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Seizures of Drugs in England and Wales, 2008/09

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Further data

This publication and the detailed tables used to produce it are available on the Home Office RDS website at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/drug-seizures.html>

Forthcoming publications

The release date for next year's bulletin, containing 2009/10 data, has not yet been pre-announced.

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Summary

- There were a record 241,090 drug seizures by police and the UK Border Agency (including Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs¹) in England and Wales in 2008/09², an increase of six per cent on 2007/08, when 228,131 seizures were made.
- The number of drug seizures made has more than doubled between 2004 and 2008/09. Much of this increase is thought to be associated with the introduction of cannabis warnings³. Seizures of cannabis in its various forms have increased by seven per cent from 173,512 in 2007/08 to 185,890 in 2008/09.
- Class A seizures have decreased by one per cent from 2007/08 to 2008/09 to 47,630. Class B seizures have increased by nine per cent to 193,376, with class C seizures also rising by 37 per cent to 6,357.
- Cocaine was again the most commonly seized class A drug in 2008/09, with 24,604 seizures, a 15 per cent increase on 2007/08. The number of seizures of cocaine has more than quadrupled since 2002. The second highest seized drug was heroin at 13,273, a six per cent decrease from 2007/08.
- There were 2.9 tonnes of cocaine seized in England and Wales in 2008/09, down from 3.6 tonnes in 2007/08. The number of seizures of cocaine, however, increased from 21,381 in 2007/08 to 24,604 in 2008/09.
- Additionally there were 1.6 tonnes of heroin seized in England and Wales in 2008/09, as well as 2.9 tonnes of amphetamines, 65 tonnes of cannabis, (almost double the 2007/08 figure), and over 640,000 cannabis plants, up from 535,055 in 2007/08.
- The number of drug seizures should not be used as a measure of drug prevalence in England and Wales. A separate publication, 'Drug Misuse Declared: Findings from the British Crime Survey', examines this topic.⁴

1 See Box 3 on page 6.

2 From 2006/07 drug seizure statistics have been published on a financial-year basis in order to be in line with other Home Office crime and policing statistical outputs.

3 See Box 1 on page 5.

4 See Drug Misuse Declared: Findings from the British Crime Survey:
<http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/drug-use-prevalence.html>

1 Introduction

This publication presents figures for drug seizures made by law enforcement agencies in England and Wales during 2008/09. The statistics in this publication relate to all drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (MDA), which divides drugs into three categories (classes A, B and C) according to their harmfulness, with class A drugs considered to be the most harmful. The drugs in the table below, with their classifications, are covered in detail within this bulletin.⁵

Table A Drugs and their classifications under the Misuse of Drugs Act

Class A	Class B ^{1,2}	Class C
Cocaine	Amphetamines	Anabolic Steroids
Crack	Barbiturates	Benzodiazepines
Ecstasy-type	Cannabis	GHB
Heroin		Temazepam
LSD		
Methadone		
Morphine		

1. Amphetamines and barbiturates are class A drugs if prepared for injection.

2. On 26 January 2009, cannabis and its derivatives were reclassified from a class C to a class B drug. Therefore, in this publication, cannabis is classified as a class B drug in 2008/09.

These statistics cover seizures made during the year by police in England and Wales (including the British Transport Police), together with information from the UK Border Agency (including seizures made by HM Revenue and Customs, see Box 3). Drug seizure data from SOCA are not included within this publication due to concerns over double counting (many domestic operations are undertaken with local police forces and seizures are attributed to the police) and operational disclosure reasons. SOCA publish their own data within their annual report, which includes seizures made outside UK borders and also those made with international partners.

On 26 January 2009, cannabis and its derivatives were reclassified from a class C to a class B drug. In this publication, cannabis is classified as a class B drug in 2008/09 so that its classification is up-to-date.

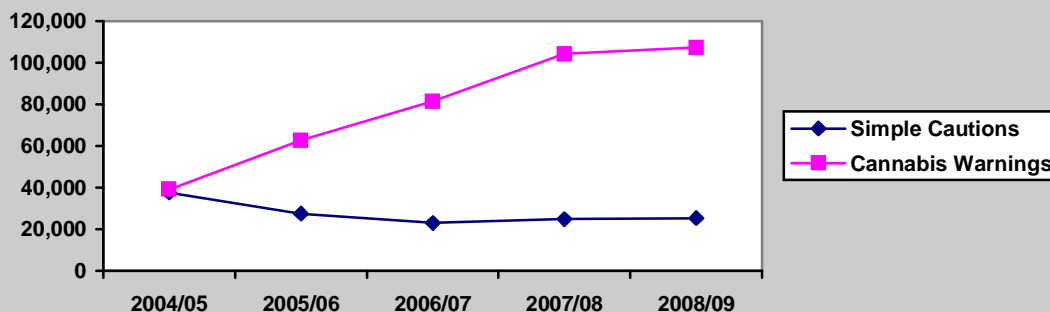
Merseyside data for years prior to 2008/09

At the beginning of 2008/09, Merseyside Police introduced a new computer system for recording drug seizures, after they became aware that seizures were being under-recorded. Due to this, drug seizures for previous years have been estimated to take account of this under-recording. As a result all percentage comparisons with previous years in this bulletin use these estimates. For further details, see Box 4.

