



2008 World Drug Report

The past few *World Drug Reports* (WDR) have indicated illicit drug use was being contained. In 2007, the WDR said that: “For almost every kind of illicit drug - cocaine, heroin, cannabis and amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) - there are signs of overall stability, whether we speak of cultivation, production or consumption.” But there is concern in the 2008 Report that this stability could be undermined as the drug traffickers adapt to the changing markets for their products.

Afghanistan had a record opium harvest; expanding its cultivation by 17%. Opiate cultivation in Myanmar increased by 29% in 2007. Afghanistan’s higher yielding opium poppy led to a second year of global opium production increases. “In 2007, Afghanistan alone accounted for over 92% of the global opium production.” Coca cultivation, which had been falling in South America, has increased in Bolivia, Columbia and Peru. However, cocaine production has remained stable because of lower coca crop yields. Two critical priorities are then lowering opiate poppy cultivation, especially in Afghanistan; and returning to steadily declining coca cultivation. Two additional global drug worries are that Afghanistan has become a major producer of cannabis resin; and indoor cultivation of cannabis in developed countries like the US is producing more potent strains of marijuana. Future concerns should also address the potential for drug traffickers to target developing countries as their efforts in richer countries is thwarted.

Nevertheless, there has been a containment of *problem* drug use to merely .6% of the global population aged 15 to 64. The proportion of drug users in 2008 (4.9%) has remained stable for the fourth straight year, within the 4.7% to 5.0% range. The following table illustrates the extent of estimated drug abuse worldwide.

Table 1.
Extent of Global Drug Use

| | Cannabis | Amphetamine-like stimulants | | Cocaine | Opiates | of which is Heroin |
|------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| | | Amphetamines | Ecstasy | | | |
| Abusers in millions | 165.6 | 24.7 | 9 | 16 | 16.5 | 12 |
| % of global population 15-64 | 3.90% | 0.60% | 0.20% | 0.40% | 0.40% | 0.30% |

reproduced from the World Drug Report 2008

Opium and Heroin

Afghanistan retained its position as a dominant player in the worldwide opium market. Eighty-two percent of the global area under opium poppy cultivation is in Afghanistan; 12% in Myanmar; and 6% in the rest of the world. In 2007, over two-thirds of Afghanistan's opium cultivation occurred in its southern provinces; 53% in the Hilmand province alone. The increased cultivation of opium in Myanmar had a relatively small impact on global increases due to the dominant position of Afghanistan, but it reverses a trend of declining poppy cultivation in SouthEast Asia over the past decade. Global opium production had its highest recorded annual levels in twenty years. Once again in 2007 Afghanistan dominated global production figures. Ninety-two percent of the world's opium was produced in Afghanistan; 5% in Myanmar; and 2% in the rest of the world.

With opium production shifting to the southern provinces in Afghanistan, it has become less convenient for traffickers to move opiates along the more northern Silk Route in Afghanistan, so trafficking through the Balkans has increased. Within the European part of the Balkan route, almost 60% of all heroin and morphine seizures were made in West Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia). This is up from 8% in 1996.

Table 2
Global Opiate Use

| Geographic Area | Population of Opiate Users in Millions | % of population 15-64 years |
|-----------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Europe | 3.59 | 0.7 |
| West & Central Europe | 1.45 | 0.5 |
| South-East Europe | 0.14 | 0.2 |
| Eastern Europe | 2 | 1.4 |
| North America | 1.33 | 0.5 |
| United States | 1.2 | 0.6 |
| South America | 0.85 | 0.3 |
| Asia | 9.33 | 0.4 |
| Oceania | 0.08 | 0.4 |
| Africa | 1.36 | 0.3 |
| Global | 16.54 | 0.4 |

