

# Criminal Justice Project: Class A drug tests in Merseyside Police custody

(2014/15 to 2017/18)

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## KEY FINDINGS

- There were 20,494 attempted drug tests across Merseyside's custody suites between April 2014 and March 2018. The number of drug tests halved between 2014/15 and 2015/16 (49% decrease), followed by a further reduction of 46% in 2016/17, then a 6% increase in 2017/18.
- In 2014/15, half (50%) of the attempted drug tests resulted in a positive test, which increased to 76% in 2016/17 and 75% in 2017/18.
- Over half (52%) of the total 2,164 positive drug tests across Merseyside in 2017/18 were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 46%; opiates only = 6%), while the remaining positive tests were for cocaine only (48%).
- Seven in ten (70%) positive drug tests in 2017/18 occurred on a weekday, peaking between 12:00 and 13:59 and between 16:00 and 17:59, while positive tests at the weekend peaked between 10:00 and 11:59.
- More than a third (35%) of positive drug test records across Merseyside in 2017/18 reported theft, followed by Misuse of Drugs Act offences (32%).
- Men accounted for over four in five (83%) individuals testing positive between April 2017 and March 2018.
- The average age of detainees who tested positive in 2017/18 was 35 years. Numbers were highest for those aged 23, 27-29 and 46 years.
- When comparing age group by gender, for men numbers were highest in 18-24 year olds and 25-29 year olds, while women aged 35-39 years and 45-49 years accounted for the largest proportions.
- Detainees testing positive for opiate metabolites increased by age, peaking at 40-44 years, and then gradually decreased by age. For detainees who tested positive for cocaine only, they were highest in 18-24 year olds and then decreased by age.
- Of the 20,494 attempted drug tests across Merseyside between April 2014 and March 2018, 16,829 (82%) records had the detainees' local authority (LA) of residence recorded. Of the records where the LA of residence was recorded, 15,850 (94%) were Merseyside residents.
- In 2017/18, where LA of residence stated Merseyside (n=2,538), around half (51%) of the attempted drug tests were on detainees resident in Liverpool, followed by Wirral residents (20%), Sefton residents (12%), St Helens residents (10%) and Knowsley residents (7%).

## INTRODUCTION

The Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) has an overarching aim to identify and engage with 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. The DIP process often begins with the police drug testing individuals in the custody suite for specified Class A drugs (opiates and/or cocaine) following an arrest or charge. If detainees test positive, they are 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 a drugs worker. During these assessments the drugs worker will assess the individual's drug use and offending behaviour and, if necessary, encourage them to engage with drug treatment services (Home Office, 2010). In 2017/18, around three in five (59%) DIP contacts across Merseyside presented via the RA route (Critchley, 2018), and for this reason the police play an important role in the early stages of the DIP process.

In 2015, Merseyside Police introduced targeted drug testing which involves a set list of questions around Class A drug use and drug-related offending that should be considered by the police before a decision is made on whether the 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.

This report presents information on drug tests carried out across Merseyside's custody suites between April 2014 and March 2018, with a particular focus given to positive tests in 2017/18. It contextualises Merseyside Police drug testing records by providing numbers and trends of offenders who use cocaine and/or opiates, identified through this route into the criminal justice system, and a demographic overview of this cohort. This report also provides recommendations for stakeholders, in terms of the efficient use of resources and effective services across Merseyside.

## DRUG TESTS ACROSS MERSEYSIDE

### OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

There were 20,494 attempted drug tests across Merseyside's custody suites between April 2014 and March 2018. The number of drug tests halved between 2014/15 and 2015/16 (49% decrease), followed by a further reduction of 46% in 2016/17, then a 6% increase in 2017/18.

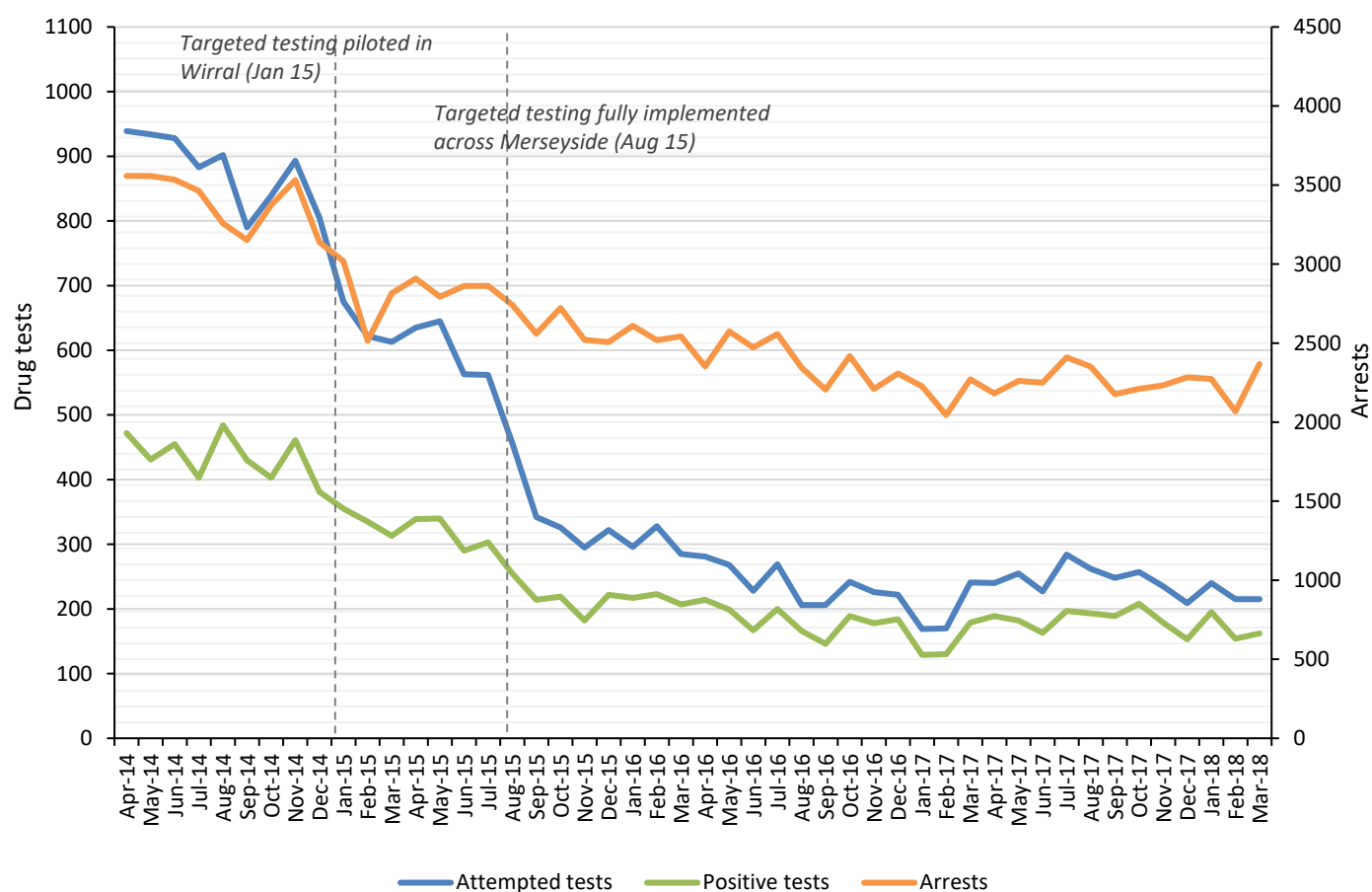
Of the attempted drug tests across Merseyside during the four-year period, 9,406 (46%) were recorded at Liverpool's custody suites, followed by 4,395 (21%) at Wirral custody suite, 3,551 (17%) at Sefton's custody suites and 3,142 (15%) at St Helens custody suite which closed mid-August 2017 (Table 1).

**Table 1: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite area and year, 14/15-17/18<sup>1</sup>**

| Custody suite area | 14/15        | 15/16        | 16/17        | 17/18        | Total         |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Liverpool          | 4,567        | 2,330        | 1,179        | 1,330        | 9,406         |
| Sefton             | 1,828        | 873          | 358          | 492          | 3,551         |
| St Helens          | 1,370        | 1,082        | 497          | 193          | 3,142         |
| Wirral             | 2,058        | 771          | 694          | 872          | 4,395         |
| <b>Merseyside</b>  | <b>9,823</b> | <b>5,056</b> | <b>2,728</b> | <b>2,887</b> | <b>20,494</b> |

Figure 1 shows the number of drug tests (attempted tests and positive tests) across Merseyside's custody suites on the left vertical axis and the number of arrests across Merseyside on the right vertical axis. Although there has been a decline in the number of arrests across Merseyside, it is not to the same degree as drug tests. The chart highlights the decline in the number of drug tests when targeted testing was implemented<sup>2</sup>.

**Figure 1: Number of arrests and drug tests (attempted and positive) across Merseyside by month and year, Apr 14 - Mar 18**



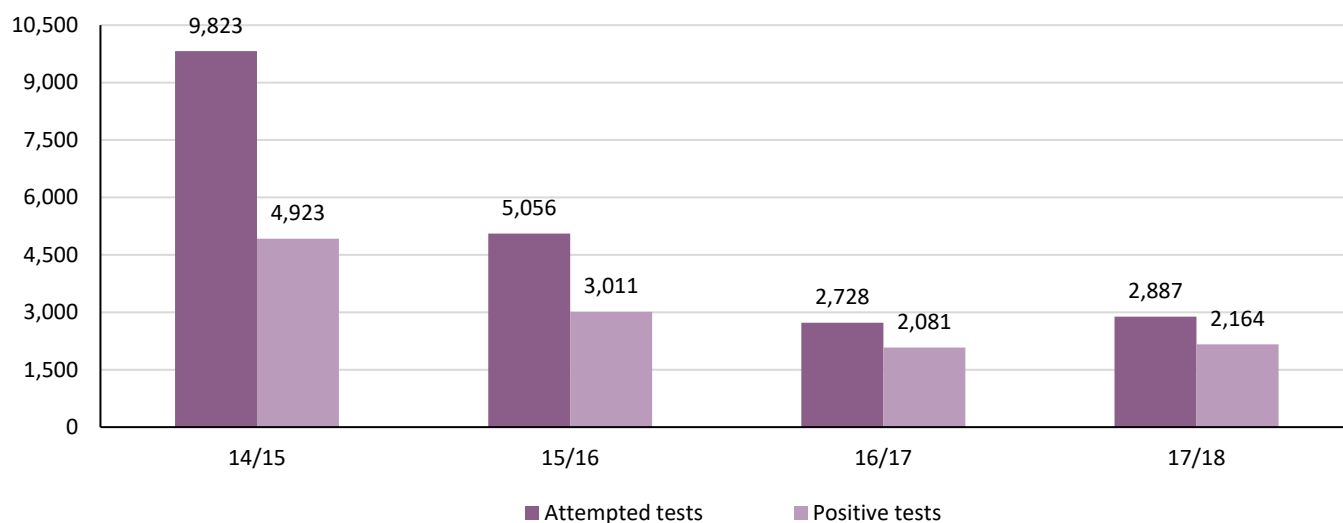
The rationale for Merseyside Police to use targeted testing was to reduce the number of negative drug tests. The gap between the number of attempted tests and the number of positive tests has narrowed substantially since targeted testing was implemented in 2015 (Figure 1).

<sup>1</sup> Liverpool custody suites include Belle Vale (14/15-15/16 only), St Anne Street and Wavertree; Sefton custody suites include Copy Lane and Southport (14/15-15/16 only). Also, note that St Helens custody suite closed mid-August 2017 and there is no custody suite in Knowsley.

<sup>2</sup> Targeted testing was piloted in Wirral custody suite in January 2015, then rolled out in Sefton and St Helens in July 2015, and Liverpool in August 2015.

In 2014/15, half (50%) of the attempted drug tests resulted in a positive test, which increased to 76% in 2016/17 and 75% in 2017/18 (Figure 2). Although the number of negative drug tests declined, the number of positive tests declined also. To compare, there were 4,923 positive drug tests in 2014/15, while there were 2,164 positive tests in 2017/18, representing a decrease of 56%.

**Figure 2: Number of drug tests (attempted and positive) across Merseyside by year, 14/15-17/18**



It is critical to ensure offenders who use Class A drugs continue to be drug tested and referred to treatment services through the RA process, as this is the main route into DIP. However, PHI research found more than half of a cohort of individuals who tested positive for specified Class A drugs and continued to offend were not drug tested at subsequent arrests in the twelve months following the initial positive drug test (Collins et al., 2017).

Merseyside Police have an action plan in place to increase the number of drug tests by streamlining the process of authorising tests and recording outcomes. This will include the necessity to document on the custody record the reason for not authorising a drug test if the targeted testing threshold is met. Furthermore, Merseyside Police is exploring IT solutions that will make the recording of outcomes of all drug tests more automated, thereby increasing efficiency and reducing duplication.

## DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 3 shows the drug testing activity for those drug tested in Merseyside's custody suites between April 2017 and March 2018. There were 2,887 attempted drug tests in 2017/18, of which 2,855 were successful (2,342 individuals)<sup>3</sup>. Of the individuals successfully tested, 1,739 individuals tested positive. This represents a positive drug test rate<sup>4</sup> of 74%.

Over half (52%) of the total 2,164 positive drug tests in 2017/18 were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 996 [46%]; opiates only = 121 [6%]), while the remaining positive tests were for cocaine only (n=1,047; 48%). The proportion of opiate metabolites is lower than the previous two years (58% in both 2015/16 and 2016/17), though the same as 2014/15. There were 2,100 RAs served to 1,687 individuals in 2017/18 (Figure 3).



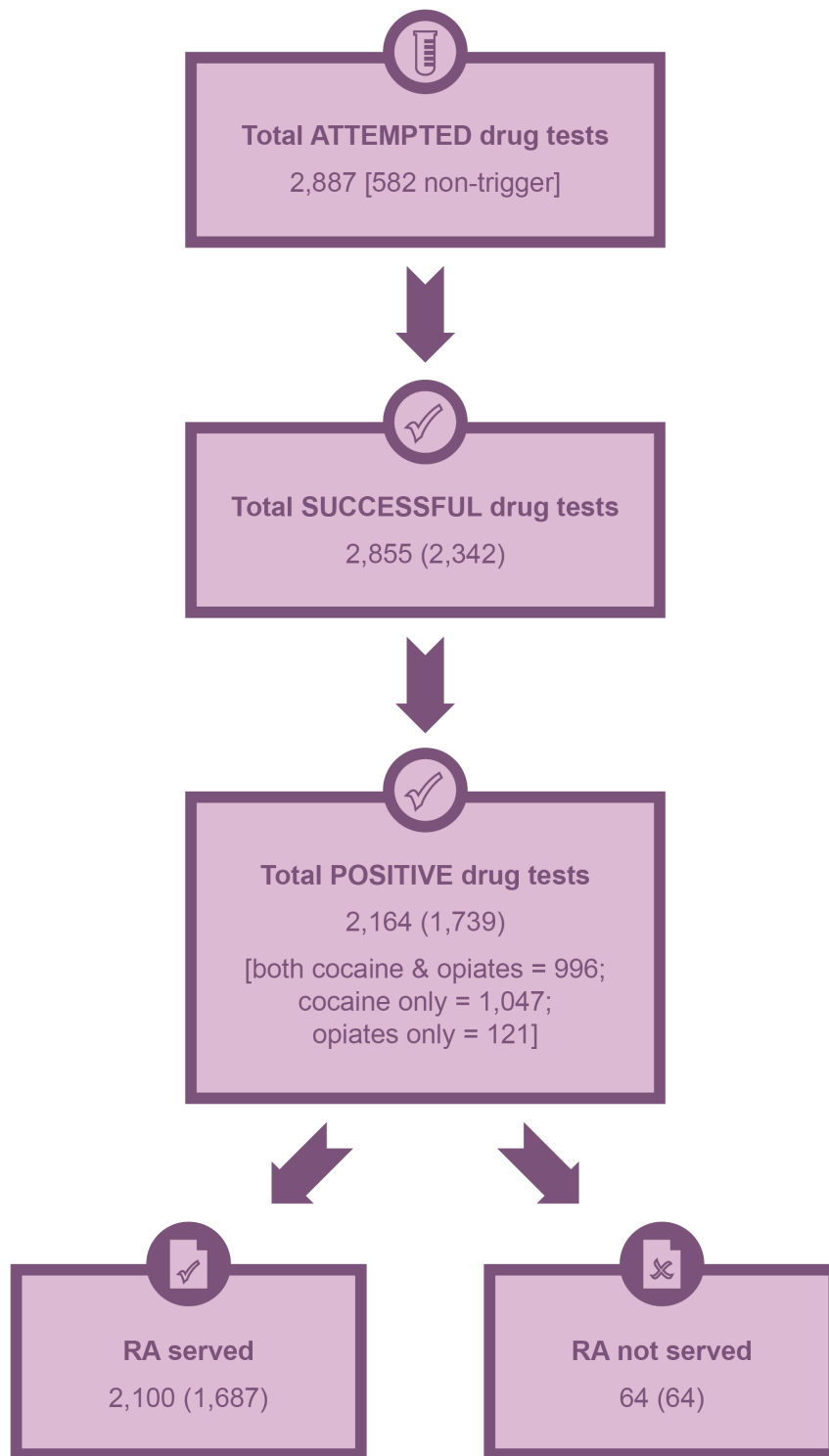
52%

positive tests for opiate metabolites, 17/18

<sup>3</sup> Reasons for drug tests not completed (n=32): test aborted - equipment failure = 14; test refused = 12; test aborted - unable to provide sample = 4; test aborted - other = 2.

