

Organizational and Systemic Changes in Drug Trafficking During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Preliminary Analysis

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Drug Trafficking Patterns 1996

MAJOR COCAINE SHIPMENT ROUTES



MAJOR HEROIN TRAFFIC ROUTES





NORTH AMERICA

MEXICO & CENTRAL AMERICA

SOUTH AMERICA

SOUTH-WEST ASIA

SOUTH ASIA

EASTERN EUROPE

WESTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE

SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

TRANS-CAUCASIA

CENTRAL ASIA

EAST ASIA

NORTH AFRICA

GULF AREA AND MIDDLE EAST

SOUTH ASIA

SOUTHEAST ASIA

WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

EAST AFRICA

SOUTHERN AFRICA

OCEANIA

NORTH AMERICA



Heroin Trafficking Patterns

United Nations
Office of Drugs
and Crime
(2016-2020)

Delivery Areas

- North America
- East Asia
- Australia
- South Africa
- Australia

Transit Areas

- East Africa
- Western Central Africa
- Central Asia
- South Asia
- South Eastern Europe

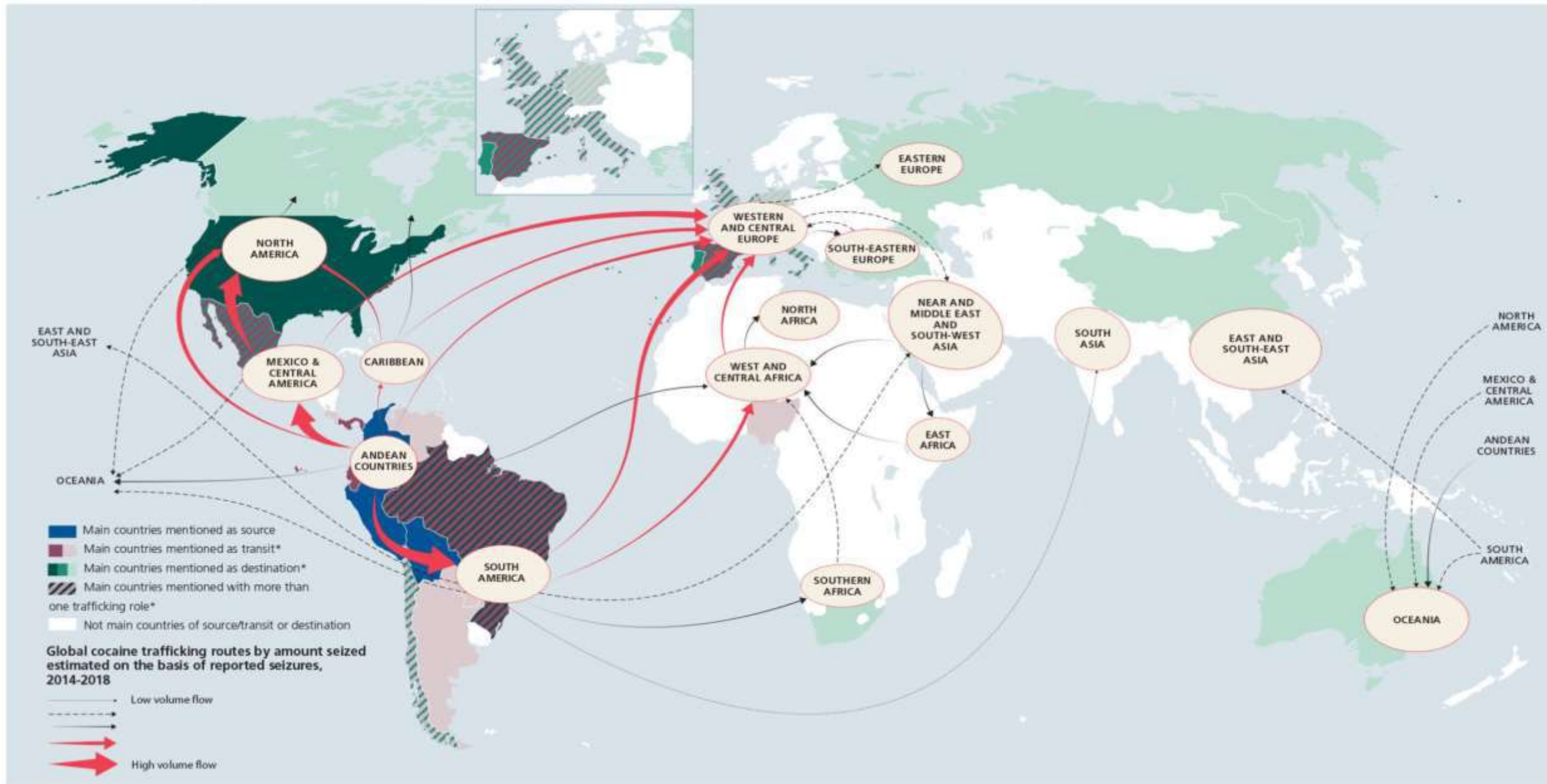
Source Areas

- Central Asia
- South East Asia
- South Asia
- Mexico
- South America

Areas with more than one category:

- South Asia
- Central Asia

Cocaine trafficking routes as described in reported seizures, 2014–2018



Cocaine Trafficking Patterns

United Nations
Office of Drugs
and Crime
(2016-2020)

