



**United Nations**  
Office on Drugs and Crime

# Synthetic Drugs in East and Southeast Asia

Latest developments and challenges

2025



## Acknowledgements

This publication was produced by the UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific. The UNODC team responsible for developing this report consisted of:

### Supervision

Benedikt Hofmann, Regional Representative a.i.  
Reiner Pungs, Drug and Precursor Programme Manager

### Core Team

Inshik Sim, Lead Analyst  
Shawn Kelley, Senior Research Analyst  
Kavinadee Suppamongtevasakul, Regional Synthetic Drugs Analyst  
Seong Jae Shin, Regional Analyst  
Dylan Hartnett, Associate Programme Officer  
Akara Umapornsakula, Graphic Designer

This report has also benefited from the valuable input of many UNODC staff members who reviewed or contributed to various sections of the report.

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## Abbreviations

AFP	Australian Federal Police
ARQ	Annual Report Questionnaire
ATS	Amphetamine-type stimulants
BNN	National Narcotics Board (Indonesia)
CCDAC	Central Committee on Drug Abuse Control (Myanmar)
CNB	Central Narcotics Bureau (Singapore)
CNPD	Counter-Narcotics Police Department (Viet Nam)
DAINAP	Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific
DDB	Dangerous Drugs Board (Philippines)
DNC	Department of Narcotics Control (Bangladesh)
EWA	UNODC Early Warning Advisory on New Psychoactive Substances
HSA	Health Sciences Authority (Singapore)
KIMIA	Department of Chemistry (Malaysia)
LCDC	Drug Control and Supervision Bureau
MHLW	Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (Japan)
NACD	National Authority for Combating Drugs (Cambodia)
NADA	National Anti-Drugs Agency (Malaysia)
NCB	Narcotics Control Bureau (Brunei Darussalam)
NCB	Narcotics Control Bureau (India)
NCNP	National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry (Japan)
NDSB	Narcotics Division, Security Bureau (Hong Kong, China)
NNCC	National Narcotics Control Commission (China)
NPA	National Police Agency (Japan)
NPS	New Psychoactive Substances
ONCB	Office of the Narcotics Control Board (Thailand)
PDEA	Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency
PoC	Province of China
RMP	Royal Malaysia Police
SPO	Supreme Prosecutors' Office (Republic of Korea)
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



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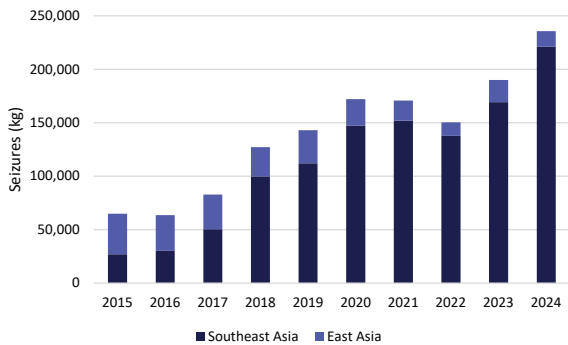
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# Key Takeaways

## Methamphetamine seizures reach a new high

A record 236 tons of methamphetamine was seized in East and Southeast Asia in 2024. The seizure total marks a 24 per cent increase compared to the 190 tons of methamphetamine seized in the previous year. Southeast Asia collectively seized 94 per cent of the total, or 221.2 tons of the drug while East Asia accounted for only six per cent (14.4 tons), underscoring the immense volume of methamphetamine trafficked through Southeast Asia. This challenge is even more pronounced in the five lower Mekong countries — Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam — where combined seizures amounted to approximately 200 tons, representing 85 per cent of the regional total.

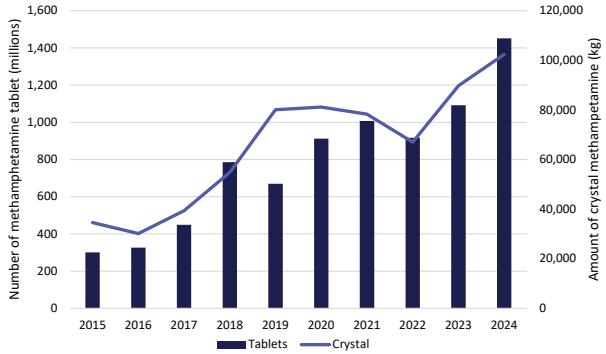
Figure 1. Seizures of methamphetamine in East and Southeast Asia, by region, 2015-2024



Note: Data include all forms of methamphetamine. Data for Japan for 2023 only include seizures made by Japan Customs. Methamphetamine tablet seizure data not reported as kilograms were converted into estimated tablet equivalent to 90mg per tablet. Sources: Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP); UNODC, responses to ARQ; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

In 2024, seizures of both methamphetamine tablets and crystal methamphetamine rose compared to 2023. Authorities in East and Southeast Asia seized a total of 102 tons of crystal methamphetamine, which is a 14 per cent increase from the 90 tons recorded the previous year. Methamphetamine tablet seizures reached nearly 1.5 billion tablets, representing a 33 per cent increase compared to 2023. Thailand alone seized 1 billion tablets, reflecting both the intensified volume of drugs trafficked to the country and, in part, the impact of successful law enforcement operations.

Figure 2. Seizures of methamphetamine in East and Southeast Asia, by type, 2015-2024



Note: Data for Japan for 2024 only include seizures made by Japan Customs. Sources: DAINAP; UNODC, responses to ARQ; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

## Ongoing conflict and pockets of stability in Myanmar together create conditions conducive to expanding methamphetamine production and trafficking

The underlying conditions driving the illicit manufacture of synthetic and other drugs in Shan State, Myanmar, such as the myriad non-state armed groups and associated governance challenges, remain intact. The ongoing and increasingly intensified conflicts that began with the military takeover in February 2021 have further heightened the reliance on drug-related proceeds while simultaneously disrupting law enforcement responses. At the same time, certain areas of Myanmar, including those known for large-scale synthetic drug production, have remained relatively stable. The combination of intensified conflict and sustained stability in key production areas has created an environment conducive to the expansion of methamphetamine manufacture and trafficking emanating from Myanmar that affects countries across the region and beyond, including South Asia.



**Table 1. Changes in the number of conflicts, methamphetamine tablet and crystal methamphetamine cases and seizures in Myanmar, 2017-2020 and 2021-2024**

Indicator	2017-2020 (average per year)	2021-2024 (average per year)	% change
<b>Number of conflict events</b>			
North Shan	277	861	+211
South Shan	18	317	+1,105
East Shan	7	10	+42
Shan total	302	1,188	+293
Other States and Regions of Myanmar	707	9,869	+1,295
Total	1,009	11,057	+996
<b>Methamphetamine tablets</b>			
Number of cases	7,251	4,332	-40
Quantity seized	154.5 million	212.1 million	+37
Quantity seized per case	21,000	49,000	+130
<b>Crystal methamphetamine</b>			
Number of cases	171	122	-29
Quantity seized	7.7 tons	19.0 tons	+148
Quantity seized per case	45 kg	156 kg	+247

Note: Two distinct periods (2017-2020 vs. 2021-2024) were selected to compare the impact of conflicts and methamphetamine-related crimes in Myanmar.

Source: CCDAC, Myanmar and ACCLED, Number of political violence events in Myanmar.

### **Growing importance of Cambodia and Sabah, Malaysia as a regional hub for methamphetamine trafficking**

One of the most rapidly expanding methamphetamine trafficking routes in East and Southeast Asia runs from Shan State, Myanmar, to Cambodia via overland routes, primarily through Lao PDR and, to a lesser extent, through Thailand. In 2024, Cambodian authorities reported by far the largest methamphetamine seizures in history with nearly 10 tons. Once drugs enter Cambodia by land, some are transferred to small fishing vessels on the southern coast and then to motherships headed for international destinations.

Meanwhile, there are growing indications of increased quantities of crystal methamphetamine being trafficked via Peninsular Malaysia to Sabah. Sabah's strategic location – bordering Indonesia's North Kalimantan and its geographical proximity to the Zambasulta region of the Philippines (Zamboanga, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi) provides incentives for organized crime groups to move larger quantities of crystal methamphetamine through the state. The region around Mindanao has emerged as a main hub of drug distribution in the Philippines with increased drug inflows from Sabah, Malaysia.

### **Increased westward methamphetamine flows from Myanmar to South Asia, particularly Northeast India**

India has become an important transit and destination point for methamphetamine trafficked from Myanmar, demonstrating growing inter-regional integration in drug trafficking. This development may also signify organized crime groups' intention to expand their consumer markets by increasingly supplying drugs through the western trafficking corridor. In 2024, law enforcement authorities across India seized 8.2 tons of ATS, most of which were believed to be methamphetamine, marking a 500 per cent increase compared to 2020. In addition, seizures of crystal methamphetamine in 2024 in Sagaing Region of Myanmar, which shares a border with India, increased significantly, from less than 1 kg in 2023 to 441 kg in 2024.

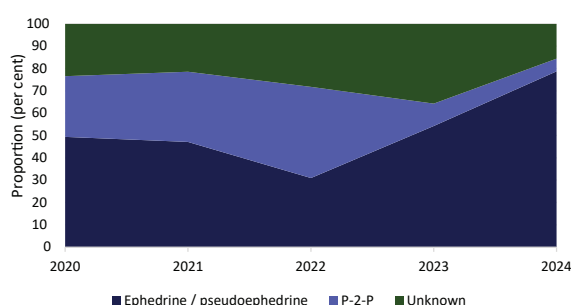
### **Despite the rising use of ephedrine or pseudoephedrine-based synthesis methods, regional visibility into the flows of these precursor chemicals remains far too limited**

Between 2022 and 2024, the proportion of crystal methamphetamine samples analyzed in Thailand that were synthesized using ephedrine/

pseudoephedrine-based methods increased significantly, from 31 per cent to 79 per cent. Notably, 2022 marked the first year in which samples showed a higher proportion of P-2-P-based synthesis routes than ephedrine/pseudoephedrine-based methods; however, this shift was short-lived. By 2024, crystal methamphetamine samples believed to have been manufactured using P-2-P-based methods accounted for only 5 per cent of all samples, representing a sharp decline from 41 per cent in 2022. This trend indicates an increased availability of non-controlled chemicals that serve as precursors for ephedrine/pseudoephedrine.

Despite the strong indications of increased use of ephedrine/pseudoephedrine, there have been virtually no reported seizures of ephedrine/pseudoephedrine and significantly limited seizures of non-controlled chemicals that can be used to illicitly synthesize ephedrine/pseudoephedrine or P-2-P. This disparity highlights the ongoing challenge of detecting key chemicals in Southeast Asia, a vulnerability that could be exploited by organized crime groups outside the region to target it as both a source and transit point for chemical supplies.

**Figure 3. Chemical profiles of crystal methamphetamine samples analyzed in Thailand, 2020-2024**



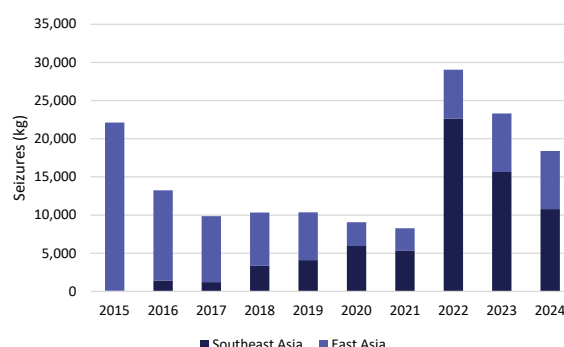
Source: ONCB, Thailand.

### Ketamine production continues to spread in the lower Mekong sub-region while use of the drug continues to expand

In recent years, the illicit manufacture of ketamine and its precursor chemicals has spread across the lower Mekong countries, beginning in Myanmar, then Cambodia and Lao PDR, and, most recently, Viet Nam, where an industrial-scale facility was seized in March 2025. This pattern suggests that

organized crime groups are diversifying the supply chains of the drug while moving production closer to major destination markets such as China and Taiwan PoC. Meanwhile, organized crime groups also continue to source ketamine from Europe and South Asia to further diversify their illicit supply chains, although the scale of this trafficking remains much smaller than that of inter-regional trafficking within East and Southeast Asia. In 2024, ketamine use increased in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR and Indonesia, according to expert perception.

**Figure 4. Seizures of ketamine in East and Southeast Asia, 2015-2024**



Source: DAINAP; UNODC, responses to the ARQ; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-April 2024.

### Growing inter-regional ketamine trafficking between Europe and East and Southeast Asia

Trafficking flows of ketamine from Europe to East and Southeast Asia continued in 2024 and early 2025. During this period, several countries and territories in the region reported seizures of ketamine originating from Europe, including Cambodia, Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan PoC, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Several recent ketamine seizures suggest an increase in the scale of ketamine trafficking from Europe to the region. Ketamine trafficking from Europe to the region is likely to intensify, given the rapidly increasing supply of the drug in Europe and the existing high demand for the drug in the region.

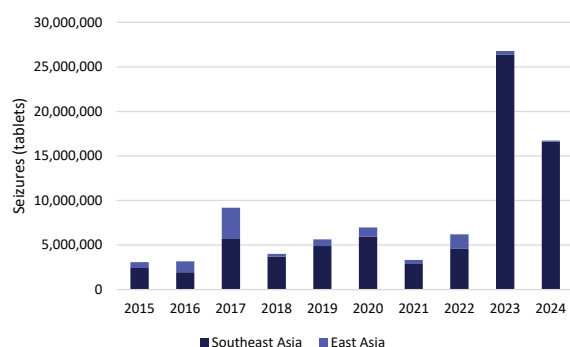
### Significant amount of ecstasy seized in 2024

Since the start of regional data collection, seizures of ecstasy in East and Southeast Asia have remained under ten million ecstasy tablets yearly. However, in the past two years, this has changed. While seizures of ecstasy declined by 37.5 per cent over the past

year from the equivalent of 26.7 million tablets to 16.7 million tablets in 2024, this is still a significant amount compared to previous years where seizure amounts hovered between 3 to 7 million tablets.

It is interesting to note that in recent years, Cambodia has seemed to have an increasing role in the regional ecstasy market. In previous years, Indonesia and Malaysia typically accounted for the majority of regional ecstasy seizures. However, in 2024, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Cambodia accounted for 28.3 per cent, 34.8 per cent, and 33.2 percent of the ecstasy seized in East and Southeast Asia, respectively, and was the first year where seizures of ecstasy in Cambodia exceeded that of Indonesia.

**Figure 5. Seizures of ecstasy tablets in East and Southeast Asia, 2015-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

### **Emergence of new synthetic drug products, including etomidate**

A wide range of new psychoactive substances (NPS) continues to be detected each year and are often found mixed with other compounds in emerging synthetic drug products, potentially posing serious health risks to users. Legal controls on NPS have resulted in the emergence of pharmaceutical products, namely etomidate and its analogues, being used for non-medical purposes, particularly in vaping products. Organized crime may be taking advantage of control or enforcement gaps to produce etomidate in some countries in the region. Authorities also continued to seize various synthetic drug products typically containing mixtures of substances. In previous years, this has included “k-powdered milk”, “happy water”, and “party lollipops” containing substances such as MDMA, methamphetamine, and ketamine.

### **Technology-enabled and cell-based synthetic drug trafficking networks**

Synthetic drug trafficking groups operating in East and Southeast Asia are becoming increasingly agile and tech-savvy. They often set up front companies and operate through flexible, cell-based networks that outsource drug transport to local actors, such as drivers and fishermen, to minimize their exposure to law enforcement authorities. At the same time, it is increasingly noticeable that the growing convergence between drug trafficking syndicates and other criminal groups, with the growing overlap in actors and operations across underground banking, illegal online casinos, and cyber-enabled scams.



## Regional Trends: East and Southeast Asia



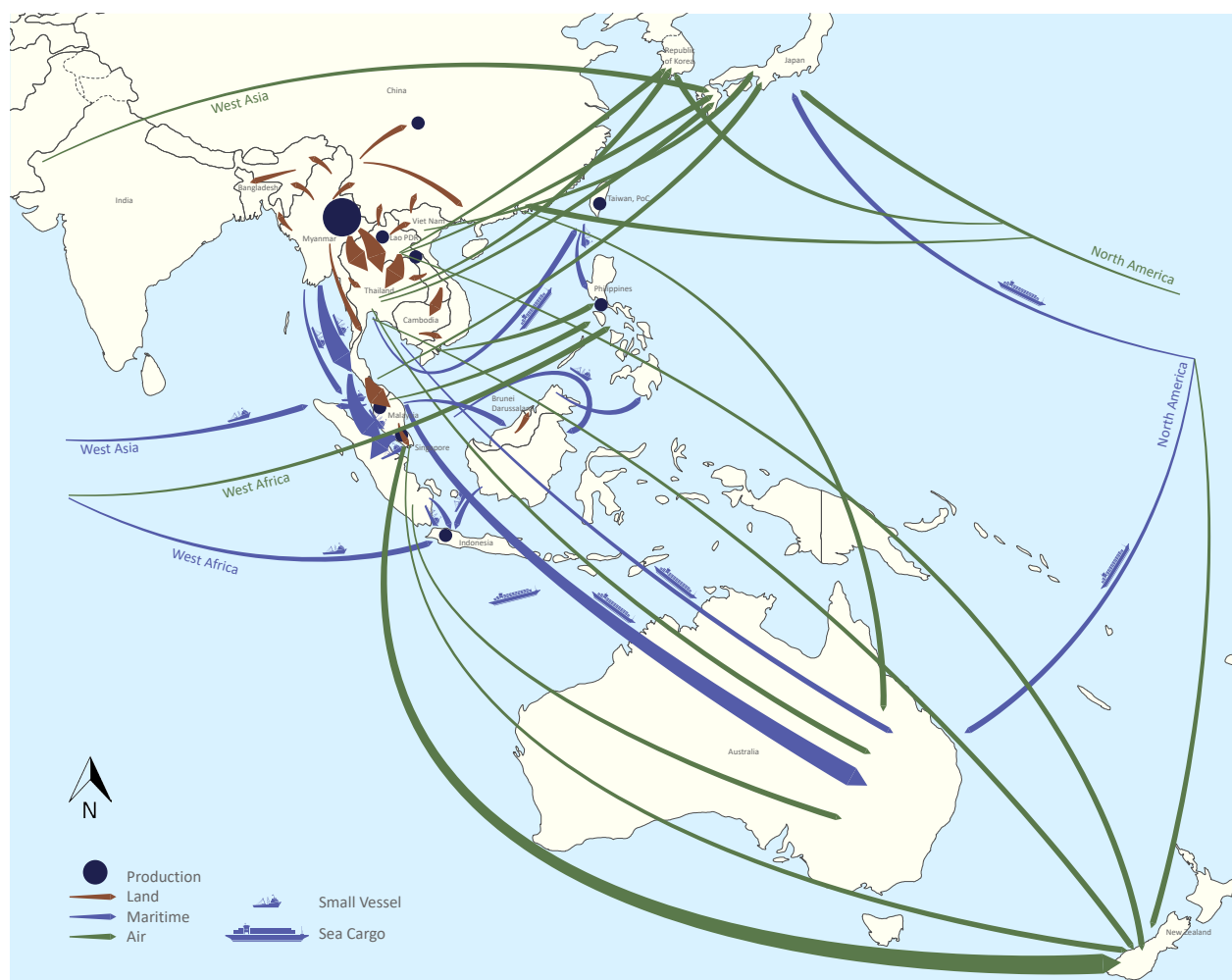
# REGIONAL TRENDS: EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

## Overview of the methamphetamine market

The methamphetamine market in East and Southeast Asia continued to expand and seizures of the drug reached another record high in 2024. The sustained flood of methamphetamine to markets in the region has been driven by industrial-

scale production and trafficking networks operated by agile, well-resourced transnational organized criminal groups. For years, the “spillover” of methamphetamine manufactured in Myanmar has impacted countries across the region; however, since the military takeover in Myanmar in February 2021, flows of drugs from the country have surged across not only East and Southeast Asia, but also increasingly into South Asia, in particular Northeast India.

**Map 1. Methamphetamine trafficking routes in East and Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Oceania, 2024 and 2025(May)**



Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Flow arrows represent the general direction of trafficking and do not coincide with precise sources of production or manufacture, are not actual routes. Sources: DAINAP and UNODC elaboration based on data, information, and intelligence from drug authorities in East and Southeast Asia and Oceania.

Organized crime groups have increasingly resorted to emerging trafficking routes, including overland corridors connecting Shan State, Myanmar, to Cambodia via Thailand or Lao PDR, as well as maritime channels using Sabah, Malaysia, as a hub. These organized crime groups have been increasingly adopting technologies and exploiting digital space to maximize their profits while successfully hiding the proceeds generated from the synthetic drug trade.

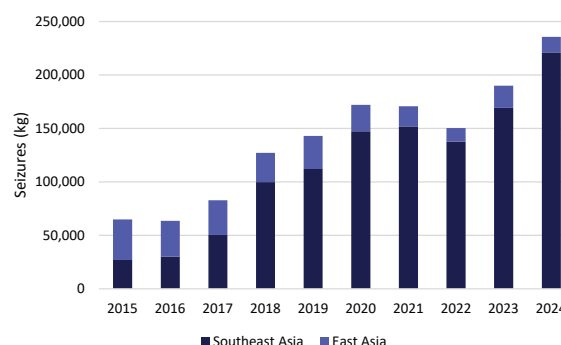
Precursor chemicals— both controlled and non-controlled — continue to be central to this supply chain, yet significant gaps remain in terms of regional visibility and understanding on their flows, despite strong indications of an increased supply of ephedrine/pseudoephedrine and their precursors.

There is mounting evidence of growing methamphetamine use in the region. It is alarming to observe the rapid rise in methamphetamine use in countries situated along major trafficking pathways.

### Methamphetamine seizures in East and Southeast Asia reached another record level

The total amount of methamphetamine seized in East and Southeast Asia in 2024 reached a record high of 236 tons, which is a 24 per cent increase from the 190 tons seized in the previous year, which at the time was the highest recorded. Almost all methamphetamine seized occurred in Southeast Asia, accounting for 94 per cent (221 tons) of the total in 2024, while East Asia accounted for only six per cent (14 tons), underscoring the immense volume of methamphetamine trafficked through Southeast Asia. This challenge is even more pronounced in the five lower Mekong countries — Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam — where combined seizures amounted to approximately 200 tons, representing 85 per cent of the regional total. This stands in contrast to a decade ago when seizure totals were split almost evenly between the two regions and totalled some 60 tons. In short, the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine in the region has undergone rapid advancements and changes in the last 10 years.

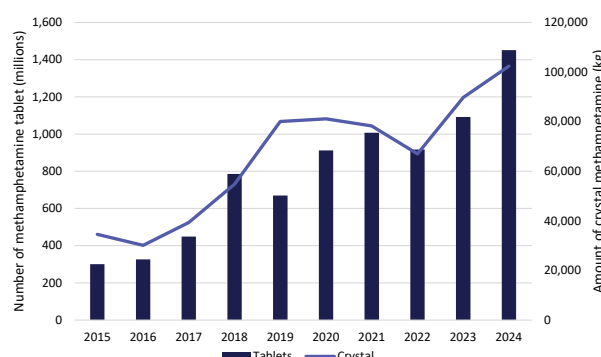
**Figure 1. Seizures of methamphetamine in East and Southeast Asia, by region, 2015-2024**



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In 2024, seizures of both tablet and crystal methamphetamine increased compared to the previous year. The amount of crystal methamphetamine seized in East and Southeast Asia in 2024 totalled 102 tons, which is a 14 per cent increase from the 90 tons seized in the previous year. Seizures of methamphetamine tablets amounted to nearly 1.5 billion tablets, representing a 33 per cent increase compared to 2023. Thailand alone seized 1 billion tablets, reflecting both the intensified volume of drugs trafficked to the country and, in part, the impact of successful law enforcement operations.

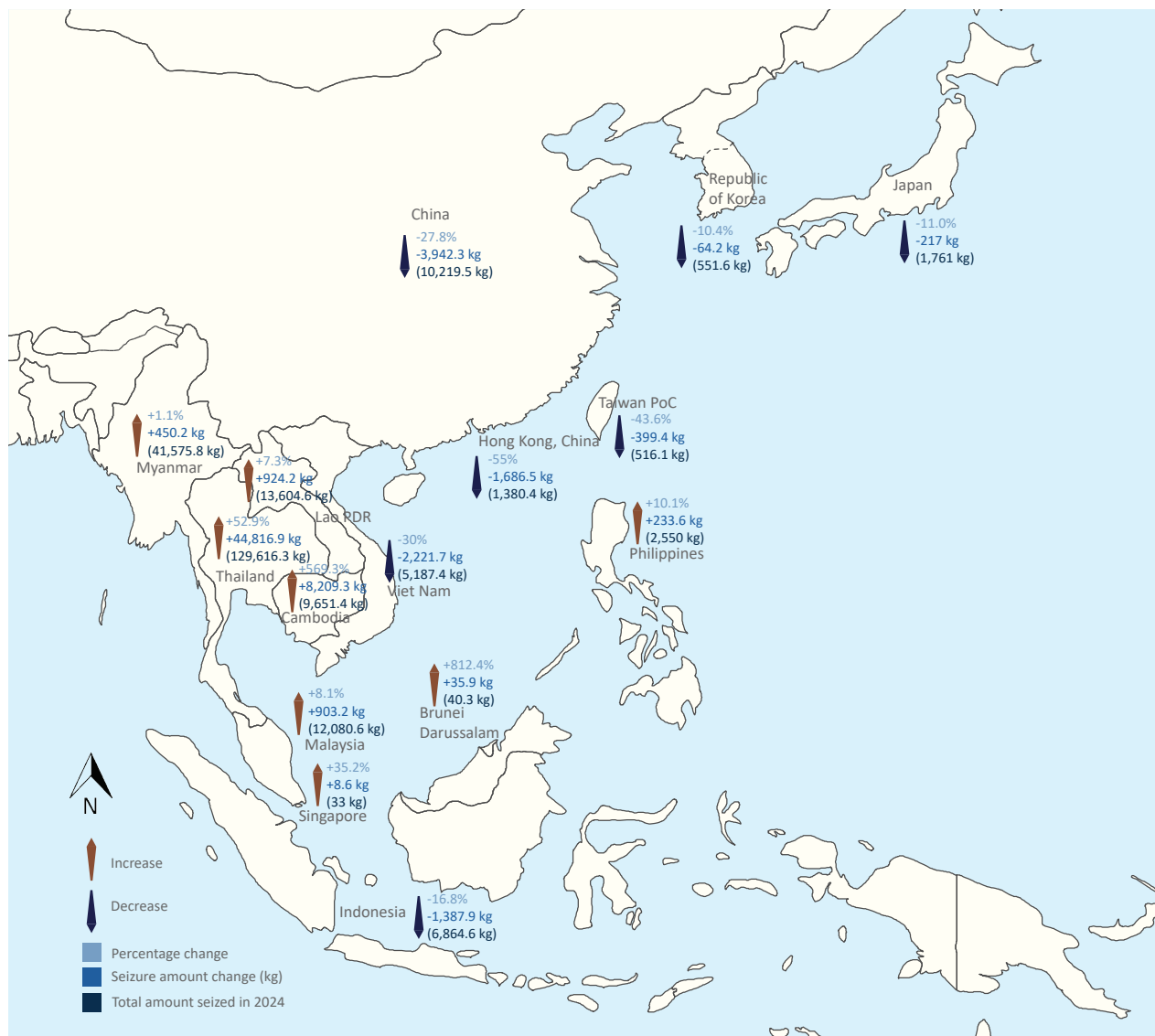
**Figure 2. Seizures of tablet and crystal methamphetamine in East and Southeast Asia, 2015-2024**



Note: Data for Japan for 2024 only include seizures made by Japan Customs. Sources: DAINAP; UNODC, responses to ARQ; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.



**Map 2. Change in methamphetamine seizure amounts in East and Southeast Asia, by percentage and weight, 2023-2024**



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Sources: DAINAP; UNODC, responses to ARQ; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

Several countries reported historically high methamphetamine seizures in 2024. For instance, Thailand alone accounted for more than half of the entire methamphetamine seized in the region with 130 tons, by far the largest amount ever seized in the country. Myanmar seized the second largest amount of methamphetamine with 41.6 tons, followed by Lao PDR (13.6 tons), Malaysia (12.1 tons), China (10.2 tons) and Cambodia (9.7 tons).<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that 9.7 tons of methamphetamine seized in Cambodia in 2024 represents a seven-fold increase compared to 2023. At the same time, some countries reported historically low methamphetamine seizure totals

in 2024, including Indonesia (6.9 tons), which reported the lowest total since 2016.<sup>2</sup> Map 2 shows changes in methamphetamine seizures over the last five years.

### Ongoing conflict and pockets of stability in Myanmar together create conditions conducive to expanding methamphetamine production and trafficking

Major methamphetamine trafficking cases reported from countries in East and Southeast Asia during 2024 and early 2025 demonstrate the continued dominance of illicit methamphetamine manufacture

<sup>1</sup> DAINAP; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

**Table 1. Changes in the number of conflicts, methamphetamine tablet and crystal methamphetamine cases and seizures in Myanmar, 2017-2020 and 2021-2024**

Indicator	2017-2020 (average per year)	2021-2024 (average per year)	% change
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Note: Two distinct periods (2017-2020 vs. 2021-2024) were selected to compare the impact of conflicts and methamphetamine-related crimes in Myanmar.

Source: CCDAC, Myanmar and ACCLED, Number of political violence events in Myanmar.

in Shan State, Myanmar. The underlying conditions driving the illicit manufacture of drugs in Shan, such as the myriad non-state armed groups and associated governance challenges, remain intact. The ongoing and increasingly intensified conflicts that began with the military takeover in February 2021 have further heightened the reliance on drug-related proceeds while simultaneously disrupting law enforcement responses. At the same time, certain areas of Myanmar, including those known for large-scale synthetic drug production, remain relatively undisturbed, allowing major drug producing groups to ramp up production without law enforcement intervention. The combination of intensified conflict and sustained stability in key production areas has created an environment conducive to the expansion of methamphetamine manufacture and trafficking emanating from Myanmar that affects countries across the region and beyond, including South Asia.

Throughout history, there has been documented evidence that armed groups engaged in conflicts have financed themselves through proceeds generated by taxing the illicit manufacture and trafficking of drugs, or directly from drug sales.<sup>3,4</sup> In

essence, conflict acts as a driver for the expansion of illicit drug economies, but it can also hinder law enforcement operations due to several factors, including loss of territorial control, diversion of resources, and threats to the physical security of law enforcement personnel.

This trend is also evident in the sharp increase in drug production and expanding illicit economies amidst intensified conflict in Myanmar. Since the military takeover in February 2021, the estimated amount of raw opium produced in the country has risen by 135 per cent, reaching 995 tons in 2024. The clandestine nature of methamphetamine production, combined with the absence of any seizures of large-scale production facilities, highlights the need for more in-depth analysis to understand how conflict affects methamphetamine production and trafficking, as well as law enforcement responses in Myanmar. However, data from past years suggests a linkage between growing volumes of methamphetamine seized on the one hand, and increased instability on the other.

3 Svante E. Cornell, "The Interaction of Narcotics and Conflict", *Journal of Peace Research* 42, no. 6 (2005): 751–60.

4 UNODC. *World Drug Report 2024, Booklet Contemporary Issues, Chapter 2, Illegal Supply of Drugs in the Golden Triangle: Confluence with Other Crimes and Impacts*. New York: United Nations publication, 2024.

Table 1 provides several notable observations. While the number of conflict events surged by nearly ten-fold between the first period (2017–

2020) and the second period (2021–2024), the number of both methamphetamine tablet and crystal methamphetamine cases decreased by 40 and 29 per cent, respectively. This trend indicates hampered law enforcement operations and reach, expectedly in conflict-affected areas. However, both the total quantities and average amounts per case of methamphetamine tablets and crystal methamphetamine increased significantly across the two periods. In particular, the average quantity per case more than doubled for tablets and nearly quadrupled for crystal methamphetamine. This distinct trend strongly suggests an escalating supply of methamphetamine from Myanmar since the military takeover.

Another important observation is that although the decline in case numbers for both tablet and crystal methamphetamine is not significantly different between the two periods, the average quantity seized per crystal methamphetamine case is far higher than for tablet cases. This divergence may suggest that tablet manufacture and trafficking are arranged by a wider network of many relatively small actors, whereas crystal methamphetamine manufacture and trafficking are concentrated in the hands of a few groups capable of rapidly scaling up operations during the period of escalating conflict in Myanmar.

### Growing importance of Lao PDR as a hub for methamphetamine tableting facilities

Several cases reported from Lao PDR in recent years highlight its growing importance in the methamphetamine trade, not only as a transshipment route but as a methamphetamine tableting hub. In January 2025, Lao authorities dismantled a methamphetamine tableting facility in Praksan District, Bolikhamxay Province which was established by a Thai syndicate.<sup>5</sup> Seized items included 97 bundles of methamphetamine tablets, 15 kg of crystal methamphetamine, and ready-made powder for methamphetamine tableting.<sup>6</sup> Various equipment, including a mixer and a cooling machine, was also found. The arrested syndicate members had clearly delineated roles, as financiers, chemical suppliers, tablet press operators, and logistics coordinators.<sup>7</sup>

5 Lao National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision (LCDC) of Lao PDR, “Country briefing”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.



Methamphetamine tableting facility seized in Bolikhamxay province in January 2025.

Source: LCDC of Lao PDR.

This seizure case is another example of the decentralized nature of methamphetamine tablet production, as evidenced by various - but often similar - toolmarks found on the tablets and their exterior packaging. Considering the rising demand for methamphetamine tablets in the Mekong region, it is likely that organized crime groups will continue to seek opportunities to expand and diversify their supply chains, with Lao PDR potentially becoming a further target.

### Small-scale methamphetamine manufacturing facilities continued to be detected in other countries in East and Southeast Asia

In Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, most of the illicit methamphetamine and other drug manufacturing facilities dismantled in recent years have been smaller operations including some reprocessing facilities. The majority of the drug supply continues to rely on imports from methamphetamine producing groups based primarily in the Golden Triangle but also the Golden Crescent, West Africa, and North America.<sup>8</sup>

In 2024, Malaysian authorities seized only one medium-scale methamphetamine manufacturing facility. The number is the lowest over the last five years. However, in the first two months of 2025, Malaysian authorities also seized two methamphetamine, one ecstasy, and two cocaine processing facilities.<sup>9</sup> This trend demonstrates that

8 PDEA of the Philippines, “Country briefing”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

9 Narcotics Crime Investigation Department (NCID) of Malaysia, “Country briefing”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

organized crime groups are targeting Malaysia not only as a transit hub but also as a processing site.<sup>10</sup>

No large-scale methamphetamine manufacturing facilities have been seized in the Philippines since 2018, and none were uncovered in 2024. However, during the first five months of 2025, Philippines authorities dismantled three methamphetamine production sites. In April 2025, Philippines authorities seized various chemicals, including ephedrine and red phosphorous, used for the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine in Las Piñas City, and arrested five suspects, including two Chinese, one person from Taiwan PoC, and two Filipinos.<sup>11</sup> In May 2025, authorities also discovered an abandoned methamphetamine production site in Rizal with no arrests at the scene.<sup>12</sup>



Chemicals and equipment seized at a methamphetamine manufacturing site seized in Las Piñas City, April 2025. Source: PDEA of the Philippines.

In Taiwan PoC, law enforcement officers discovered a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory in Chiayi County in November 2024. While the scale of the laboratory was small, benzaldehyde, a substance under the International Special Surveillance List (ISSL), which can be used for synthesizing P-2-P as well as ephedrine was seized at the site.<sup>13</sup>

Earlier in July 2024, a facility extracting ephedrine at a drug manufacturing factory in Pingtung County was also discovered.<sup>14</sup>

### Significant amounts of methamphetamine continue to be trafficked along land routes originating in Shan State

Some of the numerous trafficking routes linking illicit production areas in the Golden Triangle with markets in destination countries have been in use for years, while a few routes appear to have emerged more recently. Overland and river-based trafficking routes are commonly used to transport drugs from Shan State to neighbouring countries. Land routes also connect Shan State to Yangon via Mandalay and extend to various border towns in Myanmar, such as Myawaddy (on the Thai border) and Maungdaw (on the border with Bangladesh). Increasing amounts of methamphetamine and ketamine have been seized along these routes while destined to maritime trafficking towards Malaysia. Additionally, there has been an increase in methamphetamine seizures along trafficking routes connecting Myanmar with Northeast India in the past few years, demonstrating India's growing importance as a transit and destination market for methamphetamine.

Kengtung, in South Shan, serves as a major transit location on overland trafficking routes from drug producing areas in East and North Shan and en route to Thailand. In 2024, Myanmar authorities made several large seizures of crystal methamphetamine in and around Kengtung, highlighting its role in the regional drug trade. These included 1.5 tons of crystal methamphetamine seized in January along with 55 kg of ketamine and 175 kg of heroin as well as three large seizures of crystal methamphetamine made from June to September involving 1,047 kg, 500 kg, and 603 kg respectively.<sup>15</sup> Myanmar authorities also made several large seizures of methamphetamine tablets destined for Thailand and Bangladesh, including a seizure of 25 million tablets on 17 January in Taunggyi and destined for Thailand.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> For more information, see <https://www.facebook.com/dxbn792am/posts/pdea-other-law-enforcement-agencies-raided-a-house-in-las-pi%C3%B1as-two-chinese-one-1254347136695553/?utm>

<sup>12</sup> PDEA Calabarzon of the Philippines, Public announcement, May 2024, available at <https://www.facebook.com/pdea.calabarzon.94/posts/pdea-uncovers-shabu-lab-in-antipolothe-philippine-drug-enforcement-agency-pdea-d/1515003119480427/?utm>

<sup>13</sup> For more information see, <https://www.cib.npa.gov.tw/ch/app/news/view?id=1885&module=news&serno=01f78b7a-2e7d-42ce-bff0-2fd3b8fef06b>.

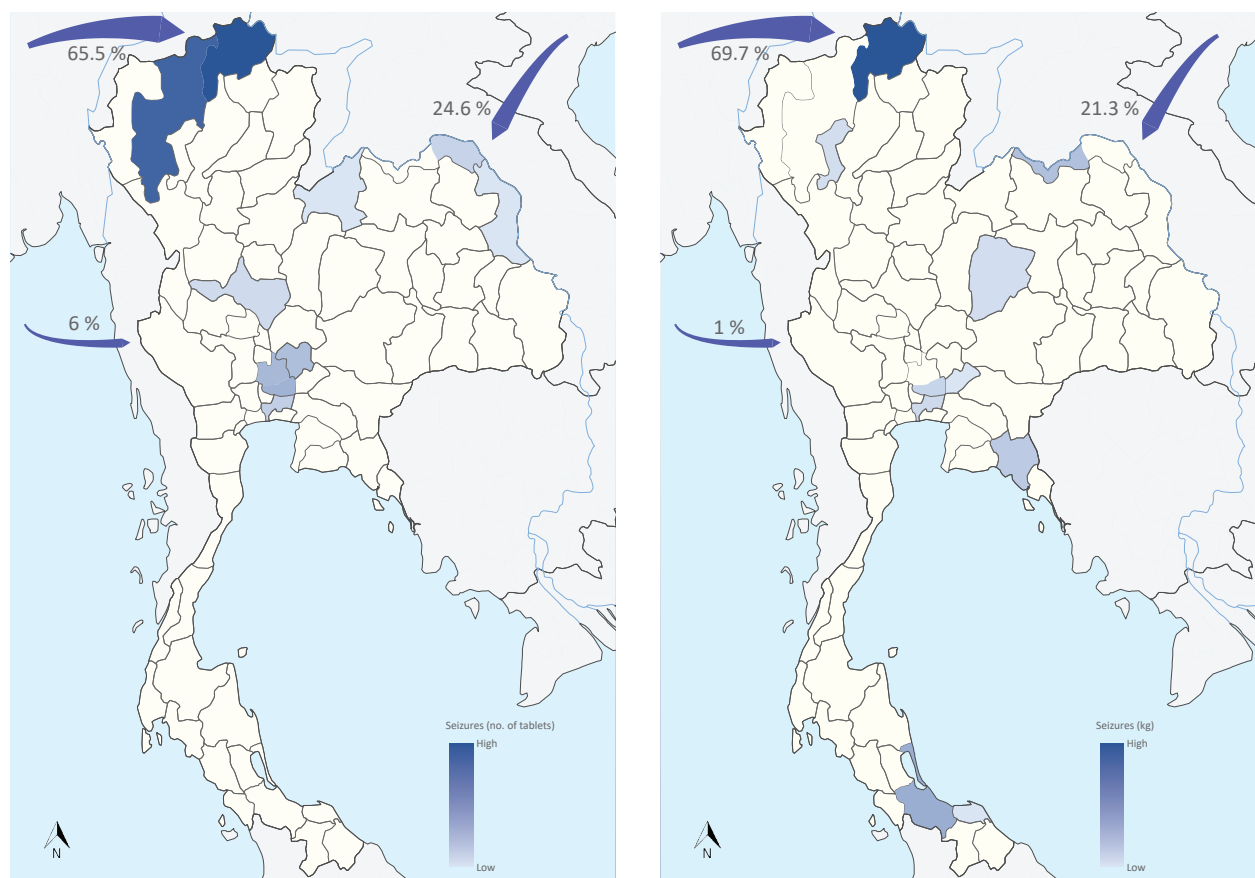
<sup>14</sup> For more information see, <https://www.cib.npa.gov.tw/ch/app/news/view?id=1885&module=news&serno=255d3404-3535-419f-a738-cded7bc40269>.

<sup>15</sup> CCDAC of Myanmar, "Country briefing", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

<sup>16</sup> CCDAC of Myanmar, Existing chemical control measures in Myanmar", the Regional Workshop on Prevention of Chemical Diversion Shanghai, China, 22-24 October 2024.



**Map 3. Top 10 provinces for seizures of methamphetamine tablets (left) and crystal methamphetamine (right) in Thailand with corresponding entry point proportions, 2024**



Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Other entry points that are minor not included. Flows arrows represent the general direction of trafficking and do not coincide with precise sources of production or manufacture, are not actual routes.

Source: ONCB of Thailand.

Predominant quantities of drugs seized in Thailand originate from Shan State, Myanmar, and are trafficked directly over land and river borders or indirectly through Lao PDR. Once inside the country, the drugs are transported through central provinces like Nakhon Sawan and redistributed via major highways. Drugs trafficked along these routes through Thailand are sometimes transported by smuggling caravans protected by armed caravans with multiple vehicles and concealed in agricultural products or hidden compartments.<sup>17</sup>

Most of the methamphetamine trafficked from Myanmar into Thailand continues to be smuggled across the northern border, and smaller portions are smuggled across the northeastern border via Lao PDR, with a small but growing portion smuggled directly across Thailand's western border (see Map 3). In addition, intelligence reports suggest a possible significant expansion

of methamphetamine trafficking from Myanmar into western Thailand; however, only six per cent of methamphetamine tablets and one per cent of the crystal methamphetamine seized in Thailand in 2024 entered at its western border.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout 2024, there were numerous cases involving modified vehicles used to transport tablets and crystal methamphetamine across mountainous areas and forest terrain in northern Thailand, particularly near the Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai borders. Types of vehicles included pickup trucks with hidden compartments, agricultural vehicles used as camouflage, and passenger vehicles and courier trucks disguised as legitimate cargo operators.<sup>19</sup>

The maritime routes from Thailand that originate in Myanmar continue to be targeted for high levels of drug trafficking. In August 2024, Thai authorities

17 ONCB of Thailand, "Thailand country report 2023-2024", the Anti-Drug Liaison Officials' Meeting for International Cooperation (ADLOMICO) 2024, October 2024.

18 Ibid.

19 ONCB of Thailand, "Country briefing", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

**Map 4. Methamphetamine tablet trafficking routes in East and Southeast Asia, 2024**

Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Flow arrows represent the general direction of trafficking and do not coincide with precise sources of production or manufacture, are not actual routes.

Source: UNODC elaboration based on data, information, and intelligence from national drug authorities of East and Southeast Asia.

intercepted a shipment of 1.5 tons of crystal methamphetamine being loaded onto a vessel at a resort in Ban Phe District, Rayong. The drugs were destined for international waters and linked to a syndicate based in Taiwan PoC.<sup>20</sup> Thai authorities report that traffickers have shifted to using private ports on the Gulf of Thailand as transshipment

points. Drugs are loaded onto speedboats or small fishing trawlers for delivery to larger cargo ships at predetermined locations in international waters for onward delivery to third countries.<sup>21</sup>

Some portion of methamphetamine tablets trafficked from Myanmar to Thailand is destined

20 Narcotics Suppression Bureau of Thailand, "Country briefing", the annual Asia-Pacific Operation Drug Enforcement Conference (ADEC), February 2025.

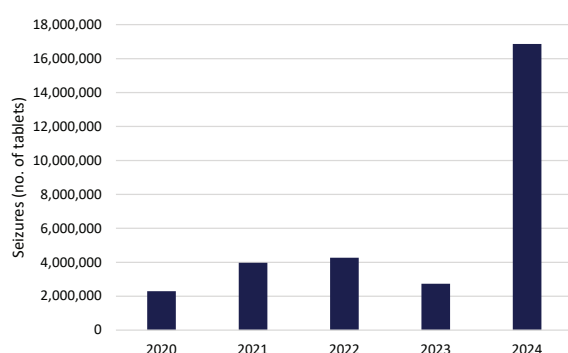
21 ONCB of Thailand, "Country briefing", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

**Table 2. Major seizures of methamphetamine and other drugs in Lao PDR in 2024 and 2025**

Date	Quantity and drug type	Location
10 February 2024	1,033 kg of crystal methamphetamine	Xayaboury
20 March 2024	166 kg of crystal methamphetamine	Bokeo
21 June 2024	5.8 million methamphetamine tablets and 225 kg of heroin	Bokeo
12 July 2024	2,042,000 methamphetamine tablets and 960 kg of crystal methamphetamine	Bokeo (Namtheung checkpoint)
21 July 2024	110 kg of crystal methamphetamine, 761 kg of ecstasy, and 37.5 kg of heroin	Bolikamxay
21 April 2025	20.2 million methamphetamine tablets	Bokeo (Namkeung checkpoint)
10 May 2025	10 million methamphetamine tablets	Bokeo (Namkeung checkpoint)

Source: LCDC of Lao PDR.

for Malaysia. In 2024, Thai authorities reported a five-fold increase in methamphetamine tablet trafficking to the southern region, with 15 large cases with a total seizure of 31.5 million tablets, compared to four large cases and 6.6 million tablets seized in 2023.<sup>22</sup> This trend is further supported by seizure data from Malaysia, which reported a six-fold increase in 2024 compared to the previous year, amounting to 16.8 million tablets. Notably, this marks the first time in history that Malaysia seized more than 10 million tablets in a single year. These developments may indicate an intensified supply of methamphetamine tablets beyond the Mekong region to archipelagic Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia, which is increasingly being used as a transshipment point.

**Figure 3. Seizures of methamphetamine tablets in Malaysia, 2020-2024**

Note: Data not reported as number of tablets were converted into estimated tablet equivalent to 90mg per tablet.

Source: Narcotics Crime Investigation Department (NCID) of Malaysia.

The quantity of drugs seized in Lao PDR along routes originating in the Golden Triangle remained

high in 2024. During the year, Lao authorities seized 91.5 million methamphetamine tablets, 5.4 tons of crystal methamphetamine, and 280 kg of ketamine. In the first three months of 2025, Lao authorities seized 44 million methamphetamine tablets.<sup>23</sup> The location and quantity of the seizures clearly indicate that a large portion of the methamphetamine and other drugs being trafficked from Shan State were destined for Thailand.

On the other hand, while the Golden Triangle continues to be the main source of drugs found in China, drugs trafficked from the region via the tri-border area decreased by 20 per cent in 2024.<sup>24</sup> However, traffickers continue to develop new trafficking routes and corridors connecting northern Myanmar, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, and China corridors. More than half of the seizures in 2024 occurred on land routes that entered Yunnan Province, specifically through Pu'er and Xishuangbanna.<sup>25</sup>

### Growing importance of Cambodia as a regional hub for methamphetamine trafficking

One of the most rapidly expanding methamphetamine trafficking routes in East and Southeast Asia runs from Shan State, Myanmar, to Cambodia via overland routes, primarily through Lao PDR and, to a lesser extent, through Thailand. In 2024, Cambodian authorities reported by far the largest methamphetamine seizures in history. Notably, crystal methamphetamine seizures

22 ONCB of Thailand, "Thailand country report 2023-2024", the Anti-Drug Liaison Officials' Meeting for International Cooperation (ADLOMIC) 2024, October 2024.

23 LCDC of Lao PDR, "Country briefing", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

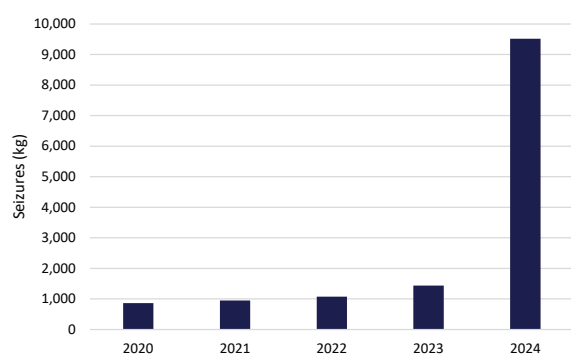
24 National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC) OF China, "Current Drug Situation in China", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

25 Ibid.



reached 9.5 tons, the third highest total in the region after Thailand (34.6 tons) and Myanmar (21 tons). In addition, Cambodia is the only country in the region that has reported year-on-year increases in seizures of crystal methamphetamine since 2016.

**Figure 4. Seizures of crystal methamphetamine in Cambodia, 2020-2024**



Source: National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD) of Cambodia.

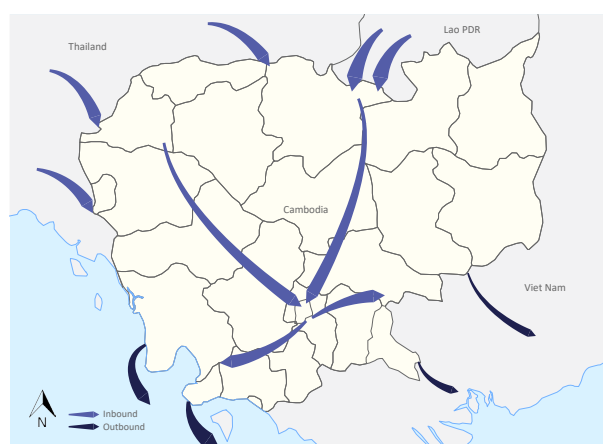
Drug trafficking into Cambodia from Lao PDR has intensified, especially near Stung Treng province. Drugs trafficked from Myanmar through Lao PDR and Thailand to Cambodia are typically stored in Phnom Penh, and their transport often involves Lao PDR and Thai nationals living in Cambodia.<sup>26</sup> Once drugs enter Cambodia by land, some are transferred to small fishing vessels on the southern coast and then to motherships headed for international destinations, primarily to Taiwan PoC.<sup>27</sup> In 2024, Cambodia made some large seizures of methamphetamine and ketamine being trafficked along this route in Phnom Penh, Preah Sihanouk, Stung Treng and Preah Vihear provinces.<sup>28</sup>

In November 2024, Cambodian authorities seized 4.5 tons of crystal methamphetamine off the coast of Koh Kong,<sup>29</sup> and the case highlights the layered nature of drug trafficking networks. The drug originated in the Golden Triangle area via Thailand and was destined for Taiwan PoC by fishing boat. A total of nine Cambodians were arrested, while one suspect escaped to Thailand. Based on investigations by Cambodian authorities, the syndicate was highly structured, with clear roles

categorized into strategic command, warehouse and land transport team, and sea shipment teams. The 4.5 tons of crystal methamphetamine were transported by land in six separate shipments from Battambang to Koh Kong before being trafficked by sea.<sup>30</sup>

Some portion of methamphetamine trafficked to Cambodia is intended for subsequent trafficking to the Viet Nam market. According to Vietnamese authorities, on the southwestern route, connecting to the Cambodian border, trafficking is associated with tourism, visiting relatives, business and gambling, involving nationals of Viet Nam and Cambodia. Several cases in 2024 showed that Viet Nam also serves as a transit point for methamphetamine trafficking primarily to Taiwan PoC, Hong Kong, China, and the Philippines, as well as Japan and the Republic of Korea.<sup>31</sup> Key drug trafficking routes span the northern and central provinces bordering Lao PDR and Cambodia, with growing concern over maritime and air cargo trafficking. Vietnamese authorities noted that maritime trafficking continued to evolve in 2024, in particular, the use of fishing vessels and small boats from southern provinces such as Kien Giang and Ca Mau, with destinations including Taiwan PoC.<sup>32</sup>

**Map 5. Inbound and outbound methamphetamine trafficking in Cambodia, 2024**



Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Flows arrows represent the general direction of trafficking and do not coincide with precise sources of production or manufacture, are not actual routes. Source: UNODC elaboration based on data, information and intelligence from NACD of Cambodia.

