

**Road Safety Authority**  
**Road Safety Appeal August Bank Holiday 2020**

*Smock Alley Theatre,  
Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020*

*Alcohol and Drug Impaired Driving 2019-2020  
&  
DUI Patterns during the Covid-19 Restrictions*

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Director, Medical Bureau of Road Safety, Ireland**



Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre  
Road Safety Authority



# Medical Bureau of Road Safety An Lia-Bhiúró um Shábháilteacht ar Bhóithre

*52 Years: 1968 – 2020*



# Intoxicants and Driving



## ● Depressant Effect

- Alcohol
- Cannabis
- Benzodiazepines
- Opiates
- Z drugs
- Pregabalin

## ● Stimulant Effect

- Cocaine
- (Cocaethylene)
- Amphetamines
- Metamphetamine

# *per se* Levels

Drug/Metabolite	Level in Whole Blood
$\Delta$ 9 -Tetrahydrocannabinol (Cannabis)	1ng/ml
11-nor-9-carboxy- $\Delta$ 9 -tetrahydrocannabinol (Cannabis)	5ng/ml
Cocaine	10ng/ml
Benzoylcegonine (Cocaine)	50ng/ml
6-Acetylmorphine (Heroin)	5ng/ml

1. Level must be greater than or equal to levels specified above
2. Uncertainty of measurement will be deducted **(-30%)**
3. Maximum permitted time for collection is 3 hours
4. Strict liability 1 year disqualification
5. No requirement for impairment to be proven- Government Road Safety Strategy Policy of Zero Tolerance



# Drugs other than *per se*

## Evidence of:

- Confirmed presence (not concentration) of the drug
  - MBRS statutory certificate
- and**
- Impaired driving
  - An Garda Síochána

# Oral Fluid Testing



Cannabis  
Benzodiazepines  
Cocaine  
Opiates

Dräger DrugTest 5000



# Preliminary Drug Testing 2019

<b>ANALYSER USE TYPE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF TESTS</b>
<b>Mobile (75)</b>	6,881
<b>Station Based (86)</b>	554
<b>Total (161)</b>	7,435



# Drugs Tested in MBRS



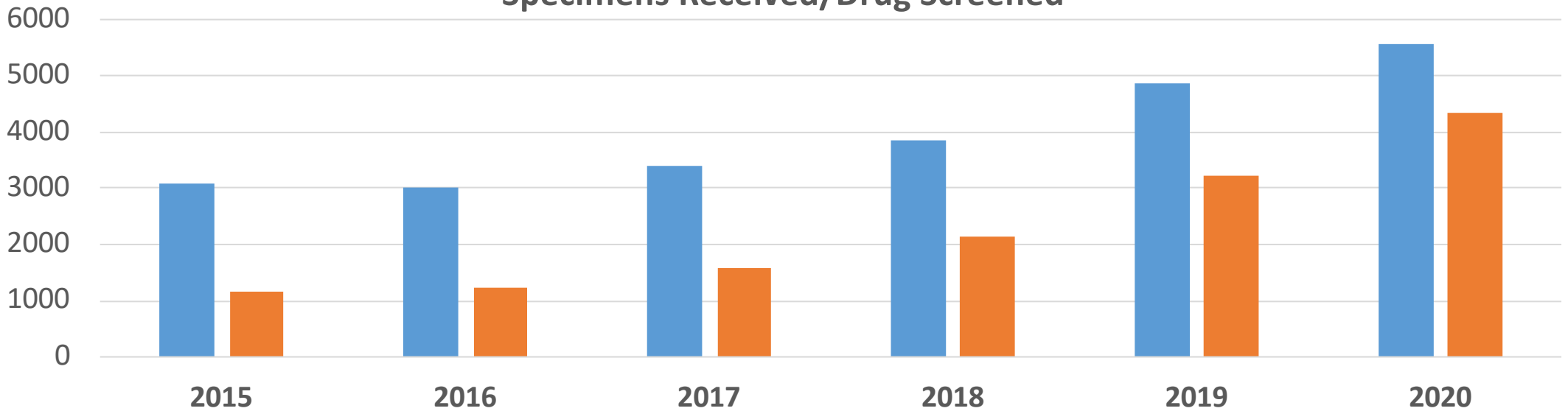
The list of some of the many drugs for which the Bureau tests is on the website at [www.mbrs.ie](http://www.mbrs.ie) under Scope of Accreditation for Alcohol and Drugs Testing 2017-2022 in the Publications section.

