



**U.S. Department of Justice
National Drug Intelligence Center**



North Texas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area



Drug Market Analysis 2010

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This assessment is an outgrowth of a partnership between the NDIC and HIDTA Program for preparation of annual assessments depicting drug trafficking trends and developments in HIDTA Program areas. The report has been coordinated with the HIDTA, is limited in scope to HIDTA jurisdictional boundaries, and draws upon a wide variety of sources within those boundaries.

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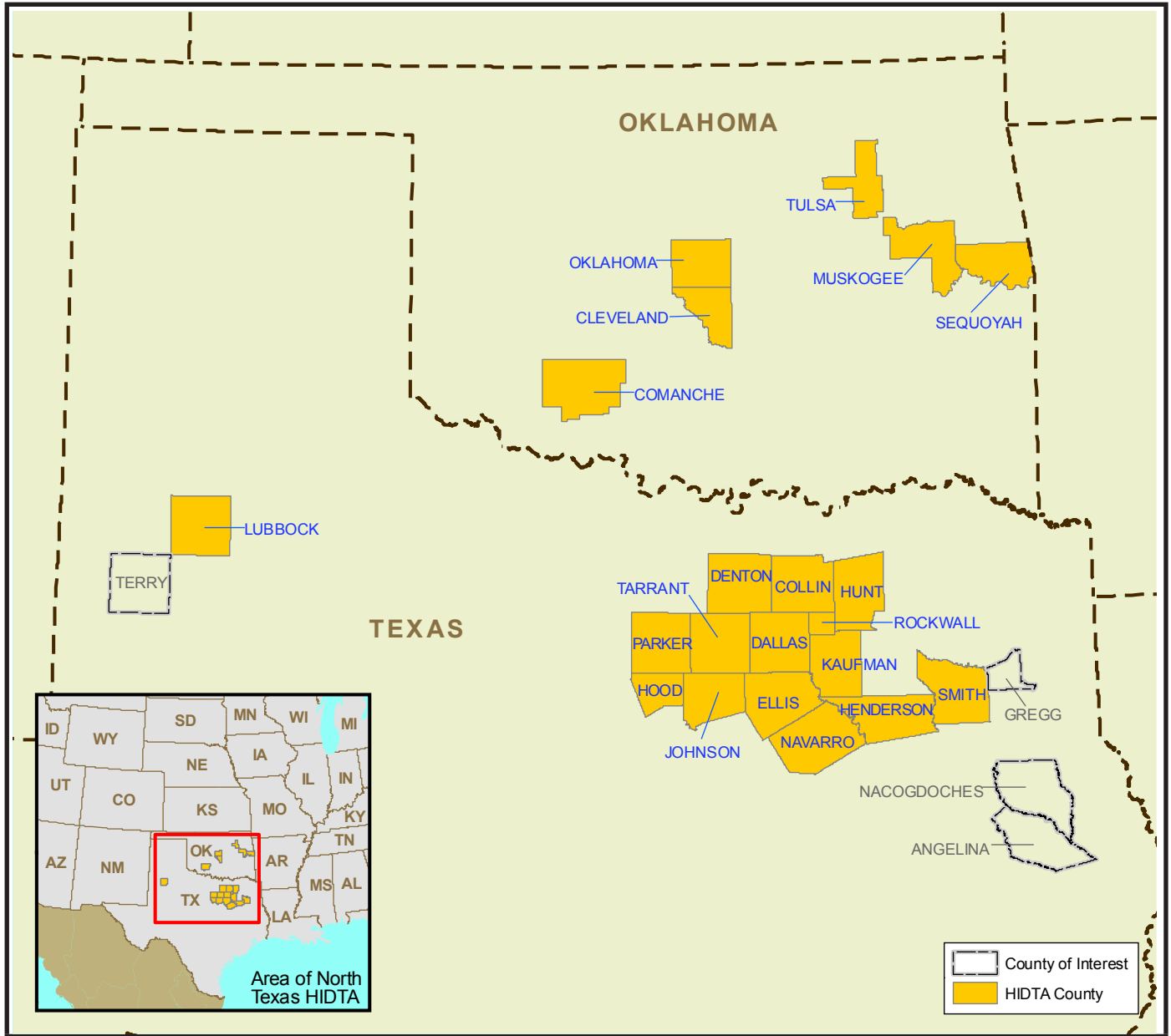
Strategic Drug Threat Developments

The North Texas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) region is a major regional- and national-level transportation and distribution area for cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana, and heroin supplied to U.S. drug markets primarily in the Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast. Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), which pose the greatest organizational threat to the region, use the Dallas/Fort Worth area as well as the Oklahoma City area to store and distribute illicit drugs destined for drug markets throughout the United States and to consolidate bulk cash drug proceeds smuggled into Mexico.

The following are significant strategic drug threat developments in the North Texas HIDTA:

- Mexican DTOs are expanding their illicit operations into rural areas within and adjacent to the HIDTA region, where law enforcement resources are limited. Consequently, these areas are expected to experience an increase in drug-related criminal activity involving these DTOs.
- Seizures of portable one-pot, or shake-and-bake, methamphetamine laboratories nearly tripled in 2009 from 2008 in the Oklahoma counties of the North Texas HIDTA region, primarily Tulsa County, indicating increased local production of methamphetamine. This trend is expected to increase in the near term.
- Controlled prescription drugs (CPDs) accounted for more than 80 percent of drug-related deaths in the Oklahoma counties in the North Texas HIDTA in 2009, posing a growing threat to the HIDTA region.
- Cannabis cultivation at indoor and outdoor sites is increasing in the North Texas HIDTA region, and outdoor grow operations in the region's rural locations are expanding in size and number.
- Seizures of hydroponic marijuana in the North Texas HIDTA region more than doubled from 2008 to 2009, indicating increased availability of the drug. This trend is expected to continue as demand for high-potency marijuana increases in the region.

