

I. TRENDS IN ILLICIT DRUGS SMUGGLING

1. Seizures of Smuggled Illicit Drugs

The total number of seizures of smuggled illicit drugs^{*1} during the one-year period from January to December of 2021 was 833 (up by 12% from the previous year), and the total amount of seized illicit drugs^{*2,3} was approx. 1,138 kg (down by 41% (id.)). However, the seized amount exceeded 1 ton for the sixth consecutive year, recording the ninth largest amount. The situation has remained serious.

* 1 "Illicit drugs" refers to methamphetamine, cannabis, opium, narcotics (heroin, cocaine, MDMA, etc.), psychotropic substances and designated substances.

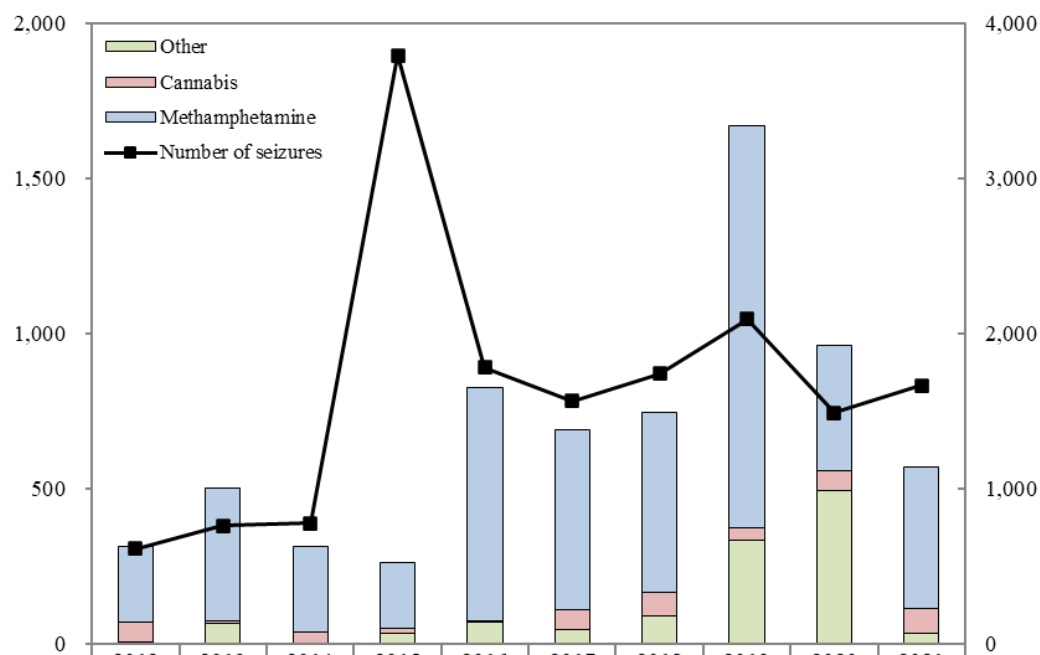
* 2 "The total amount of seized illicit drugs" excludes tablet formed drugs.

* 3 The seized amount excludes those whose weights, etc. are not defined. The same applies hereinafter.

Transition in the number of seizures of smuggled illicit drugs and the seized amount

(Seizures: cases)

(Seized amount: kg)



	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Methamphetamine	482	859	549	422	1,501	1,159	1,159	2,587	811	912
Cannabis	132	13	74	34	9	131	156	82	126	153
Other	11	135	6	66	140	90	178	670	991	73
Total	626	1,007	630	522	1,650	1,380	1,493	3,339	1,928	1,138
Number of seizures	308	382	390	1,896	892	784	871	1,047	745	833
Of which, cases of methamphetamine smuggling	141	154	174	83	104	151	169	425	72	95

(Note) "Others" includes opium, narcotics (heroin, cocaine, MDMA, etc.), psychotropic substances and designated substances.

Figures for 2021 are provisional.

