

Criminal Justice Project: Drug Interventions Programme

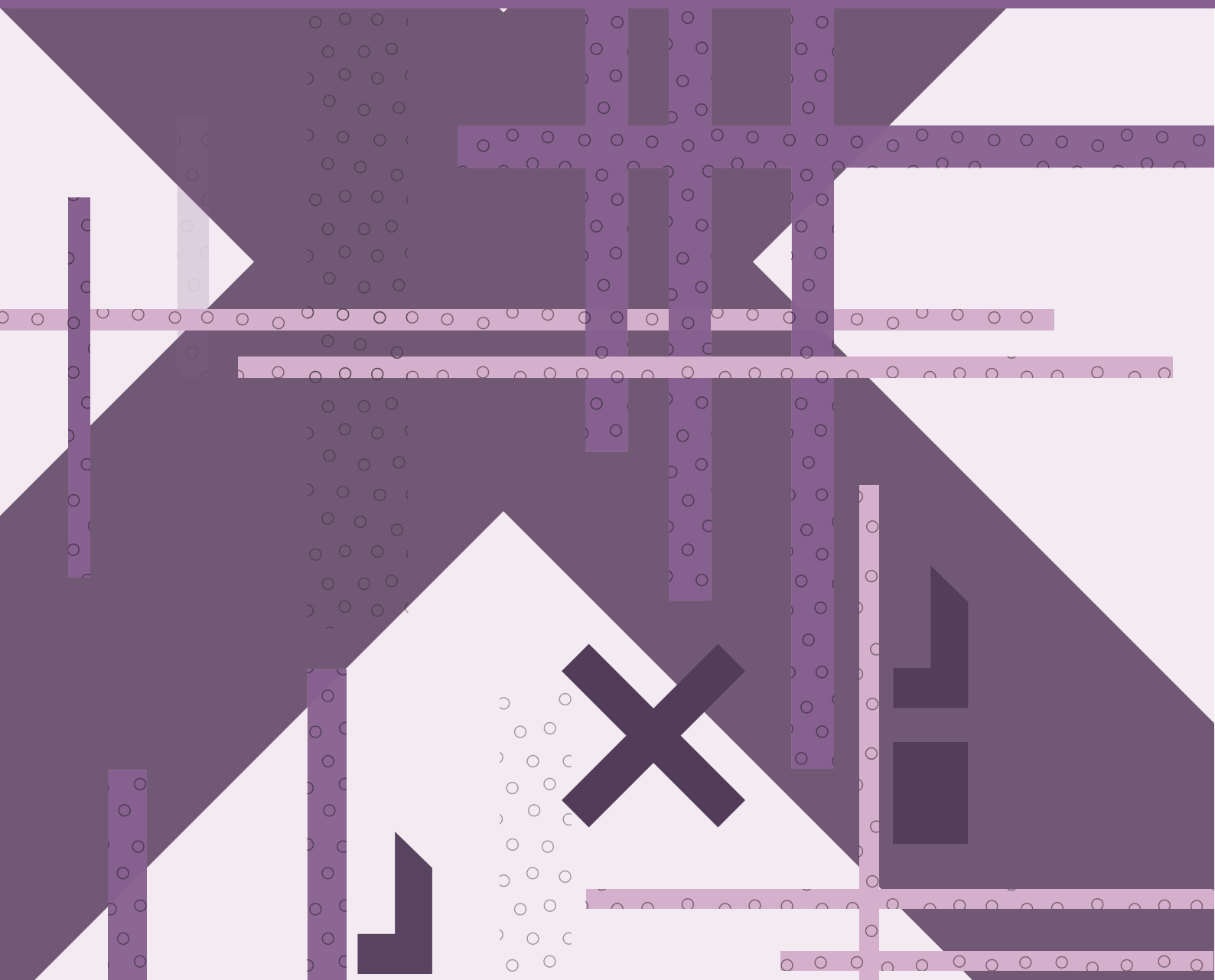
Class A drug tests in Merseyside Police custody:

year ending March 2024

October 2024



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KEY FINDINGS (YEAR ENDING MARCH 2024)

- Merseyside Police recorded 3,938 attempted drug tests for specified Class A drugs on adults across its custody suites in the year ending March 2024 (92.8% were Merseyside residents). This is a 5.5% increase on the 3,733 attempted tests in the previous twelve-month period and notably, the largest number of attempted drug tests since 2015/16, when targeted testing was implemented in Merseyside Police custody.
- Over half (54.8%) of the positive drug tests across Merseyside in the year ending March 2024 were cocaine only, while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 42.3%, opiates only = 2.9%).
- Where the positive result was maintained, there were a total of 2,343 Required Assessments served by Merseyside Police to 1,917 individuals in the year ending March 2024.
- Just under three-quarters (73.4%) of the positive drug tests in the year ending March 2024 occurred on a weekday.
- On a weekday, positive drug tests peaked at 20:00-21:59 (14.0%), followed by 10:00-11:59 and 12:00-13:59 (both 13.9%), and 16:00-17:59 (13.6%), while they peaked at 08:00-09:59 (15.2%) on a weekend, followed by 10:00-11:59 (14.0%) and 12:00-13:59 (13.5%)
- Around three in ten (30.6%) of the positive drug test records following an arrest by Merseyside Police in the year ending March 2024 were Misuse of Drugs Act offences; of which, 41.9% were possession, 33.3% were other drug offences and 24.8% were trafficking. Around one-quarter (25.6%) were theft (of which, 80.5% were shoplifting), followed by violence (12.4%), burglary (11.2%) and other offences (8.3%).
- Just over two in three (67.7%) adults who were arrested for theft tested positive for opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates), while there were larger proportions of cocaine only positive tests for burglary (51.0%), MDA offences (56.0%), violence (77.5%) and other offences (76.4%).
- Men accounted for just over four in five (82.5%) individuals testing positive in the year ending March 2024.
- The average age of individuals who tested positive in 2023/24 was 37 years. Over one-third (36.2%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by around one-quarter (25.6%) aged 40-49 years, just over one in five (22.3%) aged 18-29 years and around one in six (15.8%) aged 50 years or over.
- In the year ending March 2024, 171.7 per 100,000 adult population in Merseyside had a positive test for specified Class A drugs. Of the five Local Authority areas, Liverpool residents had the highest rate (223.4 per 100,000), followed by residents of St Helens (180.6), Knowsley (179.8), Sefton (134.4) and Wirral (130.8).
- Of the 1,986 individuals who reside in Merseyside who tested positive for opiates and/or cocaine in the year ending March 2024, just under one in five (18.7%) subsequently re-presented and were drug tested again following their initial positive drug test during the twelve-month period.
- Of the 372 individuals who re-presented between April 2023 and March 2024, just over four in five (83.1%) were men, and around two in five (41.1%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by 40-49 years (27.4%), 18-29 years (18.3%) and 50 years or over (13.2%).
- Just over three in five (61.3%) individuals who re-presented tested positive for opiate metabolites at their initial positive drug test between April 2023 and March 2024.

The Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) has an overarching aim to identify and engage with adults in the criminal justice system who use drugs and/or alcohol, and divert them to appropriate treatment services where a range of interventions can be delivered in order to reduce acquisitive crime (Home Office, 2011).

A key route into DIP is Drug Testing on Arrest (DTaA), where adults are tested for specified Class A drugs (crack/powder cocaine and/or certain opiates) in police custody following an arrest for a trigger offence, which are typically acquisitive crimes, as defined by the [Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000](#)¹.

If an individual tests positive, they can be served with a Required Assessment (RA) by the police, which is a compulsory legal sanction requiring the individual to attend up to two appointments (initial/follow-up RA) to assess whether further intervention is required to address their substance use and its related offending.

In 2015, Merseyside Police established targeted drug testing, which involves a set list of questions around Class A drug use and drug-related offending that should be considered before a decision is made on whether an individual is drug tested. This process has reduced the number of negative drug tests, while allowing people who offend and use Class A drugs to continue to be drug tested and referred to treatment services through the RA process.

This report from the Public Health Institute, Liverpool John Moores University, shows trends of drug tests carried out in Merseyside Police custody over an eight-year period up to the year ending March 2024². It contextualises Merseyside Police drug testing records for adults who offend and use crack/powder cocaine and/or opiates, identified through this key route into DIP. A demographic overview of this cohort and figures for residents of each of the five Merseyside Local Authority areas are also provided.

Non-compliance (breaches)

Where an individual fails to attend their RA appointment, the custody Sergeant is required to complete a statement confirming that an RA form has been issued. A police officer attends the home address to arrest the individual, who is then interviewed in police custody. A file for charge is compiled, then if appropriate, the individual is charged, followed by a court appearance to determine the next course of action.

In 2023, Merseyside Police was granted funding from the Home Office to address individuals who fail to attend their RA appointment. The police appointed a Drugs Offending Breach Manager to oversee this process.

Currently in Merseyside, the Drugs Offending Breach Manager contacts individuals who fail to attend their assessment. They are offered another appointment, providing a further opportunity to engage in the RA process. This has proven successful, with people re-engaging, reducing the need for punitive action.

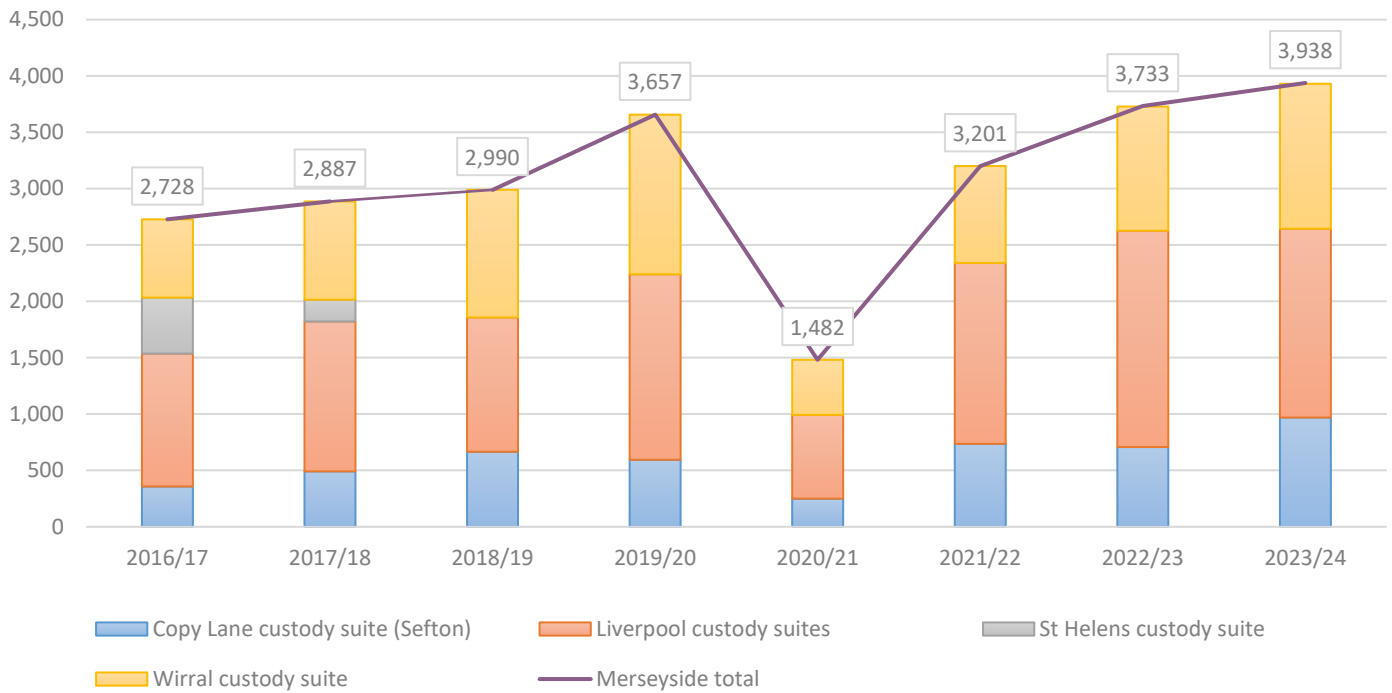
¹ Individuals can also be drug tested following a non-trigger offence where there is suspicion or grounds to suspect that specified Class A drug use by the individual caused or contributed to the offence. In such cases, an authority from an Inspector or above is obtained (Home Office, 2010).

² Notes to accompany this report are available in *Appendix A* (page 42). Furthermore, there are comparisons for the year ending March 2024 presented in charts in *Appendix C* for Merseyside residents (pages 44-45). Where comparisons have been made with Merseyside figures, these are totals for Merseyside residents only and not totals of tests carried out by Merseyside Police, which include all residents.

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2024, Merseyside Police recorded 3,938 attempted tests for specified Class A drugs on adults across the force's custody suites (*Figure 1*). This is a 5.5% increase on the 3,733 attempted tests in the previous twelve-month period and shows a continuing increase since the year ending March 2021, when drug testing was suspended for five months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, this is the highest number of attempted drug tests of the eight-year period and since 2015/16, when targeted testing was implemented in Merseyside Police custody.

*Figure 1: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite area and year, 2016/17 - 2023/24*³



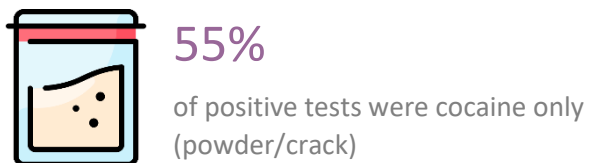
Liverpool's custody suites had the highest number of attempted drug tests, representing an average of 46% of all attempted tests in Merseyside during the eight-year period (*Figure 1*). However, the number of attempted tests carried out at Liverpool's custody suites decreased by 12.7% from 1,919 in 2022/23 to 1,675 in 2023/24, which was due to the temporary closure of St Anne Street (SAS) custody suite for refurbishment from mid-May for around four months.

Conversely, there were increases in the number of attempted drug tests at Copy Lane (Sefton) and Wirral custody suites, which can be attributed to the temporary closure of SAS. The number of drug tests carried out at Copy Lane custody suite increased by 37.0% from 708 in 2022/23 to 970 in 2023/24, while they increased by 16.7% at Wirral custody suite, from 1,102 in 2022/23 to 1,286 in 2023/24.

³ Notes regarding Merseyside Police custody suites are available in *Appendix A*. Also note that in 2023/24, there were three records that did not specify the custody suite where the test was conducted, and four records stated the drug test was carried out in a custody suite in Cheshire (during the temporary closure of St Anne Street custody suite).

Figure 2 (page 4) shows the drug testing activity for adults who were drug tested in Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024. Of the total 3,938 attempted drug tests, 3,910 were successful⁴, and subsequently 2,650 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs⁵. Overall, 67.3% of the attempted tests carried out by Merseyside Police between April 2023 and March 2024 resulted in a positive test, compared to 56.6% of the police forces in England and Wales reporting to the Home Office (2024a). This 10.7% difference could be attributed to the targeted approach used by Merseyside Police.

Over half of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=1,452, 54.8%), while over two in five (45.2%) were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 1,122, 42.3%; opiates only = 76, 2.9%).



Where the positive result was maintained⁶, there were 2,343 Required Assessments (RAs) served by Merseyside Police to 1,917 individuals in the year ending March 2024. Furthermore, just over half of the individuals served with an RA in the year ending March 2024 were assessed in police custody by the force’s health care provider (n=994, 51.9%; Figure 2)⁷.

Seizures of powder cocaine

The number of powder cocaine seizures by police forces and Border Force in England and Wales increased to 18,978 seizures in the year ending March 2023, the highest number recorded since the year ending March 2009. Furthermore, police forces seized the largest quantity of powder cocaine on record in the year ending March 2023 (3.36 tonnes), while a total of 18.58 tonnes combined was seized by police forces and Border Force (Home Office, 2024b).

Powder/crack cocaine related deaths

In 2022, 857 deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales involved powder/crack cocaine. This is 2.0% increase on the 840 deaths in the previous year and more than seven times the number recorded in 2011 (112 deaths; Office for National Statistics, 2023).

As reported by the Integrated Monitoring System Drug and Alcohol Related Deaths surveillance system, powder/crack cocaine was implicated in around three in ten (28.1%) of all toxicity deaths across Cheshire and Merseyside in the year ending 2022, which is a 20.2% increase on the previous year. Notably, just under three in five (55.6%) of these occurred for those not in the treatment system. Furthermore, just over half (53.2%) of cases in Cheshire and Merseyside had at least one cocaine metabolite mentioned in coroners’ toxicology results in the year ending 2022, a 15.0% increase on the previous year (Public Health Institute, 2023⁸).

⁴ Unsuccessful tests are those that have been refused or aborted (i.e., equipment failure or unable to provide sample). Note that there were 26 tests refused and a further two unsuccessful tests.

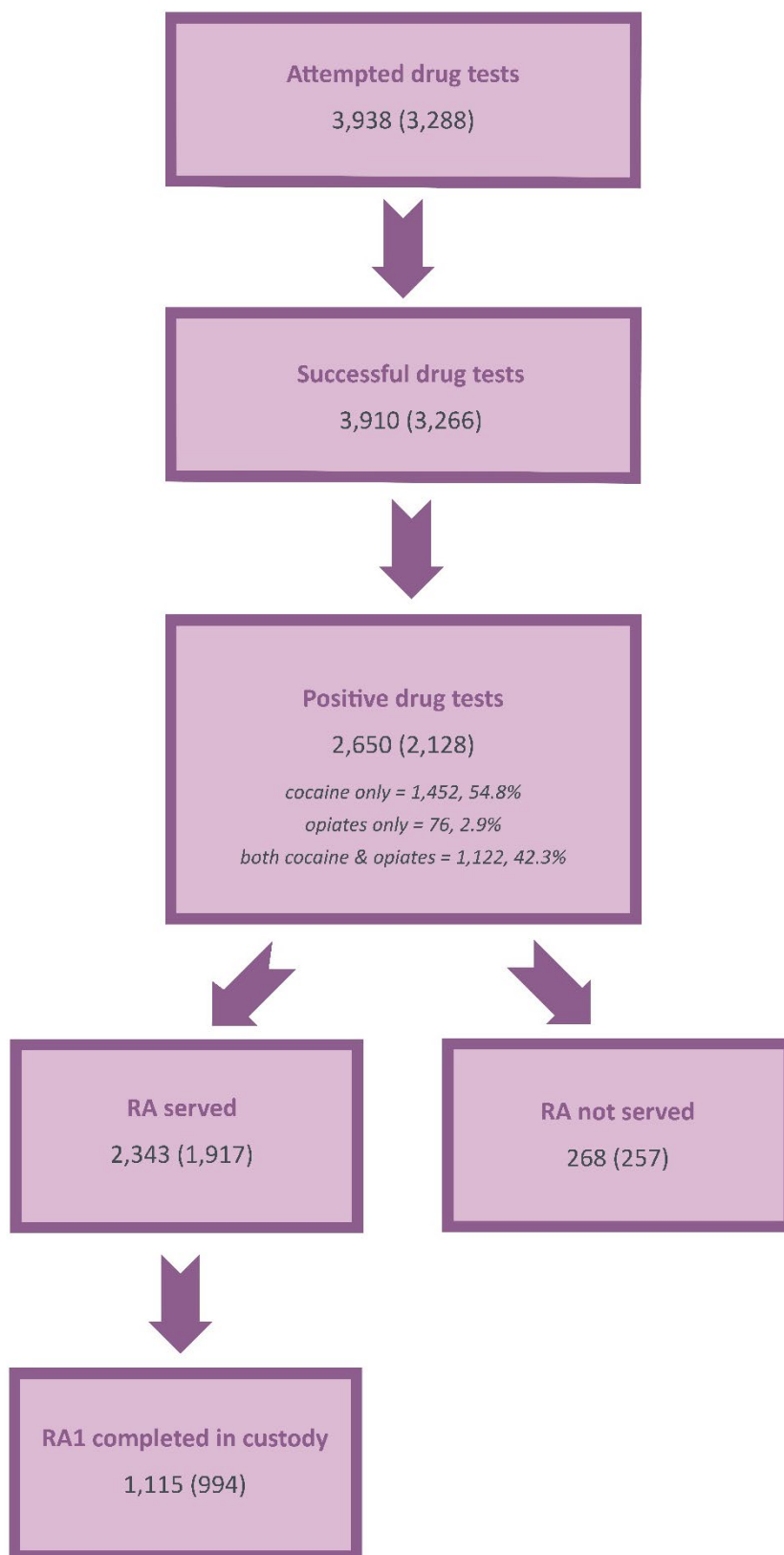
⁵ There was one record where the result of the test was not known.

⁶ The RA served figure excludes any drug tests where the positive result was overturned or not resolved following a dispute.

⁷ The health care provider ceased carrying out the initial RA in police custody on 11/03/2024.

⁸ Data is correct at the time of report production, but due to delays to inquests and data flows, they are subject to revision.

Figure 2: Drug testing activity in Merseyside's custody suites, 2023/24 ^{9,10,11}



⁹ Numbers of individuals at each level are presented in brackets.

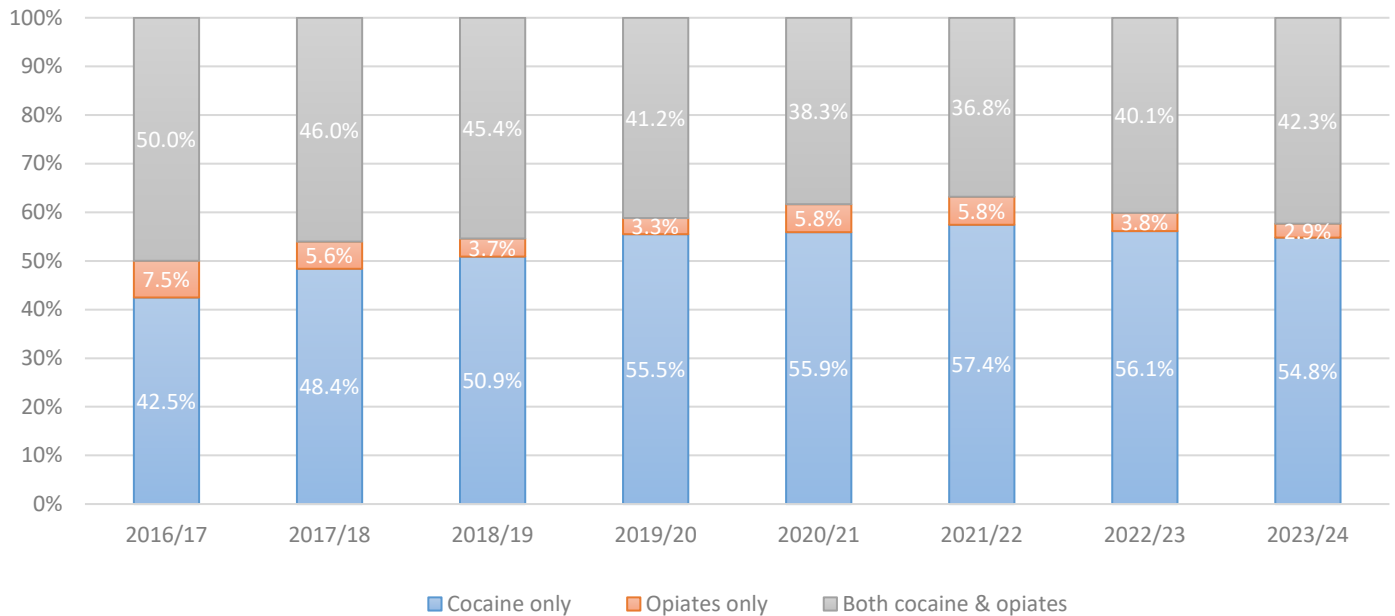
¹⁰ 'RA served' and 'RA not served' indicate the number of occasions when those who tested positive were either served or not served with the requirement to attend an initial RA (RA1). There are individuals with more than one positive drug test that could be included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'. Note that 13 records did not indicate if an RA was served or not. Also, there were 26 records where an RA was served but the positive result was overturned or not resolved following the dispute, which have been removed from the final 'RA served' figure.

¹¹ 'RA1 completed in custody' is regarding a temporary RA process introduced in July 2022, where the initial assessment was carried out by the health care provider in Merseyside Police custody. As of 11/03/2024, the RA process reverted to its original process; all initial assessments (RA1) are carried out by the local drug and alcohol treatment providers.

POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

Between 2016/17 and 2021/22, there was a year-on-year increase in the proportion of cocaine only positive tests, though this decreased by 1.3% in 2022/23 and a further 1.3% in 2023/24, while the proportion of both cocaine and opiates in 2023/24 is the largest since 2018/19 (Figure 3). Notably, the proportion of positive tests for opiates only in the year ending March 2024 is the smallest of the eight-year period, a decrease of 4.7% when compared to the year ending March 2017.

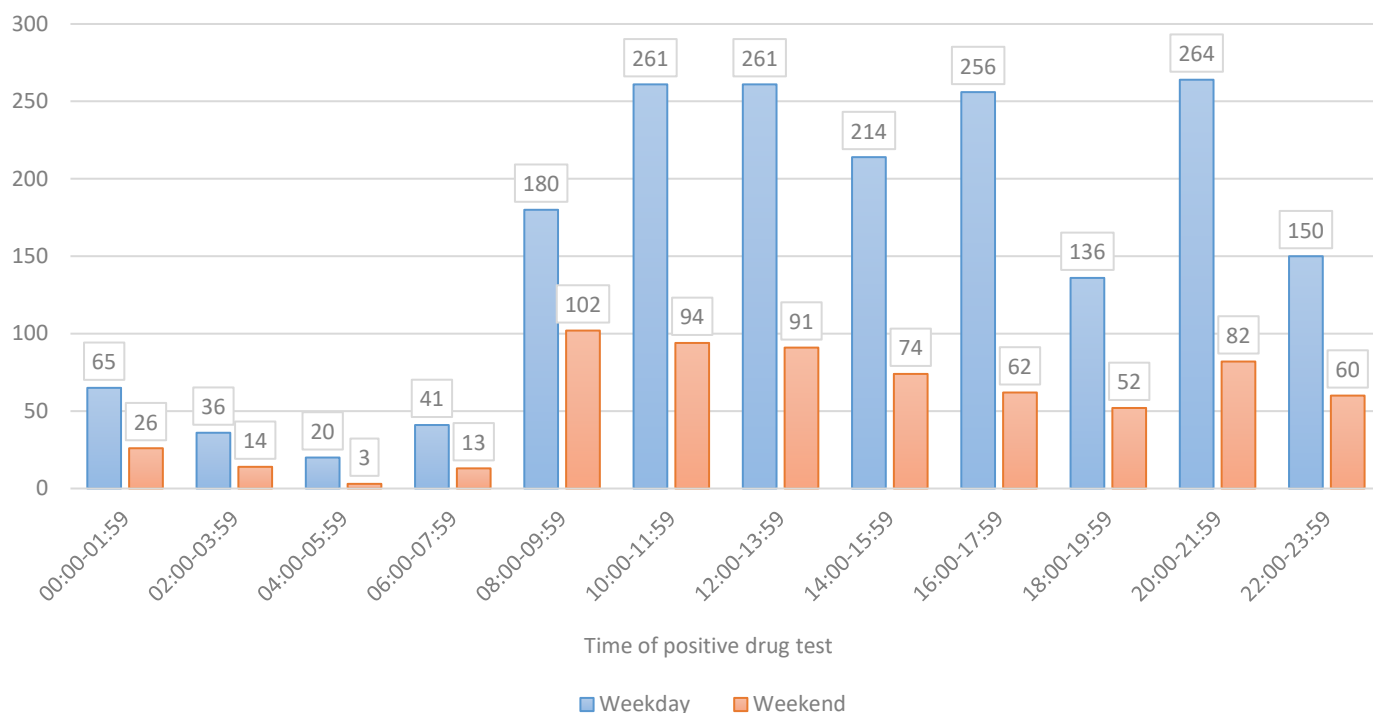
Figure 3: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, 2016/17 - 2023/24



TIME OF DRUG TESTS

Of the positive drug tests across Merseyside's custody suites in the year ending March 2024, just under three-quarters occurred on a weekday (n=1,944, 73.4%), compared to just over one-quarter on a weekend (n=703, 26.6%). Figure 4 shows the number of positive drug tests by time of test, where recorded, comparing those that occurred on a weekday with those on a weekend. On a weekday, positive drug tests peaked at 20:00-21:59 (n=264, 14.0%), followed by 10:00-11:59 and 12:00-13:59 (both n=261, 13.9%), and 16:00-17:59 (n=256, 13.6%). While on a weekend, they peaked at 08:00-09:59 (n=102, 15.2%), followed by 10:00-11:59 (n=94, 14.0%) and 12:00-13:59 (n=91, 13.5%).

