



# UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

## A Pilot Open-Source Database of Tobacco Seizures



## What this presentation covers

1. The value of individual seizure data
2. The state of illicit tobacco market research
3. Preliminary findings of the pilot study

PRELIMINARY RESULTS: DRAFT



## Why analyze individual seizure data?

- Like a pixel in a photograph...
- Reflection of both a contraband flow AND capability/political will to make a seizure and report it
- Must be triangulated with other data
- Can reveal:
  - Routing (source and destination of shipments)
  - Conveyance (container, air freight, highway, warehouse)
  - Vulnerable border crossings
  - Brands
  - Cover (misdeclarations, cover loads, concealment)
  - Traffickers (nationality, gender)
  - Valuation (absolute and tax loss)



## Drugs Monitoring Platform (DMP)

### Over 656,000 online geocoded events

- ✓ Visualization and sharing of seizures
- ✓ Tool for monitoring drug trafficking trends, routes, modus operandi
- ✓ Common system, secure data sharing

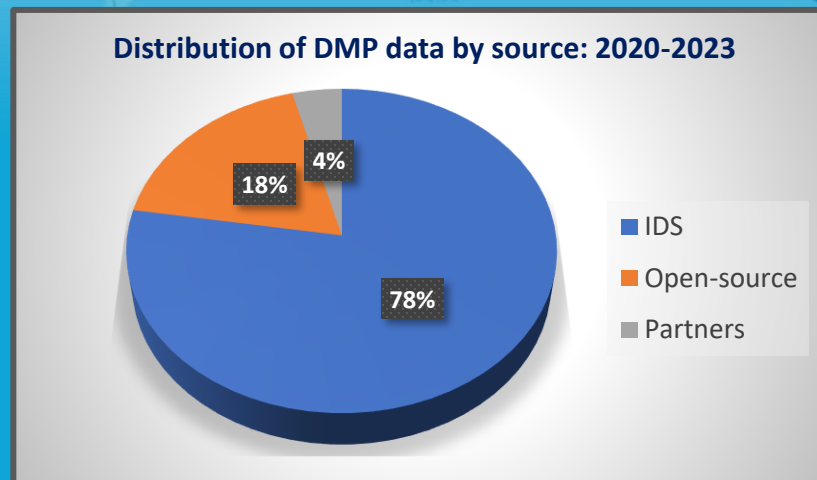
### Target Audience:

Law Enforcement, Analysts, Member States

### **Objective:**

*Assist international community by providing high-quality, essential evidence to inform policy-making and support operational action*

