



9 November 2017

Statistical News Release – Seizures of drugs in England and Wales, financial year ending 2017

National Statistics on drug seizures made in England and Wales in 2016/17 by the police (including the British Transport Police) and Border Force are released today.

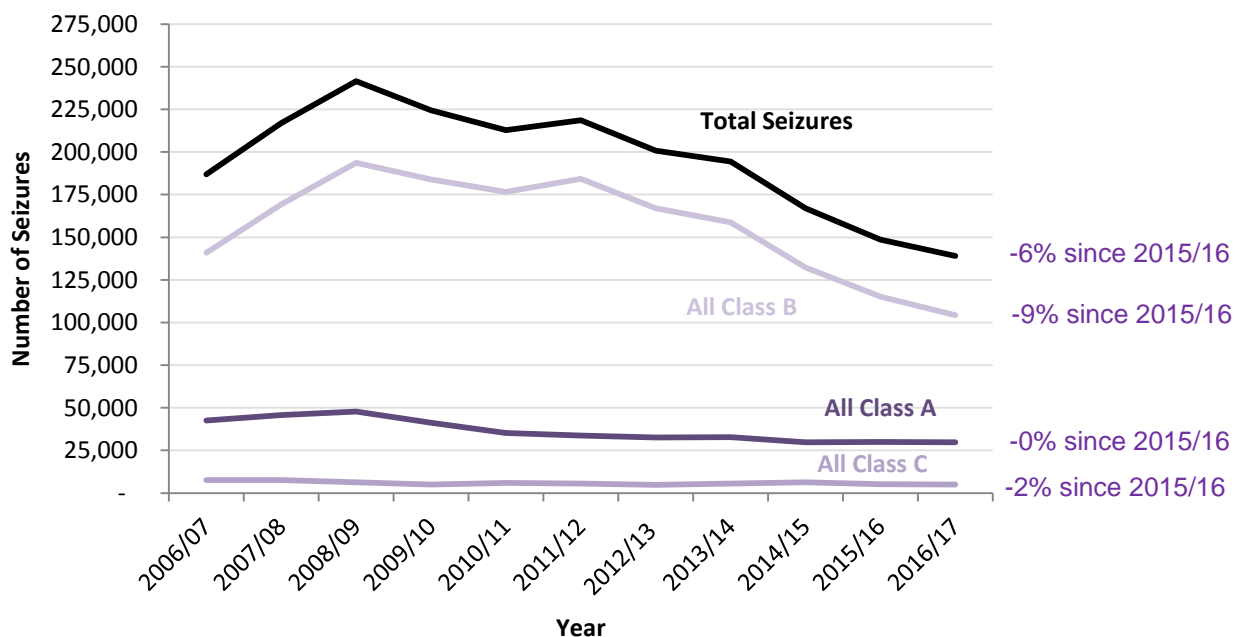
The statistics relate to all drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (MDA), which divides drugs into three categories – Classes A, B and C – according to the harmfulness they cause to the user or to society when they are misused. Class A drugs are considered to be the most harmful.

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

Key findings:

In 2016/17, there were 138,955 seizures of drugs in England and Wales², a 6% decrease on the previous year (148,553 seizures) and the lowest number since 2004 (107,359 seizures).

Number of seizures of Class A, Class B and Class C drugs, 2006/07 to 2016/17, police forces and Border Force³



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

2. Figures for police seizures are based on data supplied for 43 forces and imputed figures for one force.

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

The number of seizures made by police forces in England and Wales fell by 8% in 2016/17 compared with 2015/16, and seizures by Border Force over the same time period increased by 26%.

In 2016/17, 95% of all drug seizures were made by police forces, and 5% of seizures were made by Border Force. However, Border Force were responsible for seizing a greater quantity of drugs (e.g. Border Force seized 82% of cocaine, 76% of cannabis resin, 71% of herbal cannabis and 69% of heroin).

Summary of seizures of Class A, Class B and Class C drugs

- 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 14,892 seizures amounting to 5,516 kilograms – the largest quantity since 2003.
- There were 104,236 seizures of Class B drugs in 2016/17 (down 9%).
- Herbal cannabis was involved in 87,588 of these seizures (down 10%), amounting to 11,861 kilograms, a 61% decrease on the previous year. 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 cannabis seized by Border Force decreased by 69%, whilst the quantity seized by police forces increased by 4%.
- There were 5,016 seizures of Class C drugs in 2016/17, a decrease of 2% since 2015/16.

Notes to editors

1. 'Seizures of drugs in England and Wales, financial year ending 2017', along with data tables, is available online via Gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seizures-of-drugs-in-england-and-wales-financial-year-ending-2017>
2. This publication covers drugs seized under the Misuse of Drugs Act. Seizures of substances controlled under the [Psychoactive Substances Act 2016](#) are not covered in this publication.
3. Another Home Office statistical release on drugs, 'Drug Misuse: Findings from the 2016/17 Crime Survey for England and Wales' was published on 27 July 2017. This publication measures the prevalence of drug use. It is available on the Gov.uk website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/drug-misuse-findings-from-the-2016-to-2017-csew>
4. Statistics on the number of police recorded drug offences are published on a quarterly basis by the ONS: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/previousReleases>

For all press enquiries, please contact the Home Office Press Office who will liaise with Home Office Crime and Policing Analysis:

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