



# JAPAN

## Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

### Methamphetamine

- Preliminary data for seizures of crystalline methamphetamine show only a slight increase in 2021 compared to 2020. The low number of air passenger-related seizures likely reflect the impact of COVID-19 travel restrictions in Japan in 2021 (table 2).
- Following the trend observed in 2020, the number of cases and seizure amount for methamphetamine trafficked by air passenger dropped even further in 2021 from 23 cases to only 5. Meanwhile, though trafficking using sea cargo remained the same, the use of air cargo and international mail rose in 2021 (figure 4 and 5).
- Asian countries are the most common embarkation point in terms of number of cases as well as seizure amounts of methamphetamine trafficking to Japan in 2021, with Malaysia overtaking Thailand and Viet Nam as the country of embarkation with the highest number of cases. Hong Kong, China was the most important source by weight, accounting for 47 per cent of the total amount seized by Japan Customs throughout the year (figure 3).<sup>1</sup>
- The typical retail price of crystalline methamphetamine has remained stable over the past few years and is still the highest price in East and Southeast Asia (table 3).

### “Ecstasy”<sup>2</sup>

- Preliminary data indicate that seizures of “ecstasy” have increased year on year for the past six years (table 2).

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

- The number of arrestees related to NPS in Japan has continued to decline since 2015 (figure 1). However, NPS use and trafficking remains a concern, particularly for synthetic cannabinoids, which continue to be seized in Japan and accounted for 8 of the 17 newly classified “designated substances” in 2021, as of October 2021.<sup>3</sup>
- Though few in number, synthetic opioids continue to be identified in Japan, with three new substances in this group reported to the UNODC Early Warning Advisory in 2021 (figure 6 and table 4).

### Other drugs

- The number of people brought into formal contact with authorities for cannabis has increased every year since 2013 (figure 1). Of concern is the rising proportion of people younger than 30, which increased significantly from 57.4 per cent of the total number of people brought into formal contact with authorities for cannabis in 2019 to 66.7 per cent in 2020.<sup>4</sup>

1 Japan Customs, “Summary of Japan Customs’ Enforcement in 2021”, February 2022.

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

3 National Police Agency (NPA) and Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Japan”, presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Workshop, November-December 2021.

4 Ibid.

## Key facts and figures

### Drug demand indicators

**Table 1. Trends in use of selected drugs in Japan, 2009-2021**

Drug type	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021
Crystalline methamphetamine	↓	↑	↑	↔	↔	●	●
“Ecstasy”	↔	↓	↑	↓	↑	●	●
Cannabis	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑	●	●
NPS	●	●	●	↓	↓	●	●

Source: UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) Japan for 2019 and previous years.

Note: ↑ = Increase, ↓ = Decrease, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported.

### Drug supply indicators

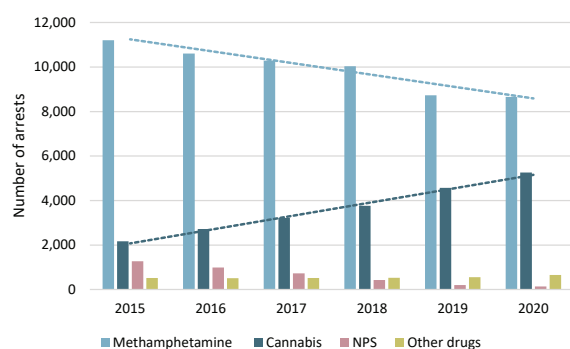
**Table 2. Seizures of selected drugs in Japan, 2016-2021**

Drug type	Unit	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*
Crystalline methamphetamine	kg	1,521.4	1,136.6	1,206.7	2,649.7	824.4	912
“Ecstasy”	tablets	5,122	3,244	12,307	73,915	106,308	127,000
Cannabis herb	kg	159.7	270.5	337.3	430.1	299.1	22
Cannabis resin	kg	1.0	21.9	3.1	14.8	3.6	132
Cocaine	kg	113.3	11.6	157.4	639.9	821.7	14
Heroin	kg	0	70.3	0	16.7	14.8	0
Opium	kg	0.7	0	0	0	0	4

Sources: UNODC ARQ Japan for 2020 and previous years; National Police Agency (NPA) and Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Japan”, presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Workshop, November-December 2021; Japan Customs, “Summary of Japan Customs’ Enforcement in 2021”, February 2022.

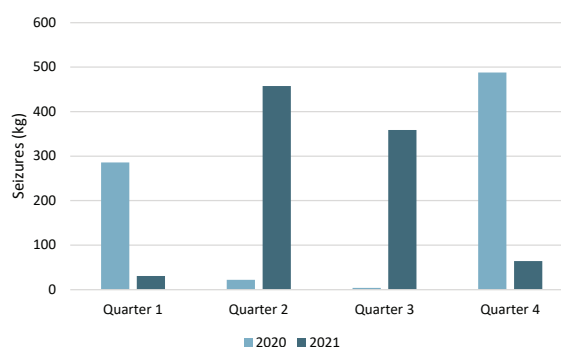
Note: \* Data are preliminary and only include the amounts as reported by Japan Customs; ● = Not reported.

