

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Police Recorded Drug Seizure and Arrest Statistics: Monthly Update to 30 November 2015

Published 16 December 2015

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This bulletin provides the most recent statistics on drug seizures and arrests recorded by the police in Northern Ireland to 30 November 2015. Figures dating back to 1 April 2015 are provisional and will be subject to change until the finalised 2015/16 figures are published in 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.

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Overview

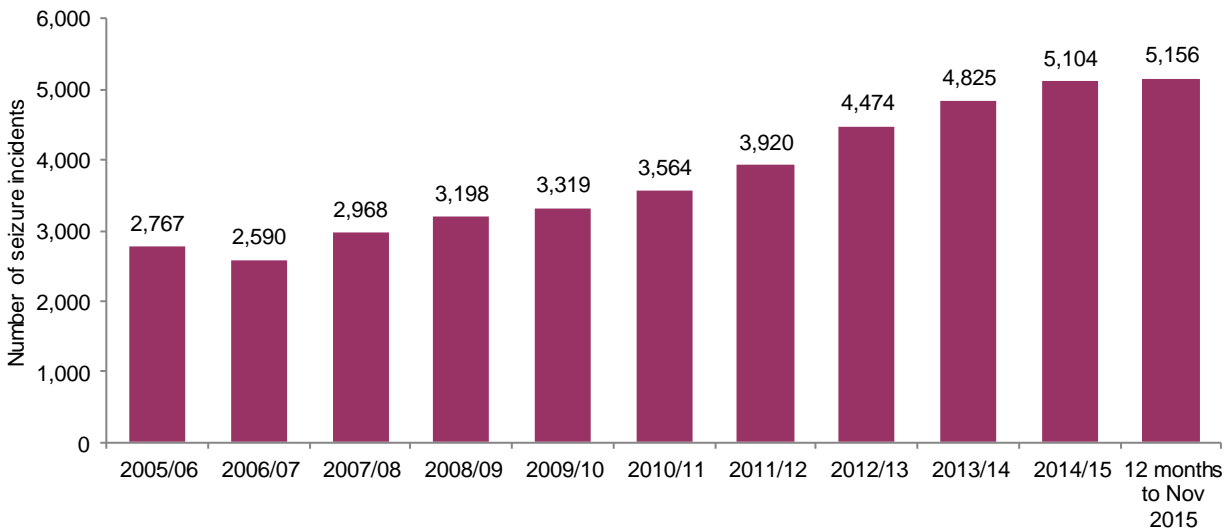
Table 1 Key statistics for drug seizure incidents, commercial cultivation of cannabis and drug arrests in the 12 months to 30 November 2015 compared with the previous 12 months

	12 months to 30 November 2014	12 months to 30 November 2015	Change	
Drug seizure incidents	4,906	5,156	250	(5.1%)
Incidents classified as cannabis farms	146	60	-86	(-58.9%)
Drug-related arrests	2,789	2,938	149	(5.3%)