# Breath alcohol specimens in Garda Stations 2019

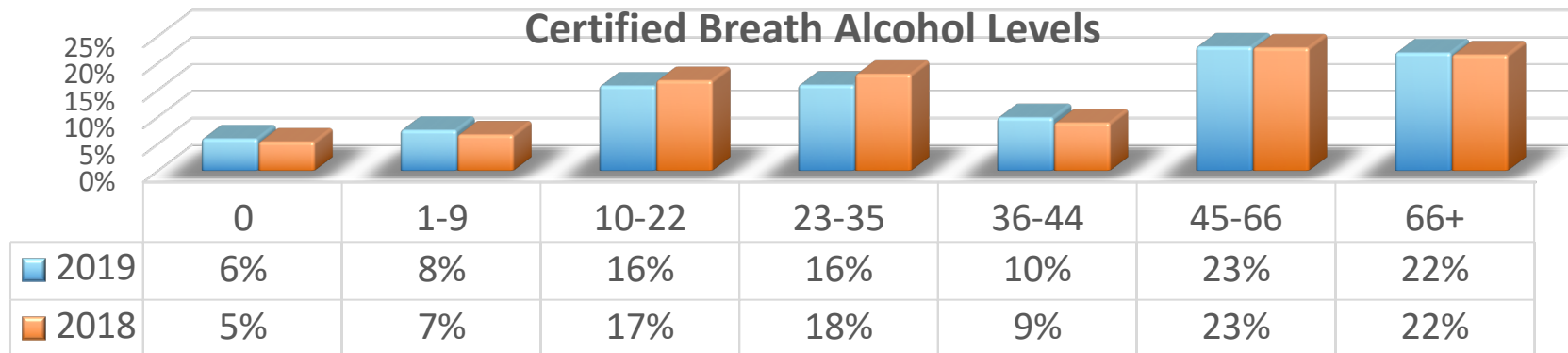
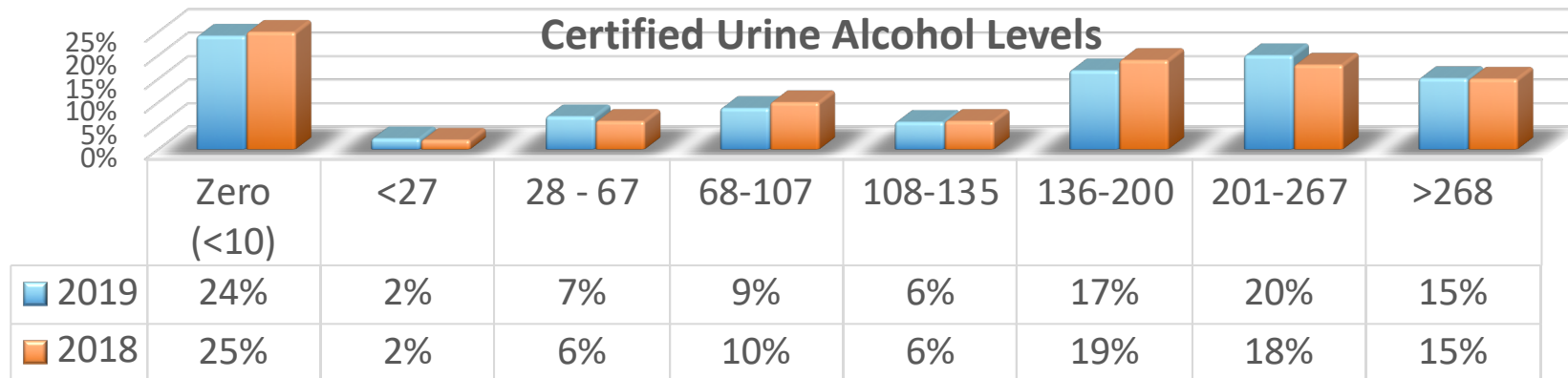
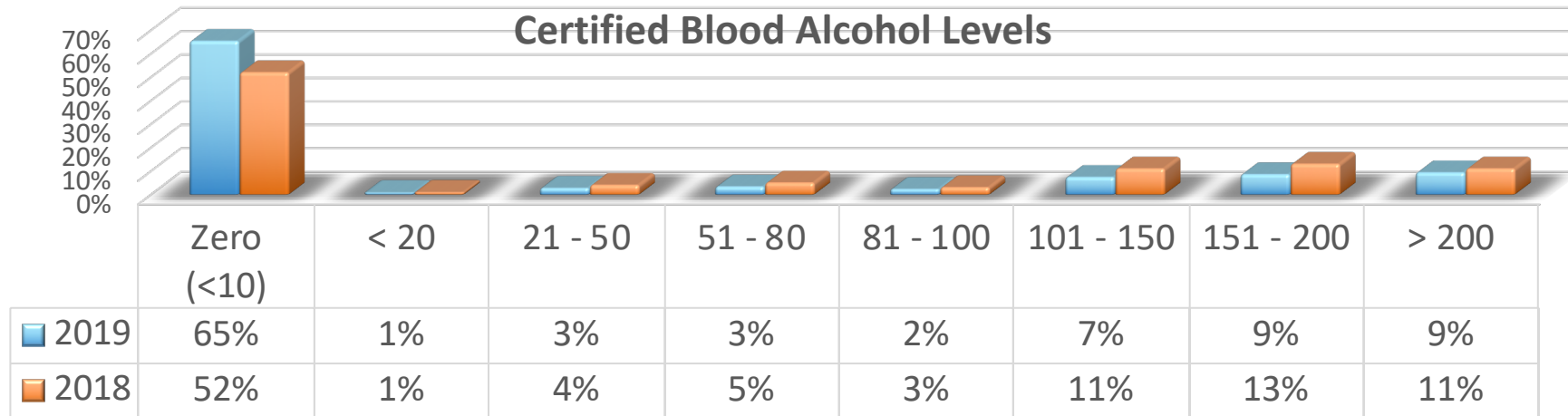
- 4,723 successful breath tests (94 % had positive alcohol, 6% had an alcohol level of zero)