Figure 1. North Texas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

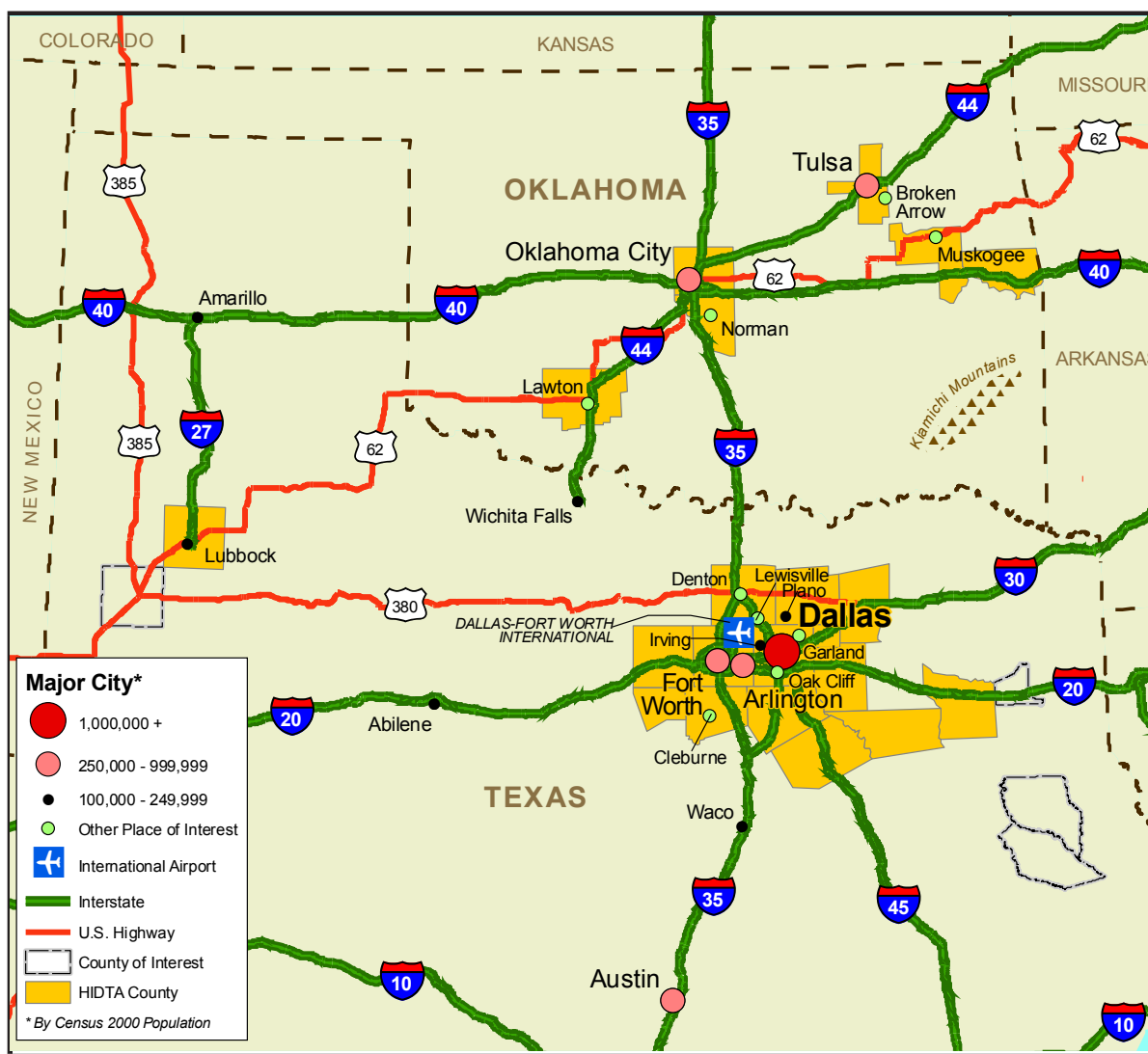


HIDTA Overview

The North Texas HIDTA region encompasses 15 northern Texas counties (most of which are located in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, the largest metropolitan area in size and population in Texas) and 6 Oklahoma counties (including Oklahoma and Tulsa Counties, where the state’s two largest cities by population are located). (See Figure 1.) Approximately 7 million residents, or 28 percent of the Texas population, reside in the Texas portion of the North Texas HIDTA region, and more than 1.7 million residents, or 48 percent of the Oklahoma population, reside in the Oklahoma portion. This large population base is ethnically diverse, particularly in the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area, where more than a million residents are foreign-born and nearly 29 percent of the population is Hispanic. The diverse population of the North Texas HIDTA region enables members of ethnic-based DTOs, criminal groups, and gangs to easily assimilate within communities and divert attention from their drug trafficking activities.

The North Texas HIDTA region’s extensive transportation infrastructure and strategic proximity to Mexico contribute to making the region an attractive area for DTOs to conduct their criminal activities. Drug traffickers exploit the region’s intricate network of highway systems for the northbound flow of illicit drugs from the Southwest Border to U.S. drug markets and the southbound flow of bulk cash and monetary instruments^a to drug source areas primarily in Mexico. Interstates 20, 30, 35, 40, and 44 are main corridors that intersect the HIDTA region and link its primary drug markets (Dallas/Fort Worth and Oklahoma City) to the Southwest Border and to major U.S. markets in the Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast. (See Figure 2.) Air transportation in the North Texas HIDTA region offers additional potential for exploitation by drug traffickers. The Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (DFW) provides nonstop service to 140 domestic and 40 international destinations. It is the third-busiest airport in the world in terms of aircraft movement and the eighth-busiest in terms of passenger traffic. The HIDTA region also has numerous private airports, buses, trains, and package delivery services that traffickers could exploit to transport contraband. Although a significant portion of illicit drug shipments transported to the North Texas HIDTA region is intended for local distribution, many drug shipments are stored at stash houses in the area and transshipped to other U.S. drug markets. National Seizure System (NSS) data for 2009 indicate that illicit drugs originating from locations in the HIDTA region were destined for drug markets in states such as Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Figure 2. North Texas HIDTA Region Transportation Infrastructure

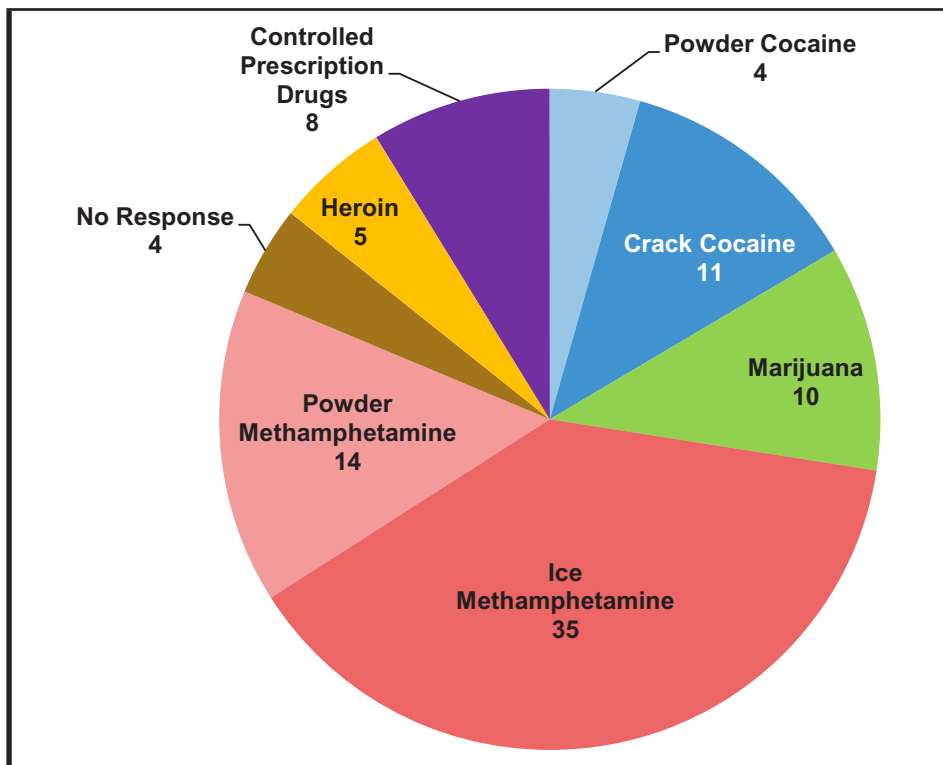


a. Monetary instruments include U.S. or foreign coins currently in circulation, currency, traveler’s checks in any form, money orders, and negotiable instruments or investment securities in bearer form, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

The attractiveness of the North Texas HIDTA region to DTOs is further enhanced by the region’s financial infrastructure, diverse businesses, major industries, and multinational corporations. In 2009, the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area was home to 24 Fortune 500 companies and was the third-highest metropolitan area in the nation based on the number of large corporate headquarters. The presence of these major companies in the metropolitan area contributes greatly to the economic viability of the region. Drug traffickers seeking opportunities to launder illicit drug proceeds are particularly drawn to the Dallas/Fort Worth area because of its status as a principal banking and financial center in the Southwest.

