



# 2021 Adult Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region

JULY 2022

Research findings from the Criminal Justice  
Clearinghouse

## Highlights

### Drug use is at a 22-year high for males, but at the second lowest for females

In 2021, 83% of adult males tested positive for at least one illicit substance, a new 22-year high. However, 60% of adult females tested positive, the lowest rate since 2008, most likely reflecting who was booked into jail during the pandemic.

### Almost two in every three adult males booked into jail tested positive for meth in 2021

Despite regional efforts to combat methamphetamine (meth) use, it was the second most common drug in adults with justice contact, with 58% of males and 44% of females testing positive in 2021.

### Despite legalization, arrestees continue to obtain marijuana illegally

While recreational dispensaries (72%) were the most common place arrestees obtained marijuana in 2021, almost two-thirds (62%) reported still obtaining marijuana illegally on the street.

### Opioid overdose remains a concern for this population

Almost one in five (19%) of adult arrestees reported having an overdose, with an average of about three in their lifetime. Of those administered naloxone, the majority said they had received it more than once, with the most common provider being Fire/Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

### Mental health and drug use is a complex issue for this population

Just over two in five (41%) of the adults interviewed said they had been diagnosed with a mental health issue, 22% had attempted suicide, and of those who had been hospitalized, the average number of times hospitalized was four. Around one in four (24%) said that a drug had led to a psychotic episode, just under half (45%) had been admitted to a mental health facility under the influence of a drug, and 56% said they began using illegal drugs as a substitute for medication they had previously been prescribed for Attention-Deficit Disorder/Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD).

## Background

This CJ Bulletin, 2021 Adult Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region, is one in a series highlighting findings from data collected as part of the San Diego County Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program.

Since 2004, when federal funding for the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program was suspended, San Diego has been the only site to continue this project uninterrupted. With funding from the SANDAG Criminal Justice Clearinghouse, these data have been reported on an annual basis, providing useful information to policy makers, law enforcement, and prevention and treatment professionals regarding drug use trends and involvement in other risky or illegal behavior over time. In 2021, this data collection effort was generously supported by the San Diego-Imperial High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA); Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services; the District Attorney's Office; and the Public Safety Group. Their support, as well as the cooperation of the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, is gratefully acknowledged.

As part of this project, arrestees are approached (using a random sampling method) within 48 hours of their booking into jail. If the arrestee is available and willing to participate in a confidential interview, she/he/they is/are asked a series of questions related to her/his/their drug use history and to provide a urine sample for drug testing. In 2021, 227 male arrestees were interviewed at the Central Jail and 80 female arrestees at Las Colinas. Of these 307 arrestees, 305 (99%) completed the interview and provided a valid urine sample for analysis. At the end of the interview, 7% responded affirmatively when asked in a new question added in 2021 if they remembered doing this interview before.

### ***What information is collected through these interviews?***

Positive drug rates for any and multiple drugs (page 4)

Positive rates for marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine, and opiates over time (page 6)

Self-reported initiation patterns of drug use (page 8)

Drug market dynamics (page 10)

Prescription drug abuse (page 14)

Binge drinking (page 17)

Risk factors to recidivate (page 19)

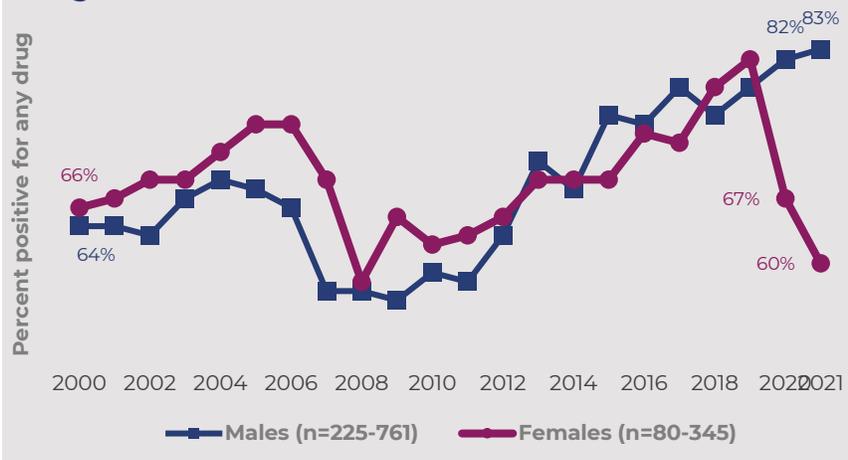
Possible effects of substance use on the community (page 25)

## How has testing positive for any drug changed over time for male and female arrestees?

In 2021, 83% of male arrestees and 60% of female arrestees tested positive for an illicit drug, which includes marijuana,<sup>1</sup> meth, cocaine, opiates, and PCP (Figure 1). The 2021 male positive test rate of 83% represented a new 22-year high, continuing an increasing trend since 2018. The 2021 female positive test rate of 60% was the lowest since 2008 (when it was 58%). These trends most likely reflect at least in part changes seen in who was booked during the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., modified booking criteria and differences in the type of charges males and females are typically booked for).

Figure 1

### Greater percentage of adult males testing positive for a drug in 2021



Note: Prior to 2013 and since 2015, percent positive was based on marijuana, meth, cocaine, opiates, and PCP. In 2013 and 2014, the PCP test was replaced with a test for alcohol.

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

## What were the characteristics of the arrestees interviewed?

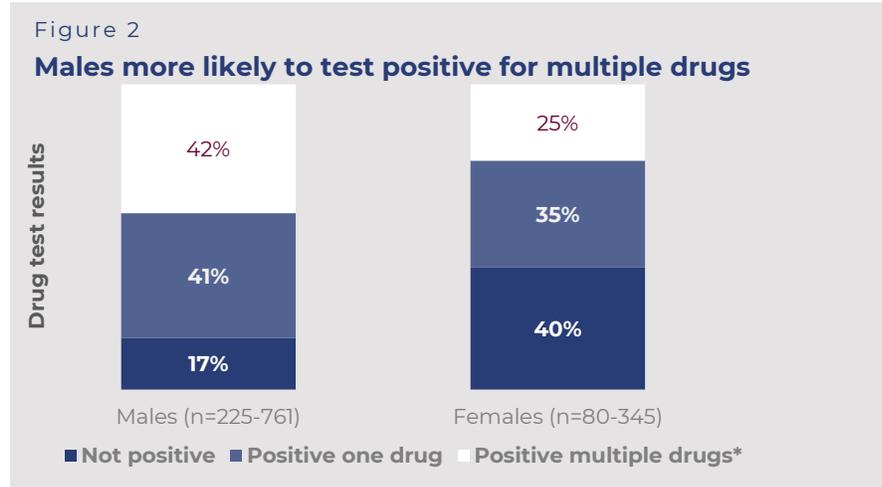
Of the 305 arrestees with completed interviews, 225 (74%) were male and 80 (26%) were female. Forty percent (40%) identified as Hispanic, 34% as White, 20% Black, and 5% "other". Four percent of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. Fourteen percent (14%) of those interviewed were under the age of 25, 54% between 25 and 39, and 31% 40 and older. The mean age was 36.0 (range 18 to 70). Over two-thirds (70%) were single; 16% divorced, separated, or widowed; and 13% married.

Almost half (48%) were booked for a violent offense as the most serious charge, 23% for a property offense, 16% for an "other" offense, and 13% for a drug offense. Twenty-eight percent (28%) reported living in the Central Major Statistical Area of the County, 21% in East Suburban, 15% in South Suburban, 14% in North City, 9% out of the County, 5% in North County East, 5% in East County, and 2% in North County West.

<sup>1</sup> The drug test panel continues to include marijuana even though California voters approved Proposition 64 on November 8, 2016. Marijuana will continue to be tested while it remains illegal federally and because changes in use pre- and post-legalization among this population is expected to continue to be an issue of interest.

## How many arrestees are polydrug<sup>2</sup> users?

Males (42%) were significantly more likely to test positive for multiple drugs in 2021, as compared to females (25%) (Figure 2). Of those testing positive for multiple drugs, 83% tested positive for two, 16% for three, and 2% for four drugs. Of those who tested positive for multiple substances, 92% were positive for meth, 92% marijuana, 18% opiates, 13% cocaine/crack, and 3% PCP.



