



# 2011 Adult Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region

September 2012

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# 2011 ADULT ARRESTEE DRUG USE IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION

## Project Overview

This SANDAG CJ Bulletin is one in a series<sup>1</sup> highlighting findings from data collected as part of the 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, as well as law enforcement, prevention, and treatment professionals regarding drug use trends over time. In 2011, this data collection effort was generously supported by the California Border Alliance Group (CBAG), County of San Diego Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS), 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 arrest and booking into jail. If the arrestee is available and willing to participate in a confidential survey, s/he is asked a series of questions related to her/his drug use history and to provide a urine sample for drug testing. In 2011, 526 male arrestees were selected to be interviewed at the Vista and Central Jails and 278 female arrestees were selected at Las Colinas. Of these 804 arrestees, 776 completed the interview and also provided a valid urine sample for analysis.

This research bulletin includes updated information regarding self-reported drug use, the results of urinalysis trends since 2000, factors related to drug use, drug market dynamics, prior justice system contact, participation in other risky behaviors, and prior receipt of drug and/or mental health treatment.

## Bulletin Highlights

- In 2011, 63 percent of adult female and 58 percent of male arrestees tested positive for an illicit drug (p. 4).
- While the percent of arrestees positive for marijuana remained relatively stable from last year, a greater percentage reported it was "easy" to obtain in 2011 compared to 2010 (p. 5 and 16).
- Cocaine/crack use remained down compared to 11 years earlier, with 7 percent of females and 6 percent of males positive in 2011, compared to 26 percent and 15 percent in 2000 (p. 7).
- Arrestees between 18 and 24 years of age who had ever used heroin were significantly more likely to say they first tried it after getting hooked on prescription-type opiates (37%), compared to those 25 to 39 (26%) and 40 years and older (15%) (p. 10).
- Arrestees who reported they had crossed the U.S./Mexican border to obtain drugs were most likely to report they did so to obtain meth (p. 17).
- Arrestees who reported trying alcohol and/or marijuana before the age of 14 were significantly more likely to report having a mental health diagnosis, being in jail previously, and having ever injected drugs (p. 18).
- One in four (25%) arrestees reported a previous mental health diagnosis and these individuals were also significantly more likely to test positive for opiates and multiple drugs and report illicit prescription drug use (p. 23 and 24).

<sup>1</sup> Three other bulletins highlighting findings from juvenile interviews, a methamphetamine addendum, and a gang addendum complete the series.

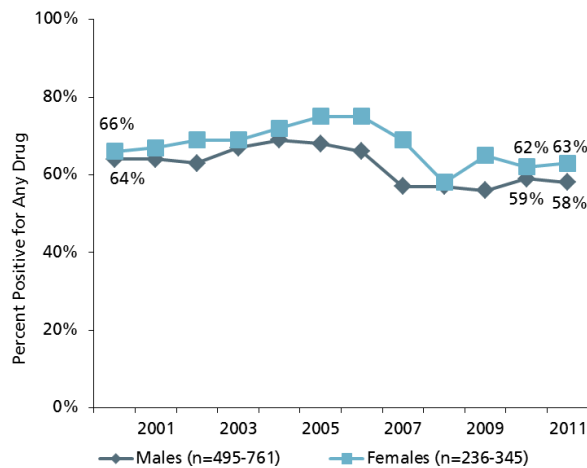
# URINALYSIS RESULTS FOR ANY AND MULTIPLE DRUGS

## Any Drug

As opposed to the general population in which males are more likely to be current drug users<sup>2</sup>, female arrestees interviewed as part of SAM have historically tested positive at a higher rate than males, though this difference varied from year to year. In 2011, 63 percent of females and 58 percent of males tested positive for any drug (which includes marijuana, cocaine, PCP<sup>3</sup>, opiates, or methamphetamine). These rates represented little change from 2010 (62% for females and 59% for males) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

### AROUND THREE IN FIVE ARRESTEES TESTED POSITIVE FOR A DRUG IN 2011



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

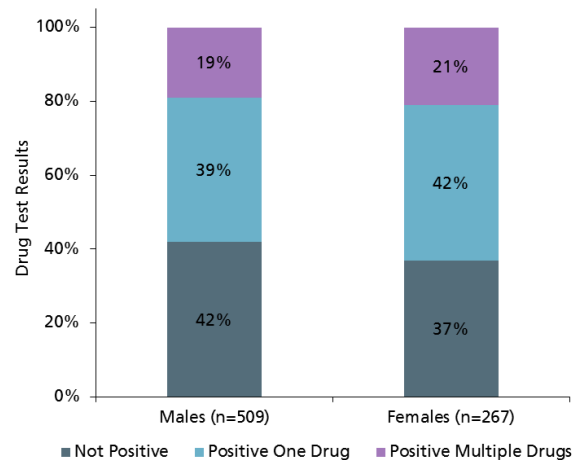
## Multiple Drugs

As Figure 2 shows, most individuals who tested positive for any drug in 2011 only tested positive for one (39% of males and 42% of females). However, 19 percent of males and 21 percent of females did test positive for multiple substances. Of these 149 individuals,

- 84 percent tested positive for two substances, 16 percent for three, and 1 percent for four;
- 91 percent tested positive for marijuana and at least one other substance; and
- the most common combination of drugs was marijuana and methamphetamine (meth), either alone (52%) or with other drugs (14%) (not shown).

**Figure 2**

### DRUG USING ARRESTEES MORE LIKELY TO TEST POSITIVE FOR ONLY ONE SUBSTANCE THAN MULTIPLE ONES



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

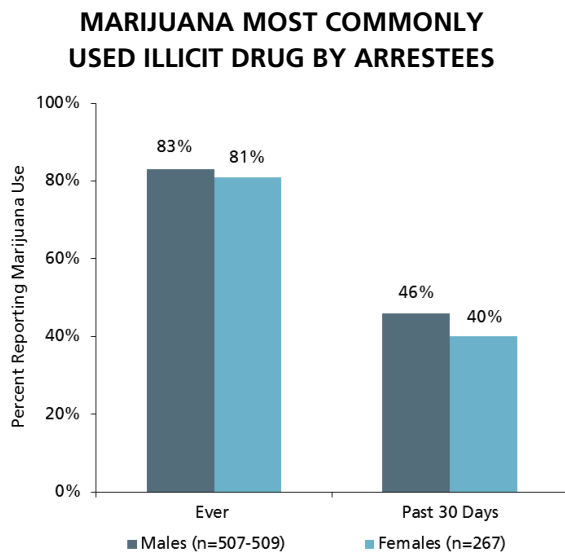
<sup>2</sup> SAMHSA (2011). *Results from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of 2010 Findings*. NSDUH Series H-41 HHS Publication Number 11-4658. Rockville, MD: Author.

<sup>3</sup> In 2011, one percent of males and no females tested positive for PCP.

# MARIJUANA

According to findings from the most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)<sup>2</sup>, marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug in the U.S. with 17.4 million individuals reporting past month use (equating to 6.9% of the population ages 12 and older). For the population interviewed here, marijuana was also the most commonly used drug, with approximately four in every five arrestees (83% of males and 81% of females) reporting having used marijuana sometime in their life and 46 percent of males and 40 percent of females reporting they used marijuana in the past 30 days (Figure 3)<sup>4</sup>.