Section 1 – Seizure Incidents

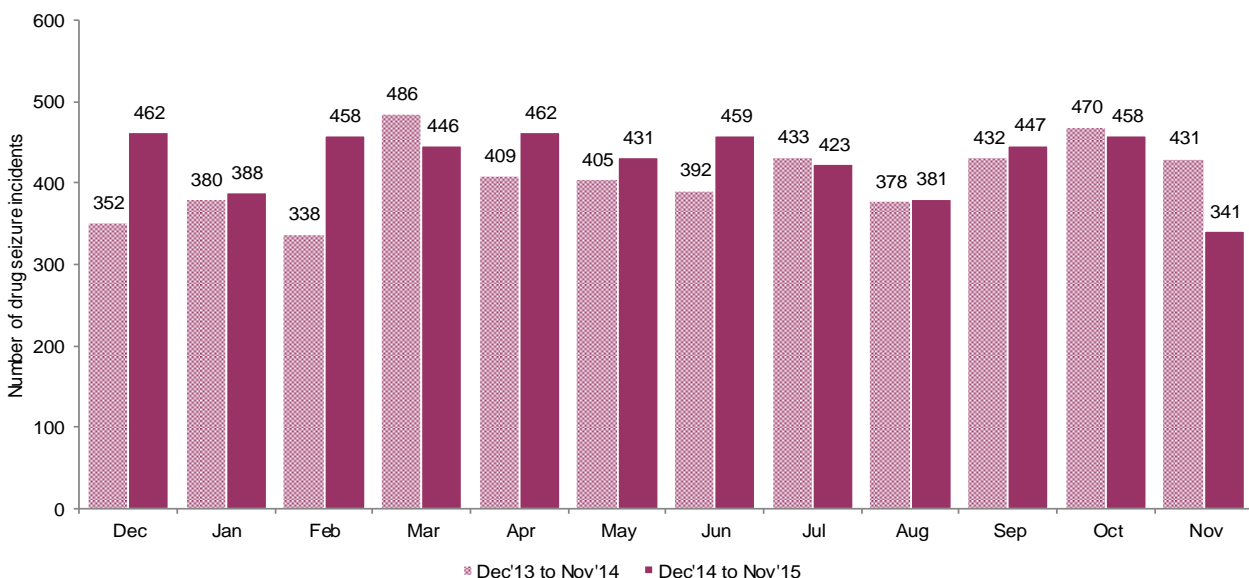
- In the 12 months from 1 December 2014 to 30 November 2015, there were 5,156 drug seizure incidents in Northern Ireland, an increase of 5.1% on the 4,906 seizure incidents recorded in the 12 months to 30 November 2014.
- The number of drug seizure incidents increased year on year from 2,590 in 2006/07 to 5,104 seizure incidents in 2014/15. At 5,156, the number of seizure incidents in the latest 12 months represents a 1.0% increase 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 November 2015, the latest month on record.

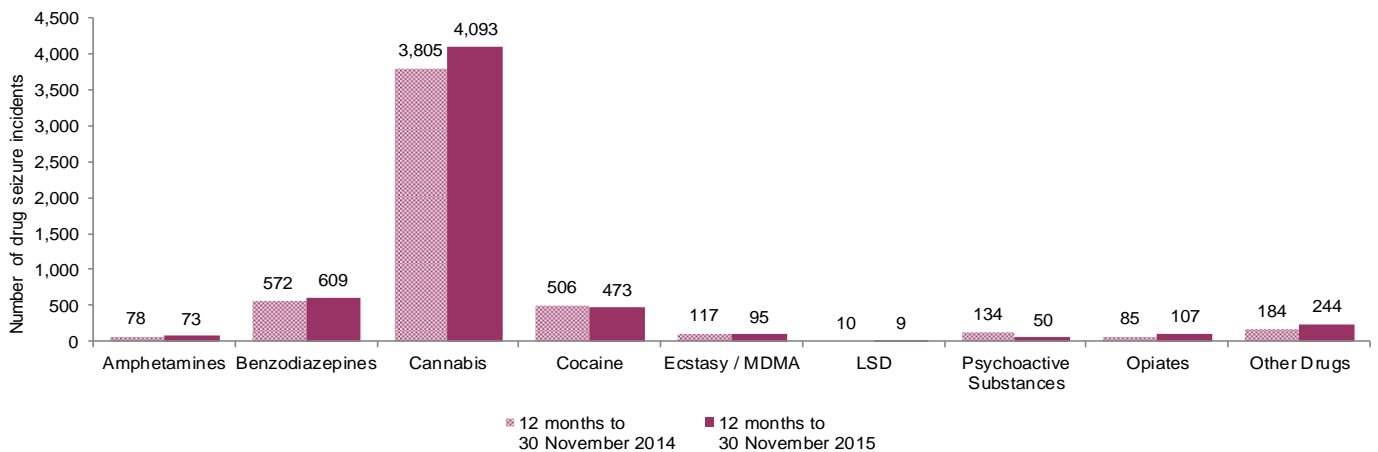
Figure 2 Number of drug seizure incidents by month in the 12 months to 30 November 2015 compared with the previous 12 months



Seizure Incidents by Drug Type

- Cannabis was the most commonly seized drug over the past 12 months, with 4,093 seizures involving cannabis being recovered. This is 288 more than the number of seizure incidents in the 12 months to 30 November 2014, an increase of 7.6%.
- Benzodiazepine seizures accounted for the second largest number of seizure incidents in the 12 months to 30 November 2015 with 609 seizures, 37 more than during the previous 12 months (572 incidents). The most commonly seized benzodiazepine was diazepam (599 incidents).
- The third most commonly seized drug was cocaine. There were 473 incidents involving the seizure of cocaine in the 12 months to 30 November 2015, down from 506 during the previous 12 months (a decrease of 33 incidents).
- 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 30 November 2015 compared with the previous 12 months