# Blood & Urine specimens for Drug Testing increasing 2015-2020

Specimens Received/Drug Screened



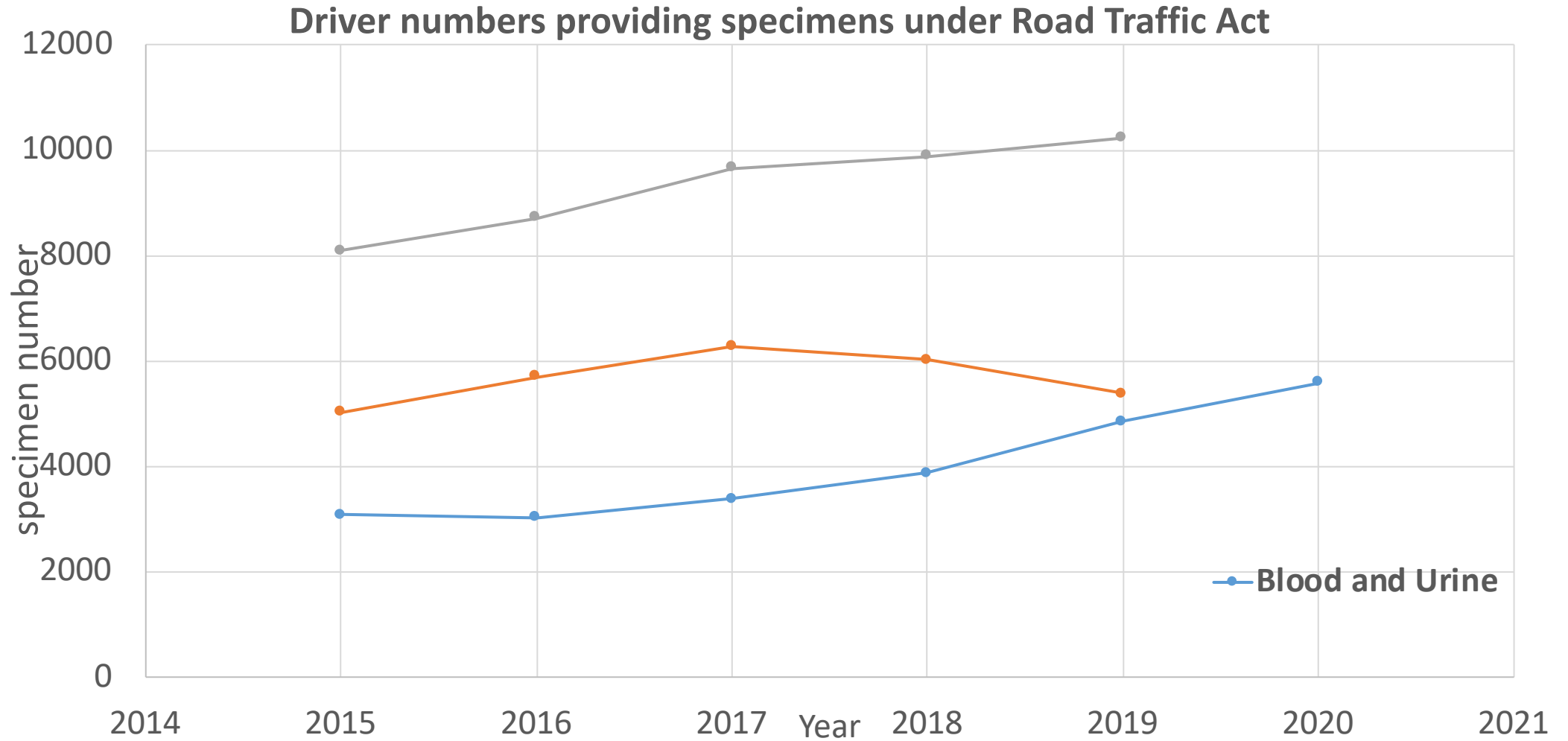
Year	Blood and Urine Received	Specimens for Drugs Testing
2015	3077	1145
2016	3020	1235
2017	3386	1594
2018	3865	2152
2019	4854	3229
2020 (full year estimate)	5574	4347



# Blood and Urine Specimens 2019

- Laboratory alcohol tests – 4,812 (35% had positive alcohol and 65% had an alcohol level reported as zero)
- Laboratory drug tests - 3,230 (74% positive for at least one drug):
  - Cannabis remains most prevalent with 1,766 of the 3,230 (54%)
  - Cocaine 865 of the 3,230 (27%)

# Breath, Blood & Urine Specimens provided



# Blood and Urine Specimens 2020

- The number of specimens received in the first six months of 2020 was 2,787 compared with 2,375 the first six months of 2019, an increase of 17%.
- In January and February 2020 there was a significant increase of specimens received: 929 compared to 732 in 2019, an increase of 27%.

