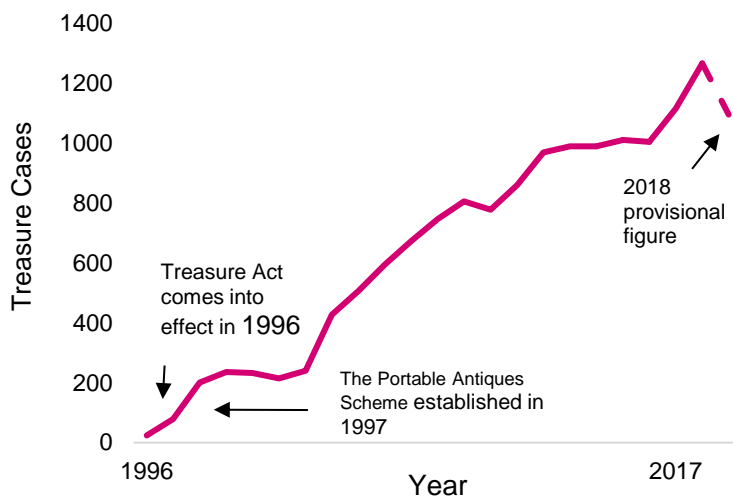




Statistical Release for Reported Treasure Finds 2017 & 2018 (provisional)



The number of reported treasure finds in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 1996 to 2018

Key findings

- In 2017, there were 1,266 reported treasure finds.
- The provisional figure for 2018 was 1,096, lower than 2017, but making this the fifth year in a row when the number exceeded 1,000.
- In both 2017 and 2018 (provisional), the largest number of reported finds was in Norfolk, accounting for 9.6% of cases in 2017 and 9.4% in 2018. This was followed by Essex in 2017 (9%) and Lincolnshire in 2018 (8%).

In 2017:

- 82% of reported treasure finds were object cases¹ (1,038 cases), of which over half were disclaimed/museum withdrawal cases (590 cases). 21% of object cases were acquired by museums (216 cases).
- The remaining 228 finds (18%) were coin cases.
- A majority (96%) of reported treasure finds were discovered by metal detecting.

This statistical release presents data on the number of reported treasure finds for 2017 and provisional figures for 2018 within England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Data for 2017 are broken down by county, period, distribution and method of discovery. Figures for 2018 are provisional and are provided by county and region only.

Data presented on treasure finds are collected by the Department of Portable Antiquities & Treasure at the British Museum and recorded by the [Portable Antiquities Scheme](#).

Estimates reported for participation in metal detecting are based on data collected in the 2018/19 [Taking Part Survey](#)

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¹ An object case is a find of any non-coin artefact

Key findings

1.1 Total reported treasure finds in England, Wales and Northern Ireland^{2,3}

In 2018, the provisional number of reported treasure finds remained over a thousand (1,096) for the fifth year in a row and for the fifth time since the Treasure Act 1996 replaced the common law of Treasure Trove in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The equivalent number for 2017 was 1,266⁴, representing a total of 14,563 artefacts (objects and coins).

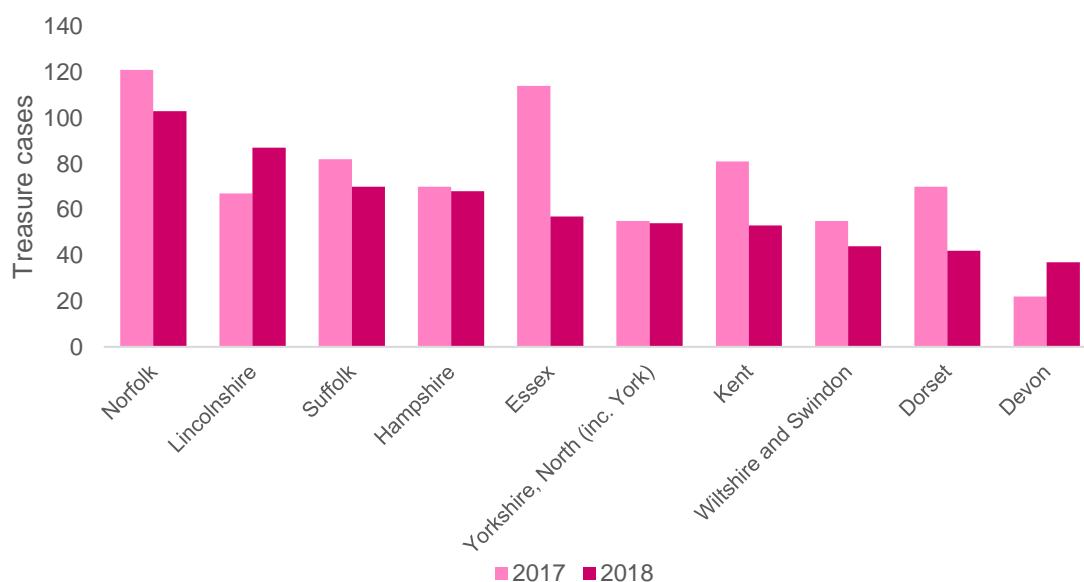
1.2 Reported finds by county in England, 2017 & 2018 (provisional)

