



# UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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## **World Drug Report 2017: 29.5 million people globally suffer from drug use disorders, opioids the most harmful**

Vienna/New York/ Geneva, 22 June 2017 – In 2015 about a quarter of a billion people used drugs. Of these, around 29.5 million people - or 0.6 per cent of the global adult population - were engaged in problematic use and suffered from drug use disorders, including dependence. Opioids were the most harmful drug type and accounted for 70 per cent of the negative health impact associated with drug use disorders worldwide, according to the latest World Drug Report, released today by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Disorders related to the use of amphetamines also account for a considerable share of the global burden of disease. And while the market for new psychoactive substances (NPS) is still relatively small, users are unaware of the content and dosage of psychoactive substances in some NPS. This potentially exposes users to additional serious health risks.

The Report finds that hepatitis C is causing the greatest harm among the estimated 12 million people who inject drugs worldwide. Out of this number, one in eight (1.6 million) is living with HIV and more than half (6.1 million) are living with hepatitis C, while around 1.3 million are suffering from both hepatitis C and HIV. Overall, three times more people who use drugs die from hepatitis C (222,000) than from HIV (60,000). However, the Report stresses that despite recent advances in the treatment of hepatitis C, access remains poor, as treatment remains very expensive in most countries.

This year marks 20 years of the World Drug Report, which comes at a time when the international community has decided to move forward with joint action. UNODC Executive Director Yury Fedotov highlighted that the outcome document of the 2016 landmark UN General Assembly special session on the world drug problem contains more than 100 concrete recommendations to reduce demand and supply, however he acknowledges that more needs to be done.

“There is much work to be done to confront the many harms inflicted by drugs to health, development, peace and security, in all regions of the world,” said Mr. Fedotov.

### **Changing business models for drug trafficking and organized crime**

In 2014, transnational organized crime groups across the globe were estimated to have generated between one fifth and one third of their revenues from drug sales. Mobile communications offers new opportunities to traffickers, while the darknet allows users to anonymously buy drugs with a crypto-currency, such as bitcoin. While drug trafficking over the darknet remains small, there has been an increase in drug transactions, of some 50 per cent annually between September 2013 and January 2016 according to one study. Typical buyers are recreational users of cannabis, “ecstasy”, cocaine, hallucinogens and NPS.

### **Global Drug Market Trends**

The spectrum of substances available on the drug market has widened considerably, the Report says. The opioid market in particular is becoming more diversified, with a combination of internationally controlled substances like heroin, and prescription medicines that are either diverted from the legal market or produced as counterfeit medicines. NPS continued to evolve such that by 2015, the number of reported substances had nearly doubled to 483 compared with 260 NPS in 2012.

Opium production is up and the cocaine market is thriving. In 2016, global opium production increased by one third compared with the previous year and this was primarily due to higher opium poppy yields in

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Afghanistan. The Report also points to the expansion of the cocaine market, such that from 2013-2015, coca bush cultivation increased by 30 per cent mainly as a result of increased cultivation in Colombia. Following a period of decline, there are signs that cocaine use is increasing in the two largest markets, North America and Europe.

### **Drugs and terrorism**

Although not all terrorist groups depend on drug profits, some do. Without the proceeds of drug production and trafficking, which make up almost half of the Taliban's annual income, the reach and impact of the Taliban would probably not be what it is today. Up to 85 per cent of opium cultivation in Afghanistan occurs in territory under some influence of the Taliban.

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The World Drug Report and further content is available here:

The 2017 World Drug Report provides a global overview of the supply and demand of opiates, cocaine, cannabis, amphetamine-type stimulants and new psychoactive substances (NPS), as well as their impact on health. It highlights the scientific evidence for hepatitis C causing greatest harm among people who use drugs; and brings into view further diversification of the thriving drug market, as well as changing business models for drug trafficking and organized crime.

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