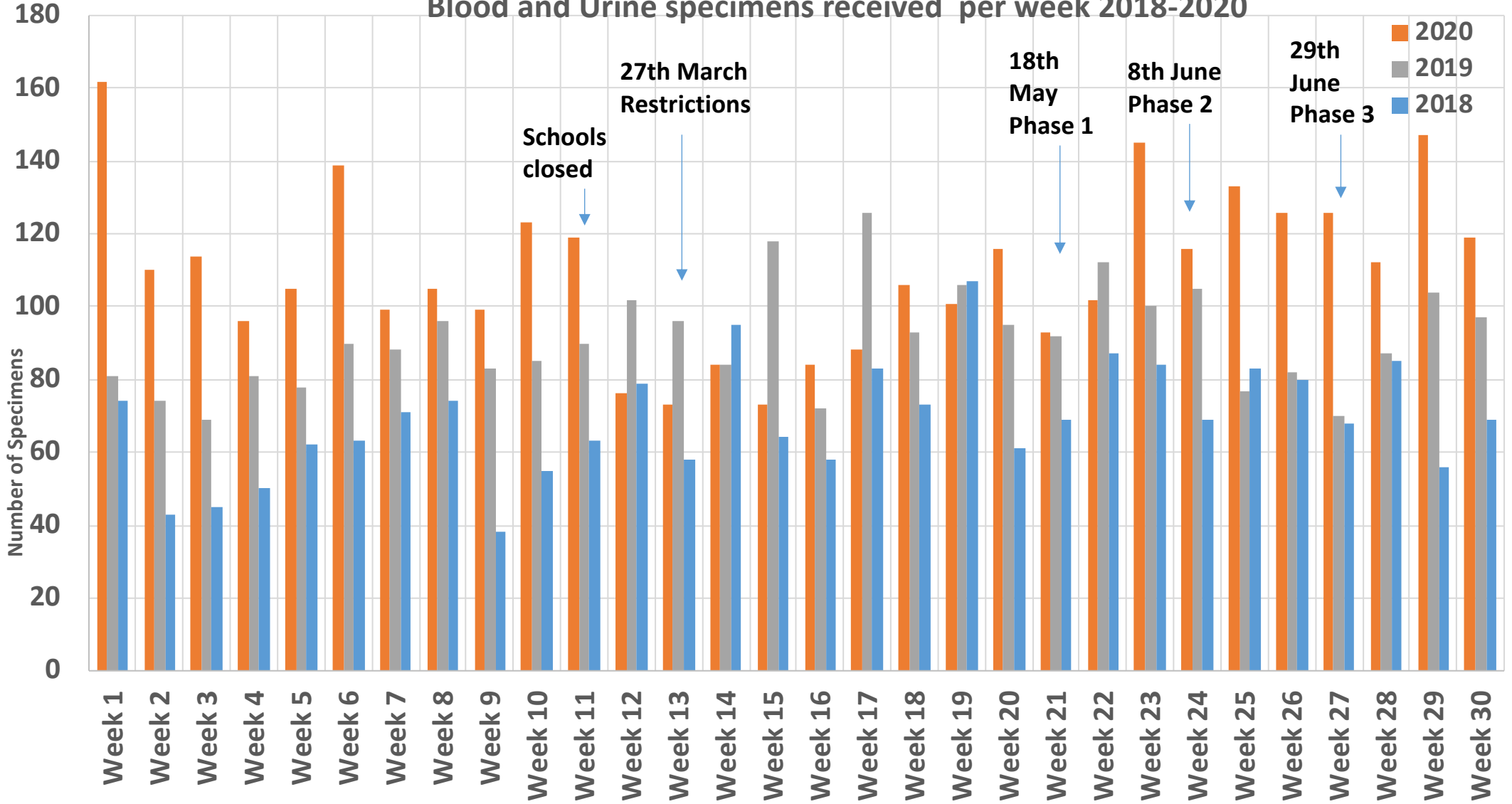
# Blood and Urine Specimens 2020

- During the 14 weeks of the Covid-19 restrictions from the 27<sup>th</sup> March to 29<sup>th</sup> June: 1,367 specimens were received in 2020 compared to 1,262 in the same period for 2019.
- An increase of 6.5% although there was a 70% reduction in traffic for most of that time.



