

COCAINE

KEY POINTS

- Colombia continues to be the main producer of cocaine in the world, with production expanding in 2015–16. Domestic profiling indicates that while there has been an increase in cocaine samples from Peru, Colombia continues to be the main source of cocaine detected in Australia.
- Indicators of cocaine supply and demand point to an expansion of the market in Australia.
 - While the number and weight of cocaine detections at the Australian border decreased this reporting period, they remain comparatively high.
 - There was a record number of national cocaine seizures in 2017–18. While the weight of cocaine seized nationally more than halved this reporting period, it is the second highest weight recorded in the last decade.
 - There was a record number of national cocaine arrests in 2017–18.
 - Using data from the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program, the ACIC estimates more than 4.1 tonnes of cocaine is consumed in Australia each year, with the estimated weight of cocaine consumed nationally increasing from the first to the second year of the program.



MAIN FORMS

Cocaine (benzoylecgonine) 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 two most common forms of cocaine are hydrochloride salt and cocaine base.
 - Powdered hydrochloride is the most common form of cocaine available 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

Globally, the total area under coca bush cultivation continued to increase in 2016. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that the total global area under coca bush cultivation increased by 36.0 per cent between 2015 and 2016. The three Andean countries and primary cocaine producing nations of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, all recorded increases in coca bush cultivation in 2016. Colombia accounted for close to 70 per cent of the global area under coca cultivation in 2016, with Peru and Bolivia each accounting for 21.0 per cent and 10.0 per cent respectively of global coca cultivation in 2016 (UNODC 2018a).

Colombia recorded an increase in the net area under coca cultivation, increasing from 146,000 hectares in 2016 to 171,000 hectares in 2017. The total area under cultivation in Peru increased, from 43,900 hectares in 2016 to 49,900 hectares in 2017. The total area under coca cultivation in Bolivia increased between 2016 and 2017, from 23,100 hectares in 2016 to 24,500 in 2017 (SIMCI-UNODC 2018; UNODC 2018a; UNODC 2018b; UNODC 2018c).

Increases in the area under coca bush cultivation globally contributed to an increase in cocaine production. The UNODC estimates that global cocaine manufacture reached approximately 1,410 tonnes in 2016—a 25.0 per cent increase on 2015 figures. Colombia accounted for an estimated 866 tonnes of cocaine in 2016, which represents a 34.0 per cent increase on 2015 figures (SIMCI-UNODC 2018; UNODC 2018a).

According to the 2018 World Drug Report, the reported weight of cocaine seized globally increased from 864 tonnes in 2015 to 1,129 tonnes in 2016, the highest weight ever reported. The Americas (with Colombia and the United States accounting for the highest country-level seizure totals) accounted for the majority (90.0 per cent) of the weight of cocaine seized globally in 2016, followed by Western and Central Europe (8.0 per cent).



In Asia, the weight of cocaine seized tripled between 2015 and 2016. In both the Near and Middle East/South-West Asia and in Africa, the weight of cocaine seized doubled over the same period. Oceania reported a considerable increase in the weight of cocaine seized (75.0 per cent), with Australia accounting for 98.0 per cent of cocaine seized in this region (UNODC 2018a; UNODC 2017).