26 NACD of Cambodia, "Cambodia Report on Drug Situation and Trafficking Route", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

27 NACD of Cambodia, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

28 Ibid.

29 NACD of Cambodia, "Cambodia Report on Drug Situation and Trafficking Route", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

30 Ibid.

31 Counter-Narcotics Police Department (CNPD) of Viet Nam, "The Situation of Organized and Transnational Drug Trafficking Crimes", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

32 Viet Nam Ministry of Public Security, "Report 243/BC-BCA summarizing drug prevention and control work in 2024 and key work directions in 2025 issued by the Ministry of Public Security", 25 January 2025.

## Yangon a major storage site for maritime trafficking and domestic distribution towards Malaysia

Massive quantities of crystal methamphetamine and ketamine are also seized, sometimes together, while being trafficked from illicit manufacturing facilities in Myanmar along overland routes to seaports on the southern coast. Several cases reported by Myanmar authorities in recent years confirm that warehouses and storage sites in Yangon are actively used by organized crime groups for temporary drug storage, both for maritime trafficking and distribution to local markets. There were also cases involving chemicals stored in warehouses in Yangon before being transported to Shan State.<sup>33</sup>

The maritime domain has become increasingly important for the onwards journey of these drugs, especially through Yangon and Pyapon (Ayeyarwady Region) and primarily to Malaysian sea territory. In 2024, there were several seizure cases involving more than 1 ton of crystal methamphetamine, several of which were destined for Malaysia. For instance, 5.5 tons were seized from a Myanmar fishing vessel in Indian waters, and 5 tons were found concealed in a fuel tanker in Kyaukse.<sup>34</sup>

One representative case was reported on 22 July 2024 in Khar Pyat Creek, where 2.3 tons of crystal methamphetamine bound for Malaysia were seized.<sup>35</sup> A more recent case highlights the various stages of trafficking and the involvement of ethnic armed groups. On 6 March 2025, Myanmar authorities seized 3.5 tons of crystal methamphetamine along with 200 kg of ketamine in Yangon. One arrestee was believed to be a business officer of a major non-state armed group in Myanmar. The drugs originated from eastern Shan State and were intended for sale in Yangon and for trafficking via maritime routes to Malaysia. The drugs were to be loaded onto the “Shwe Kaung Thar” vessel, which had previously been involved in drug shipments intercepted in October 2022 and January 2023.<sup>36</sup>

33 CCDAC of Myanmar, “Existing chemical control measures in Myanmar”, Regional Workshop on Prevention of Chemical Diversion, October 2024.

34 CCDAC of Myanmar, “Country report”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

35 Ibid.

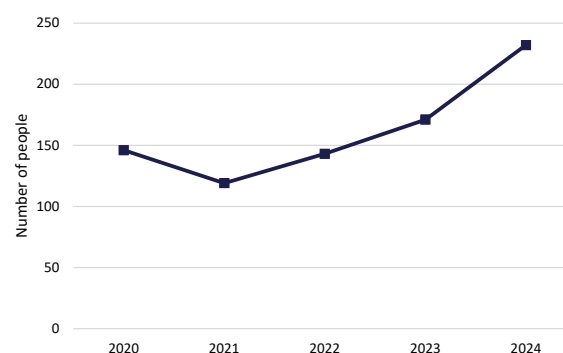
36 Ibid.

## Increasing number of foreign drug traffickers in China and Lao PDR

Some countries in the region reported an increase in the number of foreign drug traffickers arrested in 2024. In China, for instance, the numbers of drug-related cases, arrestees, and quantities of drugs seized decreased by 12.9, 5.6, and 3 per cent, respectively, compared to 2023. However, the number of foreign drug traffickers arrested in 2024 was 249, representing an increase of 297 per cent. In 2024, Chinese authorities arrested 138 Myanmar and 31 Vietnamese nationals.<sup>37</sup>

The number of foreign nationals arrested for drug trafficking in Lao PDR also showed a strong increase. In 2024, Lao PDR authorities handled 4,158 drug-related cases, resulting in 6,297 arrests, including 232 foreigners. Compared to 2023, the number of cases and arrests decreased by 11 and 13 per cent respectively, while the number of foreign nationals arrested increased by 35 per cent. During the first three months of 2025, Lao authorities handled 956 cases and arrested 1,456 offenders, of which 74 were foreign nationals, including several Thai members of a large drug trafficking network based in Bolikamxay near the Thai border who were arrested in March.<sup>38</sup>

**Figure 5. The number of foreign nationals arrested for drug-related cases in Lao PDR, 2020-2024**



Source: LCDC of Lao PDR.

37 NNCC of China, “Current Drug Situation in China”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

38 LCDC of Lao PDR, “Country report”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

## Modus operandi of maritime crystal methamphetamine trafficking connecting Myanmar with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and beyond

The primary source of methamphetamine seized in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines continues to be the Shan State in Myanmar, and most of it is trafficked into the countries along maritime routes through the Andaman Sea and South China Sea. For maritime trafficking, vessels either transport the drugs to shore, for instance in Malaysia, where traffickers often transport drugs to major seaports and Special Economic Zones, or traffickers transfer drugs from one ship to another at sea, sometimes called the “ship-to-ship method”. Ship-to-ship transfers at sea are advantageous for traffickers. They are cost-effective and lower risk compared to trafficking through traditional entry points like seaports or airports, because they minimize human intervention, reduce costs for bribes, facilitate bulk smuggling, and lower the likelihood of detection.

In Malaysia, transnational organized drug trafficking groups continue to target the country as an important transit hub, in particular for methamphetamine and ketamine manufactured in Myanmar. Malaysian authorities estimate that about 20 per cent of total drug seizures in the country are intended for the domestic market.<sup>39</sup> Malaysia is a major transit route from Myanmar to Australia, with drugs being first trafficked through the Straits of Malacca and South China Sea into Malaysia, where drugs are stored and sometimes repackaged, for further trafficking to Australia.<sup>40</sup> A large portion of the trafficking into Malaysia is conducted via cargo containers on large vessels or through smaller fishing boats. In March 2024, Malaysian authorities seized 519 kg of crystal methamphetamine which had been trafficked on board a vessel that originated from Myanmar.<sup>41</sup>

Indonesia is a large destination and transit market for the trafficking of crystalline methamphetamine from the Golden Triangle, 80 per cent of which enters the country via maritime channels.<sup>42</sup> Drugs

are largely trafficked via the Indian Ocean, the Strait of Malacca, and small ports and unofficial landings in Aceh, West Java, and Jakarta.<sup>43</sup> The majority of methamphetamine that enters Indonesia is trafficked into the country by sea vessels along numerous maritime routes from the west coast of Malaysia to Sumatra and several other routes from the eastern parts of Malaysia to various parts of Indonesia. Traffickers use a variety of vessels to transport methamphetamine from Malaysia into Indonesia, including speedboats, large passenger boats, ferries and fishing boats. Methamphetamine transactions made along this route into Indonesia also use the ship-to-ship method, by which a Malaysian courier will deliver the drugs to a discreet location, such as fish, crab and shrimp farms, where an Indonesian courier will pick up the drugs for further trafficking.<sup>44</sup>

Some of the methamphetamine arriving from Malaysia is trafficked to Jakarta and other large urban centers, particularly in Java, while a larger portion is intended for onwards trafficking to other markets, particularly Australia. For instance, in July 2024, Indonesia seized 106 kg of crystal methamphetamine in waters of Batam, in the Riau Islands, across the Singapore Strait from Singapore, from a Singapore-flagged vessel that had been hired by a prominent drug trafficking network (Mutu network). Authorities arrested 10 Indonesian crew members and three Indian nationals who smuggled the drug into Indonesia from Malaysia, along the frequently used Malaysia to Riau trafficking route. The methamphetamine was concealed in a modified diesel oil tank and was destined for Brisbane, Australia.<sup>45</sup>

In the Philippines, most of the crystal methamphetamine seized in 2024 continued to be smuggled into the country through maritime channels, primarily via ship-to-ship transfer, where drugs dropped offshore are retrieved by another vessel and then tied to ropes and pulled ashore by smuggling groups. There are two main trafficking routes for methamphetamine entering the country: the northern maritime route to Luzon and the southern maritime route through the Zambasulta region. Drug trafficking groups in the Philippines are known to rent or lease resorts and

39 NCID of Malaysia, “Country report”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

40 Royal Malaysia Police, “Malaysia Country Presentation”, ADLOMICO 2024, October 2024.

41 NCID of Malaysia, “Country report”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

42 National Narcotics Board (BNN) of Indonesia, “Indonesia Country Report (Illegal Drug Trends and the Responses on Drug Crimes in Indonesia)”, 2024, ADLOMICO 2024, October 2024.

43 BNN of Indonesia, “Country report”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

44 BNN of Indonesia, “Indonesia Country Report (Illegal Drug Trends and the Responses on Drug Crimes in Indonesia)”, 2024, ADLOMICO 2024, October 2024.

45 Ibid.

**Map 6. Maritime drug trafficking flows from Myanmar to Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, 2024 and 2025 (May)**



Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Flows arrows represent the general direction of trafficking and do not coincide with precise sources of production or manufacture, are not actual routes.

Source: UNODC elaboration based on data, information, and intelligence from drug authorities in East and Southeast Asia.

other commercial establishments along coastlines as cover for unloading and storing illicit shipments. Foiled shipments, along with others that were not thwarted, eventually make their way to Philippine markets. In addition, authorities in the Philippines have observed some drug trafficking through seaports or international container ports.<sup>46</sup> The primary crystal methamphetamine flows into Indonesia continue to consist of Chinese tea package methamphetamine from Myanmar transported in cargo containers and often transiting Malaysia.

Once the drug shipment reaches the Philippines' shores, traffickers typically use various inland distribution methods, depending on the volume of the shipment. For large-scale smuggling operations, where drug loads typically range from 500 kilograms to 1.5 tons, traffickers rely on privately owned vehicles to transport the illicit cargo further inland. For smaller-scale operations, traffickers diversify their transportation methods to evade detection. These include utilizing drug couriers or mules,

exploiting parcel delivery services, and leveraging commercial transportation such as buses, ferries, and even airline routes to move drugs more discreetly.<sup>47</sup>

### **Sabah, Malaysia, serves as a major maritime trafficking hubs in archipelagic Southeast Asian countries**

Over the last five years, the amount of crystal methamphetamine seized in Malaysia has remained relatively stable, ranging between 8 and 10 tons. In 2024, Malaysian authorities seized 8.7 tons, marking 16 per cent less than in the preceding year, when a record 10.3 tons were confiscated. As in previous years, Selangor - situated on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia - recorded the largest amount of crystal methamphetamine seized in the country in 2024, amounting to 3.6 tons,<sup>48</sup> indicating its role as not only a major entry point but also an exit point primarily toward North Sumatra, Indonesia. On the

46 PDEA of the Philippines, "Country briefing", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

47 Ibid; Official communication with PDEA, April 2025.

48 Official communication with NCID of Malaysia, April 2025.

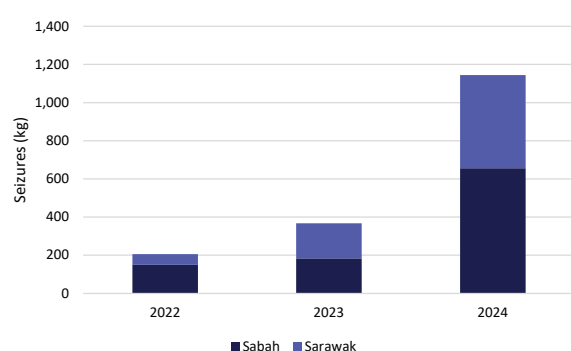


other hand, crystal methamphetamine seizures in the Thai-border provinces of Kelantan and Perlis, near the border with Thailand, fell sharply in 2024. Combined seizures dropped by nearly 80 per cent, from 3.8 tons in 2023 to 862 kg in 2024.<sup>49</sup> This trend suggests that traffickers operating along the land border with Thailand may be avoiding overland routes and increasingly turning to maritime or cargo trafficking directly to Port Klang in Selangor.

Meanwhile, there are growing indications of increased quantities of crystal methamphetamine being trafficked to Sabah and Sarawak from Peninsular Malaysia. For instance, combined seizures of crystal methamphetamine in Sabah and Sarawak continued to increase between 2022 and 2024, reaching 1,143 kg in the latter year, representing more than a five-fold increase during the period.<sup>50</sup> Sabah's strategic location – bordering Indonesia's North Kalimantan and its geographical proximity to the Zambasulta region of the Philippines provides incentives for organized crime groups to move larger quantities of crystal methamphetamine through the state.

It appears that transnational organized crime groups have been moving drugs from the east coastal states of Peninsular Malaysia, such as Terengganu, to Sarawak and ultimately to Sabah using small fishing boats and unregistered vessels as well as air cargos and parcel posts, before trafficking them onward to other countries, in particular to the Philippines. Seizure cases indicate that Pulau Sebatik and Stangkai serve as key exit points from Sabah to neighboring countries.

**Figure 6. Seizures of crystal methamphetamine in Sabah and Sarawak, Malaysia, 2022-2024**



Source: NCID of Malaysia.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

According to the Philippines Drug Enforcement Agency, the Upik Gang, one of the major drug trafficking syndicates operating in the country, is believed to transport approximately 2 tons of crystal methamphetamine annually via the Sabah–Zambasulta corridor, and some quantities transit the region for further trafficking to Indonesia and Australia. The group reportedly sources its drugs from Myanmar and transports high volumes of drugs through maritime channels or via air cargoes to Sabah.<sup>51</sup>

Additionally, Philippine authorities have also seized large amounts of crystal methamphetamine, particularly in Zamboanga and Cebu, in new teabag packaging. Previously, most of the methamphetamine seized in the Philippines was concealed in the typical gold and green teabags typical for production sites in the Golden Triangle. However, in 2024, authorities seized methamphetamine in packaging that indicated a significant Malaysian influence on production in Shan State and/or that transnational organized crime groups operate repackaging operations in Malaysia, with the seized drugs concealed in dried durian packaging and “Duri Hitam7” teabags and smuggled from Sabah through the Sulu Sea to the southwestern Philippines.<sup>52</sup>

### **The region around Mindanao emerged as an alternative source of methamphetamine in the Philippines**

The region around Mindanao has emerged as a main hub of drug distribution in the Philippines and is a primary gateway for drug inflows coming from Sabah, Malaysia through the Sulu archipelago. These flows originate primarily in Myanmar, with drugs dropped at sea in the Andaman Sea and retrieved by a mothership, for delivery to another ship in the western Philippines and destined to Mindanao.

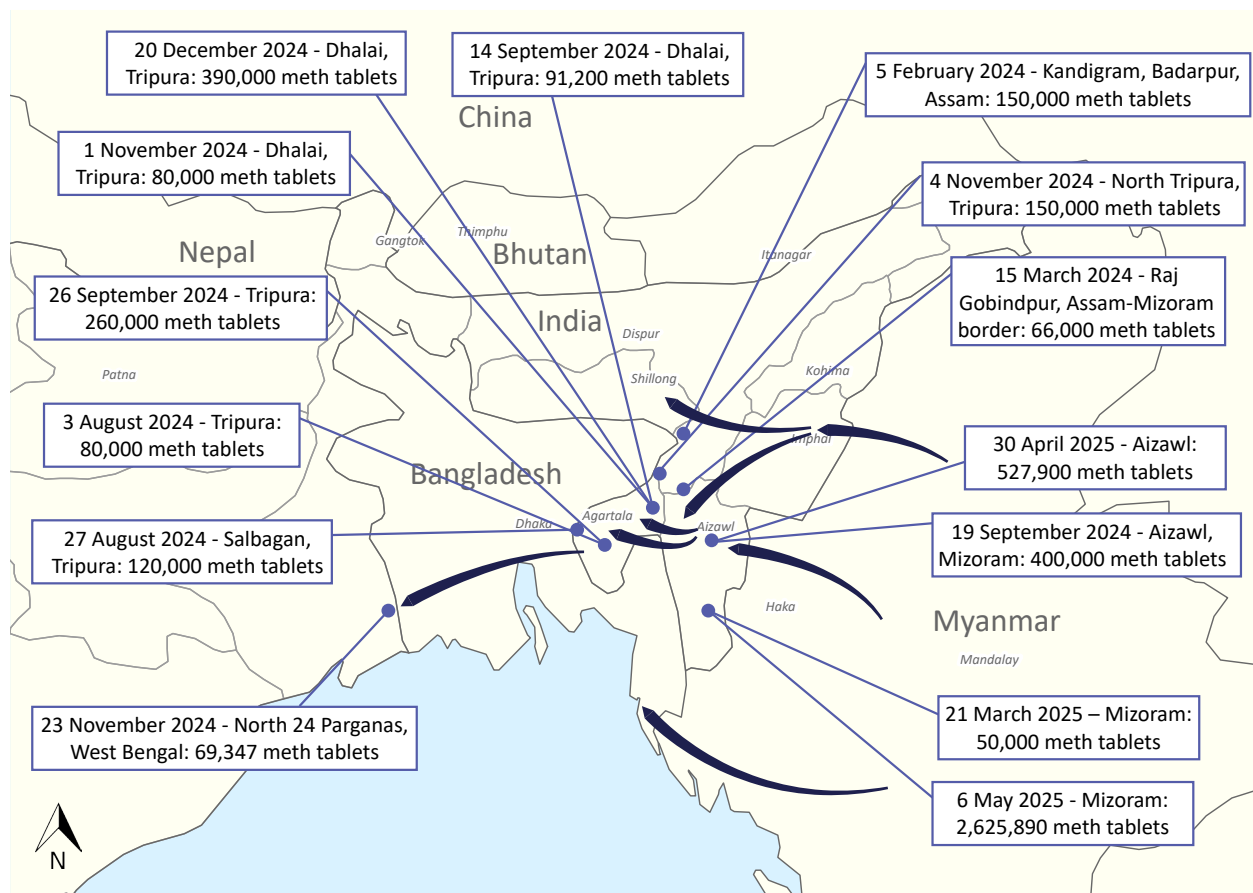
The increasing importance of this route for drug traffickers is in part due to its multiple access points and the relative ease of transporting illicit drugs across inter-island ferry connections, given also that drug deliveries shall only pass two inter-island seaports (Liloan port and Allen port).<sup>53</sup> Drug

<sup>51</sup> PDEA of the Philippines, “Country briefing”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

**Map 7. Major methamphetamine seizures and trafficking flows in northeastern India, 2024 and 2025 (May)**



Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Methamphetamine tablet seizure data not reported as number of tablets were converted into estimated tablet equivalent to 90mg per tablet. Flows arrows represent the general direction of trafficking and do not coincide with precise sources of production or manufacture, are not actual routes. Source: UNODC elaboration based seizure cases reported from authorities in northeastern India.

transactions across Mindanao are facilitated by both online and traditional methods.<sup>54</sup> The drug trade in the Mindanao region is expanding amid the volatile security environment and presence of non-state armed groups in the area.

### Increased westward methamphetamine flows from Myanmar to South Asia, particularly Northeast India

India has become an important destination point for methamphetamine trafficked from Myanmar, demonstrating growing inter-regional integration in drug trafficking and expanding markets in South Asia. A large portion of the methamphetamine smuggled along the westward route to South Asia is transported by drug smugglers to Mizoram in India, adjacent to Bangladesh and Myanmar. Drugs

are smuggled from Myanmar across the border into Mizoram, particularly to Champhai district, where drugs are stored and then smuggled to various locations on the India-Bangladesh border.<sup>55</sup> While there is no segregated data for methamphetamine tablets and crystal methamphetamine in India, year-on-year seizures of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) – most of which are believed to be methamphetamine – have increased significantly over the past five years. In 2024, law enforcement authorities across India seized 8.2 tons of ATS, marking a 500 per cent increase compared to 2020. This steep rise is primarily attributed to the Nicobar Islands case reported in November, which involved 5.5 tons of crystal methamphetamine originating from Myanmar.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> PDEA of the Philippines, "Country briefing", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

<sup>55</sup> Myanmar Ministry of Planning and Finance Customs Department, WCO Regional Workshop for Drug Enforcement Experts in the Asia-Pacific Region, Seoul, April 2024.

<sup>56</sup> For more detailed information regarding the case, see the "Cross-cutting challenges" section of this report.

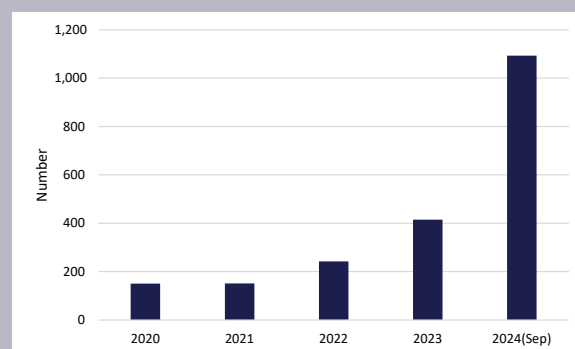
## Trafficking of methamphetamine to Pacific Island countries and territories and its implications

There is a growing body of evidence that Pacific Island countries and territories (PICT) are facing serious challenges due to the increasing presence of transnational drug trafficking syndicates and the rising availability of methamphetamine. In January 2024, the Fiji Police Force (FPF) and the Australian Federal Police (AFP) seized a total of 4.27 tons of methamphetamine under Operation Nautilus. The successful operation led to 14 arrests, including those alleged to have facilitated the landing of the drugs in Fiji and the Fijian organizers responsible for stockpiling the drugs.<sup>57</sup> A seizure as large as 4.27 tons is an indicator of the level of organized crime impacting the Pacific. Seizures of this scale are uncommon, and typical only in drug-producing jurisdictions, indicating the scale of operations now impacting PICTs.

The methamphetamine crisis in Fiji has presented several social challenges, including health impacts associated with intravenous drug use. During the first nine months of 2024, the Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services recorded 1,093 new cases of HIV, with 223 of those cases attributed to intravenous drug use.<sup>58</sup> The Ministry of Health and Medical Services of Fiji has recognized ‘bluetoothing,’ a practice where a user withdraws blood after a drug hit and injects it into a second person, as one of the drivers for the increase together with chemsex.<sup>59</sup> This highlights a lack of awareness within the population of the dangers of intravenous drug use, and a need for harm reduction strategies such as needle exchange programs and education. While Fiji appears to be the most affected PICT, the ongoing expansion of trafficking routes and

organized crime within the region would highly likely turn Fiji’s methamphetamine crisis from a national issue to a regional one.

**Figure 7. Number of new HIV cases in Fiji, 2020–2024 (Sep)**



Source: Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Fiji.

The location of Papua New Guinea (PNG), just 150 kilometers from the Australian mainland, has made it a key location for organized crime groups looking to smuggle illicit drugs into Australia via clandestine flights, known as “black flights”.<sup>60</sup> In recent years, AFP have made several arrests of organized crime syndicates attempting to import methamphetamine into Australia from PNG via black flights.<sup>61,62</sup> Similar to Fiji, the growing presence of methamphetamine trafficking through the country could quickly lead to increased methamphetamine availability. Although little information is available about current methamphetamine use in PNG, a rise in use would likely impose significant challenges on PNG communities and public health systems, mirroring the problems now being observed in Fiji.<sup>63</sup>

57 Australian Federal Police (AFP) of Australia, ‘AFP and international partners seize more than 39 tonnes of illicit drugs’, 16 December 2024, available at <https://www.afp.gov.au/news-centre/media-release/afp-and-international-partners-seize-more-39-tonnes-illicit-drugs>.

58 Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) of Fiji, News, ‘Health Ministry Launches Robust Response Plans and Rising HIV cases’, 23 January 2025, available at <https://www.fiji.gov.fj/Media-Centre/News/HEALTH-MINISTRY-LAUNCHES-ROBUST-RESPONSE-PLANS-AMI>.

59 MHMS of Fiji, Press release, ‘Ministry Releases Updated HIV / AIDS Stats’, August 2024, available at <https://www.health.gov.fj/updated-hiv-aids-stats-fiji/?utm>.

60 A black flight is commonly a light aircraft that logs false flight plans (or no log at all), flies at a very low altitude or turns off flight monitoring systems to avoid law enforcement or aviation monitoring systems.

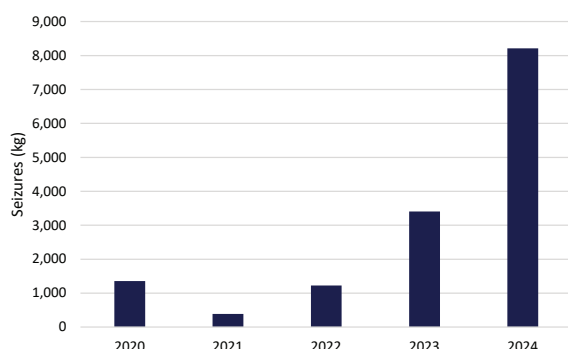
61 AFP of Australia, Press release, ‘Seventh person arrested over black flight meth importation’, 17 January 2024, available at <https://www.afp.gov.au/news-centre/media-release/seventh-person-arrested-over-black-flight-meth-importation>.

62 Ibid.

63 ABC News. ‘Meth arrives in Australia through many routes, but it’s destroying lives on Papua New Guinea’s islands near the Torres Strait’ 18 February 2024, available at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-02-18/png-torres-strait-drug-smugglers-bringing-meth-to-australia/103455440>.



**Figure 8. Seizures of amphetamine-type stimulants in India, 2020-2024**



Source: Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) of India.

In early 2025, trafficking flows of methamphetamine tablets from Myanmar to northeastern states of India, such as Assam, Manipur and Mizoram, continued to be observed. While the trafficking flows have existed for some years, recent seizure events indicate increased scale of trafficking. For instance, in May 2025, Mizoram police seized 236 kg of methamphetamine tablets, valued at ₹ 307 million (approximately US \$3.6 million).<sup>64</sup> This is believed to be the largest quantity ever seized in a single methamphetamine tablet trafficking case in northeast India. In addition, Indian authorities in Lilong, near Imphal in Manipur, also seized 102.5 kg of methamphetamine tablets.<sup>65</sup> Both cases demonstrate the intensified scale of methamphetamine tablet trafficking into northeastern India, following several years of smaller but frequent trafficking flows.

The frequency of crystal methamphetamine trafficking from Myanmar to the northeastern states of India appears to be less significant than methamphetamine tablets. However, Indian authorities have seized several shipments of crystal methamphetamine originating in the Golden Triangle.<sup>66</sup> In addition, seizures of crystal

methamphetamine in 2024 in Sagaing Region of Myanmar, which shares a border with India, increased significantly, from less than 1 kg in 2023 to 441 kg in 2024.<sup>67</sup>

### Active foreign organized crime further diversifying the methamphetamine pipeline into East Asia and archipelagic Southeast Asia

Methamphetamine trafficking flows to archipelagic Southeast Asian countries, as well as to Japan and the Republic of Korea, differ from those in the lower Mekong region, where their methamphetamine markets are sourced almost exclusively from the Golden Triangle.

#### From the Golden Crescent



One of markings of 1.1 tons of methamphetamine seized in the Philippines

Source: PDEA of the Philippines.

Myanmar has been the primary source of crystal methamphetamine in the Philippines for years. However, the proportion of Myanmar methamphetamine seized has been declining since 2022, when 98 per cent of the methamphetamine seized in the Philippines was found to have originated from Myanmar; in 2023, the proportion decreased to 60 per cent of total seizures and dropped further in 2024 to 54 per cent.<sup>68</sup> The decline in the portion of crystal methamphetamine from Myanmar seized in the Philippines in 2024 is primarily attributed to a single large seizure of 1.1 tons of methamphetamine originating from the Golden Crescent, which accounted for 43 per cent of the total methamphetamine seized in the

<sup>64</sup> Mizoram Police, Press Statement, "Seizure of 236.44 kgs methamphetamine tablets at estimated worth of R.530.72 Crore at local market rate", 06 May 2025, available at <https://police.mizoram.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PR-Huge-Meth-Seizure-Dt.6.5.2025-EngMizo-Combined.pdf>.

<sup>65</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs of India, Press Statement, "Arrest of 3 people in Assam and seizure of 30.4 kg methamphetamine tablets worth Rs 24.32 crore is a big blow to drug mafia", 10 April 2025, available at <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2120776>.

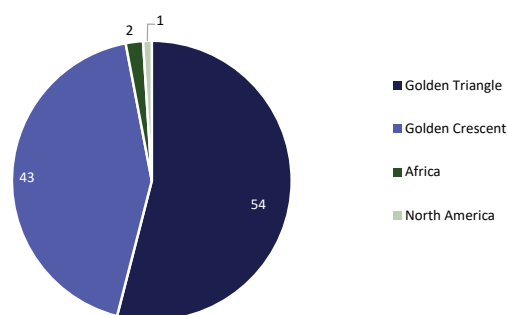
<sup>66</sup> For instance, see Mizoram Police press statement, "Significant seizure of drugs and areca nuts by Mizoram Police", May 2024, available at <https://x.com/mizorampolice/status/1790004101364814017>.

<sup>67</sup> CCDAC of Myanmar.

<sup>68</sup> PDEA of the Philippines, "Country briefing", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

Philippines.<sup>69</sup> Philippine authorities have noted that the 1.1 tons of methamphetamine were transported through the maritime domain off the western Philippines and arranged by a North America-based organized crime group.<sup>70</sup>

**Figure 9. Proportions of origins of methamphetamine found in the Philippines by source, 2024**



Source: PDEA of the Philippines.

The emergence of methamphetamine sourced from the Golden Crescent in the Philippine drug market was first identified in 2021. A trafficking assessment in 2023 pointed to the Golden Crescent methamphetamine gaining a foothold in the local market through smaller shipments facilitated by Pakistani brokers. This trend may also indicate that traffickers are now willing to take greater risks by moving larger quantities through maritime routes. One key factor behind this growing trend is the apparent improvement in the quality of methamphetamine sourced from the Golden Crescent. Previously, reports indicated that Filipino drug users were hesitant to adopt this variant due to its inferior quality.<sup>71</sup>

Indonesia and Malaysia also reported a higher level of drug trafficking from the Golden Crescent, sometimes as transit locations for trafficking to third countries. In January 2025, Malaysian authorities seized just 33.2 tons of paraffin wax some of which was infused with methamphetamine, shipped from the Islamic Republic of Iran and transited Malaysia and destined for Australia. At the time of writing, the exact amount of methamphetamine infused in the wax is unknown, and forensic testing is ongoing.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Official communication with the Department of Chemistry (KIMIA) of Malaysia, May 2025.

Iranian drug syndicates continue to traffic large quantities of drugs into Indonesia, typically by sea, and in 2024 Indonesian authorities continued to seize methamphetamine originating in the Islamic Republic of Iran from large sea cargo consignments, including 319.5 kg of methamphetamine seized at Banten province on the west coast of Sumatra which were concealed in the engine room of the vessel.<sup>73</sup> However, Indonesian authorities noted that the quality of methamphetamine trafficked by Iranian syndicates is generally lower than that of the Golden Triangle, indicating insufficient refinement methods. This finding is consistent with reports from other countries in the region, including Australia.<sup>74</sup>

### From North America

Over the past few years, methamphetamine from North America has been increasingly trafficked to some parts of the region, including Indonesia, Hong Kong, China, Japan, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea.<sup>75</sup>

Hong Kong, China is increasingly being used as a transit and transshipment hub for Mexican methamphetamine, some of which first transits Canada. Authorities in Hong Kong, China have arrested traffickers who attempted to falsify bills of lading to conceal the true origin, contents, and parties involved.<sup>76</sup> In May 2024, authorities seized 264 kg of liquid methamphetamine originating from Mexico, together with chemicals and tools and equipment that could be used to crystallize methamphetamine; seizures from Mexico in the previous two years include 1.1 tons seized in 2023, and 1.8 tons of liquid methamphetamine concealed in a shipment of coconut water seized in 2022.<sup>77</sup>

In 2024, the Inter-Agency Drug Interdiction Task Forces in Ninoy Aquino International and Clark airports in the Philippines seized a total of 32.4 kg of methamphetamine in five cases involving drug parcels from North America, specifically

<sup>73</sup> BNN of Indonesia “Country briefing”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> UNODC, “Regional situation and overview on synthetic drugs in East and Southeast Asia”, 2024 SMART Forensics workshop September 2024.

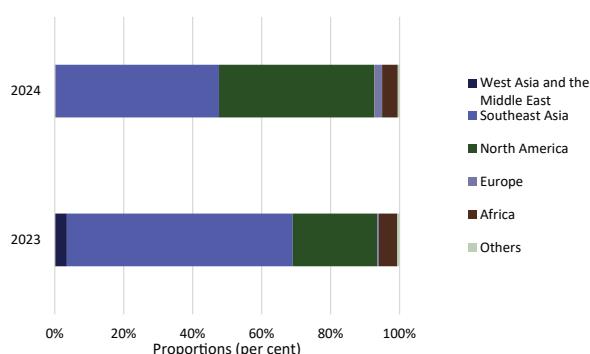
<sup>76</sup> World Customs Organization, “Methamphetamine Trends”, WCO Sub-Regional Workshop on Customs and Drug Enforcement, 2-4 April 2024, Seoul.

<sup>77</sup> UNODC, “Regional situation and overview on synthetic drugs in East and Southeast Asia”, 2024 SMART Forensics workshop September 2024.

the United States (31.2 kg, 3 cases), Canada, and Mexico. Although the number and volume of methamphetamine seizures is not alarming, these cases indicate a notable uptick in trafficking from North America to the Philippines. In addition, there are local drug networks which are diversifying their supply lines to non-traditional supply channels. Philippine authorities report that some of the methamphetamine can be traced back to Mexican drug cartels, either through direct shipments from Mexico or via transshipment through the United States and Canada.<sup>78</sup> In Indonesia, authorities seized large amounts of methamphetamine in 2024 from the postal stream in DHL packages that were found to be connected to Mexicans in the Philippines and Mexico.<sup>79</sup> Forensic data show that the purity of methamphetamine trafficked from Mexico into the country is significantly low, with numerous samples containing less than 20 per cent methamphetamine.<sup>80</sup>

In the Republic of Korea, both the proportion and quantity of crystal methamphetamine trafficked from North America increased in 2024 compared to the preceding year, demonstrating the growing importance of methamphetamine trafficking flows from North America to the country. While crystal methamphetamine from Southeast Asian countries continued to account for the largest proportion, an almost equal quantity of the drug originated from North America in 2024.

**Figure 10. Proportions of the origins of crystal methamphetamine seized in the Republic of Korea by quantity and region, 2023 and 2024**



Source: SPO of the Republic of Korea.

78 PDEA of the Philippines, “Country briefing”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

79 BNN of Indonesia, “Indonesia Country Report (Illegal Drug Trends and the Responses on Drug Crimes in Indonesia)”, ADLOMICO, October 2024.

80 PDEA of the Philippines, “Country briefing”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

Japan also reported large-scale crystal methamphetamine seizures originating from North America in recent years. According to media reports, in January 2025, Japanese authorities seized 320 kg of crystal methamphetamine trafficked from the United States and arrested one Canadian national.<sup>81</sup> The drug was concealed in a milling machine that was stored at a private warehouse in Kuki city, Saitama, near Tokyo. The primary suspect was believed to be acting under instruction from a North America-based drug trafficking syndicate.<sup>82</sup> This case, along with the others mentioned above, suggest organized crime groups from North America attempt to expand their influence in some parts of East and Southeast Asia.

### From Africa

Drug trafficking networks based in Africa continue to target some drug markets in Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines. In 2024, authorities in Pasay City seized 31.7 kg of crystal methamphetamine from a parcel that had been delivered from Zimbabwe. The drug was concealed in spare machine parts, and the shipment is the second-largest drug parcel ever seized in the Philippines – in 2023, airport authorities seized a parcel containing 59 kg of crystal methamphetamine which had been shipped from Guinea.<sup>83</sup> In addition, Philippine authorities also have seized methamphetamine originating from South Africa, Nigeria, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Madagascar.<sup>84</sup>



Cotton rolls containing methamphetamine seized in Thailand  
Source: ONCB of Thailand.

81 Tokyo Reporter, “Canadian executive accused of smuggling 320 kg of meth into Japan” January 2025, available at <https://www.tokyoreporter.com/crime/canadian-executive-accused-of-smuggling-320-kg-meth-into-japan/>

82 Ibid.

83 PDEA of the Philippines, “Country briefing”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

84 Ibid.

In January 2025, Thai drug law enforcement authorities, in collaboration with military and customs agencies, seized approximately 1.65 tons of crystal methamphetamine concealed within cotton rolls at a warehouse in Bangkok.<sup>85</sup> Investigations revealed that the methamphetamine originated in Africa and was smuggled into Thailand via India, disguised as textile shipments, before being intercepted en route to a third country. The average purity of methamphetamine samples collected from the seizure was 95.8 per cent.<sup>86</sup>

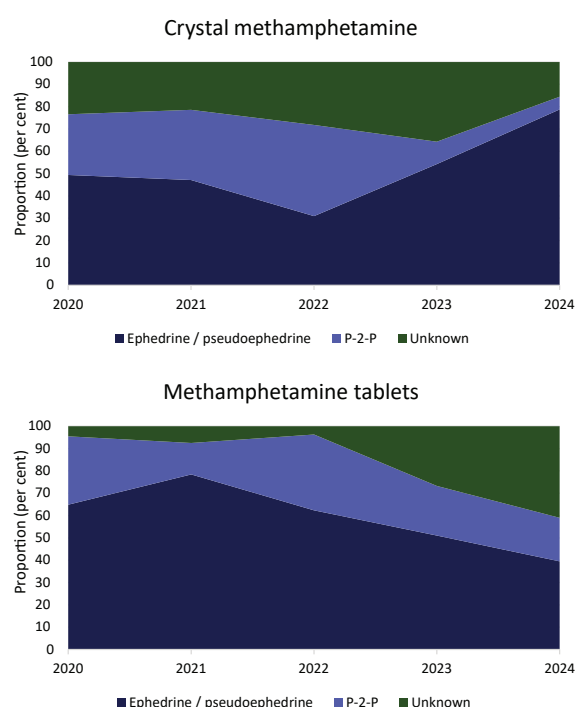
### Forensic profiles of methamphetamine: rising use of ephedrine or pseudoephedrine-based methods in crystal methamphetamine manufacturing in the Golden Triangle

Forensic profiling of methamphetamine tablets and crystal methamphetamine samples in Thailand indicates diverging manufacturing trends between the two forms. Between 2022 and 2024, the proportion of crystal methamphetamine samples synthesized with ephedrine/pseudoephedrine-based methods rose from approximately 31 per cent to 79 per cent.<sup>87</sup> Notably, 2022 had been the first year in which crystal methamphetamine samples analyzed in Thailand showed a higher share of P-2-P-based synthesis routes than ephedrine/pseudoephedrine routes. However, this shift was short-lived. In 2024, crystal methamphetamine samples believed to have been manufactured using P-2-P-based methods accounted for only five per cent of all samples, marking a significant decrease from 41 per cent in 2022.<sup>88</sup> The proportion of samples classified as “unknown” — where specific markers associated with either ephedrine/pseudoephedrine or P-2-P-based methods could not be identified —also declined, falling to 16 per cent in 2024.<sup>89</sup>

In contrast, forensic profiling of methamphetamine tablet samples analyzed in Thailand reveals a diverging trend. Since 2021, the share of tablets made via ephedrine/pseudoephedrine-based methods has fallen to 40 per cent by 2024, while P-2-P-based methods declined to 19 per cent the same year.<sup>90</sup> This shift was driven by a sharp increase

in the proportion of “unknown” samples, which rose from a minuscule four per cent in 2022 to 41 per cent in 2024.<sup>91</sup> However, if these “unknown” samples were excluded from the analysis, methamphetamine tablet samples associated with ephedrine/pseudoephedrine-based methods accounted for between 65 to 70 per cent during the period from 2022 to 2024, confirming their higher prevalence compared to samples associated with P-2-P-based manufacturing methods. This trend indicates an increased availability of non-controlled chemicals that serve as precursors for ephedrine/pseudoephedrine.

**Figure 11. Chemical profiles of crystal methamphetamine and methamphetamine tablet samples analyzed in Thailand, 2020-2024**



Source: ONCB, Thailand.

Forensic profiling data from Thailand provide valuable insights into illicit methamphetamine manufacturing practices in the Golden Triangle, since nearly all methamphetamine found in the country originates there. The high share of crystal methamphetamine samples synthesized via ephedrine/pseudoephedrine-based methods in 2024 suggests that supply chains for ephedrine/pseudoephedrine or their precursors were less disrupted than in previous years. Meanwhile, the surge in “unknown” tablet samples points to more complex and diverse tableting networks, which can obscure the chemical markers used to trace specific precursor routes.

85 ONCB of Thailand, Press release, available at <https://www.oncb.go.th/news/6882>.

86 Official communication with ONCB, Thailand, April 2025.

87 DAINAP; Official communication with ONCB Thailand conducted in April 2025.

88 Official communication with ONCB Thailand conducted in April 2025.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.



Indonesia did not report any seizures of precursor chemicals in 2024. However, forensic analysis shows that methamphetamine seized in Indonesia during the year continued to use ephedrine as the starting material. Of the 18 samples analyzed in 2024, seven samples used ephedrine as the starting material and one sample was synthesized from 1-Phenyl-2-propanone (P-2-P). Other samples used a combination of starting materials, where the specific route impurities for ephedrine and P-2-P were simultaneously detected in the samples. All samples analyzed were dextro-methamphetamine.<sup>92</sup>

### Significant gaps in regional visibility on precursor chemical flows in 2024

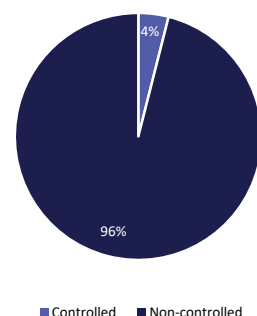
Transnational organized crime groups in the region have continued to drive a massive surge of synthetic drug production, following the migration of capacity to northern Myanmar a decade ago. This has significantly expanded both the size of the regional synthetic drug market and the reach of supply networks. Central to this ongoing challenge is the diversion and trafficking of chemicals.

As noted in an earlier section, ephedrine/pseudoephedrine continued to be the main precursors for methamphetamine produced in the Golden Triangle while some proportions of the drug were being manufactured with P-2-P. However, there have been virtually no reported seizures of ephedrine/pseudoephedrine or P-2-P. This trend points to the growing use of non-controlled chemicals that can be used to illicitly synthesize these controlled precursors. This disparity highlights the ongoing challenge of detecting key chemicals in Southeast Asia, a vulnerability that could be exploited by organized crime groups outside the region to target it as both a source and transit point for chemical supplies beyond Southeast Asia.

One positive note is that authorities in the region have started reporting increasing seizures of non-controlled chemicals in recent years. However, these have largely involved non-essential chemicals, with only limited amounts of chemicals necessary for the illicit synthesis of ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, and P-2-P being seized.

<sup>92</sup> BNN of Indonesia, "Country briefing", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

**Figure 12. Proportions of chemicals seized in Myanmar by control status and quantity, 2024**



Note: Chemicals are classified based on the international control status not national control status.

Source: CCDAC, Myanmar.

### Evolving methods of sourcing precursor chemicals

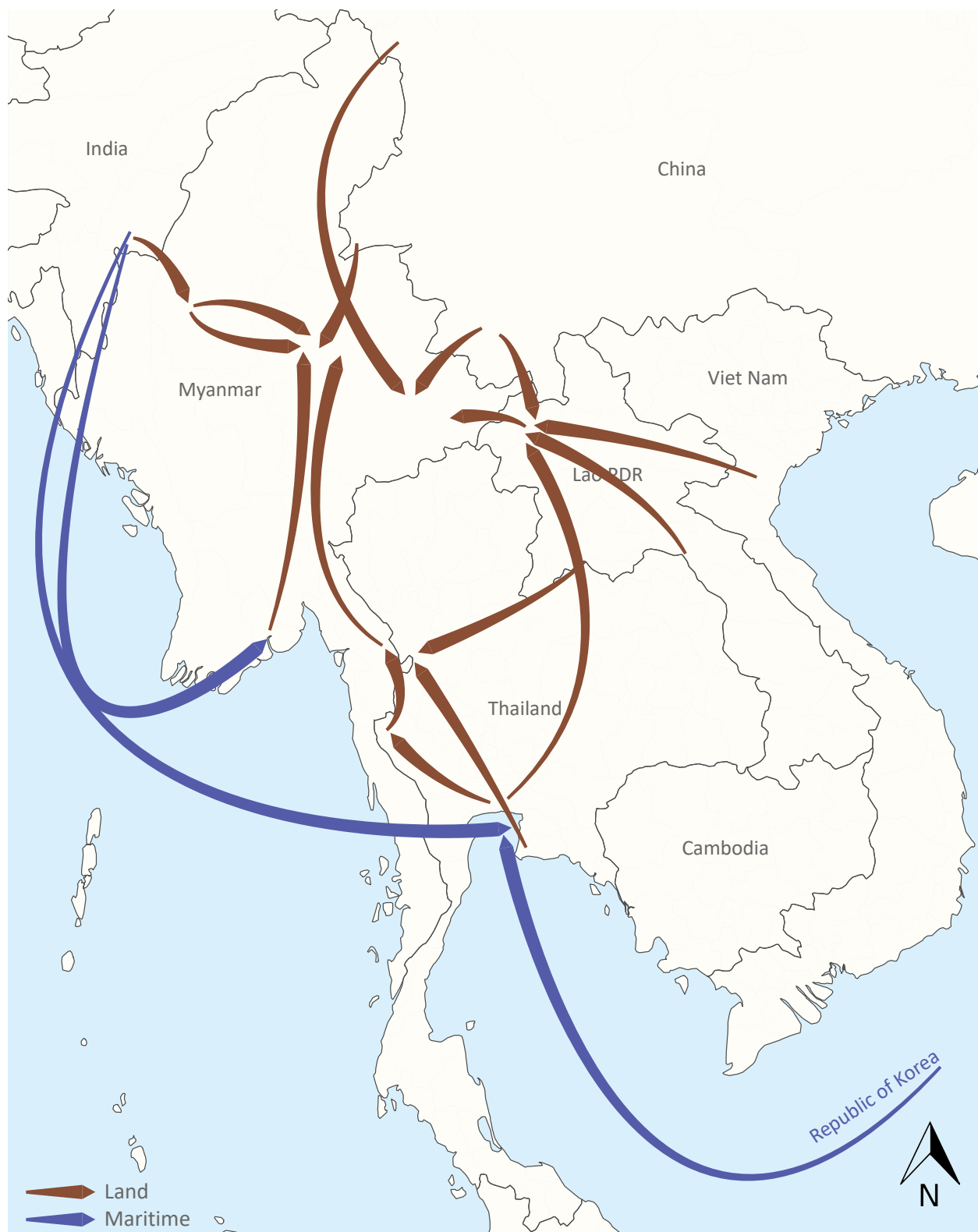
In the Mekong countries, drug-producing groups rely on networks of companies to facilitate their operations, including importations of precursor chemicals, particularly in the Special Regions of Myanmar. Chemicals continue to be trafficked into Myanmar from and via neighbouring countries, including Bangladesh, China, India, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam. Myanmar authorities noted that since 2023, routes for trafficking chemicals have shifted from northern Shan State (via China) to Kachin State, with increased seizures reported at the Myanmar–India border.<sup>93</sup>

In 2024, Myanmar authorities seized various non-controlled chemicals such as thionyl chloride, sodium cyanide, and methylamine. However, no seizures of ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, or their precursors, or other Table I substances, were reported. The only Table II substances seized were 440 litres of toluene and 560 litres of hydrochloric acid (and 60 kg in January and February 2025).<sup>94</sup> Seizures of non-controlled chemicals including large amounts of sodium cyanide, were concentrated around Mandalay and along National Highway 3 that connects the region to the drug producing areas of North Shan. Large seizures of non-controlled chemicals also occurred around Sagaing Region and parts of Kachin State.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>93</sup> CCDAC of Myanmar "Country briefing", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> CCDAC of Myanmar, "Existing chemical control measures in Myanmar", Regional Workshop on Prevention of Chemical Diversion Shanghai, China, October 2024.

**Map 8. Chemical trafficking routes into Myanmar, 2023 and 2024**

Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Data included cases involving all chemicals and bulking agents, not solely limited to the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine, but also related to other drugs and purposes that may not be connected to drug production. Flows arrows represent the general direction of trafficking and do not coincide with precise sources of production or manufacture, are not actual routes.

Sources: DAINAP and UNODC elaboration based on data, information, and intelligence from drug authorities in East and Southeast Asia.

There are two notable non-controlled chemicals seized in Myanmar that can be used for synthesizing ephedrine/pseudoephedrine or P-2-P. In August 2024, Myanmar authorities seized 4,420 litres of propiophenone, also known as P-1-P, in Sagaing, Myanmar. The shipment originated from India. Propiophenone can be used to produce ephedrine or pseudoephedrine when combined with other chemicals. In addition, Myanmar authorities seized 32,800 litres of benzyl cyanide, which can also be used in the synthesis of P-2-P.

The major precursor trafficking routes through Thailand to drug-producing groups in Myanmar have remained relatively unchanged in recent years. Most of the smuggled chemicals are transported into Thailand on cargo ships into Laem Chabang seaport and then smuggled overland into Myanmar via the northward route through Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai into Shan State, Myanmar, or along the westward route through Kanchanaburi and Tak into Karen State. There is also some smuggling of chemicals that are smuggled indirectly from Laem Chabang port to Myanmar via Lao PDR. For instance, in July 2024, Thai authorities seized 83.5 tons of acetone destined for Myanmar at Laem Chabang.<sup>96</sup> Some chemicals are trafficked into Myanmar through Thai waters directly into Myanmar. In July 2024, Thai authorities detected 90 tons of toluene that originated in the Republic of Korea and was passing through Thailand to Myanmar.<sup>97</sup>

Thailand has seized increasing quantities of chemicals destined for Myanmar, including several large seizures at its western border opposite Karen State.<sup>98</sup> Notably, in October 2024, Thai authorities seized more than 800 tons of chemicals used in the manufacture of methamphetamine tablets from a warehouse in Tak province. The seized chemicals, stored for further trafficking across the nearby border into Myanmar, included 188 tons of toluene and 192 tons of acetone. In the previous month, Thai authorities seized 12.8 tons of acetone which was destined for Myanmar, from a truck at a checkpoint in Tak.<sup>99</sup>

China remained a primary country of origin for chemicals used in methamphetamine manufacture in Myanmar. Some of the chemicals seized in Myanmar that originated from China in 2024 included sulphuric acid, sodium cyanide, and nitric acid. China seized 535.9 tons of various precursor chemicals in 2024, marking a 26.5 per cent increase from 2023. Chinese authorities noted that more than 10 new precursor chemicals were identified in 2024.<sup>100</sup> Chinese authorities also have observed organized crime networks seeking more varieties of non-scheduled chemicals as raw materials.<sup>101</sup>

In 2023 and 2024, Vietnamese authorities detected no diversion and trafficking of precursor chemicals.<sup>102</sup> However, Viet Nam was noted by New Zealand authorities as the source of the largest single ephedrine seizure (404 kg) in 2024. Viet Nam had not previously been a major source of ephedrine in New Zealand with most previously originating in China.<sup>103</sup>

### Decreasing methamphetamine retail prices in some countries are a result of high supply levels

Methamphetamine prices vary widely across the region, with the lowest prices found in markets near drug production facilities in Shan State, and increasing prices the further the drugs are trafficked. Per gram retail prices of crystal methamphetamine is lowest in Myanmar at US \$6.<sup>104</sup> The retail price is higher once the drug crosses the border into Thailand, where the average price in 2024 was approximately US \$24.

