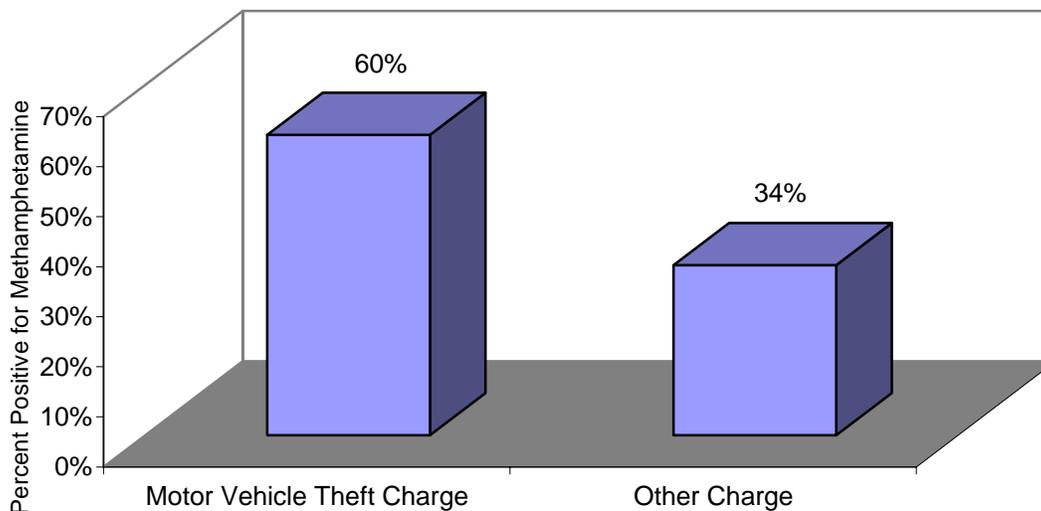


## Meth Use Costs San Diego Drivers

There is a common assumption that drug use and property crime are related. This assumption is supported by national statistics that show that property offenders report one of the highest incidence of drug use at the time of their offense<sup>1</sup> and one in four convicted property offenders report they committed their crime to get money for drugs<sup>2</sup>. Statistics from the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse also reveal that past year illicit drug users were about 16 times more likely than nonusers to report being arrested and booked for theft<sup>3</sup>.

In San Diego County, methamphetamine (meth) is the drug of choice for many individuals and motor vehicle theft has increased to a greater degree than any other Part I property crime in the past five years (42% since 2000, with 1 in 91 registered vehicles stolen in 2004). To further investigate the relationship between meth use and motor vehicle theft, data from the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program (ADAM, now called Substance Abuse Monitoring) were analyzed. As Figure 1 shows, individuals arrested with a charge of motor vehicle theft were significantly more likely to test positive for meth (60%), compared to those arrested for other types of charges (34%). This finding supports observations of local law enforcement officers of the close connection between the use of a controlled substance and the commission of motor vehicle theft.

**Figure 1**  
**MOTOR VEHICLE THIEVES MORE LIKELY TO TEST POSITIVE FOR METH AT ARREST**



SOURCE: SANDAG'S Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Data, 2000 - 2003

In terms of dollar amount, motor vehicle theft has a profound effect on the region, with the value of vehicles stolen in 2004 estimated at over \$144 million. With only five percent of motor vehicle thefts cleared (or solved), this is a drug-crime relationship that affects everyone in the region – from those who have a vehicle stolen to those who have to pay higher insurance rates because of the thefts.

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics (1999). Substance Abuse and Treatment, State and Federal Prisoners, NCJ 172781. Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics (1998). Profile of Jail Inmates, 1996, NCJ 164620. Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>3</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy (2000). Drug-Related Crime NCJ 181056. Washington, DC: Author.