\*Significant at  $p < .05$

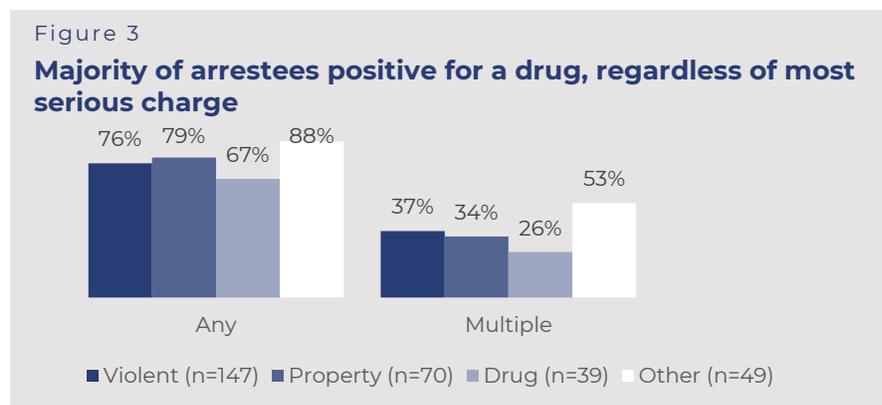
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

## How many arrestees tested positive for just marijuana?

35% of the adult arrestees who tested positive for marijuana in 2021 did not test positive for anything else, but 65% did – either meth, opiates, crack/cocaine, or some combination thereof.

## How does testing positive vary by the arrestee's highest booking charge?

As Figure 3 shows, regardless of crime type, over two-thirds of arrestees tested positive for a drug in 2021 and over one in four tested positive for multiple drugs. While any differences were not significant and due to chance, it is interesting to see that those booked for a drug offense as their most serious charge were least likely to be positive for any or multiple drugs, as compared to those booked for other reasons.



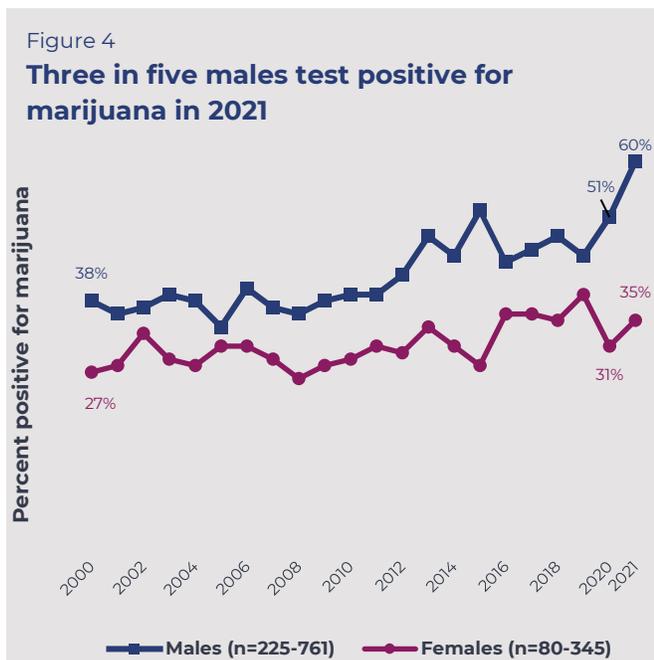
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

<sup>2</sup> Polydrug use refers to the use of two or more psychoactive drugs in combination to achieve a particular effect.

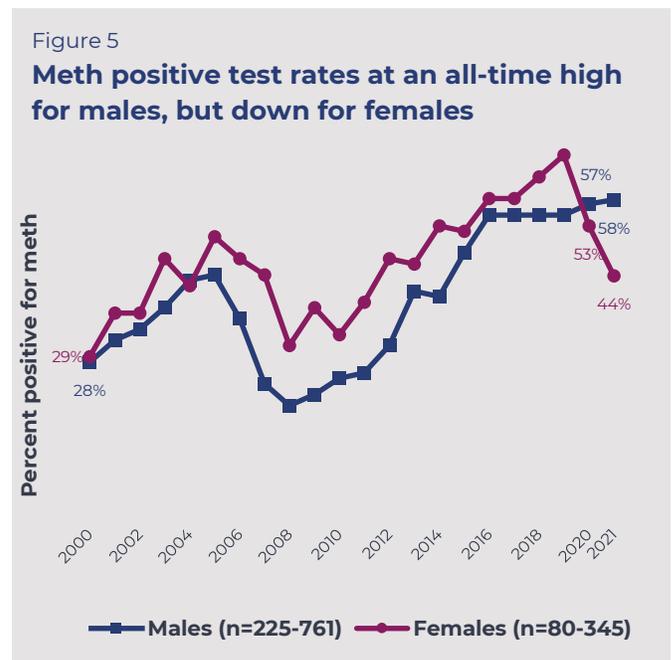
## How have positive test rates by drug type changed over time?

The percent of male arrestees testing positive for **marijuana** increased to 60% in 2021, from 51% in 2020, representing a new 22-year high (Figure 4). As in previous years, females continued to test positive at a lower rate than males (significantly lower in 2021), even though the percent testing positive for marijuana also increased from the previous year (to 35%). While there was no significant change in the percent testing positive for marijuana by age, there was by race/ethnicity, with 77% of Black individuals testing positive, as compared to 53% of Hispanic individuals and 44% of White individuals.

For **meth**, the percent of males that tested positive increased to 58% in 2021, a new 22-year high (Figure 5). In comparison, the female rate of 44% was the second consecutive decrease and represented the lowest positive test rate since 2011. Recent meth use also varied significantly by an arrestee's age. Specifically, older arrestees (59% of those 40 and older and 56% of those between 25 and 39) were more likely to test positive for meth than those under the age of 25 (36%). Meth use did not vary significantly by an individual's race/ethnicity.



Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021



Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

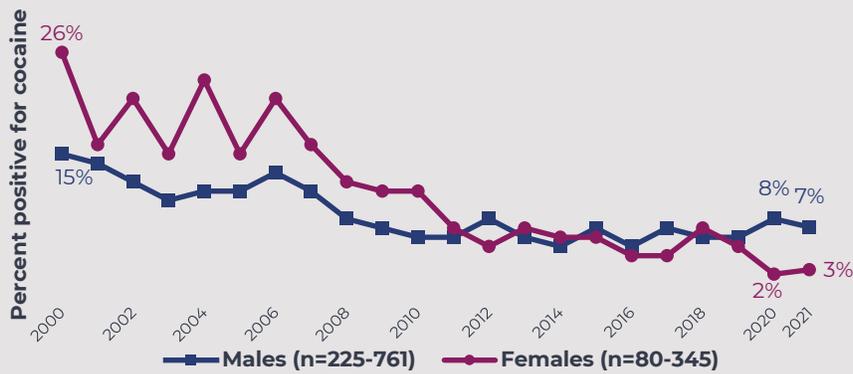
### Takeaway

Regardless of why someone is booked into jail, substance use is an issue for many arrestees, with the majority testing positive for at least one drug. Among polydrug users, meth and marijuana were used more than any other drug combination. Almost two in three arrestees testing positive for marijuana also tested positive for another drug.

The percent of arrestees testing positive for **cocaine** in 2021 decreased slightly for males (from 8% to 7%), but increased slightly for females (2% to 3%) (Figure 6). There were no significant differences in recent cocaine use by an individual's age or ethnicity/race.

Figure 6

**Cocaine positive test rates down slightly for males but up for females in 2021**



Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

For opiates,<sup>3</sup> the percent of males that tested positive decreased to 7% in 2021 (from 11% in 2020), but increased for females (to 9%, from 6% in 2020) (Figure 7). There was no significant difference in the percent testing positive for opiates by age or ethnicity/race in 2021.

Figure 7

**Around 1 in 10 arrestees test positive for opiates in 2021**



Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

In addition, 1% of adult males and 1% of adult females tested positive for PCP in 2021.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that a positive opiate drug test could indicate use of opiates other than heroin, including morphine, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, and codeine.

## How does history of drug use vary by drug type?

**Marijuana** was the drug most commonly tried by arrestees (89%) and also was tried at the earliest age (15.1) – about five years earlier than any other drug. Those who used it in the past 30 days used it an average of 18.0 days (Table 1). Males were significantly more likely than females to report using marijuana in the past 12 months (78% versus 65%) and to have tried it for the first time at an earlier age (14.5 versus 16.9).

