

What consequences does the legalization of cannabis have for crime?

RFMA
Stiftelsen mot alkohol-
och narkotikamissbruk

Konferensinbjudan



Legalisering av cannabis - vad kan det få för konsekvenser?

Onsdagen den 22 mars 2023 9.00-16.00

Teresa Silva, PhD



Crime

Crime committed
by/happening to
people who use
drugs

Crime related to the
market of illegal
drugs

Crime related to the
illegal drug market's
structure and
functioning

**Illegal
drugs**

Crime committed by - and victimization of - people who use drugs

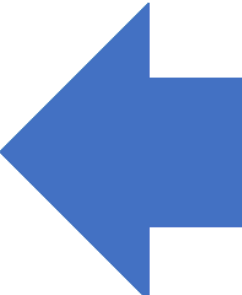
- Crime committed under the influence


Psychopharmacological model: The acute or chronic use of psychoactive substances produce changes in the brain that may result in aggression and violence.

The psychoactive substances induce symptoms such as excitability, irritability, fear/paranoia, disinhibition, mood swings, cognitive distortions and impaired judgement, any of which may lead to criminal behaviour.

- Crime committed under withdrawal symptoms
- Crime committed to directly obtain illegal drugs
- Crime committed to obtain resources to purchase drugs

- Crime committed against a victim who is under the influence

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- Theft
 - Shoplifting
 - Burglary
 - Robbery
 - Assault
 - Vehicle theft
 - Crime against property

- 
- Theft
 - Assault
 - Sexual assault/rape

Dellazizzo et al. (2020). Review meta-analyses on the association between cannabis and violence in youths, intimate partners and individuals with SMI.

Findings: Global moderate association between cannabis use and violence, which is stronger in the latter more at-risk population.

Norström & Rossow (2014). Cannabis use and violent behaviour from *Norway Longitudinal Study* ($n = 2,681$).

Findings: A 10% increase in cannabis use frequency was associated with a 0.4% increase in frequency of violence.

Schoeler et al. (2016). Young males in the *Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development* ($n = 411$) followed up between the ages of 8 and 56 years.

Findings: Compared with never-users, continued exposure to cannabis use (at age 18, 32 and 48 years) was associated with a higher risk of subsequent violent behaviour, as indexed by convictions (OR = 7.1, 95% CI 2.19–23.59) or self-reports (OR = 8.9, 95% CI 2.37–46.21). The effect persisted after controlling for other risk factors for violence.

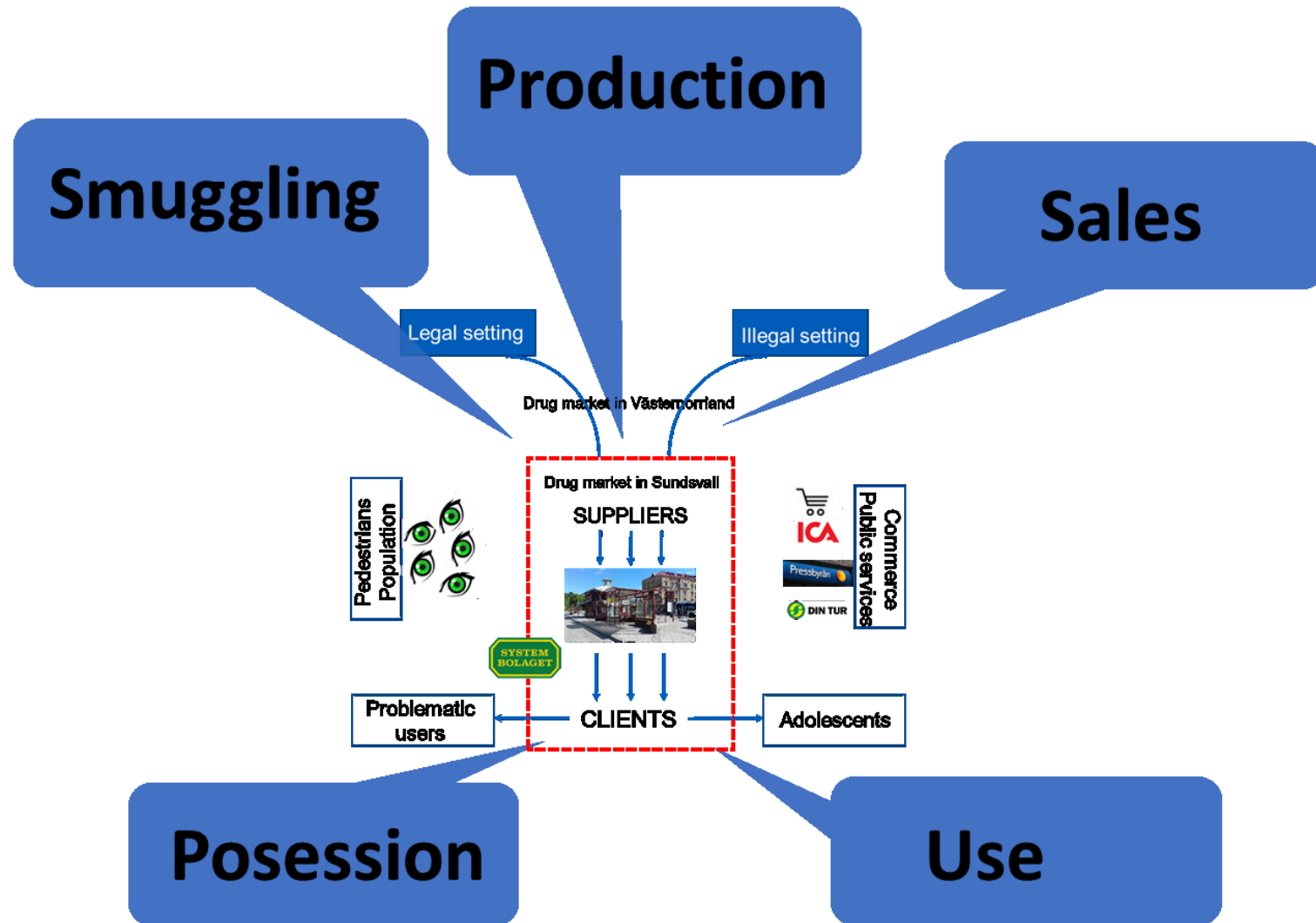
Van der Pol et al. (2018). RCT. Compared a sample of 169 adolescents with cannabis disorder to determine whether multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT) decreased self-reported criminal offending as compared with individual psychotherapy (IP).

