

CRIME AND JUSTICE

DRUG SEIZURES BY POLICE SCOTLAND, 2013-14

This bulletin presents statistics on drug seizures made by the police in Scotland in 2013-14. These statistics relate to drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, which divides drugs into three classes, namely A, B and C. For the purpose of this bulletin, the drug classifications at the end of the reporting period, 31 March 2014, have been applied to the data. The publication includes data for 2010-11 to 2013-14.

Key Points

- There can be considerable fluctuation in the quantities of drugs seized over time and the quantities seized do not necessarily move in line with the number of seizures made. Whilst most drug seizures consist of relatively small quantities (usually possession related crimes and offences), annual quantities of drugs seized can be greatly influenced by a small number of large seizures (usually trafficking offences and crimes).
- In 2013-14 there were approximately 5,500 seizures involving a Class A Drug. Within this, Police Scotland reported seizing 142.8 kilograms of heroin (compared to 80.4 kg in 2012-13), 124.3 kg of cocaine (281.3 kg in 2012-13) and 2.3 kg of crack cocaine (5.5 kg in 2012-13). In addition to this, just under 16,000 ecstasy type tablets and 9.3 litres of methadone were seized.
- In 2013-14 there were approximately 21,200 seizures involving a Class B Drug. Within this, Police Scotland reported seizing 504.9 kg of amphetamines (compared to 92.9 kg in 2012-13) and 66.8 kg of mephedrone (9.1 kg in 2012-13).
- Continuing with Class B drugs, the quantity of cannabis related drug seizures fell between 2012-13 and 2013-14, from 615.0 kg to 452.7 kg for herbal cannabis and from 1,707.0 kg to 367.8 kg for cannabis resin. The number of cannabis plants seized fell from just over 41,000 to just over 23,000.
- In 2013-14 there were approximately 3,300 seizures involving a Class C Drug. This included the seizure of over 1.2 million diazepam tablets (532,100 in 2012-13).

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Background

The statistics set out in this bulletin on the quantity of drugs seized cover the year immediately following the establishment of the Police Service of Scotland (hence forth referred to as Police Scotland). Prior to this, figures were collected and presented by the eight legacy police force areas. This bulletin does not include information on drugs seized by the UK Border Force or British Transport Police, or as a result of Police Scotland activity which led to drugs being seized outwith Scotland.

With the resulting change to the process of collecting and quality assuring data for this publication, some caution should be exercised in interpreting the statistics on the number of seizures (further information on these developments are provided in the [Annex](#)). A review into how drug seizure data is collected and how this statistical series can best add value to users, will be undertaken before the next publication. Users can be kept informed about these developments through registering with SCOTSTAT: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/scotstat>.

There are two statutory requirements for the UK to provide data on drug seizures, which are managed by the [UK Focal Point on Drugs](#), based at Public Health England. The UK Focal Point on Drugs collate drug seizures statistics from England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and submit the data, provided for the UK Focal Point's annual report, to the [European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction](#) (EMCDDA) and the [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#) (UNODC). These data inform the EMCDDA's annual report and the UNODC's annual World Drugs Report.

The minimum data requirements to satisfy these two obligations are to submit data on the number of drug seizures and the quantity of drugs seized for each of the following types of drugs: cocaine, crack, ecstasy-type substances, heroin, LSD, methylamphetamine, amphetamines, herbal cannabis, cannabis resin and cannabis plants. In addition to these ten drugs, this bulletin contains seizures data on methadone, morphine, barbiturates, mephedrone, anabolic steroids, diazepam, GHB, ketamine, temazepam and other benzodiazepines.

The statistics on drug seizures are used to inform [National Outcome 9](#) – 'we live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger' as well as [The Strategy for Justice in Scotland](#). These statistics are also used by a wide range of stakeholders to monitor trends, for policy research and development, and for research purposes.

The 'Drug Seizures by Police Scotland' annual statistical bulletin series forms part of a series of bulletins produced by the Scottish Government on the criminal justice system which can be found at <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/Publications>.

