

What is driving serious violence: drugs

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**“The marketplace is more volatile and violent
than it has ever been”**

A report by Crest Advisory

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About and acknowledgements

This programme of work

Funded by The Dawes Trust, Crest is undertaking a two-year programme of work over 2019/20 designed to investigate the drivers of serious violence. This has been informed by priorities set by the Home Office, and will conclude with a suite of practical policy recommendations for government and policing leaders.

About Crest

We are crime and justice specialists - equal parts research, strategy and communication. From police forces to public inquiries, from central government departments to tech companies we have helped all these organisations (and more) have their own part to play in building a safer, more secure society.

Acknowledgements

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- the inner London borough and Basic Command Unit, and all practitioners based there who agreed to be interviewed anonymously
- police and law enforcement officers and analysts who agreed to be interviewed anonymously

As well as other organisations who shared their insights more generally:

- Khulisa
- The Metropolitan Police Force
- The National Crime Agency

Executive Summary (1/2): key findings

This is the second in a series of reports investigating the drivers of serious violence in England and Wales in recent years. Building on [the first publication](#), this report seeks to examine the role of **drug markets as a driver**, and draws on a range of existing (largely published) data and literature, as well as new research carried out for this report, including a ‘deep dive’ in an inner London borough and semi-structured interviews with law enforcement and policing experts across the country (see Annex for full methodology.) This research has found that:

- **The supply of Class A drugs has increased:** the wholesale and retail purity of powder cocaine, crack and heroin has increased in recent years to historically high levels, at the same time as prices have fallen. This forms part of an international trend, which includes the growth in cocaine production in South America.
- **This appears to have impacted demand for drugs in the UK:** there is evidence that powder and crack cocaine use – the latter primarily in combination with heroin – have increased in recent years, as has the use of other drugs such as ecstasy and ketamine.
- **Drug market dynamics have changed:** increased cocaine supply seems to have driven retail market expansion, notably (but not exclusively) in the form of ‘county lines’, controlled out of metropolitan hubs, dealing crack and heroin in provincial towns. A small, but increasing part of the market, is conducted online or through the dark web, which may be squeezing the profits of street-based gangs.
- **There is evidence that these dynamics are impacting the nature of crime within the UK:** the data shows a correlation between the growing availability of harmful drugs and the rise in serious violence, including a notable increase in the number of drug-related homicides. At the same time, the profile of those involved has changed: those convicted of class A drugs supply are getting younger.
- **Public services - both policing and health - have struggled to respond to these trends:** the UK is seizing less Class A drugs than its neighbours and prosecuting fewer drug dealers. At the same time, a growing number of problematic drug users are not in any treatment.
- **There remain wide gaps in knowledge:** significant gaps exist in the intelligence picture, most notably at middle market level and where drug markets cross police and law enforcement boundaries or remits. Partly this is a function of police cuts (fewer police analysts), but also relates to a failure across government to get to grips with changes in drug markets.

Executive summary (2/2): what does this mean for government?

Intelligence: despite clear evidence of a relationship between drug markets and violence, too little is known about the nature and scope of those markets. The Home Office should:

- work collaboratively with universities and civil society to develop a comprehensive research programme to explore the nature of drug markets (both internationally and within the UK) and the relationship to violence
- work with PCCs to ensure that a proportion of the 20k uplift in officers is kept back for hiring police analysts, to strengthen local intelligence of drug markets

Prevention: in order to reduce the demand for drugs, early intervention is key, but has not been systematic enough. Home Office and Department of Health should commit to:

- increasing the proportion of problematic users (primarily crack and heroin) receiving drug treatment
- a new national network of drug support workers in schools
- piloting a new and expanded Drug Intervention Programme to address the underlying causes of those whose criminality is driven by drug misuse

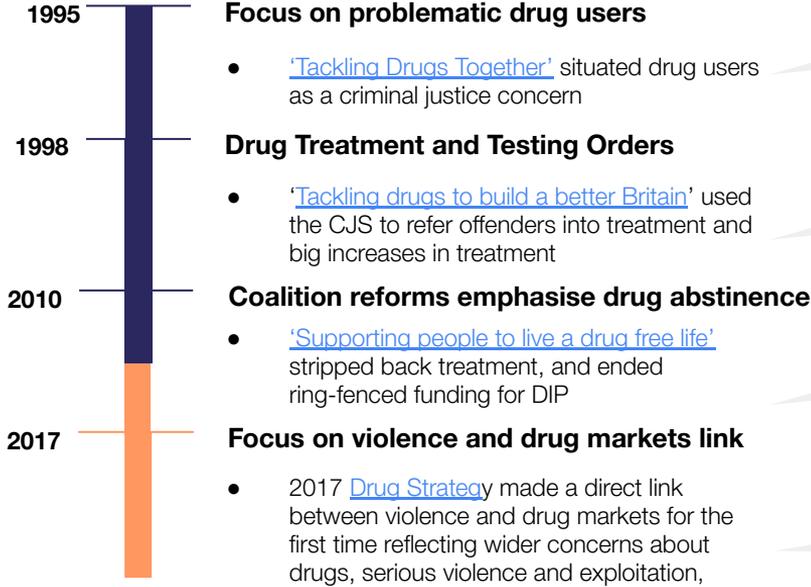
Enforcement: the Home Office (and PCCs) should support the police to reprioritise enforcement activity around the goal of disrupting the supply of harmful drugs into the UK, through:

- re-focusing the Strategic Priorities of the National Crime Agency (set by the home secretary) so that they explicitly include the disruption of harmful drugs markets, such as heroin and crack cocaine;
- ensuring there is a targeted drugs unit within every force in England and Wales, to strengthen local intelligence around shifting drugs markets
- encouraging the police to work with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to investigate low levels of detection and prosecution of drug traffickers and dealers
- making better use of existing civil orders and injunctions to limit county lines activity (including through restrictions on travel)

1. Evolution of drugs policy

For most of the last 20 years, drugs policy has been focused on the goal of reducing volume acquisitive crime - only recently has government begun to prioritise the relationship between drug markets and violence

Evolution of drugs policy: for most of the past 20 years, drugs has been treated as a criminal justice issue, but with a focus on acquisitive crime, rather than violence



The Conservative government situated drugs as a criminal justice concern and placed a particular emphasis on problem drug users as the cause of much volume acquisitive crime

New Labour government introduced Drug Treatment and Testing Orders in 1998 as a criminal justice intervention, with a particular emphasis on methadone prescription for dependent heroin users

By 2008 policy had shifted towards abstinence and this was carried through into the early years of the Coalition government, with recovery emphasised in the [2010 Drugs Strategy](#)

Explicit acknowledgement that a ‘significant proportion’ of organised crime groups involved in drugs supply are ‘involved in violent crime’

Policy relating to violence has passed through various stages of focusing on guns, knives, youth violence, gangs and latterly exploitation.

Supply-side enforcement was toughened during the mid-2000s, but more recently, has had to compete with other policy priorities

The Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) was set up in 2006, extending the government's 'tough on crime' approach to organised as well as volume crime

Priorities: SOCA aimed to make organised crime less profitable, and more likely to end in prosecution. It prioritised class A drugs and immigration offences

Impact (on supply-side enforcement): The average purity of seized cocaine more than halved between 2005 and 2009, which SOCA linked to its success in disrupting supply chains. The number of Class A drug seizures went up in 2006/07 and 2007/08, though it went down after this

Performance measures: SOCA recorded and analysed forensic data on seized drugs, using this information to measure changes in purity-adjusted price (and so its impact on supply)

The National Crime Agency (NCA) was set up in 2013, to build on and go beyond the priorities of SOCA, with its aim 'to make the UK a hostile environment for serious and organised criminality'

Priorities: The NCA focuses on tackling organised crime, economic crime and child exploitation, and policing the border

Impact (on supply-side enforcement): While the number of Class A drug seizures remains lower than in the early 2000s, the quantity of cocaine seized has gone up significantly since the creation of the NCA - especially since 2017. It is unclear whether this is a function of increased international supply, or of greater effectiveness re interdiction, or indeed a combination of the two

Performance measures: The NCA records and assesses the impact of every attempt to disrupt serious and organised crime, and these assessments are reviewed by an independent panel. The Home Secretary reviews the NCA's understanding of threats, and its effectiveness in responding to them, each quarter

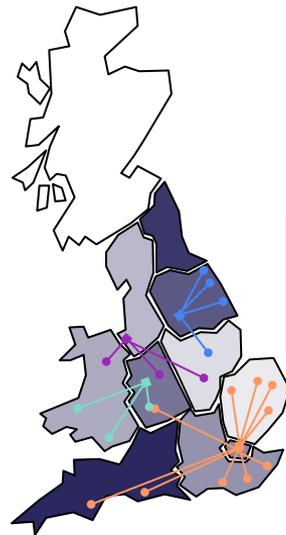
More recently, the emergence of 'county lines' as an issue of national concern has reignited interest in the role of drug markets in driving violence amongst children

The NCA defines 'county lines' as "relat[ing] to the supply of Class A drugs (primarily crack cocaine and heroin) from an urban hub into rural and coastal towns or county locations' and refers specifically to 'gang members' as being involved."¹

The 'line' refers not to geographical boundaries (in the US sense) but to branded deal (phone) lines (e.g. the 'Billy Line') which may be transferred between different phone numbers or other platforms, for example following police operations to arrest dealers and seize phones, and to which multiple phone numbers may be associated.

A characteristic of 'county lines' has been the exploitation of children and youths from urban areas, who are transported to distant locations to sell drugs and collect money, where vulnerable adults may also be used, for example to provide accommodation (notably in the form of 'cuckooing')² or to also conduct deals.

The phenomenon critically challenges the established understanding of drug markets in that the export of illicit drugs from big cities to one or more provincial towns blurs the boundaries between national wholesale and local street dealing.²



The National County Lines Coordinating Centre (NCLCC) was set up in 2018 to enhance the Policing response to county lines, and is jointly led by the National Crime Agency (NCA) and National Police Chief's Council (NPCC)

The Rescue and Response project was set up in London in 2018 to provide support to those involved in county lines as well as enhance understanding of the scale and nature of the problem

'County lines' is not a wholly new phenomenon. The number of 'county lines' known to policing and law enforcement has increased greatly in recent years, but organised crime groups (OCGs) in UK cities have long-exported drugs to provincial towns. This is explored in the next chapter.

¹NCA (2018) [National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime 2018](#). ²For a very recent discussion, see J. Spicer, L. Moyle and R. Coomber (2019) ['The variable and evolving nature of 'cuckooing' as a form of criminal exploitation in street level drug markets'](#); National Crime Agency (2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019), County Lines Drug Supply, Vulnerability and Harm; Rescue and Response County Lines project, 2019, Strategic Assessment

2. The link between illicit drug markets and violence

There is a well established body of evidence that illicit drug markets can fuel violence

Classically, there are three ways in which drugs are thought to fuel violence

Psychopharmacological (committed while under the influence): some substances (e.g. crack cocaine) have the capacity to change the functions of the brain, for example, by increasing aggression and reducing inhibition

Economic-compulsive effects (to gain money or goods to obtain drugs): drug users are compelled to commit robberies in order to service drug addiction and/ or pay debts incurred from their addiction

Systemic effects (part of the operation of the market): illicit markets are inherently violent. Traffickers, dealers and users regulate their own affairs and have no recourse to legal systems to do this. Growing demand for drugs can fuel violent competition between gangs.

Research on US police data from the 1980s points to a close relationship between the crack epidemic and local homicides

- Between 1983 and 1994, city-level homicide data from the US shows that rapid and abrupt rises in juvenile crack arrests were followed by equally rapid and abrupt rises in juvenile homicides
- This violence is seemingly inherent to drug markets. A case study of New York City Police Department data for 1988, a peak year for violence, concluded that three quarters of drug-related homicides were 'systemic'. The proportion was even higher for crack (85%) and cocaine (92%)

An important feature of the drug-violence relationships is that it is shaped by the local characteristics of illicit markets, including the type of drugs, crimes committed and demography of those involved. A 2015 study found that Plymouth's drug market was dominated by users who made little profit, and gave rise to low levels of violence. In contrast, the market in Southend-on-Sea - where non-users travelled from London to sell drugs - was associated with moderate violence. Neither was comparable to New York in the 1980s

Previous analysis of UK gangs suggests drug markets are inherently violent

Academic literature suggests that the illicit status of drugs encourages market violence for three principal reasons:

Lack of recourse to the law: grievances in illicit drug markets cannot be settled through legal channels, meaning violence is often a necessary tool

Drug dealers are often themselves targets for crime: the drug trade involves physical handling of valuable commodities and cash, exposing those involved to risks of criminal predation, including robbery

Violence (or the threat of) is required to ensure compliance: those involved in the drugs trade must have a reputation as people 'not to be messed with' to mitigate risks of debt default, attacks and/ or detection by the police

It is important to note that violence is not a guaranteed feature: some drug markets (e.g. those traded on the dark web) feature relatively little violence.

Studies in the UK have pointed at the different ways serious violence links to drug markets

- Previous research identified that illicit drug markets were closely related to firearms offences in the UK. Hales (2006) described the growth of a 'complex criminal gun culture' linked to UK drug markets, with firearms used for a range of purposes (offensive, defensive, symbolic) rather than just as offensive weapons.
- Hales noted that most violence was taking place at the street/retail level: here relationships between buyers and sellers appear to be more numerous and ephemeral, placing a greater emphasis on trust.
- This has implications for UK gang cultures, which are increasingly oriented around drug markets.
- A 2018 study of gangs in Waltham Forest found a shift away from postcode loyalty, and towards profit from illicit drugs. Gang members now defended a local drug market rather than an estate, with violence used to secure a position in the market rather than to claim status.

This is not just a UK phenomenon: the link between drugs markets and violence has been evidenced internationally

The wide range of harms of the illicit market have been grouped by the EMCCDA and Europol into four categories:

Key impacts and consequences of drugs

Wider criminal activity and terrorism

- Terrorism
- Human trafficking, exploitation and migrant smuggling
- Trade in other illicit goods

Societal impact

- Drug-related homicides (see p.35)
- Gangs, violence and intimidation
- Environmental damage

Impact on the legal economy

- Money laundering
- Impact on businesses

Corruption and strain on institutions

- Corruption of public officials
- Government expenditure
- Impact on development and governance

Case study: drug-related violence in the Netherlands

Over the past decade, particularly since 2014, the Netherlands has increasingly been facing the problem of criminal organisations involved in drug production and trafficking ‘undermining’ the legal economy. The Dutch police have reported a rise in corruption, blackmail and the systematic infiltration of criminal phenomena into urban life.²

Notable levels of violence have been reported. In 2017, there were 28 drug-related murders, whilst the once-a-week spate of explosive attacks and gun and night violence in Amsterdam in 2018 was blamed by authorities on organised crime posturing for profit off the drugs trade.³

The growing threat of European drug market dynamics: the latest (2019) EMCCDA EU report identifies that whilst drug-related violence and corruption have historically been commonly associated with market dynamics outside of Europe, the European drug market is now becoming a driver for increasing violence and corrupt practices within the EU.

Variants of the county lines phenomenon have also been identified in other European countries: in 2018 the EMCDDA and Europol identified evidence of groups based in major cities, expanding their selling operations to provincial towns and almost exclusively supplying heroin and crack cocaine in Belgium, Estonia, Greece, Ireland and Sweden.

3. Evidence that drugs are a factor in the recent spike in violence

Summary: it is notable that the rise in serious violence across much of Western Europe correlates with an increase in the supply of drugs with a known link to violence

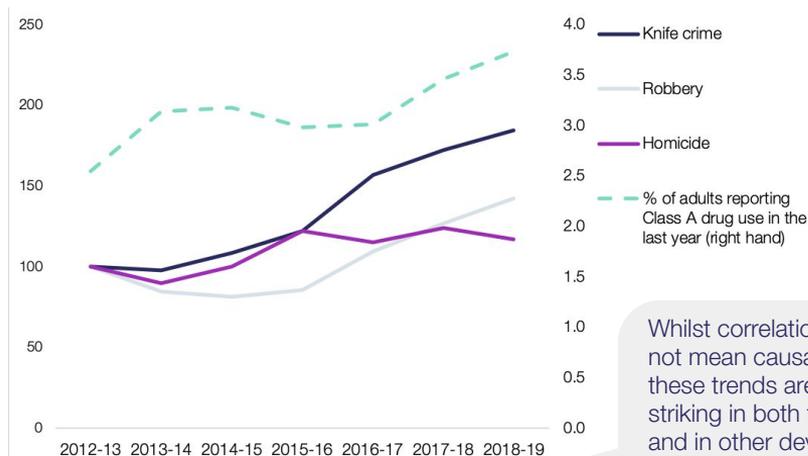
Serious violence has been increasing across much of Western Europe and other developed nations from 2013/14

Change (%) in number of selected serious violence offences, by country, 2010-14 and 2014-18^{1**}

	Homicide		Robbery	
	2010-14	2014-18	2010-14	2014-18
England and Wales	-12%	+33%	-23%	+33%
Australia	+4%	-6%	-32%	+2%
Canada	-6%	+27%*	-31%	+9%
Denmark	+23%	-14%	-32%	-21%
France	+1%	+4%	-6%	-24%
Germany	-2%	+13%	-6%	-19%
Italy	-10%	-23%*	+16%	-22%*
Netherlands	-15%	+7%*	-52%	-14%
Scotland	0%	-8%	-40%	+4%
Spain	-19%	-5%*	-16%	-13%*
Sweden	-4%	+42%	-9%	+3%
US	-4%	+22%*	-13%	-1%*

Over the same period, there is evidence of major shifts in the markets for class A drugs

Indexed trends (100=2012/13) in selected police recorded crimes, England and Wales (left hand axis), years ending September 2013-19 and proportion of UK adults who self reported Class A drug use in the last year (right hand axis), years ending March²



Whilst correlation does not mean causation, these trends are striking in both the UK and in other developed nations. The following chapter explores these in more detail.