Findings: Half indicated they had committed one or more criminal offenses in the 90 days before the baseline assessment. In the follow-up (6 and 12 months), the proportion reporting non-delinquency increased, most so in the MDFT condition. In addition, MDFT lowered the number of violent offenses more than IP. This difference was not seen for property crimes.

Nazarov & Li (2020). Analyzed toxicological testing data for homicide victims ($n = 12,638$) from the 2004–2016 *National Violent Death Reporting System* in 9 US states.

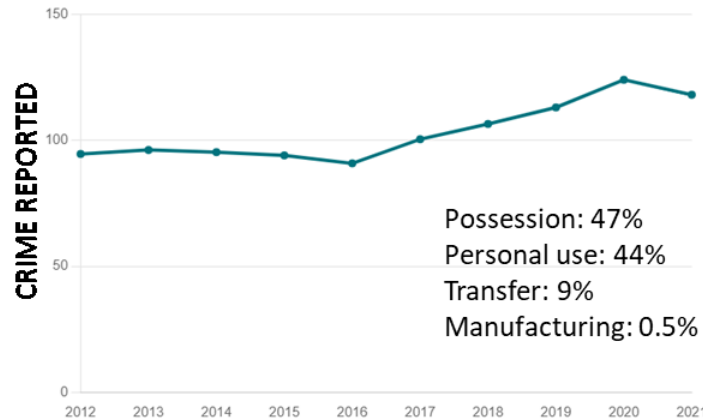
Findings: Overall, 37.5% of the homicide victims tested positive for alcohol, 31.0% positive for marijuana, and 11.4% positive for both substances. During the study period, the prevalence of marijuana increased from 22.3% in 2004 to 42.1% in 2016 ($Z = -15.7$; $P < .001$) while the prevalence of alcohol declined slightly ($Z = 1.5$; $P = 0.143$). Marked increases in the prevalence of marijuana were observed in both sexes and across age and racial groups.