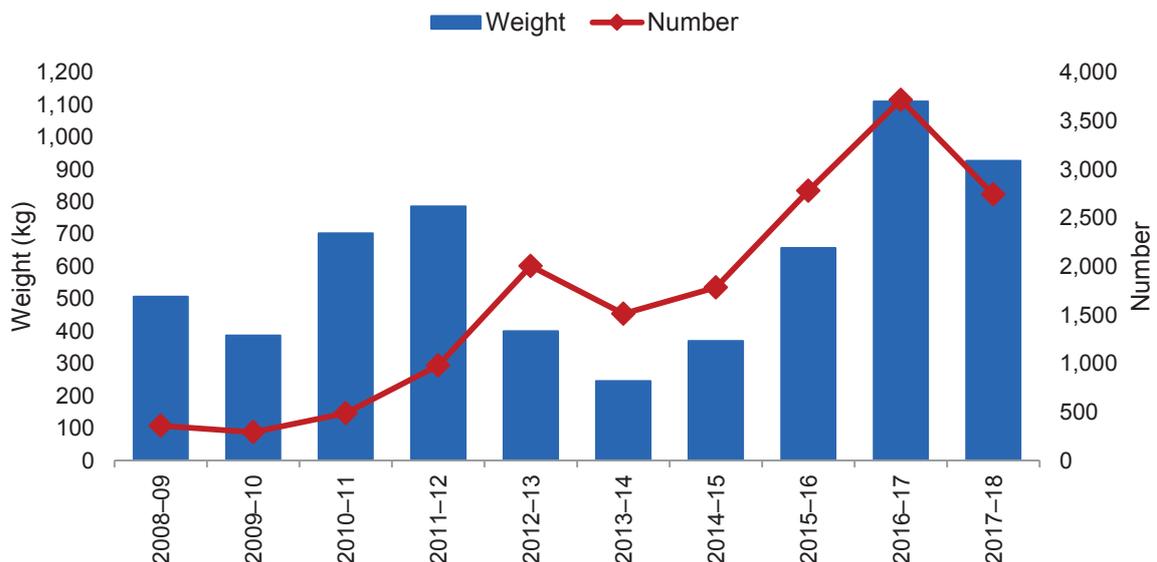
The number of cocaine seizures reported by World Customs Organization (WCO) agencies increased by 16.2 per cent, from 5,144 in 2016 to 5,975 in 2017. Compared to 2016 data, the total weight of cocaine seized globally in 2017 decreased by 8.4 per cent, from 211,217 kilograms to 193,573 kilograms (WCO 2018).

DOMESTIC TRENDS

AUSTRALIAN BORDER SITUATION

The number and weight of cocaine detections at the Australian border decreased in 2017–18. The number of cocaine detections decreased 26.2 per cent this reporting period, from a record 3,715 in 2016–17 to 2,741 in 2017–18. The weight of cocaine detected at the Australian border decreased 16.5 per cent this reporting period, from a record 1,109.5 kilograms in 2016–17 to 926.5 kilograms in 2017–18 (see Figure 19). In 2017–18, 72 cocaine detections (or 2.6 per cent), weighed one kilogram or more. With a combined weight of 854.4 kilograms, these 72 detections account for 92.2 per cent of the weight of cocaine detected in 2017–18.⁷⁶

FIGURE 19: Number and weight of cocaine detections at the Australian border, 2008–09 to 2017–18 (Source: Department of Home Affairs)



⁷⁶ See Appendix 1 for significant border detections of cocaine in 2017–18.



IMPORTATION METHODS

In 2017–18, detections of cocaine occurred in the international mail, air passenger/crew, air cargo and sea cargo streams. By number, the international mail stream accounted for the greatest proportion of cocaine detections in 2017–18 (94.1 per cent), followed by air cargo (5.2 per cent), air passenger/crew (0.6 per cent) and sea cargo (0.1 per cent). By weight, the air cargo stream accounted for the greatest proportion of cocaine detections this reporting period (76.2 per cent), followed by international mail (10.6 per cent), sea cargo (10.6 per cent) and air passenger/crew (2.6 per cent).⁷⁷

EMBARKATION POINTS

In 2017–18, 49 countries were identified as embarkation points for cocaine detected at the Australian border, compared with 47 countries in 2016–17. By weight, South Africa was the primary embarkation point for cocaine detected in 2017–18. Other key embarkation points by weight this reporting period include Mexico, the United States, China (including Hong Kong), Brazil, Chile, France, the United Kingdom, Belgium and Peru.

