Estimates of global numbers of people using drugs 2018

Estimated total number of (past-year) drug users: 269 million (range: 166-373 million) 5.4% of population aged 15-64 (range: 3.3%-7.5%)

Estimated number of people suffering from drug use disorders: 36 million (range: 19-52 million) 0.7% of population aged 15-64 (range: 0.4%-1%)
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Prevalence of drug use and drug use disorders, 2006–2018

Number of people who use drugs and people with drug use disorders, 2006–2018

Source: UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire.
Drug use accounts for 42 million disability adjusted life-years (DALYs) lost or 585,000 deaths; opioids account for half of DALYs.

Deaths related to tobacco: 8.1 million
alcohol: 2.8 million
i.e. drugs account for 5% of all deaths linked to use of psychoactive substances

Healthy life years lost (DALYs) related to tobacco: 213 million years
alcohol: 108 million years
i.e. drugs account for 12% of all DALYs lost linked to use of psychoactive substances.

Gains in the reduction of overdose deaths attributed to pharmaceutical opioids partly offset by the continuing increase in deaths attributed to synthetic opioids.
Trends in new opioids seizures (mostly fentanyl and fentanyl analogues)

Quantities of fentanyls seized, 2014-2018

North America: 98.9%
Europe: 0.6%
The threat of synthetic opioids: high profits and high harm

Fentanyl profits
- Retail: $1-1.5 ml
- Production: $1,400-3,500

Heroin profits
- Retail: $400,000
- Production: $5,000-7,000
Non-medical use of tramadol: the other opioid crisis

- Non-medical use of tramadol is of particular concern among young people in many countries in Africa (Western Africa and Northern Africa).

- Non-medical doses often 2-3 times stronger than tablets used for medical purposes.

- In Nigeria (and several other countries of Western Africa), tramadol appears to be a more accessible opioid than heroin.

- In Nigeria, use of tramadol appears to cost about one third the price of heroin ($3.60 versus $10 per day of use in the past 30 days).
Double crisis: "too little and too much"; extremely uneven access to pharmaceutical opioids for medical purposes: 12% of the global population has access to 90% of pharmaceutical
Global opium cultivation and production

Opium poppy cultivation in

- Afghanistan:
  2017: 328,000 ha
  2018: 263,000 ha, -20%
  2019: 163,000 ha, -38%

- Myanmar:
  2017: 41,000 ha
  2018: 37,300 ha, -9%
  2019: 33,100 ha, -11%

- Mexico:
  2016/17: 30,600 ha
  2017/18: 28,300 ha, -8%

Average opium production 2015-2019

South-West Asia
  Afghanistan: 84%

South-East Asia
  Myanmar: 7%
  Lao PDR: ≈1%

Latin America:
  Mexico: 6%
  Colombia and Guatemala: <1%
Coca cultivation and cocaine manufacture: record high

Coca cultivation in

**Colombia:**
- 2017: 171,000 ha
- 2018: 169,000 ha (-1%)
- 2019: 154,000 ha (-9%)
- Change: -2% of total

**Peru:**
- 2017: 49,900 ha
- 2018: 23,100 ha (-6%)

**Bolivia (Plurinational State of):**
- 2017: 24,500 ha
- 2018: 23,100 ha (-6%)

Sources: UNODC, coca cultivation surveys in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia and Peru, 2018 and previous years; United States Department of State, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, various years.

Note: The 2018 global estimate is preliminary as comparable data for Peru are not available.
Expansion of ATS market

**FIG. 16** Global quantities of amphetamine-type stimulants seized, 1998–2018

**FIG. 17** Distribution of the average annual quantity of amphetamine-type stimulants seized, by subregion, 2014–2018

Source: UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire.
NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES

NPS: three times the number of controlled substances

However:

Potentially harmful opioid new psychoactive substances are on the increase

Use of NPS may become cemented among vulnerable population groups (homeless, prisoners etc.)

