

# A Peek into Data Published by Customs Agencies: a First Look at Reporting Practices and Policy Implications

- Ari Finnsson, University of Toronto and Senior Research Assistant at Borders in Globalization
- Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, University of Victoria

# Data Collection

## Wide Range

- Currently 85 Customs Agencies surveyed worldwide

## Narrow Scope

- Focus on data reporting from **Customs Agencies only**
- Starting with customs enforcement data, other datasets to follow
  - Seizures of banned commodities
  - Control of movement of people

# Data Collection

- *Goal: to compare how data is **reported** by customs agencies globally*
  - Only data published by customs agencies, no other government bodies
  - Focus is on how the data is reported:
    - *What commodity seizures are reported?*
    - *What units are used?*
    - *How often are reports published?*

# Data Collection

Example Customs  
Agency report:  
Canada

Total number of seizures by quarter for fiscal year 2021 to 2022

All commodities	First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter	Year-to-date total
Total seizures	11,846	16,495	11,297	12,711	52,349

Quantity of goods seized, by quarter for fiscal year 2021 to 2022

Selected commodities	Unit of measure	First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter	Total
Drugs						
Cannabis products <a href="#">1</a>	Grams	3,049,528	7,452,399	3,328,205	2,303,823	16,133,955
Hashish	Grams	7,107	1,273	15,286	4,922	28,588
Cocaine/Crack <a href="#">2</a>	Grams	522,950	201,355	336,887	1,813,961	2,875,152
Heroin	Grams	56,263	26,148	34,143	170,984	287,537
Fentanyl	Grams	1	304	73	185	563
Other opioids <a href="#">3</a>	Grams	9,638	27,554	110,261	2,653,511	2,800,964
	Dosage	0	0	59	0	59
Other narcotics, drugs and chemicals	Grams	2,780,822	7,254,282	5,156,921	7,286,025	22,478,050
	ml	3,429,648	1,274,965	24,428	2,414,004	7,143,045
	Dosage	627,703	174,845	214,359	337,741	1,354,649

# Data Collection

- Canada reports data on:
  - Drugs categorized as:
    - Cannabis products
    - Hashish
    - Cocaine/Crack
    - Heroin
    - Fentanyl
    - Other opioids
    - Other narcotics, drugs, and chemicals
  - Number of seizures of all controlled commodities
    - *Per quarter and total per year*
  - Weight and/or volume of seized commodities
    - *Per quarter and total per year*

# Overall Results

## 85 countries researched

- 34 no data from customs agency
- 11 potential data but unable to translate
- 40 with data reported
- 31 Customs Agencies with data included in this report (9 South American countries with data are yet to be compiled into the report)

## Geographic spread:

- Europe: 39 countries, 18 with data
- Asia: 13 countries, 5 with data
- Africa: 9 countries, 1 with data
- North America: 2 countries, 2 with data
- Oceania: 2 countries, 2 with data
- Central and South America: 20 countries, 12 with data

# Overall Results

Key result: approx. 50% of customs agencies consulted to this point publish data

- ***Customs enforcement data is inconsistently reported.***

Of 40 with data:

- *All report on commodity seizures*
- But **significant differences exist in standards of reporting**
- *Primary modes of data collection:*
  - Annual reports
  - Published data tables
  - Press Releases
- *Only 6 report on control of movement of people*

# Overall Results

South and Central American Customs Agencies researched but not compiled into this report (9):

- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Panama
- Colombia
- Peru
- Chile
- Brazil
- Bolivia
- Uruguay

Customs Agencies yet to be confirmed (11)

- Indonesia
- Belarus
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Greece
- Hungary
- North Macedonia
- Montenegro
- Russia
- Sweden
- Bangladesh



# Overall Results

Customs Agencies surveyed who do not report enforcement data (34)			
China	Lithuania	Nigeria	Belize
India	Moldova	South Africa	Nicaragua
South Korea	Poland	Ghana	Costa Rica
Vietnam	Portugal	Uganda	Venezuela
Andorra	Romania	Zimbabwe	Guyana
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Serbia	Israel	Suriname
Italy	Slovakia	Lebanon	Egypt
Kosovo	Algeria	Mexico	
Liechtenstein	Morocco	El Salvador	

# Overall Results

Customs Agencies surveyed with reported data included in this report (31)

Japan	Czechia	Luxembourg	Jordan
Philippines	Denmark	Malta	
Singapore	Estonia	Netherlands	
Turkey	Finland	Norway	
Canada	France	Switzerland	
United States	Germany	United Kingdom	
Albania	Iceland	Australia	
Austria	Ireland	Tunisia	
Belgium	Latvia	New Zealand	