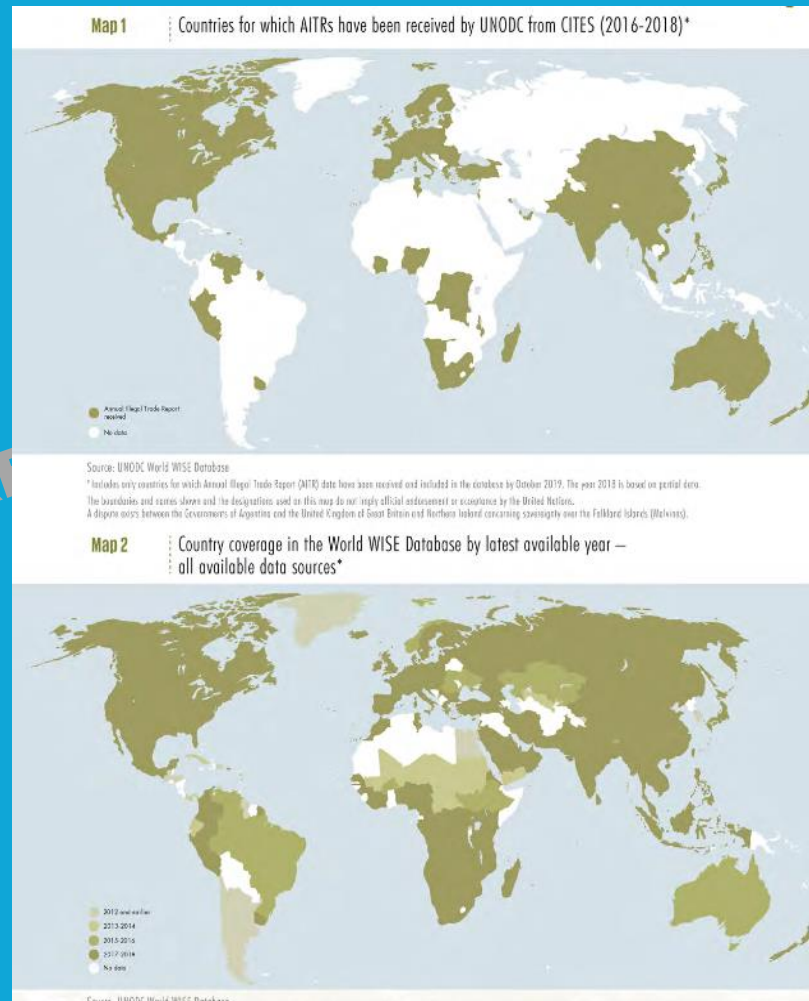
PRELIMINARY





## World Wildlife Seizures Database (World WISE)

- Wildlife report started with seizure data
- CITES CoP resolved all Parties to report all seizures annually
- Currently sitting at 316,238 seizures
- Allows tracking of scores of species markets
- Basis of an SDG target indicator (SDG 15.7)
- Developing a platform for Parties to view.