Delivery Areas

- North America
- East Asia
- Australia
- South Africa

Transit Areas

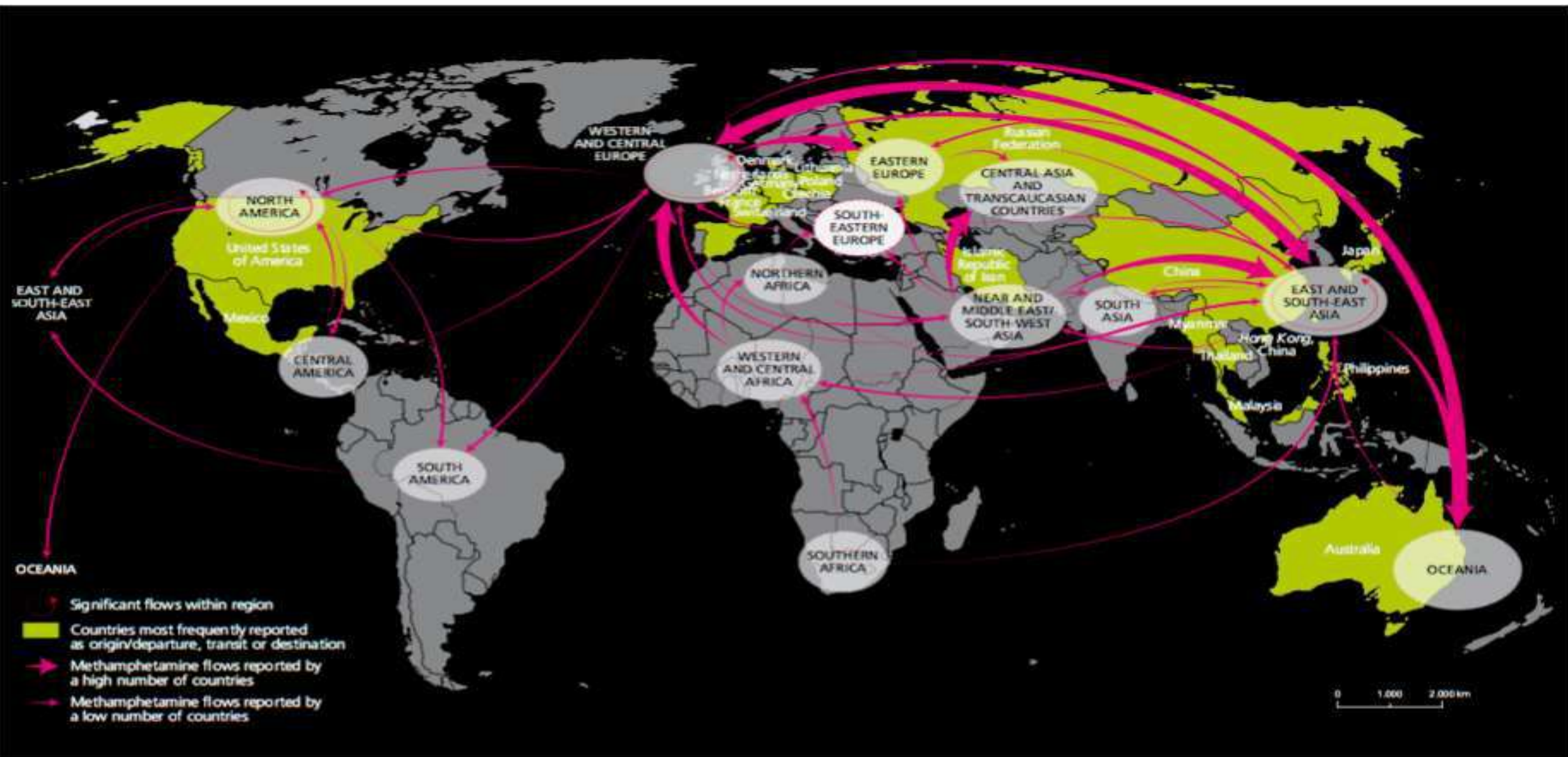
- East Africa
- Western Central Africa
- Central Asia
- South Asia
- South Eastern Europe

Source Areas

- South America

Areas with more than one category:

- South America
- Mexico
- Western and Central Europe



Meth Trafficking Patterns

United Nations
Office of Drugs
and Crime
(2016-2020)

Areas involved with origin/departure, transit, or destination

- North America
- Europe
- Asia
- Australia

High Flows Reported in:

- Western Europe
- East and Southeast Asia
- Australia

Heroin Trafficking through Europe

United Nations
Office of Drugs
and Crime
(2016-2020)

- Local Level Trafficking of Heroin
 - Northern Route-Russia
 - Balkan Route-Most of Europe
 - Southern Route- West, Central, and East Europe

United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (2016-2020)



United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (2016-2020)



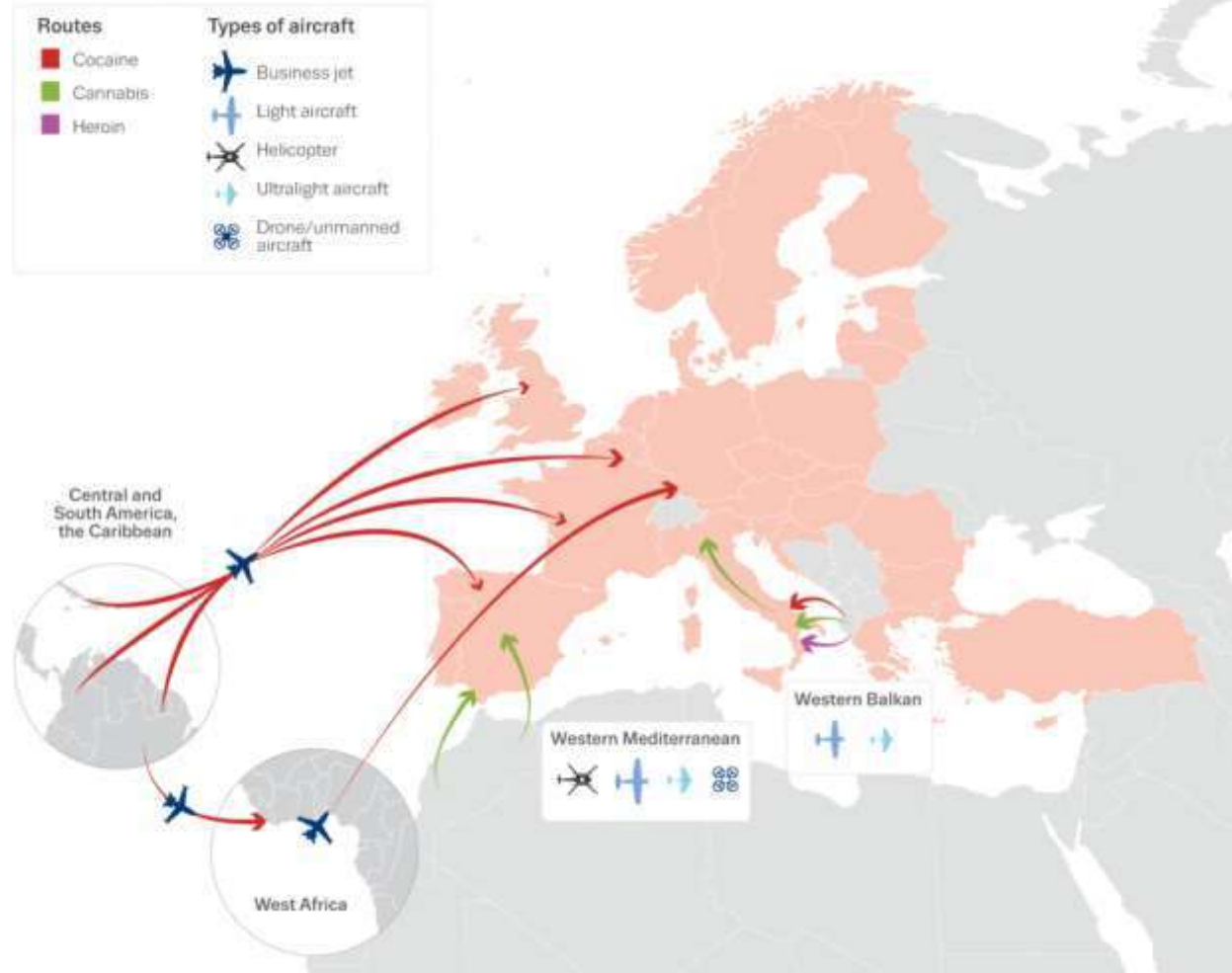
Balkan Route

- Flow From Turkey to Western Europe
- 3 branches
 - Northern
 - Western
 - Southern
- Most flow North to Hungary and Slovenia
- Albania and Greece flow to Italy

European Trafficking Methods

United Nations
Office of Drugs
and Crime
(2016-2020)

General aviation and drug trafficking: routes and types of aircraft employed



European Trafficking Methods

- Cocaine flows using Business jets from South America and West Africa
- Heroin and cannabis most frequently trafficked with lighter aircraft and smaller aircraft (helicopters, drones, etc)

COVID 19 changes in drug trafficking

- Border Closures
- Stay At Home Orders
- Limited Transit
- Limiting or shutdown of manufacturing

Countries implemented different levels of policy leading to varied levels of changes in trafficking.

