



Police Service
of Northern Ireland



Trends in Police Recorded Drug Seizures and Arrests in Northern Ireland

2006/07 to 2024/25

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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 on the cover page.

Things you need to know about this release

Coverage

This bulletin is an Official Statistics publication meaning it complies with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) as follows:

- Trustworthiness: the statistics are impartial, independent and released in an open and transparent manner in accordance with a pre-announced publication schedule
- Quality: the statistics are produced using robust and relevant data sources which undergo continuous quality improvement and assurance checks
- Value: the statistics strive to meet user needs informed by ongoing feedback, providing sufficient detail which is widely accessible.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards by emailing statistics@psni.police.uk. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the [OSR website \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Statistics on police recorded drug seizures and arrests in Northern Ireland are collated and produced by statisticians seconded to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

This release presents statistics relating to drug seizures and arrests recorded by the police between 2006/07 and 2024/25. Supplementary data are available from the PSNI website in the [drug seizures and arrests annual trends spreadsheet \(opens in a new window\)](#). Figures were compiled on 13 August 2025; as of that date 92.4% of seizure incidents for April 2024 to March 2025 have been fully validated.

Drug Seizure Incidents

Statistics in this publication relate to incidents in which a drug controlled under the [Misuse of Drugs Act \(1971\) legislation \(MDA\) \(opens in a new window\)](#) is seized, recovered or found by police. This includes drugs intercepted in the post and drugs which are handed in to the police.

Also included within this publication is information on seizures of substances within the scope of the [Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 legislation \(PSA\) \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Drug-Related Arrests

A drug-related arrest is counted when a person is arrested and processed through custody for one or more drug-related offences. A more detailed definition is provided in Section 5 Trends in Drug-related Arrests.

Points to be aware of

- As these statistics are based on drug seizures that have been recorded by the police, changes in the quantity and type of drugs seized, and also in the number of drug-related arrests, can be affected by police activity.
- Not all drug seizures are subject to forensic testing to officially confirm the drug type seized. When testing is not applied, the seized drugs 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.
- Not all drug use will come to the attention of the police.
- These statistics should not themselves be considered a measure of drug prevalence in Northern Ireland. Other sources of information relating to drug misuse are provided in the [Drug Seizures and Arrests User Guide \(opens in a new window\)](#) which accompanies this publication, and may be considered alongside this publication to obtain a more comprehensive overview of the drug situation in Northern Ireland.
- The number of drug-related arrests may be subject to change as records for previous financial years are reviewed and reconciled with live custody data on an annual basis.

Points to note

Other Agency Seizures: Drugs seized by the Border Force are published quarterly by the Home Office as [Border Force transparency data \(opens in a new window\)](#), with Border Force seizures in each of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland presented separately. Border Force and National Crime Agency seizures within Northern Ireland are not presented in this publication.

Recording Practice: Drug seizures often involve the seizure of multiple classes and types of drugs. This means that seizure figures for individual drug classes or types cannot be added together to produce totals, as this can exceed the overall number of seizures. Further details are available in the [Drug Seizures and Arrests User Guide \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Geographic breakdown: Seizure incidents and arrests are provided at policing district level; policing districts are analogous to District Council areas. Belfast City policing district accounts for around 30 per cent of all drug seizure incidents and up to 40 per cent of drug-related arrests recorded in Northern Ireland. It includes four local policing teams based in Lisburn Road (South), Tennent Street (North), Strandtown (East) and Woodbourne (West). To assist in the understanding of the statistics drug seizure incidents for Belfast City policing district have been captured at this geographic level from the start of 2016/17, while this breakdown is available for drug-related arrests from 2006/07.

Classification of Drug Types

The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 divides drugs into three categories, Class A, B and C, according to the harmfulness they cause to the user or to society when they are misused. Class A drugs are considered to be the most harmful. Further information on drugs covered under the MDA is available in this [controlled drugs list \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Class A	Class B	Class C
Cocaine	Amphetamines	Anabolic Steroids
Ecstasy	Cannabis	Benzodiazepines ⁵
Heroin	Ketamine	Pregabalin ³
LSD	Mephedrone	Gabapentin ³
Methadone	Other Class B ²	Other Class C ⁴
Morphine		
Other Class A ¹		

¹ Other Class A drugs include fentanyl, oxycodone, psilocin (magic mushrooms), methamphetamine (crystal meth) and nitazenes. Nitazenes were reclassified as Class A controlled substances in March 2024.

² Other Class B drugs include cathinone derivatives, codeine/dihydrocodeine, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC and synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists).

³ Pregabalin and gabapentin were reclassified as Class C controlled substances in April 2019.

⁴ Other Class C drugs include tramadol, buprenorphine, GHB/GBL, 'Z-class' drugs (zolpidem, zopiclone and zaleplon) and Nitrous Oxide. Nitrous Oxide was reclassified as a Class C controlled substance in November 2023.

⁵ Flualprazolam, flunitrazolam and norfludiazepam were classified as Class C controlled substances in August 2021 and are recorded as Benzodiazepines.

Application of conversion factors to the quantity of drugs seized

Most drugs can be seized in a range of formats or preparation types. In order to present seized quantities within a given drug type in terms of one comparable unit (kilograms, doses or plants), conversion factors were developed by the Home Office. These conversion factors have been applied to the main drug types in this publication in order to provide comparable estimates of the overall quantity seized for that drug (Section 3 of this publication).

The conversion factors were last updated in 2005 and the Home Office note that it is possible that some quantity data (especially for those drugs where quantity is reported in terms of doses) is not entirely accurate. However as the same conversion factors are used throughout the entire time series, the trends data can be considered reliable ([Seizures of drugs in England and Wales user guide \(opens in a new window\)](#), Table 1: Limitations and implications of drug seizures data)

The spreadsheet which accompanies this bulletin presents drug seizure quantities with the conversion factors applied. Drug seizure quantities are also available for the full range of formats/preparations recorded ([drug seizures and arrests annual trends spreadsheet \(opens in a new window\)](#), pivot tables - seizure incidents and quantities seized).

Conventions used in figures and tables

'0' indicates where the weight/volume of drugs seized was less than 0.5 grams or 0.5 millilitres respectively.

'.' Indicates that no drugs were seized

Unconverted quantity data is rounded to the nearest whole number.

Converted quantity data is rounded to the nearest 100 grams where the unit of measurement is kilograms.

Converted quantity data is rounded to the nearest 10 doses in the case of Morphine and LSD, and the nearest 100 doses in the case of Ecstasy, Anabolic Steroids and Benzodiazepines.

Time periods presented in charts

Throughout this bulletin and in the accompanying spreadsheet, where charts show the latest ten years only, the full underlying data series is made available in the associated tables.

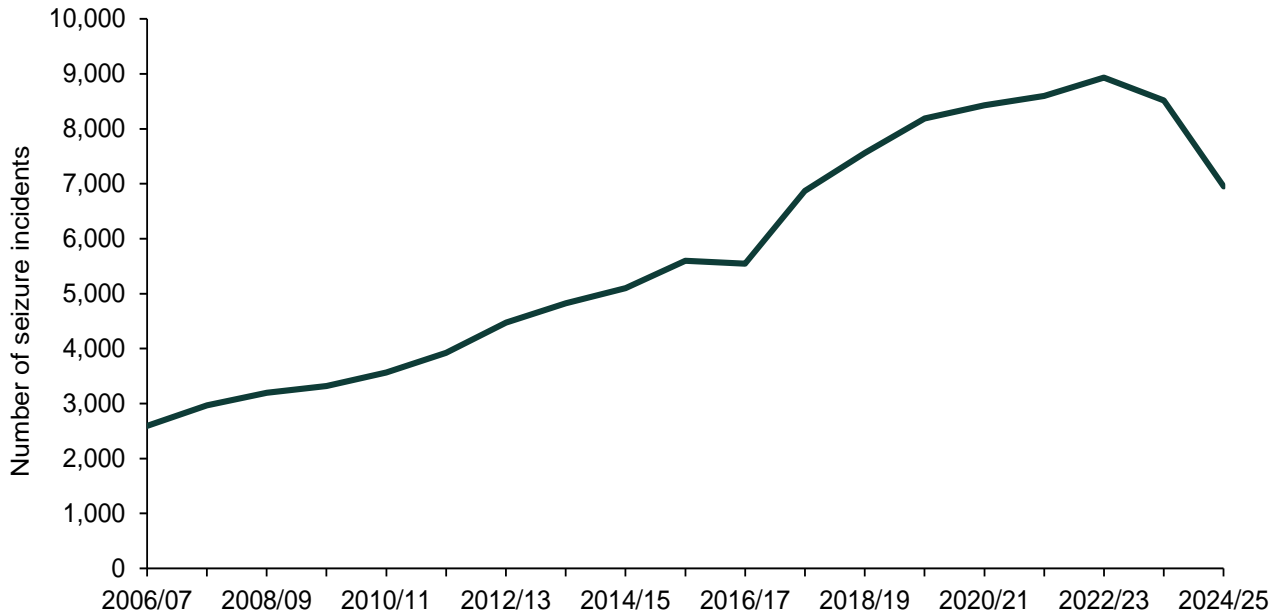
Key Points

- The number of drug seizure incidents increased each year between 2006/07 and 2022/23, with the exception of a fall in 2016/17 (51 fewer seizure incidents). The latest two years have both recorded decreases in seizure incidents: 2023/24 (414 fewer seizure incidents) and 2024/25 (1,568 fewer seizure incidents).
- The number of drug seizure incidents recorded in 2024/25 (6,951) showed a decrease of 1,568 (-18.4 per cent) when compared with 2023/24; it remains almost three times the level recorded in 2006/07 (2,590).
- Over the last ten years:
 - Seizure incidents involving Class A drugs have doubled, with 854 seizure incidents recorded in 2015/16 and 1,576 in 2024/25. This is despite the latest figure for 2024/25 recording the first decrease in four years (-335, -17.5%).
 - Class B seizure incidents generally increased in each year from 4,580 seizure incidents in 2015/16 to 6,249 seizure incidents in 2022/23. The latest figure of 4,441 seizure incidents in 2024/25 represents the second consecutive fall in Class B seizure incidents and is also the lowest number of Class B seizure incidents in the last eight years.
 - Class C seizure incidents tripled, from 761 seizure incidents recorded in 2015/16 to the highest level of 2,312 recorded in 2023/24. While 2024/25 experienced a fall of 330 (-14.3%) when compared with 2023/24, the level of 1,982 seizure incidents remains nearly three times the number in 2015/16.
 - Cocaine has been the most commonly seized Class A drug. The number of seizures involving cocaine has increased in most years from 569 in 2015/16 to 1,599 in 2023/24 before falling to 1,264 in 2024/25. In seven of the last ten years (including each of the latest four years 2021/22 to 2024/25) cocaine has been the second most commonly seized drug across all drug classes.
 - Cannabis (Class B) is the most commonly seized drug overall, with herbal cannabis being the most commonly seized cannabis format.
 - The number of herbal cannabis seizures generally increased between 2015/16 and 2021/22 before falling for the third year in a row to 3,663 in 2024/25, a decrease of 1,047 (-22.2%) when compared with 2023/24. This latest figure for 2024/25 is lower than the number recorded in 2015/16 (3,723) and the second lowest level in the last ten years.
 - Cannabis resin was the second most commonly seized cannabis format between 2015/16 (535 seizure incidents) and 2018/19 (735 seizure incidents). The number of cannabis resin seizures was at its highest level in 2017/18 (766 seizure incidents); levels have subsequently fallen in most years to 129 seizures in 2024/25.
 - Benzodiazepines were the most commonly seized Class C drug between 2015/16 and 2023/24 before being replaced by Pregabalin as the most commonly seized Class C drug in 2024/25. Prior to 2024/25 Benzodiazepines were either the second or the third most commonly seized drug across all drug classes; in 2024/25 they were the fourth. The number of Benzodiazepine seizure incidents in 2024/25 (805) fell by 413 (-33.9%) when compared with 2023/24 and represents the lowest number of benzodiazepines seizures in the last eight years.
- Between Pregabalin being reclassified as a Class C controlled substance in April 2019 and 2023/24 it was the second most commonly seized Class C drug with 726 seizure incidents recorded in 2019/20, rising to 1,190 seizure incidents in 2023/24. As of 2024/25, Pregabalin is the most commonly seized Class C drug with 1,080 seizures. Gabapentin, which was also reclassified as Class C controlled substance in April 2019, has seen a lower level of seizure incidents. The number of Gabapentin seizures in 2024/25 was 74, a rise of 6 from the previous year and 15 higher than the number of seizures recorded in 2019/20 (59).
- The number of drug-related arrests generally increased each year between 2006/07 (1,708 arrests) and 2019/20 (3,834 arrests), with the exception of falls of 37 and 239 in 2014/15 and 2016/17 respectively. The number of drug-related arrests have fluctuated since then with 2024/25 recording 3,128 arrests, a fall of 456 on the previous year. This most recent figure remains around twice that recorded in 2006/07.
- Lockdown measures in relation to Covid-19 were first introduced on 23rd March 2020, with all Covid-19 legal restrictions replaced by guidance from 15th February 2022. There may have been an impact on the number of drug seizure incidents and drug-related arrests recorded while these measures were in place.

1. Overview of Trends in Drug Seizures and Arrests

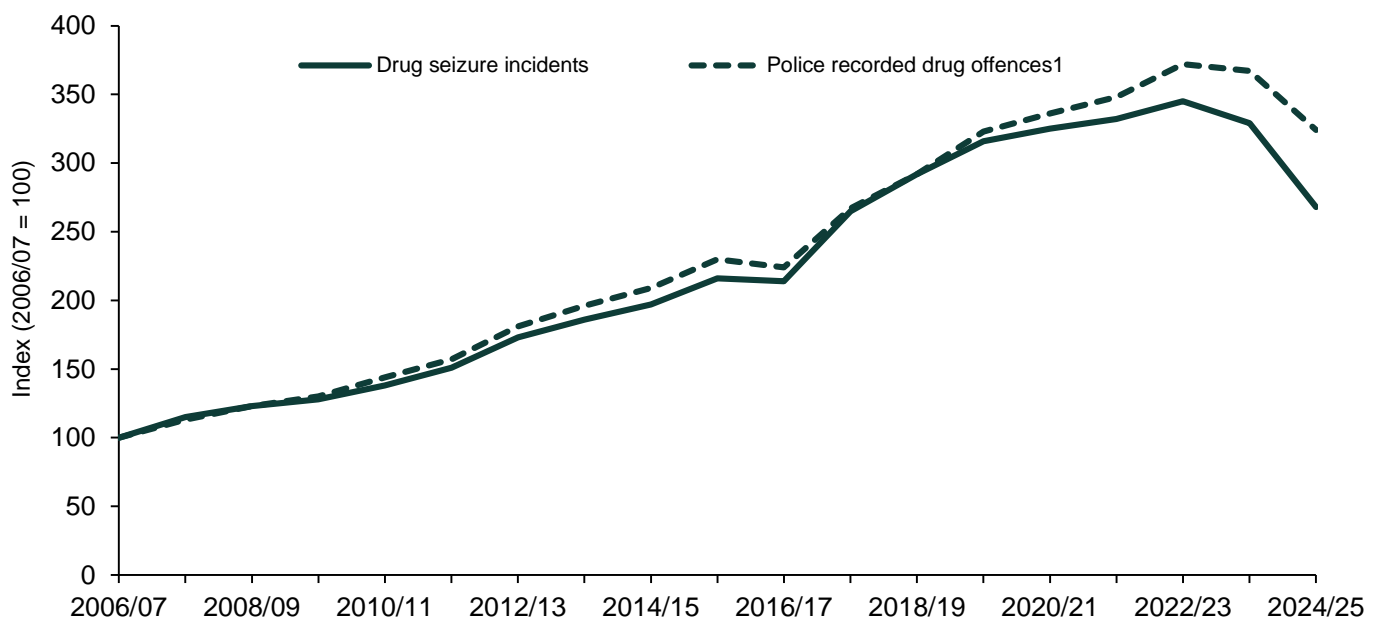
The number of drug seizure incidents increased each year between 2006/07 and 2022/23, with the exception of a fall in 2016/17 (51 fewer seizure incidents). The latest two years have both recorded decreases in seizure incidents: 2023/24 (414 fewer seizure incidents) and 2024/25 (1,568 fewer seizure incidents).

Figure 1.1 Drug seizure incidents, 2006/07 to 2024/25



Levels of drug seizures can be influenced by policing activities and priorities in response to community concern about drugs. Changing levels of drug seizures may also be reflective of a change in the nature of the drugs market, including increased accessibility from sources such as dark web purchase and postal delivery. The influence of policing activities and priorities can also be seen in the police recorded crime figures relating to drug trafficking and possession offences. Figure 1.2 shows how closely the drug seizures trend, as previously described, follows the police recorded drug offences trend.

