

2023

UTAH STATE THREAT ASSESSMENT

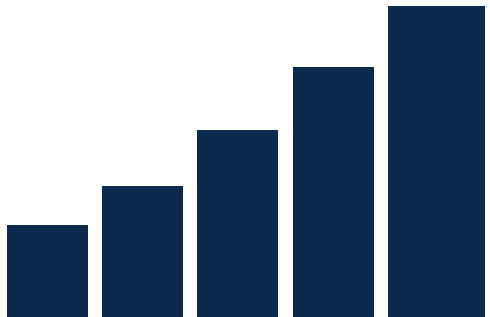


STATEWIDE INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS CENTER
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Scope: This State Threat Assessment prepared by the Utah Statewide Information & Analysis Center (SIAC) assesses the threats of cyber, terrorism, drugs, gangs, and human trafficking within/or impacting the State of Utah, and Utah citizens from October 2022 to December 2023. This assessment is intended for Federal, State, Local, and Tribal partners responsible for mitigating threats and protecting Utah and/or the United States, and its citizens and highlights threat actors, activities, targets, facilitation platforms, and the evolution of the threats impacting Utah. The information cutoff date for this assessment is 20 December 2023.



The Utah Statewide Information & Analysis Center (SIAC) assesses the observed cyber, terrorism, drugs, criminal gangs, and human trafficking threat to Utah remains substantial, particularly due to geopolitical events such as the Israel-HAMAS conflict, ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, upcoming 2024 elections, ongoing nationwide school threat hoax calls, and an increase in the availability of new technology such as artificial intelligence. All threat actors in each of SIAC's tracked threat domains continue to adapt and evolve tactics in order to evade law enforcement or further their efforts. In addition, each threat domain saw a lack of Utah-specific direct victim reporting, which contributes to gaps in an understanding of the threats to Utah. The SIAC assesses these threats will remain persistent and continue in 2024 based on an increase in reporting in each of the subject areas along with notable changes seen in 2023.



“TO SERVE UTAH BY PROVIDING INNOVATIVE INTELLIGENCE THAT ADVANCES RESPONSE TO PUBLIC SAFETY THREATS WHILE PROTECTING PRIVACY RIGHTS FOR ALL.”

OUTLOOK



CYBER

The observed cyber threat to Utah in 2023 is **substantial**. Private and public sector networks in Utah experienced significant damage due to cyberattacks or the threat of cyberattacks resulting in substantial economic loss. The SIAC assesses with **high confidence** cyber threats will continue to increase as the availability of internet, internet-connected devices, sharing platforms, and hacking tools become more readily available.



TARGETED VIOLENCE

The observed threat of targeted violence in Utah is **substantial** with far-reaching consequences of targeted attacks causing significant harm on a regional scale, with potential for widespread damage, and fear. The SIAC assesses with **medium confidence** the threat of targeted violence in Utah will remain persistent as violent extremist groups continue to evolve and adapt to thwart mitigation efforts by law enforcement.



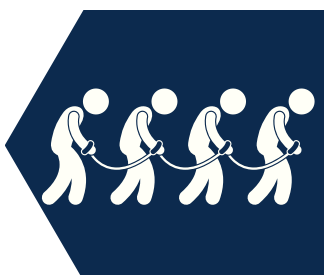
DRUGS

The observed drug threat to Utah in 2023 is **substantial**. The availability of potent and harmful substances will continue to increase, which will remain a **substantial** threat to public health moving forward into 2024. The SIAC assesses with **high confidence** that the drug threat will remain substantial due to the prevalence of methamphetamine, the increase in fentanyl and fentanyl-related fatal overdoses, and the demand for drugs that persists within Utah.



GANGS

The observed gang threat to Utah is **substantial**. Gang activity is likely to expand with the urban sprawl of Salt Lake, Utah, and Washington counties. Cities on the border of Salt Lake and Utah Counties that have had very little gang activity will likely see an increase in 2024. The SIAC assesses with **high confidence** that the gang threat will remain substantial due to the glamorization of gang culture, the efforts to recruit and expand, the young age of gang members, the effort to gain street credibility, the demand for illicit drugs and firearms, and the leniency of the criminal justice systems.