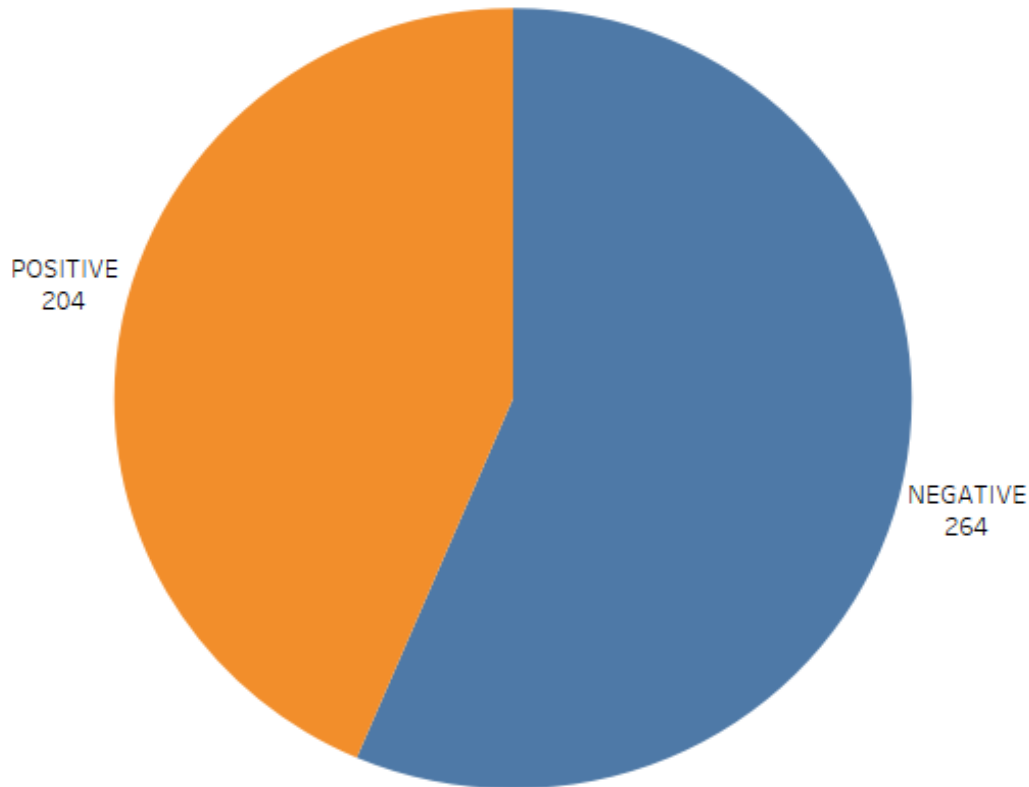
# The Restrictions Effect

## Blood and Urine specimens received per week 2018-2020

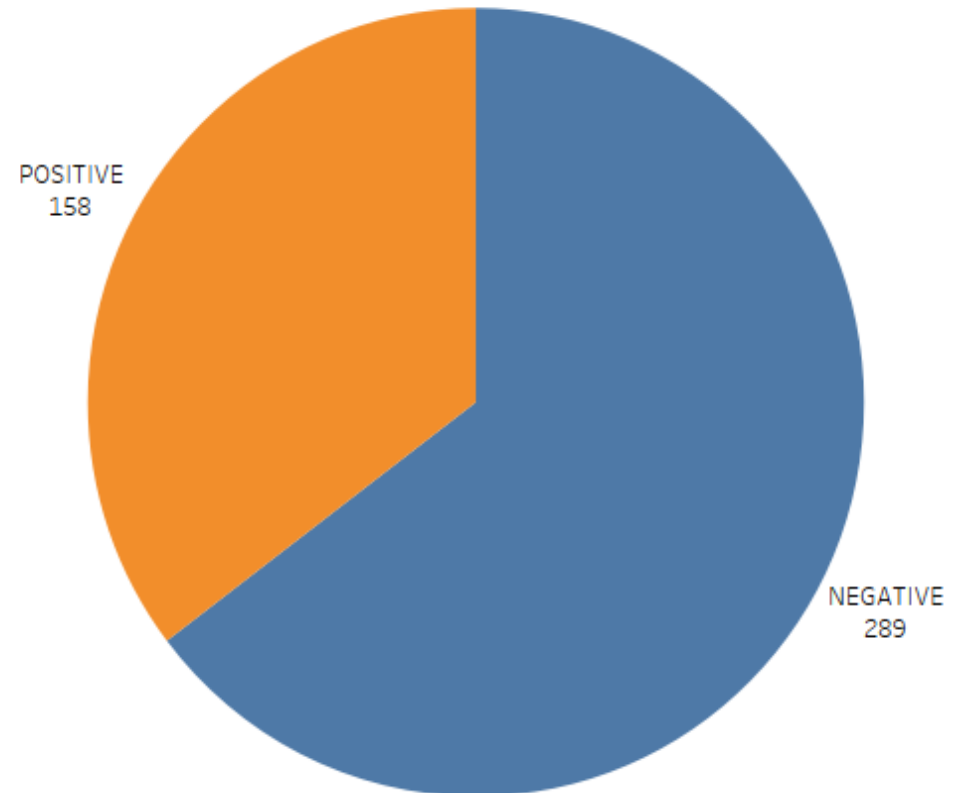


# 1<sup>st</sup> Month of Restrictions: Alcohol Results comparison with same period 2019

2019

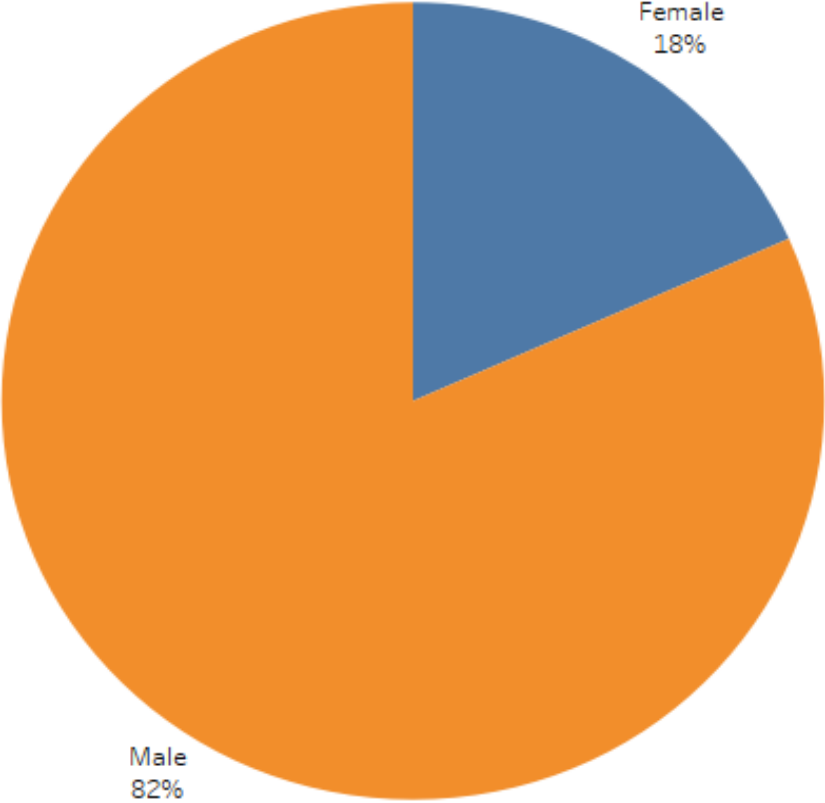


2020

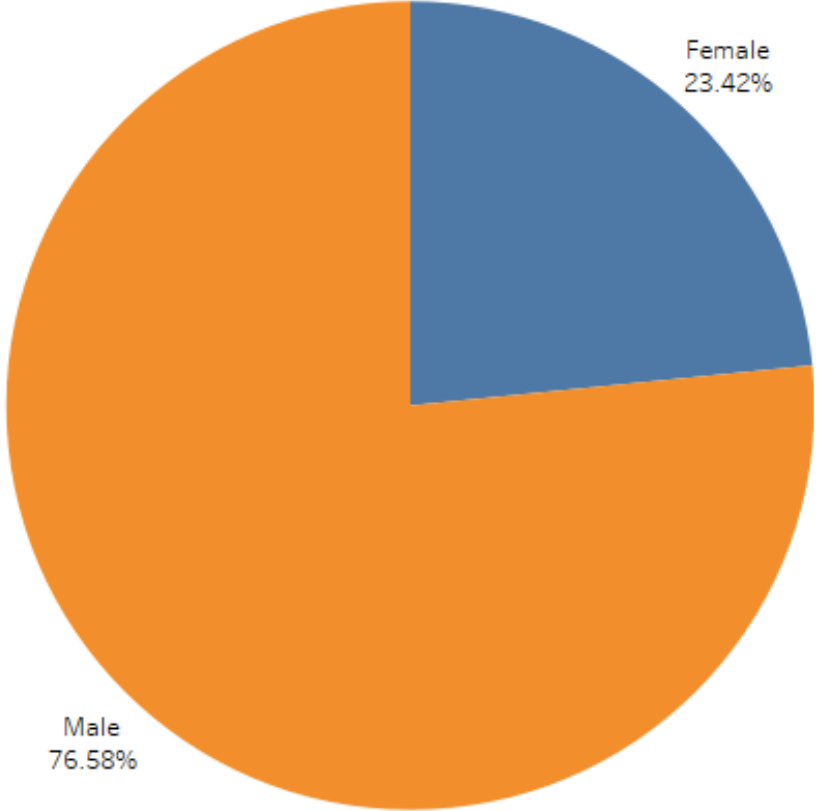


# 1st Month of Restrictions: Alcohol Positive Specimens Gender comparison with same period 2019

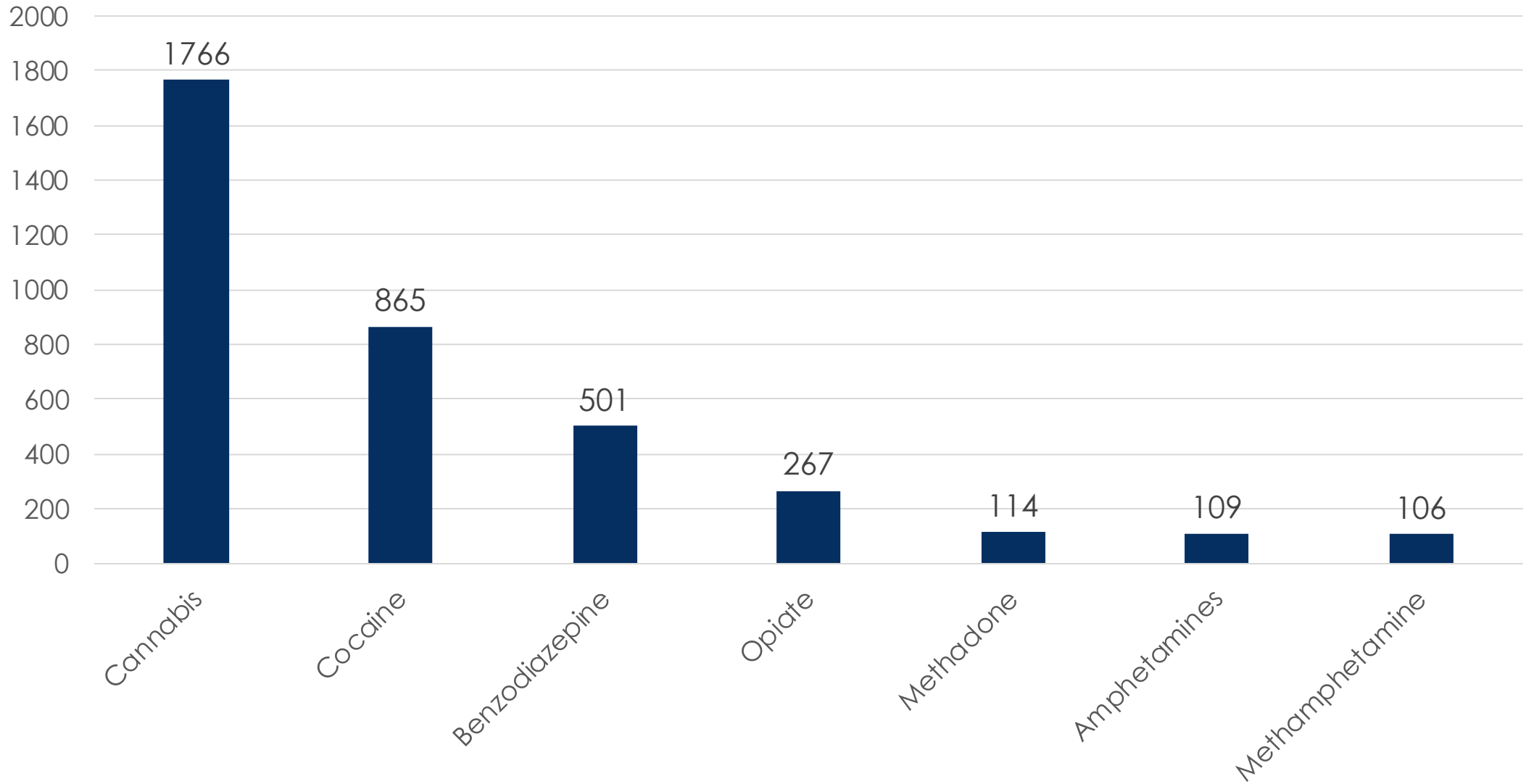
2019



2020

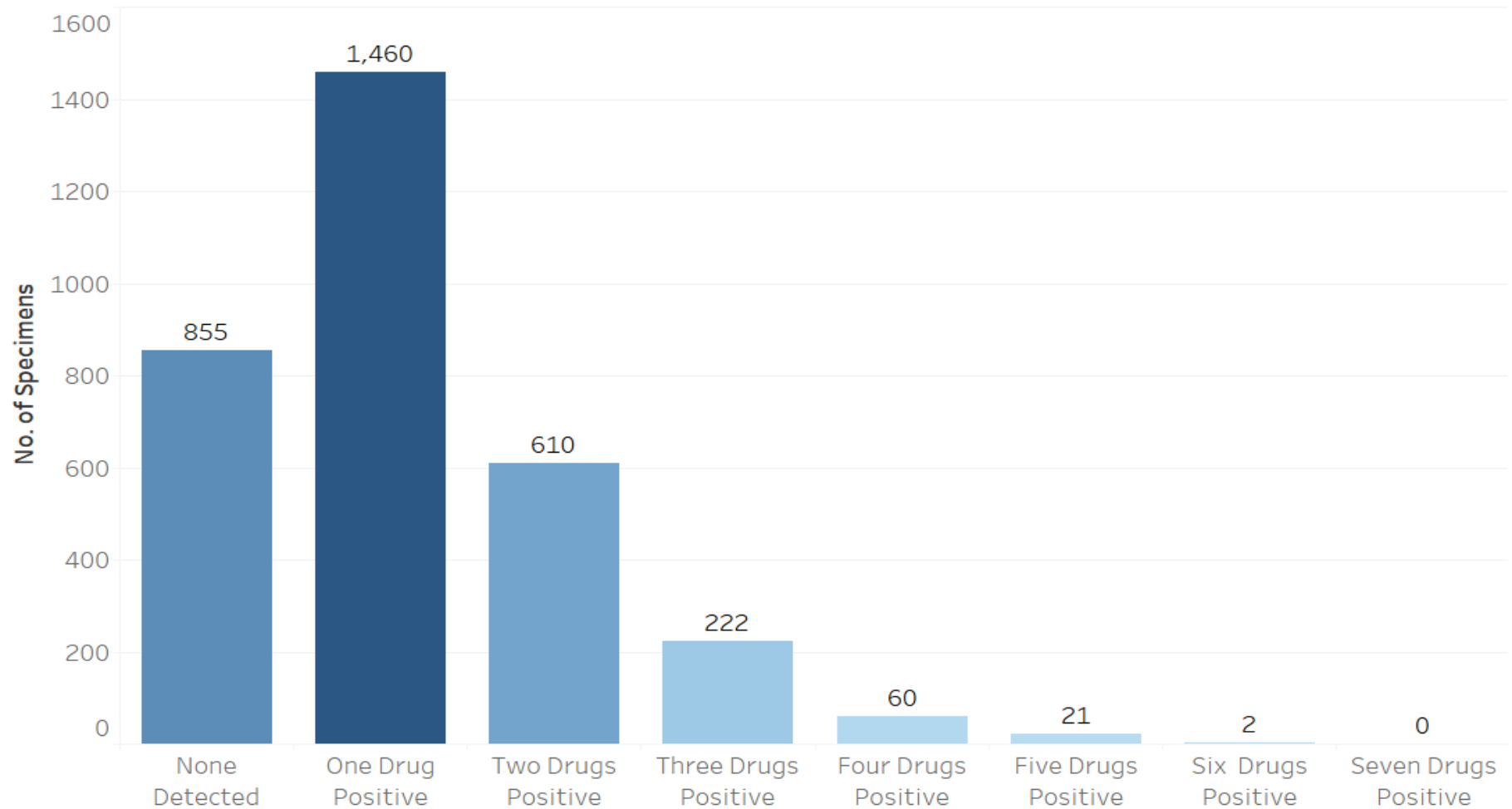


# Drug Prevalence Screening 2019



# Significant Polydrug Usage

No. of classes detected per specimen 2019



# Blood and Urine Specimens 2019-2020

- 78% of specimens were forwarded in 2020 to date for drug testing following analysis for alcohol
- increase from 2019 when 67% of specimens were forwarded for toxicology drug testing.

# Blood and Urine Specimens 2020

- During month of April during the lockdown period the number of specimens being forwarded for drug screening increased from 70% to 77%.
