

# DRUG THREAT ASSESSMENT

March 2022



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**State of Mississippi  
Department of Public Safety  
Bureau of Narcotics  
Intelligence Division**



**MISSISSIPPI BUREAU OF NARCOTICS**  
**DRUG THREAT ASSESSMENT**  
**MARCH 2022**

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## I. SCOPE

The 2022 Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics (MBN) Drug Threat Assessment provides an overview of current drug threats and drug trends in the state. The goal of this assessment is to provide law enforcement agencies, legislators, and citizens with data and information to assist them in making informed decisions about drug threats. It also assists in the planning of enforcement strategies and effective utilization of available resources for future operations. Contributing factors include geographic location, types of industries, cultural and economic diversities. Educators, community groups, parents, and the public can also use the 2022 threat assessment as a resource to better understand the drug threats in Mississippi.

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### DRUG THREATS IN MISSISSIPPI

<b>Methamphetamine</b>	→	<b>Primary drug threat</b>
<b>Heroin &amp; Fentanyl</b>	→	<b>Primary drug threat</b>
<b>Diverted Pharmaceuticals</b>	→	<b>Primary drug threat</b>
<b>Marijuana</b>	→	<b>Gateway drug</b>
<b>Cocaine and Crack Cocaine</b>	→	<b>Constant drug threat</b>
<b>New Psychoactive Substances</b>	→	<b>Continues to increase</b>

Methamphetamine remains the greatest drug threat in Mississippi. The increasing purity, the availability, the violence that is associated with users and traffickers, and the number of related overdoses make methamphetamine Mississippi's number one drug threat. Mexican methamphetamine, or "ice", is the most accessible form of methamphetamine. However, the recent reversal of House Bill 512, which allows one of the main ingredients in methamphetamine to be sold over the counter again, causes concerns that Mississippi will experience an increase in the number of local clandestine methamphetamine labs.

As prescription opioids are harder to obtain, the demand for opioid-based drugs like heroin or counterfeit drugs laced with fentanyl continue to escalate in Mississippi. Heroin is cheaper, easier to obtain and provides a more potent high than prescription opioids. Brown heroin is the most common form of heroin in Mississippi, and the seizure of heroin laced fentanyl and fentanyl laced counterfeit pills is increasing. Overdose deaths related to heroin and fentanyl outweighs all other drug related overdose deaths. This is partly a result of drug cartels cutting heroin with fentanyl to maximize their profits at the expense of the consumer.

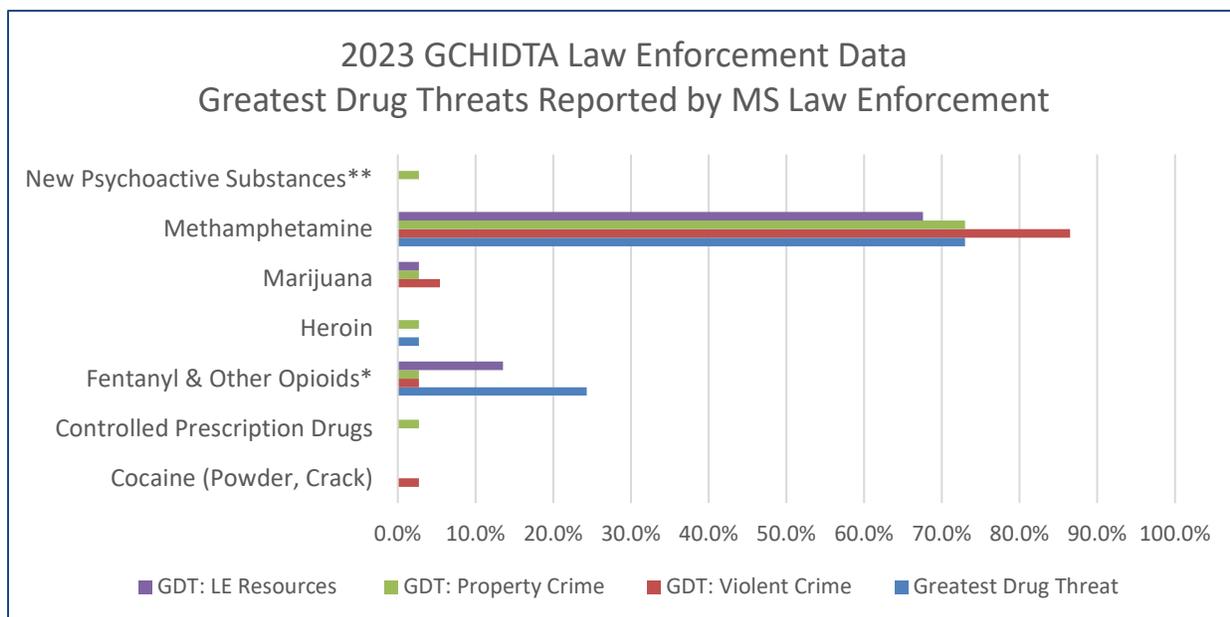
Diverted Pharmaceuticals are still a primary drug threat in Mississippi. The most common way to obtain illegal prescription drugs is still through prescription forgeries and "doctor shopping" but drugs are also being obtained illegally through the internet and being transported from Mexico and southwest border towns. These pharmaceuticals can be counterfeit, contaminated, expired

and unsafe. The threat is escalated by drug trafficking organizations becoming involved, pharmacy burglaries and the corruption of medical/health professionals/providers supporting addicts and criminals. The shortage of prescription opioids is forcing some addicts to turn to more deadly opioid drugs like heroin and fentanyl.

Marijuana trafficking and abuse continues to be prevalent in Mississippi. All of the 2023 Gulf Coast HIDTA Mississippi survey respondents rated the level of marijuana use as high. Marijuana continues to evolve as new products emerge from outside influences. Marijuana continues to be imported to Mississippi from Mexico, but it also imported from states where production is legal like California and Colorado. Products like edibles, oils, wax, and hashish are still being seen and seized across the state. These products are especially desirable among teens and younger adults. Currently, medical marijuana in Mississippi is now legalized, but the implementation of the law and impact to the community remains unclear. These new and evolving marijuana laws make marijuana a new kind of threat.

Cocaine remains a drug threat in Mississippi due especially to its high addiction rate, associated violence, and its affiliation with gangs and drug cartels. Most of the cocaine in Mississippi is transported by American and Mexican DTOs via Texas and the Southwest Border states and distributed by criminal groups, street gangs, and independent dealers. Eighty-one percent (81%) of the 2023 Gulf Coast HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey respondents rated the availability of cocaine and demand for cocaine as the same as 2020, although they rated the threat as low compared to other drugs such as methamphetamine, heroin, and fentanyl and other opioids.

New Psychoactive Substances continue to be a growing concern in Mississippi. These “designer drugs” are just as addictive and devastating as pharmaceuticals and methamphetamine. They are designed to mimic the effects of these and other illicit drugs. They are readily available in gas stations, adult stores and smoke shops, as well as, on the internet. They are typically marketed toward young adults. One of the most troubling aspects of these new psychoactive substances is the limited knowledge of the content and potency of the substance being consumed.



### III. ENVIRONMENTAL AND RELATED THREATS

#### GEOGRAPHY

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



#### HIGHWAY INTERDICTION IN MISSISSIPPI



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

With the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), southern states have to consider additional methods and means for the detection of drug smuggling organizations. As expected, trade and traffic with Mexico have increased significantly due to this agreement. The opportunities to smuggle drugs from Mexico have increased and will continue to increase drastically. According to Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)/Blue Lightning Operation Center's (BLOC) Watch Center, there were 143 calls involving arrests and/or seizures reported on Mississippi highways during 2021. All major highways in Mississippi

were included in these incidents. Mississippi cross-designated officers made 113 drug seizures: marijuana totaling 1,508 pounds; THC Products totaling 480,307 dosage units; cocaine totaling 190 pounds; methamphetamine totaling 191 pounds; opioids totaling 62,386 dosage units; non-opioids totaling 13,814 dosage units; other dangerous drugs totaling 14,831 dosage units; 52 seizures in U.S. Currency totaling \$4,318,527.00. There were 27 weapons seizures and 129 arrests with 5 aliens. As a result of these stops, many targets were identified, and active investigations were conducted. Some of the investigations have already resulted in the identification and arrests of numerous members of known DTOs.

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

ENCOUNTER ST	HIGHWAY/ INTERSTATE	COCAINE LBS.	MARIJUANA LBS.	METHAMPHETAMINE LBS.	HEROIN LBS.	CURRENCY SEIZED
MS	HWY 15					
MS	HWY 2			0.06		
MS	HWY 35	6.80	0.14	120.70		\$200
MS	HWY 45					\$50,000
MS	HWY 6	0.01	0.03			
MS	HWY 63			22.00		
MS	HWY 78	2.20	34.50			\$3,800
MS	HWY 82		1.00			
MS	I-10	47.49	533.98	2.13		\$2,197,771
MS	I-20	21.80	469.17	43.82		\$1,452,695
MS	I-22		417.29			\$86,910
MS	I-55	69.54	0.06	0.01		\$440,130
MS	I-59	41.80	5.01			\$13,000
MS	UNREPORTED		40.00			\$11,089
MS	US HWY 278					
MS	US HWY 45		0.09			\$55,504
MS	US HWY 72	0.01		1.79		\$4,428
MS	US HWY 82		6.50			\$3,000

Mississippi Seizure Totals by Highway/ Interstate

Drug trafficking patterns indicate the Interstate Highway System is the preferred method of transporting illegal drugs into and through Mississippi. The Interstate System provides unrestrained access for movement through the state. Mississippi has four major interstates and nine major highways. Law enforcement officials actively patrol these roadways. In addition, an increasing number of departments have personnel specifically assigned to intercept drug

smugglers. Budgetary concerns and resource availability impair a full-scale effort to intercept drug shipments on Mississippi highways.

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

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

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

Interstate 14, or I-14, is a proposed interstate that is to run from West Texas through Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama and ends in Georgia. It will help link military bases across these states and help economic growth in these areas. In Mississippi, it will run from Natchez to Laurel and Meridian.



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

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

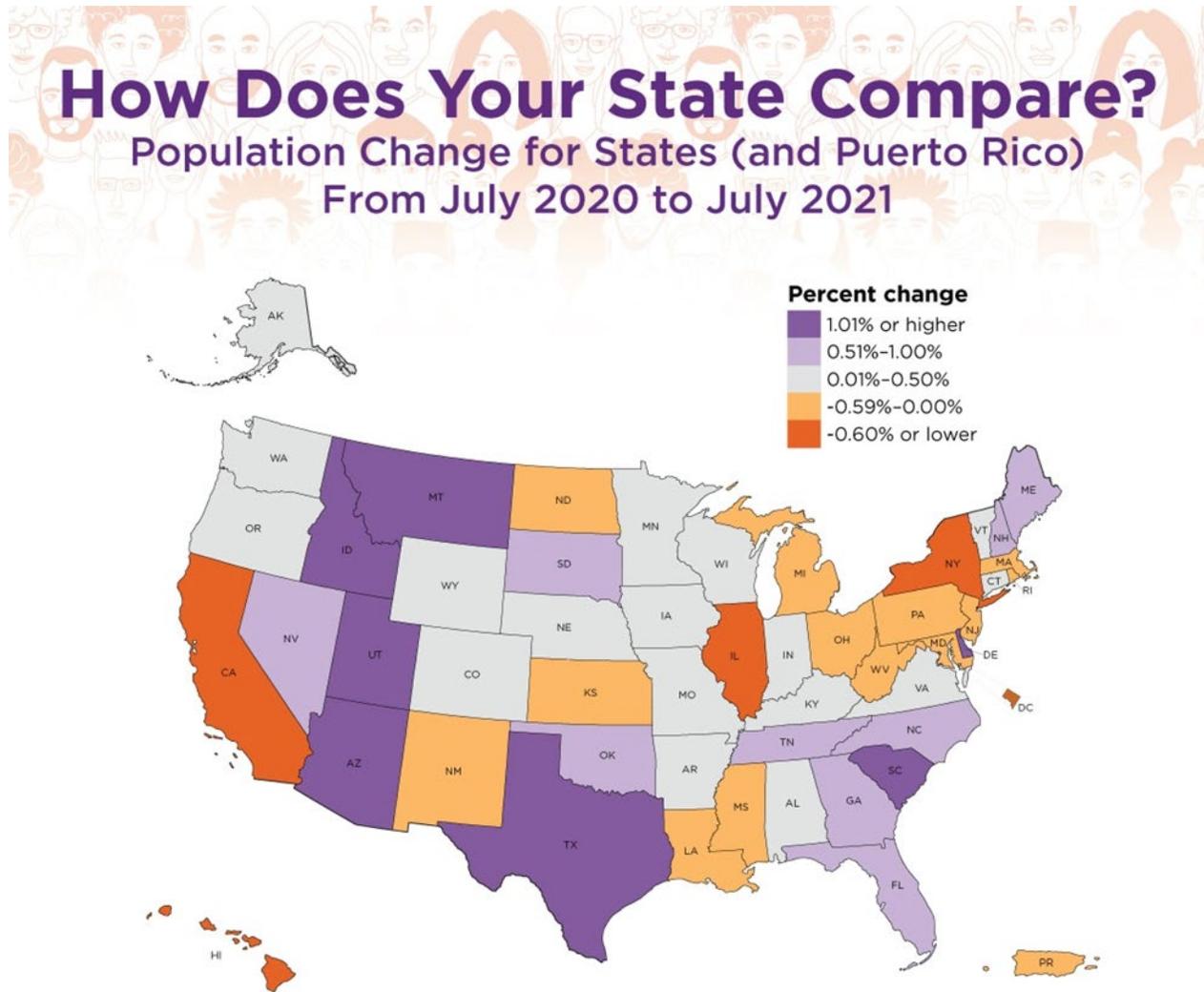
## DEMOGRAPHICS

According to U.S. 2020 Census Results, MS population in 2020 is 2,961,279. Mississippi population in 2021 is estimated to be 2.94 million. As of December 21, 2021, Mississippi is in the top 10 states in percent with a decline in population from 2020 to 2021, roughly -0.2% decline. Records indicated the following decline as reported for these months: April 1, 2020, 2,961,279; July 1, 2020, 2,956,870; July 1, 2021, 2,949,965. According to the Census, Mississippi has no numeric or percentage growth. The Population Estimates Program uses current data on births, deaths, and migration to calculate population change since the most recent decennial census date and produces a time series of estimates of population, demographic components of change, and housing units. The annual time series of estimates begins with the most recent decennial census date and extends to the vintage year. This is the first release of population estimates data developed from a base population that integrates the 2020 Census, Vintage 2020 estimates, and 2020 Demographic Analysis estimates. Furthermore, comparisons to previous years are not recommended.

The current metropolitan-area, or metro area, population of Jackson, Mississippi in 2022 is 431,000, a 1.17% increase from 2021. The metro area population of Jackson, Mississippi in 2021 was 426,000, a 1.43% increase from 2020. The metro area population of Jackson, Mississippi in 2020 was 420,000, a 1.2% increase from 2019.

Estimates show the slowest growth on record for the Nation's population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Vintage 2021 national and state population estimates and components of change, the population of the United States grew in the past year by 392,665, or 0.1%, the lowest rate since the nation's founding. The slow rate of growth can be attributed to decreased net international migration, decreased fertility, and increased mortality due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic. "Population growth has been slowing for years because of lower birth rates and decreasing net international migration, all while mortality rates are rising due to the aging of the

nation's population," said Kristie Wilder, a demographer in the Population Division at the Census Bureau. "Now, with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, this combination has resulted in a historically slow pace of growth."



**United States<sup>®</sup> Census Bureau** | U.S. Department of Commerce  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov) | Source: Vintage 2021 Population Estimates

## ECONOMICS

The state of Mississippi's economics was heavily impacted by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The governor began shutting businesses down in early March 2020. Businesses could not operate, especially restaurants, bars, salons, spas, which have high interpersonal interaction. With this shut down, many businesses failed and could not keep up with no revenues coming in

and had to close their doors forever. Several businesses have reopened but only to a small percentage. Many people lost their jobs and had to file for unemployment and seek food banks just to feed their families.