Impact of Covid-19

Border Security Changes

- Increased border stops
- Increased border seizures

Stay at home orders

- More local stops
- Increased individual delivery

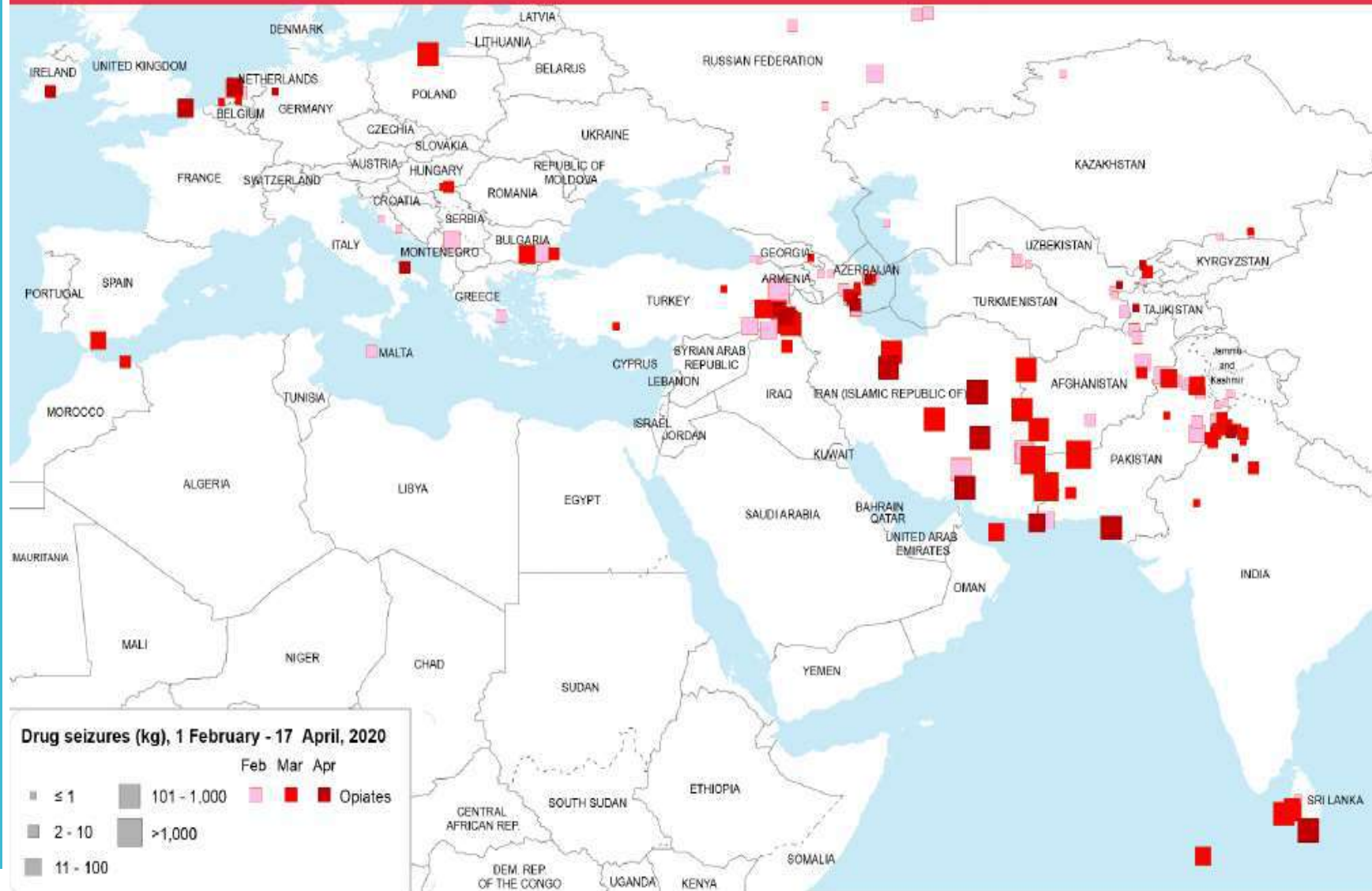
Limited transit

- Air traffic flow slowed or stopped
- Fewer legitimate goods and services moving

Limited/shutdown manufacturing

- Unavailable “precursors” used to in drug manufacturing

Seizures of opiates as recorded in the UNODC Drugs Monitoring Platform, February to April 2020



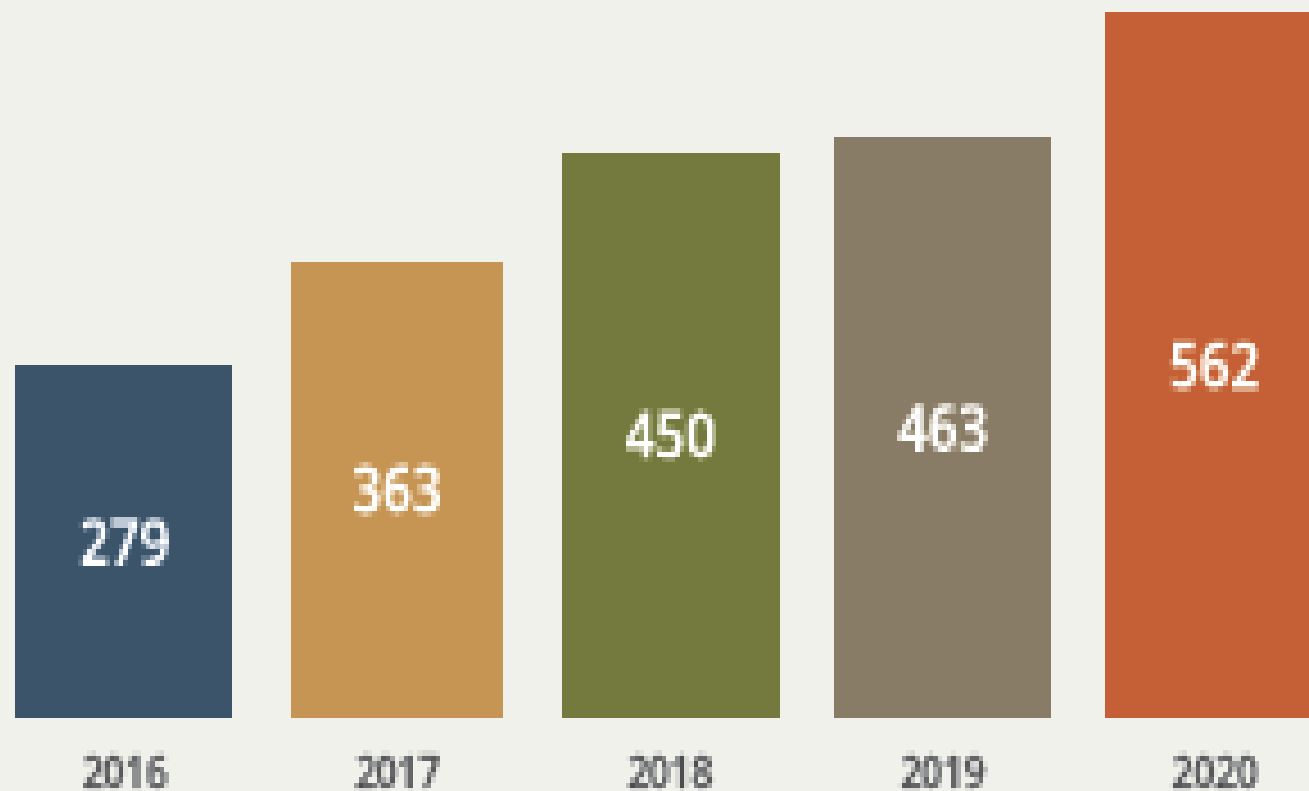
Reported
Seizures
United Nations
Office of Drugs
and Crime
February 2020-
April 2020

