Minnesota
Drug Threat Assessment

National Drug Intelligence Center
U.S. Department of Justice

This document may contain dated information.
It has been made available to provide access to historical materials.
Minnesota Drug Threat Assessment

National Drug Intelligence Center
319 Washington Street, 5th Floor
Johnstown, PA 15901-1622
(814) 532-4601
Preface

This report is a strategic assessment that addresses the status and outlook of the drug threat in Minnesota. Analytical judgment determined the threat posed by each drug type or category, taking into account the most current quantitative and qualitative information on availability, demand, production or cultivation, transportation, and distribution, as well as the effects of a particular drug on abusers and society as a whole. While NDIC sought to incorporate the latest available information, a time lag often exists between collection and publication of data, particularly demand-related data sets. NDIC anticipates that this drug threat assessment will be useful to policymakers, law enforcement personnel, and treatment providers at the federal, state, and local levels because it draws upon a broad range of information sources to describe and analyze the drug threat in Minnesota.
Minnesota Drug Threat Assessment

Executive Summary

Drug use is a growing concern in Minnesota. More people were arrested for drug violations in 1999 than in any previous year. The Minneapolis/St. Paul area is the destination of most of the drugs entering the state because of its large population and transportation infrastructure. Mexican polydrug trafficking groups are the primary suppliers of cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine. Private vehicles and mail parcels are the most common methods of transporting drugs into the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. Street gangs such as the Gangster Disciples and Vice Lords control distribution and retail sales in this area, but they are migrating to smaller cities in search of higher profits.

Powdered cocaine and crack cocaine pose the primary drug threats to Minnesota. Cocaine is the drug of choice in urban areas and accounts for more hospital emergency department mentions than any other drug in Minneapolis. Most powdered cocaine comes from the Southwest Border, while crack is converted locally or is transported from midwestern cities such as Chicago or Milwaukee.

Methamphetamine has surpassed cocaine as the primary drug of abuse in many areas of the state; law enforcement seized more methamphetamine in 1999 than in any previous year. Mexican drug trafficking organizations supply an estimated 80 percent of the methamphetamine, which is shipped from Mexico and California. However, methamphetamine laboratories are becoming more common in Minnesota. The number of laboratories seized by the Drug Enforcement Administration rose from 21 in 1997 to 138 in 2000.

Abuse of heroin and other opiates traditionally has been low in Minnesota, but use has risen consistently since the mid-1990s. There were 36 heroin-related deaths in the Minneapolis area through September 2000, compared with 27 in all of 1999. Heroin treatment admissions and hospital emergency department mentions reached all-time highs in 1999. Mexican black tar heroin, the most common type of heroin in the state, is transported from the Southwest Border and Chicago. White heroin is becoming more common in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. Opium is used primarily by Minnesota’s Southeast Asian population.
Marijuana is the most widely available and commonly abused drug in Minnesota and is responsible for more treatment admissions than any other drug. More teenagers and young adults are using marijuana than in previous years. According to the 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, Minnesota ranked eighth in the nation in the percentage of 12- to 17- and 18- to 25-year-olds in past 30-day marijuana use.

Other dangerous drugs, such as MDMA and GHB, are popular with teenagers who frequent nightclubs and all-night dance parties called raves. Abuse of these designer drugs is increasing, and MDMA has been linked to several deaths in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area.

Diverted pharmaceuticals continue to be a problem in most areas of Minnesota. Prescription drugs are illegally obtained primarily through forged prescriptions and theft. Some of the most commonly diverted prescription drugs are Darvocet, methadone, Percocet, Ritalin, Valium, and Vicodin.
# Table of Contents

**Executive Summary** ................................................................. iii

**Overview** .............................................................................. 1

**Cocaine** ............................................................................... 4
  Abuse ...................................................................................... 4
  Availability ............................................................................. 5
  Violence .................................................................................. 5
  Production .............................................................................. 6
  Transportation ......................................................................... 6
  Distribution ............................................................................ 7

**Methamphetamine** ................................................................. 8
  Abuse ....................................................................................... 8
  Availability ............................................................................. 9
  Violence .................................................................................. 9
  Production .............................................................................. 9
  Transportation ......................................................................... 11
  Distribution ............................................................................ 11

**Heroin** .................................................................................. 12
  Abuse ....................................................................................... 12
  Availability ............................................................................. 13
  Violence .................................................................................. 13
  Production .............................................................................. 13
  Transportation ......................................................................... 14
  Distribution ............................................................................ 14

**Marijuana** ............................................................................. 15
  Abuse ....................................................................................... 15
  Availability ............................................................................. 16
  Violence .................................................................................. 16
  Production .............................................................................. 16
  Transportation ......................................................................... 17
  Distribution ............................................................................ 17

**Other Dangerous Drugs** ........................................................ 17
  Abuse ....................................................................................... 17
  Availability ............................................................................. 19
  Violence .................................................................................. 19
  Production .............................................................................. 20
  Transportation ......................................................................... 20
  Distribution ............................................................................ 20

**Outlook** .................................................................................. 21

**Sources** ................................................................................. 23
Note: This map displays features mentioned in the report.
Minnesota Drug Threat Assessment

Overview

Minnesota ranks as the twenty-first most populous state with 4.9 million residents. Approximately 53 percent live in the seven-county Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. Over 90 percent of Minnesota’s population are Caucasian; African Americans are the largest minority with nearly 3 percent. Minnesota is the fastest-growing state in the Midwest. The total population grew 9.1 percent between 1990 and 1998, and the minority population, particularly Hispanic, Asian, and African American, increased by 45 percent. Roughly one-third of the population growth is due to migration. The median age has increased from 32 to 35 since 1990, while the percentage of residents under 18 has held steady at 26 percent.

Almost 400 million tons of goods, worth over $350 billion, were moved through Minnesota in 1997. Freight hauled by rail accounted for 47 percent, by truck 32 percent, and by ship 21 percent of the total tonnage. Airfreight accounted for less than 1 percent of total tonnage moved through the state.

The Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport is one of the busiest airports in the United States. It provides access to all major domestic and international cities with nonstop and one-stop flights. In 1999, it handled more than 34 million passengers and over 360 tons of cargo.

Minnesota has 130,000 miles of roads; 913 are interstates and over 14,000 are urban streets. The remaining roads are rural. Interstate 35 runs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fast Facts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minnesota</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. population ranking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoreline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other principal cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of counties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal industries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from Laredo, Texas, on the U.S.–Mexico border to Duluth. Interstate 90, which runs from Boston to Seattle, passes through the southern part of the state. Interstate 94 provides easy access from Minnesota to Milwaukee and Chicago.

Minnesota’s northern border and shoreline are ideal for smuggling aliens and contraband, including drugs. The border passes through national forests and huge lakes, is minimally patrolled, and, for the most part, is sparsely populated. Minnesota has 13 ports of entry on Lake Superior and along the 596-mile border with Canada. Only three (Baudette, Grand Portage, and Warroad) are manned 24 hours a day. According to U.S. Customs Service (USCS) data, nearly 2.9 million people entered Minnesota, either as pedestrians or as passengers, in all manner of conveyances in fiscal year (FY) 1999.