Dallas and Tarrant Counties also have one of the largest concentrations of licensed firearms dealers in the state. Drug traffickers and other criminal groups take advantage of the many firearms businesses and gun shows in the HIDTA region to purchase firearms for their criminal operations or for smuggling to Mexico on behalf of Mexican DTOs.

Figure 3. Greatest Drug Threat to the North Texas HIDTA Region as Reported by State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies, by Number of Respondents



Source: National Drug Threat Survey 2010.

Drug Threat Overview

The trafficking and abuse of methamphetamine, primarily ice methamphetamine, pose the most significant drug threat to the North Texas HIDTA region. According to the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) 2010,^b 49 of the 91 federal, state, and local law enforcement respondents in the North Texas HIDTA region identify either ice methamphetamine (35) or powder methamphetamine (14) as the greatest drug threat to their jurisdictions. Fifteen respondents identify cocaine, predominantly crack cocaine (11), as the greatest drug threat, followed by marijuana, CPDs, and heroin. (See Figure 3.) Most respondents also indicate that each of these drugs, with the exception of heroin, is readily available at moderate to high levels in their jurisdictions. Marijuana, CPDs, and ice methamphetamine are the most widely available and abused drugs in the HIDTA region. (See Figure 4 on page 6.)

b. NDTS data for 2010 cited in this report are as of March 3, 2010. NDTS data cited are raw, unweighted responses from federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies solicited through either NDIC or the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) HIDTA program. Data cited may include responses from agencies that are part of the NDTS 2010 national sample and/or agencies that are part of HIDTA solicitation lists.

The threat posed by the distribution and abuse of methamphetamine in the region is enhanced by the drug's strong association with property crime and violent crime. Of the 91 law enforcement agencies responding to the NDTs 2010, more than half attribute property and violent crime in their jurisdictions to the distribution and abuse of methamphetamine. (See [Drug-Related Crime and Figure 5 on page 12](#) and [Figure 6 on page 13](#).) Mexican ice methamphetamine is the dominant form of the drug available in the North Texas HIDTA region, and its availability remains high in most areas, despite a reduction in the quantity of methamphetamine seized in the region in 2009. This reduction in methamphetamine seizure amounts in 2009 from the 2008 total is attributed to the seizure of large amounts of the drug resulting from Project Reckoning in September 2008.^c Apart from the high seizure total recorded by the HIDTA initiative in 2008, methamphetamine seizure amounts in the region are trending upward overall since 2007. (See [Table 1](#).) NSS data indicate that seizure amounts of liquid methamphetamine in 2009 totaled 20,817.5 milliliters after none was seized in 2008. (See [Table 2 on page 7](#).) Also, locally produced powder methamphetamine is increasingly available in the Oklahoma area of the HIDTA region. (See [Table 5 on page 11](#).)

Table 1. Illicit Drug Seizures, North Texas HIDTA Initiatives, in Kilograms, 2005–2009

Drug Type	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Percentage Change 2008 to 2009
Methamphetamine	34.3	314.6	21.4	298.8	111.5	-63
Ice	23.7	292.8	14.7	269.3	77.5	-71
Powder	10.6	21.8	6.7	29.5	34.0	15
Cocaine	229.3	706.2	771.1	660.7	113.2	-83
Powder	222.2	690.1	768.4	653.4	106.0	-84
Crack	7.1	16.1	2.7	7.3	7.2	-1
Marijuana	6,259.5	9,126.7	4,898.4	10,655.4	7,414.5	-30
Hydroponic	125.6	5.1	206.5	529.0	1,284.2	143
Commercial-grade	6,120.6	7,516.5	4,551.6	10,046.7	5,945.2	-41
Sinsemilla	13.3	234.5	140.3	79.7	100.7	26
Not specified	NR	1,370.6	NR	0.03	84.4	281,233
Heroin	8.2	2.2	5.0	30.9	6.0	-81
Mexican black tar	5.4	2.1	2.1	4.6	0.1	-98
Mexican brown powder	1.8	NR	0.1	19.8	0.6	-97
Not specified	1.0	0.1	2.8	6.5	5.3	-18
MDMA (du)	27,542.0	7,363.0	19,025.0	100,593.0	45,954.0	-54
MDMA (kg)	NR	NR	NR	NR	2.5	NA
OxyContin (du)	1,031.0	4.0	160.0	459.0	81.0	-82
Prescription drugs* (du)	NR	119.0	803.0	84.0	167.0	99

Source: North Texas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

du—dosage units

NA—Not applicable.

NR—No seizures reported.

Note: Most seizure amounts are rounded to the nearest tenth.

*The North Texas HIDTA did not include prescription drugs as a category in 2005.

- c. Project Reckoning was a 15-month multiagency investigation that targeted the Gulf Cartel and its smuggling operations. As part of Project Reckoning, federal, state, and local law enforcement officers (in the jurisdiction of the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas) conducted Operation Dos Equis and Operation Vertigo, both of which focused on Gulf Cartel members who operated cocaine and methamphetamine trafficking cells in the North Texas area. The two operations resulted in the arrests of more than 30 drug traffickers and the seizure of more than \$1 million in cash, 300 kilograms of cocaine, 360 pounds of ice methamphetamine, numerous weapons, and an explosive device. A second phase of Project Reckoning led to the arrests of more than 40 drug traffickers with links to the Gulf Cartel in several states, including Texas and Oklahoma.

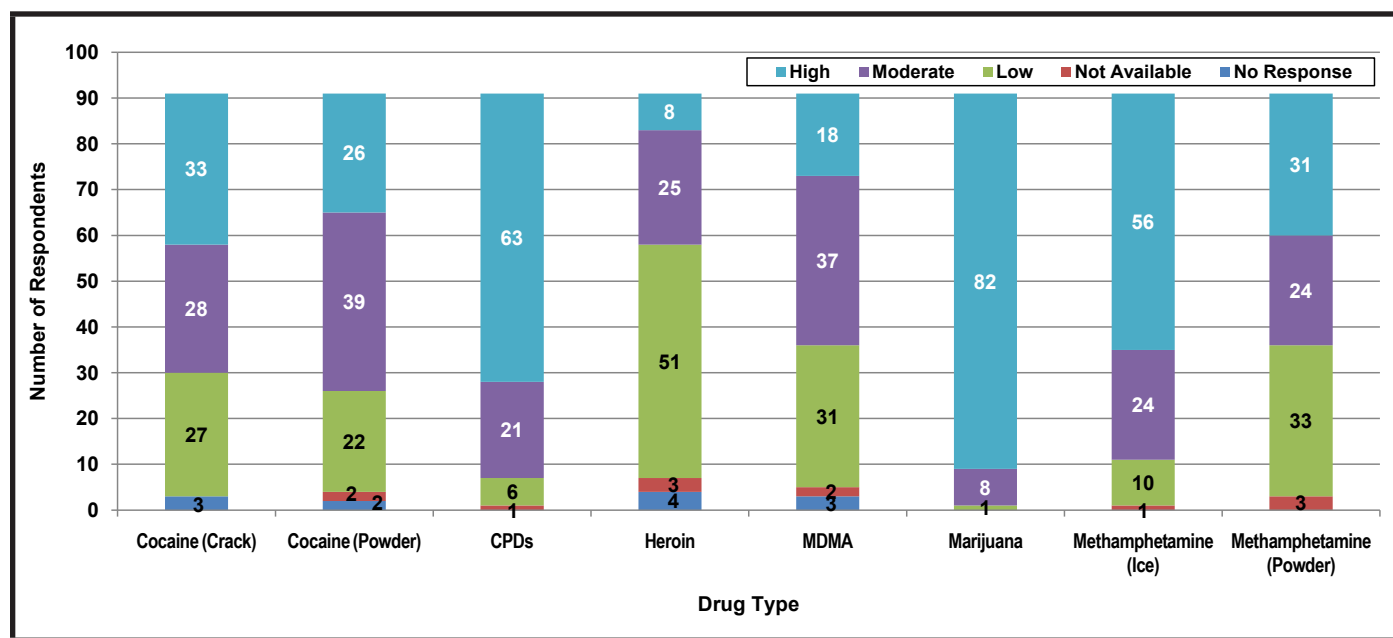
The distribution and abuse of cocaine, both powder and crack, are contributing factors to property crime and violent crime in the region, according to state and local law enforcement respondents to the NDTs 2010. (See Figure 5 on page 12 and Figure 6 on page 13.) Cocaine is readily available in the region, with a moderate upswing in the demand for powder cocaine noted during the last 6 months of 2009. Crack cocaine conversion, distribution, and abuse are most problematic in low-income urban areas of Dallas, Fort Worth, Lawton, Oklahoma City, and Tulsa.

