

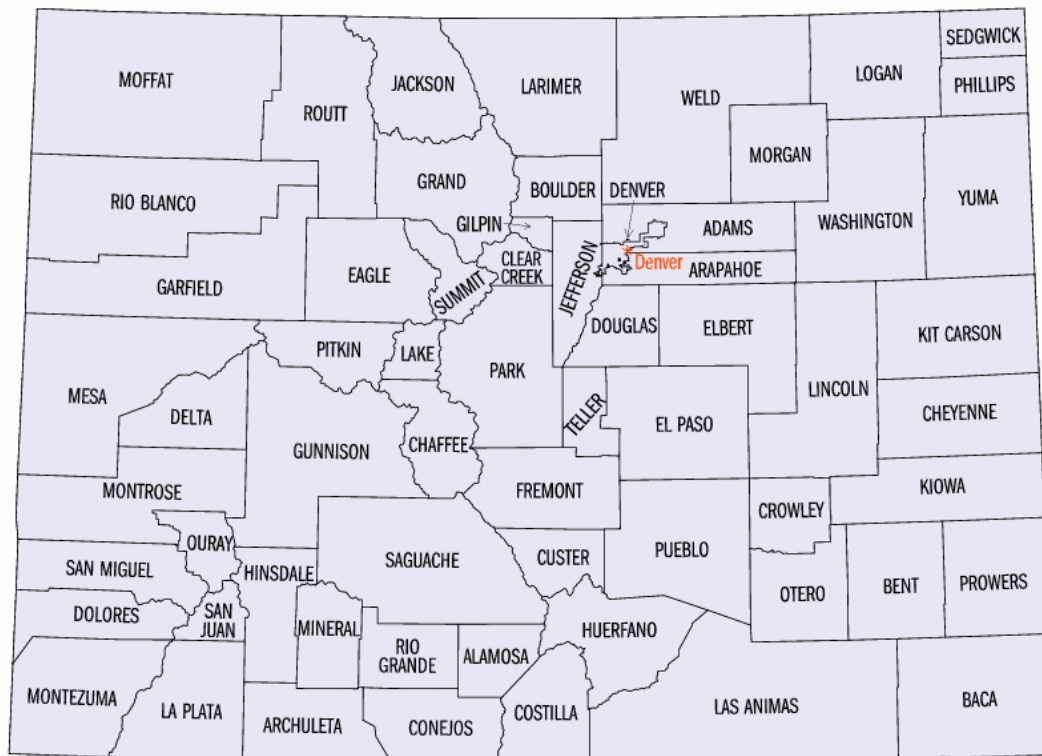
Office of National Drug Control Policy

Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse

Denver, Colorado

Profile of Drug Indicators

June 2004



ONDCP Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse staff compiled this profile by using the most recent data available from open sources. The data presented are as accurate as the sources from which they were drawn. The information contained in this profile should not be used to rank or compare States or jurisdictions, due to differences in data collection and reporting methods.

Denver, Colorado

The following profile contains information on demographics, political figures, programs, crime, drug use, drug trafficking, and enforcement statistics.

Demographics

- Population: 547,696 (2002 American Community Survey)¹; 554,636 (2000 Census)²
- Race/Ethnicity (2002 American Community Survey): 49.6% white, 10.2% black/African American, 0.4% American Indian/Alaska Native, 3.0% Asian, 0.0% Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, 0.0% other, 2.2% two or more races, 34.6% Hispanic/Latino origin³
- Denver is located in Denver County.

Political

- Mayor: John W. Hickenlooper⁴
- City Council (Districts 1-11, respectively): Rick Garcia; Jeanne Faatz; Rosemary E. Rodriguez; Peggy Lehmann; Marcia Johnson; Charlie Brown; Kathleen MacKenzie; Elbra Wedgeworth; Judy H. Montero; Jeanne Robb; and Michael B. Hancock (At-Large: Carol Boigon and Doug Linkhart)⁵
- Denver Chief of Police: Gerald R. Whitman⁶
- Denver Manager of Safety (Sheriff): Al LaCabe⁷

