



DEA
INTELLIGENCE
REPORT

2016 National Drug Price and Purity Data

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Executive Summary

The following charts provide an update on national-level price and purity data for cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin from January 2012 through December 2016. The price and purity information was derived from a database of drug exhibits sent to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) laboratories from DEA, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the United States Coast Guard (USCG), and the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). The drug exhibits are not a representative sample of drugs available in the United States, but reflect drug purchases submitted as evidence to DEA laboratories for analysis. This report presents a statistical analysis of undercover drug purchases, and when viewed in conjunction with investigative information, reflects the best information currently available on fluctuations/dynamics in the price and purity of cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin. Price and purity data is one of DEA's indicators relating to drug traffic and has value for intelligence and policy purposes including as a proxy measure for assessing drug availability.

Drug prices are quoted as "price per gram pure" (PPG), and should not be interpreted as the actual "street price" or "retail price" for each drug (refer to Figures 1, 2, and 3). The PPG reflects the price of the drug sample divided by the pure weight, expressed in grams. In addition, the PPG provides a constant over time, so that prices of samples of differing weights and purity can be compared.

The National Drug Price and Purity Report reflect data collected and analyzed under DEA's Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS).

Details

Cocaine

Analysis of 2016 cocaine price and purity data indicates that cocaine availability and use in the United States is rebounding, with some domestic cocaine data sets reaching or surpassing 2007 benchmark levels (see Figure 1).

- From January 2016 through December 2016, the PPG of cocaine decreased 20.3 percent (\$177 to \$141^a), while the purity increased 21.6 percent from 51 to 62 percent.
- From January 2015 through December 2016, cocaine PPG decreased 41 percent (\$239 to \$141), while the average purity increased 35.3 percent from 45.8 to 62 percent.
- During the 5 year period between January 2012 and December 2016, cocaine PPG decreased 19 percent (\$174 to \$141), while the purity increased 26.3 percent, from 49.1 to 62 percent.

National cocaine abuse statistics also reflect a rise in the number of new cocaine users in 2016. National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) statistics indicate that in 2016, past year cocaine new initiates rose 13.6 percent, from 968,000 in 2015 to 1.1 million in 2016.

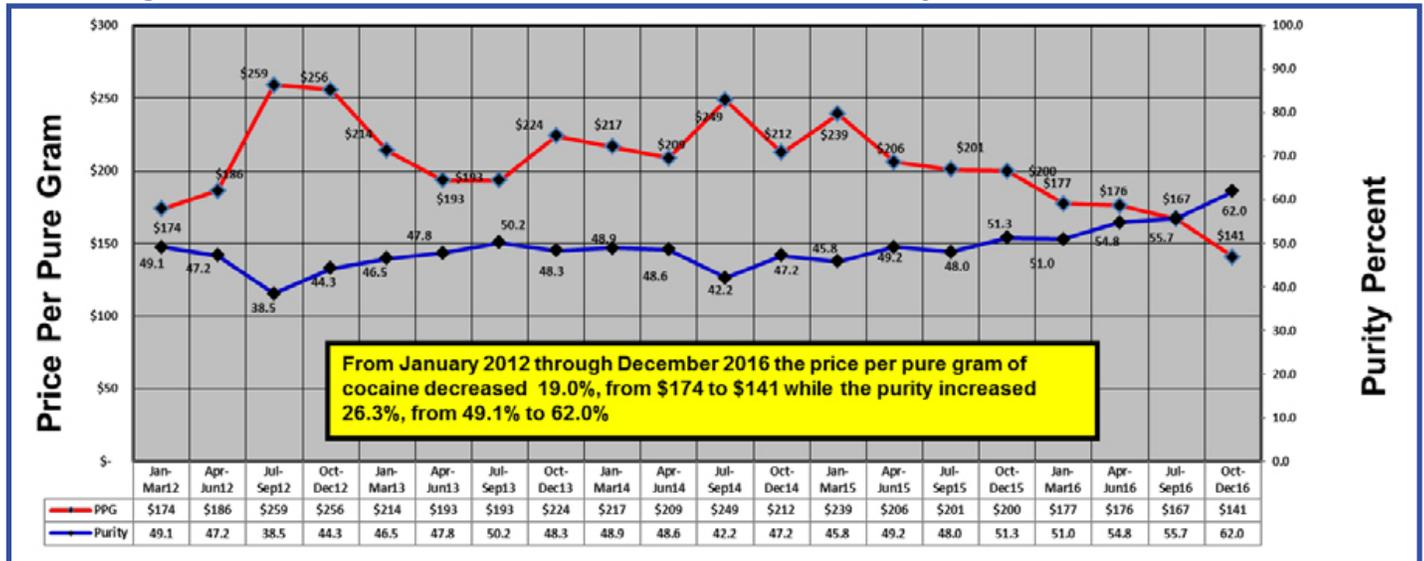
Quest Diagnostics Workplace Drug Testing Index statistics indicate the percentage of positive workplace urine drug tests for cocaine in the U.S. general workforce increased 12 percent between 2015 and 2016, from 0.25 percent to 0.28 percent. This marks the fourth consecutive year workplace urine drug tests for cocaine showed increases in positive tests and represents the highest percentage of positive cocaine tests in the general workplace since 2009.

