The year 2023 marks the midpoint of the work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The global drug phenomenon continues to challenge both the implementation of SDG targets and efforts to promote peace, security and human rights.

**2023 WORLD DRUG REPORT: KEY MESSAGES**

- World drug-related challenges are hindering SDG progress across all areas, from peace and justice to health and human rights, and the environment and equality.
- Prevention and access to evidence-informed treatment and HIV and Hepatitis services must be stepped up; otherwise, drug-related challenges will leave more people behind.
- Law enforcement responses need to keep pace with astonishingly agile criminal business models, as well as the proliferation of synthetic drugs, which are cheap and easy to bring to market.
- Public health must remain the priority in the context of rapidly developing drug control regulation, in particular in relation to medical use, and countries must invest more in research to monitor the effects of policy and inform responses.
People who use drugs, 2021: 296 million people

Women among people who use drugs, 2021: 25% opiates, 27% cocaine, 30% cannabis, 45% amphetamines, 38% "ecstasy"-type substances

People who inject drugs, 2021: 13.2 million people

People with drug use disorders, 2021: 39.5 million people

Women in treatment, 2021: 1 in 5

Primary drug of people in treatment, 2021:
- 6.6 million living with hepatitis C
- 1.6 million living with HIV
- 1.4 million living with HIV and hepatitis C

Women under 25 years old in treatment, 2021:
- South America: 17%
- Central America and the Caribbean: 9%
- Eastern and South-Eastern Europe: 33%
- Australia and New Zealand: 36%
- Africa: 27%
- North America: 17%
- Asia: 16%
- Western and Central Europe: 14%
CULTIVATION PRODUCTION

**Coca bush**

- **35%** increase between 2020 and 2021

**Opium poppy**

- **28%** increase between 2021 and 2022

Global cultivation

- Ha coca bush: 2021 - 315,200
- Ha opium poppy: 2022 - 315,800

Global production

- Tons of pure cocaine, 2021: 2,304 (+16% between 2020 and 2021)
- Tons of opium, 2022: 7,800 (-3% between 2021 and 2022)
- Heroin production: 509–739 tons (2022)

Opium processed into heroin: 6,077–6,384 tons (2022)

Trends in quantity of drugs seized

Global quantities of drugs seized, 2021

**ATS**

- Morphinic
- Heroin
- Pharmaceutical opioids
- Opiates
- Cannabis resin
- Cannabis herb

**Other NPS**

- Synthetic cannabinoids
- Synthetic opioids
- Other NPS

NPS on the global market

- 618 NPS on the market in 2021
- 87 newly identified NPS

NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES (NPS)

**Global production**

- 2,014 tons of cocaine
- 892 tons of opium
- 470 tons of morphine
- 393 tons of methamphetamine
- 154 tons of cannabis herb
- 112 tons of "ecstasy"
- 134 tons of methamphetamine
- 74 tons of other ATS
- 522 tons of pharmaceutical opioids

**Global cultivation**

- 76 tons of cannabis resin
- 315,800 ha coca bush
- 315,200 ha opium poppy

**KEY FIGURES AT A GLANCE**

**Change from previous year**

- 4%: Heroin
- 42%: Cocaine
- 1%: "Ecstasy"
- 48%: Other ATS
- 54%: Methamphetamine
- 154%: Pharmaceutical opioids
- +10%: Morphine
- -33%: Other NPS
Inequality and social and economic disparities continue to drive and be driven by the drug phenomenon, threatening public health and human rights. Disparities between the global North and South, urban and rural settings, and across subpopulations all contribute to the harms from drugs.

a. Disparities in access to and availability of medicines controlled under the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 have remained. In 2021, 86 per cent of the global population lived in countries where availability of pharmaceutical opioids for medical use was below the international standard.

b. Drug use disorders and other mental health conditions are closely interconnected: mental health conditions increase the risk of developing drug use disorders, and drug use poses the risk of exacerbating mental health problems if taken outside medical supervision. With an estimated one in eight people globally living with a diagnosed mental health condition, the need to address mental health issues in drug use prevention and treatment has increasingly become a priority.