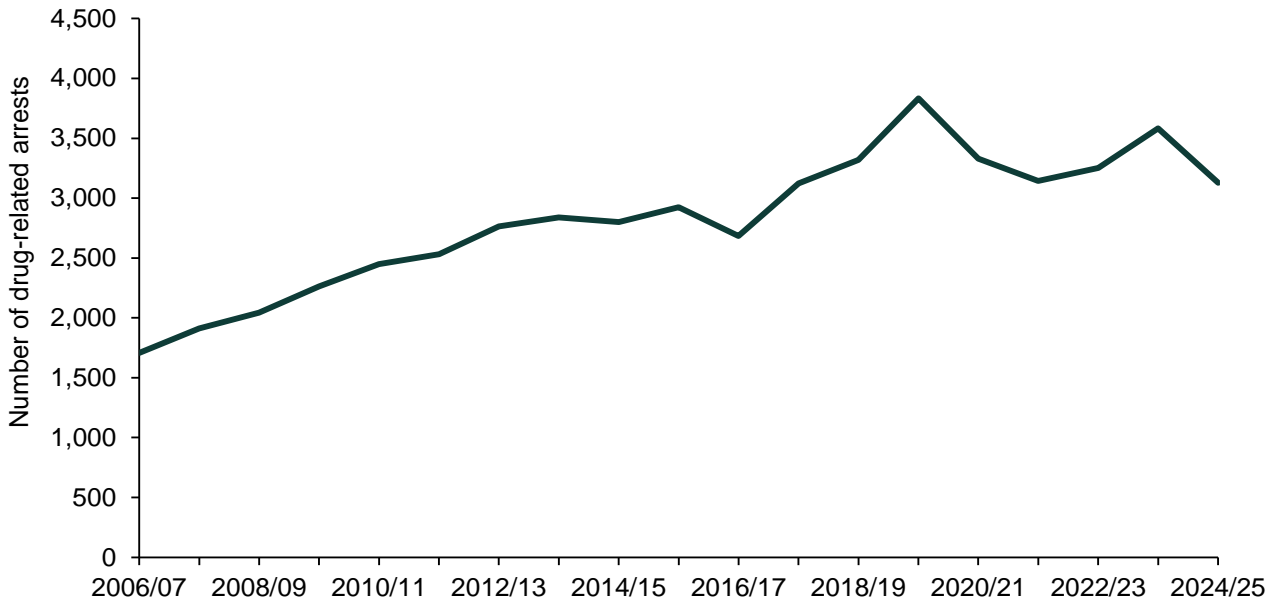
Figure 1.2 Police recorded drug offences and drug seizure incidents, 2006/07 to 2024/25, indexed to 2006/07=100



¹ As published in the Financial year update, period ending 31 March 2025, providing figures for 2024/25 (published 15 May 2025).

The number of drug-related arrests generally increased in most years between 2006/07 (1,708 arrests) and 2019/20 (3,834 arrests), with the exception of falls of 37 and 239 in 2014/15 and 2016/17 respectively. The number of drug-related arrests have fluctuated since then with 2024/25 recording 3,128 arrests, a fall of 456 on the previous year. This most recent figure remains around twice that recorded in 2006/07.

Figure 1.3 Drug-related arrests¹, 2006/07 to 2024/25



Lockdown measures in relation to Covid-19 were first introduced on 23rd March 2020, with all Covid-19 legal restrictions replaced by guidance from 15th February 2022. There may have been an impact on the number of drug seizure incidents and drug-related arrests recorded while these measures were in place.

Table 1.1 Drug seizure incidents and drug-related arrests since 2006/07

	Drug seizure incidents	Drug-related arrests ¹
2006/07	2,590	1,708
2007/08	2,968	1,911
2008/09	3,198	2,044
2009/10	3,319	2,262
2010/11	3,564	2,448
2011/12	3,920	2,531
2012/13	4,474	2,763
2013/14	4,825	2,838
2014/15	5,103	2,801
2015/16	5,597	2,924
2016/17	5,546	2,685
2017/18	6,872	3,122
2018/19	7,561	3,320
2019/20	8,186	3,834
2020/21	8,428	3,331
2021/22	8,596	3,143
2022/23	8,933	3,253
2023/24	8,519	3,584
2024/25	6,951	3,128

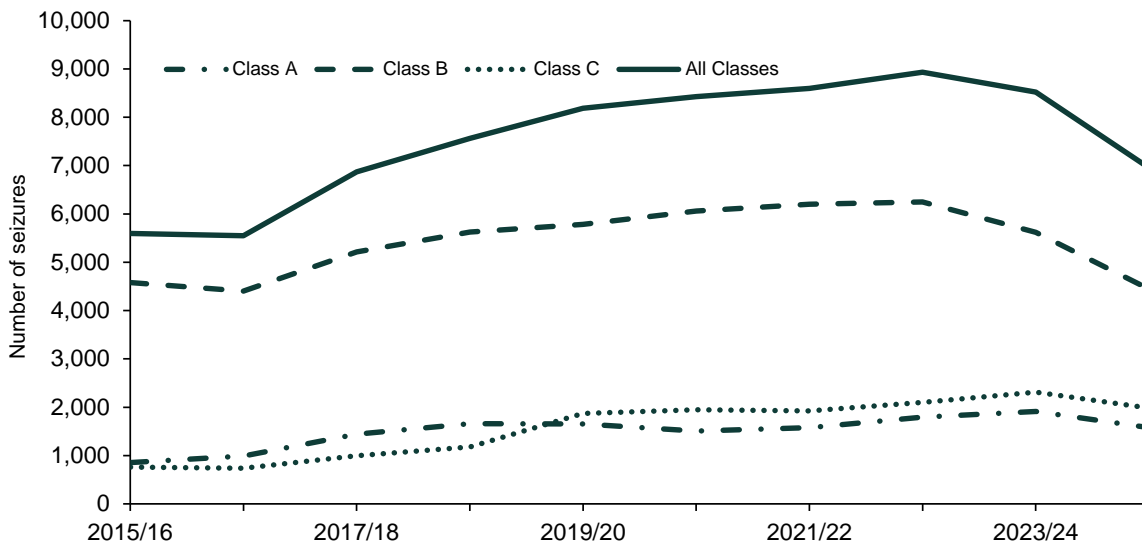
¹ Arrests for offences related to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971

2. Trends in Drug Seizures by Class and Type of Drug over the last ten years

While the latest ten years only are presented in this section, the complete time series from 2012/13 is available in the [drug seizures and arrests annual trends spreadsheet \(opens in a new window\)](#).

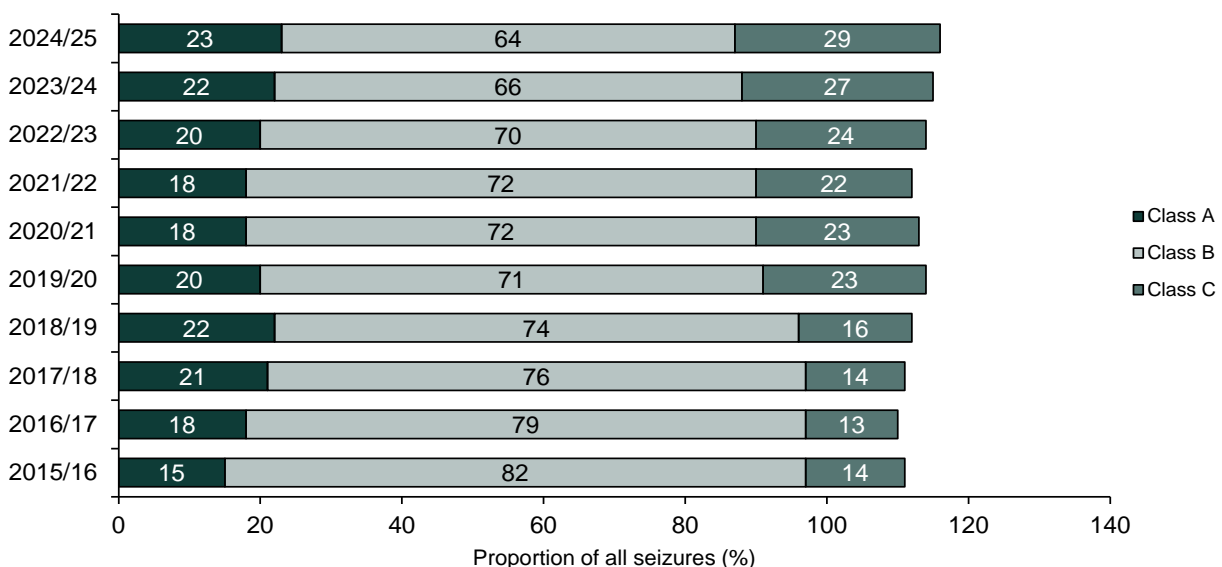
The number of drug seizure incidents increased in most years between 2015/16 (5,597) and 2022/23 (8,933) before falling in each of the last two years to 6,951 in 2024/25. The number of seizure incidents involving Class A drugs is currently almost two times higher than in 2015/16, those involving Class B drugs (and those involving Cannabis) are slightly lower and those involving Class C drugs are 2.5 times higher. As the majority of seizures involve Class B Cannabis, changes in levels of Cannabis seizures have the biggest impact on overall trends.

Figure 2.1 Number of seizures of Class A, Class B and Class C drugs², 2015/16 to 2024/25



The proportion of seizures involving Class A drugs increased from 15 per cent in 2015/16 to 23 per cent in 2024/25. The proportion of Class B drug seizures has fallen from 82 per cent in 2015/16 to 64 per cent in 2024/25, the lowest proportion recorded. The proportion of seizures involving Class C drugs ranged from 13 per cent to 16 per cent between 2014/15 and 2018/19. The reclassification of Pregabalin and Gabapentin as Class C controlled substances in April 2019 resulted in a large increase in the number of seizures of Class C drugs and an increase in the proportion of seizures involving Class C Drugs from this date, reaching 29 per cent in 2024/25. With the inclusion of Pregabalin and Gabapentin in the seizure incident figures from April 2019, the distribution of seizures from this date is not directly comparable with previous years. Figure 2.2 compares the distribution since 2015/16.

Figure 2.2 Distribution of seizures involving Class A, Class B and Class C drugs², 2015/16 to 2024/25



² As a seizure may include more than one class of drug, the number of seizures for each class of drug will sum to more than the total number of seizures and the proportions for each year will sum to more than 100%.

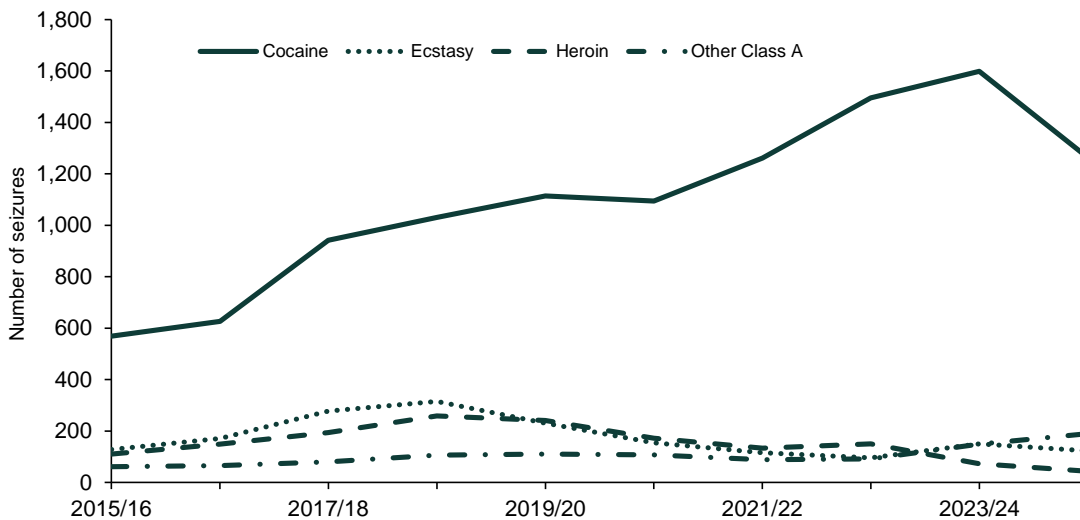
Class A Drugs

Cocaine is the most commonly seized Class A drug. The number of seizures involving cocaine has increased in most years from 569 in 2015/16 to 1,599 in 2023/24 before falling to 1,264 in 2024/25. In seven of the last ten years (including each of the latest four years 2021/22 to 2024/25) cocaine has been the second most commonly seized drug across all drug classes.

Seizures involving LSD reached their highest level in 2021/22 (26 seizures), with 16 seizures recorded in 2024/25. Morphine seizures were highest in 2020/21 (19 seizures) with 8 recorded in 2024/25. Ecstasy seizures reached their highest level in 2018/19 (315), with the number of seizures falling in subsequent years to a low of 96 in 2022/23; there were 123 ecstasy seizures in 2024/25. The number of seizures involving Heroin also reached their highest level in 2018/19 (259) followed by an overall downward trend to 44 seizures in 2024/25, the lowest level recorded.

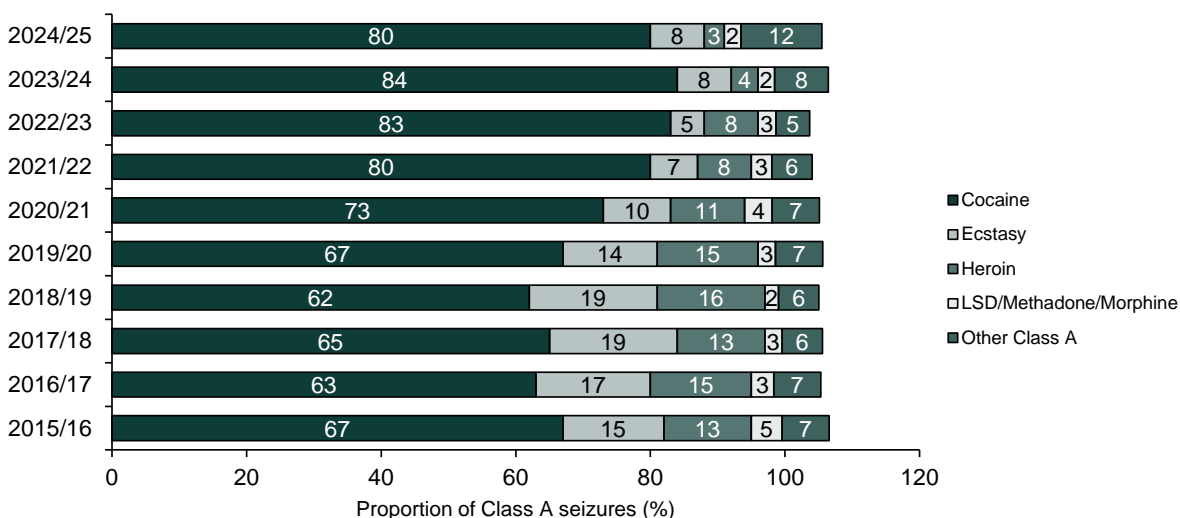
The number of seizures involving Methadone has fluctuated over the last ten years, ranging from 5 recorded in 2018/19 to 22 seizures in 2020/21; there were 15 methadone seizures in 2024/25. The number of seizures of Other Class A drugs has increased in most years, with the number of seizures ranging from 61 in 2015/16 to 190 in 2024/25.

Figure 2.3 Number of seizures involving the main Class A drugs^{3,4}, 2015/16 to 2024/25



In 2015/16 two out of every three Class A seizures included Cocaine, with the proportion increasing to four in every five Class A seizures since 2021/22. The proportion of Class A seizures involving Ecstasy has shown a general decline from nearly one in five Class A seizures in 2017/18 and 2018/19 to fewer than one in ten since 2021/22. Heroin, present in at least one in ten seizures between 2015/16 and 2020/21, is now present in fewer than one in ten Class A seizures since 2021/22 (3 per cent in 2024/25).

Figure 2.4 Distribution of seizures involving Class A drugs⁴, 2015/16 to 2024/25



³ The numbers of LSD, Methadone and Morphine seizure incidents are too small to be presented in Fig 2.3. See Table 2.1 in the [drug seizures and arrests annual trends spreadsheet \(opens in a new window\)](#).

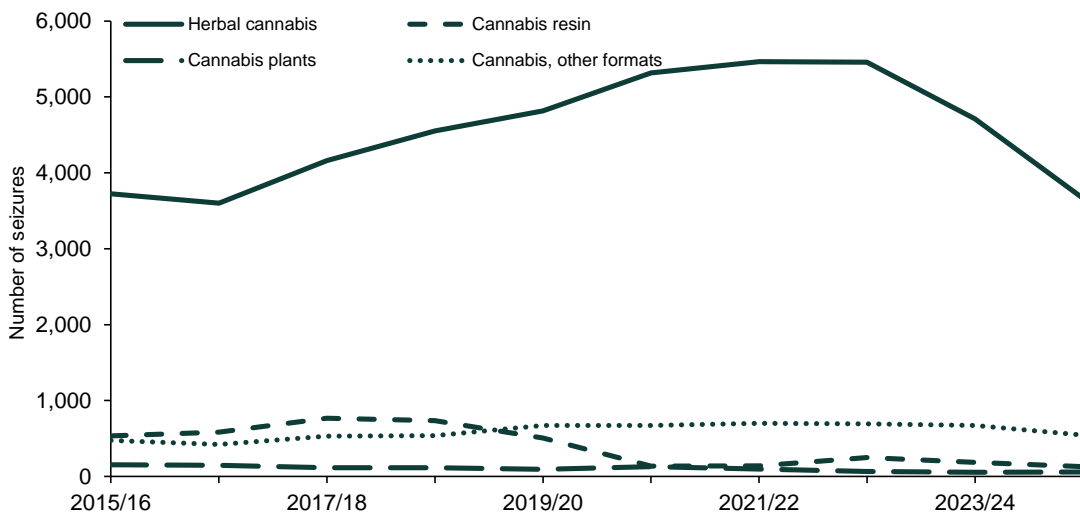
⁴ As a seizure may include more than one type of Class A drug, the number of seizures for each type of Class A drug will sum to more than the total number of Class A seizures and the proportions for each year will sum to more than 100%.

