



COCAINE

KEY POINTS

- Cocaine remains among the most consumed and seized drugs worldwide.
- While the total area under coca bush cultivation decreased in 2019, the estimated weight of cocaine produced increased to record levels.
- Colombia accounted for two-thirds of the global area under coca bush cultivation, with drug profiling indicating that the majority of both border detections and domestic cocaine seizures originated from coca leaf grown in Colombia.
- Indicators of supply and demand point to a continuing expansion of the cocaine market in Australia.
 - The weight of cocaine detected at the border reached the highest level on record in 2020–21.
 - Both the number and weight of national cocaine seizures increased in 2020–21, with the number of cocaine seizures increasing to a record level.
 - There was a record number of national cocaine arrests.



National cocaine market point in time annual and decade trend comparison

		2019–20 and 2020–21	2011–12 and 2020–21
Border detections	Number	⬇️ -18% 2,660 → 2,169	⬆️ 122% 979 → 2,169
	Weight	⬆️ 237% 763kg → 2,575kg ^a	⬆️ 228% 785kg → 2,575kg
National seizures	Number	⬆️ 12% 5,750 → 6,452 ^a	⬆️ 383% 1,336 → 6,452 ^a
	Weight	⬆️ 181% 1,573kg → 4,420kg	⬆️ 362% 956kg → 4,420kg
National arrests		⬆️ 10% 5,393 → 5,958 ^a	⬆️ 499% 995 → 5,958 ^a
Price ^b (\$)		⬇️ \$80 → \$65	⬆️ \$60 → \$65
Annual median purity range		⬆️ 40.5% to 67.0% → 22.0% to 62.5%	⬆️ 18.7% to 52.5% → 22.0% to 62.5%
DUMA ^c	Urinalysis	⬆️ 2% → 3% ^a	⬆️ 1% → 3% ^a
NDSHS ^d	Use in lifetime	⬆️ 9% → 11%	⬆️ 7% → 11%
	Recent use	⬆️ 3% → 4%	⬆️ 2% → 4%

a. Highest on record.

b. National median prices for a street deal, equivalent to 0.2 grams of cocaine. National median price used data reported by New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia only in 2011–12, and New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania only in 2019–20.

c. Drug Use Monitoring in Australia program. Data reflects the proportion of detainees testing positive to cocaine.

d. National Drug Strategy Household Survey. Data reflects the proportion of the Australian population aged 14 years or older who reported having used cocaine in 2010 and 2019 (decade trend) and 2016 and 2019 (annual trend).

MAIN FORMS

Cocaine (benzoylmethylecgonine) is a naturally occurring psychoactive alkaloid and stimulant found in specific varieties of the coca plant, in particular *Erythroxylum coca* (*E. coca*) and *Erythroxylum novogranatense* (*E. novogranatense*).

- *E. coca* and *E. novogranatense* are native to the Andes region of western South America.
 - *E. coca* is cultivated in the Plurinational State of Bolivia (Bolivia) and Peru.
 - *E. novogranatense* is cultivated in Colombia and Central America.
- The 2 most common forms of cocaine are hydrochloride salt and cocaine base.
 - Powdered hydrochloride is the most common form of cocaine in Australia, which can be snorted, rubbed into the gums or dissolved in water and injected.
 - Cocaine base, often referred to as ‘crack’, has a rock crystal appearance and is readily converted into vapour with heat, making it suitable for inhalation. Crack cocaine is not commonly encountered in Australia (Baker et al. 2004; US DEA 1993).

INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

Cocaine continues to remain one of the most consumed and seized drugs worldwide. An estimated 20 million people globally reported cocaine use in the previous 12 months in 2019, an increase from 19 million people in 2018. The total area under coca bush cultivation globally decreased in 2019, while the weight of cocaine produced increased to record levels. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that the total area under coca bush cultivation globally decreased 5%, from 244,200 hectares in 2018 to 234,200 hectares in 2019. This was mainly the result of the 9% decrease in the area under coca bush cultivation reported by Colombia in 2019. However, there was a 4% increase in the estimated weight of potential cocaine production worldwide, from 1,723 tonnes in 2018 to 1,784 tonnes in 2019 at 100% purity, which was the highest weight on record for the second consecutive year (UNODC 2020a; UNODC 2021a).

