

UNODC Drugs Monitoring Platform Brief:

Update on patterns and trends in heroin and methamphetamine trafficking from 2020 to 2022 for Afghanistan and neighbouring regions

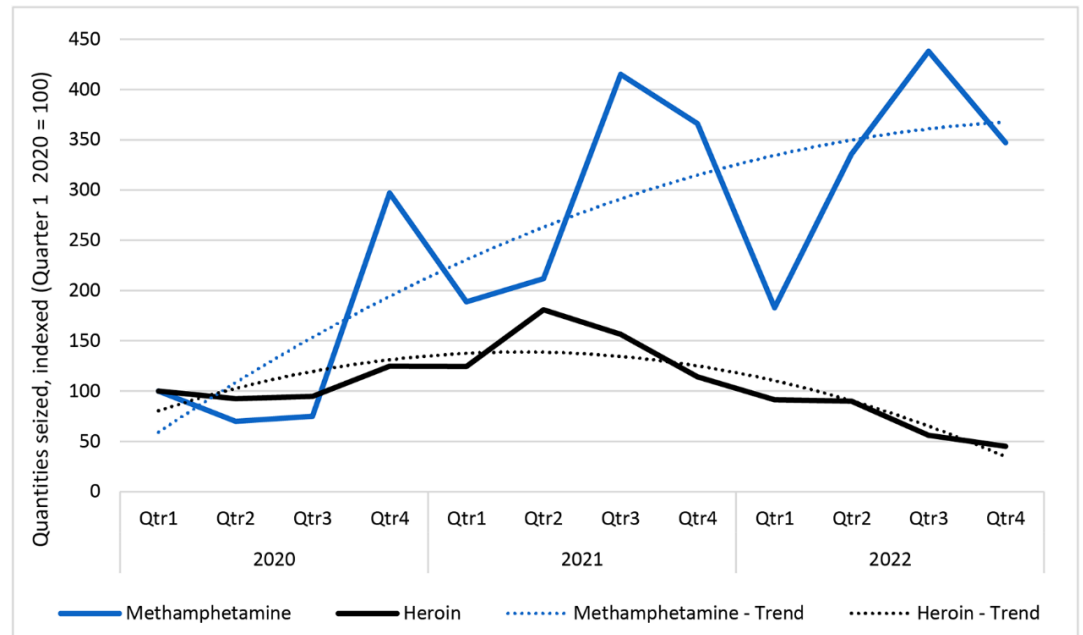
1

Size and flows of individual heroin and methamphetamine seizures suggest that heroin trafficking has continued, although at a lower rate in Afghanistan and neighbouring regions after August 2021 and through 2022, especially along the Balkan route, while methamphetamine trafficking has intensified indicating a rapid expansion of the drug's manufacture.

2

Heroin seizure patterns suggest an intensification of heroin trafficking southward from Afghanistan towards the southern coast of Pakistan and the western coast of India in the period after August 2021 through 2022.

