

I. TRENDS IN ILLICIT DRUGS SMUGGLING

1. Seizures of Smuggled Illicit Drugs

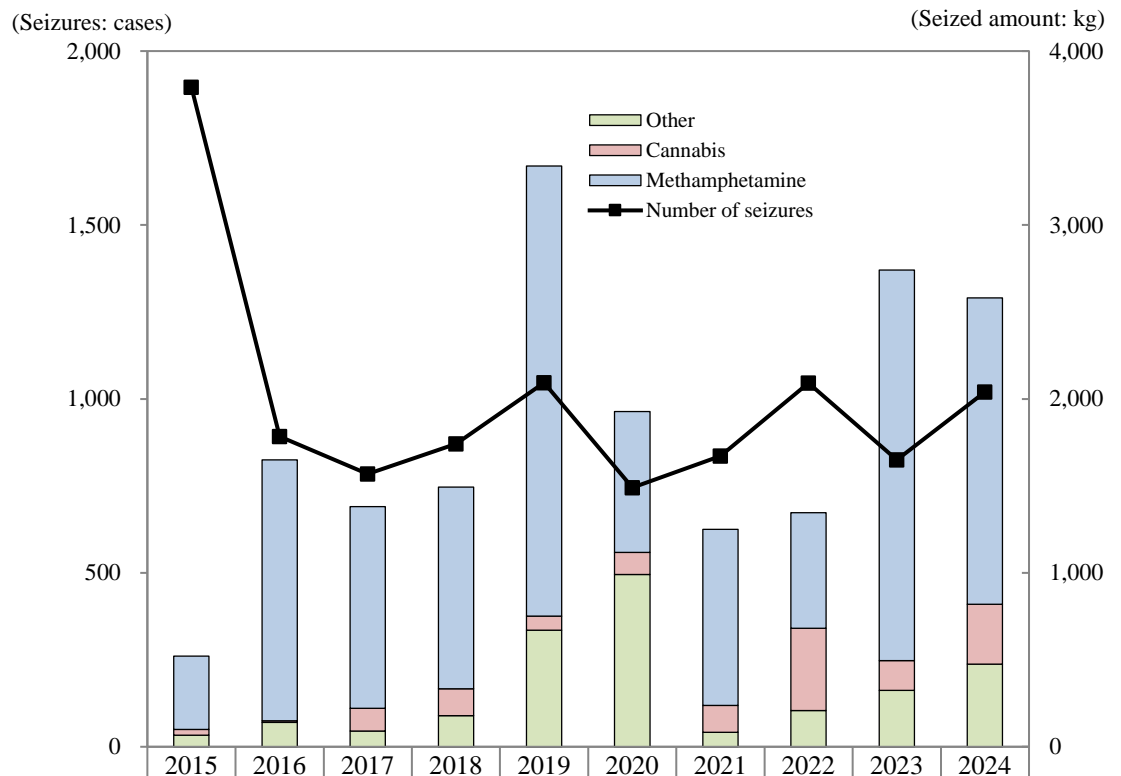
The total number of seizures of smuggled illicit drugs^{*1} during the one-year period from January to December of 2024 was 1,020 cases (up by 24% from the previous year), while the total amount of seized illicit drugs^{*2,3} decreased to approx. 2,579 kg (down by 6% (id.)). The total seized amount exceeded 2 tons for the second consecutive year for the first time, recording the third largest amount. The situation is thus very 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



Methamphetamine	422	1,501	1,159	1,159	2,587	811	1,014	665	2,246	1,761
Cannabis	34	9	131	156	82	126	153	473	171	344
Other	66	140	90	178	670	991	84	208	324	475
Total (kg)	522	1,650	1,380	1,493	3,339	1,928	1,251	1,346	2,741	2,579
Number of seizures	1,896	892	784	871	1,047	745	836	1,046	825	1,020
of which, cases of methamphetamine smuggling	83	104	151	169	425	72	95	301	297	139

(Note)

• Figures for 2024 are provisional. Cannabis includes cannabis and THC-containing products that are prescribed as narcotics under the Act Partially Amending the Cannabis Control Act and the Narcotics and Psychotropics Control Act, which was put into effect on December 12, 2024. "THC-containing products" refers to liquid and sweets, etc. containing THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), which is a harmful component of cannabis.

