

## Criminal Justice Project: Drug Interventions Programme

### Class A drug tests in Merseyside Police custody:

year ending March 2022

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## KEY FINDINGS

- There were 3,201 attempted drug tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on adult detainees across Merseyside's custody suites in the year ending March 2022 (94% were Merseyside residents). This is more than double the 1,482 attempted drug tests in the previous twelve-month period (116% increase), when drug testing was suspended in the custody suites for five months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Just under three in five (57%) of the total 2,053 positive drug tests across Merseyside in 2021/22 were cocaine only, while the remaining positive tests were opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 37%, opiates only = 6%).
- There was a total of 1,954 Required Assessments served by Merseyside Police to 1,689 individuals in the year ending March 2022.
- Seven in ten (70%) positive drug tests in the year ending March 2022 occurred on a weekday.
- On a weekday, positive drug tests peaked at 12:00-13:59 (15%), followed by 10:00-11:59 and 16:00-17:59 (both 14%), while they peaked at 10:00-11:59 (18%) and 08:00-09:59 (16%) on a weekend.
- Over one in three (36%) positive drug test records following an arrest in Merseyside in the year ending March 2022 were for Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (of which, 88% were possession offences), while around one in five (21%) were theft.
- Just under three in five (58%) detainees who were arrested for an MDA offence tested positive for cocaine only, while two-thirds (67%) of those arrested for theft tested positive for opiate metabolites.
- Men accounted for over four in five (84%) individuals testing positive in the year ending March 2022.
- The median age of detainees who tested positive in 2021/22 was 35 years. Two in five (40%) individuals were aged 30-39 years, followed by those aged 18-29 years (25%) and 40-49 years (24%), while one in ten (10%) were aged 50 years or over.
- There were larger proportions of detainees testing positive for cocaine only than opiate metabolites for those aged 18-39 years (76% and 51% respectively) and larger proportions of detainees testing positive for opiate metabolites than cocaine only for those aged 40 years or over (49% and 24% respectively).
- In the year ending March 2022, 170.2 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 (196.7 per 100,000), followed by residents of Knowsley (164.4), St Helens (158.8), Sefton (153.7) and Wirral (151.8).
- Of the 1,668 individuals who reside in Merseyside who tested positive for opiates and/or cocaine in the year ending March 2022, one in seven (14.1%) subsequently re-presented and were drug tested again following their initial positive drug test during the twelve-month period.

The Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) has an overarching aim to identify and engage with adult offenders in the criminal justice system who use drugs and/or alcohol, and encourage them towards appropriate treatment services in order to reduce acquisitive crime. Although DIP was decommissioned as a national programme by the Home Office in 2013, it remains operational across Merseyside. The DIP process often begins with the police drug testing detainees in custody for specified Class A drugs (crack/powder cocaine and/or opiates) following an arrest or charge. If a detainee tests positive, they can be served with a Required Assessment (RA) by the police. This is a compulsory legal sanction which requires the individual to attend up to two appointments (initial/follow-up RA) with the local Criminal Justice Intervention Team (CJIT). During the RA, a CJIT worker will assess the individual's drug use and offending behaviour and, if necessary, encourage them to engage with treatment services (Home Office, 2010).

In 2015, Merseyside Police introduced targeted drug testing, which replaced the national Drug Testing on Arrest (DToA) initiative. Targeted testing 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 a detainee is drug tested. The main aim of targeted testing was to reduce the number of negative drug tests, while ensuring offenders who use Class A drugs continue to be drug tested and referred to treatment services through the RA process. It is possible that Merseyside Police's drug testing process may change in response to the reinvestment of DToA nationally.

### *From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives (HM Government, 2022a)*

The latest UK Government drug strategy sets out the need to improve the criminal justice system response, outlining the need for appropriate referral pathways for offenders into treatment, in order to reduce acquisitive crime, re-offending, drug-related violence and drug-related deaths. As recommended by Dame Carol Black, the Government is investing in a range of services, so that a joined-up approach to tackle the issues can be used through the provision of effective treatment, mental and physical healthcare, housing and employment.

### *Swift, Certain, Tough: New Consequences for Drug Possession (HM Government, 2022b)*

Nationally, the rates of Drug Testing on Arrest (DToA) declined since the decommissioning of DIP, with some police forces stopping drug testing completely. The Home Office is reinvesting in DToA, providing every police force £50,000 per year over the next three years in order to boost drug testing.

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

*Project ADDER (HM Government, 2021)*

Project ADDER (Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recovery) is a joint Home Office and Department for Health and Social Care programme in England and Wales, bringing together partners such as the police, local councils and treatment services. Launched in January 2021 in five of the areas most affected by drugs, ADDER expanded to Knowsley, Liverpool and Wirral local authorities in July 2021. Its overarching aims are to reduce drug-related crime, drug-related deaths and drug prevalence.



This Public Health Institute (PHI) report presents data on drug tests carried out across Merseyside Police’s custody suites showing trends up to the year ending March 2022. It contextualises Merseyside Police drug testing records by providing numbers and trends of adult offenders who use crack/powder cocaine and/or opiates, identified through this key route into DIP, and a demographic overview of this cohort. Figures are also provided for Merseyside residents; however, with the exclusion of Knowsley residents as PHI is currently not commissioned to carry out DIP monitoring in Knowsley. Furthermore, there are Merseyside comparisons for the year ending March 2022, presented in charts in *Appendix B*.<sup>1</sup>

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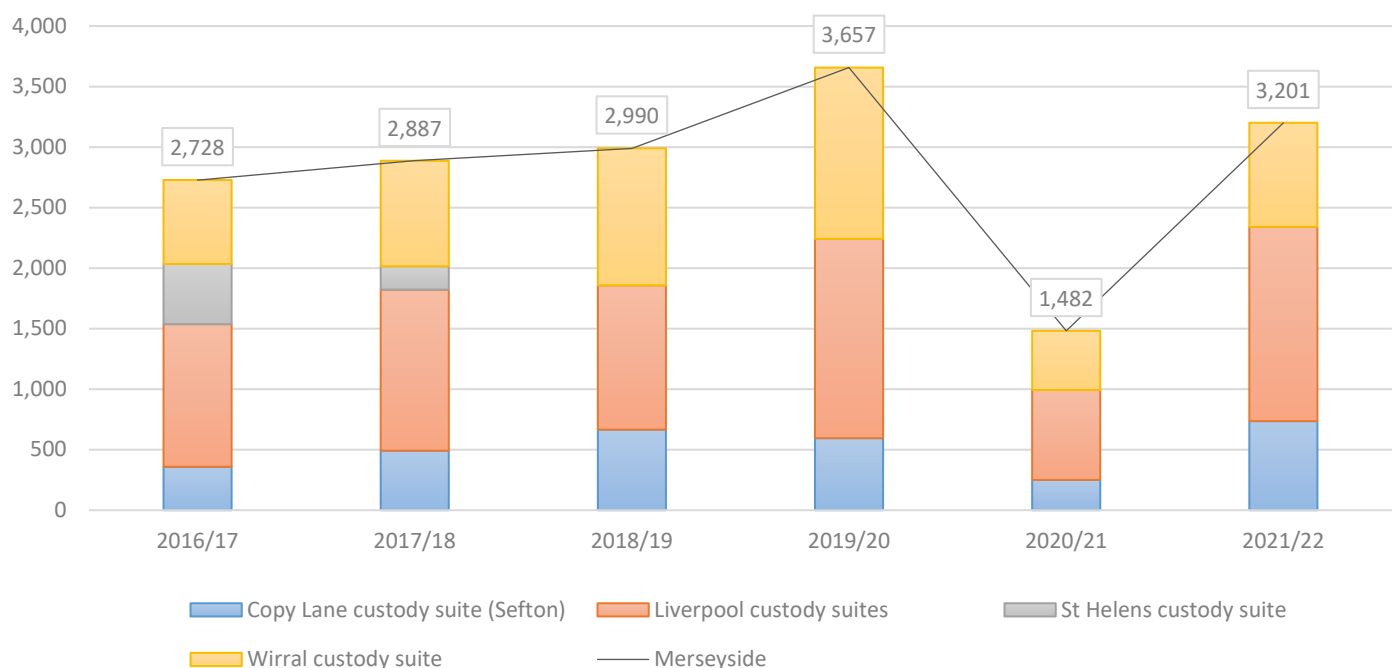
<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Also note that numbers of individuals have been reported for demographics only, while other figures include multiple tests for some detainees.

## DRUG TESTS ACROSS MERSEYSIDE'S CUSTODY SUITES

### OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2022, there were 3,201 attempted drug tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on adult detainees across Merseyside Police's custody suites (*Figure 1*). This is more than double the 1,482 attempted tests in the previous twelve-month period (116% increase), when drug testing was suspended in the custody suites for five months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, the number of attempted drug tests had been increasing year-on-year, peaking at 3,657 in the year ending March 2020. Although the number of tests in 2021/22 were not as high as in 2019/20, it is the second highest number of attempted drug tests of the six-year period (*Figure 1*). Liverpool's custody suites had the highest number of attempted drug tests of all six years shown in *Figure 1*, with half (50%) of all drug tests in the past two years carried out in Liverpool.

*Figure 1: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite area and year, 2016/17 - 2021/22*<sup>2</sup>



### DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

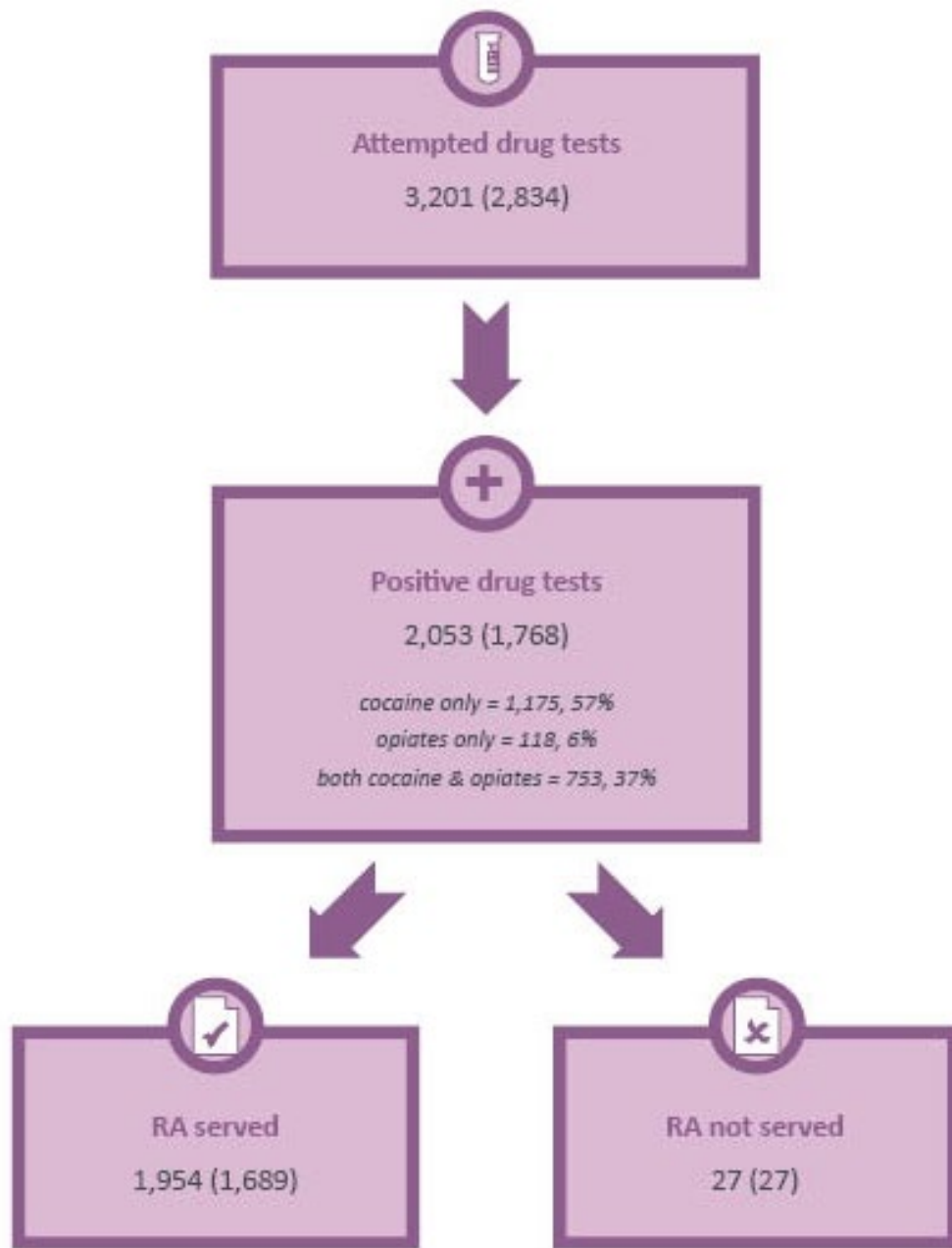
*Figure 2* shows the drug testing activity for detainees who were drug tested in Merseyside's custody suites in the year ending March 2022. Of the 3,201 attempted drug tests, 2,053 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs<sup>3</sup>. Just under three in five of the positive drug tests were for cocaine only<sup>4</sup> (n=1,175, 57%), while over two in five (43%) positive tests were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 753, 37%; opiates only = 118, 6%). There were 1,954 Required Assessments (RAs) served to 1,689 individuals in the year ending March 2022 (*Figure 2*).

<sup>2</sup> Liverpool custody suites include Belle Vale, St Anne Street and Wavertree. Wirral custody suite closed early January 2022 for refurbishment and reopened on 30 April 2022. Copy Lane custody suite closed temporarily for refurbishment for around ten weeks at the end of 2019. St Helens custody suite permanently closed mid-August 2017. Merseyside Police suspended drug testing in the custody suites between April and August 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no custody suite in Knowsley.

<sup>3</sup> A number of the drug tests will have been refused or aborted (i.e. equipment failure or unable to provide sample); therefore, the summation of positive tests and negative test does not equal the number of attempted tests. Notably, there were 44 records where the result of the test was not known.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this report, cocaine includes both powder cocaine and crack cocaine.

Figure 2: Drug testing activity in Merseyside's custody suites, 2021/22 <sup>5,6,7</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Numbers of individuals at each level are presented in brackets.

<sup>6</sup> There were seven positive drug test records that did not indicate the drug(s) detected.

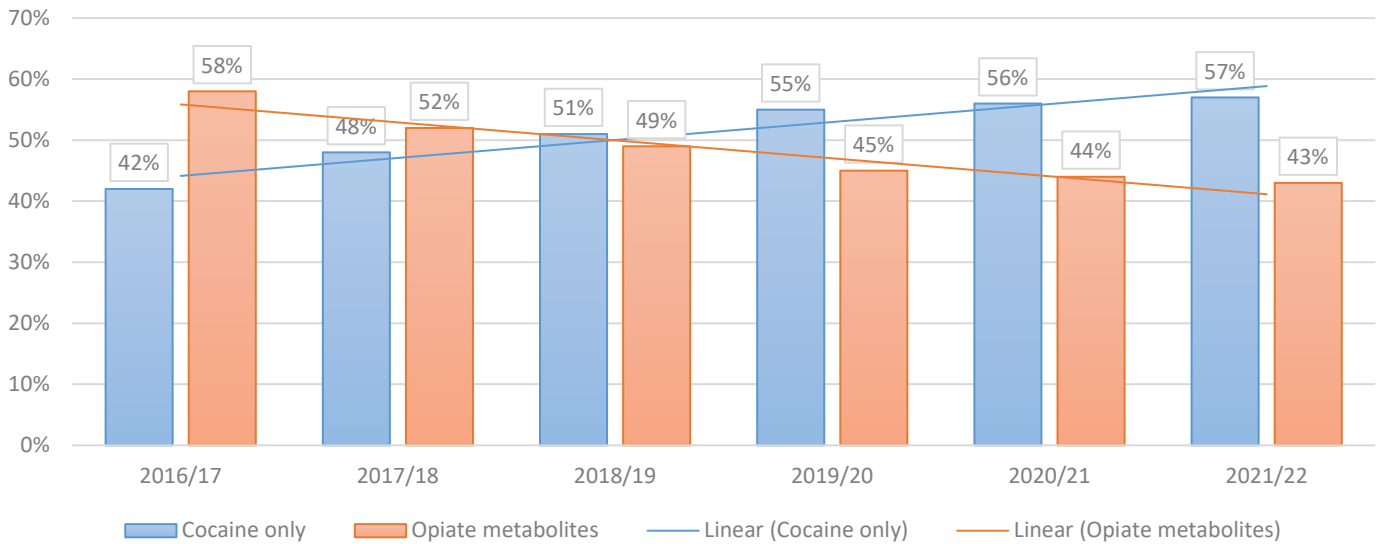
<sup>7</sup> 'RA served' and 'RA not served' indicate the number of occasions when those testing positive were either served or not served with the requirement to attend an initial RA. There are individuals with more than one positive drug test that could be included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'. Note that three records did not indicate if an RA was served or not. Also, there were 69 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

Figure 3 shows a continuing trend in the increase of positive tests for cocaine only and decrease in opiate metabolites (both opiates & cocaine and opiates only). The proportion of cocaine only positive tests increased year-on-year from 42% in 2016/17 to 57% in 2021/22, while the proportion of opiate metabolites decreased year-on-year from 58% to 43%.

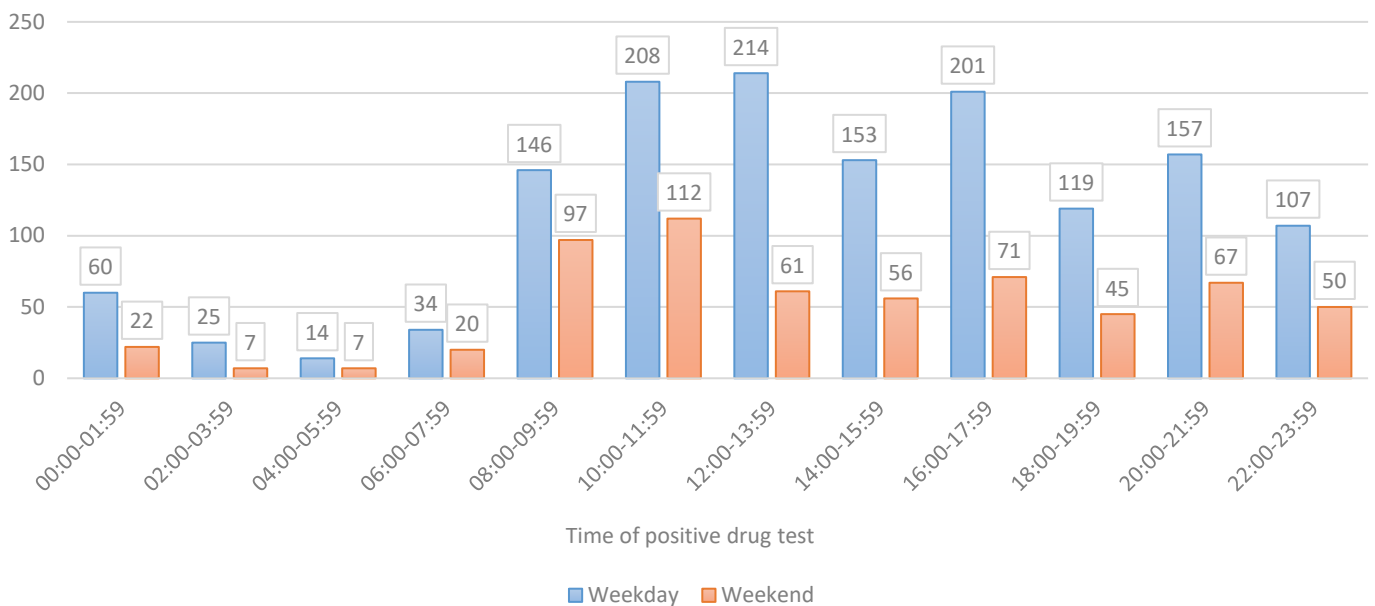
Figure 3: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, 2016/17 - 2021/22



## TIME OF DRUG TESTS

Of the total 2,053 positive drug tests across Merseyside's custody suites in the year ending March 2022, seven in ten occurred on a weekday (n=1,438, 70%) compared to three in ten on a weekend (n=615, 30%). Figure 4 shows the number of positive drug tests by time of test, comparing those that occurred on a weekday with those on a weekend. On a weekday, positive drug tests peaked at 12:00-13:59 (15%), followed by 10:00-11:59 and 16:00-17:59 (both 14%), while they peaked at 10:00-11:59 (18%) and 08:00-09:59 (16%) on a weekend.

Figure 4: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2021/22



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

Of the 1,008 positive drug tests at Liverpool’s custody suites in the year ending March 2022, around seven in ten occurred on a weekday (n=719, 71%) compared to around three in ten on a weekend (n=289, 29%). Positive drug tests on a weekday peaked at 12:00-13:59 (n=123, 17%), followed by 10:00-11:59 (n=107, 15%), while the number of tests on a weekend peaked at 08:00-09:59 and 10:00-11:59 (both n=44, 15%) (*Appendix A1*).

## COPY LANE CUSTODY SUITE, SEFTON

Of the 465 positive drug tests at Copy Lane custody suite in in the year ending March 2022, around seven in ten occurred on a weekday (n=330, 71%) compared to around three in ten on a weekend (n=135, 29%). Positive drug tests on a weekday peaked at 16:00-17:59 (n=57, 17%), while the number of tests on a weekend peaked at 10:00-11:59 (n=30, 22%) (*Appendix A2*).