The 3 primary cocaine producing countries in 2019 were Colombia (which accounted for two-thirds of the global area under coca bush cultivation), Peru (23%) and Bolivia (11%). In Colombia, while there has been a decrease in the area under coca bush cultivation in the past 2 years, the estimated quantity of cocaine produced increased over the same period. The area under coca bush cultivation in Colombia decreased by 9% from 169,000 hectares in 2018 to 154,000 hectares in 2019 and further decreased by 7% to 143,000 hectares in 2020. Conversely, the estimated quantity of coca leaf produced increased 2% between 2018 and 2019, with a further increase (<1%) between 2019 and 2020. In Bolivia, the area under coca bush cultivation increased by 10% from 23,100 hectares in 2018 to 25,500 hectares in 2019 and further increased by 15% to 29,400 hectares in 2020. The estimated quantity of coca leaf produced increased by 11% between 2018 and 2019 and increased by 17% in 2020. In Peru, the area under coca bush cultivation remained relatively stable in 2019, increasing 1% from 2018 (UNODC 2020b; UNODC 2020c; UNODC 2021a; UNODC 2021b).



Based on UNODC data, the weight of cocaine seized globally continued to increase to record levels for the fifth consecutive year, increasing by 10% from 1,311 tonnes in 2018 to 1,436 tonnes (of varying purities) in 2019. Between 2009 and 2019 the weight of cocaine seized globally increased by 90%, which is likely a reflection of factors such as an increase in cocaine manufacture (50% increase over the same period) and an increase in cocaine trafficking. In 2019, global cocaine seizures remained concentrated in the Americas and Europe (particularly in Western and Central Europe). The Americas continued to account for the majority (83%) of the weight of cocaine seized globally in 2019, of which South America accounted for the largest proportion of seizures. The weight of cocaine seized in South America increased 5% to a record 755 tonnes in 2019, with most countries in the subregion including Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia and Peru reporting increases in the same reporting period (UNODC 2020a; UNODC 2021a).

According to the World Customs Organization (WCO), the number and weight of cocaine seized increased in 2021. The number of cocaine seizures increased to 9,613 in 2021 and accounted for 13% of the total number of reported drug seizures. The weight of cocaine seized increased 27%, from 326,439 kilograms in 2020 to 413,231 kilograms in 2021. With the exception of crack cocaine, which decreased almost 100%, the weight of all cocaine types seized increased in 2021 (cocaine base increased 109% and cocaine solution increased 198%; WCO 2022).

DOMESTIC TRENDS

AUSTRALIAN BORDER SITUATION

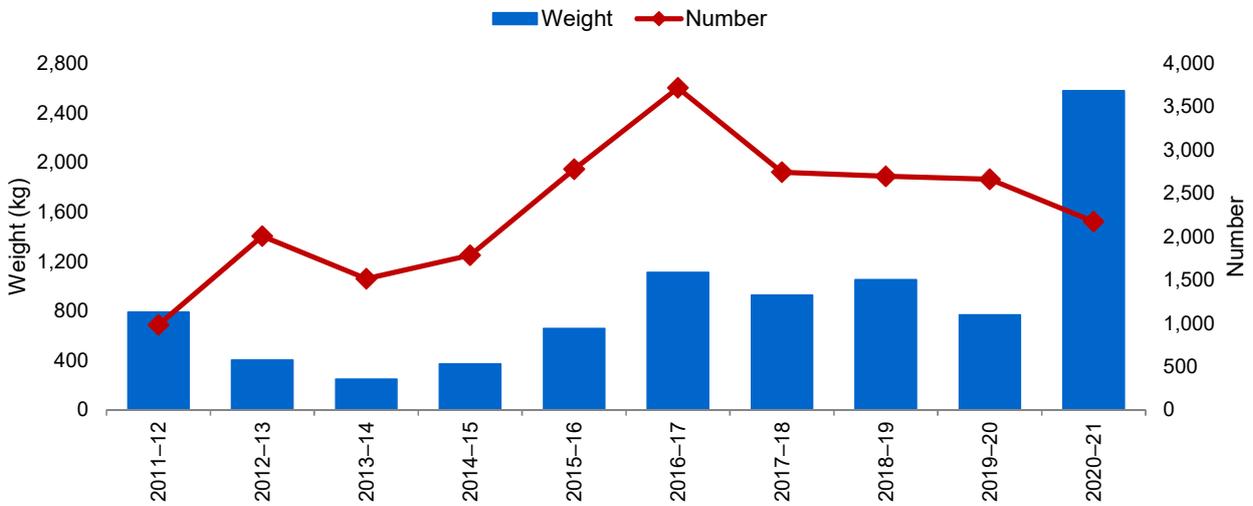
The number of cocaine detections at the Australian border increased 122%, from 979 in 2011–12 to 2,169 in 2020–21. The number of cocaine detections decreased by 18% this reporting period, from 2,660 in 2019–20.