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

(1) Methamphetamine

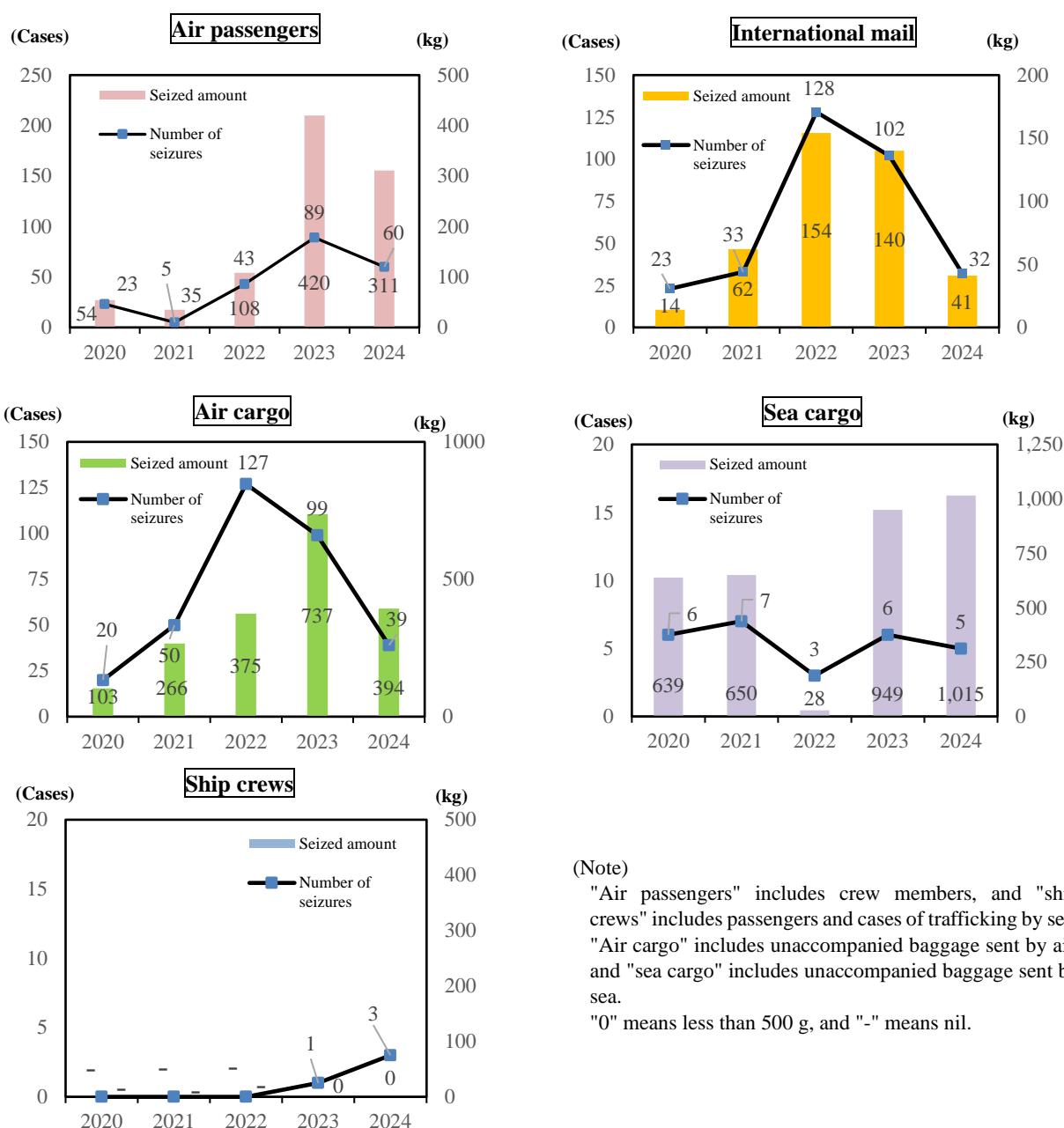
< Seizures of smuggled methamphetamine >

The number of seizures of smuggled methamphetamine during the one-year period from January to December of 2024 was 139 cases (down by 53% from the previous year), and the amount of seized methamphetamine also decreased to approx. 1,761 kg (down by 22% (id.)), but the seized amount was the third largest ever.

Seized methamphetamine is equivalent to approx. 58.70 million doses, worth approx. 116.2 billion yen in end price.

By mode of transport, the amount of methamphetamine seized from sea cargo increased to approx. 1,015 kg (up by 7% (id.)), but that from air cargo was approx. 394 kg (down by 47% (id.)) and that from international mail was approx. 41 kg (down by 70% (id.)), both showing significant decreases from the previous year. The seized amount from air passengers decreased to approx. 311 kg (down by 26% (id.)), but still remained at a high level.

Transition in the number of seizures and seized amount



< Major seizures of smuggled methamphetamine >

[Case 1]

Customs seized approx. 531 kg of methamphetamine concealed in sea cargo (a container) that arrived from Mexico. (Apr. 2024; Yokohama Customs)



[Case 2]

Customs seized approx. 59 kg of methamphetamine concealed in air cargo (plastic containers of blueberries) that arrived from Mexico. (Oct. 2024; Yokohama Customs, etc.)



