

Lao PDR

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Summary of major trends and emerging concerns

Methamphetamine

- The use of Lao PDR as a transit for methamphetamine trafficked from Myanmar intensified. Although annual seizure amounts of crystalline methamphetamine nearly halved in 2021, seizures of methamphetamine tablets increased exponentially and reached a record amount, over double the amount seized in the previous five years combined (table 2 and figure 5).
- As for the past several years, methamphetamine represents the largest proportion of drug-related offences, drug users brought into formal contact with authorities, and treatment admissions (figure 2).¹
- Lao PDR has also served as an important transit for chemicals suspected to be destined for the illicit manufacture of drugs. Seizure amounts of unspecified chemicals suspected to be intended for illicit drug manufacture decreased in 2021 compared to the record amount of 2020 but exceeded the amounts seized in the years before (table 2).

“Ecstasy”²

- There is limited information on “ecstasy” use in Lao PDR, and authorities have not reported any seizures of the drug (table 2).

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and other synthetic drugs

- For the first time, a small amount of ketamine was seized in Lao PDR in 2021 (table 2).

Other drugs

- From 2018 onwards, the amount of opium seized in Lao PDR has declined each year (table 2). Perceived use of opium follows a similar trend, with experts indicating decreasing use of the drug every year since 2018 (table 1).

1 Lao National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision (LCDC), “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Lao PDR”, presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Workshop, November-December 2021.

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

Key facts and figures

Drug demand indicators

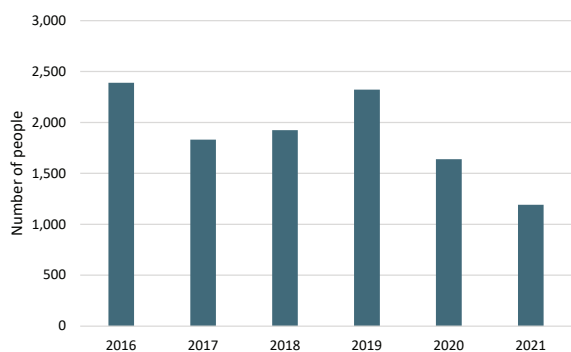
Table 1. Trend in use of selected drugs in Lao PDR, 2016-2021

Drug used in the past year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Methamphetamine tablets	↓	↑	↑	↓	↑	↑
Crystalline methamphetamine	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓
Cannabis herb	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑
Opium	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓
Heroin	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓

Sources: Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP); Official communication with the Lao National Commission for Drugs Control and Supervision (LCDC), March 2022.

Note: Based on expert perception provided by LCDC; ↑ = Increasing, ↓ = Decreasing, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported.

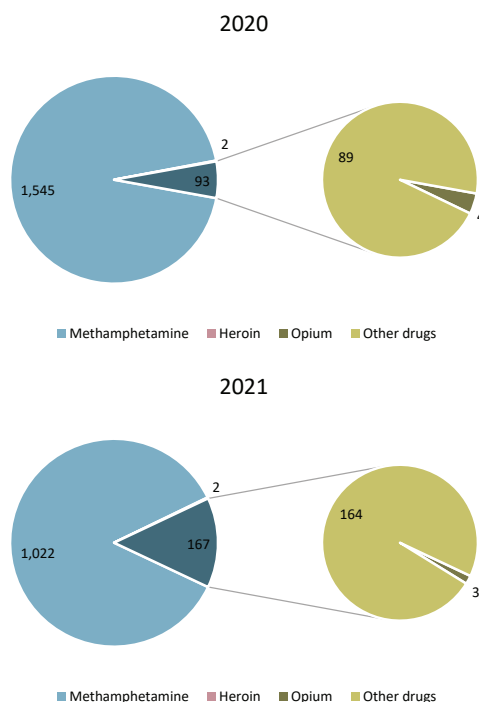
Figure 1. Number of drug users admitted for treatment in Lao PDR, 2016-2021



Sources: LCDC, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Lao PDR”, presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Workshop, November-December 2021; Official communication with LCDC, March 2022.

Note: The data here only represents drug users admitted to the Somsanga Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre, and it should be interpreted with caution to understand the drug use situation in the country.