Figure 4: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2023/24 ^{12,13}



BELLE VALE, ST ANNE STREET AND WAVERTREE CUSTODY SUITES, LIVERPOOL

Of the 1,103 positive drug tests at Liverpool’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024, just under three-quarters occurred on a weekday (n=807, 73.2%), compared to just over one-quarter on a weekend (n=296, 26.8%). Where recorded, positive drug tests on a weekday peaked at 16:00-17:59 (n=132, 17.0%), while the number of tests on a weekend were generally between 08:00 and 17:59 (*Appendix B1*).

COPY LANE CUSTODY SUITE, SEFTON

Of the 639 positive drug tests at Copy Lane custody suite in the year ending March 2024, three-quarters occurred on a weekday (n=477, 74.6%), compared to a quarter on a weekend (n=162, 25.4%). Where recorded, positive drug tests on a weekday peaked at 20:00-21:59 (n=70, 15.0%), followed by 12:00-13:59 (n=68, 14.6%), while the number of tests on a weekend peaked at 08:00-09:59 (n=25, 16.1%; *Appendix B2*).

WIRRAL CUSTODY SUITE

Of the 905 positive drug tests at Wirral custody suite in the year ending March 2024, just under three-quarters occurred on a weekday (n=660, 72.9%), compared to just over one-quarter on a weekend (n=245, 27.1%). Where recorded, positive drug tests on a weekday peaked at 20:00-21:59 (n=94, 14.7%), followed by 12:00-13:59 (n=93, 14.5%) and 10:00-11:59 (n=92, 14.4%), while the number of tests on a weekend peaked at 08:00-09:59 (n=37, 15.6%) and 10:00-11:59 (n=38, 16.0%; *Appendix B3*).

¹² There were 93 records that did not have the time of test recorded. A new Drug Testing Recorder was implemented in April 2023 due to Home Office requirements; Merseyside Police only added 'Time of test' field on 13 April 2023.

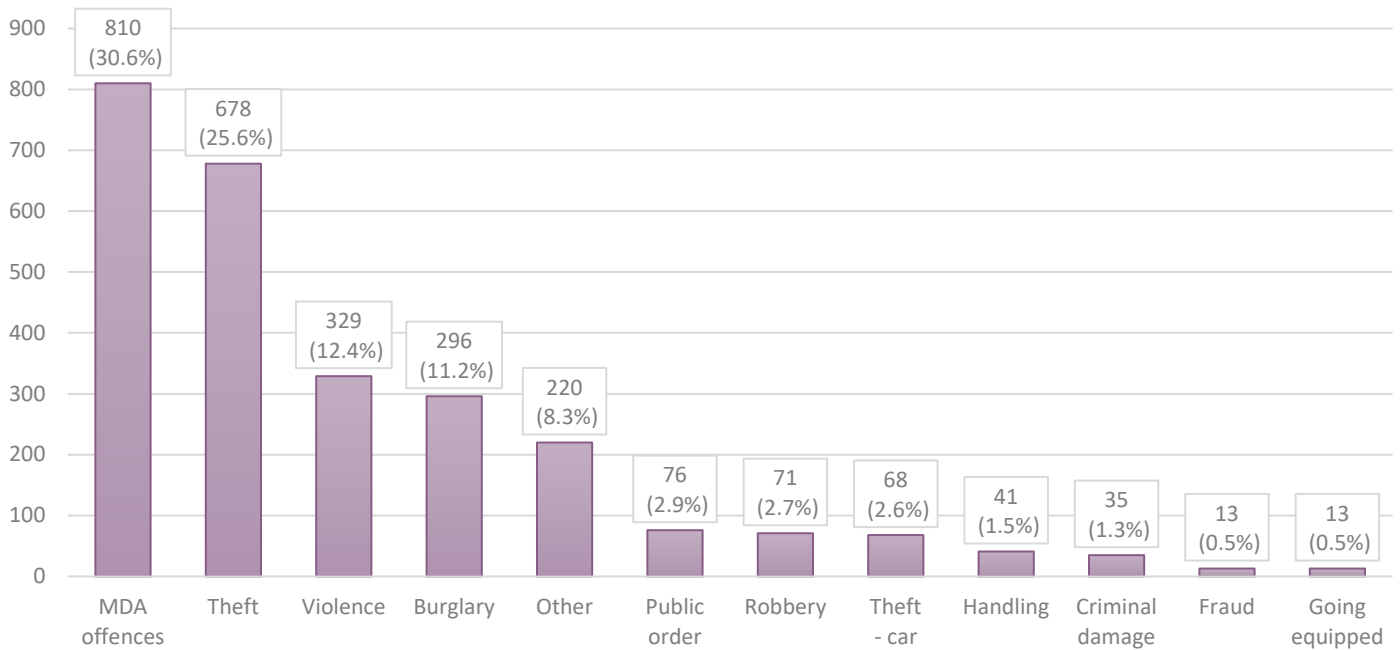
¹³ Seven records were excluded as the drug test was carried out at a Cheshire Constabulary custody suite or the custody suite was not recorded.

OFFENCES

Police drug testing records capture the offence that led to the arrest and subsequent drug test. In the year ending March 2024, three-quarters of the positive drug tests were following a trigger offence (n=1,983, 74.8%).

Around three in ten of the positive drug test records across Merseyside in the year ending March 2024 were Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=810, 30.6%), while around one-quarter were theft (n=678, 25.6%¹⁴), followed by violence (n=329, 12.4%), burglary (n=296, 11.2%) and other offences (n=220, 8.3%¹⁵; Figure 5).

Figure 5: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, 2023/24 ¹⁶



Theft - shoplifting

Of the 405 individuals who tested positive for specified drugs following an arrest for shoplifting in the year ending March 2024, just under three-quarters (73.3%) were men, and just under two in five (37.5%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by 40-49 years (33.6%), 50 years or over (19.0%) and 18-29 years (9.9%).

In March 2024, Merseyside Police removed the targeted approach for shoplifting. All adults in police custody following an arrest for shoplifting are now drug tested. It is expected that there will be an increase in the number of positive drug tests for those arrested for shoplifting and identified for treatment through the RA process.

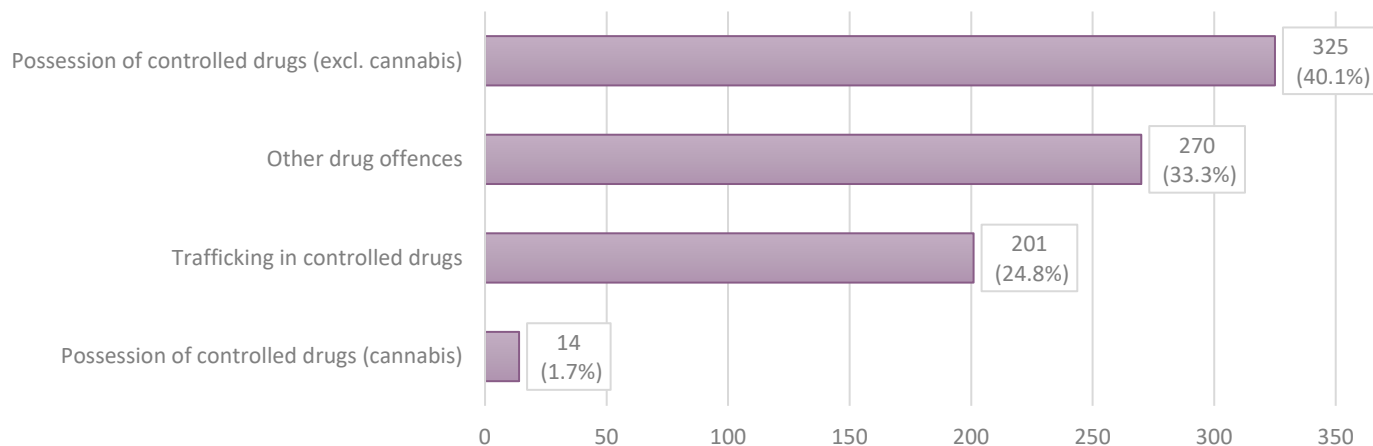
¹⁴ Theft (excludes theft of a vehicle): shoplifting = 546, 80.5%.

¹⁵ Other offences: miscellaneous crimes = 202, 91.8%; stalking and harassment = 15, 6.8%; vehicle interference = 3, 1.4%.

¹⁶ MDA = Misuse of Drugs Act; violence = violence against the person (VATP); criminal damage includes arson.

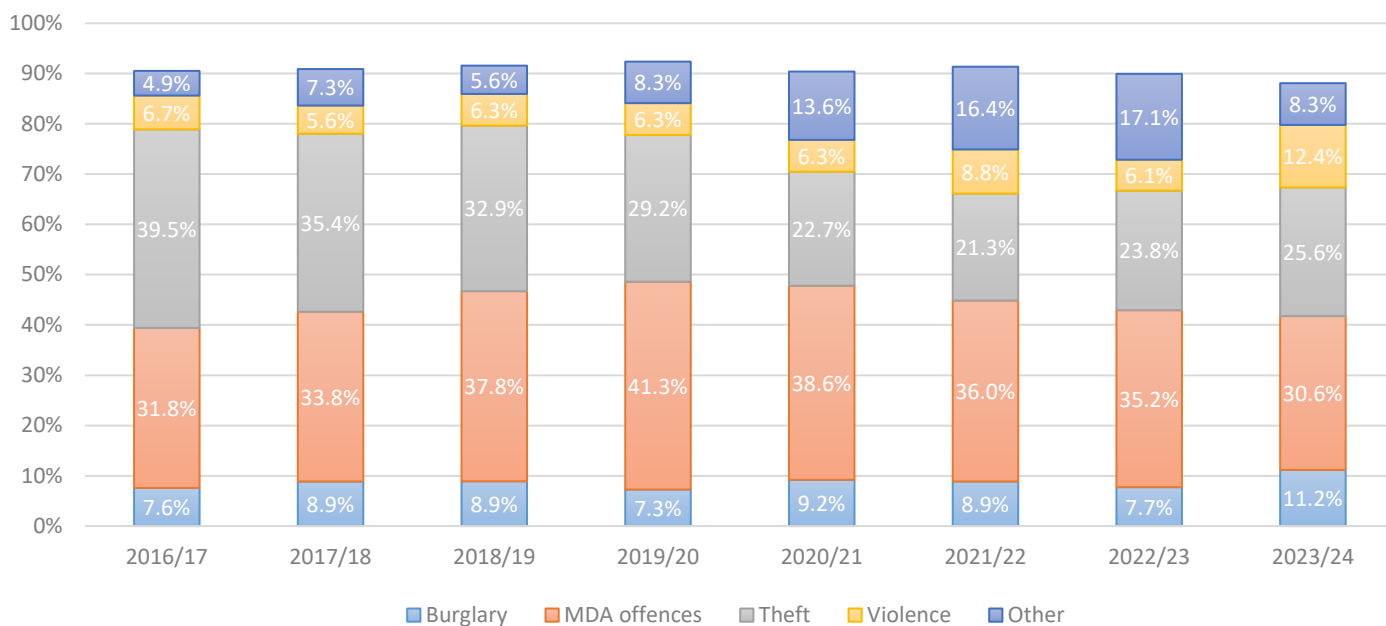
Figure 6 shows the type of MDA offences recorded in the year ending March 2024. Of the 810 MDA offences recorded for those who tested positive in the twelve-month period, two in five were possession of controlled drugs (excluding cannabis; n=325, 40.1%), while a third were other drug offences (n=270, 33.3%), a quarter were trafficking in controlled drugs (n=201, 24.8%) and the remaining MDA offences were possession of controlled drugs (cannabis; n=14, 1.7%; Figure 6)¹⁷.

Figure 6: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by type of MDA offence, 2023/24



Notably, there have been some changes in the trends of some offending categories (Figure 7). In the year ending March 2024, there were increases in burglary, theft and violence, though decreases in MDA offences and other offences. Although the proportion of burglary fluctuated over the eight-year period, it increased by 3.4% in 2023/24, while the proportion of theft is the largest since 2019/20, and notably, the proportion of violence in 2023/24 is the largest of the eight years and doubled when compared to the previous year. Between 2016/17 and 2019/20, the proportion of MDA offences increased year-on-year, peaking at 41.3%, followed by a year-on-year decrease to 30.6% in 2023/24, the smallest proportion of the eight-year period. There had been an upward trend in other offences in recent years; however, the proportion in 2023/24 is the smallest since 2019/20.

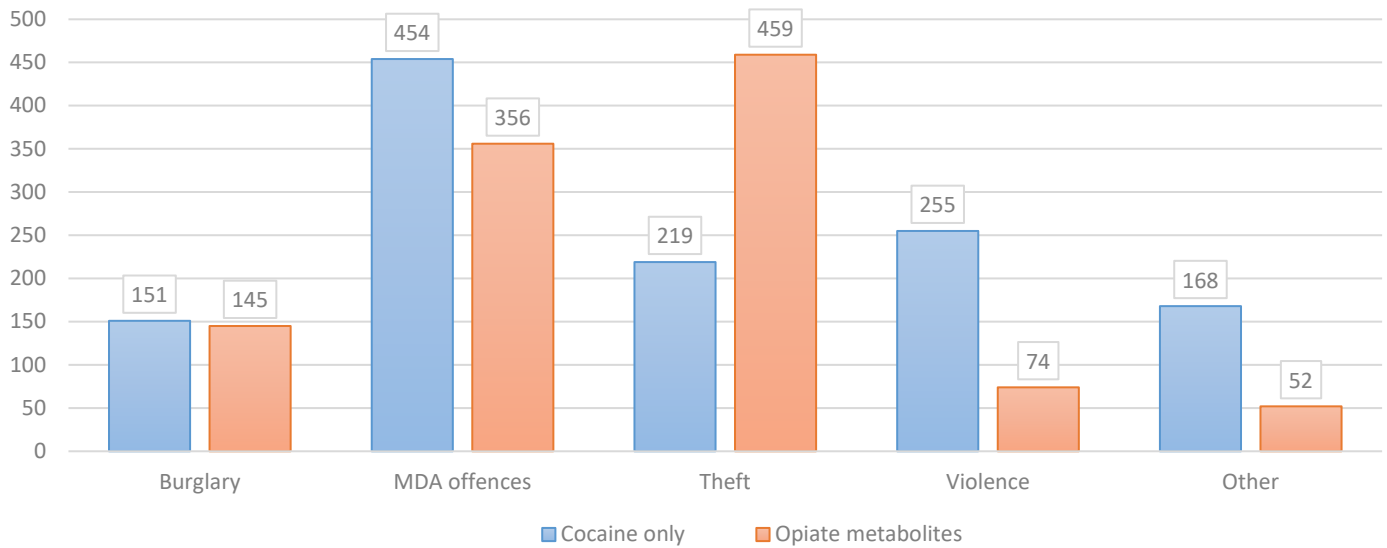
Figure 7: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offence trends, 2016/17 - 2023/24



¹⁷ In April 2023, there were some changes to the offences reported in the drug testing records. MDA offences were previously categorised as possession, possession with intent to supply, supply, production and other drug offences.

Figure 8 shows the five offences with the highest numbers recorded in the year ending March 2024 by the positive drug test result. Of the drug testing records with theft recorded, around two in three were positive for opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates; n=459, 67.7%), more than double the number of cocaine only (n=219). There were larger numbers of cocaine only positive tests than opiate metabolites for MDA offences (n=454, 56.0%), violence (n=255, 77.5%) and other offences (n=168, 76.4%), while numbers of cocaine only and opiate metabolites were similar for burglary (151 and 145 respectively).

Figure 8: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence and drug test result, 2023/24



Violence & powder/crack cocaine

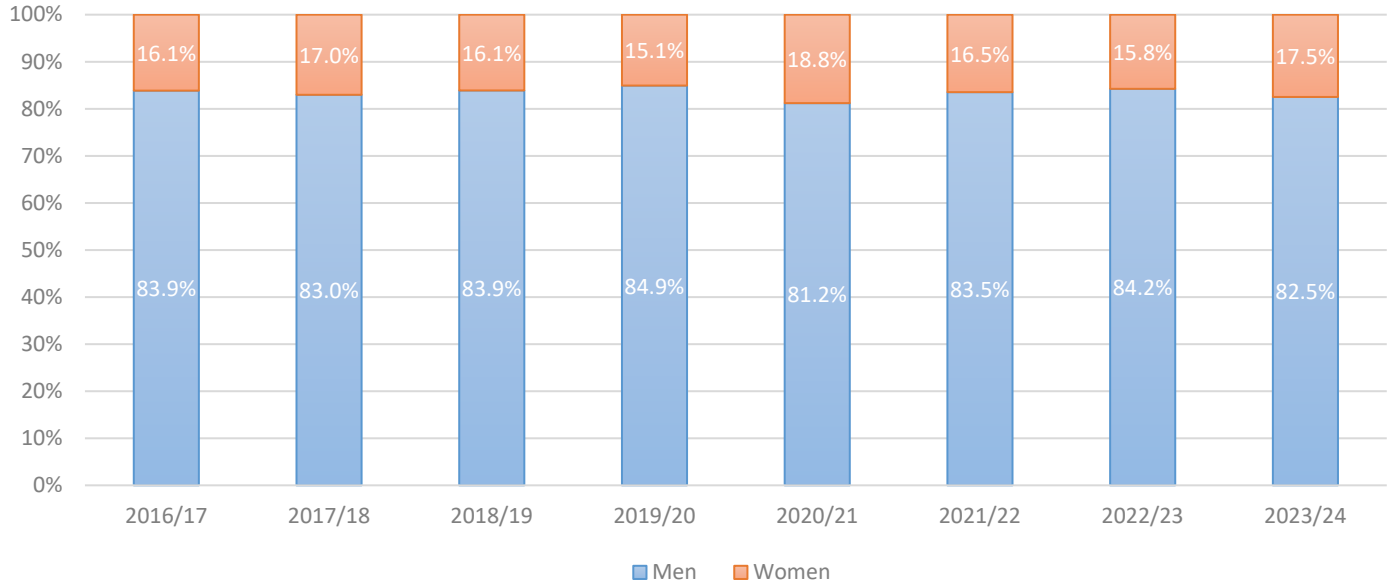
Just over two in five (42.4%) of the 255 positive tests for cocaine only for those arrested for a violence-related offence in the year ending March 2024 were drug tested on a Saturday or Sunday. Where recorded (n=119), half (50.4%) of the violence and cocaine cohort were domestic related.

Of the 248 individuals, over four in five (85.1%) were men, and over two in five (45.2%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by 18-29 years (27.4%), 40-49 years (20.6%) and 50 years or over (6.9%).

DEMOGRAPHICS

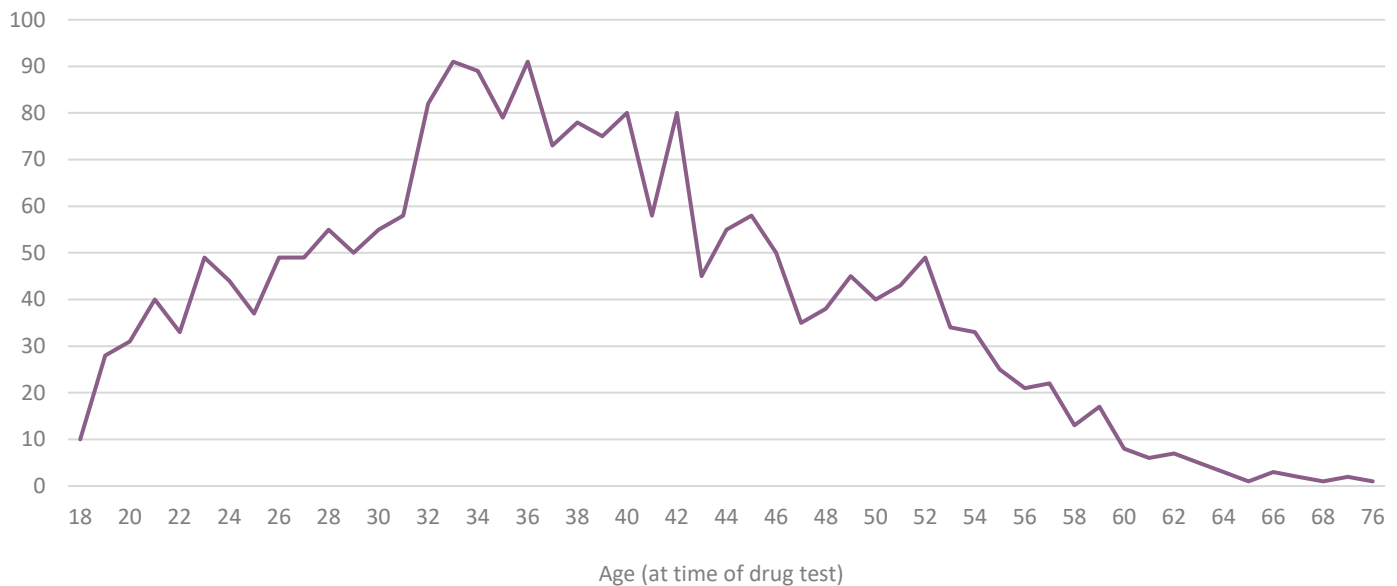
Men accounted for just over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024 (n=1,756, 82.5%). This is the second smallest proportion of men of the eight-year period, after 2020/21 (81.2%; Figure 9).

Figure 9: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender (individuals), 2016/17 - 2023/24



Where stated, the majority of individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 were White (n=2,041, 96.1%). The average age was 37 years (men = 37, women = 38) and numbers peaked for individuals aged 33 and 36 years (both n=91; Figure 10).

Figure 10: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test (individuals), 2023/24¹⁸

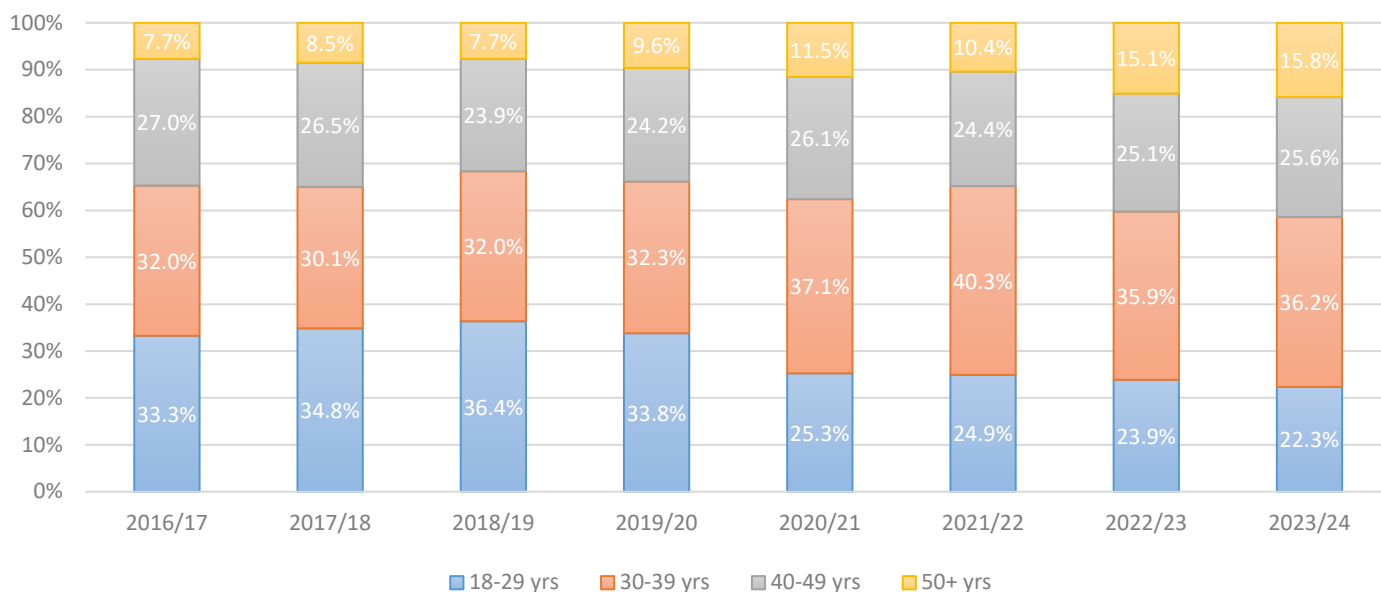


¹⁸ There were two records that did not have their age or date of birth recorded.

Over one-third of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 were aged 30-39 years (n=771, 36.2%), followed by around one-quarter aged 40-49 years (n=544, 25.6%), just over one in five aged 18-29 years (n=475, 22.3%) and around one in six aged 50 years or over (n=337, 15.8%; *Figure 11*).

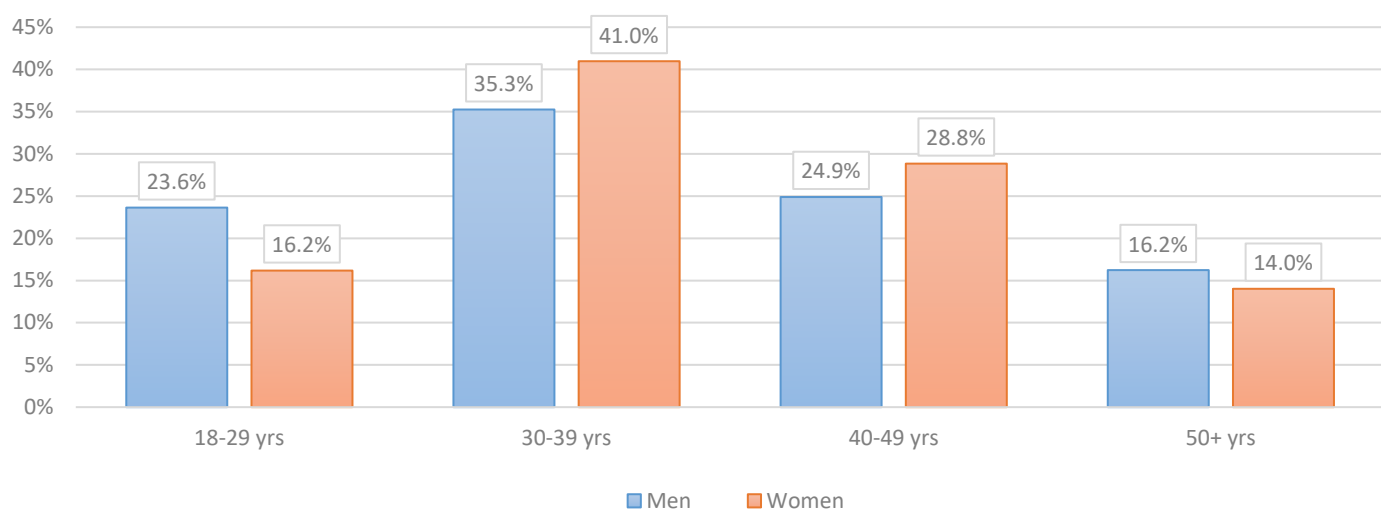
Since 2018/19, the proportion of individuals aged 18-29 years decreased year-on-year to the smallest proportion of the eight-year period in 2023/24, while the proportion aged 50 years or over increased in the latest two years, with 2023/24 having the largest proportion of the eight-year period. Proportions aged 30-39 years and 40-49 years in 2023/24 are similar to the previous year (*Figure 11*).

*Figure 11: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group (individuals), 2016/17 - 2023/24*¹⁹



There are some variations when looking at the age groups by gender in the year ending March 2024 (*Figure 12*). There were larger proportions of men than women aged 18-29 years (23.6% and 16.2% respectively) and 50 years or over (16.2% and 14.0% respectively), though larger proportions of women than men aged 30-39 years (41.0% and 35.3% respectively) and 40-49 years (28.8% and 24.9% respectively).