⁵ The number of drugs covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) is far greater than those listed in Table A. It is not feasible to publish seizure statistics in detail for every drug. Where a seizure is made of a drug that is not listed in Table A, it is aggregated into an 'other' class category. Further information on drugs covered under the MDA, including a link to the full list of drugs covered, is available at: <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/drugs-laws/misuse-of-drugs-act/>

Box 1: Warnings for cannabis possession

With effect from 1 April 2004 the Home Office issued guidance to all police forces in relation to the recording of formal warnings for cannabis possession which was in line with Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) guidance. This gave an additional disposal option of a formal warning for cannabis possession (from January 2007 renamed cannabis warnings). Whereas a simple caution involves processing an individual at a police station, a cannabis warning can be completed on the street. Additionally, in Jan 2009 Penalty notices for disorder for cannabis possession were introduced as an option for the police, meaning that offenders can only be given one cannabis warning before more serious action is considered.



The number of cautions issued declined sharply between 2004/05 and 2006/07, but have increased slightly since then. The 2008/09 total is still 33 per cent lower than in 2004/05. Meanwhile, cannabis warnings have increased by 173 per cent over the same period, although the rise in the latest year has been relatively small at three per cent. The widespread and growing use of this new disposal is thought to have been a large contributory factor in the increase in the number of police seizures for cannabis since April 2004.

Box 2: Counting rules

Single or multiple seizures

A single seizure involves a seizure of one drug quantity within one drug type (for example: 10g of cocaine). Where a seizure involves multiple drug types and/or preparation types, counting rules are applied to this multiple seizure (for example: 10g of cocaine and 5g of crack).

Three counts of seizures: total, by drug type and by class

Multiple seizures involving more than one drug are counted as a single seizure in the total number of seizures, but are counted separately against each individual drug type or drug class involved.

Example: A seizure is made of: 1kg cocaine; 100g cannabis resin; and 350g herbal cannabis. This seizure would be counted as:

- Total:
One seizure in the overall total for the number of seizures by that agency [quantity not applicable];
- Drug type:
One seizure of cocaine [1kg]; one seizure of cannabis resin [100g]; and one seizure of herbal cannabis [350g];
- Class:
One seizure of class A and one seizure of class C [quantity not applicable].

Avoiding double counting

Where more than one agency (for example: a police force and the UK Border Agency) was involved in a particular seizure, it is only recorded by the agency that made the final seizure.

Seizures in England and Wales

Although the UK Border Agency and some police forces may be involved in seizures outside England and Wales, those seizures are not included in this publication.

Box 3: The UK Border Agency and HM Revenue and Customs

In July 2007 it was announced that a new agency was to be formed to manage UK border controls. The UK Border Agency was launched in April 2008, creating a new front-line operation formed from the Borders and Immigration Agency (BIA), UK Visas as well as staff of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) employed at the frontier. In 2008-09 the UK Border Agency operated as a shadow agency, with staff from the different agencies working together at the front-line until Royal Assent was granted in August 2009 to formally transfer Customs powers to the new agency.

HM Revenue and Customs retain responsibility for the inland control of illicit goods such as Cigarettes, Tobacco and Alcohol. HMRC officers retain the legal power to seize drugs if they are discovered while they are conducting their Inland duties. Consequently, a small number of drug seizures can be attributed to HMRC. For the purposes of this report these seizures are included in the UKBA totals.

Box 4: Merseyside data for years prior to 2008/09

At the start of 2008/09, Merseyside Police brought in a new recording system for drug seizures which indicated under-reporting of drugs seized in previous years. As a result, Merseyside have reported an increase in drugs seizures from 1,744 in 2007/08 to 13,784 in 2008/09. Merseyside inform us that this change is thought to be largely associated with under-recording in 2007/08 and that there would have been similar under-recording in previous years.

