



Home Office



Seizures of drugs in England and Wales, financial year ending 2017

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Edited by: Dan Broadfield and Joe Marshall

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Further information

This statistical release presents figures for drug seizures made in 2016/17 in England and Wales by the police (including the British Transport Police) and Border Force. The data relate to all drugs controlled under the [Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#) (MDA), which divides drugs into three categories – Classes 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.

The annual *Seizures of drugs in England and Wales* publication, and other Home Office statistical releases, are available from the [Home Office pages](#) of the GOV.UK website.

The dates of forthcoming publications are pre-announced and can be found via the [GOV.UK publication hub](#).

For further information about the statistics in this publication, email crimeandpolicestats@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk, or write to: Crime and Policing Analysis Unit, 1st floor Peel Building, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF

Home Office Responsible Statistician:

Kevin Smith, Programme Director, Crime and Policing Statistics

Contact via crimeandpolicestats@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk if you have any statistical comments or need any assistance accessing the data.

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Summary

This statistical release presents figures for drug seizures made in 2016/17 in England and Wales by the police (including the British Transport Police) and Border Force. The data relate to all drugs controlled under the [Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#) (MDA), which divides drugs into three categories (Classes 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.

One police force (Kent) were unable to provide fully accurate data for the 2016/17 period. As a result, imputation methods have been used to estimate data for this force. Data from the 2015/16 period suggests that Kent accounts for 3% of all drug seizures made by police forces in England and Wales. All comparisons in this publication include the estimated values.

The number of seizures made can be affected by police activity and changes in recording practices, therefore the number of drug seizures each year should not be taken as a measure of drug prevalence in England and Wales. Prevalence is addressed in the Drug Misuse publications, based on results from the Crime Survey for England and Wales¹.

Further information can be found in the [user guide](#).

Key findings

- There were 138,955 drug seizures in England and Wales in 2016/17 (including estimated figures), a 6% decrease compared with the previous year (148,553). This is the fifth consecutive annual fall and the lowest number of seizures since 2004, when there were 107,359 seizures.
- Seizures by police forces decreased by 8% between 2015/16 and 2016/17 (from 143,248 to 132,283) whilst there was an 8% decrease in the number of police recorded drug offences² - a measure which is highly correlated with the number of drug seizures³. Over the same time period, seizures made by Border Force increased by 26% (from 5,305 to 6,672).
- The majority of seizures (95%) were made by police forces in England and Wales; however, Border Force seizures tended to be for larger quantities. In terms of quantity, Border Force seized 96% of anabolic steroids, 82% of cocaine, 76% of all cannabis resin, 71% of herbal cannabis, and 69% of heroin.

Class A

- Between 2015/16 and 2016/17, seizures of Class A drugs decreased by less than 1%, from 29,949 in 2015/16 to 29,807 in 2016/17.
- Cocaine was the most commonly seized Class A drug, with almost half of all Class A seizures involving this substance. In 2016/17, there were 14,892 seizures of cocaine, down 4% on the previous year (15,588 seizures). However, the quantity of cocaine seized between 2015/16 and 2016/17 rose by 30%, from 4,240 kilograms in 2015/16 to 5,516 kilograms in 2016/17.

Class B

- There were 104,236 seizures of Class B drugs in 2016/17, a decrease of 9% since 2015/16 (115,126). The majority of Class B seizures were for cannabis, with 99,779 seizures in total (down 9% on the 2015/16 figure).
- Between 2015/16 and 2016/17 the number of seizures of herbal cannabis fell by 10% whilst the total quantity of herbal cannabis seized fell by 61% from 30,493 kilograms in 2015/16 to 11,861 kilograms in 2016/17. The quantity of herbal cannabis seized in 2015/16 was the largest since 2008/09, largely due to seizures made by Border Force. The fall in the last year should therefore be seen in the context of the longer term trend. Over the last year, the total quantity of herbal

1. See the latest edition of 'Drug Misuse: Findings from the 2016/17 Crime Survey for England and Wales', available at: [Drug misuse statistics](#).

2. Includes offences for possession of controlled drugs, trafficking in controlled drugs, and other drug offences.

3. Statistics on the number of police recorded drug offences are published on a quarterly basis by the [ONS](#).

cannabis seized by Border Force decreased by 69% from 27,132 kilograms to 8,370 kilograms. At the same time, the quantity of herbal cannabis seized by police forces increased by 4% from 3,361 kilograms in 2015/16 to 3,492 kilograms in 2016/17.

- There was also a decrease of 17% in the amount of cannabis resin seized (from 7,035 kg to 5,838 kg) while the number of cannabis plants seized decreased by 19% from 393,702 plants to 318,988 plants.

Class C

- Seizures of Class C drugs decreased between 2015/16 and 2016/17 from 5,128 to 5,016 - a fall of 2%.
- The most commonly seized Class C drug in 2016/17 was benzodiazepine with 1,945 seizures - a fall of 1% from the 2015/16 figure of 1,964.

1 Introduction

This publication presents figures for drug seizures made in 2016/17 in England and Wales by the police (including the British Transport Police) and Border Force. Although Border Force will have made seizures outside the land territory of England and Wales (e.g. Scotland, Northern Ireland), such seizures are excluded from figures presented in this publication.

The figures presented are correct at the time of extraction from the data system, and include revisions submitted by police forces for the years covered by, and received since, the publication of, '[Seizures of drugs in England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2016](#)'.

One police force (Kent) was unable to provide fully accurate data for the 2016/17 period. As a result, imputation methods have been used to estimate data for this force. Data from the 2015/16 period suggests that Kent accounts for 3% of all drug seizures made by police forces in England and Wales. All comparisons in this publication include the estimated values.

Data on the number of seizures and quantity of drugs seized can be found in the accompanying [Excel workbooks](#).

Substances covered by this release

The statistics covered by this release relate to all drugs controlled under the [Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#) (MDA), which divides drugs into three categories – Classes 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. However, given the large number of drugs covered by the MDA, it is not feasible to publish seizure statistics in detail for every drug type. While all drugs are included in the totals, only those shown below are covered in detail within this bulletin⁴. Seizures of substances controlled under the [Psychoactive Substances Act 2016](#) are not covered in this publication. Consistent data on forces' seizures of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) has been gathered from April 2017, so this will be included in the 2017/18 bulletin.

Table 1.1 Drugs and their classifications under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971

Class A	Class B	Class C
Cocaine	Amphetamines ^a	Anabolic steroids
Crack	Barbiturates ^a	Benzodiazepines
Ecstasy	Cannabis ^b	GHB
Heroin	Ketamine ^c	Temazepam
LSD	Mephedrone	
Methadone		
Morphine		

a. Amphetamines and barbiturates are Class A drugs if prepared for injection.

b. Cannabis was reclassified from a Class B to a Class C drug in January 2004, and then classified back to a Class B drug on 26 January 2009. Cannabis is counted as a Class B drug for the entire time series in this publication.

c. Ketamine was reclassified from a Class C to a Class B drug on 10 June 2014. Ketamine is counted as a Class C drug for the entire time series in this publication.

