

Russian Federation

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1.

The UN reports that in the Russian Federation, "The widespread trafficking of cannabis continues unabated. The trafficking is fuelled by the fact that cannabis grows wild in a number of regions in Russia and so is readily available. Indeed, the Russian Federation and neighbouring Kazakhstan contain the world's largest areas of wild cannabis and the Russian authorities estimate that production of wild cannabis in Russia is around one million (1,000,000) hectares. Depending on the climate conditions, one hectare of cannabis may produce up to 1 million seeds with 5-8 years of reproduction cycle. The THC content of cannabis differs in different regions but tends not to exceed 5 percent. Since 1992, cannabis seizures steadily increased 8 times and reached 89.7 tons in 2004. However, seizures sharply decreased almost threefold in 2005 (30.6 tons) and continued to decrease in 2006 (23.7 tons)."

Source:

UNODC, "Illicit Drug Trends in the Russian Federation" (UNODC Regional Office for Russia and Belarus, April, 2008), p. 13.

<http://www.unodc.org/documents/regional/central-asia/Illicit%20Drug%20Tr...>

2.

"Substitution (or replacement) therapy such as methadone maintenance therapy, which has been widely credited with controlling HIV transmission among injection drug users in many countries, is illegal in Russia, and the 2003 amendments to the drug law did not change this. Methadone is classified as "illicit" by the terms of the three United Nations conventions on drug control, though most countries that are signatories to the conventions have methadone programs that are successful in substituting injected heroin with noninjected methadone. In this case, neither the SDCC nor the Ministry of Health seems necessarily disposed to review the status quo. Dr. Golyusov of the Ministry of Health said that he is concerned by first-hand accounts from drug users that methadone is more addictive or "harder to get off" than heroin and that other countries' experiences have been "contradictory.""

Source:

Human Rights Watch, "Lessons Not Learned: Human Rights Abuses and HIV/AIDS in the Russian Federation," April 2004, Vol. 16, No. 5, p. 23.

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/russia0404.pdf>

3. Overview

"The drug enforcement agencies are supported in their functions by strong drug control laws and high-level Governmental attention. While recent years have seen some increase in the resources devoted to the prevention of drug abuse and to the care for drug users, the major emphasis in the Government's policy is clearly targeted on addressing the problem of drug trafficking and production. "Some outside observers believe that this heavy emphasis on law enforcement sometimes hampers efforts to address the problems of drug abuse, particularly among the youth. For one thing, there is some evidence that many drug users are sent to prison for drug trafficking, although they are arrested with small quantities of drugs in their possession. Since 1997, with the introduction of a new Criminal Code, the possession of a "small amount of narcotics" is not considered a criminal offence, but an administrative infraction. However, the definitions of what constitutes a "small amount" of the various drugs are established at extremely low levels. In the case of heroin, there is no quantity that can be considered a "small amount" and, thus, the possession of any quantity of that drug can be prosecuted as drug trafficking. This phenomenon, coupled with the fact that there are no juvenile courts in Russia, has resulted in the incarceration of many young drug users in adult prisons where there are few, if any, drug treatment programmes, and where they may be exposed to risks of violence, and of infection with tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS."

Source:

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "County Profile: Russian Federation" (Moscow, Russia: UNODC Regional Office, Russian Federation, 2003) p. 33.

4.

"This was a couple of years after Russia had toughened its drug laws, lowering the minimum punishable dose to such a level that virtually any user could land behind bars. By 2004, the Justice Ministry estimated that 300,000 people were serving drug-related sentences in Russian prisons. "That year the government -- responding in part to pressure from the Justice Ministry, which was fighting prison overpopulation -- raised the minimum punishable doses of illegal drugs, essentially ensuring that users who had no intent to sell would not be arrested. The police were incensed, arguing that some dealers took to carrying amounts just below the punishable level -- but still sufficient to satisfy between one and nine users. In other words, the police complained, they were being prevented from arresting users and small-time dealers and forced to focus on real drug dealers, whom they didn't want to touch with a 10-foot pole. "The more-liberal policy lasted less than two years. The minimum punishable dose has been lowered again -- in most cases, by more than 50 percent. The dose is not quite as low as pre-2004 levels, but still low enough to put even casual users at risk."

Source:

"Anti-Drug Laws for Drug Dealers," by Masha Gessen, Moscow Times, Feb. 16, 2006, from the web at <http://www.mapinc.org/newscsd/v06/n210/a10.html> , last accessed Feb. 17, 2006.