Crime related to the market of illegal drugs

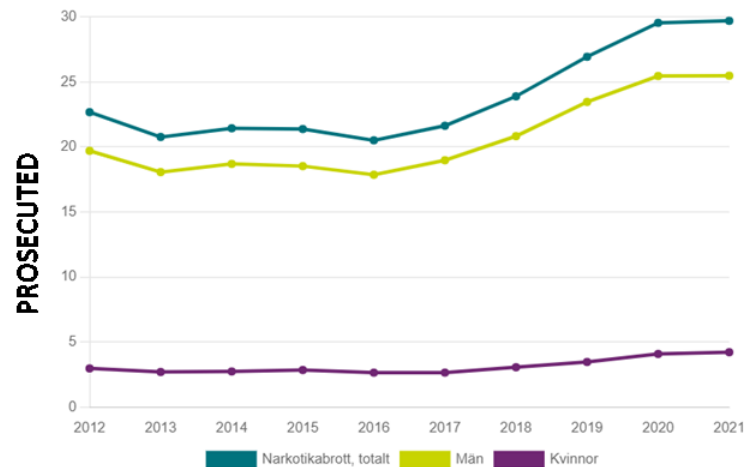


Sweden

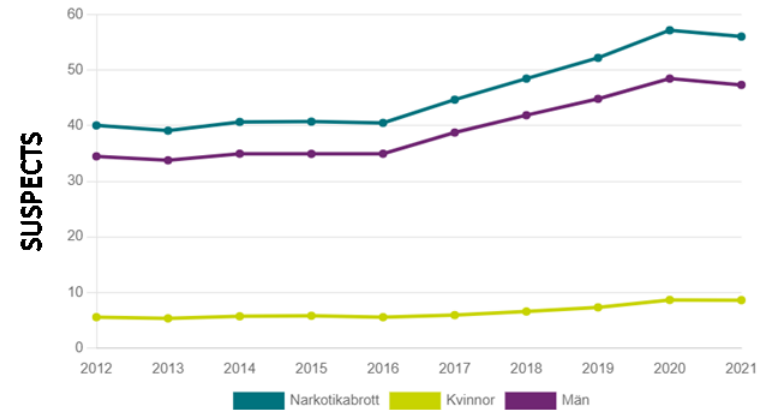
(Source: Brå <https://bra.se/statistik/statistik-utifran-brottstyper/narkotikabrott.html>)



In 2021, 118,105 offenses against the Narcotics Penalty Act were reported.

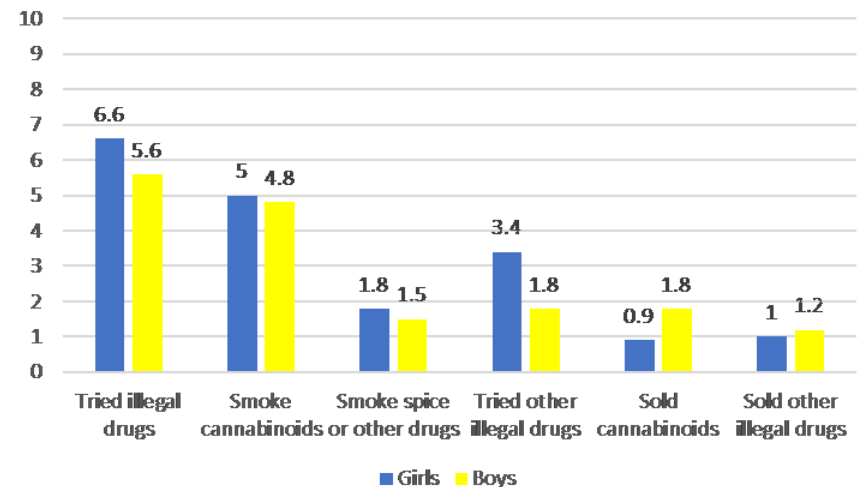


In 2020, 29,547 prosecution decisions.



In 2021, 56,047 individuals were suspected of drug offenses (653 per 100,000 inhabitants).

