

# Criminal Justice Project: Drug Interventions Programme

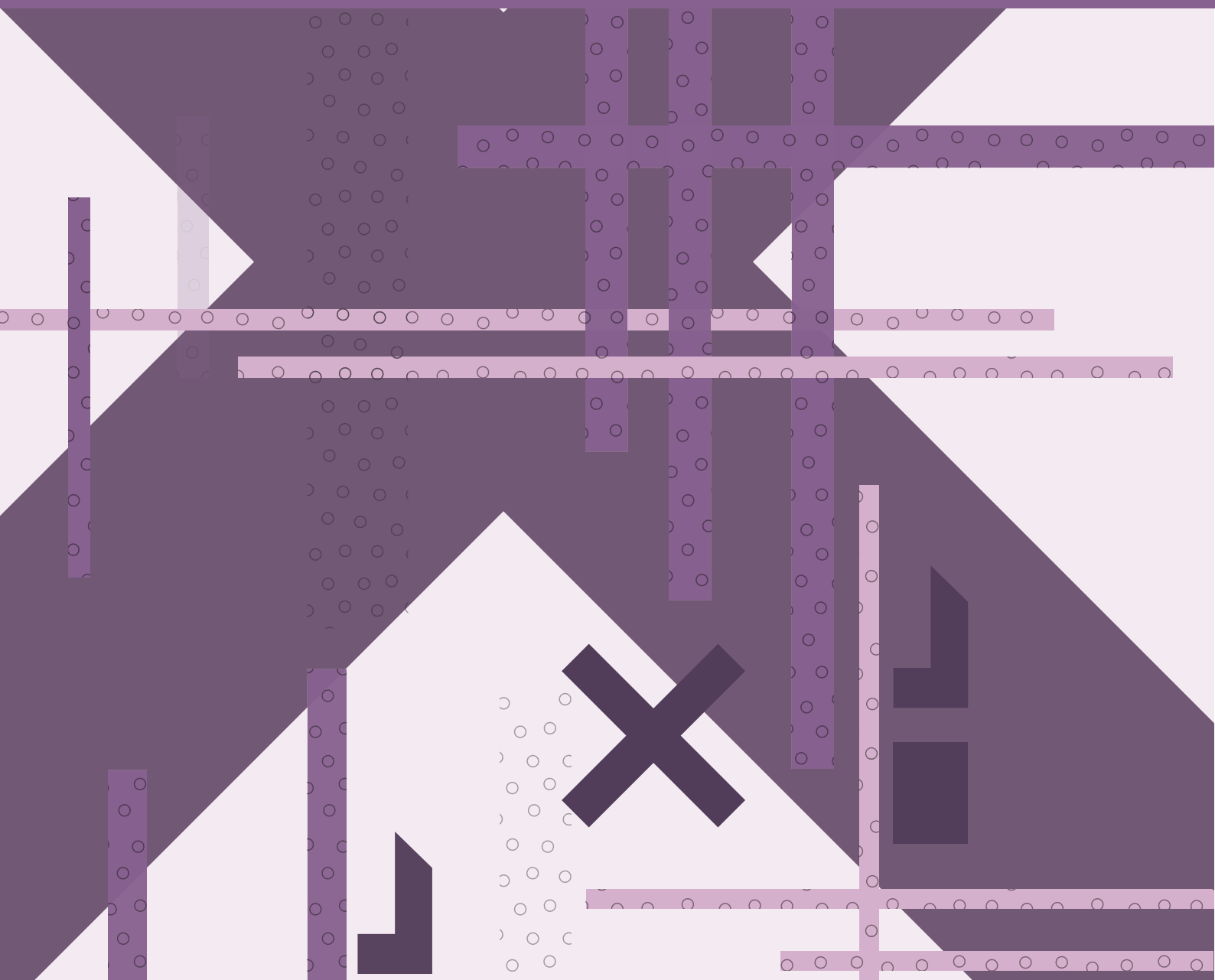
## Class A drug tests in Merseyside Police custody:

year ending March 2023

September 2023



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## KEY FINDINGS (YEAR ENDING MARCH 2023)

- There were 3,733 attempted drug tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on adults across Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2023 (93.2% were Merseyside residents). This is a 16.6% increase on the 3,201 attempted tests in the previous twelve-month period and notably, the largest number of attempted drug tests since 2015/16.
- Just under three in five (56.1%) of the positive drug tests across Merseyside in 2022/23 were cocaine only, while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 40.1%, opiates only = 3.8%).
- Where the positive result was maintained, there were a total of 2,447 Required Assessments served by Merseyside Police to 2,016 individuals in the year ending March 2023.
- Just under three-quarters (72.5%) of positive drug tests in the year ending March 2023 occurred on a weekday.
- On a weekday, positive drug tests peaked at 12:00-13:59 (14.1%), followed by 16:00-17:59 and 20:00-21:59 (13.2% and 13.4% respectively), while they peaked at 08:00-09:59 (17.2%) on a weekend.
- Over one-third (35.2%) of the positive drug test records following an arrest by Merseyside Police in the year ending March 2023 were Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (of which, 93.0% were possession offences), while just under one-quarter (23.8%) were theft and around one in six (17.1%) were other offences.
- Seven in ten (70.0%) adults who were arrested for theft tested positive for opiate metabolites, while there were larger proportions of cocaine only positive tests for MDA offences (57.0%), other offences (81.0%) and violence against the person (79.9%).
- Men accounted for over four in five (84.2%) individuals testing positive in the year ending March 2023.
- The median age of individuals who tested positive in 2022/23 was 37 years. Just over one-third (35.9%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by those aged 40-49 years (25.1%), 18-29 years (23.9%) and 50 years or over (15.1%).
- There were larger proportions who tested positive for cocaine only than opiate metabolites for those aged 18-29 years (31.7% and 10.7% respectively), while there were smaller proportions of cocaine only than opiate metabolites for those aged 40 years or over (30.6% and 53.6% respectively).
- In the year ending March 2023, 170.0 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 (221.3 per 100,000), followed by residents of Wirral (155.2), Knowsley (152.7), St Helens (149.3) and Sefton (139.4).
- Of the 1,940 individuals who reside in Merseyside who tested positive for opiates and/or cocaine in the year ending March 2023, around one in six (16.1%) subsequently re-presented and were drug tested again following their initial positive drug test during the twelve-month period.
- Of the 312 individuals who re-presented between April 2022 and March 2023, over four in five (84.0%) were men and two in five (40.4%) were aged 30-39 years.
- Just over three in five (61.9%) individuals who re-presented tested positive for opiate metabolites at their initial positive drug test during the twelve-month period and notably, proportions of opiate metabolites increased as the number of presentations increased.

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 (Home Office, 2011).

The DIP process often begins with the police drug testing adults in custody for specified Class A drugs (crack/powder cocaine and/or opiates) following an arrest or charge. 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).

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. 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.

Merseyside Police began a pilot of a new RA process in July 2022, which continued following its review in March 2023. This involves the health care provider in Merseyside Police custody carrying out the initial RA to determine whether further intervention is required with a treatment provider to address the individual's drug use and offending behaviour. If further intervention is required, an appointment is made with the local Criminal Justice Intervention Team (CJIT) for a follow-up assessment.

This report from the Public Health Institute, Liverpool John Moores University, presents data on drug tests carried out across Merseyside Police's custody suites showing trends up to the year ending March 2023<sup>1</sup>. It contextualises Merseyside Police drug testing records by providing numbers and trends of adult offenders who 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.

### Expansion of Drug Test on Arrest (DToA)

DIP was decommissioned as a national programme by the Home Office in 2013; however, it continued to remain operational across Merseyside.

Nationally, the rates of DToA declined since the decommissioning of DIP, with drug testing stopping completing in some police force areas. In 2021, the Home Office announced it was reinvesting in DToA for the next three and half years to enable police forces in England and Wales to establish or expand on existing drug testing (Home Office, 2023a).

The *Swift, Certain, Tough* White Paper (Home Office, 2022a) sets out the ambitions for DToA, proposing the potential to expand testing to include a wider range of Class A drugs and include other classifications, where relevant, and to expand the number of trigger offences that can lead to a drug test.

<sup>1</sup> Notes to accompany this report are available in *Appendix A* (page 39). Furthermore, there are Merseyside comparisons for the year ending March 2023, and trends of cocaine only positive tests and key offences, presented in charts in *Appendix C* (pages 41-42).

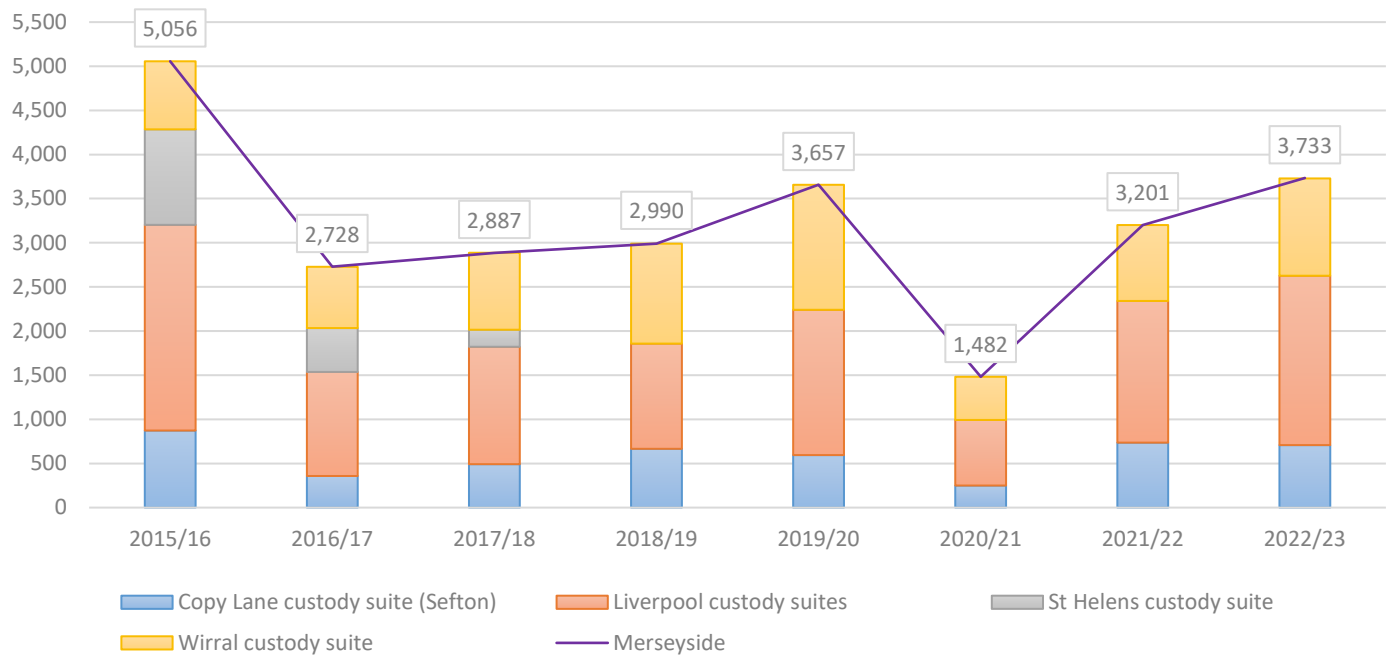
## DRUG TESTS ACROSS MERSEYSIDE'S CUSTODY SUITES

### OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2023, there were 3,733 attempted drug tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on adults across Merseyside Police's custody suites (*Figure 1*). This is a 16.6% increase on the 3,201 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. Furthermore, 2022/23 had the largest number of attempted drug tests since 2015/16, when targeted testing was implemented in Merseyside Police custody.

Although there is an increase in the number of drug tests, this may not indicate an increase in offenders who use drugs. Targeted testing was implemented to reduce the number of negative drug tests; however, the number of positive tests also declined. A report published by the Public Health Institute (2017), highlighted over half (57.6%) of a cohort of individuals who tested positive for specified Class A drugs and re-offended (as per Police National Computer records) in the twelve months following their initial positive test were not drug tested at their subsequent arrest(s). This raised concerns that opportunities were being missed for treatment services to engage with offenders who use Class A drugs and consequently a range of actions were implemented to increase the number of drug tests.

*Figure 1: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite area and year, 2015/16 - 2022/23 <sup>2</sup>*

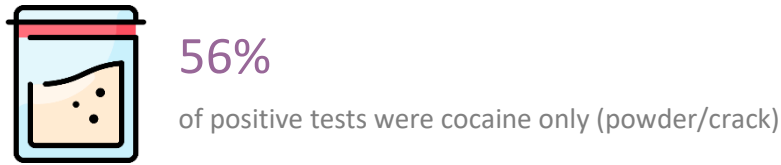


Liverpool's custody suites had the highest number of attempted drug tests in all eight years shown in *Figure 1*, representing an average of 46% of all attempted tests in Merseyside during the eight-year period. Furthermore, the number of attempted tests carried out at Liverpool's custody suites increased by 19.6% from 1,605 in 2021/22 to 1,919 in 2022/23, and similarly, Wirral custody suite had an increase of 28.1% from 860 to 1,102, though the custody suite was closed for refurbishment from early January 2022 until 30 April 2022. However, the number of attempted drug tests carried out at Copy Lane custody suite in Sefton decreased by 3.8% from 736 in 2021/22 to 708 in 2022/23.

<sup>2</sup> Notes regarding Merseyside Police custody suites are available in *Appendix A*. Also note that there were four records in 2022/23 that did not specify the custody suite where the test was conducted.



Figure 2 shows the drug testing activity for adults who were drug tested in Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2023. Of the 3,733 attempted drug tests, 3,677 were successful, and subsequently 2,506 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs<sup>3</sup>. Just under three in five of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=1,405, 56.1%), while over two in five (43.8%) positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 1,004, 40.1%; opiates only = 94, 3.8%).



Where the positive result was maintained<sup>4</sup>, there were 2,447 Required Assessments (RAs) served by Merseyside Police to 2,016 individuals in the year ending March 2023 (Figure 2). Furthermore, four in five of the 1,912 clients served with an RA since the change in the RA process (4 July 2022) were assessed in Merseyside Police custody by the health care provider (n=1,539, 80.5%).

### Seizures of powder cocaine

The number of drug seizures by police forces and Border Force in England and Wales reduced by 14% in the year ending March 2022 when compared to the previous year. However, seizures of powder cocaine increased by 5% and the quantity of powder cocaine increased by 68% to 18,767kg, which is the highest recorded quantity of powder cocaine seized on record (Home Office, 2023b).

### Powder/crack cocaine related deaths

In 2021, 840 deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales involved cocaine (powder/crack). This is an 8.1% increase on the 777 deaths in the previous year and more than seven times the number recorded a decade ago (112 deaths in 2011; ONS, 2022).

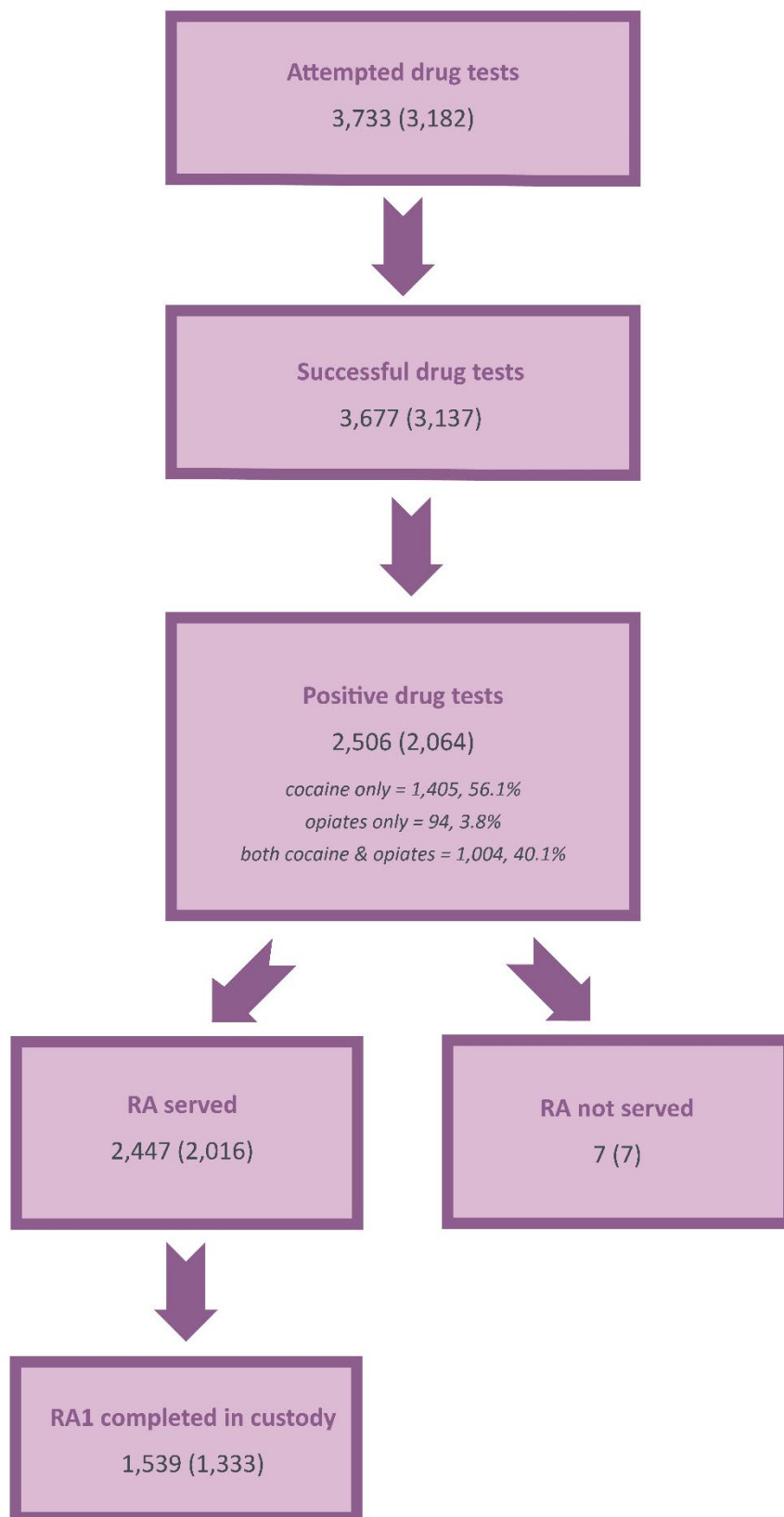
The IMS Drug Related Deaths surveillance system reported cocaine was implicated in around three in ten (28.1%) of all toxicity deaths across Cheshire and Merseyside in the year ending 2022, which is a 20.2% increase on the previous year. Notably, just under three in five (55.6%) of these occurred for 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, 2023<sup>5</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> Unsuccessful tests are those that have been refused or aborted (i.e., equipment failure or unable to provide sample). Note that there were two records where the result of the test was not known.

<sup>4</sup> The RA figure excludes any drug tests where the positive result was overturned or not resolved following a dispute.

<sup>5</sup> 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, 2022/23 <sup>6,7,8,9</sup>



<sup>6</sup> Numbers of individuals at each level are presented in brackets.

<sup>7</sup> There were three positive drug test records that did not indicate the drug(s) detected.

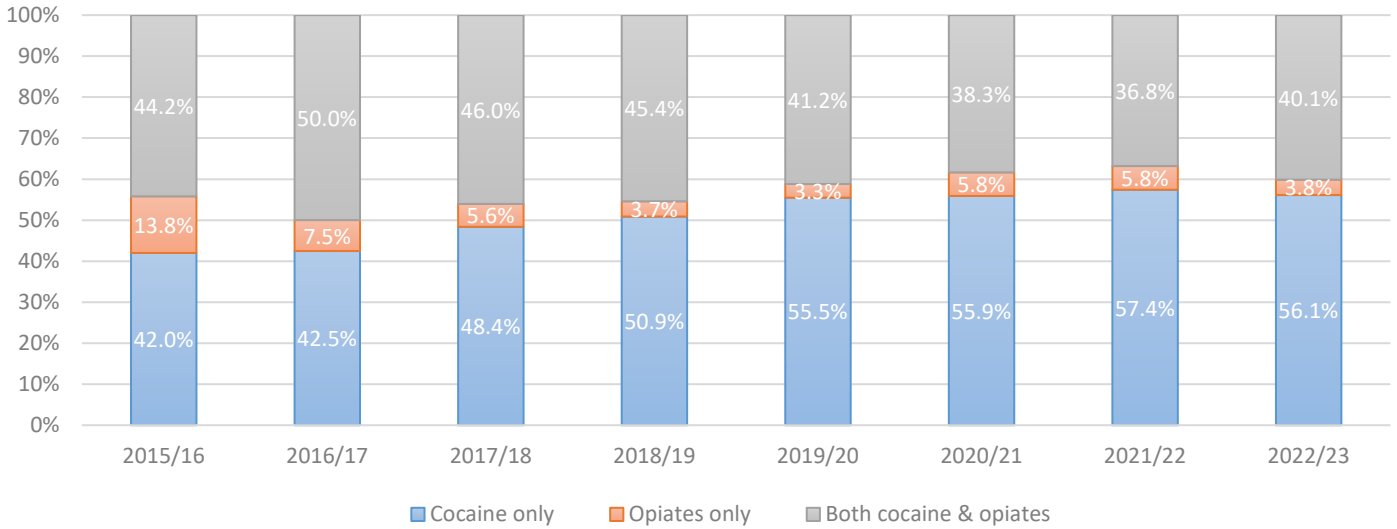
<sup>8</sup> 'RA served' and 'RA not served' indicate the number of occasions when those who tested positive were either served or not served with the requirement to attend an initial RA (RA1). There are individuals with more than one positive drug test that could be included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'. Note that three records did not indicate if an RA was served or not. Also, there were 49 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.

<sup>9</sup> 'RA1 completed in custody' is regarding the pilot of a new RA process introduced in July 2022, where the initial assessment is carried out by the health care provider in Merseyside Police custody.

## POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

Figure 3 shows that overall, there has been an increase in cocaine only positive tests and a decline in positive tests for opiate metabolites, particularly opiates only. The proportion of cocaine only positive tests increased year-on-year from 42.0% in 2015/16 to 57.4% in 2021/22, followed by a slight decrease to 56.1% in the following twelve-month period.

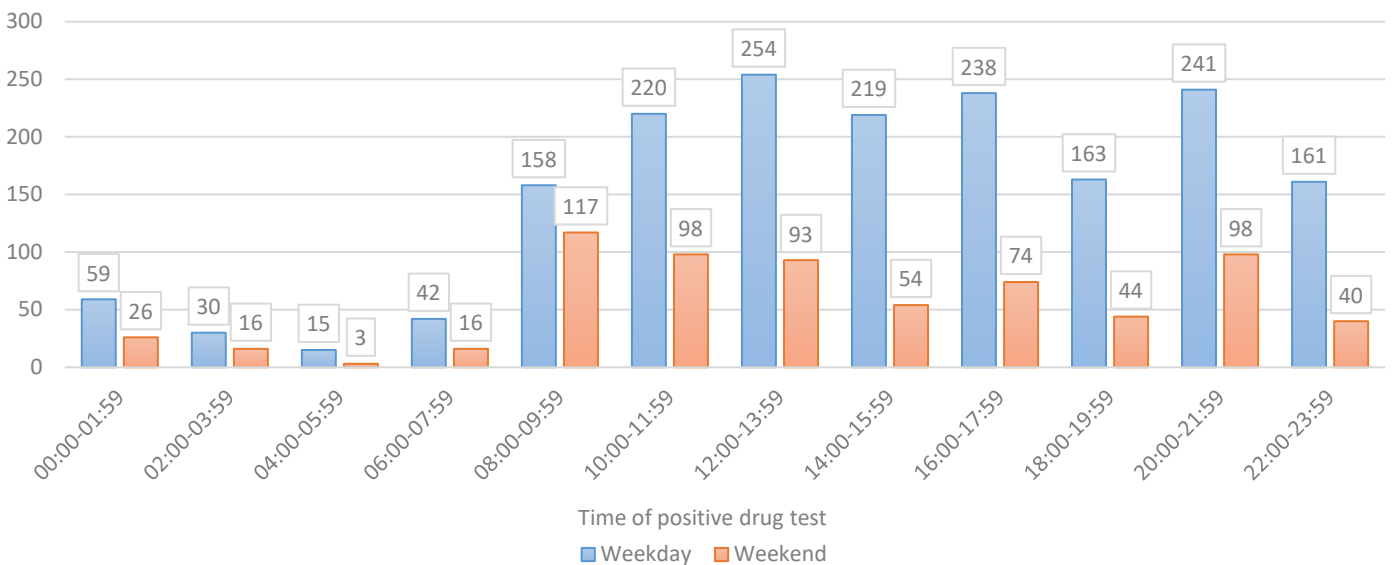
Figure 3: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, 2015/16 - 2022/23



## TIME OF DRUG TESTS

Of the total 2,506 positive drug tests across Merseyside's custody suites in the year ending March 2023, just under three-quarters occurred on a weekday (n=1,817, 72.5%), compared to just over one-quarter on a weekend (n=689, 27.5%). Figure 4 shows the number of positive drug tests by time of test, comparing those that occurred on a weekday with those on a weekend. On a weekday, positive drug tests peaked at 12:00-13:59 (n=254, 14.1%), followed by 16:00-17:59 (n=238, 13.2%) and 20:00-21:59 (n=241, 13.4%), while they peaked at 08:00-09:59 (n=117, 17.2%) on a weekend.

Figure 4: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2022/23 <sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup> There were 27 records that did not have the time of test recorded.

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

Of the 1,241 positive drug tests at Liverpool’s custody suites in the year ending March 2023, just under three-quarters occurred on a weekday (n=911, 73.4%), compared to just over one-quarter on a weekend (n=330, 26.6%). Positive drug tests on a weekday peaked at 12:00-13:59 (n=121, 13.4%) and 20:00-21:59 (n=125, 13.8%), while the number of tests on a weekend peaked at 08:00-09:59 (n=53, 16.4%), followed by 12:00-13:59 (n=46, 14.2%) and 20:00-21:59 (n=47, 14.5%; *Appendix B1*).

COPY LANE CUSTODY SUITE, SEFTON

Of the 448 positive drug tests at Copy Lane custody suite in in the year ending March 2023, around seven in ten occurred on a weekday (n=311, 69.4%), compared to around three in ten on a weekend (n=137, 30.6%). Positive drug tests on a weekday peaked at 12:00-13:59 (n=50, 16.3%), followed by 14:00-15:59 and 16:00-17:59 (both n=43, 14.0%), while the number of tests on a weekend peaked at 10:00-11:59 (n=23, 17.0%; *Appendix B2*).

