

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Police Recorded Drug Seizure and Arrest Statistics: Monthly Update to 31 January 2016

Published 17 February 2016

Police Recorded Drug Seizure and Arrest Statistics

Published 17 February 2016

This bulletin provides the most recent statistics on drug seizures and arrests recorded by the police in Northern Ireland to 31 January 2016. Figures dating back to 1 April 2015 are provisional and will be subject to change until the finalised 2015/16 figures are published on 12 May 2016. The bulletin includes details of the number of drug seizure incidents, the weight or quantity of drugs seized by drug type and format and the number of persons arrested for drug offences.

Change to policing boundaries as a result of implementing the Review of Public Administration: As part of the Review of Public Administration which came into effect on 1 April 2015, PSNI has moved from eight to eleven policing districts. The geographic breakdown presented in this bulletin and in the accompanying spreadsheet is on the basis of these new boundaries and the figures presented here have been compiled from the new policing model accordingly.

All statistics referred to in this bulletin, along with supplementary information for the previous and current financial year to date time periods are available in the accompanying [supporting spreadsheet](#) which can be downloaded from the [PSNI Drug Seizure Statistics website](#).

Please note that the drugs seized by the Border Force are reported by the Home Office and therefore are excluded from the PSNI figures in accordance with national guidance and also in order to avoid duplication of the statistics when collated at UK level.

Contents

	Page
Overview	3
Section 1 Seizure Incidents	3
Section 2 Quantity of Drugs Seized	5
Section 3 Commercial Cannabis Cultivation Statistics	6
Section 4 Drug-Related Arrests	7
Appendices	8
Notes	10

Figures, Tables and Charts

	Page
Table 1 Key statistics for drug seizure incidents, commercial cultivation of cannabis and drug arrests in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months	3
Figure 1 Drug Seizure Incidents since 2005/06	3
Figure 2 Number of drug seizure incidents by month in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months	3
Figure 3 Number of drug seizure incidents by drug type in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months	4
Figure 4 Number of drug seizure incidents by policing district in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months	4
Table 2 Incidents involving the seizure of cannabis plants in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months	6
Table 3 Cannabis farm discoveries by policing district in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months	6
Figure 5 Drug-related arrests since 2005/06	7
Figure 6 Number of drug-related arrests by month in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months	7
Table 4a Drug seizures by type and format in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months	8
Table 4b Quantity of drugs seized by type and format in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months	9
Table 5 Number of Drug Seizures and Arrests by Policing District in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months	10

Overview

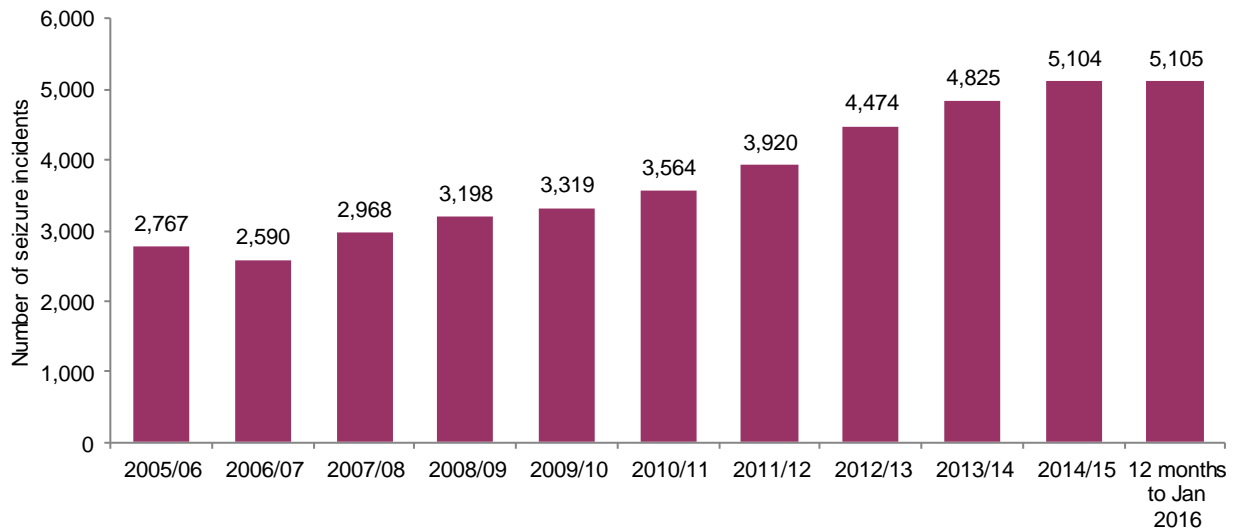
Table 1 Key statistics for drug seizure incidents, commercial cultivation of cannabis and drug arrests in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months