In both 2017 and 2018 (provisional), the largest number of finds in England was in Norfolk (9.4%). Fewer finds were reported in Norfolk in 2018 (103) than in 2017 (121). The counties with the second most reported cases were Essex in 2017 (57 cases, 9%) and Lincolnshire in 2018 (87 cases, 8%).

Lincolnshire and Devon recorded the greatest increase in reported finds in 2018 compared to 2017, with increases of 20 and 15 treasure cases respectively. Essex, Dorset and Kent had the largest decreases compared to 2017, with decreases of 57, 28 and 28 cases respectively.

From 2012 to 2018, there has been a statistically significant downward trend⁵ in the number of reported treasure finds in Bedfordshire, and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. There has been a statistically significant upwards trend in the number of reported treasure finds in Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes, and Hampshire.

Figure 1.1 Top ten counties in England by number of reported treasure cases, 2017 and 2018



² A number of finds reported in 2018 have not been resolved and it is not possible to provide a breakdown of factors such as period and disposition (i.e. change in ownership) in this release. This final breakdown will be provided in the treasure Statistical Release in 2020 which will cover the treasure finds for 2018 and provisional figures for 2019.

³ Data for Scotland is collated under the Scottish Treasure Trove system available at: <https://treasuretrovescotland.co.uk/reports-and-minutes/>

⁴ This figure has been amended from the provisional 2017 figure (1,267) reported in last year's release as the number of finds had not yet been resolved at the time of publication

⁵ A significant trend is where we can be confident that the differences in the number of finds from 2012 to 2018 are consistently increasing or decreasing

1.3 Total reported treasure cases by Country and by English Regions 2018 (provisional)

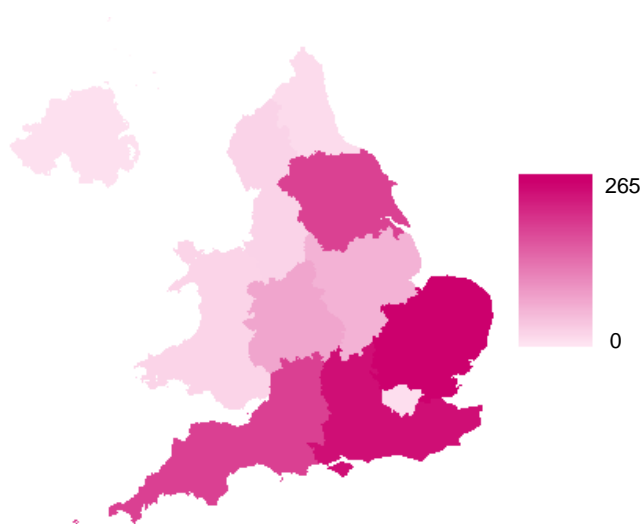
There were 1,070 finds reported in England in 2018, a decrease of 167 finds since 2017, but similar to 1,073 finds reported in 2016. Among regions in England, the East of England had the highest number of reported finds at 265, closely followed by the South East with 248. London had the fewest reported finds with 9.

In Wales, there were 20 reported treasure finds, a decrease of 8 finds from 2017 and the lowest since 2012.

There were 6 treasure finds reported in Northern Ireland compared with 1 in 2017, the highest recorded number of treasure cases since 2012. It should be noted that there are additional restrictions on searching for archaeological objects in Northern Ireland, imposed by the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995.

There has been no significant increase or decrease in reported treasure finds for any region since 2012.

Figure 1.2 Reported treasure finds by country and English region, 2018 (provisional)



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1.4 Characteristics of reported finds, 2017

1,266 treasure finds were reported in 2017. Of these reported finds, 82% were object cases (1,038) and 18% were coin cases (228).