Sources: ¹(Domestic) ONS - Appendix tables: homicide in England and Wales (Table 1), (International) See Annex. *For countries marked with an asterisk, percentage changes have been calculated from 2014 to 2017, due to 2018 data not yet being published.

**For a full breakdown of figures and methodology used to calculate figures for each country (including the list of offences included), please see Annex. Figures for Australia relate to the number of victims, rather than the number of individual offences.

²Home Office, knife crime open data March 2009 onwards (figures exclude Greater Manchester Police due to issues with force data and City of London Police) and Home Office (2019). [Drug misuse: findings from the 2018 to 2019 CSEW: data tables](#)

Note on data sources in this chapter: the hidden and criminal nature of the drug market makes it challenging for research and monitoring, and inevitably there are knowledge and data gaps in many areas, so measures must be triangulated from a range of often contradictory sources

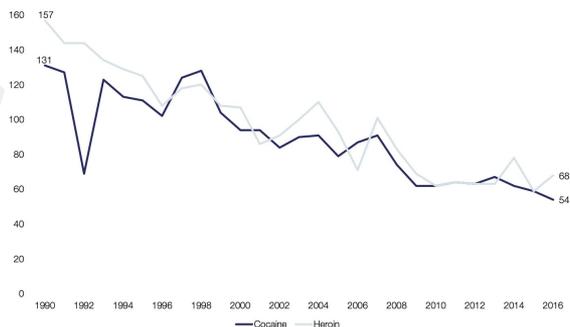
Source	Description	Limitations & Mitigations
Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)	A face-to-face survey which includes questions on self-reported drugs use. It has used the same methodology since 1981.	As a household sample, some groups of users, particularly some marginalised or harder to reach groups, may be under-represented in these surveys. Based on self-reporting, which means there may also be under-reporting or under-estimating of use.
Health data	Health data provide a different insight to the CSEW being largely based on those presenting for treatment, indicating the number of such people who use illicit substances. The main sources used are individuals presenting for treatment and the number admitted to hospital for drug-related issues.	These data shine a light on long term problematic use and on crises derived from substance abuse. However, thresholds for obtaining treatment have changed over time and some users will never be referred or present themselves. Public Health England has reported that on average, drug treatment is only delivered to 50% of the population who would need it. Therefore, these are useful datasets to measure trends and scales of harm but not a realistic reflection of need.
Deaths data	The definition of a drug misuse death is one where either the underlying cause is drug abuse or drug dependence, or the underlying cause is drug poisoning. The figures presented show deaths registered each year, rather than deaths occurring each year.	More than half of all drug poisoning deaths involve more than one drug and sometimes also alcohol, and it is often not possible to tell which substance was primarily responsible for the death. Because of the length of time it can take for an inquest to be completed, around half of drug-related deaths registered in 2018 will have occurred in earlier years, and many deaths that occurred in 2018 will not yet be included in the figures.
Criminal justice data	Police recorded crime indicates the number of drug-related offences recorded, whilst other indicators like arrests demonstrate Police activity. Courts data such as convictions for drug offences.	These data can be helpful to measure how much demand drug-related offending has on the system as a whole, but given the nature of drug consumption, users are unlikely to report their own use as a crime. Therefore, measures are more reflective of proactive policing activity as well as strategic prioritisation across the criminal justice system, rather than a measure of chancing or actual drug-related demand.
International measures (EMCDA, UNODC)	<p>The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction collects data annually from 28 EU member states and Norway and Turkey, using standardised reporting tools based on voluntary reporting of drug use. They also conduct regular wastewater epidemiological surveys measuring certain drugs' residue including cocaine and methadone.</p> <p>The United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crime publishes an annual 'World Drug Report' on the trends in drug use and supply across the world.</p>	<p>The standardisation of reporting supports meaningful comparison between drug consumption rates between comparable countries. However, numbers are based on surveys and voluntary reporting so suffer from similar limitations to national surveys: hard to reach and vulnerable populations are less likely to be included. Wastewater residue measurement provides an accurate scale of actual selected drug use within a geographical location. This measure does not address all drug types or distinguish between patterns of use.</p> <p>The UNODC report and data sources give a dynamic understanding of the international trends and markets. However, data is not collected regularly and suffers from many gaps due to the illicit nature of drug production and consumption.</p>

3.1 Changes in the supply of drugs

Major shifts have taken place in UK drug markets since 2014: key indicators suggest supply of cocaine and heroin (the drugs most associated with supply-side violence) is up, evidenced by rising purity and falling costs

While the price of cocaine and heroin is decreasing, the purity of both drugs has spiked rapidly since 2011

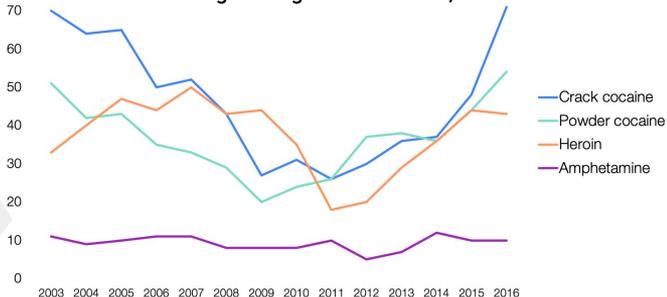
Standardised UK street price (£) of cocaine and heroin per gram, 1990 - 2016



Global production of cocaine in particular has increased, with availability of the drug across Europe “at an all-time high” EMCDDA (2019)

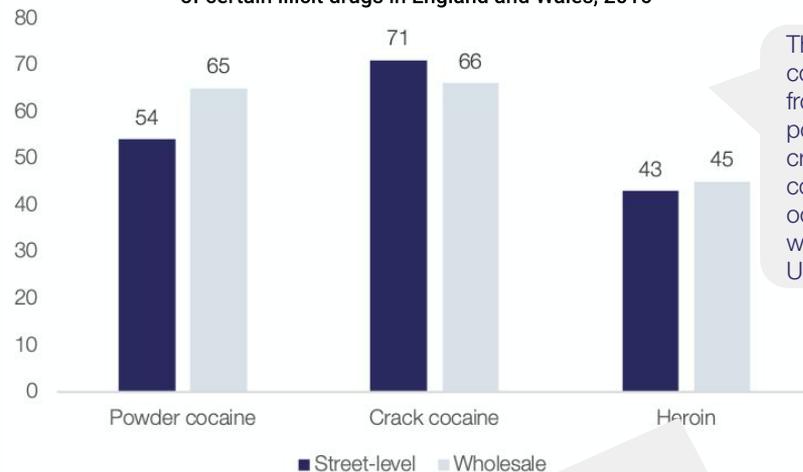
The NCA (2019) claim that increased controls on cutting agents may partially account for rising purity, though this appears unlikely given falling costs

Mean purity/potency (%) of small quantity drug seizures of certain illicit drugs in England and Wales, 2003 - 2016



There is very little adulteration between wholesale and retail levels (2016 figures), indicating buoyant supply levels

Weighted mean purity (%) of street-level and wholesale drug seizures of certain illicit drugs in England and Wales, 2016



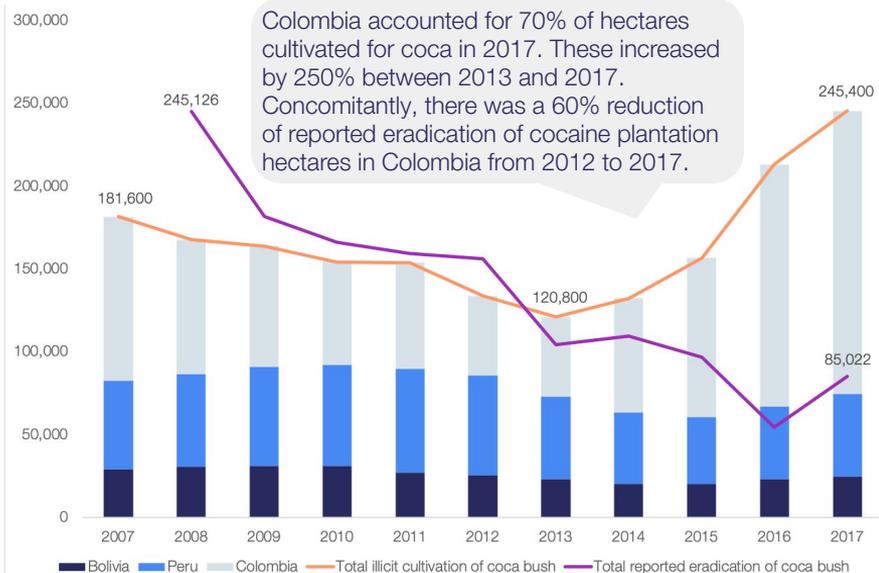
The conversion from powder to crack cocaine occurs within the UK

Purity of powdered drugs may be affected by the size and nature of the supply chain, of which many forms are present in the UK. Short supply chains, consisting, for example, of importer to retail supplier to user, can facilitate the sale of high quality products, as control remains entirely with those importing and dealing, and who will have direct sight of any cutting agents used to bulk the products. PHE (2017)

Changes in UK supply reflect global shifts in drug markets, in particular a global surge of cocaine production and a worldwide increase in drug users

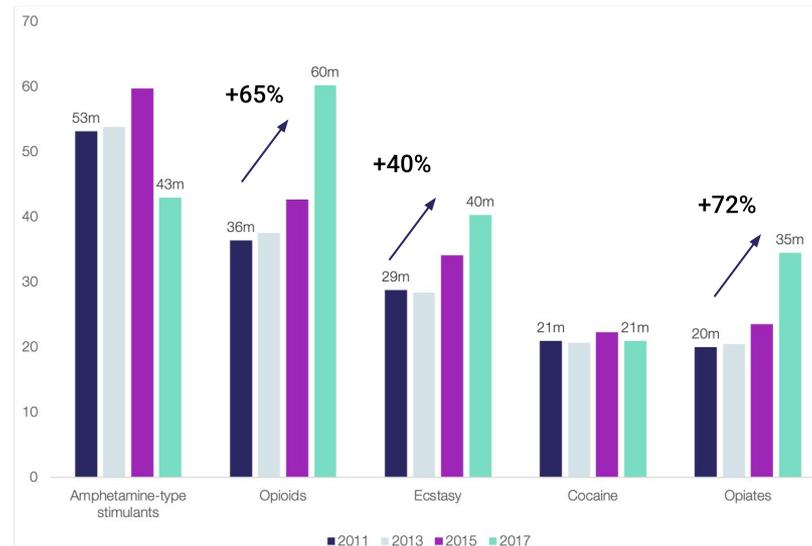
There has been a 35% global production surge of cocaine since 2013 driven by an increase in Colombia, the main source country

Global illicit cultivation of coca bush versus the reported eradication of coca bush in hectares (2007-2017)



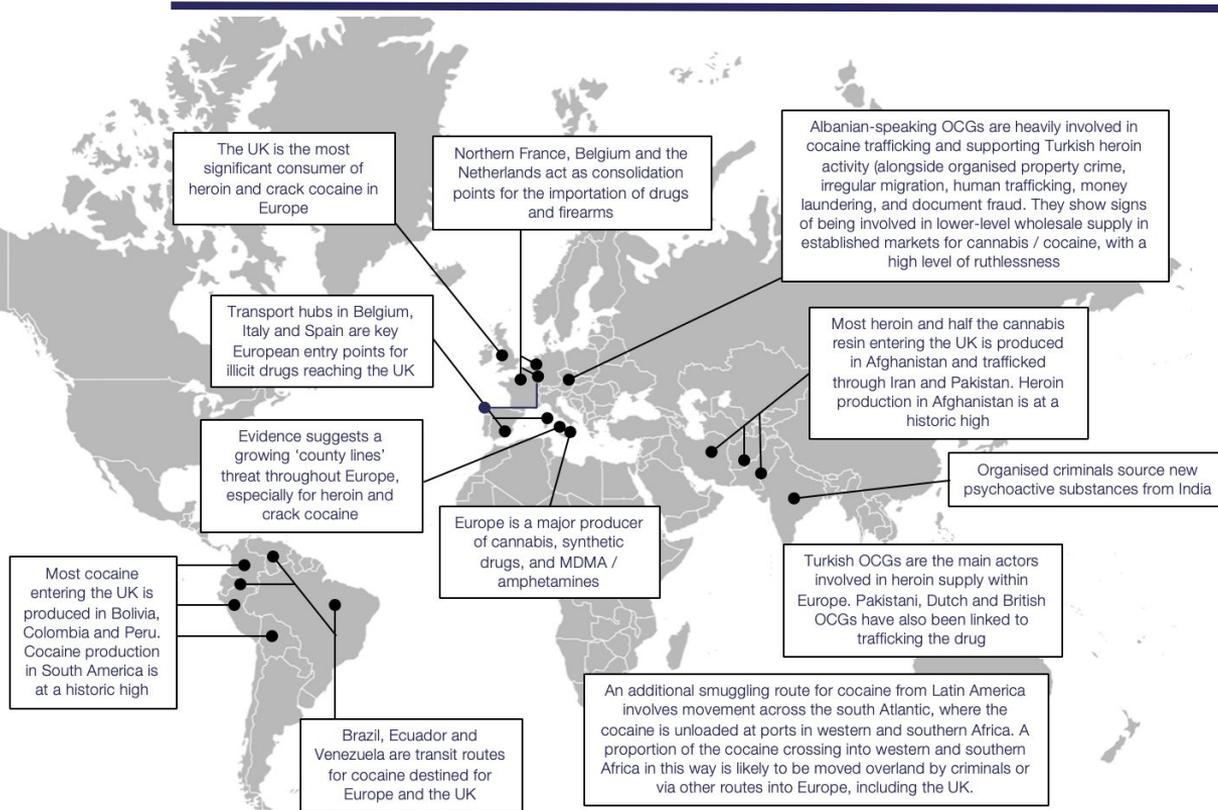
The number of illicit drug users worldwide has increased from 2011 to 2017, especially opioid, ecstasy and opiate users

Estimated number of illicit drug users worldwide from 2011 to 2017, by drug (in millions)



This survey suggests that there has not been a worldwide net increase in cocaine users - but other data sources explored below suggest that cocaine use has increased in Western Europe.

According to policing intelligence, global trafficking routes have evolved. In particular, mainland European and UK wholesale markets have become increasingly dominated by highly professional Albanian organised crime groups dealing direct with producers



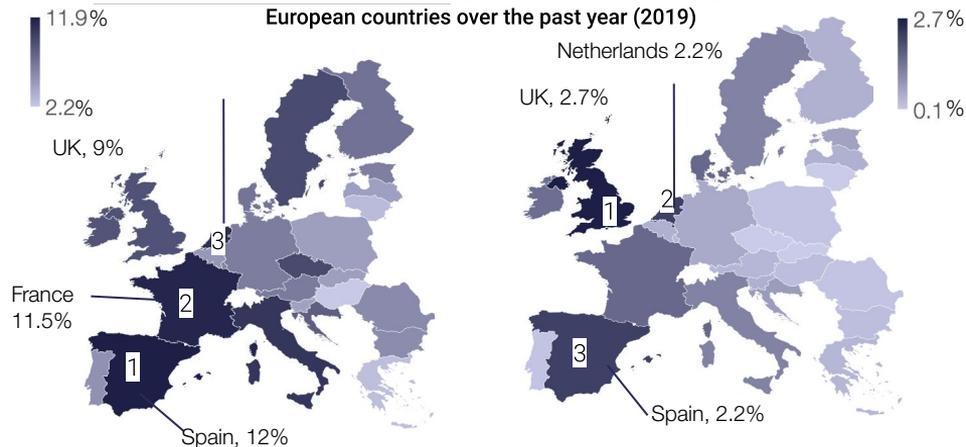
- A key change to supply in recent years has been the growing dominance of traffickers from the Balkans (specifically Albania) in cocaine supply into the UK (via mainland Europe) from South America.
- By contrast to cocaine and heroin, cannabis markets are partly supplied by international trafficking and partly by domestic (UK) production.
- The NCA believes that heroin and cocaine generate significant competition between rival OCGs from production to user. Feuds over drugs in transit, control of markets and protection of assets / income are common, often resulting in violence, kidnap and the criminal use of firearms. This is often then played out on the streets.

