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The Challenge of Synthetic Drugs in East and South-East Asia

Trends and Patterns of Amphetamine-type Stimulants and New Psychoactive Substances

Global SMART Programme

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Included in this assessment are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, China, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

Data on methamphetamine and ecstasy presented in the regional overview include Japan and the Republic of Korea.

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A Report from the Global SMART Programme
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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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General Abbreviations

ARQ	annual report questionnaire
ATS	amphetamine-type-stimulants
BNN	National Narcotics Board (Indonesia)
CCDAC	Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (Myanmar)
CNB	Central Narcotics Bureau (Singapore)
DAINAP	Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific
DDB	Dangerous Drugs Board (Philippines)
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration (USA)
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EWA	UNODC Early Warning Advisory on New Psychoactive Substances
HONLEA	Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (Asia and the Pacific)
IDS	Individual Drug Seizures
INCB	International Narcotics Control Board
KCS	Korean Customs Service
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LCDC	Lao National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision
NACD	National Authority for Combating Drugs (Cambodia)
NADA	National Anti-Drugs Agency (Malaysia)
NNCC	National Narcotics Control Commission (China)
NPS	New Psychoactive Substances
ONCB	Office of the Narcotics Control Board (Thailand)
PDEA	Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency
RMP	Royal Malaysia Police
SMART	Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends
SODC	Standing Office on Drugs and Crime (Viet Nam)
SPO	Supreme Prosecutors' Office (Republic of Korea)
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Chemical Abbreviations

2C-B	4-Bromo-2,5-dimethoxyphenethylamine
2C-I	4-Iodo-2,5-dimethoxyphenethylamine
4-MMC	4-Methylmethcathinone (also known as mephedrone)
4-FMC	1-(4-Fluorophenyl)-2-methylaminopropan-1-one (also known as flephedrone)
5-APDB	5-(2-Aminopropyl)-2,3-dihydrobenzofuran 1-(2,3-Dihydro-1-benzofuran-5-yl)propan-2-amine
5-MeO-MiPT	5-Methoxy- <i>N</i> -isopropyl- <i>N</i> -methyltryptamine
5F-AB-PINACA	<i>N</i> -(1-amino-3-methyl-1-oxobutan-2-yl)-1-(5-fluoropentyl)-1 <i>H</i> -indazole-3-carboxamide
5F-ADBICA	<i>N</i> -(1-amino-3,3-dimethyl-1-oxobutan-2-yl)-1-(5-fluoropentyl)-1 <i>H</i> -indole-3-carboxamide
5F-MN-24	1-(5-Fluoropentyl)- <i>N</i> -(naphthalen-1-yl)-1 <i>H</i> -indole-3-carboxamide
25B-NBOMe	2-(4-Bromo-2,5-dimethoxyphenyl)- <i>N</i> -[(2-methoxyphenyl)methyl]ethanamine
25C-NBOMe	2-(4-Chloro-2,5-dimethoxyphenyl)- <i>N</i> -(2-methoxybenzyl)ethanamine
25I-NBOMe	2-(4-Iodo-2,5-dimethoxyphenyl)- <i>N</i> -(2-methoxybenzyl)ethanamine
AB-CHMINACA	<i>N</i> -(1-amino-3-methyl-1-oxobutan-2-yl)-1-(cyclohexylmethyl)-1 <i>H</i> -indazole-3-carboxamide
AKB-48	<i>N</i> -(adamantan-1-yl)-1-pentyl-1 <i>H</i> -indazole-3-carboxamide
<i>alpha</i> -PVP	<i>alpha</i> -Pyrrolidinopentiophenone
AM-2201	[1-(5-Fluoropentyl)-1 <i>H</i> -indol-3-yl]-1-naphthalenyl-methanone
bk-MDMA	3,4-Methylenedioxy- <i>N</i> -methcathinone (also known as methylone)
bk-MDDMA	1-(3,4-methylenedioxyphenyl)-2-dimethylaminopropan-1-one
BZP	1-Benzylpiperazine
CB-13	1-Naphthalenyl[4-(pentylox)-1-naphthalenyl]-methanone
DMA	<i>N,N</i> -Dimethylamphetamine
DMAA	Dimethylamylamine
FUB-144	[1-(4-fluorobenzyl)-1 <i>H</i> -indol-3-yl](2,2,3,3-tetramethylcyclopropyl)methanone
JWH-018	(1-Pentyl-1 <i>H</i> -indol-3-yl)-1-naphthalenyl-methanone
JWH-081	(4-Methoxy-1-naphthalenyl)(1-pentyl-1 <i>H</i> -indol-3-yl)-methanone
JWH-210	(4-Ethyl-1-naphthalenyl)(1-pentyl-1 <i>H</i> -indol-3-yl)-methanone
mCPP	1-(3-chlorophenyl)piperazine
MDA	3,4-Methylenedioxyamphetamine
MDEA	3,4-Methylenedioxyethylamphetamine
MDEC	1-(3,4-methylenedioxyphenyl)-2-ethylaminopropan-1-ol
MDMA	3,4-Methylenedioxyamphetamine
MDMB-CHMICA	methyl 2-(1-(cyclohexylmethyl)-1 <i>H</i> -indole-3-carboxamido)-3,3-dimethylbutanoate
MDPV	3,4-Methylenedioxyprovalerone
NM-2201	Naphthalen-1-yl 1-(5-fluoropentyl)-1 <i>H</i> -indole-3-carboxylate
P-2-P	1-phenyl-2-propanone
PMMA	4-Methoxymethamphetamine, <i>N</i> -Methyl-1-(4-methoxyphenyl)propan-2-amine
STS-135	<i>N</i> -Adamantyl-1-fluoropentylindole-3-carboxamide
TFMPP	1-(3-Trifluoromethylphenyl)piperazine
UR-144	(1-Pentyl-1 <i>H</i> -indol-3-yl)(2, 2,3,3-tetramethylcyclopropyl)-methanone

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Regional trends: East and South-East Asia

Summary, emerging trends and concerns

- There is no sign of respite in the expansion of the methamphetamine market in East and South-East Asia. Seizures of both forms of methamphetamine - tablets and crystalline - reached record highs in 2015, and most countries in the region noted increasing use of methamphetamine.
- Both the number and the scale of illicit methamphetamine manufacture facilities continue to increase to meet the rapidly rising demand for methamphetamine in the region. In 2015, approximately 630 illicit synthetic drug manufacturing facilities were dismantled in the region. Of these, the majority were methamphetamine manufacturing facilities.
- The retail prices of crystalline methamphetamine in countries in East and South-East Asia are high, and might be a key driver for intensified intra-regional and inter-regional methamphetamine trafficking.
- Substantial quantities of precursor chemicals, which can be used for manufacture of methamphetamine, have been seized in the region with recent trends indicating a diversification of precursors and methods used.
- Tablets sold as “ecstasy” in the region contain various substances other than MDMA, including new psychoactive substances (NPS).
- The production of opiates in the region has been relatively stable between 2013 and 2015 but remains at a comparatively high level. Heroin trafficking and use remains a key concern in the region.
- A wide range of new psychoactive substances have been identified in East and South-East Asia. These include potent synthetic opioids, such as derivatives of fentanyl, which have been implicated in the ongoing opioid overdose crisis in North America.

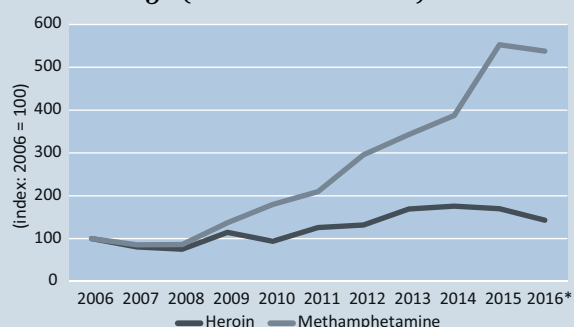
Overview of the methamphetamine market

The data on seizure, manufacture, and use indicate that there is no sign of slowing down in the expansion of methamphetamine market in East and South-East Asia. A comparison of seizure data between 2006 and 2015 clearly indicates the more rapid and ongoing expansion of methamphetamine seizures whereas heroin seizures seem to level off in recent years. Between 2006 and 2015, annual seizures of methamphetamine increased more than five-fold, while heroin seizures increased only by 75%.¹

As opium poppy cultivation continues to take place in the Golden Triangle, opiates remain problematic in the region in terms of production, trafficking and use. Opium poppy cultivation in the region, which had reached its lowest level in 2006, has since gradually increased and, since 2014, remained at comparatively high levels. Heroin remains a drug of major concern in some countries including Myanmar, Malaysia and Viet Nam. In 2015, increasing use trends were perceived in Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam whereas other countries in the region perceived either stable or decreasing use trends.

¹ Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAIN-AP); and UNODC Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) 2015 and previous years for countries in East and South-East Asia.

Figure 1. Trends in Seizures of methamphetamine and heroin in East and Southeast Asia, 2006 – 2015* (index:2006 = 100)



*Seizures include both methamphetamine tablets and crystalline methamphetamine. Methamphetamine tablet seizures reported in units were converted to kg using a weight equivalent of 90 mg per tablet.

Source: DAINAP; and UNODC Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) for 2015 and previous years for countries in East and South-East Asia.

There are strong indications that methamphetamine use continues to increase in East and South-East Asia. All countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, with an exception of Thailand, perceived an increase in the use of methamphetamine tablets in 2015.² Of greater concern, all countries in East and South-East Asia, excluding Indonesia and Japan, perceived increases in crystalline methamphetamine use.³ It is important to note that several countries in the region, including Cambodia, China⁴, the Philippines, Singapore and Viet Nam, have reported perceived consecutive increases in crystalline methamphetamine use in recent years.⁵

Seizures data suggest that the number and the scale of methamphetamine manufacture in East and South-East Asia have been rising to meet the methamphetamine market demand. For instance, there was a seven-fold increase in the detection of clandestine synthetic drug manufacturing facilities in East and South-East Asia.⁶ The large majority of seized synthetic drug laboratories were

2 DAINAP.

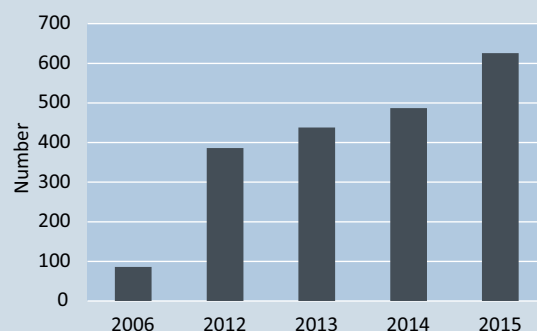
3 Ibid; and UNODC ARQ 2015 and previous years for countries in East and South-East Asia.

4 Figures for "China" in this chapter do not include data for the Special Administrative Regions (SAR) of Hong Kong and Macao, and Taiwan Province of China.

5 DAINAP.

6 DAINAP; and UNODC ARQ 2015 and previous years for countries in East and South-East Asia. .

Figure 2. Number of synthetic drug manufacture facilities dismantled in East and South-East Asia, 2006 and 2012 - 2015



Source: DAINAP; UNODC ARQ 2015 and previous years for countries in East and South-East Asia.

known to have manufactured methamphetamine. In addition, several cases reported in the region in recent years show the immense manufacturing capacity of these clandestine methamphetamine laboratories.

Combined seizures of methamphetamine tablets and crystalline methamphetamine in 2015 in East and South-East Asia amounted to 60 tons⁷ with approximately 34 tons of crystalline methamphetamine, surpassing the amount seized in North America.⁸ Seizures of crystalline methamphetamine in 2015 were larger by weight than that of methamphetamine tablets for the first time since 2008.⁹ Preliminary data for 2016 indicate a continuation of this trend.¹⁰

A total of 287 million methamphetamine tablets were seized in East and South-East Asia in 2015, a more than two-fold increase compared to 2011.¹¹ Most of these were seized in the six Greater Mekong Subregion countries – Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam.¹² According to preliminary figures, seizures in 2016 may exceed 320 million tablets, which would be the highest number of tablets seized

7 DAINAP; UNODC ARQ 2015 and previous years for countries in East and South-East Asia.

8 Ibid.

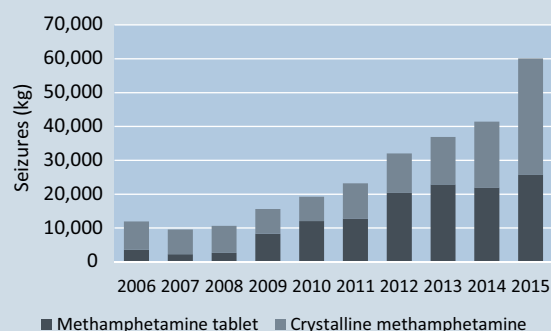
9 Ibid.

10 DAINAP.

11 DAINAP; UNODC ARQ for 2015 and previous years for countries in East and South-East Asia.

12 Ibid.

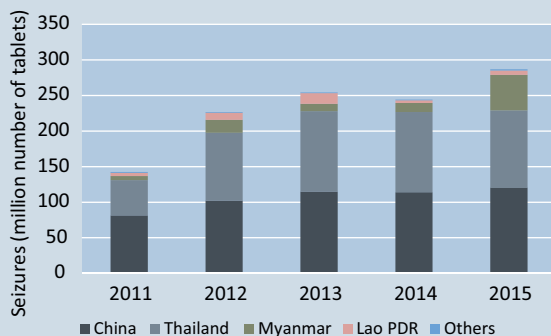
Figure 3. Seizures of methamphetamine in East and South-East Asia by type, 2006-2015*



*Methamphetamine tablet seizures reported in units were converted to kg using a weight equivalent of 90 mg per tablet.
Source: DAINAP; UNODC ARQ 2015 and previous years for countries in East and South-East Asia.

since the start of monitoring in 2008.¹³ While the steep increase in seizures of methamphetamine tablets could reflect improved law enforcement activities, expert perception, price, and purity trends denote a growing demand of the drug in the region.

Figure 4. Seizures of methamphetamine tablets in East and South-East Asia by country, 2011-2015



Source: DAINAP; UNODC ARQ 2015 and previous years for countries in East and South-East Asia.

The average purity of methamphetamine tablets found in East and South-East Asia varies by country but, overall, seems to be relatively stable. Outside of this sub-region the median purity of the methamphetamine tablet samples was not reported to UNODC, with the exception of Singapore, which has a limited methamphetamine tablet market. There are indications that the retail

price of a methamphetamine tablet decreased in US dollar terms in several countries in the region, including Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Singapore in recent years. The decline in price, in light of stable purity level and increases in seizures, could suggest increasing supply of the drug.

At more than 34 tons in 2015 in the region, the seizure of crystalline methamphetamine reached a record high.¹⁴ Several countries in the region reported unprecedented amounts of crystalline methamphetamine seized in that year, including Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Republic of Korea and Viet Nam.¹⁵ The Greater Mekong Sub-region countries accounted for about 75% of the total crystalline methamphetamine seizures between 2011 and 2015. According to preliminary figures, seizures of crystalline methamphetamine in 2016 may remain at the high levels reached in 2015.¹⁶

The average purity of crystalline methamphetamine in East and South-East Asia remains high. For instance, almost all of the 2,762 samples analysed in China in 2015 had purities higher than 80%.¹⁷ Thailand also reported that the vast majority (89%) of samples analysed in the country in 2015 had purities of over 90%.¹⁸ Crystalline methamphetamine seized in four maritime South-East Asian countries – Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore – in 2015 had purities between 70 – 80%.¹⁹

The retail prices of crystalline methamphetamine in some countries in East Asia and Oceania are comparatively high. These differences in the

14 DAINAP; UNODC ARQ 2015 and previous years for countries in East and South-East Asia.

15 Ibid.

16 DAINAP; National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC) of China, “Annual Report on Drug Control in China 2017”, April 2017; National Police Agency (NPA) of Japan, “Trend of Amphetamine-Type Stimulants Smuggling”, presented at the 22nd Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, Japan, 21 – 23 February, 2017; Supreme Prosecutors’ Office (SPO) of the Republic of Korea, “Drug-related trends in the Republic of Korea”, presented at the 22nd Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference, 21 – 23 February 2017; Hong Kong, China Police Force, Crime Statistics (Accessed at http://www.police.gov.hk/ppp_en/09_statistics/csc.html)

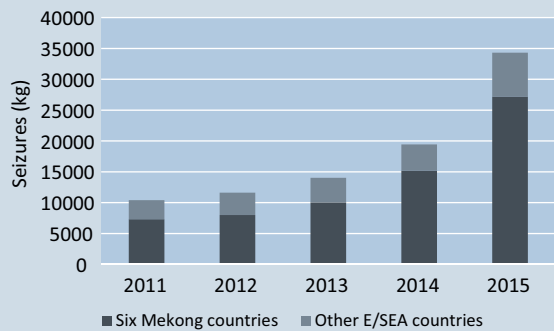
17 DAINAP.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

13 DAINAP; National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC) of China, “Annual Report on Drug Control in China 2017”, April 2017.

Figure 5. Seizures of crystalline methamphetamine in East and South-East Asia by sub-region, 2011- 2015



Source: DAINAP; UNODC ARQ 2015 and previous years for countries in East and South-East Asia.

price of crystalline methamphetamine may drive traffickers, within and outwith the region to expand markets in high income countries such as Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea. In fact, seizures of crystalline methamphetamine at the borders of these four countries increased rapidly in recent years.

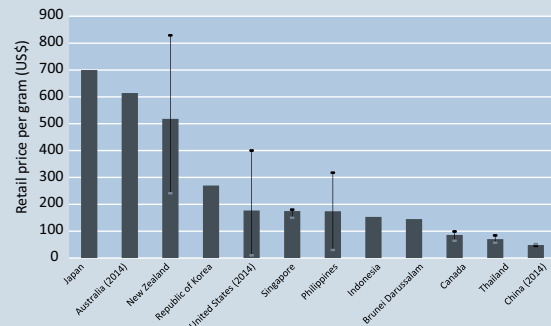
There are indications from some countries in the region - Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines and Thailand - that transnational drug trafficking groups from Taiwan Province of China are playing a significant role in methamphetamine manufacturing and trafficking in the region. For instance, Japanese national authorities seized 600 kg and 154 kg of crystalline methamphetamine in May and July 2016 with both cases involving drug trafficking groups from Taiwan Province of China.²⁰

Ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are two of the main precursors used in the manufacture of methamphetamine. Both chemicals have widespread legitimate use in the pharmaceutical industry, in bulk form and in the form of pharmaceutical preparations.²¹ In order

20 National Police Agency of Japan, "Trend of Amphetamine-Type Stimulants Smuggling", presented at the 22nd Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, Japan, 21 – 23 February, 2017.

21 Precursors and Chemicals Frequently Used in the Illicit Manufacture of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances: Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2014 on the Implementation of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 (E/INCB/2014/4).

Figure 6. Typical retail prices of crystalline methamphetamine of unknown purity in selected countries in East and South-East Asia, Oceania, and North America 2015



*The high-low bars represent the upper and lower limits of the price ranges for those countries which reported such ranges in addition to the typical price.

