

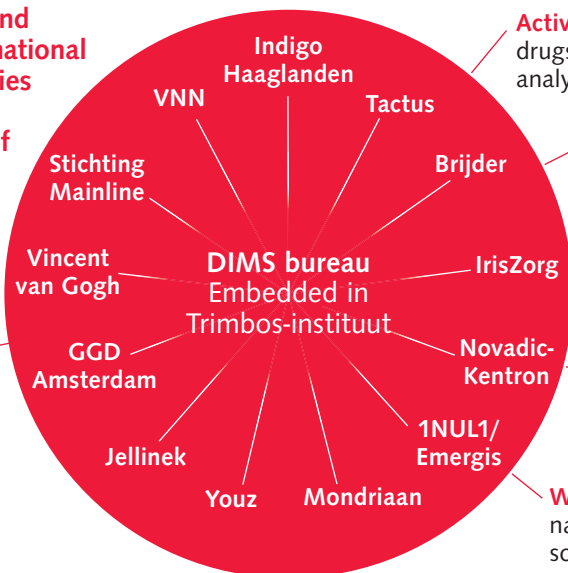
Annual Report 2020

Drugs Information and Monitoring System (DIMS)

What is DIMS?

The Drugs Information and Monitoring System is a national network of testing facilities that aims at gaining an insight into the market of controlled substances.

Commissioned by the Ministry of Health (VWS) and local authorities



Activities: DIMS examines the content of drugs, its associated health-related risks, and analyses trends.

Method: DIMS monitors the market in controlled drugs by offering consumers the possibility to have their drugs tested.

Application: The data collected are being used for education, prevention and policy interventions.

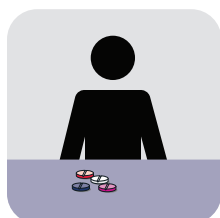
Education: The testing facilities serve a major educational purpose and provide information on effects and risks of drugs.

Warnings: DIMS occasionally warns on a national, regional or local level, or e.g. via social media for drugs involving extra risks.

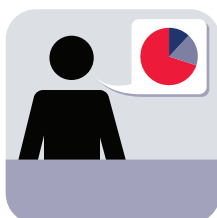
How does it work?



DIMS affiliated organizations hold weekly consulting hours.



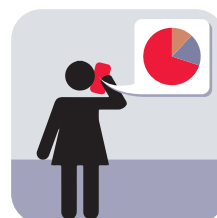
Here, users are able to hand in drugs for analysis, anonymously and discretely.



If the sample can be determined, the composition is passed on directly.



If not, the sample is sent to the laboratory for further analysis.



A week later, the drugs have been analysed and the results are communicated.



Sometimes the result is so disturbing, that a warning or Red Alert is issued.

Highlights 2020

Limited testing due to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound influence on DIMS, both on the organisation itself and on the substances handed in at the testing facilities. Testing sites have been open for most of the time during the pandemic, albeit with limited testing capacity due to COVID-19 related restrictions.

Less samples

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, DIMS has received fewer visitors in 2020 compared to previous years. However, the 8.078 samples that were handed in are sufficient to successfully monitor the drug market.

No major changes in sample composition

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, no major changes were found in the content of the monitored substances.

Decrease in ecstasy samples

During the COVID-19 pandemic DIMS saw a decline in the number of submitted party drugs like ecstasy in comparison to other substances, possibly related to the absence of festivals in 2020.

Slight decrease in MDMA dosage in ecstasy tablets

The average MDMA dosage in ecstasy tablets was slightly lower in 2020 than in 2019: 166mg versus 172mg.

