0. Summary

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This document contains a description of the latest developments derived from the National Drug Monitor (NDM) Annual Report 2020. Tables 1a and 1b provide an overview of the latest figures on substance use and drug crime up to and including 2019. However, 2020 is an exceptional year. In mid-March 2020, measures were taken in the Netherlands to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This NDM Annual Report includes available information that we have gained from research on the impact of the corona-crisis on substance use and indicators in the field of police and justice.

0.1 Developments in legislation and policy

Developments in drug policy

New Opium Act substances
List I of the Opium Act contains a number of new substances as of 19 July 2020: ADB-CHMINACA, CUMYL-4-CN-BINACA, cyclopropylfentanyl, methoxycetylfentanyl, ocfentanil, tetrahydrofuranylfentanyl, UR-144 5F-MDMB-PINACA, 5F-PB-22, AB-CHMINACA, AB-PINACA, carfentanil, 4-fluoroisobutyrifentanyl; as of 4 November 2020: the substances ADB-FUBINACA, N-Ethynorpentylon, FUB-AMB, Orthofluorofentanyl, and parafluorbutyrylfentanyl.

Widening of the powers to close drug premises
Since 1 January 2019, mayors have the authority (based on extended article 13b of the Opium Act) to also shut down residential or other premises if illegal preparatory activities take place for the production or cultivation of drugs. Previously, mayors could only shut down premises when drugs were actually present. Illegal preparatory activities include situations in which objects or substances are present that are clearly intended for the production of drugs, such as specific equipment or chemicals.

Increased sentencing for trade in hard drugs/ role of suspect
The guideline for the sentence imposed by the Public Prosecution Service for trade in hard drugs was raised on 1 May 2019. When deciding the sentence, more account must be taken of the role of the accused: is the person a minor player (e.g. a courier) or is he/she one of the leaders?

New Psychoactive Substances
New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) are substances that have similar effect as "traditional" illegal drugs but are not (yet) covered by drug laws. NPS are often produced to circumvent drug laws. A legislative proposal to introduce a ban for certain groups of NPS has been submitted for internet consultation in the spring of 2020. The suggested groups of substances are all substances derived from 2-phenethylamine, including substances with the basic structure of cathinone; cannabimimetics or synthetic cannabinoids; and substances derived from 4-aminopiperidine (fentanyl-like substances).

Bibob Act
The Bibob Act is the Public Administration Probity Screening Act. Since 1 August 2020, authorities have the opportunity to also request judicial data concerning the business relationships of the person applying for a permit or subsidy.
Precursors
Precursors are raw materials that are used for the production of drugs. Some substances are only used to produce drugs, others can also be used for legal purposes. Use of the latter substances is prohibited without a permit. The precursors that can only be used to make drugs were not prohibited. This is also related to European legislation. At the national level, it will be legally regulated that the import and export of precursors and having them available will be punishable, due to a change in the Abuse of Chemicals Prevention Act. This legislative proposal is part of the legislative bill ‘strengthening of the criminal law approach to crimes that undermine society’.

Controlled cannabis supply chain experiment
A ‘controlled cannabis supply chain experiment’ will be carried out in which quality-controlled hemp and hashish will be supplied to coffee shops in a controlled cannabis supply chain. This experiment will be scientifically supervised and evaluated. A special law and regulation has been drafted to carry out the experiment. In the summer of 2019, the municipalities that will take part in the experiment were announced. Cultivators who want to participate in the experiment could register until July 2020. After assessment of the applications, cultivators were selected at random through a lottery process in December 2020. The next step is an integrity investigation. A maximum of 10 cultivators of cannabis (weed or hashish) will be selected.

Nitrous oxide
In June 2020, the Ministry of Justice and Security and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport submitted a proposal to place nitrous oxide on list II of the Opium Act for internet consultation. This legislative proposal contains rules for sale, both by wholesalers and retailers, and for purchase by consumers. The aim is to submit the proposal to the House of Representatives at the beginning of 2021. Special attention is paid to prevention and information material for young people about the risks related to the use of nitrous oxide. Multiple information materials have been developed. Additional focus is put on the development of information and prevention material for two specific areas: nitrous oxide use among young people with a non-Western migration background and nitrous oxide use in traffic.

Medicinal cannabis
In July 2019, a new European tender was launched with the intention of contracting a second cultivator of medicinal cannabis. The number of cultivators will be doubled so that the Medicinal Cannabis Office can offer more varieties of cannabis. The Medicinal Cannabis Office is responsible for the production and supply of cannabis for medicinal and scientific purposes. Research is being encouraged to increase the knowledge about the effects of medicinal cannabis. If research shows that a certain cannabis strain works for a certain condition, it can be registered as a medicine and put into production. It is also being investigated whether it is possible to have the Office of Medicinal Cannabis analyse samples of cannabis plants found among suspects who are in a criminal case of home cultivation.

Cannabidiol (CBD)
In November 2020, the Court of Justice of the European Union decided that CBD is not a narcotic when the CBD is extracted from the whole cannabis plant and not just from its fibre and seed. Trade in CBD products is not prohibited in the Netherlands. However, since January 2019, products containing CBD are considered by the EU to be novel foods, which are subject to quality controls before they are allowed on the market. To obtain an authorisation, an assessment procedure is required for each product. The European Commission, which assesses the applications, decided in July 2020 to postpone the assessment of ‘novel food’ applications for CBD products and to consider CBD from hemp as a narcotic substance for the time being, as prohibited by the UN drug conventions.
Driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs
As of 1 January 2020, the maximum sentence for driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs has been raised from three months to one-year imprisonment.

Combatting drug-related crime within the context of organised subversive crime
Tackling organised subversive crime, focusing on the fight against the illicit drug industry, and the links with legal sectors are being continued and intensified. In October 2019, the Minister of Justice and Security sent an outline letter to the House of Representatives, containing plans to further reduce organised subversive crime.

A Multidisciplinary Intervention Team (MIT) is set up: an advanced national flexible team that aims to disrupt the business processes of criminal networks. The MIT includes financial, administrative and digital expertise.

‘Legislation addressing crimes undermining society’ will be drafted that will not be limited to combatting the illegal drug industry. According to the Dutch government, the tolerant attitude towards (synthetic) drugs and drug use must change. More effort will be put into the prevention of drug use. Prevention of crimes that undermine society must also be carried out according to a local approach, which is aimed, among other things, at (vulnerable) young people and their living environment (e.g. socio-economically weaker neighbourhoods) in order to prevent them from being recruited for drug jobs at a very young age and subsequently ending up in a criminal network.

Counteracting drug waste dumping
Since the ruling of the Administrative Jurisdiction Division of the Council of State on 27 February 2019, a private individual on whose land drug waste has been dumped without his knowledge is no longer liable for the costs of disposing of the waste, unless there has been a violation of a legal obligation incumbent on that individual. A new regulation is introduced for the disposal costs, to replace the previous temporary regulation.

Expenses related to Opium Act Offenses
In 2019, a total of 474 million euros was spent on combating opium act offenses. This amount includes expenses related to all activities aimed at preventing or punishing crime (prevention, detection, prosecution, trial, enforcement of sentences and measures, legal aid and victim support), degradation and nuisance related to Opium Act offenses (smuggling, trafficking, production and possession of drugs), and removing feelings of insecurity. Both government (state, provinces, municipalities, customs) and the private sector (private individuals and companies, including special security and investigation companies) are included.

Drugs in prisons
Attention is paid continuously to the presence of drugs and other prohibited goods smuggled into prisons. Since the beginning of 2019, the Custodial Institutions Agency has kept record of discoveries of smuggled goods. New methods are used to detect drugs when people enter prison, including equipment to detect traces of drugs on objects. To prevent prisoners from continuing their activities in organised crime networks from inside prison, a trial is being conducted with a high-security, small-scale, separate, closed ward in one penitentiary institution. In this department, supervision and isolation can be increased compared to the rest of the organisation. In addition, information about detainees from organised subversive crimes will be analysed and, if necessary, action will be taken.

