

# Substance Misuse in India and the UK (specifically Birmingham)

## International Data

11.8 million official deaths as a direct or indirect result of drugs globally.

8.71 million deaths are from tobacco, 2.44 million are from alcohol, 494,494 are as a result of illicit drugs.

Just over 2% of the world's population were dependent on illicit drugs or alcohol in 2019

## India

2.1% of Indians use opioids, the majority of which are dependent users, more than three times the global average

Of those suffering from illicit drug dependence, only 1 in 20 receive inpatient treatment

The 1985 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act makes the sale, purchase, possession, transportation, interstate import/exporting, or any other commercial activity including drugs punishable

There are harsh and disproportionate penalties, including the criminalisation of substance consumption, imprisonment, and the use of the death penalty

Nearly 60,000 cases were reported under the NDPS Act in 2020, a two-fold increase in the last decade

The treatment gap has led to a rise in 'private de-addiction centres' which are often unregulated places of incarceration, with reports of sudden deaths within centres, cruel forms of discipline, and increased risks of post-discharge relapse and overdose related fatalities

Many, including a former officer, think the NDPS Act is too harsh, as just one conviction for minor possession could ruin a person's life, only pushing them more towards drugs

Enforcement of the NDPS has inadvertently caused a shift towards harder drugs and riskier consumption

## United Kingdom

Approximately 2.3% of the UK population belong to the Indian ethnic group

The vast majority of UK drug-related deaths involve opiates

The 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) defines criminal offences for specific activities, including possession, supply, and production of 'controlled drugs', as well as specifying which drugs are controlled, and categorising them according to an assessment of relative harm. It also sets out powers for police to stop and search individuals for suspicion of drug possession

The 2016 Psychoactive Substances Act takes a broader approach than the MDA, as it criminalises the production of any substance capable of producing a psychoactive effect, but the definition excludes substances such as alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine, which also fall under this definition

A House of Commons report states that UK drugs policy is failing and urges the government to take a harm reduction approach

The consequences of criminalising people who use drugs often outweigh the risk that they face from drug use, and there is not convincing evidence that this criminalisation prevents wider drug use or drug-related harm

Punishment as a means of deterrence is unethical, and punishment for drug production is often ineffective and have negative side effects

## Birmingham

Approximately 6% of Birmingham's population are Indian, so this large proportion, relative to the country means that examining India's drug policy is very important when shaping Birmingham's.

There are estimated to be approximately 22,500 opiate and/or crack users in the West Midlands, 1.2% of the population. This large number of users, similar to high levels of opiate use in India, mean that India's drug policy is relevant.

Many drug-related admissions in Birmingham are due to people going 'cold-turkey', leading the body and mental health to deteriorate, meaning they may require urgent medical assistance, which could be avoided through proper treatment.

## Conclusion/ Recommendations

Looking at India's drug policy is insightful for two reasons: Birmingham is full of many Indian citizens, and all cultures must be represented; and as both areas' drug-related deaths are due to opiates, then it is important to look at how they conduct their policy and the effects that it has.

Neither country seems to have had a great deal of success with their drug policies, as both usage and death statistics have risen in either country since the implementation of their respective drug policies. As both countries have similar approaches, albeit India's stricter, as it criminalises the possession, sale, and distribution of drugs, then it is appropriate to infer how Birmingham's drug policy can be improved by changing the way that things are done, after reflecting on these policies.

Reducing opioid-related deaths requires the scale-up of naloxone provision, central funding for heroin assisted treatment, and the consideration of the establishment of safer drug consumption rooms in areas with high concentrations of injecting drug use

This would be useful in Birmingham city centre, where a major concentration of discarded needles were found, indicating the scale of substance misuse in the city centre

Non-judgmental harm reduction approaches are needed to facilitate access to services. The decriminalisation of drugs possession would be good, but the only way to have the most effectively, legally regulated market, safest drugs for consumption, safest ways to consume said drugs, and effective and accessible treatment services is to allow the legal regulation of drugs

Overall, Birmingham must implement a harm reduction approach to maximise safety

Arya, S., Basu, A., Basu, D., Choudhury, S., Ghosh, A., Gupta, R., Mishra, S., Nebhinani, N., Padhy, S., Prasad, S., Sharma, K., Singh, L., Somani, A. and Swami, M. (2022) 'A multicentric survey among patients with substance use disorders during the COVID-19 lockdown in India', *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 64(1), pp. 48 – 55.

Bewley-Taylor, D., Charles, M. and Neidpath, A. (2005) *Drug Policy in India: Compounding Harm?* Available at: <https://www.aidsdatahub.org/sites/default/files/resource/drug-policy-india-2005.pdf> (Accessed: 2 June 2022)

Birmingham City Council (2018) *Substance Misuse Intelligence Summary 2018*. Available at: <https://birmingham.cmis.uk.com/Birmingham/Document.ashx?cJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=IN9c2RZGKPkZaMRrB%2BnFeC0uioHlqfZIC9ybJLEoiQKPSg1s3Mwg%3D%3D&rUzwRPF%2BZ3zd4E7lkn8Lyw%3D%3D=pwRE6AGJFLDNlh225F5QM aQWCtPHwdhUfCZ%2FLUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ%3D%3D&mCTIbCubSFFxsDGW9IXnlg%3D%3D=hFfIUdN3100%3D&kCx1AnS9%2FpWZQ40DXFvdEw%3D%3D=hFfIUdN3100%3D&uJovDxwdjMPoYv%2BAJvYtyA%3D%3D=ctNJff55vVA%3D&FgPIIEJYIotS%2BYGoBi5oIA%3D%3D=NHdURQburHA%3D&d9Qij0ag1Pd993isyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJff55vVA%3D&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJff55vVA%3D&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCPMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJff55vVA%3D> (Accessed: 2 June 2018).