Marijuana availability has increased in the region, resulting in increased treatment admissions for the drug, primarily in the Oklahoma counties. For example, mentions of marijuana in Tulsa County increased from 310 treatment admissions in 2008 to 531 admissions in 2009. (See Table 6 on page 14 and Table 7 on page 15.) The demand for hydroponically grown marijuana is increasing in the region, particularly in North Texas. North Texas HIDTA task force initiatives seized more hydroponic marijuana in 2009 than in the previous 4 years combined. Additionally, a variety of marijuana called popcorn is available in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. This type of marijuana, which is grown in Chihuahua, Mexico, consists primarily of the buds of the cannabis plant and is slightly greasy or oily to the touch because it is grown under pine trees.

Heroin, primarily Mexican black tar, is widely available, and the demand for the drug remains stable. Heroin-related treatment admissions in the region increased marginally in 2009. In Texas counties, heroin-related treatment admissions increased from 2,697 in 2008 to 2,850 in 2009, and in Oklahoma counties, admissions increased from 148 to 174 during the same period.

The abuse of diverted CPDs—notably hydrocodone, oxycodone, and alprazolam products—poses a serious and growing threat to the entire HIDTA region, but especially to Oklahoma and Tulsa Counties. CPDs are readily available, abused at high levels, and associated with more than 80 percent of the drug overdose deaths (248) in the HIDTA region’s Oklahoma counties. (See paragraph 3 in Abuse on page 15.)

Figure 4. Drug Availability in the North Texas HIDTA Region as Reported by Law Enforcement Agencies by Number of Respondents



Source: National Drug Threat Survey 2010.

Other drugs such as MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxyamphetamine, also known as ecstasy), PCP (phencyclidine), and khat pose low threats to the North Texas HIDTA region. However, the availability and abuse of MDMA present a growing concern, specifically in the Dallas/Fort Worth area as well as in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. (See Figure 4 on page 6.) In addition, seizures of a counterfeit MDMA in both North Texas and Oklahoma have caused further concern. Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Crime Laboratory data indicate that in 2009 approximately 30 percent of all evidentiary drug submissions represented as MDMA were BZP (N-benzylpiperazine) and TFMPP (1-(3-trifluoromethylphenyl)piperazine).^d The counterfeit MDMA was marked, embossed, and tinted to simulate MDMA and was distributed as that drug. Increased seizure amounts of PCP in 2009 indicate growing availability of the drug. Law enforcement authorities in Nacogdoches and Angelina Counties in Texas (located near Smith County in the North Texas HIDTA region) report increased demand for PCP in their jurisdictions. Khat seizures totaled more than 89 kilograms in 2009 after none was seized in 2008. (See Table 2.) Khat use in the Dallas/Fort Worth area is prevalent among immigrants from African countries such as Somalia and Ethiopia.

Table 2. Other Drug Seizures in the North Texas HIDTA Region, 2008–2009

Year	Liquid Methamphetamine	Cannabis (plants)	PCP	Khat
2008	NR	3,643	3.6 kg 4,163.5 ml	NR
2009	20,817.5 ml	10,708	127,872.0 ml	89.8 kg

Source: National Seizure System, as of April 1, 2010.

kg—kilograms

ml—milliliters

NR—No seizures reported.

Note: Seizure amounts are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Drug Trafficking Organizations

Mexican DTOs dominate drug trafficking throughout the North Texas HIDTA region. These criminal organizations have sophisticated command-and-control centers in Mexico and in the HIDTA region. Major Mexican DTOs associated with the Sinaloa Cartel, the Juárez Cartel, La Familia Michoacana (La Familia), and Los Zetas are active throughout the North Texas HIDTA region, and Mexican DTOs associated with the Gulf Cartel are active in the Texas counties of the HIDTA region. North Texas HIDTA initiatives in 2009 investigated 67 DTOs and 5 money laundering organizations (MLOs) that were operating within the HIDTA region. Members of the majority of the DTOs and MLOs were primarily of Hispanic ethnicity. Fifty of the DTOs were polydrug traffickers, most often distributing cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamine in the HIDTA region. (See Table 3 on page 8.)

Gangs in the North Texas HIDTA region are involved at varying levels in drug trafficking and related criminal activities, such as assaults, home invasions, burglaries, and weapons trafficking. Many of the most active gangs in the HIDTA region are Hispanic street and prison gangs. (See Table 4 on page 9.) Some of these gangs are transnational and have foreign-born members who engage in criminal activity on both sides of the U.S.–Mexico border. Transnational gang members generally maintain criminal connections in their native countries and may have some of their criminal activities planned, directed, and controlled by gang leaders in those countries. (See text box on page 10.) Members of certain gangs, including outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMGs), engage in weapons smuggling. For example, law enforcement officers in the Dallas area report that members of Bandidos OMG move guns from Dallas into Mexico.

d. BZP is a stimulant that produces euphoria and cardiovascular effects and is approximately 10 to 20 times less potent than amphetamine in producing these effects. BZP tablets, especially those that contain the hallucinogen TFMPP, are often sold as MDMA or promoted as an alternative to MDMA.

Table 3. Drug Trafficking and Money Laundering Organizations Operating in the North Texas HIDTA Region, 2009

Scope of Organization	Number of Organizations			Ethnicity/Nationality of Organizations	Size of Organizations	Drugs Trafficked	Counties Areas of Operation	Drug Source Areas	Drug Destinations
	Drug	Money Laundering	Total						
International	27	3	30	African American, Albanian, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, Mexican	5 to 35 members	Cocaine, marijuana, MDMA, methamphetamine	Oklahoma: Cleveland, Muskogee, Oklahoma, Tulsa Texas: Collin, Dallas, North Texas, Tarrant	Canada (including British Columbia), Colombia, Mexico (including Michoacán de Ocampo), United States (Northern California, San Francisco), Vietnam, unknown source areas	Texas (Dallas), unknown destinations
Multistate	15	2	17	African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, Mexican American	5 to 20 members	Cocaine, marijuana, MDMA, methamphetamine	Oklahoma: Cleveland, Oklahoma, Tulsa Texas: Dallas, Denton, Gregg, Smith	Mexico (including Chihuahua), United States (Arizona, California, Texas)	Unknown destinations
Local	25	0	25	African American, Caucasian, Cuban, Hispanic, Mexican American	5 to 30 members	Cocaine, heroin, LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), marijuana, methamphetamine	Oklahoma: Cleveland, Oklahoma Texas: Dallas, Denton, Gregg, Smith	Mexico (including Hidalgo), United States (Oklahoma, Texas)	Texas (Smith), unknown destinations