**Meth** was tried by almost two-thirds (63%) of arrestees, and it also was reported by the highest percent (81%) as having been used in the last year. Meth users reported using it an average of 18.1 days out of the past 30, more often than any other drug (Table 1). Males were significantly more likely than females to report having tried meth (67% versus 51%).

**Cocaine** was tried by around three in five (61%) arrestees and at the youngest average age (19.9), following marijuana. Only around one in four (27%) reported using it in the past year and the average use in the past month was 4.0 days (Table 1). Males were significantly more likely than females to report having tried cocaine (65% versus 50%).

**Heroin** was tried by 31% of arrestees, almost half (46%) of whom had used it in the past year. Heroin was used an average of 12.4 days in the past 30 of those who had used it (Table 1).

**Crack** was tried by 27% of arrestees and was least likely to be used in the last year (25%). Those who used it in the past month did so about every one in three days, on average (9.5) (Table 1). Females were significantly more likely to report using crack in the past 12 months (47%), as compared to males (20%) and to have used it a greater number of days, on average, in the past 30 days (18.3 versus 4.4).

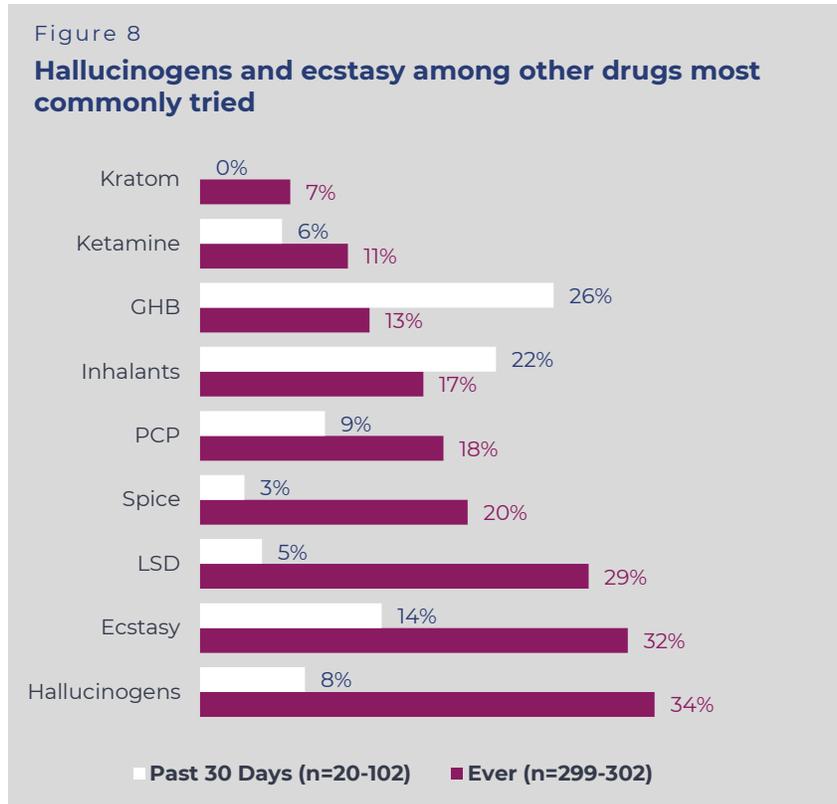
Table 1

### Self-reported drug use history varies by drug

How many have ever tried?	What was the average age at first use?	Of those who've tried it, how many used in the last year?	Of those who used in the past 30 days, how many days did they use on average?
<b>89%</b> marijuana	<b>15.1</b> marijuana	<b>74%</b> marijuana	<b>18.0</b> marijuana
<b>63%</b> meth	<b>20.9</b> meth	<b>81%</b> meth	<b>18.1</b> meth
<b>61%</b> cocaine	<b>19.9</b> cocaine	<b>27%</b> cocaine	<b>4.0</b> cocaine
<b>31%</b> heroin	<b>22.4</b> heroin	<b>46%</b> heroin	<b>12.4</b> heroin
<b>27%</b> crack	<b>21.8</b> crack	<b>25%</b> crack	<b>9.5</b> crack

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

In addition to these five drugs, almost three in every five (58%) arrestees reported having tried at least one of nine other illicit substances, including hallucinogens (34%), ecstasy (32%), LSD (29%), spice (20%), PCP (18%), inhalants (17%), GHB (13%), ketamine (11%), and kratom (7%). When those who had used an illegal substance were asked if they had used it in the past 30 days, GHB users were most likely to respond affirmatively (26%), followed by inhalants (22%) and ecstasy (14%) users (Figure 8).



Note: Cases with missing information not included.  
 Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

Due to the increased attention to combatting synthetic drug use in San Diego County, questions were added to the instrument to better understand why individuals use spice. Interestingly, males were significantly more likely than females to report having tried spice (26% versus 3%). In addition, 75% of those who used spice said they use it as an alternative to marijuana and 42% said they use it to avoid a positive drug test.

**Kratom use was added to the interview in 2019. Kratom is a tropical tree native to Southeast Asia with leaves that contain compounds with psychotropic effects. Kratom is not illegal at the time of this report and is sold as an extract or gum.**

### Takeaway

Among arrestees, drug use history and current use varies by drug. Of those who tried a drug, meth and marijuana users were most likely to report use in the last year and most frequent use in the last 30 days. Among other illicit drugs tried, hallucinogens, ecstasy and LSD were most common, but GHB and inhalants were among the other types of drugs arrestees were most likely to have recently used.

## How do drug market dynamics vary for each drug type, according to arrestees?

Over the years, a number of standard questions have been asked of arrestees regarding drugs they may have obtained, including what they traded to get them (cash and/or non-cash means), how easy they were to obtain, and if they got them in the same area in which they lived.

As Table 2 shows:

- Marijuana was most likely to be reported as “very easy” to obtain (72%) among the five drugs in 2021. Meth followed with 62% reporting it was “very easy” to obtain.
- Over two-thirds of arrestees were able to obtain their drug of choice in the MSA<sup>4</sup> in which they lived. The range was 69% of those obtaining marijuana to 78% of those obtaining crack.
- Regardless of the drug, arrestees reported obtaining the substance using cash as well as non-cash means. Crack and heroin were the substances obtained more frequently with non-cash means as compared to cash.

Table 2

### Illicit drug availability varies by type

	Marijuana	Meth	Heroin	Cocaine	Crack
Very easy to obtain	72%	62%	52%	48%	25%
Got in same MSA where live	69%	71%	71%	74%	78%
Got with cash	67%	79%	63%	43%	38%
Got with non-cash ways	55%	50%	59%	52%	58%

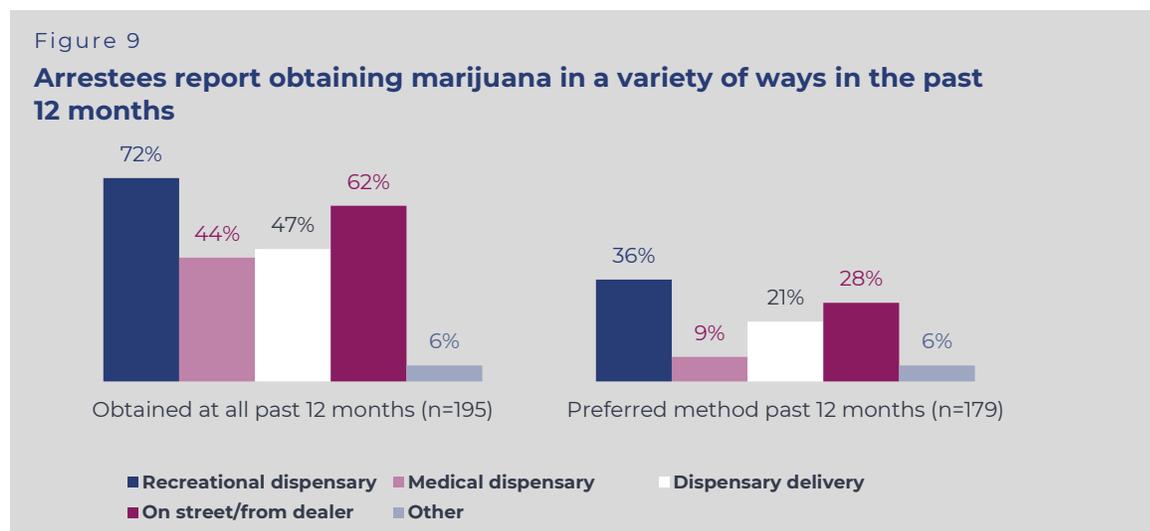
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

Arrestees were asked about buying drugs on the regular internet or dark web and if they had used electronic currency (e.g., bitcoin, PayPal, Venmo, or Zelle). Overall, only 5% reported purchasing drugs on the regular internet and 2% on the dark web. Nine percent reported they had used electronic currency to buy drugs.