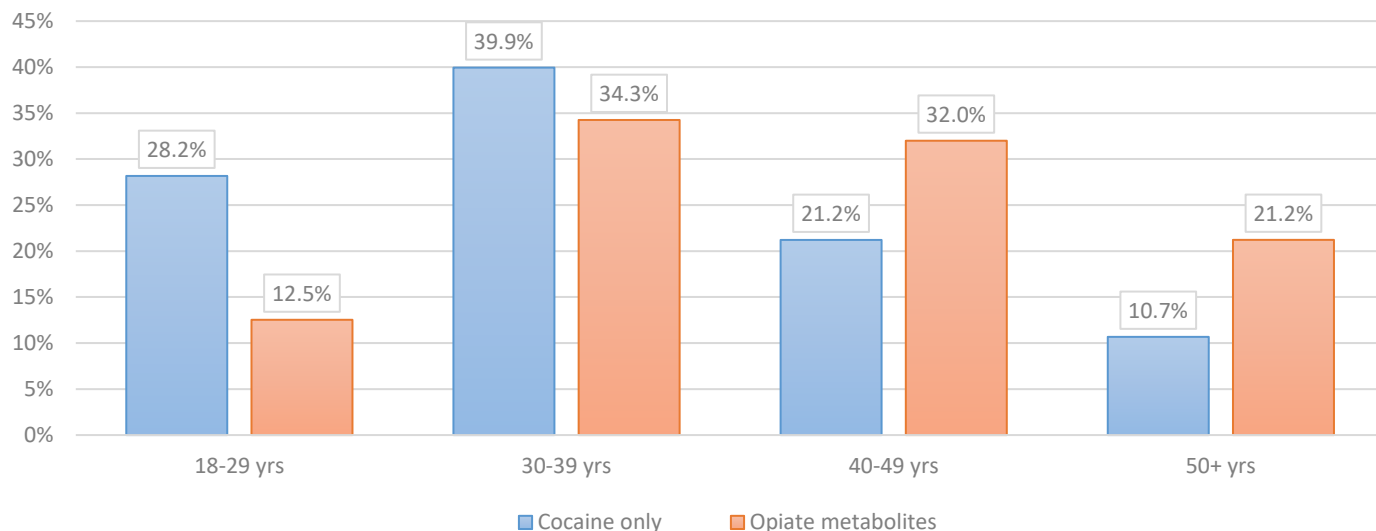
Figure 12: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and gender (individuals), 2023/24



¹⁹ Although there were two records that did not have a date of birth recorded, one of these had the age group recorded.

Positive drug test results in 2023/24 are categorised by age group in *Figure 13*. Of the people who tested positive for cocaine only, two in five (39.9%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by 18-29 years and 40-49 years (28.2% and 21.2% respectively). Positive tests for opiate metabolites peaked for those aged 30-39 years (34.3%), followed by 40-49 years (32.0%).

Figure 13: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, 2023/24



Merseyside Police Stop & Search

Between April 2023 and February 2024*, Merseyside Police reported 54,550 stop and search incidents; of which, around three-quarters were under the MDA legislation, where the object of the search was for controlled drugs (n=40,249, 73.8%).

Of the stop and search occasions on adults** between April 2023 and February 2024 (n=35,988), just over three-quarters were searches of a person (n=27,679, 76.9%), followed by person and vehicle (n=7,411, 20.6%) and vehicle (n=898, 2.5%). Of the outcomes of the searches, just over three-quarters had a no further action disposal (n=26,108, 76.2%), while one in ten led to an arrest (n=3,377, 9.9%) or community resolution (n=3,299, 9.6%).

Demographics***



87% men



31% 18-24 yrs
29% 25-34 yrs
40% 35+ yrs



87% White
7% other
2% Asian/Black/Mixed

* March 2024 data is currently unavailable.

** Includes records where the age group has not been recorded; excludes records where age is stated at <18 years.

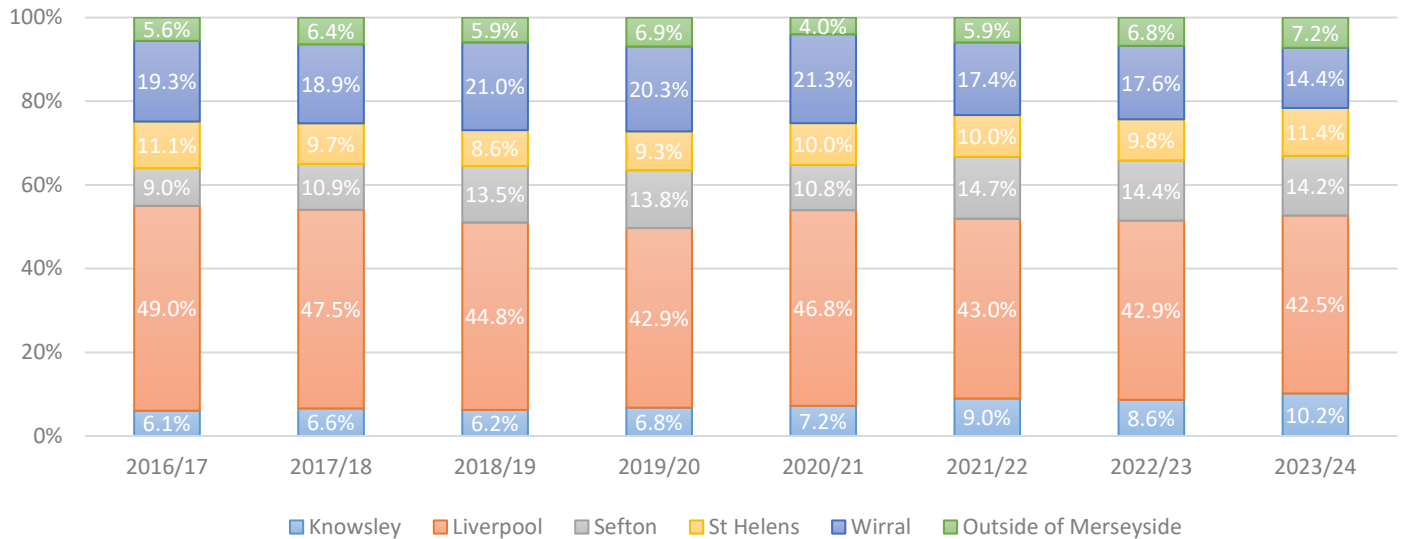
*** Where recorded. Note that ethnicity is self-defined.

data.police.uk (2024)

MERSEYSIDE RESIDENTS

Of the attempted drug tests in Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024, where recorded, 3,653 (92.8%) were Merseyside residents. Residents of Liverpool Local Authority (LA) accounted for the largest proportion of adults who were drug tested in all eight years (*Figure 14*). Furthermore, 7.2% of the people drug tested in the year ending March 2024 were residents outside of the Merseyside area, which is the largest proportion of the eight-year period.

*Figure 14: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by LA of residence and year, 2016/17 - 2023/24*²⁰



In the year ending March 2024, 171.7 per 100,000 adult population in Merseyside had a positive test for specified Class A drugs (*Figure 15*), compared to 170.0 per 100,000 population in the previous year. Of the five LA areas, Liverpool residents had the highest rate (223.4 per 100,000), followed by residents of St Helens (180.6), Knowsley (179.8), Sefton (134.4) and Wirral (130.8).

*Figure 15: Rates of positive drug tests per 100,000 adult population across Merseyside by LA of residence (individuals), 2023/24*²¹

LA of residence	Positive drug tests (individuals)	
	Number	Rate (per 100,000 adult population)
Knowsley	220	179.8
Liverpool	897	223.4
Sefton	306	134.4
St Helens	267	180.6
Wirral	336	130.8
Total Merseyside residents	1,985	171.7



²⁰ Caution should be taken when comparing trends of Merseyside residents, as in earlier years a large number of records did not have LA of residence recorded; therefore, the number of Merseyside residents drug tested may be under-reported in these years.

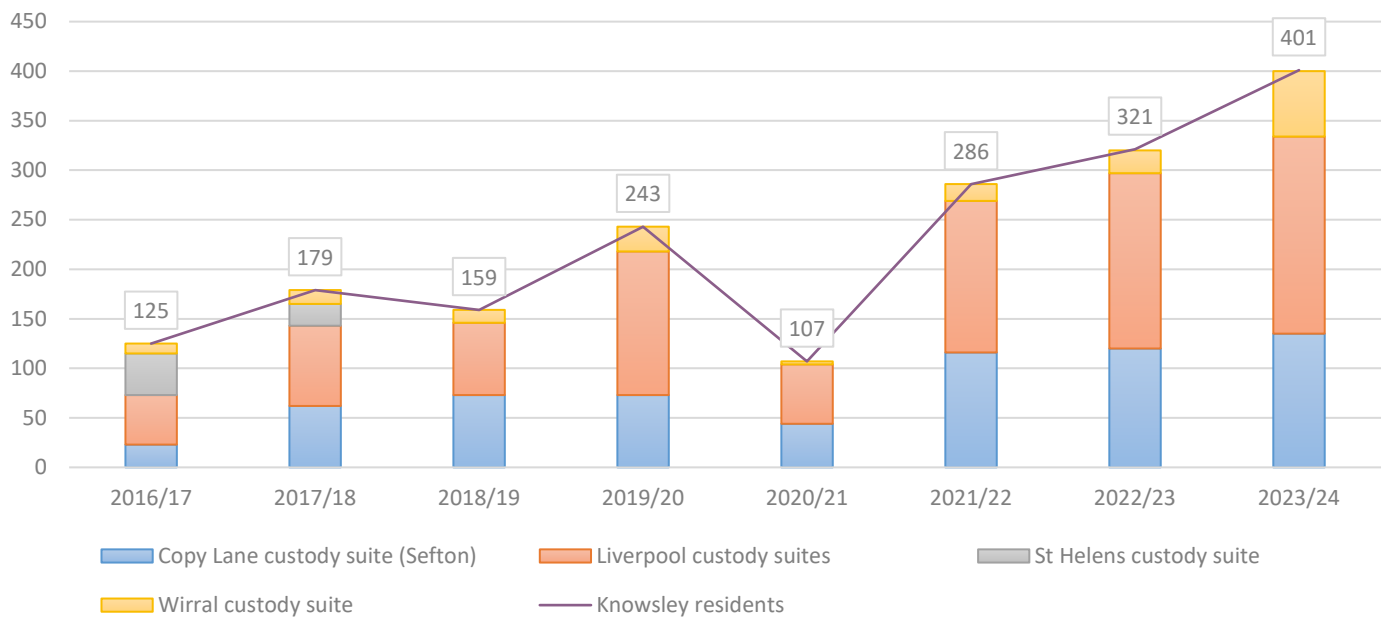
²¹ Note that the total number of Merseyside residents (n=1,985) is less than the summation of the five LAs (n=2,026). This is because a number of individuals with multiple drug tests have different LAs recorded. Rates per 100,000 adult population have been calculated using [mid-2022 population estimates](#).

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2024, there were 401 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Knowsley residents across Merseyside Police’s custody suites, representing around one in ten (11.0%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is a 24.9% increase on the 321 attempted tests in the previous year and the highest number of tests of the eight years shown in *Figure 16*²².

On average, half (50.7%) of the attempted drug tests on Knowsley residents were carried out at a Liverpool custody suite during the eight-year period, followed by just over one-third (35.2%) at Copy Lane custody suite in Sefton (*Figure 16*).

Figure 16: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Knowsley residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 17 shows the drug testing activity for Knowsley residents drug tested in Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024. All 401 attempted drug tests were successful and 250 subsequently resulted in a positive test for specified Class A drugs. Around seven in ten of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=173, 69.2%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 73, 29.2%; opiates only = 4, 1.6%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 226 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 202 individuals in the year ending March 2024.

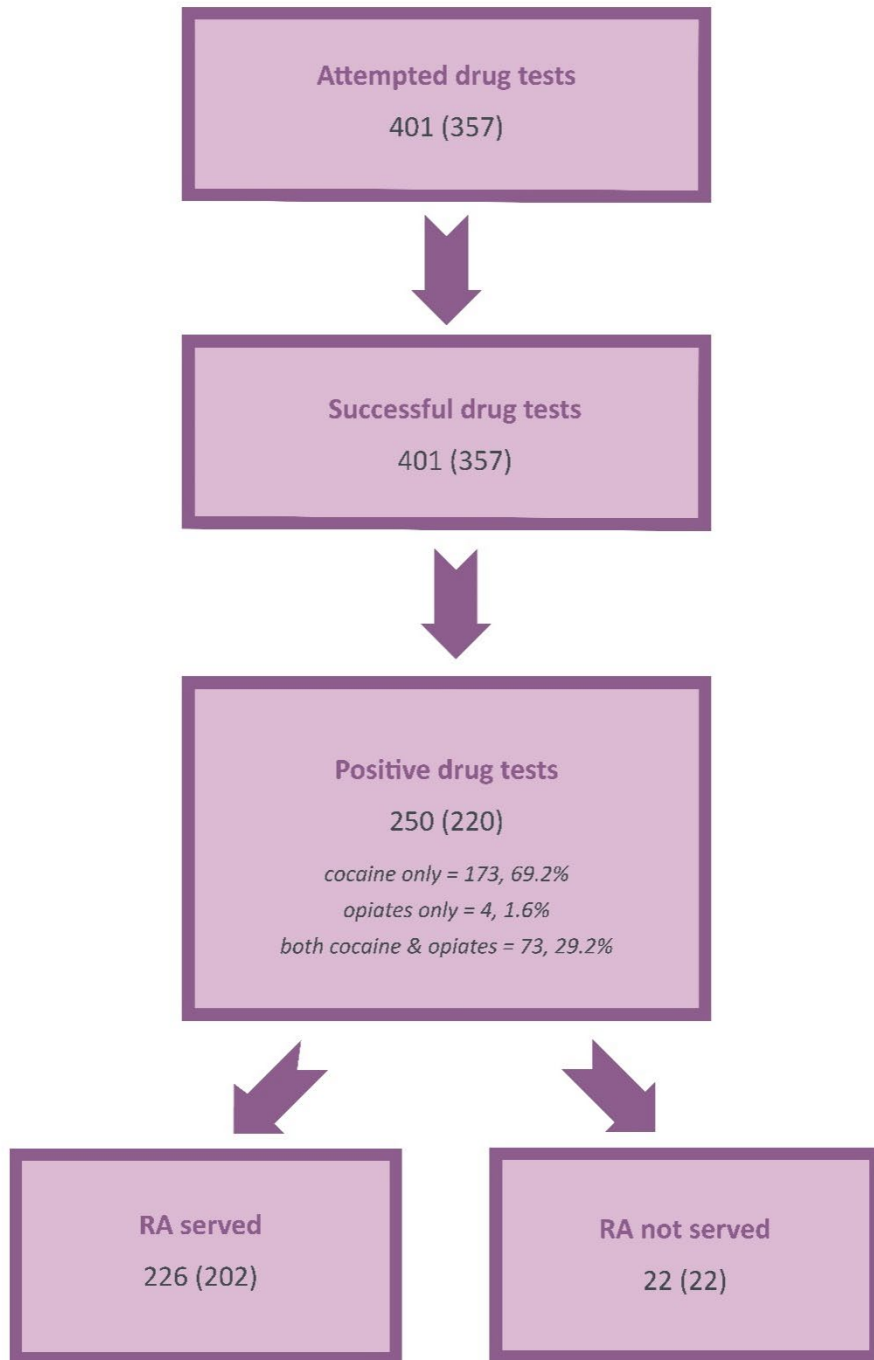


69%

of positive tests were cocaine only (powder/crack)

²² Note that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence in some years may be affecting these trends.

Figure 17: Drug testing activity, Knowsley residents, 2023/24 ²³

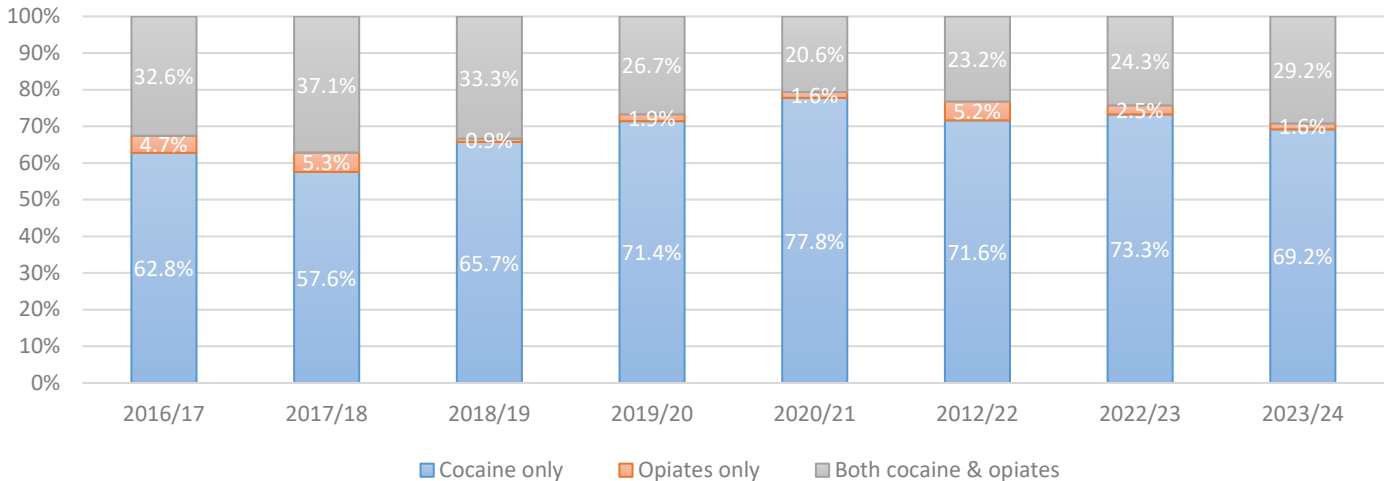


²³ The summation of 'RA served' and 'RA not served' does not equal the number of positive tests due to the exclusion of drug tests where the positive result was overturned or not resolved following a dispute, and there are individuals with more than one positive drug test that could be included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'.

POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

There have consistently been larger proportions of cocaine only positive tests than opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates) for Knowsley residents in the eight years shown in *Figure 18*. However, the year ending March 2024 had a smaller proportion of cocaine only positive tests than the previous four years. Notably, Knowsley had the largest proportions of cocaine only positive tests recorded of the five Merseyside areas in all eight years (all Merseyside residents combined in 2023/24: 53.8%).

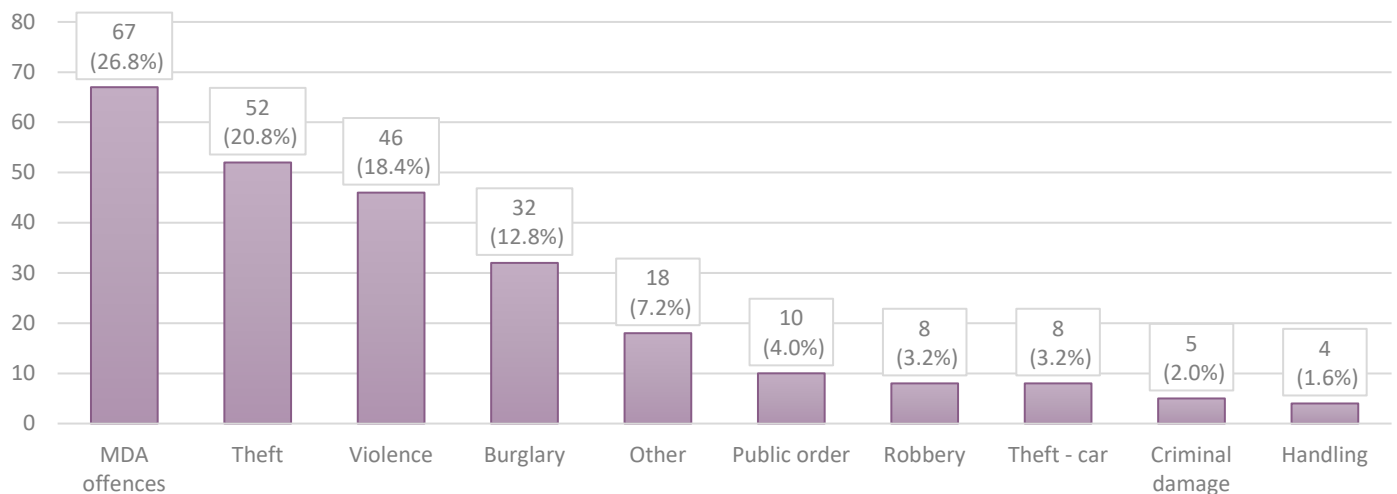
Figure 18: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Knowsley residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



OFFENCES

Just over a quarter of the positive drug test records for Knowsley residents in the year ending March 2024 reported MDA offences (n=67, 26.8%²⁴), followed by theft (n=52, 20.8%²⁵), violence (n=46, 18.4%) and burglary (n=32, 12.8%; *Figure 19*). When compared to the other Merseyside areas, Knowsley had the smallest proportions of MDA offences and other offences (Merseyside totals: 30.2% and 8.0% respectively), and the largest proportion of violence (Merseyside total: 12.2%).

*Figure 19: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Knowsley residents, 2023/24*²⁶



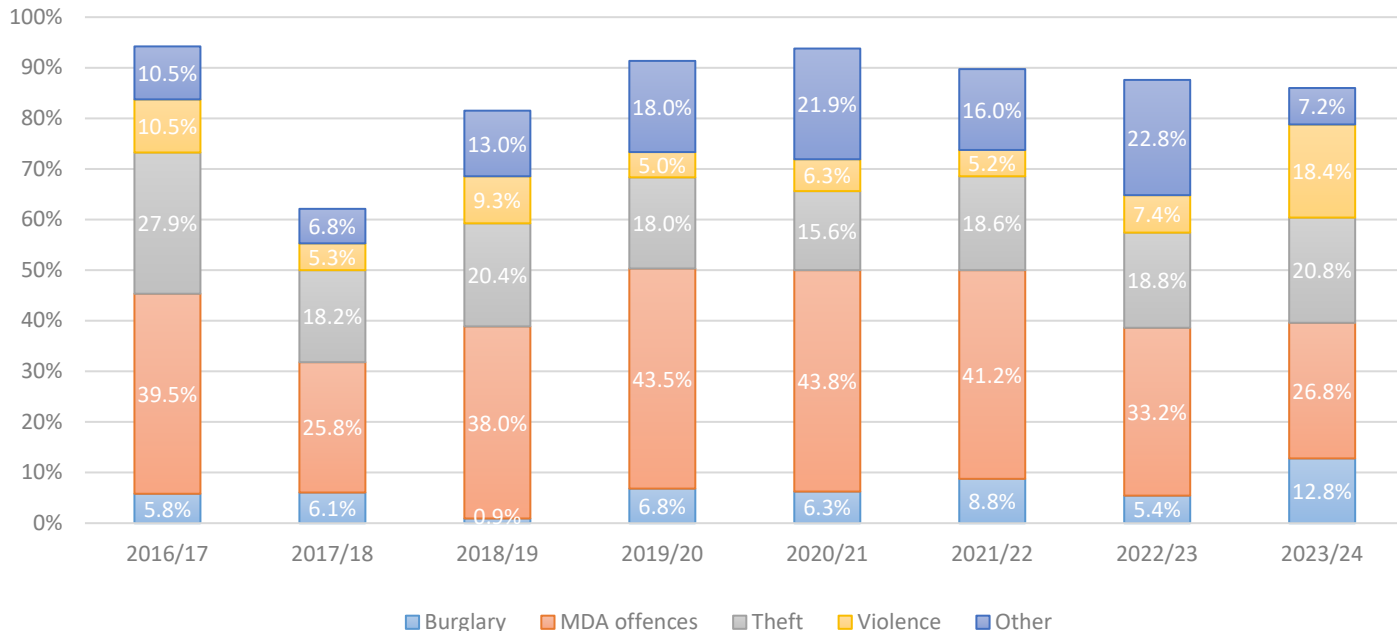
²⁴ MDA offences: possession of controlled drugs (excluding cannabis) = 24, 35.8%; other drug offences = 21, 31.3%; trafficking in controlled drugs = 21, 31.3%; possession of controlled drugs (cannabis) = 1, 1.5%.

²⁵ Theft: shoplifting = 43, 82.7%.

²⁶ Other offences: miscellaneous crimes = 18, 100%.

Overall, there have been some changes in the trends of burglary, MDA offences, theft, violence and other offences (*Figure 20*). The proportion of MDA offences peaked in the year ending March 2021, then decreased year-on-year to the second smallest proportion of the eight-year period, while there have been similar proportions of theft in the past three years. Notably, in the year ending March 2024, violence substantially increased to the largest proportion of the eight years and other offences substantially decreased to the second smallest proportion.

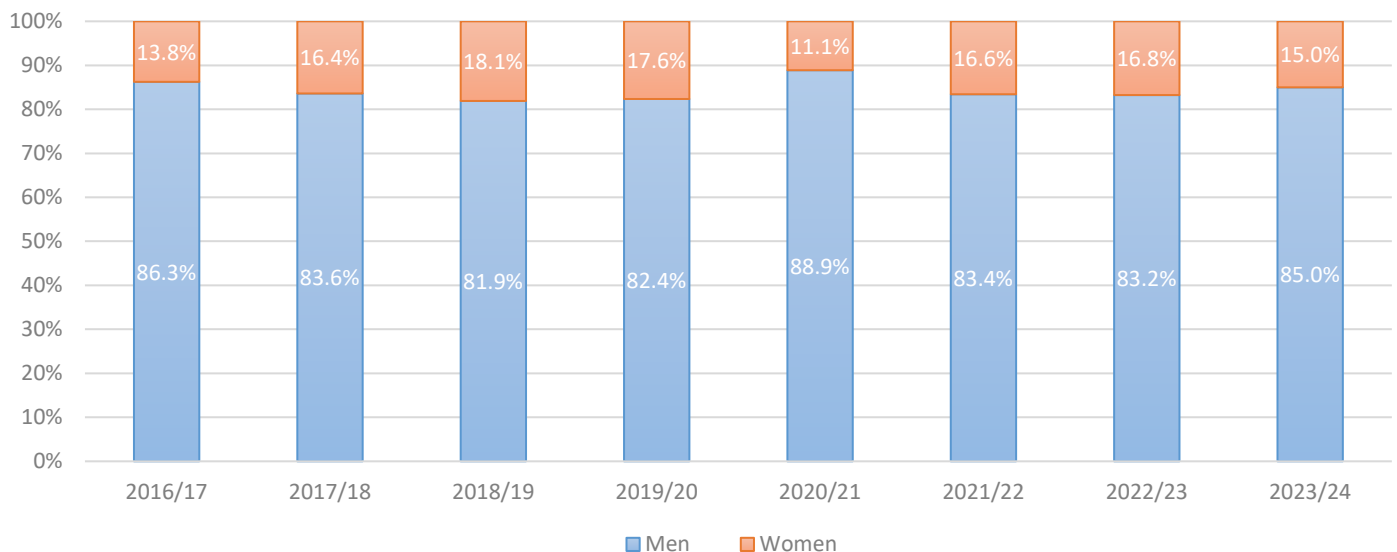
Figure 20: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offending categories, Knowsley residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024 (n=187, 85.0%; *Figure 21*). This is just above the eight-year average (84.3%) and notably, the largest proportion across Merseyside in 2023/24 (Merseyside total: 82.3%).

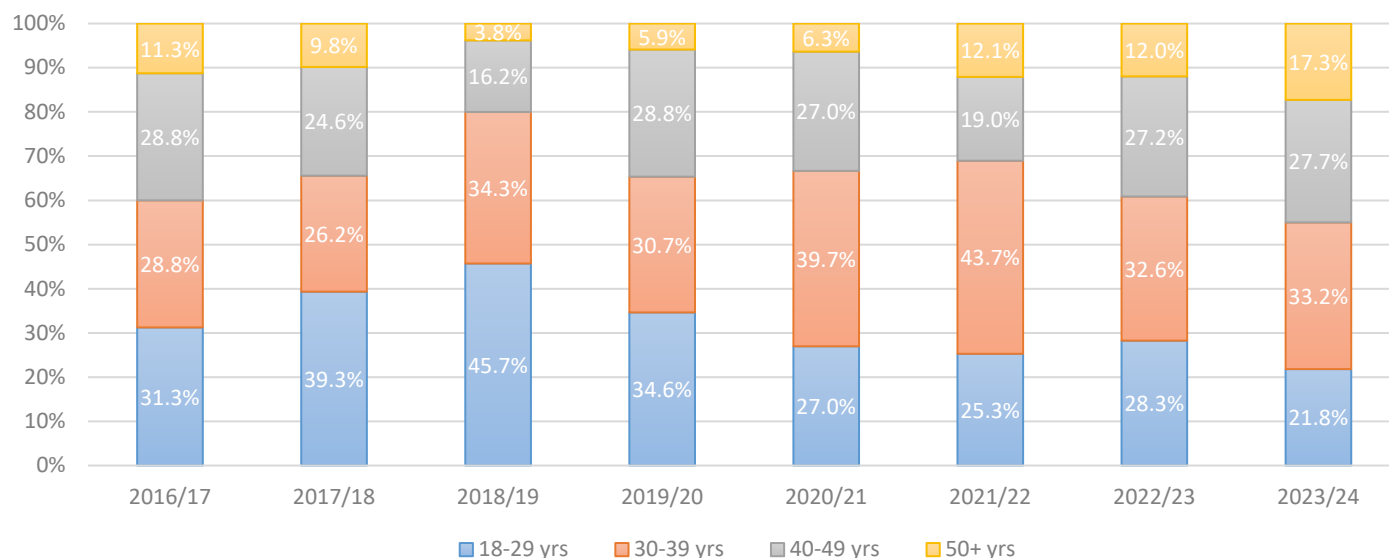
Figure 21: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, Knowsley residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2023/24



The average age of Knowsley residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 was 38 years (men = 37, women = 39), which is an increase on the previous twelve-month period (36 years).

