

Methodology

The UNODC adopted a mixed methodology in preparing this report, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches, including geospatial and open-source intelligence (GEOSINT and OSINT) methods to better understand trends and patterns of drug trafficking.

Qualitative methods included key informant interviews from decision-makers, practitioners, subject matter experts, and others. Between 2020 and 2022, a wide range of law enforcement officers, judges, prosecutors, health professionals, civil servants, as well as individuals connected to drug trafficking networks were interviewed, including former inmates, drivers, and representatives of affected communities (see interview list below). Findings generated from testimonies were cross-referenced with primary and secondary sources. Additional consultations with Iraqi authorities took place (online) between October and December 2023.

Quantitative methods consisted of data collection and analysis of administrative datasets. Primary information included the Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ) and Individual Drug Seizure (IDS) database of the Drug Monitoring platform (DMP). Likewise, UNODC drew on statistical data compiled and shared by the governments of Iraq and neighbouring countries from 2019 to 2023.

In order to better understand the relationships between conflict, border disputes, the impacts of international sanctions on narcotic supply chains, and the proliferation of actors involved, UNODC consulted secondary literature that includes academic studies, policy reports, and declassified documents. A goal was to understand Iraq's challenges in an historical and comparative context.

The report features several limitations that warrant consideration. First, field research was conducted primarily between 2020 and 2022, and data collection efforts were constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, limited data availability and incomplete datasets resulted in a greater dependence on qualitative methods. Third, the research did not focus on either the local dynamics of conflict economies or the financial dimensions of smuggling.

Details of interviews conducted: 2020-2022

| Interviewee | Occupation | Gender | Country |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Interview #1 | Law enforcement | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #2 | Law enforcement | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #3 | Law enforcement | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #4 | Magistrate | Female | Iraq |
| Interview #5 | Magistrate | Female | Iraq |
| Interview #6 | Magistrate | Female | Iraq |
| Interview #7 | Lawyer | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #8 | Inmate | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #9 | Inmate | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #10 | Inmate | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #11 | Inmate | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #12 | Inmate | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #13 | Inmate | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #14 | Lawyer | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #15 | Law enforcement | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #16 | Law enforcement | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #17 | Law enforcement | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #18 | Low level facilitator | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #19 | Low level facilitator | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #20 | Low level facilitator | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #21 | Law enforcement | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #22 | Low level facilitator | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #23 | Inmate | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #24 | Inmate | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #25 | Inmate | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #26 | Inmate | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #27 | Inmate | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #28 | Inmate | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #29 | Drug user | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #30 | Drug user | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #31 | Drug user | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #32 | Law enforcement | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #33 | Law enforcement | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #34 | Law enforcement | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #35 | Law enforcement | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #36 | Law enforcement | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #37 | Health practitioner | Female | Iraq |
| Interview #38 | Public official | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #39 | Public official | Female | Iraq |
| Interview #40 | Public official | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #41 | Analyst | Male | Iraq |
| Interview #42 | Analyst | Female | Iraq |
| Interview #43 | Analyst | Female | Iraq |
| Interview #44 | Analyst | Male | Iraq |