<sup>4</sup> Positive drug test rate = (number of individuals testing positive ÷ number of individuals successfully tested) x100.

Figure 3: Drug testing activity in Merseyside's custody suites, 17/18<sup>5,6</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Numbers of individuals at each level are presented in brackets. 'Total attempted drug tests' is a summation of successful tests and those that were refused or aborted.

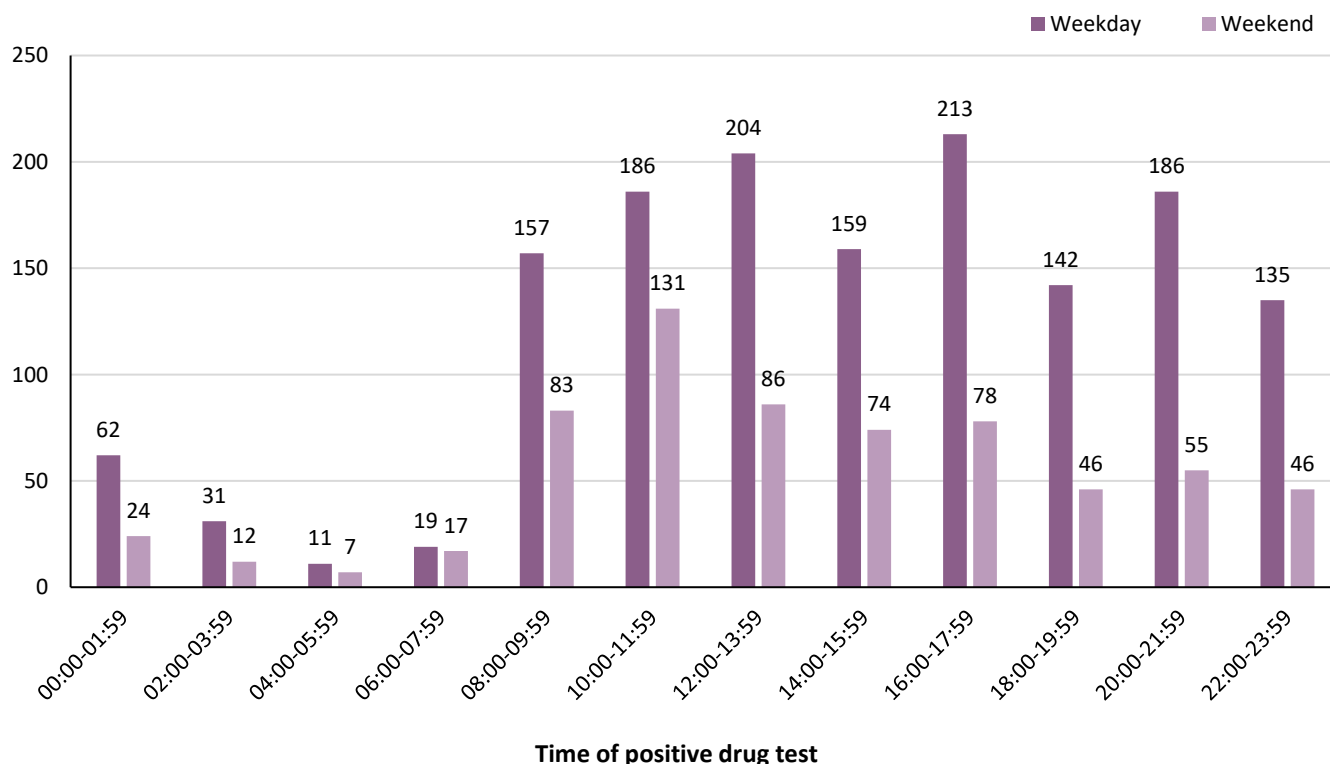
<sup>6</sup> 'RA served' and 'RA not served' indicate the number of occasions when those testing positive were either served or not served with the requirement to attend an initial RA. There are individuals with more than one positive drug test that may be included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'; therefore the summation of 'RA served' and 'RA not served' does not equal the number of individuals testing positive.



## TIME OF DRUG TESTS

The favoured option for the initial RA is for it to take place in the custody suite as soon as an RA has been served; therefore the custody suites are staffed with a drugs worker by the local treatment provider at specific times. Of the 2,164 positive drug tests across Merseyside's custody suites in 2017/18, seven in ten (n=1,505; 70%) occurred on a weekday (Monday to Friday). Figure 4 shows the proportions of positive drug tests by time of test, comparing those that occurred on a weekday and at the weekend. Positive drug tests on a weekday peaked between 12:00 and 13:59 (n=204; 14%) and between 16:00 and 17:59 (n=213; 14%), while positive tests at the weekend peaked between 10:00 and 11:59 (n=131; 20%).

**Figure 4: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by time of test, weekday vs. weekend, 17/18**



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

Around four in five positive drug tests on a weekday occurred in the hours when there is a drugs worker present in the custody suite (08:00-22:00; n=534; 82%), compared to less than half at the weekend when the staffed hours are between 12:00 and 22:00 (n=144; 47%; Appendix A1)<sup>7</sup>. Positive drug tests on a weekday peaked between 10:00 and 11:59 (n=88; 13%) and between 16:00 and 17:59 (n=84; 13%), while the number of tests at the weekend peaked between 10:00 and 11:59 (n=68; 22%). Notably, when tests peaked at the weekend, St Anne Street was not staffed with a drugs worker.

### COPY LANE CUSTODY SUITE, SEFTON

Half of all positive drug tests occurred during the hours when there is a drugs worker present in the custody suite (08:00-16:00 seven days a week; n=192; 50%; Appendix A2). Positive drug tests on a weekday peaked between 14:00 and 15:59 (n=39; 14%)

<sup>7</sup> Please note that these figures are based on when there is a drugs worker present at St Anne Street.

and between 20:00 and 21:59 (n=38; 14%), while they peaked between 16:00 and 17:59 at the weekend (n=21; 19%). Notably, when tests peaked between 20:00 and 21:59 on a weekday and between 16:00 and 17:59 at the weekend, the custody suite was not staffed with a drugs worker.

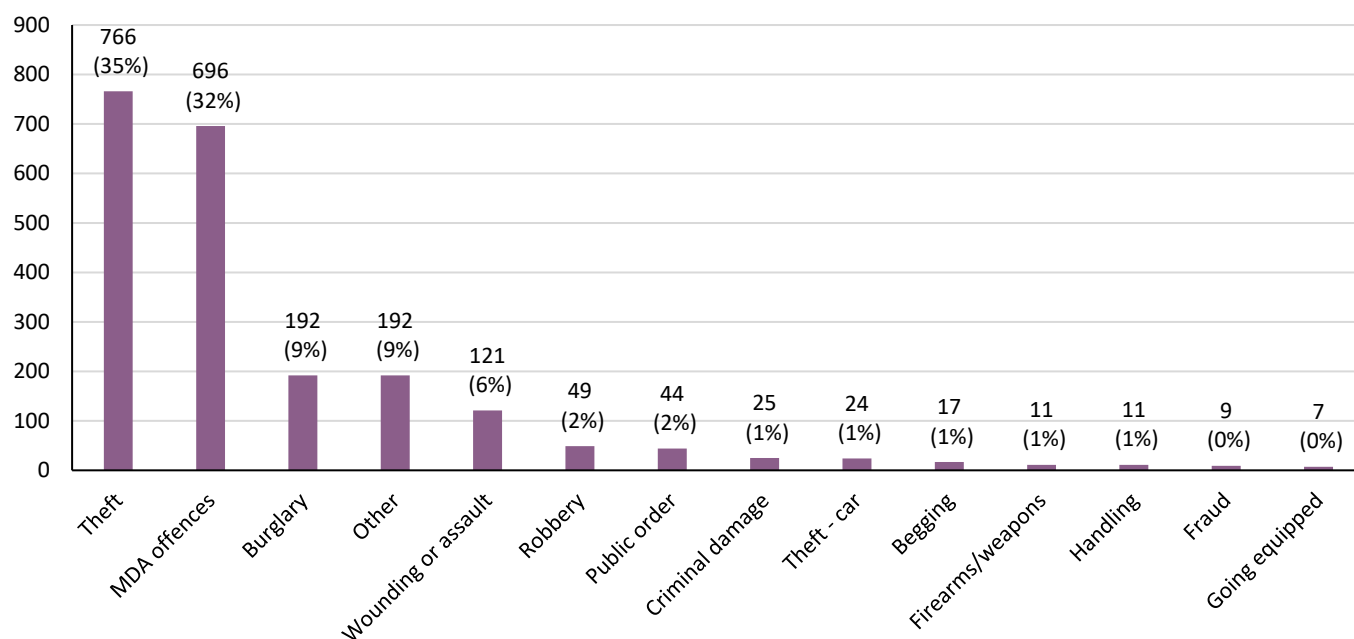
## WIRRAL CUSTODY SUITE

Around half of the positive drug tests on a weekday occurred in the hours when there is a drugs worker present in the custody suite (09:00-17:00; n=230; 49%), compared to around three in ten at the weekend when the staffed hours are between 12:00 and 17:00 (n=61; 28%; Appendix A3). Positive drug tests on a weekday peaked between 16:00 and 17:59 (n=81; 17%); however the custody suite is only staffed with a drugs worker until 17:00<sup>8</sup>. At the weekend, positive drug tests peaked between 10:00 and 11:59 (n=43; 20%), when the custody suite is not staffed with a drugs worker.

## OFFENCE

Police drug testing records capture the offence that led to the arrest/charge and subsequent drug test. More than a third of positive drug test records across Merseyside in 2017/18 reported theft (n=766; 35%), followed by Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=696; 32%; Figure 5). Notably, the proportion of theft declined year-on-year, while MDA offences increased. Of the positive drug test records in 2014/15, 45% reported theft and 24% reported MDA offences.

**Figure 5: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by offence, 17/18<sup>9</sup>**



<sup>8</sup> To break down these figures further, 40 positive drug tests were between 16:00 and 16:59 when the suite is staffed with a drugs worker, while 41 were between 17:00 and 17:59 when the suite is not staffed with a drugs worker.

<sup>9</sup> Other offences: other non-trigger offence = 95; other motoring offences = 49; non-trigger drugs offences = 35; driving whilst disqualified = 3; driving with no insurance = 2; offences against the administration of justice = 2; tampering with a motor vehicle = 2; making off without payment = 1; prostitution = 1; summary offence - failure to attend RA = 1; summary offence - other summary offence = 1.

**Figure 6: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by gender (individuals), 17/18**



83%

men = 1,443



17%

women = 296

Men accounted for over four in five individuals who tested positive across Merseyside between April 2017 and March 2018 (n=1,443; 83%; Figure 6). This is a similar proportion when compared to the previous two years (both 84%) and the same as 2014/15.

The average age of detainees who tested positive in 2017/18 was 35 years. Numbers were highest for those aged 23 (n=65), 27 (n=61), 28 (n=60), 29 (n=65) and 46 years (n=60; Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age (individuals), 17/18**