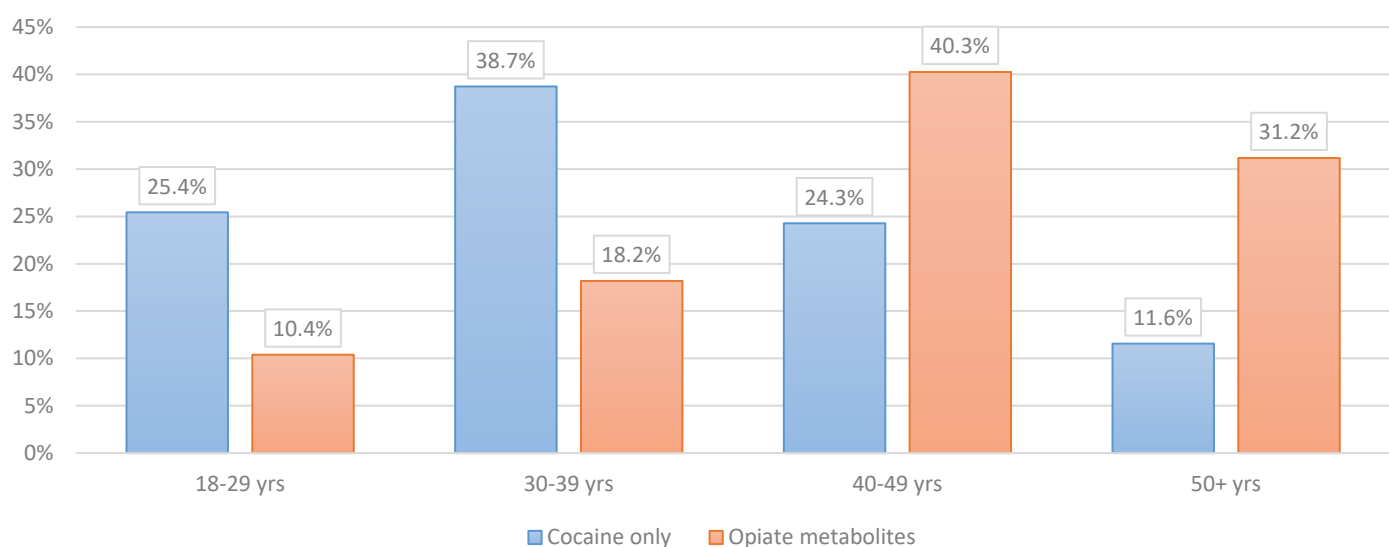
One-third of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 were aged 30-39 years (n=73, 33.2%), followed by individuals aged 40-49 years (n=61, 27.7%), 18-29 years (n=48, 21.8%) and 50 years or over (n=38, 17.3%; *Figure 22*); of which, proportions are similar to the totals for all Merseyside residents. When compared to the previous year, the proportion of 18-29 year olds decreased to the smallest proportion of the eight-year period, while the proportion of individuals aged 50 years or over increased to the largest.

Figure 22: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Knowsley residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2023/24



In the year ending March 2024, of the Knowsley residents who tested positive for cocaine only, around two in five (38.7%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by 18-29 years and 40-49 years (25.4% and 24.3% respectively; *Figure 23*). While positive tests for opiate metabolites peaked for those aged 40-49 years (40.3%), followed by 50 years or over (31.2%).

Figure 23: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Knowsley residents, 2023/24

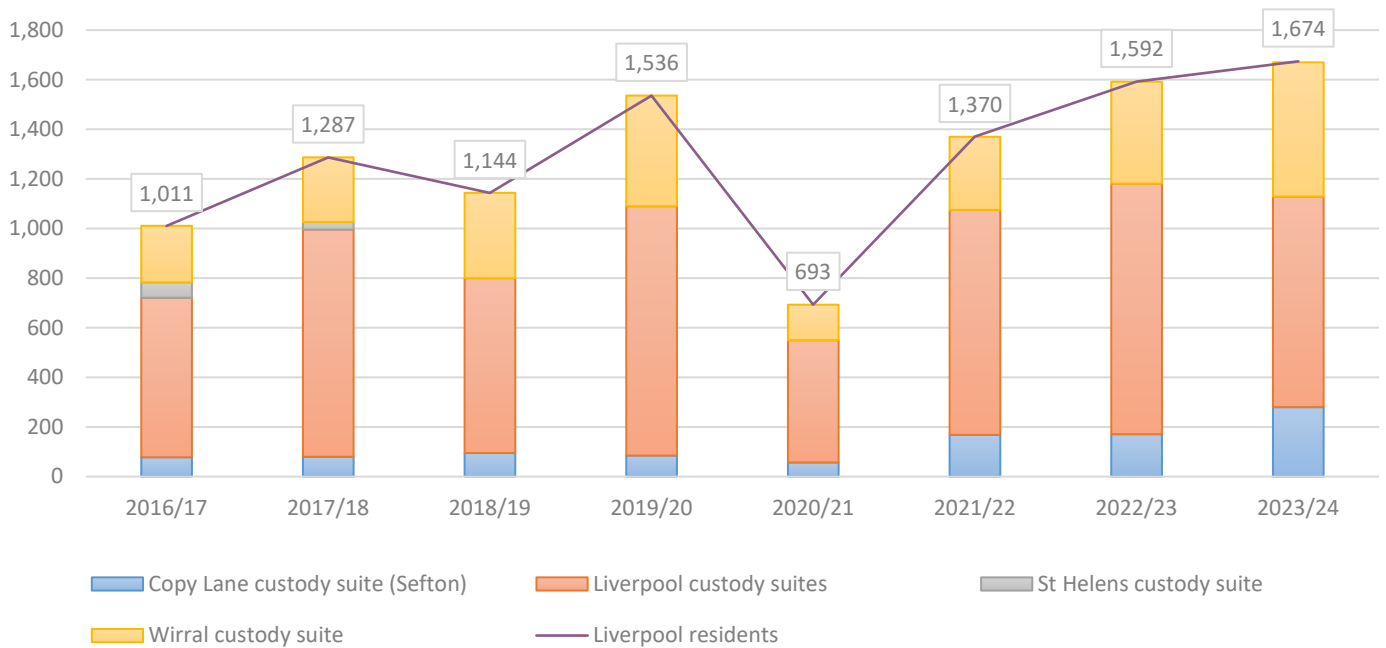


OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2024, there were 1,674 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Liverpool residents across Merseyside Police’s custody suites, representing just under half (45.8%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is a 5.2% increase on the 1,592 attempted tests in the previous year and the highest number of tests of the eight years shown in *Figure 24*²⁷.

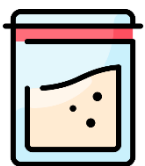
On average, just under two in three (64.2%) attempted drug tests on Liverpool residents were carried out at a Liverpool custody suite during the eight-year period, followed by one-quarter (25.3%) at Wirral custody suite and one in ten (9.5%) at Copy Lane custody suite in Sefton (*Figure 24*).

Figure 24: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Liverpool residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24 ²⁸



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 25 shows the drug testing activity for Liverpool residents drug tested in Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024. Of the 1,674 attempted drug tests, 1,658 were successful and subsequently 1,141 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Just over half of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=590, 51.7%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 518, 45.4%; opiates only = 33, 2.9%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 1,030 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 822 individuals in the year ending March 2024.



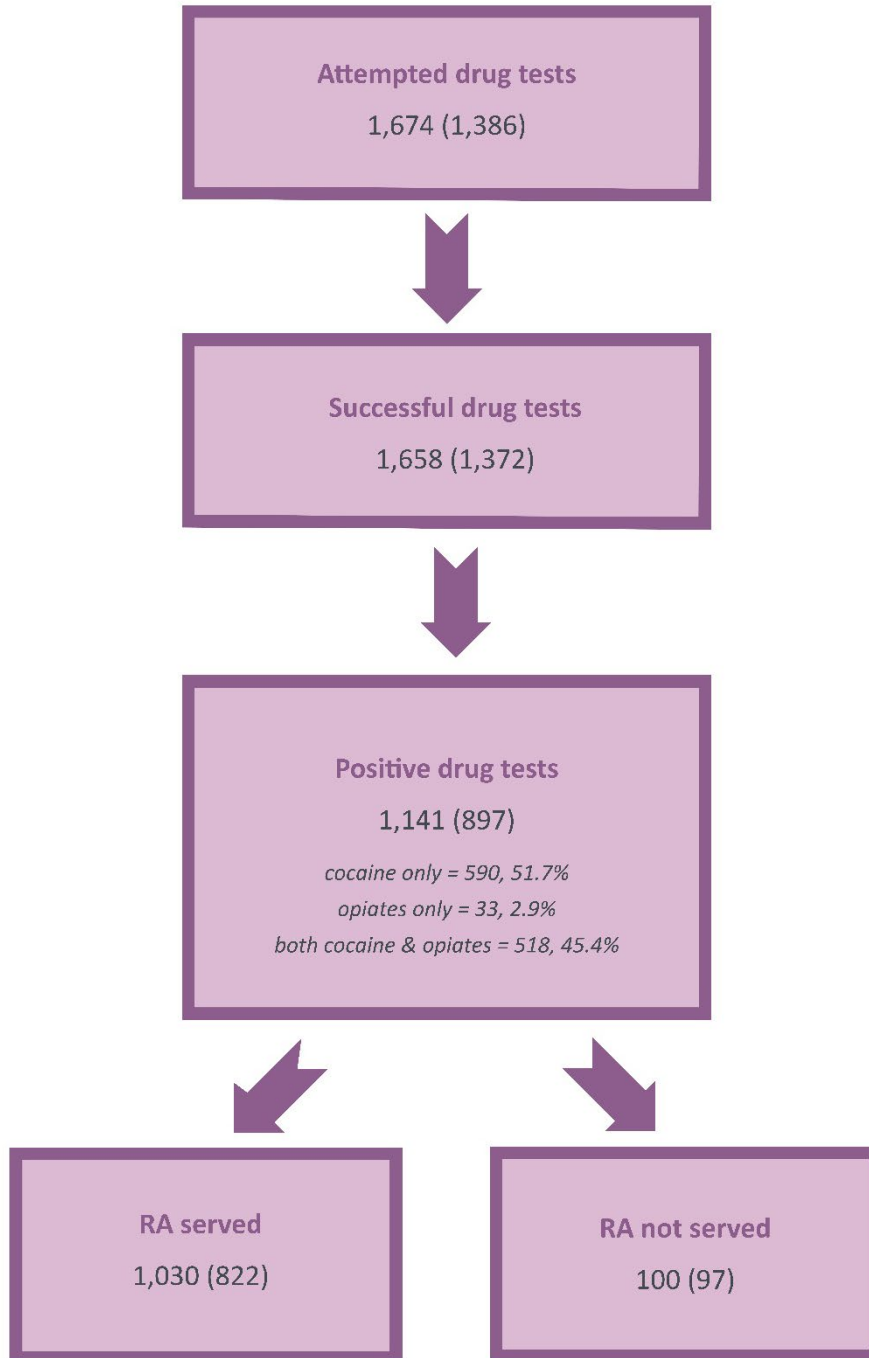
52%

of positive tests were cocaine only (powder/crack)

²⁷ Note that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence in some years may be affecting these trends.

²⁸ Liverpool custody suites include Belle Vale, St Anne Street and Wavertree.

Figure 25: Drug testing activity, Liverpool residents, 2023/24 ²⁹

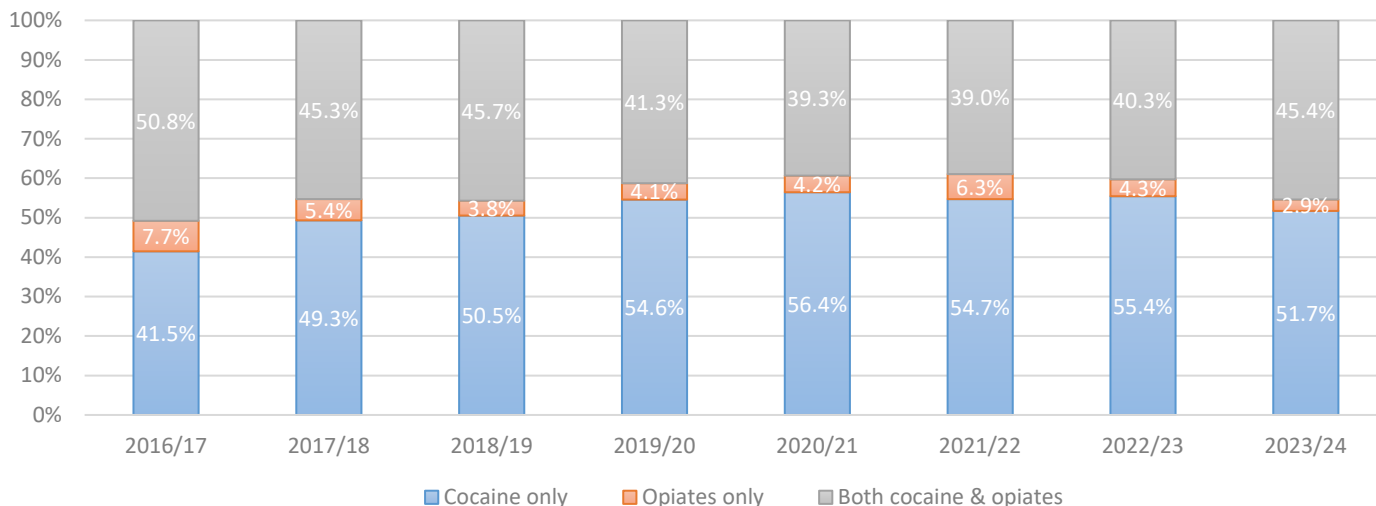


²⁹ There were 15 tests refused and one unsuccessful test. The summation of 'RA served' and 'RA not served' does not equal the number of positive tests due to the exclusion of drug tests where the positive result was overturned or not resolved following a dispute, and there are individuals with more than one positive drug test that could be included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'.

POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

In 2016/17 and 2017/18, there were larger proportions of opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates) than cocaine only for Liverpool residents, while there have been larger proportions of cocaine only than opiate metabolites in subsequent years (Figure 26). However, the proportion of cocaine only positive tests in 2023/24 is the smallest since 2018/19 and notably, is the second smallest proportion of the five Merseyside areas (all Merseyside residents combined: 53.8%); therefore, it is recommended that the increase in Liverpool residents testing positive for opiate metabolites is monitored.

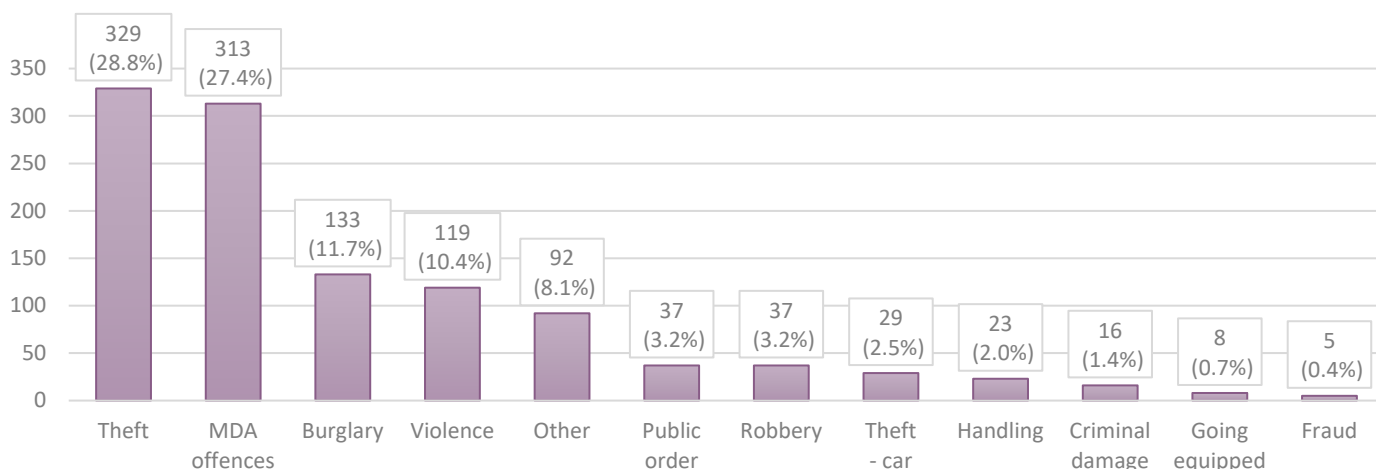
Figure 26: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Liverpool residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



OFFENCES

Around three in ten positive drug test records for Liverpool residents in the year ending March 2024 reported theft (n=329, 28.8%³⁰), while just over one-quarter were MDA offences (n=313, 27.4%³¹; Figure 27). Notably, both Liverpool and Wirral had the largest proportions of theft recorded across Merseyside (Merseyside total: 26.4%), and Liverpool had the smallest proportion of violence compared to the remaining four Merseyside areas (Merseyside total: 12.2%).

Figure 27: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Liverpool residents, 2023/24 ³²



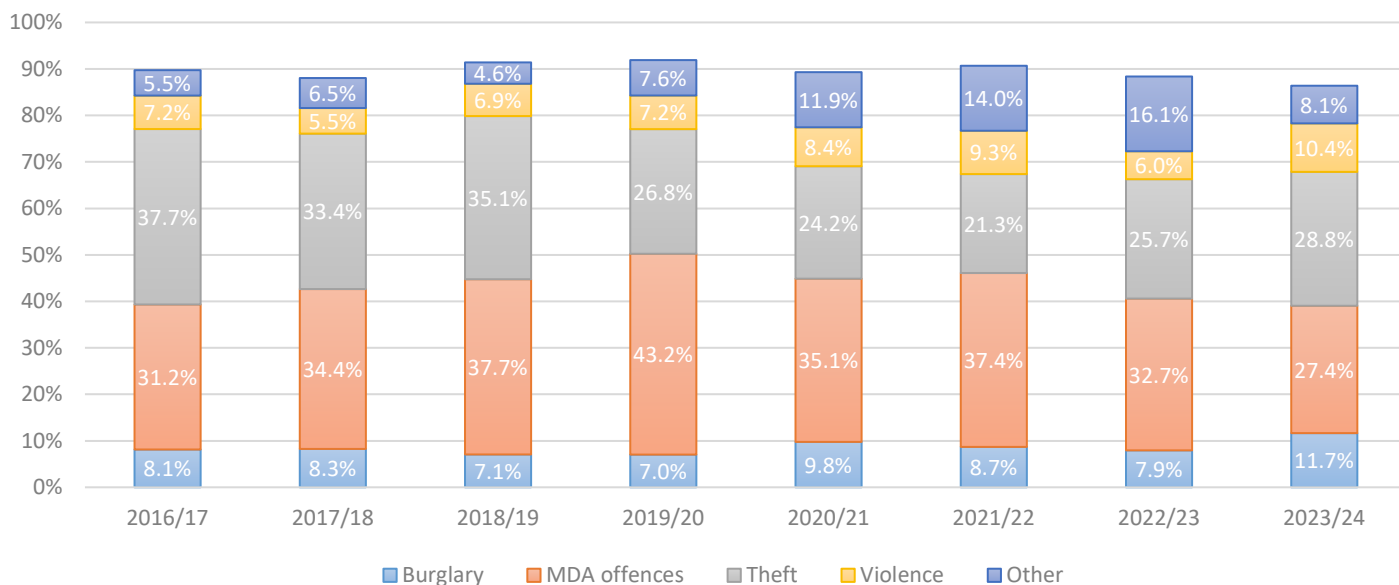
³⁰ Theft: shoplifting = 267, 81.2%.

³¹ MDA offences: possession of controlled drugs (excluding cannabis) = 135, 43.1%; other drug offences = 105, 33.5%; trafficking in controlled drugs = 68, 21.7%; possession of controlled drugs (cannabis) = 5, 1.6%.

³² Other offences: miscellaneous crimes = 83, 90.2%; stalking and harassment = 7, 7.6%; vehicle interference = 2, 2.2%.

Notably, there have been some changes in the trends of burglary, MDA offences, theft, violence and other offences (Figure 28). The proportion of MDA offences increased year-on-year between 2016/17 and 2019/20, though it decreased in subsequent years, with 2023/24 having the smallest proportion of the eight-year period. The proportion of other offences halved in the year ending March 2024 when compared to the previous year and is just below the eight-year average (9.3%). Conversely, the proportions of burglary, theft and violence increased in the year ending March 2024 when compared to the previous year, with burglary and violence having the largest proportions of the eight-year period.

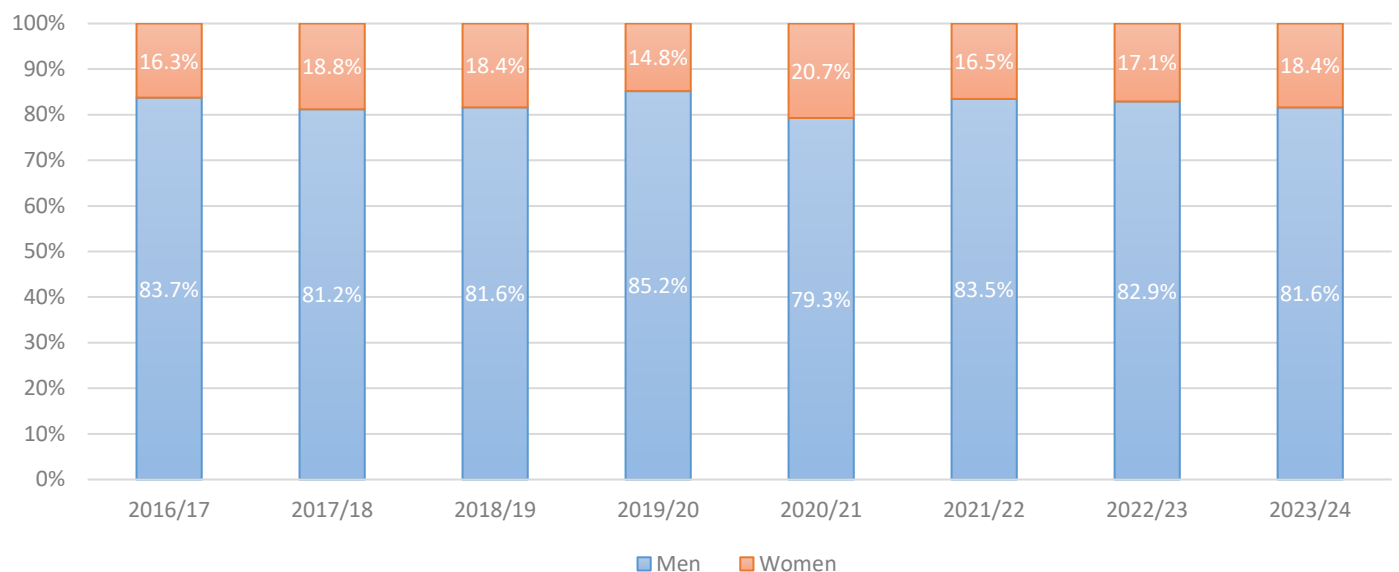
Figure 28: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offending categories, Liverpool residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for just over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024 (n=732, 81.6%; Figure 29), which is both similar to the eight-year average (82.4%) and the Merseyside figure (82.3%).

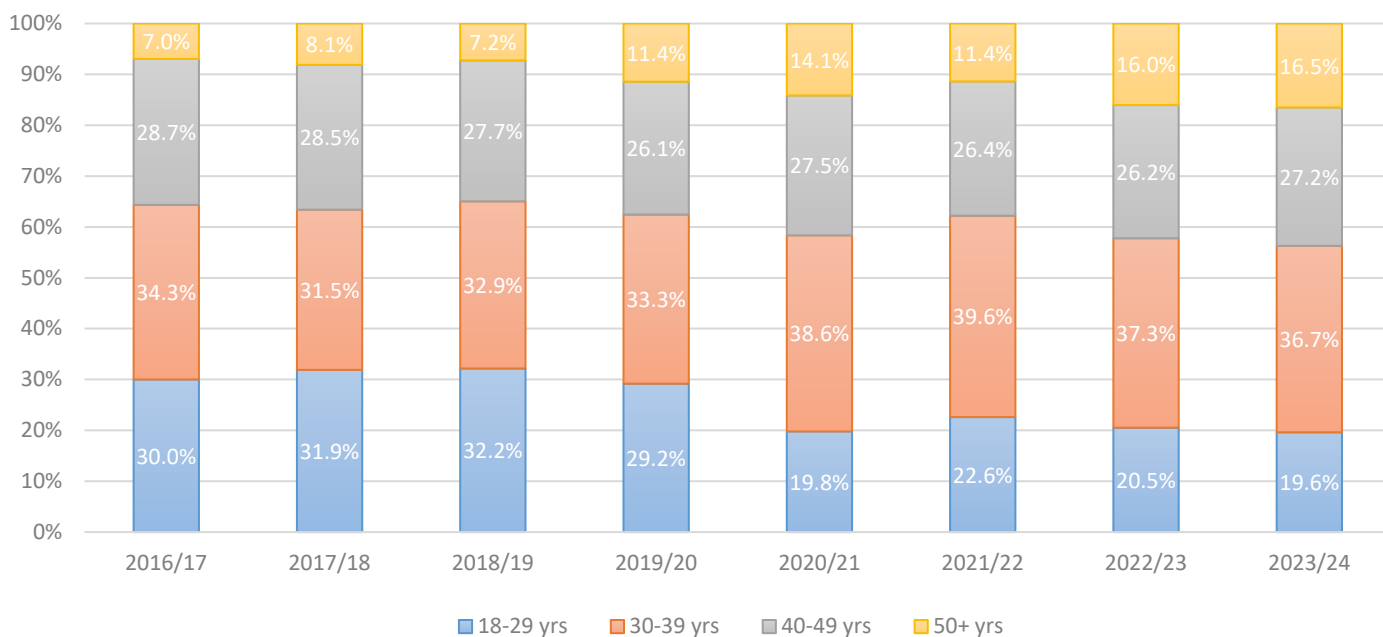
Figure 29: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, Liverpool residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2023/24



The average age of Liverpool residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 was 38 years (men = 38, women = 39), which is the same as the previous year.

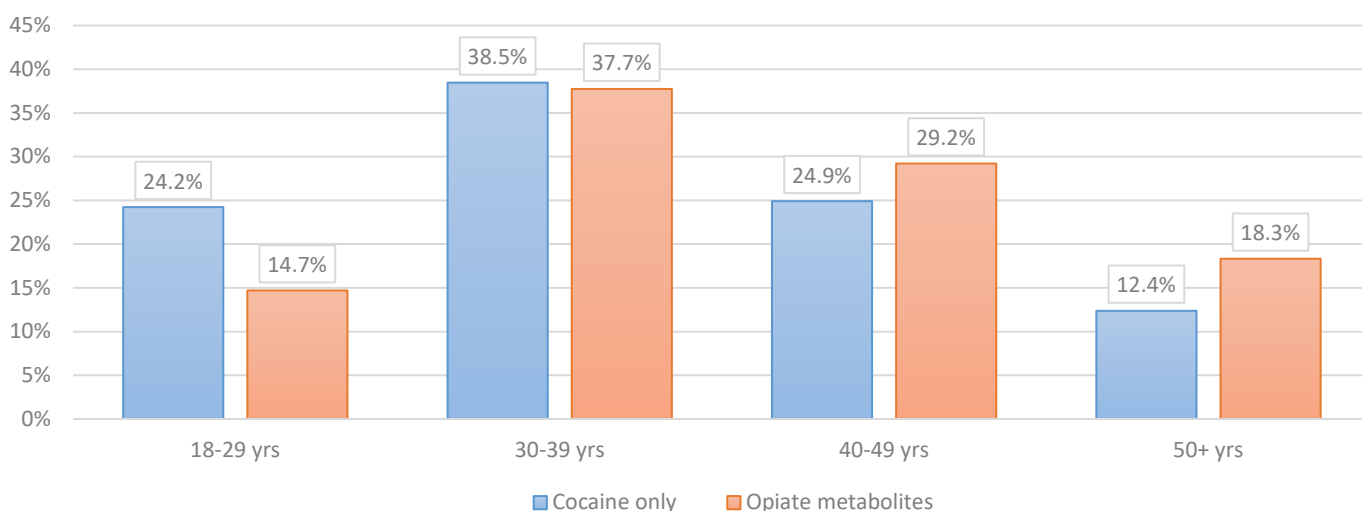
Over a third of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 were aged 30-39 years (n=329, 36.7%), followed by just over one-quarter aged 40-49 years (n=244, 27.2%), one in five aged 18-29 years (n=176, 19.6%) and around one in six aged 50 years or over (n=148, 16.5%; *Figure 30*). Notably, during the eight-year period, 2023/24 had the smallest proportion of individuals aged 18-29 years (and the second smallest proportion when compared to the other Merseyside areas; Merseyside total: 21.3%), and the largest proportion aged 50 years or over (Merseyside total: 16.0%).