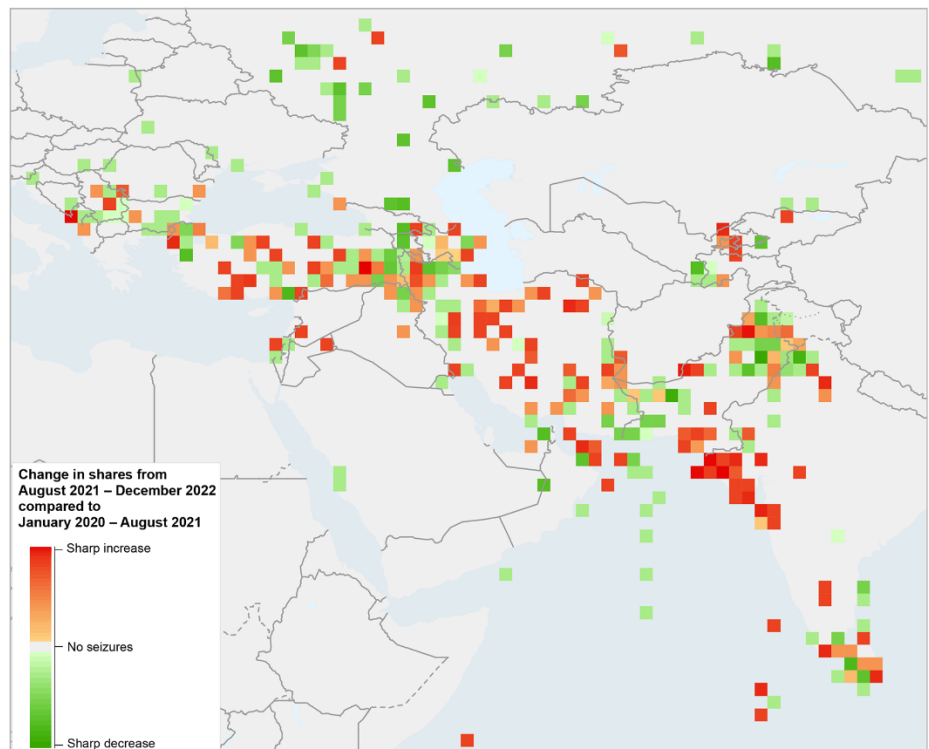
FIGURE 1: INDEX OF QUARTERLY HEROIN AND METHAMPHETAMINE SEIZURES AMOUNTS RECORDED IN THE DRUGS MONITORING PLATFORM IN CENTRAL ASIA AND TRANSCAUCASIA, EAST EUROPE, NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST, SOUTH-EAST EUROPE, SOUTH-WEST ASIA, SOUTH ASIA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN, 2020-2022



Note: Trend data are shown in relation to an average quantity of seizure events prior to first quarter of 2020 with 100 equals Quarter 1 of 2020.