5.

With respect to the Russian Federation, the UN reports states, "In keeping with global trends, cannabis abuse still remains the "drug of choice" for the majority of abusers and seizures of cannabis rank first among the total volume of seized illicit drugs in

Russia (more than 70 percent). Cannabis is abused by many people regardless of their income, education and social standing. Since 2002 the number of Cannabis abusers (19,211) has remained more or less stable and constitutes 22,528 addicts in 2006. There is an increase in the number of cases of cannabis cultivation in domestic green houses. The growing abuse of cannabis is at least in part fuelled by publications, films and internet sites which often promote the drug as 'safe' or 'soft'."

Source:

UNODC, "Illicit Drug Trends in the Russian Federation" (UNODC Regional Office for Russia and Belarus, April, 2008), p. 13.

<http://www.unodc.org/documents/regional/central-asia/Illicit%20Drug%20Tr...>

6. Prevalence Estimates

"Since 2004 the overall number of drug abusers on register in the Russian Federation stayed almost unchanged with 342,719 in 2004 and 343,509 in 2005 (or 240.2 and 241.3 per 100,000 population accordingly). The number of newly registered cases of drug abuse has been gradually decreasing during the last 5 years but has for the first time shown a small increase (by 16.3%) in 2005 with 24,390 cases (or 17.1 per 100,000 population) compared to 21,027 (or 14,7 per 100,000) in 2004."

Source:

UNODC, "Illicit Drug Trends in the Russian Federation, 2005" (UNODC Regional Office for Russia and Belarus, Nov. 2006), p. 10.

7.

"Estimates of the number of drug users range from 1.5 - 4.0 million drug users from the law enforcement services (and up to 6 million drug users from other sources). Regardless of the definitional differences at the basis of these estimates (i.e. drug addict vs. person who has tried drugs once in their life), there is a need to further gauge the extent of the drug problem."

Source:

UNODC, "Illicit Drug Trends in the Russian Federation, 2005" (UNODC Regional Office for Russia and Belarus, Nov. 2006), p. 12.

8.

"The level of drug abuse in the Russian Federation remains high and according to official statistics of the Russian Federal

Ministry of Health and Social Development, the number of registered users of illicit drugs is more than half a million (517,389), including 350,267 (67 percent) registered with medical establishments as drug dependants. The majority of registered drug users are opiate abusers and is estimated at over 300,000 people."

Source:

"Illicit Drug Trends in the Russian Federation" (UNODC Regional Office for Russia and Belarus, April, 2008), p. 9.

<http://www.unodc.org/documents/regional/central-asia/Illicit%20Drug%20Tr...>

9.

"The proportion of heroin and opium seizures has increased every year since 1999 and seizures of these two drugs increased from 38 percent in 2005 to 67 percent in 2006. At the same time, the number of significant heroin and opium seizures (according to UNODC classification) has also increased."

Source:

UNODC, "Illicit Drug Trends in the Russian Federation" (UNODC Regional Office for Russia and Belarus, April, 2008), p. 8.

<http://www.unodc.org/documents/regional/central-asia/Illicit%20Drug%20Tr...>

10.

(2004) "There is some controversy over the number of narcotic drug users in Russia. Dr. Vadim Pokrovsky of the Federal AIDS Center said that estimates of the number of active drug users in Russia in February 2004 ranged from 1 to 4 million, and he believed the high end of that range reflected the reality. On February 20, 2004, Alexander Mikhailov, the deputy director of the State Drug Control Committee (SDCC), a federal body, was cited in Pravda as saying that Russia had over 4 million drug users, and that the "gloomy prediction" of his office was that Russia could have over 35 million drug users by 2014. In early January 2004, the executive secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which includes twelve former Soviet states, predicted that in 2010 the twelve countries would have 25 million drug users of whom 10 million would be living with HIV/AIDS, the vast majority in Russia."

Source:

Human Rights Watch, "Lessons Not Learned: Human Rights Abuses and HIV/AIDS in the Russian Federation," April 2004, Vol. 16, No. 5, pp. 14-15.

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/russia0404.pdf>

11.