Class B Drugs

Cannabis is the most commonly seized drug across all classes, with herbal cannabis being the most commonly seized cannabis format. Herbal cannabis seizures generally increased from 2015/16 to their highest level of 5,466 in 2021/22, almost 1.5 times the number recorded in 2015/16 (3,723). Levels have subsequently fallen in each year, with 3,663 seizures recorded in 2024/25, the second lowest level in the last ten years. Cannabis resin was the second most commonly seized cannabis format between 2015/16 (535 seizure incidents) and 2018/19 (735 seizure incidents). The number of cannabis resin seizures have subsequently fallen in most years since 2018/19 to 129 seizures in 2024/25, becoming the third most commonly seized cannabis format during that time. Seizures of cannabis plants have generally declined over the last ten years, from 155 in 2015/16 to lows of 56 and 59 in 2023/24 and 2024/25 respectively. Seizures of cannabis in other formats generally increased from 475 in 2015/16 to the highest level of 702 in 2021/22, with levels falling in each subsequent year to 544 in 2024/25.

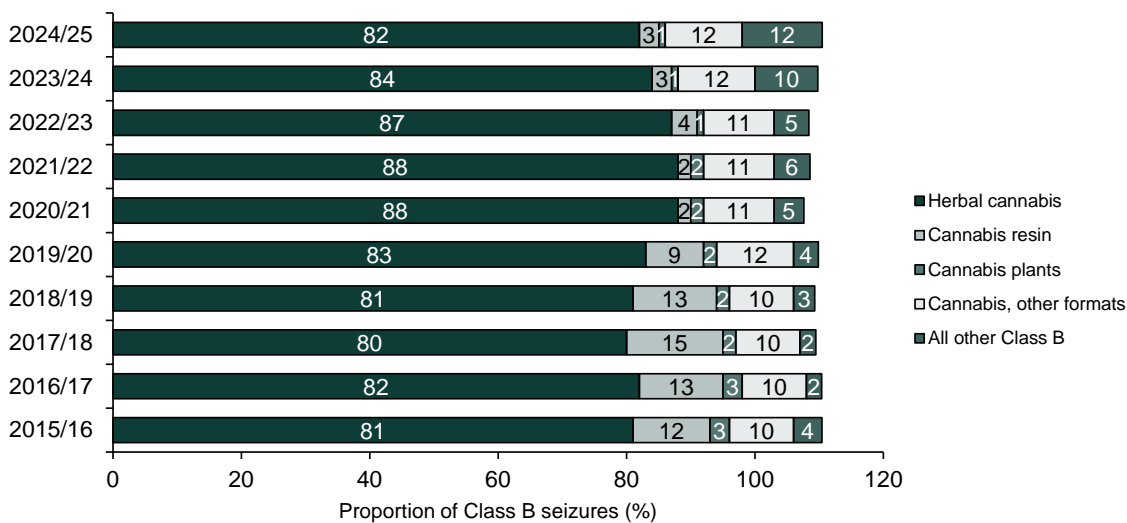
Seizures involving Other Class B drugs⁵ have increased more than ten times from the lowest level of 32 in 2017/18 to 342 recorded in 2024/25. Mephedrone seizures have fallen over the last ten years, with six of the last seven years recording fewer than 10 seizures. Amphetamine seizures increased from a low of 51 in 2016/17 to 131 seizures in 2020/21, the highest level recorded; there were 100 Amphetamine seizures in 2024/25. Ketamine seizures have generally increased from 6 in 2015/16 to 106 in 2024/25.

Figure 2.5 Number of seizures involving Cannabis in its various formats⁶, 2015/16 to 2024/25



In the last ten years more than four in every five Class B seizures involved Herbal Cannabis. The proportion of Class B seizures involving Cannabis Resin has fallen from 15 per cent in 2017/18 to less than 5 per cent since 2020/21.

Figure 2.6 Distribution of seizures involving Class B drugs^{6,7}, 2015/16 to 2024/25



⁵ Other Class B drugs include cathinone derivatives, codeine/dihydrocodeine, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), barbiturates and synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists.

⁶ As a seizure may include more than one type of Class B drug, the number of seizures for each type of Class B drug will sum to more than the total number of Class B seizures and the proportions for each year will sum to more than 100%.

⁷ Other includes Amphetamines, Mephedrone and Other Class B drugs.

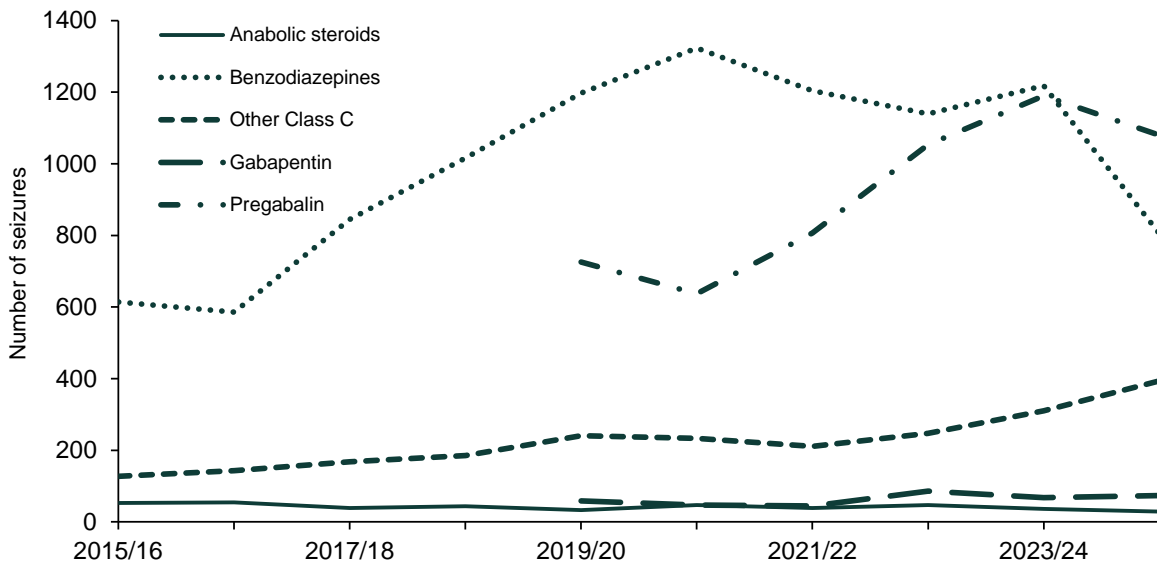
Class C Drugs

Benzodiazepines were the most commonly seized Class C drug between 2015/16 and 2023/24 and the second most commonly seized in 2024/25. The number of benzodiazepine seizure incidents reached its highest level of 1,323 in 2020/21, twice the number recorded in 2015/16 (614). Benzodiazepine seizures have generally fallen since then with 805 seizures recorded in 2024/25, the lowest level in the last eight years.

The reclassification of Pregabalin and Gabapentin as Class C controlled substances in April 2019 resulted in a large increase in the number of seizures of Class C drugs from this date. Since 2022/23 Pregabalin seizures have accounted for at least half of Class C seizures and it is the most commonly seized Class C drug in 2024/25 with 1,080 seizures recorded. Gabapentin seizures account for 2 per cent to 4 per cent of all Class C seizures.

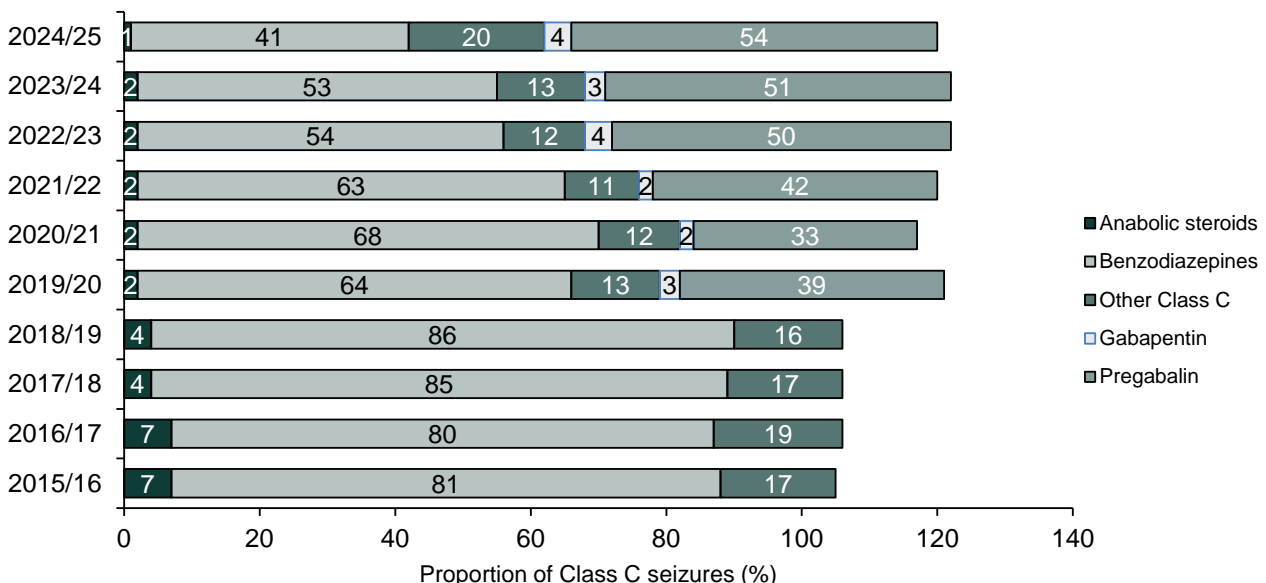
Flualprazolam was reclassified from a New Psychoactive Substance to a Class C Benzodiazepine in August 2021.

Figure 2.7 Number of seizures involving Class C drugs⁸, 2015/16 to 2024/25



The inclusion of Pregabalin and Gabapentin within the seizure incident figures from April 2019 has had an impact on the distribution of Class C seizures. As a result of this change, the distribution of seizures within Class C prior to 2019/20 is not directly comparable with that seen between 2019/20 and 2024/25. The distribution of drug types within Class C seizures since 2019/20 shows the declining proportion of benzodiazepine seizures alongside the increasing proportion of Pregabalin seizures.

Figure 2.8 Distribution of seizures involving Class C drugs⁸, 2015/16 to 2024/25



⁸ As a seizure may include more than one type of Class C drug, the number of seizures for each type of Class C drug will sum to more than the total number of Class C seizures and the proportions for each year will sum to more than 100%.

New Psychoactive Substances

The [Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 \(opens in a new window\)](#) (PSA) came into effect in May 2016, in response to the emergence of an increasing number of substances which were not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (MDA). This act created a blanket ban on the production, distribution, sale and supply of psychoactive substances in the UK for human consumption. Psychoactive substances that are within the scope of the PSA are referred to as New Psychoactive Substances (NPS).

A psychoactive substance is defined as any substance intended for human consumption that is capable of producing a psychoactive effect. In general, NPS are drugs designed to replicate the effects of other illegal substances. Before the PSA was introduced they were commonly referred to as 'legal highs'.

Table 2.1 New Psychoactive Substances Seizure Incidents since 2019/20

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 ¹	2022/23	2023/24 ²	2024/25
Number of seizure incidents	166	147	63	21	27	29

¹ Flualprazolam was first recorded as a NPS in April 2019 and was subsequently reclassified as a Class C Benzodiazepine in August 2021;

² Nitrous Oxide was reclassified to Class C in November 2023.

At least 90 per cent of seizures in both 2019/20 and 2020/21 were of Flualprazolam, which was reclassified as a Class C (Benzodiazepine) in August 2021. Almost half of seizures in 2023/24 involved Nitrous Oxide, which was reclassified as a Class C drug in November 2023. In 2024/25, almost half of NPS seizures involved HHC (Hexahydrocannabinol).

Cannabis Cultivation

Guidance from the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) defined commercial cultivation of cannabis as:

- Twenty-five or more cannabis plants, at any stage of growth (germination), are being or have been grown; or
- There is evidence of a cannabis farm.

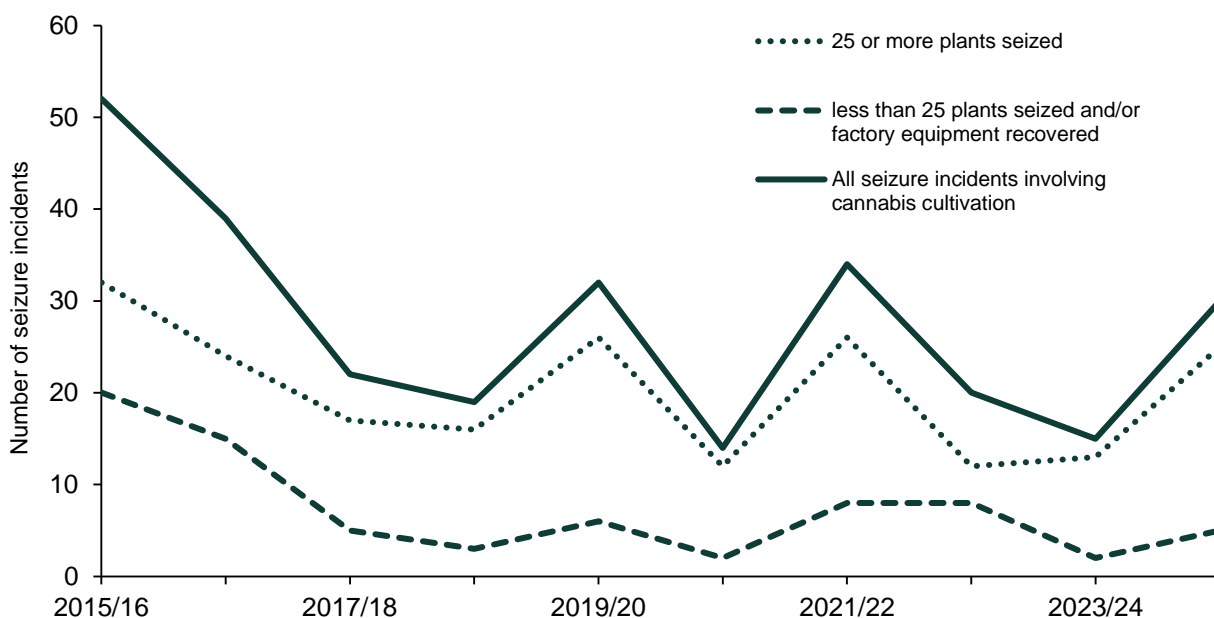
They defined a cannabis farm as:

- The premises, or part therein, has 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 electricity meter bypassed (abstraction of electricity).

In addition to the above, the overall appearance of the venue, together with available intelligence also indicates if the site was, is, or is intended to be a cannabis farm, irrespective of the number of plants present on the site. For example there may be no plants but the site has been made ready to commence cultivation.

The level of cannabis cultivation based on this definition is shown in Figure 2.9. The number of seizure incidents involving cannabis cultivation has fluctuated over the last ten years between a high of 52 recorded in 2015/16 and a low of 14 recorded in 2020/21. There were 30 such seizure incidents recorded in 2024/25.

Figure 2.9 Cannabis cultivation, 2015/16 to 2024/25



3. Trends in Drug Seizures by Quantity of Drugs Seized over the last ten years

While the latest ten years only are presented in this section, the complete time series from 2012/13 is available in the [drug seizures and arrests annual trends spreadsheet \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Most drugs can be seized in a range of formats. In order to present seized quantities within a given drug type in terms of comparable units (kilograms, doses or plants), conversion factors developed by the Home Office have been applied to estimate the overall quantity of drugs seized.

In this section, drug seizure quantities with the conversion factors applied are presented as estimated totals, summarised in kilograms, doses and plants. The raw, unconverted quantities for each drug type and format are available in the [drug seizures and arrests annual trends spreadsheet \(opens in a new window\)](#) pivot tables - seizure incidents and quantities seized, with the complete time series from 2012/13 also available.

Totals for the quantities of drugs seized can be greatly influenced by small numbers of large seizures. Quantities seized should not be taken as an indication of drug prevalence or availability.

