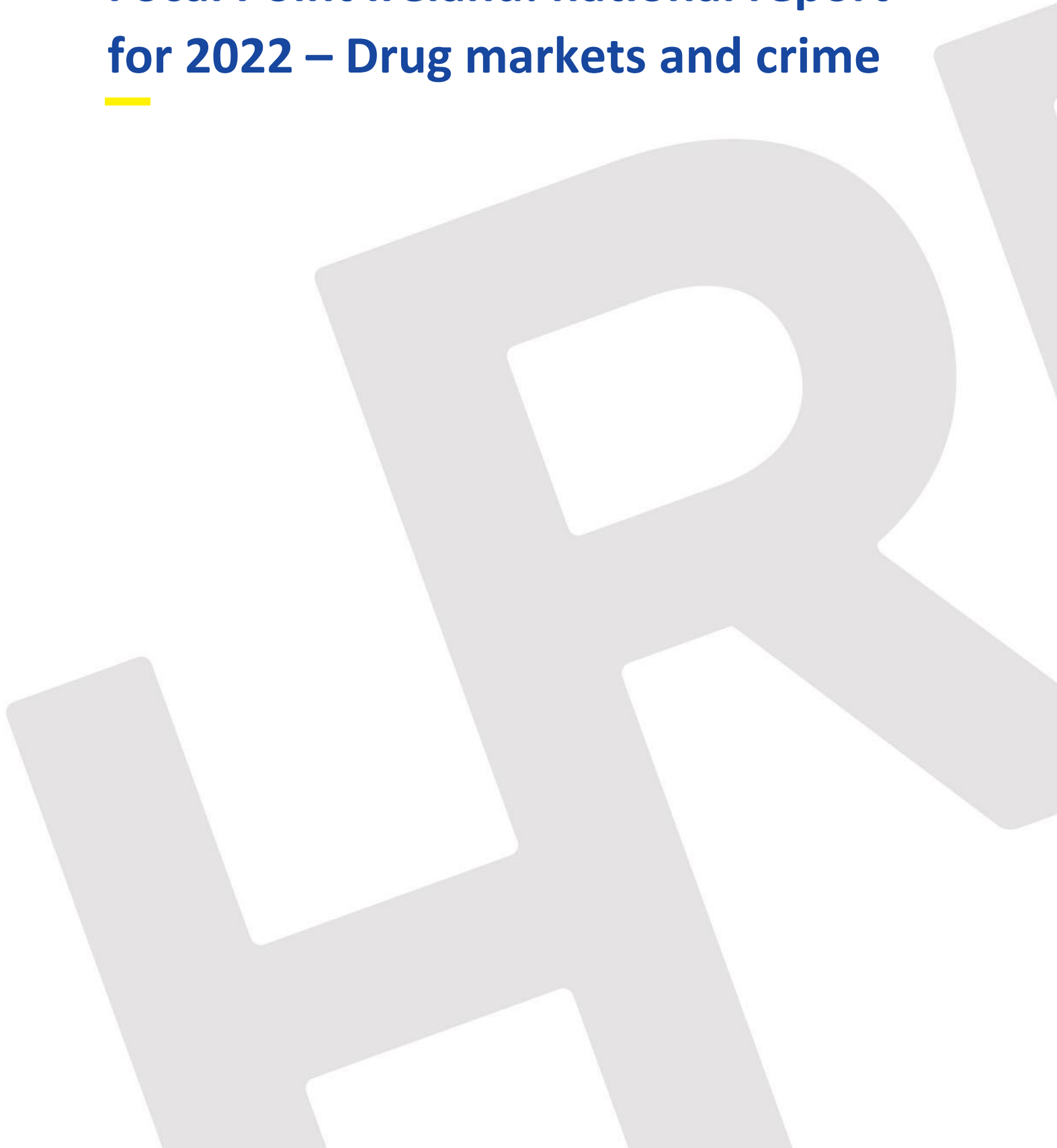


Focal Point Ireland: national report for 2022 – Drug markets and crime



Health Research Board. Irish Focal Point to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

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T0. Summary

T0.1 National profile

- Domestic drug market

The only drug produced in Ireland is cannabis. However, the market is constantly changing; pre-precursors such as alpha-phenylacetonitrile (APAAN) and benzyl cyanide, and precursors such as piperonyl methyl ketone (PMK) and benzyl methyl ketone (BMK), have been detected in Ireland in the past number of years. Synthetic drugs are not produced in Ireland, nor are general illegal drugs tableted. Ireland is viewed as an end source, not a transit country. Its long coastline acts as a route for drugs to be brought into the United Kingdom (UK) and the rest of Europe. In 2021, law enforcement operations on the island of Ireland carried out by the Revenue Commissioners and An Garda Síochána (AGS) indicated that illegal drugs brought into Ireland originated in areas such as Europe (Austria, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, and the UK); Eastern Africa (Kenya); the USA; and Canada. The main modes of transport were by freight via Rosslare Europort and Dublin Port, by plane via Dublin and Shannon Airports, or via the postal system.

- National drug law offences

Information regarding Ireland's drug law offences comes from the Courts Service, the Irish Prison Service (IPS), and AGS data via the Central Statistics Office (CSO). Data provided by the Courts Service and the IPS refer to the total number of drug offences and are not differentiated by drug type. However, AGS data, which differentiate by drug offence type, indicate that the total number of drug offences detected decreased by 13% between 2020 and 2021. By type of drug offence for the supply offences, between 2020 and 2021 incidents for importation of drugs increased by 10% and incidents for cultivation or manufacture decreased by 35%. For possession offences, between 2020 and 2021 there were decreases in possession of drugs for sale or supply (16%) and possession of drugs for personal use (12%).

- Key drug supply reduction activities

Ireland is very committed to reducing drug supply, as evidenced by law enforcement responses demonstrated in key actions in the national drugs strategy and in policing plans which have been implemented across the island of Ireland. A multifaceted, multi-agency approach has been drawn upon; this includes collaborative working and information sharing between Irish law enforcement agencies such as AGS, the Revenue Commissioners, the IPS and the Probation Service at a national level; and between cross-border agencies such as the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and European and international agencies. Operations have focused on drug interdiction and have targeted organised crime groups (OCGs), gangland crime, and drug-related intimidation; for example, the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau (GNDOCB) was established to tackle drugs and organised crime, operations continued to be implemented in 2021; Operation Tara targeted drug trafficking and Operation Hybrid and Operation Stratus targeted gangland crime. Agencies have aimed to address reoffending: a new Irish Youth Justice Strategy was launched, and interventions are continually reviewed and strengthened. On the island of Ireland, Garda Youth Diversion Projects for juveniles and youth have been established; child detention schools that have youth advocacy programmes have also been established. The Probation Service prioritises positive behaviour and restorative practice. Intervention and prevention strategies are being strengthened to provide greater early intervention.

T1. National profile

T1.1 Drug market

T.1.1.1. Domestic production

Cannabis

The domestic cultivation of cannabis herb escalated in Ireland in 2007, reaching a peak in 2011. Despite substantial interventions by law enforcement, it continues to be cultivated. The most recent figures available have indicated that 247 incidents of cultivation or manufacture of drugs were recorded in 2021, which was approximately 35% lower than that recorded in 2020 (n=379) (see Section T2.3, Figure T2.3.4 in this workbook). As stated in previous workbooks, there are several reasons for this continued cultivation: first, sophisticated growing techniques are utilised, which result in the flowering tops of the female plant being highly potent (20% tetrahydrocannabinol [THC]), making it more profitable. Second, start-up and running costs are low (Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána 2015), and there is a ready availability of vacant houses because of the 2008 financial crisis (Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána 2018). Third, individuals' avail of advances in technology and communication, as demonstrated by the Windle study detailed in Section T4.1. Other reasons that have emerged and have been reported by the media are that some offenders are growing cannabis to help manage existing medical health conditions (Lukey 2017; Maguire 2017; McLean 2017; Nic Ardghail 2017).

Synthetic drugs

As stated in previous Drug markets and crime workbooks, synthetic drugs are not produced in Ireland (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2017). However, the synthetic drug market is continually changing; as highlighted in previous workbooks, pre-precursors (e.g., APAAN, benzyl cyanide) and precursors (e.g., PMK and BMK) which are used in the manufacture of 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) and amphetamine were detected in Ireland in 2013 (An Garda Síochána and Police Service of Northern Ireland 2016). More recently, four separate 'box labs' were detected in Youghal, Co Cork; Tralee, Co Kerry; Lusk, North County Dublin; and in Dublin 8, suggesting that methamphetamine was being produced, albeit on a small scale (An Garda Síochána and Police Service of Northern Ireland 2016). Moreover, in January 2018, a suspected crystal meth lab was discovered in Dublin (McMahon 2018).

Tableting operations

As stated in previous workbooks, tableting of general illegal drugs does not really take place in Ireland (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2017). However, as reported in previous National Reports, there has been some evidence that Irish OCGs have participated in tableting pharmaceutical drugs; for example, drugs such as zopiclone, zolpidem, or benzodiazepines have been obtained in powder form and then used to produce tablets using specialised equipment (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2016). In May 2018, a pill-making factory linked to the Kinahan OCG and run by three male's resident in Ireland but formerly from Eastern Europe was discovered in Celbridge, Co Kildare (An Garda Síochána 2018; Pope C 2018). Tableting machines, which have mainly been found in Irish grow houses, tend to be archaic and slow when compared with those that are found elsewhere, for example in the Netherlands. Irish law enforcement agencies do not view the tableting process as chemical drug synthesis because all that occurs is that tablets and binding agents are pressed together (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2017).

T1.1.2 Routes of trafficking

As stated in previous Drug markets and crime workbooks, Ireland's extensive 3000 km coastline leaves it susceptible to traffickers seeking less-guarded routes to bring drugs to the UK and Europe (McDonald and

Townsend 2007). Identifying the origin of drugs being transported to Ireland can be difficult, as Ireland is primarily an end source and not a transit country (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2017). Nonetheless, the most recent analysis available of cross-border crime and threat assessment published by the PSNI and AGS indicated that drugs originated from, for example, Morocco (cannabis resin), the Netherlands (synthetic and semi-synthetic drugs), Afghanistan via Balkan routes (heroin), China (new psychoactive substances [NPS]), and India and Pakistan (counterfeit medicines) (An Garda Síochána and Police Service of Northern Ireland 2016).

The Revenue Commissioners also continued its engagement at an international level with the World Customs Organization (WCO), Europol, INTERPOL, the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), the Irish Embassy in the UK, and the Maritime Analysis and Operation Centre – Narcotics (MAOC-N) in ongoing actions aimed at addressing threats and at intercepting and preventing the trafficking of drugs, illegal medicines, NPS, and drug precursors (Revenue Commissioners 2022b).

Additionally, interdictions are carried out independently and collaboratively by Irish law enforcement agencies – such as the Revenue Customs Drug Law Enforcement Unit, AGS, CAB, Defence Forces, the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), and the Naval Service – at a national and international level can provide useful information on the origin, and, sometimes, the intended destination within Ireland, of drugs being brought into the country (Revenue Commissioners 2022b).

Additional information can be gleaned from Revenue Commissioners [press releases](#). In 2021, illegal drugs brought into Ireland originated in places such as Europe (Austria, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, and the UK); Eastern Africa (Kenya); the USA; and Canada (Revenue Commissioners, 2022, website). The main modes of transport were by freight via Dublin Port and Rosslare Europort, or by plane via Dublin, Cork, and Shannon airports. Products that arrived by plane were concealed in baggage, metal container and parcels. Another method that was used extensively was the postal system. Several products were intercepted by post in controlled deliveries using detector dogs.

AGS [press releases](#) provides a summary of operations carried out independently and jointly by various AGS units across the island, for example the GNDOCB, the Special Crime Task Force, detective units, traffic divisions, dog units, uniformed community gardaí, and divisional drug units (DDUs). Operations were carried out across the island of Ireland. All products that were seized by AGS in offences that were related to the sale and supply of drugs were sent to Forensic Science Ireland (FSI) for analysis, and thus the estimated weight of seized products was only provided for some operations. In 2021, drugs seized were mainly located via house, premises, and vehicle searches, often as part of intelligence-led operations.

T1.1.3 Contextual information on trafficking

As stated in previous Drug markets and crime workbooks, only one study has examined the nature, structure, and organisation of the illegal drug markets in Ireland (Connolly J and Donovan A M 2014). Four local drug markets were included: two urban, one suburban and one rural (anonymised as A–D). Although cannabis was shown to be the main drug supplied, heroin, crack cocaine, and prescription drugs could also be obtained at different levels across all locations surveyed. Further information on this study can be found in *Ireland: national report for 2015 – Drug markets and crime* (Health Research Board and Irish National Focal Point to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs Drug Addiction 2016). To date, no other study provides contextual information on drug trafficking in Ireland. However, figures from FSI for 2020 indicated that the most prominent drugs analysed in Ireland were cannabis herb, cocaine, and heroin, followed by alprazolam, cannabis plants, MDMA, amphetamines, and zopiclone (personal communication, FSI, 2022). Table T1.1.5.1

in Section T1.1.5 lists the illegal drugs in Ireland, based on FSI records for 2021 in descending order. Trends for these substances can be found in Section T2.1.

Size of transactions

Estimated transaction sizes vary by product and are reported in Revenue Commissioners press releases. In 2021, where quantities were reported, seizures detained by Revenue Commissioners Officers ranged in size; the highest estimate was €9.8 million (Revenue Commissioners Press Releases, 2022). AGS press releases rarely report quantities, as the seized product is sent directly to FSI for analysis.

Smuggling methods

In 2021 drugs were smuggled into Ireland via:

- airports – products were transported in two ways: either concealed or in checked-in luggage; or in parcels marked food, business documents, clothing
- ports – containers, parcels, articulated lorry and trailer, spare tyres, consignment marked stationery, furniture,
- the postal network – drugs were concealed in parcels, declared as for example, health supplements, art supplies, sports shoes, football memorabilia, pillows, toys, and dog clothing board games. Some were marked ‘clothing’, ‘candle set’, or ‘tea’ and ‘incense burner’.

The common travel area between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is also vulnerable to criminality via hauliers who, knowingly and sometimes unknowingly, transport drugs between both locations for OCGs (Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána 2018); (National Crime Agency 2018).

Organisation

As stated in previous Drug markets and crime workbooks, the Irish drug market is widely dispersed around the island of Ireland and impacts on urban, suburban, and rural communities (Connolly and Buckley 2016). The main players that profit the most are OCGs of various nationalities; for example, Irish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Eastern European OCGs profit the most (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2017). However, there is also evidence to suggest that individual entrepreneur networks which started small are now prospering (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2017). Ongoing research by Dr Sean Redmond and colleagues at Limerick University on criminal networks in Ireland has illustrated the existence of a hierarchical criminal network consisting of one individual (A2) and his family, which has had a negative impact on associates, clients, and residents in a suburban estate.

T1.1.4 Wholesale drug and precursor market

There has been no change to wholesale market prices since 2019 (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2021). Basically, wholesale drug prices depend on two things: one, what quantity is being purchased; and two, the purity of the drug. Table T1.1.4.1 shows the wholesale prices based on average purity of the product in terms of a purchase of one kilogram of a substance. For example, cocaine with a purity of 85% will sell for €60,000, but in reality, on the wholesale market, OCGs already cut and mix the drugs. As a result, cocaine that the GNDOCB detects may be sold for approximately €25,000 per kilogram; the purity at this price will be less than 40%. The premise of ‘the more you buy, the cheaper the price’ applies to all drugs. By way of example, a purchase of 100 MDMA (ecstasy) tablets could cost €5 per tablet, a purchase of 1,000 could cost €4 per tablet, a purchase of 10,000 could cost €3 per tablet, etc. There is no evidence of wholesale prices for some substances (see substances in Table T1.1.4.1 marked ‘NE’) (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2018).

Wholesale price data are determined from undercover purchases and covert human intelligence sources, which are gathered using a continuous assessment approach and through consultation with nationwide drug unit supervisors. When the information is available, random samples are taken. There is no deviation from what is requested in the submitted data. Importantly, there is very little evidence regarding wholesale prices for some NPS producers, such as synthetic cannabinoids (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2018).

Table T1.1.4.1 Drug prices based on current wholesale market value of controlled drugs, October 2019 ¹

Drug	Category	Price per kilogram/per litre
25I-NBOMe	Hallucinogen	N/A
2C-B	Phenethylamine	€10,000/kg
2C-E	Phenethylamine	€10,000/kg
2C-I	Phenethylamine	€10,000/kg
5AKB48 (not controlled)	Synthetic cannabinoid	NE
Alprazolam	Benzodiazepine	NE
AM-2201	Synthetic cannabinoid	€5,000/kg
Amphetamine	Phenethylamine	€3,000/kg
AMT	Tryptamine	NE
Benzylpiperazine	Piperazine	€10,000/kg
BKMBDB	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
Bromazepam	Benzodiazepine	NE
Butylone	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
Cannabis herb	Cannabis	€8,000/kg
Cannabis plants*	Cannabis	N/A
Cannabis resin	Cannabis	€1,500/kg
Chlordiazepoxide	Benzodiazepine	NE
Clobazam	Benzodiazepine	NE
Clonazepam	Benzodiazepine	NE
Cocaine	Cocaine	€25,000/kg
CPP	Piperazine	€10,000/kg
Diamorphine (heroin)	Opioid	€35,000/kg
Diazepam	Benzodiazepine	N/A
Dimethylone	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
Dimethylamylamine (DMAA)	Phenethylamine	€10,000/kg
DMT	Tryptamine	NE
Ethcathinone	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
Ethylone	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
Flephedrone	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
Flunitrazepam	Benzodiazepine	N/A
Fluoroamphetamine	Phenethylamine	€3,000/kg
Fluorotropacocaine	NPS	€10,000/kg
Flurazepam	Benzodiazepine	N/A
GBL	Solvent	€200/L
GHB	Solvent	€200/L
JWH-018	Synthetic cannabinoid	€5,000/kg
JWH-073	Synthetic cannabinoid	€5,000/kg
JWH-250	Synthetic cannabinoid	€5,000/kg
Ketamine	Hallucinogen	€10,000/kg
Khat	Hallucinogen	€100/kg
Lorazepam	Benzodiazepine	N/A
Lormetazepam	Benzodiazepine	N/A
LSD	Hallucinogen	N/A
Lysergamide	Hallucinogen	NE
MAM-2201	Synthetic cannabinoid	NE
MBZP	Piperazine	€10,000/kg
mCPP	Piperazine	€10,000/kg

Drug	Category	Price per kilogram/per litre
MDA	Phenethylamine	€10,000/kg
MDEA	Phenethylamine	€10,000/kg
MDMA	Phenethylamine	€10,000/kg
MDPBP	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
MDPV	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
MEC	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
Mephedrone	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
Methadone	Opioid	N/A
Methedrone	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
Methoxetamine	Hallucinogen	€10,000/kg
Methoxyamphetamine	Phenethylamine	€10,000/kg
Methylamphetamine	Phenethylamine	€10,000/kg
Methylone	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
Methylphenidate	Phenethylamine	€10,000/kg
Mirtazapine	Benzodiazepine	N/A
MMC	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
Naphyrone	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
Nitrazepam	Benzodiazepine	N/A
Pentedrone	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
Phenazepam (not controlled)	Benzodiazepine	N/A
Phentermine	Phenethylamine	€10,000/kg
PMA	Phenethylamine	€10,000/kg
PMMA	Phenethylamine	€10,000/kg
Prazepam	Benzodiazepine	N/A
Psilocin	Hallucinogen	€10,000
Psilocybin	Hallucinogen	€10,000
PVP	Cathinone	€10,000/kg
RCS-4	Synthetic cannabinoid	NE
Salvinorin A	Hallucinogen	NE
STS-135	Synthetic cannabinoid	NE
Temazepam	Benzodiazepine	N/A
Triazolam	Benzodiazepine	N/A
UR-144	Synthetic cannabinoid	NE
Zolpidem	Sleeping agent	N/A
Zopiclone (not controlled)	Sleeping agent	N/A

Note: NE = no evidence; N/A = not applicable.

Source: (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2021)

* Cannabis plants are valued based on the potential yield of the plant. An actual market value can only be applied when plants are fully mature and ready for sale. Charges contrary to Section 15A of the Misuse of Drugs Act (as amended) are not applied in relation to nursery plants or plants that are not fully mature.

Adulterants

The FSI laboratory analyses drugs seized by gardaí and other law enforcement agencies. Adulterant data are classified as 'street level' where submitted samples are defined as seizures less than 30 g (25–30 g), and as 'importation level' where submitted samples are defined as seizures over 500 g (personal communication, FSI, 2022). Data are available for cocaine (2020 and 2021), diamorphine (2021), and amphetamines (2021), and each is presented separately.

Cocaine

Cocaine data were analysed for two-time frames: 2020 and 2021 (personal communication, FSI, 2022). Table T1.1.4.2 shows a breakdown of the overall adulterants detected in quantification analysis between 2016 and 2021.

2020 adulterant analysis

Overall, in 2020, 94 cocaine seizures were submitted to FSI for quantification analysis, of which 45 seizures were classified as street-level substances and 49 seizures were classified as importation-level substances. The dates of seizures ranged from 17 January 2020 to 18 December 2020 (street level) and from 19 January 2020 to 16 December 2020 (importation level). As seen in Table T.1.1.4.2, the most prominent adulterants across in 2020 were benzocaine and levamisole. Further examination at street and importation level also indicated that benzocaine and levamisole were prominent.

2021 adulterant analysis

Overall, in 2021, 69 cocaine seizures were submitted to FSI for quantification analysis, of which 35 seizures were classified as street-level substances and 34 seizures were classified as importation-level substances. The dates of seizures ranged from 22 January 2021 to 30 December 2021 (street level) and from 7 January 2021 to 12 December 2021 (importation level). Consistent with the findings between 2016 and 2019, the most prominent adulterants overall and at street-level and importation-level in 2020 and 2021 were benzocaine, followed by levamisole and caffeine (see Table T1.1.4.2).