Source: DAINAP; UNODC ARQ 2014-2015 for Australia; Canada; New Zealand; United States; National Police Agency of Japan (NPA), "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Japan", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016; Supreme Prosecutors' Office (SPO) of the Republic of Korea, "White paper on illicit drugs-related crime", Seoul, August 2015.

to circumvent controls on ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, traffickers have started to use 1-phenyl-2-propanone (P-2-P) as an alternative. Indeed, the use of P-2-P-based methods seems to have spread to the region with seizures of P-2-P reported by China and Myanmar in recent years. Seizure data indicate that other chemicals that are not under international control may be used to manufacture methamphetamine and its precursors. Notable seizures of other pre-precursors include 10 tons of benzaldehyde in Australia in 2013/14, although methamphetamine produced in Australia is primarily manufactured from ephedrine and pseudoephedrine.²²

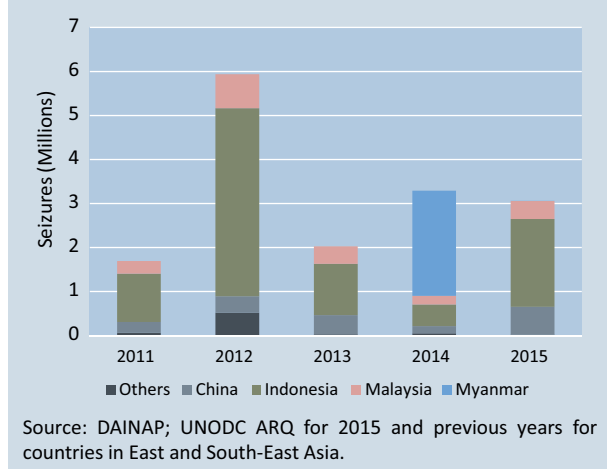
Overview of the "ecstasy" market

The "ecstasy"²³ market in East and South-East Asia remains small compared to the methamphetamine market. In 2015, none of the countries in the region reported "ecstasy" as one of the top three commonly used drugs, with the exception of Indonesia, which named the drug

22 Illicit Drug Data Report 2012-13, Illicit Drug Data Report 2013-14 and Illicit Drug Data Report 2014-15.

23 "Ecstasy" tablets sold as ecstasy in the East and South-East Asia may contain substances other than MDMA.

Figure 7. “Ecstasy” seizures in East and South-East Asia, 2011 - 2015



as the third most widely used.²⁴ In the same year, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand perceived increasing “ecstasy” use.²⁵

Annual “ecstasy” seizures in East and South-East Asia have been fluctuating and do not show any particular trends. Steep rises in seizures in a particular year are often driven by single seizure cases involving large quantities of the drug. In 2015, a total of approximately 3 million “ecstasy” tablets were seized in the region, and about two-thirds of them were seized in Indonesia alone, followed by China (21%) and Malaysia (13%).²⁶ In fact, Indonesia accounts for more than half (56%) of the total “ecstasy” seizures reported in the region between 2011 and 2015.²⁷

Data on seized laboratories suggest that the “ecstasy” manufacture is not widespread in East and South-East Asia. In 2015, only two countries in the region, China and Malaysia, reported to have dismantled “ecstasy” manufacture facilities: 4 in China and 7 in Malaysia.²⁸ An additional, seven “ecstasy” tableting facilities were dismantled in Malaysia in 2016.²⁹ Malaysia has been

²⁴ DAINAP; UNODC ARQ Japan for 2015 and previous years; and UNODC ARQ Republic of Korea for 2015.

²⁵ DAINAP.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ DAINAP; Official communication with the National Narcotics Control Commission, China, May 2017.

²⁹ Royal Malaysian Police, “Global cooperation to fight against ATS smuggling: Malaysia’s perspective”, presented at the 22nd Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, Japan, 21 – 23 February, 2017

perceived as one of the major embarkation points for the “ecstasy” found in Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia in recent years.³⁰ Hong Kong, China law enforcement authorities reported “ecstasy” trafficking flows from mainland China and the Netherlands in 2015.³¹ Indonesia also indicated the Netherlands as one of the major embarkation points for “ecstasy” seized in the country in 2015.³² Some shipments with higher quality of “ecstasy” seized in the region were perceived to have been trafficked from Canada, Germany, and the United States of America.³³

In 2015, East and South-East Asia did not report any seizure of the four MDMA precursor chemicals³⁴ listed in Table I of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.³⁵ Substantial quantities of MDMA precursor chemicals, which are not under international control, originating from the region have been seized in Europe in recent years.³⁶

A number of tablets sold as “ecstasy” but containing substances other than MDMA, including new psychoactive substances (NPS), have been found in East and South-East Asia. Those substances include ketamine (Malaysia and Thailand), 2C-B (Thailand), TFMPP (Thailand), PMMA (Indonesia), DOC (Indonesia), butylone (Thailand), and flephedron (Thailand).³⁷

Overview of the new psychoactive substances market

Between 2008 and 2016, 168 different NPS were reported by countries in the region, most of them synthetic cathinones, a group of substances with stimulant effect, following by synthetic cannabinoids. The high proportion of NPS with

³⁰ UNODC ARQ Brunei Darussalam for 2015; UNODC ARQ Indonesia for 2015.

³¹ UNODC ARQ Hong Kong, China for 2015.

³² UNODC ARQ Indonesia for 2015.

³³ Ibid; UNODC ARQ Japan for 2015; UNODC ARQ for the Republic of Korea 2015;

³⁴ Refer to 3,4-MDP-2-P, piperonal, safrole and safrole-rich oils, and isosafrole.

³⁵ INCB, Precursor Annual Report 2016, March, 2017.

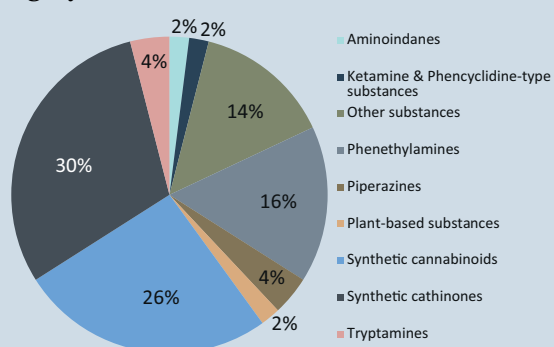
³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ ONCB, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Thailand”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

stimulant effect may reflect the existence of a large market for stimulant in the region, which, however, continues to be mainly characterized by the use of methamphetamine.

Notwithstanding this, and in contrast to the early years of NPS emergence between 2008 and 2010, when only a very limited number of NPS were reported, in 2015, countries in the region reported a large number of NPS belonging to a wide range of categories. The number of synthetic cannabinoids (27) reported in 2015 was almost at par with the number of synthetic cathinones (30), closely followed by phenethylamines (23). This points to a growing diversification of NPS present in the region which may reflect both a wider range of substances present as well as greater awareness and identification capability of countries in the region. As data for 2016 are still provisional, trends should be interpreted with caution. The data may also to some extent reflect UNODC's biennial data collection rhythm for NPS which ensures more comprehensive coverage in specific years.

Figure 8. Proportion of new psychoactive substances in South-East Asia, by substance category (December 2016)



Source: UNODC Early Warning Advisory on NPS.
Note: Based on the analysis of 168 NPS. Data for 2016 are preliminary.

The group of NPS which has experienced the largest increase in terms of number of substances is the category of “other substances”, which, in South-East Asia, consists of several synthetic opioids and benzodiazepine derivatives as well as a diverse range of other substances. To date, there are no reports of synthetic opioids such

as fentanyl analogues being sold to users in the region. In other regions such as North America and Europe, fentanyl analogues have been linked to a large and rising number of overdose deaths among opioid users. There is a potential risk that traffickers supplying East and South-East Asia, where a considerable heroin market exists, may try to cut heroin with these highly potent substances to increase their profit margins. Given the limited forensic capacity of several countries in the region to identify these substances, such a development could go underreported.

Table 1. Synthetic opioids identified in East and South-East Asia and year of first identification

Substance	Year of first reporting
Acetylfentanyl	2015
Acrylfentanyl	2016
Butyrfentanyl	2015
Furanylfentanyl	2016
U-47700	2016
Valerylfentanyl	2016
MT-45	2016

Source: UNODC Early Warning Advisory on NPS.

The emergence of several benzodiazepine derivatives, none of which has current medical use, gives rise to concern in a region with a history of illicit benzodiazepine manufacture, trafficking and non-medical use.

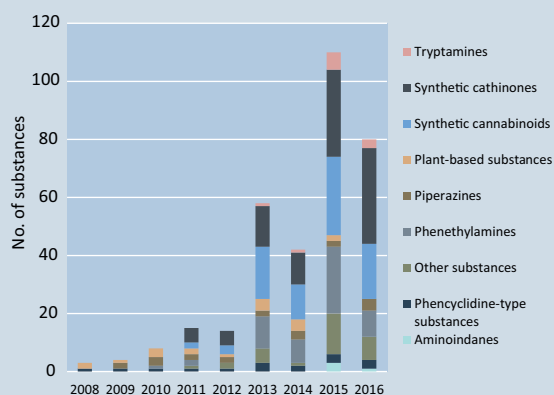
Table 2. Benzodiazepine derivatives identified in East South-East Asia and year of first reporting

Substance	Year of first reporting
Phenazepam	2012
Clonazolam	2015
Flubromazepam	2015
Nifoxipam	2015
Phenazepam	2015
Pyrazolam	2015

Source: UNODC Early Warning Advisory on NPS.

Not all NPS reported from the region are necessarily meant for the regional drug market, as the region is frequently mentioned as an origin of

Figure 9. Number of different new psychoactive substances reported each year in South-East Asia, 2009-2016



Source: UNODC Early Warning Advisory on NPS.

Note: The trend may partly reflect UNODC's biennial data collection rhythm for NPS with surveys in 2012 (covering 2011 fully and 2012 partially), 2014 (covering 2013 fully and 2014 partially) and in 2016, (covering 2015 fully and 2016 partially). Data for 2016 are preliminary.

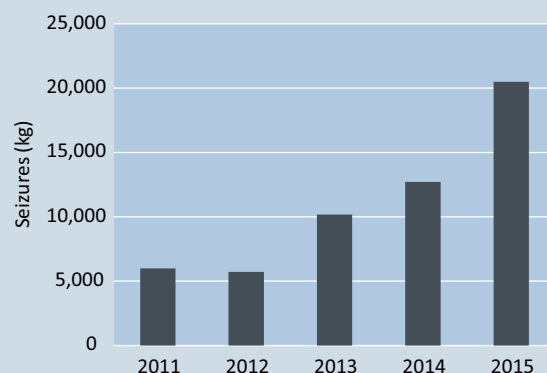
NPS shipments trafficked to other regions. Still, there is increasing evidence of a wide range of NPS present on the regional drug market, particularly in the form of tablets. NPS are being used as adulterants in tablets sold as “ecstasy”, but they are also sold under various street names. Users of such synthetic drug tablets are often unaware of the substances contained and the health risks they pose.

Ketamine

For the purposes of the present report, the analysis of NPS includes ketamine, which differs from other NPS in that it is widely used in human and veterinary medicine, while most NPS have little or no history of medical use.

Seizures of ketamine in East and South-East Asia in 2015 amounted to 20.4 mt, the highest amount reported from the region since the start of monitoring. China and Hong Kong, China together accounted for 99% of the amount of ketamine seizure in the region in 2015. Seizures of ketamine continue to decrease in other countries in the region such as Thailand and Malaysia.

Figure 10. Seizures of ketamine in East and South-East Asia, 2011 – 2015



Source: DAINAP; UNODC ARQ for 2015 and previous years for countries in East and South-East Asia.

Chinese authorities dismantled a total of 113 illicit ketamine manufacture facilities in 2015.³⁸ Besides China, Malaysian authorities seized the first ever illicit ketamine manufacture facility in the country.³⁹

38 Official communication with the National Narcotics Control Commission, China, May 2017.

39 NADA and Royal Malaysian Police, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.



Emerging trends and concerns

- Crystalline methamphetamine remains the primary drug of concern in Brunei Darussalam with a large majority of drug-related arrests and treatment admissions involving the drug.
- The number of drug-related arrests made at border checkpoints in Brunei Darussalam has increased in recent years.
- Ketamine use is indicated to have increased in Brunei Darussalam in recent years.

Overview of the drug situation

Crystalline methamphetamine is the primary drug of concern in Brunei Darussalam followed by cannabis. According to arrest and treatment data, the vast majority (94%) of all drug users in the country in 2014 and 2015 used crystalline methamphetamine.¹ Although crystalline methamphetamine remains the primary drug of concern, cannabis, ketamine and nimetazepam² (sold under the street name “Erimin-5”), are also widely used. “Ecstasy”³ is not considered to be a drug of concern in Brunei Darussalam. However, national authorities have reported increases in use of “ecstasy” over the last two years.⁴

The number of persons who underwent treatment for crystalline methamphetamine use decreased by about (47%), from 188 persons in 2014 to (99) persons in

2015.⁵ Crystalline methamphetamine users accounted for about 94 % of all persons in drug treatment in 2015, a similar proportion compared to previous years, and 95% of them were male.⁶

Annual crystalline methamphetamine seizures in Brunei Darussalam, which are low level compared to other countries in the region, did not show a clear trend in recent years. Steep year on year changes are sometimes due to the seizure of large transit shipments, such as in 2012, when national authorities seized a total of 8.2 kg of crystalline methamphetamine from two cases, in which Brunei Darussalam was used as a transit for onward trafficking to Malaysia.⁷ Preliminary figures reported from national authorities indicate that approximately 0.7 kg of crystalline methamphetamine were seized in 2016.⁸ No methamphetamine tablet seizures have been reported in the country since 2006.⁹

There have been no reports of illicit drug manufacture or attempted manufacture in Brunei Darussalam. Most drugs continue to be trafficked into Brunei Darussalam from neighbouring countries. In recent

1 Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP); Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), “Country Report on Drug Control in Brunei Darussalam”, presented at the 21st Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, Japan, 16-18 February 2016.

2 Nimetazepam is a benzodiazepine derivative, controlled in Schedule IV of the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances. While in the past, nimetazepam was contained in pharmaceutical products, there is currently no licit pharmaceutical manufacture of nimetazepam.

3 “Ecstasy” tablets sold as ecstasy in Brunei Darussalam may contain substances other than MDMA.

4 UNODC Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) for Brunei Darussalam for 2014 and 2015; DAINAP.

5 DAINAP.

6 Ibid.

7 UNODC ARQ for Brunei Darussalam for 2013.

8 NCB, “Country Report on Drug Control in Brunei Darussalam”, presented at the 21st Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, Japan, 21-23 February 2017.

9 DAINAP.

Table 3. Trend in use of selected drugs in Brunei Darussalam, 2011-2015*

Drug type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crystalline methamphetamine	↑	↓	↑	↓	↔
“Ecstasy”	●	↓	↓	↑	↑
Cannabis herb	↓	↑	↑	↑	↔
Inhalants	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓
Ketamine	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑
Nimetazepam	↑	↓	↓	●	↔

* Based on expert perception provided by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Brunei Darussalam.

↑ = Increase, ↓ = Decrease, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported

Source(s): UNODC Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) for Brunei Darussalam for 2015; DAINAP

years, there are indications that drug trafficking groups have been increasingly targeting Brunei Darussalam. For instance, the number of arrests for various drug related offences made at border checkpoints has increased in recent years, from 30 in 2012 to 75 in 2016.¹⁰ Of the 7 border check points in Brunei

Class B controlled drug and mitragynine, a substance contained in kratom leaves, was introduced into the Act as a Class D controlled drug.^{13,14} There have been no reports on the use of other new psychoactive substances.

Table 4. Seizures of selected drugs in Brunei Darussalam, 2011-2015

Drug type	Measurement	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crystalline methamphetamine	kg	0.8	9.0	2.0	4.3	3.0
“Ecstasy”	tablets	349	9	6	25 tablets and 0.52 g	43 tablets and 30.38 g
Cannabis herb	kg	0.5	0.6	0.8	8.7	1.4
Heroin	kg	●	0.6	0.8	8.1	●
Ketamine	kg	0.39	386 tablets and 6 g	0.02	14 tablets and 123.14 g	0.01
Benzodiazepines	tablets	1,495	532	129	570	243 +4.06 g

● = Not reported.

Source(s): UNODC ARQ for Brunei Darussalam for 2015 and previous years; DAINAP; NCB, “Brunei Darussalam country presentation”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015; NCB, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Brunei”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

Darussalam, the Sungai Tujoh Control point, a border between Belait District, Brunei Darussalam and Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia, has made the majority of arrests, accounting for more than half of all the drug related arrests made at border checkpoints between 2012 and 2016.¹¹

Ketamine use has been a problem in Brunei Darussalam for a number of years and its use is indicated to have increased for three consecutive years since 2013, according to government expert perception.¹² In February 2012, amendments made to the Misuse of Drugs Act included the reclassification of ketamine (as well as codeine and nimetazepam) to a stricter

There was no significant change in the purity level of crystalline methamphetamine analysed in Brunei Darussalam in the past two years. In 2015, 155 out of 156 crystalline methamphetamine samples analysed in Brunei Darussalam had a purity level higher than 70%.¹⁵ In 2015, the average retail price of 1 gram of crystalline methamphetamine in Brunei Darussalam was estimated at approximately USD 145, similar to that of last year.¹⁶

10 NCB, “Country Report on Drug Control in Brunei Darussalam”, presented at the 21st Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, Japan, 21-23 February 2017.

11 Ibid.

12 DAINAP.

13 NCB, “Latest situation in synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Brunei Darussalam”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016; NCB, “Country Report on Drug Control in Brunei Darussalam”, presented at the 21st Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, Japan, 21-23 February 2017.

14 Prior to the amendment made in 2012, ketamine and codeine were listed in the Poisons Act, and nimetazepam was listed as a Class D drug in the Misuse of Drugs Act.

15 DAINAP.

16 Ibid; UNODC Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) for Brunei Darussalam for 2015



Emerging trends and concerns

- The availability and use of methamphetamine in tablet and crystalline form continues to expand. With the expansion, there have been steep increases in both the number of drug-related arrests and the number of persons admitted for drug treatment in the country in recent years.
- Transnational drug trafficking groups, predominantly from East and Southeast Asia, continue to target Cambodia as a source, transit and destination country for amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and other illicitly-used drugs.
- Comparatively large quantities of methamphetamine have been seized in Cambodia during the past couple of years, and seizures of crystalline methamphetamine reached record highs in 2015.
- Substantial quantities of safrole-rich oils (SRO),¹ a major precursor chemical for MDMA manufacture, have been seized in recent years.

Overview of the drug situation¹

Methamphetamine, in particular in crystalline form, remains the primary drug of concern in Cambodia. Several indicators point to the continuing availability and use of methamphetamine, in both tablet and crystalline form.

According to a study² conducted by the Government of Cambodia, an estimated 13,000³ persons reported the use of an illicit drug in the past 12 months in the country in 2012. Of these, approximately one fourth lived in Phnom Penh. Of the total number

of drug users, approximately 81.3% used crystalline methamphetamine, 46.0% methamphetamine tablets and 5.4% “ecstasy”⁴. The estimated number of people who inject drugs in Cambodia in 2012 was 1,300.

The total number of arrests for drug-related offences in Cambodia increased approximately eighteen-fold from 394 persons in 2008 to 7,008 persons in 2015. While Cambodia does not provide drug-related arrest data⁵ disaggregated by drug type, the increase may be attributed to an increase in use of methamphetamine.⁶ Similar to the number of drug-related arrests, the number of admissions to temporary drug treatment centres⁷ for drug use has been increasing rapidly in Cambodia. For instance, between 2011 and 2015,

1 Safrole is a substance listed in Table 1 of the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, as well as in Cambodia’s Drug Law. The International Narcotics Control Board defines safrole-rich oils as being ‘any mixtures or natural products containing safrole present in such a way that it can be used or recovered by readily applicable means’. International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), “Precursors and chemicals frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances 2008”, Vienna, February 2009.