Class A Drugs

Conversion factors have been applied to the following Class A drugs and they are summarised as follows:

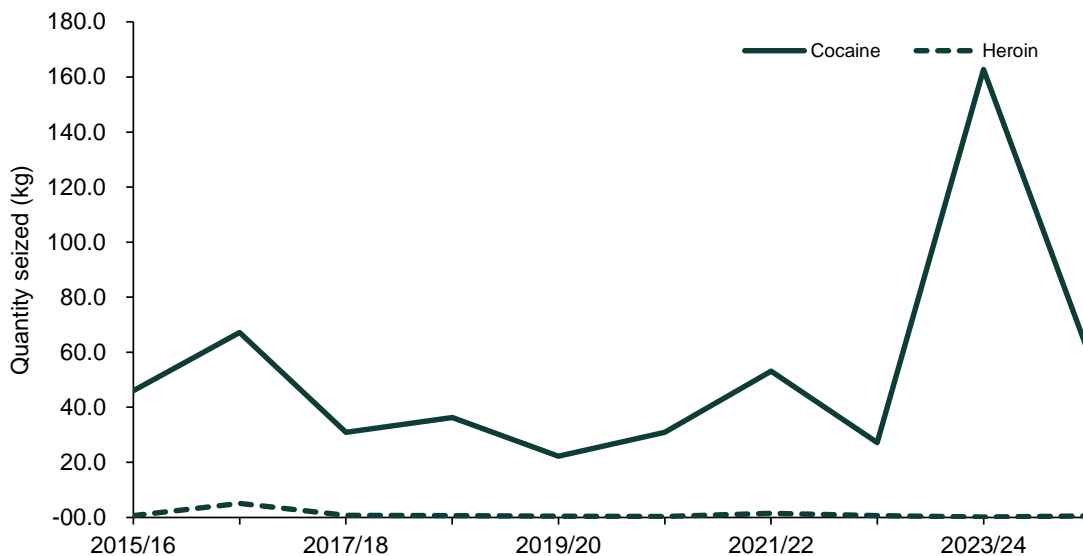
Summarised in kilograms	Summarised in thousands of doses
Cocaine	Ecstasy
Heroin	LSD (weighed amounts excluded)
	Morphine

Class A, weights seized (converted amounts)

Cocaine: The largest weight of cocaine seized in the last ten years was 162.7kg in 2023/24, with one seizure accounting for more than 70 per cent of the total weight seized. The second highest amount seized was 67.2kg in 2015/16, less than half of that seized in 2023/24. The latest financial year 2024/25 saw 58.5kg seized, the third highest amount since 2015/16.

Heroin: The quantity of heroin seized is much lower than that for cocaine, ranging from 0.1kg in 2023/24 to 5.1kg in 2016/17. One seizure accounted for around three quarters of the total weight seized in 2016/17. The only years in which the weight of heroin seized has exceeded 1kg are 2016/17 and 2021/22. In 2024/25 the quantity of heroin seized was 0.5kg.

Figure 3.1 Quantities of Cocaine and Heroin seized (kg), 2015/16 to 2024/25



In 2024/25, four out of five cocaine seizures involved quantities of less than 5g in weight, with over a third of seizures involving quantities of less than 1g. During the same period, almost three in five heroin seizures (59 per cent) involved quantities of less than 1g (Figure 3.2).

Figures 3.3 and 3.4 present the distribution of cocaine and heroin seizures since 2015/16, showing both the changes in the number of seizure incidents and the larger proportion of low weight seizures.

Figure 3.2 Distribution of the quantities of Cocaine and Heroin seized by weight (kg), 2024/25

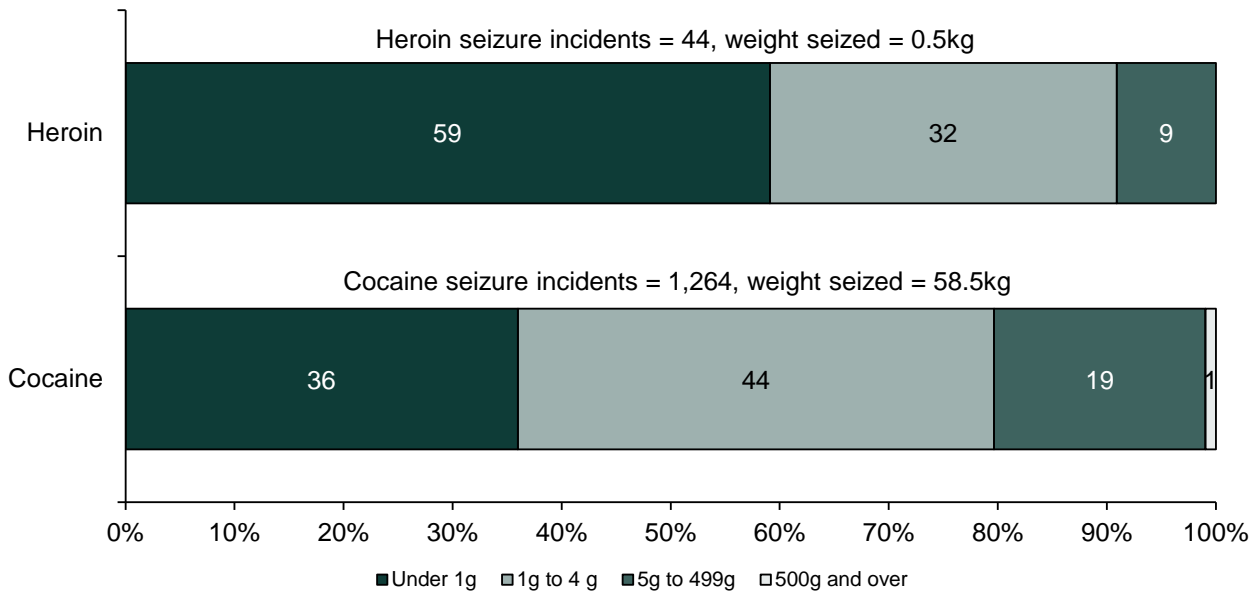


Figure 3.3 Number of Class A Cocaine seizure incidents by weight seized, 2015/16 to 2024/25

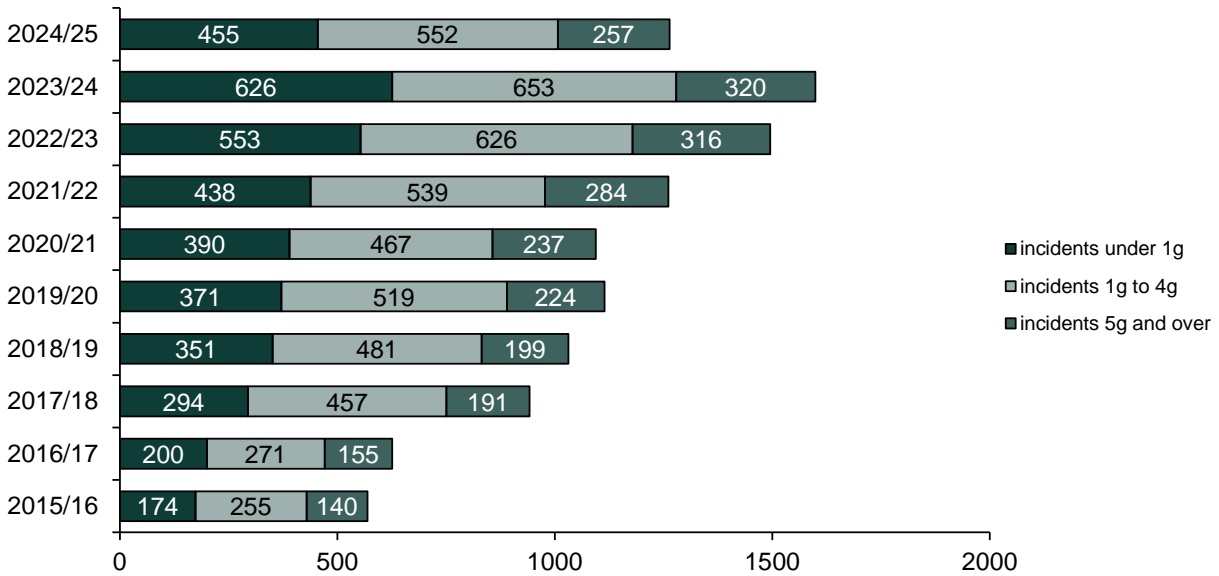
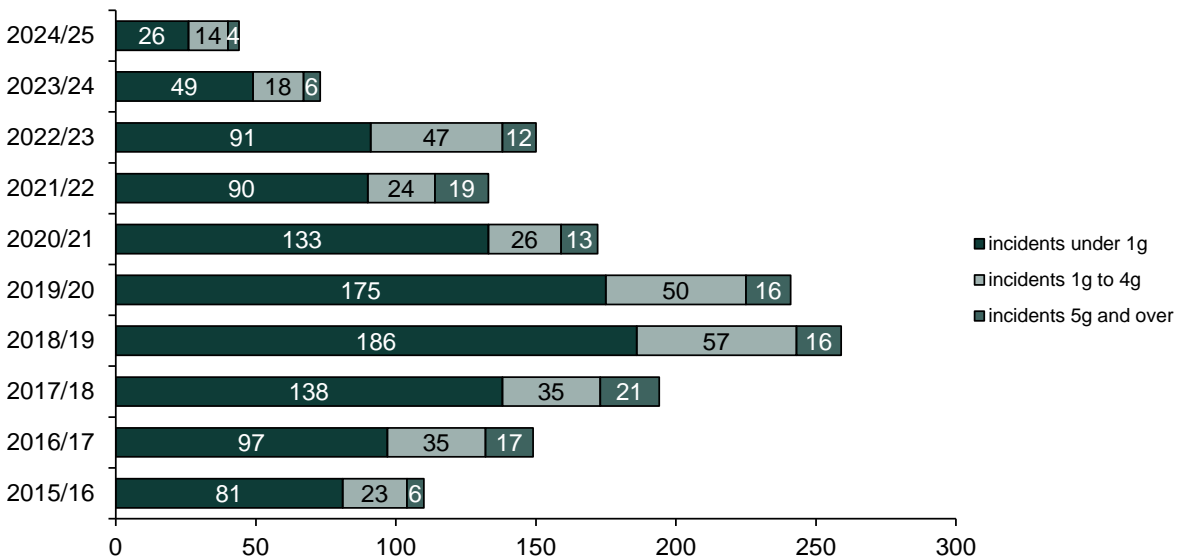


Figure 3.4 Number of Class A Heroin seizure incidents by weight seized, 2015/16 to 2024/25



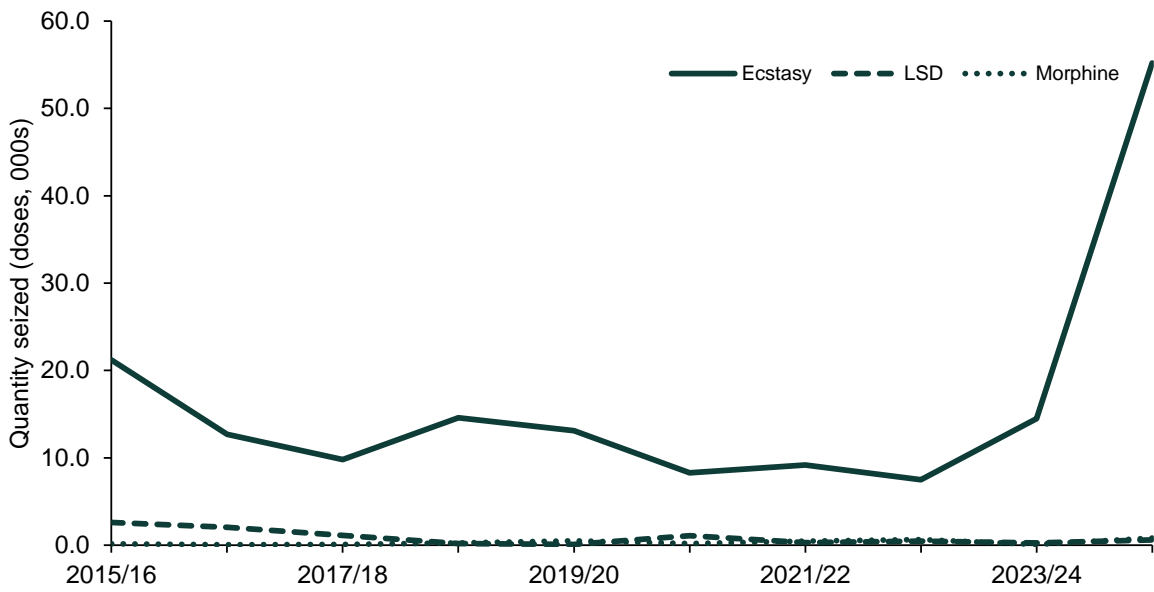
Class A, doses seized (converted amounts)

Ecstasy: Seizures of ecstasy have ranged from 7,500 doses in 2022/23 to 55,200 doses seized in 2024/25, the highest since the start of the data series; two seizures of powdered ecstasy accounted for 68% of this figure. When conversion factors are applied, each gram of ecstasy in powder format is counted as the equivalent of 4 doses.

LSD: In the last ten years there have been 170 seizures of LSD (excluding weighed amounts)⁹, adding to an estimated 8,860 doses in total and ranging between 100 doses in 2019/20 and 2,610 doses in 2015/16. There were approximately 610 doses seized in 2024/25, an increase on the 280 doses seized in 2023/24.

Morphine: There have been 121 morphine seizures in the last ten years, amounting to an estimated 3,300 doses in total. This ranges from around 70 in 2016/17 to approximately 810 in 2024/25.

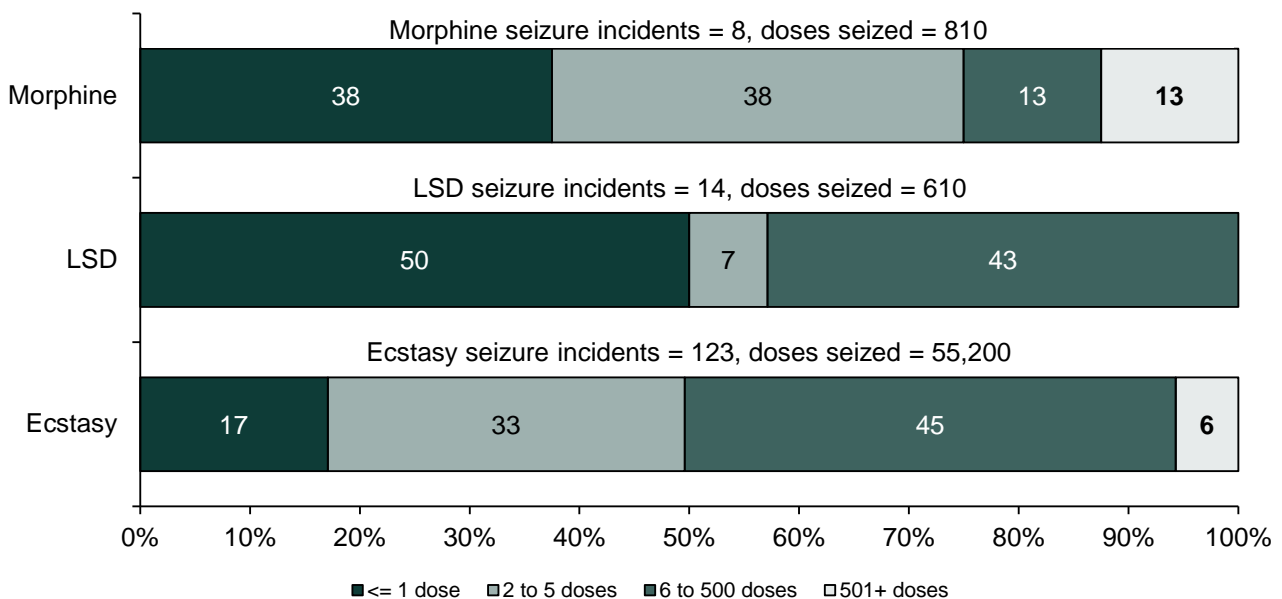
Figure 3.5 Quantities of Ecstasy, LSD and Morphine seized (doses, 000s), 2015/16 to 2024/25



In 2024/25 approximately three quarters of seizures involving Morphine, three fifths of seizures involving LSD, and half of seizures involving Ecstasy, involved less than 5 doses. (Figure 3.6).

Figures 3.7 to 3.9 present the distribution of ecstasy, LSD and morphine seizures since 2015/16, showing both the changing number of seizure incidents and the smaller proportions where the quantity seized is 51 or more doses. In most years, more than four fifths of ecstasy, LSD and morphine seizures involve quantities of 50 doses or less.

Figure 3.6 Distribution of the quantities of Ecstasy, LSD and Morphine seized (doses), 2024/25



⁹ Weighed amounts of LSD are not included in the figures; this is in line with Home Office presentation of this drug type.