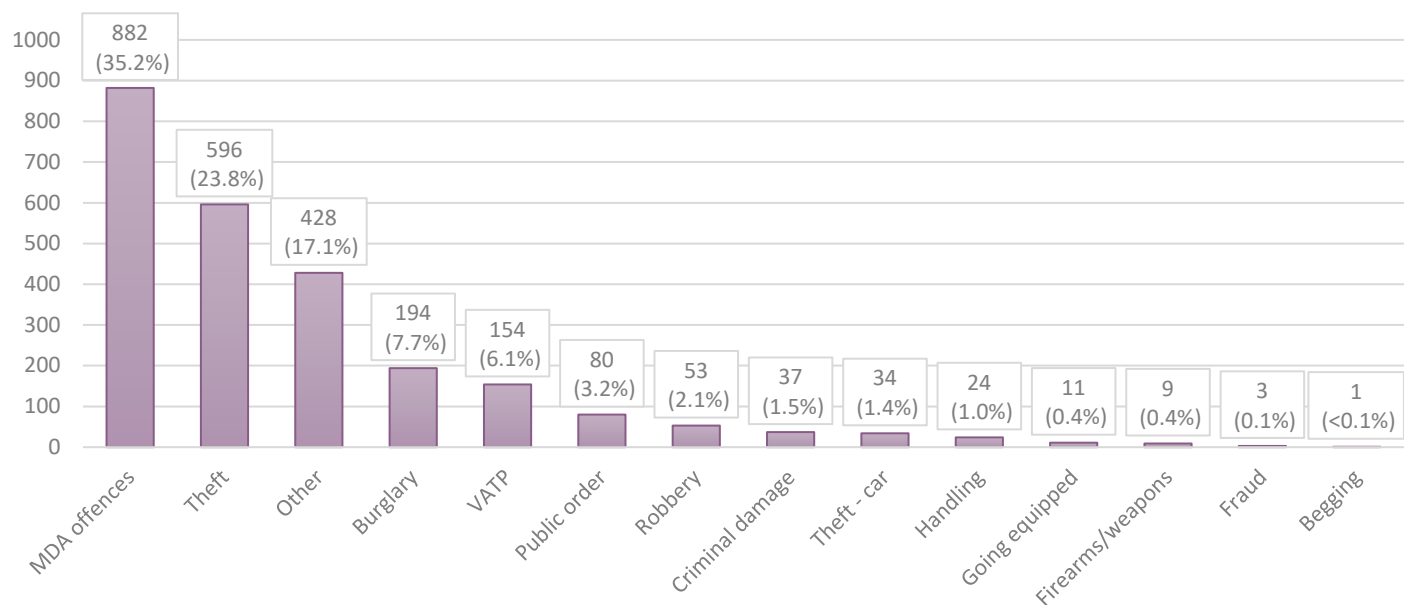
WIRRAL CUSTODY SUITE

Of the 814 positive drug tests at Wirral custody suite in in the year ending March 2023, just under three-quarters occurred on a weekday (n=592, 72.7%), compared to just over one-quarter on a weekend (n=222, 27.3%). Positive drug tests on a weekday peaked at 12:00-13:59 (n=82, 14.0%), followed by 16:00-17:59 (n=78, 13.3%) and 20:00-21:59 (n=77, 13.1%), while the number of tests on a weekend peaked at 08:00-09:59 (n=44, 20.0%; *Appendix B3*).

OFFENCES

Police drug testing records capture the offence that led to the arrest/charge and subsequent drug test. Over one-third of the positive drug test records across Merseyside in the year ending March 2023 were Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=882, 35.2%), while just under one-quarter were theft (n=596, 23.8%) and around one in six were other offences (n=428, 17.1%; *Figure 5*).

Figure 5: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, 2022/23 <sup>11</sup>



<sup>11</sup> MDA = Misuse of Drugs Act; VATP = violence against the person. Theft excludes theft of a vehicle. Other offences: other non-trigger offences = 274, other motoring offences = 148, tampering with a motor vehicle = 3, making off without payment = 2, driving whilst disqualified = 1.

Notably, there have been some changes in the trends of MDA offences, theft and other offences (Figure 6). Between 2015/16 and 2017/18, there were larger proportions of theft than MDA offences, though in subsequent years, there were larger proportions of MDA offences. The proportion of MDA offences increased year-on-year between 2015/16 (24.8%) and 2019/20 (41.3%), followed by a year-on-year decrease to 35.2% in the twelve months ending March 2023. Conversely, theft decreased year-on-year, from 43.1% in 2015/16 to 21.3% in 2021/22, followed by a slight increase to 23.8% in 2022/23. Although proportions of other offences fluctuated in earlier years, there has been an upward trend in recent years, peaking at 17.1% in the year ending March 2023, which is a substantial difference to the year ending March 2016 (3.5%).

Figure 6: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offences (MDA offences, theft & other), 2015/16 - 2022/23

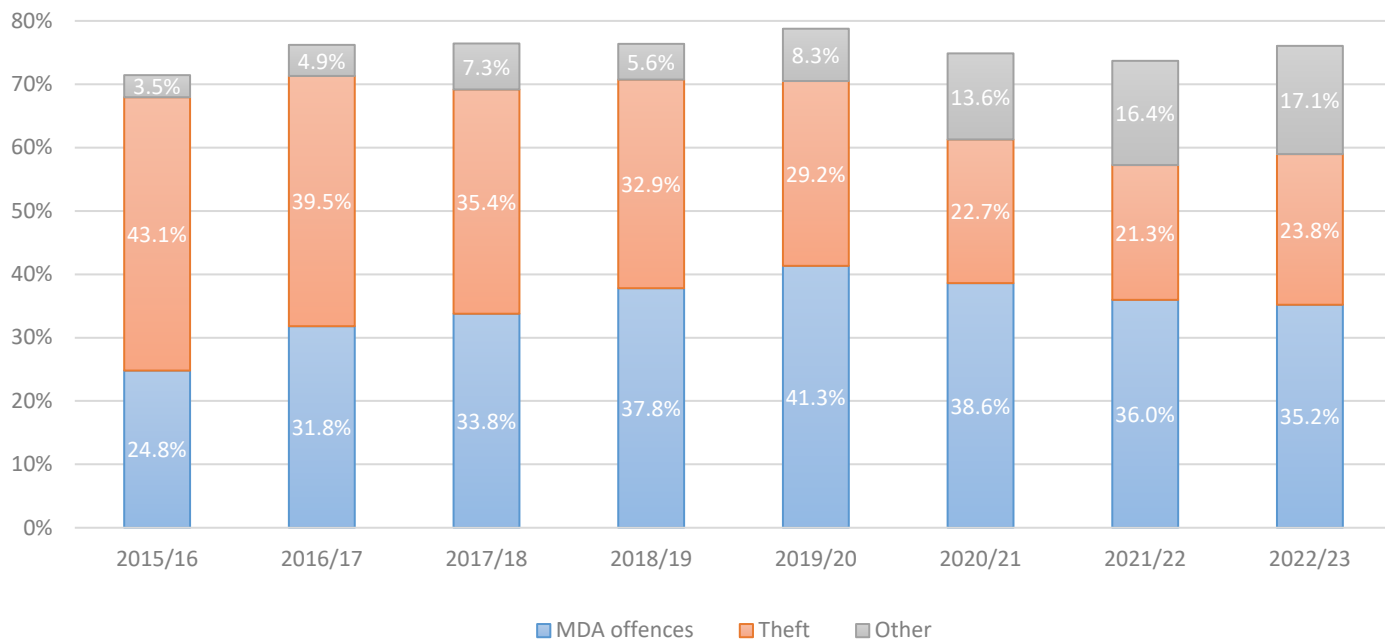


Figure 7 shows the type of MDA offences recorded in the year ending March 2023. Of the 882 MDA offences recorded for those who tested positive in the twelve-month period, over nine in ten (93.0%) were possession. Over half of all MDA offences were possession with intent to supply Class A drugs (n=486, 55.1%), while just under two in five were possession of specified Class A drugs (n=334, 37.9%).

Figure 7: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by type of MDA offence, 2022/23

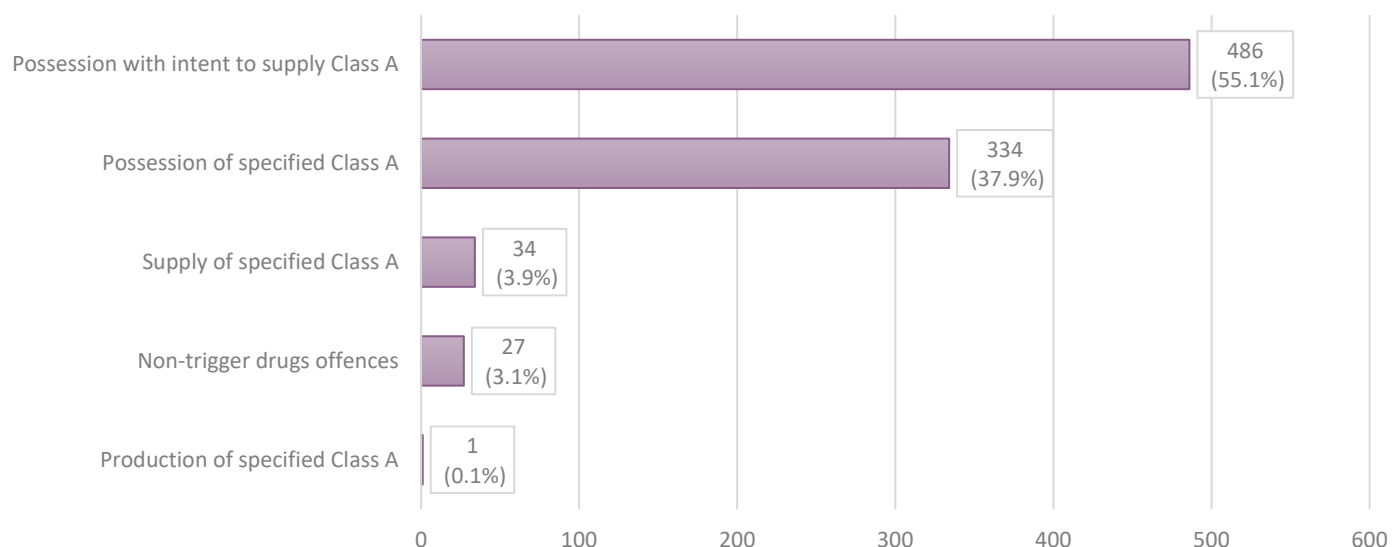
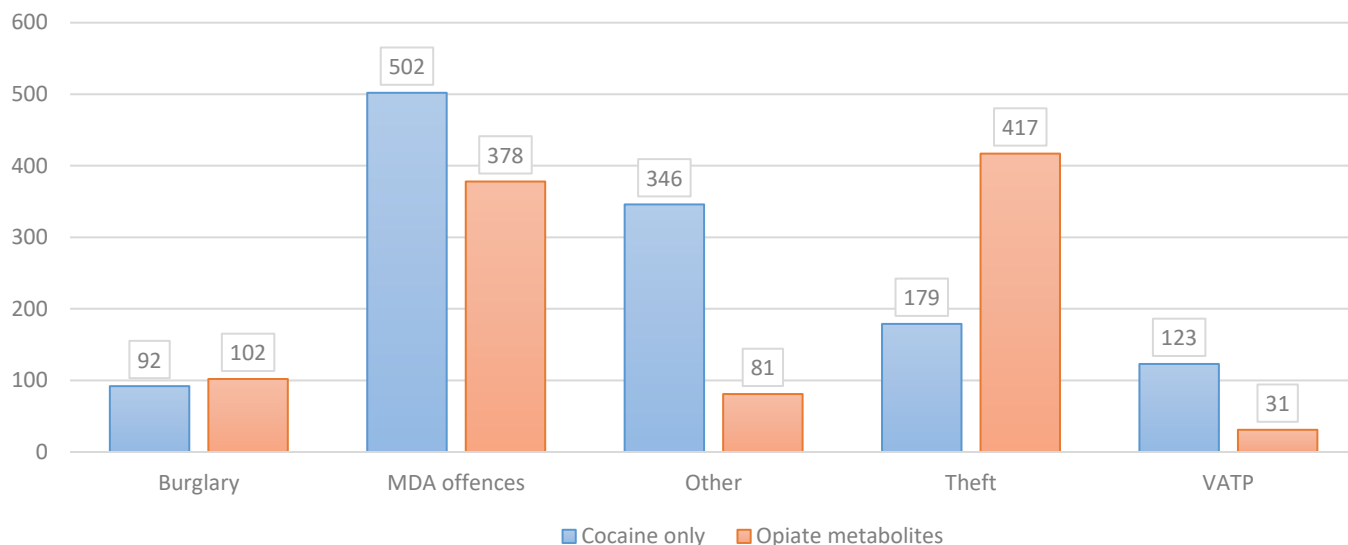


Figure 8 shows the five offences with the highest numbers recorded in the year ending March 2023 by the positive drug test result. Of the drug test records with theft recorded, seven in ten tested positive for opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates; n=417, 70.0%), while there were larger numbers of cocaine only positive tests for MDA offences (n=502, 57.0%), other offences (n=346, 81.0%) and VATP (n=123, 79.9%).

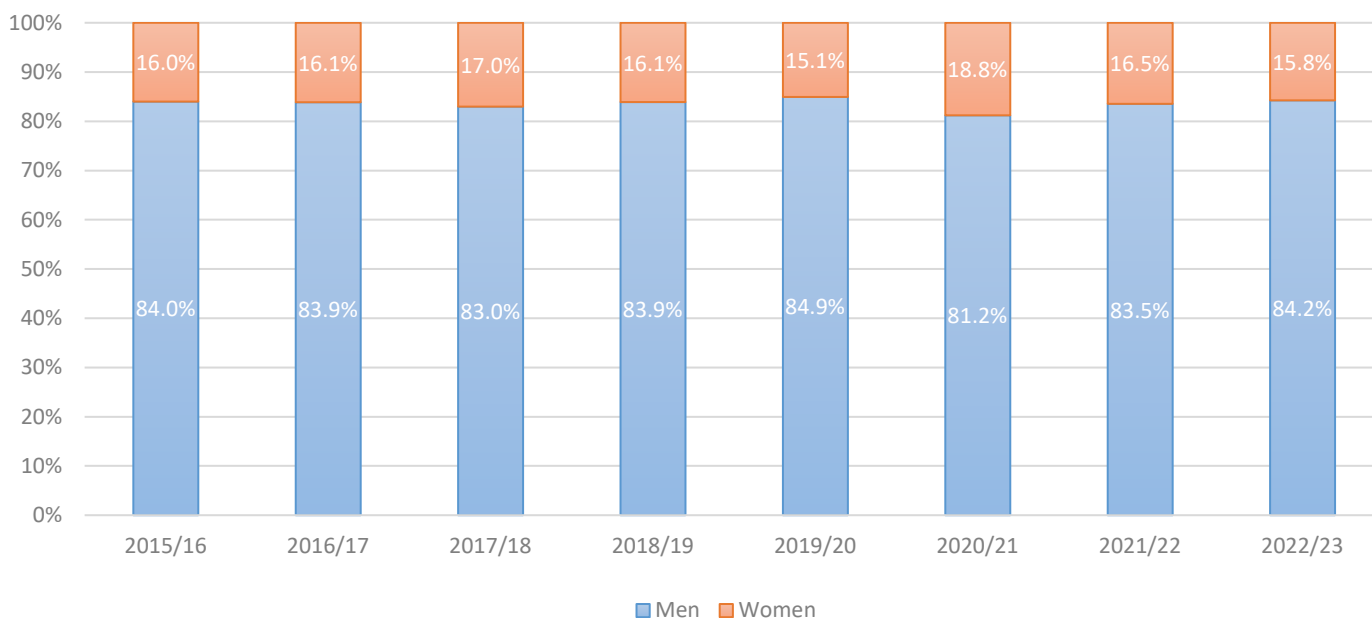
Figure 8: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence and drug test result, 2022/23 <sup>12</sup>



## DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2023 (n=1,738, 84.2%). This is the second largest proportion of men of the eight-year period, after 2019/20 (84.9%; Figure 9).

Figure 9: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender (individuals), 2015/16 - 2022/23 <sup>13</sup>

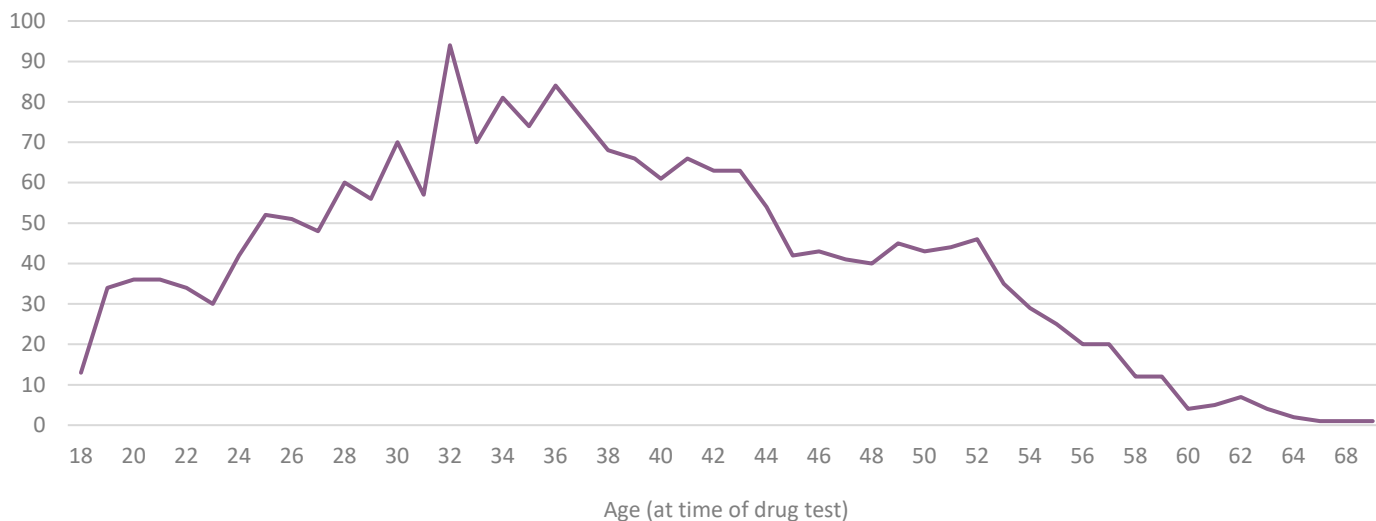


<sup>12</sup> There were three positive drug test records that did not indicate the drug(s) detected; therefore, the totals for the offences do not equal the numbers in Figure 5.

<sup>13</sup> There was one record that did not specify the individual’s gender.

The majority of individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2023 were White European (n=1,986, 96.3%). The median age was 37 years (men = 36, women = 38), which is a slight increase on the year ending March 2022 (35 years), and numbers peaked for individuals aged 32 years (n=94; *Figure 10*).

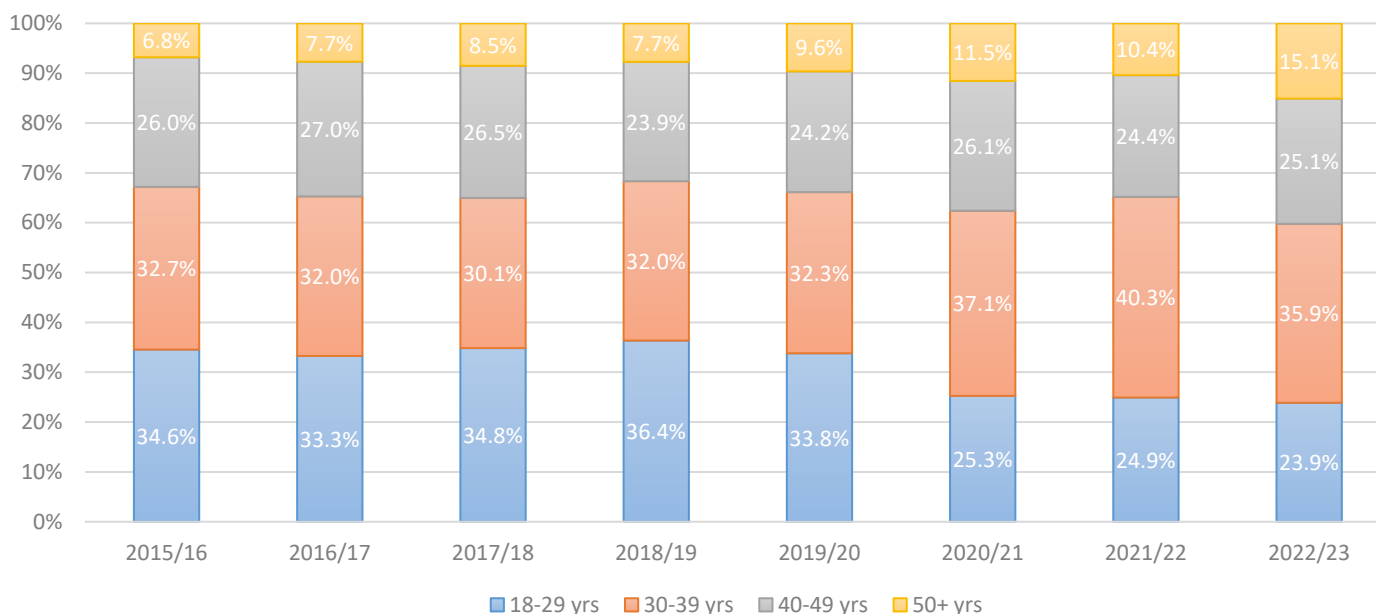
*Figure 10: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test (individuals), 2022/23<sup>14</sup>*



Just over one-third of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2023 were aged 30-39 years (n=740, 35.9%), followed by one-quarter aged 40-49 years (n=518, 25.1%), just under one-quarter aged 18-29 years (n=492, 23.9%) and around one in seven aged 50 years or over (n=311, 15.1%; *Figure 11*).

Proportions aged 18-29 years and 40-49 years in the year ending March 2023 are similar to the previous year, though notably, the proportion of 18-29 year olds in 2022/23 is the smallest of the eight-year period, which has seen a year-on-year decrease since 2018/19. Individuals aged 30-39 years in 2022/23 is a decrease on the previous year, through the third largest proportion of the eight years, and the proportion aged 50 years or over is the largest of the eight years (*Figure 11*).

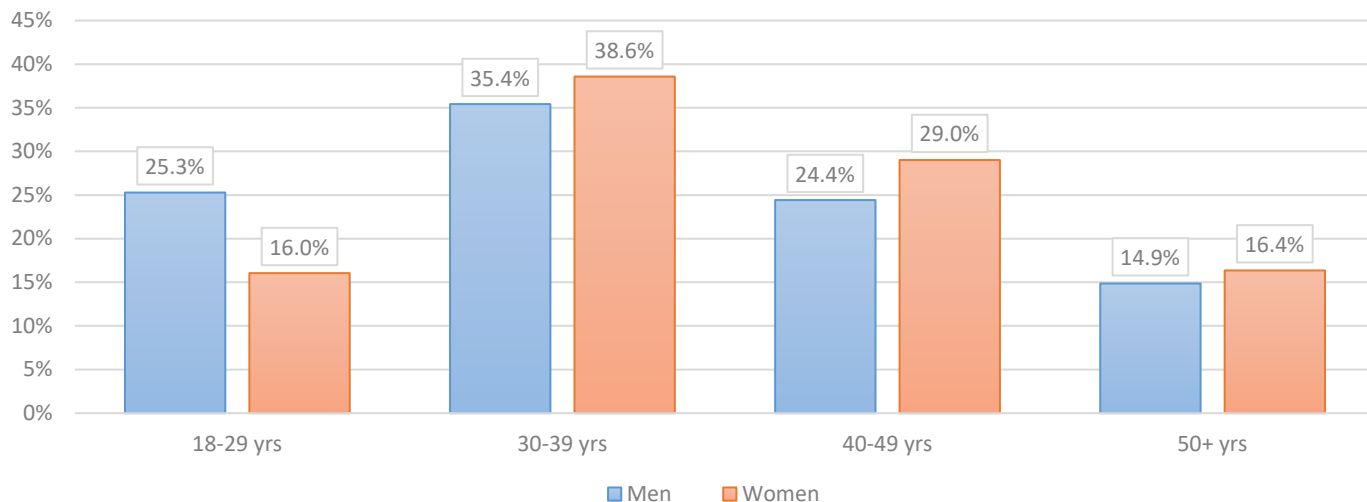
*Figure 11: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group (individuals), 2015/16 - 2022/23<sup>14</sup>*



<sup>14</sup> There were two records that had an invalid year of birth (i.e., year of test) recorded and one record that did not have a date of birth recorded.

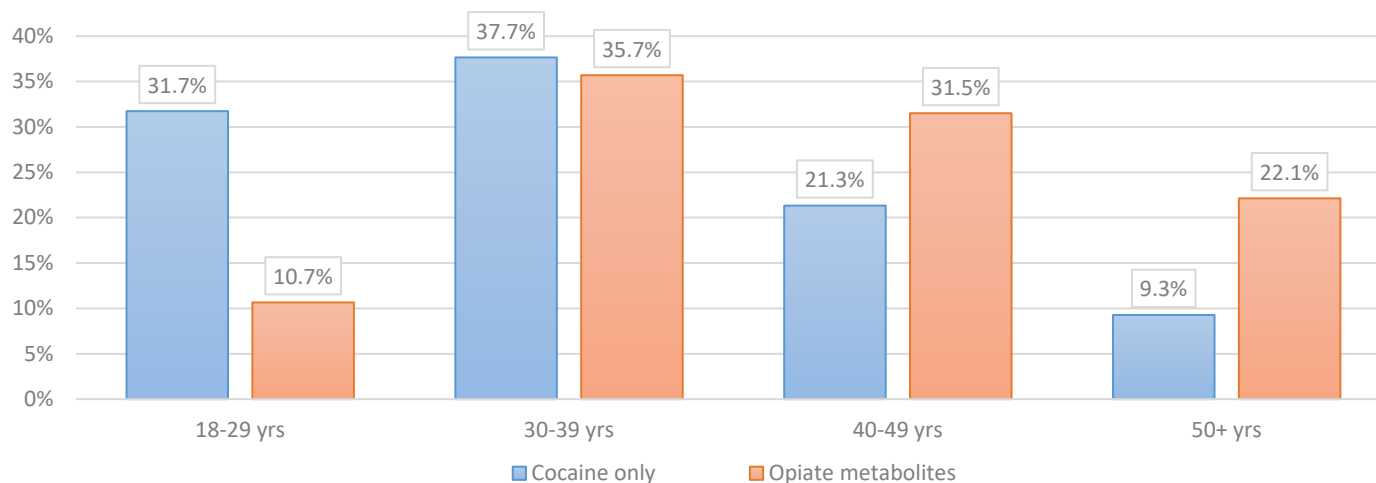
There are some variations when looking at the age groups for each gender (Figure 12). There was a substantially larger proportion of men than women aged 18-29 years (25.3% and 16.0% respectively) in the year ending March 2023, though larger proportions of women than men in the other age groups.

Figure 12: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and gender (individuals), 2022/23



Positive drug test results in 2022/23 are categorised by age group in Figure 13, where both date of birth and drug type were recorded. There were larger proportions of clients testing positive for cocaine only than opiate metabolites for those aged 18-29 years (31.7% and 10.7% respectively), while proportions were somewhat similar for those aged 30-39 years (37.7% and 35.7% respectively). Meanwhile, there were larger proportions of clients testing positive for opiate metabolites than cocaine only for those aged 40 years or over (53.6% and 30.6% respectively).