Table T1.1.4.2 Frequency of adulterants detected in cocaine samples, categorised by total, street level, and importation level ²

	Total						Street level						Importation level					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	% of samples						% of samples						% of samples					
Benzocaine	47.9	21	38	43.9	38	44.5	60	36.8	37.5	53.8	47.8	54.2	42.4	13.1	39.5	34.8	30.5	35.8
Levamisole	45.8	26.3	11.1	15.8	26.6	27	66.6	21	20.8	15.3	19.5	22.8	36.3	28.9	6.2	16.2	30.5	30.7
Caffeine	14.5	7	9.7	3.6	8.5	6.7	40	15.7	20.8	5.1	15.2	5.7	3.0	2.6	4.1	2.3	1.7	7.6
Phenacetin	2.0	1.7	2.7	8.5	3.8	4.0	6.6	5.2	4.1	12.8	4.3	2.8	–	–	3.0	4.6	3.4	5.1
Creatine/ creatinine	–	1.7	–	2.4	1.9	–	5.2	5.2	–	2.5	–	–	–	–	–	2.3	3.4	–
Paracetamol	–	–	–	–	–	1.3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1.3
Lignocaine	6.2	1.7	1.3	2.4	3.8	1.3	20	–	4.1	5.1	8.6	2.5	–	2.6	–	–	–	2.5
MDMA	–	–	–	1.2	0.9	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2.3	1.6	–
Xycaine	–	–	–	–	0.9	–	–	–	–	–	2.1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Other*	4.1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	6.0	–	–	–	–	–

* Includes hydroxyzine

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2020, 2022)

Between 2016 and 2022, the number of adulterants detected ranged from zero to four (see Table T1.1.4.3). While the most prominent presentation of adulterants across all years was one. The percentage of samples that were found to have no adulterants was higher for importation-level substances than for street-level substances (personal communication, FSI, 2022).

Table T1.1.4.3 Frequency of adulterants detected in cocaine samples, categorised by total, street level, and importation level ³

	Total						Street level						Importation level					
	2016	2017	2018	2019*	2020	2021	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of adulterants	% of samples						% of samples						% of samples					
0	27.0	45.6	47.2	39.5	39	40.5	13.3	26.3	37.5	28.5	34.7	37.1	33.0	55.2	55.6	51.1	42.3	40.5
1	39.5	49.1	44.4	46.1	40.1	37.9	–	63.1	45.8	53.8	32.6	40.0	–	42.1	43.7	37.2	47.4	35.9
2	18.7	3.5	6.9	10.5	18.1	17.6	–	10.5	12.5	12.8	28.2	20.0	–	–	4.1	9.3	10.1	15.4
3	14.5	1.4	–	3.9	2.8	4.0	–	–	–	5.1	4.3	2.9	–	2.6	–	2.3	1.7	5.1
4	–	–	1.3	–	–	–	–	–	4.1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Note. “–” = not detected; * Figures for ‘2019 Total’ were not provided; figures here were calculated from street- and importation-level data.
Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2020, 2022)

Diamorphine

Heroin consists of several naturally occurring substances that are extracted from the opium poppy. One substance that is found in heroin is diamorphine (personal communication, FSI, 2022). Adulterants are defined as substances which are typically added after the extraction of diamorphine, not naturally occurring compounds. Some naturally occurring compounds typically found in heroin samples include noscapine, papaverine, and acetylcodeine.

Overall, in 2021, 14 diamorphine seizures were submitted to FSI for quantification analysis, of which 14 seizures were classified as street-level substances and 4 seizures were classified as importation-level substances. Seizures at importation level resulted in the analysis of 14 samples. Dates of seizures ranged from 15 January 2021 to 8 October 2021 (street level) and from 24 April 2021 to 28 September 2021 (importation level). In 2021, a “street deal” survey was also carried out. The FSI define street deal samples as samples taken from typical street deal size packs

Table T1.1.4.4 shows a breakdown of the number of adulterants detected by year. On average, in street and importation levels, at least one adulterant was found in analysed samples. In 2021 the most prevalent adulterant detected in street and important level seizures was caffeine, 57.1% and 25% respectively, followed by paracetamol 35.7% and not detected respectively. While either caffeine or paracetamol was detected in all samples analysed in 2021, both adulterants were detected in 33.3% of analysed samples (personal communication, FSI, 2022).

Table T1.1.4.4 Number of adulterants detected in diamorphine samples, by year ⁴

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of adulterants	% of samples	% of samples	% of samples	% of samples	% of samples	% of samples
0	52.9	24.0	51.4	30.4	25.0	
1	8.8	4.0	5.4	13.0		
2	41.2	68.0	43.2	52.1		
3	–	4.0	–	4.3		

Note. “–” = not detected
Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2020, 2021, 2022)

Amphetamines

Between 08 January 2021 and 16 December 2021, 19 amphetamine seizures were submitted for analysis, from which 19 samples were taken. Caffeine was detected in all adulterated samples (personal communication, FSI, 2022). Table T1.1.4.5 shows an overall breakdown of adulterants between 2016 and 2021.

Table T1.1.4.5 Percentage of adulterants detected in amphetamine samples, by year ⁵

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	% of samples	% of samples	% of samples	% of samples	% of samples	% of samples
No adulterants	25.0	6.3	7.5	10.5	6.1	
Caffeine	75.0	93.7	92.5	89.5	93.9	
Methamphetamine	12.5	–	–	–	–	
Fluoroamphetamine	6.2	–	–	–	–	
Lignocaine	–	–	3.7	–	–	

Note. “–” = not detected

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2020, 2021, 2022)

Nature and organisation of buyers, sellers, and intermediaries

The main organisations running drug markets on the island of Ireland are OCGs. As stated in the previous Drugs market and crime workbooks, the most recent data from cross-border reports highlighted that drugs and drug-related criminality have remained a concern throughout the island (Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána 2018). Although ‘traditional’ drug importation routes are unchanged, the emergence of the Dark Web and NPS, as well as the misuse of prescription medications, have resulted in changes in drug abuse and OCG criminality.

‘Traditional’ drugs remain prominent. For example:

- Cannabis continues to be the most prevalent drug used/abused on the island of Ireland. At €29/£20 per gram, it is viewed as profitable by OCGs involved in wholesale importation and supply. Cannabis herb blocks or cultivated cannabis plants are mainly seized in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). However, other products – for example, cannabis resin and cannabis oil – have also been seized. Irish national OCGs are deeply implicated in this area, controlling both supply routes and grow houses.
- Improved economic conditions have resulted in the recently increased demand for cocaine and MDMA. Although it is possible to sell these drugs on the Dark Web, they do form a small part of OCG importations. OCGs that participate in ‘polydrug dealing’ are typically smaller than traditional wholesale importers. As a result, they can present issues for law enforcement trying to target the problem (Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána 2018).
- Heroin continues to be a problem across Ireland. While the most problematic area is Greater Dublin, in recent years similar problems have arisen in small urban centres and in rural towns and villages. Most opioid users reside in Dublin (71%) and are over 35 years of age (>50%). Heroin issues in the ROI are viewed as “stable and entrenched” (Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána 2018) (p. 7). By contrast, in Northern Ireland (NI), the most problematic area is Belfast city centre, where drug use can be observed every day on the streets.
- In contrast to previous assessments, crack cocaine has recently emerged as an issue for law enforcement agencies and communities. For now, it is not viewed as a nationwide issue, but it is believed that it will need to be targeted in the future.
- Synthetic opioids have been a characteristic of Irish OCG activity since 2016. Although reported seizures of these products are low, only 0.02 mg of the synthetic opioid carfentanil is needed in order to produce a fatal overdose. While this is not currently a crisis in the ROI and NI, there is evidence to suggest that OCGs are selling products on the premise that they are heroin, but in fact are heroin mixed with synthetic opioids and/or bulking agents.

- Another problem is that some OCGs are introducing synthetic opioids into the drug supply chain, and this is placing drug users at considerable risk. This problem has been identified as an area that requires ongoing attention and monitoring.
- Prescription medication is an issue across the ROI and NI and involves the importation, manufacture, and sale of pharmaceutical products. Benzodiazepines are popular with individuals who are using heroin, managing pain, or trying to improve cognitive and/or physical function.
- Another emerging trend is the use of amphetamines by individuals attending third-level education. Targeting the illegal sale of these products is becoming more and more challenging. However, as prescription drug abuse increases, so too will the issues around it.

Primarily, the cross-border elements of drug crime across Ireland centre on relationships between OCGs in the ROI and NI in the areas of control and supply. Although the links between ROI and NI OCGs are extensive, collaborations between Irish OCGs and foreign national OCGs are stronger, as foreign national OCGs see Ireland as one market. The most important supply route on the island is between Dublin and Belfast. This is due to excellent infrastructure linking both areas via motorways and transport systems. Irish OCGs make it possible for NI OCGs to access European drug markets, such as Spain, the Netherlands, and the UK. Consequently, joint collaborations between the PSNI and AGS often involve collaborating with international agencies with the aim of stopping drug supply routes north and south of the border (Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána 2018). More recent explorations of organised crime was published by (Chance 2022) who carried out a qualitative study to explore serious and organised crime across Ireland and the UK. A summary of this report can be found in Section T4.1.

T1.1.5 Retail drug market

Range and relative importance of different products

Seizure records for illegal drugs in Ireland provide the best source of data regarding the range and relative importance of different drugs on the Irish retail market. Based on AGS records, Table T1.1.5.1 lists the top 20 illegal drugs that are most prominent in Ireland in descending order by quantity seized. Trends relating to these substances and others can be found in Section T2.1 of this workbook.

Table T1.1.5.1 Prominent illegal drugs in Ireland based on FSI records for 2021 ⁶

	Drug type	Quantity seized
1	Cannabis	7002
2	Cocaine	2674
3	Diamorphine	1404
4	Alprazolam	830
5	Cannabis plants	656
6	MDMA	388
7	Amphetamine	335
8	Zopiclone	270
9	Etizolam indicated	207
10	Cannabis resin	205
11	Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)	202
12	Ketamine	186
13	Benzocaine indicated	175
14	Diazepam	161
15	Delorazepam	107
16	Methylamphetamine	52
17	Pregabalin indicated	50

	Drug type	Quantity seized
18	Flubromazolam indicated	45
19	Adinazolam indicated	42
20	Creatine/creatinine indicated	41

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2022)

Drug prices

There have been no new drug prices since 2019. Table T1.1.5.2 shows drug prices based on the current retail market value of controlled drugs on the retail drug market in October 2020. The prices indicated represent what that substance will sell for on average around the ROI in its lowest denominational street deal. No price change occurred between 2017 and 2020. As stated in previous workbooks, the most credible approach used to set prices on the retail market is via test purchase operations, where gardaí buy drugs in undercover work. The second approach is via intelligence, which is drawn from covert intelligence sources. The third is to evaluate and compare the experiences of drug units nationwide using self-report surveys. Based on all three sources, plus the experience of officers in drug policing, prices are calculated systematically (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2017). This method has illustrated that prices vary at different times; for example, the price of a gram of cannabis in Ennis, Co Clare would be different from the price of a gram purchased in Ballyfermot, Dublin.

Table T1.1.5.2 Drug prices based on current retail market value of controlled drugs, October 2019 ⁷

Drug	Category	Price per gram/tablet/millilitre
Alprazolam	Benzodiazepine	€2 per tablet
Amphetamine	Phenethylamine	€15 per gram
AM-2201	Synthetic cannabinoid	€20 per gram
AMT	Tryptamine	€200 per gram
Benzylpiperazine	Piperazine	€5 per tablet/€50 per gram
Butylone	Cathinone	€50 per gram
BKMBDB	Cathinone	€50 per gram
Bromazepam	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
Cannabis resin	Cannabis	€6 per gram
Cannabis herb	Cannabis	€20 per gram
Cannabis plants*	Cannabis	€800
Cocaine	Cocaine	€70 per gram
Chlordiazepoxide	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
Clobazam	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
Clonazepam	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
CPP	Piperazine	€5 per tablet/€50 per gram
Diamorphine (heroin)	Opioid	€140 per gram
Dimethylone	Cathinone	€50 per gram
Diazepam	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
DMT	Tryptamine	€200 per gram
DMAA	Phenethylamine	€60 per gram
Ethcathinone	Cathinone	€50 per gram
Ethylone	Cathinone	€50 per gram
Flephedrone	Cathinone	€50 per gram
Fluorotropacocaine	NPS	€50 per gram
Fluoroamphetamine	Phenethylamine	€15 per gram
Flunitrazepam	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
Flurazepam	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
GHB	Solvent	€1 per millilitre
GBL	Solvent	€1 per millilitre
JWH-018	Synthetic cannabinoid	€20 per gram
JWH-073	Synthetic cannabinoid	€20 per gram

Drug	Category	Price per gram/tablet/millilitre
JWH-250	Synthetic cannabinoid	€20 per gram
Ketamine	Hallucinogen	€60 per gram
Khat	Hallucinogen	€0.50 per gram
LSD	Hallucinogen	€10 per tablet
Lysergamide	Hallucinogen	€20 per gram
Lorazepam	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
Lormetazepam	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
MAM-2201	Synthetic cannabinoid	€20 per gram
MBZP	Piperazine	€5 per tablet/€50 per gram
mCPP	Piperazine	€5 per tablet/€50 per gram
MDMA	Phenethylamine	€10 per tablet/€60 per gram
MDEA	Phenethylamine	€10 per tablet/€60 per gram
MDA	Phenethylamine	€10 per tablet/€60 per gram
MDPBP	Cathinone	€50 per gram
MDPV	Cathinone	€50 per gram
MEC	Cathinone	€50 per gram
Methadone	Opiate	€20 per 100 millilitres
Mephedrone	Cathinone	€50 per gram
Methylone	Cathinone	€50 per gram
Methedrone	Cathinone	€50 per gram
Methylamphetamine	Phenethylamine	€60 per gram
Methoxyamphetamine	Phenethylamine	€60 per gram
Methoxetamine	Hallucinogen	€60 per gram
Methylphenidate	Phenethylamine	€60 per gram
Mirtazapine	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
MMC	Cathinone	€50 per gram
Naphyrone	Cathinone	€50 per gram
Nitrazepam	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
Pentedrone	Cathinone	€50 per gram
Phentermine	Phenethylamine	€10 per tablet/€60 per gram
Phenazepam (not controlled)	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
PMA	Phenethylamine	€10 per tablet/€60 per gram
PMMA	Phenethylamine	€10 per tablet/€60 per gram
Prazepam	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
Psilocin	Hallucinogen	€10 per gram
Psilocybin	Hallucinogen	€10 per gram
PVP	Cathinone	€50 per gram
RCS-4	Synthetic cannabinoid	€20 per gram
Salvinorin A	Hallucinogen	€20 per gram
STS-135	Synthetic cannabinoid	€20 per gram
Temazepam	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
Triazolam	Benzodiazepine	€1 per tablet
UR-144	Synthetic cannabinoid	€20 per gram
Zolpidem	Sleeping agent	€2 per tablet
Zopiclone (not controlled)	Sleeping agent	€2 per tablet
2C-B	Phenethylamine	€10 per tablet/€60 per gram
2C-E	Phenethylamine	€10 per tablet/€60 per gram
2C-I	Phenethylamine	€10 per tablet/€60 per gram
25I-NBOMe	Hallucinogen	€10 per tablet
5AKB48 (not controlled)	Synthetic cannabinoid	€20 per gram

Source: (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2021)

* Cannabis plants are valued based on the potential yield of the plant. An actual market value can only be applied when plants are fully mature and ready for sale. Charges contrary to Section 15A of the Misuse of Drugs Act (as amended) are not applied in relation to nursery plants or plants that are not fully mature.

Purity of drugs seized and pack sizes

Data for pack sizes and purity of drugs seized are obtained from FSI (personal communication, FSI, 2022). The most recent available data are for cocaine (2020, 2021), diamorphine (2021), and amphetamines (2021). A further breakdown is available for street-level and importation-level diamorphine. The FSI has operationally defined Street-level samples as samples submitted from seizures of less than 30 grams (primarily between 25 and 30 grams), and Importation-level samples as samples submitted from seizures of more than 500 grams. Additionally, in 2021, a diamorphine street deals survey was carried out. The FSI define street deal samples as samples taken from typical street deal size packs. The results of the analysis of each substance will be presented separately.

Cocaine

Table T1.1.5.3 shows a summary of purity analysis for cocaine seizures between 2016 and 2021. Data are provided for street- and importation-level seizures. In 2021, the overall average purity ranged from 42.8% to 50.9%. A further examination by classification level indicated that the average purity for importation-level cocaine across all years reported has been consistently higher than the average purity of street-level cocaine.

Table T1.1.5.3 Summary of purity and pack sizes for cocaine seizures between 2016 and 2021 ⁸

Year	Level	Number of seizures	Seizure size range	Number of samples	Pack size range	Purity	Average purity	Overall average purity (Street and Importation)
2016	Street	15	Not weighed to 19.1 kg	15	0.3 g to 1.0 kg	0.5–82.0%	34.0%	46.8%
	Importation	24		33		0.5–85.0%	52.2%	
2017	Street	19	25.1 g to 22.0 kg	19	1.2 g to 1.8 kg	0.5–90.0%	39.0%	54.2%
	Importation	28		38		17.0–90.0%	61.8%	
2018	Street	24	17.2 g to 49.0 kg	25	3.2 g to 1.0 kg	7.0–81.0%	44.2%	52.8%
	Importation	40		48		0.5–90.0%	57.0%	
2019	Street	39	25.4 g to 34.5 g	39	6.8 g to 1.0 kg	2.5–90.0%	46.5%	52.6%
	Importation	47	456.6 g to 30.1 kg	43		2.5–90.0%	58.3%	
2020	Street	45	25.0 g to 30.9 g	46	.451 g to 1.1 kg	1.0-90.0%	39.7%	50.9%

Year	Level	Number of seizures	Seizure size range	Number of samples	Pack size range	Purity	Average purity	Overall average purity (Street and Importation)
	Importation	49	477.7 g to 61.9 kg	59		7.2- to 89.5%	59.7%	
2021	Street	35	25.4 g to 30.3 g	35	1.04 to 1.2 kg	8.1-88.4%	42.8%	47.1%
	Importation	34	485.5 g to 170.0 kg	39		8.8-84.4%	50.9%	

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2020, 2022)

Diamorphine

Table T1.1.5.4 shows a summary of purity analyses for diamorphine seizures between 2016 and 2021. Data are provided for street- and importation-level seizures. Between 2016 and 2018, the overall average purity ranged from 35.1% to 42.7%. The overall average purity of street and importation level diamorphine decreased in 2019 (36.6%) and 2020 (35.4%), in 2021 the average purity increased to 40.5%. A further examination by classification level indicated that the average purity for importation-level diamorphine was slightly higher than the average purity of street-level diamorphine between 2016 and 2019. In 2020, the difference between average purity in street-level diamorphine and importation-level diamorphine is more notable, 29.6% and 43.1% respectively. In 2021 the average purity in street-level diamorphine rose to 39.6% which was more closely aligned to the average purity of importation-level diamorphine (43.9%).

Table T1.1.5.4 Summary of purity and pack sizes for diamorphine seizures between 2016 and 2021 ⁹

Year	Level	Number of seizures	Seizure size range	Number of samples	Pack size range	Purity	Average purity	Overall average purity (Street and Importation)
2016	Street	6	25.7 g to 29.6 g	6	25.7 g to 1.8 kg	22.9–53.9%	40.6%	42.7%
	Importation	21	447.0 g to 2.6 kg	28	25.7 g to 1.8 kg	13.6–54.5%	43.1%	
2017	Street	11	3.3 g to 29.4 g	11	1.8 g to 1.2 kg	15.2–59.6%	30.4%	35.1%
	Importation	12	461.8 g to 11.6 kg	14	1.8 g to 1.2 kg	10.1–61.0%	38.9%	
2018	Street	16	0.77 g to 35.9 g	16	0.2 g to 7.1 kg	12.0–90.0%	38.4%	42.0%

Year	Level	Number of seizures	Seizure size range	Number of samples	Pack size range	Purity	Average purity	Overall average purity (Street and Importation)
2019	Importation	17	459.7 g to 14.0 kg	21	0.2 g to 7.1 kg	9.5–78.2%	44.8%	36.6%
	Street	6	1.5 grams to 36.2 g	6	–	16.3–58.7%	32.3%	
2020	Importation	15	437.4 g to 8.9 kg	17	25.715 g to 1.7 kg	1.0–62.8%	38.1%	35.4%
	Street	16	0.3 g to 36.0 g	16	0.152 g to 36.0 g	8.3–61.9%	29.6%	
2021	Importation	10	498.0 g to 18.7 kg	12	123.7 g to 1.0 kg	5.5–65.7%	43.1%	40.5%
	Street	10	22.1 g to 30 g	14	1.84 g to 30g	12.7%–60.3%	39.6%	
	Importation	4	541.6g to 87.4 kg	4	247.1g to 9.92 kg	6.8%–56.9%	43.9%	

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2020, 2021, 2022)

Street Deals

In addition to the analysis of street and importation level samples in 2021, a survey of street deals was carried out. The FSI define street deal samples as samples taken from typical street deal size packs. The aim was to give a snapshot for the diamorphine content a typical pack contains. Samples were collected from various locations in Ireland over a 12-month period. Overall, 15 samples were analysed in this survey. Figure T1.1.5.1 shows the average diamorphine content of the street deal survey samples in 2021. Purity content ranged from 26.2% to 37.6% and the overall average content was 31.4%.

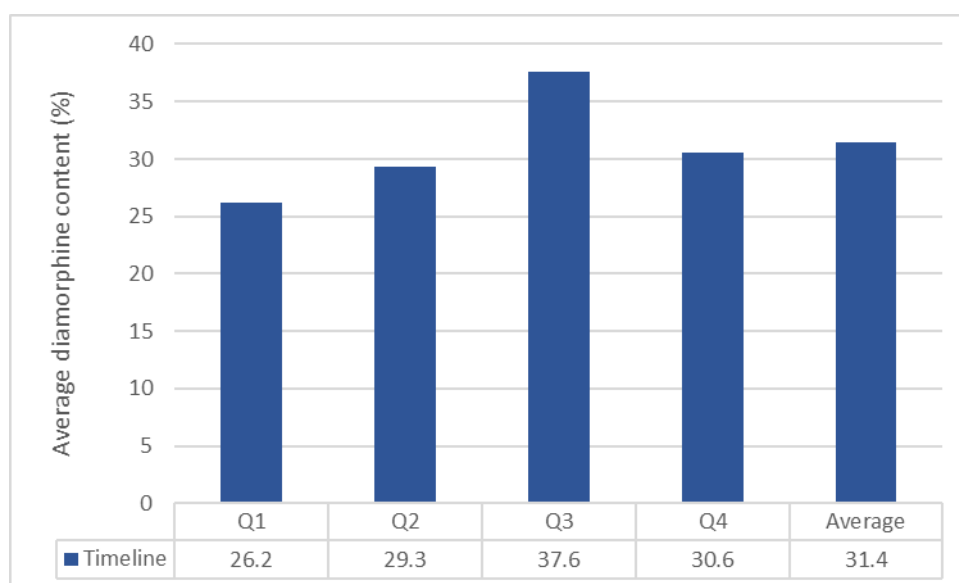


Figure T1.1.5.1 Average diamorphine content of the “street deal” survey samples in 2021 ¹

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2022)

Amphetamines

Table T1.1.5.5 shows a summary of purity analyses for amphetamine seizures between 2016 and 2021. The overall average purity ranged from 6.7% to 9.4%. Purity levels decreased between 2017 and 2019, however a slight increase was evident in 2020.