However, average methamphetamine prices decreased in most jurisdictions in 2024, reflecting the high supply levels in those markets. In the Philippines, the average retail price of 1 gram of crystal methamphetamine in 2024 was US \$79, marking a 30 per cent decrease compared to

96 ONCB of Thailand, "Country report", ADEC 2025, February 2025.

97 ONCB of Thailand, "Existing chemical control measures in Thailand", the Regional Workshop on Prevention of Chemical Diversion Shanghai, China, 22-24 October 2024.

98 ONCB of Thailand, "Country report", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

99 ONCB, "Thailand country report 2023-2024", ADLOMICO 2024, October 2024.

100 NNCC of China "Current Drug Situation in China", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

101 NNCC of China, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in China", 2024 Regional Workshop for East and Southeast Asia, September 2024.

102 CNPD of Viet Nam "Existing chemical control measures in Viet Nam", Regional Workshop on Prevention of Chemical Diversion Shanghai, China, October 2024.

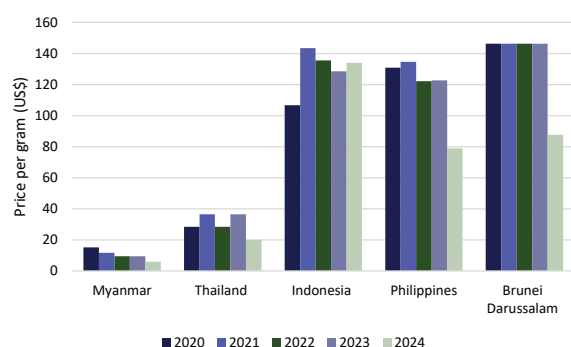
103 New Zealand Police, "2024 Snapshot of Illicit Drug Seizures from Asia", April 2025.

104 Official communication with CCDAC of China, April 2025.



2022 and the lowest retail prices since 2004.<sup>105</sup> The lowest methamphetamine prices were observed in Mindanao, the National Capital Region and in Calabarzon regions, indicating the intensity of drug trafficking activities and the high supply levels in these identified drug epicenters.<sup>106</sup> The average retail price of crystal methamphetamine decreased even further in Brunei Darussalam from US \$146.25 per gram in 2023 to US \$87.60 in 2024.<sup>107</sup> In addition, in Hong Kong, China, retail prices in 2024 averaged US \$68.44 per gram, the lowest level since 2019.<sup>108</sup>

**Figure 13. Changes in retail prices of crystal methamphetamine per gram in US\$ in select countries in Southeast Asia, 2020-2024**



Source: DAINAP.

In contrast, retail prices of drugs in China have remained high in recent years. In 2024, one gram of crystal methamphetamine is reported to cost approximately US \$293, with higher prices in eastern and northeastern provinces, indicating a high price point relative to the region.<sup>109</sup> In Macau, China, the retail price of crystal methamphetamine has remained unchanged at US \$412.50 per gram since 2019.<sup>110</sup> The retail price also remained stable in the Republic of Korea at US \$300.

### Large differences in wholesale prices of crystal methamphetamine corresponding to distance from production sites

The wholesale prices for one kilogram of crystal methamphetamine show significant increases as the drug is trafficked further from its origins. The price for one kilogram of crystal methamphetamine at the production site in Shan State is reported to be US \$450, while the average wholesale price in Thailand is US \$4,330; however, Thai authorities noted that prices on Thailand's northern and northeastern border (US \$3,000 per kg) are considerably lower than national average prices. No significant changes have been observed in the prices of major drugs in Cambodia between 2024 and early 2025. The average wholesale price of crystal methamphetamine in Phnom Penh during this period was reported at US \$7,000 per kg, while in Stung Treng province, bordering Lao PDR, it ranged between US \$4,500 and 5,500 per kg. In 2025, the wholesale price for one kilogram of crystal methamphetamine in Preah Sihanouk province was between US \$6,000-8,000.<sup>111</sup>

Wholesale crystal methamphetamine prices are much higher in the archipelagic countries in Southeast Asia. For instance, wholesale prices for crystal methamphetamine in Indonesia range from US \$72,785 per kg in Jakarta to US \$158,228 per kg in the Maluku Islands, an archipelago in the eastern part of the country.<sup>112</sup>

The corresponding wholesale price per kilogram in the Philippines decreased significantly, from US \$13,876 in 2022 to US \$6,938 in 2024. In 2024, the average wholesale price of crystal methamphetamine per kilogram in Malaysia continued its downward trend, falling from US \$12,000 in 2019 to US \$8,600 in 2022, and further to US \$6,962 in 2024.

<sup>105</sup> PDEA of the Philippines, "Country briefing", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

<sup>106</sup> PDEA of the Philippines, "Country briefing", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

<sup>107</sup> Official communication with Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) of Brunei Darussalam, February 2025.

<sup>108</sup> UNODC ARQ Hong Kong, China for 2022 and previous years; official communication with NNCC of China, April 2025.

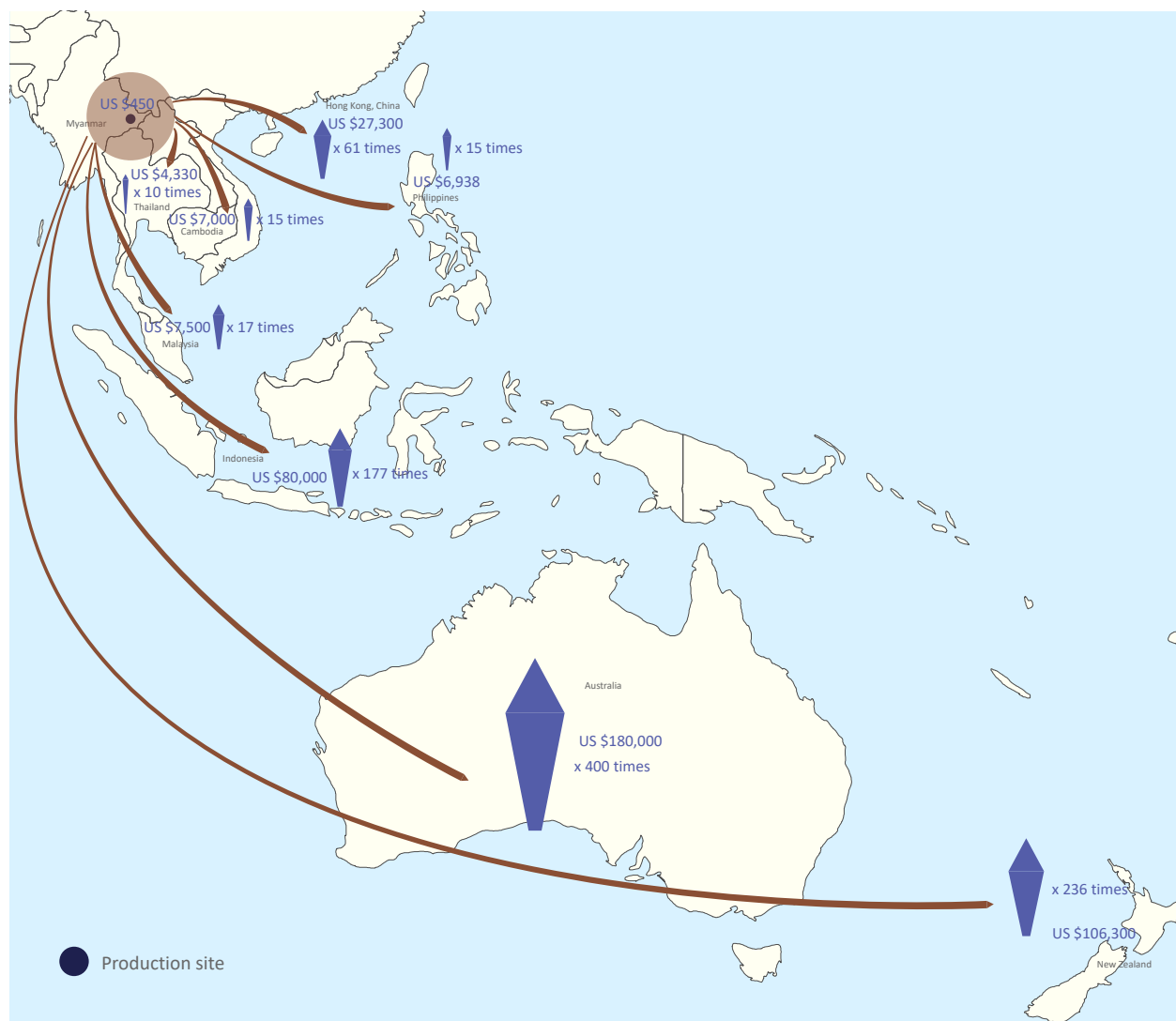
<sup>109</sup> NNCC of China "Current Drug Situation in China", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

<sup>110</sup> UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) China for 2022 and previous years; official communication with NNCC of China, April 2025.

<sup>111</sup> NACD of Cambodia, "Current Drug Situation in Cambodia", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

<sup>112</sup> BNN of Indonesia, "Current Drug Situation in Indonesia", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

**Map 9. Changes in wholesale prices of crystal methamphetamine in US\$ from the production site in Shan State to select destination countries, 2024 or the latest year available**



Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. For the purpose of this map, the midpoint of the upper and lower price points was used for countries reporting price data in a range format.

Source: DAINAP; UNODC, responses to ARQ; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

### Methamphetamine tablet prices remain at historically low levels

Reflecting the expansion of supply, methamphetamine tablet prices continued to decrease in 2024 in Myanmar and Thailand, where supply has reached record levels. Retail prices in Myanmar have decreased for four consecutive years and dropped to US \$0.60 per tablet in Myanmar in 2024, compared to US \$0.95 in the previous year and US \$2.2 in 2020. Prices are slightly higher in Cambodia (US \$1.6 per tablet) and Malaysia (US \$2.3), and prices have remained stable for the past few years. In Thailand, methamphetamine tablet prices ranged from US \$0.8-2.7 per tablet, with the highest prices observed in the southern regions. In

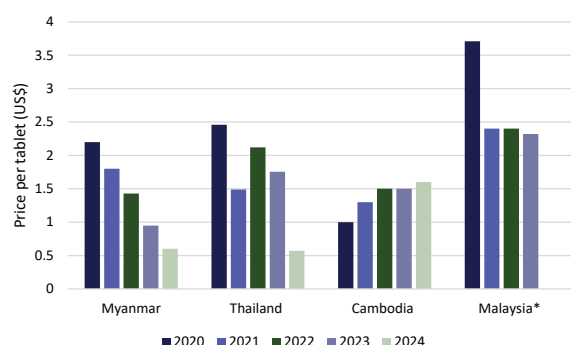
contrast, retail prices of methamphetamine tablets are considerably higher in China (US \$19.3 per tablet), suggesting more limited availability relative to the rest of the Mekong region.<sup>113</sup> The per tablet price is even higher in the Republic of Korea (US \$50), and the price remained stable in 2024.

Wholesale methamphetamine tablet price data are only available in Thailand, where the price per 2,000 tablets in 2024 was US \$577 (THB 20,000), and Myanmar. In Myanmar, the wholesale price of methamphetamine tablets has decreased sharply during the past five years, and in 2024 the wholesale price per kilogram of methamphetamine tablets

<sup>113</sup> NNCC of China "Current Drug Situation in China", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

dropped to US \$6,006, compared to US \$9,524 in 2023 and US \$22,556 in 2019.<sup>114</sup>

**Figure 14. Changes in retail prices of methamphetamine tablet per tablet in US \$ in select countries in Southeast Asia, 2020-2024**



Source: DAINAP; UNODC, responses to ARQ; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

Note: \*Data for Malaysia for 2024 is not available.

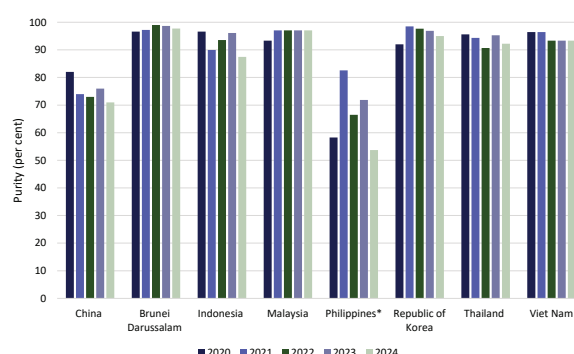
### Crystal methamphetamine purities remain high in several countries but decreased in others, reflecting reduced availability

Crystal methamphetamine purities remained very high (approximately 70-90 per cent) and stable in countries which serve as major transit points such as Malaysia and Thailand. In Thailand, the purity of crystal methamphetamine remained high, with an average of 92.3 per cent methamphetamine.<sup>115</sup> The average purity of crystal methamphetamine in Malaysia has been high at 97 per cent.<sup>116</sup>

The average crystal methamphetamine purity in Indonesia declined to 87.45 per cent in 2024, and showed a wide range (33.95–97.09 per cent). Purity of samples from the Golden Triangle also dropped from 96.1 per cent in 2023 to 88.4 per cent in 2024, corresponding with decreased prices for the drug.<sup>117</sup> The average purity also decreased in the Philippines, indicating that the methamphetamine trafficked from the Golden Triangle in high purities is being adulterated for local market distribution; it may also suggest decreasing availability of the drug and correspond with decreasing seizures of the drug. In China, the purity of crystal methamphetamine

at the retail level slightly declined to 71 per cent in 2024, down from 76 per cent the previous year. Overall decreasing purities in China confirm reduced availability of the drug, in addition to the comparatively high price per gram (US \$293 in 2024 compared to US \$88.43 in 2020).<sup>118</sup> In Hong Kong, China, retail purity of crystal methamphetamine remained stable at approximately 70 per cent. The average purity of crystal methamphetamine in the Republic of Korea remained high at 95 per cent. The high and stable purity, together with the continued high retail price of crystal methamphetamine and the increase in inbound trafficking from various countries, underscore the high market value of the drug in the Republic of Korea.<sup>119</sup>

**Figure 15. Changes in typical purities of crystal methamphetamine in select countries in East and Southeast Asia, 2020-2024**



Source: DAINAP; UNODC, responses to ARQ; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

Note: The 2024 data for the Philippines covers the first six months of the year; Purities reported in base form have been converted to the hydrochloride salt form.

### Purities of methamphetamine tablets remained stable

Purities of methamphetamine tablets continued to vary widely across the region, including in Myanmar where tablets ranged between 13.9-76.0 per cent. Most methamphetamine tablets found in the region contain roughly 10-20 per cent methamphetamine and in 2024 purity levels remained stable in most countries, including in Cambodia (15.5 per cent), China (17 per cent), and Thailand (16.8 per cent).<sup>120</sup>

<sup>114</sup> DAINAP; CCDAC of Myanmar.

<sup>115</sup> Official communication with ONCB of Thailand, April 2025.

<sup>116</sup> Official communication with NADA of Malaysia March 2025. Malaysia reported the purity in base form, which was subsequently converted to hydrochloride (HCl) form for standardization.

<sup>117</sup> Official communication with BNN of Indonesia, April 2025.

<sup>118</sup> Official communication with NNCC of China, April 2025.

<sup>119</sup> Official communication with SPO of the Republic of Korea, March 2025. Cambodia reported the purity in base form, which was subsequently converted to hydrochloride (HCl) form for standardization.

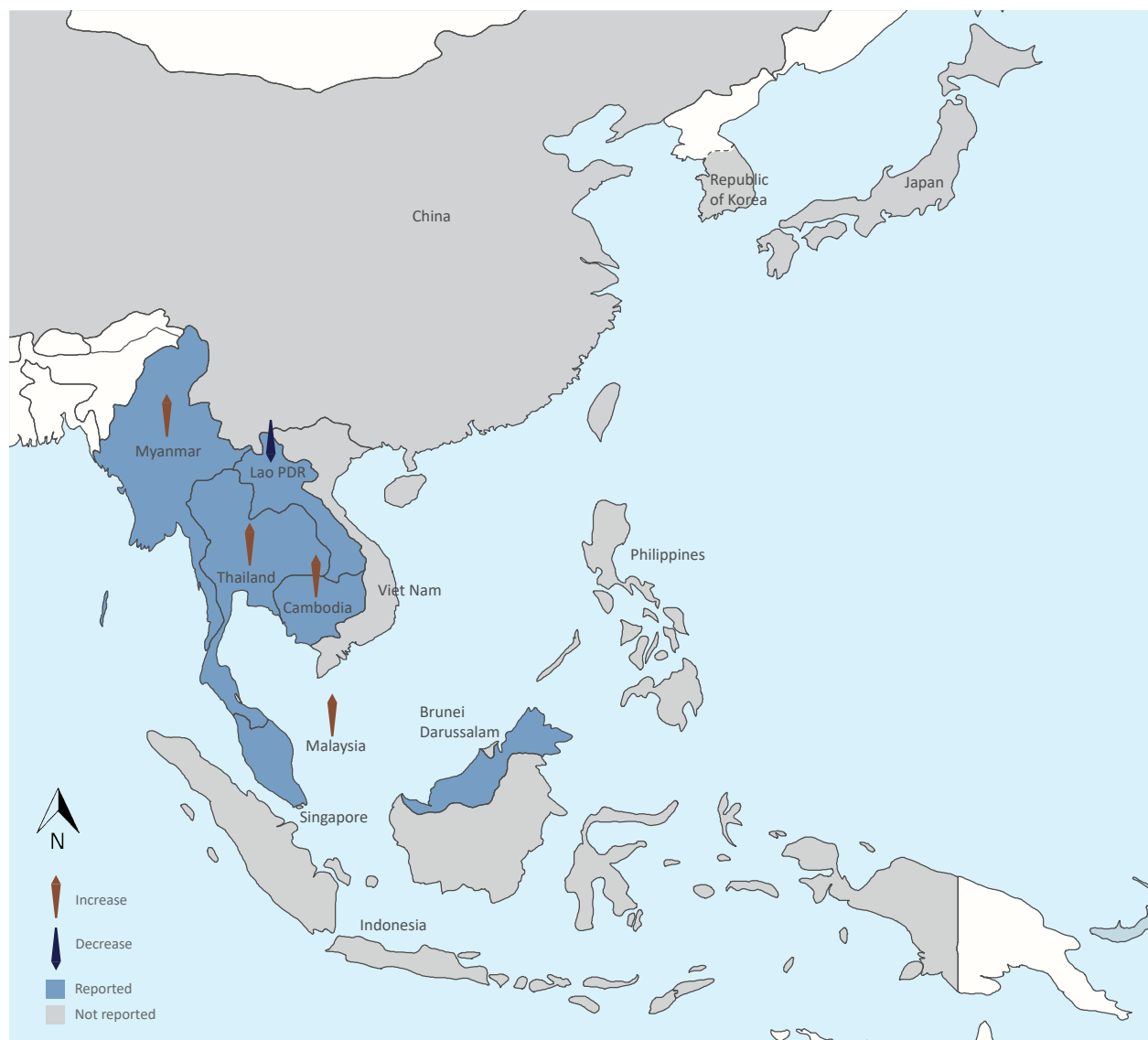
<sup>120</sup> DAINAP.

## Methamphetamine tablet use increased across most countries in Southeast Asia

Methamphetamine remains the primary drug of concern in East and Southeast Asia, according to drug demand indicators<sup>121</sup> from most countries

in the region. In 2024, four of the five countries that reported on methamphetamine tablet use — Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand — recorded increases, while Lao PDR was the sole exception, noting a decline. For crystal methamphetamine, seven of the nine reporting countries indicated rising use in 2024. Cambodia,

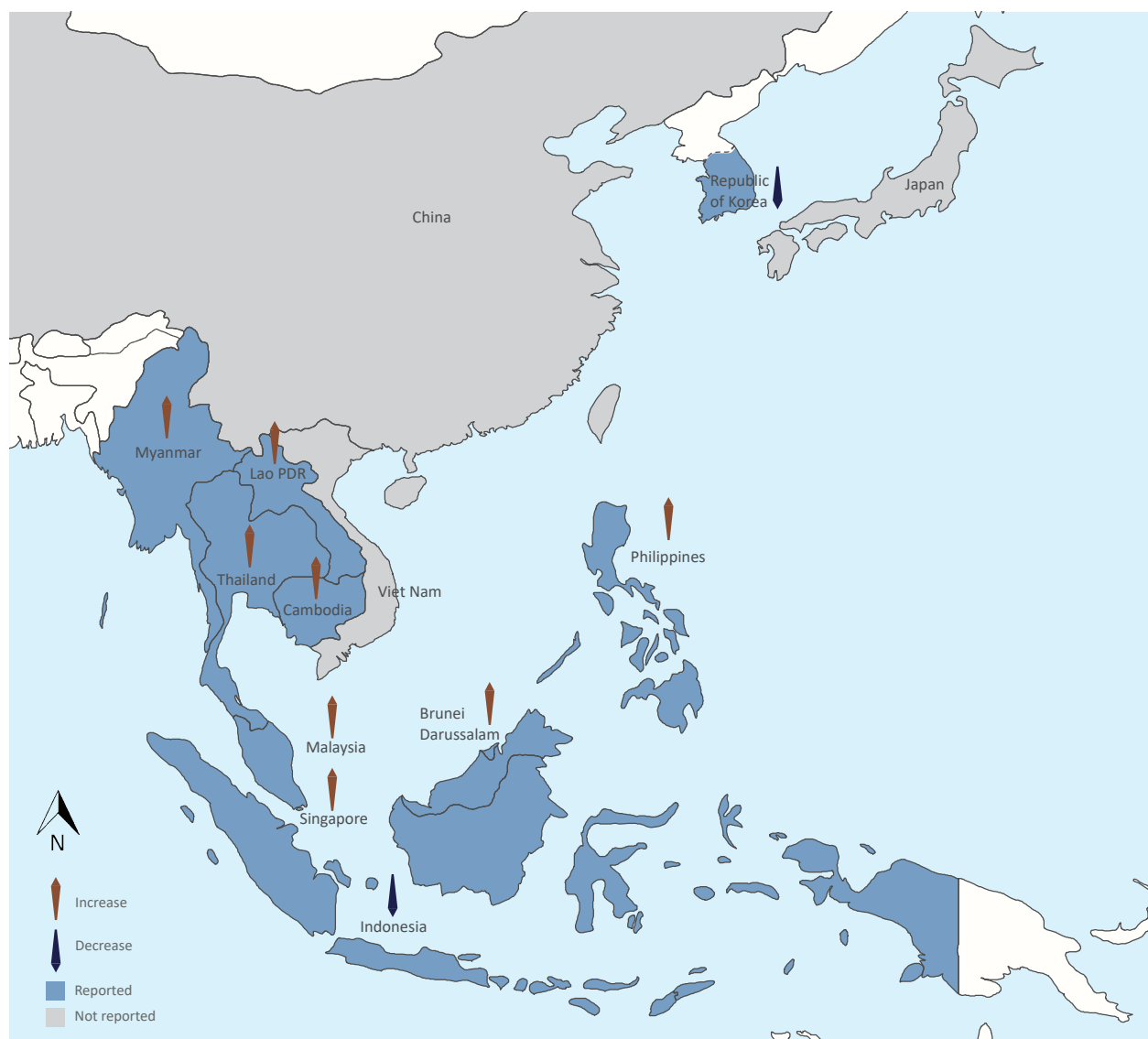
**Map 10. Methamphetamine tablet use trends in select countries in East and Southeast Asia, 2024**



Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Sources: DAINAP and UNODC elaboration based on data, information, and intelligence from drug authorities in East and Southeast Asia and Oceania.

<sup>121</sup> Drug demand data can be difficult to accurately discern. Though a wide variety of indicators are available, such as the number of registered drug users, household surveys, treatment admissions and wastewater analysis, not all of them are available in all countries in the region and they have certain limitations. Therefore, governments consider a combination of indicators when determining drug use trends.

**Map 11. Crystal methamphetamine use trends in select countries in East and Southeast Asia, 2024**

Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Sources: DAINAP and UNODC elaboration based on data, information, and intelligence from drug authorities in East and Southeast Asia and Oceania.

in particular, has noted five consecutive annual increases, reflecting the impact of the growing volume of trafficking into the country. Overall, expert perceptions point to a rebound in crystal-methamphetamine use across the region since 2023, following a period of generally flat or stable trends during the time of COVID.

Methamphetamine also continued to account for the largest proportion of drug users who were brought into formal contact with authorities<sup>122</sup> in

the region in 2024. Methamphetamine accounted for more than 90 per cent of all people admitted to drug treatment facilities in Lao PDR (96 per cent), Brunei Darussalam (94 per cent), the Philippines (93 per cent), and Cambodia (92 per cent).<sup>123</sup> In addition, Thailand (89 per cent), the Republic of Korea (77 per cent), Singapore (60 per cent), Macau, China (59 per cent), and Indonesia (56 per cent) all reported that more than half of the people admitted to drug treatment facilities were methamphetamine users.

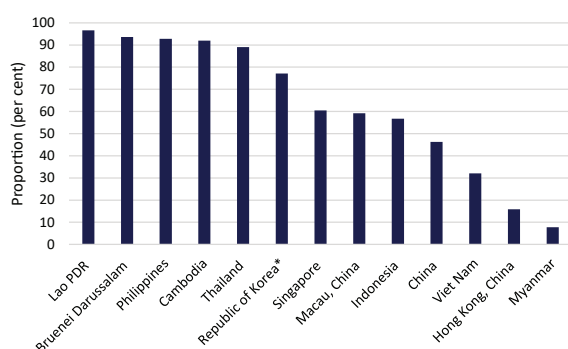
<sup>122</sup> It includes either the number of people who received drug treatment services, the number of arrested for methamphetamine-related offences, or the number of registered drug users.

In contrast, opiate users continued to constitute the large majority of drug users in Myanmar,

<sup>123</sup> DAINAP.

accounting for 87 per cent of people who received drug treatment in 2023, while only 7.7 per cent were methamphetamine users.<sup>124</sup> However, these figures almost certainly reflect the limitations in terms of drug use data in some jurisdictions and likely also do not account for the increases in methamphetamine use, particularly in Shan State.

**Figure 16. Proportion of methamphetamine users among all drug users as identified through various demand indicators in select countries in East and Southeast Asia, 2024**



Source: DAINAP; UNODC, responses to ARQ; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

Note: Data for the Philippines and Viet Nam are from 2023. Data for the Republic of Korea refer to the number of psychotropic substance users brought into formal contact with authorities and may include users of substances other than methamphetamine.

### Diverging drug use trends between younger and older populations

Analyzing methamphetamine use by age group in East and Southeast Asia is challenging because drug demand indicators are often not disaggregated by both drug type and age group.<sup>125</sup> This challenge is further compounded by the differing age group classifications adopted by individual countries, which complicates any regional analysis. However, analysing the available drug demand indicators that are disaggregated by age group for all drug users could still provide insight into age-specific trends in methamphetamine use, given that the drug is the most commonly abused in the region.

In recent years, some countries in the region, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, have reported consecutive increases in the number of older drug users, while the number of younger

users has declined. In Thailand, the number of drug users aged 45 and above admitted to treatment facilities doubled between 2020 and 2024, whereas admissions for users aged 15–19 fell by 35 per cent. Over the same period, admissions of older users rose by 80 per cent in Malaysia and 60 per cent in Singapore, while the number of younger users in both countries fell by roughly half (see Figure 17). Indonesia also reported the same diverging trend, though the difference is not as significant as observed in the three countries.<sup>126</sup>

There could be several socio-economic factors behind this diverging trend. One potential explanation is the existence of long-term drug use populations who may have developed methamphetamine dependence as a result of the rapidly expanding methamphetamine market over the past decade in Southeast Asia. The decrease in the number of younger drug users admitted to treatment facilities in these countries requires more research but drug use prevention campaigns implemented to outreach the youth population may be attributable.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>126</sup> See the Indonesia country chapter of the report.

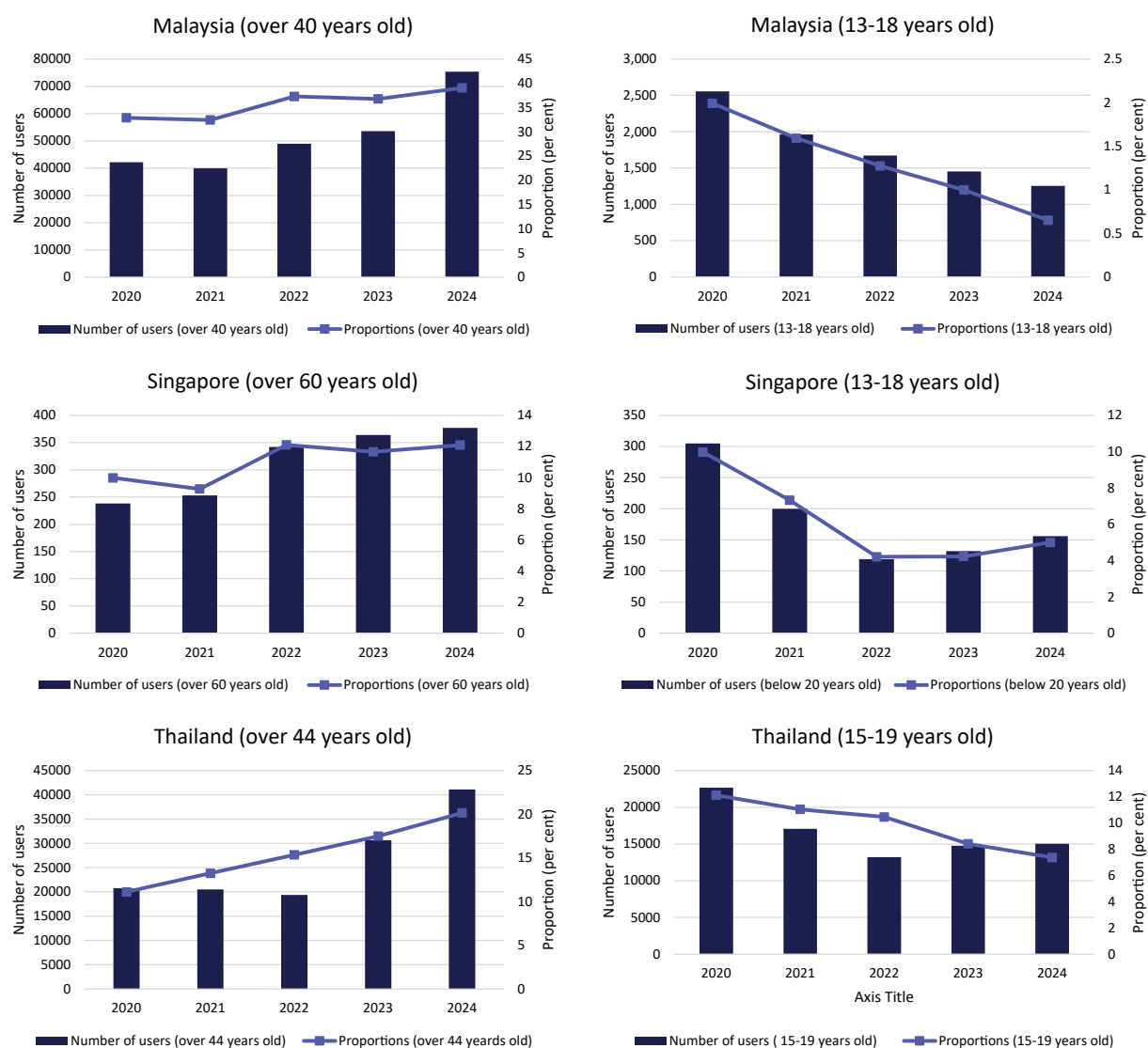
<sup>127</sup> For more information of some examples of drug use prevention campaigns by the countries, see Drugfree Singapore available at <https://drugfree.sg/?utm>, Malaysia Success, Mature, Active, Rational, Responsible (SMART) programme accessible at <https://www.aadk.gov.my/en/prevention/public-awareness-and-anti-drug-campaigns/?utm>, and Thailand DARE programme accessible at <https://xn--l3cgao1bcb5b5d8hf8b6f.com/sign-in?redirectUrl=%2F>.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Some countries may indeed collect drug demand indicators disaggregated by both age group and drug type, but they have not reported these data to UNODC.



**Figure 17. Trends in the proportion of the younger and older age group among all drug users admitted to drug treatment facilities in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, 2020-2024**

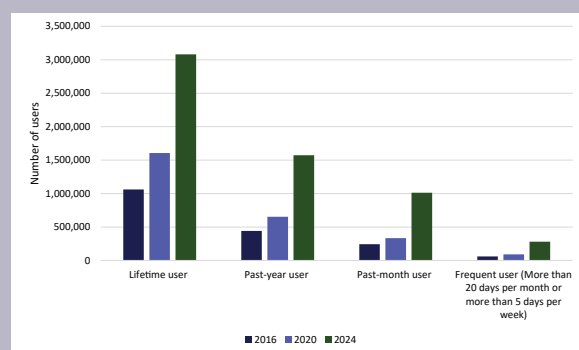


Source: DAINAP; UNODC, responses to ARQ; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

### Accelerated methamphetamine tablet market expansion in Thailand in line with increased supply of the drug to the country

The last three national household drug use surveys of Thailand show rapidly expanding methamphetamine tablet use in the country. Between 2016 and 2024, the estimated numbers of lifetime, past-year, past-month and frequent (more than 20 days per month or more than five days per week) methamphetamine tablet users all significantly increased, demonstrating accelerating prevalence of the drug. Between 2020 and 2024, both the estimated numbers of past-month and frequent methamphetamine tablet users have tripled, and the rate of increase was considerably faster than during 2016–2020. In 2024, there were estimated 281,159 frequent methamphetamine tablet users, accounting for 85 per cent of all frequent users of any drug, excluding cannabis and kratom,<sup>128</sup> demonstrating the dominance of methamphetamine tablets in drug dependence.

**Figure 18. Estimated numbers of lifetime, past-year, past-month and frequent methamphetamine tablet users in Thailand, 2016, 2020 and 2024**

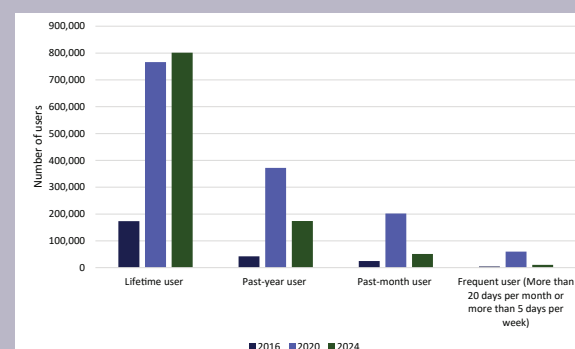


Source: ONCB, Thailand, National Household Drug Use Survey 2016, 2020 and 2024.

On the other hand, the estimated numbers of past-year, past-month and frequent crystal methamphetamine users all spiked between 2016 and 2020, but all retracted in 2024. While

the crystal methamphetamine uses levels in 2024 remained high compared to 2016, there has been a shift in the consumption patterns of the drug in the country.

**Figure 19. Estimated numbers of lifetime, past-year, past-month and frequent crystal methamphetamine users in Thailand, 2016, 2020 and 2024**

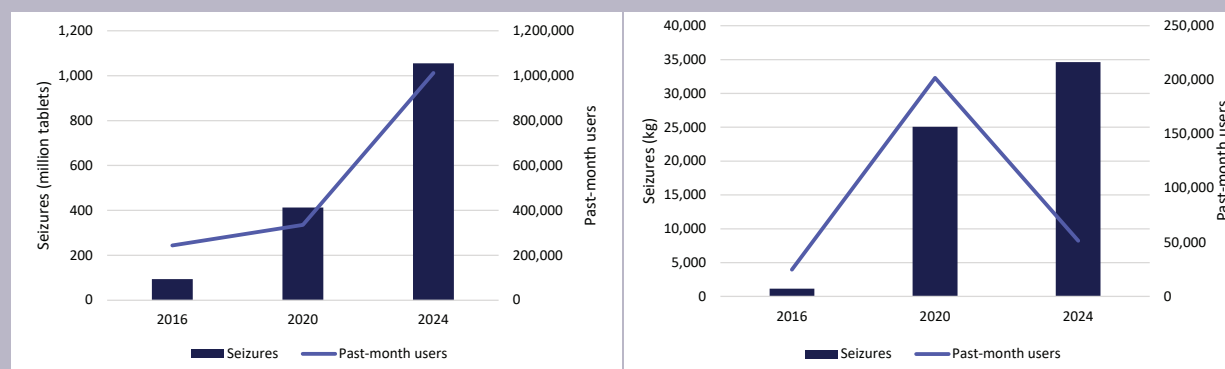


Source: ONCB, Thailand, National Household Drug Use Survey 2016, 2020 and 2024.

Figure 20 demonstrates a strong correlation between past-year methamphetamine tablet prevalence and seizure volumes in Thailand. Between 2016 and 2024, past-month methamphetamine tablet prevalence rose four-fold, while seizures increased eleven-fold. For crystal methamphetamine, despite a 30-fold increase in seizures, past-month prevalence rose only two-fold over the same period. The divergence between the two methamphetamine forms provides several observations. First, the increased supply of methamphetamine tablets appears to have driven domestic demand, as prevalence and seizure trends rose roughly in proportion. Second, the far less proportional rise in crystal methamphetamine prevalence suggests that much of the drug seized in Thailand was destined for other countries, highlighting the country's role as a transit hub in the regional drug market. Lastly, crystal methamphetamine prevalence peaked in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and has rapidly declined since, indicating that many users may have shifted to the more affordable methamphetamine tablets.

<sup>128</sup> ONCB of Thailand, National Household Drug Use Survey 2024.

**Figure 20. Number of estimated past-month users and seizures of methamphetamine tablets (left) and crystal methamphetamine (right) in Thailand, 2016,2020 and 2024**



Source: ONCB, Thailand, National Household Drug Use Survey 2016, 2020 and 2024; UNODC ARQ; and DAINAP.

## Overview of the ketamine market

In recent years, the illicit manufacture of ketamine and its precursor chemicals has spread across the lower Mekong countries, beginning in Myanmar, then Cambodia and Lao PDR, and, most recently, Viet Nam, where an industrial-scale facility was seized in March 2025. This pattern suggests that organized crime groups are diversifying supply chains of the drug while moving production closer to major destination markets such as China and Taiwan PoC. It is also important to note that organized crime groups source ketamine from Europe and South Asia to further diversify their illicit supply chains, although the scale of this trafficking remains much smaller than that of intra-regional trafficking within East and Southeast Asia.

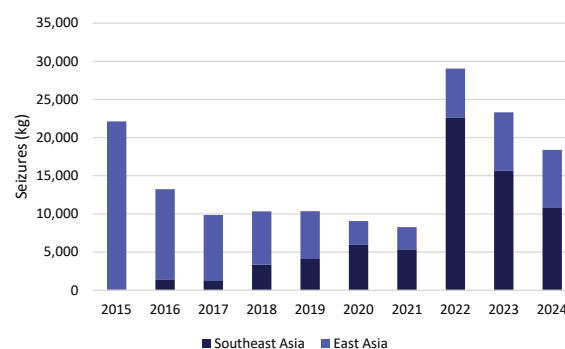
As observed in the methamphetamine market, the emergence of clandestine ketamine production facilities in the lower Mekong countries has contributed to increased abuse of the drug within the sub-region, compounding public health challenges associated with methamphetamine use. At the same time, ketamine originating from the sub-region and elsewhere has been increasingly trafficked to non-traditional markets in East and Southeast Asia, such as the Philippines and the Republic of Korea, indicating an intention by organized crime groups to expand their consumer bases beyond traditional ketamine markets.

### Ketamine seizures declined for the second consecutive year in East and Southeast Asia in 2024, although several countries continued to report increased or high-volume seizures

While ketamine<sup>129</sup> is not an internationally controlled substance, it has been controlled in East and Southeast Asia because of its historical use in illegal drug markets. Ketamine seizures in the region have declined in the past two years after reaching a record 29 tons in 2022. The record amount of ketamine seized in 2022 was largely attributable to a series of raids on clandestine laboratories in Cambodia, which resulted in the seizure of

13.5 tons of the drug.<sup>130</sup> In 2024, the amount of ketamine seized in the region totaled 18.4 tons, marking a 21 per cent decrease compared to 2023. However, several countries and territories in East and Southeast Asia reported high levels of ketamine seizures in 2024, including Thailand (approximately 4.9 tons) Cambodia (3.2 tons), China (2 tons), Myanmar (1.7 tons), and Taiwan PoC (3.8 tons). Of the 18.4 tons seized in the region in 2024, 59 per cent (10.8 tons) was seized in Southeast Asia and the remainder seized in East Asia, primarily China and Taiwan PoC. While the amount of ketamine seized in Southeast Asia in 2024 is lower compared to the previous two years, it remains comparably high to recent seizure trends.

**Figure 21. Seizure amounts of ketamine in East and Southeast Asia, 2015-2024**



Source: DAINAP; UNODC, responses to the ARQ; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-April 2024.

Seizures in Cambodia rose dramatically from 1,040 kg to 3,177 kg, nearly tripling year-on-year. Seizures of ketamine more than doubled in China, rising from 735 kg in 2023 to 2,074 kg in 2024, the largest amount ever since 2019. Major seizure provinces included Guangdong (1,174 kg) and Jiangxi (636 kg).<sup>131</sup>

In the Republic of Korea, seizures doubled to 89 kg in 2024, up from 43 kg in 2023, with notable trafficking from France, Thailand, Germany, and Viet Nam.<sup>132</sup> Philippine authorities seized more than 50 kg of ketamine in 2024, marking an exponential increase over the 2.4 kg seized in the previous year and the highest total reported since 2006 (98 kg).<sup>133</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Ketamine is a dissociative anesthetic used medically for induction and maintenance of anesthesia, and is listed as an essential medicine by the World Health Organization (WHO).

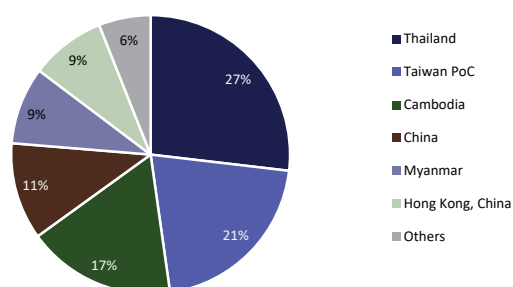
<sup>130</sup> DAINAP.

<sup>131</sup> Official communication with NNCC of China, April 2025.

<sup>132</sup> Official communication with SPO of the Republic of Korea, March 2025.

<sup>133</sup> DAINAP.

**Figure 22. Proportions of ketamine seized in East and Southeast Asia by country and territory, 2024**



Source: DAINAP; UNODC, responses to the ARQ; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-April 2024.

### Organized crime groups establish illicit ketamine manufacturing facilities in lower Mekong countries moving production closer to major destination markets

Organized crime groups have consolidated the illicit production of ketamine in the Mekong region in recent years. Drug trafficking syndicates, primarily from Taiwan PoC, have specifically targeted Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam, where authorities have seized several industrial-scale facilities involved in the illicit manufacture of ketamine or its precursor chemical.<sup>134</sup> Substantial quantities of the drug also continue to be produced in and trafficked from Shan State in Myanmar, sometimes involving criminals from Taiwan PoC. Illicit producers seem to pursue a supply-driven market expansion strategy similar to the approach adopted to expand the methamphetamine market during the past decade.

<sup>134</sup> Since 2020, Cambodian authorities have dismantled 16 highly sophisticated industrial-scale ketamine laboratories and chemical storage facilities, with 13 found in 2022 alone. Additionally, in November 2023, authorities from Lao PDR and China conducted a joint operation targeting a large-scale transnational drug manufacturing network, which resulted in the dismantling of a large clandestine laboratory producing “o-chlorophenyl cyclopentyl ketone and hydroxylamine” and a raw material warehouse in Lao PDR. The facility was located in Pak Kading County of Bolikhamsai province, across the Mekong river from Thailand, where suspects can easily escape across the border by small boat. Seizures from the facilities included more than one ton of 2-Chlorophenyl cyclopentyl ketone and more than 120 tons of chemicals (including bromine, toluene, monomethylamine, hydrochloric acid), and arrested suspects included Chinese nationals (10 persons), Laotian nationals (4), and Vietnamese nationals (2).

One of the most recent major developments was the seizure of Viet Nam’s largest ever illicit ketamine production facility in Nha Trang in March 2025. The initial investigation revealed three separate sites: a preparation site, a storage location, and a processing facility. Vietnamese authorities seized 1.4 tons of ketamine, reportedly with up to 99 per cent purity, along with 80 tons of chemicals.<sup>135</sup> In comparison, in 2023 and 2024, Vietnamese authorities detected no diversion and trafficking of precursor chemicals and seized no illicit manufacturing facilities.<sup>136</sup> The ketamine at the facility was destined for overland trafficking to seaports in central Viet Nam for onward maritime trafficking to Taiwan PoC. The alleged leader of this operation was a syndicate member from Taiwan PoC who arrived in Viet Nam in 2021. He used an ornamental fish farming business as a front to disguise the operation and produced approximately 1.8 tons of yellow powder, believed to be semi-finished ketamine, which was packed into containers and disguised as wastewater treatment foaming agents and kept at a warehouse in Nha Trang. The powder was then returned to the factory, where solvents were added and heat applied to produce pure ketamine. The scale and sophistication of the facility suggested significant investment from a powerful organized crime group. Vietnamese authorities also arrested two other syndicate members from Taiwan PoC, four Chinese, and three Vietnamese suspects.<sup>137</sup>



Clandestine ketamine production facility seized in Nha Trang, Viet Nam, March 2025.

Copyright: Counter Narcotics Police Department (CNPd), Ministry of Public Security of Viet Nam.

<sup>135</sup> CNPD of Viet Nam, “1<sup>st</sup> Drug Intelligence Analyst Meeting in the Mekong and Southeast Asia”, Bangkok, Thailand, April 2025.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

Notably, the setup of this production facility closely resembled that of the illicit ketamine site dismantled in Kampong Speu, Cambodia, in December 2021. In both cases, the illegal operations involved the creation of front companies to conceal the clandestine manufacturing. Each operation also used separate locations for processing, storage, and precursor preparation. Finally, the syndicates were composed mainly of members from China and Taiwan PoC.

Just more than a decade ago, transnational organized crime groups consolidated the illicit production of methamphetamine and ketamine in Shan State of Myanmar. More recently, these groups have begun to relocate some large-scale illicit ketamine manufacture to Cambodia, Viet Nam and Lao PDR. This strategy has enabled organized crime groups to move production closer to destination markets, with illicit ketamine facilities now located nearer seaports in Cambodia and Viet Nam for trafficking to places such as Taiwan PoC. In addition, the shorter supply chains enable trafficking groups to reduce transportation costs and the risk of detection and losing consignments to law enforcement seizures, particularly along the long overland routes through Thailand.

In addition to importing illicitly manufactured ketamine from Cambodia and Viet Nam, organized crime groups in Taiwan PoC are also involved in the illicit manufacture of ketamine domestically. In October 2024, a large-scale illicit manufacture facility was seized in Taiwan PoC. Hidden deep in the mountains of Toufen City, Miaoli County, the facility was equipped with surveillance cameras on the road and various gates leading into the facility to allow operators to evade police inspections. The site was found with 143 kg of ketamine and 211 kg of semi-finished product, as well as 1 ton of various chemicals and equipment used for producing drugs.<sup>138</sup> In 2024, Malaysian authorities also seized one ketamine laboratory, while Chinese law enforcement dismantled two ketamine production facilities, including one medium-scale site.<sup>139</sup>

## Intensified ketamine trafficking flows from Shan State, Myanmar to Thailand

As with methamphetamine tablets and crystal methamphetamine, Thailand recorded the largest quantities of ketamine seizures in East and Southeast Asia in both 2023 and 2024, an unprecedented development prior to 2023. This trend indicates intensified trafficking flows originating from Shan State, Myanmar into Thailand. It is also important to note that ketamine trafficking from Shan to Yunnan, China, may have declined in 2024, as a vast majority of ketamine seizures in the country were reported from eastern provinces, such as Guangdong (1,174 kg) and Jiangxi (636 kg), which together accounting for nearly 90 per cent of all ketamine seized in the country.<sup>140</sup> On the other hand, Chinese authorities seized 87 per cent of crystal methamphetamine and 83 per cent of methamphetamine tablets in Yunnan Province in 2024. Together with the development observed in Thailand, all these trends suggest that organized crime groups based in Shan State have opted to increasingly target Thailand as an entry point for ketamine produced from Shan, Myanmar. Organized crime groups may perceive Thailand as a more attractive logistics hub for onward trafficking to other countries than the western part of China, which is landlocked and has no direct access to maritime channels.

One key difference between the trafficking of ketamine and crystal methamphetamine is the points of entry from Myanmar. While ketamine continues to be trafficked through Thailand's northern border, sizeable quantities have also been smuggled through western border areas, such as Tak Province. Several media reports indicate that ketamine is widely available in the arcades and karaoke bars in the scam compounds in Myawaddy, Myanmar.<sup>141</sup> It is highly possible that organized crime groups are also storing ketamine in Myawaddy for trafficking into Thailand.

138 For more information see, <https://www.cib.npa.gov.tw/ch/app/news/view?module=news&id=1885&serno=0c9051bd-0341-4b14-acad-715eff0867df>.