Figure 30: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Liverpool residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2023/24



In the year ending March 2024, of the Liverpool residents who tested positive for cocaine only, around two in five (38.5%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by 18-29 years and 40-49 years (24.2% and 24.9% respectively; *Figure 31*). While positive tests for opiate metabolites peaked for those aged 30-39 years (37.7%), followed by 40-49 years (29.2%).

Figure 31: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Liverpool residents, 2023/24

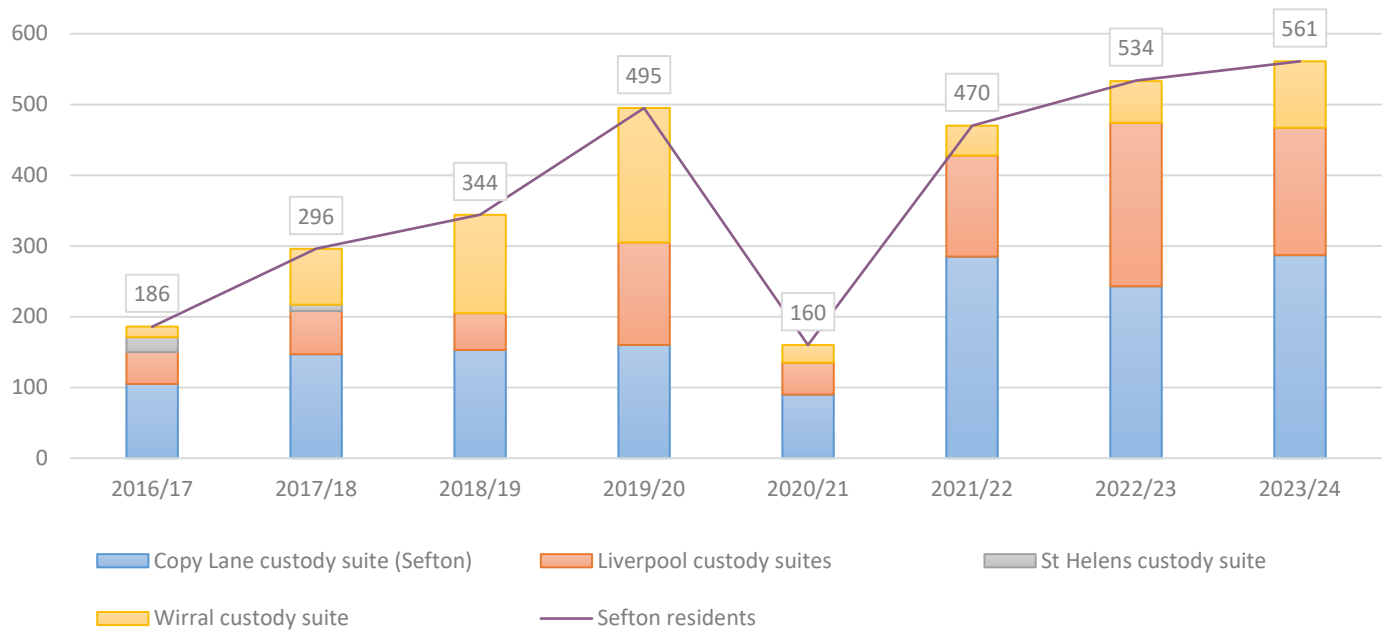


OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2024, there were 561 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Sefton residents across Merseyside Police’s custody suites, representing around one in seven (15.4%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is a 5.1% increase on the 534 attempted tests in the previous year and the highest number of tests of the eight years shown in *Figure 32*³³.

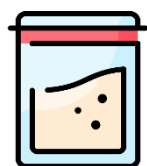
On average, around half (49.6%) of the attempted drug tests on Sefton residents were carried out at Copy Lane custody suite in Sefton during the eight-year period, followed by Liverpool custody suites (27.9%) and Wirral custody suite (20.7%; *Figure 32*).

Figure 32: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Sefton residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 33 shows the drug testing activity for Sefton residents drug tested in Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024. Of the 561 attempted drug tests, 558 were successful and subsequently 375 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Over half of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=210, 56.0%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 159, 42.4%; opiates only = 6, 1.6%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 333 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 284 individuals in the year ending March 2024.

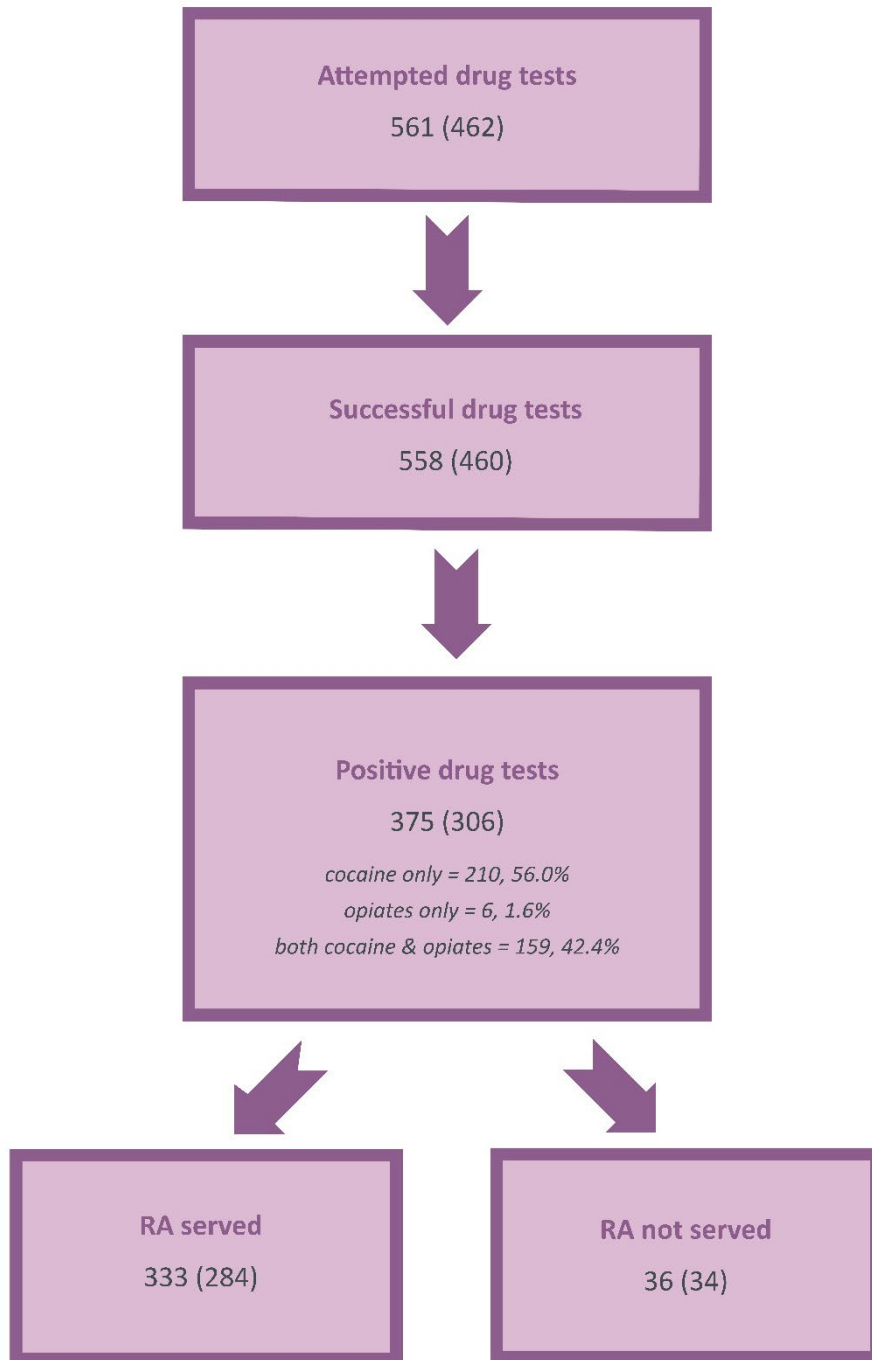


56%

of positive tests were cocaine only (powder/crack)

³³ Note that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence in some years may be affecting these trends.

Figure 33: Drug testing activity, Sefton residents, 2023/24 ³⁴

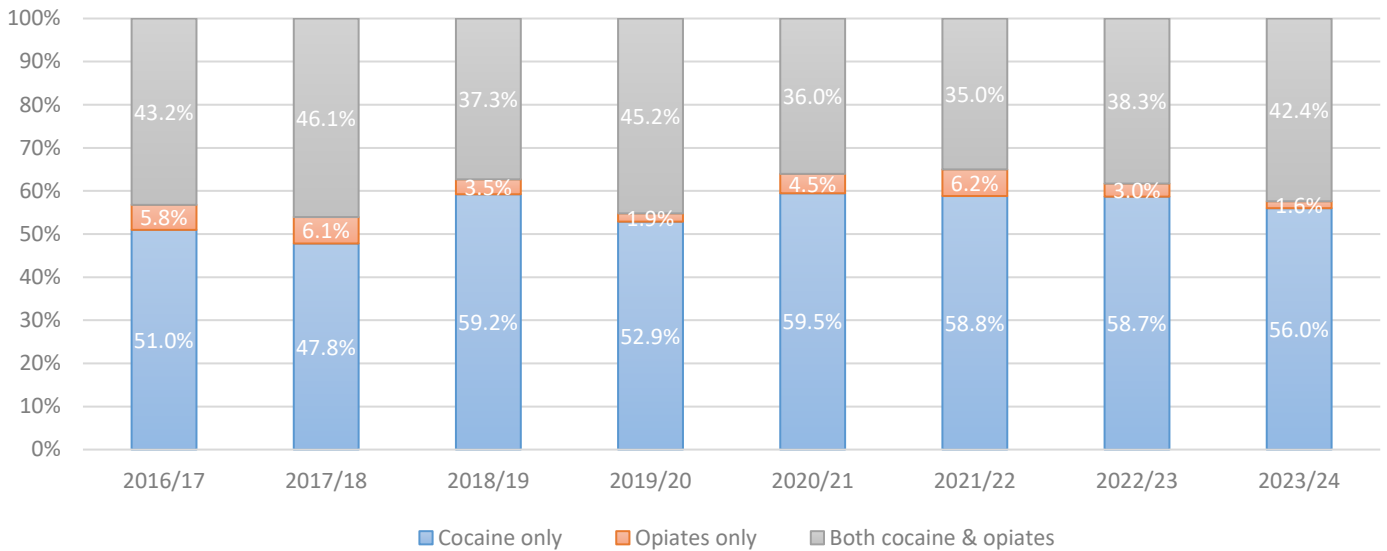


³⁴ There were three tests refused. The summation of 'RA served' and 'RA not served' does not equal the number of positive tests due to the exclusion of drug tests where the positive result was overturned or not resolved following a dispute, and there are individuals with more than one positive drug test that could be included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'.

POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

Proportions fluctuated during the eight-year period; however, there have consistently been larger proportions of cocaine only positive tests than opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates) for Sefton residents since 2018/19 (Figure 34). Notably, the proportion of cocaine only in the year ending March 2024 is a decrease on the previous three years, while the proportion of opiates only is the smallest of the eight-year period.

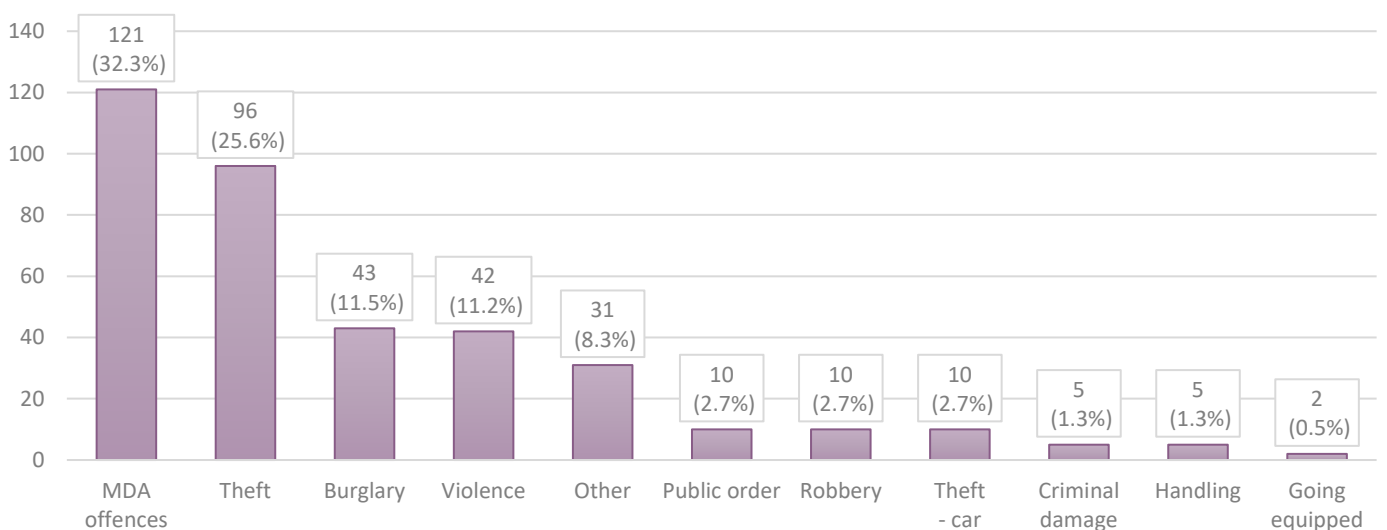
Figure 34: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Sefton residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



OFFENCES

Around one-third of the positive drug test records for Sefton residents in the year ending March 2024 reported MDA offences (n=121, 32.3%³⁵), while around one-quarter were theft (n=96, 25.6%³⁶; Figure 35). Notably, both Sefton and St Helens had the largest proportions of other offences recorded across Merseyside.

Figure 35: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Sefton residents, 2023/24 ³⁷



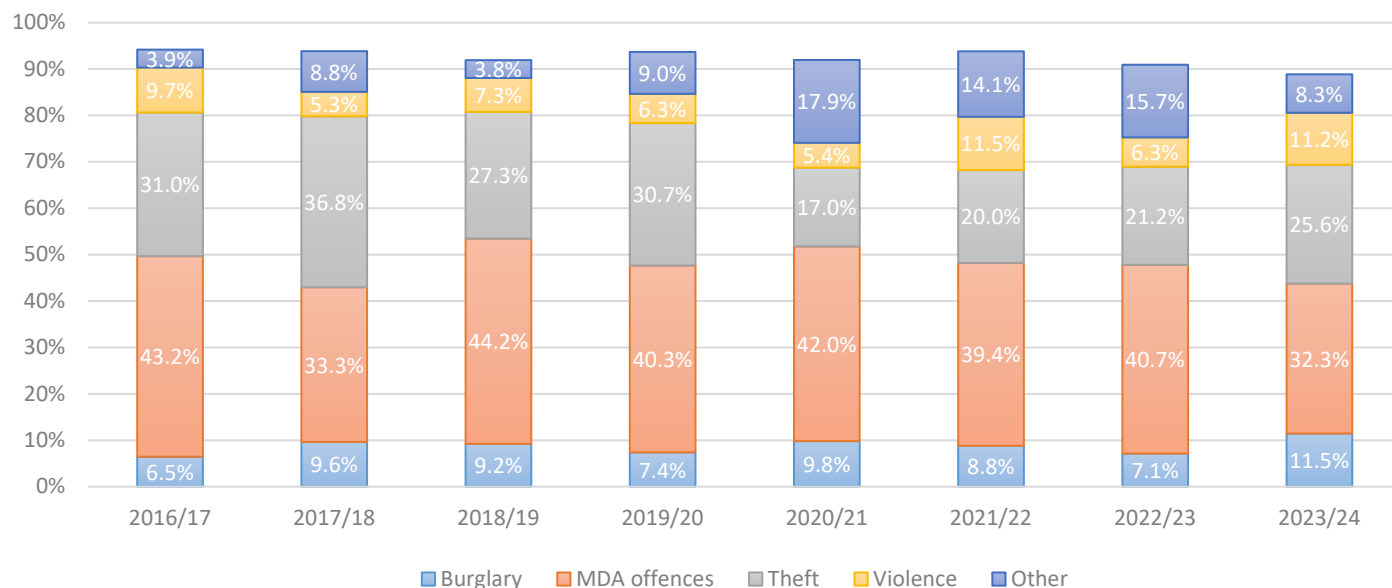
³⁵ MDA offences: other drug offences = 53, 43.8%; possession of controlled drugs (excluding cannabis) = 33, 27.3%; trafficking in controlled drugs = 33, 27.3%; possession of controlled drugs (cannabis) = 2, 1.7%.

³⁶ Theft: shoplifting = 78, 81.3%.

³⁷ Other offences: miscellaneous crimes = 28, 90.3%; stalking and harassment = 2, 6.5%; vehicle interference = 1, 3.2%.

Notably, there have been some changes in the trends of burglary, MDA offences, theft, violence and other offences (Figure 36). The proportion of MDA offences in 2023/24 is the smallest of the eight-year period and the proportion of other offences is the smallest since 2018/19. Conversely, the proportions of burglary, theft and violence increased in the year ending March 2024 when compared to the previous year, with burglary having the largest proportion of the eight-year period.

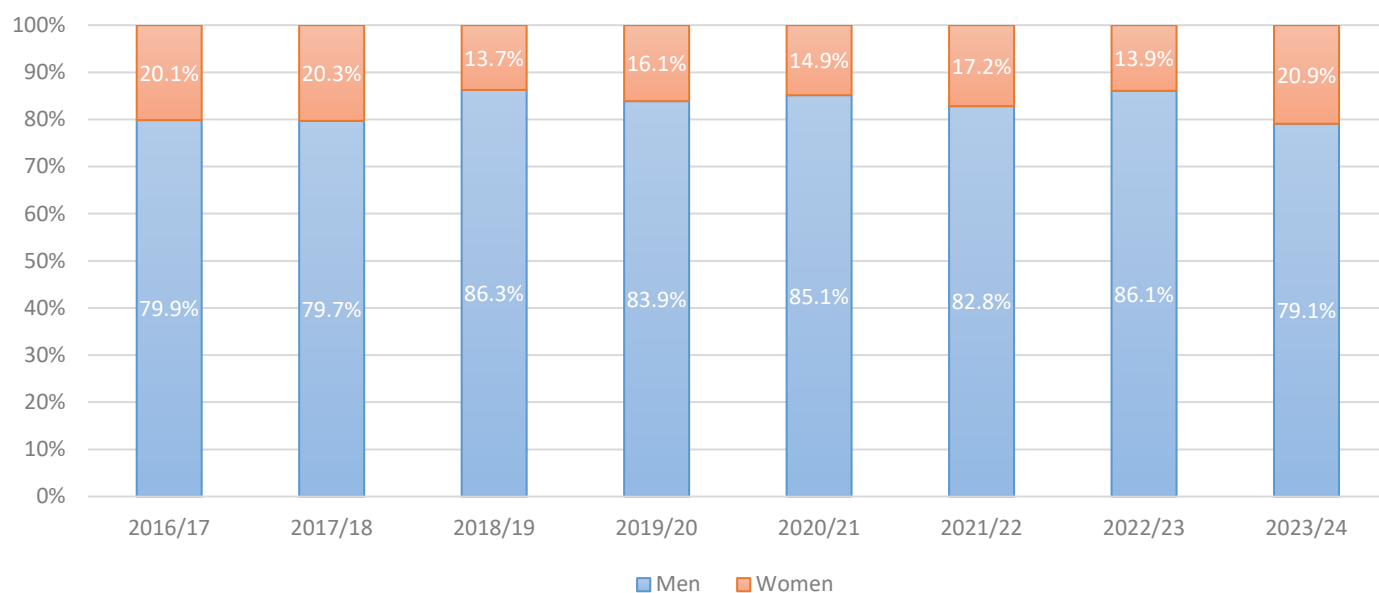
Figure 36: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offending categories, Sefton residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for around four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024 (n=242, 79.1%). Notably, this is a substantial increase in the proportion of women when compared to the previous year and the largest proportion of the eight-year period (Figure 37), as well as the largest proportion of the five Merseyside areas. It is recommended that the increase in women testing positive for specified Class A drugs in Sefton is monitored.

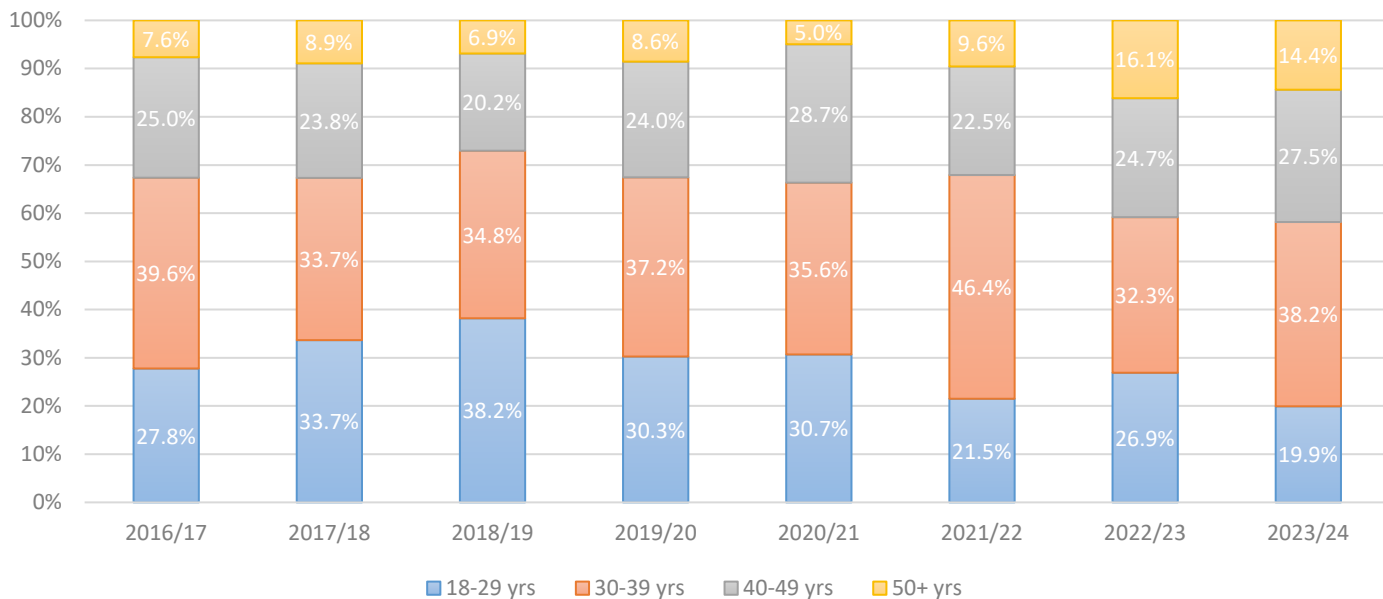
Figure 37: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, Sefton residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2023/24



The average age of Sefton residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 was 38 years (men = 37, women = 38), which is similar to the previous year (37 years).

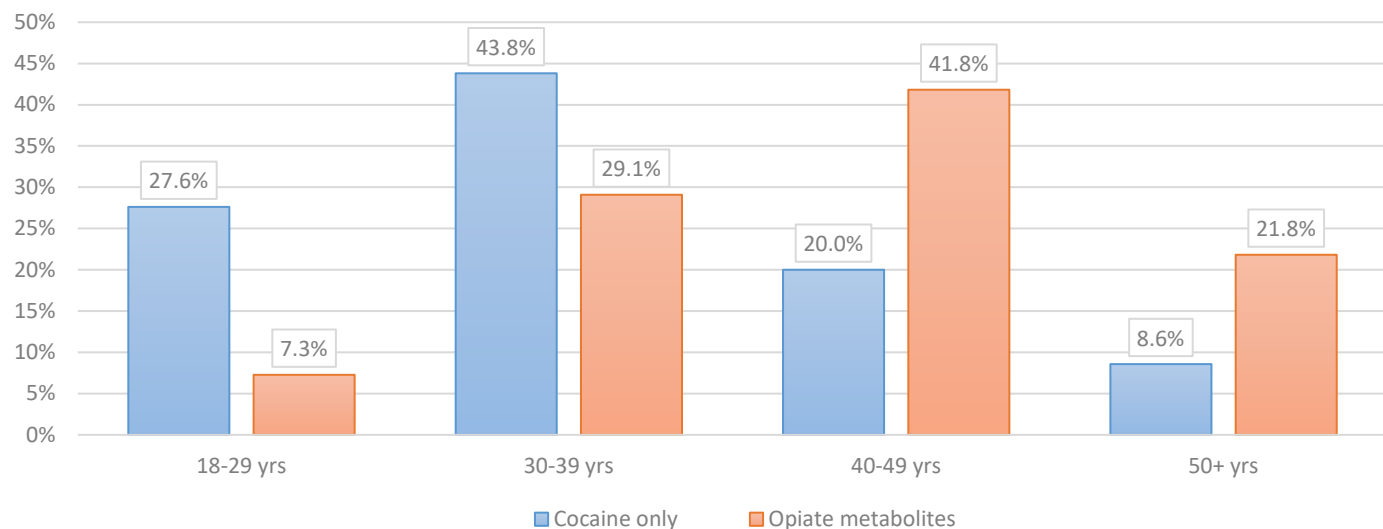
Just under two in five of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 were aged 30-39 years (n=117, 38.2%), followed by individuals aged 40-49 years (n=84, 27.5%), 18-29 years (n=61, 19.9%) and 50 years or over (n=44, 14.4%; *Figure 38*). Notably, during the eight-year period, 2023/24 had the smallest proportion of individuals aged 18-29 years, while the proportion aged 50 years or over decreased slightly when compared to the previous year. Conversely, proportions aged 30-39 years and 40-49 years increased in 2023/24, with Sefton residents representing the largest proportion of 30-39 year olds when compared to the other Merseyside areas.

Figure 38: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Sefton residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2023/24



In the year ending March 2024, of the Sefton residents who tested positive for cocaine only, over two in five (43.8%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by 18-29 years and 40-49 years (27.6% and 20.0% respectively; *Figure 39*). While positive tests for opiate metabolites peaked for those aged 40-49 years (41.8%), followed by 30-39 years and 50 years or over (29.1% and 21.8% respectively).

Figure 39: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Sefton residents, 2023/24

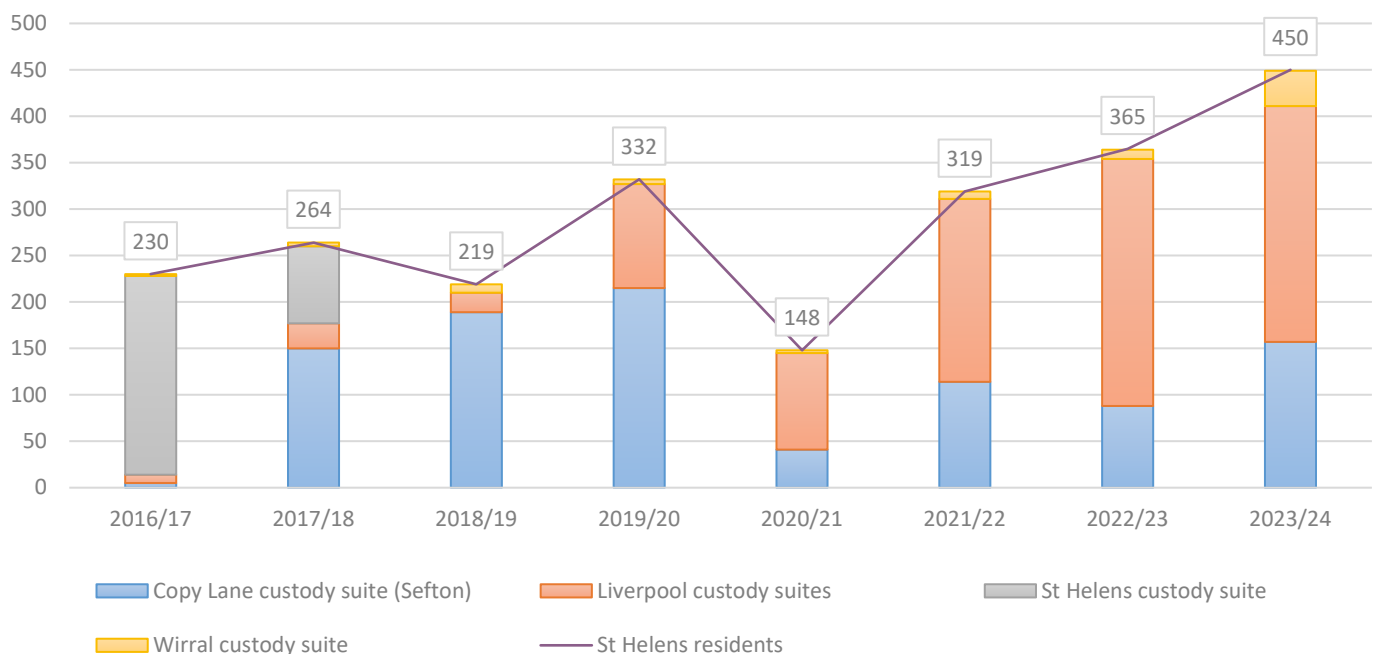


OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2024, there were 450 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on St Helens residents across Merseyside Police’s custody suites, representing around one in eight (12.3%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is a 23.3% increase on the 365 attempted tests in the previous year and the highest number of tests of the eight years shown in *Figure 40*³⁸.