The new system is now in place and will be used to supply data on drug seizures to the Home Office from 2008/09 onwards. For 2007/08 and other previous years, previously supplied figures for Merseyside in this bulletin have been estimated. These estimates have been used to create totals for England, and England and Wales for the years 1999 to 2006/07. These estimates are based on extrapolating back the contribution to national figures from Merseyside seizures in 2008/09, this being based on national trends excluding Merseyside. They have been made by the statisticians responsible for the series to provide the best estimates of national trends over time given the lack of valid Merseyside figures prior to 2008/09.

2 Number of seizures

- Police and the UK Border Agency made 241,090 seizures in England and Wales in 2008/09, an increase of six per cent on 2007/08. Drug seizures have more than doubled since 2004, when 112,923 seizures were made.
- The number of seizures made in 2008/09 is the highest since the Home Office began collecting data in 1973 and it is the fourth consecutive yearly rise.
- The numbers of seizures made are affected by police activity and changes in recording practices, such as the introduction of cannabis warnings (see Box 1). Therefore, the number of drug seizures each year should not be taken as a measure of drug prevalence in society. Drug prevalence in England and Wales is addressed in the Drug Misuse Declared publications, based on results from the British Crime Survey.⁶
- In the five years prior to the introduction of cannabis warnings, seizures averaged more than 110,000 a year.

Class A drugs

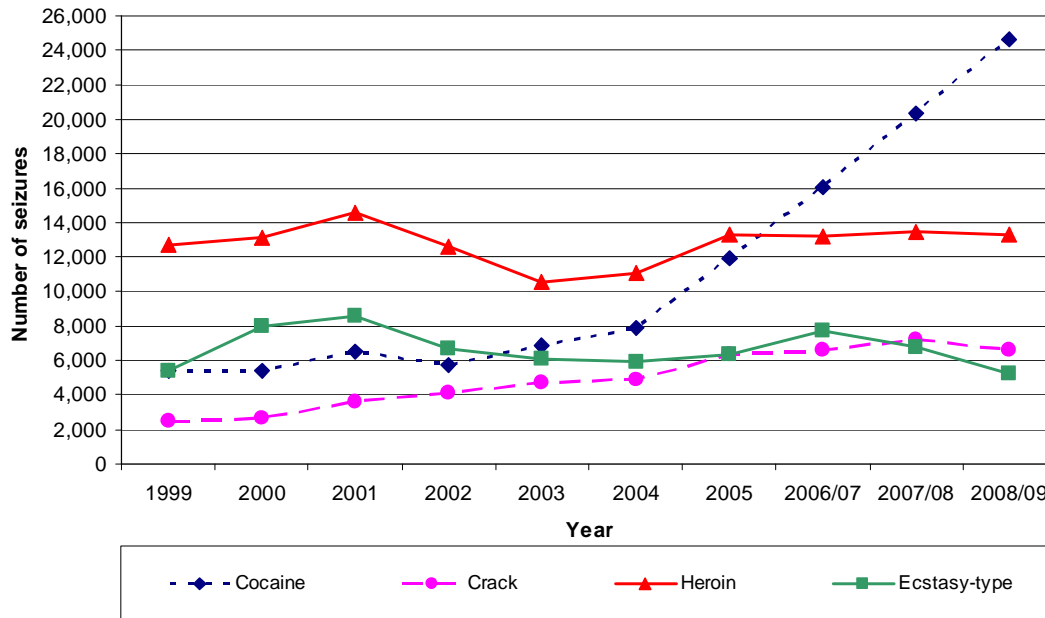
- In England and Wales seizures involving class A drugs decreased by one per cent to 47,630 in 2008/09. This is the first fall in seizures of class A drugs since 2004.
- Cocaine, for the third year in succession, was the most commonly seized class A drug, with 24,604 seizures, up 15 per cent on 2007/08. Cocaine seizures have risen sharply over recent years and have approximately doubled since 2005.
- Heroin seizures have been relatively stable in recent years, averaging around 13,800 since 2005. Seizures of heroin did however, fall six per cent between 2007/08 and 2008/09 to 13,273.

Other notable class A drug seizures include the following.

- Crack seizures have decreased by 13 per cent to 6,612 in 2008/09. This is the first fall in crack seizures in nine years.
- Ecstasy seizures have fallen to 5,206 in 2008/09, a 27 per cent decrease. This follows a fall of 12 per cent from 2006/07 to 2007/08.
- There were also 1,063 seizures of methadone, an increase of five per cent and the highest since 1999 and 131 seizures of LSD, a ten per cent fall on 2007/08.