The UK appears to account for a disproportionately large share of the illicit drugs market, particularly cocaine, as well as darknet drug sales

The UK is 9th in terms of prevalence of any drugs used compared to other European countries, but it has the highest prevalence of cocaine

This disproportionate market share is also true of online markets, as an increasing number of UK consumers are buying their drugs on the dark net

Prevalence of any illegal drugs (left) and of cocaine (right) in European countries over the past year (2019)



Cocaine residue in wastewater is another way of measuring consumption. Bristol and London have the highest concentration of residue among the European cities studied, including Amsterdam, Barcelona and Paris. The rate of increase of residue concentration has also been higher in Bristol and London compared to European counterparts.

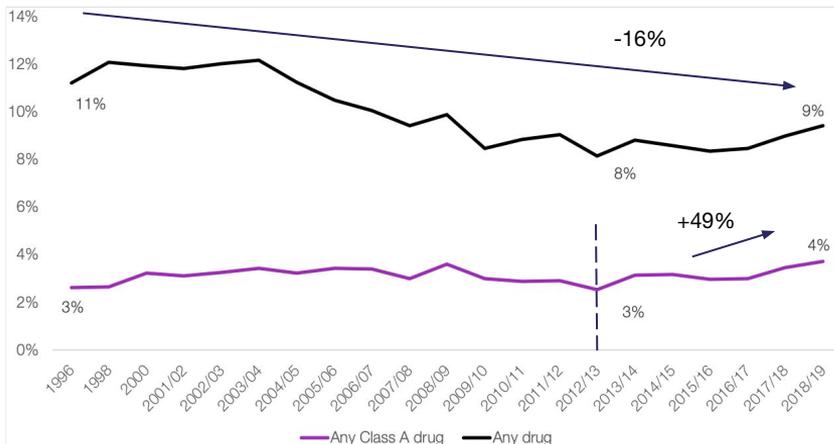
- The UK accounted for the largest single source of darknet drug sales in the EU: data collected from an EMCDDA-commissioned study showed that the vast majority of sales originating from the EU were from three countries - the United Kingdom, with approximately £24 million in total sales; Germany, with about £16 million; and the Netherlands, with just over £9 million.
- The value is likely to be much higher: This study was a snapshot of sales on four major global darknet markets over a thirteen month period, and given that a conservative estimate valued the EU drug market at £26 billion, including on the darknet, the value of UK figures is likely to be much greater. This also did not include sales over the surface web (i.e. social media)
- The darknet market share may be growing: according to the Global Drug Survey in 2019, the number of people in England buying drugs on the dark net [has more than doubled since 2014](#).

3.2 Changes in the demand for drugs

Supply impacts demand: crime survey data suggests that while overall drug use is down, the use of Class A drugs has been increasing since 2013, with big increases in the use of powder cocaine, reflecting growing availability

Volume change: overall reported drug use is up and class A drug use has increased by 49% since 2012/13

Proportion of 16 to 59 year olds reporting use of drugs ever in the previous year (any drug vs any Class A drug)



The trend of growth is even more pronounced for 16 to 24 year olds: the proportion of young people reporting class A drug use within the last year has grown by 81% since 2012/13 from 5% to 9% of respondents.

Class A drug use is rising particularly fast among younger people, particularly cocaine use

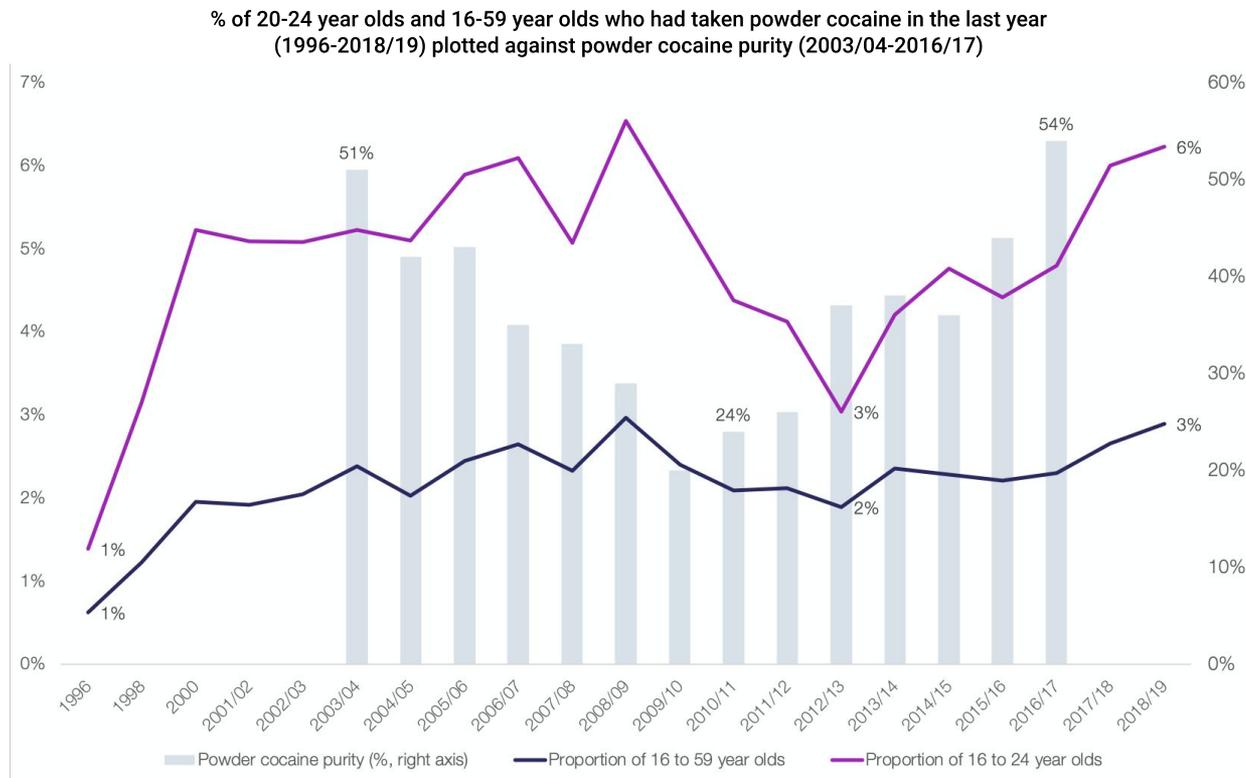
Percentage point change in drug usage prevalence in the last 12 months, by age and drug type, 2013/14-18/19

UK	Change (percentage points) over last five years (16-59 y/o)	Change (percentage points) over last five years (16-24 y/o)
Use of any illicit drug in the last 12 months ¹	+0.6%	+1.2%
Use of a class A drug in the last 12 months	+0.6%	+2.5%
Use of cocaine (powder / crack) in the last 12 months	+0.5%	+2.0%

Normalisation of cocaine usage? According to the [EMCDDA \(2019\)](#), the UK has the highest proportion of adults who have used cocaine at least once in their life (10.7% of adults in the UK vs 5.4% EU average) as well as young adults aged 15-34 (4.7% in the UK have used cocaine in the last year vs. 2.1% EU average).

According to the CSEW crack and heroin use went down respectively by 52% and 21% between 2008/9 and 2018/19. Could this be because harder to reach groups are not covered by the CSEW?

Supply impacts demand: powder cocaine usage trends (especially when looking at the age group that uses cocaine most often) suggest a lagged causal relationship between drug purity and rates of use

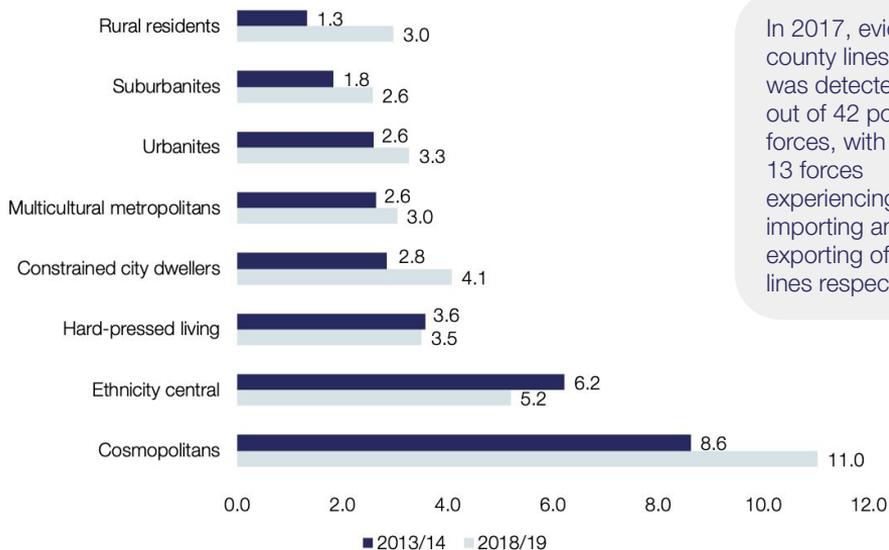


Purity fell in the 2000s, followed by a reduction in drug use, and then rose from 2009/10, followed this time by a rise in consumption. Wider evidence suggests a similar trend has been seen for crack cocaine (see slide 26 on numbers entering drug treatment for crack cocaine, which peaked in 2008, before falling in 2015, after which it began to rise again.)

Supply impacts demand: saturated markets are leading to regional expansion within the UK - drug use is rising fastest outside of the major cities

When segmented by output area classification, the proportion of adults reporting recent use of class A drugs has risen fastest in areas populated by “rural residents”

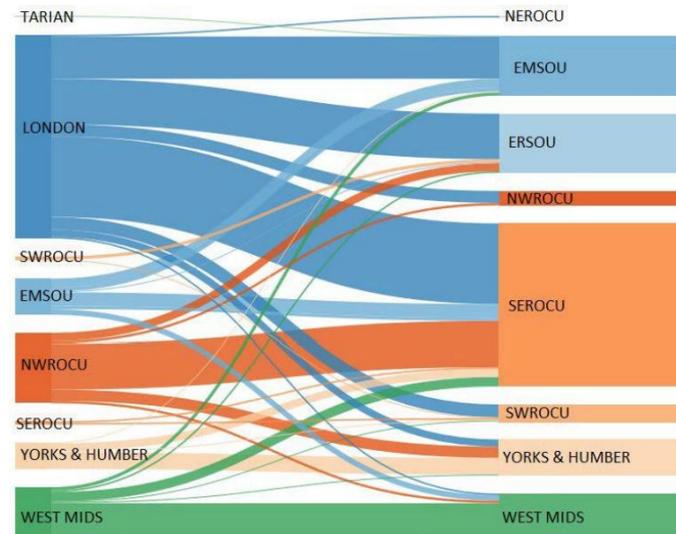
Proportion of 16 to 59 year olds reporting use of any Class A drug in the last year by output area classification, 2013/14 - 2018/19



In 2017, evidence of county lines activity was detected in 37 out of 42 police forces, with 34 and 13 forces experiencing importing and exporting of county lines respectively

Data on county lines shows how major cities are increasing the supply of drugs into regions, with London and the North West dominating supply

The NPCC Regional Organised Crime Unit County Line Profile 2018

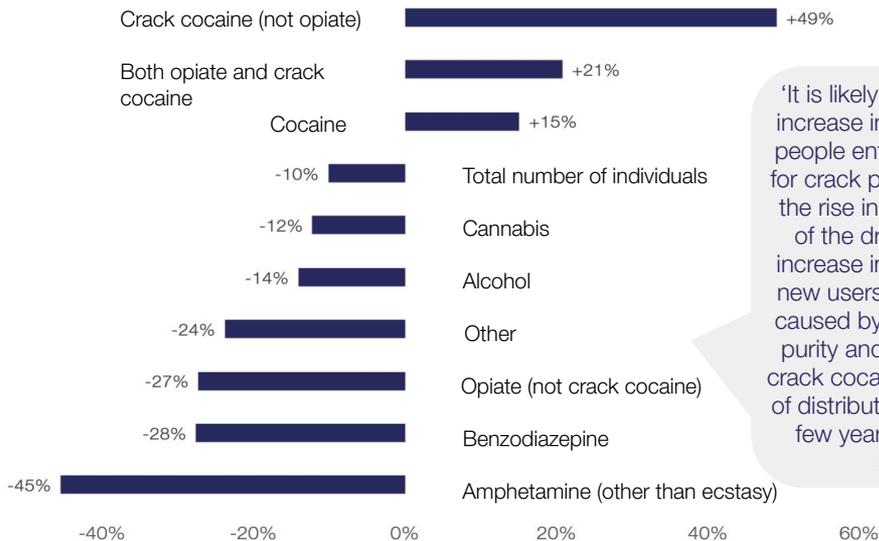


Treatment data provide an additional perspective on self-reported demand, indicating that the harmful use of crack cocaine has increased significantly since 2014

Despite an overall decrease in the number of people entering treatment for substance abuse, there has been a marked increase in those involving crack and powder cocaine

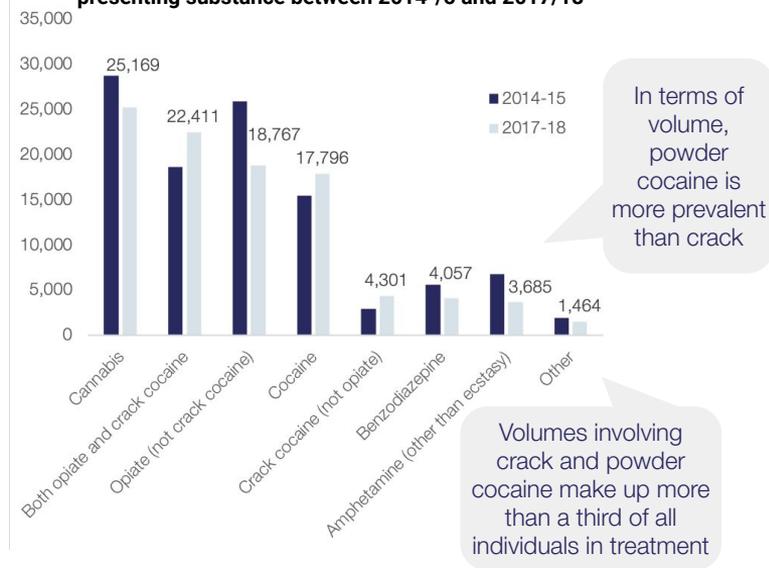
Whilst the biggest percentage change has been in opiate and crack cocaine, the highest volume of treatments still remains for cannabis

Percentage change of new entrants for treatment by presenting substance between 2014/15-2017/18



'It is likely that the recent increase in the number of people entering treatment for crack problems reflects the rise in the prevalence of the drug's use. The increase in the number of new users may be in part caused by changes in the purity and affordability of crack cocaine and patterns of distribution over the last few years.' (O'Connor 2019)

Volume change of new entrants for treatment by presenting substance between 2014/15 and 2017/18



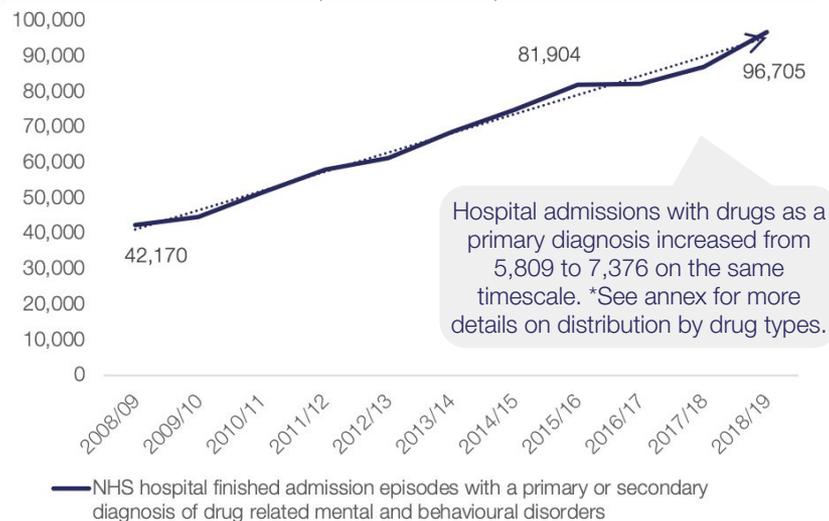
In terms of volume, powder cocaine is more prevalent than crack

Volumes involving crack and powder cocaine make up more than a third of all individuals in treatment

The growth in problematic drug use has led to rising health harms: hospital admissions for drug usage have increased rapidly over the decade, particularly since 2012, and there has been a surge in drug-related deaths due to opiates and cocaine use

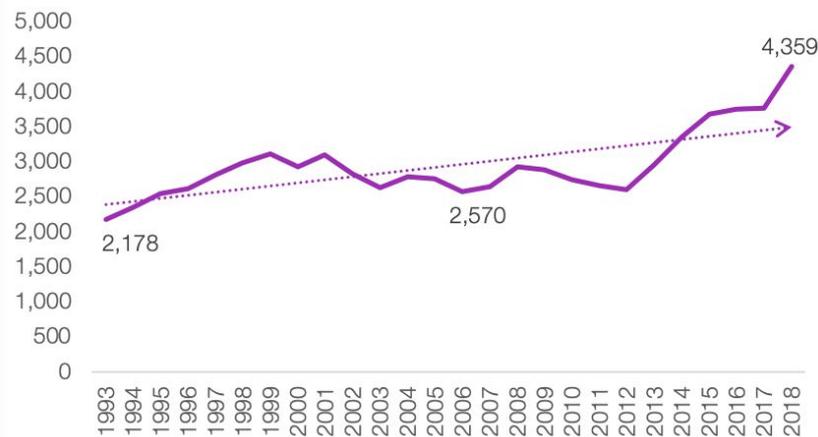
Hospital admissions due to drugs have more than doubled since 2008/09. They are mainly caused by multiple drug use, cannabinoids, opiates and cocaine misuse

NHS hospital finished admission episodes with a primary or secondary diagnosis of drug related mental and behavioural disorders (2008/09-2018/19)



Deaths caused by drug usage have doubled since 1993. In particular, deaths caused by opioid and cocaine use have been driving this increase

Deaths caused by drugs as mentioned on the death certificate in England and Wales (1993-2018)



In 2018, 62% of deaths caused by drug usage were related to the use of opiates and cocaine use. Deaths linked to opioids and cocaine have increased from 1993 to 2018 by respectively 378% and 4,218%.