Following the closure of St Helens custody suite in 2017, initially, the majority of attempted drug tests on St Helens residents were carried out at Copy Lane custody suite in Sefton; however, in recent years, the majority have been at a Liverpool custody suite (*Figure 40*).

Figure 40: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, St Helens residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 41 shows the drug testing activity for St Helens residents drug tested in Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024. Of the 450 attempted drug tests, 447 were successful and subsequently 324 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Just under three in five of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=184, 56.8%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 131, 40.4%; opiates only = 9, 2.8%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 289 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 246 individuals in the year ending March 2024.

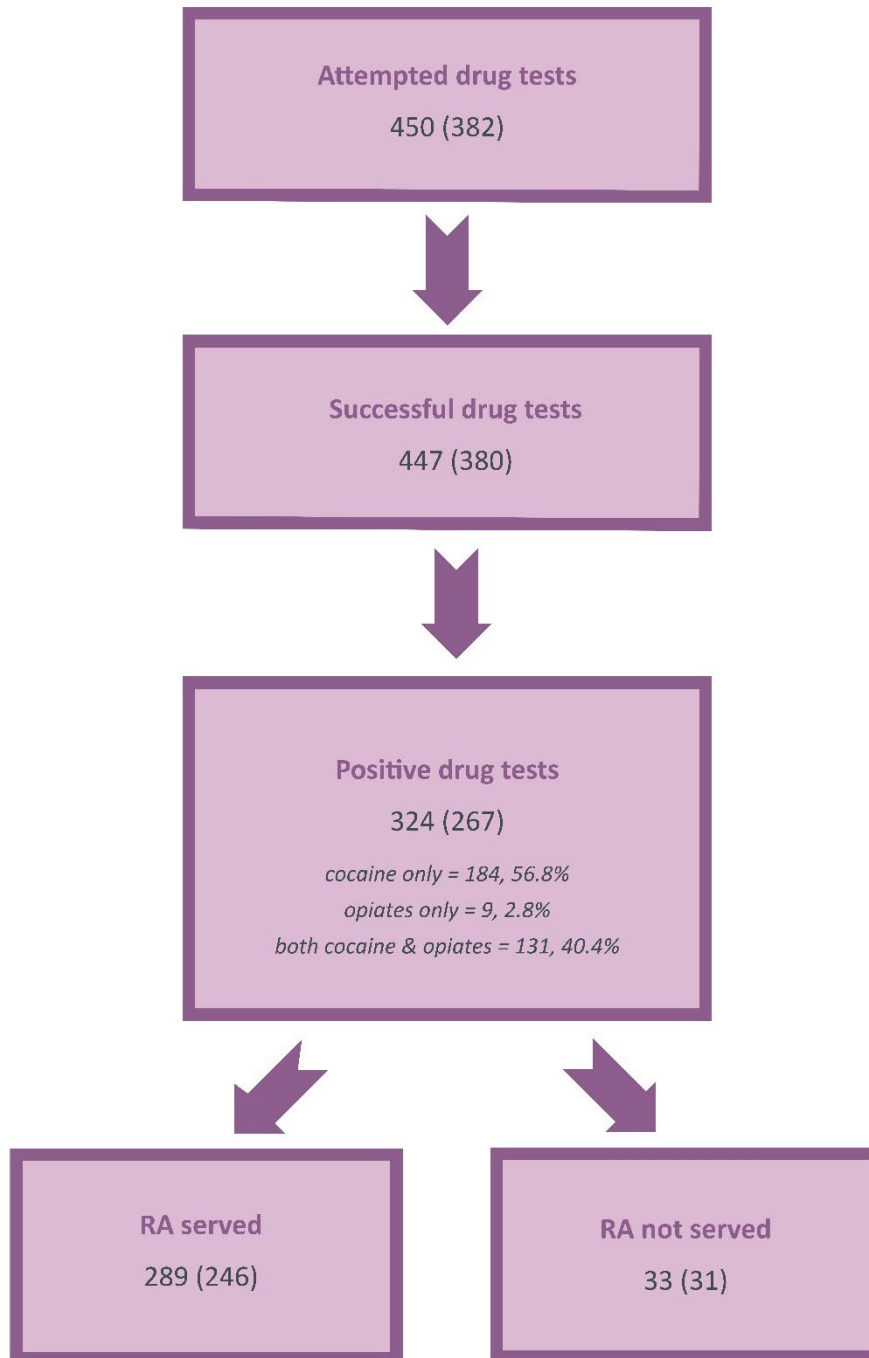


57%

of positive tests were cocaine only (powder/crack)

³⁸ Note that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence in some years may be affecting these trends.

Figure 41: Drug testing activity, St Helens residents, 2023/24 ³⁹

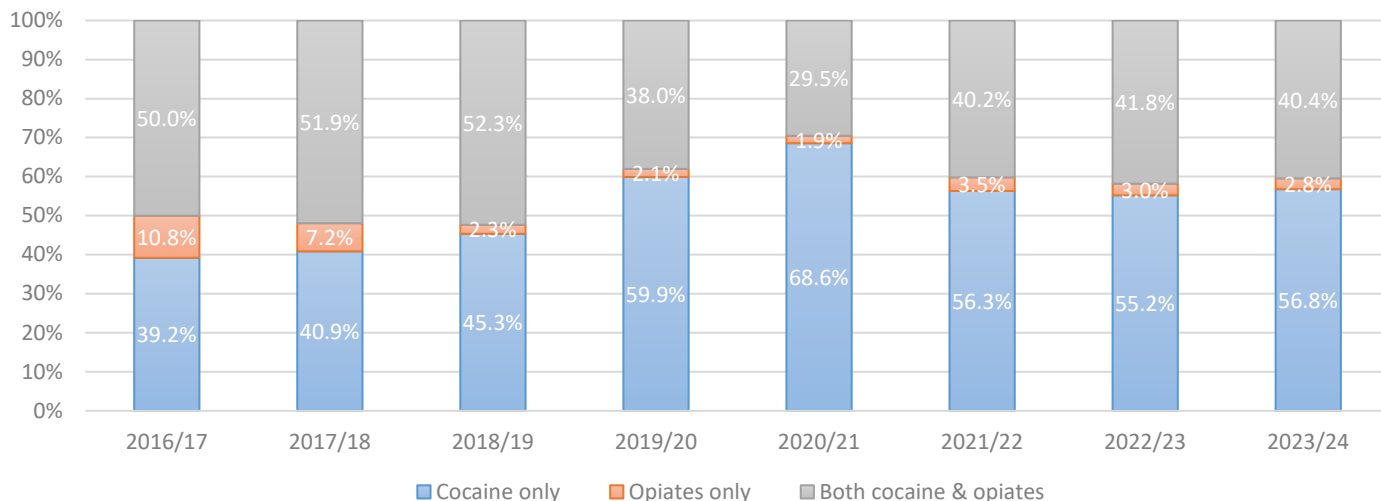


³⁹ There were three tests refused. The summation of 'RA served' and 'RA not served' does not equal the number of positive tests due to the exclusion of drug tests where the positive result was overturned or not resolved following a dispute, and there are individuals with more than one positive drug test that could be included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'.

POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

Between 2016/17 and 2018/19, there were larger proportions of opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates) than cocaine only for St Helens residents, while there have been larger proportions of cocaine only than opiate metabolites in subsequent years, peaking at 68.6% in 2020/21 (Figure 42). The proportions in the year ending March 2024 are similar to the previous two years and the Merseyside totals.

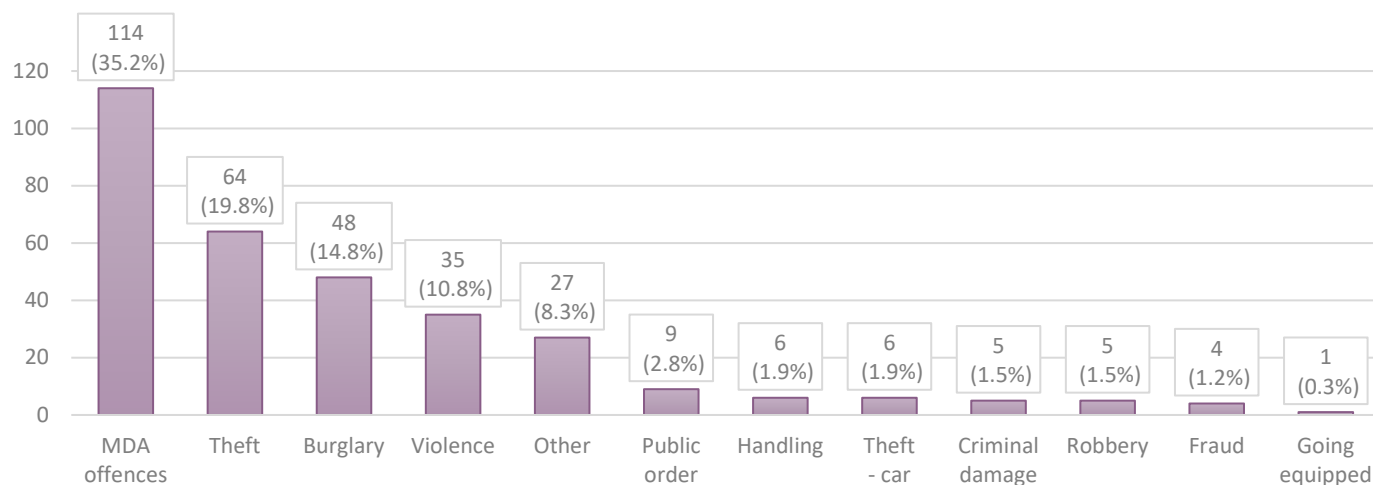
Figure 42: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, St Helens residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



OFFENCES

Just over one-third of the positive drug test records for St Helens residents in the year ending March 2024 reported MDA offences (n=114, 35.2%⁴⁰), followed by theft (n=64, 19.8%⁴¹), burglary (n=48, 14.8%) and violence (n=35, 10.8%; Figure 43). Notably, when compared to the other Merseyside areas, St Helens had the largest proportions of burglary, MDA offences and other offences (joint with Sefton for the latter; Merseyside totals: 11.3%, 30.2% and 8.0% respectively), and the smallest proportion of theft (Merseyside total: 26.4%).

Figure 43: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, St Helens residents, 2023/24 ⁴²



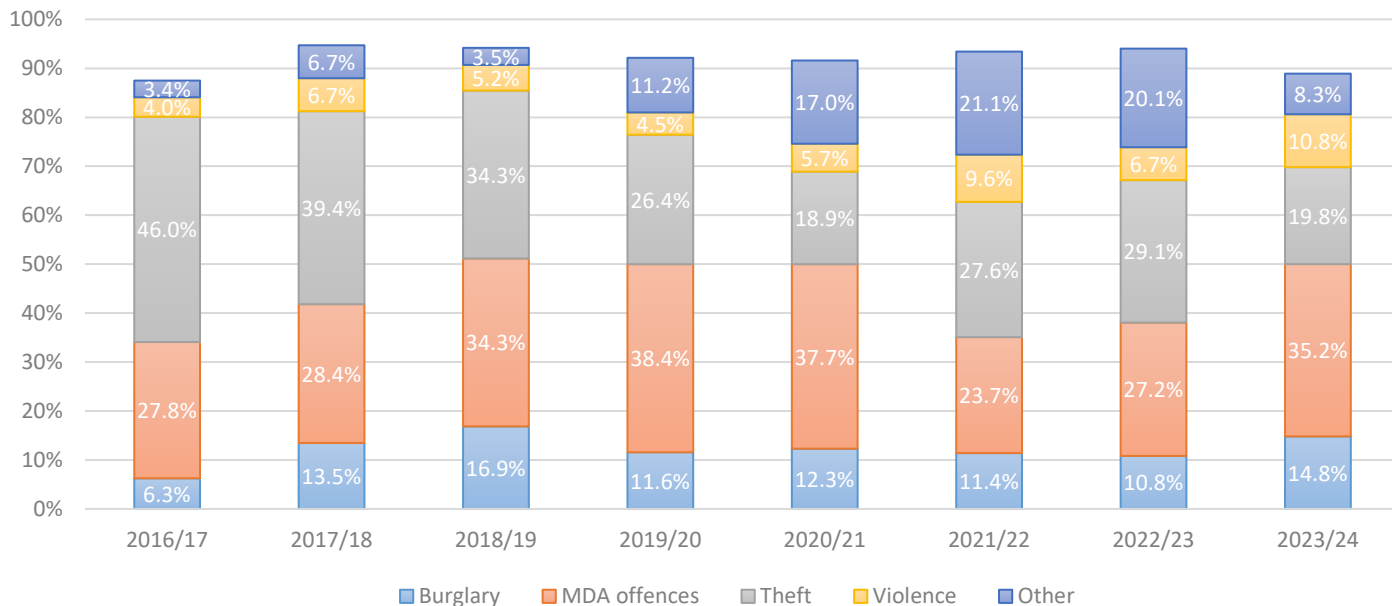
⁴⁰ MDA offences: possession of controlled drugs (excluding cannabis) = 52, 45.6%; other drug offences = 35, 30.7%; trafficking in controlled drugs = 22, 19.3%; possession of controlled drugs (cannabis) = 5, 4.4%.

⁴¹ Theft: shoplifting = 51, 79.7%.

⁴² Other offences: miscellaneous crimes = 24, 88.9%; stalking and harassment = 3, 11.1%.

Overall, there have been some changes in the trends of burglary, MDA offences, theft, violence and other offences (Figure 44). In the year ending March 2024, proportions of burglary, MDA offences and violence increased when compared to the previous year, with violence increasing to the largest proportion of the eight-year period and burglary the second largest. Conversely, the proportion of theft in 2023/24 decreased to the second smallest proportion of the eight-year period, and other offences more than halved when compared to the previous year.

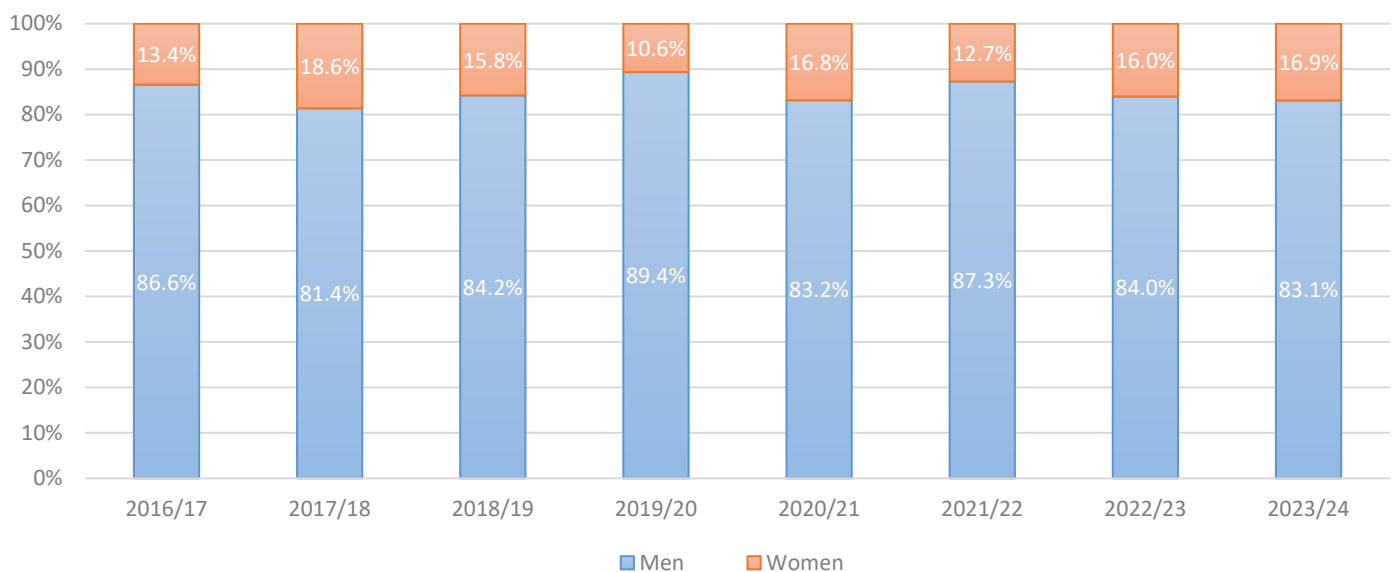
Figure 44: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offending categories, St Helens residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024 (n=222, 83.1%; Merseyside total: 82.3%), which is similar to the previous year (84.0%) and just below the eight-year average (84.9%; Figure 45).

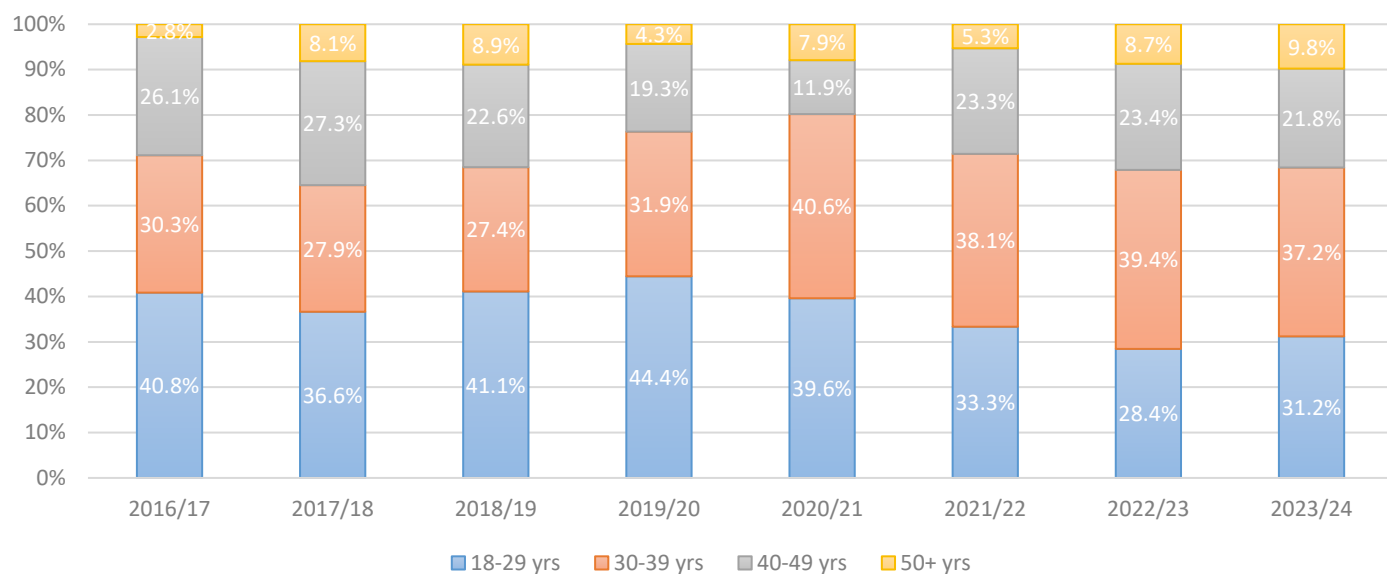
Figure 45: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, St Helens residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2023/24



The average age of St Helens residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 was 35 years (35 years for both men and women), which is the same as the previous year.

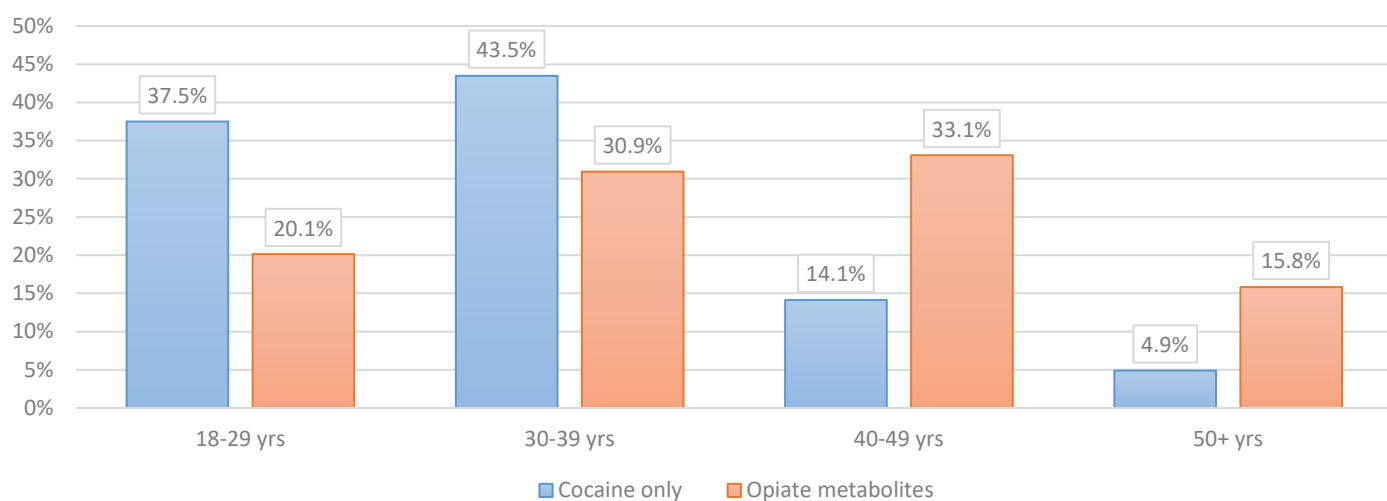
Just under two in five of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 were aged 30-39 years (n=99, 37.2%), followed by individuals aged 18-29 years (n=83, 31.2%), 40-49 years (n=58, 21.8%) and 50 years or over (n=26, 9.8%; *Figure 46*). There have been some fluctuations in proportions during the eight-year period, though notably, 2023/24 had the second smallest proportion aged 18-29 years and the largest proportion aged 50 years or over during the eight-year period. However, when compared to the other Merseyside areas, St Helens residents accounted for the largest proportion aged 18-29 years (Merseyside total: 21.3%), and the smallest proportions aged 40-49 years and 50 years or over (Merseyside totals: 26.3% and 16.0% respectively).

Figure 46: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, St Helens residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2023/24 ⁴³



In the year ending March 2024, of the St Helens residents who tested positive for cocaine only, over two in five (43.5%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by just over one-third (37.5%) aged 18-29 years (*Figure 47*). While 40-49 year olds accounted for a third (33.1%) of those who tested positive for opiate metabolites, followed by just under a third aged 30-39 years (30.9%).

Figure 47: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, St Helens residents, 2023/24 ⁴³



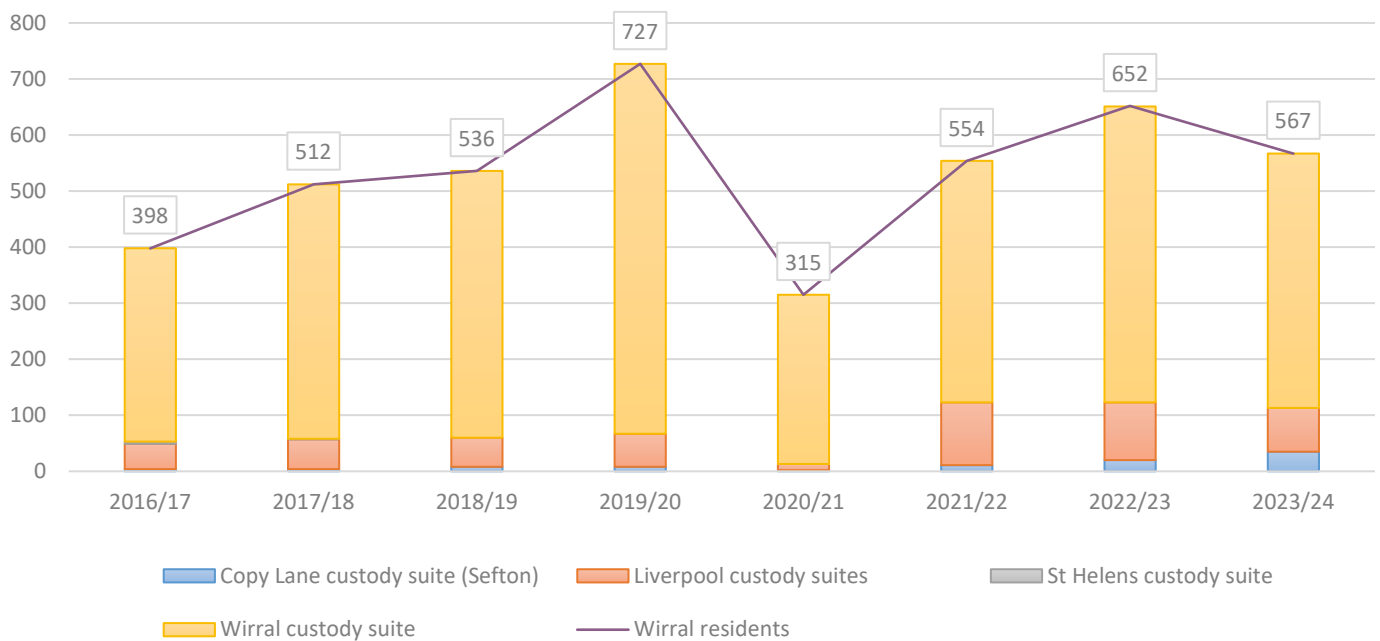
⁴³ There was one record that did not have the age or date of birth recorded.

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2024, there were 567 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Wirral residents across Merseyside Police’s custody suites, representing around one in seven (15.5%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is a 13.0% decrease on the 652 attempted tests in the previous year and the third highest number of tests of the eight years shown in *Figure 48*⁴⁴. Notably, Wirral is the only Merseyside area to have a decrease in the number of attempted drug tests in the year ending March 2024.

On average, the majority (86.2%) of the attempted drug tests on Wirral residents were carried out at Wirral custody suite during the eight-year period (*Figure 48*).

Figure 48: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Wirral residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 49 shows the drug testing activity for Wirral residents drug tested in Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024. Of the 567 attempted drug tests, 564 were successful and subsequently 413 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Over half (54.2%) of the positive drug tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 206, 49.9%; opiates only = 18, 4.4%), while the remaining positive tests were cocaine only (n=189, 45.8%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 372 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 307 individuals in the year ending March 2024.