Programs/Initiatives

- High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)⁸
Designated in 1996, the Rocky Mountain HIDTA is responsible for areas in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. This HIDTA is responsible for 17 Colorado counties, including Denver.
- Denver Drug Strategy Coordinator's Office⁹
Created in August 2000, this office serves the residents of Denver and offers resources on substance abuse and addiction. The primary focus of the office is to educate the community in the areas of substance abuse, addiction, prevention, intervention, treatment, transition and recovery.
- Denver Demand Treatment¹⁰
The Mayor's Office on Drug Policy, along with local coalition leaders and organizations, is working to expand screening, brief intervention, and referral services in the Denver Health System and other hospitals. The organizations monitor policy to assure support for increasing access to quality treatment.
- Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse's Striving Together to Achieve Rewarding Tomorrows (CASASTART)¹¹
CASASTART is a Denver school-based program geared toward elementary and middle school students who have been identified as being at a high risk for substance abuse and delinquency. Services are provided to youth to help expand their opportunities for positive interactions at school, with their friends, and in their community.

- Life Skills Training¹²
This substance abuse prevention program, conducted by the Denver public schools, provides upper elementary and middle school students with personal and social skills to resist peer pressure to use drugs.
- Social Norms Project¹³
This program, conducted in Denver high schools, promotes healthy behaviors and expels misconceptions about the extent of drug use by youth.

Federal Funding

- Drug-Free Communities Support Program grantees in Denver:¹⁴
 - FY 2003, FY 2002, and FY 2001: no Denver grantees
 - FY 2000: \$99,900 to Connecting Colorado Prevention Coalition
 - FY 1999: \$99,160 to Adolescent Counseling Exchange
- Office of Weed and Seed¹⁵
There is 1 Weed and Seed site in Denver.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) FY 2003 Discretionary Funds received in Denver:¹⁶
 - Center for Mental Health Services: \$6,217,154
 - Center for Substance Abuse Prevention: \$545,044
 - Center for Substance Abuse Treatment: \$4,059,030
- FY 2003 Office of Justice Programs and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services grant amounts received in Denver:¹⁷
 - discretionary: \$68,327,166
 - formula: \$25,305,347
- Office of Justice Programs Drug Court Grant:
 - FY 2003: \$499,627 to Denver Juvenile Court¹⁸
 - FY 2002: no Denver grantees¹⁹
- Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Methamphetamine Grant:
 - FY 2003: no Denver grantees²⁰
 - FY 2002: no Denver grantees²¹
- There were no Denver recipients of the FY 2001 Housing and Urban Development Low Income Housing Drug Elimination Grant.²²

Crime and Drug-Related Crime

- Data from 2003 indicate that 38.3% of Denver adult male arrestees tested positive for cocaine at arrest.²³

Percent of Adult Arrestees Testing Positive for Drugs, Denver, 2003

	Males	Females
Cocaine	38.3%	52.5%
Opiates	6.8	6.1
Marijuana	42.3	34.3
Methamphetamine	4.7	5.0
Any drug	66.4	69.1
Multiple drugs	23.3	24.9

- Additional Denver arrestee drug use data for 2003 indicate that 51.9% of the adult male arrestees used marijuana within the past year. Among those reporting past year marijuana use, the average number of days the drug was used in the past month was 9.6 days.²⁴

Past Drug Use, Adult Male Arrestees, Denver, 2003

Use	Crack Cocaine	Powder Cocaine	Marijuana	Meth.	Heroin
Past 7 days	16.2%	8.8%	39.3%	4.0%	5.1%
Past 30 days	18.1%	10.8%	45.3%	4.7%	5.3%
Past year	22.3%	16.5%	51.9%	8.9%	6.1%
Average # of days in month	7.3	4.8	9.6	6.1	14.5

- During 2003, 45% of adult female arrestees in Denver reported past year use of marijuana. Among the female arrestees who reported past year use of marijuana, the average number of days the substance was used in the past month was 8.8 days²⁵

