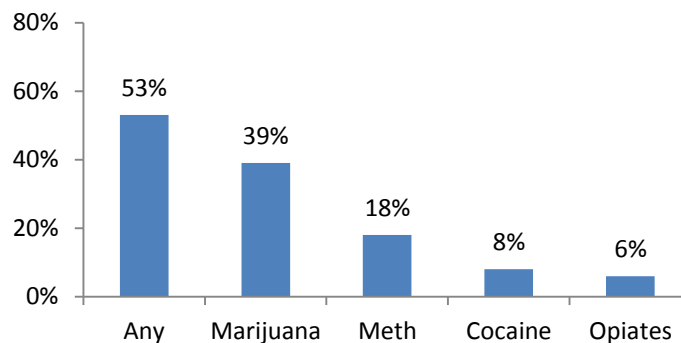


DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE ARRESTS DOWN IN 2013, BUT STILL A CONCERN FOR LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

According to statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), one in three traffic fatalities in California in 2012 involved a driver under the influence (www.nhtsa.gov). During the same calendar year, driving under the influence (DUI) remained the most common reason an adult was arrested in San Diego County (www.sandag.org). A preliminary analysis of more recent arrest statistics for the San Diego region reveals that while there were fewer adult arrests for DUI in 2013, compared to 2012, the issue remains a significant one with an average of 235 arrests per week for DUI made by local law enforcement across the region.

While most of the discussion regarding DUI focuses on the use of alcohol, it is important to note that other drugs have been noted as being involved in almost one in five (18%) motor vehicle driver deaths and that these drugs are often used in combination with alcohol (www.cdc.gov). To better understand who was booked into San Diego County jails for DUI in 2013, and what their recent drug use was, data from the 2013 Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program were analyzed for the 148 adults arrested and booked where a DUI-related offense was one of their top three charges. Of these individuals, 76 percent were male; 28 percent were under the age of 25, 34 percent between 25 and 39 and 37 percent 40 years of age and older; and 47 percent were White, 39 percent Hispanic, 9 percent Black, and 5 percent other ethnicities. As Figure 1 shows, of those who were arrested for DUI, 39 percent tested positive for marijuana, 18 percent for methamphetamine, 8 percent for cocaine, 6 percent for opiates, and 53 percent tested positive for one or more of the four.

Figure 1
PERCENT OF SAM ARRESTEES ARRESTED FOR A DUI OFFENSE ALSO POSITIVE FOR AN ILLICIT SUBSTANCE



When queried regarding possible reasons for the decline in DUI arrests in 2013, local law enforcement cited consistent public education regarding the risk of driving under the influence, as well as the greater availability of alternative modes of transportation for those who are unable to drive safely. However, acknowledging that targeted enforcement remains one of the most effective deterrents to this crime and combined with CHP's data showing DUI fatalities across the state were up over the 2014 Thanksgiving holiday (from 33 to 45), local law enforcement recently collaborated to form a new task force aimed at reducing drunken and impaired driving along State Route 78. This new task force supplements other efforts already in place, some of which are funded with Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) grant funds, including teaching teens safe driving habits and reminding them of the dangers of driving impaired or recklessly, server training, sobriety checkpoints, saturation patrols, and a specialized prosecution unit.