The weight of cocaine detected increased 228%, from 785.7 kilograms in 2011–12 to a record 2,575.8 kilograms in 2020–21, more than double the previous record weight in 2016–17 (1,109.5 kilograms). The weight of cocaine detected increased by 237% this reporting period, from 763.6 kilograms in 2019–20.

In 2020–21, 108 of the 2,169 cocaine detections (5%) weighed one kilogram or more. With a combined weight of 2,491.8 kilograms, the 108 detections account for 97% of the weight of cocaine detected in 2020–21 (see Figure 19).⁴¹

⁴¹ See Appendix 2 for significant border detections of cocaine in 2020–21.

FIGURE 19: Number and weight of cocaine detections at the Australian border, 2011–12 to 2020–21 (Source: Department of Home Affairs)



IMPORTATION METHODS

In 2020–21, detections of cocaine at the Australian border occurred in the air cargo, air passenger/crew, international mail and sea cargo streams. By number, international mail continued to account for the greatest proportion of cocaine detections (89%), followed by air cargo (11%), sea cargo (<1%) and air passenger/crew (<1%). By weight, air cargo accounted for the greatest proportion of cocaine detections (53%), followed by sea cargo (44%), international mail (3%) and air passenger/crew (<1%).

EMBARKATION POINTS

In 2020–21, 46 countries were identified as embarkation points for cocaine detected at the Australian border, compared to 42 countries in 2019–20. By weight, the United Kingdom was the primary embarkation point for cocaine detected in 2020–21. Other key embarkation points by weight this reporting period included Italy, Brazil, China (including Hong Kong), South Africa, the United States, Belgium, Greece, Germany and Canada.

DRUG PROFILING

According to data from the Australian Federal Police (AFP) Forensic Drug Intelligence (FDI) team:⁴²

- In 2020, the weight of mixed origin seizures surpassed that of Colombian cocaine, accounting for 56% of the total seizure weight. This is largely driven by a change in the sampling methodology for large illicit drug seizures (LIDS) made by the AFP, resulting in an inability to accurately attribute the bulk weight for seizures with variations in profiling results.⁴³

⁴² Profiling data relate to seizures investigated by the AFP and from which samples were submitted to the NMI for routine analysis and profiling. For all reporting years, the data represents a snapshot across the applicable reporting period. These figures cannot reflect seizures that have not been submitted for forensic examination due to prioritisation of law enforcement resources or those that have passed through the border undetected. Certain seizures/samples, such as those containing swabs or trace material, have been omitted from the analysis as they are not amenable to chemical profiling. It is difficult to extrapolate the impact of any observed border trends on drugs reaching consumers i.e. street level seizures in Australia. Samples from selected state and territory jurisdictions are submitted for chemical profiling as part of the Enhanced National Intelligence Picture on Illicit Drugs (ENIPID) project.

⁴³ The bulk weight of seizures containing cocaine of more than one geographical origin (Colombian & Peruvian/ Colombian & Unclassified) have been separated and attributed to their respective classifications. Due to a change in the sampling methodology for LIDS made by the AFP, seizure weights cannot be accurately attributed to a geographic origin for LIDS seizures with variations in profiling. As a result, the bulk weight of LIDS seizures containing cocaine of more than one geographical origin were assigned to the mixed category.

- Consistent with previous reporting periods, no cocaine of Bolivian origin was detected by the AFP during 2020. This is likely the result of coca leaf cultivation within the region accounting for only 11% of the global total, as noted in the World Drug Report 2021 (UNODC 2021a).