Past Drug Use, Adult Female Arrestees, Denver, 2003

Use	Crack Cocaine	Powder Cocaine	Marijuana	Meth.	Heroin
Past 7 days	32.4%	5.9%	34.6%	4.8%	4.3%
Past 30 days	36.2%	8.0%	39.4%	7.4%	4.8%
Past year	39.7%	14.8%	45.0%	10.7%	8.5%
Average # of days in month	9.9	5.1	8.8	6.4	9.9

- Preliminary data indicate that there were 63 murders known to police in Denver during 2003. This is up from 51 murders in 2002.²⁶ During 2001, there were 45 murders known to police in Denver.²⁷ This is an increase over the 32 murders during 2000.²⁸

Number of Index Offenses Known to Police, Denver, 2000-2003

Offense	2000	2001	2002	2003
Murder/non-negligent mansl.	32	45	51	63
Forcible rape	296	317	321	304
Robbery	1,039	1,250	1,191	1421
Aggravated assault	1,518	1,462	1,541	1743
Burglary	4,983	5,642	6,009	7097
Larceny-theft	12,842	14,621	15,380	14839
Motor vehicle theft	5,592	6,935	7,442	7128
Arson	356	345	272	228

- Drug arrests more than doubled between 1991 and 1995 in Denver and peaked in 1998. Drug arrests have since declined, although the number of drug arrests in 2001 was double the number made 10 years earlier.²⁹

- Between 1996 and 2000, Denver police made drug arrests at a rate of 1,234 per 100,000 city residents (more than twice the national average). The majority of the drug arrests (93%) were for possession.³⁰
- Between 1996 and 2000, nearly 1,000 violent crimes and 7,200 property crimes linked to alcohol and drugs were committed each year in Denver.³¹
- There are nearly 10,000 gang members documented in the Denver area, with an average of 1,500 new members added each year.³²

Drugs

- **Cocaine**
Small quantities of crack cocaine are produced locally and larger quantities come preprocessed from Mexico. Users tend to be white or black and adults over age 30. Hispanic users of powder cocaine are overrepresented relative to the general population.³³ In the 3rd quarter of FY 2003, cocaine sold for \$16,000-\$19,000/kilogram and \$700-\$1,000/ounce in the Denver Metro area with purity ranging from 50% to 90%. Crack ounce prices remain relatively stable at \$650-\$1,000 while “rock” prices have increased from \$10-\$20 to \$25-\$50 in Denver.³⁴
- **Heroin**
Mexican black tar and Mexican brown heroin are widely available in Denver. The predominate user group consists of older white males who live in the central city, although suburban user groups are emerging. The most common form of ingestion is injecting. Young adults also use heroin and do so by snorting and smoking it.³⁵ One ounce of Mexican heroin at 40% pure typically costs \$2,000-\$3,000. One gram of heroin that is 8-64% pure costs \$100-\$150.³⁶
- **Marijuana**
The increase of high-quality BC bud has contributed to an increased THC level of marijuana in Denver. BC bud sells for \$700-\$1,000/ounce.³⁷ Locally produced sinsemilla sold for \$1,000-\$3,000/ounce and \$50-\$200/gram in 2002.³⁸
- **Methamphetamine**
Methamphetamine is widely available in the Denver area. There has been an increase in the number of small, local methamphetamine labs in the area.³⁹ The availability of “ice,” methamphetamine that is nearly 100% pure, has increased in Denver.⁴⁰ The DEA reports that methamphetamine street prices are stable at \$80-\$125/gram, \$700-\$1,000/ounce, and \$4,500-\$7,500/pound.⁴¹
- **Club Drugs**
The use of club drugs, especially MDMA but also dextromethorphan, ketamine, and GHB, continues to increase in Denver.⁴² MDMA sells for \$10-\$25/pill in Denver. GHB and ketamine are reported to be emerging problems in the area.⁴³ GHB sells for \$5-\$10/capful.⁴⁴
- **Other Drugs**
The abuse of OxyContin continues to emerge in Denver.⁴⁵

Juveniles

- During 2000, 11.2% of juvenile male detainees and 11.5% of juvenile female detainees tested positive for methamphetamine use in Denver.⁴⁶

Enforcement

- As of October 2002, there were 1,778 full-time law enforcement employees in Denver (1,451 officers and 327 civilians).⁴⁷
- Denver Police Department, Gang Bureau⁴⁸
The Denver Gang Bureau strives to monitor gang activity in order to prevent gang motivated crimes from occurring. They also regularly seize large quantities of narcotics.

