



## METHAMPHETAMINE USE AMONG SAN DIEGO COUNTY ARRESTEES

Methamphetamine (meth) remained the drug of choice for adults arrested and booked into local jails in the San Diego region in 2020, with 56% testing positive for meth at the time of their arrest, which is even higher than the 45% that test positive for marijuana. As part of the Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) study that SANDAG conducts annually, individuals arrested and booked into jail are asked to complete a voluntary, confidential, and anonymous interview within 48 hours of their arrest regarding their personal histories, including alcohol and other drug use. Individuals who report

any meth use in the past 30 days are also asked to complete a meth addendum that delves further into their history of meth use. Because of the pandemic and abbreviated interview instruments, only three sets of questions were asked as part of the meth addendum in 2020. This CJ Flash highlights what these individuals shared during their interview, including some quotes they provided at the conclusion of the conversation.

**“There should be more counseling for meth. It is a sickness.”**

-34-year-old female

### Highlight 1:

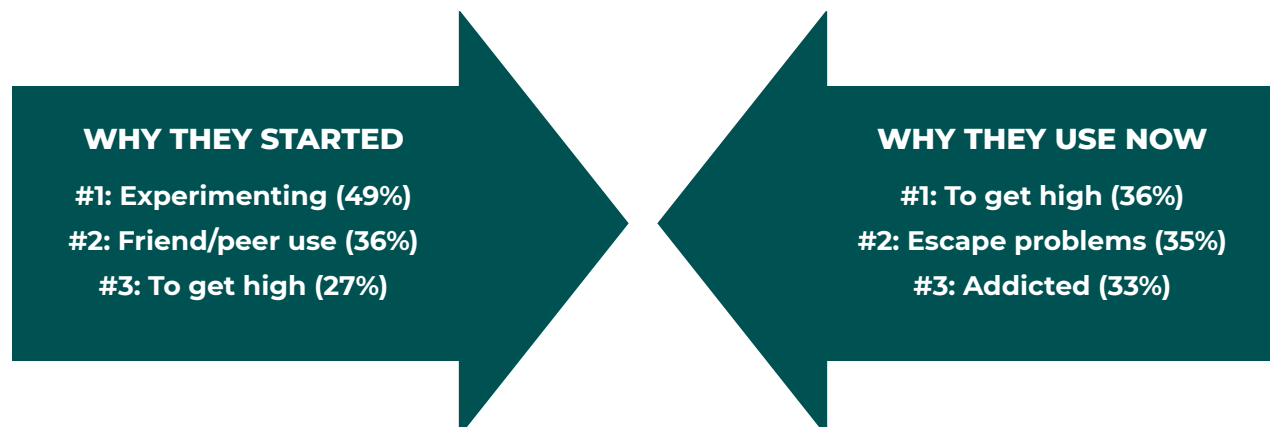
When meth-using arrestees were asked why they first started using meth, the most common reasons included that they were just experimenting, their friends/peers were using, or they wanted to get high. When asked why they use it now, the most frequent reason was to get high, followed by using it to escape problems and being addicted (Figure 1).

**“Quickest I've ever destroyed myself.”**

-31-year-old male

Figure 1

### Top Three Reasons For Why Arrestees Started Using Meth and Why They Use it Now





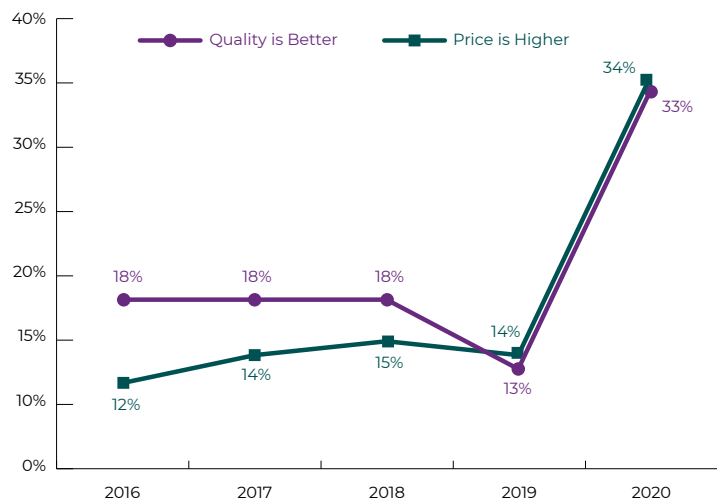
## Highlight 2:

According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA),<sup>1</sup> meth continues to be readily available, with high purity and potency in the United States. In addition, the outbreak of COVID-19 disproportionately affected meth markets, compared to other abused drugs, with supplies remaining high, but prices increasing. As Figure 2 shows, these trends were apparent in the responses from those interviewed in San Diego County, with the highest percentage in the past five years (33%) saying that the quality of the meth they had bought in 2020 was “better” than it was a year ago and almost the same proportion (34%) saying the price was higher.

**“It ruins your life. It changes you as a person.”**  
-32-year-old male

Figure 2

**Percent of Meth-Using Arrestees Who Reported the Quality was Better and the Price was Higher, Compared to the Previous Years**



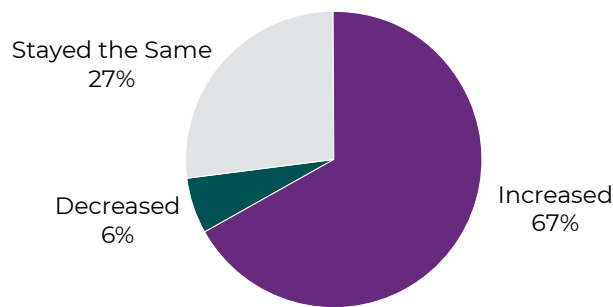
## Highlight 3:

In the final set of questions, arrestees who completed the meth addendum and said they had sold meth or acted as a middleman in the last year (34% of those interviewed) were asked if the demand for meth had increased in the past year. As Figure 3 shows, two-thirds (67%) said demand had increased, 27% thought it was the same, and only 6% said it had decreased.

**“It’s the worst drug to use if you have a family. I’m addicted and I hate myself.”**  
-41-year-old female

Figure 3

**Percent of Arrestees Who Think that the Demand for Meth has Increased, Decreased, or Stayed the Same**



<sup>1</sup> Drug Enforcement Administration (March 2021). 2020 National Drug Threat Assessment. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. Available online: [https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2021-02/DIR-008-21%202020%20National%20Drug%20Threat%20Assessment\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2021-02/DIR-008-21%202020%20National%20Drug%20Threat%20Assessment_WEB.pdf)