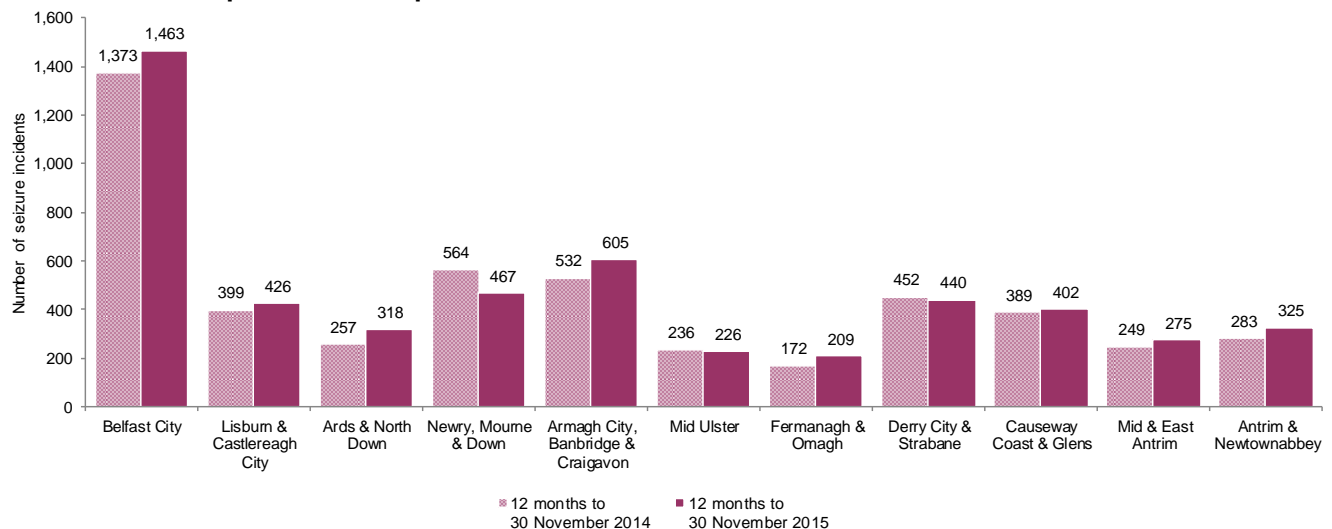


Note: A seizure incident can involve more than one drug type, seizure figures for individual drugs cannot be added together to produce totals.

Seizure Incidents by Police District

- The largest number of seizure incidents occurred in Belfast City policing district with 1,463 incidents recorded, an increase of 90 seizure incidents (6.6%) compared with the 12 month period to 30 November 2014. This was followed by Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon policing district where 605 drug seizure incidents were recorded, an increase of 73 incidents on the level recorded during the previous 12 months.
- Over the same time period, Newry, Mourne & Down policing district saw a fall of 97 in the number of seizure incidents recorded.

Figure 4 Number of drug seizure incidents by policing district in the 12 months to 30 November 2015 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 30 November 2015 (32.7kg) was less than half that seized in the previous 12 months, when 77.9kg were seized by the PSNI.
- There were 7,609 ecstasy tablets recovered by the PSNI in the 12 months to 30 November 2015, down from 9,109 in the period ending 30 November 2014 (a decrease of 16.5%). 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)
- In the 12 months to 30 November 2015, 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 and Glens policing district (2,163 microdots).
- The amount of opiate powder seized by the PSNI in the past 12 months was 138.2g, down from 425.0g in the 12 months to 30 November 2014. The volume of liquid opiates seized in the 12 months to 30 November 2015 was 436.5mls, a decrease from that recovered in the previous 12 months (2,433.5mls).