Mississippi ranks 35th in the nation for K-12 achievement in 2021, climbing from 50th in 2013, according to the latest Quality Counts report published in Education Week. (September 16, 2021)

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

According to the United States Census Bureau, between 2015 and 2019, the median household income for Mississippi was \$45,081 and the average household income is \$62,835. The per capita income was \$24,369 and 3.0% of households in Mississippi were high income households that make over \$200,000 a year. According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, the unemployment rate for Mississippi as of January 2020 was 5.3% compared to a national rate of 4.0%, with Jefferson County being the highest at 16.7%.

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

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

Mississippi ranks first in total U.S. catfish production and processing contributing more than 58% of all catfish consumed in the nation. A full 94% of all U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish are raised here in Mississippi, as well as Alabama, Arkansas, and Louisiana. In 1985, the U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish industry in these four states employed about 6,000 people and contributed roughly \$2.1 billion to the economies of each state. Today, the industry employs more than 13,000 people, and is responsible for more than \$4 billion.

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

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

**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE  
TAX REVENUES FROM GAMING  
MISCELLANEOUS TAX DIVISION**

July 22, 2021

[www.dor.ms.gov](http://www.dor.ms.gov)

POST OFFICE BOX 1033  
JACKSON, MS 39215

Collection Month		*General Fund Transfer	*Bond Sinking Fund	*Transfer to Local Governments	Totals
JULY	2020	\$ 12,587,169.89	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 6,425,484.57	\$ 22,012,654.46
AUGUST	2020	\$ 11,995,758.87	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 8,308,932.01	\$ 23,304,690.88
SEPTEMBER	2020	\$ 9,766,919.63	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 6,696,359.35	\$ 19,463,278.98
OCTOBER	2020	\$ 12,184,065.29	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 6,750,012.88	\$ 21,934,078.17
NOVEMBER	2020	\$ 7,547,557.92	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 8,165,335.44	\$ 18,712,893.36
DECEMBER	2020	\$ 11,161,103.48	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 5,809,403.98	\$ 19,970,507.46
JANUARY	2021	\$ 12,054,632.46	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 6,997,762.10	\$ 22,052,394.56
FEBRUARY	2021	\$ 10,147,862.79	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 8,214,408.48	\$ 21,362,271.27
MARCH	2021	\$ 14,057,530.61	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 6,536,178.01	\$ 23,593,708.62
APRIL	2021	\$ 19,868,385.03	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 8,373,285.34	\$ 31,241,670.37
MAY	2021	\$ 14,944,756.13	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 11,939,504.61	\$ 29,884,260.74
JUNE	2021	\$ 17,408,963.04	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 9,147,691.03	\$ 29,556,654.07
<b>FY 2021 Totals</b>		\$ 153,724,705.14	\$ 36,000,000.00	\$ 93,364,357.80	\$ 283,089,062.94

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

## IV. MISSISSIPPI DRUG THREATS

### OVERALL SCOPE OF DRUG THREATS



Methamphetamine is still considered the greatest drug threat across Mississippi because of the steady infiltration of crystal methamphetamine or ice into this state and the country and its propensity towards violent crimes, property crimes and the necessity of law enforcement resources. Prescription drugs are still a major threat, particularly with the opioid epidemic and the increase in overdose deaths due to prescription drugs. Heroin has gained more popularity and has become a major threat to Mississippi. Addicts are turning to heroin as a substitute for the more expensive and harder to find prescription opioids. The more potent and deadly drug, fentanyl, is frequently found mixed with heroin or substituted for heroin, with the result being more overdoses. Marijuana continues to be widely abused in Mississippi and is seen as larger threat. Adolescent acceptance and illicit use are increasing along with marijuana THC potency and the demand for other THC products. Cocaine, particularly crack cocaine, continues to be a major drug threat to our state due to the violence and the dangerous gangs associated with the trafficking of cocaine. Abuse of synthetic drugs such as Spice and bath salts are a constant battle for law enforcement with new synthetic drugs being developed continually. There has also been an influx of synthetic cannabinoids due to “CBD oil” being sold in local vape shops. Vape cartridges, especially those purchased in the black market, have been found to sometimes be falsely labeled and contain dangerous additives and contaminants.

## METHAMPHETAMINE

### ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT

Methamphetamine is a powerful, highly addictive stimulant that affects the central nervous system. Crystal methamphetamine, routinely referred to as “ice”, is a form of the drug that looks like glass fragments or shiny, bluish-white rocks. It is chemically comparable to amphetamine, which is a drug used to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy, a sleep disorder. People can consume methamphetamine by smoking, swallowing, snorting, or injecting the powder that has been diluted in water or alcohol. The high from the drug comes and goes quick, so because of that factor people often repeat doses in a “binge and crash” pattern. Methamphetamine has been classified by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration as a Schedule II stimulant, which makes it legally available only through a non-refillable prescription when produced by a recognized

pharmaceutical manufacturer. Due to this classification, illicit methamphetamine is also a Schedule II Controlled Substance.

Methamphetamine is typically made from a combination of household items and over-the-counter medications. Even though methamphetamine manufacturing efficiency has declined, there has been a surge in the amount of "ice" (Mexican methamphetamine distinguished by its clear, crystalline appearance)-related crimes in Mississippi because of Mexican TCO infiltration (Transnational Criminal Organizations). Following the arrests of cartel members across Mississippi in various Methamphetamine investigations, law enforcement has linked "ice" Methamphetamine to "super labs" in Mexico. "Ice" is nearly twice as strong as homemade methamphetamine and averages about 80% pure.



## ABUSE

The possibility for long-term usage has increased due to the purity level of methamphetamine "ice" produced in Mexico. Methamphetamine demand and production has expanded into Caucasian American, Black American, and Hispanic populations, according to law officials.

Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics initiated a total of 881 cases involving methamphetamine in 2021. This is an increase from 2020, which had a total of 759 methamphetamine cases. Methamphetamine cases initiated in 2021 by MBN involved the seizure of 33.93 combined pounds of solid methamphetamine, over 163 milliliters of methamphetamine in solution, and approximately 11,027 dosage units of methamphetamine. There were 594 arrests made by MBN for methamphetamine related charges including sale, possession, conspiracy, and manufacture during 2021.

The Mississippi Department of Health reported 1,322 individuals were admitted for methamphetamine abuse as a primary substance in 2021. This is an increase from 2020, in which 235 individuals were admitted for abuse of methamphetamine as a primary substance.

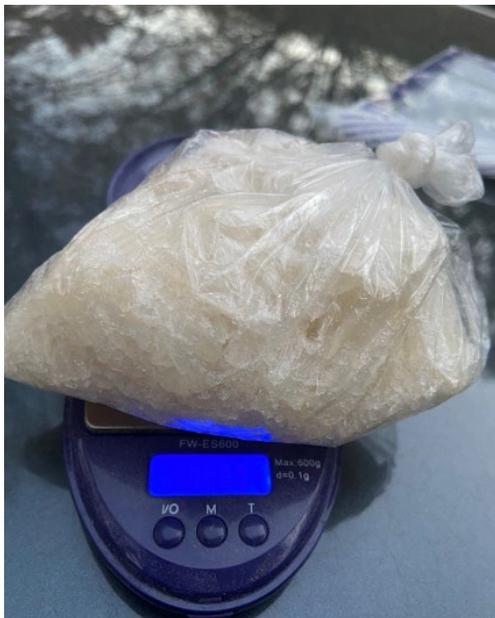
## AVAILABILITY

Methamphetamine that is transported into the state remains readily accessible and in can be found in abundance across the state. Due to crystal methamphetamine's supply and cheap price, it remains in high demand among distributors due to its purity that results in consistent and desirable "highs" for their customers, or users. Illicit methamphetamine that is imported by Mexican criminal enterprise continues to be highly addictive and readily available across the state.

With regard to “homemade” methamphetamine, referring to the locally produced drug in clandestine laboratories, the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, with the help of other law enforcement agencies, presented legislation that was passed by the Mississippi House and Senate, categorizing pseudoephedrine and ephedrine as Schedule III controlled substances in 2013. Due to this legislation, Mississippi has seen a significant reduction in local methamphetamine manufacturing, active methamphetamine labs, methamphetamine disposal sites, and chemical glassware seizures since the passing of House Bill 512.

“Chemists”, or those involved in its illicit production, require access to precursors chemicals, or “precursors”, to make methamphetamine. The primary chemicals used in the manufacture are pseudoephedrine and ephedrine, generally referred to as the trade name "Sudafed." In Mississippi, pseudoephedrine and ephedrine were previously classed as Schedule III substances under Mississippi law. This meant an individual could not go into a local drugstore and purchase the pills as an over-the-counter (OTC) medication, but had to obtain a medical provider’s prescription. Illicit drug manufacturers, on the other hand, simply utilized or attempted to utilize other substances in this clandestine chemical process. Due to several reasons, including the enactment of this law, Mississippi saw a significant decrease in illicit clandestine laboratories producing methamphetamine. In the end, the regulations prohibiting the sale of over-the-counter pseudoephedrine had little effect on the availability of methamphetamine. Therefore, in 2021, Mississippi legislators overturned the law and thereby allowing products containing pseudoephedrine to be purchased over the counter beginning in January 2022.

## ASSOCIATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE



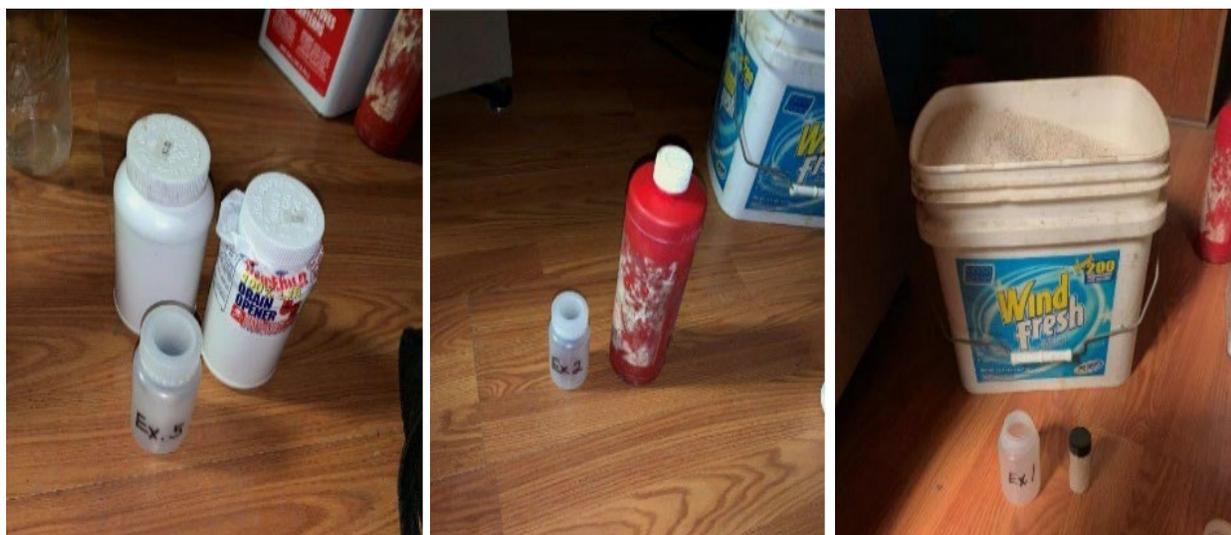
Due to the defendants' potential involvement with drug cartels and gangs, investigating drug traffickers continues to be dangerous. Methamphetamine abusers and producers both show signs of agitation and paranoia when they use the drug. As a result, instances in which violence may occur increases because of the psychological and physiological effects. Methamphetamine is one of the street drugs that continues to contribute to both violent and property crime, according to respondents to the National Drug Threat Assessment. When investigating suspected methamphetamine labs, law enforcement agents are required to wear protective clothes and breathing equipment. At methamphetamine labs, booby-traps and guns are also a threat. A sentencing enhancement was added to Mississippi Senate Bill 2575, which was voted into law in July 2005, for violators who have firearms and/or booby traps on premises or property during an

investigation or at the time of arrest. Combustible materials in methamphetamine labs frequently result in explosions and fires, posing substantial risks to the environment, law enforcement, and the public.

Children are frequently found in clandestine methamphetamine laboratories, due to a search warrant, an undercover purchase, a traffic stop, or a citizen complaint. Hazardous chemicals are present during the manufacturing process, in which children and adults are exposed. Children identified in these settings are usually related to the owners and producers of the laboratories.

## PRODUCTION

To curb production of methamphetamine, United States Congress passed the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act in 2005, which requires that pharmacies and other retail stores keep logs of purchases of products containing pseudoephedrine and limits the amount of those products an individual can purchase per day. Restrictions on the chemicals used to make methamphetamine in the United States have dramatically reduced domestic production of the drug. In 2010, there were 15,256 domestic methamphetamine laboratory incidents, which decreased over eighty percent (80 %) in 2017.



Locally, a simplified one-pot synthesis, commonly referred to as a "shake and bake" or a "mom and pop" lab, is typically the most common manufacturing method utilized. The manufacturing process is only capable of making small batches of methamphetamine, and in turn the pseudoephedrine restrictions are less effective. The process also uses smaller quantities of chemicals, thereby easier to obtain without raising undue suspicion. Additionally, this process requires less "steps" and is quicker, but no less dangerous to carry out where some addicts have been found to have made the drug while driving. For awareness and safety, the process involves placing crushed pseudoephedrine tablets into a non-pressurized container containing ammonium nitrate, water, and a hydrophobic solvent such as Coleman fuel or automotive starting fluid, to which lye and lithium strips are added. Hydrogen chloride gas produced by a reaction of salt with sulfuric acid is then used to recover crystals for purification. The container needs to be "burped" periodically to prevent failure under accumulating pressure, as exposure of the lithium to the water can spark a flash fire; thus, an abandoned reaction becomes a severe hazard to the public, as well as, first responders, to include law enforcement officer and firefighters. Lithium reacts violently with water, producing fire, which can start a fire or an explosion during the "cook". The

pressure associated with the chemical reaction can cause the container to fail and expose individuals to the hazardous chemicals.

Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) have had a significant impact in Mississippi from at least 2016 to the present, with “ice” linked to "super laboratories" in Mexico. These large labs can supply the increasing demands for crystal methamphetamine far more quickly than any small-scale local methamphetamine production. According to a report submitted to Congress by the US Government Accountability Office, “super-labs” may create ten (10) pounds of “ice” every 24 hours, compared to home methamphetamine labs that can produce significantly less methamphetamine during the same time period, such as multi-grams to ounce quantities. Crystallized methamphetamine, referred to as “ice”, undergoes additional chemical processes, which removes the impurities and produces higher concentrations of the drug. Therefore, this version of the stimulant is highly desirable due to it being almost twice as strong as homemade meth, requiring a lower amount of the stimulant to achieve the same "high”.

## TRANSPORTATION

Methamphetamine distributors have traditionally been outlaw motorcycle gangs and other independent trafficking organizations. While these organizations continue to manufacture meth, clandestine laboratories in Southwest Border states and Mexico have become the main sources of methamphetamine in Mississippi. Methamphetamine “ice” is manufactured in Mexico and imported into and through Mississippi via the West Coast and the Southwest Border. It is primarily controlled by the same major organizations that manufacture and traffic other illicit substances from Mexico to the United States. Methamphetamine is mostly transported in disguised compartments in passenger, commercial, and rail vehicles. Additionally, the United States Postal Service and next-day delivery services are frequently used by individuals and criminal organizations.

## DISTRIBUTION

Methamphetamine is typically distributed by local drug trafficking organizations and independent dealers across Mississippi. Methamphetamine distribution is no longer restricted to truck stops, clubs, low-to-moderate-income apartments, mobile home parks, hotels, restaurant parking lots, and rural regions, which were common and expected settings. The distribution has also expanded to accommodate people from all walks of life due to more people willing to try drugs and become addicted due to their initial use or subsequent attempts to reach the same high.

## HEROIN & FENTANYL

### ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT

Heroin and fentanyl continue to be a threat in Mississippi because of their high addiction rate and the increasing number of heroin and fentanyl related overdose deaths. The price of heroin has decreased over the past several years as the purity of heroin has increased. Fentanyl is so cheaply manufactured that it is being used to cut with heroin and other opioids to further the profits of drug dealers and trafficking organizations. Half of the respondents to the 2023 HIDTA Threat Assessment said that drug trafficking and availability of fentanyl increased in 2021 and 48% of respondents ranked fentanyl and other opioids, not including heroin, as the greatest drug threat facing Mississippi.