c. Young people remain the group most vulnerable to using drugs. Globally, in 2021, those aged between 15 and 16 had an annual prevalence of cannabis use of 5.34 per cent, compared with 4.3 per cent for adults. Drug use is also particularly harmful to young people. In some regions, young people are more severely affected by substance use disorder: in Africa, 70 per cent of people receiving drug treatment are below the age of 35.

d. The demand for treating drug-related disorders remains largely unmet and disparities in access persist. Globally, about one in five people with drug use disorders received treatment in 2021, with large disparities across regions and in the type and quality of treatment received. Not all forms of treatment respect human rights or are evidence based. Women face barriers in accessing drug treatment services: in 2021, 45 per cent of those who used amphetamine-type stimulants in the past year were women, but only 27 per cent of those in treatment are women. Overall, the lowest proportions of women in drug-related treatment are in Asia and Africa and the highest proportions are in the subregions of Australia and New Zealand as well as in North America.

e. Setbacks to service provision during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic left some without access to treatment or other services. Most countries that reported treatment delivery aggregates to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) before and after the pandemic noted a decline in the number of persons in drug treatment between the periods 2018–2019 and 2020–2021, with further declines within the period of 2021 to 2022.

f. Different patterns of drug use and unequal access to services exacerbate inequality in treatment provision. Although innovations in service provision that started during the pandemic appear to have resulted in early benefits, challenges remain due to the digital divide, especially in certain geographical areas and in certain marginalized populations that are hard to reach, including the homeless and injecting drug users. Other marginalized groups, such as those with a history of incarceration, people displaced by humanitarian emergencies and sex workers, face other barriers in accessing services. Moreover, use of drugs by marginalized populations may be more intense, putting them at greater risk to continued harms, relapse and other related health outcomes. For example, injecting drug use in 2020 was associated with a risk of contracting HIV that was 35 times higher than that associated with non-injecting drug use. Women who inject drugs are 1.2 times more likely than men to be living with HIV.

g. Different patterns can also be witnessed between urban and rural settings. For example, in some rural areas illicit drug cultivation and trafficking create opportunities for other crimes, including crimes that affect the environment, and impoverished and vulnerable populations are trapped in a vicious cycle with uncertain access to resources and the rule of law. For example, in the tri-border area between Brazil, Colombia and Peru in the Amazon Basin, drug trafficking organizations increasingly violate the human rights, safety and well-being of rural populations.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Reducing inequalities and the gap in access to treatment and comprehensive services to minimize the adverse public health and social consequences of drug use in a continuum of care for people who use drugs, especially vulnerable and marginalized populations, is critical.

- Large-scale drug-use prevention initiatives that are school-, family- and community-based are needed to reduce the risk of increasing drug use disorders, in particular in view of the current high prevalence level of mental health conditions. Higher socioeconomic groups have shown a greater propensity to initiate drug use than lower socioeconomic groups but it is the lower socioeconomic groups that pay the higher price, as they are more likely to suffer from drug use disorders.

- In order to be effective, the approach to treatment service provision must be voluntary and based on human rights. As the drug phenomenon continues to evolve, Member States will need to redouble efforts to ensure access to quality services that are shown to reduce drug use disorders, both globally and nationally, and across all subpopulations.

- Reducing stigma faced by people who use drugs will make drug-related treatment and interventions more accessible and effective for people who need such services. Gains have been made during the pandemic to reduce barriers in accessing services, which have shown promise in attracting and retaining patients.

In accordance with the possible responses, measures aimed at minimizing the adverse public health and social consequences of drug use are needed. For example, given the disproportionate levels of harm and the large gap in accessing services experienced by certain populations who use drugs, most intensively, additional effort is needed to design and implement policies and programmes addressing the specific needs of populations. It is important to tailor programmes to individuals, engaging homeless, sex workers, those suffering from trauma and others who face barriers in accessing services, including people with additional mental health conditions, those currently and formerly incarcerated and women who are pregnant.

The importance of addressing mental health in efforts to prevent as well as treat drug use disorders needs to be given greater priority. Current scientific research and clinical trials involving psychedelics indicate their potential for treating some mental health conditions, but medical supervision is a critical component to ensuring their benefits while limiting harms.