As with previous years, Border Force have been unable to separately identify some of the drugs included in the above table from their recording system. This has resulted in Border Force seizures of methadone being included within the 'other Class A' grouping, barbiturates within 'other Class B', and benzodiazepines and temazepam within 'other Class C'.

4. Where a seizure is made of a drug that is not listed in the above, it is aggregated into an 'other' class category. Further information on drugs covered under the MDA is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/controlled-drugs-list-2>.

Temporary Class Drug Orders (TCDOs)

In response to the increasing number of new psychoactive substances not controlled under the MDA and concerns about potential harms, the government enacted powers to introduce TCDOs in November 2011⁵. Under an amendment to the MDA, a substance becomes controlled for up to 12 months to give the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) time to provide full, independent and expert advice on the drug; possession is not an offence, but the drug can still be seized.

Between April 2016 and March 2017 the following drugs were subject to a TCDO:

- Seven substances related to Methylphenidate (Class B drug under the 1971 Act) were subject to a TCDO, namely:
 - Ethylphenidate
 - 3,4-Dichloromethylphenidate
 - Methylphenidate
 - Isopropylphenidate
 - Propylphenidate
 - 4-Methylmethylphenidate
 - Ethylphenidate
 - Any stereoisomeric form of a substance specified above
 - Any preparation or other product containing a substance specified above

The first TCDO for these substances came into force on 27th June 2015 and expired on 26th June 2016. This was remade and a new TCDO came into effect on 27th June 2016. The ACMD recommended full control of these substances and this came into force on 31st May 2017.

- N-methyl-1-(thiophen-2-yl)propan-2-amine (methiopropamine or MPA) and its simple derivatives.

The first TCDO for these substances came into force on 27th November 2015 and expired on 26th November 2016. The TCDO was remade for another 12 months and is due to expire on 27th November 2017. The ACMD recommended full control of these substances under the MDA and at the time of writing, Parliament has approved the control of MPA and its simple derivatives as a Class B drug, to coincide with the expiry of the second TCDO.

5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/temporary-class-drugs-orders-factsheet>

2 Number of seizures

- In 2016/17, there were 138,955 seizures of drugs in England and Wales, a 6% decrease since 2015/16, when there were 148,553 seizures⁶.
- The number of drug seizures peaked in 2008/09 at 241,473 seizures, and has since declined by 42% (Figure 2.1). This is the lowest number of drug seizures since 2004, when there were 107,359 seizures.
- As in previous years, the majority of seizures were for Class B drugs, and in particular cannabis. Nearly three-quarters of all seizures involved cannabis (herbal, resin or plant).

Figure 2.1 Number of seizures of Class A, Class B and Class C drugs, 2006/07 to 2016/17, police forces and Border Force¹



Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 1](#).

Chart notes

1. For consistency, drugs are counted in their current classification for the entire time series shown.

The number of seizures made can be affected by police activity and changes in recording practices. Therefore, the number of drug seizures each year should not be taken as a measure of drug prevalence in England and Wales. Prevalence is presented in the Drug Misuse publications, based on results from the Crime Survey for England and Wales⁷.

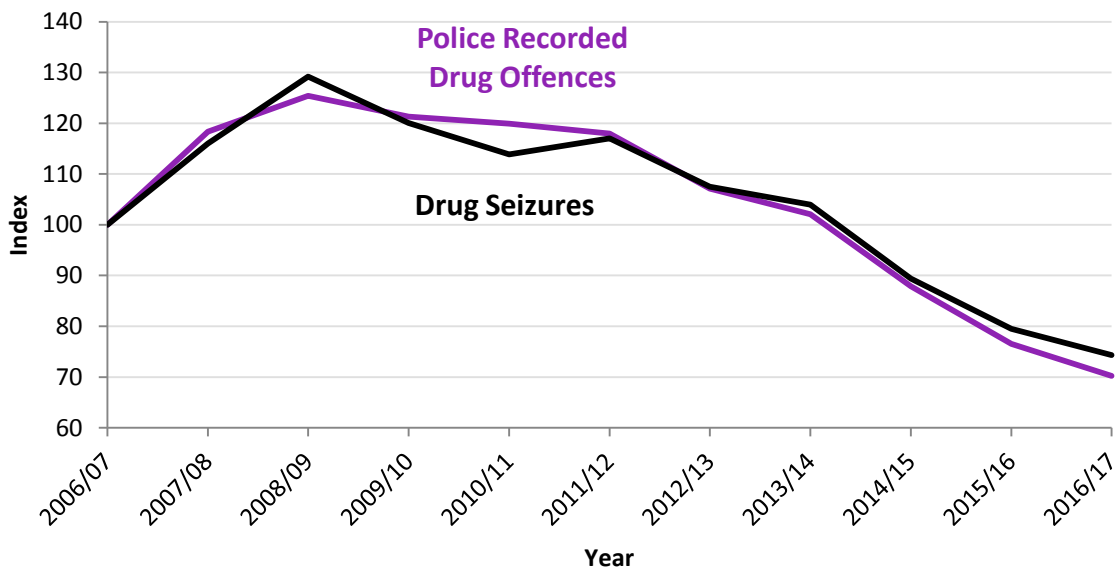
6. Figures include estimates for Bedfordshire, Dorset, Essex and Leicestershire in 2015/16, and for Kent in 2016/17

7. See the latest edition of 'Drug Misuse: Findings from the 2016/17 Crime Survey for England and Wales', available at: [Drug misuse statistics](#).

The total number of drug seizures per year is highly correlated with the number of police recorded drug offences (Figure 2.2)⁸. In 2016/17 the police recorded 136,352 drug offences⁹, an 8% decrease since the previous year (148,683). Over the same period, the number of seizures by police forces alone, excluding Border Force, fell also by 8%.

Since the peak in 2008/09, the number of drug offences recorded by the police has decreased by 44%. Over the same time period the number of drug seizures by police forces and Border Force combined has decreased by 42%.

Figure 2.2 Index of police recorded drug offences and the total number of drug seizures, 2006/07 to 2016/17



Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 1](#).
 ONS, *Crime in England and Wales, year ending June 2017*, [Appendix table A4](#).