"There is no doubt that drug use and heroin use particularly have risen meteorically in Russia since 1990. Mikhailov said the total number of drug users had risen 900 percent in the decade ending in early 2004. A Max Planck Institute study of the drug trade in Russia concluded that drug-related crimes increased twelve-fold from 1990 to 1999. Many analysts have traced the dramatic rise in use of injected heroin since the fall of the Soviet Union to economic collapse and attendant rises in unemployment, poverty and desperation and to increased availability of cheap heroin trafficked through central Asia and across the former Soviet states. Some observers have suggested that the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001 in Afghanistan and central Asia has done nothing to stem the flow of heroin through the region and may even exacerbate it in the long run. Mikhailov of the SDCC has told the press on numerous occasions that the United States military intervention in Afghanistan has contributed to heroin consumption in Russia because the Taliban had been able to suppress opium production before they were overthrown. In 2003, Victor Cherkosov, head of the SDCC, said the drug trade in Russia was valued at about U.S. \$8 billion a year."

Source:

Human Rights Watch, "Lessons Not Learned: Human Rights Abuses and HIV/AIDS in the Russian Federation," April 2004, Vol. 16, No. 5, p. 15.

12. **Problem Substance Use and Substance-Related Harm**

"From the point of view of drug-related health indicators two main problem regions can be pointed out in 2005 in scale of the whole country: south of Central / Eastern Siberia and west of Southern Federal District (regions near the Black Sea). In the majority of the problematic regions around 90% of registered users are intravenous drug users. Across the country the indicator of intravenous drug use among all stages of dependency is 74%. Still there are a few exceptions like the Tyva Republic where 83% of registered drug abusers have cannabis as the main drug."

Source:

UNODC, "Illicit Drug Trends in the Russian Federation, 2005" (UNODC Regional Office for Russia and Belarus, Nov. 2006), p. 11.

13.

(2004) "The epidemic disproportionately affects IDUs who comprise 87% of the cumulative number of registered HIV cases, however, with the epidemic becoming more mature, the infection tendency away from IDUs to heterosexual is also increasing with 68% of newly registered cases by the end of 2004 corresponding to IDU and 30% to heterosexuals (In the previous year heterosexual transmission accounted for 23.4% of new infections). The interpretation of the tendency towards less new infections diagnosed is not an indication of a slowing of the epidemic but rather reflective of the changes in HIV testing policy, the smaller number of tests performed in population groups with high-risk behaviors and also a shortage of test kits."

Source:

UNODC, "Illicit Drug Trends in the Russian Federation, 2005" (UNODC Regional Office for Russia and Belarus, Nov. 2006), p. 14.

14.

(2003) "The Russian Federation is facing a deadly epidemic of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). It is driven in part by abuses of the human rights of those most at risk to get the disease and of the over 1 million Russians already living with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). The principal means of HIV transmission in Russia has been and remains injection drug use. But the Russian state has done little to support low-cost measures that would enable drug users to realize their right to be protected from this incurable disease. Instead, Russia has been a model of repression of drug users and stigmatization of HIV-positive people, putting the country squarely on the path of very high AIDS mortality and continued abuse of people affected by HIV/AIDS."

Source:

Human Rights Watch, "Lessons Not Learned: Human Rights Abuses and HIV/AIDS in the Russian Federation," April 2004, Vol. 16, No. 5, p. 1.

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/russia0404.pdf>

15.

(2002) "In 2002, an estimated 93 percent of persons registered by the government as HIV positive since the beginning of the epidemic were injection drug users. In contrast, in 2002 an estimated 12 percent of new HIV transmission was sexual -- that figure climbed to 17.5 percent in the first half of 2003 -- indicating the foothold that the epidemic is gaining in the general population. The European Centre for the Epidemiological Monitoring of AIDS (EuroHIV), a center affiliated with the World Health Organization, noted that HIV prevalence may have "reached saturation levels in at least some of the currently affected drug user populations" in eastern Europe, including in Russia, but cautioned against complacency "as new outbreaks could still emerge among injection drug users", particularly within the vast expanse of the Russian Federation." Rhodes and colleagues in a February 2004 article echo this conclusion, noting evidence of recent examples of severe HIV outbreaks among drug users in Russia."

Source:

Human Rights Watch, "Lessons Not Learned: Human Rights Abuses and HIV/AIDS in the Russian Federation," April 2004, Vol. 16, No. 5, p. 10.

