



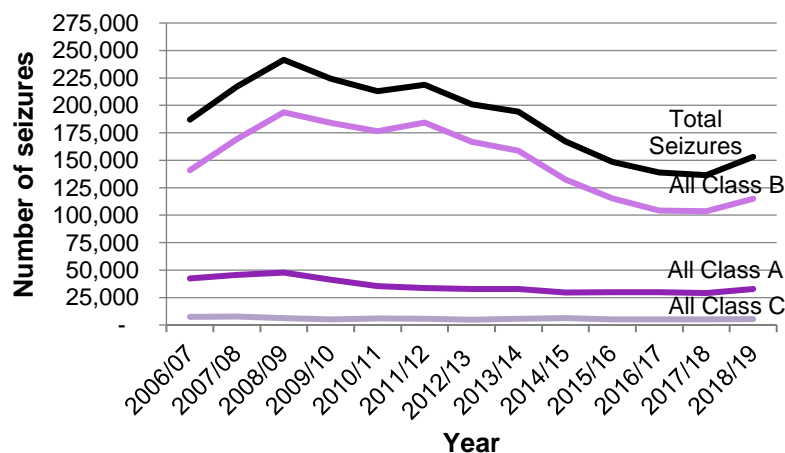
Seizures of drugs, England and Wales, financial year ending 2019 second edition

This statistical release presents figures for drug seizures made in 2018/19 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. This statistical release also presents figures relating to drugs known as New Psychoactive Substances (NPS).

Key results

- Police forces and Border Force made a total of **153,135** drug seizures in England and Wales in 2018/19, a **12% increase** compared with the previous year (136,439). **This is the first annual increase in seizures since 2011/12.**

Number of seizures of Class A, Class B and Class C drugs, 2006/07 to 2018/19, police forces and Border Force



- Seizures of Class A drugs **increased by 13%** between 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- Seizures of cocaine by police forces and Border Force **increased by 12%** from 2017/18. The quantity of cocaine seized also **increased by 6,307 kg** from 3,338 kg in 2017/18 to 9,645 kg in 2018/19. This is the **largest quantity of cocaine seized since recording began in 1973.**
- Seizures of crack by police forces **increased by 20%** since 2017/18, **the highest number of seizures since 2008/09.** The quantity of crack seized by police forces **increased by 73%, the highest amount seized since 2004.**
- The quantity of ecstasy seized **increased** from 0.7 million doses in 2017/18 to 2.2 million doses in 2018/19. This was **the highest quantity seized since 2006/07.**

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Executive summary

This statistical release presents figures for drug seizures made in 2018/19 in England and Wales by the 44 police forces (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.

In 2017/18, figures for seizures of drugs referred to as New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) were presented in this publication for the first time. NPS refers to newly available drugs that mimic the effect of existing drugs such as cannabis, ecstasy and powder cocaine. Some NPS are controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971¹, while other NPS are illegal to supply, produce and import under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016². 2017/18 was the first year that data on NPS had been recorded systematically across police forces and Border Force. Data is presented for 2017/18 and 2018/19, however these statistics remain designated as Experimental Statistics, as they are not yet fully developed and do not meet the rigorous quality standards of National Statistics.

In 2018/19, figures for seizures of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues are presented separately from the 'Other Class A drugs' category for the first time.

In 2018/19 revised data for 2006/07 was provided by Thames Valley Police and revised data for 2017/18 was provided by Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Suffolk Constabulary and South Yorkshire Police. Data relating to 2017/18 seizures of 'Other Class B' has been revised, to better reflect seizures of synthetic cannabinoids (further detail is provided in the [user guide](#)). This means data in this publication may differ from previous publications.

Three police forces were unable to provide complete data for the 2018/19 period. These forces were Hertfordshire Constabulary, Kent Police and Lincolnshire Police. As a result, imputation methods have been used to estimate data for these forces, as described in the [user guide](#). All comparisons in this publication include the estimated values.

The number and quantity of seizures made can be affected by police and Border Force activity and changes in recording practices, as well as changes in the drugs market. Therefore, the number and quantity of drug seizures each year should not be taken as an indicator of drug prevalence in England and Wales. Statistic on prevalence can be found in the Drug Misuse publications, based on results from the Crime Survey for England and Wales³ and the Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England survey⁴. Further information on these statistics can be found in the [user guide](#).

Key findings

- A total of 153,135 drug seizures were made in England and Wales in 2018/19, a 12% increase compared with the previous year (136,439). This is the first annual increase in seizures since 2011/12.
- There were increases in the number of seizures made by police forces (up by 11% from 129,940 to 144,198) and by Border Force (up 38% from 6,499 to 8,937).
- Cannabis was the most commonly seized drug, which was involved in 71% of all drug seizures in England and Wales in 2018/19. The second most commonly seized drug was cocaine, which was involved in 11% of all seizures.
- Trends in the number of seizures are driven by police forces as the vast majority (94%) were made by them.

¹ Which can be found here: [Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#)

² Which can be found here: [Psychoactive Substances Act 2016](#)

³ See the latest edition of 'Drug Misuse: Findings from the 2018/19 Crime Survey for England and Wales', available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/drug-misuse-findings-from-the-2018-to-2019-csew>

⁴ See the latest edition of 'Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England', available at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/smoking-drinking-and-drug-use-among-young-people-in-england/2018>

- While Border Force seizures made up a small proportion of the total number of seizures, they tended to comprise much larger quantities. This reflects the fact that seizures made by the territorial police will tend to be dominated by the apprehending of individuals with smaller quantities of drugs, for example for personal consumption, whereas Border Force will catch those involved in the trafficking of larger quantities for supply. In terms of quantity, Border Force seized 92% of anabolic steroids, 92% of cocaine, 90% of all cannabis resin, 85% of ecstasy and 70% of herbal cannabis.

Class A

- Seizures of Class A drugs increased by 13% between 2017/18 and 2018/19, from 29,090 to 32,753 seizures. Cocaine was the most commonly seized Class A drug, with 52% of all Class A seizures involving this substance in 2018/19.
- There were 17,038 seizures of cocaine in 2018/19, up 12% on the previous year (15,250 seizures). The quantity of cocaine seized also increased from 3,338 kilograms in 2017/18 to 9,645 kilograms in 2018/19, an increase of 6,307 kg. This is the largest quantity of cocaine seized since recording began in 1973.
- The quantity of ecstasy seized increased from 0.7 million doses in 2017/18 to 2.2 million doses in 2018/19. This was the highest quantity seized since 2006/07 (6.6 million).
- There were 54,070 doses of LSD seized in 2018/19, the highest since 2005 when 1,137,000 doses were recorded, and an increase on the previous year (3,351 doses).
- Seizures of crack by police forces increased by 20%, from 5,443 in 2017/18 to 6,556 in 2018/19, the highest number of seizures since 2008/09. The quantity of crack seized by police forces increased by 73%, from 36 kilograms in 2017/18 to 63 kilograms in 2018/19, the highest amount seized since 2004.
- There were 22 seizures of fentanyl and 8 seizures of fentanyl analogues by police forces and Border Force in 2018/19. This is the first year that data on fentanyl seizures have been published separately from the 'Other Class A drugs' category.

Class B

- Seizures of Class B drugs increased by 11% between 2017/18 and 2018/19, from 103,597 to 115,047 seizures. Cannabis was the most commonly seized Class B drug, with 94% of all Class B seizures involving this substance in 2018/19.
- Approximately 88% of cannabis seizures involved herbal cannabis. Between 2017/18 and 2018/19 the number of seizures of herbal cannabis rose by 11%, from 86,058 to 95,549 seizures. Border Force had 4,134 seizures of herbal cannabis, the highest number since 1996⁵, when there were 6,661 seizures.
- However, the quantity of herbal cannabis seized fell by 42% compared with the previous year, from 28,669 kilograms in 2017/18 to 16,692 kilograms in 2018/19.
- There was a decrease of 41% in the quantity of cannabis resin seized (from 7,781 kilograms to 4,626 kilograms) between 2017/18 and 2018/19, while the number of cannabis plants seized increased by 12% (from 354,540 plants to 395,843 plants).

Class C

- Seizures of Class C drugs increased by 4% between 2017/18 and 2018/19, from 5,092 to 5,282 seizures. The most commonly seized Class C drug in 2018/19 was 'Other Class C' with 2,383 seizures, an increase of 4% from the previous year.
- Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, there was a 55% increase in the quantity of anabolic steroids seized, from 1.7 million to 2.7 million doses.

⁵ Includes data from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) up to and including 2010/11.

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

- There were 2,973 seizures of NPS in 2018/19. This is an increase of 25% since 2017/18, when the number of seizures was 2,386.
- The most commonly seized types of NPS in 2018/19 were synthetic cannabinoids (2,186 seizures), other NPS (310), NPS powders (250) and nitrous oxide (247).

1 Introduction

This publication presents figures for drug seizures made in 2018/19 in England and Wales by the territorial police forces (and 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 and Border Force for the years covered by, and received since, the publication of, '[Seizures of drugs in England and Wales, financial year ending 2018](#)'.

