Drug Trends in Iowa
Evolving Health, Safety & Response Issues

Governor’s Office of Drug Control Policy
June 2021

Vision: Safe & healthy Iowans.
Mission: To coordinate substance use related criminal justice resourcing & policy development.
Changes & Emerging Challenges: Overview

PRODUCTS (DEA labs identified 1 new substance about every 3 weeks in 2020)
- Delivery/Consumption Systems: Vaping (Nicotine, THC, Heroin, etc.), smoking, oral ingestion, IV
- Forms: THC & CBD oils, waxes, edibles (+ delta-8/10 THC, CBG, etc.); Smokable hemp; & Synthetics
- Mixtures: Heroin + Fentanyl, Meth, Marijuana; Cocktails
- Distribution: Mail & Shipping Services

POTENCY
- Alcohol: Concentrations (craft beers)
- Nicotine: Levels (vaping pods)
- THC: Flower + Concentrations (oils, waxes, edibles)
- Meth: Purities (nearly 100% “ice”)
- Fentanyl (illicit), et al.: Extremely lethal

POLICY
- Laws (vary by state): Medical & legal marijuana (THC &/or CBD); Hemp; delta-8 THC, et al.; Psychedelic Mushrooms (psilocybin) & Ecstasy (MDMA); Opioids; Kratom; Smoking & Vaping…
Snapshot of U.S. Drug Use, by States
Map: Rates of 12+ Current (Past Month) Illicit Drug Use

Iowa ranks:

45th in current illicit drug use (9.17% vs. 12.34% US)
48th in current marijuana use (6.70% vs. 10.80% US)
44th in current cocaine use (1.45% vs. 2.00% US)
39th in heroin use (yearly) (0.25% vs. 0.28% US)
48th in the rate of drug OD deaths (9.6 vs. 20.7 US per 100,000)
5th in pain reliever misuse (yearly) (4.14% vs. 3.58% US)
15th in current tobacco use (25.16% vs. 21.28% US)
8th in current binge drinking (27.92% vs. 24.21% US)
13th in meth use (yearly) (1.11% vs. 0.70% US)

National Survey on Drug Use & Health, 2017/2018; CDC, 2018
Trends in Iowans’ Substance Use
Substance Use Disorder Treatment Admissions & Iowa Youth Survey

Over 80% of state-licensed substance use disorder treatment providers switched to “tele-treatment” during the pandemic.

Primary Substance of Iowans 12+ in SUD Treatment
- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Meth
- Other
- Heroin
- Cocaine

Past 30-Day Substance Use by Iowa 6, 8 & 11 graders
- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Other Drug
- Marijuana
- Rx
- Meth
- E-Cigs

45% of referrals via justice system vs. 52% years ago.

Iowa Department of Public Health, 2019
Iowa has one of the lowest overall rates of drug OD deaths (48th in 2018) in the U.S., but one of the highest rates of increase of drug OD deaths (4th in 2019-2020).

In 2019, U.S. drug OD deaths reversed a 2018 decline & increased 4.6% to 70,980, or over 194 lives per day.

2020 Iowa drug OD deaths rose 19% (+35% for opioids, NC for psychostimulants) vs. 2019.
IDPH, 2021
Substance-Involved Deaths in Iowa
Alcohol, Opioids (including powerful combos) & Psychostimulants (e.g., Meth)

A record high 34,661 Iowans visited hospital emergency departments in 2019 for injuries in which drugs or alcohol were a causal or contributing factor.

OTC analgesics (acetaminophen, ibuprofen, etc.) were involved in 57% more suicides/attempts in 2018 vs. 2000, according to poison control center reports.

Iowa deaths involving opioids & stimulants rose 13% 2019-2020 (46-52).
IDPH, 2021

Iowa Department of Public Health, 2020
Drug & Mixed Drug/Alcohol-Related Traffic Deaths

U.S. drug-impaired fatal crashes outnumber alcohol-impaired fatalities (44%-38%). Marijuana was most-cited drug in 2016 fatal crashes: 41.1% in U.S. & 51% in Iowa.