European Trends In Trafficking Cases

Data from EMCDDA Eurojust (2016-2020)

Drug trafficking cases registered

The last 5 years have seen a steady increase in case numbers

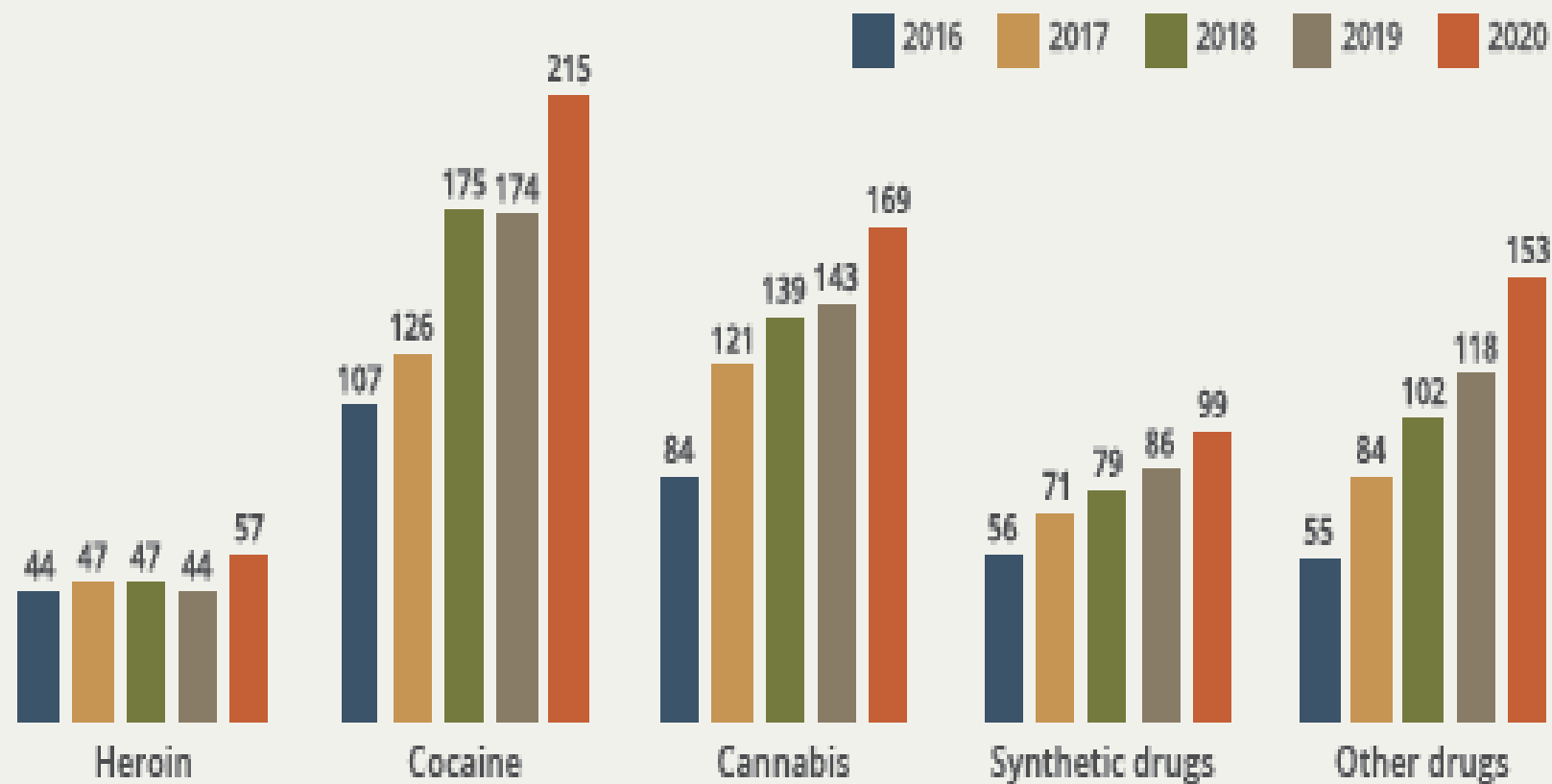


European Trends in Drug Type

Data from EMCDDA and Eurojust (2016-2020)