<sup>4</sup> Major Statistical Area (MSA) refers to different areas of San Diego County, including Central, North City, South, East Suburban, East, North County East, and North County West.

In addition, more detailed questions have been added over the years regarding marijuana, including how individuals obtain the drug.

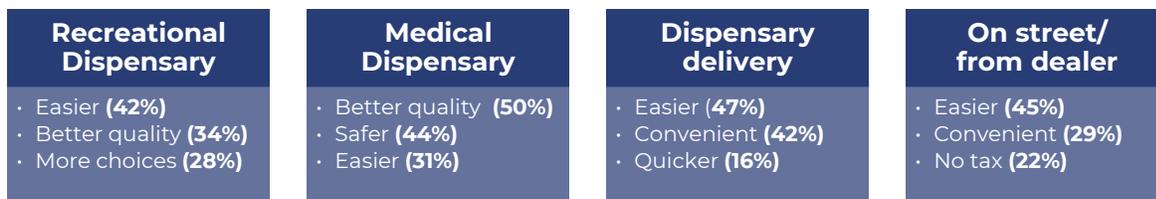
- Around two-thirds (68%) of arrestees reported they obtained marijuana in more than one way in 2021, with 32% saying they had just one preferred way. Of those who said they just obtained it only one way, the most common was illegally on the street (42%), followed by a recreational dispensary (32%), medical dispensary (18%), and delivery from a dispensary (8%).
- As Figure 9 shows, the two most common ways to obtain marijuana over the past 12 months (regardless of how many methods were used) were at a recreational dispensary (72%) and on the street (62%). When asked their preferred method, 36% said a recreational dispensary, followed by 28% saying on the street.



Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

- When asked the reasons behind their preferred method, among the top choices for recreational and medical dispensaries, and dispensary delivery, was that it was easier or had better quality. Other most common choices were that it was safer and convenient. Those who preferred buying it on the street most often noted it was easier, convenient, and less expensive because there was no tax (Figure 10).

Figure 10  
**Preferred means of obtaining marijuana most often tied to convenience and ease**

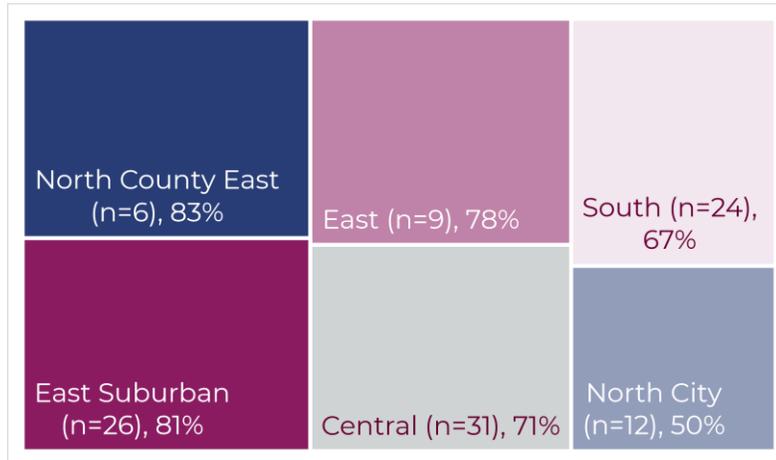


Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

- The one resident who lived in the North County West MSA reported they did not obtain marijuana at a recreational or medical dispensary in the MSA where they lived. However, some percentage of the other arrestees in other MSAs did, ranging from 50% to 83% (Figure 11).

Figure 11

**Residents who obtained marijuana at a dispensary generally obtain it in the same MSA in which they live**



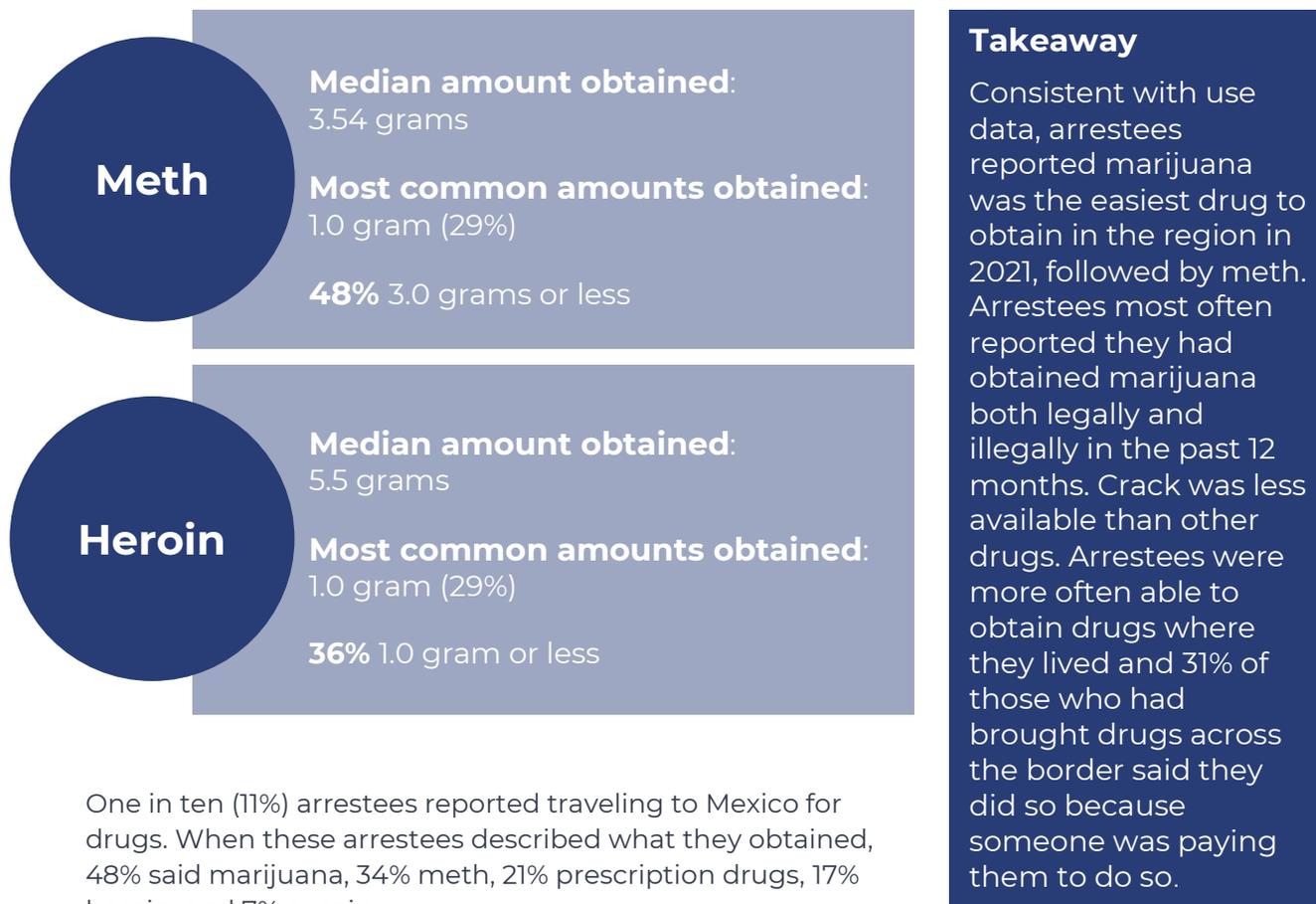
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

- In a new question added in 2021, arrestees who had purchased marijuana from a recreational or medical dispensary were asked which city in San Diego County they most often bought from. Forty-four percent (44%) said La Mesa, 41% the City of San Diego, and 15% Chula Vista.
- Of the 1 in 3 (32%) arrestees who reported having ever had a medical marijuana card, only 25% still did. When asked the medical condition they got the card for, the most common included physical pain (36%), to help them sleep (25%), anxiety (20%), and depression (8%).