Figure 3.7 Number of Class A Ecstasy seizure incidents by doses seized, 2015/16 to 2024/25

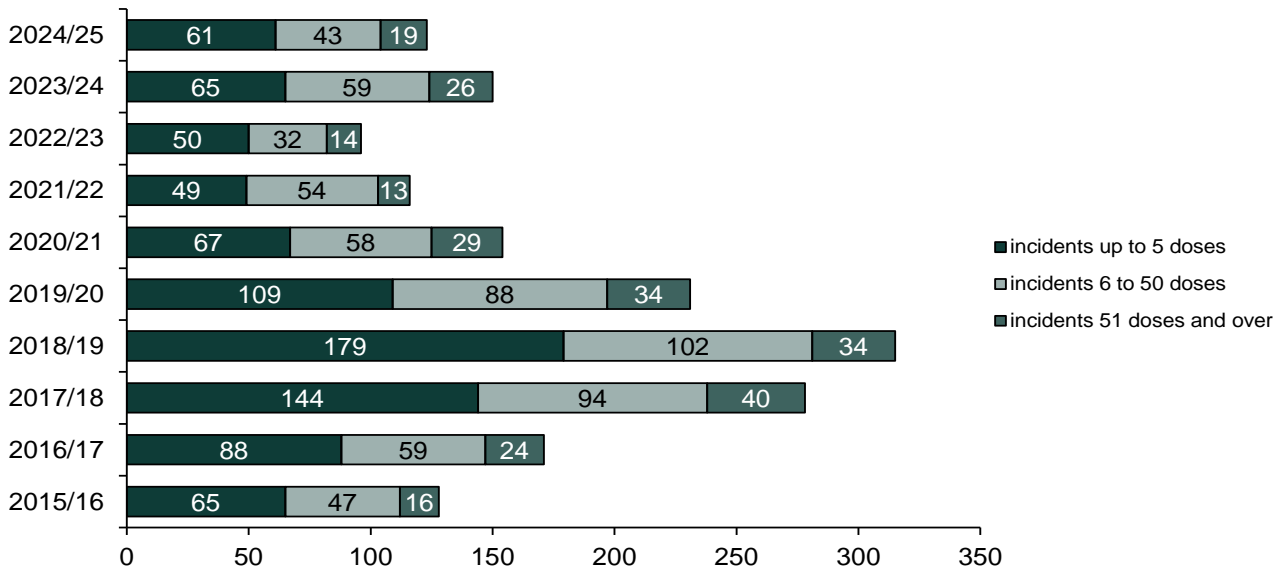


Figure 3.8 Number of Class A LSD seizure incidents by doses seized, 2015/16 to 2024/25

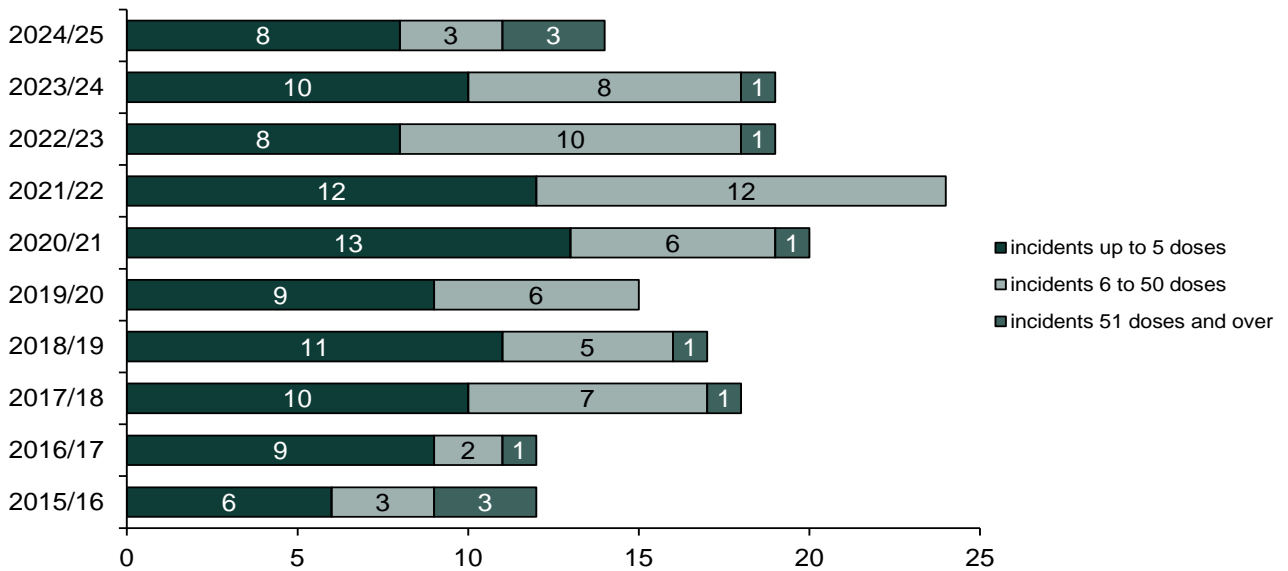
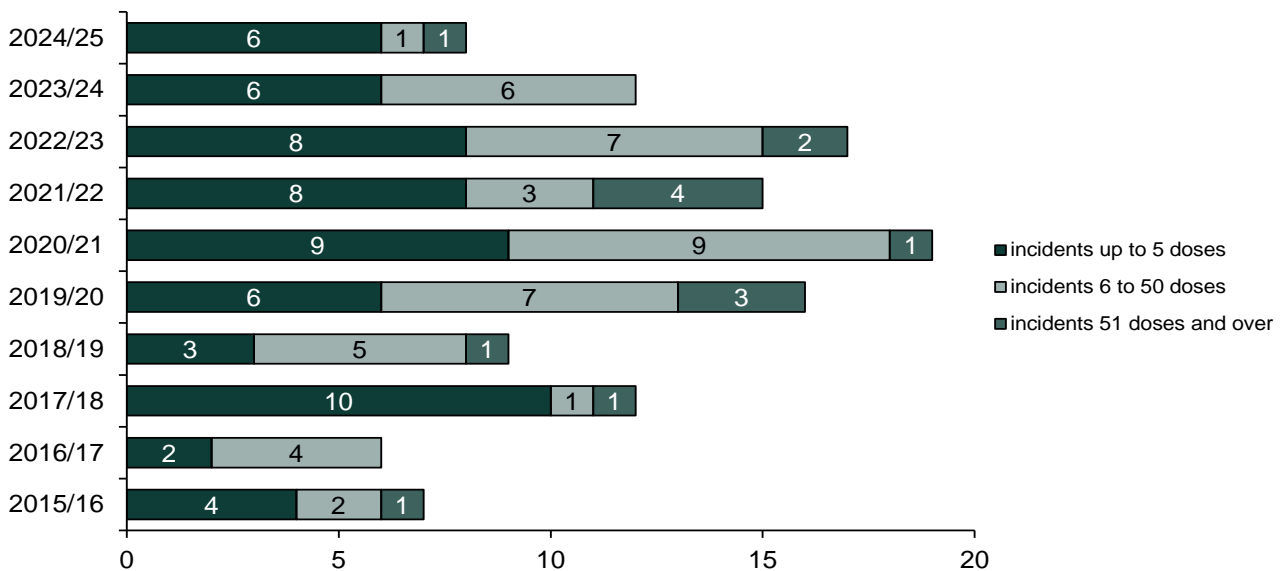


Figure 3.9 Number of Class A Morphine seizure incidents by doses seized, 2015/16 to 2024/25



Class B Drugs

Conversion factors have been applied to the following Class B drugs and they are summarised as follows:

Summarised in kilograms	Summarised in thousands of plants
Herbal cannabis	Cannabis plants
Cannabis resin	
Amphetamines	
Ketamine	

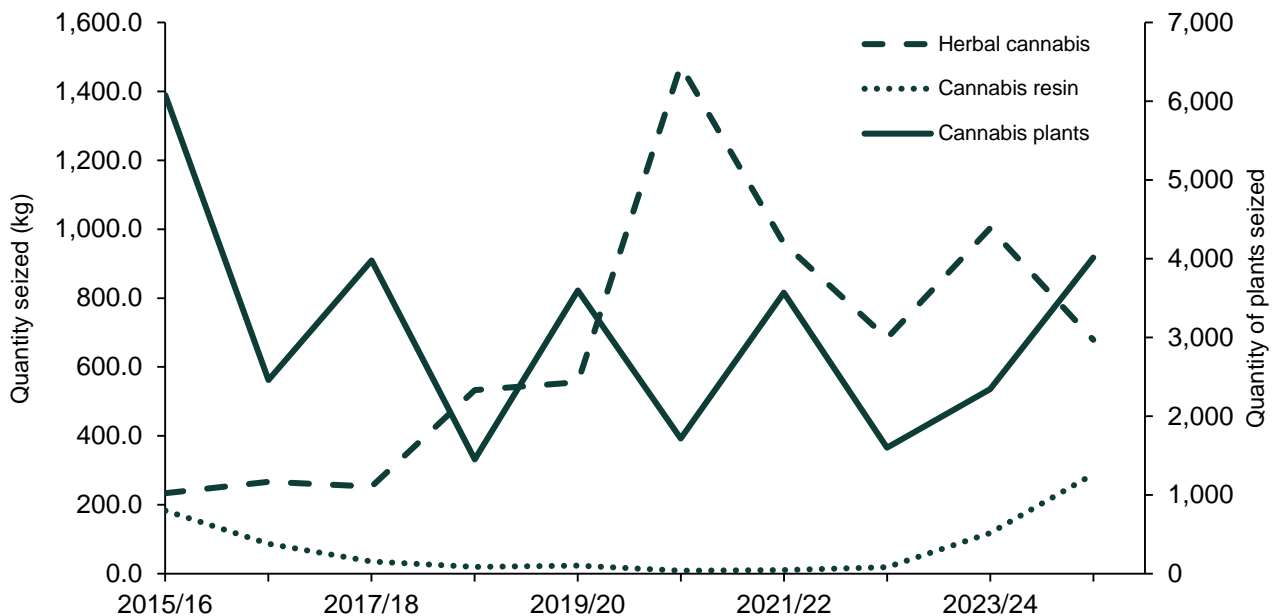
Class B, cannabis weights and plants seized (converted amounts)

Herbal cannabis: Over the last ten years, the weight of herbal cannabis seized was at its lowest in 2015/16 (233.3kg) before generally increasing to reach 1,475.5kg in 2020/21. It has generally declined from this point with 678.9kg being seized in 2024/25; this included 18 herbal cannabis seizures of 10kg or more.

Cannabis resin: The weight of cannabis resin seized fell in most of the years from 2015/16 (182.5kg) to 2020/21 (8kg). Increases have since been seen in each year from that point with 288.3kg recorded in 2024/25, the highest weight seized in the ten year period. The higher levels seen in 2015/16, 2023/24 and 2024/25 were influenced by a small number of large seizures. One seizure in 2015/16 accounted for 90 per cent of the total seized, one seizure in 2023/24 accounted for 92 per cent of the total seized and one seizure in 2024/25 two seizures in 2024/25 accounted for 97 per cent of the total seized.

Cannabis plants: Seizures of cannabis plants were at their highest in 2015/16 (6,081 plants). Since 2016/17, the number of plant seizures has fluctuated between 1,450 plants seized in 2018/19 and 4,016 plants seized in 2024/25. This latest figure is an increase of 71 per cent on the 2,342 plants seized in 2023/24.

Figure 3.10 Quantity of Cannabis seized in its various formats (kg and plants), 2015/16 to 2024/25



Nearly three quarters of herbal cannabis seizures and around three in five cannabis resin seizures in 2024/25 involved weights less than 5g. Almost two thirds of cannabis plant seizures in 2024/25 involved more than 5 plants (Figure 3.11).

Figures 3.12 to 3.14 present the distribution of herbal cannabis, cannabis resin and cannabis plant seizures since 2015/16 and the changing levels of seizure incidents.

Over the last ten years around three in four herbal cannabis seizures involved less than 5g. The number of seizures of 10kg and over ranged from 4 in 2017/18 to 20 in 2023/24.

The proportion of cannabis resin seizures involving less than 5g is generally slightly lower than for herbal cannabis, ranging from 60 per cent in 2021/22 to 76% in 2015/16. There were two seizures of 10kg and over in 2024/25, with 1 seizure of 10kg and over in each of 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2023/24. Figure 3.13 also shows the lower numbers of cannabis resin seizures recorded after 2019/20.

Information on cannabis cultivation can be found on page 12.

Figure 3.11 Distribution of the quantities of Cannabis seized (kg and plants), 2024/25

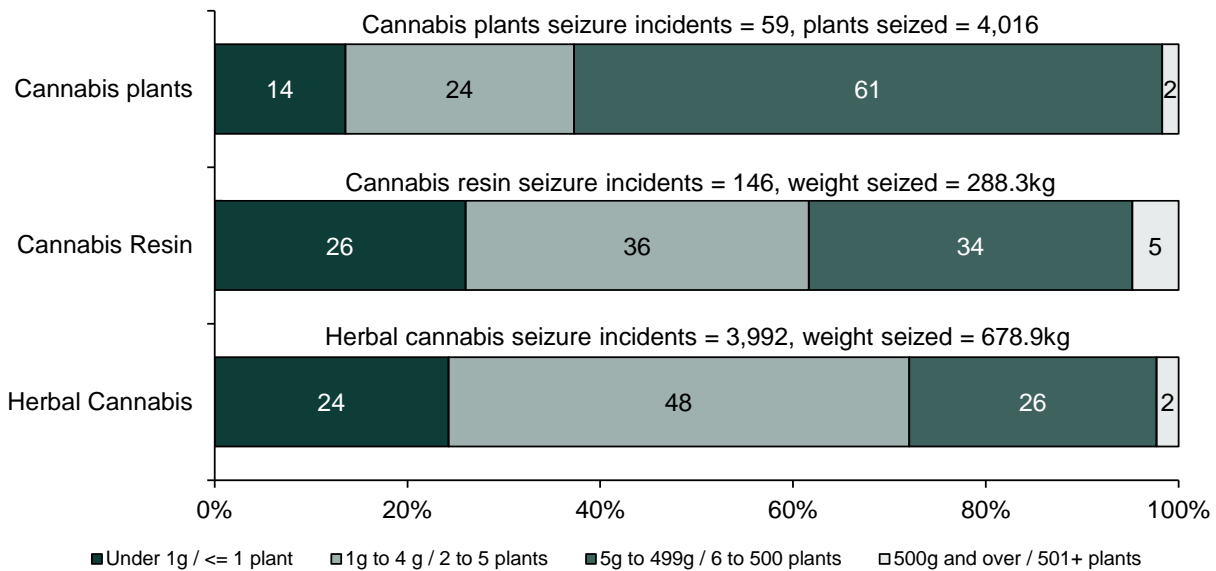


Figure 3.12 Number of Class B Herbal cannabis seizure incidents by weight seized, 2015/16 to 2024/25

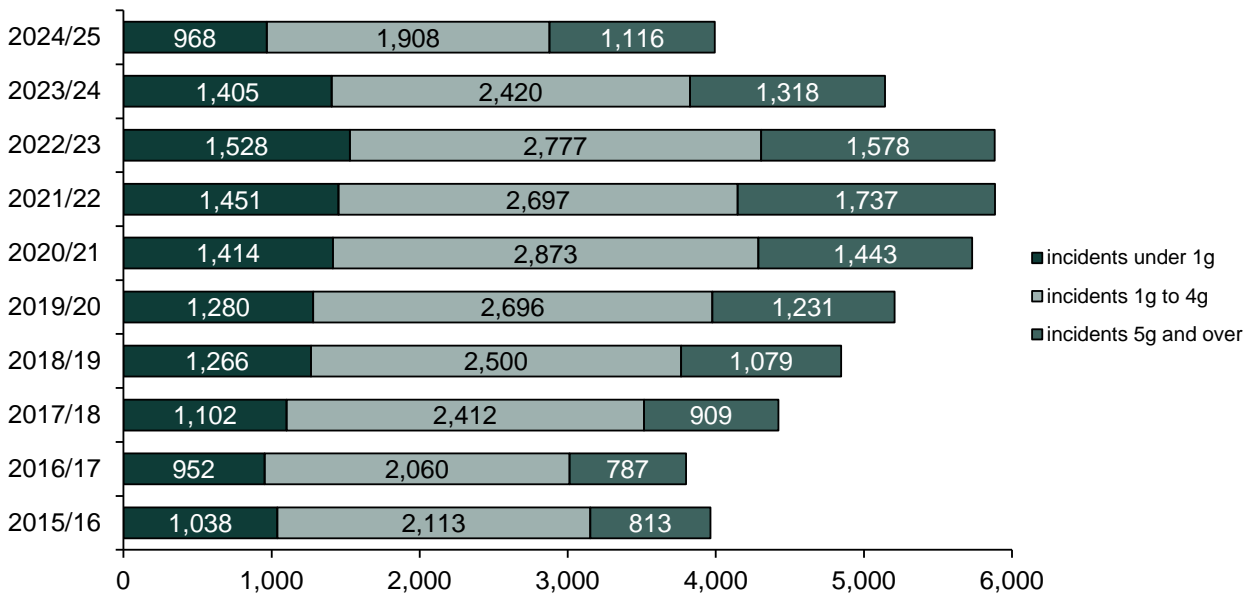


Figure 3.13 Number of Class B Cannabis resin seizure incidents by weight seized, 2015/16 to 2024/25

