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Emerging Drug Threats



**Big Brothers Big Sisters
December 13, 2021**



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National Drug Threat Assessment



- Comprehensive assessment of drug threats posed to our communities.
- Key findings:
 - ✓ Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations are greatest drug trafficking threat to the U.S. – control most of the U.S. drug market
 - ✓ Illicit fentanyl primarily responsible for fueling ongoing opioid crisis
 - ✓ Meth continues to be readily available throughout U.S.
 - ✓ Cocaine availability throughout U.S. remains steady
 - ✓ Prescription drug diversion continues to decrease
 - ✓ COVID-19 posed challenges to criminal organizations and their movement of drugs



Transnational Criminal Organizations

Mexican TCOs

- Dominate wholesale importation and distribution of all major drugs

Colombian TCOs

- Control cocaine production and supply
- Partner with Mexican TCOs

Dominican TCOs

- Mid-level distribution networks in the Northeast
- Mostly self-sufficient organizations

Domestic Gangs

- Opportunistic – no specific allegiances
- Associated with violent crimes and street-level distribution and sales

Rising Opioid-related Overdose Deaths

Drug or Drug Class	Predicted Deaths
Total Overdoses	100,306
Opioids	75,673
Synthetic Opioids, excl. methadone	64,178
Psychostimulants with abuse potential	27,893
Cocaine	20,935
Heroin	12,233
Natural & semi-synthetic opioids	14,037
Methadone	3,838

On Average, **275**
people die of a drug
overdose every day in
the U.S.



- 100,000+ people died - largest number of drug-related deaths ever recorded in a single 12-month period (May 2020 – April 2021)
- 29% increase in drug overdoses year over year
- 75% percent of overdose deaths involved opioids.
- 64% involved synthetic opioids such as fentanyl.



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Illicit Opiates and Heroin

- **U.S. fentanyl market is increasingly supplied by Mexican cartels**
- **Fentanyl remains primary driver behind drug overdoses**
- **Heroin and fentanyl markets in the United States are intertwined**
- **Heroin is often adulterated with fentanyl**
- **Seizures at the Southwest Border are increasing**
- **Fentanyl-laced counterfeit pills are widely available**



Counterfeit Pills

- Drug traffickers are using fake pills to exploit the opioid crisis and prescription drug misuse in the U.S.
- Even if users know they're not actually prescription pills, there's no way to tell how much fentanyl a pill might contain.
- If users believe they are handling actual prescription pills, there's an even greater danger of overdose.



Made to look like prescription opioids – such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, and alprazolam; or stimulants like amphetamines – but **contain fentanyl or meth**



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Legitimate Pharmaceutical Manufacturing



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Clandestine Counterfeit Pill Making



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Authentic Xanax®



Counterfeit Xanax®



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Authentic Adderall® 20mg



Counterfeit Adderall® 20mg



30mg Oxycodone – Which one is authentic?



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Authentic oxycodone M30 tablets



***Counterfeit oxycodone M30 tablets
containing fentanyl**



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Methamphetamine

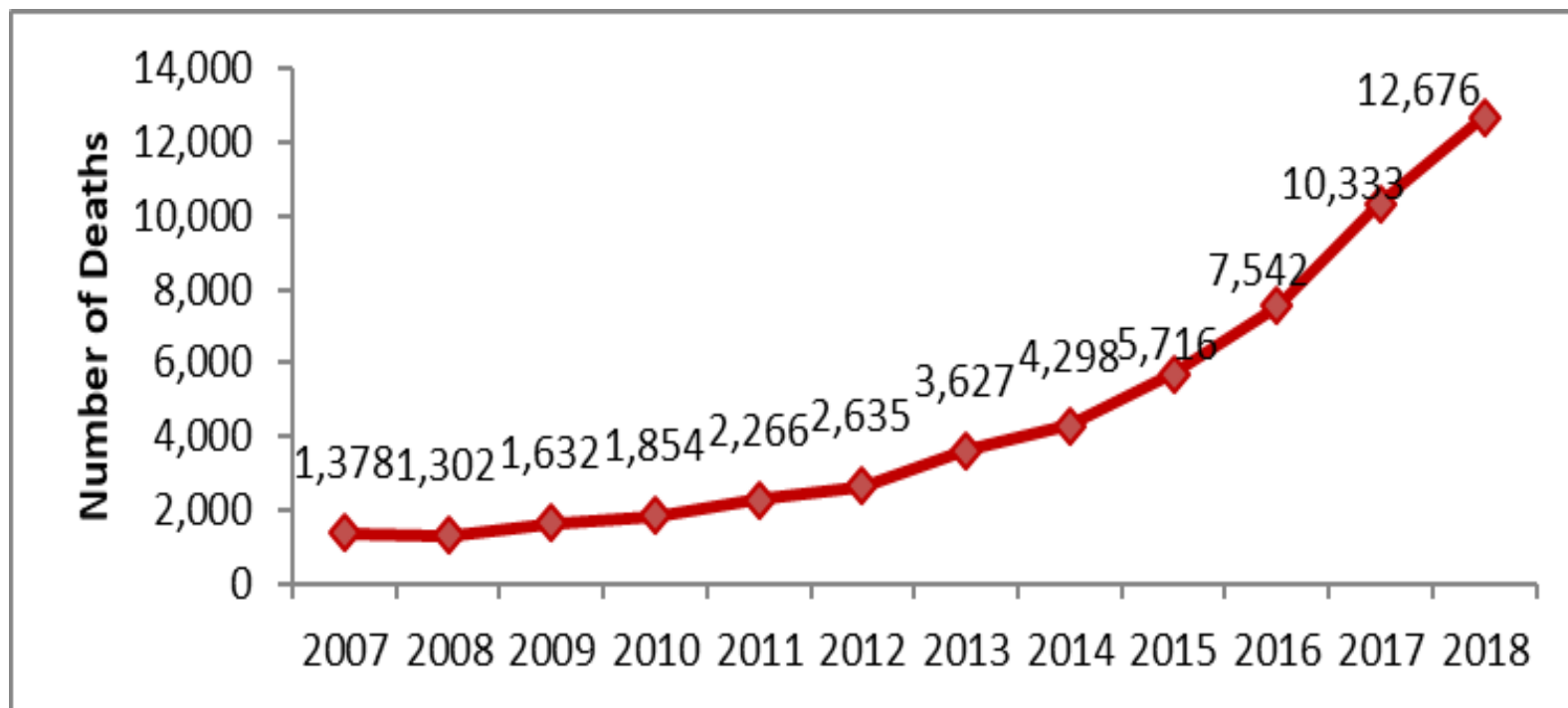
- **Methamphetamine seizures are increasing across the United States**
- **Mexico-based TCOs are primary producers**
- **Domestic clan lab seizures are decreasing**