	12 months to 31 January 2015	12 months to 31 January 2016	Change
Drug seizure incidents	5,024	5,105	81 (1.6%)
Incidents classified as cannabis farms	142	61	-81 (-57.0%)
Drug-related arrests	2,851	2,921	70 (2.5%)

Section 1 – Seizure Incidents

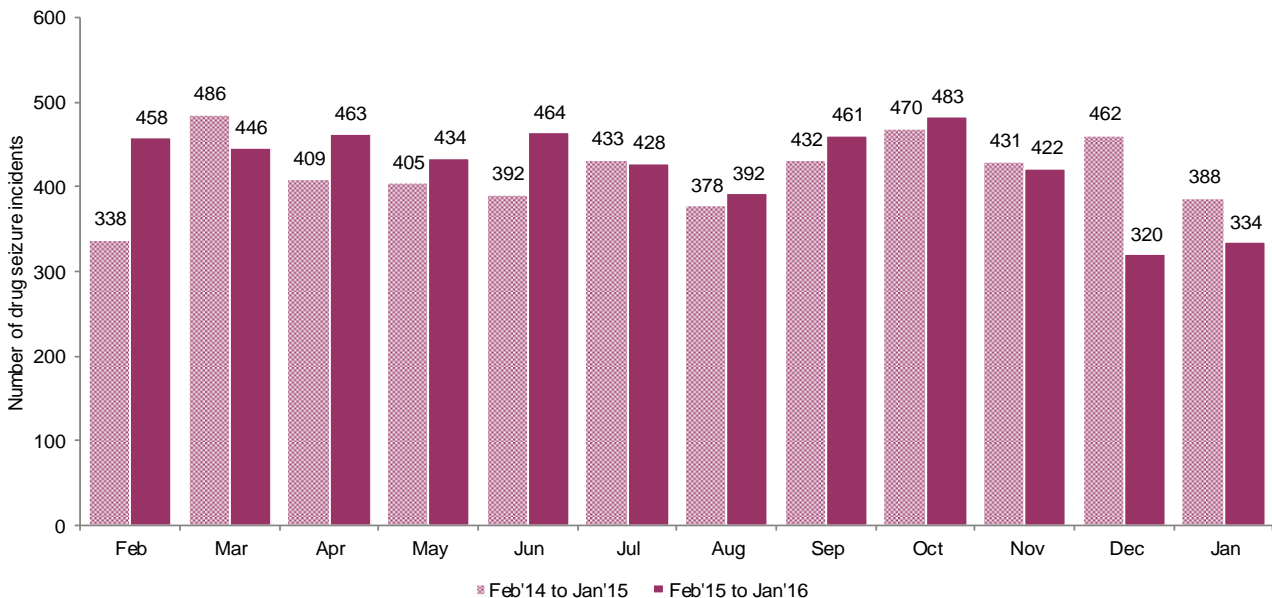
- In the 12 months from 1 February 2015 to 31 January 2016, there were 5,105 drug seizure incidents in Northern Ireland, an increase of 1.6% on the 5,024 seizure incidents recorded in the 12 months to 31 January 2015.
- The number of drug seizure incidents increased year on year from 2,590 in 2006/07 to 5,104 seizure incidents in 2014/15. At 5,105, the number of seizure incidents in the latest 12 months represents an increase of one incident on the 2014/15 level.

Figure 1 Drug seizure incidents since 2005/06



- Seizure incidents from 1st April 2015 are provisional, as there will be records still undergoing the validation process. As a result further incidents may be added to the current figures, in particular for January 2016, the latest month on record.