The record high number of displaced persons requires far greater investment in providing drug-use prevention initiatives and drug-related treatment, and services to minimize the adverse public health and social consequences in a continuum of care in humanitarian settings.

Political and financial commitments are needed to scale up interventions that address structural and economic inequalities, harmful sociocultural norms, gender-based inequalities and gender-based violence that drive HIV and hepatitis epidemics among people who use drugs.

THE CONTINUUM OF DRUG-RELATED SERVICES

- Measures aimed at minimizing the adverse public health and social consequences of drug use
- Prevention of drug use programmes
- Drug-related treatment services

KEY FINDINGS AND POSSIBLE RESPONSES
Illicit drug economies, converging crimes, displacement and conflict are accelerating environmental devastation and degrading human rights, especially in vulnerable groups.

a. Drug trafficking is compounding criminal threats that harm vulnerable communities by degrading their rights to security and livelihood, as well as the right to live in a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as recognized by the General Assembly in its resolution 76/300 of 2022:

» In the Amazon Basin, drug trafficking and production intersect with, and in some cases even finance, illegal or unregulated activities that are environmentally and socially damaging. These include, in some areas of the Amazon, illegal land occupation and cattle grazing, illegal logging, illegal mining, trafficking in wildlife and other crimes that affect the environment.

» Indigenous Peoples and other local communities are caught in the criminal nexus in the Amazon Basin, suffering displacement, mercury poisoning and other severe health impacts, as well as increased exposure to violence and victimization.

b. Drug challenges are posing greater threats in the context of conflict and displacement, coupled with economic slowdown, inflation and other intersecting crises. A record number of more than 100 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide in the first six months of 2022:

» Preventing and treating drug use disorders among displaced persons have become more challenging. Moreover, forcibly displaced populations are among the marginalized groups that suffer physical and psychological trauma and elevated levels of socioeconomic vulnerability, increasing the risk of developing mental health and substance use disorders;

On the supply side, the potential for drug production and trafficking facilitates cycles of instability in conflict-affected areas. The armed conflict in Ukraine has displaced heroin and cocaine routes, but there is an emerging threat of increased manufacture and trafficking of synthetic drugs. In the Sahel, the illicit drug trade finances non-State armed and insurgency groups through “taxes” in exchange for protection. In Haiti, cocaine and cannabis traffickers take advantage of porous borders, with heavily armed criminal gangs targeting ports, highways and critical infrastructures.

Harms to the environment and to remote and vulnerable communities call for more integrated responses to illicit drug economies at the local and national level.

» Protecting fragile environments that are used or exploited by drug traffickers and other criminal actors adds greater complexity and requires integrated efforts to address the drug-related and environmental challenges faced by Member States, in particular those in the Amazon Basin and other States with significant and endangered ecosystems in their territory.

» Tailored, community-level interventions for local and Indigenous communities should protect their rights to health and safety and to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, while addressing their needs and providing sustainable alternatives to the illicit economy.

» Additional resources and strategies are needed to disrupt the cycle of instability and limited rule of law that enable drug traffickers and other criminals to prey on vulnerable populations and regions.

» Fragile and conflict countries, such as Ukraine and Haiti, require continued monitoring and support to prevent developing or expanding illicit drug economies from contributing to conflict and instability or hampering recovery.
Synthetics and innovations in illegal drug manufacturing and trafficking challenge justice responses

a. Illegal drug markets are transforming rapidly and, in some regions, radically, with synthetics and drugs becoming increasingly dominant. Synthetic drug manufacture is cheap, easy and fast. As synthetic drugs are not tied to geographically fixed crops, using instead a wide array of precursors, supply can be relocated closer to consumer markets, and seized products can be quickly replaced, defeating drug law enforcement efforts:

- Methamphetamine is the world’s dominant illegally manufactured synthetic drug, and criminals are employing novel synthesis techniques, establishing new bases of operation and using non-controlled precursors to circumvent law enforcement and regulatory responses.
- Fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opiate, is transforming drug overdose among those who use drugs. In 2021, there were almost 90,000 fentanyl-involved overdose deaths in North America, with the majority of those involving illegally manufactured fentanyl.

b. After several years of relative stability, an increase in the number of seizures and amounts seized involving new psychoactive substances (NPS) of synthetic origin was reported in 2021, increasing by 40 per cent over the previous year to 19 tons. According to preliminary data, 1,184 NPS have now been identified and are being monitored by authorities.