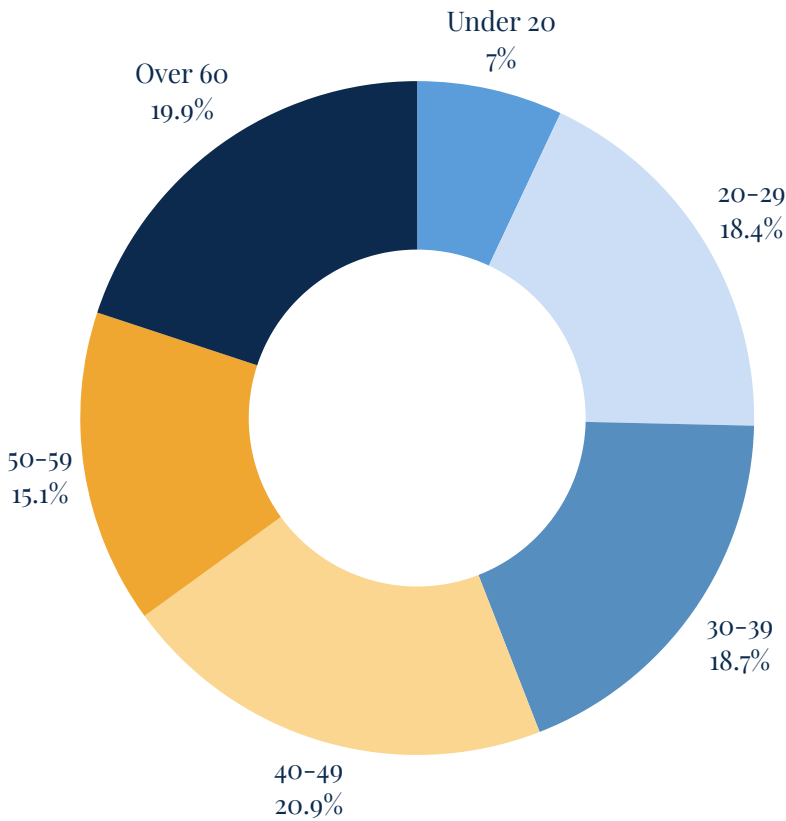


HUMAN TRAFFICKING

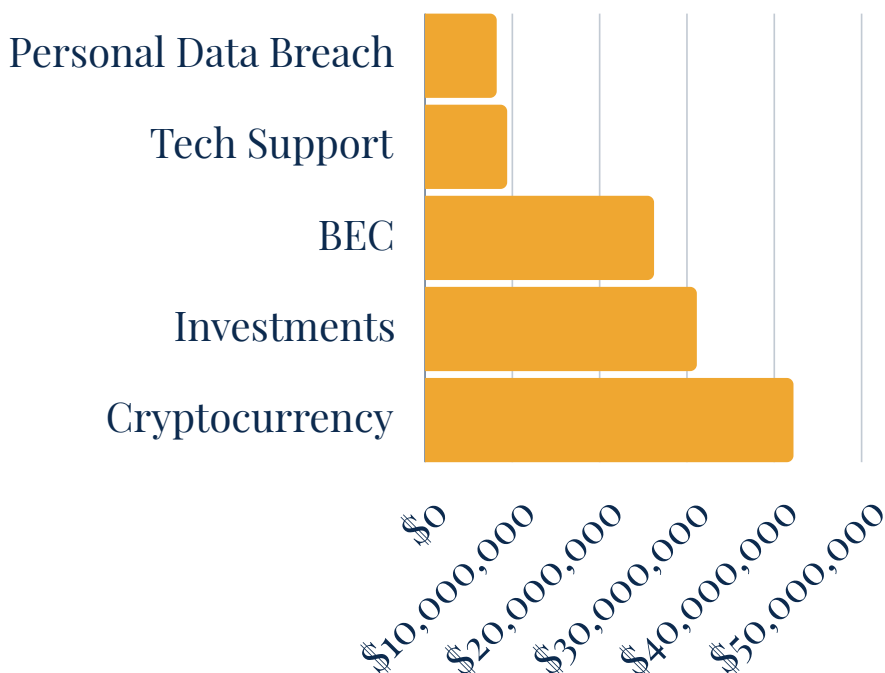
The human trafficking and exploitation threat to Utah is **substantial**. The SIAC assesses with **high confidence** that the human trafficking and exploitation threat to Utah will remain persistent. As human trafficking and exploitation become easier to facilitate with new online methods, the more **substantial** this threat will be.