2 National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD) and the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STD (NCHADS), “National Population Size Estimation, HIV Related Risk Behaviors and HIV Prevalence among the People Who Used Drugs in Cambodia in 2012”, Phnom Penh, March 2014.

3 Several methodologies were used in the survey to develop an estimate of the population size of people who use drugs (PWUD), including capture-recapture, multiplier methods and the review of existing reports. The final estimate of 13,000 PWUD (range 12,000 – 28,000) is the result of a triangulation of estimates obtained by different methods.

4 “Ecstasy” tablets sold as ecstasy in Cambodia may contain substances other than MDMA. Other drugs of use reported in this study were cannabis used by 10.5% of drug users and heroin (7.1%). Multiple responses were possible.

5 Drug-related arrest data include offences related to trafficking and distribution but not drug use offences.

6 Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAIN-AP); NACD, “Cambodia country presentation”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015; Ministry of Health of Cambodia, “Community-based treatment system for drug users and drug-dependent offenders in Cambodia”, presented at Seminar on Developing Standards for Community-Based Treatment in ASEAN: Focusing on Treatment for Drug Use/Dependence Offenders, March, 2016.

7 Temporary drug treatment centres is a term used by the Government of Cambodia and it refers to centres in closed settings.

Table 5. Trend in use of selected drugs in Cambodia, 2011-2015*

Drug type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Methamphetamine tablets	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Crystalline methamphetamine	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Ecstasy	↑	↑	●	●	↓
Cannabis herb	↑	●	●	●	↑
Heroin	↓	●	●	●	↑

* Based on expert perception provided by the National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD)

↑ = Increasing, ↓ = Decreasing, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported

Source(s): DAINAP; NACD “Cambodia country presentation”, presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Workshop, Jakarta, 28-29 August 2013; Official communication with NACD, September 2014 and March 2015.

there has been an almost five-fold increase in the number of treatment admissions, from 1,011 to 4,959 in 2015.⁸ Considering that the number of drug treatment centres (10) remained unchanged in that period, the steep surge in the number of treatment admissions might reflect an overall increase in drug use in the country, which was also perceived by experts, particularly with regard to the use of methamphetamine. According to the latest available data for the number of treatment admissions by drug type (2014), methamphetamine accounted for approximately 90% of the total number of drug users admitted for treatment in that year (3,249) in the country - 75% for crystalline methamphetamine and 15% for methamphetamine tablets – which roughly corresponds to the estimated proportion of use of methamphetamine among people who use drugs.⁹ The majority (82%) of drug users in treatment centres in 2014 were between 18-35 years old.¹⁰ Furthermore, additional 7,753 drug users received drug treatment services at 36 community health centres and 11 hospitals in 2015.¹¹

Comparatively large quantities of methamphetamine have been seized in Cambodia during the past couple of years. In 2015, seizures of crystalline methamphetamine reached a record high in 2015 with 72.9 kg (29.1 kg in 2014 and 32.5 kg in 2013). The number of methamphetamine tablets seized in 2015 was 265,760 - the largest quantities over the last 7 years (87,000 tablets in 2014 and 173,349 tablets in 2013). The steep increases in 2015 were largely due to a single trafficking case involving 38.17 kg of crystalline

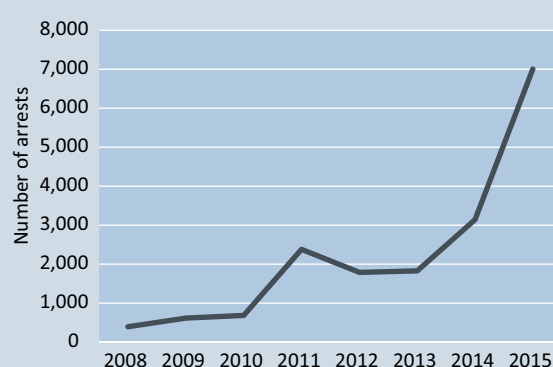
8 Ministry of Health of Cambodia, “Community-based treatment system for drug users and drug-dependent offenders in Cambodia”, presented at Seminar on Developing Standards for Community-Based Treatment in ASEAN: Focusing on Treatment for Drug Use/Dependence Offenders, March, 2016.

9 DAINAP.

10 Ibid.

11 NACD, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Cambodia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

Figure 11. Drug-related arrests in Cambodia, 2008 – 2015



Source(s): DAINAP; NACD, “Cambodia country presentation”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015; NACD, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Cambodia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

methamphetamine and 170,030 methamphetamine tablets, all of which originated from the Golden Triangle. The number of “ecstasy” tablets seized in Cambodia remains small compared with elsewhere in the region, with seizures of 70 “ecstasy” tablets in 2015. A limited amount of ketamine is seized in Cambodia each year. In 2015, approximately 15 g of ketamine was seized.¹² Cambodia has not reported the use or seizures of any other new psychoactive substance¹³ to the UNODC Early Warning Advisory (EWA) on NPS.¹⁴

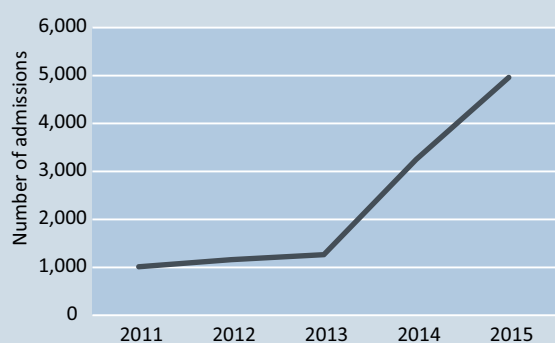
In recent years, the Cambodian national authorities have made several significant seizures of precursor chemicals related to ATS manufacture. In particular,

12 Ibid

13 UNODC defines NPS as “substances of abuse, either in a pure form or a preparation, that are not controlled by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs or the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, but which may pose a public health threat”.

14 UNODC, Early Warning Advisory on NPS, <https://www.unodc.org/LSS/Announcement?type=NPS> (Accessed in Jan 2016).

Figure 12. The number of admissions to drug treatment centres in Cambodia 2011 – 2015



Note: Data does not include drug treatment admissions to community health centres and hospitals.

Source(s): DAINAP; NACD, “Cambodia country presentation”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015; Ministry of Health of Cambodia, “Community-based treatment system for drug users and drug-dependent offenders in Cambodia”, presented at Seminar on Developing Standards for Community-Based Treatment in ASEAN: Focusing on Treatment for Drug Use/Dependence Offenders, March, 2016.

Cambodia has been frequently targeted by transnational drug trafficking groups. In 2014, there were 129 foreign national arrestees in 52 cases.¹⁷ A large proportion of the cases were related to cross-border trafficking between Cambodia and its neighbouring countries such as Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam. Large amounts of methamphetamine (in tablet and crystalline form) and heroin, reportedly manufactured in Myanmar, continue to be trafficked into Cambodia through its northeastern border with Lao PDR.¹⁸ The drugs are then often repackaged for further trafficking via overland routes and air passenger couriers to neighboring countries (primarily Thailand and Viet Nam) and to international markets, primarily Australia.¹⁹

The retail price of methamphetamine tablets has remained relatively stable from 2008 to 2014, at around US\$5 per tablet.²⁰ However, in 2015, the Cambodian National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD)

Table 6. Seizures of selected drugs in Cambodia, 2011-2015

Drug type	Measurement	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Methamphetamine tablets ^a	tablets	238,994	112,723	173,349	87,000	265,760
Crystalline methamphetamine	kg	19.1	33.5	32.4	29.0	72.9
“Ecstasy” ^b	tablets	7,855	1,373	0	10,533	70
Cannabis herb	kg	210.2	2.4	168.5	19.9	1,511.5
Cocaine	kg	1.1	41.0	12.9	7.9	5.3
Heroin	kg	2.1	0.3	38.3	1.8	2.5
Ketamine	kg	•	0.8	0.0 ^c	0.0 ^c	0.1

• = Not reported/unspecified amount. ^a The figures include quantities reported as grams; all of which were converted into estimated tablet equivalent at 90 mg per tablet. ^b The figures include quantities reported as grams; all of which were converted into estimated tablet equivalent of 300 mg per tablet. ^c Less than 0.05 kg of ketamine was seized.

Source(s): DAINAP; NACD, “Brief Operation Results of Cambodia Law Enforcement in Combating Drugs 2012”; NACD, “Cambodia country presentation”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015; NACD, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Cambodia” presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

safrole-rich oils (SRO), one of the key precursor chemicals used in the manufacture of “ecstasy”, continue to be produced in the country and trafficked to other countries and regions, including Europe. For instance, in August 2014, approximately 5,220 kg of SRO was found by the police buried underground in the Pursat province, located in the western part of the country next to the Gulf of Thailand.¹⁵ A further 110 litres of SRO were reported seized in the same province in May 2016.¹⁶

¹⁵ NACD, “Cambodia country presentation”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

¹⁶ Khmer Times, “Illegal Oil Leads to Arrests”, 08 May 2016.

reported to UNODC that it had observed a decrease in the retail price of methamphetamine tablets to around US\$ 2.50 per tablet.²¹ In the absence of a significant decreases in the purity levels of methamphetamine tablets found in the country over the same period,

¹⁷ NACD, “Cambodia country presentation”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ NACD, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Cambodia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

the significant decrease in price might indicate greater availability of methamphetamine tablets. Data on the retail price of crystalline methamphetamine are unavailable in Cambodia. However, as with methamphetamine tablets, the wholesale price of one kilogram of crystalline methamphetamine is indicated to have also decreased from approximately US\$ 60,000 in 2012 to US\$ 30,000 – 35,000 in 2015.²² The crystalline methamphetamine samples had purities ranging from 1%-90% in 2015, comparable to the figures reported for 2013 (4%-84%) and 2014 (3% - 80%).²³ The methamphetamine tablet samples had purities ranging from 2% - 23% in 2015 (14% – 19% in 2014 and 3% - 19% in 2013).²⁴

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.



Emerging trends and concerns

- A growth in the number of registered drug users, seizures and drug-related arrests indicate that illicit drug use, in particular of synthetic drugs, continues to be on the rise in China.
- Synthetic drugs continued to be manufactured at a large scale in China in 2015, with the majority of dismantled clandestine laboratories manufacturing crystalline methamphetamine.
- Transnational organized criminal groups appear to be increasingly targeting China as a source, transit and destination country for illicit drugs. Significant quantities of methamphetamine tablets and heroin continue to flow from the Golden Triangle to China.
- The risk of diversion of precursor chemicals and pharmaceutical preparations used in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine and other illicit drugs continues to be high in China.
- Reported drug user data indicate that methamphetamine might have overtaken ketamine as the most widely used synthetic drug in Hong Kong, China. However, substantial amounts of ketamine continue to be seized in Hong Kong, China, and reached a new peak in 2015.

Overview of the drug situation

The use of methamphetamine continues to increase in China,¹ particularly among young drug users.² The illicit manufacture of crystalline methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs such as ketamine continues to be a problem. China is also being increasingly used by transnational criminal syndicates as a source, transit, and destination country for illicit drugs. Significant quantities of precursor chemicals are being diverted by criminal groups for the manufacture of methamphetamine, as well as the manufacture of heroin and cocaine.

Recent data of registered drug users in China³ indicate increasing use of synthetic drugs in the country.⁴ Over 80% of newly registered drug users (445,000) in 2015 were using synthetic drugs⁵, indicating that synthetic drugs may have replaced opiates as the primary drug group of concern in the country. The proportion of synthetic drug users among all registered drug users⁶ has been on the rise in the country in recent years from 33% in 2011 to 60.5% in 2016. By the end of 2016, there were approximately 2.5 million registered drug users in China.⁷

1 Figures for “China” in this chapter do not include data for the Special Administrative Regions, China of Hong Kong and Macao, and Taiwan Province of China. Data for Hong Kong, China is reported separately below.

2 According to the National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC), as of the end of 2015, there were 2.345 million registered drug users in China and about 61% of them were between the ages of 18 and 35 years.

3 China includes ketamine in the synthetic drug category along with amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS).

4 UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) China for 2014.

5 Ibid.

6 Registered drug users are persons who have come into contact with law enforcement authorities.

7 NNCC, “Annual Report on Drug Control in China 2017”, March 2017.

Table 7. Trends in use of selected drugs in China, 2011-2015*

Drug type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crystalline methamphetamine	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Methamphetamine tablets	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
“Ecstasy” ⁸	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
Cannabis	●	●	●	↑	↓
Heroin	↔	↑	↑	↓	↓
Ketamine	↑	↑	↑	↑	↔
Opium	↔	↑	↑	↑	↓

* Based on expert perception provided by NNCC, China.

↑ = Increasing, ↓ = Decreasing, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported. 2012 and 2013 drug use trend data based on the number of registered drug users, by drug type, compared with the previous year.

Source(s): DAINAP; Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) China for 2014; National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC) “Annual Report on Drug Control in China 2014”, Beijing, China 2014; Official communication with NNCC the Ministry of Public security, October 2013; Official communication with NNCC, the Ministry of Public security, Beijing, October 2014.

A large number of clandestine synthetic drug manufacturing facilities are dismantled each year in China, most of which manufacture crystalline methamphetamine or ketamine. In 2015, a total of 593 illicit manufacturing facilities were dismantled, representing an 8 % increase compared to the preceding year (551 laboratories).⁹ The majority (433) of the seized laboratories were manufacturing methamphetamine, followed by ketamine.¹⁰ Most seizures of clandestine drug laboratories took place in Guangdong and Sichuan provinces. For instance, in 2015, 230 laboratories were seized in Guangdong province and 150 were seized in Sichuan province, accounting for approximately 64% of the total number of illicit manufacturing facilities dismantled in that year.¹¹ A total of 438 drug manufacturing facilities, including 338 for methamphetamine, were dismantled during in 2016.¹²

In 2015, there were 431 cases related to illicit manufacture of precursor chemicals. These resulted in seizures of about 1,566 mt of various substances, including 146.7 mt of ephedra herb.¹³ In addition, Chinese authorities stopped 38 shipments of precursor chemicals from the country, with a total quantity of 105.8 mt of various substances.¹⁴

8 “Ecstasy” tablets sold as ecstasy in China may contain substances other than MDMA.

9 Ibid; NNCC, “Latest situation of synthetic drugs in China”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

10 Official communication with NNCC, the Ministry of Public Security, November 2015.

11 NNCC, “Latest situation of synthetic drugs in China”, presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

12 NNCC, “Annual Report on Drug Control in China 2017”, March 2017.

13 NNCC, “Annual Report on Drug Situation in China 2016”, March 2016.

14 Ibid.

In recent years, substantial amounts of methamphetamine have been seized in China. In 2015, a total of 35.7 mt of methamphetamine in tablet and crystalline form were seized, representing a 38% increase compared to 2014 (25.9 mt) and nearly a 90% increase compared to 2013 (19.5 mt).¹⁵ The Golden Triangle remains the major source for seized methamphetamine tablets in the country. For instance, in 2015, seizures of methamphetamine tablets in four provinces in the southwestern part of China adjoining the Golden Triangle accounted for 93% of total methamphetamine tablet seizures.¹⁶

The quantity of ketamine seized in China continues to rise. Multi-ton seizures of ketamine have been reported each year since 2007.¹⁷ In 2015, a total of 19.6 mt of ketamine were seized, marking a 75% increase over 2014 (11.2 mt).¹⁸ While ketamine is manufactured in China by the pharmaceutical industry for legitimate medical purposes, significant quantities are manufactured illicitly in clandestine laboratories, with 90 illicit ketamine laboratories dismantled in 2014¹⁹ and 118 laboratories dismantled in 2013.²⁰ The non-medical (recreational) use of ketamine is indicated to have increased in each of the past six years in China.

15 Ibid; NNCC, “Latest situation of synthetic drugs in China”, presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

16 NNCC, “Annual Report on Drug Situation in China 2016”, March 2016.

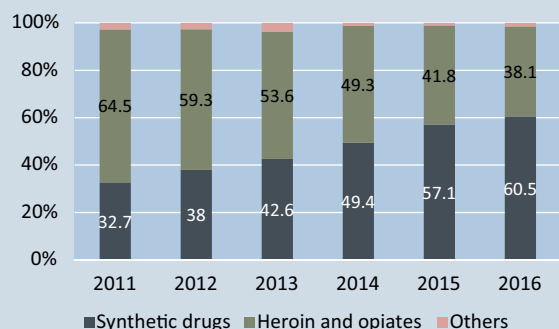
17 DAINAP; NNCC, “Ketamine abuse and illicit manufacture”, presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

18 Ibid; NNCC, “Annual Report on Drug Situation in China 2016”, March 2016.

19 Ibid.

20 Official communication with NNCC, November 2015; NNCC, “Current Drug Situation and Trends of ATS in China”, presented at the Eighteenth Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, 26-27 February 2014.

Figure 13. Proportion of registered drug users by type of drug used in China, 2011 – 2016



Source(s): NNCC, "Annual Report on Drug Control in China 2017", March 2017; NNCC, "Annual Report on Drug Control in China 2016", March 2016; and NNCC, "Latest situation of synthetic drugs in China", presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

2C-compounds; 4-FA and 5-APDB) as well as other substances including several synthetic opioids.²¹

The vast majority (97%) of crystalline methamphetamine samples (n=2,762) analysed in China in 2015 had purities higher than 80%.²² By comparison, approximately 93% of methamphetamine tablet samples (n=2,404) analyzed in the country in the same year contained less than 20% methamphetamine, with typical weights ranging between 88 mg and 92 mg per tablet. The content of methamphetamine typically ranged between 15% and 17%.²³

Table 8. Seizures of selected drugs in China, 2011-2015

Drug type	Measurement	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crystalline methamphetamine	kg	6,022.7	5,939.9	8,000.0	13,700	22,600
Methamphetamine tablets ^a	tablets	81,554,400	102,242,000	115,000,000	114,000,000	120,700,000
"Ecstasy" ^b	tablets	317,886	374,433	435,200	153,333	632,100
Ketamine	kg	5,380.0	4,716.6	9,692.3	11,212.9	19,600
Cannabis herb	kg	2,630.0	4,228.2	4,495.7 ^c	4,000	8,700 ^d
Cannabis resin	kg	980.1	•	•	0.2	•
Cocaine	kg	48.0	99.5	51.3	113	97.7
Heroin	kg	7,080.1	7,287.1	8,552.9	9,300	8,800
Opium	kg	823.2	844.7	1,463.5	1,741.0	2,451.9

• = Not reported.

^a Figures reported other than the number of tablets converted into estimated tablet equivalents at 100 mg per tablet. ^b Figures reported other than the number of tablets converted into estimated tablet equivalents at 300 mg per tablet. ^{c,d} Includes cannabis herb and cannabis resin. Source(s): DAINAP; ARQ China for 2014; NNCC, "Annual Report on Drug Control in China 2011", Beijing, 2011; Official communication with NNCC, July 2011; Official communication with NNCC, October 2013; Official communication with NNCC, October 2014; Official communication with NNCC, November 2015; NNCC, "Latest situation of synthetic drugs in China", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015; NNCC, "Annual Report on Drug Situation in China 2016", March 2016; Official communication with NNCC, April 2016.

In recent years, the Government of China has taken measures to restrict the availability of NPS. In 2015, the Government of China placed 116 substances under control. The newly scheduled NPS include 39 synthetic cannabinoids (among them several JWH- and AM-compounds; 5F-AB-PINACA; 5F-ADBICA and AB-CHIMINACA), 26 synthetic cathinones (such as Butylone; α -PVP; Pentadron and Ethcathinone) and 23 phenethylamines (including several NBOMe and

21 UNODC, Early Warning Advisory on NPS, <https://www.unodc.org/LSS/Announcement?type=NPS> (Accessed on Jan 2016); For further information, please see <http://www.sfda.gov.cn/WS01/CL0056/130753.html>.