Main drug types identified

Most of the cases registered involved the trafficking of cocaine and cannabis

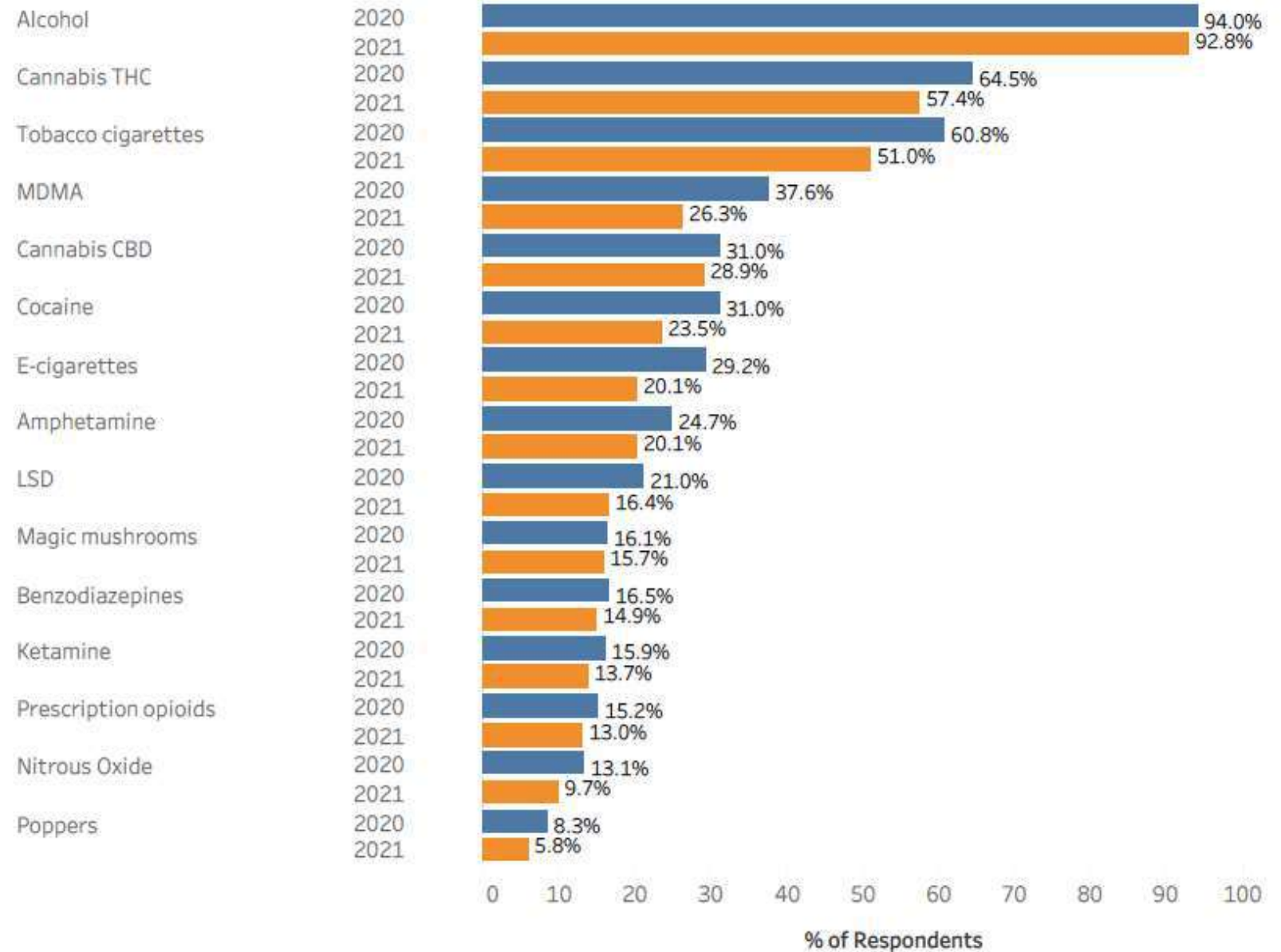


Impact of COVID-19

- Increased Seizures are reported during this time
- Increased drug use is also reported during this time

Global Drug Survey Report, 2021

Top drugs used in the last 12 months in GDS2020 v GDS2021



Global Drug Survey Report, 2021

- Increases in reported substance use across all surveyed substances in 2020
- Decrease in reported substance use in the first half of 2021
 - Impact of isolation
 - Impact of activities

Global Drug Survey Report, 2021

	Maximising pleasure	Fun with others	Avoiding harm
MDMA	8.5	9.0	7.7
Heroin	8.0	3.8	6.8
LSD	7.9	7.3	8.0
Ketamine	7.6	6.9	7.2
Mushrooms	7.6	6.9	7.7
Cocaine	7.5	8.2	6.8
Nitrous	7.4	6.8	6.9
GHB	7.4	7.3	7.9
Cannabis	7.4	6.7	6.9
Methamphetamine	7.4	6.1	6.9
Alcohol	6.2	7.4	7.3
SCRAs	6.2	5.4	7.5

2023 World Drug Report (UNODC)

- Marijuana
 - World's most used drug. (Approx 180 million users)
 - Increase in use between 2020-2021

Amphetamine (36 Million users)

Increase in use between 2020-2021

Cocaine 36 million, ecstasy (20 million),

Long term steady increase between 2011-2021

Opioids (60 million)

Stable use

European Monitoring Centre Drugs

- Purity and potency
 - Reported purity higher (EU)
 - Reported pricing higher

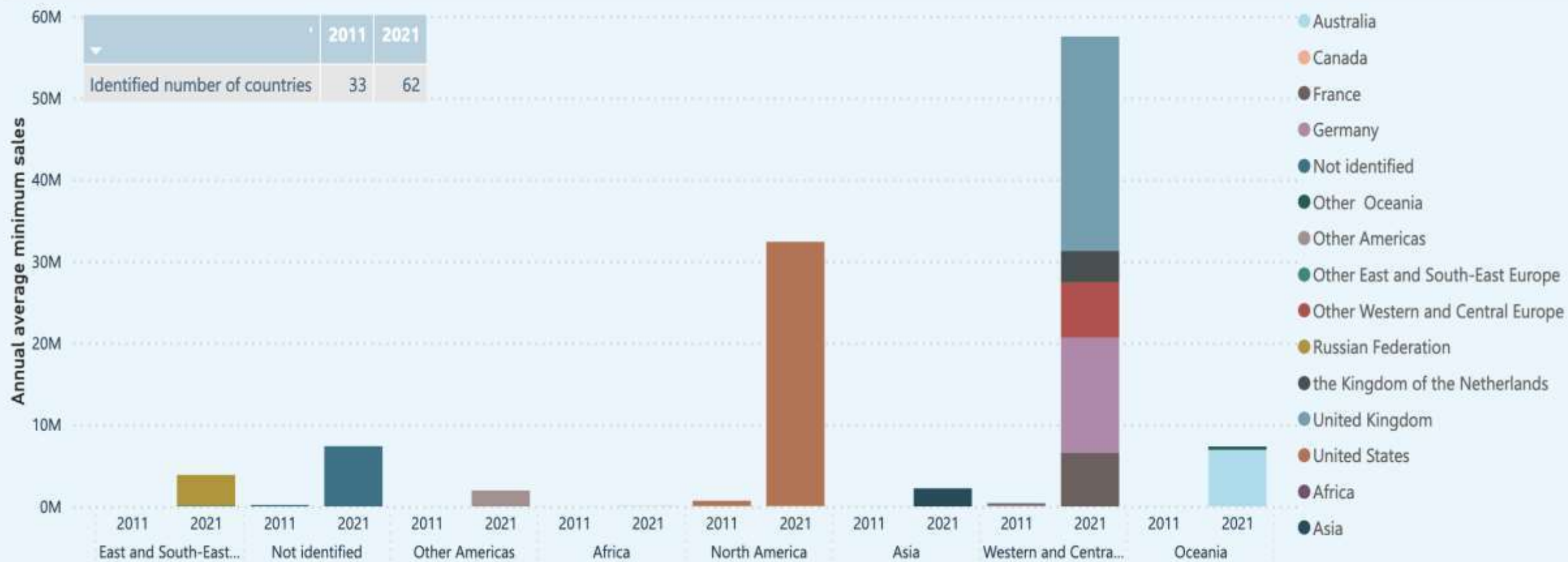
Warehouses

- Increase in local production
 - Increase in seizures in warehouses (44%)
- Increased demand for synthetics (bath salts, meth)