Class A drugs

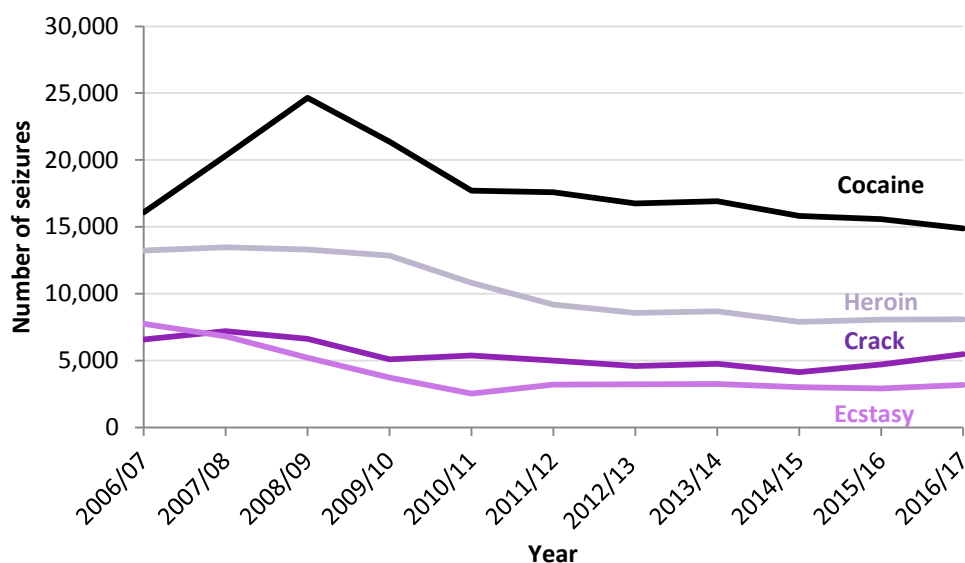
In 2016/17, there were 29,807 seizures of Class A drugs, a decrease of less than 1% since 2015/16 (29,949 seizures). In 2016/17, just over one fifth (21%) of all drug seizures involved at least one Class A drug. Since 2006/07, cocaine has been the most commonly seized drug in this classification group; prior to 2006/07, heroin had been the most commonly seized Class A drug¹⁰.

- Half of all seizures of Class A drugs involved cocaine, with 14,892 seizures of the substance in 2016/17, a 4% decrease on the 2015/16 figure (15,588).
- After cocaine, heroin was the second most commonly seized Class A drug, with 8,092 seizures in 2016/17 (27% of all Class A seizures). This was a 1% increase on the 2015/16 figure of 8,050 seizures.
- There was also an increase in the number of seizures of crack cocaine (up 16% from 4,718 in 2015/16 to 5,484 in 2016/17 – the highest number since 2008/09), ecstasy (up 9% from 2,906 to 3,174), LSD (up 42% from 98 to 139) and morphine (up 39% from 136 to 189).

8. Statistics on the number of police recorded drug offences are published on a quarterly basis by the [ONS](#).
 9. Includes offences for possession of controlled drugs, trafficking in controlled drugs, and other drug offences.
 10. Statistics on historical seizures of drugs in England and Wales can be found at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110220105210/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/hosbarchive.html>.

- There was a decrease in the number of seizures of methadone (down 9% from 547 to 498 – the lowest number since 1992), and ‘Other Class A’ drugs (down 11% from 1,462 to 1,301).

Figure 2.3 Number of seizures of the main Class A drug types, 2006/07 to 2016/17, police forces and Border Force



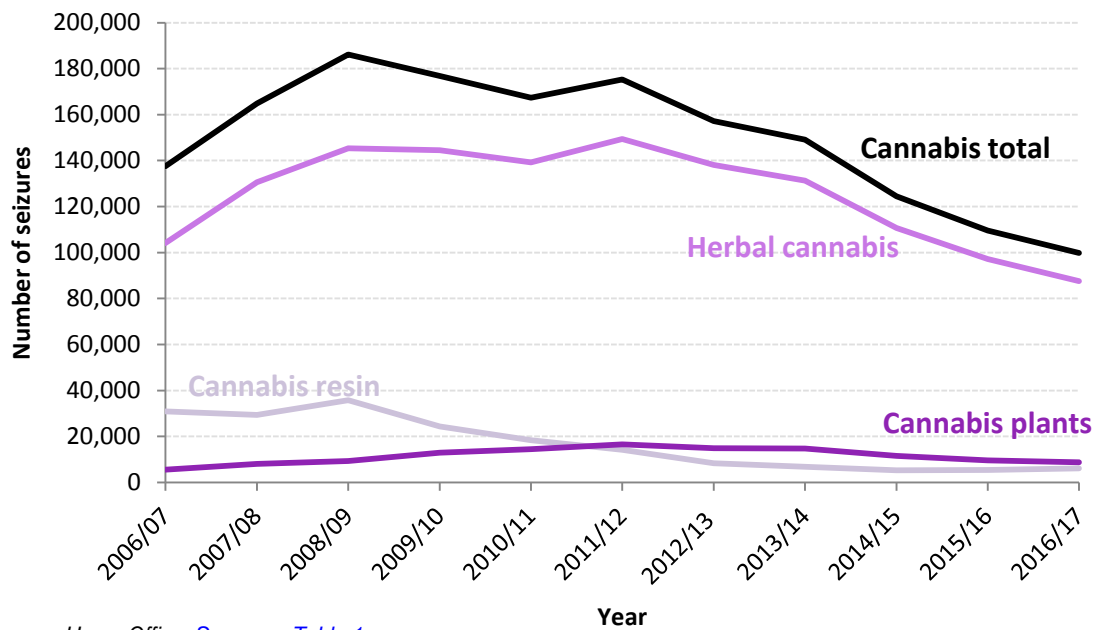
Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 1](#).

Class B drugs

In 2016/17, there were 104,236 seizures of Class B drugs, a 9% decrease compared with the previous year (115,126 seizures). As in previous years, the great majority of Class B seizures were for cannabis with 96% of all Class B seizures involving at least one form of cannabis (99,779). This is the lowest number of cannabis seizures since 2004, when there were 77,482 seizures.

- There were 99,779 seizures of cannabis in 2016/17- a 9% decrease from 2015/16 (109,527).
- Seizures of both herbal cannabis and cannabis plants decreased between 2015/16 and 2016/17, whereas there was an increase in seizures of cannabis resin over the same time period;
 - Seizures of herbal cannabis (which dominate seizures of cannabis) fell by 10% between 2015/16 and 2016/17 (from 97,218 to 87,588);
 - Seizures of cannabis plants decreased by 9% (from 9,578 to 8,753);
 - The number of seizures of cannabis in resin form increased by 12% from 5,429 to 6,078;
 - There has been a 46% fall in the seizures of cannabis since peaking in 2008/09 at 186,147 seizures. The decline in the number of seizures of cannabis over this period was initially driven by a decrease in cannabis resin. Seizures of herbal cannabis and cannabis plants also began to fall from 2011/12 (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 Number of cannabis seizures, 2006/07 to 2016/17, police forces and Border Force



Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 1](#).

Other Class B drugs

- Amphetamines were the second most frequently seized Class B drug with 3,820 seizures in 2016/17, a 14% decrease since 2015/16, when there were 4,418 seizures. This is the lowest number of seizures in 28 years.
- In 2016/17, there were 508 seizures of ketamine - a 4% decrease on the previous year, when there were 530 seizures.
- In addition, the number of seizures of 'other Class B' drugs in 2016/17 (1,218) was 7% lower than in 2015/16 (1,311). The majority of "other Class B seizures" were for cathinone and cannabinal derivatives.

Class C drugs

There was a 2% decrease in the number of seizures of Class C drugs in 2016/17 compared with the previous year from 5,128 to 5,016.

- 39% of all seizures of Class C drugs involved benzodiazepines with seizures of this drug falling by 1% between 2015/16 and 2016/17 (1,964 to 1,945).
- In 2016/17 there were 2,185 seizures of 'Other Class C' drugs - a 4% decrease compared with 2015/16.