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/russia0404.pdf>

16. **Harm Reduction Efforts**

"As indicated above, in recent years, the Government has announced the initiation of various programmes for expanding drug abuse preventive activities and treatment and rehabilitation of drug abusers. Largely due to the lack of resources, there have, in fact, been very few concrete actions in this field. There are almost no preventive education programmes aimed at informing the general public about the problems of illicit drugs. Targeted preventive programmes for high-risk groups, such as the unemployed and the youth, have been limited primarily to some small-scale, HIV/AIDS-related, activities undertaken by NGOs. The Ministry of Education has been attempting to develop some drug abuse preventive education programmes for the schools and has asked for some assistance from UNODC."

Source:

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "County Profile: Russian Federation" (Moscow, Russia: UNODC Regional Office, Russian Federation, 2003) p. 33.

17.

"Researchers have found that police harassment is one of the most important factors that exacerbate risky behavior among drug users in Russia. In a 2002 study of drug use in five Russian cities, 44 percent of drug users said they had been stopped by the police in the month prior to being interviewed, and two third of these said that their injecting equipment had been confiscated by the police. Over 40 percent added that they rarely carried syringes for fear of encountering the police with them. In the Togliatti study, Rhodes and colleagues found that fear of being arrested or detained by the police was the most important factor behind the decision of drug users not to carry syringes, which in turn was an important determinant of sharing syringes during injection. This study concluded that drug users who had been arrested or detained by the police for drug-related offenses were over four times more likely than other users to have shared syringes in the previous four weeks. Drug users who feared the police in Togliatti tended to avoid not only syringe exchange services but also drug stores that sold syringes because police frequently targeted people buying syringes at such locations, a result also highlighted in a 2003 study of drug users in Moscow."

Source:

Human Rights Watch, "Lessons Not Learned: Human Rights Abuses and HIV/AIDS in the Russian Federation," April 2004, Vol. 16, No. 5, p. 18.

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/russia0404.pdf>

18.

"State action that impedes people from protecting themselves from a deadly epidemic is blatant interference with the right of Russians to the highest obtainable standard of health. There is no dispute as to the effectiveness of sterile syringes for preventing HIV, hepatitis C and other blood-borne infections. Public health experts are virtually unanimous in the view that providing access to sterile syringes neither encourages drug use nor dissuades drug users from entering drug treatment programs. In reality, the near absence of humane treatment programs for drug addiction in Russia and the very nature of drug use guarantee that there will always be people who either cannot or will not stop using drugs. Impeding this population from obtaining or using sterile syringes amounts to prescribing death as a punishment for illicit drug use."

Source:

Human Rights Watch, "Lessons Not Learned: Human Rights Abuses and HIV/AIDS in the Russian Federation," April 2004, Vol. 16, No. 5, p. 3.

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/russia0404.pdf>

19.

"While provisions of the Federal Drug law guarantee state assistance to drug addicts, in fact, budgetary restraints have severely limited the capacity of state institutions to provide even a minimum level of support for drug users. Although the state drug-treatment centres are under the guidance of the Ministry of Health, they are, in fact, financed by the various administrative entities of the Federation. Since most of the oblasts and republics have severe financial restraints, in most cases, the drug-treatment centres have not been able to cope with the sudden expansion in the number of drug users requiring assistance. They lack the financial, material and staff resources to carry out the tasks, which are assigned to them by law. There are a few private treatment centres in some of the major cities, but only the wealthy can make use of their facilities. This general lack of treatment and rehabilitation facilities and activities for drug users are some of the reasons why the country has been facing extreme difficulties in attempting to address the very serious problem of HIV/AIDS infection among injecting drug users."

Source:

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Country Profile: Russian Federation" (Moscow, Russia: UNODC Regional Office, Russian Federation, 2003) p. 34.

20.

The UN reports that in the Russian Federation "Eighty-seven thousand people were arrested for drug related crimes in 2006 – an increase of 24 percent over 2005."

Source:

UNODC, "Illicit Drug Trends in the Russian Federation" (UNODC Regional Office for Russia and Belarus, April, 2008), p. 20.

<http://www.unodc.org/documents/regional/central-asia/Illicit%20Drug%20Tr...>

21.

The UN reports that in the Russian Federation "Drug distribution offences increased from 79,902 to 110,310 (+38%) and constituted 63% of all drug related crimes (53% in 2004). These changes were determined by the May 2004 amendment to the

Criminal and Procedural Codes, which led to the retargeting the efforts of law enforcement agencies toward the most serious types of offences. The number of detected offences committed by organized groups in 2005 totaled 14,415."