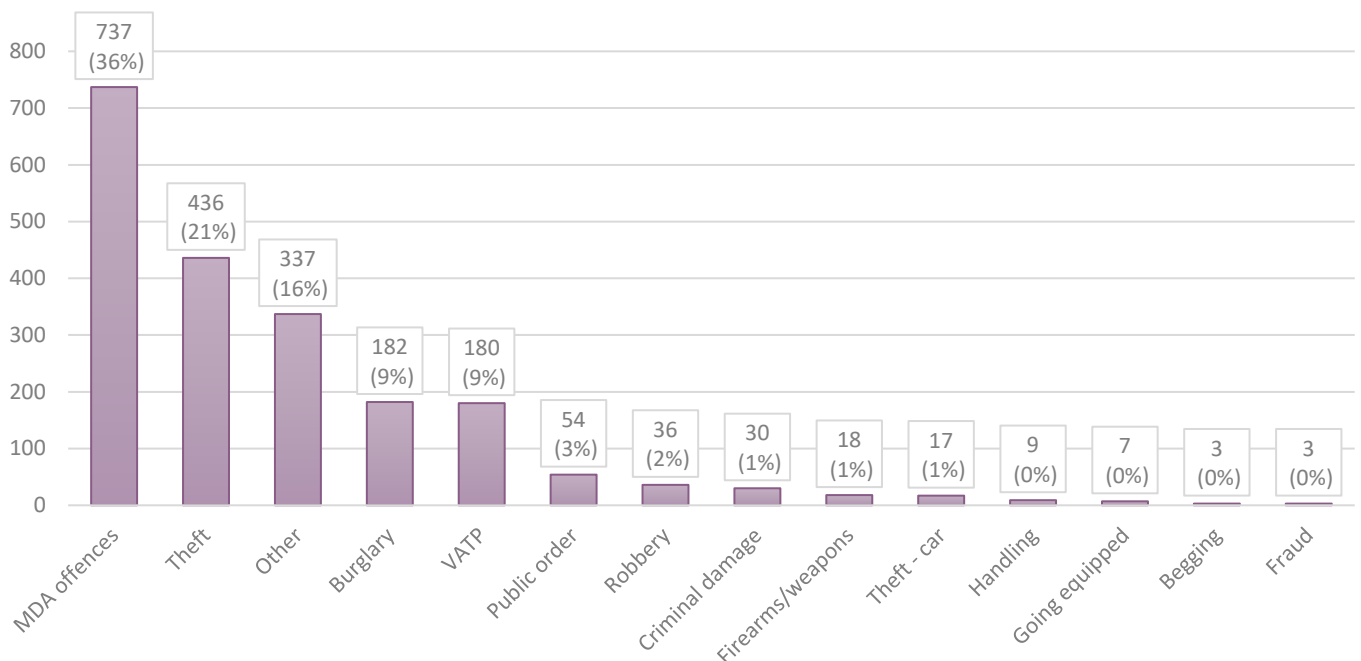
## WIRRAL CUSTODY SUITE

Of the 580 positive drug tests at Wirral custody suite in in the year ending March 2022, two-thirds occurred on a weekday (n=389, 67%) compared to one-third on a weekend (n=191, 33%). Positive drug tests on a weekday peaked at 10:00-11:59 (n=57, 15%), followed by 12:00-13:59 (n=53, 14%), while the number of tests on a weekend peaked at 08:00-09:59 and 10:00-11:59 (both n=38, 20%) (*Appendix A3*).

## OFFENCES

Police drug testing records capture the offence that led to the arrest/charge and subsequent drug test. Over one-third of the positive drug test records across Merseyside in the year ending March 2022 reported Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=737, 36%), while around one in five were theft (n=436, 21%) and around one in six were other offences (n=337, 16%) (*Figure 5*).

Figure 5: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, 2021/22 <sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> There were four records that did not have an offence recorded. MDA = Misuse of Drugs Act. VATP = violence against the person. Other offences: other non-trigger offences = 233; other motoring offences = 95; driving whilst disqualified = 5; offences against the administration of justice = 3; making off without payment = 1.

Notably, there have been some changes in the trends of MDA offences and theft (Figure 6). The proportion of MDA offences increased year-on-year, peaking at 41% in 2019/20, though the proportion then decreased in 2020/21 to 39% and again in 2021/22 to 36%. Conversely, theft decreased year-on-year, from 40% in 2016/17 to 21% in 2021/22.

Figure 6: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by MDA offences/theft, 2016/17 - 2021/22

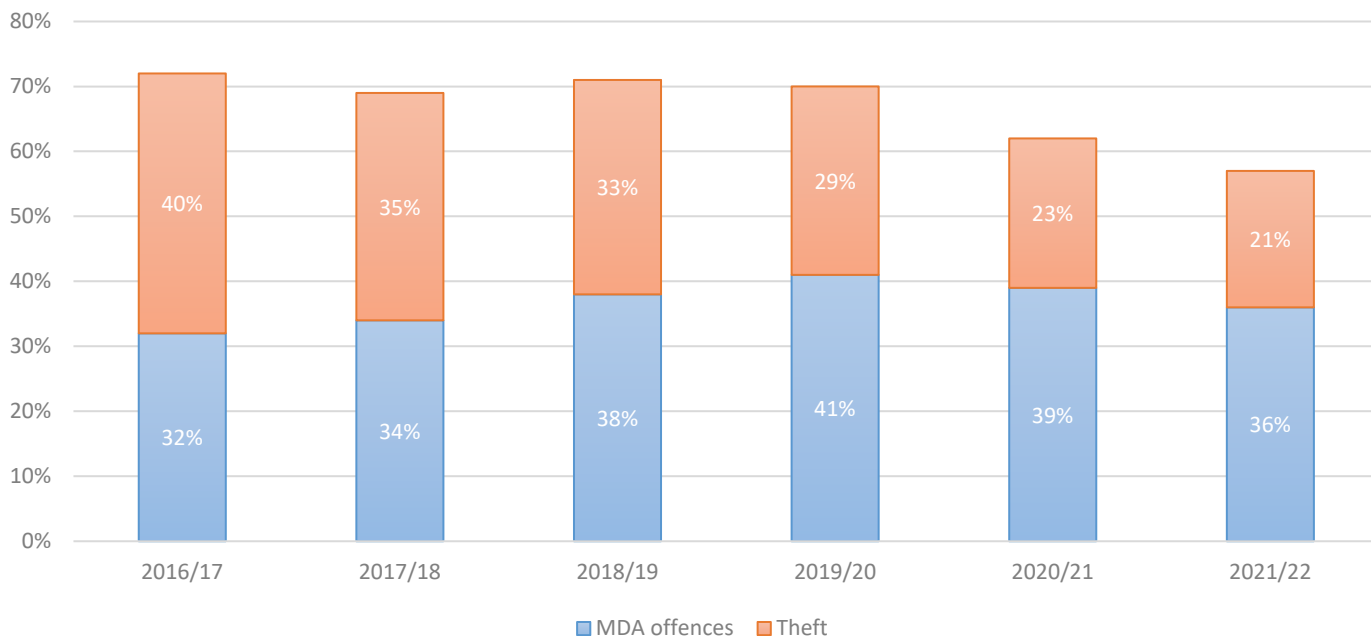
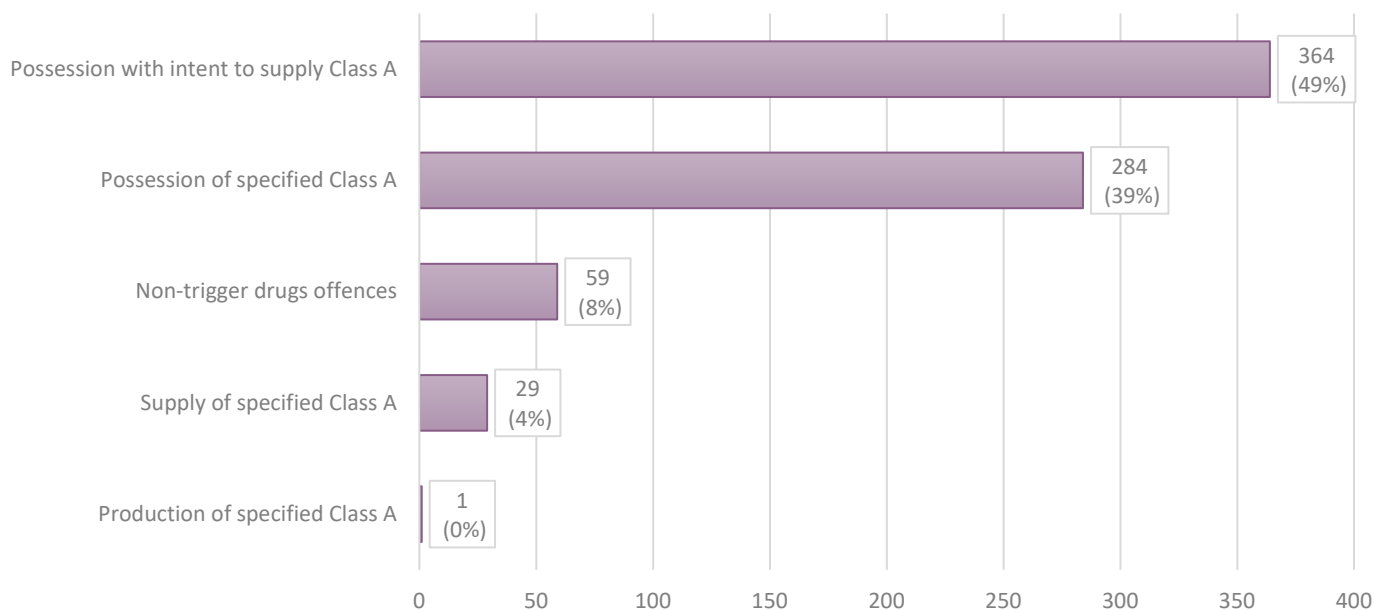


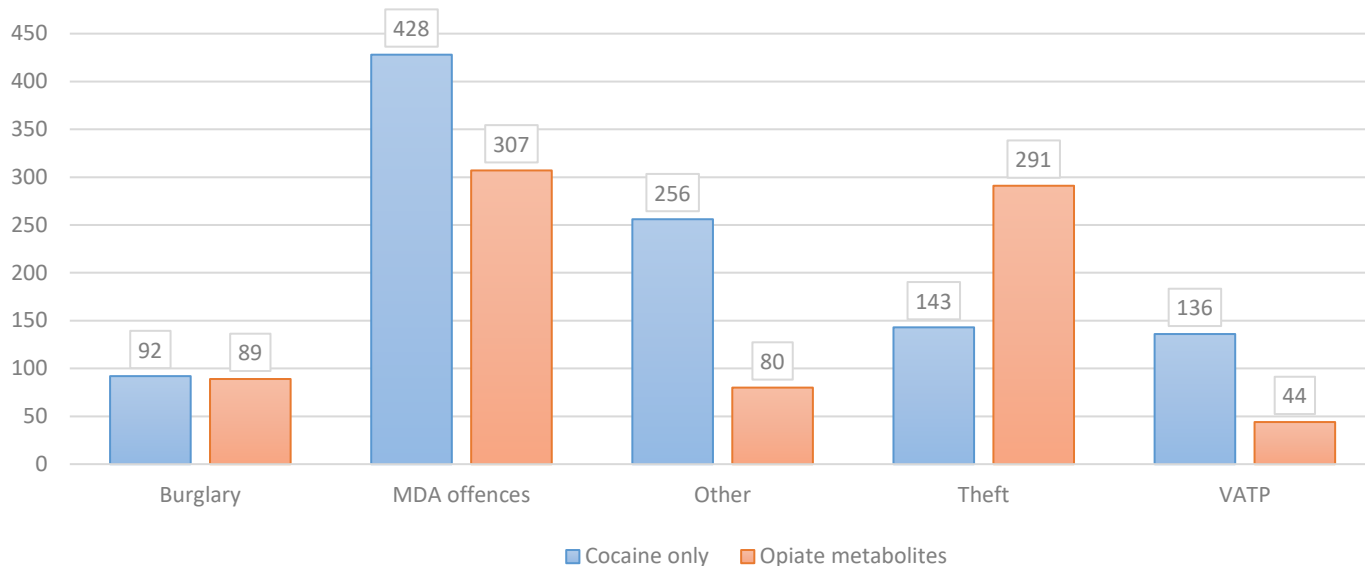
Figure 7 shows the type of MDA offences recorded in the year ending March 2022. Of the 737 MDA offences recorded for those who tested positive, just under nine in ten (88%) were for possession offences. Around half of all MDA offences were possession with intent to supply Class A drugs (n=364, 49%), while around two in five were possession of specified Class A drugs (n=284, 39%).

Figure 7: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by type of MDA offence, 2021/22



As this report shows, there has been a shift in trends for those testing positive in Merseyside’s custody suites; positive drug tests for opiate metabolites have decreased, as have theft offences. *Figure 8* shows the five offences with the highest numbers recorded in the year ending March 2022 by the positive drug test result. Of the drug testing records with an MDA offence recorded, just under three in five detainees tested positive for cocaine only (n=428, 58%), while of the records with theft recorded, two-thirds tested positive for opiate metabolites (n=291, 67%). Additionally, there were noticeably higher numbers of cocaine only positive tests for other offences and VATP, than there were for opiate metabolites.

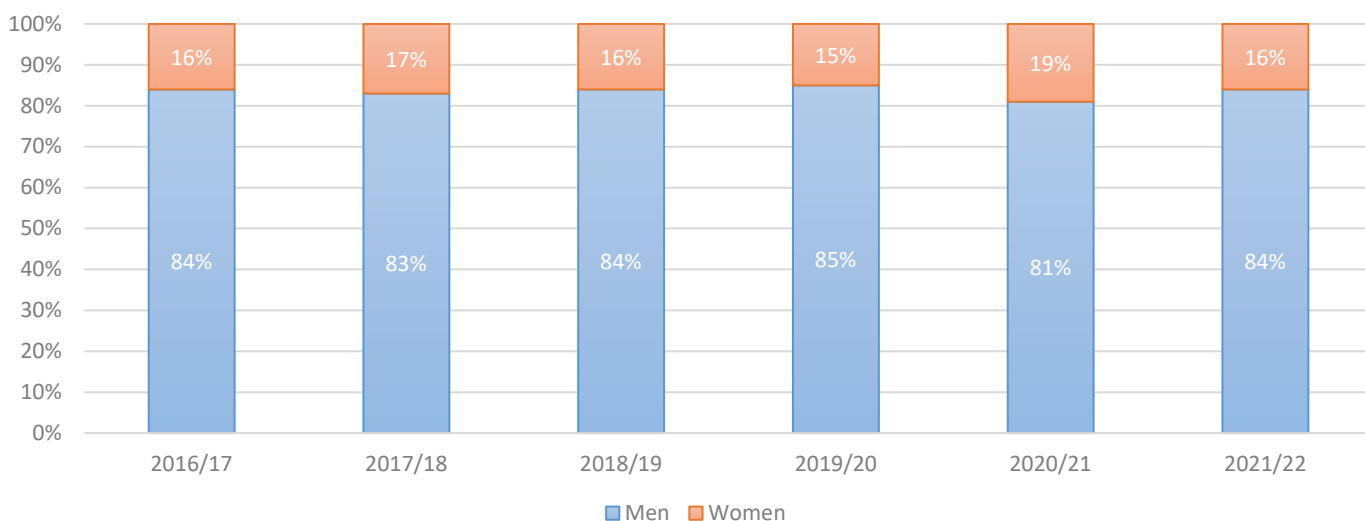
Figure 8: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence and drug test result, 2021/22 <sup>9</sup>



## DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2022 (n=1,477, 84%). Although this is an increase on the proportion of men in the previous year (81%), it is similar to preceding years.

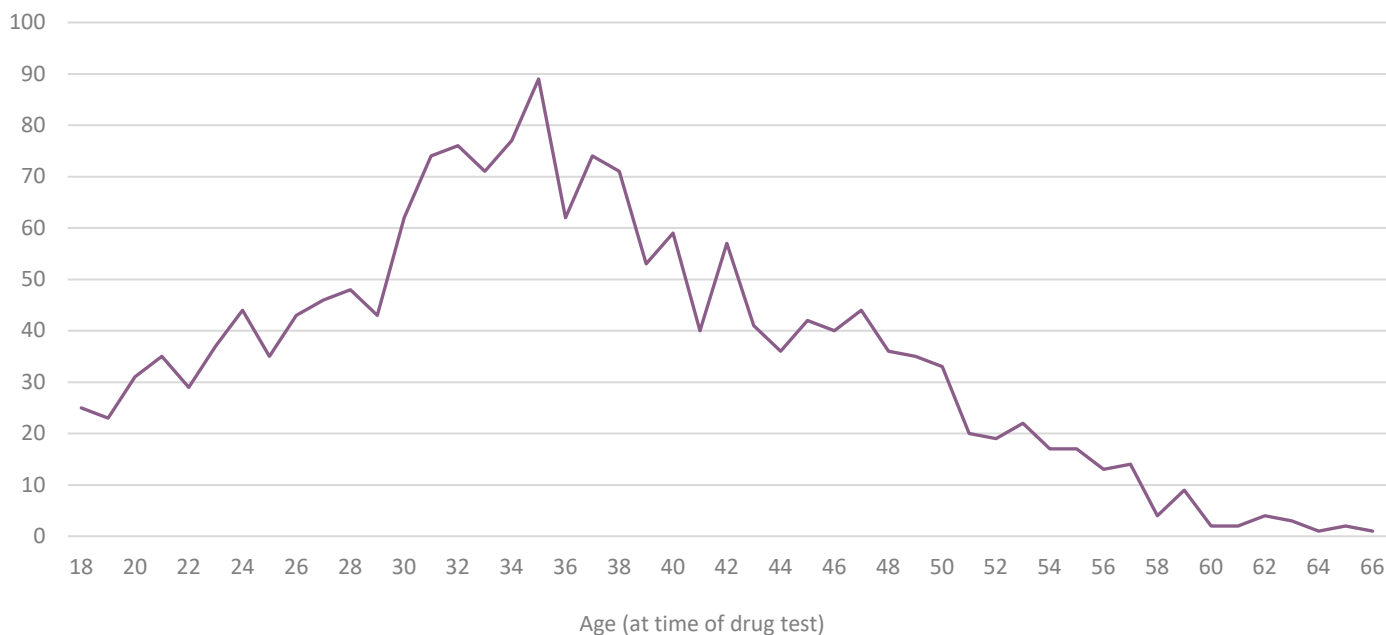
Figure 9: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender (individuals), 2016/17 - 2021/22



<sup>9</sup> There were seven positive drug test records that did not indicate the drug(s) detected; therefore, the totals for the offences do not equal the numbers in *Figure 5*.

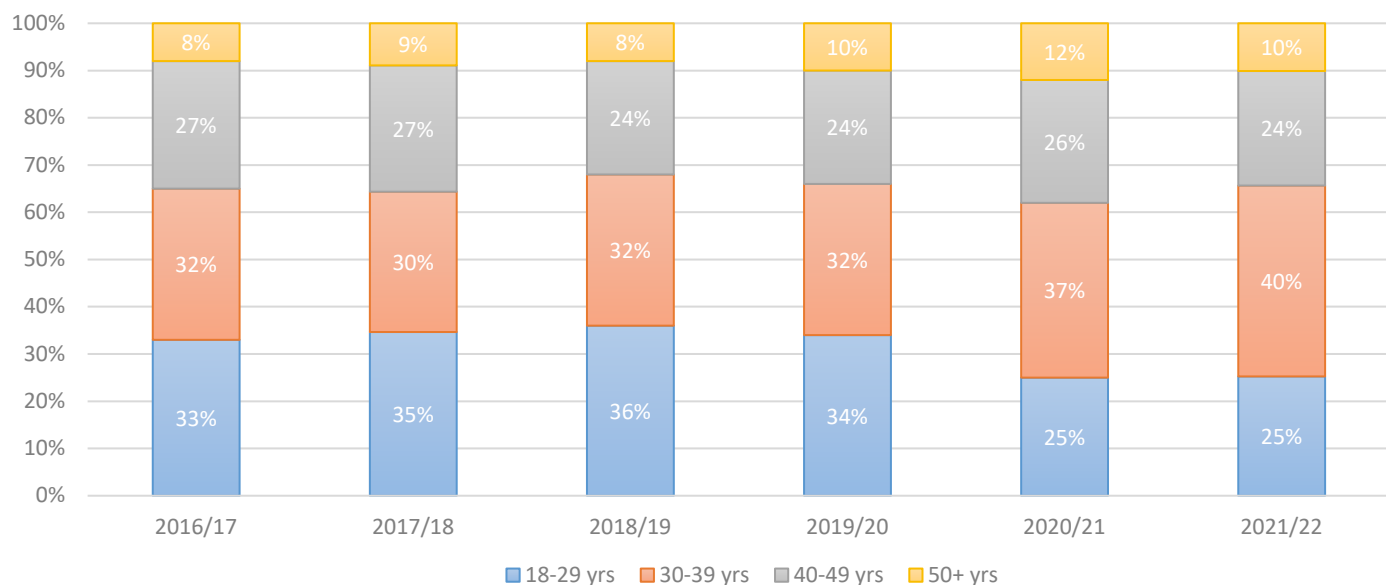
The median age of detainees who tested positive in the year ending March 2022 was 35 years, while the range of adult detainees testing positive went up to 66 years. *Figure 10* shows that numbers peaked for detainees aged 35 years (n=89), followed by those aged 34 years (n=77) and 32 years (n=76).

*Figure 10: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test (individuals) (n), 2021/22<sup>10</sup>*



Two in five of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2022 were aged 30-39 years (n=709, 40%), which is the largest proportion for that age group of the six years shown in *Figure 11*. One-quarter were aged 18-29 years (n=439, 25%), followed by a similar proportion aged 40-49 years (n=430, 24%) and one in ten aged 50 years or over (n=183, 10%). Notably, 2020/21 and 2021/22 had the lowest proportions of detainees aged 18-29 years, while those aged 40 years and over were similar to previous years (*Figure 11*).

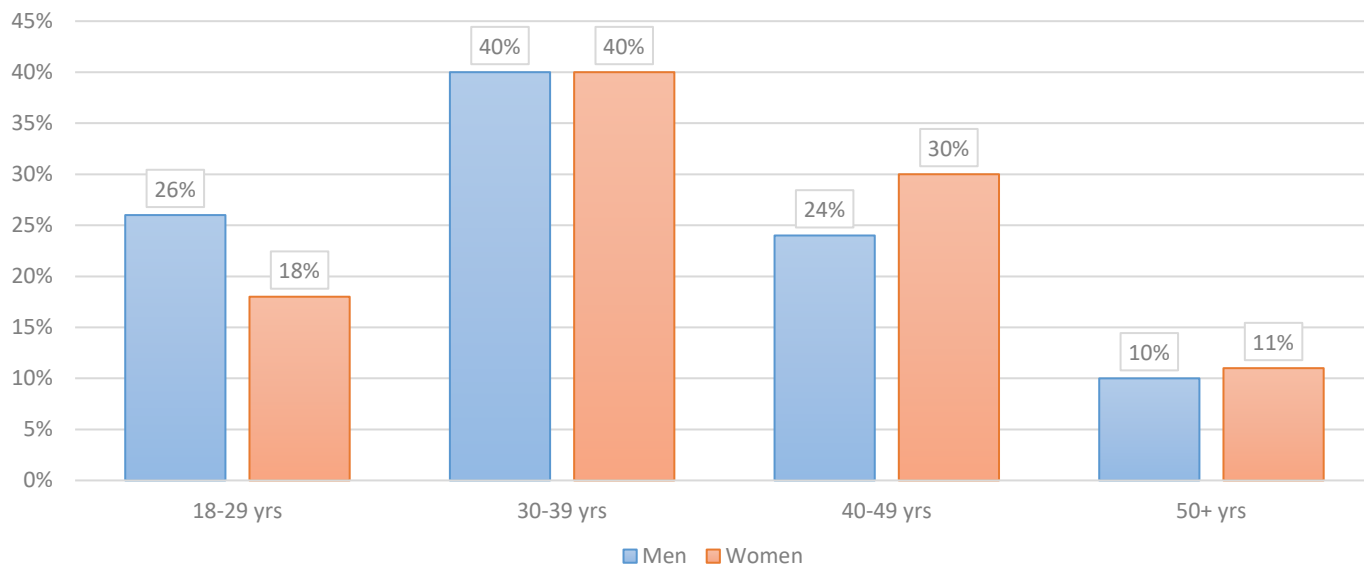
*Figure 11: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group (individuals), 2016/17 - 2021/22<sup>10</sup>*



<sup>10</sup> There were two records that did not have a date of birth recorded and five records that had an invalid year of birth recorded.