Unknown substances

In 2016/17, the number of seizures of unknown substances increased by 19% from the previous year, from 7,354 to 8,715. This is the highest number of seizures of unknown substances on record. Many of these seizures are likely to involve drugs that weren't sent for forensic testing or were sent for testing by forces, but the statistical returns were not updated on the receipt of those forensic test results.

3 Quantity of drugs seized

The quantity of drugs seized tends to fluctuate from year to year and trends do not necessarily move in line with the number of seizures made. Annual totals of the quantity of drugs seized can be greatly influenced by a small number of large seizures. As with the number of drug seizures, any large quantity of drugs seized should not be taken as an indication of drug prevalence or availability.

The quantities of drugs seized are summarised in terms of kilograms, doses (in thousands) or plants, as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Drugs summarised in kilograms, doses and plants

Summarised in kilograms	Summarised in thousands of doses	Summarised as plants
Amphetamines	Anabolic steroids	Cannabis plants
Herbal cannabis	Barbiturates	
Cannabis resin	Benzodiazepines	
Cocaine	Ecstasy	
Crack	LSD	
GHB	Methadone	
Heroin	Morphine	
Ketamine	Temazepam	

Most drugs can plausibly be seized in a preparation form other than kilograms or doses; therefore, in order to present all seized quantities within a given drug type in terms of one comparable unit (either kilograms or doses), conversion factors are applied to estimate the overall quantity of drugs seized.

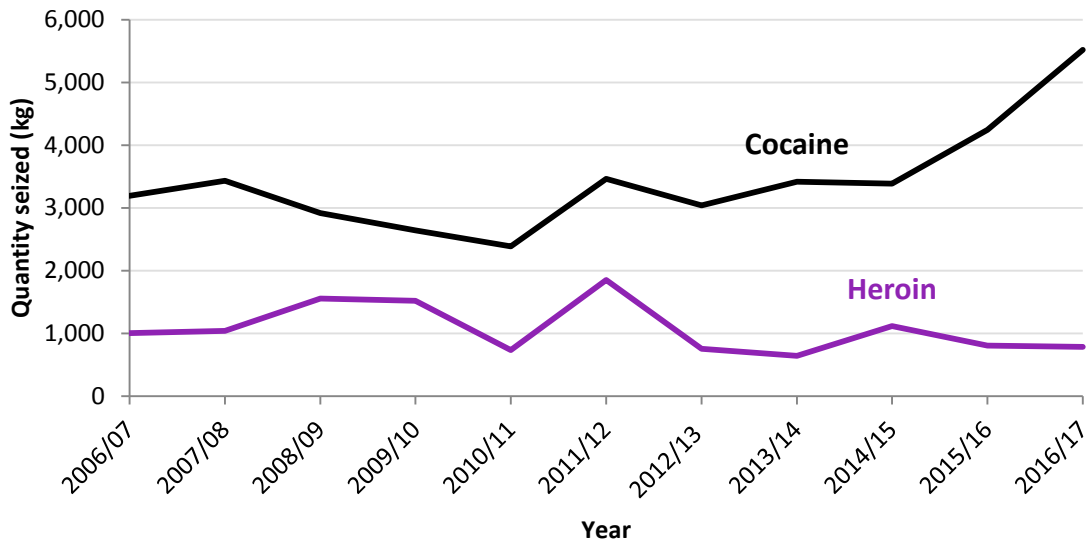
See page 11 of the [user guide](#) for more information.

Class A drugs

- In 2016/17, 5,516 kilograms of cocaine were seized by the police and Border Force, a 30% increase on the previous year (4,240 kg), and the largest quantity since 2003¹¹. In 2016/17 the quantity of cocaine seized by Border Force increased by 28% from 2015/16 (from 3,530 kilograms to 4,503 kilograms), while the quantity of cocaine seized by police forces increased by 43% (from 710 kilograms to 1,013 kilograms).
- 61% of seizures of cocaine were each under one gram in weight, with 3% weighing 500 grams or more (Figure 3.2).
- There were 39 kilograms of crack seized in 2016/17, 3 kilograms less than in 2015/16. Similarly to cocaine, the majority of seizures of crack (59%) weighed less than one gram each ([Summary table 3](#)).
- In 2016/17, 783 kilograms of heroin were seized, a 3% decrease on 2015/16 when 806 kilograms were seized. Similarly to cocaine and crack, 61% of all seizures of heroin weighed less than one gram each ([Summary table 3](#)).
- There was a decrease of 38% in the quantity of ecstasy seized in 2016/17 compared with 2015/16, from 801,294 doses to 498,331 doses. Nearly two-thirds of ecstasy seizures were of less than 10 doses, and 29% were of a single dose or less.

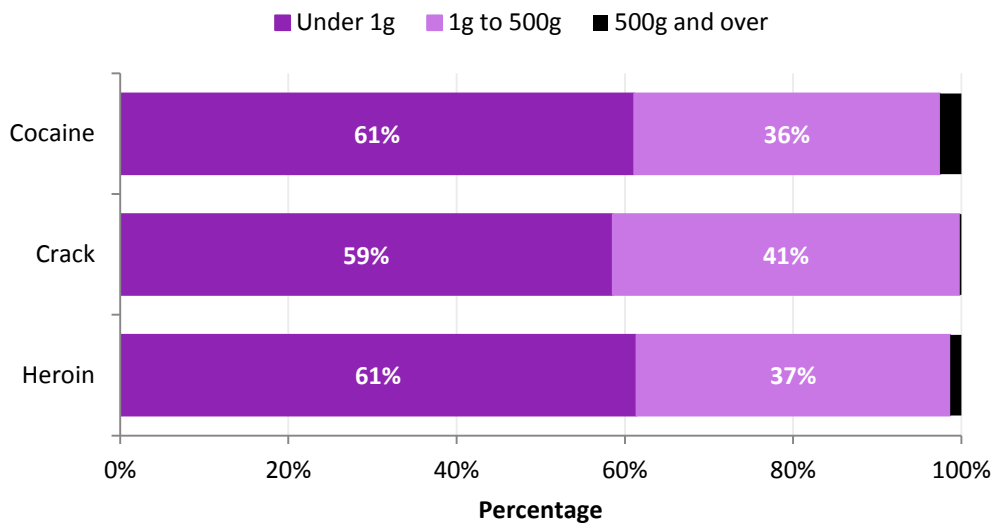
11. Statistics on historical seizures of drugs in England and Wales can be found at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110220105210/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/hosbarchive.html> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110220105210/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/hosbarchive.html>

Figure 3.1 Quantity of cocaine and heroin seized, 2006/07 to 2016/17, police forces and Border Force