The Minneapolis/St. Paul area is the nation’s third largest trucking center. Over 33,000 interstate carriers have authority to operate in Minnesota. While trucks carried only 32 percent of Minnesota’s freight tonnage in 1997, they accounted for the largest amount of freight by value at over $252 billion. Minnesota’s cross-border trade with Canada is largely dependent on trucking fleets. In 1999, Minnesota ranked second behind Michigan in the amount of freight arriving by truck from Canada—8.9 million tons. The amount of goods arriving in Minnesota by truck directly from Mexico was much smaller. Minnesota ranked twenty-sixth in the nation with over 83,000 tons of goods arriving from Mexico.

Minnesota’s rail system consists of 4 major and 20 smaller carriers operating over 4,600 miles of active railroad track. The state has 5 intermodal freight yards, where truck trailers and containers piggyback on trains, and 20 rail-ship intermodal facilities. Trains carried 159 million tons of freight through Minnesota in 1997.

Minnesota has two waterway transportation systems, the inland Mississippi River System and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway. The inland system has 231 miles of navigable waterways and supports five port areas with over 17 million tons of cargo transported in 1999. The largest river port is St. Paul, which handled over one-third of inland water tonnage. Minnesota has 206 miles of shoreline and four ports on Lake Superior. Those ports handled a combined tonnage of over 67 million in 1999. Duluth is Minnesota’s principal Great Lakes port. It has the nation’s largest inland harbor and handles a high volume of foreign shipping. Over 39 million tons of cargo passed through the port of Duluth in 2000.

Drug use is increasing in Minnesota. The state ranks twenty-eighth in the nation for drug use among all age groups, but ranks eighth and tenth among 12- to 17-year-olds and 18- to 25-year-olds, respectively, according to the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse. (See Table 1.) In 1993, an estimated 4.6 percent of Minnesotans aged 12 and older had used an illicit drug within the prior month, compared with 5.8 percent nationwide. By 1999, the gap had greatly narrowed, with 6.7 percent of Minnesotans and 6.9

### Table 1. Illicit Drug Use, Past Month, United States and Minnesota, 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>United States Percent</th>
<th>Minnesota Percent</th>
<th>Minnesota Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Age Groups</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–17</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–25</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 or Older</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse.
percent of national survey respondents reporting drug use in the past 30 days.

Statistics from the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) also reflect high drug abuse among Minnesota’s teenagers. In 1999, Minneapolis ranked second among the nation’s 21 DAWN sites for most hospital emergency department (ED) drug abuse episodes per 100,000 population aged 12 to 17. When considering female users only, Minneapolis led all sites in this age group.

Drug-related arrests continue to rise, but the rate slowed considerably in 1999. During that year, drug arrests increased only 2.7 percent to 22,600. Six of the previous 7 years showed double-digit increases. Nevertheless, drug arrests in 1999 were three times higher than at the beginning of the decade. Arrest demographics changed little between 1995 and 1999: 85 percent of those arrested were male, 73 percent were Caucasian, and 61 percent were between the ages of 18 and 24.

**Chart 1. Drug Arrests, Minnesota, 1990–1999**

![Chart showing drug arrests from 1990 to 1999](chart)

Source: Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

Between 1995 and 1999, the drug arrest rate per 100,000 rose 45 percent, fueled primarily by counties in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. The seven-county area accounted for 61 percent of all drug arrests in 1999. During that same period, the number of arrests in Dakota and Washington Counties nearly doubled. Hennepin County arrests increased by one-third, but the county had the most arrests per 100,000 in the metropolitan area.

Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) are the primary suppliers of illicit drugs to Minnesota. They are transporters and distributors of powdered cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine, using private vehicles, aircraft and parcel services to transport drugs into the state.

Gangs control transportation and distribution of crack cocaine and retail distribution of powdered cocaine and heroin. The dominant gangs in Minneapolis are the Crips, Gangster Disciples, and Vice Lords, which have migrated to smaller cities and rural areas in recent years. These migrations have fostered violence and the use of drugs that local law enforcement often is not equipped to handle.

**Gangster Disciples**

The Gangster Disciples, the largest Chicago-based street gang, is affiliated with the Folk Nation. Gangster Disciples members are primarily African American. The gang has been in existence since the early 1960s and functions with a structure similar to a corporation. The gang conducts illegal drug operations throughout the Chicago area, primarily in low-income areas on the south and west sides of the city. The Gangster Disciples operates drug distribution networks throughout the state of Illinois and has been identified in over 40 states across the nation. The Gangster Disciples has been in a state of flux because law enforcement authorities have targeted it in recent years. These investigations resulted in indictments and convictions of almost 40 leaders, including Larry Hoover who served as “Chairman of the Board” since the early 1970s. At its peak, the retail drug operation of the Gangster Disciples was reportedly worth over $100 million annually.

**Vice Lords**

The Vice Lords, the oldest street gang in Chicago, is affiliated with the People Nation. Its members are predominantly African American. The Vice Lords is split into major factions such as the Conservative Vice Lords, Traveling Vice Lords, and Four Corner Hustlers. Each faction has distinct membership and leadership and is not as structured as the Gangster Disciples. Each faction operates its drug distribution networks in Chicago, neighboring counties, and surrounding states.
Cocaine

Cocaine is the principal drug threat in Minnesota. Demand remains high and supplies are plentiful. Mexican DTOs are the primary transporters and distributors of powdered cocaine while African American street gangs control crack cocaine distribution.

Abuse

Cocaine remains the greatest drug threat in Minnesota; its use has steadily increased the last 4 years. Cocaine was a factor in more ED episodes than any other drug in 1999. During that year, there were 814 DAWN cocaine mentions in Minneapolis compared with 627 marijuana, 207 heroin, and 112 methamphetamine mentions. ED mentions increased only 5 percent in 1999 and 1998 after increasing 9 percent in 1997 and 45 percent in 1996. (See Chart 2.) According to the Hennepin and Ramsey County medical examiners, cocaine-related deaths increased in 1999 after 2 years of decline: in 1999, there were 53 cocaine-related deaths compared with 44 in 1998. Despite the increase, the number remains far below the 74 deaths recorded in 1996.

Chart 2. Cocaine Emergency Department Mentions, Minneapolis, 1992–1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Drug Abuse Warning Network, Year End Emergency Department Data, 1999.

Juvenile cocaine abuse has grown rapidly over the last 4 years. DAWN statistics show that ED cocaine mentions per 100,000 for the 12 to 17 age group nearly doubled from 1995 to 1999. Minneapolis surpassed the national rate for that age group of 14.0 per 100,000 with 15.4 per 100,000 mentions in 1999. Between 1995 and 1998, the percentage of twelfth graders who used cocaine during the past 12 months increased from 2.9 percent to 5.7 percent. The increase among ninth graders was slightly lower, with 5.5 percent admitting use in 1998 compared with 3.1 percent in 1995.