**Figure 3**



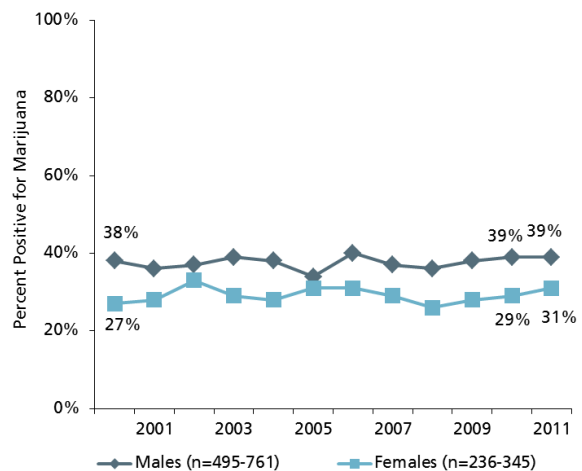
NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

Over the past 12 years, the percentage of male arrestees testing positive for marijuana has ranged from a low of 34 percent (in 2005) to a high of 40 percent (in 2006) (Figure 4). In 2011, this rate remained steady at 39 percent. During the same time period, females were consistently less likely than their male counterparts to test positive for marijuana, with around one in three or fewer (26% to 33%) testing positive during any given year. In 2011, 31 percent of females tested positive for marijuana.

**Figure 4**

**FEMALES LESS LIKELY TO TEST POSITIVE FOR MARIJUANA COMPARED TO MALES**

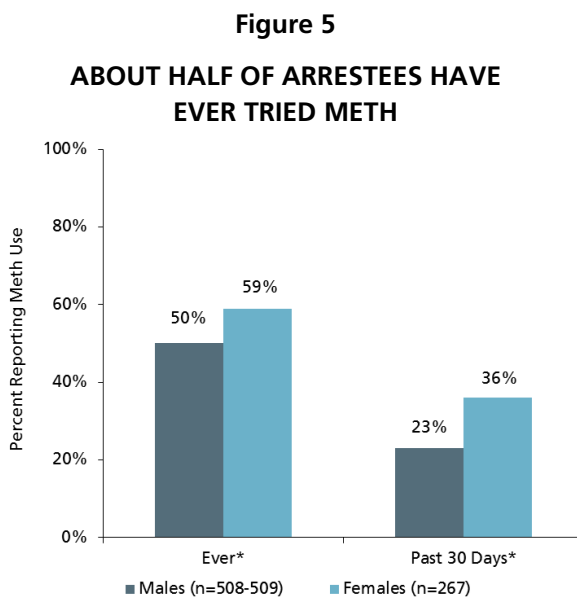


SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

<sup>4</sup> Eight percent of those who said they had not used marijuana in the past 30 days actually tested positive for it.

# METHAMPHETAMINE

In 2011, 50 percent of male and 59 percent of female arrestees reported they had used meth at least once in their lifetime, making it the most commonly tried illicit drug after marijuana by San Diego County arrestees (Figure 5). In addition, 23 percent of males and 36 percent of females reported meth use in the past 30 days<sup>5</sup>. Both of these gender differences were significant. Around three-quarters (74%) of these users reported their primary method of use was smoking, which has been associated with more immediate toxic effects. Other methods of administration included injecting (15%), snorting (9%), and eating (2%) (not shown).



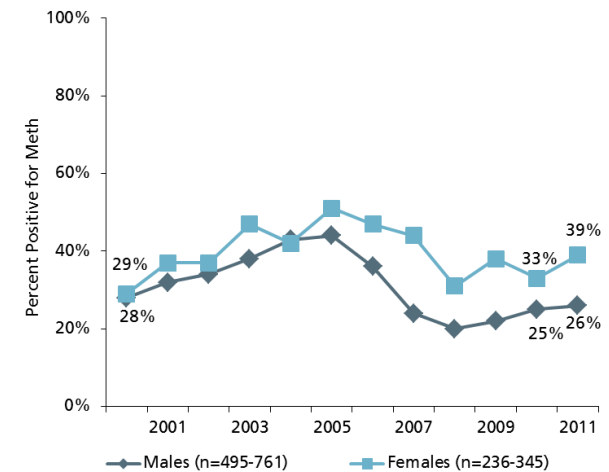
\*Significant at  $p < .05$ .

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

For males, the 26 percent that were positive for meth in 2011 (Figure 6) represented a small but steady increase (the third in three years), but was still a rate considerably lower than the percent positive in 2005 (44%), the 12-year high. For females, the increase from 33 percent (in 2010) to 39 percent (in 2011) represented a return to a rate seen in 2009 (38%), which also was lower than the high of 51 percent noted in 2005.

**Figure 6**  
**METH USE UP IN 2011**



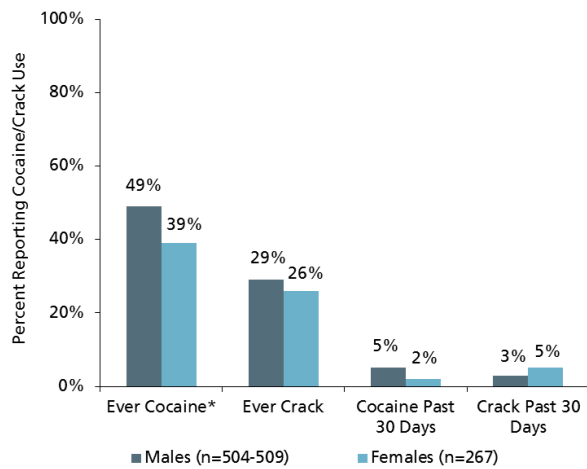
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

<sup>5</sup> Nine percent of those who said they had not used meth in the past 30 days actually tested positive for it.

As shown in Figure 7, while a greater proportion of San Diego arrestees report having ever tried powder cocaine, compared to crack, there was less variation in past 30 day use. The difference between males and females who reported ever trying cocaine was significant<sup>6</sup>, with males more likely to report having tried it.

**Figure 7**

**MORE ARRESTEES REPORT EVER TRYING COCAINE COMPARED TO CRACK**



\*Significant at  $p < .05$ .

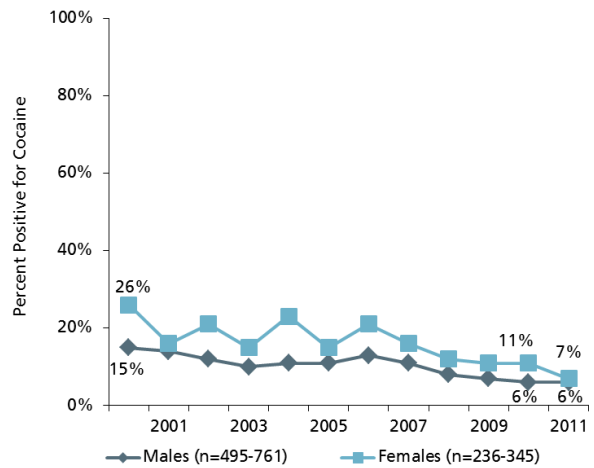
NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

Figure 8 shows that while females have traditionally tested positive at a slightly higher rate for cocaine, compared to males, this difference grew smaller since 2000. In 2011, seven percent of female arrestees tested positive for cocaine, compared to six percent for males.

**Figure 8**

**FEMALES TRADITIONALLY MORE LIKELY TO TEST POSITIVE FOR COCAINE THAN MALES**



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

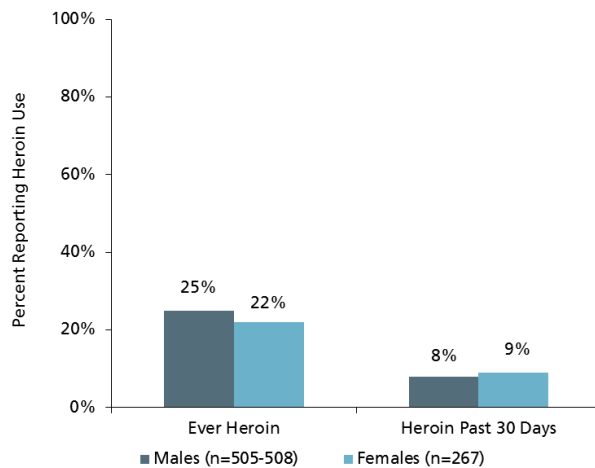
<sup>6</sup> Three percent of those who said they had not used powder cocaine or crack in the past 30 days actually tested positive for it.