Source: UNODC, Drugs Monitoring Platform

MAP 1: CHANGES IN CONCENTRATION OF HEROIN SEIZURE EVENTS AFTER AUGUST 2021 THROUGH DECEMBER 2022



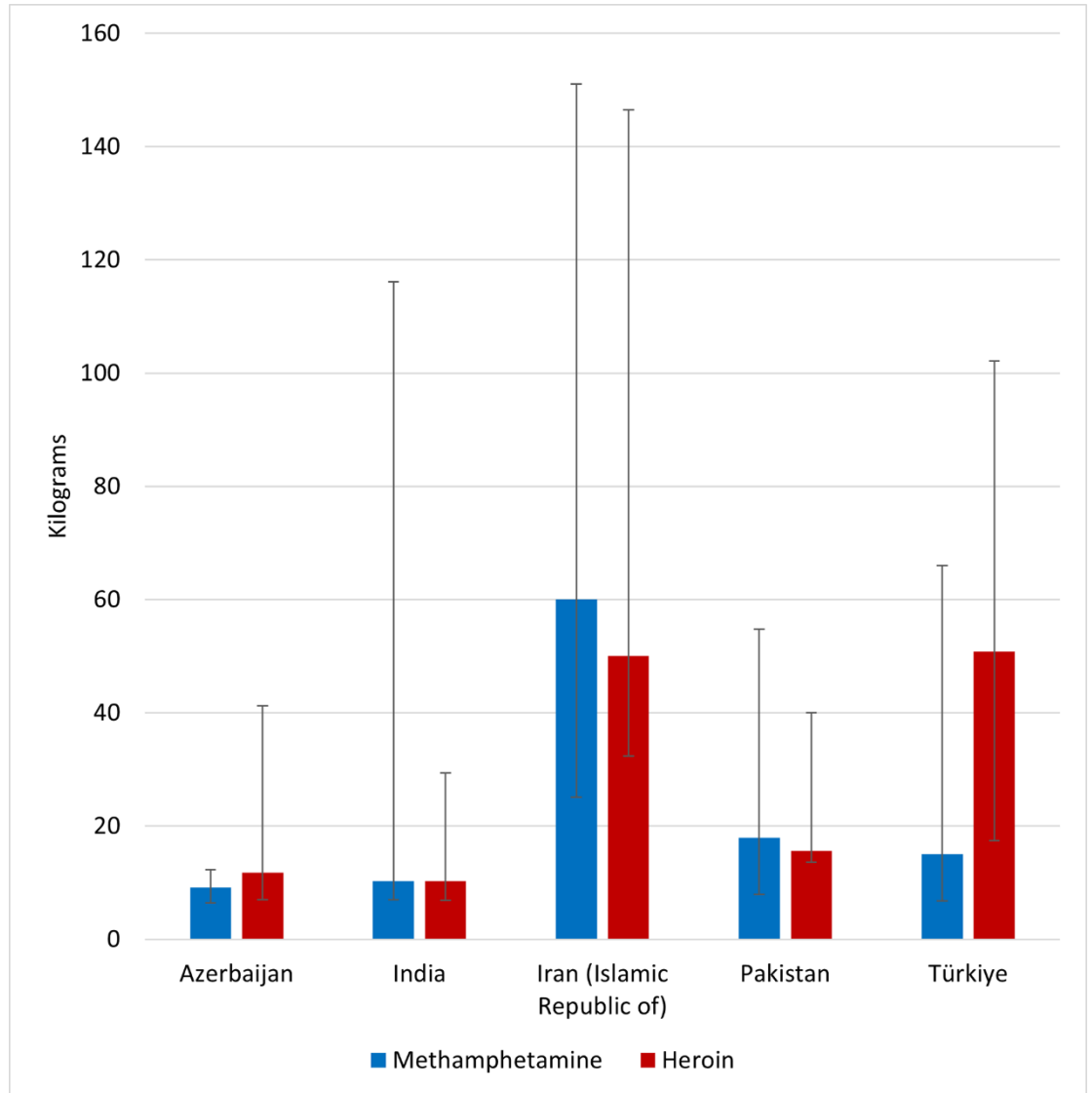
Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. The shares were calculated summing the number of heroin seizures per 1 degree grid cell, normalized by the total number of seizures in the map area. The changes were calculated as a ratio between the time periods. Seizures at sea or 'Maritime' seizures are ascribed to a body of water when they occur in international waters, or in cases where the country of jurisdiction is not readily determined.

Source: UNODC, Drugs Monitoring Platform

3

Different regions and countries are affected by different levels of trafficking of heroin and methamphetamine. Median weight of heroin seizures in Türkiye are notably larger than methamphetamine seizures, suggesting that heroin is transshipped through Türkiye but methamphetamine is distributed within the country at a wholesale level. Iran (Islamic Republic of) is used as a transshipment area for both heroin and methamphetamine. Overall, South-West Asia can be identified as having a transshipment role for methamphetamine to onward wholesale markets, while South-East Europe maintains an important transshipment role in trafficking of heroin towards the main market in West and Central Europe.

FIGURE 2: MEDIAN WEIGHT OF AN INDIVIDUAL DRUG SEIZURE CASE IN KILOGRAMS IN AZERBAIJAN, INDIA, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, PAKISTAN AND TÜRKIYE BY DRUG, IN KILOGRAMS, 2020-2022

