

Drug Interventions Programme

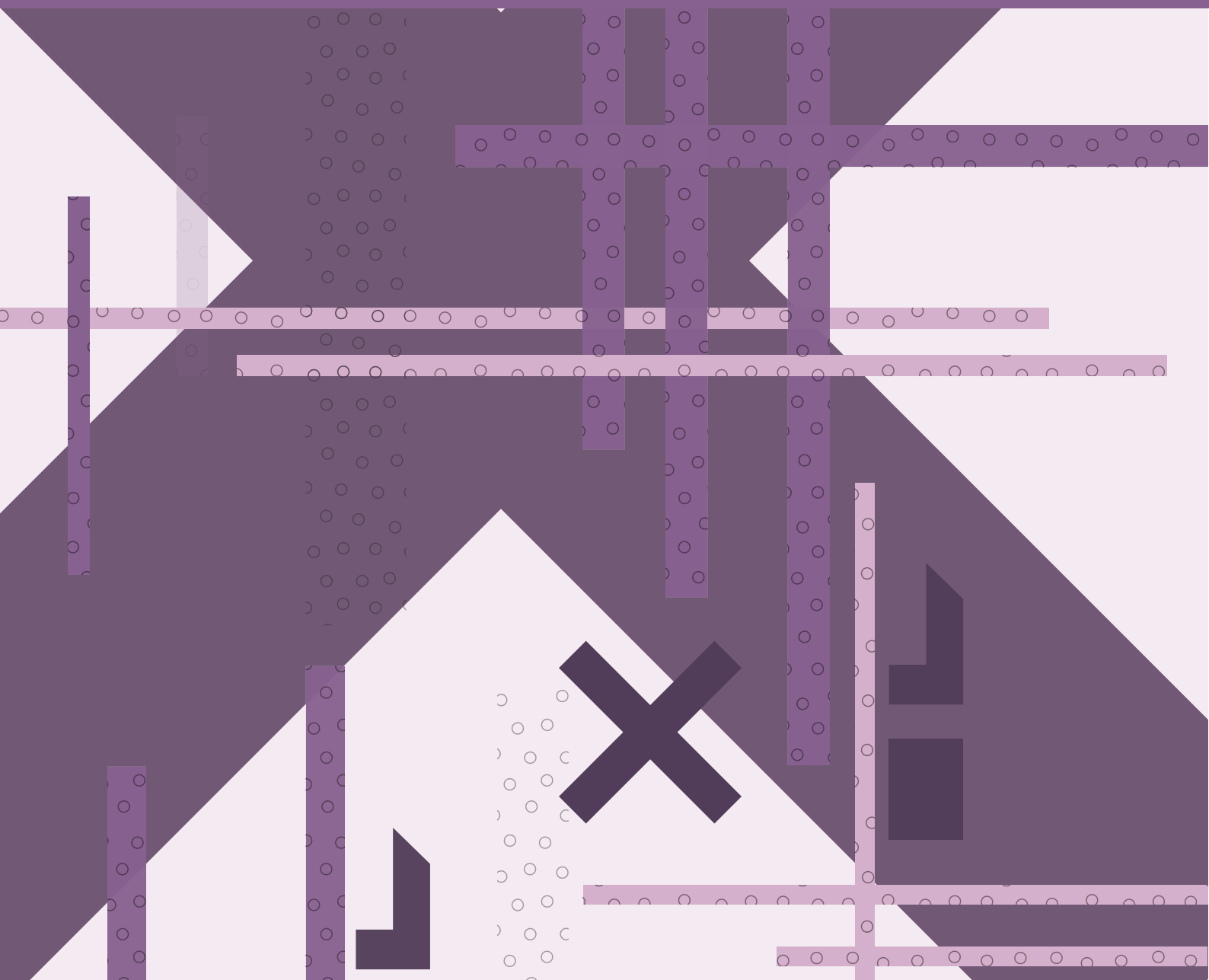


Drug Testing on Arrest:

Class A drug tests in Merseyside Police custody (2024/25)

July 2025

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KEY FINDINGS (YEAR ENDING MARCH 2025)

- Merseyside Police recorded 4,448 attempted drug tests for specified Class A drugs on adults across its custody suites in the year ending March 2025 (94.5% were Merseyside residents). This is a 13% increase on the 3,938 attempted tests in the previous twelve-month period and notably, the largest number of attempted drug tests since 2015/16, when targeted testing was implemented in Merseyside Police custody.
- Just over two-thirds (68.7%) of the successful tests carried out by Merseyside Police in the year ending March 2025 resulted in a positive test (n=2,986). Just under three in five (57.8%) were cocaine only, while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 38.7%, opiates only = 3.4%).
- Where the positive result was maintained, there were a total of 2,743 Required Assessments served by Merseyside Police to 2,134 individuals in the year ending March 2025.
- Around seven in ten (71.4%) of the positive drug tests in the year ending March 2025 occurred on a weekday, peaking at 10:00-11:59 and 20:00-21:59 (14.8% and 14.9% respectively), followed by 16:00-17:59 (13.2%) and 12:00-13:59 (12.3%), while on a weekend, they peaked at 08:00-09:59 and 10:00-11:59 (15.0% and 15.9% respectively).
- Just over a third (35.5%) of the positive drug test records following an arrest by Merseyside Police in the year ending March 2025 were Misuse of Drugs Act offences (of which, 60.9% were trafficking and 39.1% were possession), while three in ten (30.1%) were theft (of which, 79.3% were shoplifting).
- Around three in five (60.2%) adults who were arrested for theft tested positive for opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates), while there were larger proportions of cocaine only positive tests for burglary (56.9%), MDA offences (63.1%), violence (82.9%) and other offences (76.5%).
- Men accounted for just over four in five (82.2%) individuals testing positive in the year ending March 2025. The average age of individuals who tested positive in 2024/25 was 39 years. Just over one-third (35.4%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by just under three in ten (28.2%) aged 40-49 years, one in five (19.6%) aged 18-29 years and one in six (16.8%) aged 50 years or over.
- In the year ending March 2025, 189.1 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 (323.5 per 100,000), followed by residents of St Helens (221.0), Knowsley (213.7), Sefton (202.4) and Wirral (185.7).
- Of the 2,209 individuals who reside in Merseyside who tested positive for opiates and/or cocaine in the year ending March 2025, one in five (20.0%) subsequently re-presented and were drug tested again following their initial positive drug test during the twelve-month period.
- Of the 441 individuals who re-presented between April 2024 and March 2025, around four in five (81.6%) were men, and over one-third (36.5%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by just under one-third (31.3%) aged 40-49 years, around one in six (17.5%) aged 50 years or over and one in seven (14.7%) aged 18-29 years.
- Just under three in five (56.4%) individuals who re-presented tested positive for opiate metabolites at their initial positive drug test between April 2024 and March 2025, peaking for residents of Liverpool and Wirral (60.0% and 61.1% respectively).

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

A key route into DIP is Drug Testing on Arrest (DToA), where adults are tested for specified Class A drugs (crack/powder cocaine and/or certain opiates) in police custody following an arrest for a trigger offence, which are typically acquisitive crimes, as defined by the [Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000](#). Drug tests can also be carried out following a non-trigger offence where there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the offence was linked to the use of a Class A drug, though authority is required by a police Inspector or officer of higher rank (Home Office, 2010 & 2025a).

Expansion of Drug Testing on Arrest

Dame Diana Johnson, Minister of State (Home Office), announced the expansion of DToA at the Crime and Policing Bill in April 2025. The expansion includes:

- The range of drugs which can be tested for (to include all controlled drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act).
- The list of trigger offences (including offences key to the Government's Safer Streets mission, e.g. those linked to violence against women and girls, knife crime and antisocial behaviour).
- The power to take an additional sample if the first is unsuitable or insufficient.

(TheyWorkForYou, 2025)

In Merseyside, if an individual tests positive they can be served with a Required Assessment (RA) by the police, whereby an appointment is booked with the local treatment provider. An assessment is carried out to determine whether further intervention is required to address their substance use and its related offending.

In 2015, Merseyside Police established targeted drug testing, which involves a set list of questions around Class A drug use and drug-related offending that should be considered before a decision is made on whether an individual is drug tested. This process has reduced the number of negative drug tests, thus saving time and money, while allowing people who offend and use Class A drugs to continue to be drug tested and referred to treatment services through the RA process. However, in March 2024, it was decided to remove the targeted approach for shoplifting offences; therefore, all arrested for shoplifting are subject to undergo a drug test.

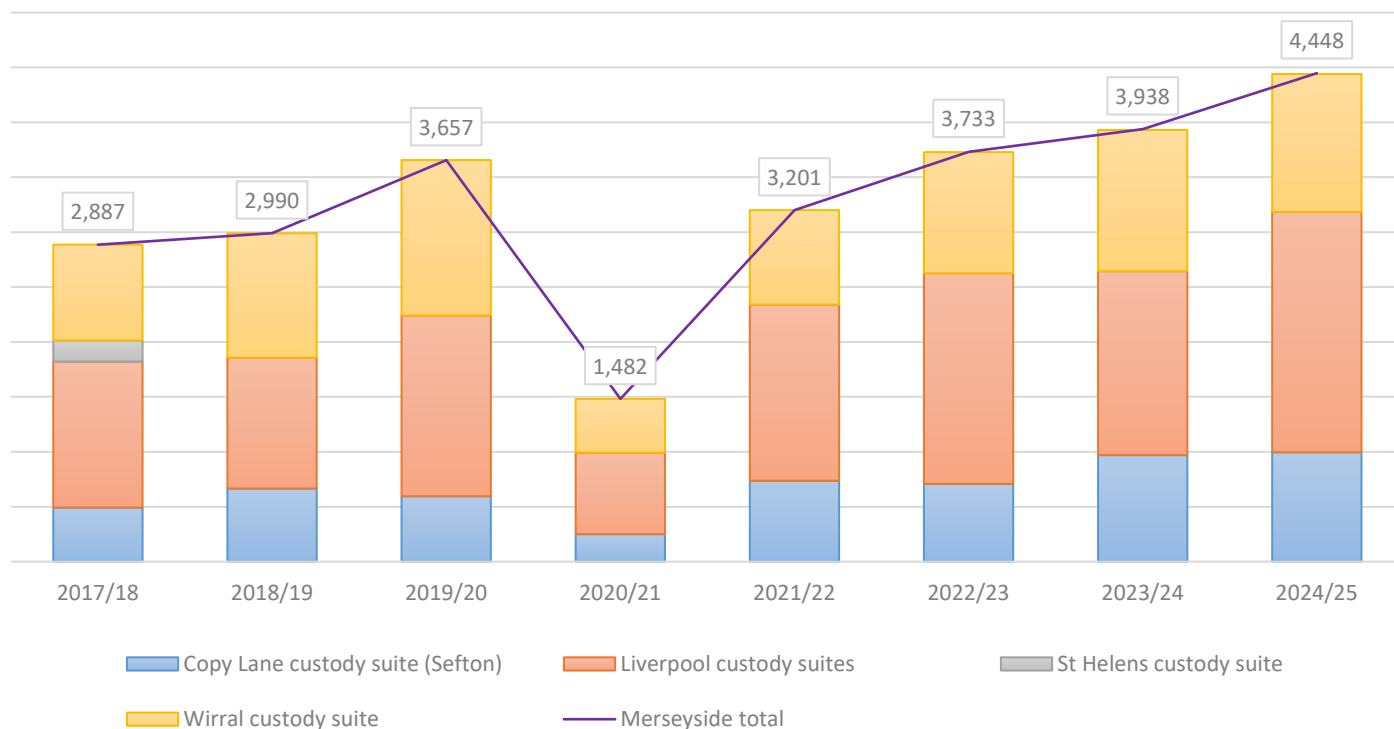
This report from the Public Health Institute, Liverpool John Moores University, shows trends of drug tests carried out in Merseyside Police custody over an eight-year period up to the year ending March 2025¹. It contextualises Merseyside Police drug testing records for adults who offend and use crack/powder cocaine and/or opiates, identified through this key route into DIP. A demographic overview of this cohort and figures for residents of each of the five Merseyside Local Authority areas are also provided.

¹ Notes to accompany this report are available in [Appendix A](#) (page 40). Furthermore, there are comparisons for the year ending March 2025 presented in charts in [Appendix C](#) for Merseyside residents (pages 41-42). Where comparisons have been made with Merseyside figures, these are totals for Merseyside residents only and not totals of tests carried out by Merseyside Police, which include all residents.

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2025, Merseyside Police recorded 4,448 attempted tests for specified Class A drugs on adults across the force's custody suites. This is a 13% increase on the 3,938 attempted tests in the previous twelve-month period and shows a continuing increase since the year ending March 2021, when drug testing was suspended for five months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, this is the highest number of attempted drug tests of the eight-year period and since targeted testing was implemented in Merseyside Police custody in 2015/16 (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite area and year, 2017/18 - 2024/25²

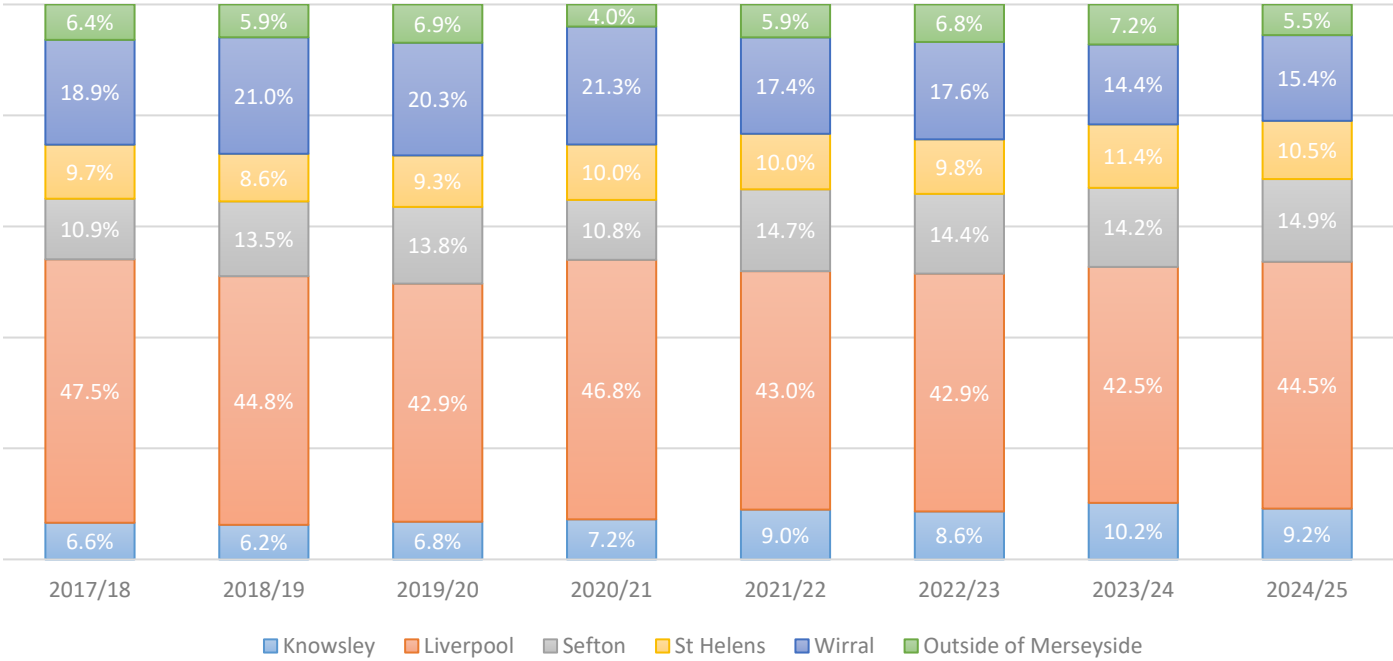


Liverpool's custody suites had the highest number of attempted drug tests, representing an average of 47% of all attempted tests in Merseyside during the eight-year period (*Figure 1*).

Of the attempted drug tests in Merseyside Police's custody suites in the year ending March 2025, where recorded, 4,189 (94.5%) were Merseyside residents. Residents of Liverpool Local Authority (LA) accounted for the largest proportion of adults who were drug tested in all eight years (an average of 44%; *Figure 2*). Furthermore, 5.5% of the people drug tested in the year ending March 2025 were residents outside of the Merseyside area, which is the smallest proportion since the year ending March 2021 (4.0%), when there were COVID-19-related restrictions in the UK.

² Notes regarding Merseyside Police custody suites are available in *Appendix A*. Also note that in 2024/25, there were seven records that did not specify the custody suite where the test was conducted.

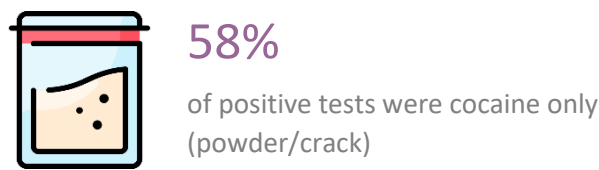
Figure 2: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by LA of residence and year, 2017/18 - 2024/25³



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 3 (page 4) shows the drug testing activity for adults who were drug tested in Merseyside Police’s custody suites in the year ending March 2025. Of the total 4,448 attempted drug tests, 4,346 were successful⁴, and subsequently 2,986 had a positive result for a specified Class A drug. Just over two-thirds (68.7%) of the successful drug tests carried out by Merseyside Police between April 2024 and March 2025 resulted in a positive test, compared to 56.2% of the police forces in England and Wales reporting to the Home Office (2025a) in the twelve months ending December 2024. Though different twelve-month periods, this is a variation of 12.5%, which could be attributed to the targeted approach used by Merseyside Police.

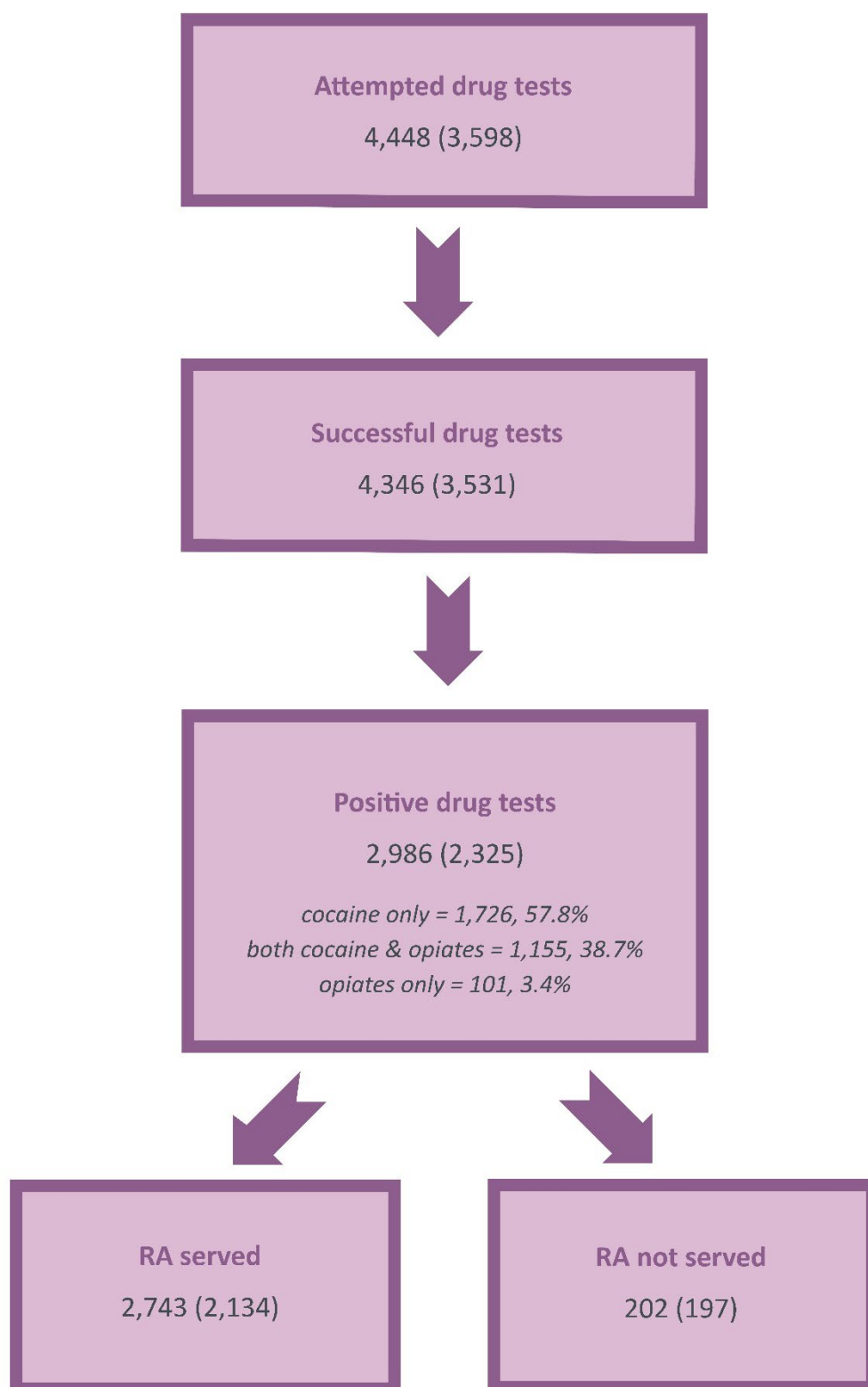
Just under three in five of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=1,726, 57.8%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 1,155, 38.7%; opiates only = 101, 3.4%).



Where the positive result was maintained⁵, there were 2,743 Required Assessments (RAs) served by Merseyside Police to 2,134 individuals in the year ending March 2025. This accounts for 91.9% of the total positive tests, compared to 89.4% reported by the police forces in England and Wales in the twelve months ending December 2024 (Home Office, 2025a).

³ There were 14 records that did not have the LA of residence recorded.
⁴ Unsuccessful tests are those that have been refused or aborted (i.e., equipment failure or unable to provide sample).
⁵ The Merseyside RA served figure excludes any drug tests where the positive result was overturned or not resolved following a dispute.

Figure 3: Drug testing activity in Merseyside's custody suites, 2024/25^{6,7,8,9}



⁶ Numbers of individuals are presented in brackets.

⁷ There were 51 tests refused and a further 51 unsuccessful tests.

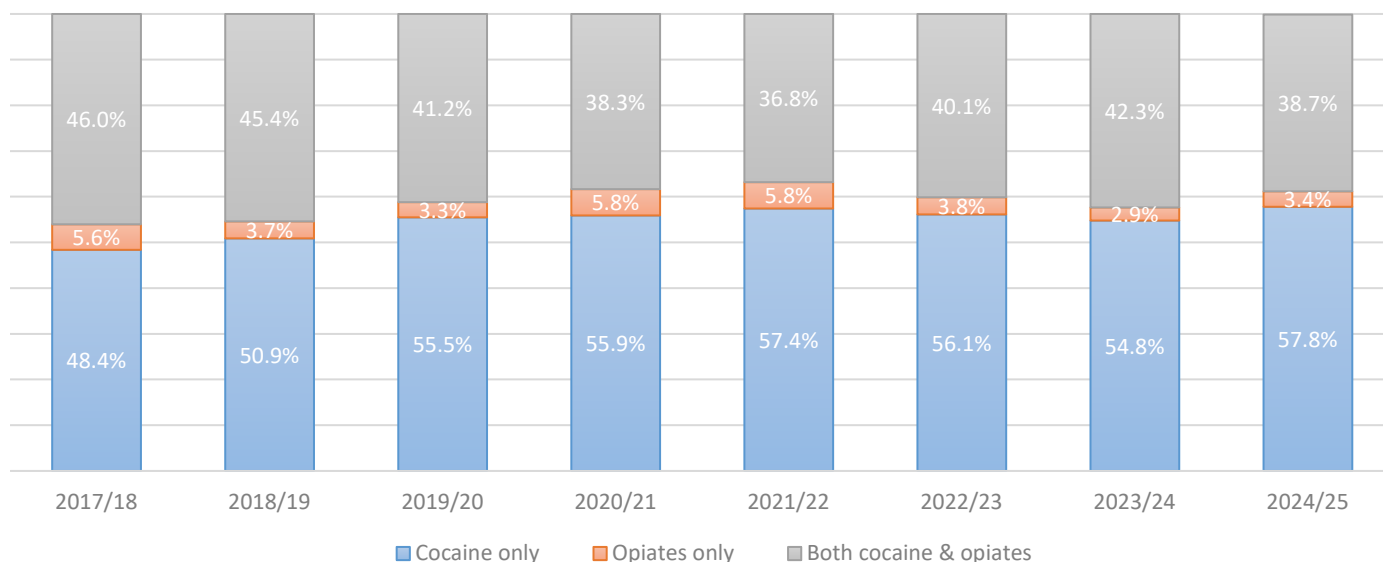
⁸ There were two records where the result of the test was not known and four positive drug test records that did not indicate the drug(s) detected.

⁹ '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 six records did not indicate whether an RA was served and there were 35 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.

POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

Following a slight decrease in the proportion of cocaine only positive tests in 2023/24, it increased by 3% in 2024/25 to the largest proportion on record. Conversely, the proportion of both cocaine and opiates decreased by 3.7% in 2024/25, while there were similar proportions of opiates only in the past three years (*Figure 4*).

Figure 4: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, 2017/18 - 2024/25



Seizures of powder cocaine

There were 21,548 powder cocaine seizures by police forces and Border Force in England and Wales in the year ending March 2024, accounting for just under three in five (57%) of all Class A drug seizures. This is a 14% increase on the 18,978 seizures in the previous year, and the highest number recorded since the year ending March 2009. Furthermore, the largest quantity of powder cocaine on record was seized in the year ending March 2024 (28.27 tonnes), which is a 52% increase on the previous year (Home Office, 2025b).

Powder/crack cocaine related deaths

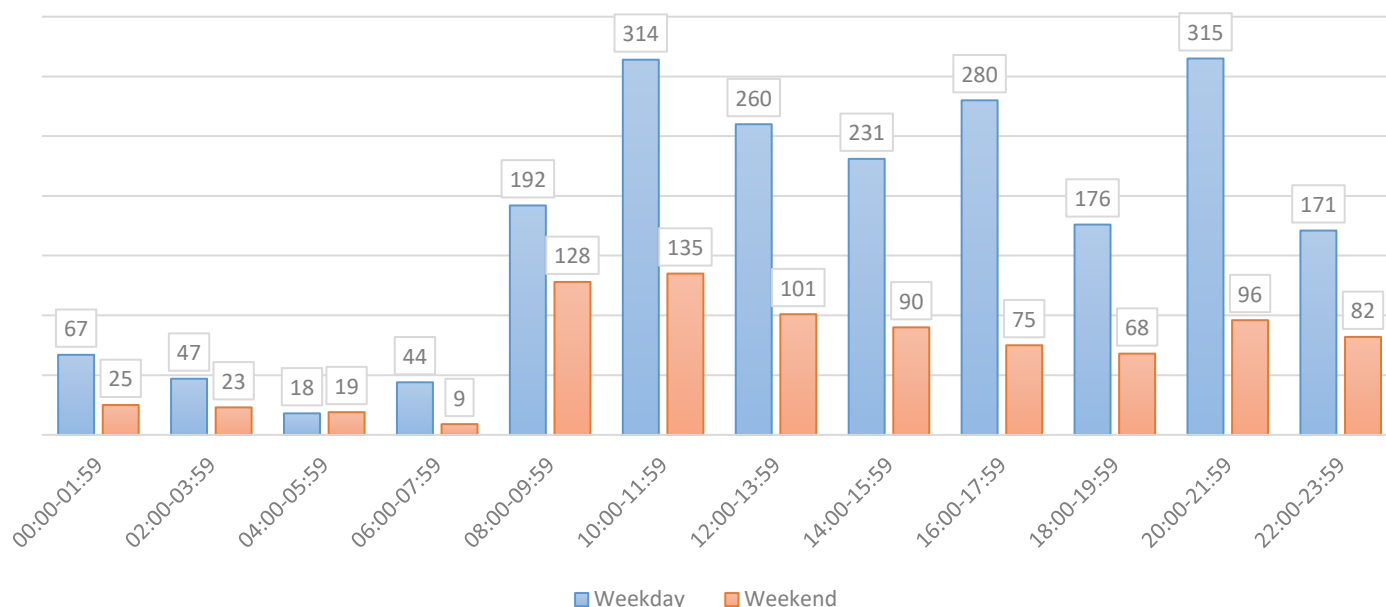
In 2023, 1,118 deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales involved powder/crack cocaine. This is a 31% increase on the 857 deaths in the previous year and nearly ten times the number recorded in 2011 (112 deaths; Office for National Statistics, 2024).