Drug seizures often involve the seizure of multiple types of drugs. This means that the sum of seizures by each drug type will exceed the overall number of seizures. For example, if cocaine and cannabis resin were both seized in one seizure, this would be counted as one seizure in the overall total, but would be counted twice in the breakdown by drug type (one seizure of cocaine plus one seizure of cannabis resin).

Three police forces (Hertfordshire Constabulary, Kent Police and Lincolnshire Police) were unable to provide fully accurate data for the 2018/19 period. As a result, imputation methods have been used to estimate data for these forces, as outlined in the [user guide](#). All comparisons in this publication include the estimated values.

In 2018/19, data revisions for 2006/07 data were provided by Thames Valley Police and data revisions for 2017/18 were provided by Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Suffolk Constabulary and South Yorkshire Police. Data relating to 2017/18 seizures of 'Other Class B' has been revised, to better reflect seizures of synthetic cannabinoids (further detail is provided in the [user guide](#)). Therefore, figures for earlier years may differ from those previously published.

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

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. 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 bulletin⁶. This bulletin also captures the number of seizures where the substance, and therefore its classification, were unknown.

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.

⁶ 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>.

For consistency, drugs are counted against their current classification for all years shown. For example, cannabis is counted as a Class B drug for the entire time series.

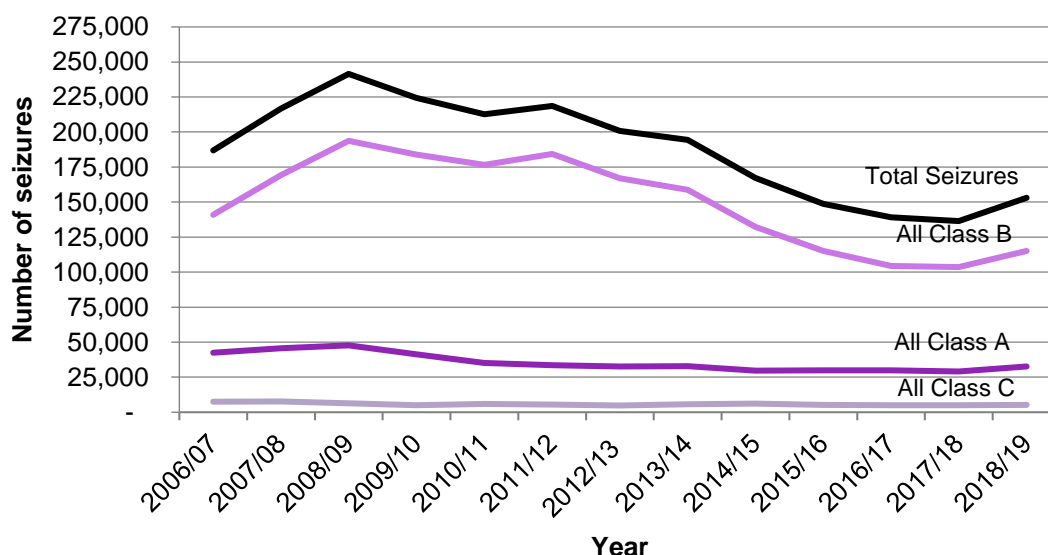
This is the second year that information on seizures of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) are covered in this publication. This is the first year that fentanyl and fentanyl analogues are identified separately from the 'Other Class A drugs' category.

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'.

2 Number of seizures

- In 2018/19, there were 153,135 seizures of drugs in England and Wales, a 12% increase since 2017/18, when there were 136,439 seizures⁷.
- The number of drug seizures peaked in 2008/09 at 241,473 seizures and declined by 43% down to 136,439 seizures in 2017/18 (Figure 2.1). This is the first year since 2011/12 that there has been an annual increase in the number of seizures and was driven by increased seizures of a range of drugs, including cannabis, cocaine, crack and heroin.
- As in previous years, the majority of seizures were for Class B drugs, and in particular cannabis. Almost three-quarters (71%) 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 2018/19, 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 Wales⁸ and the Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England survey⁹.

The total number of drug seizures per year follows a similar trend to the number of police recorded drug offences (Figure 2.2)¹⁰. In 2018/19 the police recorded 151,471 drug offences¹¹, an increase of 11% since the previous year (136,476). Over the same period, the number of seizures by police forces

⁷ Figures include estimates for Kent Police in 2017/18 and for Hertfordshire Constabulary, Kent Police and Lincolnshire Police for 2018/19.

⁸ See the latest edition of 'Drug Misuse: Findings from the 2018/19 Crime Survey for England and Wales', available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/drug-misuse-findings-from-the-2018-to-2019-csew>

⁹ See the latest edition of 'Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England', available at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/smoking-drinking-and-drug-use-among-young-people-in-england/2018>

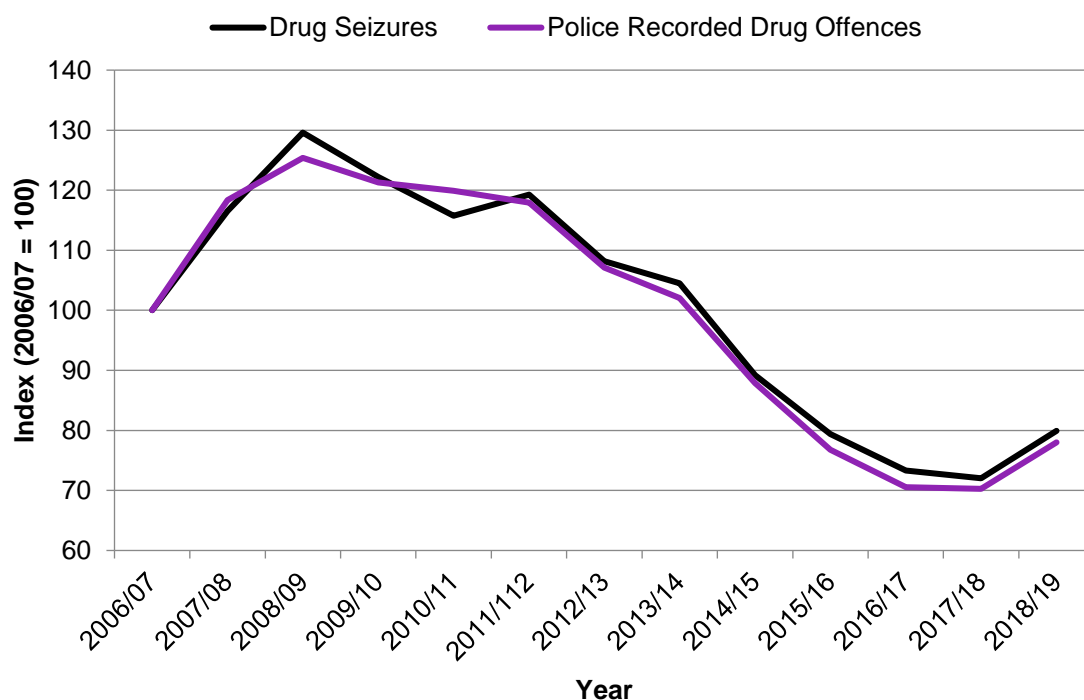
¹⁰ Statistics on the number of police recorded drug offences are published on a quarterly basis by the [ONS](#).

¹¹ Includes offences for possession of controlled drugs, trafficking in controlled drugs, and other drug offences.

alone, excluding Border Force, also increased by 11%. Other statistics¹² show that more proactive policing has led to a rise in stop and search by police forces in England and Wales which has contributed in a rise in the number of police recorded drug offences and this is likely to be a significant driver of the increase in the number of drug seizures by police.

Since the peak in 2008/09, the number of drug offences recorded by the police has decreased by 38% (from 243,536 to 151,471), and the number of drug seizures by police forces has also decreased by 38% (from 233,793 to 144,198).

Figure 2.2 Index of police recorded drug offences and the total number of drug seizures by police forces, 2006/07 to 2018/19



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

ONS, [Crime in England and Wales, year ending March 2019](#), Appendix Table A4.

Class A drugs

In 2018/19, there were 32,753 seizures of Class A drugs, an increase of 13% since 2017/18 (29,090 seizures). In 2018/19, over two-fifths (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 drug¹³.