## HEROIN/OPIATES

Twenty-five percent (25%) of male arrestees and 22 percent of female arrestees reported they had used heroin at some time in their life and 8 percent and 9 percent respectively, had used it in the past 30 days (Figure 9)<sup>7</sup>. There was no significant difference in use patterns by gender.

**Figure 9**

### HEROIN ONE OF THE LEAST COMMONLY USED DRUGS AMONG ARRESTEES



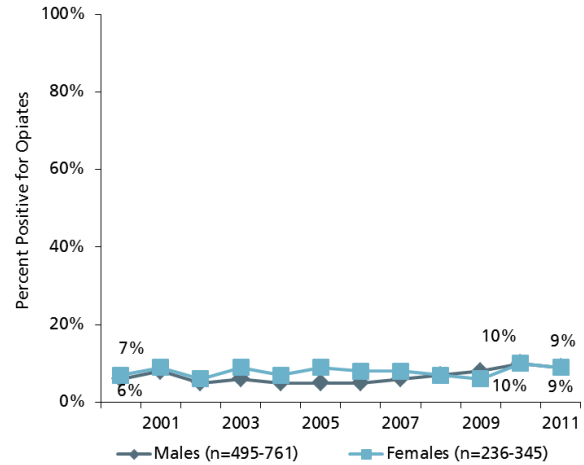
NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

As Figure 10 shows, the proportion of positive tests for opiates<sup>8</sup> remained fairly stable over the past 12 years, with almost no change from 2010 to 2011. In 2011, nine percent of adult arrestees (males and females) tested positive for opiates.

**Figure 10**

### AROUND ONE IN TEN ARRESTEES TESTED POSITIVE FOR OPIATES IN 2011



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

<sup>7</sup> Four percent of those who said they had not used heroin in the past 30 days actually tested positive for opiates.

<sup>8</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.



## OTHER DRUGS

As part of the interview, questions are asked regarding lifetime illegal use of prescription drugs, as well as other less common substances that are not available legally in the U.S. Just over half (56%) of the arrestees reported using some other type of drug illegally, with 42 percent reporting ever having used a prescription drug illegally and 47 percent using other illicit drugs (Table 1).

**Table 1**

### ARRESTEES ALSO HAVE EXPERIMENTED WITH OTHER TYPES OF DRUGS

<b>Any Other Drug</b>	<b>56%</b>
<b>Prescription Drugs Illegally</b>	<b>42%</b>
Vicodin	23%
Tranquilizers	19%
Oxycontin	16%
Percocet	16%
Somas	15%
Codeine	13%
Morphine	10%
Methadone	9%
Amphetamines	8%
Dilaudid	7%
Darvon/Darvocet	5%
Fentanyl	4%
Anti-depressants	4%
Barbiturates	4%
Demerol	3%
<b>Other Illicit Drugs</b>	<b>47%</b>
Peyote/Mescaline/Mushrooms	28%
Ecstasy	27%
LSD	23%
PCP	14%
Inhalants	12%
Ketamine/Special K	8%
GHB/G	8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>771-772</b>

*NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.*

*SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011*

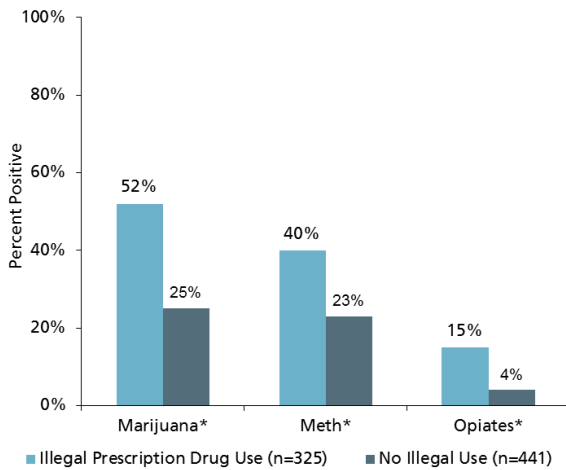
As Table 1 shows, five of the six most commonly abused prescription drugs among the local arrestee population are categorized as painkillers, including Vicodin, Oxycontin, Percocet, Somas, and Codeine. In addition, tranquilizers were illegally used by 19 percent of the arrestees. In terms of other illicit drug use, arrestees were most likely to report previous use of peyote/mescaline/mushrooms (28%), ecstasy (27%), and LSD (23%). Additional analyses revealed that White arrestees were significantly more likely to have used both prescription and other drugs illegally, compared to other ethnic groups (59% versus 30% to 34% for prescription drugs and 65% versus 31% to 39% for other drugs) (not shown).

Those who reported ever using a prescription drug illegally also were asked if they had used the substance in the past 12 months. Those who had ever reported using Oxycontin were most likely to report using it in the past year (35%), followed by those who had abused tranquilizers (32%), Percocet (25%), Fentanyl (22%), methadone (21%), and Vicodin (21%). The most common other illicit drugs used in the past year (by those who had ever used the substance) were GHB/G (46% of those who had ever used the drug), ecstasy (45%), inhalants (29%), and mushrooms (27%) (not shown).

To determine how a history of abusing prescription drugs was related to illegal drug use, additional analyses were completed. As Figure 11 shows, arrestees who previously reported using prescription drugs illegally were significantly more likely to be current illicit drug users. Specifically, these individuals were more likely to test positive for marijuana (52% versus 25%), meth (40% versus 23%), and opiates (15% versus 4%).

Figure 11

**ILLEGAL USE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS  
ASSOCIATED WITH OTHER CURRENT DRUG USE**



\*Significant at  $p < .05$ .

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

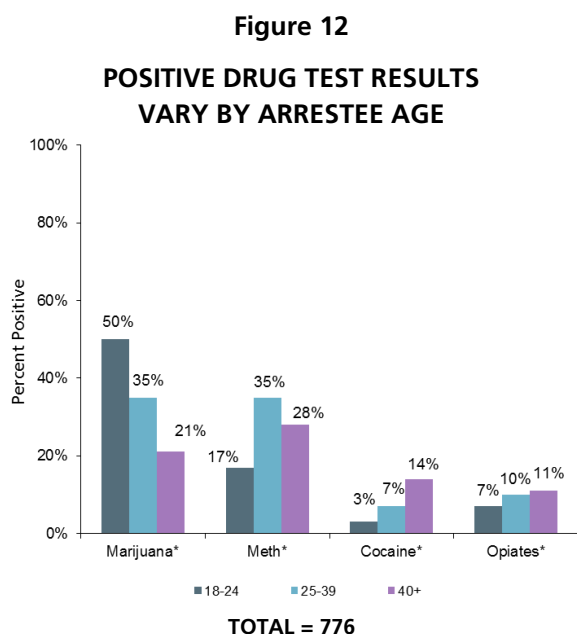
Arrestees who had ever used heroin were asked if prior to using heroin, they were “hooked on any prescription-type opiates.” Twenty-four percent (24%) of these 176 individuals said they were, with a significant difference by age, such that those 24 and younger were most likely to respond affirmatively (37%), compared to those between 25 and 39 (26%) and 40 and older (15%). Of these 43 individuals, almost three-quarters (70%) said they began using heroin as a substitute for the other drug(s). When asked what these prescription opiate(s) were, 65 percent said Vicodin, 63 percent Oxycontin, 58 percent Percocet, 35 percent morphine, 26 percent methadone, 23 percent Dilaudid, 23 percent Fentanyl, and 21 percent Demerol (not shown).

# PREDICTORS OF CURRENT DRUG USE

To better understand what factors were related to current drug use among the arrestee population, additional analyses were conducted. The following describes how drug testing results varied by arrestee characteristic.