MBN Agents worked 71 cases involving heroin in 2021. This is a slight increase from 2020 with 61 heroin cases, but a substantial decrease when compared to 122 cases in 2019. MBN seized over 267 grams and 20 milliliters of heroin in 2021, as compared to 415 grams and 270 milliliters seized in 2020 and 2,954 grams seized in 2019. During the past several years, brown heroin was the predominant form of heroin seen in Mississippi, whereas the trend continued in 2021. MBN seized 223 grams of brown heroin, 2 grams of black heroin, and 42 grams of white heroin. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the 2023 Gulf Coast HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey respondents said the availability of heroin, fentanyl and other opioids has increased in the past year. Additionally, almost all respondents said that the demand has either stayed the same or increased.





MBN has seen a steady increase in the number of cases initiated involving fentanyl over the past four years. In 2021, MBN initiated 39 cases involving fentanyl, compared to 19 cases in 2020, 14 in 2019 and 10 in 2018. MBN is also noticing an increase in the numbers of cases where other drugs, particularly counterfeit prescription pills, have been determined to contain fentanyl. As expected, the drugs were believed to be some other drug, but crime lab results indicated the presence of fentanyl. In 2021, MBN initiated 26 cases involving counterfeit pills, which were found to contain fentanyl. The crime lab is still facing a pandemic-driven backlog, although

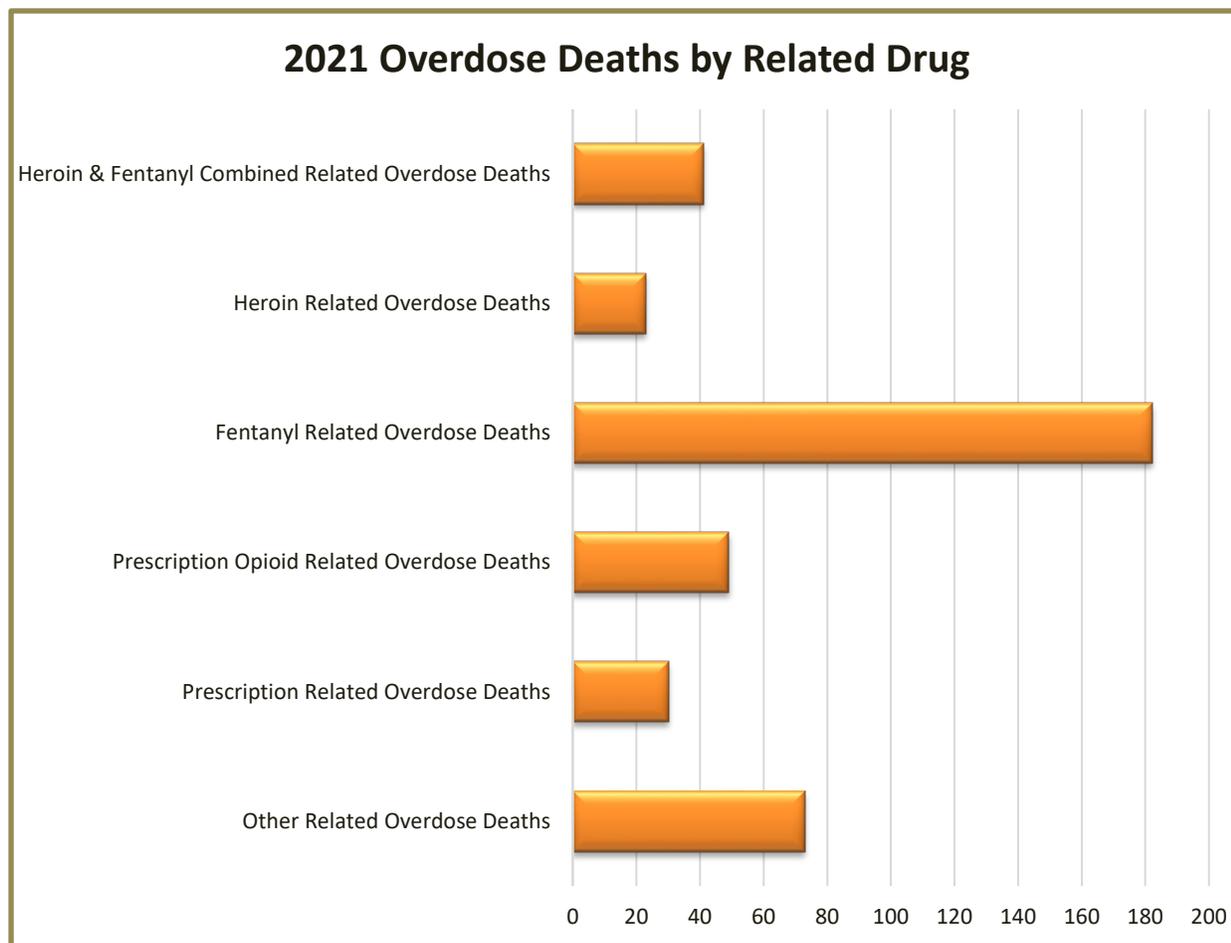
not as severe as 2020. MBN expects the fentanyl numbers to increase as drug submissions are analyzed and these results are reported to MBN.

## ABUSE

According to “Fentanyl: The State We’re In” from the advocacy group Families Against Fentanyl, fentanyl deaths have increased 373% in the past two years and have increased 980% since 2015. A rapid increase in the prescribing of opioids, started in the 1990s, led to an opioid epidemic. With prescription opioids now being harder to obtain, heroin and other illicit opioids are more in demand. Cartels and some local drug dealers are cutting heroin with fentanyl and selling on the street to increase profits. Additionally, these drug distributors are selling fentanyl laced counterfeit pills that appear to be Oxycodone, Xanax, Percocet, or other similar drugs, causing overdose deaths involving fentanyl to rise. There were at least 240 overdose deaths involving heroin and/or fentanyl in 2021, which is 61% of all of the overdose deaths reported for 2021. Additionally, there were about 289 overdose deaths that involved prescription, illegal or synthetic opioids, which was 73% of all overdose deaths in 2021. There are still overdose deaths that have not been reported, as well as, crime lab results that have not been completed, whereas this number is expected to rise. In 2020, there were 272 overdose deaths involving heroin and/or fentanyl, which accounted for 60% of all drug overdose deaths and 73% involved prescription, illegal or synthetic opioids.



The Mississippi Department of Mental Health reported that during the year 2021, 314 people were treated for heroin as a primary substance and 100 people were treated for heroin as a secondary substance. This is a decrease from the previous three years. In 2020, 680 people were treated for heroin as a primary substance as compared to 574 admissions in 2019 and 530 admissions in 2018.



## PRODUCTION

Heroin is an opioid derived from morphine which comes from the poppy plant. Heroin generally comes in three different forms in the United States: powder, black tar and pills. Powder heroin comes in brown and white. White powder heroin is usually the most desirable and originates in Southeast and Southwest Asia. Brown powder originates from Mexico and is darker in color and is usually less powerful. Black tar heroin, which has a black sticky appearance, almost exclusively comes from Mexico and South America. The third, least common form of heroin is pill form. These are often sold in gel capsules or made with pill presses and mixed with other powders like powdered lactose, quinine and baby laxative. Usually, these pills mimic an opiate pill. Pills are usually the cheapest and lowest-quality form of the drug.

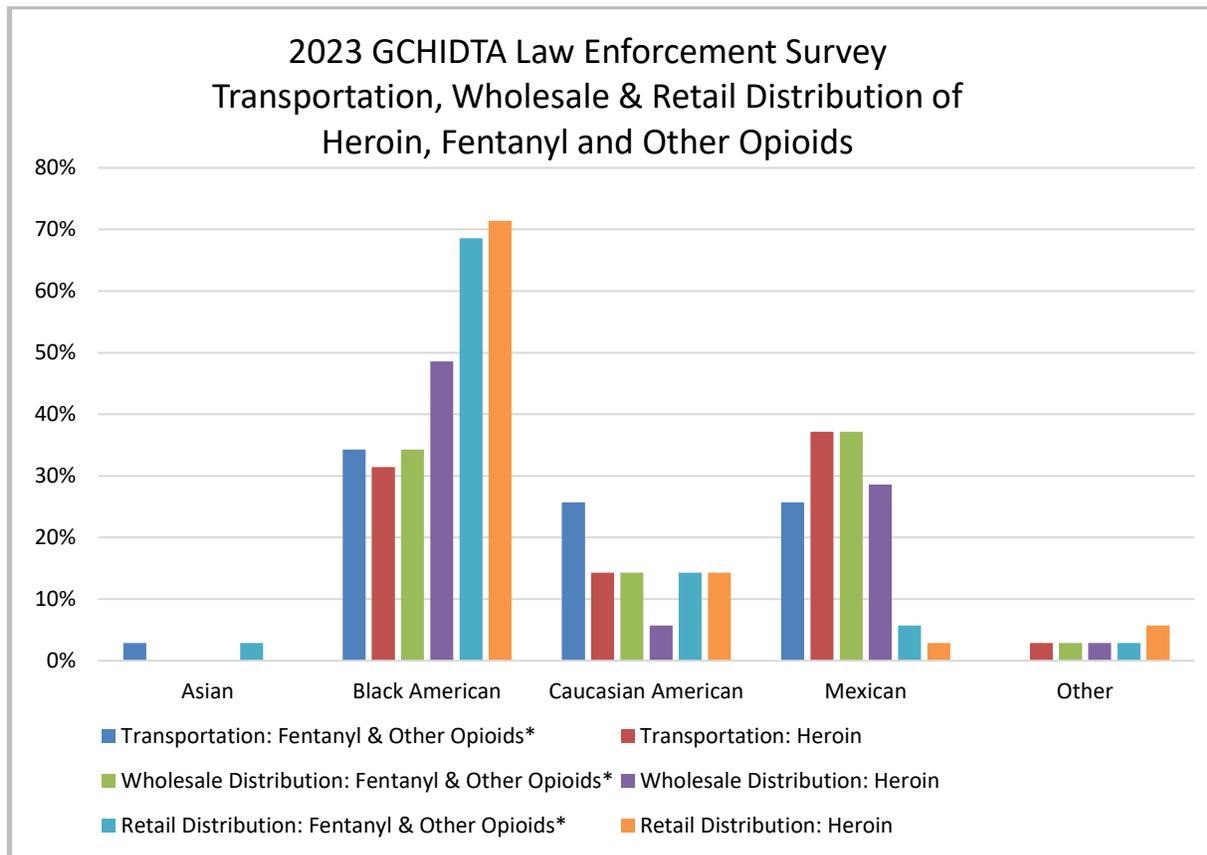
Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that can be prescribed to treat patients with chronic pain or severe pain following surgery. It is a Schedule II controlled substance like morphine but 50 to 100 times more potent. Transdermal patches or lozenges are prescribed forms of fentanyl, which can be diverted for misuse and abuse. Fentanyl is also illicitly manufactured primarily in foreign clandestine labs and smuggled through Mexico to the United States. Fentanyl is being mixed with other illicit drugs like methamphetamine, cocaine, and heroin to increase the potency of the drug and is sold as powders, nasal sprays, and counterfeit prescription opioids pills.

Counterfeit pills are made without any official supervision or quality control so often counterfeit pills contain lethal doses of fentanyl. There is significant risk that illegal drugs have been intentionally contaminated with fentanyl increasing the possibility of a fatal interaction.

## TRANSPORTATION AND DISTRIBUTION

Mexican DTOs dominate the trafficking of Mexican black tar heroin and Mexican brown powder heroin. Most of the heroin distributed in the United States comes across the southwest border and is controlled by Mexican Cartels. White powder heroin originates in Southeast and southwest Asia. Heroin is typically transported by private and commercial vehicles from Mexico, and then across the United States from California, and other southwestern states. According to the 2023 Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Law Enforcement Survey, 37% of respondents said heroin is transported by Mexicans, 31% said Black Americans and 14% said Caucasian Americans.

China and Mexico are the largest producers of fentanyl that makes its way into the United States via shipping containers, mail, or smuggled across the U.S./Mexico border. Heroin and fentanyl, once in the U.S., are transported into and through Mississippi via three major routes: Interstate 10, Interstate 20, and Interstate 55. According to the 2023 Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Law Enforcement Survey, 34% of respondents said fentanyl is transported by Black Americans, 26% said Caucasian Americans, and 26% said Mexicans.



## ASSOCIATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Heroin and fentanyl related violence is minimal in Mississippi. However, gangs that are associated with selling small quantities of heroin and fentanyl, commit violent crimes including: assault, burglary, homicide, and robbery, to further their drug activities and to protect their turf. Most of the violent crime that occurs in Mississippi is not directly attributed to heroin or fentanyl use and distribution.

## DIVERTED PHARMACEUTICALS

### ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT



Pharmaceutical Drug Diversion has generally been defined as the use of pharmaceuticals, or prescription medications, by someone other than for whom they were intended or used in a manner other than prescribed. Typically, the biggest threat lies in pharmaceuticals that are obtained by forgery and theft, whereas organized groups focus their efforts on specific drugs of choice to be further distributed. These medications are routinely the most prescribed and in high demand in both, the legitimate and illicit markets. With that stated, the use and abuse of diverted pharmaceuticals continues to be a

serious problem that affects the health, social, and economic welfare of all communities, not only in Mississippi, but all over the country. Again, the majority of the diversion cases that are being investigated are related to prescription forgeries. MBN, along with its law enforcement partners, routinely investigate and affect arrests for diversion activity and the distribution of pharmaceuticals in Mississippi. Law enforcement encounters all segments of society involved in pharmaceutical diversion activity: young people, elderly people, and everyone in between. Law enforcement continues to encounter the less fortunate to the wealthy, which includes lawyers, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, doctors, nurses, businessmen, homemakers, and others, who are involved in some aspect of pharmaceutical diversion and/or distribution of prescription medications. Pharmaceuticals are still a central drug threat in Mississippi.

### ABUSE

According to the Mississippi Prescription Monitoring Program (MS PMP), the “Top 10” medications prescribed in Mississippi during Calendar Year 2021 continued to be dominated by an assortment of narcotics, benzodiazepine, and stimulants. Hydrocodone continues to be the most prescribed medication during the time period followed by oxycodone. Following these two medications, the “Top 10” are rounded out by dextroamphetamine, tramadol, alprazolam, zolpidem, clonazepam, methylphenidate, buprenorphine, and amphetamine. As to be expected and for the most part, the illicit diversion of pharmaceutical drugs mirrors the drugs that are being prescribed. The abuse of these medications continues to be a concern to law enforcement.

Drug users and abusers seek the commonly prescribed pharmaceuticals due to a familiarity with them, such as hydrocodone (brand names: Vicodin, Norco, etc.), oxycodone (Percocet, OxyContin, etc.), tramadol (Ultram, Ultracet), Ritalin (methylphenidate), Adderall (dextroamphetamine), alprazolam (Xanax), clonazepam (Klonopin), and others. Narcotics, benzodiazepines, stimulants, and other classes of prescription drugs continue to be a major concern to law enforcement in Mississippi. Additionally, Promethazine with Codeine continues to be a desired drug in the illicit market, whereas law enforcement has seen a dramatic uptick in fraudulently manufactured prescriptions and fraudulent call-ins for this medication during COVID.

MBN has found that some users and abusers were lawfully prescribed their medication or medications, of choice and had a desire to continue to feel the effects produced by this drug after the prescription was depleted. Other users and abusers were introduced to a drug by a family member or acquaintance and enjoyed the feeling that it caused. Furthermore, users and abusers continued to seek to find this medication from other sources than from a licensed medical provider, albeit prescription forgery activity, stealing from family and friend's medicine cabinets, purchasing quantities of friends and acquaintances' legitimate supply, or seeking an illicit source on the street. Similar to "street drugs", users and abusers seek to obtain the elusive high that got them hooked in the beginning. As supply and demand impacts the availability of hydrocodone, oxycodone, alprazolam, and other pharmaceuticals, illicitly pressed pills, containing fentanyl and other substances that mimic or appear to be the desired pill, continue to be sold to users seeking particularly marked pharmaceutical medications. Unfortunately, these counterfeit pills can have lethal consequences. In an effort to combat this dangerous situation, MBN's Pharmaceutical Diversion Unit continues to investigate the increasing numbers of diverted pharmaceuticals and the increasing number of overdose-related cases throughout the state. MBN maintains a valued partnership with DEA's Tactical Diversion Unit based in Jackson, Mississippi.