Regulating new psychoactive substances appears to have a containment effect
Effects of NPS control

Following the introduction on NPS legislation, in Austria (2008 and 2012) use of NPS remained low in Austria. NPS use appears to have increased in Germany for several years; once NPS legislation was introduced in 2016, NPS use stopped growing.
Cannabis seizure trends

FIG. 39  Global cannabis seizures: quantities and seizure cases, 1998–2018

- Quantities seized (tons)
- Number of seizure cases

- Cannabis herb
- Cannabis resin
- Seizure cases of cannabis herb and resin
Cannabis use in Colorado and Washington where cannabis was first legalized

Cannabis users USA:
Change 2008-2018
Past year use: +68%
Past month use: +81%
Daily or near daily use: +124%

Public health outcomes: emergency department visits and hospitalization in Colorado

Colorado: cannabis-related emergency department visits and hospitalizations, United States, 2011–2017

Colorado: cannabis-related emergency department visits and hospitalizations, by age group, United States, 2011–2017

Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, "Colorado Hospital Association data".
Public safety outcomes: Cannabis-related driving and crime in Washington and Colorado
Many cannabis users continue purchasing cannabis from illegal sources

Despite legalization significant numbers of people (some 40% of cannabis users in Canada in 2019) obtain their cannabis from the illicit market
Darknet as a source of drugs: markets shutdowns and resilience

- Long-term upward trend
- Short-life span of darknet markets
- Temporary loss of confidence following the dismantling of darknet markets, market shutdowns and exit scams in recent years
- The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have increased again trafficking over the darknet in 2020, notably retail trafficking
Short lifespan of darknet markets (on average ≈ 8 months)

Most of the darknet markets selling drugs operational in 2019 had been launched only in 2018.

Darknet: attracting new users

FIG. 74 Share of people who had not consumed drugs prior to their first purchase of drugs on the darknet, among Internet users purchasing drugs over the darknet, 2015–2020

Source: *Global Drug Survey 2020* and previous years: detailed findings on drug cryptomarkets.

FIG. 76 Year in which Internet users who purchase drugs via the darknet obtained their first drug through the darknet, reported in January 2020

Source: *Global Drug Survey 2020*: detailed findings on drug cryptomarkets.
Long-term upward trend in most countries across all regions

Source: UNODC calculations based on the Global Drug Survey 2020 data and previous years' detailed findings on drug cryptomarkets.

Note: The Global Drug Survey is based on a convenience sample of 100,000 to 500,000 people every year, of whom 50,000 to 90,000 replied to questions on drug purchases over the darknet. All regional averages are weighted by the population of each country. North America: averages based on information from respondents in Canada and the United States. Europe: averages based on information from respondents in 25 European countries (not included are data from the Russian Federation, which are only available for 2018 and 2020; Oceania: averages based on information from respondents in Australia and New Zealand; Latin America: averages based on information from respondents in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico (not included are data from Argentina and Chile, which are only available for 2020 and 2019, respectively).

Data for either January 2014 or January 2020 were not available, data from the most recent year available were taken as a proxy.
Drug supply over darknet – though rising fast - remains modest compared to overall illicit retail drug sales.

0.2 \approx 0.1–0.2\% of US and EU drug retail sales

Sources: Gregory Midgette, Steven Davenport, Jonathan P. Caulkins and Beau Kilmer, What America’s Users Spend on Illegal Drugs, 2006–2016 (RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California, 2019); EMCDDA and Europol, EU Drug Markets Report 2019; EMCDDA, “Analysis of the supply of drugs and new psychoactive substances by Europe-based vendors via darknet markets in 2017–18”.
Global drug market: Expansion

- 30% more users between 2009-2018
- 2008-2017: deaths increased by a quarter
- Highest cocaine production in 2018
- Abundant opium production
- Seizures of ATS quadrupled between 2009-2018
Expansion in developing countries

Between 2000-2018

- Total population grew by 28% in developing countries and by 7% in developed countries

- Population 18-25 grew by 18% in developing countries and decreased by 10% in developed countries

Sources: UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire; and United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2019 Revision.
Global drug market: increased complexity
With controls on precursor chemicals drug manufacturers innovate
Higher socioeconomic groups may have a greater propensity to initiate drug use than lower socioeconomic groups, but it is the people in the lower socioeconomic groups that are more likely to progress from drug use to drug user disorder and therefore pay the highest price.