Commentary

Number of Seizures and Quantities of Drugs Seized

- There can be considerable fluctuation in the quantities of drugs seized over time and the quantities seized do not necessarily move in line with the number of seizures made. Whilst most drug seizures consist of relatively small quantities (usually possession related crimes and offences), annual quantities of drugs seized can be greatly influenced by a small number of large seizures (usually trafficking offences and crimes).
- It was identified that some seizures of more than one type of drug were not counted as a single seizure in the data supplied by Police Scotland. This issue has no impact on the individual number of seizures by drug type (available in Tables 2,3 and 4 of the associated excel spreadsheet) and a limited impact on the number of seizures by drug class (shown in Table [1](#) below). However caution should be taken when interpreting the overall figure of 29,138 for total drug seizures in 2013-14 as this will include an element of over-estimation on seizures given the double counting of those instances where more than one type of drug was seized. Further information on this practice is available in the [Annex](#). It should be noted that this has no impact on the quantity of actual drugs seized, as presented in this bulletin.
- Intelligence led operations against known drug dealers tend to result in a low number of seizures, but conversely the quantity of drugs seized and their value will be high. These high profile operations may result in greater disruption to the illicit drugs trade which, whilst having a positive effect, may reduce the number of seizures made. As such care should be taken when comparing quantities of drugs seized over time.
- Table [1](#) shows that there were, in total, 5,534 incidents which led to a seizure of a class A drug in 2013-14, a slight increase from 5,313 (+4%) in 2012-13.
- Police Scotland recorded a fall in the number of incidents that result in a seizure of class B substances from 22,185 to 21,168 (-5%). The number of seizures of class C substances has fallen 7% from 3,544 seizures in 2012-13 to 3,311 seizures in 2013-14.

Table 1: The number and percentage of seizures of controlled drugs by class of drug, Scotland, 2010-11 to 2013-14

Drug Class	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	change 12-13 to 13-14
Class A	6,074	5,825	5,313	5,534	4%
Class B	17,821	20,618	22,185	21,168	-5%
Class C	4,138	4,719	3,544	3,311	-7%
Total	26,693	29,734	28,968	29,138	1%
Percentage of Total Seizures					
Class A	23%	20%	18%	19%	
Class B	67%	69%	77%	73%	
Class C	16%	16%	12%	11%	

Class A drugs

Table 2

- [Table 2](#) shows that in 2013-14, Police Scotland reported that they had seized 142.8 kilograms (kg) of heroin compared to 80.4 kg in 2012-13. They also seized 124.3 kg of cocaine and 2.3 kg of crack cocaine in 2013-14. This compares to 281.3 kg of cocaine and 5.5 kg of crack cocaine in 2012-13.

Table 2: The quantity of class A drugs seized by police forces in Scotland by drug type, 2010-11 to 2013-14

Drug	Units	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Cocaine	kg	148.2	100.5	281.3	124.3
Crack	kg	7.2	6.3	5.5	2.3
Ecstasy-type	tablets (000s)	10.1	158.1	32.9	15.7
Heroin	kg	95.6	120.6	80.4	142.8
LSD	tablets (000s)	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0
Methadone	litres	36.6	46.3	20.5	9.3
Methylamphetamine	kg	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Morphine	litres	0.8	0.7	0.4	0.7

- Just under 16,000 ecstasy-type tablets were seized in 2013-14. Seizures from ecstasy-type substances vary considerably year-on-year, ranging from 10,100 tablets in 2010-11 to 158,100 tablets in 2011-12.

- Over 9 litres of methadone was seized by Police Scotland in 2013-14. This is the lowest amount of methadone seized by the police since this current data collection began in 2010-11.
- Compared to other types of Class A Drugs, relatively smaller amounts of LSD and methylamphetamine (or “speed”) were seized in 2013-14, in line with the small amounts seized in previous years of this collection. Just under a litre (0.7) of morphine was also seized in 2013-14.

Class B drugs

Table 3

- [Table 3](#) shows the quantities of class B drugs seized in 2013-14. A relatively larger amount of amphetamines (504.9 kg) was seized in 2013-14 compared to the amount seized each year between 2010-11 and 2012-13.

Table 3: The quantity of class B drugs seized by police forces in Scotland by drug type, 2010-11 to 2013-14

Drug Type	Units	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Herbal Cannabis	kg	867.9	620.8	615.0	452.7
Cannabis resin	kg	1,069.3	1,211.6	1,707.0	367.8
Cannabis (unknown)	kg	-	-	-	25.3
Cannabis plants	plants	34,853	34,785	41,411	23,336
Amphetamines	kg	261.1	132.2	92.9	504.9
Barbiturates	tablets (000s)	0.2	-	-	-
Mephedrone	kg	5.8	9.9	9.1	66.8

- The quantity of cannabis related drug seizures (also a class B drug) fell between 2012-13 and 2013-14, from 615.0 kg to 452.7 kg for herbal cannabis and from 1,707.0 kg to 367.8 kg for cannabis resin. The number of cannabis plants seized fell from just over 41,000 to just over 23,000.
- Compared to previous collections, a relatively larger quantity of mephedrone was seized, increasing from 9.1 kg in 2012-13 to 66.8 kg in 2013-14.

Class C drugs

Table 4

- [Table 4](#) shows the quantities of class C drugs seized. Most class C seizures continue to be diazepam, with approximately 1.2 million tablets seized in 2013-14. This is a large increase from the 532,100 seized in 2012-13, however the amount of diazepam seized has fluctuated year-on-year since this current collection began in 2010-11.