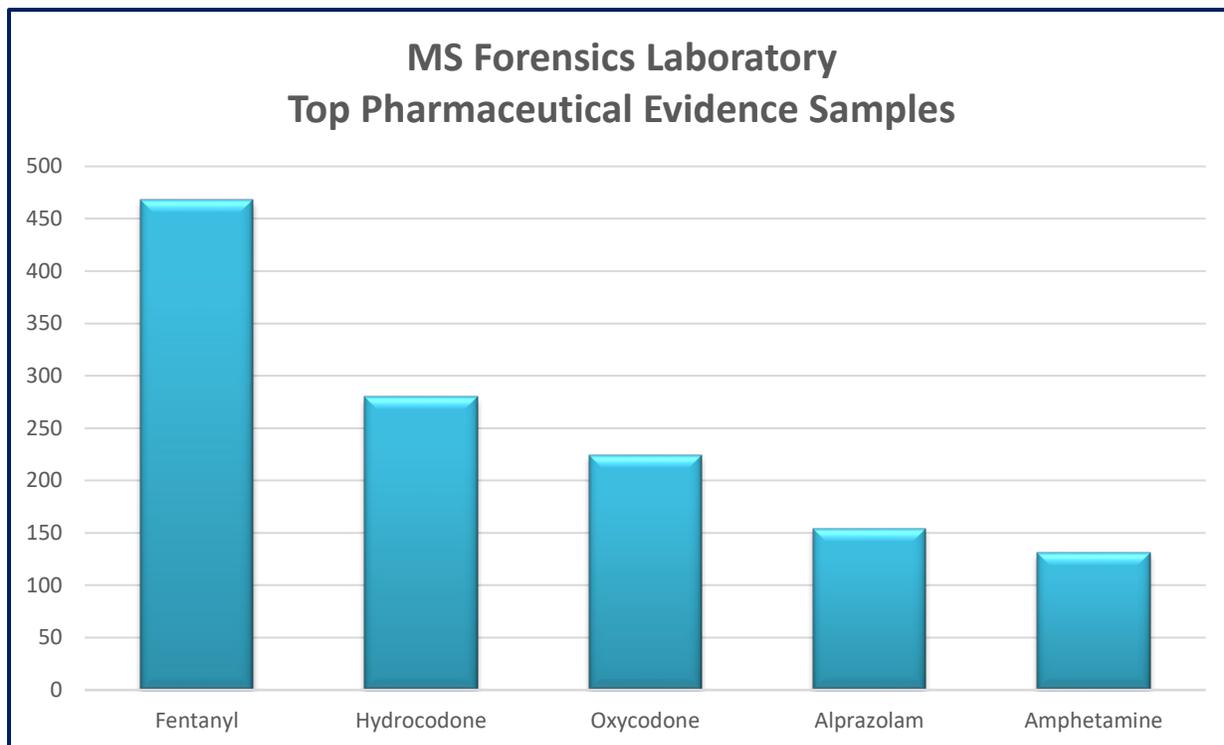
As MBN continues to investigate allegations of wrongdoing as it pertains to pharmaceutical medications, MBN also conducts training to increase awareness and expand partnerships with local, state, and Federal law enforcement agencies. MBN initiated 219 cases involving prescription narcotics, 80 cases involving prescription depressants, and 33 cases involving prescription stimulants. These pharmaceutical-related cases involved the sale, possession, and prescription forgery in 2021. According to MBN and as reported by Mississippi coroners, approximately 20% of the reported overdoses in the state are related to or involve pharmaceutically manufactured controlled substances. We continue to see the abuse of opioids and other pharmaceutically manufactured controlled substances diverted from their legitimate use and introduced into the black market across our state. This continued pattern forces law enforcement to focus and refine their training, policies, and procedures to proactively combat this dangerous situation of epic proportions.

## AVAILABILITY



Some methods of obtaining pharmaceuticals include: 1) legitimately obtaining prescriptions then diverting a portion for abuse or financial gain; 2) being given by, bought from, or taken from a friend or relative; 3) stealing physician's prescription pads; 4) producing counterfeit prescriptions; 5) purchasing from internet pharmacies; and 6) calling pharmacists impersonating a physician. Some abusers continue to go from medical provider to medical provider complaining of the same ailment in an effort to obtain duplicate prescriptions for personal use. Other abusers steal prescription blanks or fraudulently call-in prescriptions to secure quantities of desired medications to support their habit. Additionally,

some physicians, and other medical providers, willingly help individuals abuse prescription drugs by writing prescriptions when there is no medical need, usually associated with some personal gain. MBN continues to identify individuals who travel outside the state to Louisiana, Texas, and Florida to visit pain management clinics in order to obtain large quantities of pharmaceuticals to illegally distribute in Mississippi. MBN continues to see intrastate and interstate organized groups who utilize high quality fraudulently manufactured prescriptions to secure large quantities of pharmaceuticals to illegally distribute inside and outside of Mississippi's borders.



On January 20, 2022, the statewide numbers of evidence samples tested by the Mississippi Forensics Laboratory Drug Section for 2021 were as follows for cases relevant to the top pharmaceuticals: 468 cases that contained fentanyl or an analog of fentanyl; 280 cases that contained hydrocodone or a combination; 224 cases that contained oxycodone or a combination; 154 cases that contained alprazolam; and 131 cases that contained amphetamine. Since the Mississippi Forensics Laboratory Drug Section is still working 2021 cases, this number will probably increase as analyzed drug results continue to be made available.

## INTERNET PHARMACIES

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

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

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

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

MBN's Statewide Pharmaceutical Diversion Unit continues its efforts by working in conjunction with the DEA to combat the illegal distribution of pharmaceuticals in the state from sources outside of our state, albeit nationally or internationally.

## ASSOCIATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Local independent dealers and abusers are primarily responsible for burglarizing pharmacies and the homes of legitimate prescription holders to obtain drugs. However, MBN and our law enforcement partners continue to investigate pharmacy burglaries that appear to be coordinated efforts by out-of-state criminal groups. Pharmacy diversion also occurs when pharmacy employees steal products directly from the shelves. Doctor shopping occurs when individuals who may or may not have a legitimate ailment visit numerous physicians to obtain drugs in excess

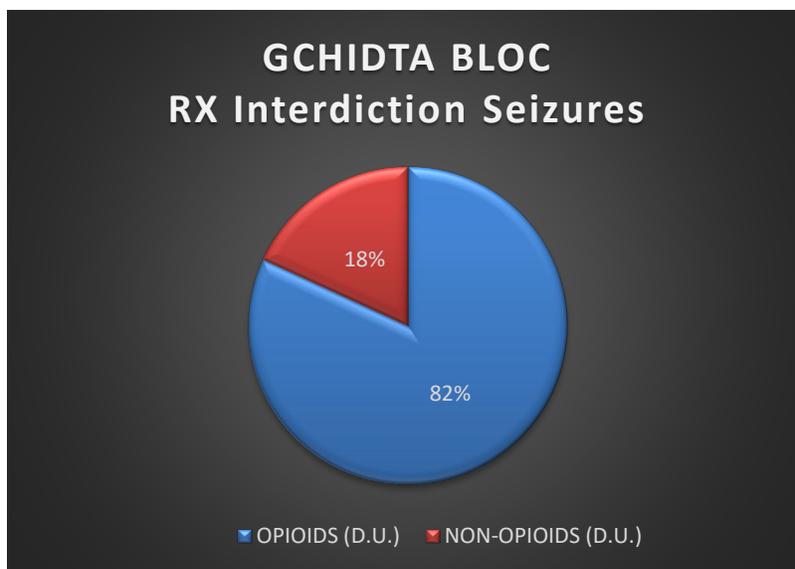
of what should be prescribed. Prescription forgery transpires when local independent dealers or abusers steal prescriptions from physicians or make “pen and ink” changes to prescriptions doctors have written. Unscrupulous physicians sometimes prescribe medications for individuals who do not have a medical need or sometimes for a fee or other favors. In addition to local independent dealers and abusers, intrastate and interstate criminal groups that specialize in pharmaceutical diversion are actively involved in all aspects of prescription forgery activity. In 2021, there were a total of 22 pharmacy burglaries, 9 of which were attempted, in Mississippi, down from a total of 45 in 2020, of which 15 were attempted.

## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation of diverted pharmaceuticals is usually by privately owned vehicles and parcel service businesses. MBN executed and/or responded to 729 interdiction stops in 2021, of which 114 resulted in the seizure of diverted pharmaceuticals. MBN has also intercepted numerous packages and seized pharmaceuticals from the United States Postal Service, Federal Express, United Parcel Service and others.

## DISTRIBUTION

Most diverted pharmaceuticals in Mississippi are for individual use. Occasionally, violators will sell pharmaceuticals obtained through legitimate and diverted means as a way of supplementing their own habit. Users also obtain pharmaceuticals through pain clinics throughout the state. While MBN is seeing a decrease in the number of general practitioners’ issuing opioid prescriptions, the prescriptions written by doctors at pain management clinics has increased substantially. By following a person’s Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) history, it has become evident which prescribers are problematic. Often the PMP of an overdose victim will lead you straight to an over-prescriber. Some doctors are even prescribing controlled substances through the internet to patients who have never been examined.



## SUMMARY

The MBN Statewide Pharmaceutical Diversion Unit (SPDU) continues to work hand in hand with the state regulatory boards to include the Mississippi Board of Pharmacy among others. By maintaining these invaluable relationships, MBN has an interdisciplinary approach to their

enforcement efforts, whereas some investigations may not rise to the level needed for criminal prosecution, but disciplinary action is warranted by the appropriate regulatory board(s). MBN realizes the complexity of pharmaceutical drug diversion and it takes law enforcement, regulatory boards, and the entire medical community working together to achieve a reduction in diverted prescription medications.

## MARIJUANA

### ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT



Marijuana continues to be the most trafficked, widely abused, and readily available illicit drug in Mississippi. A relaxed public perception of harm, popularization by the media, and groups advocating for legalization encourages marijuana use. While the recreational use of marijuana remains illegal under Mississippi law, state legislatures recently approved legislation legalizing marijuana for medical use.

Nationwide, eighteen states and the District of Columbia have legalized marijuana for recreational use. Three states, Arizona, New Jersey, and Montana approved recreational marijuana on Election Day 2020. In 2021, New York, Virginia, New Mexico, and Connecticut approved initiatives to legalize recreational marijuana. On a federal level, marijuana remains illegal. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) classifies marijuana as a Schedule I drug with no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse.

In 2021, MBN seized approximately 1,188 pounds of processed marijuana and 451 plants. Additionally, 392 marijuana plants were reported to MBN as being seized by local sheriff and police departments. MBN made 235 arrests in 2020 and 227 in 2021 for marijuana violations. MBN seized approximately 715 pounds of marijuana and initiated 596 cases involving marijuana and 19 cases involving marijuana plants in 2020. The significant decline in 2020 is likely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. When compared to previous years' statistics, marijuana availability has increased in Mississippi. This likely stems from the growing number of states changing the legal status of marijuana.

## ABUSE

Marijuana continues to be the most commonly abused drug across all social, ethnic, financial, and educational lines. Public perception of marijuana's harmful effects is declining, a trend that substance abuse professionals suggest stems from the drug's changing legal status. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMH), marijuana use is linked to depression, anxiety, suicide ideation, and psychotic episodes. In 2021, The Mississippi Department of Mental Health served over 10,000 patients for substance abuse. In 2020, MDMH treated 4,848 patients for some form of substance abuse. When compared to 2020, the number of substance abuse patients has increased by approximately 5,000 patients. Out of the total number of substance abuse patients, 2,801 were treated for the abuse of marijuana. Approximately 15% of the patients treated for marijuana used the drug as a primary substance.

Nationwide, marijuana is widely available and generally readily accessible. Marijuana use among young adults and teens has trended downward in the past year. This decrease could be contributed to the Covid-19 pandemic and dramatic shifts in the day-to-day lives of adolescents. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), marijuana use in all forms (smoking and vaping) decreased significantly for 8th, 10th, and 12th graders in 2021. In 2020, 11.4 % of 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported using marijuana, compared to 7.1% in 2021. 17.3% of 10th graders reported using marijuana in 2021. This is in contrast to 2020 when 28.0% 10<sup>th</sup> graders reported using marijuana. 30.5% of 12 graders reported using marijuana in the past year in 2021, compared to 35.2% in 2020.

## AVAILABILITY



In the United States, marijuana is ranked as the most readily available illicit drug. Since November 2020, Mississippi has moved toward legalizing marijuana for medical use. Voters approved a measure in November 2020 to allow patients to purchase up to five ounces of medical marijuana over the duration of a month. The initiative was overturned by the Mississippi State Supreme Court several months later. In September 2021, a modified version of the program was approved by both the Mississippi House and Senate. The new program allows physicians to prescribe three ounces of marijuana to patients. This is a 40% decrease from the original Initiative 65. The final version of Senate Bill 2095 was passed in January 2022.

In February 2022, the Governor signed the legislation. Even though the governor's signature means the bill becomes law immediately, it could be months before the first marijuana dispensaries open. The Mississippi State Department of Health is responsible for regulating the program. MSDH will begin accepting online applications for patients, medical practitioners, and cannabis cultivation facilities by June 2022. After receiving applications, MSDH has 120 days to begin administering licenses.

The continued push for the legalization of medical marijuana has presented multiple challenges for law enforcement officials. States that have legalized medical marijuana have become a source for marijuana produced and distributed outside the legal framework. For example, Oregon reported in the 2022 Oregon-Idaho HIDTA Drug Threat Assessment the amount of marijuana seized by HIDTA task forces has steadily increased since 2016. Oregon-Idaho HIDTA suggests the increase in marijuana seizures stems from legalization, insufficient resources for monitoring compliance, and black market sales that encourage trafficking across state borders. It is common for groups to exploit state laws limiting an individual's possession by diverting state-approved medical marijuana to the illicit market. These groups are able to sell what they purchase to markets where marijuana is illegal.

Prices for marijuana vary based on the quality, potency, and geographic region where it was produced, and whether it's in flower, wax, or edible form. In Mississippi, Mexican marijuana ranges between \$400 and \$900 per pound. Hydroponic marijuana ranges from approximately \$4,000 to \$8,500 per pound. Nationally, the average price for commercial-grade marijuana is approximately \$750 per pound.

## ASSOCIATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Violent crime is not associated with marijuana in Mississippi. However, some marijuana producers and distributors will submit to violent crimes to protect their product. Cannabis growers for example, will often resort to counter-surveillance, trip wires and explosives to protect their crop from theft or seizure. In other states, marijuana retail distributors have been known to carry weapons to protect their merchandise and to guard against potential robberies during marijuana transactions. Mexican marijuana DTO's are reputed to be the most violent in the world.

## PRODUCTION



There are three types of marijuana markets in the United States: illicit markets, state-approved medical marijuana, and state-approved recreational/personal-use markets. Each market operates differently and can be best described independently. Marijuana is grown utilizing different methods such as indoor, outdoor and hydroponic grow operations. Over the past few years, indoor grow operations were on the decline in Mississippi. These operations range in size from a small closet to entire residences. Indoor cannabis cultivation requires diligent oversight. In order to produce a healthy plant, growers must provide their crops with light, heat, humidity, and fertilizer. Indoor grow operations also employ sophisticated means of production and concealment. Organizations often purchase homes in neighborhoods with mid to high-level income residents. Residential indoor operations

are capable of producing marijuana crops four or more times in one year. Data from 2018 shows that seizures from these types of operations range from 50 to 100 marijuana plants, totaling up to \$100,000 in value.

Outdoor operations enable a grower to conceal their crop from law enforcement by intermixing it with other crops. Mexican DTOs continue to use sophisticated methods of cultivation. Workers are required to live on-site and tend to the crop daily. DTOs utilize elaborate irrigation systems, water pumps, hoses, portable sprayers, portable gas generators, and advanced chemical fertilizer applications.



## TRANSPORTATION

Mexico-produced marijuana enters the country primarily in Arizona, California, and south Texas, while high-potency Canadian marijuana is usually smuggled through and between points of entry in Washington, Michigan, New York, and Vermont. Both forms of marijuana are distributed nationally. Similarly, domestically produced marijuana is transported from grow sites to markets nationwide. Mississippi continues to be a major trans-shipment point for bulk marijuana from the Southwest Border.