DRUG PROFILING

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) Forensic Drug Intelligence (FDI) team operates a forensic drug profiling capability through the National Measurement Institute (NMI), which is used to identify regions of origin and manufacturing trends for samples of cocaine submitted from seizures made at the Australian border. The capability also allows for comparisons within and between seizures to identify distinct batches of drugs, the origin of drugs, or to demonstrate links between groups involved in illicit drug manufacture or trafficking. Only certain drug types are examined and not every seizure of drugs is analysed and profiled. The following data relate to seizures investigated by the AFP between 2009 and June 2018, from which samples were submitted to the NMI for routine analysis and profiling.⁷⁸

Trends observed in samples seized by the AFP and submitted to NMI for analysis are outlined below:

- Figures for 2017 and January to June 2018 highlight Colombian cocaine dominating the Australian market (see Table 11 and Table 12).
- A large proportion of the bulk weight of cocaine seized in 2017 was found to originate from Colombia. This included two seizures of 1.2 tonnes and 299.8 kilograms of cocaine, which were both found to be of Colombian origin.

⁷⁷ Figures for importation methods of cocaine detections in 2017–18 will be available on the Crime Statistics Australia website. See <<http://crimestats.aic.gov.au/IDDR/>>.

⁷⁸ Profiling data relate to seizures investigated by the AFP between 2009 to June 2018, 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.



- In contrast to the previous reporting period, the proportion of Peruvian cocaine seized at the Australian border has increased, returning to similar levels to those observed in 2015.
- Data for 2017 show an increased incidence of seizures containing cocaine originating from more than one geographical location (mixed origin). This included 1.4 tonnes of cocaine seized during Operation ARMOUR, which comprised 389 kilograms of cocaine of Colombian origin and 1,031 kilograms of cocaine of unclassified origin.
- Considerable increases have been observed in the bulk weight of cocaine of unclassified origin.

TABLE 11: Geographical origin of coca leaf used to produce cocaine as a proportion of analysed AFP border seizures, 2009–June 2018⁷⁹ (Source: Australian Federal Police, Forensic Drug Intelligence)

Year	Colombia %	Peru %	Bolivia %	Mixed %	Unclassified %
Jan–Jun 2018	60.7	14.3	–	7.1	17.9
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
2011	55.9	35.3	–	5.9	2.9
2010	55.2	30.2	1.0	6.3	7.3
2009	44.9	32.7	2.0	10.2	10.2

TABLE 12: Geographical origin of coca leaf used to produce cocaine as a proportion of total bulk weight of analysed AFP border seizures, 2009–June 2018⁷⁹ (Source: Australian Federal Police, Forensic Drug Intelligence)

Year	Colombia %	Peru %	Bolivia %	Mixed %	Unclassified %
Jan–Jun 2018	84.2	9.3	–	–	6.5
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
2011	51.3	44.2	–	4.4	0.1
2010	96.3	3.2	<0.1	–	0.4
2009	91.3	6.8	<0.1	–	1.9

⁷⁹ These data may also include seizures destined for Australia which occurred offshore.



The Enhanced National Intelligence Picture on Illicit Drugs (ENIPID) project extends this profiling to include state and territory seizures involving heroin, methylamphetamine and cocaine. This enables detection of similarities between supply routes into different jurisdictions, links between different criminal groups, as well as comparison of trends between jurisdictions.⁸⁰

Profiling data from 2017 indicates that Colombia was the dominant source of cocaine submitted to the ENIPID project, both as a proportion of all analysed samples and as a proportion of all analysed cases in all jurisdictions (see Appendix 2, Tables 5 and 6).

- For the first six months of 2018 there was a comparable split between Colombian and mixed/unclassified samples. This is consistent with reporting for the same period in 2017.
- The prevalence of Peruvian cocaine submitted to the ENIPID project increased in 2017.
- Data from 2017 show a decrease in the proportion of jurisdictional mixed/unclassified samples (as a whole).

DOMESTIC MARKET INDICATORS

No single data set provides a comprehensive picture of illicit drugs or the Australian illicit drug market. Each has benefits and limitations, and it is only through the layering of multiple data that we are able to enhance our understanding of the extent of the supply and demand trends in Australia's illicit drug markets.