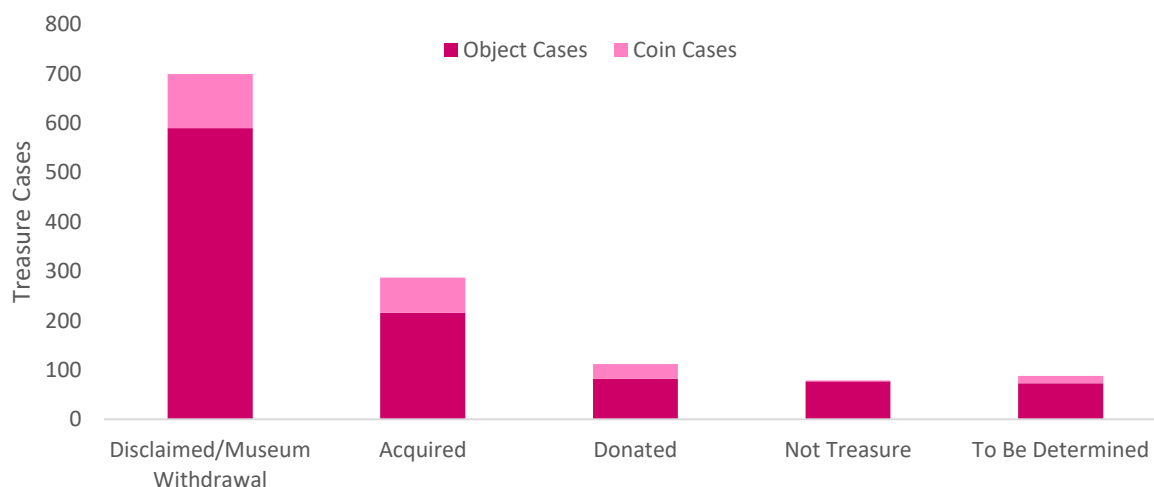
In 2017, 399 finds were acquired by, or donated to, museums, an increase from 363 in 2016. Of the 287 treasure cases acquired by museums⁶, 216 were object cases and 71 were coin cases. A total of 112 treasure cases were donated to museums, allowing them to be acquired by museums at no (or reduced) public cost, 73% (82) of these were object cases.

⁶ Acquired cases covers finds that have been acquired as well as finds where museums have made an expression of interest, but have not yet acquired.

Under the Treasure Act 1996, the Secretary of State has the power to disclaim a find, even when the find meets the definition of treasure under the Act. This can occur at any point in the process e.g. if a museum withdraws its interest in acquiring a find, and no other museum expresses an interest.

A total of 700 reported treasure finds were either withdrawn or disclaimed⁷ by museums, where 590 of these were object cases and 110 were coin cases. The total number of finds which have been shown to meet the definition for treasure in 2017 was 1,099. This includes acquired, donated and disclaimed/museum withdrawal items.