- Over half (52%) of all seizures of Class A drugs involved cocaine, with 17,038 seizures in 2018/19, a 12% increase on the 2017/18 figure (15,250). As shown in Figure 2.3, the number of cocaine seizures had previously followed a downward trend since the peak in 2008/09.
- After cocaine, heroin was the second most commonly seized Class A drug, with 8,444 seizures in 2018/19 (26% of all Class A seizures). This was a 13% increase on the 2017/18 figure of 7,470 seizures.
- There was an increase in the number of seizures of crack cocaine, up 20% from 5,451 in 2017/18 to 6,561 in 2018/19, the highest number since 2008/09 (6,623). There were also

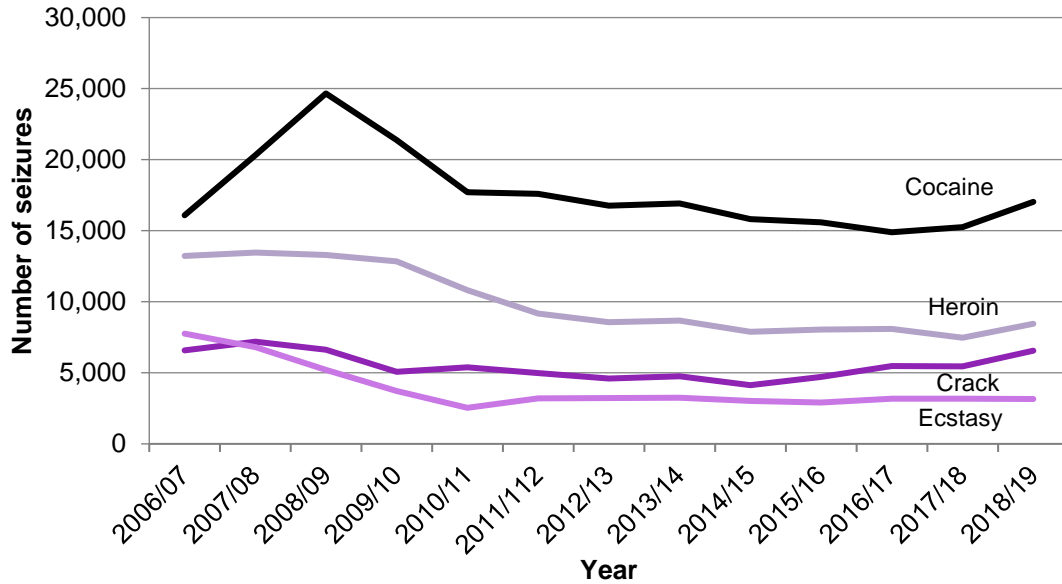
¹² See the latest edition of 'Police powers and procedures' available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/841408/police-powers-procedures-mar19-hosb2519.pdf

¹³ 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>.

increases in the number of seizures of Other Class A, up 59% from 1,119 to 1,774, LSD, which was up 38% from 145 to 200 (the highest since 2000 when there was 240 seizures), morphine, which was up 8% from 189 to 204.

- There was a 1% decrease in the number of seizures of ecstasy from 3,190 to 3,147, and there was a 12% decrease in seizures of methadone, from 463 to 407.

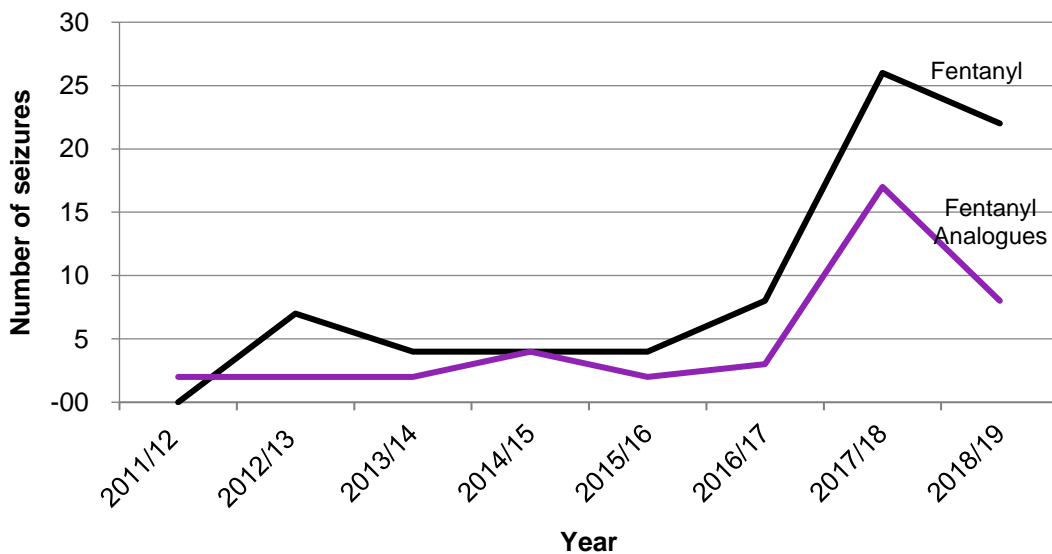
Figure 2.3 Number of seizures of the main Class A drug types, 2006/07 to 2018/19, police forces and Border Force



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

- The number of fentanyl and fentanyl analogue seizures is published separately for the first time in this publication. Data is available for police forces from 2006/07 to 2018/19, and for Border Force from 2011/12 to 2018/19. There were 22 seizures of fentanyl and eight seizures of fentanyl analogues in 2018/19.¹⁴

Figure 2.4 Number of seizures of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues, 2011/12 to 2018/19, by police forces and Border Force



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

¹⁴ Fentanyl data from 2006/07 to 2017/18 excludes Sussex, as reliable data was not available

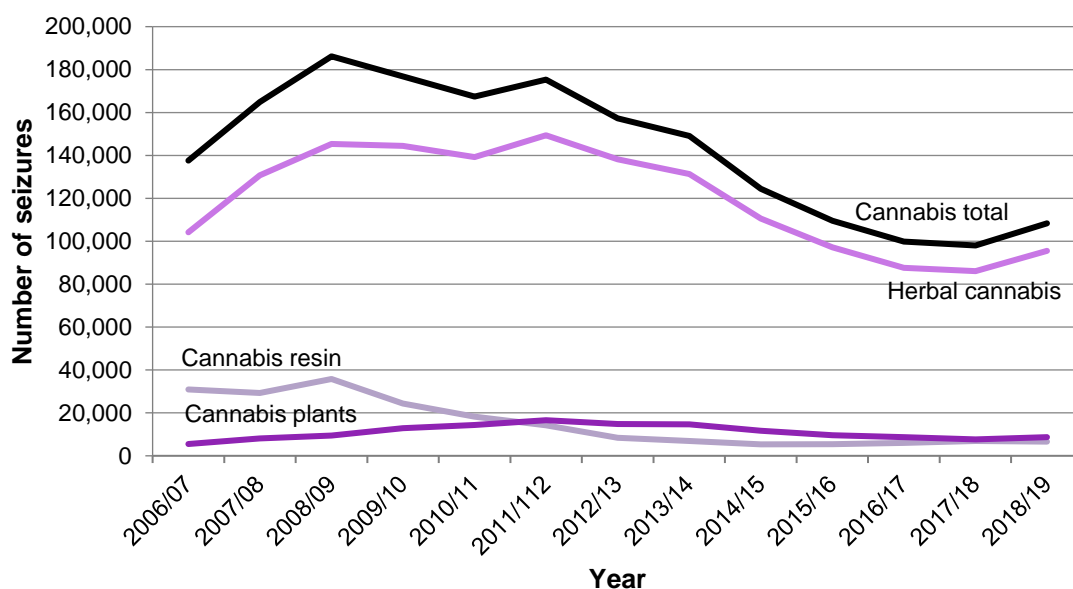
Class B drugs

In 2018/19, there were 115,047 seizures of Class B drugs, an 11% increase compared with the previous year (103,597 seizures). As in previous years, the great majority of Class B seizures were for cannabis, with 94% of all Class B seizures involving at least one form of cannabis (108,362).

Cannabis

- There were 108,362 seizures of cannabis in 2018/19, an 11% increase from 2017/18 (98,025).
- This increase follows a general decline in cannabis seizures since 2011/12, as shown in Figure 2.4. This increase is driven by an increase in seizures of herbal cannabis and cannabis plants.
- Seizures of herbal cannabis (which dominate seizures of cannabis) increased by 11% between 2017/18 and 2018/19 (from 86,058 to 95,549). Seizures of cannabis plants increased by 13% (from 7,650 to 8,663). However, seizures of cannabis resin decreased by 5% from 6,964 to 6,583.

Figure 2.5 Number of cannabis seizures, 2006/07 to 2018/19, 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 3,664 seizures in 2018/19, a 5% increase since 2017/18 when there were 3,497 seizures. This reverses the declining trend in amphetamine seizures since 2007/08, when there were 8,414 seizures.
- In 2018/19 there were 959 seizures of ketamine, a 32% increase on the previous year when there were 725 seizures. This increase is mostly driven by seizures by police forces, which accounted for 90% of all ketamine seizures in 2018/19.
- The number of seizures of mephedrone fell by 6%, from 67 in 2017/18 to 63 in 2018/19. This continues the longer-term decline since 2012/13, when there were 3,850 seizures.
- The number of seizures of 'Other Class B' drugs in 2018/19 (3,554) was 31% higher than in 2017/18 (2,714).

Class C drugs

- There was a 4% increase in the number of seizures of Class C drugs in 2018/19 compared with the previous year, from 5,092 to 5,282 seizures.
- 43% of all seizures of Class C drugs involved benzodiazepines, with the number of seizures increasing by 13% between 2017/18 and 2018/19 (1,989 to 2,249).
- In 2018/19 there were 2,383 seizures of 'Other Class C' drugs, a 4% increase compared with 2017/18 (2,281 seizures).

Unknown substances

In 2018/19, the number of seizures of unknown substances increased by 32% compared with the previous year, from 8,678 to 11,489.

