



CRIMINAL JUSTICE BULLETIN

2016 Adult Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region

OCTOBER 2017
Cynthia Burke, Ph.D.

Research findings from the Criminal Justice Research Division

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Highlights

Drug use approaches all-time highs

In 2016, 75 percent of male adult arrestees and 74 percent of female adult arrestees tested positive for an illicit substance – the second highest rate since 2000 for both groups.

Marijuana use down for males, but up for females

The percent of males testing positive for marijuana dropped from the previous all-time high of 52 percent in 2015 to 44 percent in 2016. However, females had an 8 percent increase from 28 percent to 36 percent – a 17-year high.

Methamphetamine use up

More males and females tested positive for methamphetamine (meth) in 2016 (55% for males and 58% for females) than 2015 and both percentages were the highest they have been since 2000.

Prescription drug abuse and heroin use remain a regional issue

Around half (49%) of arrestees reported previously abusing prescription drugs and almost two-thirds (64%) said they were “very easy” or “easy” to obtain. Almost nine in ten of those who stole prescription drugs said they did so from either someone they did not know (44%) or from family (44%).

For opiates, the trend of younger arrestees testing positive at a higher rate continued, with 15 percent of those under 25 testing positive, compared to 6 percent of those 40 years of age and older.

When arrestees who first abused prescription drugs and then switched to heroin were asked why they did so, the most common answers were that heroin was cheaper (59%) and easier to obtain (43%) than prescription drugs.

Substance Abuse Monitoring data provides other information about needs and risks for this population

Around half (49%) of those previously convicted of a felony reported they had committed crimes, most often property crime, to support their drug habit.

Sixty-five percent (65%) of the arrestees interviewed have been homeless, 60 percent are currently unemployed, and 33 percent have a mental health diagnosis, demonstrating the level of underlying needs and risk for reentry of this population.

Background

This CJ Bulletin, [2016 Adult Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region](#), is one in a series highlighting findings from data collected as part of the San Diego County 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 and involvement in other risky or illegal behavior over time. In 2016, this data collection effort was generously supported by the San Diego-Imperial HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area), 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 booking into jail. If the arrestee is available and willing to participate in a confidential interview, 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 2016, 360 male arrestees were interviewed at the Vista and Central Jails and 155 female arrestees at Las Colinas. Of these 515 arrestees, 492 completed the interview and also provided a valid urine sample for analysis.

What information is collected through these interviews?

Positive drug rates for any and multiple drugs (page 5)

Positive rates for marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine, and opiates over time (page 7)

Self-reported initiation patterns of drug use (page 9)

Drug market dynamics (page 11)

Prescription drug abuse (page 13)

Binge drinking (page 15)

Risk factors to recidivate (page 16)

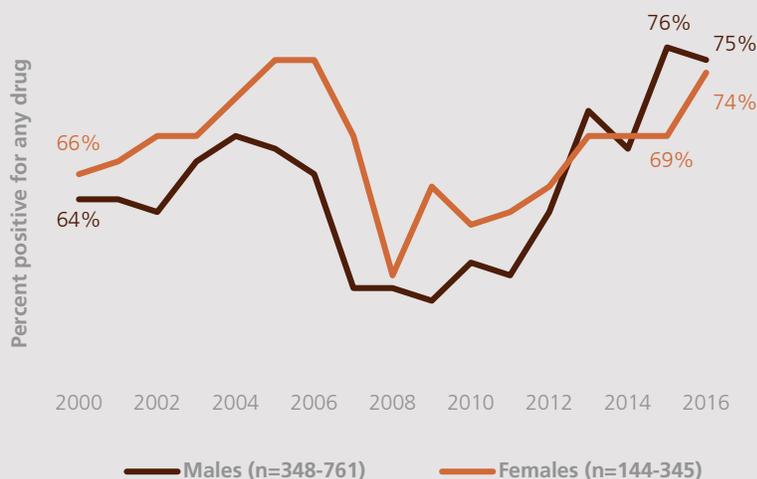
Possible effects of substance use on the community (page 20)

How has testing positive for any drug changed over time for male and female arrestees?

In 2016, 75 percent of male arrestees and 74 percent of female arrestees tested positive for an illicit drug, which includes marijuana¹, meth, cocaine, opiates, and PCP. The 2016 male positive rate of 75 percent was the second highest since 2000 (and only 1 percent lower from the high of 76% in 2015). The 2016 female positive rate of 74 percent was also the second highest, following only 75 percent in both 2005 and 2006 (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Three-quarters of arrestees tested positive for drugs in 2016



NOTE: Prior to 2013 and again in 2015, percent positive was based on marijuana, meth, cocaine, opiates, and PCP. In 2013 and 2014, the PCP test was replaced with a test for alcohol.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

What were the characteristics of the arrestees interviewed?

Of the 492 arrestees with completed interviews, 348 (71%) were male and 144 (29%) were female. Forty-six percent (46%) were White, 32 percent Hispanic, 16 percent Black, and 5 percent "other". Four percent of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. Twenty-one percent (21%) were under the age of 25, 44 percent between 25 and 39, and 35 percent 40 and older. The mean age was 36.1 (range 18 to 81). Two-thirds (66%) were single, 20 percent divorced/separated/widowed, and 14 percent married.

Just over one-third (34%) were booked for a highest charge that was a drug offense, 23 percent for an "other" offense, 23 percent for a violent offense, and 20 percent for a property offense. Seven percent (9% of males and 1% of females) were estimated to be in custody because of realignment, either because they were identified as being flash incarcerated (being booked into jail for a technical violation while under probation supervision) or identifying as a post-release community supervision (PRCS) offender. Thirty percent (30%) reported living in the Central Major Statistical Area of the County, 18 percent in East Suburban, 12 percent in North City, 10 percent in South Suburban, 9 percent in North County East, 8 percent in North County West, 7 percent out of the County, and 5 percent in East County.