According to the 2023 Gulf Coast HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey, marijuana is the most commonly seized drug. According to Gulf Coast HIDTA/BLOC interdiction data for the calendar year 2021, law enforcement officers in Mississippi seized 1,508 pounds of marijuana and 480,307 dosage units of THC products from drug traffickers traveling through the state. The primary source states for marijuana trafficked through Mississippi is California followed by Texas. Domestic marijuana is the most common type of marijuana encountered by Mississippi law enforcement followed by high-grade hydroponic and British Columbia seeds (BC bud). Parcel delivery is also a popular avenue for drug traffickers to utilize for transporting drugs. Sixty-six percent (66%) of Mississippi law enforcement respondents to the 2023 Gulf Coast HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey reported an increase in the number of illicit narcotics packages trafficked by mail or parcel transportation.

## DISTRIBUTION

According to the 2023 Gulf Coast HIDTA threat assessment survey, sixty-five percent (65%) of law enforcement in Mississippi reported the distribution of marijuana remained the same in 2021. Marijuana produced in the United States is trafficked into Mississippi, from states where production is legal. Private and rented vehicles remain the preferred method of transportation for marijuana; however, drug traffickers often use commercial semi-trucks and tractor-trailers. Law enforcement in Mississippi has encountered commercial semi-trucks transporting loads of 100 to 1,000-kilogram quantities. Marijuana is distributed by all socio-economic classes ranging from street-level dealers to major distributors.



Mexican-produced marijuana is transported into the United States across the southwest border while smaller quantities are often trafficked from Canada and the Caribbean. Marijuana produced in Mexico is considered “low grade” and of lesser quality than marijuana produced in the United States and Canada. Warehouses along the southwest border are often used to store foreign-produced marijuana once it enters the U.S. The United States Custom and Border Protection Office of Field Operations seized approximately 319,447 pounds of marijuana during the Federal fiscal year (FY) 2021 (October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021). When compared to FY2020, the amount of marijuana seized by CBP has increased.

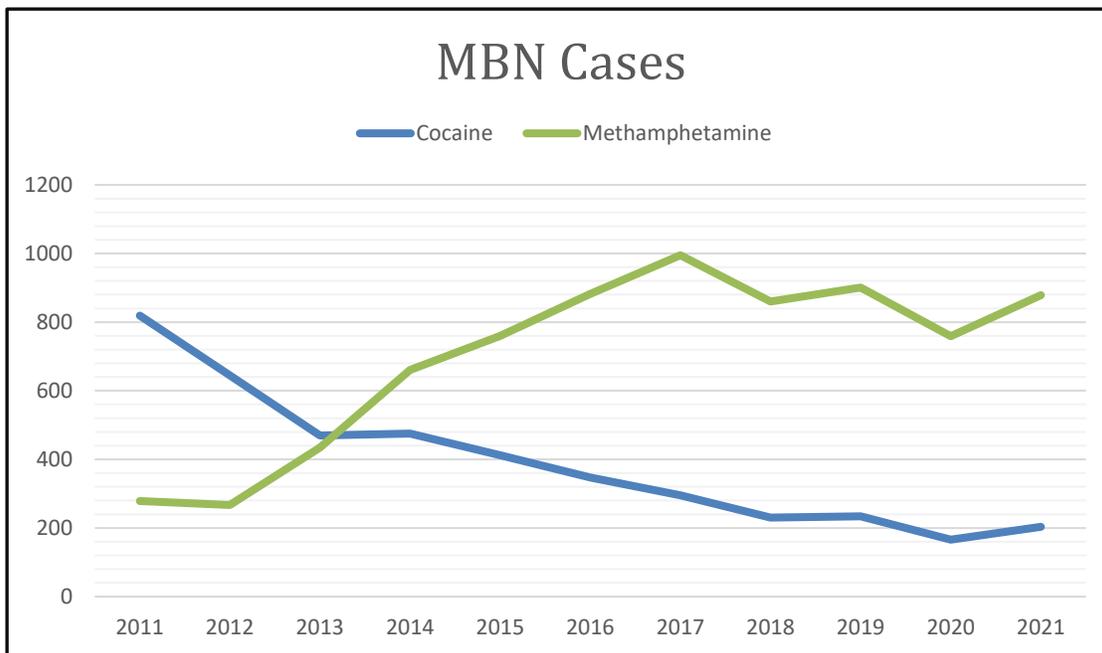
## TRENDS

Marijuana will continue to be one of the most widely abused and one of the most available illicit drugs in Mississippi. The Mississippi medical cannabis program will likely lead to an increase in abuse and availability rates. Medical marijuana legislation has led to an increase in marijuana seizures in states that enacted medical cannabis programs. Oregon has reported a steady increase in marijuana seizures since the state’s medical cannabis program went into effect. As more states move to legalize medical and recreational marijuana, domestic production and trafficking will increase. This will likely allow criminal and drug trafficking organizations to take advantage of state legality.

## POWDER AND CRACK COCAINE

### ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT

Cocaine numbers have steadily dropped in Mississippi due to drug organizations expanding their drug trafficking to include drugs like methamphetamine and heroin. MBN initiated cocaine cases increased in 2021 as compared to 2020, but was still a decrease compared to the previous nine years. Although MBN cocaine case numbers are low, cocaine remains a dangerous and problematic drug in communities and for law enforcement across the state. The use and/or sale of cocaine can be linked directly and indirectly to crimes, especially violent crimes.



## ABUSE

In Mississippi, cocaine is illicitly trafficked and abused by people from all racial and socioeconomic groups throughout the state’s 82 counties. Crack cocaine remains the drug of choice among users and traffickers in the Black American population in both urban and rural areas of Mississippi. However, the use and abuse of cocaine is not limited to any one geographic area or ethnic group.

In 2021, Mississippi saw an increase in the number of cocaine cases and cocaine seized compared to 2020. In 2021, approximately 11% of all MBN drug cases initiated were for cocaine. There were 92 cases involving crack cocaine and 111 involving powder cocaine in 2021 compared to 69 cases involving crack cocaine and 97 cases involving powder cocaine in 2020, but this is a decrease when compared to 155 cases involving crack cocaine and 121 cases involving powder cocaine in 2019. There was an increase in the amount of cocaine seized in 2021, as compared to the past couple of years, but a considerable decrease compared to seizures in 2018. MBN agents purchased or seized approximately 88 pounds of cocaine during 2021, 26 pounds of cocaine during 2020 and approximately 13 pounds in 2019 but seized or purchased approximately 148 pounds in 2018.

During 2021, MBN arrested a total of 122 individuals for sale and possession of cocaine. This was approximately 10% of all the drug related arrests by MBN in 2021. This is an increase compared to 68 arrests for cocaine in 2020 but a decrease when compared to 182 arrests for cocaine in 2019 and 143 arrests for cocaine in 2018.

In 2021, the Gulf Coast HIDTA/BLOC Watch Center reported a total 190 pounds of cocaine seized during 5 traffic stops, primarily from local agency traffic stops on Mississippi interstates and state highways. This was a very significant increase compared to 19 pounds seized in 2020 and 108 pounds seized in 2019, but a decrease compared to 206 pounds in 2018.

Treatment data from the Mississippi Department of Mental Health shows that 428 people were admitted for cocaine abuse as a primary substance in 2021 in comparison to 96 in 2020 and 547 in 2018. This is less than 1% of the total amount of individuals served in 2021. Of the 428 people, 47% were between the age of 46 and 65 and 46% were between the age of 26 and 45.

## AVAILABILITY

Most of the high-level (wholesale) crack cocaine trade in Mississippi is controlled by Black Americans, many of whom are members or affiliates of groups or gangs such as the “Vice Lords,” “Gangster Disciples,” “Wood Street Players,” the “Four Corner Hustlers,” and the “North End Boys.” Unique to the Mississippi Gulf Coast counties of Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson are the Vietnamese gangs involved in drug trafficking. These Vietnamese gangs, primarily operating in the Biloxi area, are heavily involved in the distribution



of powder cocaine and the club drug ecstasy. The primary cocaine sources for these Vietnamese dealers are located in Texas, Canada, and California. Vietnamese dealers are known to supply some of the Black American dealers with powder cocaine, which is then converted into crack cocaine for local sale.

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

## ASSOCIATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

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

## PRODUCTION

Cocaine is produced almost exclusively in northern and western South America with Colombia as the main producer of illegal cocaine coming to the United States. Cocaine is not cultivated nor is it produced in Mississippi. Some crack cocaine is transported to Mississippi from neighboring states; however, most crack cocaine is converted locally prior to retail distribution.

## TRANSPORTATION

Mexican DTO's dominate cocaine transportation into the United States. Most of the cocaine entering the United States is transported across the Southwest Border via Mexico in kilogram quantities. Most of the cocaine found in Mississippi is primarily transported by Mexican or Black American DTOs via Texas and the Southwest Border. Cocaine is transported primarily in powder form and is commonly transported from the main source cities of Houston and Dallas to local wholesale distributors in Mississippi, most often via personal vehicles or commercial trucks on I-10, I-55, I-59, and I-20. There are a variety of concealment methods, to include false compartments inside the quarter-panels of the vehicles. Additionally, cocaine is often found inside electronically controlled false compartments in vehicles. Cocaine is transported into Mississippi by personal carry-on luggage via commercial and private buses, and through parcel services. Mississippi distributors often travel to Texas to obtain cocaine or rely on the Mexican DTOs through "mules", or individuals whose primary, if not only, role is to transport the drugs, to deliver cocaine to Mississippi. Los Angeles, Memphis, Chicago, Atlanta, and Miami are secondary source cities for the cocaine found in Mississippi.

## DISTRIBUTION



Most of the local distribution in the state is controlled by miscellaneous independent drug trafficking organizations and is transported into the state in two to 10-kilogram quantities. Loads of 20 kilograms and greater have been seized in the state, largely bound for Chicago or Atlanta. There is also widespread use of commercial courier services, such as commercial truck lines, independent truckers, and parcel service businesses to transport drugs into the state and ship currency out. A bulk of Mississippi's cocaine supply comes in through Texas.

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

## NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES



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### ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS), research chemicals (RC), designer drugs or “herbal highs,” are terms that have all been used to describe drugs that have been created to mimic the effects of scheduled or controlled illicit drugs. Synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinones are most commonly abused amongst all NPS. Despite the fact that these substances are referred to as “new,” it is not that they are newly created substances, but rather newly abused and encountered on the illicit market. Moreover, many NPS’ existences have been previously documented in scientific and regulatory communities. In addition to the wide availability of these substances online, they are also readily available in gas stations, adult stores, and smoke shops. NPS include, but are not limited to, synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic cathinones, MDMA (Ecstasy), GHB, LSD, DMT, PCP, psilocybin mushrooms and anabolic steroids

### ABUSE

NPS are a variety of other dangerous drugs that are equally addictive and just as devastating to society despite the fact that opioids, methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana receive a great deal of attention through enforcement efforts and media outlets. Although they remain popular among all age groups, NPS are typically marketed toward young adults as well as the homeless population. While some are used regularly among a small group of users, new substances often appear quickly and disappear again. NPS may be particularly attractive to drug users that are subjected to drug screening, such as inmates, parolees, and probationers, as drug screens often do not have the ability to identify all NPS. One of the most troubling aspects of NPS is the lack of awareness of the content and potency of the substance being consumed.

## SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS (SPICE)

Synthetic cannabinoids are a class of chemicals that bind to cannabinoid receptors in the body, but they are different from the natural cannabinoids in the cannabis plants. Synthetic cannabinoids can be used/consumed in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to, 1) being sprayed or otherwise soaked into a plant or other base material then typically smoked, 2) suspended in an oil form to be used in e-cigarettes or, 3) pressed into counterfeit prescription pills. The blend of material, oil, or pill is sometimes misleadingly referred to as synthetic marijuana. MBN initiated 44 cases involving synthetic cannabinoids during 2021. These cases resulted in four arrests and the seizure of 407 containers, 1644 grams, 1418 milliliters and 320 dosage units of the substance. There were 50 cases initiated in 2020, whereas six arrests were made and approximately 295 containers, 539 grams, 21-liter units of the substance were seized.



## MDMA (ECSTASY)



3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) is a psychoactive drug used recreationally. It is chemically similar to both stimulants and hallucinogens, producing feelings of increased energy, pleasure, emotional warmth, and distorted sensory and time perception. While it was initially popular in the nightclub scene and at “raves,” the drug now affects a broader range of people and is often referred to as Molly and Ecstasy. MBN initiated 65 cases in 2021 resulting in 51 arrests and the seizure of approximately 23,499 dosage units and 3,386 grams of MDMA. This is an increase from 2020 where 32 cases were opened, 42 arrests were made and approximately 3,465 dosage units and 166 grams were seized or purchased.

## ANABOLIC STEROIDS

Anabolic steroids are synthetic variations of the male sex hormone testosterone. Some common names for anabolic steroids are Gear, Juice, Roids, and Stackers. During 2021, MBN initiated 3 cases and made 0 arrests. Those three cases resulted in the seizure of 210 milliliters of steroids. This is a decrease from 2020 where MBN initiated five cases and seized 440 milliliters of steroids.

## OTHER HALLUCINOGENS

MBN initiated seven cases involving other hallucinogens in 2021, broken down as follows: five for LSD and two Psilocybin Mushrooms. This was a slight decrease from 2020, whereas MBN initiated 13 cases involving other hallucinogens in 2020, broken down as follows: four for LSD, eight for Psilocybin Mushrooms and one for dimethyltryptamine (DMT).



Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), also known as acid, is a psychedelic drug known for its psychological effects, which may include altered awareness of one's surroundings, perceptions, and feelings as well as sensations and images that seem real though they are not. Used mainly as a recreational drug, LSD is sold on the street in small tablets ("microdots"), capsules or gelatin squares ("windowpanes"). It is sometimes added to absorbent paper, which is then divided into small squares decorated with designs or cartoon characters ("loony toons"). LSD is typically either swallowed or held under the tongue but can also be injected. In 2020, one case involving LSD was initiated resulting in one arrest and the seizure of 78 dosage units. Considered by some as a significant increase, five cases were initiated with 127 dosage units of LSD seized and/or purchased, with zero arrests being made at the time of this report.

Psilocybin Mushrooms are one of a polyphyletic group of mushrooms that contain any of various psychedelic compounds including psilocybin, psilocin, and baeocystin. When consumed or brewed into a tea, mushrooms can produce a state of euphoria, altered thinking processes, closed and open-eye visuals, synesthesia, an altered sense of time, and spiritual experiences. MBN initiated two cases, making one arrest, and seizing 63.75 grams of mushrooms in 2021, whereas MBN initiated eight cases that resulted in two arrests and the seizure of 38.12 grams and 172 dosage units in 2020.



## AVAILABILITY

While the most common way to obtain NPS is through the internet, they are also readily available at college campuses, night clubs, and rave parties, especially MDMA and LSD. People continue to seek NPS out in gas stations/convenience stores, adult stores, and smoke and drug paraphernalia shops. The danger in this lies in the fact that these substances are not regulated and because of the variations in contents, two seemingly identical products sold in stores may have two completely different cannabinoids, cathinones, etc. inside them or may be laced/contaminated with other substances like fentanyl.

## ASSOCIATED CRIME AND VIOLENCE

The use of synthetic cathinones and synthetic cannabinoids has been linked to violence and overdose deaths across the country. Violence has also been linked to the use of other synthetic drugs such as bath salts, PCP, and steroids. GHB can cause memory lapse, confusion, or amnesia in victims which can lead to difficulty in prosecutions. As law enforcement and policy makers have begun to target stores selling synthetic cannabinoids, sales have moved more towards the streets.

## PRODUCTION

NPS are all created substances, from chemicals requiring no plant material, and are made to mimic the effects of other illicit drugs. Due to a lack in standardization, people often do not really know what they're getting. For example, synthetic cannabinoids, which are often obtained from China, are sold in colorful packaging, designed to support the belief of synthetic cannabinoids being "safe" for use. While MDMA was initially developed by a German pharmaceutical company in 1912, presently its main source of production is more ambiguous. Manufacturing LSD requires laboratory equipment and experience in the field of organic chemistry. Already synthesized NPS are commonly available in China and other Asian and European countries and often shipped through mail carriers to be processed and packaged domestically.

## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation of these various hallucinogens and synthetics is usually via privately owned vehicles and through the internet via parcel delivery services like the United States Postal Service (USPS), Federal Express (FedEx), and United Parcel Service (UPS).