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Methamphetamine

Psychostimulant-involved
Drug Poisoning Deaths, 2007 – 2018



Source: CDC



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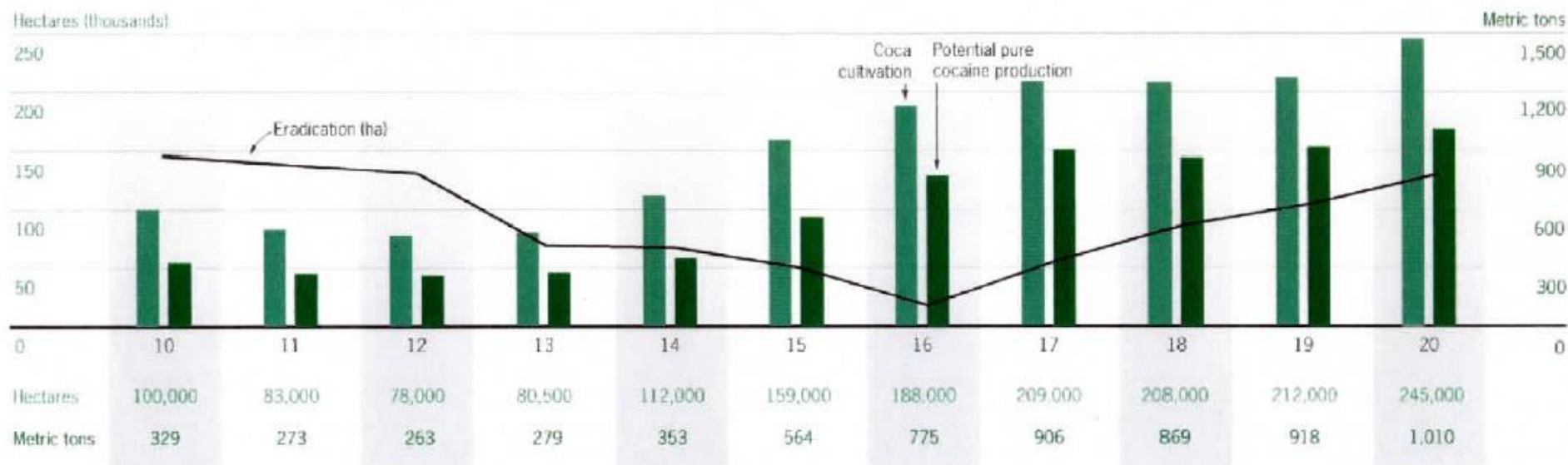


Cocaine

- **Readily available across the United States**
- **Cocaine-related overdose deaths increased**
- **Nationwide seizures increased**
- **Cocaine production reached record highs**



Cocaine



**Colombia Coca Cultivation and Cocaine Production
2010 – 2020**



Marijuana



- **The most commonly used illicit drug in the United States**
- **Readily available throughout the nation**
- **Grown on public lands to the detriment of the local environment and water supply**
- **National legal landscape is constantly evolving**
- **Mexico is the primary source of foreign marijuana**
- **Cuban traffickers establishing a presence in Colorado**



Controlled Prescription Drugs

- **Availability in illicit markets remains high throughout United States**
- **Abuse levels and related deaths going up in 2020-2021 (COVID)**
- **The second most abused illicit substance**
- **Hydrocodone products are the most commonly misused pain relievers**
- **Majority of pain reliever abusers obtained their prescription drugs from friend or relative**



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More on Top Drug Threats

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