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 doses ^a	Summarised as plants
Amphetamines	Anabolic steroids	Cannabis plants
Herbal cannabis	Barbiturates	
Cannabis resin	Benzodiazepines	
Cocaine	Ecstasy	
Crack	LSD	
GHB	Methadone	
Heroin	Morphine	
Ketamine	Temazepam	

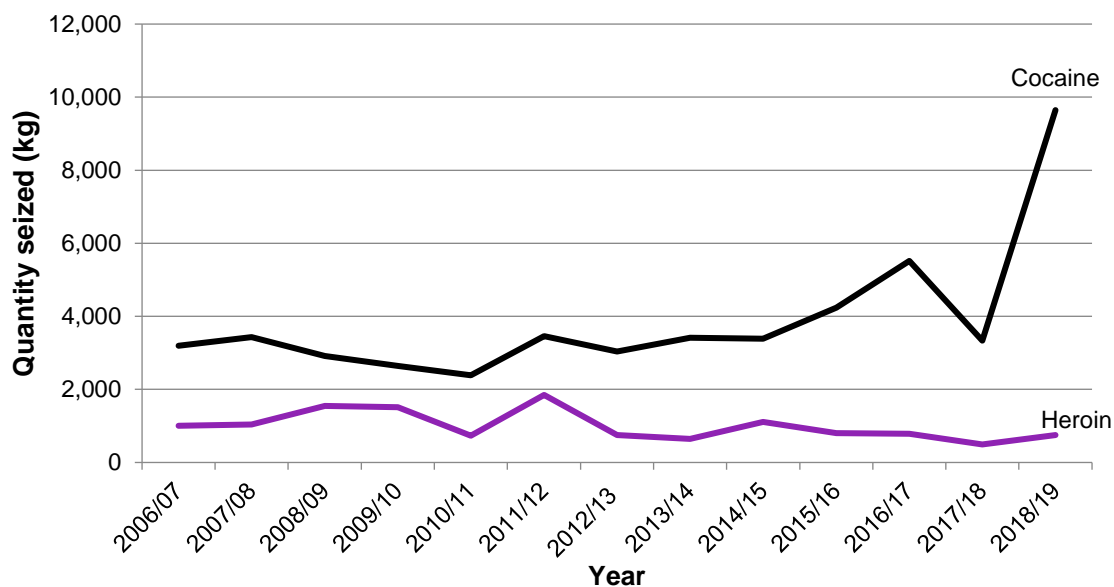
a. In the data tables these are presented in thousands of doses (000s).

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. The quantities of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues have not been converted into one comparable unit, as an accurate conversion factor could not be identified. See page 12 of the [user guide](#) for more information.

Class A drugs

- In 2018/19, 9,645 kilograms (kg) of cocaine were seized by the police and Border Force. This was an increase of 6,307 kg on the previous year (3,338 kg) and is the largest quantity of cocaine seized since recording began in 1973. This increase is largely driven by an increase in quantity seized by Border Force, who seized 92% of the quantity of cocaine for 2018/19.
- The quantity of cocaine seized in 2018/19 by Border Force increased by 6,220 kg compared with 2017/18 (from 2,660kg to 8,880kg), while the quantity of cocaine seized by police forces increased by 13% (from 678kg to 765kg).
- The total quantity of heroin seized in 2018/19 was 754 kg, a 53% increase on 2017/18 when 494 kg were seized. This was largely driven by an increase of 334 kg in the amount seized of heroin by Border Force, who had one particularly large seizure of over 100kg in 2018/19. In contrast, there was a 22% decrease (340 kg to 266 kg) in the amount of heroin seized by police forces.
- There were 63 kg of crack seized by police forces and Border Force in 2018/19, 5 kg more than in 2017/18 (an 8% increase) and the highest amount since 2004 when 140 kg of crack were seized. Border Force only seized a small amount (0.03 kg) of crack in 2018/19.

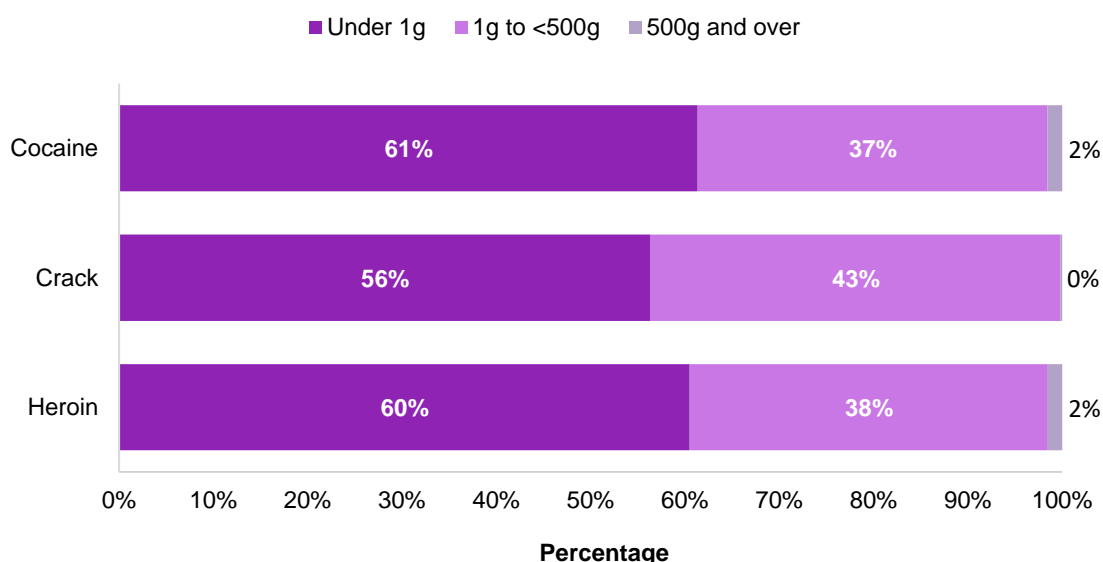
Figure 3.1 Quantity of cocaine and heroin seized, 2006/07 to 2018/19, police forces and Border Force



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

- As shown in Figure 3.2, 60% of heroin seizures in 2018/19 weighed under one gram, 38% weighed between 1g to <500g, and the remaining 2% weighed 500 grams or more. The distributions of cocaine seizures by weight were similar, with 61% under 1g and 37% between 1g and <500g with the remaining 2% weighing 500g and over. For crack seizures, 56% weighing under 1g, 43% weighing between 1g and <500g and 0.2% weighing 500g and over (12 seizures).

Figure 3.2 Distribution of quantities of Class A drugs seized, summarised in grams, 2018/19, police forces and Border Force

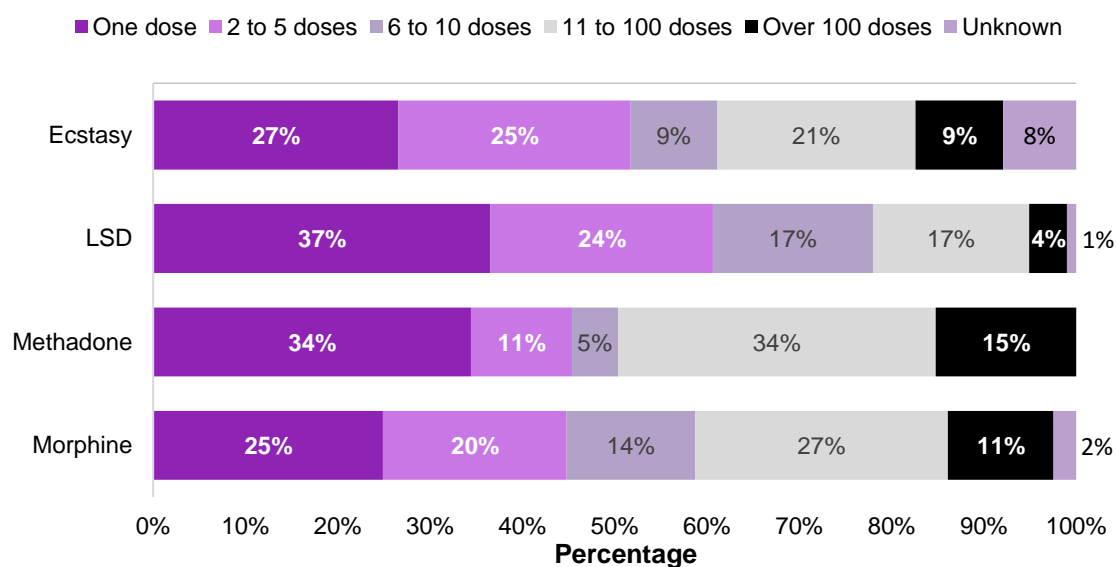


Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 3](#). Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

- There was an increase of 1.6 million doses in the quantity seized of ecstasy, from 682,864 doses in 2017/18 to 2,248,850 doses in 2018/19. This was largely driven by Border Force seizures, which increased from 467,194 doses to 1,903,651 doses in 2018/19. This is the highest quantity seized since 2006/07, when 6,610,906 doses were seized by police forces and Border Force.