⁶ See Drug Misuse Declared: Findings from the British Crime Survey: <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/drug-use-prevalence.html>

Figure 1 The number of seizures for the main class A drug types, England and Wales, 1999 to 2008/09



Class B drugs

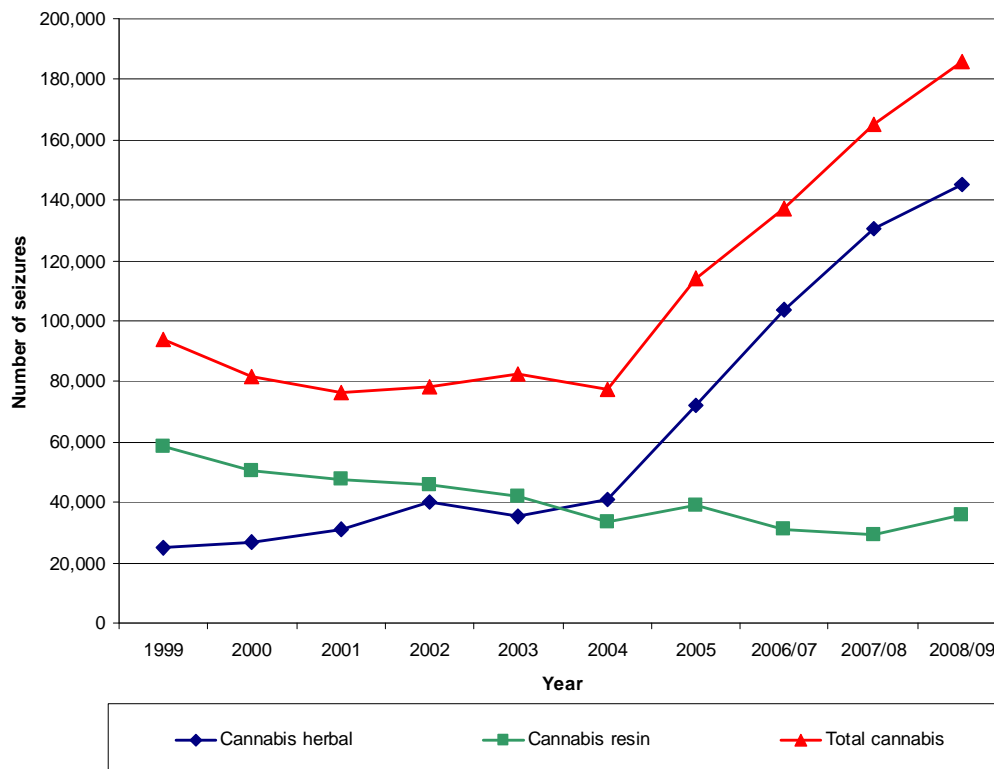
- Due to the reclassification of cannabis from class C to class B during 2008/09 all comparisons with previous years at 'drug class' level have been calculated taking this into account, with cannabis counted as a class B drug.
- In 2008/09, there was a nine per cent increase in seizures of class B drugs to 193,376. The majority of class B seizures were for cannabis, with 185,890 seizures in 2008/09, up from 173,512 in 2008/08. The second highest number of seizures for a class B drug was for amphetamines with 7,735 in 2008/09, down from 8,852 in 2007/08.

Cannabis

There are two main types of cannabis: cannabis resin and herbal cannabis. The resin variety tends to be imported and used to be a more common form of cannabis. Over recent years, resin has been overtaken by the use of herbal cannabis and this is mirrored in the number of seizures of these drugs. Herbal cannabis is increasingly domestically produced, so, as might be expected, seizures of cannabis plants have also been rising sharply. Previous Home Office research discusses the trends in further depth.⁷

- Cannabis seizures totalled 185,890 for 2008/09, increasing by seven per cent from 2007/08. This comprised 145,094 seizures of herbal cannabis (up 6%); 9,372 seizures of cannabis plants (up 10%); and 35,758 seizures of cannabis resin (up 16%).
- There are more than three times as many seizures of both herbal cannabis and cannabis plants as there were in 2004. Herbal cannabis seizures have increased from 43,109 to 145,094 and cannabis plants from 2,924 to 9,372 over this five-year period.
- As previously mentioned, the increase in cannabis seizures is thought to mainly be due to the introduction of cannabis warnings in 2004 (see Box 1).

Figure 2 The number of seizures for cannabis, England and Wales 1999 to 2008/09



⁷ See <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/publication-search/cannabis/potency?view=Binary>

Class C drugs

- Due to the reclassification of cannabis from class C to class B in 2008/09 all comparisons with previous years at 'drug class' level have been calculated taking this into account, with cannabis counted as a class B drug.
- In 2008/09 there were 6,357 seizures involving class C drugs, a 37 per cent increase on 2007/08. The most seized class C drug in 2008/09 was benzodiazepines with 4,029 seizures, an increase of 40 per cent on 2007/08. Seizures of these drugs have been increasing sharply over the last four years.