To better understand how much meth or heroin arrestees obtain for their own personal use, a question was added to the interview in 2019 regarding how much of the drug they obtained the last time they did so. For meth, of those who provided a unit of measurement in grams, the median was 3.54, and for heroin the median was 5.5 in 2021 (Figure 12).

Figure 12

**How much meth and heroin did arrestees get for their own use the last time they obtained it?**

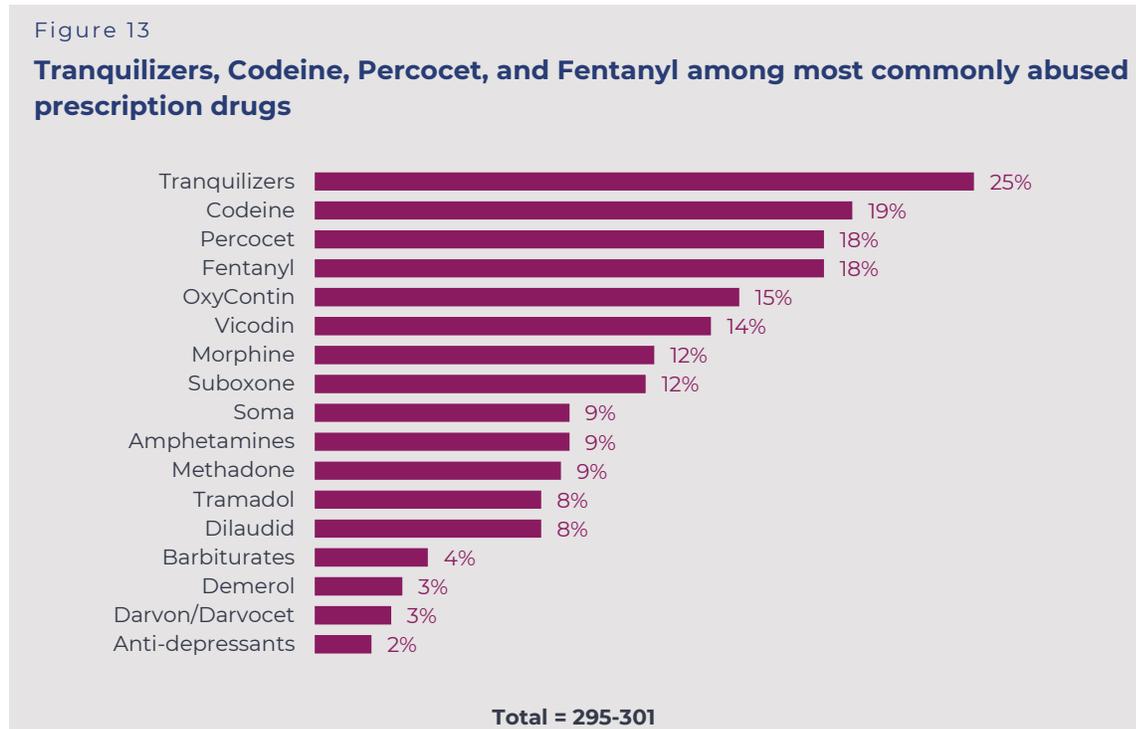


One in ten (11%) arrestees reported traveling to Mexico for drugs. When these arrestees described what they obtained, 48% said marijuana, 34% meth, 21% prescription drugs, 17% heroin, and 7% cocaine.

In addition, 14% reported they had been approached to transport, smuggle, conceal, or participate in bringing drugs across the border. Almost half (45%) of those who said they were approached, also reported they had crossed the border to obtain drugs, versus 5% of those who said they had not been approached. Regarding why they brought drugs across the border, 50% did so for their own personal use, 31% reported someone paid them to do so, and 19% were going to sell it themselves.

## What do we know about prescription drug abuse by the arrestee population?

In 2021, 52% of arrestees reported they had abused prescription drugs, with the most commonly abused including tranquilizers (i.e., benzodiazepines), codeine, Percocet, fentanyl, and OxyContin (Figure 13).<sup>5</sup>



Note: Cases with missing information not included.

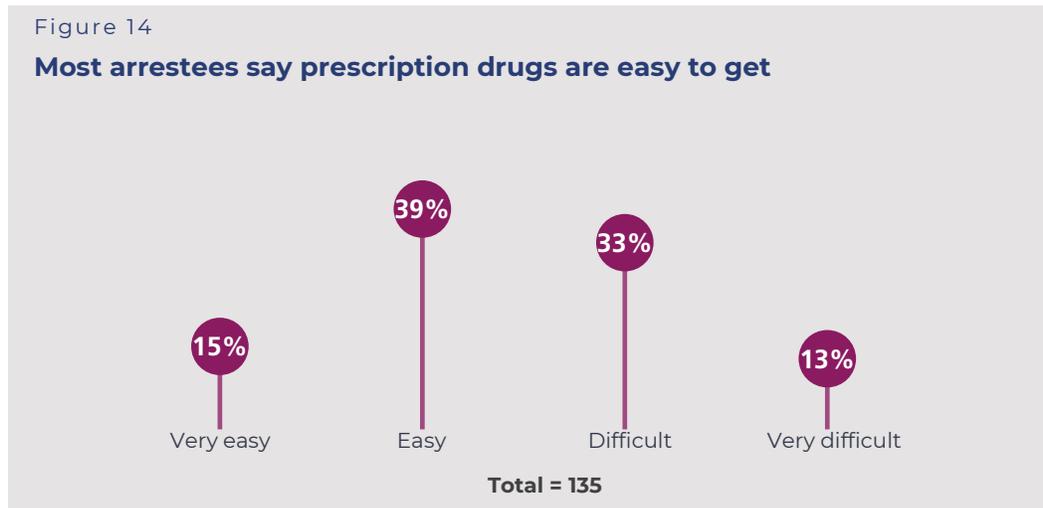
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

When those who had abused a prescription drug were asked if they had abused it in the past 30 days, the top five drugs currently being abused included fentanyl (61%), barbiturates (33%), Dilaudid (13%), OxyContin (11%), and tranquilizers (10%).

Additional analyses revealed that White arrestees were significantly more likely to report abusing prescription drugs (63%), as compared to arrestees of other ethnic groups (47% Black and 46% Hispanic). An arrestee's age also was a significant predictor, with younger ones more likely to abuse prescription drugs (48% of those under 25 and 58% 25 to 39), as compared to older arrestees (42%). Additionally, arrestees who abused prescription drugs were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana (61% versus 44%) and meth (71% versus 36%).

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that in 2020 the interview instrument was updated to ask individuals if they had used the prescription drug with a prescription, without a prescription, or both. The drugs most often used both ways (legally and illegally) included codeine (4%), Vicodin (4%), Demerol (3%), OxyContin (3%), and tramadol (3%).

When asked how difficult it was to obtain prescription drugs illegally, just over half said it was “very easy” or “easy” (Figure 14).



Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

When asked to describe how they had obtained the prescription drugs, the most common ways included that they were given them (most often from a friend), they bought them from someone illegally, or they took them from someone (most often a friend, a casual acquaintance, or a family member) (Figure 15). In addition, 10% (13% of males and 1% of females) reported that they had “doctor shopped” for prescription drugs, 52% of whom were successful in doing so.

Figure 15

**Most common ways arrestees got prescription drugs illegally**



Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

In another question, arrestees were asked if they thought that any of the pills they had bought were counterfeit and 37% said they thought they were.

Almost one in four (24%) heroin users said they were hooked on prescription opiates before they began using heroin and of these, 59% said they began to use heroin as a substitute for prescription opiates. When asked which opiates they were addicted to, 73% said OxyContin, 45% Vicodin, 32% Percocet, 32% morphine, 27% Dilaudid, 27% methadone, 18% Demerol, and 18% fentanyl. When asked why they switched from prescription drugs to heroin, the most common answers included that heroin was easier to get (58%) and gave a “better high” (42%). One in four (25%) also said it was cheaper to get heroin. In a new question added in 2021, 36% of these individuals who had switched from prescription drugs to heroin responded affirmatively when asked if a doctor had refused to continue to prescribe the medication to them.

Given the continuous national attention regarding the dangers of fentanyl, the SAM questionnaire in 2021 continued asking specific questions about the drug, including, “If you knew a drug contained fentanyl, would you purchase it?” Overall, 88% of the arrestees said they would *not* purchase it, but there were differences across a number of different variables. Specifically,

- White arrestees were significantly more likely to say they would buy fentanyl (21%), as compared to Hispanic (8%) and Black (3%) arrestees;
- Those testing positive for meth were significantly more likely to say they would use a drug containing fentanyl (18%), as compared to those who did not test positive for meth (5%); and
- Those testing positive for opiates were significantly more likely to say they would use a drug containing fentanyl (59%), as compared to those who did not test positive for opiates (8%).