Cocaine treatment admissions also indicate a steady increase in abuse among Minnesotans. Admissions increased 19 percent between 1993 and 1998, but as a percentage of total drug admissions, have hovered near 14 percent for several years. Minnesota’s cocaine treatment admissions per 100,000 increased from 107 in 1993 to 127 in 1998, exceeding the national average of 109. (See Chart 3.) When compared with other states and the District of Columbia, Minnesota’s ranking changed from twenty-third to sixteenth. More than two-thirds of people entering treatment in 1998 were male, and 56.3 percent were African American. Slightly less than half were 35 or older. Approximately 87 percent were over the age of 25 and typically crack smokers. According to 1999 statistics from the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program (ADAM), 35.8 percent of the female


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Minnesota</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set 1993–1998, National Admissions to Substance Abuse Treatment Services.
arrestees tested for drugs were positive for cocaine, the highest of any drug. Among male arrestees, 29.3 percent of those tested were positive for cocaine, the second highest of any drug.

Availability

Cocaine, in both powdered and crack forms, continues to be widely available throughout Minnesota. In 2000, purity levels were 80 to 96 percent at the kilogram level, 57 to 80 percent at the ounce level, and 50 to 80 percent at the gram level. In 1998, drug task forces seized almost 62 kilograms of cocaine, an amount basically unchanged from 1997. State drug task force arrests for powdered cocaine were unchanged from 1998 to 1999 after increasing almost 40 percent the previous year. Crack cocaine arrests in 1999 were the highest of any year in the 1990s. Arrests for crack cocaine also increased from 11 percent of task force cocaine arrests in 1991 to nearly 34 percent in 1999. Cocaine submissions to the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension’s Forensic Science Laboratory increased from 9 percent of the caseload in 1995 to 20 percent in 1999.

Powdered cocaine prices in Minnesota have decreased slightly from 1993 to 2000, from $1,200 per ounce to $800–$1,200 and from $24,000–$32,000 per kilogram to $20,000–$26,000. Midlevel and wholesale prices for crack cocaine are similar to those for powdered cocaine.

Cocaine is the drug of choice in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. Crack is available in Minneapolis for $20 per rock. Combined arrests for powdered and crack cocaine accounted for 72 percent of all drug arrests by the Hennepin County/Minneapolis Narcotics Task Force in 1997 and 1998. Hennepin and Ramsey Counties accounted for 76 percent of all sentences for cocaine-related offenses in Minnesota in 1998. Nearly 60 percent of drug arrests by the St. Paul Police Department in 1998 were cocaine-related.

The Bloomington Police Department reports that crack cocaine is the most commonly encountered drug. Crack cocaine costs $50 per rock and powdered cocaine $25,000 per kilogram, unchanged from the previous year. Cocaine seizures, arrests, and prices were the same in 1999 as in the previous year. The Bloomington Police Department seized 15 pounds of crack and 10 pounds of powdered cocaine and made 75 crack and 50 powdered cocaine-related arrests.

Street gang migration continues to influence cocaine availability. More gangs are moving to smaller communities because of law enforcement pressure in urban areas and a less competitive, more lucrative drug market in suburban and rural areas. For example, a rock of crack cocaine that sells for $10 in Detroit and $20 in Minneapolis brings $75 to $100 in St. Cloud. The Minneapolis Chief of Police reports increasing evidence of gang migration from urban to suburban and rural areas. The Duluth Police Department reports that gangs migrating to the area from Chicago, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis/St. Paul and selling crack cocaine pose its greatest law enforcement challenge.

Violence

Law enforcement sources continue to report gang involvement in the transportation and distribution of cocaine and related violent crime. Of the homicides committed statewide between May 1997 and March 1998, 22 percent of the victims and 33 percent of the suspects and arrestees were gang members. In the Minneapolis/St. Paul area the rise in violent crime is attributable to street
gangs’ defense of their turf. The St. Paul Police Department estimates that 50 percent of crime in the city can be attributed to gang-related drug sales, assaults, drive-by shootings, burglaries, and criminal damage to property.

**Production**

A significant percentage of crack cocaine distributed throughout Minnesota is converted within the state. Gangs convert powdered cocaine to crack cocaine within the state to avoid severe criminal penalties for transporting crack cocaine. St. Paul law enforcement officials estimate that 60 percent of the crack cocaine distributed in the area is converted locally by street gangs and independent dealers. Law enforcement officials in Duluth and Bloomington estimate that 25 percent of the crack cocaine seized was converted locally.

**Transportation**

Mexican DTOs are the primary transporters of powdered cocaine into Minnesota. Nearly all the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) cases in Minnesota in 1999 involved Mexican DTOs transporting drugs into Minnesota. The Ramsey County Sheriff’s Department reports that Mexican DTOs are the dominant transporters of powdered cocaine into Ramsey County.

Street gangs, outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMGs), independent dealers, and Asian criminal groups also transport cocaine into Minnesota. For example, the St. Paul Police Department reports that local street gangs and OMGs also transport cocaine. The Bloomington Police Department reports that primary transporters in Bloomington are independent dealers and Asian criminal groups.

Cocaine is transported to Minnesota from the Southwest Border, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Milwaukee, primarily in automobiles with hidden compartments. Transporters use Interstate 35 to move cocaine from the Southwest Border, and Interstate 80 to transport it from California. Operation Pipeline data from the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) indicated that shipments totaling over 28 kilograms of powdered cocaine destined for Minnesota were seized in seven separate incidents in 1999. In six of the cases, the cocaine shipment originated in California or at the Southwest Border. In April 2000, the California Highway Patrol seized 7 kilograms of cocaine near San Bernardino, California, from a vehicle on route to Minneapolis. Interstates 90 and 94 are used to transport cocaine from Chicago and Milwaukee. Police officers in Minnesota seized more than a kilogram of cocaine from a vehicle on Interstate 90 arriving from Wisconsin in April 2000. Interstates 35 and 94 are the most common routes used to transport cocaine into the Bloomington and St. Paul areas. Cocaine is transported to Bloomington from Chicago, Los Angeles, and Phoenix.

Other means of transporting cocaine into the state include commercial aircraft and parcel delivery services. The USCS seized more than 2 kilograms of cocaine at the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport in FY1999. In October 2000, law enforcement officials at the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport seized 1 kilogram of cocaine from the luggage of a passenger arriving from Santa Ana,
California. In February 2000, law enforcement officials in Bloomington intercepted a parcel containing 1.5 kilograms of cocaine sent from the Los Angeles area. Also in February 2000, postal inspectors in Minneapolis seized a package containing 629 grams of powdered cocaine mailed from San Francisco.

Though uncommon, seizures from passenger trains have occurred. In December 1999, law enforcement authorities in Dallas, Texas, seized 4.7 kilograms of cocaine from the luggage of a passenger traveling by rail from Dallas to Minneapolis.

African American street gangs are the primary transporters of the crack cocaine that is brought into the state. In 1999, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Minnesota indicted members of the Broadway Five Deuce Crips and the 132 Street Shotgun Crips for operating extensive crack cocaine networks stretching from Los Angeles to Minneapolis/St. Paul. The crack cocaine was transported to Minnesota by courier via commercial airline or by parcel delivery services.