^aAll dollar amounts listed in this report are in U.S. currency.

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U.S. Customs and Border Protection reporting indicates that seizures of cocaine at the Southwest Border (SWB) in 2016 increased 21.5 percent, from 9,019 kilograms in 2015 to 10,961 kilograms in 2016. The increase in SWB cocaine seizures is consistent with the elevated levels of coca cultivation and potential pure cocaine production in Colombia, the primary source for cocaine seized in the United States. According to U.S. Government estimates, potential Colombian cocaine production increased 35 percent between 2015 and 2016, from 520 metric tons to 710 metric tons. The 2017 National Drug Threat Assessment reports that current production estimates are at the highest levels ever recorded.

Figure 1: All Domestic Cocaine Purchases January 2012 - December 2016.



Note: The “adjusted” price and purity figures plotted above are expressed as standardized values, in proportion to the overall distribution of seizures by amount purchased. Drug prices are quoted as “price per gram pure” (PPG) and should not be interpreted as the actual “street price” for each drug.

Source: DEA

Methamphetamine

Analysis of 2016 methamphetamine price and purity data indicates methamphetamine prices in the United States remain at record lows and purity remains at record highs. Methamphetamine continues to be readily available throughout the United States (see Figure 2).

- From January 2016 through December 2016, the PPG of methamphetamine decreased 23.2 percent (\$69 to \$53), while the purity remained relatively stable at 94 percent.
- From January 2015 through December 2016, methamphetamine PPG decreased 19.7 percent (\$66 to \$53), while the average purity increased 0.75 percent, from 93.3 to 94 percent.
- During the 5 year period between January 2012 and December 2016, the PPG of methamphetamine decreased 35 percent (\$81 to \$53), while the purity increased 6.9 percent, from 87.9 to 94 percent.