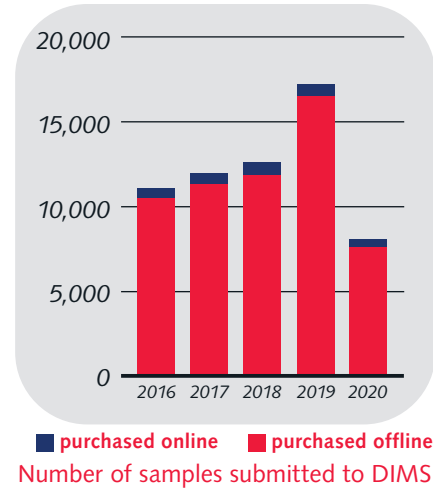
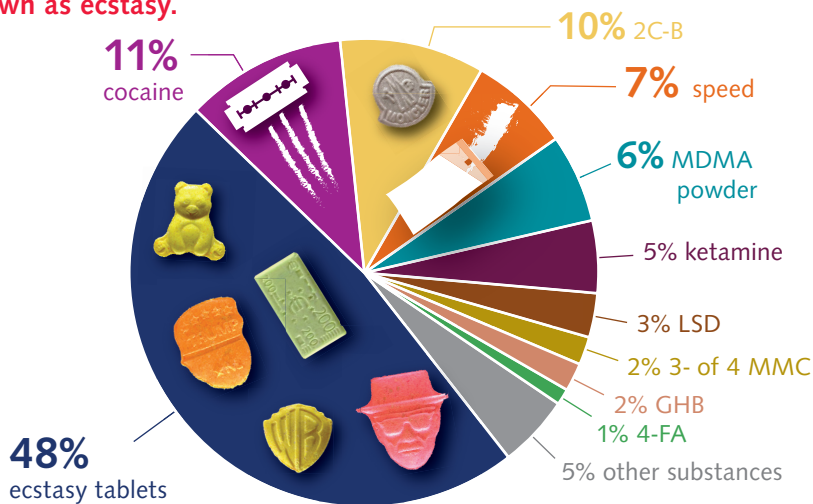
Limited Red Alert MDMB-4en-PINACA

In December 2020, DIMS has issued a targeted warning for cannabis adulterated with the synthetic cannabinoid MDMB-4en-PINACA. This new psychoactive substance was found to be present on weed and hashish, a market DIMS usually does not monitor.



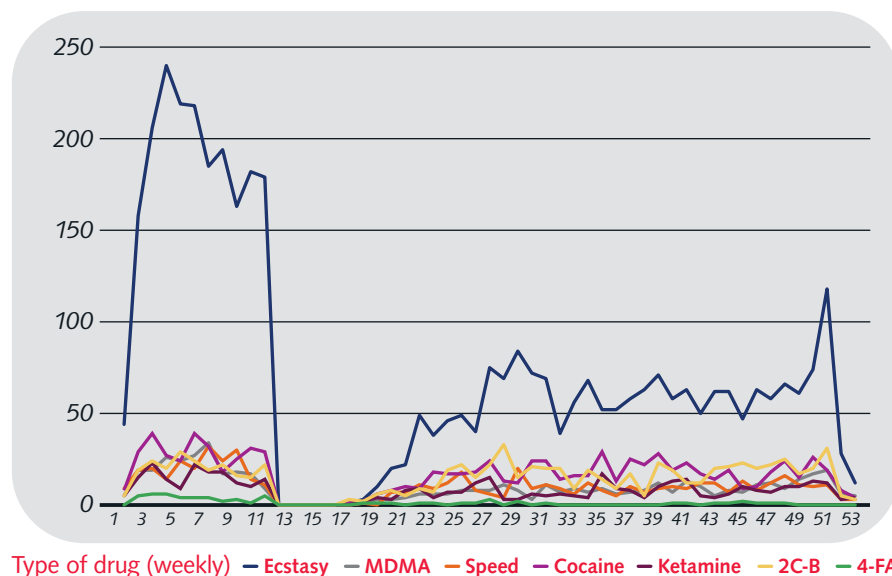
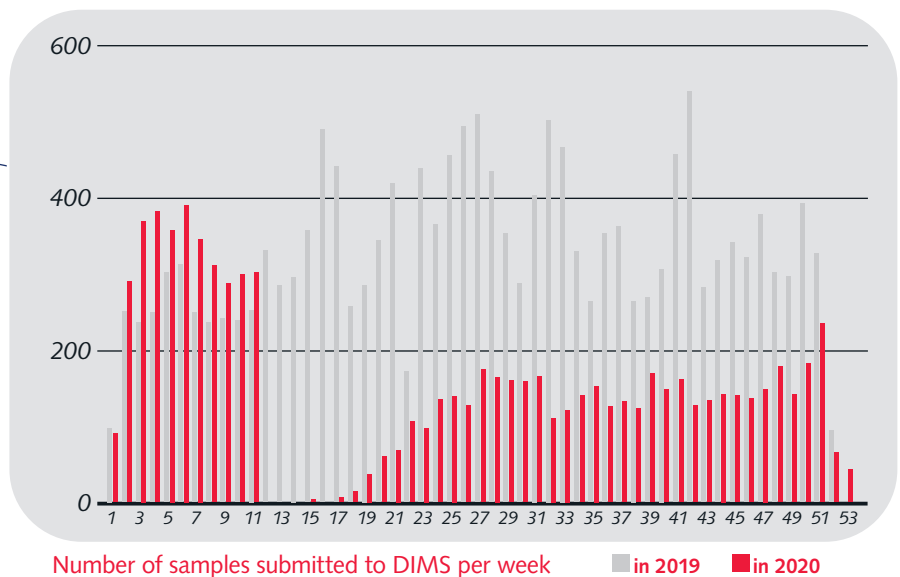
Samples submitted to DIMS in 2020