Figure 2. Drug treatment centre admissions in Lao PDR, by drug type, 2020 and 2021



Sources: LCDC, “Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Lao PDR”, presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Workshop, November-December 2021; Official communication with LCDC, March 2022.

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Drug supply indicators

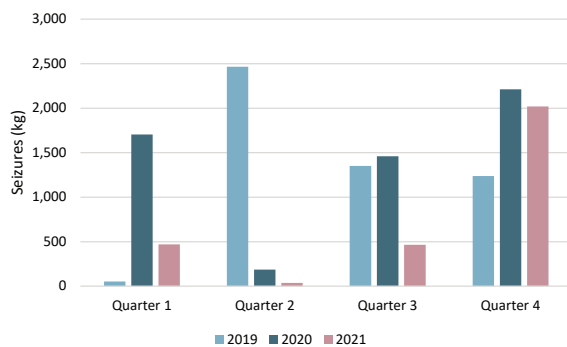
Table 2. Seizures of selected drugs and chemicals in Lao PDR, 2016-2021

Drug type	Unit	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Methamphetamine tablets	tablets	2,849,414	10,019,643	21,036,045	17,703,036	18,602,900	143,007,700
Crystalline methamphetamine	kg	150.0	124.4	1,841.4	5,106.9	5,564.4	2,991
Cannabis herb	kg	465.9	4,810.0	450.9	2,577.4	5,167.6	5,846.7
Cocaine	kg	0	0	8.3	3.5	0	●
Heroin	kg	221.0	149.5	281.2	174.0	537.2	467.8
Opium	kg	137.7	142.9	103.7	89.4	60.3	18.8
Ketamine	kg	●	●	●	●	●	4.1
Precursors and unspecified chemicals	kg	1,102.5	189.2	5,016.3	13,141.9	125,418	19,480.3

Sources: DAINAP; UNODC Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) Lao PDR for 2020 and previous years; LCDC, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Lao PDR", presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Workshop, November-December 2021; Official communication with LCDC, March 2022.

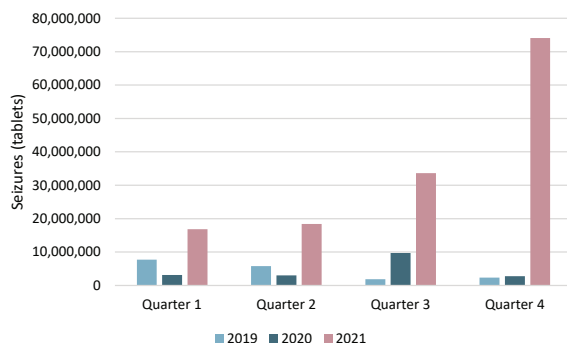
Note: ● = Not reported.

Figure 3. Seizure amounts of crystalline methamphetamine in Lao PDR, by quarter, 2019-2021



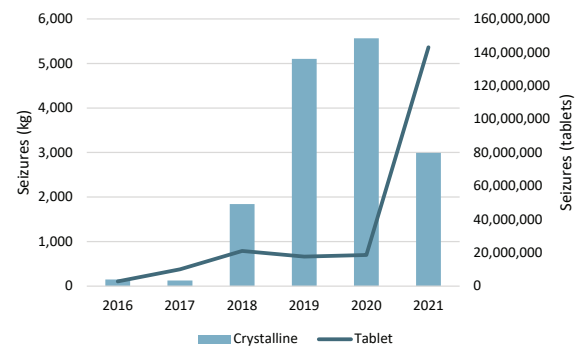
Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with LCDC, March 2022.

Figure 4. Seizure amounts of methamphetamine tablets in Lao PDR, by quarter, 2019-2021



Sources: DAINAP; Official communication with LCDC, March 2022.

Figure 5. Seizure amounts of crystalline methamphetamine and methamphetamine tablets in Lao PDR, 2016-2021



Sources: DAINAP; LCDC, "Latest situation on synthetic drugs and responses to the threats in Lao PDR", presented at the Global SMART Programme Regional Workshop, November-December 2021; Official communication with LCDC, March 2022.