Punish and protect law
Detainees will no longer automatically be released temporarily after two-thirds of the sentence: their behaviour during detention will be more important. This approach also applies, for example, to the introduction and possession of drugs. The person-oriented approach, with more emphasis on the prisoner’s own responsibility and his behaviour will be continued. During the intake, a program is drawn up that is tailored to the problems of
the individual prisoner, such as substance abuse problems. The role of the probation service and of the municipalities related to a reintegration to society will be better defined, and it will be easier to exchange information.

**Placement in an Institution for Profile Offenders Act**
The placement in an institution for Profile Offenders Act (ISD) is meant for prolific offenders, who often have complex, multiple problems such as addiction and other psychological syndromes. The capacity for implementing the ISD in institutions will be expanded during 2020 with 56 additional places in PI Alphen aan den Rijn.

**Developments in tobacco policy**

**Smoking Prevention Agreement**
The most important development for tobacco policy was the National Prevention Agreement that was reached in November 2018 between the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and 70 civil social organisations. The ambition of the partial agreement is to achieve a smoke-free generation by 2040. This means that the percentage of smokers within the adult population should fall below 5% by 2040, that no more minors should start smoking, and that the percentage of smokers among pregnant women should fall to 0%.

**Support for four themes**
There is broad support for deploying a coherent package of measures and actions organised around four themes:

- Theme 1: A smoke-free environment;
- Theme 2: Effective and accessible stop-smoking care and support;
- Theme 3: Smoke-free care, starting with addiction care institutions, mental health institutions and medical centres;
- Theme 4: Smoke-free organisations, starting with 10 of the 100 largest companies and the national government.

**Theme 1: A smoke-free environment**
To promote a smoke-free environment, the price of tobacco products has been increased. Taxes were increased as of 1 January 2020 (€ 0.40) and as of 1 April 2020 (€ 1.00) and the price of a package of 20 cigarettes has become on average 1 euro more expensive. A pack of cigarettes, converted to 25 cigarettes, costs 8.11 euros on average. The price of a 50-gram package of rolling tobacco has become € 2.50 more expensive on average.

A smoke-free environment is also promoted by banning the display of cigarettes and neutral packaging. As of 1 July 2020, a ban on cigarette display in supermarkets has come into effect. On 1 October 2020, neutral packaging was introduced, meaning that the packaging has a dark green-brown colour and all brand expressions are removed.

Furthermore, a smoke-free environment has been promoted by introducing a smoking ban on school grounds as of 1 August 2020. This smoking ban on school grounds was supported by “The Edsons” campaign. The ban on smoking areas in the catering industry was also enforced as of 1 April 2020. In addition, the aim is to make the petting zoos smoke-free, as well as the playgrounds, day-care centres and sport clubs.

**Theme 2: Effective and accessible stop-smoking care and support**
From 1 January 2020 onwards, health insurers will no longer charge the client the deductible excess for primary smoking cessation care. As such, smoking cessation care has become available to all insured persons without financial barriers. Most of the collaborative partnerships of obstetric care have now a care path for women who continued to smoke during pregnancy.
**Theme 3: Smoke-free care**
To the extent that a healthcare institution has succeeded in providing smoke-free care, an institution can acquire bronze, silver or gold status. The percentage of addiction care institutions with bronze has more than doubled status (58%) in 2019. The percentage with a silver status (33%) has also increased. The percentage with gold status (8%) has remained the same. Both the percentage of smoke-free hospitals (41%) and smoke-free academic hospitals (71%) increased in 2019.

**Theme 4: Smoke-free organisations**
Out of the top 100 companies, 16 companies were under way to a Smoke-Free Generation in 2019. They either had introduced a smoke-free policy or stopped selling tobacco products and/or stopped investing in the tobacco industry. In addition, at least 16 of the 20 largest institutional investors in the Netherlands stopped investing in the tobacco industry in 2020. In 2019, there was also an increase in the percentage of contact moments (to 24%) during which company doctors included smoking cessation.

**Developments in alcohol policy**

**Prevention Agreement on Problematic Alcohol Consumption**
The more than 70 parties that agreed to the National Prevention Agreement (NPA) at the end of 2018 started working on the vast majority of the agreements in 2019. The actions and measures of the NPA focus on: Alcohol and the school and study environment; Marketing of alcoholic beverages; Awareness and early warning; A healthy sports environment; Compliance with and enforcement of the age limit and drunkenness. The Progress Report of the NPA published annually by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) shows that most agreements were implemented in 2019 (65%), many other agreements are in preparation (20%) and only few agreements had not been implemented yet at the end of 2019 (10%).

**Alcohol Marketing**
The Advertising Code for Alcohol-Free and Low-Alcohol Beer came into effect on 15 October 2020. The code states, among other things, that advertising for alcohol-free and low-alcohol beer may not be aimed at young people under the age of 18. In 2020 the WHO published a report on the state of affairs regarding the regulation of alcohol marketing in Europe. The report shows that it will be a major challenge to limit alcohol marketing over the internet and specifically through social media.

**New Alcohol Act**
The name of the Licensing and Catering Act (Drank en Horecawet - DHW) will be changed to the Alcohol Act. In addition to the NPA, a number of new measures are proposed: off license price discounts of more than 25% will be prohibited; there will be strict rules on the remote sale of alcohol; passing alcohol on to minors will be prohibited in public places. National research into the compliance with the legal age limit of 18 for the sale of alcoholic beverages showed that the majority of underage adolescents have hardly any problems buying alcohol. The law will probably enter into force in July 2021.

**Campaigns and prevention interventions**
In recent years, various national campaigns (NIX18, Ikpas, BOB) and short-term (online) alcohol interventions (Jellinek Online Self-help; Drinking Less, Moti-4) and community-based interventions (Icelandic approach, STAD approach) have been developed and offered to prevent and/or reduce problematic alcohol consumption. The Dutch Addiction Association has published an overview of the highest recognised short-term (online) alcohol interventions. However, these online interventions insufficiently reach problem drinkers and there is little coherence and coordination in this field. The ambition within this project is to change that.

**Blurring**
The legislative proposal on blurring was discussed in the House of Representatives in July 2020. The results of
Berenschot’s evaluation report, which examined the effects of this legislative proposal on public health, public order, road safety, and the economy were included in this proposal. In the case of blurring, liquor stores organise tastings in their business. When blurring is allowed and it leads to more sale points and more alcohol sales, it is (reasonably) likely that this will have undesirable consequences for public health (in particular for risk groups), traffic accidents and public order.

**Driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs**

One of the objectives of the Strategic Plan for Traffic Safety 2030 is to strengthen and extend the social norm of not using substances in traffic. The Alcohol Meter, which continuously measures the alcohol use, appears to have a positive effect on reducing alcohol use in traffic.

**International developments**

At the end of 2018, the WHO presented the SAFER action package to help governments reduce harmful alcohol consumption by 10% by the end of 2025. The action package consists of five 'high-impact' strategies. In the next few years, a new action plan will be developed for the period 2022-2030 for the implementation of the international strategy to reduce harmful alcohol consumption.

**Policy developments in the field of prevention and help services**

**Purpose of prevention policy**

The purpose of prevention policy is to ensure that people stay healthy by promoting and protecting their health. The National Prevention Agreement (NPA) focuses primarily on smoking, problematic alcohol consumption and obesity because these three areas are the largest causes of disease burden in the Netherlands.

**Addiction prevention**

The new organisation of the Dutch Association of Mental Health and Addiction Care provides less and less room for separate prevention departments within mental health care institutions, including addiction care. Government, healthcare providers and financial institutions are striving for broadening the Association of Mental Health and Addiction Care towards community teams, GP care and mental health care. In 83% of the municipalities, social (neighbourhood) teams were active in 2019. In 46% of the municipalities, such teams comprised a broad range of expertise for all requests for assistance. However, neighbourhood teams can still insufficiently carry out the preventive work and early identification. With regard to problematic substance use and addiction, 64% of the neighbourhood teams made use of external specialists, 20% indicated that they had this expertise within the neighbourhood team itself and 3% of the cases a specialised team existed for this issue. The following tasks were most internalised: accessible support for questions about substance use, identification of risk groups, and cooperation with the Public Health Services.