22 DAINAP.

23 NNCC, "Latest situation of synthetic drugs in China", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

Hong Kong, China

Recent data seems to indicate that drug use in Hong Kong, China, based on the number of reported drug users, is on the decline. In 2015, the total number of reported drug users was 8,598, a 5 % decrease compared with 2014 (9,059) and a 17% decrease from 2013 (10,241).²⁴

Although these figures show a downward trend in recent years, crystalline methamphetamine use and seizure data suggest that the methamphetamine market continues to expand in Hong Kong, China. In the past four years, the number of crystalline methamphetamine users has grown every year from 1,532 users in 2011 to 2,195 in 2015, an increase of 43%.²⁵ In 2015, the number of reported methamphetamine users was for the first time higher than that of ketamine users (1,974) thus elevating crystalline methamphetamine to the status of a drug of concern in Hong Kong, China while heroin continued to be the most commonly reported drug of use.

The typical retail price of 1 gram of crystalline methamphetamine in 2014 was estimated at approximately USD 58, a significant decrease compared to 2013 (USD 86).²⁶ Given the increasing number of reported crystalline methamphetamine users and seized amounts of the drug, the decrease in the typical price could possibly be due to an increasing availability of the drug. However, purity-adjusted prices were not available to confirm this hypothesis.

Seizures of crystalline methamphetamine have also been on the rise in recent years. For instance, record amounts of crystalline methamphetamine were seized in Hong Kong, China in the last two years with 488 kg and 356 kg respectively in 2014 and 2015. Almost all crystalline methamphetamine seized in Hong Kong, China reportedly originated from mainland China with significant amounts meant for onward trafficking to other countries in East Asia and the Pacific.²⁷ For instance, in 2014 law enforcement authorities in Hong Kong, China seized a total of 104

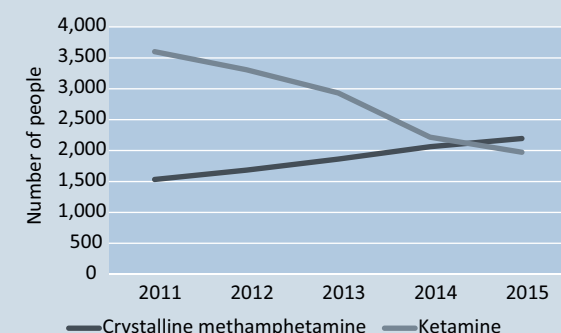
²⁴ Narcotics Division, Security Bureau (NDSB), "Newly/previously reported drug abusers by age group by common type of drugs abused (T3)" (Accessed at http://www.nd.gov.hk/en/statistics_list.htm)

²⁵ Ibid. See figure 2.

²⁶ Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) Hong Kong, China for 2013 and 2014.

²⁷ UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) Hong Kong, China for 2014.

Figure 14. The number of reported crystalline methamphetamine and ketamine users in Hong Kong, China, 2011 – 2015



Source: Narcotics Division, Security Bureau (NDSB), "Newly/previously reported drug abusers by age group by common type of drugs abused (T3)" (Accessed at http://www.nd.gov.hk/text/en/stat/statistics_list.htm).

kg of crystalline methamphetamine from five transit express cargo consignments from China, all of which were destined for Malaysia.²⁸

Ketamine remains a concern in Hong Kong, China, notwithstanding indications that its use may be on the decline. For instance, the number of reported ketamine users decreased by 46% over the last five years, from 3,600 persons in 2011 to 1,974 persons in 2015 (see Figure 2).²⁹ However, substantial quantities of ketamine were seized in 2015 in Hong Kong, China, amounting to 660 kg, the second highest total reported during the last decade.³⁰ The increase in ketamine seizures in 2015 might be a the result of a reported increase in ketamine trafficked from mainland China, where record amounts of the drug (19.6 mt) were seized in that year, to other countries, using Hong Kong, China as a transit location.

In recent years, a number of new psychoactive substances (NPS) have been identified in Hong Kong, China which is believed to be a transit location for NPS shipments.³¹ For instance, in 2014 a total of 226 kg of synthetic cathinones were seized in Hong Kong, China, and a large majority of them were destined for

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Narcotics Division, Security Bureau (NDSB), "Newly/previously reported drug abusers by age group by common type of drugs abused (T3)" (Accessed at http://www.nd.gov.hk/text/en/stat/statistics_list.htm).

³⁰ Hong Kong Police Force (HKNB), Crime Statistics Comparison 2014-2015. (Accessed at http://www.police.gov.hk/ppp_en/09_statistics/csc.html).

³¹ For the purposes of this report, the analysis of NPS includes ketamine, which differs from other NPS in that it is widely used in human and veterinary medicine, while most NPS have little or no history of medical use.

Table 9. Seizures of selected drugs in Hong Kong, China, 2011-2015

Drug type	Measurement	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crystalline methamphetamine	kg	44	50	141	488	356
“Ecstasy”	tablets	5,132	1,154	1,405	1,585	2,791
Ketamine	kg	224	663	226	334	660
Cannabis	kg	61	71	85	99	130
Cocaine	kg	625	734	269	130	292
Heroin	kg	145	69	56	49	27

Source(s): Official communication with Hong Kong Police Force (HKNB), September 2016.

other countries - in particular to the United States.³² Though the use of these NPS in Hong Kong, China appears to be limited, there is a risk of increasing use due to ‘spillover’ effects considering the amounts of NPS trafficked through the territory.

³² Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) Hong Kong, China for 2013 and 2014.



Emerging trends and concerns

- Record amounts of crystalline methamphetamine were seized in Indonesia in 2015. The low prices of relatively higher purity products, compared to previous years, point to an increased availability of crystalline methamphetamine market in the country.
- The trafficking of crystalline methamphetamine into Indonesia by transnational organized criminal groups, particularly by sea, is on the increase. The large coastal line, due to the number of islands which constitute the country, makes this a worrying development.
- The clandestine manufacture of crystalline methamphetamine continues to occur in Indonesia, although both the scale and number of dismantled clandestine laboratories have been declining in recent years.
- The emergence of new psychoactive substances (NPS), albeit still at a low level, continues to present a challenge for drug control and health responses in Indonesia.

Overview of the drug situation

Crystalline methamphetamine remains the primary drug of concern in Indonesia. Recent data on seizures, purity and prices indicate a greater availability of crystalline methamphetamine in the country. There are indications that “ecstasy”¹ use has been increasing in recent years and some quantities of the drug have been continuously manufactured domestically. In addition, transnational organized criminal groups from both within and outside East and South-East Asia continue to target Indonesia as a transit and destination country for illicit drugs, in particular methamphetamine.

According to the most recent national drug use survey (2015)², approximately 0.6% of the general population between the ages of 10 and 59 years were estimated to have used an illicit drug at least once in 2015.³ Cannabis remains the most illicitly used drug in the

country with an annual prevalence of approximately 0.18%, followed by methamphetamine at 0.09%.⁴ In addition, the use of dextromethorphan, a cough suppressant, has increased rapidly among drug users in recent years.⁵ Heroin use in Indonesia, which has in the past had a large market for low-purity heroin, has shown an overall declining trend over the period 2011-2015.⁶

In 2015, a total of 1,321 persons received drug treatment of which approximately 28% (370 persons) were due to the use of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS).^{7,8}

According to expert perception (see Table 1), crystalline methamphetamine use trends have been stable over the last five years. While the increasing trend in the number of methamphetamine related arrests as well as seizure amounts could reflect increased law

1 “Ecstasy” tablets sold as ecstasy in Indonesia may contain substances other than MDMA.

2 The survey was conducted in 20 provinces of Indonesia with the total sample size of 24,869 people between the ages of 10 and 60 years.

3 UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) 2015 for Indonesia.

4 Ibid.

5 Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAIN-AP).

6 Ibid.

7 UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) 2015 for Indonesia.

8 The figures may not include all treatment centres in the country.

Table 10. Trend in use of selected drugs in Indonesia, 2011-2015

Drug type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crystalline methamphetamine	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔
Methamphetamine tablets	↓	●	●	●	●
“Ecstasy”	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑
Barbiturates	↔	↑	↑	↔	↑
Benzodiazepines	↔	↔	↑	↔	↑
Cannabis herb	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔
Cannabis resin	↓	↔	●	↑	↑
Cocaine	↔	↓	●	↑	●
Heroin	↔	↓	↓	↔	↔
Ketamine	↑	↑	●	↑	↔

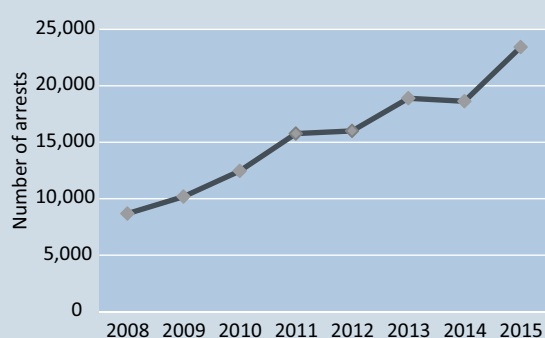
*Based on expert perception provided by the National Narcotics Board (BNN), Indonesia.

↑ = Increasing, ↓ = Decreasing, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported

Source(s): DAINAP

enforcement activities, price and purity trends point to an increased availability of methamphetamine on the market. Between 2008 and 2015, the number of methamphetamine related arrests nearly tripled, from 8,685 persons in 2008 to 23,420 persons in 2015.⁹ Of the 23,420 arrestees, approximately 7% were women (1,693 arrestees), while foreign nationals accounted for 0.5% (124 arrestees) of the total.¹⁰ With regard to “ecstasy”, the number of arrests decreased by 85% from 2,947 in 2008 to 444 in 2014.¹¹ However, a total of 1,307 persons were arrested for “ecstasy” in 2015, marking nearly a 200% increase compared to 2014.¹²

Figure 15. Methamphetamine related arrests in Indonesia, 2008 – 2015



Source(s): DAINAP

Substantial quantities of crystalline methamphetamine have been seized in Indonesia in recent years.

In 2015, seizures of crystalline methamphetamine amounted to 4,420 kg, which was by far the largest

amount ever reported from Indonesia. It is imperative to note that the 2015 figure represents more than a two-fold increase compared to the previous record reported in 2012 (2,054 kg).¹³ This steep increase is due to the seizure of several methamphetamine shipments containing hundreds of kg of the drug, originating from outside the country. Seizures of “ecstasy” in Indonesia have been fluctuating over the last decade. In 2015, almost 2 million “ecstasy” tablets were seized, representing a 300 % increase compared to 2014, but significantly less than 2012 when the record number of 4.3 million tablets was seized.¹⁴

The trafficking of crystalline methamphetamine into Indonesia by transnational organized criminal groups continues to be of major concern. In particular, drug trafficking groups based in China are reported to be responsible for significant amounts of methamphetamine trafficked to the country in recent years.¹⁵ For instance, approximately 862 kg and 270 kg of crystalline methamphetamine originating from China were seized in Indonesia in January and October 2015, respectively.¹⁶ Malaysia is also a major country of origin of seized crystalline methamphetamine in Indonesia.¹⁷ In particular, Indonesia’s Aceh province, located in North Sumatra, is used a major hub for methamphetamine trafficked from Malaysia to the

13 UNODC, ARQ 2015 for Indonesia; DAINAP.

14 Ibid.

15 UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) Indonesia for 2014 and 2015.

16 BNN Press release, January 2015 (Accessed at <http://www.bnn.go.id/read/pressrelease/12483/awal-tahun-2015-bnn-gagalkan-peredaran-800-kg-sabu>); BNN Press release, October 2015. (Accessed at <http://www.bnn.go.id/read/pressrelease/13471/bnn-gagalkan-peredaran-270.2278-gram-sabu>).

17 UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) Indonesia for 2014 and 2015.

9 DAINAP.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

Table 11. Seizures of selected drugs in Indonesia, 2011-2015

Drug type	Measurement	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crystalline methamphetamine	kg	1,092.0	2,054.2	542.7	1,125.1	4,420.2
“Ecstasy”	tablets	826,096	4,271,619	1,165,178	489,311	1,980,873
“Ecstasy” powder	kg	●	●	●	●	4.3
Barbiturates	tablets	158,578	426,794	181	9,571	7,332
Benzodiazepines	tablets	518,478	512,523	460,807	356,631	1,247,895
Cannabis herb	kg	23,891.2	22,335.3	17,777.1	68,398.9	29,389.3
Cannabis plants	plants	1,839,664	341,395	534,829	92,481	101,815
Cocaine	kg	0.1	6.7	2.1	0.4	0.0a
Heroin	kg	27.4	52.4	11.3	12.2	13.3
Ketamine	kg	95.3	13.4	4.7	13.4	13.4

● = Not reported, ^a Reported as 10.5 gram.

Source(s): DAINAP; UNODC, ARQ 2014 and 2015 for Indonesia; BNN and UNODC, “Indonesia ATS Situation Assessment 2012, February 2013; BNN, “Journal of Data on the Prevention and Eradication of Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 2013 Edition 2014, Jakarta, March 2014; BNN, “Indonesia country report”, presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional meeting, Yangon, Myanmar, 20-21 August 2014; BNN, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Indonesia”, presented at the SMART regional workshop, Beijing, 16-17 September 2015; Official communication with BNN in May 2016; BNN, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Indonesia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

country.¹⁸ African drug trafficking syndicates, also continue to target Indonesia for trafficking of illicit drugs, including methamphetamine. Drug couriers from Indonesia and other neighbouring countries in South-East Asia, often recruited through social media platforms, have been used by these syndicates.¹⁹ According to Indonesian national authorities, there are indications that increasing amounts of crystalline methamphetamine have been trafficked by sea in recent years. In 2013, only about 4% of the total amount of crystalline methamphetamine seizures made in Indonesia was trafficked by sea²⁰, a share which increased to 14 % and 80 % respectively in 2014 and 2015.²¹ This development is a significant concern, considering the large number of islands and extensive maritime boundaries of the country.

Manufacture of ATS continues to take place in Indonesia, even though it appears to be declining in recent years. In 2015, a total of three illicit ATS manufacture facilities were dismantled in Indonesia, all of which were small-scale crystalline methamphetamine manufacturing facilities.²²

The purity level of crystalline methamphetamine has significantly increased in recent years. Crystalline methamphetamine samples analysed at the retail level in the last two years (2014 and 2015) had an average purity level of around 80%, a strong increase compared to average purities of 40% and 53% reported in 2012 and 2013.²³ Over the same period, the price of 1 gram of crystalline methamphetamine at the retail level fell below the price ranges of USD 155 – 250 in 2012 and USD 183 – 230 in 2013²⁴ to a typical price of USD 153 in 2014 and 2015.²⁵ This increase in the purity and decline in retail prices at a time of rising seizure amounts are indications of an increased availability of crystalline methamphetamine in the country, probably due to trafficking of large shipments from outside of the country. Similar to 2014, the retail price of an “ecstasy” tablet was approximately USD 31 in 2015.

The use of new psychoactive substances (NPS) is an emerging threat in Indonesia, though their use is not widespread. As of March 2017, a total of 56 different NPS were identified in the country.²⁶

18 BNN, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Indonesia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

19 BNN, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Indonesia”, presented at the SMART regional workshop, Beijing, 16-17 September 2015.

20 UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) Indonesia for 2013.

21 UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) Indonesia for 2014 and 2015.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid; BNN, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Indonesia”, presented at the SMART regional workshop, Beijing, 16-17 September 2015.

24 DAINAP. Price data may differ from data as reported due to conversions made by UNODC. In 2012 and 2013, only price ranges were reported.

25 UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) Indonesia for 2014 and 2015. In 2014 and 2015, only the typical price was reported.

26 BNN, “List of NPS identified by BNN”, see http://www.bnn.go.id/_multimedia/document/20170329/nps_2017_-_56_zat.pdf (Indonesian)

Some of the identified NPS include *bk*-MDEA²⁷ (a phenethylamine), buphedrone²⁸ (a synthetic cathinone), 5-MeO-MiPT²⁹ (a tryptamine), FUB-144³⁰ and AB-CHMINACA³¹ (both synthetic cannabinoids).³² Indonesian national authorities continue to seize some amounts of ketamine. However, during the past few years, declining quantities of the drug have been seized in the country.³³

27 Also known as ethylone and MDEC.

28 Also known as α -methylamino-butyrophenone (MABP).

29 Also known as 5-methoxy-N-methyl-N-isopropyltryptamine or Moxy.

30 Also known as FUB-UR-144.

31 Also known as MAB-CHMINACA.

32 BNN, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Indonesia", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

33 UNODC, ARQ Indonesia for 2014.; DAINAP; BNN, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Indonesia", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.



Emerging trends and concerns

- Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) remains a major transit country for illicitly manufactured drugs originating from the Golden Triangle.
- In recent years, increasing amounts of crystalline methamphetamine and precursor chemicals have been seized in the country and with record highs reported in 2015.
- In recent years, the number of drug-related arrests has increased significantly and reached a record level in 2015.

Overview of the drug situation

Located between major ATS manufacturers and large user markets, Lao PDR is particularly vulnerable to illicit drug trafficking. The country's mountainous terrain and its many rivers pose a challenge for Lao PDR's law enforcement agencies. Paradoxically, the increasing pace of regional integration and the development of transportation and communication networks offer new opportunities for drug trafficking syndicates to expand their activities in the region. Illicit poppy cultivation and opium production continues to be of concern, and significant quantities of methamphetamine and opiates manufactured in the Golden Triangle continue to be trafficked via Lao PDR to neighbouring countries.

In the absence of an official drug use survey, data reported by the Provincial Committee for Drug Control (PCDC) estimates that there were 65,000 – 70,000 drug users in the country in 2015, representing approximately 1% of the total population.¹ Methamphetamine tablets, primarily used in urban and border areas of the country, have remained the

primary drug of concern in Lao PDR.² Crystalline methamphetamine use is currently not perceived as a great concern in Lao PDR. However, increasing amounts of crystalline methamphetamine have been seized in Lao PDR in recent years, suggesting its possible role as a transit location for traffickers.

The Government of Lao PDR currently operates 12 treatment centres across the country, with two additional centres under construction.³ The Somsanga Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre in Vientiane is the only centre that collects data in a regular manner and provides data on persons admitted by drug type.⁴ The Centre reports that methamphetamine tablets have been the primary drug of use among approximately 95% of persons registered since 2004.⁵ In 2015, 2,696 persons were treated at the Centre, marking a significant decrease compared to 2014, when 3,877 drug users were admitted to the centre.⁶ Of the 2,696 persons admitted in 2015, 98% (2,643 persons) were treated for methamphetamine use,

¹ Lao National Commission for Drugs Control and Supervision (LCDC), "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Lao PDR", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

² Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAIN-AP).

³ Official communication with LCDC, May 2016.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ DAINAP. While other centres can also provide ATS treatment, Somsanga is the only centre that provides specialized treatment for ATS patients which may explain why patients admitted for ATS use feature so prominently in the data from this centre.

⁶ DAINAP.

Table 12. Trend in use of selected drugs in Lao PDR, 2011-2015*

Drug type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Methamphetamine tablets	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Crystalline methamphetamine	●	●	↑	↓	↑
Cannabis herb	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Opium	↓	↑	↔	↓	↑
Heroin	↓	↔	↑	↓	↓

* Based on expert perception provided by Lao National Commission for Drugs Control and Supervision (LCDC).