The National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) collects self-report information on alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use among the general population and also surveys people's attitudes and perceptions in relation to these. Conducted approximately every three years, the related report presents estimates derived from survey responses weighted to the appropriate Australian population. According to the 2016 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 8.1 per cent in 2013 to 9.0 per cent in 2016.
- The proportion of the Australian population aged 14 years or older who reported having recently⁸¹ used cocaine increased, from 2.1 per cent in 2013 to 2.5 per cent in 2016 (AIHW 2017).

The National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program (NWDMP) collects wastewater samples every two months in capital city sites and every four months in regional sites. Aimed at acquiring data on the population-scale use of substances causing potential harm, the program provides a measure of the consumption of 12 illicit and licit drugs. According to data from the NWDMP:

- The population-weighted average consumption of cocaine increased when comparing data from August 2017 and August 2018.

⁸⁰ The Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) funded ENIPID project officially concluded on 30 June 2016. Since then, the ENIPID capability has been integrated into core AFP FDI duties to ensure its continued delivery through AFP Forensics.

⁸¹ In the NDSHS, recent use refers to reported use in the previous 12 months.



- Using data derived from the NWDMP, the ACIC estimates more than 4.1 tonnes of cocaine is consumed in Australia each year, with the estimated weight of cocaine consumed nationally increasing from the first to the second year of the program (ACIC 2019).

The below data reflect drug use within sentinel groups. As such, they are not representative of all people who use drugs, or drug use in the general population. However, they provide valuable insight into patterns of drug use and market trends and can assist in the identification of emerging issues that require further monitoring.

The Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) collects self-report information on drug use and related harms annually from individuals in Australian capital cities who regularly inject drugs. According to the national study of injecting drug users:

- The proportion of respondents reporting cocaine as their drug of choice increased, from 1.0 per cent in 2017 to 2.0 per cent in 2018.
- The proportion of respondents reporting the recent use⁸² of cocaine increased, from 13.0 per cent in 2017 to 14.0 per cent in 2018.
- In 2018, the reported median number of days of cocaine use in the six months preceding interview remained unchanged at 3 days⁸³ (Peacock et al. 2018a).

The Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System (EDRS) collects self-report information on drug use and related harms annually from individuals in Australian capital cities who regularly use ecstasy and other stimulants. According to the national study of regular ecstasy users:

- The proportion of respondents reporting cocaine as their drug of choice increased, from 6.0 per cent in 2017 to 8.0 per cent in 2018.
- The proportion of respondents reporting the recent use of cocaine increased, from 48.0 per cent in 2017 to 59.0 per cent in 2018. This is the highest proportion recorded since cocaine monitoring began in 2003.
- In 2018, the reported median number of days of cocaine use in the six months preceding interview remained unchanged at 3 days⁸⁴ (Peacock et al. 2018b).

The Australian Needle and Syringe Program Survey (ANSPS) collects self-report information and capillary blood samples⁸⁵ annually to monitor blood borne viral infections and associated risk behaviour among individuals who inject drugs. According to the ANSPS National Data Report 2013–17, the proportion of respondents reporting cocaine as the drug last injected remained unchanged at 1.0 per cent in 2017 (Heard et al. 2018).

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

83 A figure for this data will be available on the Crime Statistics Australia website. See <<http://crimestats.aic.gov.au/IDDR/>>.