Figure 13: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, 2022/23



*“Working in partnership is essential if we are to effectively deliver the three strategic priorities set out in the 10-year drugs strategy: breaking drug supply chains, delivering a world-class treatment and recovery system, and achieving a shift in the demand for drugs. All three priorities form the scope of a local partnership approach to delivering the strategy.”*

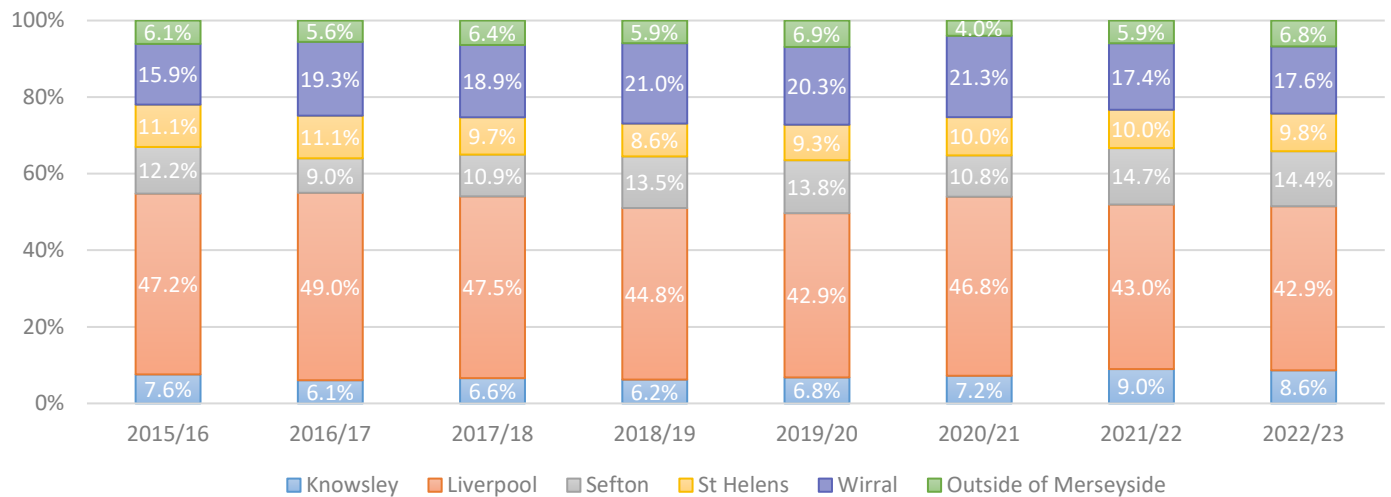
(Home Office, 2022b)



## MERSEYSIDE RESIDENTS

Of the recorded 3,733 drug tests attempted in Merseyside Police's custody suites in the year ending March 2023, where recorded, 3,464 (93.2%) were Merseyside residents. Residents of Liverpool Local Authority (LA) accounted for the largest proportion of adults drug tested in the year ending March 2023 (n=1,592, 42.9%), followed by Wirral LA (n=652, 17.6%). Notably, Liverpool LA had the largest proportion in all eight years (*Figure 14*).

*Figure 14: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by LA of residence and year, 2015/16 - 2022/23*<sup>15</sup>



In the year ending March 2023, 170.0 per 100,000 adult population in Merseyside had a positive test for specified Class A drugs (*Figure 15*), compared to 170.2 per 100,000 population in the previous year. Of the five LA areas, Liverpool residents had the highest rate (221.3 per 100,000), followed by residents of Wirral (155.2), Knowsley (152.7), St Helens (149.3) and Sefton (139.4).

*Figure 15: Rate of positive drug tests per 100,000 adult population across Merseyside by LA of residence (individuals), 2022/23*<sup>16</sup>



LA of residence	Positive drug tests (individuals)	
	Number	Rate (per 100,000 adult population)
Knowsley	185	152.7
Liverpool	867	221.3
Sefton	316	139.4
St Helens	219	149.3
Wirral	396	155.2
<b>Total Merseyside residents</b>	<b>1,940</b>	<b>170.0</b>

<sup>15</sup> 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.

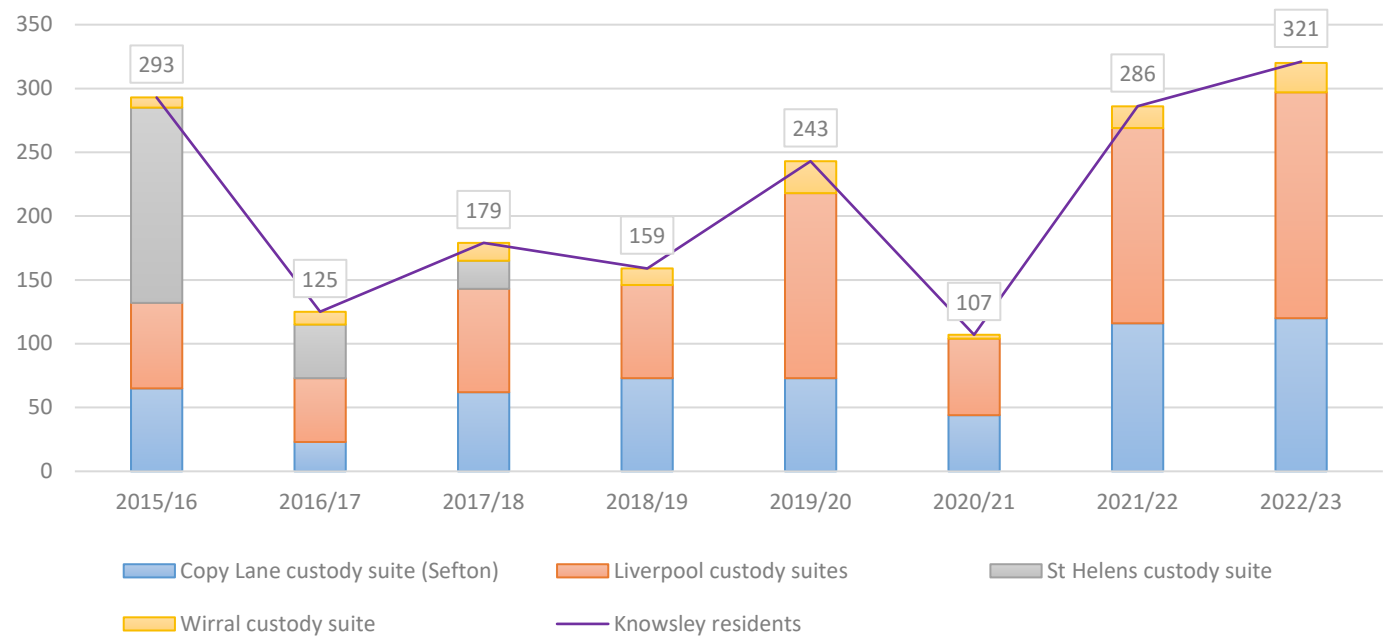
<sup>16</sup> Note that the total number of Merseyside residents (n=1,940) is less than the summation of each LA (n=1,983). This is because a number of individuals with multiple drug tests have different LAs recorded.

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2023, there were 321 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Knowsley residents across Merseyside Police’s custody suites, representing around one in ten (9.3%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is a 12.2% increase on the 286 attempted tests in the previous year and the highest number of tests of the eight years shown in *Figure 16*<sup>17</sup>.

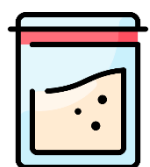
On average, just under half (47.3%) of the attempted drug tests on Knowsley residents were carried out at a Liverpool custody suite during the eight-year period, followed by around one-third (33.8%) at Copy Lane custody suite in Sefton (*Figure 16*).

*Figure 16: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Knowsley residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23*



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

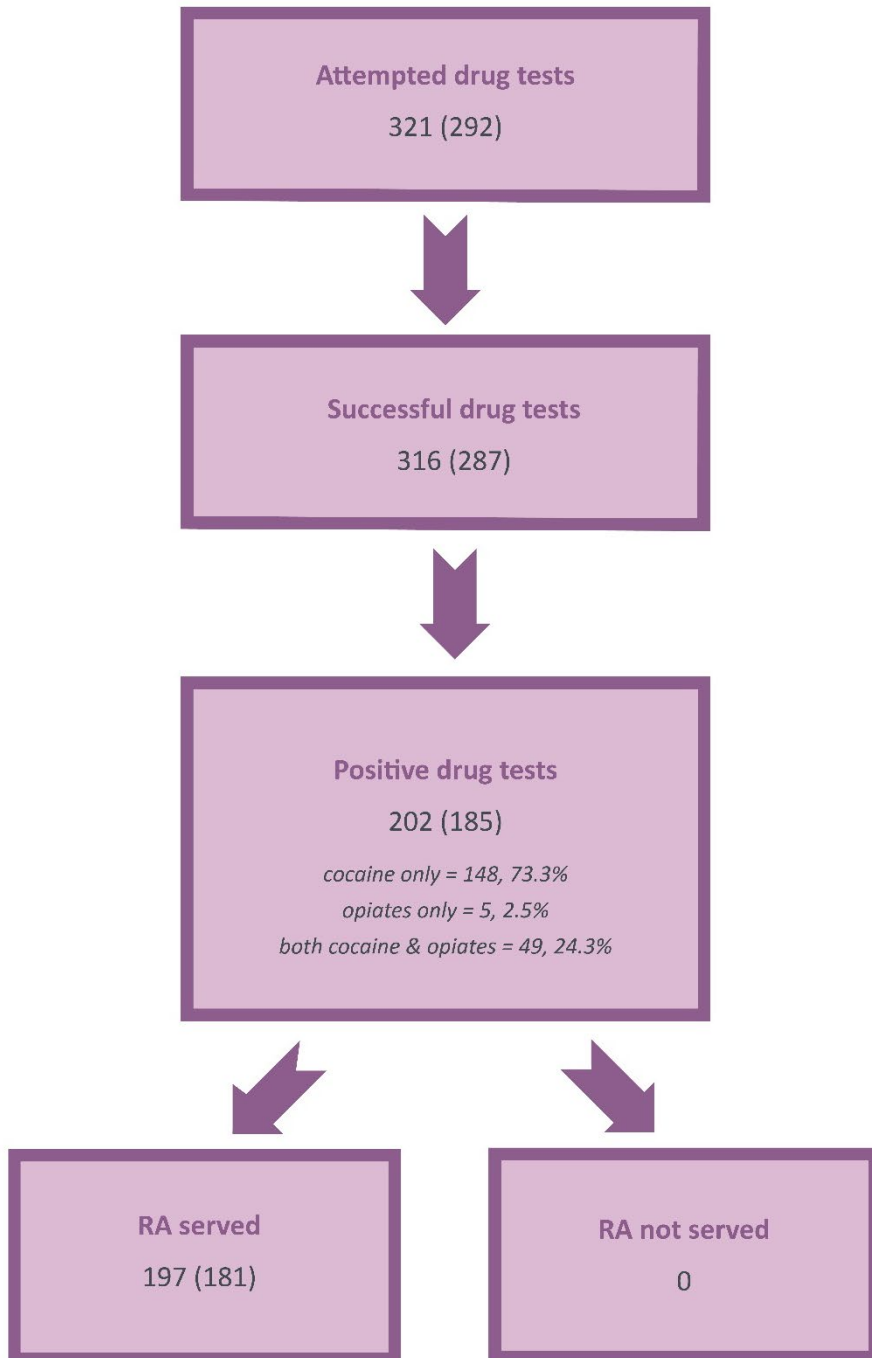
*Figure 17* shows the drug testing activity for Knowsley residents drug tested in Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2023. Of the 321 attempted drug tests, 316 were successful, and subsequently 202 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Just under three-quarters of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=148, 73.3%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 49, 24.3%; opiates only = 5, 2.5%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 197 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 181 individuals in the year ending March 2023.



**73%**  
of positive tests were cocaine only (powder/crack)

<sup>17</sup> Please bear in mind that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence may be affecting these trends.

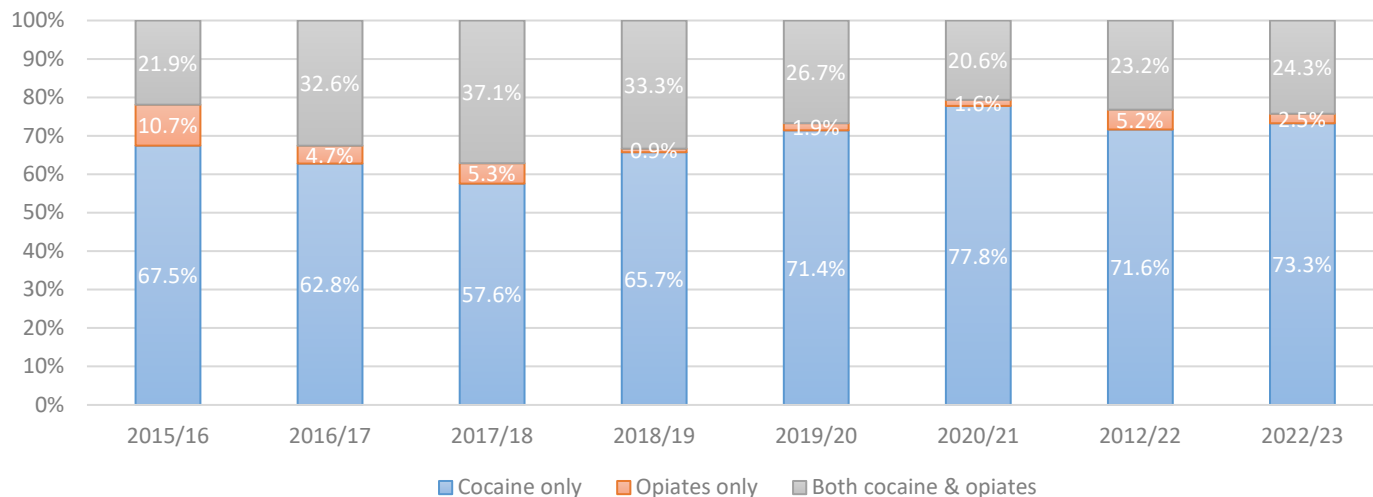
Figure 17: Drug testing activity, Knowsley residents, 2022/23



## 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*. The year ending March 2023 had the second largest proportion of cocaine only positive tests (73.3%), after the year ending March 2021 (77.8%). Notably, Knowsley had the largest proportions of cocaine only positive tests recorded of the five Merseyside areas in all eight years.

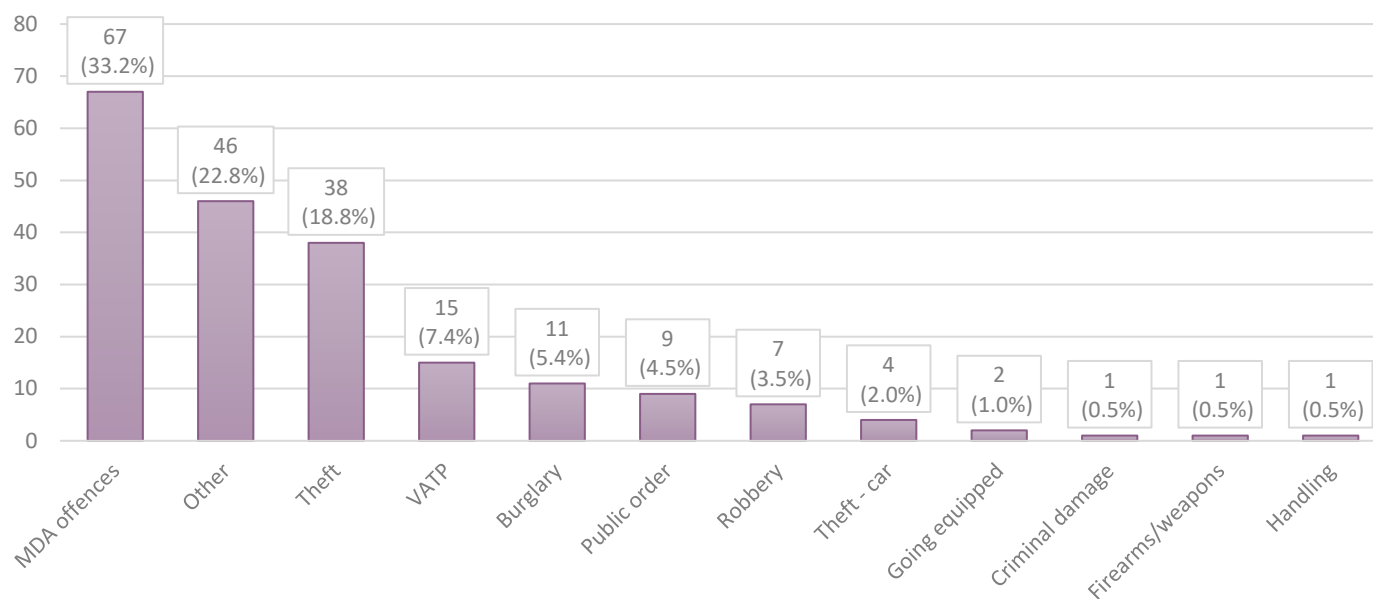
*Figure 18: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Knowsley residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23*



## OFFENCES

One-third of the positive drug test records for Knowsley residents in the year ending March 2023 reported MDA offences (n=67, 33.2%), while just under one-quarter were other offences (n=46, 22.8%) and around one-fifth were theft (n=38, 18.8%) (*Figure 19*). When compared to the other Merseyside areas, Knowsley had the smallest proportion of theft and the largest proportion of other offences.

*Figure 19: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Knowsley residents, 2022/23<sup>18</sup>*

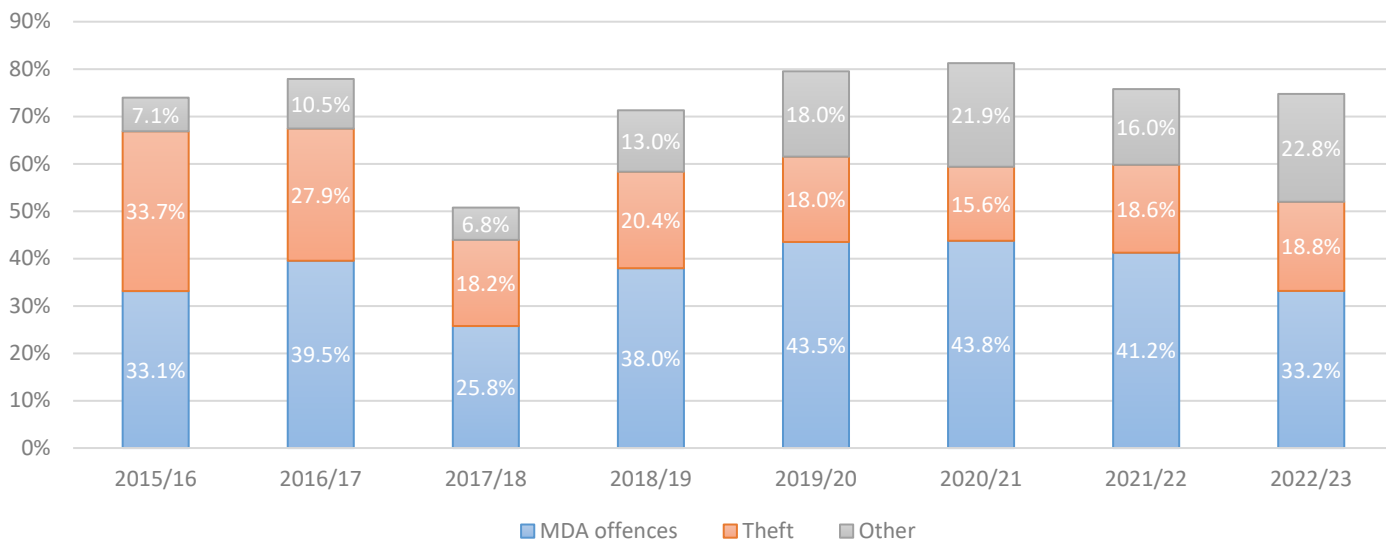


<sup>18</sup> Other offences: other non-trigger offences = 23, other motoring offences = 22, making off without payment = 1.

Of the 67 MDA offences recorded for Knowsley residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2023, around nine in ten (91.0%) were possession. Just under three in five of all MDA offences were possession with intent to supply Class A drugs (n=38, 56.7%), and around a third were possession of specified Class A drugs (n=23, 34.3%).

Overall, there have been some changes in the trends of MDA offences, theft and other offences (Figure 20). The proportions of MDA offences and theft fluctuated, though they are somewhat lower for theft from 2017/18 onwards. Notably, the proportion of other offences is at its largest in the year ending March 2023 and above the proportion of theft.

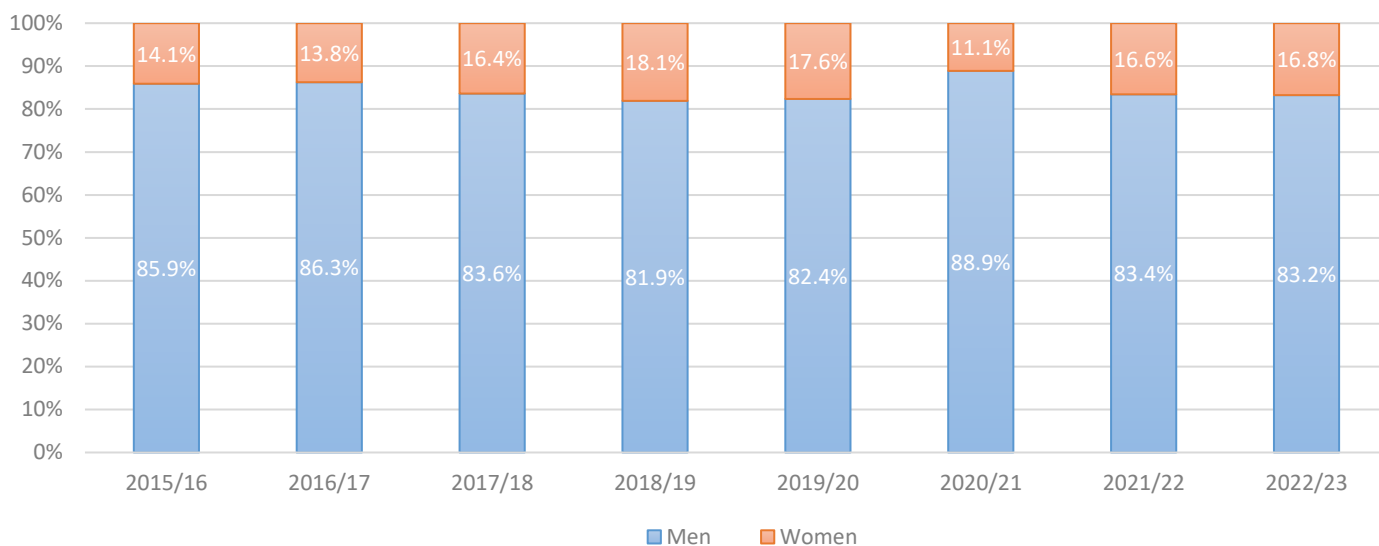
Figure 20: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offences (MDA, theft & other), Knowsley residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23



## DEMOGRAPHICS

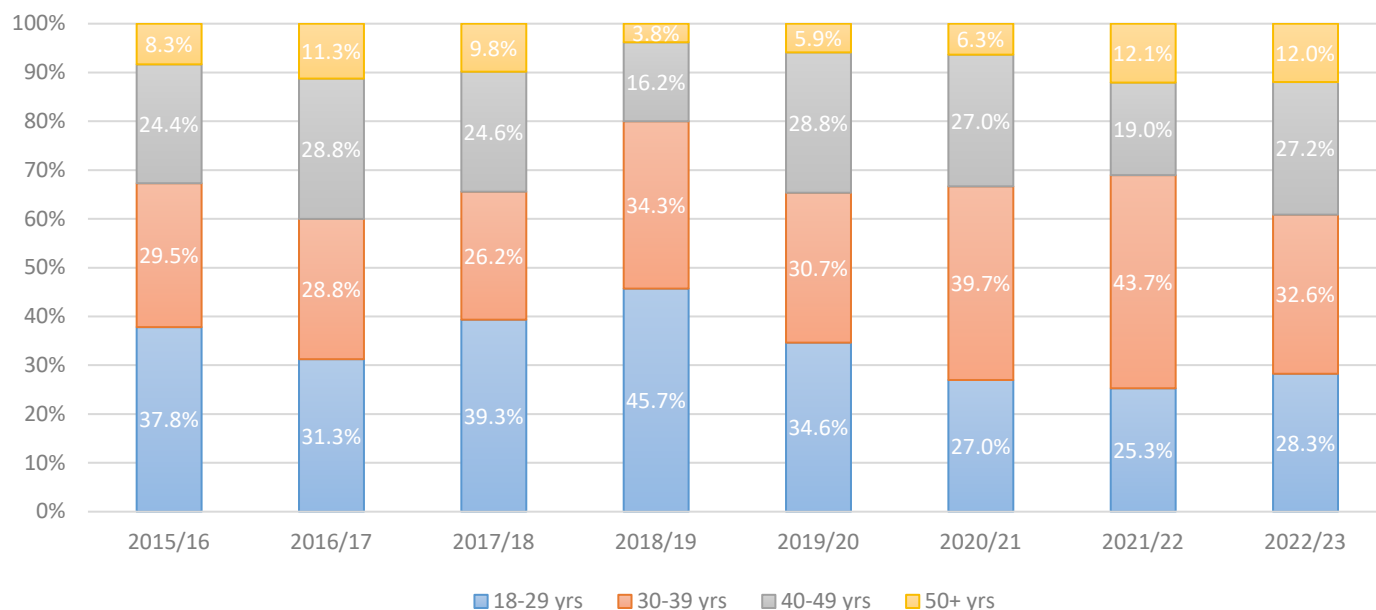
Men accounted for just over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2023 (n=154, 83.2%), which is just below the eight-year average (84.4%; Figure 21), and similar to the total figure for all Merseyside residents (84.1%).

Figure 21: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, Knowsley residents (individuals), 2015/16 - 2022/23



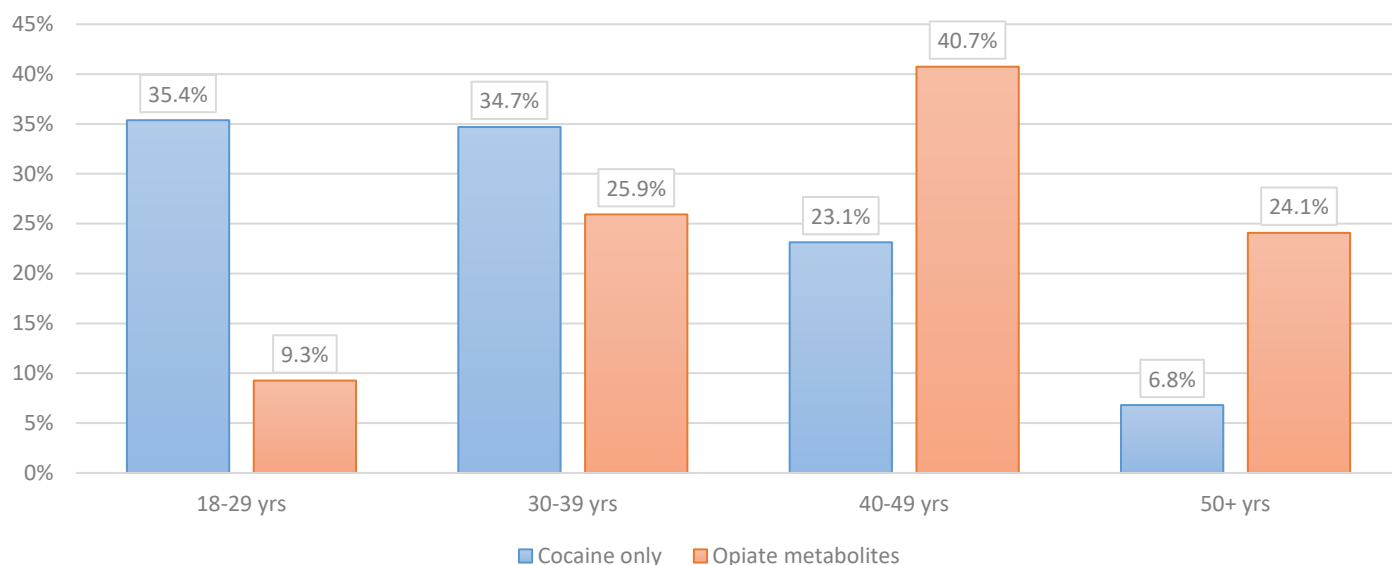
The median age of Knowsley residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2023 was 36 years (men = 34, women = 42). Around one-third of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2023 were aged 30-39 years (n=60, 32.6%), followed by individuals aged 18-29 years (n=52, 28.3%), 40-49 years (n=50, 27.2%) and 50 years or over (n=22, 12.0%; *Figure 22*). When compared to the other Merseyside areas, Knowsley (and St Helens) had the largest proportion of 18-29 year olds.