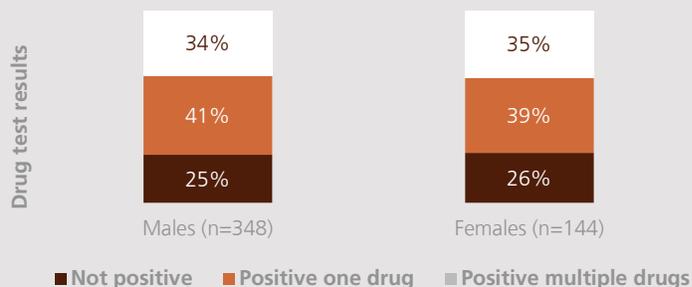
¹ The drug test panel in 2016 continued to include marijuana even though California voters approved Proposition 64 on November 8, 2016. Marijuana will continue to be tested because it remains illegal federally and because changes in use pre- and post- legalization among this population is expected to continue to be an issue of interest.

How many arrestees are polydrug² users?

Thirty-four percent (34%) of male and 35 percent of female arrestees tested positive for more than one drug in 2016 (Figure 2). Of those who tested positive for multiple substances, 89 percent tested positive for two and 11 percent tested positive for three or more. Of those who tested positive for multiple substances, 91 percent were positive for meth, 83 percent marijuana, 26 percent opiates, and 11 percent cocaine.

Figure 2

Around one in three arrestees tested positive for more than one drug in 2016



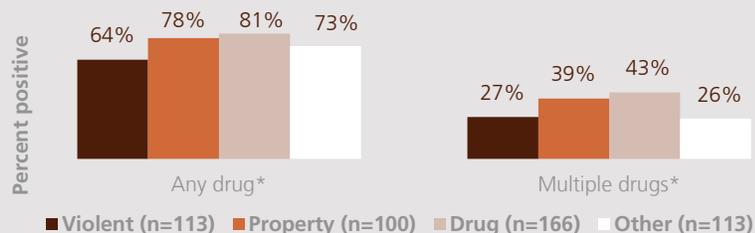
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

How does testing positive vary by the arrestee's highest booking charge?

While the majority of arrestees tested positive for at least one drug, regardless of highest booking charge, there were significant differences, with those arrested for a drug, property, or other offense more likely to test positive for any drug, compared to those arrested for a violent offense. In addition, drug and property offenders were more likely to test positive for multiple drugs. Around three-quarters or more of drug, property, and other arrestees tested positive for any drug and around one in four or more tested positive for multiple drugs (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Majority of arrestees test positive for drugs regardless of highest charge



* Significant difference at $p < 0.05$

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

² Polydrug use refers to the use of two or more psychoactive drugs in combination to achieve a particular effect.

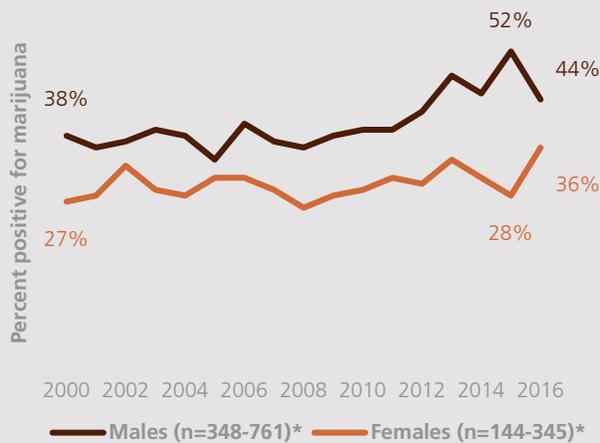
How have positive rates by drug type changed over time?

The percent of male arrestees positive for **marijuana** was down 8 percent from 52 percent in 2015 to 44 percent in 2016. While this was the lowest rate since 2012 (when it was 42%), prior to that year, the percentages ranged from 36 percent to 40 percent. For female arrestees, the percent positive for marijuana increased 8 percent, from 28 percent in 2015 to 36 percent in 2016, a 17-year high (Figure 4). Despite the different one-year changes for males and females, both positive rates were higher in 2016 than the 17-year average positive for marijuana rate (40% for males and 30% for females).

Arrestees under the age of 25 were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana (55%), compared to those between 25 and 39 (47%) and 40 years of age and older (26%). In addition, arrestees who identified as Black were significantly more likely to test positive (54%), compared to those who identified as Hispanic (44%) and White (36%).

One in four (25%) arrestees reported they had ever obtained a medical marijuana card; 23 percent also reported they had a card to allow them to grow it. Of those who did not have a card, 45 percent had thought about getting one.

Figure 4
Marijuana use at 17-year high for adult females

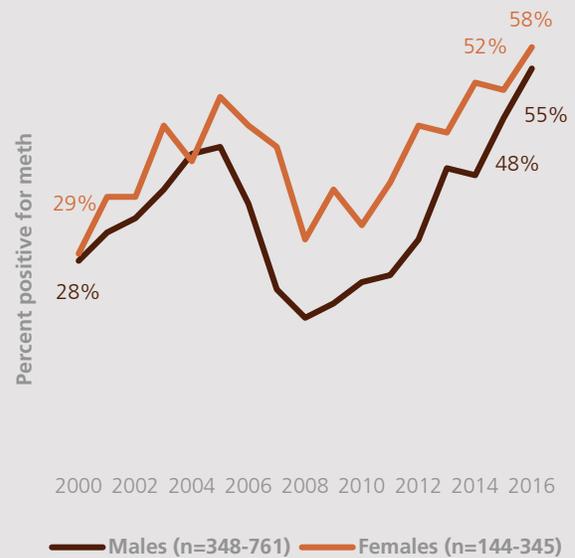


*Significant difference at $p < 0.05$

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

For **meth**, the percent of males that tested positive was up to 55 percent in 2016, an increase of 7 percent from 2015 and a 17-year high. The female rate of 58 percent was an increase of 6 percent from 2015, and also a record high (Figure 5).