## DISTRIBUTION

Besides the wide availability via the internet, more and more NPS are being sold in gas stations and smoke shops. There has been an influx of synthetic cannabinoids being marketed as legal e-liquids or vape oils. As law enforcement targets these types of shops, the sales of these e-liquids are making their way towards street sales. MDMA and LSD distribution typically occur at private parties and close to high school and college campuses. Some street gang members in Mississippi also distributes these illicit substances.

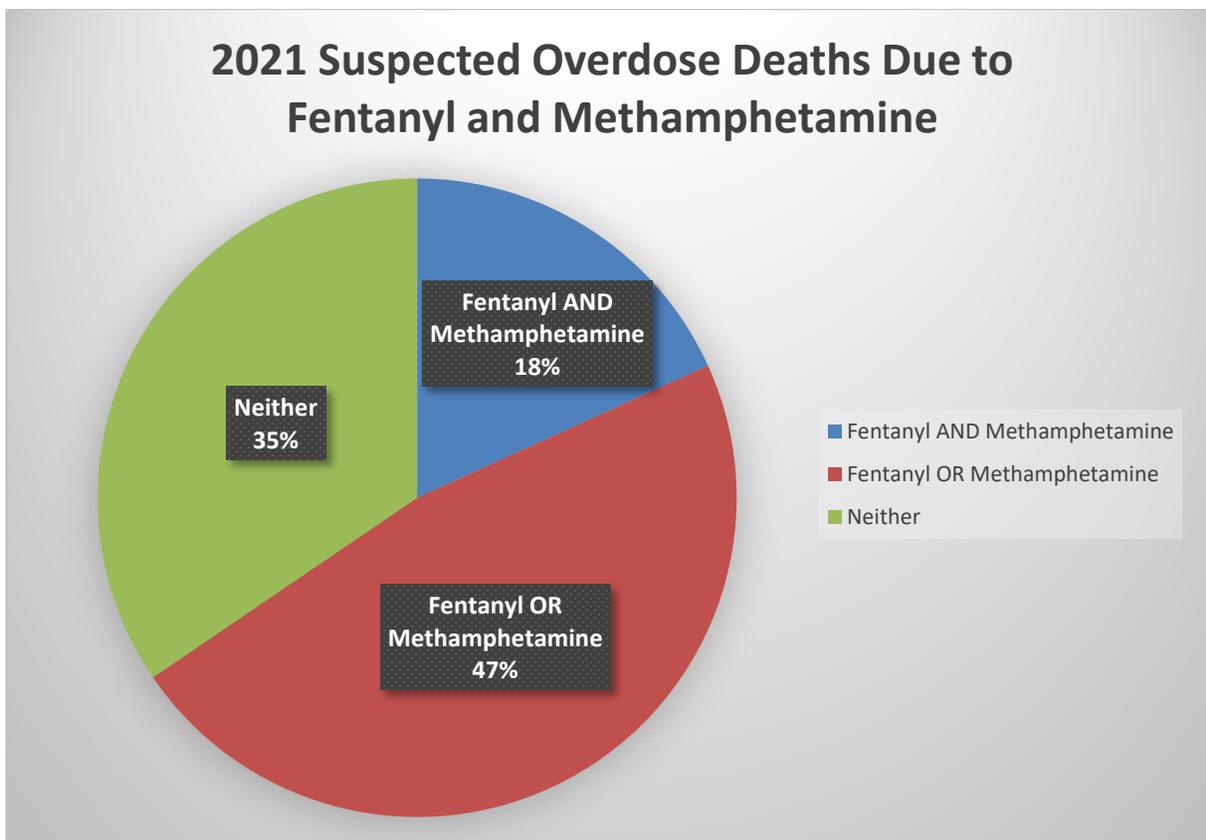
## V. DRUG OVERDOSES

As of March 22, 2022, Mississippi Coroners reported 429 Drug Related Overdose deaths to MBN that occurred in 52 counties in 2021. Compliance with reporting overdose deaths continues to be haphazard in some areas. As a result, Senate Bill 2264 was passed in 2007 to require healthcare providers, coroners, and law enforcement officers to notify the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics of all drug overdose deaths within 24 hours.

2021 - 426 cases reported involving 429 individuals experienced fatal overdoses.

2020 - 531 cases reported involving 533 individuals experienced fatal overdoses.

*Analyst note: Although many coroners have begun reporting these deaths since the passage of this bill, there is no penalty for failure to report an overdose. Therefore, these figures may not be an accurate reflection of the actual number of overdose deaths in the state of Mississippi.)*

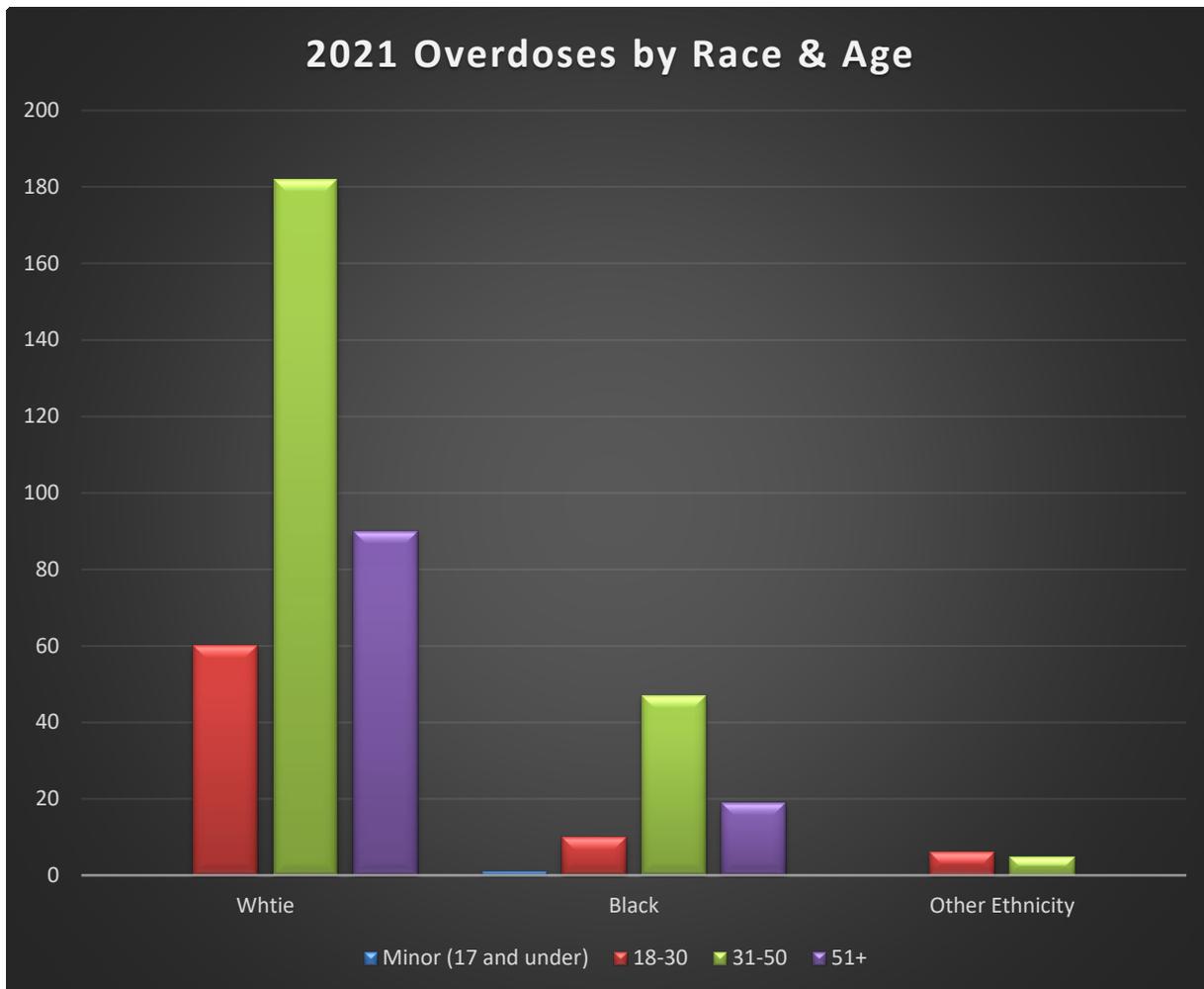


MBN speculates that the distribution of NARCAN® (naloxone HCl) to first responder resulted in a reduction of deaths secondary to drug (OPIATES) overdoses in our state. NARCAN® (naloxone HCl) Nasal Spray is used for the treatment of an opioid emergency or a possible opioid overdose with signs of breathing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

The misuse of and addiction to opioids, including prescription pain relievers, heroin, and synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, is a serious national crisis that affects public health as well as social and economic welfare. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the total "economic burden" of prescription opioid misuse alone in the United States is \$78.5 billion a year, including the costs of healthcare, lost productivity, addiction treatment, and criminal justice involvement.

### How did this happen?

In the late 1990s, pharmaceutical companies reassured the medical community that patients would not become addicted to prescription opioid pain relievers, and healthcare providers began to prescribe them at greater rates. This subsequently led to widespread diversion and misuse of these medications before it became clear that these medications could indeed be highly addictive. Opioid overdose rates began to increase.



## VI. ILLICIT FINANCE

The United States AML/CFT continues to seek ways in denying criminal and malign actors access to the U.S. and international financial system by detecting, disrupting, and preventing illicit financial activities within the U.S. Illicit activity occurs both domestically and internationally. Some of the key illicit finance threats are money laundering from various crimes (including fraud), drug trafficking, terrorist financing, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) financing, organized crime, human trafficking, and corruption. Vulnerabilities that have been exploited are, but not limited to, lack of beneficial ownership information, real estate, correspondent banking, uneven anti-money laundering obligations, compliance weakness, cash, complicity professionals and digital assets. All of these have in some form contributed to the allowance of illicit proceeds to enter the United States financial system.

## FINANCE/MONEY LAUNDERING

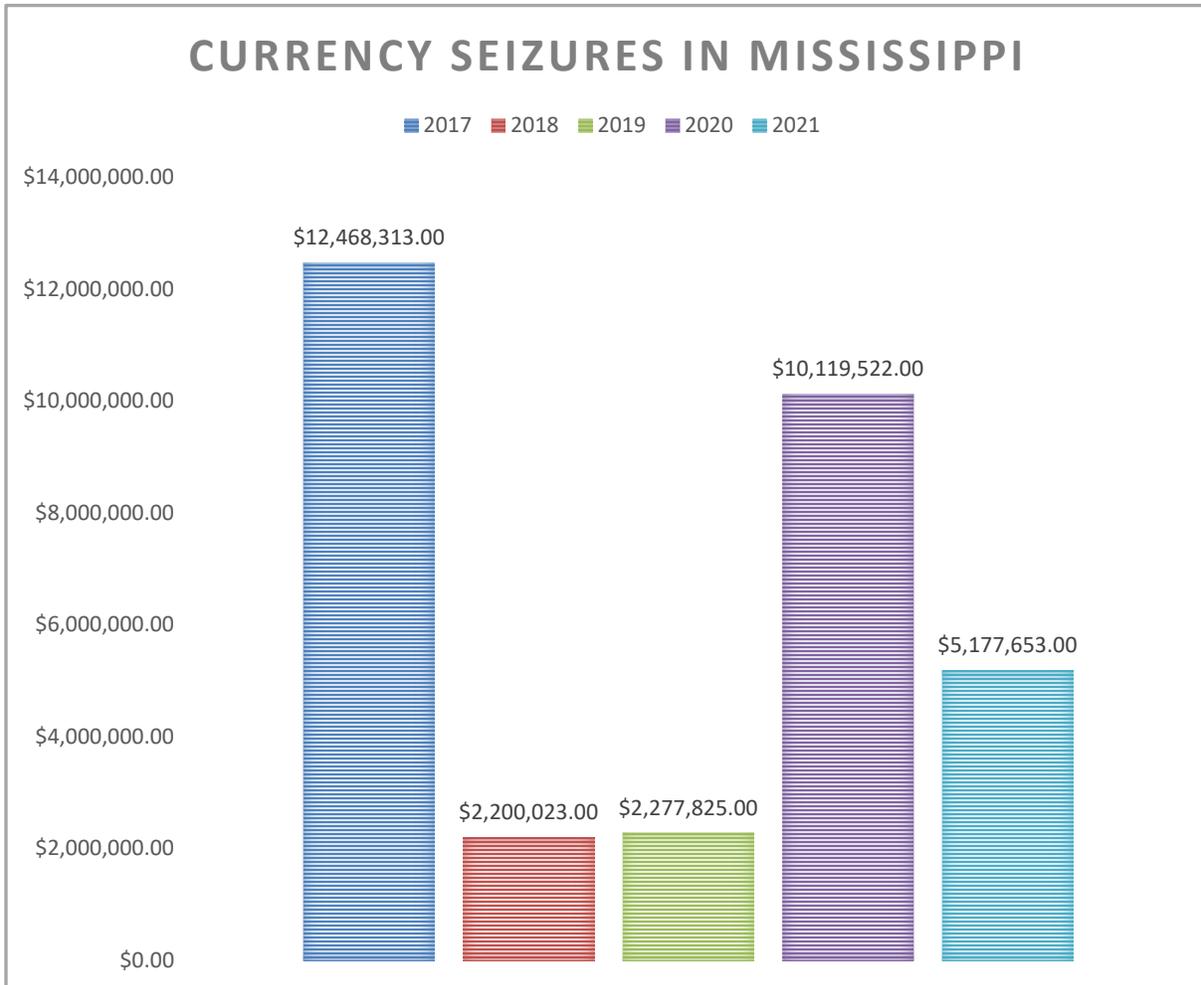
Why is laundering money illegal? Simply because it is a way for criminals, terrorists, and other illegal organizations to profit from illegal activity. Money can be laundered through placement, layering, and integration. Placement is where the funds are placed legally back into the financial system to avoid banks, financial institutions, and law enforcement agencies of being suspicious. Layering is after the funds have been placed backed into the financial system, it is then entered through a series of transactions designed to confuse the paper trail for investigators. Integration is the last and final step before the funds are withdrawn and put back into circulation. This is when the funds are reimbursed to the criminal from what seem to be legitimate sources.

COVID 19 has had a significant impact on the way criminals launder money due to the fear of being exposed to the virus. Some of the new and creative ways are selling fake COVID-19 test kits online, the sale of personal protective equipment and the sale of medical supplies that are in high demand. Money laundering of cash is declining due to the rise of emerging technology, customers providing payment through virtual currencies, and phishing scams. Criminals are exploiting new technology as they become more mainstream, particularly digital assets. Laundering illegal proceeds through digital assets is frequently linked to cybercrime and buyers of narcotics, like fentanyl, both on the Clearweb and Darknet marketplace.

Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) and Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) continue to employ a variety of money laundering methods. DTOs are pursuing a more creative and sophisticated method to conceal drug proceeds to elude law enforcement by turning to Professional Money Laundering Networks (PMLN) who receive a fee or commission for their laundering services and often use their specialized expertise to launder proceeds generated by others, regardless of the criminal actions. PMLNs are constantly evolving and adapting to law enforcement.

In 2021, MBN responded to 729 traffic stops conducted by the Mississippi Highway Patrol and various local and state agencies. Of those, 25 stops resulted in the seizure of illicit funds. MBN seized \$372,246. in U.S. currency from drug violators within the state. Agents assisted other agencies with the seizure of approximately \$486,880. According to Gulf Coast HIDTA/BLOC, participating agencies seized approximately \$4,318,527. from drug violators in Mississippi for a combined total of \$5,177,653. The seizure of these funds has greatly impacted the drug trade within the state.

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



## VII. TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

PMP Aware is a prescription monitoring solution that provides state government agencies with accurate, real-time data, compliant with their regulations. The system has been re-modified to better serve physicians, nurse practitioners, dentists, pharmacists, and authorized law enforcement.

The Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) is a very useful tool for the state of Mississippi. PMP is active in 54 states and territories. The MS PMP is managed by the Mississippi Board of Pharmacy. Every controlled substance prescribed state-wide is entered into the PMP Aware database in real time, allowing for earlier identification and intervention. In 2021, the system was overhauled and given a new more user-friendly interface.

Mississippi has had a steady rise in deaths due to prescription drug use. A simple PMP can tell a doctor if a patient is doctor shopping, how many prescriptions that individual had filled within a year, or specified time period, doctor's name and what prescription drug was prescribed. In

2021, there were 4,736,213 requests from the PMP data base, over 27,382 registered users and an average of 500,000 prescriptions reported each month.