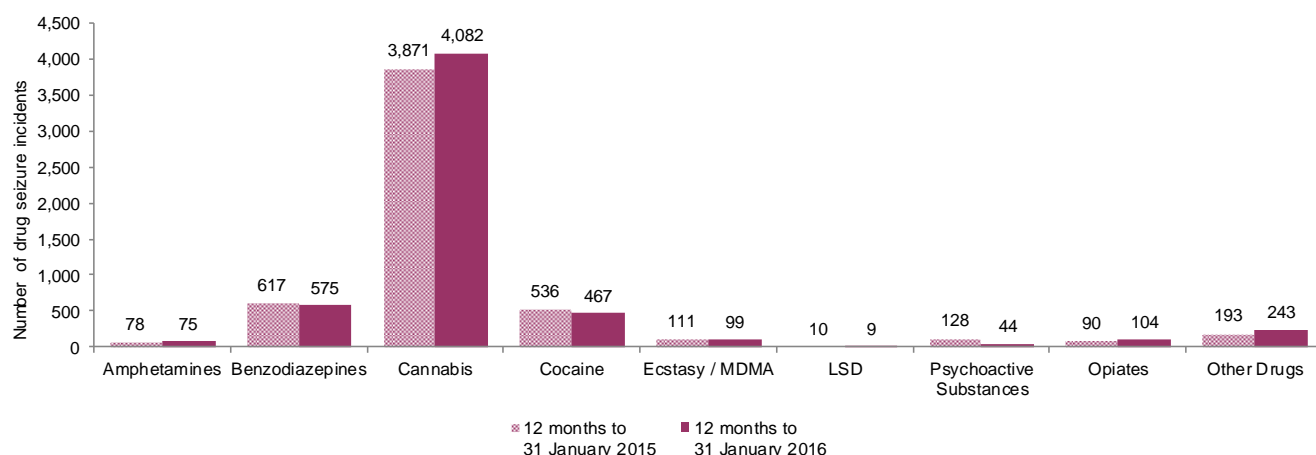
Figure 2 Number of drug seizure incidents by month in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months



Seizure Incidents by Drug Type

- Cannabis was the most commonly seized drug over the past 12 months, with 4,082 seizures involving cannabis being recovered. This is 211 more than the number of seizure incidents in the 12 months to 31 January 2015, an increase of 5.5%.
- Benzodiazepine seizures accounted for the second largest number of seizure incidents in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 with 575 seizures, 42 fewer than during the previous 12 months (617 seizures). The most commonly seized benzodiazepine was diazepam (564 seizures).
- The third most commonly seized drug was cocaine. There were 467 incidents involving the seizure of cocaine in the 12 months to 31 January 2016, down from 536 during the previous 12 months (a decrease of 69 seizures).
- Further information of seizure incidents by drug type is available in the [supporting spreadsheet](#).

Figure 3 Number of drug seizure incidents by drug type in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months