Source: North Texas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

North Texas: A Major Focus in Project Coronado Operation

In October 2009, a law enforcement effort led by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) resulted in the arrests of more than 300 individuals in 19 states as part of Project Coronado, a multijurisdictional investigation that targeted methamphetamine and cocaine trafficking cells associated with La Familia Michoacana (La Familia). La Familia is a significant Mexican DTO operating in the North Texas HIDTA region, notably the Dallas/Fort Worth area. La Familia's organizational components in and around the Dallas/Fort Worth area are highly structured, well-organized, and primarily responsible for the majority of ice methamphetamine and significant amounts of marijuana trafficked in the North Texas area. Some cell members who work for the DTO use members of the Tango Blast¹ prison clique and the Mexican Mafia prison gang for enforcement, protection, and the transportation of illicit drugs. Arrests in conjunction with Project Coronado in the North Texas HIDTA region occurred in the Dallas/Fort Worth (84) and Tulsa (8) areas. The Dallas/Fort Worth area served as a critical distribution hub for La Familia and a transshipment point for drug shipments to other U.S. cities in states such as Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, and Mississippi. Cell members received drug shipments, used stash houses to store the drugs and cash proceeds, and acted as intermediaries and brokers to negotiate the acquisition, price, delivery, and payment for the drugs. They used vehicles to transport the bulk currency to supply sources in Michoacán, Mexico, secreting the funds in false compartments, gas tanks, or other containers in vehicles. Project Coronado also resulted in the arrests of individuals engaged in firearms smuggling for La Familia.

Source: U.S. Department of Justice.

1. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice Correctional Institutions Division reports that Tango Blast is a prison clique—a group of offenders who have little or no structure, with vague or few, if any, rules—who are involved in illegal activity. Generally, these groups are formed along racial or geographic lines. Their underlying motive typically is to control their environment. In some instances, prison cliques evolve into street or prison gangs.

Table 4. Active Hispanic Gangs in the Major Drug Markets of the North Texas HIDTA Region, 2009

City	Gang	Type
Dallas	Eastside Homeboys	Street
	Latin Kings	Street
	Mexicles	Prison
	Mexikanemi	Prison
	Tango Blast	Prison clique/Street
	Texas Syndicate	Prison
	Varrío North Side (VNS)	Street
	West Side Gator Boys	Street
Fort Worth	28th Street	Street
	Fantasmas	Street
	Sur-13	Street
Oklahoma City	Eastside Vatos Sureños (EVS)	Street
	Grande Barrio Centrale (GBC)	Street
	Juaritos (or Grande Barrio Loco (GBL))	Street
	South Side Locos (SSL)	Street
Tulsa	East Side Longos	Street
	Latin Kings	Street
	Ñeta	Prison/Street
	Norteños	Street
	Sureños	Street

Source: Law enforcement interviews and reporting.

Transnational Gang Members Arrested in Dallas/Fort Worth Area

In June 2009, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and other law enforcement officers arrested 81 transnational gang members, their associates, and immigration status violators during a 6-day Operation Community Shield¹ action in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. The operation targeted foreign-born, violent gang members and associates in the North Texas cities of Arlington, Dallas, Carrollton, Fort Worth, Irving, Lewisville, and Plano. Gang members arrested were from Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, and Laos and belonged to the following street gangs: 15th Street, 18th Street, 28th Street, 68th Street (Nuevo Laredo, Mexico), Aryan Brotherhood, Butter Bean Boys, Crips, East Side Homeboys, Easy Riders (Los Angeles), Five Deuce Crip, How High Crew, Mara Salvatrucha (MS 13), Northside Locos, Laotian Oriental Killer Boyz, Mexican Clan Locos, Norteños, Southside, Sureños, Tango Blast, True Bud Smokers, Trueman Street Blood, Varrio Diamond Hill, and Varrio Northside. Fifty-two of those arrested were active gang members and 14 were gang associates. Individuals associated with the Los Zetas criminal organization were also arrested during this operation. Many of those arrested had previous criminal convictions that included weapons charges, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon against a peace officer, engaging in organized criminal activity, burglary of a vehicle, and robbery.

Source: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

1. Community Shield is a national law enforcement initiative that partners ICE with other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to target violent transnational street gangs. The program was launched in February 2005, and its first operation in March 2005 targeted significant U.S. drug market areas, including Dallas, Texas; Baltimore, Maryland; Los Angeles, California; Miami, Florida; Newark, New Jersey; and Washington, D.C.

Production

Local small-scale methamphetamine production increased significantly in the Oklahoma areas of the HIDTA region in 2009. After the enactment of state precursor chemical control legislation in 2004,^e powder methamphetamine production levels in the North Texas HIDTA region declined significantly. However, authorities in the HIDTA Oklahoma counties have reported a resurgence in methamphetamine production since late 2008, particularly involving the one-pot, or shake-and-bake, method and most notably in Tulsa County, where 398 methamphetamine laboratories were seized in 2009. The Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics (OBN) reports that the number of methamphetamine laboratories seized in the six Oklahoma counties in the HIDTA region increased nearly 290 percent from 2008 (121) to 2009 (468). OBN reports that of the 943 methamphetamine laboratories seized in the entire state of Oklahoma in 2009, 95 percent were one-pot laboratories. Only six methamphetamine laboratories were seized in Texas counties in the HIDTA region in 2009. (See Table 5 on page 11.)

Texas DPS authorities indicate that during 2009, Mexican traffickers transported liquid methamphetamine to the Dallas/Fort Worth area; however, no seizures of this form of the drug have been recorded since late 2009. Texas DPS officers note that quantities of acetone have been discovered in some methamphetamine stash houses in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Traffickers convert or “recrystallize” the liquid compound to high-purity (98%) ice methamphetamine crystals or shards using an acetone-wash process. Although no liquid methamphetamine has been seized in the HIDTA region since the last quarter of 2009, there is still reporting that acetone is being stored in stash houses in the area, leading to an intelligence gap regarding the purpose of this chemical.

Law enforcement officials in the region report an increase in the number of indoor cannabis grow operations, particularly those producing hydroponic marijuana. The majority of indoor hydroponic grows in the HIDTA region are found in rental units or homes in residential areas, primarily in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Grow operators are employing techniques such as using stolen electric meters during the production process to avoid detection of excessive electricity use. In the first quarter of 2010, law enforcement officers in Lubbock County, Texas, reported a noticeable increase in the cultivation of hydroponic cannabis in dorm rooms and apartments.

Law enforcement officials also report an increase in the number of outdoor grow operations in the North Texas HIDTA region, particularly in the heavily wooded rural areas of the region. In July 2009, law enforcement officers discovered several large cannabis grow operations in Ellis and Navarro Counties, resulting in the seizure of more than 16,000 plants. Officers in Oklahoma discovered other large grow operations in a remote section of the Kiamichi Mountains situated in southeastern Oklahoma across the border from Texas. Evidence at many of the grow sites in the region indicates that the principal growers are Mexicans, usually illegal nationals.

e. Officials in Oklahoma passed and enacted House Bill 2167 in April 2004, the first legislation of its kind in the United States.