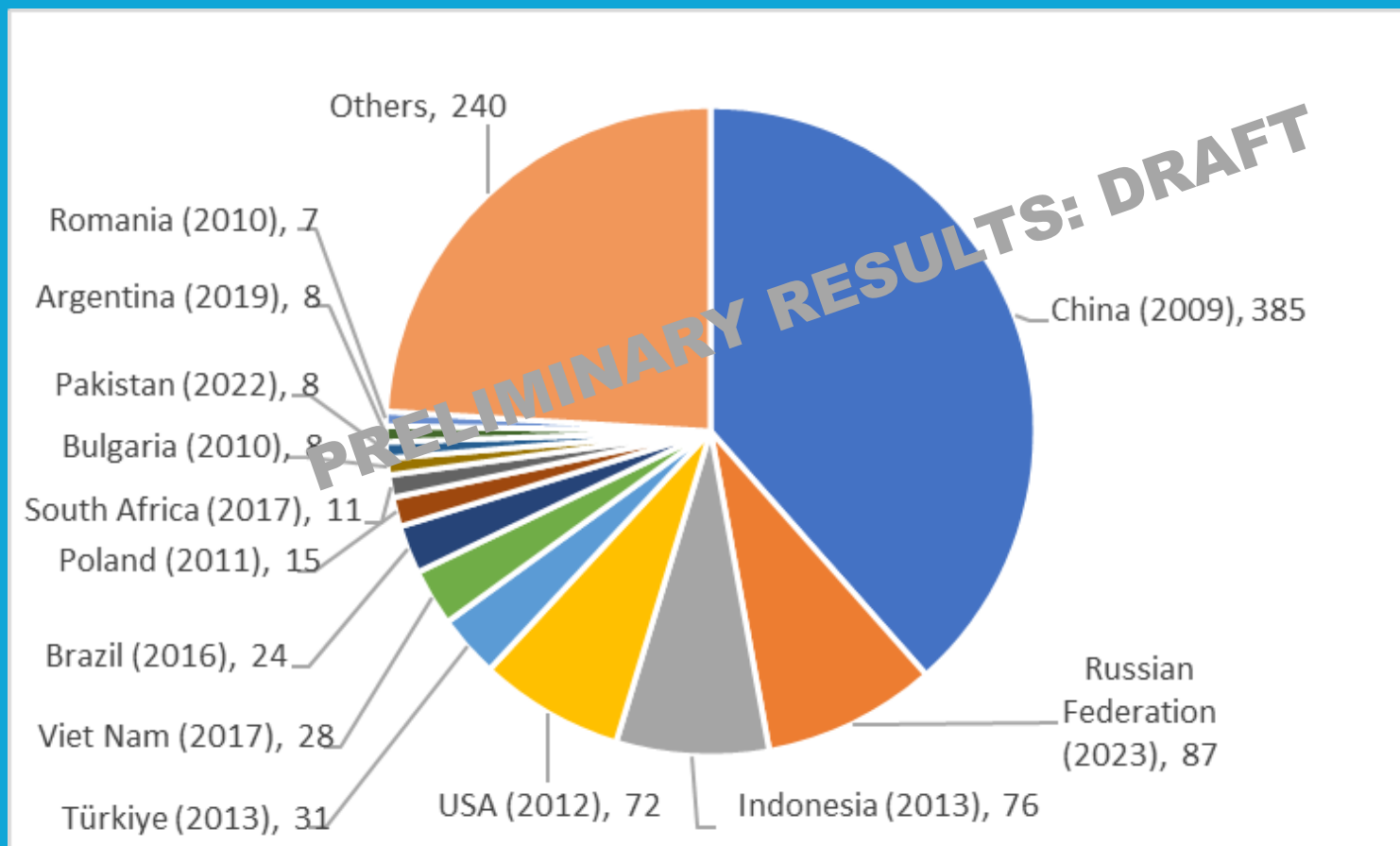


## State of knowledge on the illicit tobacco market: Cigarette packet studies and gap analysis

- Two attempts to estimate global illicit cigarette market share:
  - Joossens, et al. 2009 (84 countries, 11.6% illicit)
  - Goodchild, et al. 2022 (36 countries, 11.2% illicit)
- Both showed large national variation in share illicit
- Both were based on data from different years using different methods, which highlights the need for a systematic global data collection effort.