# Commodities Seizures: Summary

## Drug seizures:

- *Most Common reported:*
  - Cocaine: 27/31 countries reported
  - Cannabis: 26/31 countries reported
  - Heroin: 23/31 countries reported
  - Methamphetamine: 17/31 countries reported
  - MDMA/Ecstasy: 20/31 countries reported
- *Most common units of measurement:*
  - Weight/volume (30/31)
    - ***Philippines only agency that does not report weight/volume of seized drugs***
  - Number of cases of seizure (9/31) see Table 2
  - Majority report drug seizures in overall annual reports; minority report drug seizures as a separate report
    - *9/31 report drugs seizures only in press releases per incident see Table 1*

# Commodities Seizures: Summary

- Drugs seizures reported in a variety of categories, see table 3:
  - *Reported individually (21/31)*
  - *Single numbers reported for composite groups, (10/31) e.g.*
    - Other Drugs
    - Opiates
    - Amphetamines and ecstasy
    - Other narcotics
    - Cocaine & Heroin
- Other seizure statistics:
  - *Seized firearms and weapons: 20/31 countries reported*
  - *Counterfeit items/IP violations seizures: 18/31 countries reported*
  - *<50% of 31 with data reported:*
    - Seized currency/proceeds of crime
    - Tobacco and Alcohol seizures
    - Protected animal/plant species
    - Agricultural products

# Commodity Seizures: Reports by Press Release

TABLE 1: CUSTOMS AGENCIES WHO RELEASE DATA BY PRESS  
RELEASE OF INDIVIDUAL VIOLATIONS/SEIZURES ONLY (NO  
CENTRAL REPORT) (9/31)

Austria
Estonia
France
Malta
Australia
Tunisia
Argentina
Paraguay
Ecuador

# Commodity Seizures: Tables

Table 2: Customs Agencies reporting total number of cases of commodity seizure

Agencies which report <b>number of cases</b> of seizure of common banned drugs (9/31)	Banned <b>drugs reported by number of cases of seizure</b>
Japan	Cannabis & components/derivatives; Amphetamines; Methamphetamines; Cocaine; Heroin; Ketamine; Ecstasy/MDMA; Psychotropic substances; Other narcotics; Designated Substances
Philippines	Cannabis & components/derivatives; Methamphetamines; Ketamine; Ecstasy/MDMA
Canada	Cannabis & components/derivatives; Cocaine; Heroin; Fentanyl; Opioids
United States	Cannabis; Cocaine; Heroin; Ketamine; Ecstasy/MDMA; Fentanyl; Methamphetamines; LSD; Khat
Ireland	Cannabis; <b>Cocaine &amp; Heroin</b> ; Amphetamines, Ecstasy and other
Netherlands	Cannabis & components/derivatives; Amphetamines; Methamphetamines; Cocaine; Heroin; Ecstasy/MDMA; Khat
Norway	Cannabis; Amphetamines; Cocaine; Heroin
United Kingdom	Cannabis & components/derivatives; Amphetamines; <b>Cocaine; Crack Cocaine; Heroin</b> ; Fentanyl; Ketamine; Ecstasy/MDMA; LSD; Morphine; Steroids; GHB; methadone; barbiturates; Temazepam; Mephedrone; nitrous oxide
Turkey	Cocaine; Methamphetamine; Khat; Captagon; Opium

# Commodity Seizures: Tables

Table 3: Drug Reporting Categories

Customs Agency	Drug categories
Japan	Psychotropic substances; Other narcotics; Designated Substances
Canada	Other narcotics, drugs, and chemicals
Belgium	Heroin & Opiates; Synthetic drugs (Amphetamines/LSD/Ecstasy)
Denmark	New Psychoactive Substances; Amphetamines & Ecstasy; Opiates; Medicines and Doping Substances
Ireland	Cocaine & Heroin; Ecstasy, Amphetamines & other
Luxembourg	Doping products; New Psychoactive Substances
Switzerland	Designer drugs; Dangerous pills
Turkey	Other Drugs
Jordan	Narcotics
United Kingdom	Crack cocaine reported separately from Cocaine
Remaining Agencies (21)	Drugs reported separately

# Commodities Seizures: Key Results

## Where data is available:

- Number of cases of commodity violations/seizures infrequently reported by customs agencies
- *A minority of customs agencies publish data showing the frequency of violations*
- *Lack of data impedes cross-agency comparison of violations frequency*



# Commodities Seizures: Key Results

## Where data is available:

- Although all but 1 customs agency reports weight/volume of seizures, **cross-agency comparisons are complicated by different standards and methods of reporting**
- *Seizure statistics of specific controlled commodities cannot be compared across differently grouped categories*

# Example: Jordan Anti-Smuggling Data report

- Large categories—ex. total Customs violations per year—give “big picture” report for the year
- But **Data does not separate seizures into categories**, cannot compare specific commodity seizure data

Duration	Number of Cases			Amount of fines collected )Million dinars(	Amount of drugs detected
	Collected	Smuggling Cases	Customs Violations		
2021	44,554	4,267	40,287	25,0	(9.5) million narcotic pills (1500) gm cocaine (20) kg of cereals (combs) for growing marijuana
2020	37,871	4,773	33,098	14,0	(375) kg

\*Customs fines above are the total amounts actually paid during the year under financial receipts.