Global opiate consumption has been relatively stable, with only a marginal increase in annual prevalence from .37% of the population 15-65 in 2005 to .39% in 2006; an estimated 16.5 million people. Use continues to be stable in Europe and to decline in North America. Consumption continues to expand in Afghanistan and its bordering countries. More than half of the world's opiate using population (9.3 million) lives in Asia, with the highest levels of abuse following the main drug trafficking routes out of Afghanistan. Estimates in the Near & Middle East/ South-West Asia sub-region have a prevalence rate of 1%. Above average prevalence rates exist in Iran (2.8%), Afghanistan (1.4%) and Pakistan (.7%). The province of Baluchistan in Pakistan, along the main trafficking route from southern Afghanistan to Iran, has a prevalence rate of

1.1%. Europe remains the second largest consumer market for opiates, with Eastern Europe leading with a 1.4% prevalence rate. See Table 2 above for estimates of global opiate use by geographic area.

Heroin remains the most widely used opiate. Globally, an estimated 72% of the world's 16.5 million opiate users use heroin. European estimates suggest that 90% of its opiate users use heroin. In Western Europe other opioids, including maintenance drugs such as methadone and buprenorphine, are often consumed with heroin. In South America, most opiate consumption is synthetic opioids diverted from legal sources; less than 30% is heroin. Non-medical use of synthetic opioids in the USA (such as codeine, Oxycontin, Propoxyphene, etc.) increased from 4.7% to 5.1% of the population age 12 and above from 2002 to 2006. If the non-medical use of synthetic opioids in the USA was included with the use of heroin and morphine, the overall annual prevalence rate for non-medical opioid use would exceed 5% of the adult population. The total opioids prevalence rate would be around 5.5%—almost ten times the level of heroin use in the USA. Excluding synthetic opioids, heroin accounts for about 95% of opiate use in North America.

Cocaine

In 2007, coca cultivation rose 16% in Bolivia, Columbia and Peru. The increase was led by a 27% increase in the area under cultivation in Columbia, reversing a trend towards lower cultivation noted in 2006. Despite the increases in Columbia, the level of coca cultivation for 2007 is 40% lower than it was in 2000. Colombia continues lead in the global production of coca leaves with 60%, followed by Peru (29%) and Bolivia (10%) respectively. The global area under cultivation is 18% lower than the level in 2000. Lower yields seemed to limit production, keeping the global production of cocaine fairly stable. "Overall production remained roughly at 2006 levels."

The global stabilization of cocaine use over the past few years seems to have resulted from a combination of lower cocaine use in North America, coupled with increases in South and Central America, in Western Europe and West and Southern Africa. The decline in North American cocaine use may be attributed to price increases of more than 40%, following successful law enforcement operations against drug trafficking organizations. The largest number of cocaine users is still found in North America, 7.1 million people or 45% of the world total. West & Central Europe is next with 3.9 million or 24% of the world total; followed by South America (including

Central America and the Caribbean) with 3.1 million or 19% of the world total. See Table 3 for estimates of global cocaine use by geographic area.

Table 3
Global Cocaine Use

| Geographic Area | Population of Cocaine Users in Millions | % of population 15-64 years |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Europe | 4.008 | 0.73 |
| West & Central Europe | 3.895 | 1.22 |
| South-East Europe | 0.067 | 0.08 |
| Eastern Europe | 0.046 | 0.03 |
| North America | 7.1 | 2.42 |
| South America | 3.1 | 1.05 |
| Asia | 0.034 | 0.01 |
| Oceania | 0.03 | 1.37 |
| Africa | 1.147 | 0.22 |
| Global | 15.987 | 0.37 |

Most of the global increase in cocaine use over the past decade can be attributed to the rise of cocaine use in Europe, but there are some indications of a future stabilization of that trend. There has been a noticeable increase of cocaine use in Africa, primarily in western and southern Africa, and along the Atlantic coast of North Africa. This increase follows the use of these areas as transshipment locations for cocaine destined for Europe. Cocaine use in Asian countries is on the rise as well; perhaps because of rising levels of affluence.