(1) Methamphetamine

< Seizures of smuggled methamphetamine >

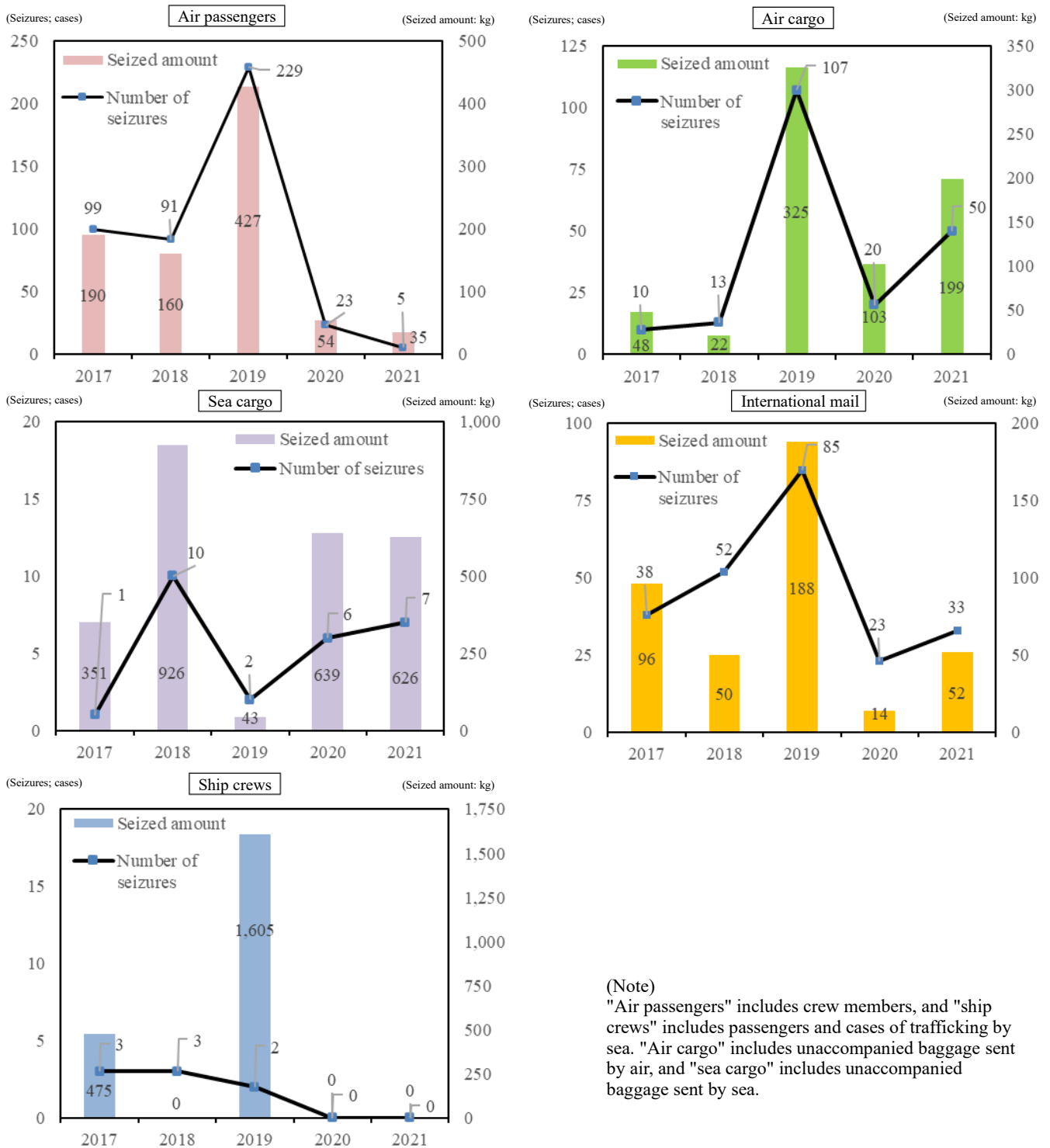
The number of seizures of smuggled methamphetamine during the one-year period from January to December of 2021 was 95 cases (up by 32% from the previous year), and the amount of seized methamphetamine also increased to approx. 912 kg (up by 12% (id.)).

Seized methamphetamine is equivalent to approximately 30.40 million doses, worth approximately 54.7 billion yen in end price.

By mode of transport, the number of seizures and seized amount of methamphetamine from air cargo, sea cargo, and international mail were almost the same as or larger than those in the previous year. The number of seizures from air cargo showed a 2.5-fold increase.

In the meantime, smuggling cases by air passengers decreased both in terms of the number of seizures and seized amount. There was no seizure involving a ship crew.