- As shown in Figure 3.3, 61% of ecstasy seizures in 2018/19 involved 10 or fewer doses, and 31% involved over 10 doses, 8% unknown (Border Force).
- Seizures of LSD by police forces and Border Force increased from 3,352 doses in 2017/18 to 54,070 doses in 2018/19. This was the highest quantity recorded since 2005, when 1,137,000 doses of LSD were seized. This was largely driven by Border Force seizures, which accounted for 89% of the quantity seized of LSD in 2018/19. Over three-quarters of seizures involved 10 or fewer doses, however, Border Force had one large seizure of over 10,000 doses.
- The quantity of morphine seized increased from 9,256 to 21,831 doses between 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- The quantity of methadone seized decreased by 43%, from 53,189 doses in 2017/18 to 30,303 doses in 2018/19.
- A total of 112 doses and 68 kg of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues were seized by police forces and Border Force in 2018/19. Border Force seized 98% of weighed fentanyl (67 kg).

Figure 3.3 Distribution of quantities of Class A drugs seized, summarised in doses, 2018/19, police forces and Border Force



Source: Home Office, [Supplementary Table 2](#). Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

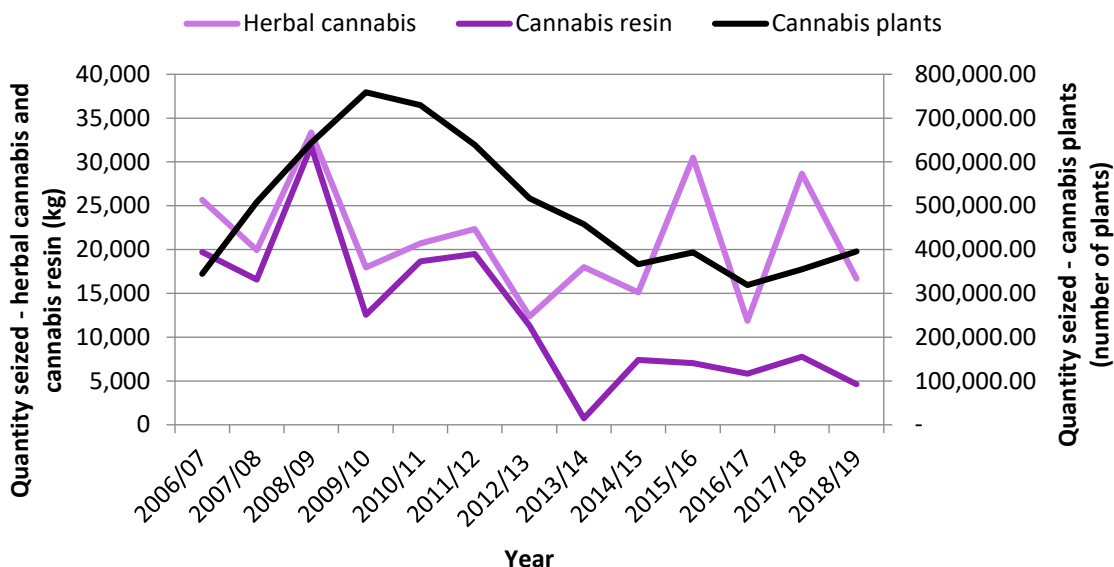
Class B drugs

Cannabis

- The total quantity of herbal cannabis seized in 2018/19 fell by 42% from the previous year, from 28,669 kg to 16,692 kg. As shown in Figure 3.4, this is after a considerable rise in the quantity of herbal cannabis seized in 2017/18 compared with 2016/17 (from 11,861 kg to 28,669 kg).
- The decrease over the last year is driven by a 54% reduction in Border Force seizures of herbal cannabis, from 25,585 kg in 2017/18 to 11,646 kg in 2018/19. Seizures of herbal cannabis by police forces however, increased by 64% over this period (3,085kg to 5,046kg).
- The total quantity of cannabis resin seized in 2018/19 decreased by 41% compared with the previous year, from 7,781 kg to 4,626 kg. The quantity of cannabis resin seized by Border Force decreased by 41% (from 7,126 kg to 4,169 kg), and the quantity seized by police forces decreased by 30% (from 655 kg to 457 kg).

- In 2018/19, a total of 395,843 cannabis plants were seized, an increase of 12% since 2017/18 when 354,540 plants were seized.

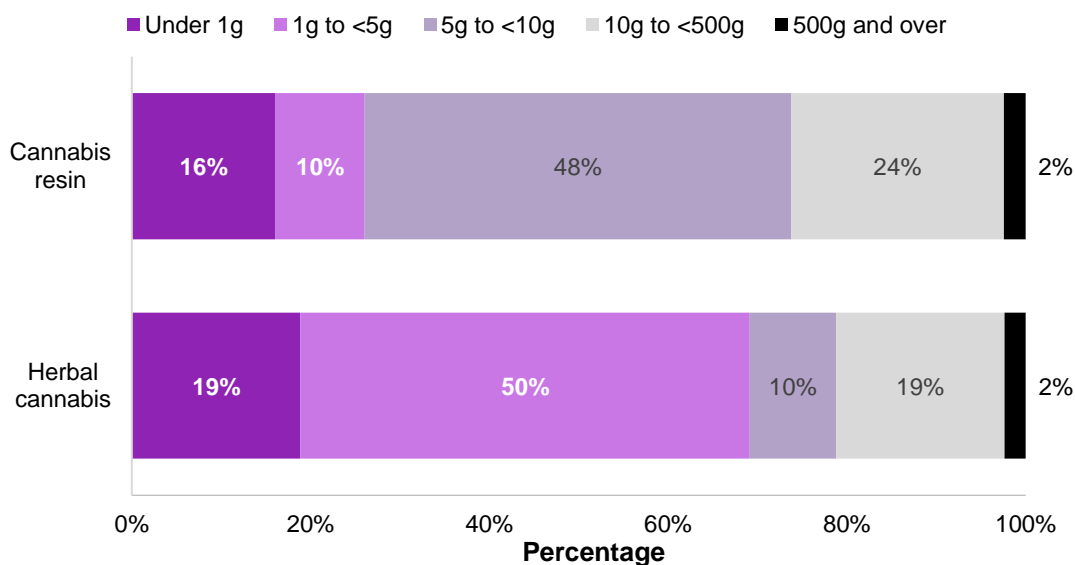
Figure 3.4 Quantity of cannabis seized, 2006/07 to 2018/19, police forces and Border Force



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

- As shown in Figure 3.5, 16% of cannabis resin seizures in 2018/19 weighed less than one gram, 10% weighed between 1 gram and <5 grams, and the remaining 74% weighed 5 grams or more.
- In contrast, 19% of herbal cannabis seizures weighed less than one gram, 50% weighed between 1 gram and <5 grams, and the remaining 31% weighed 5 grams or more.

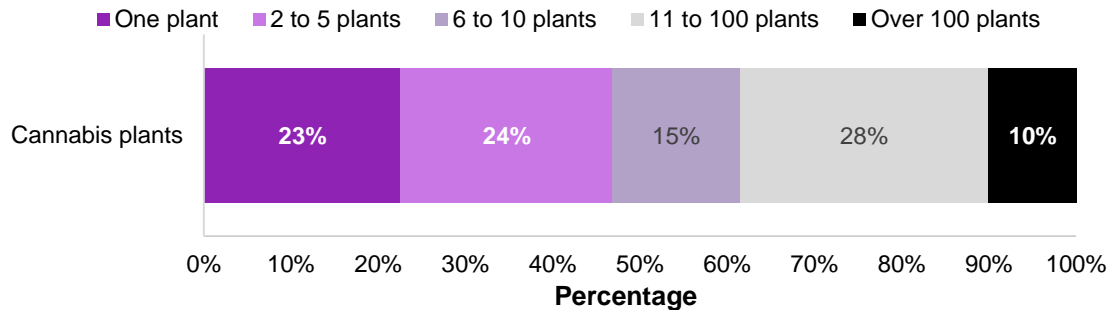
Figure 3.5 Distribution of quantities of herbal cannabis and cannabis resin seized, 2018/19, police forces and Border Force



Source: Home Office, [Supplementary Table 2](#). Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

- As shown in Figure 3.6, 47% of cannabis plant seizures involved five plants or fewer in 2018/19, 15% involved 6 to 10 plants, and the remaining 38% involved 11 plants or more.