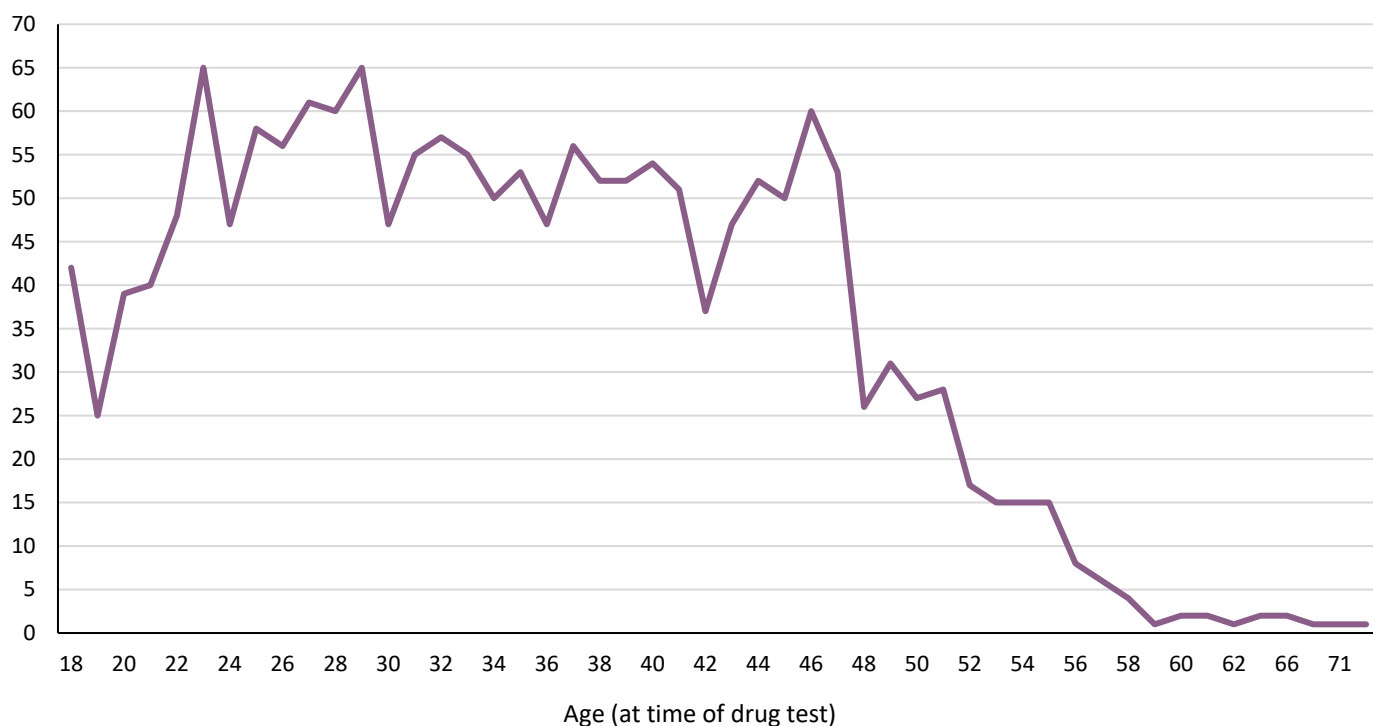


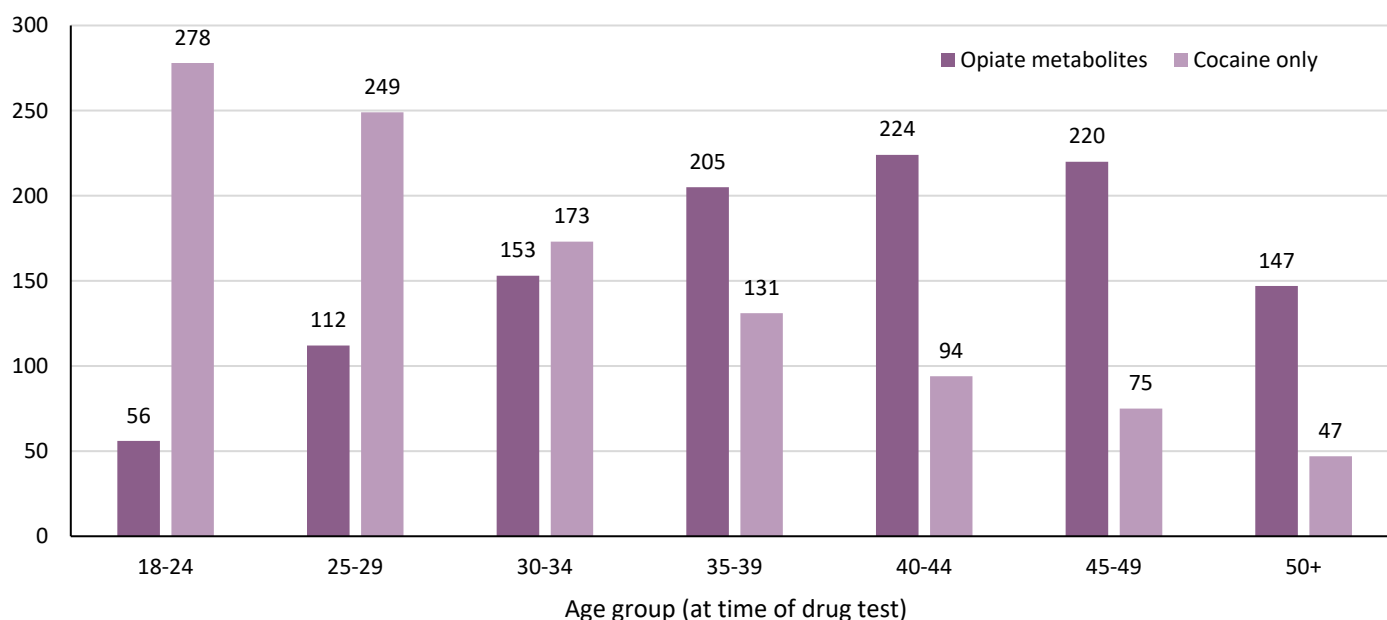
Table 2 shows the age group of detainees who tested positive across Merseyside in 2017/18 by gender. Overall, detainees aged 18-24 years accounted for the largest proportion (n=306; 18%), followed by those aged 25-29 years (n=300; 17%). There were, however, variations by gender. For men, numbers were highest for 18-24 year olds (n=280; 19%) and 25-29 year olds (n=259; 18%), while women aged 35-39 years accounted for the largest proportion (n=61; 21%), followed by women aged 45-49 years (n=49; 17%).

**Table 2: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and gender (individuals), 17/18**

| Age group    | Men          |             | Women      |             | 17/18 Total  |             |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
|              | n            | %           | n          | %           | n            | %           |
| 18-24        | 280          | 19%         | 26         | 9%          | <b>306</b>   | <b>18%</b>  |
| 25-29        | 259          | 18%         | 41         | 14%         | <b>300</b>   | <b>17%</b>  |
| 30-34        | 221          | 15%         | 43         | 15%         | <b>264</b>   | <b>15%</b>  |
| 35-39        | 199          | 14%         | 61         | 21%         | <b>260</b>   | <b>15%</b>  |
| 40-44        | 196          | 14%         | 45         | 15%         | <b>241</b>   | <b>14%</b>  |
| 45-49        | 171          | 12%         | 49         | 17%         | <b>220</b>   | <b>13%</b>  |
| 50+          | 117          | 8%          | 31         | 10%         | <b>148</b>   | <b>9%</b>   |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1,443</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>296</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>1,739</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Positive drug test results are categorised by age group in Figure 8. Positive tests for opiate metabolites increased by age, peaking at 40-44 years (n=224), and then gradually decreased by age, while positive tests for cocaine only were highest in 18-24 year olds (n=278) which then decreased by age.

**Figure 8: Positive drug tests across Merseyside by age group and drug test result, 17/18**



## MERSEYSIDE RESIDENTS

Of the 20,494 attempted drug tests across Merseyside between April 2014 and March 2018, 16,829 (82%) records had the detainees' local authority (LA) of residence recorded. Of the records where the LA of residence was recorded, 15,850 (94%) were Merseyside residents (Table 3). It should be noted that figures are a proxy for Merseyside residents as LA of residence was missing for 18% of records during the four-year period; therefore the number of Merseyside residents drug tested may be under-reported.

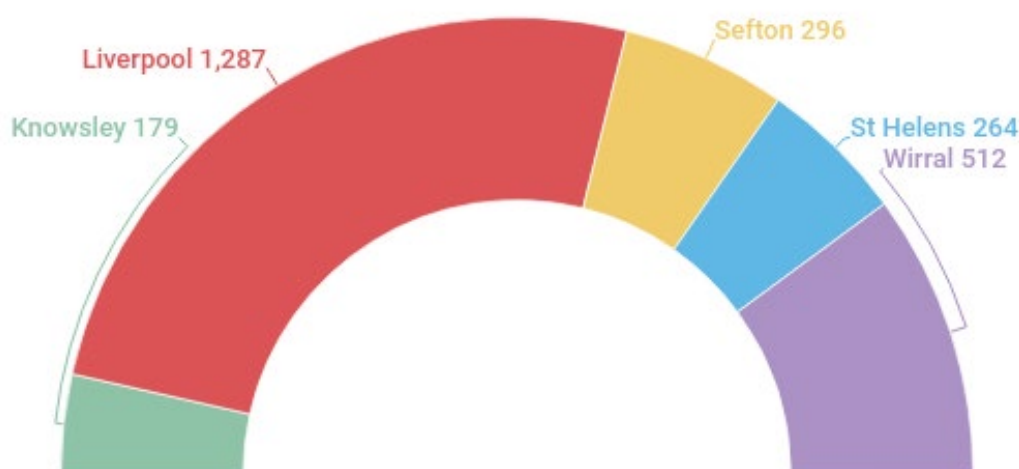
The number of attempted drug tests on Merseyside residents more than halved between 2014/15 and 2015/16 (53% decrease), followed by a further reduction of 46% in 2016/17. The number of attempted drug tests on Merseyside residents then increased by 30% in 2017/18 (Table 3).

**Table 3: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by LA of residence and year, 14/15-17/18**

| LA of residence                    | 14/15        | 15/16        | 16/17        | 17/18        | Total         |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Knowsley                           | 628          | 293          | 125          | 179          | <b>1,225</b>  |
| Liverpool                          | 3,650        | 1,826        | 1,011        | 1,287        | <b>7,774</b>  |
| Sefton                             | 1,073        | 471          | 186          | 296          | <b>2,026</b>  |
| St Helens                          | 864          | 428          | 230          | 264          | <b>1,786</b>  |
| Wirral                             | 1,516        | 613          | 398          | 512          | <b>3,039</b>  |
| <b>Merseyside</b>                  | <b>7,731</b> | <b>3,631</b> | <b>1,950</b> | <b>2,538</b> | <b>15,850</b> |
| <b>Outside of Merseyside</b>       | <b>455</b>   | <b>236</b>   | <b>115</b>   | <b>173</b>   | <b>979</b>    |
| <b>Total (excl. blank records)</b> | <b>8,186</b> | <b>3,867</b> | <b>2,065</b> | <b>2,711</b> | <b>16,829</b> |

Figure 9 shows the number of attempted drug tests by LA of residence for Merseyside residents in 2017/18 only. There were 1,287 (51%) attempted tests on Liverpool residents, followed by Wirral residents (n=512; 20%), Sefton residents (n=296; 12%), St Helens residents (n=264; 10%) and Knowsley residents (n=179; 7%).

**Figure 9: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by LA of residence and year, Merseyside residents, 17/18**



## OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

Between April 2014 and March 2018, there were 1,225 attempted drug tests on Knowsley residents across Merseyside's custody suites, representing 8% of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. The number of attempted drug tests on Knowsley residents more than halved between 2014/15 and 2015/16 (53% decrease), followed by a further reduction of 57% in 2016/17, then an increase of 43% in 2017/18.

Of the attempted drug tests on Knowsley residents during the four-year period, 449 (37%) were recorded at Liverpool's custody suites, followed by 377 (31%) at St Helens custody suite which closed mid-August 2017, 351 (29%) at Sefton's custody suites and 48 (4%) at Wirral custody suite (Table 4).

**Table 4: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite area and year, Knowsley residents, 14/15-17/18**

| Custody suite area | 14/15      | 15/16      | 16/17      | 17/18      | Total        |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Liverpool          | 251        | 67         | 50         | 81         | 449          |
| Sefton             | 201        | 65         | 23         | 62         | 351          |
| St Helens          | 160        | 153        | 42         | 22         | 377          |
| Wirral             | 16         | 8          | 10         | 14         | 48           |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>628</b> | <b>293</b> | <b>125</b> | <b>179</b> | <b>1,225</b> |

## DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 10 shows the drug testing activity for Knowsley residents drug tested in Merseyside's custody suites between April 2017 and March 2018. There were 179 attempted drug tests in 2017/18, of which 177 were successful (161 individuals). Of the individuals successfully tested, 122 individuals tested positive. This represents a positive drug test rate of 76%.

Around three in five of the total 132 positive drug tests in 2017/18 were for cocaine only (n=76; 58%), while the remaining positive tests were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 49 [37%]; opiates only = 7 [5%]). Notably, the proportion of positive tests for opiate metabolites in 2017/18 (42%) is the highest of the four-year period. There were 126 RAs served to 116 individuals in 2017/18 (Figure 10).



58%

positive tests for cocaine only, 17/18

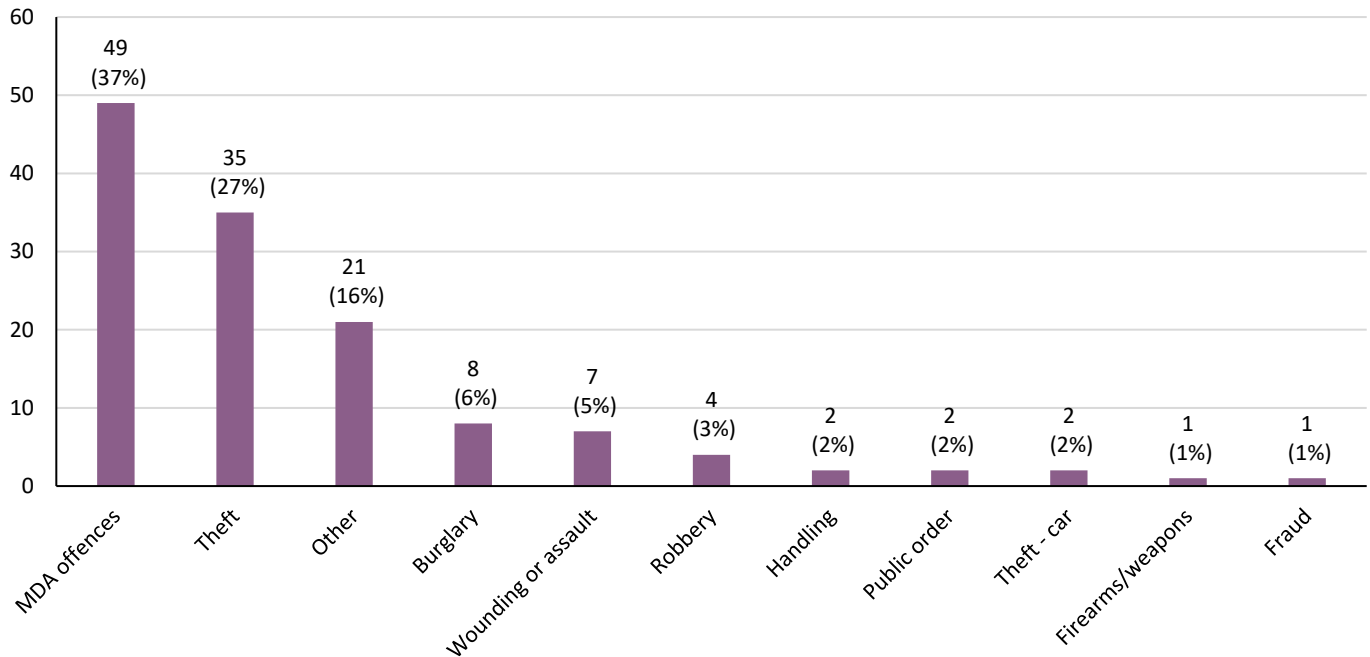
Figure 10: Drug testing activity, Knowsley residents, 17/18



## OFFENCE

Almost two in five positive drug test records in 2017/18 reported Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=49; 37%), followed by theft (n=35; 27%) and offences categorised as 'other' (n=21; 16%; Figure 11). The proportion of MDA offences in 2017/18 is a slight reduction on the previous year (40%), while the proportion of theft decreased year-on-year (from 39% in 2014/15) and offences categorised as 'other' increased year-on-year (from 1% in 2014/15).

**Figure 11: Positive drug tests by offence, Knowsley residents, 17/18**



## DEMOGRAPHICS

**Figure 12: Positive drug tests by gender, Knowsley residents (individuals), 17/18**



84%

men = 102



16%

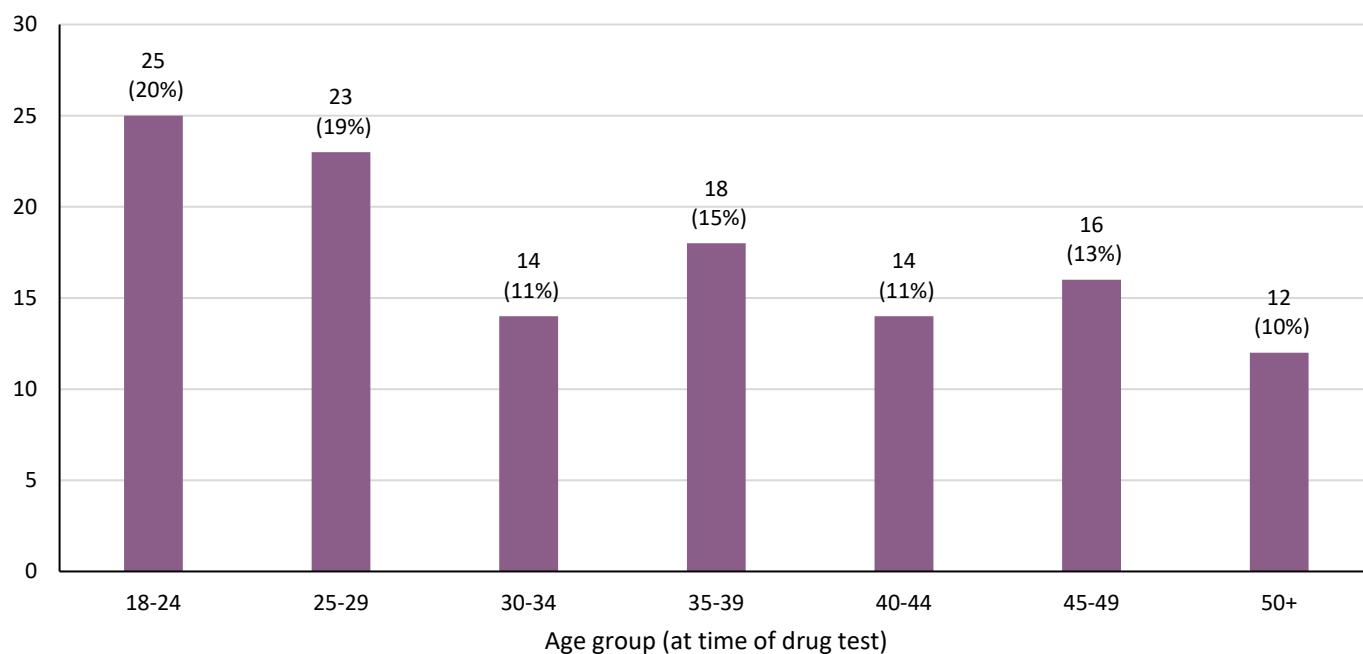
women = 20

Men accounted for over four in five individuals who tested positive between April 2017 and March 2018 (n=102; 84%; Figure 12). This is a lower proportion when compared to the previous two years (both 86%) and the same as 2014/15.

