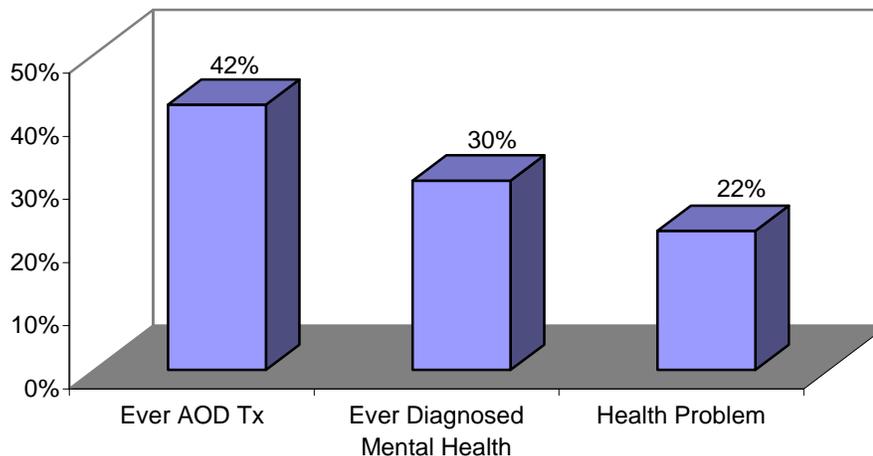


Baby Boomer's Continued Drug Use Sends a Warning to the Criminal Justice System and Treatment Providers

As healthcare systems brace for the torrent of aging baby boomers, national and local drug usage research warns of another pending storm that could impact the criminal justice system, as well as the alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment community. That is, recent data show that baby boomers are continuing to use drugs into their 40s and 50s and as such, having to deal with the associated consequences. For example, the most recent Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN)¹ report shared that baby boomers accounted for more than half of drug-related suicides and overdoses. Local data, gathered as part of SANDAG's Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program that tracks drug trends among San Diego County's arrestee population, found that individuals 40 years and older also accounted for the largest proportion (39%) of arrestees who reported having ever overdosed. Furthermore, many of the arrestees in this age cohort reported struggling with mental and physical health problems. Specifically, over 42 percent reported having received some type of prior AOD treatment, about 30 percent had a mental health diagnosis, and 22 percent reported having a health problem directly related to their AOD use (Figure 1).

Figure 1
DRUG-RELATED AND OTHER ISSUES REPORTED BY OLDER ARRESTEES



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM program, 2006

This information indicates that the AOD treatment community, as well as other service providers, need to prepare for an aging population whose numbers are expected to increase in the next decade. Specifically, the San Diego region population 65 years of age and older is estimated to increase 125 percent by 2030². This increase combined with the nexus between drug use and crime, could tax an already overwhelmed criminal justice institutional system. For more information about the AOD use of the adult arrestee population, visit the SANDAG Web site at www.sandag.org/cjc.

¹ Drug Abuse Warning Network, 2003 Area Profiles of Drug Related Mortality. Department of Health and Human Services (March 2005). Rockville MD. Available at <http://dawninfo.samhsa.gov/pubs/mepubs/>.

² SANDAG Regional Growth Forecast Update, September 2006. SANDAG, San Diego, CA. Available at www.SANDAG.org.