As reported by the Integrated Monitoring System Drug and Alcohol Related Deaths surveillance system (Public Health Institute, 2024), there were 76 cases where powder/crack cocaine was implicated in a drug related death across Cheshire and Merseyside in the year ending 2023, accounting for around one-third (33.8%) of all toxicity deaths. This is a 17% increase on the 65 deaths in the previous year and notably, cocaine (excluding crack, where known) was implicated in more deaths where the individual was not in treatment, while crack cocaine was implicated in more deaths where the individual was in treatment.

TIME OF DRUG TESTS

Of the positive drug tests across Merseyside's custody suites in the year ending March 2025, around seven in ten occurred on a weekday (n=2,132, 71.4%), compared to those on a weekend (n=854, 28.6%). *Figure 5* shows the number of positive drug tests by time group of test, comparing those that occurred on a weekday with those on a weekend. On a weekday, positive drug tests peaked at 10:00-11:59 and 20:00-21:59 (14.8% and 14.9% respectively), followed by 16:00-17:59 (13.2%) and 12:00-13:59 (12.3%). While on a weekend, they peaked at 08:00-09:59 and 10:00-11:59 (15.0% and 15.9% respectively).

Figure 5: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2024/25¹⁰



Belle Vale and St Anne Street custody suites, Liverpool

Just under three-quarters of the positive drug tests at Liverpool's custody suites in the year ending March 2025 occurred on a weekday (n=1,075, 72.5%), compared to those on a weekend (n=408, 27.5%). On a weekday, positive drug tests peaked at 10:00-11:59 and 20:00-21:59 (15.4% and 16.0% respectively), while the number of tests on a weekend peaked at 08:00-09:59 and 10:00-11:59 (15.5% and 15.7% respectively; *Appendix B1*, page 40).

Copy Lane custody suite, Sefton

Just over seven in ten of the positive drug tests at Copy Lane custody suites in the year ending March 2025 occurred on a weekday (n=463, 71.8%), compared to those on a weekend (n=182, 28.2%). On a weekday, positive drug tests peaked at 10:00-11:59 (17.2%), while the number of tests on a weekend peaked at 08:00-09:59 and 10:00-11:59 (14.3% and 14.8% respectively; *Appendix B2*, page 41).

Wirral custody suite

Around seven in ten of the positive drug tests at Wirral custody suites in the year ending March 2025 occurred on a weekday (n=592, 69.2%), compared to those on a weekend (n=263, 30.8%). On a weekday, positive drug tests peaked at 16:00-17:59 (15.8%), while the number of tests on a weekend peaked at 10:00-11:59 (16.9%; *Appendix B3*, page 41).

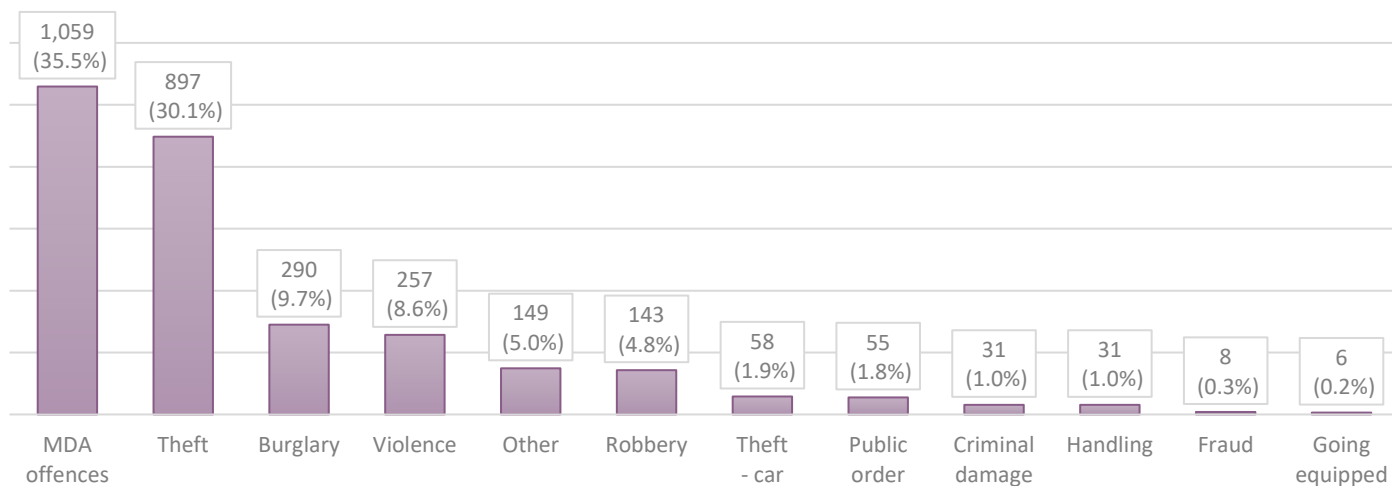
¹⁰ There were 20 records that did not have the time of test recorded.

OFFENCES

Police drug testing records capture the offence that led to the arrest and subsequent drug test. In the year ending March 2025, just under nine in ten of the positive drug tests were following a trigger offence (n=2,502, 83.8%).

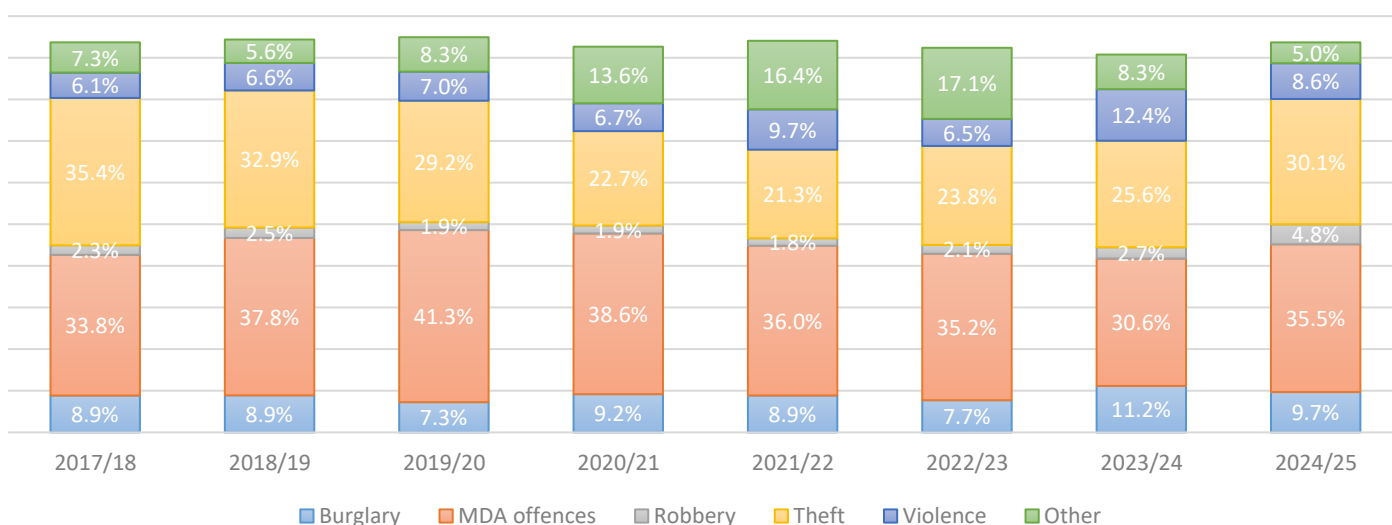
Just over a third of the positive drug test records across Merseyside in the year ending March 2025 were Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=1,059, 35.5%¹¹), while three in ten were theft (n=897, 30.1%¹²; *Figure 6*).

Figure 6: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, 2024/25¹³



Notably, there have been changes in the trends of some offending categories. In the year ending March 2025, the proportions of MDA offences, robbery and theft increased, while they decreased for burglary, violence and other offences (*Figure 7*). The proportion of other offences in 2024/25 is the smallest of the eight-year period, while the proportion of robbery is the largest, and the proportion of theft is the largest since 2018/19. The increase in the proportion of theft could be attributed to the removal of the targeted approach to drug testing for those arrested for shoplifting in March 2024.

Figure 7: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offence trends, 2017/18 - 2024/25



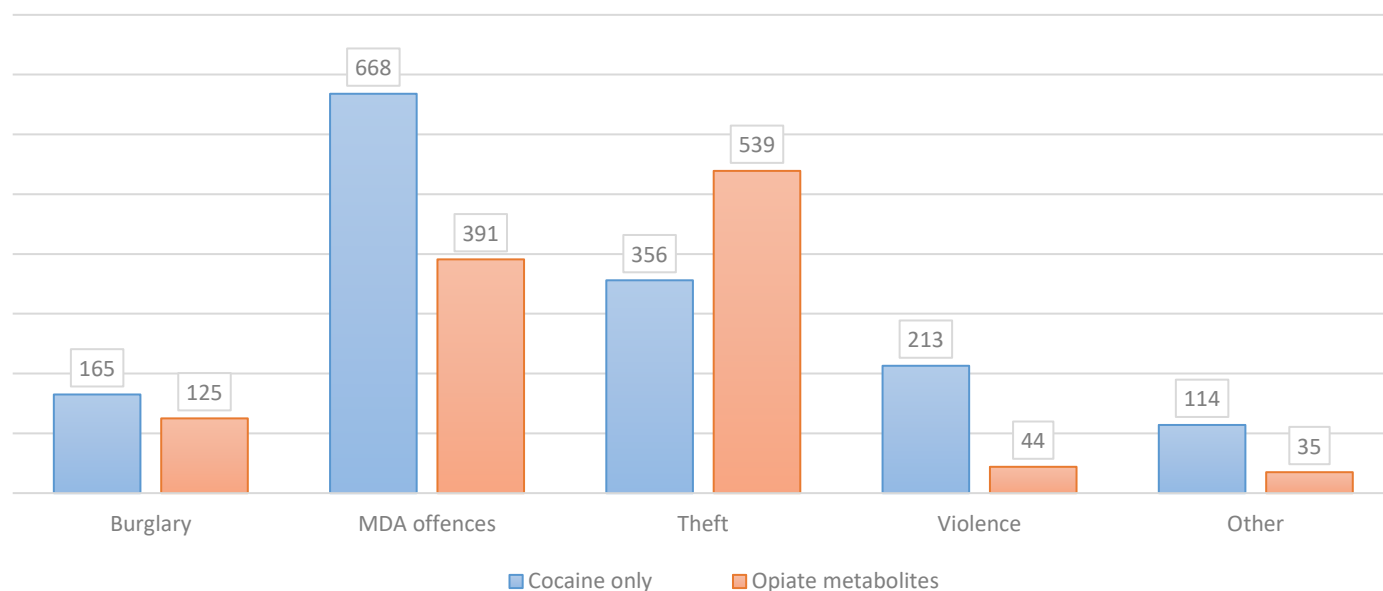
¹¹ MDA offences: trafficking in controlled drugs = 644, 60.9%; possession of controlled drugs = 414, 39.1%.

¹² Theft (excludes theft of a motor vehicle): shoplifting = 711, 79.3%.

¹³ There were two records that did not have an offence recorded. Criminal damage includes arson. Other offences: miscellaneous crimes = 131, 87.9%; motoring offences = 9, 6.0%; stalking and harassment = 6, 4.0%; vehicle interference = 3, 2.0%.

Figure 8 shows the five offences with the highest numbers recorded in the year ending March 2025 by the positive drug test result. Of the drug testing records with theft recorded, there were more positive results for opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates; n=539, 60.2%) than cocaine only, while for burglary, MDA offences, violence and other offences, there were more positive tests for cocaine only. This was most prominent for violence-related offences and other offences where the positive test was cocaine only (82.9% and 76.5% respectively).

Figure 8: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence and drug test result, 2024/25



Violence & cocaine

Just under half (48.4%) of the 213 records for a violence-related offence where there was a positive result for cocaine only in the year ending March 2025 were carried out on a Saturday or Sunday, peaking on a Sunday morning (08:00-11:59), and just under two in three (63.4%) were domestic related. Of the 211 individuals of the violence and cocaine cohort, just under nine in ten (86.7%) were men and just under half (46.9%) were aged 30-39 years.

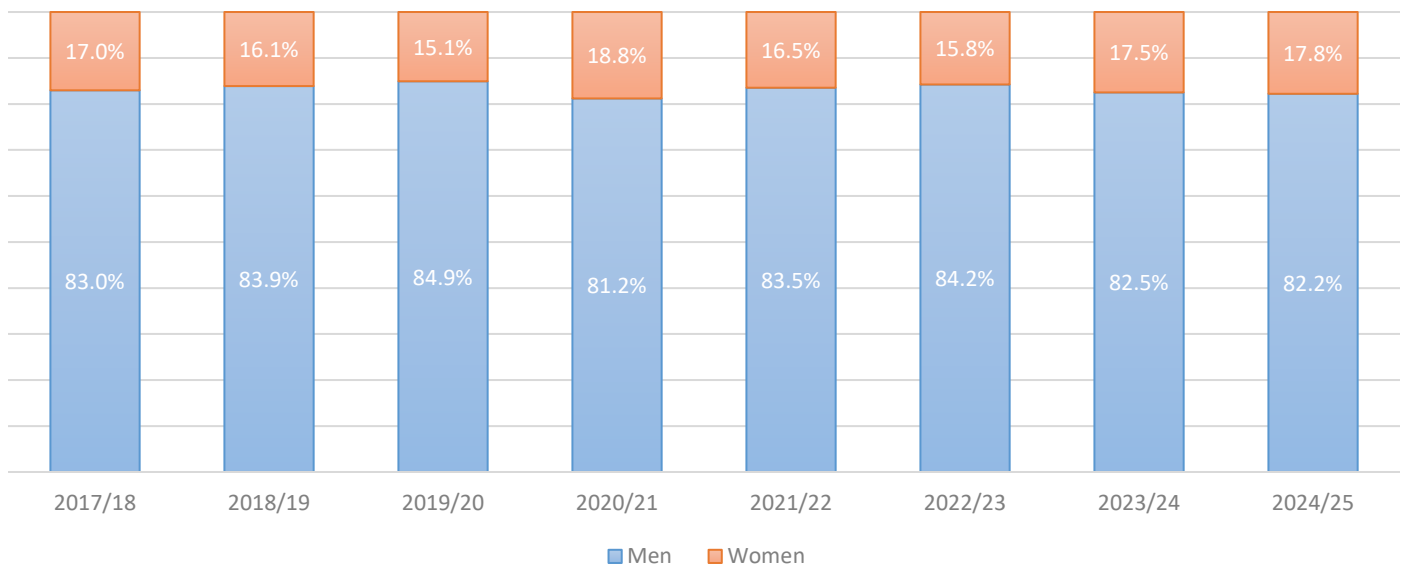
Theft & opiate metabolites

Around four in five (78.7%) of the 539 records for theft where there was a positive result for opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates) in the year ending March 2025 were carried out on a weekday (Monday to Friday). Of the 383 individuals, around three-quarters (75.7%) were men and there were similar proportions aged 30-39 years and 40-49 years (35.5% and 34.2% respectively).

DEMOGRAPHICS

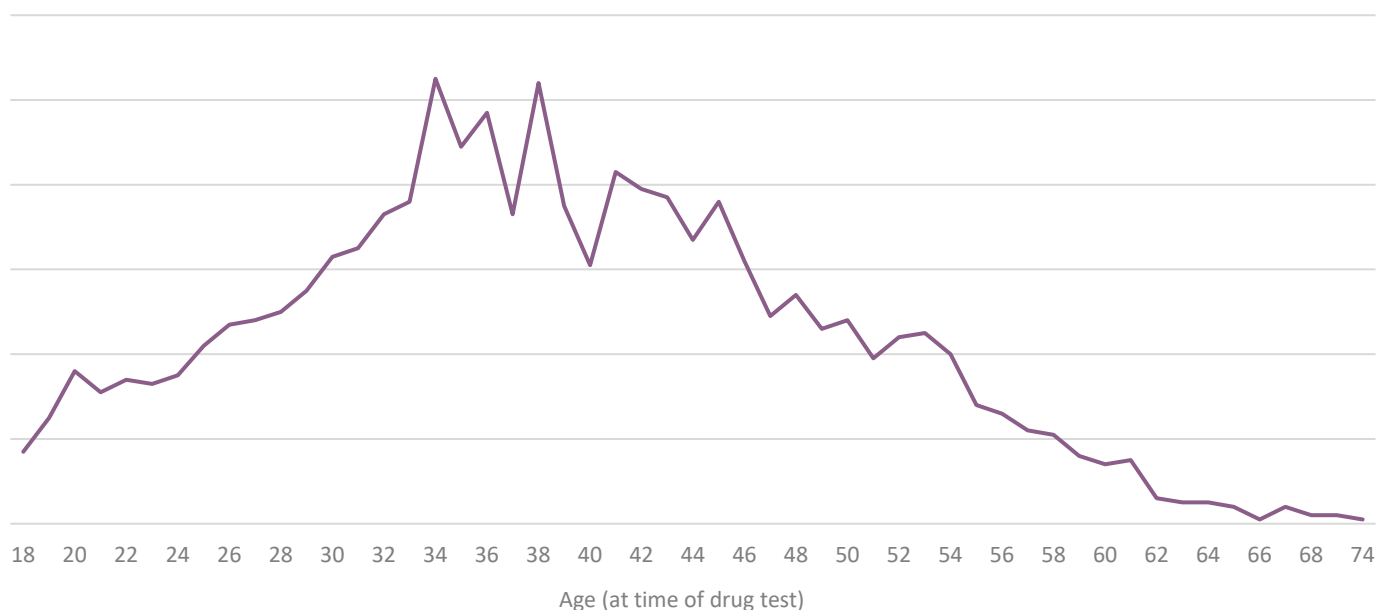
Men accounted for just over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside's custody suites in the year ending March 2025 (n=1,910, 82.2%). This is similar to the previous year (82.5%) and the second smallest proportion of men of the eight-year period, after 2020/21 (81.2%; *Figure 9*).

Figure 9: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by sex (individuals), 2017/18 - 2024/25¹⁴



Where stated, the majority of individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2025 were White (n=2,203, 94.8%). The average age was 39 years (men = 38.8, women = 38.9), which is an increase on the previous year (37 years), and numbers peaked for individuals aged 34 years (n=105) and 38 years (n=104; *Figure 10*).

Figure 10: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test (individuals), 2024/25¹⁵



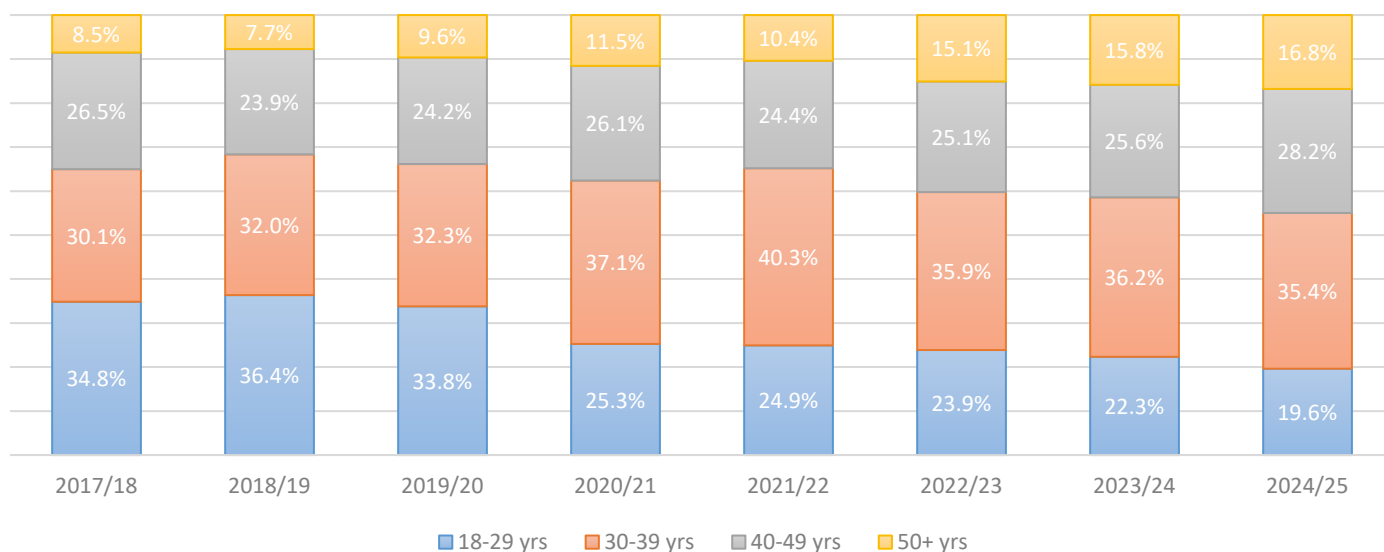
¹⁴ There were two records that did not specify the individual's sex in 2024/25.

¹⁵ There were eight records that did not have the age or date of birth recorded.

Just over one-third of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2025 were aged 30-39 years (n=822, 35.4%), followed by just under three in ten aged 40-49 years (n=655, 28.2%), one in five aged 18-29 years (n=456, 19.6%) and one in six aged 50 years or over (n=390, 16.8%; *Figure 11*).

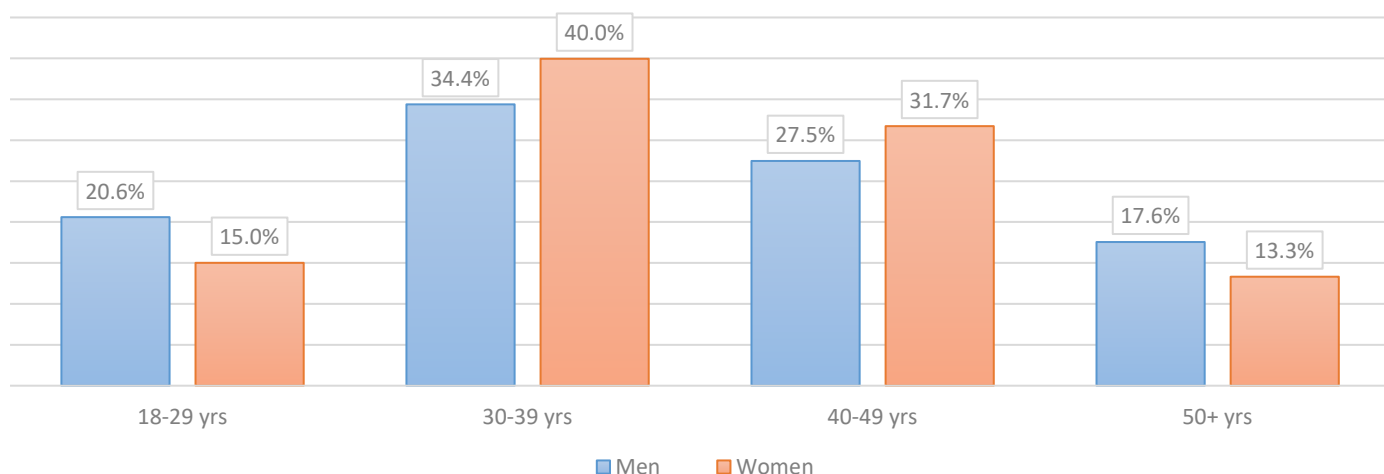
Since 2018/19, the proportion of individuals aged 18-29 years decreased year-on-year to the smallest proportion of the eight-year period. Conversely, the proportion aged 50 years or over increased year-on-year since 2021/22, with the latest year having the largest proportion of the eight-year period. Furthermore, the proportion aged 30-39 years in 2024/25 is similar to the previous two years, while the proportion aged 40-49 years increased slightly in 2024/25 to the largest proportion of the eight-year period (*Figure 11*).

Figure 11: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group (individuals), 2017/18 - 2024/25¹⁶



There are some variations when looking at the age groups by gender in the year ending March 2025 (*Figure 12*). There were larger proportions of men than women aged 18-29 years (20.6% and 15.0% respectively) and 50 years or over (17.6% and 13.3% respectively), though larger proportions of women than men aged 30-39 years (40.0% and 34.4% respectively) and 40-49 years (31.7% and 27.5% respectively).

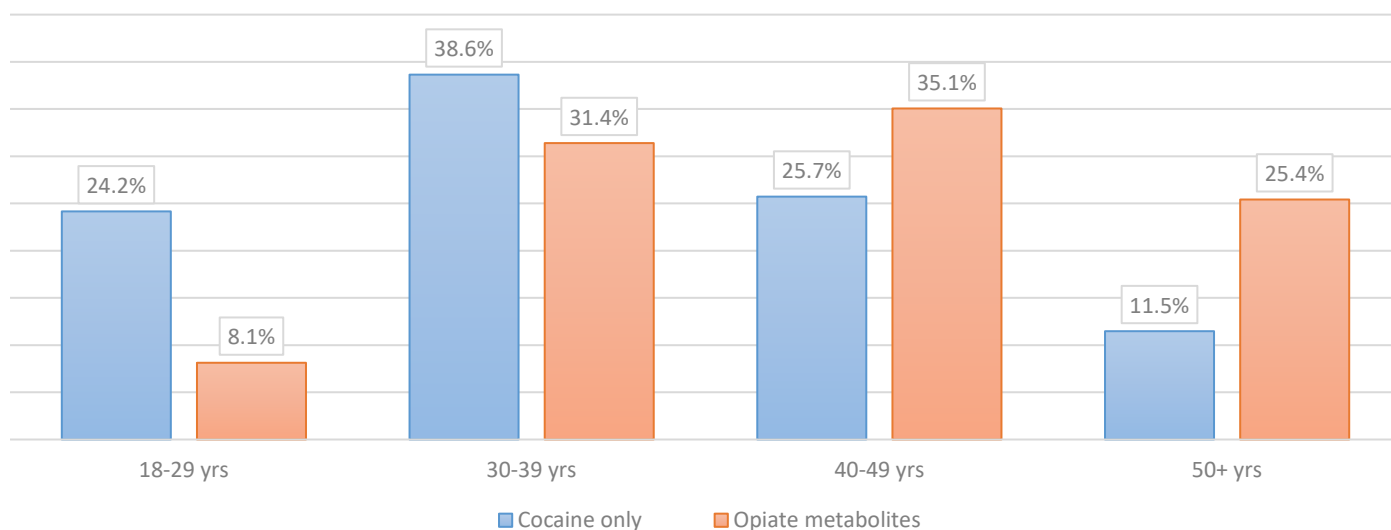
Figure 12: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and sex (individuals), 2024/25



¹⁶ Although there were eight records that did not have a date of birth recorded, seven of these had the age group recorded.