Most Latin American countries have reported rising levels of cocaine use. The only documented exception of this upward trend is Chile. “Cocaine use in Chile increased

strongly in the late 1990s but gradually declined after 2000.” While cocaine use in the Oceania region was reported as largely stable in 2006, a new household survey conducted in Australia indicated a reversal of that trend, showing a statistically significant increase in cocaine use over 2004-07.

Cannabis

Globally, the cannabis market has remained stable, but it has some specific regional developments. Declines in use have been noted in North America, West and Central Europe, and Oceania; while use continues to increase in Mexico, Central and South America, Africa, and Asia. The regions noting declines in cannabis use are all areas where high THC cannabis is cultivated hydroponically. Another disturbing trend is that Afghanistan has been increasing its production of cannabis resin. In 2007 the area under cultivation for cannabis in Afghanistan was equivalent to over a third of the area under opium poppy cultivation.

Cannabis is by far the most commonly used drug in the world, with an estimated 3.9 percent of the global population aged 15 to 64 who have used it. It continues to dominate the global drug market in terms of pervasiveness of cultivation, volume of production, and number of consumers. But unlike other drugs, trafficked mostly within the geographic regions in which it is grown.

The prevalence rates are highest in Oceania, followed by North America, and Africa. The highest rates in Africa are found in the countries of West and Central Africa (12.6%), and the countries of southern Africa (8.4%). While Asia has the lowest prevalence rate, it has the largest number of estimated users at 51 million.

Cannabis herb production (versus resin, hashish) continues its concentration in North America; Mexico, the United States and Canada respectively. The cultivation of cannabis takes place throughout the USA, but is particularly widespread in California, Washington, Oregon, Hawaii, and the Appalachian region of Kentucky and Tennessee. The largest producer of cannabis herb in West and Central Europe is the Netherlands. Morocco seems to still be the world’s largest producer of cannabis resin, but its importance has been declining in recent years, as the Afghanistan cultivation of cannabis approaches that of Morocco. See Table 4 for global estimates of cannabis use.

Table 4
Global Cannabis Use

| Geographic Area | Population of Cannabis Users in Millions | % of population 15-64 years |
|-----------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Europe | 29.2 | 5.3 |
| West & Central Europe | 22.1 | 6.9 |
| South-East Europe | 1.7 | 2 |
| Eastern Europe | 5.4 | 3.7 |
| North America | 30.6 | 10.5 |
| South America | 9.9 | 3.4 |
| Asia | 51.1 | 2 |
| Oceania | 3.2 | 14.5 |
| Africa | 41.6 | 8 |
| Global | 165.6 | 3.9 |

Cannabis use has stabilized, and even shown a slight decline in the USA, from prevalence rates of 11% in 2002 to 10.3% in 2006. Cannabis use has also fallen substantially in the United States over the past thirty years, from 18.1% of the population in 1979, to 10.3% in 2006. Latin American and African countries have increased cannabis use, while European countries such as England, France and Germany show downward trends in cannabis use. Declining rates of use were noted in Australia and New Zealand as well.

Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS)

The overall stabilization with ATS continues; and is attributed to the effective control of precursor chemicals (such as ephedrine and pseudo-ephedrine) used to produce ATS. In some regions, manufacturers are already circumventing the controls

by substituting with substances outside international controls, such as pharmaceutical preparations, natural ephedra plant extracts, and uncontrolled chemicals. Trafficking routes continue to develop in places that lack the enforcement and forensics infrastructure to detect precursor trafficking. These new routes have a wide geographical spread and include even Africa and West Asia, South and Central America, often starting from East Asia, or South Asia.