Table 5. Methamphetamine Laboratory Seizure Incidents in North Texas HIDTA Counties 2007–2009*

Oklahoma County	2007	2008	2009	Total
Cleveland	0	0	2	2
Comanche	6	9	4	19
Muskogee	6	2	35	43
Oklahoma	11	10	14	35
Sequoyah	13	7	15	35
Tulsa	22	93	398	513
Totals for Oklahoma Counties	58	121	468	647
Texas County	2007	2008	2009	Total
Dallas	2	2	2	6
Denton	2	0	0	2
Kaufman	1	1	0	2
Lubbock	0	2	3	5
Navarro	1	0	0	1
Tarrant	5	3	1	9
Totals for Texas Counties	11	8	6	25
North Texas HIDTA Region Totals	69	129	474	672

Source: Oklahoma counties: Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, as of April 1, 2010;
Texas counties: National Seizure System, as of March 24, 2010.

*Data are inclusive of chemical/equipment, dumpsite, and laboratory seizures. HIDTA counties not listed report no seizure incidents from 2007 through 2009.

Transportation

Mexican traffickers smuggle multikilogram to multiton quantities of illicit drugs—primarily cocaine, ice methamphetamine, heroin, and marijuana—to the North Texas HIDTA region, either directly from Mexico through major ports of entry (POEs) along the U.S.–Mexico border (such as Laredo, El Paso, McAllen, or Brownsville) or other, smaller Southwest Border towns, or through California and Arizona. Traffickers continually adjust their smuggling routes through the region to avoid interdiction on the major highways in the North Texas HIDTA region. For example, law enforcement in Terry County (which is directly southwest of Lubbock County) reports that traffickers are avoiding concentrated law enforcement interdiction efforts along Interstates 10, 20, 27, and 40 and shifting to less traveled highways such as U.S. Highways 62, 380, and 385 to transport drug shipments from western states to the North Texas area.

Drug shipments that arrive in the HIDTA region are often repackaged for distribution to drug markets in the region and throughout the United States. NSS data indicate that seized drug shipments originating in the North Texas HIDTA region in 2009 were destined primarily for drug markets in southeastern and midwestern states, including Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

Aviation smuggling is increasing in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. ICE agents indicate that traffickers are transporting cocaine and marijuana as well as illegal aliens by air from the Dallas/Fort Worth area to other transshipment locations, such as Atlanta. Much of this activity occurs at private airports through the use of private pilots referred to as mercenary pilots.

Distribution

Dallas/Fort Worth

Mexican DTOs are the principal wholesale distributors of methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, and marijuana in the Dallas/Fort Worth area of the HIDTA region, while Asian DTOs, primarily Vietnamese, are the main distributors of MDMA and hydroponic marijuana. Local independent distributors and members of street, prison, and outlaw motorcycle gangs are the primary midlevel and retail-level drug distributors operating in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. African American and Hispanic street gangs are principal retail-level distributors of illicit drugs in the North Texas HIDTA region. African American drug traffickers in the Dallas/Fort Worth area are increasingly distributing MDMA.

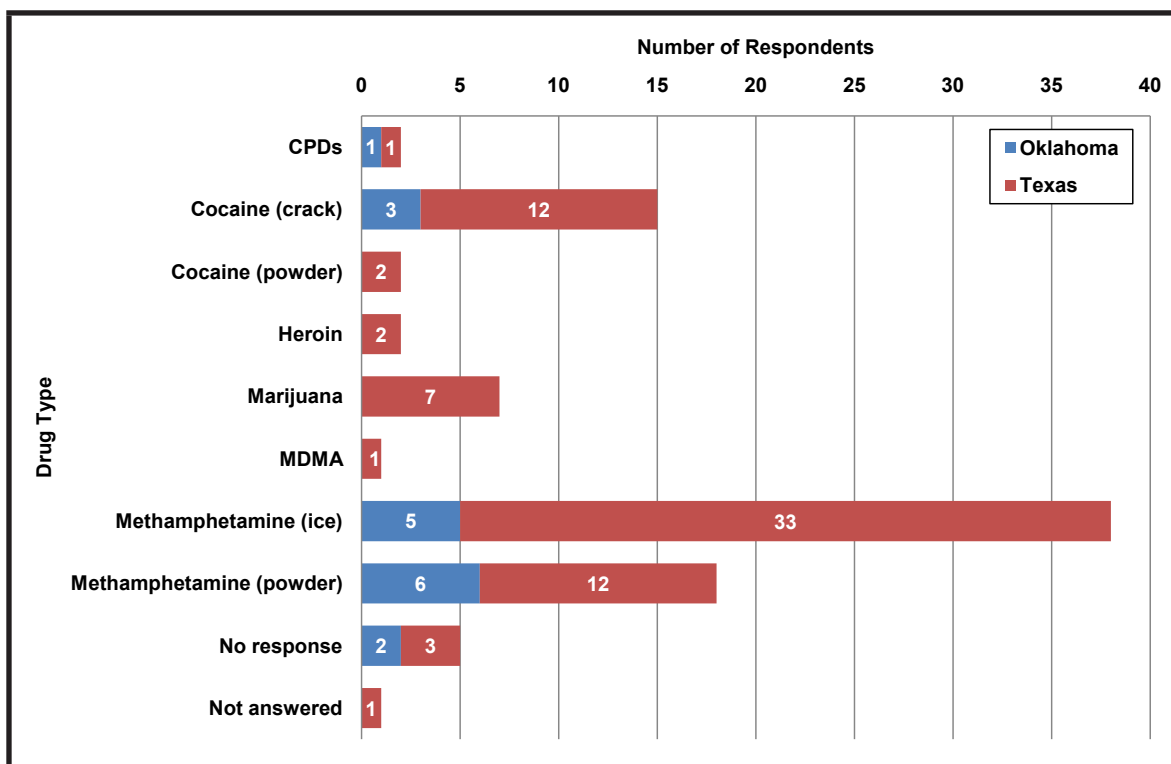
Oklahoma City

Mexican DTOs and criminal groups are significant suppliers of wholesale quantities of illicit drugs in Oklahoma City. Some members of African American and Hispanic street gangs, particularly South Side Locos and Juaritos, work with Mexican DTOs to distribute methamphetamine, marijuana, and cocaine in Oklahoma City at the retail level. African American street gangs also distribute MDMA and codeine-laced cough syrup to young abusers.

Drug-Related Crime

Methamphetamine is the drug that most contributes to property crime and violent crime in the HIDTA region. According to NDTS 2010 data, 56 of the 91 state and local law enforcement respondents in the North Texas HIDTA region identify methamphetamine as the drug most associated with property crime (see Figure 5), and 48 respondents identify methamphetamine as the drug most associated with violent crime (see Figure 6 on page 13).

Figure 5. Drug Most Associated With Property Crime in the North Texas HIDTA Region as Reported by State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies, by Number of Respondents