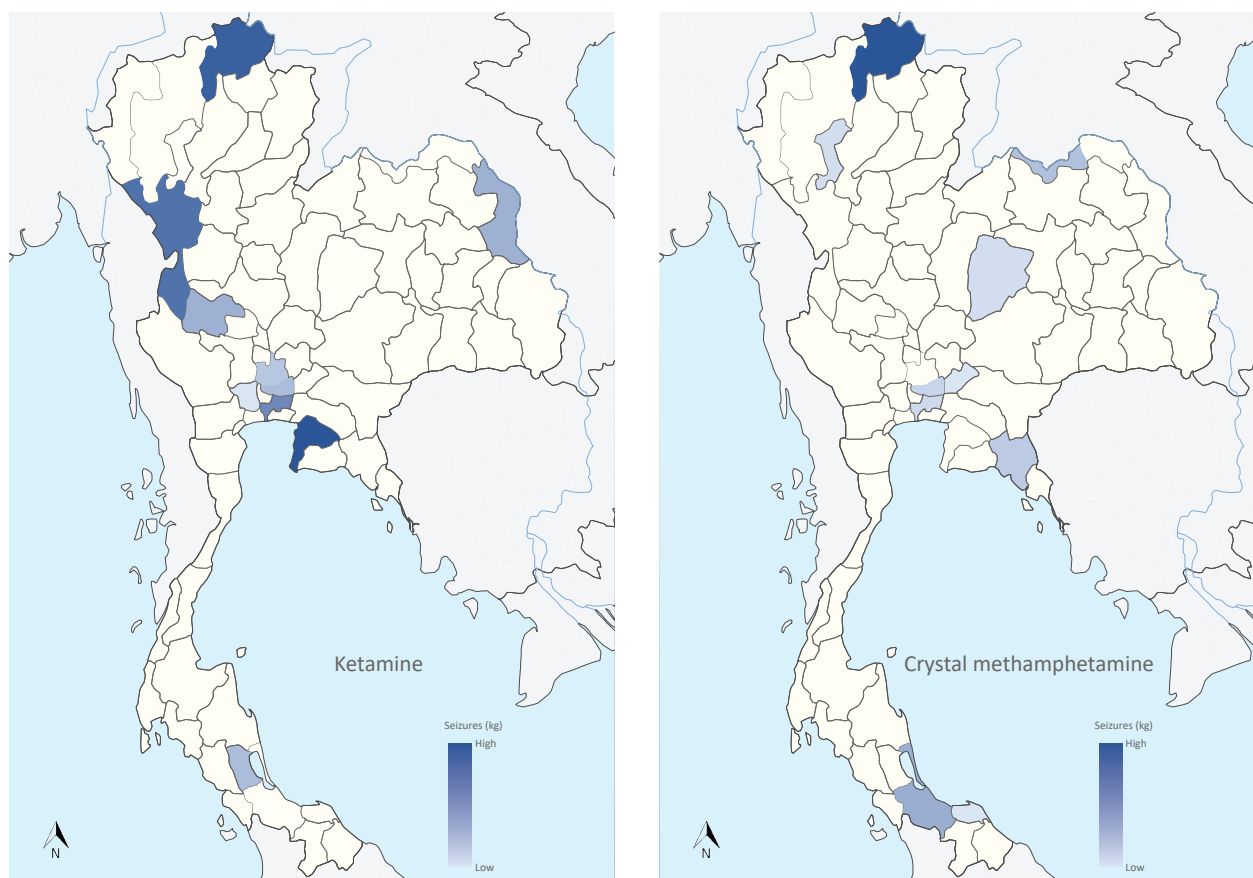
139 Official communications with NNCC of China and NCID of Malaysia between February and April 2025.

140 Ibid.

141 For instance, see Irrawaddy, "Sex, Drugs and Cyber Scams: Insider Myanmar's Notorious Online Crime Hub", 8 May 2025, available at <https://www.irrawaddy.com/in-person/interview/sex-drugs-and-cyber-scams-inside-myanmars-notorious-online-crime-hub.html>; The New York Times, "7 Months Inside an Online Scam Labor Camp", 17 December 2023, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/12/17/world/asia/myanmar-cyber-scam.html>.



**Map 12. Top 10 provinces of ketamine (left) and crystal methamphetamine (right) seizures in Thailand, 2024**

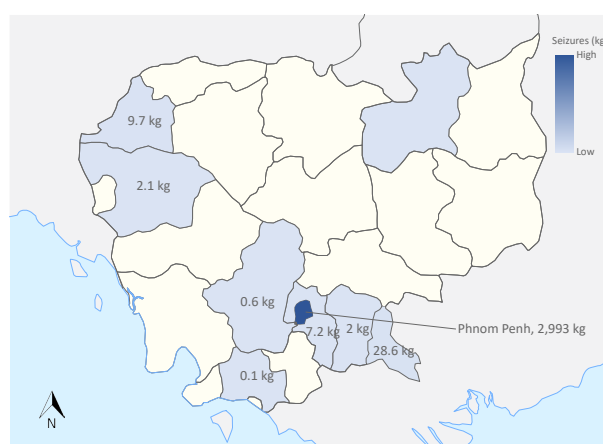


Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.  
Source: ONCB of Thailand.

### Emerging ketamine trafficking routes targeting Cambodia

Cambodia has emerged as a significant hub for ketamine trafficking in East and Southeast Asia, paralleling its role in regional methamphetamine distribution. In 2024, Cambodian authorities seized 3,177 kilograms of ketamine, marking the second largest quantity in the region after Thailand. A predominant portion of these seizures occurred in Phnom Penh (94 per cent), indicating its role as a storage and transit point for ketamine before it is trafficked to other countries via land and maritime routes. It is important to note that only minuscule amounts of ketamine were seized in different provinces of Cambodia, including those sharing borders with Lao PDR and Thailand, underscoring challenges in detecting ketamine trafficking at the country's entry points (see Map 14).

**Map 13. Top 10 provinces for ketamine seizures in Cambodia, 2024**



Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.  
Source: NACD of Cambodia.

Cambodian authorities have noted that major inbound sources for ketamine in 2024 were Lao PDR (1,935 kg) and Thailand (871 kg), indicating that most of the drug seized in Cambodia was sourced

and trafficked from lower Mekong countries. Outbound trafficking of ketamine was largely linked to Taiwan PoC (981 kg), followed by Viet Nam (12 kg).<sup>142</sup>

Several major ketamine trafficking cases reported not only from Cambodia but elsewhere in Southeast Asia indicate that Taiwan PoC is a primary destination. For instance, in February 2024, Taiwan PoC seized 947 kg of ketamine originating from Southeast Asia packed in vacuum teabags aboard a fishing vessel off the coast of Penghu, and arrested the captain and two crew members, all of whom were from Taiwan PoC.<sup>143</sup> In addition, in April 2025, approximately 1.6 tons of ketamine and 23 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine were seized off the coast of the Pratas Islands. A captain from Taiwan PoC and two Indonesian nationals were arrested in connection with the case, which was reported to be the largest single ketamine seizure ever recorded in Taiwan PoC.<sup>144</sup>

In 2024, there were several cases of air passengers from Cambodia being arrested for attempting to traffic drugs into the Republic of Korea, of usually up to approximately 2 kg.<sup>145</sup> Korean authorities have reported that transnational drug trafficking groups recruit many air passenger couriers in Cambodia via the Telegram platform.<sup>146</sup>

### Growing inter-regional ketamine trafficking between Europe and East and Southeast Asia

Trafficking flows of ketamine from Europe to East and Southeast Asia continued in 2024 and early 2025. During this period, several countries and territories in the region reported seizures of ketamine originating from Europe, including Cambodia, Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan PoC, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

Several recent ketamine seizures suggest an increase in the scale of ketamine trafficking from Europe to the region. For instance, March 2025, two air passengers arriving in Hong Kong, China from Germany were found with approximately 81 kg of ketamine concealed in their suitcases.<sup>147</sup> Another case reported a day later involved 21 kg of ketamine, with the courier arriving from the Netherlands. In addition, according to media reports, in April 2025, Korean authorities arrested one German and one Polish national for attempting to distribute 52 kg of ketamine that had been shipped from Germany into the country.<sup>148</sup> The two individuals reportedly received instructions from Germany.<sup>149</sup> Table 3 below provides recent ketamine trafficking cases involving 10 kg or more ketamine originating from Europe and reported from countries and territories of East and Southeast Asia.

Ketamine trafficking from Europe to the region is likely to intensify, given the rapidly increasing supply of the drug in Europe. In 2022, the latest year for which publicly available data exists, seizures of ketamine in Europe amounted to 2.8 tons, representing a 70-fold increase compared to the amount seized a decade earlier.<sup>150</sup> During the same period, the number of ketamine seizure cases also tripled, from 1,011 to 3,462 cases.<sup>151</sup>

142 Official communication with NACD of Cambodia, April 2025.

143 Investigative Branch, Coast Guard Administration, Ocean Affairs Council, Press Release, 20 July 2024, available at <https://www.cga.gov.tw/GipOpen/wSite/ct?ctNode=10619&mp=9998&xltem=160703&utm>.

144 For more information, see [https://www.police.taichung.gov.tw/wuri/home.jsp?dataserno=202504070025&id=10&mcustomize=news\\_view.jsp&mserno=201710280037&parentpath=0%2C1&t=News&utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.police.taichung.gov.tw/wuri/home.jsp?dataserno=202504070025&id=10&mcustomize=news_view.jsp&mserno=201710280037&parentpath=0%2C1&t=News&utm_source=chatgpt.com)

145 Supreme Prosecutors' Office (SPO), of the Republic of Korea.

146 Ibid.

147 Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department, "Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected ketamine worth about \$50 million at airport" Press Release, 31 March 2025, available at [https://www.customs.gov.hk/en/customs-announcement/press-release/index\\_id\\_4544.html](https://www.customs.gov.hk/en/customs-announcement/press-release/index_id_4544.html).

148 SBS News, German and Polish arrested for smuggling large quantities of drugs into the country and distributing them by 'throwing', 08 May 2025, available at: <https://news.sbs.co.kr/news/endPage.do?newsId=N1008092419&plink=COPYPASTE&cooper=SBSNEWSEND>.

149 Ibid.

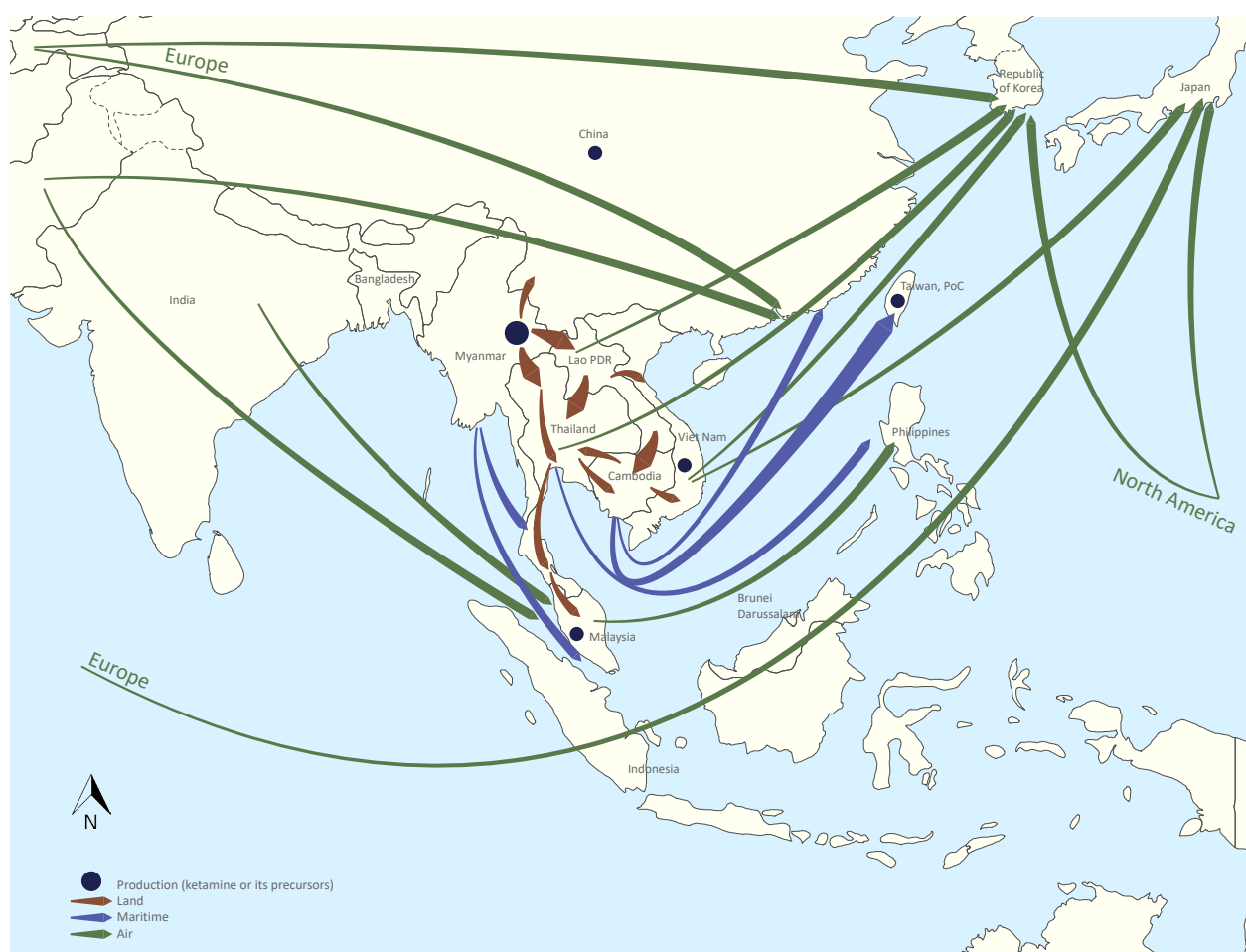
150 European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA), "EU Drug Market: New psychoactive substances — Distribution and supply in Europe: Ketamine", June 2024.

151 Ibid.

**Table 3. Select seizures of ketamine originating from Europe to East and Southeast Asia, 2024-2025 (April)**

Date	Location	Embarkation country	Amount seized	Method
Apr 2025	Ulsan, the Republic of Korea	Germany	52 kg	Parcel post
Apr 2025	Hong Kong Int'l Airport	France	26 kg	Air passenger
Mar 2025	Hong Kong Int'l Airport	Germany	81 kg	Air passenger
Jan 2025	Taoyuan Int'l Airport, Taiwan PoC	Belgium	15.1 kg	Parcel post
Dec 2024	Hong Kong Int'l Airport	France	10 kg	Air passenger
Dec 2024	Hong Kong Int'l Airport	Denmark	12 kg	Air passenger
Nov 2024	Kuala Lumpur Int'l Airport, Malaysia	Unidentified country in Europe	14.2 kg	Parcel post
Nov 2024	Hong Kong Int'l Airport	Unidentified country in Europe	21 kg	Air passenger
Nov 2024	Kuala Lumpur Int'l Airport, Malaysia	Unidentified country in Europe	16.9 kg	Parcel post
Aug 2024	Tainan City, Taiwan PoC	Austria	10.1 kg	Parcel post
Aug 2024	Hong Kong Int'l Airport	United Kingdom	20 kg	Air passenger
Jun 2024	Noi Bai Int'l Airport, Viet Nam	France	14.8 kg	Parcel post

Source: Customs and Excise Department of Hong Kong, China; Seoul Metropolitan Police, the Republic of Korea; General Department of Customs, Viet Nam; and Royal Malaysian Customs.

**Map 14. Ketamine trafficking flows in East and Southeast Asia, 2024 and 2025 (May)**

Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Flows arrows represent the general direction of trafficking and do not coincide with precise sources of production or manufacture, are not actual routes.

Sources: DAINAP and UNODC elaboration based on data, information, and intelligence from drug authorities in East and Southeast Asia and Oceania.

### Philippines ketamine market concentrated in the Philippine Offshore Gaming Operator (POGO) industry

In 2024, Philippine authorities made the largest ketamine seizure in the country, of 47 kg of the substance confiscated from two Pakistani nationals in Manila. This case is the first known instance of Pakistani nationals being directly linked to ketamine trafficking in the Philippines. It is interesting to note that Malaysian authorities seized 25 kg of ketamine originating in Pakistan in 2023 that had been concealed in the wall of a cargo container.<sup>152</sup> Intelligence points to a likely ketamine market among foreign nationals, particularly Philippine Offshore Gaming Operator (POGO) workers. Unverified reports suggest that ketamine is widely used in POGO scam centers, where it fuels criminal activities,

152 Royal Malaysian Customs Department, Intelligence Division, "Overview of Illicit Drugs Situation in the Context of Royal Malaysian Customs Department", Asia Pacific Division, IDEC Working Group, 26-27 March 2024, Da Nang, Viet Nam

including sexual exploitation and violence, as evidenced by recent law enforcement actions against illicit POGO hubs in the country. Ketamine is not a traditional drug of choice in the Philippines, but several recent seizures indicate its increasing availability within local poly-drug markets. Three successive operations in Pasay City during July and August 2024 resulted in the seizure of ketamine alongside other substances such as crystal methamphetamine, ecstasy and cannabis, with arrested suspects being a mix of Chinese nationals and Filipino associates. This pattern suggests that ketamine distribution remains largely tied to foreign consumers, particularly Chinese, Malaysian, and Korean nationals, with POGO employees forming a core user base.<sup>153</sup> Although demand in the broader domestic market remains uncertain, increased enforcement against illicit POGO operations may influence future trends in ketamine trafficking.

153 PDEA of the Philippines, "Country briefing", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

### Ketamine use continues to expand in East and Southeast Asia

Data on ketamine use remains severely limited in most countries in East and Southeast Asia; however, expert opinion<sup>154</sup> points to varying patterns in the region. According to various demand indicator data as identified by drug agencies across the region, ketamine use increased in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, China and Indonesia. In China, ketamine use increased for the second consecutive year, and the number of registered users reached 29,733,<sup>155</sup> and in Indonesia, where increasing ketamine use was observed particularly among younger users.<sup>156</sup> In Hong Kong, China, ketamine remains the second most commonly used drug after heroin, with 528 registered users in 2024, slightly down from 534 in 2023. The number of newly reported ketamine users declined from 279 in 2023 to 226 in 2024, though the total remains relatively high compared to pre-2020 levels.<sup>157</sup>

154 UNODC regularly collects expert opinions on trends in the use of selected drugs from countries in East and Southeast Asia. The data are provided by central national drug authorities in the region.

155 Official communication with NNCC of China, April 2025.

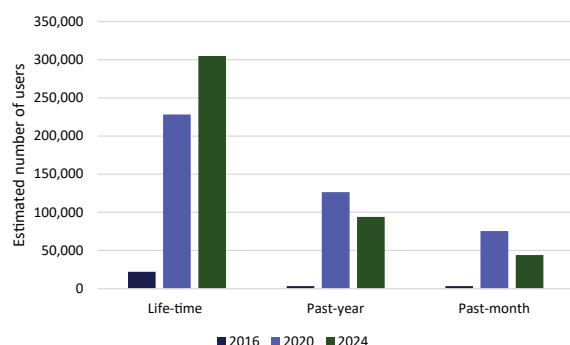
156 DAINAP; Official communication with BNN of Indonesia, April 2025.

157 Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

In Thailand, the number of ketamine users showed the most rapid increase compared to users of other synthetic drugs. National household drug use surveys in Thailand show that the estimated lifetime ketamine users (aged 12-65) increased fourteenfold, from approximately 22,220 in 2016 to 1,372,000 in 2024. In comparison, estimated lifetime users of methamphetamine tablets increased nearly three times, users of crystal methamphetamine increased 4.6 times, and users of ecstasy increased seven times. The estimated number of past-year ketamine users increased even more rapidly, showing nearly 40-time increase between 2015 and 2019 and then dropping slightly to approximately 94,000 in 2024.<sup>158</sup> The sharp increase in the number of ketamine users in Thailand appears to have been driven by a massive increase in supply; for instance, seizures of ketamine in Thailand between 2016 and 2020 increased from just under 26 kg to nearly 4,940 kg.<sup>159</sup>

158 National Household Drug Use Survey, 2016, 2020 and 2024, ONCB, Thailand.

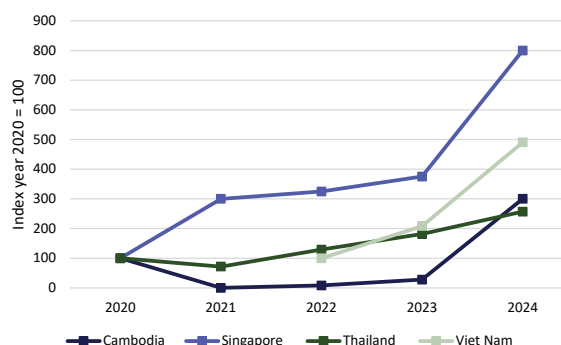
159 DAINAP.

**Figure 23. Lifetime, past-year and past-month ketamine use in Thailand, 2016, 2020 and 2024**

Source: National Household Drug Use Survey, 2016, 2020 and 2024, ONCB of Thailand.

### Treatment admissions related to ketamine increased in several countries in 2024

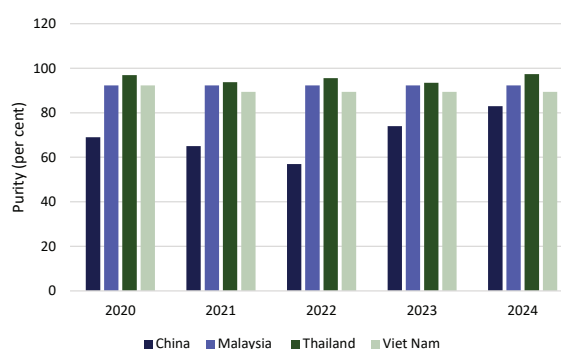
Drug treatment data confirm a rapid rise in ketamine use across several countries in recent years. Between 2020 and 2024, admissions grew three-fold in Cambodia, 2.5-fold in Thailand, and eight-fold in Singapore (the latter from a small base). The 2021 dip in ketamine treatment admissions reflects COVID-related service closures, but numbers rebound quickly thereafter. Viet Nam showed the steepest recent acceleration—a five-fold increase in just three years—making ketamine its fastest-growing drug in terms of treatment admissions. The dual role of Cambodia and Viet Nam in recent years as a transit and emerging manufacturing hub appears to have boosted local availability, driving the treatment surge in both countries. In Singapore, the total numbers of ketamine users receiving drug treatment remain modest, but each annual increase is significant, and in 2024 the figure more than doubled compared with the previous year. Ketamine is the only drug that expert opinion has not labeled as ‘declining’ in Singapore since 2018.<sup>160</sup> Figure 24 is the indexed graph (2020 = 100) of ketamine-treatment admissions for the countries that report disaggregated data, to compare the widely divergent national totals. Please note that the series for Viet Nam begins in 2022, when it first reported ketamine treatment separately.

**Figure 24. The number of ketamine treatment admissions (2020 = 100) in Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam, 2020-2024**

Source: DAINAP.

### Ketamine purity remains high while prices have been stabilized at low levels

In 2024, both China and Thailand reported the highest ketamine purity levels in the past seven years. In Thailand, the average purity of ketamine was reported to be 97.4 per cent,<sup>161</sup> the highest among countries in the region that reported ketamine purity data. In China, the retail purity of ketamine continued to increase for the third consecutive year, reaching 83 per cent in 2024.<sup>162</sup> Ketamine purity trends in Malaysia and Viet Nam have remained stable over the last five years, ranging between 89 and 92 per cent.<sup>163</sup>

**Figure 25. Purities of ketamine in select countries in East and Southeast Asia, 2020-2024**

Source: DAINAP; Official communication with national drug agencies in the region, February-April 2025.

Note: Data in this table refer to the weight/weight (w/w) % expressed as the hydrochloride salt of these substances; Purities reported in base form have been converted to the hydrochloride salt form.

<sup>161</sup> Official communication with ONCB of Thailand, April 2025.

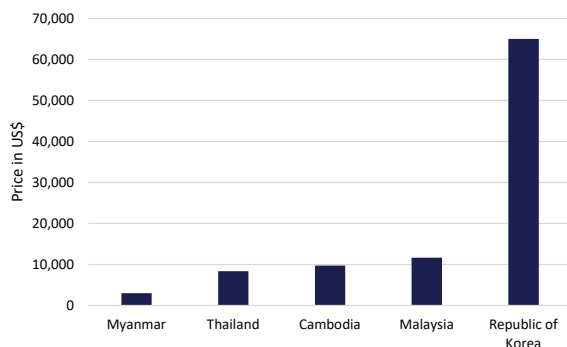
<sup>162</sup> Official communication with NNCC of China, March 2025.

<sup>163</sup> Official communication with NADA of Malaysia and SODC of Viet Nam; Purities reported in base form have been converted to the hydrochloride salt form.

<sup>160</sup> DAINAP.

The wholesale prices of ketamine vary widely across countries in the region, ranging from approximately US \$3,000 per kg in Myanmar to US \$65,000 in the Republic of Korea. Major transit countries for regional ketamine trafficking—such as Cambodia, Malaysia, and Thailand—report prices between US \$8,000 and US \$11,700 per kg. Over the past three years, no significant changes have been observed in wholesale ketamine prices, except in Myanmar, where a significant depreciation of the national currency in recent years has led to a steep decrease in wholesale prices in US dollar terms.

**Figure 26. Wholesale prices of ketamine per kg in select countries in East and Southeast Asia, 2024**

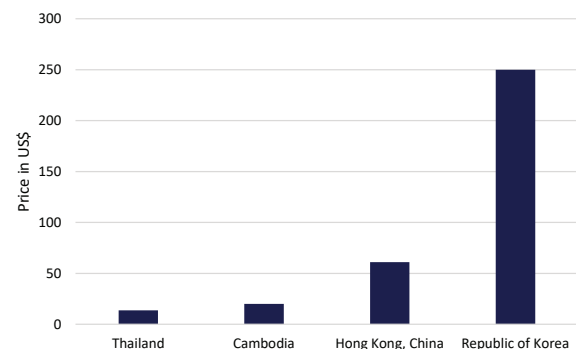


Source: DAINAP; Official communication with national drug agencies in the region, February-April 2025.

Note: For the purpose of this figure, a mid-point of upper and lower limit was used when data were reported in a range format.

In 2024, the typical retail price of ketamine per gram in Thailand ranged from US \$9 to US \$18, showing no significant change compared to 2023. In Cambodia, the typical price per gram was reported to be US \$20. In contrast, the corresponding price in the Republic of Korea was around US \$250, representing a much higher price point than in neighboring Southeast Asian countries. The price is also significantly higher than in countries in Europe. For instance, in 2022, the typical price for 1 gram of ketamine in the Netherlands was estimated at US \$24 (EUR 21.8).<sup>164</sup>

**Figure 27. Retail prices of ketamine per gram in select countries and territories in East and Southeast Asia, 2024**



Source: DAINAP; Official communication with national drug agencies in the region, February-April 2025.

Note: For the purpose of this figure, a mid-point of upper and lower limit was used when data were reported in a range format.

<sup>164</sup> Data from Central Criminal Investigations Division, Dutch Police, the Netherlands, reported in the EU Drug Market: New psychoactive substances — Distribution and supply in Europe: Ketamine, available at [https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/eu-drug-markets/new-psychoactive-substances/distribution-and-supply/ketamine\\_en](https://www.euda.europa.eu/publications/eu-drug-markets/new-psychoactive-substances/distribution-and-supply/ketamine_en).



## Overview of the ecstasy market

Although the ecstasy<sup>165</sup> market in East and Southeast Asia remains small in comparison to the methamphetamine market, in the past two years significant amounts have been seized in the region, with several countries reporting an increase in seizures in 2024.

While most of the ecstasy in the region originates from Europe, a few large processing and drug synthesis laboratories have been seized, pointing towards a possible increase in regional manufacture of MDMA. The MDMA content in ecstasy tablets varies across the region, but overdose deaths connected to the use of ecstasy highlight the danger in consuming a drug with varying amounts of MDMA per tablet that often also contain mixtures of the other substances, though ecstasy use in the region remains limited compared to methamphetamine use.

### Significant amount of ecstasy seized in 2024

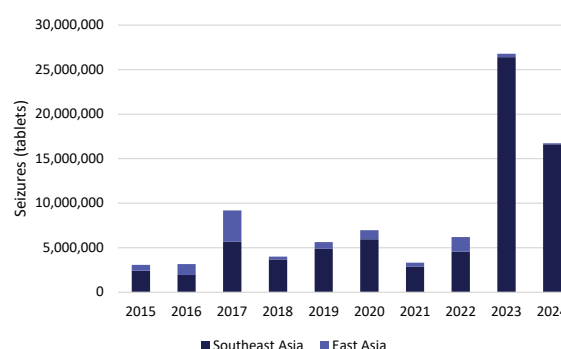
Since the start of regional data collection, seizures of ecstasy in East and Southeast Asia have remained under ten million ecstasy tablets per year.<sup>166</sup> However, in the past two years, this has changed. While seizures of ecstasy declined by 37.5 per cent over the past year from the equivalent of 26.7 million tablets to 16.7 million tablets in 2024, this is still two to five times more compared to the previous years where seizure amounts hovered between 3 to 7 million tablets.<sup>167</sup>

The decrease in seizures from 2023 to 2024 was in large part due to a significant decrease in the amount of ecstasy seized in Malaysia. In 2023, Malaysia seized a record 22.8 million ecstasy tablets (6,863.3 kg), which accounted for 85 per cent of the total amount of ecstasy seized in the region that year. A portion of that amount can be attributed to numerous large ecstasy seizures from air and maritime cargo consignments arriving in

Malaysia from Europe. In 2024, seizures of ecstasy in Malaysia declined to 5.8 million ecstasy tablets (1,746.3 kg). However, this is still the second highest amount of ecstasy seized reported in the country.

Despite the large decrease in ecstasy seizures in Malaysia, the overall amount of ecstasy seized in East and Southeast Asia only declined by 37.5 per cent. This is due to marked increases in ecstasy seizures in other countries in the region. Cambodia and Indonesia both reported record amounts of ecstasy seized in their respective countries, with Cambodia seizing nearly 5.6 million tablets (more than a 400 per cent increase) and Indonesia seizing over 4.7 million tablets (a 130 per cent increase). Increases were also reported in Brunei Darussalam (108 tablets, 1,700 per cent increase), Hong Kong, China (6,808 tablets, 300 per cent increase), Myanmar (214,452 tablets, 228 per cent increase), the Philippines (61,627 tablets, 75 per cent increase), and Thailand (206,809 tablets, 30 per cent increase). Meanwhile, aside from Malaysia, only China, the Republic of Korea, and Singapore reported a decrease in seizures.

**Figure 28. Seizures of ecstasy tablets in East and Southeast Asia, 2015-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; UNODC, responses to ARQ; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

It is interesting to note that in recent years Cambodia has seemed to have an increasing role in the regional ecstasy market. In previous years, Indonesia and Malaysia typically accounted for the majority of regional ecstasy seizures. However, in 2024, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Cambodia accounted for 28.3 per cent, 34.8 per cent, and 33.2 percent of the ecstasy seized in East and Southeast Asia, respectively. In turn, 2024 was the first year when seizures of ecstasy in Cambodia exceeded those of Indonesia.<sup>168</sup>

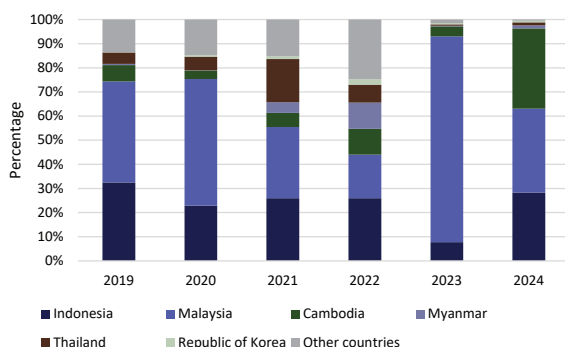
<sup>165</sup> Ecstasy tablets sold in East and Southeast Asia may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition to or instead of MDMA. The term “ecstasy” has expanded to sometimes include substances other than MDMA. Here “ecstasy” is used largely in reference to MDMA unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>166</sup> Figures reported in grams were converted into estimated tablet equivalents of 300 mg per tablet.

<sup>167</sup> DAINAP.

<sup>168</sup> DAINAP.

**Figure 29. Proportion of ecstasy seizures in East and Southeast Asia, by country, 2019-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

### Ecstasy trafficking flows to East and Southeast Asia

As reported by several countries in the region, including Indonesia, the Philippines, and the Republic of Korea, the majority of ecstasy seized in the region is sourced from Europe, such as Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and France.<sup>169</sup>

The Philippines, in particular, noted several cases of ecstasy originating from Europe. In May 2024, Philippine joint agencies made the largest single seizure of ecstasy ever reported in the country, seizing a parcel containing 40,389 tablets of ecstasy originating from the Netherlands. The drugs, which were concealed in dog food packaging, were seized at a postal facility in Manila, and local Filipino consignees were arrested upon claiming the package.<sup>170</sup> This accounted for 65.5 per cent of the ecstasy seized in the Philippines in 2024. In addition to the Netherlands, Philippine authorities also seized ecstasy through parcel post originating from Ireland, Denmark, and Germany. Of note is that, in 2024, Philippine authorities seized two shipments of ecstasy in crystalline form, which is purer than tableted MDMA, smuggled via parcel post from the Netherlands and Germany. The first case, detected in May 2024, involved an ecstasy parcel from the Netherlands while the second case, containing 2 kg of MDMA, was seized in a separate shipment

from Germany.<sup>171</sup> This significant development is evidence of attempts by some ecstasy trafficking groups to traffic higher-purity ecstasy perhaps as a means to reduce smuggling risk, as higher purity products are less voluminous than tablets that contain filling agents. It is likely that high-purity shipments were intended for processing in clandestine ecstasy manufacturing facilities before being repackaged into capsules or pressed into tablets, the preferred forms of ecstasy in local party scenes, though no such facilities have been detected in the Philippines.

Ecstasy is also occasionally trafficked across borders in the region through postal streams or land borders, though these shipments are likely transiting through countries in the region rather than being sourced directly from departure countries. Indonesia, for example, reported small quantities of ecstasy departing from Thailand and Malaysia into the country.<sup>172</sup> The Republic of Korea has also reported ecstasy arriving from Viet Nam, the Philippines, and China.<sup>173</sup>

### Expansion of ecstasy production in Southeast Asia to include synthesis of drugs

Ecstasy production still exists in Southeast Asia despite most of the ecstasy seized in the region being sourced from Europe. In the past six years, ecstasy production laboratories, primarily reprocessing facilities, have been dismantled in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Viet Nam, though the last time a laboratory was seized in Viet Nam was in 2019.<sup>174</sup> In the meantime, Malaysia has seized ecstasy laboratories every year since 2014. In 2024, two ecstasy laboratories were seized in the country, one small and one medium sized. Indonesia seized one laboratory in 2024, equal to the previous year. Although this appears to be a large drop compared to the six laboratories seized in 2022, it is important to consider the context that, since 2016, Indonesia has consistently seized only one ecstasy laboratory each year, except for 2019 and 2021 where no ecstasy laboratories were seized, and 2022 where the six laboratories were seized.<sup>175</sup> Meanwhile, Cambodia dismantled one ecstasy laboratory in 2024.<sup>176</sup>

169 RILO AP, "Regional situation briefing", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

170 Bureau of Customs of the Philippines, "BOC-NAIA, PDEA, and NAIA-IADITG Seizes PhP68 Million Worth of Ecstasy, Nabs 4 Suspects", May 2024, available at <https://customs.gov.ph/boc-naia-pdea-and-naia-iaditg-seizes-php68-million-worth-of-ecstasy-nabs-4-suspects/>.

171 PDEA of the Philippines, "Drug situation report", the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

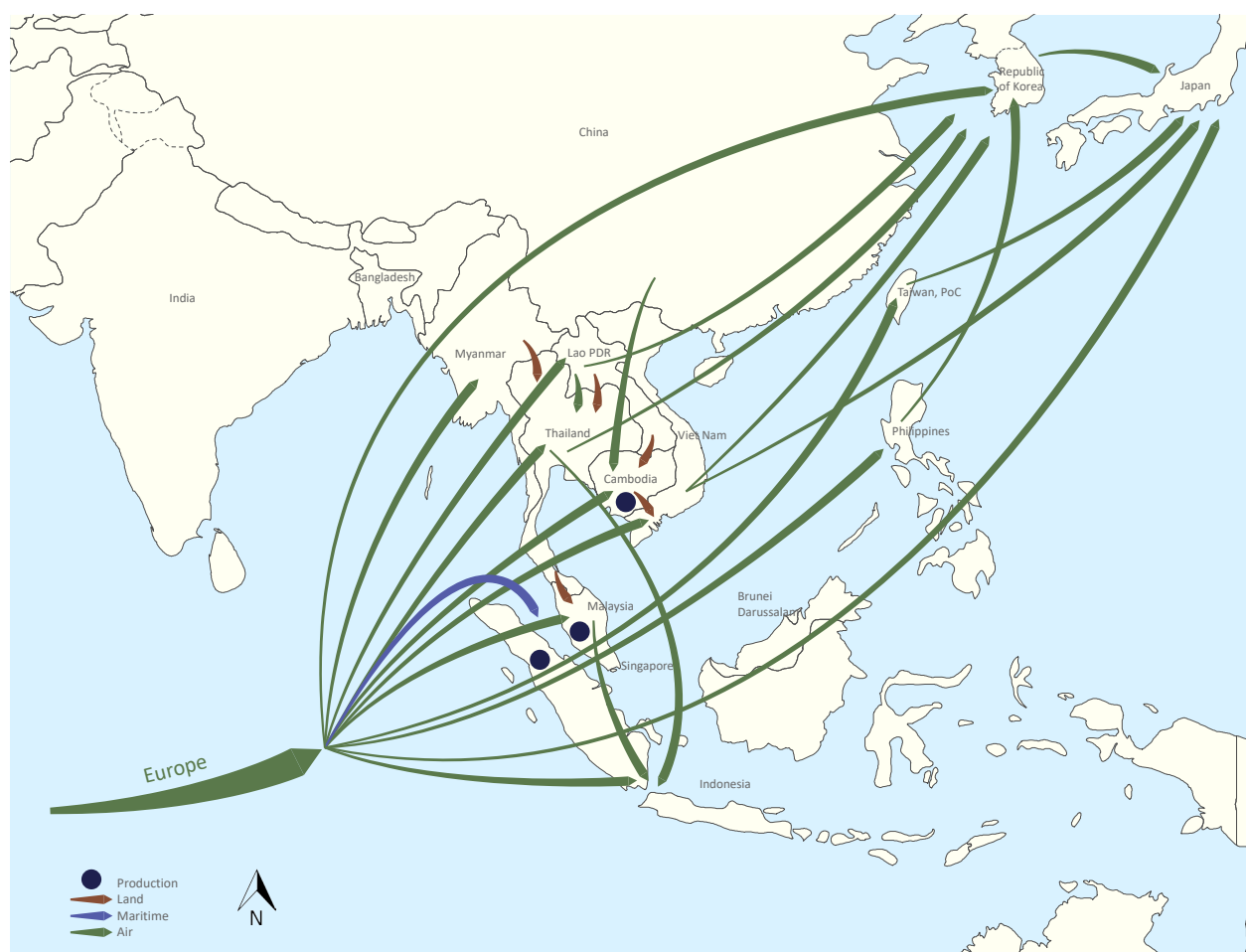
172 Official communication with BNN of Indonesia, March 2025.

173 Official communication with SPO of the Republic of Korea, February 2025.

174 DAINAP.

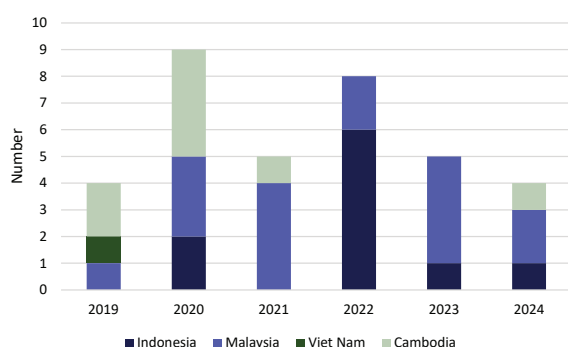
175 Ibid.

176 Official communication with NACD of Cambodia, March 2025.

**Map 15. Ecstasy trafficking flows in East and Southeast Asia, 2024 and 2025 (May)**

Note: Boundaries, names, and designations used do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Flows arrows represent the general direction of trafficking and do not coincide with precise sources of production or manufacture, are not actual routes.

Sources: DAINAP and UNODC elaboration based on data, information, and intelligence from drug authorities in East and Southeast Asia and Oceania.

**Figure 30. Number of ecstasy laboratories seized in Southeast Asia, 2019-2024**

Sources: DAINAP; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

In November 2024, an ecstasy production laboratory was seized in Kandal province, Cambodia. Altogether over 4.7 million ecstasy

tablets (1.4 tons) and 115 kg of MDMA powder, as well as 593 kg of other chemicals along with equipment needed in tabletting. This large seizure accounted for 92.2 per cent of the ecstasy seized in Cambodia in 2024. Forensic profiling found that the tablets had a purity of around 39 per cent or approximately 116 mg MDMA per tablet. Of note is that the arrestee was an Indian national, with two accomplices (one Indian and one Pakistani) having fled the scene. However, it is unclear the extent to which the operation has connections to transnational drug trafficking networks. Details on the origin of the equipment and substances, target market, and connections to transnational networks are still limited, as the laboratory was discovered not through investigation, but due to authorities responding to a fire that had been reported on the scene.<sup>177</sup>

177 Ibid.



Seizure of ecstasy production laboratory in Kandal province, Cambodia, November 2024.

Source: NACD of Cambodia.

Significantly, aside from ecstasy reprocessing facilities, there have also been signs of ecstasy production in the region. In January 2025, Malaysian authorities seized a clandestine laboratory producing ecstasy and Erimin 5. Located in Selangor, the laboratory was equipped with machinery and chemicals trafficked into Malaysia via air cargo. A total of 493 kg of ecstasy, 306 kg of Erimin 5, 21 kg of cocaine, and other drugs were found at the site. In addition, ten individuals from Taiwan PoC, one Malaysian, and one Thai national were arrested. It is important to note that this laboratory was not a typical reprocessing facility as seen in previous years, but one that synthesized drugs using precursor chemicals. At the time of writing, details regarding the specific chemicals used and their origins remain unavailable. Investigations revealed a sophisticated operation connected to a syndicate based in Taiwan PoC.<sup>178</sup>

In a similar vein, Thai authorities have also seized chemicals that could be used for the illicit production of drugs. In March 2025, Lao authorities informed their Thai counterparts in Chiang Saen, Chiang Rai in northern Thailand about two suspicious wooden crates imported from Lao PDR, declared as strong grinding machinery and intended for re-export to Myanmar. Upon inspection and further confirmatory testing, the crates were found to contain 960 kg of PMK ethyl glycidate and 101 kg of PMK, which can be used to synthesize MDMA. However, based on initial information, the chemicals might not have been intended for the production of ecstasy tablets, but rather for MDMA in synthetic drug products like “happy water”.<sup>179</sup>

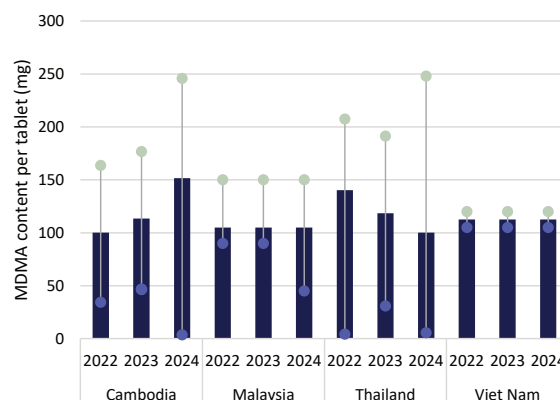
178 NCID of Malaysia, “Drug situation report”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

179 ONCB of Thailand, “Drug situation report”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

## Content of MDMA in ecstasy tablets remains high in Southeast Asia<sup>180</sup>

The average MDMA content in ecstasy tablets varies among countries in the region, but remained mostly stable in 2024. Both Malaysia and Viet Nam reported the same average purity in 2024 compared to the previous two years, at 35 per cent and 37.5 per cent respectively. In Cambodia, the average purity of ecstasy increased for the third consecutive year reaching 50.5 per cent in 2024 compared to 37.8 per cent in 2023 and 33.4 per cent in 2022. Meanwhile, purity in Thailand dropped for the third year in a row to 33.4 per cent in 2024 compared to 39.5 per cent in 2023 and 46.8 per cent in 2022. Although the average purity in Thailand declined, the maximum percentage detected increased quite significantly in both Thailand and Cambodia, both reaching over 80 per cent. Even though it may only be a few samples, the high dosage could pose significant harm if taken by drug users.<sup>181</sup> In comparison, the average ecstasy tablet tested by drug checking services in Europe in 2023 contained 134 mg of MDMA, a purity of around 44.7 per cent.

**Figure 31. Changes in MDMA content in ecstasy tablets analyzed in Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Viet Nam, 2022-2024**



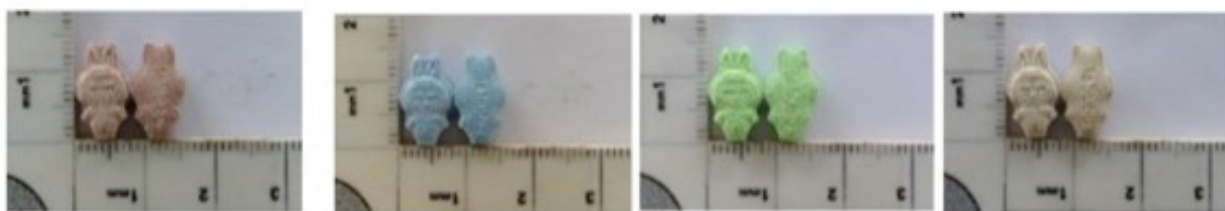
Note: The MDMA content is an approximation based on an estimated average tablet weight of 300 mg per tablet. The high-low bars represent the upper and lower limits of the content range for those countries which reported such range in addition to the typical content. For the purpose of this figure, a mid-point of upper and lower limit was used when data were reported in a range format.

Sources: DAINAP; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

180 The figures in this subsection should be interpreted with caution as ecstasy tablets are of different weights, and average weights may change from year to year. Additionally, some tablets may be different shapes and sizes to appeal to different individuals, which may drive the changes in the percentage of active MDMA when the actual amount may not change much. Nevertheless, the figures can still provide insight to changes to ecstasy found in the region.

181 Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.





Samples of 'Labubu' ecstasy tablets seized in Thailand.  
Source: ONCB of Thailand.

Indeed, in April 2025, Thailand reported two deaths connected to ecstasy use during the Songkran festival. Three patients had been admitted after losing consciousness, experiencing muscle spasms, and respiratory arrest. Of the three, two unfortunately succumbed to the symptoms, while one remained in critical condition. The commonality observed among the three was that they had all taken ecstasy shaped like the character 'Labubu', which is popular in East and Southeast Asia, including in Thailand, and has been found in the country since September 2024.<sup>182</sup> Although the source of the tablet is unknown, it is possible that dealers in the region may have wanted to press their own shapes to appeal to local markets and chose 'Labubu' due to its popularity in the region. According to chemical and physical profiling, 'Labubu'-shaped ecstasy tablets weigh between 310 and 320 mg and contain approximately 50.6 to 63 per cent MDMA (around 159.4 to 198.5 mg per tablet assuming an average weight of 315 mg per tablet) and 7.2 to 8.6 per cent ketamine as well as caffeine, which is high compared to the average ecstasy tablet seized in Thailand, but not necessarily fatal.<sup>183</sup> It is important to note, however, that the effects of drugs may vary in intensity and severity based on the person taking them due to several factors, such as physical condition and profile, and the same dosage to one person may have a greater effect on another. Moreover, there is additional risk if ecstasy is taken together with other party drugs or drug cocktails, as the combination of substances could have even more harmful effects.

Ecstasy tablets in the region are often found to contain a large number of adulterants or other drugs. For instance, Thailand has reported varying combinations of MDMA, methamphetamine, ketamine, heroin, and caffeine.<sup>184</sup> Meanwhile, in Singapore, forensic analysis of ecstasy tablets seized in the country has also shown a variety of substances, including ketamine, methamphetamine, and various NPS.<sup>185</sup> Viet Nam has also reported detecting nimetazepam in ecstasy tablets.<sup>186</sup>

182 ONCB of Thailand, "ONCB Secretary-General warns of 'Labubu' ecstasy during Songkran after two deaths reported by the Ramathibodi Poison Center with patients losing consciousness and entering respiratory arrest", April 2025, available at [https://www.facebook.com/oncb.go.th/posts/pfbid02DGPwSijIM6uF29x3XYyzLpJTajHLoVLN4bSGdPqtob3DeaVD8EGzLZbKYoc2Kx7l?locale=zh\\_TW](https://www.facebook.com/oncb.go.th/posts/pfbid02DGPwSijIM6uF29x3XYyzLpJTajHLoVLN4bSGdPqtob3DeaVD8EGzLZbKYoc2Kx7l?locale=zh_TW).

183 Official communication with ONCB of Thailand, April 2025.

184 Ibid.

185 Health Sciences Authority (HSA) of Singapore, "Country briefing", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

186 CNPD of Viet Nam, "Country briefing", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

**Table 4. Samples of ecstasy tablets containing multiple substances analyzed in Southeast Asia, 2024**

Country	Images	Composition
Singapore		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MDMA</li> <li>- 4-FPP</li> <li>- Ketamine</li> </ul>
Singapore		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MDMA</li> <li>- Ketamine</li> <li>- Methamphetamine</li> <li>- Diamorphine</li> <li>- 4-FPP</li> <li>- MBZP</li> </ul>
Singapore		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MDMA</li> <li>- Ketamine</li> <li>- Methamphetamine</li> </ul>
Thailand		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MDMA</li> <li>- Methamphetamine</li> <li>- Caffeine</li> </ul>
Thailand		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MDMA</li> <li>- Ketamine</li> <li>- Caffeine</li> </ul>
Thailand		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MDMA</li> <li>- Methamphetamine</li> <li>- Ketamine</li> <li>- Caffeine</li> </ul>
Thailand		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MDMA</li> <li>- Methamphetamine</li> <li>- Ketamine</li> <li>- Heroin</li> <li>- Caffeine</li> </ul>
Viet Nam		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MDMA</li> <li>- Nimetazepam</li> </ul>

Sources: Country briefings, September 2024; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

### Changes in retail prices for ecstasy

Changes to the typical retail price for one tablet of ecstasy in the region varied depending on the country. While Hong Kong, China, and Thailand both reported increases, the price in Myanmar and the Philippines decreased, while the price in the Republic of Korea remained the same.

In Hong Kong, China, the price increased from US\$ 7.61 in 2023 to US\$ 9.92 in 2024, returning to the

range of prices observed in 2019 (US\$ 9.54).<sup>187</sup> In Thailand, the average price increased slightly from US\$ 10.80 in 2023 to US\$ 12.75 in 2024, but is still lower than the US\$ 13.64 observed in 2022. Prices in the country varied from region to region, with prices in western Thailand ranging from US\$ 5.70 to US\$ 14.20 while prices in Bangkok ranged from US\$ 7.10 to US\$ 9.90.<sup>188</sup> When adjusted for purity, however, while the retail price for ecstasy in Thailand remained relatively stable between

187 Official communication with NNCC of China, April 2025.

188 Official communication with ONCB of Thailand, April 2025.



2022 and 2023, there was an increase in the purity-adjusted price for 2024. This could indicate a smaller supply relative to growing demand.

**Table 5. Purity-adjusted retail prices of ecstasy tablets in US\$ in Thailand, 2022-2024**

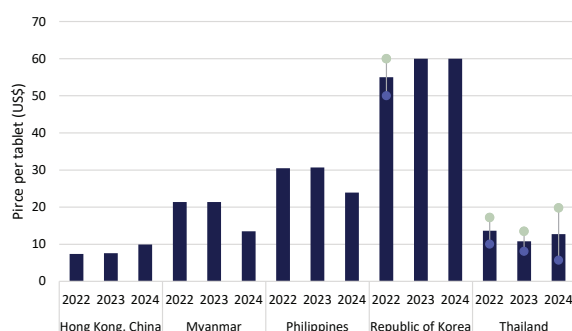
Price	2022	2023	2024
Average price	13.64	10.80	12.75
Purity-adjusted price	29.15	27.34	38.17

Source: Official communication with ONCB of Thailand, April 2025.

