

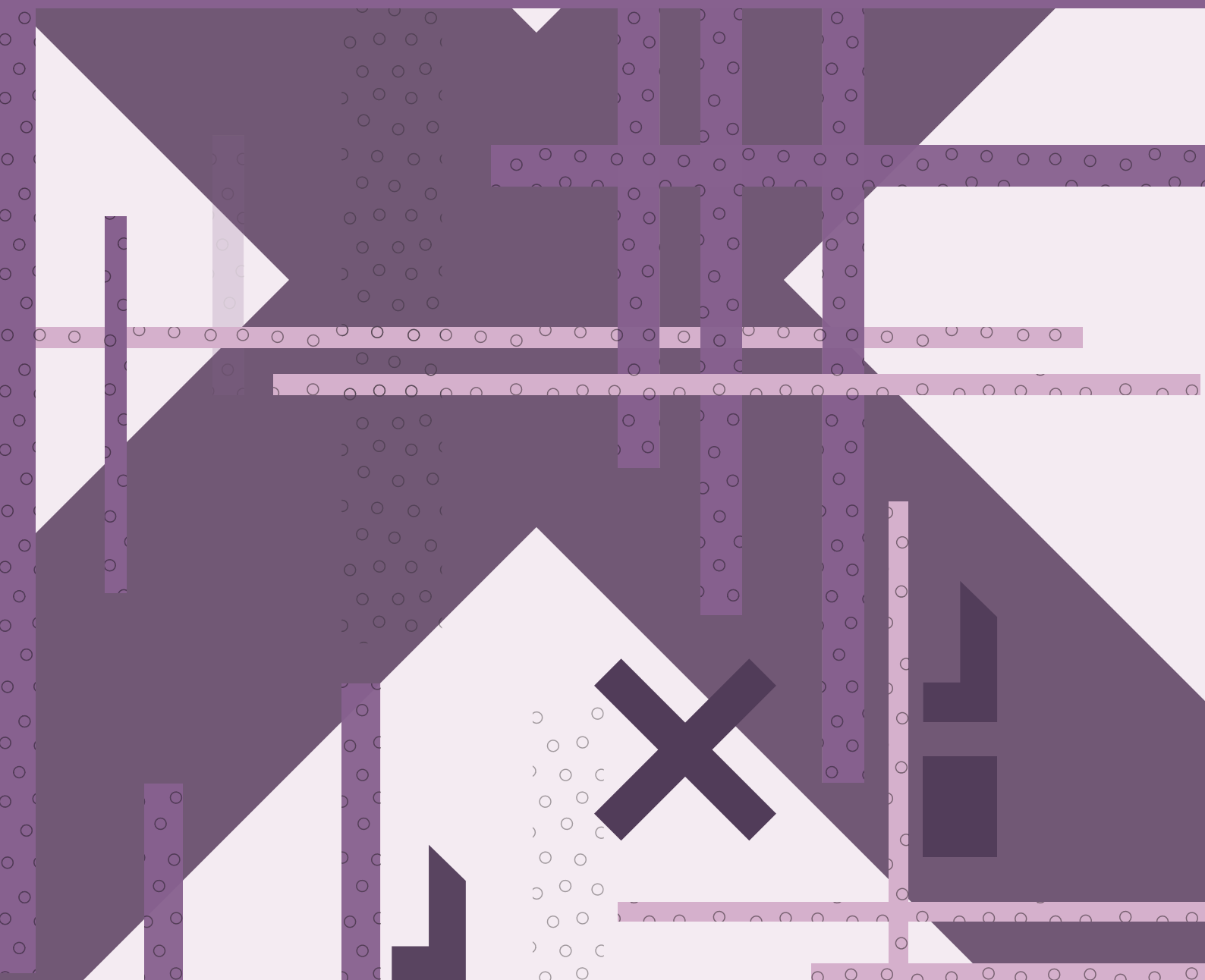
Criminal Justice Project: Class A drug tests in Merseyside Police custody

(2019/20)

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KEY FINDINGS

- There were 3,657 attempted drug tests on adult detainees across Merseyside's custody suites between April 2019 and March 2020. From 2016/17, there was a year-on-year increase in the number of drug tests, with the largest increase between 2018/19 and 2019/20 (22% increase).
- Over half of the total 2,557 positive drug tests across Merseyside in 2019/20 were for cocaine only (55%), while the remaining positive tests were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 41%; opiates only = 3%).
- Around two-thirds (67%) of positive drug tests in 2019/20 occurred on a weekday.
- Positive drug tests peaked between 10:00 and 11:59 both on a weekday and at the weekend in 2019/20.
- Around two in five (39%) positive drug test records across Merseyside in 2019/20 reported Misuse of Drugs Act offences, followed by theft (29%).
- Men accounted for 85% of individuals testing positive between April 2019 and March 2020.
- The average age of detainees who tested positive in 2019/20 was 34 years. Detainees aged 18-24 years, 25-29 years and 30-34 years each accounted for 17% of individuals.
- When comparing age group by gender, for men numbers were highest in 18-24 year olds, while women aged 30-34 years and 35-39 years accounted for the largest proportions.
- Detainees testing positive for opiate metabolites increased by age, peaking at 40-44 years, and then decreased by age. For detainees who tested positive for cocaine only, numbers were highest in 18-24 year olds, which then decreased by age, though there was a slight increase in those aged 50 years and over compared to 45-49 year olds.
- Of the 2,118 individuals across Merseyside who tested positive for opiates and/or cocaine between April 2019 and March 2020, 15% subsequently re-presented and were successfully tested following the initial positive test during the twelve-month period.
- In 2019/20, a monthly average of around two in five (41%) detainees attended their appointment with a CJIT worker within 28 days of being served with a Required Assessment.
- Of the total number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside between April 2019 and March 2020, 98% had the detainees' local authority (LA) of residence recorded. Of the records where the LA of residence was recorded, 93% were Merseyside residents.
- Of the positive drug tests in 2019/20, where LA of residence stated Merseyside, over two in five were residents of Liverpool (44%), followed by Wirral residents (23%), Sefton residents (15%), St Helens residents (10%) and Knowsley residents (7%).

The Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) has an overarching aim to identify and engage with adult offenders in the criminal justice system who use drugs and/or alcohol, and encourage them towards appropriate treatment services in order to reduce acquisitive crime. The DIP process often begins with the police drug testing detainees in the custody suite for specified Class A drugs (opiates and/or cocaine) following an arrest or charge. If detainees test positive, they are served with a Required Assessment (RA) by the police. This is a compulsory legal sanction which requires the individual to attend up to two appointments (initial/follow-up RA) with a Criminal Justice Intervention Team (CJIT) worker. During the RA, the CJIT worker will assess the individual's drug use and offending behaviour and, if necessary, encourage them to engage with treatment services (Home Office, 2010).

In 2015, Merseyside Police introduced targeted drug testing which involves a set list of questions around Class A drug use and drug-related offending that should be considered by the police before a decision is made on whether the detainee is drug tested. The main aim of targeted testing was to reduce the number of negative drug tests, while ensuring offenders who use Class A drugs continue to be drug tested and referred to treatment services through the RA process.

This report presents data on drug tests carried out across Merseyside's custody suites between April 2019 and March 2020¹. It contextualises Merseyside Police drug testing records by providing numbers and trends of offenders who use cocaine and/or opiates, identified through this route into DIP, and a demographic overview of this cohort². This report also provides recommendations for stakeholders, in terms of the efficient use of resources and effective services across Merseyside.

Box 1: Drug Testing Recorders (DTRs)

There is a discrepancy between the number of drug tests carried out and what is recorded on the DTRs. The data used in this report is from the DTRs, which appear to under report the actual number of drug tests carried out; therefore caution should be taken with these figures.

In order to overcome this, Merseyside Police intended to implement a new DTR on 1st April 2020; however drug testing was suspended towards the end of March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹ Please note that drug testing was suspended in the custody suites towards the end of March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The last drug test carried out was the 18th of March at Wirral custody suite, and the 25th of March at both Copy Lane custody suite and Liverpool's custody suites.

² Throughout this report, percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Also note that numbers of individuals have been reported for demographics only, while other figures include multiple tests for some individuals.

DRUG TESTS ACROSS MERSEYSIDE

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

Between April 2019 and March 2020, there were 3,657 attempted drug tests on adult detainees across Merseyside's custody suites (*Table 1*). There was a substantial reduction in the number of drug tests between 2015/16 and 2016/17 (46% decrease), which could be attributed to the implementation of targeted testing in 2015 when there was a significant change in the drug testing process. From 2016/17, there was a year-on-year increase in the number of drug tests, with the largest increase between 2018/19 and 2019/20 (22% increase).

Across all five-year periods, Liverpool's custody suites had the highest number of attempted drug tests; however in 2019/20, the number of attempted tests at Wirral custody suite was just 230 less than Liverpool (*Table 1*). Between 2016/17 and 2019/20, the number of attempted drug tests at Liverpool's custody suites increased by 40%, while they increased by 66% at Copy Lane custody suite (which could be attributed to the closure of St Helens custody suite in 2017) and tests more than doubled at Wirral custody suite (104% increase).

Table 1: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, 2015/16 - 2019/20³

Custody suite	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
Belle Vale, St Anne Street & Wavertree (Liverpool)	2,330	1,179	1,330	1,192	1,646
Copy Lane (Sefton)	873	358	492	666	595
St Helens	1,082	497	193	0	0
Wirral	771	694	872	1,132	1,416
Merseyside	5,056	2,728	2,887	2,990	3,657

DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 1 shows the drug testing activity for those who were drug tested in Merseyside's custody suites between April 2019 and March 2020. Of the 3,657 attempted drug tests in 2019/20, 3,635 were successful (3,068 individuals)⁴. Of the individuals successfully tested, 2,118 individuals tested positive, representing a positive drug test rate⁵ of 69%, which is a decrease on the previous year's rate (74%).

Over half of the total 2,557 positive drug tests in 2019/20 were for cocaine only⁶ (n=1,419; 55%), while the remaining positive tests were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 1,053 [41%]; opiates only = 85 [3%]). There were 2,493 Required Assessments (RAs) served to 2,059 individuals in 2019/20 (*Figure 1*).



55%

positive tests for cocaine only, 2019/20

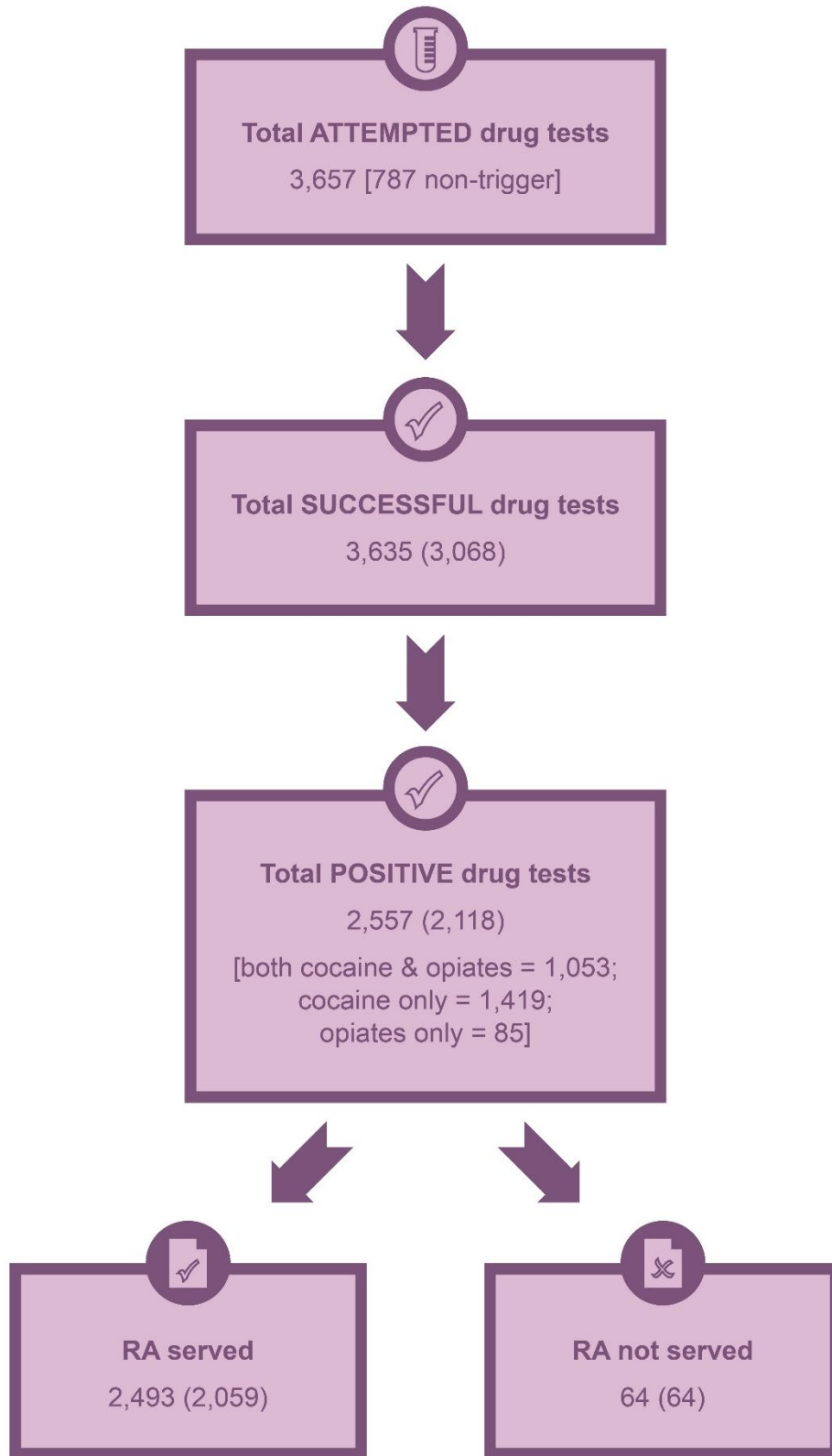
³ St Helens custody suite closed mid-August 2017; Copy Lane custody suite closed temporarily for refurbishment for around ten weeks at the end of 2019 and figures include tests carried out at Southport custody suite in 2015/16; there is no custody suite in Knowsley.

⁴ Reasons for drug tests not completed in 2019/20 (n=22): test aborted - equipment failure = 15; test refused = 5; test aborted - other = 1; test aborted - unable to provide sample = 1.

⁵ Positive drug test rate = (number of individuals testing positive ÷ number of individuals successfully tested) x100.

⁶ Throughout this report, cocaine includes both powder cocaine and crack cocaine.

Figure 1: Drug testing activity in Merseyside's custody suites, 2019/20^{7,8}



⁷ Numbers of individuals at each level are presented in brackets. 'Total attempted drug tests' is a summation of successful tests and those that were refused or aborted.

⁸ 'RA served' and 'RA not served' indicate the number of occasions when those testing positive were either served or not served with the requirement to attend an initial RA. There are individuals with more than one positive drug test that are included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'; therefore the summation of individuals with an 'RA served' and 'RA not served' does not equal the number of individuals testing positive.

POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

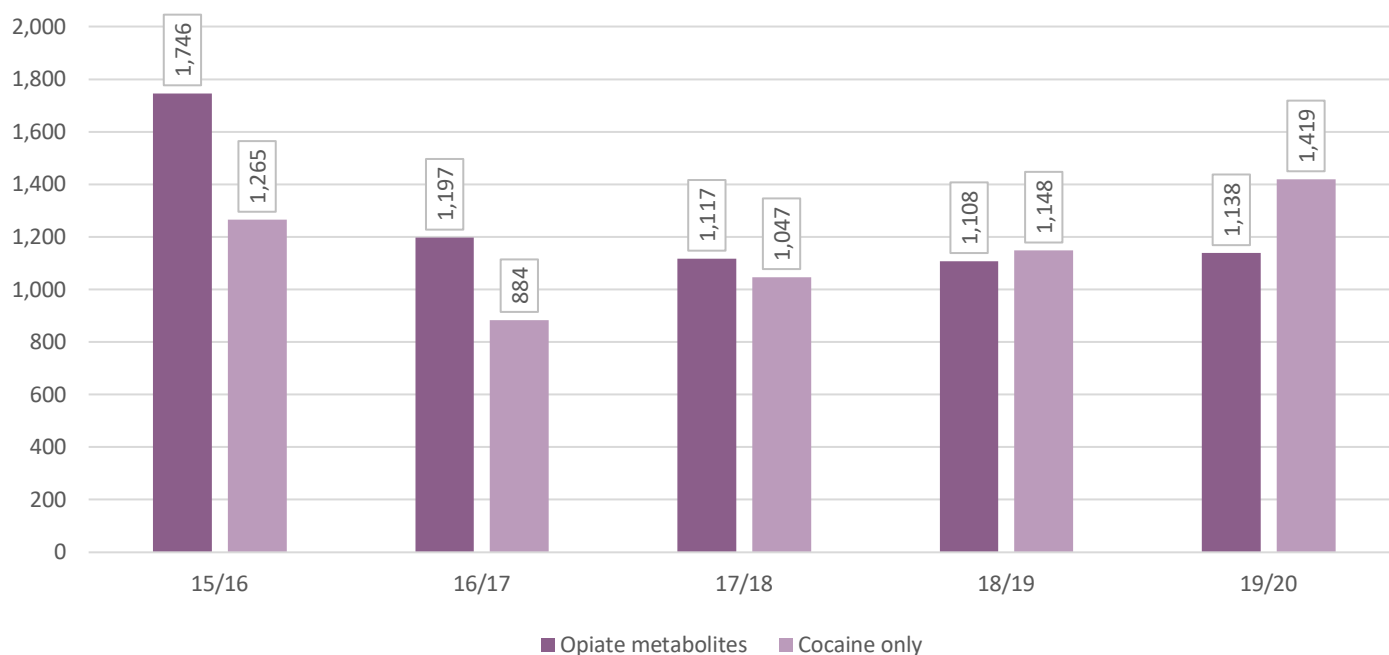
Between 2015/16 and 2017/18, there were more positive tests across Merseyside for opiate metabolites (positive tests for both opiates & cocaine and opiates only) than for cocaine only (Figure 2). Conversely, in 2018/19 and 2019/20 there were more positive tests for cocaine only than opiate metabolites.