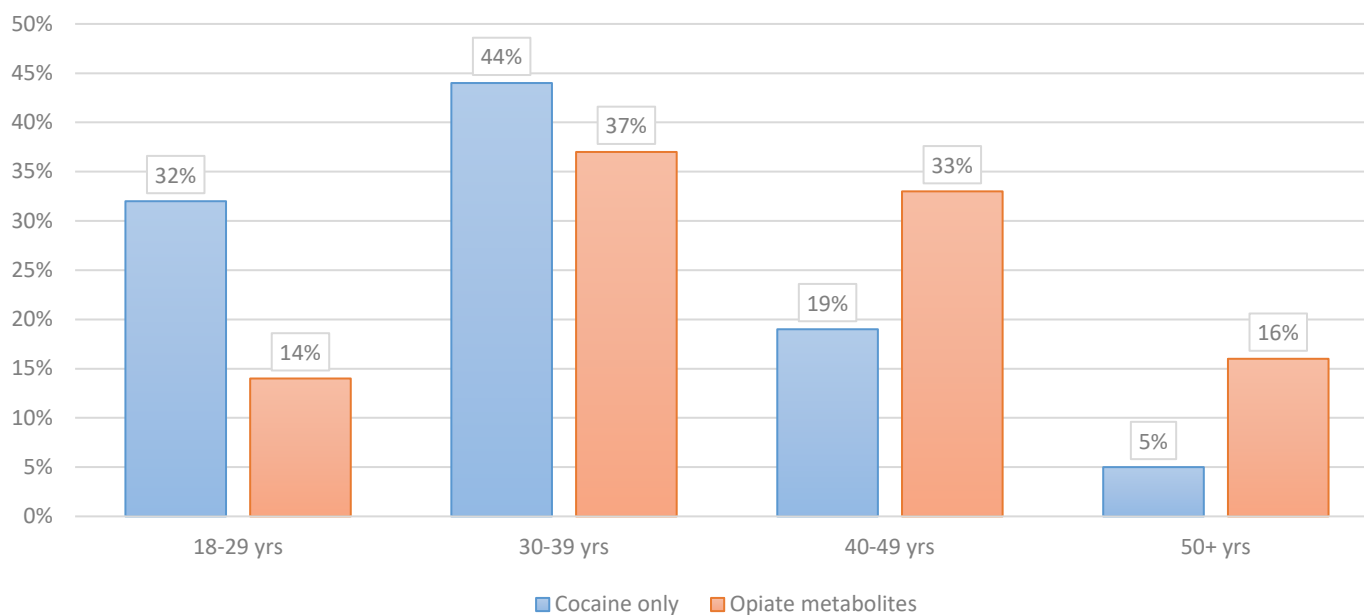
There are some variations when comparing age group with gender. *Figure 12* shows that there was a larger proportion of men than women aged 18-29 years (26% and 18% respectively), though a smaller proportion of men than women aged 40-49 years (24% and 30% respectively).

*Figure 12: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and gender (individuals), 2021/22*



Positive drug test results in 2021/22 are categorised by age group in *Figure 13*. There were larger proportions of detainees testing positive for cocaine only than opiate metabolites for those aged 18-39 years (76% and 51% respectively) and larger proportions of detainees testing positive for opiate metabolites than cocaine only for those aged 40 years or over (49% and 24% respectively). Notably, proportions were highest for both cocaine only and opiate metabolites for detainees aged 30-39 years (44% and 37% respectively).

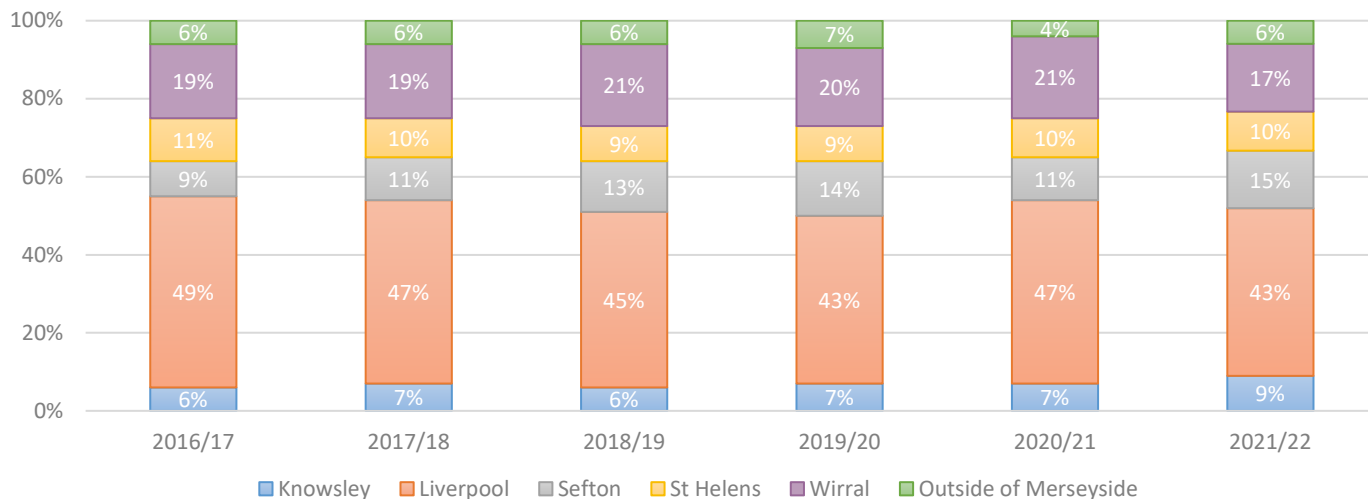
*Figure 13: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, 2021/22*



## MERSEYSIDE RESIDENTS

Of the recorded 3,201 drug tests attempted in Merseyside's custody suites in the year ending March 2022, 2,999 (94%) were Merseyside residents. Residents of Liverpool Local Authority (LA) accounted for the largest proportion of detainees drug tested in all seven years, followed by Wirral residents (43% and 17% respectively in the year ending March 2022) (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by LA of residence and year, 2016/17 - 2021/22 <sup>11</sup>



In the year ending March 2022, 170.2 per 100,000 adult population in Merseyside had a positive test for specified Class A drugs. Figure 15 shows the rates for each of the five LA areas. Liverpool residents had the highest rate (196.7 per 100,000), followed by Knowsley residents (164.4 per 100,000), while the lowest rate was for Wirral residents (151.8 per 100,000).

Figure 15: Rate of positive drug tests per 100,000 adult population across Merseyside by LA of residence, 2021/22



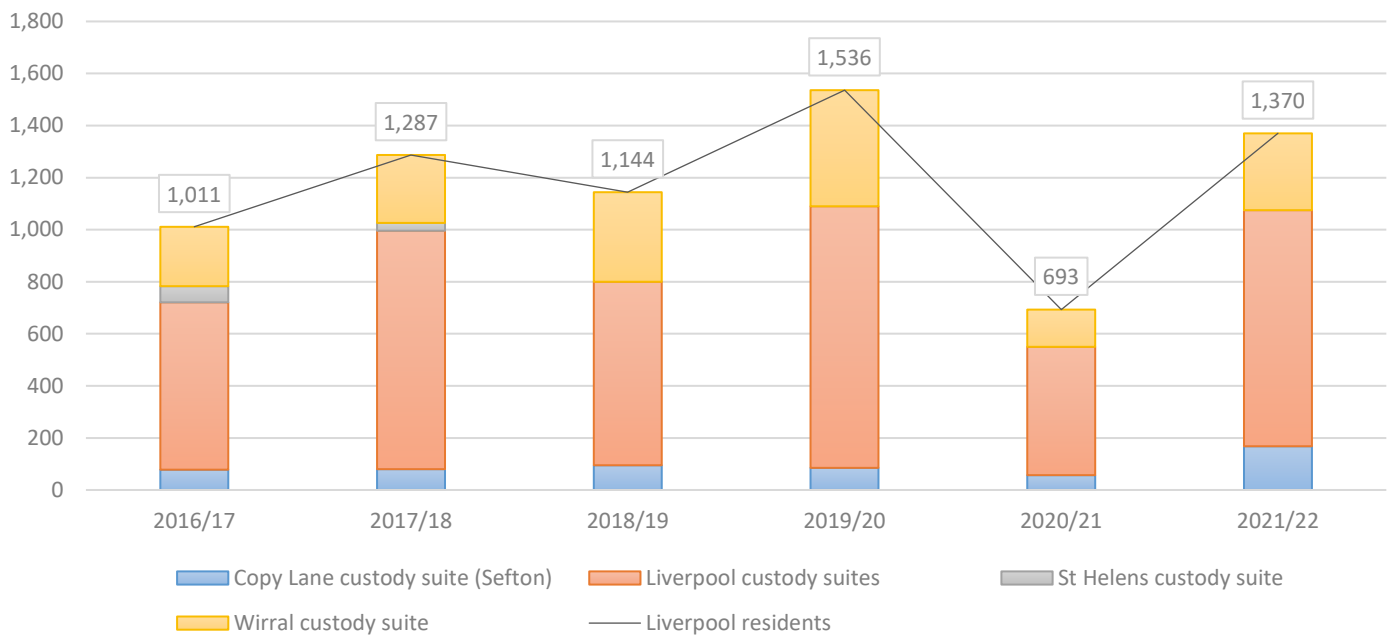
| LA of residence                   | Positive drug tests |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                                   | Number              | Rate (per 100,000 adult population) |
| Knowsley                          | 194                 | 164.4                               |
| Liverpool                         | 794                 | 196.7                               |
| Sefton                            | 341                 | 153.7                               |
| St Helens                         | 229                 | 158.8                               |
| Wirral                            | 390                 | 151.8                               |
| <b>Total Merseyside residents</b> | <b>1,948</b>        | <b>170.2</b>                        |

<sup>11</sup> Caution should be taken with these figures as in some 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. Proportion of records missing LA of residence between 2016/17 and 2021/22: 24%, 6%, 15%, 2%, 0% and <1% respectively.

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2022, there were 1,370 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Liverpool residents across Merseyside’s custody suites (*Figure 16*), representing just under half (46%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is almost double the 693 attempted tests in the previous twelve-month period (98% increase), when drug testing was suspended in the custody suites for five months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, the number of attempted drug tests on Liverpool residents fluctuated, peaking at 1,536 tests in the year ending March 2020, which could be attributed to the data quality of the recording of LA of residence. On average, two-thirds (67%) of attempted drug tests on Liverpool residents were carried out at a Liverpool custody suite during the six-year period (*Figure 16*).

Figure 16: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Liverpool residents, 2016/17 - 2021/22 <sup>12</sup>



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 17 shows the drug testing activity for Liverpool residents drug tested in Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2022. Of the 1,370 attempted drug tests, 794 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Over half of the positive drug tests were for cocaine only (n=431, 55%), which is just below the Merseyside figure (57%), while 45% of the positive tests were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 307, 39%; opiates only = 50, 6%). Of the detainees who tested positive for cocaine and/or opiates in the year ending March 2022, there were 759 RAs served to 685 individuals (*Figure 17*).

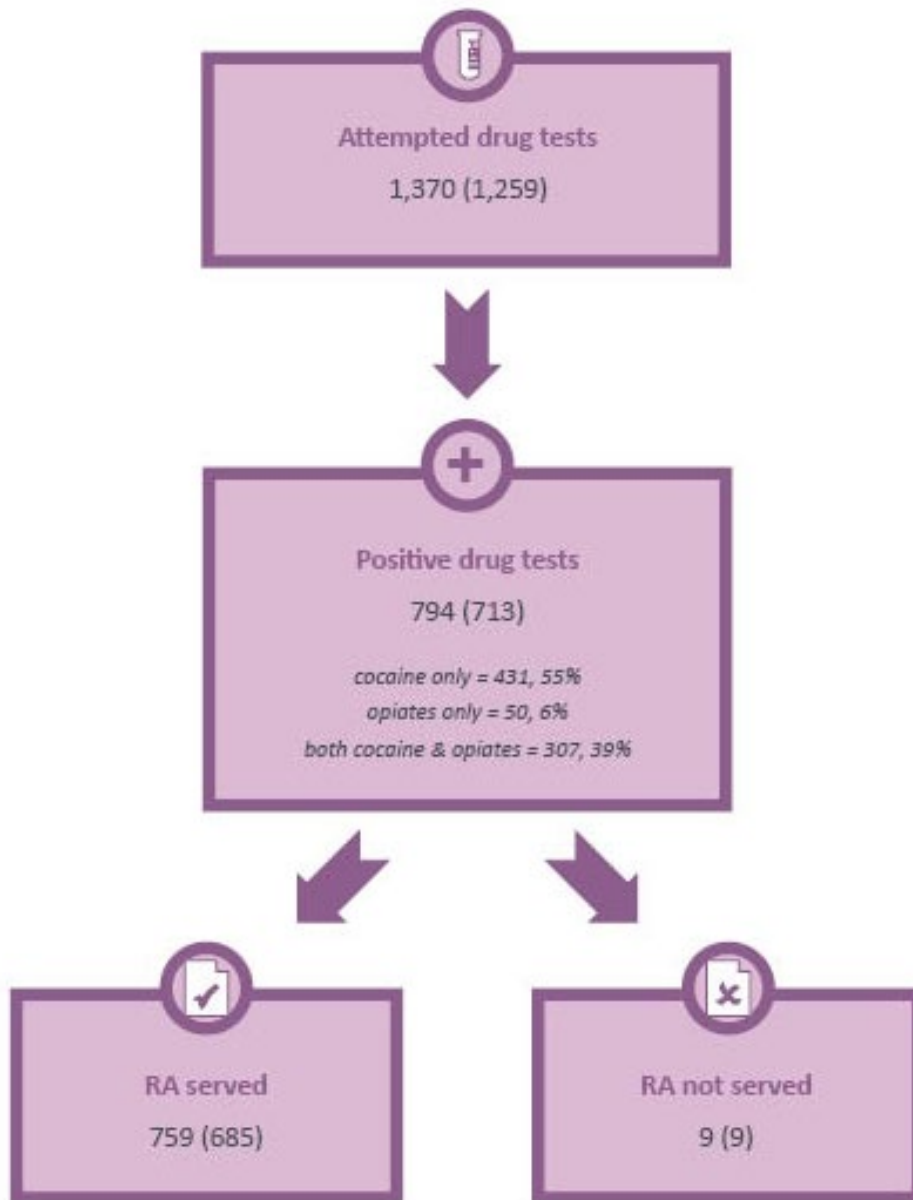


**55%**  
positive tests for crack/powder cocaine, 2021/22

<sup>12</sup> Liverpool custody suites include Belle Vale, St Anne Street and Wavertree



Figure 17: Drug testing activity, Liverpool residents, 2021/22 <sup>13</sup>

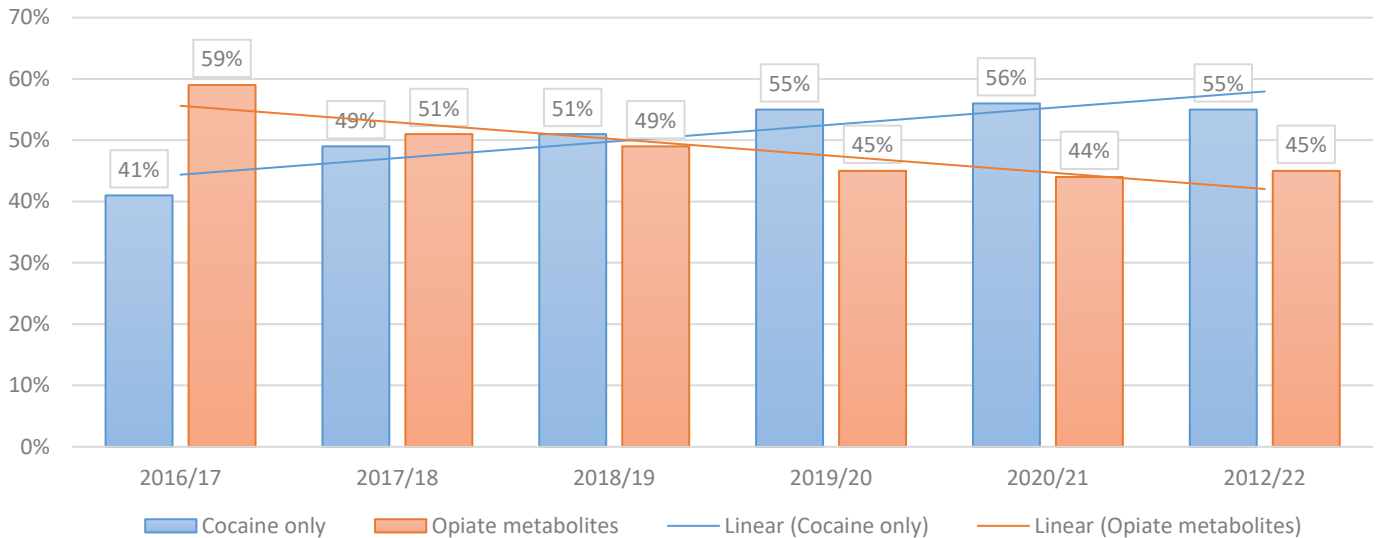


<sup>13</sup> There were 12 records where the result of the test was not known and six positive drug test records that did not indicate the drug(s) detected.  
Criminal Justice Project | Class A drug tests in Merseyside Police custody: year ending March 2022

## POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

In the five years ending March 2021, the proportion of cocaine only positive tests increased year-on-year from 41% to 56%, while the proportion of opiate metabolites (both opiates & cocaine and opiates only) decreased year-on-year from 59% to 44%. However, in the year ending March 2022, there was a slight shift in trends when compared to the previous twelve-month period (cocaine only positive tests -1%; opiate metabolites +1%) (Figure 18).

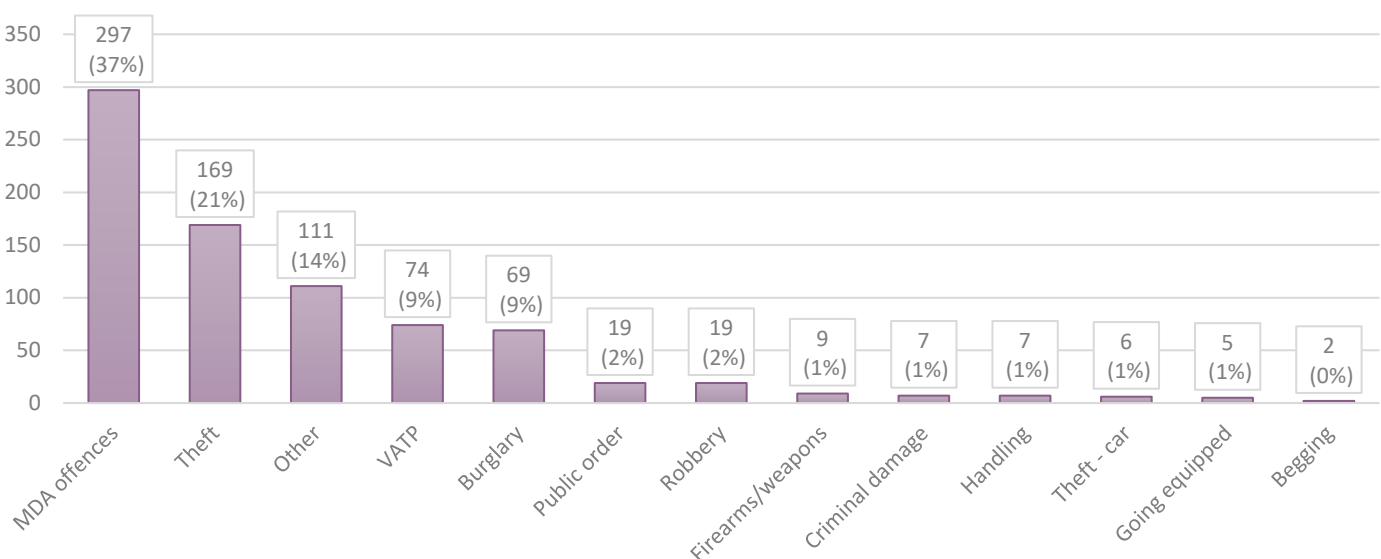
Figure 18: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Liverpool residents, 2016/17 - 2021/22



## OFFENCES

Just under two in five positive drug test records for Liverpool residents in the year ending March 2022 reported MDA offences (n=297, 37%), while around one in five were theft (n=169, 21%) and one in seven were other offences (n=111, 14%) (Figure 19). These proportions are similar to the figures for all Merseyside residents (35%, 22% and 16% respectively).

Figure 19: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Liverpool residents, 2021/22 <sup>14</sup>

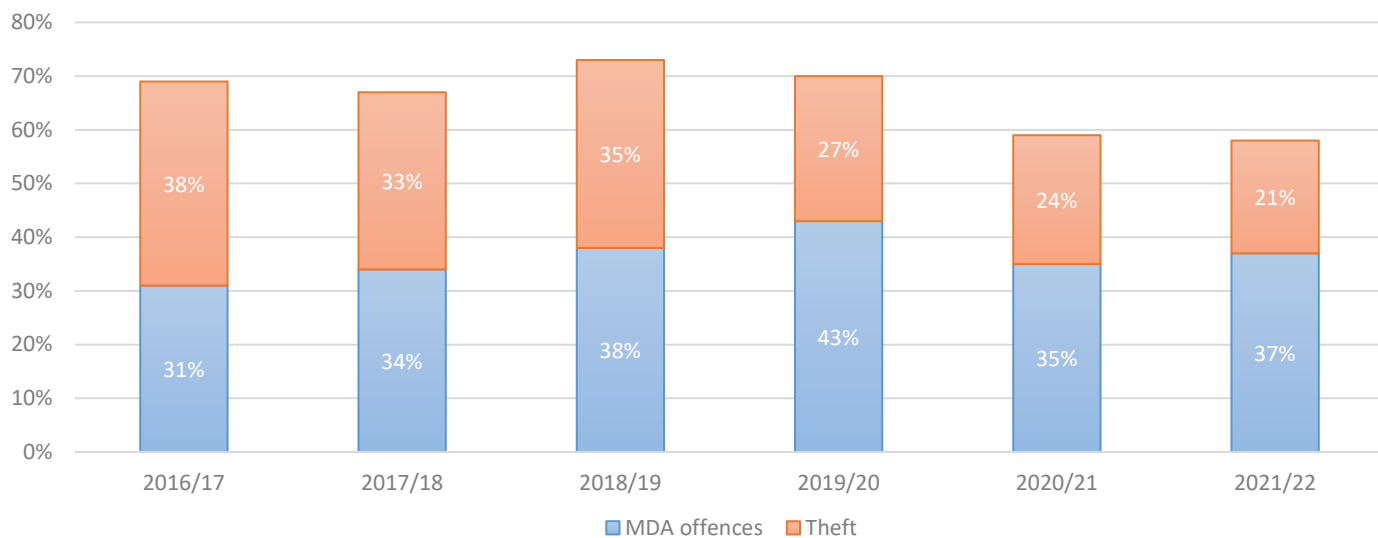


<sup>14</sup> Other offences: other non-trigger offences = 77; other motoring offences = 30; driving whilst disqualified = 3; offences against the administration of justice = 1.