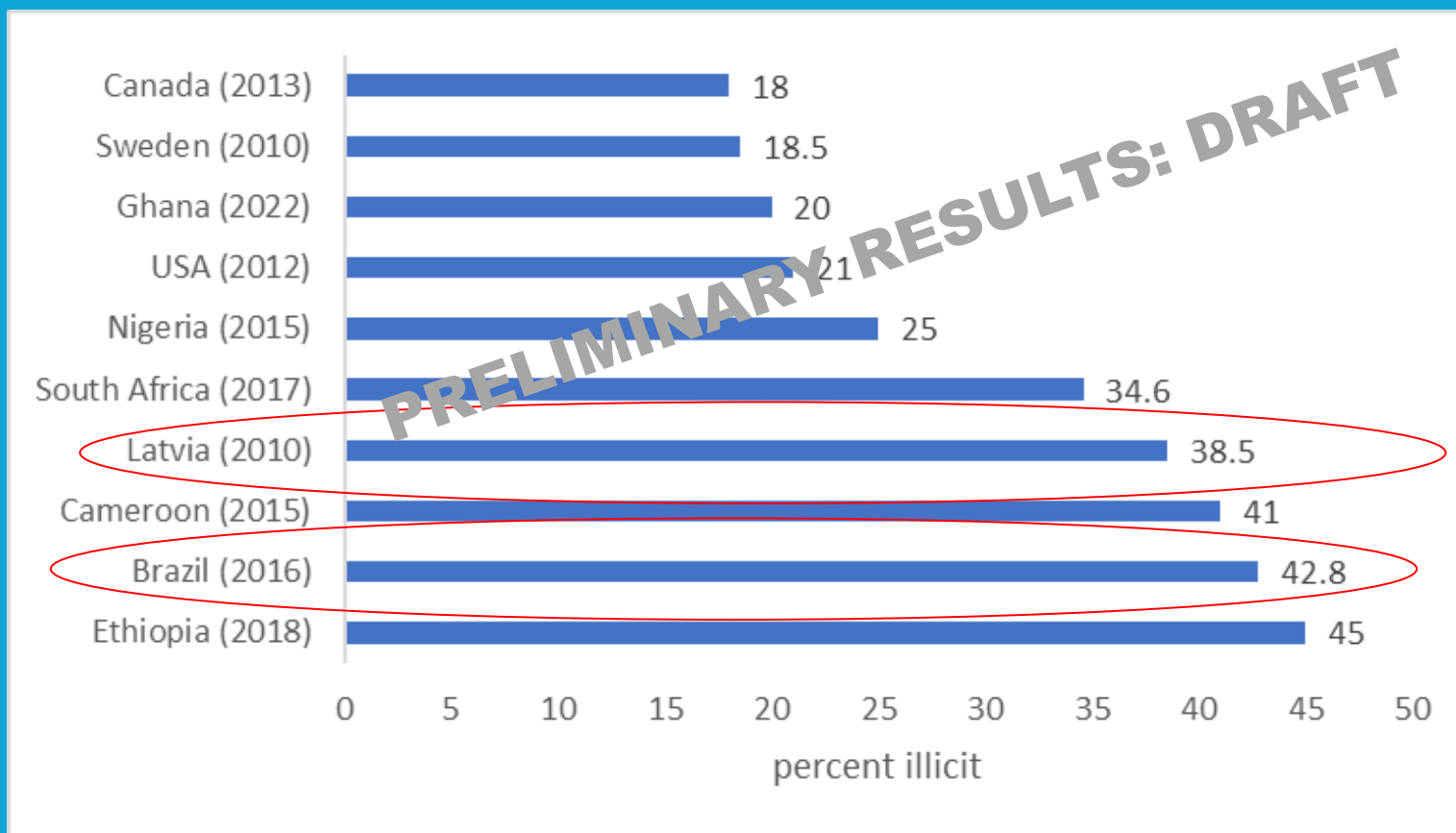


## Updated breakdown estimate: National illicit cigarette consumption (billions)





## Top 10 countries with the highest available estimated market share of illicit cigarettes, (year of illicit market estimation)





## State of knowledge on the illicit tobacco market

### Legal trade data

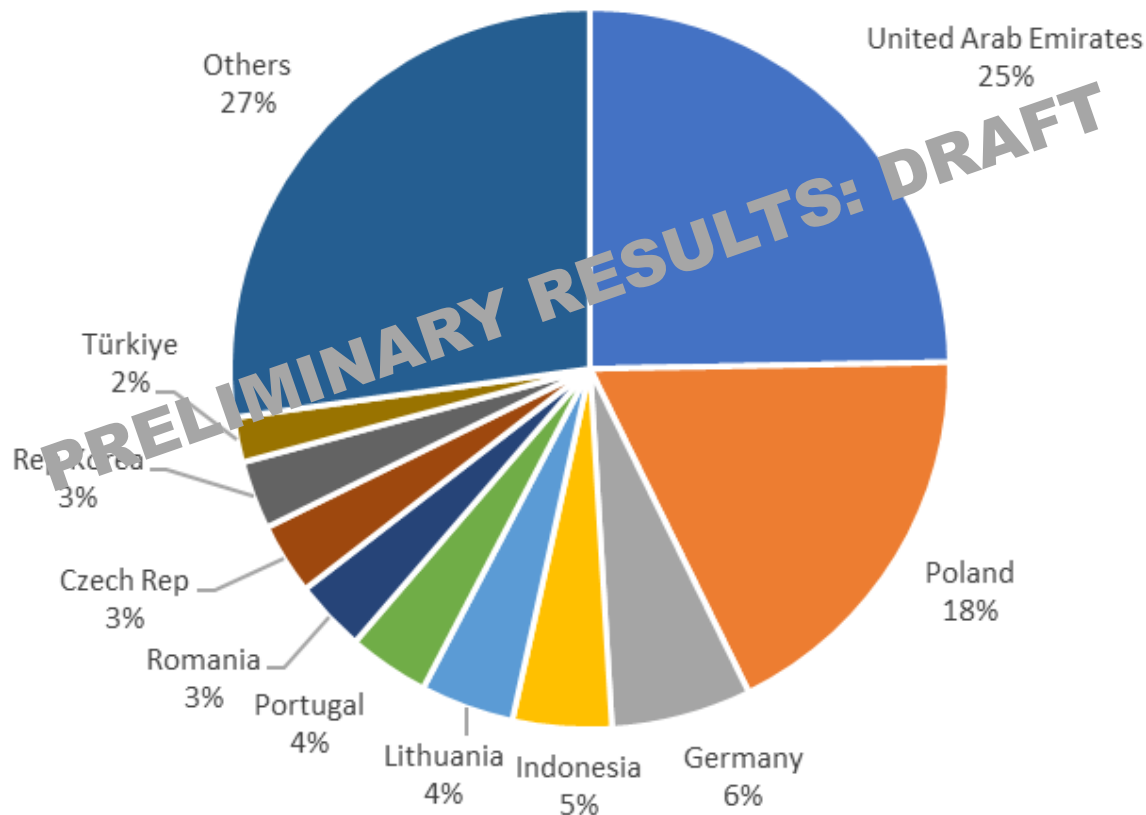
- Since a share of the illicit tobacco supply is diverted from legal manufacture, legal trade data can be used to understand the illicit market.
- Comparing production/import to export/consumption and tax revenues can also suggest curious surpluses.
- These data are rarely strong enough to be dispositive on their own but can be triangulated with other data to pose questions.