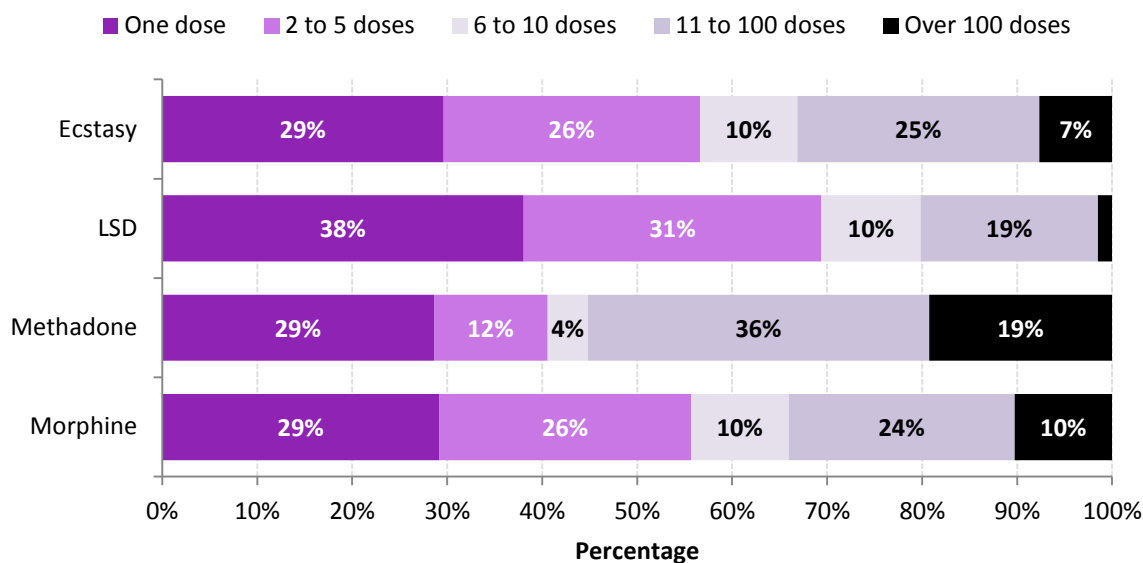
Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 2](#).

Figure 3.2 Distribution of quantities of Class A drugs seized, summarised in grams, 2016/17, police forces and Border Force



Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 3](#).

Figure 3.3 Distribution of quantities of Class A drugs seized, summarised in doses, 2016/17, police forces and Border Force



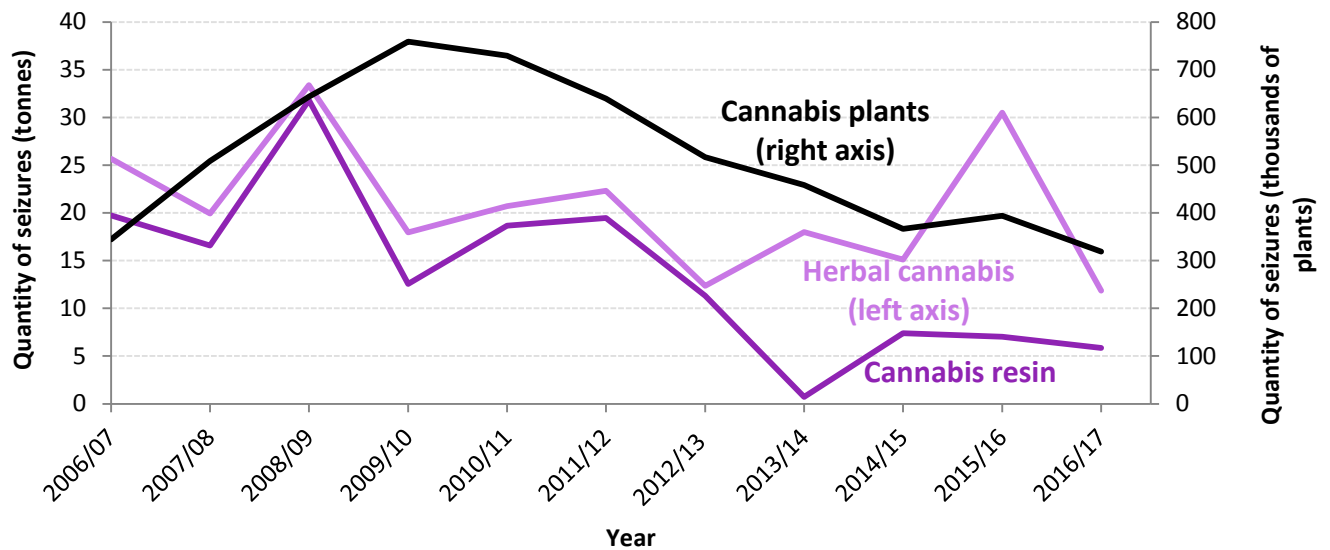
Source: Home Office, [Supplementary table 2](#).

Class B drugs

Cannabis

- The total quantity of herbal cannabis seized in 2016/17 fell by 61% from the previous year, from 30,493 kilograms to 11,861 kilograms. However, the quantity of herbal cannabis seized in 2015/16 was the largest since 2008/09, largely due to seizures made by Border Force. The fall in the last year should therefore be seen in the context of the longer term trend (Figure 3.4). Over the last year, the total quantity of herbal cannabis seized by Border Force decreased by 69%, from 27,132 kilograms to 8,370 kilograms. At the same time, the quantity of herbal cannabis seized by police forces increased by 4% from 3,361 kilograms in 2015/16 to 3,492 kilograms in 2016/17.
- Over the same time period, the quantity of cannabis resin seized decreased from 7,035 kilograms in 2015/16 to 5,838 kilograms in 2016/17 (down by 17%).

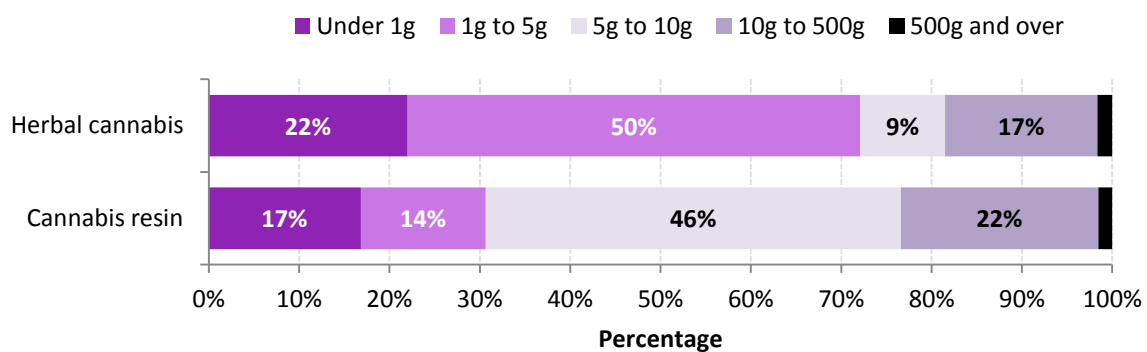
Figure 3.4 Quantity of cannabis seized, 2006/07 to 2016/17, police forces and Border Force



Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 2](#).

- The majority of seizures of cannabis weighed over one gram each. In 2016/17, 22% of seizures of herbal cannabis were of quantities weighing less than one gram, one half (50%) were of quantities weighing between 1 gram and 5 grams and the remaining 28% weighed 5 grams or more (Figure 3.5).
- 17% of seizures of cannabis resin weighed less than one gram, and a further 14% were of quantities weighing between 1 gram and 5 grams.