Positive drug test results in 2024/25 are categorised by age group in *Figure 13*. Of the people who tested positive for cocaine only, around two in five (38.6%) were aged 30-39 years, while around a quarter were aged 18-29 years and 40-49 years (24.2% and 25.7% respectively). Positive tests for opiate metabolites peaked for those aged 40-49 years (35.1%), followed by 30-39 years (31.4%) and 50 years or over (25.4%).

Figure 13: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, 2024/25



MERSEYSIDE RESIDENTS¹⁷

There were 189.1 per 100,000 adult population in Merseyside who tested positive for specified Class A drugs in the year ending March 2025 (*Figure 14*), compared to 171.7 per 100,000 population in the previous year. Of the five LA areas, Liverpool residents had the highest rate (323.5 per 100,000), followed by residents of St Helens (221.0), Knowsley (213.7), Sefton (202.4) and Wirral (185.7).

Figure 14: Rates of positive drug tests per 100,000 adult population across Merseyside by LA of residence (individuals), 2024/25¹⁸

LA of residence	Positive drug tests (individuals)	
	Number	Rate (per 100,000 adult population)
Knowsley	265	213.7
Liverpool	1319	323.5
Sefton	463	202.4
St Helens	329	221.0
Wirral	481	185.7
Total Merseyside residents	2,209	189.1



¹⁷ The following sections provide figures for residents of each of the five Merseyside areas. Where comparisons have been made with Merseyside figures, these are totals for Merseyside residents only and not totals of tests carried out by Merseyside Police, which include all residents.

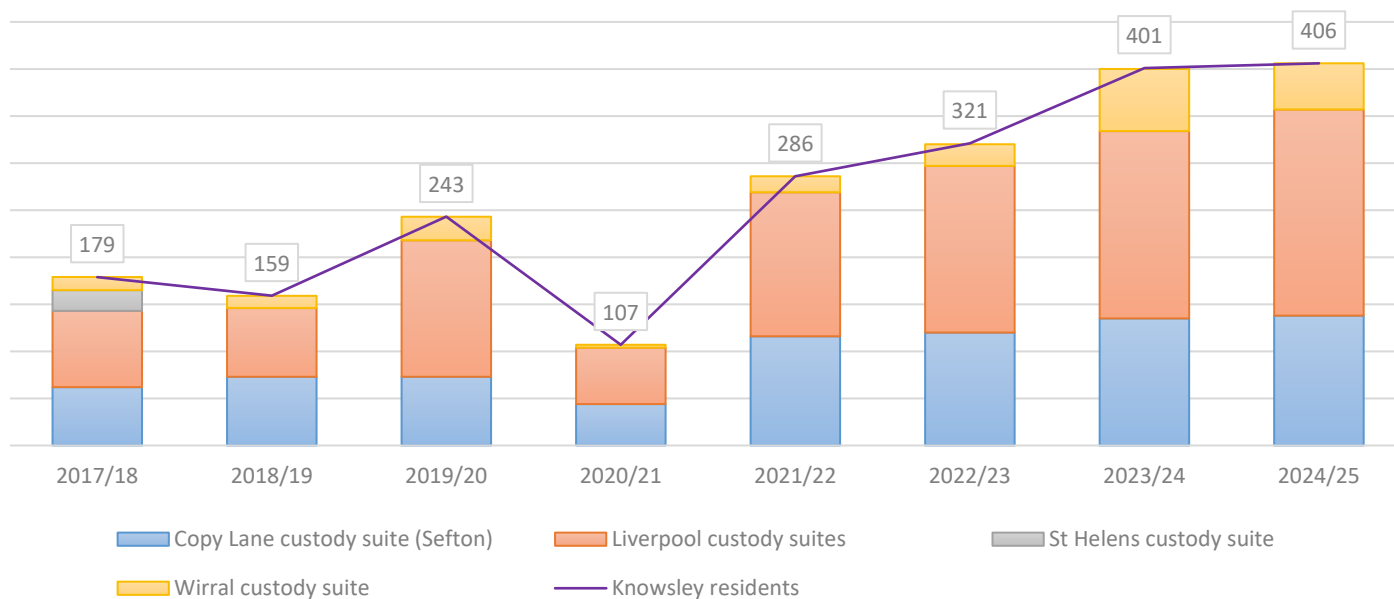
¹⁸ Note that the total number of Merseyside residents (n=2,209) is less than the summation of the five LAs (n=2,857). This is because a number of individuals with multiple drug tests have different LAs recorded. Rates per 100,000 adult population have been calculated using [mid-2023 population estimates](#).

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2025, there were 406 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Knowsley residents across Merseyside Police's custody suites, representing around one in ten (9.7%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is similar to the 401 attempted tests in the previous year (1% increase) and the highest number of tests of the eight years shown in *Figure 15*¹⁹.

On average, just over half (52.4%) of the attempted drug tests on Knowsley residents were carried out at a Liverpool custody suite during the eight-year period, followed by just under two in five (37.2%) at Copy Lane custody suite in Sefton (*Figure 15*).

Figure 15: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Knowsley residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 16 shows the drug testing activity for Knowsley residents drug tested in Merseyside Police's custody suites in the year ending March 2025. Of the 406 attempted drug tests, 399 were successful and subsequently 265 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Around two-thirds (66.4%) of the successful drugs tests carried out by Merseyside Police between April 2024 and March 2025 resulted in a positive test.

Just over seven in ten of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=190, 71.7%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 69, 26.0%; opiates only = 6, 2.3%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 244 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 209 individuals in the year ending March 2025.

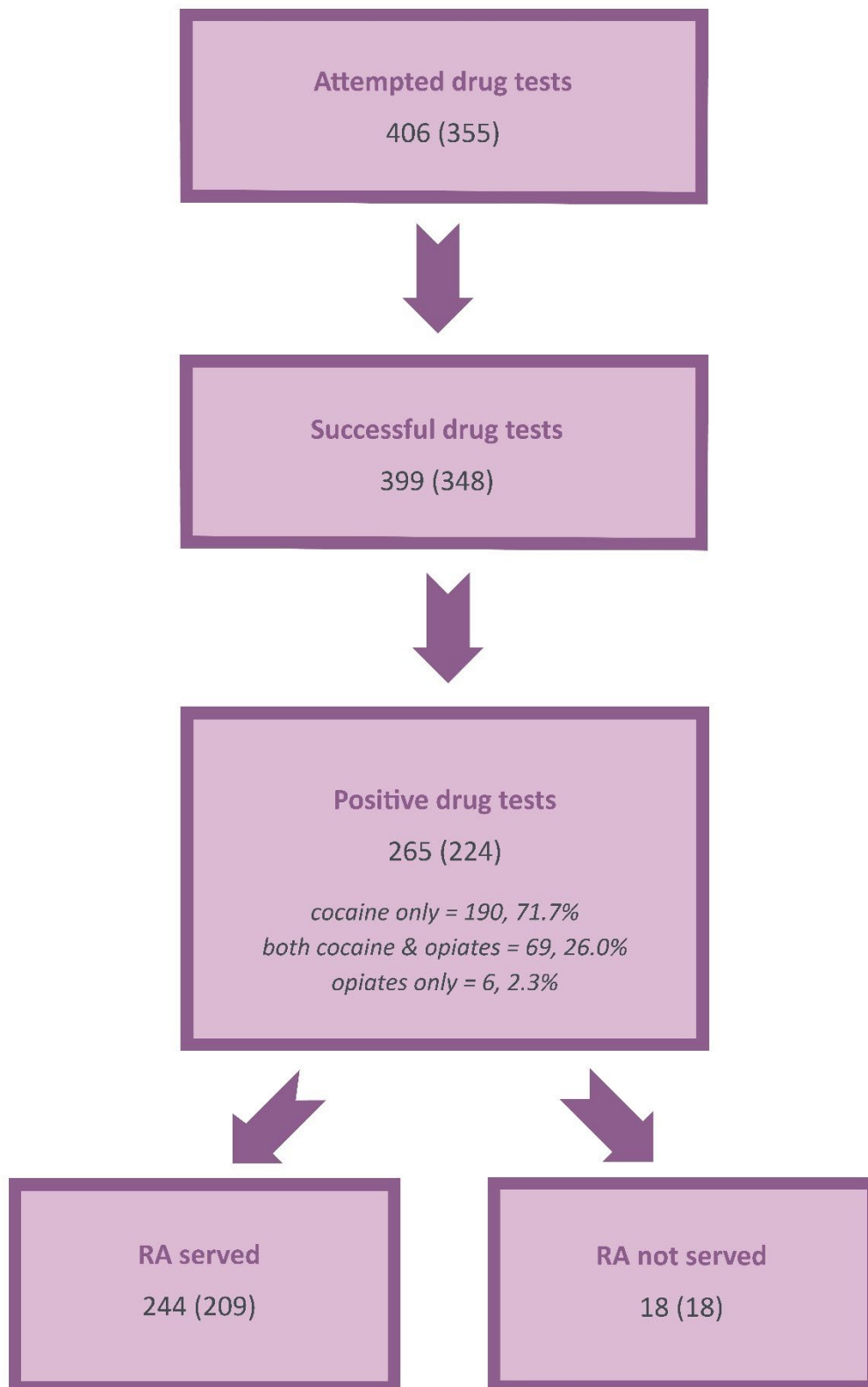


72%

of positive tests were cocaine only
(powder/crack)

¹⁹ Note that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence in some years may be affecting these trends.

Figure 16: Drug testing activity, Knowsley residents, 2024/25²⁰

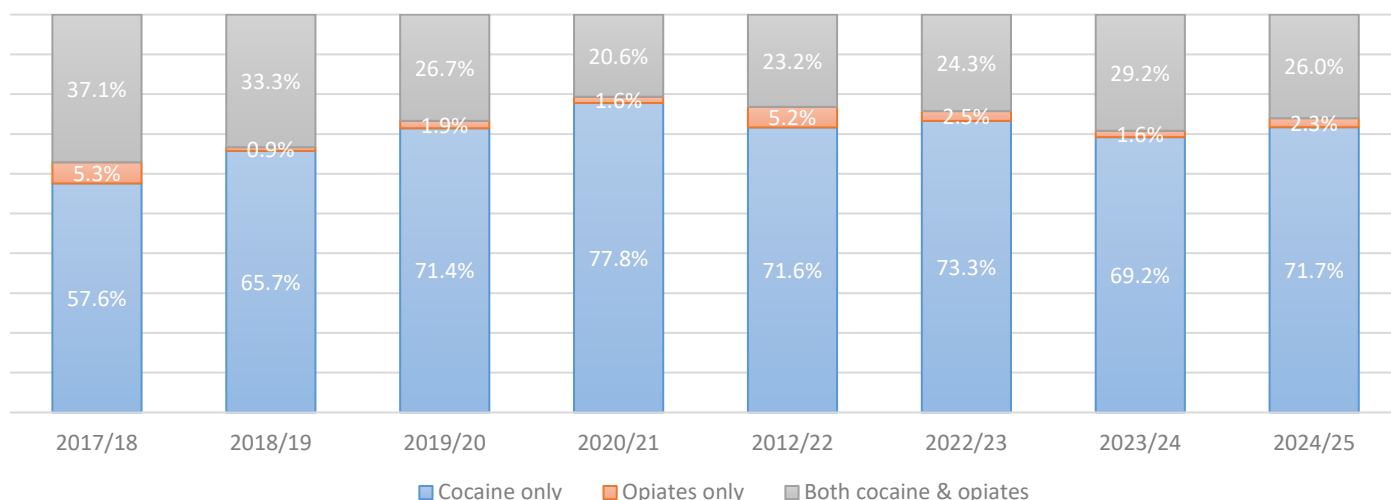


²⁰ There were four tests refused and three unsuccessful tests.

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 17*. There were slight increases in the proportions of cocaine only and opiates only positive tests in the year ending March 2025, when compared to the previous year, while a decrease in both cocaine and opiates. Notably, Knowsley had the largest proportions of cocaine only positive tests recorded of the five Merseyside areas in all eight years (all Merseyside residents combined in 2024/25: 57.1%).

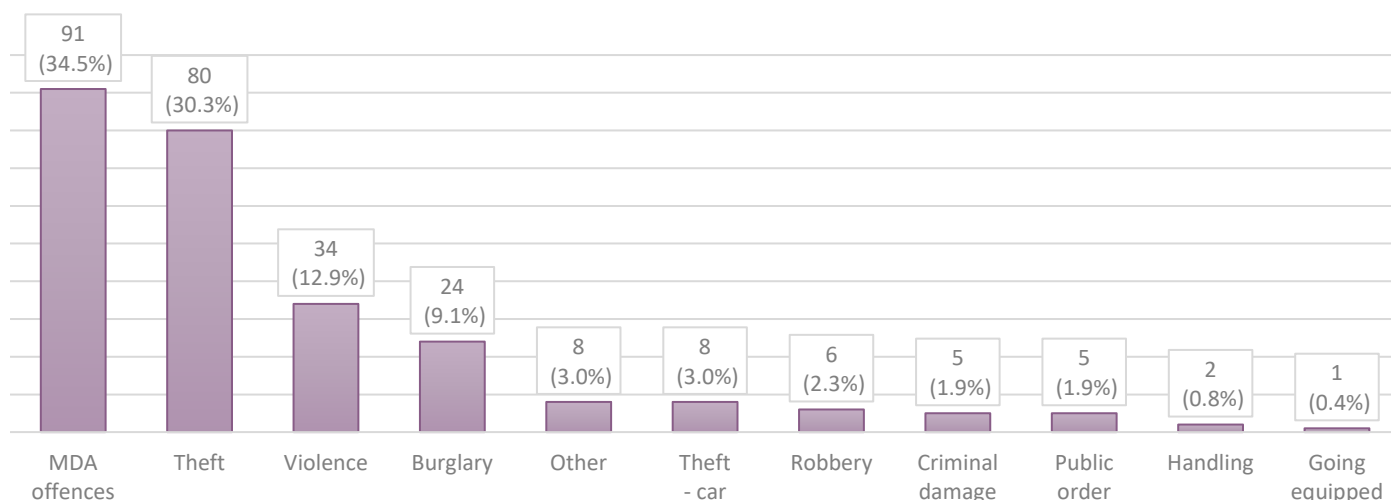
Figure 17: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Knowsley residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



OFFENCES

Around one-third of the positive drug test records for Knowsley residents in the year ending March 2025 reported MDA offences (n=91, 34.5%²¹), while around three in ten reported theft (n=80, 30.3%²²) and one in eight reported violence (n=34, 12.9%; *Figure 18*). When compared to the other Merseyside areas, Knowsley had the largest proportion of violence (total Merseyside residents: 8.6%).

Figure 18: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Knowsley residents, 2024/25²³



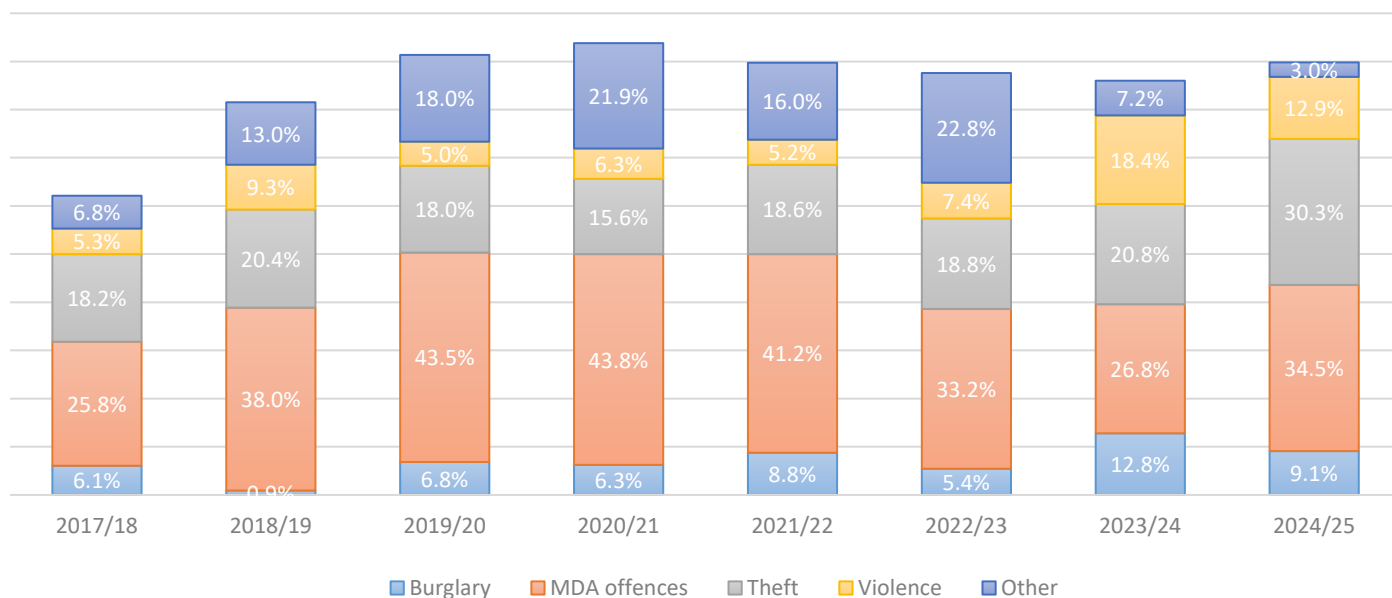
²¹ MDA offences: trafficking = 50, 54.9%; possession = 41, 45.1%.

²² Theft (excludes theft of a motor vehicle): shoplifting = 64, 80.0%.

²³ There was one record that did not have an offence recorded.

Overall, there have been some changes in the trends of burglary, MDA offences, theft, violence and other offences (*Figure 19*). Proportions of MDA offences and theft increased in the year ending March 2025 when compared to the previous year. Notably, the proportion of theft increased year-on-year since 2020/21 to the largest proportion of the eight-year period. Conversely, the proportions of burglary, violence and other offences decreased in 2024/25, with other offences accounting for the smallest proportion of the eight-year period.

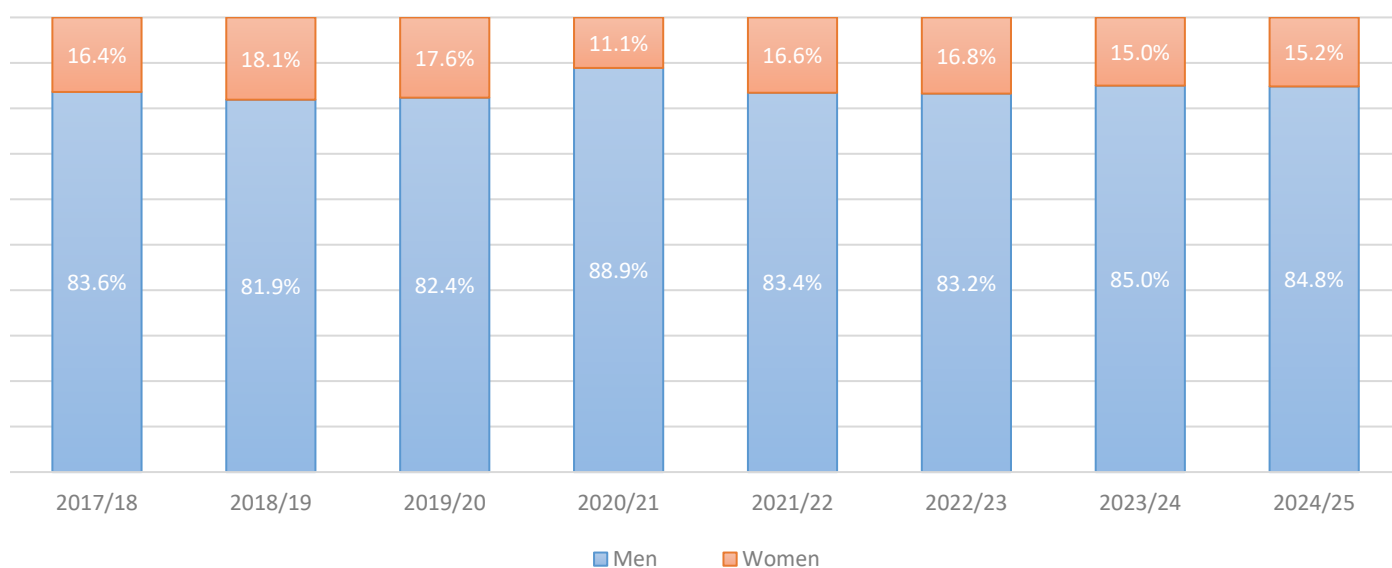
Figure 19: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offending categories, Knowsley residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside Police's custody suites in the year ending March 2025 (n=190, 84.8%; *Figure 20*). This is similar to the eight-year average (84.2%) and notably, Knowsley and St Helens had the largest proportions of men across Merseyside in 2024/25 (total Merseyside residents: 82.3%).

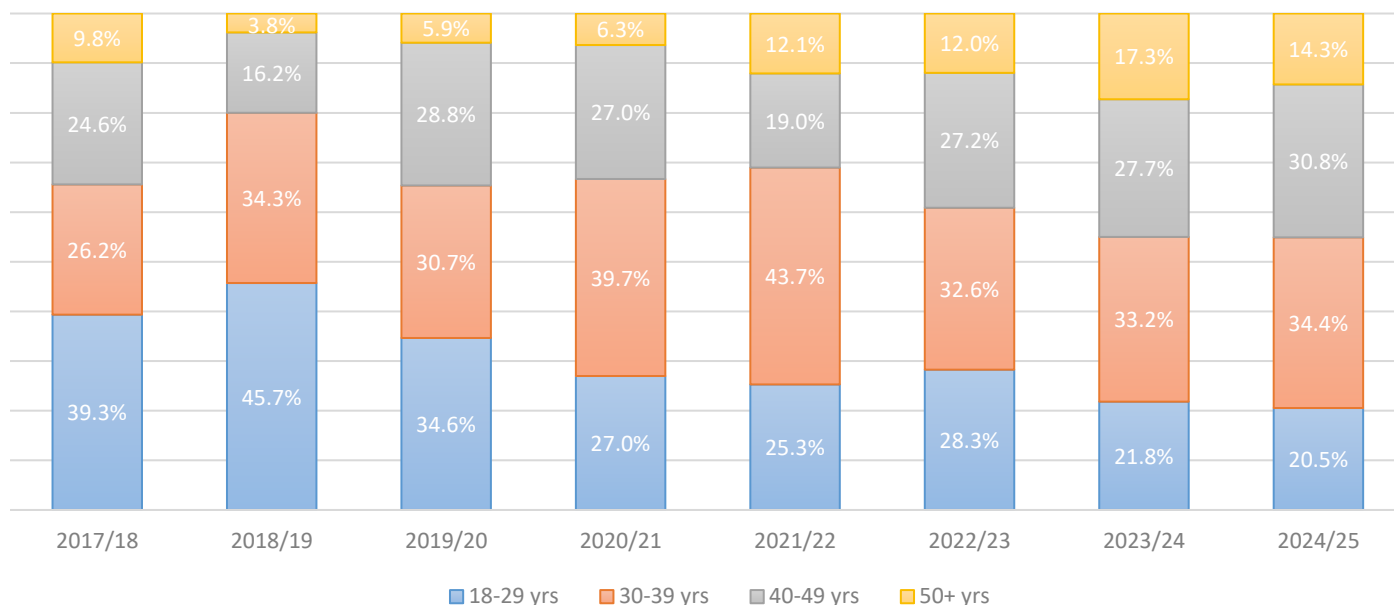
Figure 20: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by sex, Knowsley residents (individuals), 2017/18 - 2024/25



The average age of Knowsley residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 was 38 years (men = 37.9, women = 40.6), which is the same as the previous twelve-month period.

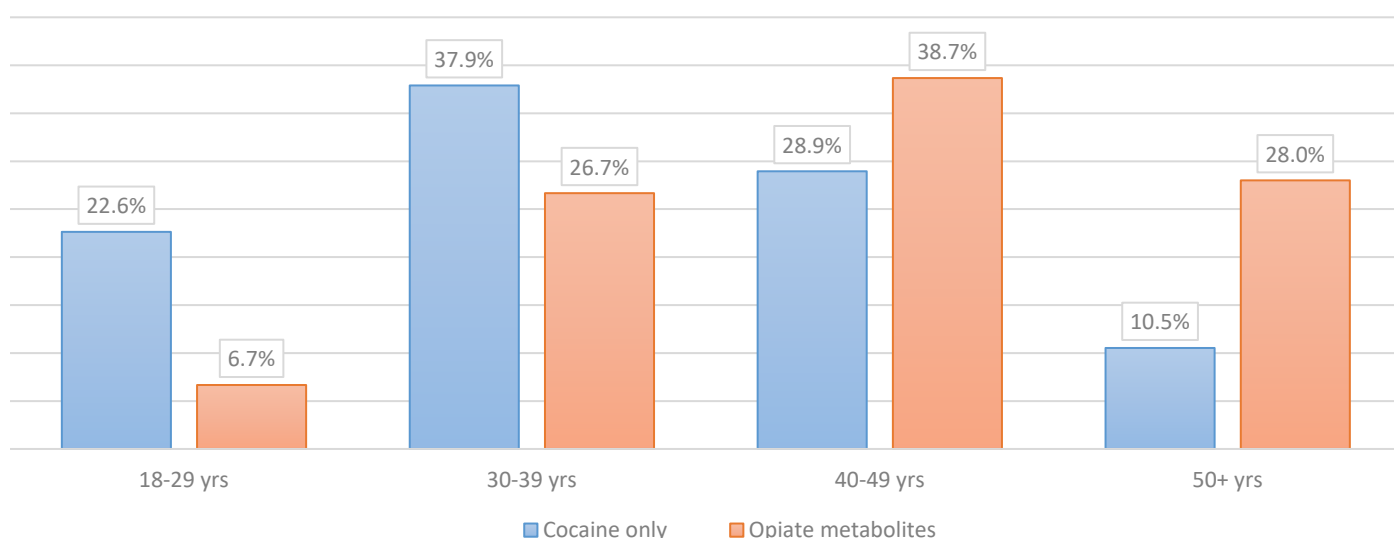
Around a third of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2025 were aged 30-39 years (n=77, 34.4%), followed by around three in ten aged 40-49 years (n=69, 30.8%), around one in five aged 18-29 years (n=46, 20.5%) and one in seven aged 50 years or over (n=32, 14.3%; *Figure 21*). Proportions of individuals aged 18-29 years and 50 years or over decreased in 2024/25 when compared to the previous year, while proportions aged 30-39 years and 40-49 years increased. Notably, Knowsley and Liverpool accounted for the largest proportions of 40-49 year olds when compared to the other Merseyside areas (total Merseyside residents: 28.8%).