- Analysis of transactions on the darknet suggests a shift toward wholesale distribution, and retail transactions appear to be growing on social media platforms. An examination of blockchain transactions on darknet marketplaces suggests that the average transaction has increased in value from about $100 in 2018 to $500 in 2021 and, at the same time, there has been a notable decline in the number of active buyers and transactions overall.

- Self-reported data from those who use drugs suggest a recent shift towards social media platforms for purchasing drugs, especially for cannabis, cocaine and “ecstasy.” New psychoactive substances are still bought and sold to a greater degree on darknet forums.

- Fragmenting supply chains and loosely connected criminal groups are driving the expansion of drug supply, notably cocaine, with new hubs and markets, as well as increasing use in traditional markets. Trafficking groups are less rigid and hierarchical, and more innovative and adaptable. Transformations in the ways that criminal groups are organized or operate may make them less susceptible to traditional law enforcement interventions, as parts of the supply chain or product can be replaced.

f. The latest data indicate near-record levels of illicit coca and opium cultivation but the drug ban in Afghanistan may have an impact on the 2023 opium harvest there, increasing the need for alternative development efforts: Global opium production remained high at 7,800 tons in 2022, mainly driven by high levels of production in Afghanistan. A combination of market dynamics, Western Europe, the second largest cocaine market in the world, and higher efficiency in the production of cocaine at the source has triggered subsequent increases in cocaine manufacture, which reached a record high of 2,500 tons in 2021.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES

The continuously shifting strategies and tactics used by criminal groups and traffickers, away from traditional production methods and modes, require law enforcement strategies that are more targeted and strategic.

- Drug trafficking groups are increasingly fragmented, managing only parts of the drug supply chain, and law enforcement operations can be effective only if they target the wider ecosystem of illicit markets rather than single cells or single shipments. This requires sophisticated operational analysis and trust-building within and between national law enforcement agencies in order to share intelligence and ensure smooth and prompt national and international cooperation when required.

- Given the increase in levels of drug trafficking through waterways and maritime routes in containerized shipments, ports continue to be important nodes where drugs are smuggled across borders, warranting more effective control targeting potential chokepoints.

- Continued expansion of synthetic drug manufacture within new regions using new methods demands rebalanced efforts to monitor changes in drug markets and to respond with more targeted policies aimed at reducing access to precursor chemicals and new psychoactive substances.

- Drug interdiction may have less and less impact on supply, as criminal groups can replace the seized drugs easily and cheaply. The role of law enforcement authorities in assessing the quality and type of drugs sold in markets therefore becomes increasingly important to better understand the ways in which suppliers are shifting their strategies and the risks faced by those who use drugs.

- Alternative development remains a critical pillar of supply reduction policies for farmers in Afghanistan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, Myanmar, Peru and other countries where drugs are illicitly cultivated, to enable sustainable livelihoods outside the drug economy.

- The benefits of a possible drastic reduction in illicit opium cultivation in Afghanistan in 2023 will be global but will be at the expense of many farmers in the country who do not have alternative means of income generation. Shared responsibility calls for donors, in particular those that will benefit most from reduced trafficking of Afghan heroin, to urgently provide support for the people in rural areas of Afghanistan to develop livelihoods away from illicit opiate cultivation.
New research on the use of controlled drugs in treating mental health conditions shows that such treatments have potential but regulators run the risk of increasing harm if public health is not prioritized over commercial interests.

a. Clinical trials involving psychedelics for the treatment of mental health and substance use disorders are proceeding in some jurisdictions at an unprecedented pace, giving some hope that these compounds could be effective in addressing certain treatment-resistant psychological conditions. However, the rapid pace of developments increases the risk that people, in particular young people, will perceive such substances as being “safe” or not harmful, regardless of the context, which in turn could encourage unsupervised, non-medical use.

b. Prioritizing public health concerns remains a challenge in the face of growing commercial interest in developing and profiting from new, legal drug markets. If frameworks for medical use are not well designed and adequately resourced, ensuring access and availability of the drugs for medical purposes, approaches could contribute to the creation of illicit markets through limited supply or diversion of therapies for non-medical use.