Table T1.1.5.5 Summary of purity and pack sizes for Amphetamine seizures between 2016 and 2021 ¹⁰

Year	Number of seizures	Seizure size range	Number of samples	Pack size range	Purity	Overall average purity
2016	16	13.3 g to 1.2 kg	15	1.8 g to 793.7 g	0.5–40.0%	7.1%
2017	16	30.6 g to 386.8 g	15	17.1 g to 235.4 g	0.7–16.6%	9.4%
2018	26	27.6 g to 3.7 kg	27	2.1 g to 1.1 kg	0.7–15.4%	7.4%
2019	19	27.0 g to 16.4 kg	19	25.3 g to 2.0 kg	0.6–13.3%	6.7%
2020	32	25.8 g to 995.5 g	33	4.4 g to 995.5 g	0.1–15.6%	7.6%
2021	19	25.0 g to 2.9kg	19	6.7 g to 1.0 kg	3.9–16.0%	8.7%

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2020, 2021, 2022)

T1.2 Drug related crime

T1.2.1 Drug law offences

Data regarding drug law offences are provided by the Courts Service and the Irish Prison Service (IPS) via their annual reports.

Court outcomes for drug offences

The *Courts Service Annual Report 2021* presented statistics on prosecutions for drug offences between January and December 2021 (Ireland. Courts Service 2022). Notably, data provided are for overall drug law offences. The Courts Service does not distinguish between the different supply offences and possession/use offences (personal communication, Courts Service, 2017).

District Court

In most cases, prosecutions for drug offences are carried out in the District Court, which is the lowest court in the Irish legal system. The District Court, exercising its criminal jurisdiction, deals with four types of offences: summary offences, indictable offences tried summarily, some indictable offences, and indictable offences not tried summarily. When the District Court hears a criminal case, the judge sits without a jury. The District Judge decides the issues of fact and whether to convict. He or she also determines the sentence. In the case of most indictable offences which must be tried by a judge sitting with a jury, the District Court may impose a sentence where the accused pleads guilty, provided that the Director of Public Prosecutions consents, and the judge accepts the guilty plea. Otherwise, the accused is sent forward to the Circuit Court on their signed guilty plea for sentencing. The District Court has a limit on the sentence it may impose in respect of a single criminal charge, which is 12 months' imprisonment (Courts Service 2013). Overall, 25,727 orders were made in relation to drug offences in 2021 – involving 19,909 defendants – which represents a 56% increase since 2020 (N=16,456) (Ireland. Courts Service 2022) (see Table T1.2.1.1 and Table T1.2.1.2).

Table T1.2.1.1 Sentences for drug offences in the District Court, 2021 ¹¹

Incoming		Resolved: offences		
Offences	Defendants*	Summary	Indictable dealt with summarily	Sent forward for trial
35 220	19 909	3 231	22 496	3 536

Source: (Ireland. Courts Service 2022)

* There may be more than one offence brought against a defendant.

Table T1.2.1.2 Summary and indictable offences: outcomes in District Court, 2020 ¹²

	Dis	S/O	TIC	Fine	Bond	Disq	C/S	Prob	Imp/det	Susp	Other	Total
Summary offences: outcomes	123	449	213	962	20	967	17	73	84	84	239	3 231

Indictable offences dealt with summarily: outcomes	486	5 743	2 600	3 855	89	2	153	2 573	506	833	5 656	22 496
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Note: Dis = Dismiss; S/O = strike out; TIC = taken into consideration; Disq = disqualified; C/S = community service; Prob = probation; Imp/det = imprisonment or detention; Susp = suspended sentence.

Source: (Ireland. Courts Service 2022)

Juvenile crime

The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years (Section 52 of the Children Act, 2001, as amended by Section 129 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006). Generally, children who come before the courts are aged between 15 and 17 years. The total number of orders that were made in respect of drug offences in the Children Court in 2021 was 488 (see Table T1.2.1.3) (Ireland. Courts Service 2022) which represented approximately 118% decrease since 2020 (N = 224). In 2021, 124 young offenders were imprisoned or detained; two were sentenced to community service (n=2) or probation (n=122). The number of young people placed on probation in 2021 (n=122) was nearly three times higher than the 2020 figure (n=38).

Table T1.2.1.3 Juvenile crime outcomes in 2021 ¹³

Dis	S/O	TIC	Fine	Bond	Disq	C/S	Prob	Imp/det	Susp	Other	Total
31	140	119	17	6	9	2	122	4	1	37	488

Note: Dis = Dismiss; S/O = strike out; TIC = taken into consideration; Disq = disqualified; C/S = community service; Prob = probation; Imp/det = imprisonment or detention; Susp = suspended sentence.

Source: (Ireland. Courts Service 2022)

Circuit Court

The Circuit Court heard cases for 892 defendants that involved 3,310 drug offences in 2021. There were 2,181 guilty pleas, which represented a 24% increase from 2020 (N=1,758); of the cases that went to trial, 23 resulted in convictions and 19 resulted in acquittals (see Table T1.2.1.4). Trials resulted in 349 imprisonments/detentions and 378 suspended sentences (see Table T1.2.1.5) (Ireland. Courts Service 2022)

Table T1.2.1.4 Sentences for drug offences in the Circuit Court in 2021 ¹⁴

Incoming		Resolved: offences							
Offences	Defendants*	Guilty	Trials	Convicted	Acquitted	NP	TIC	Quash	Dec
3 310	892	2 181	23	19	918	432	3	3	

Note: Guilty = guilty pleas; NP = *nolle prosequi*; TIC = taken into consideration; Quash = quash return for trial; Dec = accused deceased.

* There may be more than one offence brought against a defendant.

Source: (Ireland. Courts Service 2022)

Table T1.2.1.5 Offence outcomes following conviction in the Circuit Court in 2021 ¹⁵

	TIC	Fine	Bond	Disq	C/S	Prob	Imp/det	Susp	Other	Total
Offence outcomes following conviction	180	9	516	3	24	108	349	378	652	2 216

Note: TIC = taken into consideration; Disq = disqualified; C/S = community service; Prob = probation; Imp/det = imprisonment or detention; Susp = suspended sentence.

Source: (Ireland. Courts Service 2022)

Appeals (from District Court)

In 2020, 574 appeals from the District Court, representing 1,075 offences, were dealt with in the Circuit Court (Ireland. Courts Service 2022). Appeals and Offences were, 48% and 41% higher than 2019 (appeals=387; offences=764). Table T1.2.1.6 shows a breakdown of resolved offences.

Table T1.2.1.6 Appeals from District Court, 2021 ¹⁶

Incoming		Resolved: offences					
Off	Def	Aff	Varied	Rev	S/O	S/O N/A	
1 075	574	132	377	112	214	170	

Note: Off = offences; Def = defendants; Aff = affirmed; Rev = reversed; S/O = struck out; S/O N/A = struck out no appearance.

Source: (Ireland. Courts Service 2022)

Court of Appeal

Overall, the number of appeals that were lodged from the Circuit Criminal Court for drug/misuse of drugs offences decreased by nearly 40% from 2020 (N=67) to 2021 (N=40). Overall, all the appeals which originated in the Circuit Criminal Court were resolved in 2021 (Ireland. Courts Service 2022). Table T1.2.1.7 indicates that most appeals resolved were for sentence severity (n=29), followed by conviction and sentence (n=7) and conviction (n=3) and sentence leniency (n=1).

Table T1.2.1.7 Summary of resolved appeals in 2021 ¹⁷

Appeal	Conviction	Sentence (severity)	Conviction and sentence	Sentence (leniency)	Director of Public Prosecutions (dismissal)	Miscarriage of Justice	Other	Total
Resolved	3	29	7	1	0	0	0	40

Source: (Ireland. Courts Service 2022)

Prison committals for drug offences

The IPS Annual Report 2022 provided statistics on the number of persons in custody under sentence (i.e., not on remand) on a given day in that year (30 November) and on the number of committals under sentence, by

sentence length (Irish Prison Service 2022). On 30 November 2021, the number of persons in custody for controlled drug offences comprised of 10.9% (323 out of 2,956) of the total prison population. The difference between the share of the total prison population in 2020 (10.5% – 322 out of 3,059) and 2021 is a 0.4 percentage point increase. The increase in the actual number of persons in custody from 2020 (n=322) to 2021 (n=321) was only one. Of those in custody for drug offences, 122 were under a sentence of 5 years or longer; of these, 19 were under a sentence of 10 years or longer. Twenty-eight prisoners were under a sentence of 12 months or less (Irish Prison Service 2022).

Between 2020 (n=325) and 2021 (n=325), there was no change in the number of committals for drug offences. Of the 325 committals to prison during 2021, 28 (8.6%) were for sentences of 3 months or less (Irish Prison Service 2022). Further information on prisons can be found in Section T1.2.1. of the *Prison workbook*.

T1.2.2 Drug related crime outside drug law offences (optional)

T1.3 Drug supply reduction activities

T1.3.1 Drug supply reduction

a) Key priorities of supply reduction

Four documents illustrate the importance of the law enforcement response to drug trafficking in Ireland: *An Garda Síochána Strategy Statement 2022-2024* (An Garda Síochána 2022b); *An Garda Síochána Annual Policing Plan 2022* (An Garda Síochána 2022a). *An Garda Síochána Crime Prevention & Reduction Strategy: 2022-2024* (An Garda Síochána (2021) Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy. 2021) and the national drugs strategy, *Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery: A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017–2025*, which commenced in 2017 (Department of Health 2017).

An Garda Síochána Strategy Statement 2022-2024

An Garda Síochána Strategy Statement 2022-2021 was published on June 09, 2022 (An Garda Síochána 2022b). The An Garda Síochána (AGS) mission for the duration of the strategy is simply “Keeping People Safe” (p. 5). While the strategy is set against the backdrop of living in a world post-pandemic, global political and economic uncertainty, AGS are committed to evolving and meeting policing demands that are continually changing. The pillars that the strategy focuses on are:

- Community
- Tackling crime and preventative policing
- Victims and the vulnerable
- Protecting the security of the Irish State
- Sustainable change and innovation

Initiatives related to these areas will be highlighted in the next section.

An Garda Síochána Annual Report Policing Plan 2022

An Garda Síochána Annual Report Policing Plan 2022 (An Garda Síochána 2022a). proposed by Garda Commissioner, Drew Harris, represents the first of three annual plans to give effect to the *An Garda Síochána Strategy Statement 2022-2024* (An Garda Síochána 2022b). The focus of the Policing Plan 2022 is on community policing and preventing and detecting crime. While drug trafficking is only mentioned in the

community pillar, it is implied throughout the document that drugs will be targeted. Five pillars have been highlighted by AGS in 2022:

Community – AGS aim to continue to strengthen connections with communities and work in partnership to keep them people safe. They will achieve this by using a proactive problem-solving approach and by continuing to implement the Community Policing Framework, and by increasing engagement with vulnerable and minority group to increase understanding about their needs. In addition, tackling drug trafficking and the harm caused by drug dealing will be continued (An Garda Síochána 2022a)..

Tackling crime and preventative policing – The priority is to deal with current and emerging trends in crime by targeting organised crime, implementing approaches that will increase AGS ability to identify, disrupt new and emerging criminal activities in private, rural and urban settings. In addition the aim is to increase collaboration with internal, national and international stakeholders. It is hoped that this will be achieved, by using an intelligence-led response to crime, by targeting increases in fraud and cyber-enabled crimes, by finishing and reviewing the National Criminal Intelligence Framework and the Serious Organised Crime Threat and by disrupting organised and serious crime (An Garda Síochána 2022a)..

Victims and the vulnerable – The aim is to reduce harm by promoting and protecting the dignity and human rights of victims and all vulnerable individuals engaging with AGS. This will be achieved by enhancing capability to support victims of domestic violence including coercive control and by ensuring support are available for victims and those who are vulnerable (An Garda Síochána 2022a)..

Protecting the security of the Irish State – AGS aim to protect Ireland and its people from terrorism and threats. This will be achieved by increasing security and intelligence capability via the continued implementation of the Security and Intelligence Operating model, participating in Major Emergency Management interagency structures and carrying out intelligence-led operations nationally and internationally (An Garda Síochána 2022a).

Sustainable change and innovation – In order to inspire and sustain a continuous improvement, a culture of innovation needs to be adopted. To achieve this AGS the change management capacity building plan needs to be implemented. This will enhance innovation and responsiveness to change (An Garda Síochána 2022a). Five enablers are essential to the successful implementation of the plan. AGS needs to be a people focused organisation that is centred around engagement in collaborative partnerships to increase knowledge, service and effectiveness. Two-way communications need to be developed allowing engagement via new and existing channels. A culture of empowerment and trust needs to be nurtured and rooted in integrity and the protection of human rights. Finally an information-led service centred on using data and technology to inform decisions can be achieved by implementing the 2022 ICT Roadmap, by incorporating data quality processes to improve consistency and by increasing the abilities of Garda mobility devices and widening their use (An Garda Síochána 2022a).

Commissioner Harris acknowledged that 2021 was overshadowed by the Covid-19 pandemic however, AGS remains focused on organisational objectives and goals to keep people safe. The Commissioner stated that “the trust build between the community and AGS is at the heart of the service [provided and]....whilst there is a degree of uncertainty in the immediate future the Commissioner is confident that AGS are well placed to deliver on their goal of keeping people safe in 2022” (An Garda Síochána 2022a).

An Garda Síochána Crime Prevention & Reduction Strategy 2021 to 2024

The *An Garda Síochána Crime Prevention & Reduction Strategy: 2021-2024* was published on 21 December 2021 (An Garda Síochána (2021) Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy. 2021). The strategy is

underpinned by a problem-oriented policing approach that is based on a strong evidence base. The National Crime Prevention Unit and Divisional Crime Prevention Officers are critical to its successful implementation in Ireland. The strategy is centred on five pillars:

- Partnerships – AGS aim to reduce crime and fear of crime by working with key internal and external stakeholders by sharing crime prevention knowledge, and trend to reduce and prevent crime. In addition they will work with local authorities and organisations, engage with the development of appropriate legislation, support the operation of Joint Policing Committees, participate in public networks, local for a and community safety partnerships (An Garda Síochána (2021) Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy. 2021).
- Creating awareness and communication – AGS aim to provide prevention advice and guidelines using suitable channels in enhance awareness and educate hard to reach and vulnerable communities on the tenets of crime prevention and victims of crime support (An Garda Síochána (2021) Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy. 2021).
- Protecting communities – AGS aim to reassure and support communities by working hard to prevent, detect and prosecute criminal behaviour. Problem-solving techniques will be drawn upon and additional support will be provided to the national approach to offender management (An Garda Síochána (2021) Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy. 2021).
- Consistent and professional crime prevention service – To ensure that crime prevention services within divisions are provided, personnel will be trained and upskilled to develop and maintain expertise. Crime trend data analysis will enhance understanding of patterns enabling the delivery of an intelligence-led policing response (An Garda Síochána (2021) Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy. 2021).
- Review and evaluation – AGS intend to
 - evaluate how the Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy is delivered
 - evaluate the operation of the service provided
 - measure the effectiveness of information campaigns
 - evaluation public perception or crime prevention initiatives and the Crime Prevention Officer role (An Garda Síochána (2021) Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy. 2021).

Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery: A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017–2025

Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery: A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017–2025, the national drugs strategy in Ireland, was launched in 2017. It is aimed at providing an integrated public health approach to drug and alcohol use by focusing on the promotion of healthier lifestyles within society. It consists of five goals and aims to target a 50-point action plan from 2017 to 2025. Goal 3 sets out key actions for reducing the supply of drugs:

- provide a comprehensive and responsive misuse of drugs control framework which ensures the proper control, management, and regulation of the supply of drugs
- implement effective law enforcement and supply reduction strategies and actions to prevent, disrupt, or otherwise reduce the availability of illegal drugs

- develop effective monitoring of, and responses to, evolving trends, public health threats, and the emergence of new drug markets.

Further information on this strategy can be found in Section T1.1 of the *Drug policy workbook* and in Section T4.2 of *Focal Point Ireland: national report for 2017 – Drug markets and crime* (Irish National Focal Point to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction 2018a). Further updates on this strategy can be found in the *Drug Policy workbook*, Section T1.1.2 (Summary), Section T1.3 (revised implantation structure and Section T3.1 (findings from the mid-term review and new strategic priorities).

Areas of activity of supply reduction

As stated in previous workbooks, the following account describes the range of operations in the areas of drug interdiction, organised crime, policing communities, and reducing reoffending. The account is drawn from information published in the reporting period (August 2014 to September 2022) on the websites and in the annual reports of the key agencies involved in supply reduction activities, and in responses to Parliamentary Questions.

Drug interdiction

The Revenue Commissioners' Operational Intelligence Unit gathers data with a view to identifying possible drug smuggling routes into Ireland via passenger and cargo traffic; analysing the movement of persons and goods on those routes; and profiling, targeting, and conducting routine surveillance of suspect persons or consignments (Revenue Commissioners 2022a). Many drug seizures result from profiling techniques based on risk analysis. The Operational Intelligence Unit transmits intelligence and details of suspect traffic to the local operational units, whose functions include the examination of suspect passengers' baggage and freight consignments; the search of suspect persons, vehicles, vessels, pleasure craft, aircraft, etc.; and the transmission of information to the Operational Intelligence Unit for further action.

The Revenue Commissioners' Maritime Unit, based in Cork, is equipped with rigid inflatable boats and two Revenue Commissioners Customs cutters tasked with the prevention, detection, interception, and seizure of controlled drugs, fiscal goods, arms/ammunition/explosives, and prohibited and restricted goods smuggled or illegally imported into, or intended to be exported out of, Ireland or the European Union (EU). When not engaged in operational duties, Maritime Unit personnel engage in coastal intelligence work.

Drug detector dog units form a vital component of policing in Ireland. Detector dogs are trained to locate cocaine, cannabis, ecstasy, heroin, tobacco products, and cash. Units are based at strategic locations, including ports and airports around Ireland, by the Revenue Commissioners Customs Service. For operational and security reasons, performance statistics are not provided out of respect for individual detector dogs. These units are on call 24/7 all year round. When required, they provide backup to other enforcement agencies.

Similarly, Garda Dog Units have been providing an operational support service for approximately 58 years. One unit is based at Kilmainham Garda Station in Dublin, while another is in the Southern Region. The most recent data available indicate that the Garda Dog Unit was involved in approximately 1,442 deployments in 2020 (An Garda Síochána 2021). These included searches for missing persons, drugs, firearms and explosive substances, and stolen goods (An Garda Síochána 2021).

The Customs Drugs Watch Programme, launched by the Revenue Commissioners in 1994, encourages those living in coastal communities, maritime personnel, and people living near airfields to report unusual occurrences to the Customs Service via a confidential 24/7 drugs watch freephone facility.

The Revenue Commissioners also uses mobile X-ray scanners in the fight against smuggling. A state-of-the-art X-ray scanner was launched in June 2017; this was partially funded by a grant from OLAF, the European Anti-Fraud Office, under its Hercule III Programme. It was viewed as the most advanced on the market and avails of imaging technology to analyse vehicles as well as shipping containers. It was deployed in Dublin Port (Revenue Commissioners 2018). In 2019, a new mobile X-ray scanner, Z Backscatter Van, was also partially funded by OLAF. It was deployed in Dublin Port and is expected to remain there for at least 11 years. It allows for “unobtrusive and non-invasive cargo examinations” (Revenue Commissioners 2019). Revenue commissioners announced in July 2021 that they had commissioned a new, state of the art mobile scanner, Nuctech MT1213DE, it replaces an older scanner that come to the end of its operational lifespan. It was deployed to Rosslare Europort. The new scanner cost €2.16 million and was part-funded by a grant of €1.73 million from the European Anti-Fraud Agency, OLAF under its Hercule III Programme (Revenue Commissioners (2021) Revenue deploys new mobile container scanner to target smuggling. 2021).

Drug-related cash seizures are undertaken by the Customs Service under Section 38 of the Criminal Justice Act, 1994, as amended by Section 20 of the Proceeds of Crime (Amendment) Act 2005 (see Section T1.1.4 of the *Legal framework workbook*). As stated in previous Drug markets and crime workbooks, most drug-related cash seizures are conducted when attempts are made to export from Ireland, but increasingly, seizures are also being made at the point of import and inland. These seizures continue to have a major impact on the activities of both national and international drug traffickers. Investigations are conducted throughout the EU and worldwide following a drug-related cash seizure. Cash forfeited under this Act is transferred for the benefit of the Exchequer.

Organised crime

As stated in previous Drug markets and crime workbooks, regional, national, and international organised crime and drug trafficking investigations are managed by the GNDOCB, which was established by AGS in 2015. It aims to disrupt, dismantle, and prosecute groups and individuals involved in serious organised criminal activity. A multidisciplinary approach is viewed as essential to target OCGs effectively via legislation such as the Proceeds of Crime Act, 1996, as amended in 2005 and 2016 (see Section T2.1 of the *Legal framework workbook*) and the powers of the CAB (Dáil Éireann Debate written answer 124 garda resources. Vol 945 No 1. 2017).

Moreover, numerous strategic partnerships are in place both nationally and internationally, and include the Revenue Commissioners Customs Service, HPRA, the Irish Naval Service, Europol, INTERPOL, and the Maritime Analysis and Operation Centre – Narcotics (MAOC-N) in Lisbon (Revenue Commissioners 2022b) (Dail Eireann debate. Written answers 77 drugs crime. Vol 919 No 1. 2016).