The proportion of cocaine only positive tests increased from 42% in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 to over half in 2018/19 and 2019/20 (51% and 55% respectively). This could be attributed to an increase in supply and demand for cocaine in England and Wales in recent years (Black, 2020; Hales et al., 2020).

Box 2: Acquisitive crime and drug use

A strong association between drug use, particularly heroin and crack cocaine, and acquisitive crime is well known, with around 45% of acquisitive offences committed by people who regularly use heroin and crack cocaine (Home Office, 2017). As crack cocaine is often used by people who use heroin (Black, 2020; Hales et al., 2020), this could explain the continued high number of positive tests recorded by Merseyside Police for both cocaine and opiates, even though numbers for cocaine only positive tests were higher in the past two years.

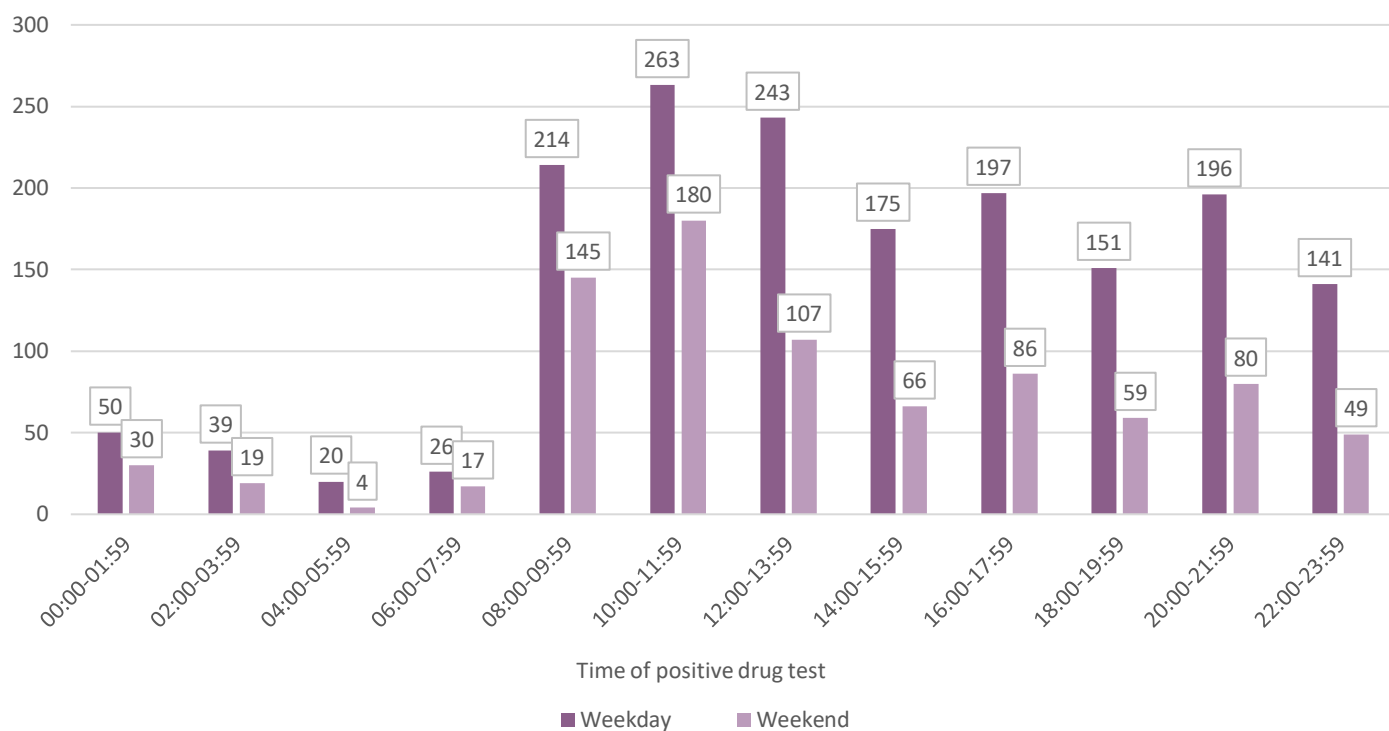
Figure 2: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, 2015/16 - 2019/20



TIME OF DRUG TESTS

Of the total 2,557 positive drug tests across Merseyside's custody suites in 2019/20, around two-thirds occurred on a weekday (n=1,715; 67%) compared to one-third on weekends (n=842; 33%). Figure 3 shows the number of positive drug tests by time of test, comparing those that occurred on a weekday with those on weekends. Positive drug tests peaked between 10:00 and 11:59 (n=263; 15%) and between 12:00 and 13:59 (n=243; 14%) on a weekday, while on weekends around one in five occurred between 10:00 and 11:59 (n=180; 21%).

Figure 3: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by time of test, weekday vs. weekend, 2019/20



BELLE VALE, SAS AND WAVERTREE CUSTODY SUITES, LIVERPOOL

Of the 1,071 positive drug tests at Liverpool’s custody suites in 2019/20, around two-thirds occurred on a weekday (n=709; 66%) compared to around one-third on weekends (n=362; 34%). Positive drug tests on a weekday peaked between 10:00 and 11:59 (n=104; 15%) and 12:00 and 13:59 (n=107; 15%), while the number of tests on weekends peaked between 10:00 and 11:59 (n=74; 20%), followed by 08:00 - 09:59 (n=68; 19%) (Appendix A1).

COPY LANE CUSTODY SUITE, SEFTON

Of the 430 positive drug tests at Copy Lane custody suite in 2019/20, over three in five occurred on a weekday (n=273; 63%) compared to weekends (n=157; 37%). Positive drug tests on a weekday peaked between 10:00 and 11:59 (n=43, 16%), followed by 08:00 - 09:59 (n=37; 14%) (Appendix A2). Similarly, positive drug tests on weekends peaked between 10:00 and 11:59 (n=36, 23%), followed by 08:00 - 09:59 (n=32; 20%).

WIRRAL CUSTODY SUITE

Of the 1,056 positive drug tests at Wirral custody suite in 2019/20, around seven in ten occurred on a weekday (n=733; 69%) compared to around three in ten on weekends (n=323; 31%). Positive drug tests on a weekday peaked between 10:00 and 11:59 (n=116; 16%), followed by 12:00 - 13:59 (n=102; 14%), while the number of tests on weekends peaked between 10:00 and 11:59 (n=70; 22%) (Appendix A3).

OFFENCE

Police drug testing records capture the offence that led to the arrest/charge and subsequent drug test. Around two in five positive drug test records across Merseyside in 2019/20 reported Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=1,009; 39%), while around three in ten records reported theft (n=746; 29%) (Figure 4). Notably, over the past five years the proportion of MDA offences has increased considerably, from 24% in 2015/16 to 39% in 2019/20, while it decreased for theft.

Figure 4: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, 2019/20⁹

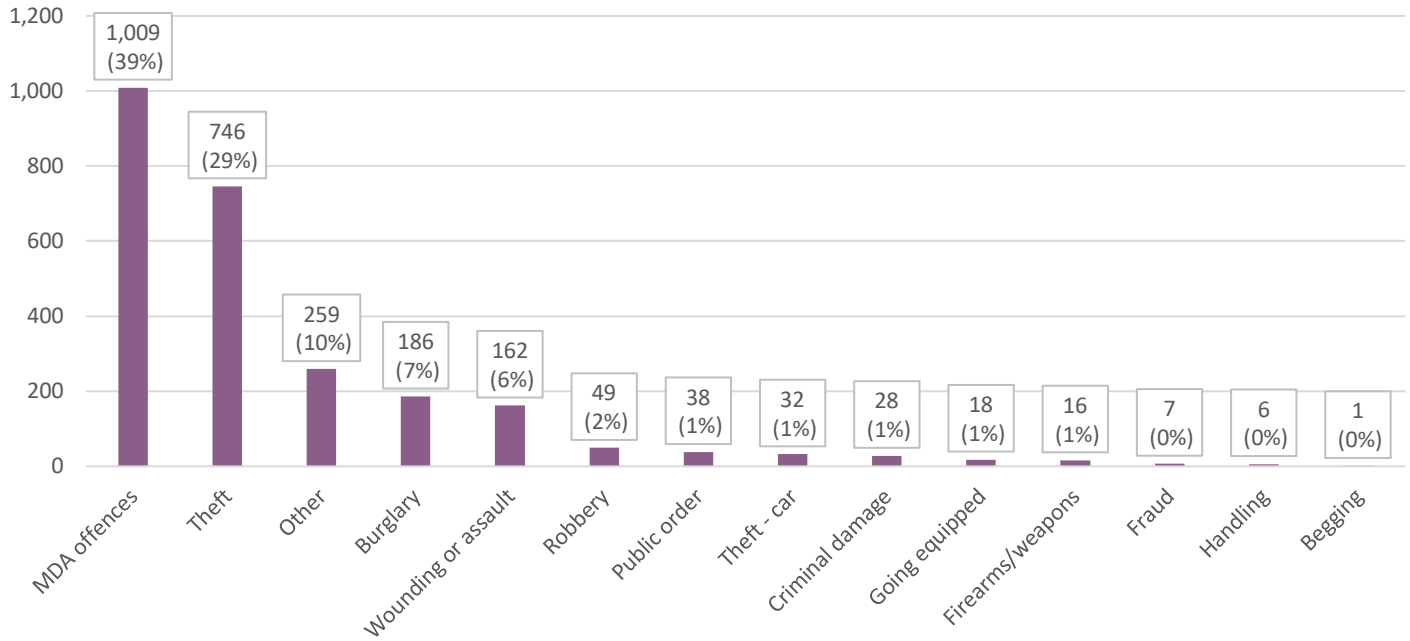
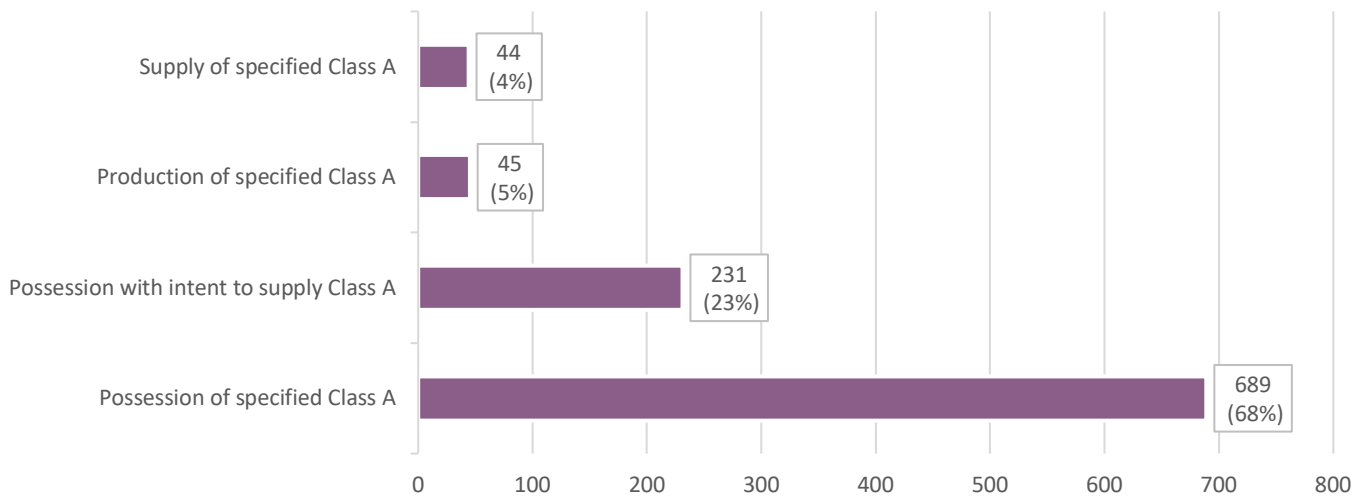


Figure 5 shows the type of MDA offences recorded in 2019/20. Of the 1,009 MDA offences, the majority were for possession. Just over two-thirds were possession of specified Class A drugs (n=689; 68%), followed by possession with intent to supply Class A drugs (n=231; 23%). Production of specified Class A drugs (n=45) and supply of specified Class A drugs (n=44) each accounted for 5% and 4% respectively.

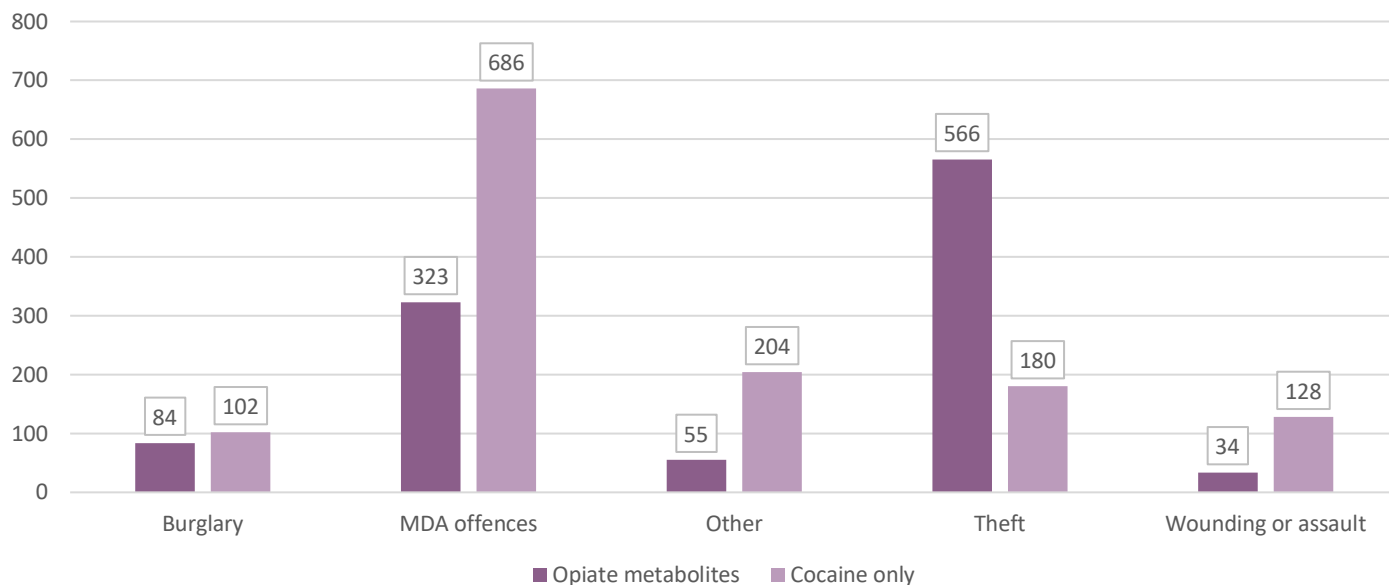
Figure 5: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by type of MDA offence, 2019/20



⁹ Other offences: other non-trigger offence = 124; other motoring offences = 76; non-trigger drugs offences = 48; driving with no insurance = 4; offences against the administration of justice = 3; prostitution = 2; driving whilst disqualified = 1; making off without payment = 1.