**Distribution**

Mexican criminal groups are the dominant wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine in Minnesota, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Minneapolis Police Department. In May 2000, members of one such group were convicted for distributing 10 to 15 pounds of cocaine per month in Minnesota from a network based in California. In October 2000, members of another Mexican criminal group also based in California were sentenced for distributing more than 50 kilograms of cocaine in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area.

Street gangs are the primary crack cocaine distributors in Minnesota. Local African American street gangs control crack cocaine distribution in the Minneapolis area. Eleven members of the Chicago-based Mickey Cobras and Black P Stones gangs were indicted for running a crack cocaine enterprise in Minnesota in April 2000. The gangs had formed a distribution alliance in Minnesota in 1995, and were transporting and distributing as much as 1 pound of crack cocaine 3 to 4 times per month in the St. Cloud and Moorhead areas. Local and statewide gangs distribute both powdered and crack cocaine in Duluth, according to Duluth Police Department reports. Retail transactions occur in several venues, for example, in homes, city parks, public housing, and a motel, as found in one Duluth drug sweep in September 1999.

Law enforcement pressure in Chicago, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis/St. Paul has driven gangs into areas of Minnesota that have less police presence and also offer the lure of untapped markets. For example, the Bemidji Police Department reports that gang members are distributing crack cocaine and expanding operations from Bemidji to more rural areas. According to the Duluth Police Department, gangs migrating to the area and selling crack cocaine pose its greatest threat. The gangs moved from Chicago, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis/St. Paul to Duluth to avoid competition and obtain greater profits. Law enforcement officials in Hennepin County and Rochester report the migration of gang members from Milwaukee, Chicago, Gary, and Detroit.

Other criminal groups add to the growing cocaine distribution networks in Minnesota. The Plymouth Police Department reports that small groups of Russians are active in cocaine retail sales within the ethnic Russian community. The St. Paul Police Department reports that OMGs, Hispanic gangs, Jamaican criminal groups, and independent dealers are retail distributors. DEA reports that Hispanic gangs retail crack in the Moorhead area. The Bloomington Police Department also reports that Hispanic gangs are distributing powdered cocaine in Bloomington.
Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine availability and abuse continue to increase, and methamphetamine is supplanting cocaine as the principal drug of abuse in many areas of Minnesota. Approximately 80 percent of the methamphetamine in the state originates in California and Mexico and is controlled by Mexican DTOs.

Abuse

Methamphetamine is supplanting cocaine as the principal drug of abuse in many areas of Minnesota. Among all felony sentences levied in 1998, 47 percent were for cocaine, followed by 26 percent for amphetamine, which includes methamphetamine. According to Minnesota Sentencing Guideline Commission statistics, amphetamine/methamphetamine felony sentences increased nearly sevenfold between 1994 and 1998. Minnesota drug task force arrest statistics also attest to methamphetamine’s tightening grip on the state’s drug abusers. As recently as 1996, there were over 65 percent more arrests for cocaine than amphetamine. However, there were more arrests for amphetamine than for cocaine in 2 of the following 3 years.

ED methamphetamine mentions dropped sharply between 1997 and 1999 in Minneapolis. Methamphetamine mentions accounted for 2.4 percent of all drug mentions in 1999, compared with 4.4 percent in 1997. This appears to reflect a national trend, as ED mentions steadied or fell in 17 of the 21 DAWN sites. This trend is probably indicative of the low-purity Mexican methamphetamine being distributed and consumed. According to the DEA System to Retrieve Information from Drug Evidence (STRIDE), retail purity declined in Minnesota from nearly 50 percent in 1995 to about 14 percent in 1999. (See Table 2.) State and local sources support DEA figures. The Hazelden Foundation’s Butler Center for Research reports that almost 80 percent of methamphetamine samples seized by law enforcement contained less than 30 percent pure methamphetamine in 1999. The Minneapolis Police Department states that average methamphetamine purity was only 26.6 percent in 1999.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DEA, System to Retrieve Information from Drug Evidence.
Availability

Methamphetamine is readily available throughout the state. Most law enforcement agencies in Minnesota report an increase in methamphetamine arrests, investigations, and seizures. Between 1997 and 1998, drug task force arrests for methamphetamine and amphetamine increased by more than 10 percent, and the amount seized nearly tripled, from 33 to 96 kilograms. In 1999, the amount increased to over 165 kilograms. The Minneapolis Police Department reports that in 1998 the amount of methamphetamine seized may have exceeded the amount of crack cocaine seized. The St. Paul Police Department reports that methamphetamine accounted for more than 50 percent of all drugs seized by the Department in 1998 compared with only 20 percent in 1997.

The increase in methamphetamine availability may be measured by comparing prices over time. An ounce of methamphetamine sold for $1,500 to $2,600 in 1993. In 2000 it sold for $650 to $1,400. The price decreased, indicating an increase in availability.

Violence

The relationship between methamphetamine abuse and violence is well documented generally, although little specific information is available from Minnesota law enforcement authorities. Individuals addicted to methamphetamine are unpredictable and will go to great lengths to obtain the drug. Users experience feelings of paranoia, fright, and confusion, and, as a result, become violent. As the euphoric effect of methamphetamine diminishes, abusers enter a stage called “tweaking,” in which they are prone to violence, hallucinations, and paranoia. Many abusers try to alleviate the effect of the methamphetamine “crash” by buffering it with other drugs such as heroin. These effects, in combination with severe sleep deprivation, can result in a very unpredictable, uncontrollable individual.

Production

Most of the methamphetamine in the United States is produced by Mexican DTOs in Mexico and California. Law enforcement authorities estimate that Mexican DTOs supply 80 percent of the methamphetamine in Minnesota. While Mexican DTOs remain the principal suppliers, the number of local producers in Minnesota has increased dramatically. Seizures of laboratories by DEA throughout Minnesota increased from 13 in 1995 to 138 in 2000.
Methamphetamine Production Methods

**Ephedrine reduction** method, also known as the Mexican or red phosphorus method, uses ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, hydriodic acid, and red phosphorus. Mexican DTOs normally use this method to produce larger amounts of methamphetamine.

**Cold cook** method requires ephedrine, iodine, and red phosphorus. The mixture is typically heated by sunlight or by burying the containers in hot sand to produce small quantities of high quality d-methamphetamine.

**Nazi** method uses ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, anhydrous ammonia, sodium metal or lithium, and ether. This method normally produces up to ounce quantities of high quality d-methamphetamine and is frequently used by independent Caucasian producers.

**P2P** method, formerly associated with outlaw motorcycle gangs, requires the combination of phenyl-2-propanone and aluminum in a complex process that produces low quality dl-methamphetamine.

Methamphetamine laboratories can be set up virtually anywhere. They have been discovered in settings ranging from farms, homes, and motels to abandoned cars. One was even discovered in an ice-fishing house. Most laboratories are small; the essential chemicals and equipment can be carried in a box. This makes them easily movable and difficult to detect. Using the Nazi method, laboratory operators can in a few hours set up a laboratory, produce methamphetamine, and disassemble the operation.