## Current Age

As Figure 12 shows, arrestees between the ages of 18 and 24 were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana, while meth was more likely among arrestees 25 years of age and older. In addition, arrestees 25 to 39 were significantly more likely to test positive for multiple drugs (24%, compared to 17% of those 18 to 24 and 17% of those 40 and older) (not shown). In contrast, self-report information from the NSDUH suggests that among the general population, drug use is highest for those 18 to 25, regardless of the drug<sup>2</sup>.



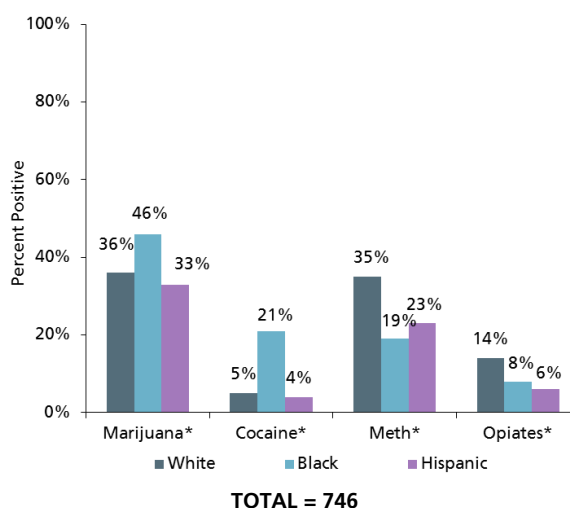
\*Significant at  $p < .05$ .

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

## Ethnicity

As Figure 13 shows, arrestee ethnicity also was a significant predictor of having a positive drug test result for marijuana, cocaine, meth, and opiates. Specifically, individuals who identified as Black were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana and cocaine and Whites were more likely to test positive for meth and opiates. Hispanic arrestees had a similar use profile to Whites for marijuana and cocaine, but were less likely to test positive for meth and opiates.

**Figure 13**  
**POSITIVE DRUG TEST RESULTS VARY BY ARRESTEE ETHNICITY**



\*Significant at  $p < .05$ .

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

## Current Employment Status

Overall, about two in every five (39%) arrestees reported they were employed either full-time or part-time, while the rest (61%) were unemployed<sup>9</sup>, whether or not they were looking for work. Additional analyses revealed that for this sample, employment status was related to recent drug use. Specifically, those who were unemployed were significantly more likely to test positive for meth (36% versus 22%), as well as for multiple drugs (23% versus 15%) (not shown).

## Previous Arrest History

Almost four in five (79%) of those interviewed reported they had been arrested previously. Being arrested in the past was significantly related to testing positive for marijuana (39% versus 29%), meth (36% versus 8%), and cocaine (7% versus 2%), as well as testing positive for multiple drugs (23% versus 8%) (not shown).

In terms of this current arrest, the most consistent predictors were related to current meth use. Specifically, individuals who tested positive for meth were significantly *less* likely to be arrested for aggravated assault (9% versus 33%), other violent offenses (16% versus 32%), or disturbing the peace (15% versus 32%) and *more* likely to be arrested for a drug-related offense (possession, 61% versus 23%, and under the influence, 72% versus 26%) (not shown).

## Prior Time Spent in Prison

Around one in four (24%) of those interviewed reported previously serving time in prison (29% of males and 14% of females, a significant difference). Similar to the previously described relationship regarding prior arrest and recent drug use, individuals who had previously served time in prison were significantly more likely to test positive for meth (39% versus 28%) and cocaine (10% versus 5%), as well as for multiple drugs (29% versus 17%) (not shown).

## Parental Drug Use

Around one-quarter (28%) of arrestees reported they knew at least one of their parents had previously used illegal drugs (25% of males and 33% of females). Having a parent who used illegal drugs was a significant predictor of current marijuana (54% versus 30%), meth (44% versus 25%), and opiate use (13% versus 7%), as well as use of multiple substances (33% versus 15%). Additionally, it was a significant predictor of prescription drug abuse (68% versus 33%). This relationship between parental drug use and risk-taking behaviors by children, which was previously reported with juvenile data, reiterates the special need for intervention in the lives of drug abusers with children (not shown).

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<sup>9</sup> Males were significantly more likely to report being employed (45%), compared to females (28%).

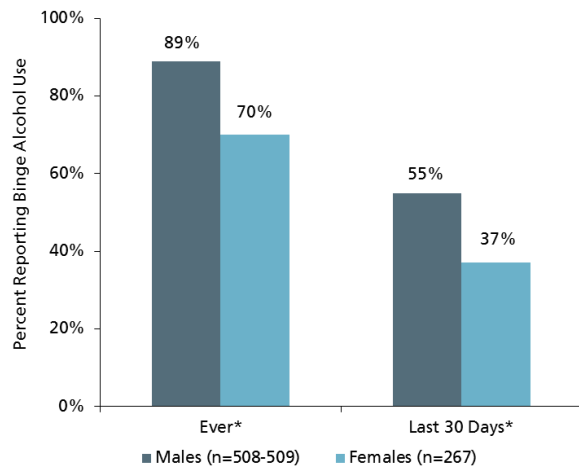
# ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO USE

## Alcohol

Arrestees also are asked whether they have ever had five or more alcoholic drinks in one day (i.e., binge drinking) and if they have done so in the past 30 days. Figure 14 shows the percent of arrestees in 2011 who responded affirmatively to these questions. Males were significantly more likely than females to report ever having consumed five or more alcoholic drinks in one day (89% versus 70%) and also to report doing so in the last 30 days (55% versus 37%). Males reported using alcohol in the last 30 days more often than any other substance.

**Figure 14**

### MALE ARRESTEES MORE LIKELY TO REPORT BINGE DRINKING PREVIOUSLY



\*Significant at  $p < .05$ .

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

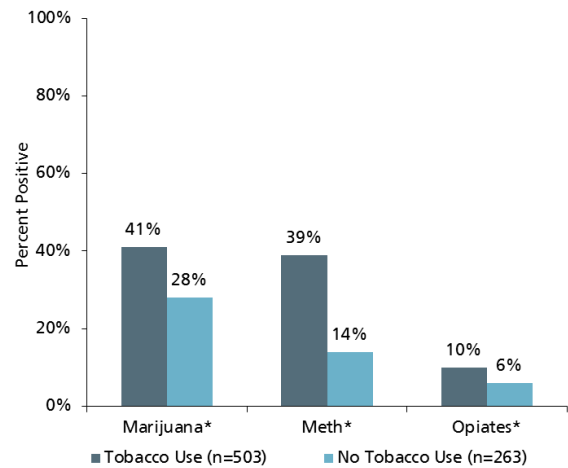
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

## Tobacco

Two-thirds (66%) of arrestees reported that they currently use tobacco in some form (67% of males and 62% of females) (not shown). Consistent with national survey data<sup>2</sup>, individuals who reported currently using tobacco were significantly more likely to test positive for an illicit drug. As Figure 15 shows, tobacco users were more likely to test positive for marijuana, meth, and opiates, as well as multiple drugs (24% versus 10%, not shown), compared to those who do not use tobacco.

**Figure 15**

### POSITIVE DRUG TEST RESULTS VARY BY CURRENT TOBACCO USE



\*Significant at  $p < .05$ .

