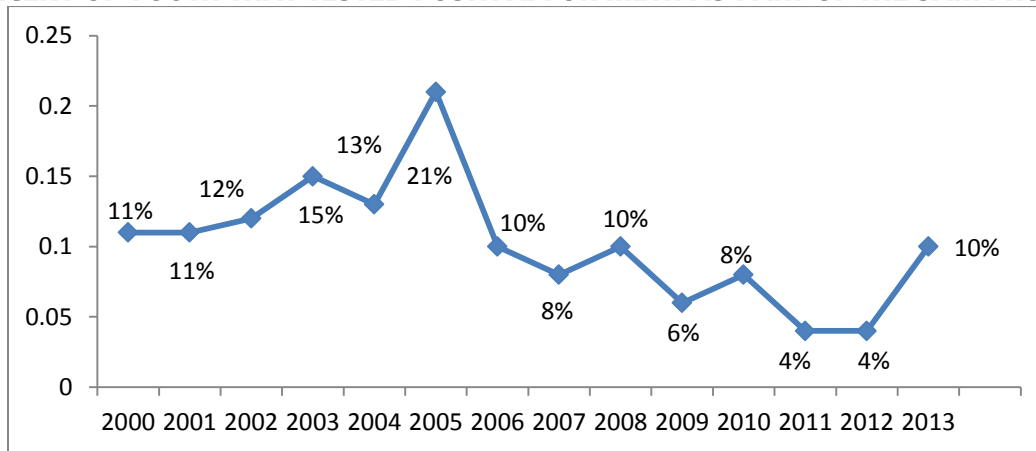


Meth Use Up Among Youth Booked Into Juvenile Hall in 2013

In 2013, the percent of youth who tested positive for methamphetamine (meth) increased to 10 percent, after staying at record lows (4%) the previous two years¹ (Figure 1). However, while this was the largest increase in several years, the rate was still considerably lower than the 21 percent high reported in 2005.

Figure 1
PERCENT OF YOUTH THAT TESTED POSITIVE FOR METH AS PART OF THE SAM PROJECT



To better understand any common characteristics of these youth, analyses were done to compare those who tested positive for meth (13 individuals) to those who did not (121 individuals). While the relatively small sample size limits any statistical significance tests, the data do present some interesting similarities between the youth who used meth and differences between those who did not. Specifically, a *greater* percentage of those who had recently used meth were male (92% versus 79%, respectively) and Hispanic (85% versus 60%), had been arrested previously (85% versus 67%), had previously thought of killing themselves (23% versus 9%), had reported a history of running away (54% versus 36%) and of gang membership (31% versus 17%), and had sold drugs (54% versus 36%). In addition, youth who tested positive for meth reported trying alcohol (10.9 versus 13.1) and marijuana (11.3 versus 12.4) at earlier ages, on average, than those who did not test positive and used the drug despite the fact that most (85%) thought it was “extremely bad” or “very bad” for them. On average, youth who tested positive for meth (and answered questions about recent use) were 14.6 years old, on average, when they first tried the drug and reported using it an average of 16.3 days out of the past 30. Half (50%) reported that meth was “very easy” or “easy” to obtain (not shown).

With data from the San Diego County Medical Examiner² also showing increases in the number of unintentional deaths due to meth (for five consecutive years, with most recent increases from 142 in 2012 to 190 in 2013), it is important that prevention, treatment, and law enforcement professionals continue their collaboration and focused efforts to address this continuing drug issue. For more information about local efforts to combat meth, visit www.no2meth.org.

¹ As part of the Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) Program, youth booked into juvenile and adult detention facilities are interviewed about their recent drug use and other risky behaviors. Data for calendar year 2013 will be released in a series of bulletins in the coming months.

² County of San Diego Department of the Medical Examiner (2014). *2013 Annual Report*. San Diego, CA: Author.