c. Diverse approaches are being taken to regulate the medical use of cannabis. The choices that regulators make when defining a medical market determine the porosity of the market. The types of products allowed in the medical market, who gets to produce for the market and who has access to use cannabis under which medical conditions are important considerations and can shape the size and scope of a medical cannabis regime.

d. Regulatory approaches can be designed to ensure sufficient availability of products with proven safety and efficacy, while at the same time restricting access to legitimate medical needs. Such approaches may also limit potential spill-over into a non-medical or recreational use market.
While cannabis trafficking and use affect all regions worldwide, other drug issues pose additional threats in different geographical locations.
DRUG THREATS IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS

Fragile and conflict-affected areas are noted by the presence of UN peacekeeping and political missions.

- Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS)
- Cannabis
- Captagon
- Cocaine
- Khat
- Methamphetamine
- Opiates/opioids
DRUG-BY-DRUG DEVELOPMENTS IN BRIEF

COCAINE

- An estimated 219 million people used cannabis in 2021, representing 0.4 per cent of the global adult population.
- The global level of opioid use remained stable in 2021, with the number of users of pharmaceutical opioids in 2021, compared to 2017, increasing slightly between 2017 and 2019.
- Many countries have made provisions for the medical use of cannabis but the regulatory approaches to medical cannabis differ widely among those countries.

AMPHETAMINE-TYPE STIMULANTS (ATS)

- The prevalence of use and the number of users of amphetamines are highest in North America, with the second largest number of users being in Europe and South-East Asia. In Europe, the number of users fell sharply in 2021, having increased slightly between 2017 and 2019.
- About 38 per cent of all people in drug treatment in 2021 cited opioids as their primary drug of use.
- Opioids remain the most lethal drug of groups, accounting for two-thirds of deaths related directly to drugs (mostly overdoses).

CANNABIS

- An estimated 60 million people used opioids in 2021, representing 1.2 per cent of the global adult population. More people are using opioids in South Asia or South-West Asia than in North America.
- Opiate seizures in South Asia, which increased by 28 per cent in 2021, have increased by 618 in 2021, of which 87 were identified for NPS opioids.
- The global area under opium poppy cultivation increased by 28 per cent in 2022. Opium production decreased by 3 per cent in 2022, but following the drug ban in Afghanistan a substantial increase may be expected in 2023.
- The Balkan route remains the main trafficking route for opioids, with individual drug seizures in 2021, following a downward trend over the previous two years, driven by large decreases in seizures in North America.
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- Afghanistan continued to account for the majority (80 per cent) of global illicit opium production in 2022.
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- The two epidemics of non-medical use of opioids, one related to fentanyl in North America and the other to the non-medical use of tramadol in North Africa, West Africa, the Near East and East and South-East Asia, continue to pose significant health risks.
- In Africa, there have been signs of increases in the non-medical use of tramadol and related harm in recent years.
- In North America, overdose-deaths, driven by the use of fentanyl, reached unprecedented levels during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Access to pharmaceutical opioids for pain management and palliative care continues to vary considerably between low- and middle-income countries and high-income countries.
- The limited data available, mainly from countries a decade earlier. These seizures were small and most commonly involved ketamine, followed by synthetic cathinones and cannabinoids.
- The number of different NPS on the market increased from 555 NPS identified in 2020 to 618 in 2021, of which 87 were identified for the first time.
- Many users of NPS use them unknowingly, consuming the substances as party drugs, and often with fatal consequences.