↑ = Increasing, ↓ = Decreasing, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported

Source(s): DAINAP

while only nine persons were treated for heroin.⁷ Most other persons in drug treatment centres in Lao PDR continue to be treated for heroin, alcohol, inhalants and cannabis use.—

In recent years, the number of drug-related arrests in Lao PDR has risen rapidly. In 2015, a total of 3,346 persons were arrested for illicit drugs, including 555 women and 90 foreign nationals.⁸ Between 2010 and 2015, there was more than a three-fold increase in the number of drug-related arrests in Lao PDR. This poses a significant challenge to the criminal justice system in the country.

Seizures of methamphetamine tablets in Lao PDR have fluctuated strongly in recent years. In 2015, the number of methamphetamine tablets seized in Lao PDR increased by approximately 65%, to 6.33 million (6,331,692) tablets, compared to 3.83 million (3,832,895) tablets in 2014. The increase in the number of methamphetamine tablet seizures in 2015 is mainly due to a seizure of almost 3 million methamphetamine tablets in Vientiane in July 2015.⁹ However, the figure for 2015 is nearly 60% lower than that of 2013 (15,083,355). It is imperative to note that, seizures of methamphetamine tablets in the country were lower than 2 million tablets in each of three preceding years of 2010 when the record number of methamphetamine tablets (24.5 million tablets), originating from Myanmar, was seized.¹⁰ The seizure of large scale shipments of methamphetamine tablets, a single one of which can be much larger than the total annual amount seized in the years before 2010, point to the existence of a drug flow from Myanmar

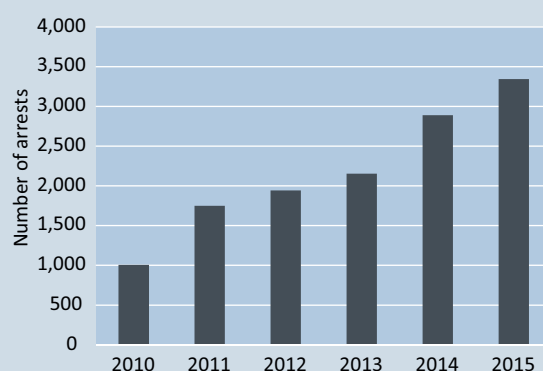
7 LCDC, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Lao PDR”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

8 DAINAP.

9 LCDC, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Lao PDR”, presented at the SMART regional workshop, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

10 The record number of methamphetamine tablet seizures in 2010 was due to a single major seizure case involved with 21.8 million tablets originating from Myanmar.

Figure 16. Number of arrests for drug-related offences in Lao PDR (2010 – 2015)



Source(s): DAINAP, LCDC, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Lao PDR”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

through Lao PDR to other countries in the region. It seems that the Myanmar-Lao PDR border area has become more attractive for traffickers who are moving shipments of several million tablets.

Over the last three years, some amounts of crystalline methamphetamine have been seized in Lao PDR. At almost 142 kg, the total amount of crystalline methamphetamine seized in the country in 2015 was the highest ever reported for Lao PDR. Between 2006 and 2012, no seizures of crystalline methamphetamine were reported in Lao PDR.¹¹

Lao PDR is a major transit location for methamphetamine, heroin and opium originating from the Golden Triangle and destined for markets in Thailand, Viet Nam, China and Cambodia. There are indications that Lao PDR is also a significant transit country for precursor chemicals used in the manufacture of drugs in the Golden Triangle area. In 2015, approximately 4,372 kg of unspecified precursors in powder form were seized in Lao PDR (1,494 kg in 2014).¹²

11 DAINAP.

12 LCDC, “Report of Seizure of Illicit Drugs from January to December 2015”, January 2016.

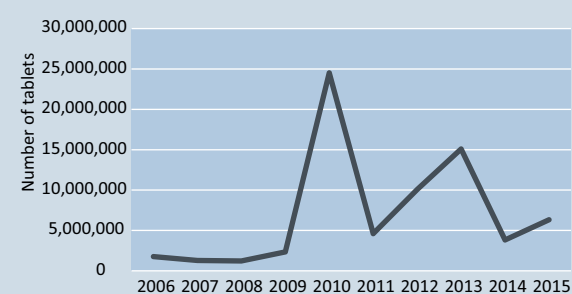
Table 13. Seizures of selected drugs in Lao PDR, 2011-2015

Drug type	Measurement	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Methamphetamine tablets	tablets	4,609,729	10,071,146	15,083,355	3,832,895	6,331,692
Crystalline methamphetamine	kg	0	0	26.4	19.4	141.9
Cannabis herb	kg	1,617.0	2,836.0	5,484.30	1,233.3	3,258.0
Cocaine	kg	0	0	10.5	0	0
Heroin	kg	43.4	45.0	287.8	181.8	134.8
Opium	kg	63.8	87.6	89.7	12.76	51.6

● = Not reported.

Source(s): DAINAP; LCDC, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Lao PDR", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

Figure 17. Seizures of methamphetamine tablet in Lao PDR (2006 – 2015)



Source(s): DAINAP

Lao PDR remains a major producer of opium in the region, in spite of the area under cultivation being significantly less than that of Myanmar. The total area under opium poppy cultivation in Lao PDR in 2015 was estimated to be 5,700 hectares, at about a similar level as in 2014 (6,200 ha).¹³ Phongsali and Houaphan provinces accounted for 72% of opium poppy cultivation areas in Lao PDR.¹⁴

Methamphetamine tablets continue to be the cheapest and the most widely available illicitly-used drug in Lao PDR. In 2015, the reported retail price for one methamphetamine tablet was USD 2, which is the same price reported in previous two years.¹⁵

There have been no reports of trafficking or use of new psychoactive substances (NPS) in Lao PDR.

¹³ UNODC, "Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2015: Myanmar and Lao PDR", December 2015.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ DAINAP; LCDC, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Lao PDR", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.



Emerging trends and concerns

- The manufacture, trafficking and use of crystalline methamphetamine remain a significant drug threat in Malaysia.
- Seizures of methamphetamine tablets originating from the Golden Triangle have stabilized in recent years, but remain at high levels.
- Transnational drug trafficking groups are increasingly targeting Malaysia as both a destination and transit country for methamphetamine and other illicit drugs, as well as for the manufacture of crystalline methamphetamine and MDMA for “ecstasy”¹ tablets. In addition, Malaysian national authorities dismantled the first ever ketamine manufacturing facility in the country in 2016.
- In recent years, increasing amounts of heroin from Afghanistan have been trafficked into the country via the Islamic Republic of Iran or Pakistan.

Overview of the drug situation

The trafficking of methamphetamine into Malaysia for domestic use and the use of the country as a transit location remain a problem. Transnational drug trafficking groups, mainly from China, Myanmar, West Africa, South Asia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, have been involved in supplying methamphetamine to the illicit drug market in Malaysia.² In addition, significant quantities of crystalline methamphetamine and “ecstasy” are also manufactured domestically in clandestine laboratories.

While heroin remains the most commonly used drug in Malaysia, the number of treatment admissions for the use of amphetamines³ has been increasing in recent years. The total number of drug treatment

admissions in 2015 was 6,032⁴. Of this total, 71% (4,287) were admitted for opiates.⁵ In 2015, a total of 1,571 treatment admissions were related to the use of amphetamines, accounting for 26% of the total and about a 47% increase compared to 2014 (839 admissions).⁶ Methamphetamine in crystalline form accounted for 77% (1,213 admissions) of the amphetamines-related treatment admissions in 2015.⁷ The non-medical use of ketamine and nimetazepam is also of concern in Malaysia.

The quantity of crystalline methamphetamine seized over the period 2009-2015 in Malaysia has been substantially higher than the quantities seized between 2004 and 2008 when an average of 135 kg of crystalline methamphetamine were seized in Malaysia per annum. Since 2009, the annual average amount seized increased nearly nine-fold to

1 “Ecstasy” tablets sold as ecstasy in Malaysia may contain substances other than MDMA.

2 NADA and Royal Malaysian Police, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

3 Refers to amphetamine and methamphetamine.

4 Ibid; the figure includes those admitted for more than one types of drugs, thus the number is different with the actual number of persons admitted in 2015.

5 NADA and Royal Malaysian Police, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

6 DAINAP.

7 Ibid.

Table 14. Trend in use of selected drugs in Malaysia, 2011-2015*

Drug type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Amphetamine	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑
Crystalline methamphetamine	↓	↓	↔	↑	↑
Methamphetamine tablets	●	●	↓	↑	↓
“Ecstasy”	●	↓	↔	↓	↑
Cannabis herb	↓	↓	↔	↑	↓
Heroin	↓	↓	↔	↓	↑
Ketamine	↓	↓	↔	↓	↓
Kratom	●	●	↔	●	●

* Based on expert perception provided by the National Anti-Drug Agency (NADA), Malaysia.

↑ = Increase, ↓ = Decrease, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported

Source(s): UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) for Malaysia for 2014; DAINAP

1,177 kg.⁸ This steep surge in seizures of crystalline methamphetamine is likely due to the increasing use of Malaysia by transnational drug trafficking groups as a transit country for methamphetamine destined to other markets in Asia and Oceania, as well as the increasing local demand in the country. According to the preliminary figures from national authorities, approximately 650 kg of crystalline methamphetamine and 1,215 kg of methamphetamine in liquid form, were seized in 2016⁹. Methamphetamine in liquid form refers to methamphetamine in solution before crystallization, and this is typically encountered during seizures of clandestine laboratories. This indicates that semi-finished methamphetamine products are trafficked for conversion and refinement in the country.

Seizures of methamphetamine tablets originating from the Golden Triangle have stabilized in recent years, but remain at high levels.¹⁰ More than 500,000 methamphetamine tablets have been seized in the country each year since 2012.¹¹ Large quantities of “ecstasy” tablets as well as sizable amounts of “ecstasy” in powder form, continue to be seized in Malaysia in recent years. In 2015, more than 400,000 “ecstasy” tablets were seized in the country.¹²

Malaysian authorities continue to dismantle ATS manufacturing facilities in the country. In 2015, a total of 23 ATS manufacturing facilities were dismantled in Malaysia: 16 for crystalline methamphetamine

manufacturing facilities and 7 for “ecstasy” tablet tableting facilities (respectively 12 and 5 in 2014).¹³ Between January and mid-August 2016, Malaysian authorities dismantled 14 synthetic drug manufacturing facilities, including the first ever clandestine ketamine laboratory found in the country.¹⁴ The seized illicit ketamine manufacturing facility was large scale and several Indian nationals were charged in connection with this case.¹⁵

A large share of the methamphetamine trafficked into Malaysia is perceived to originate from China via Hong Kong, China, and from Myanmar via Thailand.¹⁶ In 2016, several shipments of methamphetamine originating from China were seized in Malaysia, including 120.7 kg trafficked from Guangzhou, China, by air cargo.¹⁷ Malaysia has also been targeted by transnational criminal groups trafficking methamphetamine from West Africa to Asia, often with the involvement of Nigerian nationals. For instance, two Nigerian nationals were arrested for trafficking of 20.8 kg of crystalline methamphetamine

8 Ibid.

9 Royal Malaysian Police, “Global cooperation to fight against ATS smuggling: Malaysia’s perspective”, presented at the 22nd Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, Japan, 21-23 February, 2017.

10 NADA, “Malaysia country presentation”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

11 DAINAP.

12 Ibid.

13 NADA and Royal Malaysian Police, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016; NADA, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the SMART regional workshop, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

14 NADA and Royal Malaysian Police, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

15 Ibid.

16 UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) Malaysia for 2014.

17 NADA and Royal Malaysian Police, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

Table 15. Seizures of selected drugs in Malaysia, 2011-2015

Drug type	Measurement	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crystalline methamphetamine	Kg	1,235.6	851.8	1,706.5	1212.7	1,141.4
Liquid methamphetamine	lt/kg	•	•	•	41.8 lt	539.2 kg
Methamphetamine tablets	tablets	364,909	521,384	524,967	557,337	538,176
“Ecstasy”	tablets	98,751	772,421	395,984	117,702	407,475
“Ecstasy” powder	kg	27.0	464.6	654.6	53.7	267.9
Ketamine	kg	202.5	238.9	402.6	240.3	48.4
Benzodiazepines	tablets	1,206,735	9,424,643	365,274	467,133	4,038,733
Cannabis herb	kg	1,054.4	861.3	898.1	578.2	1,844.2
Cocaine	kg	3.5	7.0	73.9	33.4	18.0
Codeine	lt	3,463.8	5,571.6	6,990.2	1,584.5	3,169.1
Heroin	kg	755.5	416.9	763.0	455.8	742.6
Kratom	kg	3,067.0	5,237.7	9,101.5	15,541.4	28,961.4
Opium (raw and prepared)	kg	0.9	10.9	0.3	0.1	0.1
Psychotropics	tablets	895,890	1,124,078	816,938	1,287,472	56,279

• = Not reported.

Source(s): DAINAP; ARQ Malaysia for 2014, Royal Malaysian Police (RMP), “Malaysia Drug Situation Report”, presented at the 25th ADLOMICO meeting, Jeju, the Republic of Korea, 22-24 September, 2015; NADA, “Malaysia country presentation”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015; NADA and Royal Malaysian Police, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016; Royal Malaysian Police, “Global cooperation to fight against ATS smuggling: Malaysia’s perspective”, presented at the 22nd Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, Japan, 21-23 February, 2017.

sourced from Guangzhou, China, in April 2016.¹⁸ In 2015, a total of 139 Nigerian nationals were arrested for drug-related offences. In addition, these groups are also involved in trafficking of other drug types, including cocaine, cannabis and heroin into Malaysia.¹⁹

There has been a decline in the trafficking of crystalline methamphetamine by Iranian groups based in Malaysia. The authorities attribute this decline to the large number of arrests of Iranian nationals by the Narcotics Criminal Investigation Department, NCID, of the Royal Malaysian Police for drug-related offences in recent years (27 in 2015, 27 in 2014, 37 in 2013 and 52 in 2012).²⁰ However, recent reports suggested that Iranian nationals are not only involved

in trafficking of crystalline methamphetamine to Malaysia but also in its manufacture in Malaysia.²¹ For instance, national authorities arrested eight men, including two Iranian nationals, and seized 34 kg of high purity crystalline methamphetamine and 239 kg of methamphetamine in liquid form from a methamphetamine manufacturing site, located in Perak, Malaysia, in June 2016.²² Transnational groups based in India and Pakistan have also been involved in trafficking of illicit drugs, including methamphetamine, ketamine and heroin, into Malaysia.²³

The most commonly used new psychoactive substances (NPS) in Malaysia continue to be ketamine and

18 NADA and Royal Malaysian Police, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August 2016.

19 Ibid.

20 I NADA and Royal Malaysian Police, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016; RMP, “Malaysia country presentation”, presented at the Nineteenth Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, 18-20 February 2014.

21 NADA, “Malaysia Country Report”, presented at the ASEAN + 3 Workshop on Drug Monitoring Network of the ASEAN- NARCO 22-24, June 2015; NADA, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the SMART regional workshop, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

22 NADA and Royal Malaysian Police, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August 2016.

23 Royal Malaysian Police, “Global cooperation to fight against ATS smuggling: Malaysia’s perspective”, presented at the 22nd Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, Japan, 21-23 February, 2017.

kratom²⁴. Seizures of kratom have been on a steep rise in recent years in Malaysia, and in 2015, the amounts reached nearly 29 metric tons (mt), a two-fold increase compared to 2014 (15.5 mt).²⁵

Ketamine seizures and ketamine-related arrests have decreased significantly over the past five years, while kratom²⁶ related seizures and arrests have increased. Malaysia has also reported the seizure and use of piperazines (since 2010), khat (since 2010), synthetic cathinones (2013) and synthetic cannabinoids (since 2014).²⁷ In recent years, several tablets sold as “ecstasy” but containing a wide range of synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinones were found in the country. Some of the substances found in these tablets include methylone²⁸, MDPV²⁹, mephedrone³⁰, AM-2201³¹ and JWH-081.³²

While the purity of crystalline methamphetamine has been stable between 70% and 80% of methamphetamine since 2013,³³ the prices have dropped recently. The retail price of 1 kg of crystalline methamphetamine in 2014 and 2015 was estimated at USD 29,000, a significant decrease (40%) compared to the price reported in three preceding years (USD 49,000).^{34,35} The retail price of 1 methamphetamine tablet in 2015 was USD 5, a decrease of 50 % compared to the price reported in the three preceding

years (USD 10 per tablet).^{36,37} According to the Royal Malaysian Police, these significant decreases in the price of both forms of methamphetamine could be due to price decreases in some source countries.³⁸

24 Kratom (*mitragyna speciosa*) is a tree found in tropical and sub-tropical regions of South-East Asia.

25 NADA and Royal Malaysian Police, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

26 Kratom is often referred as ketum in Malaysia.

27 UNODC, “The challenge of new psychoactive substances”, Vienna, March 2013; UNODC Early Warning Advisory on New Psychoactive Substances.

28 Methylone was added to Schedule II of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 at the 58th Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

29 MDPV (3,4-methylenedioxypropylvalerone) was added to schedule II of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 at the 58th Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

30 Mephedrone was added to schedule II of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 at the 58th Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

31 AM-2201 was added to Schedule II of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 at the 58th Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

32 NADA and Royal Malaysian Police, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016

33 DAINAP; NADA, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs responses to the threats in Malaysia”, presented at the SMART regional workshop, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015; NADA and the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP).

34 DAINAP.

35 Price data may differ from data as reported due to conversions made by UNODC in June 2016. For instance, the retail price of 1kg of crystalline methamphetamine in the country in each of 2011, 2012 and 2013 was reported as 200,000 Malaysian Ringgit (MYR) and that of 2014 and 2015 was reported 119,000 and 117,000 MYR respectively.

36 DAINAP.

37 Reported as 22 MYR in 2014 and 2015 and reported as 40 MYR in 2011, 2012 and 2013.

38 Official communication with the Royal Malaysian Police, November 2016. As crystalline methamphetamine found in Malaysia is sourced both locally and trafficked from multiple countries, it is difficult to assess the impact of price changes in other countries relative to the price of drug in Malaysia. However, with regard to methamphetamine tablets, as Myanmar has been referred to as a major source country for methamphetamine tablets found countries in South-East Asia, including Malaysia itself, data related to price of methamphetamine tablets in Myanmar could explain the price decrease in methamphetamine tablets in the country. According to the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC), Myanmar, the retail price for 1 methamphetamine tablet in Myanmar in 2015 dropped to USD 2-4 from USD 3-6 per tablet in 2014. For more information, see the Myanmar country chapter.



Emerging trends and concerns

- Large quantities of methamphetamine, both in tablet and crystalline form, have been seized in Myanmar in recent years with record highs reached in 2015.
- Methamphetamine in both tablet and crystalline form originating from Myanmar continue to be seized in neighbouring countries.
- The number of persons admitted to government drug treatment facilities, and the proportion of methamphetamine users among them, are on the increase. The use of crystalline methamphetamine has been reported for the first time in 2015.
- Substantial quantities of known precursor chemicals for methamphetamine are trafficked from neighbouring countries and continue to be seized in Myanmar. There are indications that in addition to (pseudo) ephedrine-based methods, 1-phenyl-2-propanone (P-2-P) based methods might also be used to manufacture methamphetamine in Myanmar.
- A large “ecstasy” seizure in 2014 raises questions on the level of trafficking and role of Myanmar as a transit country.