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# National distribution of value of global exports of cigarettes by export country in 2022 (UN COMTRADE)

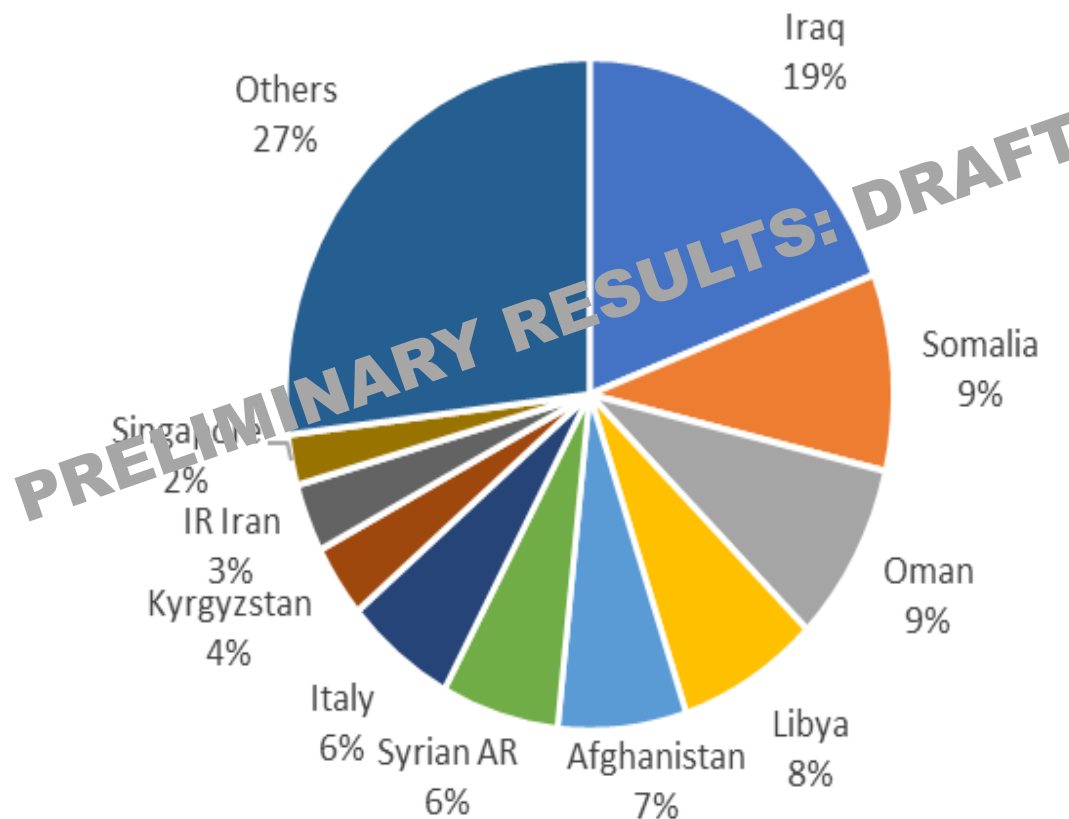




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# National distribution of value of imports of cigarettes from the UAE in 2022 (UN COMTRADE)