CYBER

AGE RANGE OF LOSS

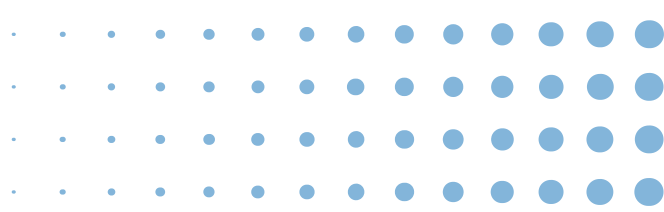


TOP 5 CRIME TYPES BY VICTIM LOSS



- The SIAC assesses cyber threats will likely continue to **increase** as the availability of internet, internet-connect devices, sharing platforms, and hacking tools become more readily available.
- Cyber threat actors **will persistently adapt** and evolve their tactics posing a continuous threat to the State of Utah. The most common cyber threat actors are:
 - Cyber Criminals
 - Hacktivists
 - Nation-State Actors
- Cyber threat actors employ diverse and emerging cyber attack methods such as **vulnerability exploitation and social engineering**. The most common attacks and threats are:
 - Business Email Compromise (BEC)
 - Data Breaches
 - Network Scanning
 - Ransomware
 - Cryptocurrency
- Financially motivated cyber criminals and nation-state actors utilized **cryptocurrency** to steal, extort, and facilitate criminal activities.
- The **underreporting** of Utah-specific cyber threats leaves a substantial gap in SIAC's assessment.
- The adoption of new technologies such as the widespread use of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, will likely **increase** success in creating social engineering scripts and generating potentially malicious code.

TARGETED VIOLENCE & TERRORISM



The SIAC assesses threats stemming from both domestic and foreign ideologies **very likely** remain a persistent threat throughout Utah.

- **Homegrown Violent Extremists** (HVEs) and lone actors, inspired by a perceived grievance or ideology, are the most likely to conduct a targeted attack.
- **Domestic Violent Extremist** (DVE) groups remain the **most prevalent** in Utah, with multiple groups increasing their activities within the state throughout 2023, often inspired by or reacting to local and global events.
- **Foreign Terrorist Organizations** (FTOs) and DVEs similarly continue to evolve, aiming to influence the volatile socio-political climate in the U.S. and increase their recruiting efforts, exploiting world events, social issues, and political polarization to encourage followers to conduct violent acts against perceived targets such as schools, racial and social minorities, critical infrastructure, law enforcement, military installations, public events and venues, and religious institutions in furtherance of their varying ideologies.
- FTOs continue to call on individuals in the West to plan attacks on their behalf and have increased calls to action since the beginning of the most recent Israel-HAMAS conflict on 7 October 2023.
- Utah schools saw a variety of threats throughout 2023 and will likely see an increase in credible and hoax threats. In the first two months of the 2023-2024 school year, the SIAC is aware of 38 school threats made against Utah schools.
- Violent extremists in Utah will continue to operate on encrypted platforms to recruit, conduct criminal activity, and spread propaganda to promote violence.
- The terrorism threat to Utah is **substantial**, however, the lack of intelligence reporting from citizens and local law enforcement agencies leaves a significant gap in understanding fully, the magnitude by which foreign and domestic extremist groups are operating within Utah.

*A **Homegrown Violent Extremist** (HVE) is a person of any citizenship living primarily within the United States or its territories who advocates and/or supports terrorist activities “in furtherance of a **Foreign Terrorist Organization’s** (FTO) objectives,” but is acting independently of their direction. FTOs such as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), al-Qa’ida (AQ), and Hizballah continue to inspire HVEs to commit acts of terrorism against the United States.*