2016 GHSA & 2016 IDOT


CDC/SAMHSA, 2019

Top 3 drugs found in Iowa OWI-related tests (besides alcohol):
1. THC-33%
2. Amphetamines-19%
3. Benzodiazapines-18%

Iowa DCI Lab, 2020

Iowa Departments of Transportation & Public Safety, et al., 2020
Iowa Drug-Related Traffic Fatalities
2018 by Drug Type (not including alcohol-only)

Some cases involve multiple substances

Drugged driving is more complicated than drunk driving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DRUGGED DRIVING</th>
<th>DRUNK DRIVING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number:</td>
<td>Hundreds of drugs</td>
<td>Alcohol is alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use by Drivers, Presence in Crashes:</td>
<td>Limited Data</td>
<td>Abundant Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use by Drivers:</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
<td>Decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impairment:</td>
<td>Varies by type</td>
<td>Well-documented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crash Risk:</td>
<td>Varies by type</td>
<td>Precise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beliefs &amp; Attitudes:</td>
<td>No strong attitudes – public indifferent</td>
<td>Socially unacceptable</td>
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Cannabinoids & THC
Stimulants (Amphetamines, Meth, Cocaine)
Opioids, Narcotics
Depressants
Hallucinogens
Others

Iowa Department of Transportation 2019
Iowa Drug-Related Child Abuse

Confirmed/Founded Cases: Presence of Illegal Drugs in Child’s System

(Caution advised interpreting trends due to protocol changes in 2014 & 2017)

Iowa Department of Human Services, 2021
Iowa “Drug-Related” Prison Admissions

Primary Drug Involved

In Iowa 60.2% of state prisoners & 42.1% of probationers/parolees have an active substance abuse treatment need.

Iowa Department of Corrections, 2020

58% of state prisoners & 63% of jail inmates used drugs vs. 5% of general population.

USDOJ, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2017

Iowa Justice Data Warehouse, 2020
The U.S. workforce drug positivity rate hit a 16 year high in 2019, with increases in the Midwest in cocaine, meth & marijuana.

- Meth: Iowa 1.6% vs. US 1.1%
- Cocaine: Iowa 0.16% vs. US 0.26%
- Marijuana: Iowa 1.6% vs. US 2.5%
- Opiates: Iowa 0.2% vs. US 0.22%
- Overall: Iowa: 3.9% vs. US 4.5%

2020 Quest Diagnostics
Alcohol & Tobacco/Nicotine
U.S. alcohol consumption increased 14% overall in May-June 2020 vs. May-June 2020.  
Pollard, et al., 2020

National Survey on Drug Use & Health, 2018/2019
Current Binge Drinking
Last 30-Days

60% of those surveyed report drinking more than before the pandemic. 45% cite stress, particularly women.

National Survey on Drug Use & Health, 2018/2019
Iowa distilled spirits sales rose 8.1% in FY20 vs. FY19.

Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division, 2020
Iowa Alcohol-Related Deaths
As a Contributing Factor

The rate of all fatal traffic crashes seemingly has returned to a pre-pandemic pace, following a 23% drop early in 2020.
Iowa Department of Transportation, 2020

Among those in U.S. who died violently, 41% had BAC & 28% had BAC of .08 or >.
CSTE/CDC, 2021
Iowa Youth Cigarette vs. E-Cigarette Use
Last 30-Days

24.7% of US 12th graders report currently vaping nicotine in 2020 vs. 11% in 2017.
12.2% of US 12th graders report currently vaping marijuana in 2020 vs. 4.9% in 2017.
Monitoring the Future Survey, 2020

Following a 139% increase in 2019, E-cigarette “exposure” calls decreased 44% in 2020 (51 vs. 91 in 2019).
IPCC, 2020

22%
Marijuana in Iowa
Health & Public Safety Perspectives

“Medical”
“Extracts”  “CBD & THC”  “Concentrates”
“Cannabis”  “Hemp”
“Recreational”
Marijuana Laws Across the U.S.

9 of 10 states with highest past month usage legalized or decriminalized marijuana. NCSL/NSDUH, 2019

Illegal per federal law (except hemp)

National Conference of State Legislatures, 2021
U.S. Marijuana Use
Current Use (Past Month) by Age Group

Iowans’ past month rate of marijuana use is 3rd lowest in U.S. among 12+ (6.7%) & 9th lowest among youth 12-17 (5.71%).
National Survey on Drug Use & Health, 2018-2019

Marijuana is primary drug for 77% of Iowa juveniles in treatment.
Iowa Department of Public Health, 2018

Cannabis use disorder among U.S. 12-17 year olds was 25% higher in “legal” states.
NYU & Columbia Universities, 2019

Past month U.S. marijuana use in last 4 years grew 31%, with largest increase among adults, & 12-17 year old marijuana use disorders rose 20%.
National Survey on Drug Use & Health, 2019
Iowa Youth Attitudes about Marijuana
Lower Perceived Risk Coincides with Higher U.S. Rates of Use

Nearly 1 in 4 Iowa 11th graders perceive no risk smoking marijuana once or more a week, a view shared by 18% of Iowa 6th graders.