Notable seizures of other class C drugs in 2008/09 included the following:

- There were 609 seizures of temazepam in 2008/09, which represents the highest number seized since records began in 1995.
- Seizures of anabolic steroids increased by 53 per cent to 802, which is the highest total since records began for this drug type in 1996.
- In 2008/09 there were 2,344 seizures of other class C drugs in comparison to 1,837 in 2007/08. Around half of these seizures were for ketamine, with 1,266 seizures in 2008/09.

3 Quantities of drugs seized

There are considerable fluctuations in the quantities of drugs seized over time. Whilst most drug seizures consist of relatively small quantities, annual totals of drugs seized can be greatly influenced by a small number of large seizures, generally made by the UK Border Agency. These large seizures, when made, should not be taken as an indication of drug prevalence or availability.

Seizures by the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) have not been directly included here, although the majority of their domestic seizures are made in conjunction with local police forces, with the seizure attributed to the police.

Class A drugs

- In 2008/09, there were 2.9 tonnes of cocaine seized (a 19% decrease on 2007/08), 1.6 tonnes of heroin (a 42% increase on 2007/08) and 33kg of crack seized (an 11% fall). There were also 543,000 doses of ecstasy (a 46% fall on 2007/08) and over 200,000 doses of methadone seized in 2008/09 (almost double the 2007/08 figure). Summary Table 3 shows the trends in quantities of class A drugs seized over the last ten years. The quantities data fluctuate from year to year and do not necessarily move in line with the number of seizures made.
- Summary Table 5 shows the amount of weighed and unweighed seizures. For class A drugs the table shows the following:
- For cocaine, almost half of the 24,604 seizures were of quantities between one gram and 500 grams, with a further 48 per cent of quantities of less than one gram.
- There were 13,273 seizures of heroin made of which 8,127 (61%) were under one gram. This is consistent with 2007/08 where 62 per cent of seizures were under one gram.
- There were 6,612 seizures of crack made of which 3,892 seizures were under one gram.
- The majority of unweighed class A drug seizures in 2008/09 were for ecstasy-type with 5,206 seizures; 92 per cent of these seizures were between 1-50 doses.
- The proportion of seizure quantities for the other main categories of class A drug was also similarly high for smaller seizures. For morphine, 85 per cent of seizures were between 1-50 doses, with LSD standing at 81 per cent and methadone at 65 per cent for 1-50 doses.

Class B drugs

- There were a total of 65 tonnes of cannabis seized (herbal and resin) in 2008/09, as well as 643,296 cannabis plants. This compares with 38 tonnes of cannabis and 535,055 cannabis plants seized in 2007/08.
- Of the 145,094 seizures of herbal cannabis, the most commonly seized class B drug, 114,708 (79%) weighed between one gram and 500 grams.
- There were 35,758 seizures of cannabis resin made of which 29,544 or 83 per cent weighed between one gram and 500 grams.
- While the police seized more than 10.5 tonnes of cannabis (herbal and resin), UKBA seized more than 54.5 tonnes of cannabis (herbal and resin).
- Eighty-three per cent of cannabis plant seizures were for 50 plants or fewer. All seizures of cannabis plants were made by the police.
- There were 2.9 tonnes of amphetamines seized in 2008/09, the highest amount since records began in 1973 (the previous highest was the 2.1 tonnes seized in 2005). Class B seizures by number and quantity for the last ten years are shown in Summary Table 4.

Class C drugs

- There were nearly 1.8 million doses of benzodiazepines seized in 2008/09, the most commonly seized class C drug.
- Anabolic steroids were the next highest unweighed class C drug with just over 460,000 seizures made.

Calculating quantities of drugs

The quantities of drugs seized are summarised in terms of kilograms, doses or plants (for cannabis plants only). Most drugs can plausibly be seized in a preparation form other than kilograms or doses. Therefore, in order to present all seized quantities within a given drug type in terms of one comparable unit (either kilograms or doses), conversion factors are applied to estimate the overall quantity of drugs seized.

The conversion factors were revised from the 2005 publication to reflect trends in average drug preparations. These conversion factors have also been used for the 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09 publications, and will be reviewed periodically in the future. All revisions to quantities conversion factors and units for presentation have been made on the advice of the Forensic Science Service. Some drugs that were previously presented in kilograms are presented in doses from 2005. As the basis for these calculations has changed, figures for seizure quantities for prior to 2005 are not directly comparable with the published data for the last three years.