Cross-border cooperation and collaboration continues between AGS, the PSNI, and other law enforcement agencies north and south of the border (Dáil Éireann debate. Other questions - Cross-border co-operation [36818/21]. 2021). The Fresh Start Agreement in 2015 created a Joint Agency Task Force led by AGS, the PSNI, the Revenue Commissioners, and Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs in the UK, and which includes other relevant agencies, such as the National Crime Agency in the UK and the CAB. The aim was to build on existing law enforcement frameworks and to increase operational effectiveness. Minister Flanagan notes that this has been successful in addressing cross-border criminality (Dáil Éireann Parliamentary Debate. Cross-Border Co-operation. 2019).

In addition, representatives from law enforcement agencies in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland come together annually at the Cross-Border Conference on Organised Crime. The most recent event took place online on 17 December 2020. This was the 18th event. The theme was “understanding and preparing

for the evolving cross border risks and threats around organised crime” after Brexit (Department of Justice) (Department of Defence 2020, 17th December). Minister McEntee said: “Criminal organisations and dissident groups cannot be allowed to take advantage of the UK’s separation from the EU. This webinar will allow us to better coordinate and understand the issues of cross border crime and identify the opportunities for beneficial cooperation in the context of new political realities...By better understanding the existing challenges and risks we can ensure they are managed and mitigated. This forum will be one step among many to ensure the communities of our shared island are safe from crime” (Department of Justice 2020). Minister Naomi Long commended “law enforcement agencies north and south of the border for their continuing commitment to working collectively to combat organised crime” (Department of Justice 2020).

The conference is considered an essential and indispensable forum that enables discussion and information exchange which ultimately keeps communities north and south of the border safe (Department of Justice and Equality 2019) and allows for enhanced cooperation between law enforcement agencies. It also provides an opportunity to assess and address changing trends in crime and to build upon and enhance the operational actions already undertaken in this area (Department of Justice 2020). Agencies that attended the conference included AGS, the PSNI, the National Crime Agency, the Revenue Commissioners, Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs, and relevant government departments from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Policing communities

Drug-related crime in the form of gangland violence has become a serious problem in Dublin because of the ongoing feud between the Hutch and Kinahan criminal gangs, which are well known for robbery/burglary and for drug dealing, respectively. The GNDOCB is of the opinion that all associated killings are drug related, as they all stemmed from disagreements and revenge in relation to the illegal drug enterprise (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2018). The response to gangland violence that the AGS has established is coordinated under Operation Hybrid and is reviewed on a weekly basis in order to maintain optimal impact. As of 19 February 2021, in respect of DMR North Central Division, there have been 450 arrests associated with Operation Hybrid, with over 4,672 checkpoints performed, 1,359 patrols and 74 searches (Dail Eireann Debate Garda operations [9710/21]. 2021). Additionally, there are several other operations that are targeting OCGs in Ireland:

- As part of the National Garda Anti-Drugs Operation that commenced 01 July 2021, Operation Tara targets street-level dealing in cities, towns, and villages across Ireland. The main goal of Operation Tara is to protect communities from the ‘scourge of illegal drugs’ by disrupting, dismantling, and prosecuting drug trafficking networks at all levels, international, national, local, in all aspects of drug related activities
- Operation Jaywalk targets OCGs that are suspected of skimming, cashing out and money laundering.
- Operation Omena targets a Romanian OCG whose nationals are suspected of operating in Ireland. This is a joint investigation with enforcement agencies in Finland and with the assistance of Europol and Eurojust (An Garda Síochána 2020). In 2020 the Payment Crime and Counterfeit Currency Unit within the GNECB undertook several coordinated searches and planned arrests resulting in convictions for money laundering and related offences (An Garda Síochána 2021).
- Operation Stratus has been targeting organised crime in Co Louth. Support is provided by Emergency Response Units and Armed Support Units, which form part of the Special Tactics and Operations Command (STOC) (An Garda Síochána 2018; An Garda Síochána 2019).

Drug-related intimidation and violence is an area of major concern for Irish communities, and it has been shown to affect the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of victims (Connolly and Buckley 2016). Further details on this study can be found in Section T1.3.1 of *Focal Point Ireland: national report for 2016 – Drug markets and crime* (Health Research Board. Irish National Focal Point to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction 2017).

The national Drug Related Intimidation Reporting Programme was developed by AGS with the aim of addressing the needs of drug users and family members who are subjected to drug-related intimidation. This programme fulfils criteria put forward in the most recent national drugs strategy in Ireland, *Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery: A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017–2025*, in Objective 4.1 of Goal 4: “Strengthen the resilience of communities and build their capacity to respond” (p. 63) (Ireland. Department of Health 2017). See also *Focal Point Ireland: national report for 2017 – Drug policy* (Irish National Focal Point to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction 2018b).

As stated in previous workbooks, primary responsibility for responding to the issue of drug-related intimidation has been given to one Inspector in every Garda division. Inspectors are at management level and are chosen by the Garda Commissioner for their expertise, knowledge, and extensive experience. They liaise directly with their local Superintendent in relation to each individual case. Anyone requiring help from an Inspector in their local area can make contact to arrange a formal or informal meeting. Additional details of the operation of this programme are provided on the [AGS](#) website.

Reducing reoffending

As stated in previous workbooks, reducing reoffending is addressed via several agencies, such as the Irish Youth Justice Service, the IPS, AGS, and the Probation Service.

On 15 April 2021 the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, and the Minister of State for Law Reform, James Brown, launched a new Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 (Department of Justice 2021). Section T2.2 of the *Legal Framework workbook*, provides an outline of the aim and guiding principles and main themes that underpin the strategy. In addition, the Probation Service aims to reduce the likelihood of reoffending by developing positive professional relationships via individual risk and needs assessment, combined with using interventions that are tailored to the individual’s needs. In order to achieve these goals, it avails of risk assessment and a risk-based approach to supervision (Probation Service 2022).

b) Organisational structures/coordinating bodies

As reported in previous workbooks, responsibility for the prevention of drug trafficking rests primarily with the Revenue Commissioners Customs Division, whereas responsibility for the prevention of drug-related crime within Ireland rests primarily with AGS. In addition to the exchange of information between the Office of Customs Drugs Law Enforcement Head and the GNDOCB, which is part of AGS, nationwide liaison also takes place at local level between nominated Customs officers and Garda officers. Other State agencies engaged in supporting supply reduction activities include the CAB and FSI. The Naval Service and the Air Corps cooperate with the Revenue Commissioners Customs Division and AGS, when called upon, through the Joint Task Force on Drugs Interdiction.

The Revenue Commissioners Office of Customs Drugs Law Enforcement, Investigations and Prosecutions Division

Revenue Commissioners Customs officers have primary responsibility for the prevention, detection, interception, and seizure of controlled drugs being smuggled into or out of Ireland. All strategic management

functions relating to drugs issues are attached to the Investigations and Prosecutions Division (personal communication, Revenue Commissioners Press and Media Division, 2019), and include:

- Gathering national and international intelligence and disseminating this intelligence, as necessary.
- Participating in the National Inter-Agency Drugs Joint Task Force, comprising the Revenue Commissioners Customs Division, AGS, and the Naval Service. Information is also exchanged between Customs Drugs Law Enforcement and the GNDOCB.
- Analysing national and international drug smuggling trends.
- Researching, planning, and organising both national and international operations targeting drug smuggling and related issues.
- Liaising with other national and international enforcement agencies and government bodies, as well as organising and participating in operations at both national and international level, including joint interagency operations.
- Participating in the International Liaison Network; five officers from the Investigations and Prosecutions Division are currently assigned abroad and are directly involved in the international exchange of information and intelligence. Officers are assigned to Permanent Representation in Brussels (2), the Irish Embassy (1), Europol (1), and the MAOC-N based in Lisbon (1).
- Managing the Revenue Commissioners Customs Division Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) initiative, which is a programme of cooperation between the Revenue Commissioners Customs Division and the business community on the prevention of smuggling, in particular drug smuggling. The Revenue Commissioners Customs Division has established working links with thousands of diverse companies, ranging from airlines, air express couriers, and shipping companies to airport and harbour authorities, freight forwarders, exporters, road hauliers, chemical companies, and yachtsmen. The MOU initiative delivers training to company staff by Customs liaison officers to heighten drug smuggling awareness, and practical advice is offered to help prevent vehicles from being used to smuggle drugs and other contraband goods. In addition, company staff are provided with ready channels of communication with the Revenue Commissioners Customs Division.
- Managing the Customs Drugs Watch Programme. The Revenue Commissioners Customs Division is responsible for monitoring 3000 km of coastline, and therefore individuals living in coastal communities, maritime personnel, and yachting networks are asked to contact Customs Drug Watch if they see any of the following activities:
 - “yachts and other craft sighted in remote areas
 - crew making landings in remote areas
 - unusual objects at sea, underwater or ashore such as buoys or signaling devices
 - merchant shipping at anchor close to land or islands
 - ships away from their normal shipping lanes
 - ships signalling ashore or being met by small craft
 - vessels operating at night without lights” (Revenue Commissioners 2022a)
- Managing the Drug Precursor Programme, which is a mechanism for cooperation between the Revenue Commissioners Customs Division and the chemical industry and was set up to detect the

diversion of chemicals for illicit purposes. The Programme is designed to increase the awareness of Customs officers and members of the chemical trade to the possibility of legitimate chemicals being diverted to the manufacture of illegal drugs. As part of this programme, the Customs Service now has dedicated Precursor Liaison Officers located in key areas around Ireland. These officers have been trained in the identification and handling of chemicals and are tasked with liaising with members of the chemical trade for the purpose of identifying suspicious activity.

- Managing the Revenue Commissioners Customs Division detector dog teams which are operational and located nationwide.

2021: National Level Overview

In 2021, the Revenue Commissioners worked closely with other agencies internationally and in Ireland, including AGS, the CAB, the Defence Forces, the Naval Service, and the HPRA, sharing operational/intelligence support in order to act against the illegal drugs trade.

The Revenue Customs Drug Law Enforcement Unit was involved in joint national operations and investigations with AGS – in particular with the GNDOCB. Overall, 30 individuals were arrested in 45 joint controlled deliveries in 2021 (Revenue Commissioners 2022b). In addition, Revenue Commissioners were involved in a range of other activities nationally:

- Worked closely with AGS, CAB, the Naval Service, and the Defence Forces, providing mutual operational, intelligence and material support.
- Contributed to the national response in tackling organised crime, including the secondment of 17 staff members to the CAB.
- The Joint Investigation Unit (JIU) contributes to an intervention strategy by targeting shadow economy activity targeting fraud, illicit trade, smuggling and organised crime.
- Participated in the Oversight Forum on Drugs, led by the Department of Health, which oversees the implementation of Government's National Drugs Strategy 2017-2025.
- Coordinated the enforcement and interception of prohibited and restricted goods and products on behalf of our colleagues in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, HPRA, and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission.
- Collaborated with the Private Security Authority (PSA) in exchanging information, in accordance with the Private Security Services Act, 2004, as amended, and the Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997 to support the regulation of the private security industry.
- Worked closely with the Department of Justice on administrative matters related to passenger movements through the Irish Passenger Intelligence Unit (Revenue Commissioners 2022b).

2021: International Level Overview

- Worked with international bodies and agencies and participate in the EU's Customs Cooperation Working Party.
- Seconded officers to EUROPOL in the Hague, the Irish Embassy in the UK and the Maritime Analysis and Operational Centre-Narcotics (MAOC-N) which is based in Lisbon.

- Engaged with the activities of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) directed towards addressing the threats posed by fraud and smuggling.
- Worked closely with the European Anti-Fraud Office, sharing intelligence and information
- Worked closely with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and other law enforcement agencies in Northern Ireland. The cross jurisdictional Joint Agency Task Force, established under the Fresh Start Agreement, prioritises the area of fiscal fraud. Under this framework, Inland revenue work with the Police Service of Northern Ireland, An Garda Síochána, HMRC, the CAB, and the National Crime Agency.
- Key partner at the annual Cross Border Crime Conference, a collaborative event between representatives of law enforcement agencies and related organisations in the field of combatting organised crime on both sides of the border (Revenue Commissioners 2022b).

An Garda Síochána

As reported in previous drug markets and crime workbooks, supply reduction activities range from participation in international and cross-border operations to street-level policing of supply and possession offences, to undercover operations targeting specific individuals or groups or targeting specific locations, such as nightclubs, where drugs are consumed. There are several units within AGS that support the work of divisions and districts in operational duties and investigations.

Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau (GNDOCB)

The GNDOCB manages regional, national, and international drug trafficking and organised crime investigations. The main areas of focus are crime detection, supply reduction, harm prevention, demand reduction, and recovery support (Garda Síochána (2022). Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau. 2022). It aims to disrupt, dismantle, and prosecute groups and individuals involved in serious organised criminal activity using intelligence-led investigations (An Garda Síochána 2021). It is also one of the lead agencies involved in implementing the current national drugs strategy. It is responsible for putting initiatives and policies in place that enable government strategies to lower the demand for drugs and decrease harms linked with their misuse (Garda Síochána (2022). Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau. 2022).

Criminal Assets Bureau

As reported in previous National Reports, the CAB's statutory remit under the Criminal Assets Bureau Acts 1996 and the Proceeds of Crime Acts 1996–2016, and in social welfare and revenue legislation is to carry out investigations into the suspected proceeds of criminal conduct. The CAB uses a multi-agency, multidisciplinary partnership approach in its investigations into the suspected proceeds of criminal conduct. CAB staff are drawn from AGS, the Office of the Revenue Commissioners (including Customs), the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, and the Department of Justice and Equality. The CAB also works closely with international crime investigation agencies and has successfully targeted proceeds of foreign criminality.

The CAB supports the roll-out of the Garda Divisional Profiler programme by providing lectures, training, and expertise, with reference to targeting middle-ranking drug dealers and others benefiting by deriving assets from criminal activity. In turn, the CAB receives intelligence, information, and evidence from profilers.

In order to continue to identify and trace assets which are the proceeds of crime, and to present testimony before the courts, the CAB has established the Bureau Analysis Unit, adopted international best practices in forensic analysis, and adopted the use of enhanced training. Through making earlier or preliminary applications relating to lower-value assets, the CAB has begun to target more middle-ranking criminals. While this approach may not realise extensive financial returns, it demonstrates the CAB's ability to react to local community concerns.

Forensic Science Ireland

As reported in previous National Reports, the Drugs section of FSI (formerly known as the Forensic Science Laboratory) examines and analyses substances seized by AGS or Revenue Commissioners Customs officers, and sometimes by the Military Police, that are thought to contravene the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977–2017. As shown in Section T2.1 of this workbook, the most common drug encountered in the FSI laboratory was cannabis herb, followed by cocaine, heroin, alprazolam, cannabis plants, MDMA, amphetamine and Zopiclone. Moreover, the increase in NPS-type drugs and further changes to drugs legislation have led to an exponential increase in the variety of compounds submitted to the laboratory for analysis. As a result, hundreds of different compounds can be analysed by staff on an annual basis. Items that possibly come into contact with such substances – for example, weighing scales, knives, and equipment from clandestine laboratories – may also be examined to determine whether traces of a controlled substance are present. Several analytical procedures are used in the laboratory in order to determine whether a substance is a controlled drug, the most common of which is gas chromatography coupled with mass spectrometry (GC/MS). The results of the analysis are issued with a certificate of analysis that is presented as evidence in court.

Joint Task Force on Drugs Interdiction

As reported in previous National Reports, the Joint Task Force on Drugs Interdiction (JTF) was established in 1993 as a government measure to improve law enforcement in relation to drug trafficking at sea. The JTF comprises members of AGS, the Revenue Commissioners, and the Naval Service (Department of Defence 2015). The JTF is convened whenever AGS and the Revenue Commissioners, which have primary responsibility in this area, review intelligence received and consider that a joint operation with the Naval Service and/or the Air Corps should be mounted. The Naval Service is legally empowered under the Criminal Justice Act, 1994 (as amended by the Criminal Justice (Illicit Traffic by Sea) Act 2003) to engage in drug interdiction operations. The Air Corps provides air support if required and, on occasion, may be requested to carry members of the Revenue Commissioners in an observational capacity for the purposes of monitoring vessels suspected of drug trafficking. The Air Corps provides an important intelligence-gathering capability when requested by the JTF. Intelligence for drug interdiction operations is provided by AGS and the Revenue Commissioners and via the international intelligence centre MAOC-N (Department of Defence 2015).

T2. Trends

T2.1 Short term trends (5 years)

Seizures

The number of drug seizures in any given period can be affected by such factors as law enforcement resources, strategies, and priorities, and by the vulnerability of traffickers to law enforcement activities. However, drug seizures are considered indirect indicators of the supply and availability of drugs (see

Standard Table T13). Data for drug seizures are recorded independently by both the Revenue Commissioners Customs Division and AGS, and each will be presented separately below.

Revenue Commissioners Customs Division seizures

Information regarding all Revenue Customs seizures, including Revenue Customs drugs seizures, are held in the Revenue National Seizure Register on C-NET, which is a secure networked intelligence system. Only Revenue Commissioners seizures are recorded on this register. As set out in Table 18 in the Revenue Commissioners *Annual Report 2021* drugs seizures are recorded by product type:

- cannabis (herbal and resin)
- cocaine and heroin
- amphetamines, ecstasy, and other (Revenue Commissioners 2022b).

No further category breakdown is available. When a prosecution is pending, or presumptive field tests are not available, only samples are sent to FSI for analysis (personal communication, Revenue Commissioners Press and Media Division, 2017).

Drug interceptions by the Revenue Commissioners and joint operations in 2021 resulted in 21,163 seizures (5741 kg), which were estimated to be valued at €114.8 million. The number of seizures for cocaine and heroin intercepted in 2021 (174) was higher than those intercepted in 2020 (161). The overall weight of these seizures was estimated at 912 kg and had a value of €71.7 million. While the number of seizures was only higher (8%) in 2021 the estimated product weight and value was nearly seven times higher than 2020 figures (123kg, €10.2 million) (Revenue Commissioners 2022b). In 2021, a total of 1,746 kg of cannabis (herbal and resin) with an estimated value of €32.4 million was intercepted in 5,393 separate seizures (Revenue Commissioners 2022b). Notably, the number and estimated value of cannabis seizures was over 6% and 13% respectively higher than those reported in 2020. The highest number of seizures reported by Customs officers was for amphetamines, ecstasy, and other types of drugs (15,596). The estimated weight of these substances was 3,083 kg, and they had an estimated value of €10.7 million (Revenue Commissioners 2022b).

An Garda Síochána seizures

Only drugs seized by AGS for supply offences are sent to FSI for analysis. Figure T2.1.1 shows trends for total seizures and cannabis-related seizures between 2003 and 2021 (personal communication, FSI, 2022). Overall 10,212 cases were submitted to FSI for analysis resulting in 16,055 drugs were mainly categorised as identified, however some products were categorised as indicated or as having trace amounts of product. Further analysis showed that no controlled drug was detected in 767 analyses and no controlled drug was identified in 48 analyses.

All drug seizures

The total number of drug seizures analysed by FSI increased from 5,299 in 2004 to a peak of 10,444 in 2007. Between 2008 and 2010, the number almost halved to 5,477. This decrease was followed by a slight increase in 2011 (6,014). An annual decrease occurred between 2011 and 2015, except for a very slight increase between 2013 and 2014 (3%). The 2015 figure showed the lowest number of seizures in a 12-year period. Following an increase of 52% (1,814) between 2015 and 2016, a slight decrease occurred in 2017 (2%). Between 2017 (5,199) and 2018 (3,630), FSI analyses decreased by 30%. The quantity of drug seizures analysed by the FSI in 2019 was more than three times higher than in 2018. In 2020, the total number of drug

seizures analysed in 2020 (N=10,475) was nearly 10% lower than 2019 figures (N=11,578). However between 2020 and 2021, seizures analysis increased by 53% to 16,055.

Cannabis

Cannabis-type seizures accounted for nearly 49% of all drug seizures in 2021 (see Figure T2.1.1). Following a slight decrease between 2003 and 2004, seizures of cannabis-type substances increased from 2005 to reach a peak in 2008. Between 2008 and 2009, the number of such seizures decreased by approximately 60%. Although there was a 38% spike in seizures in 2011, an annual decreasing trend was evident between 2011 and 2015; 2015 figures were approximately 55% lower than those reported in 2011. One possible explanation for this outcome is that gardaí targeted the cannabis cultivation industry in numerous operations during that time frame. Between 2015 and 2017, an increasing trend was evident. While FSI analyses reduced by 21% between 2017 and 2018, the number of cannabis-type seizures in 2019 (3,071) was more than double the number analysed in 2018. While a slight increase was evident in 2020, it was very small (<.5%). The number of seizures analysed in 2021 (7,866) was two times higher than 2020 (3,706) figures.

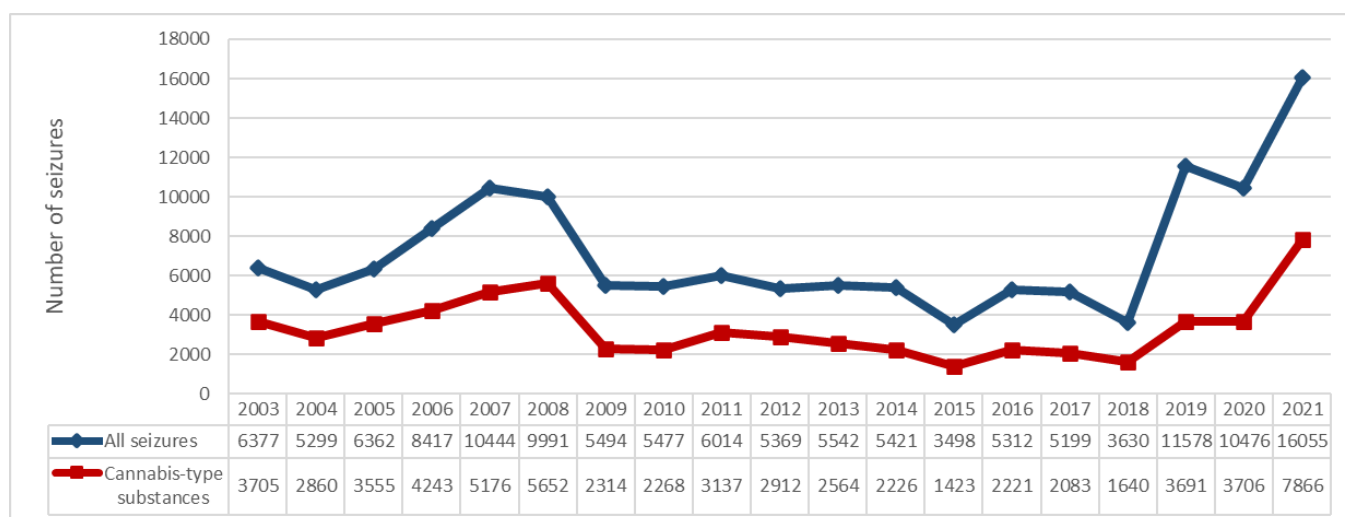


Figure T2.1.1 Trends in the total number of drug seizures and cannabis seizures, 2003–2021 ²

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2003–2022)

An examination of cannabis substances by type is shown in Figure T2.1.2. Cannabis herb has been shown to be the most prominent drug seized in Ireland since 2010. Between 2011 and 2015, there was an overall decrease in the numbers of cannabis herb, cannabis resin, and cannabis plants seizures. While the number of cannabis herb and resin seizures analysed increased between 2015 and 2016, the figure illustrates that between 2016 and 2018, the number of seizures analysed for both substances decreased annually. However, between 2018 and 2019, a substantial increase was shown for the three main cannabis products analysed. In 2020, there was a slight increase in the analysis of cannabis herb seizures, and a larger increase was evident for cannabis plants. However, the analysis of cannabis resin decreased from 2019 (N=422) to 2020 (N=263). Between 2020 and 2021, the number of analyses increased for over twofold for cannabis herb (121%) and cannabis plants (138%). During the same timeframe, cannabis resin decreased by 22%.