The Nazi method is popular in agricultural states such as Minnesota because of the availability of anhydrous ammonia, which is used as a fertilizer. Theft of the chemical from farms for methamphetamine production is becoming more common. Because of the proliferation of Nazi method methamphetamine laboratories in Minnesota, the state legislature enacted a law in August 2000 making it a felony to steal, tamper with, or improperly transport anhydrous ammonia. Maximum penalties are 5 years in prison and a $50,000 fine.

The production of methamphetamine creates public health and environmental hazards. The volatile and toxic chemicals used to manufacture the drug pose a high risk of explosion and fire. Numerous laboratories have been found in Minnesota by officers responding to fire alarms. Some of the chemicals cause burns on contact, and vapors can cause lung damage as well as harm the brain, eyes, and kidneys. Hazardous waste that is damaging to the environment and expensive to remove is a by-product of methamphetamine production. Five to 6 pounds of toxic waste are created for every pound of methamphetamine produced. Most often, the waste is dumped at the production site. This contaminates the soil and can pollute nearby streams. Cleanup efforts are costly and potentially dangerous. The St. Paul Police Department reports that the average cost to clean up a laboratory is $5,000.

In July 1999, a container of anhydrous ammonia exploded at a laboratory in a Minneapolis neighborhood. The explosion and resulting toxic fumes injured 10 people including 6 police officers and 3 medics and forced the evacuation of 40 people from their homes.

Source: WCCO Channel 4000, July 1999.
Transportation

Mexican DTOs dominate the transportation of methamphetamine into Minnesota. Law enforcement officials estimate that 80 percent of the methamphetamine destined for Minnesota is produced in Mexico and California. In 1996, one Mexican DTO was responsible for transporting between 40 and 50 pounds of methamphetamine per month into the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. Since then, law enforcement officials have identified several other Mexican organizations that transport even larger amounts.

Private automobiles with hidden compartments are the primary means of transporting methamphetamine into Minnesota. Law enforcement officers have seized many multikilogram shipments of methamphetamine from automobiles en route to Minnesota. However, methamphetamine has also been seized from commercial aircraft. USCS seized 6 pounds in FY1999 and over 54 pounds in FY1998 at the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport.

Distribution

Mexican DTOs are the principal wholesale distributors of methamphetamine in Minnesota. They use the same networks as those established for the distribution of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana. In May 2000, members of a Mexican DTO were convicted for distributing 30 pounds of methamphetamine per month in Minnesota from a network that originated in California. Wholesale distribution is conducted primarily by Mexican DTOs and OMGs in the St. Paul area. The Minneapolis Police Department reports that OMGs, known for producing their own supply, also buy methamphetamine from Mexican DTOs. Retail distribution is controlled by Mexican criminal groups, Hispanic and African American street gangs, OMGs, and local independent Caucasians. The St. Paul Police Department reports that Mexican criminal groups, local independent dealers, and OMGs conduct retail distribution. In Ramsey County, Mexican criminal groups and street gangs are the primary retailers, according to the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Department.
Heroin

Heroin availability and abuse are gradually increasing in Minnesota’s urban areas. Mexican black tar heroin, brown powdered heroin, and Southeast Asian heroin are available in Minnesota at the retail level. Nigerian and Mexican DTOs are the primary transporters and wholesale distributors of heroin throughout the state.

Abuse

Historically, heroin abuse has been low in Minnesota, but there are signs of increased use. There were 36 opiate-related deaths in Hennepin County through September 2000, compared with 27 in all of 1999. Heroin ED mentions in Minneapolis increased for the fifth consecutive year in 1999 and accounted for 4.5 percent of all drug mentions, compared with 1.7 percent in 1994. Mentions are increasing for all age groups, but most rapidly among those aged 18 to 25. (See Table 3.)

Heroin accounted for 5 percent of treatment admissions in Minneapolis/St. Paul in 1999, up slightly from 4.7 percent in 1998. Males accounted for 64.7 percent of admissions in 1999 and 66.8 percent in 1998. African Americans continue to be the largest group admitted for treatment of heroin abuse. They accounted for 45.6 percent of heroin admissions in 1999, 56.2 percent of heroin admissions in 1998, and 45.7 percent in 1997. Individuals aged 18 to 25 accounted for the largest increase in treatment admissions from 1998 to 1999. For this age group, the percentage of total admissions increased from 13.2 to 19 percent. Despite the increase among younger users, the heroin abuser population in general is an aging one. In 1999, over 70 percent of those admitted for treatment were 35 or older. Among arrestees from 1998 to 1999, the percentage of males who tested positive for opiates dropped from 4.7 percent to 3.7 percent, while the percentage of females increased from 6 to over 9 percent.

Drug abuse, particularly of opiates, among Minnesota’s Southeast Asian community is a growing concern. Substance-related arrests increased 28 percent among adults and 60 percent among juveniles between 1995 and 1996. Of 51 Hmong clients assessed during a recent year by the Lao Family Community Health Program for substance abuse, 49 were determined to be chemically dependent. The drug of choice for 47 of them was opium.

Table 3. Emergency Department Heroin Mentions per 100,000, Minneapolis, 1995–1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18–25</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26–34</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35+</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Drug Abuse Warning Network, Year End Emergency Department Data, 1999.
Availability

Mexican black tar and brown powdered heroin and Southeast Asian heroin are available in Minnesota at the retail level. There are no confirmed reports of South American or Southwest Asian heroin in the state.

Wholesale quantities of heroin are only rarely available in Minnesota, but retail availability seems to be increasing. DEA reports that both white heroin and black tar heroin have only limited availability at the multiounce level and larger amounts are rare. The St. Paul Police Department also reports that seizures of quantities greater than multiounce are rare. The Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support laboratory received 18 heroin submissions totaling 69 grams in 1998. By 2000, the number increased to 68 submissions totaling 668 grams. Minnesota drug task forces seized 352 grams of heroin in 1999, up from 97 grams in 1997. The Duluth Police Department reports that while crack is its primary problem, heroin availability is high and increasing. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials conducted drug sweeps in Duluth in September 1999 and May 2000 that yielded unexpectedly large amounts of heroin.

Price and purity levels reflect heroin’s increasing availability. Between 1993 and 1999, white heroin prices decreased from a range of $5,000–$8,200 per ounce to $4,500–$5,500 as purity increased from 68 percent to 80–90 percent. Similarly, black tar prices decreased from $4,500–$6,000 per ounce to $1,500–$3,000.

Violence

Most federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in Minnesota cite violent crime associated with gang-related drug distribution as the most serious criminal threat to the state. Gangs are the primary street-level distributors of heroin and other drugs in Minnesota. Gang migration from Chicago to urban areas of Minnesota, and subsequently to suburban and rural areas, has increased the availability of drugs and, consequently, the associated violent criminal activity in these areas.

There are, however, no indications of significant increases in crime or violence related directly to heroin abuse in Minnesota. Nonetheless, the highly addictive nature of heroin forces many users to resort to a life of crime to obtain the money necessary to purchase the drug. Heroin users often commit theft and burglary and occasionally engage in prostitution in order to support their addiction.