4 Seizures by authority

Number of seizures

- In 2008/09, 233,410 or 97 per cent of seizures were made by police forces with the remaining 7,680 or three per cent made by the UK Border Agency (UKBA). The number of seizures has risen for both the police and the UKBA from 2007/08 to 2008/09. Seizures made by police forces rose by five per cent, and those by the UKBA rose by 17 per cent.
- Police forces accounted for 97 per cent of all seizures of class A drugs and 98 per cent of all seizures of class B drugs. For class C drugs, police forces were responsible for 53 per cent of seizures.
- Within the class A drugs seized, the vast majority were conducted by the police with almost all seizures of crack, ecstasy and methadone, 99 per cent of heroin seizures, 97 per cent of LSD and 96 per cent of cocaine.
- Ninety-nine per cent of seizures of amphetamines and 98 per cent of seizures of cannabis were conducted by the police.
- All seizures of GHB in 2008/09 were conducted by the police. The UKBA were responsible for 55 per cent of seizures of benzodiazepines (47% in 2007/08), 52 per cent of temazepam (31% in 2007/08) and 32 per cent of anabolic steroids (24% in 2007/08).

Table B Number¹ and percentage of drug seizures by class, drug type and authority², England and Wales, 2008/09

		England and Wales				Numbers and percentages	
		Police forces		UK Border Agency (including HM Revenue and Customs)		Totals	
		Number	%	Number	%		
<i>All seizures</i>		233,410	97%	7,680	3%	241,090	
Class A drugs							
	Cocaine	23,580	96%	1,024	4%	24,604	
	Crack	6,604	100%	8	0%	6,612	
	Heroin	13,102	99%	171	1%	13,273	
	LSD	127	97%	4	3%	131	
	Ecstasy-type	5,185	100%	21	0%	5,206	
	Methadone	1,059	100%	4	0%	1,063	
	Other	654	86%	108	14%	762	
	<i>Of which:</i>						
	Morphine	112	93%	8	7%	120	
All class A		46,311	97%	1,319	3%	47,630	
Class B drugs							
	Cannabis ³	182,673	98%	3,217	2%	185,890	
	Amphetamines	7,673	99%	62	1%	7,735	
	Other	248	39%	387	61%	635	
All class B		189,840	98%	3,536	2%	193,376	
Class C drugs							
	Benzodiazepines	1,807	45%	2,222	55%	4,029	
	Temazepam	292	48%	317	52%	609	
	Anabolic steroids	543	68%	259	32%	802	
	GHB	47	100%	-	0%	47	
	Other	2,035	87%	309	13%	2,344	
All class C		3,346	53%	3,011	47%	6,357	
	Unknown	2,644	100%	-	0%	2,644	

1. As a seizure can involve more than one drug, figures for individual drugs cannot be added together to produce totals. See note on counting rules for multiple seizures on page 5.

2. Seizures from joint operations involving the UK Border Agency and the police are recorded against the lead agency that takes possession of the seized drugs.

3. On 26 January 2009, cannabis was reclassified from a class C drug to a class B drug.

Quantity of seizures

Although the UKBA only accounted for three per cent of seizures in 2008/09, the percentage seized in terms of quantity was much higher. This is due to the fact that the agency is often involved in high profile operations where large quantities of drugs are seized at ports etc.

- In 2008/09, the UKBA seized 86 per cent of cocaine by quantity (84% in 2007/08), 67 per cent of heroin (63% in 2007/08) and 45 per cent of ecstasy (62% in 2007/08). For class B drugs, the agency seized 74 per cent of amphetamines (49% in 2007/08). It also seized large proportions of cannabis; 87 per cent of herbal cannabis (80% in 2007/08) and 81 per cent of cannabis resin (80% in 2007/08). These large seizures of herbal cannabis show that despite the growth in domestic production there are still sizeable imports being attempted.
- Within class C drugs the UKBA seized 90 per cent of benzodiazepines (82% in 2007/08), 72 per cent of anabolic steroids (94% in 2007/08) and 37 per cent temazepam (83% in 2007/08).
- All cannabis plant seizures were made by local police forces.

Seizures made by SOCA would also tend to be much larger than those of police forces. These data are not included here unless attributed to a local police force.