TABLE 11: Geographical origin of coca leaf used to produce cocaine as a proportion of analysed AFP border seizures (by number), 2012–June 2021⁴⁴ (Source: Australian Federal Police, Forensic Drug Intelligence)

Year	Colombia %	Peru %	Bolivia %	Mixed %	Unclassified %
Jan–Jun 2021 ^a	83.3	–	–	4.8	11.9
2020 ^a	65.6	4.5	–	9.0	20.9
2019	66.7	8.8	–	7.0	17.5
2018	55.2	11.9	–	9.0	23.9
2017	59.6	11.9	–	13.8	14.7
2016	75.9	0.9	–	9.3	13.9
2015	53.6	13.1	2.4	5.9	25.0
2014	47.9	43.8	1.4	6.9	–
2013	64.1	28.2	–	5.1	2.6
2012	55.3	29.1	–	5.9	9.7

TABLE 12: Geographical origin of coca leaf used to produce cocaine as a proportion of total bulk weight of analysed AFP border seizures, 2012–June 2021⁴⁵ (Source: Australian Federal Police, Forensic Drug Intelligence)

Year	Colombia %	Peru %	Bolivia %	Mixed %	Unclassified %
Jan–Jun 2021 ^a	96.0	-	-	0.9	3.1
2020 ^a	26.2	0.9	-	55.8	17.1
2019	47.0	1.6	–	49.5	1.9
2018	56.0	13.3	–	–	30.7
2017	63.6	3.6	–	<0.1	32.8
2016	84.1	1.8	–	–	14.1
2015	49.9	8.9	0.1	34.7	6.4
2014	67.2	31.8	0.9	0.1	–
2013	9.9	90.0	–	–	0.1
2012	23.7	74.3	–	1.3	0.7

a. Due to a change in methodology for LIDS made by the AFP, seizure weights cannot be accurately attributed for LIDS with variations in profiling.

⁴⁴ The data may also include seizures destined for Australia which occurred offshore.

⁴⁵ The data may also include seizures destined for Australia which occurred offshore.

According to the AFP’s Enhanced National Intelligence Picture on Illicit Drugs (ENIPID) project:⁴⁶

- Cocaine samples submitted to the ENIPID capability throughout the reporting period continue to reflect the higher prevalence of Colombian cocaine in the Australian market. However there has been a large increase in the number of mixed/unclassified samples submitted by New South Wales and Victoria throughout the reporting period (see Appendix 3, Table 3).
- Cocaine samples of Peruvian origin have decreased and no cocaine samples submitted to the ENIPID project for this reporting period were identified as originating in Bolivia. Samples with a geographic origin classification of Peruvian or Bolivian, or Colombian or Peruvian were attributed to the unclassified/mixed category.

DOMESTIC MARKET INDICATORS

According to data from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS):

- The proportion of the Australian population aged 14 years or older who reported having used cocaine at least once in their lifetime increased, from 7% in 2010 to 11% in 2019. In 2016 this proportion was 9%.
- The proportion of the Australian population aged 14 years or older who reported having recently⁴⁷ used cocaine increased, from 2% in 2010 to 4% in 2019. In 2016 this proportion was 3% (AIHW 2020).

According to the ACIC’s National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program (NWDMP) data for August 2020 to August 2021:

- Cocaine consumption was higher per capita in capital city sites than regional sites.
- The population-weighted average consumption of cocaine decreased in both capital city and regional sites.
- The ACIC estimates that around 4.7 tonnes of cocaine was consumed in Australia in the year ending 31 August 2021, a decrease from 5.6 tonnes of cocaine consumed in the previous year (ACIC 2022).

The below data reflect drug use within sentinel groups which provide valuable insight into patterns of drug use and market trends and can assist in the identification of emerging issues that require further monitoring.

According to Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) data:

- The proportion of respondents reporting the recent use⁴⁸ of cocaine remained stable at 15% in 2012 and 2021. In 2020 this proportion was 17%.
- The reported median number of days of cocaine use in the 6 months preceding interview remained stable at 3 days in 2012 and 2021. The median number of days remain unchanged from 2020 (Sutherland et al. 2021a).

According to Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) data:

- The proportion of respondents reporting cocaine as their drug of choice remained relatively stable, increasing from 13% in 2012 to 14% in 2021. In 2020 this proportion was 12%.

⁴⁶ The Proceeds of Crime Act-funded ENIPID project officially concluded on 30 June 2016. Since then, the ENIPID capability has been integrated into core AFP Forensic Drug Intelligence duties to ensure its continued delivery through AFP Forensics.

⁴⁷ In the NDSHS, recent use refers to reported use in the 12 months preceding the survey.