Figure 21: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Knowsley residents (individuals), 2017/18 - 2024/25



In the year ending March 2025, of the Knowsley residents who tested positive for cocaine only, just under two in five (37.9%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by around three in ten (28.9%) aged 40-49 years and just under a quarter (22.6%) aged 18-29 years (*Figure 22*). While around two in five (38.7%) who tested positive for opiate metabolites were aged 40-49 years, followed by just under three in ten (28.0%) aged 50 years or over and just over one-quarter (26.7%) aged 30-39 years.

Figure 22: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Knowsley residents, 2024/25

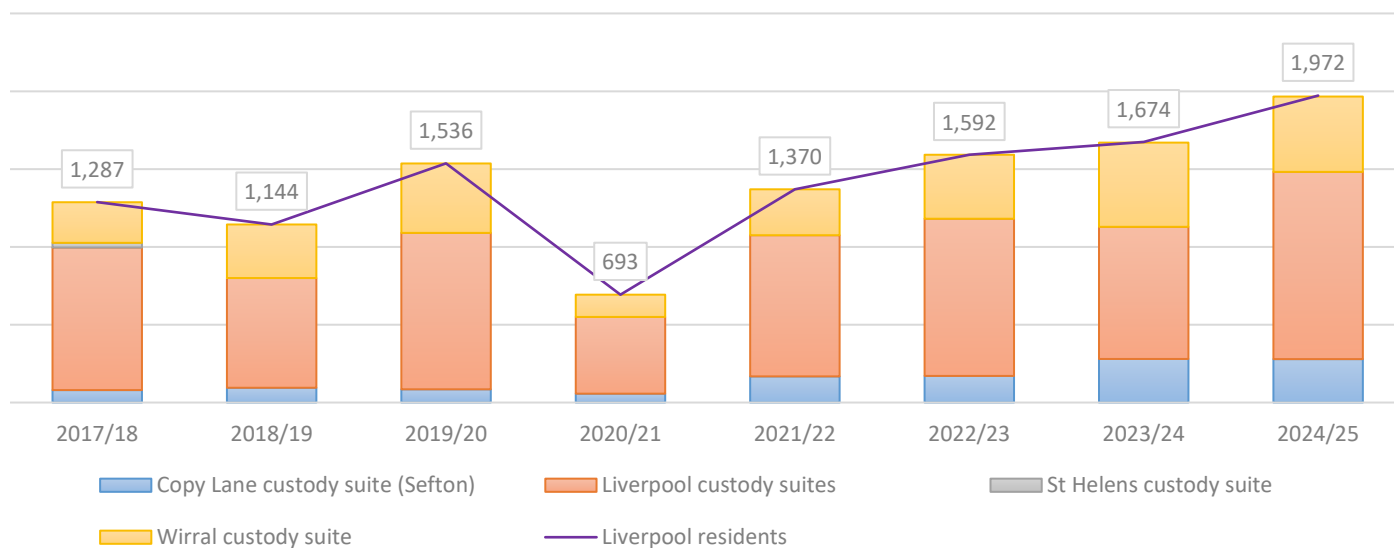


OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2025, there were 1,972 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Liverpool residents across Merseyside Police's custody suites, representing just under half (47.1%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is an 18% increase on the 1,674 attempted tests in the previous year and the highest number of tests of the eight years shown in *Figure 23*²⁴.

On average, just under two in three (63.9%) attempted drug tests on Liverpool residents were carried out at a Liverpool custody suite during the eight-year period, followed by one-quarter (25.5%) at Wirral custody suite and one in ten (10.3%) at Copy Lane custody suite in Sefton (*Figure 23*).

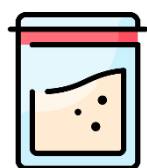
*Figure 23: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Liverpool residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25*²⁵



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 26 shows the drug testing activity for Liverpool residents drug tested in Merseyside Police's custody suites in the year ending March 2025. Of the 1,972 attempted drug tests, 1,916 were successful and subsequently 1,319 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Around seven in ten (68.8%) of the successful tests carried out by Merseyside Police between April 2024 and March 2025 resulted in a positive test.

Over half of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=704, 53.4%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 585, 44.4%; opiates only = 29, 2.2%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 1,232 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 940 individuals in the year ending March 2025.



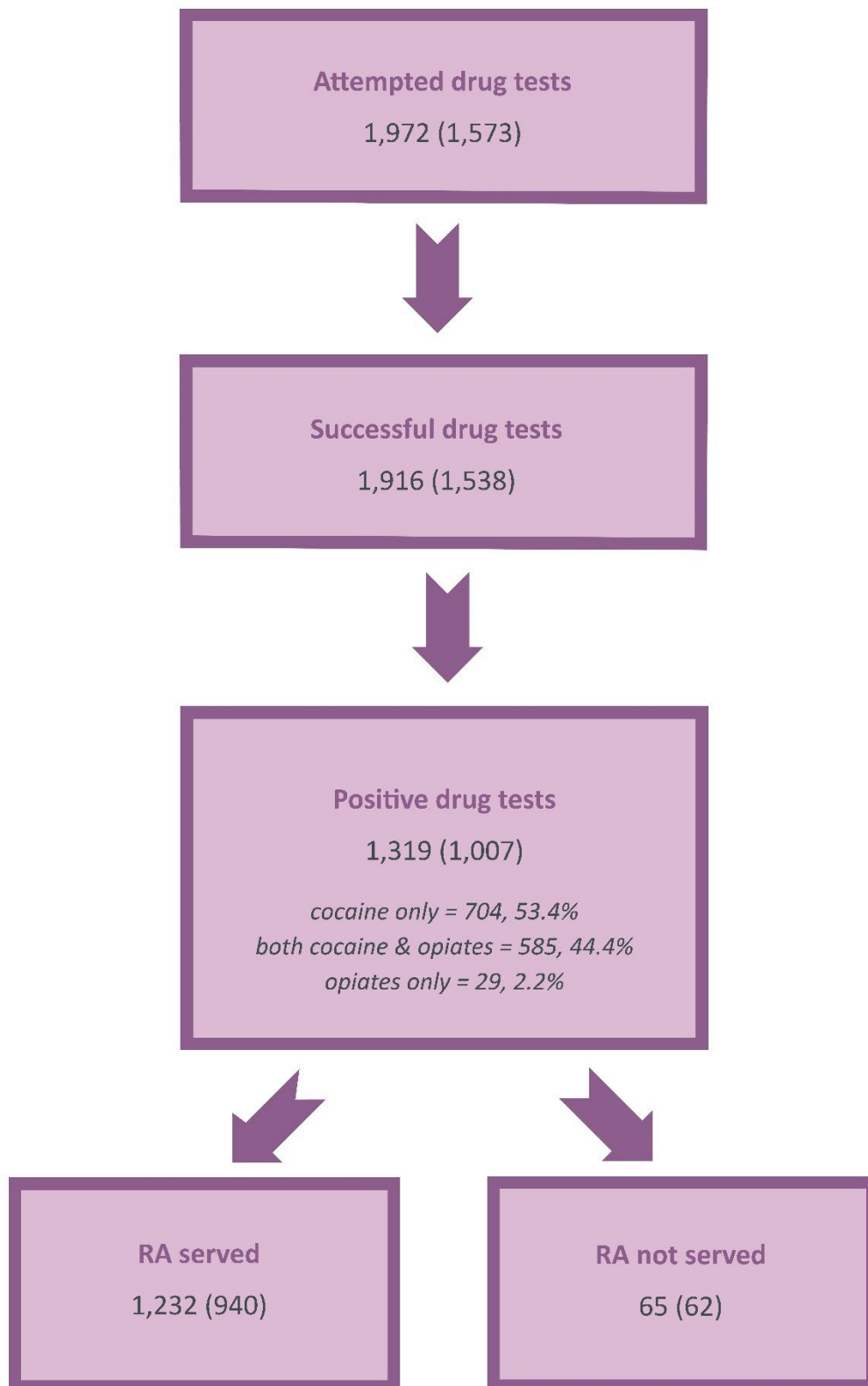
53%

of positive tests were cocaine only
(powder/crack)

²⁴ Note that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence in some years may be affecting these trends.

²⁵ There were six records in 2024/25 that did not specify the custody suite where the test was conducted.

Figure 24: Drug testing activity, Liverpool residents, 2024/25²⁶

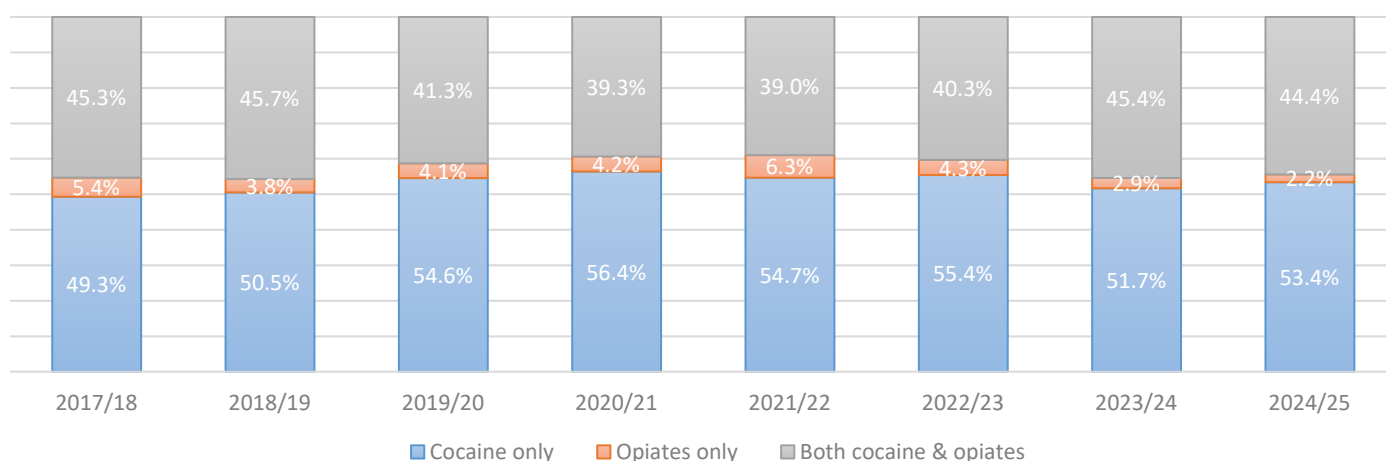


²⁶ There were 30 tests refused and 26 unsuccessful tests; one record where the result of the test was not known and one positive drug test record that did not indicate the drug(s) detected; and three records did not indicate whether an RA was served.

POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

In 2017/18, there were larger proportions of opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates) than cocaine only for Liverpool residents, while there have been larger proportions of cocaine only than opiate metabolites in subsequent years (*Figure 25*). Although the proportion of cocaine only positive tests increased in 2024/25 when compared to the previous year, it is the smallest of the five Merseyside areas (all Merseyside residents combined: 57.1%). Notably, Liverpool residents accounted for the largest proportion testing positive for both cocaine and opiates across Merseyside in the year ending March 2025 (total Merseyside residents: 39.5%).

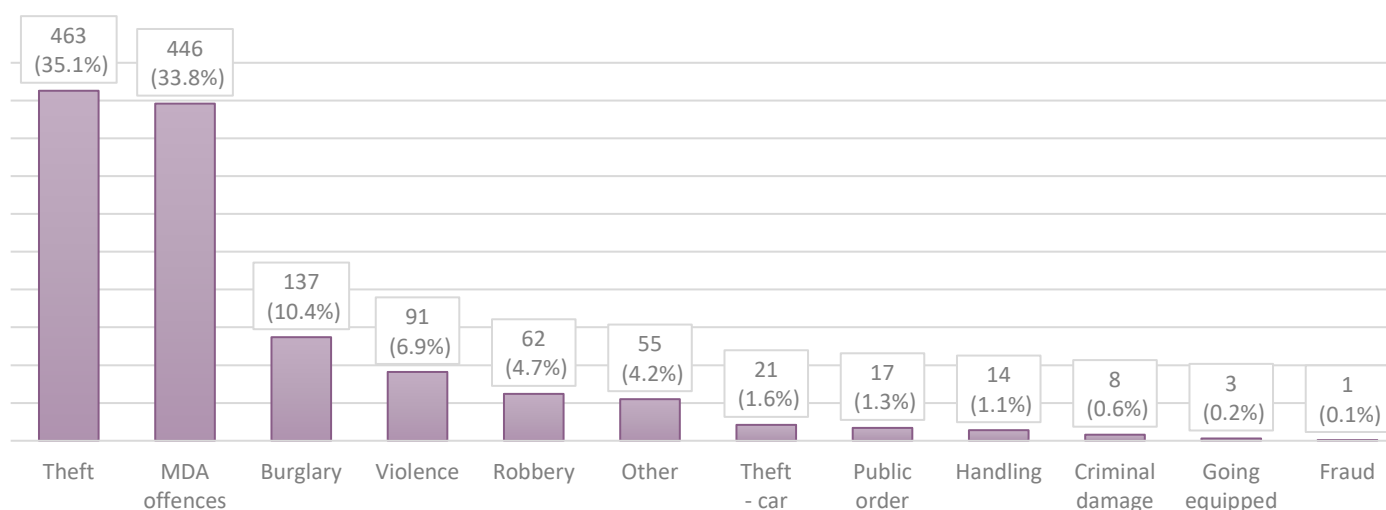
Figure 25: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Liverpool residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



OFFENCES

Theft (n=463, 35.1%²⁷) and MDA offences (n=446, 33.8%²⁸) accounted for the largest proportions of Liverpool residents who tested positive for specified Class A drugs in the year ending March 2025 (*Figure 26*). Notably, Liverpool had the largest proportion of theft recorded across Merseyside (Merseyside residents: 30.5%), though the smallest proportions of MDA offences and violence when compared to the remaining four Merseyside areas (total Merseyside residents: 35.2% and 8.6% respectively).

Figure 26: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Liverpool residents, 2024/25²⁹



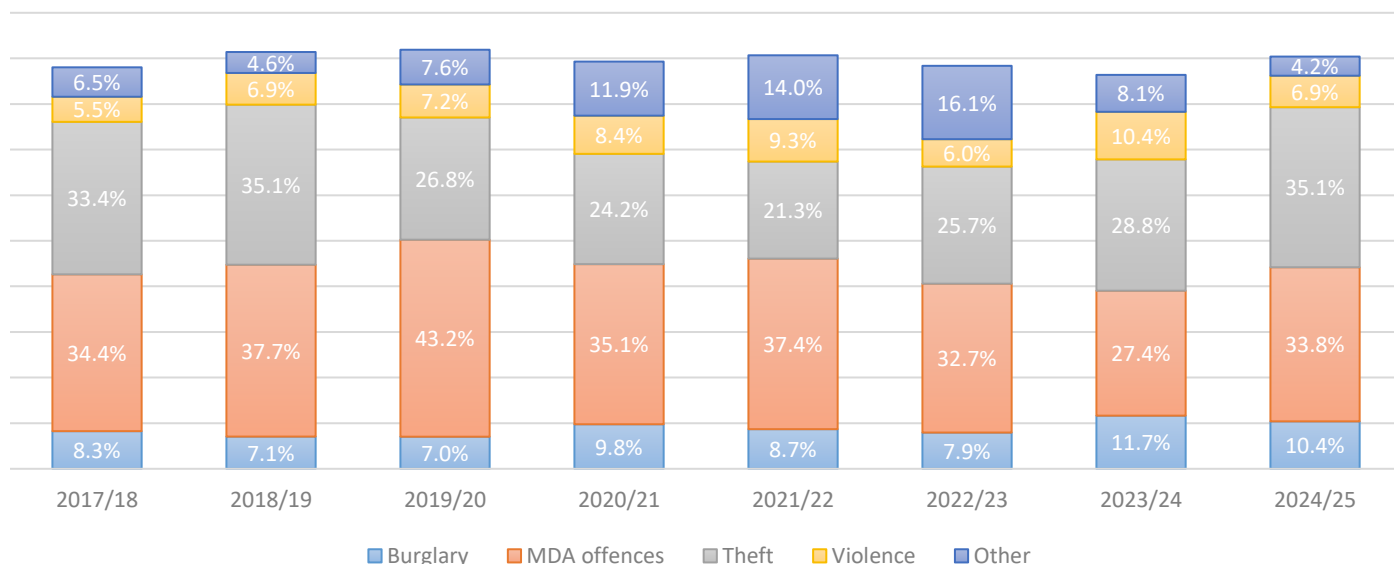
²⁷ Theft (excludes theft of a motor vehicle): shoplifting = 366, 79.0%.

²⁸ MDA offences: trafficking = 250, 56.2%; possession = 195, 43.8%.

²⁹ There was one record that did not have an offence recorded.

Notably, there have been some changes in the trends of burglary, MDA offences, theft, violence and other offences (*Figure 27*). Proportions of MDA offences and theft increased in the year ending March 2025 when compared to the previous year. Notably, the proportion of theft increased year-on-year since 2021/22 to the largest proportion of the eight-year period (same as 2018/19). Conversely, the proportions of burglary, violence and other offences decreased in 2024/25, with other offences accounting for the smallest proportion of the eight-year period.

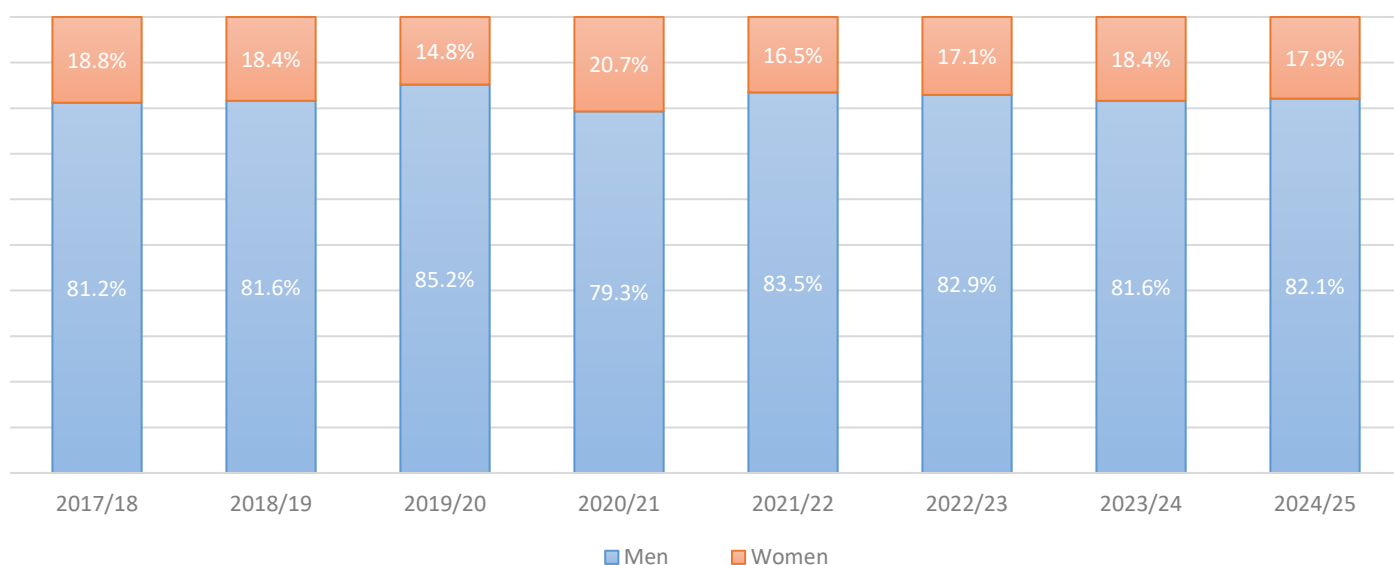
Figure 27: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offending categories, Liverpool residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for just over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside Police's custody suites in the year ending March 2025 (n=826, 82.1%; *Figure 28*), which is both similar to the eight-year average (82.2%) and the Merseyside figure (total Merseyside residents: 82.3%).

Figure 28: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by sex, Liverpool residents (individuals), 2017/18 - 2024/25³⁰

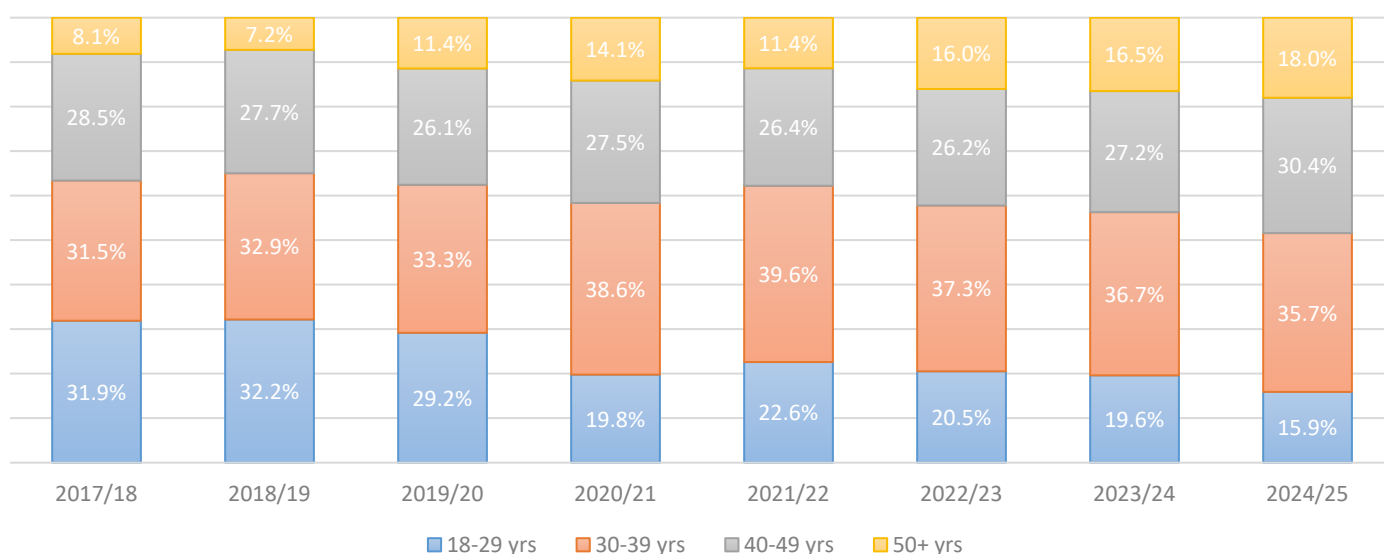


³⁰ There was one record that did not specify the individual's sex.

The average age of Liverpool residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2024 was 40 years (men = 39.9, women = 39.2), which is a slight increase on the previous year (39 years).

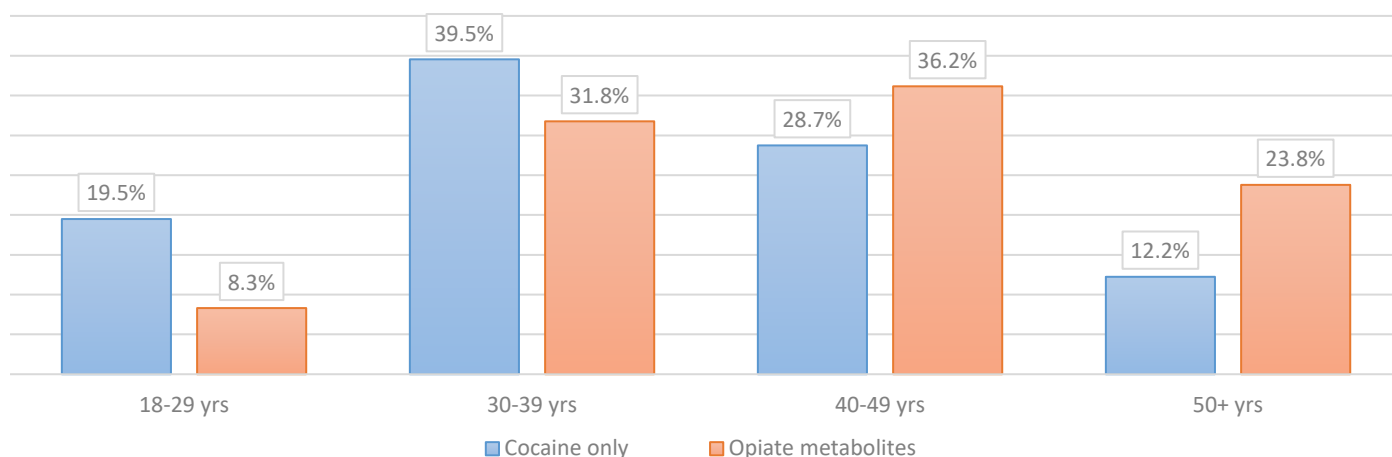
Over a third of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2025 were aged 30-39 years (n=359, 35.7%), followed by three in ten aged 40-49 years (n=306, 30.4%), just under one in five aged 50 years or over (n=181, 18.0%) and around one in six aged 18-29 years (n=160, 15.9%; *Figure 29*). Notably, individuals aged 40-49 years and 50 years or over increased in 2024/25 to the largest proportions during the eight-year period, while the proportion of individuals aged 18-29 years decreased in 2024/25 to the smallest of the eight years. Furthermore, Liverpool accounted for the smallest proportion aged 18-29 years in 2024/25 when compared to the other Merseyside areas (total Merseyside residents: 18.6%), while Liverpool and Knowsley accounted for the largest proportions of 40-49 year olds (total Merseyside residents: 28.8%).

Figure 29: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Liverpool residents (individuals), 2017/18 - 2024/25³¹



In the year ending March 2025, of the Liverpool residents who tested positive for cocaine only, two in five (39.5%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by just under three in ten (28.7%) aged 40-49 years and one in five (19.5%) aged 18-29 years (*Figure 30*). While just under two in five (36.2%) who tested positive opiate metabolites were aged 40-49 years, followed by around one-third (31.8%) aged 30-39 years and around one-quarter (23.8%) aged 50 years or over.