Table C Quantities and percentage of drugs seized by class, drug type and authority¹, England and Wales, 2008/09

England and Wales		Numbers and percentages				Totals ²
		Police forces		UK Border Agency (including HM Revenue and Customs)		
Drug type		Quantity ³	%	Quantity ³	%	
Class A (weighed - kg)						
	Cocaine	408	14%	2,508	86%	2,916
	Crack	29	87%	4	13%	33
	Heroin	517	33%	1,035	67%	1,552
	Other class A	..	..	..	..	..
Class A (unweighed)						
	LSD (1000s doses)	19	96%	1	4%	20
	Ecstasy-type (1000s doses)	299	55%	244	45%	543
	Methadone (1000s doses)	204	100%	0	0%	204
Class B (weighed - kg)						
	Amphetamines	753	26%	2,185	74%	2,939
	Cannabis (herbal) ⁴	4,451	13%	28,908	87%	33,360
	Cannabis resin ⁴	6,082	19%	25,716	81%	31,798
	Other Class B	..	..	..	..	..
Class B (unweighed)						
	Cannabis plants (plants) ⁴	643,296	100%	-	-	643,296
	Barbiturates (1000s doses)	23	99%	0	1%	23
Class C (weighed - Kg)						
	GHB	2	100%	-	0%	2
	Other Class C	..	..	..	..	..
Class C (unweighed)						
	Benzodiazepines (1000s doses)	173	10%	1,587	90%	1,760
	Anabolic steroids (1000s doses)	128	28%	334	72%	462
	Temazepam (1000s doses)	91	63%	54	37%	145

1. Seizures from joint operations involving the UK Border Agency and the police are recorded against the lead agency that takes possession of the seized drugs.

2. Totals are rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. Drugs can be seized in a variety of forms or preparation types. In this table, quantities of drugs have been converted to weights (kg), doses (1000s) or plants; previous to 2005 only LSD and ecstasy were presented in doses. In order to convert seizures to comparable units, conversion factors are applied to estimate the overall quantity for that drug. New conversion factors were introduced in 2005, in consultation with the Forensic Science Service.

4. On 26 January 2009, cannabis was reclassified from a class C drug to a class B drug.

5 Purity of drugs

Data on the average purities of different types of drugs have been obtained from the Forensic Science Service (FSS) and are based on the average of all analysed drug samples submitted to the FSS. In general, the purity from the UK Border Agency seizures is higher than that from the police force seizures. This reflects the fact that their seizures will tend to be made higher in the supply chain and before 'cutting' (the addition of active agents to increase profit margins) occurs.

- The average purity of drugs varies between 2007/08 and 2008/09. Compared to data in 2007/08, the purity of a number of drugs seized by the UK Border Agency and police have all decreased in percentage points from 2007/08 to 2008/09 except for amphetamines seized by the UK Border Agency which has increased by 13 percentage points.

Table D Average purity¹ of drug seizures analysed by the Forensic Science Service by drug type and authority for 2007/08 and 2008/09

Percentages				
Drug type	Authority		2007/08	2008/09
Amphetamines	UK Border Agency (including HM Revenue and Customs)		31	44
	Police		11	7
Cocaine	UK Border Agency (including HM Revenue and Customs)		66	62
	Police		33	27
Crack ²	UK Border Agency (including HM Revenue and Customs)		..	64
	Police		50	40
Heroin	UK Border Agency (including HM Revenue and Customs)		54	50
	Police		51	39

1. Purities are expressed in percentages. Data derived from average purities by taking figures from each quarter from Summary Tables 6 and 7

2. UK Border Agency only made 11 seizures of crack in 2007/08 so no purity figures are available.

NOTES

1. The statistics in this bulletin and accompanying tables relate to the misuse of drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, which came into force on 1 July 1973. The Act divides drugs into three categories according to their harmfulness. A full list of drugs in each category is given in Schedule 2 to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, as amended by Orders in Council.
2. The Home Office first collated drug-seizure statistics in an electronic format in 1974, originally covering the United Kingdom, rather than England and Wales. Since the introduction of the Act, there have been various changes to which drugs are covered as well as to recording practices by police forces and other agencies. Drug-seizure statistics are not directly comparable from year to year and furthermore are not a measure of drug prevalence in society.
3. The statistics of seizures cover those made during the year by police (including the British Transport Police) that have been submitted to the Home Office, together with information from the UK Border Agency. More detailed figures are given in the associated area and supplementary tables. Seizures involving more than one drug are counted as a single seizure in the total number of seizures but are counted separately against each individual drug or drug class involved. Annual movements in quantities are often heavily affected by a small number of very large seizures.
4. The UK Border Agency data in this bulletin have been supplied as finalised figures, data processing and quality assurance having been undertaken internally. This has been completed following Home Office and National Statistics guidance. These data include data from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Previously, the Home Office has been sent raw data from the UK Border Agency for processing. It is anticipated that the UK Border Agency will continue to supply finalised figures for future bulletins. In practice, this should not have materially affected the data as the processing was completed under the same documentation.
5. Seizures by the UK Border Agency have historically accounted for about four per cent of the total number of seizures but for the majority of the quantities seized. In recent years, the NCS and now SOCA have been making large seizures of a number of drug types. SOCA figures are not directly included in this publication and can be found in their annual reports to Parliament. However, many SOCA seizures are attributed to local police forces when operations have been run together.
6. For consistency, the counting rules used by the police have been applied to the UK Border Agency data. All historical data shown in this publication and the associated tables have also been revised.