Figure 13 shows the age group of Knowsley residents who tested positive across Merseyside in 2017/18. Detainees aged 18-24 years accounted for the largest proportion (n=25; 20%), followed by those aged 25-29 years (n=23; 19%). Notably, the proportion of 25-29 year olds in 2017/18 was almost double the proportion in the previous year (10%).

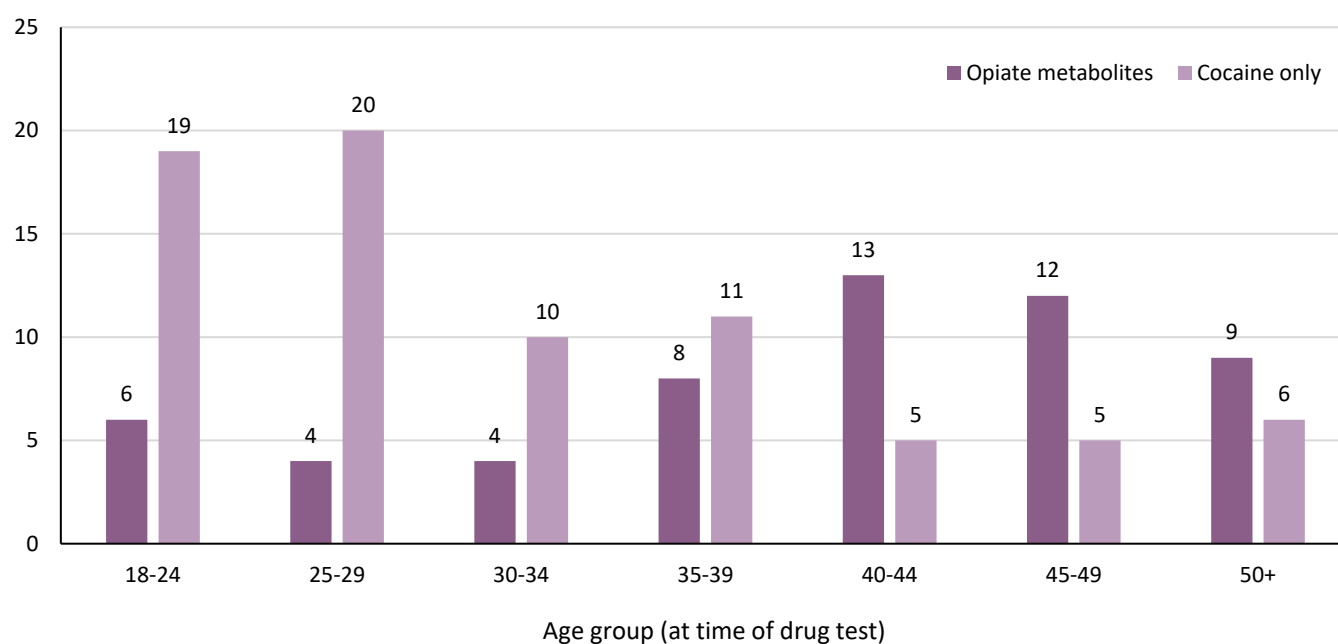


**Figure 13: Positive drug tests by age group, Knowsley residents (individuals), 17/18**



Positive drug test results are categorised by age group in Figure 14. Positive tests for opiate metabolites peaked in 40-44 year olds (n=13) and 45-49 year olds (n=12), while cocaine only positive tests peaked in 18-24 year olds (n=19) and 25-29 year olds (n=20).

**Figure 14: Positive drug tests by age group and drug test result, Knowsley residents, 17/18**



## OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

Between April 2014 and March 2018, there were 7,774 attempted drug tests on Liverpool residents across Merseyside's custody suites, representing around half (49%) of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. The number of attempted drug tests on Liverpool residents halved between 2014/15 and 2015/16, followed by a further reduction of 45% in 2016/17, then an increase of 27% in 2017/18.

Of the attempted drug tests on Liverpool residents during the four-year period, around three-quarters were recorded at Liverpool's custody suites (n=5,772; 74%), followed by 894 (11%) at Wirral custody suite, 768 (10%) at Sefton's custody suites and 340 (4%) at St Helens custody suite (Table 5).

**Table 5: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite area and year, Liverpool residents, 14/15-17/18**

| Custody suite area | 14/15        | 15/16        | 16/17        | 17/18        | Total        |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Liverpool          | 2,956        | 1,257        | 643          | 916          | <b>5,772</b> |
| Sefton             | 386          | 224          | 78           | 80           | <b>768</b>   |
| St Helens          | 102          | 146          | 62           | 30           | <b>340</b>   |
| Wirral             | 206          | 199          | 228          | 261          | <b>894</b>   |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>3,650</b> | <b>1,826</b> | <b>1,011</b> | <b>1,287</b> | <b>7,774</b> |

## DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 15 shows the drug testing activity for Liverpool residents drug tested in Merseyside's custody suites between April 2017 and March 2018. There were 1,287 attempted drug tests in 2017/18, of which 1,269 were successful (1,071 individuals). Of the individuals successfully tested, 787 individuals tested positive. This represents a positive drug test rate of 73%.

Around half (51%) of the total 945 positive drug tests in 2017/18 were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 428 [45%]; opiates only = 51 [5%]), while the remaining positive tests were for cocaine only (n=466; 49%). Notably, the proportion of positive tests for opiate metabolites in 2017/18 is lower than 2015/16 and 2016/17 (both 59%), though the same as 2014/15. There were 922 RAs served to 769 individuals in 2017/18 (Figure 15).



**51%**

**positive tests for opiate metabolites, 17/18**

**Figure 15: Drug testing activity, Liverpool residents, 17/18<sup>10</sup>**

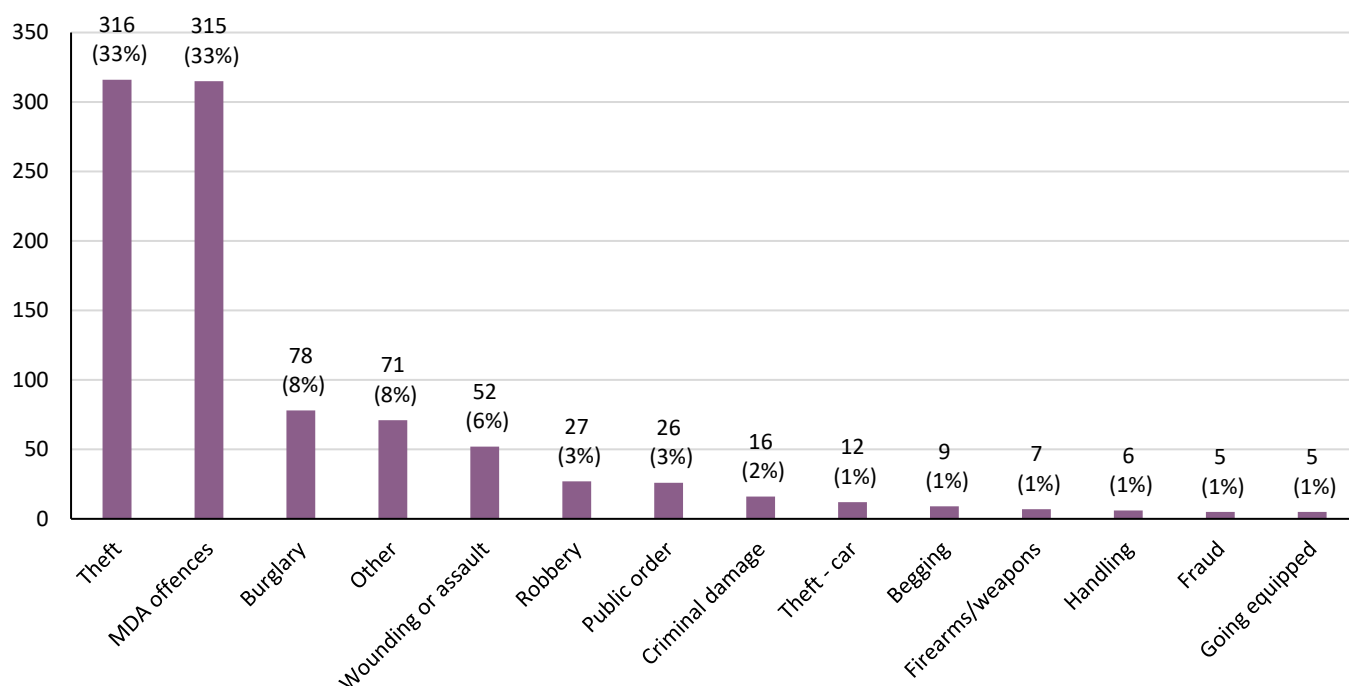


<sup>10</sup> There are individuals with more than one positive drug test that may be included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'; therefore the summation of 'RA served' and 'RA not served' does not equal the number of individuals testing positive.

## OFFENCE

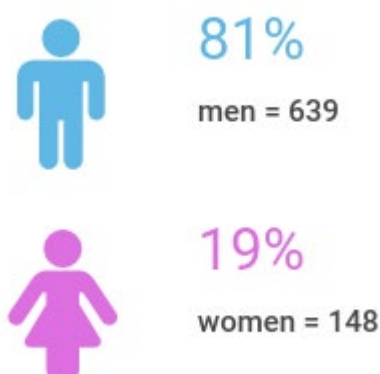
Theft (n=316) and Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=315) each accounted for a third of positive drug test records in 2017/18 (Figure 16). The proportion of theft decreased year-on-year (from 44% in 2014/15), while the proportion of MDA offences increased year-on-year (from 23% in 2014/15).

**Figure 16: Positive drug tests by offence, Liverpool residents, 17/18**



## DEMOGRAPHICS

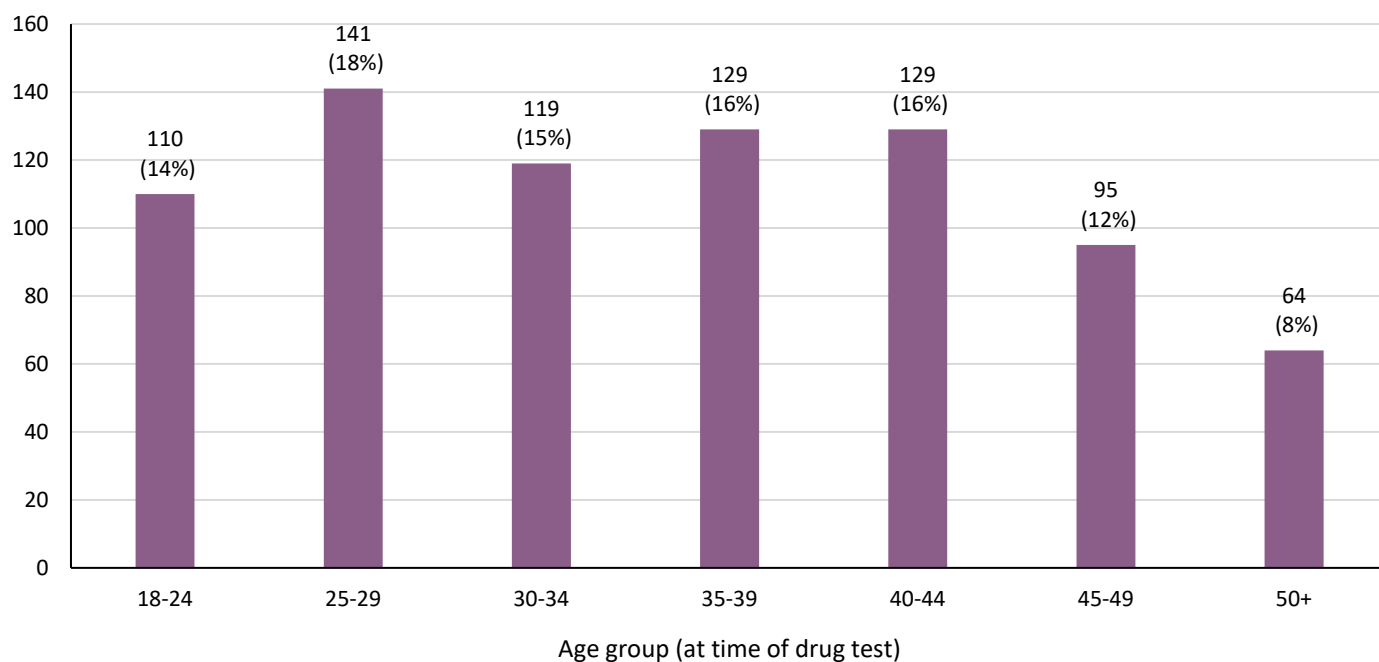
**Figure 17: Positive drug tests by gender, Liverpool residents (individuals), 17/18**



Men accounted for around four in five individuals who tested positive between April 2017 and March 2018 (n=639; 81%; Figure 17). This is the lowest proportion of men testing positive in the four-year period (2014/15 = 82%; 2015/16 = 84%; 2016/17 = 84%).

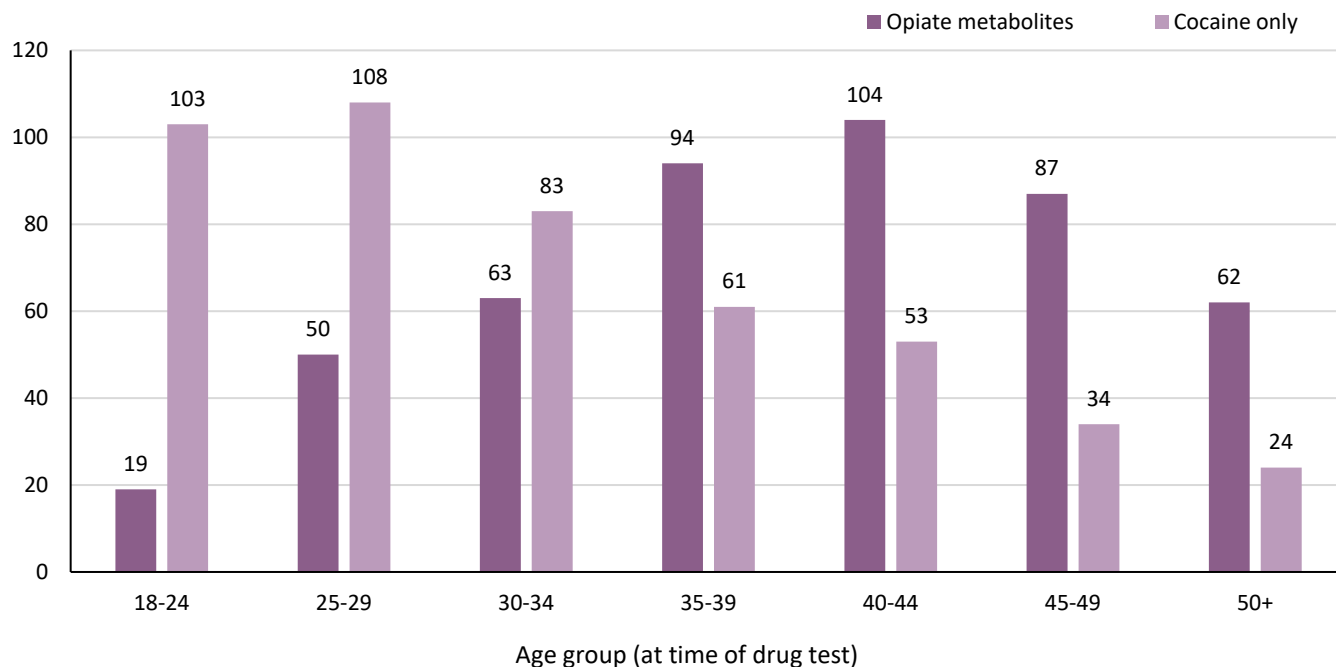
Figure 18 shows the age group of Liverpool residents who tested positive across Merseyside in 2017/18. Detainees aged 25-29 years accounted for the largest proportion (n=141; 18%), followed by those aged 35-39 years (n=129; 16%) and 40-44 years (n=129; 16%).