Class B

- The weight of herbal cannabis seized in the 12 months to 30 November 2015 (186.9kg) was 21.1% lower than that in the previous 12 months when 236.9kgs were recovered. Most of the herbal cannabis was seized in Belfast City policing district (28.6kg).
- There was a sharp increase in the quantity of cannabis resin seized in the past 12 months when compared with the previous 12 months (190.9kg up from 104.1kg). More than three quarters of the cannabis resin seized from December 2014 to November 2015 was seized in Newry, Mourne and Down policing district where 165.6kg of resin were recovered.
- There were 5,263 cannabis plants recovered in the 12 months to 30 November 2015. This represents a 55.4% decrease on the previous 12 months when 11,789 plants were seized.
- The amount of amphetamine powder seized by the PSNI in the past 12 months was 1.8kg, down from 11.2kg seized in the previous 12 months to 30 November 2014. The quantity of amphetamine tablets recovered in the 12 months to 30 November 2015 was over thirty times higher than that seized in the previous 12 months (349 tablets, up from 11).
- The amount of psychoactive stimulants powder seized in the 12 months to 30 November 2015 (0.4kg) is lower than that seized in the previous 12 months when 3.1kg were recovered. The quantity of mephedrone powder seized fell from 1.1kg between 1 November 2013 and 30 November 2014 to 0.4kg the following 12 months, a decrease of 65.6%.

Class C

- The majority of benzodiazepine seizures in the past 12 months consisted of diazepam tablets (109,505). This was 92,489 fewer tablets than that seized in the 12 months to 30 November 2014, a decrease of 45.8%.

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 30 November 2015, 60 were classified as a cannabis farm as per the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) definition¹. This is a 58.9% decrease on the previous 12 months period ending 30 November 2014, when 146 incidents were classified as a cannabis farm.
- In the past 12 months, 20 of those incidents involved the recovery of 25 plants or more, while 40 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 30 November 2015 compared with the previous 12 months

Cannabis farms ¹	12 months to 30 November 2014	12 months to 30 November 2015	change
Cases where 25 plants or more were seized	56	20	-36
Cases where no plants or less than 25 plants were seized and factory equipment was recovered	90	40	-50
Total number of incidents classified as cannabis farms	146	60	-86

Cannabis Farm Discoveries by Policing District

- The highest number of cannabis farms discovered by the PSNI between 1 December 2014 and 30 November 2015 was in Belfast City policing district (20), followed by Mid & East Antrim (7).
- All 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 which had the same numbers of farms discovered during both periods (4)

Table 3 Cannabis farm discoveries by policing district in the 12 months to 30 November 2015 compared with the previous 12 months

Policing district	12 months to 30 November 2014	12 months to 30 November 2015	Change
Belfast City	54	20	-34
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	4	4	0
Ards & North Down	11	5	-6
Newry, Mourne & Down	18	6	-12
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	16	5	-11
Mid Ulster	4	3	-1
Fermanagh & Omagh	8	2	-6
Derry City & Strabane	5	4	-1
Causeway Coast & Glens	9	2	-7
Mid & East Antrim	11	7	-4
Antrim & Newtownabbey	6	2	-4
Northern Ireland	146	60	-66

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 30 November 2015, 2,938 persons were arrested and processed through custody for drug offences. This constitutes an increase of 5.3% on the previous 12 months to 30 November 2014 when 2,789 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 2,938 from 1 December 2014 to 30 November 2015. This is 107 arrests higher than the 2014/15 level.