Even in a year in which festivals were cancelled due to COVID-19, half of the 8,078 samples still consists of MDMA in tablets, better known as ecstasy.



Since the first lockdown in March 2020, DIMS has received far fewer samples, presumably due to restricted testing options because of COVID-19 measures.

Effects of COVID-19



Originally, the vast majority of samples that DIMS receives are ecstasy tablets. While ecstasy remains the most frequently tested drug during the COVID-19 pandemic, the difference with other substances is much smaller than usual. This probably has to do with the absence of festivals and the nightlife industry due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Ecstasy/MDMA in 2020

Half of the DIMS samples submitted in 2020 was sold as ecstasy (48%). Normally this share is even higher.

Risks

- Overheating
- Exhaustion
- Brain damage



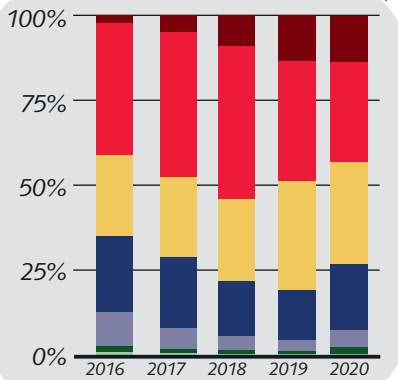
Cutting agents

- Caffeine
- Amphetamine (very rare)
- mCPP (rare)
- PMMA (rare)

Effects

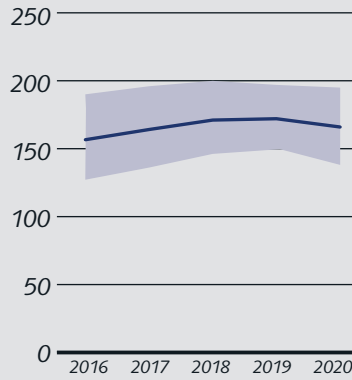
- Sense of intimacy
- Increased energy

Average price per tablet: € 4.30
Half of the ecstasy tablets cost between 3 en 5 euro.

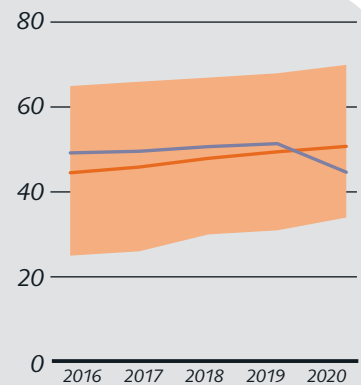


1-35 36-70 71-105 106-140
141-175 176-210 > 210 (mg MDMA)

There can be large differences in the MDMA dosage in ecstasy tablets.