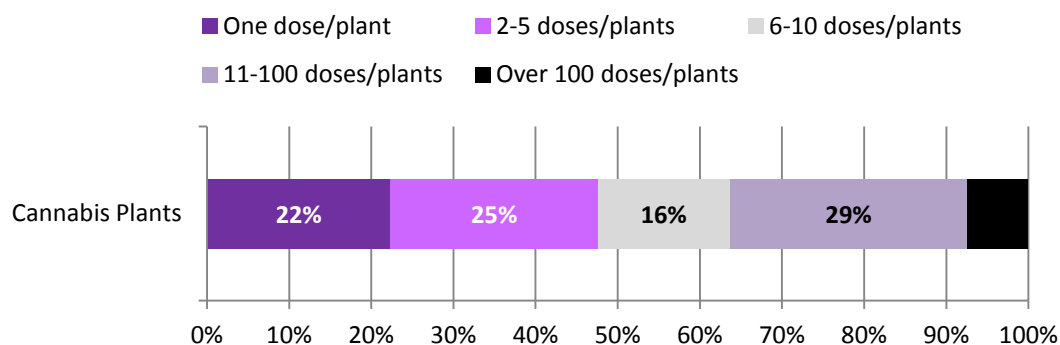
Figure 3.5 Distribution of quantities of herbal cannabis and cannabis resin seized, 2016/17, police forces and Border Force



Source: Home Office, [Supplementary Table 2](#).

- In 2016/17, there were 318,988 cannabis plants seized - a decrease of 19% since 2015/16 when 393,702 plants were seized. This is part of the downwards long term trend since 2009/10 (Figure 3.4).
- Almost half (47%) of seizures of cannabis plants were of quantities of five plants or fewer (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6 Distribution of quantities of cannabis plants seized, 2016/17, police forces and Border Force

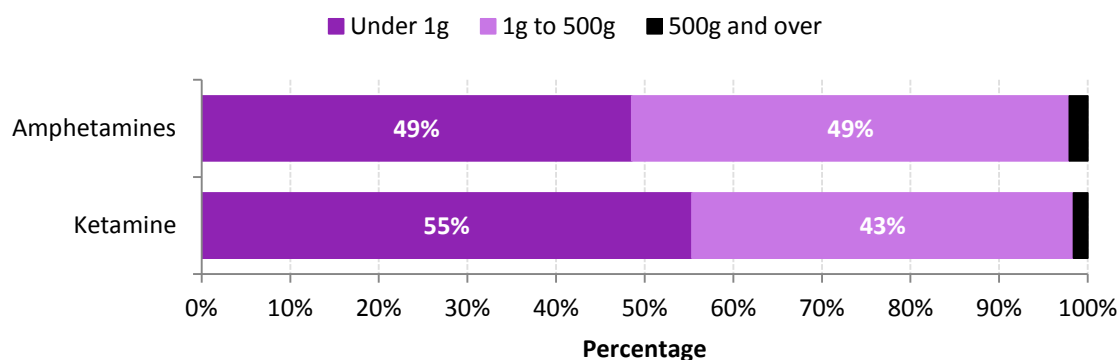


Source: Home Office, [Supplementary Table 2](#).

Other Class B drugs

- In 2016/17, there were 1,242 kilograms of amphetamines seized - a 171% increase on 2015/16, when 459 kilograms were seized. This was driven by a more than 12-fold increase in the quantity of amphetamines seized by Border Force from 2015/16 to 2016/17, and reverses the overall downwards trend since 2012/13.
- There were 58 kilograms of ketamine seized in 2016/17, a 3% increase on 2015/16. The quantity of ketamine seized by Border Force fell significantly from 47 kilograms in 2015/16 to 3 kilograms in 2016/17. This was more than offset by an increase in the quantity seized by the police, who seized 55 kilograms in 2016/17 compared with 9 kilograms in the previous year. Three-quarters of the total quantity of ketamine seized by police forces was made in a single seizure (42 kilograms) by Bedfordshire police force. The majority of police force seizures of ketamine, however, weighed less than 500 grams, with 56% weighing less than one gram. Border Force made 8 seizures of ketamine weighing 500 grams or more.

Figure 3.7 Distribution of quantities of Class B drugs seized, summarised in kilograms, 2016/17, police forces and Border Force

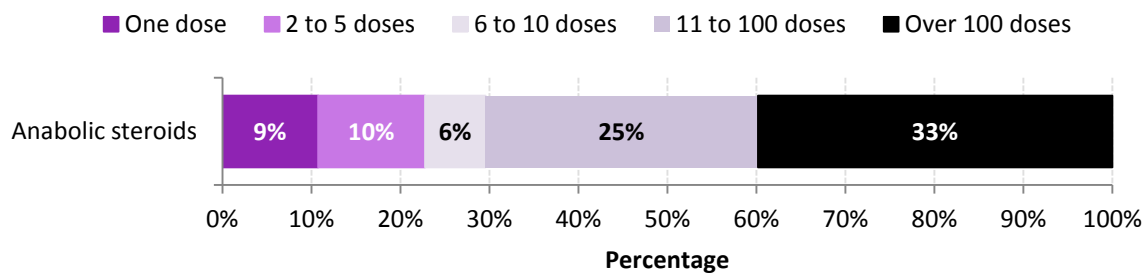


Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 3](#).

Class C drugs

- Total seizures of anabolic steroids increased from 4.9 million doses in 2015/16 to 5.2 million in 2016/17. The quantity of anabolic steroids seized in 2016/17 was the second highest since 2007/08 (16 million doses were seized in 2014/15). Anabolic steroids seized by police forces decreased by 66% over the same period, from 545,121 doses in 2015/16 to 185,933 doses in 2016/17.

Figure 3.8 Distribution of quantities of anabolic steroids, 2016/17, police forces and Border Force



Source: Home Office, [Supplementary Table 2](#).

- The total quantity of benzodiazepines seized in 2016/17 was more than double than in 2015/16 (567,438 in 2016/17 compared with 246,544 doses in 2015/16). This was driven by an increase in the quantity of benzodiazepines seized by police forces. South Wales police force made four separate seizures of over 30,000 doses.
- The quantity of GHB seized increased from 1 kilogram in 2015/16 to 10 kilograms in 2016/17.

4 Seizures by authority

This chapter looks at the seizures of drugs by authority, separating seizures made by Border Force from those seizures made by the police. Seizures from joint operations involving Border Force and the police are recorded against the lead agency that takes possession of the seized drugs. Although Border Force will have made seizures outside the land territory of England and Wales (e.g. Scotland, Northern Ireland), such seizures are excluded from figures presented in this publication.