**Prevention of drug use in the nightlife scene**

- Ten additional measures have been taken to combat the normalisation and the use of drugs in the nightlife scene. A campaign against normalisation is being developed.
- A special website for parents has been developed.
- The school program “Bright at School” has thoroughly been renewed.
- More emphasis is put on collaboration between municipalities, catering and events industry, and institutions for addiction care.
- It is being investigated how the Icelandic prevention approach of neighbourhood-oriented interventions can be implemented in the Netherlands.
- The testing capacity of consumer drug tests has been expanded with new equipment.
- An innovative intervention is being developed aimed at preventing the first use of drugs.
- A “Platform against Rising Drug Use” is being set up.
• The proposal to place nitrous oxide on list II of the Opium Act was submitted for internet consultation in June 2020. Legislative proposals are published on the internet; through an internet consultation people can share ideas on this subject.

• The legislative proposal "Amendment of the Opium Act due to new psychoactive substances" was submitted for internet consultation in March 2020.

Organisation of addiction care
In the Netherlands, addiction care is offered by existing regional institutions that are organised as a separate institution for addiction care or as part of a larger mental health care institution. In addition, there are private organisations that offer addiction care. Some of those institutions are member of the Dutch Association of Mental Health and Addiction Care (GGZ Nederland).

Three new laws came into force in 2019 and 2020, which had major consequences for the mental health care and addiction care. These three new laws are the "Forensic Care Act (Wfz)", the "Compulsory Mental Health Care Act (Wvggz)" and the "Care and Compulsion Act (Wzd)". The Wfz stipulates that the necessary psychological care is provided more quickly within the area of criminal law, or in the area connected with it. The Wvggz insures that people who form a danger to themselves or their environment due to a mental disorder can be treated against their will. The Wzd arranges for compulsory care for psychogeriatric and mentally disabled clients.

Access to addiction care
Access to addiction care has improved in recent years because of the introduction of the General Practice Mental Health Worker (POH-GGZ), which means that primary care can pay more attention to addiction problems. The "Hey, it’s okay" campaign, which aims at increasing openness in the debate around mental illnesses and reducing shame, will be continued with an additional focus on addiction problems. The campaigns of the foundation Together Strong Without Stigma, which combat stigma in mental health care and also the stigma of addictions, are financed by the national government.

Waiting list
Patients with a serious psychiatric problem and an addiction problem often belong to the group of patients who are on a waiting list for a long time. At the insistence of the State Secretary, health insurers and care providers have developed an action plan to solve the problem of waiting lists. The core of the plan is that patients with a highly complex mental health care demand (including addiction care) receive faster an offer for tailor-made treatment. This will be possible by improving the accessibility and availability of care for this target group.

0.2 Impact of COVID-19 and the corona measures related to the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco
The Dutch measures against the coronavirus have had different effects on the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco. In different groups of users, some decreased their drug use, while others started using more. Effects of the coronavirus measures are described in the respective chapters on cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy, amphetamine, GHB, alcohol and tobacco of the NDM Annual Report 2020. Below we provide a summary of the results in these chapters.

Patterns in the impact of the coronavirus measures
Where data is available, a pattern is emerging in the impact of the coronavirus measures on substance use.
Individuals who were already using substances before the coronavirus measures more often displayed a decrease rather than an increase in use of substances such as ecstasy, amphetamine, GHB and alcohol. This pattern was observed in the general population, young adults, people from nightlife settings, and students. However, among those who already smoked prior to the coronavirus measures, a larger proportion of individuals from the general population increased their tobacco use. Conversely, a reduction in tobacco use was seen more often among individuals from nightlife settings who were already smoking prior to the coronavirus measures. The use of cannabis increased among both young adults and people from nightlife scene (who were already using cannabis prior to the coronavirus measures).

A possible explanation for the reduction in use may be that the substances in question are mainly used in the nightlife scene, and that the nightlife scene has largely come to a stillstand in the Netherlands during the pandemic. An explanation for more use may be that the substances in question were used more often in a home situation, especially to combat feelings of stress, boredom and loneliness during the lockdown measures.

0.3 Developments in the use of substances covered by the Opium Act, New Psychoactive Substances, nitrous oxide and ketamine

Cannabis

A third of the adult population who have used cannabis in the last month used it (almost) every day
A bit less than 1 million Dutch people aged 18 and older are reported to have used cannabis in the past year (7.2%). Last-year use is highest among 18-19 year olds and 20-24 year olds (21.1% and 22.3%). Last-month use among 18 years and older is 4.9%. One third (33.3%) of these last-month users smoked (almost) daily.
The percentage of (almost) daily users (1.6%) was in 2019 comparable to 2018, but higher than in previous years (1.2% in 2015).
The percentage of last-year cannabis users among 15-64 year-olds in the Netherlands was 9.6% in 2019, and therewith higher than the European average (7.6%).

The cannabis use of Dutch school students aged 15 and 16 is above the European average
Last-year use decreased among school students aged 12-16 between 2003 and 2015 (from 13.1% to 8.2%), and remained stable in 2019 (9.1%). Almost half (44%) of all students who have used cannabis in the last month, had done so during school hours (during intermediate hours or recess).
The percentage of 15 and 16-year-old Dutch school students who have ever used cannabis was 22.4% in 2019; this is higher than the European average of 15.6%. The percentage of last-month users among Dutch school students (12.6%) was also higher than the European average of 7.1%.
Cannabis is not considered a typical nightlife drug. It is mostly used at home or at other people’s homes: 84.4% of users name this as one of the three locations where they use cannabis the most.

Increase in hospital admissions related to cannabis between 2015 and 2018
In 2019, cannabis use played a role in 26% of all drug incidents reported by medical services of the Monitor Drug-Related Incidents; in 19% of all incidents cannabis was the only drug used. The proportion of incidents with cannabis as the only drug used is lower at first aid posts at large-scale parties and higher in accident and emergency care departments in hospitals nationwide; in the second case they often involve tourists in the
Amsterdam region. The number of patients admitted to general hospitals at least once with a problem related to cannabis as the main or secondary diagnosis increased from 1,190 to 1,660 patients between 2015 and 2018. The average age of cannabis patients increased from 36 in 2015 to 38 in 2018.

THC content: stable in Dutch-grown weed and imported hashish after years of increase, also stable
The average level of THC in Dutch-grown weed (the most popular variety) increased gradually from 2013 to 2016, but has remained stable since (with 14.6% THC in 2020). The THC level in imported hashish increased significantly between 2014 and 2019 and remained at the same level in 2020 (24.4%). Imported hashish has been much more potent than Dutch-grown weed for several years.
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Cocaine

Last-year-use of cocaine has remained stable in the general population
In 2019, approximately 1.9% of the Dutch population aged 18 and older had used cocaine in the past year, which does not differ significantly from 2015 to 2018 (between 1.6% and 1.8%). This equates to approximately 260 thousand people (rounded off to the nearest ten thousand). The percentage of adults who had ever used cocaine increased from 4.3% in 2015 to 5.4% in 2019, but last-year use and last-month use remained stable.

The percentage of secondary school pupils aged 12-16 who had used cocaine in the past year decreased between 2003 and 2007 but has since then stabilised at 0.8% in 2019. In 2019, the ever-use of cocaine (1.7%) and crack (0.6%) among 15-16-year-old Dutch school students was slightly below the European average (1.9% and 1.1% respectively) but the difference to the other countries is small.

Indication of a rise in cocaine use among specific groups
The use of cocaine, especially in powder form for snorting, is still relatively common among adolescents and young adults in the nightlife scene. There are indications that the popularity of cocaine is rising among those groups, in Amsterdam and its surroundings and in The Hague. Among Amsterdam pub visitors, the percentage that had used cocaine in the past month rose from 15% in 2014 to 22% in 2018. Among people who participate in the nightlife scene in The Hague, this percentage rose from 11% in 2014 to 26% in 2019. There is no insight into local developments elsewhere. Analyses in wastewater from sewers also suggest that use has increased, particularly in Amsterdam; however, no distinction can be made between tourists and residents. According to panel members cocaine use also seems to be more accepted among at-risk groups. In 2020, 26.2% of the Dutch people who participate in the nightlife scene used cocaine in the past year, so there does not seem to be a significant difference between 2016 (25%) and 2020, but an accurate comparison is difficult to make due to possible differences between the samples that are not corrected.