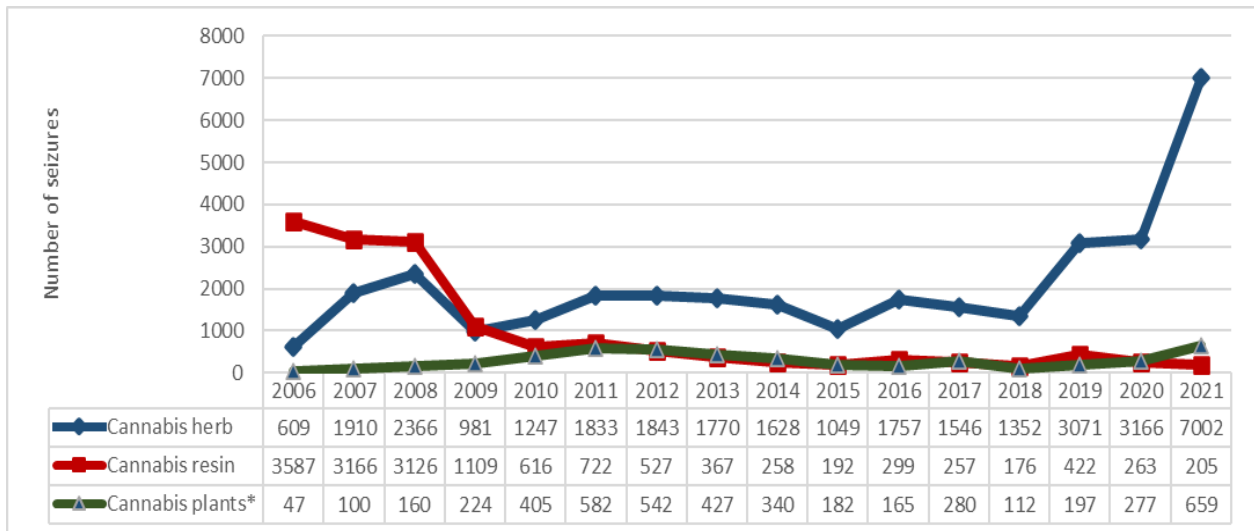


Figure T2.1.2 Trends in the total number of drug seizures by cannabis type, 2006–2021 ³

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2007–2022)

* These figures are not a true reflection of the number of cannabis plants analysed, as only a sample of these seizures is sent for analysis.

As can be seen in Figure T2.1.3, analysis of percentage increases/decreases between 2011 and 2015 follow a similar trajectory as the total number of cannabis seizures. Overall, seizures showed a 56% increase between 2015 and 2016. Similarly, seizures of cannabis herb and resin increased by 67% and 56%, respectively. In contrast, this analysis shows that seizures of cannabis plants decreased by 9% between 2015 and 2016. A different picture emerged between 2016 and 2017; overall, there was a slight decrease in the analyses of cannabis-type seizures (6%). Similarly, the analysis by type indicates that seizures of cannabis herb and resin decreased by 12% and 14%, respectively. In contrast, a substantial increase (70%) was evident for seizures of cannabis plants. As stated previously, a possible explanation for this outcome is that operations by Irish law enforcement agencies have focused specifically on addressing the problem, resulting in arrests and convictions (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2016). However, it is also important to note that while the number of cannabis plants analysed has mainly been lower than the number of cannabis herb and cannabis resin samples, this is not a true reflection of how many cannabis plants are seized in Ireland each year, as only a sample of overall cannabis plant seizures are sent to FSI for analysis. Therefore, this outcome should be interpreted with caution. Between 2017 and 2018, the decrease in cannabis plants (60%) and cannabis resin (32%) accounted for a larger proportion of the overall 21% decrease in cannabis-type seizures. Figure T2.1.3 shows the analysis of cannabis herb, resin, and plant seizures was significantly higher in 2019 when compared with 2018, however in 2020, total cannabis-type seizures analyses remained similar to 2019 figures. Further investigation of this indicated that while only a slight increase was evident for the analysis of cannabis herb, analysis of cannabis resin decreased by 38% and the analysis of cannabis plants increased by 41%. Between 2020 and 2021, there was significant increase in the total number of cannabis-type seizures analyses (112%). As can be seen from Figure T2.1.3, cannabis herb and cannabis plants accounted for this increase, 121% and 138% respectively. A percentage decrease was shown for cannabis resin (22%).

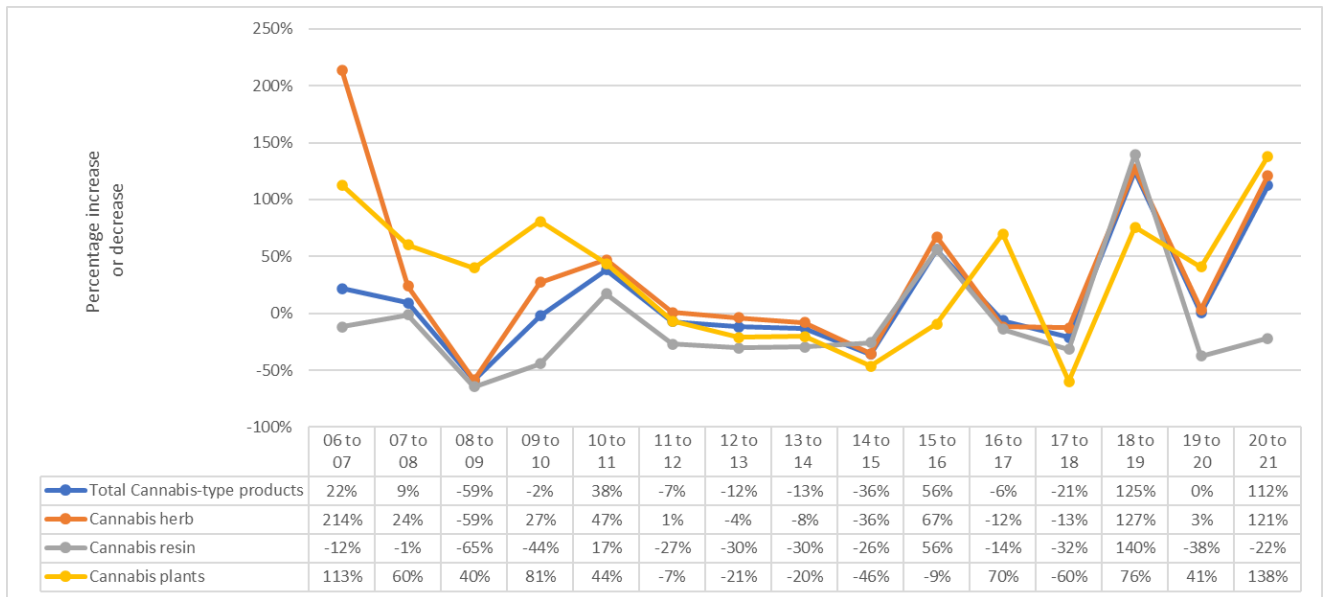


Figure T2.1.3 Comparison of percentage increase/decrease, total drug seizures, for cannabis-type products, by cannabis type, 2007–2021 ⁴

In 2020, other types of cannabis products were seized and submitted for analysis (N=224).

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) was detected in 202 seizures, and trace amounts of THC were found in six seizures. According to FSI, ‘trace amount’ generally means a very small amount of a substance in the presence of something else, or it might be the residue of a drug on tinfoil (personal communication, FSI, 2019). Cannabis oil (cannabidiol [CBD]) was found in 13 seizures, and 3 other seizures contained both CBD and THC one of which was a trace amount.

Other controlled drugs

Opioids

Heroin: Figure T2.1.4 shows trends for seizures of heroin between 2003 and 2021. From 2004, the number of heroin seizures analysed increased, reaching a peak in 2007 (1,698). Although heroin seizures subsequently decreased almost every year between 2007 and 2013, a substantial increase occurred between 2013 and 2014 (38%). Although an increase was evident between 2015 and 2016 (35%), decreases were shown from 2014 to 2015 (21%) and from 2016 to 2017 (25%), and an even larger decrease was shown between 2017 and 2018 (60%). The number of heroin seizures analysed in 2019 was more than four times higher than 2018. While a decrease of heroin seizures analysed was evident between 2019 and 2020, between 2020 and 2021 heroin seizures analysed increased by 38% (388).

In addition, FSI analysis determined that traces of diamorphine were present in 19 seizures in 2021 (see Figure T2.1.4). Three seizures contained more than one product: diamorphine and cocaine (2) and diamorphine, cocaine and MDMA (1).

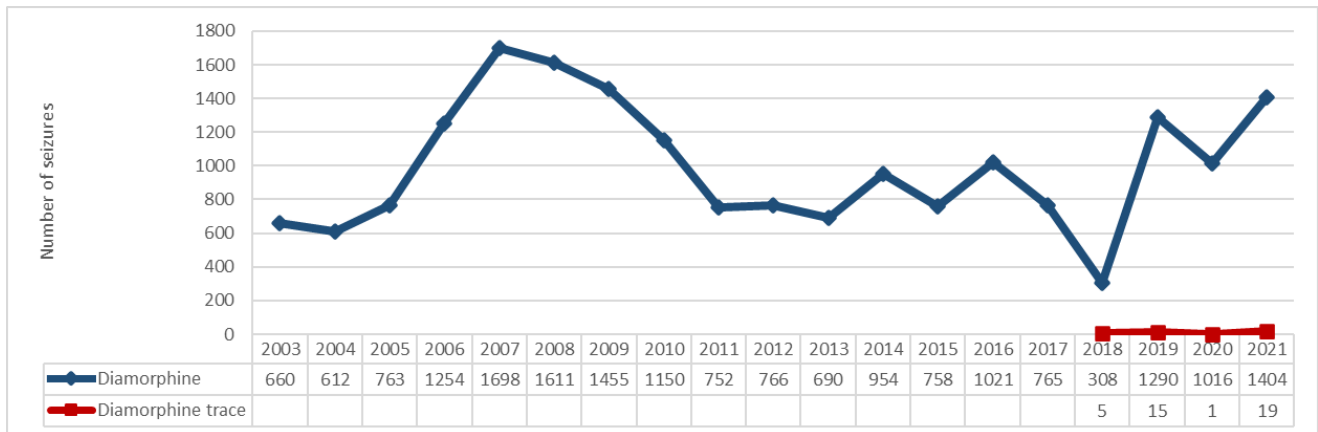


Figure T2.1.4 Trends in the number of heroin seizures, 2003–2021 ⁵

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2003–2022)

Other opioids: Figure T2.1.5 shows trends in the number of other opioids seized between 2012 and 2021. Following a peak in the total number of seizures in 2014, the number of seizures of drugs in this category declined year on year, with the number of seizures in 2018 being approximately 77% lower than in 2014. However, in 2019, the total number of seizures analysed (N=66) was nearly four-and-a-half times higher than in 2018 (N=15). A slight increase was evident between 2019 and 2020 (15%). The number of other opioids decreased by 4% between 2020 and 2021. This decrease can possibly be explained by the decrease in methadone analysis (51%). Methadone has been the most prominent drug in this category since 2012 and accounted for 27% of products in this category in 2021, followed by Morphine (n=16) and Oxycodone (n=10) (see Figure T2.1.5). In 2021, other substances analysed included monoacetylmorphine (n=5) and dihydrocodeine (n=4). Drugs were indicated in several seizures: codeine (n=6), and tramadol (n=5). Trace amounts of monoacetylmorphine were detected in four seizures.

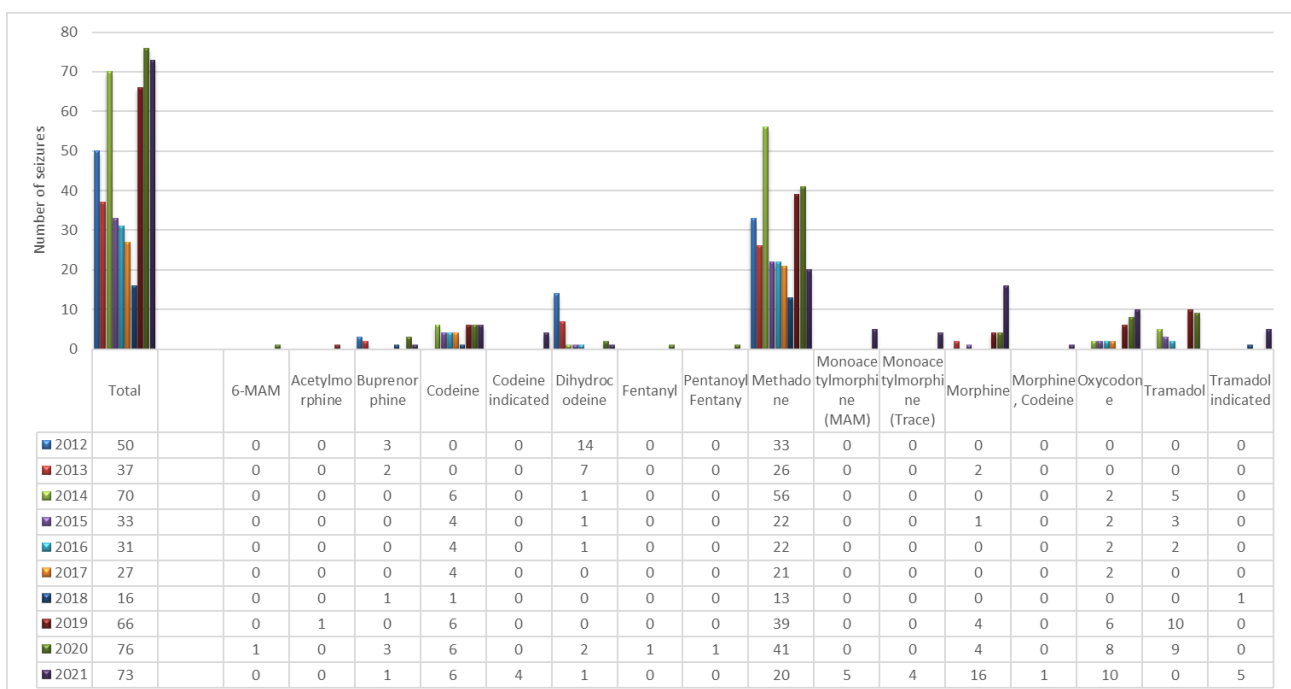


Figure T2.1.5 Trends in the number of seizures of other opioids, 2012–2021 ⁶

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2012–2022)

Cocaine: Figure T2.1.6 shows the trends for cocaine seizures between 2003 and 2021. Generally, except for a 11% spike between 2013 and 2014, the number of cocaine seizures decreased from a peak of 1,749 in 2007 to 364 in 2015. One possible explanation for this is that the economy in Ireland was not doing well in 2013 and 2014; another possibility is that the market would have been affected by the availability of cheaper white powders that mimic the effects of cocaine (personal communication, GNDOCB, 2016). An increase in cocaine analyses was seen in between 2015 and 2016 (63%) and between 2016 and 2017 (33%). Although a decrease of 25% was shown between 2017 and 2018, this was followed by a substantial increase (N=1,636) between 2018 (N=595) and 2019 (N=2231), when the number of cocaine seizures analysed was close to four times higher than in 2018. The number of cocaine seizures analysed in 2020 was 11% lower than those analysed in 2019. Between 2020 and 2021, cocaine seizures analysed increased by 34%.

In addition, FSI detected cocaine traces in 48 seizures. Cocaine was also detected along with other substances (n=9); benzocaine (n=3), ethylhexedrone (n=2), ketamine (n=2), diamorphine (n=1), and amphetamine (n=1).

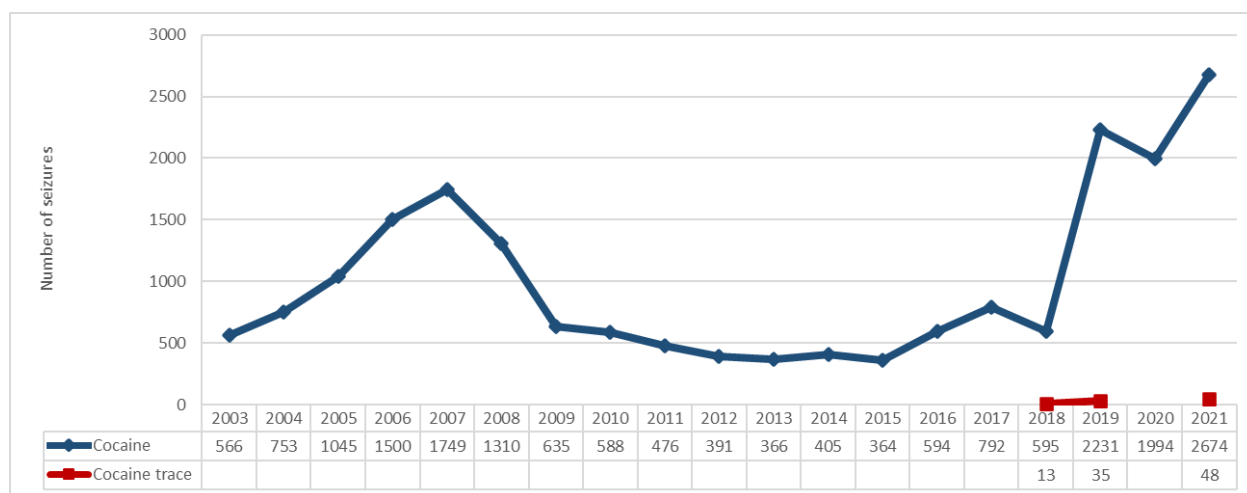


Figure T2.1.6 Trends in the number of cocaine seizures, 2003–2021 ⁷

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2003–2022)

Stimulants other than cocaine: Table T2.1.1 shows a breakdown of the stimulants other than cocaine that were seized and analysed by FSI between 2012 and 2021. Between 2016 and 2018, there was a steady decline in analyses. However, in 2019, FSI analysed 1,303 stimulants other than cocaine; this was more than three times higher than 2018 figures. Since 2019 analyses have decreased annually, between 2019 and 2020 (31%) and between 2020 and 2021 (11%).

As shown in Table T2.1.1, a breakdown by substance indicates that the most prominent substance in this category is MDMA, followed by amphetamine and methylamphetamine. Following a peak in 2013 (n=434), the number of MDMA seizures decreased until 2015 (n=202). Between 2015 and 2016, an increase of 71% was shown. Although the change between 2016 and 2017 was negligible, between 2017 and 2018, the analyses of MDMA seizures decreased by 12%. Data received from FSI have shown that the number of MDMA analyses in 2019 (n=974) was more than three times higher than in 2018 (n=304). A further decrease of 35% was illustrated between 2019 and 2020 and again between 2020 and 2021 (39%).

Following a steady decline between 2012 and 2015, the number of analyses of amphetamine seizures peaked in 2016 (n=104). Between 2016 and 2017, a decline of 40% was recorded. While a slight increase occurred in

2018 (8%), a further increase was shown in 2019 when the number of analyses carried out was more than three times higher than in 2018, and more than double the analyses reported in 2016 (n=104) (see Table T2.1.1). Between 2019 and 2020, the analysis of amphetamine seizures decreased by approximately 16%. However between 2020 and 2021, the analysis of amphetamine seizures was nearly two time higher than those analysed in the previous year.

As shown in Table T2.1.1, 33 methylamphetamine seizures analysed by FSI in 2021, increased by 58% from 33 in 2020 seizures to 52 seizures in 2021.

Table T2.1.1 Stimulants other than cocaine analysed by FSI, 2012–2021 ¹⁸

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total	531	697	642	368	542	469	404	1304	900	800
1,3-Dimethylamylamine (DMAA)	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2C-B	17	-	17	15	3	0	2	15	15	-
2C-I	-	-	3	-	-	-	2	4	1	-
5-MAPB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
6-APB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
6-MAPB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
4-Chloro-alpha-pyrrolidinovalerophenone	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Alpha-PVP/PVP	-	81	64	46	50	24	2	4	-	-
Amphetamine	90	77	75	63	104	62	67	220	185	335
Amphetamine (Cocaine)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Amphetamine (trace)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
BZP	16	7	10	1	-	2	-	-	-	-
Chlorodimethoxyamphetamine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Chloro-pyrrolidinovalerophenon (PVP)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Desozypipradrol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dibutylone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-
Dimethoxybromoamphetamine (DOB)	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Dimethoxychloroamphetamine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Dimethylone	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fluoroethylamphetamine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Fluoromethylamphetamine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Fluorophenmetrazine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-
Hordeine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Khat	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	2	-
MDMA	311	434	386	202	345	344	304	974	632	388
MDMA (trace)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
MDMA in plastic bag	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
MDMA, Cocaine, Amphetamine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
MDPV	-	-	6	1	4	1	-	-	-	-
Mephedrone/MMC	-	-	4	6	3	4	-	5	2	3
Methiopropamine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Methoxyamphetamine	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Methylamphetamine	53	37	24	4	28	29	21	54	33	52
Methylamphetamine (trace)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	1
Methylenedioxyethylamphetamine (MDEA)	-	30	8	2	2	-	-	1	-	-
Methylphenidate	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	4	5	2
Mitragynine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	9	6
N-(Dimethylpentyl)-DMA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9
Pentedrone	-	-	4	19	1	-	-	-	-	-
Phentermine	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
PMA	-	5	4	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
TFMPP (Trifluoro-methyl-phenylpiperzine)	44	26	24	8	2	2	-	1	1	-

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2012–2022)

Hypnotic and sedative drugs: Another factor that may be influencing seizure trends for illegal drugs is the illegal street sale of prescription drugs. Table T2.1.2 shows trends for some of the main prescription drugs, primarily benzodiazepines and Z-hypnotics, seized by AGS and analysed by FSI in recent years. Following a peak in 2013 (N=861), the number of seizures of hypnotic and sedative substances decreased annually until 2016. A 73% increase in these seizures was recorded between 2016 and 2017, followed by a 49% decrease between 2017 and 2018. However, the number of seizures analysed in 2019 (N=1269) was more than four times higher than those reported in 2018 (N=309). Increases were evident between 2019 and 2020 (8%) and again between 2020 and 2021 (6%).