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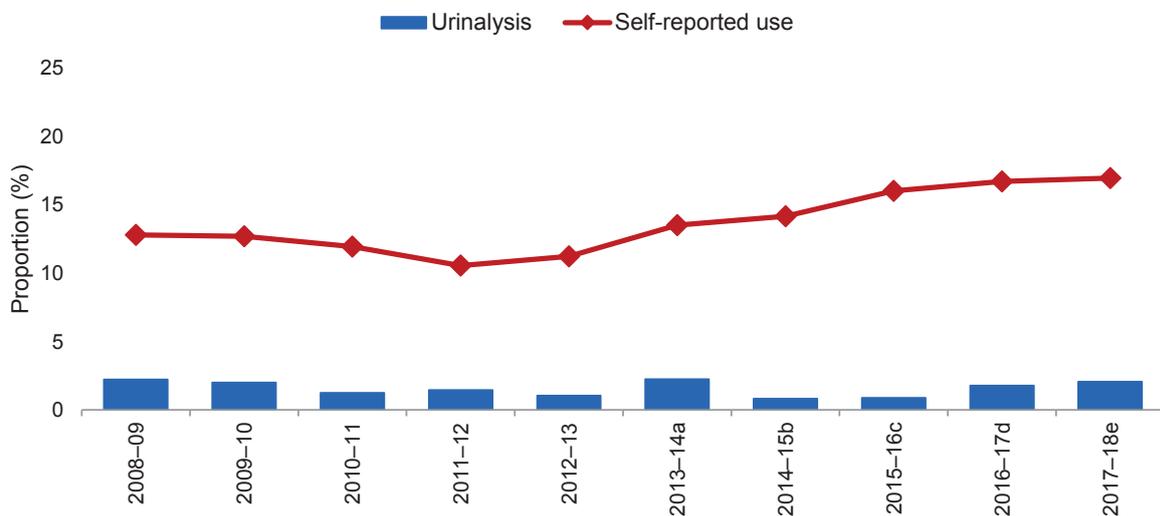
85 Individuals participating in the survey are invited to provide a blood sample for HIV and HCV antibody testing.



The Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) program collects criminal justice and drug use information on a quarterly basis from police detainees and comprises an interviewer-assisted self-report survey and the voluntary provision of a urine sample which is subjected to urinalysis to detect licit and illicit drug use.⁸⁶ According to data from the DUMA program:

- The proportion of detainees testing positive to cocaine increased this reporting period, from 1.8 per cent in 2016–17 to 2.1 per cent in 2017–18.
- The self-reported recent use⁸⁷ of cocaine among detainees remained relatively stable, increasing from 16.7 per cent in 2016–17 to a record high of 16.9 per cent in 2017–18.
- During the past decade, the proportion of detainees testing positive to cocaine has fluctuated, while the proportion of detainees self-reporting recent cocaine use has increased (see Figure 20).

FIGURE 20: National proportion of detainees testing positive for cocaine compared with self-reported recent use, 2008–09 to 2017–18 (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.

The Australian Secondary Students Alcohol and Drug Survey (ASSAD) collects self-report information on alcohol, tobacco, over-the-counter drugs and illicit substance use among Australian secondary school students (aged 12 to 17) and is conducted every three years. According to the 2017 ASSAD survey:

- The proportion of respondents who reported having used cocaine at least once in their lifetime remained stable at 2.0 per cent.
- The proportion of respondents who reported having used cocaine at least once in the past month remained stable at 1.0 per cent (Guerin & White 2018).

⁸⁶ Detainees can participate in the survey without providing a urine sample. Cases with missing data are excluded from the relevant analysis.

⁸⁷ Recent use in the DUMA program refers to self-reported use in the 12 months prior to arrest.