The rise in crack use is particularly concerning, given the known links to violence. A government-led inquiry into the causes of growing demand for crack found a perfect storm of growing availability, affordability and purity

In 2018 Public Health England and the Home Office conducted an inquiry into the increase in crack use,¹ highlighting six important themes:

1. Aggressive marketing by dealers, primarily targeting existing heroin users, including 3-for-2 deals or even free crack.
2. Easy access to and wider availability of crack, 24/7 and “quicker than a pizza”.
3. Affordability of crack, including it being sold in smaller quantities and at higher purity.
4. Increase in ‘county lines’ activity in three of the six areas, linked to aggressive marketing and increased availability of crack, although the report notes established local dealers in the other three areas using similar tactics and so the story is not just one of ‘county lines’.
5. Less stigma associated with crack use, at least in some areas, with suggestions that new groups were increasingly taking it, including professionals, students and clubbers.
6. Lack of police focus on drugs, reflecting less police visibility.

Interviews with police and law enforcement officers and analysts uncovered a number of factors relating to the expansion of the crack and heroin markets, especially in the form of county lines

- ‘County lines’ is not ubiquitous. For example, interviewees from one region described the situation there as more mature, which they thought partly reflected their proximity to major metropolitan hubs and therefore the longer-standing nature of drug markets in general and the ‘county lines’ model in particular, which was reported to have been present in the region for at least a decade.
- Nevertheless, they remarked that markets in the region were characterised by ‘lots of churn’ – something mentioned by several interviewees – and that an ‘undercurrent of violence’ had included ‘some murders that we wouldn’t have seen before’, including committed by ‘some new [and] especially violent groups’.

For example, one interviewee in a force where ‘county lines’ have become much more apparent in recent years, described how they ‘come and they go, set up and disappear, from all over the place’, alongside local drug dealers and others commuting in, including some who have settled in the region.

While some of the apparent increase is undoubtedly a function of growing awareness by agencies, most interviewees were also clear that the ‘threat has genuinely expanded’.

It has been suggested in recent years that violence is being driven by 'middle class cocaine users' - the data does not back this up. Rather, there seems to have been an increase in recreational drug use crossing demographic groups

The use of powder cocaine is highest among those who frequent the nighttime economy, but does extend across all social and economic classes

Whilst in general, violence is identified to be linked to crack, rather than powder, cocaine, there are examples where this is not the case - suggesting local factors, again, are important to take into account when understanding violence

Use of reported powder cocaine in the least year, by selected groups, aged 16-59, 2018/19

	Group	% reporting powder cocaine use in last year
Highest prevalence of usage	Those visiting nightclubs more than four times in the last month	20.7%
	Those visiting pubs/bars more than 9 times in the last month	17.6%
Factors denoting socio/economic class	Those living in the 20% least deprived area	3.0%
	Those living in the 20% most deprived areas	2.4%
	Those living in areas of 'rising prosperity'	5.2%
	Those living in areas classified as 'financially stretched'	3.3%

The *Crack Cocaine Inquiry* makes reference to one police force area in which 'officers said that their major threat was violent disputes between organisations dealing in powder cocaine, because there was a large market for the drug and dealers viewed it as more lucrative than crack'.

Similarly, one of the law enforcement interviewees described powder cocaine dealing in their region as linked heavily to the night-time economy where it is controlled by door security companies and the owners of nightclubs and other venues. In general, however, violence linked to these venues seems to be relatively rare, unless it involves drug users, for example where they have used cocaine and alcohol together.

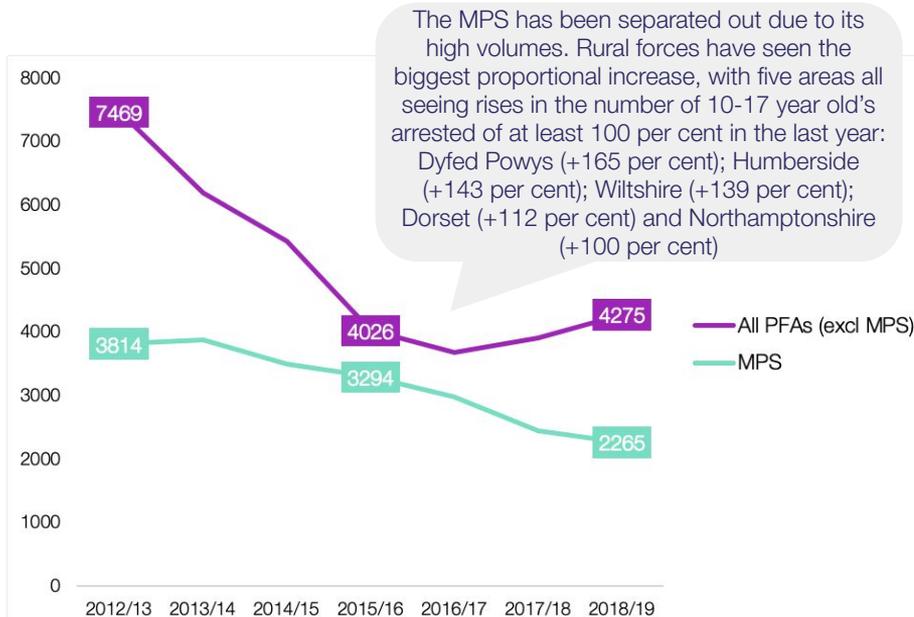
This is a potential knowledge gap that further, in-depth study of localised drug market dynamics could help shed light on

3.3 Changes in the profile of those involved in drug markets

The number of young people using Class A drugs and being convicted of Class A drugs offences (possession and supply) has increased since 2014

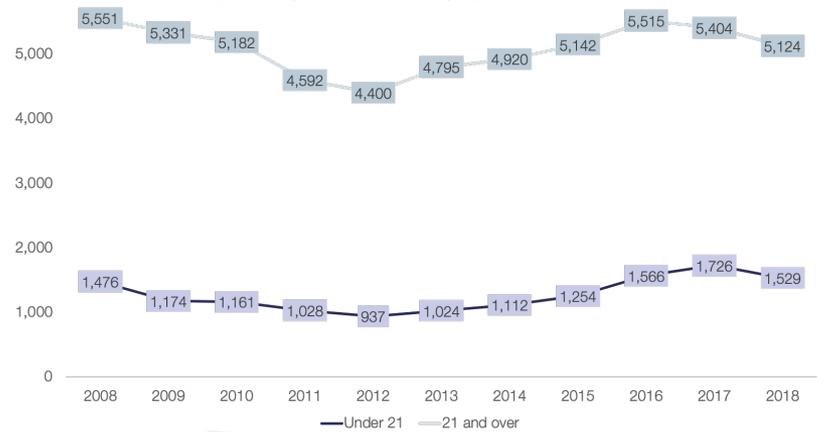
Data on arrests of children aged 10 to 17 for drug related offences provides the best proxy data available on children exploited by criminal groups, and shows increases in rural areas

Number of children (10-17) arrested for a drug-related offence, 2012/13-18/19



At the same time, the number of young people (under 21) convicted of Class A drugs offences has increased since 2012 by 63%, compared to a 16% increase for 21 and over.

Number of production, supply and possession with intent to supply a controlled drug (Class A) broken down by age, 2008 - 2018



The biggest increase is the number of younger people convicted of offences related to powder cocaine (61% since 2013), with an increase in crack cocaine offences of 54% and in heroin of 46%. All of these increases have been bigger than offences committed by people 21 and over.

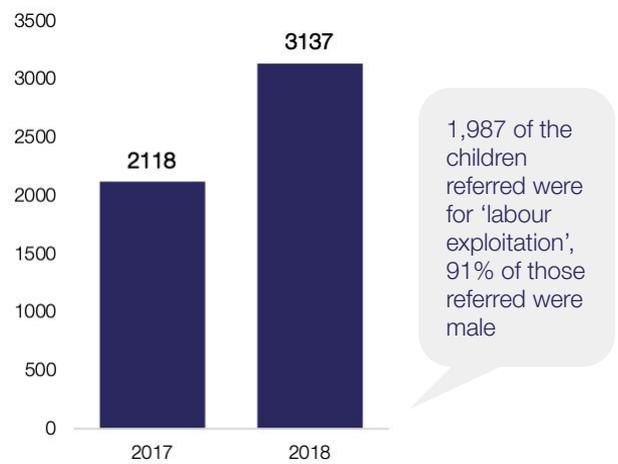
Sources: figures exclude those of Lancashire Police Force as data could not be supplied. Home Office, Arrests open data 2006/07 to 2019/19, pivot table. FOI requests submitted by the Children's Society (2019), provide more granular data and reveal the number of 10-17-year-olds arrested for intent to supply drugs has gone up by 49% outside London, with the number rising from 338 in 2015/16 to 505 in 2017/18; Source: Ministry of Justice, Court Outcomes by Police Force Area data tool - Principal Offence tool

Various data suggests the scale of child criminal exploitation is significant, particularly as linked to county lines, although it is difficult to ascertain with certainty the extent to which this reflects growing numbers or closer attention from authorities

There was a 48% increase in the number of referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for under 18s between 2017 and 2018, which was reported as being almost entirely related to county lines

Data from London helps to shed light on the scale of the problem of county lines, with 568 young people involved referred directly for support, although a total of 4,013 London individuals suspected as being linked

Number of NRM referrals for minors, 2017-18*



Between June 2018 and 2019, 568 young people across London were referred to London's Rescue and Response (R&R) project, a programme that works with young Londoners affected by county lines (see page 9):

- 72 per cent had been reported missing at least once prior to referral,
- 58 per cent were under social care at the time of referral,
- 36 per cent had a gang link recorded by the referrer, and
- half (50 per cent) had a known or suspected experience of child sexual abuse or sexual violence at the time of referral

The NRM is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking or modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support. In 2019 the Home Office assumed responsibility for NRM from the NCA. It is increasingly used by practitioners working with young people involved in county lines drug dealing as well as those trafficked into the UK and other modern slavery victims.

Sources: NCA, National Referral Mechanism statistics, 2019. *The rise was mostly down to increases in labour exploitation, with a smaller increase in sexual exploitation; Rescue and Response, Strategic Assessment 2019

3.4 Changes in the profile of violence

Note on data sources in this chapter: as with drug markets, quantifying serious violence is not straightforward, as it is a multi-faceted, complex and often hidden issue. There are several factors to take into account when measuring violence, and a range of data sources

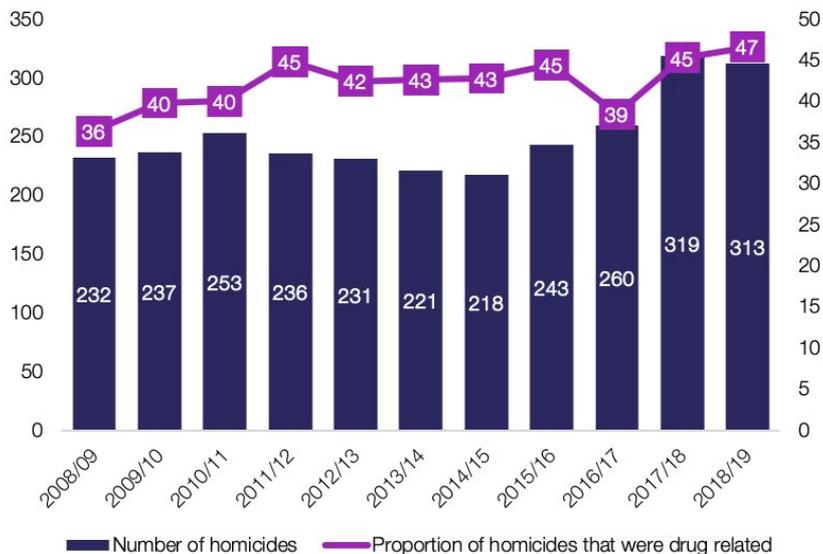
- Not all violence is reported to the police nor recorded by other agencies, and changing social attitudes (i.e. towards domestic abuse) means some forms of violence are now better recognised and recorded
- In statistical terms, low numbers of some forms of the most serious crimes, such as homicide, means changes in trends are likely to be due to random variation
- Available data sources each have their own limitations, therefore must be triangulated where possible

Description	Limitations & Mitigations
<p>Police Recorded Crime (PRC) are allegations of crime reported or identified by the Police. It is generally the most reliable measure of high-harm offences which are less affected by recording practice change, and, though less frequently occurring than other offences, more likely to be reported due to their high harm.</p>	<p>Not all offences are reported to the police. PRC is dependent on recording methods/practices, and there have been sizeable changes to these in recent years. However, we can account for recording practice changes as they are known at national level, and crimes of serious violence have been less subject to this.</p>
<p>Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is a face-to-face victimisation survey which has used the same methodology since 1981. This data is a better/more reliable measure of <i>general</i> offending and victimisation, because it is a representative household survey of victimisation and also captures underreported crimes.</p>	<p>Not as effective for measuring high-harm offences which are less frequent (so less likely to be picked up in a survey) and also does not cover all forms of violent crime i.e. homicide. Also, as a household sample, groups that are harder to reach may be less well-represented in findings.</p>
<p>Health data includes incidents recorded by the NHS like hospital admissions which give a fuller picture of harm and provides an additional record of figures related to violence.</p>	<p>It does not always match up with criminal justice system data, and detailed data can be hard to come by in the public domain.</p>

Drugs impacting violence: analysis of homicides data reveal that there has been a growth in the number/ proportion of homicides that are drug-related over the last decade

The number and proportion of homicides that have been 'drug-related' increased over the decade, up from 36% in 2008/09 to 47% in 2018/19 and numbers peaking last year

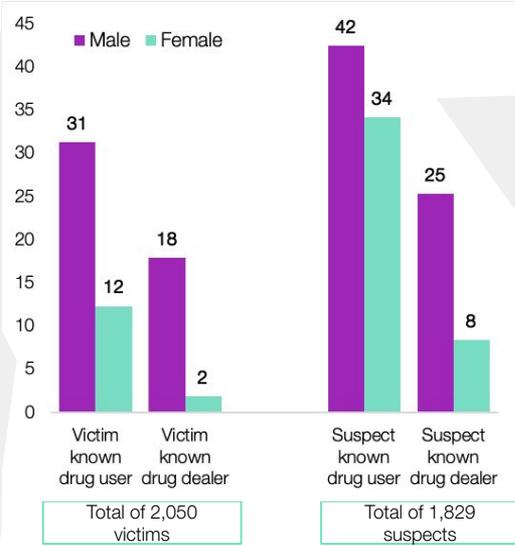
Number of homicides in some way drug-related, and proportion of total homicides in each year that were drug related, years ending March 2009 to 2019