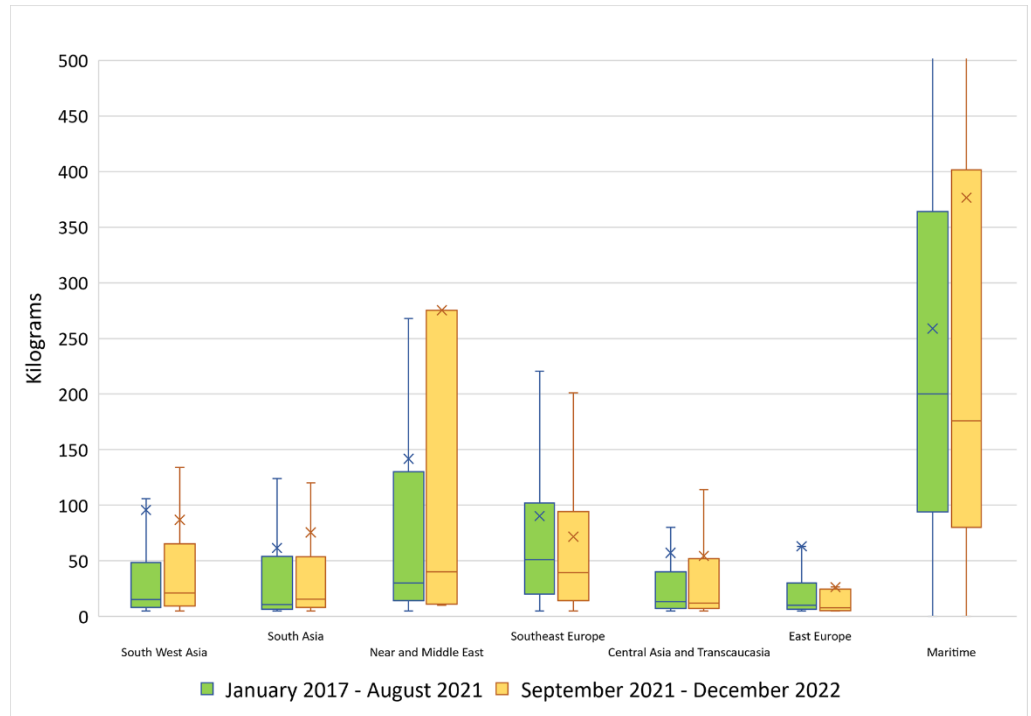


Note: Error bars indicate the range between the first and third quartiles. Seizures cases under 5kg have been excluded from the analysis to allow for a comparison of medium to large seizures to examine possible trends in trafficking.
Source: UNODC, Drugs Monitoring Platform

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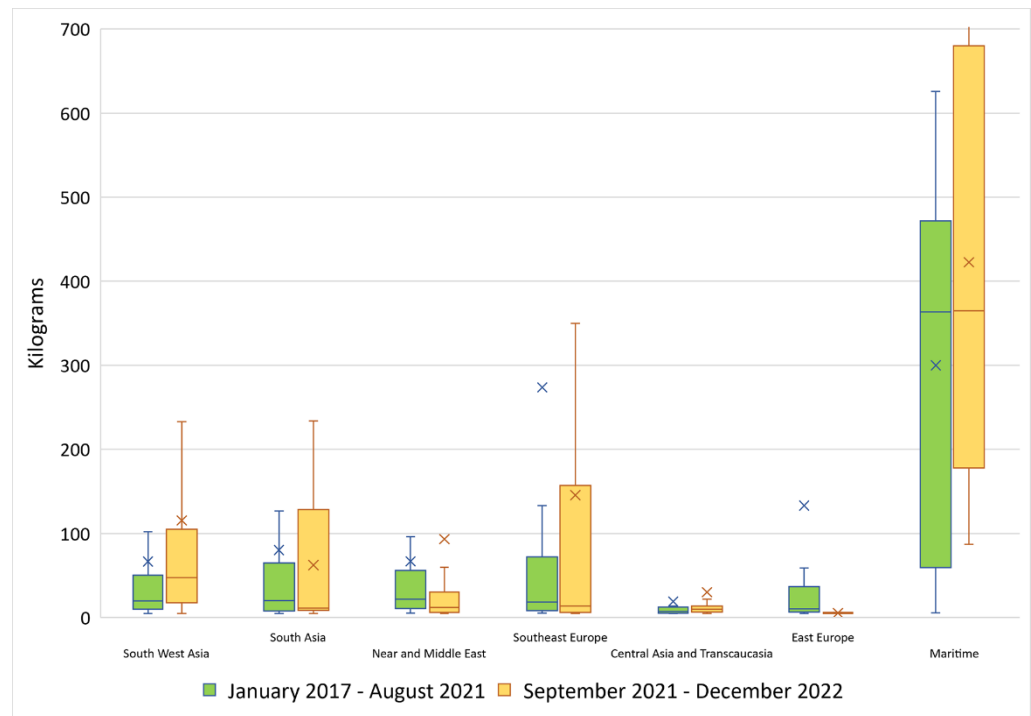
Median weights of large heroin and methamphetamine seizures before and after August 2021 are largely unchanged across most regions examined. However, regional differences in weights are shown. Maritime seizures generally weigh more than those occurring overland, but median heroin and methamphetamine seizure weights show modest changes before and after August 2021. Maritime routes may offer traffickers a lower risk means to move considerably larger shipments to end markets.