**Figure 18: Positive drug tests by age group, Liverpool residents (individuals), 17/18**



Positive drug test results are categorised by age group in Figure 19. Positive tests for opiate metabolites increased by age, peaking at 40-44 years (n=104), and then gradually decreased by age, while positive tests for cocaine only peaked in 18-24 year olds (n=103) and 25-29 year olds (n=108), and then decreased by age.

**Figure 19: Positive drug tests by age group and drug test result, Liverpool residents, 17/18**



## OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

Between April 2014 and March 2018, there were 2,026 attempted drug tests on Sefton residents across Merseyside's custody suites, representing 13% of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. The number of attempted drug tests on Sefton residents more than halved between 2014/15 and 2015/16 (56% decrease) and between 2015/16 and 2016/17 (61% decrease), followed by an increase of 59% in 2017/18.

Of the attempted drug tests on Sefton residents during the four-year period, seven in ten were recorded at Sefton's custody suite (n=1,423; 70%), followed by 390 (19%) at Liverpool's custody suites, 122 (6%) at Wirral custody suite and 91 (4%) at St Helens custody suite (Table 6).

**Table 6: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite area and year, Sefton residents, 14/15-17/18**

| Custody suite area | 14/15        | 15/16      | 16/17      | 17/18      | Total        |
|--------------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Liverpool          | 199          | 85         | 45         | 61         | 390          |
| Sefton             | 831          | 340        | 105        | 147        | 1,423        |
| St Helens          | 25           | 36         | 21         | 9          | 91           |
| Wirral             | 18           | 10         | 15         | 79         | 122          |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>1,073</b> | <b>471</b> | <b>186</b> | <b>296</b> | <b>2,026</b> |

## DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 20 shows the drug testing activity for Sefton residents drug tested in Merseyside's custody suites between April 2017 and March 2018. There were 296 attempted drug tests in 2017/18, of which 293 were successful (261 individuals). Of the individuals successfully tested, 202 individuals tested positive. This represents a positive drug test rate of 77%.

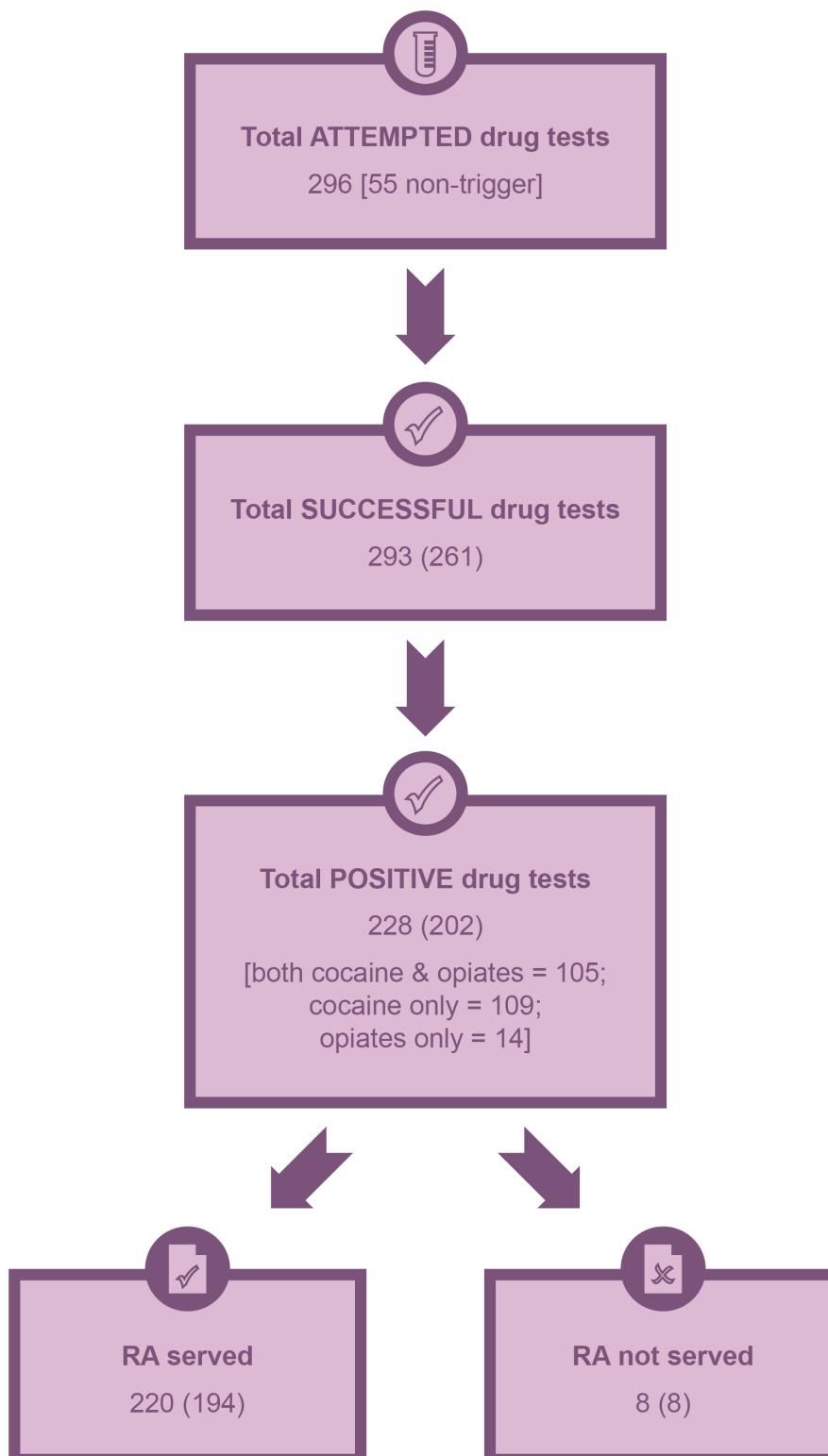
Just over half (52%) of the total 228 positive drug tests in 2017/18 were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 105 [46%]; opiates only = 14 [6%]), while the remaining positive tests were for cocaine only (n=109; 48%). Notably, the proportion of positive tests for opiate metabolites in 2017/18 is the highest of the four-year period. There were 220 RAs served to 194 individuals in 2017/18 (Figure 20).



52%

positive tests for opiate metabolites, 17/18

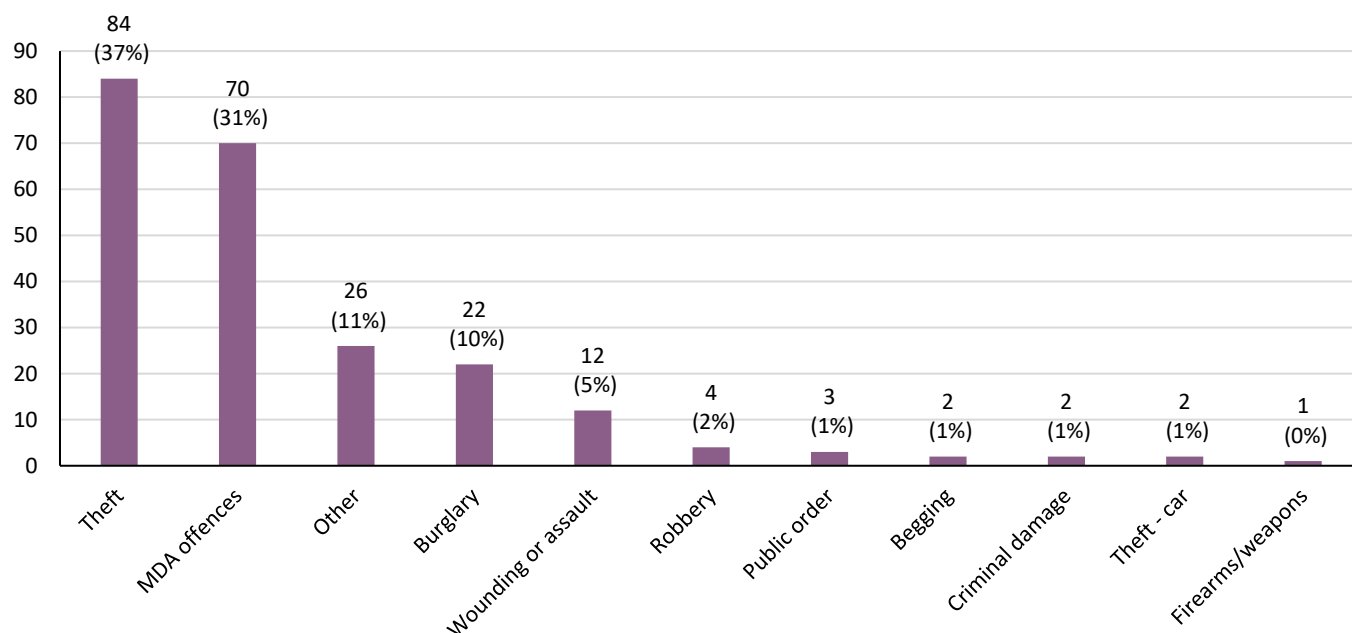
Figure 20: Drug testing activity, Sefton residents, 17/18



## OFFENCE

Under two in five positive drug test records in 2017/18 reported theft (n=84; 37%), while around three in ten reported Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=70; 31%; Figure 21). The proportion of theft in 2017/18 is a slight increase on the previous year (31%), while the proportion of MDA offences is a decrease on the previous year (41%).

**Figure 21: Positive drug tests by offence, Sefton residents, 17/18**



## DEMOGRAPHICS

**Figure 22: Positive drug tests by gender, Sefton residents (individuals), 17/18**



80%

men = 161



20%

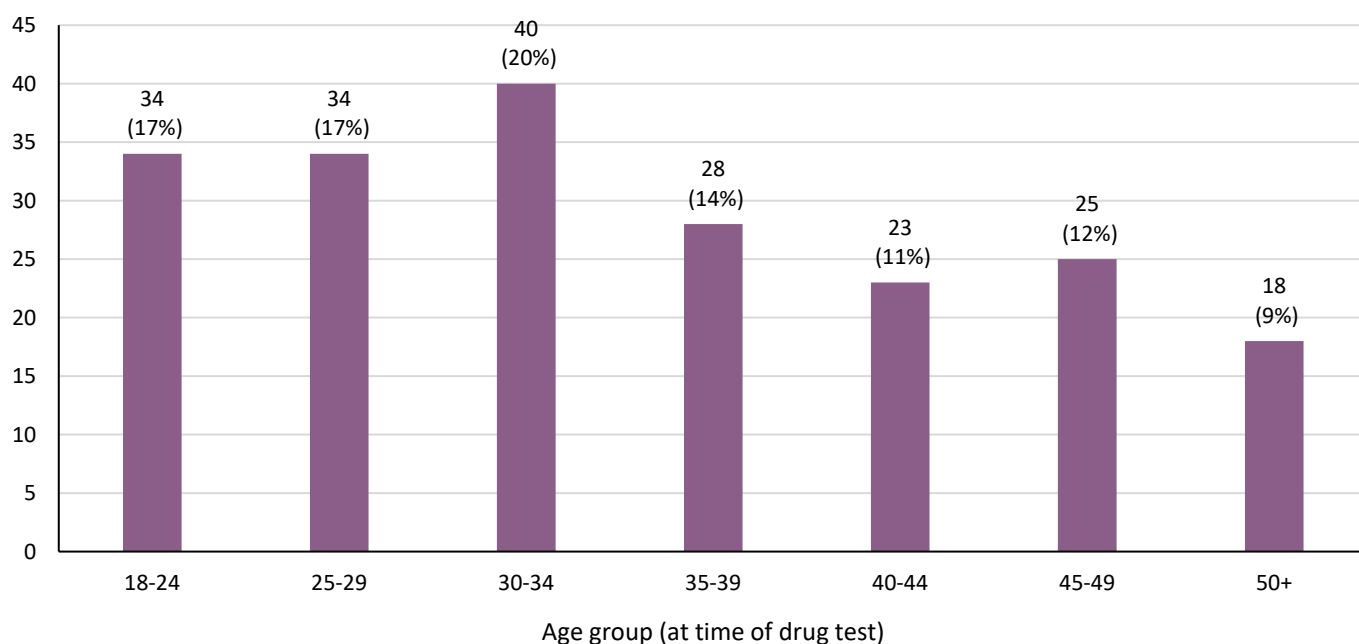
women = 41

Men accounted for four in five individuals who tested positive between April 2017 and March 2018 (n=161; 80%; Figure 22). This is the same proportion of men in 2014/15 and 2016/17, but lower than 2015/16 (85%).

Figure 23 shows the age group of Sefton residents who tested positive across Merseyside in 2017/18. Detainees aged 30-34 years accounted for the largest proportion (n=40; 20%), followed by those aged 18-24 years (n=34; 17%) and 25-29 years (n=34; 17%). The proportions of 25-29 year olds and 30-34 year olds have increased when compared to the previous year (11% and 17% respectively), while the proportion of 35-39 years has decreased from 22%.

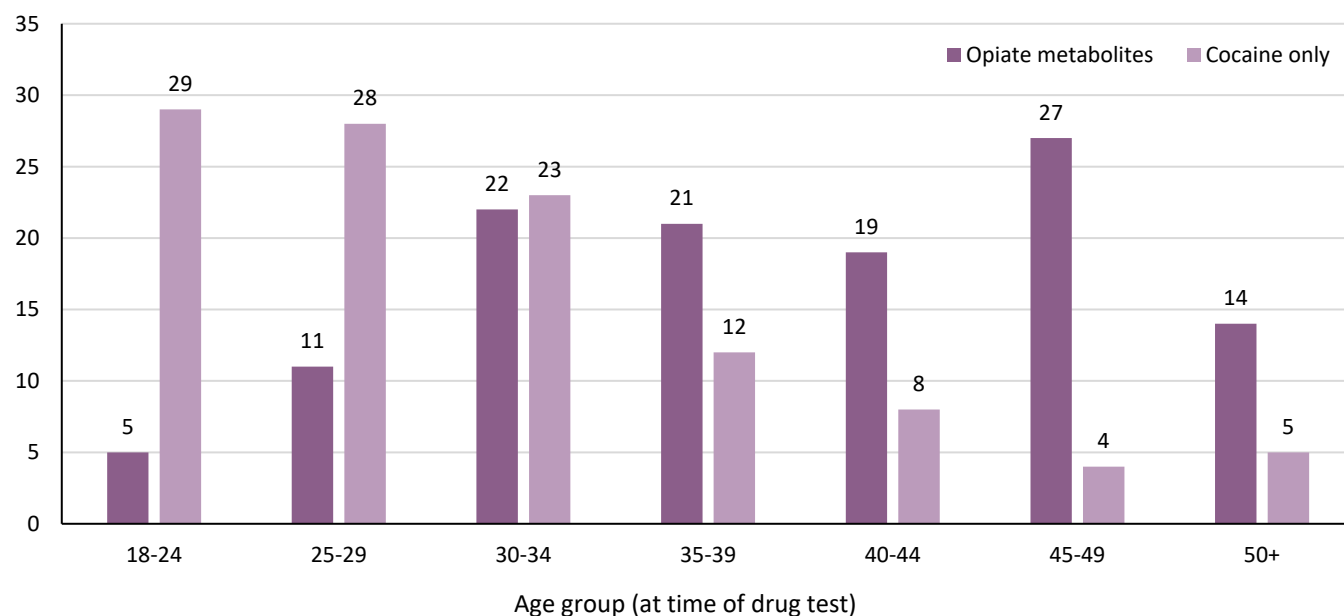


**Figure 23: Positive drug tests by age group, Sefton residents (individuals), 17/18**



Positive drug test results are categorised by age group in Figure 24. Positive tests for opiate metabolites peaked in 45-49 year olds (n=27), while for cocaine only they peaked in 18-24 year olds (n=29) and 25-29 year olds (n=28), and then decreased by age. The number of positive tests for opiate metabolites and cocaine only were similar for 30-34 years olds.