Overview of the drug situation

Myanmar continues to be a major source of methamphetamine in both tablet and crystalline form, opium and heroin in South-East Asia. The majority of methamphetamine is manufactured in Shan State in the eastern part of the country, and significant amounts originating from the country continue to be seized in neighbouring countries.¹

While the large majority of persons admitted to drug treatment in Myanmar continue to be users of heroin and opium, there are indications that methamphetamine use is expanding rapidly in Myanmar. Information from the Myanmar Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC) indicates that methamphetamine tablet use has increased each year in Myanmar since 2005.²

In recent years, the number of persons admitted to drug treatment centers has increased steadily in Myanmar. In 2015 a total of 7,684 persons were admitted to treatment centres, the highest number ever reported in the country. This steep surge might indicate the expansion of the illicit drug market in the country. However, in the absence of a national representative drug use survey, the extent of drug use among the general population in Myanmar is unclear.³

The number of persons in treatment related to methamphetamine use has increased for six successive years, albeit at a low level relative to opiates.⁴ In 2015, the 359 methamphetamine users in treatment accounted for 4.7% of all persons who received treatment during that year,⁵ a more than a two-fold increase compared to 2014. According to expert

1 National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC), Ministry of Public Security, China, “Annual Report on Drug Situation in China 2014”, June 2015; Office of the Narcotics Control Board of Thailand (ONCB), Thailand, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Thailand”, presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

2 Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAIN-AP).

3 The Government of Myanmar is in the process of implementing a national household survey on drug use with support from UNODC.

4 DAINAP; CCDAC, “Myanmar country presentation”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

5 Official communication with CCDAC, June 2016.

Table 16. Trend in use of selected drugs in Myanmar, 2011-2015*

Drug type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Heroin	↔	↔	↓	↑	↔
Opium	↔	↔	↓	↔	↔
Methamphetamine tablets	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Crystalline methamphetamine	●	●	●	●	↑
Cannabis	↔	↔	↓	↓	↑

* Based on expert perception provided by CCDAC, Myanmar.

↑ = Increasing, ↓ = Decreasing, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported

Source(s): DAINAP; UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) Myanmar for 2014.

perception, this increase could partly be due to the emergence of the use of methamphetamine in crystalline form, which was reported by government officials for the first time in 2015, in addition to the use of methamphetamine tablets.⁶

In 2014, approximately 2.4 % (177 persons) of all treatment admissions were related to methamphetamine in Myanmar. In contrast, a much higher proportion of methamphetamine use was found among persons arrested for drug-related offences. The results of urine analysis were positive for methamphetamine for 60% (125) of arrestees in Yangon, the commercial centre of the country, 22% (49) in Lashio and 12% (30) in Myitkyina respectively, in 2014.⁷

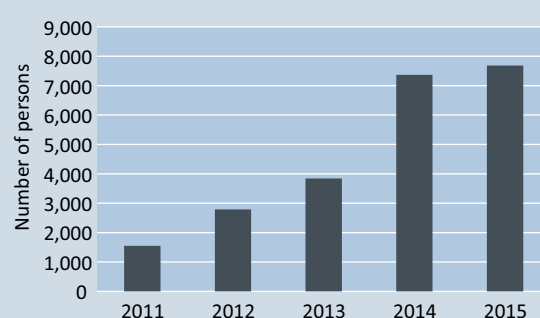
The relatively low number of persons admitted to treatment for methamphetamine use in Myanmar might be due to a combination of factors, including: the lack of awareness of the negative health effects of methamphetamine use and the risk of developing a substance use disorder; poly drug use; and the limited availability of methamphetamine-specific treatment in treatment centres in the country. Government officials cite the lack of tools, guidelines and training for public health officers in treatment centres as a challenge for providing treatment services for methamphetamine users in the country. Due to the aforementioned factors, the extent of methamphetamine use in Myanmar is probably not well represented in treatment admission data.

Large quantities of methamphetamine have been seized in Myanmar in recent years. In 2015, driven by large single incidents, seizures of both methamphetamine tablet and crystalline form reached a record high. In 2015, national authorities seized approximately 50 million methamphetamine tablets. This is by far the largest annual amount of methamphetamine tablets seized in the country and more than the combined

⁶ Official communication with CCDAC, October 2016.

⁷ CCDAC, "Myanmar country presentation", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

Figure 18. Number of persons admitted to drug treatment centres in Myanmar, 2011 – 2015



Source(s): DAINAP; CCDAC, "Myanmar country presentation", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015; Official communication with CCDAC, June 2016.

total of the years 2012 to 2014. This steep increase is primarily due to one case involving 26.7 million methamphetamine tablets seized in Yangon in July 2015.⁸ With regard to crystalline methamphetamine, nearly 2.3 mt were seized in 2015, marking an almost 300 % increase compared to 2014. This was by far the largest amount of crystalline methamphetamine seized since the start of monitoring. The sharp rise in the amount of crystalline methamphetamine seized in 2015 is primarily due to the seizure of 1,242 kg of the drug during several operations in Laukkai, the capital of Special Region 1, located in the northern part of Shan State, Myanmar, which is bordering China.⁹

Most of the methamphetamine that originates from Myanmar is illicitly manufactured in eastern Shan State, close to the border with China and Thailand. Some methamphetamine is manufactured in small, mobile facilities, primarily in territories controlled by

⁸ CCDAC, "Myanmar country presentation", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

⁹ CCDAC, "Initiative to Control Narcotic Drugs Problem in Myanmar", presented at the ASEAN +3 Drug Workshop on Drug Monitoring Network of the ASEAN-NARCO, 22- 24 June, 2015.

Table 17. Seizures of selected drugs in Myanmar, 2011-2015

Drug type	Measurement	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Methamphetamine tablets	tablets	5,894,188	18,162,052	10,187,014	12,650,000	49,950,000
Crystalline methamphetamine	kg	33.4	426.7 ^b	173.0	47.1	2,261.9
Methamphetamine powder ^a	kg	20.2	7.3	7.3	108.4	197.9
"Ecstasy"	tablets	0	0	0	2,388,953	1
Heroin ^c	kg	42.4	335.8	238.9	435.5	186.0
Opium, high grade	kg	828.3	1,470.4	2,357.0	1,828.4	888.8
Opium, low grade	kg	281.6	80.8	66.0	134.0	34.9
Opium oil	kg	60.0	0.535 litres	29.3	102.1	38.1
Cannabis ^d	kg	196.4	80.3	40.9	205.5	87.7
Kratom	kg	969.5	330.2	219.0	605.3	687.4
Ketamine	kg	1.4	●	●	4.2 ^e	3.1 ^f

● = Not reported.

^a Methamphetamine for processing into methamphetamine tablets. ^b Reported as 274.0 kg of liquid methamphetamine and 152.7 kg of crystalline methamphetamine. ^c Reported as heroin No.4. ^d Combined herb and resin. ^e Reported as 1.1 kg of powder and 3.1 litres of liquid types. ^f Reported as 3.1 litres of liquid types.

Source(s): DAINAP; CCDAC, "Myanmar country presentation", presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Workshop, Phnom Penh, 24-25 July 2012; CCDAC, "Myanmar country report", presented at the Eighteenth Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, 26-27 February 2013; CCDAC, "Myanmar country presentation", presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional meeting, Yangon, Myanmar, 20-21 August 2014; CCDAC, "Myanmar country presentation", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015; CCDAC, "ATS and Precursor Chemical Control", presented at the 39th Meeting of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies for Asia and the Pacific (HONLAP), 19-22 October, Bangkok, Thailand; CCDAC, "Seizures of Drugs by Law Enforcement Agencies from 1988 to 2015", February 2016.

active or former ethnic insurgent groups. Although no large-scale methamphetamine laboratory seizures have been reported by the Government, the large amounts of methamphetamine seized in Myanmar and neighbouring countries may be indicative of the existence of manufacturing facilities in Myanmar.

Between 2005 and 2015, law enforcement authorities seized a total of 32 methamphetamine tablet pressing machines, including 2 in 2014 and 3 in 2015.¹⁰ In July 2015, the national authorities seized nearly 200,000 methamphetamine tablets together with 100 kg of semi-processed methamphetamine products (methamphetamine powder) from a methamphetamine manufacturing facility, dismantled in Tachileik in East Shan State, bordering Mae Sai, Thailand. A total of 9 kg of crystalline methamphetamine and 245 kg of 'cutting agents' for methamphetamine were also seized at the scene.¹¹

Diversion of licit pharmaceutical preparations which

¹⁰ CCDAC, "Myanmar country report", presented at the 21st Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, Japan, 16-18 February 2016.

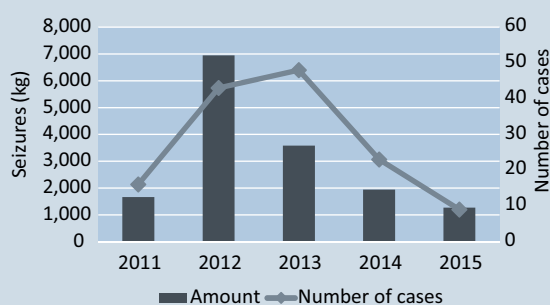
¹¹ CCDAC, "ATS and Precursor Chemical Control in Myanmar", presented at the 39th Meeting of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies for Asia and the Pacific (HONLAP), 19-22 October, Bangkok, Thailand.

contain ephedrine or pseudoephedrine continues to be a main source for the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine. These preparations originate largely from India and China and to a lesser extent from Thailand. Lao People's Democratic Republic has been identified as a transit point of precursor chemicals originating from Viet Nam.¹² While substantial amounts of methamphetamine precursor chemicals have been seized at the border with India in recent years, only limited amounts have been seized at the areas bordering China, where Government authorities have limited access.

The annual amounts, as well as the number of cases of pseudoephedrine seizures in Myanmar have been declining since 2012, despite strong increases in the seizure of methamphetamine over the same period. This decrease could indicate a reduction in the volume of pseudoephedrine, usually in the form of pharmaceutical preparations, trafficked from India to Myanmar in recent years, possibly as a result of strengthened interdiction efforts at the border but also because severe flooding and landslides affected transport routes in areas near

¹² Ibid.

Figure 19. Amounts and the number of cases of pseudoephedrine seizures in Myanmar, 2011 – 2015



Source(s): CCDAC, "Seizures of Drugs by Law Enforcement Agencies from 1988 to 2015", February 2016.

the border. These developments could be the drive for traffickers to explore alternative manufacturing methods for methamphetamine and new routes to traffic the precursors required for them. Indeed, a total of approximately 2,200 litres of phenylacetic acid and 14,200 litres of 1-phenyl-2-propanone (P-2-P), perceived to have originated from China, were seized in Myanmar in 2014 and 2015.¹³ These two precursors can be used in a methamphetamine manufacturing scheme instead of (pseudo)ephedrine. P-2-P based manufacturing methods have so far been mainly reported from regions such as Central- and North America and Europe.¹⁴

A large portion of the methamphetamine tablets manufactured in Myanmar is reportedly trafficked directly into China¹⁵ and Thailand, with some quantities trafficked via Lao PDR to Cambodia, Thailand and Viet Nam. Seizure data during the last few years suggest that significant and increasing quantities of methamphetamine tablets are also being trafficked westward to Bangladesh.¹⁶ While most crystalline methamphetamine originating from Myanmar is destined for the international market rather than for local use, the domestic demand for crystalline methamphetamine is increasing in some major cities in Myanmar.¹⁷

Methamphetamine tablets in Myanmar in 2014 were typically composed of about 20% methamphetamine, 75% of caffeine and other substances.¹⁸ The retail price for a methamphetamine tablet in 2015 ranged between USD 2 and 4 (2014: USD 3-6 per tablet) while the wholesale price for 1 kg of crystalline methamphetamine was reported to be between USD 2,000 and 10,000, the same range reported for 2014.¹⁹ "Ecstasy" has not been reported as a drug of major concern in Myanmar and the country had not reported any large "ecstasy" seizures until 2014. The largest annual amount of "ecstasy" seized in a ten-year period before 2014 was reported in 2005 (5,807 tablets).²⁰ However, in 2014 a total of nearly 2.4 million "ecstasy" tablets containing MDMA were seized in one single case off the coast of Tanintharyi Region.²¹ The seized tablets were destined for Malaysia which has been perceived to be a transit country for "ecstasy" by several countries, including Brunei Darussalam, New Zealand, and Singapore, in recent years.²² Considering the sheer number of tablets seized and the intended destination, it might be possible that the drugs were destined, not only for the Malaysian drug market but also for onward trafficking to other countries in South-East Asia and the Pacific.

The use of new psychoactive substances has not been indicated as a major problem in Myanmar. Myanmar is one of three countries in South-East Asia (the others being Malaysia and Thailand) where kratom²³ use and cultivation are relatively common. A total of 687 kg of kratom was seized in Myanmar in 2015, the largest amounts of seizures ever reported by the country.²⁴

13 Ibid.

14 UNODC, Global SMART Update, Vol. 12, September 2014.

15 National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC), Ministry of Public Security, China, "Annual Report on Drug Situation in China 2014", June 2015

16 Department of Narcotics Control, Ministry of Home Affairs, Bangladesh. (Accessed at <http://www.dnc.gov.bd/statistics.html>).

17 CCDAC, "Myanmar country presentation", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid. Price data may differ from data in national reports due to conversions made by UNODC.

20 DAINAP.

21 Official communication with CCDAC, March 2015.

22 UNODC, *The Challenge of Synthetic Drugs in East and South-East Asia and Oceania: Trends and Patterns of Amphetamine-type Stimulants and New Psychoactive Substances*, May 2015.

23 A plant indigenous to Southeast Asia that contains the alkaloid mitragynine. The most frequent mode of administration is making tea out of the dried leaves. It is a controlled substance in Myanmar.

24 CCDAC, "Seizures of Drugs by Law Enforcement Agencies from 1988 to 2015", February 2016.



Emerging trends and concerns

- Crystalline methamphetamine continues to be the primary drug of concern in the Philippines, and accounts for the vast majority of drug-related arrests and drug treatment admissions in the country.
- The manufacture and trafficking of crystalline methamphetamine by transnational organized criminal groups from China, as well as the increasing involvement of Mexican drug syndicates in illicit drug trafficking, poses a threat to the country.
- New types of synthetic drugs sold in tablet form, and often containing a combination of different substances, are emerging in the Philippines. In recent years, increasing amounts of heroin from Afghanistan have been trafficked into the country via the Islamic Republic of Iran or Pakistan.

Overview of the drug situation

Crystalline methamphetamine remains the most problematic drug of use in the Philippines. According to the latest drug use survey conducted by the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB), there were an estimated 1.8 million drug users¹ in the Philippines.^{2,3} Excluding cannabis, crystalline methamphetamine was the most widely abused drug in the country, accounting for approximately half (48.9%, 859,150 individuals) of the current drug users. Crystalline methamphetamine users also continue to account for the majority of drug-related arrests and treatment admissions. “Ecstasy”⁴ use remains limited. A large number of drug users in the Philippines are polydrug users.

1 Current drug users refer to individuals who used drugs at least once from 1 January 2015 to 5 February 2016.

2 Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB), “2015 Nationwide Survey on the Nature & Extent of Drug Abuse in the Philippines”, 2015.

3 The sample size of the survey was 5,000 of the population aged between 10 – 69 years-old, selected from 5 regions of the country, namely North Luzon, South Luzon, National Capital region, Visayas and Mindanao. Of 5,000 surveyed people, 113 people responded to use illicit drugs between January 2015 and February 2016, and approximately 49% - including 24.5 % of poly-drug users – of 113 people responded to have used crystalline methamphetamine. The confidence level of the survey is 95% and $\pm 0.9\%$ margin of error.

4 “Ecstasy” tablets sold as ecstasy in the Philippines may contain substances other than MDMA.

The use of new psychoactive substances (NPS) is limited in the Philippines. The non-medical use of ketamine use has been reported for some years. However, the low seizures in recent years (see Table 2) might indicate that the use is not widespread. However, it appears that markets for new types of drugs have been gradually developing in the country over recent years. Some seized tablets, referred to as “Fly High”, were found to contain MDMA and methamphetamine.⁵ New products suspected to contain NPS and sold in capsules as “Green Apple” and “Green Amore” have been detected on the market as well in recent years.⁶

Cannabis remains the most widely used drug in the Philippines according to the latest drug use survey, accounting for 72% (1,270,048 estimated users) of the total current drug users.⁷ In 2015, 20% (1,091)

5 Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) and Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in the Philippines”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

6 DDB and PDEA “Synthetic drug tablets found in the Philippines”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

7 Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB), “2015 Nationwide Survey on the Nature & Extent of Drug Abuse in the Philippines”, 2015.

Table 18. Trend in use of selected drugs in the Philippines, 2011-2015

Drug type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crystalline methamphetamine	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Benzodiazepine	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
Cannabis herb	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓
Inhalants	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓

* Based on expert perception provided by the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB).

↑ = Increase, ↓ = Decrease, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported

Source(s): DAINAP.

of all treatment admissions were related to cannabis.⁸ A large number of cannabis plantation sites (286) were eradicated by Philippine authorities in 2015, most of which (82%) were located in Cordillera Administrative Region on the island of Luzon.⁹

The number of all treatment admissions related to drugs has been increasing rapidly in recent years in line with the increasing number of persons admitted for using methamphetamine (see figure 1). Over the last six years, the number of persons treated for methamphetamine in the country nearly tripled from 1,929 in 2010 to 5,226 in 2015.¹⁰ The proportion of women treated for methamphetamine use remained low at 7% in 2015.¹¹ The 31 persons in treatment for “ecstasy” use in 2015 continued to make up less than 1% of all persons admitted to drug treatment of that year in the country.¹²

Between 2009 and 2012, an average of about 145 kg of the crystalline methamphetamine was seized in the Philippines per year, compared to an annual average of 636 kg between 2013 and 2015.¹³ While the steep increase in seizures of crystalline methamphetamine could reflect increased law enforcement activities, treatment admission, price, and purity trends denote a growing demand of the drug in the country. According to the preliminary figures from national authorities, nearly 2.5 mt of crystalline methamphetamine were seized in 2016, the largest amount within the last decade.¹⁴

8 DDB and PDEA “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in the Philippines,” presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016; some of the cannabis related admissions include admissions for poly-drug use.

9 PDEA, “2015 Annual Report”, 2016.

10 UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) for the Philippines.

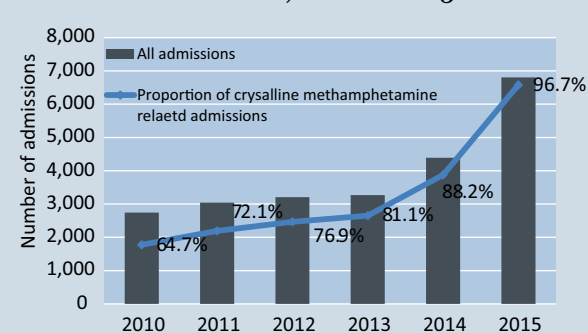
11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) for the Philippines for 2015 and previous years.

14 Official communication with DDB, January 2017.

Figure 20. The number of persons who use crystalline methamphetamine among all treatment admissions, 2010 – 2015



Note: Some of the crystalline methamphetamine related admissions include admissions for poly-drug use.

Source(s): UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) for the Philippines, 2010-2015 and previous years.

The manufacture of crystalline methamphetamine continues to be a concern in the Philippines, even though the number of crystalline methamphetamine manufacture facilities dismantled in the country appears to be on the decline in recent years. Between 2010 and 2015, a total of 25 facilities manufacturing crystalline methamphetamine were dismantled, including two laboratories in 2015, one in Cagayan province and the other in Masbate province.¹⁵ In 2016, Philippine national authorities dismantled 10 methamphetamine facilities, one of them a ‘floating laboratory’ found off Subic Bay in July 2016.¹⁶

Methamphetamine is not only manufactured in the country but also trafficked from other countries and regions into the Philippines. The manufacture and trafficking of crystalline methamphetamine from China by transnational organized criminal groups is of major concern. According to Philippine national

15 DDB and PDEA “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in the Philippines,” presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016; DAINAP.