Zoom on: women, sexually diverse populations, indigenous and aboriginal peoples, ethnic groups and immigrants, displaced persons, people in rural settings.
International cooperation: development assistance

FIG. 19 Commitments and disbursement of funds by donor countries reporting to the Development Assistance Committee on development assistance in general and development assistance dedicated to drug control, 2000-2017

FIG. 21 Donors of development assistance funds dedicated to drug control, 2002-2017

(N = $1.093 billion per year in constant 2017 dollars)

Source: OECD, OECD.Stat, Development, Flows based on individual projects, “Creditor Reporting System (CRS)”. Note: The statistics include information provided by observers of international institutions such as the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and various regional development banks, as well as by other OECD member countries and non-OECD-member DAC “participants”, including several oil-producing countries, such as Gulf States, the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan.
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE – Impact?

**FIG. 23** Growth in global cocaine manufacture and global quantities of cocaine seized, 1980–2018

**FIG. 24** Growth in global opium production and global quantities of opiates seized, including heroin, 1980–2018

Sources: UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire (for data on seizures); UNODC, opium poppy surveys, and responses to the annual report questionnaire; and United States, Department of State, International Narcotics Control Strategy Reports (for opium production estimates).

Note: The 2018 estimates of cocaine manufacture are provisional.
Alternative development

Source: UNODC and Afghanistan, Minister of Counter-Narcotics stan Opium Survey Report 2016 (May 2017) and UNODC and l ing Resilience to Opium Poppy Cultivation in Shan State, Myan further information.

Notes: The SDG indicators in the graphs are interpretative elements of Goal indicators themselves, of which there are 247. The development of the villages affected (red line) and villages not affected (blue line) by illicit better the situation of the villages is in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the areas of health, education, and income. The graph illustrates the impact of alternative development projects on the reduction of poppy cultivation and the improvement of living conditions in affected villages.

Fig. 26: Development gap

Fig. 33: Number of alternative development projects, by main objective and country, 2013-2017


Notes: N = 53. The main objectives are those as stated in the project documents and are not mutually exclusive. The numbers refer to the number of projects for each stated main objective. The projects had one or more main objectives.
Drugs and violence

**FIG. 38** Homicide rates in Honduras and Mexico, 2007–2018

- **Homicide rate in Honduras** (victims per 100,000 population)
- **Homicide rate in Mexico** (victims per 100,000 population)

**Source:** UNODC, homicide statistics, and national sources.

**FIG. 37** Homicide rates in South-Eastern Europe, selected countries, 2000–2016

- **Serbia**
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**
- **Romania**
- **Bulgaria**
- **Croatia**
- **North Macedonia**

**Source:** UNODC, homicide statistics.
COVID: changed risks and opportunities

- Production: reduced opportunity to sell and shortage of precursor chemicals

- Trafficking: it depends by mode of transportation, softer impact on maritime routes

- Increased border controls in the Americas leading to a reduction in trafficking

- Use: shortage in some countries, reduced accessibility to services
COVID-19: the threat

- Risk for low-cost, high-quality drugs from stockpiles when restrictions are lifted

- Drug production and often trafficking is related to precarious situation of the local (rural) population

- Worsening of living conditions in producing countries may lead to an increase in drug production and manufacture on the long run
COVID-19: the threat

- In the short term, drug use may have decreased, although specific problems for marginalised groups remain.

- In the long term, the looming economic crisis may lead to a lasting transformation of the markets.

- Poverty, unemployment and a more precarious socio-economic situation can be conducive to substance use and to related (often criminal) behaviour.

- Studies from the 2008 financial crisis showed that:
  - Drug use patterns became more harmful.
  - A shift to cheaper drugs and towards injecting drug use.
  - While government budgets to address the drug problem decreased.
FIG. 78  Sales of cannabis by weight category on Cannazon market, January–March 2020

THANK YOU
FOR YOUR ATTENTION

World Drug Report 2020

For more information:
http://www.unodc.org/