Around a quarter (25%) of all homicide victims were known drug users, and one in ten (13%) known drug dealers. These proportions were even higher among suspects: over a third (42%) were known users and around a quarter (24%) dealers - proportions higher for males

Proportion of currently recorded homicides by various drug fields, combined data for year ending March 2017 to year ending March 2019

Last year, the EMCDDA began to analyse drug-related homicides (DRHs). However, the pilot study of data from Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands found different patterns in each. While most Finnish and Swedish DRHs were psycho-pharmacological, in the Netherlands three-quarters were systemic*



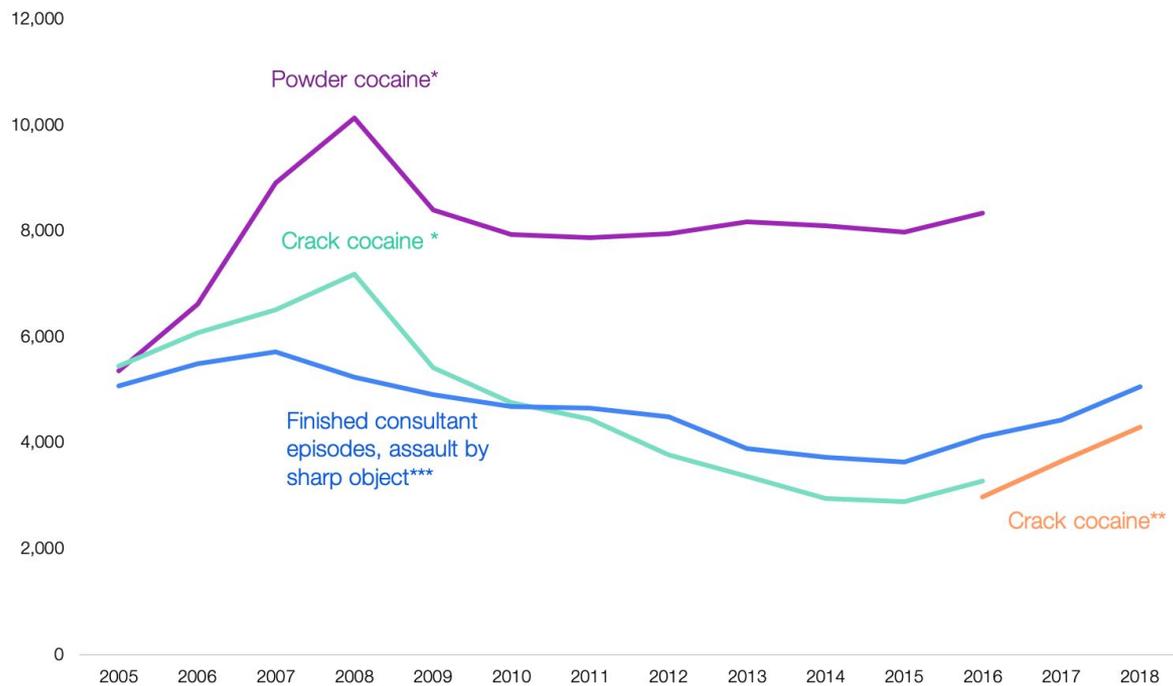
Only 6% of victims and 5% of suspects were recorded as being under the influence at the time of the homicide, indicating that the incident was not psycho-pharmacological; and in a similar proportion of cases, police flagged the motive as 'obtaining drugs' (5%) or 'stealing drug proceeds' (5%), indicating most incidents were not economic compulsive

Sources: ONS, [Appendix tables: homicide in England and Wales](#), 2020, Table 17 and Table 18.

*This may be explained by the fact that most drug-related homicides in Finland and Sweden involved alcohol, in combination with illicit substances (alcohol-related cases involving no illicit drug use were excluded in the study). Previous research links alcohol to psychopharmacological homicide. Source: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2019), EMCDDA pilot study of drug-related homicide in Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden

Drugs impacting violence: treatment commencements for powder and crack cocaine correlate strongly with hospital data on 'finished consultant episodes' for assaults by sharp objects, suggesting commonalities between the two variables

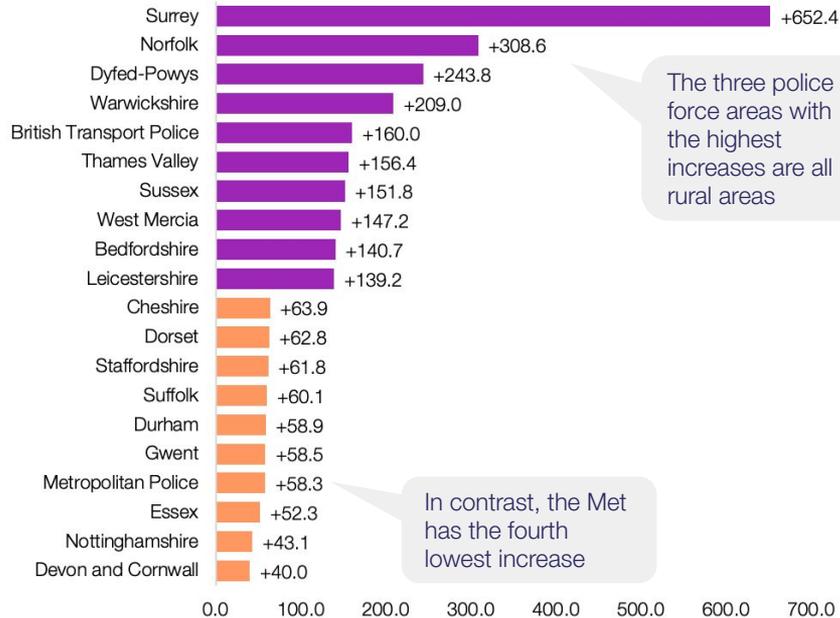
Drug treatment entrants for powder cocaine and crack cocaine (as primary drug) & finished consultant episodes for assaults by sharp objects (2005-2018)



Drugs impacting violence: drugs might also explain the geography of violence, with increases in knife crime occurring fastest in provincial towns, rather than metropolitan hubs

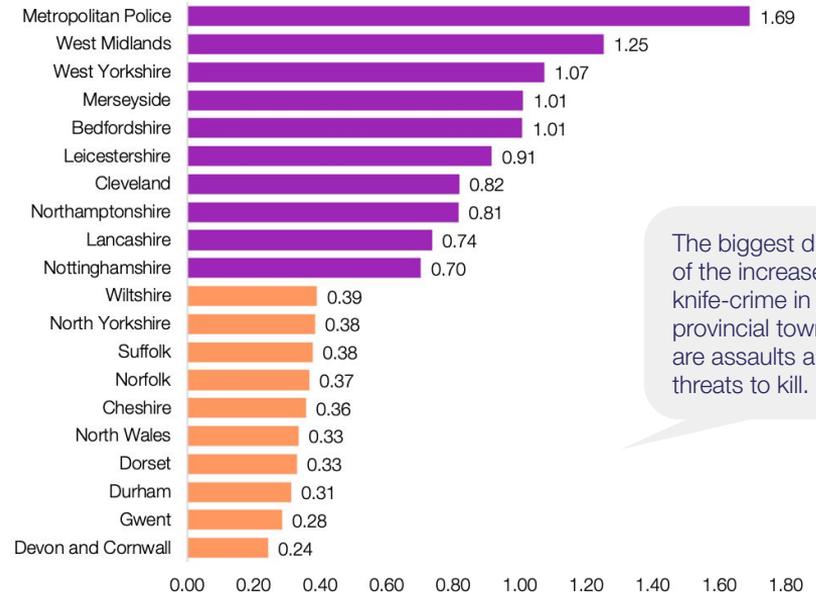
The areas which have seen the fastest increases in knife crime compared to five years ago are almost exclusively rural force areas...

5 year percentage change in total knife-enabled crime, top 10 (purple) and bottom 10 (orange), years ending September 2014 to 19



... although the highest volumes and rates of knife crime are still concentrated in urban areas

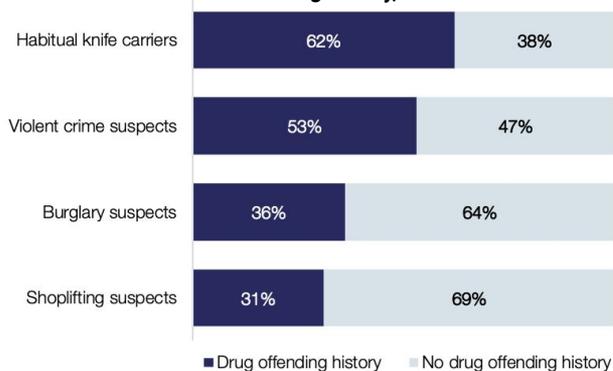
Rate per 1,000 population of knife-enabled crime, top 10 (purple) and bottom 10 (orange), years ending September 2019



Drugs impacting violence: force-held data on robbery suggests that many of those involved in violence are also involved in drug offences for financial gain

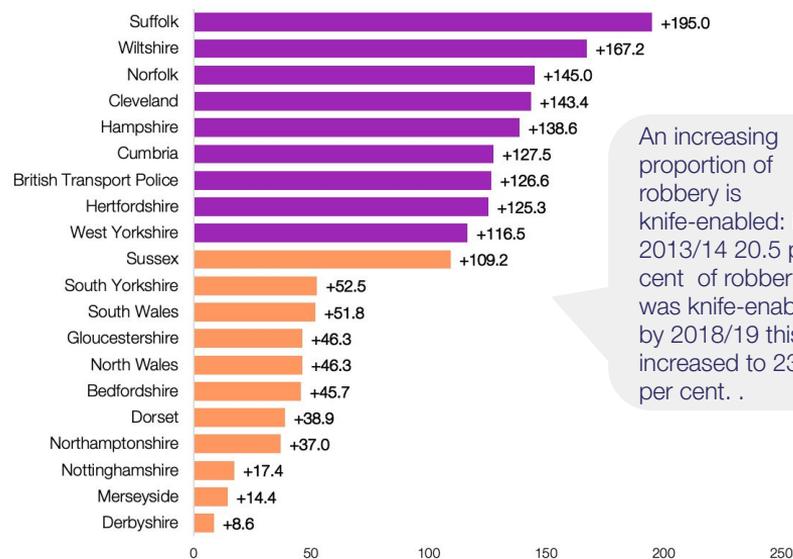
Over half of violent crime, including robbery, suspects in a major urban force area had a history of drug offending, compared to less than a third of shoplifting, an acquisitive offence typically linked to offenders under the influence

% of individuals within different crime cohorts who have a drug offending history, 2017/18*



The rises in robbery largely mirror those of the rises in knife-crime, and are likely to reflect a genuine increase in these crimes**

5 year percentage change in recorded robbery, top 10 (purple) and bottom 10 (orange), years ending September 2014 to 19



An increasing proportion of robbery is knife-enabled: in 2013/14 20.5 per cent of robbery was knife-enabled, by 2018/19 this increased to 23.5 per cent.

Interviewees in our fieldwork in a London borough suggested that robbery, drug dealing and violent crime typically go hand in hand, as part of serious organised criminality for financial gain. 'Lower tier' offenders, typically young (under 25) and involved in high-risk/low-reward activities such as muggings and snatches, were likely to also be involved in social and low-level retail drug dealing. This, as with the data above, may well be specific to metropolitan areas.

Drugs impacting violence: fieldwork conducted for this report suggests that gangs are involved both in street robbery and drug dealing for the purpose of making money - both of these activities are thought to be linked to organised criminality

Street crime, including robbery and snatch thefts can be easy cash generators, most likely linked to criminal networks

Street robbery has been found to be driven by two key factors: a societal context of limited youth opportunities combined with the desire to acquire high-value commodities that sustain hedonistic lifestyles. The portability of high-value items such as AirPods and iPhones offers monetary benefits to robbers, but this is most likely to be realised if robbers are criminally networked to individuals able to move stolen goods. Such links might also help individual drug users raise their required cash.

Outside of London, law enforcement interviewees described the way that those arrested in three out of the last four shootings in the region were known to be involved in 'county lines'; two recent murders were 'linked to robberies of drug runners', and otherwise 'a lot of stabbings have links to drug debts and gang rivalries'.

Findings from fieldwork in a London borough identified that many young people involved in street robbery are also linked to the local drug trade

Practitioners we spoke to in a London borough suggested that young people involved in street robbery (both perpetrators and victims) were disproportionately likely to be mixed up in the local drugs trade. While many spoke of suspected links to organised criminality, this remained something of an intelligence blind spot.

"Young people who are involved in selling drugs are also involved in knife point robberies, moped enabled phone snatching with machetes and used to be involved with smash and grabs"

"It's about making money (...). They are very adaptable and will diversify, often they will do both, if there's heat on one thing they'll change tact."

"Loosely, you have high end crews, who are involved in people trafficking and prostitution, and at the low end you have wannabes on the periphery who are involved in robbery and gangs - these can sometimes just involve organised groups involved in criminal activities"

Drugs impacting violence: 'county lines' is of growing concern to UK policing. 'Importer' drug-selling gangs tend to be more violent than local dealers who previously controlled the market

The number of 'county lines' known to policing and law enforcement has increased greatly in recent years

- As of January 2019, the NCA reports that 2,000 deal line numbers in the UK were known about, linked to 'approximately 1,000 branded county lines', with the primary exporting hubs being the Metropolitan (in particular), Merseyside and West Midlands police force areas, but that a further 23 force areas are also reported to have groups exporting from them
- The numbers have increased in recent years, but it is not possible to disentangle with certainty the extent to which this reflects actual growing numbers of deal lines or the result of closer attention from policing and law enforcement; as ever, the harder particular forms of criminal activity are looked for, the more are found
- The increase is in part a function of dedicated central resources being committed to understand the strategic picture, latterly in the form of the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre that was established in 2018

Areas where 'county lines' operated have become significantly more violent, and areas without 'county lines' where changes in violent crime were described as 'less pronounced'

- In 2018 research into the reasons behind the apparent rise in the use of crack cocaine and the link between crack cocaine and violence in six areas found that:
 - Areas where 'county lines' operated had become significantly more violent, and areas without 'county lines' had seen changes in violent crime described as 'less pronounced'
 - Violence was described as 'mainly perpetrated by drug dealers' and was reflected in increased weapons carrying. 'Turf wars' were also described, both between 'county lines' groups, and between 'county lines' and local groups
- However, lack of, or slow, information sharing between agencies remains a barrier to understanding more about the source of violence. [An Inquiry](#) into Serious Youth Violence heard [evidence](#) that some areas "do not know whether it is their locals who are creating the criminal activity and the violence or whether they are on the import or the export end".²

4. The changing structure of drug markets: what we know and what we don't

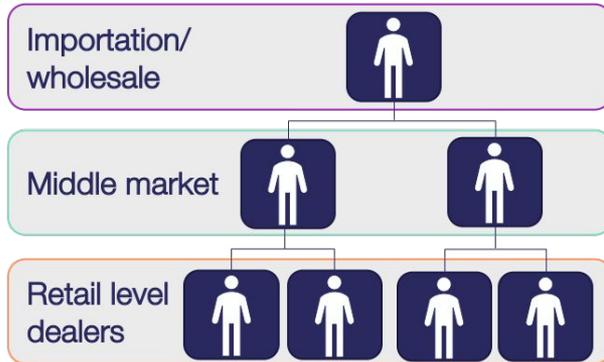
4.1 Market structures

Illicit drug markets are usually thought to involve three broad tiers, though in reality the lines between these are often blurred

The supply chain has typically been understood as having an international importation level, a local retail level, connected by a 'middle market' that distributes wholesale quantities to dealers/groups

At each tier, tasks are divided up, with different groups monopolising control of various activities

Drug market structure



As an indication of the numbers involved, a 2007 Home Office study estimated that at the time there were...