Of the 297 MDA offences recorded for Liverpool residents who tested positive, just under nine in ten (88%) were for possession offences. Around half of all MDA offences were possession with intent to supply Class A drugs (n=145, 49%), while around two in five were possession of specified Class A drugs (n=116, 39%).

Notably, there have been some changes in the trends of MDA offences and theft (Figure 20). The proportion of MDA offences increased year-on-year peaking at 43% in 2019/20, though the proportion then decreased in 2020/21 to 35%, followed by a slight increase to 37% in 2021/22. Conversely, theft decreased year-on-year, from 35% in 2018/19 to 21% in 2021/22.

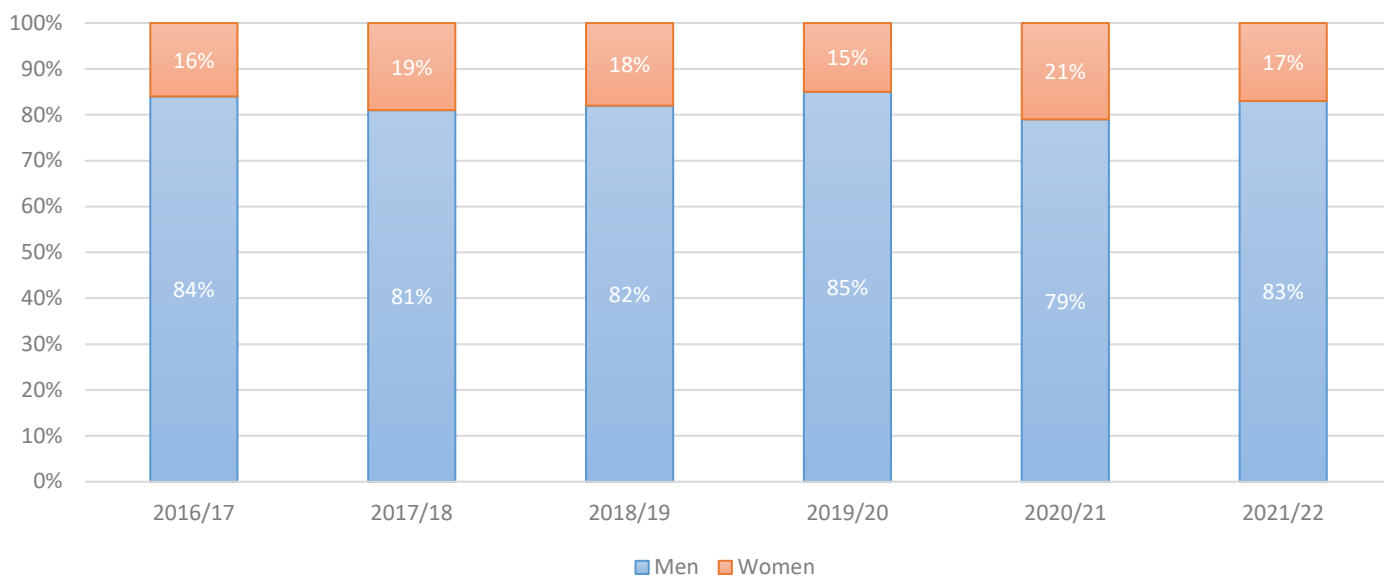
Figure 20: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by MDA offences/theft, Liverpool residents, 2016/17 - 2021/22



## DEMOGRAPHICS

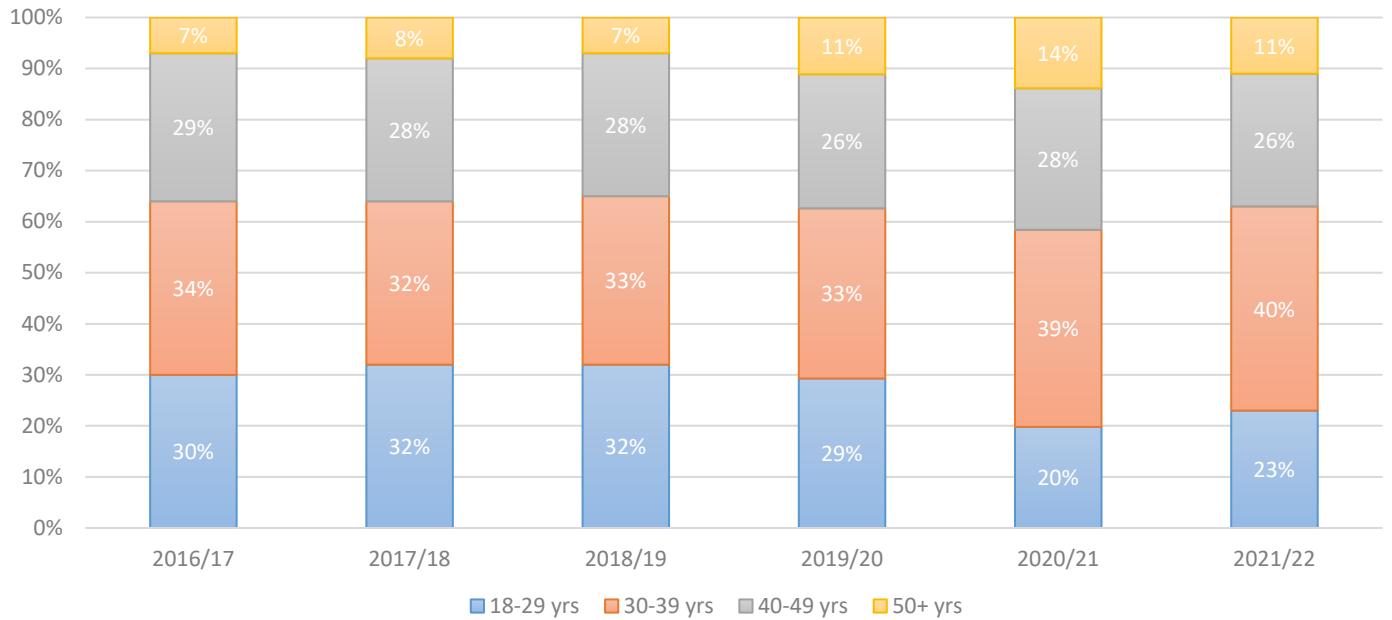
Men accounted for just over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2022 (n=595, 83%), which is the third largest proportion of the six-year period (Figure 21) and is the same as the total figure for all Merseyside residents.

Figure 21: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, Liverpool residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2021/22



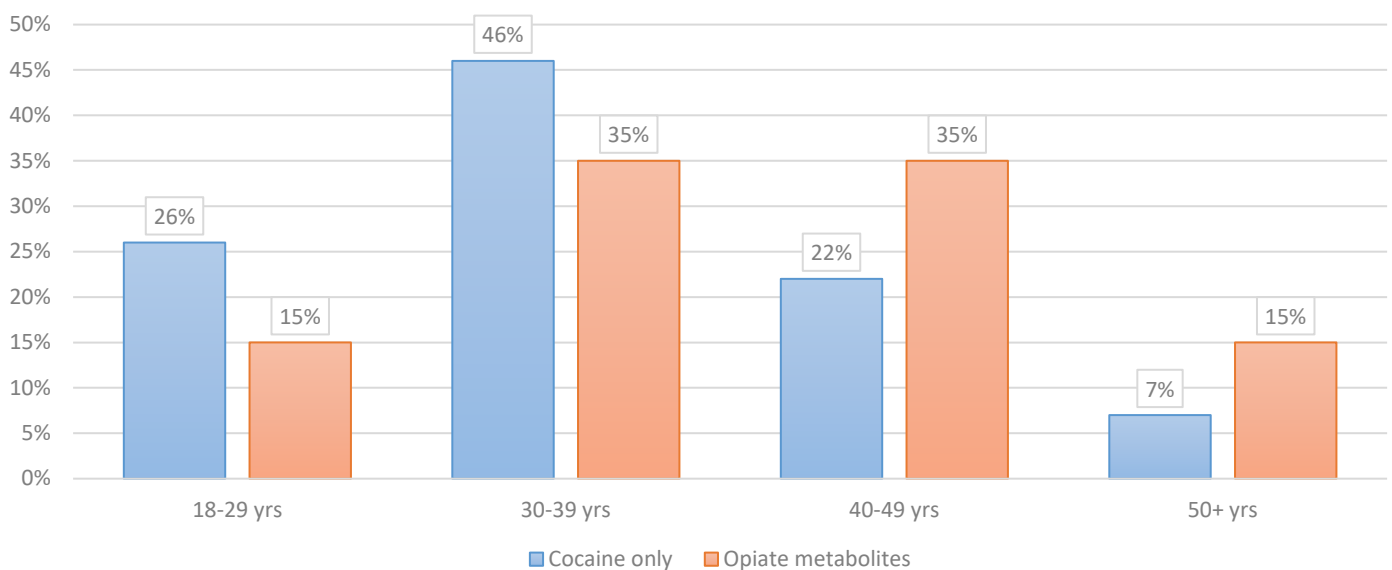
The median age of Liverpool residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2022 was 36 years. Two in five of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2022 were aged 30-39 years (n=282, 40%), which is the highest proportion for that age group of the six years shown in *Figure 22*. Around one-quarter were aged 40-49 years (n=188, 26%), followed by just under one-quarter aged 18-29 years (n=161, 23%) and around one in ten aged 50 years or over (n=81, 11%). These proportions are similar to the Merseyside figures.

*Figure 22: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Liverpool residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2021/22*<sup>15</sup>



Positive drug test results in 2021/22 are categorised by age group in *Figure 23*. Just over seven in ten (72%) of those testing positive for cocaine only were aged 18-39 years, compared to 28% aged 40 years or over. While for those who tested positive for opiate metabolites, similar proportions were aged 18-39 years and 40 years or over (51% and 49% respectively), with proportions peaking for detainees aged 30-39 years and 40-49 years (both 35%).

*Figure 23: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Liverpool residents, 2021/22*

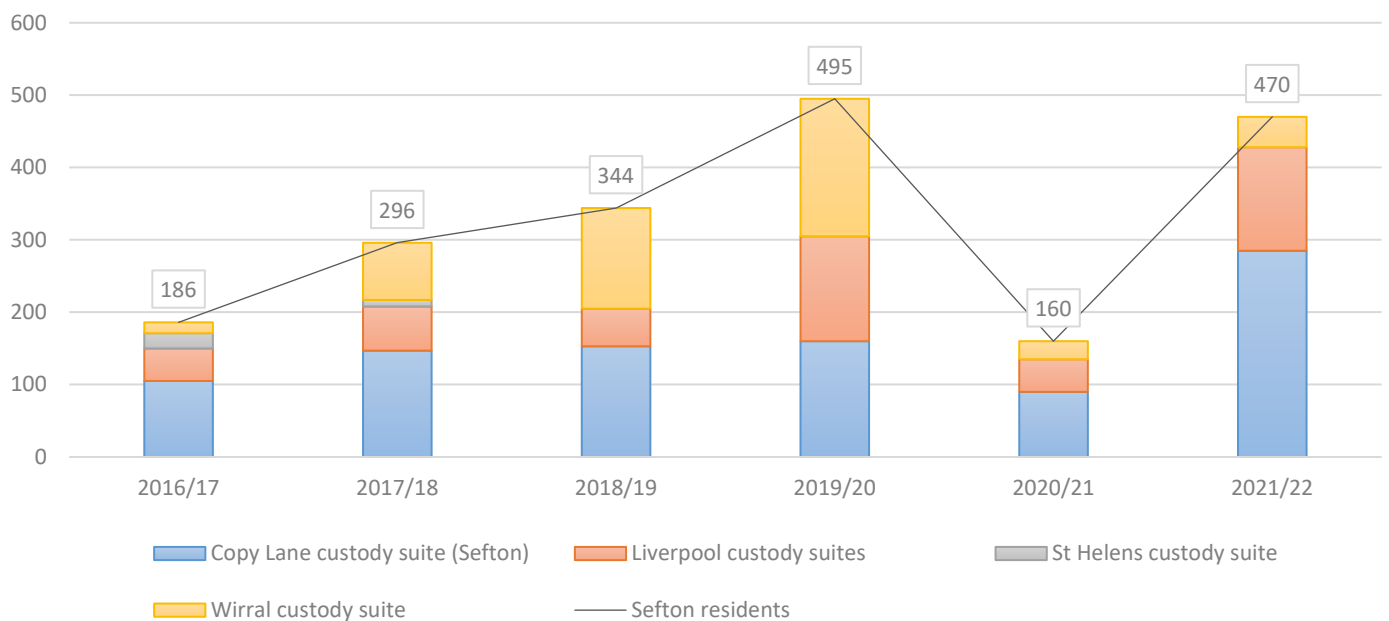


<sup>15</sup> There was one record that did not have a date of birth recorded.

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2022, there were 470 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Sefton residents across Merseyside’s custody suites (*Figure 24*), representing 16% of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is almost triple the 160 attempted tests in the previous twelve-month period (194% increase), when drug testing was suspended in the custody suites for five months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, the number of attempted drug tests on Sefton residents had been increasing year-on-year, peaking at 495 in the year ending March 2020. Although the number of tests in 2021/22 were not a high as in 2019/20, it is the second highest number of attempted drug tests of the six-year period. In the year ending March 2022, around three in five (61%) attempted drug tests on Sefton residents were carried out at Copy Lane custody suite (*Figure 24*).

Figure 24: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Sefton residents, 2016/17 - 2021/22



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

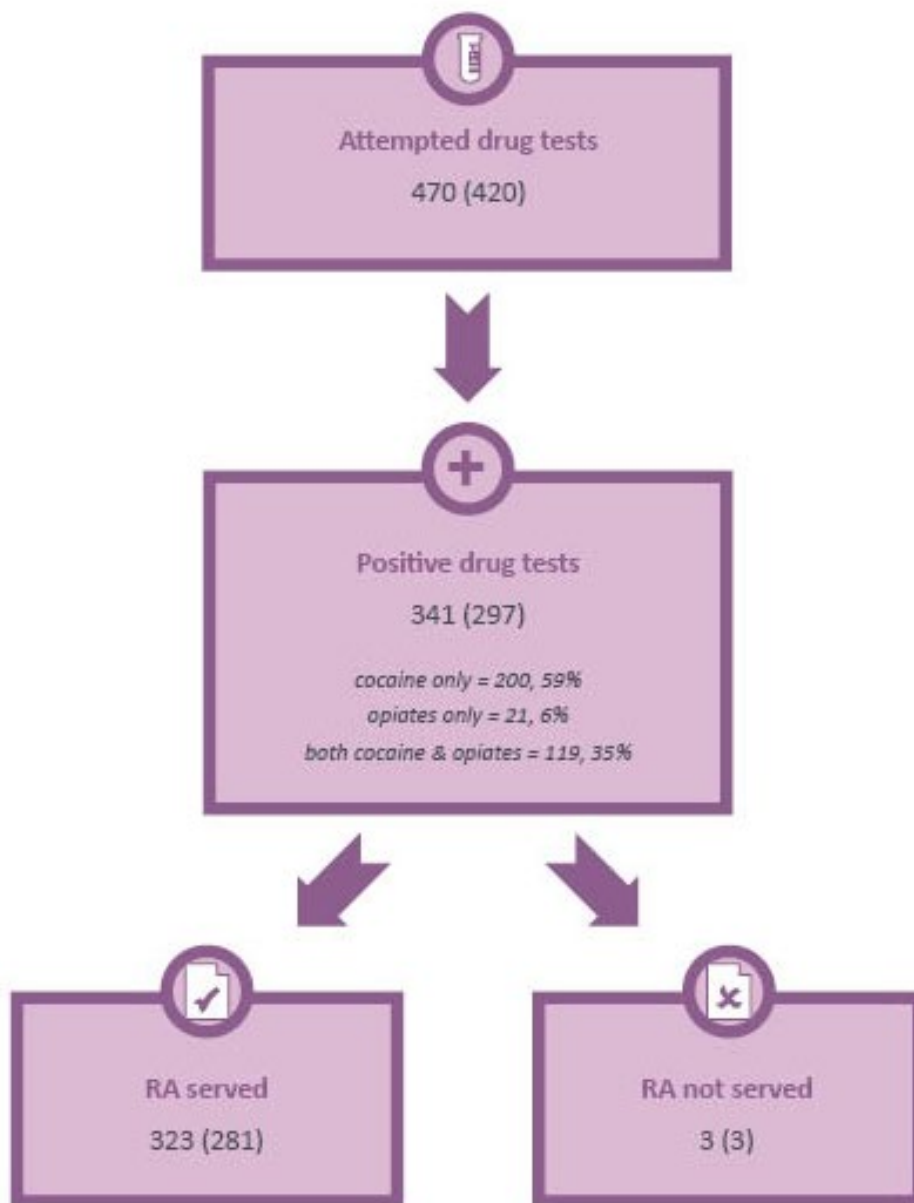
Figure 25 shows the drug testing activity for Sefton residents drug tested in Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2022. Of the 470 attempted drug tests, 341 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Around three in five positive drug tests were for cocaine only (n=200, 59%), while 41% of the positive tests were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 119, 35%; opiates only = 21, 6%). Notably, the proportion of Sefton residents who tested positive for cocaine only is just above the Merseyside figure (57%) and the second highest proportion of all five Merseyside LA areas. Of the detainees who tested positive for cocaine and/or opiates in the year ending March 2022, there were 323 RAs served to 281 individuals (*Figure 25*).



59%

positive tests for crack/powder cocaine, 2021/22

Figure 25: Drug testing activity, Sefton residents, 2021/22 <sup>16</sup>

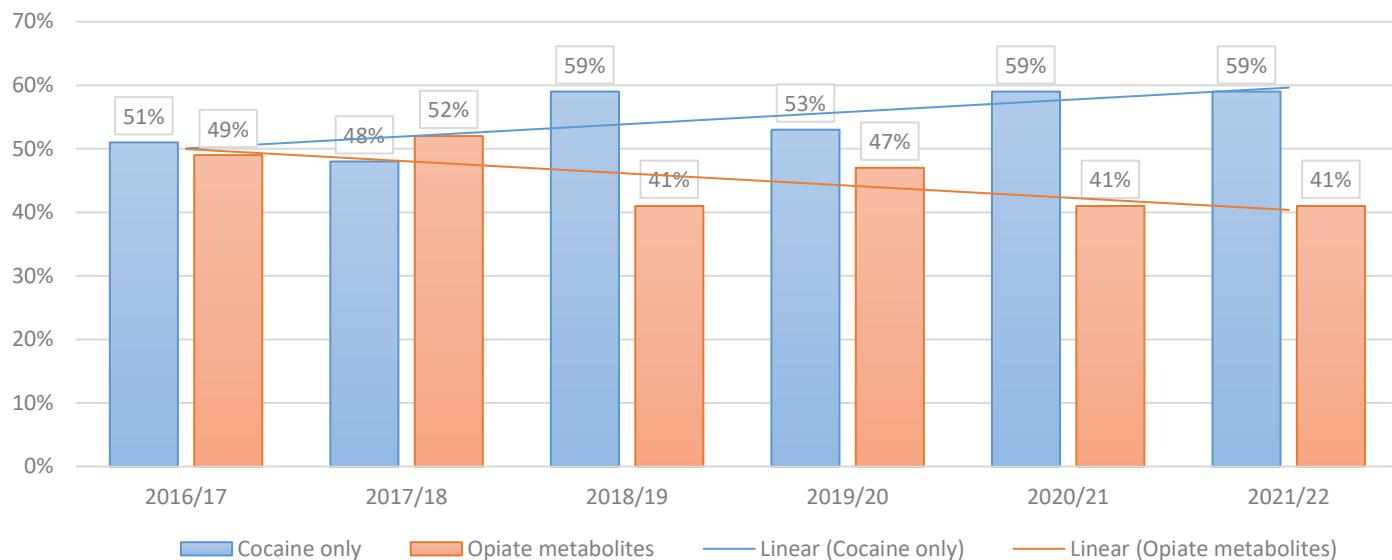


<sup>16</sup> There was one record where the result of the test was not known and one positive drug test record that did not indicate the drug(s) detected.  
Criminal Justice Project | Class A drug tests in Merseyside Police custody: year ending March 2022

## POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

There have been some fluctuations in the proportions of opiate metabolites (both opiates & cocaine and opiates only) and cocaine only positive tests between 2016/17 and 2021/22, though positive tests for cocaine only were highest in 2018/19, 2020/21 and 2021/22 (59% in all three years) (Figure 26).

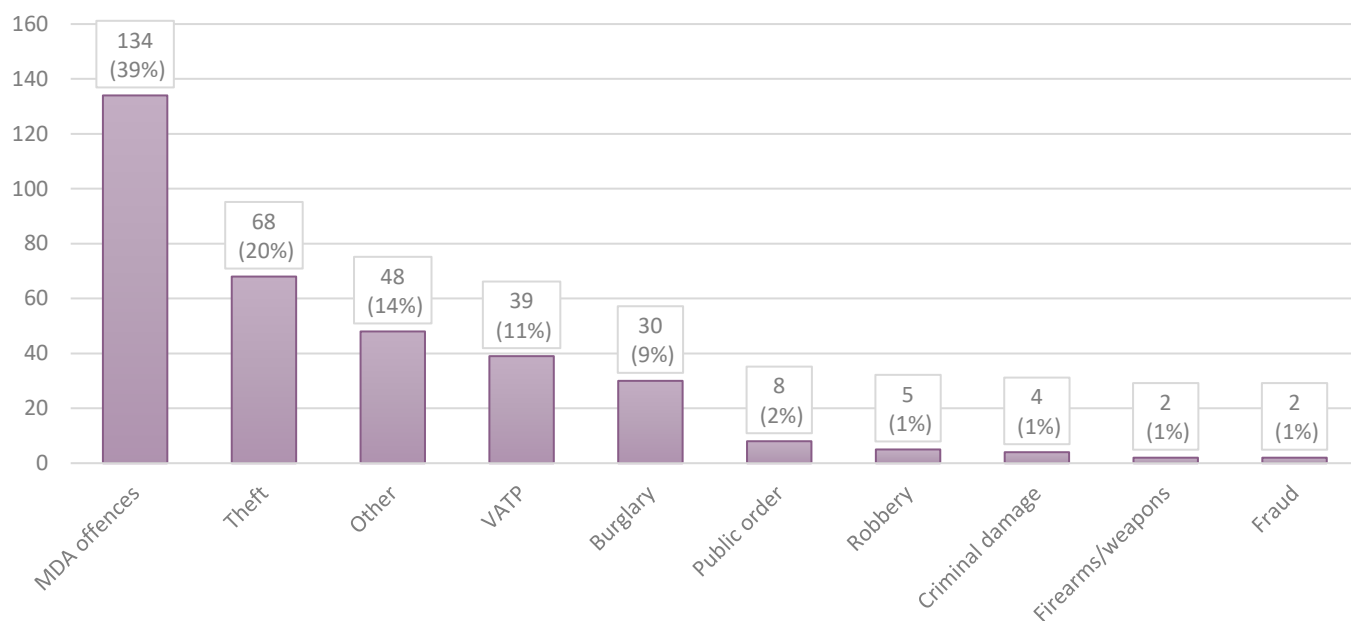
Figure 26: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Sefton residents, 2016/17 - 2021/22



## OFFENCES

Around two in five positive drug test records for Sefton residents in the year ending March 2022 reported MDA offences (n=134, 39%) (Figure 27), which is a larger proportion than the Merseyside figure (35%) and the second highest proportion of all five Merseyside LA areas. One in five offences were theft (n=68, 20%), followed by other offences (n=48, 14%) and VATP (n=39, 11%).