7. Some of the totals for quantities of drugs seized by the UK Border Agency included in this bulletin may differ slightly from their own published figures, especially for earlier years. The discrepancies reflect differences in the treatment of information, mainly revisions to weights, which became available after these statistics had been issued by the UK Border Agency.
8. Information on average (arithmetic mean) drug purities for cocaine, crack, heroin and amphetamines has been provided by the Forensic Science Service (FSS), whose laboratories analyse seizures made by most police forces and the UK Border Agency (including HMRC). Such averages do not adequately describe the overall average purity. Not all seizures are sent for analysis although arrangements exist for the police to send for analysis all potential cocaine samples, including crack. FSS data refer to the year that information on the analysis was provided rather than the year of seizure.
9. The conversion factors used to estimate quantities of seizures from the police and the UK Border Agency (including HMRC) have been revised from 2005 data in line with recommendations from the Forensic Science Service. Average seizures of quantities for valid preparation types by drug type are used as conversion factors to present each drug quantity as one unit (kilograms, doses or plants). From 2005, for approximately half the main drug types the quantities of these seizures are presented in doses rather than kilograms. In previous years only LSD and ecstasy were presented in doses.
10. The method of collecting the statistics for England and Wales changed from 1 January 1993; seizures were reported on a simplified form no longer linked to an offender. All seizures of controlled drugs are included, whether or not there is an offender, and whether the case results in court proceedings, in a caution, or no further action. In England and Wales, total seizures were about 22 per cent higher in 1993 using the new method of collection than in 1992 using the old method.
11. A new database of drug seizures made by the police was developed between 1999 and 2000 and implemented in September 2000. There are some differences between the way this database counts seizures compared to the two databases it replaced. It was discovered that figures previously published for the period 1993–1999 were undercounting the number of seizures. The historic tables in this bulletin have been updated to take this into account.
12. There have been a number of changes which have affected the statistics in this bulletin over the period covered in the tables, the more significant of which are as follows:

01/07/2003	GHB became a controlled drug.
29/01/2004	Reclassification of cannabis from a class B to a class C drug under the Criminal Justice Act 2003.
18/07/2005	Raw magic mushrooms classified as a class A drug. Previously only prepared (such as dried or stewed) magic mushrooms were classified as class A drugs.
01/01/2006	Ketamine classified as a class C drug.
18/01/2007	Methamphetamine (commonly known as "Crystal Meth") reclassified from a class B to a class A drug.
26/01/2009	Reclassification of cannabis from a class C to a class B drug.

13. Not all drugs that come into the possession of the police have been “seized” in the strictest sense of the word. For example, a member of the public may hand in what appear to be drugs that have been found in the street. These items will be recorded at individual police stations and then destroyed.
14. Although care is taken in completing and analysing the returns used to compile the figures in this bulletin, the figures are subject to the inaccuracies of any large-scale recording system of this kind that involves different organisations. So that the reliability of data could be ensured, a reconciliation exercise was conducted, where each police force or other authority was asked to check their own data and supply revised figures where necessary.
15. The figures in the tables in this bulletin are generally shown to the last digit in order to provide a comprehensive record of the information collected. However, the figures are not necessarily accurate to the last digit shown. In some tables components may not add to totals (or the total) because they have been rounded independently.

Symbols and conventions used in tables

*	not applicable
..	not available
-	nil
0	less than a specified amount

RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND STATISTICS (RDS)

MISSION STATEMENT

RDS staffs are part of the Home Office. They work closely with front-line staff and policy makers. The HO Chief Scientific Advisor, who is also Director of RDS, oversees professional development for RDS teams, quality assurance and strategic R & D issues.

The Home Office's purpose is to work together to protect the public. This is the guiding principle for Home Office policies to counter terrorism, cut crime, provide effective policing, secure our borders and protect personal identity.

Part of the remit of RDS staff is to provide Home Office National Statistics. These statistics inform Parliament and members of the public about the state of the nation and provide a window on the work and performance of government, allowing the impact of government policies and actions to be assessed.

Therefore –

Research Development and Statistics in the Home Office improves policy making, decision taking and practice in support of the Home Office purpose and aims, to provide the public and Parliament with information necessary for informed debate and to publish information for future use.