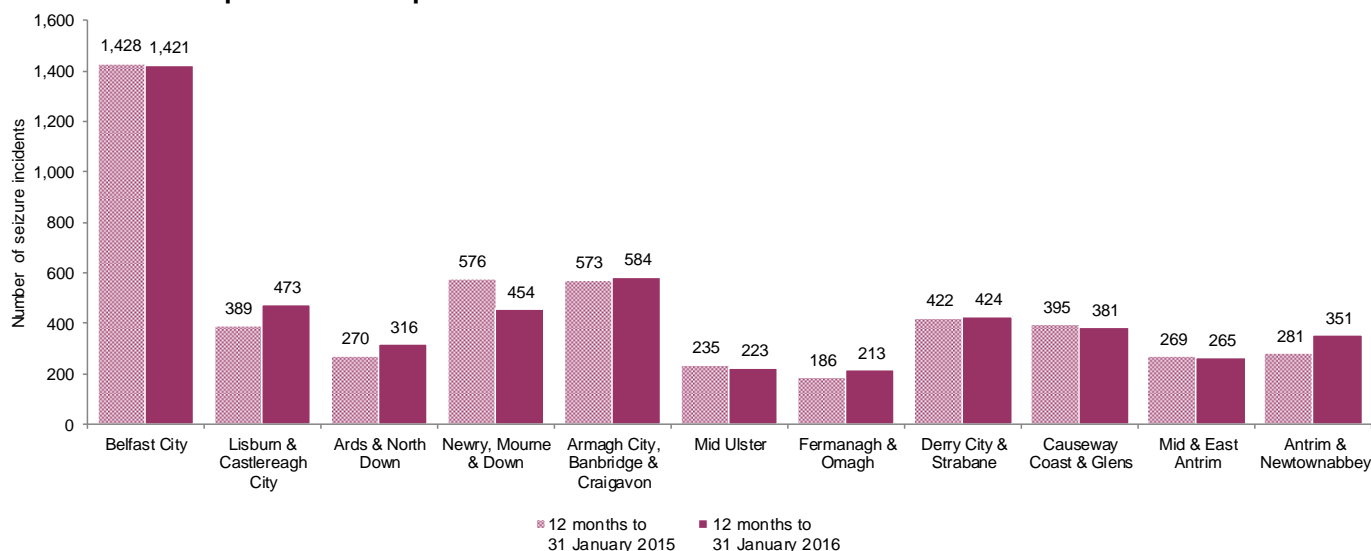


Note: A seizure incident can involve more than one drug type, seizure figures for individual drugs cannot be added together to produce totals.

Seizure Incidents by Police District

- The largest number of seizure incidents occurred in Belfast City policing district with 1,421 incidents recorded, a decrease of 7 seizure incidents (0.5%) compared with the 12 month period to 31 January 2015. This was followed by Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon policing district where 584 drug seizure incidents were recorded, an increase of 11 incidents on the level recorded during the previous 12 months.
- Over the same time period, Lisburn & Castlereagh City policing district saw an increase of 84 in the number of seizure incidents recorded and Antrim & Newtownabbey policing district saw an increase of 70, while in Newry, Mourne & Down policing district there was a fall of 122 in the number of seizure incidents recorded.

Figure 4 Number of drug seizure incidents by policing district in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months



Section 2 – Quantity of Drugs Seized

Class A

- The weight of cocaine powder seized in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 (27.2kg) was less than half that seized in the previous 12 months, when 81.6kg were seized by the PSNI.
- There were 6,844 ecstasy tablets recovered by the PSNI in the 12 months to 31 January 2016, up from 4,674 in the period ending 31 January 2015 (an increase of 46.4%). The largest amount of ecstasy tablets recovered in the past 12 months was seized during one incident in Antrim & Newtownabbey policing district in July 2015 (5,000 tablets). The volume of ecstasy powder seized increased from 0.04kg in the 12 months to 31 January 2015 to 1.8kg in the last 12 months.
- In the 12 months to 31 January 2016, there were 2,199 LSD microdots seized, an increase on the previous 12 months when the seizures of 21 LSD microdots were recorded. This increase is mostly down to one single seizure incident in June 2015 in Causeway Coast & Glens policing district (2,163 microdots).
- The amount of opiate powder seized by the PSNI in the past 12 months was 240.1g, down from 440.8g in the 12 months to 31 January 2015. The volume of liquid opiates seized in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 was 435.2mls, a decrease from that recovered in the previous 12 months (2,435.0mls).

Class B

- The weight of herbal cannabis seized in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 (184.5kg) was 19.8% lower than that in the previous 12 months when 230.0kgs were recovered. Most of the herbal cannabis was seized in Belfast City policing district.
- There was a sharp increase in the quantity of cannabis resin seized in the past 12 months when compared with the previous 12 months (179.3kg up from 112.3kg). More than three quarters of the cannabis resin seized from February 2015 to January 2016 was seized in Newry, Mourne and Down policing district where 165.5kg of resin were recovered.
- There were 5,815 cannabis plants recovered in the 12 months to 31 January 2016. This represents less than half the amount of plants seized during the previous 12 months (12,130 plants seized).
- The amount of amphetamine powder seized by the PSNI in the past 12 months was 1.6kg, down from 11.1kg seized in the previous 12 months to 31 January 2015. The quantity of amphetamine tablets recovered in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 was forty times higher than that seized in the previous 12 months (440 tablets, up from 11).
- The amount of psychoactive stimulants powder seized in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 (0.3kg) is lower than that seized in the previous 12 months when 2.2kg were recovered. The quantity of mephedrone powder seized increased from 0.2kg between 1 February 2014 and 31 January 2015 to 0.3kg the following 12 months.