When those who said they would buy fentanyl were asked why, 56% said opiates were their drug of choice, 53% said because it is a strong high, 19% said it is cheap, and 13% said it could help with pain or for them to sleep. When those who said they would not buy it were asked why, the most common answers included it was a dangerous drug (69%), they did not know what it is (20%), they do not do drugs (9%), and 4% respectively said that opiates/prescription drugs are not their drug of choice or they simply did not want to.

When asked if they had used a drug they thought contained fentanyl, even if they were not told it did, almost one in three (31%) said they thought they had because of how they reacted to it.

Arrestees were also asked if they had used fentanyl test strips to see if their drugs contained fentanyl, and if they had not, would they? While only 11% of arrestees said they had used these strips, more than half (54%) said they would if they were available.

## Takeaway

In addition to using illicit drugs, a number of arrestees have a history of abusing prescription drugs, particularly Whites and those later addicted to heroin. Fentanyl was used most often in the past 30 days by those who had abused prescription drugs and around 1 in 10 said they might buy a drug if they knew it contained fentanyl. More common ways of obtaining prescription drugs included being given them by a friend, buying them illegally, or taking them from another person, most often a friend or acquaintance.

## What do we know about arrestee use of alcohol?

The majority of both male and female arrestees reported at least one prior binge drinking episode (defined as five drinks or more for males and four drinks or more for females), with males doing so at an earlier age (16.5) than females (18.0). Around one in three of both genders had reporting drinking any alcohol in the 24 hours prior to their arrest (Figure 16).

Additional analyses revealed that:

- White arrestees were more likely to report binge drinking in the past 30 days (38%), as compared to Hispanic (36%) and Black (16%) arrestees.
- Arrestees older than 40 years were more likely to report binge drinking in the past 30 days (35%), as compared to those under the age of 25 (32%) and those between 25 and 39 (30%).
- Individuals who reported binge drinking in the past 30 days were significantly *less* likely to test positive for meth (45% versus 58%), but *more* likely to test positive for marijuana (57% versus 51%) and cocaine (11% versus 4%).

### Takeaway

Alcohol remains the drug of choice for many adults in the justice system, with more than 3 in 4 arrestees having reported binge drinking. Around one-third drank alcohol within 24 hours prior to their arrest.

Figure 16

### Male and female arrestee alcohol use history

Male		Female	
<b>85%</b> binge drank		<b>77%</b> binge drank	
<b>16.5</b> average age first binge*	<b>4.5</b> average number of drinks in past 24 hours	<b>18.0</b> average age first binge*	<b>4.9</b> average number of drinks in past 24 hours
<b>33%</b> binge drank past 30 days	<b>36%</b> self-report drinking any alcohol in the past 24 hours	<b>29%</b> binge drank past 30 days	<b>34%</b> self-report drinking any alcohol in the past 24 hours

**Males (n=72-186)    Females (n=26-58)**

\*Significant at  $p < .05$

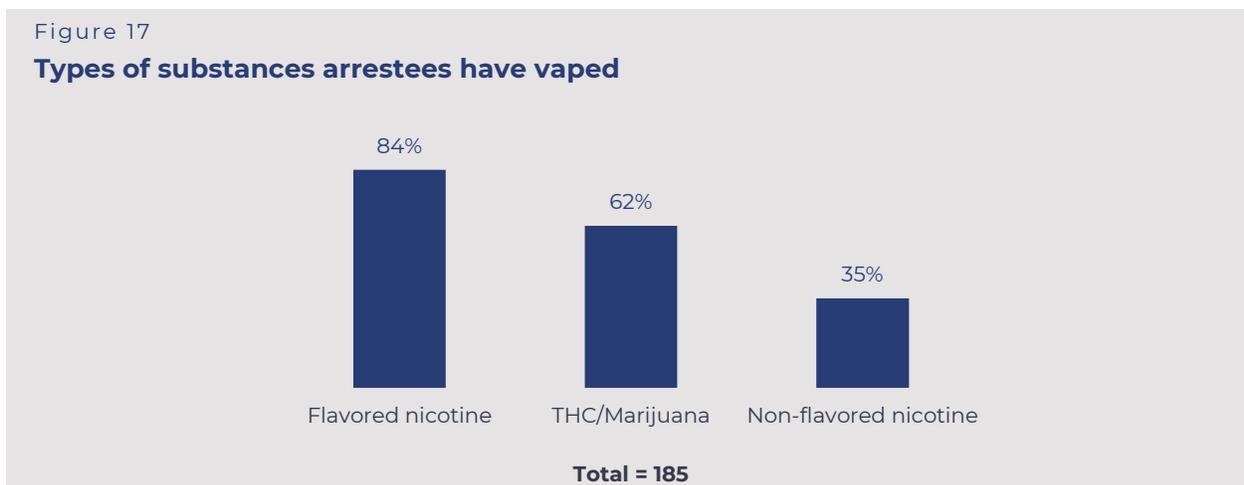
Note: Cases with missing information not included.

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

## What do we know about tobacco use and vaping?

Given the growth in e-cigarettes and vaping over the past several years, a series of questions were asked addressing arrestees' history of vaping, the types of products vaped, and the frequency of use of vaping products.

- Overall, 66% of adult arrestees reported currently using tobacco products. Males were significantly more likely to report using tobacco (71%), as compared to females (52%). There was also a significant difference by race/ethnicity with Black individuals most likely to report using tobacco (77%), followed by White individuals (69%) and those who were Hispanic (57%). There was no difference by age.
- Sixty-three percent (63%) reported they had vaped. There was no significant difference by gender or race/ethnicity, but there was by age, with 73% of those under the age of 25 having vaped, as compared to 69% of those between 25 and 39, and 47% of those 40 years of age and older.
- Individuals who reported using tobacco products were significantly more likely to report vaping (77%), as compared to those who don't use tobacco products (35%).
- Sixty percent (60%) of arrestees who had vaped said they had done so in the last 30 days and of those who had vaped in the past month, the average number of days vaped was 15.6 (range 1 to 30).
- When asked what they had vaped, the most common answer was flavored nicotine (84%), followed by THC/marijuana (62%), and non-flavored nicotine (35%) (Figure 17).



Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

### Takeaway

More than 1 in every 2 arrestees has vaped, with those under the age of 25 most likely to report doing so (almost 3 in every 4). Flavored nicotine and THC/marijuana are the substances most often vaped and about 1 in 10 of those who vaped in the past 30 days did so every day.

## What other underlying factors or needs do these arrestees have that can shed light on the risk to recidivate?

### Prior arrests and incarcerations

- Almost four in every five arrestees (78%) reported having a previous arrest, with a median number of 6.0 prior arrests. Males were significantly more likely to report a prior arrest (84%), as compared to the females (61%).
- On average, males were 21.3 years old at their first arrest as an adult, as compared to 23.2 for females. When asked what their first arrest as an adult was for, 30% said a property crime, 27% a drug-related crime, 25% a violent crime, 14% some other type of offense, and 8% a weapons offense.
- Forty-two percent (42%) reported being arrested as a juvenile, including 49% of males and 23% of females. When asked what their first arrest as a juvenile was for, 40% said a property crime, 27% a violent crime, 14% a status offense, 12% a drug-related crime, 8% a weapons offense, and 5% some other type of offense. A status offense is one that only a juvenile can be arrested for (e.g., curfew violation).
- Around four in every five arrestees (81%) reported previously serving time in jail and 32% in prison. Males were more likely than the females to report serving time in both (86% versus 66% and 39% versus 14%).

### Community supervision

- Of those who had served time in prison, 80% said they also had been on parole – 31% of whom still were. Eighty-four percent (84%) of the males and 55% of the females had been on parole before, a significant difference.

- Around three in four (78%) of those with a prior arrest reported they had previously been on probation, 45% of whom said they were currently on probation.
- About one third (35%) of those who had been in custody reported receiving services (27% while incarcerated and 27% in the community). When asked their biggest need upon reentry after incarceration, the most common answers included housing (30%), help with substance abuse (15%), employment (14%), and transportation (11%).