*Figure 22: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Knowsley residents (individuals), 2015/16 - 2022/23*<sup>19</sup>



In the year ending March 2023, clients who tested positive for cocaine only were generally younger, while those who tested positive for opiate metabolites were generally older (*Figure 23*). Seven in ten (70.1%) of those testing positive for cocaine only were aged 18-39 years, compared to 29.9% aged 40 years or over. While for those who tested positive for opiate metabolites, just under two-thirds (64.8%) were aged 40 years or over (peaking in the 40-49 age category; 40.7%), compared to 35.2% aged 18-39 years.

*Figure 23: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Knowsley residents, 2022/23*



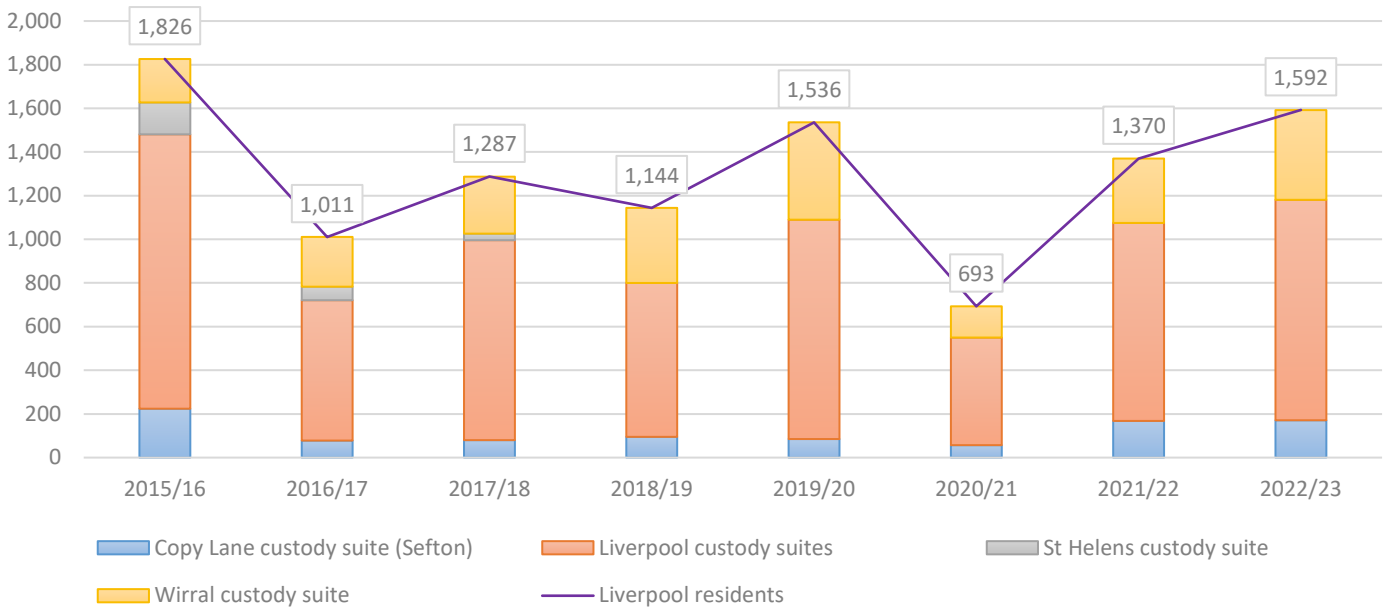
<sup>19</sup> There was one record that did not have a date of birth recorded.

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2023, there were 1,592 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Liverpool residents across Merseyside Police’s custody suites, representing just under half (46.0%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is a 16.2% increase on the 1,370 attempted tests in the previous year and the highest number of tests since the year ending March 2016 (n=1,826; *Figure 24*)<sup>20</sup>, when targeted testing was implemented in the custody suites.

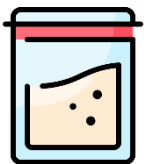
On average, around two-thirds (66.4%) of the attempted drug tests on Liverpool residents were carried out at a Liverpool custody suite during the eight-year period, followed by just under one-quarter (22.6%) at Wirral custody suite (*Figure 24*).

Figure 24: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Liverpool residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23 <sup>21</sup>



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 2023. Of the 1,592 attempted drug tests, 1,561 were successful, and subsequently 1,032 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Over half of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=571, 55.4%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 415, 40.3%; opiates only = 44, 4.3%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 1,006 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 843 individuals in the year ending March 2023.

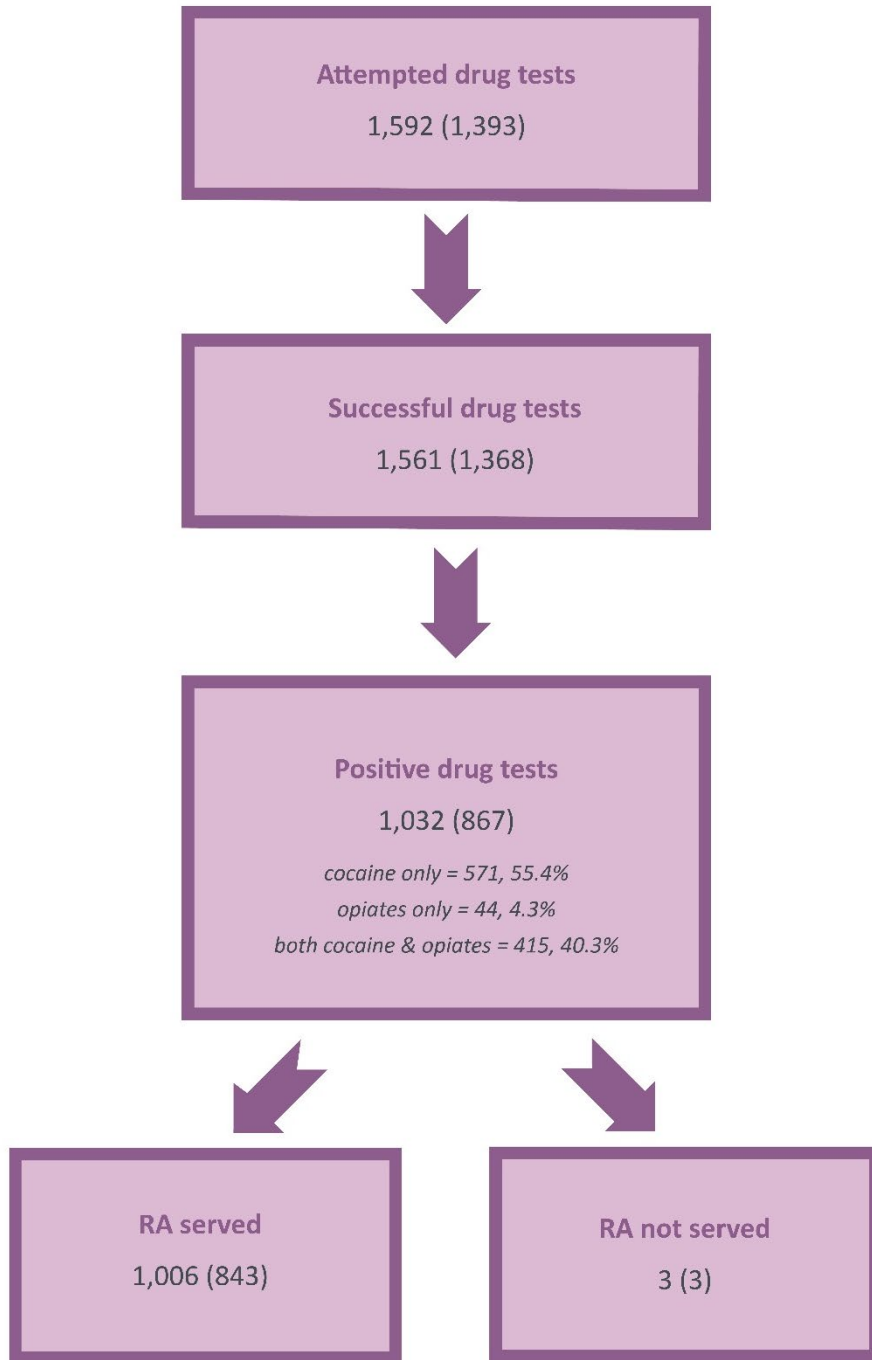


**55%**  
of positive tests were cocaine only (powder/crack)

<sup>20</sup> Please bear in mind that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence may be affecting these trends.

<sup>21</sup> Liverpool custody suites include Belle Vale, St Anne Street and Wavertree.

Figure 25: Drug testing activity, Liverpool residents, 2022/23 <sup>22</sup>



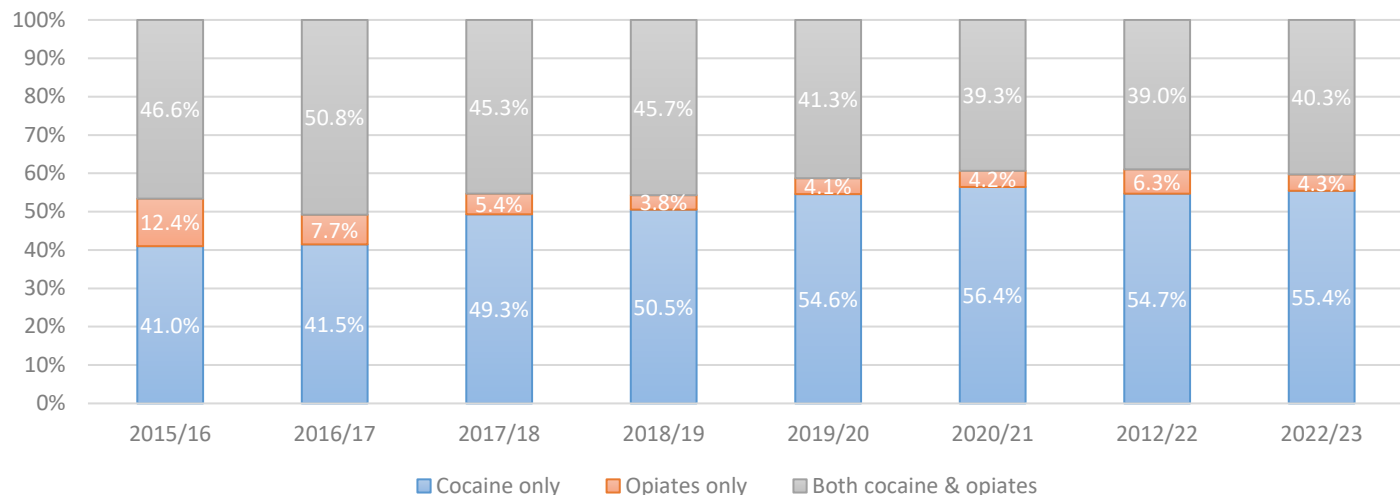
<sup>22</sup> There were two positive drug test records that did not indicate the drug(s) detected.



## POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

Between 2015/16 and 2017/18, there were larger proportions of opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates) than cocaine only for Liverpool residents, while they were similar in 2018/19. However, since 2019/20, there have been larger proportions of cocaine only than opiate metabolites (Figure 26). The year ending March 2023 had the second largest proportion of cocaine only positive tests (55.4%), after the year ending March 2021 (56.4%), and is the same as the total figure for all Merseyside residents (55.0%).

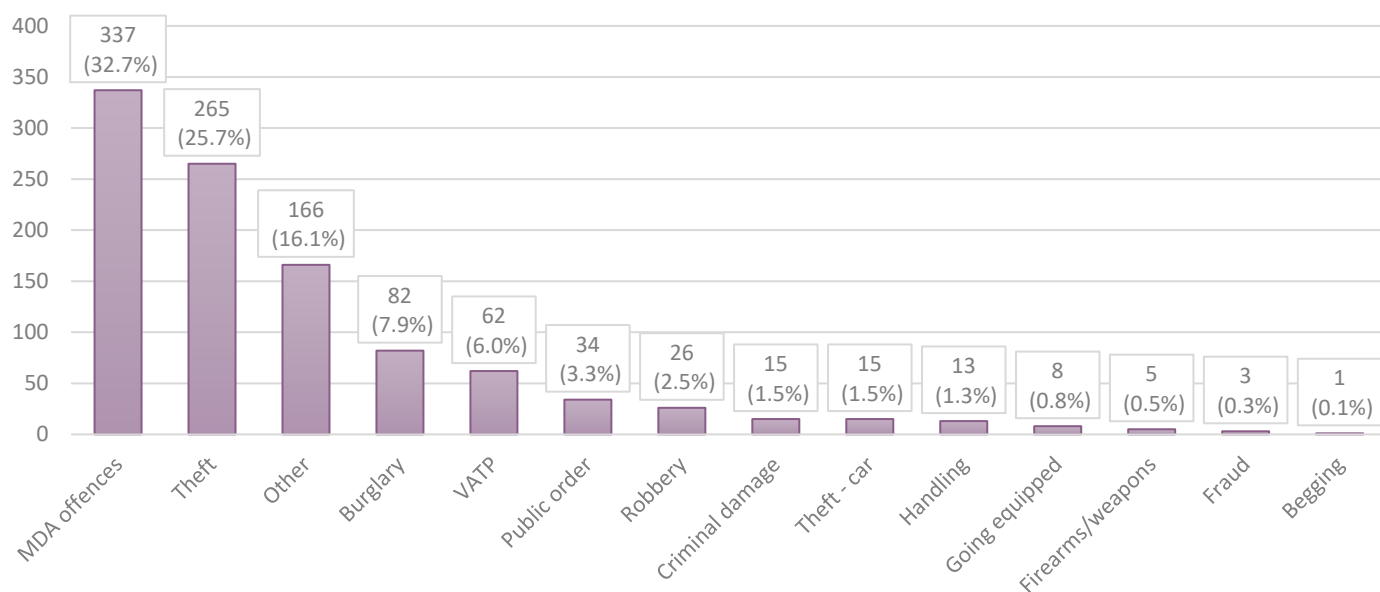
Figure 26: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Liverpool residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23



## OFFENCES

Around one-third of the positive drug test records for Liverpool residents in the year ending March 2023 reported MDA offences (n=337, 32.7%), while around one-quarter were theft (n=265, 25.7%) and around one in six were other offences (n=166, 16.1%) (Figure 27). These proportions are similar to the figures for all Merseyside residents (34.7%, 24.4% and 16.8% respectively).

Figure 27: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Liverpool residents, 2022/23 <sup>23</sup>

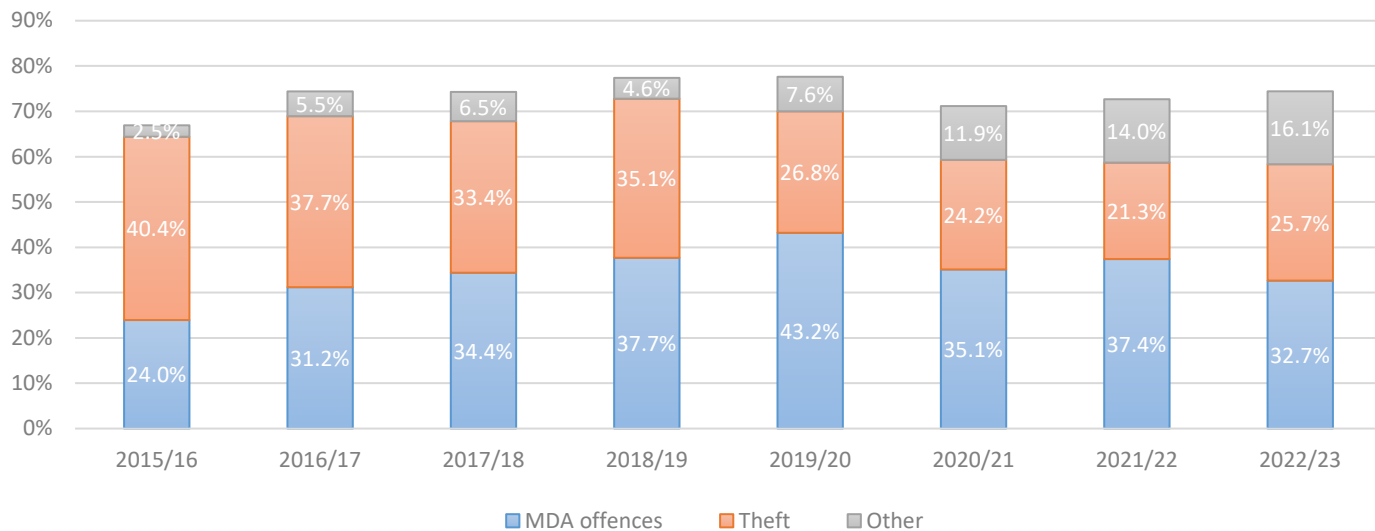


<sup>23</sup> Other offences: other non-trigger offences = 115, other motoring offences = 49, tampering with a motor vehicle = 2.

Of the 337 MDA offences recorded for Liverpool residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2023, just over nine in ten (92.6%) were possession. Around half of all MDA offences were possession with intent to supply Class A drugs (n=166, 49.3%), while just over two in five were possession of specified Class A drugs (n=146, 43.3%).

Notably, there have been some changes in the trends of MDA offences, theft and other offences (Figure 28). The proportion of MDA offences increased year-on-year peaking at 43.2% in 2019/20, though proportions have fluctuated since, with the proportion in 2022/23 (32.7%) the smallest since 2016/17 (31.2%). Proportions of theft also fluctuated, though were noticeably larger between 2015/16 and 2018/19 than in subsequent years. Notably, the proportion of other offences has increased year-on-year since 2018/19, peaking at 16.1% in the year ending March 2023.

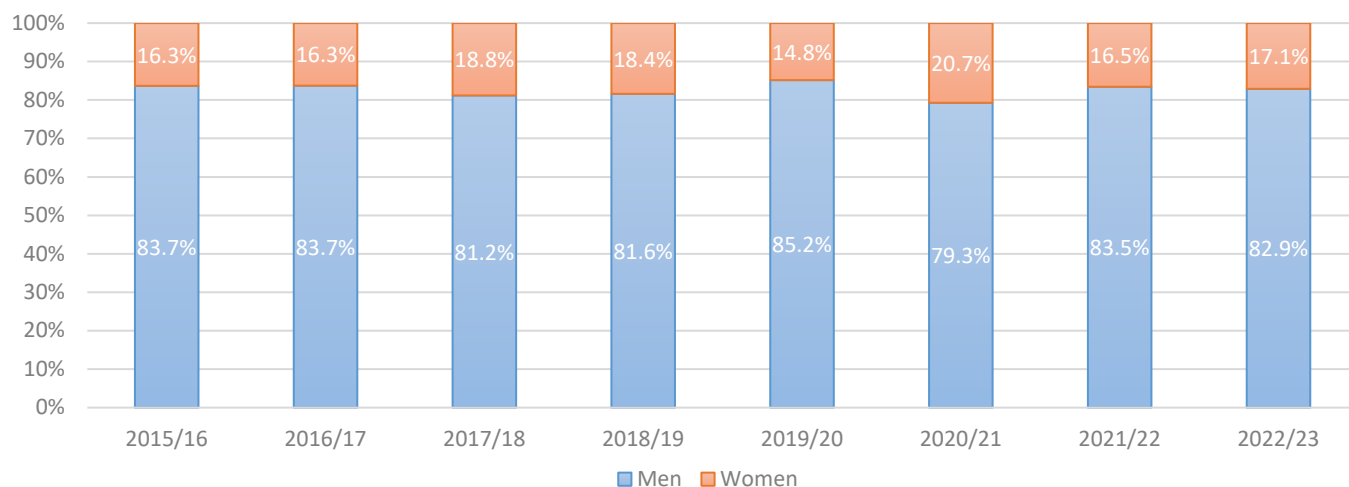
Figure 28: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offences (MDA, theft & other), Liverpool residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23



## DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2023 (n=718, 82.9%), which is similar to the previous twelve months (83.5%; Figure 29), and the smallest proportion of men testing positive of the five Merseyside areas.

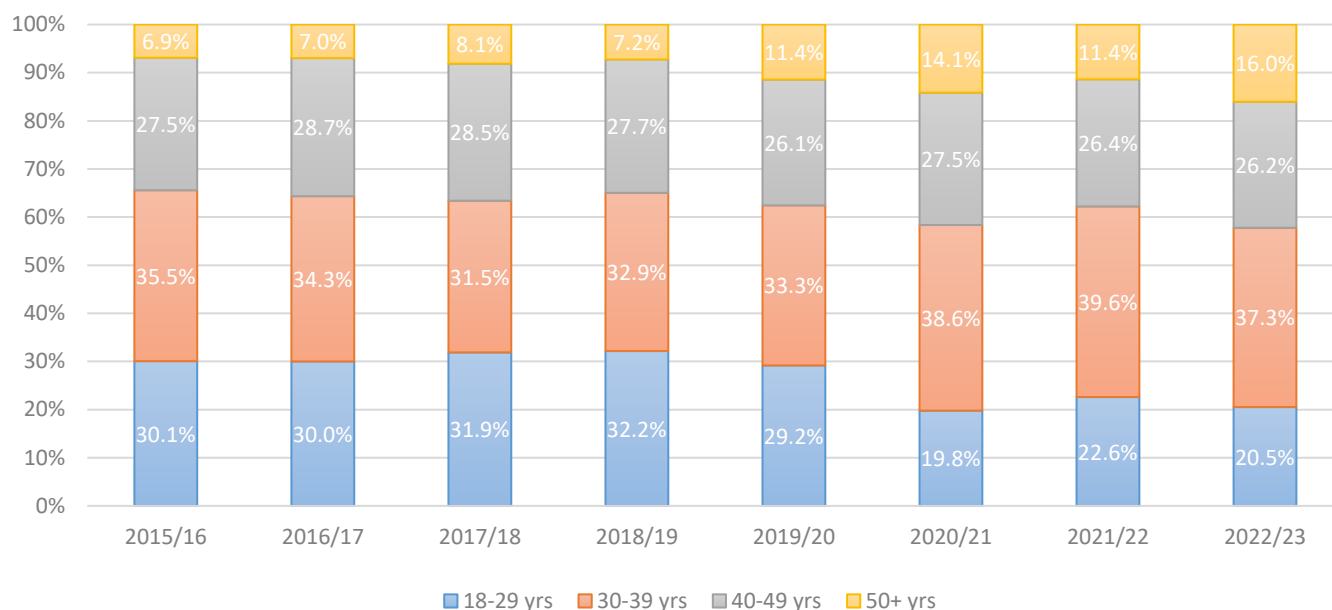
Figure 29: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, Liverpool residents (individuals), 2015/16 - 2022/23 <sup>24</sup>



<sup>24</sup> There was one record that did not have a gender recorded.

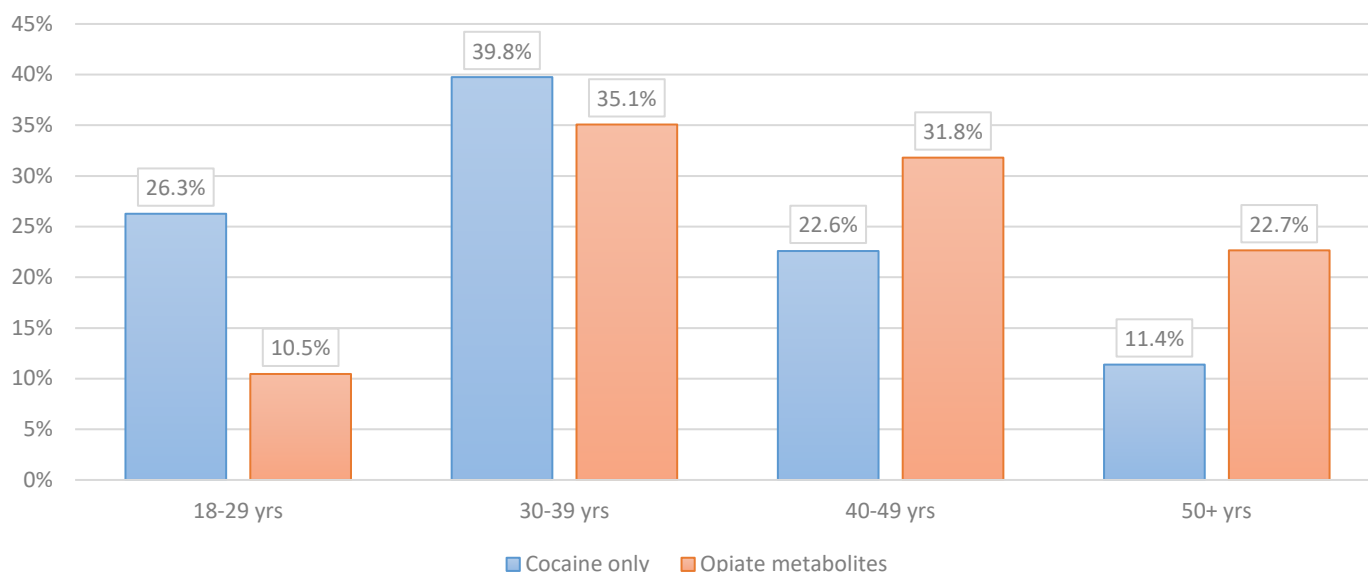
The median age of Liverpool residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2023 was 38 years (38 years for both men and women), which is a slight increase on the year ending March 2022 (36 years). Just under two in five of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2023 were aged 30-39 years (n=323, 37.3%), followed by around one-quarter aged 40-49 years (n=227, 26.2%), around one in five aged 18-29 years (n=178, 20.5%) and around one in six aged 50 years or over (n=139, 16.0%; *Figure 30*). Notably, during the eight-year period, 2022/23 had the second smallest proportion of individuals aged 18-29 years (and the smallest proportion when compared to the other Merseyside areas) and the largest proportion aged 50 years or over.

*Figure 30: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Liverpool residents (individuals), 2015/15 - 2022/23*



In the year ending March 2023, clients who tested positive for cocaine only were generally younger, while those who tested positive for opiate metabolites were generally older (*Figure 31*). Around two in three (66.0%) of those testing positive for cocaine only were aged 18-39 years, compared to 34.0% aged 40 years or over. While for those who tested positive for opiate metabolites, over half (54.5%) were aged 40 years or over, compared to 45.5% aged 18-39 years.