Trafficking and Seizures

- Mexican poly-drug trafficking groups control the majority of cocaine distribution through Hispanic, white, and African American distribution groups. Supplies of crack cocaine come from street gangs in Los Angeles and Chicago.⁴⁹
- The majority of heroin sales take place in the lower downtown area of Denver. Mexican Nationals control the street level heroin market in the form of small autonomous distribution cells. Gang related crimes are associated with the sale of heroin.⁵⁰
- According to the Denver DEA, large supplies of marijuana are trafficked from Mexico by Mexican poly-drug trafficking organizations through bordering states, such as Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The marijuana is hidden in vehicles and is transported in pound to multi-pound quantities.⁵¹
- GHB and its analogs are occasionally seized during routine traffic stops and at rave parties.⁵²
- Methamphetamine seizures in Denver almost doubled from 111 pounds in 1999 to 212 pounds in 2000.⁵³

Amount of Drugs Seized (in Pounds), Denver, 1999-2000

Drug Seized	1999	2000
Powder cocaine	526	244
Heroin	25	24
Methamphetamine	111	212
Marijuana	8,227	2,683

- From Fall 2001 to Spring 2002, seizures of methamphetamine lab boxes, especially in motels and hotels, increased in Denver.⁵⁴

Courts

- Drug Courts⁵⁵
As of November 2003, there was 1 drug court in existence for over 2 years and 1 that was recently implemented in Denver. There were no drug courts being planned in Denver at that time.
- An estimated 1,500 Denver residents participate in treatment through the Denver Drug Court each year. In 1995, 19% of participants graduated, while the remaining 81% were sent to prison. The number of participants that graduated has since increased to 75% in 2001.⁵⁶
- During FY 2001, Denver’s City Attorney, District Attorney and County Court spent \$6.7 million on legal matters involving alcohol and drug abuse.⁵⁷

- Drug felony cases in Denver rose from 398 cases in 1986 to 3,107 cases in 1996. This number later declined to 2,265 in 2001.⁵⁸
- From 1994 through 1998, drug felony convictions in Denver doubled, increasing from 1,109 to 2,240. Half of all drug convictions during this period were for possession.⁵⁹
- One reason drug arrests and convictions have increased in Denver is the creation of the Denver Drug Court in 1994. The drug court provides a treatment option for persons who plead guilty or are found guilty on felony drug charges.⁶⁰

Corrections

- The Denver county jail facility has been in existence since 1956, and is the largest single county jail in the Rocky Mountain region. Its daily population averages over 1,900 inmates. County Jail programs include drug and alcohol counseling.⁶¹
- Almost half of felony offenders on probation in Denver need treatment for substance abuse.⁶²
- As of June 2001, Denver residents accounted for 42% of the 3,200 drug offenders incarcerated in Colorado prisons. The drug offense incarceration rate for Denver residents (308 state drug prisoners per 100,000 residents) is more than twice the national average of 125 per 100,000 residents.⁶³
- Sisters In Sober Treatment Empowered in Recovery (SISTERS) Project⁶⁴
The SISTERS Project, operating at the Denver County jail, is a 7-week program for incarcerated women with substance abuse issues. The program can serve 17 women at a time and has served about 230 women over a 3-year period. In addition to the standard therapy for drug and alcohol issues, the program also addresses other issues such as eating disorders, employment, health, mental health and victimization.