⁴⁸ In both the Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) and Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS), recent use refers to reported use in the 6 months preceding interview.



- The proportion of respondents reporting recent use of cocaine doubled, increasing from 40% in 2012 to 80% in 2021. In 2020 this proportion was 68%.
- The reported median number of days of cocaine use in the 6 months preceding interview remained relatively stable, increasing from 3 days in 2012 to 5 days in 2021. In 2020 the number of days was 4 (Sutherland et al. 2021b).

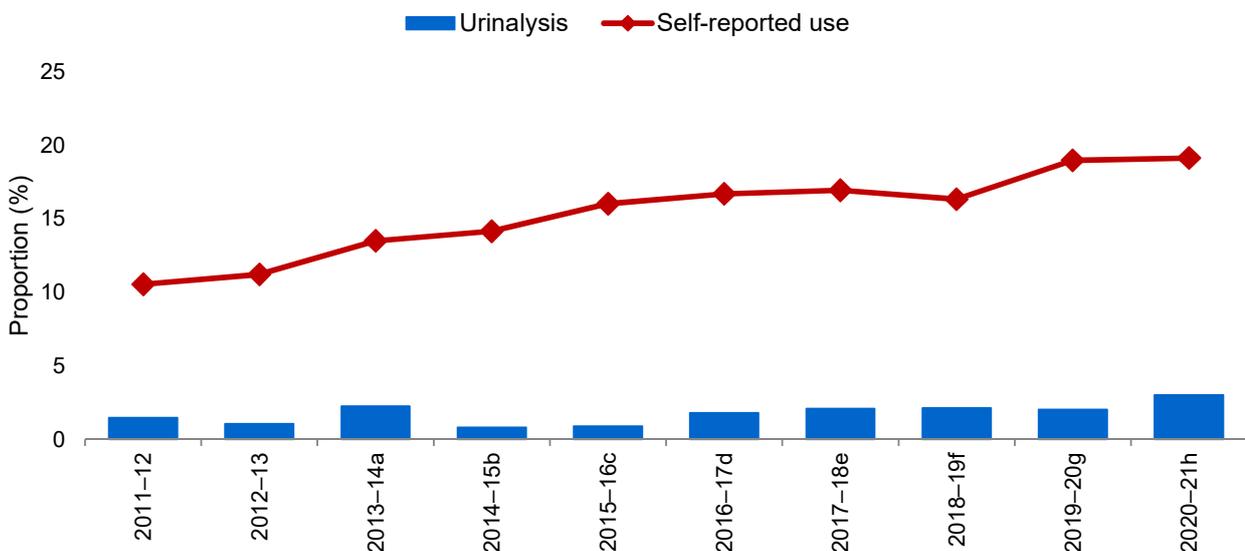
According to the Australian Needle and Syringe Program Survey (ANSPS) data:

- The proportion of respondents reporting cocaine as the last drug injected remained stable at 1% in 2011, 2019 and 2020 (Heard et al. 2020; Heard et al. 2021).

According to Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) program data:

- The proportion of detainees testing positive to cocaine and self-reporting cocaine use generally increased over the last decade.
- The proportion of detainees testing positive to cocaine ranged from 1% in 2014–15 to 3% in 2020–21. In 2019–20 this proportion was 2%.
- The proportion of detainees self-reporting recent cocaine use⁴⁹ over the last decade ranged from 11% in 2011–12 to 19% in 2019–20 and 2020–21 (see Figure 20).

FIGURE 20: National proportion of detainees testing positive for cocaine compared with self-reported recent use, 2011–12 to 2020–21 (Source: Australian Institute of Criminology)



- Urine was collected in the third and fourth quarter of 2013 and the first quarter of 2014.
- Urine was collected in the third quarter of 2014 and the first and second quarter of 2015.
- Urine was collected in the third quarter of 2015 and the first and second quarter of 2016.
- Urine was collected in the third quarter of 2016 and the second quarter of 2017.
- Urine was collected in the third quarter of 2017 in Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth; the fourth quarter of 2017 in Bankstown; and the first quarter of 2018 in Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth and Surry Hills.
- Urine was collected in the third quarter of 2018 in Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth; the fourth quarter of 2018 in Bankstown; and the first quarter of 2019 in Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth and Surry Hills.
- Urine was collected in the third quarter of 2019 in Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth; the fourth quarter of 2018 in Bankstown; and the first quarter of 2020 in Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth and Surry Hills.
- Urine was collected in the second quarter of 2021 in Adelaide, Bankstown, Brisbane and Perth.