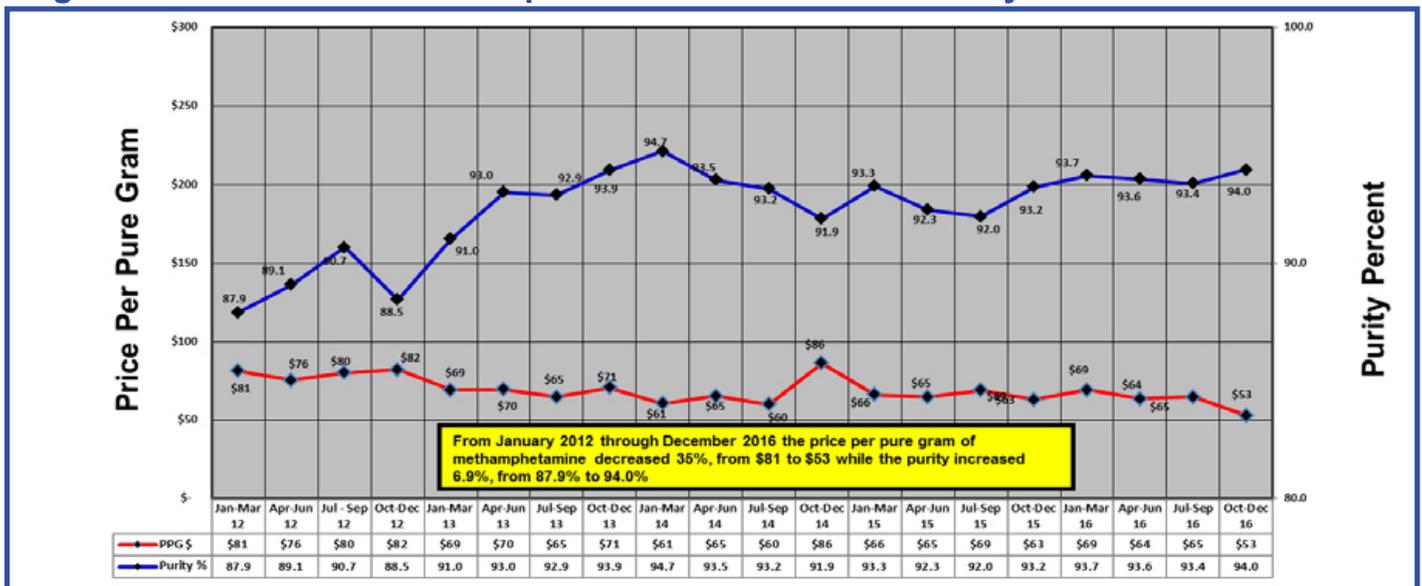
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Quest Diagnostics Workplace Drug Testing Index statistics continue to show overall higher levels of methamphetamine abuse in the general U.S. workforce since 2012. Methamphetamine positivity increased 80 percent, from 0.11 percent in 2012 to 0.20 percent in 2016.

Most of the methamphetamine available in the United States is produced clandestinely in Mexico and is smuggled across the SWB. According to U.S. Custom and Border Protection reporting, 21,048 kilograms of methamphetamine were seized at the SWB in 2016, a 29 percent increase from the 16,313 kilograms seized in 2015.

Mexican methamphetamine production continues to increase, as Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) have adapted to Government of Mexico (GOM) imposed restrictions on precursor chemicals by switching to the P2P (phenyl-2-propanone) method. In using the P2P method, Mexican DTOs are able to produce an abundance of high-purity methamphetamine at lower cost.

Figure 2: All Domestic Methamphetamine Purchases January 2012 - December 2016.



Note: The “adjusted” price and purity figures plotted above are expressed as standardized values, in proportion to the overall distribution of seizures by amount purchased. Drug prices are quoted as “price per gram pure” (PPG) and should not be interpreted as the actual “street price” for each drug.

Source: DEA

Heroin

The United States has seen substantial increases in heroin availability in the last 7 to 10 years, with the heroin threat expanding to unprecedented levels. Opium poppy cultivation and heroin production in Mexico—the primary source of heroin for the U.S. market—have continued to surge, which provides a steady stream of heroin to the United States.

- From January 2016 through December 2016, the PPG of heroin increased 5.5 percent (\$855 to \$902), while the purity remained virtually unchanged at 32 percent.
- From January 2015 through December 2016, heroin PPG increased 28.1 percent (\$704 to \$902), while the purity decreased 8.8 percent (35.4 to 32.3 percent).