2023 World Drug Report (UNODC)

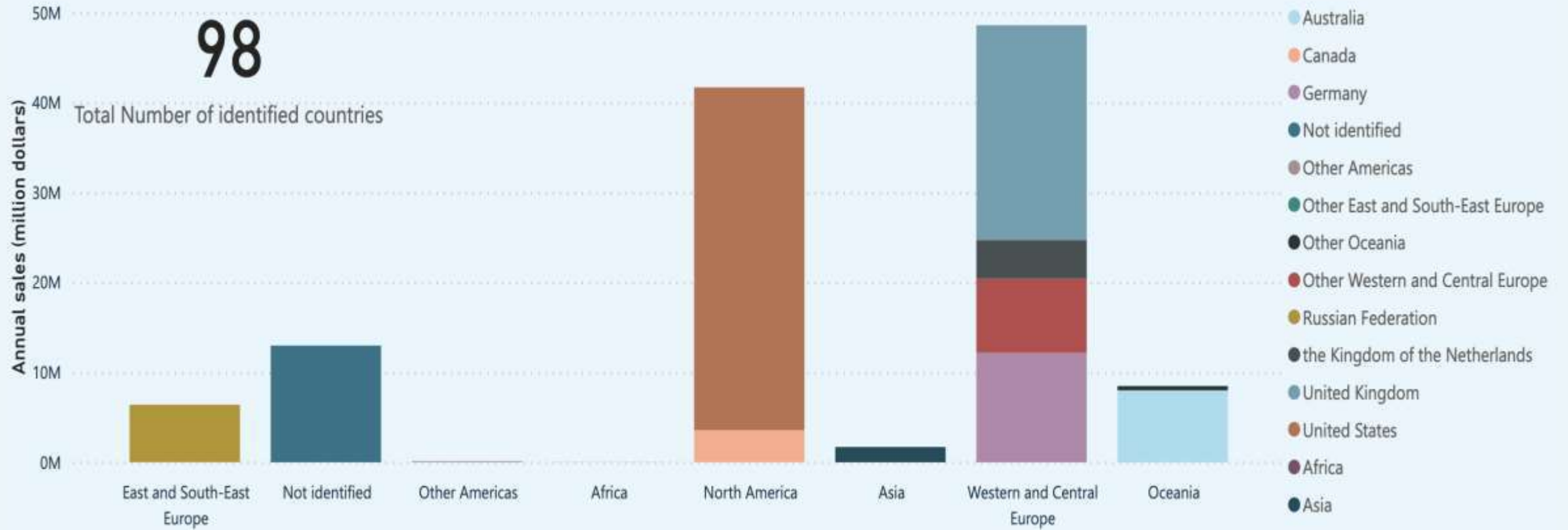
- **Changes in Europe (2019-2023)**
- Synthetics
- Warehouses
- Local production
- Meth
 - Afghanistan
- Mail
- Darknet

Countries of origin of shipments on major darknet markets, 2011 and 2021



Source: UNODC calculations based on Hikari labs data.

Countries of origin of shipments on major darknet markets, 2018-2022





Trafficking In the United States (U.S. CBP Data)

Top 5 Areas for trafficking seizures

2016-2019

Western District of Texas(1,341);

Southern District of California(1,291);

Southern District of Texas(1,036);

District of Arizona(779);

Northern District of Texas (632)

Data from United States Drug Enforcement Agency National Drug
Threat Assessment (2016-2020)

Trafficking in the United States (U.S. CBP Data

- Top 5 Areas for trafficking seizures
 - 2020
 - Southern District of California (1,225);
 - Western District of Texas (894);
 - Northern District of Texas (631);
 - Southern District of Texas (623);
 - District of Puerto Rico (415)
-
- Data from United States Drug Enforcement Agency National Drug Threat Assessment (2016-2020)

U.S. Seizure Data (CBP 2019-2023)

Northern Border

- Events are mostly marijuana and other drugs
- Southern Border
- Events are mostly marijuana, meth, fentanyl, and other drugs
- Coastal
- Events are mostly other drugs, marijuana, ecstasy

U.S. Seizure Data (CBP 2019-2023)

Northern Border

- Highest weight seized each year: Marijuana and Khat

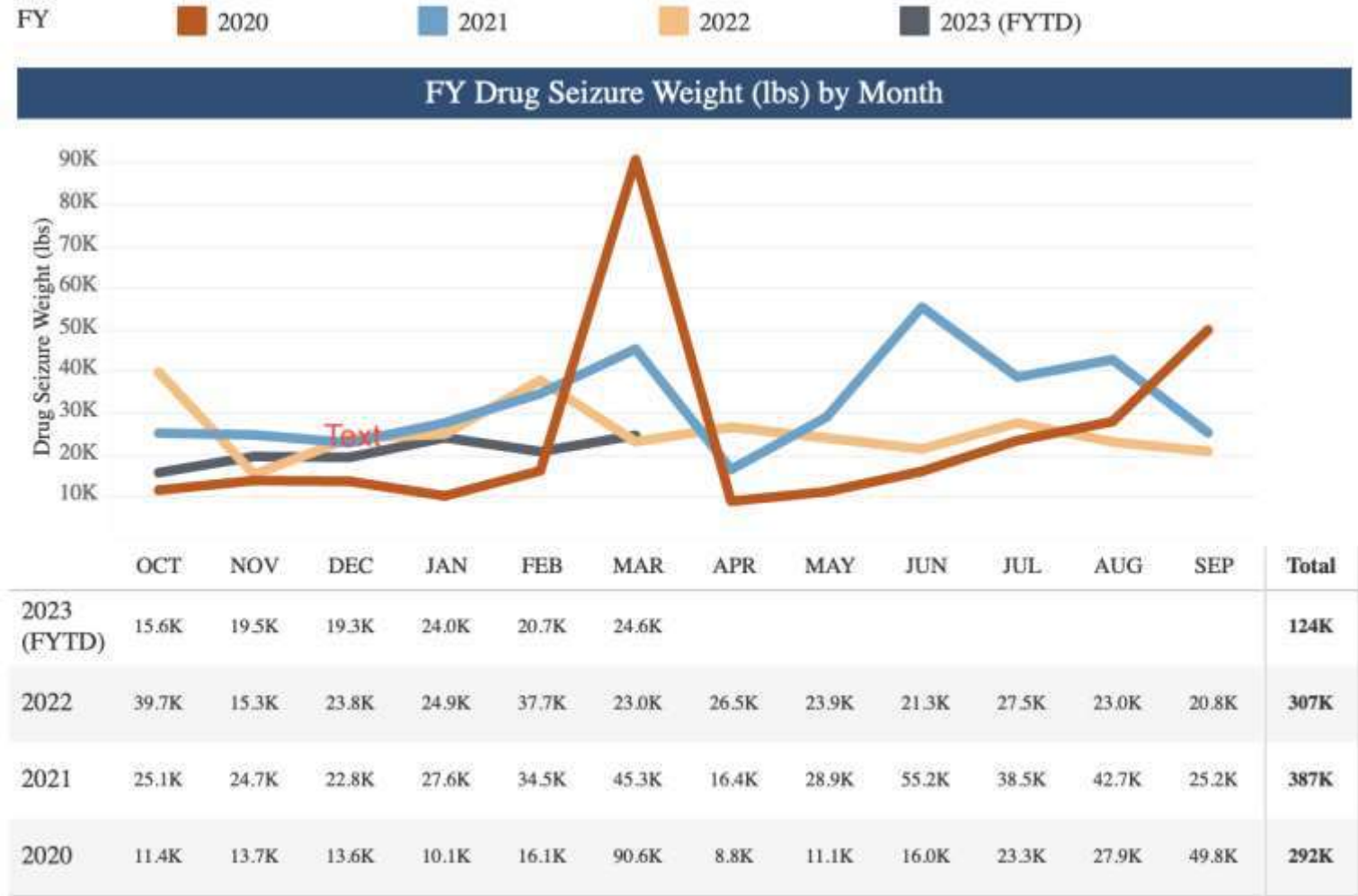
- Southern Border

- Highest weight seized each year : Marijuana and Meth

- Coastal

- Highest weight seized each year: Khat, other drugs, cocaine
 - Coastal spike in seizures February-April 2020