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

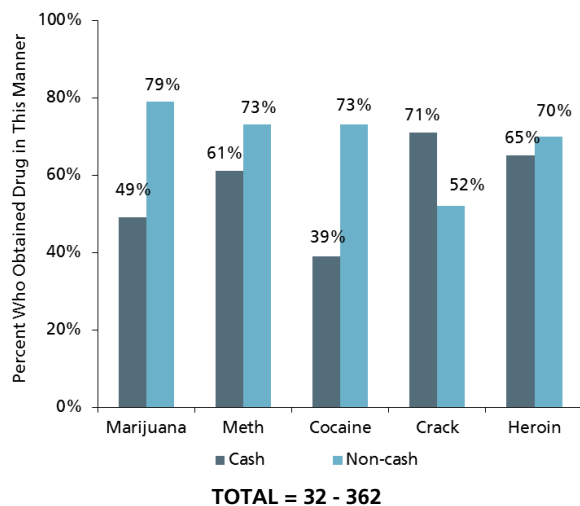
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

## Types of Transactions

Arrestees who reported they obtained drugs in the past 30 days were asked a series of questions regarding the details of these transactions<sup>10</sup>. As Figure 16 shows, respondents were more likely to report getting marijuana, cocaine, and meth through non-cash means, such as trading something for it or just receiving it as a “gift.” In comparison, those who obtained heroin were almost equally likely to report getting this drug through cash and non-cash transactions and those who obtained crack were more likely to do so after paying cash for it.

**Figure 16**

### ARRESTEES OBTAIN DIFFERENT DRUGS IN DIFFERENT WAYS



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

<sup>10</sup> One hundred percent (100%) of those who reported obtaining heroin also reported using it in the past 30 days, compared to 99 percent for marijuana, 97 percent for meth, 94 percent for crack, and 84 percent for cocaine. Therefore, the terms “buyers” and “users” are used interchangeably in this section of the report.

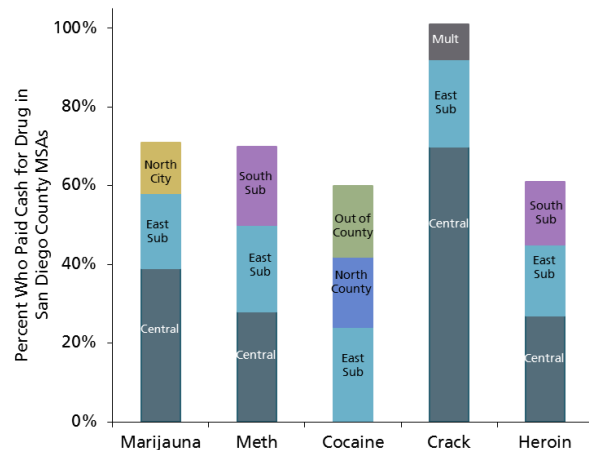
## Location and Frequency of Cash Transactions

Individuals who paid cash for drugs reported obtaining the substances from Major Statistical Areas (MSA)<sup>11</sup> across the region. Figures 17 and 18 present the percent who reported obtaining a drug in the three most common MSAs, as well as what percent of arrestees purchased drugs in the same MSA in which they lived. Some highlights from these data include:

- the Central MSA was the area most frequently noted as the purchase location for all drugs except cocaine;
- the East Suburban MSA was in the top three areas where buyers purchased each of the five drugs; and
- crack and meth users were most likely to report purchasing the drug in the same MSA in which they lived, while heroin users were most likely to report they traveled outside of it to obtain the drug.

**Figure 17**

### MOST ARRESTEES REPORT BUYING DRUGS IN THE CENTRAL MSA



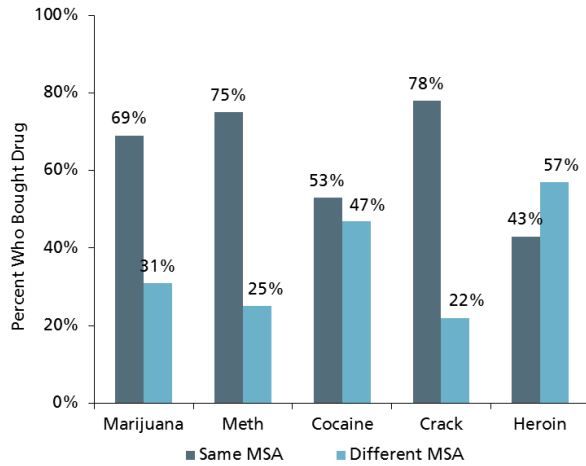
NOTE: Cases with missing information not included. For crack, both North City and South Suburban represented the same proportions at five percent each and are shown as “Mult” for multiple.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

<sup>11</sup> MSAs are groups of subregional areas (SRAs) which, in turn, are groups of census tracts. The seven MSAs encompass the entire San Diego region, with boundaries remaining static over time. A map of these MSAs is included at the end of this bulletin.

**Figure 18**

**MOST INDIVIDUALS BUY DRUGS IN THE MSA IN WHICH THEY LIVE**



TOTAL = 17 - 176

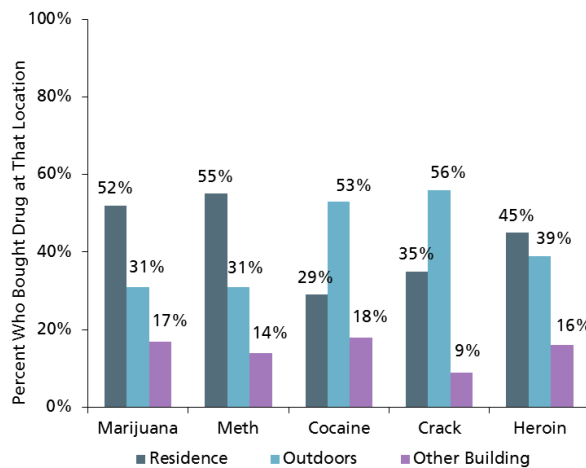
NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

Buyers also varied in terms of what type of place their most recent drug purchase occurred. As Figure 19 shows, individuals buying marijuana and meth were more likely to make the purchase indoors at a residence. Those who reported purchasing cocaine and crack; however, were more likely to report buying the drugs outdoors, compared to other drug buyers.

**Figure 19**

**METH AND MARIJUANA MORE LIKELY TO BE PURCHASED AT A RESIDENCE**



TOTAL = 17 - 136

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

Drug purchasers also were asked questions related to whether they made multiple purchases on the same day, as well as multiple purchases in the same week. Specifically, arrestees were asked to remember the last time they purchased a drug and to note how many times they made a purchase on the same day. As Table 2 shows, crack and heroin users were most likely to report making more than one purchase on a given day (43% and 25%, respectively). Heroin users also reported buying the greatest number of times per week on average (4.1), followed by crack users (3.0).

**Table 2**

**HEROIN AND CRACK USERS MOST LIKELY TO MAKE MULTIPLE PURCHASES PER DAY AND PURCHASE MOST TIMES PER WEEK**

	Bought More Than Once/Day	Mean Number of Days Purchased in Last Seven
Marijuana	7%	2.6
Meth	17%	2.8
Cocaine	12%	1.1
Crack	43%	3.0
Heroin	25%	4.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17 - 175</b>	

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

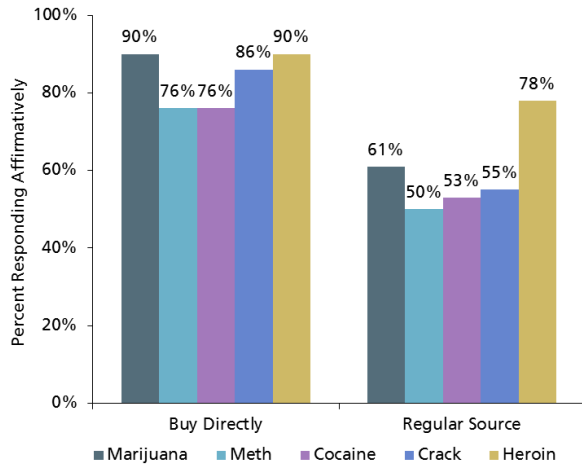
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

**Ease and Reliability of Cash Transactions**

When asked from whom they obtained drugs, around three-quarters or more reported they bought it directly themselves, rather than having someone else purchase it for them (Figure 20). In terms of having a regular source from whom they most recently purchased a drug, there was a greater amount of variability across the drugs. Specifically, three-quarters (78%) of heroin users reported a regular source, compared to 50 percent to 61 percent for the other drugs.