FIGURE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF WEIGHTS OF INDIVIDUAL LARGE HEROIN SEIZURES BY SUB-REGION, BEFORE AND AFTER AUGUST 2021



Note: The Whisker diagram shows the average (symbolized "x") as well as the median ("—"), the interquartile range [box] and the minimum and maximum figures without outliers. 'Large' seizures refer to individual drug seizure cases of 5 kg or more of heroin. Seizures cases under 5 kg have been excluded from the analysis to allow for a comparison of medium to large seizures to examine possible trends in trafficking. Seizures at sea or 'Maritime' seizures are ascribed to a body of water when they occur in international waters, or in cases where the country of jurisdiction is not readily determined.
Source: UNODC, Drugs Monitoring Platform

FIGURE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF WEIGHTS OF INDIVIDUAL LARGE METHAMPHETAMINE SEIZURES BY SUB-REGION, BEFORE AND AFTER AUGUST 2021



Note: The Whisker diagram shows the average (symbolized "x") as well as the median ("—"), the interquartile range [box] and the minimum and maximum figures without outliers. 'Large' seizures refer to individual drug seizure cases of 5 kg or more of heroin. Seizures cases under 5 kg have been excluded from the analysis to allow for a comparison of medium to large seizures to examine possible trends in trafficking. Seizures at sea or 'Maritime' seizures are ascribed to a body of water when they occur in international waters, or in cases where the country of jurisdiction is not readily determined.
Source: UNODC, Drugs Monitoring Platform

Introduction

Building on earlier efforts of the UNODC Drugs Monitoring Platform, this brief examines dimensions of seizure event data to enable early assessments of possible changes in trafficking patterns.¹

This analysis is based on selected countries situated along the initial stages of the southern route and along the Balkan (excluding West and Central Europe), Caucasus, and northern routes, focusing on seizures of heroin and methamphetamine of 5 kilograms or larger in size taking place in South-West Asia, South Asia, the Near and Middle East, East Europe, South-East Europe, Central Asia and Transcaucasia. Seizures in bodies of water within the mentioned regions, such as the Gulf of Oman or the Indian Ocean, are also included and referred to as “Maritime” seizures. The specific intention is to focus on possible trafficking in heroin and methamphetamine from Afghanistan, a major source of illegally produced drugs, and trafficking in neighbouring regions.

To read more, please visit <https://dmp.unodc.org/>

UNODC ACKNOWLEDGES THE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THIS BRIEF

¹ The analysis contained here is based on a continually updated set of individual drug seizure data captured by the Drugs Monitoring Platform. The Drugs Monitoring Platform and its analytical outputs aim at providing knowledge based on a constantly evolving and expanding dataset, bearing in mind that several data caveats should be considered.