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On the 26 October, the government published a [briefing](#) covering the latest summary of drug crime statistics for England and Wales.

This summary includes the headline figures from each section, excluding hospital admission data and drug-related deaths.

Police recorded crime

- Overall, the figures showed that drug crime has increased by 13% compared to last year, with 175,000 offences recorded nationally. However, it is important to note that national totals exclude figures from Greater Manchester for the years ending March 2019 and 2020 and are therefore not directly comparable with previous years.

Stop and Search:

- The number of searches conducted by police has fallen by 75% from a peak of 1,519,561 in 2008/09 to 383,629 in 2018/19. However, the proportion of searches with drugs stated as the reason has increased over this period, from 36% in 2008/09 to 59% in 2018/19. Since 2012/13, more than half of all stop and searches conducted each year have been looking for drugs.
- As the overall number of searches conducted has decreased, the proportion of resultant arrests have increased. This suggests that searches have become better targeted and more effective, although the majority of searches still result in nothing being found (72%).
- In 2018/19, over 1 in 4 drug stops (28%) led to an outcome related to 'Drugs'. In comparison, this figure was just under 1 in 8 (11%) for searches relating to 'Offensive weapons' and 'Going equipped'. Overall, just over 1 in 5 of all stop and searches (22%) resulted in an outcome that was linked to the reason for the search.
- People from minority ethnic backgrounds have been consistently more likely to be stopped and searched than White people. People who self-identified as White were under-represented relative to the population, accounting for 84.4% of the population but only 50.6% of drug-related stop and searches. All other ethnic groups were overrepresented, with the exception of the 'Chinese or other' ethnic category.

Arrests:

- The number of arrests for notifiable drug offences peaked 118,658 in 2010/11 and has since fallen to 66,211 in 2018/19. However, it is important to note that arrest figures reflect police activity and cannot be reliably used to infer the level of crime being committed by offenders.
- The majority of people arrested for drug offences are male. The proportions of men and women arrested has remained relatively stable, with 88% of those arrested between 2008/09 and 2018/19 being male and 12% female.
- In 2018/19, 56% of those arrested were White, 17% were Black or Black British, 10% Asian or Asian British, 5% Mixed and 2% Chinese or other. 10% of those arrested did not state their ethnicity.
- Since 2013/14, the proportion of those arrested who self-define as White has decreased by 16%, whilst the proportion who identify as Black or Black British increased by 5%, Asian or Asian British increased by 2%, Mixed increased by 1% and Chinese or other ethnic group increased by 1%. The proportion of those not stating their ethnicity has also risen by 8%.

Outcomes:

- The majority of police recorded drug offences resulted in some form of formal or informal criminal justice outcome, whereby the suspect was either charged or summonsed (24%), cautioned or issued a penalty notice for disorder (formal out-of-court disposal) (12%), issued a cannabis or khat warning or a Community Resolution was applied (informal out-of-court disposal) (32%). 17% of drug offences recorded in 2018/19 went unsolved or the case was dropped for various reasons, whilst 15% had not yet been assigned an outcome.
- A higher proportion of drug offences result in a formal or informal criminal justice outcome compared with all offences combined (68% and 11% respectively). This is partly due to the nature of the crime. Drug crime tends to be detected when the perpetrator is found in possession of drugs.

Trends over time:

- The number of drug offences fell between 2008/09 and 2017/18, before rising again over the past two years.
- Data for 2018/19 and 2019/20 excludes the Greater Manchester Police Force (GMP) and is therefore not directly comparable with previous years. However, in the year ending March 2020, there were around 175,000 drug offences. With GMP excluded, this is still 13% higher than in 2017/18 (the lowest level of drug crime recorded since 2004/05), but 28% lower than in 2008/09 when drug crime peaked.
- The main drug offence recorded in 2019/20 was 'possession of cannabis' (63%), followed by 'possession of controlled drugs (excluding cannabis)' (18%), 'trafficking in controlled drugs' (18%) and 'other drug offences' (0.4%).
- Over this period, the total number of drug offences increased by 18%. There was an increase in offences recorded across all categories: possession of cannabis increased the most (23%), followed by trafficking in controlled drugs (13%) and possession of controlled drugs (excluding cannabis) (8%). Other drug offences increased the least in the twelve months ending March 2019 (0.1%).

Police Force Areas (PFAs):

- In 2019/20, the Merseyside Police Force recorded the highest rate of 8.3 drug offences per 1,000 population.
- The Warwickshire Constabulary recorded the lowest rate of 1.6 offences per 1,000 population.

- Between 2010/11 and 2019/20, all but six British police forces have seen a decline in drug offences.
- In London, the Metropolitan police reported that drug offences declined from around 67,000 in 2009/10 to 37,000 in 2017/18. Numbers have since increased to roughly 48,000 in 2019/20.

Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) data

Drug crime:

- The proportion of CSEW respondents that had personally experienced or witnessed 'people using or dealing drugs' in their local area increased from 9.0% in 2018/19 to 10.8% in 2019/20. This proportion has doubled from 4.4% 2016/17.
- In 2019/20, 22% of respondents perceived that there was a high level of people using or dealing drugs in their local area. This represents a three-percentage point increase since 2018/19. Overall, perceptions of people using or dealing drugs has seen a ten-percentage point decrease from a peak of 33% in 2000.
- In 2019/20, the victim believed that the perpetrator was under the influence of drugs in 29% (360,000) of violent incidents. This is the highest proportion recorded in the past decade. This figure has fluctuated around 1 in 4, or 1 in 5, incidents.

Drug misuse:

- In 2018/19, 9.4% of adults aged 16-59 reported having used any drug in the past year, down from a peak of 12.2% in 2002/3.
- Drug use among 16-24-year-olds has seen a steeper decline; the proportion that had used any drug in the past year peaked at 31.8% in 1998 before reducing to 16.5% in 2012/13. This has since increased to 20.3% in 2018/19.

Proven offences and offenders

Out of court disposals:

- In 2018/19, 20,800 Public Notices for Disorder (PNDs) were issued. After drunk and disorderly, possession of cannabis was the second most common offence for which an offender received this sanction (accounting for 25% of all PNDs issued). The total number of PNDs issued has fallen over the past decade from around 175,000 in 2008/09 (an 88% decrease).
- Around 67,000 cautions were issued in 2018/19. Drug offences were the most common indictable offence for which the offender received a caution (accounting for 40% of all cautions for indictable offences). The overall cautioning rate for all offences (among those cautioned or convicted excluding summary motoring offences) was 9%. This has seen a reduction from 28% in 2008/09. Drug offences have the highest cautioning rate (29% in 2018/19).

Proven offenders:

- The number of proven drug offenders fell by more than half between 2010/11 and 2018/19 from just over 100,000 to just under 50,000.
- The proportion of drug offenders receiving a caution has fallen (from 46% in 2008/9 to 30% in 2018/19), while the proportion receiving a custodial sentence has increased (from 9% to

16%) in the same time frame. This contrasts with a general falling trend in the number of people sentenced to immediate custody for all offences.

- Offenders found guilty of drug possession offences are more likely to receive a caution than those found guilty of drug trafficking offences, who are more likely to be sentenced to immediate custody. In 2018, 36% of those cautioned or sentenced for possession offences received a caution, whilst 3% were sentenced to immediate custody.
- Of those offenders cautioned or sentenced for trafficking offences, 13% received a caution whilst 51% were sentenced to immediate custody.

Custodial sentences:

- The average custodial sentence length (ACSL) for all drug offences decreased from 37.3 months in 2004 to 28.7 months in 2012. The ACSL has since increased again to 39.2 months in 2019. The ACSL for drug offences is higher than that for all indictable offences, which in 2019 was 21.4 months.
- Drug trafficking offences receive considerably longer sentences than possession offences. In 2019, the ACSL for trafficking offences was 43.4 months, compared to 4.1 months for possession offences.
- At 30 June 2020 (the most recent data available), there were just under 13,000 persons in prison for drug offences, accounting for 16% of the overall prison population.

Mandatory drug testing:

- In 2019/20 there were 54,375 tests administered in prisons in England and Wales, of which 13.5% (7,275) tested positive (10.5% for traditional drugs and 4.3% for psychoactive substances).
- Since 1998/99 (the first year of Random Mandatory Drug Testing data available), the percentage of positive tests for traditional drugs fell from 18.1% to a low of 6.9% in 2014/15. It subsequently rose again to the current level, where it has remained since 2017/18.
- Positive results for psychoactive substances have fallen considerably over this period, down from 9.0% in 2018/19 and 12.9% in 2017/18. These are 'new' synthetic drugs, including the drugs known as Spice and Black Mamba.

Drug finds:

- In 2019/20, there were 21,575 incidents in which drugs were found in prisons in England and Wales. There has been a 102% increase in the number of these incidents since 2016/17, when there were 10,666.
- In 2019/20, psychoactive substances were the most common type of drug found, being found in 38% of incidents. This was followed by Class B drugs (found in 21% of incidents) and 'unknown' drugs (found in 20% of incidents).

Reoffending rates

Reoffending rates (or recidivism) serve as a measure of the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. Reduced reoffending tends to mean lower overall crime levels.

- Of adult drug offenders convicted between January and March 2018, 25.1% reoffended within a year. This figure has remained stable since October to December 2015. This is slightly lower than the overall adult reoffending rate for all offences (28.0%).
- Amongst juvenile drug offenders, the reoffending rate was considerably higher at 39.9% (compared to 39.2% of juvenile offenders convicted of all offences).

- In 2018/19, 57% of people cautioned for drug offences were reoffenders, compared to 49% cautioned for all crimes.
- In contrast, 85% of people sentenced to immediate custody for drug offences were reoffenders, compared to 90% of people sentenced for all crimes.
- Reoffending rates for drug offences have remained relatively stable over the past decade.
- 24% of convicted drug offenders in 2018/19 had long criminal histories (more than 15 previous cautions or convictions), compared to 7% of those cautioned for drug offences.