Figure 27: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Sefton residents, 2021/22 <sup>17</sup>

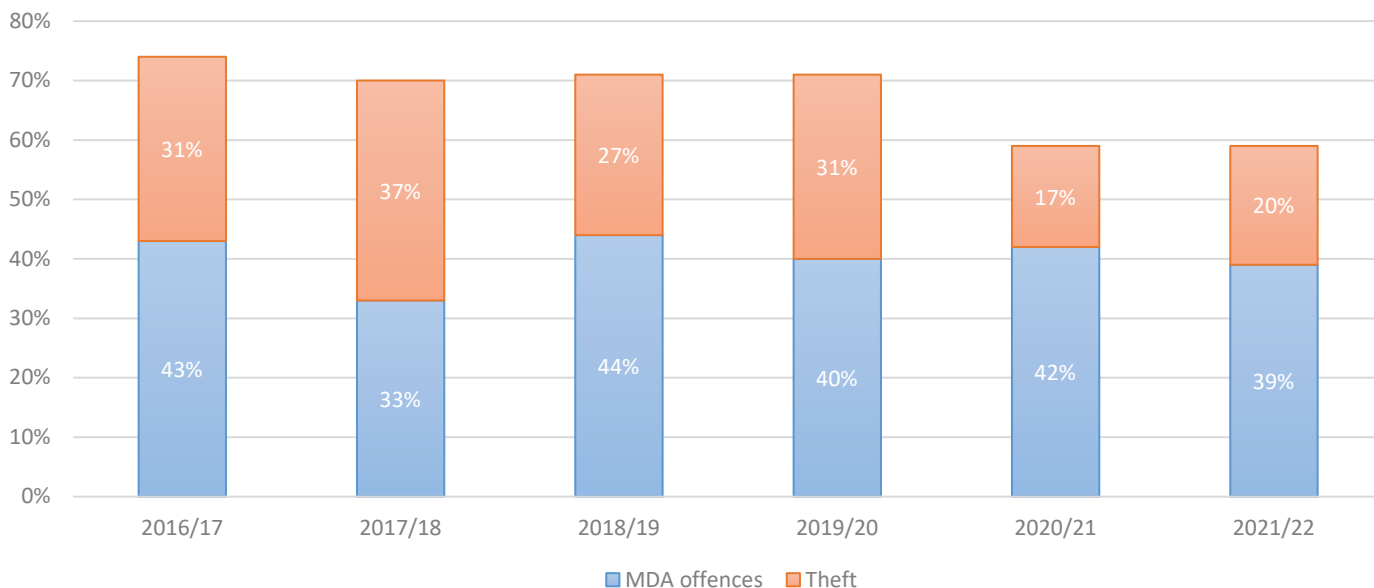


<sup>17</sup> There was one record that did not have an offence recorded. Other offences: other non-trigger offences = 34; other motoring offences = 12; driving whilst disqualified = 1; offences against the administration of justice = 1.

Of the 134 MDA offences recorded for Sefton residents who tested positive, around nine in ten (91%) were for possession offences. Around three in five of all MDA offences were possession with intent to supply Class A drugs (n=82, 61%), while three in ten were possession of specified Class A drugs (n=40, 30%).

Six-year trends of MDA offences and theft are shown in *Figure 28*. The proportion of MDA offences fluctuated over the six-year period, with the largest proportion in the year ending March 2019 (44%). Although the proportion of theft has also fluctuated, the years ending March 2021 and March 2022 had the lowest proportions (17% and 20% respectively).

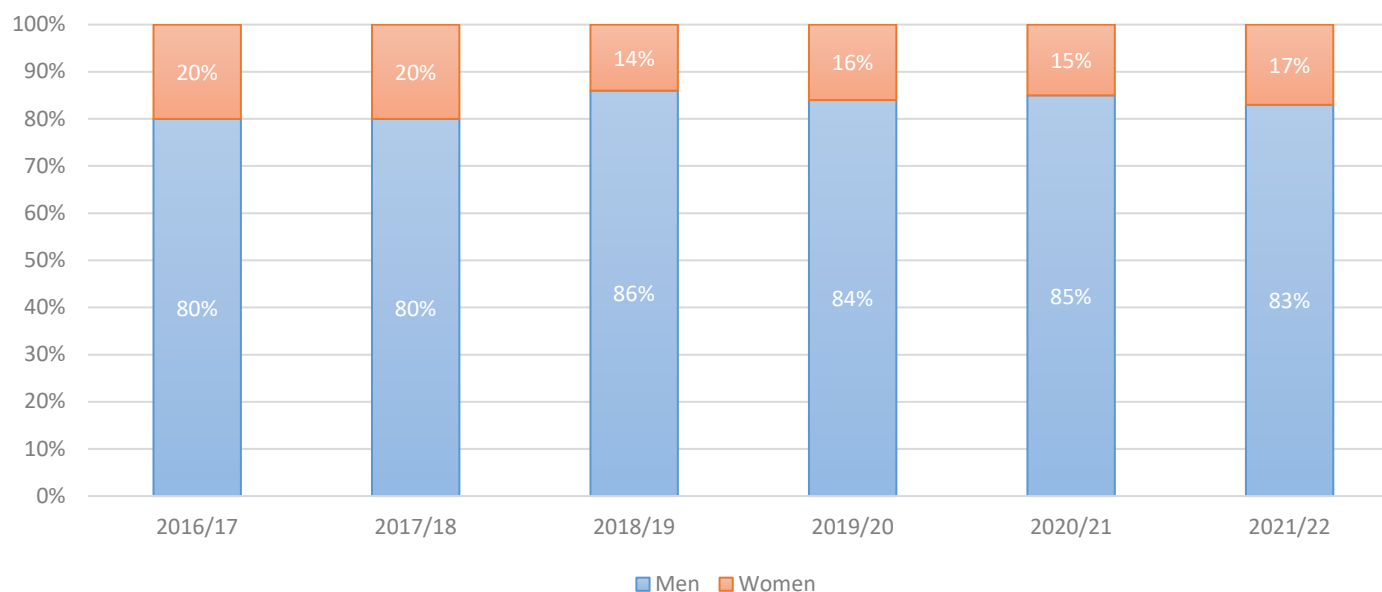
*Figure 28: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by MDA offences/theft, Sefton residents, 2016/17 - 2021/22*



## DEMOGRAPHICS

Men accounted for just over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2022 (n=246, 83%). This is similar to the previous two years (*Figure 29*) and is the same as the total figure for all Merseyside residents.

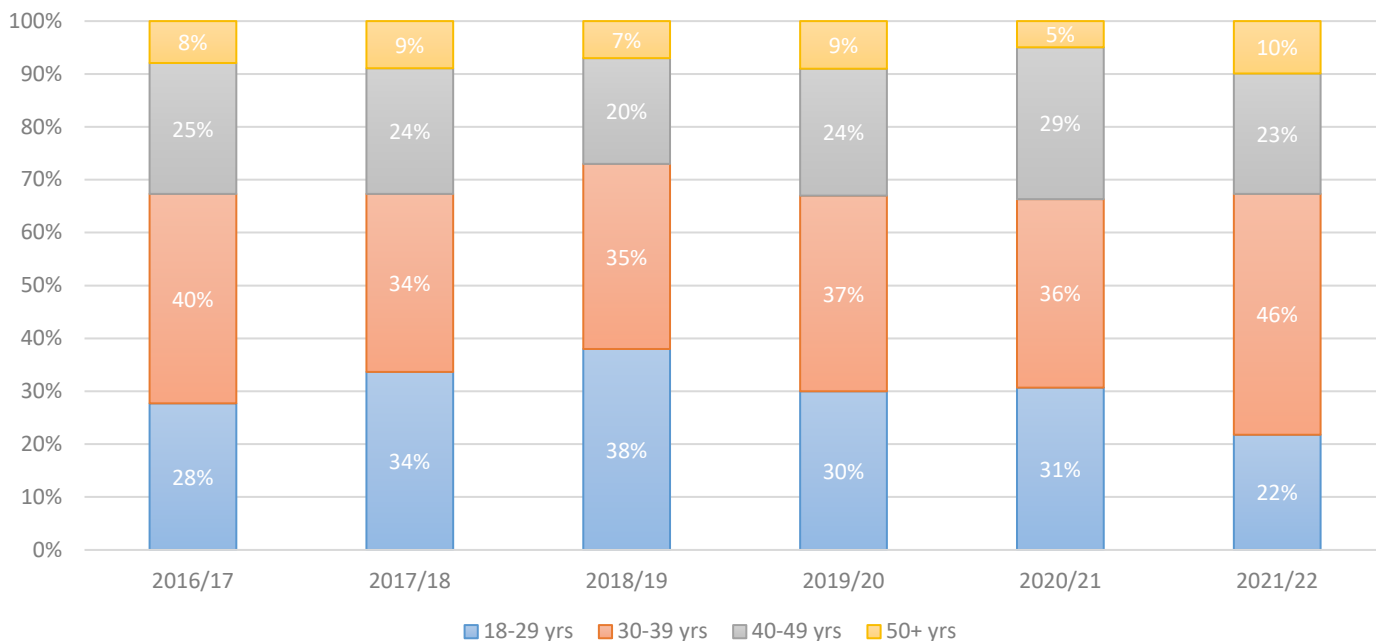
*Figure 29: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, Sefton residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2021/22*





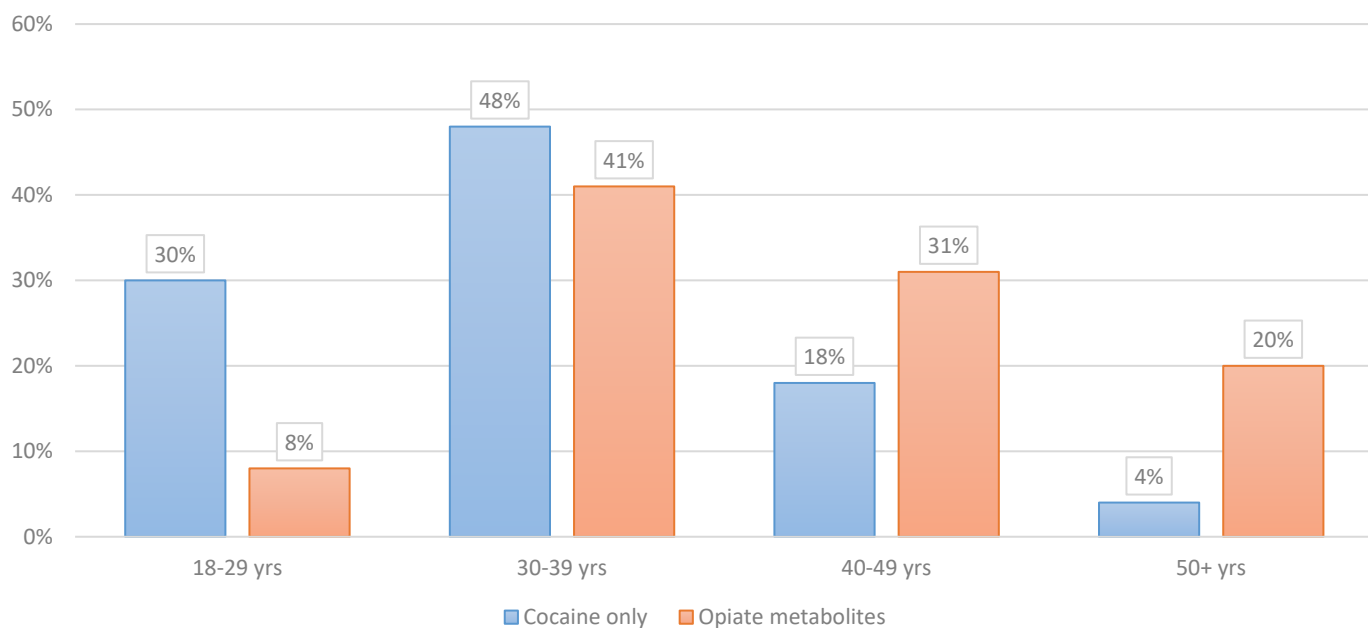
The median age of Sefton residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2022 was 35 years. Over two in five of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2022 were aged 30-39 years (n=136, 46%), which is the largest proportion for that age group of the six years shown in *Figure 30*, and the largest proportion of the five Merseyside LA areas (Merseyside total: 40%). There were similar proportions aged 18-29 years (n=63, 22%) and 40-49 years (n=66, 23%), while one in ten were aged 50 years or over (n=28, 10%).

*Figure 30: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Sefton residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2021/22*<sup>18</sup>



Positive drug test results in 2021/22 are categorised by age group in *Figure 31*. Just under four in five (78%) of those testing positive for cocaine only were aged 18-39 years, compared to 22% aged 40 years or over. While those who tested positive for opiate metabolites, similar proportions were aged 18-39 years and 40 years or over (49% and 51% respectively).

*Figure 31: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Sefton residents, 2021/22*

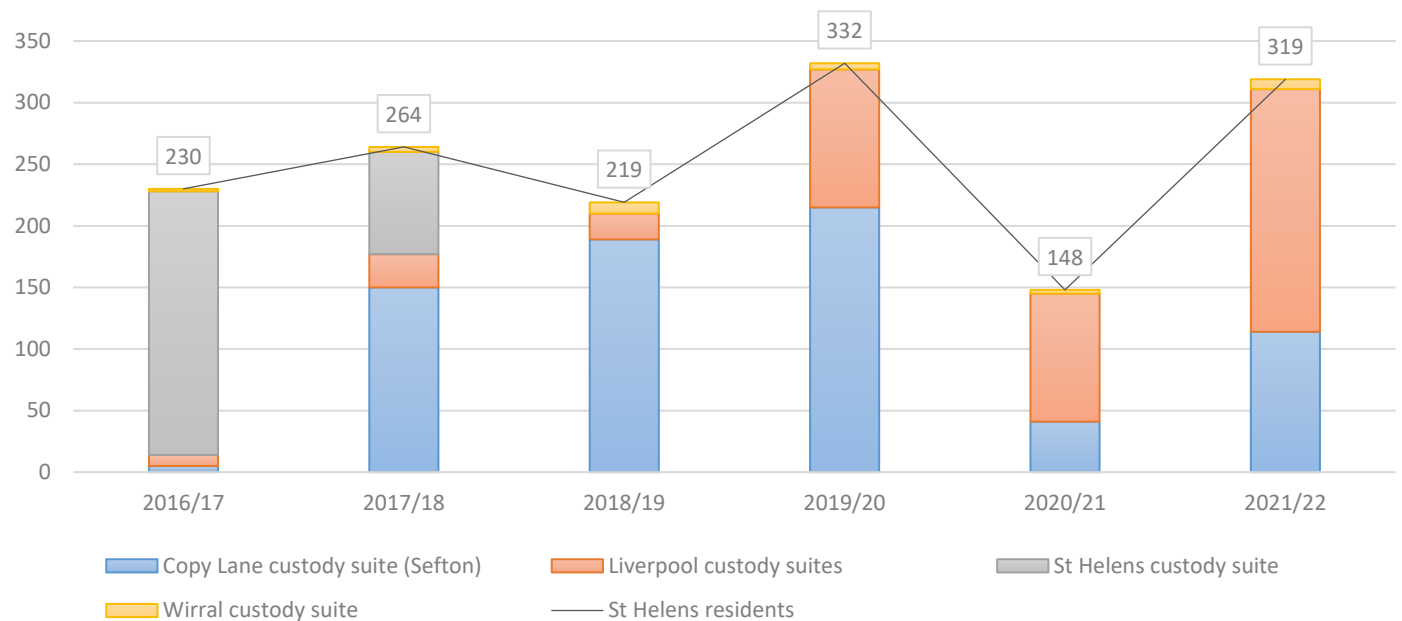


<sup>18</sup> There was one record that did not have a date of birth recorded and there were three records that had an invalid year of birth recorded.

OVERVIEW AND TRENDS


In the year ending March 2022, there were 319 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on St Helens residents across Merseyside’s custody suites (Figure 32), representing around one in ten (11%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is more than double the 148 attempted tests in the previous twelve-month period (116% increase), when drug testing was suspended in the custody suites for five months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, the number of attempted drug tests on St Helens residents fluctuated, peaking at 332 tests in the year ending March 2020, which could be attributed to the data quality of the recording of LA of residence. Following the closure of St Helens custody suite in August 2017, most of the tests were carried out at Copy Lane custody suite; however, in the years ending March 2021 and March 2022, the majority were carried out at a Liverpool custody suite (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, St Helens residents, 2016/17 - 2021/22



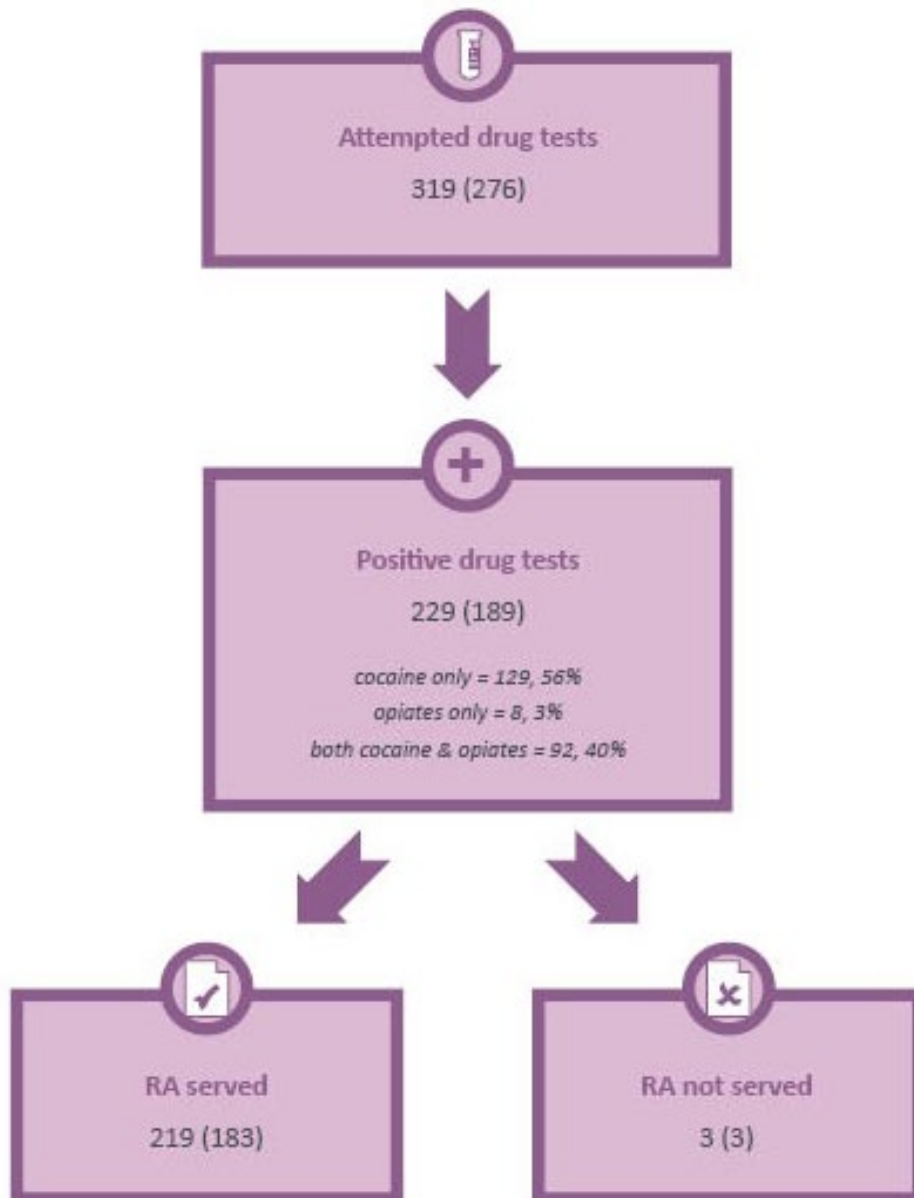
DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 33 shows the drug testing activity for St Helens residents drug tested in Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2022. Of the 319 attempted drug tests, 229 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Just under three in five positive drug tests were for cocaine only (n=129, 56%), which is similar to the Merseyside figure (57%), while 44% of the positive tests were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 92, 40%; opiates only = 8, 3%). Of the detainees who tested positive for cocaine and/or opiates in the year ending March 2022, there were 219 RAs served to 183 individuals (Figure 33).



**56%**  
positive tests for crack/powder cocaine, 2021/22

Figure 33: Drug testing activity, St Helens residents, 2021/22 <sup>19</sup>

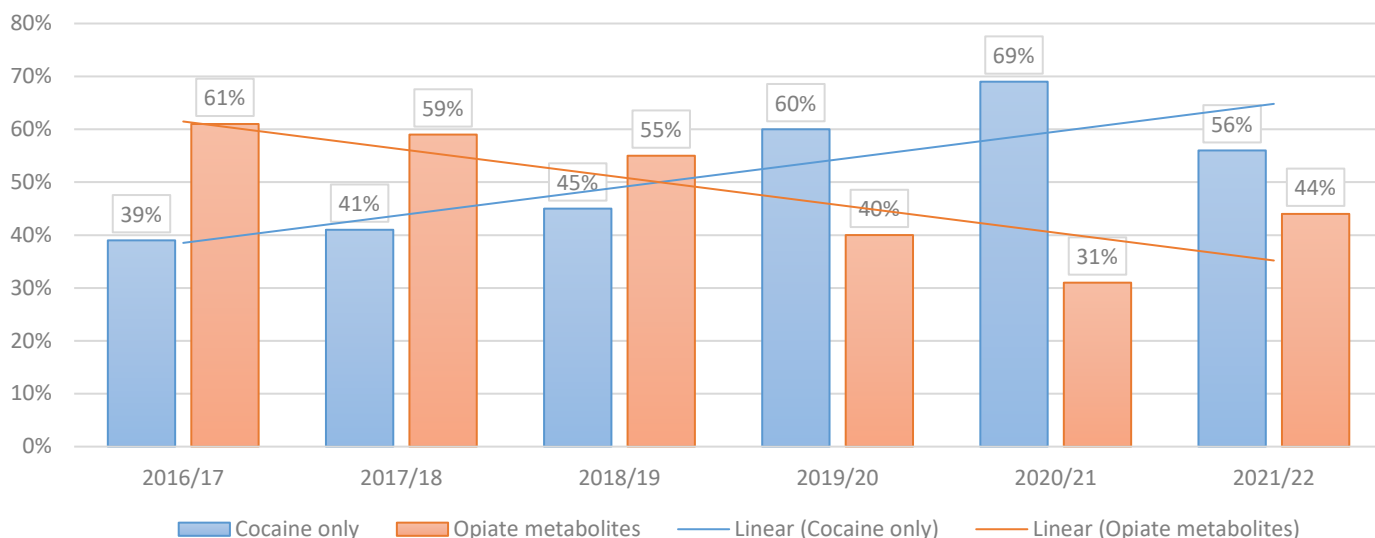


<sup>19</sup> There were four records where the result of the test was not known.

## POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

Figure 34 shows that there have been year-on-year increases in cocaine only positive tests and decreases for opiate metabolites (both opiates & cocaine and opiates only) between 2016/17 and 2020/21. Although this was followed by a decrease in cocaine only positive tests and an increase in opiate metabolites in the year ending March 2022, there remained a larger proportion of cocaine only compared to opiate metabolites (56% and 44% respectively).

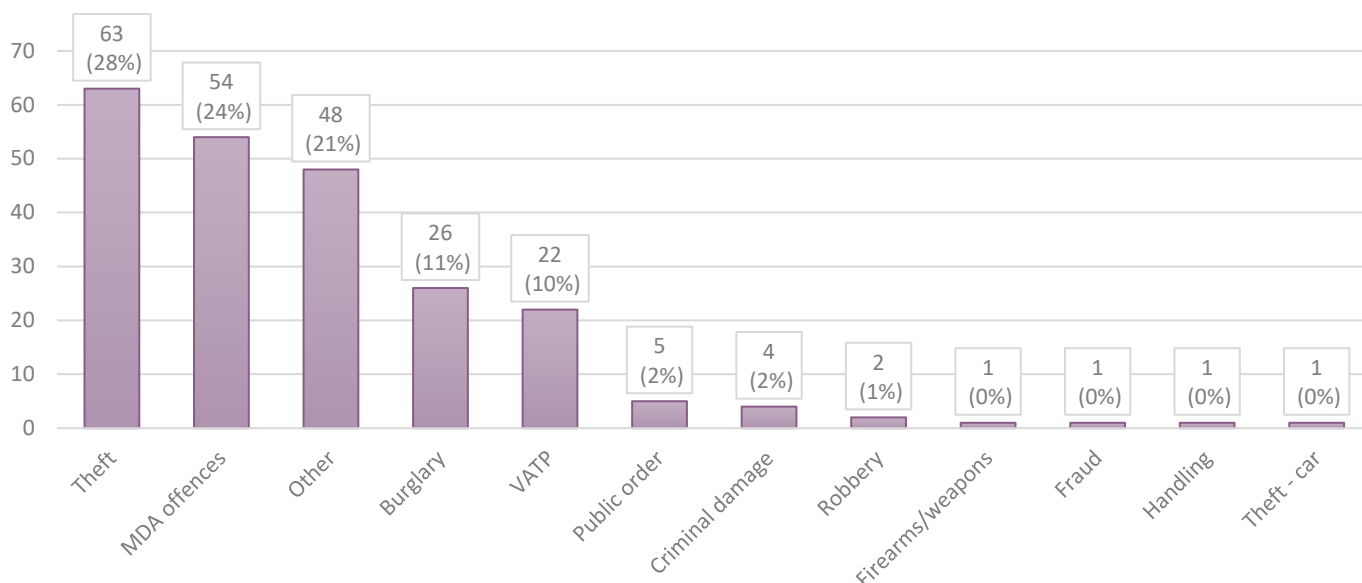
Figure 34: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, St Helens residents, 2016/17 - 2021/22



## OFFENCES

Just under three in ten positive drug test records for St Helens residents in the year ending March 2022 reported theft (n=63, 28%) (Figure 35), which is a larger proportion than the Merseyside figure (22%) and the highest proportion of all five Merseyside LA areas. Around one-quarter were MDA offences (n=54, 24%), followed by other offences (n=48, 21%), burglary (n=26, 11%) and VATP (n=22, 10%).

Figure 35: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, St Helens residents, 2021/22 <sup>20</sup>

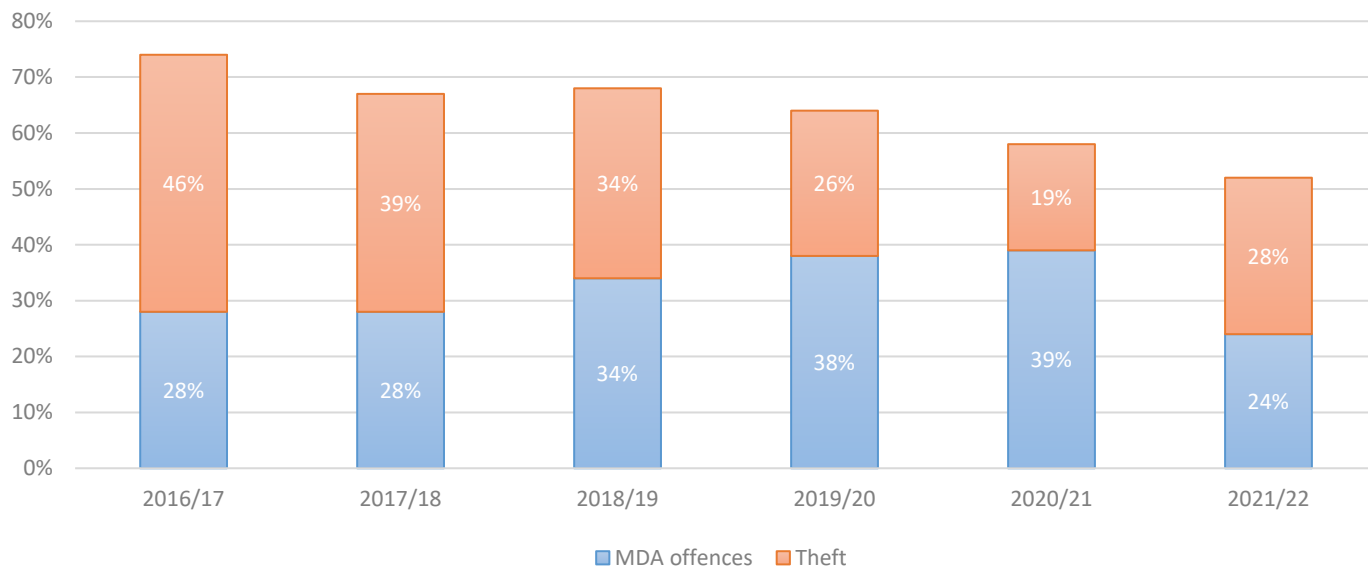


<sup>20</sup> There was one record that did not have an offence recorded. Other offences: other non-trigger offences = 36; other motoring offences = 12.  
Criminal Justice Project | Class A drug tests in Merseyside Police custody: year ending March 2022

Of the 54 MDA offences recorded for St Helens residents who tested positive, around nine in ten (91%) were for possession offences. Just under half of all MDA offences were possession with intent to supply Class A drugs (n=26, 48%), while just over two in five were possession of specified Class A drugs (n=23, 43%).

Notably, there have been some changes in the trends of MDA offences and theft (Figure 36). The proportion of MDA offences were generally increasing year-on-year, peaking at 39% in 2020/21, then decreased to 24% in 2021/22. While theft decreased year-on-year to 19% in 2020/21, then increased to 28% in 2021/22.

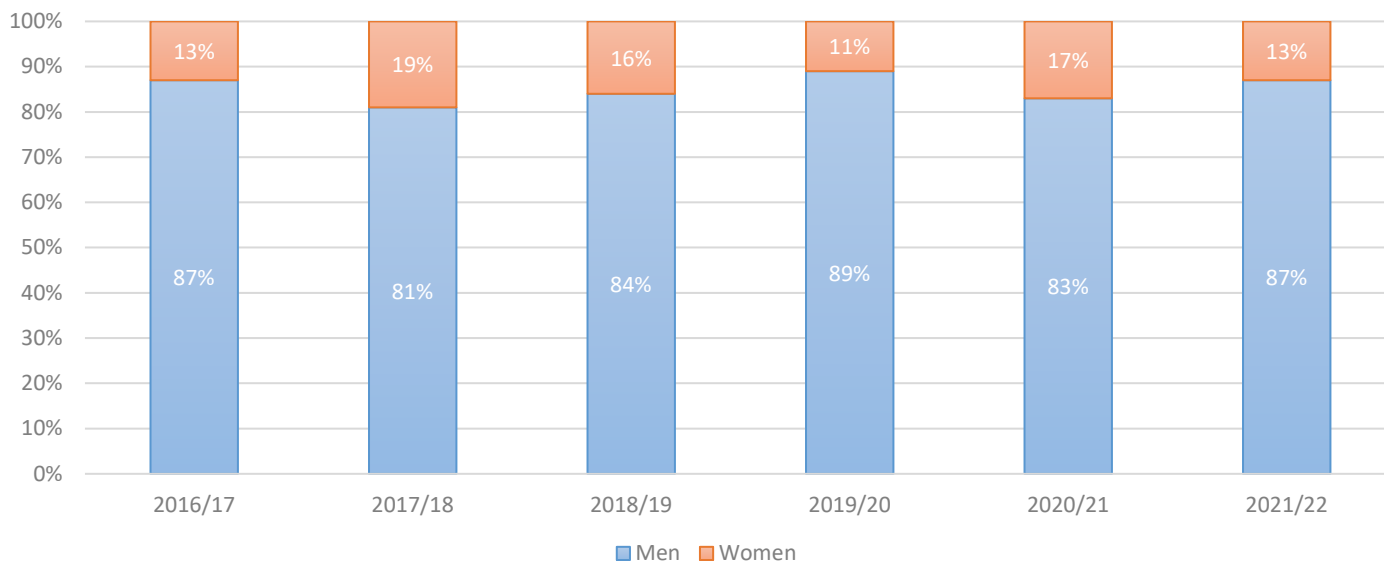
Figure 36: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by MDA offences/theft, St Helens residents, 2016/17 - 2021/22



## DEMOGRAPHICS

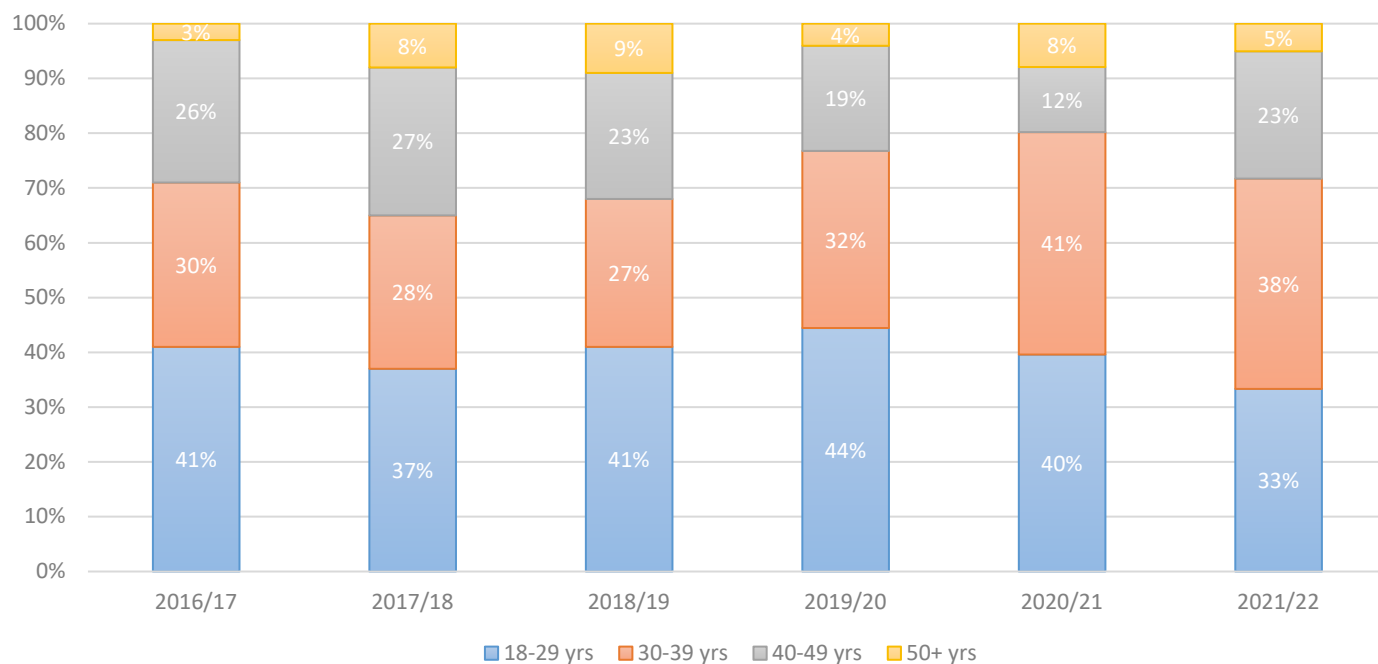
Men accounted for just under nine in ten individuals who tested positive across Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2022 (n=165, 87%). Proportions have somewhat fluctuated over the six-year period (Figure 37), though notably, St Helens residents reported the largest proportion of men in the year ending March 2022, with all other Merseyside areas reporting 83%.

Figure 37: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, St Helens residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2021/22



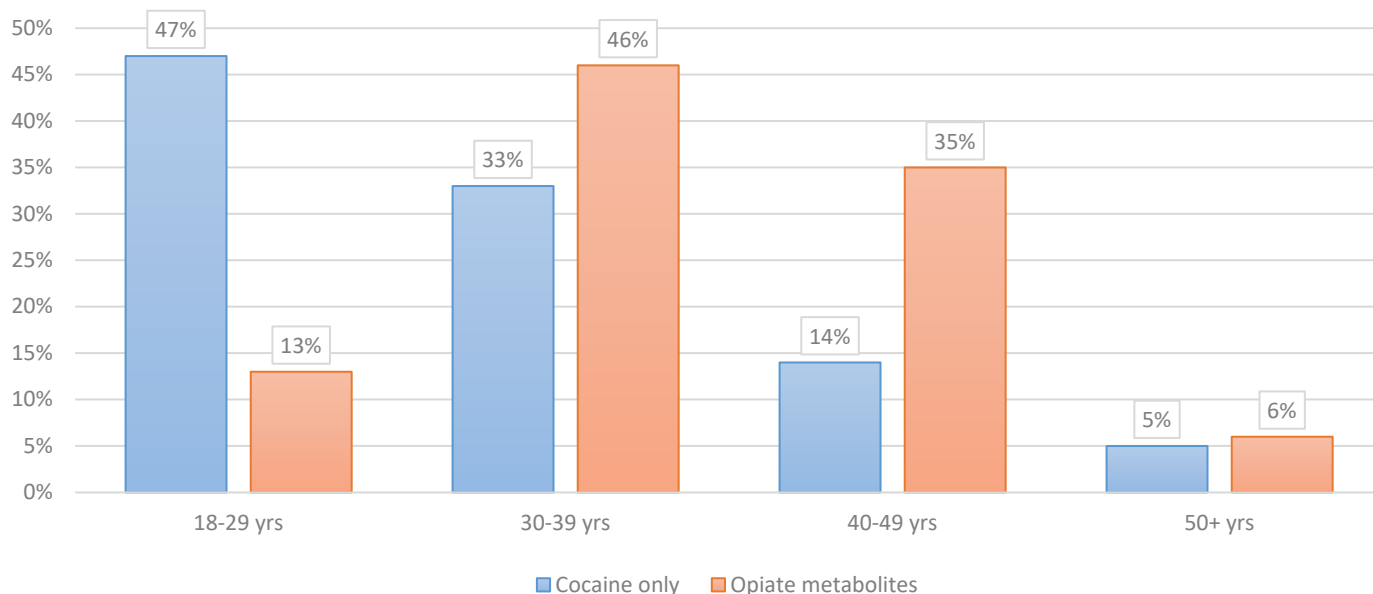
The median age of St Helens residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2022 was 34 years. Just under two in five individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2022 were aged 30-39 years (n=72, 38%), followed by one-third aged 18-29 years (n=63, 33%), just under one-quarter aged 40-49 years (n=44, 23%) and ten (5%) aged 50 years or over (Figure 38). Although the proportion of individuals aged 18-29 years in 2021/22 is the lowest of the six-year period, it is the highest proportion of the five Merseyside areas (Merseyside total: 24%). Conversely, the proportion of St Helens residents aged 50 years or over in the year ending March 2022 is the lowest proportion across Merseyside (Merseyside total: 11%).

Figure 38: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, St Helens residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2021/22



Positive drug test results in 2021/22 are categorised by age group in Figure 39. Around four in five (81%) of those testing positive for cocaine only were aged 18-39 years, compared to 19% aged 40 years or over. While those who tested positive for opiate metabolites, around three in five (59%) were aged 18-39 years, compared to 41% aged 40 years or over. Notably cocaine only positive tests decreased with age, from 47% for those aged 18-29 years to 5% for those aged 50 years or over.

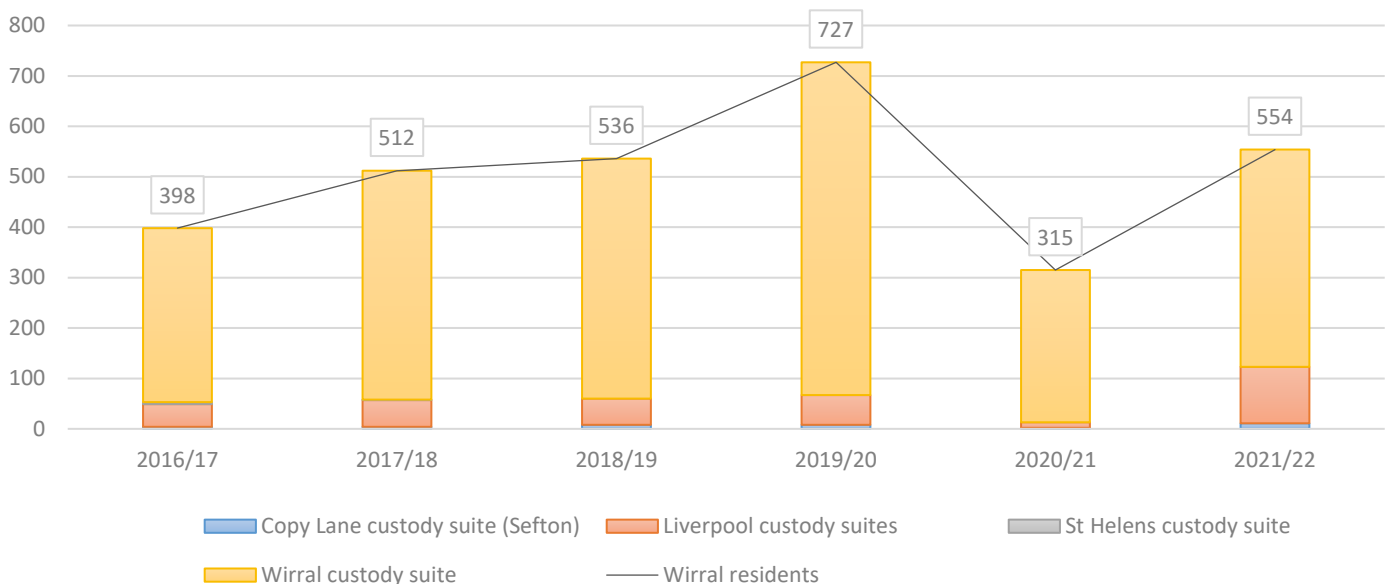
Figure 39: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, St Helens residents, 2021/22



OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

In the year ending March 2022, there were 554 attempted tests recorded for specified Class A drugs on Wirral residents across Merseyside’s custody suites (Figure 40), representing just under one in five (18%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. This is a considerable increase on the 315 attempted test in the previous twelve-month period (76% increase), when drug testing was suspended in the custody suites for five months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, the number of attempted drug tests on Wirral residents had been increasing year-on-year, peaking at 727 in the year ending March 2020. Although the number of tests in 2021/22 were not as high as in 2019/20, it is the second highest number of attempted drug tests of the six-year period. Between 2016/17 and 2020/21, an average of nine in ten (90%) attempted drug tests on Wirral residents were carried out at Wirral custody suite. However, this decreased to just under four in five (78%) in the year ending March 2022, which can be attributed to the temporary closure of the custody suite for the final quarter of the year due to refurbishment (Figure 40).

Figure 40: Attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite and year, Wirral residents, 2016/17 - 2021/22



DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

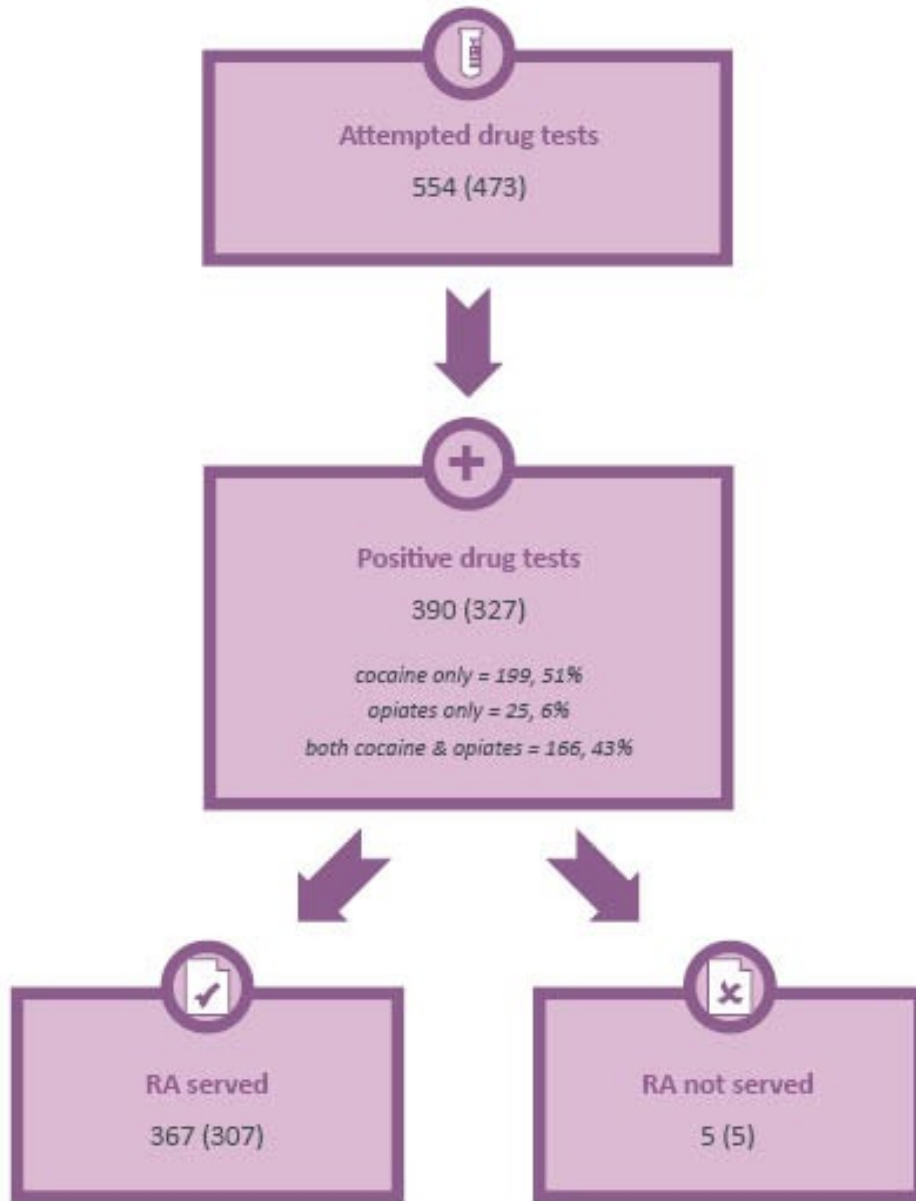
Figure 41 shows the drug testing activity for Wirral residents drug tested in Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2022. Of the 554 attempted drug tests, 390 had a positive result for specified Class A drugs. Just over half of the positive drug tests were for cocaine only (n=199, 51%), while 49% of the positive tests were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 166, 43%; opiates only = 25, 6%). Notably, the proportion of Wirral residents who tested positive for cocaine only is the lowest of the five Merseyside areas and somewhat lower than the Merseyside total (57%), while the proportion of opiate metabolites is the highest in Merseyside (Merseyside total: 43%). Of the detainees who tested positive for cocaine and/or opiates in the year ending March 2022, there were 367 RAs served to 307 individuals (Figure 41).