Transition in the number of seizures and seized amount

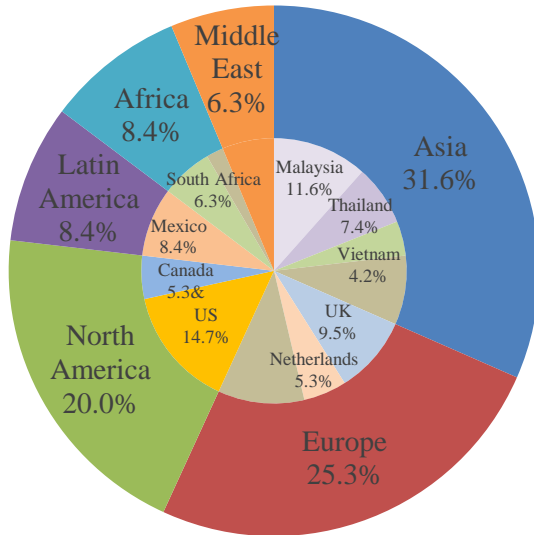


(Note)
 "Air passengers" includes crew members, and "ship crews" includes passengers and cases of trafficking by sea. "Air cargo" includes unaccompanied baggage sent by air, and "sea cargo" includes unaccompanied baggage sent by sea.

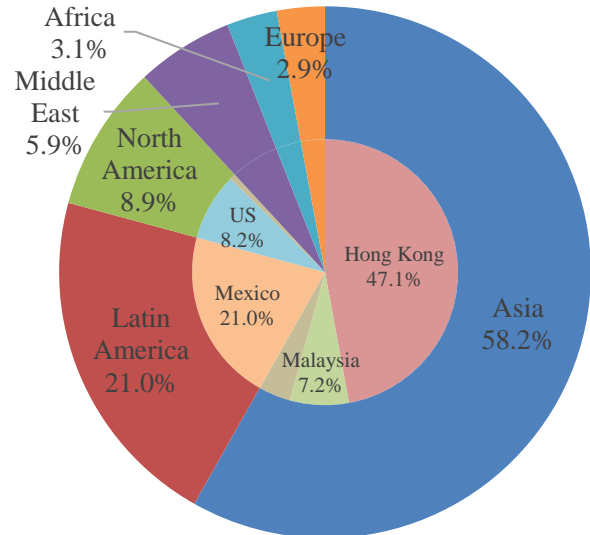
Looking at seizures by source, Asia accounted for the largest proportion, at 31.6% (30 cases), followed by Europe, at 25.3% (24 cases), and North America, at 20.0% (19 cases).

In terms of the seized amount, Asia accounted for 58.2% (approx. 531 kg) and Latin America 21.0% (approx. 192 kg). These two areas accounted for approx. 80% of the overall total.

Number of seizures of smuggled methamphetamine by source



Amount of seized methamphetamine by source



< Major seizures of smuggled methamphetamine >

[Case 1]

Customs seized **approx. 297 kg of methamphetamine** concealed in sea cargo (a laser beam machine) from Hong Kong. (Apr. 2021; Yokohama Customs)



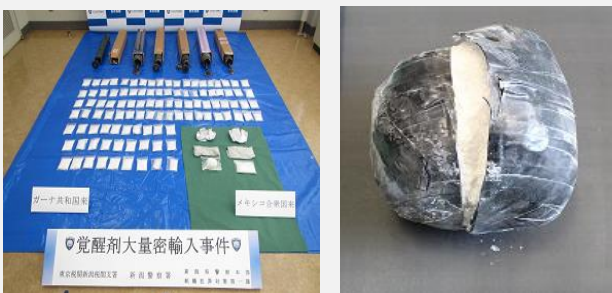
[Case 2]

Customs seized **a considerable amount of methamphetamine** concealed in sea cargo (charcoal) from Türkiye. (Nov. 2021; Tokyo Customs)



[Case 3]

Customs seized **approx. 11 kg of methamphetamine** concealed in air cargo (clay and rubber rollers) from Mexico, etc. (Apr. and May 2021; Tokyo Customs)



[Case 4]

Customs seized **approx. 8.7 kg of methamphetamine and approx. 430 g of cannabis** concealed in air cargo and international mail (a water purifier and tea bags, etc.) from Canada, etc. (Jun. 2021; Osaka Customs)