Increasing problem with cocaine use as a secondary diagnosis in admissions to general hospitals
The number of patients admitted to a general hospital with a problem related to cocaine as a main or secondary diagnosis increased from 1,040 to 1,290 patients between 2015 and 2018 (corrected for double counts). The increase only took place in the secondary diagnoses, a problem in cocaine use as the main diagnosis remained stable in that period.

Incidents after cocaine use often show a combination with alcohol and other drugs
In 2019, cocaine was recorded in 1.091 (17%) of the total of 6,629 acute drug incidents reported to the Monitor Drug-Related Incidents. Within the group of monitored drugs, cocaine is used relatively often in combination with other drugs. 54% of cocaine users with a health incident have used another drug, usually ecstasy and GHB. In the
case of 498 incidents, cocaine-HCl was the only drug reported (whether or not in combination with alcohol). In the majority of those cases, 287 out of 498 (58%), cocaine was reported in combination with alcohol. The registered cocaine-related deaths doubled from 24 in 2013 and 2014 to 55 in 2017. However, in 2018 there was a slight decrease to 40 cases. It is still unknown whether this was due to actual changes or due to a change in the method of detection and registration.

Decrease in powdered cocaine with levamisole stagnated, purity at record level
Most cocaine powders are adulterated with other substances. However, between 2015 and 2018 there was a striking reduction in the proportion of consumer cocaine powder that contained levamisole (an animal anthelmintics (dewormer)), from 71% to 34%. In 2019, the proportion stayed at about the same level, at 39%. Human consumption of levamisole is linked to severe cases of haematological and skin disorders. Despite being adulterated, the purity of cocaine, the proportion of cocaine in cocaine powders, is high. The average purity level of cocaine rose from 49.2% in 2011 to 68.9% in 2019. This means that the cocaine is very pure, also when compared to other European countries. The consumer price of cocaine remained stable (on average 50 euro per gram in 2019), which may indicate the increased availability of cocaine.

Opiates (and opioids)

Heroin and methadone
Heroin use is uncommon in the general population. In 2019, 0.4% of the population aged 18 and older reported having ever used heroin. Based on information from various studies, heroin and methadone are used very little among young people. However, problem heroin (and other hard drug) users are underrepresented in population studies. Based on a different method than a regular population study, in 2012, the size of this group was estimated to be 14,000, which is lower than the estimated 18,000 problematic opiate users found in 2008. How this developed after 2012 is unknown, but there are no indications of a rise in new users. The number of methadone patients at the Public Health Service of Amsterdam was decreasing until 2018. The number of detainees receiving methadone at an Amsterdam police station also appears to be decreasing. Furthermore, the average age of the methadone clients has become increasingly higher. These are indications that the population of heroin users is shrinking and aging. In 2021 (new) figures will be available related to the number of clients in addiction care with an opiate use disorder. In general hospitals, the number of patients with an opiate problem rose from 880 in 2015 to 980 patients in 2018.

No further increase in use of (medical) opioids
Between 2003 and 2018, the number of potent medical opioid users increased from 137,000 to 697,000. In 2019, this upward trend was broken for the first time in more than 15 years. In the fourth quarter of 2019, there were only 238,923 users of potent opioids, compared to a higher number of 254,477 users in the fourth quarter of 2018. In 2018, the potent opioids were mainly 454,500 users of oxycodone and 104,560 users of fentanyl.

Minor rise in new cases of HIV and Hepatitis B and C among injecting drug users
The number of new and reported cases of HIV and Hepatitis B and C among injecting drug users has been low for years. The number of newly diagnosed HIV cases among injecting drug users per million inhabitants is one of the lowest in the EU-15. In 2019, only two new cases were registered in the Netherlands. However, the number of existing Hepatitis C patients in the Netherlands is high in cities that keep records of them. Together, HIV-positive and HIV-negative drug users (more than 3,400) account for 15% of all chronic Hepatitis C patients. However, Hepatitis C treatment using Direct Acting Antivirals (DAAs) is extremely cost effective, also for drug users.

Rise in registered drug-related deaths
The registered general drug-related deaths rose significantly between 2014 (123 cases) and 2017 (262 cases). In 2018 this number decreased to 224 cases, but in 2019 it increased again to 252 cases. The proportion of opiate-
related deaths rose from 30% in 2014 and to almost 50% in 2016. This proportion remained stable after 2016. The probability is that the actual proportion of opiate-related deaths is higher, in view of the fact that opiates and opioids are also found in the category ‘other drugs’ (in combination with other substances).

The age at which these people die is rising. In the period 1996 up to and including 2000, 47% of opiate users who died were younger than 35, compared to only 20% in the period from 2016 through 2019. However, between 2011-2015 and 2016-2019, the proportion in the 15-34 age group rose from 13% to 21%. This may have (partly) resulted from deaths due to medical opioids, but further research will have to prove that hypothesis. The registered deaths increase up to 2017 and between 2018 and 2019 are difficult to interpret. Factors that could play a role in an actual rise include the increasing age of the drug users, and an increase in the use of medicinal opioids including oxycodone and fentanyl. However, an increase in the number of toxicological studies (which has caused more cases to be detected) can play a role, and a registration effect could have occurred because more information is provided on the electronic forms used to register the cause of death.

Ecstasy

Percentage of ecstasy users increased in the general population
For the first time since 2015, the last-year use of ecstasy is higher than in previous years. Last-year use was 3.4% in 2019, when it had previously been stable between 2.7% and 2.9%. Compared to 2018, last-year-use increased in 2019 among men, highly educated people, and 20-24 year olds. These are the groups in which ecstasy use was already relatively high.

The Netherlands is still leading in Europe in terms of last-year use of ecstasy among young adults aged 15-34: 6.9% versus the EU average of 3.9%. The percentage of 15- and 16-year-old Dutch students who have ever used ecstasy (3.5%) is also above the European average (2.3%).

Ecstasy is widely used in the nightlife scene, but also in vulnerable groups of young people
Ecstasy is the most used drug after cannabis in different groups of young people and young adults, people in nightlife settings, as well as vulnerable groups. About half of the respondents of The Great Nightlife Survey 2020 participating in the nightlife scene had ever used ecstasy (53.9%) and most of them used it in the past year. An downward trend among school students was recorded from 1.9% in 2015 to 1.0% in 2017, but use increased again in 2019 to the level of 2015 (1.7%). No increase was found for other drugs. The use of ecstasy among young people in vocational and special education has remained the same over the past decade, while there has been a decline in the use of, for example, cannabis.

In addition, ecstasy is used in at-risk groups. An alarming signal is that these groups start using ecstasy at an early stage and that they perceive the risks to be low, while youth workers do see incidents. According to them, the low-threshold use is mainly due to the wide availability and the low price of ecstasy.

Incident severity at first aid posts decreases, but increases at accident and emergency departments
Most ecstasy health incidents are reported by first aid posts at large-scale events. The proportion of ecstasy intoxications of all reported drug intoxications at first aid posts has fluctuated over the years but is lower in 2019 than in 2018. The proportion of moderate and severe intoxications decreased from 28% in 2015 to 14% in 2019. Post-ecstasy incidents reported by accident and emergency departments of hospitals are limited but are of a serious nature. Since 2009, an average of 65% to 75% of patients in these health services have been moderately or severely under the influence of ecstasy (as the only drug).

Increase in the proportion of highly potent ecstasy pills stabilises
In 2019, ecstasy is still the most commonly supplied drug to the Drugs Information and Monitoring System
(DIMS), and once again a high percentage of the pills (99.2%) actually contained MDMA, the active substance in ecstasy pills. The rise in the average level of MDMA in pills appears to be levelling off for the first time in years. In 2018, a pill contained an average of 171mg of MDMA and in 2019 this was 172mg. At the DIMS, a (significant) increase in the number of pills that also contain another pharmacologically active substance or a by-product was observed, a signal that may indicate a change in the MDMA production process.

**Amphetamine**

In 2019, 1.7% of the Dutch population aged 18 and older reported to have used amphetamine in the past year, approximately 230 thousand adults, which is similar to 2015. In the past month, 0.7% had used amphetamine.

Among young adults in the nightlife scene, the use of amphetamine is higher. Research in Amsterdam indicates that amphetamine use has stabilised, after increasing for years. Among visitors to Amsterdam pubs, the percentage that had ever used amphetamine had risen from 18% in 2010 to 38% in 2018. The percentage that had used amphetamine in the past month rose from 2% to 12% in this period.