*Figure 31: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Liverpool residents, 2022/23*

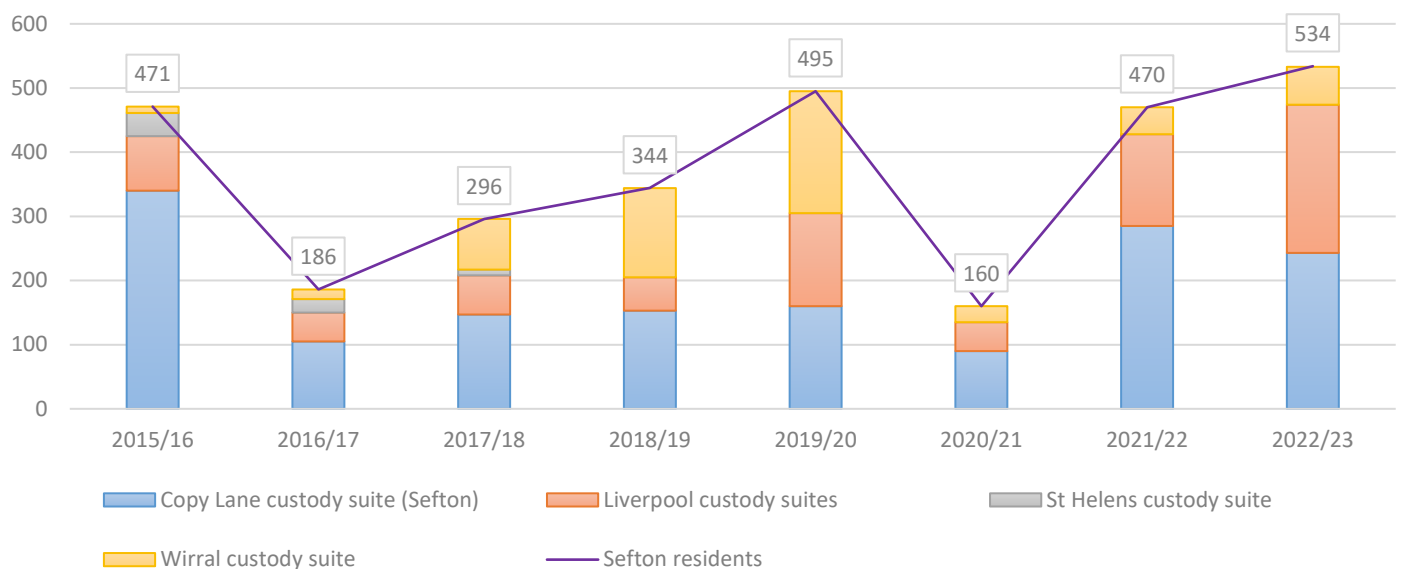


OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2023, there were 534 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 13.6% increase on the 470 attempted tests in the previous year and the highest number of tests of the eight years shown in *Figure 32*<sup>25</sup>.

On average, just over half (52.2%) 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 around one in four (26.1%) at a Liverpool custody suite and around one in five (18.9%) at Wirral custody suite (*Figure 32*).

Figure 32: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Sefton residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

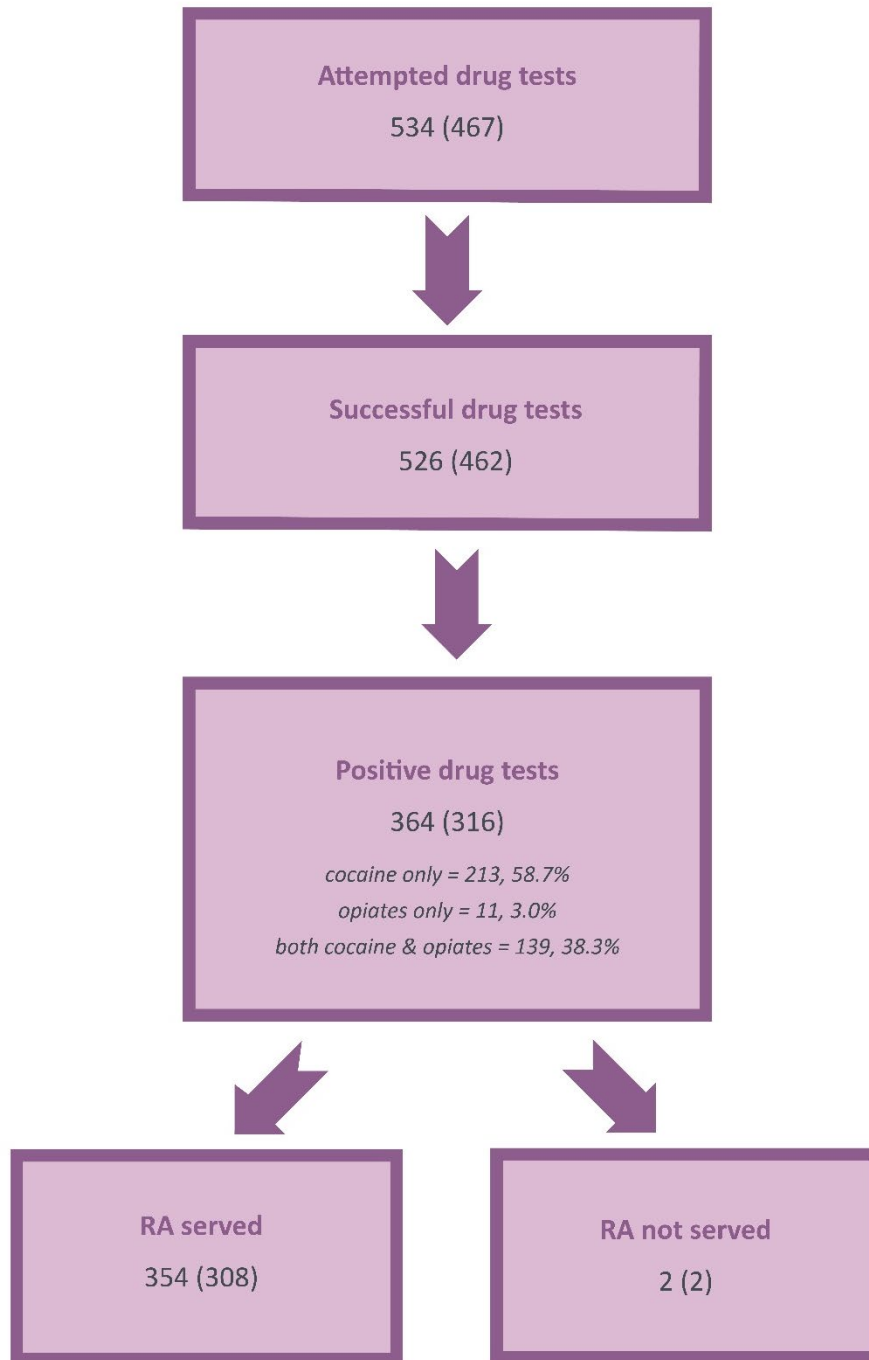
Figure 33 shows the drug testing activity for Sefton residents drug tested in Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2023. Of the 534 attempted drug tests, 526 were successful, and subsequently 364 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Around three in five of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=213, 58.7%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 139, 38.3%; opiates only = 11, 3.0%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 354 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 308 individuals in the year ending March 2023.



**59%**  
of positive tests were cocaine only (powder/crack)

<sup>25</sup> Please bear in mind that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence may be affecting these trends.

Figure 33: Drug testing activity, Sefton residents, 2022/23 <sup>26</sup>

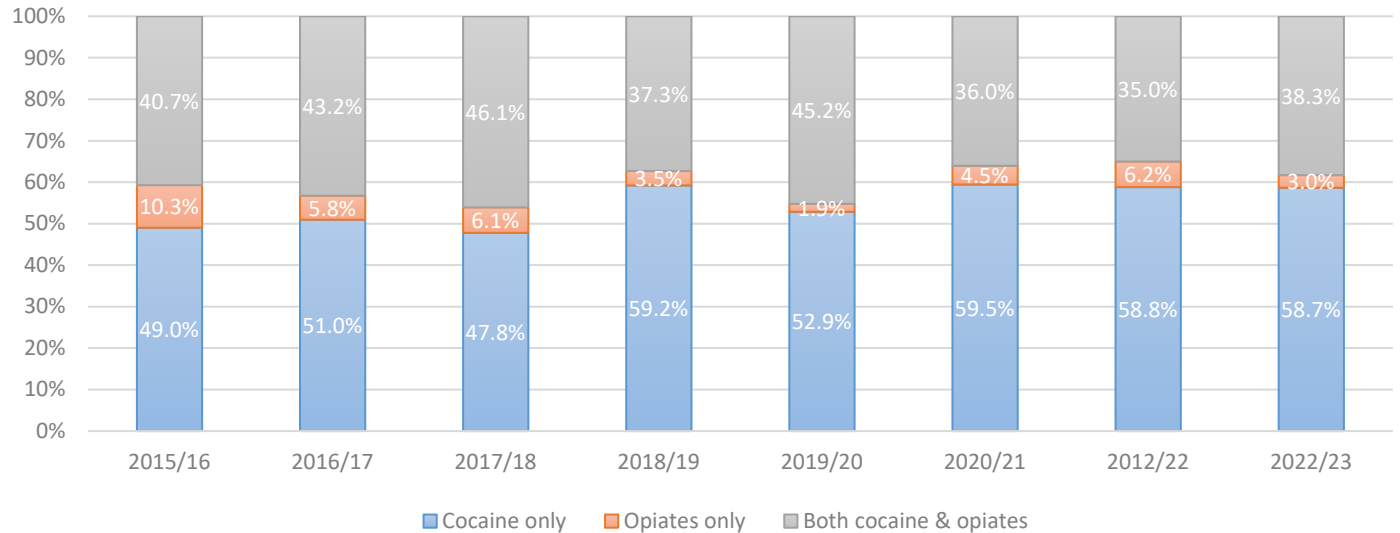


<sup>26</sup> There was one positive drug test record that did not indicate the drug(s) detected.

## 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 year ending March 2023 had the second smallest proportion of positive tests for opiates only (3.0%), after the year ending March 2020 (1.9%), and the second largest proportion of cocaine only positive tests of the five Merseyside areas.

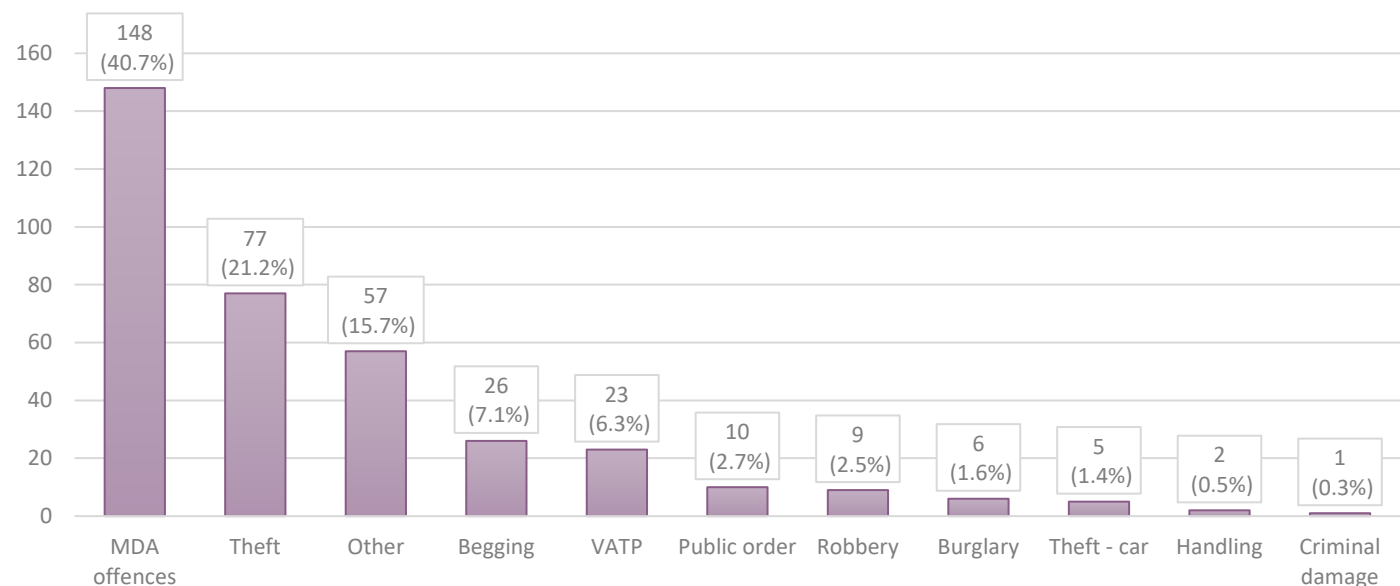
Figure 34: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Sefton residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23



## OFFENCES

Two in five positive drug test records for Sefton residents in the year ending March 2023 reported MDA offences (n=148, 40.7%), while around one in five were theft (n=77, 21.2%) and around one in six were other offences (n=57, 15.7%; Figure 35). Notably, Sefton had the largest proportion of MDA offences of the five Merseyside areas.

Figure 35: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Sefton residents, 2022/23 <sup>27</sup>

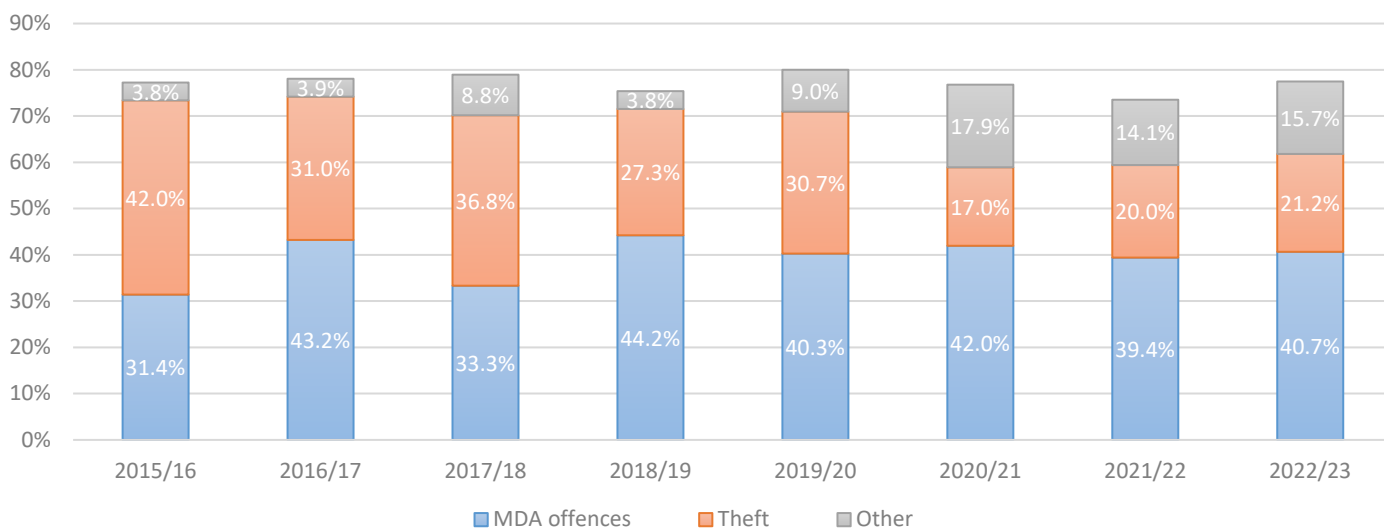


<sup>27</sup> Other offences: other non-trigger offences = 34, other motoring offences = 23.

Of the 148 MDA offences recorded for Sefton residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2023, over nine in ten (93.2%) were possession. Just under three in five of all MDA offences were possession with intent to supply Class A drugs (n=86, 58.1%), while just over one-third were possession of specified Class A drugs (n=52, 35.1%).

The proportions of MDA offences, theft and other offences have fluctuated during the eight-year period. In the year ending March 2023, the proportion of MDA offences (40.7%) is similar to the eight-year average (39.3%), while the proportion of theft (21.2%) is smaller than the average (28.2%) and the proportion of other offences (15.7%) is larger than the average (9.6%; *Figure 36*). Furthermore, the proportion of other offences in 2022/23 is the second largest of the eight years, after 2020/21 (17.9%).

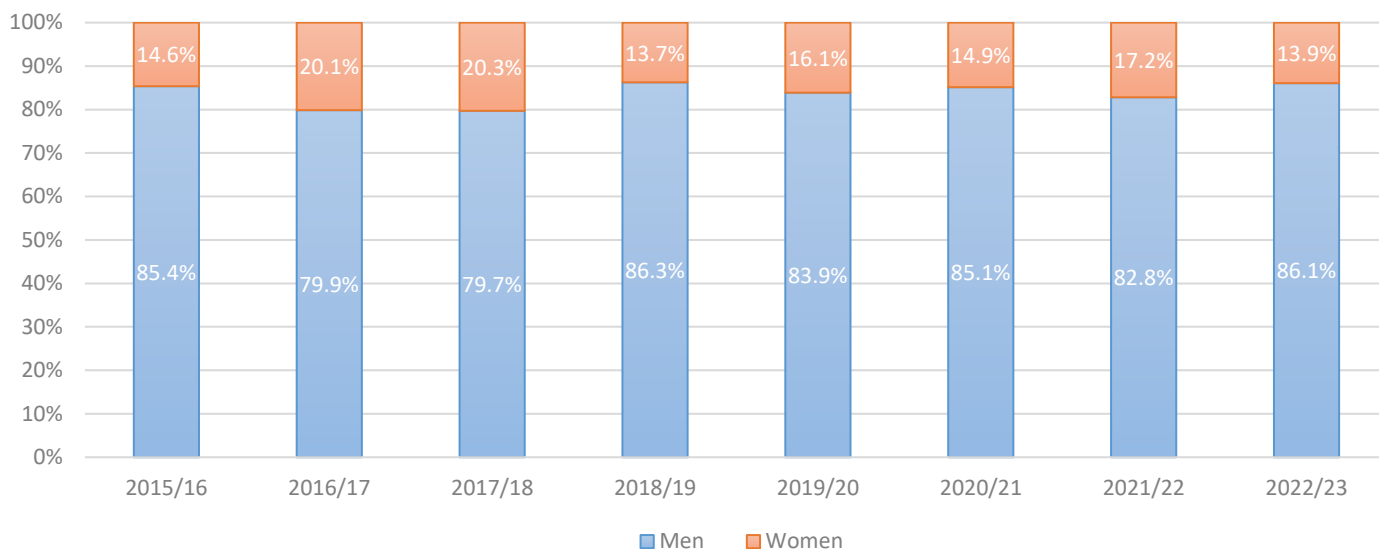
Figure 36: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offences (MDA, theft & other), Sefton residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23



## DEMOGRAPHICS

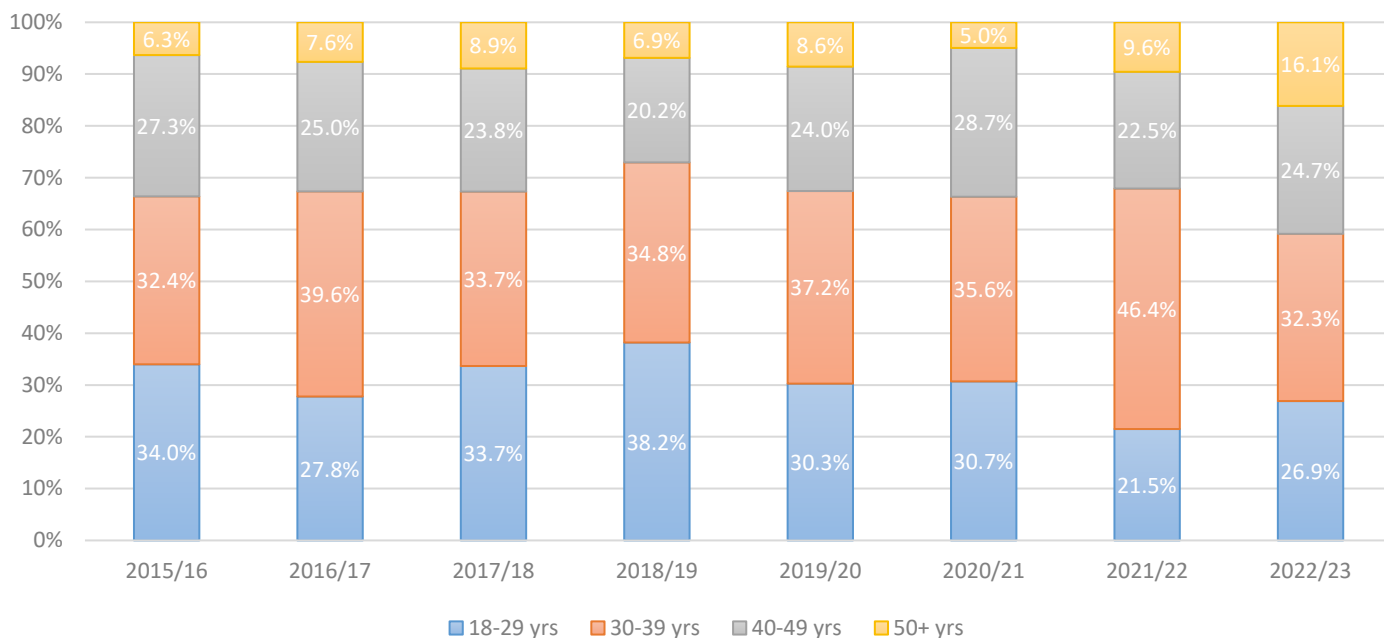
Men accounted for over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2023 (n=272, 86.1%), which is the second largest proportion of the eight-year period, after the year ending March 2018/19 (86.3%; *Figure 37*), and the largest proportion of the five Merseyside areas.

Figure 37: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, Sefton residents (individuals), 2015/16 - 2022/23



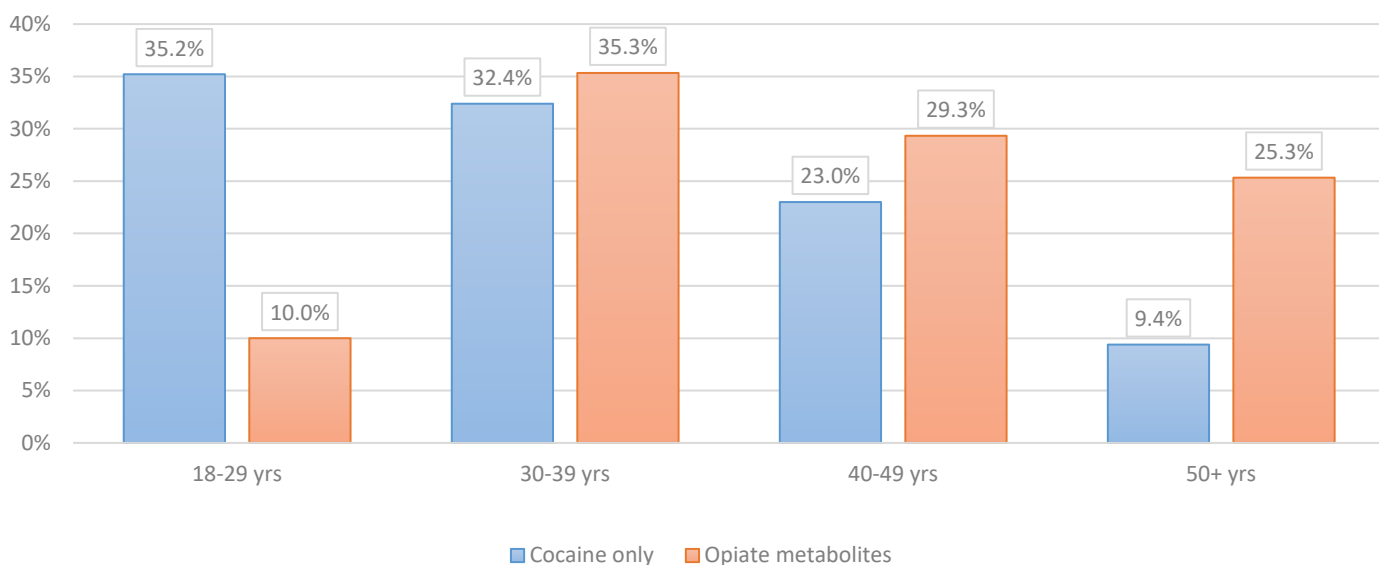
The median age of Sefton residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2023 was 36 years (men = 36, women = 41), which is similar to the year ending March 2022 (35 years). Around one-third of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2023 were aged 30-39 years (n=102, 32.3%), followed by individuals aged 18-29 years (n=85, 26.9%), 40-49 years (n=78, 24.7%) and 50 years or over (n=51, 16.1%; *Figure 38*). Notably, during the eight-year period, the latest year had the smallest proportion of individuals aged 30-39 years (and the smallest proportion when compared to the other Merseyside areas), the second smallest proportion aged 18-29 years and the largest proportion aged 50 years or over.

*Figure 38: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Sefton residents (individuals), 2015/16 - 2022/23*



In the year ending March 2023, of the clients who tested positive for cocaine only, over one-third were aged 18-29 years (35.2%), and then proportions decreased as age increased (*Figure 39*). Positive tests for opiate metabolites peaked in 30-39 years (35.3%), which is similar to those who tested positive for cocaine only (32.4%), though the difference increased as the age increased.

*Figure 39: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Sefton residents, 2022/23*



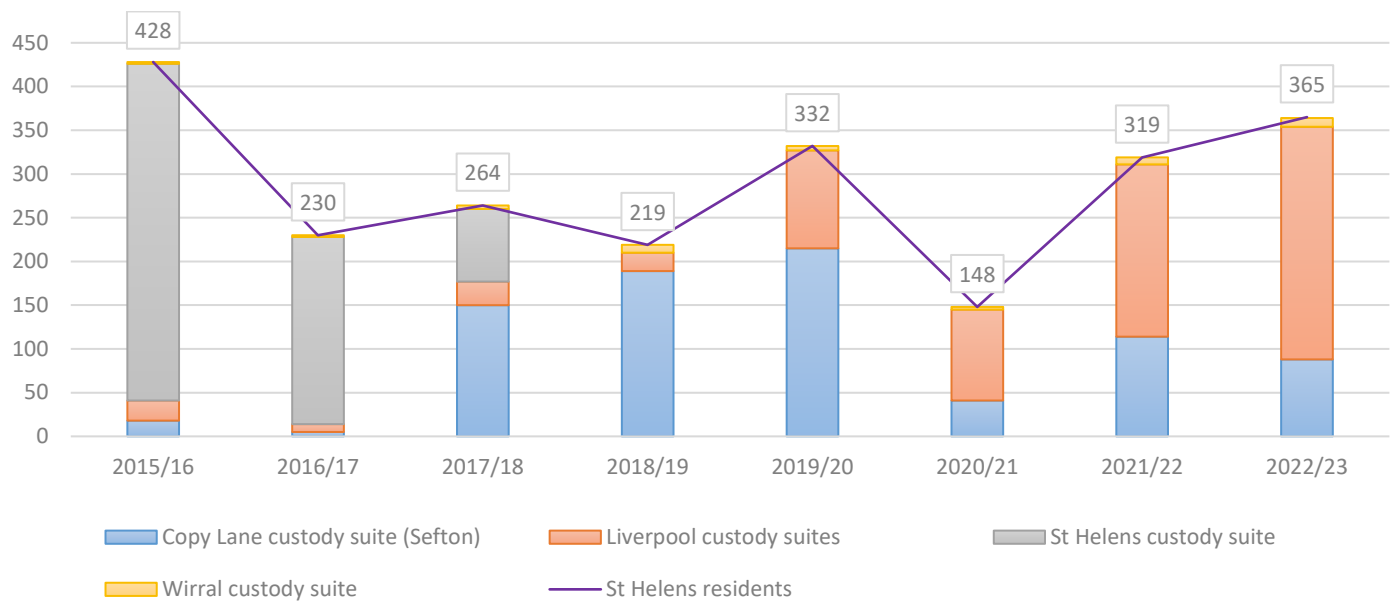


OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2023, there were 365 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on St Helens residents across Merseyside Police’s custody suites, representing one in ten (10.5%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is a 14.4% increase on the 319 attempted tests in the previous year and the highest number of tests since the year ending March 2016 (n=428; *Figure 40*)<sup>28</sup>, when targeted testing was implemented in the custody suites.

On average, just under two in five (37.7%) of the attempted drug tests on St Helens residents were carried out at Copy Lane custody suite in Sefton during the eight-year period, followed by one in three (33.5%) at a Liverpool custody suite (*Figure 40*). Notably, following the closure of St Helens custody suite in August 2017, initially the majority of drug tests were carried out at Copy Lane custody suite, then in more recent years it was a Liverpool custody suite.