## The pilot project

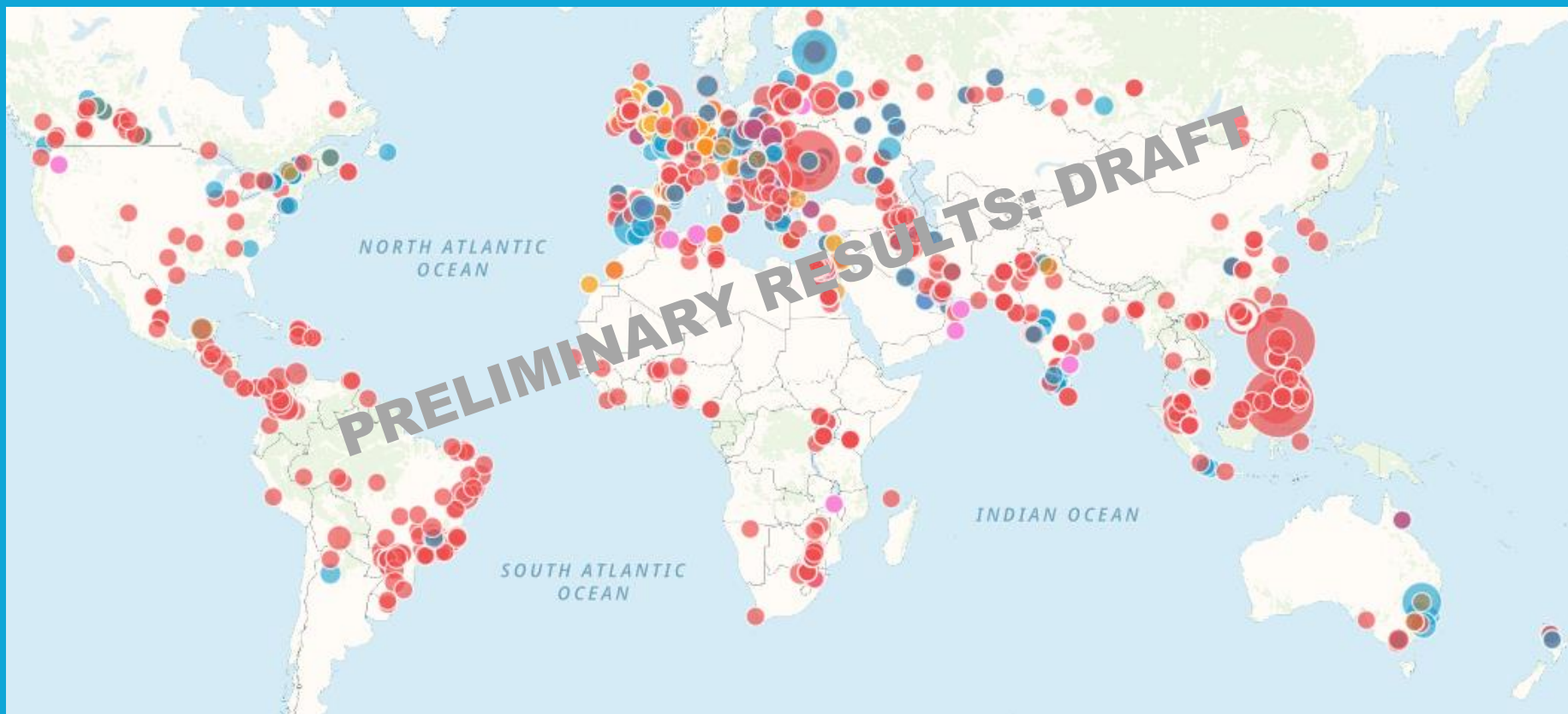
- In partnership with the Protocol Secretariat, funded by Norway
- Web scraped data used to populate a seizure database.
- Pilot study conducted in Quarter 4, 2023.
- The final test dataset covers 1,421 seizure events that occurred in the period October 2022-October 2023 in 92 countries and territories (about three seizure events per day).
- The test observations are consistent about what is known about the market from other sources, while challenging presumptions.
- So it works! International tobacco trafficking can be monitored through this mechanism.
- Potential to combine open source with data from operational programmes such as the Passenger and Cargo Border Team (about one every four days).