COCAINA

- An estimated 36 million people used cannabinoids in 2021, representing 0.7 per cent of the global population.
- An estimated 22 million people used cocaine in 2021, representing 0.4 per cent of the global adult population. Half of those were in South America linked to maritime trafficking.
- Periods of lockdown during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic drove increases in the use of cannabinoids, in terms of the amount used and frequency of use.
- Cannabis accounts for a substantial share of drug-related harm globally, owing in part to its high prevalence of use: an estimated 41 per cent of drug-related cases globally are cannabis use disorders (2019). In 2021, around 46 per cent of overdose deaths linked to the non-medical use of cannabinoids were in North America and 28 per cent were in Europe and South-East Asia.
- The use of opioids in 2021, cited by 21.5 million people, was the most common primary drug of use, followed by cannabis at 17.4 per cent of the global adult population.
- The prevalence of use and the number of users of amphetamines is highest in North America, with the second largest number of users being in Europe and South-East Asia.
- An estimated 20 million people used ‘ecstasy’-type substances in 2021, representing 0.4 per cent of the global adult population.
- The gender gap in treatment is particularly acute for women who use ATS, as women account for almost one in two users of amphetamines but only one in four people in treatment for ATS use disorders.
- Methamphetamine manufacture and use have continued to spread beyond the traditional markets for the drug, namely East and South-East Asia and North America, most notably into South-West Asia, Europe and Africa.
- The increase in the use and manufacture of methamphetamine continues to be of growing concern in South-West Asia, where trafficking for the substance is expanding beyond this region.
- Seizures suggest a shift in the manufacture of methamphetamine towards the use of precursors of 1-phenyl-2-propanone (P-2-P) and benzoylcegonine, with the use of precursor compounds.
- In 2020, seizures of cannabis herb and resin increased in the use of amphetamines in 2021 and over the last decade.
- In Africa, there have been signs of increases in the non-medical use of tramadol in North Africa, West Africa, the Near East and East and South-East Asia, continue to pose significant health risks.
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AMPHETAMINE-TYPE STIMULANTS (ATS)

- An estimated 36 million people used amphetamines in 2021, representing 0.7 per cent of the global population.
- Qualitative assessments suggest that cannabis cultivation continued to increase in 2021, although at a lower rate than in 2020.
- Seizures of cannabis resin dropped in 2021 after a record high in 2020 but remained the second highest level ever reported.
- Seizures of cannabis herb declined in 2021, with a substantial increase in 2020, which followed a downward trend over the previous two years, associated with the greatest number of drug use disorders linked to cannabis use.
- Half of those were treated for drug-related harm associated with the greatest number of drug use disorders linked to cannabis use.
- The two epidemics of non-medical use of opioids, one related to fentanyl in North America and the other to the non-medical use of tramadol in North Africa, West Africa, the Near East and East and South-East Asia, continue to pose significant health risks.
- The increase in the use and manufacture of methamphetamine continues to be of growing concern in South-West Asia, where trafficking for the substance is expanding beyond this region.
- Seizures of plant-based NPS, dominated by kratom and khat, continued to fall in 2021 from the record high of 2019.
- A total of 44 countries reported seizures of synthetic NPS in 2020 and 2021, up from 36 countries a decade earlier. These seizures were small and most commonly involved ketamine, followed by synthetic cathinones and cannabinoids.
- The use of ATS is lower than that of other drugs under international control.
- The increase in the use and manufacture of methamphetamine continues to be of growing concern in South-West Asia, where trafficking for the substance is expanding beyond this region.
- Control systems have succeeded in containing the spread of NPS in high-income countries but the geographical reach of NPS trafficking continues to expand.
- In some subregions, such as Eastern Europe and Central Asia, NPS have become a major problem.
- The use of ketamine, which is still among the most used drugs in Eastern and South-East Asia, may be spreading in several subregions; the drug is used both on its own or as part of drug mixtures, the content of which is largely unknown to users.
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REGION-BY-REGION DEVELOPMENTS IN BRIEF

**Demand**

- Use of cannabis is particularly high in West and Central Africa, with a past-year prevalence of use in 2021 of nearly 10 per cent (70 million people), which has sharply increased the prevalence of cannabis use in Nigeria.
- The 2021 estimated prevalence of use of opioids (1.2 per cent) is also high in the sub-region. Non-medical use of tramadol remains a threat, in particular in West and Central Africa.
- The majority of opioid users in other parts of Africa are opiate users, mostly of heroin and, in a few countries, mainly methadone.
- Cocaine use appears to be generally increasing across the continent, in particular in West and Southern Africa, shown by an increase in the number of people in drug treatment, although related data are scarce.
- Wherever the use of, for example the synthetic NPS, is widespread in East Africa, the use of synthetic NPS is most commonly reported in Southern Africa but data regarding both instances are scarce.