(2) Cannabis

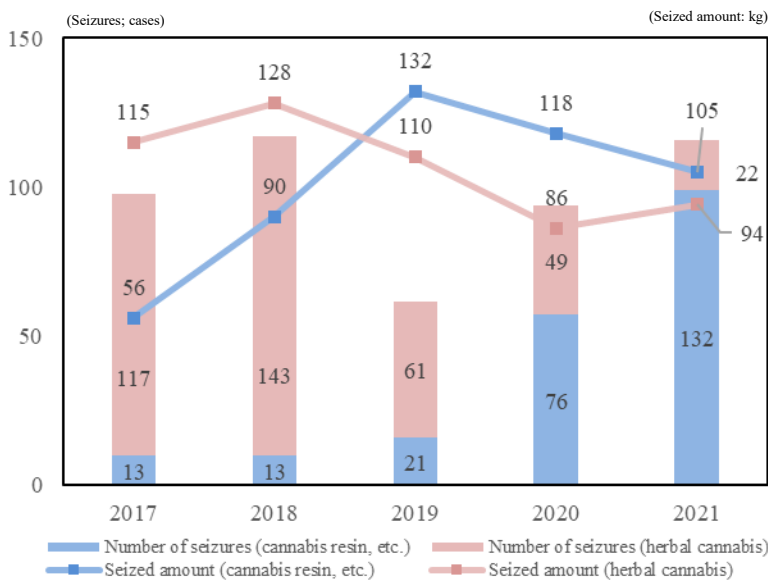
< Seizures of smuggled cannabis >

The number of seizures of smuggled cannabis during the one-year period from January to December of 2021 was 199 cases (down by 2% from the previous year), while the seized amount increased by 22% from the previous year to approx. 153 kg.

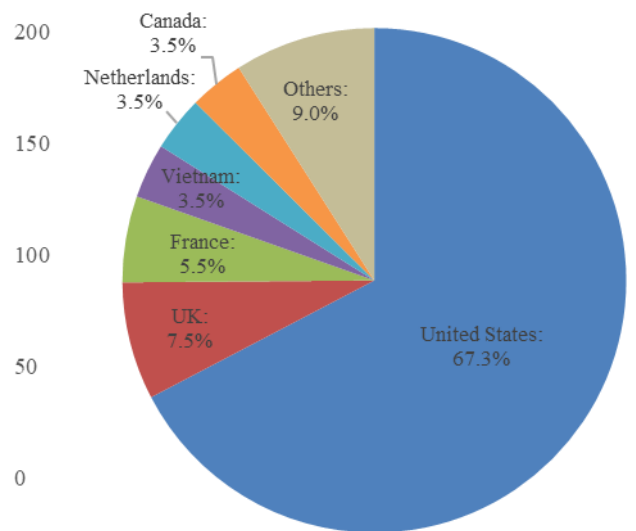
The seized amount decreased for herbal cannabis to approx. 22 kg (down by 56% (id.)), but increased for cannabis resin, etc. (including cannabis products, such as cannabis liquid and cannabis sweets, in addition to cannabis resin) to approx. 132 kg (up by 72% (id.)).

By source, North America accounted for approx. 70% of the overall total (67.3% from the United States and 3.5% from Canada).

Transition in the number of seizures of smuggled cannabis and seized amount



Number of seizures by source (2021)



< Major seizures of smuggled cannabis >

[Case 5]

Customs seized **approx. 7.9 kg of cannabis liquid** concealed in air cargo (oil cans) from the United States.

(May 2021; Nagoya Customs, etc.)



[Case 6]

Customs seized **approx. 3 g of cannabis liquid** concealed in international mail from the United States.

(Sep. 2021; Moji Customs)



(3) Narcotics

< Seizures of smuggled narcotics >

The number of seizures of smuggled narcotics (heroin, cocaine, MDMA, etc.) during the one-year period from January to December of 2021 increased to 230 cases (up by 38% from the previous year). The seized amount increased to approx. 130,000 tablets (up by 45% (id.)) but decreased to approx. 51 kg by weight (down by 94% (id.)).

The number of seizures of smuggled MDMA, etc. increased to 81 cases (up by 9% (id.)), with the increases observed in the seized amount of MDMA tablets (127,000 tablets [up by 42% (id.)]) and MDMA in other forms (approx. 27 kg [an approx. 16.2-fold increase (id.)]).

The number of seizures of smuggled cocaine increased to 34 cases (up by 26% (id.)), but the seized amount decreased* to approx. 14 kg (down by 98% (id.)).

* In 2020, there was a massive seizure of approx. 722 kg of smuggled cocaine, the largest-ever amount.