**Figure 24: Positive drug tests by age group and drug test result, Sefton residents, 17/18**



## OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

Between April 2014 and March 2018, there were 1,786 attempted drug tests on St Helens residents across Merseyside's custody suites, representing 11% of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. The number of attempted drug tests on St Helens residents halved between 2014/15 and 2015/16, followed by a further reduction of 46% in 2016/17, then an increase of 15% in 2017/18.

Of the attempted drug tests on St Helens residents during the four-year period, around three-quarters were recorded at St Helens custody suite which closed mid-August 2017 (n=1,366; 76%), followed by 278 (16%) at Sefton's custody suites, 132 (7%) at Liverpool's custody suites and 10 (1%) at Wirral custody suite (Table 7).

**Table 7: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite area and year, St Helens residents, 14/15-17/18**

| Custody suite area | 14/15      | 15/16      | 16/17      | 17/18      | Total        |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Liverpool          | 73         | 23         | 9          | 27         | 132          |
| Sefton             | 105        | 18         | 5          | 150        | 278          |
| St Helens          | 684        | 385        | 214        | 83         | 1,366        |
| Wirral             | 2          | 2          | 2          | 4          | 10           |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>864</b> | <b>428</b> | <b>230</b> | <b>264</b> | <b>1,786</b> |

## DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 25 shows the drug testing activity for St Helens residents drug tested in Merseyside's custody suites between April 2017 and March 2018. There were 264 attempted drug tests in 2017/18, of which 261 were successful (217 individuals). Of the individuals successfully tested, 172 individuals tested positive. This represents a positive drug test rate of 79%.

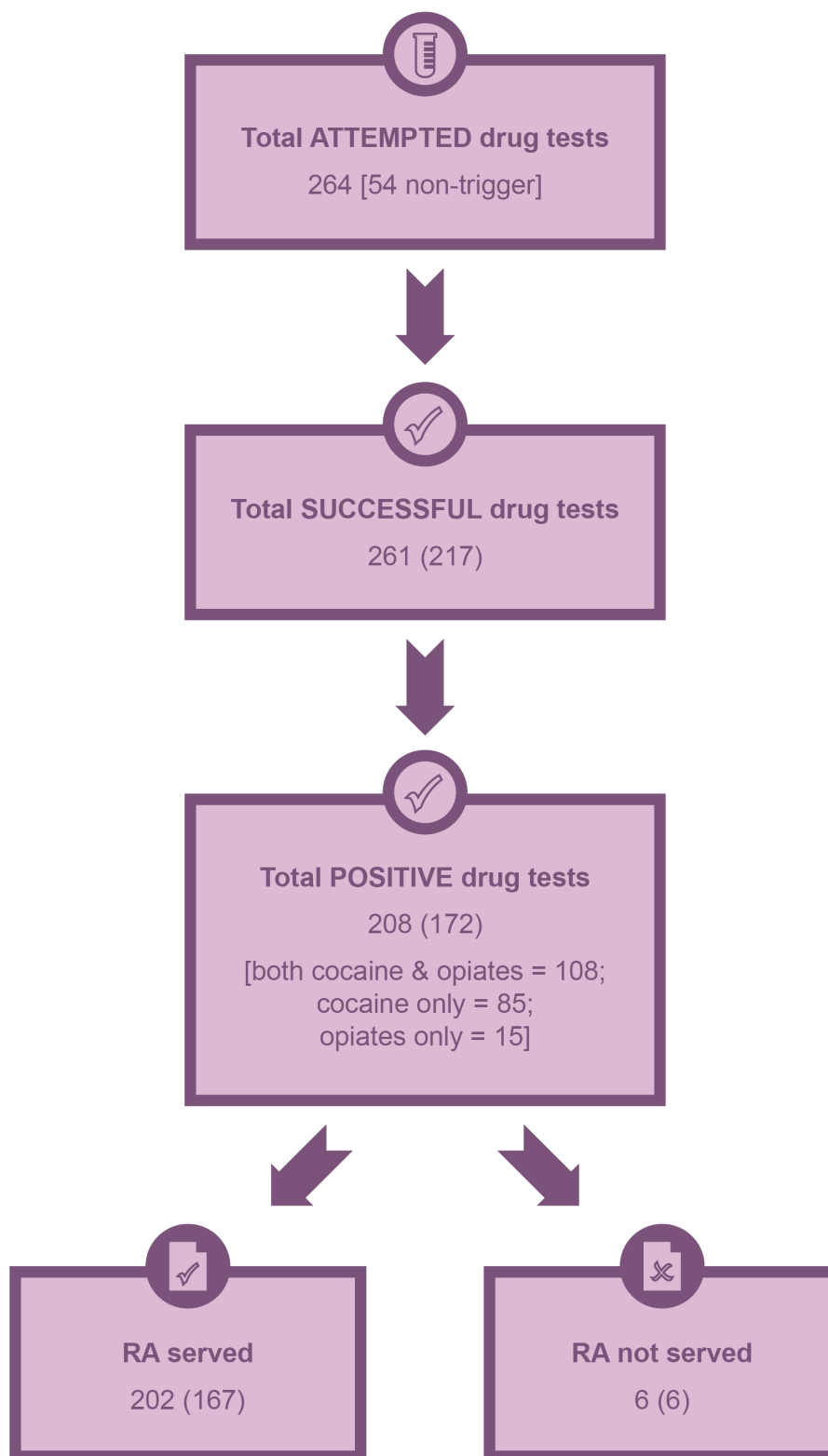
Around three in five (59%) of the total 208 positive drug tests in 2017/18 were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 108 [52%]; opiates only = 15 [7%]), while the remaining positive tests were for cocaine only (n=85; 41%). Notably, the proportion of positive tests for opiate metabolites in 2017/18 is the lowest of the four-year period. There were 202 RAs served to 167 individuals in 2017/18 (Figure 25).



59%

positive tests for opiate metabolites, 17/18

Figure 25: Drug testing activity, St Helens residents, 17/18<sup>11</sup>

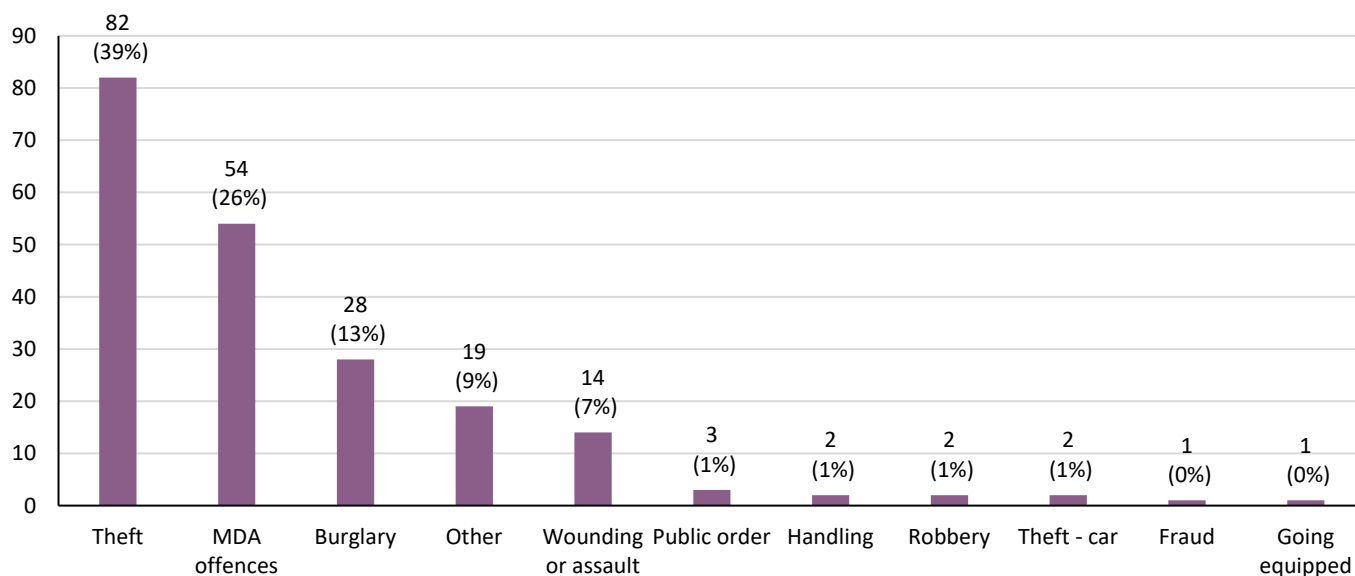


<sup>11</sup> There are individuals with more than one positive drug test that may be included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'; therefore the summation of 'RA served' and 'RA not served' does not equal the number of individuals testing positive.

## OFFENCE

Around two in five positive drug test records in 2017/18 reported theft (n=82; 39%), followed by Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=54; 26%) and burglary (n=28; 13%; Figure 26). The proportion of theft in 2017/18 is the lowest of the four-year period, while burglary in 2017/18 is the highest of the four-year period.

**Figure 26: Positive drug tests by offence, St Helens residents, 17/18**



## DEMOGRAPHICS

**Figure 27: Positive drug tests by gender, St Helens residents (individuals), 17/18**



81%

men = 140



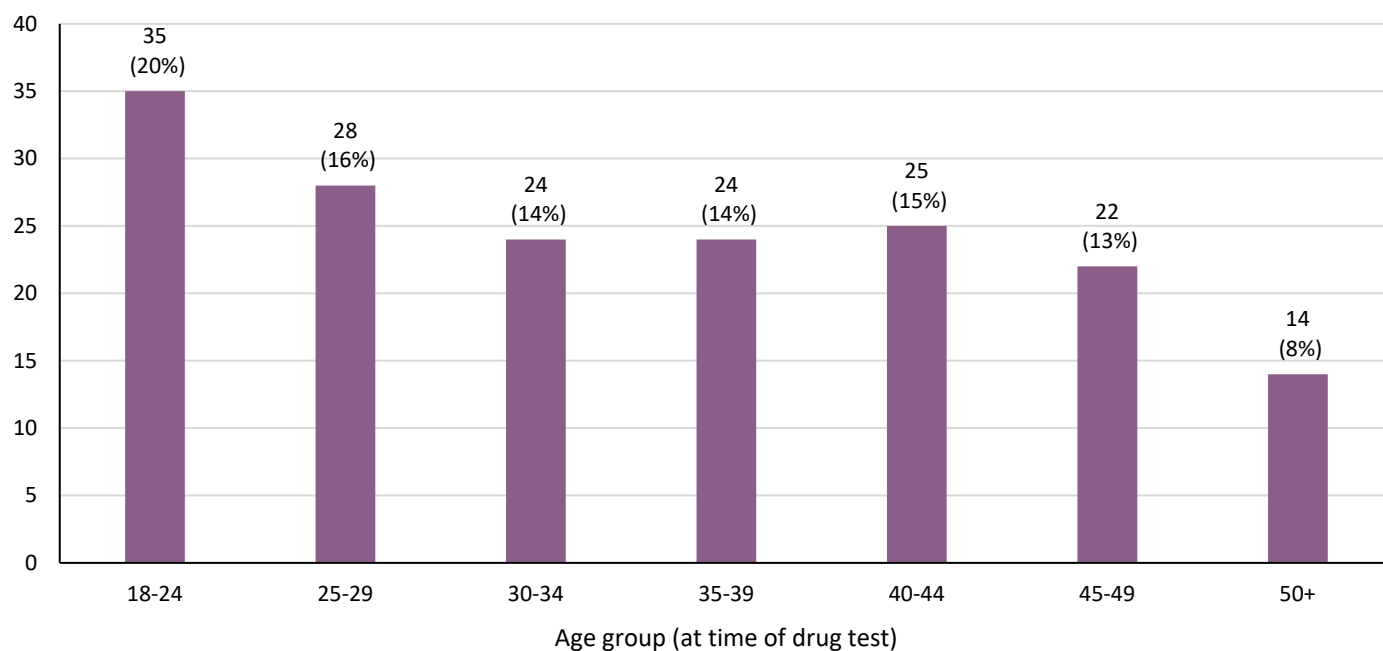
19%

women = 32

Men accounted for around four in five individuals who tested positive between April 2017 and March 2018 (n=140; 81%; Figure 27). This is the lowest proportion of men testing positive in the four-year period (2014/15 = 84%; 2015/16 = 82%; 2016/17 = 87%).

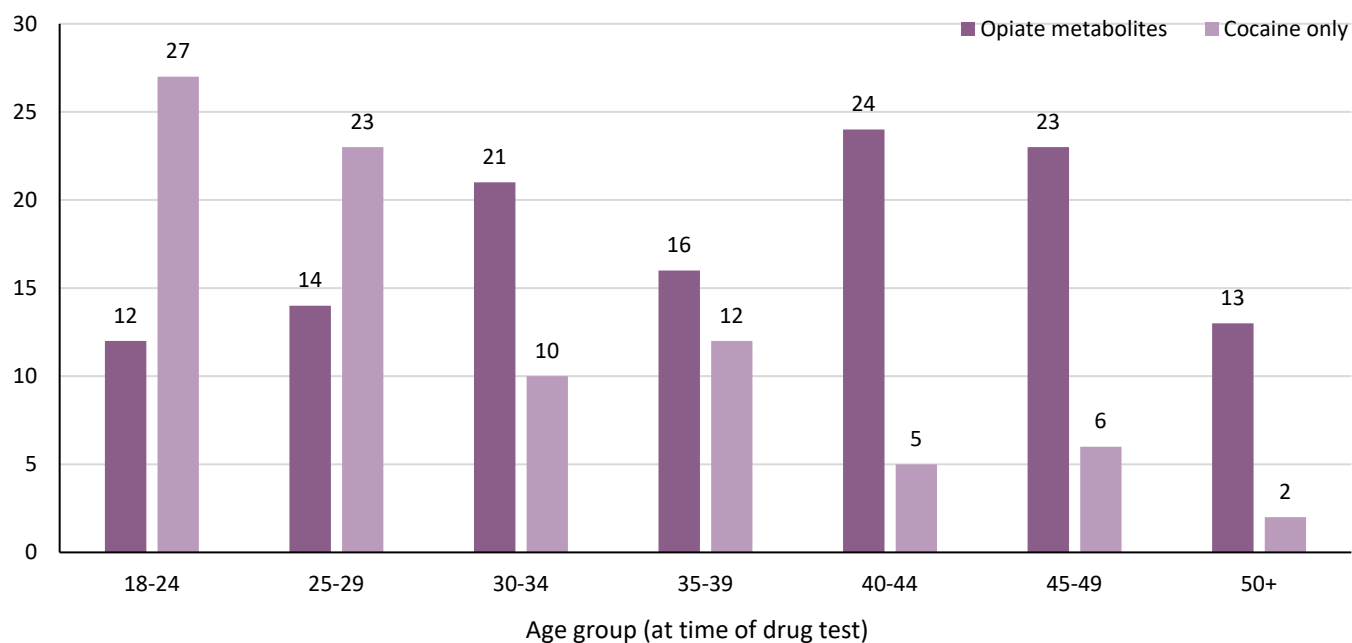
Figure 28 shows the age group of St Helens residents who tested positive across Merseyside in 2017/18. Detainees aged 18-24 years accounted for the largest proportion (n=35; 20%); however this is a decrease from the previous three years (2014/15 = 25%; 2015/16 = 22%; 2016/17 = 26%). When compared to the previous year, the proportion of detainees aged 30-34 years has decreased from 20%, while the proportion of those aged 35-39 years has increased from 10%.

**Figure 28: Positive drug tests by age group, St Helens residents (individuals), 17/18**



Positive drug test results are categorised by age group in Figure 29. Positive tests for opiate metabolites peaked in 40-44 year olds (n=24) and 45-49 year olds (n=23), though notably, there was also a high number of positive tests for opiates in 30-34 year olds (n=21). Cocaine only positive tests peaked in 18-24 year olds (n=27) and 25-29 year olds (n=23).

**Figure 29: Positive drug tests by age group and drug test result, St Helens residents, 17/18**



## OVERVIEW AND TRENDS

Between April 2014 and March 2018, there were 3,039 attempted drug tests on Wirral residents across Merseyside's custody suites, representing 19% of all drug tests on Merseyside residents. The number of attempted drug tests on Wirral residents more than halved between 2014/15 and 2015/16 (60% decrease), followed by a further reduction of 35% in 2016/17, then increased by 29% in 2017/18.