Class C

- The majority of benzodiazepine seizures in the past 12 months consisted of diazepam tablets (114,539). This was 97,815 fewer tablets than that seized in the 12 months to 31 January 2015, a decrease of 46.1%.

Other / Unknown

- Not all drugs are tested to authenticate substances. When testing is not applied, the PSNI's drug seizure statistics are classified in accordance with the investigating officer's assessment of the drug type seized based on their experience and knowledge of the illegal drug trade in Northern Ireland.

Section 3 – Commercial Cannabis Cultivation Statistics

Incidents Involving the Seizure of Cannabis Plants by PSNI

- Of all incidents involving the seizure of cannabis plants or cannabis cultivation equipment in the 12 months to 31 January 2016, 61 were classified as a cannabis farm as per the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) definition¹. This is a 57.0% decrease on the previous 12 months period ending 31 January 2015, when 142 incidents were classified as a cannabis farm.
- In the past 12 months, 28 of those incidents involved the recovery of 25 plants or more, while 33 incidents involved the discovery of less than 25 plants but in locations that were deemed, due to the equipment recovered, to be qualified as cannabis farms as per the NPCC definition.

Table 2 Incidents involving the seizure of cannabis plants in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months

Cannabis farms ¹	12 months to 31 January 2015	12 months to 31 January 2016	change
Cases where 25 plants or more were seized	53	28	-25
Cases where no plants or less than 25 plants were seized and factory equipment was recovered	89	33	-56
Total number of incidents classified as cannabis farms	142	61	-81

Cannabis Farm Discoveries by Policing District

- The highest number of cannabis farms discovered by the PSNI between 1 February 2015 and 31 January 2016 was in Belfast City policing district (16), followed by Mid & East Antrim (11).
- Most policing districts have seen a decrease in the number of cannabis farms discovered in the past 12 months compared to the previous 12 months, with the exception of Lisburn & Castlereagh City and Mid Ulster which had the same numbers of farms discovered during both periods (5 and 4 respectively); there was an increase in both Derry City & Strabane (5 farms discovered, up from 3) and Mid & East Antrim (11 farms, up from 10).

Table 3 Cannabis farm discoveries by policing district in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months

Policing district	12 months to 31 January 2015	12 months to 31 January 2016	Change
Belfast City	54	16	-38
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	5	5	0
Ards & North Down	13	3	-10
Newry, Mourne & Down	16	6	-10
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	16	5	-11
Mid Ulster	4	4	0
Fermanagh & Omagh	7	2	-5
Derry City & Strabane	3	5	2
Causeway Coast & Glens	7	3	-4
Mid & East Antrim	10	11	1
Antrim & Newtownabbey	7	1	-6
Northern Ireland	142	61	-81

¹ 2012 NPCC definition: *Cultivation of cannabis should be regarded as 'commercial' if:*

Twenty-five or more cannabis plants, at any stage of growth, are being or have been grown OR Any premises shall be deemed a cannabis farm if the premises, or part therein, have been adapted to such an extent that normal usage would be inhibited and usually present within the premises, or part therein, are items solely concerned for the production of cannabis, i.e.: hydroponics system, high intensity lighting, ventilation/extraction fans, any other associated equipment, and/or abstraction of electricity.

Section 4 – Drug-Related Arrests

- In the 12 months to 31 January 2016, 2,921 persons were arrested and processed through custody for drug offences. This constitutes an increase of 2.5% on the previous 12 months to 31 January 2015 when 2,851 persons were arrested.
- The number of persons arrested for drug offences increased year on year from 1,440 in 2005/06 to 2,867 arrests in 2013/14, before decreasing slightly to 2,831 during financial year 2014/15. The number of persons arrested for drug offences has since increased to a current level of 2,921 from 1 February 2015 to 31 January 2016. This is 90 arrests higher than the 2014/15 level and is the highest level recorded since 2005/06.