33% of U.S. teens think smoking marijuana & driving is legal.  
Liberty Mutual Insurance & SADD, 2017

U.S. high school seniors are now ~3x as likely to report past month marijuana use (21.1%) vs. cigarettes (7.5%).  
Monitoring the Future Survey, 2020

Teens are more likely than young adults to develop addiction to marijuana or Rx drugs within 12 months after trying them.  
NIDA/JAMA, 2021

Iowa Youth Survey, 2018
Marijuana’s Increasing Potency
Average THC & CBD Levels in U.S. Marijuana Samples

Odds of psychotic disorder were 3x higher among daily cannabis users & 5x higher among high-potency cannabis users vs. never users.

The Lancet Psychiatry/Di Forti, et al., 2019

THCA is a cannabis precursor that when heated converts to higher levels of THC.

Iowa DCI Lab, 2019

A newly discovered cannabis compound (THCP) shows in a lab to potentially be 30X more potent than THC.

CNN, January 2020

University of Mississippi Marijuana Project, 2021
Concentrates
Less is More…THC

“Ear Wax”

Butane Hash Oil (BHO)

“Budder”

“Diamonds”

Hash Oil Capsules

“Green Crack” wax

“Shatter”

Des Moines area man arrested in Nebraska with hundreds of vape cartridges filled with THC oil
Marijuana-Related Hospital ED Visits
Marijuana Use as Causal or Contributing Factor

U.S. workplace drug positivity rates for THC surged 118% 2012-2020 in legalization states vs. 58% in non-legalization states. Quest, 2021

~14.1% of All Drug & Alcohol Related Visits

(*Reporting methods changed in 2015, resulting in a new baseline in 2016.)

Iowa Department of Public Health, 2020
Medical Derivatives & Extracts of Cannabis

Marinol, Syndros (Dronabinol) & Cesamet (Nabilone): 
FDA-approved synthetic cannabinoids—containing THC & CBD—legally available as prescription pills to treat cancer chemotherapy nausea & appetite loss.

Sativex (mouth spray): 
A product with 2 cannabinoids extracted from the cannabis plant failed FDA-authorized tests for cancer pain, but continues undergoing clinical study for spasticity & other treatments.

Epidiolex (oral liquid) 
Contains the non-psychoactive cannabis extract Cannabidiol (CBD). Recently approved by the FDA & reclassified as a Schedule V controlled substance by the DEA after clinical trials, this Rx product is now available in pharmacies.

Iowa “Medical Cannabidiol” (mCBD): 
State law authorizes products regulated by the Iowa Department of Public Health to be used by qualified patients for eligible conditions.
Other Cannabis Products (ABCs of THC, CBD, et al.)

February 2020

• “The FDA has approved only one CBD product, a prescription drug product to treat two rare, severe forms of epilepsy.

• It is currently illegal to market CBD by adding it to a food or labeling it as a dietary supplement.
• The FDA has seen only limited data about CBD safety and these data point to real risks that need to be considered before taking CBD for any reason.
• Some CBD products are marketed with unproven medical claims and are of unknown quality.”

Recent Iowa Legislation

• 2019: Iowa Hemp Act legalizes products with less than 0.3% THC content.
• 2020: Iowa Hemp Act amended to legalize “consumable hemp” products (e.g., CBD) as long as such products are not inhaled (administrative rules pending).

***Other/Newer Cannabinoids: THC-A, delta-8 & delta-10 THC, CBG, CBG-A…

2020 FDA review found less than half of CBD products contained the amount of CBD listed on the label, plus other labeling inaccuracies.
2017 Penn. Univ. School of Medicine study found ~70% of CBD products sold online are mislabeled, posing potential harm to consumers.
Iowa Meth Labs

1,500

(2004)

Gold = “One Pot” Labs

Iowa Department of Public Safety, 2020
Iowa Meth Purity
Crime Lab Fiscal Year Averages

Iowa Department of Public Safety, 2020
Iowa Meth Trends: Use vs. Production

Iowa has 45th highest rate of illicit drug use & 8th highest rate of meth use disorder treatment admissions in U.S.
National Survey on Drug Use & Health, 2018-2019 & Treatment Episode Data System, 2017

Iowa Departments of Public Health & Public Safety, 2020
Rising Tide of Meth in U.S.