Figure 40: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, St Helens residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

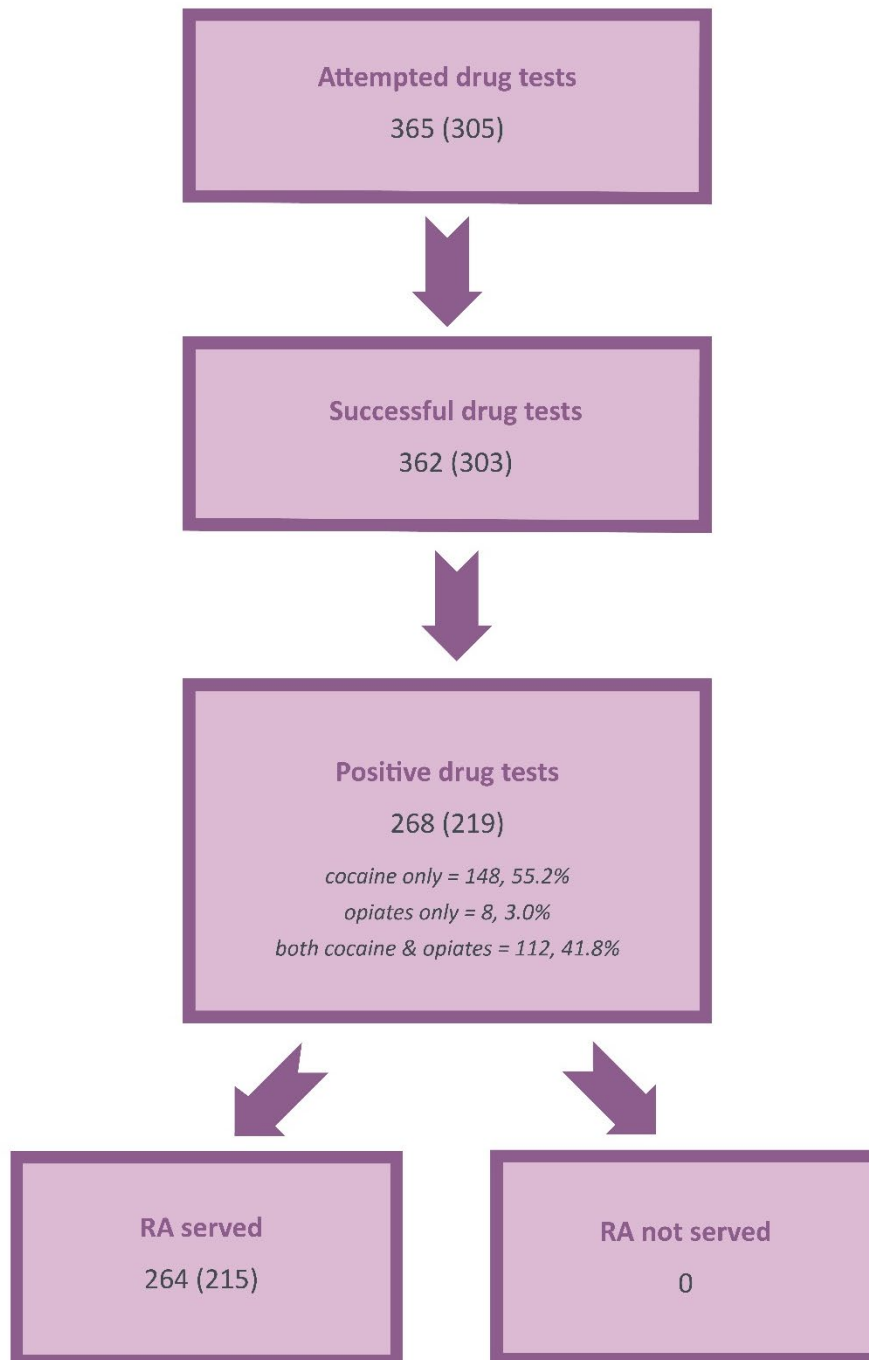
Figure 41 shows the drug testing activity for St Helens residents drug tested in Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2023. Of the 365 attempted drug tests, 362 were successful, and subsequently 268 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Over half of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=148, 55.2%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 112, 41.8%; opiates only = 8, 3.0%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 264 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 215 individuals in the year ending March 2023.



**55%**  
of positive tests were cocaine only (powder/crack)

<sup>28</sup> Please bear in mind that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence may be affecting these trends.

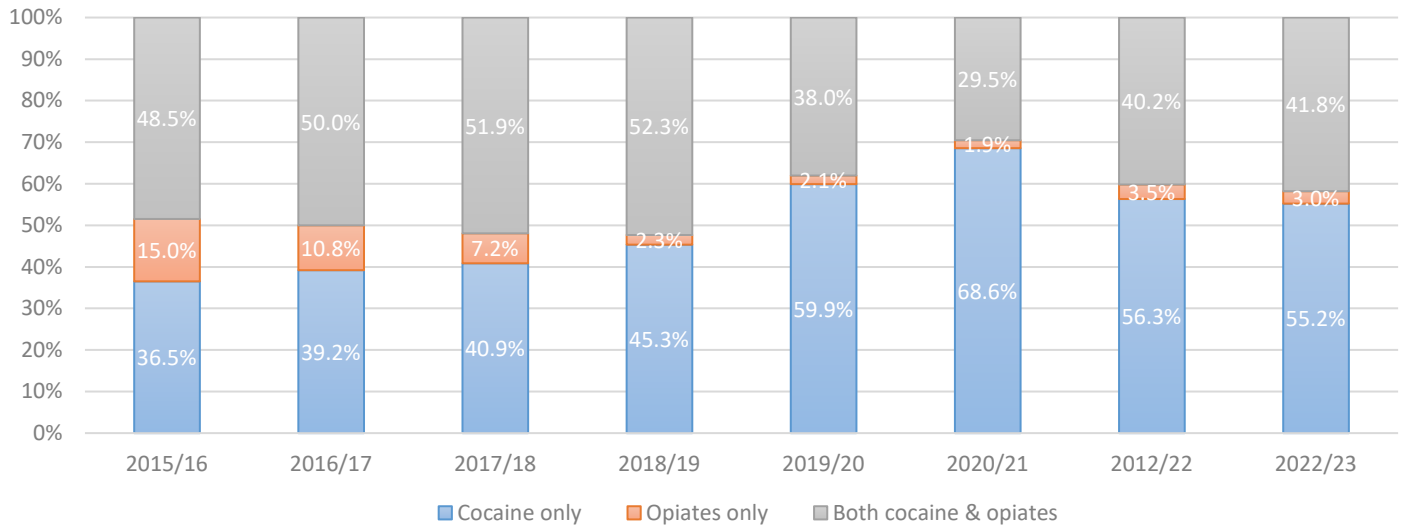
Figure 41: Drug testing activity, St Helens residents, 2022/23



## POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

Proportions of cocaine only positive tests increased year-on-year between 2015/16 and 2020/21, and even though they reduced in 2021/22 and again in 2022/23, they remained larger than the proportions of opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates); *Figure 42*). Furthermore, the proportion of cocaine only positive tests in the year ending March 2023 is the same as the total figure for all Merseyside residents (55.0%).

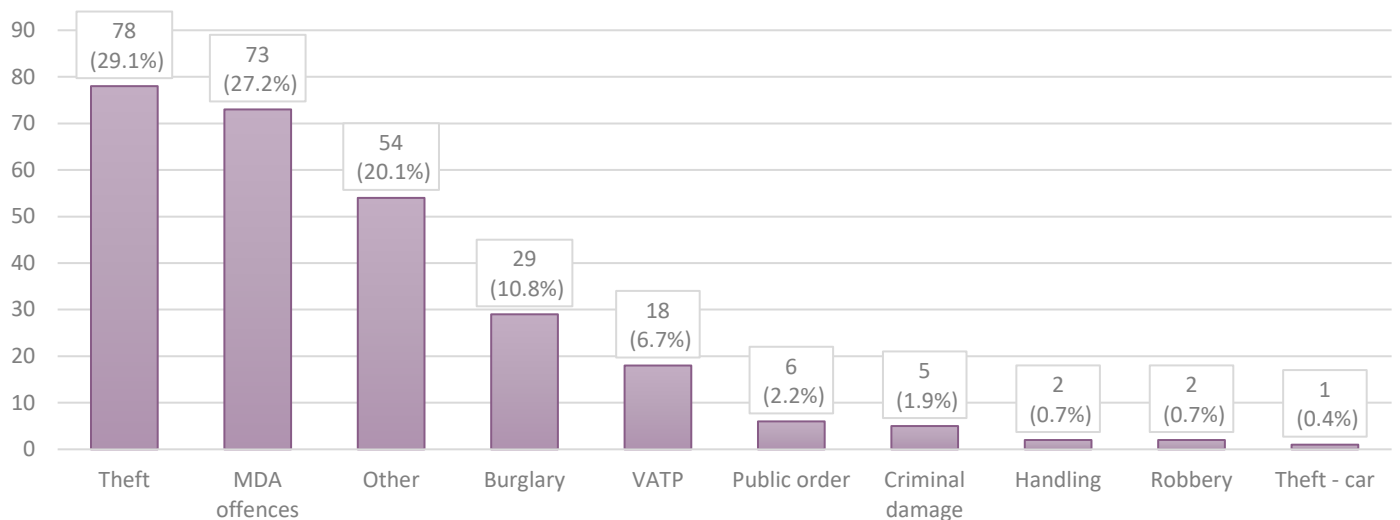
*Figure 42: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, St Helens residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23*



## OFFENCES

Around three in ten positive drug test records for St Helens residents in the year ending March 2023 reported theft (n=78, 29.1%), while just over one-quarter were MDA offences (n=73, 27.2%) and one in five were other offences (n=54, 20.1%; *Figure 43*). Notably, when compared to the other Merseyside areas, St Helens had the largest proportion of theft and the smallest proportion of MDA offences.

*Figure 43: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, St Helens residents, 2022/23* <sup>29</sup>

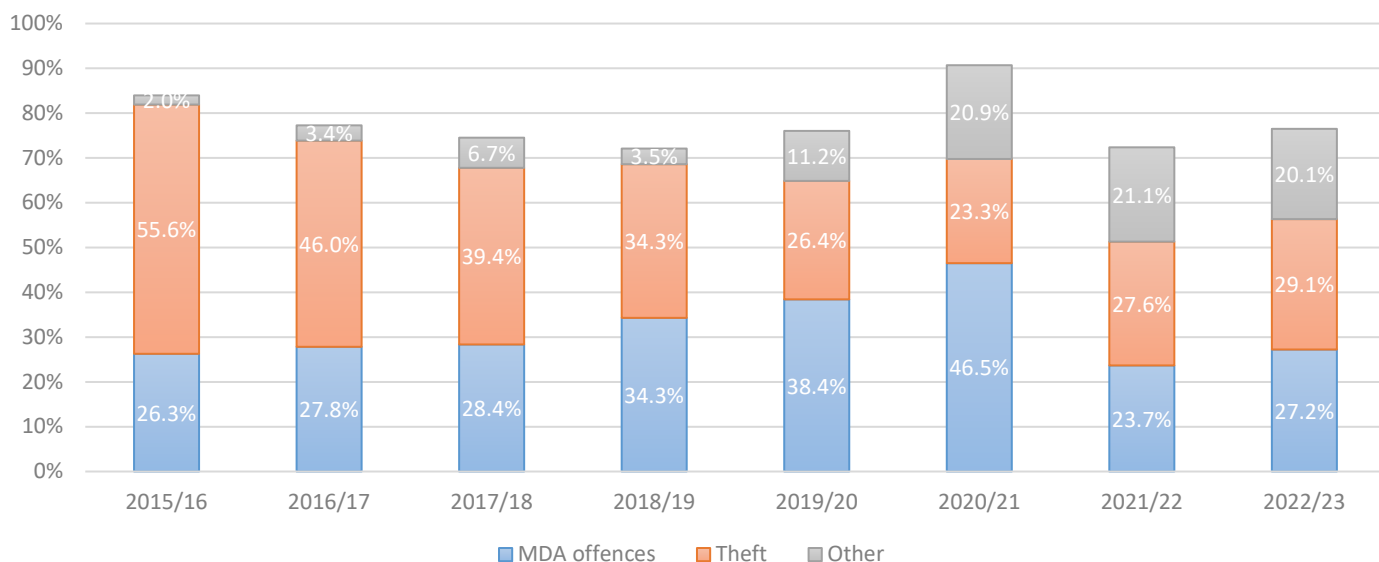


<sup>29</sup> Other offences: other non-trigger offences = 43, other motoring offences = 9, driving whilst disqualified = 1, tampering with a motor vehicle = 1.

Of the 73 MDA offences recorded for St Helens residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2023, all but two were possession (97.3%). Over half of all MDA offences were possession with intent to supply Class A drugs (n=39, 53.4%), while over two in five were possession of specified Class A drugs (n=32, 43.8%).

Overall, there have been some changes in the trends of MDA offences, theft and other offences (Figure 44). Between 2015/16 and 2020/21, proportions of MDA offences increased year-on-year, while proportions of theft decreased year-on-year. However, in 2021/22 and 2022/23, there has been a decrease in MDA offences and an increase in theft. Furthermore, there has been a notable increase in other offences in the three years ending March 2023.

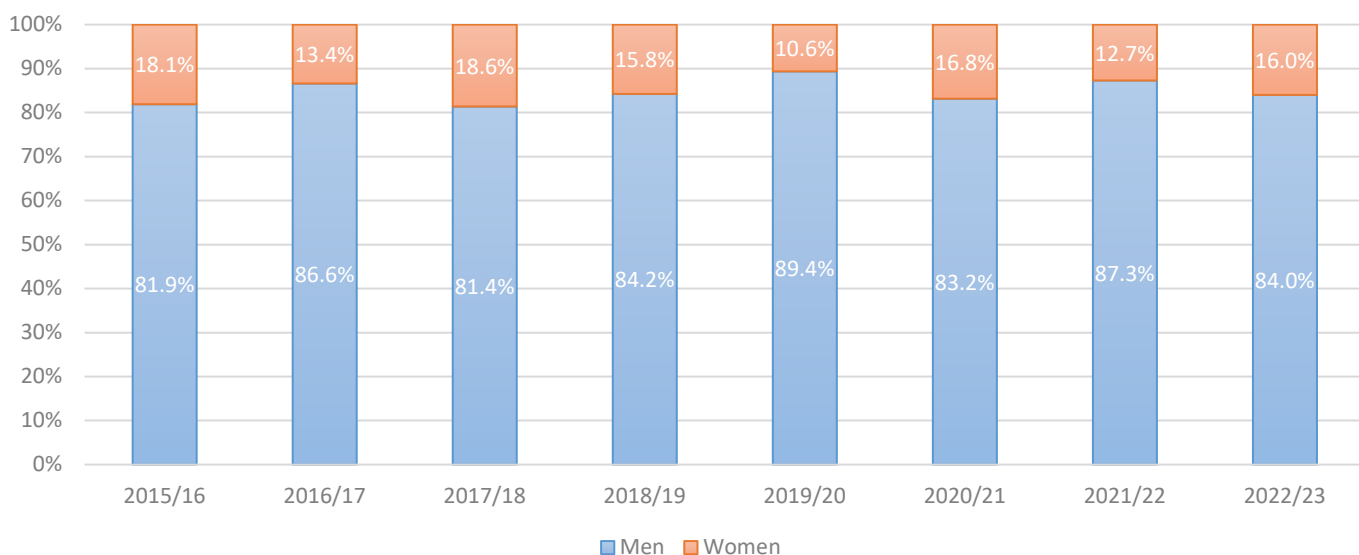
Figure 44: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offences (MDA, theft & other), St Helens residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23



## DEMOGRAPHICS

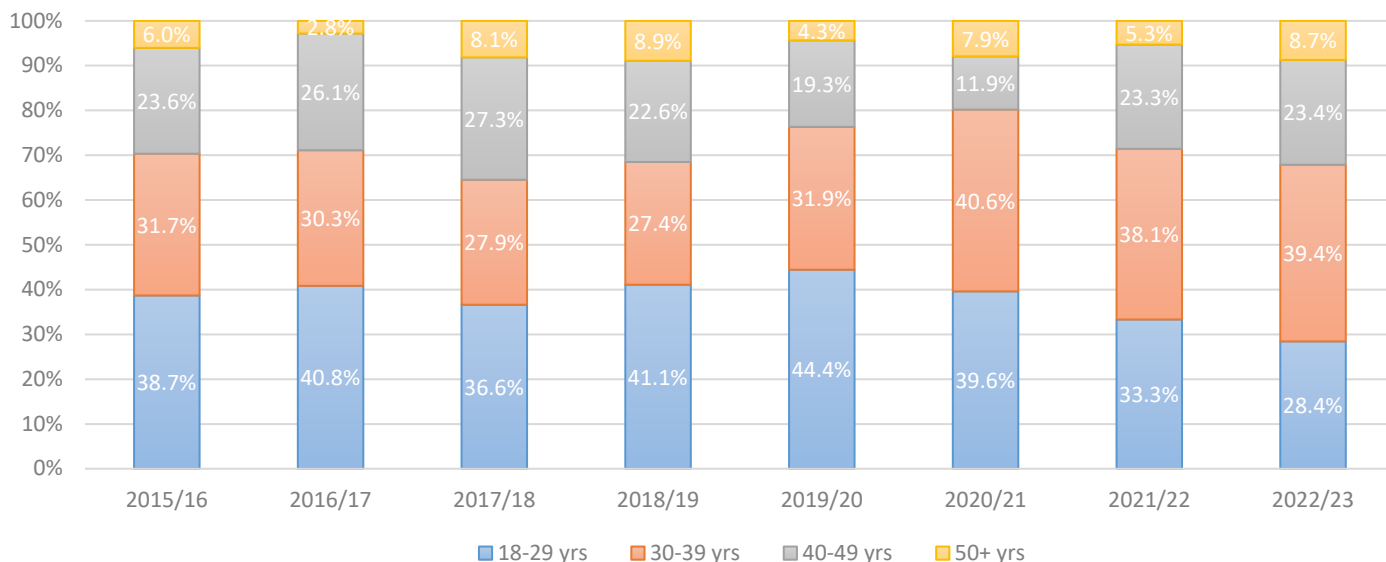
Men accounted for over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2023 (n=184, 84.0%), which is a decrease on the previous year (87.3%), though similar to the eight-year average (84.8%; Figure 45). The proportions in the year ending March 2023 are the same as the total figures for all Merseyside residents.

Figure 45: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, St Helens residents (individuals), 2015/16 - 2022/23



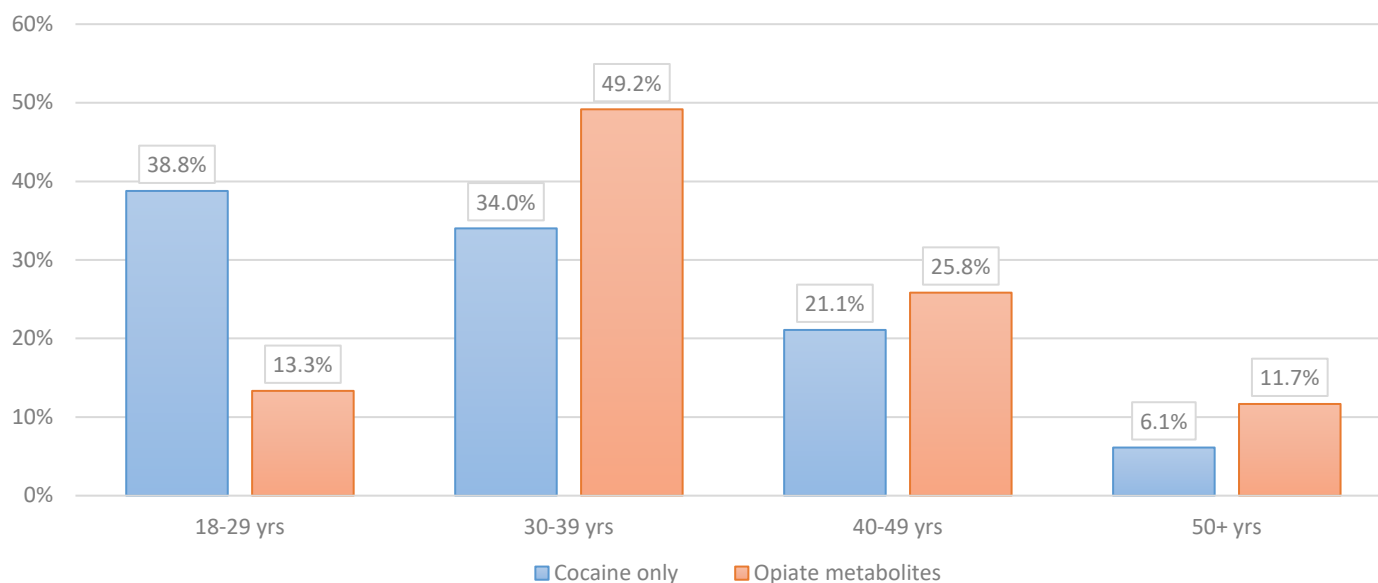
The median age of St Helens residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2023 was 35 years (men = 34, women = 36), which is similar to the year ending March 2022 (34 years). Around four in five of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2023 were aged 30-39 years (n=86, 39.4%), followed by individuals aged 18-29 years (n=62, 28.4%), 40-49 years (n=51, 23.4%) and 50 years or over (n=19, 8.7%; *Figure 46*). Notably, during the eight-year period, 2022/23 had the smallest proportion of individuals aged 18-29 years, and the second largest proportions aged 30-39 years and 50 years or over. When compared to the other Merseyside areas, St Helens had the largest proportions of 18-29 year olds (along with Knowsley) and 30-39 year olds, though the smallest proportions aged 40-49 years and 50 years or over.

*Figure 46: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, St Helens residents (individuals), 2015/16 - 2022/23*<sup>30</sup>



In the year ending March 2023, of the clients who tested positive for cocaine only, just under two in five were aged 18-29 years (38.8%), and then proportions decreased as age increased, while positive tests for opiate metabolites peaked in 30-39 years (49.2%; *Figure 47*).

*Figure 47: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, St Helens residents, 2022/23*



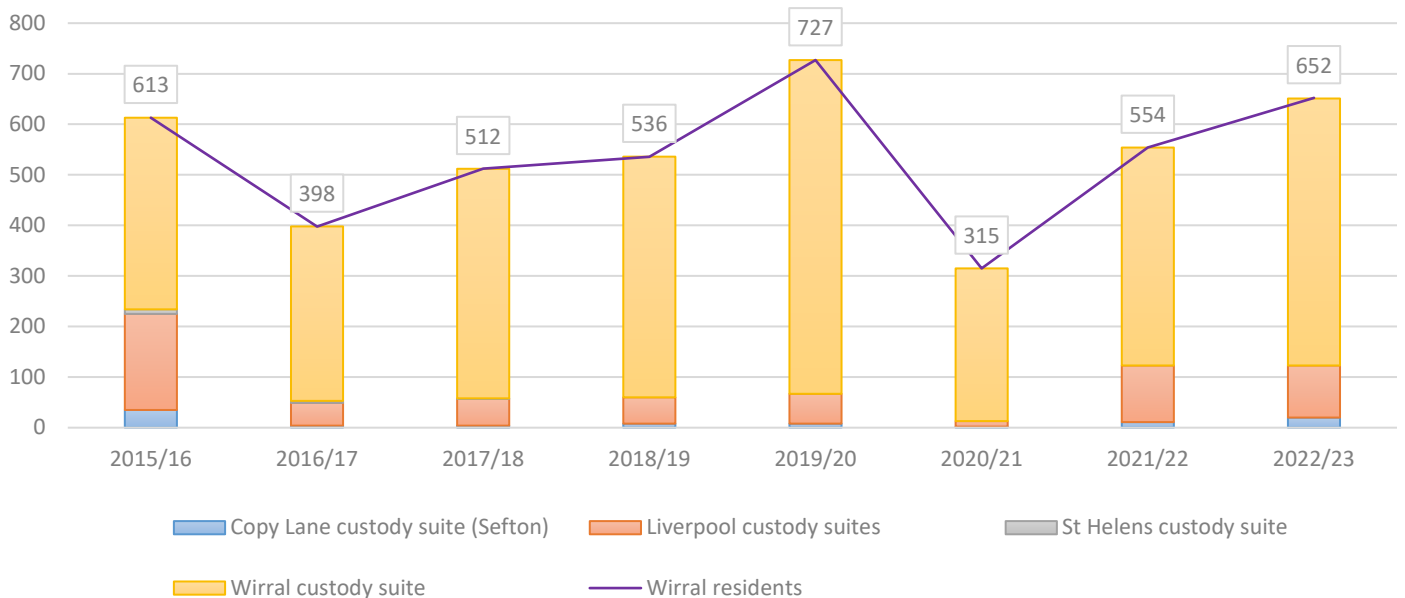
<sup>30</sup> There was one record that had an invalid date of birth recorded.

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2023, there were 652 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Wirral residents across Merseyside Police’s custody suites, representing around one in five (18.8%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is a 17.7% increase on the 554 attempted tests in the previous year and the second highest number of tests of the eight years shown in *Figure 48*, after the year ending March 2020 (n=727)<sup>31</sup>.

On average, the majority (83.9%) 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, 2015/16 - 2022/23



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 2023. Of the 652 attempted drug tests, 647 were successful, and subsequently 501 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Over half (56.1%) of the positive drug tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 262, 52.3%; opiates only = 19, 3.8%), while the remaining positive tests were cocaine only (n=220, 43.9%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 489 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 388 individuals in the year ending March 2023.

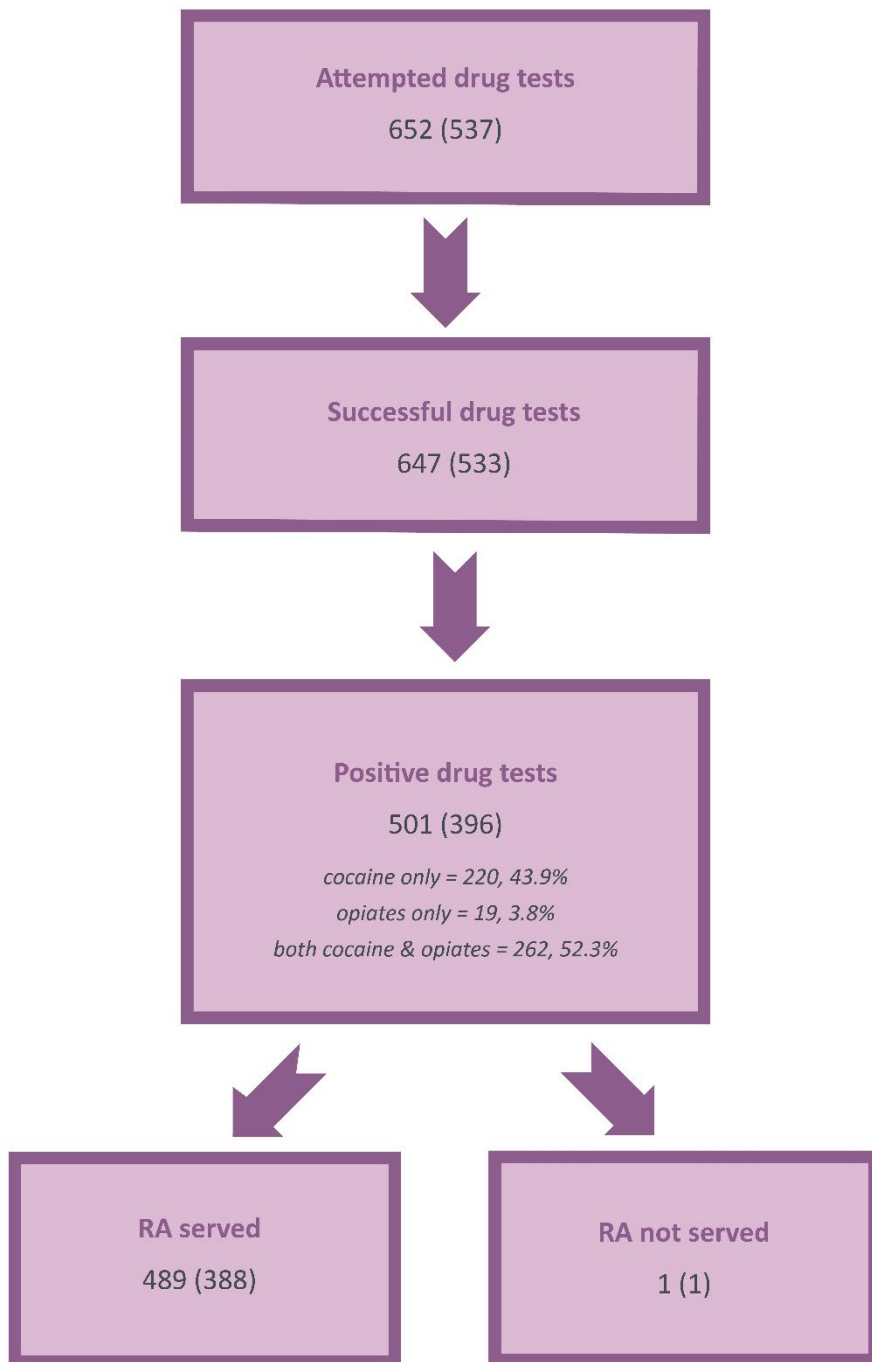


56%

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

<sup>31</sup> Please bear in mind that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence may be affecting these trends.