Meanwhile, in Myanmar, after two years with the retail price at US\$ 21.40 per tablet, in 2024 the price decreased by 36.9 per cent to just US\$ 13.50.<sup>189</sup> Prices in the Philippines similarly dropped by 22.1 per cent from US\$ 30.69 to US\$ 23.91. This decrease is potentially attributed to high supply levels compared to the previous year as well as the existence of a vibrant market for this drug in the country, particularly at social activities where it is often distributed.<sup>190</sup>

The typical retail price for one tablet of ecstasy remained the same in the Republic of Korea. After increasing from US\$ 55 in 2022 to US\$ 60 in 2023, the price has stayed at US\$ 60 in 2024.<sup>191</sup>

**Figure 32. Typical retail prices of ecstasy tablets in Hong Kong, China, Myanmar, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand, 2022-2024 (US\$)**



Note: The high-low bars represent the upper and lower limits of the price range for those countries which reported such range in addition to the typical price. For the purpose of this figure, a mid-point of upper and lower limit was used when data were reported in a range format. Sources: DAINAP; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

189 CCDAC of Myanmar.

190 PDEA of the Philippines, "Annual Intelligence Assessment Report 2024", 2025.

191 Official communication with SPO of the Republic of Korea, March 2025.

## Ecstasy use in East and Southeast Asia remains limited

In 2024, six countries provided their expert perception on ecstasy use. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Thailand reported an increase in ecstasy use over the past year, while Indonesia and Singapore reported decreases.<sup>192</sup> Ecstasy treatment admissions remain low, with Brunei Darussalam (one of 137 admissions), Cambodia (58 of 9,428 admissions), and Thailand (284 of 199,319 admissions) reporting that ecstasy treatment admissions accounted for less than one per cent of all drug admissions. Despite the low percentage, it is important to note that in Cambodia, the number of people admitted into drug treatment for ecstasy increased significantly from six people in 2023 to 58 people in 2024. According to a nationwide drug use survey conducted in Thailand in 2024, of the people who reported using drugs in the past year 1.5 per cent reported using ecstasy (147,778 out of 9,955,893 people total).<sup>193</sup> Meanwhile in Singapore, the proportion of ecstasy treatment admissions declined from 2.7 per cent in 2023 to 1.2 per cent in 2024 (29 of 2,403 admissions).<sup>194</sup>

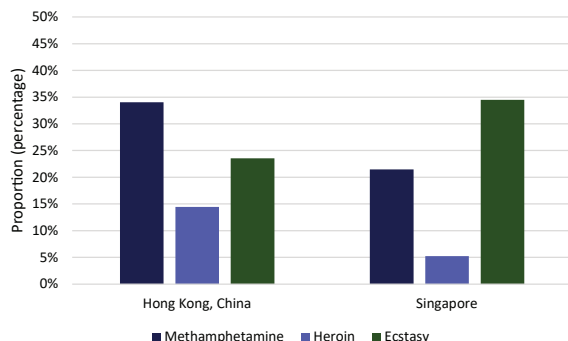
Available disaggregated data by gender on drug use for 2024 indicate that the proportion of female users of ecstasy remains high compared to female users of other major drugs in the region, particularly in Singapore. In Hong Kong, China, female ecstasy users accounted for 23.5 per cent of all ecstasy users, while in Singapore they accounted for 34.5 per cent.

192 Official communication with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

193 Vongchavalitkul University (with support from ONCB of Thailand), "Nationwide drug use survey", May 2024.

194 Ibid.

**Figure 33. Proportion of female users of methamphetamine, heroin, and ecstasy as identified through various demand indicators in Hong Kong, China, and Singapore, 2024**



Note: Data for Hong Kong, China, are based on the number of drug users brought into formal contact with authorities, while data for Singapore are based on treatment admissions.

Sources: DAINAP; official communication with CNB of Singapore, April 2025; Narcotics Division, Security Bureau (NDSB), Hong Kong, China, "Newly/previously reported drug abusers by sex by common type of drugs abused (T12)", available at [https://www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda\\_main\\_charts\\_and\\_tables.html](https://www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda_main_charts_and_tables.html).

## Overview of the new psychoactive substances (NPS) and other synthetic drug markets

Although the volume of seizures of NPS<sup>195</sup> is not as high as that of other synthetic drugs, NPS remain a concern in the region as new compounds continue to be detected each year and can be found mixed with other substances in a variety of emerging products sold in illegal drug markets. At the same time, legal controls on NPS have resulted in the emergence of pharmaceutical products, namely etomidate, being used for non-medical purposes, particularly in vaping products, which have seen an increase in use in recent years.

### General trends in the detection of NPS in East and Southeast Asia

Preliminary data up to December 2024 show that a total of 575 individual NPS have been identified so far in East and Southeast Asia.<sup>196</sup> Of these substances, synthetic cannabinoids (178) account for the largest proportion, followed by synthetic cathinones (120) and phenethylamines (77). In 2024, 83 individual NPS were identified with synthetic cannabinoids (29) comprising the majority of substances, followed by synthetic cathinones (15), other substances<sup>197</sup> (10), and phencyclidine-type substances (9).<sup>198</sup>

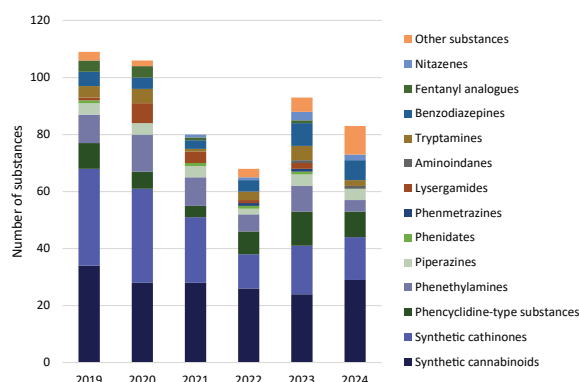
195 For the purpose of this report, NPS that have been placed under international control since 2014 continue to be included under the term NPS to enable time series analysis. A list of all scheduling decisions can be found at: [https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Mandate\\_Functions/Mandate-and-Functions\\_Scheduling.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/Mandate_Functions/Mandate-and-Functions_Scheduling.html).

196 Based on data collected since 2008.

197 Other substances are substances that do not fall under the substance types of aminoindanes, benzodiazepines, fentanyl analogues, lysergamides, nitazenes, phencyclidine-type substances, phenethylamines, phenidates, phenmetrazines, piperazines, plant-based substances, synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic cathinones, or tryptamines.

198 UNODC Early Warning Advisory (EWA) on NPS; official communications with national drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

Figure 34. Individual NPS reported to UNODC in East and Southeast Asia, by substance group, 2019-2024



Note: Not including plant-based substances.

Sources: UNODC Early Warning Advisory (EWA) on NPS; DAINAP; official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

### Shift in geographical distribution of synthetic cannabinoids and diversification of NPS

For the past decade, synthetic cannabinoids have been the dominant NPS in East and Southeast Asia in terms of number of individual substances detected, and continue to account for the largest share of NPS detected in the region. However, following the class scheduling of synthetic cannabinoids in China in 2021,<sup>199</sup> there have been some shifts in the most frequently detected NPS in a few countries in the region. While some countries, such as Viet Nam, Indonesia, and Malaysia still predominantly reported synthetic cannabinoids, the NPS markets in China and Singapore have diversified towards substances other than synthetic cannabinoids.

In 2024, Viet Nam only reported detections of synthetic cannabinoids,<sup>200</sup> while in Malaysia 680 of 825 NPS samples were identified as synthetic cannabinoids.<sup>201</sup> In Indonesia, while some samples of NPS only contained one substance, the majority of samples contained multiple substances, frequently in combination with synthetic cannabinoids. The most commonly identified NPS in Indonesia in 2024 was MDMB-4en-PINACA, which appeared in 2,387 of the 2,425 samples analyzed, most often in combination with MDMB-INACA (2,184 samples), on its own (169 samples), but also in combination with NPS from other substance groups as well as methamphetamine and ketamine.<sup>202</sup>

199 Ministry of Public Security of China, May 2021, available at: <https://app.mps.gov.cn/gdnps/pc/content.jsp?id=7881703>.

200 Official communication with CNPD of Viet Nam, March 2025.

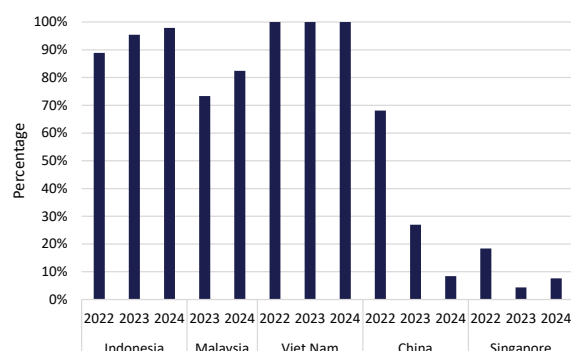
201 Official communication with NADA of Malaysia, February 2025.

202 Official communication with BNN of Indonesia, March 2025.



Meanwhile, in China, the class scheduling of synthetic cannabinoids in 2021 had initially led to the emergence of synthetic cannabinoids that circumvented the general structural backbones as specified under the scheduling.<sup>203</sup> Since then, the overall proportion of synthetic cannabinoids detected has continued to drop, now for the third consecutive year from 68 per cent of all NPS samples analyzed in 2022 (618 of 97 samples) to 27 per cent in 2023 (93 of 345 samples) and even lower to 9 per cent in 2024 (17 of 184 samples).<sup>204</sup> Singapore detected more synthetic cannabinoids in 2024 than in 2023 (42 samples compared to 22 samples), however, the overall proportion of synthetic cannabinoids identified in samples analyzed remained low at nearly eight per cent of samples compared to four per cent in 2023 and 18 per cent in 2022.<sup>205</sup>

**Figure 35. Proportion of synthetic cannabinoids identified in select countries in East and Southeast Asia, by country and number of occurrences, 2022-2024**

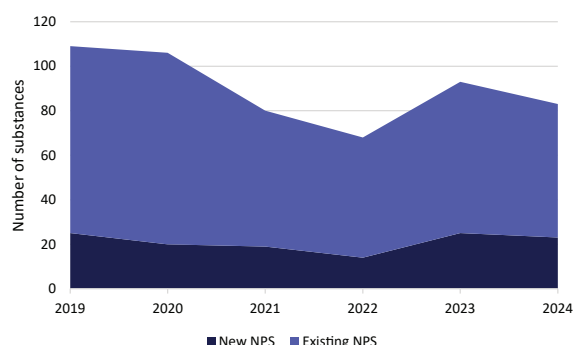


Note: The proportion of samples identified in Indonesia containing synthetic cannabinoids only includes samples which contain only synthetic cannabinoids, and does not include samples mixed with NPS from other substance groups.

Sources: UNODC EWA on NPS; DAINAP; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

A total of 23 new NPS were identified in East and Southeast Asia in 2024. The proportion of new NPS detected has increased for the past three years, with 28 per cent of the individual NPS identified in 2024 being new NPS, compared to 27 per cent in 2023, and 21 per cent in 2022.

**Figure 36. Number of newly identified NPS in East and Southeast Asia, 2019-2024**



Sources: UNODC EWA on NPS; DAINAP; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

It is important to note that compared to 2023 when only two new synthetic cannabinoids were identified, nine new synthetic cannabinoids were identified in 2024. Notably, none of the new synthetic cannabinoids were identified in China, with the majority instead being detected in Viet Nam. However, the remaining newly identified NPS in the other substance types were all detected in China. This could indicate a shift in the geographical distribution of synthetic cannabinoids away from China and rather to other countries in the region.

While synthetic cannabinoids were the substance group with the highest number of newly identified NPS, substances that are not part of the other common substance types comprised the second highest number of new NPS. Significantly, six of the other substances newly identified in 2024 were etomidate analogues.

## Emergence of etomidate

In recent years, China has reported an increase in the illicit use of pharmaceutical products as drug suppliers seek substitutes for mainstream drugs (methamphetamine and heroin), sometimes to get around emerging drug controls of NPS. Of note is etomidate, which is a hypnotic agent used for anaesthetic purposes, that was found to be added to e-liquids for use with vaping products following the class scheduling of synthetic cannabinoids in 2021. Symptoms of etomidate overuse primarily include intoxication-like effects, hand tremors, unsteadiness, as well as anxiety, panic, sluggishness, and mental confusion, and its use has been associated with public safety accidents.<sup>206</sup>

203 UNODC, "Synthetic Drugs in East and Southeast Asia: Latest developments and challenges 2022", May 2022.

204 Official communication with NNCC of China, March 2025.

205 Official communication with CNB and HSA of Singapore, April 2025.

206 Official communication with NNCC of China, March 2025.

**Table 6. Newly identified NPS and other emerging synthetic substances in East and Southeast Asia, 2024**

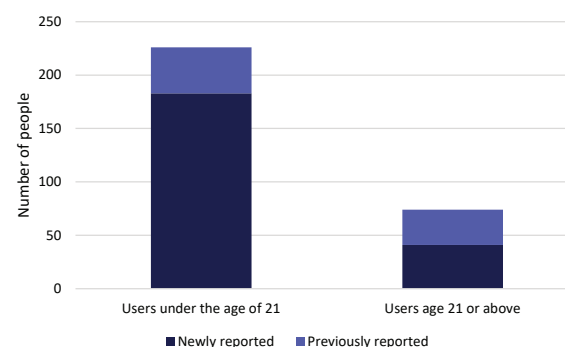
Substance type	Substance name	Countries identified
Synthetic cannabinoids	ADB-ICA	Viet Nam
	Delta-9-THC acetate	Singapore
	EDMB-4en-PINACA	Malaysia
	MDMB-3en-BUTINACA	Malaysia, Viet Nam
	MDMB-5Me-INACA	Indonesia
	MDMB-BUTICA	Viet Nam
	MDMB-CHM7AICA	Viet Nam
	MDMB-ICA	Viet Nam
	MDMB-PINACA	Republic of Korea
Synthetic cathinones	<i>N</i> -Isopropyl Butylone	China, Singapore
	$\alpha$ -PHIPP	China
Phencyclidine-type substances	3-methoxy Rolicyclidine (3-MeO-PCPy)	China
	Deschloro- <i>N</i> -propyl-ketamine (2-oxo-PCPr)	China
Phenethylamines	MDProlintane	China
Piperazines	1-(3,4-Methylenedioxybenzyl)piperazine (MDBP)	China
Nitazenes	<i>N,N</i> -dimethyl etonitazene	China
Other substances	2,6-diCl-3F-Etomidate	China
	4F-Etomidate	China
	Isobutomidate	China
	Propoxate	China, Singapore
	sec-Butomidate	China
	TF-Etomidate	China
	Thiopropamine	China

Sources: UNODC EWA on NPS; DAINAP; Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

Etomidate was subsequently controlled in China in October 2023. However, since then, analogues of the substance have been identified, including metomidate, isopropoxate, and propoxate (controlled in July 2024), as well as sec-Butomidate, 4F-etomidate, and isobutomidate, among other etomidate analogues. This development is concerning as it shows that manufacturers of the substance have quickly adapted to legal controls on etomidate.

In Hong Kong, China, the non-medical use of etomidate (also known locally as “space oil (drug)”) through vaping products first emerged in 2023, and seizures and use of the substance increased significantly in 2024.<sup>207</sup> In 2024, a total of 300 drug users used “space oil (drug)”, with most being new users. Concerningly, the number of “space oil (drug)” users aged under 21 was triple that of users aged over 21, with 183 of the 226 young users being new users of the drug. The third most common substance taken by drug users under age

21 in 2024 was “space oil (drug)”, behind cannabis (296 users) and cocaine (291 users), showing the significance of the problem, particularly among youth in Hong Kong, China.<sup>208</sup>

**Figure 37. Number of people using “space oil (drug)” in Hong Kong, China, 2024**

Source: NDSB of Hong Kong, China, “Newly/previously reported drug abusers by age group and common type of drugs abused (T13)”, available at [https://www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda\\_main\\_charts\\_and\\_tables.html](https://www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda_main_charts_and_tables.html).

207 Government of Hong Kong, China, “LCQ7: Combating vaping of ‘space oil’”, October 2024, available at <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202410/23/P2024102300363.htm>.

208 NDSB of Hong Kong, China, “Newly/previously reported drug abusers by age group and common type of drugs abused (T13)”, available at [https://www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda\\_main\\_charts\\_and\\_tables.html](https://www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda_main_charts_and_tables.html).



As at 14 February 2025, etomidate and three of its analogues (metomidate, propoxate, and isopropoxate) have been listed as dangerous drugs in Hong Kong, China.<sup>209</sup> Taiwan PoC also classified etomidate as a Schedule 4 controlled drug in November 2024 following increased use and seizures of the substance, as well as its implications in fatal traffic accidents.<sup>210</sup> Its analogue metomidate was also recently scheduled as a Schedule 3 controlled drug.<sup>211</sup>



Seizure of chemicals used in the production of etomidate at a warehouse in Bangkok, Thailand, December 2024.  
Source: ONCB of Thailand.

While the use of etomidate and its analogues does not seem to be as prevalent in other countries in the region, e-liquid samples containing etomidate have also been found in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. In Thailand, etomidate has been found for sale online since September 2024. Although its possession, import, and production are controlled by the Thai Food and Drug Administration, it is not currently listed as an illegal substance in Thailand, but due to its emergence in the country, there are considerations to list it as a category 2 psychotropic substance.<sup>212</sup>

Organized crime may be taking advantage of control or enforcement gaps to produce etomidate in other countries in the region. In December 2024, ONCB of Thailand reported that, in cooperation with the NNCC of China, authorities were able to seize 2,200

lit and 250 kg of chemicals as well as equipment that could be used to produce etomidate at a warehouse in Bangkok, Thailand.<sup>213</sup> These chemicals included phenylethylamine, ethyl chloroacetate, triethylamine, ethyl formate, formic acid, benzene, and potassium thiocyanate, and would have been able to produce 200 kg of etomidate.<sup>214</sup> According to case information, NNCC contacted ONCB with information that 4 Chinese nationals were found to have ordered a large quantity of chemicals from China into Thailand. Upon investigation, ONCB discovered that the individuals had rented the warehouse in Bangkok where the chemicals were found.<sup>215</sup>

Distribution centres with cartridge packaging operations have also been seized in Hong Kong, China, Taiwan PoC,<sup>216</sup> and Singapore,<sup>217</sup> further showing the spread of etomidate across East and Southeast Asia.

209 NDSB, Hong Kong, China, Press release, “Space Oil Drug”, available at [https://www.nd.gov.hk/en/space\\_oil\\_drug.html](https://www.nd.gov.hk/en/space_oil_drug.html).

210 For more information, see <https://www.fda.gov.tw/eng/newsContent.aspx?id=30789>.

211 For more information, see <https://www.fda.gov.tw/ENG/lawContent.aspx?cid=5061&id=603>.

212 LAW central legal database, Official announcement, available at: [https://law.go.th/listeningDetail?survey\\_id=NTESMERHQV9MQVdfRIJPTIRFTkQ=](https://law.go.th/listeningDetail?survey_id=NTESMERHQV9MQVdfRIJPTIRFTkQ=).

213 ONCB of Thailand, “ONCB and partner agencies expand investigation into transnational crime network – chemicals used to produce dangerous drug to be used as substitute for narcotics seized”, December 2024, available at <https://www.oncb.go.th/news/4599>.

214 Official communication with ONCB of Thailand, April 2025.

215 ONCB of Thailand, “ONCB and partner agencies expand investigation into transnational crime network – chemicals used to produce dangerous drug to be used as substitute for narcotics seized”, December 2024, available at <https://www.oncb.go.th/news/4599>.

216 For more information, see <https://www.cib.npa.gov.tw/ch/app/news/view?id=1885&module=news&serno=c242dfac-d8b3-416a-ab29-958bb3d7bd17&utm>.

217 HSA of Singapore, “E-vaporisers, duty-unpaid cigarettes and illicit substances found in industrial unit”, January 2025, available at [https://www.hsa.gov.sg/docs/default-source/about-us/download-pdf-version-hereee0055daf-69fa-4625-8384-1411a4a14ce6.pdf?sfvrsn=648dec\\_1](https://www.hsa.gov.sg/docs/default-source/about-us/download-pdf-version-hereee0055daf-69fa-4625-8384-1411a4a14ce6.pdf?sfvrsn=648dec_1).

### Substances found in vaping products

Vaping products were originally intended as an alternative to tobacco cigarettes, however, in recent years, they have evolved to contain not only nicotine, but also flavourings, cannabinoids, and NPS, sometimes with combinations of substances. This trend is concerning as products could be mislabelled and not contain the substances advertised to users. In addition, the concentration of substances may not be known, and vaping products are typically sold in attractive packaging to appeal to users, which increasingly include young consumers. Use of novel substances in unknown amounts taken by vaping could lead to overdose or dependence. Further, vaping is easier to conceal, making it attractive to those wishing to avoid detection or get around bans on anti-smoking laws.

In East and Southeast Asia, vaping products are commonly found to contain synthetic cannabinoids. However, following the class scheduling of synthetic cannabinoids in China in 2021, there has been an increase in other substances detected in vaping products. In addition to etomidate, countries have also reported detecting ketamine and methamphetamine. Of note, Thailand has reported the emergence of vaping products containing ketamine, sometimes in combination with methamphetamine or etomidate, called “K pods”, and public warnings have been issued by the Food and Drug Administration<sup>218</sup> and the Department of Disease Control (DDC)<sup>219</sup> on the harmful effects of consuming these vaping products. Meanwhile in Singapore, products sold as “K pods” have been found to contain either ketamine or etomidate.

**Table 7. Samples of vaping products analyzed in East and Southeast Asia, 2024**

Country	Images	Composition
Indonesia		- Etomidate
Singapore		- MDMB-4en-PINACA - MDMB-BUTINACA
Singapore		- Methamphetamine - MDMB-4en-PINACA - ADB-4en-PINACA
Singapore		- Ketamine
Singapore		- Etomidate
Thailand		- Etomidate - Ketamine
Thailand		- Etomidate
Viet Nam		- MDMB-BUTICA - MDMB-ICA

Sources: Official communications with drug agencies in the region, February-May 2025.

Although information on the use of vaping products is limited in the region, several countries have noted the rising use of vaping products, particularly among youth. The popularity of the

<sup>218</sup> FDA of Thailand, “FDA warns use of ‘K pods’ can result in death, selling will lead to imprisonment”, January 2025, available at <https://www.fda.moph.go.th/media.php?id=720185484017541120&name=ข่าว%20พอดเค%20เสี่ยงตายขายผิดกฎหมาย>.pdf.

<sup>219</sup> DDS of Thailand, “DDS warns of e-cigarettes containing ketamine”, January 2025, available at [https://ddc.moph.go.th/brc/news.php?news=49558&deptcode=brc&news\\_views=414](https://ddc.moph.go.th/brc/news.php?news=49558&deptcode=brc&news_views=414).

product has been attributed to the accessibility of the products, as well as their attractive packaging and perception as a cool and modern alternative to traditional cigarettes.

In other regions, synthetic cannabinoids appear to be the most prevalent NPS substance group found in vaping products and have been reported in countries such as the United Kingdom and Scotland. However, other substances such as nitazenes have also been reported in Australia, as well as countries in Europe and North America.<sup>220</sup> In 2024, four patients in Australia

220 UNODC EWA on NPS, “Increasing range of drugs and new psychoactive substances found in vaping products”, April 2025, available at <https://www.unodc.org/LSS/Announcement/Details/8afbc6e8-9439-4ed8-8117-30d80173590a>.

experienced severe opioid withdrawal after ceasing their prolonged use of vaping products. Testing of the vaping liquid used revealed that rather than simply being non-nicotine vaping liquid or containing cannabinoids as had been originally advertised, they instead were found to contain nitazenes, including protonitazene, illustrating the danger and potential harm arising from the use of mislabelled vaping products.<sup>221</sup>

221 NSW Health of Australia, “UPDATE: Cases of dependence and overdose linked to nitazenes (strong opioids) in refillable vape liquids”, August 2024, available at <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/sabs/Documents/2024-sn-023.pdf>.

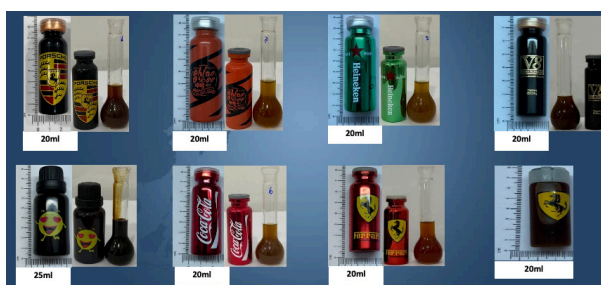
## Continued prevalence of synthetic drug products

In addition to vaping products, countries in the region continue to report various synthetic drug products typically containing mixtures of substances. In previous years, this has included “k-powdered milk”, “happy water”, and “party lollipops”.

“Happy water” remains prevalent in the region, with multiple countries continuing to detect the product, including Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Viet Nam, with varying combinations of substances in each country. In Thailand, “happy water” has been found to contain substances such as MDMA, methamphetamine, ketamine, nimetazepam, diazepam, heroin, amphetamine, and caffeine.<sup>222</sup> While samples seized in Cambodia mostly contain MDMA and ketamine, some samples have been found to also contain the synthetic cathinone 4-methylmethcathinone (4-MMC).<sup>223</sup> “Happy water” samples containing 4-MMC have also been identified in Singapore in combination with methamphetamine and ketamine. Additionally, aside from methamphetamine, ketamine, MDMA, and amphetamine, samples containing synthetic cannabinoids have also been detected, primarily XLR-11.<sup>224</sup> In Malaysia, “happy water” typically contains MDMA, ketamine, methamphetamine,

and caffeine.<sup>225</sup> Meanwhile in Viet Nam, “happy water” typically contains two or more of the following substances: methamphetamine, MDMA, ketamine, nimetazepam, or caffeine.<sup>226</sup>

As a recent development, in 2024, “happy water” has been found to be sold not only as powder in packet form, but also in small bottles in liquid form. Cambodia has seized multiple samples of liquid “happy water”, some with the same packaging as powder “happy water”, containing methamphetamine, MDMA, and ketamine in low concentrations (0.1-3%).



Liquid “happy water” samples seized in Cambodia.  
Source: NACD of Cambodia.

Thailand has also seized “happy water” in liquid form, found to contain MDMA, ketamine, diazepam, and nimetazepam. The evolution of “happy water” from powder packets to liquid bottles shows that producers are constantly adapting the packaging and presentation of their products to appeal to more users.

222 Official communication with ONCB of Thailand, April 2025.

223 NACD of Cambodia, “Country briefing”, Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

224 HSA of Singapore, “Country briefing”, Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

225 KIMIA of Malaysia, “Country briefing”, Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

226 CNPD of Viet Nam, “Country briefing”, Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.



Liquid “happy water” sample seized in Thailand.  
Source: ONCB of Thailand.

## Responses to the emergence of NPS

With the continued advent of new NPS, it is more important than ever to develop national early warning systems to be able to identify and rapidly share information on new and emerging substances, as well as new combinations of drugs and use patterns, before public health crises occur. In the region, currently only Indonesia has implemented a national early warning system, while China has provincial early warning systems in major provinces. While other countries do not have formal early warning systems, some informal non-centralized systems quickly share information with other relevant agencies and the public.

In the legal dimension, countries have taken various legislative measures to prevent their spread. According to scheduling procedures in several countries in the region, substances are controlled on an individual basis, subject to reviews on their prevalence and potential harm. However, with how quickly NPS enter and sometimes leave the market, this mechanism might not be able to effectively control emerging substances in a timely manner. Other measures, such as class scheduling have also been adopted by some countries to curb the creation of new substances. China, for example, scheduled fentanyl as a class in 2019 and, as previously mentioned, synthetic cannabinoids in 2021. While this has led to changes in the regional landscape, controlling substances based on common structural backbones may also leave gaps. For example, as previously mentioned, while the class scheduling of synthetic cannabinoids has resulted in the decrease of synthetic cannabinoids detected in China, in 2022, it also resulted in the emergence of synthetic cannabinoids with previously unencountered or not commonly encountered structural backbones.<sup>227</sup>

As an alternative, to more quickly adapt to the emergence of new unlisted NPS, Singapore recently introduced a new legislative framework, which came into effect on 1 June 2024. Through this framework, psychoactive substances are controlled based on their capacity to produce a psychoactive effect rather than their chemical structure, granting flexibility to control newly emerging NPS before their use spreads in the local recreational scene. This framework does not apply to psychoactive substances that have legitimate uses or that are controlled under other legislative frameworks. This framework is still new, but it is an interesting approach to respond to the emergence of new substances promptly in the region, and its potential efficacy should be monitored.<sup>228</sup>

<sup>228</sup> Official communication with CNB and HSA of Singapore, April 2025.

<sup>227</sup> UNODC, “Synthetic Drugs in East and Southeast Asia: Latest developments and challenges 2022”, May 2022.



## Cross-cutting challenges

Drug trafficking groups in East and Southeast Asia have successfully expanded synthetic drug markets by continually adapting to changing environments. They have demonstrated agility by modifying their modus operandi in response to law enforcement and regulatory pressures and shown business acumen by leveraging digital tools and emerging technologies to facilitate and profit from the illicit trade in synthetic drugs. At the same time, drug trafficking groups in the region infiltrate legitimate businesses or set up front companies to support and conceal their illicit activities.

One of the major developments in the regional organized crime landscape is the growing convergence between drug trafficking organized crime groups and those offering services such as underground banking. In addition, there is increasing evidence of overlaps between actors involved in drug trafficking and those engaged in other criminal activities, including illegal online casinos and cyber-enabled scam operations.<sup>229</sup> In essence, the distinction between drug trafficking groups and other organized criminal groups has become increasingly blurred.

This section examines cross-cutting challenges related to drug trafficking and associated crimes, with a focus on synthetic drugs, which pose additional complexities for national drug law enforcement authorities.

### Modus operandi of drug trafficking groups

#### Leveraging technology and infiltrating and exploiting legitimate businesses

One of the recent maritime methamphetamine trafficking cases reported in the region highlights the growing sophistication of organized criminal groups in leveraging technology and infiltrating legitimate businesses. In October 2024, Myanmar authorities monitored a drug trafficking group that stored crystal methamphetamine at a warehouse in Yangon for maritime trafficking through the Andaman Sea. The Myanmar boat owner was

a resident of Ann, Rakhine. He flew to Tachileik in Shan State to coordinate the transaction and visited Kawthoung to buy a boat before returning to Yangon. Some of the other members of the group were fishermen working for Yangon-based fishing companies. The group used Starlink and Viber to communicate and carry out ship-to-ship transfers of drugs. In November 2024, the group delivered a consignment of 45 bags of methamphetamine, weighing 5,500 kg, by transferring the consignment at sea to another boat in a pre-determined location off the coast of Kawthoung. The captain was to hand over a sealed envelope containing brand new 5,000 kyat bills and a GPS coordinate to the captain of the second boat. From that location, a third boat was to take over the consignment for final delivery to Malaysia. The organizer of the transaction was paid via Wave Money, a mobile financial and digital payment platform popular in Myanmar, and the group used satellite phones to communicate while the drugs were in transit.<sup>230</sup>

Cambodian authorities have also noted that drug trafficking groups increasingly use technology to evade law enforcement detection. For instance, they use vehicles equipped with GPS trackers and audio surveillance to monitor whether their couriers encounter law enforcement. In essence, trafficking operations are monitored in real time, and the use of encrypted communications and remote-controlled navigation systems is common. In one instance, drug traffickers may have used explosive devices to deter law enforcement, although this has not been confirmed.

In Indonesia, transnational organized criminal groups have increasingly used fishing vessels and targeted remote islands for maritime drug trafficking. These groups often recruit Indonesian fishermen as transporters, many of whom are unaware of the true nature of their assignments. Hired fishing boats are used to collect drug shipments at sea and deliver them to coastal regions of the country.<sup>231</sup>

Vietnamese authorities reported that Chinese criminal networks involved in large-scale ketamine trafficking have established pharmaceutical

229 UNODC. *World Drug Report 2024, Booklet Contemporary Issues, Chapter 2, Illegal Supply of Drugs in the Golden Triangle: Confluence with Other Crimes and Impacts*. New York: United Nations publication, 2024.

230 Official communication with drug intelligence officials in the region, February–May 2025.

231 BNN of Indonesian, “Drug situation report”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

companies abroad, which are used to buy precursors to produce drugs, for trafficking via sea routes.<sup>232</sup> In another illicit ketamine manufacturing case reported in Viet Nam in March 2025, the leader of the group established an ornamental fish farm as a front to conceal operations.<sup>233</sup>

Thai authorities reported that traffickers in neighbouring countries have adopted innovative methods, including the use of drones, to monitor law enforcement activities across Thai border towns.<sup>234</sup> One group is believed to be led by a Lao-based trafficker working closely with a Thai coordinator and at least three Thai operatives responsible for receiving, storing, and distributing methamphetamine within Thailand. The group uses rural warehouse facilities and licensed vehicles and boats for transportation. Thai authorities have reported that, on many occasions, suppliers based in Lao PDR coordinate with multiple Thai contacts who take on roles such as middlemen, couriers, and payment handlers. They primarily communicate via WhatsApp and Thai phone numbers, often using nicknames to avoid detection.<sup>235</sup>

As described below in more detail, drug trafficking groups also use casinos to launder money, taking advantage of the growing underground banking system which also links to other forms of organized crime, including online fraud and scam centres. For instance, surveillance by Philippine law enforcement authorities revealed that traffickers are conducting money laundering through casinos in Manila, particularly within VIP rooms, with the illicit drug proceeds also linked to shell companies and foreign exchange operators.<sup>236</sup> At the same time, many casinos and connected businesses have physically relocated into autonomous areas and Special Economic Zones, or SEZs, across the region that, in some cases, have become safe havens and breeding grounds for criminal networks.<sup>237</sup>

### Building cell-based networks to minimize risk

Transnational drug trafficking groups extend across the region and beyond, and their vast networks largely operate in a compartmentalized manner, clearly separating those involved in leadership and coordination, transportation and logistics, and production. This layered arrangement is advantageous to prevent arrest and complicate backtracking investigations, so that when drug couriers are arrested, those higher up the organization remain untouched. China notes that major traffickers near Yunnan border use this separation model to minimize risk, and their networks lack distinct familial or regional affiliations.<sup>238</sup>

Transnational organized criminal groups operating in Viet Nam often hire Vietnamese nationals for roles in driving, storage, and surveillance. In some cases, these individuals are trained to monitor law enforcement activities and relay relevant information to higher-level coordinators via encrypted messaging apps. Groups are often organized in cells, with each member knowing only their limited role. This compartmentalization ensures the protection of the larger organization as it limits their exposure in the event of law enforcement actions.<sup>239</sup>

Philippine authorities report that drug transactions orchestrated by one of major transnational drug trafficking groups targeting the country are primarily conducted via phone or encrypted communication platforms, with payments typically routed through foreign exchange services or shell companies. The group usually collaborates with convicted local traffickers or their associates operating from prisons. Every drug shipment is overseen by a local “manager” in the Philippines, who in return receives a 5 per cent commission per delivery.<sup>240</sup> One case linked to the major transnational drug trafficking group resulted in the seizure of 80 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine in June 2022. The individuals arrested were members

232 CNPD of Viet Nam, “The Situation of Organized and Transnational Drug Trafficking Crimes,” Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2025.

233 CNPD of Viet Nam, “Drug situation report,” the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

234 ONCB of Thailand, “Drug situation report,” the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

235 Ibid.

236 PDEA of the Philippines, “Drug situation report,” the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

237 UNODC, *Casinos, Money Laundering, Underground Banking, and Transnational Organized Crime in East and Southeast Asia: A Hidden and Accelerating Threat*.

238 NNCC of China “Drug situation report,” the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

239 CNPD of Viet Nam, “Drug situation report,” the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

240 PDEA of the Philippines, “Drug situation report,” the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

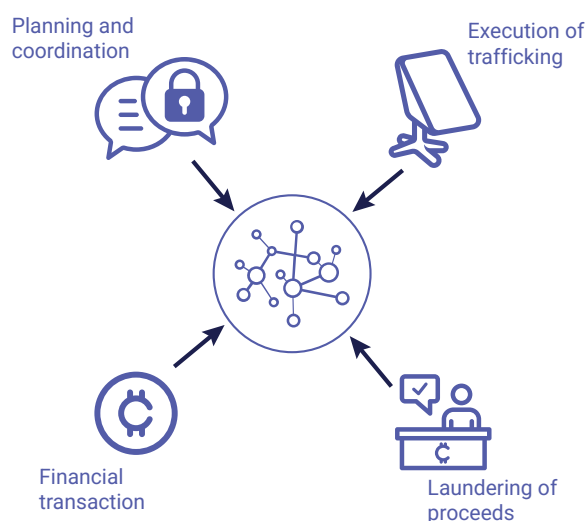


of a local drug trafficking group, and mobile phone forensics revealed stored contact numbers registered in China, including Hong Kong, China, and Myanmar.<sup>241</sup>

This cell-based model applies not only to synthetic drugs but also to the trafficking of other drugs as well. As observed in the trafficking case involving the seizure of 196 kg of opium in March 2025, nine arrestees, including five Thai, one Lao, and two Chinese nationals. The arrestees did not know each other, but all confessed to receiving orders from a man based in Lao PDR.<sup>242</sup> Another case from Cambodia highlights the layered nature of drug trafficking networks.

All the cases above show that drug trafficking groups operating in East and Southeast Asia are becoming increasingly agile and tech-savvy. They often set up front companies and operate through flexible, cell-based networks that outsource drug transport to local actors, such as drivers and fishermen, to minimize their exposure to law enforcement authorities.

**Figure 38. Nature of drug trafficking groups in East and Southeast Asia**



Source: UNODC elaboration based on information provided by national drug authorities in East and Southeast Asia.

## Convergence of money laundering and underground banking, cyber-enabled crime, and the regional drug trade in Southeast Asia

The underground financial infrastructure supporting the synthetic drug trade in Southeast Asia has grown more sophisticated, keeping pace with the wider expansion of the regional organized crime ecosystem, especially the online fraud and scam industry. As highlighted in recent UNODC analyses, authorities in the region have consistently reported major regional drug production and trafficking networks increasingly utilizing advanced money laundering and underground banking networks for their payment, settlement, and money laundering needs.<sup>243,244,245</sup>

Representing one of the largest of such cases, in April 2024, Thai authorities reported a separate operational outcome involving another transnational money laundering network believed to be processing as much as US \$947 million per year linked to illegal online gambling, cyber-enabled fraud, and drug trafficking under Operation ‘The Purge’.<sup>246</sup> Investigators initially uncovered the network, which specialized in converting Tether (USDT) to fiat currency and laundering criminal proceeds through local nominees hired to register front companies and bank accounts, by tracing funds stolen in a cryptocurrency investment fraud scheme.

Authorities were able to recover assets totaling US \$6.8 million, including approximately US \$2.2 million in cash which was intercepted on route to Myawaddy, Myanmar, at a checkpoint along the Thai border, as well as assets totaling US \$51.6 million including luxury real estate, vehicles, cash, and other goods under a series of earlier related operations.<sup>247</sup> Authorities made multiple arrests involving Chinese, Singaporean, Thai nationals, and noted the use of an unlicensed online payment platform established by a criminal group operating

241 Ibid.

242 NACD of Cambodia, “Drug situation report”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

243 UNODC, *Inflection Point: Global Implications of Scam Centres, Underground Banking and Illicit Online Marketplaces in Southeast Asia*.

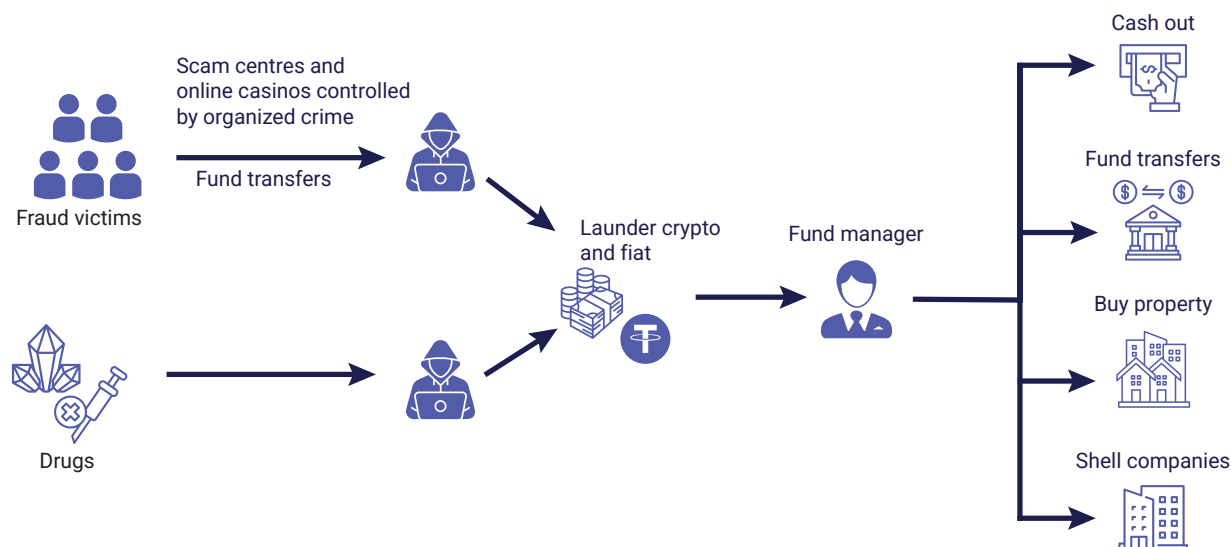
244 UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime and the Convergence of Cyber-Enabled Fraud, Underground Banking, and Technological Innovation in southeast Asia: A Shifting Threat Landscape*.

245 UNODC, *Casinos, Money Laundering, Underground Banking, and Transnational Organized Crime in East and Southeast Asia: A Hidden and Accelerating Threat*.

246 Royal Thai Police, Cyber Crime Investigation Bureau, Technology Crime Suppression Division, Press Conference, April 2024.

247 Ibid.

**Figure 39. The underground banking and money laundering network identified through the Operation Purge in Thailand, 2024**



Source: Elaboration based on official investigation information shared by Cyber Crime Investigation Bureau, Royal Thai Police.

from the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone to process a portion of criminal proceeds generated from drug trafficking.<sup>248</sup>

More recently, in April 2025, Thai authorities executed a series of sweeping raids across eight locations in Bangkok, Chonburi, and Phuket targeting money service and foreign exchange businesses found offering unlicensed over the counter (OTC) cryptocurrency exchange services under “Operation Crypto Phantom”. The operation identified more than 1,000 unauthorized transactions totaling more than 425 million USDT or Tether (US \$425 million), with investigators tracing numerous transactions back to drug trafficking and cyber-enabled fraud networks. As observed in this case, transnational organized crime groups have been increasingly using cryptocurrencies such as Tether, which is preferred over Bitcoin. China reports that some drug trafficking groups may have developed their own blockchain systems and custom-built cryptocurrencies.<sup>249</sup>

While challenges relating to the growth of money laundering-as-a-service and associated unlicensed service providers persist, there has also been some indication of infiltration of these businesses and related money laundering infrastructure by criminal

groups engaged in the synthetic drug trade.<sup>250,251,252</sup>

One recent example relates to the former Kokang Border Guard Force (BGF) in Special Region 1 (SR 1) of Shan State, Myanmar. As is the case with many non-state armed groups located in Shan and other border enclaves of Myanmar, the Kokang BGF had a well-documented history of involvement in drug production and trafficking prior to its collapse.<sup>253</sup> In December 2023, the Criminal Investigation Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security of China issued ten arrest warrants for high-ranking members of the former Kokang BGF leadership on charges relating to their roles in leading multiple violent criminal groups engaged in cyber-enabled fraud, drug production and trafficking, trafficking in persons, homicide, and money laundering targeting Chinese citizens.<sup>254</sup>

According to prosecutors, these criminal operations generated billions of dollars annually and were organized with the support of foreign financiers

<sup>248</sup> UNODC, Regional Meeting of Analysts and Investigators, Bangkok, Thailand, August 2024.

<sup>249</sup> NNCC of China “Drug situation report”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.

<sup>250</sup> UNODC, *Inflection Point: Global Implications of Scam Centres, Underground Banking and Illicit Online Marketplaces in Southeast Asia*.

<sup>251</sup> UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime and the Convergence of Cyber-Enabled Fraud, Underground Banking, and Technological Innovation in southeast Asia: A Shifting Threat Landscape*.

<sup>252</sup> UNODC, *Casinos, Money Laundering, Underground Banking, and Transnational Organized Crime in East and Southeast Asia: A Hidden and Accelerating Threat*.

<sup>253</sup> UNODC, *Casinos, Money Laundering, Underground Banking, and Transnational Organized Crime in East and Southeast Asia: A Hidden and Accelerating Threat*.

<sup>254</sup> Criminal Investigation Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security of China, “Official WeChat”, December 2023, available at: <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/sm3wSWuxPSFcuSg4zIEfsQ>.

who were provided with armed protection by the BGF. Most of those charged were members of SR 1's Gambling and Entertainment Management Committee and were overseeing various aspects of Kokang's cryptocurrency-integrated online gambling, money laundering, and fraud industries, and several have been apprehended and currently face prosecution in China.<sup>255</sup>

Another strong example relates to a large, diversified conglomerate based in one Mekong country. The business group has rapidly established itself as a major property developer with an expansive portfolio of interests in land-based casinos and online gambling, cyber-enabled fraud operations, and large-scale drug trafficking, according to law enforcement sources.<sup>256</sup> More than this, one senior executive has been formally implicated in connection with large-scale methamphetamine production and trafficking, and is currently listed on Taiwan PoC's wanted list.<sup>257</sup>

The cases outlined above underscore the growing convergence between money laundering and underground banking networks, cyber-enabled crime, and the synthetic drug trade in East and Southeast Asia. While these examples highlight the scale and complexity of emerging threats, they represent only a fraction of a much larger and rapidly evolving landscape.

### Expansion of online drug markets, particularly for synthetic drugs

The emergence of online platforms as distribution channels for drugs is reshaping supply dynamics in parts of East and Southeast Asia. While traditional face-to-face sales continue to dominate, online transactions have increased in scale and complexity, particularly for synthetic substances such as methamphetamine and ecstasy. Non-face-to-face distribution methods — including product drops, mail-based delivery, and encrypted communications — have become increasingly common. These mechanisms reduce physical

contact between buyers and sellers and lower the risk of detection. In jurisdictions where drug prices are high, including China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, the use of digital platforms appears to have grown more prominent. In such settings, traffickers often accept cryptocurrency and use anonymized delivery to facilitate transactions. This trend has been driven in part by cross-border supply linkages, with criminal actors in East and Southeast Asia exploiting lower production costs to meet regional demand via online markets.

Thailand provides a relevant case study within this broader trend. According to the 2024 National Household Drug Use Survey, online purchases accounted for a measurable share of total reported transactions across several substances. Out of 1,124,156 people who purchased methamphetamine tablets from illicit drug markets, 3.0 per cent (32,306 buyers) reported having experience purchasing the drug online.<sup>258</sup> Similar patterns were observed for crystal methamphetamine, with 3.1 per cent of the 420,392 reported transactions occurring via online channels.<sup>259</sup> Online sourcing is an important development to monitor, and this trend is likely to grow, especially for novel synthetic substances and products that are frequently advertised and distributed through online platforms. As markets continue to evolve and more people rely on mobile phones, encrypted communications, and digital payment systems, the online space will increasingly serve a key role in the supply as well as distribution of these drugs.

The increased use of online channels for drug acquisition in Thailand reflects broader regional dynamics. Online purchases are often perceived by users as lower-risk alternatives, particularly for substances subject to intense law enforcement scrutiny. Digital platforms also offer access to lower-cost supply sources, and in some cases, prices on online markets may undercut those of traditional street-level transactions. For example, ketamine purchased offline in Thailand was reported to range between US \$8.5 to 17 per gram, whereas online purchases were available at lower prices, between US \$7.9 and 12.6 per gram.<sup>260</sup> Such

255 Criminal Investigation Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security of China, "The first trial of the Ming Family criminal group case begins", 19 February 2025, available at: <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/uwPHS12Fj1PQjivdNIIDWg>.

256 UNODC, *Regional Meeting of Analysts and Investigators on Transnational Organized Crime and Cyber-Enabled Fraud*.

257 As per case documents available on Taiwan PoC Judicial Judgement Retrieval System and High Prosecutor's Office of Taiwan PoC Wanted Inquiry System.

258 ONCB, Thailand "National Household Drug Use Survey", 2024.

259 Ibid.

260 Official communication with ONCB of Thailand, April 2025.

**Table 8. Breakdown of past-year drug users by type and online channel in Thailand, 2024**

Drug type	Number of users buying drugs from any illicit drug markets	Number of users ever purchasing drugs online	Proportion of online (per cent)
All drugs	1,542,584	41,069	2.7
Methamphetamine tablets	1,091,850	32,306	3.0
Crystal methamphetamine	420,392	12,888	3.1
Ecstasy	277,066	5,651	2.0
Ketamine	184,246	5,651	3.1
Cocaine	136,660	1,365	1.0
Opium	266,909	1,325	0.5
Heroin	237,727	12,557	5.3
Inhalants	1,111,444	5,289	0.5
Mixed substances (happy water etc.)	167,055	4,063	2.4
Kratom	1,451,636	22,813	1.6
Cannabis	1,314,751	34,544	2.6

Source: National Household Drug Use Survey 2024, ONCB, Thailand.

pricing differentials may incentivise users to shift toward digital acquisition methods, particularly for synthetic drugs and party substances. However, this evolving modus operandi poses challenges for national authorities. Transactions conducted via encrypted messaging applications, combined with the use of cryptocurrency and decentralized delivery methods, reduce traceability and limit the effectiveness of conventional interdiction approaches. The Thai experience underscores the need for enhanced monitoring of digital drug markets, improved capacity for virtual financial investigations, and strengthened regional cooperation to counter cyber-enabled drug trafficking.

### **Increased use of online markets offering a wide range of services for chemical sourcing**

Authorities in the region have observed an increase in the online availability of chemicals commonly associated with the production of synthetic drugs, including methamphetamine, MDMA, and synthetic opioids. These substances are typically marketed under the pretext of legitimate uses, such as “pharmaceutical intermediates,” and are observed on both surface-level and dark web platforms. Chemical vendors offer a wide range of services, with many claiming guaranteed customs clearance, customized stealth packaging, alternative shipping routes, and cryptocurrency payment options. To evade regulatory scrutiny, chemical vendors leverage anonymized transactions, encrypted communication, and mislabeling tactics.

Regional trade routes intersect Southeast Asia, where vulnerabilities in customs controls, added to an increasing number of Special Economic Zones and/or Free Trade Zones, create opportunities for the repackaging, redirection, and onward shipment of goods. This diversion of chemicals ordered and often paid for through online channels, in combination with low regulatory oversight, advanced concealment practices, and cryptocurrency-based payments, is a serious challenge for authorities in the region.





## National Trends





## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- The perceived use of crystal methamphetamine increased in Brunei Darussalam for the third consecutive year (table 1). Both the number of persons brought into formal contact with authorities for methamphetamine offences (638 people to 727 people) and drug treatment admissions for methamphetamine (113 people to 123 people) increased from 2023 to 2024, further indicating that methamphetamine remains the main drug of concern in the country (figure 1 and table 2).
- Seizures of crystal methamphetamine increased sharply from 4.42 kg in 2023 to 40.33 kg in 2024 (table 3). This spike is largely attributed to eight parcels containing 36.73 kg of methamphetamine intercepted in November 2024, which were shipped via air freight and found not to be destined for the local market.<sup>1</sup>
- The average retail price for crystal methamphetamine decreased for the first time since 2018, dropping 39 per cent from US\$ 146.25 (195 BND) to US\$ 87.60 (118.72 BND), while purity remained relatively stable suggesting increased availability in the local market (figure 4 and table 4).