Consequences of Use

- During FY 2001, the Denver Health and Hospital Authority (DHHA) spent \$35.9 million on medical care for patients with diagnoses related to smoking, drinking, and other drug abuse. DHHA also spent \$9.1 million on alcohol detoxification and methadone maintenance treatment.⁶⁵
- Denver's rate of new injection drug use (IDU)-related AIDS cases is twice that of the U.S. rate and nearly five times higher than the rest of Colorado.⁶⁶
- From 2000 to 2001, the number of cocaine and crack related calls to the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center more than doubled (from 59 calls in 2000 to 127 calls in 2001).⁶⁷
- In 2001, there were 36 heroin-related calls to the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center compared to 21 calls in 1995.⁶⁸
- Amphetamine related calls to the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center increased dramatically from 1994 (36 calls) to 2001 (581 calls).⁶⁹
- From 1994 to 1998, the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center received 1 or 2 calls a year relating to marijuana. In 1999, the Poison Center received 47. The increase in marijuana related calls continued in 2001 with 97 calls.⁷⁰
- Marijuana emergency department (ED) mentions in Denver increased from 677 in 1999 to 979 in 2001. During 2002, there were 742 marijuana-related ED mentions reported to the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN).⁷¹

Number of ED Drug Mentions, Selected Drugs, Denver, 1999-2002

Selected Drugs	1999	2000	2001	2002
Alcohol in combination	1,709	1,758	1,875	1,575
Cocaine	1,382	1,342	1,343	1,613
Heroin	629	666	769	855
Marijuana	677	817	979	742
Amphetamines	235	334	406	480
Methamphetamine	101	110	98	99
MDMA	15	57	42	33
Ketamine	1	12	11	--
LSD	87	64	43	5
PCP	--	7	7	--
Miscellaneous hallucinogens	27	15	32	21
Rohypnol	0	0	1	0
GHB	71	43	16	15
Inhalants	29	38	35	76
Combinations not tabulated above	--	--	9	8
Total drug abuse episodes	4,814	4,943	5,468	5,266
Total drug abuse mentions	8,222	8,558	9,412	8,745

- During 2002, there were 284 drug-related deaths reported to DAWN by medical examiners (ME) in the Denver metropolitan area (includes Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson Counties).⁷²

Number of ME Drug Mentions, Denver Metropolitan Area, 1998-2002

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Alcohol in combination	61	74	75	99	86
Cocaine	66	82	80	126	108
Heroin/morphine	51	79	66	77	64
Marijuana	3	20	20	31	5
Amphetamines	3	5	9	8	13
Methamphetamine	3	8	10	19	17
Club drugs	--	--	2	4	2
Hallucinogens	--	--	1	--	1
Inhalants	1	--	1	--	1
Narcotic analgesics	40	71	64	106	94
Other analgesics	6	4	16	22	21
Benzodiazepines	11	39	28	55	38
Antidepressants	25	33	37	38	59
All other substances	27	38	68	79	68
Total drug deaths	163	237	242	310	284
Total drug mentions	297	453	477	664	577

- Denver County medical examiners reported a total of 136 drug-related deaths in 2002.⁷³

Number of ME Drug Mentions, Denver County, 1998-2002

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Alcohol in combination	42	52	45	67	60
Cocaine	45	56	57	78	68
Heroin/morphine	35	63	40	52	37
Marijuana	--	--	--	1	--
Amphetamines	1	3	6	7	6
Methamphetamine	1	5	4	11	6
Club drugs	--	--	1	1	1
Hallucinogens	--	--	1	--	1
Inhalants	1	--	--	--	--
Narcotic analgesics	8	28	29	35	23
Other analgesics	3	2	5	3	8
Benzodiazepines	2	16	14	18	13
Antidepressants	14	15	14	11	17
All other substances	11	12	23	12	15
Total drug deaths	84	135	123	147	136
Total drug mentions	163	252	239	296	255

Treatment

- Approximately 36% of Denver adult male arrestees interviewed during 2003 reported receiving inpatient or residential treatment at some point in their lives.⁷⁴

Percent of Adult Arrestees Reporting Past Drug Treatment, Denver, 2003

Type of Treatment	Male		Female	
	Ever	Past Year	Ever	Past Year
Outpatient	23.4%	5.0%	22.6%	4.8%
Inpatient/Residential	36.1	7.5	38.4	3.7

- As of March 2001, there were 42 licensed treatment programs/facilities in Denver. There were 2,600 people in publicly funded treatment and an average of 118 people waiting for publicly funded treatment at that time.⁷⁵
- Between 45,000 to 60,000 Denver residents age 12 and older are estimated to need treatment for substance abuse and addiction.⁷⁶

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