Figure 30: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Liverpool residents, 2024/25



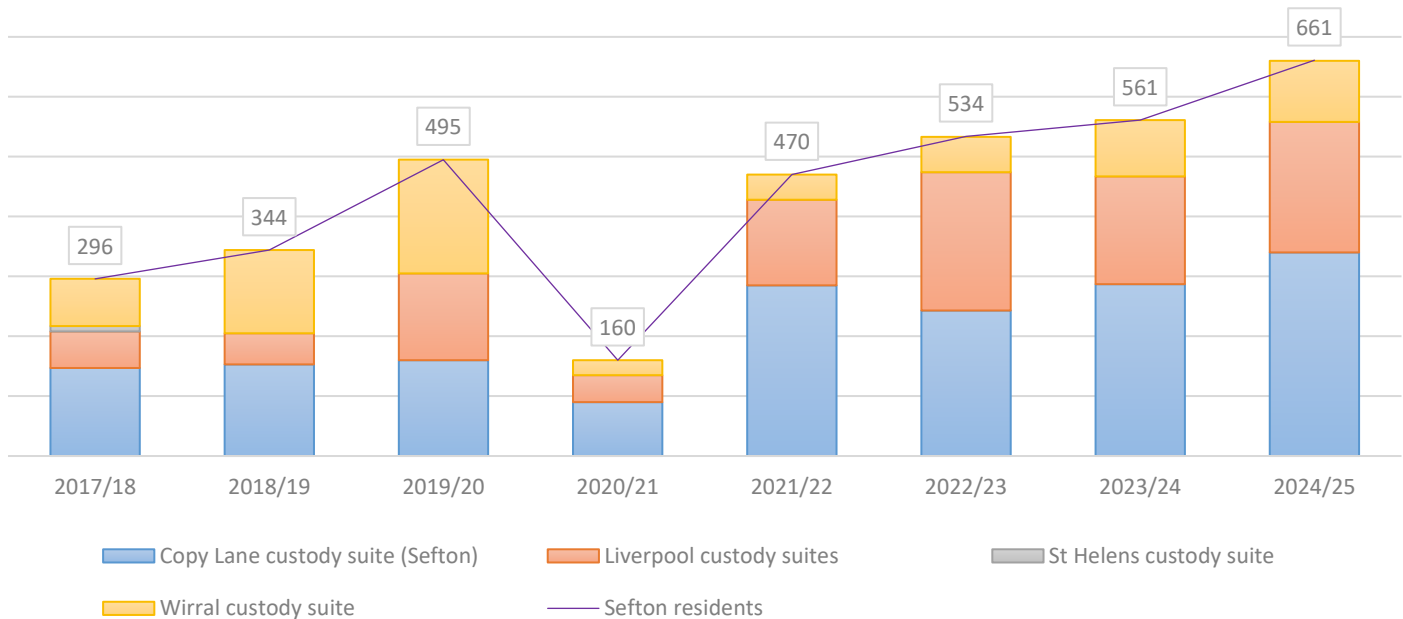
³¹ There was one record that did not have the age or date of birth recorded.

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2025, there were 661 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Sefton residents across Merseyside Police's custody suites, representing around one in six (15.8%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is a 17.8% increase on the 561 attempted tests in the previous year and the highest number of tests of the eight years shown in *Figure 31*³².

On average, around half (49.0%) of the attempted drug tests on Sefton residents were carried out at Copy Lane custody suite in Sefton during the eight-year period, followed by Liverpool custody suites (29.0%) and Wirral custody suite (21.7%; *Figure 31*).

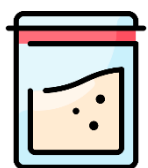
Figure 31: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Sefton residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 32 shows the drug testing activity for Sefton residents drug tested in Merseyside Police's custody suites in the year ending March 2025. Of the 661 attempted drug tests, 650 were successful and subsequently 463 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Around seven in ten (71.2%) of the successful tests carried out by Merseyside Police between April 2024 and March 2025 resulted in a positive test.

Three in five positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=276, 60.0%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 163, 35.4%; opiates only = 21, 4.6%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 423 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 333 individuals in the year ending March 2025.

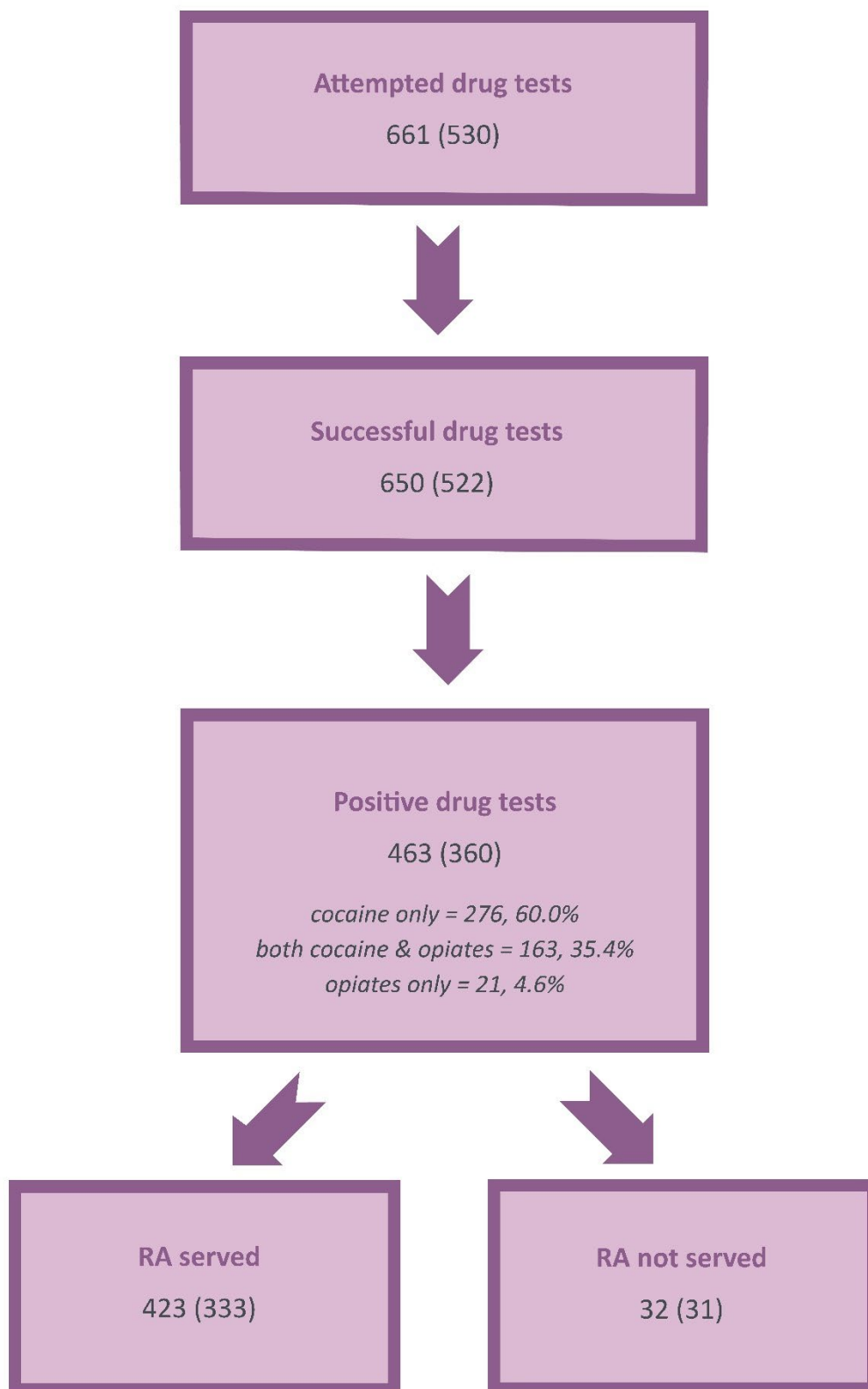


60%

of positive tests were cocaine only
(powder/crack)

³² Note that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence in some years may be affecting these trends.

Figure 32: Drug testing activity, Sefton residents, 2024/25³³

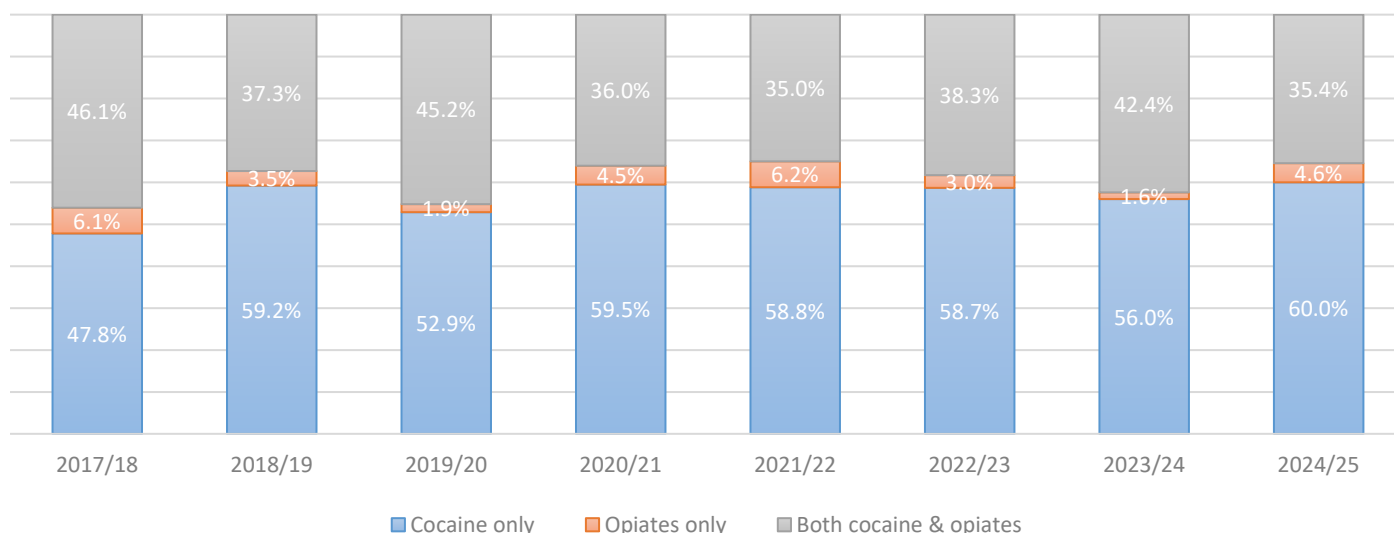


³³ There were four tests refused and seven unsuccessful tests; three positive drug test records that did not indicate the drug(s) detected; and two records did not indicate whether an RA was served.

POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

In 2017/18, there were larger proportions of opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates) than cocaine only for Sefton residents, while there have been larger proportions of cocaine only than opiate metabolites in subsequent years (Figure 33). Notably, the proportion of cocaine only in the year ending March 2025 is the largest of the eight-year period and is larger than the Merseyside total (all Merseyside residents combined in 2024/25: 57.1%).

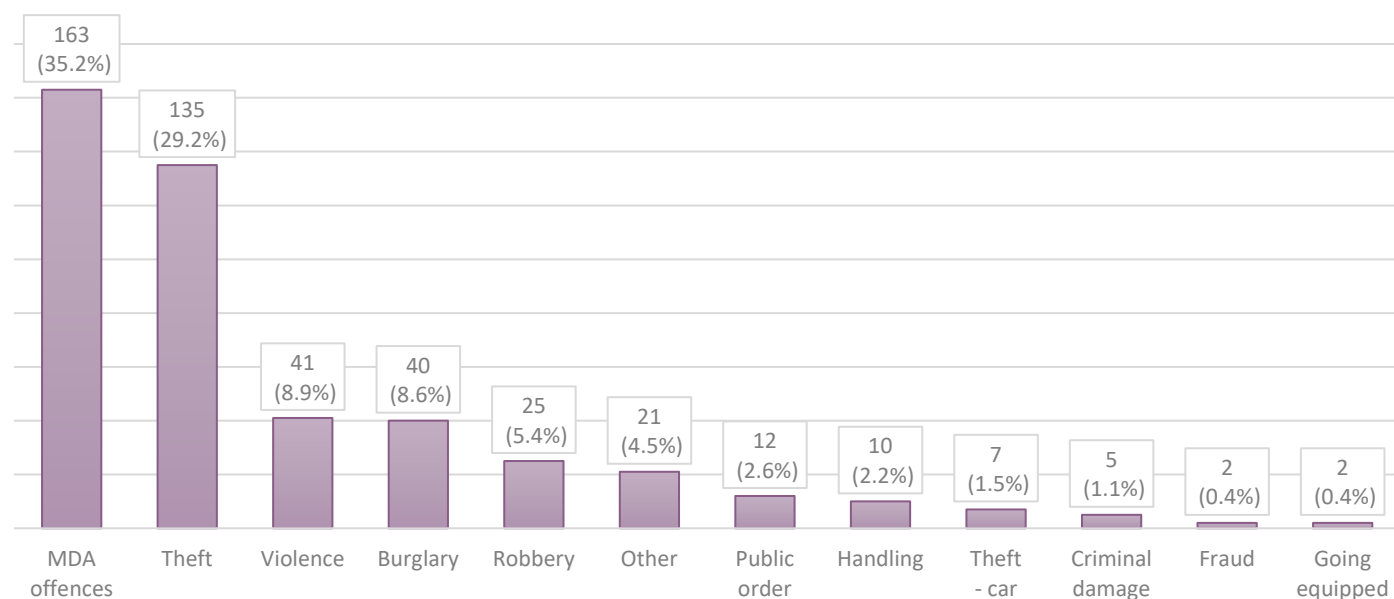
Figure 33: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Sefton residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



OFFENCES

Over one-third of the positive drug test records for Sefton residents in the year ending March 2025 reported MDA offences (n=163, 35.2%³⁴), while around three in ten were theft (n=135, 29.2%³⁵; Figure 34). These proportions are similar to the totals for all Merseyside residents (35.2% and 30.5% respectively).

Figure 34: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Sefton residents, 2024/25

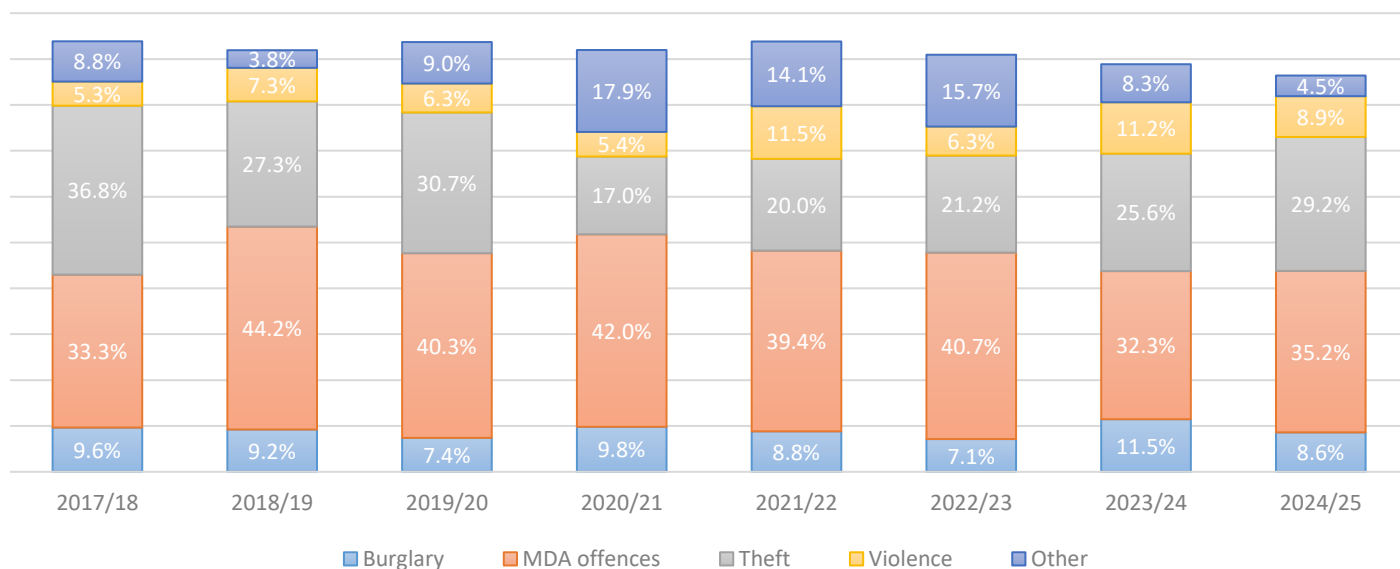


³⁴ MDA offences: trafficking = 113, 69.3%; possession = 50, 30.7%.

³⁵ Theft: shoplifting = 115, 85.2%.

Notably, there have been some changes in the trends of burglary, MDA offences, theft, violence and other offences (*Figure 35*). Proportions of MDA offences and theft increased in the year ending March 2025 when compared to the previous year, while the proportions of burglary, violence and other offences decreased in 2024/25.

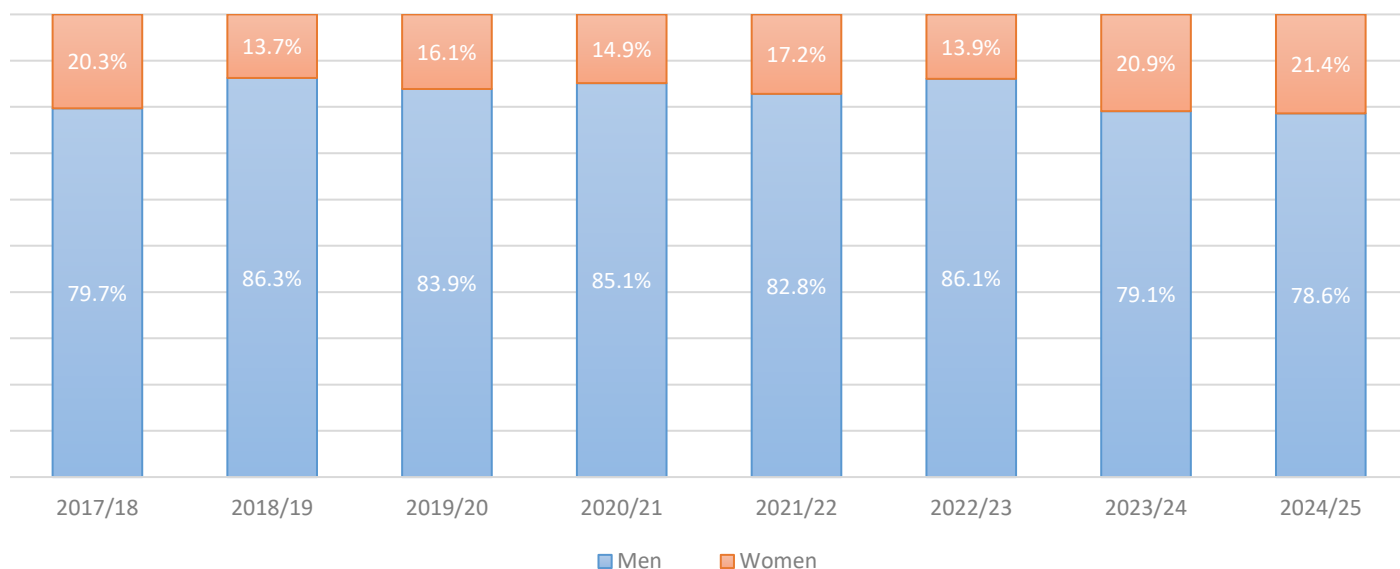
Figure 35: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offending categories, Sefton residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for around four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside Police's custody suites in the year ending March 2025 (n=283, 78.6%). Notably, the proportion of women has increased in 2024/25 and is the largest proportion of the eight-year period (*Figure 36*), as well as the largest proportion of the five Merseyside areas (total Merseyside residents: 17.7%). It is recommended that the increase in women testing positive for specified Class A drugs in Sefton is monitored.

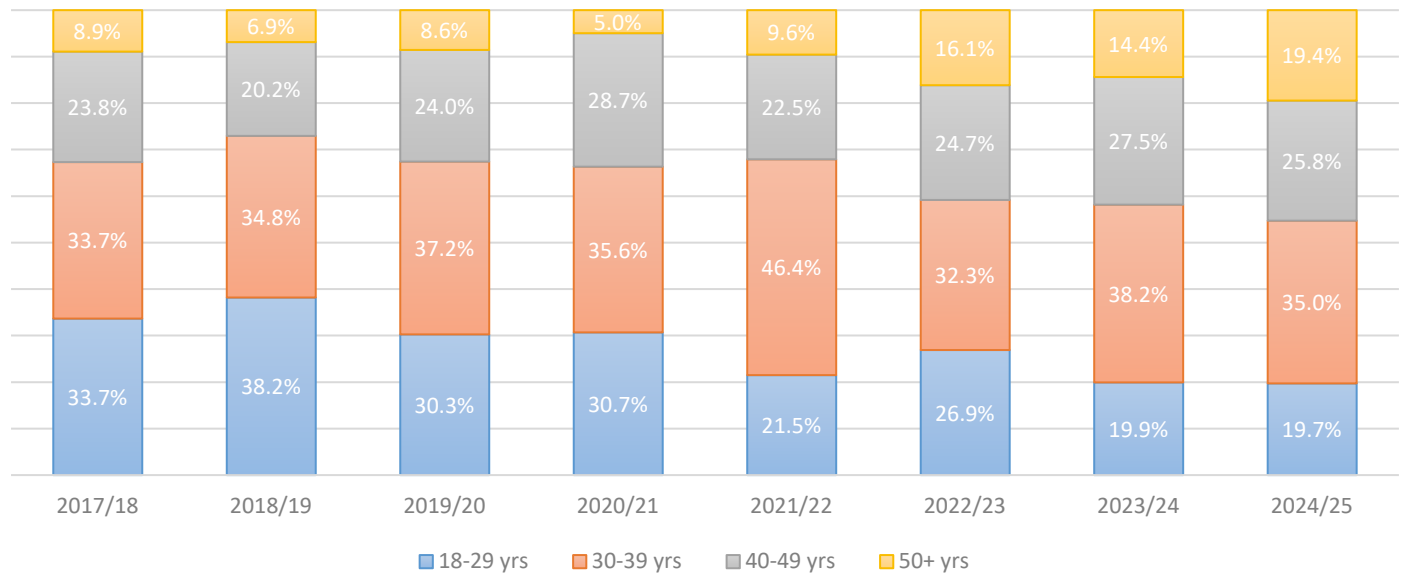
Figure 36: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by sex, Sefton residents (individuals), 2017/18 - 2024/25



The average age of Sefton residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2025 was 39 years (men = 39.3, women = 38.3), which is a slight increase om the previous year (38 years).

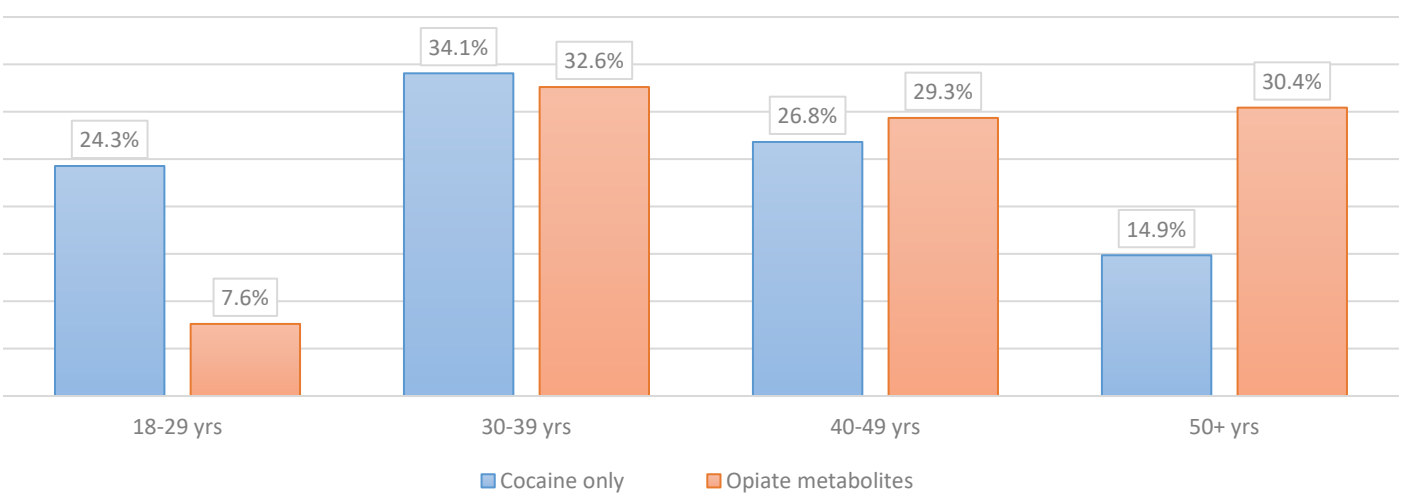
Just over one-third of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2025 were aged 30-39 years (n=126, 35.0%), followed by around one-quarter aged 40-49 years (n=93, 25.8%), and similar proportions aged 18-29 years (n=71, 19.7%) and 50 years or over (n=70, 19.4%; *Figure 37*). The proportion of individuals aged 50 years or over increased substantially in 2024/25 to the largest proportion of the eight-year period and is just above the Merseyside figure (total Merseyside residents: 17.1%). Conversely, the proportion of individuals aged 18-29 years in 2024/25 is the smallest of the eight years (total Merseyside residents: 18.6%).

Figure 37: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Sefton residents (individuals), 2017/18 - 2024/25



In the year ending March 2025, of the Sefton residents who tested positive for cocaine only, around one-third (34.1%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by 40-49 years and 18-29 years (26.8% and 24.3% respectively; *Figure 38*). Similarly, around one-third of the positive tests for opiate metabolites peaked for those aged 30-39 years (32.6%), while clients aged 40-49 years and 50 years or over each accounted for three in ten (29.3% and 30.4% respectively).

Figure 38: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Sefton residents, 2024/25

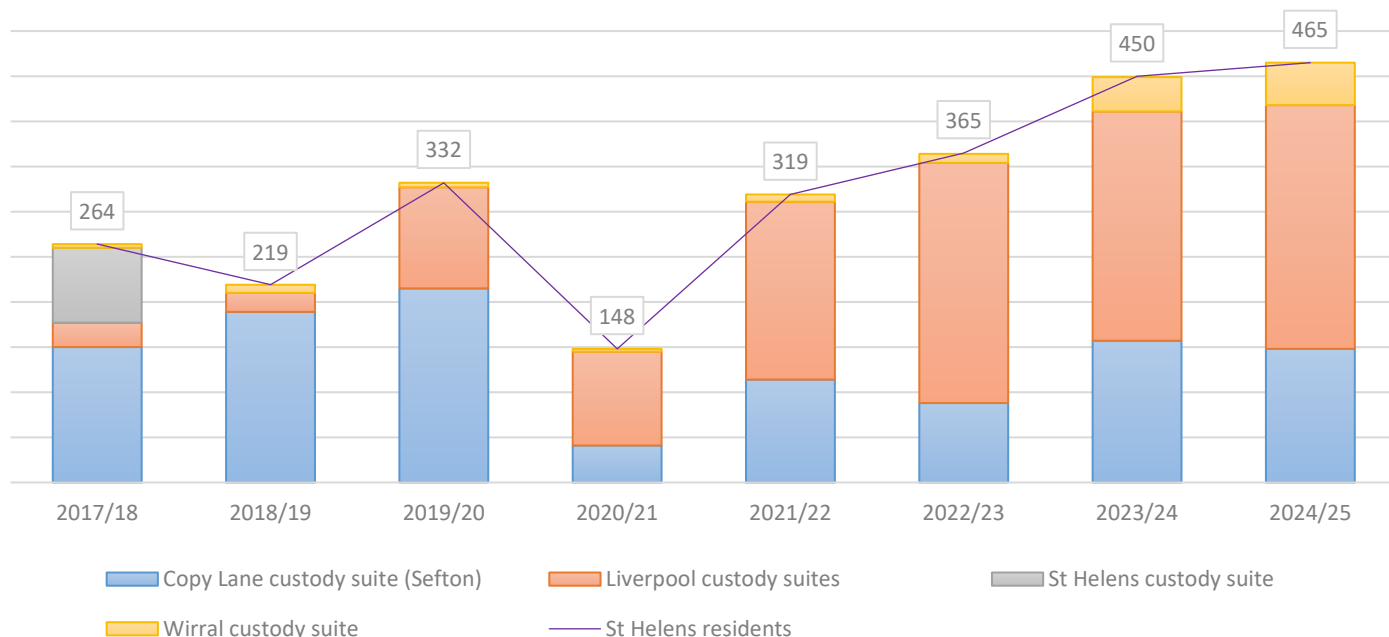


OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2025, there were 465 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on St Helens residents across Merseyside Police's custody suites, representing around one in ten (11.1%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is a 3.3% increase on the 450 attempted tests in the previous year and the highest number of tests of the eight years shown in *Figure 39*³⁶.