51%

positive tests for crack/powder cocaine, 2021/22

Figure 41: Drug testing activity, Wirral residents, 2021/22 <sup>21</sup>



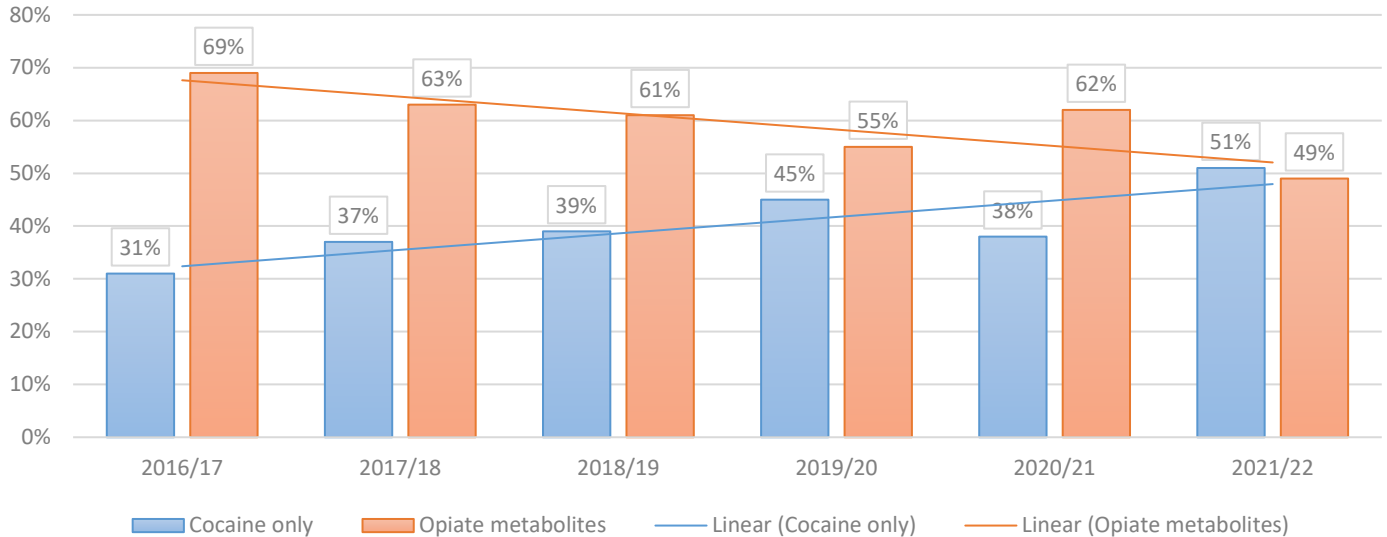
<sup>21</sup> There were 13 records where the result of the test was not known.



## POSITIVE DRUG TESTS

Figure 42 shows that there were larger proportions of opiate metabolites (both opiates & cocaine and opiates only) than cocaine only between 2016/17 and 2020/21, while in the year ending March 2022, there were slightly more positive tests for cocaine only than opiate metabolites (51% and 49% respectively).

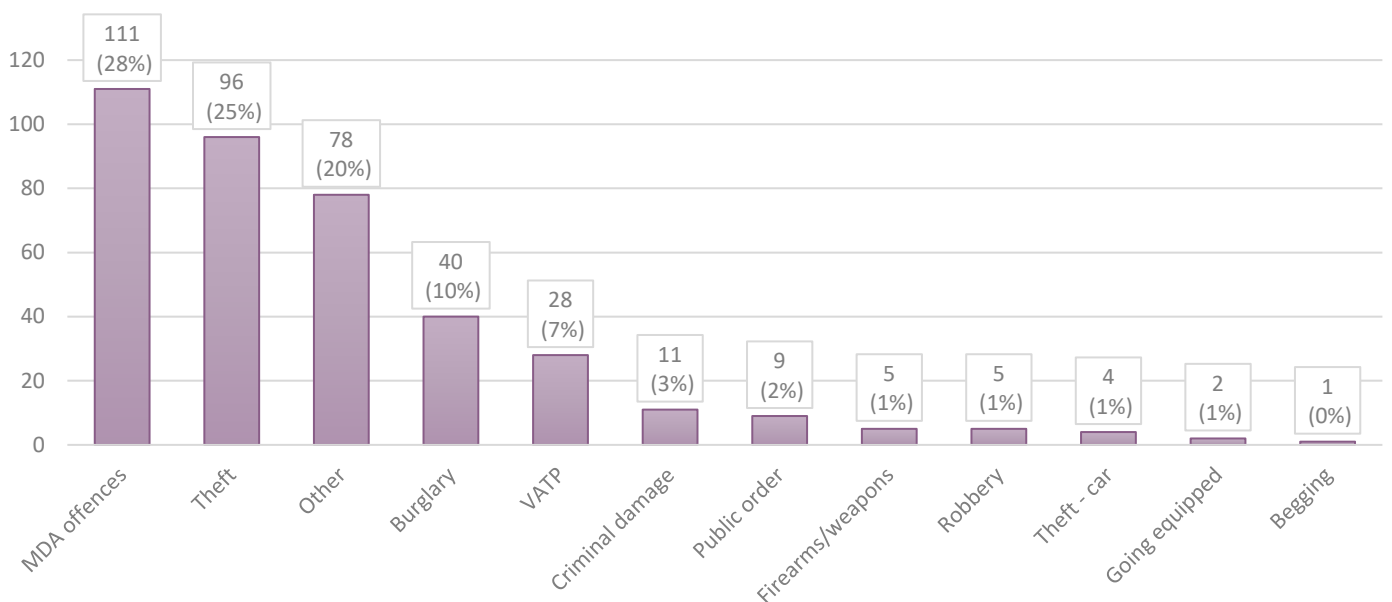
Figure 42: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by drug test result, Wirral residents, 2016/17 - 2021/22



## OFFENCES

Just under three in ten positive drug test records for Wirral residents in the year ending March 2022 reported MDA offences (n=111, 28%), while one-quarter were theft (n=96, 25%) and one in five were other offences (n=78, 20%) (Figure 43). The proportion of MDA offences is lower than the Merseyside figure (35%), while the proportions of theft and other offences are larger than the Merseyside figures (22% and 16% respectively).

Figure 43: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, Wirral residents, 2021/22 <sup>22</sup>

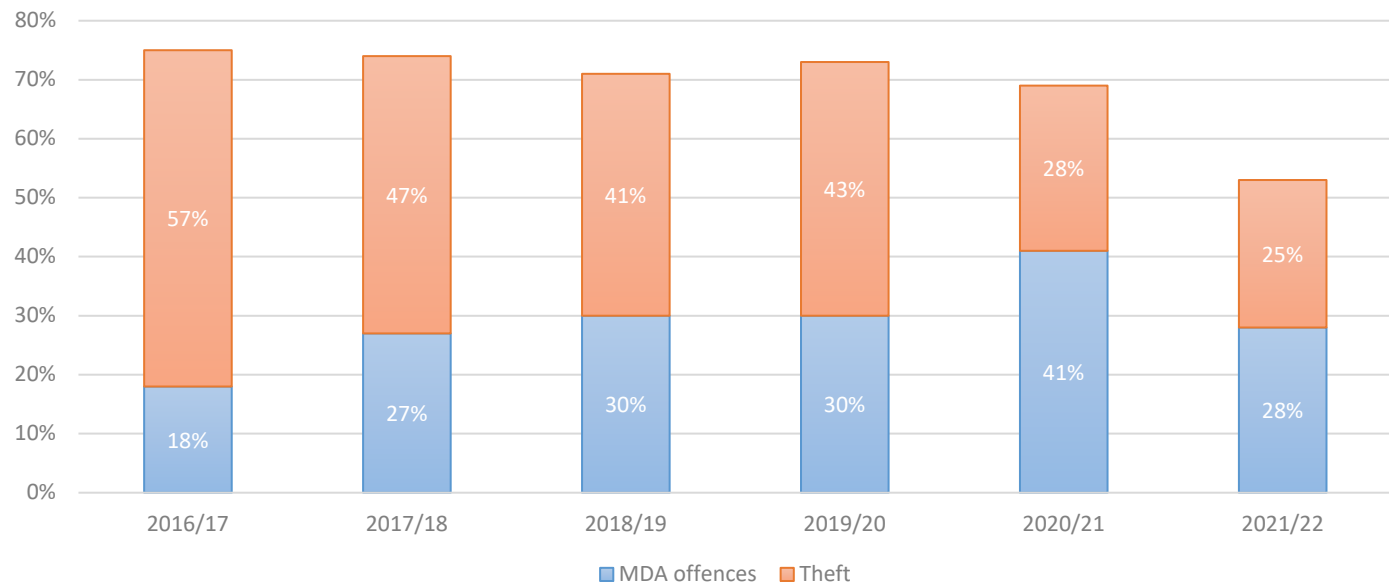


<sup>22</sup> Other offences: other non-trigger offences = 55; other motoring offences = 21; making off without payment = 1; offences against the administration of justice = 1.

Of the 111 MDA offences recorded for Wirral residents who tested positive, 85% were for possession offences. Half of all MDA offences were possession with intent to supply Class A drugs (n=55, 50%), while just over one-third were possession of specified Class A drugs (n=39, 35%).

Notably, there have been some changes in the trends of MDA offences and theft (Figure 44). The proportion of MDA offences were generally increasing year-on-year, peaking at 41% in 2020/21, then decreased to 28% in 2021/22, while theft generally decreased year-on-year, with the exception of a slight rise in 2019/20.

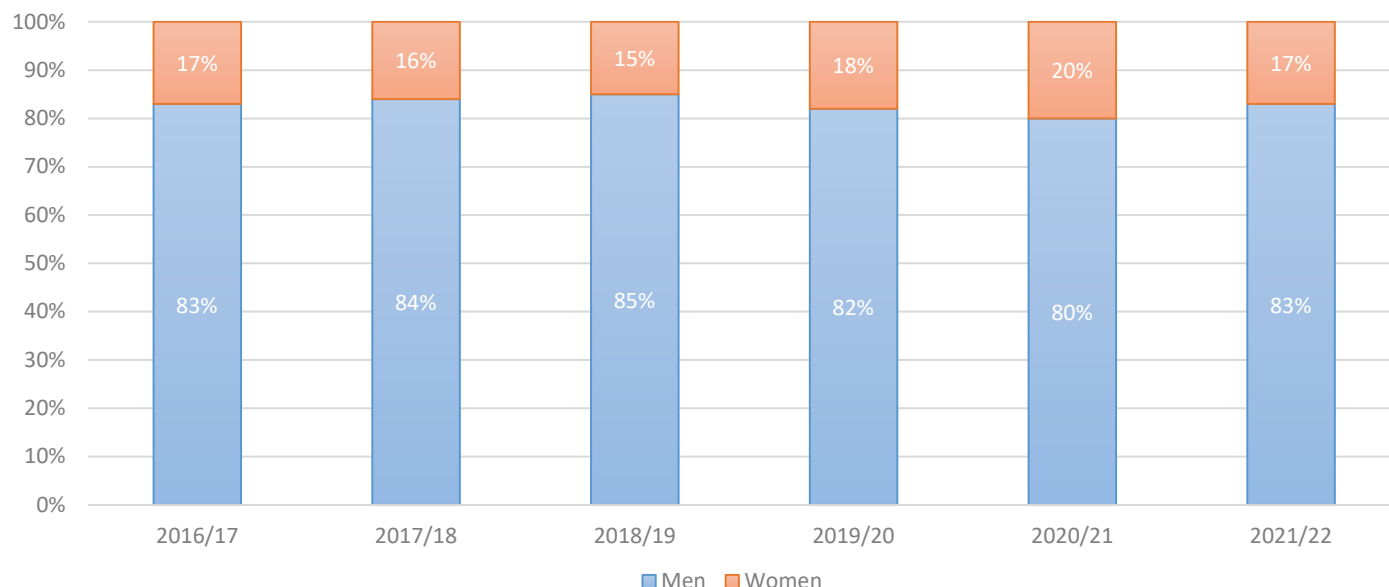
Figure 44: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by MDA offences/theft, Wirral residents, 2016/17 - 2021/22



## DEMOGRAPHICS

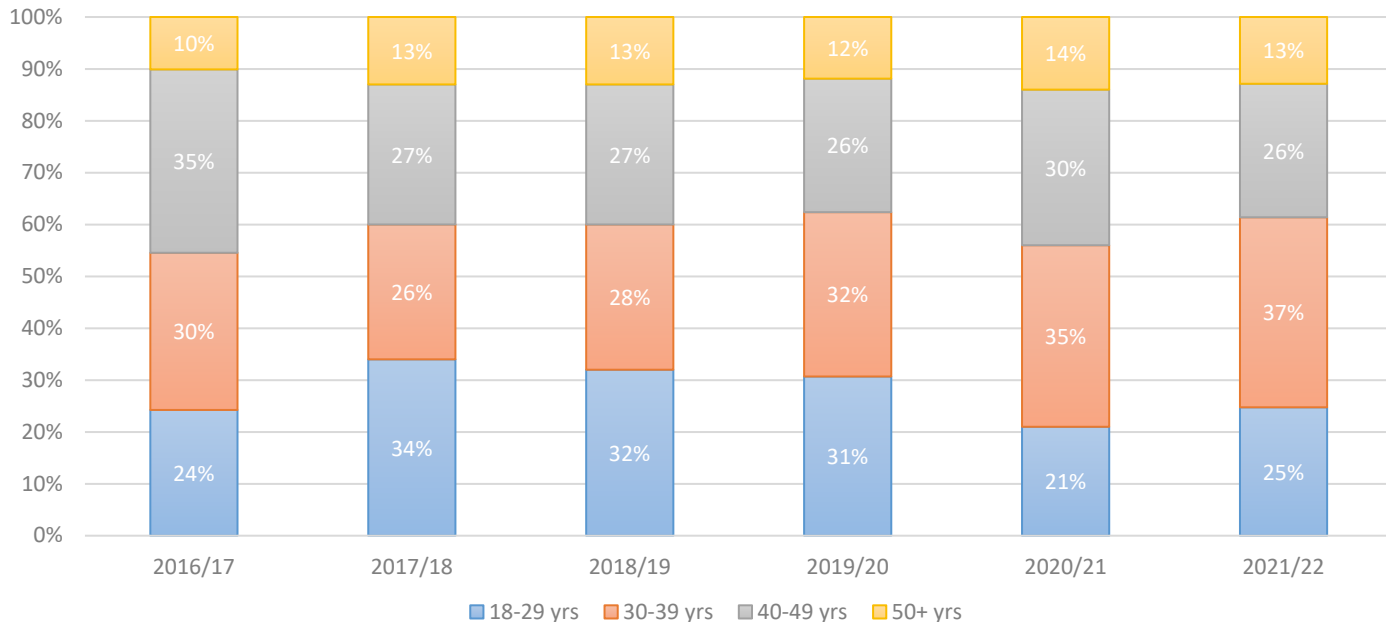
Men accounted for just over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside’s custody suites in the year ending March 2022 (n=270, 83%), which is the third largest proportion of the six-year period (Figure 45) and the same as the total figure for all Merseyside residents.

Figure 45: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender, Wirral residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2021/22



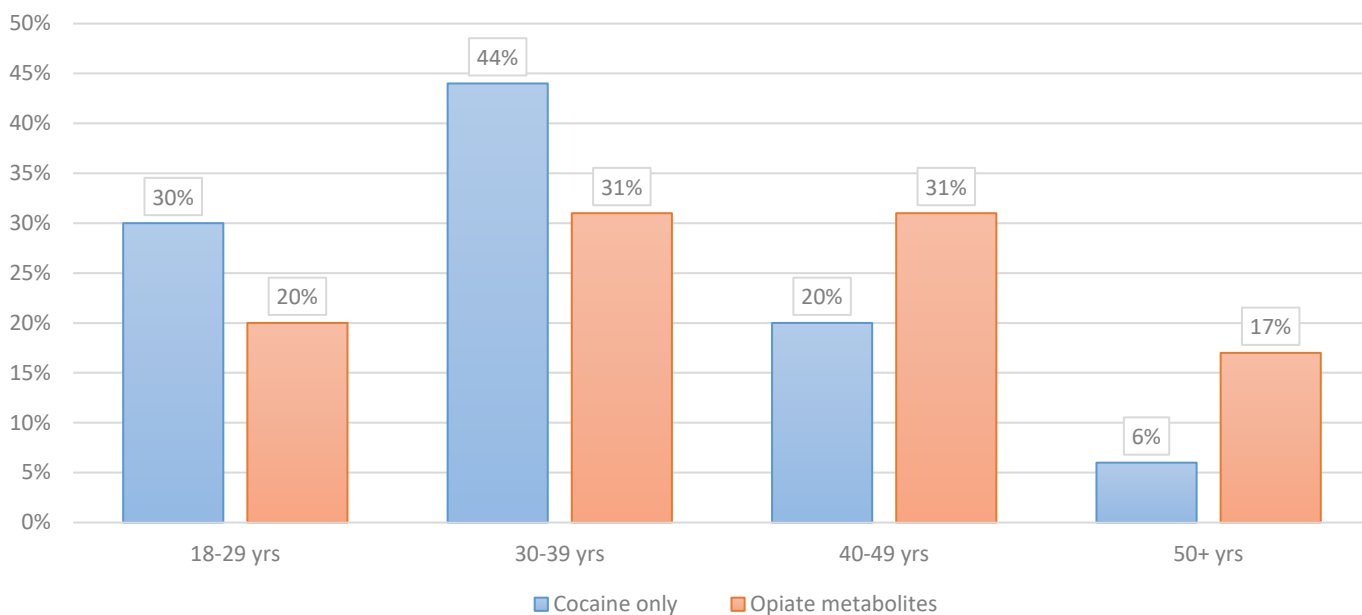
The median age of Wirral residents who tested positive in the year ending March 2022 was 36 years. Just under two in five of the individuals who tested positive in the year ending March 2022 were aged 30-39 years (n=120, 37%), which is the highest proportion for that age group of the six years shown in *Figure 46*. There were similar proportions aged 18-29 years (n=81, 25%) and 40-49 years (n=84, 26%), while around one in seven were aged 50 years or over (n=42, 13%). These proportions are similar to the Merseyside figures.

*Figure 46: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age at time of drug test, Wirral residents (individuals), 2016/17 - 2021/22*



Positive drug test results in 2021/22 are categorised by age group in *Figure 47*. Around three-quarters (74%) of those testing positive for cocaine only were aged 18-39 years, compared to 26% aged 40 years or over. While those who tested positive for opiate metabolites, similar proportions were aged 18-39 years and 40 years or over (51% and 49% respectively), with proportions peaking for detainees aged 30-39 years and 40-49 years (both 31%).

*Figure 47: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, Wirral residents, 2021/22*



## RE-PRESENTATIONS

Table 1 provides an indication of the rate of re-presentation of Merseyside residents through the drug testing process, which can be used as a proxy measure of re-offending. Of the 1,668 individuals who reside in Merseyside who tested positive for opiates and/or cocaine in the year ending March 2022, 236 (14.1%) subsequently re-presented and were drug tested again following their initial positive drug test during the twelve-month period.

Table 1: Re-presentations of individuals testing positive across Merseyside, Merseyside residents, end 2021/22

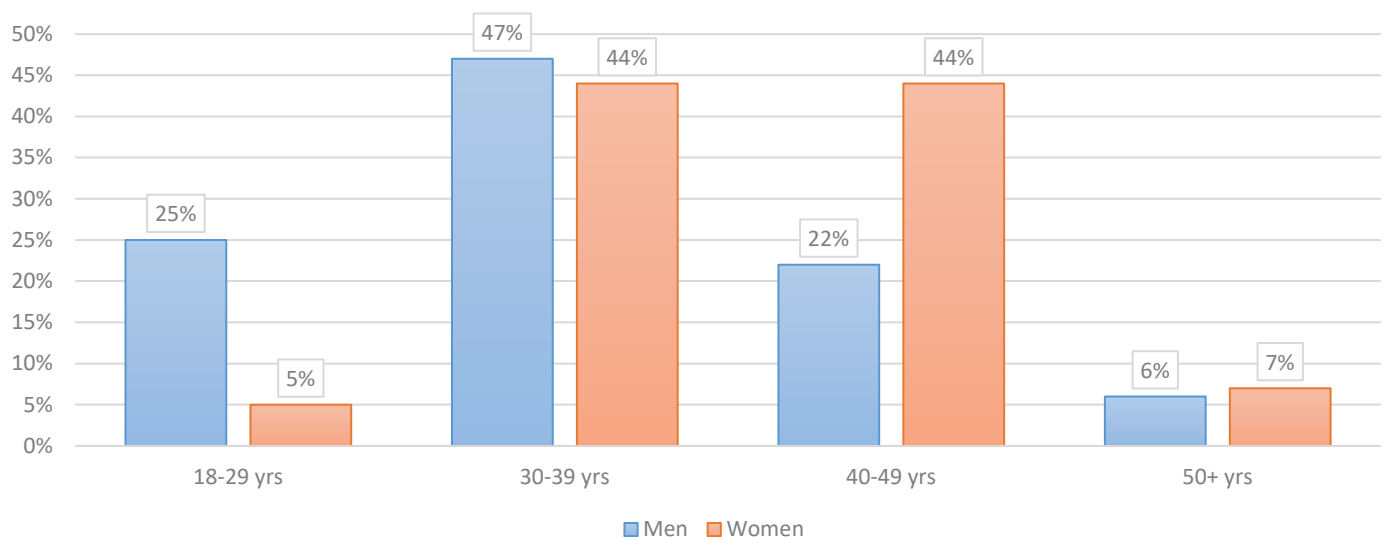
| Number of drug test occasions            | n          | %            |
|--|------------|--------------|
| One                                      | 1,432      | 85.9%        |
| Two                                      | 185        | 11.1%        |
| Three                                    | 31         | 1.9%         |
| Four                                     | 11         | 0.7%         |
| Five                                     | 6          | 0.4%         |
| Six                                      | 2          | 0.1%         |
| Seven                                    | 0          | -            |
| Eight                                    | 0          | -            |
| Nine                                     | 1          | 0.1%         |
| <b>Clients presenting more than once</b> | <b>236</b> | <b>14.1%</b> |

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO PRESENTED MORE THAN ONCE

Of the 236 individuals who presented more than once in the year ending March 2022, just over four in five were men (n=193, 82%), while just under half were aged 30-39 years (n=110, 47%).