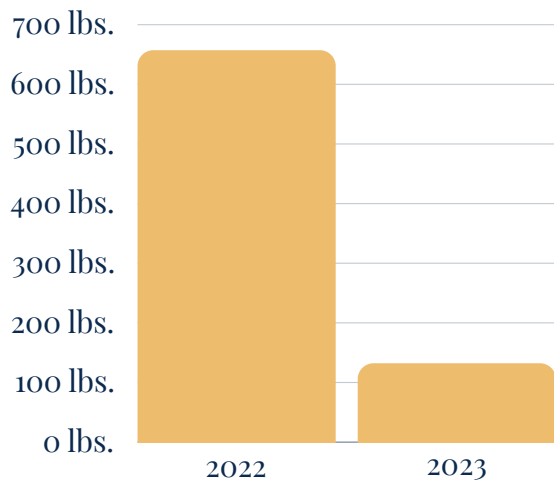
***Domestic Violent Extremist** (DVE) groups and/or threats are categorized into: 1) Anti-Government/Anti-Authority (AG/AA) groups which include Militia Violent Extremists, Anarchist Violent Extremists, and Sovereign Citizen Violent Extremists; 2) Racially/ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism (RMVE); 3) Animal Rights/Environmental Violent Extremism; 4) Abortion-related Violent Extremism; and 5) All other domestic terrorism threats.*



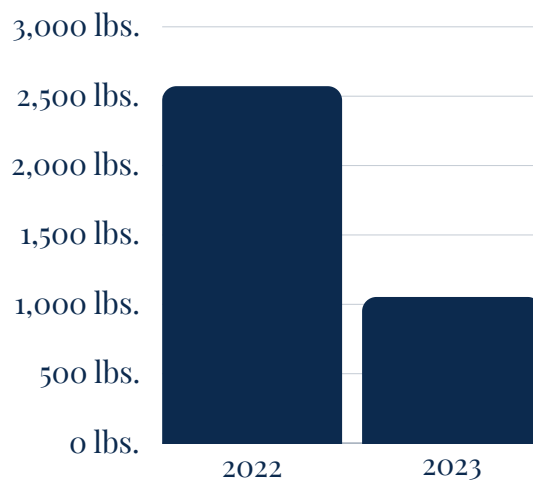
Drugs

The SIAC assesses that the observed drug threat to Utah in 2023 is **substantial**. The availability of potent and harmful substances will continue to **increase**, which will remain a **substantial threat** to public health and safety moving forward into 2024.