Figure 5 Drug-related arrests since 2005/06

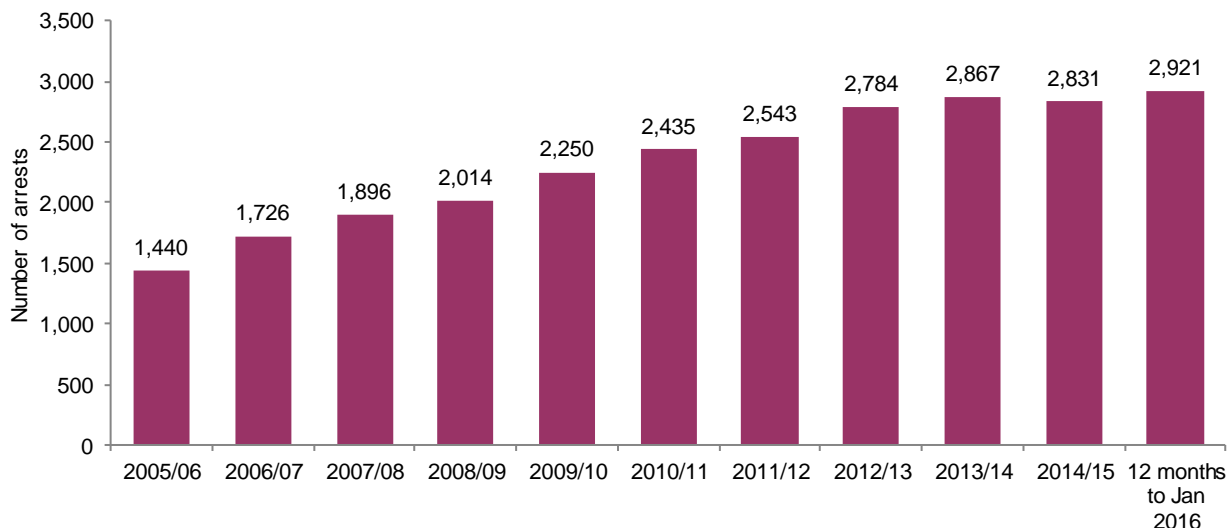
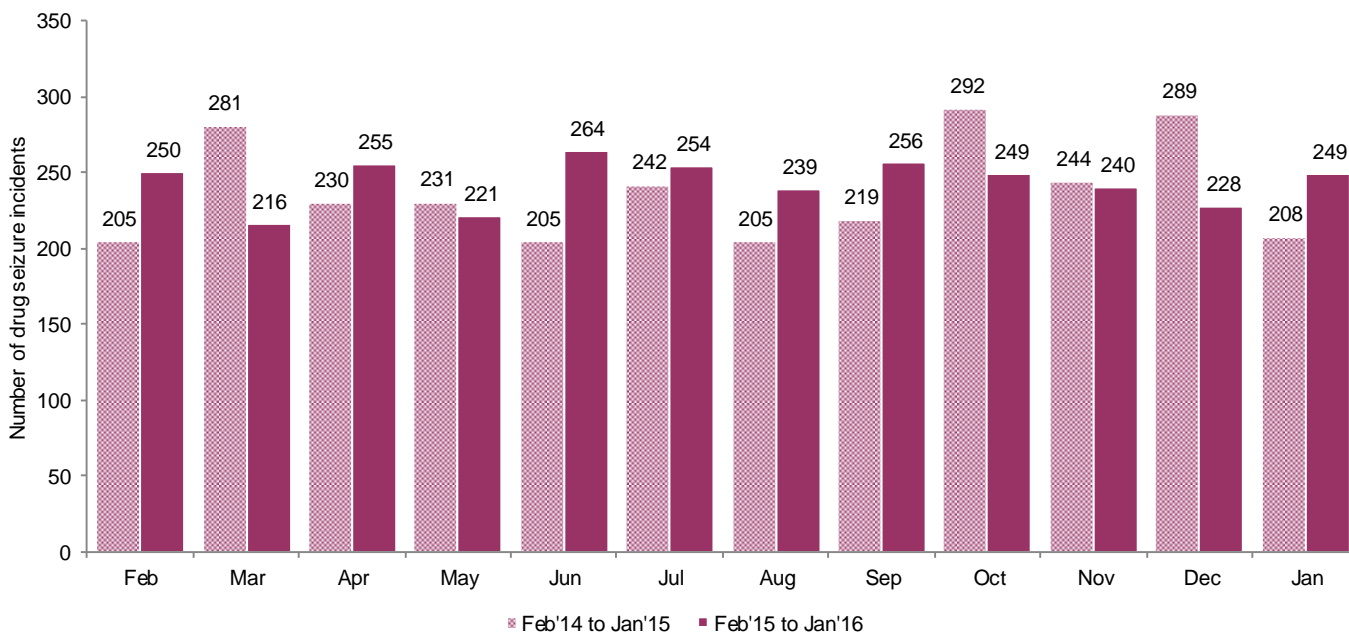