School Crime Survey 2021

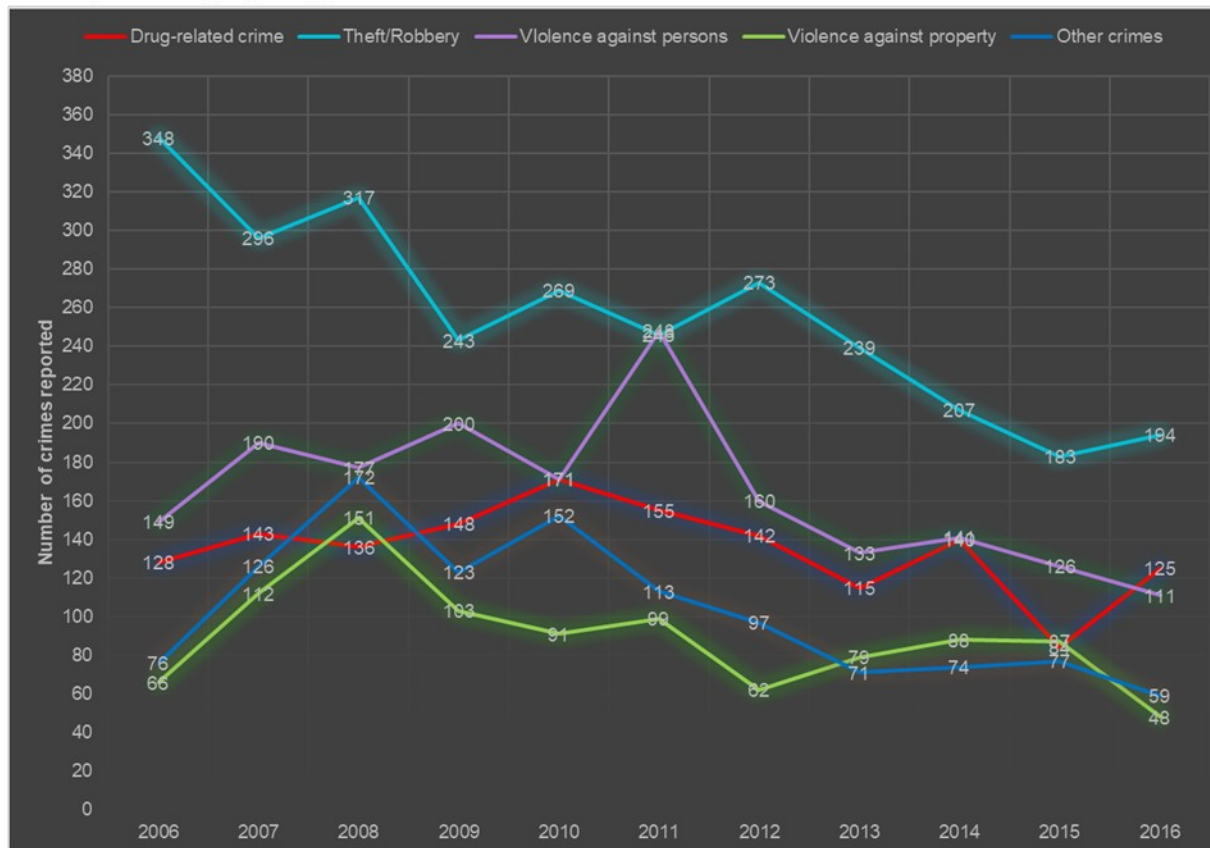


Silva, T. (2018) (unpublished data)

The Navet project

Crime trend (district Centre) 2006-2016

Source: Polismyndigheten



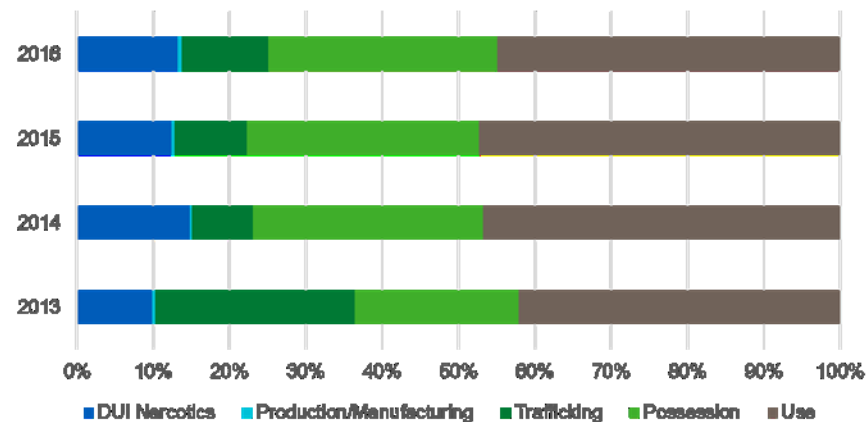
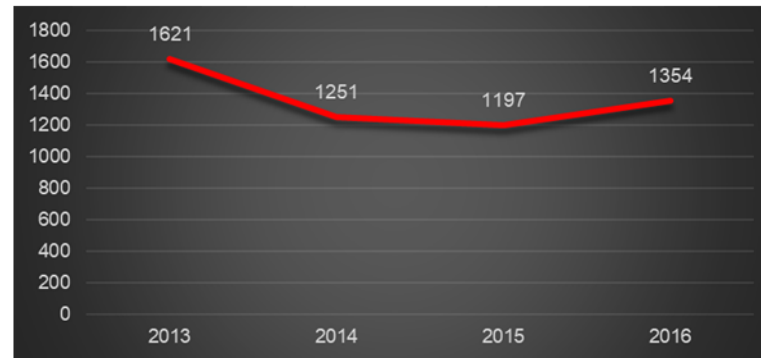
Silva, T. (2018) (unpublished data)



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Drug-related crime trend (Sundsvall municipality) 2013-2016
Source: Polismyndigheten