⁴⁹ Recent use in the DUMA program refers to self-reported use in the 12 months prior to arrest.

PRICE

At the street level, the price of cocaine is generally measured as a ‘cap’ or in grams. Nationally, the price range for one cap (0.2 grams) of cocaine increased over the last decade, ranging between \$50 and \$100 in 2011–12 to between \$50 and \$200 in 2020–21. In 2019–20, the reported price ranged from \$50 to \$200. The median price for one cap of cocaine remained relatively stable over the last decade, from a median of \$60 in 2011–12 (reported in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia) to a national median of \$65 in 2020–21. The median price was \$80 in 2019–20 (reported in New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania).

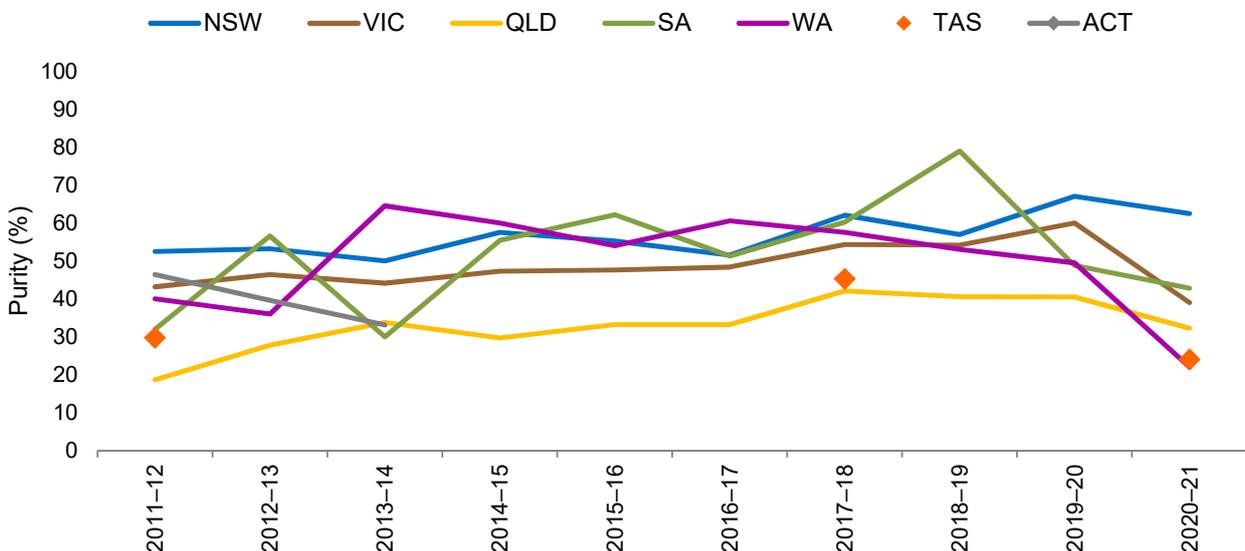
Nationally, the price range for one gram of cocaine increased, ranging between \$250 and \$500 in 2011–12 to between \$200 and \$600 in 2020–21 (noting there is a large overlap in price ranges). The reported price range was between \$300 and \$600 in 2019–20. The national median price for one gram of cocaine increased, from \$375 in 2011–12 to \$400 in 2020–21. The national median price in 2019–20 was \$412.50.

Nationally, the price range for one kilogram of cocaine increased, ranging between \$190,000 and \$300,000 in 2011–12 to between \$130,000 and \$410,000 in 2020–21 (noting there is a large overlap in price ranges). In 2019–20, the reported price ranged from \$150,000 to \$330,000. The national median price for one kilogram of cocaine remained stable, at \$220,000 in both 2011–12 and 2020–21. The national median price in 2019–20 was \$210,000.

PURITY

Since 2011–12, the annual median purity of analysed cocaine samples ranged between 19% (reported in 2011–12) and 79% (reported in 2018–19). In 2020–21, the annual median purity ranged from 22% in Western Australia to 63% in New South Wales. Annual median cocaine purity decreased over the last decade, with fluctuations occurring in the intervening years. New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia all reported an increase in the annual median cocaine purity across the decade, while Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia all recorded decreases in annual cocaine purity. In 2020–21 the 5 states which provided data in 2019–20 reported a decrease in the annual median purity of cocaine (see Figure 21).