Of the attempted drug tests on Wirral residents during the four-year period, the majority were recorded at Wirral custody suite (n=2,549; 84%), while there were 416 (14%) at Liverpool's custody suites, 55 (2%) at Sefton's custody suites and 19 (1%) at St Helens custody suite (Table 8).

**Table 8: Number of attempted drug tests across Merseyside by custody suite area and year, Wirral residents, 14/15-17/18**

| Custody suite area | 14/15        | 15/16      | 16/17      | 17/18      | Total        |
|--------------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Liverpool          | 128          | 190        | 45         | 53         | 416          |
| Sefton             | 12           | 35         | 4          | 4          | 55           |
| St Helens          | 5            | 9          | 4          | 1          | 19           |
| Wirral             | 1,371        | 379        | 345        | 454        | 2,549        |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>1,516</b> | <b>613</b> | <b>398</b> | <b>512</b> | <b>3,039</b> |

## DRUG TESTING ACTIVITY

Figure 30 shows the drug testing activity for Wirral residents drug tested in Merseyside's custody suites between April 2017 and March 2018. There were 512 attempted drug tests in 2017/18, of which 507 were successful (386 individuals). Of the individuals successfully tested, 296 individuals tested positive. This represents a positive drug test rate of 77%.

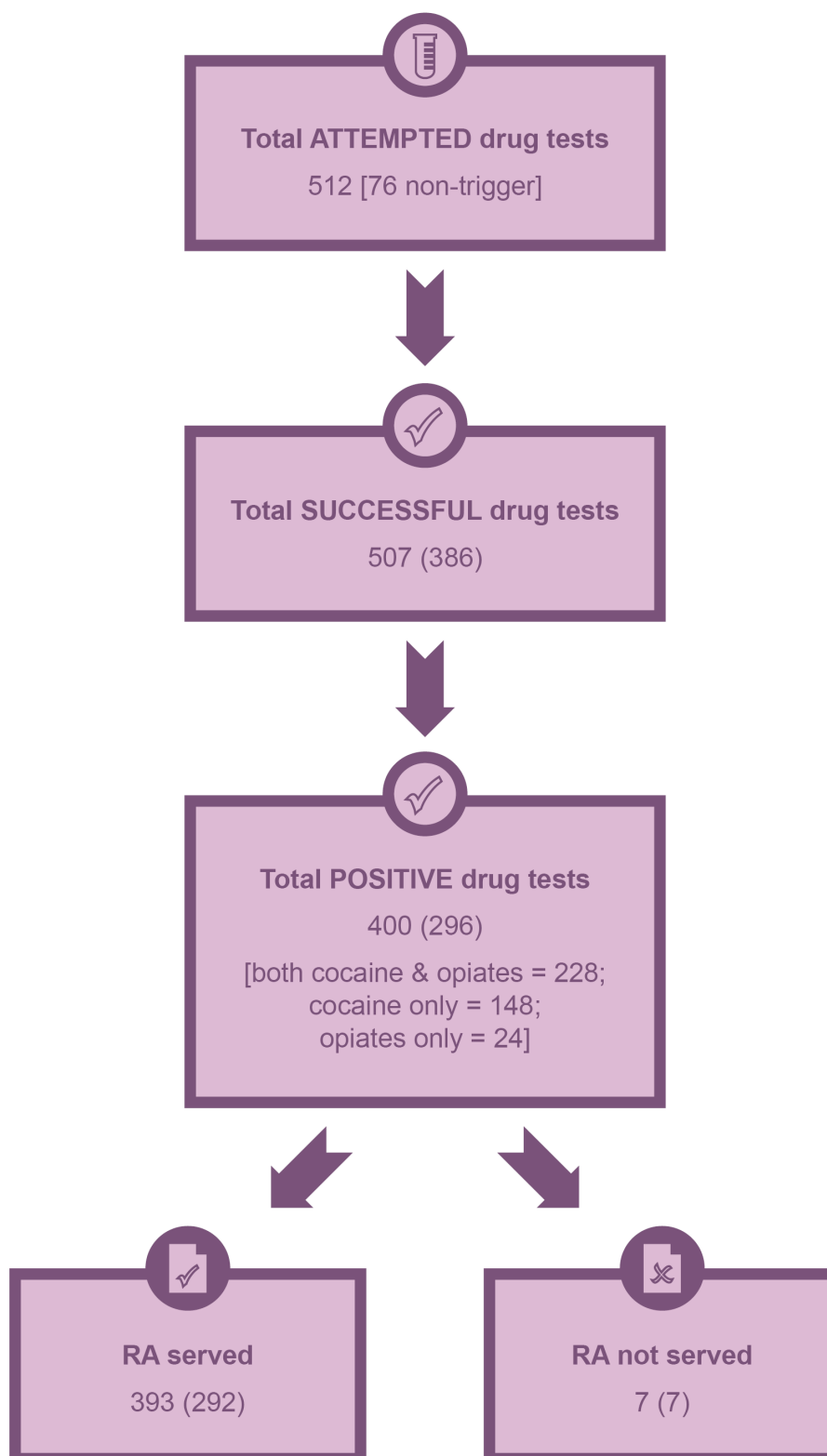
Over three in five (63%) of the total 400 positive drug tests in 2017/18 were for opiate metabolites (both cocaine and opiates = 228 [57%]; opiates only = 24 [6%]), while the remaining positive tests were for cocaine only (n=148; 37%). The proportion of positive tests for opiate metabolites in 2017/18 has decreased when compared to the previous two years (69% in both 2015/16 and 2016/17). There were 393 RAs served to 292 individuals in 2017/18 (Figure 30).



63%

positive tests for opiate metabolites, 17/18

Figure 30: Drug testing activity, Wirral residents, 17/18<sup>12</sup>

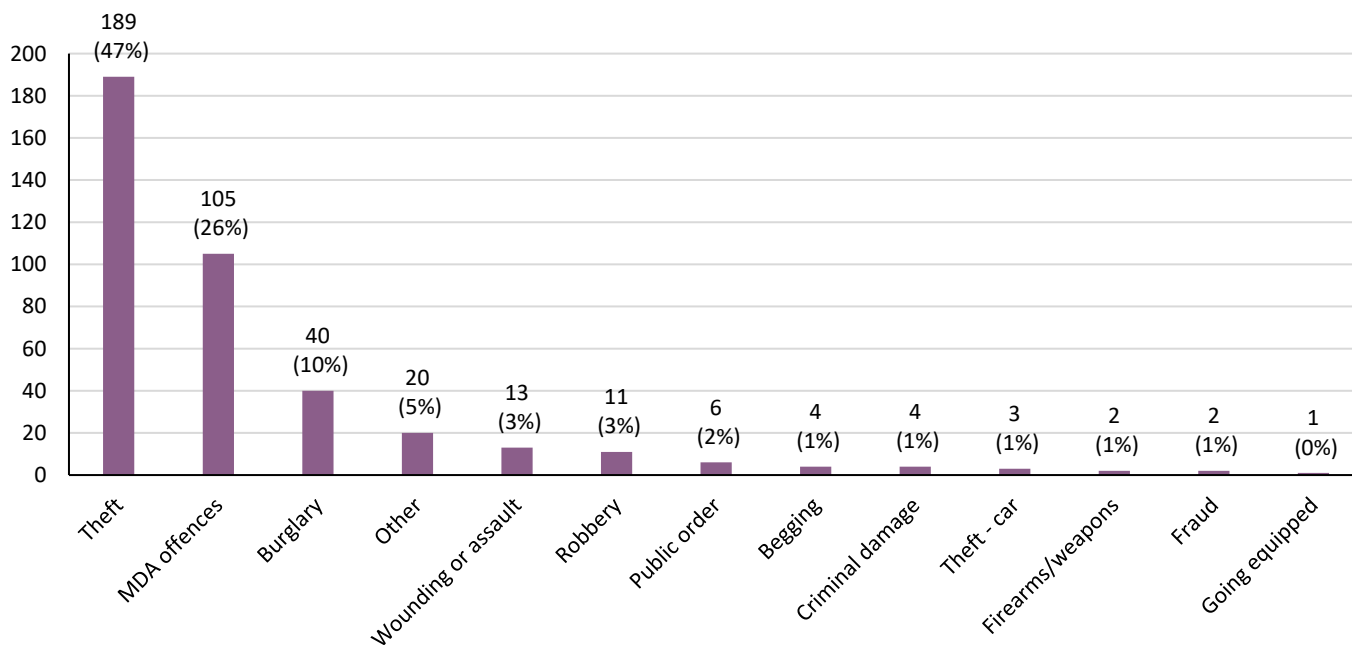


<sup>12</sup> There are individuals with more than one positive drug test that may be included in both 'RA served' and 'RA not served'; therefore the summation of 'RA served' and 'RA not served' does not equal the number of individuals testing positive.

## OFFENCE

Just under half of the positive drug test records in 2017/18 reported theft (n=189; 47%), followed by Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) offences (n=105; 26%; Figure 31). When compared to the previous three years, the proportion of theft was lowest in 2017/18, while the proportion of MDA offences was highest in 2017/18.

**Figure 31: Positive drug tests by offence, Wirral residents, 17/18**



## DEMOGRAPHICS

**Figure 32: Positive drug tests by gender, Wirral residents (individuals), 17/18**



84%

men = 249



16%

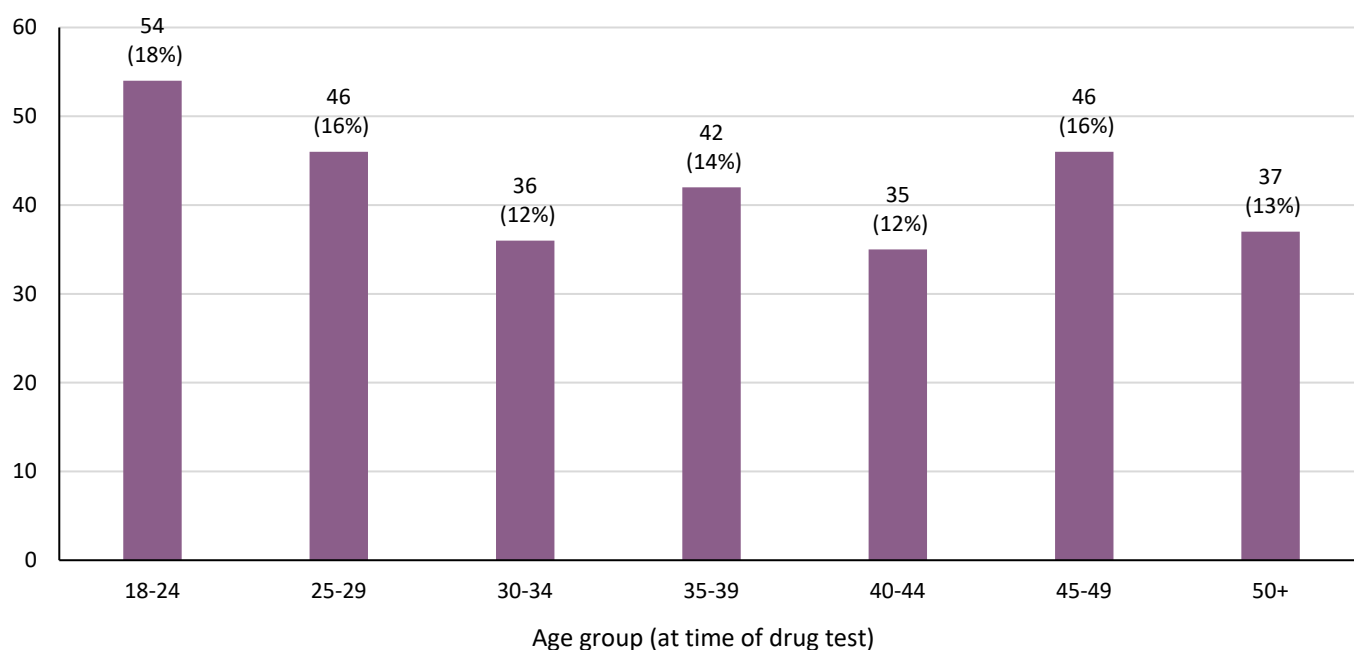
women = 47

Men accounted for over four in five individuals who tested positive between April 2017 and March 2018 (n=249; 84%; Figure 32). This proportion is a slight increase on the previous two years (2015/16 = 82%; 2016/17 = 83%) and the same as 2014/15.

Figure 33 shows the age group of Wirral residents who tested positive across Merseyside in 2017/18. Detainees aged 18-24 years accounted for the largest proportion (n=54; 18%), followed by 25-29 year olds (n=46; 16%) and 45-49 year olds (n=46; 16%). The proportion of 18-24 years has increased from 14% in 2015/16 and 10% in 2016/17, while the proportion of detainees aged 35-39 years and 40-44 years have decreased.

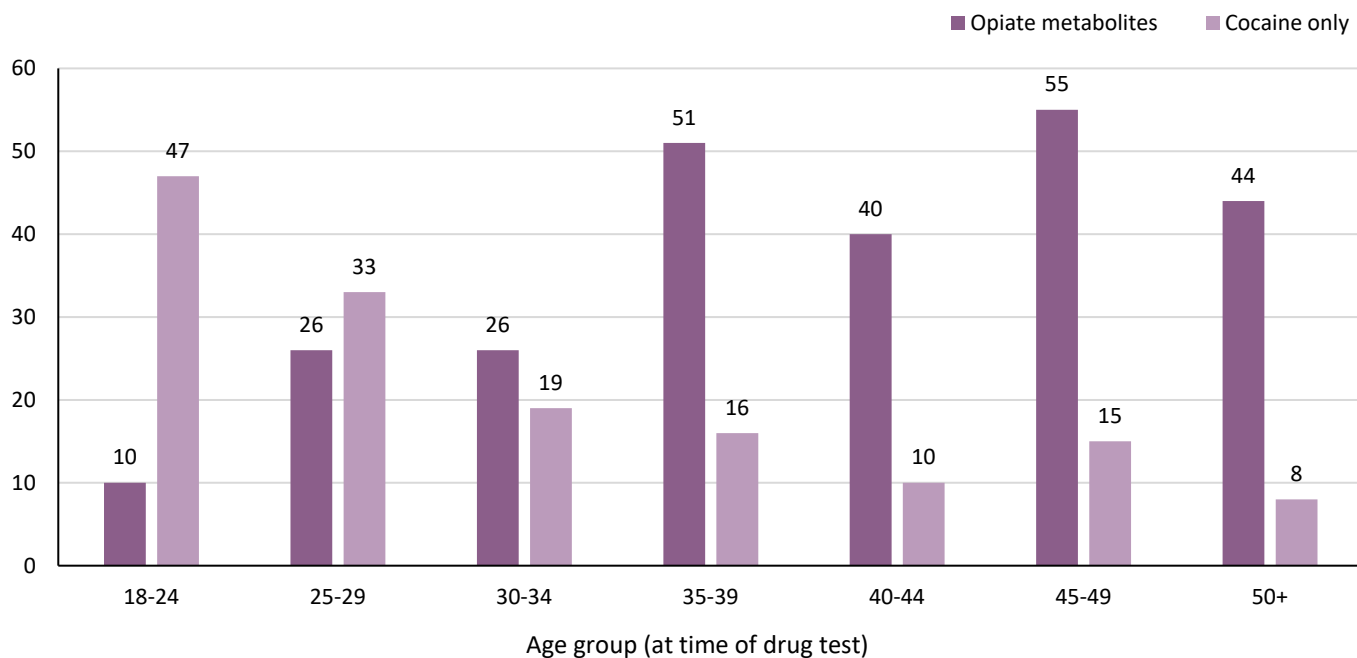


**Figure 33: Positive drug tests by age group, Wirral residents (individuals), 17/18**



Positive drug test results are categorised by age group in Figure 34. Positive tests for opiate metabolites peaked in 35-39 year olds (n=51) and 45-49 year olds (n=55), while positive tests for cocaine only peaked in 18-24 year olds (n=47) and 25-29 year olds (n=33).

