Current NPS and synthetic opioids trends

Sabrina Levissianos
Associate Drug Control Officer (Illicit Synthetic Drugs),
Global Synthetics Monitoring, Analyses, Reporting and Trends Programme (SMART)
Global NPS situation

Number of individual NPS reported by effect group at global level, 2009-2021

- Synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists
- Dissociatives
- Classic hallucinogens
- not applicable
- Sedatives/Hypnotics
- Stimulants
- Synthetic opioids
- Unknown

The global emergence of New Psychoactive Substances

Map: Number of NPS reported by countries, 2009-2021

Currently almost 1100 unique substances have been reported to UNODC.

Synthetic opioids increased dramatically in recent years

Number of individual synthetic opioids reported by effect group at global level, 2009-2021*

New developments – Synthetic opioids reported for the 1st time

Innovative dynamics – Are nitazenes the new fentanyls?

Examples selected as representatives of new emerging structural classes

- O-Desmethyltramadol
- 1-Methyl-4-phenyl-4-propionoxypiperidine
- Isobutylfentanyl
- 1-Cyclohexyl-4-(1,2-diphenylethyl)piperazine (MT-45)
- U-47700
- Brorphine
- Isotonitazene

Source: UNODC Early Warning Advisory on NPS, Oct. 2021. *Note: Data from 2021 are still preliminary.
Top 15 synthetic opioids

U-47700 was reported by 32 countries in total in 2009-2021 with 7 country reports alone from the United States, followed by 6 country reports from Canada.

Synthetic opioids under international control

![Chart showing international scheduling decisions 2014–2021 for various drug categories: dissociatives, sedative hypnotics, hallucinogens, synthetic opioids, stimulants, synthetic cannabinoids, and precursors. The synthetic opioids category is highlighted with a large circle, indicating significant scheduling decisions in this area. The chart indicates the years 2014 to 2021 with bars representing the number of decisions for each year.]
Fentanyl manufacture emerging in Mexico

• 362 kg of fentanyl were seized in Mexico in 2018 and 206 kg in 2019

• According to DEA, Mexican cartels are involved in the production of fentanyl in Mexico - indications that fentanyl is also being manufactured or processed in other parts in the Latin American and Caribbean region
Fentanyl precursor trafficking to Mexico diversifies

- According to US authorities, illicit manufacture of fentanyl in Mexico relies mostly on the Janssen synthesis route (before, the Siegfried route was popular), which does not require controlled precursors NPP and ANPP.

- Additionally, the use of the non-scheduled precursor 4-AP as an alternative precursor chemical to NPP for the synthesis of ANPP has recently been noted.
Fentanyl precursors placed under international control

- 4-anilino-N-phenethylpiperidine (ANPP)
- N-phenethyl-4-piperidone (NPP)
Thank you!

UNODC - Making the world safer from drugs, crime and terrorism

- Email: unodc-globalsmart@un.org