U.S. Seizure Data (CBP 2019-2023)



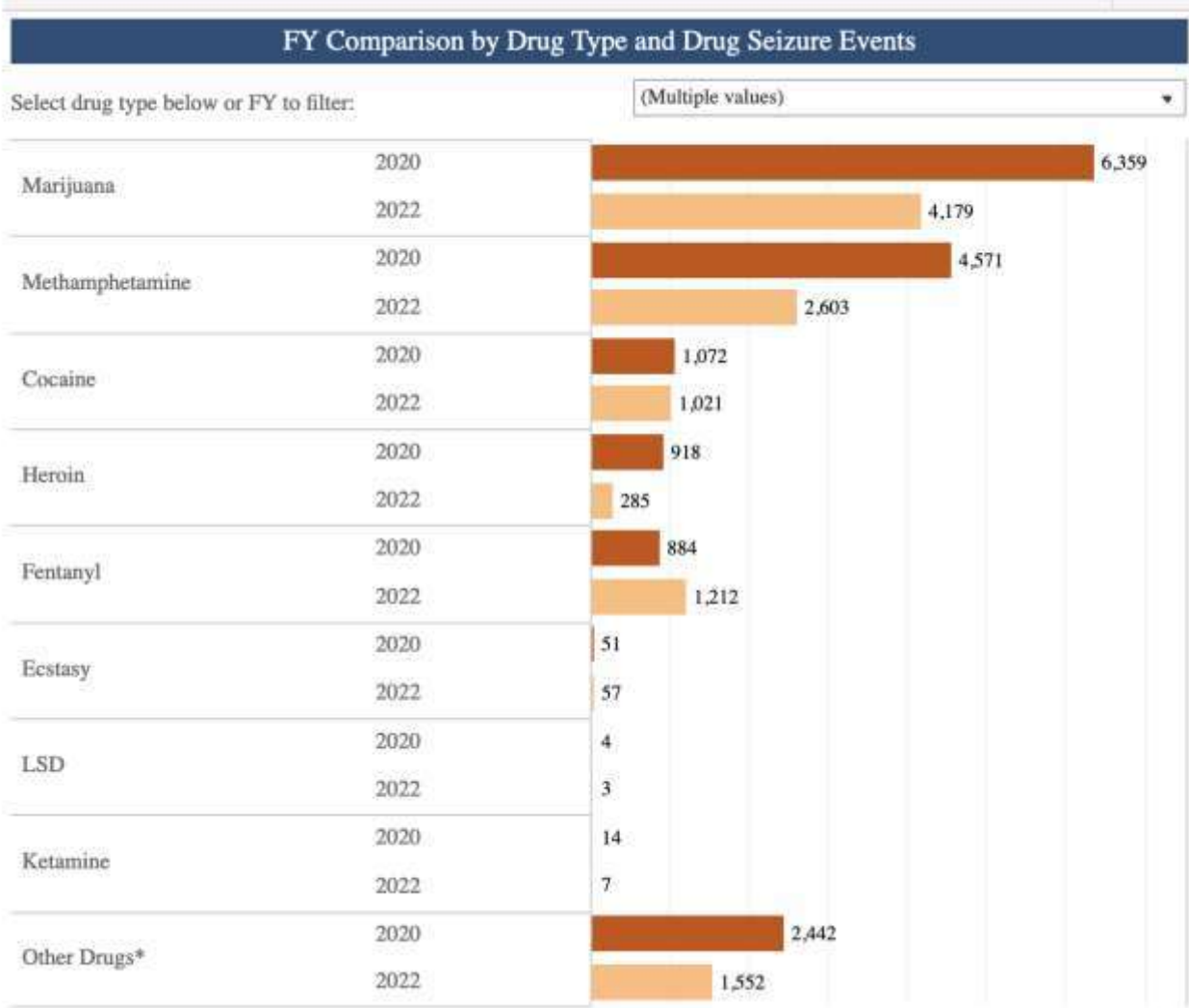
U.S. Seizure Data (CBP 2019-2023)