As this report shows, there has been a shift in trends for those testing positive in Merseyside’s custody suites; cocaine only positive drugs tests have increased, as have MDA offences. *Figure 6* shows the five offences with the highest numbers recorded in 2019/20 by the positive drug test result. Of the drug testing records with MDA offences recorded, just over two-thirds tested positive for cocaine only (n=686; 68%), while records with theft recorded, around three-quarters tested positive for opiate metabolites (n=566; 76%). Additionally, there were noticeably higher numbers of cocaine only positive tests for offences recorded as ‘other’ and wounding or assault, than there were for opiate metabolites.

Figure 6: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence and drug test result, 2019/20



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for 85% of the individuals who tested positive across Merseyside between April 2019 and March 2020. Although this is a similar proportion when compared to the previous twelve-month period (84%), it is the largest proportion of the past five years.

The average age of detainees who tested positive in 2019/20 was 34 years, compared to 35 years in the previous year. Numbers peaked for those aged 33 years (n=93), followed by those aged 29 years (n=83) and 32 years (n=81) (*Figure 7*).



85%
1,799 men



15%
319 women

Figure 7: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test (individuals), 2019/20

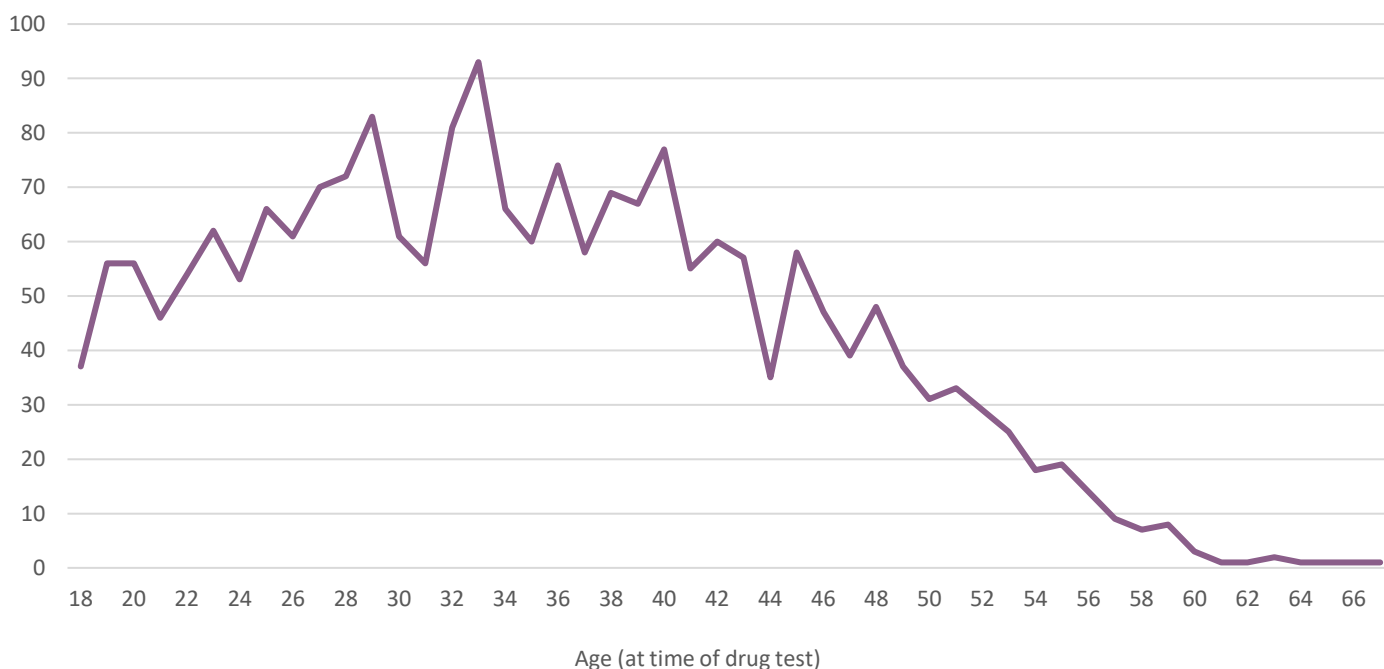


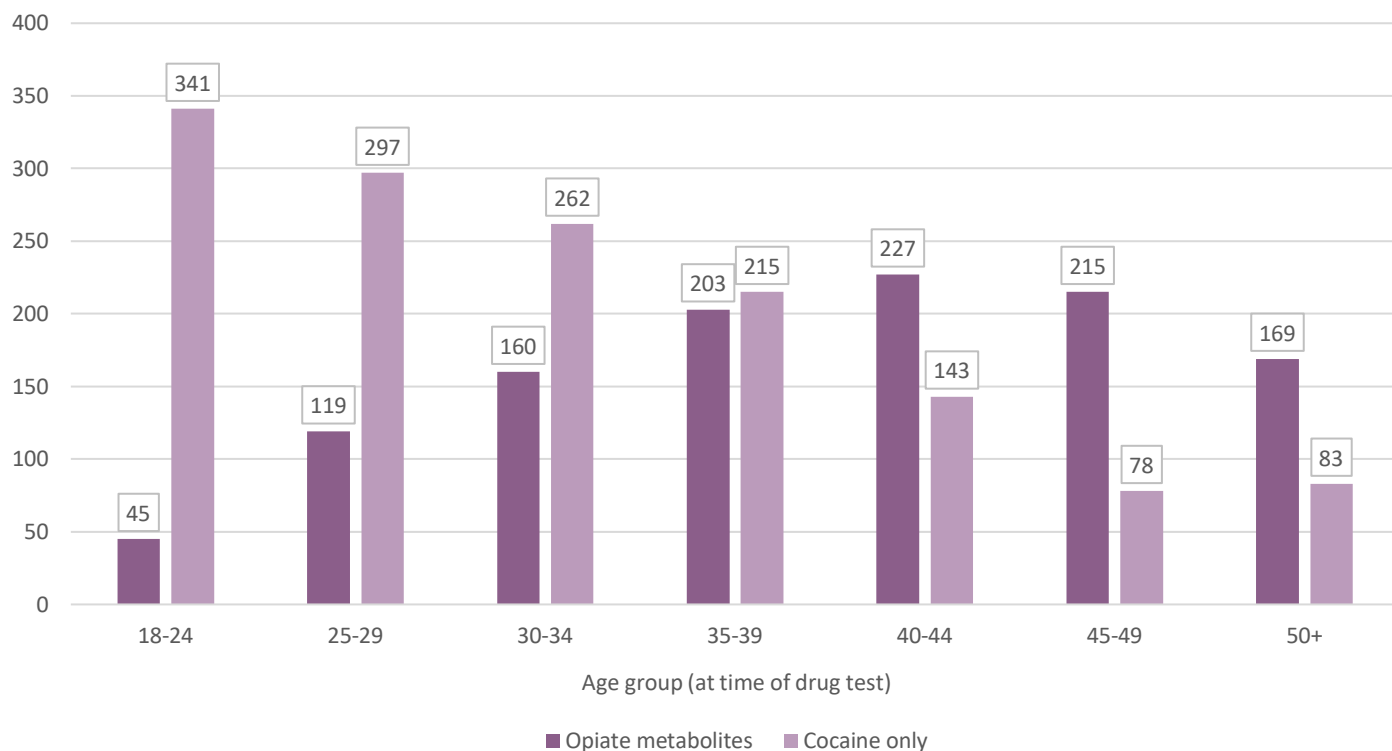
Table 2 shows the age group of detainees who tested positive across Merseyside in 2019/20 by gender. Overall, detainees aged 18-24 years (n=364), 25-29 years (n=352) and 30-34 years (n=357) each accounted for 17% of individuals, and proportions then decreased by age group. There were, however, variations by gender. For men, numbers were highest for 18-24 year olds (n=337; 19%), while women aged 30-34 years (n=67; 21%) and 35-39 years (n=60; 19%) accounted for the largest proportions.

Table 2: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and gender (individuals), 2019/20

Age group	Men		Women		2019/20 Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
18-24	337	19%	27	8%	364	17%
25-29	307	17%	45	14%	352	17%
30-34	290	16%	67	21%	357	17%
35-39	268	15%	60	19%	328	15%
40-44	230	13%	54	17%	284	13%
45-49	195	11%	34	11%	229	11%
50+	172	10%	32	10%	204	10%
Total	1,799	100%	319	100%	2,118	100%

Positive drug test results are categorised by age group in *Figure 8*. There were more positive tests for opiate metabolites in the older age groups, while there were more positive tests for cocaine only in the younger age groups. Positive tests for opiate metabolites increased by age, peaking at 40-44 years (n=227), and then decreased by age. While positive tests for cocaine only were highest in 18-24 year olds (n=341), which then decreased by age, though there was a slight increase in those aged 50 years and over compared to 45-49 year olds. .

Figure 8: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, 2019/20



RE-PRESENTATIONS

Table 3 provides an indication of the rate of re-presentation through the drug testing process. Of the 2,118 individuals across Merseyside who tested positive for opiates and/or cocaine between April 2019 and March 2020, 317 (15%) subsequently re-presented and were successfully tested following the initial positive drug test during the twelve-month period. This is the same positive drug test rate as the previous twelve-month period.

Table 3: Re-presentations of individuals testing positive across Merseyside, end 2019/20

Number of drug test occasions	n	%
One	1,801	85.0%
Two	204	9.6%
Three	69	3.3%
Four	29	1.4%
Five	9	0.4%
Six	4	0.2%
Seven	2	0.1%
Individuals presenting more than once	317	15.0%

DEMOGRAPHICS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO PRESENTED MORE THAN ONCE

Of the 317 individuals who presented more than once between April 2019 and March 2020, 262 (83%) were men, which is a slight increase on the previous year (81%).



83%

262 men

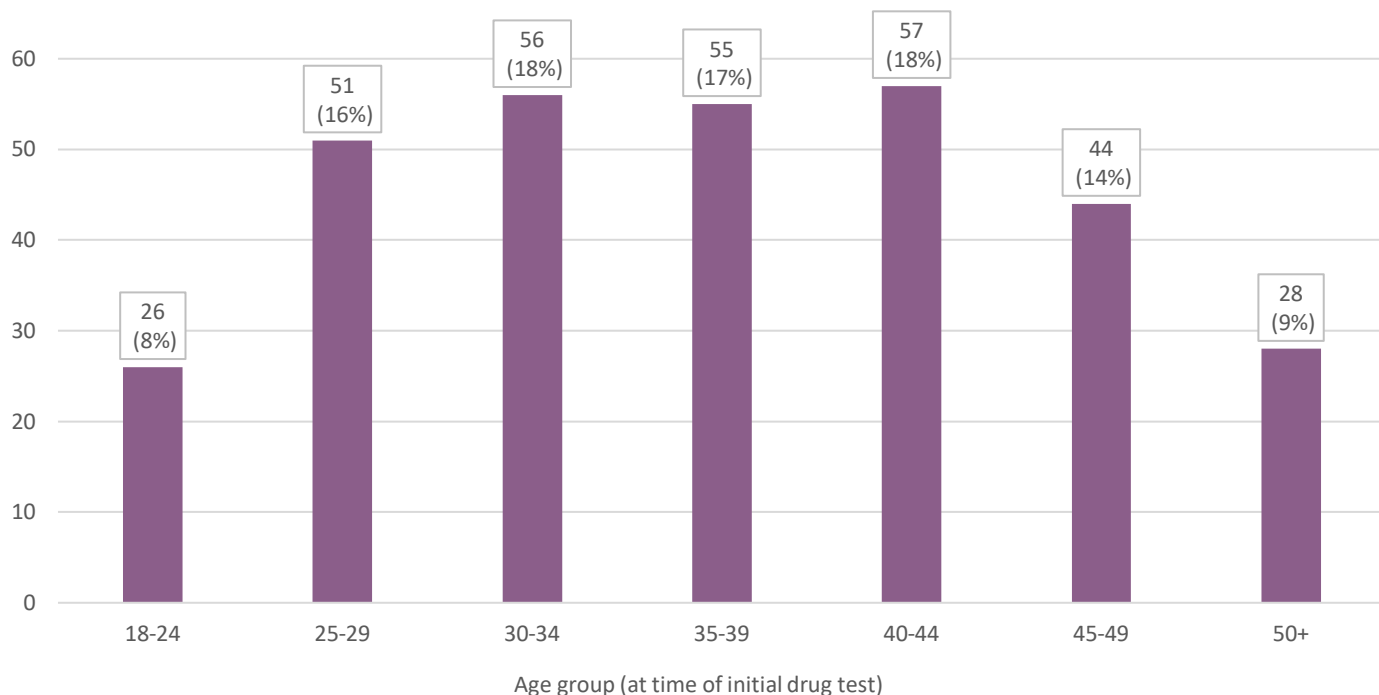
Most of the detainees who re-presented were aged between 25 and 44 years (*Figure 9*). Those aged 30-34 years (n=56) and 40-44 years (n=57) each accounted for 18%, followed by 35-39 year olds (n=55; 17%) and 25-29 years (n=51; 16%).



17%

55 women

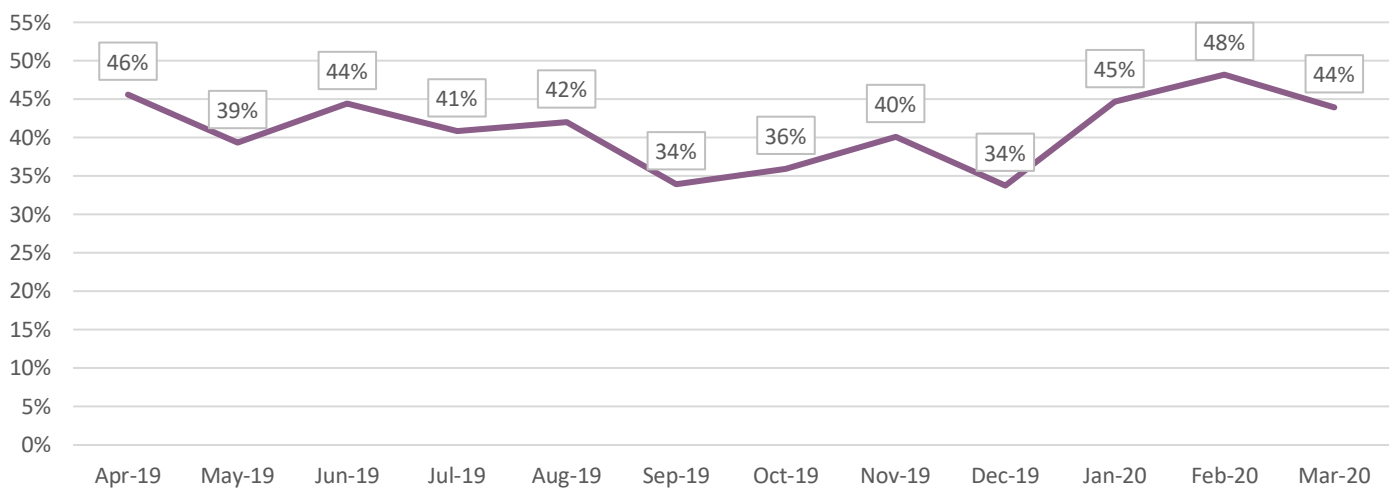
Figure 9: Re-presentations of individuals testing positive across Merseyside by age group, 2019/20



REQUIRED ASSESSMENT PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

The Required Assessment (RA) performance indicator matches drug testing records with CJIT records to identify whether individuals served with an RA by Merseyside Police following a positive drug test have attended their appointment with a CJIT worker^{10,11,12}. In 2019/20, a monthly average of around two in five (41%) detainees attended their appointment with a CJIT worker within 28 days of being served with an RA (*Figure 10*).

Figure 10: Detainees served with an RA following a positive drug test who were assessed by a CJIT worker within 28 days, April 2019 - March 2020



Three of the Merseyside CJITs report reasons why detainees were not assessed. These reasons could include non-compliance from the detainee, scenario restrictions that meant it was not possible for an assessment to take place, or other factors that could highlight limitations with the RA process and/or data recording (see *Box 3*). Detainees who fail to attend their appointment, where process issues did not affect the non-compliance, should subsequently be breached by the treatment provider.

Box 3: Limitations of the RA process

- RA paperwork not received by the CJIT;
- RA served to the incorrect CJIT area;
- Detainees given an appointment when there is no availability or a day and/or time when RA appointments are not carried out by the CJIT;
- Individuals not assessed by the CJIT within 28 days of the date the RA was served;
- CJIT episode not recorded or submitted to Public Health England via the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System;
- Incorrect attributable details recorded by either the police or CJIT.

¹⁰ Analyses include detainees where a positive test was confirmed; any disputed results which were overturned or not resolved were removed from the performance indicator.