Production

There is no evidence of opium poppy cultivation or heroin production in Minnesota.
Transportation

Mexican heroin is smuggled from Mexico through Los Angeles, California, and the Southwest Border, primarily Arizona. The Immigration and Naturalization Service discovered in late 1998 that small amounts of heroin were being smuggled from Mexico to Minnesota and the Dakotas in the driveshafts of vehicles. Most were pickup trucks and sedans entering the United States through Texas. Parcel delivery services and the mail continue to be the predominant methods of smuggling Southeast Asian heroin into Minnesota. USCS agents seized a shipment of 12.4 kilograms destined for Minnesota in 1998. The traffickers obtained the heroin from Thailand and repackaged it as cosmetics in South Korea for shipment to Minnesota.

Southeast Asian traffickers continue to smuggle opium into the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. Opium destined for the Southeast Asian community is smuggled by courier and by mail parcels. In one instance, USCS agents seized 6 kilograms of opium at the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport in June 2000. Two Laotian residents of St. Paul were attempting to smuggle the opium in briefcases. USCS officials in Minneapolis, San Francisco, and Honolulu intercepted at least 40 kilograms of opium from couriers and mail parcels addressed to residents of the Minneapolis area during the first 9 months of 2000. In just one month (September 2000), the USCS seized over 15 kilograms of opium destined for Minneapolis/St. Paul.

Distribution

Nigerian DTOs are the primary distributors of Southeast Asian heroin at the wholesale level. Chicago serves as the distribution center for Nigerian trafficking operations. Mexican DTOs supply Mexican black tar and brown powdered heroin to Mexican criminal groups and African American street gangs for distribution at the street level.

Retail sales of heroin are conducted primarily by African American street gangs and Mexican and Nigerian criminal groups in Minneapolis/St. Paul. African American gangs such as the Chicago-based Gangster Disciples, Mickey Cobras, and Vice Lords operate in open-air drug markets in the northwest Minneapolis neighborhoods along Broadway Street and in southern areas, particularly near Peavey Park in the Phillips neighborhood. Retail quantities are packaged in small brown plastic bindles. Local gangs and independent dealers conduct retail sales in Duluth. The gangs arrive from Chicago and Milwaukee to sell heroin in Duluth and return by automobile and bus to replenish their supplies. Retail transactions occur in several venues. In a drug sweep conducted in Duluth in September of 1999, drug retailers were found selling from homes, city parks, public housing, and a motel.
Marijuana

Marijuana remains the most readily available and most widely abused illicit drug in Minnesota. Abuse by young people has increased dramatically since the early 1990s. Most marijuana is transported from the Southwest Border area by Mexican DTOs, but the rural areas of Minnesota provide an adequate environment for the domestic cultivation of cannabis.

Abuse

Marijuana remains the primary drug of abuse in Minnesota. It accounted for more treatment admissions than cocaine and remained the most prevalent drug found among Minneapolis male arrestees in 1999. Marijuana accounted for 22.7 percent of treatment admissions in 1999, up from 20.3 percent in 1998. Of those admitted to treatment in Minneapolis/St. Paul in 1999, 78.4 percent were male and 68.8 percent were Caucasian. Of Minneapolis arrestees tested, 44.3 percent of males and 26.8 percent of females were positive for marijuana in 1999, as compared with 45.4 percent of males and 22.6 percent of females in 1998.

Marijuana use is particularly prevalent among youth and is increasing. In 1998, marijuana abuse among juveniles continued the upward trend, although at a slower pace than in previous years. Marijuana use reported by twelfth graders in the Minnesota Student Survey increased from 20.4 in 1993 to 30.3 percent in 1998. This rate, however, remained below the national rate of 37.5 percent in 1998. More than half the treatment admissions for marijuana abuse in Minnesota were under age 18. Among arrestees in 1999, the average age of first marijuana use was 15. According to the 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 5.9 percent of Minnesotans admitted use of marijuana in the past 30 days, ranking the state fifteenth. When comparing 12- to 17-year-olds and 18- to 25-year-olds, Minnesota ranks eighth in the nation in both age categories. (See Table 4.)

The increasing abuse among youth is particularly troubling because marijuana use often leads to the use of other drugs. A 1994 study conducted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reported that children who use marijuana are 85 times more likely to use cocaine than nonusers.

Table 4. Marijuana Use, Past Month, United States and Minnesota, 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>United States Percent</th>
<th>Minnesota Percent</th>
<th>Minnesota Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Age Groups</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–17</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–25</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 or Older</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse.
Availability

Marijuana is the most widely available drug in Minnesota. In 1999, nearly 65 percent of all drug arrests were marijuana-related. In FY1998, the Federal-Wide Drug Seizure System reported 301 kilograms of marijuana seized in Minnesota, up from 106.6 kilograms seized in FY1997. Thirty-seven percent of Minnesota’s multijurisdictional drug task force cases in 1998 involved marijuana, resulting in 1,528 arrests and the seizure of more than 3,138 pounds. Task force seizures increased to over 8,200 pounds in 1999. The St. Paul Police Department seized 362 pounds of marijuana and made 265 marijuana arrests in 1999, both increases from the previous year. The average quantities of cannabis seized were 1,000 plants at outdoor grows and 100 plants at indoor grows in the St. Paul area. The largest seizure was 55 pounds. Marijuana submissions to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension’s forensic science laboratory in 1999 constituted 32 percent of the total number of drug submissions, down from 37 percent in 1997, but still the highest percentage.

Marijuana prices remain stable with the price of sinsemilla at $6,000 to $7,000 per pound and the price of Mexican marijuana at $2,500 to $3,000 per pound in the Minneapolis area. Locally produced marijuana is available in Duluth for $1,500 per pound.

Violence

Marijuana abuse is not normally tied directly to violent behavior. However, ADAM statistics for Minneapolis reveal that 44 percent of males arrested for violent crimes in 1999 tested positive for marijuana.

Domestic cannabis growers are often heavily armed and commonly use boobytraps and warning devices to protect their cultivation sites from law enforcement authorities and the public. The U.S. Forest Service reports that visitors to public lands may be endangered by the presence of cannabis cultivation sites, which routinely are booby-trapped with explosives, trip-wire firing devices, hanging fishhooks, and punji sticks buried around the cannabis plots. Nationwide, the number of weapons seized during cannabis eradication program operations more than doubled during the 1990s.

Production

The Southwest Border is the primary source area for marijuana available in Minnesota. Local cultivation, particularly indoors, is increasing. Caucasians and OMGs grow cannabis indoors and outdoors in St. Paul. Local cannabis growers are the primary source of marijuana in Duluth, according to the Duluth Police Department.
Transportation

Mexican DTOs are the primary transporters of marijuana into Minnesota. Transportation methods are similar to those used for cocaine and methamphetamine. Parcel post and private vehicles are the primary methods used to convey marijuana to Minnesota. The DEA reports that 40- to 200-pound shipments are being transported into the state from the Southwest Border. Operation Pipeline seizures reported by EPIC for 1999 show that over 1,700 kilograms of marijuana were seized en route to Minnesota from the Southwest Border. Most marijuana in St. Paul comes from Mexico and is primarily transported by Mexican and Jamaican criminal groups with connections to DTOs in Texas and California.