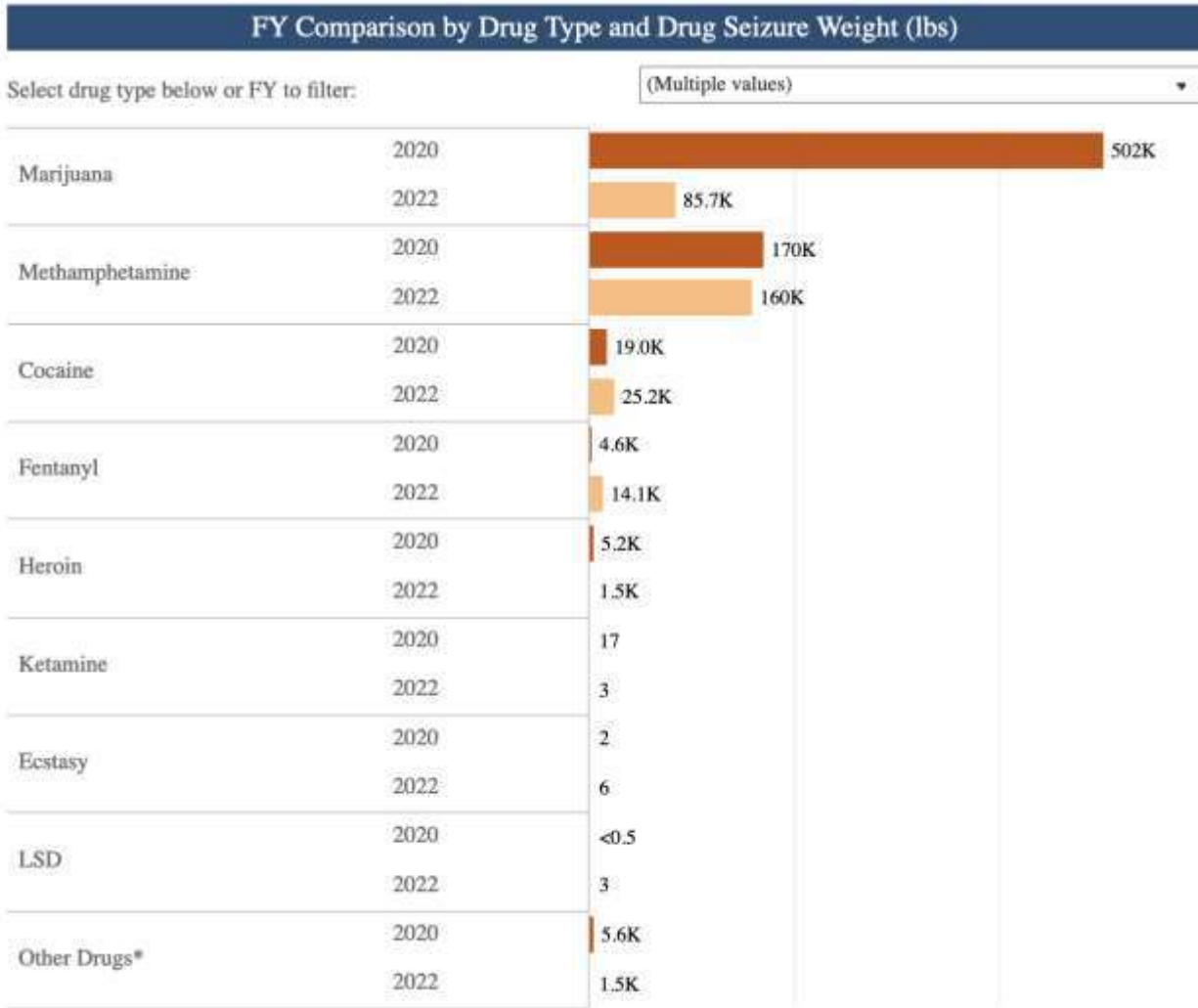
U.S. Individual Drug Use

- US drug use data
 - Fentanyl
 - Increase of fentanyl trafficked since 2019.
 - Similar increase in overdose deaths from fentanyl
- Sinaloa Cartel
- China
- Tunnels, Trucks, Commercial Trucks

U.S. Southern Border Seizures (CBP 2019-2023)



U.S. Southern Border Seizures (CBP 2019-2023)



Organized Crime Adaptations

Switch to maritime activities

- Use of newer ports (Puerto Rico)

Move to legitimate businesses

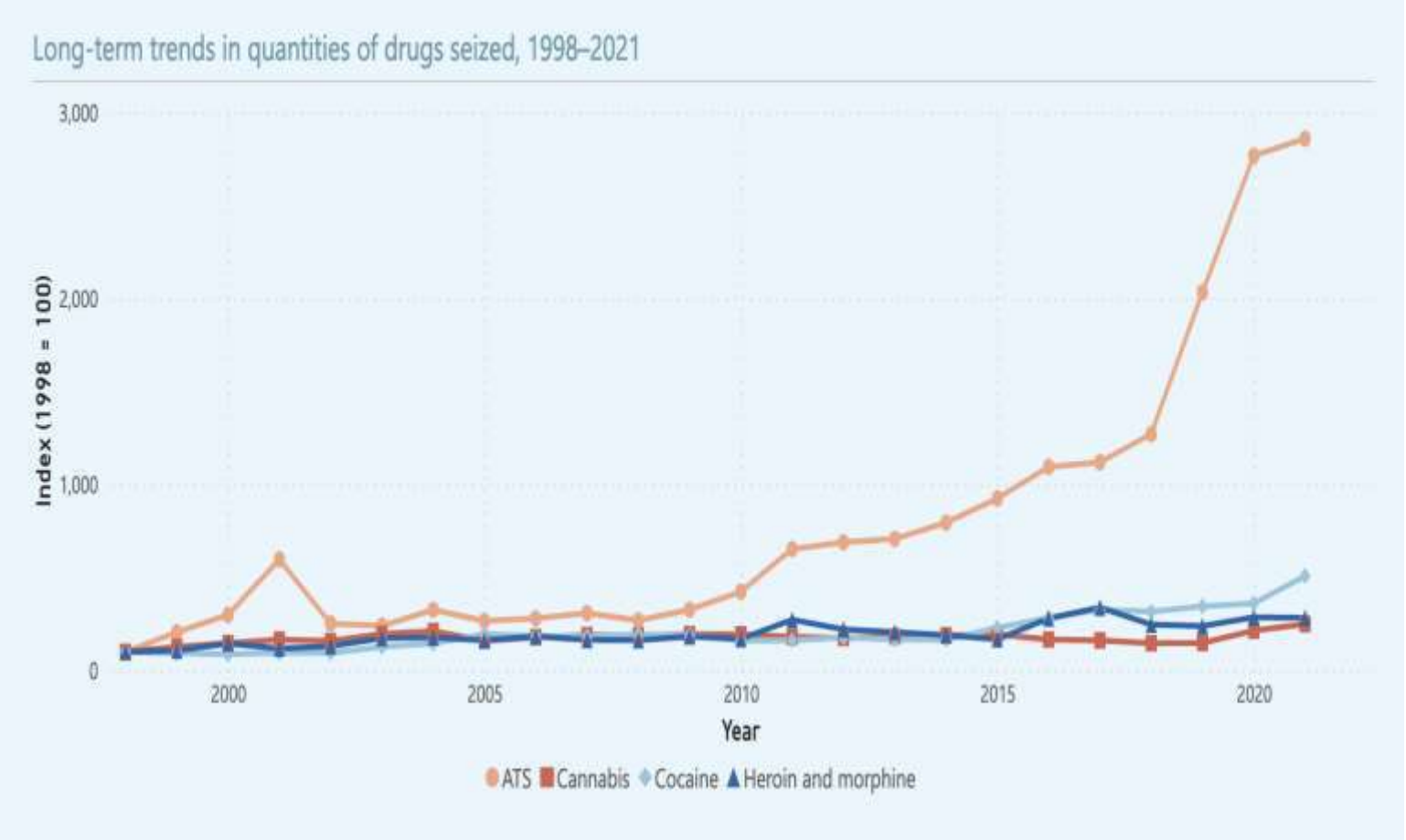
- Agriculture
- Uber

Commercial trafficking

- Masks
- Avocados
- Fruit

Fewer shipments, larger quantities

2023 World Drug Report (UNODC)



Sources

- Vanderbruggen and others, "Self-reported alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis use during COVID-19 lockdown measures".
- Busse and others, "Engagement in health risk behaviours before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in German university students".
- Margriet W. van Laar and others, "Cannabis and COVID-19: reasons for concern", *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, vol. 11, art. No. 601653 (December 2020).
- EMCDDA, "Impact of COVID-19 on patterns of drug use and drug-related harms in Europe".
- UNODC, "COVID-19 and the drug supply chain: from production and trafficking to use".
- EMCDDA "Impact of COVID-19 on patterns of drug use and drug-related harms in Europe".
- Grebely, Cerdá and Rhodes, "Covid-19 and the health of people who use drugs" and EMCDDA, "Impact of Covid-19 on patterns of drug use and drug-related harms in Europe".
- EMCDDA "Impact of COVID-19 on patterns of drug use and drug-related harms in Europe".

Data Sources

- U.S. Customs and Border Protection Drug Seizure Statistics
- U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency National Drug Threat Assessment
- EuroJust-European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation
- (EMCDDA)European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
- (UNODC)United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime Drug Trafficking Reports