The most prominent drug in this category in 2021 was alprazolam, followed by zopiclone and diazepam, and delorazepam. Following the overall trend for this category between 2020 and 2021, alprazolam increased by 11%. While decreases were evident in zopiclone (10%) and a smaller decrease in delorazepam (1%).

Table T2.1.2 Seizures of a selection of benzodiazepines and Z-hypnotics, 2012–2021 ¹⁹

Hypnotic and sedative drugs	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total	675	861	821	392	350	605	309	1269	1368	1448
Alprazolam	111	145	201	127	115	304	160	681	745	830
Alprazolam trace	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2
Alprazolam plus adinazolam indicated	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Amyl nitrite	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.
Bromazepam	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	2	3
Chlordiazepoxide	.	.	2	1	.	1	.	1	2	3
Clonazolam	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	5	.
Clonazolam indicated	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	14
Delorazepam	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	62	107
Diazepam	463	450	420	175	141	155	62	230	163	161
Flualprazolam	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	5	40	8
Flualprazolam indicated	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	20
Flunitrazepam (Rohypnol)	9	6	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Flurazepam	52	35	37	15	15	11	4	25	16	12
GBL	.	.	3	.	.	.	.	7	9	.
GHB	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.
Lorazepam	1	.	1	.	.	.	2	.	.	.
Lorazepam	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	5	4
Nitrazepam	.	.	2	1	.	.	2	.	.	.
Nitrazolam	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	.
Nitrazolam indicated	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Nordazepam	.	.	.	.	.	.	5	5	1	.
Pentobarbitone	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Phenobarbitone	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Prazepam	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Temazepam	12	6	4	1	1	.	.	.	1	3
Triazolam	11	7	12	2	4	5	1	5	5	5
Zolpidem	16	7	10	4	.	3	1	7	9	4
Zopiclone	.	205	125	65	74	126	72	296	301	270

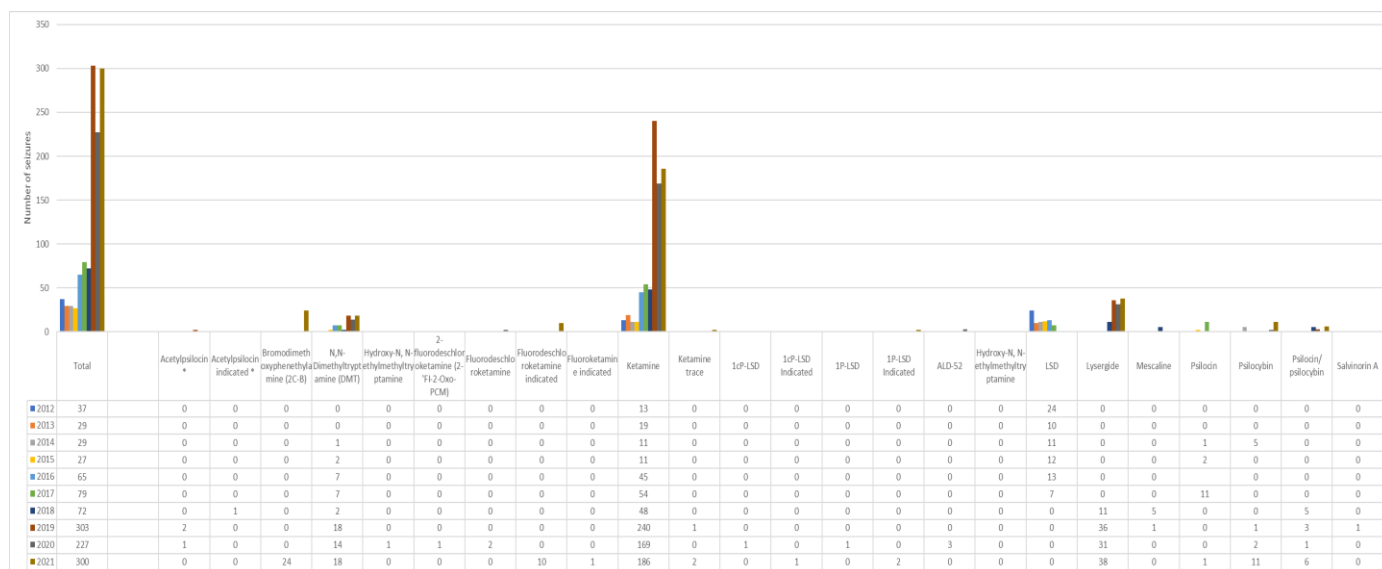
Note: = no data available

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2012–2022)

Hallucinogens: Figure T2.1.7 shows trends in the number of hallucinogen seizures between 2012 and 2021. Over the course of this time frame, a variety of hallucinogens have been seized, including acetylpsilocin, ketamine, lysergide, DMT, psilocin, psilocybin. While the total number of hallucinogen seizures analysed ranged from 65 to 79 between 2016 and 2018, the number reported by FSI in 2019 (303) was more than four times higher than the number reported in 2018 (n=72). Between 2019 and 2020, to total number of seizures in this category decreased by 25%. An increase of 32% was evident between 2020 and 2021.

The most predominant hallucinogen seized in 2021 was ketamine (n=186), which nearly 10% higher than the number of ketamine analyses in 2020 (n=169). This was followed by lysergide (n=38), Bromodimethoxyphenethylamine (2C-B, 24) and DMT (n=18).

Figure T2.1.7 Trends in the number of seizures of hallucinogens, 2012–2021 ⁸



Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2012–2022)

Note: *indicated can mean not controlled in Ireland at time of analysis, or a small amount of material present.

NPS: Table T2.1.3 shows trends for NPS that are available on the Irish market. In 2021, 573 NPS were analysed by FSI. This figure was 78% higher than the number analysed in 2020 (N=322). The most prominent NPS in 2021 was MDMB-4en-PINACA (n=36), followed by ADB-BUTINACA (n=32). Several products seized in this category were labelled ‘indicated’: etizolam (n=207), flubromazolam (n=45), adinazolam (n=42). In this context FSI defines indicated as meaning not controlled in Ireland at time of analysis, or a small amount of material present.

Table T2.1.3 Seizures of NPS in Ireland, 2012–2021 ²⁰

NPS Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Overall Total	17	39	79	42	50	41	64	388	322	573
2-Fluorodeschloroketamine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
AMB-FUBINACA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AMB-FUBINACA indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Methoxetamine (MXE)	-	-	6	10	3	1	-	2	-	-
3F-MDMB-PINACA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
4F-MDMB-BINACA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	8

NPS Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
4F-MDMB-BINACA indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
4F-MDMB-BUTICA indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
5F-ADB (5F-MDMB-PINACA)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	4	-
5F-AKB48	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
5F-EMB-PINACA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
5F-MDMB-PICA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	6	13
5F-MDMB-PICA indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
4F-MDMB-BUTICA indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
5F-ADBICA indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
5F-EDMB-PICA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
5F-EDMB-PICA indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
ADB-BUTINACA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32
ADB-BUTINACA, no controlled drug detected	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
MDMB-4en-PINACA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36
MDMB-4en-PINACA indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
AB-PINACA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
AB-PINACA indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
ADB-FUBINACA indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
AMB-FUBINACA	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
CI-2201	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
CUMYL-5F-P7AICA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	-
JWH-018	-	4	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
JWH-019	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
JWH-073	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MDMB CHMICA	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
NM-2201	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
STS-135	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3',4'-Methylenedioxy- α -pyrrolidinobutyrophenone (MDPBP)	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4-Methylethcathinone or 4-MEC	-	-	23	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bupropion indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Chlorethcathinone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Chlorethcathinone Trace	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Chloro-N,N-dimethylcathinone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Chloromethcathinone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	15
Clephedrone	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	10	5	9
Ethylhexedrone	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	17	8	8
Ethylone (3,4-methylenedioxy-N-ethylcathinone; MDEC)	-	-	6	4	-	-	1	4	-	1
Ethylpentylone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Eutylone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	7	6
Fluoro-methyl-PVP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Methedrone	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Methomethcathinone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	-
Methylethcathinone (MEC)	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	1	-
Methylone (3,4-methylenedioxy-N-methylcathinone, MDMC)	-	12	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
N-ethylpentedrone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Pyrrolidinohexiophenone (PHP)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
AMT	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Methoxy-DBT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
U-51754 indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Adinazolam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	43	6
Adinazolam indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42
Adinazolam and amantadine indicated	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Adinazolam, melatonin and adinazolam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Adinazolam, melatonin and amantadine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Bromazolam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Bromazolam indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
Bromazolam indicated, Alprazolam (trace)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Clonazepam	15	16	13	12	6	10	4	15	23	10

NPS Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Desalkylflurazepam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Deschloroetizolam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Deschloroetizolam indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Diclazepam	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	51	31	-
Diclazepam indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17
Diclazepam and Etizolam indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Etizolam	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	221	146	4
Etizolam indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	207
Etizolam and Cocaine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Flubromazepam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Flubromazolam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	6
Flubromazolam indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45
Meclonazepam indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Phenazepam	-	-	13	12	34	28	20	14	3	4
Phenazepam indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
25C-NBOMe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
Dimethoxychloramphetamine	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Flephedrone (4-Fluoramphetamine)	1	6	3	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Iododimethoxyphenethylamine (2C-I)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Isopropylphenidate/propylphenidate indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
N-Ethylpentylone	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	12	3	1
Phenethylamine (not named)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
4-anilino-1-Boc-piperidine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
BOC-4-ANP/4-anilinopiperidine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Ethylphenidate	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
MBZP (1-benzyl-4-methylpiperazine)	-	-	1	1	0	0	-	-	-	-
mCPP (1-(3-chlorophenyl))	-	-	4	3	5	2	-	2	-	-
Harmine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Harmine/Harmaline	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Nicotine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-
Nicotine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Plant material unknown	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Dextromethorphan indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Dihydrofuran-2(3H)-one (GBL)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4

Note.: = no data available

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2012–2022)

Medicinal products: Table T2.1.4 shows a breakdown of medicinal products seized between 2012 and 2021. The number of medicinal products analysed by the FSI in 2021 (N=555), this was nearly 14% lower than 2020 (N=555).

The main drug seized in this category in 2021 was benzocaine (n=26), which was significantly lower than 2020 (n=225). The most prominent substances after benzocaine included lignocaine (n=11). Similar to the NPS category several products were categorised with ‘indicated’ (n=52), such as: benzocaine (n=179), pregabalin indicated (n=52), creatine/creatinine indicated (n=43), Sildenafil indicated (n=27), paracetamol indicated (n=24), Quetiapine indicated (n=22), amitriptyline indicated (n=16), aspirin indicated (n=14), mirtazapine (n=12) and methandrostrenolone indicated (n=10).

Table T2.1.4 Seizures of medicinal products in Ireland, 2012–2021 ²¹

Medicinal Products	Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Overall Total		8	54	90	56	78	45	109	714	644	555

Medicinal Products	Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Acne and hair growth	RU-58841	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Anti-aging	Squalene	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Antiflatulent	Simeticone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Antifungal	Fluconazole	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Antiparkinsonian	Amantadine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Procyclidine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Antipsychotic	Paliperidone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Bipolar	Valproic Acid	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
	Valproic Acid Indicted	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Bladder conditions	Oxybutynin Chloride	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Blood thinners	Apixaban	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Clopidogrel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Rivaroxaban	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Cholesterol	Atorvastatin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Pravastatin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Simvastatin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Gout (Joint Pain)	Febuxostat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Hair loss men/hair growth women	Finasteride	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Herpes infections	Aciclovir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Traumatic brain Injury	N-Phenylacetylprolylglycine ethylester	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
ADHD	Atomoxetine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Alcoholism	Disulfiram indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Androgenic-anabolic steroids	Mesterolone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	6
	Methandienone indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	6
	Methandienone/Metandienone	-	9	7	3	-	-	2	18	2	-
	Methandrostenolone	-	-	6	2	4	-	-	11	10	-
	Methandrostenolone indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	10
	Methyltestosterone	-	11	2	2	-	-	-	10	4	-
Steroid	Methyltestosterone indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Oxandrolone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	4	-
	Oxandrolone indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	7
	Oxymetholone	-	-	7	2	7	-	-	12	8	-
	Oxymetholone indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	6
	Stanozolol	-	5	8	2	2	2	-	11	7	-
	Stanozolol indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	4
	Trenbolone indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Anaesthetic/Pain-relief medications	Aspirin	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	6	16	-
	Aspirin indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
	Benzocaine	-	-	18	18	28	36	13	207	225	26
	Benzocaine (cocaine)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	1
	Benzocaine (Lignocaine)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Benzocaine and cocaine (Trace)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
	Benzocaine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	-	179
	Benzocaine indicated, creatine /	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Ephedrine (prevents low blood pressure during spinal anaesthesia)	8	3	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	-
	Ephedrine/pseudoephedrine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Ephenidine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-

Medicinal Products	Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	Hydromorphone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Ibuprofen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	8	-
	Ibuprofen Indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
	Lignocaine	-	-	9	12	2	1	-	11	9	11
	Lignocaine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	5
	Mefanamic acid	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	-
	Midazolam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Naproxen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
	Naproxen indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Paracetamol	-	-	5	1	25	3	3	46	35	-
	Paracetamol indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	-	24
	Paracetamol/tramadol indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
	Phenacetin	-	5	5	4	2	1	2	5	10	-
	Phenacetin indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	2
	Procaine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-
	Procaine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Antibiotics	Doxycycline	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Flucloxacillin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
	Metronidazole	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Tetracycline	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Trimethoprim	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Antidepressant medications	Agomelatine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
	Amitriptyline	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	9	17	-
	Amitriptyline indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	16
	Buspirone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Citalopram	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-
	Citalopram indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Clomethiazole indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
	Doxepin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	2	-
	Escitalopram	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
	Fluxetine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-
	Fluoxetine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
	Lisdexamphetamine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
	Mesembrine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
	Mirtazapine	-	-	5	1	-	-	-	14	19	-
	Mirtazapine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	12
	Nortriptyline	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Paroxetine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Pregabalin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	41	32	-
	Pregabalin indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	52
	Prochlorperazine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Prochlorperazine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
	Quetiapine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	12	-
	Quetiapine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	22
	Sertraline	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	-
	Sertraline indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	6
	Trazodone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
	Venlafaxine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	-
	Venlafaxine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Anti-inflammatory	Celecoxib	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Diclofenac	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
	Diclofenac indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
	Ketoprofen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Nimesulide	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Antihistamine	Bisoprolol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Bisoprolol indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2

Medicinal Products	Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	Camphor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Camphor Indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
	Cetirizine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Cetirizine Indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
	Chlorphenamine	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	-
	Chlorpheniramine	-	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Chlorpheniramine and clozapine indicated.	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
	Chlorpheniramine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Chlorpromazine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Chlorpromazine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
	Cyclizine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
	Cyproheptadine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Dimethyl sulfone	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
	Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
	Doxylamine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
	Doxylamine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Etodroxizine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Levocetirizine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
	Loratadine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Triprolidine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Triprolidine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Antinausea	Domperidone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
	Piperine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Promethazine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-
	Promethazine Indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Antivertigo/tinnitus/hearing loss	Betahistine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Arthritis	Etoricoxib	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Asthma/Weight loss	Clenbuterol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-
	Clenbuterol indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Sibutramine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Beta Blocker	Propranolol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
	Propranolol indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Blood Pressure	Clonidine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Furosemide	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Lercanidipine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Losartan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Quinapril	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Ramipril	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1
	Ramipril indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Breast cancer	Tamoxifen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-
Breathing	Tapentadol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Chest Infection	Erythromycin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Cholesterol	Atorvastatin (Lipitor) indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Constipation	Bisacodyl	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Hyoscine Butylbromide	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Sorbitol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Coronavirus	Hydroxychloroquine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Corticosteroids	Hydrocortisone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Prednisolone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
	Prednisolone indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Cough Suppressant	Dextromethorphan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Decongestant	Pseudoephedrine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Diuretic	Mannitol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Epilepsy/Seizures	Carbamazepine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Gabapentin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	-

Medicinal Products	Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	Gabapentin Indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
	Lamotrigine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
	Levetiracetam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-
	Levetiracetam indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Primidone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Topiramate	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
	Zonisamide	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Erectile dysfunction medicines	Sildenafil (Viagra)	-	19	14	9	8	2	1	36	23	-
	Sildenafil (Viagra) indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	27
	Tadalafil	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	5	-
	Tadalafil Indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
	Testosterone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-
	Yohimbine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Eyes	Tetracaine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Heart	Amiodarone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Infertility	Clomiphene	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Lupus/kidneys/Rheumatoid arthritis	Mycophenolate mofetil indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Muscles	Baclofen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
	Baclofen indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
	Carisoprodol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Cyclobenzaprine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Drotaverini	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Tizanidine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
	Ligandrol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Obesity/Flavouring	4-(4-hydroxyphenyl)-2-butanone	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Performance	Creatine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-
	Creatine/Creatinine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	85	92	-
	Creatine/Creatinine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	43
	Creatinine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	1
Schizophrenia	Glycine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Olanzapine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	13	-
	Olanzapine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Skin care	dimethylaminoethanol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Salicylic Acid	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Sleep disorders	Armodafinil	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
	Melatonin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-
	Melatonin indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
	Modafinil	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Stomach	Amoxicillin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-
Stomach	Esomeprazole	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Esomeprazole indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Lansoprazole	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Mefenamic acid indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Omeprazole	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
	Omeprazole indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Throat	Menthol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Travel sickness	Scopolamine indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Veterinary	ACP mix	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-
	Mebendazole	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Menadione	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Vitamins/Supplements	Ascorbic Acid	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	Daidzein	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
	DL-Phenylalanine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
	Inositol	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

Medicinal Products	Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	Niacinamide (Vitamin B3)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
	Vitamin E	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
	Vitamin E indicated	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2012–2022)

Other substances

As shown in Table T2.1.5, FSI analysed 44 seizures in this category in 2021, of which 14 were caffeine seizures and one was levamisole. 27 seizures were classified as ‘indicated’ and two seizures caffeine traces were identified. In addition, caffeine was identified along with 15 other substances (see Table 2.1.6).

Table T2.1.5 Seizures of other substances in Ireland, 2014–2021 ²²

Other substances	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total other substances	8	24	39	15	7	79	68	44
Levamisole						1	5	1
Caffeine	8	24	39	15	5	78	63	14
Caffeine Traces								2
Caffeine indicated					2			27

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2012–2022)

Table T2.1.6 Total analyses where caffeine was indicated, or trace amounts found 2018–2021 ²³

Other substances (2)	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total analyses where caffeine was indicated, or trace amounts found	16	53	48	15
Aspirin/Caffeine		7	6	
Benzocaine / Caffeine			5	
Benzocaine/Caffeine Indicated				1
Benzocaine/Caffeine/Phenacetin		2		
Benzocaine, caffeine and lignocaine	1			
Caffeine (Formylamphetamine)		1		
Caffeine /Phenacetin			1	
Caffeine/Cocaine indicated	1			
Caffeine/Cocaine Trace		1		
Caffeine/Lignocaine		16	11	2
Caffeine/Lignocaine indicated	5			1
Caffeine/Lignocaine (Cocaine) Trace		2		4
Caffeine/Lignocaine/Tripolidine		1		
Caffeine/Paracetamol		23		
Caffeine/paracetamol indicated	9		25	7

Source: (personal communication, FSI, 2012–2022)

Preservatives: No preservatives were analysed by FSI in 2021

T2.2 Explanations of long-term trends and short-term trends in any other drug market data

No new information

T2.3 Short/long term trends in drug law offences data

Garda-recorded incidents of drug offences

Crime data, which are collated on the Police Using Leading Systems Effectively (PULSE) system by AGS, are provided to the CSO for analysis. An incident may consist of more than one criminal offence, and a primary offence or detection may refer to one offence within an incident. Sometimes, a charged offence may be different from the offence originally identified in the incident. Nevertheless, incidents are a useful indicator of the level of types of criminal activities (Central Statistics Office 2014).

In September 2017, due to issues with the quality of data received from PULSE, crime statistics were suspended by the CSO. In 2018, the CSO announced that publication of crime statistics would resume; however, as the quality of PULSE data was still under review, they would be published in a new category: 'under reservation' (Central Statistics Office 2018). While there has been improvement to crime statistics, the 'under reservation' category continues to remain in place (Central Statistics Office (2022). Review of the Quality of Recorded Crime Statistics 2020. Central Statistics Office, Cork. 2022) Essentially, what this means is that the crime statistics are of sufficient quality to allow publication; however, due to the ongoing issues with PULSE data, the quality does not meet the higher standard required of official statistics by the CSO (Central Statistics Office 2018). Therefore, the figures that are provided here may not be the same as those in previous years' reports and are likely to change in the future, as quality issues are resolved. What follows are the available statistics for recorded incidents of drug offences and court proceedings, as entered in the PULSE system by gardaí.