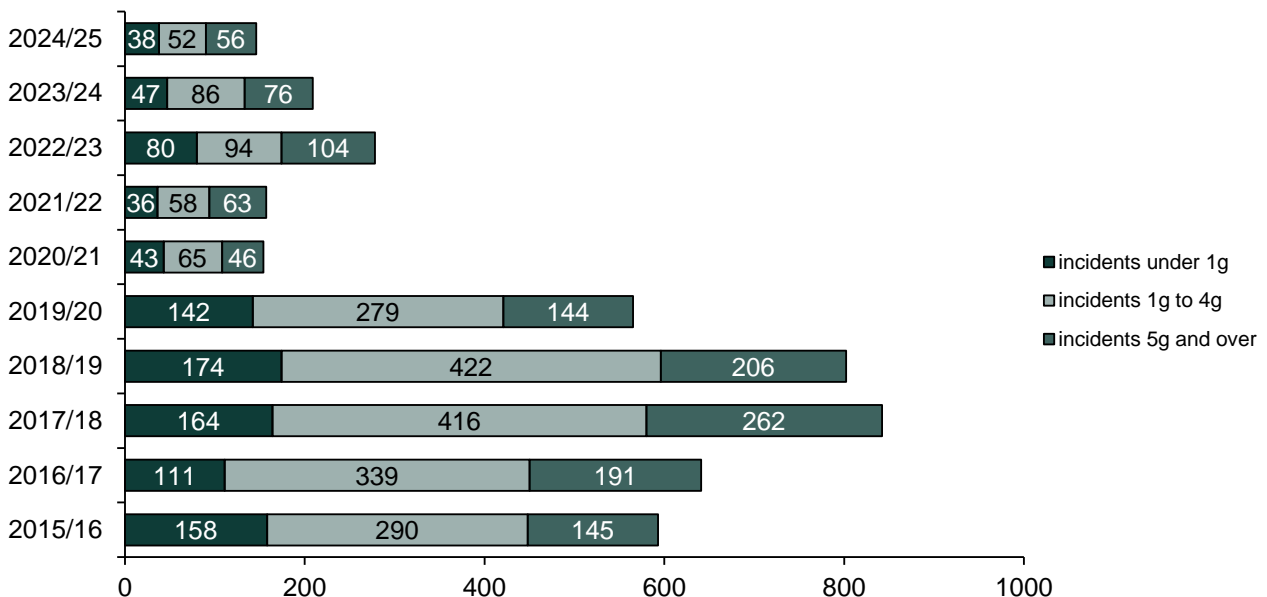
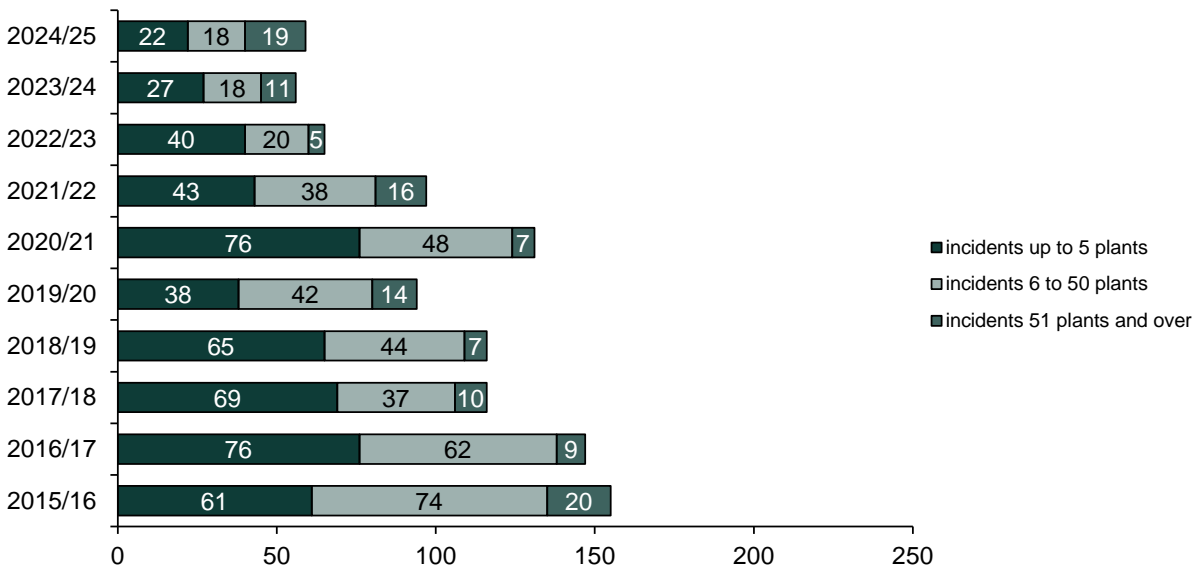


Figure 3.14 Number of Class B Cannabis plant seizure incidents by number of plants seized, 2015/16 to 2024/25

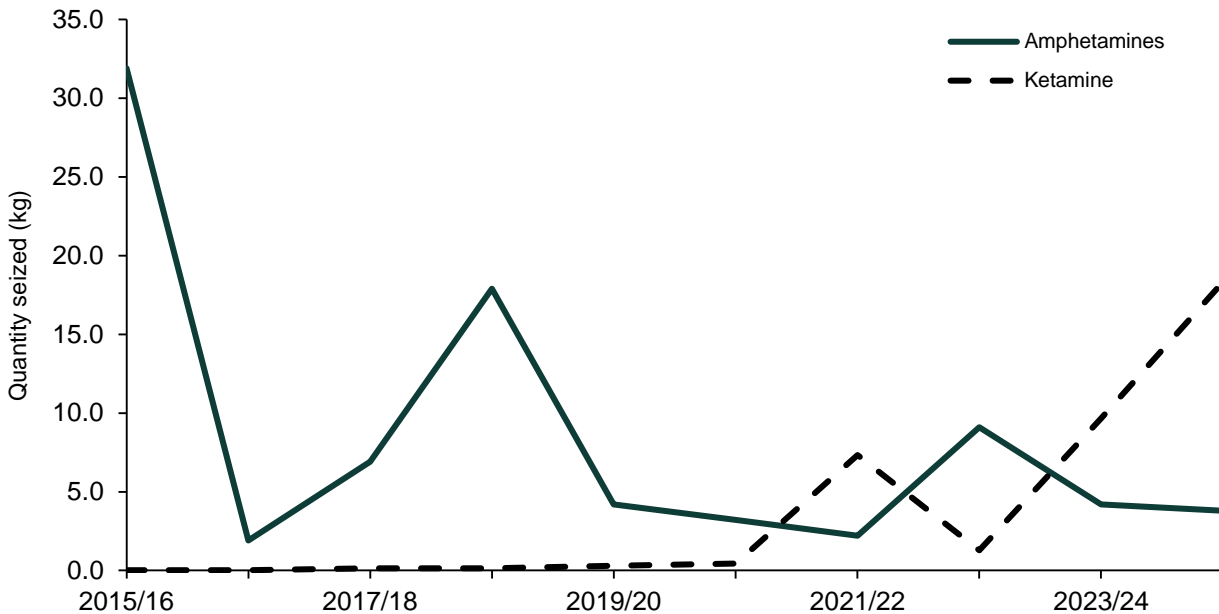


Class B, amphetamines seized (converted amounts)

Amphetamines: Seizures of amphetamines have not shown a consistent trend over the last ten years. In 2015/16 two seizures accounted for 87 per cent of the 31.9kg seized, while in 2018/19 two seizures accounted for around 75 per cent of the 17.9kg seized. The weight seized in 2024/25 was 3.8kg.

Ketamine: The weight of ketamine seized has generally increased from 2015/16. A small number of large seizures have contributed to the higher quantities recorded in 2021/22 (7.3kg), 2023/24 (9.7kg) and 2024/25 (18.3kg). In 2021/22 one seizure accounted for 69 per cent of the total seized, one seizure in 2023/24 accounted for around 71 per cent of the total seized and one seizure in 2024/25 accounted for around 92 per cent of the total seized.

Figure 3.15 Quantity of Amphetamines and Ketamine seized (kg), 2015/16 to 2024/25



In 2024/25 approximately three quarters of both amphetamine and ketamine seizure incidents involved weights of less than 10g.

Figure 3.16 to 3.17 present the distribution of amphetamine and ketamine seizures since 2015/16, demonstrating the variability of amounts seized.

Figure 3.16 Number of Class B Amphetamine seizure incidents by weight seized, 2015/16 to 2024/25

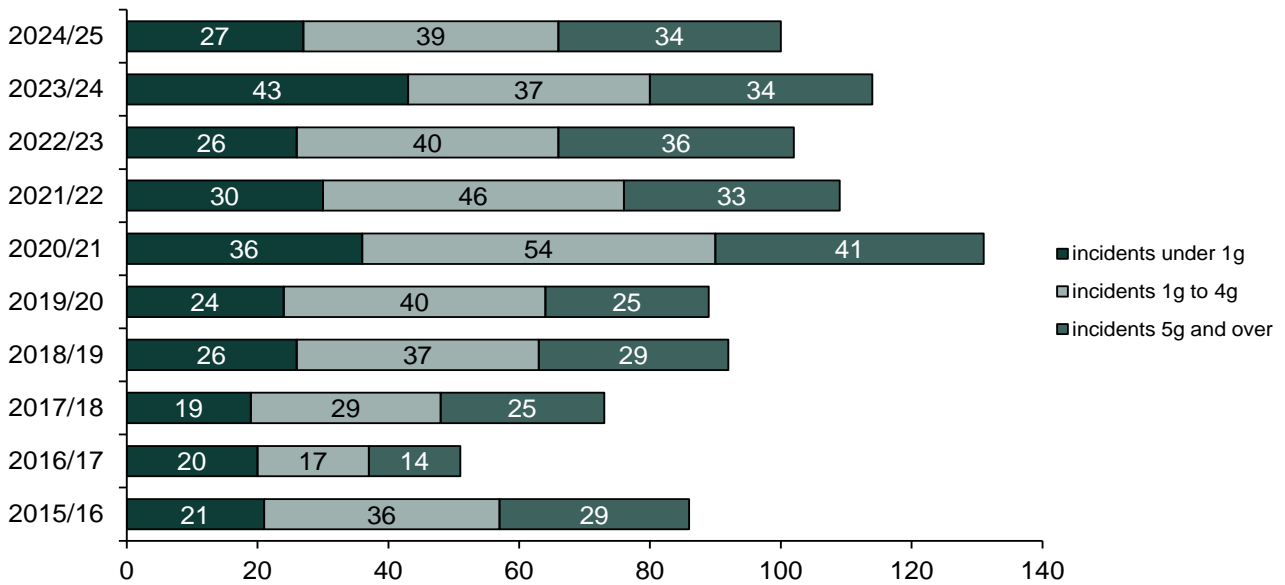
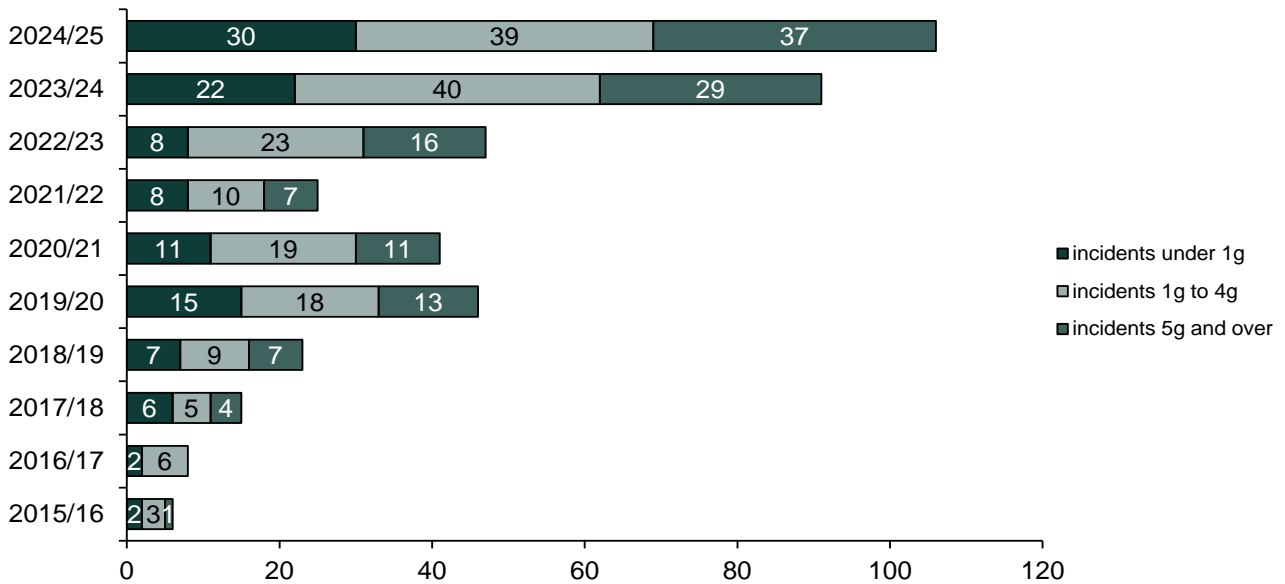


Figure 3.17 Number of Class B Ketamine seizure incidents by weight seized, 2015/16 to 2024/25



Class C Drugs

Conversion factors have been applied to the following Class C drugs and they are summarised as follows:

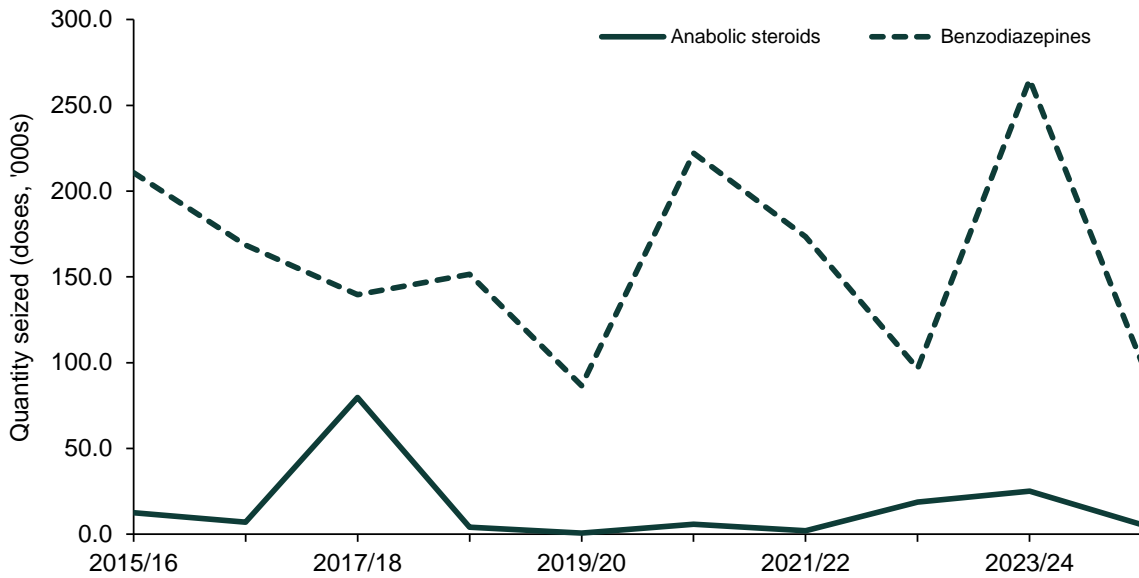
Summarised in thousands of doses
Anabolic steroids
Benzodiazepines

Class C, doses seized (converted amounts)

Anabolic Steroids: In 2017/18 there were nearly 80,000 doses of anabolic steroids seized, with three quarters of this total attributed to one seizure. [53150+8390 doses in same RM] The number of doses seized in all other years between 2015/16 and 2024/25 was much lower, with the lowest level of 700 doses seized in 2019/20. There were 5,700 doses seized in 2024/25.

Benzodiazepines: Over the last ten years the number of doses of benzodiazepines seized has ranged from 86,600 in 2019/20 to 265,000 doses seized in 2023/24. The amount seized in 2024/25 was 100,800 doses, the third lowest amount since 2015/16. In some years a small number of seizures has accounted for a sizeable proportion of doses seized. Two seizures accounted for 45 per cent of the total quantity seized in 2020/21, two seizures accounted for almost half of the total quantity seized in 2023/24 and one seizure accounted for almost half of the total quantity seized in 2024/25.

Figure 3.18 Quantity of Anabolic Steroids and Benzodiazepines seized (doses,'000s), 2015/16 to 2024/25



In 2024/25, 79 per cent of anabolic steroid and 69 per cent of benzodiazepine seizures involved more than 5 doses (Figure 3.19). Figures 3.20 and 3.21 present the distribution of anabolic steroid and benzodiazepine seizures since 2015/16; in most years at least two thirds of the seizures have involved more than 5 doses.

