NFLIS
NATIONAL FORENSIC LABORATORY INFORMATION SYSTEM
DRUG MEC TOX
MEC/TOX
DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION
DIVERSION CONTROL DIVISION
BRIEF

Toxicology Testing Practices for Benzodiazepines in the United States

The National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS) is a Drug Enforcement Administration program that systematically collects results of forensic analyses, and other related information, from local, regional, and national entities. From June through October 2017, NFLIS administered surveys that collected calendar year 2016 data from toxicology laboratories (TLs) and medical examiner/coroner offices (MECs) across the United States. Results from the TL and MEC Office Surveys were previously published.[1,2] This publication provides additional data not presented in the survey reports and displays findings from responding TLs about their toxicology testing frequency and quantification of benzodiazepines, reported by laboratory ownership (private or public) and caseload size (small, medium, or large). Findings from responding MECs are reported by jurisdiction size.

The toxicology testing frequency reported by TLs for benzodiazepines (shown in **Figure 1**) is summarized as "always," "sometimes," or "never," by TL ownership and caseload size of the responding TL. An "always" response indicates that testing for benzodiazepines is part of a standard panel, "sometimes" indicates that testing is done on an individual case basis, and "never" indicates that testing is never done for benzodiazepines. Overall, more than 70% of TLs reported always testing for benzodiazepines. Higher percentages of public TLs and those with small caseloads reported always testing for benzodiazepines than did private TLs or those with medium or large caseloads.

Although TLs frequently test for benzodiazepines, quantitative testing is less common, especially for public TLs and those with small caseloads (56% each) (**Figure 2**). TLs with large caseloads (16,000 or more cases) are the most likely to perform quantitative analyses (63%). Similarly, private TLs report conducting quantitative analyses 61% of the time, and TLs with medium caseloads report conducting these analyses 58% of the time.

Figure 1 Toxicology Testing Frequency Reported by TLs for Benzodiazepines, by TL Ownership and Caseload Size

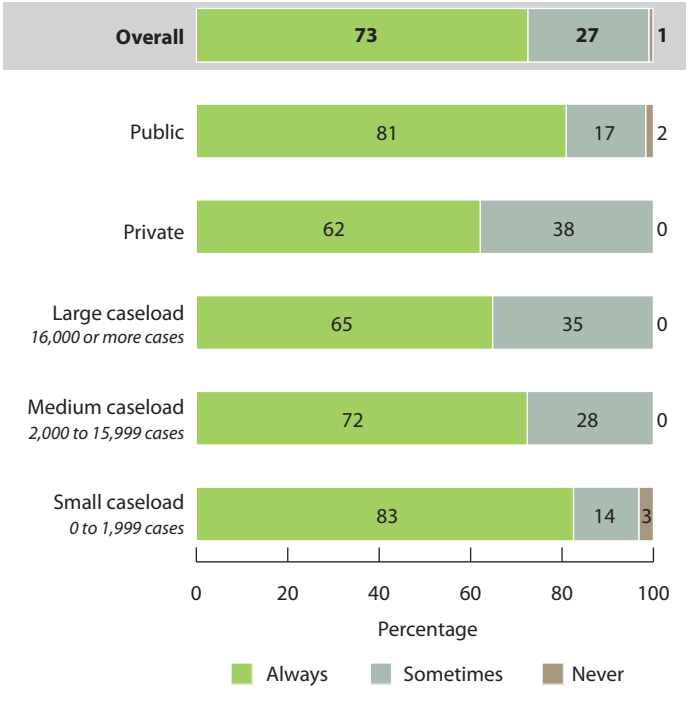


Figure 2 Quantitative Analysis Frequency Reported by TLs for Benzodiazepines, by TL Ownership and Caseload Size