- 300 major importers
- 3,000 middle market dealers
- 70,000 street dealers

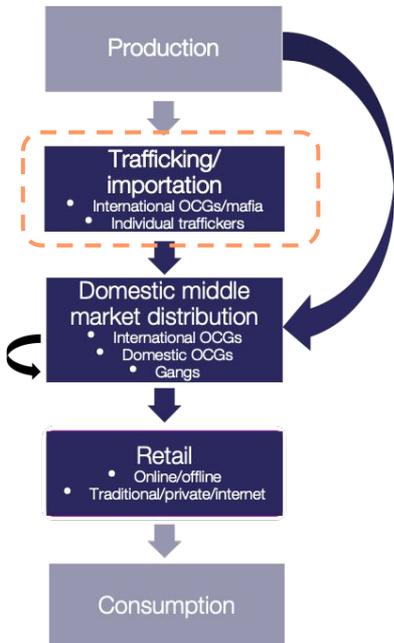
Participants and roles occupied at each stage along the distribution chain by market level

Market level	Participants/actors
International	<p>Wholesaler: buys drugs outside the UK, oversees them being brought into the UK and sells them on in bulk.</p> <p>Buyer: buys drugs outside the UK.</p> <p>Seller: brings drugs into the UK and sells in bulk.</p> <p>Transporter: transports drugs (e.g. as a mule or haulier).</p>
National/regional	<p>Wholesaler: buys and sells in bulk across the UK.</p> <p>Buyer: buys drugs in the UK and in bulk in different areas.</p> <p>Seller: sells drugs in bulk in the UK and in different areas.</p> <p>Transporter: facilitates national transportation within the UK.</p>
Local/retail	<p>Wholesaler: buys and sells in one area in bulk.</p> <p>Buyer: buys drugs in one area in bulk.</p> <p>Seller: sells drugs in one area in bulk.</p> <p>Transporter: facilitates local transportation within the UK.</p> <p>Storer: holds drugs between purchase and sale.</p> <p>Retailer: sells drugs to users (a dealer).</p> <p>Runner: delivers drugs to users for a retailer/dealer.</p>

However, the structure of these markets appears to be changing, with distinctions between tiers in the supply chain becoming increasingly blurred and a streamlining of middle markets. There is also a growing, though still minor, component of the retail market conducted online

There is anecdotal evidence in the UK of market streamlining - with OCGs/ gangs negotiating directly with producers - though there is no data to back this up

Changing shape of the drugs markets



- At a wholesale level, the key change identified by the interviewees concerned the **increased availability of cocaine at higher purity and lower cost** with parallel changes to cocaine supply having driven the expansion of cocaine and crack dealing
- In the UK, there is some anecdotal evidence that middle markets have collapsed, with UK-based organised crime groups negotiating directly with producers - but we do not have the data to support this
- One particularly well placed/informed law enforcement interviewee described how this has been driven by **Albanian OCGs** who have increasingly come to dominate wholesale cocaine importation into Western Europe, reportedly building on their previous involvement in the heroin trade via Turkey
- This has involved Albanian groups **establishing their own trading relationships** in producer countries and **cutting out intermediaries** in the wholesale supply chain, resulting in **lowered wholesale costs and prices**
- Wholesale prices per kilo in major European ports (notably Rotterdam and Antwerp) have reportedly fallen even while purity has increased to historically high levels, reflected in unprecedented falls in wholesale prices in the UK during the last five to ten years **from £45,000 per kilo to £35,000 per kilo**
- We still require further clarification on changes to the 'middle' market, especially surrounding the relationship between imports, OCGs, and gangs
- The European Council reports that across the EU there has been an increase in online drug purchases through social media, the surface web and darknet markets - this may also disrupt existing markets by lowering the barriers for market entry for new providers

Interviews with with police and law enforcement officers and analysts suggest intelligence gaps abound

There are significant enforcement intelligence gaps around the drug markets in the UK, especially in terms of organised crime group structures, processes and locations

- **The lack of priority** afforded to drugs markets has contributed to a very patchy intelligence picture. **The lack of clear ownership and resource dedication has allowed drug markets to remain in the shadows:** local police forces focus on short-term, tactical information and often do not have the resources to explore middle markets while the NCA tends to concentrate on wholesalers wherever supply lines cross **police force or organisational boundaries**. An interviewee remarked that local forces *'haven't got upstream to suppliers'* as the quantities are *'not large enough to hit the ROCU remit but local police can't take the investigation'*
- **Forces have become increasingly reactive** (in part due to funding falls, see p.57), focused on responding to emergencies and investigating individual crimes, with far less capacity to do proactive enforcement and intelligence gathering operations. One interviewee said: *"We spend so much time firefighting, we don't know what the top-level [of the drug market/chain] looks like."*

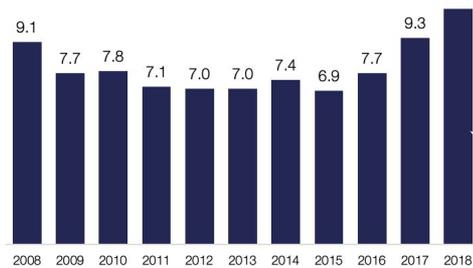
Intelligence gaps are particularly glaring around those controlling the middle markets and exploiting street level retailers.

- In the case of 'county lines' it appears that forces have very little understanding of **'who controls the controllers'**, with operational activity largely focused at street/retail level and rarely extending beyond those immediately directing the activities of the individuals completing deals with drug users
- Services and systems struggle to deal with the complexity of cases linked to serious violence and the **victim/offender overlap**
- It is also apparent that very little is known about how the **proceeds of drug market sales** are laundered or where they are ending up; one interviewee referred to many dealers having a *'cash lifestyle'* and mentioned that they see *'no-one with a large bank balance'*

Prisons act as a microcosm for the link between illicit drug markets and violence

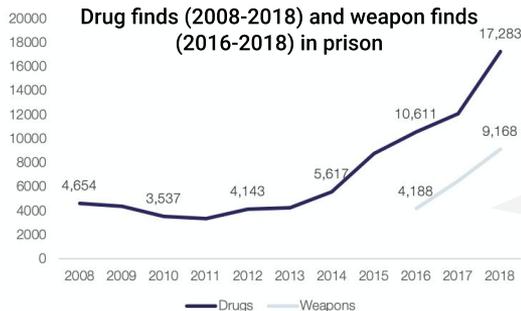
Illegal drug use is rife and rising, affecting at least 1 in 5 prisoners – likely to be higher with the prevalence of Psychoactive Substances (PSs)

% of mandatory drug tests in prison with positive results for traditional drugs



Positive results rise to 20.4% when including PSs (data only exists from 2018)

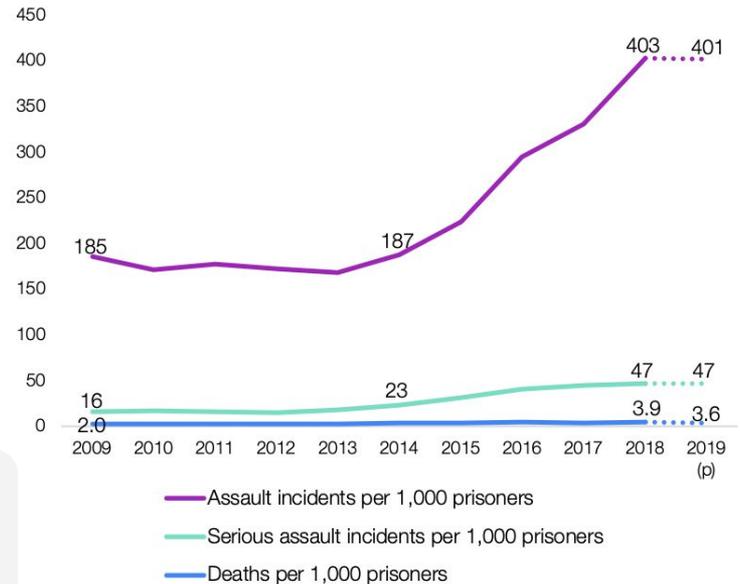
There has been more than a five fold increase in drug finds in prisons since 2011, whilst weapon finds have more than doubled in two years



The largest increases have been in finds of class A drugs, which have quadrupled between 2016 - 2018

Prisons are increasingly violent: assaults and rates of harm are at their highest since records began

Rates of assault, serious assault and deaths in prison, 2009-19



Sources: MoJ, Safety in Custody quarterly; 2019 - assault incidents refer to years ending September, deaths refer to years ending December; MoJ, 2018, Safety in Custody Statistics: Deaths annual tables, 1978 - 2017; HMPPS annual digest 2018 to 2019

4.2 Street gangs

There is evidence that the 'MO' of street-based gangs is changing, partly as a result of shifts in the structure of drug markets

There is evidence that street-based gangs are increasingly structured around the drug market, with a more professional, profit-focused ethos and structure

- In a 2018 study of gangs in Waltham Forest, former gang members and statutory sector professionals repeatedly brought up the Mali Boys - an example of this new model. They were described as especially violent and especially business-oriented, potentially operating across London rather than just in Waltham Forest
- At the time of the study, the Mali Boys were heavily involved in county lines. They were also known to collect information on the personal lives of police officers (to escape detection and intimidate law enforcement), and to take over the properties of vulnerable people as a base
- Though the gang 'elders' were Somali locals, interviewees explained that non-Somali 'youngers' were recruited as drug runners. These children were often drawn into serious violence, as both victims and perpetrators

In one small (mostly urban) force, a diverse range of drug suppliers operate, with a heavy presence of street gangs, some with direct links to organised crime groups

- Urban street gangs and County Lines networks are increasingly involved in the supply of Class A and B drugs at street level across the country - there is also some suggestion that dominant gangs have adopted the model of County Lines to export drugs across the country. This is also serving to reduce the influence of external county lines operations
- It has been reported that the distinction between organised crime groups and more established street gangs is becoming increasingly blurred
- Some of the OCGs linked to local drug suppliers have end-to-end capabilities, with links to international trafficking - suggesting the 'middle man' has been cut out
- Although cocaine powder is identified as the most common drug supplied by OCGs, polysubstance supply is widespread amongst street gangs and OCGs

Those involved in street-based gangs are increasingly young and disproportionately vulnerable, displaying a range of risk factors

Research on the involvement of 'gangs' in the drugs market in Scotland suggests a four-tier model - highly dependent on young and vulnerable people

Hierarchical model of gang involvement in the drugs market (Scotland)

Early offenders in young street gangs are typically involved in social supply and only rarely involved in retail-level drug supply

Groups may move beyond social supply and mature into young crime gangs that can penetrate higher levels of the illicit drug market

Gangs that are able to avoid law enforcement action and grow may eventually move on to wholesale buying

If sustained, wholesale activity and increased market share create the potential for development into serious organised crime, including the adoption of business-like principles

Some gangs evolve to be 'sole suppliers' in a given domain (drugs, firearms) and come to resemble / become OCGs

Analysis by the Children's Commissioner revealed that children in gangs were 37 per cent more likely to be missing/ absent from school than other children who offend

34,000 children in England were identified as being in a gang/ on the periphery of gang, but just 19 per cent (6,560) - are known to children's services or youth offending teams. Data on children in gangs reveals a much higher level of vulnerability than comparable non-gang cohorts:

- those assessed by children's services who are in gangs compared to those who are not reveals those in gangs are:
 - 41% more likely to have a parent or carer misusing substances
 - eight times more likely to be misusing substances themselves
- child offenders in gangs compared to other young offenders are:
 - 76% more likely not to be having their basic care needs met at home (as assessed by a practitioner)
 - 37% more likely to have witnessed domestic violence
 - 37% more likely to be missing/absent from school

"The St Giles Trust found that all of the 100 teenagers referred to it after being caught up in county lines gangs had all been excluded or spent time in a pupil referral unit (PRU) because of their behaviour." - [The Telegraph](#), Jan 2020

The 'county lines' modus operandi of branded deal lines and exploitation is highly organised, and not strictly restricted to operations from urban hubs out to suburban or rural areas

Interviews and fieldwork indicated that many groups involved in county lines are more organised than current narratives suggest

- Although policing/law enforcement generally talk about 'urban street gangs' running 'county lines', there is a strong case that many, if not most, of these groups are in fact OCGs.
- Interviews with policing officials in policing suggest that the reluctance to use the OCG label stems in part from the consequences – in terms of monitoring and operational activity requirements – that arise from groups being recorded as OCGs on the 'Organised Crime Group Mapping database (OCGM)', and in turn the limited capacity of ROCUs (police Regional Organised Crime Units) and the National Crime Agency (NCA) to have so many groups falling into their remit.
- More recently, the NCA has started referring to 'county lines' as 'involv[ing] gangs and organised criminal networks'.

This activity of branded deal lines and exploitation is not unique to groups transporting drugs from urban hubs to extra-urban markets, nor does it necessarily involve the crossing of county boundaries

- Several interviewees stressed that the exploitation 'county lines' involves, to provide a workforce to expand into new markets and to displace risk onto more vulnerable and expendable individuals (a central logic of these markets), is not new, not limited to 'county' settings, nor does it necessarily involve the crossing of county or police force boundaries – although the extent of exploitation was described as having 'gone to new levels' in one region reflecting increases in many others as well.
- What is arguably newer is the extent of this activity, the degree to which children and youths are being used/exploited to conduct deals, and the degree to which it is a subject of attention by policing and law enforcement.

As one law enforcement interviewee put it, 'we've gone into a space where exploitation of vulnerable people has gone to new levels [and where] anything goes'. Another remarked that 'county lines pioneers' showed that 'the model works, even at a long distance, and is easily replicable', with others following suit.

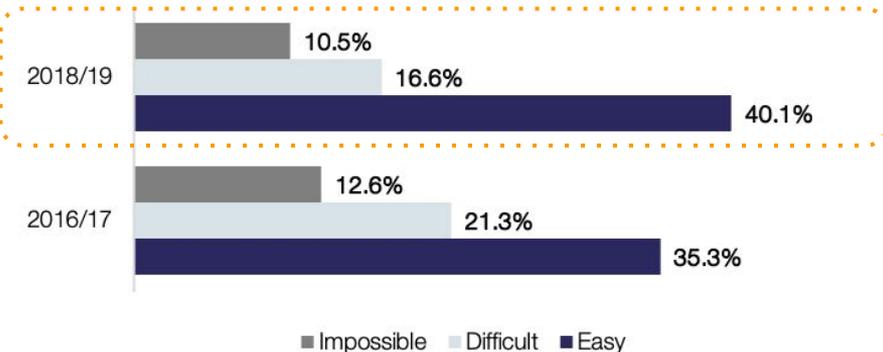
4.3 The role of technology

New technology (including the growing reach of the dark web) is changing the way drugs are sold in the UK

The drug market is increasingly digitally enabled. Both the surface web and darknet markets are used for online drug sales, as are social media and mobile communication apps

The dark web has further severed the connection between drug markets and local places that arguably began with the advent of pagers and mobile phones. More broadly, and reflecting changes in the wider economy, transactions have increasingly shifted towards a model of 'just in time' delivery to the customer, enabled by mobile technology. Consumers report the rapidly increasing ease of obtaining drugs quickly, with 2 in 5 reporting it being easy to obtain illegal drugs within 24 hours in the UK, up from 2016/17.

Ease of obtaining illegal drugs within 24 hours, if wanted to obtain, 2016/17 to 2018/19



Social media is also being used as a tool to recruit (and control) individuals to work in the drugs trade

- Practitioners also report that social media and digital technology are being used in a variety of ways in the context of the criminal exploitation (CCE).
- Through the county lines model perpetrators utilise digital methods as a means of targeting, grooming and controlling their victims. In the case of CCE, criminal groups are using social media to openly advertise the monetary incentives of becoming involved with their specific group.

"We know that young people are targeted through online forums like Instagram where they might be, so yes targeted through that and basically told to meet at a random spot which is the site. So this is where they're going to be get picked up by, and they only get the screen name of the person that's coming to pick them up and then they'll get taken in a car and taken to the trap house or something."
-The Children's Society Practitioner (2019, [Children's Society](#))

At the same time, practitioners have suggested that a more lucrative online trade may be squeezing the profits of street-based gangs

Research suggests online markets are increasingly lucrative, and there is anecdotal evidence that this may be squeezing the profits of gangs

- Rapid developments in virtual currencies and anonymised payment systems increasingly facilitate the online drug trade and allow OCG groups to reduce risks, with other developments, such as the use of drone technology, increasingly enabling 25/7 options for deliveries.¹ The development of automated parcel and delivery processes also contributes to ease of distribution at reduced risk to retailers.
- Many of the new developments also serve to lower the barrier to new entrants into the drug market. The EMCDDA (2019) cite the example of the way “‘entrepreneurs’ can sell synthetic opioids purchased online and thus compete with heroin suppliers, who require a complex infrastructure to transport and protect their product.”
- Senior police officers consulted during the course of Crest’s research suggested that the profitability of the online trade may be ‘squeezing the profits’ of street gangs, who are forced into more violent competition - but we do not have data to back this up.

Fieldwork suggested that the type of product supplied varied by retail mode: with some evidence that visible drug markets tend to supply Class A with online markets supplying a wider range

- One law enforcement interviewee described the way the Deliveroo model ‘exposes whole communities to greater availability as the market comes to them’, outlining the transition in a town in southern England from a market controlled by a single family with irregular supply, often necessitating users to drive to larger towns to buy drugs, to the situation today where users can very quickly and easily have drugs delivered to them at their convenience.
- Another rural area was described as having a ‘24/7 drugs market’.