¹¹ RA indicator figures were re-calculated the following month to account for detainees served with an RA one month but their appointment was the following month, though within 28 days of the drug test. Furthermore, following monthly feedback from three of the Merseyside CJIT areas (Sefton, St Helens and Wirral) on reasons why individuals were not assessed, individuals who were unable to be assessed due to being in prison custody or hospital at the time of their appointment were removed from the performance indicator when re-calculated.

¹² Each month reports on individuals; however there could be individuals served with an RA in more than one month across the twelve-month period.

MERSEYSIDE RESIDENTS

Of the 3,657 attempted drug tests across Merseyside between April 2019 and March 2020, 3,580 (98%) records had the detainees' local authority (LA) of residence recorded, which is the largest proportion of the past five years. Of the 2019/20 records where the LA of residence was recorded, 3,333 (93%) were Merseyside residents, compared to 94% in each of the previous four years (Table 4).

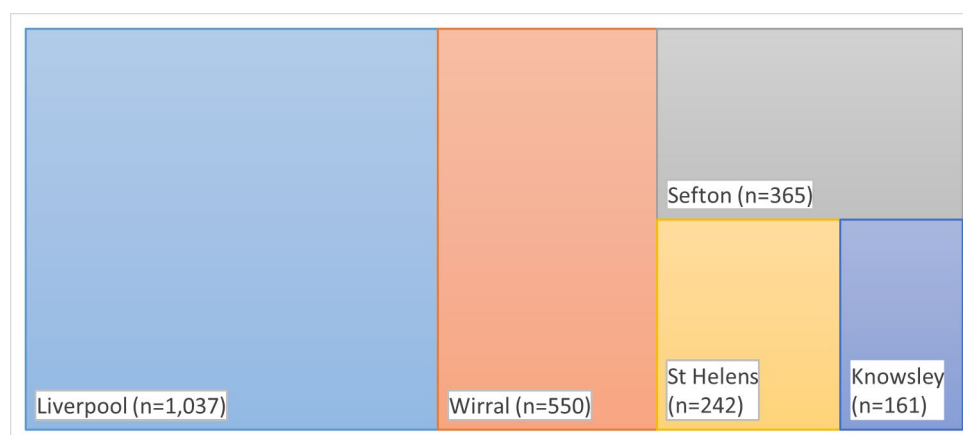
The number of attempted drug tests carried out on Merseyside residents fluctuated during the five-year period (Table 4); however this will be attributed to the proportion of records with LA of residence recorded. It should be noted that figures are a proxy for Merseyside residents as LA of residence was missing for a proportion of records; therefore the number of Merseyside residents drug tested may be under-reported.

Table 4: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by LA of residence and year, 2015/16 - 2019/20

LA of residence	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
Knowsley	293	125	179	159	243
Liverpool	1,826	1,011	1,287	1,144	1,536
Sefton	471	186	296	344	495
St Helens	428	230	264	219	332
Wirral	613	398	512	536	727
Merseyside	3,631	1,950	2,538	2,402	3,333
Outside of Merseyside	236	115	173	151	247
Total (excl. blank records)	3,867	2,065	2,711	2,553	3,580

Figure 11 shows the number of positive drug tests by LA of residence for Merseyside residents in 2019/20, where LA of residence was recorded. Of the 2,355 Merseyside residents who tested positive, 1,037 (44%) were Liverpool residents, followed by Wirral residents (n=550; 23%), Sefton residents (n=365; 15%), St Helens residents (n=242; 10%) and Knowsley residents (n=161; 7%)¹³.

Figure 11: Number of positive drug tests across Merseyside by LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2019/20



¹³ There is no breakdown of data for Knowsley residents on the following pages as there is currently no commissioning in place for Knowsley DIP monitoring.

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

Between April 2019 and March 2020, there were 1,536 attempted drug tests on Liverpool residents across Merseyside's custody suites, representing just under half (46%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents in the twelve-month period. The number of attempted drug tests on Liverpool residents fluctuated over the past five years (*Table 5*). This could be attributed to the data quality of the LA of residence, as conversely, the total number of drug tests carried out by Merseyside Police overall increased year-on-year from 2016/17. An average of around two-thirds (66%) of attempted drug tests on Liverpool residents during the five-year period were recorded at Liverpool's custody suites.

Table 5: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Liverpool residents, 2015/16 - 2019/20

Custody suite	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
Belle Vale, St Anne Street & Wavertree (Liverpool)	1,257	643	916	705	1,005
Sefton (Copy Lane)	224	78	80	95	85
St Helens	146	62	30	0	0
Wirral	199	228	261	344	446
Total	1,826	1,011	1,287	1,144	1,536

DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 12 shows the drug testing activity for Liverpool residents who were drug tested in Merseyside's custody suites between April 2019 and March 2020. There were 1,536 attempted drug tests in 2019/20, of which 1,527 were successful (1,320 individuals). Of the individuals successfully tested, 884 individuals tested positive, representing a positive drug test rate of 67%, which is a decrease on the previous year's rate (73%).

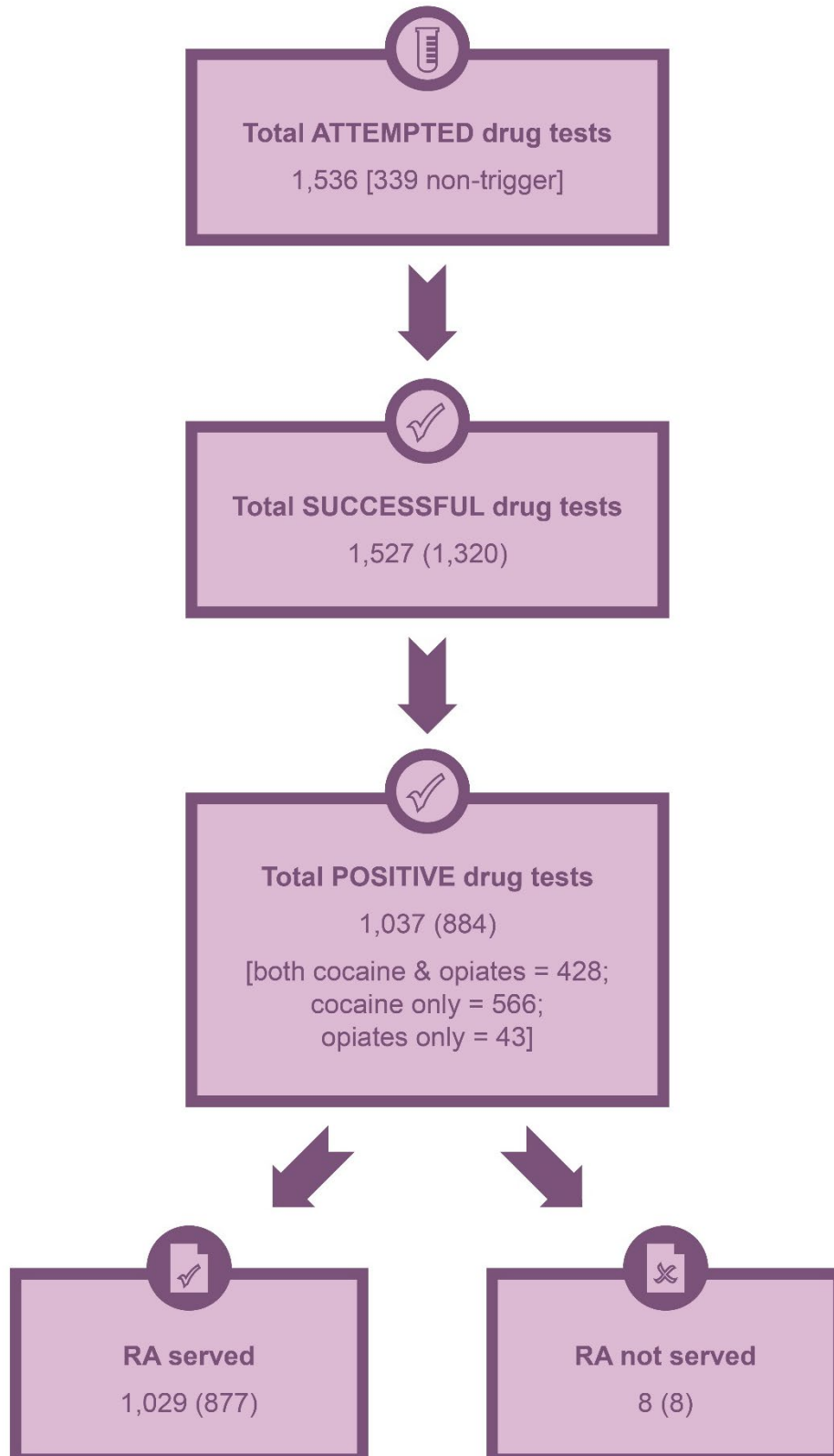
Over half of the total 1,037 positive drug tests in 2019/20 were for cocaine only (n=566; 55%), while the remaining positive tests were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 428 [41%]; opiates only = 43 [4%]). Notably, this is the largest proportion of positive tests for cocaine only in the past five years, increasing from 41% in both 2015/16 and 2016/17. There were 1,029 RAs served to 877 individuals in 2019/20 (*Figure 12*).



55%

positive tests for cocaine only, 2019/20

Figure 12: Drug testing activity, Liverpool residents, 2019/20¹⁴

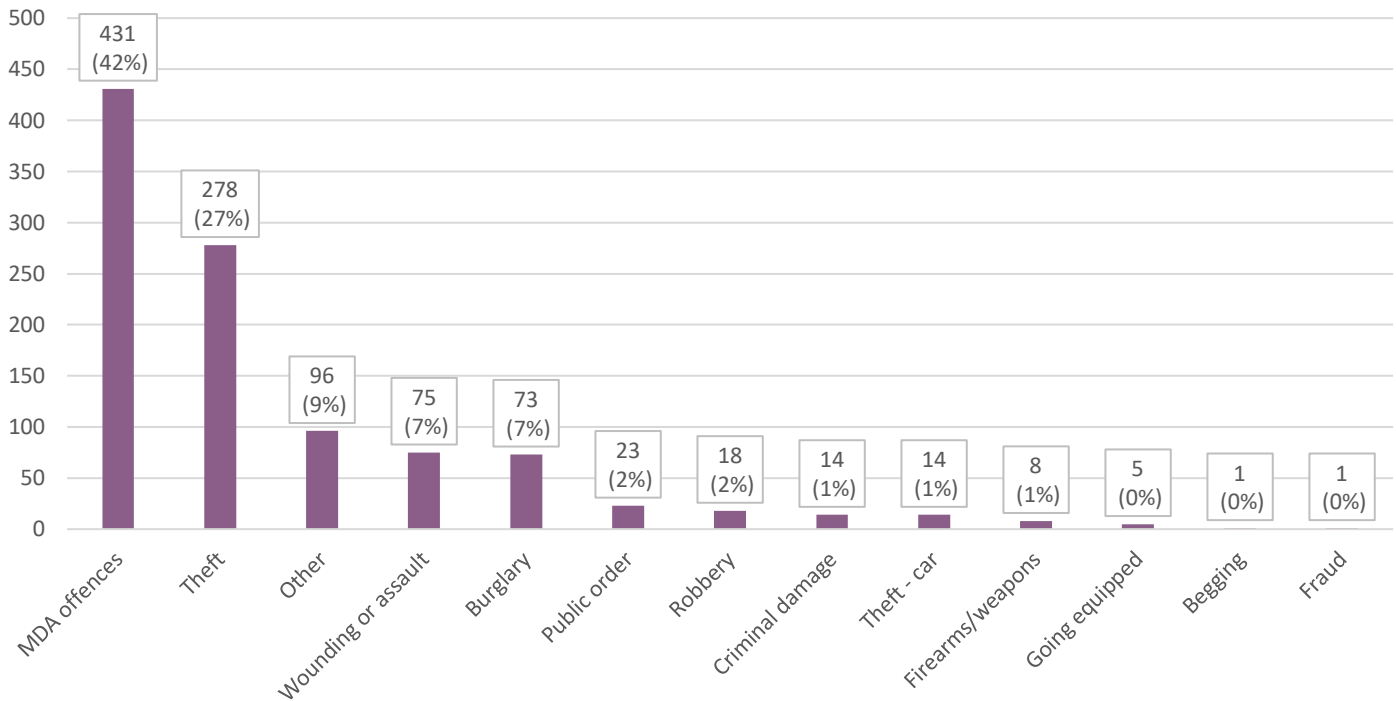


¹⁴ There are individuals with more than one positive drug test that are included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'; therefore the summation of individuals with an 'RA served' and 'RA not served' does not equal the number of individuals testing positive.

OFFENCE

Over two in five positive drug test records in 2019/20 reported Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=431; 42%), while just over one-quarter were recorded as theft (n=278; 27%) (Figure 13). Notably, the proportion of MDA offences increased considerably from 23% in 2015/16 and is a larger proportion than what was recorded for residents of Sefton, St Helens and Wirral.

Figure 13: Positive drug tests by offence, Liverpool residents, 2019/20



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for 85% of the individuals who tested positive between April 2019 and March 2020 (n=753), which is the largest proportion of the past five years.

Figure 14 shows the age group of Liverpool residents who tested positive across Merseyside in 2019/20. Detainees aged 35-39 years accounted for the largest proportion (n=149; 17%), which is a slight increase on the previous twelve-month period (15%). Those aged 25-29 years (n=138) and 30-34 years (n=145) accounted for 16% each, which is similar to the previous year (17% each). Notably, the proportion of individuals aged 50 years and over is the largest of the past five years (11%).