Figure 5
Meth positive rates at 17-year high for males and females



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

Takeaway

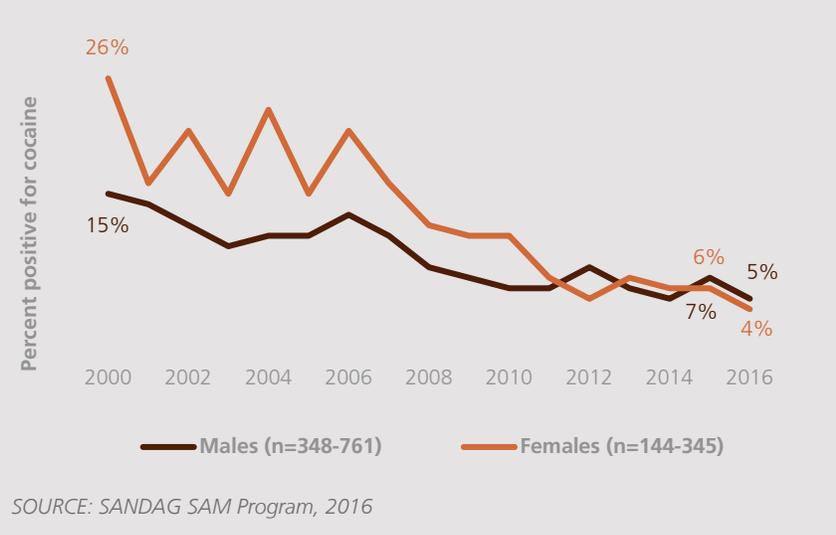
Regardless of why someone is booked into jail, substance use is an issue for many arrestees, with three-fourths positive for at least one drug overall, and about one in three current polydrug users. Among polydrug users, meth and marijuana were used more than any other drug combination.

While there was no difference in recent meth use by the arrestee's race in 2016, which historically there has been (with Blacks less likely to test positive), there was by age, with arrestees between 25 and 39 most likely to test positive for meth (62%), compared to those under 25 (48%) and 40 and older (53%).

The percent of arrestees positive for **cocaine** has dropped considerably since 2000, with 5 percent of males and 4 percent of females positive in 2016, both of which were 17-year lows (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Cocaine positive rates at 17-year low for males and females in 2016



There also were significant ethnic and age differences in cocaine use among the arrestees. In terms of ethnicity, 13 percent of Black arrestees were positive, compared to 5 percent of Hispanic and 3 percent of White arrestees. For age, 9 percent of those under 25 tested positive, compared to 2 percent of those between 25 and 39 and 6 percent of those 40 and older.

For opiates³, the percent of males that were positive was down to 9 percent in 2016, the lowest rate since 2011. For females, after a drop from 15 percent positive in 2014 to 10 percent in 2015, the rate rose back to 15 percent in 2016 – the highest rate since 2000 (Figure 7).

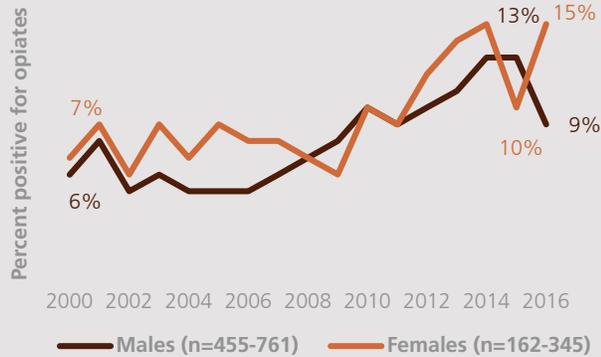
Takeaway

In 2016, marijuana and opiate use was down for males compared to 2015, but meth use was up to the highest use in the past 17 years. In comparison, females were more likely to test positive for all three in 2016, compared to 2015.

³ It should be noted that a positive opiate drug test could indicate use of opiates other than heroin, including morphine, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, and codeine.

Figure 7

Females almost twice as likely to test positive for opiates in 2016 compared to males



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

Among the arrestees, those that identified as White were most likely to test positive for opiates (15%), compared to 8 percent of Hispanics and 5 percent of Blacks. Arrestees under 25 were also most likely to test positive for opiates (15%), compared to those 25 to 39 (12%) and those 40 and older (6%).

How does history of drug use vary by drug type?

Marijuana is the drug most commonly tried by arrestees (88%) and was also tried at the earliest age (14.2). Those who used it in the past 30 days used it an average of 16.1 days (Table 1). More than two-thirds (70%) of the arrestees reported trying meth and it was also reported by the highest percent (79%) as having been used in the last year. Meth users reported using an average of 17.6 days out of the past 30 (Table 1). More than one-third (35%) of arrestees reported having ever tried heroin and it was the most frequently used drug of those who used in the past 30 days (18.4 days in the past 30) (Table 1). A greater proportion of arrestees had ever tried cocaine (53%), compared to crack (29%). For both, arrestees who had tried these drugs were least likely to report use in the last year. However, current crack users used more days, on average, in the past 30 days, compared to current cocaine users (6.5 versus 2.7) (Table 1).