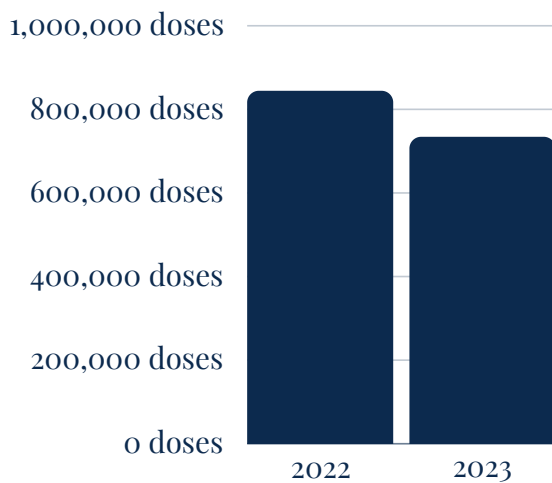
COCAINE SEIZURES



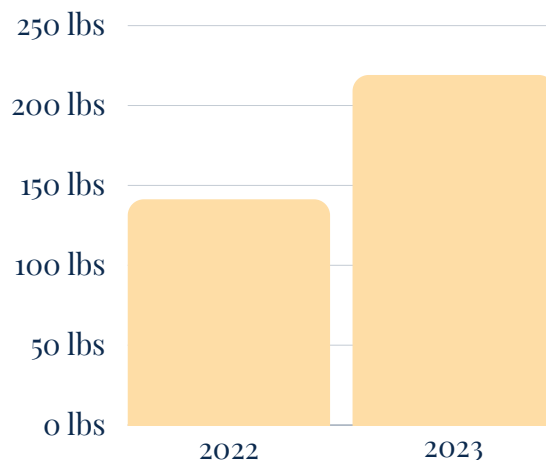
METHAMPHETAMINE SEIZURES



FENTANYL PILL SEIZURES



FENTANYL POWDER SEIZURES



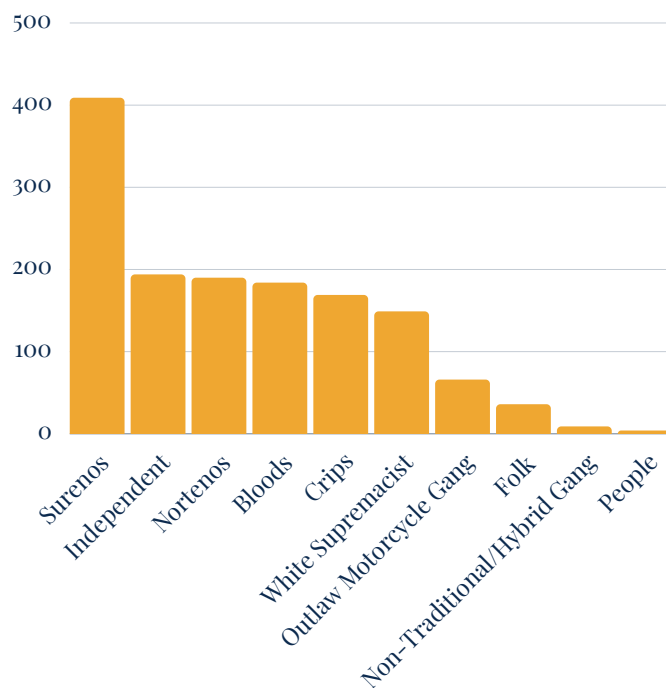
- The **primary strategic drug threats** in the state of Utah are Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) and State-based drug trafficking organizations (DTOs). Although many local jurisdictions deal with the street-level impact of the drug trade, it is directly supported by transnational criminal organizations operating from Mexico, who provide access to traditional drugs such as methamphetamine, heroin, and cocaine, but have increased their capability to provide fentanyl.
- A **continuing threat** in the State of Utah is the trafficking of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) cartridges from California.
- An **emerging concern** is fentanyl powder distribution and trafficking in and through Utah. Fentanyl in its powder form may be added to many different products.
- A full and accurate assessment of the illicit drug trade in the State of Utah is limited due to the clandestine nature of drug trafficking and the differences in law enforcement reporting throughout the State. Due to this intelligence gap, the quantity of drugs within Utah is likely much greater than reported.

GANGS

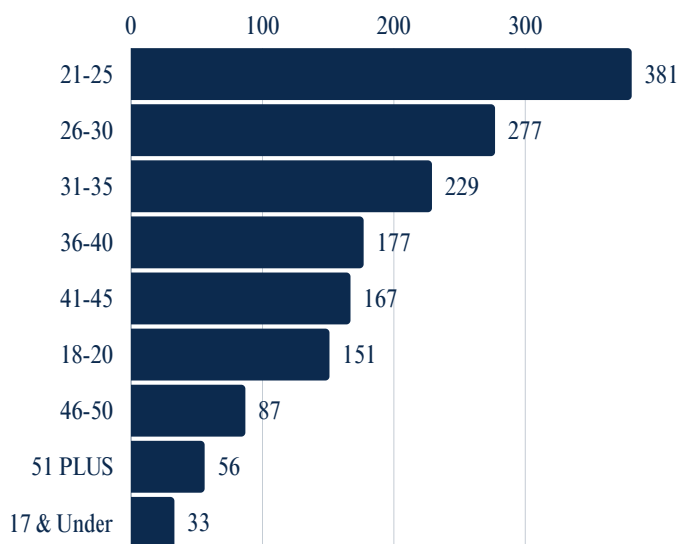
- The SIAC assesses the **primary** gang threat to Utah are Sureño gangs in terms of organization, membership, and violent criminal activity.
- Salt Lake and Weber counties continue to experience the most gang activity in the state, however, urban sprawl is causing gang activity to expand to Salt Lake suburbs and neighboring counties. (Utah & Washington)
- The **primary criminal activities** of Utah gang members are drug and firearm distribution.
- Utah experienced a **significant increase** in the seizure of cocaine and fentanyl from gang members, as well as seizures of suboxone and methamphetamine being smuggled into Utah correctional facilities.
- Utah gang members will very likely continue to utilize encrypted messaging applications to obfuscate their criminal activity and avoid law enforcement detection or prosecution.
- **Aggressive recruitment** of juveniles increases gang activity in schools and on the streets. Juvenile gang members are facilitated in part by loopholes in Utah gun laws and the leniency of the juvenile justice system. Gang violence is likely to continue to increase as long as the juvenile justice system continues to give juvenile gang members leniency for their crimes, and access to firearms and drugs is prevalent.