**Figure 20**

**HEROIN USERS MOST LIKELY TO HAVE REGULAR SOURCE**



**TOTAL = 17 - 176**

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

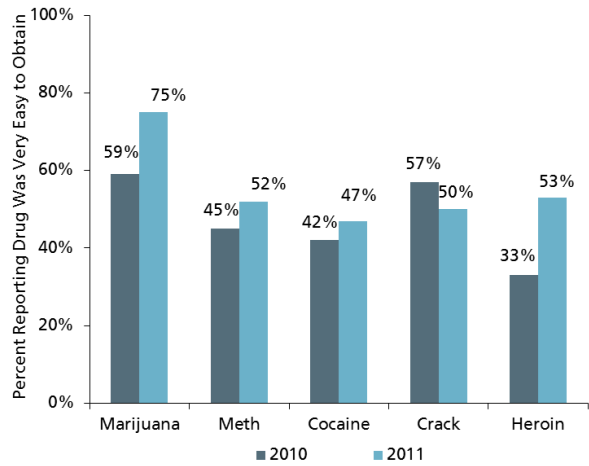
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

Arrestees also were asked how many individuals they had purchased a given drug from in the past seven days. This answer is partly a function of how frequently they purchased the substance (Table 2), as well as if they had a regular source (Figure 20). Cocaine users were least likely to say they used more than one source (8%), followed by marijuana (20%), heroin (32%), meth (37%), and crack users (47%) (not shown).

In another set of questions, arrestees were asked “how easy is it usually” to obtain a particular substance, as well as if “there was a time in the past 30 days when you tried to buy the drug but you were unable to.” As Figure 21 shows, 75 percent of marijuana users said it was “very easy” to obtain the drug, the highest percentage for the five drugs and an increase from 59 percent reporting it was “very easy” to obtain in 2010. The percent of arrestees who said it was “very easy” to obtain heroin also increased considerably from 2010 to 2011 (33% to 53%).

**Figure 21**

**ARRESTEES MORE LIKELY TO SAY MARIJUANA AND HEROIN ARE EASIER TO OBTAIN IN 2011**



**TOTAL = 17 - 175**

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

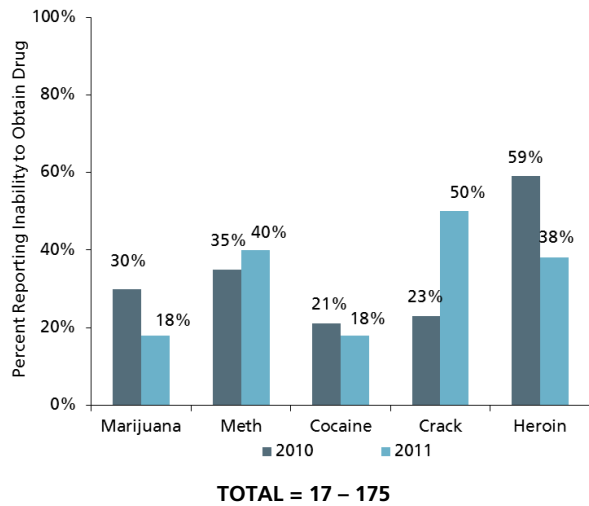
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

In terms of how often these arrestees reported they were unable to buy one of these substances in the past year, fewer marijuana and heroin users also reported they had difficulty obtaining the substance in 2011, compared to 2010 (Figure 22). When further queried if they bought another drug including alcohol when the one they intended to purchase was unavailable, 27 percent (of the 11 crack users) to 40 percent (of the 57 meth users) said that they had (not shown).



**Figure 22**

**FEWER ARRESTEES REPORTED INABILITY TO OBTAIN MARIJUANA AND HEROIN IN 2011**



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

**Crossing the U.S./Mexican Border for Drugs**

Arrestees were asked if they had ever crossed the U.S./Mexican border to obtain drugs and ten percent of the respondents indicated they had. On average, these 76 individuals first crossed the border at 22.5 years of age (range 10 to 50) and did so to obtain meth (40%), marijuana (31%), heroin (23%), cocaine (12%), ecstasy (4%), steroids (3%), crack (3%), or LSD (1%). Thirty-two percent (32%) also reported crossing the border for prescription drugs (not shown).

Arrestees were asked if they had “ever been approached to transport, smuggle, conceal, or participate in bringing drugs across the U.S./Mexican border.” Overall, 17 percent of the arrestees responded affirmatively to this question, with Whites (22%) and Hispanics (18%) significantly more likely than Blacks (8%) to report being asked to participate in drug distribution. There was no significant difference in the age of those approached (not shown).

**Methods for Obtaining Prescription Drugs**

Arrestees also were asked if they had ever obtained prescription drugs without a legitimate prescription. Forty-five percent (45%) of respondents said they had. Of these, 346 individuals described how, with most (94%) saying they had obtained the drug from another individual with fewer arrestees reporting they had obtained it another way (3%), used a fake prescription (2%), stole the drug from someone else (2%), or stole the drug from a pharmacy (1%). In addition, six percent of the arrestees said they had “doctor shopped” for someone to write them a prescription, with the majority (72%) saying they had been successful in doing so (not shown).

## Age of First Drug Use

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the younger an individual starts using “gateway drugs” (such as alcohol and marijuana), the greater the probability s/he will continue with other illicit drug use in her/his lifetime<sup>12</sup>. As Table 3 shows, marijuana use began earlier than other drugs for this sample of individuals, around 14 for males and 15 for females. Binge alcohol use (five drinks or more in one day) seemed to typically follow around the age of 17 on average for males and 18 for females. Additional analyses revealed that experimenting with alcohol and/or marijuana at a younger age (13 and younger) was significantly related to having a mental health diagnosis, being in jail previously, and ever injecting drugs. Early use of marijuana was also a significant predictor of testing positive for meth, opiates, and multiple drugs at this arrest (not shown).

**Table 3**

### MALE ARRESTEES YOUNGER ON AVERAGE AT TIME OF FIRST SUBSTANCE USE

	Males	Females
Marijuana*	14.1	15.0
Alcohol*	16.9	18.1
Powder Cocaine	18.8	19.6
Meth	20.5	19.7
Rock/Crack Cocaine	22.3	22.7
Heroin	23.6	22.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>126-452</b>	<b>59-186</b>

\*Significant at  $p < .05$ .

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

## Participation in Risky Behaviors

Arrestees were asked about a variety of risky behaviors they participated in after consuming alcohol or other drugs in the past year. Table 4 shows the percent of arrestees reporting they engaged at least once in each particular risky behavior after alcohol, other drug(s), or with one or the other. The most common risks, reported by 53 percent, included participating in sexual acts while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, followed by riding in a vehicle with a driver who had been drinking or using drugs (46%) or driving a car themselves while under the influence (37%)<sup>13</sup>.

**Table 4**

### ARRESTEES REPORTED RISKY BEHAVIORS OR EFFECTS OF USING AFTER SUBSTANCE USE

	Alcohol	Drugs	Either or Both
Participated in sex acts	36%	42%	53%
Rode with a driver under the influence	34%	36%	46%
Drove a car	23%	28%	37%
Went to work	NA	NA	32%
Missed work	NA	NA	21%
Health problems	11%	9%	17%
Family violence perpetrator	5%	4%	6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>496 - 766</b>		

NOTE: Cases that were not applicable or with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

<sup>12</sup> SAMHSA (2004). *Initiation of Marijuana Use: Trends, Patterns, and Implications*. Rockville, MD: Author.

<sup>13</sup> Seven percent of arrestees who drove a vehicle after consuming alcohol reported they had gotten in an automobile accident as a result, as did four percent of those who had consumed drugs.