In 2019, amphetamine had become again less popular than cocaine. Some users view amphetamine as a cheaper alternative to cocaine, while others have a strong preference for amphetamine over cocaine.

The percentage of secondary school pupils aged 12-16 that had used amphetamine in the past year fell from 1.4% to 0.9% between 2003 and 2015 and in 2019 this percentage stabilised at 0.9%. Use in the past month was 0.7% in 2019.

With regard to the (young) adult population, the Netherlands ranks high compared to the other European countries. 2.7% of the 15-34 year olds had used amphetamine in the last year compared to the EU average of 1.2%. The percentage of Dutch school students aged 15 and 16 who have ever used amphetamine is similar to the European average.

**Indications of a rise in methamphetamine use in the men who have sex with men (MSM) subgroup**

Although the use of methamphetamine (a highly potent form of amphetamine) in the Netherlands is a niche activity, there are indications of an increase in its use in a small group of men who have sex with men (MSM) in a sexual setting (Chemsex). Sometimes the substance is injected ('slamming'). This increases the risk of hazardous sexual behaviour and the transmission of infectious diseases. However, there are no national figures concerning the extent of this problem.

Although the use of methamphetamine is still a niche affair, especially among MSM, there are signs that the use of methamphetamine also occurs among vulnerable young people in some regions of the Netherlands.

**Amphetamine plays a minor role in acute drug incidents**

Health incidents following amphetamine use (only) were reported relatively infrequently in 2019. However, amphetamine is the drug most often used in combination with other drugs in health incidents. The most intoxications where amphetamine is used with other drugs are when it is combined with GHB (42%) and/or with ecstasy (38%). Between 2015 and 2018, the number of patients in general hospitals, with a problem with psychostimulants fluctuated between 740 and 850 patients per year.

**New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)**

**Decrease in the use of 4-fluoromfetamine (4-FA) continues**

The use of NPS in the general population is rare. In 2018, about one in 100 Dutch adults (1.3%) reported to have used a NPS in the last year, which amounts to about 170 thousand adults. The majority used 4-FA and the
psychedelic substance 2C-B (0.9% and 0.6% of the population respectively). In special groups of young people and young adults in the nightlife scene, such as visitors to clubs and parties, the use of NPS is considerably higher. Various studies and monitor show that the use of 4-FA has continued to decrease since its ban in 2017. However, there are signs of an increase in the use of 2C-B and 3-MMC (a stimulant), at least in certain groups of people in nightlife settings.

In 2019, 14.8% of the people who participate in the nightlife scene had used 2C-B in the last year. For the first time the use of 2C-B was higher than the use of 4-FA (5.1%). A similar pattern was observed among students of the secondary vocational education (MBO) and the higher professional education (HBO). There are signs from various studies and monitors that the problematic use of 3-MMC appears to be increasing, at least in certain (local) groups in the population. However, clear insight into this matter is currently lacking.

**NPS use among Dutch students is below the European average**
In the Netherlands, 1.5% of the students aged 15 and 16 reported having ever used NPS; this figure is below the European average of 3.4%. In many countries, young people often report using more NPS than some of the more traditional illegal drugs, such as ecstasy. This is not the case for Dutch students.

**Limited number of health incidents involving NPS limited, but an increase in incidents with synthetic cathinones**
The Monitor Drug-Related Incidents notes few incidents involving NPS. The proportion of 4-FA incidents at first aid posts has decreased in recent years, from 456 incidents in 2016 to 77 incidents in 2019. The number of incidents with 2C-B remained stable (30 in 2019), while the number of incidents with 3-MMC / 4-MMC had increased from 3 in 2017 to 26 in 2019.
The Dutch Poisons Information Centre has also reported an increase in the number of information requests by doctors and other care providers about synthetic cathinones (such as 3-MMC) and a decrease in information requests about synthetic phenethylamines (such as 4-FA) in recent years.

**NPS market is dynamic**
After a slight decrease in the number of NPS drug samples submitted by consumers to the DIMS in 2017 and 2018, an increase occurred in 2019. This increase was mainly caused by 2C-B.
Since 2017 (after 4-FA was put on the Opium list), more samples are seen that were sold as 4-FA, but that contain another active ingredient. In 2019, the trend continued: the purity of 4-FA decreased, the proportion of samples bought as 4-FA decreased, and the proportion of other NPS (in particular the 4-FMA) increased.

The increase in the number of samples submitted to the DIMS that were sold as 4-MMC is remarkable. 84 samples were submitted in 2019, which is an increase from 29 samples in 2018. The number of samples submitted that were sold as 3-MMC is stable (51 times in 2019). Although 3-MMC is starting to gain popularity, people still seem to be looking more for 4-MMC. Interestingly, 3-MMC is found during sample testing almost twice as often as 4-MMC; presumably because 3-MMC has not yet been banned. 4-MMC has been put on the Opium List since 2012.

In recent years, consumers submitted samples containing 6-APB to the DIMS with some regularity (62 times in 2019). Synthetic opioids and synthetic cannabinoids are only occasionally found on the Netherlands user market.

**GHB**

**GHB use is relatively limited, but there are miscellaneous user groups**
The use of gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB) is relatively uncommon among the general population and among regular secondary school pupils. In 2019, 0.4% of the population aged 18 and older had used GHB in the past year, an estimated 50 thousand people. Last-month use was 0.1%, a lower percentage than that of ecstasy (1.2%), cocaine (0.8%) or amphetamine (0.7%). GHB use is relatively uncommon among adolescents. In 2019, 0.3% of 12-16-year-old secondary school pupils had ever used GHB.
GHB is used more often by adolescents and young adults who participate in the nightlife scene. According to a 2019 national survey, 8.3% of the population who participate in the nightlife scene aged 15-35 had tried GHB or GBL, gamma-butyrolactone, one of the ingredients of GHB.

Despite the poor image that GHB has, there are signs that the use of GHB in Amsterdam’s nightlife has increased. It is also used by men who have sex with men (MSM) for Chemsex. GHB use also occurs among “swingers”, which are heterosexual couples who have sex with other couples and singles.

GHB is also used elsewhere, other than in the nightlife scene. For instance, also vulnerable groups, such as teenage loiterers and ‘home users’ use GHB. They use the drug together with friends during ‘home parties’, or even when they are alone. There are regional differences in the Netherlands in the prevalence of (problematic) use, requests for help and health incidents.

There is a considerable risk of relapse after detoxification
Frequent, especially daily, use of GHB can lead to dependency. If use is stopped abruptly, it can lead to severe and even life-threatening withdrawal symptoms. The number of clients in addiction care with a primary GHB problem rose from 60 in 2007 to 837 in 2015 (the latest available data). Most clients (78%) were already known to, and already registered with, the addiction care services. There is a considerable risk of relapse after treatment. Within three months after detoxification, 70% were already once more receiving treatment.

Acute GHB incidents often serious
GHB is difficult to dose and the risk of overdose is high. Considering that the use of GHB is minor within the total population, the number of GHB incidents is high. A total of 6,629 drug incidents was reported in 2019. In 853 cases (13%), GHB was reported as the only drug (with or without alcohol). In addition, GHB was involved in 559 cases (8%) in incidents where more than one drug was used at the same time. In these cases, GHB was mainly combined with amphetamine, ecstasy and/or cocaine.

It is striking that a relatively large number of patients suffer from serious intoxication after using GHB: 44% of the cases involved GHB as the only drug in the ambulances and 54% of the cases at the first aid posts. The proportion of registered health incidents after using GHB as the primary drug is lower in the Randstad than in regions outside of the Randstad. Reports in the media about an ‘explosive’ national increase in GHB incidents could not be substantiated by further research; in regions where an increase was found, this occurred in the wake of an overall increase in the number of registered drug incidents, which was not specific to GHB and could possibly be attributed to other factors.

The number of GHB-related deaths is unclear. In 2019, GHB was mentioned two times as the cause of death on the death certificates reported to Statistics Netherlands (CBS). It remains unknown whether GHB was the cause of death or a contributory factor.