Bordoloi, P. (2022) 'Why India's Drug Policy Should Pivot Towards Public Health and Harm Reduction', *The Wire*, 24 January. Available at: <https://thewire.in/government/india-drug-policy-public-health-harm-reduction> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Kumar, S. (2004) 'India has widespread drug problem, report says', *BMJ*, 329(7456), p. 14.

Holland, A. (2020) 'An ethical analysis of UK drug policy as an example of a criminal justice approach to drugs: a commentary on the short film *Putting UK Drug Policy into Focus*', *Harm Reduction Journal*, 17(97), pp. 1 – 9.

Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (2019) *NDTDC, AIIMS submits report "Magnitude of Substance Use in India" to M/O Social Justice & Empowerment*. [Press release] 18 February. Available at: [https://www.issup.net/files/2019-02/NDTDC%2C%20AIIMS%20submits%20report%20E2%80%9CMagnitude%20of%20Substance%20use%20in%20India%E2%80%9D%20to%20M\\_O%20Social%20Justice%20%26%20Empowerment.pdf](https://www.issup.net/files/2019-02/NDTDC%2C%20AIIMS%20submits%20report%20E2%80%9CMagnitude%20of%20Substance%20use%20in%20India%E2%80%9D%20to%20M_O%20Social%20Justice%20%26%20Empowerment.pdf) (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Mittal, N. and Thakur, B. (2021) 'Drug Policy in India: An Analysis', *International Annals of Criminology*, 59(1), pp. 88 – 97.

NDTV (2021) *FYI: India's Drug Policy Explained*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMfIDDaEM3I> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Nomis (no date) *Birmingham Local Authority*. Available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E08000025> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Nomis (2011) *KS201UK – Ethnic Group*. Available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/KS201UK/view/2092957697?cols=measures> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Parliament. House of Commons (2019) *Drugs Policy: First Report of Session 2019*. (HC 143). London: The Stationary Office.

Rao, R. and Singh, B. (2022) 'Is there an opioid epidemic in India?', *Journal of Public Health*, 43(2), pp. 43 – 50.

Rehab Clinics Group (2019) *Drug and Alcohol Statistics In Birmingham*. Available at: <https://rehabclinicsgroup.com/drug-and-alcohol-statistics-in-birmingham/> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Ritchie, H. and Roser, M. (2019) *Drug Use*. Available at: <https://ourworldindata.org/drug-use#citation> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Singh, O. (2020) 'Substance use in India – Policy implications', *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 62(2), p. 111.

Society for the Study of Addiction (2020) *Opioid use in India five times higher than in 2004*. Available at: <https://www.addiction-ssa.org/opioid-use-in-india-five-times-higher-than-in-2004/> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Strategic Policing and Crime Board (2017) *Substance Misuse Report*. Available at: <https://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Key-facts-and-full-report-Substance-Misuse-SPCB-05-09-17.pdf> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Transform (no date) *Understanding UK Drug Law*. Available at: <https://transformdrugs.org/drug-policy/uk-drug-policy> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

## References

Mittal, N. and Thakur, B. (2021) 'Drug Policy in India: An Analysis', *International Annals of Criminology*, 59(1), pp. 88 – 97.

NDTV (2021) *FYI: India's Drug Policy Explained*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMfIDDaEM3I> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Nomis (no date) *Birmingham Local Authority*. Available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E08000025> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Nomis (2011) *KS201UK – Ethnic Group*. Available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/KS201UK/view/2092957697?cols=measures> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Parliament. House of Commons (2019) *Drugs Policy: First Report of Session 2019*. (HC 143). London: The Stationary Office.

Rao, R. and Singh, B. (2022) 'Is there an opioid epidemic in India?', *Journal of Public Health*, 43(2), pp. 43 – 50.

Rehab Clinics Group (2019) *Drug and Alcohol Statistics In Birmingham*. Available at: <https://rehabclinicsgroup.com/drug-and-alcohol-statistics-in-birmingham/> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Ritchie, H. and Roser, M. (2019) *Drug Use*. Available at: <https://ourworldindata.org/drug-use#citation> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Singh, O. (2020) 'Substance use in India – Policy implications', *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 62(2), p. 111.

Society for the Study of Addiction (2020) *Opioid use in India five times higher than in 2004*. Available at: <https://www.addiction-ssa.org/opioid-use-in-india-five-times-higher-than-in-2004/> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Strategic Policing and Crime Board (2017) *Substance Misuse Report*. Available at: <https://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Key-facts-and-full-report-Substance-Misuse-SPCB-05-09-17.pdf> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

Transform (no date) *Understanding UK Drug Law*. Available at: <https://transformdrugs.org/drug-policy/uk-drug-policy> (Accessed: 2 June 2022).

## By Leah Bedwin for the Commonwealth Behaviours Project

Birmingham City Council Public Health Department Knowledge Exchange Internship

For a more detailed analysis, please see the attached full written report