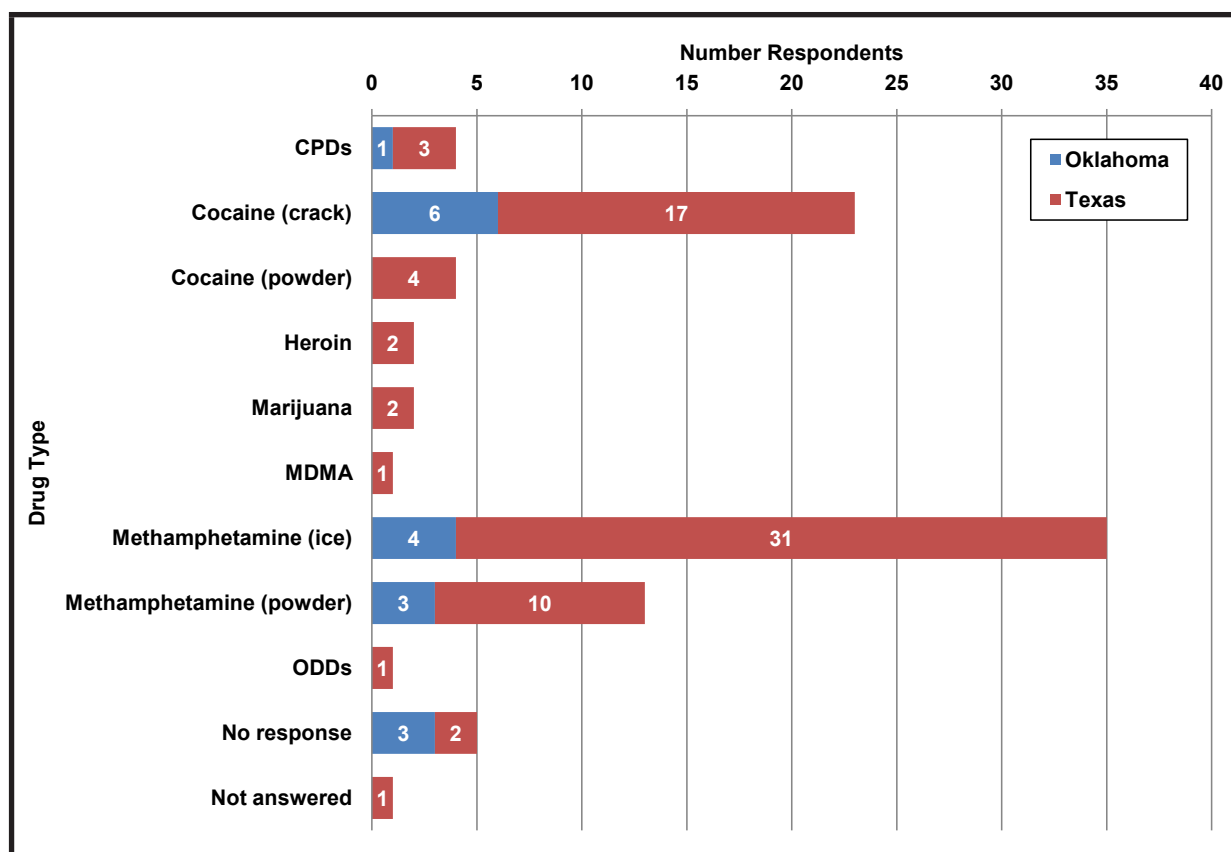
Source: National Drug Threat Survey 2010.

Abusers of methamphetamine and other drugs commit crimes to obtain money to support their drug addictions, including stealing property, committing identity theft and credit card fraud, and other criminal activity. Some gangs in the HIDTA region have a propensity for violence, such as Tango Blast in Dallas and South Side Locos in Oklahoma City, and some gangs also commit auto theft, burglary, illegal immigrant smuggling, home invasion robbery, kidnapping, and murder.

Gang members (such as members of the East Side Homeboys street gang in Dallas) arrested on drug trafficking violations in the HIDTA region are frequently in possession of firearms, which they typically carry to protect their drug supplies or defend their distribution territories. They also use the firearms for intimidation or retaliation purposes and, at times, against law enforcement. Many gang and criminal group members obtain firearms by burglarizing area businesses, private homes and vehicles, or through straw purchasers.

Mexican criminals and trusted members of some gangs in the North Texas HIDTA region smuggle stolen and illegally purchased guns, particularly assault rifles, to Mexico for use by DTO enforcers. For example, in October 2009, gun smugglers in the Dallas/Fort Worth area were arrested in conjunction with Project Coronado. (See text box on page 9.) The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) participated in the Project Coronado effort, targeting firearms smugglers working on behalf of La Familia. Six of the arrests occurred in Fort Worth, where a weapons trafficking ring had recruited and paid individuals to act as straw purchasers to buy firearms. After acquiring a sufficient number of firearms, the traffickers transported them to a ranch in Cleburne, Texas, where the guns were stored prior to shipment to the Southwest Border area and eventually to Mexico.

Figure 6. Drug Most Associated With Violent Crime in the North Texas HIDTA Region as Reported by State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies, by Number of Respondents



Source: National Drug Threat Survey 2010.

Table 6. Adult Drug-Related Treatment Admissions in Texas: North Texas HIDTA Counties and Statewide, by Drug, 2007–2009

Drug	Year	North Texas HIDTA County (Texas)														Total for NTX HIDTA Counties in Texas	Percent of State Total	Texas State Total	
		Collin	Dallas	Denton	Ellis	Henderson	Hood	Hunt	Johnson	Kaufman	Lubbock	Navarro	Parker	Rockwall	Smith				Tarrant
Cocaine (crack)	2007	61	1,277	30	37	17	11	26	28	14	249	*	*	*	61	666	2,477	27	9,197
	2008	35	1,104	26	31	*	*	26	30	23	216	*	15	*	55	670	2,231	27	8,229
	2009	28	739	23	21	*	*	12	*	18	125	*	*	*	37	651	1,654	24	6,976
Cocaine (powder)	2007	44	348	11	41	*	*	*	18	11	115	*	*	19	233	840	16	5,394	
	2008	23	283	11	21	*	*	*	*	*	86	*	10	16	254	704	14	5,046	
	2009	21	183	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	51	*	*	*	166	421	12	3,453	
Marijuana/Hashish	2007	100	517	32	96	13	67	27	89	21	157	*	31	22	406	1,578	23	6,981	
	2008	91	474	12	72	*	86	29	111	20	169	*	29	30	451	1,574	22	7,202	
	2009	93	415	14	32	*	78	23	83	25	150	*	29	51	472	1,465	19	7,515	
Heroin	2007	77	1,686	25	19	*	14	11	11	14	57	*	*	*	590	2,504	39	6,501	
	2008	81	1,713	49	13	*	*	14	30	16	50	*	*	*	719	2,697	38	7,058	
	2009	121	1,683	49	20	*	*	*	33	13	48	*	14	14	838	2,850	38	7,510	
Other Opiates	2007	39	343	18	28	23	11	10	40	24	63	*	17	53	271	940	25	3,717	
	2008	42	343	45	19	21	38	12	46	14	78	*	20	65	374	1,117	26	4,318	
	2009	39	352	26	24	15	27	15	52	19	90	*	19	62	321	1,073	23	4,726	
Amphetamines/ Methamphetamine	2007	*	653	52	134	23	102	97	207	70	221	*	64	50	788	2,474	38	6,513	
	2008	67	553	39	45	10	97	42	145	55	161	*	59	48	737	2,058	42	4,874	
	2009	61	436	49	36	18	72	28	117	58	160	*	44	38	875	1,992	41	4,890	

Source: Texas Department of State Health Services.

*Admissions in any drug category with a frequency of less than 10 have been omitted from North Texas HIDTA county totals as a result of Health Insurance Privacy and Accountability Act confidentiality requirements. Therefore, actual totals are slightly higher than those shown here.

Abuse

Treatment admissions for heroin abuse in the Texas counties of the North Texas HIDTA region increased overall from 2008 to 2009, whereas treatment admissions for all other major drug categories declined during the same period. The increase in the number of heroin-related treatment admissions reflects the rising availability and abuse of the drug. Of interest, more than half of all adult drug-related treatment admissions in the 15 Texas counties located in the North Texas HIDTA region occurred in Dallas and Tarrant Counties each year from 2007 through 2009. (See Table 6 on page 14.)

Drug-related treatment admissions for the abuse of marijuana, heroin, other opiates, and amphetamine/methamphetamine in the Oklahoma counties of the North Texas HIDTA increased from 2008 to 2009. Treatment admissions for marijuana were highest (1,514), followed by admissions for amphetamine/methamphetamine (1,372). (See Table 7.)