FIGURE 21: Annual median purity of cocaine samples, 2011–12 to 2020–21





AVAILABILITY

In a 2021 report of a national study of people who regularly inject drugs, the proportion of respondents reporting cocaine as ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’ to obtain increased from 65% in 2012 to 68% in 2021. Data on availability of cocaine in 2020 was not published (Sutherland et al. 2021a).

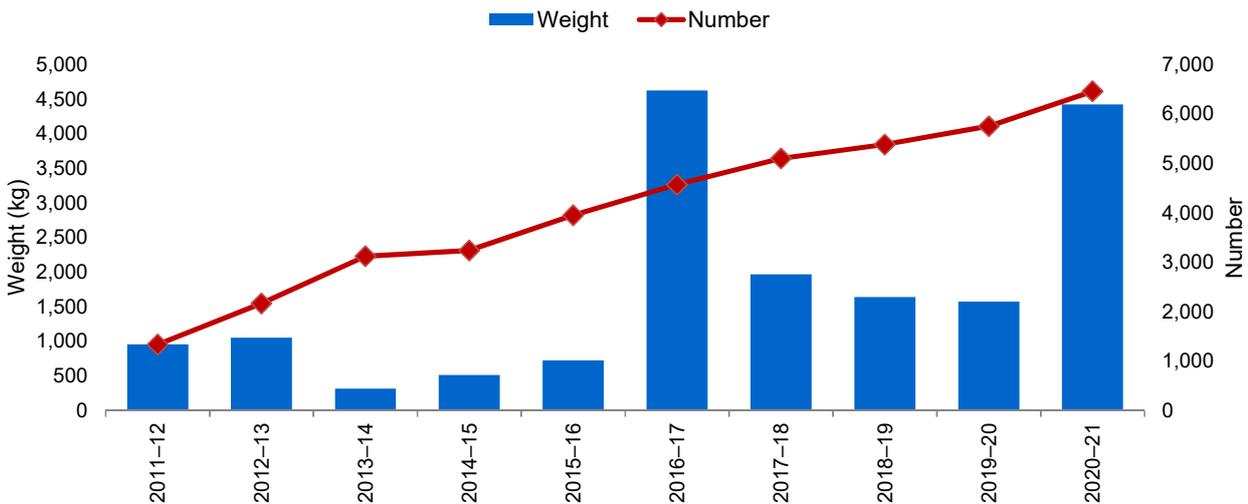
In a 2021 national study of people who regularly use ecstasy and other stimulants, the proportion of respondents reporting cocaine as easy or very easy to obtain increased, from 67% in 2020 to 77% in 2021. This is an increase from the 49% in 2012 (Sutherland et al. 2021b).

SEIZURES

The number of national cocaine seizures increased 383%, from 1,336 in 2011–12 to a record 6,452 in 2020–21. The number of national cocaine seizures increased 12% this reporting period from 5,750 in 2019–20.

The weight of cocaine seized nationally increased 362%, from 956.3 kilograms in 2011–12 to 4,420.7 kilograms in 2020–21. The weight of cocaine seized nationally more than doubled this reporting period, increasing 181% from 1,573.8 kilograms in 2019–20 (see Figure 22).

FIGURE 22: National cocaine seizures, by number and weight, 2011–12 to 2020–21



Tasmania reported the greatest percentage increase in the number of cocaine seizures in 2020–21, while the Australian Capital Territory reported the greatest percentage increase in the weight of cocaine seized. This reporting period New South Wales continued to account for the greatest proportion of both the number (62%) and weight (75%) of cocaine seized nationally (see Table 13).