Figure 5 Drug-related arrests since 2005/06

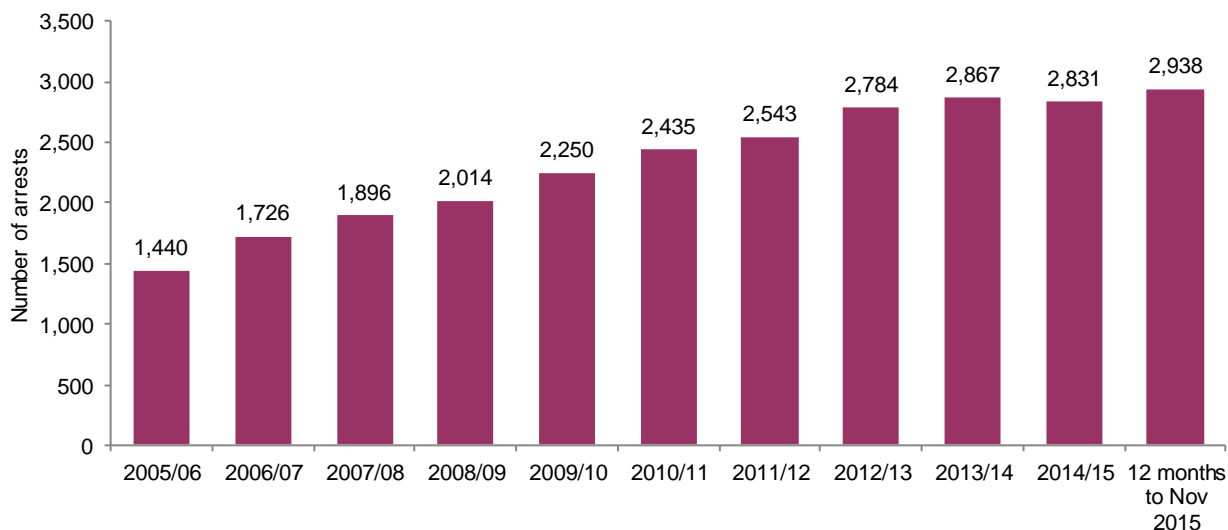
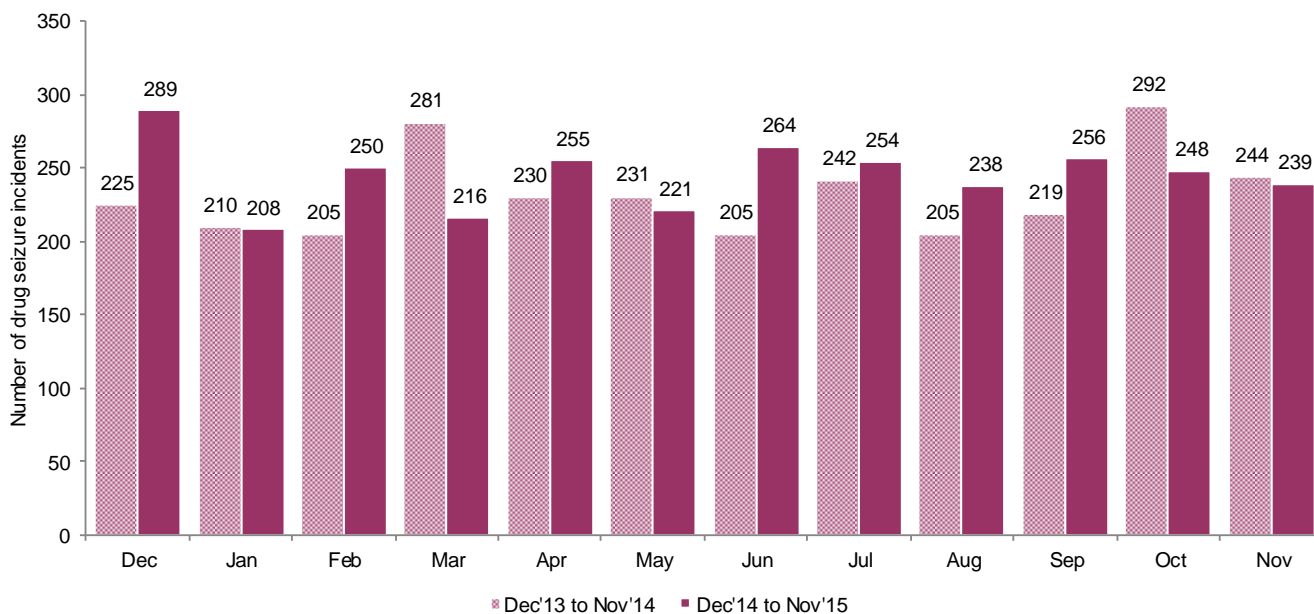


Figure 6 Number of drug-related arrests by month in the 12 months to 30 November 2015 compared with the previous 12 months



- There were 239 persons arrested and processed through custody in November 2015, 5 fewer than during the same month in 2014, when 244 persons were arrested for drug offences.
- The number of persons arrested for drug offences in the 12 months to 30 November 2015 varied across the policing districts, ranging from 136 drug arrests in Ards & North Down policing district to 903 in Belfast City policing district.