### Ketamine

- Ketamine use declined in 2024 according to expert perception, marking a reversal from the stable or increasing pattern of previous years (table 1). Meanwhile, seizures dropped markedly from 29.4 g in 2023 to just 4.6 g in 2024 (table 3).

### Ecstasy<sup>2</sup>

- Ecstasy use continued to rise in 2024, marking the second consecutive year of increased use based on expert perception, as did the number of persons brought into formal contact for ecstasy (from one in 2023 to seven in 2024) (table 1 and figure 1).
- Seizures of ecstasy increased significantly from 6 tablets and 1.24 g in 2023 to 108 tablets and 9.88 g in 2024, the most seized in a single year in the country since 2015 when 144 tablets were seized (table 3).

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- Aside from ketamine, kratom<sup>3</sup> continues to be the only other NPS seized in Brunei Darussalam (table 3).

### Other drugs

- Erimin 5<sup>4</sup> was once again seized in 2024, though seizures fell from 662 tablets (and 0.36 g) in 2023 to 58.5 tablets in 2024 (table 3).
- The perceived use of cannabis, the number of people brought into contact with authorities for cannabis-related offences, seizures, and treatment admissions for cannabis all declined in 2024, indicating a possible contraction in the cannabis market in the country (tables 1, 2, and 3, and figure 1).
- The number of individuals brought into formal contact with authorities for poly-drug use slightly declined from 22 in 2023 to 19 in 2024 (figure 1).

1 Official communication with the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), February 2025.

2 Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.

3 Kratom is the colloquial name of the plant *Mitragyna speciosa*. It contains pharmacologically active alkaloids, especially mitragynine and 7-hydroxymitragynine, which have opioid and stimulant properties.

4 Erimin 5 is a proprietary product of Sumitomo corporation, and its licit production has been discontinued since 2015. The proprietary product contains nimetazepam, a benzodiazepine, which is controlled in Schedule IV of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971. It is probable that current Erimin 5 seizures are manufactured illicitly and may or may not contain nimetazepam as well as a range of other substances.

## Key facts and figures

### Drug demand indicators

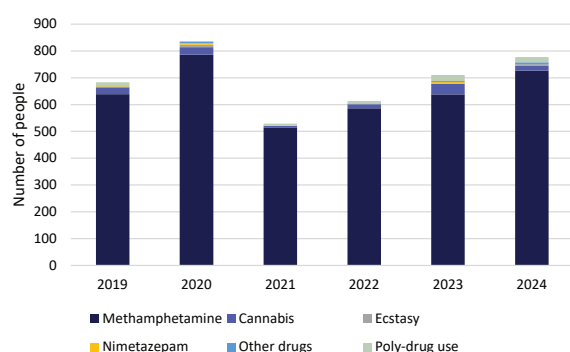
**Table 1. Trend in use of selected drugs in Brunei Darussalam, 2019-2024**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	↔	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Ecstasy	↑	↑	↓	↔	↑	↑
Cannabis herb	↓	↔	↓	↑	↑	↓
Inhalants	↔	↔	↔	●	●	●
Ketamine	●	↑	●	↑	↔	↓
Nimetazepam	↔	↔	↓	●	↑	↓

Note: Based on expert perception provided by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB); ↑ = Increase, ↓ = Decrease, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported.

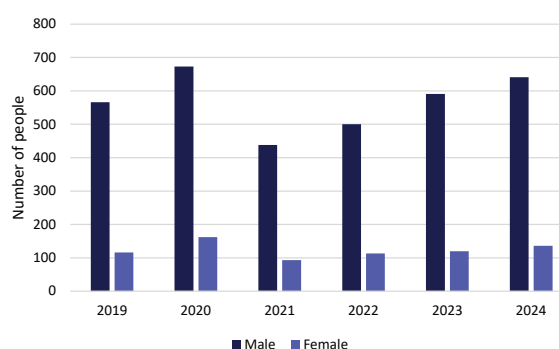
Sources: Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP); UNODC Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQ) Brunei Darussalam for 2023 and previous years; official communication with NCB, February 2025.

**Figure 1. Number of people brought into formal contact with authorities for drug-related offences in Brunei Darussalam, by drug type, 2019-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with NCB, February 2025.

**Figure 2. Number of people brought into formal contact with authorities in Brunei Darussalam for drug-related offences, by gender, 2019-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with NCB, February 2025.

**Table 2. Number of people who use drugs receiving treatment in Brunei Darussalam, by gender and selected drug types, 2023-2024**

Drug type	2023			2024		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Methamphetamine	114	23	137	105	18	123
Cannabis	4	0	4	4	0	4
Ecstasy	0	0	0	1	0	1
Inhalants	0	0	0	0	0	0
Poly-drug use	10	1	11	8	1	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>137</b>

Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with NCB, February 2025.

## Drug supply indicators

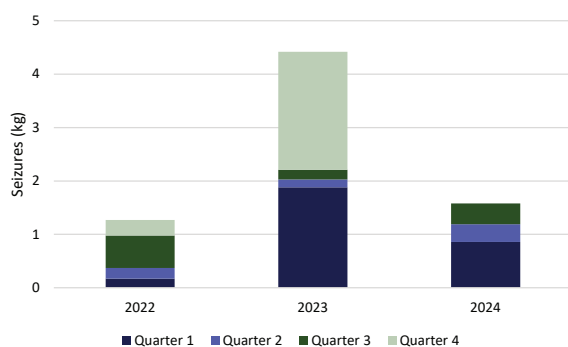
**Table 3. Seizures of selected drugs in Brunei Darussalam, 2019-2024**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	6.4	32	3.4	1.3	4.4	40.3
Ecstasy	tablet / g	42 tablets	100 tablets	0.5 g	0.3 g	6 tablets / 1.2 g	108 tablets / 9.9 g
Cannabis herb	kg	6.5	1.3	0.1	1.2	6.3	2.6
Heroin	kg	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ketamine	tablet / g	1.6 g	229.9 g	●	61.6 g	29.4 g	4.6 g
Nimetazepam	tablet / g	503 / 0.3 g	108 / 0.3 g	0.20 g	●	662 tablets / 0.4 g	58.5 tablets
Kratom (liquid)	lt	0.9	0	●	7.1	5	2
Khat	kg	80	0	●	●	●	●

Note: ● = Not reported.

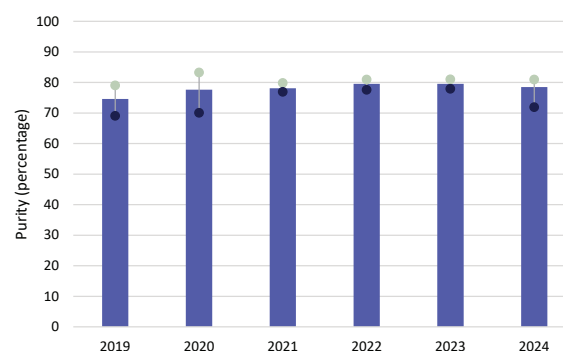
Sources: DAINAP; UNODC ARQ Brunei Darussalam for 2022 and previous years; Official communication with NCB, February 2025.

**Figure 3. Seizure amounts of crystal methamphetamine in Brunei Darussalam, by quarter, 2022-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with NCB, February 2025.

**Figure 4. Typical purity of crystal methamphetamine in Brunei Darussalam, 2019-2024 (percentage)**



Note: Data in this graph refer to the weight/weight (w/w) % expressed as the base form of these substances.

Source: Official communication with NCB, February 2025.

**Table 4. Retail prices of selected illicit drugs in Brunei Darussalam, 2022-2024 (BND (US\$))**

Drug type	Unit	2022	2023	2023
Crystal methamphetamine	per g	195 (146.8)	195 (146.8)	118.72 (87.60)
Ecstasy	per tablet	30 (22.6)	30 (22.6)	29.69 (21.90)
Cannabis herb	per g	15 (11.3)	15 (11.3)	14.84 (10.94)
Ketamine	per g	50 (37.7)	50 (37.7)	49.53 (36.50)
Benzodiazepines (Erinin 5)	per tablet	10 (7.5)	10 (7.5)	9.91 (7.30)

Source: Official communication with NCB, February 2025.





# CAMBODIA

## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- Methamphetamine continues to be the most prominent drug in Cambodia in terms of use, treatment, and seizures.
- The perceived use of both crystal methamphetamine and methamphetamine tablets increased in 2024, with crystal methamphetamine showing an uninterrupted increase since 2017. Crystal methamphetamine continues to account for the largest proportion of treatment admissions (tables 1 and 2).
- Seizures of methamphetamine tablets rose significantly from 59,222 tablets in 2023 to over 1.5 million tablets in 2024, while seizures of crystal methamphetamine surged from 1,436.8 kg to 9,514.7 kg, a 562 per cent year-on-year increase and a record amount for the country (table 3).
- The average purity of crystal methamphetamine increased from an average of 60.4 per cent in 2023 to 70.7 per cent in 2024, with wholesale prices of the substance increasing from US \$6,000 to US \$7,000, returning to the same price as in 2022. Retail prices for methamphetamine tablets remained stable at US \$1.6 per tablet (figures 3 and 4, and table 5).

### Ketamine

- Perceived use of ketamine increased again in 2024 after a one-year decline. Of note, treatment admissions for ketamine jumped from 10 people in 2023 to 108 people in 2024, the highest on record for Cambodia (tables 1 and 2).
- Seizures of ketamine rose dramatically from 1,040.3 kg to 3,177.4 kg, nearly tripling year-on-year (table 3). This is the second largest amount recorded in the country, behind only the 13.5 tons seized in 2022 when industrial-scale ketamine laboratories were dismantled.
- Major inbound sources for ketamine in Cambodia were Lao PDR and Thailand, while outbound trafficking included destinations such as Taiwan PoC, Viet Nam, and Republic of Korea.<sup>1</sup>

### Ecstasy<sup>2</sup>

- Seizures of ecstasy tablets surged from an equivalent of 1,080,867 tablets in 2023 to 5,561,712 tablets in 2024, a 415 per cent year-on-year increase (table 3). This was in large part due to the seizure of over 4.7 million ecstasy tablets and 115 kg of MDMA powder at a clandestine ecstasy production laboratory in November 2024.<sup>3</sup>
- Purity of ecstasy tablets averaged 50.5 per cent in 2024, with some tablets testing as high as 81.9 per cent. This is a marked increase from the average 37.8 per cent observed in 2023 (table 4).

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- For the first time, Cambodia reported NPS other than ketamine, namely 4-methylmethcathinone (4-MMC), which was identified in a sample of “happy water”.<sup>4</sup>
- “Happy water” continues to be seized in the country in powder form and primarily consists of MDMA and ketamine but has also been found to contain methamphetamine and 4-MMC. For the first time, in 2024, Cambodia also identified “happy water” in liquid form.<sup>5</sup>

1 Official communication with the National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD), March 2025.

2 Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.

3 Official communication with the National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD), March 2025.

4 Ibid.

5 NACD, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats”, Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.



### Other drugs

- Seizures of Erimin 5<sup>6</sup> continue to be reported in the country, although the amount seized dropped slightly in 2024 (table 3).
- Heroin seizures decreased slightly from 166.6 kg to 153.42 kg, while treatment admissions also declined from 83 to 22 individuals. Together with the decrease in perceived use of heroin, this indicates a possible contraction of the local heroin market (tables 1, 2 and 3).

6 Erimin 5 is a proprietary product of Sumitomo corporation, and its licit production has been discontinued since 2015. The proprietary product contains nimetazepam, a benzodiazepine, which is controlled in Schedule IV of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971. It is probable that current Erimin 5 seizures are manufactured illicitly and may or may not contain nimetazepam as well as a range of other substances.

## Key facts and figures

### Drug demand indicators

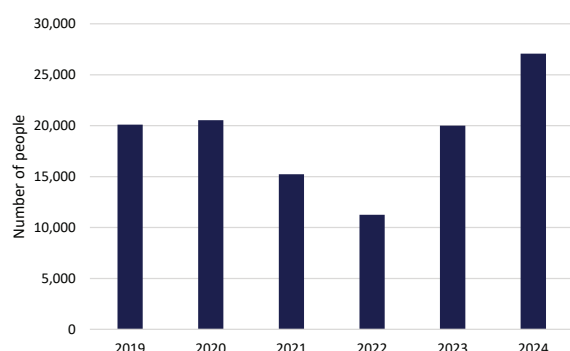
**Table 1. Trend in use of selected drugs in Cambodia, 2019-2024**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Methamphetamine tablets	↑	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
Crystal methamphetamine	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Ecstasy	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑
Cannabis herb	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑
Cocaine	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓
Heroin	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓
Ketamine	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑

Note: Based on expert perception provided by the National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD); ↑ = Increase, ↓ = Decrease, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported.

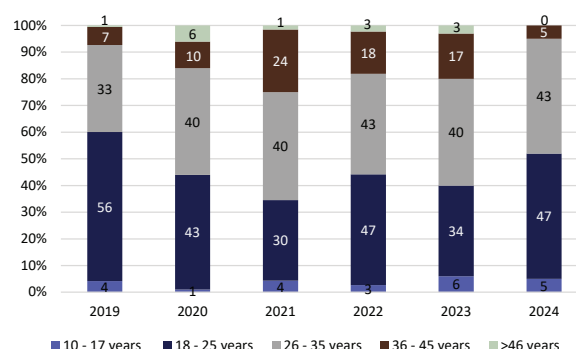
Sources: Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP); Official communication with NACD, March 2025.

**Figure 1. Number of people who use drugs brought into formal contact with authorities in Cambodia, 2019-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with NACD, March 2025.

**Figure 2. Drug treatment centre admissions in Cambodia, by age group, 2019-2024**



Note: Data in the table only covers drug users admitted to temporary treatment centres.

Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with NACD, March 2025.

**Table 2. Drug treatment centre admissions in Cambodia, by drug type, 2021-2024**

Drug type	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	2,953	4,781	5,528	9,200
Methamphetamine tablet	34	1	6	28
Ecstasy	0	0	6	58
Heroin	37	0	83	22
Ketamine	0	3	10	108
Cannabis herb	9	1	3	1
Other drugs	16	22	11	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,049</b>	<b>4,808</b>	<b>5,647</b>	<b>9,428</b>

Note: Data in the table only covers drug users admitted to temporary treatment centers; The total number of admissions for temporary drug treatment centers in 2024 was 19 and included those admitted for poly-drug use.

Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with NACD, March 2025.

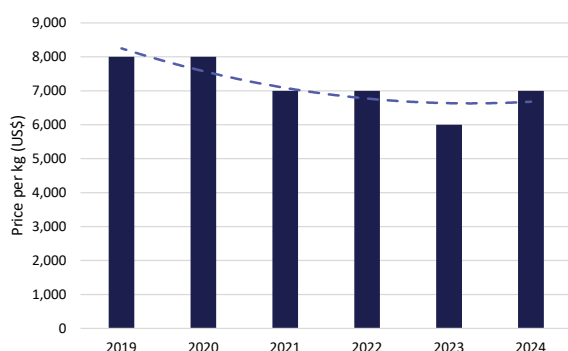
## Drug supply indicators

**Table 3. Seizures of selected drugs in Cambodia, 2019-2024**

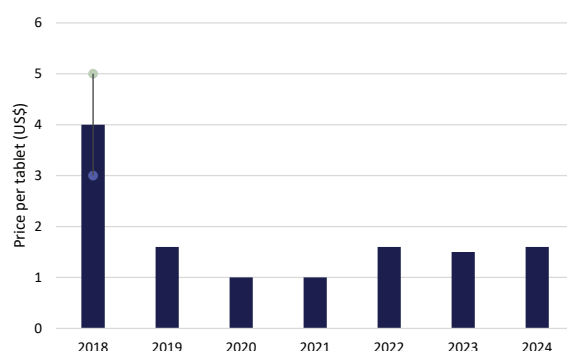
Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Methamphetamine tablets <sup>a</sup>	tablets	483,444	43,222	63,130	308,222	59,222	1,518,840
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	384.9	863.5	948	1,076.8	1,436.8	9,514.7
Ecstasy	tablets	382,733	243,800	194,706	661,800	1,080,867	5,561,712
Cannabis herb	kg	102.9	292.2	135.1	●	45.2	142.4
Cocaine	kg	0.6	0.5	2	0.5	8.7	1.4
Heroin	kg	0.5	298.7	275.6	70.8	166.6	153.4
Ketamine	kg	33	112.5	2,782.8	13,504.5	1,040.3	3,177.4
Nimetazepam	kg	●	9.4	11.7	29.5	6.9	2.2

Note: <sup>a</sup> Figures not reported as number of tablets converted into estimated tablet equivalent at 90 mg per tablet; ● = Not reported.

Sources: DAINAP; UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) Cambodia for 2023 and previous years; Official communication with NACD, March 2025.

**Figure 3. Wholesale prices of crystal methamphetamine in Cambodia, 2019-2024 (US\$)**

Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with NACD, April 2025.

**Figure 4. Retail prices of methamphetamine tablets in Cambodia, 2019-2024 (US\$)**

Note: The high-low bars represent the upper and lower limits of the price ranges reported in addition to the typical price.

Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with NACD, March 2025.

**Table 4. Typical purity of selected drugs in Cambodia, 2023-2024 (percentage)**

	Number of samples analyzed	2023			Number of samples analyzed	2024		
		Minimum	Average	Maximum		Minimum	Average	Maximum
Crystal methamphetamine	N/A	1.5%	60.4%	80.6%	6333	0.92%	70.7%	81%
Methamphetamine tablets	N/A	8.9%	13.2%	22%	273	8%	12.5%	19.8%
Ecstasy tablets (MDMA)	N/A	15.5%	37.8%	58.9%	357	1.2%	50.5%	81.9%
Ketamine (powder)	N/A	0.9%	54.5%	65.6%	720	0.6%	60.3%	64.5%

Note: Data in this table refer to the weight/weight (w/w) % expressed as the base form of these substances.

Source: DAINAP; Official communication with NACD, March 2025.

## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- While the total number of registered methamphetamine users declined for the sixth consecutive year, they continue to account for the largest proportion of registered users with 348,591 current registered users in 2024 (figure 2).
- Seizures of crystal methamphetamine decreased to 4,782.6 kg in 2024, down from 5,757.9 kg in 2023, continuing a three-year declining trend since the 2021 peak. Methamphetamine tablet seizures similarly declined in 2024 (table 1). Most of the methamphetamine was seized in Yunnan, bordering the Golden Triangle, highlighting the importance of the Golden Triangle as a source of methamphetamine within the region.<sup>1</sup>
- The total number of illicit drug production laboratories seized in China declined in 2024, with 18 being clandestine methamphetamine laboratories, comprising 16 small-scale and 2 medium-scale facilities (figure 6).<sup>2</sup>
- Purity of crystal methamphetamine at the level slightly declined to 71 per cent in 2024, down from 76 per cent the previous year, while purity of methamphetamine tablets remained stable at 17 per cent (table 2).

### Ketamine

- The number of registered ketamine users decreased for the six consecutive years. However, it is important to note that this decreasing trend has been observed for all reported drugs (methamphetamine, opiates, ketamine, and cannabis). Of the drugs reported, ketamine users have declined the least at only one per cent, compared to 23 per cent, 28 per cent, and three per cent for methamphetamine, opiates, and cannabis respectively (figure 3).
- Seizures of ketamine more than doubled, rising from 735 kg in 2023 to over 2 tons in 2024, the highest amount recorded in the country since 2018 when 5.7 tons were seized (table 1).
- Two clandestine ketamine laboratories were seized in 2024, including one medium-scale site.<sup>3</sup>

### Ecstasy<sup>4</sup>

- Seizures of ecstasy plummeted to the equivalent of just 2,467 tablets in 2024, down from 233,33 tablets in 2023 (table 1).

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- A total of 36 different NPS were identified in China in 2024, with most being substances other than the typical groups (11 substances), followed by synthetic cathinones (seven substances), and phencyclidine-type substances (six substances). Of note is the continued decline in the number of synthetic cannabinoids detected in the country following the class scheduling in 2021, with only five different substances detected in 2024 compared to 12 in 2023.<sup>5</sup>
- A total of 17 NPS were newly identified in the country, with six of those substances being etomidate analogues (table 3). Following the class scheduling of synthetic cannabinoids, etomidate, a hypnotic agent used for anaesthetic purposes, has been found added to e-liquids for use with vaping products. Etomidate was controlled in China in October 2023, however, since then, analogues have emerged, showing the adaptability of suppliers in circumventing legal controls.<sup>6</sup>

### Other drugs

- The number of registered opiates users decreased by 28 per cent between 2023 and 2024 (figure 2). Although opium seizures increased between 2023 and 2024, heroin seizures declined (table 1).

1 Official communication with the National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC), March 2025.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.

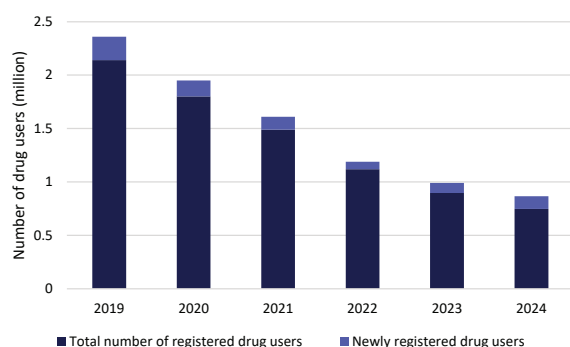
5 Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

6 Ibid.

## Key facts and figures

### Drug demand indicators

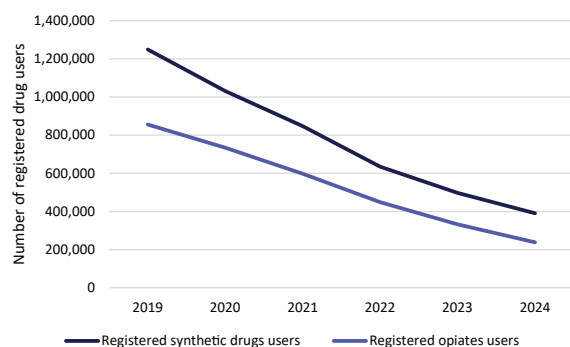
**Figure 1. Number of current registered drug users in China, 2019-2024**



Note: The number of current registered drug users is the number of registered drug users, excluding those who have passed away, are out of the country, or have not relapsed for 3 years.

Source: Official communication with the National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC), March 2025.

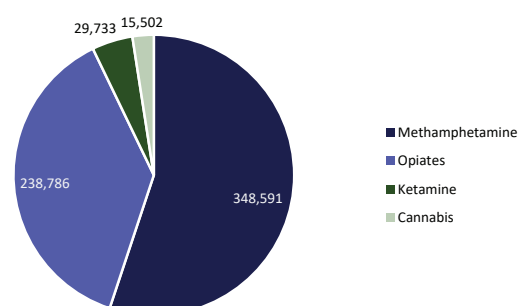
**Figure 2. Number of current people who were registered for using synthetic drugs and opiates in China, 2019-2024**



Note: The number of current registered drug users is the number of registered drug users, excluding those who have passed away, are out of the country, or have not relapsed for 3 years.

Source: Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

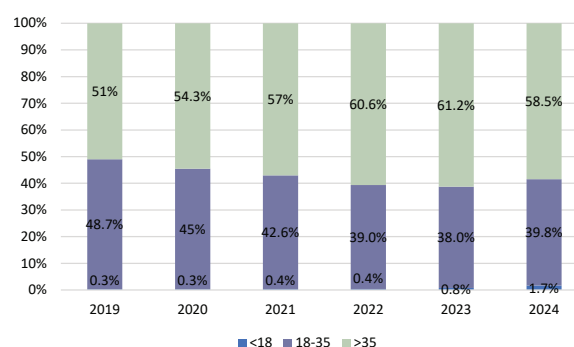
**Figure 3. Proportion of current registered drug users in China, by drug type, 2024**



Note: The number of current registered drug users is the number of registered drug users, excluding those who have passed away, are out of the country, or have not relapsed for 3 years.

Source: Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

**Figure 4. Proportion of current registered drug users in China, by age group, 2019-2024**



Note: The number of current registered drug users is the number of registered drug users, excluding those who have passed away, are out of the country, or have not relapsed for 3 years.

Source: Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.



## Drug supply indicators

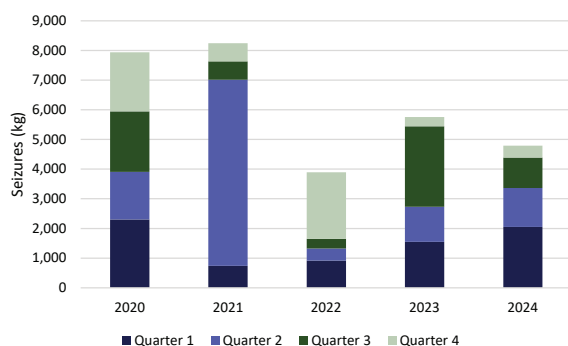
**Table 1. Seizures of selected drugs in China, 2019-2024**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	12,155.32	7,935.5	8,239.7	3,896.3	5,757.9	4,782.6
Methamphetamine tablets <sup>a</sup>	tablets	129,464,300	132,360,700	67,254,459	51,875,676	85,217,453	52,576,444
Methamphetamine powder	kg	235.8	364.5	808.9	384.3	595.6	573.7
Methamphetamine liquid	lt	1,174	437.8	611.7	225.4	138.7	131.3
Ecstasy <sup>b</sup>	tablets	240,667	490,667	292,667	1,364,667	233,333	2,467
Ketamine	kg	1,761.8	1,406.8	456.6	1,299.6	735	2,074.2
Cannabis herb	kg	621.7**	406.1	344.9	499.8	457	2,163
Cannabis resin	kg	2,559.7	3	0.4	0	152.7	0.1
Cocaine	kg	155.1	582.2	690.5	176.6	2,568.6	1,991.3
Heroin	kg	6,136.4	3,771.5	1,805.6	1,306.6	1,560.1	994.9
Opium	kg	2,908.4	2,770.8	2,031.5	1,559.1	1,409.5	1,953.9
Synthetic cannabinoids	kg	6	11.7**	179.2	19.2	35.8	15.8
Synthetic cathinones	kg	•	•	•	•	•	9.3

Note: \* Figures not reported as number of tablets converted into estimated tablet equivalent at 90 mg per tablet; \*\* Figures not reported as number of tablets converted into estimated tablet equivalent at 300 mg per tablet; • = Not reported.

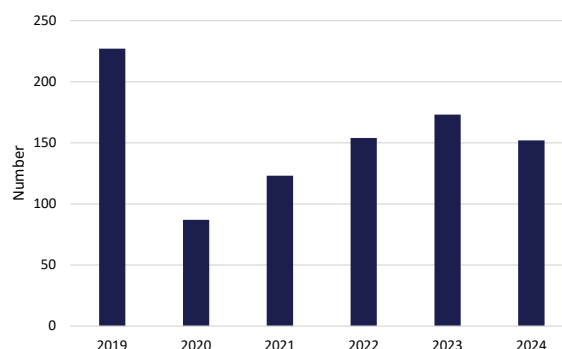
Sources: UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) China for 2023 and previous years; official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

**Figure 5. Seizure amounts of crystal methamphetamine in China, by quarter, 2020-2024**



Source: Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

**Figure 6. Number of illicit drug production laboratories dismantled in China, 2019-2024**



Note: \* Data for 2021 to 2024 are from official communication with NNCC, while data for previous years are from the UNODC ARQ China unless otherwise stated.

Sources: UNODC ARQ China for 2023 and previous years; Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

**Table 2. Typical retail purities of methamphetamine and ketamine in China, 2019-2024 (percentage)\***

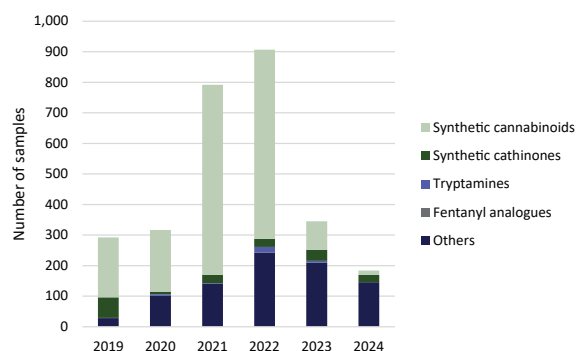
Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	72	82	74	73	76	71
Methamphetamine tablet	17**	17	16	16	16	17
Ketamine**	72	69	65	67	74	83

Note: Data in this table refers to the weight/weight (w/w) % expressed as the hydrochloride salt of these substances; \* Data for 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 are from Official communication with NNCC, while data for previous years are from the UNODC ARQ China unless otherwise stated. Sources: UNODC ARQ China for 2019 and previous years; Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

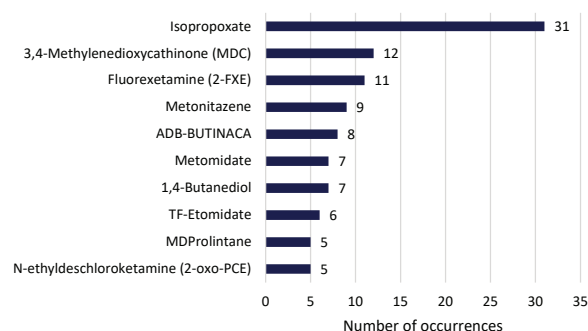
**Table 3. Newly identified NPS and other emerging synthetic substances in China, 2023-2024**

Substance group	2023	2024
Synthetic cannabinoids	-	• ADB-5'Br-BUTINACA
Synthetic cathinones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>N</i>-sec-Butylpentedrone</li> <li>• 1-(4-Chlorophenyl)-2-methyl-2-morpholinopropan-1-one</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3,4-Methylenedioxycathinone (MDC)</li> <li>• <math>\alpha</math>-PHiPP</li> <li>• <i>N</i>-Isopropyl Butylone</li> </ul>
Nitazenes	• Metonitazene	• <i>N,N</i> -dimethyl etonitazene
Phencyclidine-type substances	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3-Methoxyeticyclidine (3-MeO-PCE)</li> <li>• deschloro-<i>N</i>-propyl-ketamine (2-oxo-PCPr)</li> </ul>
Phenethylamines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5-(2-Aminopropyl)benzofuran (5-APB)</li> <li>• Methallylescaline</li> </ul>	• MDProlintane
Piperazines	• 1-(4-fluorobenzyl)-4-methylpiperazine (4F-MBZP)	• 1-(3,4-Methylenedioxybenzyl)piperazine (MDBP)
Aminoindanes	-	• <i>N</i> -Methyl-2-Aminoindane (NM-2AI)
Designer benzodiazepines	• Desalkylgidazepam	-
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1V-LSD</li> <li>• 4F-Phenibut</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2,6-diCl-3F-Etomidate</li> <li>• 4F-Etomidate</li> <li>• Isobutomidate</li> <li>• Propoxate</li> <li>• sec-Butomidate</li> <li>• TF-Etomidate</li> <li>• Thiopropamine</li> </ul>

Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

**Figure 7. Frequency of NPS identified in samples analyzed by the NPS Monitoring Programme of China, by substance group, 2019-2024**

Source: Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

**Figure 8. Top 10 NPS identified by the NPS Monitoring Programme of China, 2024**

Source: Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

## Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China)

### Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

#### Methamphetamine

- The number of methamphetamine users brought into formal contact with authorities continued to decline in 2024, with 802 individuals reported compared to 864 individuals in 2023 and over 2,000 in 2014 (figure 1). Newly reported methamphetamine users declined from 417 in 2023 to 340 in 2024, continuing a gradual downward trend (figure 2).
- Seizures of crystal methamphetamine decreased to 1,380.4 kg in 2024, down from the record 3,066.9 kg seized in 2023. This remains a significant amount as it is the second highest amount recorded in Hong Kong, China, with total annual seizure amounts of over one ton only starting to occur in 2022 (table 1).
- The wholesale and retail prices of crystal methamphetamine both dropped in 2024, particularly the whole price, which dropped by 27 per cent (table 2).

#### Ketamine

- The number of ketamine users brought into formal contact with authorities remained relatively stable in 2024, with most being repeat users of the drug (figures 1 and 2).
- Seizures of ketamine fell from the record 2,671.7 kg in 2023 to 1,601.7 kg in 2024, but still reflect a high level of availability as the third highest amount seized on annual record (table 1).

#### Ecstasy<sup>7</sup>

- Seizures of ecstasy tablets rose from 1,704 in 2023 to 6,808 tablets in 2024, but remain below the amounts seized between 2020 to 2022 (table 1). Users of ecstasy account for only 1.7 per cent of reported drug users.<sup>8</sup>

#### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- Since 2023, the use of etomidate (also known locally as “space oil (drug)”) has emerged in Hong Kong, China, with seizures of the substance increasing significantly in 2024. Etomidate analogues, namely metomidate, propoxate, and isopropoxate, have also been detected and since controlled.<sup>9</sup>

#### Other drugs

- Heroin remains the most used drug in Hong Kong, although the number of users brought into formal contact with authorities continued to decline in 2024 (figure 1). Heroin seizures dropped sharply from 675 kg in 2023 to 252 kg in 2024 (table 1).
- The number of cocaine users remained relatively stable with 1,064 users, down slightly from 1,164 in 2023 (figure 1). While cocaine seizures decreased, they remained at high levels compared to previous years (table 1).
- Cannabis use declined to 661 individuals, continuing a downward trend since 2021 (figure 1). However, over half were new users of the drug (figure 2).

7 Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.

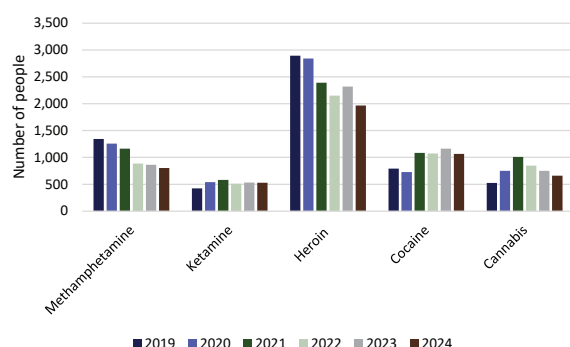
8 Narcotics Division, Security Bureau (NDSB), Hong Kong, China, “Newly/previously reported drug abusers by age group by common type of drugs abused (T3)”, available at [https://www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda\\_main\\_charts\\_and\\_tables.html](https://www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda_main_charts_and_tables.html).

9 NDSB, Hong Kong, China, Press release, “Space Oil Drug”, available at [https://www.nd.gov.hk/en/space\\_oil\\_drug.html](https://www.nd.gov.hk/en/space_oil_drug.html).

## Key facts and figures

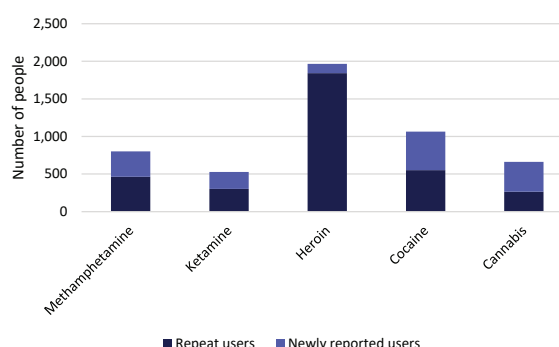
### Drug demand indicators

**Figure 1. Number of people who use methamphetamine, ketamine, heroin, cocaine, and cannabis brought into formal contact with authorities in Hong Kong, China, 2019-2024**



Source: Official communication with NNCC, April 2025.

**Figure 2. Number of newly reported people who use methamphetamine, ketamine, heroin, cocaine, and cannabis brought into formal contact with authorities in Hong Kong, China, 2024**



Source: Official communication with NNCC, April 2025.

### Drug supply indicators

**Table 1. Seizures of selected drugs in Hong Kong, China, 2019-2024**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	162.8	466.2	982.3	1,359.2	3,066.9	1,380.4
Methamphetamine tablets <sup>a</sup>	tablets	7	54	37	10	103	2
Ecstasy	tablets	57,366	364,713	44,221	15,840	1,704	6,808
Ketamine	kg	320.6	293.7	1,301.6	2,174.9	2,671.7	1,601.7
Cannabis	kg	374.1	422.7	1,534.9	1,326.9	3,346.2	4,340.6
Cocaine	kg	1,677.6	512.6	1,079.3	2,418.1	3,537	2,677.1
Heroin	kg	46.83	188.7	410.3	372.3	675	252

Note: \* Data are provisional. <sup>a</sup> Figures not reported as number of tablets converted into estimated tablet equivalent at 300 mg per tablet.

Sources: UNODC ARQ Hong Kong, China for 2023 and previous years; Official communication with NNCC, April 2025.

**Table 2. Wholesale and retail prices of selected drugs in Hong Kong, China, 2019-2024 (US \$)**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	19,013.5	27,935.1	26,641	27,245.2	24,080	17,604
Crystal methamphetamine	g	65.4	79.3	80.5	73.1	70.4	68.4
Ecstasy	tablets	9.5	6.8	7.4	7.4	7.6	9.9
Heroin	g	105.9	151.4	165	118.1	107.9	86.1
Ketamine	g	75.3	70	77	70.3	65.5	61.1
Cocaine	g	142.4	174.2	150.7	114.5	127.5	184.3

Note: \* Data for 2021-2023 are from official communication with NNCC, while data for previous years are from the UNODC ARQ Hong Kong, China unless otherwise stated.

Sources: UNODC ARQ Hong Kong, China for 2022 and previous years; Official communication with NNCC, May 2025.

## Macau (Special Administrative Region of China)

### Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

#### Methamphetamine

- Since 2022, the number of registered methamphetamine users has increased, reaching 45 people in 2024, up from 33 in 2023. Significantly, 37 of the 45 methamphetamine users were new users (figure 1).<sup>10</sup> Despite this upward trend in number of methamphetamine users, overall figures remain below those recorded in 2021.
- Crystal methamphetamine seizures surged more than 15-fold, from 0.7 kg in 2023 to 10.3 kg in 2024. Tablet form seizures remained negligible, with only two tablets seized in 2024 (table 1).
- Most of the methamphetamine seized departed from Thailand (nearly 10 kg), with smaller volumes traced to China (mainland and Hong Kong) and Malaysia.<sup>11</sup>
- Retail price of crystal methamphetamine has remained unchanged at US\$ 412.50 per gram since 2019 (table 2).

#### Ketamine

- The number of registered ketamine users remained very low at 3 people in 2024, down from 9 people in 2023, with no female users reported (figure 1).
- Seizures dropped significantly from 0.1 kg in 2023 to just 0.01 kg in 2024 (table 1).

#### Ecstasy<sup>12</sup>

- Information on ecstasy use is unavailable, but limited seizures of the drug have been reported with 6 tablets seized in 2024, down from 282 tablets in 2023 and a peak of 1,143 in 2022 (table 1).

#### New psychoactive substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- Aside from ketamine, no other NPS were reported in Macau, China in 2024.

#### Other drugs

- Heroin use continued to decline, with just 7 users reported in 2024 (figure 1). Seizures dropped sharply to just 0.01 kg, from 2.5 kg in 2023 (table 1)
- After three consecutive years of decline in the number of cannabis users, a slight rebound was observed in 2024 with 19 users reported up from 13 in 2023 (figure 1). Cannabis seizures rose sharply, from 0.2 kg in 2023 to 9.3 kg in 2024 (table 1).

<sup>10</sup> Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

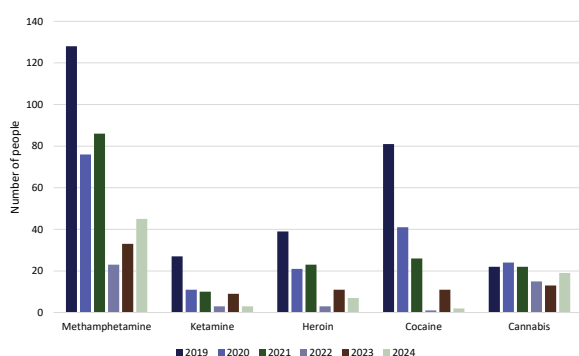
<sup>12</sup> Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.



## Key facts and figures

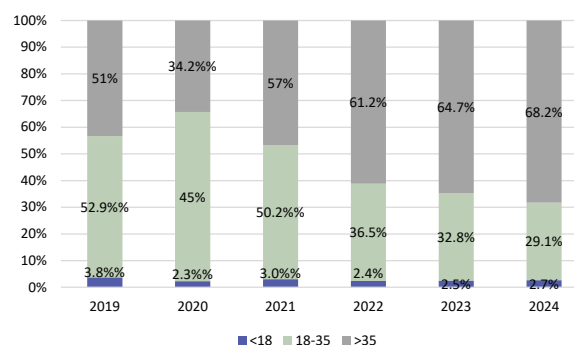
### Drug demand indicators

**Figure 1. The number of reported people who use methamphetamine, ketamine, heroin, and cocaine in Macau, China, 2019-2024**



Source: Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

**Figure 2. Proportion of current registered drug users in Macau, China, by age group, 2019-2024**



Source: Official communication with NNCC, March 2025

### Drug supply indicators

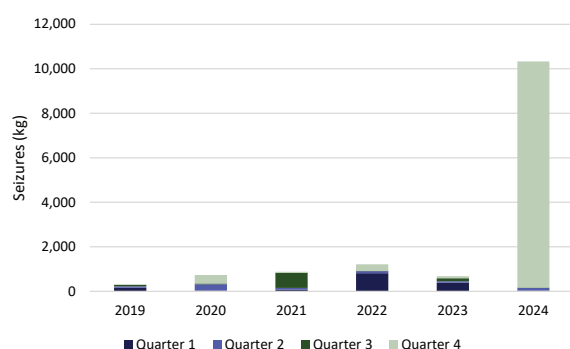
**Table 1. Seizures of selected drugs in Macau, China, 2019-2024**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	0.3	0.7	0.9	1.2	0.7	10.3
Methamphetamine tablets <sup>a</sup>	tablets	200	0	4	5	1	2
Ecstasy	tablets	13	10	88	1,143	282	6
Ketamine	kg	0.3	0.3	0.1	0 <sup>b</sup>	0.1	0 <sup>b</sup>
Cannabis	kg	0.2	0.2	1.9	0.8	0.2	9.3
Cocaine	kg	4.7	3.8	8.6	0.2	74.8	0.1
Heroin	kg	0.4	0 <sup>b</sup>	0	0 <sup>b</sup>	2.5	0 <sup>b</sup>

Note: <sup>a</sup> Figures not reported as number of tablets converted into estimated tablet equivalent at 90 mg per tablet; <sup>b</sup> Less than 0.05 kg of the substance was seized.

Source: Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.

**Figure 3. Seizures of crystal methamphetamine in Macau, China, by quarter, 2019-2024**



Source: Official communication with NNCC, March 2025

**Table 2. Retail prices of selected drugs in Macau, China, 2019-2024 (US\$)**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	g	412.5	412.5	412.5	412.5	412.5	412.5
Ecstasy	tablets	25	25	25	25	25	25
Heroin	g	50	175	175	175	175	175
Ketamine	g	125	125	125	125	125	125
Cocaine	g	412.5	412.5	412.5	412.5	418.8	416.8

Source: Official communication with NNCC, March 2025.



## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- Although use of crystal methamphetamine decreased in 2024, it continues to account for the largest proportion of drug treatment admissions (57 per cent of drug treatment admissions) and drug-related offences (83 per cent of all drug arrests) (tables 1 and 2, and figure 2).
- Seizures of crystal methamphetamine declined for the third consecutive year, dropping 17 per cent year-on-year from 8,252.5 kg in 2023 to 6,864.6 kg in 2024 (table 3), with the majority of methamphetamine seized originating from the Golden Triangle and trafficked into the country through Malaysia.<sup>1</sup> Although methamphetamine production still exists in the country, it remains limited with only six kitchen-sized laboratories seized in 2024 (table 4).
- For the first time since 2017, the purity of crystal methamphetamine samples analyzed in Indonesia dropped to lower than 90 per cent, to 87.5 per cent (table 6). This was due to the lowest purity in an analyzed sample being only 34 per cent, the lowest detected in the country since reporting. The low purity was found in a sample of methamphetamine originating from Mexico.<sup>2</sup>
- Ephedrine remains the most common starting material of methamphetamine seized in the country. In the analysis of 18 samples, up to September 2024, seven samples used ephedrine as the starting material, ten had both ephedrine and P-2-P,<sup>3</sup> while only one had P-2-P. All samples analyzed were *d*-methamphetamine.<sup>4</sup>

### Ketamine

- The perceived use of ketamine decreased in 2024 (table 1).
- Seizures also declined slightly from 30.8 kg in 2023 to 24.9 kg in 2024, however, it is still the second highest amount seized in the country since reporting (table 3).

### Ecstasy<sup>5</sup>

- Ecstasy use decreased slightly in 2024 based on expert perception (table 1).
- However, seizures of ecstasy tablets reached a record 4.7 million tablets in 2024, over double the amount seized in the year prior (table 3).

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- Synthetic cannabinoids account for the largest proportion of NPS samples identified in the country, with many samples containing multiple compounds. Of particular note is the combination of MDMB-4en-PINACA and MDMB-INACA, which comprised nearly 90 per cent of all samples (2,184 of 2,434 samples). MDMB-4en-PINACA was the most commonly identified NPS, detected on its own along as well as with other NPS.<sup>6</sup>
- Seizures of synthetic cannabinoids surged from 14.9 kg in 2023 to 1558.4 kg in 2024, which appears to be driven by seizures of sprayed products and powders (table 3). Law enforcement also dismantled two synthetic cannabinoid production facilities after not detecting any in 2023 (table 4).

1 Official communication with the National Narcotics Board (BNN), March 2025.

2 BNN, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

3 For the samples in this mixed category, the specific route impurities for ephedrine and P-2-P were simultaneously detected in the samples.

4 BNN, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

5 Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.

6 Official communication with BNN, March 2025.

### Other drugs

- For the first time, a clandestine laboratory producing *N,N*-Dimethyltryptamine (DMT) was detected in the country. Authorities seized the laboratory in Bali in July 2024 and apprehended a Philippine national.<sup>7</sup>
- In recent years, countries around the region have reported the detection of etomidate, a hypnotic agent used for anaesthetic purposes, in vaping products. Indonesia reported the detection of such a product for the first time in 2024.<sup>8</sup>
- Since 2022, cannabis herb seizures have declined dramatically. After dropping from over 80 tons in 2022 to 9.8 tons in 2023, they further decreased to 8.4 tons in 2024, though cannabis plant seizures were reported for the first time since 2021 (table 3).
- Heroin seizures increased from 1.1 kg in 2023 to 5.6 kg in 2024. Although not a large amount compared to other countries in the region or compared to the years prior to 2021, it could possibly indicate that heroin is making a return to the local market (table 3).

7 BNN, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

8 Official communication with BNN, March 2025.

## Key facts and figures

### Drug demand indicators

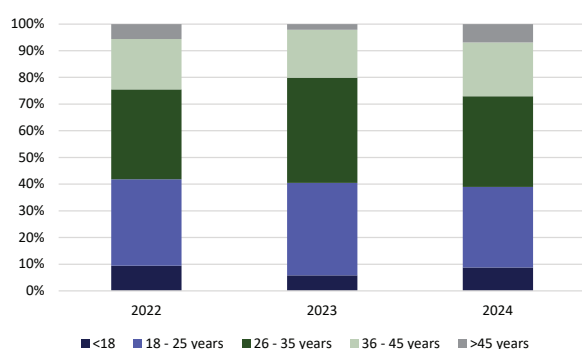
**Table 1. Trend in use of selected drugs in Indonesia, 2019-2024**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	↔	↔	↔	●	↓	↓
Ecstasy	↔	↔	↔	●	↓	↓
Barbiturates	↔	↓	↔	●	↓	●
Benzodiazepines	↔	↓	↔	●	●	●
Cannabis herb	↔	↑	↔	●	↑	↓
Cannabis resin	●	●	●	●	●	●
Cocaine	↔	↓	↑	●	●	↓
Heroin	↓	↓	↑	●	↑	↓
LSD	●	↑	↔	●	↑	↓
Ketamine	●	●	●	●	●	↓

Note: Based on expert perception provided by the National Narcotics Board (BNN), Indonesia; ↑ = Increasing, ↓ = Decreasing, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported.

Sources: Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP); Official communication with BNN, March 2025.

**Figure 1. Proportion of drug and substance users in Indonesia, by age group, 2022-2024**



Source: Official communication with BNN, March 2025.

**Table 2. Drug treatment admissions in Indonesia, by drug type, 2024**

Drug type	All admissions		
	Male	Female	Total
Methamphetamine*	7,396	767	8,163
Opiates**	261	17	278
Cannabis	954	39	993
Cocaine	3	1	4
Sedatives	518	81	599
Barbiturates	0	0	0
Hallucinogens	0	0	0
Inhalants	287	34	321
Poly-drug use	2,965	295	3,264
Other drugs	684	71	751
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,082</b>	<b>1,305</b>	<b>14,387</b>

Note: \* Includes a few ecstasy related admissions. \*\* Includes heroin, morphine and methadone.

Source: Official communication with BNN, March 2025.

## Drug supply indicators

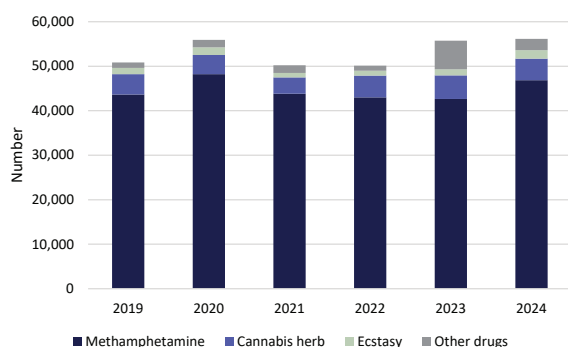
**Table 3. Seizures of selected drugs in Indonesia, 2019-2024**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	17,928.3	7,905.7	11,743.5	8,637.7	8,252.5	6,864.6
Methamphetamine powder	kg	•	•	•	•	•	•
Amphetamine	kg	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ecstasy	tablets	1,537,806	1,543,336	860,783	1,394,287	2,066,005	4,737,733
Ecstasy powder	kg	142.7	14.4	11.7	•	•	4.1
Barbiturates	tablets	722,572	65,774	488,859	221,775	156,388	•
Benzodiazepines	tablets	12,125	574,421	88,901	144,175	117,430	•
Cannabis herb	kg	63,212.2	53,573	72,721.8	80,492.6	9,824.7	8,435.5
Cannabis plants	plants	350,868	16,539	130,000	•	•	99,864
Cocaine	kg	8.4	0.5	1.4	131	13.6	8.9
Heroin	kg	23.9	44	28.1	0.3	1.1	5.6
Prescription opioid (tramadol)	tablets	3,476	5,998	•	•	•	•
Ketamine	kg	11	8.2	•	6.3	30.8	24.9
Synthetic cannabinoids	kg	25.1	492.4	337.7	40.1	14.9	1,558.4
PCC (paracetamol, carisoprodol, and caffeine)	tablet	1,652,864	400,000	•	•	•	961,114

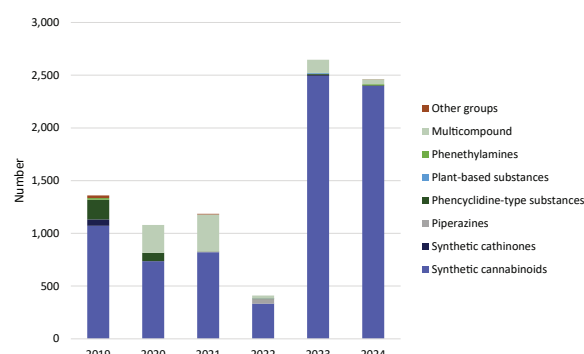
Note: • = Not reported.