Additional analyses revealed some age differences for these self-reported behaviors worth noting. Specifically,

- arrestees between 18 and 24 (40%) and 25 and 39 (45%) were significantly more likely to report driving drunk than those 40 years of age and older (26%);
- arrestees between 18 and 39 were significantly more likely to report they had ridden in a vehicle with someone who had used alcohol/drugs (51%), compared to those 40 years of age and older (35%); and
- arrestees between 18 and 24 (56%) and 25 and 39 (59%) were significantly more likely to report participating in sexual acts after consuming alcohol/drugs, compared to those 40 and older (43%) (not shown).

### **Injection Drug Use**

In 2011, 23 percent of arrestees reported having ever injected drugs and of these 171 individuals, 63 percent reported injecting in the past 12 months. Of these 108 individuals, 80 percent had injected meth, 47 percent heroin, and 7 percent cocaine. A follow-up question pertained to whether or not these individuals had shared their needles or works, with 38 percent responding affirmatively. Additional analyses revealed that arrestees under the age of 25 were significantly more likely to report sharing their needles/works (61%), compared to those between 25 and 39 (35%) or 40 and older (27%) (not shown).

### **Overdoses and Hospitalizations**

Fourteen percent (14%) of the arrestees reported they had overdosed at least once in the past. When asked what they had overdosed on, 36 percent said heroin, 18 percent meth, 6 percent cocaine, 2 percent crack, and 50 percent some other drug or drug combination. White arrestees were significantly more likely to report overdosing (25%), compared to Black (8%), Hispanic (6%), or other ethnicities (7%) (not shown).

In another set of questions, arrestees were asked if they ever had to go to the emergency room for anything related to alcohol or other drug use. Overall, almost one in four (24%) reported they had been admitted. When asked to describe in more detail the reason for this visit, the most common responses included an overdose (27%), alcohol poisoning (24%), physical injury (12%), other medical issue (such as difficulty breathing or high heart rate) (11%), a car accident (5%), and injuries suffered from a fight or violent incident (5%). White arrestees were also significantly more likely to report visiting an emergency room (38%), compared to other ethnic groups (12% to 17%) (not shown).

### **Job Loss**

Given the current economic situation, a series of questions were added to the interview in 2009 regarding whether the arrestee had lost a job in the past 12 months, and if so, what the reason was and what collateral effects may have been associated with this event. Overall, around one in five arrestees (18%) reported losing a job in the past year, with 47 percent saying they were laid off, 39 percent that they were fired, 9 percent that the employer went out of business, and 4 percent giving another reason. In regard to how this job loss affected them, 81 percent said it led to financial problems, 52 percent emotional problems, 47 percent family problems, 47 percent legal problems, 39 percent substance use, and 28 percent health problems (not shown).

### Previous Contact

The majority of the individuals interviewed as part of this project reported that this was not their first adult arrest (79%) and most also had spent time previously in jail (73%). In addition, more than one in three (38%) reported they also had been arrested as a juvenile (with males significantly more likely to report previous contact, 43% versus 30%) (not shown).

When asked how many prior adult arrests they had, the median was 4.0 (range 1 to 105) and the mean age at the time of their first adult arrest was 22.3 for males and 24.4 for females, also a significant difference. In terms of their current highest offense, two in five (40%) were arrested for a drug-related offense, 24 percent for a violent offense, 19 percent for another type of offense<sup>14</sup>, and 17 percent for a property-related offense (not shown).

Arrestees also were asked specifically whether they had ever traded sex for money, drugs, or other things or been involved in any pimping or pandering activity. Overall, 9 percent of the arrestees said they had ever exchanged sex for something else (starting on average at 21.0 years of age, with a range of 12 to 51) and 4 percent had ever engaged in pimping/pandering. Females were significantly more likely to report exchanging sex for money, drugs, or other things (16%) compared to males (5%). Other predictors of engaging in these sexual acts included age (with those 40 and older more likely to respond affirmatively), ethnicity (with Black and White individuals significantly more likely to report this type of exchange), and recent drug of choice (those who tested positive for meth and cocaine were significantly more likely to have ever exchanged sex for money or other things). Thirty percent (30%) of the individuals who had ever exchanged sex for money reported doing so in the past 30 days (not shown).

### Partner Involvement in Justice System

Arrestees are asked if their intimate partner had ever been arrested and booked into jail, and if so, if this had occurred in the past year. Given the greater preponderance of male contact with the justice system, it was not surprising that female arrestees were significantly more likely to report their partner also had a prior arrest history (71%) compared to males (29%). Of those who reported this contact, 53 percent of both males and females reported their partner also had been arrested in the past year (not shown).

### Gang Association

Twenty-two percent (22%) of the arrestees reported they had ever been in a gang or associated with one. In 2011, gang membership/association was tied to gender, age and ethnicity. Specifically,

- males were significantly more likely to report this association, compared to females (25% versus 16%, respectively);
- individuals 40 years of age and older were less likely to report this association (10%), compared to those 18 to 24 (28%) and 25 to 39 (28%); and
- individuals who identified as White were least likely to identify themselves as a gang member or associate (17%), compared to 27 percent of those who said they were an “other” ethnicity, 26 percent of Blacks, and 25 percent of Hispanics (not shown).

Individuals who reported some type of gang association were more likely to test positive for marijuana (52% versus 33%) as well as multiple drugs (28% versus 18%) (not shown).

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<sup>14</sup> The most common other offenses included disturbing the peace, flight or escape, obstruction of justice, and parole/probation violation.

## Reentry Issues

With the recent increase in numbers of individuals returning from jail and prison, as well as realignment with a greater level of local supervision of felons, more attention is being paid at the local and national level to the issue of how well ex-offenders readjust to life not behind bars.

Among those interviewed for this study, over half (54%) reported that they had a prior felony conviction and 24 percent (29% of males and 14% of females, a significant difference) reported that they had ever served time in prison. There were also significant differences in the prior prison rate by arrestee age [with those 40 and older significantly more likely to have been to prison (35%), compared to those under 25 (5%) or between 25 and 39 (29%)] and ethnicity [with Hispanic arrestees significantly less likely to report a prior prison commitment (15%), compared to Blacks (33%), Whites (29%), and other ethnic groups (27%)] (not shown).

When asked to describe the biggest problem ex-offenders face when returning home, the two most common answers included employment (47%) and housing (19%). However, only 42 percent reported receiving any type of in-custody program related to reentry and only 38 percent reported receiving services post-release (56% received one or both). When the 102 individuals who received any service(s) (pre- or post-release) described them, the most common were substance abuse treatment (62%) and employment assistance (38%), followed by housing assistance (25%). Less than one in five reported receiving education (19%), anger management (18%), food and clothing (17%), transportation assistance (15%), assistance reunifying with children (11%), medical care (10%), mental health care (9%), or assistance reunifying with a spouse (6%) (not shown).

Arrestees who had served time in prison previously also were asked why they thought they were back in the system. The most common reasons given for their continued contact with the criminal justice system included drug use (40%), strict post-release supervision conditions (16%), alcohol use (13%), lack of personal motivation (9%), prior criminal record (9%), negative peer influence (5%), employment challenges (3%), lack of housing (2%), lack of financial resources (2%), lack of personal documentation (2%) (e.g., birth certificate), and gang involvement (1%) (not shown).