As Figure T2.3.1 shows, following a decline between 2008 and 2013, the total number of controlled drug offences recorded increased in 2014 (by 3%). Although a decline of 5% (from 15,859 to 15,048 offences) was recorded between 2014 and 2015, between 2016 and 2019 the number of drug offences recorded has increased annually, by 6% in 2016, 5% in 2017, 9% in 2018, 17% in 2019 and 9% in 2020. Between 2020 and 2021, a 13% decrease was evident (Central Statistics Office (2022). Statistics: Crime and Justice. 2022)

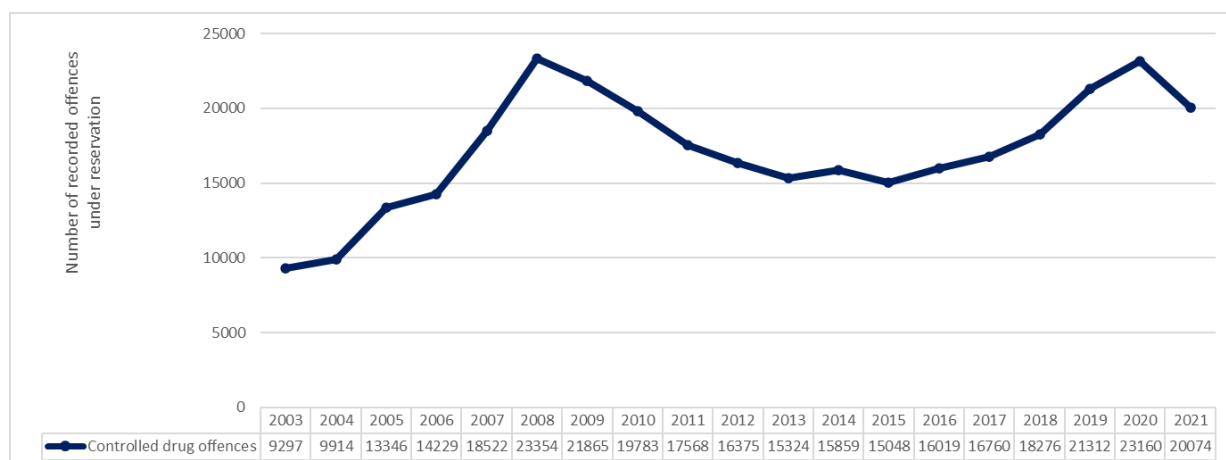


Figure T2.3.1 Recorded total number of controlled drug offences under reservation between 2003 and 2021 ⁹

Source: (Central Statistics Office (2022). Statistics: Crime and Justice. 2022)



Figure T2.3.2 Map showing An Garda Síochána administration boundary after 2019 restructuring ¹⁰

This section provides a breakdown of recorded incidents by region (see Figure T2.3.2). Figure T2.3.3 shows a breakdown of importation of drugs offences by region and year. It clearly illustrates that the highest number of controlled drug offences was recorded in the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) and the lowest number was recorded in the North Western Region. Between 2020 and 2021, the number of offences recorded decreased across all regions. The highest decrease was reported in the DMR (22%), followed by the North Western Region (15%), the Eastern Region (6%) and the Southern Region (3%).

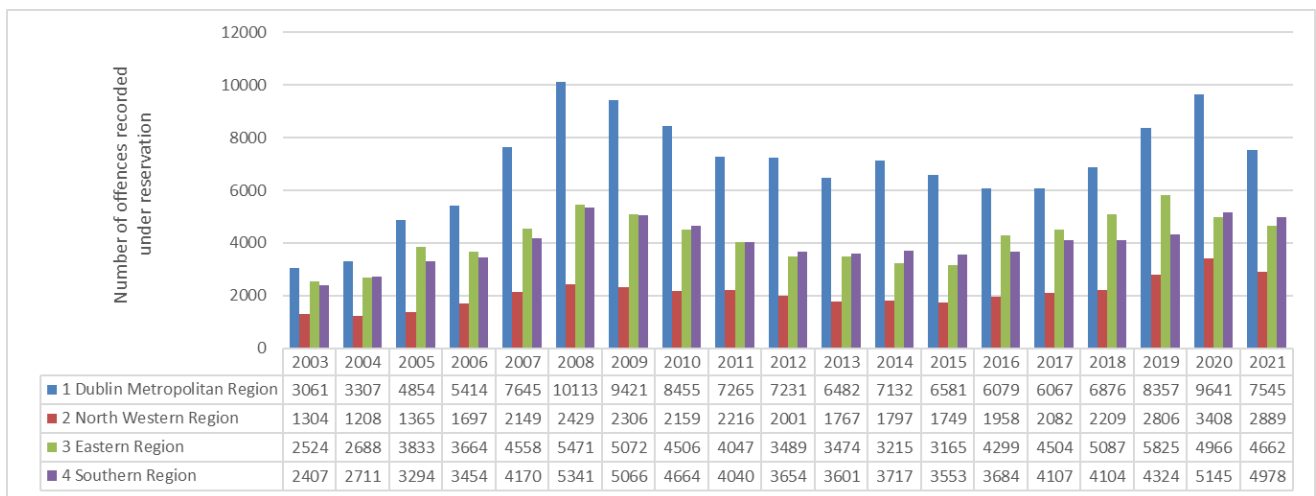


Figure T2.3.3 Recorded incidents of controlled drug offences, categorised by region, 2003–2021 ¹¹

Source: (Central Statistics Office (2022). Statistics: Crime and Justice. 2022)

Supply: Recorded incidents

Figure T2.3.4 shows the number of controlled drug offences by importation, and by cultivation or manufacture of drugs, recorded under reservation between 2003 and 2021.

Importation of drugs

Essentially, from 2003 to 2021, an increase/decrease trend has been evident for recorded importation of drugs incidents. Increases were seen between 2005 and 2008 (86%), 2010 and 2011 (38%), 2012 and 2013 (47%), 2015 and 2016 (47%) and 2018 and 2019 (87%). Incidents recorded in 2019 were nearly double the number recorded in 2018. Decreases were seen between 2008 and 2010 (57%), 2011 and 2012 (25%), 2013 and 2015 (57%), 2016 and 2017 (25%), 2017 and 2018 (29%) and 2019 and 2020 (25%). Between 2020 and 2021 there were only two importation of drugs incidents recorded (N=2).

Cultivation or manufacture of drugs

As shown in Figure T2.3.4, recorded incidents of the cultivation or manufacture of drugs increased steadily after 2004 and peaked in 2011. Alarmingly, between 2006 and 2010, the number of offences recorded increased nearly six-fold. A 9% increase was shown between 2010 and 2011. Between 2011 and 2015, there was a steady decline in the number of such incidents reported; 2015 figures were nearly 60% lower than 2011 figures. Although an increase was shown between 2015 and 2016 (9%), the number of recorded offences declined annually between 2016 and 2019; a decline of 5% was evident between 2016 and 2017, and a larger decline was evident between 2017 and 2018 (19%). The decreasing trajectory continued in 2019 with a 4% decrease from 2018 (see Figure T2.3.4). Between 2019 and 2020, the number of offences recorded for cultivation and manufacture of drug offences doubled. However a 35% decrease was evident between 2020 and 2021.

Windle (2017) argued that changes in trends between 2010 and 2012 could be explained by: a) emigration, due to higher levels of young people who consume drugs leaving Ireland during the recession; or b) adaptation, where dealers and consumers adapted to having less income by growing their own product, which resulted in the decline in drug importation (Windle 2017). Further information on this study can be found in Section T4.1 of this workbook. In addition, trends have also been impacted by operations by Irish law enforcement agencies that have specifically targeted drug crimes in recent years.

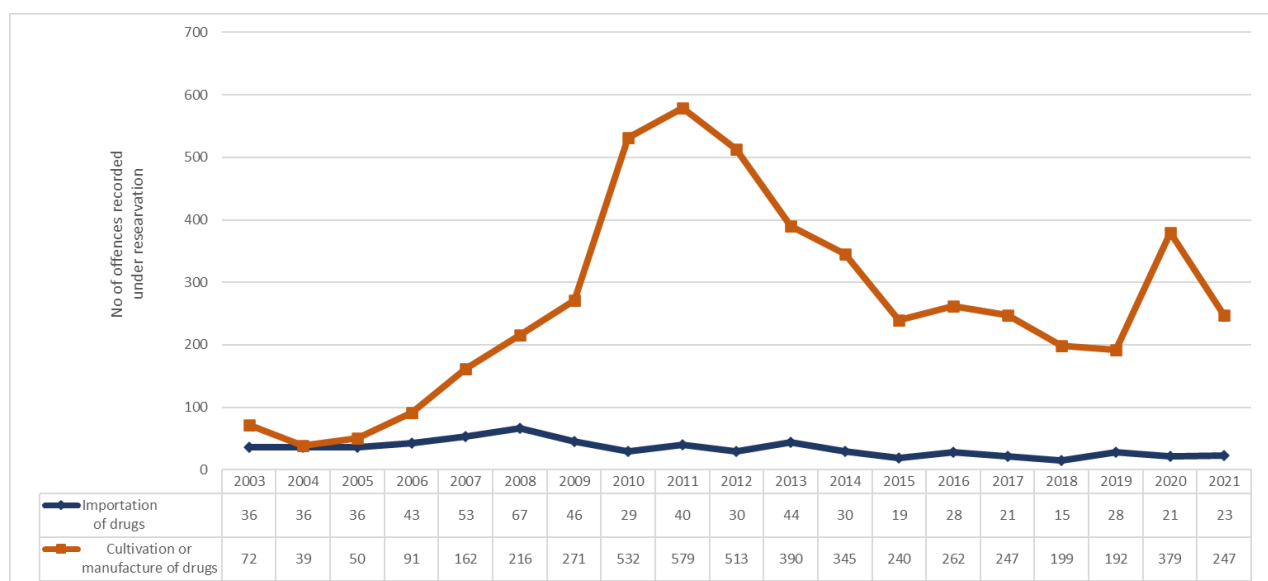


Figure T2.3.4 Recorded incidents of controlled drug offences categorised by importation of drugs, and by cultivation or manufacture of drugs, 2003–2021 ¹²

Source: (Central Statistics Office (2022). Statistics: Crime and Justice. 2022)

Supply: Recorded incidents by region

This section provides a breakdown of recorded incidents by region. Figure T2.3.5 shows a breakdown of importation of drugs offences by region and year between 2003 and 2020. It clearly illustrates that the highest number of importation of drugs offences was recorded in the DMR. While the number of incidents recorded between 2016 and 2018 decreased annually, this trend changed in 2019, where incidents recorded (n=20) was more than double the number recorded in 2018 (n=9). Between 2019 and 2020 a slight decrease was shown (N=3). This decrease continued in DMR in 2021 (47%).

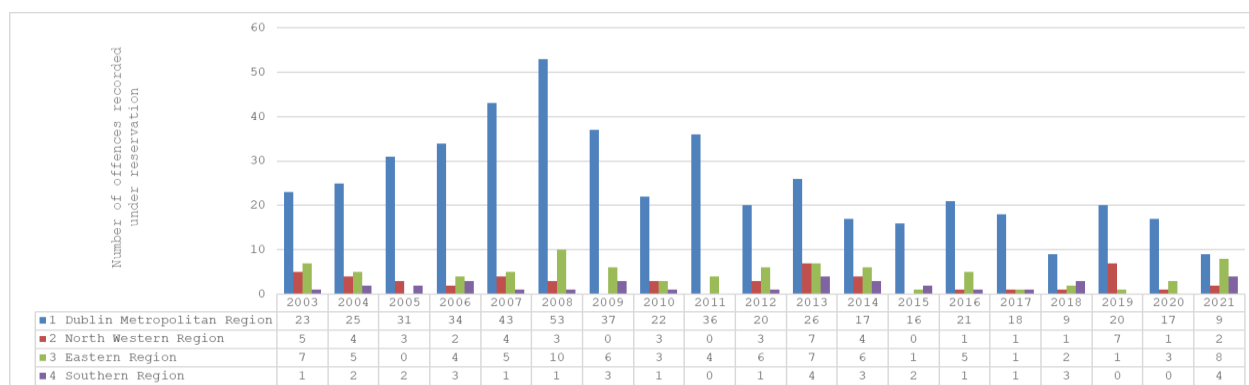


Figure T2.3.5 Recorded incidents of importation of drugs offences, categorised by region, 2003–2021 ¹³

Source: (Central Statistics Office (2022). Statistics: Crime and Justice. 2022)

Figure T2.3.6 presents the frequency of recorded incidents of cultivation or manufacture of drugs offences by region from 2003 to 2021. Overall, decreases were reported in all Regions in 2021. The Southern Region reported the highest number of incidents and the DMR reported the lowest number of incidents.

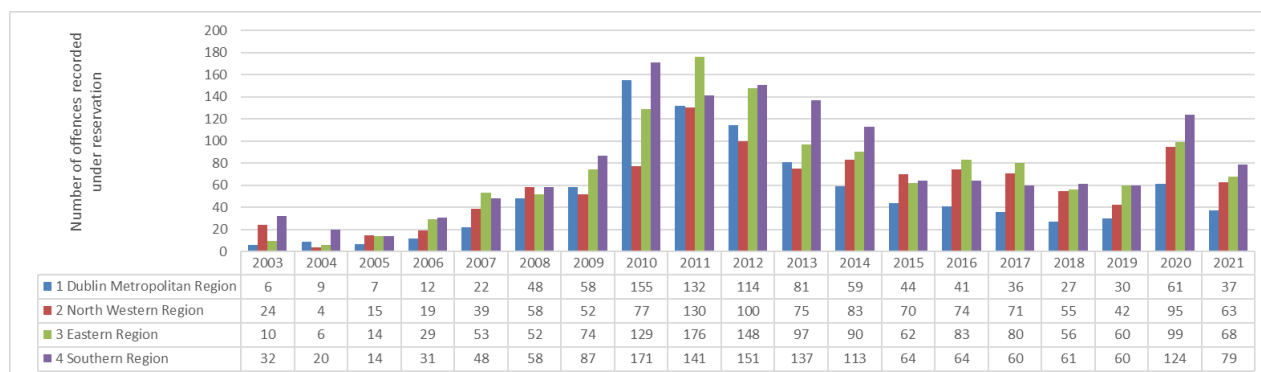


Figure T2.3.6 Recorded incidents of cultivation or manufacture of drugs offences, categorised by region, 2015–2020 ¹⁴

Source: (Central Statistics Office (2022). Statistics: Crime and Justice. 2022)

Possession of drugs for sale or personal use: Recorded incidents

Figure T2.3.7 shows the number of recorded incidents under reservation for possession of drugs for sale or supply and for personal use.

Possession of drugs for sale or supply

The number of recorded offences of possession of drugs for sale or supply nearly doubled between 2004 (N=2 183) and 2008 (N=4 265). A steady decline was seen overall between 2008 and 2013, except from 2009 to 2010, which showed a 3% increase. Since 2013, the number of incidents recorded increased by 10% in 2014, followed by a 5% decrease in 2015. An increase in incidents of possession of drugs for sale or supply was shown annually from 2015 to 2016 (8%), 2016 to 2017 (6%), 2017 to 2018 (8%), 2018 to 2019 (16%) and 2019 to 2020 (26%). Between 2020 and 2021 the number of incidents of possession of drugs for sale or supply decreased (16%).

Possession of drugs for personal use

The number of incidents recorded of possession of drugs for personal use peaked in 2008 (N=18,075). This figure was nearly three times higher than that recorded in 2003 (N=6 505). A decreasing trend was seen between 2008 and 2013. Since 2013, incidents recorded for possession of drugs for personal use increased in 2014 (1%, 85 more incidents) before decreasing again in 2015 (3%, 317 fewer incidents). Between 2016 and 2019, reported incidents have increased annually, by 4% in 2016, 7% in 2017, 10% in 2018, 17% in 2019 and 1% in 2020 (see Figure T2.3.7). Between 2020 and 2021 the number of incidents recorded decreased by 12%.

A possible explanation for the recent annual increases in the number of drug offences recorded is that both supply and possession of drugs have increasingly been the target of focused operations by gardaí and other agencies in recent years.

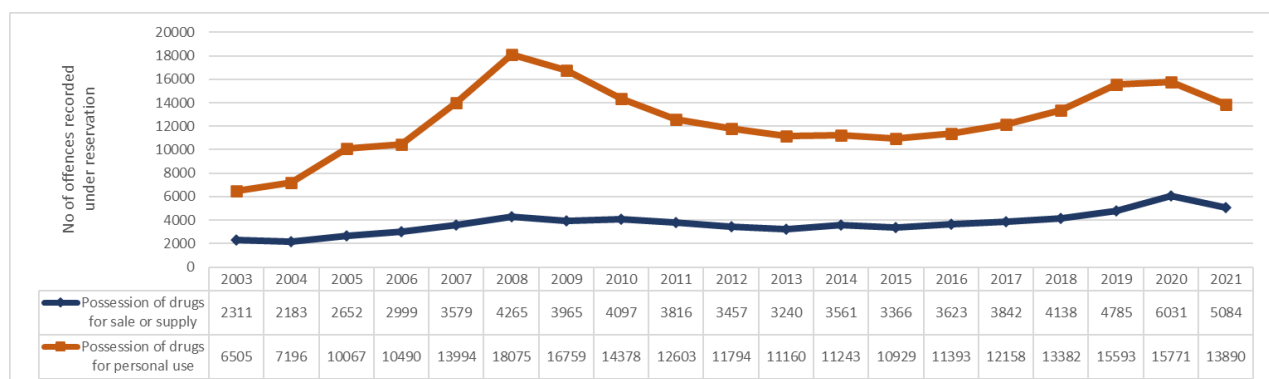


Figure T2.3.7 Recorded incidents of controlled drug offences, categorised by possession for sale or supply or by possession for personal use, 2003–2021 ¹⁵

Source: (Central Statistics Office (2022). Statistics: Crime and Justice. 2022)

Possession of drugs for sale or for personal use: Recorded incidents by region

As shown in Figure T2.3.8, between 2003 and 2021 most recorded incidents for possession of drugs for sale or supply occurred in the DMR. Between 2020 and 2021, all regions experienced decreases in incidents recorded; the largest increase was in the North Western Region (14%), followed by the Southern Region (10%), the DMR (22%) and Eastern Region (7%).

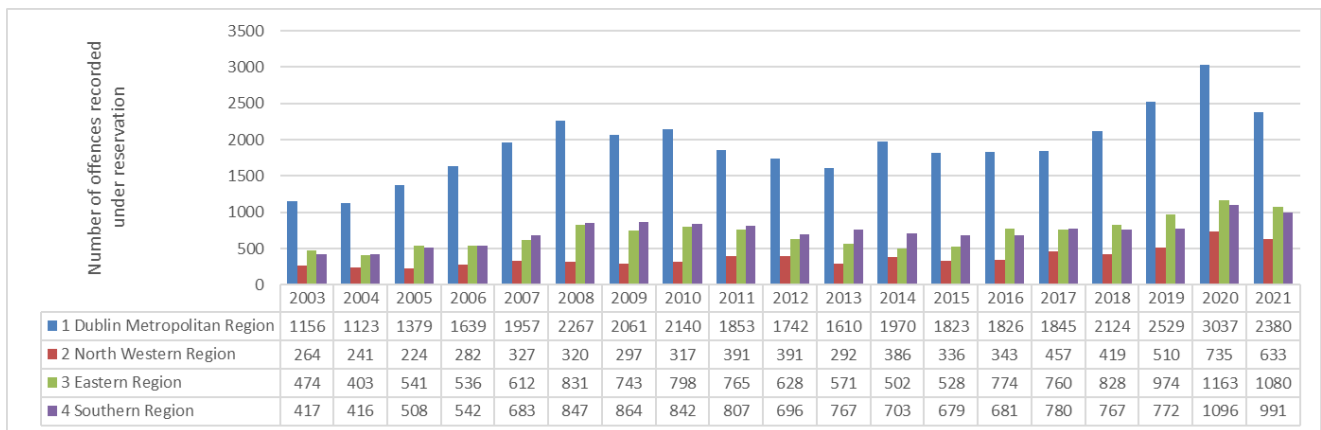


Figure T2.3.8 Recorded incidents of possession of drugs for sale or supply offences, categorised by region, 2003-2021 ¹⁶

Source: (Central Statistics Office (2022). Statistics: Crime and Justice. 2022)

Similar to Figure T2.3.8, Figure T2.3.9 also indicates that the highest number of recorded incidents of possession of drugs for personal use occurred in the DMR. Only the Southern Region experienced a slight increase in the number of incidents recorded between 2020 and 2021 (<1%); decreases were reported in the DMR (22%) followed by the North Western Region (15%), and the Eastern Region (6%). The number of recorded incidents of possession of drugs was lowest in the North Western Region in 2021.

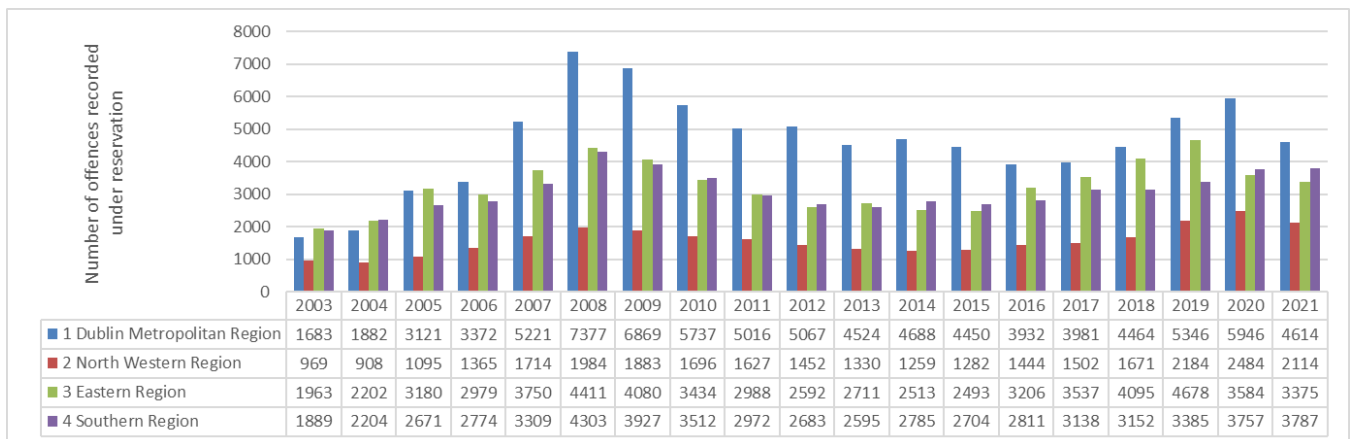


Figure T2.3.9 Recorded incidents of possession of drugs for personal use offences, categorised by region, 2015-2021 ¹⁷

Source: (Central Statistics Office (2022). Statistics: Crime and Justice. 2022)

Defence Forces

As stated in Section T1.1.4 of the *Legal framework workbook*, compulsory random drug testing (CRDT) and targeted drug testing have existed for Defence Forces personnel (the Army, the Air Corps, the Naval Service, and the Reserve) since 2002 and 2009, respectively. Table T2.3.1 shows the total number of personnel who were tested between 2009 and 2021 (Kehoe 2017; Department of Defence 2020; Department of Defence and Defence Forces 2021). Table T2.3.2 shows a breakdown by organisation between 2015 and 2021 (Department of Defence 2017; Department of Defence 2018; Department of Defence 2019; Department of Defence 2020; Department of Defence and Defence Forces 2021; Ireland. Department of Defence and Defence Forces 2022). In 2021, CRDT operations were still constrained due to Covid-19 national restrictions,

nonetheless, the Defence Force drug testing team carried out 388 random drug tests in different locations (N=14), of which, 4 were positive representing 1.8% of those tested.