Sedatives and tranquillizers
Use of benzodiazepines has decreased over time
Not only alcohol and drug use can lead to abuse and addiction, the chronic use of sedatives and tranquillizers can also pose this risk. Most of the sedatives and tranquillizers used are in the benzodiazepine group. In 2018, 10.2% of the population aged 18 and older had used sedatives or tranquillizers in the past year, more women (13.3%) than men (7.0%). Last-year use is highest among people aged 65+ (14.1%). One in three of last-year users used these drugs (also) without a prescription; use without a prescription is highest among 20-24-year-olds. Compared to 2016, last-year use remained at the same level. Between 2015 and 2018, the number of patients admitted to general hospitals because of a problem with sleeping pills and sedatives varied between 3,060 and 2,830 patients per year.
Data provided by public pharmacies regarding the dispensing of benzodiazepines indicates a reduction (started longer ago) in their use after limits were placed on the amount that would be compensated in the basic Dutch health insurance package in 2009. The number of standard daily doses that were dispensed fell by 15% in 2009 (compared to 2008). Between 2016 and 2017, there was a reduction of almost 2%.

**Suicide is often the reason for people to take fatal overdoses of sedatives and tranquillizers**

In 2019, 94 fatal overdoses of these medicines were registered, 42 of which concerned benzodiazepines, 5 concerned (other) sedatives and 47 concerned barbiturates. Most of these cases were suicides. The trend over time (from 2008 through 2012) was erratic and unclear. Between 2013 and 2016, the number of barbiturate cases doubled from 31 to 64, stabilising at 66 in 2017, and falling again in 2018 and 2019 to respectively 43 and 47 cases. Here as well, it is unknown whether the initial rise in numbers shows an actual rise or whether it is due to a change in detection and registration.

**Nitrous oxide**

**Nitrous oxide use at relatively high level**

In 2019, 3.2% of the population aged 18 and older used nitrous oxide in the past year. Between 2018 and 2019, use only increased among men (ever use, last-year-use, and last-month-use). According to data from LSM-A, an increase was recorded in use in the total population between 2016 and 2018. Nitrous oxide use is most common among young people and young adults (with 15.4% last-year use among 18-19 year olds and 17.5% among 20-24 year olds).

Other studies suggest that nitrous oxide is one of the most commonly used substances among (even) younger age groups. More than half of the respondents of The Great Nightlife Survey 2020 participating in the nightlife scene has experience with nitrous oxide. At the MBO and HBO, the use in the past month rose from 6.4% in 2017 to 8.1% in 2019. However, the number of students that had ever used nitrous oxide stabilised, where a couple of years ago a significant increase was observed (19.8% in 2015 and 28.7% in 2017). The use among school students in mainstream education stabilised as well; the percentage of students aged 12-16 who had ever used nitrous oxide was at 9.9% in 2019 at the same level as in 2017 (9.0%).

Conversely, the rise in use of nitrous oxide tanks (instead of individual cartridges) has caused the use of more nitrous oxide at a time, with a greater risk of side effects or problematic use.

**The risks of nitrous oxide are often estimated to be low**

In some vulnerable groups of young people throughout the Netherlands an increase in nitrous oxide use is observed. Nitrous oxide is easily available and cheap, and still legal. That is why it is not considered to be a (dangerous) drug at all by many young people, and many of them start with their first balloon while still being a minor.

**Nitrous oxide causes more health incidents**

The number of reports of health complaints registered by the National Poisons Information Centre about the non-medical use of nitrous oxide increased from 13 in 2015 to 54 in 2018 and doubling to 128 in 2019. Half of the reports concerned the use of nitrous oxide in extreme quantities, yet smaller quantities can cause complaints too.

Users asked for medical assistance because they developed health problems such as nausea, headache and dizziness, chest pain, vision disturbances, confusion and anxiety. In 2019, 38 of the 128 patients (30%) had tingling or numbness in the arms and/or legs; this may indicate neurological disorders due to a vitamin B12 deficiency, which can be caused by excessive nitrous oxide use.
Nitrous oxide policy
Because of the risks related to nitrous oxide use, the government intends to put nitrous oxide on List II of the Opium Act (see also Chapter 2). Furthermore, the prevention message about the risks of nitrous oxide will be strengthened, and specific efforts will be made to prevent nitrous oxide use among young people with a non-Western migration background and the use in traffic (see Chapter 2).

Ketamine

Increase in ketamine use among young people and young adults participating in nightlife
Ketamine is used for pain relief or as an anaesthetic in (animal) medicine but is also taken as a tripping substance for recreational purposes. The use of ketamine in the general population aged 18 and older is limited: 1.2% have ever used the substance and 0.6% in the last year.

The use of ketamine is highest among young people and young adults participating in nightlife. They use the drug in different settings, but mostly at parties and afterparties. According to The Great Nightlife Survey published in 2020, 27.3% of the respondents had ever used ketamine and 22.1% during the year before the survey. This is a significant increase compared to the Great Nightlife Survey in 2016. In 2016, the ever use of ketamine was still at 17.3% and the last-year use was at 12.3. Likewise, key figures of the nightlife scene in Amsterdam indicate that ketamine is used even more in the past year.

Prevention workers note that ketamine is also receiving increasing attention among groups at risk throughout the Netherlands, because of the unique effect of the use of ketamine. In addition, dealers offer more and more often ketamine.

Increase in the proportion of ketamine samples at the DIMS
The proportion of ketamine samples submitted to the Drugs Information and Monitoring System increased between 2016 and 2017. In 2018 the proportion stabilised at 3.4%; yet in 2019 there was another increase to 4.5%. Of all drugs submitted to the DIMS, only 2C-B experienced an even stronger increase. However, this increase does not necessarily mean that ketamine use has increased. An alarming contamination in ketamine that occurred more frequently in 2019 is levamisole, a powdered substance known from the cocaine market. In 2019, 3.6% of the ketamine powders contained levamisole, compared to 0.2% in 2018.

The proportion of incidents involving ketamine at parties and festivals increased again
The proportion of ketamine-related incidents in the total number of drug incidents at first aid posts at parties remained stable at approximately 4% until 2015, but since then the proportion has been increasing every year up to 11% in 2019. In these intoxications, ketamine had often been used with other drugs. In addition, 53% of the incidents with ketamine as the only drug, involved moderate or severe intoxication in 2019 – a slight increase compared to 2018 (43%).

At the National Poisons Information Centre, the number of phone inquiries for information regarding a possible intoxication with ketamine remained the same between 2018 (33) and 2019 (34), but the information inquiries through the website increased threefold compared to 2018.

Methylphenidate (Ritalin)

Use with and without a doctor’s prescription
Ritalin (methylphenidate) and some other medication prescribed to children and adolescents suffering from ADHD are also used as ‘recreational’ drugs. This means that they are taken for non-medical purposes, without a doctor’s prescription.
In 2018, approximately one in 30 (3.2%) adults reported to have ever used ADHD medication with approximately 1% doing so in the past year. More than one in three last-year users (37.2%) had taken ADHD medication in the last year (also) without a prescription, this is a half a percent of the general adult population and is approximately 70,000 people. The ever use of ‘ADHD medication’ at almost 10% is highest in the group aged 20-24; almost one in twenty (5.2%) of young adults used these substances in the past year.

Recreational use among young adults to improve concentration
In this group, Ritalin is mostly used as a performance-enhancing substance for study or work. In 2020, parliamentary questions about the use of Ritalin were debated. Concerns about improper use are shared in the House of Representatives but more research is needed. Possible causes of the use are the increasing pressure to perform, distractions such as social media, or a changing attitude towards substance use.

In The Great Nightlife Survey carried out in 2020, 8.8% indicated that they had used Ritalin for non-medical purposes in the last year. Between 2010 and 2018, the Amsterdam Antenna (Antenne) survey found a substantial increase in the ever-use rate among pub visitors (from 8.7 to 20.9%). Research shows that most young adults get the substance from others or buy it online.

0.4 Developments in the use of alcohol and tobacco

Alcohol

The majority of the Dutch population do not adhere to the drinking recommendations of the Health Council of the Netherlands (Gezondheidsraad)
Eight out of ten Dutch people aged 18 and older drink alcohol occasionally; only among people older than 75 this proportion of users is smaller. These figures have been stable for many years. The Guideline for Good Nutrition of the Health Council of the Netherlands recommends drinking no alcohol or in any case no more than one glass a day. Since the Directive was introduced, there has been an increase in the percentage of adults complying with the standard, from 37.4% to 41.5%. Women meet the standard 1.8 times more often than men.