85%

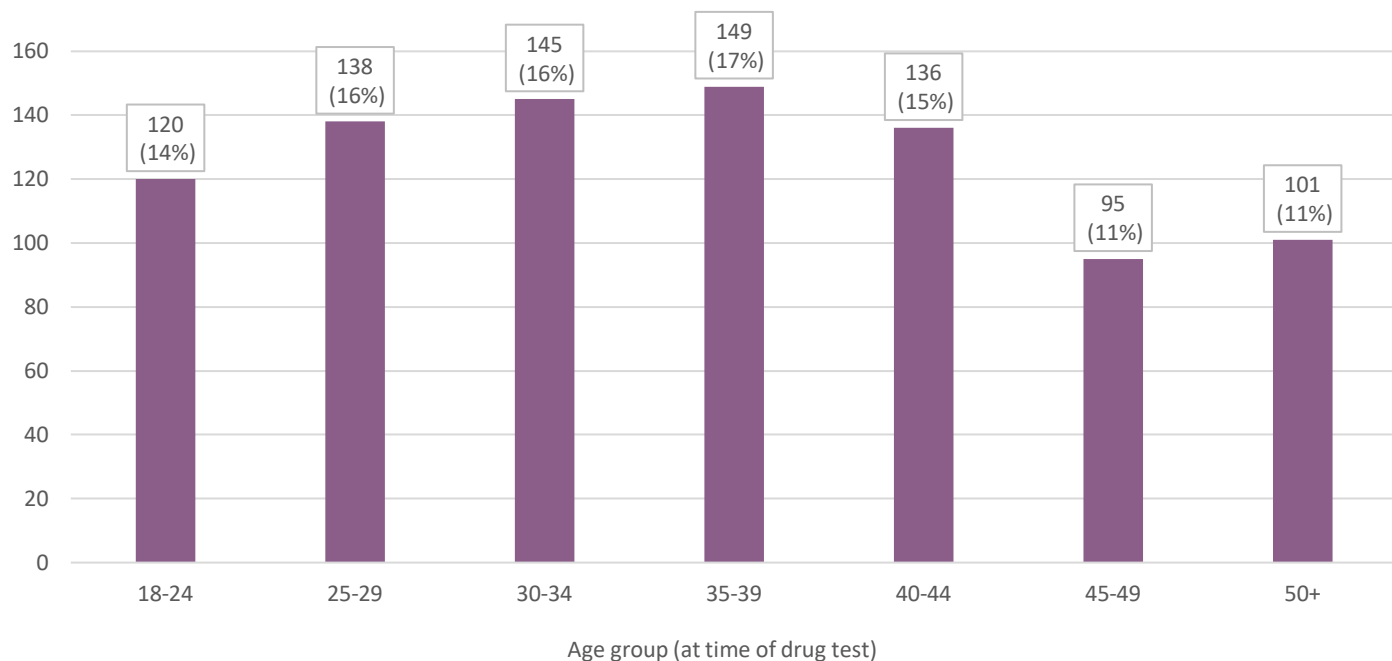
753 men



15%

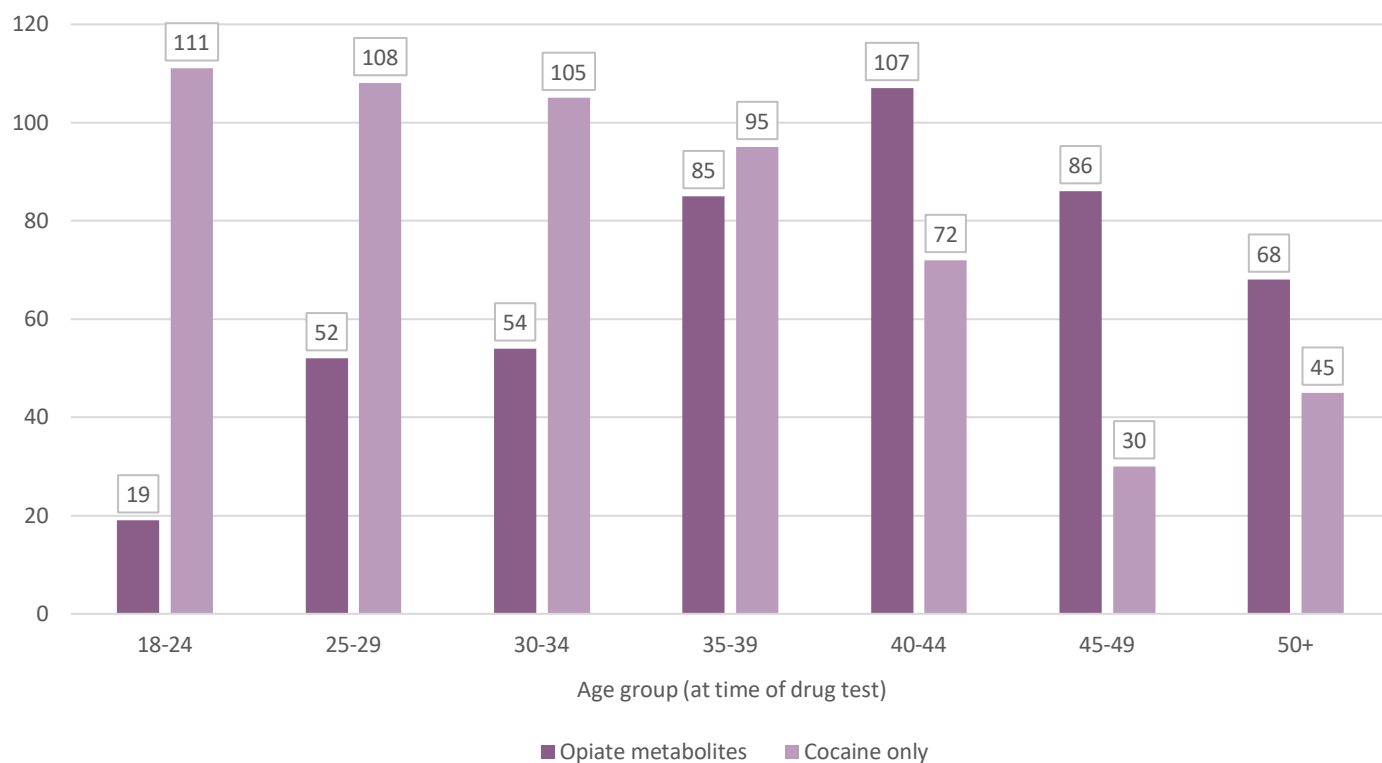
131 women

Figure 14: Positive drug tests by age group, Liverpool residents (individuals), 2019/20



Positive drug test results are categorised by age group in Figure 15. Positive tests for opiate metabolites increased by age, peaking at 40-44 years (n=107), and then decreased by age, while positive tests for cocaine only peaked in 18-24 year olds (n=111) and then decreased by age, though there was a slight increase in detainees aged 50 years and over.

Figure 15: Positive drug tests by age group and drug test result, Liverpool residents, 2019/20



OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

Between April 2019 and March 2020, there were 495 attempted drug tests on Sefton residents across Merseyside's custody suites (Table 6), representing 15% of all drug tests on Merseyside residents in the twelve-month period. The number of attempted drug tests on Sefton residents substantially decreased between 2015/16 and 2016/17 (61% decrease), which could be attributed to the implementation of targeted testing. From 2016/17, there was a year-on-year increase in the number of drug tests, with the largest increase between 2016/17 and 2017/18 (59% increase), though this could be affected by the data quality of the LA of residence.

In 2015/16, over seven in ten (72%) of the attempted drug tests on Sefton residents were recorded at Copy Lane custody suite; however this proportion decreased year-on-year to around one-third (32%) in 2019/20. There were more drug tests recorded at Wirral custody suite than at Copy Lane in 2019/20 (Table 6), though this could be attributed to the temporary closure of Copy Lane custody suite for refurbishment in the latter part of 2019.

Table 6: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Sefton residents, 2015/16 - 2019/20

Custody suite	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
Belle Vale, St Anne Street & Wavertree (Liverpool)	85	45	61	52	145
Sefton (Copy Lane)	340	105	147	153	160
St Helens	36	21	9	0	0
Wirral	10	15	79	139	190
Total	471	186	296	344	495

DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 16 shows the drug testing activity for Sefton residents who were drug tested in Merseyside's custody suites between April 2019 and March 2020. There were 495 attempted drug tests in 2019/20, of which 490 were successful (418 individuals). Of the individuals successfully tested, 304 individuals tested positive, representing a positive drug test rate of 73%, which is a slight decrease on the previous year's rate (76%).

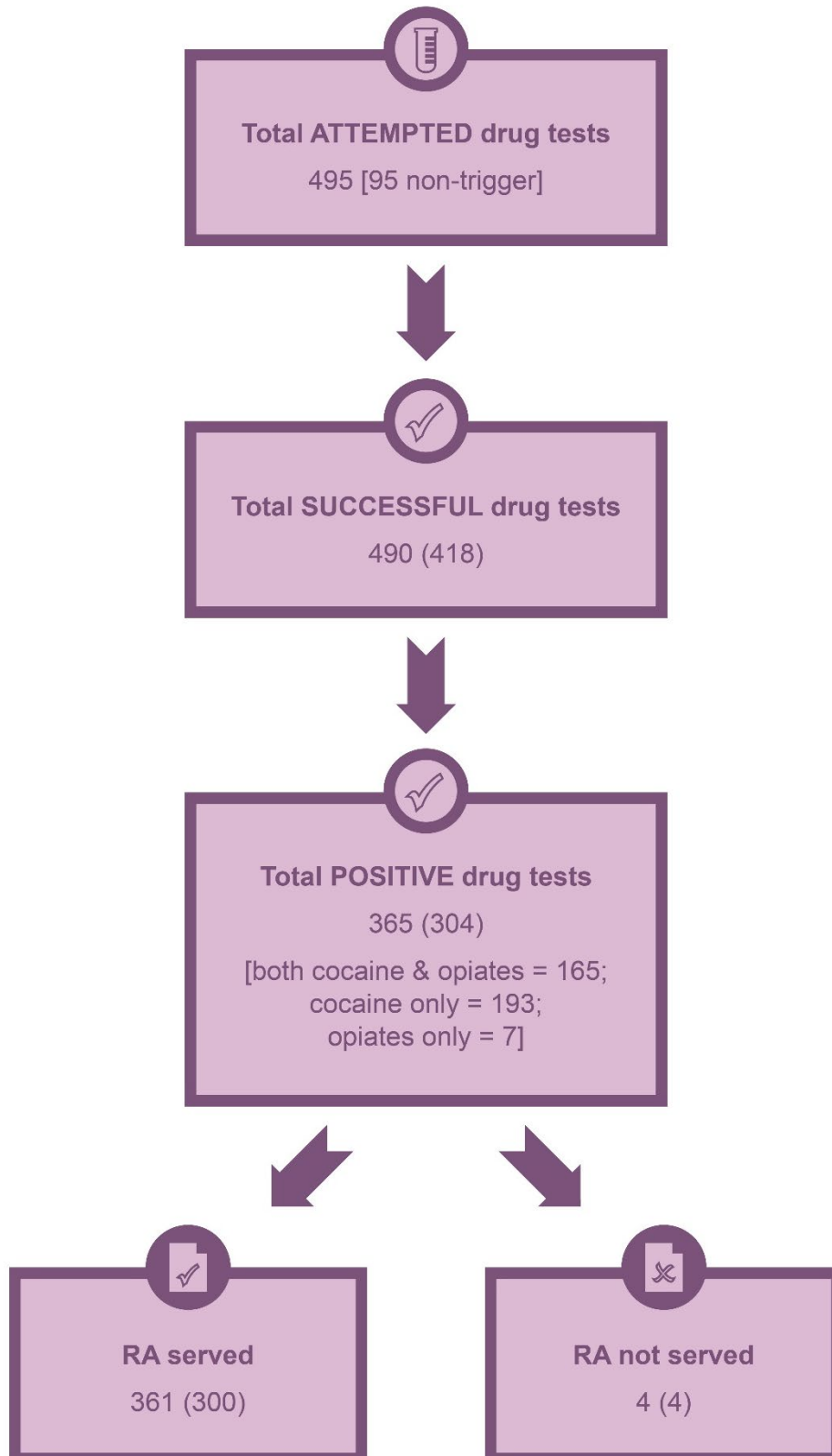
Over half of the total 365 positive drug tests in 2019/20 were for cocaine only (n=193; 53%), while the remaining positive tests were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 165 [45%]; opiates only = 7 [2%]). Although the proportion of positive tests for cocaine only in 2019/20 is a slight decrease on the previous year (59%), it is the second largest proportion of the past five years. There were 361 RAs served to 300 individuals who had a positive drug test in 2019/20 (Figure 16).



53%

positive tests for cocaine only, 2019/20

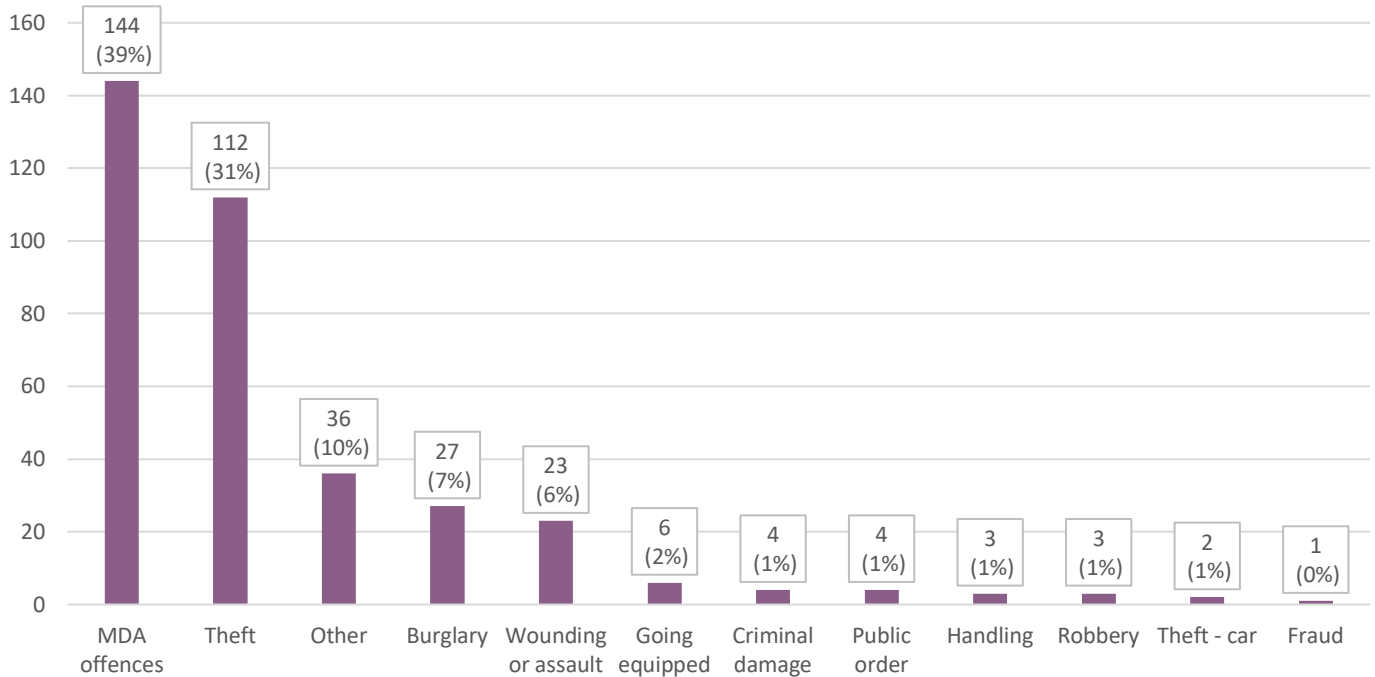
Figure 16: Drug testing activity, Sefton residents, 2019/20



OFFENCE

Around two in five positive drug test records in 2019/20 reported Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=144; 39%), while around three in ten were recorded as theft (n=112; 31%) (Figure 17). The proportion of MDA offences in 2019/20 decreased when compared to the previous year (43%), though is the third largest proportion of the past five years. Conversely, theft increased from 27% in the previous year.

Figure 175: Positive drug tests by offence, Sefton residents, 2019/20



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for 84% of the individuals who tested positive between April 2019 and March 2020 (n=255). The proportion of women increased to 16% from 14% in the previous year (14%) and is the second largest proportion of the past five years.

Figure 18 shows the age group of Sefton residents who tested positive across Merseyside in 2019/20. Around one in five detainees were aged 30-34 years (n=59; 19%), followed by individuals aged 35-39 years (n=54; 18%). The proportion of those aged 30-34 years is the same as the previous year; however in 2018/19 18-24 year olds accounted for the largest proportion (24%), which has reduced considerably to 15% in 2019/20.

