

# Release 2020 Illicit Drug Market Watch Following COVID-19

24 Sep 2020



## Findings from the Release COVID-19 Market Watch Survey

data collected from survey launch  
9 April 2020 to 18 Sep 2020

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# Research questions

Would COVID-related restrictions on the movement of people:

- Change drug availability?
- Impact on price & purity?















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## Impact of Coronavirus on Drug Purchases Survey

Please let us know about you.

Age

Gender ☐ Female  
☐ Male  
☐ Trans  
☐ Other

Ethnicity

Occupation - which best describes you?

Please tell us about a purchase you've made since the lockdown, or any purchase you made because you anticipated shortages due to lockdown. Note: we are interested in any drugs you have obtained, even if for free or 'in trade' from someone outside your household, as well as drugs you have bought with money.

Purchase date    

Drug purchased

I purchased a combination of different drugs  
*Please state which drugs*

Price paid

☐ Given freely  
☐ Trade/in-kind

Quantity/Amount "sold as"

Quantity type/units

### HELPLINE

020 7324 2989  
[ask@release.org.uk](mailto:ask@release.org.uk)

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# TALKING DRUGS

69% male

27% female  
4% trans/other

missing = 5



56% aged 18-24

56% 18-24  
25% 25-34  
12% 35-44  
5% 44-64  
2% 55-64  
1% 65 and over

missing = 91

Characteristics of Survey  
Respondents Reporting Drug  
Transactions

N = 2621

54% employed  
/furloughed

1% in training  
2% carer  
7% benefits  
9% self-employed  
20% student  
6% unemployed