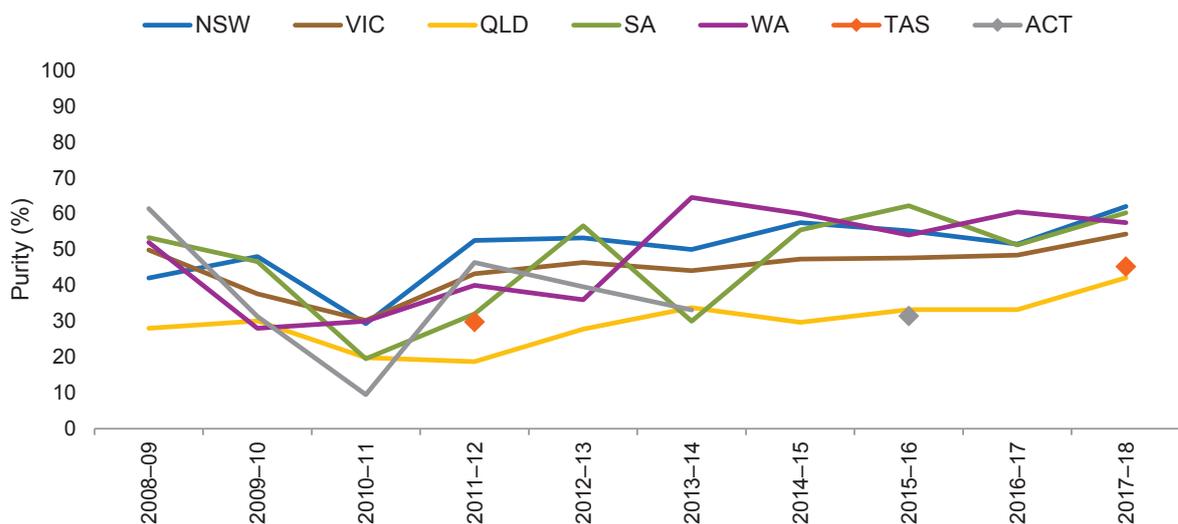
PRICE

Nationally, the price for 1 gram of cocaine remained unchanged between 2016–17 and 2017–18, ranging between \$200 and \$600. Nationally, the price of 1 kilogram of cocaine ranged between \$100,000 and \$300,000 in 2017–18, compared to a price range of between \$180,000 and \$300,000 in 2016–17.

PURITY

Since 2008–09, the annual median purity of analysed cocaine samples has ranged between 9.5 per cent and 64.5 per cent (see Figure 21). In 2017–18, the annual median purity ranged from 42.1 per cent in Queensland to 62.0 per cent in New South Wales. With the exception of Western Australia, which reported a decrease, all states reported an increase in annual median purity in 2017–18. In 2017–18, the quarterly median purity of cocaine ranged between 31.1 per cent in Queensland in the third quarter of 2017 and 70.0 per cent in Western Australia in the first quarter of 2018.⁸⁸

FIGURE 21: Annual median purity of cocaine samples, 2008–09 to 2017–18



AVAILABILITY

In a 2018 national study of regular injecting drug users, 64.0 per cent of respondents reported cocaine as easy or very easy to obtain, an increase from 59.0 per cent in 2017 (Peacock et al. 2018a).

In a 2018 national study of regular ecstasy users, 62.0 per cent of respondents reported cocaine as easy or very easy to obtain, an increase from 55.0 per cent in 2017 (Peacock et al. 2018b).

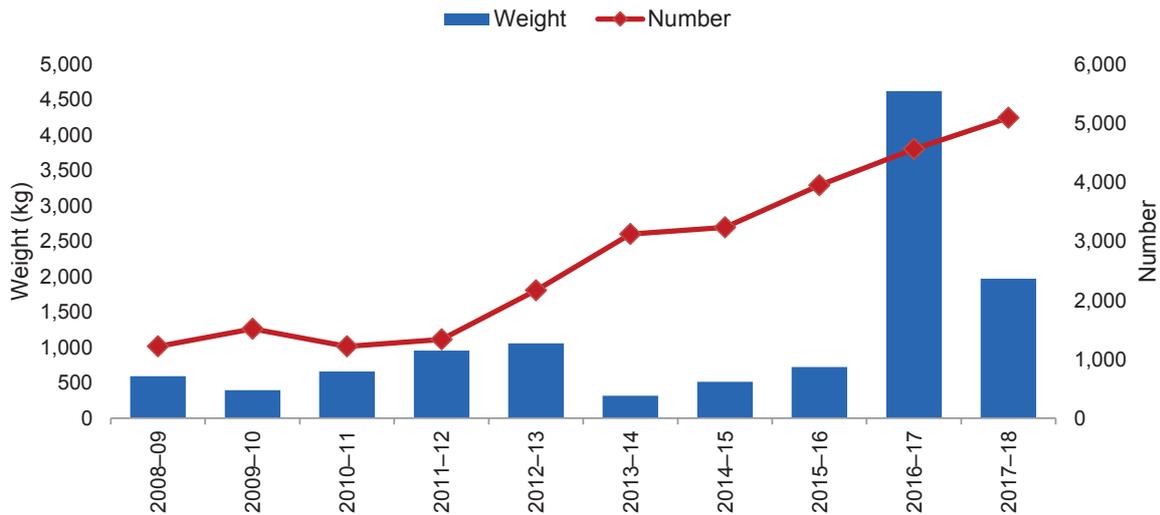
⁸⁸ A figure for this data will be available on the Crime Statistics Australia website. See <<http://www.crimestats.aic.gov.au/IDDR/>>.