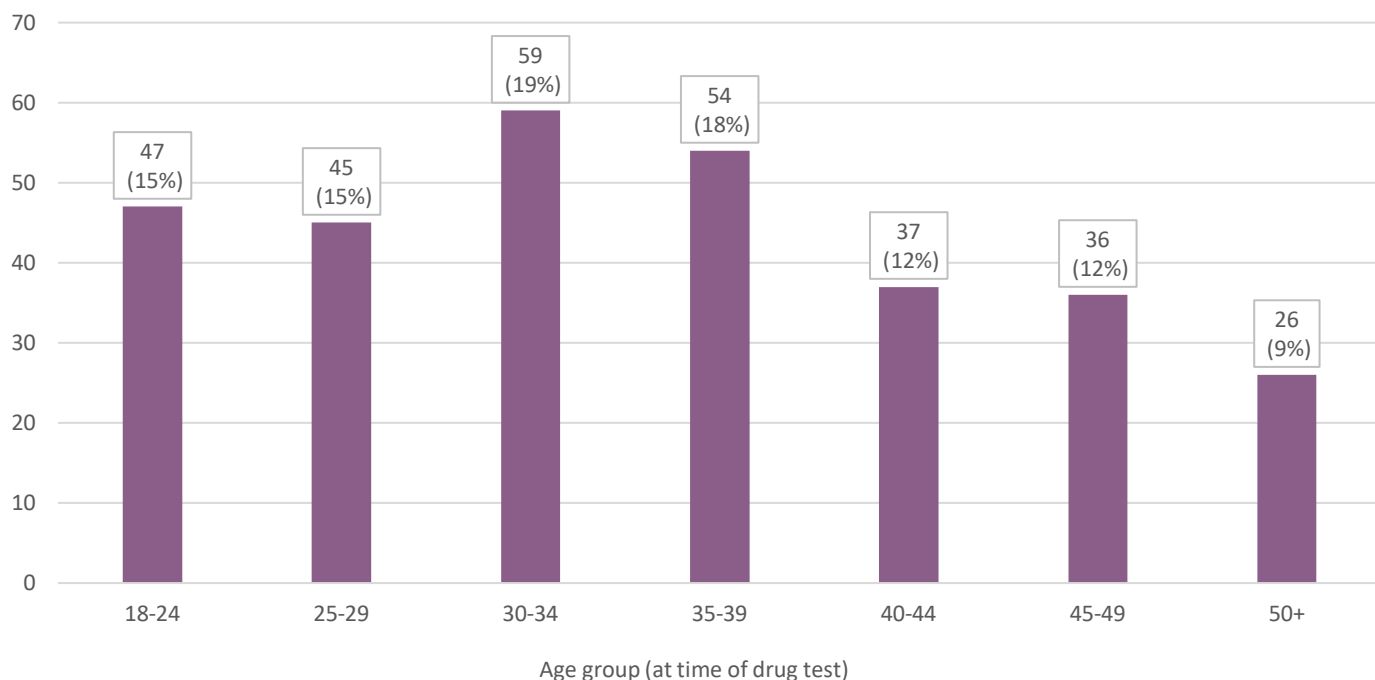


84%
255 men



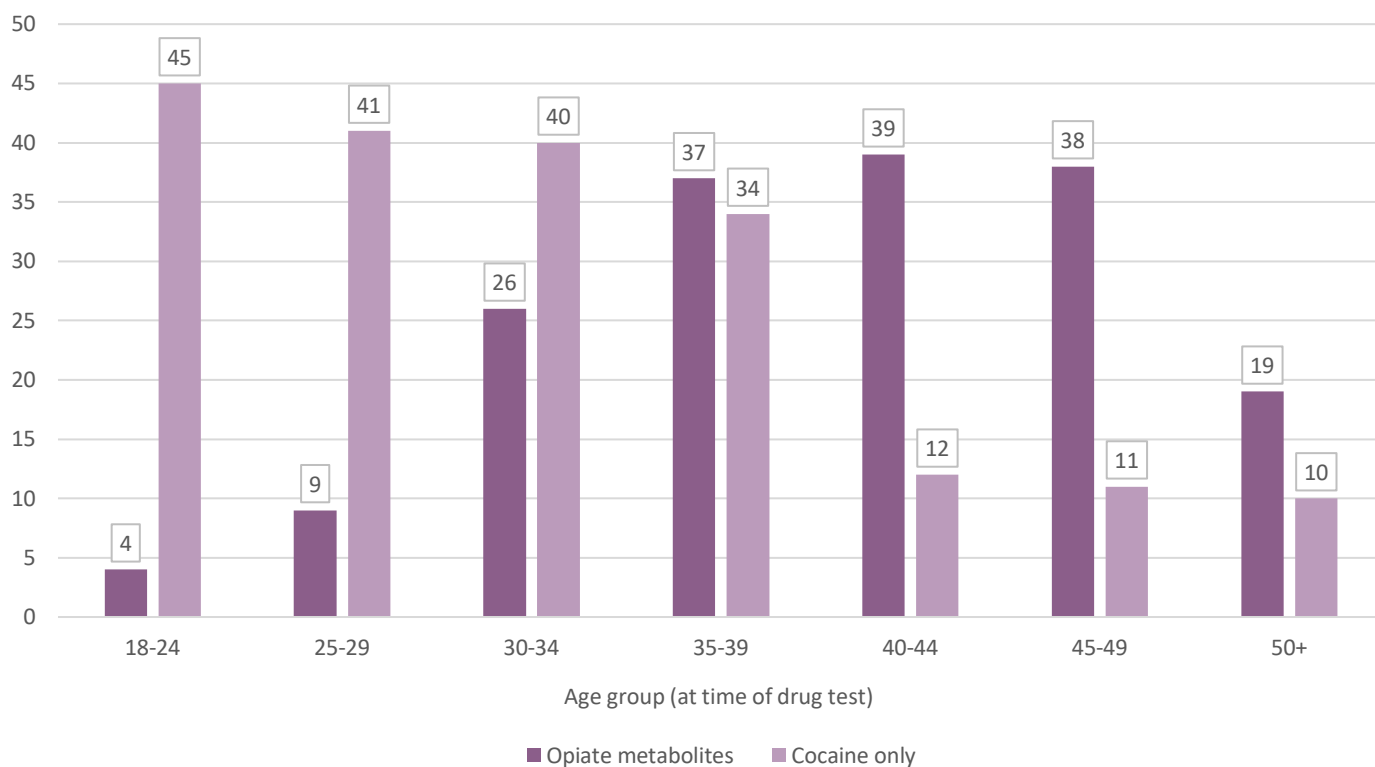
16%
49 women

Figure 6: Positive drug tests by age group, Sefton residents (individuals), 2019/20



Positive drug test results are categorised by age group in Figure 19. Positive tests for opiate metabolites increased by age, peaking at 40-44 years (n=39), and remained similar for detainees aged 45-49 years (n=38), followed by a substantial decrease for detainees aged 50 years and over (n=19). Positive tests for cocaine only peaked in 18-24 year olds (n=45) and then decreased by age, with a substantial decrease between those aged 35-39 years and 40-44 years.

Figure 19: Positive drug tests by age group and drug test result, Sefton residents, 2019/20



OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

Between April 2019 and March 2020, there were 332 attempted drug tests on St Helens residents across Merseyside's custody suites, representing 10% of all drug tests on Merseyside residents in the twelve-month period. The number of attempted drug tests on St Helens residents fluctuated over the past five years (*Table 7*). This could be attributed to the data quality of the LA of residence, as conversely, the total number of drug tests carried out by Merseyside Police overall increased year-on-year from 2016/17.

Following the closure of St Helens custody suite in 2017, 86% of St Helens residents were recorded at Copy Lane custody suite in 2018/19 and 65% in 2019/20. There was an increase in the number of St Helens residents recorded at Liverpool's custody suites in 2019/20, though this could be attributed to the temporary closure of Copy Lane custody suite for refurbishment in the latter part of 2019.

Table 7: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, St Helens residents, 2015/16 - 2019/20

Custody suite	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
Belle Vale, St Anne Street & Wavertree (Liverpool)	23	9	27	21	112
Sefton (Copy Lane)	18	5	150	189	215
St Helens	385	214	83	0	0
Wirral	2	2	4	9	5
Total	428	230	264	219	332

DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 20 shows the drug testing activity for St Helens residents who were drug tested in Merseyside's custody suites between April 2019 and March 2020. There were 332 attempted drug tests in 2019/20, all of which were successful (287 individuals). Of the individuals successfully tested, 207 individuals tested positive, representing a positive drug test rate of 72%, which is a decrease on the previous year's rate (78%).

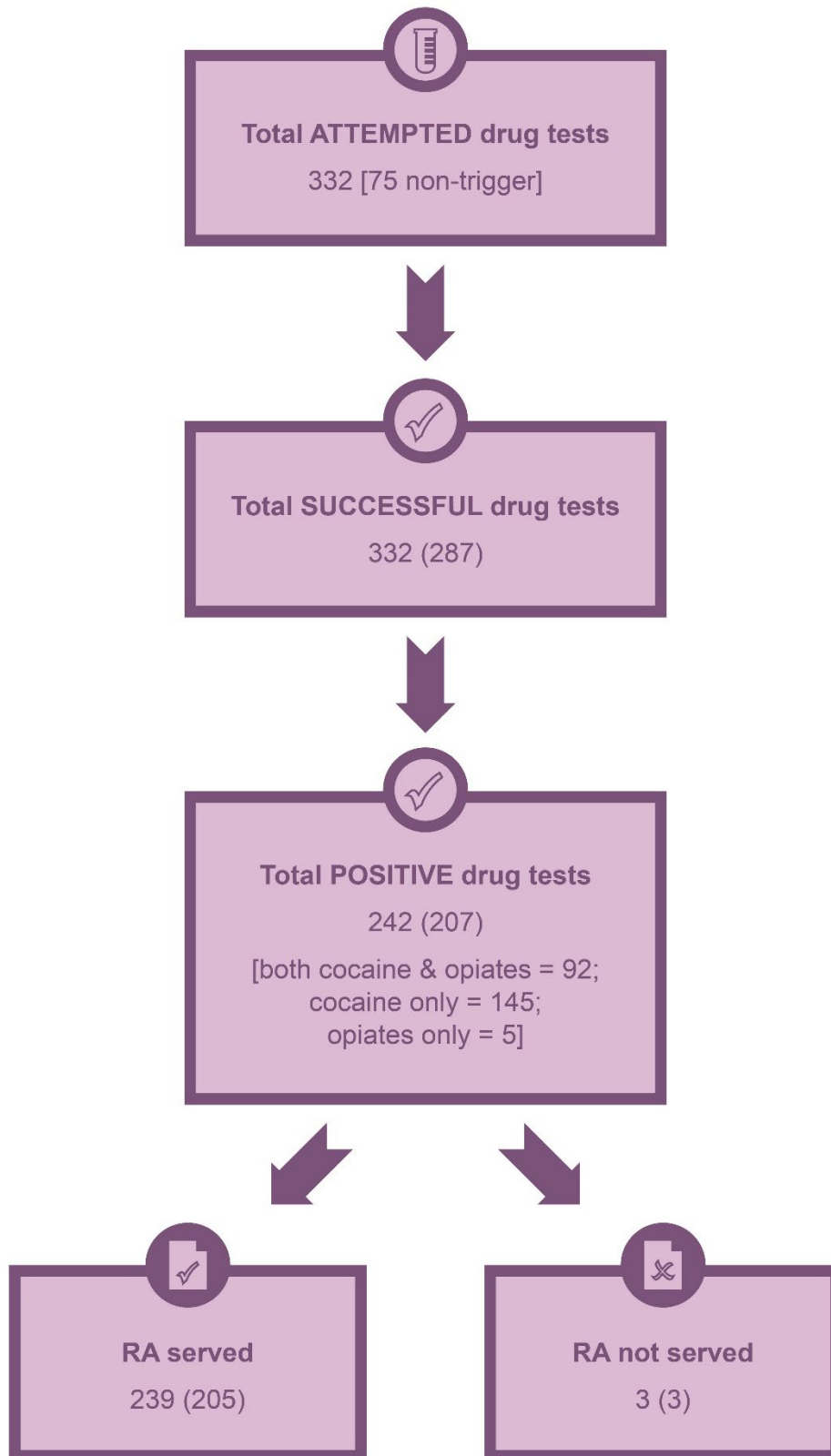
Three in five of the total 242 positive drug tests in 2019/20 were for cocaine only (n=145; 60%), while the remaining positive tests were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 92 [38%]; opiates only = 5 [2%]). Notably, the proportion of positive tests for cocaine only increased year-on-year from 37% in 2015/16 and is a higher proportion than that of residents of Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral. There were 239 RAs served to 205 individuals in 2019/20 (*Figure 20*).



60%

positive tests for cocaine only, 2019/20

Figure 20: Drug testing activity, St Helens residents, 2019/20¹⁵

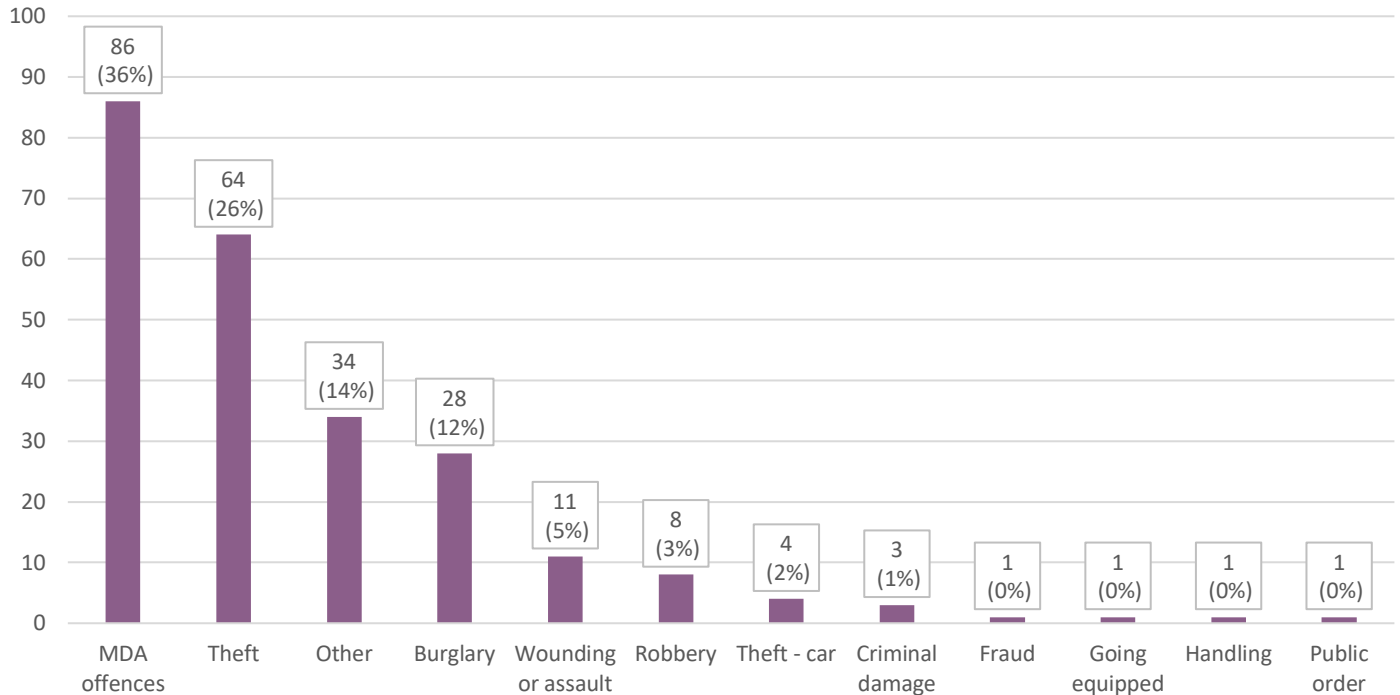


¹⁵ There are individuals with more than one positive drug test that are included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'; therefore the summation of individuals with an 'RA served' and 'RA not served' does not equal the number of individuals testing positive.

OFFENCE

Over one-third of positive drug test records in 2019/20 reported Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=86; 36%), followed by around one-quarter which were recorded as theft (n=64; 26%) (Figure 21). Offences categorised as 'other' accounted for 14% (n=34), while burglary accounted for 12% (n=28). Notably, the proportion of MDA offences increased from 25% in 2015/16, while theft decreased from 56%.

Figure 21: Positive drug tests by offence, St Helens residents, 2019/20



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for around nine in ten individuals who tested positive between April 2019 and March 2020 (n=185; 89%). This is the largest proportion of men of the past five years and is higher than the other Merseyside areas.

Figure 22 shows the age group of St Helens residents who tested positive across Merseyside in 2019/20. Around one-quarter of detainees who tested positive were aged 18-24 years (n=53; 26%). Numbers then decreased by age, though there was a slight increase for individuals aged 45-49 years, while they decreased again for those aged 50 years and over. The proportion of 18-24 year olds is substantially higher than the other Merseyside areas and is an increase when compared to the previous two years, though it is the same as 2016/17, while the proportion of 25-29 year olds decreased slightly when compared to the previous year (21%).