missing = 14

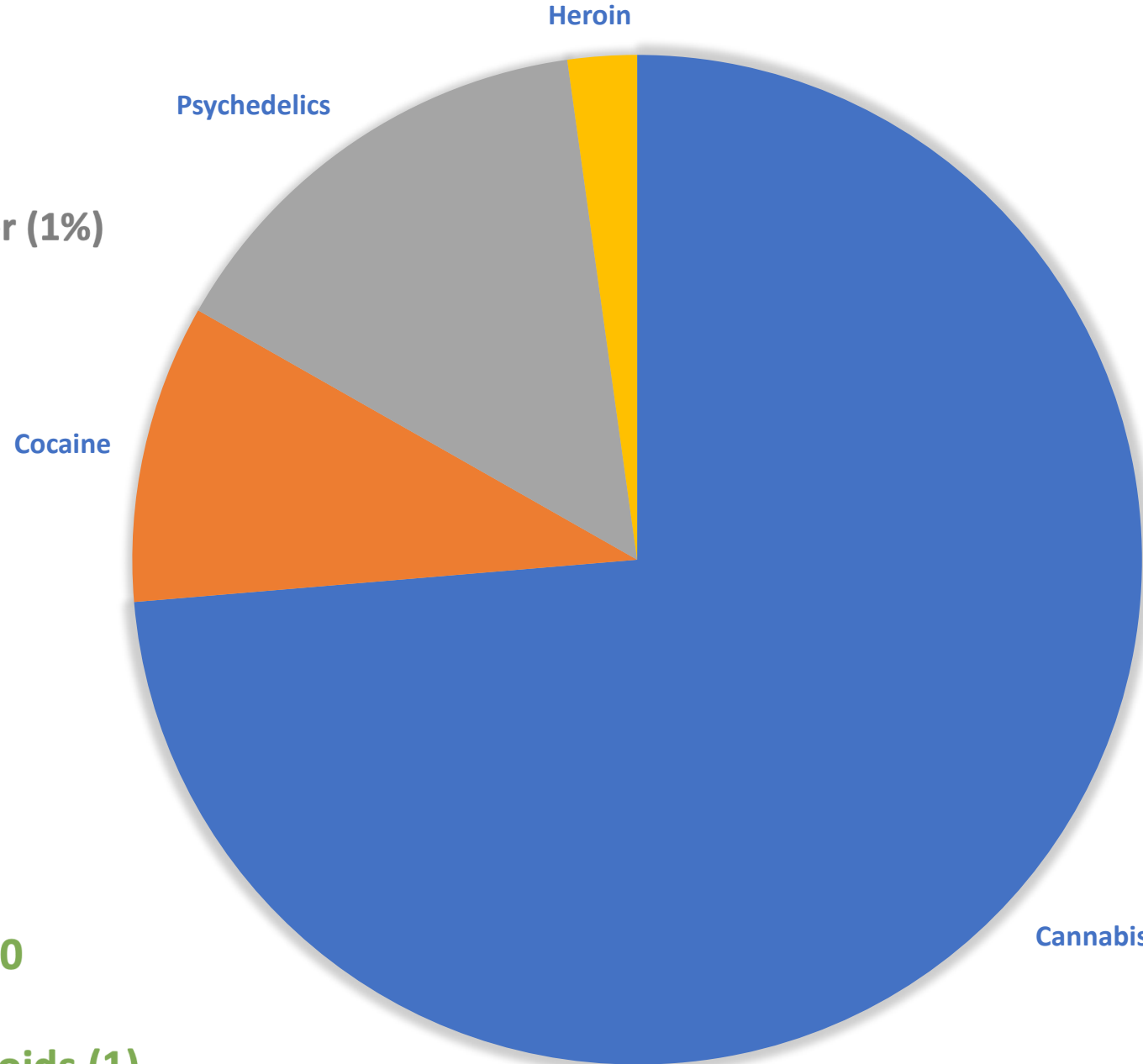


92% white

1% Asian  
1% Black  
4% mixed

missing = 5

**Ketamine (4%)**  
**LSD (4%)**  
**MDMA/ecstasy (4%)**  
**2C-B (1%)**  
**Mushrooms/DMT/other (1%)**



**Of 2621 reports**

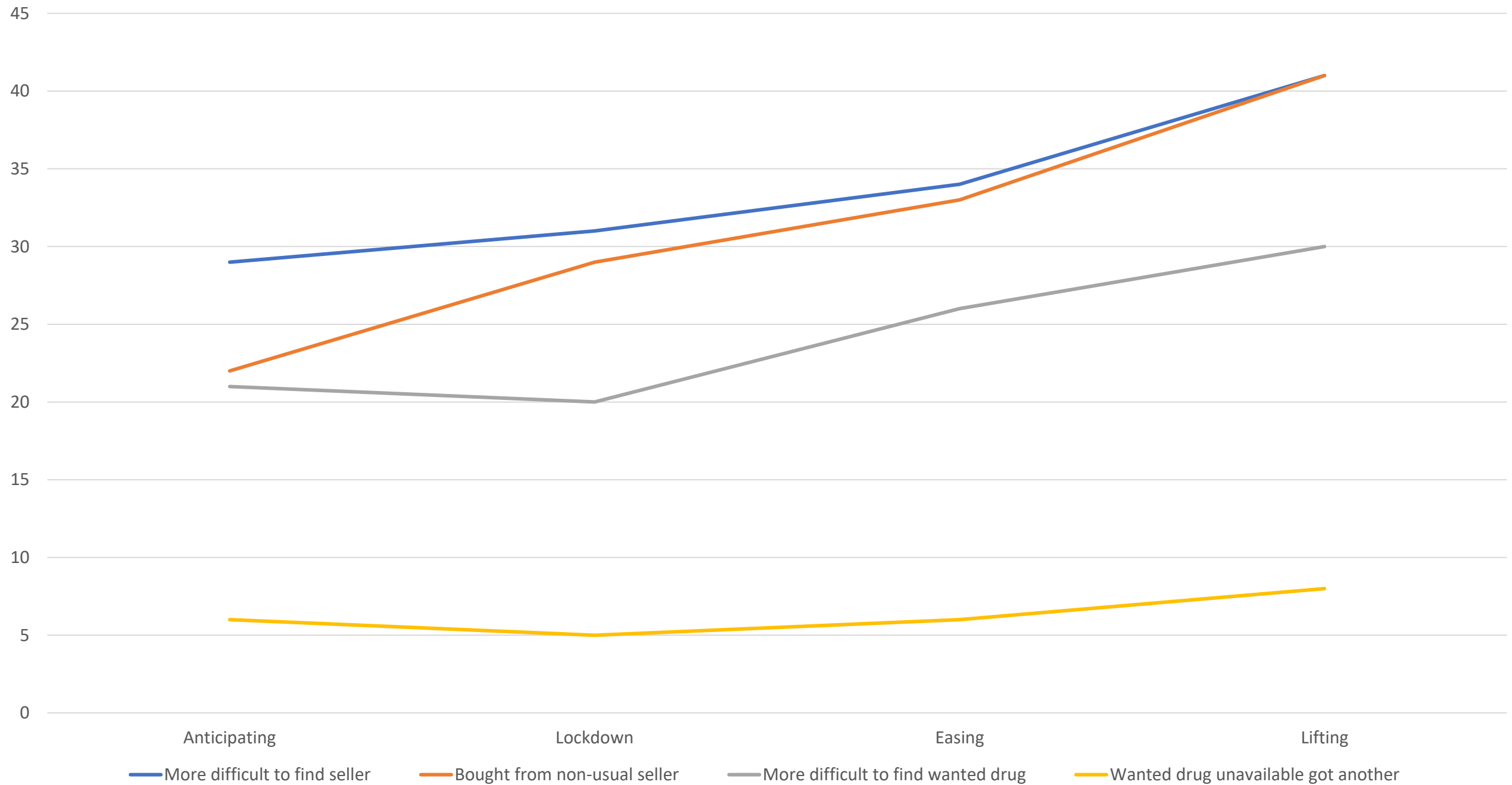
**Benzodiazepines (30)**  
**Nitrous oxide (2)**  
**Synthetic cannabinoids (1)**