Figure 3.6 Distribution of quantities of cannabis plants seized, 2018/19, police forces and Border Force

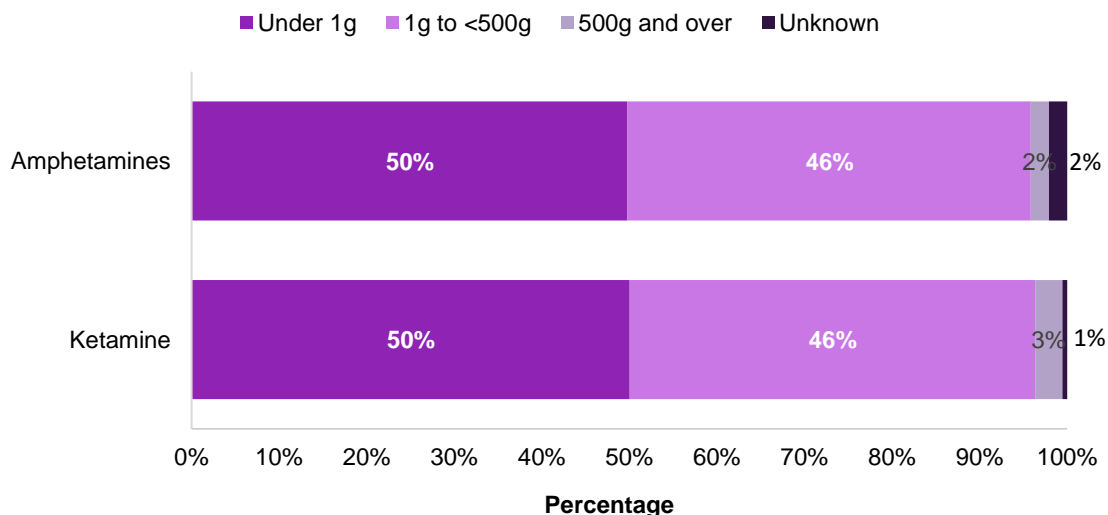


Source: Home Office, [Supplementary Table 2](#). Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Other Class B drugs

- There were 155 kg of ketamine seized in 2018/19, a 37% decrease from 2017/18 when 247 kg were seized. This was driven by a fall in the quantity seized by police forces (from 132 kg to 23 kg), while there was an increase of 16% in the quantity seized by Border Force (from 114 kg to 133 kg).
- In 2018/19 there were 668 kg of amphetamines seized, a 58% decrease on 2017/18 when 1,593 kg were seized.
- As shown in Figure 3.7, the majority of seizures of ketamine and amphetamines weighed less than 500 grams, with 50% of ketamine seizures and 50% of amphetamines seizures weighing less than one gram respectively.

Figure 3.7 Distribution of quantities of ‘Other Class B’ drugs seized, 2018/19, police force and Border Force

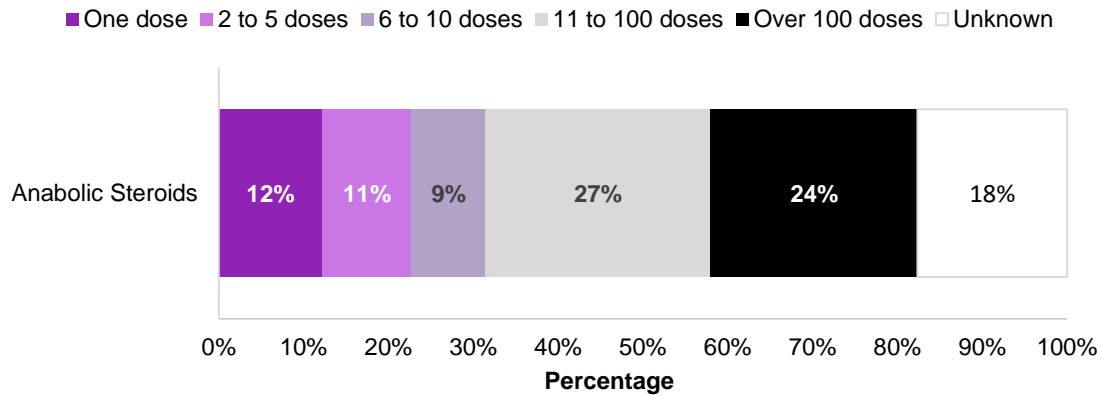


Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 3](#). Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Class C drugs

- The total quantity of anabolic steroids seized increased from 1.7 million doses in 2017/18 to 2.7 million doses in 2018/19, a rise of 55%.
- As shown in Figure 3.8, 31% of anabolic steroid seizures involved 10 doses or less in 2018/19, 27% involved 11 to 100 doses, 24% involved over 100 doses and 18% were unknown.

Figure 3.8 Distribution of quantities of anabolic steroids, 2018/19, police forces and Border Force



Source: Home Office, [Supplementary Table 2](#). Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

- The total quantity of benzodiazepines seized increased by 4% between 2017/18 and 2018/19, from 547,965 doses to 567,275 doses.
- The quantity of GHB seized increased slightly from 0.6 kg to 0.7 kg from 2017/18 to 2018/19.
- There were 1,100 doses of temazepam seized in 2018/19, a 73% decrease from 2017/18 when 4,085 doses were seized.

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 2018/19, 94% of seizures were made by police forces (144,198); the remaining 6% (8,937) were made by Border Force.

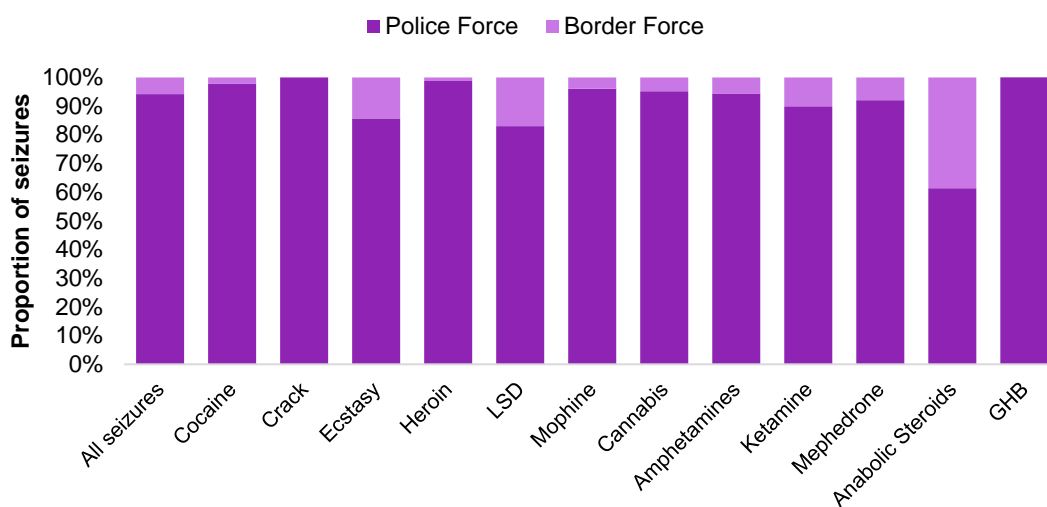
Table 4.1 Number of seizures made by police forces and Border Force, 2017/18 to 2018/19

	Police forces			Border Force		
	2017/18	2018/19	% change	2017/18	2018/19	% change
Class A	27,866	30,961	11	1,224	1,792	46
Class B	99,695	109,266	10	3,902	5,781	48
Class C	3,605	3,801	5	1,487	1,481	0
All	129,940	144,198	11	6,499	8,937	38

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

- The total number of seizures made by police forces in England and Wales rose by 11% in 2018/19 compared with 2017/18, whilst the total number of seizures made by Border Force over the same time period rose by 38%.
- Police forces accounted for 95% of all seizures of Class A drugs, 95% of all seizures of Class B drugs and 72% of seizures of Class C drugs, which is similar to previous years.
- For Class A seizures, police forces were responsible for almost 100% of crack cocaine seizures, and the majority of heroin (99%), cocaine (98%), morphine (96%), ecstasy (86%) and LSD (83%) seizures, as shown in Figure 4.1.
- For Class B seizures, police forces were responsible for 95% of cannabis, 94% of amphetamine seizures and 95% of “Other Class B” seizures.
- For Class C seizures, Border Force were responsible for 39% of anabolic steroids seizures and 51% of seizures of “Other Class C” drugs (including benzodiazepines and temazepam).

Figure 4.1 Proportion of drug seizure numbers by drug type and authority, 2018/19



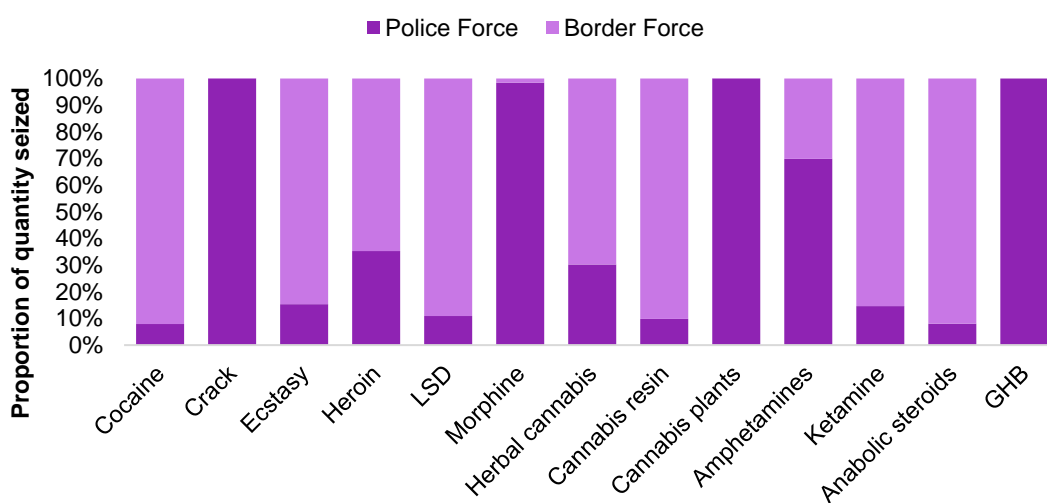
Source: Home Office, [Summary Table 4](#).