89%

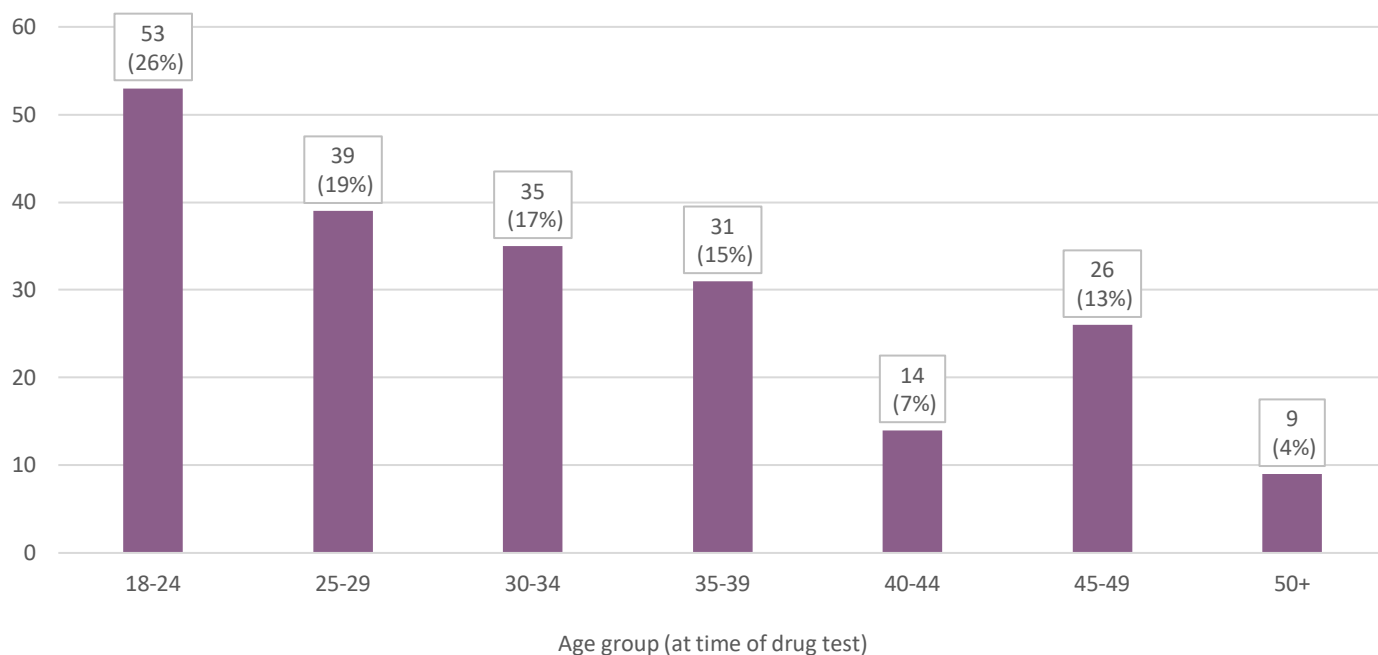
185 men



11%

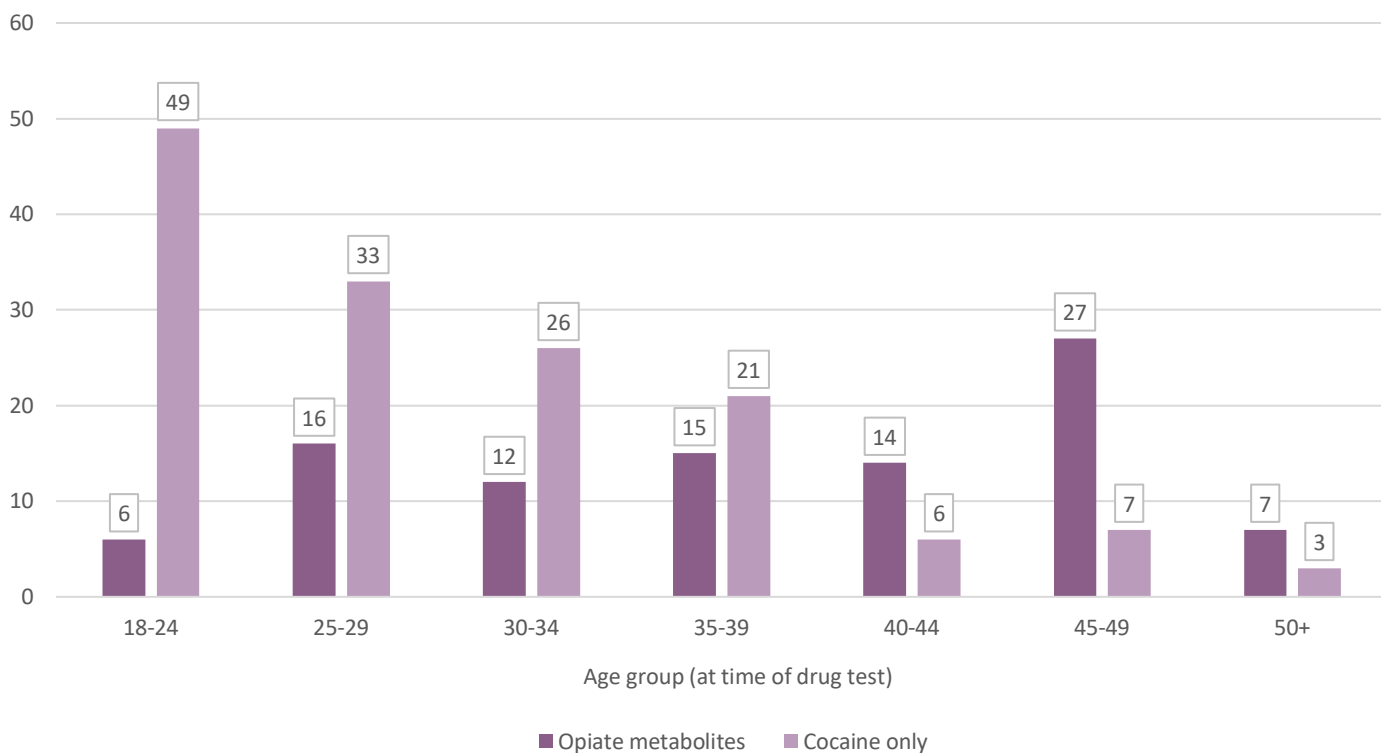
22 women

Figure 22: Positive drug tests by age group, St Helens residents (individuals), 2019/20



Positive drug test results are categorised by age group in Figure 23. Positive tests for opiate metabolites fluctuated by age group, peaking in 45-49 year olds (n=27), while cocaine only positive tests peaked in 18-24 year olds (n=49) and then decreased by age, though numbers were similar for 40-44 year olds and 45-49 year olds.

Figure 23: Positive drug tests by age group and drug test result, St Helens residents, 2019/20



OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

Between April 2019 and March 2020, there were 727 attempted drug tests on Wirral residents across Merseyside's custody suites (Table 8), representing just over one in five (22%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents in the twelve-month period. The number of attempted drug tests on Wirral residents substantially decreased between 2015/16 and 2016/17 (35% decrease), which could be attributed to the implementation of targeted testing. From 2016/17, there was a year-on-year increase in the number of drug tests, with the largest increase between 2018/19 and 2019/20 (36% increase), though this could be affected by the data quality of the LA of residence. An average of 83% of attempted drug tests on Wirral residents during the five-year period were recorded at Wirral custody suite; though in 2019/20 the figure was around nine in ten (91%).

Table 8: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Wirral residents, 2015/16 - 2019/20

Custody suite	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
Belle Vale, St Anne Street & Wavertree (Liverpool)	190	45	53	52	59
Sefton (Copy Lane)	35	4	4	8	8
St Helens	9	4	1	0	0
Wirral	379	345	454	476	660
Total	613	398	512	536	727

DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 24 shows the drug testing activity for Wirral residents who were drug tested in Merseyside's custody suites between April 2019 and March 2020. There were 727 attempted drug tests in 2019/20, of which 721 were successful (568 individuals). Of the individuals successfully tested, 418 individuals tested positive, representing a positive drug test rate of 74%, which is a decrease on the previous year's rate (80%).

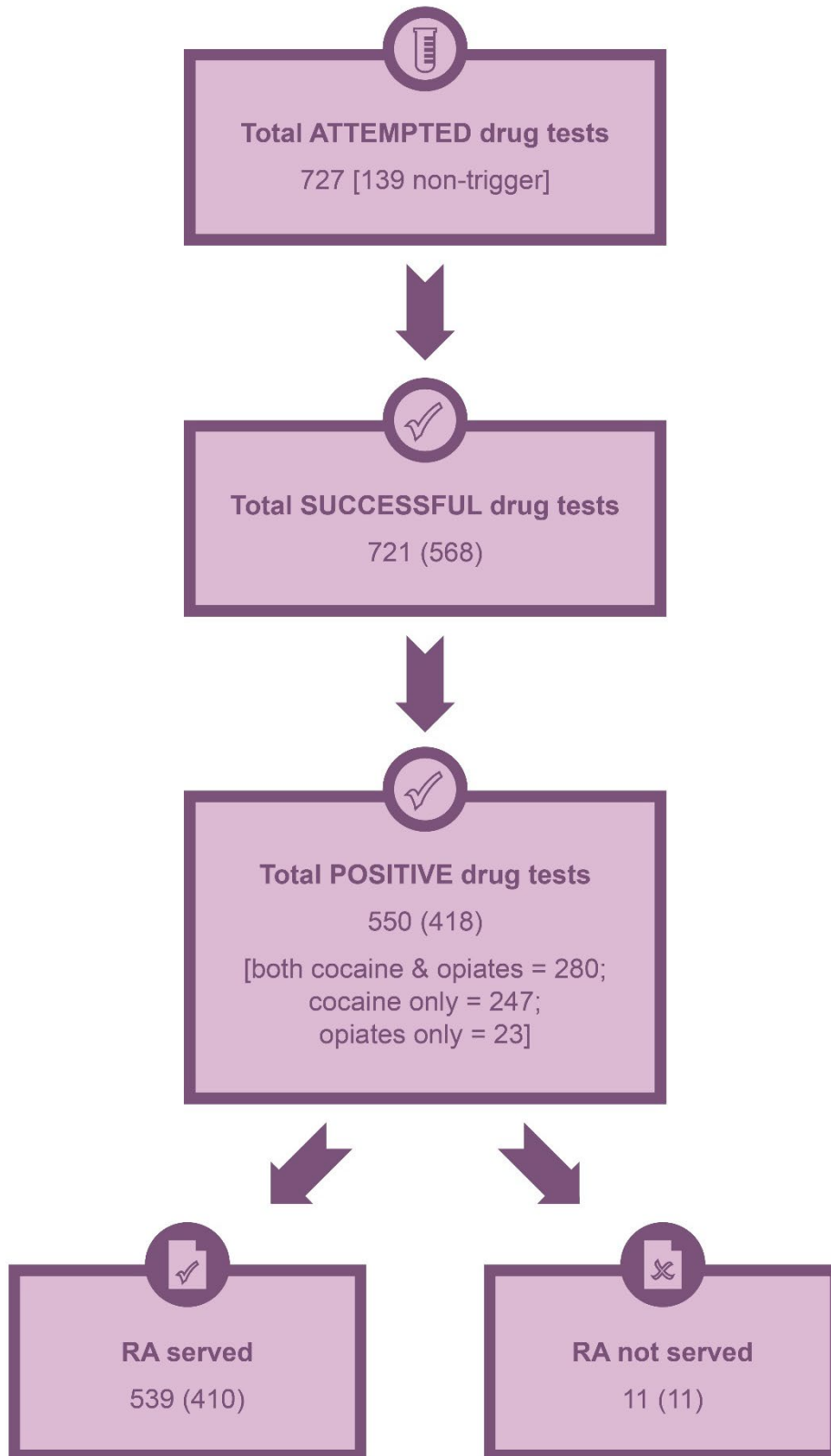
Over half (55%) of the total 550 positive drug tests in 2019/20 were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 280 [51%]; opiates only = 23 [4%]), while the remaining positive tests were for cocaine only (n=247; 45%). Although this is the lowest proportion of positive tests for opiate metabolites of the past five years, decreasing from 69% in both 2015/16 and 2016/17, it is the largest proportion recorded when compared to the other Merseyside areas. There were 539 RAs served to 410 individuals in 2019/20 (Figure 24).



55%

positive tests for opiate metabolites, 2019/20

Figure 24: Drug testing activity, Wirral residents, 2019/20¹⁶

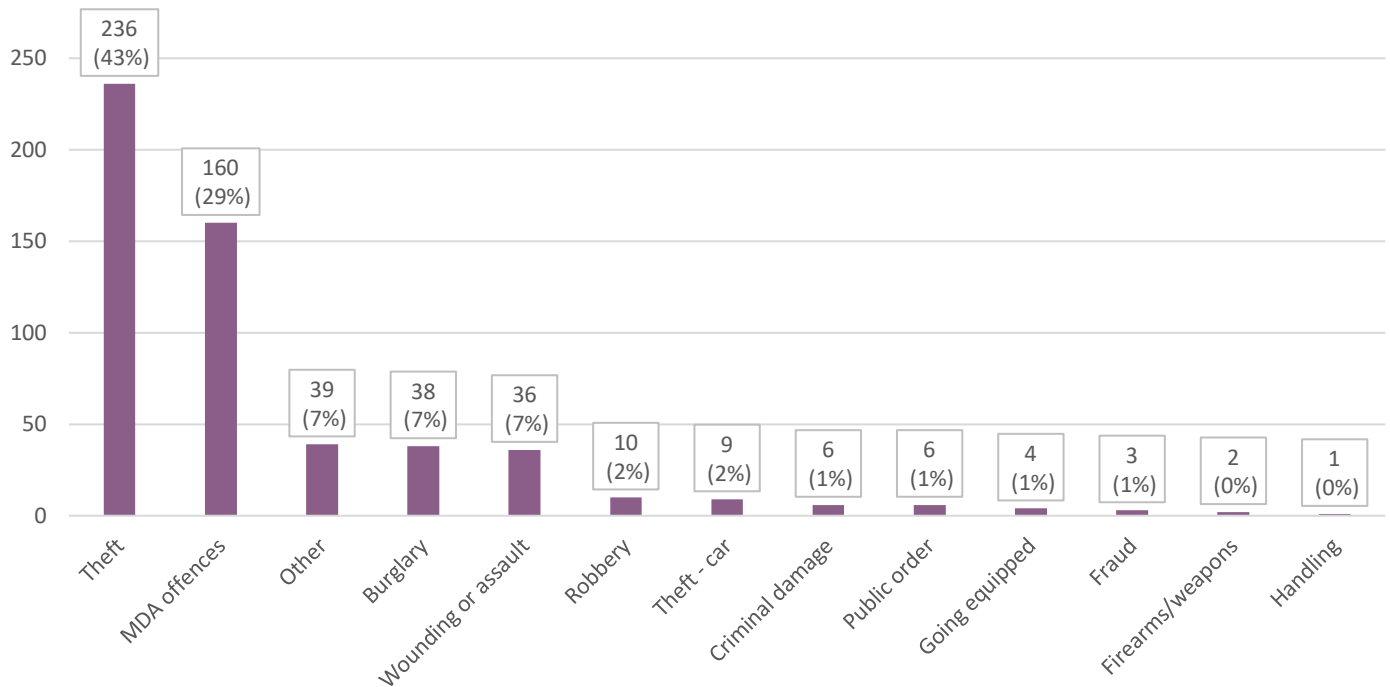


¹⁶ There are individuals with more than one positive drug test that are included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'; therefore the summation of individuals with an 'RA served' and 'RA not served' does not equal the number of individuals testing positive.

OFFENCE

Over two in five positive drug test records in 2019/20 reported theft (n=236; 43%), followed by Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=160; 29%) (Figure 25). The proportion of theft increased slightly when compared to the previous year (41%) and is substantially higher than the other Merseyside areas, while the proportion of MDA offences is the same as the previous year.

Figure 25: Positive drug tests by offence, Wirral residents, 2019/20



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for just over four in five (82%) individuals who tested positive between April 2019 and March 2020 (n=341). The proportion of women increased from 15% in 2018/19 to 18% in 2019/20. This is the largest proportion of the past five years, though is the same as 2015/16, and also the largest proportion when compared to the other Merseyside areas.

Figure 26 shows the age group of Wirral residents who tested positive across Merseyside in 2019/20. Detainees aged 25-29 years accounted for the largest proportion (n=74; 18%), followed by individuals aged 30-34 years (n=73; 17%). These proportions are the highest of the past five years for both age groups, while the proportion of 18-24 year olds decreased from 16% in 2018/19 to 13% in 2019/20.