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## Mapping the pilot seizure events, Oct 2022-Oct 2023



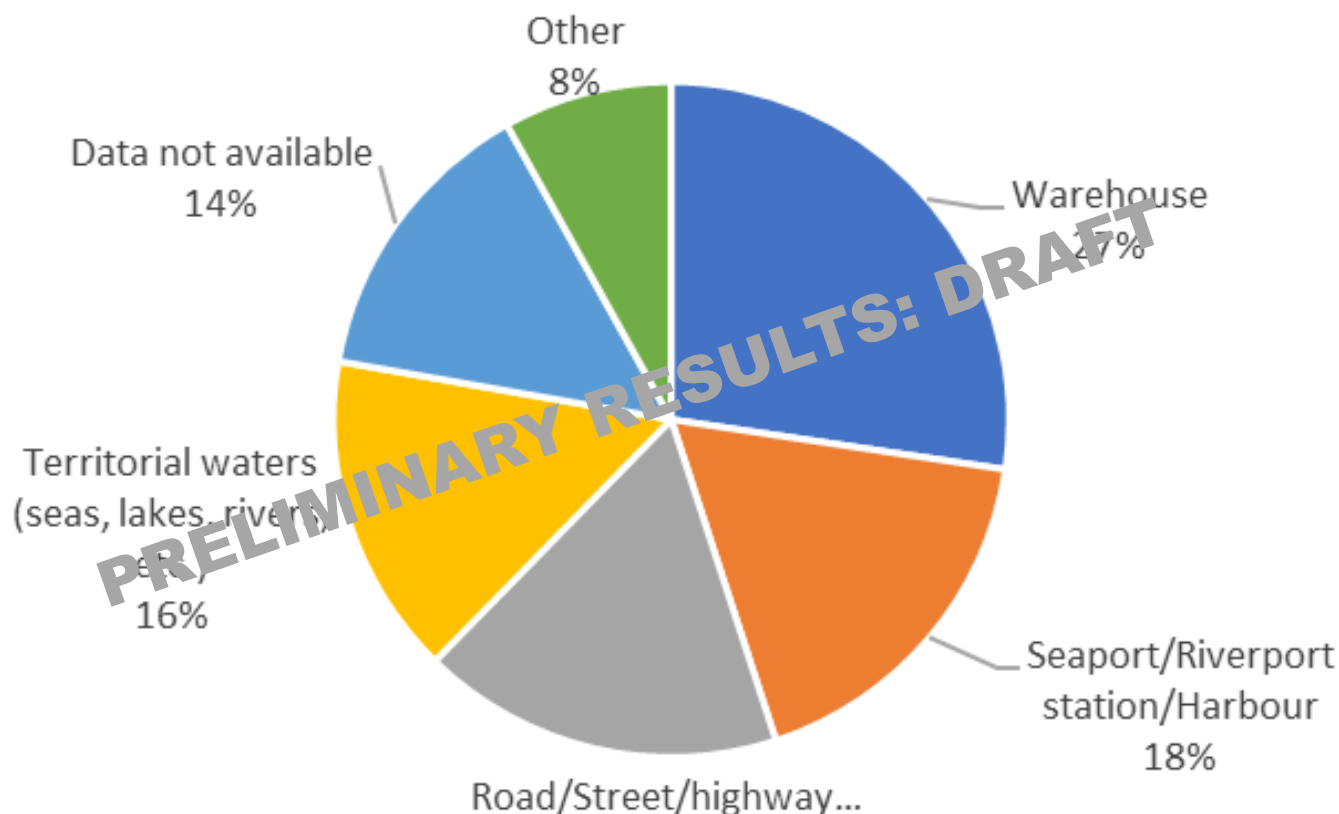
Source: UNODC pilot database



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## Distribution of the estimated weight of cigarette seizures by location type, open source data, October 2022-October 2023 (n=1681)





## Preliminary observations

- There is a great need for an interagency program of systematic assessment of the illicit tobacco trade.
- This assessment should combine multiple methods and could be integrated with operations.
- The pilot has shown that open-source seizure monitoring can be one of these sources but should be teamed with official data.
- Limited investment needed to continue the pilot.