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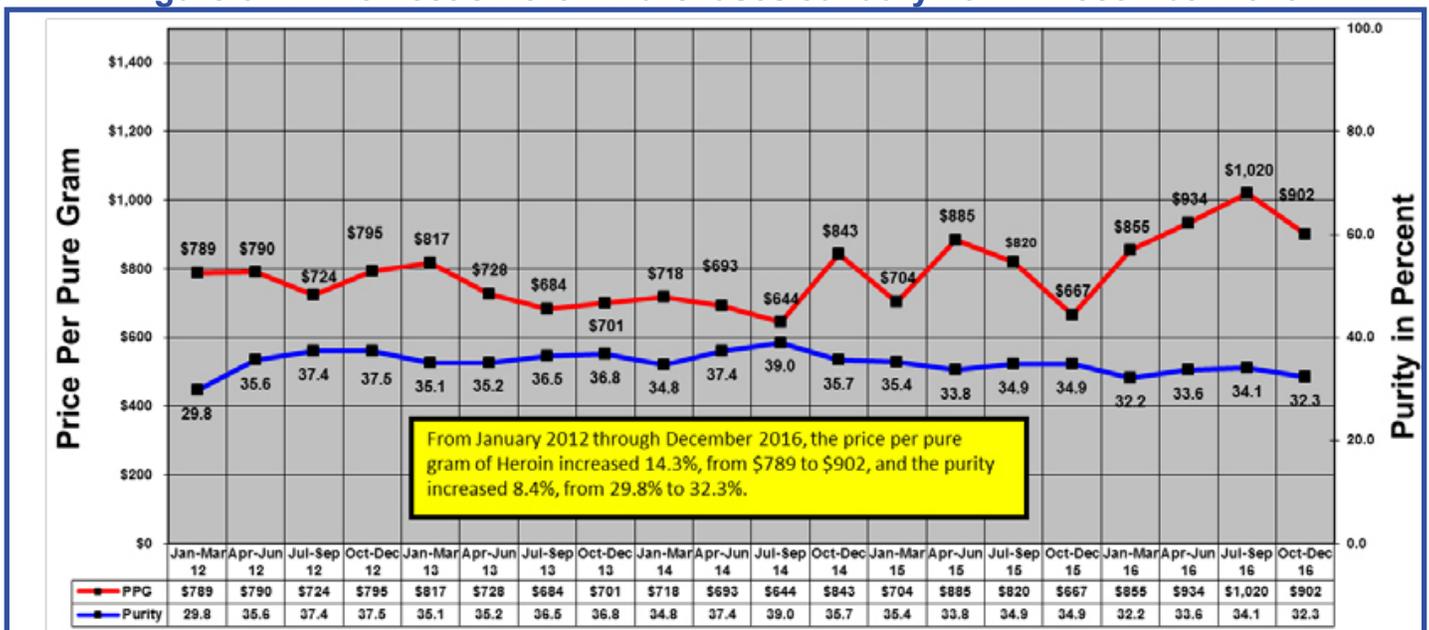
- During the 5 year period between January 2012 and December 2016, the PPG of heroin increased 14.3 percent (\$789 to \$902). Heroin purity during this same timeframe also increased 8.4 percent, from 29.8 to 32.3 percent (see Figure 3).

National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) statistics show a 14.5 percent increase in past year new heroin use from 828,000 in 2015 to 948,000 in 2016.

Quest Diagnostics Workplace Drug Testing Index statistics show that heroin positivity in the U.S. general workforce, (as measured by the 6-acetylmorphine [6AM] metabolite) may have plateaued. From 2012 to 2015, the 6AM positivity rose nearly 90 percent, from 213 positives per million tests to 403 positives per million tests. In 2016, 6AM positives dropped 8 percent to 377 positives per million tests.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection report that SWB heroin seizures decreased 21 percent in 2016, from 2,137 kilograms in 2015 to 1,689 kilograms in 2016.

Figure 3: All Domestic Heroin Purchases January 2012 - December 2016.



Note: The “adjusted” price and purity figures plotted above are expressed as standardized values, in proportion to the overall distribution of seizures by amount purchased. Drug prices are quoted as “price per gram pure” (PPG) and should not be interpreted as the actual “street price” for each drug.

Source: DEA



(U) This product was prepared by the DEA Intelligence Programs Section. Comments and questions may be addressed to the Chief, Analysis and Production Section at DEA.IntelligenceProducts@usdoj.gov. For media/press inquiries call (202) 307-7977.

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