16 Official communication with DDB, January 2017.; DDB and PDEA “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in the Philippines,” presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

Table 19. Seizures of selected drugs and precursor chemicals in the Philippines, 2011-2015

Drug type	Measurement	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crystalline methamphetamine	kg	254.3	112.1	837.6	718.5	350.7
Liquid methamphetamine	lt.	173.5	•	•	•	856.5
“Ecstasy”	tablets	993	158	52	3,599	2,902
Benzodiazepine	tablets	9	18,042	20	133	•
Cannabis herb	kg	596.5	425.6	649.7	368.7	427.4
Cannabis plants	plants	3,955,546	1,234,020	2,280,507	1,436,113	1,396,123
Cannabis seed	kg	2.9	2.7	138.7	35.8	29.3
Cannabis seedlings	kg	2.9	2.7	138.7	43.2	29.3
Heroin	kg	•	•	•	•	2.0
Cocaine	kg	17.8	15.4	12.2	69.8	11.5
Ketamine	kg	• ^a	• ^a	0	176 (capsules)	89 (ampules)
GHB	lt	•	•	•	•	3.1
Pseudoephedrine	lt.	0.7	2.5	•	154.9 (gram)	•
Ephedrine	kg	0.1	377.8	0.6	510.1	49.7

• = Not reported. ^a Reported as less than 10 grams of ketamine seized.

Source(s): DAINAP; PDEA “Philippine country report”, presented at the Sixteenth Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference, Tokyo, 22-24 February 2011; Official communication with PDEA, October 2012; PDEA and DDB, “Philippine country report” presented at the Global SMART Regional meeting, Jakarta, 28-29 August 2013; DDB, “Philippine country report”, presented at the Global SMART Regional meeting, Yangon, Myanmar, 20-21 August 2014; DDB and Philippine PDEA, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in the Philippines”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015; DDB and PDEA “Synthetic drug tablets found in the Philippines”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016; Official communication with DDB, November 2016; UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) for the Philippines, 2011-2015.

authorities, more than half (373 persons) of a total of 710 foreign nationals arrested for drug-related offences, were Chinese nationals.¹⁷ There is also increasing concern over the targeting of the country by Mexican drug syndicates since 2012.¹⁸ For instance, between May 2014 and April 2015, there were three methamphetamine seizure incidents totaling 600 kg at the Port of Manzanillo, Mexico, bound for the Philippines.¹⁹

The size and extent of the “ecstasy” market in the Philippines remains relatively small in comparison to its neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia and Malaysia. However, seizures of “ecstasy” tablets rose significantly from 52 tablets in 2013 to 3,599 tablets in 2014, and 2,902 tablets in 2015.²⁰

17 PDEA, “Philippine country report”, presented at the 26th Anti-Drug Liaison Officials’ Meeting for International Cooperation (ADLOMICO), Jeju, 22-24 September, 2016.

18 PDEA, “Philippine country report”, presented at the 21st Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, Japan, 16-18 February 2016.

19 DDB and PDEA “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in the Philippines,” presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

20 DAINAP.

The Philippines is a transit and a destination point for cocaine trafficking from South America. According to Philippine national authorities, a large majority of cocaine seized in the past two years were trafficked to the country from Peru, Brazil and Ecuador via Hong Kong, China and United Arab Emirates (UAE).²¹

Crystalline methamphetamine samples analysed in the Philippines in 2015 had an average purity of 57% methamphetamine, having previously been reported at 74% in 2014 and 73% in 2013.²² The retail price for 1 gram of crystalline methamphetamine in 2015 ranged between USD 30 and 318.²³ The decline in purity at roughly stable price level, while seizures and treatment admissions increased, suggests a growing demand for crystalline methamphetamine in the Philippines.

21 UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) the Philippines for 2013 and 2014.

22 DAINAP; DDB and PDEA “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in the Philippines,” presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016; Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) and Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in the Philippines”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

23 Ibid;



Emerging trends and concerns

- Heroin and crystalline methamphetamine remain the two most commonly used drugs in Singapore. However, recent data indicate that crystalline methamphetamine might have replaced heroin as the most widely used drug in the country.
- According to recent data on first-time drug-related arrestees, in Singapore, methamphetamine is the most frequently reported substance, accounting for approximately 80% of all cases.
- International drug trafficking organizations continue to target Singapore as a transit location for amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) into the region, even though there are some indications that Singapore might have become a less preferred transit route by drug trafficking groups in recent years.
- A growing number of new psychoactive substances (NPS) have been found in tablets sold as “ecstasy”¹ in Singapore in recent years.

Overview of the drug situation

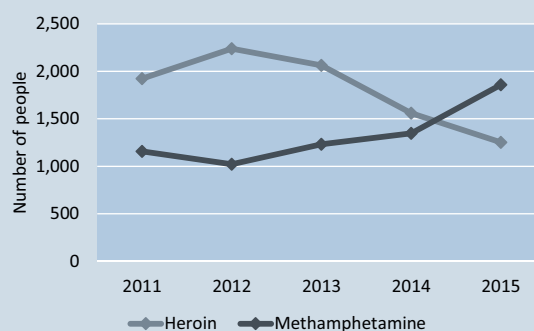
Heroin and methamphetamine remain the two most commonly used drugs in Singapore. In 2015, a total of 3,343 drug users were arrested in the country, of which 1,858 persons (56%) used methamphetamine and 1,253 (37%) persons used heroin.² During the last five years, the number of arrestees for methamphetamine use in Singapore increased by approximately 60% while the number for heroin decreased by 35%. Although drug-related arrests are not a direct indicator of prevalence of use, this could indicate that methamphetamine is replacing heroin as the most widely used drug in the country (see figure 1). In addition, crystalline methamphetamine continued to be the most commonly used drug (70%) among all drug users arrested for the first time in 2015.³ According to preliminary figures from national authorities, nearly 80% (1,068 persons)

1 “Ecstasy” tablets sold as ecstasy in Singapore may contain substances other than MDMA.

2 Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), Singapore, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Singapore”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

3 Ibid.

Figure 21. Drug users arrested for heroin and methamphetamine, 2011 – 2015



Source: Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), “Drug situation report 2015”, February 2016, and previous years; CNB, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Singapore”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

of all drug users arrested for the first time (1,347 persons) used methamphetamine in 2016.⁴ Use of methamphetamine in tablet form and “ecstasy” are not indicated to be a significant problem in Singapore.

4 CNB, “Overview of Singapore’s Drug Situation in 2016”, February 2017. (Accessed at https://www.cnb.gov.sg/Libraries/CNB_Newsroom/Files/CNB_Annual_Stats_Release_for_2016_docx.sflb.ashx)

Table 20. Trend in use of specific drugs in Singapore, 2011-2015*

Drug type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Methamphetamine	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑
Ecstasy (MDMA)	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓
Buprenorphine	↓	↓	↓	●	●
Cannabis herb	↔	↔	↑	↑	↑
Heroin	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓
Inhalants	↓	↓	↓	●	●
Ketamine	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Nimetazepam	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓

*Expert perception provided by CNB.

↑ = Increase, ↓ = Decrease, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported

Source(s): DAINAP; UNODC, Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) Singapore for 2014 and 2015; Official communication with the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) in August and September 2013; Official communications with CNB, November 2014.

The number of persons admitted to drug treatment for methamphetamine use in Singapore has increased each year since 2005. In 2013, as a proportion of all persons in drug treatment, crystalline methamphetamine users accounted for about 49% (heroin users accounted for 36%), marking the first time since 2007 that the proportion of methamphetamine users in treatment was higher than that of heroin users.⁵ The trend continued in 2015 with methamphetamine users in treatment accounting for approximately 69% of the total, while heroin users accounted for only 19%.⁶

Following large seizures of crystalline methamphetamine in 2012 and 2013, a significantly lower amounts of the drug were seized by Singapore national authorities during the last two years. In 2015, a total of approximately 15.6 kg of crystalline methamphetamine was seized in the country, an approximately 24 % decrease compared to 2014 (12.5 kg), and 65% lower than the amounts seized in 2013 (44.1kg). However, the amount of crystalline methamphetamine destined for the local market has been on the rise in recent years: 8.9 kg in 2013, 9.2 kg in 2014 and 15.6 kg in 2015.⁷ Thus, the overall decrease in seizures of crystalline methamphetamine in the previous two years might be due to the strengthened efforts of the Government of Singapore to tackle methamphetamine trafficking transiting the country. For instance, according to the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), there are indications that West African drug trafficking syndicates have

5 Official communication with CNB, Singapore, November 2014.

6 DAINAP.

7 CNB, "Drug situation report 2014", July 2015 (Accessed at: http://www.cnb.gov.sg/Libraries/CNB_Newsroom_Files/CNB_2014_Stats_Release_16_jun.sflb.ashx); CNB, Singapore, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Singapore", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

been using Singapore less frequently as a transit for methamphetamine trafficking⁸, which may have resulted in the overall decreases in methamphetamine seizures in 2014 and 2015. However, new trafficking routes for crystalline methamphetamine by air embarking from either China or Hong Kong, China, and transiting Singapore to reach other countries, including Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Japan and Russia, have been observed.⁹ According to preliminary figures from national authorities, approximately 18.3 kg of crystalline methamphetamine were seized in the country.¹⁰

The overall trends of methamphetamine tablet seizures in Singapore show similar trends with those of crystalline methamphetamine. The amounts seized in 2014 (248 tablets) and 2015 (142 tablets) were significantly less than in 2013, when the seizures peaked with 22,020 tablets.¹¹ The number of 'ecstasy' tablets seized in 2015 (2,943 tablets) was also the lowest during the last five years and significantly less than in 2013 (7,327 tablets).¹²

According to the Government of Singapore, there is no known manufacture of illicit drugs in the country and illicit drugs are mostly trafficked from neighbouring countries.¹³ Furthermore, in 2014, there were 9 drug

8 CNB, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Singapore", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

9 Ibid; CNB, Singapore, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Singapore", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

10 CNB, "Overview of Singapore's Drug Situation in 2016", February 2017. (Accessed at https://www.cnb.gov.sg/Libraries/CNB_Newsroom_Files/CNB_Annual_Stats_Release_for_2016_docx.sflb.ashx)

11 DAINAP; CNB, "Drug situation report 2015", February 2016.

12 CNB, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Singapore", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

13 Ibid.

Table 21. Drug treatment admissions by drug type in Singapore, 2011-2015

Drug type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Methamphetamine	549	585	675	676	837
Amphetamine	●	●	1	1	1
Ecstasy	8	10	16	8	●
Buprenorphine	1	2	0	●	●
Cannabis	79	69	86	73	85
Heroin	558	632	505	356	225
Ketamine	22	17	19	30	5
Nimetazepam	25	19	66	43	18
Inhalants	●	14	24	20	●
Mephedrone	●	●	1	0	●
Methadone	●	●	●	●	1
Opium	●	●	●	●	2
Multiple drugs	●	●	●	8	●
Total	688	1,245	1,408	1,384	1,213¹⁴

● = Not reported

Source(s): DAINAP; Official communication with CNB, September 2013; Official communication with CNB, November 2014.

trafficking cases involving postal services, where the shipments were suspected to have been ordered online through the Internet.¹⁵

While the trafficking and use of new psychoactive substances (NPS) is not currently a major problem in Singapore, it is certainly on the increase. The appearance of synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones were first reported in Singapore in 2011, while use of the plant-based substance kratom¹⁶ was first reported before 2008.¹⁷ The trafficking and use of ketamine¹⁸ has for several years been of concern, is currently indicated to be limited in terms of its use and but reported as one of several NPS found in tablets sold as “ecstasy” in Singapore. In recent years, the number of exhibits containing NPS encountered in Singapore has increased substantially. For instance, in 2014, a total of 214 exhibits containing NPS were detected in Singapore, an 80% increase compared to 2011 when 47 exhibits containing NPS were encountered.¹⁹ According to CNB, in 2015, 3,172 tablets and 3.54 kg of NPS were seized in the country, representing

significant increases in comparison to 2014 when 470 tablets and 114.4 g of NPS, mostly belonging to the synthetic cannabinoid and synthetic cathinone groups, were seized.²⁰ In 2015, 20 NPS were identified in the country for the first time, including 3 synthetic cannabinonids (MDMB-CHMICA, NM-2201, and CBM-2201) and 3 tryptamines (AMT, DMT, and 5-MeO-MiPT).²¹

Recognizing the increasing threats of NPS, the Government of Singapore introduced the Fifth Schedule of the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) in May 2013) to allow the authorities to list a new psychoactive substance for a period of 12 months, with the possibility of an extension for another 12 months. The CNB has the power to seize NPS listed in the Fifth Schedule in order to restrict their circulation. The trafficking, manufacture, importing, exporting, possession or consumption of any substance listed in the Fifth Schedule does not constitute an offence under the MDA. However, that changes when substances are moved from the Fifth Schedule to a schedule with stricter controls.²² For instance, effective as of 1 May 2016, a generic group of tryptamines and 22 psychoactive substances have been added to the First Schedule of MDA, of

¹⁴ The figure includes other drugs unspecified.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Kratom is a product derived from the *mitragyna speciosa* plant and produces both stimulant and sedative effects. It is indigenous to countries in South-East Asia, in particular Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand.

¹⁷ UNODC Global SMART Programme, “The challenge of new psychoactive substances”, Vienna, March 2013.

¹⁸ Ketamine is listed as a Class A controlled drug in the First Schedule of the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) of Singapore.

¹⁹ CNB, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Singapore”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015.

²⁰ CNB, Singapore, “Drug situation report 2015”, February 2016.

²¹ CNB, Singapore, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Singapore”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

²² CNB, “Singapore country presentation”, presented at the Eighteenth Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, 26-27 February 2013.

Table 22. Seizures of selected illicit drugs in Singapore, 2011-2015

Drug type	Measurement	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crystalline methamphetamine	kg	14.1	50.8	44.1	12.5	15.6
Methamphetamine tablets	tablets	771.5	765	22,020	248	142
Ecstasy	tablets	3,213	4,103	7,327	3,874	2,943
Buprenorphine (Subutex)	tablets	35	276	47	12	620
Cannabis herb	kg	12.9	14.9	15.6	35.0	44.3
Heroin ^a	kg	72.7	66.4	72.4	67.5	53.7
Ketamine	kg	7.9	3.9	4.3	2.5	2.3
Benzodiazepines	tablets	40,078	46,421	62,943	17,682	33,686
Cocaine	kg	•	•	4.1	0	0
LSD	stamp	•	•	1	4	130 ^b
Synthetic cathinones	Tablets / grams	•	•	•	18 and 0.1 gram	2,444 and 490.9 gram
Synthetic cannabinoids	Tablets / grams	•	•	9130 gram	452 and 114.1 gram	114 and 145.9 gram

• = Not reported.

^a Refers to Heroin No. 3. ^b Some of these stamps contain NBOME and other NPSs

Source(s): UNODC Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) for Singapore for 2015 and previous years; DAINAP; CNB, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Singapore", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September, 2015; CNB, "Drug situation report 2015", February 2016.

which 20 substances were previously scheduled in the Fifth Schedule.²³ In addition, 4 substances, MDMB-CHMICA, THJ-018, NM-2201 (and its fluoro positional isomers in the pentyl group) and 5F-NNE1 (and its fluoro positional isomers in the pentyl group), were newly listed in the Fifth Schedule.²⁴

Crystalline methamphetamine samples analysed in 2015 had an average purity of about 78% of methamphetamine, similar to the figure reported in 2014 (77%).²⁵ Over the last five years, the average proportion of methamphetamine found in tablets ranged between 2.7 % and 7.5%.²⁶ In 2015, the average proportion of methamphetamine in tablet samples was 5.6% of methamphetamine. Singapore reported a (MDMA) purity of 36% for 'ecstasy' in 2015, a significant increase compared to figures reported in the four preceding years (15.7 to 24.2%).²⁷ This steep increase requires further research, e.g. to better understand if this development indicates a

greater MDMA availability.²⁸

The retail price of methamphetamine has been stable in recent years. In 2015, the street retail price of a gram of crystalline methamphetamine in the country ranged from USD 150 to USD 180 and the average price of one methamphetamine tablet was USD 20.²⁹ The street retail price of 'ecstasy' has been stable over the last five years ranging between USD 25 and USD 30 per tablet.³⁰

23 CNB, "MISUSE OF DRUGS ACT", CNB News release, April 2016 (Accessed at https://www.cnb.gov.sg/Libraries/CNB_Newsroom/Files/CNB_News_Release_-_NPS_for_1_May_2016.sflb.ashx)

24 Ibid.

25 CNB, Singapore, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Singapore", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 For further information, see <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/2473/TD0116348ENN.pdf>

29 CNB, Singapore, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Singapore", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

30 Ibid.



Emerging trends and concerns

- Annual seizure amounts of methamphetamine both in tablet and crystalline form have stabilized in recent years yet remained at high levels.
- While the use of methamphetamine tablets remains of great concern, recent Government reports estimate that the number of crystalline methamphetamine users is on the increase.
- Transnational criminal groups continue to target Thailand as a major transit location for the trafficking of illicit drugs and precursor chemicals to international markets, and also as a destination country for illicit drugs.

Overview of the drug situation

Methamphetamine trafficking and use continues to be the main drug-related concern in Thailand as evidenced by arrests, seizures and drug treatment data. Annual seizure amounts of methamphetamine both in tablet and crystalline form have been at high levels in recent years. Seizures include methamphetamine destined for the local drug market, but also shipments intended for onward trafficking to other countries in East and South-East Asia and Oceania. The number of methamphetamine users admitted to treatment programmes in Thailand has decreased in recent years. According to the Government of Thailand, this is primarily due to a major change in its drug policy. In recent years, the Government's promotion of voluntary treatment for drug users has led to a steep decrease in the number of admissions to compulsory drug treatment centres.

According to a recent government estimate, the number of methamphetamine users has been on the rise. It is estimated that there were approximately 2.89 million drug users in Thailand in 2014.¹ Of the 2.89

million users, 2.29 million users (79%) were estimated to have used methamphetamine tablets and 185,000 users (6.4%) were considered to have used crystalline methamphetamine.² Thai national authorities have reported that the crystalline methamphetamine market has grown rapidly in recent years in the country.³ "Ecstasy"⁴ use is limited and has shown a stable trend of late. The use of cannabis and kratom⁵ continues to be of concern. The use of heroin remains relatively low compared to methamphetamine. However, according to expert perception, the use of heroin has been on the increase in four out of five years since 2011 – a development which is also reflected in rising numbers of heroin users admitted to treatment.

HIV prevalence among people who inject drug (PWID) in Thailand remains high and a serious concern even though the most recent data on HIV among PWID point to a declining trend. In 2014, the prevalence of HIV among PWID in the country was estimated to be 19%, a decrease from 25% in 2012.⁶

1 ONCB, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Thailand", presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 "Ecstasy" tablets sold as ecstasy in Thailand may contain substances other than MDMA.

5 Kratom is a substance derived from *mitragyna speciosa* and produces both stimulant and sedative effects.

6 Thailand National AIDS Council, "Thailand AIDS Response Progress Report 2015: Reporting Period: Fiscal Year of 2014", 2015.