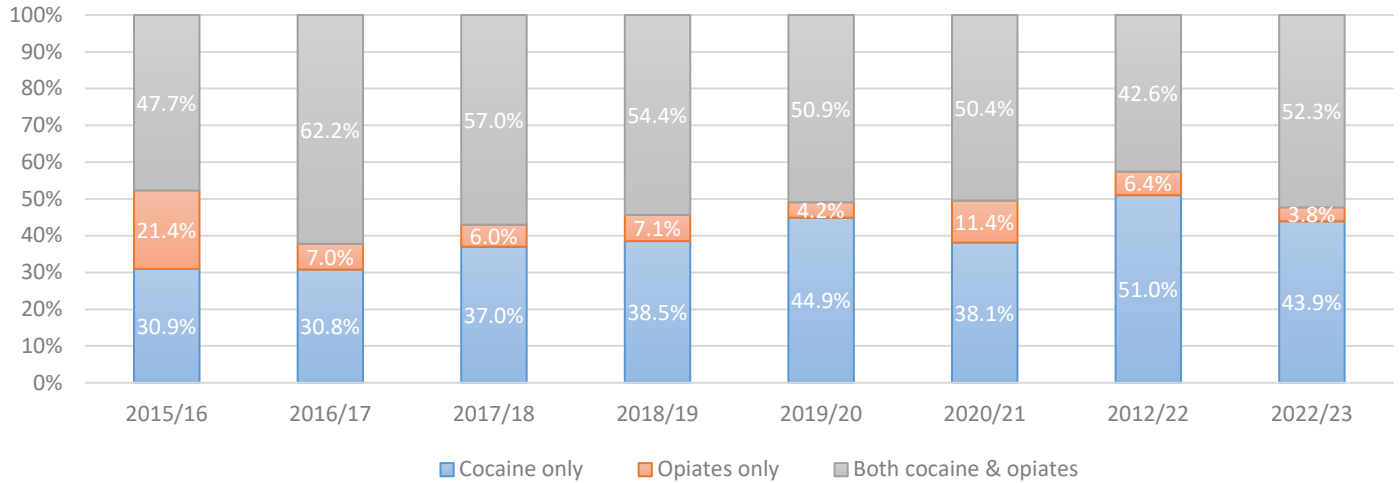
Figure 49: Drug testing activity, Wirral residents, 2022/23



## POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

Except for the year ending March 2022, 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. Although the proportion of opiate metabolites in the year ending March 2023 (56.1%) is an increase on the previous year (49.0%), it is below the average proportion of opiate metabolites of the eight-year period (60.6%). Furthermore, proportions of opiate only positive tests have fluctuated, though notably, it peaked at 21.4% in 2015/16 and dipped to 3.8% in 2022/23.

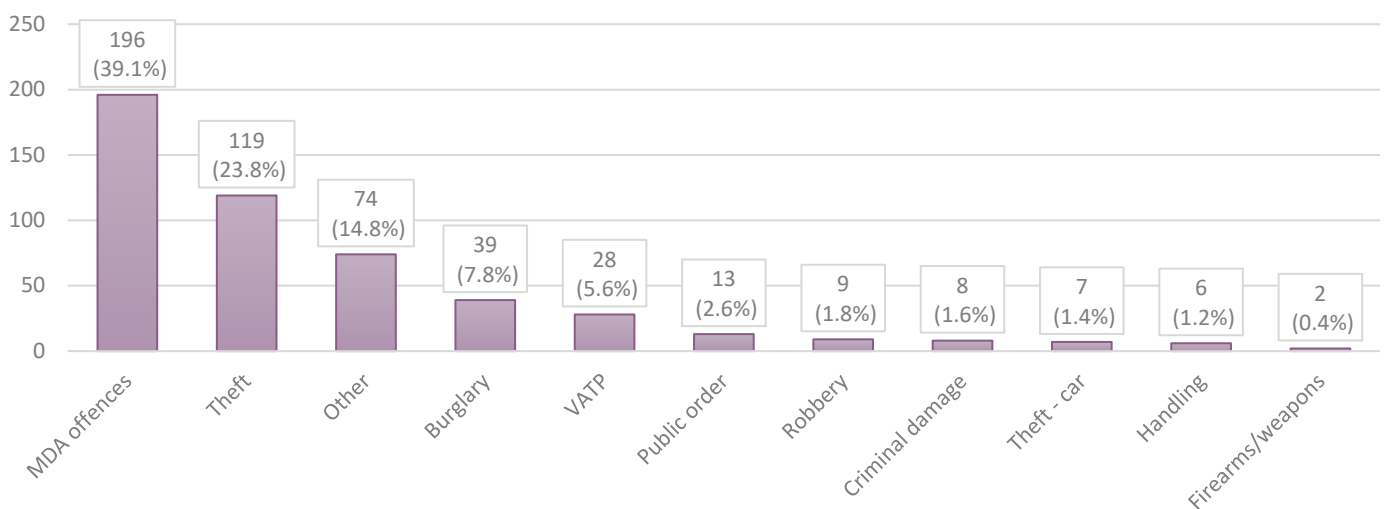
Figure 50: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Wirral residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23



## OFFENCES

Around two in five positive drug test records for Wirral residents in the year ending March 2023 reported MDA offences (n=196, 39.1%), while around one in four were theft (n=119, 23.8%) and just over one in seven were other offences (n=74, 14.8%; Figure 51). The proportion of other offences is the smallest of the five Merseyside areas, while the proportion of MDA offences is the second largest and theft is similar to the Merseyside figure (24.4%).

Figure 51: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Wirral residents, 2022/23 <sup>32</sup>



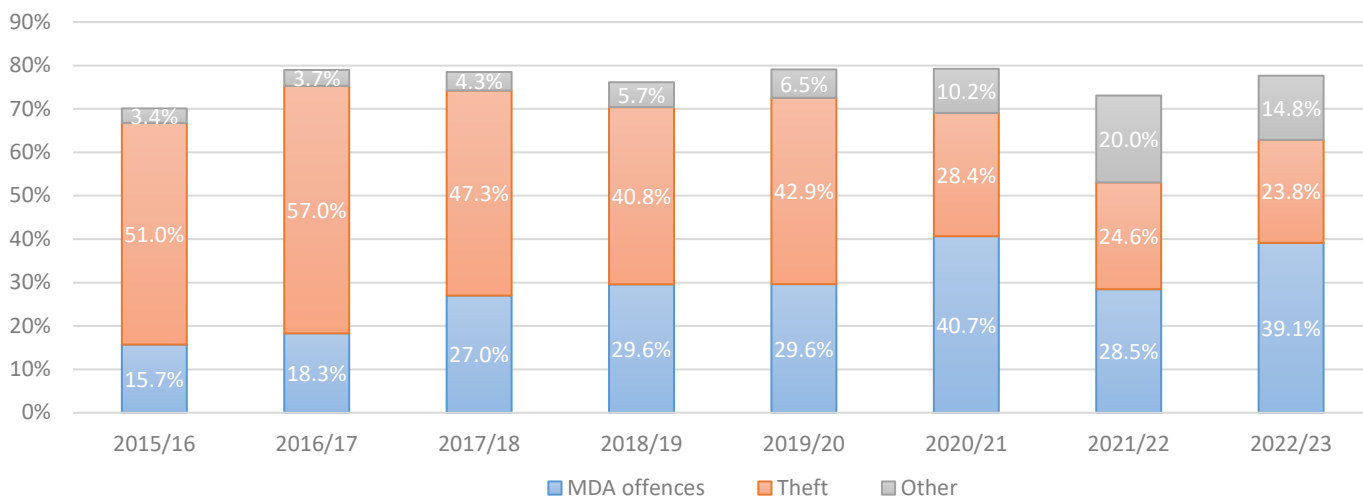
<sup>32</sup> Other offences: other non-trigger offences = 44, other motoring offences = 29, making off without payment = 1.



Of the 196 MDA offences recorded for Wirral residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2023, just over nine in ten (91.8%) were possession. Around seven in ten of all MDA offences were possession with intent to supply Class A drugs (n=135, 68.9%), while just under one-quarter were possession of specified Class A drugs (n=45, 23.0%).

Notably, there have been some changes in the trends of MDA offences, theft and other offences (Figure 52). Between 2015/16 and 2019/20, there were larger proportions of theft than MDA offences, though in the subsequent three years there were larger proportions of MDA offences. Initially, the proportion of MDA offences increased year-on-year, peaking at 29.6% in 2018/19 and 2019/20, though proportions have fluctuated since, with the proportion in 2022/23 (39.1%) the second largest of the eight-year period. Theft peaked in 2016/17 (57.0%), compared to 23.8% in 2022/23, the smallest of the eight years. Furthermore, the proportion of other offences in the year ending March 2023 (14.8%) is the second largest of the eight-year period, after the year ending March 2022 (20.0%).

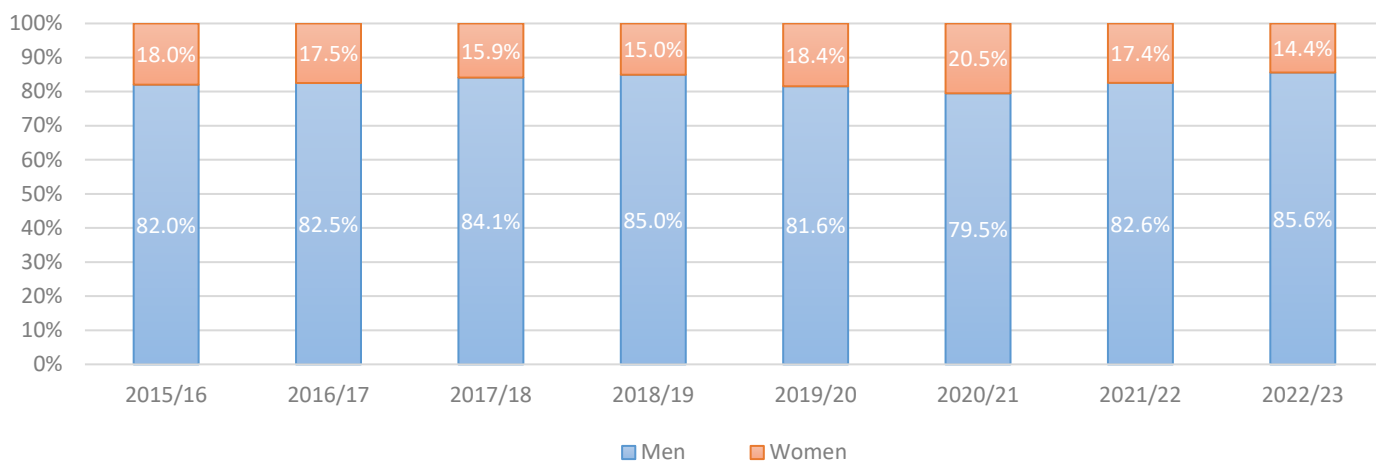
Figure 52: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offences (MDA, theft & other), Wirral residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23



## DEMOGRAPHICS

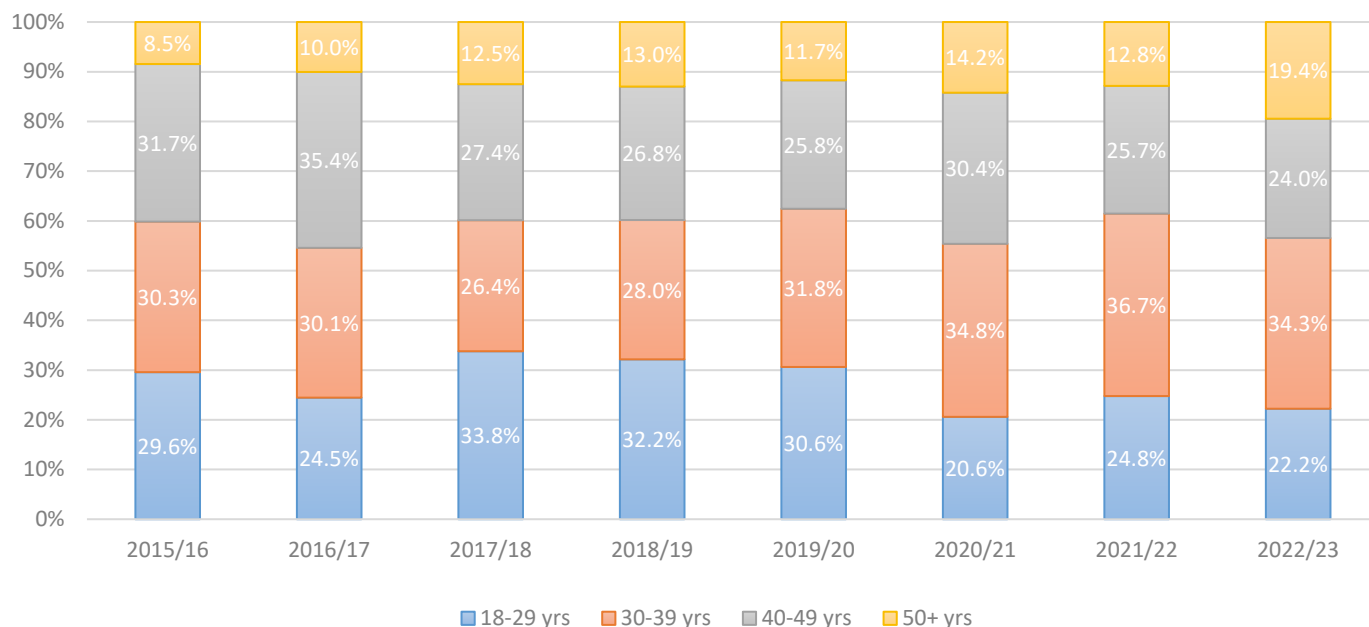
Men accounted for just under nine in the ten individuals who tested positive across Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2023 (n=339, 85.6%), which is the largest proportion of the eight-year period (Figure 53), and the second largest proportion of the five Merseyside areas.

Figure 53: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, Wirral residents (individuals), 2015/16 - 2022/23



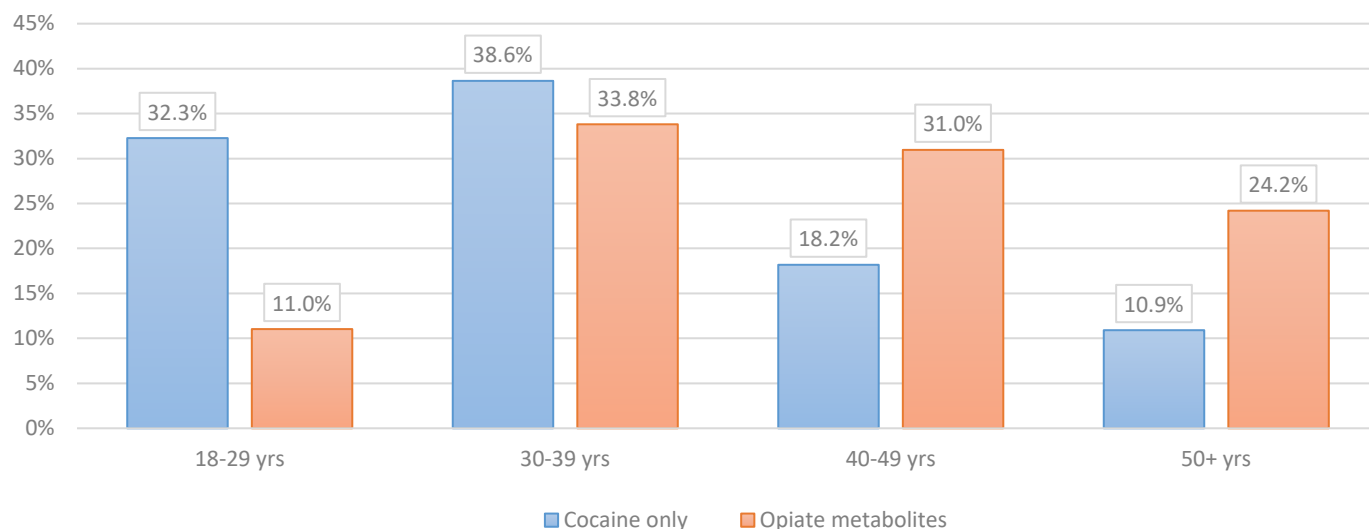
The median age of Wirral residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2023 was 37 years (men = 37, women = 42), which is similar to the year ending March 2022 (36 years). Around one-third of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2023 were aged 30-39 years (n=136, 34.3%), followed by individuals aged 40-49 years (n=95, 24.0%), 18-29 years (n=88, 22.2%) and 50 years or over (n=77, 19.4%; *Figure 54*). During the eight-year period, 2022/23 had the second smallest proportion of individuals aged 18-29 years and the smallest proportion aged 40-49 years. Notably, in the year ending March 2023, Wirral had the largest proportion aged 50 years or over of the eight-year period and the largest proportion of all Merseyside areas.

*Figure 54: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Wirral residents (individuals), 2015/16 - 2022/23*



In the year ending March 2023, clients who tested positive for cocaine only were generally younger. Around seven in ten (70.9%) of those testing positive for cocaine only were aged 18-39 years, compared to 29.1% aged 40 years or over (*Figure 55*). For Wirral residents who tested positive for opiate metabolites, around one in three (33.8%) were aged 30-39 years and just under one in three (31.0%) were aged 40-49 years.

*Figure 55: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Wirral residents, 2022/23*



## RE-PRESENTATIONS

Table 1 provides an indication of the rate of re-presentation of Merseyside residents through the drug testing process, which can be used as a proxy measure of re-offending. Of the 1,940 individuals who reside in Merseyside who tested positive for opiates and/or cocaine in the year ending March 2023, around one in six subsequently re-presented and were drug tested again following their initial positive drug test during the twelve-month period (n=312, 16.1%).

Table 1: Re-presentations of individuals testing positive across Merseyside, Merseyside residents, end 2022/23

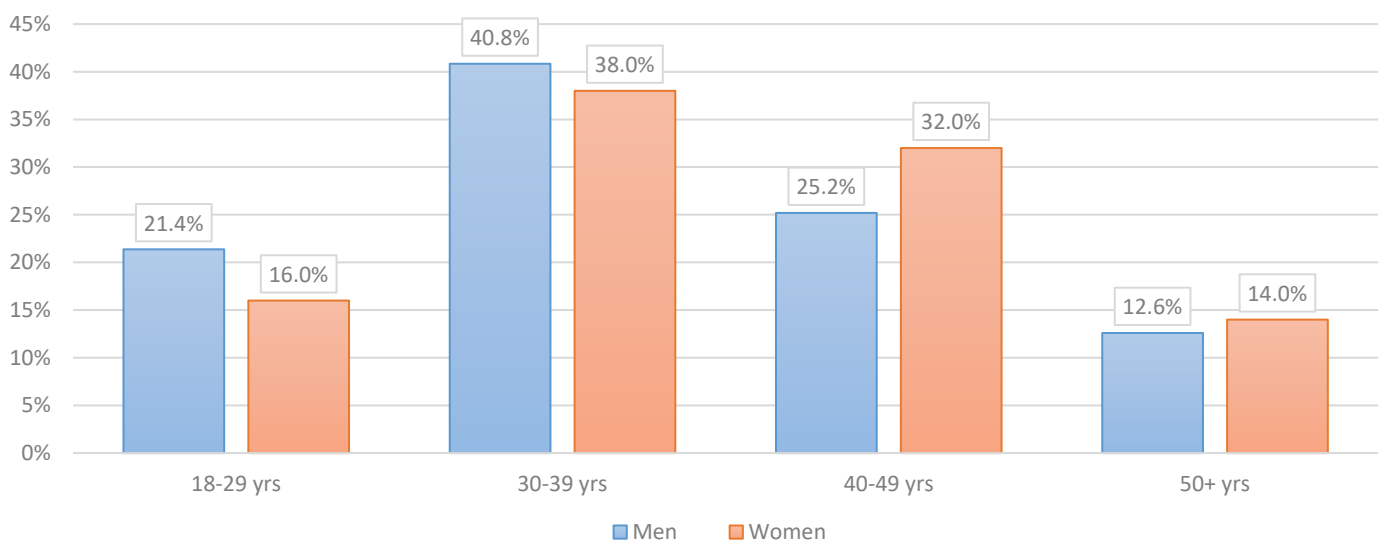
Number of DToA occasions	N	%
One	1,628	83.9%
Two	211	10.9%
Three	63	3.2%
Four	23	1.2%
Five	9	0.5%
Six	3	0.2%
Seven	3	0.2%
<i>Clients presenting more than once</i>	<i>312</i>	<i>16.1%</i>

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO RE-PRESENTED<sup>33</sup>

Of the 312 individuals who presented more than once in the year ending March 2023, over four in five were men (n=262, 84.0%), and two in five were aged 30-39 years (n=126, 40.4%).

Figure 56 compares age group with gender for individuals who presented more than once during the twelve-month period. There were similar proportions of men and women aged 50 years or over (12.6% and 14.0% respectively), while there were larger proportions of men than women aged 18-29 years (21.4% and 16.0% respectively) and 30-39 years (40.8% and 38.0% respectively), and a smaller proportion of men than women aged 40-49 years (25.2% and 32.0% respectively).

Figure 56: Individuals re-presenting to DToA by age group and gender, Merseyside residents, 2022/23



<sup>33</sup> Figures in this section are as recorded in the initial positive drug test.

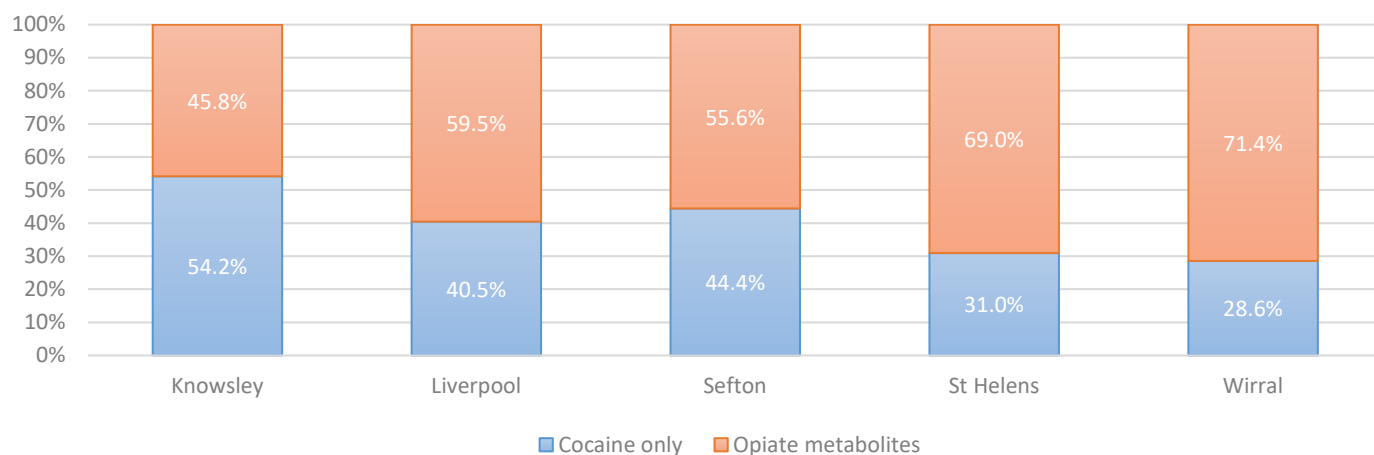
Just over two in five of the individuals who re-presented between April 2022 and March 2023 were residents of Liverpool LA at the time of their initial drug test (n=131, 42.0%), followed by just over one in five who were residents of Wirral (n=70, 22.4%).

**INITIAL POSITIVE DRUG TEST OF INDIVIDUALS WHO RE-PRESENTED**

As this report highlighted, 56.1% of all positive drug tests were cocaine only. However, of the cohort who presented to DToA more than once between April 2022 and March 2023, just over 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=193, 61.9%).

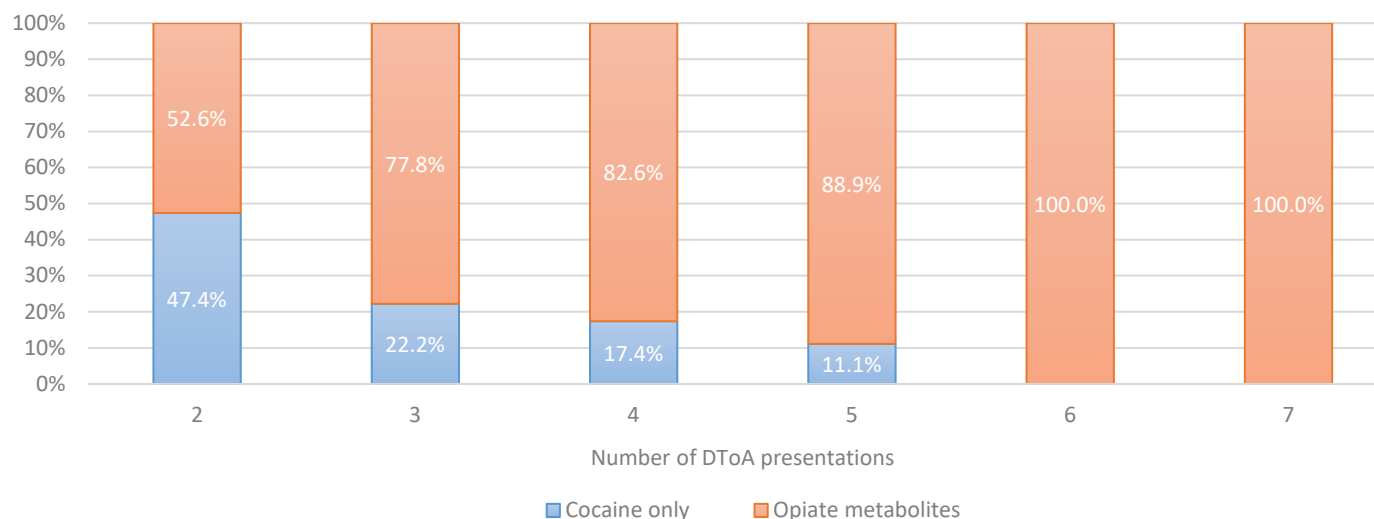
Notably, there were some variations across the Merseyside areas (Figure 57). Wirral residents who re-presented accounted for the largest proportion of individuals testing positive for opiate metabolites between April 2022 and March 2023 (71.4%), followed by St Helens (69.0%). Conversely, over half (54.2%) of Knowsley residents tested positive for cocaine only at their initial drug test, followed by residents of Sefton (44.4%) and Liverpool (40.5%).