Table 1

Self-reported drug use history varies by drug

How many have ever tried?	What was the average age at first use?	Of those who've tried it, how many used in the last year?	Of those who used in the past 30 days, how many days did they use on average?
88% marijuana	14.2 marijuana	66% marijuana	16.1 marijuana
70% meth	21.0 meth	79% meth	17.6 meth
29% crack	23.3 crack	21% crack	6.5 crack
53% cocaine	19.2 cocaine	26% cocaine	2.7 cocaine
35% heroin	23.7 heroin	54% heroin	18.4 heroin

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

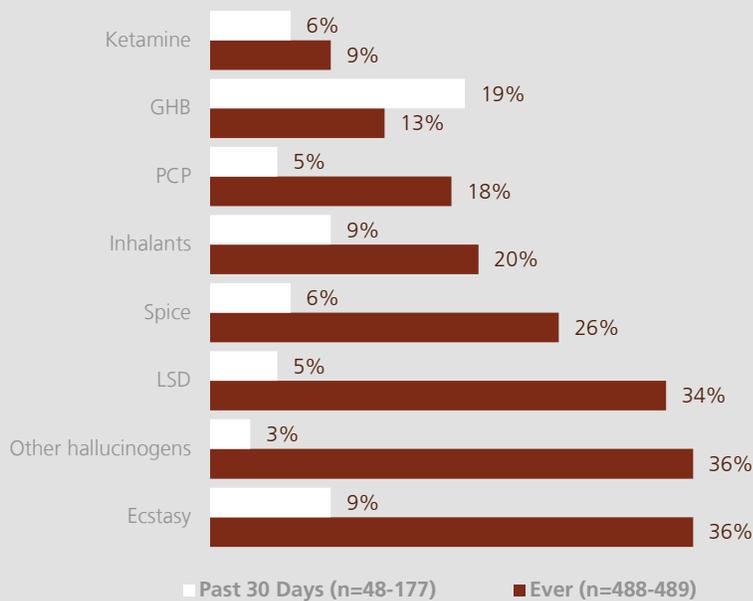
In addition to these five street drugs, four in five (80%) of the arrestees reported having ever tried other illicit substances, including ecstasy (36%), other hallucinogens (36%), LSD (34%), spice (26%), inhalants (20%), PCP (18%), GHB (13%), and ketamine (9%) (Figure 8). Males were significantly more likely to report trying other drugs than females (83% versus 72%).

When those who had ever used an illegal substance were asked if they had used it in the past 30 days, GHB users were most likely to respond affirmatively (19%), while the other drugs were used by less than 10 percent of those who had ever tried them (Figure 8).

Due to the increased attention to combatting synthetic drug use in San Diego County, new questions were added to the instrument to better understand why individuals use spice. Specifically, 50 percent of those who ever used spice said that they use it as an alternative to marijuana and 29 percent said they use it to avoid a positive drug test.

Figure 8

Percent of arrestees who have tried other illicit drugs ever and in the past 30 days



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

Takeaway

Among arrestees, drug use history and current use varies by drug. Of those who ever tried a drug, meth users were most likely to report use in the last year and heroin users reported the most frequent use in the last 30 days. Among other illicit drugs ever tried, ecstasy and other hallucinogens were most common, but GHB was among the other types of drugs arrestees were most likely to have recently used.

How do drug market dynamics vary for each drug type, according to arrestees?

As Table 2 shows:

- Marijuana was most likely to be reported as “very easy” to obtain (56%) among the five drugs in 2016.
- Around three in four (76%) said they obtained marijuana in the Major Statistical Area in which they lived and individuals who obtained marijuana were most likely to obtain it in a variety of different types of places (residences, outside, public buildings).
- Fifty-two percent (52%) said it was “very easy” to get meth in 2016 – making it the second most available drug in the region according to arrestees.
- Seventy-eight percent (78%) of arrestees who obtained meth got it in the same MSA in which they lived.
- Twenty-nine percent (29%) said heroin was “very easy” to obtain, the smallest percentage of all the drugs.
- Of those who obtained drugs outside the MSA in which they lived, marijuana and meth users were most likely to report traveling to the Central MSA, with the second most common location traveled to being North County West for marijuana and South Suburban for meth. Those who traveled to buy heroin most often reported traveling to the North San Diego MSA or North County East (not shown).
- Around one in three said that it was “very easy” to obtain cocaine (34%) and crack (33%). Individuals who obtained crack were most likely to report they got it in the same MSA in which they lived (86%), to pay only cash for it (93%), and to obtain it outside (67%).

Table 2

Illicit drug availability varies by type

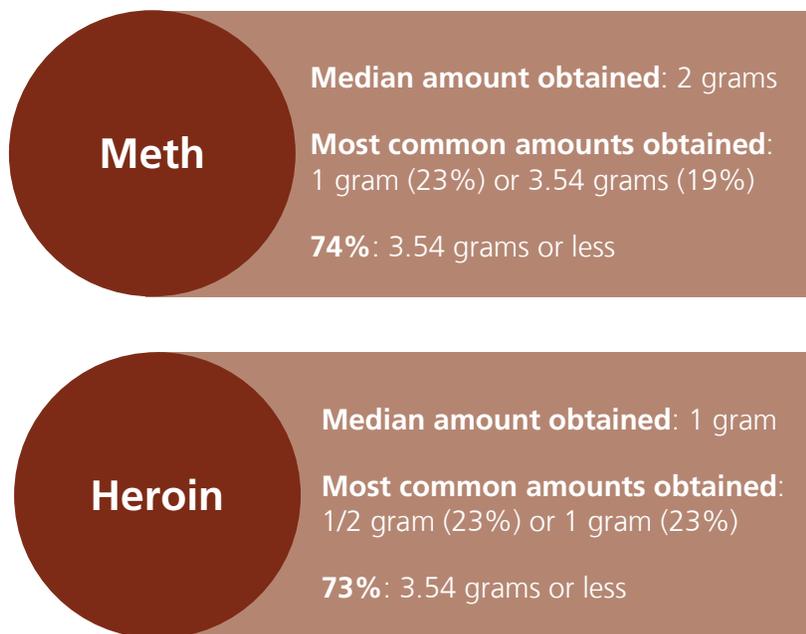
	Marijuana	Meth	Heroin	Cocaine	Crack
Very easy to obtain	56%	52%	29%	34%	33%
Got in same MSA where live	76%	78%	70%	61%	86%
Got with cash	61%	71%	64%	66%	93%
Got with non-cash ways	62%	59%	58%	43%	21%
Got at a residence	33%	49%	53%	47%	33%
Got at a public building	13%	4%	3%	16%	0%
Got outside	36%	46%	41%	38%	67%