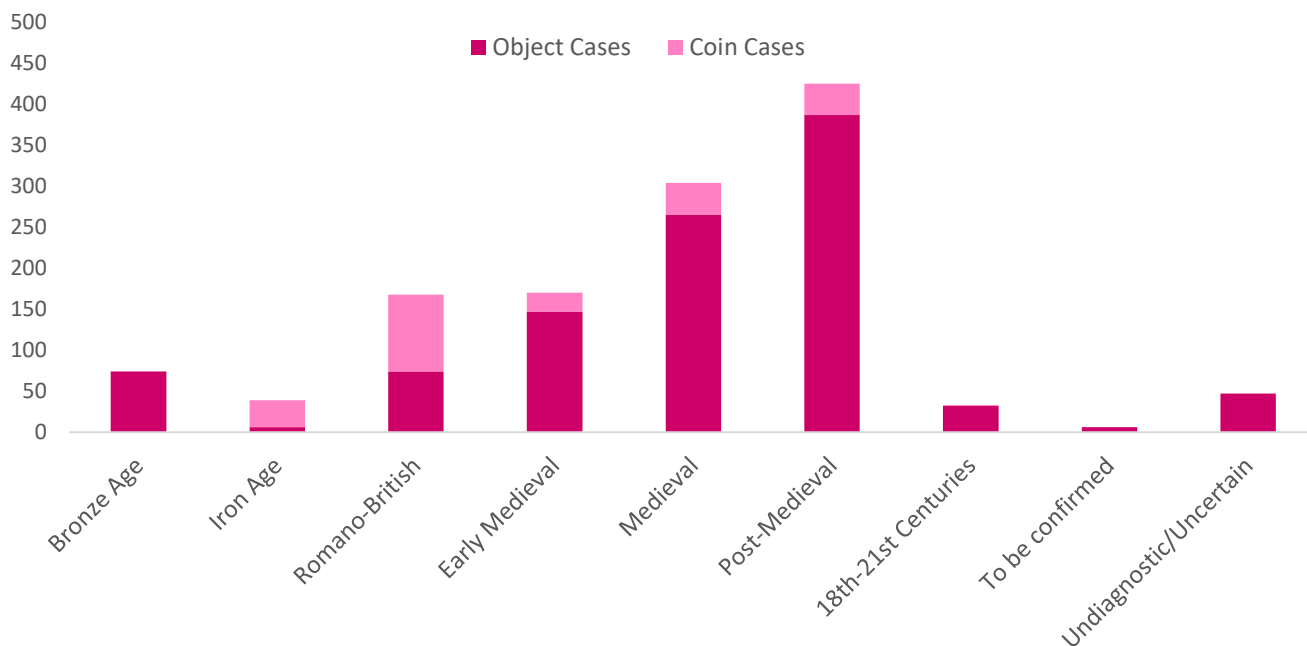
Figure 1.3 Reported treasure finds (both object and coin cases) by change in ownership: England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2017



Around a third (34%) of treasure cases in 2017 were from the post-medieval period (387 object cases and 38 coin cases) and nearly a quarter (24%) were from the medieval period.

⁷ Disclaimed/museum withdrawal cases are those case where the Crown disclaims title for the find prior to inquest, or where an inquest is held declaring the find to be treasure (and therefore vesting in the Crown) but where a museum subsequently fails to acquire the find and it is returned to the finder or landowner.

Figure 1.4 Reported treasure cases by period: England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2017



1.5 Mode of discovery

A majority (96%) of treasure finds in 2017 were discovered by metal detecting, up from 94% in 2016. A further 3% (33 cases) were archaeological finds and 0.5% (7 cases) were from field walking or searching the foreshore.

1.6 Percentage of adults in England taking part in metal detecting

Data in this section are taken from the 2018/19 Taking Part Survey, a household survey in England which measures engagement with the cultural sectors. Taking Part Survey data are widely used by policy officials, practitioners, academics and charities. For more information about the Survey please see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-survey>

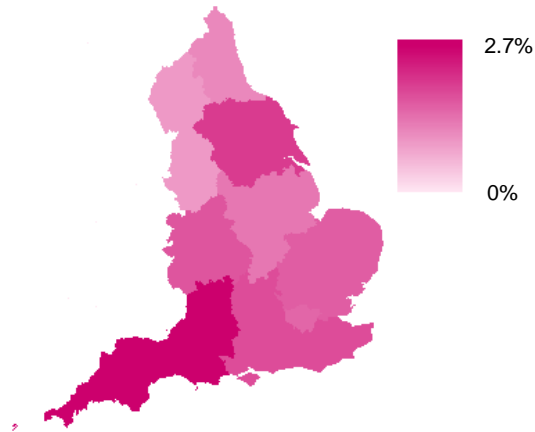
In 2018/19, an estimated 1.6% of adults (16+) in England said they had taken part in metal detecting at least once in the 12 months prior to interview⁹. This is similar to the 1.5% of adults who were estimated to have participated in 2017/18.

Regionally, the rate ranged between 0.9% in the North West to 2.7% in the South West, however this difference in rates between these two regions was not statistically significant¹⁰.

⁹ Survey participants were asked whether they had participated in metal detecting within the last 12 months, therefore, these statistics are not intended to capture an estimate of 'regular' metal detectorists or those who are members of metal detecting clubs within England.

¹⁰ A difference which is not statistically significant is where we cannot be confident that the differences seen in our sampled respondents are reflective of differences in the population.

Figure 1.5 Percentage of adults in England who took part in metal detecting at least once in the year prior to interview, 2018/19.



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1.7 Museum acquisitions, 2017

In 2017, 399 treasure cases were acquired by or donated to museums in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Of these, 7% (27 cases) were obtained by the **Dorset Country Museum** and 6% (24 cases) were obtained by **The British Museum**.