Quantity of seizures

Although Border Force accounted for just 6% of drug seizures in 2018/19, the proportion they seized in terms of quantity was much larger. This is because the agency is often involved in operations where large quantities of drugs are seized, for example at airports or ferry ports.

- For Class A seizures, Border Force seized 92% of cocaine (8,880 kg), 65% of heroin (488 kg), 89% of LSD (48,153 doses) and 85% of ecstasy (1.9 million doses) as shown in Figure 4.2.
- For Class B seizures, Border Force seized 70% of herbal cannabis (11,646 kg), 90% of cannabis resin (4,169 kg), and 30% of amphetamines (202 kg).
- For Class C seizures, Border Force seized 92% of anabolic steroids (2.5 million doses).

Figure 4.2 Proportion of drug seizure quantities by drug type and authority, 2018/19



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

In general, Border Force seized much larger quantities of drugs, per seizure, than police forces. For drugs measured in grams, 30% of seizures by police forces weighed under one gram, compared with 1% of seizures made by Border Force. For drugs measured in doses, 84% of seizures by police forces involved fewer than 50 doses, compared with 16% of seizures made by Border Force. A further breakdown by drug type is provided in Figure 4.3 to Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.3 Distribution of drug seizure quantities of cocaine by authority, 2018/19

Figure 4.4 Distribution of drug seizure quantities of heroin by authority, 2018/19

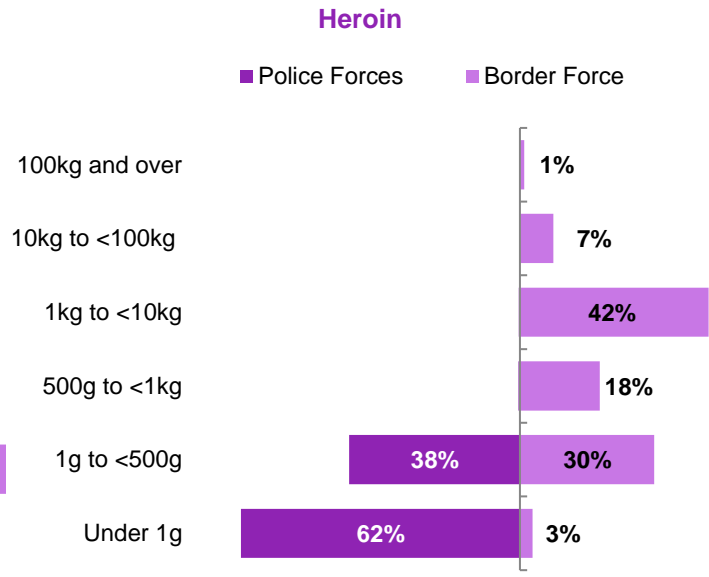
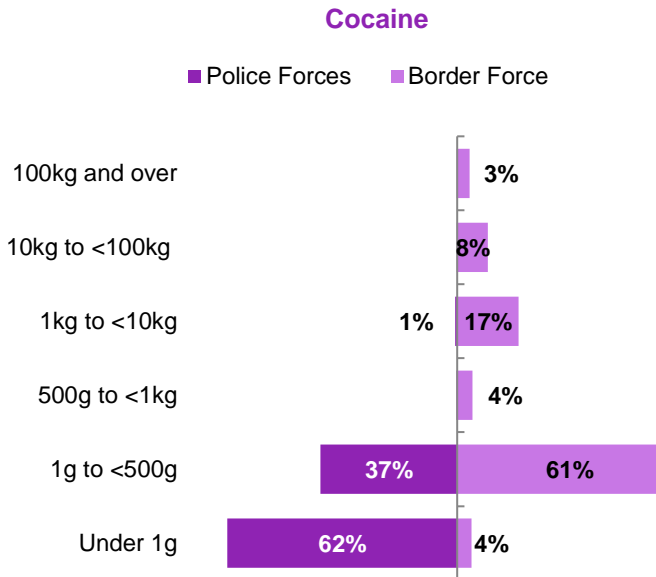
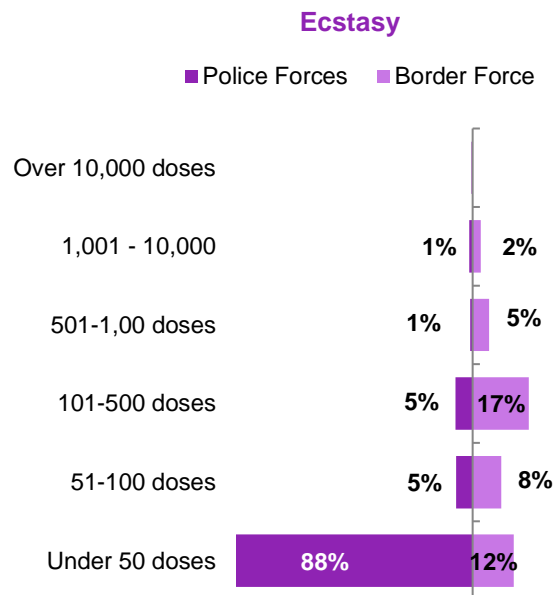
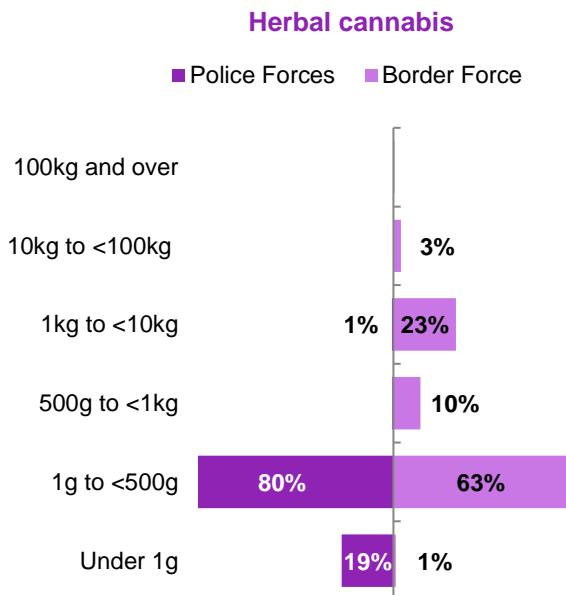


Figure 4.5 Distribution of drug seizure quantities of herbal cannabis by authority, 2018/19

Figure 4.6 Distribution of drug seizure quantities of ecstasy by authority, 2018/19



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

5 New Psychoactive Substances

New Psychoactive Substances

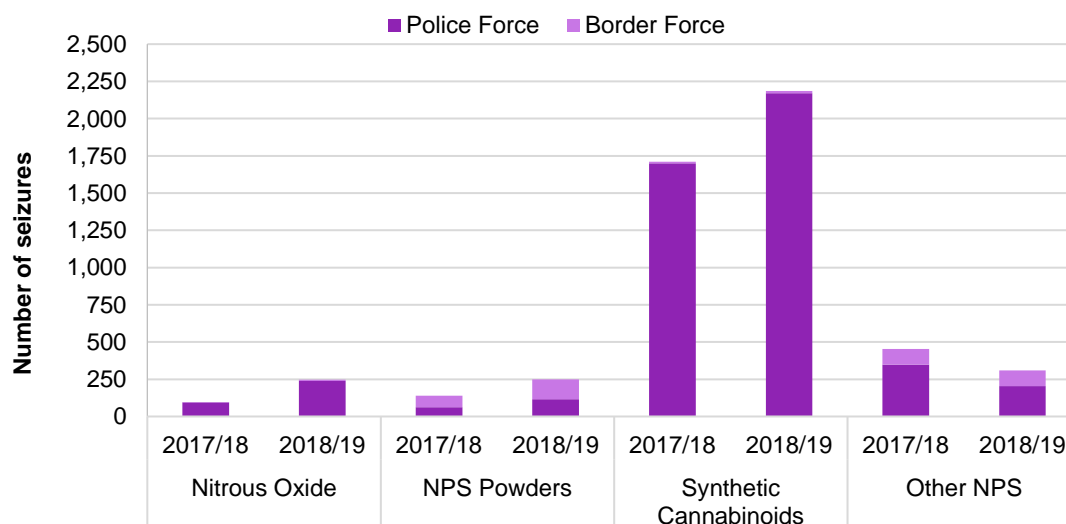
NPS refers to newly available drugs that mimic the effect of existing drugs such as cannabis, ecstasy and powder cocaine. Some NPS are controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971¹⁵, while other NPS are illegal to supply, produce and import under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016¹⁶. In 2017/18, figures for seizures of NPS were presented in this publication for the first time. Data is presented for 2017/18 and 2018/19, however these statistics remain as designated Experimental Statistics, as they are not yet fully developed and do not meet the rigorous quality standards of Official Statistics.

Seizures of NPS have been grouped into four categories: nitrous oxide, NPS powders, synthetic cannabinoids and other NPS (including pills). Seizures of synthetic cannabinoids are also counted against the 'Other Class B' category, as the 'third generation' of synthetic cannabinoids were controlled as Class B substances in December 2016¹⁷.