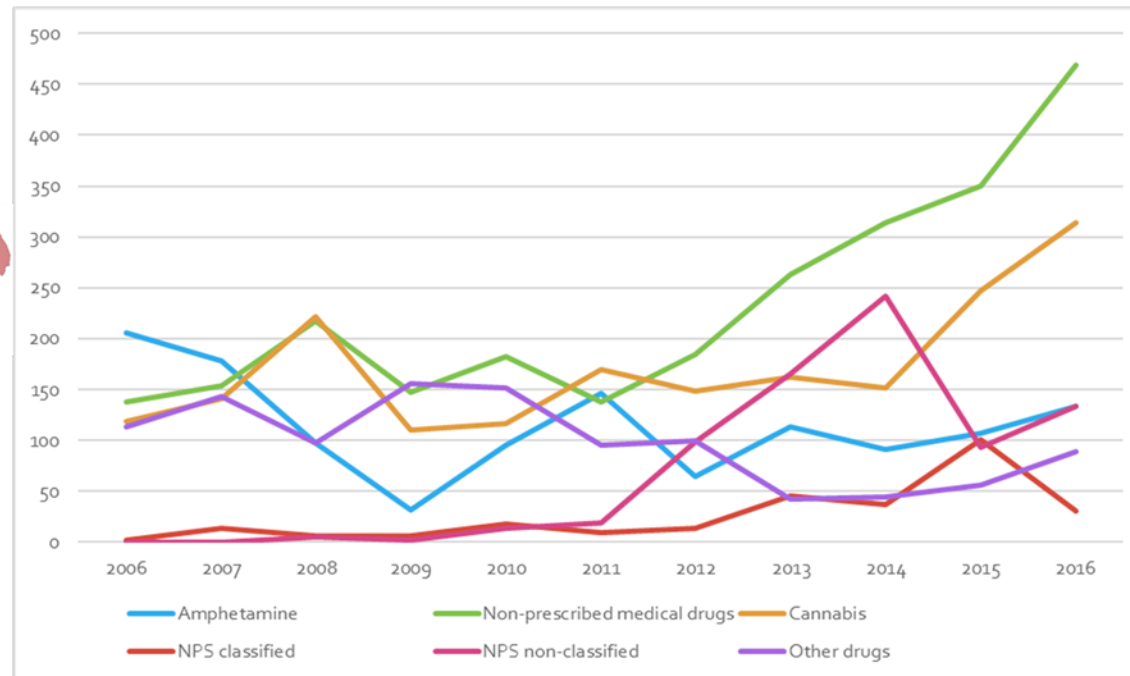
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Drugs seized by the police (Västernorrland) 2006-2016