Figure 3.19 Distribution of the quantities of Benzodiazepine and Anabolic Steroids seized (doses) 2024/25

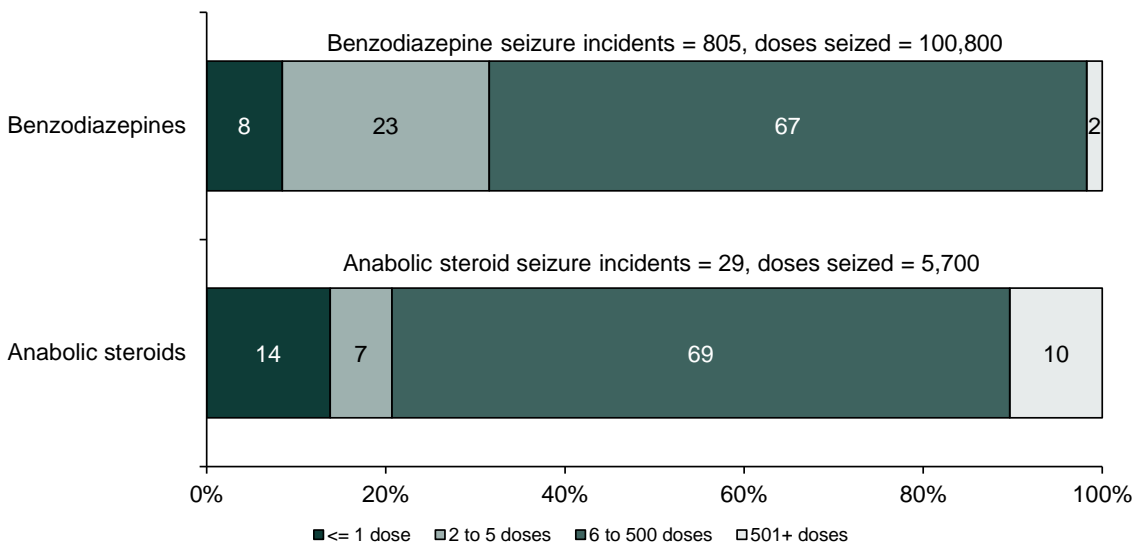


Figure 3.20 Number of Class C Anabolic steroids seizure incidents by doses seized, 2015/16 to 2024/25

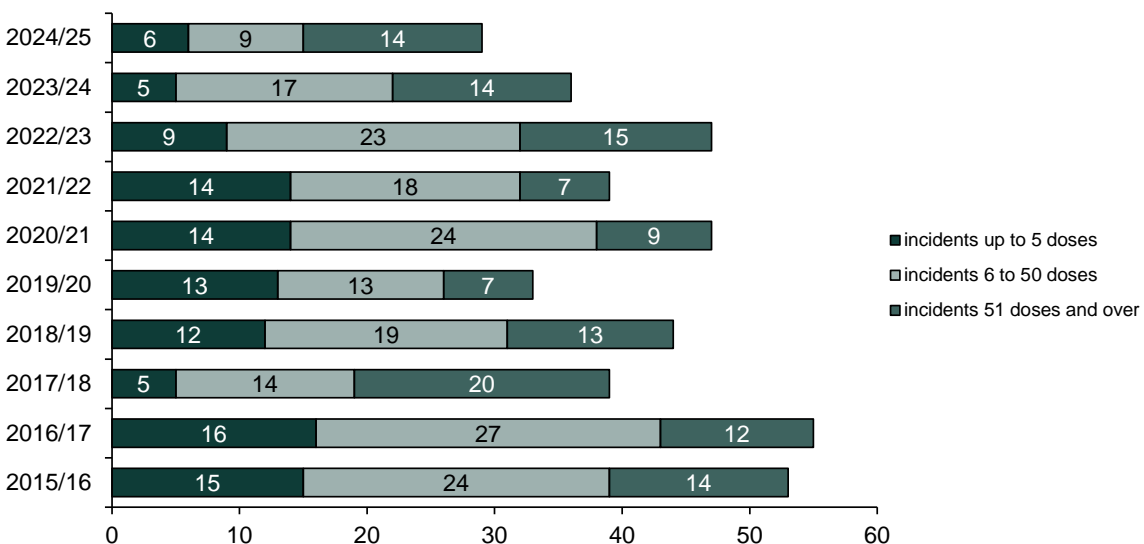
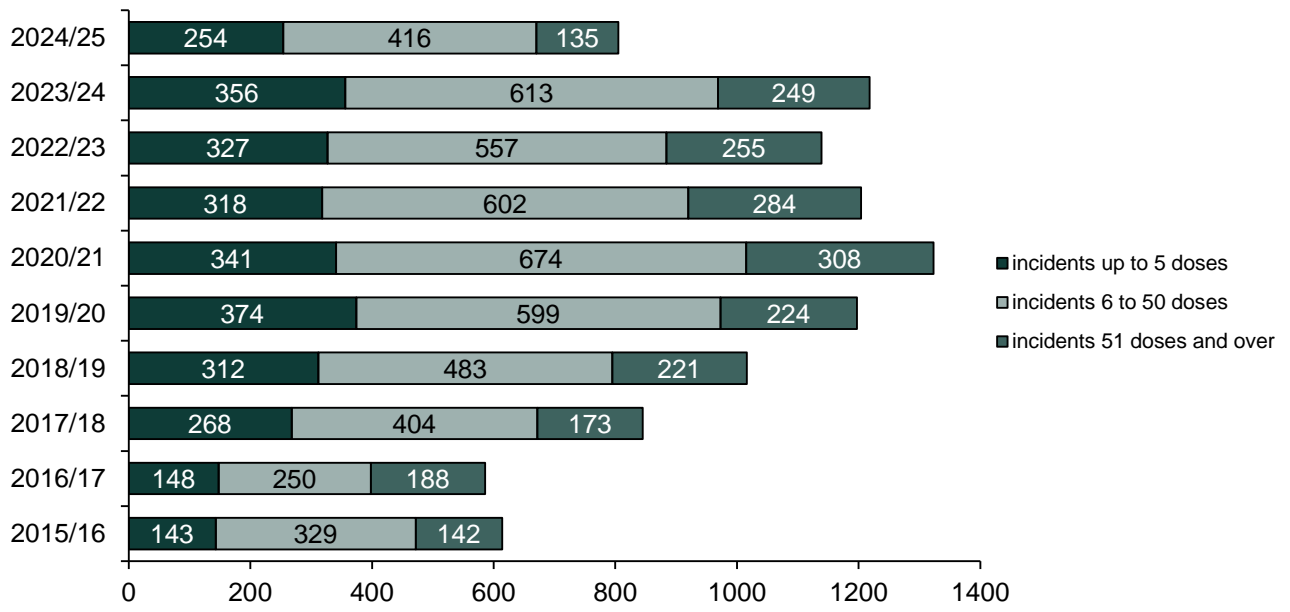


Figure 3.21 Number of Class C Benzodiazepines seizure incidents by doses seized, 2015/16 to 2024/25



4. Geographic Patterns of Drug Seizures

Drug seizure incidents are allocated to the policing district in which the seizure occurs. The distribution of seizures across policing districts has remained largely unchanged since 2012/13.

In 2024/25, 30 per cent of seizure incidents occurred in Belfast City Policing District compared with 34 per cent in the previous financial year. To assist in understanding the distribution of seizure incidents, a breakdown of Belfast City Policing District into the four local policing teams is available from 2016/17. The four local policing teams are based in Lisburn Road (South Belfast), Tennent Street (North Belfast), Strandtown (East Belfast) and Woodbourne (West Belfast).

Figure 4.1 Distribution of seizure incidents by policing district, 2024/25

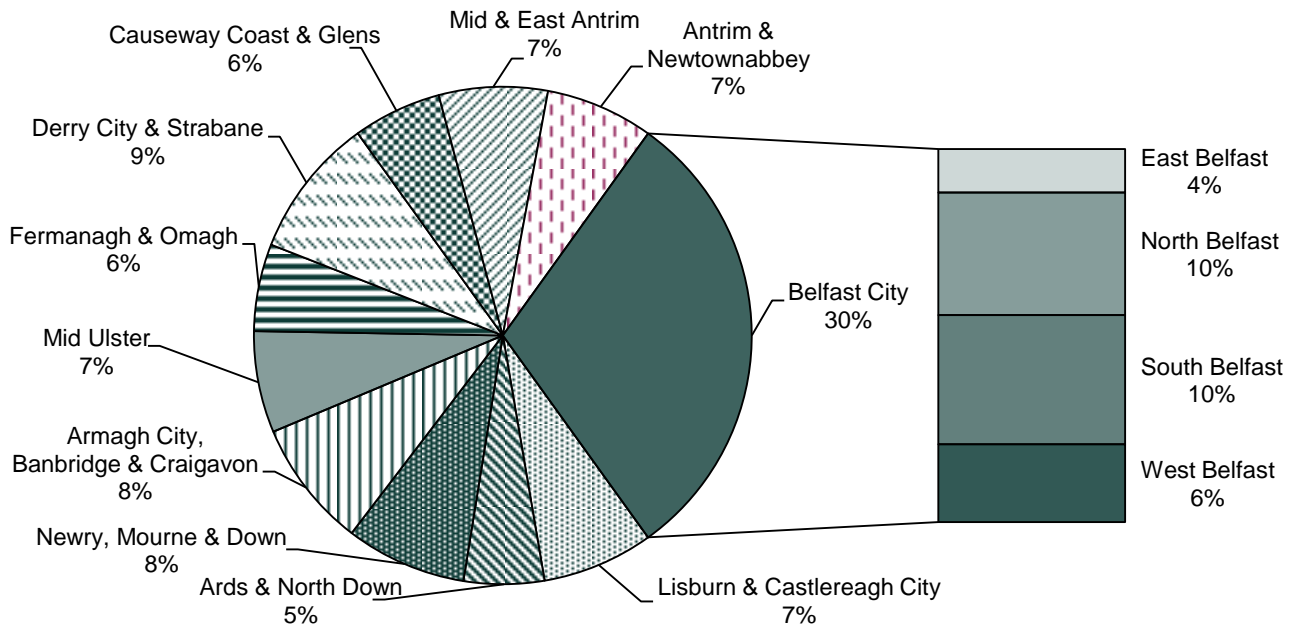


Table 4.1 Drug seizure incidents by policing district over the last five years¹⁰

Policing District	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Belfast City	2,483	2,526	2,851	2,886	2,096
<i>East Belfast</i>	445	376	322	307	245
<i>North Belfast</i>	739	677	877	886	689
<i>South Belfast</i>	829	998	1,082	1,058	726
<i>West Belfast</i>	470	475	570	635	436
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	668	721	767	639	503
Ards & North Down	317	335	435	515	363
Newry, Mourne, & Down	699	639	778	698	546
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	806	797	742	662	576
Mid Ulster	504	546	530	503	459
Fermanagh & Omagh	294	375	370	412	394
Derry City & Strabane	826	885	789	670	636
Causeway Coast & Glens	557	450	491	364	400
Mid & East Antrim	787	879	638	586	491
Antrim & Newtownabbey	487	443	542	584	487
Northern Ireland	8,428	8,596	8,933	8,519	6,951

¹⁰ The complete time series from 2012/13 is available in the [drug seizures and arrests annual trends spreadsheet \(opens in a new window\)](#).

5. Trends in Drug-related Arrests

A drug-related arrest is counted when a person is arrested and processed through custody for one or more drug-related offences. The figures presented are a count of custody records rather than a count of persons arrested. Where a person has been arrested on more than one occasion during a financial year, each occasion on which they have been arrested will be counted separately.

The arrest figures do not include persons who are street-bailed but are not later processed through custody.

Arrests relating to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971

The number of drug-related arrests increased each year between 2006/07 (1,708 arrests) and 2019/20 (3,834 arrests), with the exception of falls of 37 and 239 in 2014/15 and 2016/17 respectively. Drug-related arrests subsequently fell in 2020/21 and 2021/22 with higher numbers of arrests seen again in the following two financial years. The number of drug-related arrests recorded in 2024/25 (3,128) showed a fall of 459 (-12.7 per cent) when compared with 2023/24. This latest figure is almost twice that recorded in 2006/07. Lockdown measures in relation to Covid-19 were first introduced on 23rd March 2020 with all Covid-19 legal restrictions replaced by guidance from 15th February 2022, and there may have been an impact on the number of drug-related arrests recorded while these measures were in place.

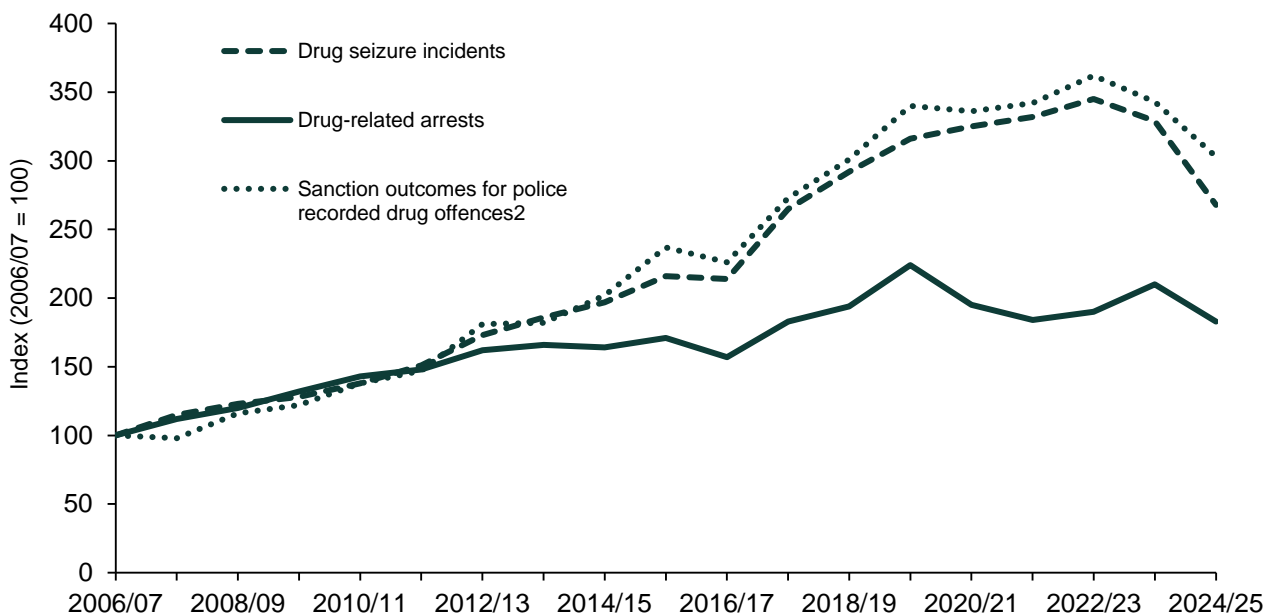
Following arrest, further police action may be taken against the arrested person or they may be released with no further action being taken. People may also be dealt with by police without first being arrested.

The rate of increase in drug-related arrests has not kept pace with that seen in drug seizure incidents. The sanction outcome figures for police recorded drug offences can provide some clarity on this.

Each police recorded drug offence can be allocated a crime outcome including sanction outcomes where police have taken action against the person involved, such as charge, summons, caution/informed warning or community resolution notice (CRN).

CRNs were introduced as a crime outcome disposal during 2011/12. In their first year there were 174 CRN outcomes recorded in respect of police recorded drug offences, rising to 3,280 in 2022/23. In 2024/25 there were 2,437 CRN outcomes recorded in respect of police recorded drug offences, a 19 per cent decrease on the previous year. Since 2017/18 CRNs have represented the highest proportion of sanction outcome disposals allocated to drug offences, followed by summons, charge and then caution. With the introduction of community resolutions, the proportion of drug offences allocated a caution outcome has fallen.

Figure 5.1 Drug-related arrests, drug seizure incidents and sanction outcomes¹¹ for police recorded drug offences, 2006/07 to 2024/25, indexed to 2006/07=100



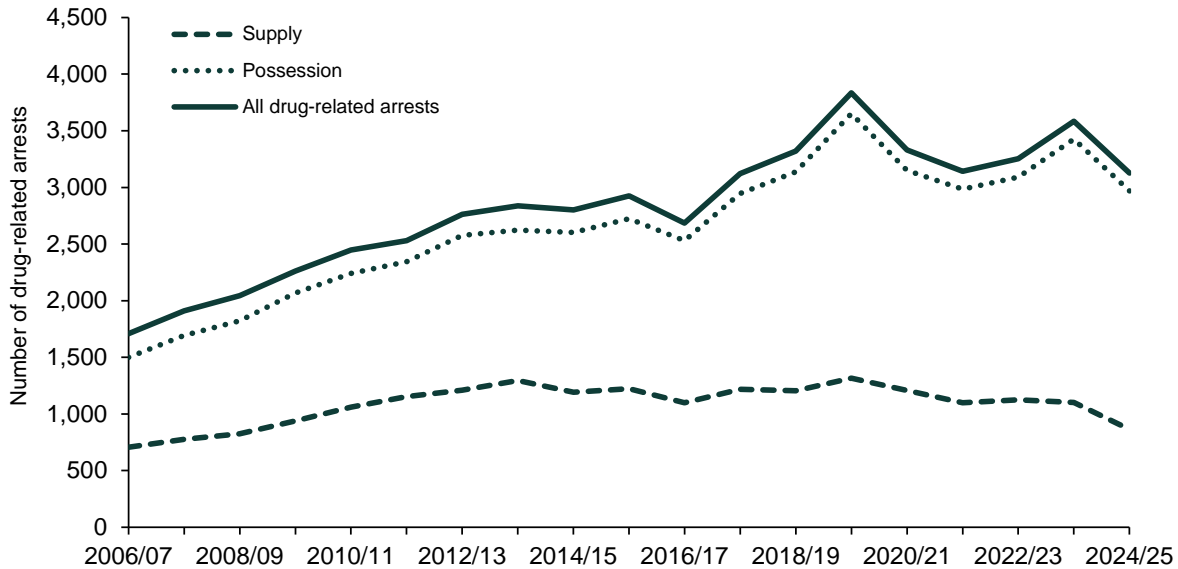
¹¹ Sanction outcomes for police recorded drug offences include charge, summons, caution and community resolution. Community resolutions were introduced as a crime outcome disposal during 2011/12.