Table 5
Global Amphetamine Use

| Geographic Area | Population of Amphetamine Users in Millions | % of population 15-64 years |
|----------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Europe | 2.49 | 0.45 |
| West & Central Europe | 1.95 | 0.61 |
| South-East Europe | 0.18 | 0.21 |
| Eastern Europe | 0.35 | 0.24 |
| North America | 3.72 | 1.27 |
| South America | 1.96 | 0.66 |
| Asia | 13.75 | 0.53 |
| Oceania | 0.47 | 2.14 |
| Africa | 2.26 | 0.43 |
| Global | 24.65 | 0.58 |

The contraction in US domestic manufacturing has led to an increase of manufacturing in Mexico and to a lesser extent, Canada. This seems to imply that larger and more organized groups are becoming involved in the ATS trade. While trafficking in ATS remains primarily an intra-regional matter, there are growing

indications that it is becoming an inter-regional problem. Trafficking in ATS precursor chemicals continues to be mostly inter-regional, with the majority of precursor chemicals coming from South, East, and South-East Asia.

While the number of meth labs worldwide has decreased dramatically, methamphetamine manufacture has not. Although small kitchen-laboratories are still more common, methamphetamine is increasingly manufactured in super or mega-laboratories. A mega-lab has the capacity to produce 1,000 kg or more per production cycle; a super-lab has the capacity to produce 4.5 kg or more per production cycle.

Nearly 14 million people, close to 55% of the world’s estimated amphetamine users live in Asia; most in East and South-East Asia. In contrast, the total number of amphetamine users in North America are estimated at around 3.7 million people or 15% of global users. Europe accounts for 10% of all users, about 2.7 million individuals; Africa, 2.3 million, 9%; and South America, 2 million, 8%. See Table 5 above for information on global amphetamine use.

Summary

Cannabis is far and away the most widely used illicit drug worldwide in terms of overall users and percent of the world’s population between 15 and 64. Surprisingly, amphetamine-type stimulants are more popular globally than opiates or cocaine. See Table 6 below.

Table 6
Global Use of Drug Types

| Type of Drug | Global Population of Users in Millions | % of Global Population 15-64 years |
|--------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Opiates | 16.54 | 0.4 |
| Cocaine | 15.99 | 0.37 |
| Cannabis | 165.6 | 3.9 |
| ATS | 24.65 | 0.58 |

Regionally, Asia has the highest number of users in three of the four types of drugs, opiates, cannabis and ATS; but this is the result of its much larger population than other regions. When the number of users is calculated as a percentage of the regional population, Eastern Europe has the highest percentage of opiate users; North America has the highest percentage of cocaine users; and Oceania (which includes Australia) had the highest percentage of cannabis and ATS users. See Table 7 below.

Table 7
Regional Use of Drug Types

| Type of Drug | Region and Users in Millions | | Region and % Population 15-64 years | |
|--------------|------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|------|
| Opiates | Asia | 9.33 | Eastern Europe | 1.4 |
| Cocaine | North America | 7.1 | North America | 2.42 |
| Cannabis | Asia | 51.1 | Oceania | 14.5 |
| ATS | Asia | 13.75 | Oceania | 2.14 |

This regional diversity among types of drugs hides the fact that North America, particularly the US, continues to be the primary market for global illicit drug trade. When the regions are ranked by the percentage of their population using an illicit drug, North America places first or second in all four drug types. In contrast, Europe only ranked in the top two spots for one type of drug, opiates. See Table 8 below.

Table 8
Selected Regional Ranking by Drug Types

| Type of Drug | North America Ranking by % Population 15-64 years | | European Ranking % Population 15-64 years | |
|--------------|---|------|---|-----|
| Opiates | 2nd | .5 | 1st | .7 |
| Cocaine | 1st | 2.4 | 4th | .73 |
| Cannabis | 2nd | 10.5 | 4th | 5.3 |
| ATS | 2nd | 1.27 | 5th | .45 |

You can review the original [2008 World Drug Report](#) for a more detailed discussion of the regional and global trends for each type of drug. Information on topics not covered here, such as ecstasy and drug trafficking, are in the original report. There is a whole chapter devoted to a look back at the last 100 years of drug control. It opens with a brief history of the opium trade and efforts to address the largest substance abuse problem the world has ever faced: the Chinese opium epidemic.