[Case 3]

Customs seized approx. 19 kg of methamphetamine concealed in the personal effects (a suitcase) of a passenger who came from Canada to Narita International Airport. (Jun. 2024; Tokyo Customs)



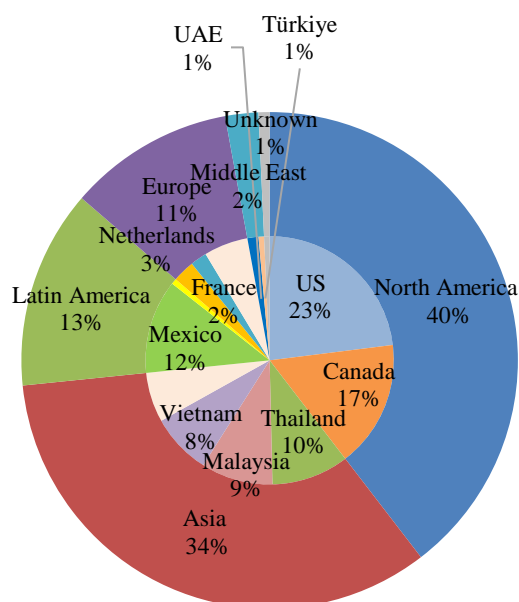
[Case 4]

Customs seized approx. 4 kg of methamphetamine concealed in international mail (soap) that arrived from Thailand. (Apr. 2024; Moji Customs)

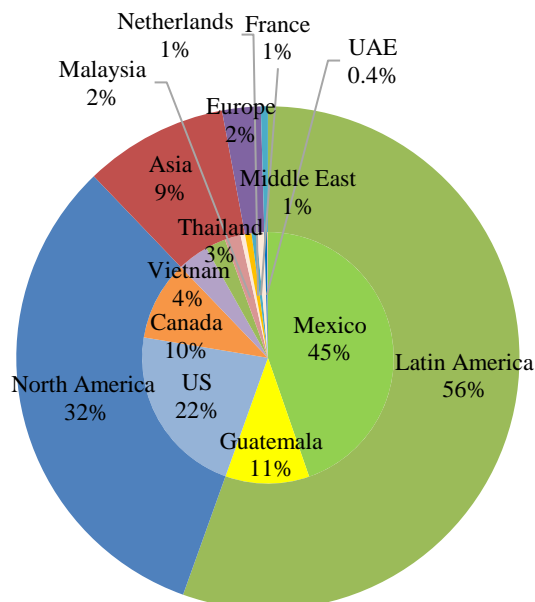


Looking at seizures by source, North America accounted for the largest proportion, at 40% (55 cases). In terms of the seized amount, Latin America accounted for the largest proportion, at 56% (approx. 977 kg).

Number of seizures by source



Seized amount by source



(2) Cannabis

< Seizures of smuggled cannabis >

The number of seizures of smuggled cannabis (herbal cannabis, cannabis resin, etc.) during the one-year period from January to December of 2024 was 390 cases (up by approx. 2.9 times from the previous year), and the seized amount also increased, up by approx. 2 times (id.) to approx. 344 kg. The number of seizures marked a record high.

The seized amounts of herbal cannabis and cannabis resin, etc. (including cannabis products, such as cannabis liquid and cannabis sweets, in addition to cannabis resin) both increased to approx. 211 kg (up by approx. 2.4 times (id.)) and to approx. 133 kg (up by 59% (id.)), respectively.

* Herbal cannabis includes cannabis that is prescribed as a narcotic under the Act Partially Amending the Cannabis Control Act and the Narcotics and Psychotropics Control Act, which was put into effect on December 12, 2024, and cannabis resin, etc. include THC-containing products that are prescribed as narcotics under the same Act. "THC-containing products" refers to liquid and sweets, etc. containing THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), which is a harmful component of cannabis.

Looking at seizures by source, Thailand accounted for the largest proportion, at 47%, followed by the United States (26%) and Vietnam (10%). Asia and North America jointly accounted for approx. 90% of the overall total.