Distribution

Mexican DTOs are the primary wholesale distributors of marijuana in Minnesota. There were six OCDETF investigations into Mexican DTOs’ distribution of marijuana in Minnesota in 1999. Mexican and Jamaican groups are the principal distributors in the St. Paul area. The Ramsey County Sheriff’s Department reports that Mexican criminal groups are the dominant wholesale distributors in the county. African American and Hispanic street gangs are the primary street-level distributors of marijuana. Law enforcement agencies across the state report that gangs dominate the retail drug trade. These gangs survive financially through the distribution and sale of drugs. Street gangs typically sell marijuana and other drugs in low-income areas such as public housing projects. Gang members who sell drugs on the street corners are frequently in their teens or younger.

Other Dangerous Drugs

The other dangerous drugs category includes club drugs, hallucinogens, khat, a stimulant primarily used by the ethnic Somali community, and pharmaceuticals. Club drugs such as MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxyamphetamine) and GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) are becoming increasingly popular, particularly among young people in urban areas and in college towns. Nightclubs and “rave” parties are the primary retail distribution outlets, although many of these drugs are increasingly being distributed in other environments.

Diverted pharmaceuticals are a continuing problem throughout much of the state. Forged prescriptions and theft are the most common means of illegally obtaining prescription drugs. Some of the most commonly diverted pharmaceuticals in Minnesota are Darvocet, methadone, Percocet, Ritalin, Valium, and Vicodin.

Abuse

Club or designer drugs are general terms for synthetic drugs that have become popular with teenagers and young adults who frequent nightclubs and raves. These drugs include MDMA, LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), GHB, and GBL (gamma-butyrolactone) and Rohypnol.
The popularity of these drugs has increased in large part because their hallucinogenic and stimulating effects enhance the rave experience. There is little specific information on club drugs in Minnesota. Many users are experimenting with a variety of club drugs and with club drugs in combination with other drugs such as heroin—an extremely dangerous combination.

MDMA is both a stimulant and hallucinogen. MDMA’s effect usually lasts from 4 to 6 hours, although varying from person to person. If taken in pill or capsule form, the onset of the effect takes approximately 30 to 45 minutes; if snorted, smoked, or injected, the effect is felt more quickly. Immediate physical reactions include increased heart rate, body temperature, and blood pressure as well as nausea and cramping. The full effect is usually attained within an hour after ingestion and includes feelings of well-being and euphoria, as well as anxiety or paranoia.

MDMA taken in high doses can be extremely dangerous. It can cause a marked increase in body temperature leading to muscle breakdown and kidney and cardiovascular system failure. MDMA use may lead to heart attack, stroke, and seizures as reported in some fatal cases at raves. Recent research links MDMA to long-term, possibly permanent, damage to parts of the brain that are critical to thought and memory. There is also evidence that individuals who develop a rash after using MDMA may suffer severe liver damage or other serious side effects. There were five MDMA-related deaths in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area in 2000.

GHB and Rohypnol are often referred to as date rape drugs. They are powerful sedatives and have become a significant problem, particularly on college campuses. GHB is a central nervous system depressant that has been approved in some countries for use as an anesthetic. It is unlawful to produce or distribute GHB in the United States, but recipes and do-it-yourself kits are available on several Internet sites. Because GHB is odorless and colorless, it is virtually undetectable in drinks, which may explain why use of Rohypnol is decreasing and use of GHB is increasing. When even small amounts of these drugs are mixed with alcohol, the victim loses consciousness for several hours. Teenagers and young adults attending rave parties take these drugs to lessen the crash associated with coming down from other drugs. There have been over 5,700 overdoses and 58 deaths associated with GHB in the United States and Canada since 1990. GHB and two closely related drugs, GBL and BD (1,4-butanediol) are growing in popularity in Minnesota. Emergency rooms in Minneapolis/St. Paul reported treating up to five GHB-related overdoses per month in 1999. The Hennepin County Medical Center reports treating about one BD overdose a week in 2000. In April 2000, two men from Farmington were hospitalized after overdosing on GBL.

The abuse of LSD appears to be increasing at least in Minneapolis/St. Paul. LSD-associated DAWN ED mentions rose from 51 in 1998 to 64 in 1999. However, this is still well below the 116 mentions in 1995. Of those in which gender and race were reported, 77 percent were Caucasian males and the remainder were Caucasian females. In 1999, 54 percent were Caucasian males, 30 percent were Caucasian females, and 12 percent were African American males. LSD potency, currently between 20 and 80 micrograms per dosage unit, is significantly lower today than it was in the 1960s when dosages were 100 to 300 micrograms. LSD users experience hallucinations, confusion, suspicion, and anxiety. Flashbacks can occur after a user has stopped taking the drug.

Khat is a stimulant and contains two scheduled substances, cathomine and cathine.

In October 2000, a naked, male teenager under the influence of LSD attacked an Apple Valley police officer responding to a disturbance call. The teen dived into the squad car, scuffled with the officer over his gun, and was shot three times.

Cathinone is a Schedule I drug and is present only in the fresh leaves of a flowering shrub indigenous to East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Cathinone converts to the considerably less potent cathine in about 48 hours. Most users chew the leaves, though they sometimes smoke khat or brew it in tea. Individuals in all age brackets abuse diverted prescription drugs, but increases in abuse among youth and young adults pose the greatest concern. Pharmaceuticals, which are generally perceived as harmless, are becoming more popular among young people. Most young abusers will take any available pharmaceutical, without knowing exactly what it is.

Availability

The availability of club drugs in Minnesota is increasing, particularly in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. Law enforcement officials seized about 30,000 MDMA pills in the first half of 2000. The largest single seizure was 1,000 pills, seized by the Anoka-Hennepin Drug Task Force. There were eight MDMA submissions, totaling 2,500 grams, to the St. Paul crime laboratory in the first half of 2000. This compares with 2.9 grams submitted in 1999, 0 in 1998, and 6.9 in 1997. GHB and related solvents GBL and BD are also appearing more frequently in Minnesota. GHB and BD are sold as nutritional supplements and industrial solvents and are widely available from Internet sites. In March 2000, law enforcement officers arrested a Woodbury man in possession of over 4,000 doses of GBL. LSD availability appears to be increasing. State drug task forces seized 5,328 dosage units in 1999, an increase of nearly 14 percent over 1998, and the most since 1996. Task force LSD arrests increased from 44 in 1998 to 73 in 1999. LSD is primarily sold as blotter acid, but the Butler Center for Research reports that LSD on soda crackers was sold in the Minneapolis area for the first time in 2000. Khat first appeared in Minnesota in 1997, and its use has become more common as the Somali population has increased to an estimated 15,000. Khat is primarily consumed by ethnic Somali communities in the state, most of which are in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. The Minneapolis Police Department reports the appearance of its use in the general community. An average bundle of khat, containing 25 to 30 stems, sells for $40 to $50 and represents a day’s supply. Forged prescriptions and theft are the most common methods used to obtain pharmaceuticals illegally. Patients will often steal a doctor’s prescription pad and forge prescriptions. Unscrupulous physicians write prescriptions for fictitious patients, send them to a local pharmacy, then pick up the prescriptions themselves. Prescription drugs are also stolen from pharmacies and medical facilities. According to law enforcement sources, healthcare workers are responsible for most pharmaceutical thefts from medical facilities.