On average, a tablet contains 166 mg MDMA (—). Half of the tablets contain between 138 and 195 mg MDMA (■), a quarter less, and a quarter more than that.



— Average amphetamine concentration (%)
— Average caffeine concentration (%)
■ Amphetamine concentration covering half of the speed powders (%)

A third of the speed samples also contains caffeine in addition to amphetamine.

Speed in 2020

In 2020, 6.7% of samples consisted of speed.

Effects

- Increased energy
- Delays fatigueness
- Inhibits appetite

Average price per gram: € 8.10.
Half of the speed powders cost between 5 and 10 euro.



Risks

- Overheating
- Exhaustion
- Brain damage
- Paranoia
- Heavy physical strain



Cutting agent
• Caffeine



Cocaine in 2020

In 2020, 11% of samples consisted of cocaine.

Risks

- Dependency
- Cardiovascular problems
- Nasal mucosa
- Paranoia

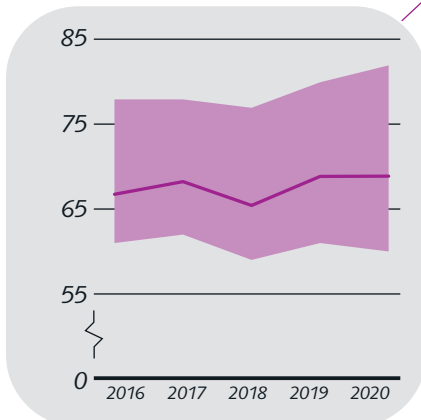
Cutting agents

- Levamisole
- Caffeine
- Phenacetine

Effects

- Increased energy
- Confident feeling

Average price per gram: € 50.30.
More than half of all cocaine costs exactly 50 euro per gram.



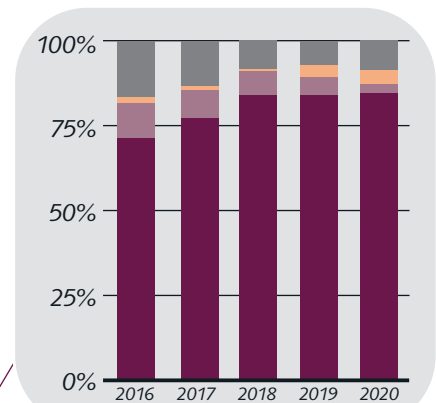
— Average cocaine concentration (%)
■ Cocaine concentration covering half of the cocaine powders (%)

The average cocaine concentration in submitted powder samples is stable at 69%.



■ Only cocaine
■ No cocaine
■ Cocaine plus cutting agents

Cocaine is adulterated relatively often, usually with levamisole.



■ Only ketamine
■ Ketamine plus levamisole
■ Ketamine plus adulteration
■ No ketamine (and/or levamisole)

Ketamine samples are fairly pure (79% average), but sometimes contain high concentrations of levamisole (47% average).

Ketamine in 2020

In 2020, 5.3% of submitted samples consisted of ketamine.

Average price per gram: € 23.80. Half of the ketamine powders cost between 20 and 30 euro.



Effects

- Mind altering
- Out-of-body experience

Risks

- Bad trip (k-hole)
- Loss of coordination
- Muscle stiffening or paralysis
- Urinary tract problems

Cutting agents

- Levamisole
- Caffeine

2C-B in 2020

2C-B (4-bromo-2,5-dimethoxyphenethylamine) is typically submitted as tablets, but can also occur as powder. In 2020, 9.8% of samples submitted to DIMS consisted of 2C-B.

Average price per tablet: € 4.60. Half of the 2C-B tablets cost between 4 and 5 euro.



The average price of a gram of 2C-B powder is € 52.80.