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

To better understand how much meth or heroin arrestees obtain for their own personal use, a question was added to the interview in 2016 regarding how much of the drug they obtained the last time they did so. For meth, of those who provided a unit of measurement in grams, the average was two, and for heroin, it was one (Figure 9).

Figure 9

How much meth and heroin did arrestees get for their own use the last time they obtained it?



Takeaway

Consistent with use data, arrestees reported marijuana was the easiest drug to obtain in the region in 2016, followed by meth. Heroin, cocaine, and crack were less available. Arrestees were willing to travel around the region to obtain drugs, and one in ten crossed the border to Mexico to obtain them. A number of these individuals participated in various risky or illegal activities to obtain drugs without paying cash for them.

Ten percent (10%) of arrestees reported traveling to Mexico for drugs. When these 48 arrestees described what they obtained, 40 percent said marijuana, 35 percent meth, 33 percent heroin, 21 percent prescription drugs, 10 percent cocaine, 2 percent crack, and 2 percent steroids.

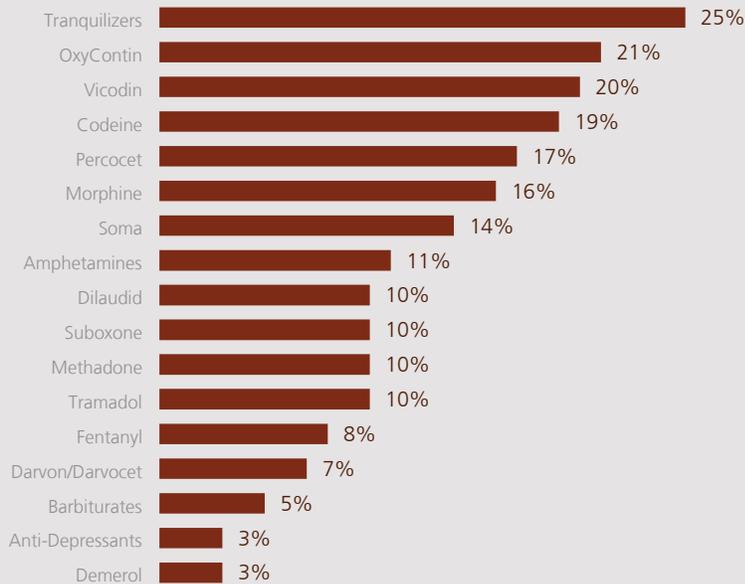
In addition, 14 percent reported they had ever been approached to transport, smuggle, conceal, or participate in bringing drugs over the border. Forty-nine percent (49%) of those who said they were approached also reported they had crossed the border to obtain drugs, versus 4 percent of those who said they had not been approached.

What do we know about prescription drug abuse by the arrestee population?

In 2016, 49 percent of arrestees (52% of males and 40% of females) reported they had ever abused prescription drugs, with the most commonly abused including tranquilizers (i.e., benzodiazepines), OxyContin, Vicodin, codeine, and Percocet (Figure 10).

Figure 10

Tranquilizers, OxyContin, and Vicodin among most commonly abused prescription drugs



TOTAL = 489-491

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

When those who had ever abused a prescription drug were asked if they had abused it in the past 30 days, the top three drugs currently being abused included tranquilizers (16%), amphetamines (13%), and Suboxone (11%). Additional analyses revealed that White arrestees were significantly more likely to report abusing prescription drugs (63%), compared to arrestees of other ethnic groups (32% to 38%). Additionally, arrestees who abused prescription drugs were significantly more likely to test positive for meth (63% versus 48%). Thirty percent (30%) of heroin users said they were hooked on prescription opiates before they began using the street drug and of these, 80 percent said they began to use heroin as a substitute for prescription opiates. When asked which opiate they were addicted to, 69 percent said OxyContin, 41 percent Vicodin, 39 percent Percocet, 18 percent Dilaudid, 18 percent morphine, 12 percent fentanyl, 12 percent methadone, and 6 percent Demerol. When asked why they switched from prescription drugs to heroin, the most common answers included that heroin was cheaper (59%), it was easier to get (43%), and that it was a better high (19%).

When asked how difficult it was to obtain prescription drugs illegally, two-thirds said it was “very easy” or “easy” and the rest said it was “difficult” or “very difficult” (Figure 11).