"About a quarter of drugs [in London] are being ordered online, which would presumably squeeze the street level drug dealers/gang." - Senior Policing official, Metropolitan Police

One effect of the addition of tech to the market may be the segmentation of drug markets into high-end and lower-end markets. However, without publically available detailed analysis of the value/share of online/offline markets, it is not possible to quantify.

5. Effectiveness of the current response



5.1 The law enforcement response (tackling supply)

Taking their steer from central government and PCCs, the police de-prioritised drugs during the early 2010s

It is clear from interviews with police and law enforcement, and wider review of policing strategies, that drug markets have not generally been a policing priority in recent years

In 2016, for example, only two of 43 PCC Police and Crime Plans in England and Wales mentioned drugs as a stated priority.¹ The Metropolitan Police, for example, deprioritised tackling drugs, and between 2014-17 had no specific drug strategy.

In our Freedom of Information request to all police forces,² we asked whether they had a dedicated strategy in place relating to drugs. Of the 29 police forces that responded:

- A third (34 per cent) had **no** drug strategy in place, and seven per cent provided insufficient evidence to suggest they had one
- 12 forces (41 per cent) had a current drug strategy devised in the last twelve months, and 5 (17 per cent) had a strategy that was older than a year or out of date.

A combination of budget cuts and changing priorities (e.g. to focus on vulnerability/ public protection) have squeezed out drugs

For policing, the 19 per cent fall in real terms funding between 2010/11 and 2018/19³ has seen resources pared back, and forces have become increasingly reactive, focused on responding to emergencies and investigating individual crimes, with far less capacity to do proactive enforcement and intelligence gathering operations than was the case in the previous decade.

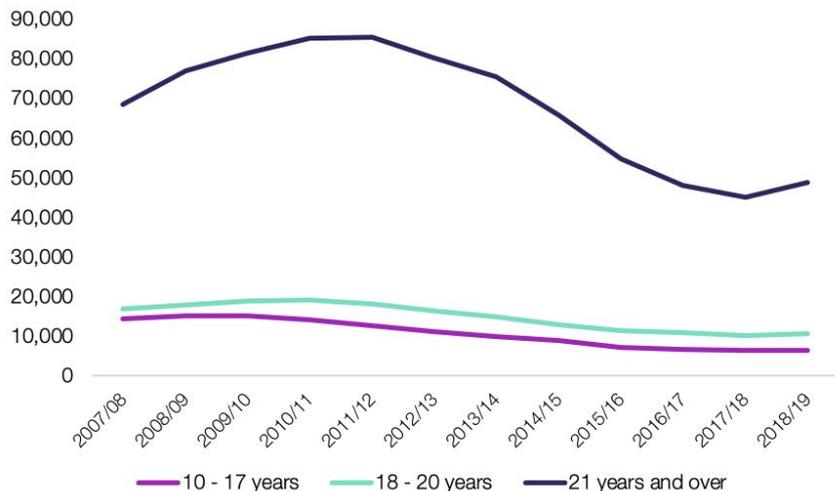
It also reflects the trajectory of government policy outlined in section one, in which drug users have generally been prioritised in relation to volume crime, and drug markets have only latterly emerged as a focus due their connection to growing levels of serious violence.

Consequently, the policing of drugs has been significantly squeezed out and efforts to combat rising supply/ demand have not been coordinated. One interviewee, for example, referred to the way that in their force *'drugs has never quite gone away, but it hasn't been an organisational priority for many years'* with the result that there is *'no strategic research or intelligence'*; they contrasted the *'business as usual'* approach to drugs with the more concerted efforts focused in recent years on the likes of modern slavery and CSE.

There has been a reduction in enforcement activity, with stop and search, and arrests both falling substantially in recent years

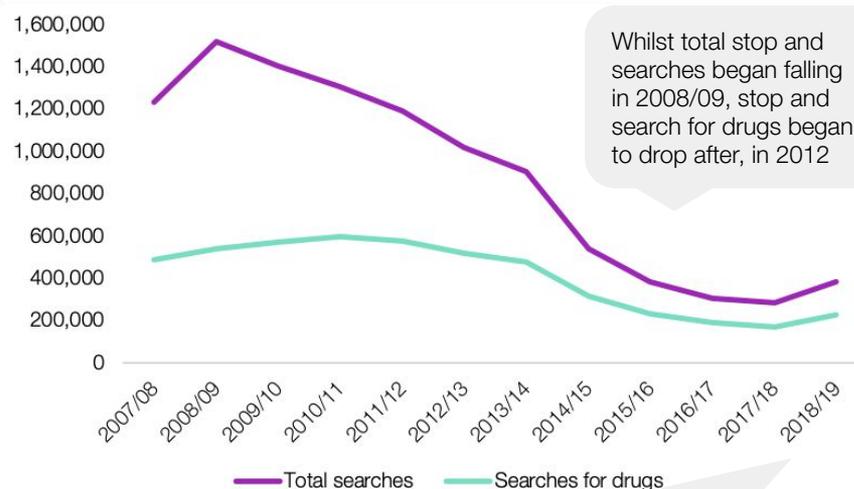
Between 2012-2018, the number of arrests for drug offences fell 47%, though there are signs that this trend may be starting to go into reverse

Number of arrests for drug offences, by age, FY 2007/08-18/19*



Between 2012-18, the number of stop and searches for drugs fell 61 per cent, over the same period the total number of stop and searches fell 68 per cent, both have increased in the last year

Number of stop and searches, total, and for drugs, FY 2007/08-18/19



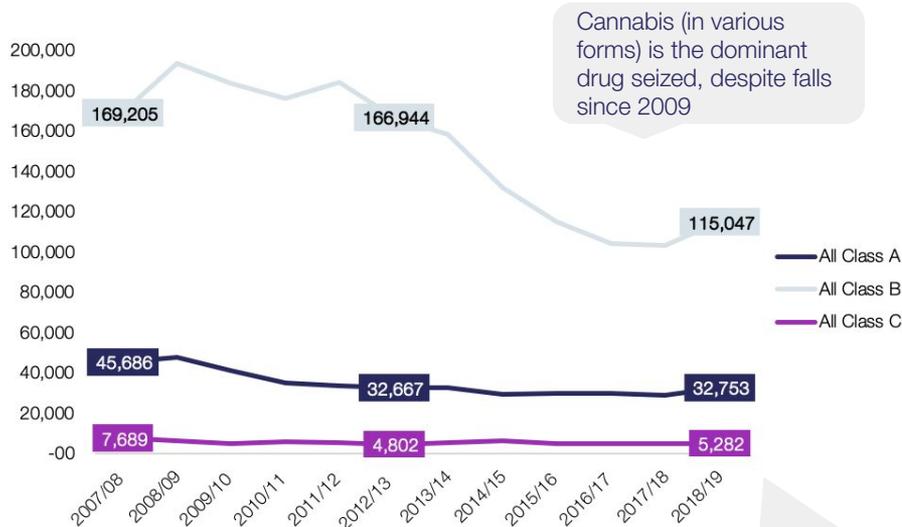
Whilst total stop and searches began falling in 2008/09, stop and search for drugs began to drop after, in 2012

Although the reduction in stop and search is related to Theresa May's focus on ethnic disproportionality, rather than deprioritisation of drugs, a consequence has been less policing of drugs.

At the same time, there has been a long-term drop in the seizure of all drugs, although Class A and B have both started to increase in the last year

Drug seizures have been falling for a decade for border forces and police forces. There has been a slight overall increase between 2017/18 and 2018/19

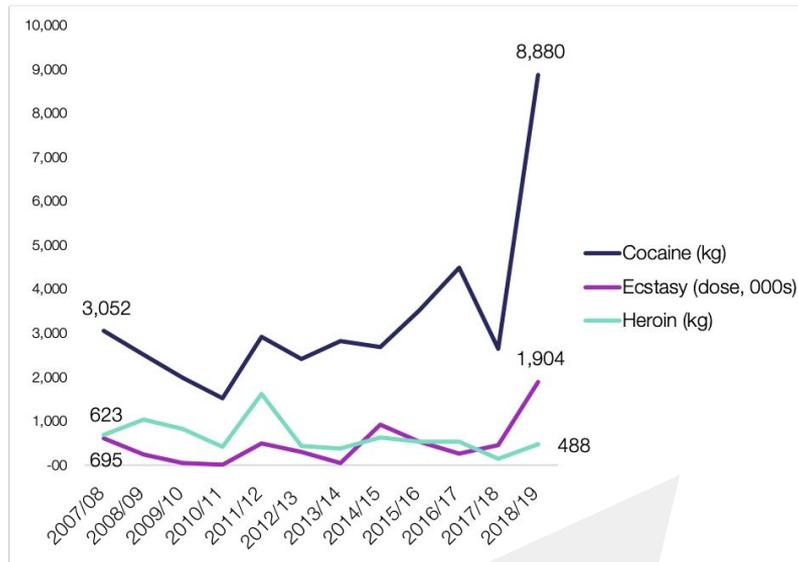
Total number of seizures made by police forces and Border Force



This increase may be linked to the increase in stop and search over the same time period (see previous slide)

In terms of volume, 2018-19 was a clear outlier in terms of the amount of cocaine seized by border forces

Total Class A quantity seized by police forces and Border Force*

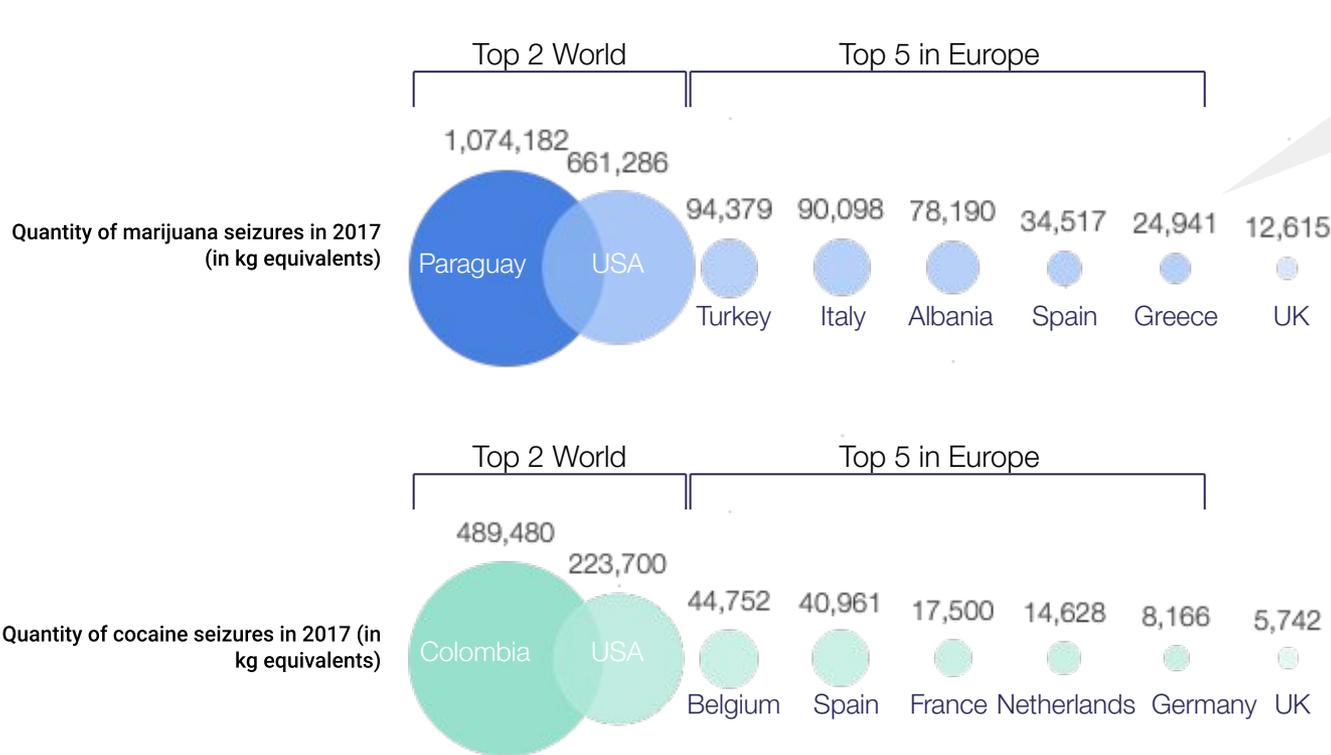


Although not included on the graph due to low numbers (*), virtually all crack cocaine seizures in England and Wales are made by the police forces, reflecting the domestic nature of crack cocaine production from imported cocaine powder in the UK

Source: Home Office: [Seizures of drugs in England and Wales](#).

*Crack, LSD, Methadone and Morphine have all been omitted from this chart due to low numbers (all less than 100 of their respective units)

The UK seizes significantly lower quantities of cocaine and cannabis than her European partners, despite the high prevalence of both drugs



These patterns in quantities seized are in line with the fact that the majority of drugs are seized through entry routes - the UK is not a transit country for cocaine and cannabis supply, but an end user.

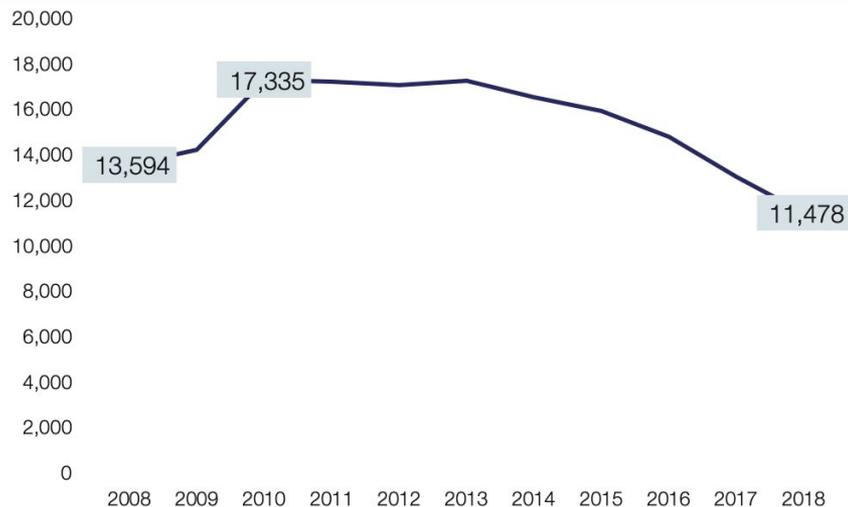
In 2017, the quantity of cannabis seized grew by 60%.

In 2017, the global quantity of cocaine seized rose by 13% to 1,275 tons, the largest reported ever.

At the same time, there has been a fall in the number of successful prosecutions for drugs offences. With drug trafficking convictions falling whilst demand is rising, more drug dealers are likely to be operating on the streets

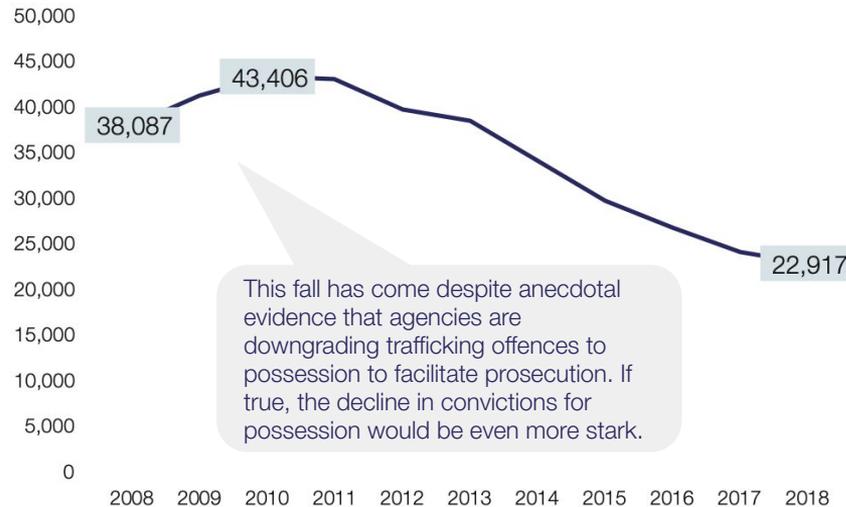
Drug trafficking offences have fallen by 34 per cent since 2010

Number of convictions for drug trafficking offences, 2008 - 2018



Over the same period, drug possession offences have fallen by 47 per cent despite possible downgrading of trafficking offences to possession by criminal justice agencies

Number of convictions for drug possession offences, 2008 - 2018



The police have reported that the thresholds for prosecuting drug traffickers have been increased, making it harder to bring convictions against known drug dealers

Forces do not understand enough about county lines criminality to tackle it as effectively as possible, and practitioners lack the tools to support those involved

In the case of 'county lines' it appears that forces have very little understanding of 'who controls the controllers' and also struggle to reconcile exploitation with criminal culpability

Law enforcement interviews revealed that operational activity is largely focused at street/retail level and rarely extends beyond those immediately directing the activities of the individuals completing deals with drug users.