Risks

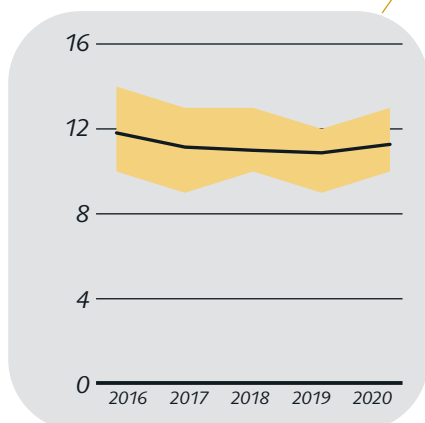
- Bad trip
- Effects stronger than expected/overdose

Cutting agents

- Caffeine

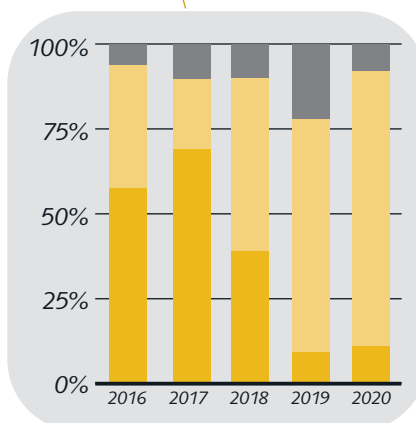
Effects

- At low dose: euphoria, increased energy
- At high dose: hallucinogenic



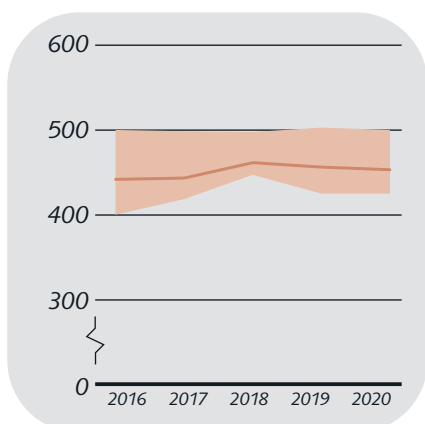
— Average 2C-B content (mg)
 ■ 2C-B content covering half of the 2C-B tablets (mg)

A 2C-B tablet contains on average 11mg of 2C-B.



■ Only 2C-B ■ 2C-B plus adulteration ■ No 2C-B

In 2020 nearly all 2C-B samples contained adulterations, these are often leftovers of (untidy) production.



— Average GHB content (mg/ml)
 ■ GHB content covering half of the GHB liquid (mg/ml)

After years of increase, the average GHB content has not increased in 2020. On average, the samples contained 453 mg/ml GHB.

GHB in 2020

In 2020, 1.7% of samples consisted of GHB.

Effecten

- Euphoria
- Relaxation
- Loss of control
- Libido enhancing

We gathered too little data to give a reliable average of the price of GHB.



Cutting agents
 • GBL

Risks

- Addictive
- Potentially life-threatening if combined with alcohol
- Risk of overdosing
- Burns mouth/esophagus
- Unconsciousness

LSD in 2020

In 2020, 3.4% of samples consisted of LSD samples.

Average price per blotter: € 6.20.
Half of the blotters cost between 4 and 8 euro.