SEIZURES AND ARRESTS

The number of national cocaine seizures increased 11.6 per cent this reporting period, from 4,567 in 2016–17 to a record 5,096 in 2017–18. The weight of cocaine seized nationally decreased 57.4 per cent this reporting period, from a record 4,623.3 kilograms in 2016–17 to 1,970.7 kilograms in 2017–18 (see Figure 22). While there was a decrease in the weight of cocaine seized nationally, the 1,970.7 kilograms is the second highest weight seized on record.

FIGURE 22: National cocaine seizures, by number and weight, 2008–09 to 2017–18



Queensland reported the greatest percentage increase in the number of cocaine seizures this reporting period, while South Australia reported the greatest percentage increase in the weight of cocaine seized. New South Wales continues to account for the greatest proportion of national cocaine seizures, accounting for 65.3 per cent of the number and 71.8 per cent of the weight of cocaine seized nationally in 2017–18 (see Table 13).

TABLE 13: Number, weight and percentage change of national cocaine seizures, 2016–17 and 2017–18

State/Territory ^a	Number			Weight (grams)		
	2016–17	2017–18	% change	2016–17	2017–18	% change
New South Wales	3,216	3,327	3.5	3,908,711	1,414,761	-63.8
Victoria	319	407	27.6	457,204	343,080	-25.0
Queensland	436	641	47.0	51,767	163,321	215.5
South Australia	66	38	-42.4	4,199	16,632	296.1
Western Australia ^b	316	461	45.9	13,834	31,197	125.5
Tasmania	22	25	13.6	187,128	135	-99.9
Northern Territory	51	45	-11.8	323	969	200.0
Australian Capital Territory	141	152	7.8	182	652	258.2
Total	4,567	5,096	11.6	4,623,348	1,970,747	-57.4

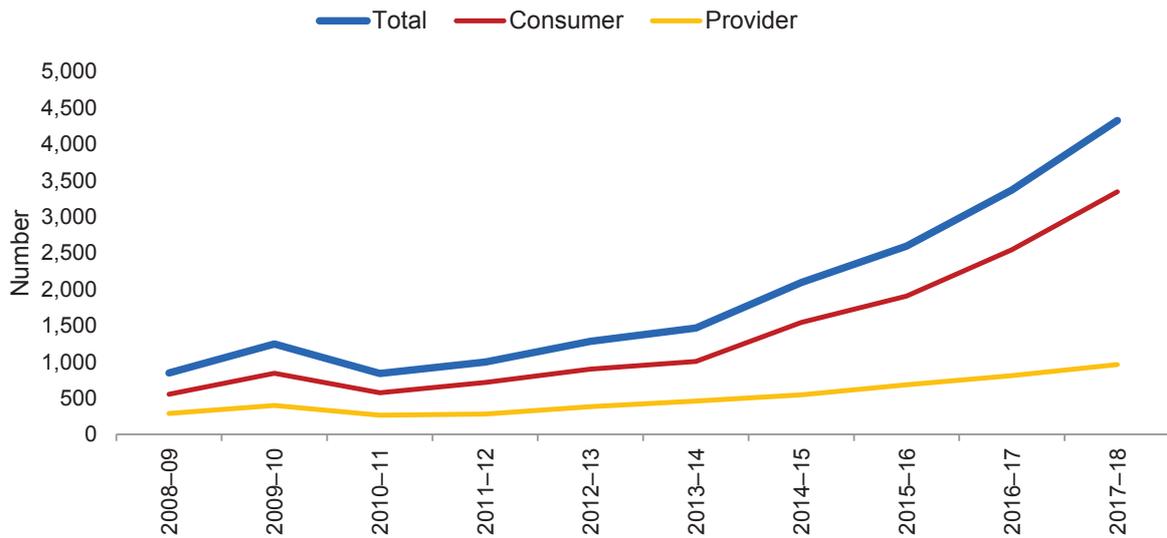
a. Includes seizures by state and territory police and Australian Federal Police for which a valid seizure weight was recorded.