**Figure 1. Number of drug-related arrests in Japan, by drug type, 2015-2020**



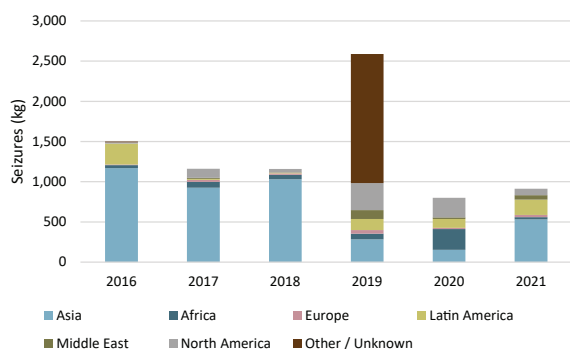
Source: Official communication with MHLW, June 2021.

**Figure 2. Seizure amounts of methamphetamine in Japan, by quarter, as reported by Japan Customs, 2020-2021**



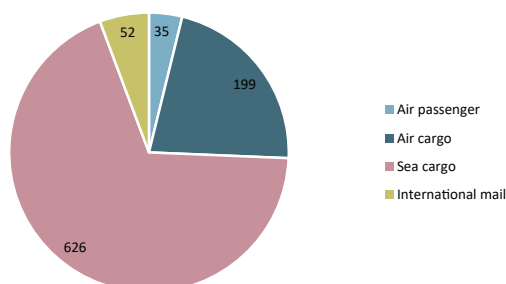
Source: Japan Customs, “Summary of Japan Customs’ Enforcement in 2021”, February 2022.

**Figure 3. Proportion of embarkation points of methamphetamine trafficking to Japan, by seizure amount, as reported by Japan Customs, 2016-2021**



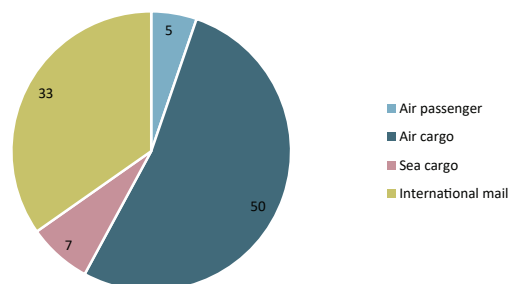
Source: Japan Customs, "Summary of Japan Customs' Enforcement in 2021", February 2022.

**Figure 4. Seizures of methamphetamine in Japan, by mode of trafficking and seizure amount (kg), as reported by Japan Customs, 2021**



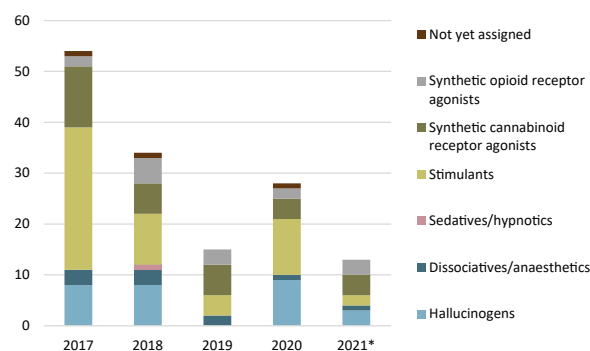
Source: Japan Customs, "Summary of Japan Customs' Enforcement in 2021", February 2022.

**Figure 5. Seizures of methamphetamine in Japan, by mode of trafficking and number of cases, as reported by Japan Customs, 2021**



Source: Japan Customs, "Summary of Japan Customs' Enforcement in 2021", February 2022.

**Figure 6. NPS reported annually to UNODC in Japan, by effect group, 2017-2021**



Source: UNODC Early Warning Advisory (EWA) on NPS.  
Note: \* Data are preliminary.

**Table 3. Retail prices of selected drugs in Japan, 2016-2021 (US\$)**

Drug type	Unit	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Crystalline methamphetamine	per g	588	560	562	562	613.56	535
"Ecstasy"	per tablet	36.7	36	37	37.5	38.35	●
Cannabis herb	per g	55	55	47	47	57.52	●
Heroin	per g	276	270	281.4	281.4	287.60	●
Cocaine	per g	●	●	187.6	187.6	191.74	●

Sources: NPA and MHLW, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Japan", presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Workshop, November-December 2021 and previous years.

Note: ● = Not reported.

**Table 4. New synthetic opioids in Japan reported to UNODC, 2020-2021**

Year	Substance name
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crotonylfentanyl</li> <li>• Valeryl-fentanyl</li> </ul>
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isotonitazene</li> <li>• Isobutyrylfentanyl</li> <li>• 2-methyl-AP-237</li> </ul>

Source: UNODC EWA on NPS.