Sources: DAINAP; UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) Indonesia for 2023 and previous years; Official communication with BNN, March 2025.



**Figure 2. Number of drug-related arrests in Indonesia, by drug type, 2019-2024**

Sources: DAINAP; official communication with BNN, March 2025.

**Figure 3. Number of NPS samples identified and analyzed in Indonesia, by substance group, 2019-2024**

Sources: Official communication with BNN, March 2025.

**Table 4. Number of illicit drug production laboratories dismantled in Indonesia, by drug type, 2019-2024**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Methamphetamine	2	6	1	22	4	6
Ecstasy	0	2	0	6	1	1
Synthetic cannabinoids	0	2	0	1	0	2
PCC	1	0	0	1	0	1
Synthetic cathinones	1	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Official communication with BNN, March 2025.

**Table 5. Typical retail price of selected drugs in Indonesia, 2019-2024 (US\$)**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	per g	85.7 - 114.3	106.67 (66-233)	42 - 245	45.2 - 225.8	24 - 233	48.7 - 219.2
Ecstasy	per tablet	24.3 - 28.6	26 (12 - 50)	10.5 - 45.5	11.9 - 58.1	•	18.3 - 30.5
Amphetamine	per g	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ketamine	per g	50 - 71.4	•	•	•	•	•
Cannabis herb	per kg	•	•	•	•	•	121.9 - 365.9
LSD	per blot	10.7 - 21.4	•	•	•	•	•
Synthetic cannabinoids	per bag (5 g)	28.6 - 35.7	•	•	•	•	3.7 - 18.3
Heroin	per g	214.3	116.7	•	•	•	•
Cocaine	per g	179	183.3	•	•	•	304.8

Note: •: Not reported.

Source: Official communication with BNN, March 2025.

**Table 6. Typical purity of crystal methamphetamine in Indonesia, 2019-2024 (percentage)**

Year	Number of samples analyzed	Purity (percentage)
2019	38	96.35 (90.01-99.88)
2020	127	96.65 (88.80-99.31)
2021	33	89.96 (61.72-96.93)
2022	11	93.57 (89.35-98.86)
2023	16	96.13 (93.16-98.16)
2024	22	87.45 (33.95 – 97.09)

Note: Data in this table refers to the weight/weight (w/w) % expressed as the hydrochloride salt of these substances

Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with BNN, March 2025.

**Table 7. Newly identified NPS and other emerging synthetic substances in Indonesia, 2022-2023**

Substance group	2023	2024
Synthetic cannabinoids	• MDMB-INACA	• MDMB-5Me-INACA
Phencyclidine-type substances, including ketamin	• Fluorexetamine (2-FXE)	-
Designer benzodiazepines	-	• Bromazolam

Sources: Official communication with BNN, March 2025.





# JAPAN

## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- Methamphetamine remains a primary drug threat in Japan. In 2024, Japan Customs seized approximately 1,761 kg, a 10 per cent increase from the amount seized in the country in 2023 (table 3). The number of seizure cases dropped sharply to 139, a 53 per cent decrease, indicating a shift toward larger but less frequent shipments.<sup>1</sup>
- The estimated street value of methamphetamine seizures reached US \$775 million, equivalent to about 58.7 million user doses.<sup>2</sup>
- Sea cargo seizures increased, while seizures via air cargo, international mail, and air passengers declined significantly (figures 6 and 7).
- By volume, Latin America was the largest source (56%) of methamphetamine in the country, followed by North America (32%) and Asia (9%), including Viet Nam, Thailand, and Malaysia (figures 2 and 3).

### Ketamine

- Disaggregated data for ketamine is not available. However, seizures involving ketamine were noted, including a seizure of 4 kg of ketamine arriving from the Netherlands in September 2024.<sup>3</sup>

### Ecstasy<sup>4</sup>

- Ecstasy seizures rose substantially in 2024. Authorities intercepted 67,000 tablets (a 37 per cent increase) and 139 kg of ecstasy powder (a 19 per cent increase) year-on-year (table 3).
- The number of ecstasy-related seizure cases increased to 90, up 48 per cent, signaling continued growth in availability and use of synthetic party drugs.<sup>5</sup>

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- Since 2021, the number of NPS-related drug arrests has steadily increased, with 444 people arrested in 2023 compared to 312 in 2022 (figure 1).
- Semi-synthetic cannabinoids continue to be found in the country, with several shops selling the substances having been detected in the country.<sup>6</sup>

### Other drugs

- The number of cannabis-related drug arrests increased in 2023, surpassing those of methamphetamine for the first time (figure 1). In 2024, cannabis seizures surged to 344 kg, more than doubling the 2023 figure, while seizure cases rose to 390, the highest on record. This included 211 kg of cannabis herb and 133 kg of resin and cannabis-based products such as oils and edibles. Primary source countries were Thailand (47%), United States (26%), and Viet Nam (10%).<sup>7</sup>
- Cocaine seizures more than doubled, reaching 260 kg, despite a 24 per cent drop in seizure cases (54 cases), reflecting a shift toward larger-volume shipments, primarily trafficked via maritime routes from Latin America.<sup>8</sup>

1 Japan Customs, "Summary of Japan Customs' Enforcement in 2024", February 2025.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.

5 Japan Customs, "Summary of Japan Customs' Enforcement in 2024", February 2025.

6 Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), National Police Agency (NPA), and Japan Customs, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

7 Japan Customs, "Summary of Japan Customs' Enforcement in 2024", February 2025.

8 Ibid.

## Key facts and figures

### Drug demand indicators

**Table 1. Trends in use of selected drugs in Japan, 2011-2023**

Drug type	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2023
Crystal methamphetamine	↑	↑	↔	↔	↓	↓	↑
Ecstasy	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	↔	↑
Cannabis	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑
NPS	●	●	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓

Note: Based on expert perception provided by the MHLW; ↑ = Increase, ↓ = Decrease, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported.

Sources: UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) Japan for 2021 and previous years; MHLW, National Police Agency (NPA), and Japan Customs, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

### Drug supply indicators

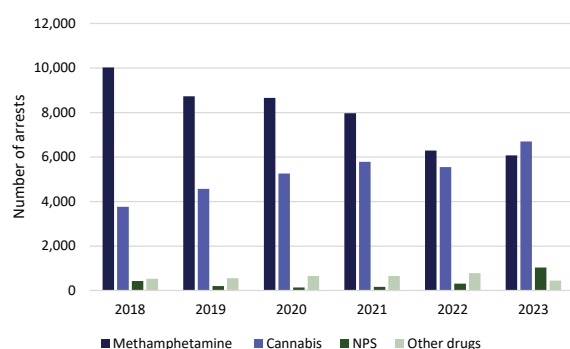
**Table 2. Seizures of selected drugs in Japan, 2019-2024**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	2,649.7	824.4	998.7	475.3	1,978	1,761
Ecstasy	tablets	73,915	106,308	80,623	111,339	36,000	67,000
Cannabis herb	kg	430.1	299.1	376.9	330.7	74	211
Cannabis resin	kg	14.8	3.6	2.9	5.6	68	133
Cocaine	kg	639.9	821.7	15.1	42.8	103	260
Heroin	kg	16.7	14.8	0	0	0	0
Opium	kg	0	0	5.8	0	0	0

Note: \* Data are preliminary and only include the amounts as reported by Japan Customs; ● = Not reported.

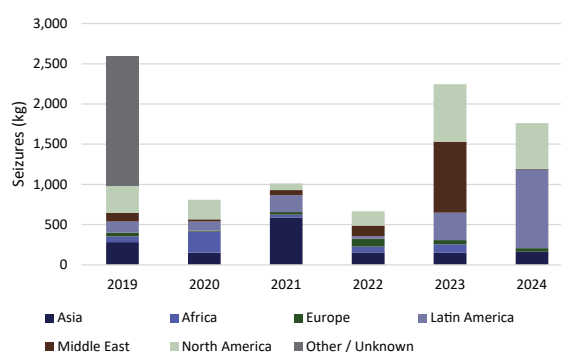
Sources: UNODC ARQ Japan for 2023 and previous years; MHLW, NPA, and Japan Customs, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024; Japan Customs, "Summary of Japan Customs' Enforcement in 2024", February 2025.

**Figure 1. Number of drug-related arrests in Japan, by drug type, 2018-2023**



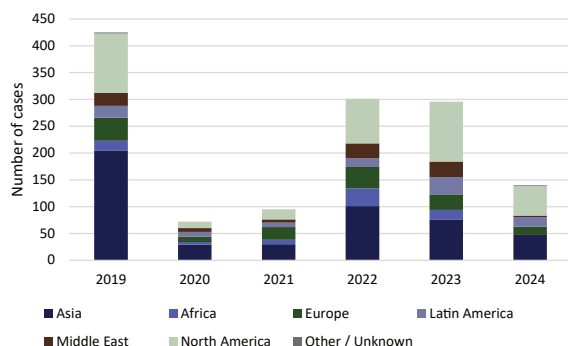
Source: MHLW, NPA, and Japan Customs, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

**Figure 2. Proportion of embarkation points of methamphetamine trafficking to Japan, by seizure amount, as reported by Japan Customs, 2019-2024**



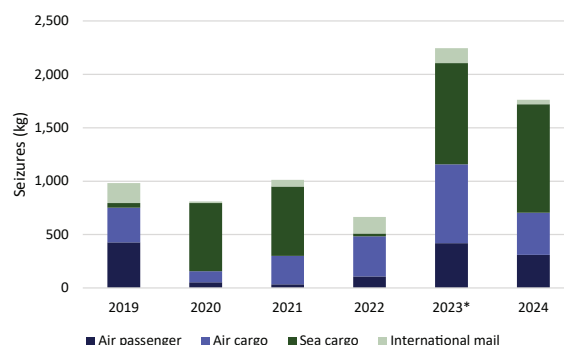
Source: Japan Customs, "Summary of Japan Customs' Enforcement in 2024", February 2025.

**Figure 3. Proportion of embarkation points of methamphetamine trafficking to Japan, by number of cases, as reported by Japan Customs, 2019-2024**



Source: Japan Customs, "Summary of Japan Customs' Enforcement in 2024", February 2025.

**Figure 4. Seizures of methamphetamine in Japan, by mode of trafficking and seizure amount (kg), as reported by Japan Customs, 2019-2024**



Note: \* Previous data has been updated and is as collected by Japan Customs.

Source: Japan Customs, "Summary of Japan Customs' Enforcement in 2024", February 2025.

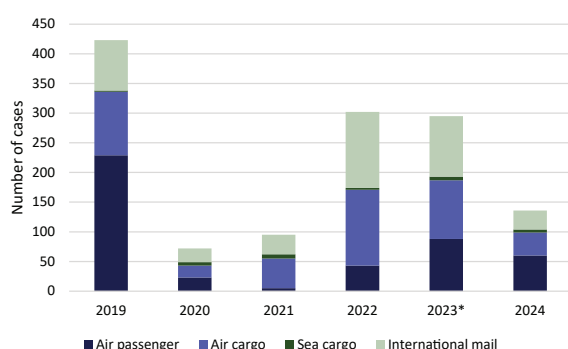
**Table 3. Retail prices of selected drugs in Japan, 2019-2024 (US\$)**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	per g	562	613.56	535	563.7	423.49	456.8
Ecstasy	per tablet	37.5	38.35	●	●	40.98	41.5
Cannabis herb	per g	47	57.52	●	●	34.15	34.6
Heroin	per g	281.4	287.60	●	●	●	69.2
Cocaine	per g	187.6	191.74	●	●	163.93	173

Note: ● = Not reported.

Source: MHLW, NPA, and Japan Customs, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

**Figure 5. Seizures of methamphetamine in Japan, by mode of trafficking and number of cases, as reported by Japan Customs, 2019-2024**



Note: \* Previous data has been updated and is as collected by Japan Customs.

Source: Japan Customs, "Summary of Japan Customs' Enforcement in 2024", February 2025.







## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- Methamphetamine tablet use declined in 2024, following a similar trend in 2023. However, crystal methamphetamine use increased for the second year in a row (table 1). Methamphetamine-related drug treatment admissions surged in 2024, reaching 3,025 admissions, nearly triple the figure from 2023 (992 admissions). However, it is important to note that data for 2024 includes data from additional drug treatment centres, which could be the reason for the large increase (figure 1).
- Seizures of methamphetamine tablets declined slightly, totaling 91.5 million tablets in 2024, down from 96 million in 2023. Meanwhile, crystal methamphetamine seizures increased from 4,043 kg in 2023 to 5,362 kg in 2024 (table 2).
- Lao PDR remains a key transit country for methamphetamine from the Golden Triangle, with trafficking routes directed to Thailand, Cambodia, and Viet Nam. Top provinces for seizures included Xayaboury, bordering northeastern Thailand, and Bokeo, bordering Thailand and Myanmar, for crystal methamphetamine, and Bokeo and Khammouane, bordering northeastern Thailand and Viet Nam, for methamphetamine tablets.<sup>1</sup>

### Ketamine

- Seizures of ketamine decreased to 279 kg in 2024 from 1,044.8 kg in 2023, after first being reported in the country in 2021 (table 2). Despite the decrease, ketamine has been identified in synthetic drug markets across the region, and Lao PDR's seizure patterns reflect ongoing cross-border trafficking risks.

### Ecstasy<sup>2</sup>

- No ecstasy seizures were reported in 2024 and information on its use in the country remains limited (table 2).

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- In 2024, Lao PDR identified NPS aside from ketamine for the first time, including the synthetic cannabinoid ADB-CHMINACA and two synthetic cathinones, 3-methylmethcathinone (3-MMC) and 4-methylmethcathinone (4-MMC).<sup>3</sup>

### Other drugs

- Heroin and opium use both declined in 2024. Seizures of both drugs also dropped in 2024 (tables 1 and 2).
- Seizure amounts of cannabis herb fell to around 3.3 tons in 2024, dropping to below 5 tons for the first time since 2019 (table 2).

1 Official communication with the Drugs Control and Supervision Bureau (LCDC), May 2025.

2 Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.

3 Official communication with the Drugs Control and Supervision Bureau (LCDC), May 2025.

## Key facts and figures

### Drug demand indicators

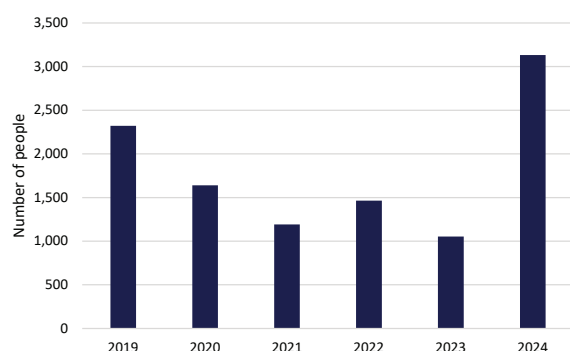
**Table 1. Trend in use of selected drugs in Lao PDR, 2019-2024**

Drug used in the past year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Methamphetamine tablets	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓
Crystal methamphetamine	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑
Cannabis herb	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓
Opium	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
Heroin	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓

Note: Based on expert perception provided by LCDC; ↑ = Increasing, ↓ = Decreasing, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported

Source: Official communication with LCDC, May 2025.

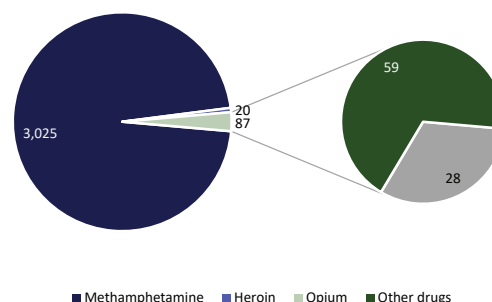
**Figure 1. Number of drug users admitted for treatment in Lao PDR, 2019-2024**



Note: Data from 2023 and earlier only include data from the Somsanga Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre while data for 2024 includes data from 14 drug treatment centres across the country, and they should be interpreted with caution to understand the drug use situation in the country.

Source: Official communication with LCDC, May 2025.

**Figure 2. Drug treatment centre admissions in Lao PDR, by drug type, 2024**



Note: Data from 2023 and earlier only include data from the Somsanga Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre while data for 2024 includes data from 14 drug treatment centres across the country, and they should be interpreted with caution to understand the drug use situation in the country.

Source: Official communication with LCDC, May 2025.

### Drug supply indicators

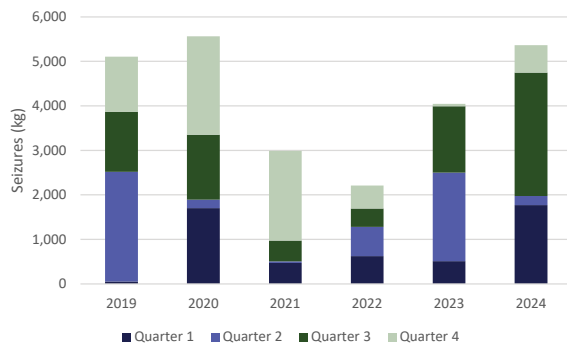
**Table 2. Seizures of selected drugs and chemicals in Lao PDR, 2019-2024**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Methamphetamine tablets	tablets	17,703,036	18,602,900	143,007,700	143,991,200	95,970,387	91,509,571
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	5,106.9	5,564.4	2,991	2,209.9	4,043.1	5,361.7
Cannabis herb	kg	●	●	4.1	12,014.3	1,044.8	279.4
Cocaine	kg	2,577.4	5,167.6	5,846.7	3	5,628.2	3,274.3
Heroin	kg	3.5	0	●	175.8	0	1
Opium	kg	174.0	537.2	467.8	251.1	487.6	391.6
Ketamine	kg	89.4	60.3	18.8	1,930.4	131.7	88.8
Precursors and unspecified chemicals	kg	13,141.9	125,418	19,480.3	11,577	26,248.4	10,453.8

Note: \* Includes precursor chemicals; ● = Not reported.

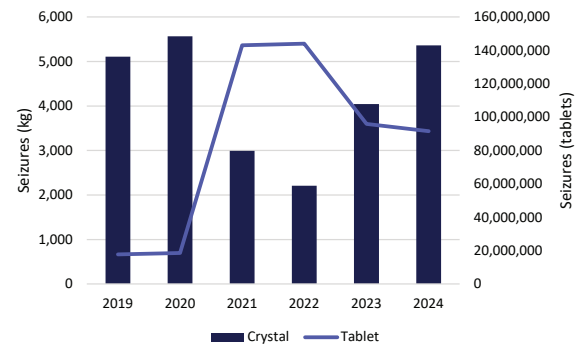
Sources: DAINAP; UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) Lao PDR for 2023 and previous years; official communication with LCDC, May 2025.

**Figure 3. Seizure amounts of crystal methamphetamine in Lao PDR, by quarter, 2019-2024**



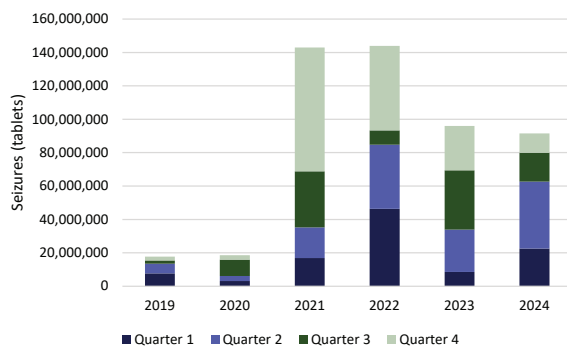
Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with LCDC, May 2025.

**Figure 5. Seizure amounts of crystal methamphetamine and methamphetamine tablets in Lao PDR, 2019-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with LCDC, May 2025.

**Figure 4. Seizure amounts of methamphetamine tablets in Lao PDR, by quarter, 2019-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with LCDC, May 2025.



## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- The perceived use of both crystal methamphetamine and methamphetamine tablets increased in 2024, continuing an upward trend since 2022. The number of people brought into formal contact for methamphetamine use reached 108,891, the highest on record. Drug treatment admissions for both crystal and tablet methamphetamine also rose in 2024. Combined, these account for over 60% of all treatment admissions in 2024 (tables 1, 2, and 3).
- The amount of crystal methamphetamine decreased from 10,345.7 kg in 2023 to 8,728.5 kg in 2024. However, methamphetamine tablet seizures increased significantly to nearly 16.9 million tablets, over three times the amount seized in 2023 (table 4).
- Seizures of clandestine methamphetamine laboratories once again declined in 2024 after increasing the previous year. Only one medium sized laboratory was seized (figure 3).
- The typical purity of crystal methamphetamine and methamphetamine tablets remained stable in 2024, although the purity of crystal methamphetamine increased very slightly by one per cent (table 5).

### Ketamine

- According to expert perception, ketamine use increased in 2024 for the second year in a row (table 1).
- Seizures of the substance dropped significantly to 349.1 kg in 2024, down from 1,540.7 kg in 2023, and only one clandestine ketamine laboratory was seized in 2024 (table 4 and figure 3). However, it continues to be detected in samples of “happy water” seized in the country.<sup>1</sup>

### Ecstasy<sup>2</sup>

- The perceived use of ecstasy increased in 2024, and a total of 8,633 individuals were admitted for treatment, of whom 6,108 were newly registered cases (tables 1 and 3).
- Although seizures of ecstasy dropped from nearly 6.9 tons in 2023 to 1.7 tons in 2024, it is still the second highest amount seized on record. Two clandestine ecstasy processing laboratories (one small and one medium sized) were seized in 2024 (table 4 and figure 3). Significantly, in January 2025, Malaysian authorities seized a laboratory that synthesized drugs, including ecstasy, using precursor chemicals, which was not a typical reprocessing facility as seen in previous years.<sup>3</sup>

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- In 2024, Malaysia identified over 20 NPS, over half of which were synthetic cannabinoids. By number of samples analyzed, MDMB-4en-PINACA (371 samples) was the most commonly detected synthetic cannabinoid, followed by ADB-BUTINACA (53 samples). Additionally, all of the newly identified NPS in the country in 2024 were synthetic cannabinoids, showing the continued dominance of synthetic cannabinoids in the local NPS market (tables 6 and 7).

### Other drugs

- The perceived use of opiates (heroin and morphine) increased for the first time since 2016, with the number of people brought into formal contact with authorities increasing in 2024, while treatment admissions for heroin remain high, second only behind methamphetamine (tables 1, 2, and 3). Meanwhile, the amount of heroin seized and the number of clandestine heroin laboratories both decreased, though heroin laboratories continue to account for the largest proportion of clandestine laboratories seized (table 4 and figure 3).

1 National Anti-Drug Agency (NADA) and the Department of Chemistry Malaysia (KIMIA), “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats”, Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

2 Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.

3 Narcotics Crime Investigation Department (NCID), “Drug situation report”, the Annual Meeting of Drug Intelligence Analysts in the Mekong and Southeast Asia, April 2025.



## Key facts and figures

### Drug demand indicators

**Table 1. Trend in use of selected drugs in Malaysia, 2019-2024**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑
Methamphetamine tablets	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Ecstasy	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑
Amphetamine	●	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑
Cannabis herb	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑
Opiates*	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑
Ketamine	↓	↓	↓	●	↑	↑
Cocaine	↑	●	●	●	●	●
Kratom	↑	●	●	●	●	●
Psychotropic group**	●	↓	↑	●	↑	↑

Note: \* Refers to heroin and morphine; \*\* includes benzodiazepines, psychotropic pills and Erimin 5; based on expert perception provided by the National Anti-Drug Agency (NADA); ↑ = Increase, ↓ = Decrease, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported.

Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with NADA, February 2025.

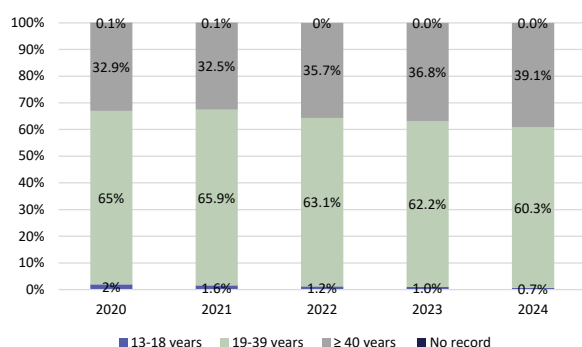
**Table 2. Number of people who use drugs brought into formal contact with authorities in Malaysia, by drug type, 2019-2024**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	64,866	62,652	61,767	70,570	77,989	108,891
Opiates*	43,578	39,601	39,100	37,742	33,761	39,895
Methamphetamine tablets	7,580	10,951	9,708	15,649	17,941	21,255
Cannabis	4,497	3,396	3,179	3,858	4,358	7,121
Amphetamine and ecstasy	19,238	10,107	8,341	7,391	8,192	9,763
Other drugs**	1,826	1,061	697	1,153	1,779	3,143
Psychotropic group***	614	557	347	813	1,488	2,789

Note: \* Refers to heroin and morphine; \*\* mainly composed of kratom, inhalants and others; \*\*\* includes benzodiazepines, psychotropic pills and Erimin 5.

Source: Official communication with NADA, February 2025.

**Figure 1. Proportion of drug and substance users in Malaysia, by age group, 2020-2024**



Source: Official communication with NADA, February 2025.

**Table 3. Drug treatment admissions in Malaysia, by drug type and gender, 2024**

Drug type	New admissions			All admissions		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Crystal methamphetamine	28,294	1,643	29,937	44,016	2,257	46,273
Methamphetamine tablets	5,077	238	5,315	8,912	362	9,274
Ecstasy	5,651	457	6,108	8,058	575	8,633
Amphetamine						
Heroin	5,990	199	6,189	22,531	497	23,028
Opium	2	0	2	20	0	20
Cannabis	1,568	26	1,594	2,979	49	3,028
Psychotropic pills*	119	10	129	267	14	281
Others**	252	23	275	424	27	451
Total	46,953	2,596	49,549	87,207	3,781	90,988

Note: \*Includes benzodiazepines, psychotropic pills and Erimin 5; \*\* Others include kratom, inhalants, cocaine, ketamine, and others.

Source: Official communication with NADA, February 2025.

## Drug supply indicators

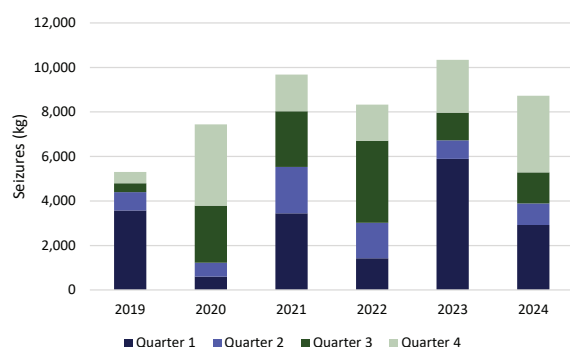
**Table 4. Seizures of selected drugs in Malaysia, 2019-2024**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	5,302.4	7,557.2	9,682.1	8,298.4	10,345.7	8,728.5
Liquid methamphetamine	kg	308.4	5,960	188.5	49.6	585.8	1,834.3
Methamphetamine tablets <sup>a</sup>	tablets	2,208,889	2,300,222	3,971,667	4,262,556	2,732,000	16,863,333
Ecstasy	kg	706.9	1,096	293.1	335.8	6,863.3	1,746.3
Ketamine	kg	1,261	3,004.2	474.6	3,000.3	1,540.7	349.1
Heroin	kg	709.9	930.3	2,166.5	717.8	950.1	589.9
Benzodiazepines / Erimin 5	kg	683.2	925.4	●	158.7	573.3	549.4
Cannabis herb	kg	649.6	5,426.8	3,728.3	8,120.9	4,800.5	4,024.7
Cocaine	kg	15,247.1	11.3	5.8	20.1	293.7	181.2
Codeine	lt	13,312.6	4,187.8	6,451.9	3,255.4	1,582.6	3,237.9
Kratom leaf	kg	161,233.6	296,120.8	368,040.4	128,285.9	80,508.6	56,768.9
Kratom liquid	lt	101,516.7	75,545.1	76,212.8	78,909.9	61,236.5	57,600.3
Opium (raw and prepared)	kg	0.4	●	0.1	1.4	10.2	0.001
Psychotropics	kg	2.6	2	3.3	10.5	4.2	23.3

Note: a Figures not reported as number of tablets converted into estimated tablet equivalent at 90 mg per tablet; ● = Not reported.

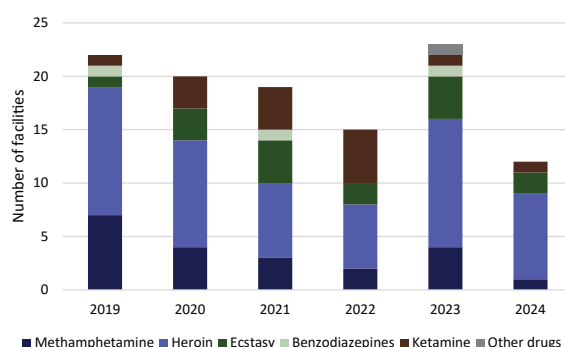
Sources: DAINAP; UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) Malaysia for 2023 and previous years; Official communication with NADA, February 2025.

**Figure 2. Seizure amounts of crystal methamphetamine in Malaysia, by quarter, 2019-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with NADA, February 2025.

**Figure 3. Number of illicit drug production laboratories dismantled in Malaysia, by drug type, 2019-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with NADA, February 2025.

**Table 5. Typical purity of selected drugs in Malaysia, 2019-2024 (percentage)**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	75 (20 – 80)	75 (20 – 80)	78 (20 – 80)	78 (10 – 80)	78 (10 – 80)	79 (10 – 80)
Methamphetamine tablets	•	•	16 (16 – 18)	16 (16 – 18)	16 (16 – 18)	16 (16 – 18)
Ecstasy	50 (10 – 60)	50 (10 – 60)	50 (10 – 60)	35 (30 – 50)	35 (30 – 50)	35 (30 – 50)
Heroin (No.3)	4 (3 – 5)	3 (3 – 5)	2 (2 – 4)	2 (2 – 80)	2 (2 – 80)	2 (2 – 80)
Ketamine	80 (50 – 85)	80 (50 – 85)	80 (50 – 85)	80 (75 – 85)	80 (75 – 85)	80 (60 – 85)

Source: Official communication with NADA, February 2025.

**Table 6. Types of NPS and other emerging synthetic substances identified in drug samples analyzed in Malaysia, 2023-2024**

Substance group	2023	2024
Synthetic cannabinoids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADB-BUTINACA</li> <li>• ADB-4en-PINACA</li> <li>• ADB-5'Br-BUTINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-4en-PINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-BUTINACA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4F-MDMB-BINACA</li> <li>• 5F-MDMB-PINACA</li> <li>• AB-CHMINACA</li> <li>• ADB-4en-PINACA</li> <li>• ADB-BUTINACA</li> <li>• ADB-FUBINACA</li> <li>• CUMYL-5F-PINACA</li> <li>• EDMB-4en-PINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-3en-BUTINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-4en-PINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-BUTINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-CHMINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-FUBINACA</li> </ul>
Synthetic cathinones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4-Methylmethcathinone</li> <li>• <i>N,N</i>-Dimethylpentylone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3-methylmethcathinone (3-MMC)</li> <li>• 3,4-Methylenedioxypyrovalerone (MDPV)</li> <li>• 4-methylmethcathinone (4-MMC)</li> <li>• <i>N,N</i>-Dimethylpentylone</li> </ul>
Nitazenes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metonitazene</li> </ul>	-
Phencyclidine-type substances, including ketamine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-fluoro-2-oxo-PCE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-fluoro-2-oxo-PCE</li> </ul>
Piperazines	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-(p-Fluorophenyl)piperazine</li> <li>• 1-Benzyl-4-methylpiperazine (MBZP)</li> </ul>
Plant-based substances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kratom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kratom</li> </ul>
Designer benzodiazepines	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bromazolam</li> <li>• Etizolam</li> <li>• <i>N</i>-Methylclonazepam</li> </ul>

Source: Official communication with NADA, February 2025.

**Table 7. Newly identified NPS and other emerging synthetic substances in Malaysia, 2023-2024**

Substance group	2023	2024
Synthetic cannabinoids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADB-4en-PINACA</li> <li>• ADB-5'Br-BUTINACA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4F-MDMB-BINACA</li> <li>• AB-CHMINACA</li> <li>• ADB-FUBINACA</li> <li>• CUMYL-5F-PINACA</li> <li>• EDMB-4en-PINACA</li> <li>• MBMB-CHMINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-FUBINACA</li> </ul>
Synthetic cathinones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metonitazene</li> </ul>	-
Designer benzodiazepines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-fluoro-2-oxo-PCE</li> </ul>	-

Source: Official communication with NADA, February 2025.





## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- Use of both crystal and tablet methamphetamine increased in 2024, following fluctuations in recent years. They were the only two drugs where an increase in use was indicated (table 1).
- Seizures of methamphetamine tablets remained high, totalling 227.8 million tablets, the second-highest annual figure on record, slightly lower than the amount seized in 2023 (253.3 million). On the other hand, crystal methamphetamine seizures increased to over 21 tons, up from 17.8 tons in 2023 and approaching the 2022 peak (23.4 tons) (table 2).
- Retail prices of methamphetamine dropped to US\$ 0.60 per methamphetamine tablet and US\$ 6 per gram of crystal methamphetamine (table 4).

### Ketamine

- Ketamine seizures dropped sharply in 2024 to 1,651.6 kg, down from 4,053.8 kg in 2023, though this remains a significant compared to previous years (table 2).

### Ecstasy<sup>1</sup>

- Ecstasy tablet seizures tripled in 2024 to 214,452 tablets, up from 65,382 in 2023, though still below the 2022 peak (674,542 tablets) (table 2). Retail price per tablet was US\$ 13.50, a notable decrease from US\$ 21.40 in 2023, suggesting greater affordability in the local market (table 4).

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- Myanmar authorities reported continued detection of “happy water” containing combinations of multiple substances. As of 2024, over 40 different packaging designs have been seized, indicating that multiple suppliers are involved in the production of this type of product.<sup>2</sup>

### Other drugs

- The area under illicit opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar declined slightly from 41,300 hectares in 2023 to 39,700 hectares in 2024. Opium production also declined, but remains high at an estimated 995 tons, the second highest recorded since 2022. Myanmar currently remains the world’s largest source of opium.<sup>3</sup> Heroin and opium seizures continued to increase in 2024, with seizures of heroin increasing slightly, while opium seizures tripled (table 2). Heroin prices also declined significantly in 2024, falling to US\$ 9 per gram compared to US\$ 14 per gram in the previous year (table 4). This indicates a possible return of the local heroin market.

<sup>1</sup> Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.

<sup>2</sup> Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC), September 2024.

<sup>3</sup> UNODC, “Myanmar Opium Survey 2024: Cultivation, Production, and Implications”, December 2024.



## Key facts and figures

### Drug demand indicators

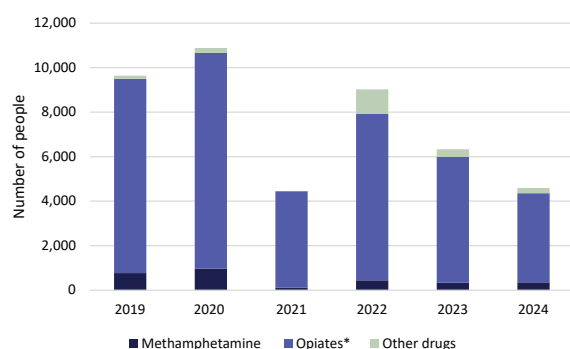
**Table 1. Trend in use of selected drugs in Myanmar, 2019-2024**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Heroin	↑	↔	↓	↔	↓	↓
Opium	↔	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Methamphetamine tablets	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Crystal methamphetamine	●	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑
Cannabis	↔	↔	↓	↔	↓	↔

Note: ↑= Increase, ↓= Decrease, ↔= Stable, ●= Not reported.

Sources: Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP); CCDAC, March 2025.

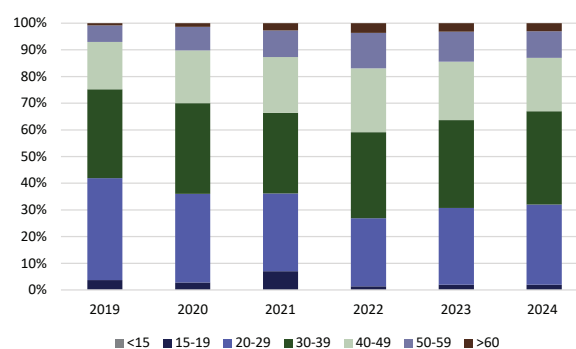
**Figure 1. Number of people admitted to drug treatment centres in Myanmar, by drug type, 2019-2024**



Note: \* Includes opium and heroin.

Sources: DAINAP; CCDAC, March 2025.

**Figure 2. Proportion of people admitted to drug treatment centres in Myanmar, by age group, 2019-2024**



Source: CCDAC, March 2025.

### Drug supply indicators

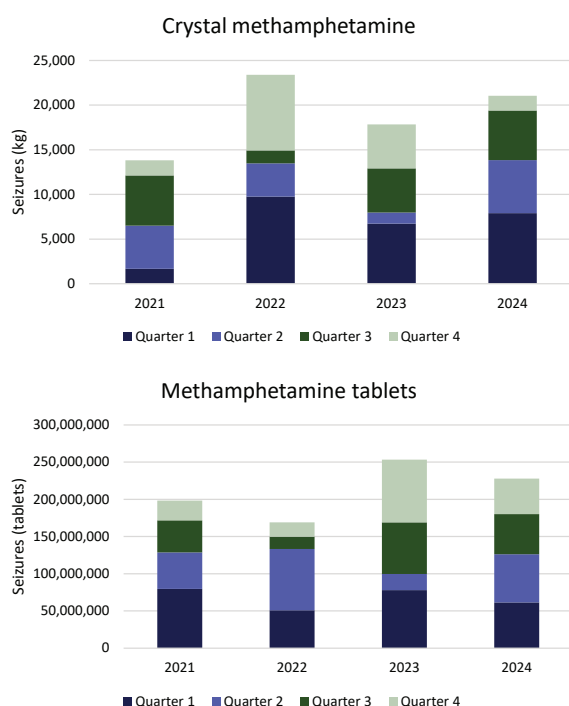
**Table 2. Seizures of selected drugs in Myanmar, 2019-2024**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Methamphetamine tablets	tablets	108,719,071	328,410,692	198,188,715	169,070,909	253,341,325*	227,794,146
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	9,426.2	17,363.9	13,815.8	23,401.9	17,829.3	21,048.3
Methamphetamine powder <sup>a</sup>	kg	679.5	2,145.2	111.3	279.6	859.4	26.1
Ecstasy	tablets	27,995	2,437	146,414	674,542	65,382	214,452
Heroin <sup>b</sup>	kg	690.2	1,853.4	2,526.1	1,345.5	1,873.4	1,978.6
Opium	kg	1,552.7	3,882.9	2,632	1,209.8	581.3	1,719.2
Cannabis <sup>c</sup>	kg	364.8	737.6	503.7	929.4	686.7	1,185.1
Kratom	kg	2,542.6	2,632.7	3,088.2	1,608.7	1,769.9	1,944.4
Ketamine <sup>d</sup>	kg	1,096	888.5	762	2,328.6	4,053.8	1,651.6
Happy water	kg	●	●	●	159.9	296.2	216.4

Note: \* Previous data has been updated. <sup>a</sup> Methamphetamine for processing into methamphetamine tablets; <sup>b</sup> Reported as heroin No.4; <sup>c</sup> Combined herb and resin; <sup>d</sup> Figures reported in lt were converted into kg with the ratio 1 lt = 1 kg.

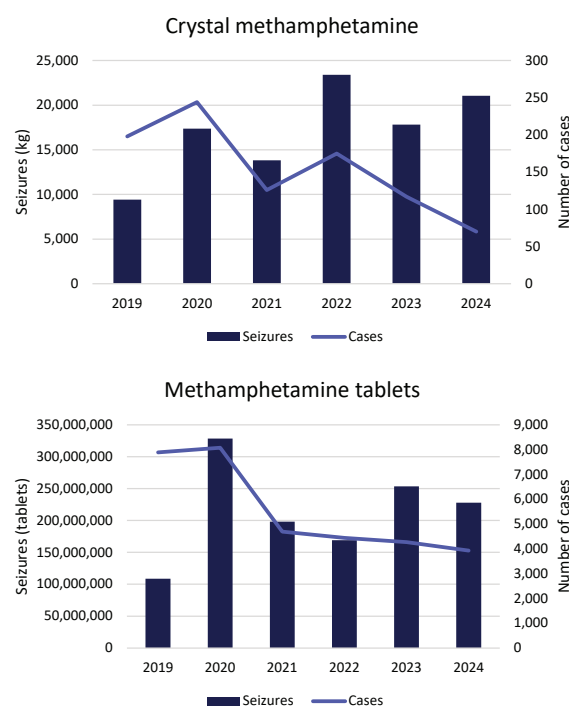
Sources: DAINAP; UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) Myanmar for 2023 and previous years; CCDAC, March 2025.

**Figure 3. Seizure amounts of methamphetamine in Myanmar, by quarter, 2021-2024**



Source: CCDAC, March 2025.

**Figure 4. Number of cases and seizures for methamphetamine in Myanmar, 2019-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; CCDAC, March 2025.

**Table 3. Seizures of selected precursors and chemicals in Myanmar, 2019-2024**

Chemical / substance	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Ephedrine	kg	4.02	630	•	1	•	•
Pseudoephedrine <sup>a</sup>	tablets	0	1,500,000	•	3,050,000	80,000	•
Phenylacetic acid	lt	0	•	•	•	•	•
P-2-P	lt	300	160	•	•	•	•
Acetic anhydride	lt	4,140.1	12,240	•	•	1,710	•
Safrole	lt	1,440	•	•	•	•	•
Thionyl chloride	lt	11,600	•	•	•	23,940	13,100
Methyl ethyl ketone	lt	9,600	•	•	•	262.6	•
Sodium cyanide	kg	4,640	107,870	48,620	15,400	1,135	30,780
Benzyl cyanide	lt	•	17,272.5	14,050	•	67,140	32,800
Tartaric acid	lt	22,800	2,855	•	•	6,875	•
Caffeine (bulking agent)	kg	19,226	11,371.9	9,355	9,036	25,592.5	24,045.15
Toluene	lt	16,680	18,080	50,400	41,910	111,800	440
Ethyl acetate	lt	59,000	53,319	42,960	3,120	162,066	19,230
Ammonium nitrate	kg	500	103,585	74,434	567,201	82,549	409,845.6
Sodium ethoxide	kg	•	15,400	•	14,000	10,400	•
Methyl phenylacetate	lt	•	5,085	•	•	•	•

Note: a The amount of pseudoephedrine in tablets varies; • = Not reported.

Sources: DAINAP; CCDAC, March 2025.

**Table 4. Typical retail prices of selected drugs in Myanmar, 2019-2024 (US\$)**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Methamphetamine tablet	per tablet	2.2	2.2	1.8	1.4	1	0.6
Crystal methamphetamine	per g	14.3	15.2	11.7	9.5	9.5	6
Ecstasy	per tablet	32.1	34.3	26.5	2.14	21.4	13.5
Ketamine	g	7.5	7.5	6.2	4.7	4.7	3
Heroin	g	22.5	22.5	18.8	14	14	9

Sources: DAINAP; CCDAC, March 2025.

## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- Methamphetamine continues to be the main drug of concern in the Philippines. According to government experts, the perceived use of crystal methamphetamine increased for the fourth consecutive year (table 1). The number of treatment admissions for methamphetamine account for the largest proportion of treatment admissions, and have increased every year since 2016, reaching the highest number of admissions since 2016 (figure 1).
- In 2024, authorities confiscated 2,550 kg of crystal methamphetamine, a 17 per cent increase from 2023 (2,186.2 kg) (table 2). Arrests linked to methamphetamine remained the highest among all drug types (figure 3).
- The retail price for crystal methamphetamine dropped significantly to US\$ 93.4 per gram, the lowest since reporting, reflecting increased availability (table 3).

### Ketamine

- Ketamine seizures reached a record 50.4 kg in 2024, marking the highest seizure volume ever recorded for the substance in the country. Previously, the 2.4 kg seized in 2023 was the highest amount, showing the sharp rise of ketamine in the country (table 2).

### Ecstasy<sup>1</sup>

- Ecstasy seizures rose substantially in 2024 to 66,540 tablets, up from 35,125 tablets in 2023, and is the second highest amount recorded in the country indicating growing circulation and use of the drug (table 2).

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- Aside from ketamine, no other NPS were identified in the Philippines in 2024.

### Other drugs

- Cannabis herb seizures nearly tripled, reaching 5,938.7 kg in 2024, up from 2,125.3 kg in 2023, surpassing the amount of methamphetamine seized for the first time (table 2).

1 Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.

## Key facts and figures

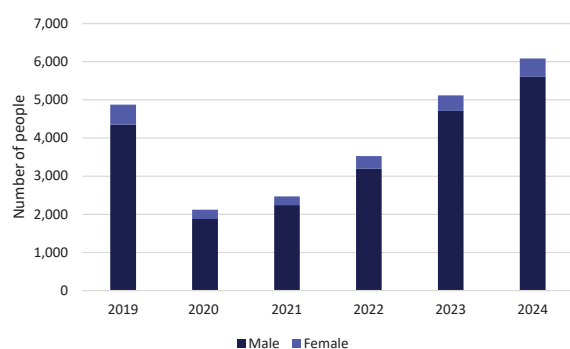
### Drug demand indicators

**Table 1. Trend in use of selected drugs in the Philippines, 2019-2024**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
Benzodiazepines	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓
Cannabis herb	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑
Inhalants	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑

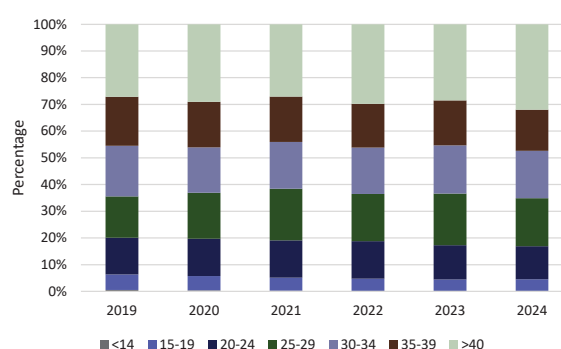
Note: Based on expert perception provided by the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB); ↑ = Increasing, ↓ = Decreasing, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported.  
Sources: Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP); Official communication with DDB, May 2025.

**Figure 1. Number of methamphetamine-related treatment admissions in the Philippines, by gender, 2019-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with DDB, May 2025.

**Figure 2. Number of treatment admissions in the Philippines, by age group, 2019-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with DDB, May 2025.

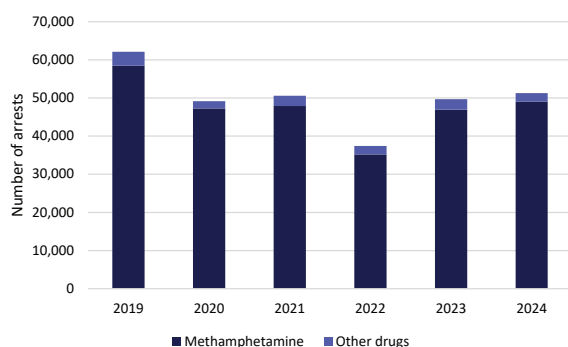
### Drug supply indicators

**Table 2. Seizures of selected drugs and precursor chemicals in the Philippines, 2019-2024**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	2,071.1	2,196	2,302.7	4,260.9	2,186.2	2,550
Liquid methamphetamine	lt	203.2	0.7	7.9	0	0.4	0.5
Ecstasy	tablets	13,108	42,794	74,786	30,213	35,125	66,540
Cannabis herb	kg	900.4	1,474.4	6,286.7	3,922.6	2,125.3	5,938.7
Heroin	kg	0	●	0	0	4.8	0.1
Cocaine	kg	347	1.4	1.2	13.5	40.6	32.7
Ketamine	kg	0.2	●	0.8	1.3	2.4	50.4
Ephedrine	kg	0.1	0.01	6.3	0.6	2	0.6

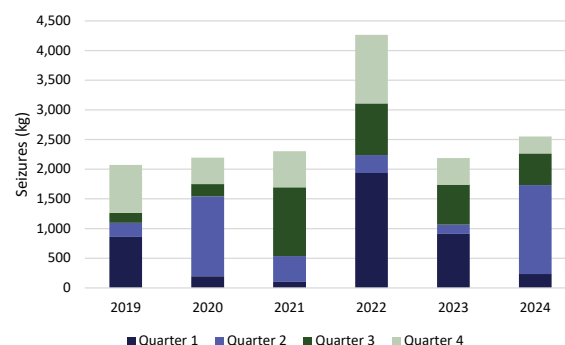
Sources: Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP); UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) Philippines for 2023 and previous years.

**Figure 3. Number of drug-related arrests in the Philippines, by drug type, 2019-2024**



Source: DAINAP.

**Figure 4. Seizure amounts of crystal methamphetamine in the Philippines, by quarter, 2019-2024**



Source: DAINAP.

**Table 3. Retail prices of selected drugs in the Philippines, 2019-2024 (US\$)**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	per g	136	130.8	134.6	122.1	122.7	93.4
Ecstasy	per tablet	34	32.7	33.7	30.5	30.7	23.9
Cocaine	per g	106	106	99	95.2	95.7	92.2
Cannabis herb	per g	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.2	3.0

Source: DAINAP.







## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- For the first time since 2018, the perceived use of crystal methamphetamine in the country declined in 2024 (table 1). However, the number of people who use psychotropic substances,<sup>1</sup> including methamphetamine, continues to account for the largest proportion of drug users brought into formal contact with authorities (figure 1).
- Methamphetamine continues to dominate Korea's drug landscape. In 2024, authorities seized 2,786,079 methamphetamine tablets (up 19 per cent from 2023) and 300.9 kg of crystal methamphetamine, down from 405 kg in 2023, but still a higher amount than all other drugs (table 2).
- In 2024, one clandestine methamphetamine laboratory was dismantled, with authorities seizing 9.4 kg of methamphetamine and 9.1 kg of intermediates—the first domestic lab detected since 2021 (table 3).
- The average purity of crystal methamphetamine remained at high levels, while the price of crystal methamphetamine remained stable (tables 4 and 5).

### Ketamine

- Ketamine seizures more than doubled to a record 88.9 kg in 2024, up from 42.6 kg in 2023, with notable trafficking from France, Thailand, Germany, and Viet Nam (table 2).
- The retail price for ketamine remained steady at US\$ 250 per gram (table 5).

### Ecstasy<sup>2</sup>

- Seizures declined to 112,289 tablets in 2024 from 140,597 tablets in 2023, but remains high compared to previous years (table 2).
- Ecstasy trafficking into Korea in 2024 originated mainly from Europe, namely from Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, though seizures were also reported to originate from within the region, namely Viet Nam. Seizure cases were spread across postal, cargo, and air passenger routes.<sup>3</sup>

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- Seizures of synthetic cannabinoids increased to 113.8 kg in 2024, nearly tripling from the 41 kg seized in 2023 (table 2). Synthetic cannabinoids identified in the country included MDMB-PINACA, as well as combinations of MDMB-BUTINACA and MDMB-INACA.<sup>4</sup>

### Other drugs

- Cocaine seizures increased to 106.6 kg in 2024, nearly ten times the amount seized the previous year, with seizures originating from the United States, Canada, and South Africa (table 2).<sup>5</sup>

1 The Government of the Republic of Korea categorises synthetic drugs, such as methamphetamine, ecstasy, LSD, and NPS as psychotropic substances.

2 Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.