< Major seizures of smuggled cannabis >

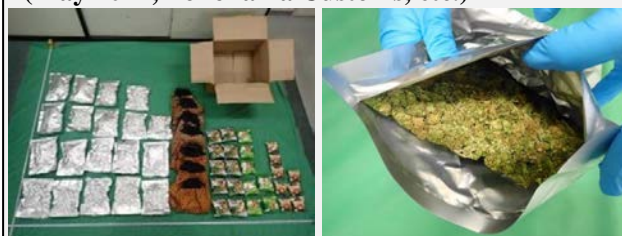
[Case 5]

Customs seized **approx. 16 kg of herbal cannabis** concealed in the personal effects (a suitcase) of a passenger who came from Thailand to Narita International Airport. (Sep. 2024; Tokyo Customs)



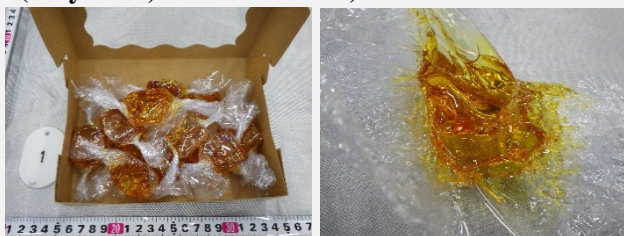
[Case 6]

Customs seized **approx. 3 kg of herbal cannabis** concealed in international mail (aluminum bags) that arrived from Thailand. (May 2024; Yokohama Customs, etc.)



[Case 7]

Customs seized **approx. 825 g of cannabis mucilage** concealed in international mail (candy) that arrived from the United States. (May 2024; Osaka Customs)



[Case 8]

Customs seized **approx. 2.9 g of cannabis liquid** concealed in the personal effects, etc. (a suitcase) of a ship crew who came from the United States to the Port of Kobe. (Nov. 2024; Kobe 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 2024 increased to 322 cases (up by 34% from the previous year). The seized amount increased to 464 kg (up by 49% (id.)), and the number of tablets seized also increased to approx. 67,000 (up by 37% (id.)). The number of seizures marked a record high.

The number of seizures of smuggled cocaine decreased to 54 cases (down by 24% (id.)), while the seized amount increased to approx. 260 kg, up by approx. 2.1 times (id.).

The number of seizures of smuggled MDMA, etc. increased to 90 cases (up by 48% (id.)), and the seized amount increased to approx. 139 kg (up by 19% (id.)). The number of MDMA tablets seized also increased to approx. 67,000 (up by 37% (id.)).

< Major seizures of smuggled narcotics >

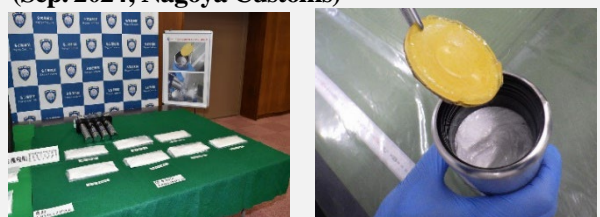
[Case 9]

Customs seized **approx. 178 kg of cocaine** that was traded on the sea off Chiba Prefecture at a fishing port in Tateyama City, Chiba Prefecture. (May 2024; Yokohama Customs, etc.)



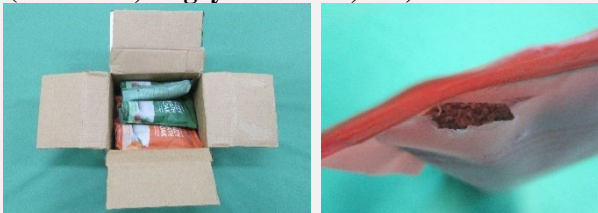
[Case 10]

Customs seized **approx. 3 kg of ketamine** concealed in international mail (water purifiers) that arrived from the Netherlands. (Sep. 2024; Nagoya Customs)



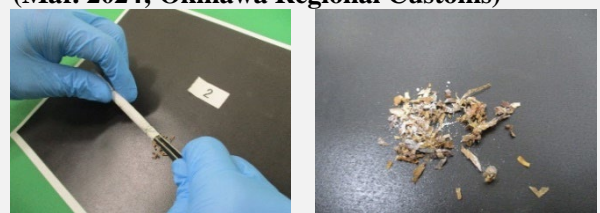
[Case 11]

Customs seized **approx. 2 kg of MDMA** concealed in air cargo (bath additives) that arrived from Canada. (Jun. 2024; Nagoya Customs, etc.)



[Case 12]

Customs seized **approx. 4.2 g of heroin** concealed in the personal effects (a paper box) of a passenger who came from Taiwan to Naha Airport. (Mar. 2024; Okinawa Regional 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 2024 increased to 163 cases (up by 14% from the previous year), while the seized amount decreased to approx. 10 kg (down by 22% (id.)).

< Major seizures of smuggled designated substances >

[Case 13]

Customs seized **approx. 129 g of designated substances (isobutyl nitrite)** concealed in international mail that arrived from France. (Jul. 2024; Hakodate 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>
(Available in Japanese)