**Findings**

Cannabis is more potent but fewer young people see it as harmful

PERCEPTION AMONG ADOLESCENTS

CANNABIS IS RISKY!

1995 2019

CANNABIS HERB POTENCY

4X INCREASE

1995 2019

**Possible Responses**

» Combat misinformation about the potential impact of the increased strength of cannabis.

» Use fact-based information to raise awareness of the potential harm from non-medical use of cannabis.

» Prioritise public health over private business through a comprehensive ban on advertising.

» Increase investment in research both into the harm cannabis use poses to health and the possible medical uses of the drug.

» Monitor the cannabis markets and the perception of risks associated with cannabis use.

Rising web-based sales could transform global drug use patterns

INCREASE IN DRUG SALES OVER THE DARK WEB

2011 to mid-2017

80 million dollars

mid-2017 to 2020

315 million dollars

nearly x4 increase

» Improve government response to drug trafficking on the internet by forging public/private partnerships with internet service providers, tech companies, shipping and mailing companies.

» Control the drug supply chain on the Internet by removing drug adverts and listings and sharing information with law enforcement.

» Regulate cryptocurrency markets and monitor electronic payments to detect suspicious transactions and illicit financial flows from drug trafficking.

» Enhance expert access to the dark web in order to take down online markets and platforms.
Number of drug users in Africa is projected to rise by 40 per cent by 2030

- Implement an integrated, people-centred and human-rights based approach to empowering African societies to develop sustainable solutions to drug use.
- Help African States define and apply innovative and cost-effective assessment systems for regular monitoring of the drug situation on the continent.
- Cultivate strong partnerships between African Member States and the United Nations system to stem the expected increase in the number of people who use drugs and the possible negative impact on health and security.
Covid-19 has triggered innovation in drug prevention and treatment services

- Audio-only assessments and prescriptions
- Remote consultation
- Service hotlines
- Mobile telephone-enabled outreach programmes
- Internet-based services and training
- Mail services for needles and syringes and naloxone
- Mobile outreach programmes
- Administration of treatment medication without face-to-face meetings
- Vending machines for drug treatment medications
- Methamphetamine agonist treatment

**FINDINGS**

- Maintain COVID-19 adaptations to the delivery of drug-related services in order to increase accessibility and coverage of services.
- Continuously update scientific standards to keep abreast of the acceleration of Internet-based services.
- Prioritize people who use drugs and with drug use disorders for COVID-19 screening and vaccination because of their health vulnerability.

**POSSIBLE RESPONSES**
Drug markets quickly recovered after the onset of the pandemic, but some trafficking dynamics have been accelerated during Covid-19.

**COVID HAS ACCELERATED SOME DRUG TRAFFICKING PATTERNS**

- Larger shipment size
- Increased use of private aircraft
- Increased use of waterway routes
- Contactless methods to deliver drugs to end-consumers

**POSSIBLE RESPONSES**

- Foster international cooperation for fighting the enduring problem of drug trafficking.
- Exchange and transfer law enforcement intelligence and effective interdiction approaches and best practices.
- Develop international accountability mechanisms and practices for shipping and railway companies, postal services, and air cargo.
- Implement real-time data monitoring systems for promptly detecting and addressing drug market changes.

**FINDINGS**

- Drug markets quickly recovered after the onset of the pandemic, but some trafficking dynamics have been accelerated during Covid-19.
Non-medical use of cannabis and sedatives has increased globally during the pandemic

 Allocate sufficient funding in national post-covid-19 budgets for drug prevention and treatment to prevent the acceleration of increasing drug use patterns.


 Pre-empt further increases in the number of people who use cannabis, and the harm arising from its increasing non-medical use, through cost-effective measures such as prevention.

 Covid-19 fallout is likely to be felt in drug markets for years to come

 Support parents and young people in vulnerable circumstances to face the stresses of the pandemic without resorting to negative coping mechanisms.

 Alleviate the negative consequences for vulnerable and marginalized population groups through post-pandemic recovery plans that include housing, food supply, economic assistance and health insurance.

 Increase the effectiveness of alternative development interventions to improve the conditions of rural households.
THE WORLD DRUG PROBLEM
COMMON CHALLENGE
LOCAL DYNAMICS
While cannabis trafficking and use affect all regions worldwide, other drug issues pose additional threats in different geographical locations.
### Demand