Table 4: The quantity of class C drugs seized by police forces in Scotland by drug type, 2010-11 to 2013-14

Drug Type	Units	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Anabolic Steroids	tablets (000s)	48.1	6.0	10.8	0.3
Diazepam	tablets (000s)	678.9	1,074.3	532.1	1,214.6
GHB	litres	0.1	0.0	-	-
Ketamine	kg	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other Benzodiazepines	tablets (000s)	1.0	7.3	11.1	9.8
Temazepam	tablets (000s)	0.8	1.7	2.0	0.4

- Approximately 300 tablets of anabolic steroids and approximately 400 tablets of temazepam were seized in 2013-14.

Annexes

Data Quality Statement

To produce this annual release on drug seizures, the Scottish Government requests data on all drug seizure related incidents from Police Scotland's Analysis and Performance Unit (APU). APU, in turn, requests information on drug seizures from divisions across Police Scotland which still maintain aspects of their own Crime Management Systems defined by the previous legacy force areas.

This current statistical collection depends on a system of collation that requires manual checks of thousands of crime reports to establish quantities of drugs seized. The process of collating this information for 2013-14 has highlighted variable levels of quality assurance, as may be expected given the labour-intensive nature of this exercise. Through this some issues were identified, further detail on which is set out below.

- Prior to 2013-14, seizures involving more than one drug were counted as a single seizure in the total number of seizures, but were counted separately against each individual drug or drug class involved. As a seizure can involve more than one type of drug, figures for individual drug classes cannot be added together to produce totals. Therefore the number of seizures of drug by class can add up to more than the total number of seizures.
- This year (2013-14) a number of records supplied by Police Scotland did not follow this practice, with some instances of a single seizure (where more than one type of drug was seized) being recorded as multiple seizures. This issue has no impact on the individual number of seizures by drug type and a limited impact on the number of seizures by drug class. However caution should be taken when interpreting the overall figure of 29,138 for total drug seizures in 2013-14 as presented in Table [1](#). There will be an element of over-estimation with this figure given the double counting of those seizures where more than one type of drug was seized.
- During the production of previous bulletins, figures for earlier years were revised. This process has not been enacted for the 2012-13 data as not all geographic areas within Police Scotland were able to confirm or supply revisions when they submitted their 2013-14 data. This may have a slight effect on the interpretation of year-on-year changes for the quantities seized for all drugs reported in this bulletin.
- A small proportion (25.3 kg out of 845.8 kg or 3%) of cannabis seized had an unknown type.

Given the issues outlined above, the current model of collating information on drug seizures will be reviewed with stakeholders to identify the potential for

improvements, both to the data collection process and the overall value of these statistics.

The review will consider the range of statistics held by Police Scotland in relation to illicit drug crime in Scotland, and will also investigate what demand there may be for statistics on drug crime beyond the statutory requirements on quantities seized as outlined on page [3](#).

The review will conclude prior to the production of the 2014-15 statistics so as to allow any findings to be considered as part of this process. Users can be kept informed about these developments through registering with ScotStat:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/scotstat>.

In addition to this, we always welcome feedback on the content of our statistical bulletins and users are welcome to submit their comments to:

justiceanalysts@gov.scot.

Police Scotland Management Information

In addition to the Official Statistics on drug seizures, Police Scotland publish management information on drug crimes recorded by the police (including the number of recorded crimes of drug supply & production, possession of drugs and other drug offences). This is presented within their Quarterly Management Information Reports, which are available from the 'Our Performance' section of Police Scotland's website:

<http://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/our-performance/>

These reports are produced to demonstrate Police Scotland's commitment to transparency (alongside other regular reporting activity to the Scottish Police Authority). The information within these reports is presented on a cumulative quarterly basis, with the first quarter of a reporting year containing 3 months of data (from April to June), the second containing 6 months of data (from April to September) etc. The reports are typically published within 2 months of the period to which they refer.

Other Notes

Justice Analytical Services publishes a work plan each year detailing the programme of work planned over the current financial year period. The work of the division covers both an agreed forward programme of analytical priorities, and routine analytical work particularly related to the compilation of National and Official Statistics, ongoing project management and knowledge transfer activity.

Analytical planning to develop a programme for the financial year 2015-16 followed a structured process of engagement with policy colleagues which was designed to closely align our analysis with current policy priorities and to the delivery of outcomes. The work plan is available via the following link:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/JASAP11-12>.

Clearly, only a limited selection of tables can be included in any statistical bulletin. Further analysis of Drug Seizures in Scotland can be supplied on request. In certain cases a fee is charged. For details of what can be provided, please telephone Alastair Greig on 0131 244 5428 or e-mail JusticeAnalysts@gov.scot.

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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available on the Scottish Government website
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact justiceanalysts@gov.scot for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

Complaints and suggestions

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, 3WR, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0302, e-mail statistics.enquiries@gov.scot.

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