Oct. 14, 2020: Largest domestic meth seizure in DEA history—2,224 lbs.—announced in LA.
Iowa Psychostimulant-Related (OD) Deaths

As a Contributing Factor

Meth supplied to Iowa appears to have returned to a high volume level, after drug smuggling pipelines briefly slowed at the start of the pandemic.

Iowa Department of Public Safety, et al., 2020

Iowa Department of Public Health, 2021
Opioids

• Rx
• Heroin
• Illicit Synthetics
  (fentanyl analogs, etc.)
Top 10 Iowa Rx Controlled Substances
CII-CIVs per Iowa’s Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) in 2019

- Hydrocodone-19% (opioid)
- Tramadol-16% (opioid)
- Oxycodone-8% (opioid)
- Alprazolam-11% (anti-anxiety)
- Methylphenidate-6% (stimulant)
- Zolpidem-5% (sedative)
- Clonazepam-8% (anti-anxiety)
- Lorazepam-8% (anti-anxiety)
- Dextroamphetamine-11% (stimulant)
- Oxycodone-8% (opioid)

In 2019 Iowa C2-4 Rxs & doses dropped to lowest levels since 2013 (down 3.5% & 8.6% respectively). Iowa Board of Pharmacy/PMP, 2020
Iowa Rates of Opioid Rx & Treatment
By County in 2018 & 2017, Respectively

Iowa Hepatitis C cases have risen 220% since 2000, due in part to IV drug use.
Iowa Department of Public Health, 2018

Top 3 categories of “exposure” calls: (1) Analgesics; (2) Anti-Depressants; (3) Sedatives/Hypnotics/Anti-Psychotics.
Iowa Poison Control Center, 2020

Iowa Department of Public Health/Board of Pharmacy, 2020
Illicit Synthetic Opioids: Less is More

Often mixed with heroin, illicit synthetic opioids (e.g., fentanyl analogs)—in tiny amounts—can be much more lethal vs. heroin.

Iowa’s 1st Carfentanil OD death per SME: February 2017
Heroin, Fentanyl & Illicit Synthetic Opioids
Law Enforcement Seizure Cases per Iowa’s Crime Lab

Iowa’s crime lab reports counterfeit oxycodone tablets with carfentanil & cases of illicit opioids mixed with cocaine, meth, ketamine, caffeine, etc.

Iowa synthetic narcotic deaths rose 59% 2019-2020 (101-161).
IDPH, 2021

Iowa Department of Public Safety, 2021
Iowa Opioid OD Deaths
Primary Cause of Deaths vs. Contributing Factor (Related) Deaths

- Iowa all drug OD death rate: 9.6 per 100,000, 48th in U.S. (CDC, 2018)
- 91 Americans died of ODs related to the herbal drug “kratom” during an 18-month period ending December 2017, including 1 in Iowa. (CDC/FDA, 2019)
- Iowa’s opioid OD death rate among youth (0-24) rose 180% 2019-2020 (10-28). (IDPH, 2021)
Iowa Opioid OD & Addiction Tools

Naloxone Doses by EMS, Good Samaritan Law & MAT

(Reporting process changed in 2015.)

Iowa Department of Public Health, Emergency & Trauma Services, 2020
Iowa “Take-Back” Initiative
Amount (in Pounds) of Rx Drugs Collected

Total collected in 2 events/year since start (2010):
Iowa = 86+ tons (172,625 pounds)
US = 7,262 tons (14.5+ million pounds)

Next National Prescription Drug Take Back Day:
Fall 2021 (Date TBA)!

(*April 2020 Event Canceled Due to Pandemic)
Iowa Permanent Rx “Take Back” Sites
Controlled Prescription Drug Disposal Locations

Search: Iowa Rx Takebacks

398 Sites Statewide (273 Pharmacies & 125 Law Enforcement Centers) vs. 47 in January 2016

[imap of Iowa showingRx Takebacks sites]
Youth Substance Use 40+ Year Trends
Current Use (past 30 days) Among U.S. 12th Graders

- Alcohol: 68.2%-33.6%
- Cigarettes: 36.7%-7.5%
- Marijuana: 27.1%-21.1%
- Mj Vape: 4.9%-12.2%
- Any Vape: 16.6%-28.2%

Monitoring the Future, 1975-2020