Appendices

Table 4a Drug seizure incidents by type and format in the 12 months to 30 November 2015 compared with the previous 12 months

Drugs Seized ¹ – Number of Incidents ³		12 months to 30 November 2014	12 months to 30 November 2015	Change
Cocaine (Class A)	Powder	485	448	-37
	Wraps	30	32	2
Ecstasy (Class A)	Powder	19	28	9
	Tablets	102	75	-27
LSD (Class A)	Microdots	4	3	-1
	Powder	1	1	0
	Tablets	5	5	0
Opiates (Class A)	Ampoules	1	0	-1
	Millilitres	11	14	3
	Patches	2	0	-2
	Powder	40	43	3
	Tablets	6	3	-3
	Twists	6	3	-3
	Wraps	24	51	27
Amphetamine (Class B)	Powder	72	64	-8
	Tablets	1	5	4
	Wraps	6	5	-1
Cannabis (Class B)	Herbal	3,171	3,426	255
	Joints	367	445	78
	Oil	0	1	1
	Plants	234	151	-83
	Resin	394	505	111
Psychoactive Stimulants (Class B)	Powder	134	49	-85
	Tablets	0	0	0
	Wraps	3	1	-2
Benzodiazepines (Class C)	Powder	2	4	2
	Tablets	575	621	46
Other Drugs ²	Ampoules	21	13	-8
	Crystals	0	1	1
	Herbal	0	2	2
	Microdots	2	0	-2
	Millilitres	10	5	-5
	Patches	1	1	0
	Powder	85	88	3
	Psilocin	2	2	0
	Tablets	82	150	68
	Wraps	0	2	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 30 November 2015 compared with the previous 12 months

Drugs Seized ¹ – Quantities		12 months to 30 November 2014	12 months to 30 November 2015	Change
Cocaine (Class A)	Powder (kg)	77.9	32.7	-45.2
	Wraps	53	64	11
Ecstasy (Class A)	Powder (gms)	375.1	1,757.5	1,382.3
	Tablets	9,109	7,609	-1,500
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	2433.5	436.5	-1,997.0
	Patches	3	.	-3
	Powder (kg)	0.4	0.1	-0.3
	Tablets	383	70	-313
	Twists	13	4	-9
	Wraps	119	142	23
Amphetamine (Class B)	Powder (kg)	11.2	1.8	-9.4
	Tablets	11	349	338
	Wraps	10	15	5
Cannabis (Class B)	Herbal (kg)	236.9	186.9	-50.0
	Joints	484	759	275
	Oil (gms)	.	11.0	11.0
	Plants	11,789	5,263	-6,526
	Resin (kg)	104.1	190.9	86.8
Psychoactive Stimulants (Class B)	Powder (kg)	3.1	0.4	-2.6
	Tablets	.	.	0
	Wraps	9	1	-8
Benzodiazepines (Class C)	Powder (gms)	2	7.43	5.4
	Tablets	206,107	109,875	-96,232
Other Drugs ²	Ampoules	569	7,511	6,942
	Crystals (gms)	.	1.0	1.0
	Herbal (gms)	.	8.0	8.0
	Microdots	112	.	-112
	Millilitres	279.1	167.2	-111.9
	Patches	1	3	2
	Powder (kg)	1.2	2.2	1.0
	Psilocin	35	15	-20
	Tablets	12,549	8,744	-3,805
	Wraps	.	2	2

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 30 November 2015 compared with The previous 12 months

Policing District	Seizure Incidents			Arrests		
	12 months to 30 November 2014	12 months to 30 November 2015	Change	12 months to 30 November 2014	12 months to 30 November 2015	Change
Belfast City	1,373	1,463	90	828	903	75
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	399	426	27	194	201	7
Ards & North Down	257	318	61	122	136	14
Newry, Mourne & Down	564	467	-97	229	199	-30
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	532	605	73	260	270	10
Mid Ulster	236	226	-10	130	138	8
Fermanagh & Omagh	172	209	37	139	169	30
Derry City & Strabane	452	440	-12	304	265	-39
Causeway Coast & Glens	389	402	13	284	299	15
Mid & East Antrim	249	275	26	143	169	26
Antrim & Newtownabbey	283	325	42	156	189	33
Northern Ireland	4,906	5,156	250	2,789	2,938	149

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;

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