Following the closure of St Helens custody suite in 2017, initially, the majority of attempted drug tests on St Helens residents were carried out at Copy Lane custody suite in Sefton. However, since 2020/21, the majority have been at a Liverpool custody suite, accounting for just under three in five (58.1%) in 2024/25 (*Figure 39*).

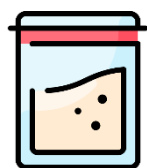
Figure 39: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, St Helens residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 40 shows the drug testing activity for St Helens residents drug tested in Merseyside Police's custody suites in the year ending March 2025. Of the 465 attempted drug tests, 458 were successful and subsequently 329 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Around seven in ten (71.8%) of the successful tests carried out by Merseyside Police between April 2024 and March 2025 resulted in a positive test.

Three in five of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=198, 60.2%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 119, 36.2%; opiates only = 12, 3.6%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 308 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 262 individuals in the year ending March 2025.

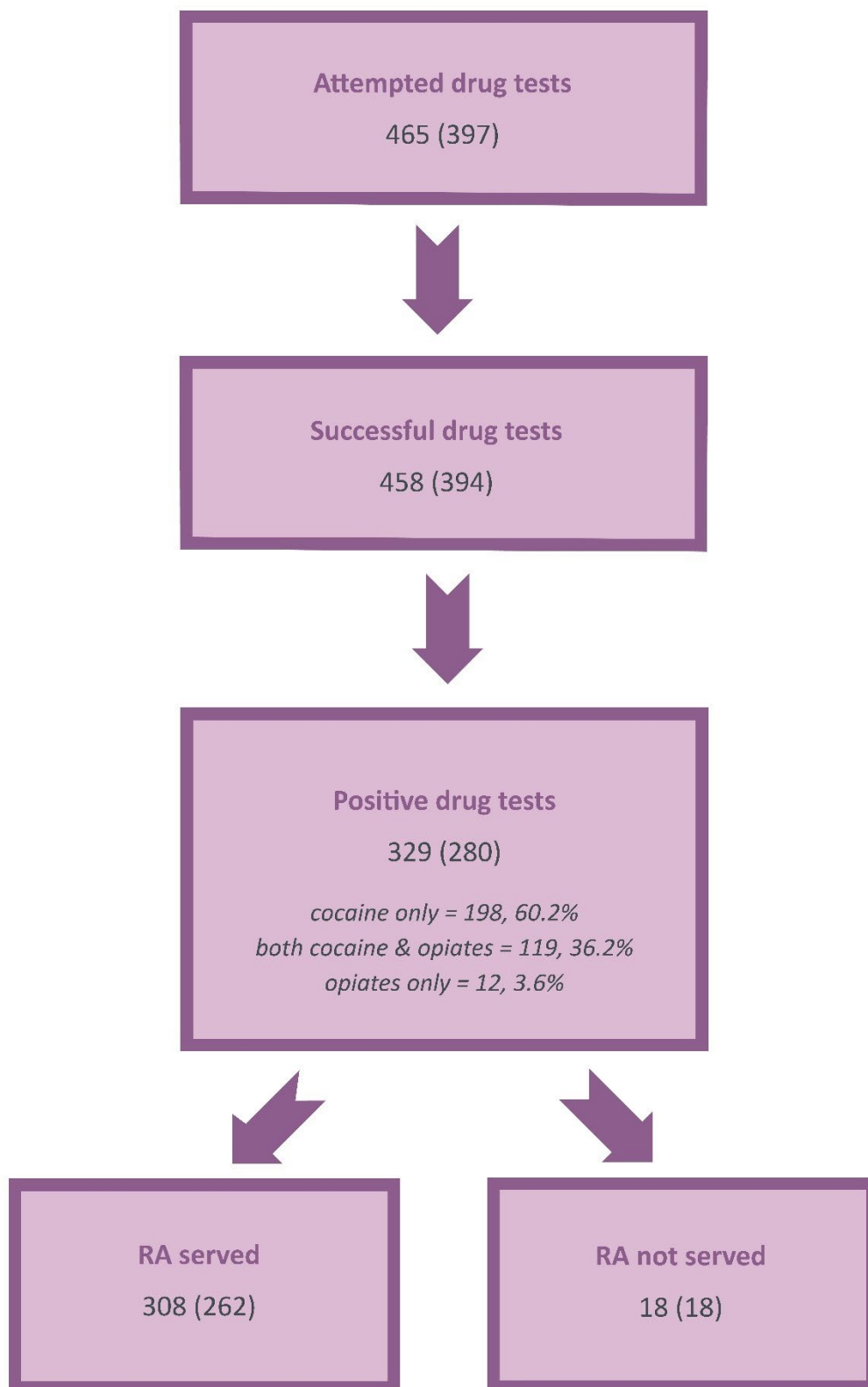


60%

of positive tests were cocaine only
(powder/crack)

³⁶ Note that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence in some years may be affecting these trends.

Figure 40: Drug testing activity, St Helens residents, 2024/25³⁷

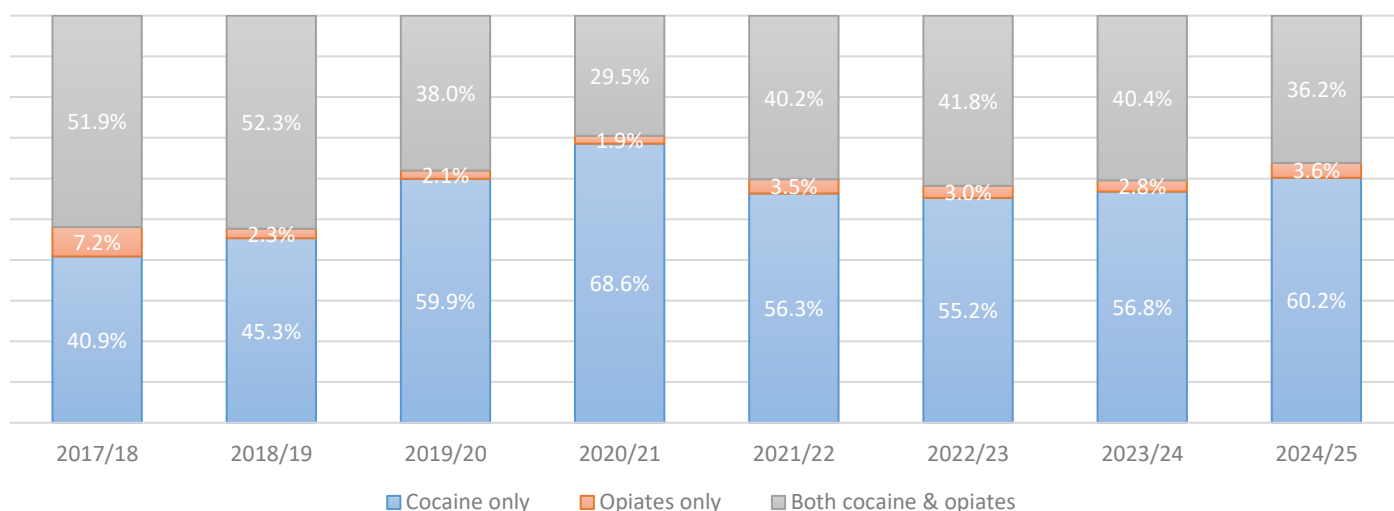


³⁷ There were five tests refused and two unsuccessful tests; and one record did not indicate whether an RA was served.

POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

In 2017/18 and 2018/19, there were larger proportions of opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates) than cocaine only for St Helens residents, while there have been larger proportions of cocaine only than opiate metabolites in subsequent years, peaking at 68.6% in 2020/21 (*Figure 41*). The proportion of cocaine only positive tests in the year ending March 2024 is an increase on the previous year and larger than the Merseyside total (all Merseyside residents combined in 2024/25: 57.1%).

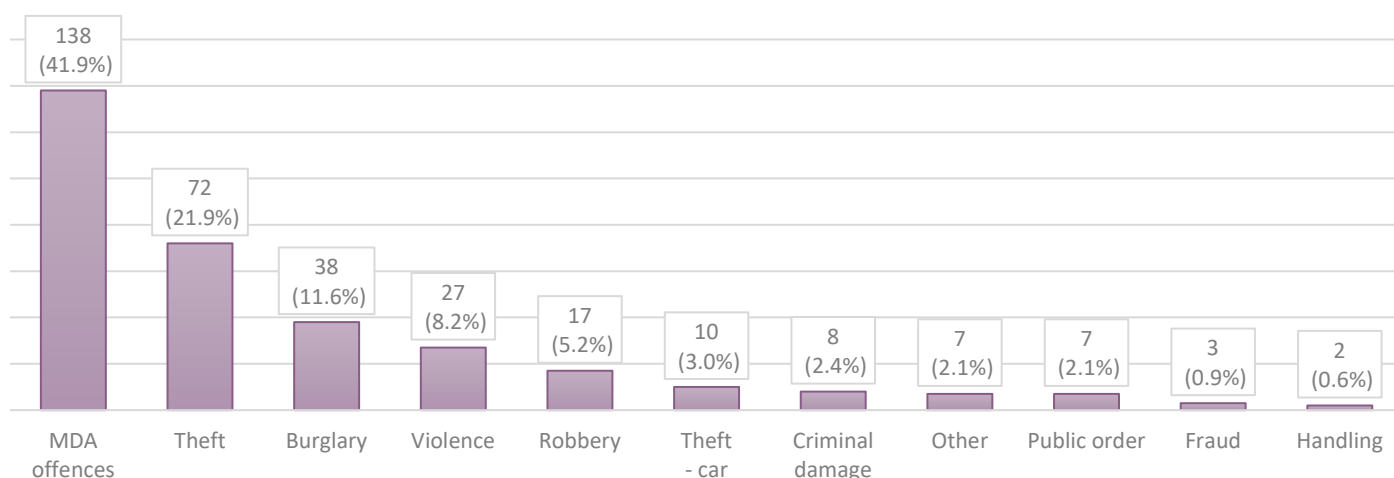
Figure 41: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, St Helens residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



OFFENCES

Just over two in five positive drug test records for St Helens residents in the year ending March 2025 reported MDA offences (n=138, 41.9%³⁸), while just over one in five were theft (n=72, 21.9%³⁹) and just over one in ten were burglary (n=38, 11.6%; *Figure 42*). Notably, when compared to the other Merseyside areas, St Helens had the largest proportions of burglary and MDA offences (total Merseyside residents: 9.9% and 35.2% respectively), and the smallest proportions of theft and other offences (all Merseyside residents: 30.5% and 4.9% respectively).

Figure 42: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, St Helens residents, 2024/25

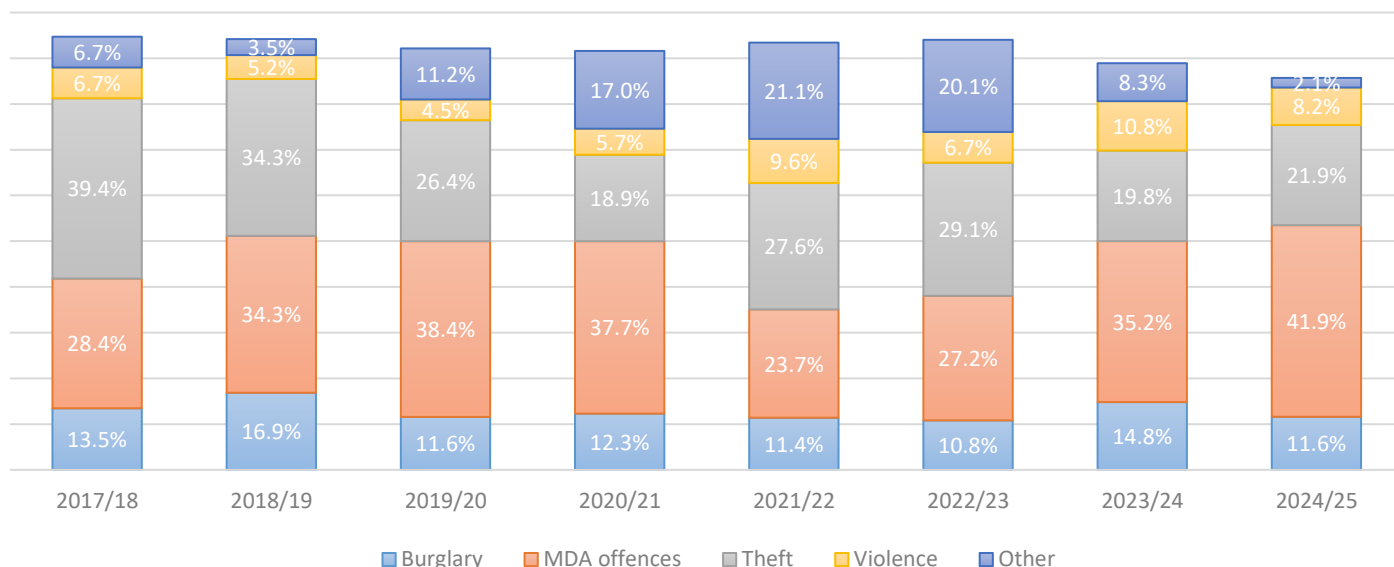


³⁸ MDA offences: trafficking = 98, 71.0%; possession = 40, 29.0%.

³⁹ Theft: shoplifting = 52, 72.2%.

Overall, there have been some changes in the trends of burglary, MDA offences, theft, violence and other offences (*Figure 43*). In the year ending March 2025, proportions of MDA offences and theft increased when compared to the previous year, with MDA offences increasing year-on-year since 2021/22 to the largest proportion of the eight-year period. Conversely, proportions of burglary, violence and other offences decreased in 2024/25, with other offences accounting for the smallest proportion of the eight-year period.

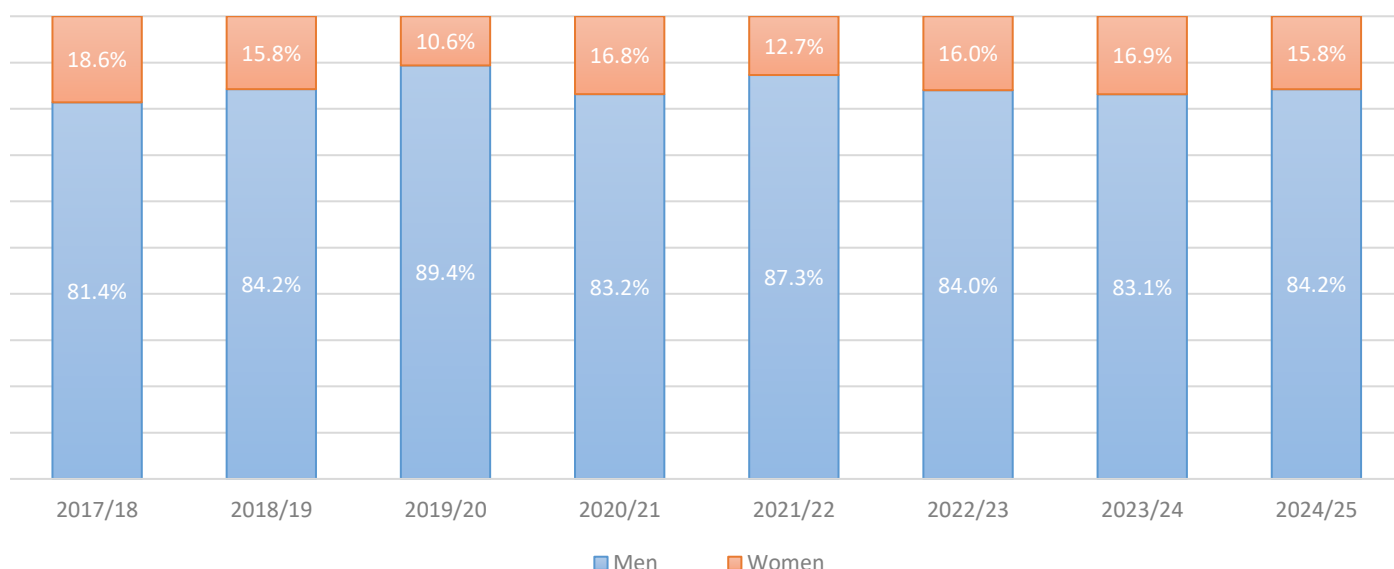
Figure 43: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offending categories, St Helens residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside's custody suites in the year ending March 2025 (n=235, 84.2%; *Figure 45*), which is similar to the eight-year average (84.6%). Notably, St Helens and Knowsley had the largest proportions of men across Merseyside in 2024/25 (total Merseyside residents: 82.3%).

Figure 44: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by sex, St Helens residents (individuals), 2017/18 - 2024/25⁴⁰

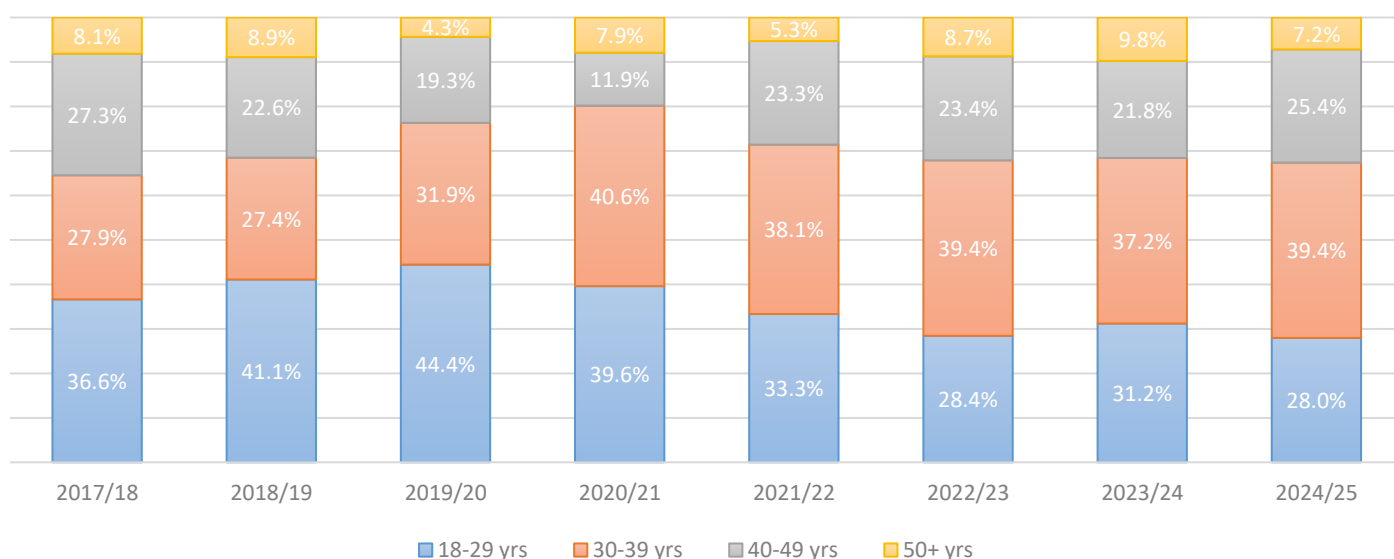


⁴⁰ There was one record that did not specify the individual's sex.

The average age of St Helens residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2025 was 36 years (men = 35.4, women = 37.1), which is a slight increase on the previous year (35 years).

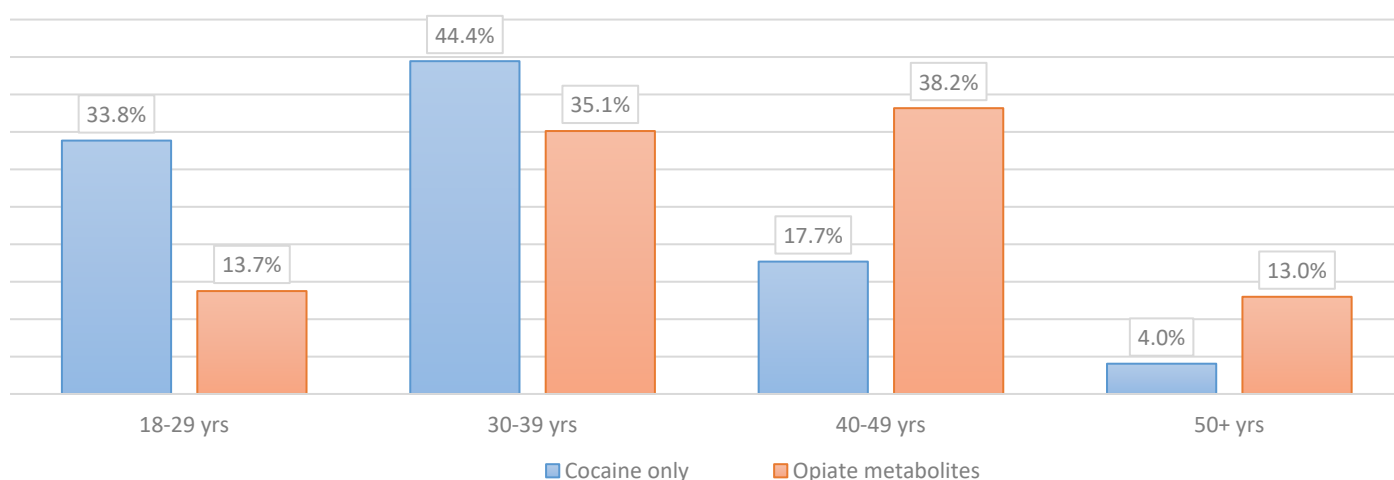
Around two in five individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2025 were aged 30-39 years (n=110, 39.4%), while just under three in ten were aged 18-29 years (n=78, 28.0%), one-quarter were aged 40-49 years (n=71, 25.4%) and just under one in ten were aged 50 years or over (n=20, 7.2%; *Figure 45*). The proportion of individuals aged 30-39 years and 40-49 years increased in 2024/25 when compared to the previous year, while proportions aged 18-29 years and 50 years or over decreased. Although 18-29 year olds accounted for the smallest proportion of the eight-year period, it is the largest proportion of the five Merseyside areas (total Merseyside residents: 18.6%), while the proportion aged 50 years or over is the smallest across Merseyside (total Merseyside residents: 17.1%).

Figure 45: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, St Helens residents (individuals), 2017/18 - 2024/25⁴¹



In the year ending March 2025, of the St Helens residents who tested positive for cocaine only, over two in five (44.4%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by around one-third (33.8%) aged 18-29 years (*Figure 46*). While just under two in five (38.2%) who tested positive opiate metabolites were aged 40-49 years, followed by just over one-third (35.1%) aged 30-39 years.

Figure 46: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, St Helens residents, 2024/25⁴¹



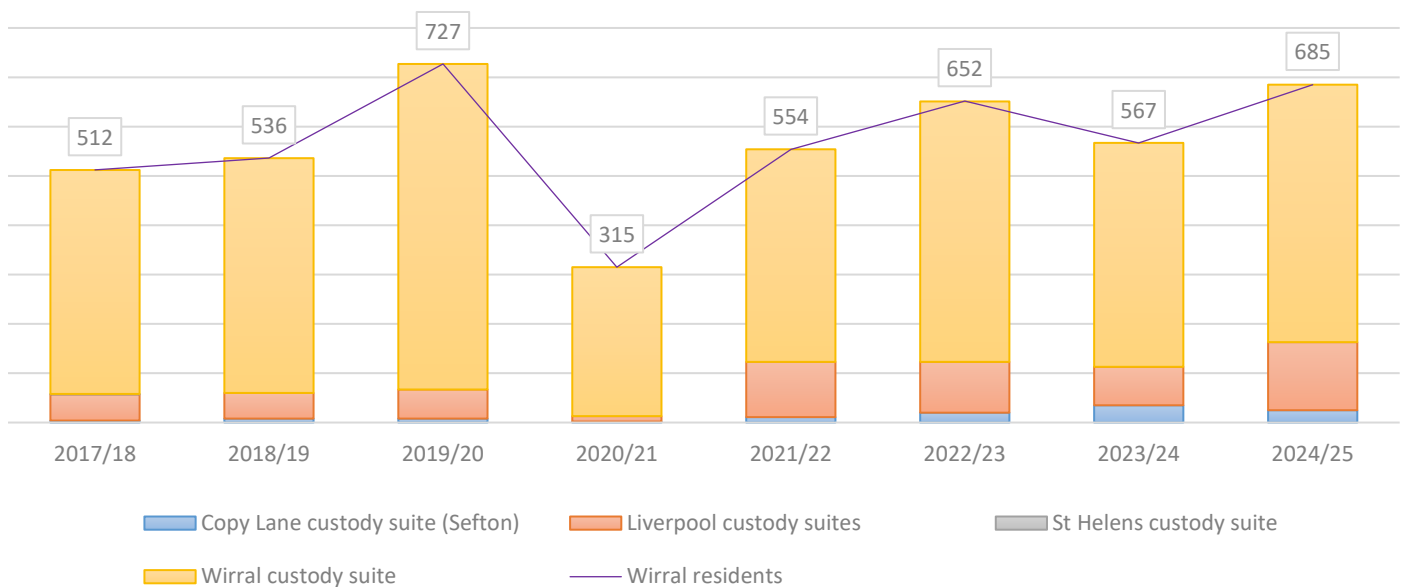
⁴¹ There was one record that did not have the age or date of birth recorded.

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2025, there were 685 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Wirral residents across Merseyside Police's custody suites, representing around one in six (16.4%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is a 20.8% increase on the 567 attempted tests in the previous year and the second highest number of tests of the eight years shown in Figure 47⁴².

On average, over four in five (84.9%) attempted drug tests on Wirral residents were carried out at Wirral custody suite during the eight-year period (Figure 47).

Figure 47: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Wirral residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 48 shows the drug testing activity for Wirral residents drug tested in Merseyside Police's custody suites in the year ending March 2025. Of the 685 attempted drug tests, 676 were successful and subsequently 481 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Around seven in ten (71.2%) of the successful tests carried out by Merseyside Police between April 2024 and March 2025 resulted in a positive test.

Over half (54.3%) of the positive drug tests were cocaine only (n=261, 54.3%), while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 192, 39.9%; opiates only = 28, 5.8%). Where the positive result was maintained, there were 464 RAs served by Merseyside Police to 374 individuals in the year ending March 2025.