- **CANNABIS**
  - Roughly 200 million people used cannabis in 2019 representing 4 per cent of the global population.
  - The figure is highest in North America (14.5 per cent) and lowest in Asia (2 per cent).
  - The number of cannabis users has increased by nearly 18 per cent over the past decade.
  - No data are available on the global illicit cultivation of cannabis but qualitative information suggests an overall expansion between 2010-2019.
  - Between 2009–2019, quantities seized fell by 35 per cent, largely because of dramatic declines in North America partly linked to legalization of non-medical cannabis in some jurisdictions.
  - Excluding North American data, global seizures were 36 per cent higher in 2019 than in 2009.
- **COCAINE**
  - An estimated 20 million people used cocaine in 2019, corresponding to 0.4 per cent of the global population.
  - The prevalence rate of use was the highest in Oceania (2.7 per cent), mainly reflecting the situation in the sub-region Australia and New Zealand, and the lowest in Asia (0.07 per cent).
  - Global prevalence rates have remained stable over the past decade, while the number of people using the drug increased by 22 per cent largely owing to population growth.
  - Global manufacture doubled in output between 2014 and 2019 to reach an estimated 1,784 tons, the highest level ever recorded.
  - The quantity seized more than doubled in the same period, with the Americas accounting for close to 83 per cent of global quantity intercepted in 2019.
  - Following an upward trend over the period 2013–2017, illicit coca cultivation stabilised in 2018 and then declined for the first time in years by 5 per cent in 2019.
- **OPIOIDS**
  - Around 62 million people used opioids for non-medical purposes in 2019, corresponding to 1.2 per cent of the global population.
  - North America (3.6 per cent) has the highest prevalence, Europe the lowest (0.8 per cent).
  - The number of users worldwide has nearly doubled over the past decade, with the increase in the last few years mainly driven by new estimates in Asia and Africa.
  - Following a decline in the area under illicit cultivation of opium poppy from a peak in 2017, it rebounded in 2020, rising by 24 per cent compared with the previous year, to reach 295,000 ha.
  - Global opium production has stabilised since 2018, amounting to 7,430 tons in 2020.
  - Both opium production and opiate seized have shown an upward trend over the past two decades.
  - Most opiate seizures are made in, or close to, the main opium production areas in Asia, which accounted for 76 per cent of all opiates seized worldwide in 2019.
  - Heroin trafficking was reported in 99 countries in 2019, a much higher number than those reporting trafficking in opium or morphine.
  - Quantities of heroin seized in Europe hit a record high in 2019, tripling since 2016, and accounting for 27 per cent of the global total.
  - Seizures of “pharmaceutical opioids” hit peaks in 2014 and in 2019, almost tripling since the previous year to 228 tons.

### Supply

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  - Cocaine manufacture was disrupted during the initial stages of the pandemic but returned to its typical level shortly afterwards.
  - The cocaine trafficking route between South America and Europe is evolving, with greater competition between traffickers pushing up the quality and reducing prices, which is likely to continue to widen the potential harm caused by the drug in Europe.
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  - Seizures of “pharmaceutical opioids” hit peaks in 2014 and in 2019, almost tripling since the previous year to 228 tons.
  - Roughly 50,000 people died from opioid overdoses in the United States in 2019, more than double the 2010 figure. Fentanyl and its analogues now are involved in most of the deaths.
  - North America has seen a spike in opioid overdose deaths since the onset of the pandemic.
  - As the result of the economic downturn triggered by the pandemic, fragile communities in areas of illicit cultivation of drugs are now increasingly vulnerable, especially in Afghanistan, where the appeal of illicit crop cultivation of opium poppy is likely to rise.
  - Access to pharmaceutical opioids in low- and middle-income countries is a tiny fraction of the availability in high-income countries.
### AMPHETAMINE-TYPE STIMULANTS (ATS)

- An estimated 27 million people used amphetamine type stimulants in 2019, corresponding to 0.5 per cent of the global population.
- The figure was highest in North America (2.3 per cent) and lowest in Africa (0.4 per cent), though the data from Africa was patchy.
- Nearly 20 million people globally are estimated to have used “ecstasy” in the past year.
- Amphetamine use varies by region. Non-medical use of pharmaceutical stimulants and methamphetamine is the most prevalent in North America, methamphetamine in East and South East Asia and amphetamine predominates in Western and Central Europe and in the Near and Middle East.

- More than 95 per cent of ATS laboratories uncovered between 2015 and 2019 were used to manufacture methamphetamine, and the drug accounted for 72 per cent of the total quantity of ATS seized in the same period.
- The quantities of ATS seized rose by 64 per cent between 2018 and 2019 to record levels, capping an almost sixfold increase in the past decade while methamphetamine showed a tenfold increase over the same period.
- Ecstasy and amphetamine seizures doubled between 2015 and 2019.
- Roughly 85 per cent of amphetamine laboratories dismantled worldwide between 2015 and 2019 were in Europe, along with more than half of ecstasy laboratories.
- Most methamphetamine was seized in North America (49 per cent) and East and South-East Asia (43 per cent); most amphetamine was seized in the Near and Middle East and South West Asia (49 per cent) and in Europe (26 per cent); and most ecstasy was seized in Europe (43 per cent) and North America (21 per cent) over the period 2015–2019.

### NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES (NPS)

- There are some declines in the use of NPS in North America and in Europe, but NPS use continues among some marginalized population groups.
- The use of NPS appears to be rapidly emerging in some low- and middle-income countries.
- The harms from NPS use, though may vary according to the type of substance, are observed/visible more at the individual rather than at the population level.

- The number of NPS found at global level has been stabilizing in recent years at slightly more than 500 substances (541 in 2019) while the actual number of new psychoactive substances identified for the first time at global level declined from 213 to 71 between 2013 and 2019.
- The number of NPS with opioid effects (often fentanyl analogues), have been growing strongly over the past decade and continued growing in 2018 and in 2019, though at a lesser pace than before.
- Quantities of synthetic NPS seized have declined markedly, including of synthetic cannabinoids.

- National and international drug control systems have succeeded in containing the spread of NPS in high-income countries where different types of legislation have been applied.
- NPS markets are emerging in countries where control systems may be weaker.
- The limited capacity of forensic, law enforcement and health experts to identify different NPS and their use makes it challenging for countries to adequately address the threat of NPS.