- Constantly **evolving tactics and dynamics** of gang relationships and the absence of a centralized statewide gang database impede our understanding of the extent of the gang threat to Utah.
- The **inherent secrecy** of gangs and their attempts to obfuscate criminal activity and impede law enforcement investigations will have an ongoing effect on our level of understanding of the gang threat to Utah.
- An **early indicator** of gang activity is gang graffiti and tagging, and group conflicts in Middle and High Schools.
- Utah’s correctional facilities will **likely see a shift** in gang dynamics and activity over the next year as law enforcement continues to dismantle active gang sets and incarcerate their members.
- Street **gang dynamics** in Salt Lake County will likely shift as active gang members are incarcerated, creating an opportunity for other gangs to recruit leftover members, and fight over their distribution territories, leading to rival gang violence.

Number of Documented Gang Members and Associates as of September 30, 2023



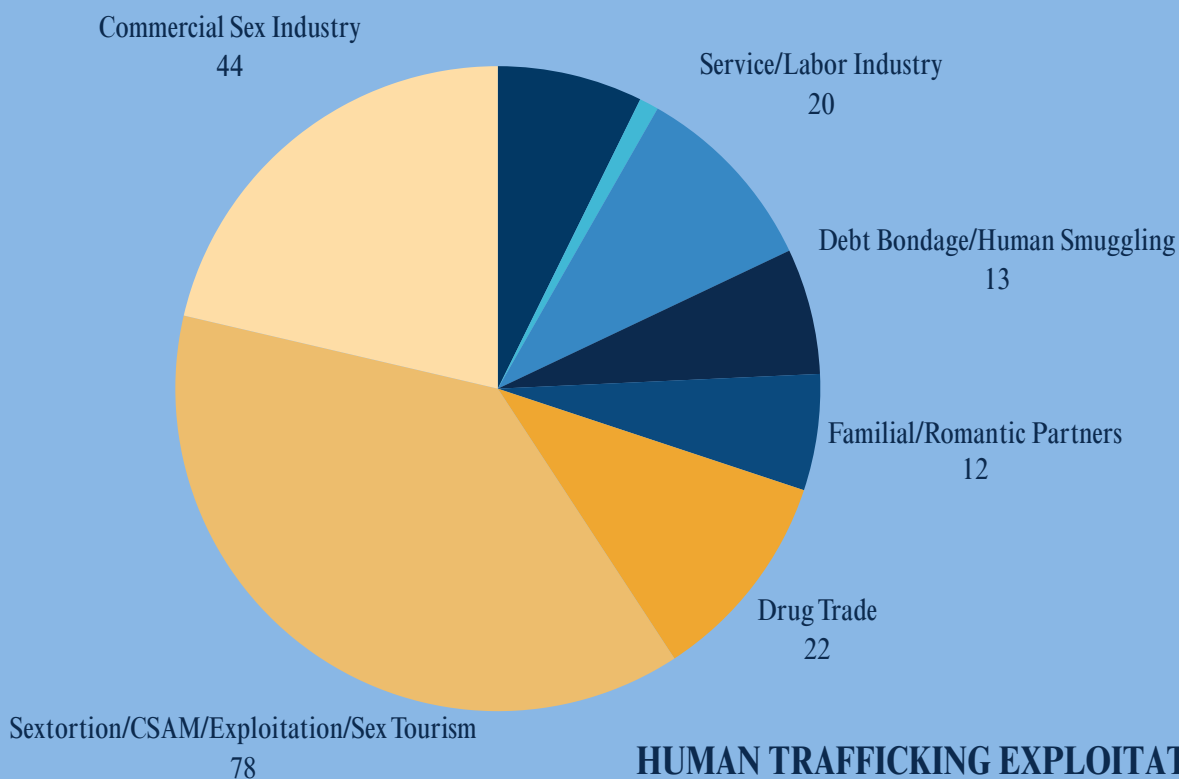
Age of Documented Gang Members & Associates (2023)



HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The SIAC assesses the human trafficking and exploitation threat will likely remain a **substantial and persistent** threat in Utah.