Figure 6 Number of drug-related arrests by month in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months



- There were 249 persons arrested and processed through custody in January 2016, 41 more than during the same month in 2015, when 208 persons were arrested for drug offences.
- The number of persons arrested for drug offences in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 varied across the policing districts, ranging from 126 drug arrests in Ards & North Down policing district to 921 in Belfast City policing district.

Appendices

Table 4a Drug seizure incidents by type and format in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months

Drugs Seized ¹ – Number of Incidents ³		12 months to 31 January 2015	12 months to 31 January 2016	Change
Cocaine (Class A)	Powder	520	436	-84
	Wraps	24	39	15
Ecstasy (Class A)	Powder	21	26	5
	Tablets	95	79	-16
LSD (Class A)	Microdots	4	3	-1
	Powder	1	1	0
	Tablets	5	5	0
Opiates (Class A)	Ampoules	1	0	-1
	Millilitres	13	13	0
	Patches	1	0	-1
	Powder	39	42	3
	Tablets	5	2	-3
	Twists	6	3	-3
	Wraps	30	50	20
Amphetamine (Class B)	Powder	74	64	-10
	Tablets	1	7	6
	Wraps	4	5	1
Cannabis (Class B)	Herbal	3,249	3,397	148
	Joints	363	456	93
	Oil	1	0	-1
	Plants	235	147	-88
	Resin	399	509	110
Psychoactive Stimulants (Class B)	Powder	128	43	-85
	Tablets	0	0	0
	Wraps	3	1	-2
Benzodiazepines (Class C)	Powder	1	5	4
	Tablets	620	584	-36
Other Drugs ²	Ampoules	19	13	-6
	Crystals	1	0	-1
	Herbal	0	2	2
	Microdots	2	0	-2
	Millilitres	10	3	-7
	Patches	1	0	-1
	Powder	80	99	19
	Psilocin	2	4	2
	Tablets	96	140	44
	Wraps	1	3	2

¹ Not all drug seizures are subject to forensic testing to officially confirm the drug type seized. When testing is not applied, the PSNI's drug seizure statistics are classified in accordance with the investigating officer's assessment of the drug type seized based on their experience and knowledge of the illegal drug trade in Northern Ireland.

² Other drugs include anabolic steroids, GHB, ketamine, piperazines and magic mushrooms.

³ As each seizure incident can involve more than one drug type, seizure figures for individual drugs cannot be added together to produce totals.

Table 4b Quantity of drugs seized by type and format in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with the previous 12 months

Drugs Seized ¹ – Quantities		12 months to 31 January 2015	12 months to 31 January 2016	Change
Cocaine (Class A)	Powder (kg)	81.6	27.2	-54.4
	Wraps	44	78	34
Ecstasy (Class A)	Powder (gms)	44.0	1,756.2	1,712.2
	Tablets	4,674	6,844	2,170
LSD (Class A)	Microdots	21	2,199	2178
	Powder (gms)	0.1	3	2.9
	Tablets	58	320	262
Opiates (Class A)	Ampoules	2	.	-2
	Millilitres	2435.0	435.2	-1,999.8
	Patches	2	.	-2
	Powder (kg)	0.4	0.2	-0.2
	Tablets	381	63	-318
	Twists	13	4	-9
	Wraps	165	111	-54
Amphetamine (Class B)	Powder (kg)	11.1	1.6	-9.6
	Tablets	11	440	429
	Wraps	8	15	7
Cannabis (Class B)	Herbal (kg)	230.0	184.5	-45.5
	Joints	483	755	272
	Oil (gms)	11	.	-11.0
	Plants	12,130	5,815	-6,315
	Resin (kg)	112.3	179.3	67.0
Psychoactive Stimulants (Class B)	Powder (kg)	2.2	0.3	-1.9
	Tablets	.	.	0
	Wraps	9	1	-8
Benzodiazepines (Class C)	Powder (gms)	1	8.95	8.0
	Tablets	216,203	114,913	-101,290
Other Drugs ²	Ampoules	567	7,511	6,944
	Crystals (gms)	1	.	-1.0
	Herbal (gms)	.	8.0	8.0
	Microdots	112	.	-112
	Millilitres	352.1	63.2	-288.9
	Patches	1	.	-1
	Powder (kg)	1.1	14.1	13.0
	Psilocin	35	43.04	8
	Tablets	12,907	5,773	-7,134
	Wraps	1.0	5	4

