessment. First and foremost, this product is the result of a multiagency effort, including contributions from representatives of nearly three dozen federal, state, and local agencies. Furthermore, all twelve of the NFHIDTA's initiative commanders were instrumental in providing case examples, statistics, and general trends. Data was collected primarily through an online survey, which was distributed to applicable law enforcement agencies as well as NFHIDTA initiative commanders. Additional data was collected through in-person interviews, phone calls, and email communication.

(U) Appendix 2 – Contributing Agencies

(U) In addition to input from members of the twelve NFHIDTA law enforcement initiatives, members from the following organizations contributed survey responses or other guidance.

Federal Agencies

Amtrak Police
U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Service
U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration
 Jacksonville DO
 Gainesville RO
 Tallahassee RO
U.S. Forest Service Law Enforcement & Investigations
U.S. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Immigration and Customs Enforcement
U.S. Marshal's Service
U.S. Naval Criminal Investigative Service
U.S. Postal Inspection Service
U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

Florida State Agencies

Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)
University of Florida Police Department
University of North Florida Police Department
Florida Highway Patrol (FHP)

Local Agencies

Alachua County Sheriff's Office	Lawtey Police Department
Atlantic Beach Police Department	Leon County Sheriff's Office
Baker County Sheriff's Office	Levy County Sheriff's Office
Bradford County Sheriff's Office	Marion County Sheriff's Office
Clay County Sheriff's Office	Neptune Beach Police Department
Columbia County Sheriff's Office	Ocala Fire Rescue
Flagler Beach Police Department	Ocala Police Department
Gainesville Police Department	Putnam County Sheriff's Office
Gilchrist County Sheriff's Office	St. Augustine Police Department
Jacksonville Beach Police Department	St. Johns County Sheriff's Office
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office	Tallahassee Police Department
Street and High-Level Narcotics	Union County Sheriff's Office

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