Source: National Forensic Center

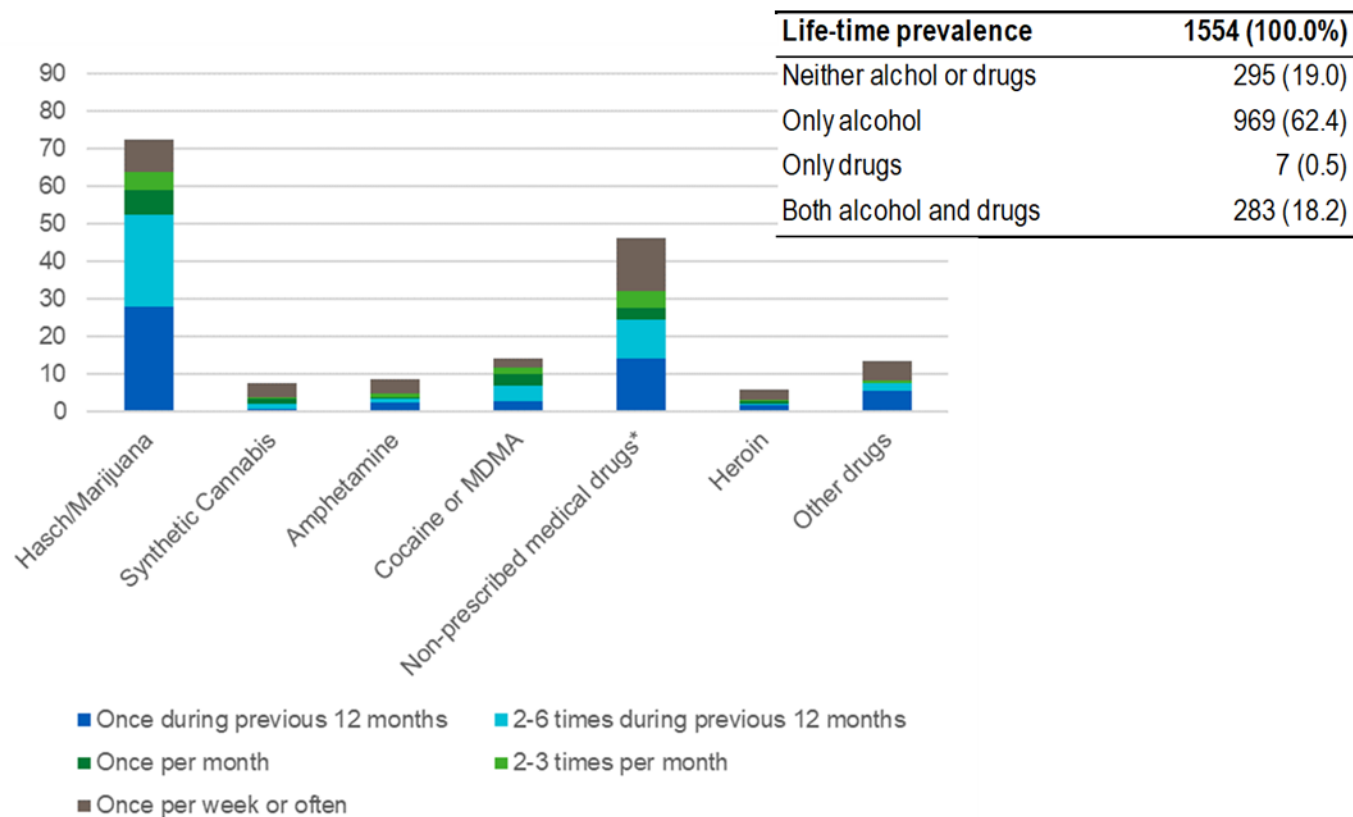


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The Navet project

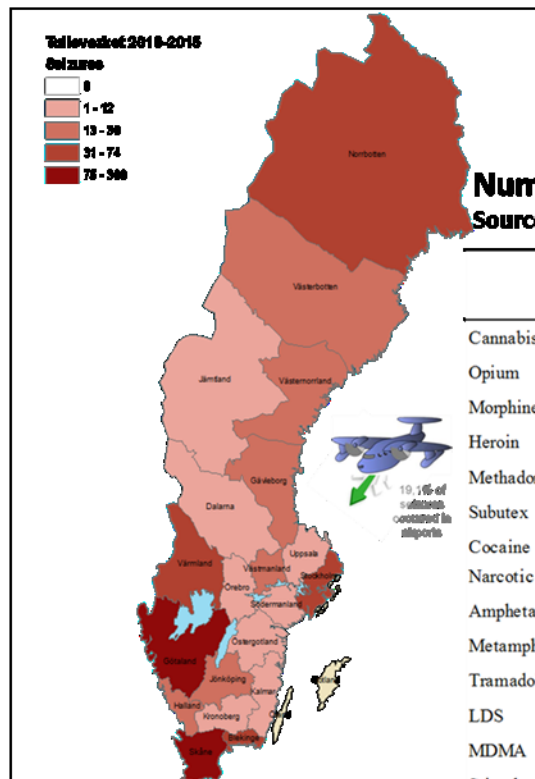
Adolescents and the use of alcohol and drugs

Source: School survey



Silva, T. (2018) (unpublished data)

The Navet project



Number of seizures (Sweden) 2010-2015

Source: Tulleverket

	Total	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Cannabis	224 (19.6)	67 (23.6)	94 (25.0)	101 (23.2)	101 (24.6)	97 (23.9)	105 (19.2)
Opium	15 (1.3)	2 (0.7)	1 (0.3)	6 (1.4)	5 (1.2)	5 (1.2)	7 (1.3)
Morphine	27 (2.4)	4 (1.4)	7 (1.9)	11 (2.5)	13 (3.2)	10 (2.5)	7 (1.3)
Heroin	20 (1.8)	7 (2.5)	11 (2.9)	13 (3.0)	7 (1.7)	6 (1.5)	9 (1.6)
Methadone	10 (0.9)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	6 (1.5)	7 (1.3)
Subutex	8 (0.7)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	2 (0.5)	8 (1.5)
Cocaine	51 (4.5)	9 (3.2)	15 (4.0)	13 (3.0)	21 (5.1)	19 (4.7)	31 (5.7)
Narcotic plants	90 (7.9)	25 (8.9)	31 (8.2)	39 (8.9)	29 (7.1)	36 (8.9)	32 (5.9)
Amphetamine	83 (7.3)	25 (8.9)	27 (7.2)	26 (6.0)	40 (9.8)	30 (7.4)	39 (7.1)
Metamphetamine	31 (2.7)	8 (2.8)	9 (2.4)	17 (3.9)	5 (1.2)	3 (0.7)	10 (1.8)
Tramadol	80 (7.0)	17 (6.0)	19 (5.1)	33 (7.6)	19 (4.6)	30 (7.4)	39 (7.1)
LDS	17 (1.5)	2 (0.7)	2 (0.5)	5 (1.1)	3 (0.7)	5 (1.2)	11 (2.0)
MDMA	49 (4.3)	8 (2.8)	11 (2.9)	15 (3.4)	16 (3.9)	16 (3.9)	32 (5.9)
Stimulants	14 (1.2)	6 (2.1)	2 (0.5)	3 (0.7)	6 (1.5)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.2)
Benzodiazepines	120 (10.5)	30 (10.7)	45 (12.0)	44 (10.1)	44 (10.4)	31 (7.6)	50 (9.1)
Doping preparations	166 (14.5)	44 (15.7)	60 (16.0)	55 (12.6)	117 (16.0)	63 (15.5)	83 (15.2)
GHB	12 (1.1)	1 (0.4)	2 (0.5)	4 (0.9)	6 (0.8)	3 (0.7)	4 (0.7)
Other narcotics	125 (10.9)	26 (9.3)	40 (10.6)	51 (11.7)	79 (10.8)	43 (10.6)	72 (13.2)
Total	1142 (100.0)	281 (100.0)	376 (100.0)	436 (100.0)	410 (100.0)	406 (100.0)	547 (100.0)