- The number found to be positive for one or more drugs increased from 74% to 90%.
- Increases were seen in most of the classes of drugs.

## Drug Result Comparison 2020 to 2019

		2019			Month of April 2020		
		2019	% of total screened	% of total positives	April 2020	% of total screened	% of total positives
Total blood and urine received		4584			436		
Total forwarded for drug analysis		3230			337		
Total drug Positive		2375	74		304	90	
Total drug Negative		855	26		33	10	
Screened Positive	Cannabis	1766	55	74	226	67	74
	Cocaine	865	27	36	128	38	42
	Benzodiazepines	501	16	21	85	25	28
	Amph/Methamp	215	7	9	13	4	4
	opiate/methadone	381	12	16	53	16	17
% samples received forwarded for drug screening			70			77	



# Drug Certificates Issued

Drug	Legal Limit
$\Delta^9$ -Tetrahydrocannabinol (Cannabis)	1ng/ml
11-nor-9-carboxy- $\Delta^9$ -tetrahydrocannabinol (Cannabis)	5ng/ml
Cocaine	10ng/ml
Benzoylcegonine (Cocaine)	50ng/ml
6-acetylmorphine (Heroin)	5ng/ml

Certificate Type	2018	2019	% Difference
Concentration (legal limit)	963	1,833	90% Increase
Presence	1,435	1,793	25% Increase
Concentration and Presence (2 certificates)	269	420	56% Increase
None Detected	508	823	62% Increase

# Legislative Change Needed

- Graded penalties for increasing levels of alcohol already in place since 1995 (20, 50, 80, 100, 150 mg%)
- Graded penalties for combination (hybrid) of alcohol with other drugs positive (e.g. alcohol 80mg% + cocaine) or multiple drugs positive (e.g. cannabis and benzodiazepines) now needed

# Prescribable Medications



- Benzodiazepines
- Opiates
  - Morphine
  - Codeine
  - Methadone
- Cannabis
- Taken as per prescription
- In excess of prescription
- Off prescription (“borrowed” or “street market”)

# Over the Counter Medications

- Medications containing codeine (and paracetamol\*), most frequently purchased-
  - Solpadeine \* / Solpadol \*
  - Migralve \*
  - Feminex \*
  - Uniflu Plus \*
  - Nurofen Plus
  - Night Nurse