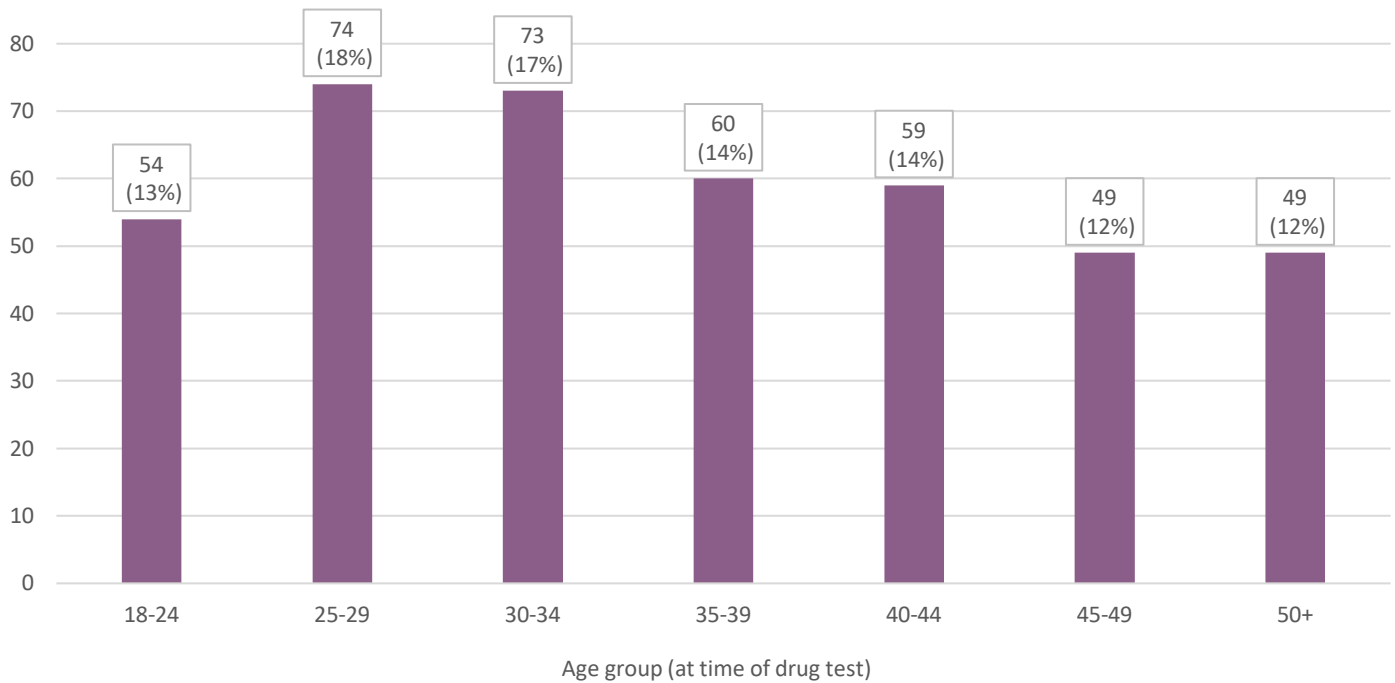


82%
341 men



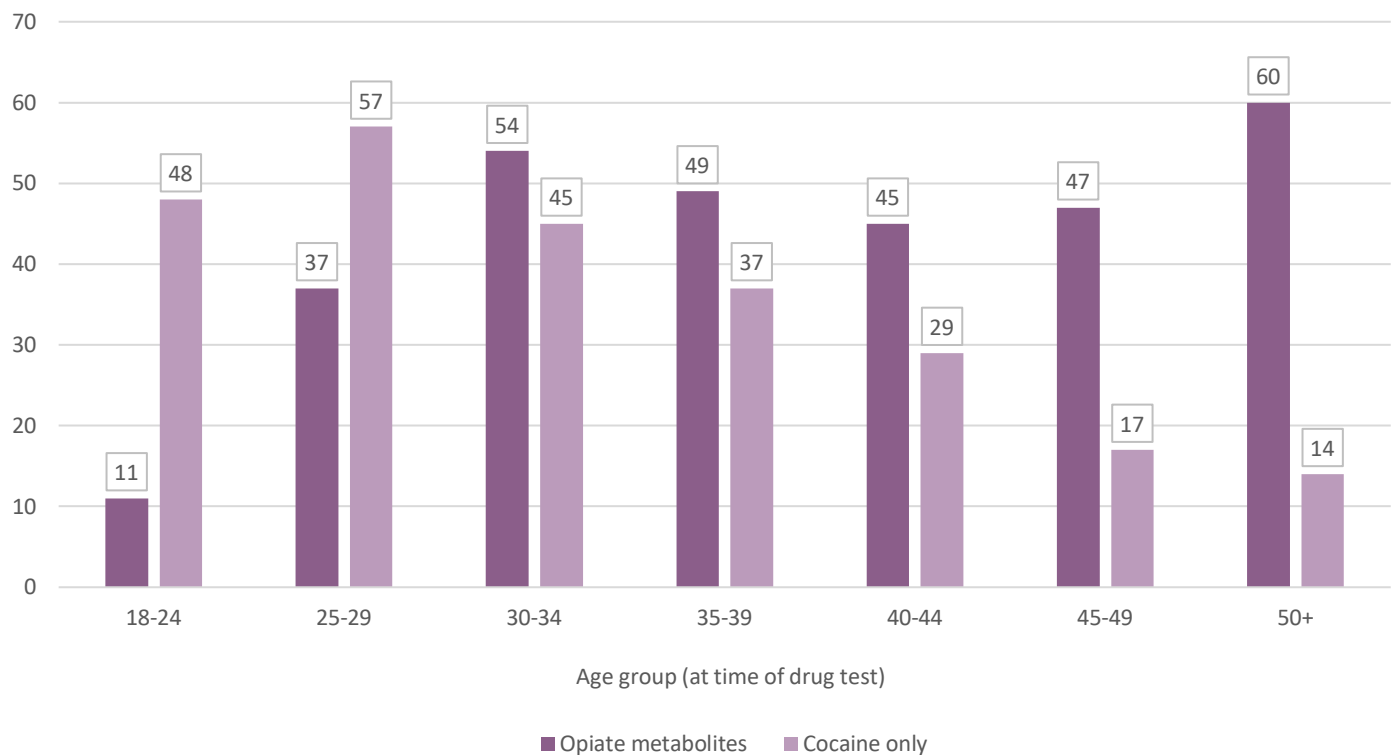
18%
77 women

Figure 26: Positive drug tests by age group, Wirral residents (individuals), 2019/20



Positive drug test results are categorised by age group in Figure 27. The number of detainees who tested positive for opiate metabolites fluctuated across the age groups. Numbers were highest for those aged 50 years and over (n=60), followed 30-34 year olds (n=54). Positive tests for cocaine only peaked in 25-29 year olds (n=57) and then decreased by age.

Figure 27: Positive drug tests by age group and drug test result, Wirral residents, 2019/20



RECOMMENDATIONS

- The RA process is the main criminal justice route whereby offenders who use Class A drugs are identified and assessed for treatment. When it is safe for drug testing to resume in the custody suites, Merseyside Police should ensure that the new Drug Testing Recorder (DTR) is used in order to improve the accuracy of data collection. Not long prior to the suspension of drug testing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, changes to the RA process were implemented (see *Box 4*). All stakeholders should monitor and feedback on the progress of these process changes when drug testing recommences in order to improve the overarching RA process.
- Although there is no legislated timescale, CJITs should be reminded that the local RA performance indicator identifies those assessed within 28 days of the drug test. Furthermore, CJITs should ensure client episodes are submitted to Public Health England via the National Drug Testing Monitoring System in a timely manner, and with accurate attributable details and assessment dates.
- Local police drug testing data are not available through other reporting mechanisms; therefore this resource should be utilised by all stakeholders regularly. All partners in this process should use available data which look at trends over time; for example, total attempted drug tests and positive drug test rates. This information will enable stakeholders to observe any changes and/or trends within their local area and across Merseyside, as well as investigate the reasons for these trends. This should assist in evidencing any required process changes, in addition to highlighting potential gaps or barriers that may prevent individuals from engaging with treatment services.
- Police drug testing records enable client profiling, including Class A drug use, offending and demographics, and can identify peak times for those who test positive. This information is key in identifying likely presenters through the drug testing process, and can impact on the resources and services required to cater for the needs of these individuals in an efficient manner in the custody suite, drug treatment service and/or local community. With resources and budgets constantly under scrutiny, this information should be used to ensure these individuals have a successful drug treatment experience. Furthermore, the dataset should be monitored in order to identify any changes in client profiling or drug trends. For example, the proportion of positive tests for cocaine only increased year-on-year from 42% in both 2015/16 and 2016/17, to 55% in 2019/20.
- The recording of the detainees' LA of residence is valuable for treatment agencies in identifying individuals tested across Merseyside and is even more critical in areas where there is no custody suite. Although a high proportion of records had the detainees' LA of residence recorded in 2019/20 (98%), Merseyside Police should continue to ensure this is recorded to enable more accurate analysis and a comprehensive understanding of the residents across Merseyside, which should be attainable through the new DTR.
- It is imperative that there are effective and prompt communication channels across the police in the custody suites, the local treatment provider and all other relevant treatment providers across Merseyside. Although organisational operations may differ, an overarching aim of assisting offenders who use drugs towards treatment should be shared by all stakeholders and facilitated as much as possible, with a clear understanding of the RA process. High levels of communication are particularly

Box 4: Changes to the RA process in Merseyside

1. Written notice of RA (RA1 form) sent to treatment agencies electronically.
2. Treatment agencies' electronic diaries accessible by all custody Sergeants to allocate RA appointments for detainees.
3. Breaches of those who failed to attend their RA appointment notified to a central police email account and within 24 hours of failure to attend.

relevant at times when there is not a drugs worker present in the custody suite and when dealing with residents of Knowsley and St Helens where there is no local custody suite. Regular feedback of any issues arising should be encouraged and addressed, as well as adequate training provided where and when required. Merseyside Police intend to set up operational meetings to discuss issues with the RA process. These meetings should take place routinely, with attendance from all relevant stakeholders, where possible.

These recommendations are unlikely to be achieved without sustained working between all stakeholders; however their implementation would likely ensure offenders who use drugs are referred to treatment services appropriately and have a successful and positive drug treatment experience.

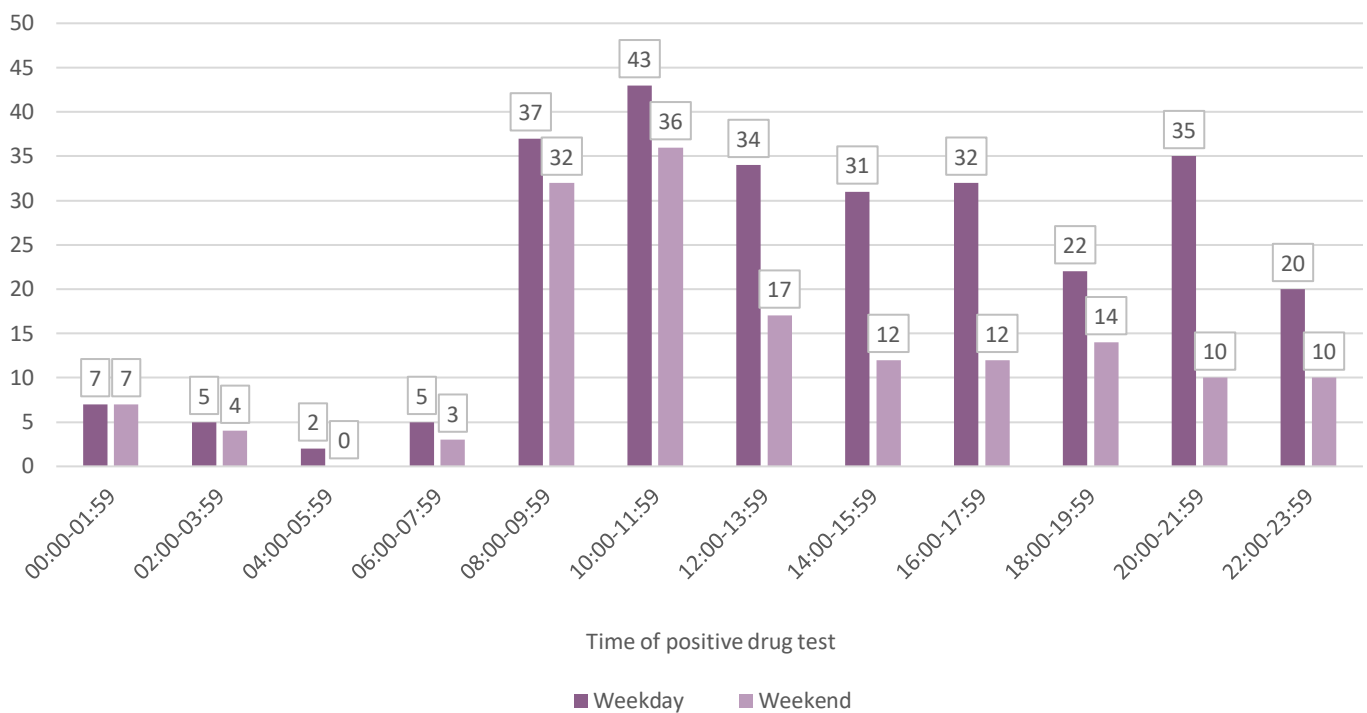
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

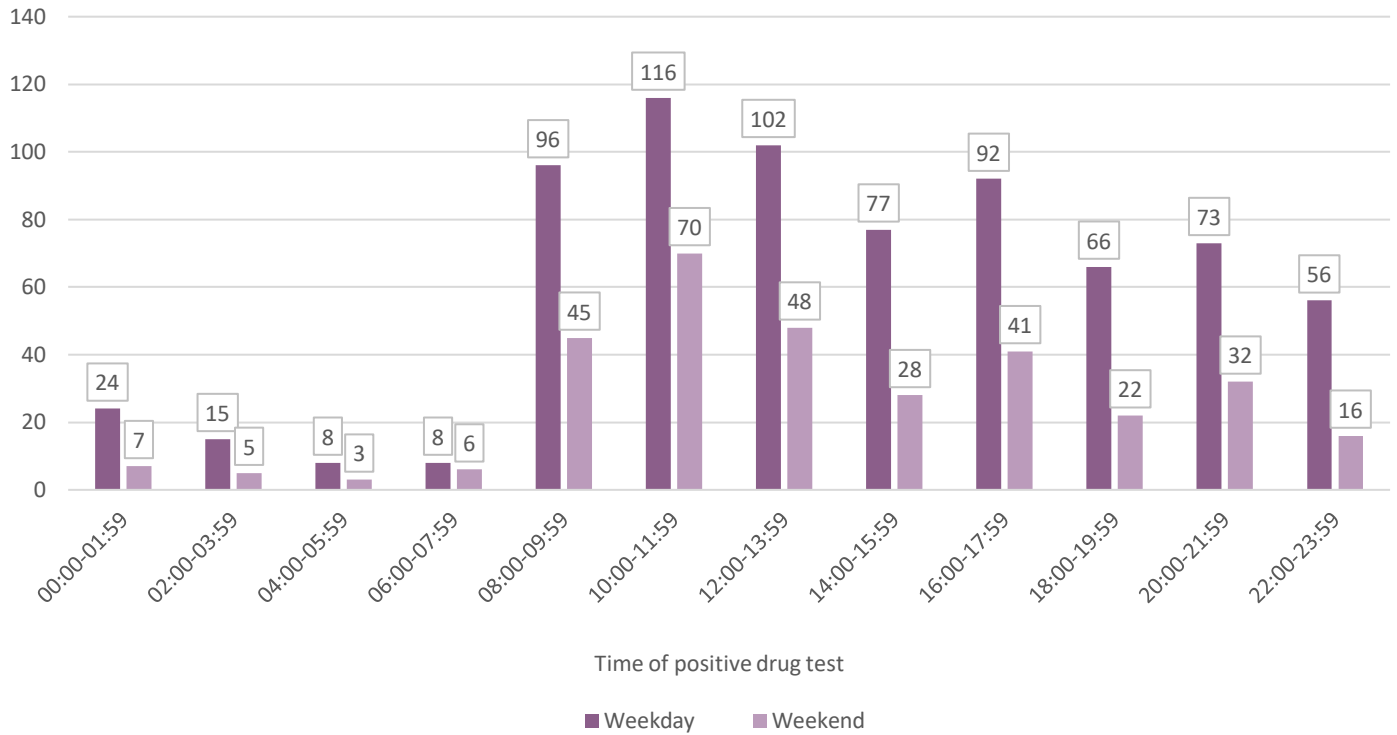
APPENDIX A1: POSITIVE DRUG TESTS AT BELLE VALE, SAS AND WAVERTREE CUSTODY SUITES BY TIME OF TEST, WEEKDAY VS. WEEKEND, 2019/20



APPENDIX A2: POSITIVE DRUG TESTS AT COPY LANE CUSTODY SUITE BY TIME OF TEST, WEEKDAY VS. WEEKEND, 2019/20



APPENDIX A3: POSITIVE DRUG TESTS AT WIRRAL CUSTODY SUITE BY TIME OF TEST, WEEKDAY VS. WEEKEND, 2019/20



SUMMARY OF FIGURES BY LA OF RESIDENCE, MERSEYSIDE RESIDENTS, 2019/20¹⁷

	Liverpool	Sefton	St Helens	Wirral	Merseyside Total
Attempted tests	1,536	495	332	727	3,333
Successful tests	1,527	490	332	721	3,313
Positive tests	1,037	365	242	550	2,355
Both cocaine & opiates	428 (41%)	165 (45%)	92 (38%)	280 (51%)	1,008 (43%)
Cocaine only	566 (55%)	193 (53%)	145 (60%)	247 (45%)	1,266 (54%)
Opiates only	43 (4%)	7 (2%)	5 (2%)	23 (4%)	81 (3%)
Offence					
MDA offences	431 (42%)	144 (39%)	86 (36%)	160 (29%)	891 (38%)
Theft	278 (27%)	112 (31%)	64 (26%)	236 (43%)	719 (31%)
Gender					
Men	753 (85%)	255 (84%)	185 (89%)	341 (82%)	1,660 (84%)
Women	131 (15%)	49 (16%)	22 (11%)	77 (18%)	306 (16%)
Age group					
18-24	120 (14%)	47 (15%)	53 (26%)	54 (13%)	303 (15%)
25-29	138 (16%)	45 (15%)	39 (19%)	74 (18%)	320 (16%)
30-34	145 (16%)	59 (19%)	35 (17%)	73 (17%)	338 (17%)
35-39	149 (17%)	54 (18%)	31 (15%)	60 (14%)	315 (16%)
40-44	136 (15%)	37 (12%)	14 (7%)	59 (14%)	273 (14%)
45-49	95 (11%)	36 (12%)	26 (13%)	49 (12%)	223 (11%)
50+	101 (11%)	26 (9%)	9 (4%)	49 (12%)	194 (10%)

¹⁷ Figures for offence, gender and age group are for positive drug tests; figures for gender and age group are for individuals. Please note that the Merseyside total includes Knowsley residents.

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