**Skunk/import (41%)**  
**Low grade herbal (18%)**  
**Other cannabis (7%)**  
**Resin (3%)**  
**Oil/shatter/extract (1%)**



Transactions made	Date in 2020	N
In anticipation of lockdown	1 January to 22 March	223
After lockdown	23 March to 10 May	1231
After lockdown easing was announced	11 May to 4 July	738
After lockdown lifting	5 July (onwards)	263

Indicators of drug supply availability







**BORN**



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## COVID-19 & the impact on the drugs market

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TALKING  
DRUGS



# Jack's reports from these networks

Dealers selling less often

Reports that dealers had enough stock for 3 months only

After the 'Encrochat' arrests, markets for cocaine, crack cocaine and heroin significantly disrupted, across the country

Reports of dealers decided to stop business until supply is up and risk is down

In short, results from this key informant data corroborate our explanation for changes in availability

You can take part!

<https://www.release.org.uk/coronavirus-drug-purchases-impact-survey>

The image shows a circular crop of a web page for a survey. The top navigation bar is orange with the word 'Release' in white. Below it are links for 'SERVICES', 'POLICY & NEWS', and 'ABOUT'. The main heading is 'Coronavirus Drug Purchases Survey'. The form includes fields for Age (dropdown), Gender (radio buttons for Female, Male, Trans, Other), Ethnicity (dropdown), and 'Which best describes you?' (dropdown). A paragraph explains the survey's purpose: 'We are interested in any drugs you have purchased since the lockdown, or any purchase you made due to shortages due to lockdown. Note: we are interested in any drugs you have purchased for free or 'in trade' from someone outside your household, as well as any purchase with money.' Below this are fields for Purchase date (three dropdowns and a calendar icon), Drug purchased (dropdown), and a text box for 'Number of different drugs purchased (please state which drugs)'. There is also a 'Price paid' section with a currency dropdown (£), a text box, and checkboxes for 'Given freely' and 'Trade/in-kind'. At the bottom, there are more dropdowns and a 'Select -' button. On the right side of the page, there are three orange boxes: 'HELPLINE' with the number '020 7324 2989' and email 'ask@release.org.uk'; 'SUPPORT OUR WORK'; 'NEWSLETTER' with a sign-up link; and 'INTERNATIONAL DRUG POLICY NEWS' with the text 'TALKING DRUGS'.

**Release**

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### Coronavirus Drug Purchases Survey

Age

Gender ☐ Female  
☐ Male  
☐ Trans  
☐ Other

Ethnicity

Which best describes you?

We are interested in any drugs you have purchased since the lockdown, or any purchase you made due to shortages due to lockdown. Note: we are interested in any drugs you have purchased for free or 'in trade' from someone outside your household, as well as any purchase with money.

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