Number of seizures

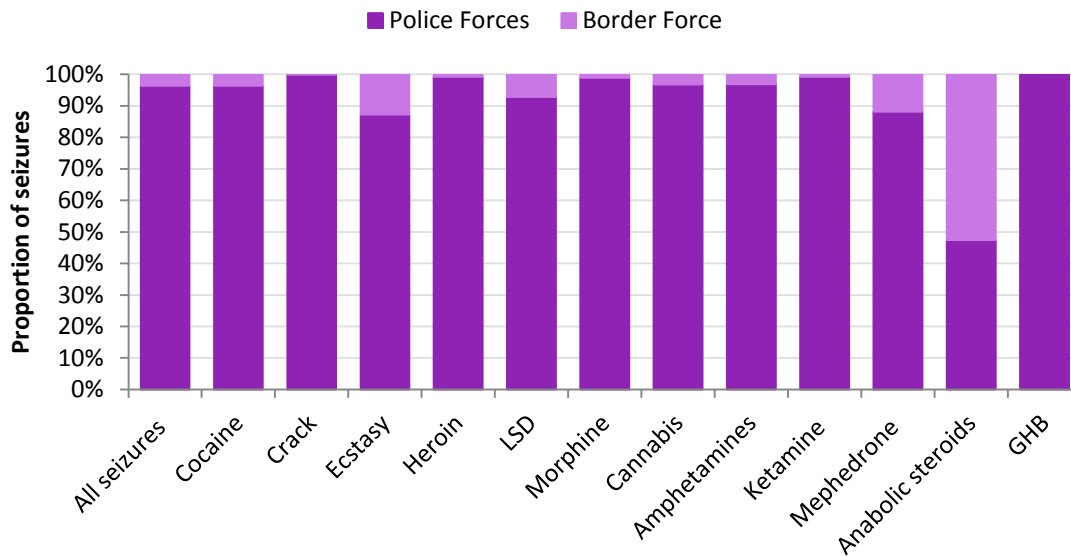
Table 4.1 shows the number of seizures made by police forces and Border Force for each class of drug. In 2016/17, 95% of seizures were made by police forces (133,380); the remaining 5% (6,672) were made by Border Force.

Table 4.1 Number of seizures made by police forces and Border Force, 2015/16 to 2016/17

	Police forces			Border Force		
	2015/16	2016/17	% change	2015/16	2016/17	% change
Class A	28,553	28,125	-1	1,396	1,682	20
Class B	112,567	100,693	-11	2,559	3,543	38
Class C	3,729	3,501	-6	1,399	1,515	8
All	143,248	132,283	-8	5,305	6,672	26

- The number of seizures made by police forces in England and Wales fell by 8% in 2016/17 compared with 2015/16, whilst seizures by Border Force over the same time period increased by 26%.
- For police forces, the number of seizures of Class A drugs fell by 1% on the previous year. Class B seizures fell by 11%, and Class C seizures by 6% over the same period. Border Force, on the other hand, saw an increase in the number of seizures of all classification categories. The number of seizures of Class A drugs increased by 20%, Class B drugs by 38% and Class C drugs by 8%.
- Police forces accounted for 94% of all seizures of Class A drugs, 97% of all seizures of Class B drugs and 70% of seizures of Class C drugs, which is similar to previous years ([Summary Table 4](#)).
- Within Class A seizures, the police were responsible for all but 5 seizures of crack cocaine, and the majority of heroin (99%), morphine (99%), cocaine (96%), LSD (93%) and ecstasy (87%) seizures. For seizures of Class B drugs, approximately 97% of both cannabis and amphetamine seizures were conducted by the police.
- Of Class C drugs, Border Force were responsible for 53% of anabolic steroids seizures and 47% of seizures of “other Class C” drugs (including Benzodiazepines and Temazepam).

Figure 4.1 Proportion of drug seizure numbers by drug type and authority, 2016/17



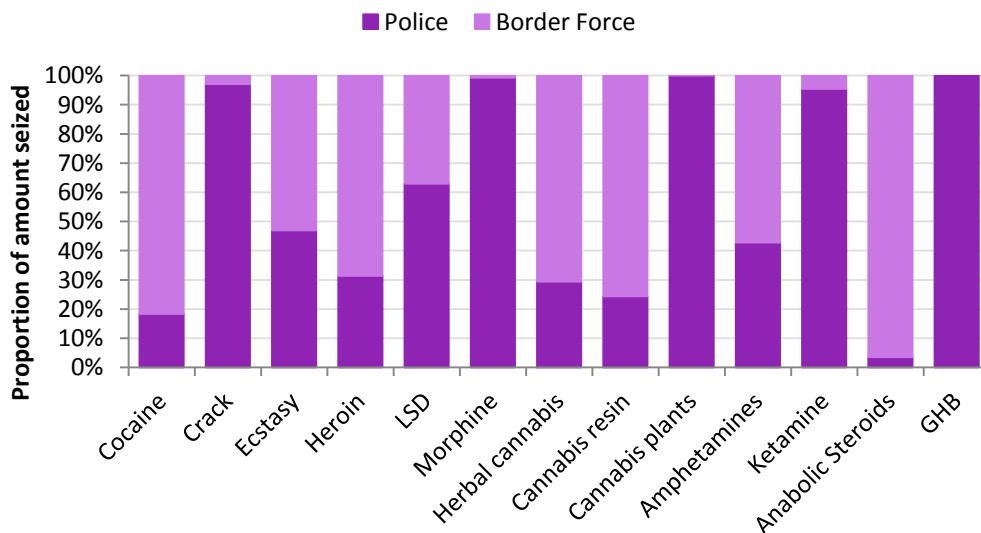
Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 4](#).

Quantity of seizures

Although Border Force accounted for just 5% of drug seizures in 2016/17, the proportion they seized in terms of quantity was much larger. This is due to the fact that the agency is often involved in operations where large quantities of drugs are seized, for example at airports or ferry ports.

- In terms of quantity, Border Force seized 96% of anabolic steroids (4,995,354 doses), 82% of cocaine (4,503 kilograms), 76% of cannabis resin (8,370 kilograms) and 71% of herbal cannabis (8,370 kilograms).

Figure 4.2 Proportion of drug seizure quantities by drug type and authority, 2016/17



Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 5](#).

Seizures of drugs in England and Wales, financial year ending 2017

In general, Border Force seized much larger quantities of drugs, per seizure, than police forces. One third (32%) of seizures of drugs (measured in terms of weight) made by the police forces of England and Wales were for quantities of under one gram. Conversely, just 2% of seizures of drugs made by the Border Force were of quantities less than one gram.