Excessive drinking and heavy drinking have not decreased
The further reduction of excessive drinking (defined as more than 21 drinks per week for men and more than 14 drinks per week for women) and heavy drinking (defined as at least once a week 6 or more glasses of alcohol on one day for men or 4 glasses for women) are two pillars of the National Prevention Agreement. In 2019, the percentage of excessive drinkers (8.5%) was significantly lower than in 2014, but it did not differ significantly from the other years. The percentage of heavy drinkers has fluctuated since 2014 and was lower in 2019 (8.5%) than in 2015 (10.0%) but was at a similar level to 2016-2018.
Reducing the proportion of pregnant women who drink during pregnancy is another pillar of the prevention agreement. In 2018, 4.2% of all women drank alcohol when they knew they were pregnant. For 2019, no new data are available.

In 2020, significant alcohol consumption continues to be the norm among people participating in the nightlife scene. Men drink 8 glasses and women more than 5 glasses on average. Before going out, alcohol is already consumed: more than 6 glasses for men and five for women.
Increase in sales of non-alcoholic beer diminishes
In 2019, sales of non-alcoholic beer grew by 6.5%, a lower figure compared to the years 2017 and 2018, when the increase was 32.4%. This year, for the first time, figures are available on the use of non-alcoholic drinks among adults and young people.

About one out of ten adults drinks alcohol-free beer every month, men more often than women (13.5% and 5.8% respectively). Almost one out of ten schoolchildren aged 12-16 drinks at least weekly non-alcoholic drinks, boys more often than girls (12% and 7% respectively). It is not yet clear whether the consumption of non-alcoholic drinks can have undesirable effects on non-drinking minors and adults, such as a faster start of the consumption of alcoholic drinks.

Alcohol consumption no longer decreases among young people
Alcohol consumption and binge drinking (defined as more than 5 glasses of alcohol on one occasion) among 12-16-year-old school students in mainstream secondary education decreased between 2011 and 2015 but stabilised in 2019. There are almost no differences between boys and girls in the alcohol consumption in the past year. Friends and parents are still the main providers of alcohol for students. From an international point of view, alcohol consumption among Dutch 15-16-year-old school children is above the average of 35 European countries.

Last-month alcohol consumption among the secondary vocational education (MBO) and the higher professional education (HBO) students aged 16-18 had not significantly changed between 2015 (73.3%) and 2019 (68.2%). There is almost no difference between MBO and HBO; however, MBO students aged 17 (21%) and 18 years (22%) more often drink more than 10 glasses on a weekend day than their peers in HBO (17 year olds: 12% and 18 year olds: 15%).

Alcohol consumption among vulnerable young people mapped
About a quarter (24%) of young people in Amsterdam’s youth care programmes show risky behaviour by drinking too much or too often, drinking during school hours, staying away from school because of drinking, getting extremely drunk or drinking to forget their problems. There is hardly any difference in gender, age, origin and forms of youth care between young people who have a problematic and those who have a non-problematic alcohol consumption.

In groups of young people and young adults at risk, in which often drug problems are involved as well, the vast majority of people drink alcohol. One third of the groups combine alcohol with cocaine, followed by cannabis and nitrous oxide.

Increase in problem with alcohol as a secondary diagnosis and increase in alcohol-related incidents
The number of secondary diagnoses involving alcohol in general hospitals increased from 19,720 in 2015 to 21,415 in 2018, while the number of main diagnoses of alcohol decreased slightly from 6,615 to 5,770. Between 2010 and 2019, the number of patients in an emergency department increased, both with alcohol intoxication (estimated from 4,000 to 6,500) and with serious injuries from an alcohol-related accident (estimated from 5,400 to 11,800). This increase may in part be due to improved registration of alcohol involvement at the emergency departments.

In 2017, according to the estimations of the National Institute for Public Health and Environment, 1,906 people died as a result of the consequences of alcohol-related illnesses. International estimations of alcohol mortality in the Netherlands are also available, but these differ due to differences in methodology and must be further investigated. Stroke, mental illnesses related to alcohol, and digestive tract illnesses are major causes of alcohol-related death.
Tobacco

Downward trend in smoking
In 2019, 21.7% of the Dutch population aged 18 and older smoked (daily and non-daily) and 15.9% smoked daily. The percentage of smokers (daily and non-daily) fell from 25.7% in 2014 to 21.7% in 2019. There is a reduction in the prevalence of smoking among adults with both a lower and a higher level of education. However, the reduction is less among people that have a lower level of education than among people with a higher level. Between 2015 and 2017, a further decrease was seen in the percentage of pupils aged 12-16 who had ever smoked and had smoked in the past month; in 2019 these percentages did not decrease further. Pupils attending lower secondary school (VMBO-b) smoke the most, while those attending higher secondary school (pre-university) smoke the least.

In 2019, 1.6% of the Dutch population aged 18 and older regularly smoked an e-cigarette.

One in three adult smokers made a ‘serious’ attempt to stop smoking in 2019
In 2019, almost one third (32.8%) of smokers aged 18 and older made a serious attempt to stop smoking. In 2018, this percentage was higher (36.9%). Less educated smokers made less often a serious attempt to quit (27.4%), compared to those with intermediate education (35.1%). About a third of the highly educated smokers made an attempt to stop (32.9%).

Smoking is still the number one cause of illness and premature death
In the Netherlands, more than 9% of the total disease burden can be attributed to smoking. In 2018, an estimated 19,275 people aged 20 and older in the Netherlands died as a direct effect of smoking. Lung cancer is the main cause of death directly related to smoking, excluding mortality due to passive smoking. The actual number of smoking-related deaths is higher, because the effects of passive smoking have not been taken into account.

0.5 Alcohol- and drug-related crime

Illicit trafficking, production and possession of drugs

Criminal investigations into organised subversive drug crime
The number of criminal investigations carried out into organised drug crime that undermines society has increased. In 2019, a total of 613 criminal investigations were carried out, compared to 578 in 2018. In 122 cases, it involved a large-scale hemp cultivation, in 250 cases cocaine and heroin trafficking, and in 238 cases synthetic drugs.

Seized drugs
In 2019, the following figures related to seized drugs were registered (as absolute lower limit): 1,420 kilos of weed, 1,552 kilos of hashish, 556,802 cannabis plants, 3,956 cannabis buds, 1,326 kilos of heroin, 43,836 kilos of cocaine, 599 kilos of ecstasy/MDMA, 475 kilos of Amphetamine, 550 kilos of Methamphetamine, 287 kilos of Crystal Meth, 51 kilos of DMT, 2,271 kilos of Qat, 1,630 grams of GHB, 19 kilos of ketamine.

Synthetic drugs
In 2019 a total of 90 synthetic drug production sites were reported as being dismantled (in 2018 a total of 82).
The number of reports of dismantled storage locations has increased from 79 in 2018 to 85 in 2019. The number of reports of waste dumping dropped from 292 to 191.

**Hemp cultivation**

In 2019, a total of 3,635 hemp farms were closed. That is a decrease compared to 2018, when 3,913 hemp farms were shut down.

**Contract killings related to organised drug trafficking**

Liquidations are usually the result of conflicts related to drug trafficking. The number of liquidations in the Netherlands has been decreasing since 2017. In 2017, 31 drug related liquidations took place, compared to 20 in 2018 and 17 in 2019.

**Alcohol and drug related incidents**

The number of soft and hard drug incidents registered by the police increased in 2019. This increase followed a falling trend in the period 2014-2018. The increase in incidents is not equally strong in all police units.

**People suspected of Opium Act offences**

The number of registered people suspected of Opium Act offences reached 19,400 in 2019. After decreasing for years, the number of registered suspects has increased again since 2017.

**Opium Act cases submitted to the Public Prosecution Service and the courts**

In 2019, about 16,300 opium law cases were registered. This is an increase, after a slight decrease in 2017 and 2018.