Thanks in part to grant funding by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and the Mississippi Partnership Project, Mississippians have access to prescription drop boxes at 36 different law enforcement agencies and schools (listed below) throughout the state, to help dispose of their expired or unwanted prescriptions.

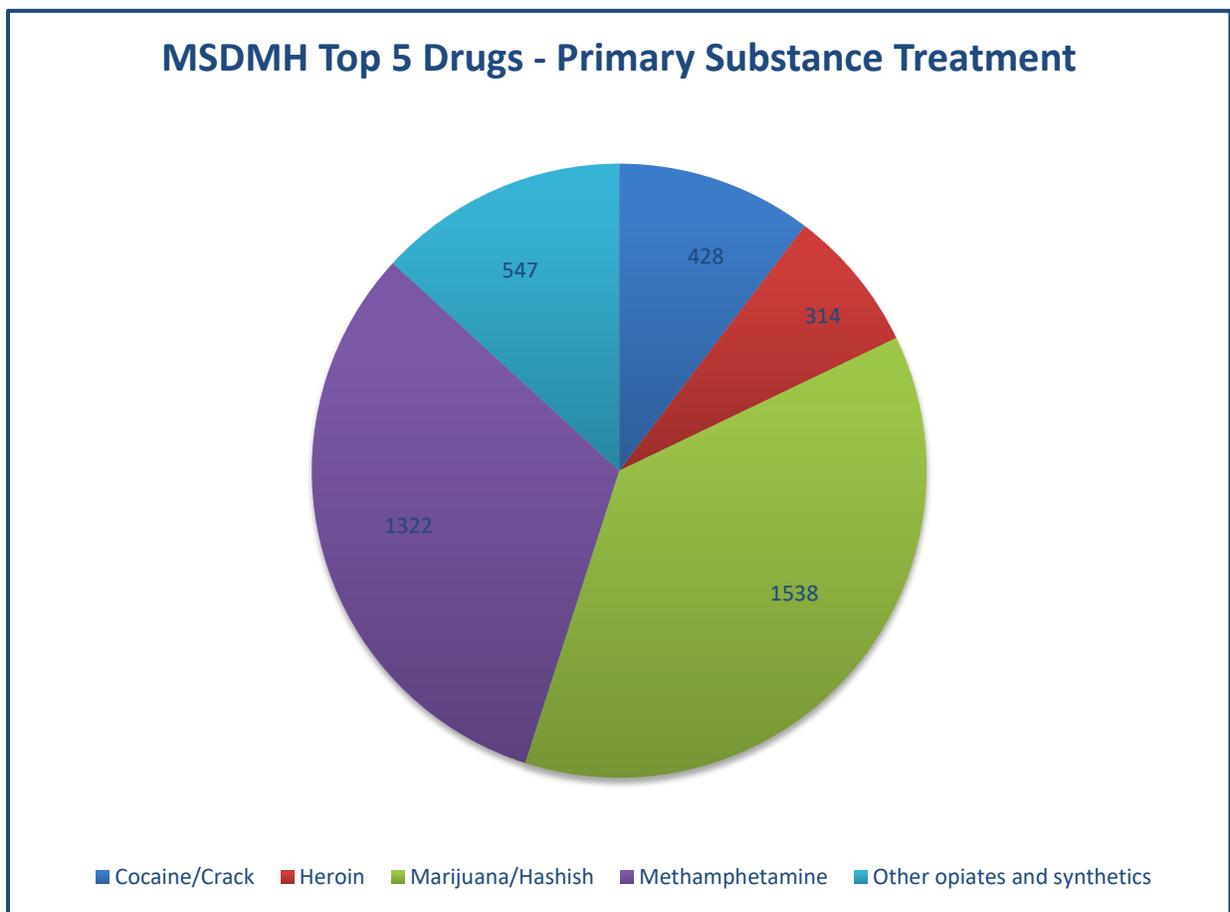
Bay St. Louis PD	JPD-Precinct 2	MHP-Brookhaven	Ocean Springs PD
Biloxi PD	JPD-Precinct 3	MHP-Hattiesburg	Oxford PD
Brandon PD	JPD-Precinct 4	MHP-Jackson I-55	Pascagoula PD
Byram PD	Kemper County Schools	MHP-Meridian	Pass Christian PD
Columbus PD	Long Beach PD	MHP-Pearl	Pearl PD
D'Iberville PD	Louisville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

## TREATMENT

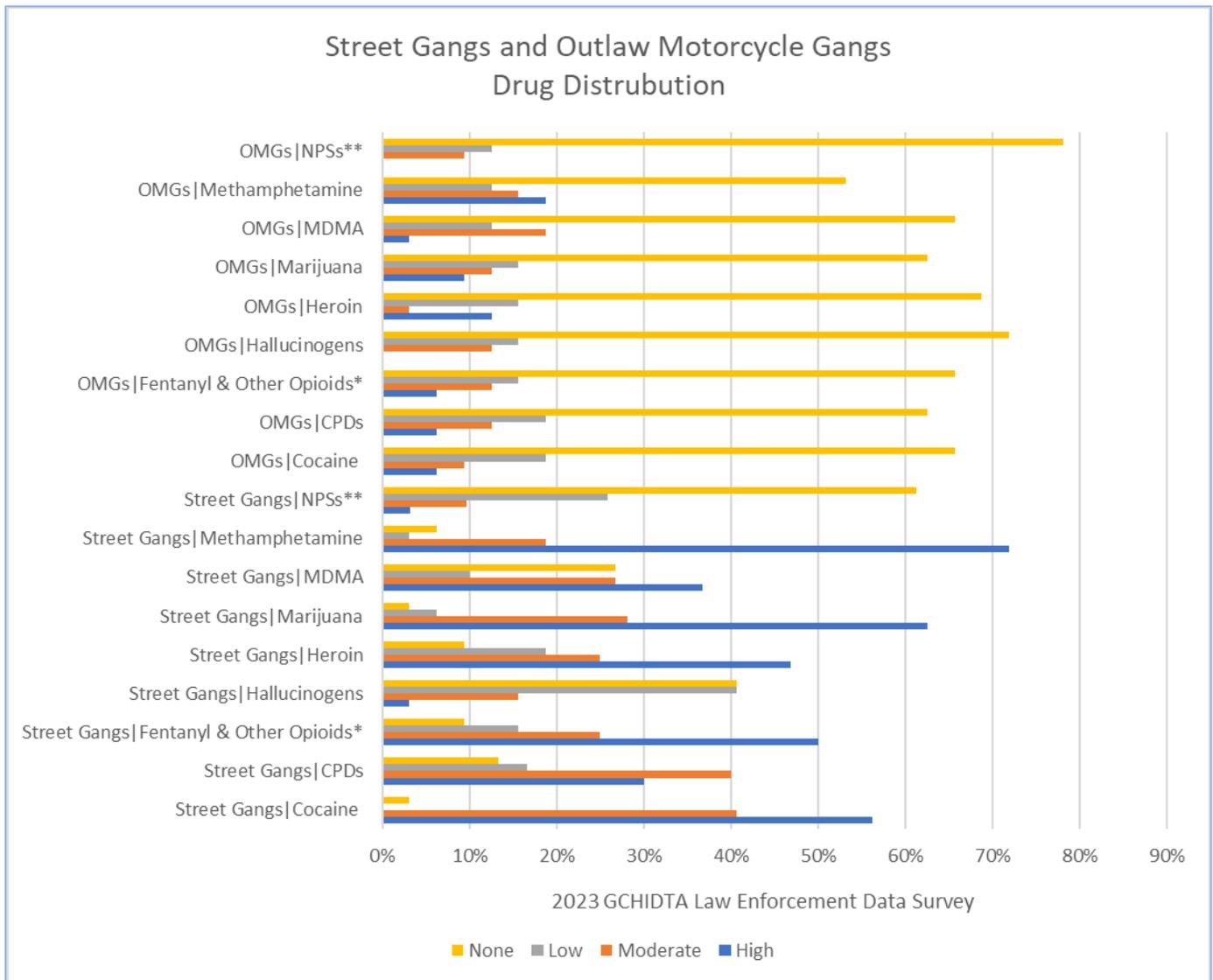
According to the Mississippi State Hospital (MSH) Substance Use Services, they operate 50 inpatient adult substance use beds (25 male and 25 female). They are a person-centered recovery program which utilizes the integration of Dialectical Behavior Therapy and the 12 Step Recovery Model. Their goal is to actively engage patients in creating an individualized relapse prevention plan based on insights, coping skills, and social support gained through treatment. MSH provides a primary substance use program for adolescents who are engaging in harmful drug or alcohol use behaviors. The program employs evidence-based individual and group behavioral health interventions grounded in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Motivational Enhancement, as well as the 12 Step Recovery Model. In addition to targeting substance use behaviors, the program helps adolescents with presenting co-occurring diagnoses, family/relational problems, and impactful traumatic experiences. The Child and Adolescent Service operate 26 beds for psychiatric treatment for children and adolescents, and substance use treatment for adolescents. There is no set number of beds reserved for substance use treatment in the unit. The beds are filled according to need.

Currently, Mississippi has 41 drug courts. These include 22 adult felony drug courts, four adult misdemeanor drug courts, 12 juvenile drug courts, and three family drug courts. 677 Mississippi drug offenders graduated from various drug courts in 2021. From July 1, 2020 through June 30,

2021, drug courts had the following graduates: Adult felony – 543, Adult misdemeanor – 28, Juvenile – 91, Family drug court – 15. There were 175 fewer successful completions reported for during this period believed to be linked to COVID-19 and challenges relating to conducting court proceedings in a similar manner to previous years.



## VIII. STREET AND OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE GANGS



### STREET GANGS

Mississippi’s legal definition of a "street gang," "gang," "organized gang," or "criminal street gang" is defined as any combination, confederation, alliance, network, conspiracy, understanding, or other similar conjoining, in law or in fact, of three or more persons with an established hierarchy that, through its membership or through the agency of any member, engages in felonious criminal activity. This sets the street gangs apart from any other type of group. Street gangs are turf oriented and will go to great lengths to protect their territory. Experts say teens joining young is all too common; gangs recruit children as young as eight years old. Social media and the use of apps continue to be primary means of communication, promotion, and conducting business. Gangs focus on integration and acceptance in the community.



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

Hybrid gangs consist of people from different racial ethnic background, and individuals participating in multiple gangs. Such gangs have unclear codes of conduct and symbolic association with more than one gang. Hybrid gangs modify traditional gang culture with their personal interpretations and agendas. Presently, hybrid gangs have become a big criminal and societal problem in local communities. These young adults are trying to find somewhere to fit in, find something to identify with.

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

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

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) indicates there are now over 1.4 million gang members involved in the 33,000 active gangs inside the United States. The number of gang members in the U.S. has increased by 40% since 2009. Some of the most dangerous gangs in the United States are Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), Latin Kings, Crips, 18th Street Gang, Bloods, Nuestra Familia, Mexican Mafia, and Aryan Brotherhood. Six of those ten have been identified in Mississippi: MS-13, Latin Kings, Crips, Bloods, Mexican Mafia and Aryan Brotherhood. The southernmost counties in Mississippi are influenced by the Simon City Royals, Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, Vice Lords and Subsets.



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

The Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics initiated 37 cases associated with gang affiliations in the year of 2021 compared to 36 cases in 2020 and 27 cases in 2019. There was a slight decrease in the number of arrests of members belonging to the Vice Lords and Gangster Disciples street gangs. There were six arrests for members of the Gangster Disciples and no arrest for members of the Vice Lord street gang. The Gangster Disciples were charged with possession of drugs, including but not limited to, powder and crack cocaine, methamphetamine, and marijuana. Charges also stemmed from sale of methamphetamine, trafficking of marijuana and MDMA (Ecstasy), possession of firearm by convicted felon, and possession of narcotics. Two members of the Simon City Royals were arrested for Possession of Methamphetamine.

	# of Gangs	Total Cases	Total Subjects	Total Arrests	Total Charges
2019 Totals	8	27	37	11	55
2020 Totals	5	36	49	16	88
2021 Totals	4	37	44	14	74

Throughout Mississippi, gangs use graffiti markings to identify their turf. Ages of identified gang members range from 13 years of age to 50 plus. In December 2019, the Mississippi Department of Corrections experienced a spike in gang activity.

Joining the military has been found to be an increasing trend amongst gang members. They receive combat training, in addition to other skills, then utilize this training in order to



instruct/educate other gang members. They also have access to dangerous and deadly weapons as well as other tools of destruction. Gangster Disciples have been documented in the U.S. military, found in both U.S. and overseas bases. Known Gangster Disciples graffiti has been reportedly seen on US military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan. Gang members have also begun to infiltrate police departments, using tactics and information they learn there to both outsmart and confront law enforcement and rival gangs.

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



Gangster Disciples "represent" with the colors black and blue. Gang members are known to wear Georgetown Hoyas, Florida Gators, and Duke Blue Devils apparel. The predominant symbol used to represent them is the six-pointed Star of David (☆). The symbol pays homage to founder David Barksdale. The Gangster Disciples are active in 110 cities and in 31 states, predominantly in the midwestern and southeastern United States. The gang consists of approximately 30,000 to 35,000 members. Their most notable criminal activities include drug trafficking, robbery, extortion, murder, and prostitution.

Symbols often used to characterize the Vice Lords are hats cocked to the left side, rabbits wearing a bow tie (The *Playboy* logo), martini glasses, gloves, top hats, canes, five-point stars (points representing Love, Truth, Peace, Freedom and Justice), crescent moons, pitchforks pointing down, broken hearts with wings, pyramids with eyes above them, and five-point crowns. They're comprised of approximately 30,000 to 45,000 members. As reported by the Harrison County, Mississippi Sheriff's Office, Vice Lords use local juveniles and the music industry to recruit new members. Their criminal activities include drug trafficking, robbery, extortion, fraud, money laundering, boosting and murder.





The Simon City Royals is one of the predominant gangs in Mississippi. They were formally the Almighty Simon City Royal Nation, a greaser gang affiliated with a Chicago street gang instituted in the late 1950's known as Simon City. Having 10,000 to 15,000 members, this organization is known by city, state, and federal officials, as well as the media, to have once been the largest Caucasian

gang. The Simon City Royals are now an affiliate of the All Folk Nation. As of 2003, Royal recruits in Mississippi are required to be sponsored by a member, serve a six-month probationary period (during which time they are referred to as "prospects"), and ultimately declare a lifetime commitment to the gang. The Simon City Royals have recently made a notable split creating a new set known as Sip City or Thirteen Dreams (a 501(c)(3) organization). Simon City Royals' symbols include a shield with an R for Royal, 6-pointed star, cross, 3-pointed crown and the royal knight. This organization is represented by the colors black, white and blue. Criminal activities include dealing of illegal drugs and other contraband, particularly in prison where members are incarcerated. They are also involved in racketeering and loan sharking.



*Simon City Royals*



Currently, law enforcement's most concerning street gang is Mara Salvatrucha, most commonly known as MS-13. With approximately 10,000 members in the United States, MS-13 is notorious for its propensity for vicious violence. Initiation requires committing murder and many gang members have been convicted of homicide, some using machetes to behead their victims. Most of the gang is

ethnically composed of Central Americans (mostly Salvadorans) who are active in urban and suburban areas. Traditionally, MS-13 gang members wear Chicago Bulls hats in the gang's official colors blue & white, but members in Massachusetts have been known to wear Chicago Bulls hats in a variety of different colors in an attempt to avoid identification. MS-13 gang members commonly use Chicago Bulls apparel to identify themselves. Tattoos common to the MS-13 are "MS," "Salvatrucha," "devil horns," the name of their clique, and more. MS-13 utilize a system of hand signs for purposes of identification and communication. One of the most commonly displayed is the "devil's head" which forms a 'M' when displayed upside down. The hand sign is similar to the same symbol commonly seen displayed by heavy metal musicians and their fans. Founders of Mara Salvatrucha borrowed the hand sign after attending concerts of heavy metal bands. Criminal activities include drug trafficking, robbery, larceny, human

trafficking, extortion, illegal immigration, murder, prostitution, racketeering, battery, kidnapping and arms trafficking.