### Drug Treatment

Overall, almost two in five (39%) arrestees reported they had received alcohol or other drug treatment in the past. For almost two-thirds (64%) of these individuals, treatment had been court-ordered and the median number of times arrestees had entered a drug treatment program was 2.0 (range 1 to 26). Forty-eight percent (48%) of the individuals who tested positive for any drug had received drug treatment previously and 73 percent of those who had previously received treatment were positive for any drug, supporting the view that relapse is a part of recovery. Several other factors also were predictive of receiving drug treatment, including gender, age, ethnicity, prior Child Welfare Services (CWS) referral, and previously being arrested. Specifically,

- older individuals were more likely than younger ones to have received treatment (27% of those 18 to 24, compared to 42% of those 25 to 39 and 46% of those 40 and older);
- arrestees identifying as Hispanic were less likely (25%) than other ethnic groups (53% of Whites and 35% of Blacks);
- arrestees who had ever had a CWS case were more likely (58%) than those who had not (32%); and
- those who reported previously being arrested were more likely than those experiencing their first arrest (47% versus 8%) (not shown).

Of the individuals who had ever received drug treatment, around three in five (61%) reported they had successfully completed the program<sup>15</sup>. When asked why they had not completed the program, the most common response was that they wanted to use again and were not ready to be clean, with others noting they were still in the program, they were arrested, the program was too strict, they were kicked out, or it was too long (not shown).

Only 17 percent of arrestees reported that they had previously sought treatment, but it was unavailable. Of these individuals, 29 percent had *not* been in treatment previously. The most commonly reported type of treatment that was unavailable was in-patient (61%) (not shown).

Overall, 31 percent of those interviewed said they had previously been offered drug treatment as a condition of probation or parole or as a sentencing alternative. There was variance by age on this dimension, with those 25 to 39 and 40 and older more likely to report receiving this option (37% and 38%, respectively), compared to those 18 to 24 (17%) (not shown).

### Mental Health Treatment

Twenty-five percent (25%) of the arrestees reported they had previously been diagnosed with a mental or psychiatric disorder and 20 percent reported that they had previously stayed overnight for mental health treatment at a hospital or other facility. On average, these individuals had been admitted for an overnight stay 2.0 times (median, range 1 to 100) and the mean age of their first admittance was 22.9 (range 5 to 58) (not shown).

Of the individuals who had previously been diagnosed with a mental health issue, 96 percent reported they had been prescribed medication for their illness. However, only 57 percent said they were still being prescribed this medication and of these 106 individuals, 32 percent said they were currently not taking it. When asked for the primary reason for not taking their medication, the most common responses included that they did not like the side effects, they had run out of or lost it, it interfered with their other drug use, they could not afford to pay for it, or they did not think they needed it or it was not helping them (not shown).

Additional analyses revealed that a number of arrestee characteristics were associated with being diagnosed with a mental health issue (Table 5), as well as staying 24 hours or longer in a mental health facility (not shown). That is, individuals who reported having a diagnosis were significantly more

<sup>15</sup> If a respondent reported more than one treatment episode, s/he was asked about the most recent.

likely to have a history of drug use and prior justice and social service system contact, and received drug treatment. This last association – between having a diagnosis, receiving mental health treatment, and receiving drug treatment – is consistent with the fact that over half (57%) of those with an overnight stay reported they had previously been under the influence of alcohol or other drugs when admitted for mental health treatment. This supports the view that addressing the needs of dual diagnosis clients (those with mental health and drug treatment needs) is a key issue for the criminal justice system (not shown).

**Table 5**

**INDIVIDUALS WITH DRUG USE HISTORIES  
MORE LIKELY TO REPORT HAVING A MENTAL  
HEALTH DIAGNOSIS\***

	<b>Mental Health Diagnosis</b>	<b>No Diagnosis</b>
Positive opiates	15%	7%
Positive multiple drugs	31%	16%
Other previous illicit drug use	72%	50%
Illicit prescription drug use	54%	39%
Previous arrests	90%	75%
Previous CWS case	42%	21%
Previous drug treatment	61%	32%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>113-193</b>	<b>344-580</b>

\*Significant at  $p < .05$ .

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2011

## SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

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A total of 804 adult arrestees were interviewed as part of the SAM Program in 2011. Of those interviewed, 776 (97%) provided a viable urine sample<sup>16</sup> and completed the entire interview; these individuals are described here. Five hundred nine (509) of these arrestees were male and 267 were female. Other characteristics include:

- 43 percent were White, 38 percent were Hispanic, 16 percent Black, and 4 percent identified with “other” in terms of ethnicity;
- 91 percent completed the interview in English and 9 percent in Spanish;
- 33.5 years (age range 18 to 71) was the average age of respondents ;
- 29 percent did not have a high school degree;
- 61 percent were unemployed, whether or not looking for work;
- 83 percent were single (either never married, divorced, legally separated or widowed) and 17 percent were married;
- 60 percent reported having children (of any age), 33 percent reported living with at least one child under the age of 18 (whether or not the child was their own), and 6 percent of the female arrestees reported they were pregnant;
- 26 percent of those who reported having any children also said they previously had an open case with CWS;
- 12 percent had previously been in foster care, with 51 percent of these individuals reporting they had aged out of the system;
- 52 percent had ever been homeless and 15 percent were currently homeless; and
- 63 percent currently had no health insurance (not shown).

In addition, all of the data (percentages and raw numbers) captured through the adult interview and urinalysis for 2007 through 2011 are available online at [www.sandag.org/cj](http://www.sandag.org/cj). For questions regarding the project methodology or data set, please contact the SANDAG Criminal Justice Research Division at (619) 699-1900.

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<sup>16</sup> In 2011, additional analyses revealed that a willingness to provide a urine sample was not significantly related to the arrestee’s gender, age, race, or highest charge at arrest.



## SUMMARY

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As a continuation of the federally-funded ADAM (Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring) program, the San Diego SAM (Substance Abuse Monitoring) program involves annual interviews with local arrestees booked into one of four booking facilities across the region. Because interviews are supplemented with urinalysis, these data provide one of the only objective measures of drug use trends over time for an at-risk population that may predict forthcoming trends in the general population. Further, because of the richness of the qualitative information obtained, additional insight useful to law enforcement, drug prevention specialists, treatment providers, other service providers, elected officials, and the general public is available regarding the current needs and issues of this group of criminally-involved individuals.

As described in the current bulletin (which highlights results from interviews conducted in 2011 with adult arrestees), while meth use for both males and females was up, it was still lower than in previous years. Additional analyses revealed that arrestees 25 years of age and older and those who identified as White were more likely to use the drug than other arrestees. In addition, these individuals were more likely to be arrested with a high charge for a drug-related offense.

Marijuana continues to be the drug of choice for most arrestees, especially those between 18 and 24, with most arrestees reporting having tried it and around one in three testing positive for it at the time of booking into jail. Marijuana was the most common drug used in combination with other drugs and users were most likely to describe it as very easy to obtain.

Compared to other parts of the country, cocaine and crack are used less frequently than meth<sup>2</sup>. The percent of arrestees testing positive for cocaine has decreased substantially since 2000, and more crack users reported an inability to obtain the drug in 2011 compared to 2010.

With more than one in five arrestees reporting ever having tried heroin and one in ten testing positive for opiates, heroin was the least commonly used of these four illicit substances among this population. Heroin users were more likely than arrestees obtaining other drugs to report a regular source for the drug. About one in four individuals who had ever used heroin reported they had first been hooked on a prescription opiate and replaced that substance with heroin.

Forty-two percent (42%) of arrestees reported using prescription drugs illegally in the past, with tranquilizers and painkillers among those most commonly abused. Individuals who had a history of abusing prescription drugs were more likely to test positive for marijuana, meth, and opiates than those who had not, suggesting that treatment providers should be aware of multiple addictions that could be present when serving this population.

Other relevant information about this population includes other lifestyle risks that affect both the individual, as well as the community at large. These include repeated contact with the criminal justice system, including as a juvenile; gang association; unmet reentry issues; intravenous drug use; unmet treatment needs; driving under the influence; missing work; health problems and visits to medical providers; lack of health insurance; previous contact with Child Welfare Services (CWS); homelessness; and mental health issues that may be untreated.

# APPENDIX MAP