Number of NPS seizures

- In total, there were 2,973 seizures of NPS in 2018/19, a 25% increase from 2017/18 (2,386).
- As shown in Figure 5.1, synthetic cannabinoids were the most often seized category of NPS (2,186 seizures). This is a 28% increase from 1710 seizures in 2017/18. The number of seizures of NPS powders increased by 79% from 140 to 250, and nitrous oxide seizures increased from 96 to 247 seizures (157% increase).
- Seizures of other NPS decreased by 32%, from 454 in 2017/18 to 310 seizures in 2018/19.
- Police forces were responsible for 96% of nitrous oxide seizures, 99% of synthetic cannabinoid seizures, 66% of other NPS seizures and 46% of NPS powder seizures.

Figure 5.1 Number of NPS seizures by drug type and authority, 2017/18 and 2018/19



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

¹⁵ Which can be found here: [Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#)

¹⁶ Which can be found here: [Psychoactive Substances Act 2016](#)

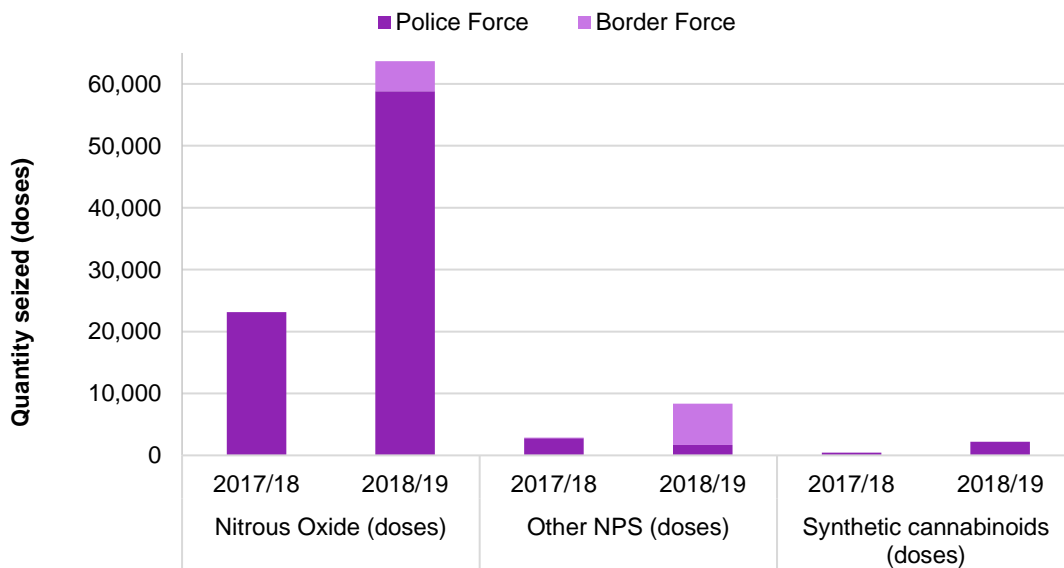
¹⁷ [Explanatory Memorandum](#), Home Office, 2016

Quantity of NPS seizures

The quantities of drugs seized are summarised in terms of kilograms (kg) for NPS powders, and are summarised in doses for nitrous oxide. 'Other NPS' seizures and synthetic cannabinoids have been presented with separate figures for kilograms and doses.

- As shown in Figure 5.2, a total of 63,697 doses of nitrous oxide were seized by police forces and Border Force in 2018/19¹⁸.
- A total of 1,559 kg of NPS powders were seized in 2018/19, of which almost 100% was seized by Border Force, with police forces seizing under 1 kg. This is an increase of 205% since 2017/18 (512 kg).
- A total of 69 kg of synthetic cannabinoids was seized in 2018/19, of which 96% (66 kg) were seized by police forces. This is a decrease of 47% since 2017/18 (130 kg). In 2018/19 a total of 2,207 doses of synthetic cannabinoids were seized, 405% more than in 2017/18 (437 doses).
- A total of 8,342 doses of other NPS were seized in 2018/19, of which 80% (6,651 doses) were seized by Border Force. A total of 4,887 kg of other NPS were seized, of which almost 100% (4,885 kg) were seized by Border Force. This is an increase of 735% since 2017/18 (585 kg).

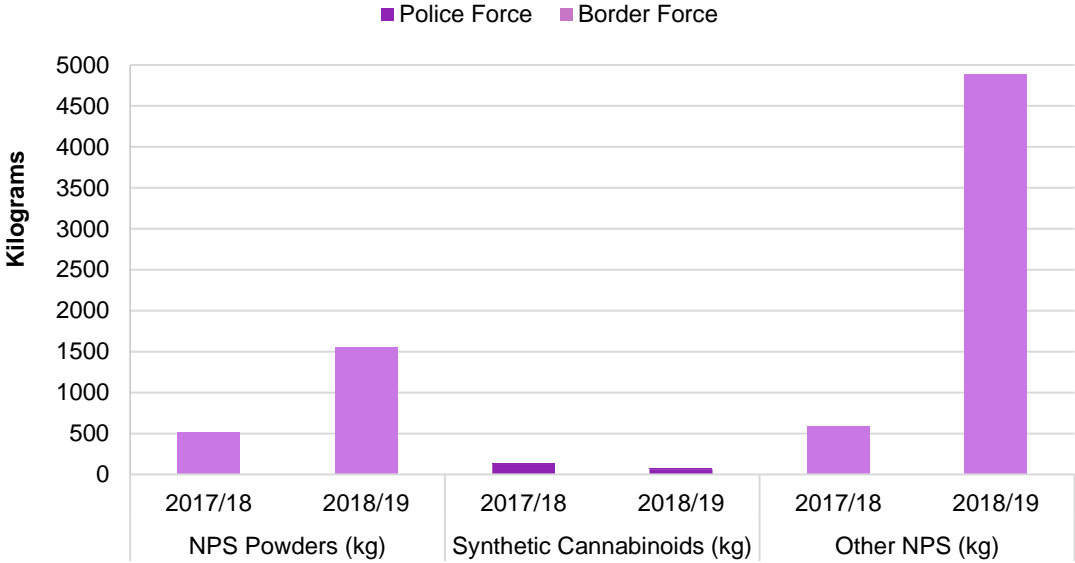
Figure 5.2 Quantities of NPS drugs seized by drug type and authority, summarised in doses, 2017/18 and 2018/19



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

¹⁸ Border Force were unable to supply quantity data for nitrous oxide in 2017/18.

Figure 5.3 Quantities of NPS drugs seized by drug type and authority, summarised in kilograms, 2018/19



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

6 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, and the Psychoactive Substances Act (PSA) 2016, which came into force on 26 May 2016. 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' category based on its class, for example 'Other Class A' for Class A drugs. 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](#). Information on the PSA is available at: [Psychoactive Substances Act 2016](#). Details about the counting rules used for calculating numbers of seizures in this bulletin are included in the [user guide](#).

Imputation

Three police forces (Hertfordshire Constabulary, Kent Police and Lincolnshire Police) were unable to provide fully accurate data for the 2018/19 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. Data for Border Force is only revised once (the year after the period they refer to).

In 2018/19 data revisions for 2006/07 data were provided by Thames Valley Police and data revisions for 2017/18 data were provided by Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Suffolk Constabulary and South Yorkshire Police.

Further information on the data collection process, and quality assurance of the data, can be found in Appendix A of the [user guide](#).

Revision to this bulletin

Following the initial release of data, some corrections were received from Border Force which affected data on seizures of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues. Revisions have therefore been made to Summary Table 1, Summary Table 4, Area Table 1, Area Table 3, Appendix Table 3 and Appendix Table 4 and Chapter 2 and 3 of the publication, 24% of pupils reported they had ever taken drugs, the same as in 2016 and similar to over a decade ago (25% in 2007).

7 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 Government¹⁹.

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.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland²⁰ (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.

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 indicators²¹.

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 Office²². According to the 2018/19 CSEW, around 1 in 11 (9.4%) adults had taken any illicit drug in the last year, similar to 2017/18 (9.0%) and similar to a decade ago (9.9% in the 2008/09 survey).

The Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England²³ is published by NHS Digital and contains results from a biennial survey of school children aged 7 to 11. Based on the 2018 survey, 24% of pupils reported they had ever taken drugs, the same as in 2016 and similar to over a decade ago (25% in 2007).

¹⁹ Latest drug seizure statistics for Scotland were published in March 2019 and are available online at: [The Scottish Government website](#).

²⁰ Latest drug seizure statistics for Northern Ireland are published monthly, and are available online at: [Police Service of Northern Ireland website](#).

²¹ Border Force publishes data on its key performance indicators at [Border Force transparency data](#).

²² See the latest edition of 'Drug Misuse: Findings from the 2018/19 Crime Survey for England and Wales', available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/drug-misuse-findings-from-the-2018-to-2019-csew>

²³ See the latest edition of 'Smoking, Drinking and Drug use among Young People in England', available at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/smoking-drinking-and-drug-use-among-young-people-in-england/2018/part-8-drug-use-prevalence-and-consumption>

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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