Changing levels of drug-related arrests are mainly influenced by arrests related to possession offences. The highest number of possession-related arrests was recorded in 2019/20 (3,652), more than double the number seen in 2006/07 (1,499). This was followed by two consecutive falls before rising again in 2022/23 (3,091 arrests) and 2023/24 (3,426 arrests). Another fall was recorded in 2024/25 with 2,970 arrests

Arrests involving supply offences nearly doubled between 2006/07 (707) and 2019/20 (1,317) before falling to 863 in 2024/25.

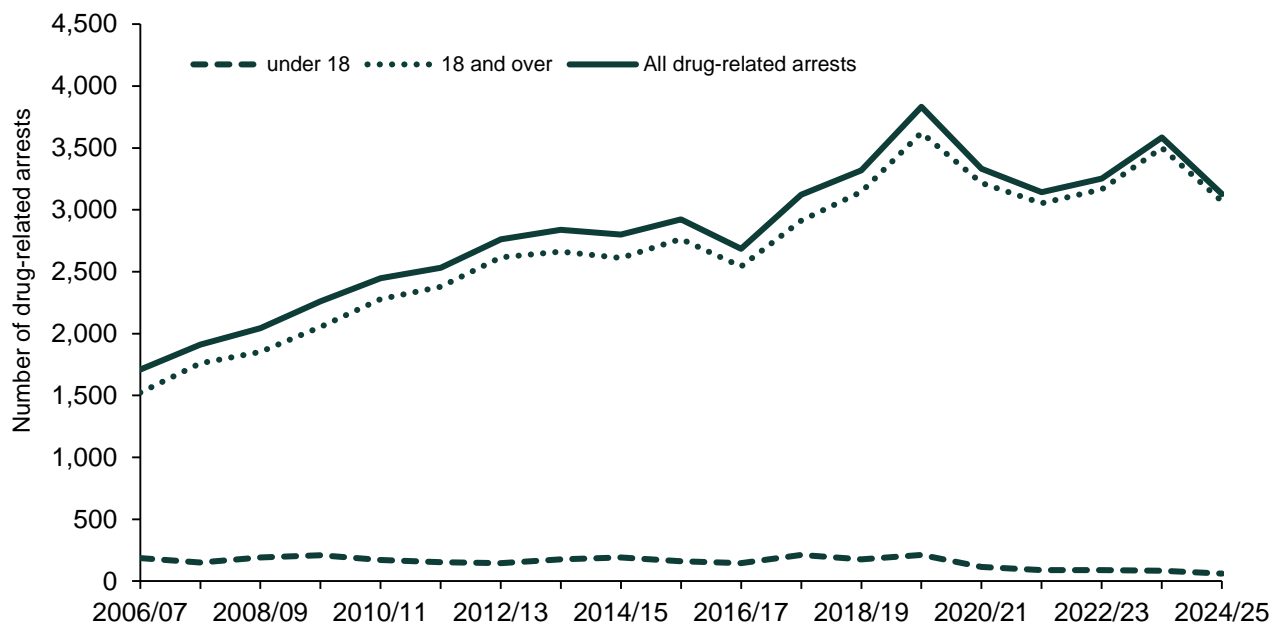
Arrests involving other drug-related offences (other than supply or possession) are small in number, averaging less than 30 each year.

Figure 5.2 Drug-related arrests by type of arrest offence¹², 2006/07 to 2024/25



The number of arrests for a drug-related offence where the person was under 18 at time of arrest fell to its lowest level of 60 in 2024/25, less than a third the number recorded in both 2017/18 and 2019/20 (210). Drug-related arrests where the person was 18 or over at time of arrest have more than doubled since 2006/07 (1,522), reaching 3,624 in 2019/20; there were 3,068 such arrests recorded in 2024/25. As the number of drug-related arrests has increased, the proportion of those who were under 18 at time of arrest has fallen from 10.9 per cent in 2006/07 to 1.9 per cent in 2024/25.

Figure 5.3 Drug-related arrests by age at time of arrest, 2006/07 to 2024/25



¹² As a person can be arrested for more than one type of drug offence, arrest figures by type of arrest offence will sum to more than the total number of drug-related arrests. The number of arrests for 'Other' drug offences are too small to be presented in Figure 5.2.

Arrests under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016

Table 5.1 presents the number of arrests made under the Psychoactive Substances Act since the legislation was introduced.

More than half of the arrests (34 of the 61) have occurred in Belfast City Policing District.

Table 5.1 Arrests made under the Psychoactive Substances Act since 2016/17

Financial Year	Psychoactive Substances Act Arrests
2016/17	11
2017/18	10
2018/19	4
2019/20	4
2020/21	13
2021/22	2
2022/23	7
2023/24	10
2024/25	0

6. Geographic patterns of Drug-related Arrests

Drug-related arrests are allocated to the policing district in which the person was arrested.

Two in five drug-related arrests occurred in Belfast City Policing District during 2024/25. To assist in understanding the distribution of drug-related arrests, a breakdown of Belfast City Policing District into the four local policing teams is presented in this section. The four local policing teams are based in Lisburn Road (South Belfast), Tennent Street (North Belfast), Strandtown (East Belfast) and Woodbourne (West Belfast).

Drug-related arrests in Belfast City Policing District increased in most years between 2006/07 (469 arrests) and 2019/20 (1,541 arrests). The latest year recorded 1,250 arrests, a 15.7% fall on 2023/24 when there were 1,482 arrests. Representing just over one in ten drug-related arrests, Derry City & Strabane Policing District saw their highest level (477) recorded in 2020/21.

Figure 6.1 Distribution of drug-related arrests by policing district, 2024/25

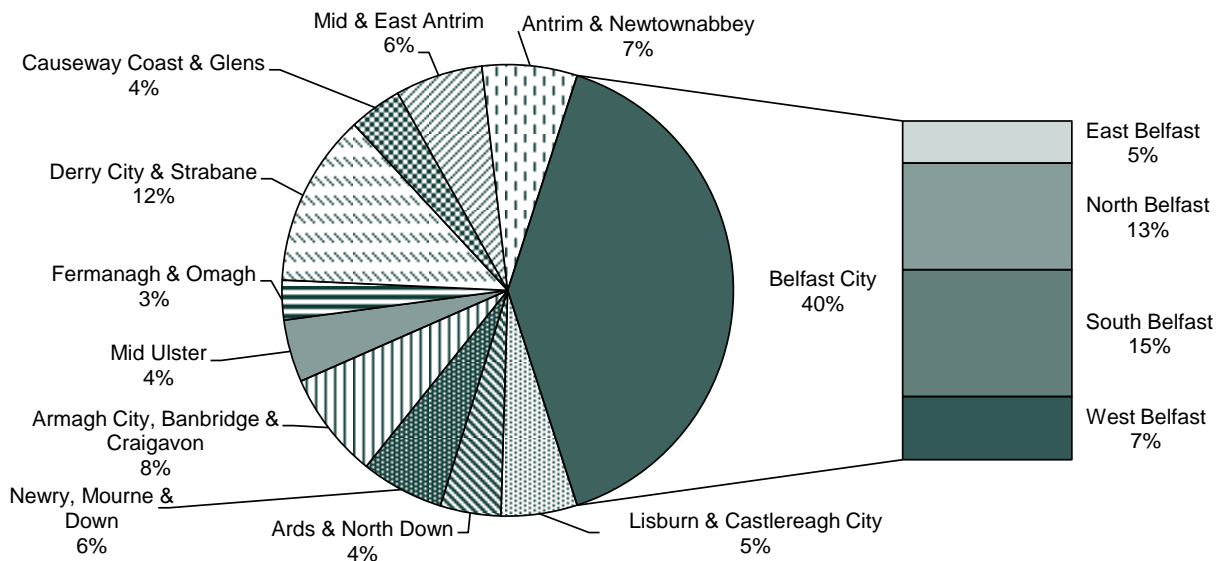


Table 6.1 Drug-related arrests by policing district over the last five years¹³

Policing District	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Belfast City	1,207	1,238	1,339	1,482	1,250
<i>East Belfast</i>	188	182	154	167	156
<i>North Belfast</i>	352	327	391	473	394
<i>South Belfast</i>	447	523	551	577	466
<i>West Belfast</i>	220	206	243	265	234
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	245	166	239	215	171
Ards & North Down	121	126	141	182	137
Newry, Mourne, & Down	208	202	217	253	187
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	257	263	233	227	239
Mid Ulster	135	131	135	158	140
Fermanagh & Omagh	109	122	78	101	89
Derry City & Strabane	477	392	356	380	387
Causeway Coast & Glens	211	152	162	151	119
Mid & East Antrim	185	197	163	212	196
Antrim & Newtownabbey	176	154	190	223	213
Northern Ireland	3,331	3,143	3,253	3,584	3,128

¹³ The complete time series from 2012/13 is available in the [drug seizures and arrests annual trends spreadsheet \(opens in a new window\)](#).

7. Wider Context (Comparison with England and Wales)

Figure 7.1 below provides a comparison of trends in drug seizure incidents in Northern Ireland compared with those in England and Wales¹⁴. As the number of seizures in England and Wales far exceed those recorded in Northern Ireland, the trends are shown relative to the levels recorded in 2006/07. As with the Northern Ireland data series, Border Force seizures have been excluded from the England and Wales total.

While the trends were similar between 2006/07 and 2008/09, they started to diverge in 2009/10 with an increasing trend observed in Northern Ireland and a falling trend in England and Wales. The trend in England & Wales increased in 2023/24, while Northern Ireland has begun to decrease in the same time period.

Figure 1.2 (Section 1 Overview) shows how closely the drug seizures trend follows the police recorded drug offences trend in Northern Ireland. It should be noted that the same is also observed in England and Wales¹⁵.

Figure 7.1 Drug seizures in Northern Ireland compared with England and Wales (index 2006/07=100)

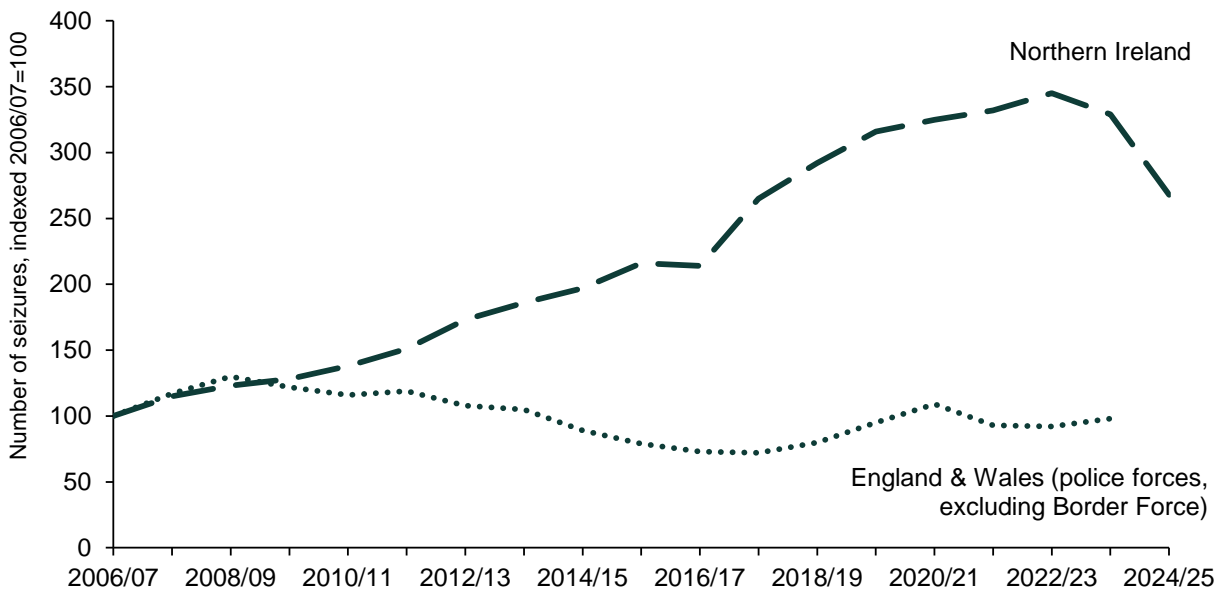
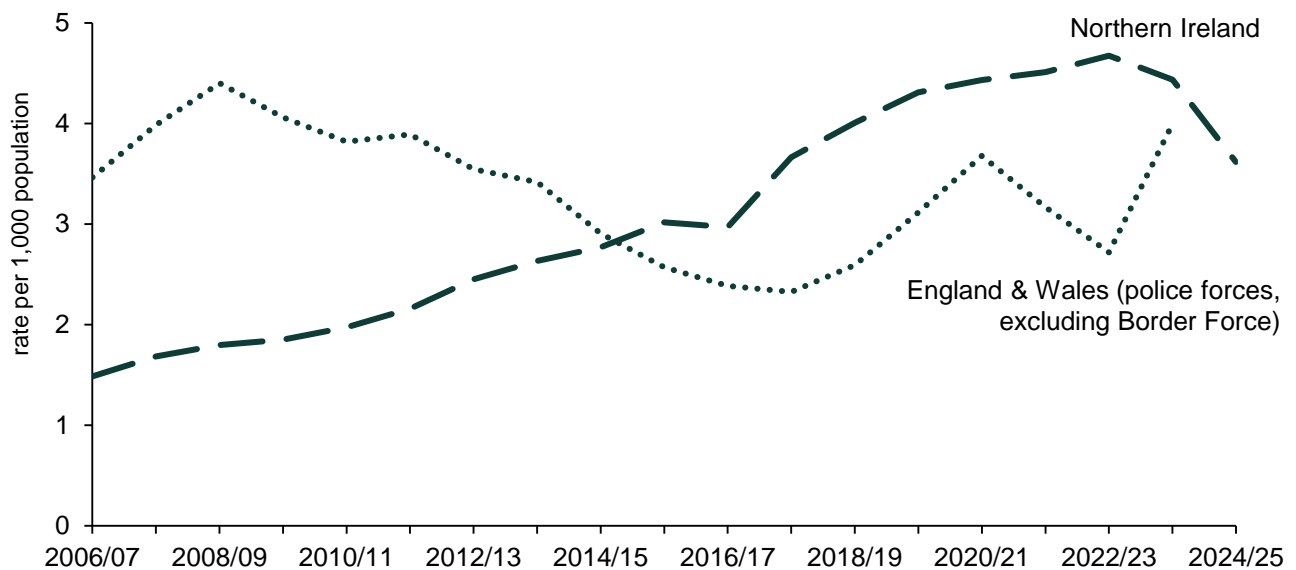


Figure 7.2 Drug seizures per 1,000 population in Northern Ireland compared with England and Wales



¹⁴ The England & Wales details have been sourced from the publication [Seizures of drugs in England and Wales, financial year ending 2024 \(opens in a new window\)](#). At time of publication these were the most up-to-date figures available for England & Wales.

¹⁵ [Seizures of drugs in England and Wales, financial year ending 2024 \(opens in a new window\)](#), Figure 2.

Appendix 1. Background and Data Quality

1 Methodology

1.1 Data Collection

When a drug is seized by police there are procedures in place that cover the handling, management, storage and disposal of seized substances. One requirement of these procedures is that the details of the seized substances are added to PSNI's record management system. Statistics on drug seizures are based on information extracted from PSNI's record management system and separately collated on a bespoke database. In order for a seizure to be included in the published statistics a range of information is required including, but not limited to, drug type, drug format, estimated weight or quantity seized and any details relating to forensic examination.

Drug-related arrests are extracted from custody data, where a person has been arrested and processed through police custody for one or more drug-related offences (ie related to the Misuse of Drugs Act or the Psychoactive Substances Act). Persons arrested and street-bailed, dealt with by other means or whose detention was not authorised are not included in these statistics.

1.2 Data Quality

A quality assurance process is in place to ensure that the data is fit for purpose and published to the highest possible standard. A set of checks have been written to identify incidents that indicate drugs may have been seized. Where there are no drugs details are available, each record will be followed up to confirm seizure and ensure the required details are input. A range of data quality checks are regularly conducted on the seizure data to identify incomplete or inconsistent records, potential duplication of records and input errors. Large seizures are also checked.

Further details on Police Recorded Drug Seizure and Arrest statistics are available in the [Drug Seizures and Arrests User Guide \(opens in a new window\)](#).

2 Further Information

2.1 Data Use

The drug seizures and drug-related arrests statistics are mainly used within PSNI as management information and to monitor performance on drug crime targets against the policing plan. The figures are also used by government departments and other voluntary and statutory agencies to inform debate and policy development regarding drug crime in NI.

2.2 Data Availability

A consistent data series at the overall level of drug seizure incident and drug-related arrest is available dating back to 2006/07, while a consistent data series at the level of individual drug type and format is available for the period dating back to 2012/13. The number of seizure incidents involving new psychoactive substances is presented from 2016/17.

2.3 Publication

The PSNI website has a full [publication schedule \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Tables and charts in this bulletin are available on the PSNI website in the form of an accompanying spreadsheet, which also provides additional levels of detail. It is available in [excel spreadsheet format and open document spreadsheet format \(opens in a new window\)](#).

2.4 Related information available on the PSNI website

[Police Recorded Crime Statistics \(opens in a new window\)](#). These statistics are updated on a monthly basis and a trends report is published annually

[Crime Outcomes \(opens in a new window\)](#). This annual publication summarises the outcomes that have been assigned to crimes recorded by the police since 2015/16.

Copies of other PSNI publications are available from the [PSNI website \(opens in a new window\)](#).