**Figure 34: Positive drug tests by age group and drug test result, Wirral residents, 17/18**



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The RA process is the main criminal justice route whereby offenders who use Class A drugs are identified and assessed for treatment. Local police drug testing data are not available through other reporting mechanisms; therefore this resource should be utilised by all stakeholders regularly. All partners in this process should use available data which look at trends over time; for example, total attempted drug tests and positive drug test rates. This information will enable stakeholders to observe any changes and/or trends within their local area and across Merseyside, as well as investigate the reasons for these trends. This should assist in evidencing any process changes that may be needed, in addition to highlighting potential gaps or barriers that may prevent these clients from engaging with treatment services.
- Police drug testing records enable client profiling, including Class A drug use, offending and demographics, and can identify peak times for those who test positive. This information is key in identifying likely presenters through drug testing, and can impact on the resources and services required to cater for the needs of these individuals in an efficient manner in the custody suite, drug treatment service and/or local community. With resources and budgets constantly under scrutiny, this information should be used to ensure these individuals have a successful drug treatment experience. Furthermore, the dataset should be monitored in order to identify any changes in client profiling or drug trends. For example, the proportion of positive tests for cocaine only has increased from 42% in 2015/16 and 2016/17 to 48% in 2017/18.
- This report found that in some instances there were peak times for positive drug tests when there was no drugs worker present in the custody suites. Treatment providers in Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral should monitor and review their coverage time at the custody suites, which could assist in more effective targeting of resources. Furthermore, the treatment providers in Knowsley and St Helens should consider resources and support in the custody suites where their residents are mostly likely to be conveyed following an arrest.
- The number of drug tests across Merseyside has decreased substantially since the implementation of targeted testing. Although the gap between attempted tests and positive tests has narrowed, there is concern with the decline in the number of positive tests. Research suggests individuals who would be appropriate for treatment are not being drug tested under targeted testing; Collins et al. (2017) found more than half of a cohort of individuals who tested positive for Class A drugs and continued to offend were not drug tested at subsequent arrests. Merseyside Police have put in place an action plan to increase the number of drug tests. Progress on numbers and performance should be monitored routinely, with training and feedback to detention officers and custody Sergeants.
- The recording of the detainees' LA of residence is valuable for treatment agencies in identifying individuals tested across Merseyside and is even more critical in the two areas where there is no custody suite. Between April 2014 and March 2018 overall, 18% of attempted drug tests were missing the LA of residence; however only 6% of records in 2017/18 were missing this information. Merseyside Police should continue to ensure the LA is recorded to enable more accurate analysis and a comprehensive understanding of the residents across the five Merseyside areas.
- It is imperative that there are effective and prompt communication channels across the police in the custody suites, the local treatment provider and all other relevant treatment providers across Merseyside. Although organisational operations may differ, an overarching aim of assisting offenders who use drugs towards treatment should be shared by all stakeholders and facilitated as much as possible, with a clear understanding of the RA process. High levels of communication are particularly relevant at times when there is not a drugs worker present in the custody suite and when

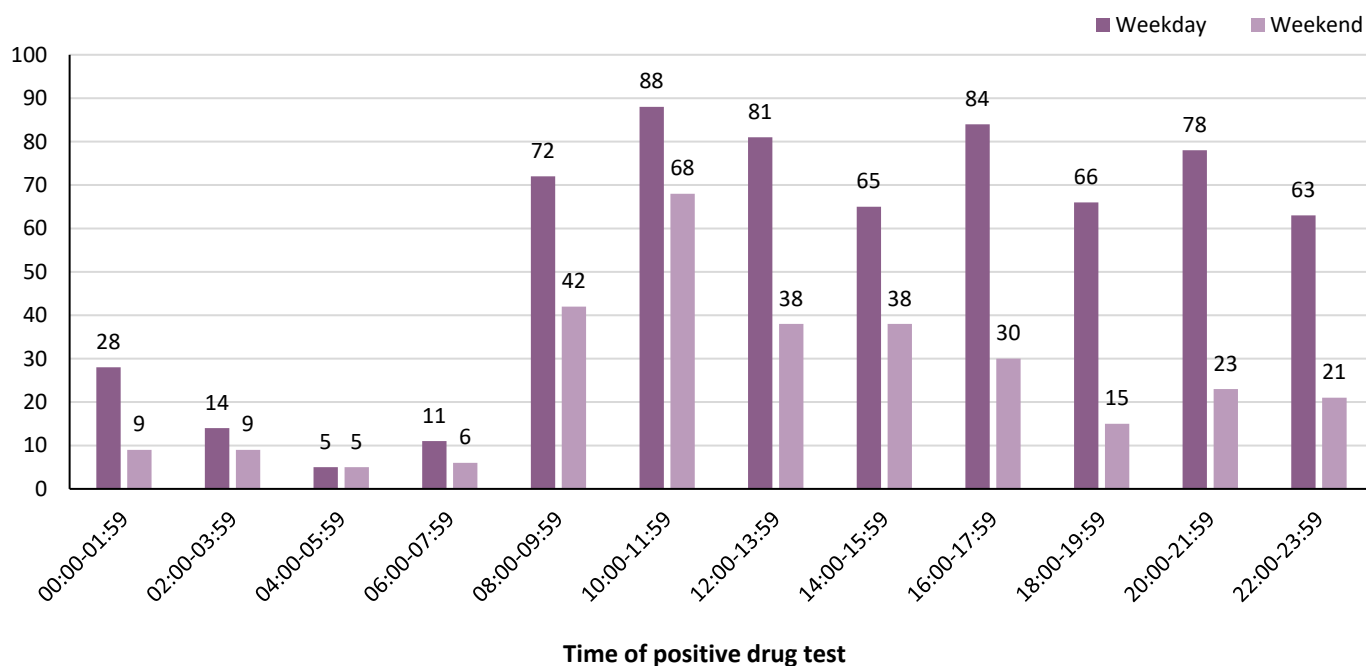
dealing with residents of Knowsley and St Helens where there is no local custody suite. Regular feedback of any issues arising should be encouraged and addressed, as well as adequate training provided where and when required. Merseyside Police intend to set up operational meetings to discuss issues with the RA process, for example missing RA paperwork. These meetings should take place routinely, with attendance from all relevant stakeholders, where possible.

These recommendations are unlikely to be achieved without sustained working between all stakeholders; however their implementation would likely ensure offenders who use drugs are referred to treatment services appropriately and have a successful and positive drug treatment experience.

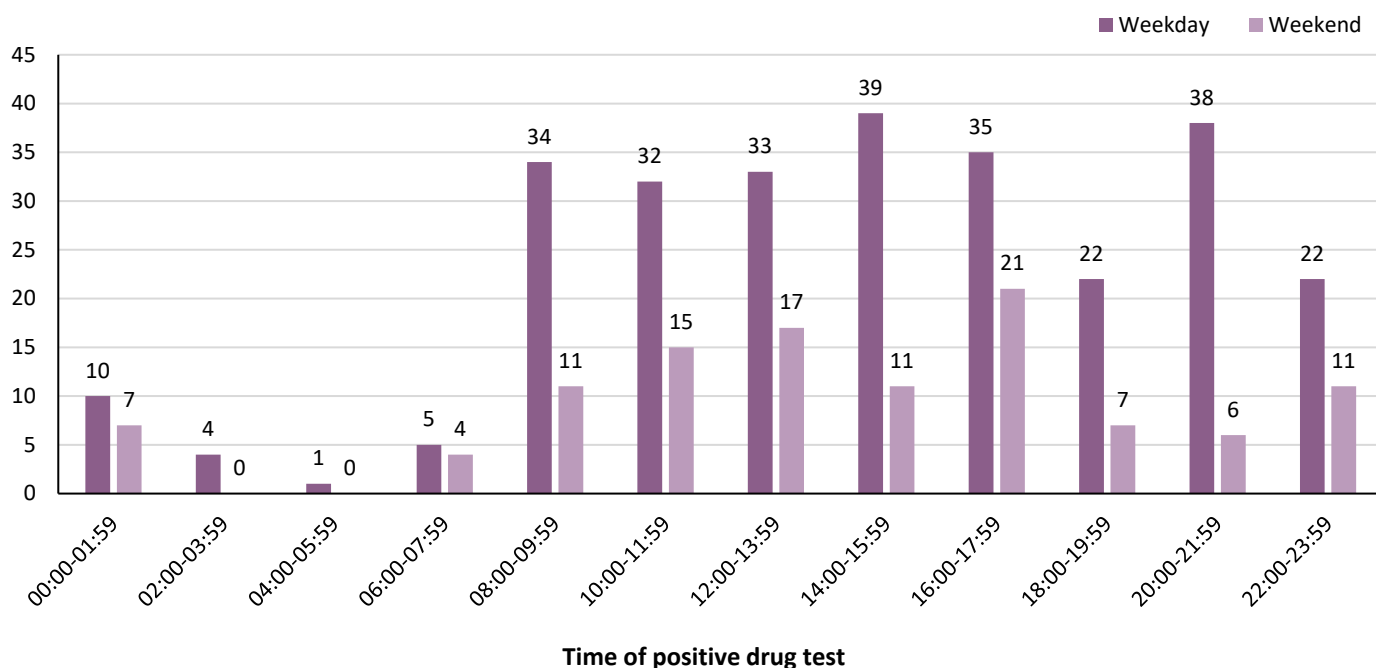
## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

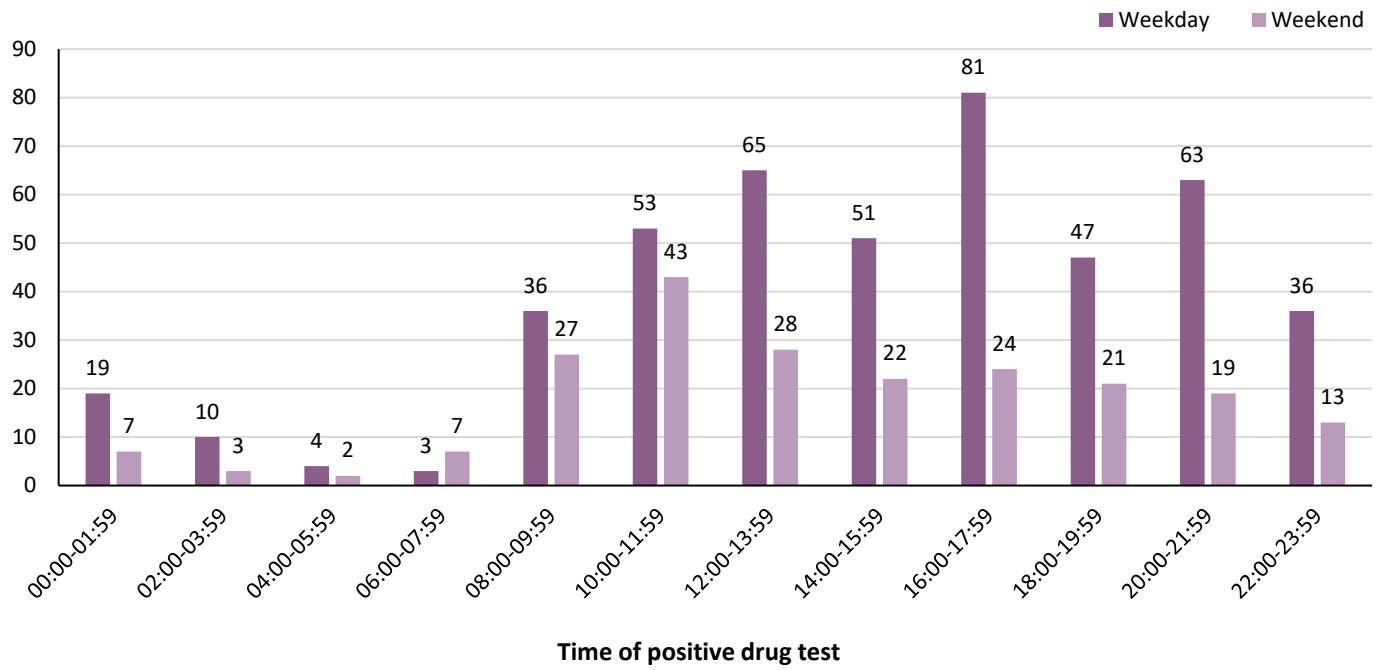
APPENDIX A1: POSITIVE DRUG TESTS AT LIVERPOOL'S CUSTODY SUITES BY TIME OF TEST, WEEKDAY VS. WEEKEND, 17/18



APPENDIX A2: POSITIVE DRUG TESTS AT COPY LANE CUSTODY SUITE BY TIME OF TEST, WEEKDAY VS. WEEKEND, 17/18



APPENDIX A3: POSITIVE DRUG TESTS AT WIRRAL CUSTODY SUITE BY TIME OF TEST, WEEKDAY VS. WEEKEND, 17/18



SUMMARY OF FIGURES BY LA OF RESIDENCE, MERSEYSIDE RESIDENTS, 17/18<sup>13</sup>

|                         | Knowsley  | Liverpool | Sefton    | St Helens | Wirral    | Total              |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|
| <b>Attempted tests</b>  | 179       | 1,287     | 296       | 264       | 512       | <b>2,538</b>       |
| <b>Successful tests</b> | 177       | 1,269     | 293       | 261       | 507       | <b>2,507</b>       |
| <b>Positive tests</b>   | 132       | 945       | 228       | 208       | 400       | <b>1,913</b>       |
| Both cocaine & opiates  | 49 (37%)  | 428 (45%) | 105 (46%) | 108 (52%) | 228 (57%) | <b>918 (48%)</b>   |
| Opiates only            | 7 (5%)    | 51 (5%)   | 14 (6%)   | 15 (7%)   | 24 (6%)   | <b>111 (6%)</b>    |
| Cocaine only            | 76 (58%)  | 466 (49%) | 109 (48%) | 85 (41%)  | 148 (37%) | <b>884 (46%)</b>   |
| <b>Offence</b>          |           |           |           |           |           |                    |
| Burglary                | 8 (6%)    | 78 (8%)   | 22 (10%)  | 28 (13%)  | 40 (10%)  | <b>176 (9%)</b>    |
| MDA offences            | 49 (37%)  | 315 (33%) | 70 (31%)  | 54 (26%)  | 105 (26%) | <b>593 (31%)</b>   |
| Theft                   | 35 (27%)  | 316 (33%) | 84 (37%)  | 82 (39%)  | 189 (47%) | <b>706 (37%)</b>   |
| Other                   | 21 (16%)  | 71 (8%)   | 26 (11%)  | 19 (9%)   | 20 (5%)   | <b>157 (8%)</b>    |
| <b>Gender</b>           |           |           |           |           |           |                    |
| Men                     | 102 (84%) | 639 (81%) | 161 (80%) | 140 (81%) | 249 (84%) | <b>1,291 (67%)</b> |
| Women                   | 20 (16%)  | 148 (19%) | 41 (20%)  | 32 (19%)  | 47 (16%)  | <b>288 (15%)</b>   |
| <b>Age group</b>        |           |           |           |           |           |                    |
| 18-24                   | 25 (20%)  | 110 (14%) | 34 (17%)  | 35 (20%)  | 54 (18%)  | <b>258 (13%)</b>   |
| 25-29                   | 23 (19%)  | 141 (18%) | 34 (17%)  | 28 (16%)  | 46 (16%)  | <b>272 (14%)</b>   |
| 30-34                   | 14 (11%)  | 119 (15%) | 40 (20%)  | 24 (14%)  | 36 (12%)  | <b>233 (12%)</b>   |
| 35-39                   | 18 (15%)  | 129 (16%) | 28 (14%)  | 24 (14%)  | 42 (14%)  | <b>241 (13%)</b>   |
| 40-44                   | 14 (11%)  | 129 (16%) | 23 (11%)  | 25 (15%)  | 35 (12%)  | <b>226 (12%)</b>   |
| 45-49                   | 16 (13%)  | 95 (12%)  | 25 (12%)  | 22 (13%)  | 46 (16%)  | <b>204 (11%)</b>   |
| 50+                     | 12 (10%)  | 64 (8%)   | 18 (9%)   | 14 (8%)   | 37 (13%)  | <b>145 (8%)</b>    |

<sup>13</sup> Figures for offence, gender and age group are for positive drug tests only; figures for gender and age group are for individuals.

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