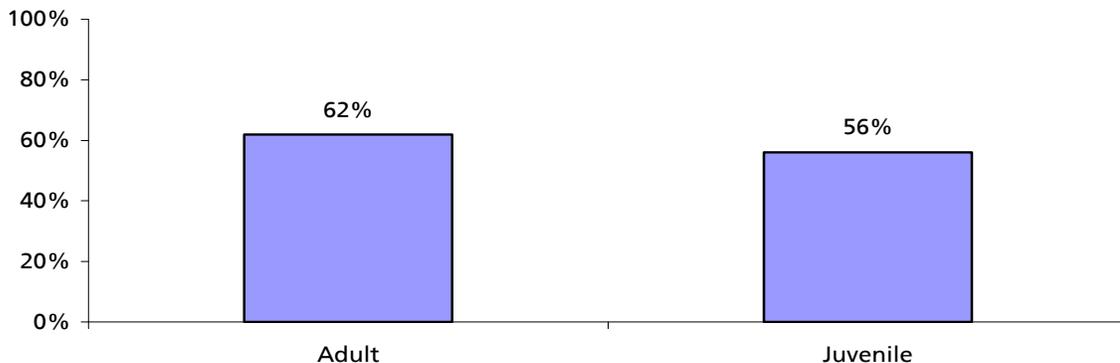


Alcohol Related Fatalities on the Decline, but Driving Under the Influence Still a Concern

The combination of drinking alcohol and operating a motor vehicle can be lethal, as evidenced by 1,420 alcohol-related fatality crashes in California in 2006, representing 37 percent of all traffic collisions.¹ This percentage was the same for San Diego County, with 101, or 37 percent, of all fatal collisions found to be alcohol-related. These incidents involved the death of the driver, the passenger, or a victim in another vehicle. Despite decreases in highway fatalities since the 1980s (down 57% in California since 1988)², the number of alcohol-related fatality collisions has been fairly constant in San Diego County over the past five years (a high of 109 in 2002 and a low of 99 in 2003). However, arrests for DUIs (alcohol or drugs) have increased during this same time period. Specifically, there were 466 felony-level DUI arrests in 2006, compared to 443 in 2002 (5% increase), and 17,661 misdemeanor-level in 2006, compared to 15,516 in 2002 (14% increase). In addition, the percentage of arrestees booked into local facilities who reported either riding in a motor vehicle with someone under the influence, or driving while under the influence themselves, indicates a large percentage of individuals are taking part in this risky behavior whether or not it comes to the attention of law enforcement. As Figure 1 illustrates, over half of the arrestees interviewed as part of the Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program (including adults and juveniles) reported DUI-related behavior that puts others on the road at risk.

Figure 1
ARRESTEES REPORTING DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OR RIDING WITH A DRIVER UNDER THE INFLUENCE



SOURCE: SANDAG 2006 Adult and Juvenile Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region.

These data, examined in the context of fatal crashes, highlight the potential for harm that exists on the road with so many individuals combining substance use and driving. The information also supports continuing prevention efforts to reduce the number of individuals who participate in DUI behaviors.

¹ California Highway Patrol (2007). **California Highway Patrol Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System** (SWITRS) Sacramento, CA: Author

² California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (2008). **Fact Sheet: Driving under-the-Influence (DUI) Statistics**. Sacramento, CA: Author