b. The 2017–18 data provided by the Western Australia Police Force reflects improvements made to the quality of the drug seizure and offender dataset. As a result, caution should be exercised in comparing data from previous reporting periods.



The number of national cocaine arrests increased 28.5 per cent this reporting period, from 3,366 in 2016–17 to a record 4,325 in 2017–18 (see Table 14). Consumer arrests continue to account for the greatest proportion of arrests, comprising 77.7 per cent of national cocaine arrests in 2017–18 (see Figure 23). However, of the 26 cocaine arrests reported for the Northern Territory, more were cocaine provider arrests than consumer arrests this reporting period.

FIGURE 23: Number of national cocaine arrests, 2008–09 to 2017–18



New South Wales reported the greatest percentage increase in cocaine arrests this reporting period. New South Wales continues to account for the greatest proportion of national cocaine arrests, accounting for 53.5 per cent in 2017–18.

TABLE 14: Number and percentage change of national cocaine arrests, 2016–17 and 2017–18

State/Territory ^a	Arrests		
	2016–17	2017–18	% change
New South Wales	1,687	2,316	37.3
Victoria	621	765	23.2
Queensland	539	737	36.7
South Australia	135	164	21.5
Western Australia ^b	241	208	-13.7
Tasmania	9	5	-44.4
Northern Territory	27	26	-3.7
Australian Capital Territory	107	104	-2.8
Total	3,366	4,325	28.5

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

b. The 2017–18 data provided by the Western Australia Police Force reflects improvements made to the quality of the drug seizure and offender dataset. As a result, caution should be exercised in comparing data from previous reporting periods.



COCAINE

NATIONAL IMPACT

The weight of cocaine seized globally increased 23.0 per cent in 2016, with the 1,129 tonnes seized the highest weight ever reported. Colombia continues to account for the greatest proportion of global cocaine production.

Despite fluctuations, indicators of cocaine demand and supply point to an expanding cocaine market in Australia.

Indicators of cocaine demand include surveys of drug users, police detainees and wastewater analysis.

- According to the 2016 NDSHS, both reported cocaine use in lifetime and recent use increased between 2013 and 2016.
- According to a national survey of police detainees, both the proportion of detainees testing positive to cocaine and those self-reporting recent cocaine use increased in 2017–18.
- The NWDMP identified that cocaine is the second most consumed stimulant drug monitored by the program. When comparing wastewater data from August 2016 to August 2018, the population-weighted average consumption of cocaine in both capital city and regional sites increased.
- According to studies of injecting drug users and ecstasy users, the proportion of respondents reporting cocaine as their drug of choice increased this reporting period. The proportion of respondents reporting recent cocaine use also increased.

Indicators of cocaine supply include border detection, seizure, arrests and purity data.

- While both the number and weight of cocaine detections at the Australian border decreased this reporting period, they remain comparatively high.
- There was a record number of national cocaine seizures in 2017–18. While the weight of cocaine seized nationally more than halved this reporting period from the record weight reported in 2016–17, it is the second highest weight recorded in the last decade.
- The number of national cocaine arrests increased to a record high in 2017–18.
- With the exception of Western Australia, all states reported an increase in the annual median purity of cocaine in 2017–18.
- Drug profiling identified the continued prominence of Colombia as a source country for cocaine in Australia, with an increased proportion of mixed/unclassified samples in the ENIPID data this reporting period.



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