Violence

With the exception of the date rape drugs, particularly GHB, club drugs are not normally associated with violent crime. There are no known documented cases of the use of GHB as a date rape drug in Minnesota, but cases have been documented in Boston, Detroit, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Seattle. It is odorless, tasteless, and virtually undetectable if slipped into a drink.
Medical and law enforcement experts say victims can lose consciousness within 20 minutes of ingesting GHB and often have no memory of following events. It is difficult to trace, usually leaving the body within 24 hours.

Production

The production of club drugs occurs in the United States and foreign countries. According to DEA, at least 80 percent of all the MDMA in the world is produced in laboratories in western Europe, primarily in the Netherlands and Belgium. MDMA is pressed into pill form with a variety of recognizable logos such as the Mitsubishi three diamonds or the Nike swoosh to identify various brands. MDMA submissions to the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension’s Forensic Science Laboratory in 1999 included logos bearing Smurf, butterfly, panda bear, LOVE, 007, and the numeral “1” with 3 stars. LSD typically has been produced in laboratories in northern California. There are no known incidents of LSD production in Minnesota.

Transportation

Most MDMA is transported to Minnesota from the Netherlands and Belgium by mail. Federal law enforcement officials seized 1,500 kilograms of MDMA linked to these countries in 1999. Nearly one-third of the MDMA seized was being smuggled in mail parcels. Of this amount, 1 to 2 percent was destined for Minnesota according to the DEA. Minnesota’s largest seizure (19,000 pills) occurred in November 1999 when USCS officials at the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport intercepted a mail parcel originating in Amsterdam.


Distribution

Israeli and Russian organized crime syndicates supplied by Western European producers have become the primary wholesale distributors of MDMA in the United States. These criminal groups work closely with Israeli and Russian midlevel wholesale distributors in large metropolitan areas in the United States. GHB is usually distributed locally by young Caucasian males who produce it. Licit production of GHB occurs only in Europe.

The widespread publication of recipes and the ease with which precursor chemicals can be obtained make the production of GHB an increasing problem. Only two chemicals, GBL and sodium hydroxide, are needed to produce GHB. Most illegally produced GHB is in liquid form. The powdered form of GHB is much more difficult to synthesize, and it is usually converted into a powder only when it is commercially manufactured.

Nationally, nightclubs and rave parties are the primary retail distribution outlets for MDMA and other club drugs. Retail dealers are typically suburban Caucasian teenagers who are involved
in the rave scene. In the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, there are indications that Asian criminal groups are becoming the primary distributors of MDMA. The St. Paul Police Department reports that Vietnamese street gangs are distributing MDMA obtained from California in St. Paul. The FBI and the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Department report that some Asians are selling MDMA at the retail level. In February 2001, the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Department arrested two young Asian males and seized about 3,000 MDMA pills from a St. Paul apartment.

Pharmaceuticals are not normally distributed in the same manner as other illicit drugs; in fact, most are consumed by the same individuals responsible for diverting the drugs. However, there are known instances of illegally obtained prescription drugs being retailed in the state. Individuals on methadone maintenance programs sometimes sell their daily dosage immediately after receiving it. Teenagers and young adults often distribute stolen prescription drugs at raves and other venues. Dishonest healthcare providers sell stolen pharmaceuticals to addicts and other retail distributors.

**Outlook**

Cocaine availability will probably continue at current levels, and abuse will likely show a modest increase. Abuse statistics have shown a gradual upward movement for several years, and there are no indications of restricted availability of cocaine in the state’s population centers.

Greater profit margins, lack of competition, and law enforcement pressure will ensure continued migration of gang members into Minnesota’s midsized and smaller cities. Cities in Northern and Central Minnesota have begun to experience the gang-related problems usually associated with large urban areas. This trend is likely to continue.

Methamphetamine will remain in abundant supply, but the current low purity of Mexican methamphetamine probably will lead to the establishment of more laboratories in the state and may push the expanding customer base to look for a source other than the Mexican DTOs. The first seizure of Asian methamphetamine pills in Minnesota in March 2001 may presage an attempt by Asian criminal groups to expand into the Minnesota drug market. The introduction of higher purity methamphetamine by local laboratory operators or Asian criminal groups could cause a reversal of the recently declining overdoses and deaths.

Heroin abuse likely will continue to increase gradually. A sudden dramatic increase in abuse probably will be precluded by the following factors: the limited availability of heroin, the historically low heroin abuse rates in Minnesota, and the fact that the user population is aging, in spite of the influx of new, young users.

Marijuana abuse likely will continue to increase. Statistics show that its use is climbing among youth and that marijuana is increasingly available. Most of the marijuana will continue to come from Mexico.

Club drugs such as MDMA and GHB are becoming a threat in Minnesota, especially among adolescents and young adults. The popularity of these drugs will continue to increase, especially in college towns. Increases in the number of raves will provide adolescents and young adults with easy access to these and a variety of illicit drugs. The number of emergency room and treatment admissions probably will increase as the popularity of these drugs continues to grow.
This page intentionally left blank.
Sources

State and Regional Sources

Bemidji Police Department
Bloomington Police Department
Chicago High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area
Duluth Police Department
Hazelden Foundation
    Butler Center for Research
Hennepin County Adult Detention Center
Hennepin County Sheriff’s Office
Lao Family Community of Minnesota
Lac qui Parle Sheriff’s Department
Maplewood Police Department
Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support
Minneapolis Police Department
    Narcotics Unit
Minneapolis Star Tribune
Minnesota Multijurisdictional Narcotics Task Forces
Plymouth Police Department
Ramsey County Sheriff’s Department
Rochester (Minnesota) Post-Bulletin
Rochester Police Department
Rock County Sheriff’s Office
St. Paul Police Department
State of Minnesota

   Department of Children, Families and Learning
   Department of Human Services
   Department of Public Safety
      Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
         Forensic Science Laboratory
      Office of Drug Policy and Violence Prevention
   Minnesota Gang Strike Force
   Sentencing Guidelines Commission

WCCO Channel 4000 (Minneapolis)

Wright County Sheriff’s Office

National and International Sources

Associated Press

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

   National Institutes of Health
      National Institute on Drug Abuse
      Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

U.S. Department of Justice

   Drug Enforcement Administration
      Chicago
      Dallas
   El Paso Intelligence Center
      Operation Jetway
      Headquarters
      Minneapolis

Federal Bureau of Investigation

   Minneapolis

National Institute of Justice

U.S. Attorney’s Office

   District of Minnesota
   Northern District of Illinois
U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics

U.S. Customs Service

    Office of Information and Technology

U.S. State Department

**Other Sources**

This page intentionally left blank.