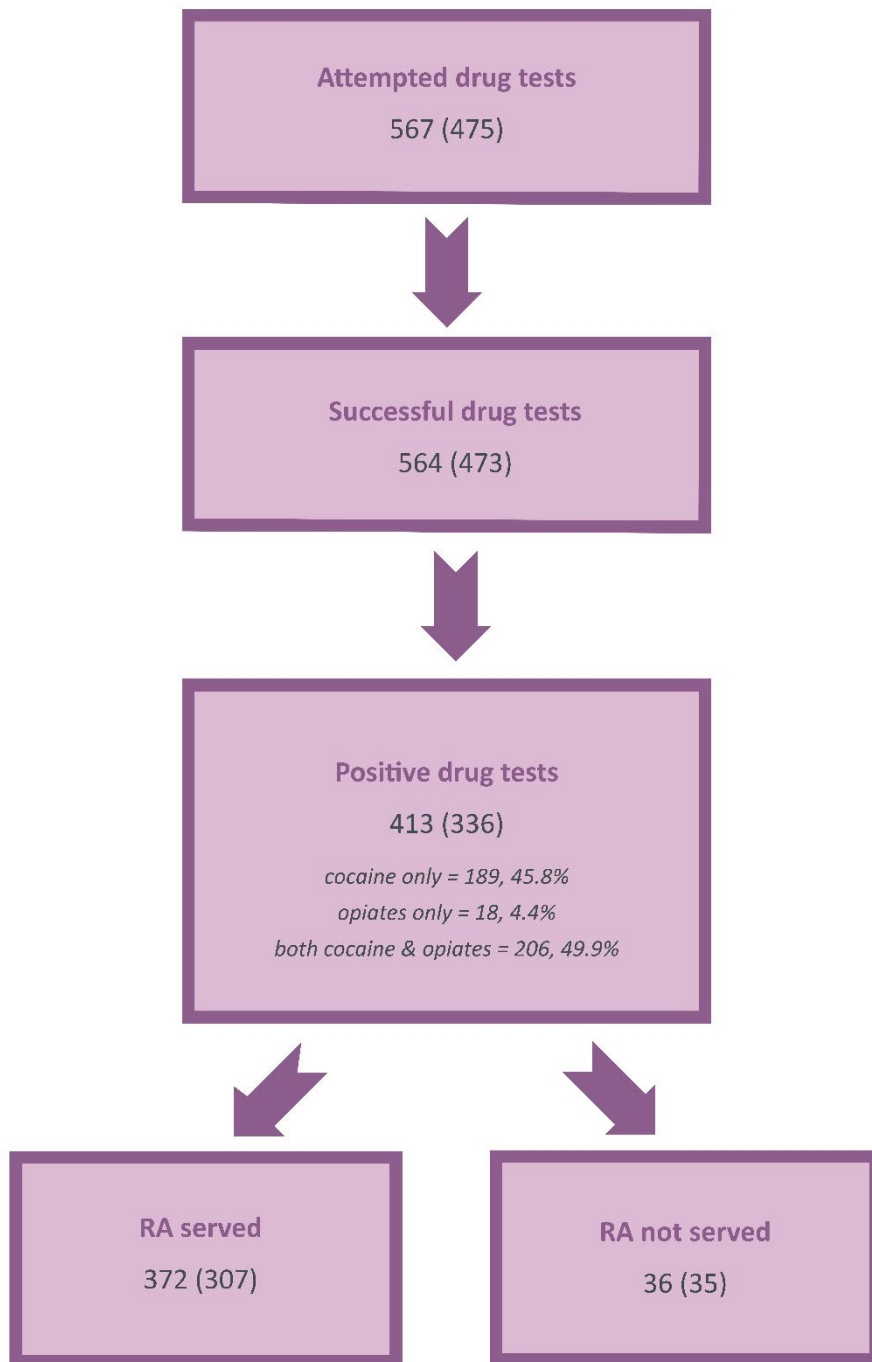


54%

of positive tests were opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates)

⁴⁴ Note that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence in some years may be affecting these trends.

Figure 49: Drug testing activity, Wirral residents, 2023/24 ⁴⁵

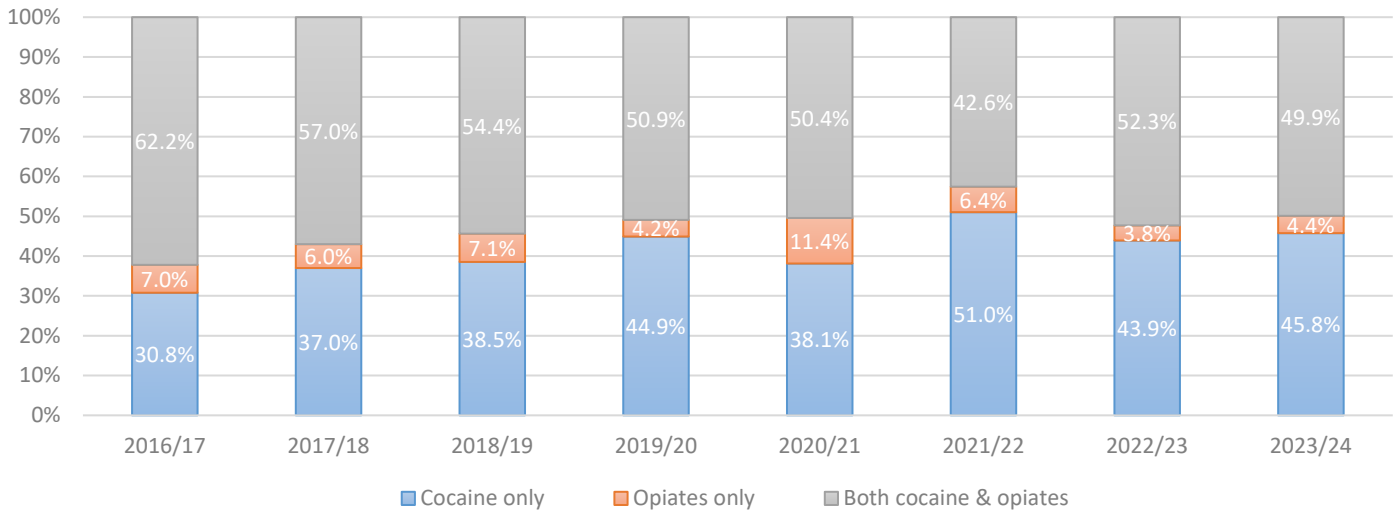


⁴⁵ There were two tests refused and one unsuccessful test. The summation of 'RA served' and 'RA not served' does not equal the number of positive tests due to the exclusion of drug tests where the positive result was overturned or not resolved following a dispute, and there are individuals with more than one positive drug test that could be included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'.

POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

In all years except 2021/22, there were larger proportions of opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates) than cocaine only during the eight-year period (*Figure 50*), while other Merseyside areas consistently had larger proportions of cocaine only than opiate metabolites in recent years. However, the proportion of opiate metabolites in the year ending March 2024 (54.2%) is a decrease on the previous year and is the second smallest proportion of the eight-year period.

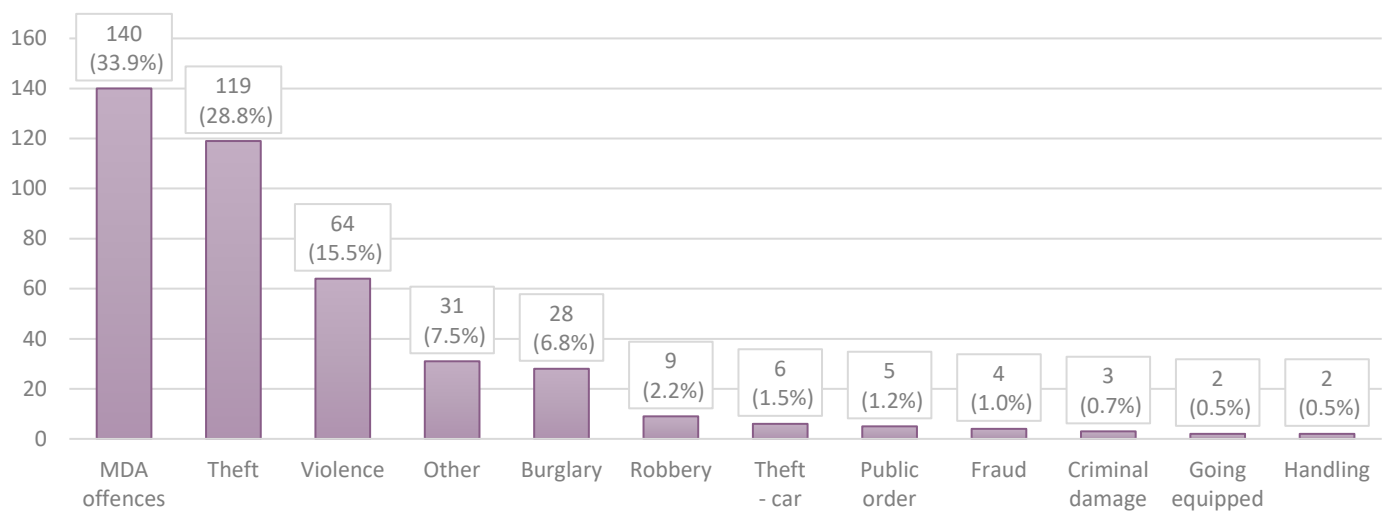
Figure 50: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Wirral residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



OFFENCES

Around a third of the positive drug test records for Wirral residents in the year ending March 2024 reported MDA offences (n=140, 33.9%⁴⁶), while around three in ten were theft (n=119, 28.8%⁴⁷) and around one in seven were violence (n=64, 15.5%; *Figure 51*). Notably, both Liverpool and Wirral had the largest proportions of theft recorded across Merseyside (Merseyside total: 26.4%), and Wirral had the second largest proportions of MDA offences and violence (Merseyside totals: 30.2% and 12.2% respectively).

Figure 51: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Wirral residents, 2023/24 ⁴⁸



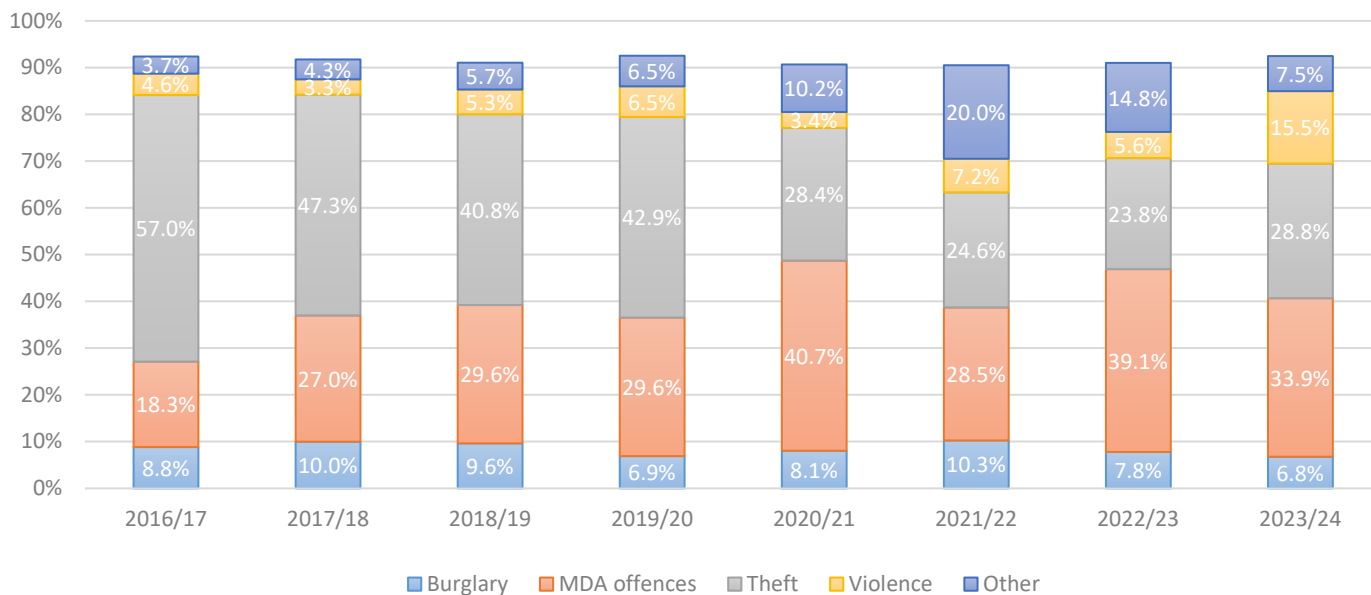
⁴⁶ MDA offences: possession of controlled drugs (excluding cannabis) = 52, 37.1%; trafficking in controlled drugs = 44, 31.4%; other drug offences = 43, 30.7%; possession of controlled drugs (cannabis) = 1, 0.7%.

⁴⁷ Theft: shoplifting = 96, 80.7%.

⁴⁸ Other offences: miscellaneous crimes = 31, 100%.

Overall, there have been some changes in the trends of burglary, MDA offences, theft, violence and other offences (Figure 52). In the year ending March 2024, proportions of theft and violence increased when compared to the previous year, with violence increasing to the largest proportion of the eight-year period. Conversely, the proportions of burglary, MDA offences and other offences decreased in 2023/24.

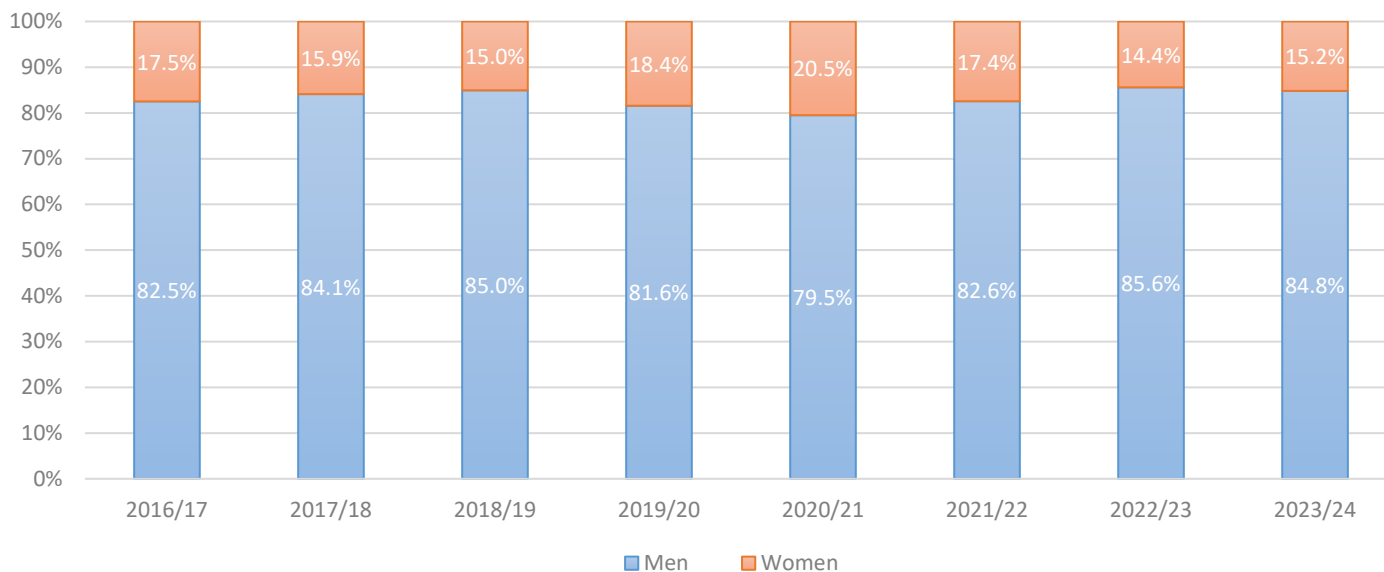
Figure 52: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offending categories, Wirral residents, 2016/17 - 2023/24



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2024 (n=285, 84.8%). This is a decrease on the previous year, though it is a larger proportion than the eight-year average (83.2%), and the second largest proportion of men of the five Merseyside areas (Merseyside total: 82.3%).

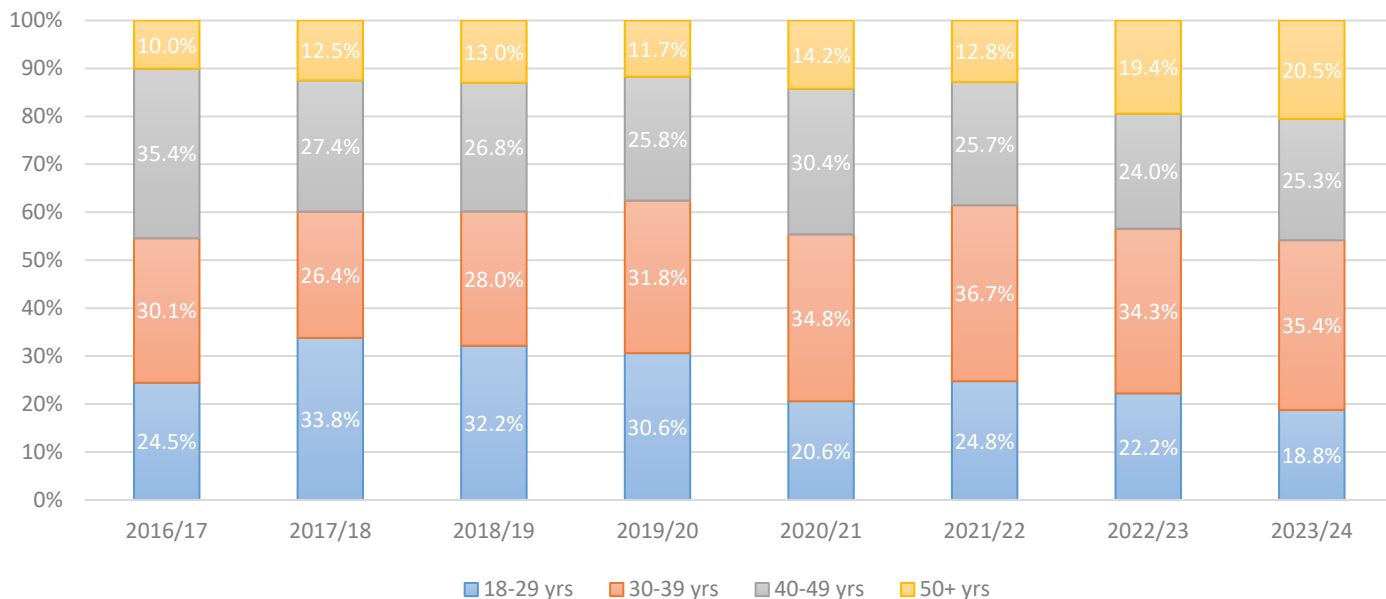
Figure 53: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, Wirral residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2023/24



The average age of Wirral residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 was 39 years (men = 39, women = 40), which is similar to the previous year (38 years).

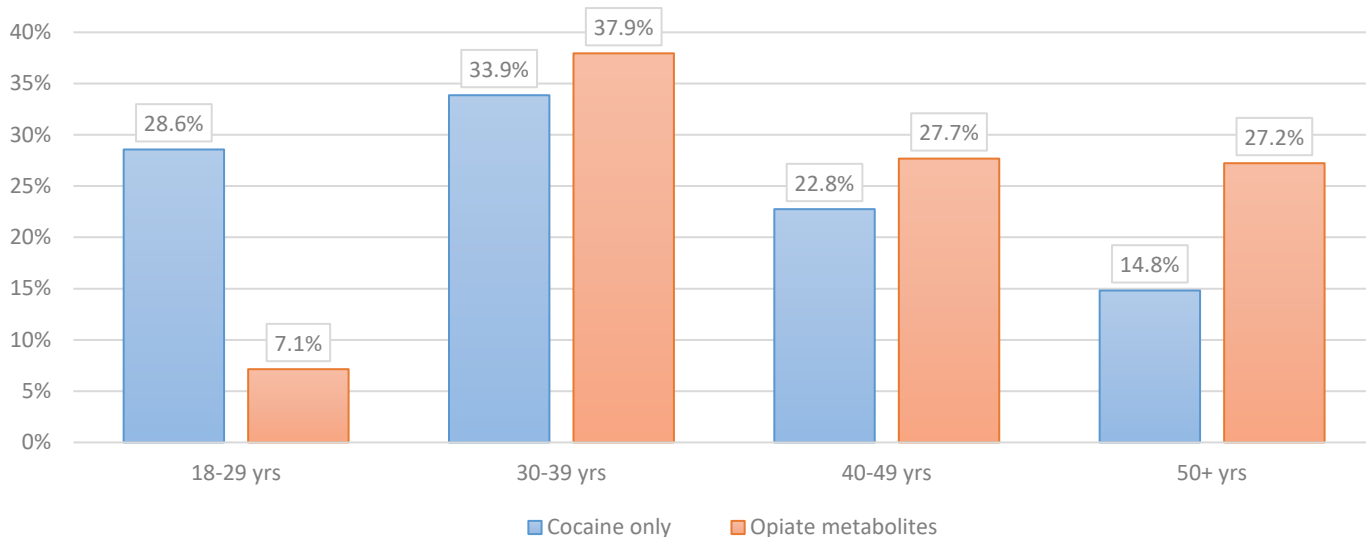
Over one-third of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 were aged 30-39 years (n=119, 35.4%), followed by one-quarter aged 40-49 years (n=85, 25.3%), one in five aged 50 years or over (n=69, 20.5%) and just under one in five aged 18-29 years (n=63, 18.8%; *Figure 54*). Notably, this is the smallest proportion aged 18-29 years and the largest proportion aged 50 years or over of the eight-year period. Furthermore, when compared to the other Merseyside areas, this is the smallest proportion of 18-29 year olds and the largest proportion of individuals aged 50 years or over (Merseyside totals: 21.3% and 16.0% respectively).

Figure 54: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Wirral residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2023/24



In the year ending March 2024, of the Wirral residents who tested positive for cocaine only, around a third (33.9%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by around three in ten (28.6%) aged 18-29 years and just under one-quarter (22.8%) aged 40-49 years (*Figure 55*). While 30-39 year olds accounted for just under two in five (37.9%) of those who tested positive for opiate metabolites, followed by those aged 40-49 years and 50 years or over (27.7% and 27.2% respectively).

Figure 55: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Wirral residents, 2023/24



RE-PRESENTATIONS

Table 1 provides an indication of the rate of re-presentations through Drug Testing on Arrest (DTToA) in Merseyside, which can be used as a proxy measure of re-offending. Of the 1,986 individuals who reside in Merseyside who tested positive for opiates and/or cocaine in the year ending March 2024, just under one in five subsequently re-presented and were drug tested again following their initial positive drug test during the twelve-month period (n=372, 18.7%).

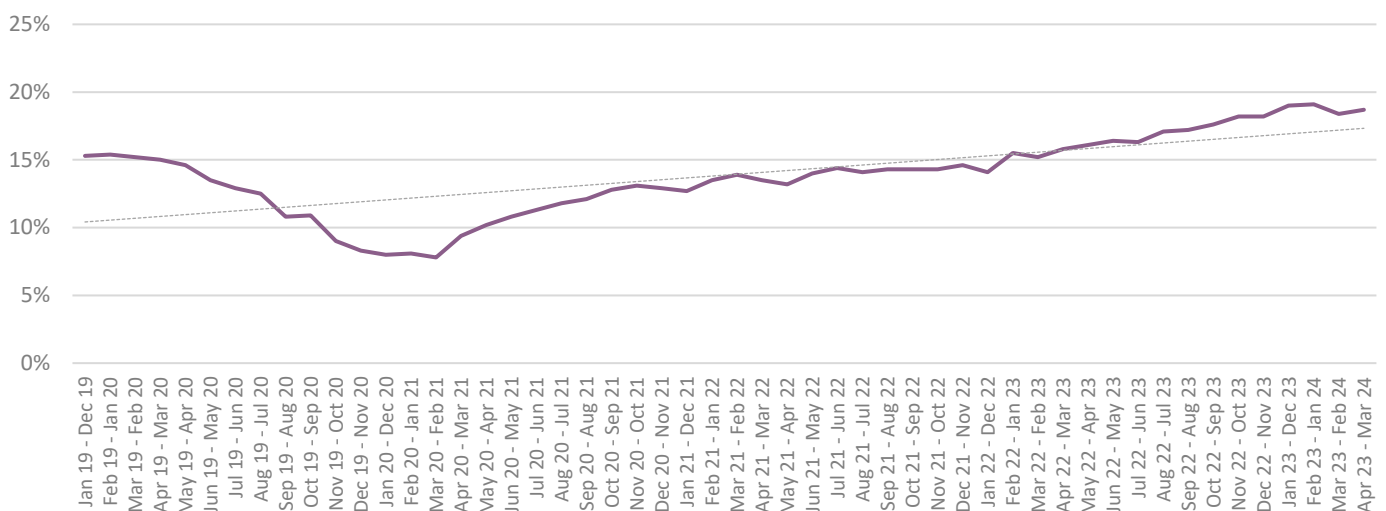
Table 1: Individuals re-presenting to DTToA following a positive test for specified Class A drugs, Merseyside residents, 2023/24

Number of DTToA occasions	N	%
One	1,614	81.3%
Two	256	12.9%
Three	72	3.6%
Four	28	1.4%
Five	10	0.5%
Six	4	0.2%
Seven	0	-
Eight	1	0.1%
Nine	1	0.1%
<i>Individuals presenting more than once</i>	<i>372</i>	<i>18.7%</i>

TRENDS OF RE-PRESENTATIONS

Figure 56 shows the proportions of individuals re-presenting to DTToA following a positive test for specified Class A drugs during twelve-month cohorts between January 2019 - December 2019 and April 2023 - March 2024. Since the cohorts affected by the suspension of drug testing for five months in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in the proportion of individuals re-presenting to DTToA⁴⁹. Of the 52 cohorts shown in Figure 56, re-presentations peaked in the twelve months ending December 2023 and twelve months ending January 2024 (19.0% and 19.1% respectively).

Figure 56: Proportions of individuals re-presenting to DTToA following a positive test for specified Class A drugs, Merseyside residents, Jan 2019 - Dec 2019 to Apr 2023 - Mar 2024



⁴⁹ Note that as well as the suspension of drug testing between April and August 2020, Merseyside Police ran out of drug testing kits in May 2021 due to a nationwide shortage, which was an ongoing issue and may have affected the number of drug tests carried out in subsequent months.

OVERVIEW OF INDIVIDUALS WHO RE-PRESENTED

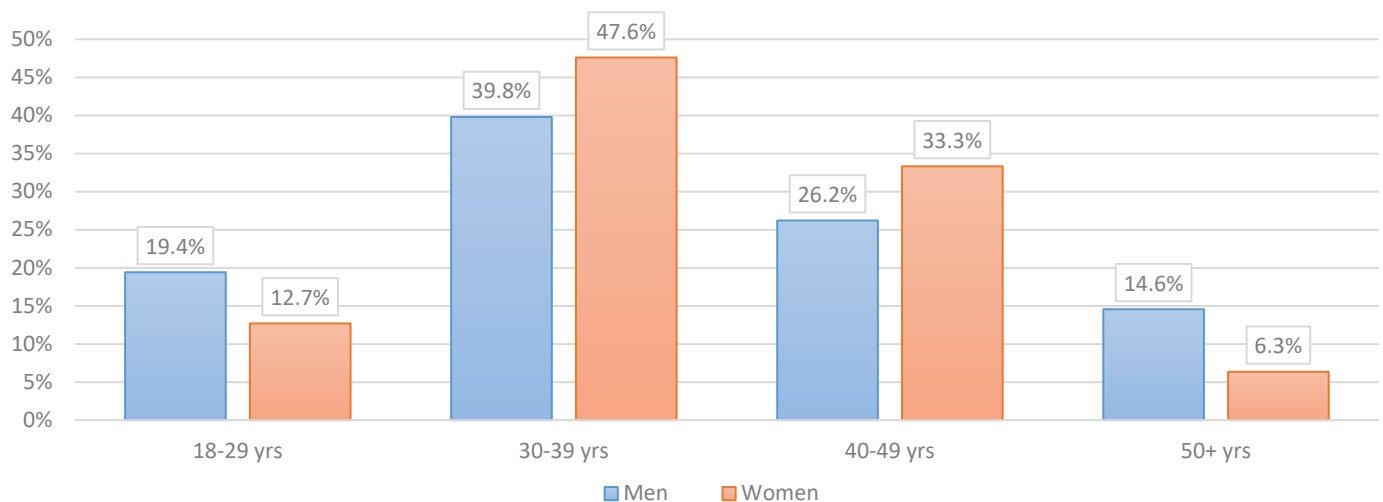
This section provides an overview of the 372 individuals who tested positive in the twelve months ending March 2024 and subsequently re-presented during the twelve-month period. Figures are shown as per the age and drug(s) detected at the initial positive drug test.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Just over four in five of the individuals who re-presented in the year ending March 2024 were men (n=309, 83.1%), and around two in five were aged 30-39 years (n=153, 41.1%), followed by just over one-quarter aged 40-49 years (n=102, 27.4%), just under one in five aged 18-29 years (n=68, 18.3%) and around one in seven aged 50 years or over (n=49, 13.2%).

Figure 57 compares age group with gender for individuals who presented more than once between April 2023 and March 2024. There were larger proportions of men than women aged 18-29 years (19.4% and 12.7% respectively) and 50 years or over (14.6% and 6.3% respectively), though larger proportions of women than men aged 30-39 years (47.6% and 39.8% respectively) and 40-49 years (33.3% and 26.2% respectively).

Figure 57: Individuals re-presenting to DToA by age group and gender, Merseyside residents, 2023/24



Over two in five of the individuals who re-presented in the twelve months ending March 2024 were residents of Liverpool LA at the time of their initial drug test (n=167, 44.9%), followed by residents of Wirral (n=63, 16.9%), Sefton (n=59, 15.9%), St Helens (n=49, 13.2%) and Knowsley (n=34, 9.1%).

INITIAL POSITIVE DRUG TEST OF INDIVIDUALS WHO RE-PRESENTED

As this report highlighted, 54.8% of all positive drug tests in the year ending March 2024 were cocaine only (Figure 2). However, of the cohort who presented to DToA more than once between April 2023 and March 2024, around three in five individuals tested positive for opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates) at their initial positive drug test during the twelve-month period (n=228, 61.3%).