**Hard and soft drugs**

At the public prosecution service, the number of hard drug cases increased for the second year in a row. The number of soft drug cases also slightly increased again in 2019 after a decrease in 2018. It should be noted that the observed increase is affected by a change in the registration system. The number of combination cases (hard and soft drugs) remained about the same.

Since 2018, there have been more hard drugs than soft drugs cases at the public prosecution service. Hard drug cases usually concern the possession of a hard drug; soft drug cases usually concern drug production (usually: cannabis cultivation).

**Sanctions**

In 2019, the majority of Opium Act cases resulted in community service orders, followed by (partly) unconditional custodial sentences (imposed by the judge) and financial sanctions by the public prosecution service. This situation has remained unchanged in recent years. Community service orders were mostly imposed in soft drug cases, unconditional custodial sentences are mostly imposed in hard drug cases.

On the reference date of 30 September 2019, 20% of the 8,250 prisoners were detained for an opium law offense. In 2019, the number of detainees for an opium law offense rose for the third year in a row, to over 1,600.

**Crimes committed and nuisance caused by alcohol and drug users**

**Alcohol and drug related crime**

In 2019, the number of suspects listed in the police register as alcohol and/or drug users decreased compared to previous years. Property crimes are the most common. In addition, there were also many violent, traffic and Opium Act offences.
Driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs

In 2019, the police registered 31,915 driving under influence suspects, an increase of 13% compared to 2018 (preliminary figures). Apparently, the number of registered suspects seemed smaller from March to May 2020 than in the same months in previous years, due to the coronavirus crisis.

Care for litigants

In 2019, the probation service issued 42,141 recommendations, which is less than in 2018 (50,051 recommendations). The numbers for 2018 and 2019 are not fully comparable, as the probation service adjusted its work processes. For 13% of the clients, addiction was the reason for the offence.

In 2019, 31,562 clients were supervised by the probation service. This is less than in 2018 when 32,387 clients were under probation. In 2019, 34,207 community service orders were imposed, slightly less than in 2018 (35,327).

Alcohol and drug related crimes

An extensive population study shows that approximately 25% of the respondents were affected by nuisance in their own neighbourhoods caused by drug trafficking or by the use of drugs and alcohol on the street at some point in time. This percentage has remained fairly constant since 2012. A minority (approximately 3%) were seriously affected.

0.6 Table 1a, part 1: Key figures substance use Opium Act substances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USE IN GENERAL POPULATION (2019)</th>
<th>Cannabis</th>
<th>Cocaine</th>
<th>Opiates</th>
<th>Ecstasy</th>
<th>Amphetamine</th>
<th>GHB</th>
<th>Sedatives and tranquillizers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage last-month users 18+</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>Hardly any</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>6.5% (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage last-year users 18+</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>Hardly any</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>10.2% (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend in use</td>
<td>The same</td>
<td>Rise</td>
<td>The same</td>
<td>Rise</td>
<td>The same</td>
<td>The same</td>
<td>The same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International comparison</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADOLESCENT, PUPIL USE (2019)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage last-month users</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend (2003-2017/2019)</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. Heroin (and methadone). II. Trend data is available for the age range 18+ for 2015 to 2019 (see appendix A). III. Compared to the weighted average of ‘ever use’ (15-64 years) in the member states of the European Union, for opiates with respect to the number of problem users (15-64 years) of the drugs (EMCDDA). IV. Compared to the unweighted average in 35 European countries (ESPAD). V. In the three largest Dutch cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague), 0.5% are addicted to crack. VI. Addiction care as registered pseudonymized in the National Alcohol and Drugs Information System (LADIS). VII. The definitions and methods used to estimate drug-, alcohol- and tobacco-related deaths differ and these categories cannot be compared. Primary cause of death: substance as primary (underlying) cause of death. Sudden death: primary deaths where the person dies rapidly after taking a lethal amount of a substance. Secondary cause of death: substance as secondary cause of death (contributing factor or complication). See explanation in appendix B4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>29,300</td>
<td>± 14,000</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>(dependency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>40,200</td>
<td>1,794</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>4,501</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>803</td>
<td>(abuse)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF ADDICTION CARE CLIENTS (2015)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substance as primary problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance as secondary problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend (2006-2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After rise, stable since 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS (2018)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substance as primary diagnosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance as secondary diagnosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend (2015-2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGISTERED DEATHS (2019)**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hardly any sudden deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 (sudden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124 (sudden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (sudden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (sudden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94 (sudden)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 0.7 Table 1a, part 2: Key figures substance use alcohol and tobacco

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USE IN GENERAL POPULATION (2019)</th>
<th>Alcohol</th>
<th>Tobacco</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage last-year users 18+</td>
<td>79.1%</td>
<td>21.7%(^i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International comparison</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>Below average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADOLESCENT, PUPIL USE (2019)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of last-month users, aged, 12-16(^a)</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>7.7% (last-month(^b))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend (2003-2019)</td>
<td>Fall stagnates</td>
<td>Fall stagnates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International comparison, aged 15/16 (2015)(^\text{III})</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>Below average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF PROBLEM USERS</th>
<th>2007-2009</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>82,400 (dependent)</td>
<td>417,782(^\text{IV})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>395,600 (abuse)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF ADDICTION CARE CLIENTS (2015)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substance as primary problem</td>
<td>29,374</td>
<td>809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance as secondary problem</td>
<td>4,575</td>
<td>3,136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS (2018)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substance as primary diagnosis</td>
<td>5,770</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance as secondary diagnosis</td>
<td>21,415</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend (2015-2018)</td>
<td>Rise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGISTERED DEATHS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,906 (2017)</td>
<td>19,275 (2018)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1. This is the percentage of smokers (daily and non-daily) aged 18 and older according to the Statistics Netherlands (CBS) Health Survey/Lifestyle Monitor in collaboration with the RIVM and the Trimbos Institute, 2019. II. Figure of last-month smoking among pupils in 2019 from the HBSC study. III. Compared to the unweighted average in 35 European countries (ESPAD). IV. Based on the percentage of heavy smokers (20 cigarettes or more per day) in the population aged 18 and older in 2019 (3.0%). V. Primary cause of death: substance as primary (underlying) cause of death, in contrast to secondary cause of death: substance as secondary cause of death (contributing factor or complication). VI. See appendix B4 for the method used to estimate alcohol and smoking-related mortality.
### Table 1b Key figures drug crime: Opium Act offences submitted to the Criminal Justice System in the period 2010-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase in the system</th>
<th>Number Opium Act 2014-2019</th>
<th>Number of incidents registered at the police</th>
<th>Number of Criminal investigations&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Number of suspects Police&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>New Public Prosecution cases&lt;sup&gt;v&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Number of settlements by judge in the 1st instance&lt;sup&gt;v&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Number of detainees&lt;sup&gt;v&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hard and soft drugs</strong></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>--- (2014: 7%)</td>
<td>975 (2018: 1,005)</td>
<td>650 (2018: 670)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Most recent development compared to previous year (absolute)**
- Rise for hard and soft drugs
- Rise only for synthetic drugs (from 204 to 238)
- Rise, mainly for hard drugs, less for soft drugs
- Fall mainly for soft drugs, to a lesser degree for hard drugs and combination cases
- Fall

**Global trend in period**
- Falling for both soft and hard drugs from 2014 to 2018, rising in 2019
- Rise, mainly for heroin and cocaine (until 2018) and synthetic drugs (until 2019) fall proportion of large-scale hemp cultivation
- Falling from 2012 to 2017, then rising
- Stable from 2011 to 2016, falling until 2018, then rising (soft drugs dominate until 2017, then hard drugs dominate)
- Rising from 2012 to 2017, then fall especially for soft drugs (soft drugs dominate from 2012 to 2018, then hard drugs dominate
- Falling to 2016, then rising

**% Opium Act of total**
- 7.4% (2018: 7%)
- 8.6% (2018: 9.1%)
- 9.3% (2018: 9.9%)
- 20% (2018: 20%)

**Most recent development compared to previous year**
- Rise
- Fall
- Stable

**Global trend in period**
- Falling from 2014 to 2018, then rising
- Rising to 2013, constant to 2017, then rising
- Rising to 2016, then falling
- Rising to 2017, then falling
- Falling to 2014, constant to 2017, then rising

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