3 Official communication with the Supreme Prosecutors' Office, February 2025.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

## Key facts and figures

### Drug demand indicators

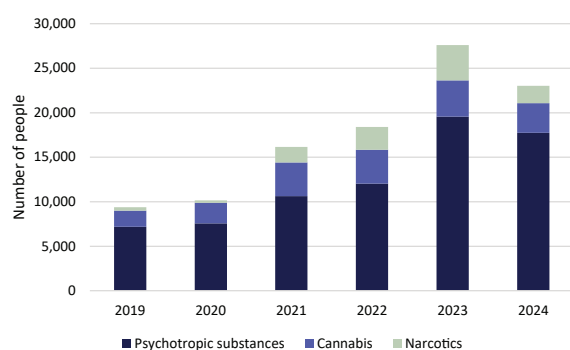
**Table 1. Trend in use of selected drugs in the Republic of Korea, 2019-2024**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓
Cannabis herb	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓
Other narcotics	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓

Note: Based on expert perception provided by the Supreme Prosecutors' Office (SPO); other narcotics include heroin, cocaine, and opium; ↑ = Increase, ↓ = Decrease, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported.

Source: Official communication with SPO, February 2025.

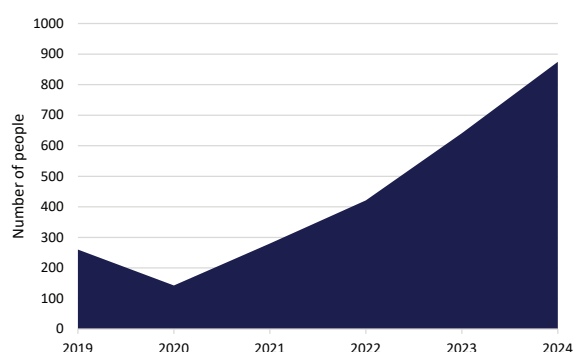
**Figure 1. Number of people who use drugs who are brought into formal contact with authorities in the Republic of Korea, by drug type, 2019-2024**



Note: The Government of the Republic of Korea categorizes synthetic drugs, such as methamphetamine, ecstasy, LSD, and NPS as psychotropic substances. Narcotics include heroin, cocaine, and opium.

Source: Official communication with SPO, February 2025.

**Figure 2. Number of people admitted to drug treatment centres in the Republic of Korea, 2019-2024**



Source: Official communication with SPO, February 2025.

### Drug supply indicators

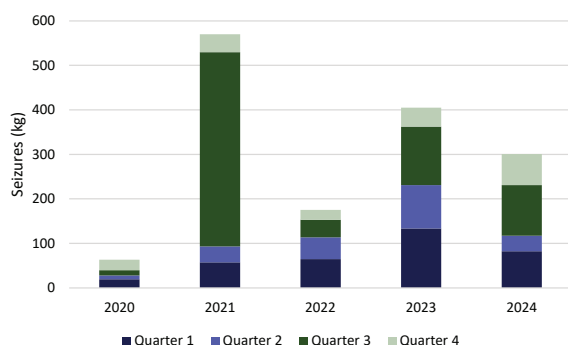
**Table 2. Seizures of selected drugs in the Republic of Korea, 2019-2024**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	87.3	63.6	569.9	175.4	405	300.9
Methamphetamine tablets <sup>a</sup>	tablets	193,034	253,167	557,075	1,862,247	2,342,355	2,786,079
Ecstasy <sup>b</sup>	tablets	10,464	39,714	39,645	140,600	140,597	112,289
Cannabis herb	kg	81.9	37.3	91.2	79.3	114.2	99
Cannabis resin	kg	2.7	3.1	0.1	1.4	3.2	5.1
Cannabis seed	kg	0.4	5.9	0.9	1.6	0.6	1.2
Synthetic cannabinoids	kg	1.7	3.2	18.8	55.7	41	113.8
Ketamine	g	0.6	1.2	4	30.8	42.6	88.9
Cocaine	kg	106.9	48	435.7	0.3	11.7	106.6
Heroin	g	0	8.8	1,213	35.8	1,362.1	805.5
Raw opium	g	43.5	187.3	8.3	0	0	0
Khat	kg	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note: <sup>a</sup> Figures not reported as number of tablets converted into estimated tablet equivalent at 90 mg per tablet; <sup>b</sup> Figures not reported as number of tablets converted into estimated tablet equivalent at 300 mg per tablet.

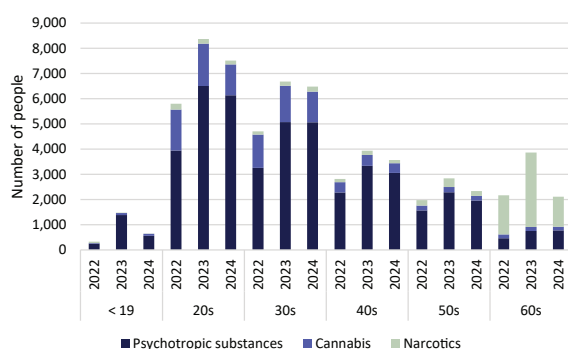
Sources: UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) Republic of Korea for 2023 and previous years; official communication with SPO, February 2025.

**Figure 3. Seizure amounts of crystal methamphetamine in the Republic of Korea, by quarter, 2020-2024**



Source: Official communication with SPO, February 2025.

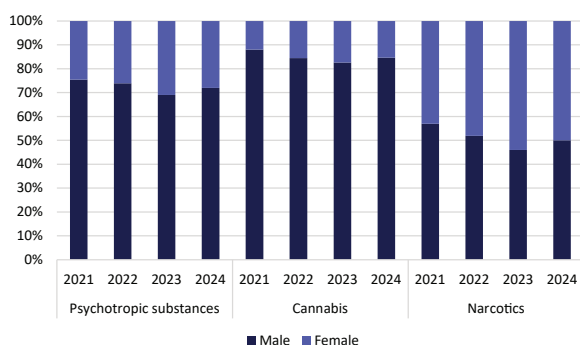
**Figure 4. Number of drug offenders in the Republic of Korea, by age group, 2022-2024**



Note: The Government of the Republic of Korea categorizes synthetic drugs, such as methamphetamine, ecstasy, LSD, and NPS as psychotropic substances. Narcotics include heroin, cocaine, and opium.

Source: Official communication with SPO, February 2025.

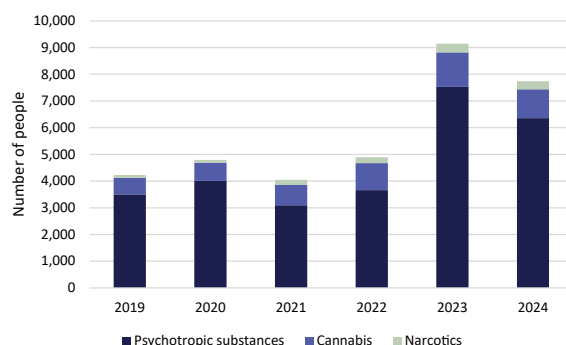
**Figure 5. Number of drug offenders in the Republic of Korea, by gender, 2021-2024**



Note: The Government of the Republic of Korea categorizes synthetic drugs, such as methamphetamine, ecstasy, LSD, and NPS as psychotropic substances. Narcotics include heroin, cocaine, and opium.

Source: Official communication with SPO, February 2025.

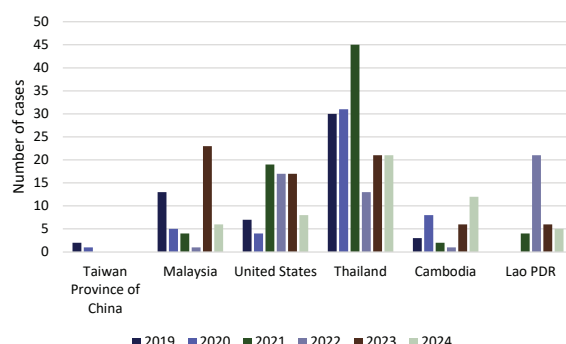
**Figure 6. Number of people who are brought into formal contact with authorities for supplying drugs in the Republic of Korea, by drug type, 2019-2024**



Note: The Government of the Republic of Korea categorizes synthetic drugs, such as methamphetamine, ecstasy, LSD, and NPS as psychotropic substances. Narcotics include heroin, cocaine, and opium.

Source: Official communication with SPO, February 2025.

**Figure 7. Origins of crystal methamphetamine shipments seized in the Republic of Korea, by number of cases, 2019-2024**



Source: Official communication with SPO, February 2025.

**Table 3. Number of clandestine methamphetamine laboratories dismantled and amounts seized in the Republic of Korea, 2019-2024**

Year	Number	Methamphetamine (g)	Intermediate products (g)
2019	2	1,320	2,280
2020	1	1.8	0
2021	1	900	0
2022	0	0	0
2023	0	0	0
2024	1	9,400	9,100

Source: Official communication with SPO, February 2025.

**Table 4. Typical purity of crystal methamphetamine in the Republic of Korea, 2019-2024**

Year	No. of samples analyzed	Minimum	Maximum	Average
2018	62	89.9	98.5	96.4
2019	79	34.7	98.5	91.6
2020	53	80.6	98.5	92
2021	89	87.7	98.5	98.5
2022	55	68.0	98.5	97.7
2023	69	83.0	98.5	96.9
2024	110	45.4	98.5	95.0

Note: Data in this table refer to the weight/weight (w/w) % expressed as the hydrochloride salt of these substances.

Sources: SPO, "Country briefing", August 2023; Official communication with SPO, February 2025.

**Table 5. Wholesale and retail prices of selected drugs in the Republic of Korea, 2019-2024 (US\$)**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	per g	399	272	272	250 - 300	300	300
Crystal methamphetamine	per kg	●	●	●	100,000	100,000	100,000
Methamphetamine tablet	per tablet	62	60	45.4 - 63.6	50 - 70	50	50
Ecstasy	per tablet	95.4 (27.2-163.6)	45.4	45.4-54.5	50 - 60	60	60
Cannabis herb	per g	103.1 (24.5-181.8)	113.6 (90.9-136.3)	90.9-109.1	100 - 120	150	150
Heroin	per g	118	118	118.2	130	250	250
Cocaine	per g	295.4 (227.2-363.6)	340.8 (318.1-363.6)	318.2-363.6	350 - 400	500	500
Ketamine	per g	318	317.9 (272.2-363.6)	227.2-254.5	250 - 280	250	250
Ketamine	per kg	●	●	●	65,000	65,000	65,000
LSD	per sheet	28.7 (19.4-38.1)	90.9	90.9	100	100	100

Note: ● = Not reported. Values in parentheses are the price range (minimum-maximum) of the substances.

Source: Official communication with SPO, February 2025.



## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- According to expert perception, methamphetamine use increased in 2024 (table 1). Methamphetamine users account for the largest proportion of drug treatment admission and drug users brought into formal contact with authorities, with 38 per cent being new users. After three years of decline, the proportion of drug treatment admissions for methamphetamine once again increased in 2024, accounting for 58 per cent of admissions (table 2 and figure 1).
- Seizures of crystal methamphetamine rose by 35 per cent, from 24.4 kg in 2023 to 33 kg in 2024, after two years of decline. Meanwhile, methamphetamine tablets seizures remained low at 199 tablets, indicating limited presence in tablet form (table 4).

### Ketamine

- The amount of ketamine seized increased for the third consecutive year with 8.5 kg and 3,537 tablets seized and is the highest amount seized since reporting (table 4).
- At the same time, perceived use of the drug increased, and drug treatment admissions for ketamine more than doubled from 15 people in 2023 to 32 people in 2024 (tables 1 and 2).

### Ecstasy

- According to government experts, perceived use of ecstasy declined in 2024 (table 1). Drug treatment admissions for ecstasy more than halved, while seizures showed a similar decrease with tablet seizures dropping by 64.6 per cent and powder weight dropping by 40.9 per cent (tables 2 and 4).
- Ecstasy seized in Singapore is often found to contain NPS, including synthetic cathinones and synthetic cannabinoids, among others.<sup>1</sup>

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- Singapore continued to see diverse NPS products, including synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic cathinones, tryptamines, and designer benzodiazepines. Since 2023, synthetic cathinones have been the most detected group of NPS by number of occurrences (figure 4).
- “Happy water” continues to be detected in the country. In addition to MDMA and ketamine, packets of “happy water” have also been found to contain the synthetic cannabinoid XLR-11, among other substances.<sup>2</sup>
- In recent years, countries in the region including Singapore have reported the detection of etomidate, a hypnotic agent used for anaesthetic purposes, in vaping products. In addition to etomidate, Singapore authorities also detected its analogues metomidate and propoxate (table 5).
- A new legal framework was enacted in June 2024 to control psychoactive substances based on their effects rather than specific chemical structures.<sup>3</sup>

1 Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) and Health Sciences Authority (HSA), “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats”, Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024.

2 Official communication with CNB, April 2025.

3 Official communication with CNB, April 2025.

### Other drugs

- The perceived use of heroin decreased in 2024, though heroin users continue to account for the second largest proportion of drug treatment admissions (tables 1 and 2). Seizures of the drug also declined from 83 kg in 2023 to 65.6 kg in 2024 (table 4).
- According to expert perception, the use of cannabis declined in 2024 (table 1). However, notably, 61 per cent of cannabis users brought into formal contact with authorities were new users, with over half of those new users being under 30 years old.<sup>4</sup> This marks the fourth consecutive year where new users accounted for the majority of people who use cannabis brought into contact with authorities (figure 1). Seizures of cannabis increased marginally (table 4).

4 CNB, "Singapore Drug Situation Report 2024", February 2025.

## Key facts and figures

### Drug demand indicators

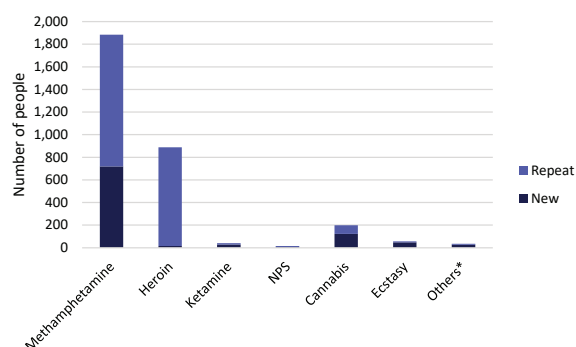
**Table 1. Trend in use of specific drugs in Singapore, 2019-2024**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Methamphetamine	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑
Ecstasy	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
Cannabis herb	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
Heroin	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
Ketamine	↑	↔	↔	↑	↔	↑
Nimetazepam	●	●	●	●	↔	↑
Cocaine	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑	↔
Synthetic cannabinoids	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑

Note: Based on expert perception provided by CNB; ↑ = Increase, ↓ = Decrease, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported.

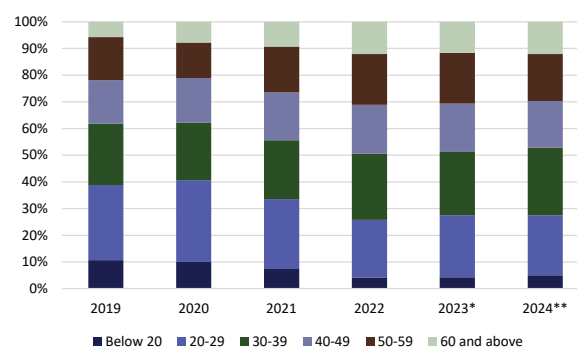
Sources: Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP); UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) Singapore for 2023 and previous years; Official communication with CNB, April 2025.

**Figure 1. People who use drugs brought into formal contact with authorities in Singapore, by drug type, 2024**



Note: Data are provisional. \* Others include ketamine, GHB, LSD, dihydrocodeine, methadone, methylphenidate and tapentadol.  
Source: Official communication with CNB, April 2025.

**Figure 2. People who use drugs brought into formal contact with authorities in Singapore, by age group, 2019-2024**



Note: \* Previous data has been updated. \*\* Data for 2024 are provisional.

Sources: DAINAP; official communication with CNB, April 2025.

**Table 2. Drug treatment admissions in Singapore, by drug type, 2019-2024**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*
Methamphetamine	1,250	1,571	1,111	1,119	1,131	1,393
Ecstasy	19	26	26	43	64	29
Cannabis	69	67	98	156	210	167
Heroin	473	327	558	787	767	744
Ketamine	8	4	12	13	15	32
NPS	●	64	46	10	1	6
Other drugs	261	185	95	21	181	32
<b>Total**</b>	<b>2,080</b>	<b>2,244</b>	<b>1,946</b>	<b>2,149</b>	<b>2,369</b>	<b>2,403</b>

Note: \* Data for 2024 are provisional; \*\* Figures include other unspecified drugs; ● = Not reported.

Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with CNB, April 2025.

**Table 3. Number of people who use drugs admitted to treatment centres in Singapore, by gender and drug type, 2024**

Drug type	Male	Female	Total
Methamphetamine	1,094	299	1,393
Ecstasy	19	10	29
Cannabis	145	22	167
Heroin	705	39	744
Ketamine	25	7	32
Unclassified / other drugs	34	4	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,022</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>2,403</b>

Note: Data are provisional.

Source: Official communication with CNB, April 2025.

## Drug supply indicators

**Table 4. Seizures of selected illicit drugs in Singapore, 2019-2024**

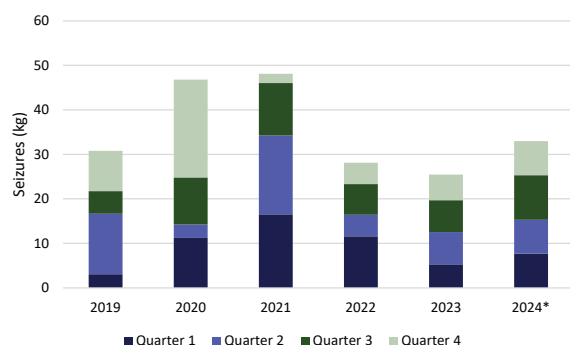
Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	30.8	46.8	50	28.2	24.4	33
Methamphetamine tablets	tablets	691	70	29	2,313	197	199
Ecstasy	tablets / g	5,742 / 469.5 g	23,141 / 92.1 g	9,313 / 252.3 g	8,024 / 1,082.5 g	7,899 / 3,082.5 g	2,799 / 1,820.6 g
Cannabis herb	kg	27.8	43.1	107.1	133.4	70.2	72.4
Heroin <sup>a</sup>	kg	38.1	72.7	95.4	68.2	83	65.6
Ketamine	tablets / kg	3	4	747 / 3.5 kg	641 / 4 kg	1,247 / 6 kg	3,537 / 8.5 kg
Benzodiazepines	tablets	8,204	42,706	13,292	10,906	8,260	26,596
Cocaine	g	60.4	21.2	1	405.2	117.4	186.9
LSD <sup>b</sup>	stamp	17	122	844	788	468	592
Synthetic cathinones	tablets / g	329 / 1.4 g	5 / 30.9 g	2,775 / 448.1 g	170 / 8.7 g	2,923 / 75.2 g	107 / 6.6 g
Synthetic cannabinoids	tablets / g	9,240.8 g	87 / 5,097.5 g	0 / 6,212 g	0 / 124.8 g	0 / 3.5 g	3 / 387 g

Note: \* Data for 2024 are provisional; a Refers to Heroin No. 3; b Some of these stamps contain NBOMe and other NPS.

Sources: DAINAP; UNODC ARQ Singapore for 2023 and previous years; Official communication with CNB, April 2025.



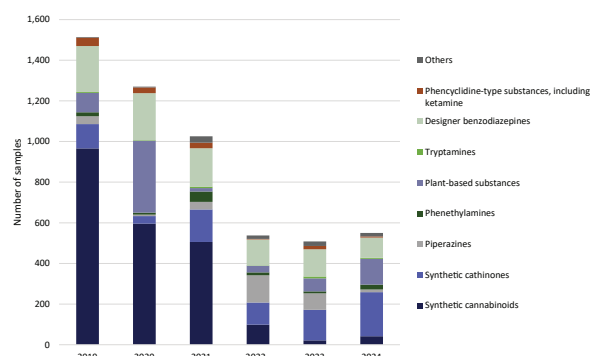
**Figure 3. Seizure amounts of crystal methamphetamine in Singapore, by quarter, 2019-2024**



Note: \* Data for 2024 are provisional.

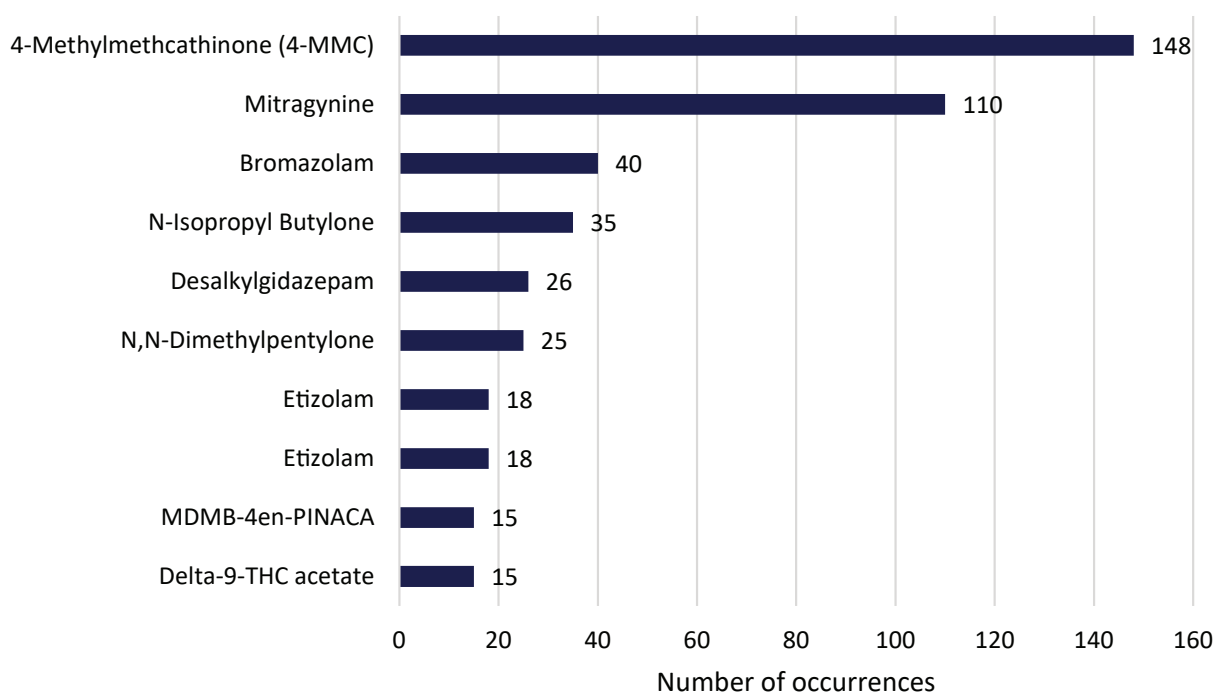
Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with CNB, April 2025.

**Figure 4. Number of NPS and other emerging synthetic substances occurrences in seizures in Singapore, by substance group, 2019-2024**



Source: Official communication with CNB and HSA, April 2025.

**Figure 5. Top 10 NPS and other emerging synthetic substances identified in drug samples in Singapore, by number of occurrences, 2024**



Note: The numbers of occurrences do not equate with the number of exhibits because some exhibits may contain more than one NPS.

Source: Official communication with CNB and HSA, April 2025.

**Table 5. Newly identified NPS and other emerging synthetic substances in Singapore, 2023-2024**

Substance group	2023	2024
Synthetic cannabinoids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ADB-4en-PINACA</li> <li>ADB-INACA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delta-9-THC acetate</li> <li>MDMB-BUTINACA</li> <li>MDMB-INACA</li> </ul>
Synthetic cathinones	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N-butylbutylone</li> <li>N-Isopropyl Butylone</li> </ul>
Nitazenes	-	-
Phencyclidine-type substances, including ketamine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3-Methoxyeticyclidine (3-MeO-PCE)</li> </ul>	-
Tryptamines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5,6-Dimethoxy-N,N-diisopropyltryptamine</li> </ul>	-
Designer benzodiazepines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bromazolam</li> <li>Desalkylgidazepam</li> <li>Flunitrazolam</li> <li>N-Methylclonazepam</li> </ul>	-
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4-fluoroanilino-1-boc-piperidine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metomidate</li> <li>Propoxate</li> </ul>

Source: Official communication with CNB and HSA, April 2025.

**Table 6. Benzodiazepines and substances detected in Erimin 5 tablets in Singapore, 2019-2024**

Substance name	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Nimetazepam	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nitrazepam	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Diazepam	✓	●	●	●	●	●
Phenazepam	✓	●	✓	●	●	●
Etizolam	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Alprazolam	✓	●	●	●	●	●
Flurazepam	✓	●	●	●	●	●
Clozapine	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carbamazepine	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	●
Flubromazolam	●	✓	✓	✓	●	✓
Flualprazolam	●	●	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clonazolam	●	●	●	●	✓	✓
Bromazolam	●	●	●	●	✓	✓
Desalkylgidazepam	●	●	●	●	✓	✓
Flunitrazolam	●	●	●	●	✓	●
N-Methylclonazepam	●	●	●	●	✓	✓
Flubromazepam	●	●	●	●	●	✓

Note: ✓ = Detected; ● = Not detected, ■ = Newly reported.

Source: Official communication with CNB and HSA, April 2025.





# THAILAND

## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- For the second year in a row, the perceived use of all drugs reported, including crystal and tablet methamphetamine, increased (table 1). Drug treatment admissions for methamphetamine increased from 150,121 individuals in 2023 to 177,533 individuals in 2024, accounting for nearly 89 per cent of all admissions compared to 87 per cent in 2023 (table 2). Meanwhile, a national drug use survey conducted in 2024 found that nearly 1.6 million people used methamphetamine tablets while 174,000 people used crystal methamphetamine in the past year.<sup>1</sup>
- Seizures of both crystal and tablet methamphetamine reached record amounts in 2024. Thailand alone seized over one billion methamphetamine tablets, a 63 per cent increase from the previous year, and 34.6 tons of crystal methamphetamine, a 31 per cent increase from the previous year (table 3). Together, this amounts to 129.6 tons and accounted for over half of all the methamphetamine seized in East of Southeast Asia in 2024.
- The purity of both crystal methamphetamine remained high at over 90 per cent, while purity of methamphetamine tablets continued to hover at around 17 per cent (table 4). The range of prices for both declined in 2024 suggested increase in affordability for the drugs (table 5).
- Ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, rather than P-2-P, remained the main precursors identified in both crystal and tablet methamphetamine samples analyzed in 2024 (figures 4 and 5). However, no seizures of ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, or P-2-P were reported in 2024, further showing the shift towards non-controlled chemicals in methamphetamine production. Of note is the seizure of 16 tons of propiophenone, together with six other chemicals, in October 2024 in Tak province, bordering Myanmar. Propiophenone can be used to synthesize ephedrine/pseudoephedrine and P-2-P.<sup>2</sup>

### Ketamine

- The perceived use of ketamine increased in 2024, and treatment admissions increased from 1,290 admissions in 2023 to 1,827 admissions in 2024 (tables 1 and 2).
- Seizures of ketamine declined from 6.4 tons in 2023 to 4.9 tons in 2024. However, it is important to note that this remains the second highest amount recorded for the country, and is a significant amount compared to the period between 2019 and 2022 when seizures first reached above one ton but remained lower than two tons annually (table 3).
- Vaping products called “K Pods” containing ketamine and etomidate in varying combinations were reported in 2024, and ketamine continues to be found in various synthetic drug products.<sup>3</sup>

### Ecstasy<sup>4</sup>

- Ecstasy use as perceived by government experts increased in 2024 (table 1). Treatment admissions rose to 284 admissions, up from 202 in 2023 (table 2), and a nationwide drug use survey conducted in 2024 found that 147,778 people had used the drug within the past year.<sup>5</sup>
- Seizures increased to over 206,000 tablets, recovering from a dip in 2023 (159,000 tablets), though still far below the 2021 peak (594,000 tablets) (table 3).
- Although the average purity of ecstasy tablets declined slightly in 2024 from around 40 per cent to 33 per cent, the range was wider with some samples reaching as high as around 83 per cent (table 4).

1 Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB), National Household Drug Use Survey 2024.

2 Official communication with ONCB, April 2025.

3 Ibid.

4 Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.

5 ONCB, National Household Drug Use Survey 2024.

**New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs**

- Aside from ketamine, Thailand identified three NPS in 2024, namely 4-Methylmethcathinone (4-MMC), *N,N*-Dimethylpentylone, and para-Methoxymethylamphetamine (PMMA).<sup>6</sup>
- “K Pods”, party lollipops, and “happy water” containing mixtures of substances continued to circulate, with ONCB reporting 1,555 “K Pods” (containing etomidate and/or ketamine) and 1,277 “happy water” samples. For the first time, Thailand also reported “happy” water in liquid form.<sup>7</sup>

**Other drugs**

- The perceived use of heroin increased in 2024 (table 1). Seizures of the drug reached over 2 tons for the first time since 2021, while prices dropped significantly from US\$ 8,097.17 in 2023 to between US\$ 4,447 and US\$ 5,929 in 2024, indicating increased supply and affordability in the local drug market (table 3).
- Treatment admissions for cannabis increased in 2024, and for the first time accounted for the second largest proportion of drug treatment admissions (table 2). According to a national drug use survey conducted in 2024, more than 1.5 million people used cannabis in the past year.<sup>8</sup>

6 Official communication with ONCB, April 2025

7 Ibid.

8 ONCB, National Household Drug Use Survey 2024.

## Key facts and figures

### Drug demand indicators

**Table 1. Trend in use of selected drugs in Thailand, 2019-2024**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	↓	↔	↓	↓	↑	↑
Methamphetamine tablets	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑
Ecstasy	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑
Ketamine	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑
Cannabis herb	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑
Heroin	↓	↑	↔	↓	↑	↑
Kratom <sup>a</sup>	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑
Cocaine	↔	↔	↓	↑	↑	↑

Note: Based on expert perception provided by the Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB); ↑ = Increasing, ↓ = Decreasing, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported.

Sources: Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP); Official communication with ONCB, April 2025.

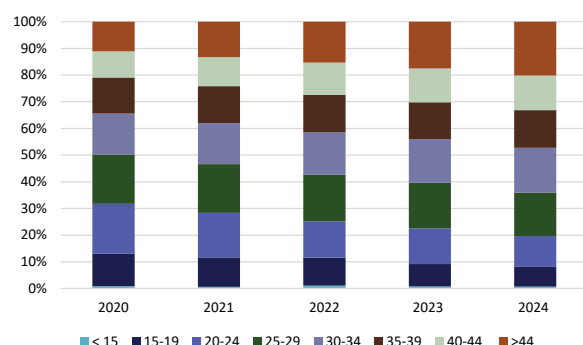
**Table 2. Drug treatment admissions in Thailand, by drug type, 2019-2024**

Drug type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Methamphetamine	185,526	155,676	135,795	90,910	150,121	177,533
Ecstasy	413	299	138	171	202	284
Cannabis	15,676	9,272	6,451	4,344	6,556	7,500
Heroin	3,660	4,890	5,543	5,456	7,224	5,915
Opium	3,167	8	3,341	2,550	4,050	2,971
Ketamine	1,093	711	511	918	1,290	1,827
Cocaine	12	15	7	16	33	40
Inhalants	1,055	698	515	91	110	93
Kratom <sup>a</sup>	4,495	2,737	1,795	976	2,129	3,156
<b>Total</b>	<b>215,097</b>	<b>174,306</b>	<b>154,096</b>	<b>105,432</b>	<b>171,715</b>	<b>199,319</b>

Note: a Includes users of kratom in leaf and liquid form; ● = Not reported.

Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with ONCB, April 2025.

**Figure 1. Proportion of drug treatment admissions in Thailand, by age group, 2020-2024**



Source: Official communication with ONCB, April 2025.

## Drug supply indicators

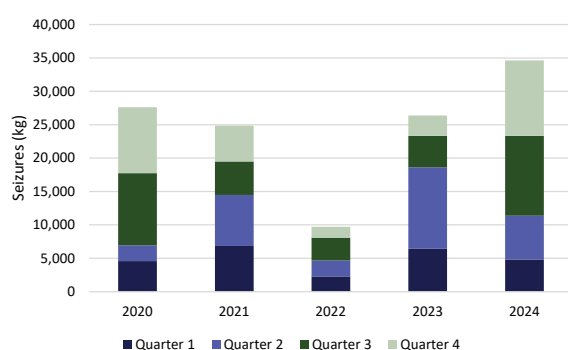
**Table 3. Seizures of selected drugs in Thailand, 2019-2024**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Methamphetamine tablets	tablets	395,000,000	412,620,744	592,013,942	541,429,075	648,981,559	1,055,491,370
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	17,642.9	25,072.6	22,126.7	9,727.1	26,391	34,622.3
Ecstasy <sup>a</sup>	tablets	221,300	398,333	594,029	457,766	159,606	206,809
Cannabis herb	kg	26,815.2	41,611.6	69,711.9	5,200	0	0
Cocaine	kg	41.8	36.6	36.1	50.2	34.7	26.7
Heroin	kg	722.7	1,873.5	3,370	849.5	1,098.2	2,046.7
Ketamine	kg	1,175.4	1,926.3	1,031.9	1,867.5	6,385.3	4,942.1
Kratom leaves	kg	85,707.7	81,965.4	0	0	0	0
Kratom liquid	lt	28,525.0	35,307.8	0	64.4	0	0

Note: <sup>a</sup> Figures not reported as number of tablets converted into estimated tablet equivalent at 300 mg per tablet; • = Not reported.

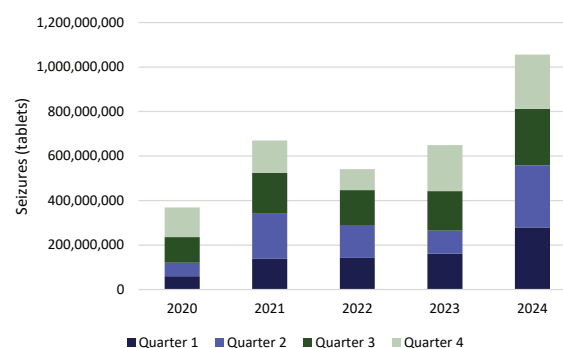
Sources: DAINAP; UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) Thailand for 2023 and previous years; Official communication with ONCB, April 2025.

**Figure 2. Seizure amounts of crystal methamphetamine in Thailand, by quarter, 2020-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with ONCB, April 2025.

**Figure 3. Seizure amounts of Methamphetamine tablets in Thailand, by quarter, 2020-2024**



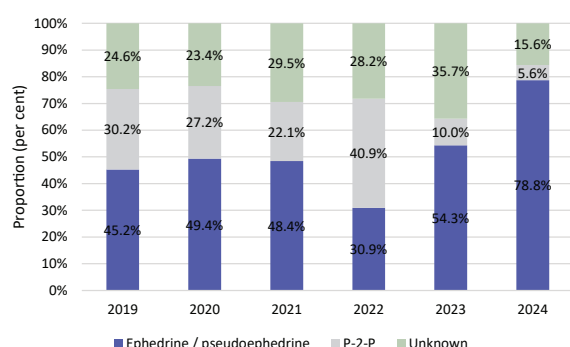
Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with ONCB, April 2025.

**Table 4. Typical purity of selected drugs in Thailand, 2021-2024**

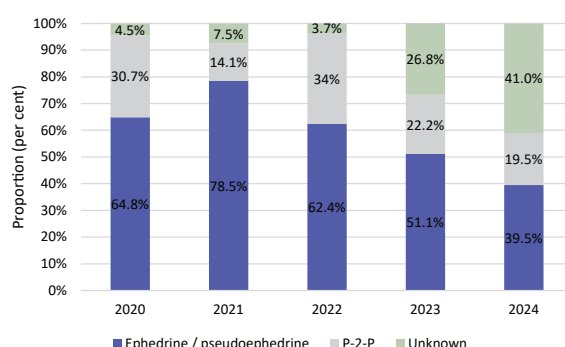
Drug type	2021	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine	93.54 (2.23-99.84)	90.71 (0.08-99.88)	95.31 (0.07-99.98)	92.26 (0.71-99.87)
Methamphetamine tablets	17.02 (0.02-23.99)	16.78 (0.02-31.65)	17.13 (0.01-34.21)	16.78 (0.01-30.18)
Ecstasy	18.80 (0.02-79.71)	46.75 (1.41-69.13)	39.48 (10.30-63.75)	33.37 (1.85-82.67)
Heroin (No. 3)	84.53 (39.46-95.31)	86.24 (58.92-96.77)	84.08 (1.00-98.43)	84.78 (0.51-97.90)
Cocaine	85.50 (0.33-98.47)	74.13 (40.36-99.18)	84.89 (51.19-99.72)	87.28 (45.74-95.04)
Ketamine	90.94 (0.09-99.11)	95.54 (0.02-99.66)	93.51 (1.27-99.97)	97.38 (64.07-99.88)

Note: Data in this table refer to the weight/weight (w/w) % expressed as the hydrochloride salt of these substances. Values in parentheses are the purity range (minimum-maximum) of the substances.

Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with ONCB, April 2025.

**Figure 4. Proportion of crystal methamphetamine samples analyzed in Thailand, by main precursor, 2019-2024**

Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with ONCB, April 2025.

**Figure 5. Proportion of methamphetamine tablet samples analyzed in Thailand, by main precursor, 2020-2024**

Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with ONCB, April 2025.

**Table 5. Wholesale and retail prices of selected illicit drugs in Thailand, 2022-2024 (US\$)**

Drug type	2022	2023	2024
Methamphetamine tablet (per 2,000 tablets)	350	<u>Northern Thai border</u> • 404.86 - 539.81  <u>Northeastern Thai border</u> • Lao PDR side: 242.91 • Thailand side: 674.76	<u>In border areas</u> 453.4  <u>In production areas</u> 170.0  <u>In Southern Region</u> 708.4
Methamphetamine tablet (per tablet)	1.44 - 2.80	0.81 - 2.70	0.6 - 0.9
Crystal methamphetamine (per kg)	4,410	<u>Northern Thai border</u> • 2,699.06 - 3,238.87  <u>Northeastern Thai border</u> • Lao PDR side: 4,318.49 • Thailand side: 4,858.30 - 5,398.11  <u>Southern Thai border</u> • 6,747.64	<b>Wholesale unit = kilogram</b> 7,084.3  <u>In border areas</u> 2,833.7  <u>In production areas</u> 425.1



Drug type	2022	2023	2024
Crystal methamphetamine (per g)	19 - 38	22.49 - 40.49	14.2 - 34.0
Ecstasy (per tablet)	10 - 17	8.10 - 13.50	<u>Inner areas</u> 11.3 - 19.8  <u>Bangkok</u> 7.1 - 9.9  <u>Western region areas</u> 5.7 - 14.2
Heroin (per 700 g)	11,400	8,097.17	4,447 - 5,929
Heroin (per g)	41 - 51	20.76 - 62.29	<b>Retail unit = plastic straw (1straw / 0.03 gram) or tube (1 tube / 1.3 - 1.6 gram)</b> <u>Typical Price</u> 93.3 per gram (straw) 17.7 - 21.8 per gram (tube)  <u>In Southern Region</u> 93.3 per gram (straw) 53.1 - 65.4 per gram (tube)
Cannabis herb (per kg)	●	●	●
Cannabis (per unit*)	3 - 3.5	●	●
Ketamine (per kg)	7,800 - 8,000	5,398.11 - 6,747.64	<b>Wholesale unit = THB/kg</b> <u>Typical Price = 9,918.1</u>  <u>In border areas</u> 8,501.2  <u>Northern region border areas</u> 5,667.5 - 7,084.3  <u>Western region areas</u> 7,934.5
Ketamine powder (per g)	14 - 23	10.80 - 26.99	<u>Bangkok</u> 11.3 - 14.2  <u>Southern region areas</u> 17  <u>Western region areas</u> 8.5 - 14.2  <u>Online</u> 7.9- 12.6
"Happy water" (per sachet)	●	40.49	<b>Retail unit = THB/sachet</b> <u>Northeastern region border areas (bordering Lao PDR)</u> 34 - 42.5  <u>Bangkok and Pattaya</u> 51 - 56.7  <u>Upper northeastern region areas</u> 42.5  <u>Western region areas</u> 62.3 - 85

Note: \* Approximately 5 g; ● = Not reported. Thailand reported prices with a conversion ratio of THB 37.07 = US \$1 (in 2023), THB 34.83 = US \$1 (in 2022), and THB 35.28 = US \$1 (in 2021).

Sources: DAINAP; ONCB, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats", Annual SMART Forensics workshop, September 2024; Official communication with ONCB, April 2025.





# VIET NAM

## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- Methamphetamine accounts for a significant proportion of registered drug users in Viet Nam. In 2024, 54,743 amphetamine users were registered, accounting for 25 per cent of the total amount of registered users (figure 1).
- Crystal methamphetamine seizures dropped by 31 per cent, from 7,118 kg in 2023 to 4,890 kg in 2024. However, methamphetamine tablet seizures remained stable at around 3.3 million tablets (table 1).
- Crystal methamphetamine purity remained stable at 70 to 80 per cent, while methamphetamine tablet purity held at 10 to 15 per cent (table 2).

### Ketamine

- Since 2022, the number of registered ketamine has increased year-on-year, with 10,169 registered users in 2024, more than double the previous year's total (figure 1).
- Ketamine seizures totaled 306 kg and 900 tablets, down from 1,547 kg in 2023, but still markedly higher than earlier years (table 1).

### Ecstasy<sup>1</sup>

- Seizure data is not available for ecstasy, but forensic analysis information shows the presence of ecstasy in the country. Forensic data show that the MDMA content of ecstasy tablets has remained stable since 2020 at 35 to 40 per cent (table 2).

### New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- For the past three years, all the NPS identified in Viet Nam have been synthetic cannabinoids. In 2024, MDMB-4en-PINACA (170 samples) was the most detected substance, followed by MDMB-BUTINACA (46 samples) (table 3). Of the 15 synthetic cannabinoids identified in the country in 2024, five were detected for the first time in East and Southeast Asia. These include: ADB-ICA, MDMB-3en-BUTINACA, MDMB-BUTICA, MDMB-CHM7AICA, and MDMB-ICA.
- Synthetic cannabinoids are found in a variety of products in Viet Nam, including vaping products, herbal substances, and in cigarettes.<sup>2</sup>

### Other drugs

- Heroin seizures nearly tripled, reaching 1,999 kg, up from 682.3 kg in 2023 (table 1). The number of registered heroin users decreased slightly in 2024, but still accounts for 33 per cent of all registered drug users (figure 1).
- Cannabis herb seizures jumped to 2,580 kg, more than triple the 2023 amount (726.9 kg), the highest amount seized in recent years (table 1).
- After being reported again in 2023 after a three year gap, seizures of cocaine were once again reported in 2024, with 555 kg seized, nearly double the amount of the previous year (table 1).

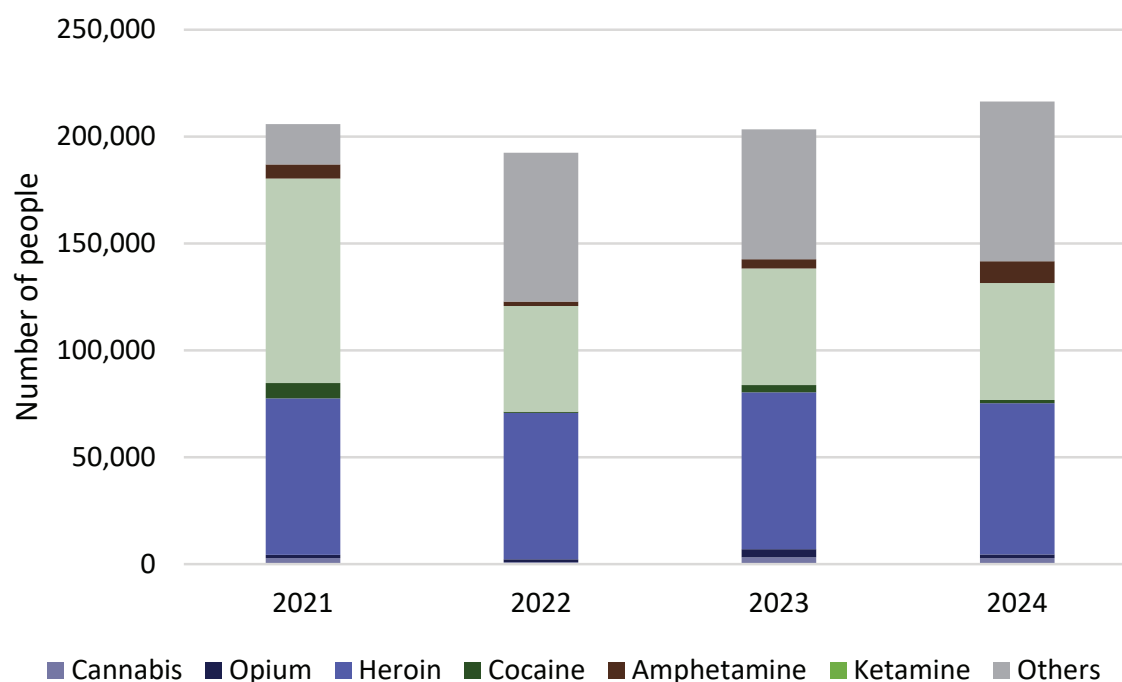
<sup>1</sup> Ecstasy tablets sold in the country may contain a range of substances in varying composition and quantities in addition or instead of MDMA.

<sup>2</sup> Official communication with the Counter-Narcotics Police Department, March 2025.

## Key facts and figures

### Drug demand indicators

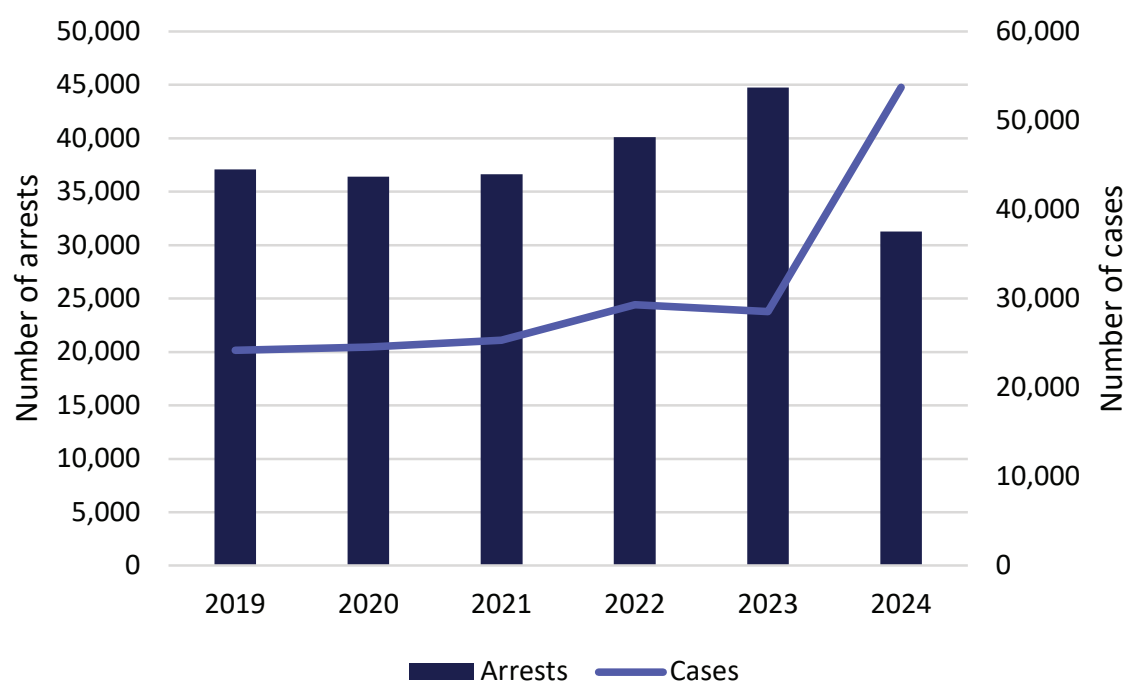
**Figure 1. Number of registered drug users in Viet Nam, 2021-2024**



Sources: Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP); Counter-Narcotics Police Department (CNPd), "Country briefing", August 2023; Official communication with CNPD, April 2025.

### Drug supply indicators

**Figure 2. Number of drug-related cases and arrests in Viet Nam, 2019-2024**



Sources: DAINAP; CNPD, "Country briefing", August 2023; Official communication with CNPD, April 2025.

**Table 1. Seizures of selected drugs in Viet Nam, 2019-2024**

Drug type	Unit	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Methamphetamine tablets	tablets	987,913	2,436,507	2,557,966	3,998,040	3,231,233	3,304,707
Crystal methamphetamine	kg	5,500.6	3,950	3,304	2,147.8	7,118.3	4,890
Cannabis herb	kg	586	274.8	1,756	467.3	726.9	2,580
Cocaine	kg	120.5	●	●	●	335.8	555
Heroin	kg	1,494.3	841	764	743.7	682.3	1,999
Ketamine	kg	507.5	●	304	●	1,547	306 / 900
Opium	kg	600	13.4	●	●	125	73.6
Khat	Kg	●	●	●	●	●	●
NPS	kg	●	●	●	●	●	●

Note: ● = Not reported.

Sources: DAINAP; UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) Viet Nam for 2022 and previous years; CNPD, “Country briefing”, August 2023; Official communication with CNPD, April 2025.

**Table 2. Typical purity of selected drugs in Viet Nam, 2020-2024 (percentage)**

Drug type	Form	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Methamphetamine	Tablet	10-15%	10-15%	10-15%	10-15%	10-15%
	Crystal	75-80%	75-80%	70-80%	70-80%	70-80%
Ecstasy / MDMA	Tablet	35-40%	35-40%	35-40%	35-40%	35-40%
	Crystal	75%	75%	75%	●	●
Ketamine	Tablet	1-5%	1-5%	1-5%	1-5%	1-5%
	Crystal	80%	75-80%	75-80%	75-80%	75-80%
	Liquid	100 mg/ml	●	●	●	●

Note: Data in this graph refers to the weight/weight (w/w) % expressed as the base form of these substances; ● = Not reported.

Sources: CNPD, “Country briefing”, August 2023; Official communication with CNPD, April 2025.

**Table 3. Types of NPS and other emerging synthetic substances identified in drug samples in Viet Nam, 2023-2024**

Substance group	2023	2024
Synthetic cannabinoids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5F-MDMB-PINACA</li> <li>• ADB-4en-PINACA</li> <li>• ADB-5'Br-BUTINACA</li> <li>• ADB-BUTINACA</li> <li>• ADB-CHMINACA</li> <li>• ADB-FUBIATA</li> <li>• ADB-INACA</li> <li>• MDMB-4en-PINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-BUTINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-FUBINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-INACA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5F-MDMB-PINACA</li> <li>• AB-CHMINACA</li> <li>• ADB-4en-PINACA</li> <li>• ADB-5'Br-BUTINACA</li> <li>• ADB-BUTINACA</li> <li>• ADB-ICA</li> <li>• ADB-INACA</li> <li>• MDMB-3en-BUTINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-4en-PINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-BUTICA</li> <li>• MDMB-BUTINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-CHM7AICA</li> <li>• MDMB-FUBINACA</li> <li>• MDMB-ICA</li> <li>• MDMB-INACA</li> </ul>

Source: Official communication with CNPD, April 2025.









**United Nations**  
**Office on Drugs and Crime**

**Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific**

United Nations Building, 6<sup>th</sup> floor, Secretariat Building, Raj Damnern Nok Avenue, Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Tel. (66-2) 288-2100 Fax. (66-2) 281-2129 E-mail: [unodc-thailandfieldoffice@un.org](mailto:unodc-thailandfieldoffice@un.org)

Website: <http://www.unodc.org/roseap>

X: @UNODC\_SEAP