Note: In this table, where the weight of drugs seized is 0.0, this means the weight seized was less 0.05 grams, Mls or kgs while '.' indicates that no drugs were seized. More detailed information on the drugs and quantities seized is published in the supporting spreadsheet.

¹ Not all drug seizures are subject to forensic testing to officially confirm the drug type seized. When testing is not applied, the PSNI's drug seizure statistics are classified in accordance with the investigating officer's assessment of the drug type seized based on their experience and knowledge of the illegal drug trade in Northern Ireland.

² Other drugs include anabolic steroids, GHB, ketamine, piperazines and magic mushrooms.

Table 5 Number of drug seizures and arrests by policing district in the 12 months to 31 January 2016 compared with The previous 12 months

Policing District	Seizure Incidents			Arrests		
	12 months to 31 January 2015	12 months to 31 January 2016	Change	12 months to 31 January 2015	12 months to 31 January 2016	Change
Belfast City	1,428	1,421	-7	881	921	40
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	389	473	84	186	215	29
Ards & North Down	270	316	46	127	126	-1
Newry, Mourne & Down	576	454	-122	228	188	-40
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	573	584	11	301	252	-49
Mid Ulster	235	223	-12	130	132	2
Fermanagh & Omagh	186	213	27	139	171	32
Derry City & Strabane	422	424	2	261	277	16
Causeway Coast & Glens	395	381	-14	292	289	-3
Mid & East Antrim	269	265	-4	154	153	-1
Antrim & Newtownabbey	281	351	70	152	197	45
Northern Ireland	5,024	5,105	81	2,851	2,921	70

Notes

Statistics on drug seizures are based on electronic and paper returns that are completed by police officers when they make a drug seizure. The statistics are checked for completeness with local districts and with the PSNI Organised Crime Branch and are also cross-referenced against other internal records of drug seizures. Not all drugs are tested to authenticate substances. When testing is not applied, the PSNI's drug seizure statistics are classified in accordance with the investigating officer's assessment of the drug type seized based on their experience and knowledge of the illegal drug trade in Northern Ireland.

The statistics contained in this bulletin are based on drug seizures that were recorded by the police. As a result, increases or decreases in the quantity and type of drugs seized along with drug-related arrests can be affected by specific targeted police operations thus accounting for some of the year on year variations (i.e. increased police enforcement action can result in increased seizures and arrests). Also, not all drug use will come to the attention of the police and therefore these statistics should be considered along with other measures of drug prevalence in Northern Ireland for users to get a more comprehensive overview of the drug situation in Northern Ireland. Copies of this bulletin are available from the [PSNI Internet website](#).

Annual reports are available back to 2003/04 on the [PSNI Internet website](#) and during the financial year, drug seizure statistics are published on a monthly basis and are provisional and may be subject to change. Statistics on drug seizures by type and format at policing district level are published separately in the accompanying [supporting excel spreadsheet](#).

We welcome comment and feedback on these statistics. If you would like to forward your views, receive notification of new publications or be kept informed of developments relating to PSNI statistics, please email your contact details using the email address provided below.

For further information about drug seizure statistics for Northern Ireland, or to contact PSNI Statistics Branch:

Email: statistics@psni.police.uk;

Write to: Drug Seizure Statistician, PSNI Statistics Branch, Lisnasharragh, 42 Montgomery Road, Belfast, BT6 9LD;

or

Telephone: 028 9065 0222 ext. 24135