Figure 11

Most arrestees say prescription drugs are easy to get

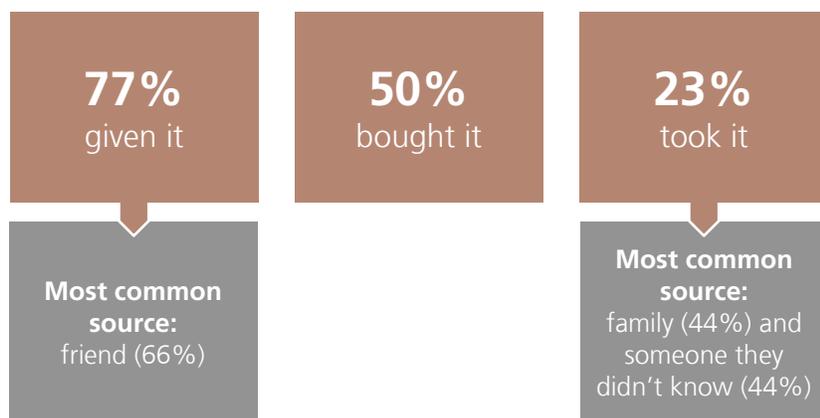


SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

When asked to describe how they had obtained the prescription drugs, the most common ways included that they were given it (most often from a friend), they bought it from someone illegally, or they took it from someone (most often a family member or someone they did not know) (Figure 12). In addition, 6 percent reported that they had “doctor shopped,” 84 percent of whom were successful in doing so.

Figure 12

Most common ways to get prescription drugs illegally



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

Takeaway

In addition to using illicit drugs, a number of arrestees have a history of abusing prescription drugs, particularly Whites and those later addicted to heroin. Those who obtained prescription drugs were less likely to say they were “very easy” to obtain, compared to street drugs, and while few of these individuals doctor shopped, those who did were mostly successful. More common ways of obtaining prescription drugs included being given it by a friend, buying it, or taking it from another person, most often a family member or someone they did not know.

What do we know about arrestee’s use of alcohol?

The majority of both male and female arrestees reported at least one prior binge drinking episode (defined as five drinks or more), with males significantly more likely to do so than females (83% versus 63%) and at an earlier age (16.8 versus 18.0) (Figure 13). Male arrestees were also significantly more likely to report binge drinking in the past 30 days, but differences in the past 24 hours were not significant (Figure 13).

Takeaway

Alcohol remains the drug of choice for many adults in the justice system, with more than four in five males and around two in three females reporting ever binge drinking. Two in five males and one in three females binge drank within 24 hours prior to their arrest.

Figure 13
Male and female arrestee alcohol use history

Male		Female	
83% ever binge drank*		63% ever binge drank*	
16.8 average age first binge	4.5 average number of drinks in past 24 hours	18.0 average age first binge*	4.1 average number of drinks in past 24 hours
38% binge drank past 30 days*	40% self-report binge drinking in the past 24 hours	28% binge drank past 30 days*	35% self-report binge drinking in the past 24 hours

Males = 136-348 Females = 46-144

* Significant at p<0.05

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

What other underlying factors or needs do these arrestees have that can shed light on the risk to recidivate?

Lengthy system involvement

- Around four in every five arrestees (83%) reported having a previous arrest (86% of males and 75% of females) with a median number of 6.0 prior arrests. When asked what their first arrest as an adult was for, 30 percent said a property crime, 27 percent drugs, 13 percent a violent offense, 5 percent weapons, and 30 percent “other”.
- Almost two-thirds (64%) reported they had previously been convicted of a felony, including 67 percent of males and 55 percent of females.
- On average, males were 21.5 years old at their first arrest as an adult, compared to 25.9 for females.
- Four in five (80%) reported previously serving time in jail (84% of males and 69% of females) and 30 percent serving time in prison (36% of males and 14% of females). Of those who had served time in prison, 86 percent said they had also been on parole – 25 percent who still were.
- Just over half (54%) of those who had ever been in prison reported receiving services (43% while in prison and 34% in the community). When asked their biggest need upon reentry after prison, the most common answers included housing (36%), employment (30%), and help with substance abuse (10%).
- Around one in four (27%) reported not having a valid form of identification, with the most common reasons including they lost it (49%) or it was stolen (21%).
- More than four in five (81%) of those with a prior arrest reported they had previously been on probation, 62 percent of whom said they were currently on probation.
- Sixteen percent (16%) of those with a previous arrest said they had ever been flash incarcerated, which is a sanction for PRCS offenders. Of these, 3 percent said that someone had asked them to bring something illicit into the detention facility when they were flashed.
- Forty-four percent (44%) reported being arrested as a juvenile, including 51 percent of males and 28 percent of females. When asked what their first arrest as a juvenile was for, 50 percent said a property crime, 18 percent a violent crime, 17 percent a drug-related crime, 11 percent a status offense, 6 percent a weapons offense, and 3 percent some other type of offense.
- Over two in five (43%) reported they had been involved in selling drugs (47% of males and 33% of females) and of these, 53 percent said they had done so in the past year. Of those convicted of a felony, 55 percent reported ever being involved in selling drugs.
- About one in three (36%) arrestees reported they have committed a crime to support a drug habit, but this percentage was even higher for those who said they had previously been convicted of a felony – 49 percent. Of those who admitted to doing so, 87 percent said they committed property crime and when asked what drug they were ever under the influence while committing the crime, the most common was meth (70%), followed by heroin (38%), and marijuana (23%).
- Almost one in three (31%) arrestees reported ever carrying a gun, with males significantly more likely to do so than females (38% versus 15%). When asked how easy it was to obtain the gun, 33 percent said “very easy”, 46 percent “easy”, 18 percent “difficult”, and 3 percent “very difficult”. When asked how they obtained it, 42 percent said they bought it off the street, 28 percent from a friend, 21 percent from a store or gun shop, 12 percent from a family member, and 14 percent some other way (e.g., stole it, found it).