Crime related to the illegal drug market's structure and functioning





Europe

(Source: EMCDDA/Europol, 2019)

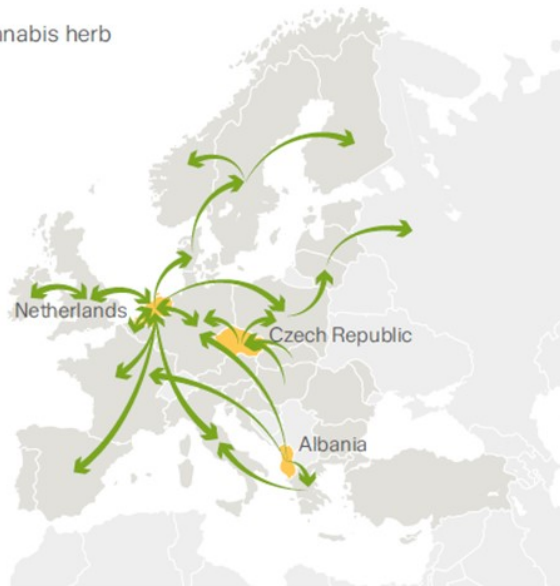
- Europe's biggest drug market is for cannabis.
- Significant production of cannabis takes place within the EU with estimates indicating that at least 20 000 cultivation sites are dismantled each year
- Cannabis market is a major source of income for OCGs.
- The cannabis market is rapidly becoming more diverse and complex. Resin and herbal cannabis of higher potency still dominate but other products are appearing (e.g., high-potency cannabis oils, wide range of commercial medical and wellness products with low levels of THC).
- There appears to be diversification in OCGs involvement in the cannabis market in the EU, with the competition leading to higher levels of intergroup violence.
- OCGs of Moroccan origin play a major role in cannabis resin trafficking, and groups of Dutch, but also of Vietnamese, origin are important for large-scale production of herbal cannabis.
- While the scale is currently small compared with traditional offline supply, online sales of cannabis appear to be increasing and have the potential to expand further.

Europe

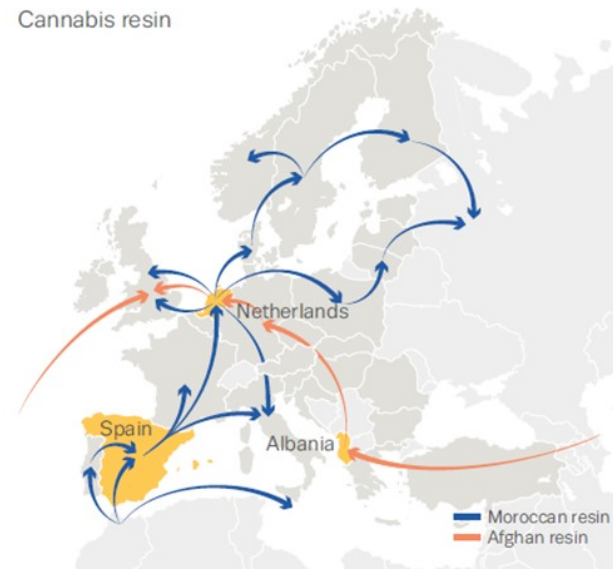
(Source: EMCDDA/Europol, 2016)

Main trafficking flows of cannabis in Europe

Cannabis herb



Cannabis resin



Note: The trafficking flows represented are a synthesis of a number of information sources and should be considered indicative rather than accurate descriptions of the main trafficking flows.

Source: Europol.

“The drug market is a major source of income for organised crime groups in the EU, with minimum estimated retail value of EUR 30 billion per year” (EMCDDA/Europol 2019)

Legalization of cannabis and crime (US)

Wu et al. (2020). Rates of crime in Colorado and Washington and border counties.

Findings: Spillover crime reduction effect of legalization, reflected by significant decrease in the rates of property crime, larceny, and simple assault in the Colorado region.

Lu et al. (2021). Time-series analysis (1999-2016) of reported crime in Colorado and Washington.