Notably, there are some variations across the Merseyside areas (Figure 58). Residents of Liverpool and Wirral accounted for the largest proportions of individuals testing positive for opiate metabolites at their initial positive test (67.1% and 66.7% respectively), followed by Sefton (59.3%) and St Helens (53.1%). Conversely, just over three in five (61.8%) Knowsley residents tested positive for cocaine only at their initial drug test.

Figure 58: Individuals re-presenting to DToA by LA of residence and drug type at initial positive test, Merseyside residents, 2023/24

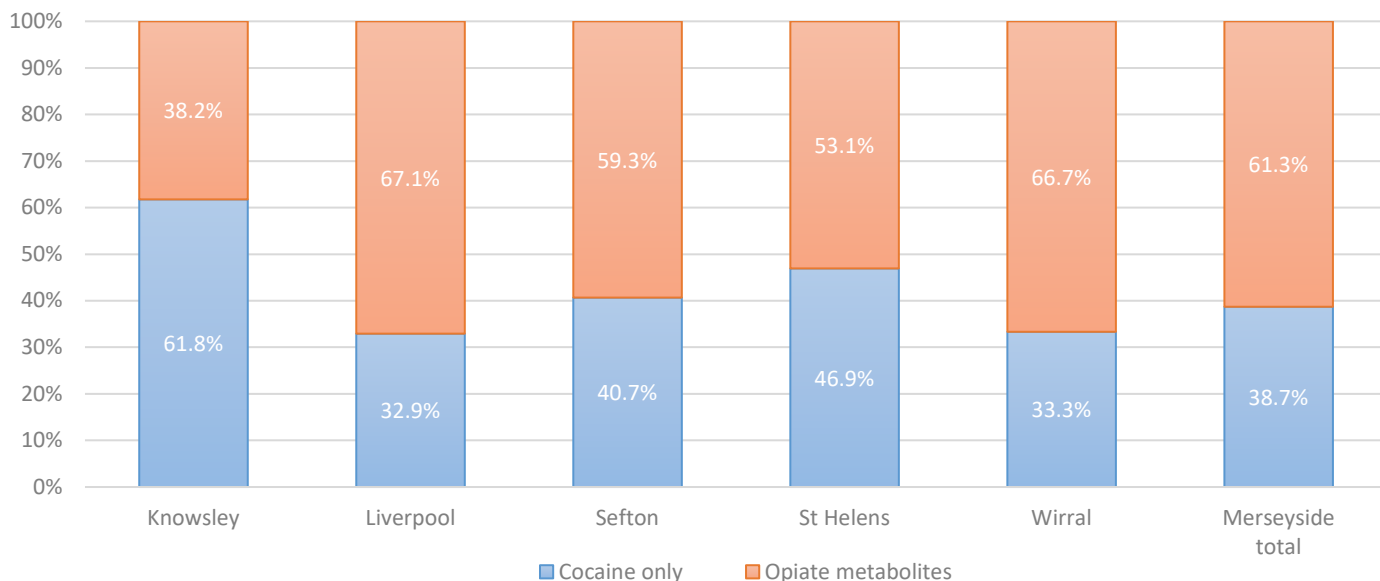
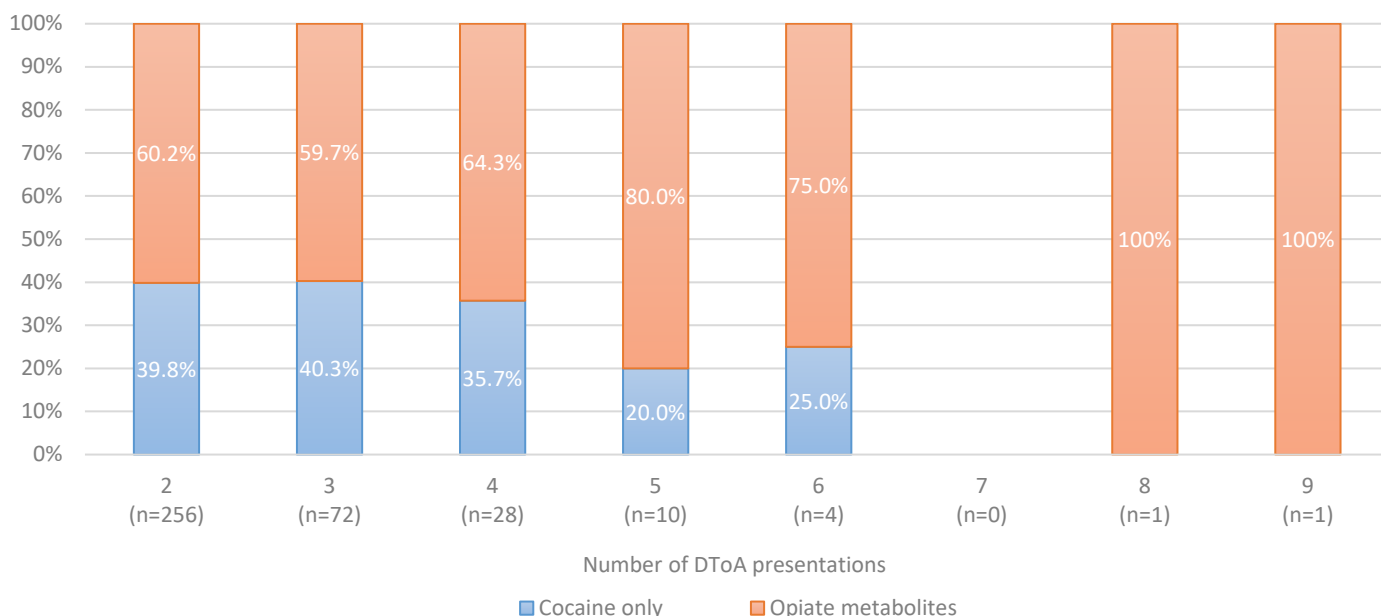


Figure 59 compares the number of DToA presentations with the drug type at the initial positive drug test between April 2023 and March 2024. Opiate metabolites accounted for three in five individuals who presented two or three times during the twelve-month period (60.2% and 59.7% respectively), and just under two-thirds (64.3%) who presented four times. The proportion who tested positive for opiate metabolites increased for those who presented five or six times in the twelve-month period (80.0% and 75.0% respectively). There were no individuals who presented seven times, and both of the two individuals who presented eight and nine times tested positive for opiate metabolites at their initial positive test.

Figure 59: Individuals re-presenting to DToA by number of presentations and drug type at initial positive test, Merseyside residents, 2023/24

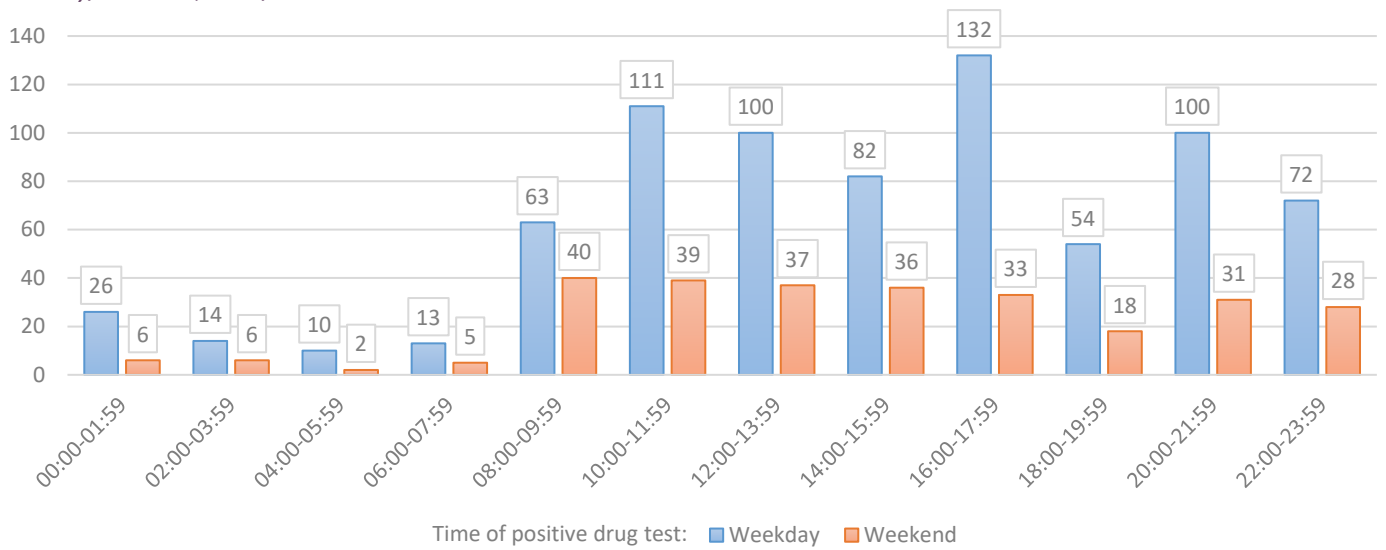


Notes to accompany this report:

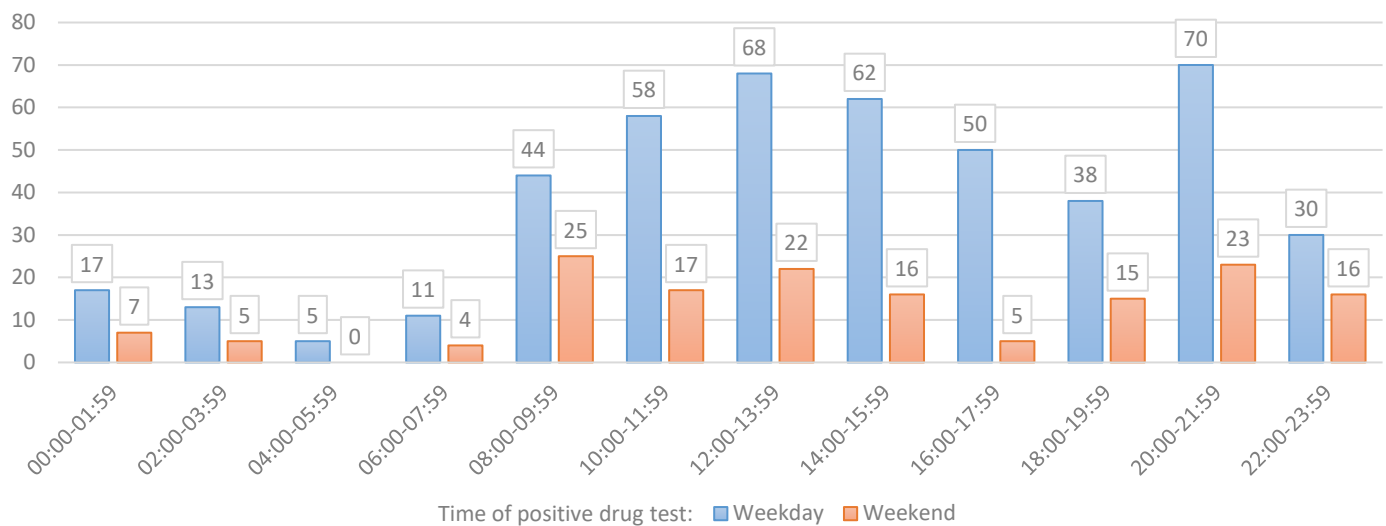
1. Merseyside Police custody suites:
 - a. Liverpool custody suites include Belle Vale, St Anne Street and Wavertree.
 - b. St Anne Street custody suite closed on 16 May 2023 for refurbishment and reopened on 20 September 2023.
 - c. Wirral custody suite closed early January 2022 for refurbishment and reopened on 30 April 2022.
 - d. Copy Lane custody suite closed temporarily for refurbishment for around ten weeks at the end of 2019.
 - e. St Helens custody suite permanently closed mid-August 2017.
 - f. There is no custody suite in Knowsley.
2. Merseyside Police suspended drug testing in the custody suites between April and August 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Where comparisons have been made with Merseyside figures, these are totals for Merseyside residents only and not totals of tests carried out by Merseyside Police, which include all residents (pages 2-12).
4. Throughout this report, cocaine includes both powder cocaine and crack cocaine.
5. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
6. Numbers of individuals have been reported for demographics (*Figures 9-12, 15, 21-22, 29-30, 37-38, 45-46 & 53-54*) and re-presentations (*Table 1 & Figures 56-59*) only, while other figures include multiple tests for some clients.
7. For instances where there are blank records or an individual declines to answer, does not know or does not state a response, these have been excluded from the calculations; therefore, totals may not add up to the total number of attempted/positive drug tests or individuals. Footnotes have been included throughout the report to indicate numbers of records missing information in order to monitor data quality.

APPENDIX B

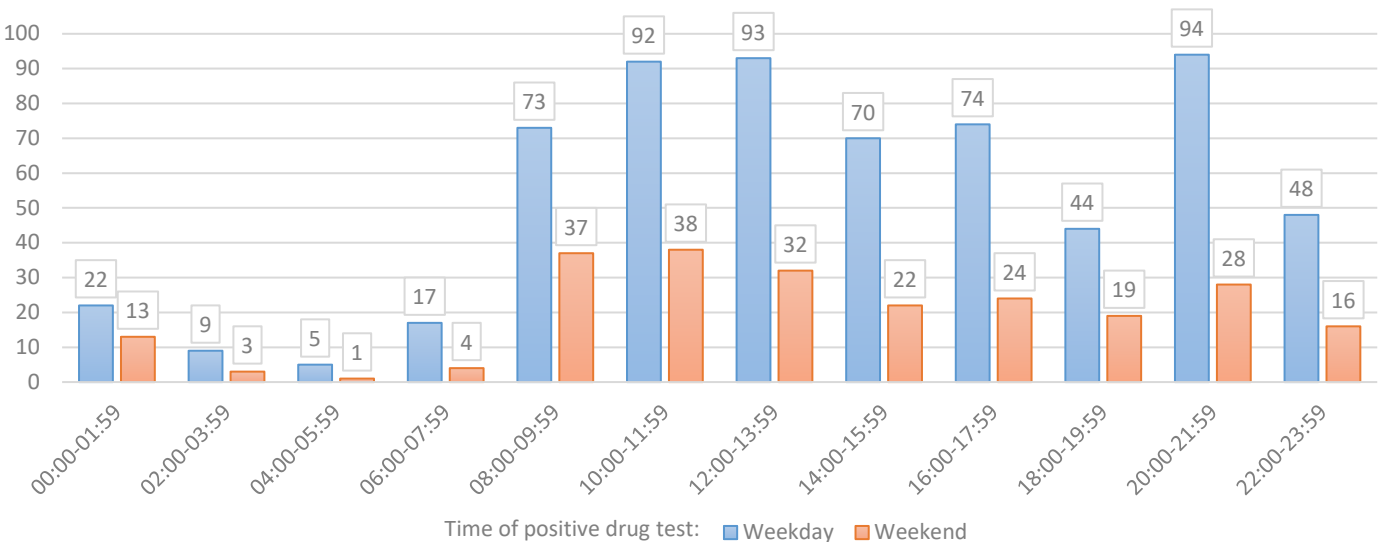
Appendix B1: Positive drug tests at Belle Vale, St Anne Street and Wavertree custody suites (Liverpool) by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2023/24



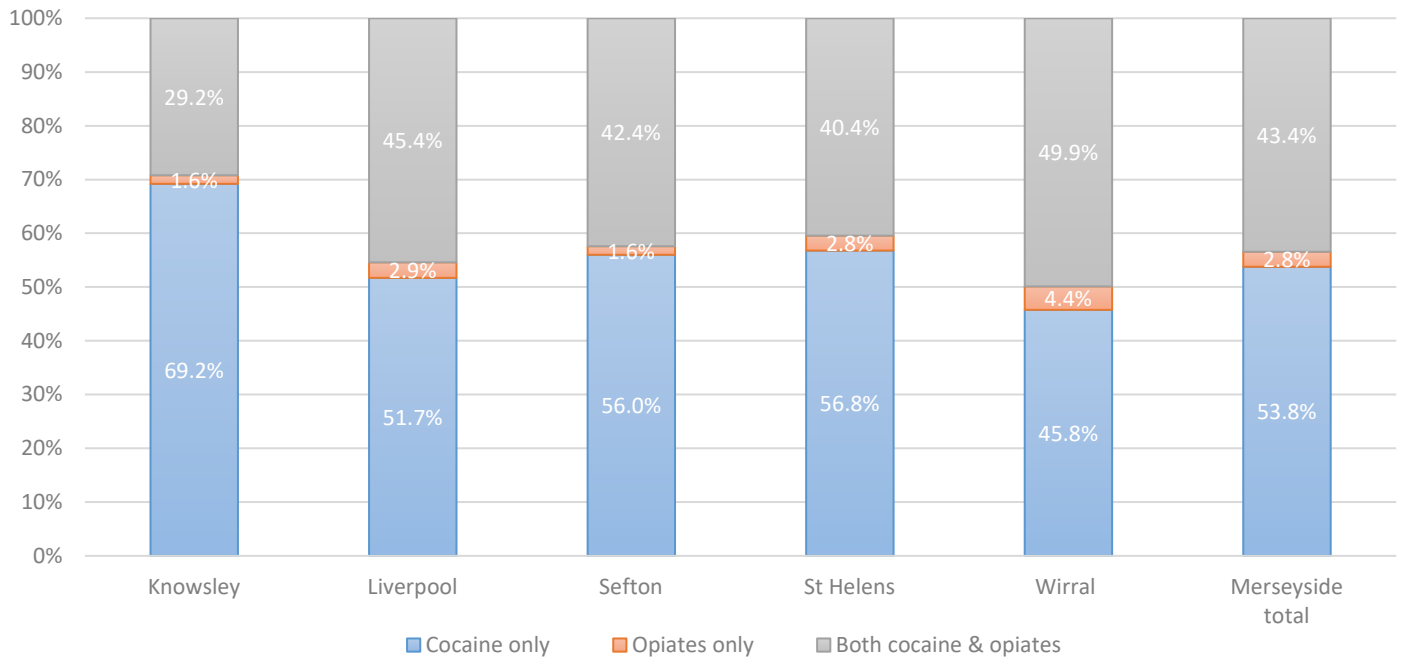
Appendix B2: Positive drug tests at Copy Lane custody suite (Sefton) by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2023/24



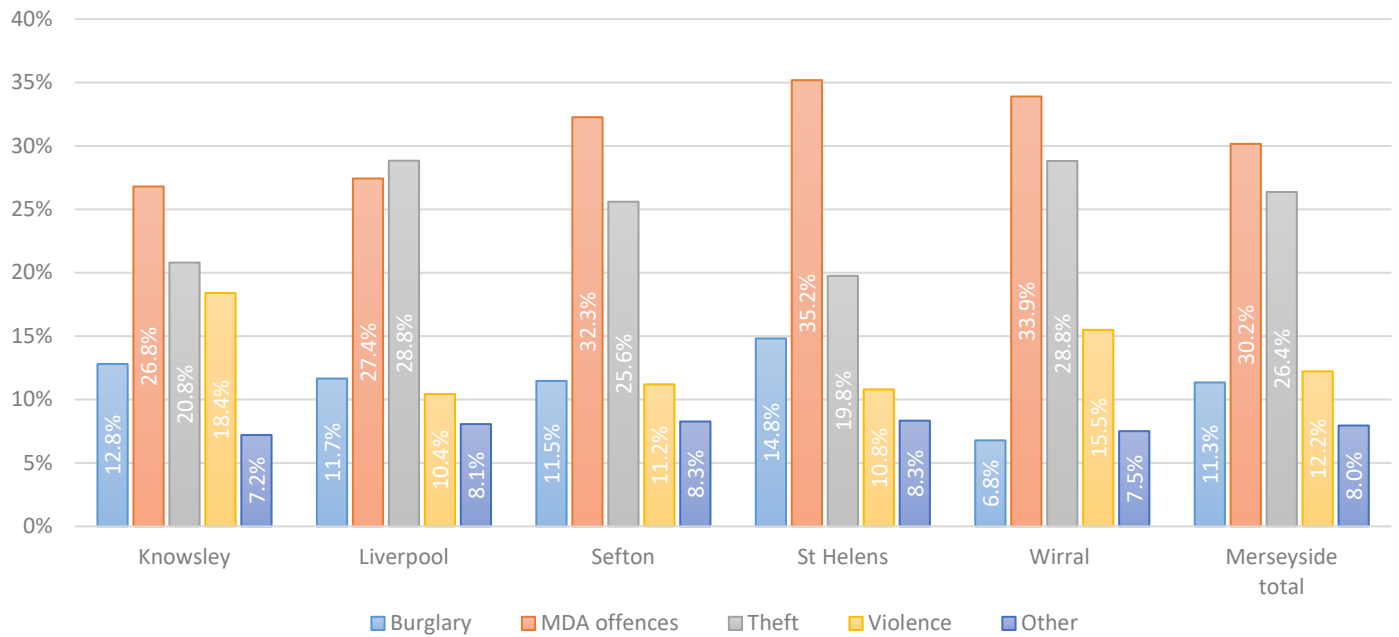
Appendix B3: Positive drug tests at Wirral custody suite by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2023/24



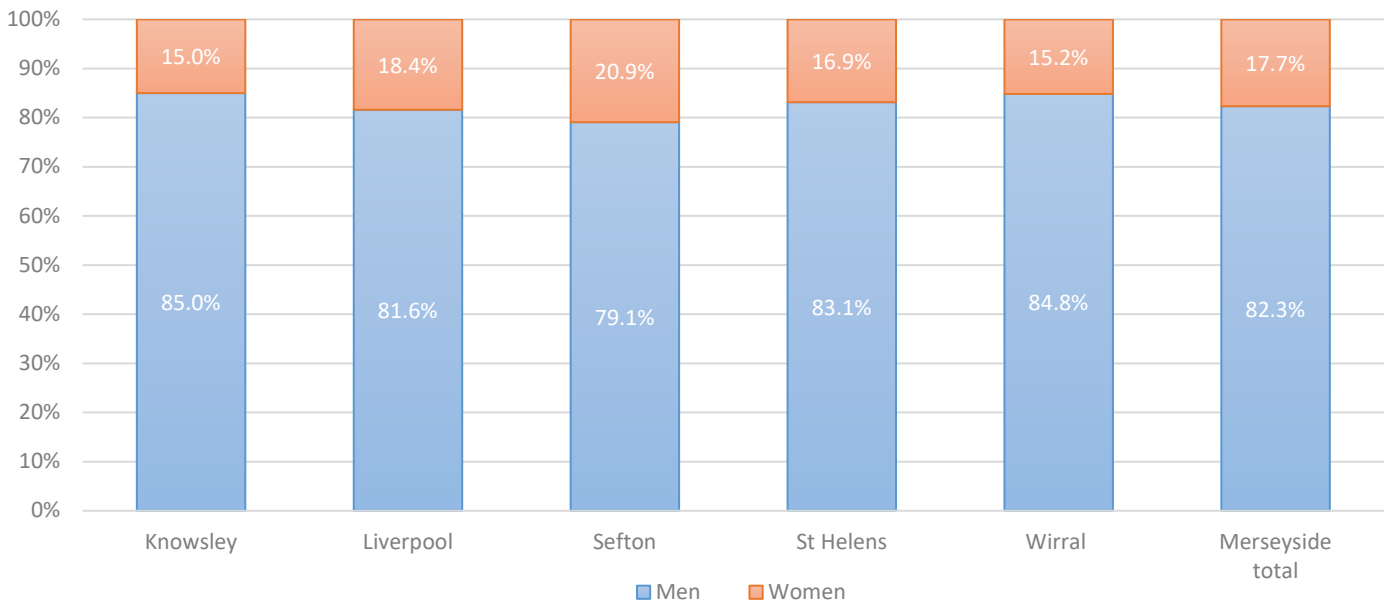
Appendix C1: Positive drug tests by drug test result and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2023/24



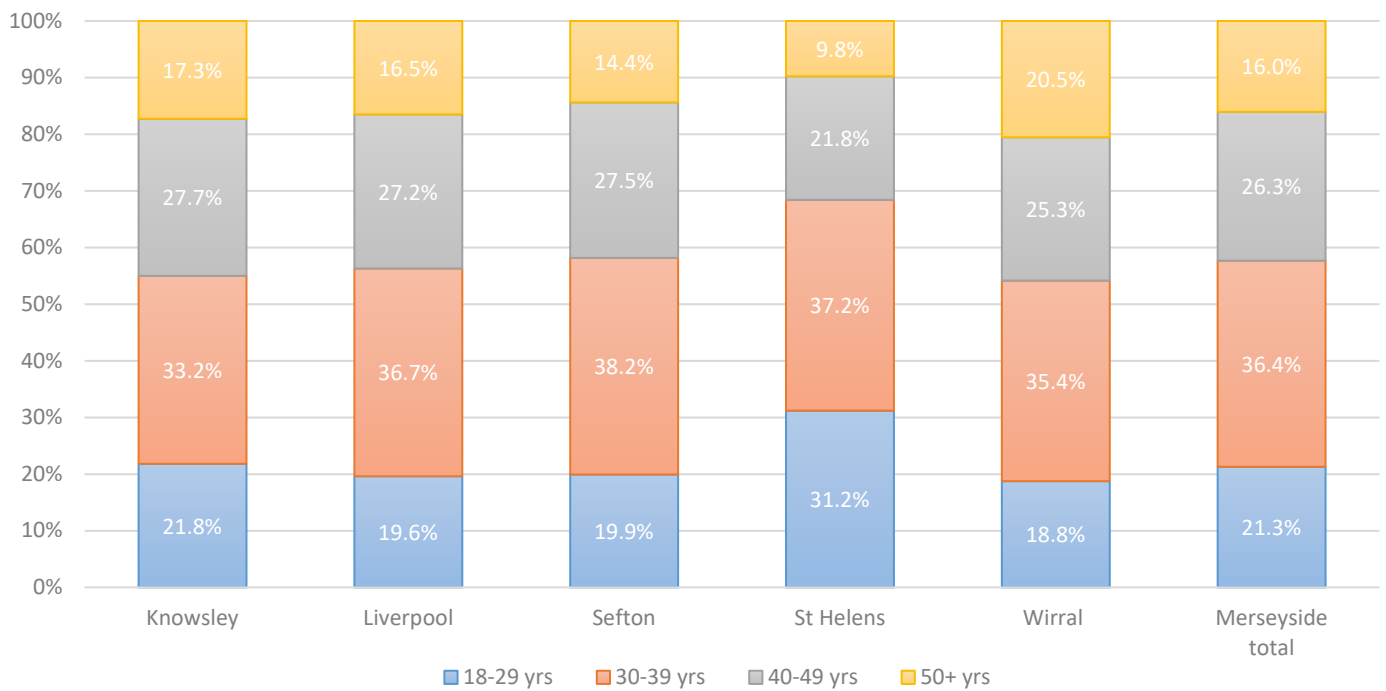
Appendix C2: Positive drug tests by key offences and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2023/24



Appendix C3: Positive drug tests by gender and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2023/24



Appendix C4: Positive drug tests by age group and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2023/24



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With special thanks to Merseyside Police for providing drug testing records and their ongoing support. Thank you also to the commissioners and treatment providers across Merseyside. Finally, thank you to Cara Citraro and Nicky Mawdsley at the Public Health Institute for their help in proof reading this report.

About the Public Health Institute

The Public Health Institute (PHI) within the Faculty of Health, Liverpool John Moores University, specialises in applied research and educational programmes addressing health issues at all levels from policy development to service delivery. PHI is committed to a multidisciplinary approach to public health and works in partnership with health services, local authorities, judicial bodies, environmental services, and community groups.

Influencing health service design and delivery, as well as health related policy, PHI's research has been at the forefront of the development of multi-agency strategies to promote and protect public health. PHI turns information and data into meaningful and timely intelligence.

Intelligence and Surveillance Team

The Intelligence and Surveillance Team provides data collection and monitoring systems to support public health reporting, evidence review, evaluation and research. The team have extensive experience across various large-scale data sets which contribute to the surveillance systems developed and managed by PHI.

DIP and criminal justice monitoring

PHI has been monitoring criminal justice interventions for people in the criminal justice system who use drugs and/or alcohol since the implementation of the Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) in 2003. The Institute is commissioned to deliver the intelligence and surveillance of data collected for clients in contact with DIP across Merseyside.

The Intelligence and Surveillance Team has access to Merseyside Police records for drug tests carried out for specified Class A drugs in the custody suites and the criminal justice data set, which collects information on clients in contact with the Criminal Justice Intervention Teams (CJITs) across Merseyside's treatment providers. Drug testing records are matched with the criminal justice data set across the five Merseyside Local Authority areas, using a client attributor. This enables the monitoring of performance, identifying when individuals have attended their Required Assessment (RA) and engaged with DIP, and highlight any issues with the RA, and wider DIP, processes.

Intelligence is collated and presented through monthly and annual reports, and ad-hoc reporting in response to data requests. In partnership with commissioners, treatment providers and Merseyside Police, DIP monitoring in Merseyside has been continually developing to meet local needs.