# Sláinte agus Tiomáint (April 2019 Edition)

[DUID and the link with  
Fitness to Drive]

*Chapter 6.1 and 6.2:*

Alcohol and Drugs Misuse and  
Dependence

*Information Leaflets:*

Medicines and Driving

&

Driving Under the Influence of Illicit  
Drugs and/or the Abuse of Prescription  
Drugs

RSA



## Sláinte agus Tiomáint

Medical Fitness to Drive Guidelines  
(Group 1 and 2 Drivers)  
May 2018

An tÚdarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre  
Road Safety Authority

# Plain Messages - Drugs Driving

- Drugs Driving is a major problem in Ireland
- Alcohol remains the single largest DUI problem and those over the limit are well over the limit
- Younger men are the largest DUI group

# Plain Messages – Drugs Driving

- Gardaí are successful in detecting DUID at the roadside in increasing numbers
- Need to increase drug testing in drivers particularly in Garda stations but also at roadside - increased detection during Covid-19 restrictions
- 41 additional PDT devices released by MBRS to Gardaí for roadside testing for August Bank Holiday 2020 campaign (now:  $83 + 41 = 124$  versus 75 in 2019)

# Plain Messages - Prescribable and Over the Counter Drugs

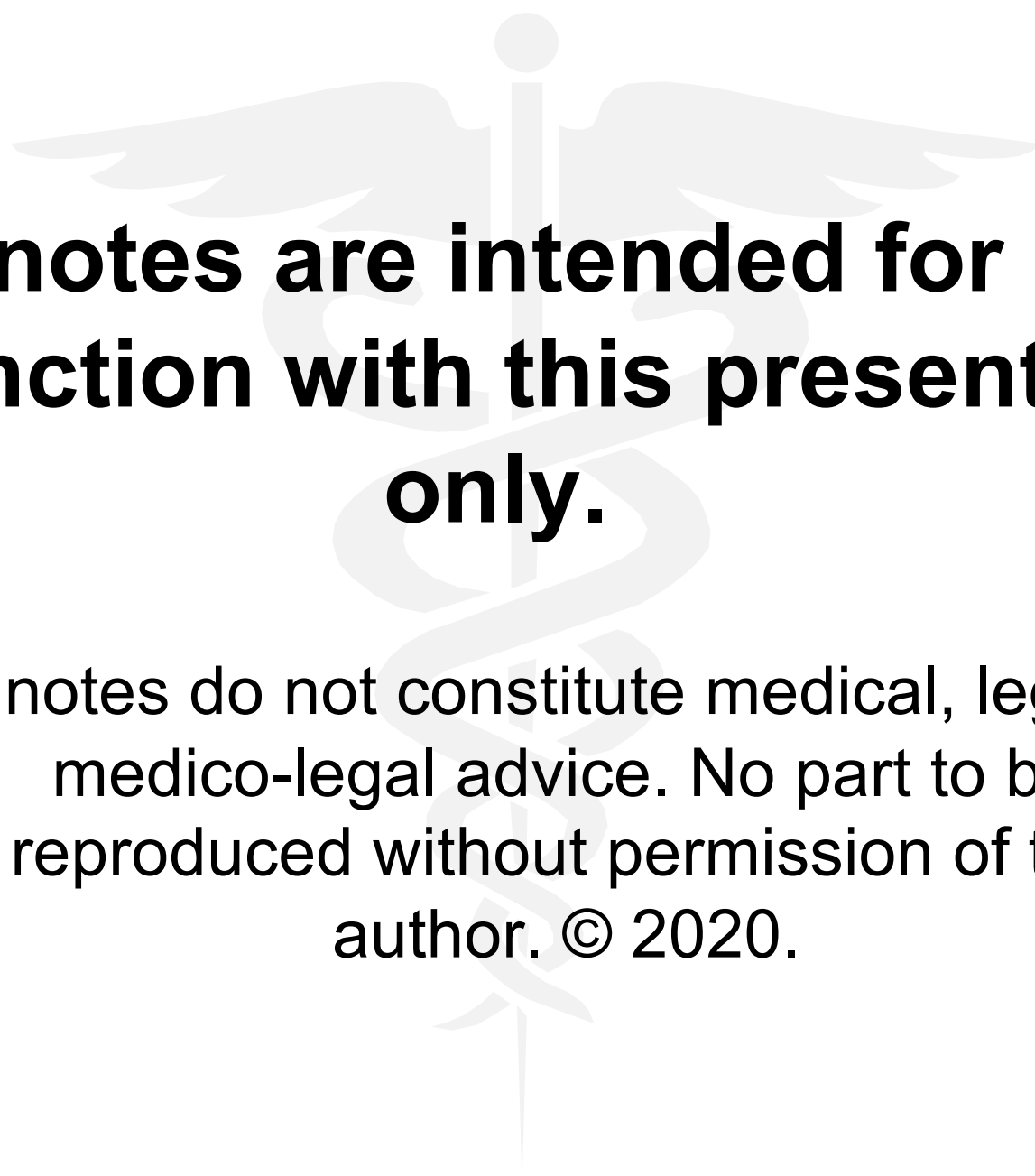
- Prescribable and OTC drugs are also a real problem and mirror taking of drugs and medications in Ireland
- Need to watch benzodiazepines, Z-drugs and pregabalin
- Take your on medications, be safe on them, read the patient information leaflet and listen to your doctor's and pharmacist's advice
- Drive safely, be aware of your own impairment and don't kill or maim others or yourself or risk losing your licence to drive





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Road Safety Authority





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# Medical Bureau of Road Safety

1968 – 2020

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