Findings: There seems to be an immediate increase in crime at the point of legalization, but not permanent. There were no long-term shifts in crime rates, aside from a decline in Burglary in Washington

Harper & Jorgenssen (2022). Crime rates in Colorado and Washington.

Findings: Legalization was not associated with variations in index crime rates in either of the states.

Dragone et al. (2019). Comparison between states of Washington (legalization in 2012) and Oregon (legalization in 2014).

Findings: Significant reduction in rapes and property crime on Washington state in 2013-2014 compared to Oregon and pre-legalization years 2010-2012

Legalization of cannabis and crime

(US)

Makin et al. (2019). Crime clearance rates in Colorado and Washington.

Findings: For Colorado, clearance rates for violent crime, property crime, rape, robbery, burglary, and larceny increased sharply postlegalization. For Washington, clearance rates increased for violent crime, burglary, and vehicle theft postlegalization

Wu et al. (2023). Clearance rates for violent crimes in Oregon

Findings: Significant increase in clearance rate of overall violent crimes and that for aggravated assault. The positive effect appears to reduce over time.

Plunk et al. (2019). Arrest for possession of cannabis rates of adults and youths in US states (2000-2016). In 4 states cannabis was legal, in 7 states was decriminalized, and in 27 was illegal.

Findings: When possession was decriminalized for adults and youths there was a decrease of arrests in both populations. When cannabis was legalized for adults, there was a decrease of arrest rates in adults but not in youths.

Legalization of cannabis and crime (US)

Farley & Orchowsky (2019). Criminal justice resources in states where cannabis was legalized and border states.

Findings: Legalization resulted in fewer cannabis-related arrests and court cases. Legalization did not have noticeable impact on border states. There were no indications of increasing in arrests related to transportation or trafficking offenses

Amlung et al. (2018). Impact of legalization on illegal cannabis market (behavioral economics).

Findings: Higher prices motivated substitution irrespective of legality.

Asymmetric substitution: The presence of a legal alternative had a greater effect on consumption and elasticity of illegal cannabis than the presence of an illegal alternative on demand for legal cannabis (favoring legal product).

Cannabis price policies that include somewhat higher consumer costs for legal cannabis relative to contraband (but not excessively higher costs) would not be expected to incentivize and expand the illegal market.

Legalization of cannabis and crime

(Canada)

Callaghan et al. (2021). Police report cannabis-related offenses among youth in Canada (2015-2018).

Findings: For females was found a decrease of 64.6% reduction. For males was found a decrease of 57.7%. Inconclusive results for property crime and violent crime

Wadsworth et al. (2022). Cannabis flower prices and transitions to legal sources after legalization in Canada (2019-2020). Cross-sectional survey data (n = 4,923)

Findings: The proportion of consumers purchasing from legal sources increased.

The mean price of legal dried flower decreased in 2020 but remained more expensive than the illegal product

Hathaway et al. (2021). Analyzed whether cannabis legalization curtailed the illegal market. National Cannabis Survey administered at three-months intervals.

Findings: Differences between provinces. Quebec and Ontario more likely to purchase illegal cannabis, while BC is least likely.

Those who use more often (heavier consumers) more likely to purchase from dealers (price conscious in purchasing decisions). Older users are less likely to buy from dealers.

Those with less than high school education were more likely to report purchasing from dealers than respondents with university degree. Price and assess are significant.

Legalization of cannabis and crime

(Jamaica)

2015 legalized and regulated commercial cultivation and sale of cannabis for therapeutic use, legalized home cultivation, and decriminalized personal possession.

Also introduced the Criminal Records [Amendment] Act, which introduced a simple administrative mechanism for expungement of criminal records for minor cannabis offenses

Klein et al. (2022). Ethnographic observations and interviews with policy stakeholders to analyze penalization and criminal record expungement policies.

Findings: A significant decline in the number of cannabis-related street-level interventions was observed even prior to 2015. Between 2014 and 2015 the total cannabis-related arrests **cropped by 77%**.

4,000 expungements recorded between 2014 and 2016. (Removed stigma of criminal record).
Social transformation for farmers.

Legalization of cannabis and crime

(Italy)

In December 2016 a legislative gap (law devoted to regulating and incentivizing the production and commercialization of industrial cannabis – hemp – the law did not regulate the production of flowers) created the opportunity to legally sell cannabis with low levels of THC (C-light)

Carrieri et al. (2019).

Findings: Reduction in the confiscation of illegal marijuana

8% reduction in the supply of hashish and 32% decrease in the number of plants confiscated (per month)

Decrease in the total number of nationals, foreigners and minors arrested for drug-related crime. Estimations suggest that foregone revenues for criminal organizations amount to around 90-170 million euros per year.

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