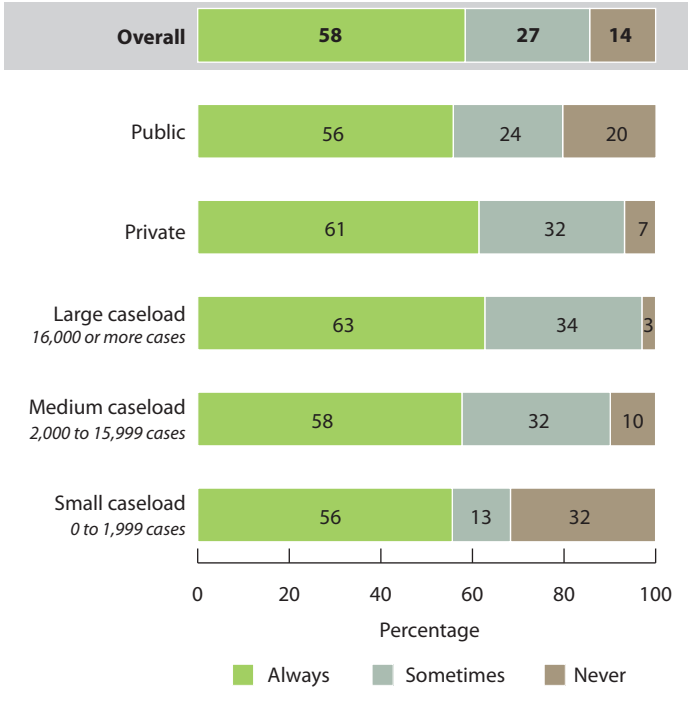
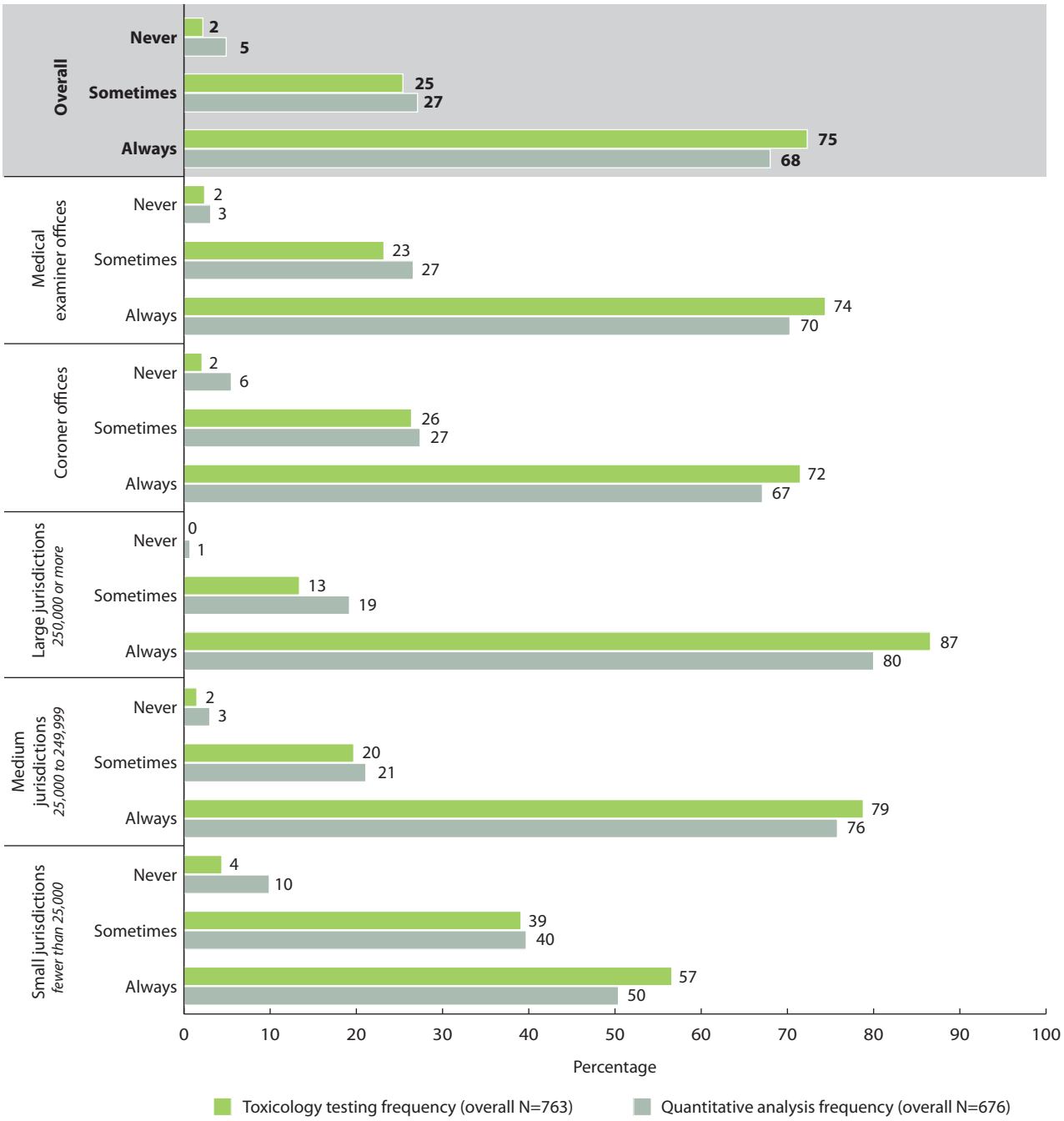


Figure 3 presents the frequency of toxicology testing and quantitative analysis reported by MECs for benzodiazepines, by jurisdiction size. More than three-quarters of MECs serving large and medium jurisdictions reported always testing and conducting quantitative analyses for benzodiazepines. MECs serving smaller jurisdictions are less likely to always conduct quantitative analyses (50%). Coroner offices are slightly less likely to always test for benzodiazepines than medical examiner offices (72% vs. 74%) and are slightly less likely to always conduct quantitative analyses (67% vs. 70%).

Figure 3 Toxicology Testing and Quantitative Analysis Frequency Reported by MECs for Benzodiazepines, by Jurisdiction Size



Note: In all figures, percentages will not sum to 100% because of rounding.

[1] U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Diversion Control Division. (2018). *2017 Toxicology Laboratory Survey Report*. Springfield, VA: U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

[2] U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Diversion Control Division. (2018). *2017 Medical Examiner/Coroner Office Survey Report*. Springfield, VA: U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.