Source:

UNODC, "Illicit Drug Trends in the Russian Federation, 2005" (UNODC Regional Office for Russia and Belarus, Nov. 2006), p. 5.

22.

"The most serious threat of illegal smuggling originates from Afghanistan (heroin and opium). Drugs are smuggled through Central Asia into Russia's domestic market and onwards into Europe. Since the withdrawal of Russian Border Guards from the Tajikistan / Afghanistan border in December 2004 heroin seizures have decreased significantly in all Central Asian States with seizures now the lowest on record since 2001."

Source:

UNODC, "Illicit Drug Trends in the Russian Federation, 2005" (UNODC Regional Office for Russia and Belarus, Nov. 2006), p. 8.

23.

"The results of drug purity analysis are not readily available in part due to the fact that drug related sentencing is based on weight rather than other indicators. Nevertheless, some sources point to a continuing low heroin purity level reported in different parts of the country corroborating a trend first reported in 2001."

Source:

UNODC, "Illicit Drug Trends in the Russian Federation, 2005" (UNODC Regional Office for Russia and Belarus, Nov. 2006), p. 9.

24.

"Because of drug laws that have historically criminalized the possession of very small amounts of narcotics, drug users in Russia face a high probability of spending time in prison or pretrial detention at some time in their lives. Injection drug use is widespread in prisons. But basic HIV prevention measures, including condoms and materials for sterilization of syringes, are largely lacking in Russian correctional facilities, making prisons across the country high-risk environments for AIDS. The vast numbers of prisoners released every year thus represent a public health challenge for the general population. Both in and outside of prison, the virtual absence of humane services to treat drug addiction and the illegality in Russia of methadone and other drugs used elsewhere to treat heroin addiction further compromise HIV prevention among drug users."

Source:

Human Rights Watch, "Lessons Not Learned: Human Rights Abuses and HIV/AIDS in the Russian Federation," April 2004, Vol. 16, No. 5, pp. 2-3.

25.

"Being in prison or other state detention is an important risk factor for HIV in Russia. A very high percentage of drug users in the FSU find themselves in state custody at some time in their lives. Injection drug use is reportedly widespread in Russian prisons, and HIV prevention services such as provision of sterile syringes, disinfectant materials for syringes and condoms are virtually absent. Official statistics indicate that from 1996 to 2003, HIV prevalence in Russian prisons rose more than thirty-fold from less than one per 1,000 inmates to 42.1 per 1,000 inmates. According to a 2002 report, about 34,000 HIV-positive persons—over 15 percent of the persons officially counted as HIV-positive in the country—were in state custody, of which the large majority found out about their HIV status in prison. The Kresty pretrial detention facility in Saint Petersburg was reported in 2002 to have about 1,000 HIV-positive persons among its 7,800 inmates. Some 300,000 prisoners are released each year from penal institutions in Russia, representing an important public health challenge."

Source:

Human Rights Watch, "Lessons Not Learned: Human Rights Abuses and HIV/AIDS in the Russian Federation," April 2004, Vol. 16, No. 5, pp. 11-12.

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/russia0404.pdf>

26.

"The system of penalties for juveniles facing criminal charges in Russia is based on suspended sentences or detention in educational correctional facilities, which house young offenders aged up to 21 years. The average sentence is four years. Only one quarter of adult recidivists considered a high-risk to society are said to have been admitted to a VK as juveniles."

Source:

UNODC, "Illicit Drug Trends in the Russian Federation, 2005" (UNODC Regional Office for Russia and Belarus, Nov. 2006), p. 15.

27.

The Russian Federation's incarceration rate is 629 inmates per 100,000 of national population, with a total prison population 891,738 out of an estimated national population of 141.83 million.

Source:

Walmsley, Roy, "World Prison Population List (Seventh Edition)" (London, England: International Centre for Prison Studies, 2007), p. 5, Table 4.

http://www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/law/research/icps/downloads/wpl-8th_41.pdf

28.

The Russian Federation's homicide rate is 22.05 per 100,000 national population (average per year 1999 to 2001).

Source:

Barclay, Gordon & Cynthia Tavares, "International Comparisons of Criminal Justice Statistics 2001," Home Office Bulletin 12/03 (London, England, UK: Home Office Research, Development, and Statistics Directorate, October 24, 2003), p. 10, Table 1.1.

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