- The SIAC reviewed more than **200 reports** of human trafficking and exploitation to find human traffickers and exploiters who exhibit diverse profiles and strategies. Reports reveal a wide array of predators, including **men, women, parents, romantic partners, and foreign nationals**.
- Traffickers operate in various sectors like **fraudulent educational institutions, illicit massage parlors, the commercial sex industry, human smuggling, debt bondage, the service and labor industry, drug trade, gangs, and online exploitation**.
- Traffickers will very likely continue using **social media and online platforms** as their main form of facilitation.
- Barriers in **education, data, prosecution, and communication** hinder the fight against human trafficking.
- Traffickers are very likely to continue targeting vulnerable populations like **children and youth or at-risk adults**.
- Traffickers often target these individuals, groom them, and then coerce victims into trafficking and exploitation after gaining their trust.



**HUMAN TRAFFICKING EXPLOITATION
CASES BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE**



CONTACT US

If you have any questions about this product, please contact the SIAC at siac.utah.gov

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This report addresses DHS HSEC Code: HSEC-1, HSEC-3, HSEC-5, HSEC-6, HSEC-8, HSEC-9, HSEC-10; and SIAC Standing Information Requirements: UTSIAC-01, 03-01, 03-02, 05-01, 05-02, 05-03, 05-04, 08, 09-01, 09-02, 09-03

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Expressions of Likelihood or Probability

Almost no chance	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Roughly even chance	Likely	Very likely	Almost certain(ly)
01-05%	05-20%	20-45%	45-55%	55-80%	80-95%	95-99%

Appendix B: Confidence Intervals Regarding Analytic Judgments

Confidence levels are assigned to judgments and sources in order to inform individuals of the level of credibility assigned to the information. Typically, confidence levels are assigned to information received from sources and the analyst's level of confidence in the accuracy of that information based on their experience and other reporting that validates the source's reporting. Confidence levels are also assigned to threat analysis/outlook sections of reports to identify the analyst's level of confidence in their analysis of the identified situation based on the available information.

- **High Confidence** – indicates the judgment/analysis is based on high-quality information from multiple sources or from a single, highly reliable source, and the nature of the issue makes it possible to render a solid judgment.
- **Medium Confidence** – indicates the judgment/analysis is credibly sourced and plausible but can be interpreted in various ways or is not sufficient to warrant a higher level of confidence.
- **Low Confidence** – indicates the judgment/analysis is based on information that has questionable credibility or plausibility, the information is too fragmented to make solid analytical inferences, or sources of information are questionable/unreliable.

Appendix C: Threat Assessment Methodology

Domain Management is the systematic process by which the SIAC develops and improves the strategic, contextual, and domain awareness of threat issues. The Domain Analytic Methodology serves as the foundation for Domain Intelligence Assessments and the State Threat Assessment to address threat issues in Utah.

Step 1: Research relating to the overall domain intelligence question.

Step 2: Framework questions to address the overall domain intelligence question, What is the currently observed and potential impact of the threat issue in Utah? Framework questions address threat actors, threat activities, threat targets, facilitation platforms, level of understanding, and evolution of the threat.

Step 3: Answering the overall domain intelligence question includes determining the observed and potential impact of the threat to Utah using the following matrix.



IMPACT LEVEL CHARACTERIZATION

What impact is the threat issue currently having on the AOR based on an assessment of the observed harm to the domain's safety, economy, government operation, US national security, or trust in law enforcement over the last 6-12 months? What impact could the threat issue have on the AOR over the next 12-24 months, based on an assessment of the potential harm to the domain's safety, economy, government operation, US national security, or trust in law enforcement?

	Severe	Substantial	Limited	Unobserved/Note Present
Effect – Results or consequences of events that followed	Affects beyond the intended target and directly affiliated parties, with collateral implications	Affects the intended target and directly affiliated parties	Affects only the intended target	If the fusion center or other elements have not observed the threat issue in the AOR due to a lack of intelligence, the threat is characterized as UNOBSERVED. If the FC or Other Elements have sufficient to indicate the threat is not present in the AOR, the threat is characterized as Not Present.
Reach – the scope or extension of the Impact	Causing widespread harm affecting the majority of the US, and/or on a national or international scale	Causing harm on a regional scale or to specific subgroups, including individuals or small groups that may reside outside the AOR	Causing harm on a local scale, or no harm	
Damage- physical harm or injury, including value or loss	Large-scale economic loss, often in the billions of dollars, OR widespread fear or psychological/ physical trauma	Significant economic loss, often in the millions of dollars, OR fear or psychological/ physical trauma to specific groups	Minimal financial loss to individuals/small group, OR fear limited to an individual victim/organization	