### Involvement in drug distribution

- Two in five (40%) of those interviewed reported being involved in selling drugs and of these, 52% said they had done so in the past year. Males (46%) were more likely to report being involved in distributing drugs, as compared to females (24%).

### Crime to support drug use

- One in three (34%) arrestees reported they had committed a crime to support a drug habit, but this percentage was even higher for those who said they had previously been convicted of a felony (51% versus 20% of those who had not been). Males were also more likely to respond affirmatively, as compared to females (40% versus 16%).
- Of those who admitted to doing so, 92% said they committed property crime and when asked what drug they were under the influence of while committing the crime, the most common was meth (59%), followed by marijuana (21%), and heroin (19%).

- Individuals who reported committing a crime to support their drug habit, as well as those who were involved in selling drugs, were significantly more likely to report having carried a gun (54% of those who were supporting their habit and 55% of those who had sold drugs), as compared to those who said they had not (23% and 17%, respectively).

## Weapons

- One in three (33%) arrestees reported carrying a gun, with males significantly more likely to do so than females (39% versus 16%).
- When asked how easy it was to obtain a gun, 41% said “very easy”, 39% “easy”, 16% “difficult”, and 3% “very difficult.”
- When asked how they obtained it, 38% said off the street, 34% from a friend, 26% from a store or gun shop, 8% from a family member, 1% over the internet, and 9% some other way (e.g., stole it, found it).
- Seventeen percent (17%) said they had committed a crime with a gun.
- In a new question added in 2021, 6% said they had purchased a ghost gun, a gun that is manufactured in parts and can be assembled at home by an unlicensed buyer.

## Proposition 47

- In 2014, Proposition 47 (Prop 47) passed which reduced certain property and drug-related felonies to misdemeanors. In 2021, 22% of the arrestees said they had heard of Prop 47.
- Of those who had ever heard of it, 28% said that they or their attorney had petitioned to have a prior offense reduced.

- Of these individuals, 35% were currently in custody for a violent offense, 24% for a property offense, 24% for an “other” offense, and 18% for a drug-related offense.
- When asked if they would complete programs such as drug treatment if they did not have to (because of legislative changes), 57% said they would not.

## Exploitation

- Fourteen percent (14%) of arrestees report they have been approached by someone to pimp/prostitute them, including 24% of females and 11% of males.
- More than one in ten (12%) of those interviewed said they had exchanged sex for money, drugs, or other things. Of these individuals, 23% of the females and none of the males said that they ever had a pimp. All three females who had a pimp, reported their pimp had given them drugs.
- When asked the first age they exchanged sex for something else, the mean was 22.4 years (range 12 to 58).
- About one in every five (19%) of those who reported exchanging sex for something said they had done so in the last 30 days. Of these individuals, 37% said they would be interested in getting help to stop.
- Seven percent reported being involved in pimping or pandering activities. This included 19 males (8 who said they had exchanged sex themselves and 11 who had not) and 3 females who had exchanged sex themselves.
- Almost half (48%) of those who had pimped/pandered said they had given drugs to the person/people they were pimping.

- Individuals who reported having engaged in pimping or pandering activities were significantly more likely to report having carried a gun (73%), as compared to those who did not have this history (30%).
- In a new question added in 2021, 6% (8% of males and 1% of females) said that someone had forced them to work against their will by threatening them, taking something from them, or withholding something from them.

## Gang involvement

- One in three (33%) arrestees reported some type of gang involvement. Males were significantly more likely to report a history of gang involvement, as compared to females (37% versus 20%).
- When asked how old they were when they started hanging out with the gang, the mean age was 13.7 years (range 1 to 34).
- Of the 98 arrestees who reported any type of gang involvement, 56% said they had gang contact within the past five years. When asked their current status with the gang, 33% said they currently hang out but were never a member, 27% used to hang out but don't anymore, and 16% respectively said that they either are currently members or that they were, but not anymore.
- When those individuals who ended their affiliation with a gang were asked why they had done so, the most common reason was they grew tired of the lifestyle (52%).
- Those who reported a previous gang affiliation were significantly more likely to report having been arrested as a juvenile (61% versus 33%), having been involved in drug distribution (71% versus 26%), and carrying a gun previously (66% versus 17%).
- They were also more likely to test positive for meth (72% versus 46%) and marijuana (65% versus 47%).

## Mental health issues

- Just over two in five (41%) of the arrestees reported they had been diagnosed with a mental or psychiatric disorder and 30% reported they had previously stayed at least overnight for mental health treatment at a hospital or other facility. Females were significantly more likely to say they had been diagnosed (55%), as compared to males (36%). Individuals who identified as White were also significantly more likely to report having a diagnosis (55%), as compared to Blacks (39%) and Hispanics (28%).
- Of those who had been admitted to a mental health or psychiatric facility for at least an overnight stay, the mean number of stays was 4.3 (range 1 to 50) and the mean age for the first stay was 22.6.
- Almost half (45%) said they had been under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time they were admitted, supporting the need for dual diagnosis treatment options.
- Almost all (98%) of those who had been diagnosed with mental health issues also had been prescribed medication for their disorder. However, only 31% said they were currently prescribed medication for their mental health issues, and of those, 28% said they were not taking the medication they were prescribed.
- Individuals who reported having a mental health diagnosis were significantly more likely to test positive for meth (59%), as compared to those who did not have one (50%). Also, they were more likely to test positive for marijuana (55% versus 51% without diagnosis).

- One in five (22%) arrestees reported they had attempted suicide. In addition, 32% said they had seriously thought about it. Those who reported a mental health diagnosis were more likely to say they had attempted suicide (39% versus 10% without a diagnosis). Females (31%) were also more likely to report having attempted suicide, as compared to males (19%).
- Arrestees were asked if they had taken a drug that led to a psychotic episode. Almost one in every four (24%) said they had, with meth being the drug most often mentioned as leading to this occurrence (77%).
- In a new question added in 2021, arrestees were asked if they had been prescribed medication for ADD/ADHD and then began using drugs as a substitute for the medication. Forty-four percent (44%) of arrestees said they had been diagnosed, 93% of whom had been prescribed medication for ADD/ADHD. Of these, 56% said they started using illegal drugs as a substitute, with the most common substitutes being meth (63%) and marijuana (40%).

### Education, employment, and insurance

- Seventeen percent (17%) of those interviewed did not have a high school degree or equivalent.
- Thirty-seven percent (37%) were employed full- or part-time at the time of their arrest and 63% were not.
- Eight percent reported previously serving in the military.
- Twenty-six percent (26%) said they currently did not have health insurance.

Table 3

### Arrestee risk in different areas

Criminal involvement	
78%	prior arrests
81%	prior jail bookings
40%	have sold drugs
42%	arrested as a juvenile
Prop 47	
28%	petitioned to have prior offense reduced
57%	would not participate in voluntary programs
Prostitution	
12%	history of prostitution
7%	history of pimping/pandering
Gangs	
33%	history of gang involvement
Mental health	
45%	admitted overnight to a mental health facility under the influence at time
28%	not taking medication for mental health issues as prescribed
22%	previously attempted suicide
Instability	
65%	homeless
63%	currently not employed
26%	no health insurance
17%	no high school degree
Foster care	
15%	prior foster care system involvement
Drug treatment	
41%	received drug treatment previously
Children	
63%	have children
38%	prior Child Welfare Services contact

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

## County of origin

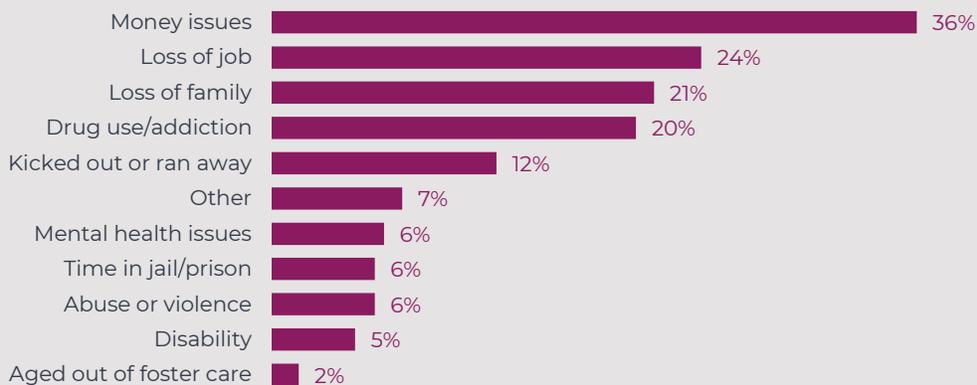
- More than half (51%) of those interviewed reported they were not born in San Diego County.
- When asked how long ago they moved to San Diego County, 9% said they moved here in 2021, 21% in the past five years, and 70% five years ago or longer.
- When asked why they moved here, 54% cited family, 21% for work, 10% to be with someone, 9% for a new beginning, and 5% liked something about San Diego.