Proposition 47

- In 2014, California voters passed Proposition 47 (Prop 47) which reduced certain property and drug-related felonies to misdemeanors. In 2016, 58 percent of the arrestees said they had heard of Prop 47, including 74 percent of those ever convicted of a felony and 47 percent of those who had not had a prior felony conviction.
- Of those who had ever heard of it, 32 percent said that they or their attorney had petitioned to have a prior offense reduced. Of these 87 individuals (18% of the 492 in this study), 33 percent were currently in custody for a most serious crime that was a drug-related offense, 26 percent for an “other” offense, 23 percent for a property offense, and 17 percent for a violent offense.
- When asked if they would complete mandated programs such as drug treatment if they did not have to (because of legislative changes), 38 percent said they would not.

Exchanging sex/pimping/pandering

- Fourteen percent (14%) of those interviewed said they had ever exchanged sex for money, drugs, or other things, including 11 percent of the males and 22 percent of the females. There were also statistically significant differences in the responses by ethnicity (14% of Whites, 27% of Blacks, and 8% of Hispanics).
- When asked the first age they exchanged sex for something else, the mean was 22.2 (range 12 to 54).
- Thirty percent (30%) of those who reported ever exchanging sex for something said they had done so in the last 30 days. Five percent reported being involved in pimping or pandering activities. This included 19 males (6 who said they had exchanged sex themselves and 13 who had not) and 8 females (7 who had exchanged sex themselves and 1 who had not).

Gang involvement

- Twenty-seven percent (27%) reported some type of gang involvement – including 30 percent of males and 18 percent of females. Self-reported gang involvement also varied by ethnicity, with 21 percent of White arrestees reporting it, compared to 32 percent of Black and 33 percent of Hispanic arrestees. Younger arrestees were also more likely to report involvement, with 19 percent of those 40 and older reporting any, compared to 30 percent of those under 25, and 31 percent of those 25 to 39. When asked how old they were when they started hanging out with the gang, the mean age was 15.6 years (range 4 to 49).
- Of the 131 adult arrestees who reported any type of gang involvement, 48 percent said they had this contact within the past five years. When asked their current status with the gang, 32 percent said they currently hang out and were never a member, 28 percent used to hang out but don’t anymore, 27 percent were currently a member, 7 percent used to be a member but aren’t now, and 7 percent used to be a member but just hang out now.
- Those who reported a previous gang affiliation were significantly more likely to report having been arrested as a juvenile (67% versus 36%), to have been involved in drug distribution (67% versus 34%), and to have carried a gun previously (55% versus 23%).
- Individuals who reported a gang affiliation were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana (50% versus 39%), meth (69% versus 51%), and multiple drugs (49% versus 29%).

Mental health issues

- Thirty-three percent (33%) of the arrestees reported they had ever been diagnosed with a mental or psychiatric disorder and 27 percent reported they had previously stayed at least overnight for mental health treatment at a hospital or other facility. Female arrestees were significantly more likely to report having a diagnosis (42%), compared to males (30%), as well as those who were older (41% of those 40 and over, versus 26% of those under 25 and 31% of those 25 to 39) and who identified as White (42%) or Black (41%) (compared to Hispanic, 18%).
- Of those who had ever been admitted to a mental health or psychiatric facility for at least an overnight stay, the mean number of stays was 4.0 (range 1 to 30) and the mean age for the first stay was 25.0 (range 4 to 70).
- Fifty-five percent (55%) said they had been under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time they were admitted, supporting the need for dual diagnosis treatment options.
- Almost all (90%) of those who had ever been diagnosed had also been prescribed medication for the disorder. However, only 48 percent said they were currently prescribed the medication and of those, 29 percent said they were not taking them.
- Twenty-six percent (26%) of females and 16 percent of males (19% overall) reported they had ever tried to commit suicide. In addition, 33 percent said they had seriously thought about it. Those who reported a mental health diagnosis were more likely to say they had tried to commit suicide (38% versus 10% without a diagnosis).

Unemployment and housing issues

- Forty percent (40%) were employed full- or part-time and 60 percent were not. Twenty percent (20%) reported they had lost their job in the past year.
- Around one in four (24%) did not have a high school degree or equivalent.
- Around one in four (26%) did not have health insurance.
- Six percent reported previously serving in the military. Ninety percent (90%) of these individuals said they were discharged (63% honorably), and 10 percent were still on active duty.
- Around three in five (65%) reported ever being homeless and 29 percent described themselves as being homeless in the past 30 days.

Table 3

Arrestee risk in different areas

Criminal involvement	
83%	prior arrests
80%	prior jail bookings
44%	arrested as a juvenile
43%	have sold drugs
Prop 47	
18%	petitioned to have prior petition reduced
38%	would not participate in voluntary programs
Prostitution	
14%	history of prostitution
5%	history of pimping/pandering
Gangs	
27%	history of gang involvement
Mental health	
55%	admitted overnight to mental health facility under the influence at time
29%	not taking medication for mental health issues as prescribed
19%	previously attempted suicide
Instability	
65%	ever homeless
60%	currently unemployed
26%	no health insurance
24%	no high school degree
Foster care	
12%	prior foster care system involvement
Drug treatment	
41%	received drug treatment previously
Children	
53%	have children
23%	prior CWS contact

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

- About half (53%) of those interviewed reported they were not born in San Diego County. When asked how long ago they moved to San Diego County, 2 percent said they moved here in 2016, 17 percent in the past five years, and 81 percent five years ago or longer. When asked why they moved here, 52 percent cited family, 19 percent work, 9 percent something they liked about San Diego, 7 percent an opportunity, 5 percent they moved for other people, 3 percent another reason, 2 percent school, 1 percent legally had to, and 1 percent said they were trying to escape something somewhere else.
- Overall, 12 percent of the arrestees reported they had been in the foster care system as a child and over one-third (37%) of these individuals reported aging out of the system.

