



## Prescription Drug Abuse Among San Diego County Arrestees

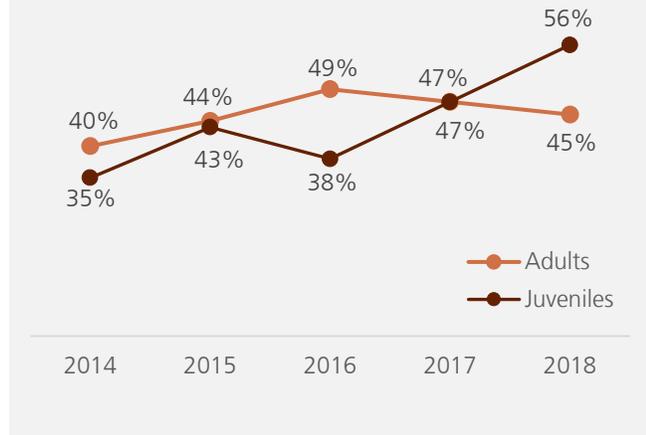
According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)<sup>1</sup>, the nonmedical use of prescription drugs has increased over the past 15 years nationally, with more emergency room visits associated with the misuse, overdose deaths, and treatment admissions. Data from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health<sup>2</sup> revealed over 5,200 individuals age 12 and over misused prescription pain killers per day for the first time in 2018 (second only to marijuana) and NIDA notes this high prevalence of misuse is linked to misinformation about the addictive properties of some prescription drugs, the perception they are less harmful than street drugs, and the ease of access.

With the next **National Prescription Take Back Day**<sup>3</sup> scheduled for Saturday, October 26, 2019, this CJ Flash highlights recent statistics from the Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program related to the illicit use of prescription drugs by adults and juveniles booked into a local detention center in 2018, and notes some trends over time.

### Highlight 1

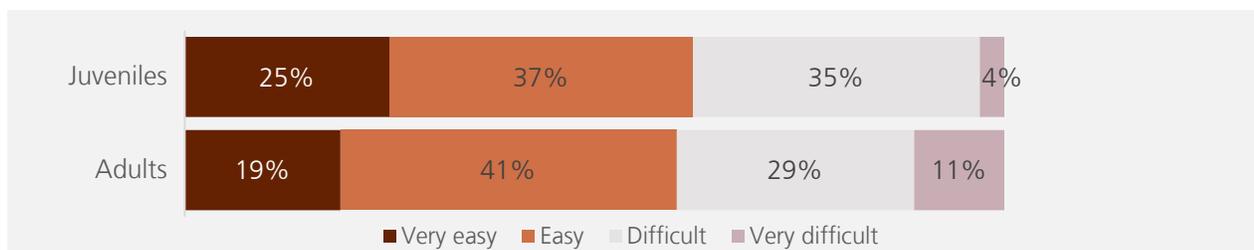
In 2018, 45% of adult arrestees and 56% of juvenile arrestees reported ever abusing prescription drugs. While the percent of adult arrestees who reported ever abusing prescription drugs has gone down for the past two years, the percent of juveniles was at a five-year high.

Percent of arrestees who report they have ever abused prescription drugs



### Highlight 2

Around 3 in 5 of both adults and juveniles said that prescription drugs were “very easy” or “easy” to obtain in 2018.



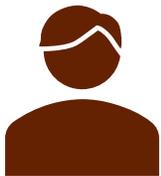
<sup>1</sup> [drugabuse.gov/publications/misuse-prescription-drugs/overview](http://drugabuse.gov/publications/misuse-prescription-drugs/overview)

<sup>2</sup> [samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/cbhsq-reports/NSDUHNationalFindingsReport2018/NSDUHNationalFindingsReport2018.pdf](http://samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/cbhsq-reports/NSDUHNationalFindingsReport2018/NSDUHNationalFindingsReport2018.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Visit [takebackday.dea.gov/](http://takebackday.dea.gov/) to find out about Take Back locations in San Diego County.

### Highlight 3

Both adults and juveniles were most likely to say they obtained the prescription drugs they misused when someone gave it to them (81% of adults and 79% of juveniles) or they bought them (66% and 61%, respectively). However, 21% of adults and 36% of juveniles also said they stole them, with juveniles most likely to report they took them from family (55%) or a stranger (45%).



#### Adults

- **81%** given it
- **66%** bought it
- **21%** stole it



#### Juveniles

- **79%** given it
- **61%** bought it
- **36%** stole it

### Highlight 4

More than 1 in 4 of adult heroin users reported they had used prescription opiates first and 82% of these individuals said they switched to heroin as a substitute for prescription opiates. When asked why they switched, the most common answers were that heroin was cheaper (61%) and easier to obtain (48%).

**29%** used prescription opiates before heroin

**82%** said heroin was a substitute for prescription opiates

**61%** switched because heroin was cheaper and **48%** because it was easier to obtain

## Takeaways

- Parents should talk to their children about the risks of prescription drugs.
- Adults should be aware of how they store prescription drugs and who could have access to them.
- Unused prescription drugs should be discarded on National Prescription Take Back Days.