Tattoos common to the Mexican Mafia are symbols which include images of a black hand. The gang's primary symbol, which is often used in tattoos by members, is the national symbol of Mexico (eagle and a snake) atop a flaming circle over crossed knives. The number 13 is used to show allegiance to the Mexican Mafia. M is the 13th letter of the alphabet. The Mexican Mafia did not originate in Mexico and is entirely a U.S. criminal prison organization. Even though homosexuals are barred from entry into the gang, they are engaged heavily in homosexual prostitution in the prison system. Criminal activities both inside and outside the prison system involve extorting drug distributors outside prison and distributing various narcotics within and outside the penitentiary. Criminal activities include: murder, money laundering, arms trafficking, drug trafficking, kidnapping, pandering, racketeering, extortion, human trafficking, illegal immigration, fraud and illegal gambling.



A Sureno is a Latino gang member who belongs to a street gang that identifies with, and is subservient to, the Mexican Mafia. Surenos use the number 13 which represents the thirteenth letter of the alphabet, the letter M, in order to pay allegiance to the Mexican Mafia. They are soldiers for the Mexican Mafia, and further their organized criminal enterprises. Symbols common to the Surenos are Sur, XIII, X3, 13, SUR 13, Uno Tres, Trece and 3-dots. Surenos display tattoos with the number 13, Sureno, Sur, South Sider, or Kanpol. Surenos represent themselves by wearing the colors blue and gray. Criminal activities include human smuggling, murder, drug trafficking, extortion, assault, theft, robbery, fraud, and arms trafficking.

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





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

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

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

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



The Aryan Brotherhood (AB), also known as the Brand, is a white supremacist prison gang and organized crime syndicate in the United States with roughly 20,000 members. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the gang makes up less than one-tenth of a percent of the prison population, but it is responsible for as many as 20% of the murders in the federal prison system. Throughout the state of Mississippi, there are approximately 400 known Aryan



Brotherhood members consisting mostly of young white males. The Mississippi Brotherhood calls itself “the Family” and is ruled by a three-man “Wheel” that divides the state into nine zones. The Wheel appoints a captain to oversee each zone and prison, with a network of sergeants-at-arms who enforce order and discipline, a treasurer to handle finances and numerous soldiers. Recruits are in “prospect status” for six months before they can be assigned a “blood in mission.” The gang was disrupted in 2016 when 42 members and associates were convicted of racketeering conspiracy, murder, and conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine. Representations common to the Aryan Brotherhood are: “Aryan Brotherhood,” “AB,” 666, Nazi symbolism such as SS, sig runes, and swastikas, as well as shamrocks and Celtic iconography. Criminal activities include drug trafficking, extortion, inmate prostitution and murder-for-hire.



The Mississippi Gulf Coast has a population of Asian gangs in the Harrison, Hancock, and Jackson County area. Some of the Asian gangs known to authorities are: The Dragon Family/Royal Family, True Viet Boys (TVB), and the Viet Boyz (2202 VBZ). Junior members are called “Baby Gangsters” (aka “Boy Gangsters”; “Tiny Baby Gangsters”). The Dragon



Family is a known rival of the Viet Boyz. The dragon is most often used to symbolize these gangs. The revenue from organized crime comes mainly from the extortion of brothels, prostitution, money laundering, the distribution of narcotics, and counterfeit merchandise. Criminal activities include extortion, counterfeiting, prostitution, money laundering, drug trafficking, racketeering, murder, assault, robbery, arms trafficking, auto theft, and burglary. The Viet Boys are known as one of the most violent Asian gangs. They are typically known for their stubbornness and protecting their turf. They have approximately 1,300 to 2,000 members. This gang was created by Cambodians to protect their own people from getting attacked by Mexican gang members. The gang is allied with the Crips. Criminal activities include drug trafficking, robbery, assault, burglary, theft, homicide, and gambling.

## OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE GANGS

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



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



(Photo of a Bandido in Magee, MS)

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

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





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

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

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



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

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

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



The Outcast Motorcycle Club is a black one percenter motorcycle club founded in Detroit, Michigan in 1969. They are an all-black one percenter motorcycle club. After starting their Mother Chapter in Detroit, Michigan, they have grown to over 30 chapters in cities throughout the US. They do not have any chapters internationally. The Outcast Motorcycle Club patch is made up of a laughing skull, which has teeth and possibly cornrows. Behind the skull is an iron cross. The Outcast motto is “We Ride For Piece,” making note of the spelling of the word “piece,” rather than “peace.” Also used by the Outcast Motorcycle Club is the acronym of “OFFO,”

which stands for Outcast Forever, Forever Outcast. Outcast has chapters in Mississippi as well as Alabama.

Satan's Sidekick is a unique Motorcycle club that requires its members to be black. This all-black motorcycle club was formed in 1970s in Detroit, Michigan. There was a Satan's Sidekicks military squadron which served in the Korean War; however, it is not known if this was the driver behind the name of the motorcycle club, or if any members from the military squadron were associated with the club. This is a relatively small group with three chapters in USA: Satan's Sidekick Cleveland, Detroit, and Louisville in Kentucky. They do not have any internationally based chapters. A local chapter has been established in Grenada, Mississippi. The Mother Chapter is still based in Detroit, MI. Satan Sidekick enemies are known to be the Phantom Outlaw Motorcycle club. The Satan's Sidekick patch is of a cartoon style character performing a wheelie on a motorcycle.



## IX. OUTLOOK

The world marketplace impacts every aspect of our lives and undoubtedly, almost every country across the globe have felt the effects that are directly, or indirectly, correlated with COVID-19. The global economy essentially rises and falls through supply and demand. Likewise, the illicit drug market also is impacted by supply and demand, as well as, trends and availability. Due to multiple factors, the illicit drug market in the United States is one of the most profitable in the world. As such, it attracts the most ruthless, sophisticated, and aggressive drug traffickers. The State of Mississippi, which lies along the Gulf of Mexico with multiple interstates running through it, continues to struggle with drug trafficking, distribution, use, and abuse. The Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics (MBN) and other law enforcement agencies continue to face an enormous challenge in protecting the citizens of Mississippi and its neighboring states against the perils of dangerous drugs. State and local law enforcement agree, and statistics confirm, that Mississippi has a significant drug problem. Methamphetamine (ICE) is a significant problem in the state, while fentanyl and heroin are the next major threat to our citizens, as overdose deaths are often associated with fentanyl and other substances. Due to the increasing use of fentanyl, both intentional and unintentional, fentanyl continues to be a growing concern in Mississippi with lethal consequences. Over the past few years, fentanyl has claimed more lives in this state than in years prior and is expected to continue. Diverted pharmaceuticals fall in behind fentanyl and heroin ranking third. In-state and out-of-state drug trafficking organizations, who specialize in pharmaceuticals, are targeting Mississippi pharmacies in an effort to acquire significant quantities of the most desired prescription medications for distribution and resale across the country. MBN believes that this trend will continue primarily due to the low acquisition cost of medications, such as Promethazine with Codeine, and the lucrative resale value in major cities, to include Atlanta, Georgia, Chicago, Illinois, Las Vegas, Nevada, and Orlando, Florida. Based on discussions with other law enforcement agencies around the country, Mississippi is

not the only state that is being targeted, but certainly one that is very attractive to the DTOs. Marijuana, cocaine, and New Psychoactive Substances follow these. The transportation and distribution of vast quantities of Mexico-produced methamphetamine continues to be readily available in our state. The Mexico-produced methamphetamine is typically of high quality, or purity, and is relatively inexpensive. Mississippi also passed legislation placing pseudoephedrine back on the shelves as an over-the-counter (OTC) medication, which took effect on January 1, 2022. MBN and our law enforcement partners will be monitoring the impact and prepared for an uptick in the local manufacturing of methamphetamine within our state. Prior to January 1, 2022, pseudoephedrine was classified as a Schedule III Controlled Substance under Mississippi law and required a medical provider's prescription as a requirement of that law as passed and in effect on July 1, 2010. Cocaine has taken a back seat to marijuana in Mississippi. Marijuana, as we all know, is the gateway/starter drug that is abused by a wide spectrum of the population. Mississippi has recently passed legislation to allow for medical marijuana use in our state, whereas there are many unknowns, to include how it will affect everyday life for Mississippi citizens. Current trends indicate that marijuana, which is grown and/or manufactured in-state, is not transported out-of-state, but is used locally in addition to the vast quantities imported from other areas like California, Colorado, and Washington. Vaping continues to be an increased concern for the youth in Mississippi. Law enforcement in Mississippi has seized numerous amounts of vaping cartridges containing THC and other synthetic substances. Drug Trafficking Organizations continue to establish distribution routes in Mississippi dealing in bulk shipments. Mississippi continues to experience significant issues with drugs.

## TRENDS

- The importation, distribution, and seizure of methamphetamine "ICE" from outside the state, continues to be readily available.
- Overdose deaths related to fentanyl continue due to intentional misuse of pharmaceutical products, as well as, by ingesting counterfeit pharmaceuticals (containing fentanyl).
- Mississippi law enforcement continues to see counterfeit pharmaceuticals, containing fentanyl and other substances, sold in both small and large quantities in the Northwest, Delta area, Central, and Coastal Mississippi.
- Diverted pharmaceutical abuse remains constant.
- DTOs target Mississippi's pharmacies to acquire desired controlled medications, such as promethazine with codeine and pain pills, for distribution in our state and out-of-state.
- Vaping continues to be popular among Mississippi's youth.
- The presence of higher-grade marijuana has driven the price and popularity of marijuana higher than in previous years.
- Activity on the Dark Web, where subjects avoid traceable transactions of currency and drugs, continues to grow in Mississippi.

- Kratom and other “legal highs” continue to adversely impact law enforcement efforts in Mississippi’s fight for public safety and public health.
- Utilization of parcel services to facilitate the distribution of drugs and move United States Currency across the country.

## DEVELOPMENTS

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

## PREDICTIONS

- Vaping will become the most popular way for Mississippi’s youth to consume drugs.
- Money laundering will increasingly become harder to discover due to the numerous methods of transferring funds digitally over the internet.
- More drug dealers/traffickers will use virtual currency in efforts to avoid cash seizures from law enforcement.

- An increase in and the expansion in the use of technology, such as encrypted apps, to conceal drug involved/related communications to thwart law enforcement's efforts to protect public safety and public health.
- MBN expects Mississippi to experience the diversion of Medical Marijuana.
- The production of new chemicals and compositions for manufacturing synthetic fentanyl and other synthetic substances will increase.
- Marijuana will become more readily available and the industry will be a target for diversion of the authorized medical marijuana.
- Interstate transportation using private and public carriers and domestic aircraft will continue to be the primary method of trans-shipping narcotics across the state.
- Mississippi will see more of its youth enrolled in drug treatment programs.
- There will be an increase in availability of counterfeit substances across the state as the demand for pharmaceuticals continues to climb.
- Abuse of synthetic drugs will continue to increase as people seek to obtain a legal high.
- More and more drugs will be abused utilizing vape pens.

## X. METHODOLOGY

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

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

*(NOTE: Statistics included for previous years may have changed due to late reporting and crime lab results.)*

## XI. SOURCES

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Federal Drug Administration (FDA)

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Mississippi Department of Revenue

Mississippi Forensics Laboratory

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## XII. DRUG PRICES ACROSS MISSISSIPPI

Drug Type	Weight	Jackson	Greenwood	Oxford	Tupelo	Starkville	Meridian	Hattiesburg	Gulfport	McComb
Powder Cocaine	Gram	\$60-\$100	\$80-100	\$60-120	\$100	\$80-100	\$60-80	\$100-120	\$100	\$50
	Eight-Ball	\$175	\$200-250	\$150-250	\$175-225	\$250	\$150-200	\$250-300	\$200	\$160
	Ounce	\$1,000-1,200	\$1000-1200	\$1000-1,200	\$900-1,100	\$1,000	\$1,000-1,200	\$1,000-1,200	\$700	\$1000
	¼ Kilo	\$5,000	\$8,000-10,000	\$6,000-9,000	\$4,800-6,500	\$6,200	\$7,000-8,000	\$7,000-10,000	\$5,000	N/A
	½ Kilo	\$9,000	\$14,000-19,000	\$15,000	\$9,000-12,000	\$14,000-\$15,000	\$15,000-\$16,000	\$15,000-19,000	\$9,000	N/A
	Kilogram	\$16,000	\$34,000-37,000	\$30,000-37,000	\$18,000-24,000	\$21,000	\$30,000-32,000	\$32,000-36,000	\$18,000-22,000	N/A
Crack Cocaine	Rock	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20
	Gram	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$80-100	\$80-100	\$100	\$100	\$40
	Eight-Ball	\$200-225	\$200-250	\$150 – 175	\$175-250	\$150	\$250	\$200	\$200	\$140
	Ounce	\$1,000-1,200	\$1,000-1500	\$1,000	\$900-1,100	\$800-1,000	\$1,000-1,200	\$1,400-1,800	\$700	\$750
	¼ Kilo	\$5,000-8,000	\$5,000-8,000	\$6,500	\$6,800-8,500	\$6,500	\$8,000	\$7,000-10,000	\$6,000	N/A
	Kilogram	\$30,000-34,000	\$25,000 - 30,000	\$28,000-36,000	\$28,000	\$27,000-30,000	\$30,000-34,000	\$30,000-34,000	\$30,000	N/A
Marijuana	Dime Bag	\$10	\$20-25	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10
	20-Sack	\$20	\$40	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20	\$20
	¼ Ounce	\$35	\$75	\$40	\$40	\$40	\$35-40	\$40	\$35	
	Ounce	\$100	\$450	\$100-150	\$80-140	\$80	\$60-100	\$50-100	\$100	\$400 high \$250 med \$60 low
	¼ Pound	\$400	\$800-1000	\$350	\$180-200	\$250-350	\$250	\$200-300	\$400	N/A
	½ Pound	\$800	\$1,200	\$600-700	\$250-300	\$500-600	\$450	\$250-450	\$800	N/A
	Pound	\$1,200	\$2,000-2,500	\$1,000-1,200	\$800-1,200	\$800-1,200	\$800-1,000	\$500-700	\$600	N/A
	BC BUD	Ounce	\$250	\$450	\$500-600	\$400	\$500	\$400- 600	\$150-200	\$250
	¼ Pound	\$700-1,200	\$800-1000	\$1,000-2,000	\$1,500	\$1,500-1,600	\$1,500-1,600	\$1,000-1,200	\$700	N/A
	½ Pound	\$1,200-1,500	\$1,200	\$2,500-3,500	\$3,500	\$3,000-3,200	\$3,000-3,200	\$1,500-2,000	\$1,200	N/A
	Pound	\$3,000	\$2,000-2,500	\$5,000-7,000	\$5,000-7,000	\$5,100	\$4,500-5,000	\$3,000-3,500	\$3,000	N/A

*Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics*

Drug Type	Weight	Jackson	Greenwood	Oxford	Tupelo	Starkville	Meridian	Hattiesburg	Gulfport	McComb
LSD	Dosage Unit	N/A	\$10	\$10-15	\$12	\$10-12	\$10	\$5-10	N/A	N/A
MDMA	Dosage Unit	N/A	\$10-20	\$25-40	\$25-40	\$25-35	\$2-5	\$5-25	\$12-15	\$5-10
Meth	Gram	\$50	\$60-100	\$50-75	\$80-100	\$80-100	\$35-50	\$30-60	\$80	\$50
	Eight-Ball	\$150	\$125-150	\$150-200	\$150-200	\$150-250	\$70-150	\$75-150	\$150	\$160
	Ounce	\$425	\$450	\$400-700	\$700-1,100	\$1,100	\$350-500	\$250-550	\$600	\$1,000
	Pound	\$6,000	\$4,500-5,000	N/A	\$12,000-15,000	\$12,000-15,000	\$4,500 5,500	\$2,000-4,000	\$5,500	N/A
Heroin	Gram	\$250	\$120 - 200	\$200-250	\$222-250	\$250	\$200-250	\$100-200	\$200	\$200
	Ounce	\$4,000	\$2,500	\$1,750-3,000	\$3,000	\$1,750-\$2,000	\$4,000	\$1,400-2,200	\$2,400	N/A
	¼ Kilo	N/A	\$15,000-18,000	\$15,000-18,000	\$15,000-18,000	\$15,7500	N/A	\$12,000-16,000	N/A	N/A
	1 Kilo	\$120,000	\$80,000-85,000	\$70,000-75,000	\$30,000-50,000	\$63,000	N/A	\$45,000-65,000	N/A	N/A