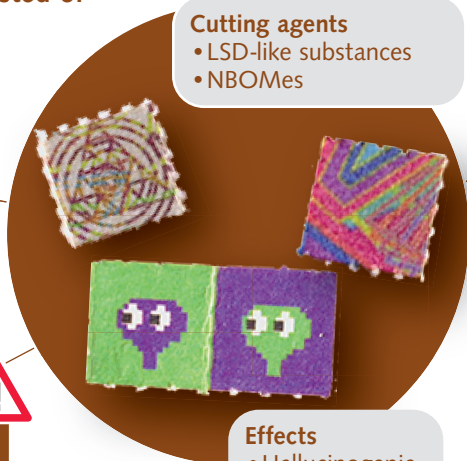
Risks

- Bad trip
- Nausea
- Flash backs



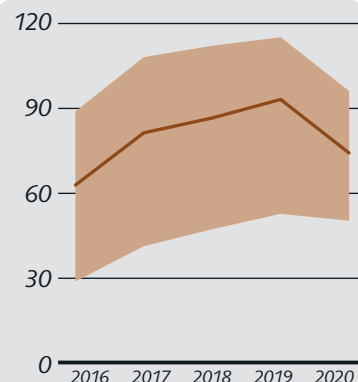
Cutting agents

- LSD-like substances
- NBOMes



Effects

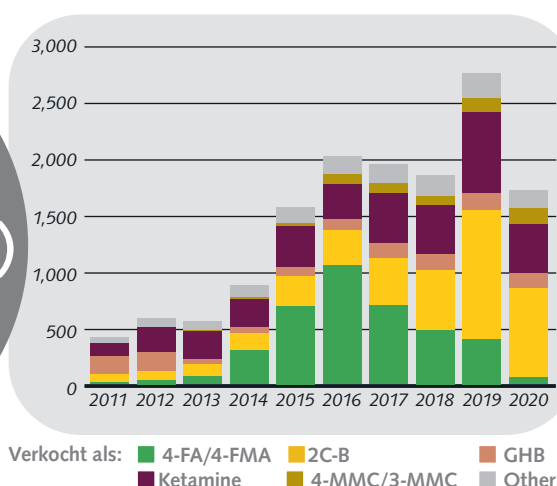
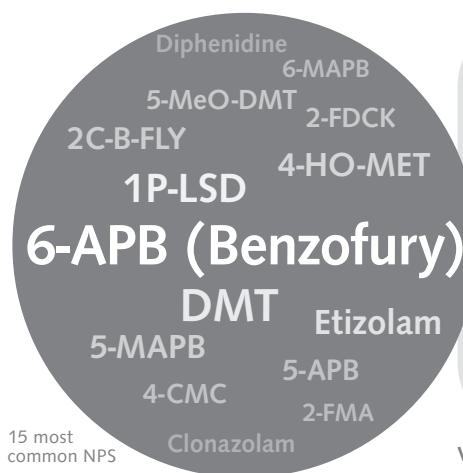
- Hallucinogenic



— Average LSD content (µg)
■ LSD content covering half of the LSD-blotters (µg)

After years of increase, the average LSD dose on a blotter has declined to 74 µg in 2020.

NPS in 2020



Most NPS (New Psychoactive Substances) seen by DIMS are substances such as 2C-B that might not be regarded as "new", but following the EMCDDA definition are still classified as NPS. The category "other" consists of more than 40 different NPS or mixtures of NPS. Many of these substances are so-called 'research chemicals', unlegislated psychoactive substances that are in general used by a limited group of users. The vast majority of NPS submitted to DIMS in 2020 were derivatives from one of three chemical classes: phenethylamines, cathinones, or tryptamines.

	4-MMC versus 3-MMC		4-FA versus 4-FMA	
Legal status	Illegal (2012)	Legal	Illegal (2017)	Legal
Relative popularity at DIMS	Equally popular (51%)	Equally popular (49%)	More popular (89%)	Less popular (11%)
Variant detected in sample	Often contains 3-MMC (49%)	Never contains 4-MMC	Often contains 4-FMA (55%)	Never contains 4-FA

Some individual NPS have been banned in the Netherlands. Both 4-MMC (2012) and 4-FA (2017) are examples of this. For both banned substances, legal alternatives are available (3-MMC and 4-FMA). It takes time for these legal alternatives to become as popular as their illegal counterparts, if ever. However, these legal alternatives are often found to be present in samples sold as their illegal counterparts. They are in that case not the "drug of choice", but are being used nonetheless. Currently, a so-called generic law is waiting to be implemented. This new law will aim to ban entire groups of substances at once.