< Major seizures of smuggled narcotics >

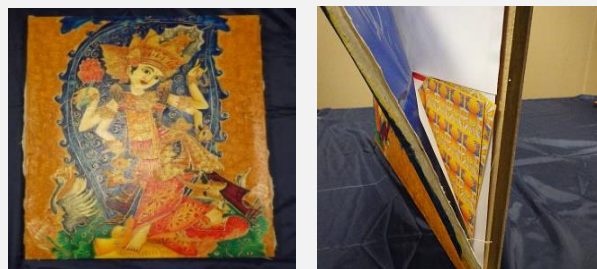
[Case 7]

Customs seized **approx. 15,000 tablets of MDMA** concealed in three pieces of international mail from Germany.
(Apr. 2021; Yokohama Customs)



[Case 8]

Customs seized **approx. 20 sheets of LSD (10,000 pills)** concealed in international mail (a painting) from the Netherlands.
(Aug. 2021; Osaka Customs)



(4) Designated Substances

< Seizures of smuggled designated substances >

The number of seizures of smuggled designated substances during the one-year period from January to December of 2021 increased to 302 cases (up by 1% from the previous year), but the seized amount decreased* to approx. 17 kg (down by 90% (id.)).

* In 2020, there was a massive seizure of approx. 156 kg of smuggled Sivagus, which contains dinitrogen monoxide, a designated substance.

< Major seizures of smuggled designated substances >

[Case 9]

Customs seized **approx. 315 g (52 bottles) of isobutyl nitrite** concealed in international mail from Vietnam.
(Apr. 2021; Kobe Customs, etc.)



[Case 10]

Customs seized **300 pieces of ADB-BUTINACA** concealed in international mail from Vietnam.
(Jun. 2021; Nagasaki Customs, etc.)



2. Influences of Illicit Drug Abuse

Methamphetamine and narcotics significantly harm the mental and physical health of people who abuse them, make them unable to live like human beings, or even cause deaths.

Hallucinations or delusions due to the illicit drug abuse may lead to heinous crimes, such as murder or arson, or traffic accidents in some cases. The abuse of illicit drugs may thus cause irredeemable damage not only to abusers themselves but also to the people around them and to society as a whole in the end.

(1) Mental and physical influences

The abuse of methamphetamine and other illicit drugs fatally destroys abusers' mental and physical health. Major organs are subject to serious adverse influences listed as follows, which may even cause death in the worst case.

- Brain: Brain atrophy and brain hemorrhage (memory deterioration and senility symptoms)
- Eyes: Optic nerve disorder and fundus hemorrhage (decreased vision and loss of sight)
- Bronchi: Mucosal abnormality (bronchitis)
- Lungs: Mucosal abnormality (lung cancer)
- Stomach: Gastric mucosal abnormality and bleeding (gastric pain, nausea, and emesis)
- Bone marrow: Red blood cell dysplasia (anemia)

The abuse of illicit drugs hinders normal brain development and worsens abusers' mental balance. Abusers may temporarily feel to be clear-headed or have nervous excitement, but will be overwhelmed by a sense of exhaustion or a feeling of fatigue, and will eventually have hallucinations and delusions.

(2) Influences on surrounding people

The abuse of illicit drugs not only exerts influences on individual abusers but also causes damage to the people around them and society as a whole. One of the representative adverse influences is violence. Long-term abuse of illicit drugs causes disturbance of perception, decreased appetite, emotional disorder, hallucinations and strong paranoia, due to which abusers often use violence on their family members or develop abnormal behavior, such as carrying a weapon all the time. Family members and people around them are swayed by such behavior and are forced to live with fear and suffering.

The high prices of illicit drugs often make abusers heavily debt-ridden, leading to the destruction of families or failure of lives, or triggering minors to take money from the home. The abuse of illicit drugs thus also causes serious economic problems.

Furthermore, the abuse of illicit drugs triggers various offenses. There seems no end to the heinous crimes, such as murder, arson, captivity, and injury, caused by hallucinations, delusions or flashbacks,* or theft just to get money for purchasing drugs.

Additionally, it is also a serious social problem that money paid by illicit drug abusers becomes the source of funds for international narcotics crime organizations and organized crime groups in Japan. In this manner, the influences of abuse of illicit drugs threaten people's lives on a broad scale from various aspects.

* Once a person develops a hallucination, delusion or other symptoms of mental illness due to the abuse of illicit drugs, even if the person superficially seems to have recovered through treatment, his/her base prone to mental disorders remains and something may easily trigger a mental disorder, such as a hallucination or delusion, after the person stopped the drug abuse and resumed his/her normal life. This is called a flashback, which may be caused by a trivial stimulus such as drinking alcohol or mental stress.

Refer to Japan Customs' Website: <https://www.customs.go.jp/mizugiwa/smuggler/abuse.htm>