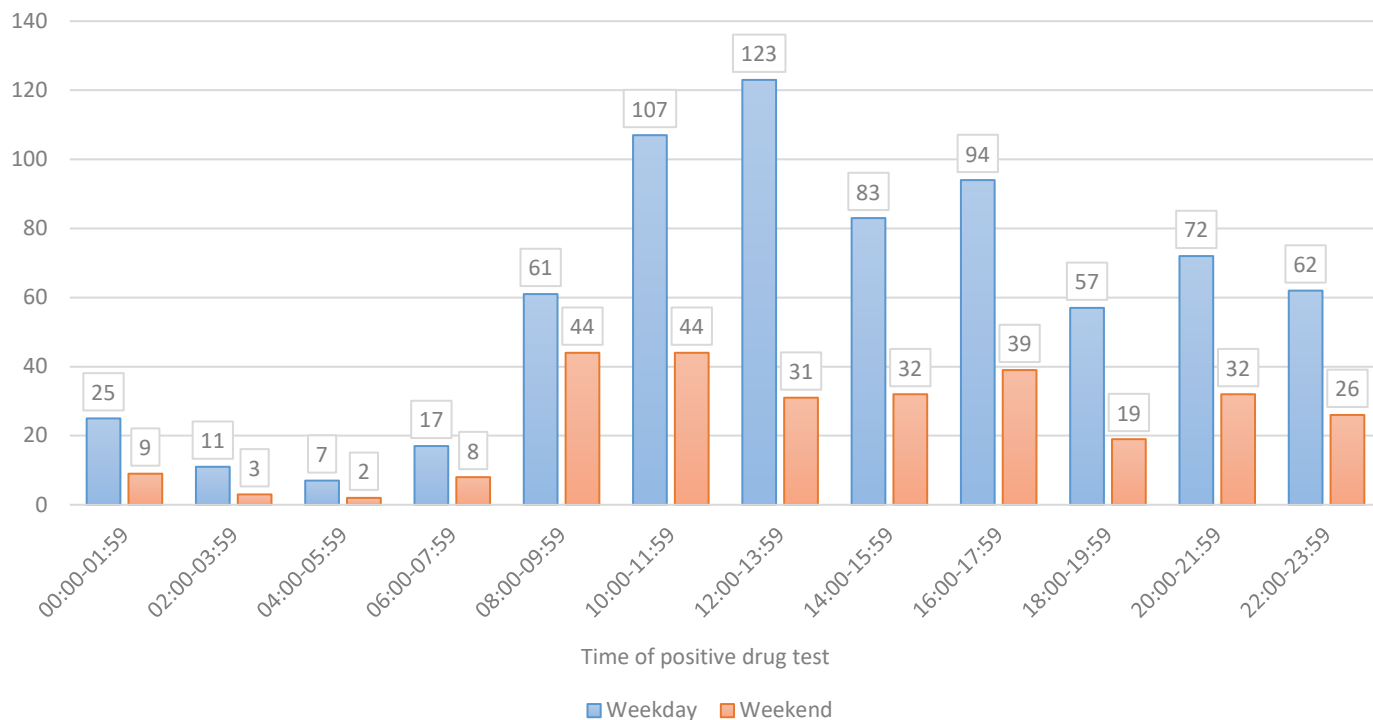
Figure 48 compares age group with gender for individuals who presented more than once during the twelve-month period. There were similar proportions of men and women aged 30-39 years (47% and 44% respectively) and 50 years or over (6% and 7% respectively), while there was a larger proportion of men than women aged 18-29 years (25% and 5% respectively) and a smaller proportion of men than women aged 40-49 years (22% and 44% respectively).

Figure 48: Re-presentations of individuals testing positive by age group and gender, Merseyside residents, 2021/22

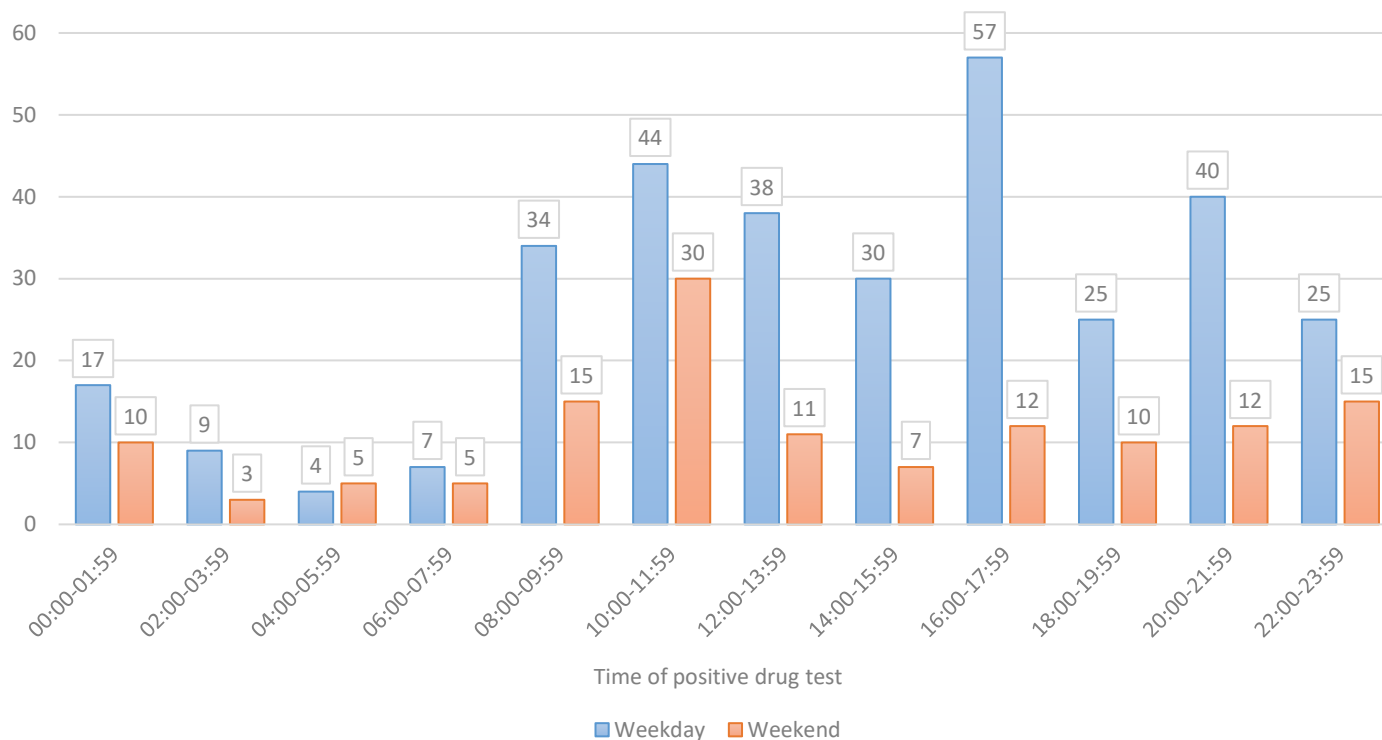


APPENDIX A

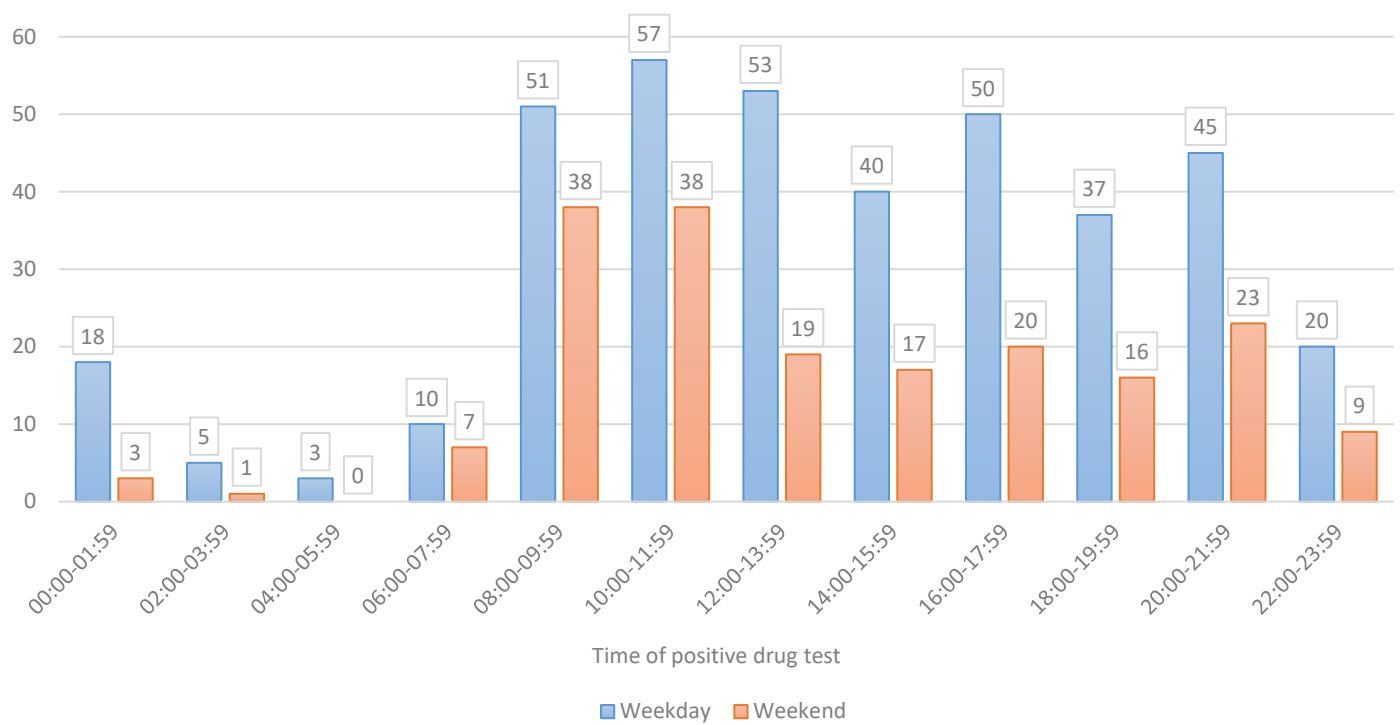
Appendix A1: Positive drug tests at Belle Vale, St Anne Street and Wavertree custody suites (Liverpool) by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2021/22



Appendix A2: Positive drug tests at Copy Lane custody suite (Sefton) by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2021/22

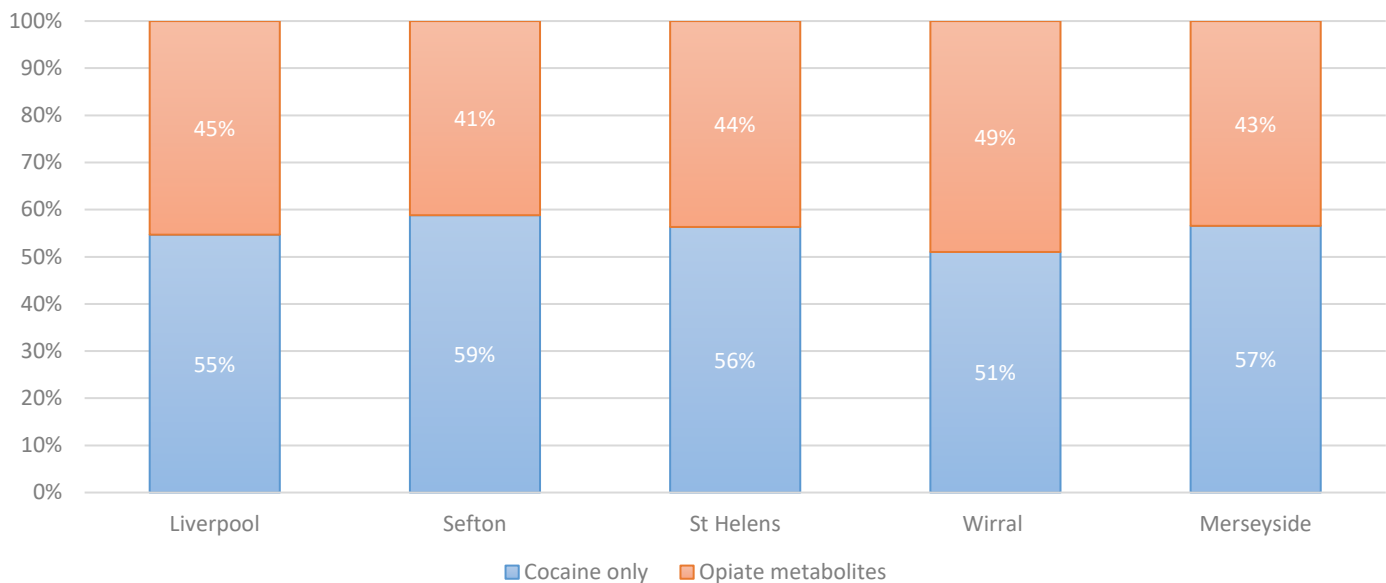


Appendix A3: Positive drug tests at Wirral custody suite by time of test and weekday/weekend, 2021/22



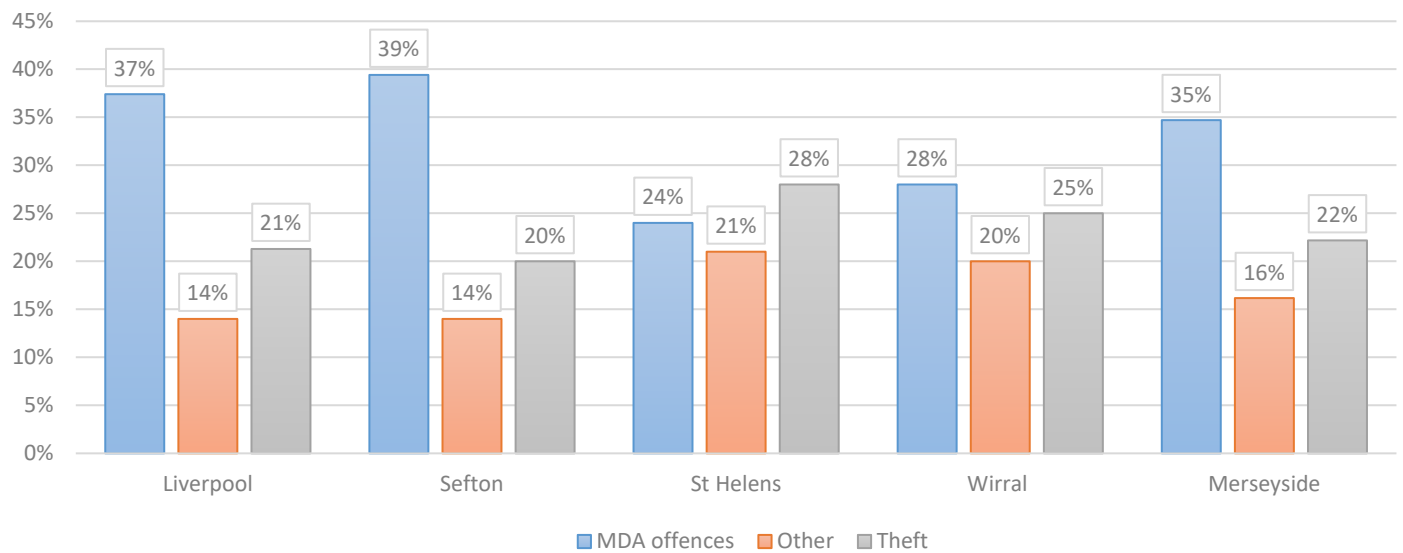
APPENDIX B <sup>23</sup>

Appendix B1: Positive drug tests by drug test result and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2021/22

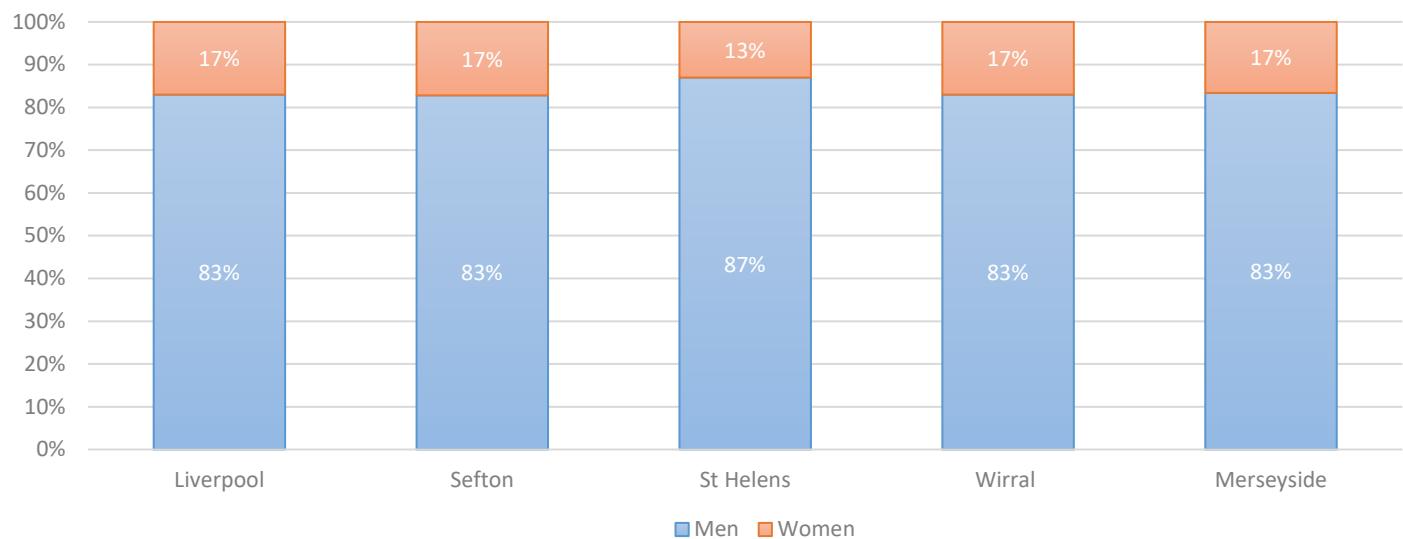


<sup>23</sup> Please note that the Merseyside figure includes Knowsley residents.

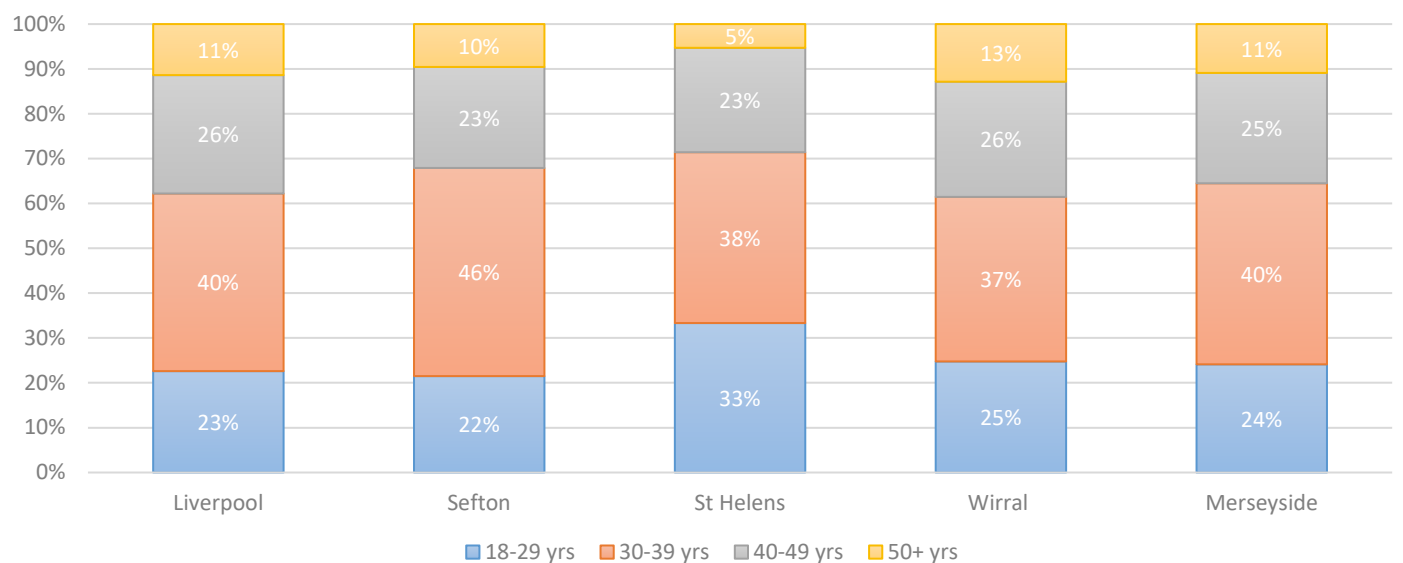
Appendix B2: Positive drug tests by offence and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2021/22



Appendix B3: Positive drug tests by gender and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2021/22



Appendix B4: Positive drug tests by age at time of drug test and LA of residence, Merseyside residents, 2021/22



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### ***About the Public Health Institute***

The Public Health Institute (PHI) 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***

PHI's Intelligence and Surveillance Team provides data collection and monitoring systems to support public health reporting, evidence review, evaluation and research. The team have extensive experience across various data sets which contribute to the surveillance systems.

### ***DIP and criminal justice monitoring***

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

PHI 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 (CJIT) across Merseyside's treatment providers. PHI matches the criminal justice data set with drug testing records across the five Merseyside local authority areas, using a client attributor. This enables the monitoring of performance, identifying when individuals have attended their Required Assessment and engaged with DIP, and highlight any issues with the DIP process.

PHI collates and presents information through monthly and annual reports and also provides ad-hoc reporting in response to data requests. In partnership with commissioners, treatment providers and Merseyside Police, DIP monitoring in Merseyside has been continually developing to meet local needs.