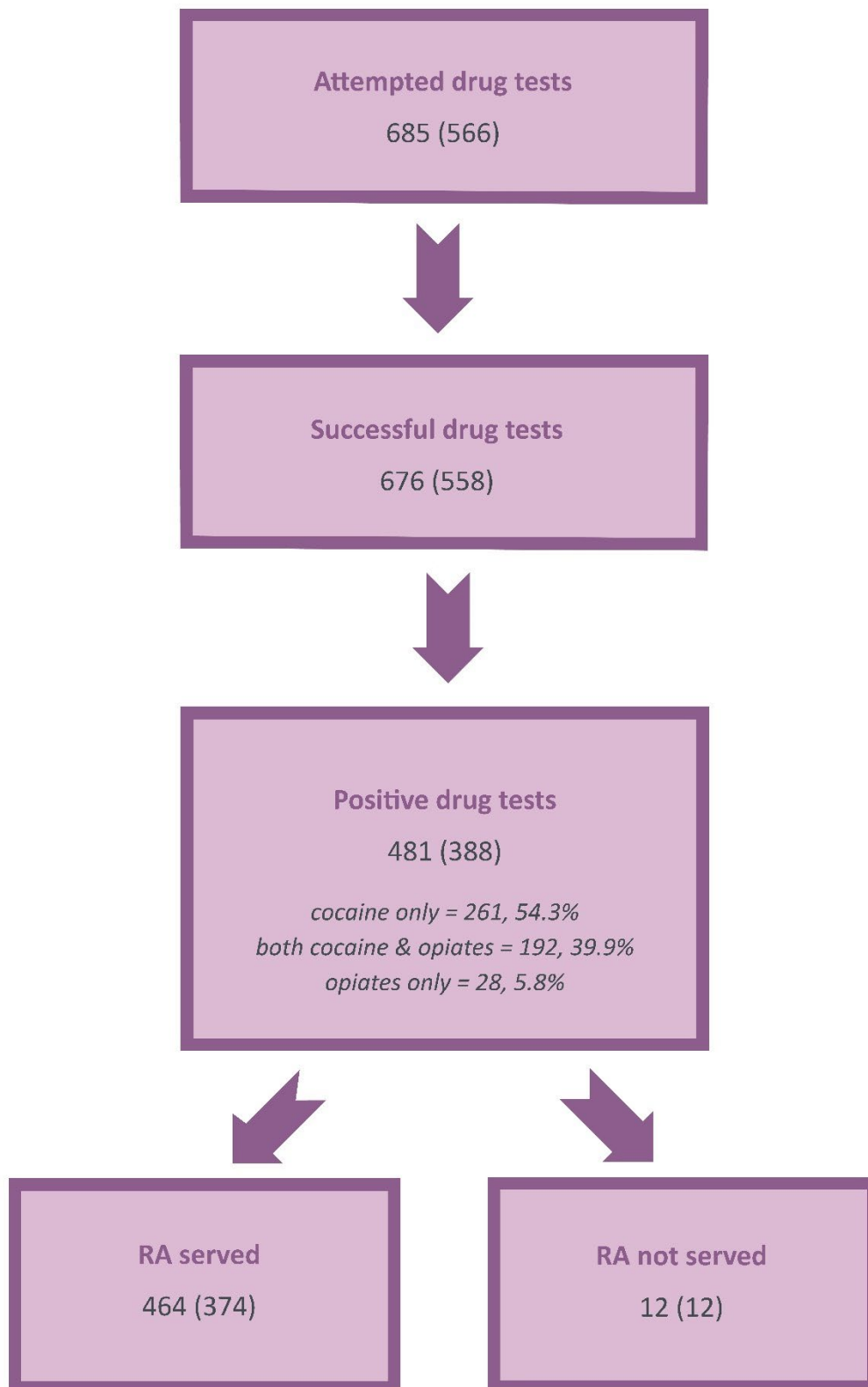


54%

of positive tests were cocaine only
(powder/crack)

⁴² Note that the data quality of the recording of LA of residence in some years may be affecting these trends.

Figure 48: Drug testing activity, Wirral residents, 2024/25⁴³

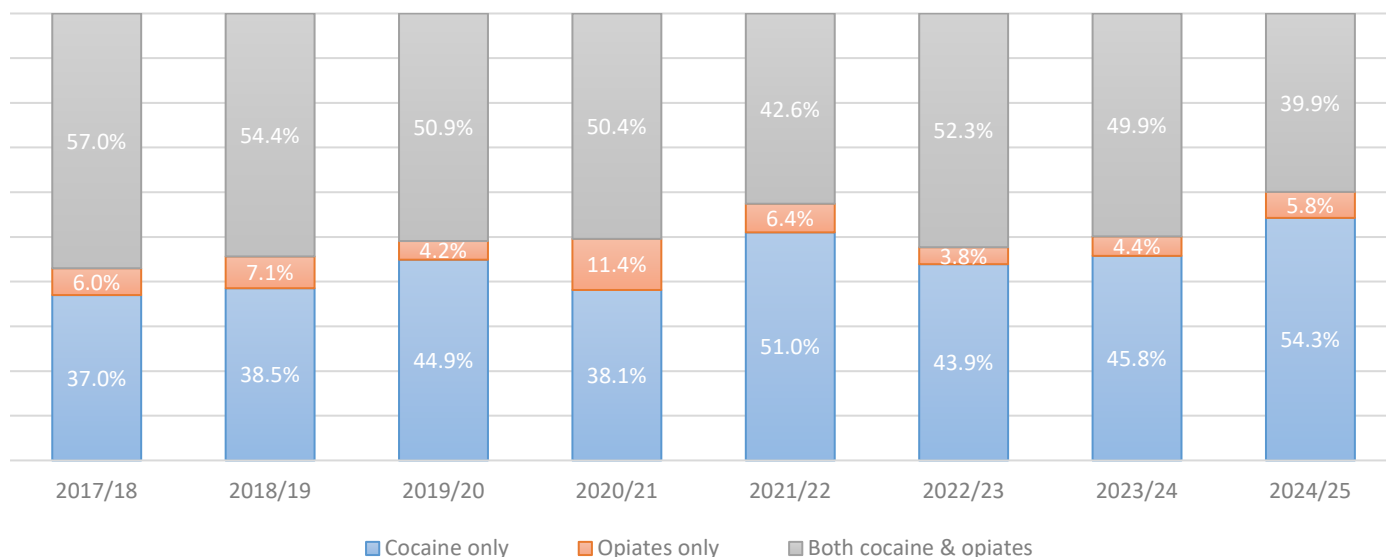


⁴³ There were four tests refused and five unsuccessful tests.

POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

There were larger proportions of opiate metabolites (opiates only, and both cocaine & opiates) than cocaine only in six of the eight-year period (*Figure 49*). Notably, the proportion of cocaine only in 2024/25 is the largest of the eight-year period; however, it is the smallest proportion of the five Merseyside areas (all Merseyside residents combined in 2024/25: 57.1%). Furthermore, Wirral residents accounted for the largest proportion of Merseyside residents who tested positive for opiates only in the year ending March 2025 (total Merseyside residents: 3.4%), even though this is below the eight-year average (6.1%).

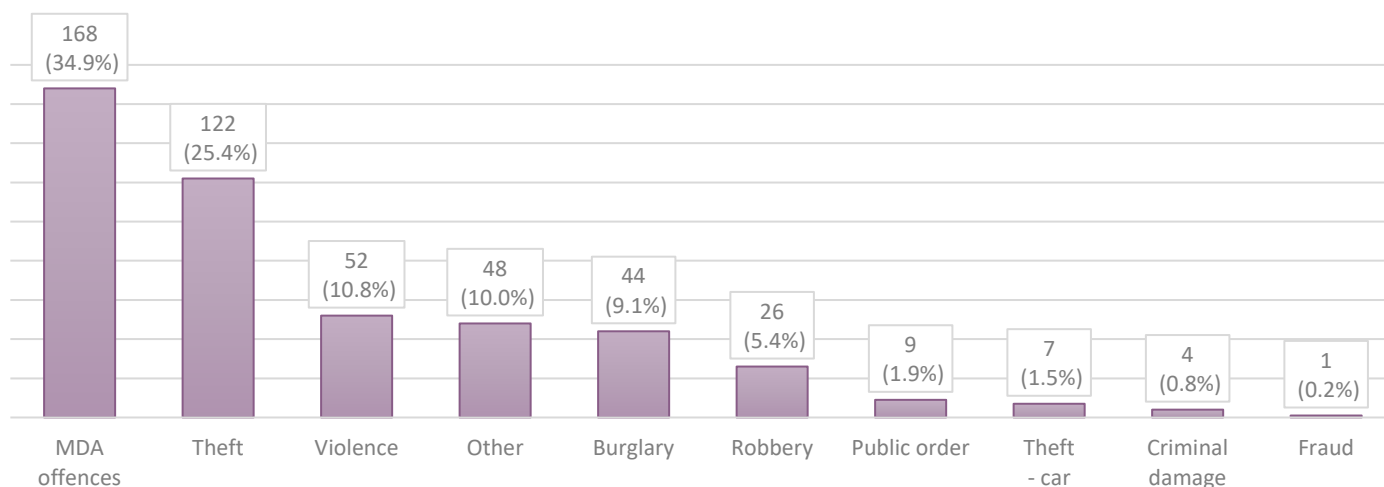
Figure 49: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Wirral residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



OFFENCES

Just over one-third of the positive drug test records for Wirral residents in the year ending March 2025 reported MDA offences (n=168, 34.9%⁴⁴), while one-quarter were theft (n=122, 25.4%⁴⁵; *Figure 50*). Furthermore, violence and other offences accounted for one in ten each (10.8% and 10.0% respectively). When compared to the other Merseyside areas, Wirral had the largest proportion of other offences (total Merseyside residents: 4.9%).

Figure 50: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Wirral residents, 2024/25

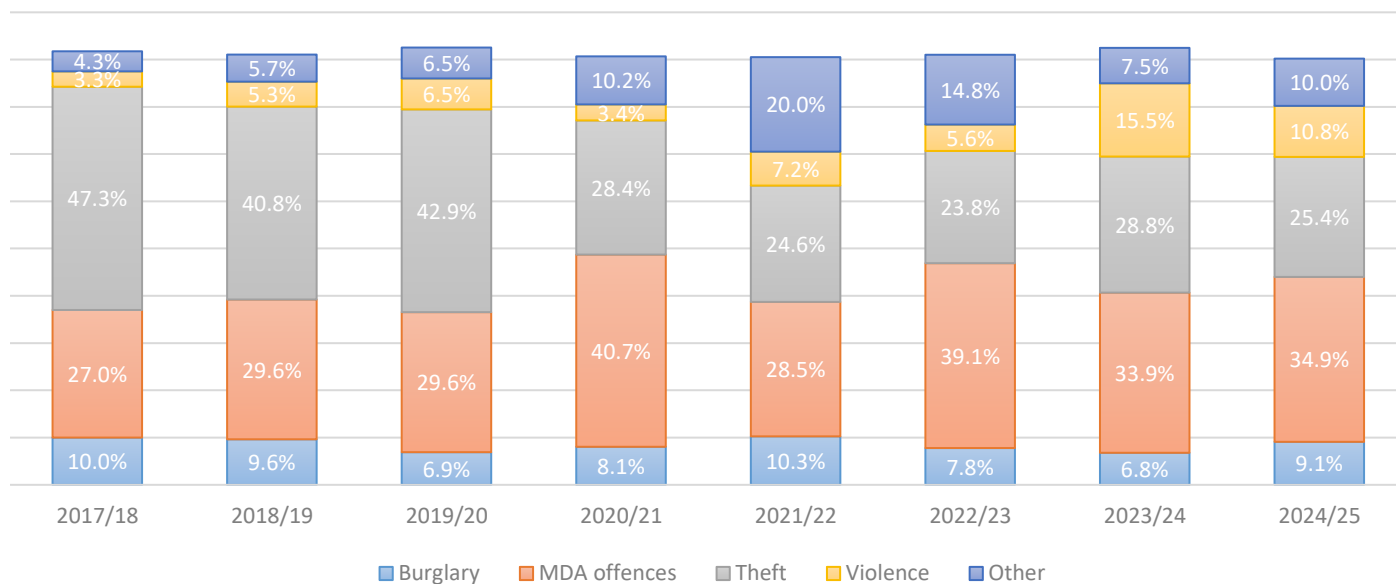


⁴⁴ MDA offences: trafficking = 107, 63.7%; possession = 61, 36.3%.

⁴⁵ Theft: shoplifting = 96, 78.7%.

Overall, there have been fluctuations in the trends of burglary, MDA offences, theft, violence and other offences, particularly in recent years (*Figure 51*). In the year ending March 2025, proportions of burglary and other offences increased when compared to the previous year, while proportions of theft and violence decreased, and MDA offences remained similar.

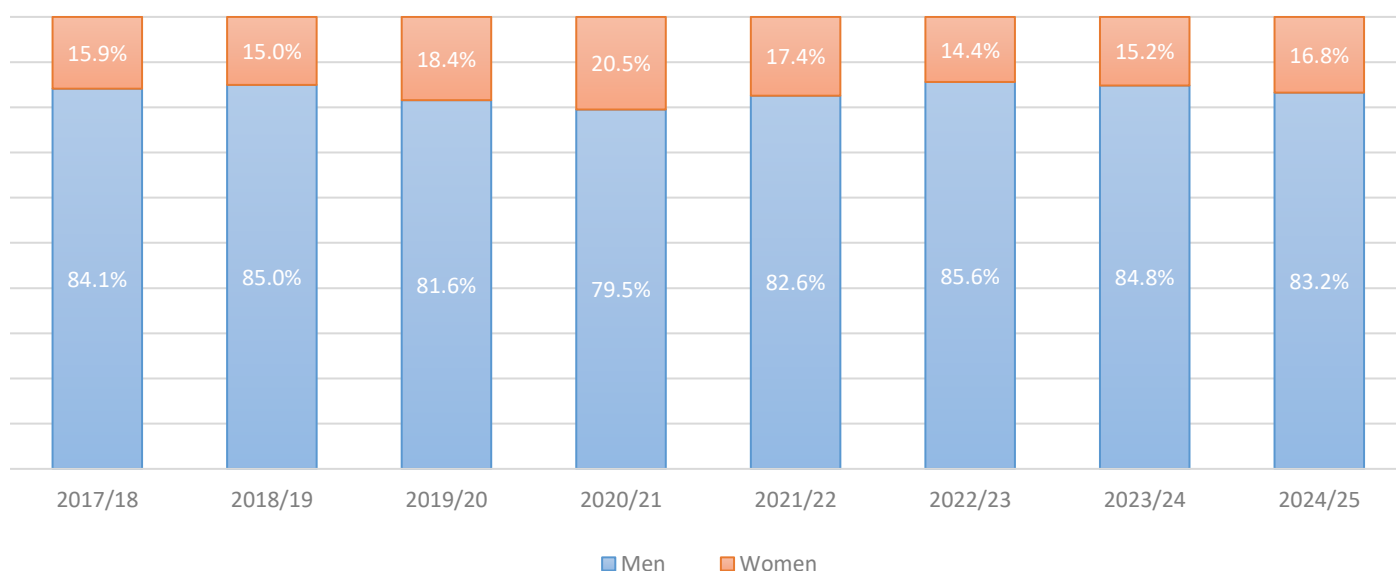
Figure 51: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by key offending categories, Wirral residents, 2017/18 - 2024/25



DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for just over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside Police's custody suites in the year ending March 2025 (n=323, 83.2%; *Figure 52*), which is both similar to the eight-year average (83.3%) and the Merseyside figure (total Merseyside residents: 82.3%).

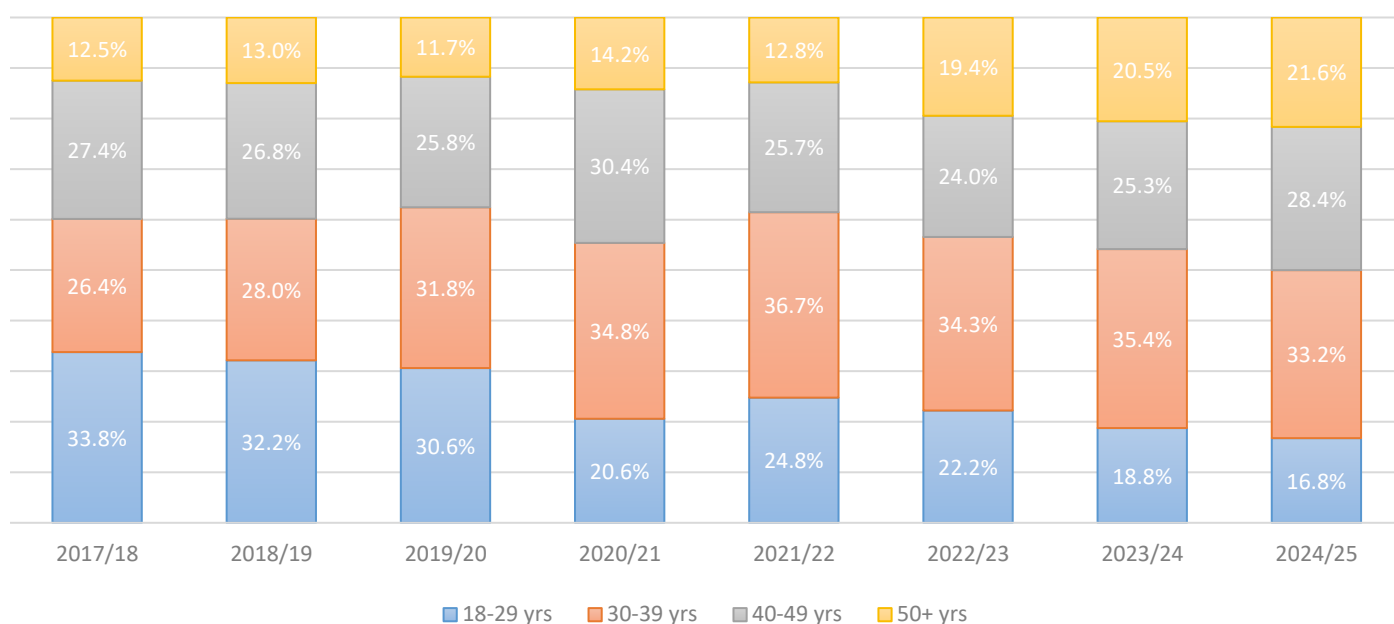
Figure 52: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by sex, Wirral residents (individuals), 2017/18 - 2024/25



The average age of Wirral residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2025 was 40 years (men = 40.2, women = 40.4), which is a slight increase on the previous year (39 years).

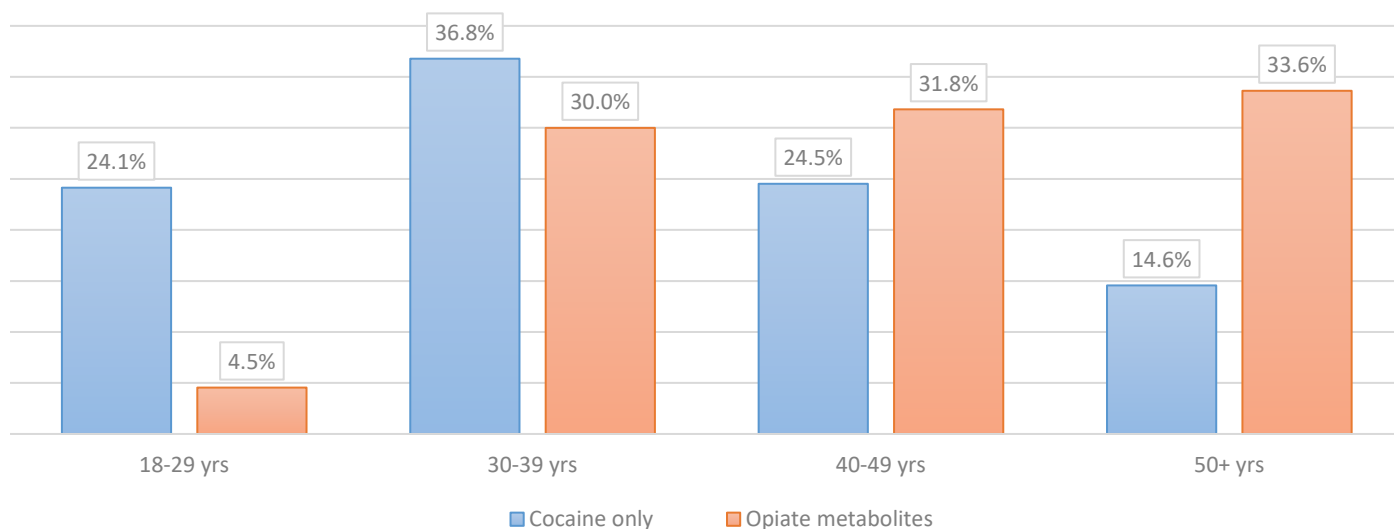
One-third of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2025 were aged 30-39 years (n=129, 33.2%), followed by just under three in ten aged 40-49 years (n=110, 28.4%), just over one in five aged 50 years or over (n=84, 21.6%) and one in six aged 18-29 years (n=65, 16.8%; *Figure 53*). Notably, this is the smallest proportion aged 18-29 years and the largest proportion aged 50 years or over of the eight-year period. Furthermore, when compared to the other Merseyside areas, Wirral residents accounted for the largest proportion of individuals aged 50 years or over (total Merseyside residents: 17.1%).

Figure 53: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Wirral residents (individuals), 2017/18 - 2024/25



In the year ending March 2025, of the Wirral residents who tested positive for cocaine only, just under two in five (36.8%) were aged 30-39 years, followed by those aged 18-29 years and 40-49 years (24.1% and 24.5% respectively; *Figure 54*). While there were similar proportions aged 30-39 years, 40-49 years and 50 years or over (30.0%, 31.8% and 33.6% respectively).

Figure 54: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Wirral residents, 2024/25



RE-PRESENTATIONS

Table 1 provides an indication of the rate of re-presentations through Drug Testing on Arrest (DTToA) in Merseyside, which can be used as a proxy measure of re-offending. Of the 2,209 individuals who reside in Merseyside who tested positive for opiates and/or cocaine in the year ending March 2025, one in five subsequently re-presented and were drug tested again following their initial positive drug test during the twelve-month period (n=441, 20.0%).

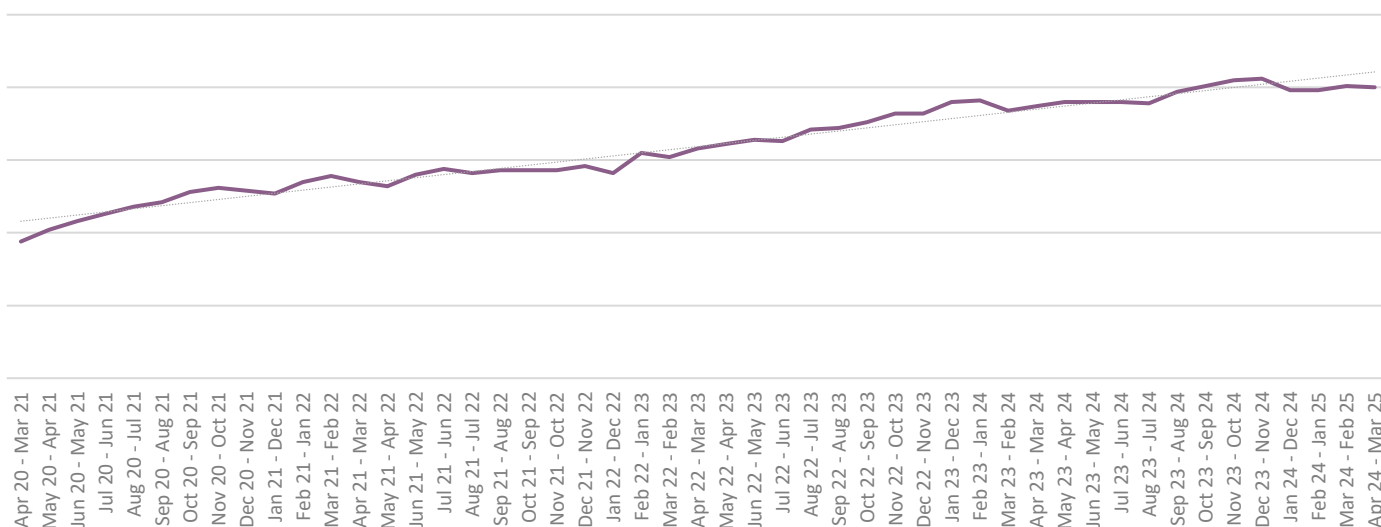
Table 1: Individuals re-presenting to DTToA following a positive test for specified Class A drugs, Merseyside residents, 2024/25

Number of DTToA incidences	N	%
One	1,768	80.0%
Two	281	12.7%
Three	87	3.9%
Four	40	1.8%
Five	22	1.0%
Six	6	0.3%
Seven	3	0.1%
Eight	2	0.1%
Individuals presenting more than once	441	20.0%

TRENDS OF RE-PRESENTATIONS

Figure 55 shows an increase in the proportion of individuals re-presenting to DTToA following a positive test for specified Class A drugs during twelve-month cohorts between April 2020 - March 2021 and April 2024 - March 2025⁴⁶. Of the 49 cohorts shown in Figure 55, re-presentations peaked November 2023 - October 2024 and December 2023 - November 2024 (20.6% and 20.5% respectively), followed by October 2023 - September 2024 and March 2024 - February 2025 (both 20.1%), and April 2024 - March 2025 (20.0%).

Figure 55: Proportions of individuals re-presenting to DTToA following a positive test for specified Class A drugs, Merseyside residents, Apr 2020 - Mar 2021 to Apr 2024 - Mar 2025



⁴⁶ Note that drug testing was suspended between April and August 2020, and Merseyside Police ran out of drug testing kits in May 2021 due to a nationwide shortage, which was an ongoing issue and may have affected the number of drug tests carried out in subsequent months.

OVERVIEW OF INDIVIDUALS WHO RE-PRESENTED

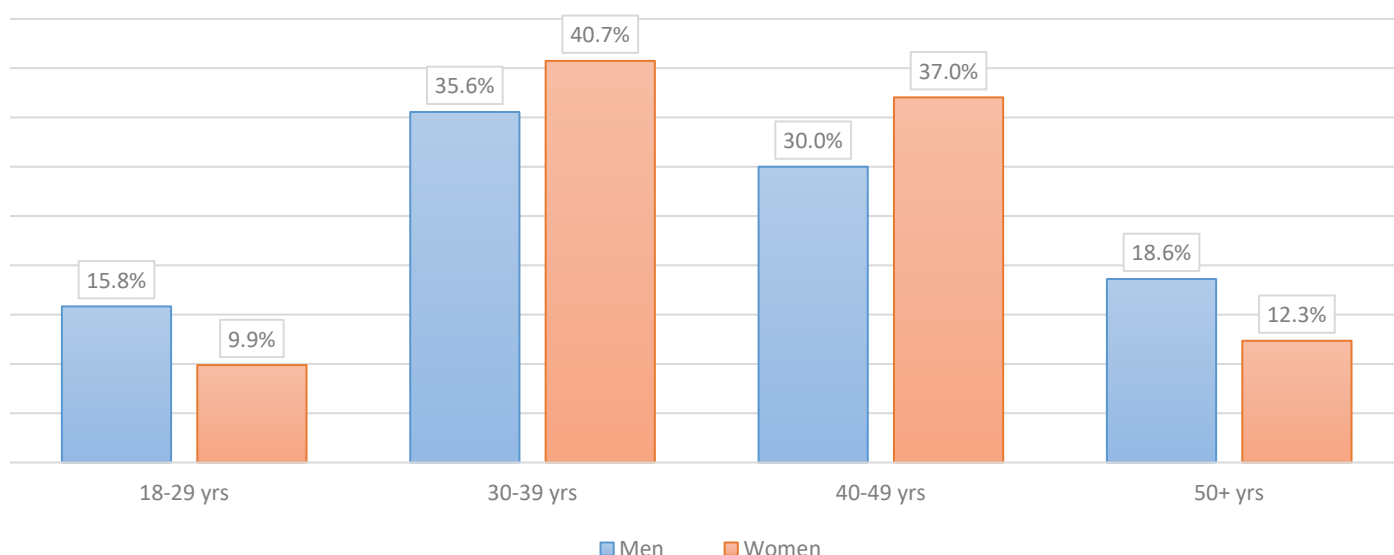
This section provides an overview of the 441 individuals who tested positive in the twelve months ending March 2025 and subsequently re-presented during the twelve-month period. Figures are shown as per the age and drug(s) detected at the initial positive drug test.