Drug treatment needs

- Overall, 41 percent of the arrestees said they had received drug treatment in the past, but 41 percent of these individuals said the most recent time was not successful. The mean number of prior treatment admissions was 2.8 (range 1 to 20).
- Older arrestees were more likely to report having received treatment, compared to younger ones (27% of those under 25, 44% of those 25 to 39, and 45% of those 40 years of age and older). Older individuals were also more likely to report completing their most recent treatment program successfully (71%, versus 40% and 54%, respectively).
- For 61 percent of those who had received treatment, the last program was court-ordered (as opposed to voluntary). Individuals who reported having a prior arrest (47% versus 10%) were more likely to have received treatment.
- There was no significant difference between court-ordered treatment being successful (59%), compared to voluntary (58%). Four in five (82%) of the arrestees reported that every time they had sought drug treatment, it had been available.

Dependent children

- Fifty-three percent (53%) of arrestees reported having children, including 50 percent of males and 62 percent of females.
- Twenty-one percent (21%) reported they currently live with a child, whether or not it was their own.
- Nine percent of the female arrestees said they were currently pregnant, and 3 percent said they did not know if they were pregnant.
- Thirty-three percent (33%) of female arrestees and 18 percent of males reported prior CWS contact (23% overall). Thirty-one percent (31%) of these individuals said their case was still open.

Takeaway

Many of the arrestees booked into local jails have a lengthy history of justice system involvement, drug and mental health treatment needs, employment and housing challenges, prior foster system involvement, and children who are dependent on them. Understanding and documenting these underlying risk factors is important in ensuring that individuals can be assisted as they reenter the community from incarceration.

Unreported victimization

- About one in three (36%) arrestees reported they had previously been the victim of a crime they did not report to police. Females were significantly more likely to report victimization than males (46% versus 32%).
- When asked to describe what type of crime they were the victim of, the most common responses were sexual assault (32%), assault (32%), robbery (17%), domestic violence (15%), some type of larceny/theft (13%), burglary (4%), or something else (7%).
- When asked to explain why they did not report the crime to police, the most common answer (25%) was they handle things themselves and don't rely on law enforcement, followed by they were scared to (18%), they did not think it would help (18%), they knew the person and did not want to get them into trouble (18%), it was too risky given their own involvement in the system (7%), they just wanted to forget about it (7%), it happened a long time ago (6%), and 1 percent did not know how to report it.

What are the possible ways other risk-taking behavior of this population indirectly affects others in our community?

Criminal and other risky behaviors of arrestees can affect others in the community – either through the risk of being on the road with an impaired driver in another vehicle, interacting with someone at work or school under the influence, coming into contact with a used syringe, providing medical treatment to those under the influence, or as an employer, when someone misses work due to alcohol or other drug use. Figure 14 shows how addressing underlying addiction can have a cost-benefit for the community overall and Figure 15 shows how common alcohol versus other drug use is in relation to these behaviors.

Figure 14

Risky behaviors that have consequences for arrestees and possibly others around them



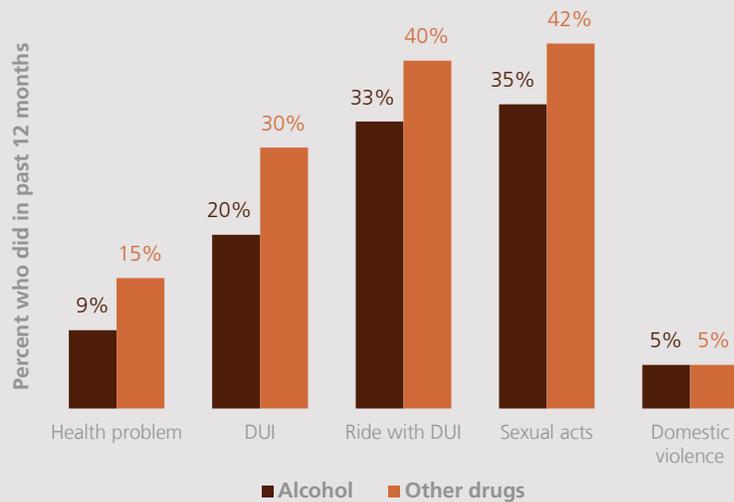
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

Of those who had ever injected drugs, over two-thirds (68%) reported they had injected in the last year. Of those who had ever overdosed, 43 percent said they had been administered naloxone to help reverse the effect of the opiate, but only 9 percent said they would know how to obtain it if they needed it in the future.

Overall, 30 percent of arrestees (34% of males and 21% of females) reported they had ever been arrested for driving under the influence, with those who were 40 years of age or older more likely to report this happening (39%), compared to those who were under 25 (15%) or between 25 and 39 (31%). Sixty-four percent (64%) reported they had been arrested just once for driving under the influence, and 36 percent more than once, with a range of one to seven previous arrests. When asked what they had consumed when they drove under the influence most recently, 67 percent said alcohol, 14 percent drugs, and 19 percent both alcohol and drugs. When the 46 individuals who had used drugs were asked and answered which type of drug, 48 percent said meth, 37 percent marijuana, 17 percent some other type of drug (e.g., prescription), 11 percent heroin, and 9 percent powder cocaine.

Figure 15

Other drug use more common than alcohol use before most risky behaviors in the past 12 months



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2016

Takeaway

The risk-taking behaviors that are associated with the alcohol and other drug use of the arrestee population have a direct impact on their lives, as well as others in the community potentially, through going to work or driving under the influence, engaging in drug use behaviors that could put the community and first responders at risk, and requiring medical treatment for issues that may not have occurred if not for the substance abuse.