- Each commodity has data for volume and number of seizures per quarter from 2011-present

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
4	Drug Class	Drug type	Country	2011-12 Q1	2011-12 Q2	2011-12 Q3	2011-12 Q4	2012-13 Q1	2012-13 Q2	2012-13 Q3	2012-13 Q4	2013-14 Q1
5	A	Cocaine (KG)	England	1,511	578	349	495	1,151	279	460	526	830
6			Northern Ireland	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
7			Scotland	0	10	2	0	0	0	0	11	0
8			Wales	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9			Total	1,512	589	352	495	1,151	279	460	537	832
10	A	Crack (KG)	England	0	0	0	4	0	0	7	0	0
11			Northern Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12			Scotland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13			Wales	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14			Total	0	0	0	4	0	0	7	0	0
15	A	Diamorphine (Heroin) (KG)	England	655	60	107	802	170	131	74	69	99
16			Northern Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
17			Scotland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18			Wales	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19			Total	655	60	107	802	171	131	74	75	99
20	A	LSD (Dose 000s)	England	0	1	0	0	0	0	20	0	0
21			Northern Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22			Scotland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
23			Wales	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24			Total	0	1	0	0	0	0	20	0	0
25	A	MDMA (Ecstasy) (Dose 000s)	England	2	183	320	0	22	47	94	95	28
26			Northern Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27			Scotland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28			Wales	0	0	0	0	40	0	0	0	0
29			Total	2	183	320	0	62	47	94	95	28
30	A	Methadone (Dose 000s)	England									
31			Northern Ireland									
32			Scotland									
33			Wales									
34			Total									
35	A	Morphine (Dose 000s)	England	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
36			Northern Ireland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
37			Scotland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
38			Wales	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
39			Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
40												
41	B	Anabolic Steroids (MG)	England	127	112	225	2	225	127	25	225	2

# Ireland Anti-Smuggling Report

- Drug violations reported in **composite categories unique to this agency**.
  - Cocaine & Heroin reported together; Ecstasy, Amphetamines & other reported as one category

*Table 18: Drug Seizures*

Type of Drug	No. of Seizures	Quantity (kg)	Value (€m)
<b>Cannabis (Herbal &amp; Resin)</b>	5,393	1,746	32.4
<b>Cocaine, Heroin</b>	174	912	71.7
<b>Amphetamines, Ecstasy &amp; other</b>	15,596	3,083	10.7
<b>Total</b>	21,163	5,741	114.8

Control of  
Movement of  
people: Key  
results

Inconsistency in  
definitions of  
*enforcement actions*:

Cross country comparisons  
impossible without clear  
symmetry between  
categories of enforcement

Customs Agency	Categories of Data Reported
Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removals</li> <li>• Arrests</li> <li>• Detentions</li> </ul>
United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nationwide Encounters and Apprehensions</li> <li>• Total Credible Fear Inadmissibles</li> <li>• Custody Statistics for SW Border and US Border Patrol locations</li> <li>• Southwest Land Border Encounters</li> <li>• Numbers for Expedited Removal &amp; Reinstatement of Prior Orders of Removal</li> <li>• Arrests</li> </ul>
United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of records in Migration Refusal Pool</li> <li>• Foreign National Offenders released from prison</li> <li>• Foreign National Offenders subject to deportation action</li> <li>• FNOs removed under the Early Removal and Facilitated Returns Schemes</li> <li>• People entering/leaving immigration detention</li> <li>• Annual Numbers of Returns [with various sub-categories, i.e. by type of return]</li> </ul>
Switzerland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of cases of illegal residence</li> <li>• Persons detained for whom an alert had been issued</li> </ul>
Turkey	Illegal immigrants detected
Albania	Number of "Clandestines" detected

# Conclusions:

*data  
harmonization  
is a policy  
conundrum*

- What commodity seizures are reported ?  
*varied types/varied definition*
- What units are used?  
*varied types*
- How often are reports published?  
*varied methods and irregularly*
- Inconsistency of definitions requires work on alignment of (1) definition of data, (2) types of data, (3) types of units, and (4) types of publication outlets

# Thank you !

A Peek into Data Published by Customs Agencies:  
a First Look at Reporting Practices and Policy  
Implications

Ari Finnsson, University of Toronto and  
Senior Research Assistant at Borders in Globalization

Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, University of Victoria,  
Director, Borders in Globalization