Demographics

Around four in five of the individuals who re-presented in the year ending March 2025 were men (n=360, 81.6%), and over one-third were aged 30-39 years (n=161, 36.5%), followed by just under one-third aged 40-49 years (n=138, 31.3%), just under one in five aged 50 years or over (n=77, 17.5%) and one in seven aged 18-29 years (n=65, 14.7%).

Figure 56 compares age group with gender for individuals who presented more than once between April 2024 and March 2025. There were larger proportions of men than women aged 18-29 years (15.8% and 9.9% respectively) and 50 years or over (18.6% and 12.3% respectively), though larger proportions of women than men aged 30-39 years (40.7% and 35.6% respectively) and 40-49 years (37.0% and 30.0% respectively).

Figure 56: Individuals re-presenting to DToA by age group and gender, Merseyside residents, 2024/25



Half of the individuals who re-presented in the twelve months ending March 2025 were residents of Liverpool LA at the time of their initial drug test (n=220, 49.9%), while around one in six were residents of Sefton (n=77, 17.5%) or Wirral (n=72, 16.3%), and around one in ten were residents of Knowsley (n=33, 7.5%) or St Helens (n=39, 8.8%).

Initial positive drug test of individuals who re-presented

As this report highlighted, 57.8% of all positive drug tests in the year ending March 2025 were cocaine only (Figure 4). However, of the cohort who presented to DToA more than once between April 2024 and March 2025, just under 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=248, 56.4%; Figure 57).

Notably, there are some variations across the Merseyside areas. Residents of Liverpool and Wirral accounted for the largest proportions of individuals testing positive for opiate metabolites at their initial positive test (60.0% and 61.1% respectively), while Knowsley and Sefton had the largest proportions of individuals testing positive for cocaine only (51.5% and 52.6% respectively; *Figure 57*).

Figure 57: Individuals re-presenting to DToA by LA of residence and drug type at initial positive test, Merseyside residents, 2024/25

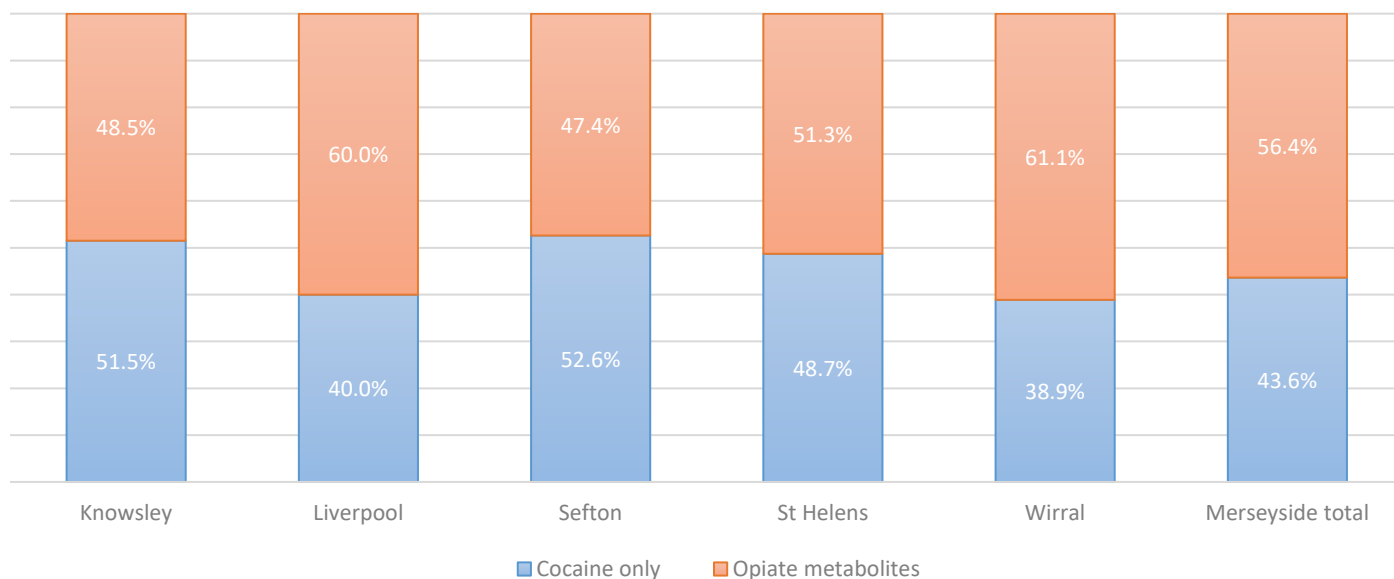
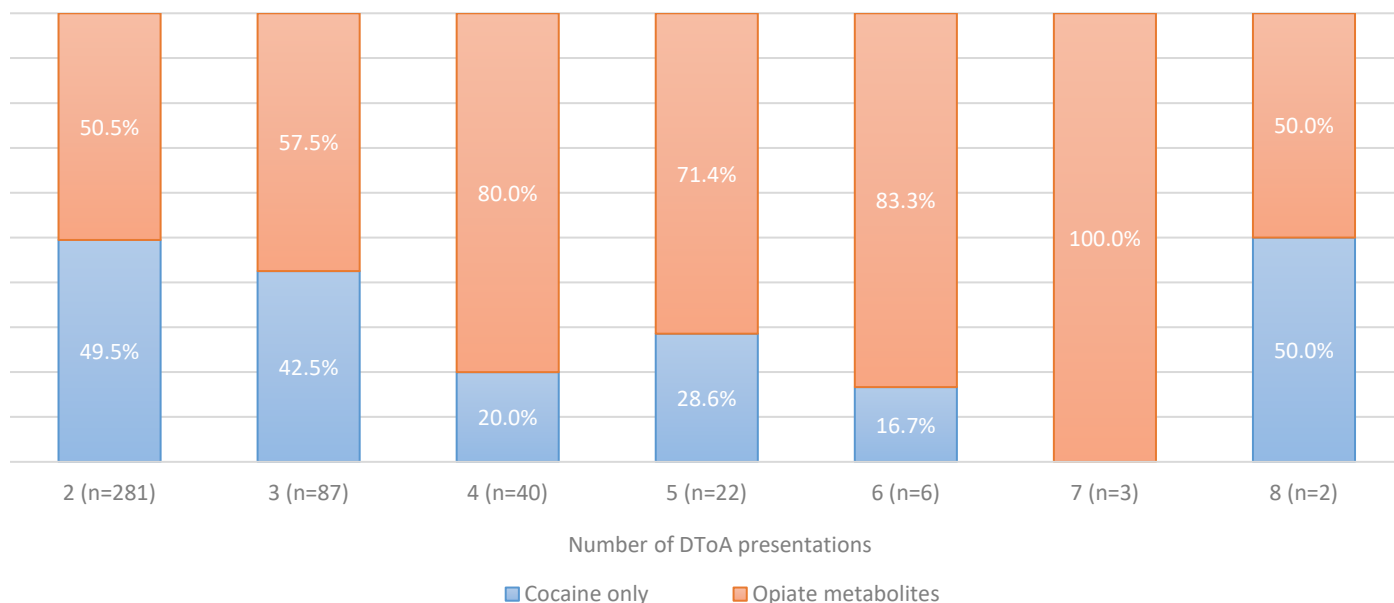


Figure 58 compares the number of DToA presentations with the drug type at the initial positive drug test between April 2024 and March 2025. Generally, the proportion of opiate metabolites increased as the number of presentations increased, with the exception of eight presentations (though note there were only two individuals).

Figure 58: Individuals re-presenting to DToA by number of presentations and drug type at initial positive test, Merseyside residents, 2024/25



APPENDICES

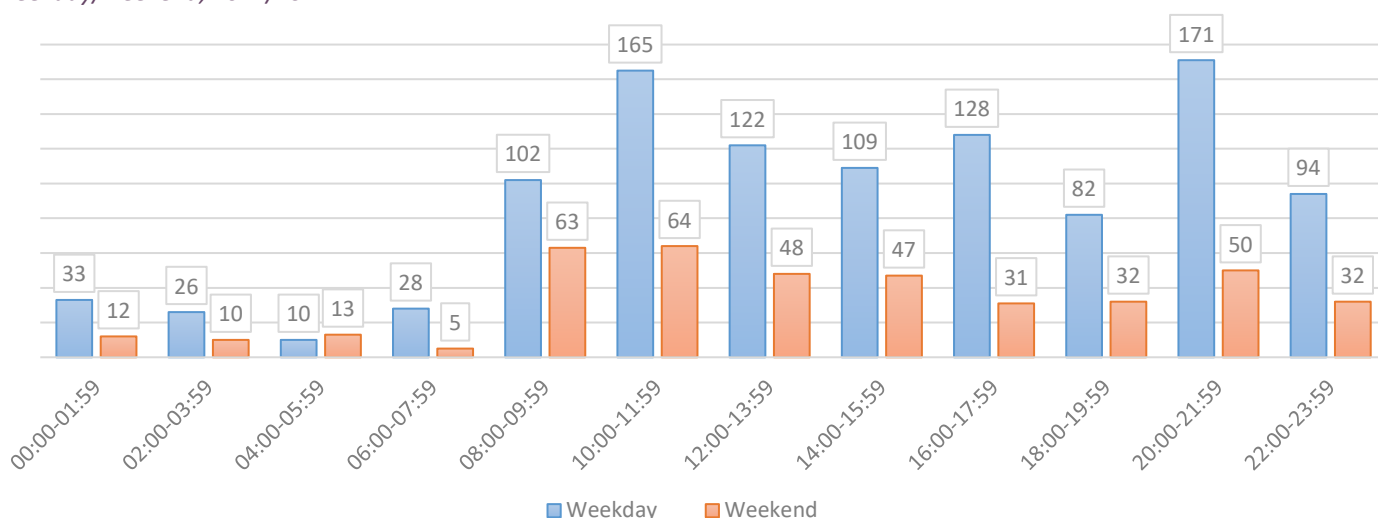
APPENDIX A

Notes to accompany this report:

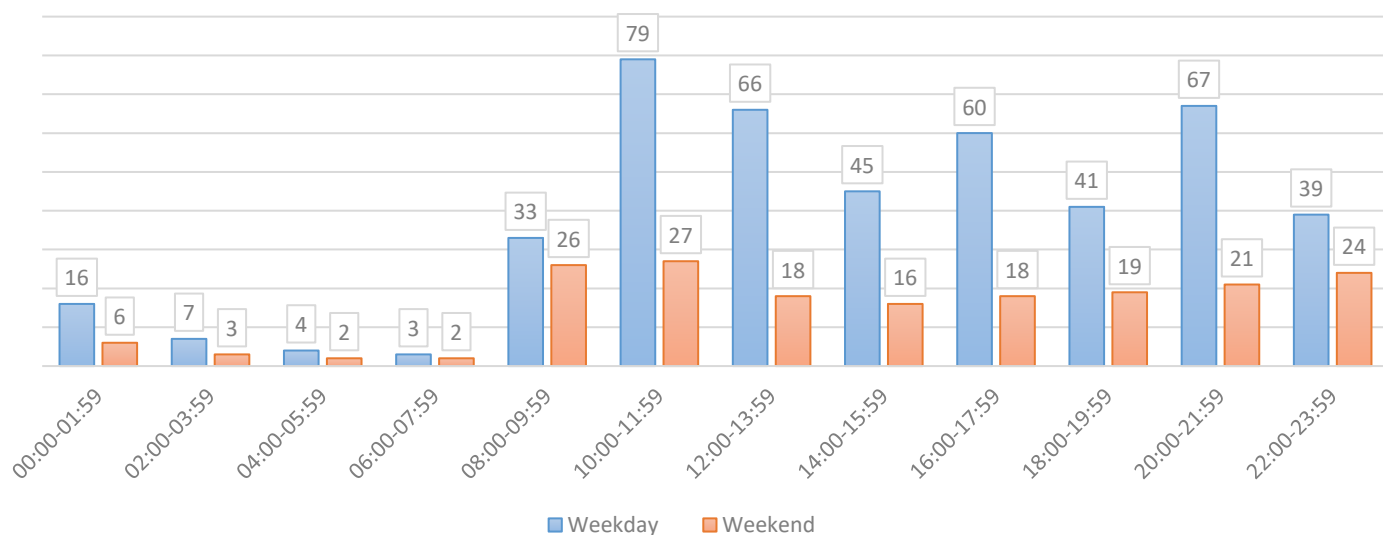
- Merseyside Police custody suites:
 - Liverpool custody suites include Belle Vale, St Anne Street and Wavertree.
 - St Anne Street custody suite closed on 16 May 2023 for refurbishment and reopened on 20 September 2023.
 - Wirral custody suite closed early January 2022 for refurbishment and reopened 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.
- Merseyside Police suspended drug testing in the custody suites between April and August 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Where comparisons have been made with Merseyside figures, these are totals for Merseyside residents only and not totals of tests carried out by Merseyside Police, which include all residents (pages 2 to Figure 13 on page 11).
- 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.
- Throughout this report, cocaine includes both powder cocaine and crack cocaine.
- Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
- Numbers of individuals have been reported for demographics (*Figures 9-12, 14, 20-21, 28-29, 36-37, 44-45 & 52-53*) and re-presentations (*Table 1 & Figures 55-58*) only, while other figures include multiple tests for some clients.
- For instances where there are blank records or an individual declines to answer, does not know or does not state a response, these have been excluded from the calculations; therefore, totals may not add up to the total number of attempted/positive drug tests or individuals. Footnotes have been included throughout the report to indicate numbers of records missing information in order to monitor data quality.

APPENDIX B

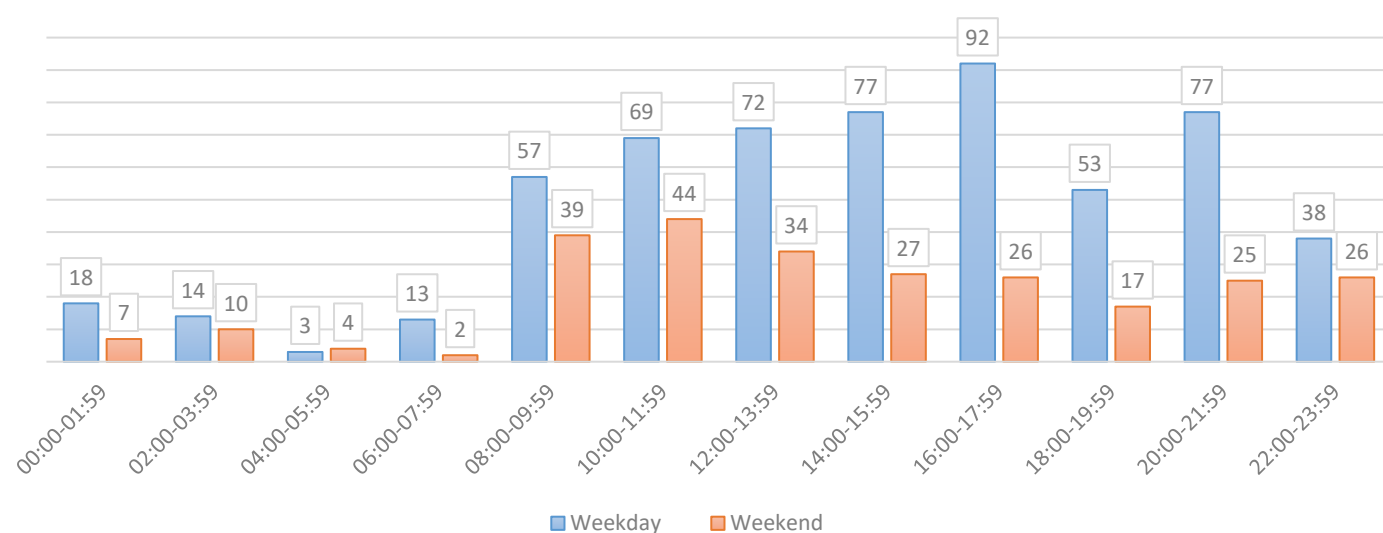
Appendix B1: Positive drug tests at Belle Vale, St Anne Street and Wavertree custody suites (Liverpool) by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2024/25



Appendix B2: Positive drug tests at Copy Lane custody suite (Sefton) by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2024/25

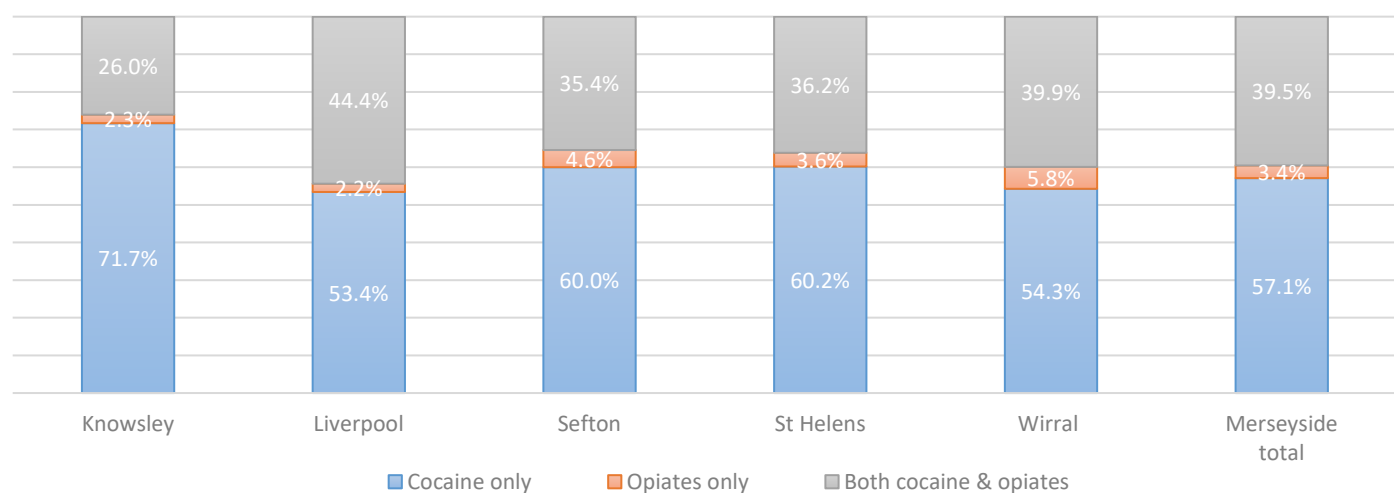


Appendix B3: Positive drug tests at Wirral custody suite by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2024/25

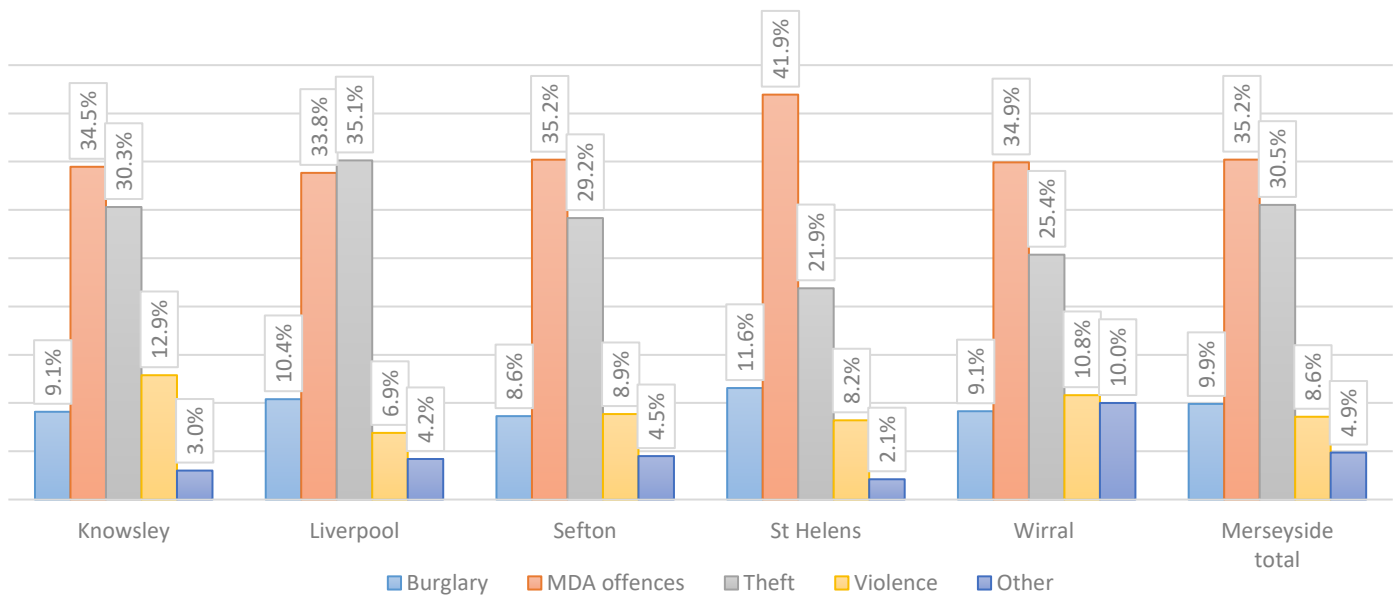


APPENDIX C

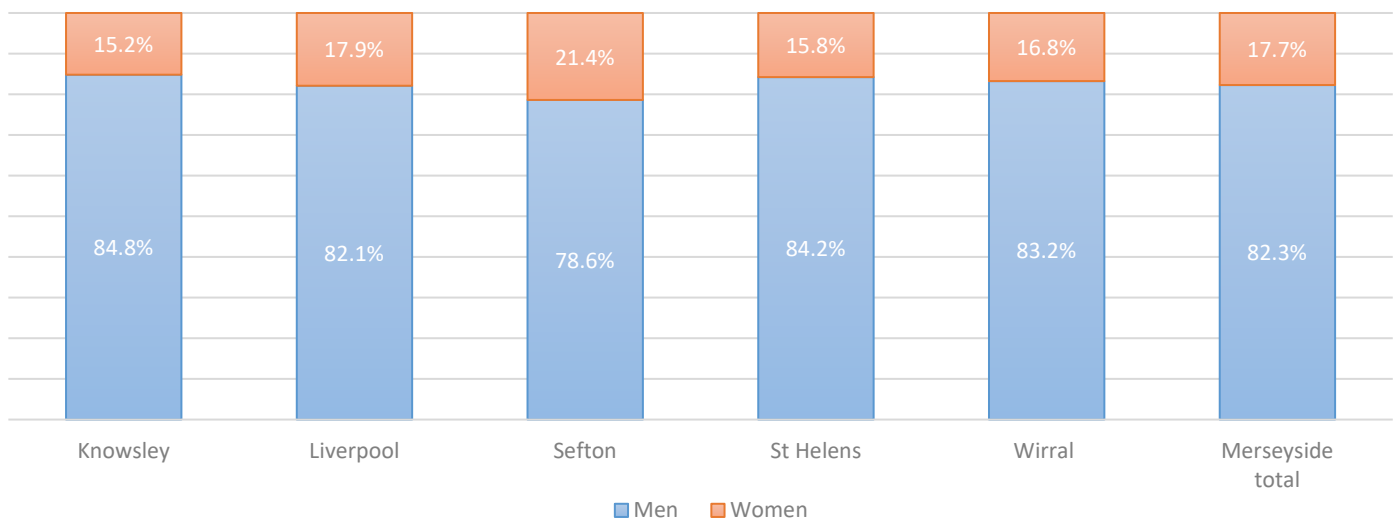
Appendix C1: Positive drug tests by drug test result and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2024/25



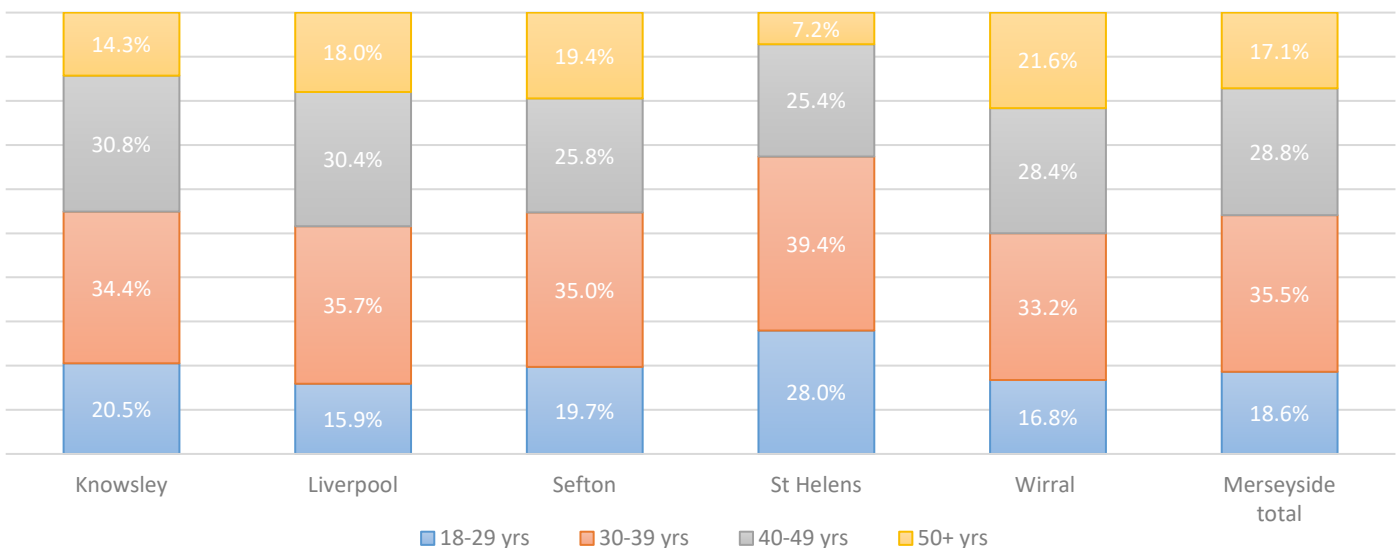
Appendix C2: Positive drug tests by key offences and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2024/25



Appendix C3: Positive drug tests by sex and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2024/25



Appendix C4: Positive drug tests by age group and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2024/25



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With special thanks to Merseyside Police for providing drug testing records and their ongoing support. Thank you also to the commissioners and treatment providers across Merseyside. Finally, thank you to Sue O’Looney and Jane Webster at the Public Health Institute for their help in proof reading this report.

About the Public Health Institute

The Public Health Institute (PHI) within the Faculty of Health, Innovation, Technology and Science at 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 has extensive experience across various large-scale data sets which contribute to the surveillance systems developed and managed by PHI.

DIP monitoring

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

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

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