CPD abuse is a significant and growing problem in the six Oklahoma counties in the HIDTA region, as indicated by a rising number of treatment admissions and overdose deaths associated particularly with abuse of opioid pain medications. (See Table 7 below and Table 8 on page 16.) Of particular note is the high percentage of drug-related deaths attributed to the abuse of CPDs. Of the 304 drug-related deaths that occurred in these six counties in 2009, almost 82 percent (248 deaths) involved CPDs. According to the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control (OBNDCC), hydrocodone products (such as Lortab and Vicodin) and oxycodone products (such as OxyContin) accounted for the greatest number of CPD-related deaths in Oklahoma.

Drug-related deaths attributed to the abuse of methamphetamine also increased in Oklahoma in 2009. OBNDCC reports that at least 51 people died from methamphetamine overdoses in 2009—an almost 89 percent increase from the 27 methamphetamine-related deaths that occurred in 2008.

Table 7. Adult Drug-Related Treatment Admissions in Oklahoma: North Texas HIDTA Counties and Statewide, by Drug, 2007–2009

Drug	Year	North Texas HIDTA County (Oklahoma)						Total for North Texas HIDTA Counties in Oklahoma	Percent of State Total	Oklahoma State Total
		Cleveland	Comanche	Muskogee	Oklahoma	Sequoyah	Tulsa			
Cocaine (crack)	2007	33	102	48	546	2	213	944	76	1,249
	2008	31	73	45	486	1	169	805	75	1,068
	2009	25	69	30	352	0	144	620	81	768
Cocaine (powder)	2007	33	21	12	167	0	74	307	65	471
	2008	18	13	17	165	3	71	287	65	443
	2009	13	16	8	117	1	52	207	69	301
Marijuana/Hashish	2007	109	76	81	655	12	283	1,216	48	2,522
	2008	98	77	85	745	19	310	1,334	49	2,728
	2009	98	109	66	689	21	531	1,514	53	2,848
Heroin	2007	10	2	1	58	1	16	88	76	116
	2008	16	3	4	97	0	28	148	75	197
	2009	27	4	4	88	1	50	174	70	247
Other Opiates	2007	53	30	25	336	14	177	635	57	1,120
	2008	85	36	31	372	9	233	766	54	1,413
	2009	107	43	28	376	8	256	818	55	1,485
Amphetamines/ Methamphetamine	2007	141	74	135	675	55	328	1,408	42	3,353
	2008	125	69	104	598	23	228	1,147	43	2,686
	2009	106	149	127	570	57	363	1,372	48	2,871

Source: Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

Table 8. Illicit and Controlled Prescription Drug-Related Deaths in Oklahoma: North Texas HIDTA Counties and Statewide, 2009*

Drug Type	North Texas HIDTA County (Oklahoma)						Total for North Texas HIDTA Counties in Oklahoma	Percent of State Total	Oklahoma State Total
	Cleveland	Comanche	Muskogee	Oklahoma	Sequoyah	Tulsa			
Illicit	1	1	2	12	2	38	56	61	92
Controlled Prescription Drugs	27	10	9	83	7	112	248	55	447
Totals	28	11	11	95	9	150	304	56	539

Source: Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control.

*Death statistics as reported through third quarter 2009, as of March 29, 2010, are the latest data available.

Illicit Finance

Millions of dollars in illicit drug proceeds are smuggled in bulk to Mexico from the HIDTA region for eventual laundering or repatriation. Drug traffickers routinely use the region, particularly the Dallas/Fort Worth area, as a staging location for bulk cash and monetary instruments that they generate through their illicit activities. Internal Revenue Service authorities indicate that some drug traffickers have used color coding to mark packages in bulk currency shipments to identify from where the proceeds have come or to which criminal groups the proceeds should be delivered.

Traffickers in the Dallas and Oklahoma City areas are also being seen in possession of stored value cards, such as gift cards. Traffickers are transporting the stored value cards to Brownsville or other Southwest Border locations. There the transporter withdraws the money from the cards and wires the funds to a recipient in Mexico or another foreign location. (See text box.)

Stored Value Cards

Stored value cards are prepaid debit cards that use magnetic stripe technology to store information about funds that have been prepaid to the card. Payroll cards, government benefit cards, gift cards, and telephone cards are examples of stored value cards. These virtual money cards can be accessed through the Internet and often allow holders to transfer money values anonymously without being subject to the same controls required of institutions that deal with credit and debit cards. Legitimate and criminal users of these virtual money cards store funds on the cards in amounts not exceeding the dollar limit set by the issuing authority; however, a complicit issuing authority can waive the dollar limit, making these cards attractive to money launderers. In addition, the owner of a stored value card can authorize another individual to withdraw funds without requiring any type of identification at the time of the transaction.

Source: Financial Crimes Enforcement Network.

Money launderers also use wire transfer services to move illicit drug proceeds from the Dallas/Fort Worth area to banks and other financial transaction points in Mexico. Money launderers are facilitating wire transfers by using “straw men” to conceal the identity of the transferring party. Also in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, members of Mexican drug trafficking cells are buying properties, renovating them, and then selling them legitimately and sending the profits to Mexico.

Outlook

NDIC analysts expect that Mexican DTOs will continue to dominate wholesale drug distribution in and from the North Texas HIDTA region and further exploit the Dallas/Fort Worth area as a major staging area for their drug trafficking and bulk currency consolidation operations. No other trafficking group appears to have the sources of supply or organizational structure to challenge them. Methamphetamine, primarily Mexican ice methamphetamine, will remain the most significant drug threat in the HIDTA region as distributors and abusers continue to commit violent crimes and property crimes. Although Mexican methamphetamine will remain the most available type of the drug, it is expected that the production and availability of one-pot, or shake-and-bake, methamphetamine will increase in the Oklahoma areas of the HIDTA region and expand to some areas of North Texas. The increasing abuse of CPDs in the North Texas HIDTA, particularly in the HIDTA's Oklahoma counties, will result in more drug-related deaths. NDIC analysts expect indoor and outdoor cannabis grow operations to increase in number throughout the HIDTA region. DTOs will exploit the region's rural wooded areas to situate larger and more sophisticated outdoor cannabis grow sites and, thereby, avoid the risk of having their marijuana shipments interdicted along the Southwest Border. It is expected that Mexican traffickers will exploit the rising demand for hydroponic or high-potency marijuana and the high profit margins associated with the drug to develop indoor grow operations in the North Texas HIDTA region.

Sources

Local, State, and Regional

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control
Diversion Unit
Oklahoma City Police Department
Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Texas

Dallas Independent School District Police Department
Dallas Police Department
Gang Unit
Interdiction Group
Narcotics Division
Pharmaceutical Diversionary and Intelligence Group
Fort Worth Police Department
Gang Intelligence and Gang Enforcement Unit
Special Operations Division
Garland Police Department
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Correctional Institutions Division
Texas Department of Public Safety
Garland Regional Crime Lab
Narcotics Unit
Directed Intelligence Group
Drug Intelligence Group
Texas Department of State Health Services

Federal

Executive Office of the President
Office of National Drug Control Policy
High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area
North Texas
Regional Intelligence Support Center
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
U.S. Department of Justice
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Dallas Field Division
Criminal Division
Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force
Drug Enforcement Administration
Dallas Division
Oklahoma City Resident Office
El Paso Intelligence Center
National Seizure System
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Dallas Field Division
U.S. Attorneys Office
Northern District of Texas
Dallas Office
U.S. Department of the Treasury
Financial Crimes Enforcement Network
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