Table 23. Trend in use of selected drugs in Thailand, 2011-2015

Drug type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crystalline methamphetamine	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑
Methamphetamine tablets	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓
Ecstasy	↓	↑	↓	↔	↑
Ketamine	↔	↑	↑	●	●
Cannabis herb	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑
Heroin	↑	↑	↔	↑	↑

↑ = Increase, ↓ = Decrease, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported
Source(s): DAINAP. Based on expert perception.

In 2015, there were a total of 121,208 drug treatment admissions in Thailand, a 47% decrease compared with the previous year (229,654 admissions). Methamphetamine continued to be the most common drug of use reported by persons in treatment in 2015, accounting for approximately 84% of the total. Treatment admissions related to “ecstasy” remained low (202) in 2015. However, the proportion of women admitted for “ecstasy” use was relatively high (40% or 80 persons) compared to other drugs where female patients only represent 3% of persons in treatment on average. The number of persons admitted to treatment for kratom use also decreased by about 70% to 1,727 persons, accounting for about 1.4% of all treatment admissions in 2015.

Between 2007 and 2013, annual seizure amounts of methamphetamine both in tablet and crystalline form increased, reaching a peak of 113 million methamphetamine tablets and 1.68 mt of crystalline methamphetamine in 2013. In 2014 and 2015, seizures of both drugs have been relatively stabilized at a lower level compared to 2013 and the previous year. These recent trends might be the result of intensified law enforcement efforts to stop flows of illicit drugs originating from the Golden Triangle area, which is the main source area of methamphetamine found in Thailand.

A large majority of methamphetamine tablets found in Thailand originate from along the border with Myanmar.⁷ Large amounts (90%) of crystalline methamphetamine seized in Thailand also originate from there.⁸ In addition, transnational criminal groups involving nationals of African countries, China and the Islamic Republic of Iran continue to target

7 ONCB, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Thailand”, presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

8 ONCB, “Thailand country report”, presented at the 25th Anti-Drug Liaison Officials’ Meeting for International Cooperation (ADLOMICO), Jeju, the Republic of Korea, 22-24 September 2015.

Thailand as both a destination and transit country for the trafficking of crystalline methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin to international markets.⁹

Large quantities of precursor chemicals are diverted or smuggled through Thailand to illicit methamphetamine manufacturing locations located along the Thai-Myanmar border area, and to a lesser extent, in Cambodia.¹⁰ There are also indications that domestic drug trafficking networks managed from inside correctional facilities in Thailand are playing an increasing role in the illicit methamphetamine trade within the country.¹¹

There are indications that African transnational drug trafficking syndicates are increasingly targeting Thailand’s international airports for the trafficking of crystalline methamphetamine as well as cocaine. In 2014, approximately 36.4 kg of crystalline methamphetamine trafficked by African drug trafficking syndicates were seized across several Thai international airports.¹² In addition, Thailand national authorities seized 15.1 kg of crystalline methamphetamine and 43 kg of cocaine at several Thailand international airports in 2015 and arrested 37 offenders, including 15 Thai nationals and 11 African nationals.¹³ A large number of these methamphetamine shipments were targeting the local market but some were destined for other markets in Asia, including Hong Kong, China, Japan, Malaysia, and the Philippines.¹⁴

9 Ibid.

10 ONCB, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Thailand”, presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

11 ONCB, “Thailand country report”, presented at the 25th Anti-Drug Liaison Officials’ Meeting for International Cooperation (ADLOMICO), Jeju, Republic of Korea, 22-24 September 2015.

12 ONCB, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Thailand”, presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

13 ONCB, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Thailand”, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

14 ONCB, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Thailand”, presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

Table 24. Drug treatment admissions in Thailand by drug type, 2011-2015

Drug type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Methamphetamine tablets	158,316	245,920	255,449	188,595	95,756
Crystalline methamphetamine	6,728	16,503	13,565	8,487	5,604
“Ecstasy”	172	263	185	224	202
Cannabis	7,136	14,279	14,304	13,360	8,720
Cocaine	15	27	30	32	30
Heroin	2,115	2,559	2,634	2,994	3,691
Inhalants	3,535	4,288	2,957	7,033	1,787
Ketamine	13	18	31	51	●
Kratom ^a	2,835	11,593	9,789	5,687	1,727
Opium	2,601	2,846	2,888	3,191	3,691
Total	183,547	298,296	301,832	229,654	121,208

^a Includes users of kratom in leaf and liquid form. ● = Not reported.
Source(s): DAINAP

Some quantities of pharmaceutical preparations containing pseudoephedrine have been seized in Thailand. During the first six months of 2015, a total of 6.2 kg and 51,600 pseudoephedrine tablets were seized in Thailand.¹⁵ In addition, 20 mt of methylene chloride, a solvent used for illicit manufacture of

as well as solvents seized in Thailand are believed to be destined for illicit methamphetamine manufacturing sites in Myanmar. Unlike in 2012 and 2013, when 12 small-scale ATS manufacturing facilities were detected in Thailand, no such facilities were dismantled in 2014 and 2015.¹⁷

Table 25. Seizures of selected drugs in Thailand, 2011-2015

Drug type	Measurement	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Methamphetamine tablets	tablets	49,365,700	95,268,000	113,000,000	112,910,000	108,300,000
Crystalline methamphetamine	tablets	771.5	765	22,020	248	142
Ecstasy ^a	tablets	21,115	4,809	18,324	31,381	11,467
Cannabis herb	kg	12,749.0	24,393.5	28,943.3	32,199.4	24,554.3
Cocaine	kg	31.8	17.9	62.6	28.6	45.7
Heroin	kg	547.5	127.5	750.1	378.7	202.5
Ketamine	kg	78.0	21.0	24.4	40.1	25.8
Kratom ^b	kg	32,913.6	28,978.4	45,513.2	75,423.4	27,525.1 ^c

● = Not reported. ^a Ecstasy tablet seizures converted into estimated kg equivalents at 1 tablet = 300 mg. ^b Combined seizures of kratom leaves and kratom liquid (2011-2014). ^c -The figure does not contain seizures of kratom liquid.

Source(s): DAINAP; Official communication with ONCB, October 2012; ONCB, “Thailand country presentation”, presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Workshop, Jakarta, 28-29 August 2013; ONCB, “Thailand country presentation”, presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional meeting, Yangon, Myanmar, 20-21 August 2014; ONCB, “Thailand country report”, presented at the 25th Anti-Drug Liaison Officials’ Meeting for International Cooperation (ADLOMICO), Jeju, Republic of Korea, 22-24 September 2015; ONCB, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Thailand”, presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

drugs, including methamphetamine, originating from China were seized in Thailand en route to Myanmar in February 2015.¹⁶ Most of the pseudoephedrine tablets

“Ecstasy” use is limited in Thailand, in part due to a higher price of the substance than other drugs prevalent in Thailand. However, in 2015 the use of “ecstasy” was reported to have increased according to expert perception.¹⁸

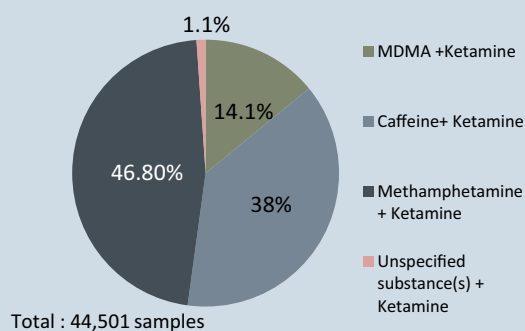
¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ ONCB, “Thailand country report”, presented at the 25th Anti-Drug Liaison Officials’ Meeting for International Cooperation (ADLOMICO), Jeju, Republic of Korea, 22-24 September 2015.

¹⁷ One clandestine laboratory seized in 2013 was reported to produce “ecstasy” and ketamine. DAINAP

¹⁸ DAINAP.

Figure 22. Chemical composition of synthetic drug tablet samples containing ketamine, 2005-2014



Note: This chart represents an analysis of tablet samples which contained at least some ketamine.

Source: ONCB, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Thailand", presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

Though the non-medical use of ketamine is not considered to be of major concern, synthetic drug tablets found in Thailand often contain a mixture of ketamine with other substances, mainly methamphetamine and caffeine, and less frequently MDMA. Thailand also reported the emergence of mephedrone, ethylone, dimethylone, XLR-11, TFMPP, butylone, and flephedron in recent years.¹⁹

The average purity of seized methamphetamine has remained stable in Thailand during the last few years. Approximately 66% of all methamphetamine tablet samples analysed in Thailand in 2015 had purity in the range of 15 – 25% of methamphetamine.²⁰ The vast majority (89%) of crystalline methamphetamine samples analysed in the country in 2015 had purities of over 90% of methamphetamine.²¹ The retail price for a methamphetamine tablet in 2015 ranged between USD 5 and 8, while 1g of crystalline methamphetamine was reported to cost between USD 57 and 84 at the retail level.²²

19 UNODC, Early Warning Advisory on NPS, <https://www.unodc.org/nps> (Accessed in Jan 2016); ONCB, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Thailand", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

20 ONCB, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Thailand", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

21 Ibid.

22 DAINAP.



Emerging trends and concerns

- The amphetamine-type substances (ATS) market in Viet Nam continues to expand and diversify, and in particular, crystalline methamphetamine use is perceived to be on the increase across the country.
- In recent years, the number of registered drug users in Viet Nam has been rising, mainly due to an increase in the use of ATS.¹
- A small number of clandestine laboratories for the manufacture of methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs have been detected in Viet Nam over the past several years.
- Substantial amounts of illicit drugs continue to be trafficked from neighbouring countries to Viet Nam through its northern provinces. In addition, transnational organized criminal groups continue to traffic large quantities of illicit drugs and precursor chemicals through Viet Nam to international markets.

Overview of the drug situation

The trafficking and use of ATS continue to increase in Viet Nam. According to expert perception, heroin remains the primary illicitly-used drug in Viet Nam. However, the Standing Office on Drugs Control (SODC) of Vietnam reports that methamphetamine use is on the increase across the country, not only amongst young drug users in major cities, but also within groups of people living in industrialized zones, villages and communities.² Most of ATS seized in Viet Nam continue to originate from its neighbouring countries, and only a small number of clandestine methamphetamine manufacturing facilities have been dismantled in the country in recent years.

In 2015, 24,123 persons received compulsory drug treatment from 142 drug treatment centres, of which 123 are managed by the Government. In addition, 25,397 drug users received community based

treatment in 2015.³ Data on the number of ATS users undergoing treatment in Viet Nam are not available.

The number of registered drug users in Viet Nam has increased rapidly over the last few years. For instance, in 2014, there was a total of 204,377 registered drug users, a 30% increase compared with 2010 (143,196).⁴ The figure for 2015 (200,134) decreased slightly from the 2014 figure, yet it still represents the second highest number on record. By drug type (2014), the majority of the registered drug users were heroin users, accounting for 75% (155,936) of the total, followed by ATS (11.5%, 23,363 users), opium (4.2%, 8,524 users), cannabis (3.7%, 7,652 users), and other drugs, including cocaine, (2.1%, 4,320 users).⁵ However, there are indications that ATS use is growing in the country. For instance, ATS users accounted for 90% of newly registered drug users in some southern provinces in the country in the first half of 2015.⁶

¹ Viet Nam does not provide ATS figures disaggregated by drug. However, according to Government experts, methamphetamine is the main ATS used.

² Standing Office on Drugs and Crime (SODC), 'Problems relating to ATS and responses to its threats in Viet Nam', presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

³ SODC, 'Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Viet Nam', presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

⁴ DAINAP.

⁵ SODC, 'Viet Nam country report', presented at the ASEAN +3 Drug Workshop on Drug Monitoring Network of the ASEAN-NARCO, 22- 24 June, 2015.

⁶ SODC, 'Problems relating to ATS and responses to its threats in Viet Nam', presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

Table 26. Trend in use of selected drugs in Viet Nam, 2011-2015*

Drug type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crystalline methamphetamine	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Methamphetamine tablets	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Methamphetamine powder	●	↑	↑	↑	●
Ecstasy	↑	↑	●	↔	●
Cannabis herb	↓	↑	↑	↔	↑
Heroin	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑
Ketamine	●	●	●	●	●
Opium	↓	↓	↑	↑	●

* Based on expert perception provided by SODC.

↑ = Increasing, ↓ = Decreasing, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported

Source(s): DAINAP

Large quantities of synthetic drugs continue to be seized in Viet Nam. The number of ATS tablets seized in Viet Nam amounted to 297,285 tablets in 2014 and 696,632 tablets in 2015.⁷ In 2015, an additional 983 kg of unspecified ATS, the largest amount ever reported in the country, was seized. It is currently not possible to determine seizure trends for crystalline methamphetamine, methamphetamine tablets or “ecstasy” in Viet Nam due to the lack of disaggregated data. New psychoactive substances (NPS) are currently not a major concern in Viet Nam. In recent years, however, tablets sold as “ecstasy”⁸ but containing NPS, such as PMMA⁹, mCPP¹⁰, BZP¹¹ and TFMPP¹² have been seized as well as a small amount of mephedrone^{13,14}. Between 2015 and August 2016, a total of 27 substances, including several NBOME-compounds and JWH-compounds, were added to the list of controlled substances in the country to restrict the availability of NPS.¹⁵

7 SODC, “Problems relating to ATS and responses to its threats in Viet Nam”, presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

8 “Ecstasy” tablets sold as ecstasy in Thailand may contain substances other than MDMA.

9 PMMA refers to para-Methoxy-N-methylamphetamine. During its 59th session in March 2015, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) decided to add PMMA to schedule I of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971.

10 mCPP refers to meta-Chlorophenylpiperazine, or 1-(3-chlorophenyl)piperazine.

11 BZP refers to 1-Benzylpiperazine.

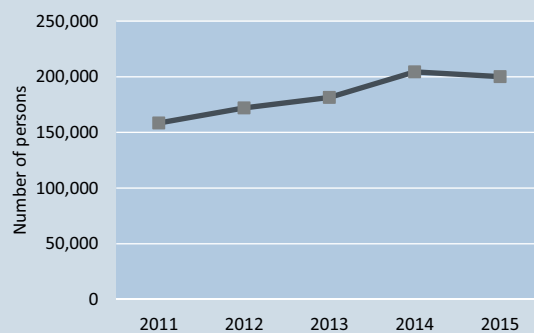
12 TFMPP refers to 1-3-(Trifluoromethylphenyl)piperazine.

13 In March 2015, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) decided to place BZP and mephedrone under international control. In March 2016, a similar decision was taken with regard to PMMA.

14 SODC, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Vietnam”, presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Workshop, Yangon, Myanmar, 20-21 August 2014.

15 SODC, ‘Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Viet Nam’, presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

Figure 23. The number of registered drug users in Viet Nam, 2011 – 2015



Source(s): DAINAP; SODC, “Drugs Control in Viet Nam”, 25th Anti-Drug Liaison Officials’ Meeting for International Cooperation (ADLOMICO), Jeju, Republic of Korea, 22-24 September 2015.

Viet Nam continues to be a destination and significant transit location for the trafficking of illicit drugs to international markets via land, sea and air route. A large share of illicit drugs trafficked into Viet Nam were transported across land borders with China and Lao PDR.¹⁶ Approximately 59% of the quantity of heroin seized in 2014 was detected in border areas with these two neighboring countries and substantial quantities of ATS were seized in these areas as well.¹⁷ Trafficking of illicit drugs (both inbound and outbound) and their precursor chemicals via international airports in Viet Nam remains of concern.¹⁸

Over the last few years, a small number of illicit manufacturing facilities for ATS have been dismantled in Viet Nam. In 2014, three illicit ATS facilities were dismantled, one each in Ha Noi,

16 SODC, ‘Drugs Control in Viet Nam’, the 25th Anti-Drug Liaison Officials’ Meeting for International Cooperation (ADLOMICO), Jeju, Republic of Korea, 22-24 September 2015.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

Table 27. Seizures of selected drugs in Viet Nam, 2011-2015

Drug type	Measurement	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
ATS	tablets & kg	366,000 tablets	335,470 tablets and 129 kg	332,772 tablets and 118 kg	297,285 tablets and 352 kg	696,632 tablets and 983 kg
Cannabis herb	kg	7 mt of 'fresh' and 500 kg of 'dried'	1 mt of 'fresh' and 164 kg of 'dried'	932 kg of 'fresh' and 225.7 kg of 'dried'	422	4,500
Cocaine	kg	•	•	2.4	42.6	178
Heroin	kg	309.0 kg and 36 'blocks'	692.0	940	922	1,510
Ketamine	kg	•	•	•	•	•
Opium	kg	76.0	225.0	117	32	133.8

Source(s): DAINAP; SODC, "Vietnam country report", presented at the Thirty-second ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters Meeting (ASOD), Vientiane, 10-13 October 2011; Op. cit. SODC, September 2012; SODC, "Synthetic Monitoring, Reporting and Trends through Drug Analysis Activities", presented at the SMART Viet Nam National Workshop, Da Nang, Viet Nam, 30-31 May 2013; SODC, "Viet Nam country presentation", presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Workshop, Jakarta, 28-29 August 2013; SODC, "Viet Nam country report", presented at the Nineteenth Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), Tokyo, 18-20 February 2014; SODC, "Viet Nam country presentation", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Yangon, Myanmar, 20-21 August 2014; SODC, 'Problems relating to ATS and responses to its threats in Viet Nam', presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015; SODC, 'Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Viet Nam', presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

Quang Ninh and Dong Nai. No ATS manufacturing facilities were detected in the country during the first half of 2015.¹⁹ According to Vietnamese national authorities, there are indications that large-scale clandestine methamphetamine manufacturing could be taking place in laboratories operated by Vietnamese nationals who used to live abroad and have since returned to Viet Nam.²⁰ In recent years, most illicit methamphetamine manufacturing in Viet Nam was based on pseudoephedrine and ephedrine extracted from pharmaceutical preparations, as precursor chemicals. However, a small number of clandestine laboratories have been detected which were using ephedra herb, P-2-P, or phenylacetic acid as precursors.²¹ To address the diversion of precursor chemicals in the country, the Government of Viet Nam suspended issuing importation licenses for bulk pseudoephedrine from 2011 to 2013.²²

During the past two years, seizures of cocaine have increased significantly in Viet Nam. Having reported cocaine seizures for the first in 2013 (2.4kg), Viet

Nam national authorities seized a total of 42 kg of the drug in 2014 and another 178kg in 2015.²³ However, in 2014, registered cocaine users accounted for only 0.3% of the all registered drug users in the country. Considering the small number of registered cocaine users in Viet Nam, most of the seized cocaine may have been destined for other countries, yet it is imperative to continuously monitor this new development. In addition, during the first half of 2016, Viet Nam national authorities seized 5 mt of khat originating from South Africa and destined for Australia and the United States, indicating that the country continues to be targeted by transnational organized criminal groups as a transit location for illicit drug trafficking.

Some quantities of cannabis are cultivated in Viet Nam, primarily for the domestic market. The illicit cultivation of opium poppy remains limited.

19 SODC, "Problems relating to ATS and responses to its threats in Viet Nam", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

20 SODC, "Drugs Control in Viet Nam", 25th Anti-Drug Liaison Officials' Meeting for International Cooperation (ADLOMICO), Jeju, Republic of Korea, 22-24 September 2015.

21 Ibid.

22 SODC, "Problems relating to ATS and responses to its threats in Viet Nam", presented at Global SMART Programme regional meeting, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2015.

23 DAINAP; SODC, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Viet Nam", presented at the Global SMART Programme regional workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 30-31 August, 2016.

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