

I. Factors limiting the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

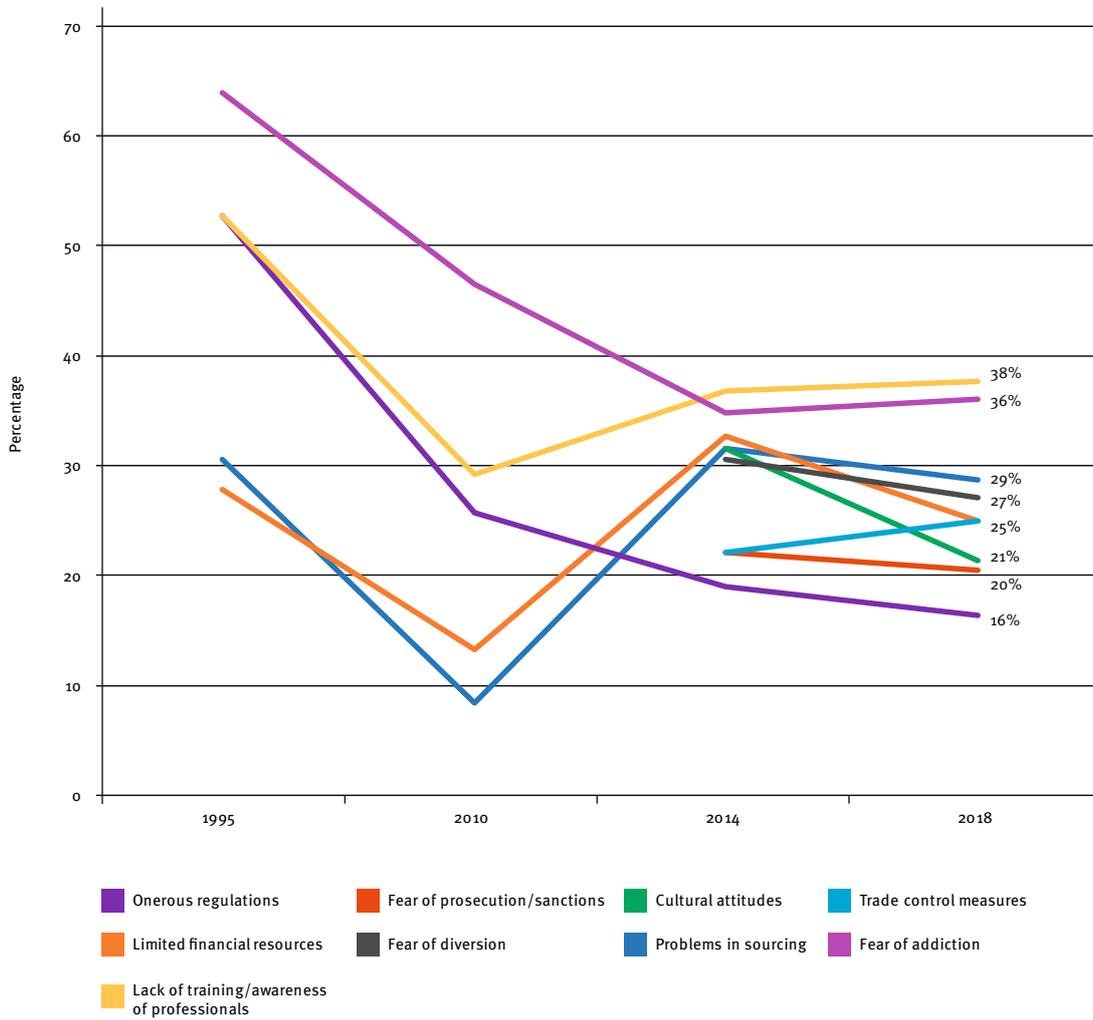
1. Over the years, INCB has reviewed and reported on the impediments to the availability of controlled substances. The questionnaire sent to competent national authorities in 2018 contained a general question, also used in previous surveys, about the factors unduly limiting the availability of controlled substances for scientific and medical purposes. Comparing the responses provided in 1995, 2010, 2014 and 2018, it is possible to observe a decrease in the number of times that onerous regulations are mentioned as impediments to availability. The number of times that fear of addiction was mentioned increased slightly between 2014 and 2018 after a sharp decline between 1994 and 2014. Lack of training and awareness of health professionals was the factor most often mentioned as an impediment in both 2014 and 2018, followed by fear of addiction. The number of times that the issue of limited financial resources was mentioned declined in 2018, after increasing between 2010 and 2014 (see figure I).

2. Although questions relating to fear of diversion or prosecution, trade control measures and cultural attitudes

have only been included in the questionnaire since 2014, it is possible to see that the fear of diversion of controlled substances has decreased, together with the fear of prosecution or sanctions. The role of cultural attitudes in limiting availability decreased noticeably between 2014 and 2018, while trade control measures were reported to be more of an issue in 2018 than they were in 2014 (see also figure I).

3. The review of the impediments as reported by competent national authorities constitutes an important element for identifying problems related to the limited availability of opioid analgesics and psychotropic substances and for developing policies and programmes that can effectively address the problem. It is encouraging that the number of times that some of the impediments that are not necessarily based on scientific evidence but are more related to cultural issues and bias are mentioned is progressively diminishing. The factors reported more often as obstacles are concrete and practical issues.

Figure I. Impediments to availability mentioned by competent national authorities (1995, 2010, 2014 and 2018)



Note: The above figure has been developed to illustrate general trends. Data from questionnaires from different years are not directly comparable owing to variations in the number of countries that replied to the questionnaires and in which countries replied.