## Homelessness

- About two thirds (65%) of those interviewed reported being homeless and 27% described themselves as being homeless in the past 30 days. Males were significantly more likely to report ever being homeless (70%) and to be recently homeless (33%), as compared to females (49% and 8%).
- The majority (78%) said they had first become homeless in San Diego County, as opposed to somewhere else.
- As Figure 18 shows, the most common reasons these individuals gave for becoming homeless were money issues, followed by loss of job, and loss of family.

Figure 18

### Primary factors arrestees said led to their first becoming homeless



Total = 194

Note: Percentages based on multiple response.

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

- When asked the first age they became homeless, the median age was 22.0 (range 1 to 63), and when asked how many times they had been homeless, 22% said once, 24% twice, 19% three times, and 35% four or more times.
- When those who reported any homelessness in the past 12 months were asked in what part of the county they most often stayed, 41% said the Central MSA, 20% East Suburban, 17% South, 8% North City, 5% North County East, 5% East County, and 5% outside the County.

- Twenty-three percent (23%) said they had stayed in a shelter in the past 12 months. When asked why they had *not* stayed in a shelter, 38% said because of restrictions and rules at the shelter, 26% concerns for safety, 8% wait lists, 6% because they have family, friends, or a pet that is not allowed to stay there, and 36% provided an “other” answer (that included personal preference, have someplace else to stay, personal pride, and don’t know how to).
- When asked what they thought their housing status would be a year from now (if they had described themselves as primarily homeless in the past 30 days), 62% said they would be in a house, mobile home, or apartment; 25% said they would still be homeless; and 13% said they would have some other type of living situation (e.g., residential hotel, shelter, or jail).
- In regard to foster care involvement, overall, 15% of the arrestees reported they had been in the foster care system as a child and more than half (57%) of these individuals reported aging out of the system.

### Drug treatment needs

- Overall, 41% of the arrestees said they had received drug treatment in the past, but 35% of these individuals said the most recent time was not successful. Males (45%) were also more likely to report receiving drug treatment, as compared to females (30%).
- The mean number of prior treatment admissions was 4.3 (range 1 to 30).
- When asked what type of treatment they had most recently completed, 56% said in-patient, 19% detox, 18% out-patient, 2% other, and 5% NA/AA.
- In a new question added in 2020, 26% said they were aware of Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), which uses medications in combination with counseling and behavioral therapy. One in four (25%) of these individuals said they had received it.
- For 69% of those who had received treatment, the last program was court-ordered (as opposed to voluntary). Individuals who reported having a prior arrest (48% versus 17%) were more likely to have received treatment.
- There was no significant difference between court-ordered treatment being successful (65%), as compared to voluntary (66%).
- Only 22% of the arrestees reported that every time they had sought drug treatment, it had been available.

### Takeaway

Many of the arrestees booked into local jails have a lengthy history of justice system involvement, homelessness, drug and mental health treatment needs, employment, and housing challenges, prior foster system involvement, and/or children who are dependent on them. Understanding and documenting these underlying risk factors is important in ensuring that individuals can be assisted as they reenter the community from incarceration.

## Dependent children

- Over three in five (63%) arrestees reported having children, including 58% of males and 75% of females.
- Around 1 in 4 (24%) reported they currently live with a child, whether or not their own. Females were more likely to report living with a child, as compared to males (36% versus 20%).
- Thirty-eight percent (38%) reported prior Child Welfare System (CWS) contact. One in four (25%) of these individuals said their case was still open.
- In a new question added in 2021, 16% of females responded affirmatively when asked if they had used drugs when they were pregnant.

## Unreported victimization

- Just over one in three (37%) reported they had previously been the victim of a crime they did not report to police.
- When asked to describe what type of crime they were the victim of, the most common responses were assault (30%), domestic violence (30%), robbery (27%), sexual assault (24%), and some type of larceny/theft (12%).
- When asked why they did not report the crime to police, the most common reasons included they thought it would be risky (23%), did not think it would help (22%), don't trust law enforcement (21%), were scared (19%), or knew the person who had committed the crime (17%).

## What are the possible ways other risk-taking behavior of this population indirectly affects others in our community?

Criminal and other risky behaviors of arrestees can affect others in the community. Figure 19 shows how addressing underlying addiction can have an impact on the community overall and Figure 20 shows how common alcohol versus other drug use is in relation to these behaviors.

Figure 19

### Risky behaviors that have consequences for arrestees and possibly others around them

**45%** rode with drivers under the influence and **38%** drove under the influence

**22%** went to work high or drunk and **19%** missed work because of being under the influence

**23%** have injected drugs, and of those who injected in the last year, **47%** shared their needles and/or works

**27%** have gone to an emergency room for an alcohol/drug-related issue and **19%** have overdosed

**18%** had health problems related to their alcohol/drug use

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021

Almost two-thirds (65%) of arrestees who had overdosed reported they had been administered naloxone; a medication designed to rapidly reverse opioid overdose at least once. These individuals answered additional questions about naloxone, including:

- How many times they had been administered it, with 39% getting it once, 31% twice, and 31% three or more times.
- Who administered it, with responses including emergency medical services or EMS (62%), friends (38%), law enforcement (21%), family (18%), healthcare providers (18%), and service providers (9%).
- Whether the person who gave them naloxone talked to them about getting treatment for their addiction, 100% of those who said they received naloxone from a healthcare provider or service provider saying they got the offer of recovery, from EMS (62%), and from law enforcement (43%).
- If they knew where they could get naloxone, two in five (43%) said they did.

Overall, 28% of arrestees reported they had been arrested for driving under the influence. Sixty-three percent (63%) reported they had been arrested just once for driving under the influence, 27% twice, and 10% three or more times. When asked what they had consumed when they drove under the influence most recently, 71% said alcohol, 11% drugs, and 18% both alcohol and drugs. When the individuals who had used drugs were asked and answered which type of drug, 57% said meth, 48% marijuana, 5% powder cocaine, and 15% some other type of drug (e.g., prescription).

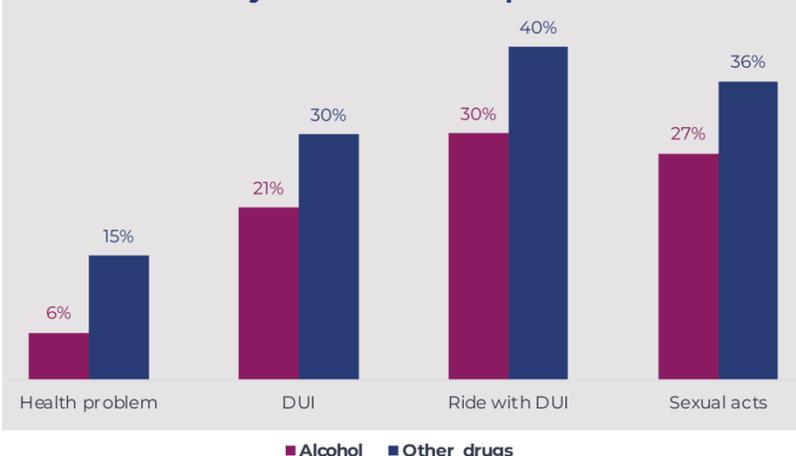
In terms of how self-reported alcohol and drug use is potentially related to risky behavior, as Figure 20 shows, arrestees were more likely to report that drug use preceded each of the four outcomes (health problems, DUI, riding with someone under the influence, and participating in sexual acts), as compared to alcohol.

## Takeaway

The risk-taking behaviors that are associated with alcohol and other drug use by the arrestee population have a direct impact on their lives, as well as others potentially, through going to work or driving under the influence, engaging in drug use or other behaviors that could put the community and first responders at risk, and behaviors requiring medical treatment for issues that may not have occurred if not for the substance abuse.

Figure 20

### Other drug use more common than alcohol use before most risky behaviors in the past 12 months



Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2021