At the start of 2021, one Defence Force personnel was in the targeted drug testing programme, and two more joined the programme through the year. Overall, 5 targeted tests were carried out during the testing period. Of these personnel, one finished the process and remained in service. In December 2021, two personnel remained in the targeted drugs testing process (Ireland. Department of Defence and Defence Forces 2022). If an individual fails a CRDT in accordance with the Defence Forces admin instruction, there are three options to conclude the case:

- discharge for enlisted ranks, retirement for both officers/cadets or
- retention in Service, or
- defer decision, allowing the individual to be retained in service, conditional on participation in a targeted drugs testing process for a specified period (Ireland. Department of Defence and Defence Forces 2022).

Table T2.3.1 Details of compulsory random drug tests, 2009–2021 ²⁴

Year	Total tested	Negative tests	Positive tests
2009	1719	-	6
2010	1586	-	7
2011	1362	-	6
2012	2058	-	16
2013	1054	1041	13
2014	1092	1087	5
2015	1184	1167	17
2016	1204	1192	12
2017	1187	1172	15
2018	1101	1082	19
2019	1054	1037	16
2020	778	767	11
2021	388	381	7

Source: Department of Defence, 2020; 2021, 2022

Table T2.3.2 Details of compulsory random drug tests completed, by organisation, 2015–2021 ²⁵

	2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
Brigade/ formation	Number tested	Positive tests*	Number tested	Positive tests	Number tested	Positive tests	Number tested	Positive tests	Number tested	Positive tests	Number tested	Positive tests	Number tested	Positive Tests
1 Brigade	553	-	453	5	433	1	530	8	202	1	129	3	0	0
2 Brigade	220	-	376	2	357	4	310	1	501	6	500	6	125	2
Defence Forces Training Centre	54	-	242	4	146	3	111	2	35	1	0	0	210	3
Air Corps	230	-	47	1	87	1	70	2	158	3	99	2	32	2
Naval Service	76	-	86	0	164	6	80	6	158	5	8	0	1	0
DFHQ									54	0	42	0	20	0

	2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
Total	1133	-	1204	12	1187	15	1101	19**	1108	16	778	11**	388	7**

Source: Department of Defence, 2017 – 2022

* Data for positive tests by location were not provided in 2015.

** Includes two positives in 2018, 2020 and 2021; in 2018 and 2020 under heading “Failure to Report”, and in 2021 under heading “Failed to Provide a Sample”.

T2.4 Other drug offences

Other drug offences

The category ‘possession/supply drug offences, drug-related crime’ also has a classification for other drug offences, which includes forged or altered prescription/obstruction offences.

Forged or altered prescription/obstruction offences under the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977–2017

Following a peak in 2009 (N=824), the number of other drug offences recorded decreased annually until 2011. Between 2011 and 2012, the number of incidents recorded increased by 10%. Offences recorded declined between 2012 and 2013 by nearly 16%, before increasing by 39% between 2013 and 2014. Although a substantial decrease (27%) was shown in this category between 2014 and 2015, crimes recorded increased by 44% from 494 in 2015 to 713 in 2016. While incidents recorded in this category decreased in 2017 (31%), since then the number of incidents recorded has increased annually, by 10% from 2017 to 2018, by 32% from 2018 to 2019 and by 34% from 2019 to 2020. Between 2020 and 2021 a decrease of 21% was shown (see Figure T2.4.1).

Driving under the influence of drugs

Driving under the influence of drugs has been a statutory offence in Ireland since the enactment of the Road Traffic Act, 1961. The number of offences of driving under the influence of drugs peaked in 2009 (N=873). A decreasing trend for this offence was evident between 2009 (N=873) and 2016 (N=217). Since 2016, the number of offences recorded has increased annually, by 29% between 2016 and 2017 and by 88% between 2017 and 2018. In 2019, the number of incidents recorded was nearly two-and-a-half times higher than the number recorded in 2018 (see Figure T2.4.1) (Central Statistics Office (2022). Statistics: Crime and Justice. 2022). This increase was not surprising; due to provisions in the Road Traffic Act 2016, preliminary roadside drug testing by AGS commenced in Ireland in April 2017. The number of incidents recorded in 2020 (N=2639) was over double that reported in 2019 (N=1265). Between 2020 and 2021 drug driving incidents decreased by 6%.

Further information on the Road Traffic Act 2016 can be found in Section T3.1 of the *Legal framework workbook*.

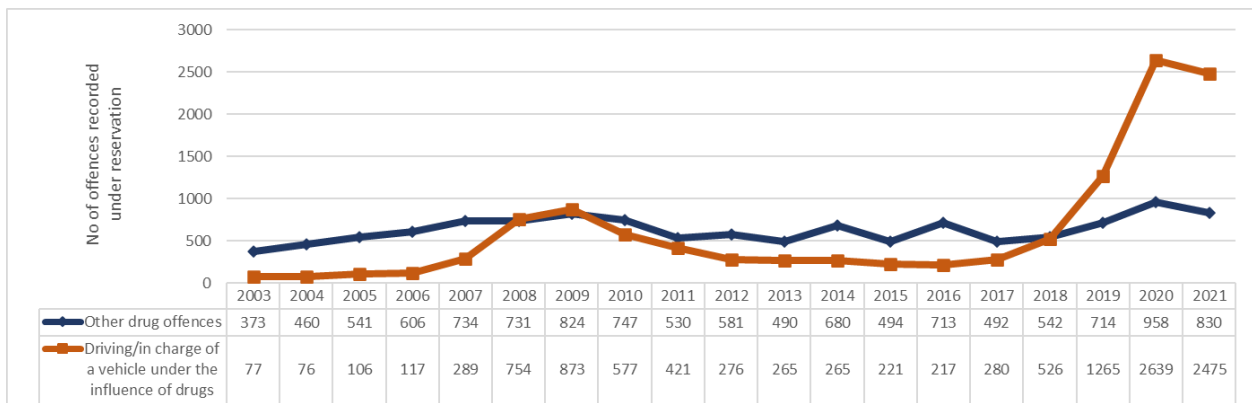


Figure T2.4.1 Recorded incidents of other drug offences and driving under the influence of drugs under reservation, 2003–2021 ¹⁸

Note: Other drug offences include forged or altered prescription offences and obstruction under the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977–2017.
Source: (Central Statistics Office (2022). Statistics: Crime and Justice. 2022)

By region

Figure T2.4.2 presents the frequency of recorded incidents for driving or being in charge of a vehicle while under the influence of drugs by region between 2003 and 2021. Between 2015 and 2020, the frequency of incidents reported increased annually. However between 2020 and 2021 only the Eastern Region showed an increase (12%). All other regions showed a decrease in recorded incidents, the highest decrease was in the Southern Region (30%) followed by the North Western Region (17%) and finally the DMR (13%). As stated above, a possible explanation for the recent annual increases up to 2020, is that in April 2017, a new measure to address this offence was introduced: roadside drug testing. Gardaí have been given power to carry out Preliminary Drug Testing (PDT) using the Dräger Drug Test 5000 device (and, more recently, the Dräger Alcotest 7510) on motorists who are thought to be driving under the influence of drugs (Sheehan 2019). The device tests the driver’s oral fluid (saliva) for the presence of cannabis, cocaine, opioids (such as heroin or morphine) and benzodiazepines (such as valium).

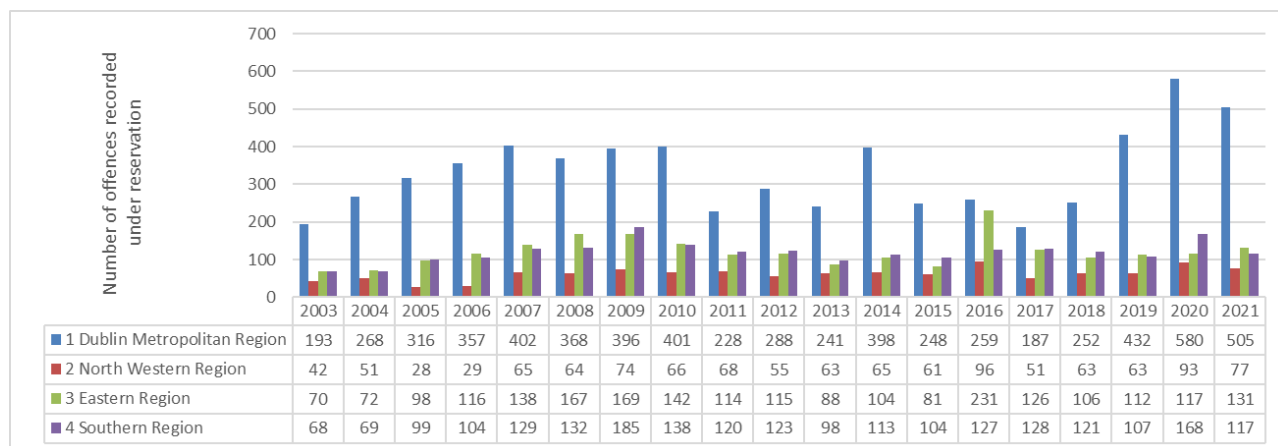


Figure T2.4.2 Recorded incidents of driving/being in charge of a vehicle while under the influence of drugs, categorised by region, 2003–2021 ¹⁹

Source: (Central Statistics Office (2022). Statistics: Crime and Justice. 2022)

Roadside drug testing

Drug driving is still an issue in Ireland; however, no new data is currently available.

T2.5 Notable trends or important developments in the organisation, coordination, and implementation of drug supply reduction activities over the past 5 years

See Section T1.3.1 for an overview of recent developments in the organisation and coordination of supply reduction activities.

T3. New developments

T3.1 New or topical developments observed in the drug market in Ireland since 2015

Please see Section T3.1 of the *Drug policy workbook*, which provides an outline of recent developments that will likely have an impact on the Irish drug market in the future. Areas discussed include:

- National drugs strategy: Midterm review and new strategic priorities
- Joint Committee on Health and the national drugs strategy
- Adult Caution Scheme and cannabis
- Legislation against the coercion and use of minors in the sale and supply of drugs (an update)
- Health Diversion approach to possession of drugs for personal use (an update)
- Implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018 (an update)
- Establishment of a pilot supervised injecting facility (an update)

T3.2 Describe any other important aspect of drug market and crime that has not been covered in the specific questions above (optional)

No new information

T4. Additional information

T4.1 Specific studies

Exploring serious and organised crime across Ireland and the UK

In March 2021, the Azure Forum for Contemporary Security Strategy, with the support of the British Embassy in Dublin, launched a report examining serious and organised crime in Ireland and the United Kingdom (UK) (Chance 2022). The aim of this report was to conduct a qualitative assessment of information that was publicly available about serious and organised crime to determine how criminality occurs across and between Ireland and the UK. The report considers methods and activities that make up serious and organised crime along with the wider criminal markets where criminal behaviour takes place. It focuses on three issues: human trafficking, drug trafficking, and economic crime.

Methodology

Over 300 documents from a range of sources, such as journals, book chapters, speeches, presentations, expert blogs, and researcher blogs were identified in the literature review. Additionally, reports published by government departments, law enforcement agencies, and advisory bodies were included along with reports published by charities, non-governmental organisations, and think tanks. Due to the transnational nature of criminality in the UK and Ireland, the author also drew on European and international literature related to serious and organised crime. In order to get further insight into serious and organised crime in these jurisdictions, semi-structured interviews were carried out with law enforcement practitioners (n=15) from An Garda Síochána (AGS) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

Key findings

Cross-cutting criminal enablers

Four ‘cross-cutting’ enablers that made different types of serious and organised crime possible across Irish and UK jurisdictions were identified and examined.

- 1 **Digital technology:** Use of technology has become the most significant enabler of serious and organised crime. As acknowledged by the European Commission (2020), approximately 85% of all crimes are considered to have a digital component (European Commission (2020) Communication from the Commission: a counter-terrorism agenda for the EU: anticipate, prevent, protect, respond. COM(2020) 795 final. Brussels: European Commission. 2020). Secure communications platforms that

avail of end-to-end encryption, such as WhatsApp and Telegram, have contributed to a changed landscape which is resilient in the face of law enforcement takedowns.

- 2 **Exploitation of national borders:** While criminality online has increased, exploiting national borders remains essential for all types of serious and organised criminal activity; for example, in the movement of drugs, people, firearms, and cash. The land border between Northern Ireland (NI) and Ireland has provided many layers and facets in the facilitation of criminal activity, influencing how offenders and markets operate on the island of Ireland and within the Common Travel Area. Moreover, cross-border cooperation between organised crime groups (OCGs) in NI and Ireland is well-known, as are groups that commit crime in both jurisdictions (Chance 2022).
- 3 **Professional and public sector corruption:** OCGs count on the involvement of 'active or passive' corrupt individuals working in professional and public sectors (p. 20) (Chance 2022). Fortunately, corruption within Irish law enforcement and justice agencies is rare but remains a risk for both Ireland and England.
- 4 **Criminal use of firearms:** In the main, illegal firearm possession and use in Ireland and the UK remains low when compared with international standards. However, there is evidence of more firearm seizures alongside drug seizures and more firearm-related violence among OCGs involved in drug trafficking in Ireland when compared with similar groups in the UK.

Modern slavery and human trafficking

While slavery and human trafficking is closely linked to serious and organised crime, it is not straightforward but is more 'complicated and nuanced' (p. 23) (Chance 2022). The author examined the relationship between human trafficking and human smuggling and stressed how victims may move between both several times on their journey. Typically, human smuggling ends when the victim arrives at their destination; however, often the victim is exploited enroute or at their final destination or both. The main markets, methods, and offenders involved are considered in the report. Trafficking is centred on three markets: criminal exploitation, labour exploitation, and sexual exploitation (Chance 2022). In Ireland, sexual exploitation is prominent followed by labour exploitation and then criminal exploitation. Trafficking victims are exploited in the drugs trade; for example, in the cultivation of cannabis where they are used for supervising plant growth, drying out their leaves, removing buds, and packing bags for onward transportation and sale (Chance 2022).

Drug trafficking

The UK and Ireland are considered 'highly lucrative markets' for criminal networks involved in the importation and supply of illicit drugs (p. 30) (Chance, 2022) Trafficking methods that are frequently used include air; maritime via roll-on/roll-off ferries and foot passengers; and the postal system via regular mail or courier services. The report explored supply and retail trades in cannabis, cocaine, heroin, and synthetic drugs. The movement of drugs into and within Ireland and the UK displayed similar features. However, divergences were also evident, particularly in the amphetamines market and in the retail supply of heroin and crack cocaine, which for now is only evident in the UK. Due to the close proximity and relationship between Ireland and the UK, the Common Travel Area, the 'all-island nature' of the drugs trade in Ireland and NI (p. 37) (Chance 2022). The author has called for vigilance as changes in trends in one country will likely influence the other.

Economic crime

Due to the similarities between the British and Irish economies, both countries are vulnerable to illicit asset laundering from overseas and/or domestic criminality. However, there are differences between both jurisdictions; in the UK, ‘a sophisticated laundering infrastructure’ has been documented and threatens the existing financial system (p. 43) (Chance 2022). In contrast, in Ireland, the targeting of domestic criminal finance has presented a challenging environment for OCGs involved in money laundering, who lean more towards cash. Overseas illicit financial movement is currently underdeveloped in Ireland as is the use of cryptocurrencies for laundering purposes.

Limitations of study

The author acknowledged several limitations in the report. For example, while the literature review was extensive it relied on publicly available data and did not include sensitive intelligence that would normally be included in organised threat assessments. Nor were insights from network analyses or interviews with offenders themselves included. Due to the thematic focus of the report, it was not possible to include other types of information. Time constraints also resulted in the prioritisation of some topics over others. The broad geographic area of Ireland and the UK resulted in the loss of information that might have been gleaned at a local and regional level.

Recommendations

Several recommendations were put forward by the author, as follows.

- 1 There should be increased drug market monitoring.
- 2 Comprehensive research projects funded by Irish and UK justice agencies should map the nature and scale of human trafficking between the island of Ireland and the UK.
- 3 UK and Irish agencies should consider harmonising data collection and analysis on human trafficking.
- 4 The Irish Department of Justice should consider establishing an independent ‘technology futures’ research advisory group.
- 5 A joint research programme should explore and monitor the role of crypto-assets in serious and organised crime.
- 6 There should be a bilateral research project on corrupted transport workers.
- 7 Joint projects between AGS, the National Crime Agency, Europol, and Dutch and Belgian authorities should be considered to actively monitor any changes in drug flows to the UK from the Netherlands and Belgium regarding nature and scale of displacement to UK and/or Irish ports.
- 8 The Department of Justice and Central Bank of Ireland should review the threat to the Irish economy from the laundering of illicit finance from overseas.
- 9 The Department of Justice and AGS should consider the production of regular strategic threat assessments on serious and organised crime in Ireland based on all-source reporting from across all State agencies.
- 10 Civil society organisations and research institutions across Ireland and the UK should explore practical, collaborative mechanisms to promote independent analysis of serious and organised crime.

Conclusion

This report is a valuable first step at bringing together existing publicly available knowledge and information and has provided a partial snapshot of organised and serious crime across Ireland and the UK. As acknowledged by the author, there were several limitations mainly due to lack of research in serious and organised crime in the Irish context. Some of the inferences made in this report were informed by the *Drug markets and crime national reports*, published by the Health Research Board, who is the Irish Focal Point to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) (Health Research Board. Irish

National Focal Point to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction 2022). The EMCDDA monitors drug-related activities across Europe.

T4.2 Other Aspects of drug market and crime

No new information

T5. Sources and methodology

T5.1 Sources

Websites, annual reports, and unpublished data from the following agencies are the notable sources of information:

[An Garda Síochána](#)

[Central Statistics Office](#)

[Courts Service](#)

[Defence Forces](#)

[Department of Health](#)

[Department of Justice and Equality](#)

[Forensic Science Ireland](#)

[Garda Ombudsman](#)

[Houses of the Oireachtas](#)

[Irish Prison Service](#)

[Irish Statute Book](#)

[Law Reform Commission](#)

[Policing Authority](#)

[Probation Service](#)

[Revenue Commissioners](#)

T5.2 Methodology

Please see Section T4.1 for a summary of two a recent study exploring serious and organised crime across Ireland and the UK.

Previous Studies

Department of Children and Youth Affairs. *Lifting the Lid on Greentown: Why we should be concerned about the influence criminal networks have on children's offending behaviour in Ireland*. Dublin: Government Publications, 2016. Available at <http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/26850/>

This study examined the effect of a criminal network on the offending behaviour of children between 2010 and 2011 in a regional Garda sub-district outside Dublin referred to as Greentown. Further information about the study can be found in Section T4.1 of *Focal Point Ireland: national report for 2017 – Drug markets and crime*.

Connolly J and Buckley L. *Demanding money with menace: drug-related intimidation and community violence in Ireland*. Dublin: CityWide Drugs Crisis Campaign, 2016. Available at <http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/25201/>

This report presented the findings of research on drug-related intimidation and community violence in several Local and Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force areas throughout Ireland. Further information on this study can be found in Section T6.2 of *Focal Point Ireland: national report for 2016 – drug markets and crime*.

Connolly J and Donovan AM. *Illicit Drug Markets in Ireland*. Dublin: National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Alcohol, 2014. Available at <http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/22837/>

This study examined the nature, structure, and organisation of four local drug markets over a 3-year time span (2008–2010). Further information on this study can be found in Sections T1.1.3 and T6.2 of *Ireland: national report for 2015 – drug markets and crime*.

Redmond S and Naughton C. *National prevalence study: do the findings from the Greentown study of children’s involvement in criminal networks (2015) extend beyond Greentown? Interim report*. Limerick: School of Law, University of Limerick, 2017. Available at <http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/28326/>

Windle J. The impact of the Great Recession on the Irish drug market. *Criminol Crim Justice*, 2017; 18(5), 548–567. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748895817741518>

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[df](https://www.rsa.ie/Documents/Press%20Office/RSA%20Academic%20Lecture%20-%20Presentation%20by%20Asst%20Commissioner%20David%20Sheahan%20An%20Garda%20Síochána.pdf).
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European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) is a decentralised EU agency based in Lisbon. The EMCDDA provides the EU and its Member States with information on the nature, extent, consequences, and responses to illicit drug use. It supplies the evidence base to support policy formation on drugs and addiction in both the European Union and Member States.

There are 30 National Focal Points that act as monitoring centres for the EMCDDA. These focal points gather and analyse country data according to common data collection standards and tools and supply these data to the EMCDDA. The results of this national monitoring process are supplied to the Centre for analysis, from which it produces the annual *European drug report* and other outputs.

The Irish Focal Point to the EMCDDA is based in the Health Research Board. The focal point writes and submits a series of textual reports, data on the five epidemiological indicators and supply indicators in the form of standard tables and structured questionnaires on response-related issues such as prevention and social reintegration. The focal point is also responsible for implementing Council Decision 2005/387/JHA on the information exchange, risk assessment and control of new psychoactive substances.

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Forensic Science Ireland

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Hospital In-Patient Enquiry Scheme, Health Service Executive

Irish Prison Service

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