The difference, in terms of number of doses, between the quantity of seizures made by police forces and quantity of seizures made by Border Force follows a similar pattern, with the largest seizures on average being made by Border Force (Figure 4.3 to Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.3 Distribution of drug seizure quantities of cocaine by authority, 2016/17

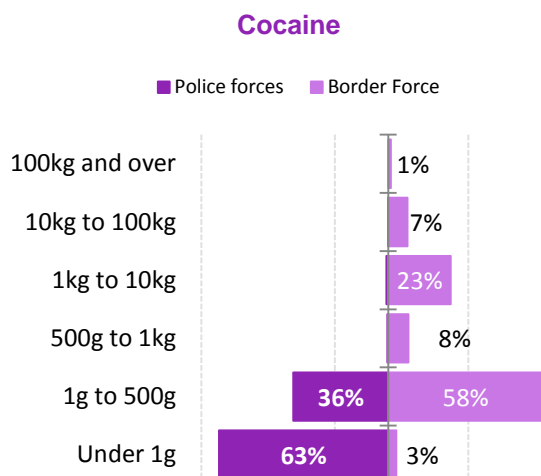


Figure 4.4 Distribution of drug seizure quantities of heroin by authority, 2016/17

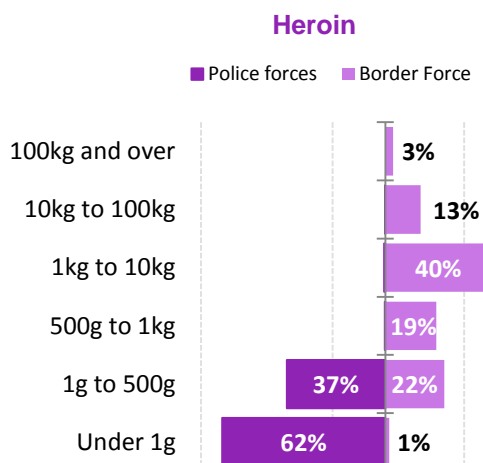


Figure 4.5 Distribution of drug seizure quantities of herbal cannabis by authority, 2016/17

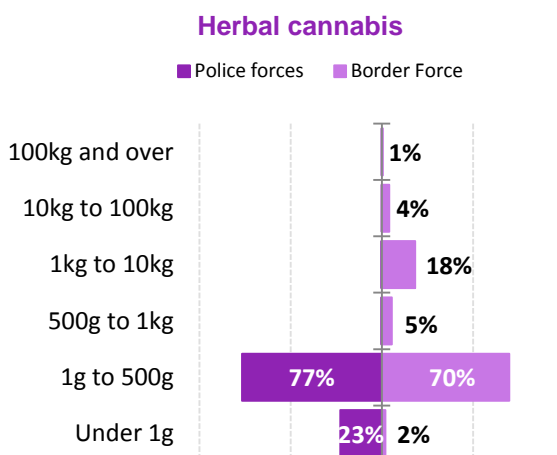
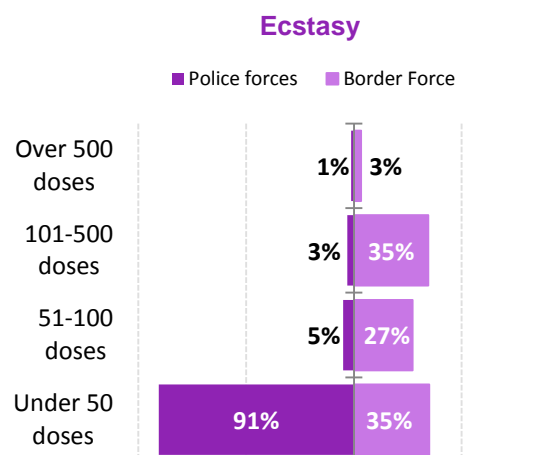


Figure 4.6 Distribution of drug seizure quantities of ecstasy by authority, 2016/17



Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 3](#). Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

5 Data quality and interpreting the figures

The statistics in *Seizures of drugs in England and Wales* relate to the seizures of drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) 1971, which came into force on 1 July 1973. They cover seizures made during the year by police forces in England and Wales (including the British Transport Police) and Border Force (formerly part of the UK Border Agency). Although Border Force will have made seizures outside the land territory of England and Wales (e.g. Scotland, Northern Ireland), such seizures are excluded from figures presented in the publication. Seizures from joint operations involving Border Force and the police are recorded against the lead agency that takes possession of the seized drugs.

Where a seizure is made of a drug not separately listed in this bulletin, it is aggregated into an 'other' Class Category. Further information on drugs covered under the MDA, including a link to the full list of drugs covered, is available at: [Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#). Details about the counting rules used for calculating numbers of seizures in this bulletin are included in the [user guide](#).

Imputation

One police force (Kent) was unable to provide fully accurate data for the 2016/17 period. As a result, data and imputation methods have been used to estimate data for this force. Further information on estimations, including those made in previous years, can be found in the introduction of the [user guide](#).

Revision policy

Police forces have the opportunity to resubmit historical data whenever they wish. All figures quoted in this release are correct at the time of publication and reflect the latest revisions made by police forces; therefore, figures published in this release supersede all previous published data. Since the previous report, Thames Valley resubmitted data for 2015/16. Data for Border Force is only revised once (the year after the period they refer to); no revisions were submitted by Border Force for 2015/16, and data prior to 2015/16 also remain unchanged from previous publications. Further information on the data collection process, and quality assurance of the data, can be found in Appendix A of the [user guide](#).

6 Other data sources

Seizures by police in Scotland and Northern Ireland

As well as providing a comparison to seizures in England and Wales, drug seizure figures for Scotland and Northern Ireland give a more complete UK-wide picture. Data relating to seizures of drugs by the police in Scotland are collected and published by the Scottish Government¹². Prior to 2014/15, the Scottish Government used the same counting rules and broad methodology as for England and Wales. However, since then they have changed the data collection process, splitting seizures into supply and possession offences, and using extrapolation methods to estimate the latter from a sample. As a result, the figures from Scotland are not directly comparable with those from England and Wales. In 2015/16, it was estimated that Police Scotland recorded 29,929 drug possession crimes, 67.5% of which were for Class B drugs, 17.5% for Class A and 14.5% for Class C.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland¹³ (PSNI) collects and publishes data on drug seizures by police in Northern Ireland, and they are also presented on the same basis as those for England and Wales. Police recorded a total of 5,546 drug seizure incidents in Northern Ireland during 2016/17; further breakdowns can be found on the [PSNI website](#).

Border Force seizures

Seizures made by Border Force officials outside England and Wales (e.g. Scotland, Northern Ireland) are excluded from figures presented in this statistical release. A quarterly breakdown of Border Force seizures in the UK is available online as part of their regular key performance indicators¹⁴.

Misuse of drugs

The extent and trends in illicit drug use among adults aged 16 to 59, measured by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), are published separately by the Home Office¹⁵. According to the 2016/17 CSEW, around 1 in 12 (8.5%) adults had taken an illicit drug in the last year, a similar proportion to 2015/16, but significantly lower than a decade ago (10.1% in the 2006/07 survey). The trend in last year drug use among 16 to 59 year olds has been flat for the last eight years.

12. Latest drug seizure statistics for Scotland were published on 27 June 2017 and are available online at: [The Scottish Government website](#).

13. Latest drug seizure statistics for Northern Ireland are published monthly, and are available online at: [Police Service of Northern Ireland website](#).

14. Border Force publishes data on its key performance indicators at [Border Force transparency data](#).

15. See the latest edition of 'Drug Misuse: Findings from the 2016/17 Crime Survey for England and Wales', available at: [Drug misuse statistics](#).

Statistical Bulletins are prepared by staff in Home Office Crime and Policing Statistics under the Official Statistics Code of Practice and can be downloaded from GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/about/statistics>

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