Policing and the wider criminal justice system also seem to be struggling to contend with the blurred lines between grooming, exploitation and vulnerability on the one hand, and individual agency and criminal culpability on the other (noting the age of criminal responsibility is only 10 years in England and Wales).

This may be compounded by a combination of young people not recognising that they have been groomed and exploited and/or fear of explaining their circumstances due to retribution by the exploiters. In addition, there are concerns by police that claims of exploitation (including in the form of modern slavery) are being made falsely in order to avoid criminal convictions and sanctions.

Interviewees described the difficulties forces confronting local drug market violence can face in securing the cooperation of exporting forces

Difficulties joining intelligence together between forces was reported, notably phone call data that might help develop a clearer strategic understanding of market structures regionally and nationally.

More recent efforts to do so through ROCUs and the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre are evidently starting to highlight links that hadn't previously been identified and are now facilitating greater co-operation between forces.

The institutional landscape for tackling drug markets is confused, with a range of different organisations involved in enforcement:

102 separate law enforcement agencies or organisations are involved in tackling serious organised crime, with a further 43 involved including policy, justice and intelligence and security. A recent (2020) HMICFRS [inspection](#) into the Police and the National Crime Agency's response to county lines drug offending identified the need for greater collaboration and consistency to tackle the issue across forces.

There is a growing debate about the regulatory framework for drugs and the police's role in enforcing it

Drugs legalisation: a panacea?

There are three main arguments for legalising the possession of drugs:

1. **The desire to restrict the size of the illicit market;**
2. **Limiting the incarceration of vulnerable drug users;**
3. **To regulate drug use in a safer way.**

These arguments deserve to be considered seriously. However, there are reasons to be sceptical that such an approach would offer a panacea to drug-related harms. For example, decriminalising possession would not necessarily eradicate the illicit market; despite the legal status of tobacco, the selling of fake cigarettes is estimated to cost the taxpayer £2 billion a year in lost revenue.

There is little evidence that decriminalisation would make a significant dent in our prison population, with MoJ sentencing data showing that only 1.17 per cent of all those committed to immediate custody in 2018 had been found guilty of drug possession offences. Similarly, decriminalisation of the possession of all drugs would do little to address the supply-side violence relating to drugs such as crack cocaine and heroin.

A growing number of police forces are attracted to the notion of piloting different approaches to demand management

Mike Barton (former Chief Constable, Durham Police):

"When I've locked up [drug dealers] I've put them in the court and they've gone to prison for a long time. But two hours after I've locked them up, behind my back, two more violent drug dealers have tried to take over the patch, and the most violent one has won. So then I go after the most violent drug dealer that has taken over from the previous one and this is a Darwinian spiral of violence." - [BBC Question Time, 2020](#)

David Jamieson (Police and Crime Commissioner, West Midlands):

Laid out [proposals](#) oriented around the reduction of drug harms. These include Heroin Assisted Treatment for certain groups of addicts, a formal scheme for diversion away from the courts for addicts, and the introduction of safe consumption rooms in the West Midlands.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):

[Called](#) for society to have an evidence-based discussion about cannabis, in terms of the law, its enforcement, and support for those struggling with addiction, in an effort to reduce violent crime.

Debates about the legal framework largely stray beyond the remit of this report, but should be the subject of an evidence-based discussion

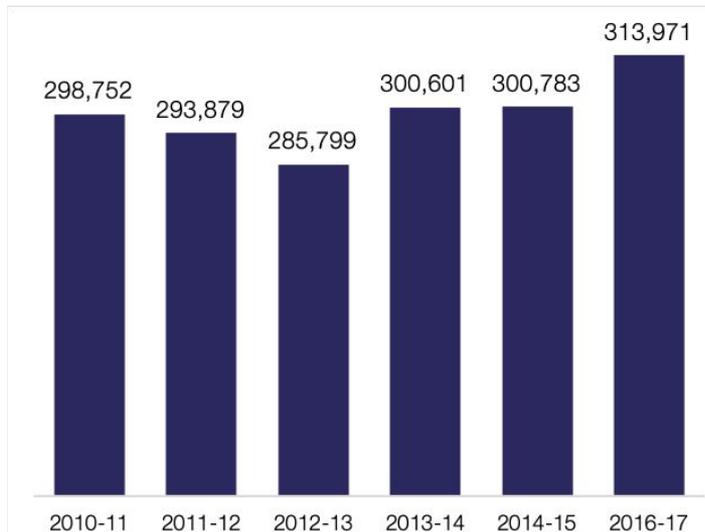
5.2 The preventative response (tackling demand)

Despite the growth in problematic drug use, analysis suggests a large proportion of problematic drug users are currently not in treatment

The number of users of opiates and/or crack are estimated to have been creeping up in recent years - driven by increased opiate, rather than crack use

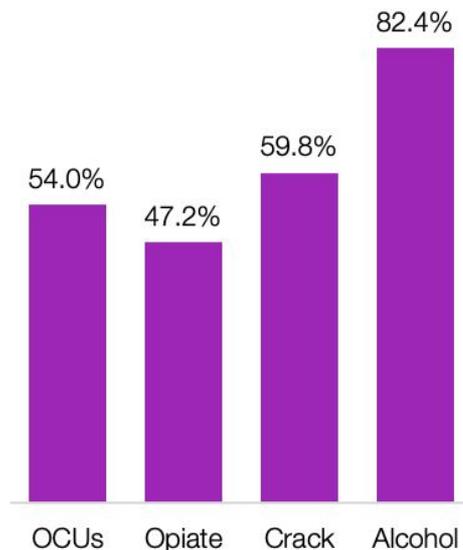
Just under half of opiate users (47 per cent) and six in ten (59.8 per cent) of crack users are not in treatment nationally

Estimated number of opiate and/or crack users (OCUs), England, 2010-11 to 2016-17*



We also heard that treatment for crack is largely based on psychological interventions without drug substitution treatment: and can be 'less attractive' for those wanting to deal with their addictions

Rate of unmet need (proportion of users, by drug type, in need of specialist treatment but not currently in treatment), nationally, June 2018

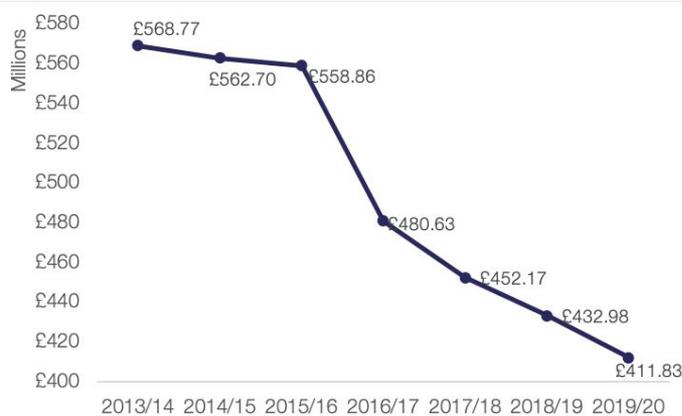


Local authorities are responsible for drug prevention and treatment services, but their budgets have steadily decreased since 2013/14, whilst drug related-deaths have been creeping up

Since 2013-14, local authorities have been responsible for drug treatment and prevention services. However, their budget for these services has gone down by 20% since then

The North East has the highest rate of drug misuse deaths, and has seen the most dramatic cuts to its drug service funding of all areas. It is now 40% below 2013-14 levels

Sum of local government budgets for drug services, 2013-14 to 2019-20*



In 2018, drug-related deaths reached their highest recorded level. The death rate was worst in north-east England, with 96.3 deaths per million related to drug misuse

Total amount budgeted by local authorities Budget for drug services (prevention and treatment) from revenue and expenditure data in north-east England, 2013-14 to 2019-20*



North-eastern drug service funding has gone down by twice as much as drug service funding across the country

6. Conclusions: links between SV and drugs markets

Reflecting on the totality of the evidence presented above, we can identify a broad narrative arc regarding the relationship between drug market and violent crime trends in England and Wales in recent years

- Principally, the increased international and national supply of cheaper and purer cocaine has driven the expansion of markets for both powder and crack cocaine, the latter typically sold with heroin
- Crack and heroin market expansion has in many cases been facilitated by the recruitment (often involving exploitation) of urban youths to conduct drug sales and the use of smartphone technology to market drugs and arrange deals, accompanied by increasing levels of violence including with weapons
- This violence is a consequence of market competition and the illicit nature of drug dealing, but seems also to result from the broader social and economic contexts within which crack and heroin dealing and use takes place and from which those engaged in sales are drawn
- Along with other factors including the local nature of many crack and heroin markets and competition for a relatively small number of prolific and dependent or problematic users, this seems likely to account for the much more visible relationship between crack and heroin dealing and violence than is seen for other drugs including powder cocaine

The conclusions from this work are summarised here, and the recommendations that flow from these are set out on the following pages:

- **The supply of Class A drugs has increased:** the wholesale and retail purity of powder cocaine, crack and heroin has increased in recent years to historically high levels, at the same time as prices have fallen. This forms part of an international trend, which includes the growth in cocaine production in South America.
- **This appears to have impacted demand for drugs in the UK:** there is evidence that powder and crack cocaine use – the latter primarily in combination with heroin – have increased in recent years, as has the use of other drugs such as ecstasy and ketamine.
- **Drug market dynamics have changed:** increased cocaine supply seems to have driven retail market expansion, notably (but not exclusively) in the form of ‘county lines’, controlled out of metropolitan hubs, dealing crack and heroin in provincial towns. A small, but increasing part of the market, is conducted online or through the dark web, which may be squeezing the profits of street-based gangs.
- **There is evidence that these dynamics are impacting the nature of crime within the UK:** the data shows a correlation between the growing availability of harmful drugs and the rise in serious violence, including a notable increase in the number of drug-related homicides. At the same time, the profile of those involved has changed: those convicted of class A drugs supply are getting younger.
- **Public services - both policing and health - have struggled to respond to these trends:** the UK is seizing less Class A drugs than its neighbours and prosecuting fewer drug dealers. At the same time, a growing number of problematic drug users are not in any treatment.
- **There remain wide gaps in knowledge:** significant gaps exist in the intelligence picture, most notably at middle market level and where drug markets cross police and law enforcement boundaries or remits. Partly this is a function of police cuts (fewer police analysts), but also relates to a failure across government to get to grips with changes in drug markets.

Recommendations: build a richer intelligence picture

Problem	Solution	Rationale
<p>Crest's research has highlighted significant gaps in the intelligence picture. In particular, government and law enforcement do not have a holistic understanding of drug market structures, both in respect of middle market and cross-border markets in relation to crack and heroin and down to retail level for other drug types.</p>	<p>The government should work collaboratively with universities and civil society (potentially through the new National Crime Lab) to develop a comprehensive research programme to explore the nature of drug markets (both internationally and within the UK) and the relationship to violence</p>	<p>Strengthening the national intelligence picture around drug markets (internationally and nationally)</p>
<p>This is a function of the relative deprioritisation of illicit drugs over the last decade; general lack of attention given to drug markets where violence doesn't feature; and a failure to go upstream of retail drugs markets during police investigations.</p>	<p>The Home Office should work with PCCs to ensure that a proportion of the 20k uplift in officer numbers is kept back for re-building police analyst teams, to strengthen local intelligence of drug markets</p>	<p>Rebuilding local intelligence capability within policing (much of which was lost post-2010)</p>

Recommendations: investing in prevention

Problem

Tackling the 'supply' of harmful drugs into the UK is necessary but not sufficient. Addressing the challenge of drug-related violence requires a programme of measures to reduce 'demand'.

Crest's research reveals that despite a surge in problematic drug use, the majority of these users (including over half of crack users) are not currently in treatment. At the same time, schools are struggling to cope with an increase in drug use amongst children, with exclusions for drugs at a ten year high.

Solution

Department of Health should set a new national target to increase the proportion of problematic users (primarily crack and heroin) receiving drug treatment

Department of Education should invest in a new national network of drug support workers in schools and Pupil Referral Units

Home Office should pilot a new and expanded Drug Intervention Programme to ensure more offenders are diverted into treatment and providing police and local authorities with the resources/ tools to proactively minimise harms from street-level dealing

Rationale

Increasing the number of PDUs in treatment will reduce the harms from problematic drug use and reduce demand

Early intervention to prevent drug misuse amongst children and reduce the risks of later involvement in violence

More proactive policing to minimise the harms from street-level dealing will make it harder for drug dealers to operate with impunity and create pathways out of crime for drug-related offenders

Recommendations: tougher enforcement

Problem

Over the last decade, there has been a dramatic fall in drug-related enforcement activity, at a time when both supply and demand of harmful drugs has been growing.

Seizures of Class A drugs have fallen as have the number of offenders being caught and convicted for drug trafficking offences.

This reflects a combination of factors, including the pressure on police budgets, changing priorities (with a growing emphasis on vulnerability and complex crimes) and a lack of focus from the top of government. The net result has been an environment in which drug dealing has become more lucrative

Solution

Home Office should work with PCCs to ensure there is a targeted drugs unit within every force in England and Wales

Re-focusing the Strategic Priorities of the National Crime Agency (set by the Home Secretary) so that they explicitly include the disruption of harmful drugs markets, such as heroin and crack cocaine;

Joint review by the Police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to investigate low levels of detection and prosecution of drug traffickers and dealers and explore the potential for better use of civil injunctions to limit county lines activity (e.g. restrictions on travel)

Rationale

Strengthen local intelligence/ prioritisation of drug markets and the relationship to violence

Ensuring policing is focused nationally on the enforcement of drug markets

Reduce the harm caused by drug trafficking and dealing

Annex I: methodology

Methodology

To explore the links between drugs market and violent crime trends, extensive fieldwork was carried out across England, including in-depth semi-structured interviews with well-informed law enforcement/police contacts from across the country; a deepdive in a London borough and interviews with contacts across the country

Data and document review

We used several sources of information to underpin our research, provide context and help shape our fieldwork approach. These included:

- Force management statements
- Government strategy documents and white papers
- Academic literature
- Nationally published data
- Locally held data
- Freedom of Information Requests to 43 police forces

Fieldwork

Our fieldwork took place between July and December 2019. This involved:

- **Interviews with professionals involved in law enforcement responses to drugs:** ten in-depth semi-structured interviews with well-informed law enforcement/police contacts and a roundtable with senior police officials in a metropolitan police force area
 - Interviews covered to varying degrees drug market trends, 'county lines' and criminal exploitation, drug market-related weapons trends, the role of technology, and overlaps with other types of offending. Interviewees covered the national picture, London, the North West and parts of Central, Eastern, South Eastern and Southern England, as well as some links into Scotland.
- **Local authority deepdive and interviews with professionals:** we spoke to 29 practitioners from a local authority to better understand the impact of serious violence on the ground and how much was perceived to be connected to drugs markets. We also analysed and reviewed local data and research.
- **Interviews with national agencies:** we engaged with the NCA; the Cabinet Office and the MPS.

Methodology

International sources for serious crime trends

Country	Source	Offences included under "Homicide"	Offences included under "Robbery"
England and Wales	ONS / Home Office - Recorded crime	Homicide (excluding attempted murder, mass murder and terror attacks)	Robbery
Australia	Bureau of Statistics - Recorded Crime, Victims	Murder, manslaughter	Robbery
Canada	Statistics Canada - Incident-based crime	Homicide (murder, manslaughter)	Robbery
Denmark	Statistics Denmark - Reported criminal offences by type of offence	Homicide (murder, voluntary manslaughter)	Robbery
France	Ministère de l'Intérieur, Insécurité et délinquance en 2018	Homicide (excluding terrorism victims)	Armed robbery, violent unarmed robbery
Germany	Police Crime Statistics - Cases: Basic Table	Murder, manslaughter and killing at his / her own request	Robbery, extortion resembling robbery, and assault on motorists with intent to rob
Italy	I-Stat - Crimes reported by the police to the judicial authority	Intentional homicides, infanticide, manslaughter	Robberies
Netherlands	StatLine - Homicide / robbery	Murder, manslaughter	Robbery
Scotland	Scottish Government - Recorded Crime in Scotland	Homicide (including murder, culpable homicide)	Robbery
Spain	Portal Estadístico de Criminalidad - Hechos conocidos	Completed intentional homicide	Robbery with violence or intimidation
Sweden	BRA - Reported offences	Completed murder, manslaughter, and assault resulting in death	Robbery, aggravated robbery
USA	FBI - Violent Crime 2017	Murder and non-negligent homicide	Robbery

Thank you

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