Annex A: Background information

1. Treasure Finds is an Official Statistic and as such has been produced to the professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. Official Statistics undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs and are produced free from any political interference. See the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for more information.
2. The data presented here are collected by the Portable Antiquities and Treasure section, Department of Portable Antiquities & Treasure, and recorded by the [Portable Antiquities Scheme](#).
3. **The Treasure Act 1996** replaced the common law of Treasure Trove in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This has been further supplemented by the 2002 Treasure (Designation) Order. The Treasure Act sets out the definition of treasure, which includes the metallic composition required for a find to qualify as treasure and it extends the definition of treasure to include other objects found in archaeological association with finds of treasure. The Act confirms that treasure vests in the Crown, or the franchisee if there is one, subject to prior interests and rights. It simplifies the task of coroners in determining whether or not a find is treasure and it includes an offence of non-declaration of treasure. Lastly, it states that occupiers and landowners will have the right to be informed of finds of treasure from their land and that they will be eligible for rewards.
4. **The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)** was established by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in 1997 to record archaeological finds found by the public. It also has an important educational role, enabling children and adults alike to learn about archaeology, get involved and bring the past to life. The work of the Scheme is managed by the British Museum and guided by the Portable Antiquities Advisory Group which advises on issues relating to portable antiquities. There is no requirement by the Treasure Act to present statistics on the PAS before Parliament. This administrative data series is continuously updated and available at <http://finds.org.uk/>. The PAS has been a key factor in the success of the Treasure Act and the large increase in reported treasure finds. Through working with metal detecting groups and others, the Scheme's Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs) are able to explain the system of treasure reporting and encourage detectorists and others to report their finds.
5. If an item reported to the Coroner appears to meet the definition of treasure, but no museum expresses an interest in acquiring it, the Crown's interest is disclaimed following the procedures set out in paragraphs 48-52 of the Code of Practice. In this process, the British Museum writes to the relevant Coroner to inform them of the Crown's disclaimer and the Coroner will (normally) not hold an inquest but will write to the landowner to give them an opportunity to object to the return of the find to the finder (an objection is very rarely received). The case is then 'closed' without an inquest being held.

However, if a museum indicates an interest in acquiring a find which appears to meet the definition of Treasure, the British Museum will ask the Coroner to hold an inquest. If the conclusion of the inquest is that the find is 'Treasure', then title formally vests in the Crown. If, subsequent to the inquest, the museum decides to withdraw its interest, and no other museums wishes to step in and acquire the find, then the British Museum in effect 'disclaims' the Crown's interest and writes to the landowner/finder following the same principles as the Coroner would for a find prior to inquest.

6. The reporting of statistically significant trends was calculated using linear regression, with a linear trend line fitted to a plot of treasure finds reported vs year. Only those trend lines with an R^2 value greater than 0.65 and a p value less than 0.05 were accepted. A low p value indicates that we are 95% confident that the gradient is not equal to zero. A high R^2 value indicates that a linear model fits the data well. These thresholds were taken from '[An Operational Definition of a Statistically Meaningful Trend](#)', Bryhn & Dimberg, 2011, PLoS One. A positive gradient indicates an overall increase over time and a negative gradient indicates an overall decrease over time.
7. Metal detection participation estimates were produced from data collected in the 2018/19 Taking Part Survey. For more information about the Taking Part Survey, including quality and technical information please see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/taking-part-technical-reports>. In brief, the Taking Part survey randomly samples adults, youths and children across England and involves a face-to-face interview where participants are asked a series of questions about their engagement in cultural activities. One of the questions asked to all adults (16+) was 'In the last 12 months, have you participated in metal detecting?' to which participants can answer either 'yes', 'no', or 'don't know'. Since only a sample of adults in England is randomly selected for the survey and answer this question, the results we present are an estimate of the population. The upper and lower bounds presented in the data tables show the range of values in which our estimate would be 95% of the time, if we selected repeated random samples. Having a small number of respondents for any question leads to a larger range of values in which we are confident the true population average lies.
8. The responsible statistician for this release is Alistair Rice. For enquiries on this release please contact evidence@culture.gov.uk. For general enquiries please contact enquiries@culture.gov.uk.
9. The next release of data is scheduled for November 2020 and will include finalised treasure finds data for 2018 and provisional data for 2019.

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