TABLE 13: Number, weight and percentage change of national cocaine seizures, 2019–20 and 2020–21

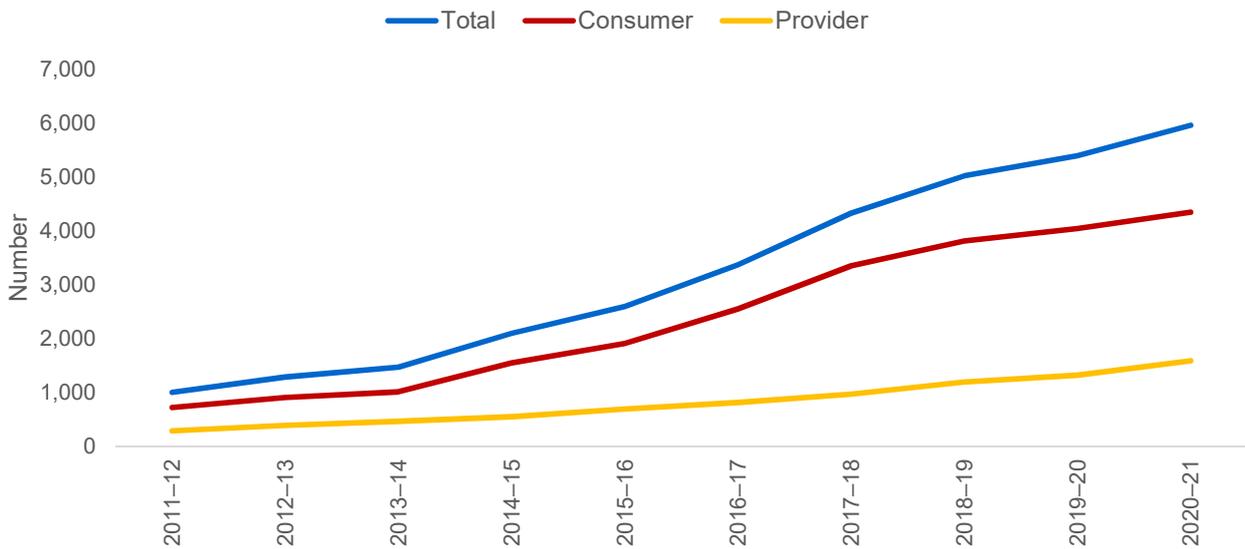
State/Territory ^a	Number			Weight (grams)		
	2019–20	2020–21	% change	2019–20	2020–21	% change
New South Wales	3,725	4,026	8.1	1,068,733	3,303,698	209.1
Victoria	394	398	1.0	69,240	231,896	234.9
Queensland	877	1,089	24.2	33,742	789,401	2,239.5
South Australia	38	61	60.5	2,158	2,282	5.7
Western Australia	541	604	11.6	397,460	29,153	-92.7
Tasmania	30	90	200.0	97	912	840.2
Northern Territory	27	39	44.4	262	211	-19.5
Australian Capital Territory	118	145	22.9	2,161	63,235	2,826.2
Total	5,750	6,452	12.2	1,573,853	4,420,788	180.9

a. Includes seizures by state and territory police and Australian Federal Police for which a valid seizure weight was recorded.

ARRESTS

The number of national cocaine arrests increased 499%, from 995 in 2011–12 to a record 5,958 in 2020–21. The number of national cocaine arrests increased 10% this reporting period from 5,393 in 2019–20. Consumer arrests continue to account for the greatest proportion of arrests, accounting for 73% of national cocaine arrests in 2020–21 (see Figure 23).

FIGURE 23: Number of national cocaine arrests, 2011–12 to 2020–21



While starting from a low base, the Northern Territory reported the greatest percentage increase in the number of cocaine arrests in 2020–21. This reporting period New South Wales accounted for the greatest proportion of national cocaine arrests (46%; see Table 14).

TABLE 14: Number and percentage change of national cocaine arrests, 2019–20 and 2020–21

State/Territory ^a	Arrests		
	2019–20	2020–21	% change
New South Wales	2,590	2,740	5.8
Victoria	1,124	1,162	3.4
Queensland	1,088	1,430	31.4
South Australia	166	219	31.9
Western Australia	326	305	-6.4
Tasmania	13	13	0.0
Northern Territory	5	25	400.0
Australian Capital Territory	81	64	-21.0
Total	5,393	5,958	10.5

a. The arrest data for each state and territory include Australian Federal Police data.

SUMMARY

Cocaine continues to be among the most consumed and seized substances worldwide. Between 2018 and 2019, the total area under coca bush cultivation decreased while coca leaf production increased. Despite decreases, Colombia continues to account for the greatest proportion of the total coca bush cultivation. In 2019, the weight of cocaine seized reached record levels for the fifth consecutive year, with the majority of seizures concentrated in the Americas and Western and Central Europe.

Indicators of supply and demand point to a continued expansion of the Australian cocaine market, with demand indicators pointing to increases in consumption.

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