Figure 57: Individuals re-presenting to DToA by LA of residence and drug type at initial positive test, Merseyside residents, 2022/23



When comparing the number of DToA presentations with the drug type at the initial positive drug test between April 2022 and March 23, proportions of opiate metabolites increased as the number of presentations increased (Figure 58).

Figure 58: Individuals re-presenting to DToA by number of presentations and drug type at initial positive test, Merseyside residents, 2022/23



## APPENDICES

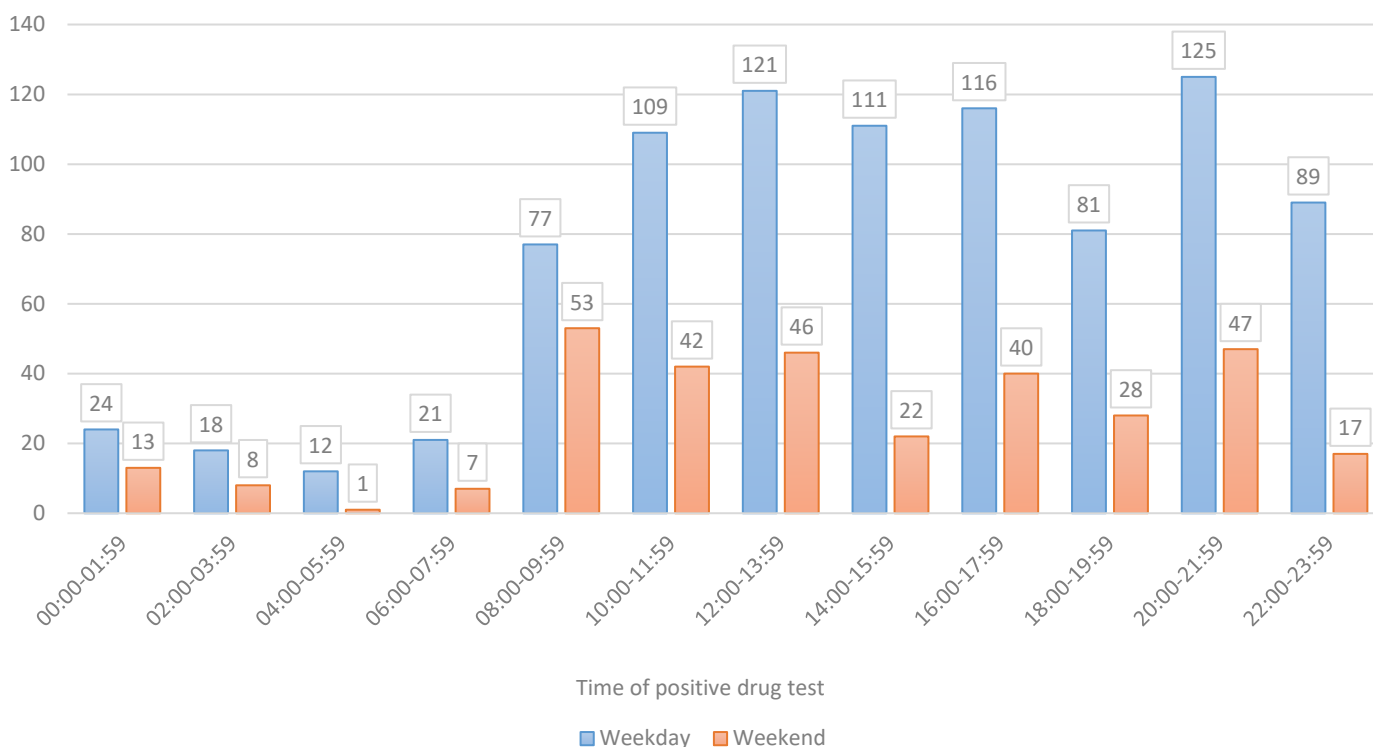
### APPENDIX A

Notes to accompany this report:

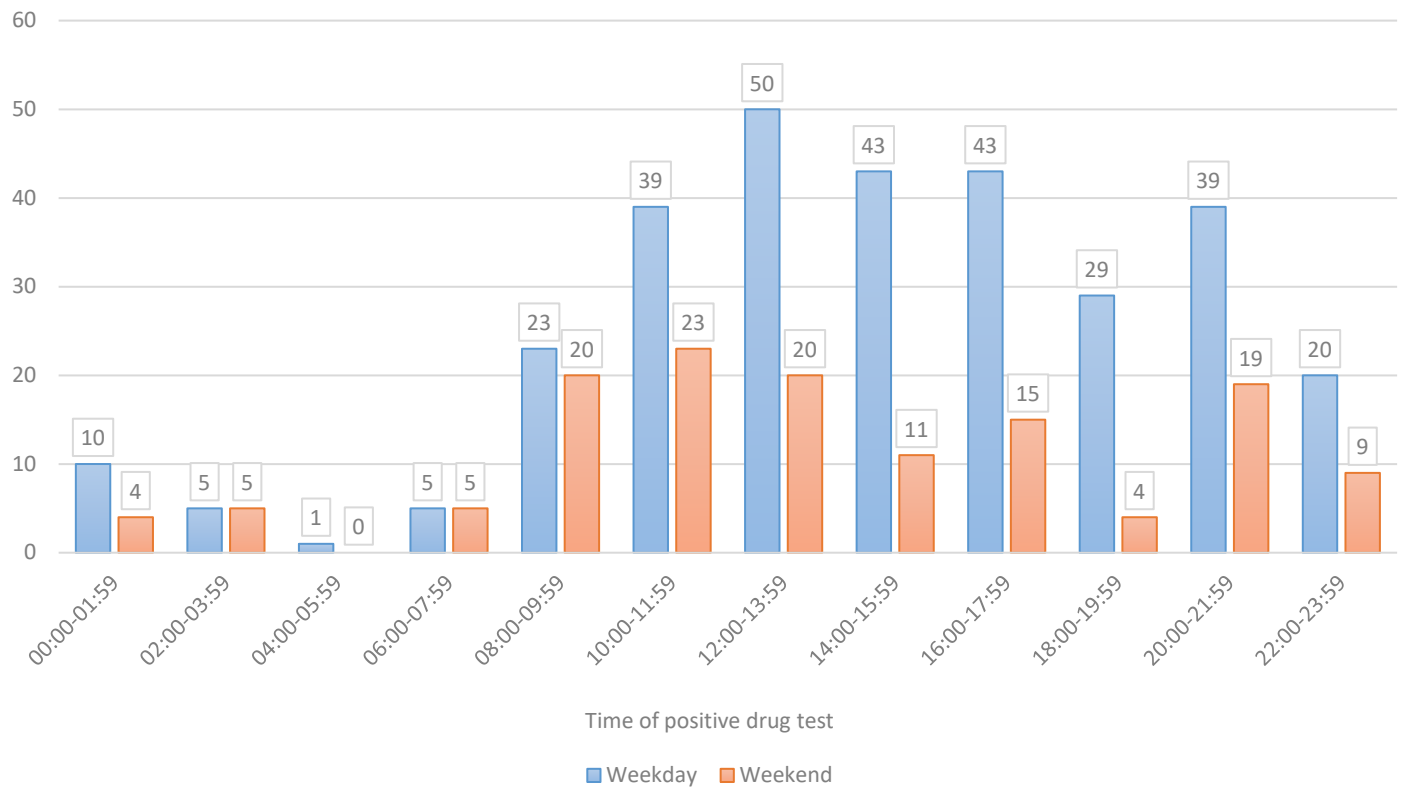
1. Liverpool custody suites include Belle Vale, St Anne Street and Wavertree. Wirral custody suite closed early January 2022 for refurbishment and reopened on 30 April 2022. Copy Lane custody suite closed temporarily for refurbishment for around ten weeks at the end of 2019. St Helens custody suite permanently closed mid-August 2017. 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. Throughout this report, cocaine includes both powder cocaine and crack cocaine.
4. 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 56-58*) only, while other figures include multiple tests for some clients.
5. 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 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

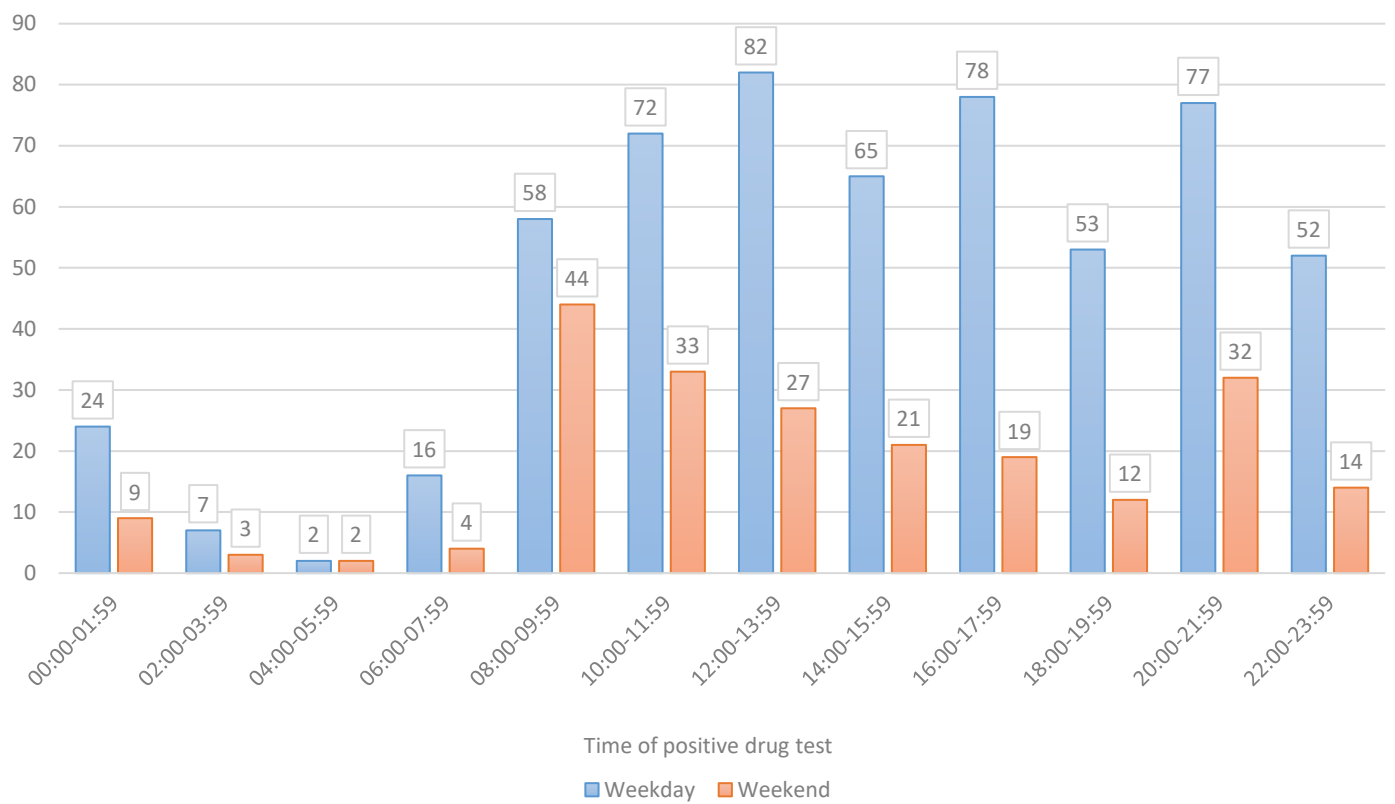
Appendix B1: Positive drug tests at Belle Vale, St Anne Street and Wavertree custody suites (Liverpool) by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2022/23



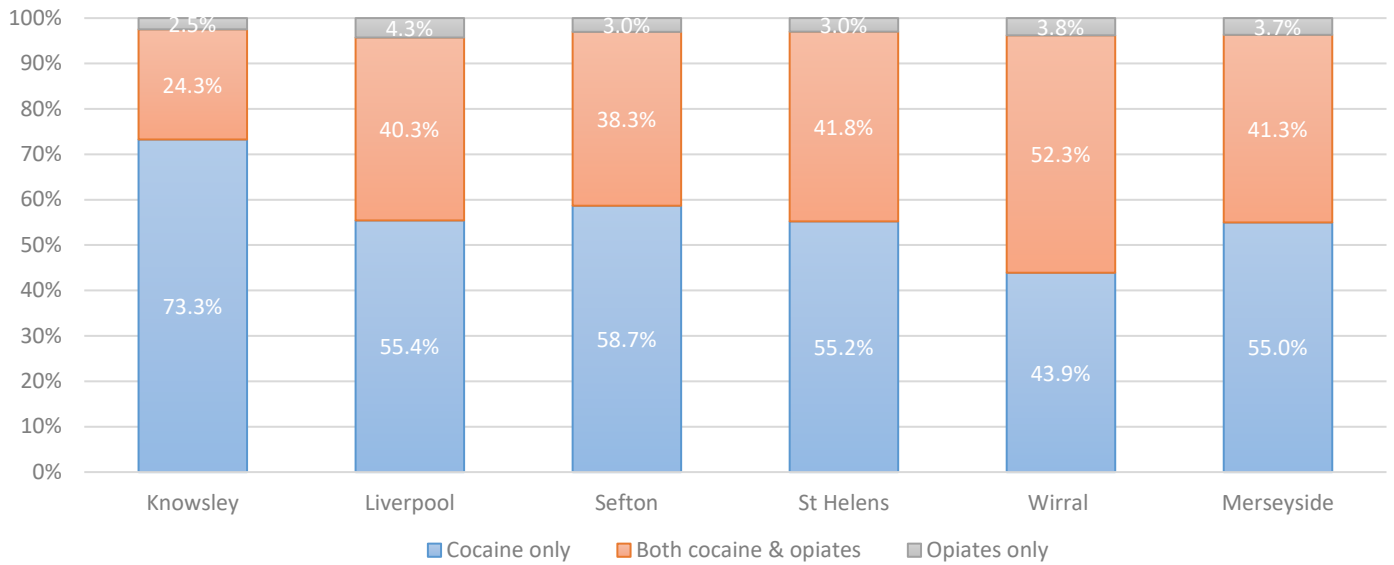
Appendix B2: Positive drug tests at Copy Lane custody suite (Sefton) by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2022/23



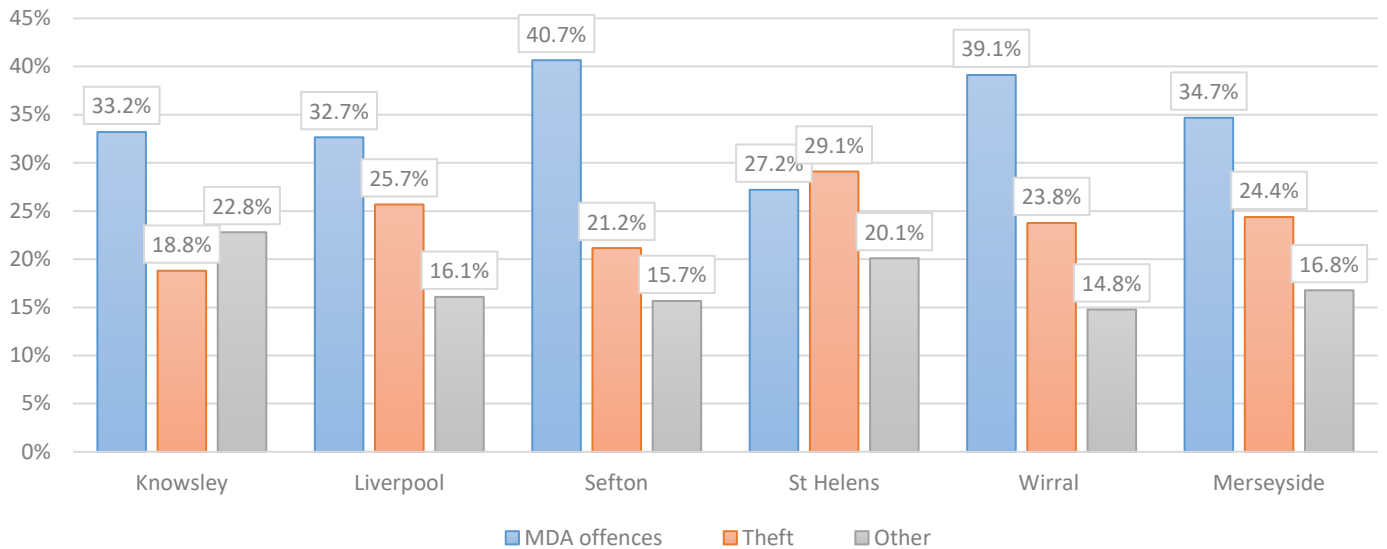
Appendix B3: Positive drug tests at Wirral custody suite by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2022/23



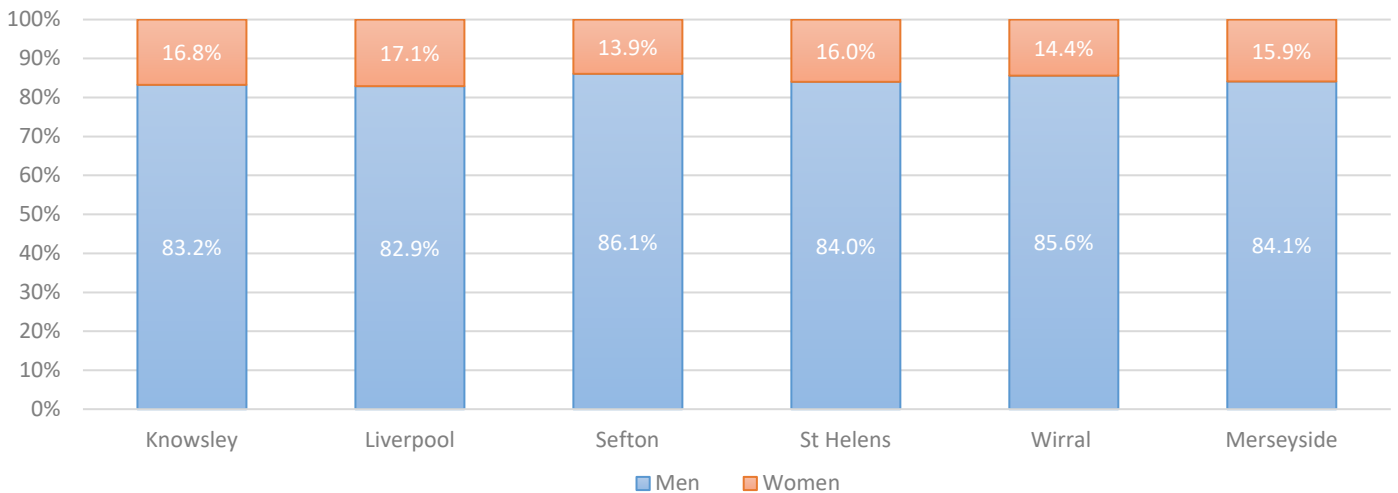
Appendix C1: Positive drug tests by drug test result and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2022/23



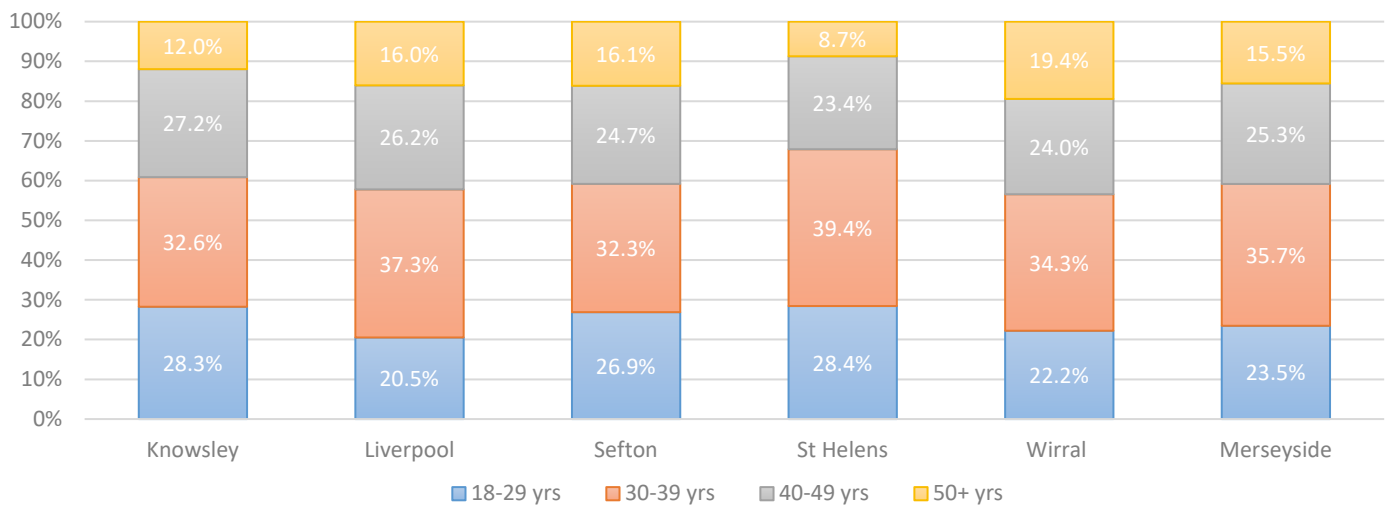
Appendix C2: Positive drug tests by offence and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2022/23



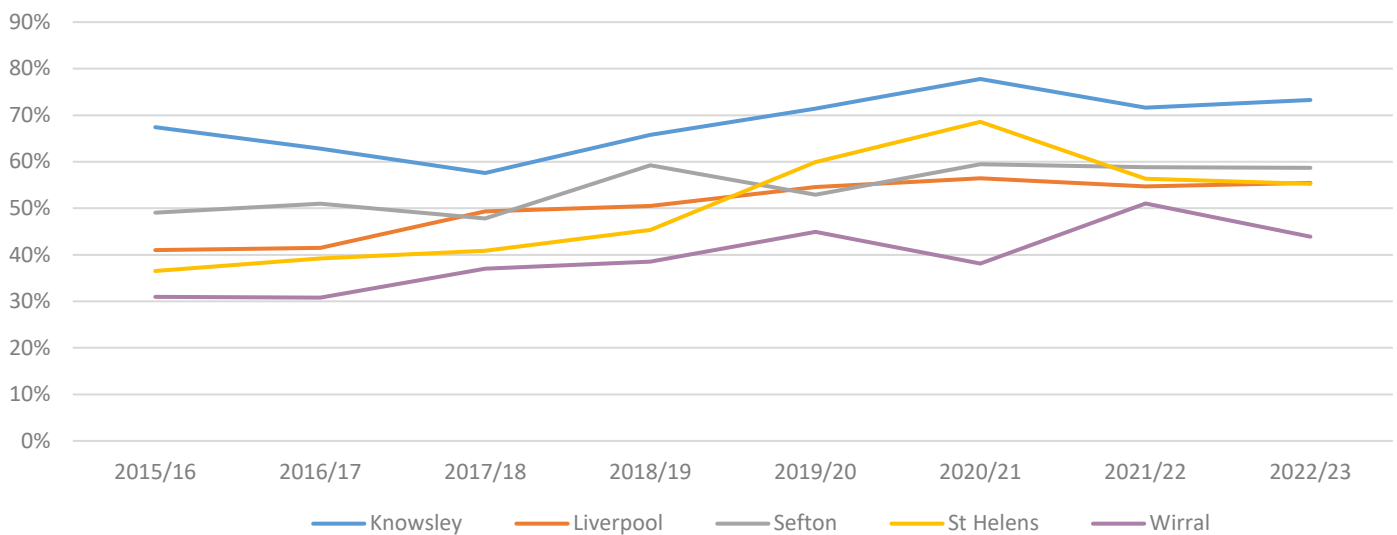
Appendix C3: Positive drug tests by gender and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2022/23



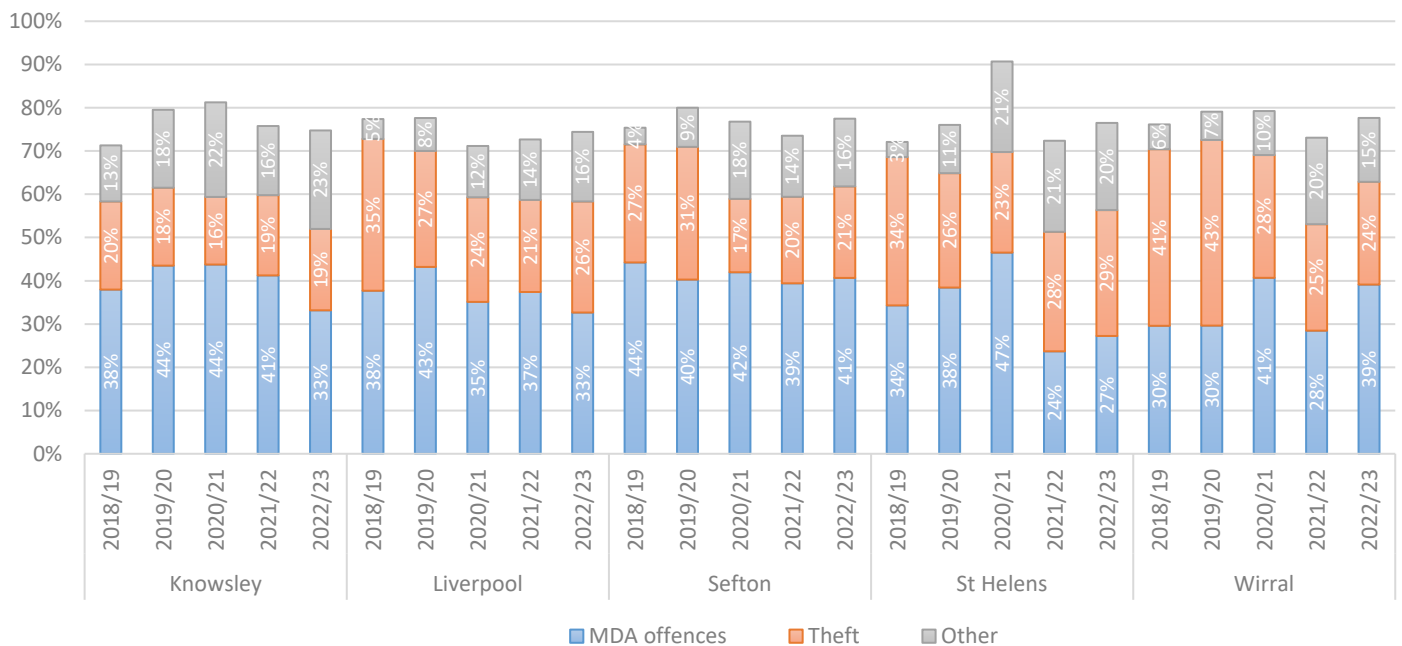
Appendix C4: Positive drug tests by age at time of drug test and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2022/23



Appendix C5: Cocaine only positive drug tests by LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2015/16 - 2022/23



Appendix C6: Positive drug tests by key offences (MDA offences, theft & other) and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2018/19 - 2022/23





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### ***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 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 offenders 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 and engaged with DIP, and highlight any issues with the DIP process.

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.