**Supply**

- Of the 980,000 persons who inject drugs in Africa, cocaine use appears to be generally increasing across the continent.
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**Key Issues**

- The opioid epidemic related to the non-medical use of opioids and as a result of injecting drug use disorders is increasing in some countries in Europe.
- The region from South-West Asia is trafficked through all of Africa’s subregions, often with the drug movement utilizing existing trade routes to other markets in Africa and consumer markets in Western and Central Europe.
- The prevalence of persons who inject drugs living with HIV is of particular concern in Southern Africa.
- The opioid use in North America remains high, with 5.3 per cent of the adult population reporting use in 2021 (9.0 million people) in 2021.
- South and Central America and the Caribbean are the subregions with the highest proportions of people in treatment drug treatment owing to the use of cocaine production worldwide.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of people who inject drugs in North America, with an estimated 4.7 million people, 1.4 million of whom inject drugs.
- The prevalence of persons who inject drugs in North America is high, with 10 per cent of the population (3.4 million people) using illicit drugs in 2021.
- In North Africa, a hub for interregional cannabis resin trafficking to Western Europe, the drug movement is expanding to South-West Asia and beyond.
- The 2022 opium production in Afghanistan was at all high but the levels the effects of the drug war, announcing in Afghanistan and 70 per cent of global clandestine production.
- There are indications that methamphetamine manufacture in the Americas is expanding to South-West Asia and beyond.
- The methamphetamine market continues to expand in Central and South America.
- NPS use in Central Asia and Transcaucasia appears to be increasing.
- The market for methamphetamine manufactured in Afghanistan is expanding to 10 per cent of its Asian markets.
- The methamphetamine market continues to expand in Central and South America.
- Past-year use of cocaine in the subregion of Australia and New Zealand has the highest prevalence of persons who inject drugs among the general population of 3 per cent.
- Seizures of heroin, morphine, and cocaine increased in Oceania in 2021.
- Overall methamphetamine seizures declined in 2021 but remained at a high level.
- Methamphetamine is both produced within Oceania and imported into the region from South-West Asia and East and South Asia.
- Methamphetamine seizures and seizures of precursor chemicals to methamphetamine in Oceania have declined slightly in 2021 but increased in the long-term by a factor of over ten compared with the year 2021.
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For the first time since its conception, this year the World Drug Report presents the latest global, regional and subregional estimates of and trends in drug demand and supply in a user-friendly, interactive online format. The new online segment is designed to both enhance and simplify access to the wealth of information provided in the report by presenting the data in the form of succinct key findings supported by interactive graphs, infographics and maps.

While Booklet 1 takes the form of an executive summary based on analysis of the key findings of the online segment and the thematic booklet 2, the Special points of interest offer a framework for the main takeaways and the conclusions and policy implications that can be drawn from them. In addition to providing an in-depth analysis of key developments and emerging trends in selected drug markets, including in countries currently experiencing conflict, booklet 2 focuses on contemporary issues related to drugs. The booklet opens with a look at the challenges posed to law enforcement by synthetic drugs, both in terms of their increasing potency, adaptability and ease of manufacture and their shorter supply chains, reduced risk and lower production costs compared with drugs of natural origin. Other law enforcement challenges are considered in the context of the increasing use of social media for buying and selling drugs online. Booklet 2 also examines approaches to regulating the medical cannabis market in different countries and assesses recent developments surrounding the therapeutic, spiritual and non-medical use of substances known as “psychedelics”. The remainder of the booklet focuses on issues related to drugs in specific contexts, including the Amazon Basin, where the convergence of drug crime and crimes that affect the environment poses a threat to natural and human ecosystems. The risk factors for and vulnerability to substance use disorders among forcibly displaced populations are also discussed in the booklet, and the interim outcomes of innovations and modifications of services for people who use drugs during the COVID-19 pandemic are summarized.

The World Drug Report 2023 is aimed not only at fostering greater international cooperation to counter the impact of the world drug problem on health, governance and security, but also at assisting Member States in anticipating and addressing threats posed by drug markets and mitigating their consequences.


The online segment is published on the UNODC website: www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/wdr-2023-online-segment.html