CJBULLETIN

SANDAG

2019 Adult Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region

October 2020

Research findings from the Criminal Justice Clearinghouse

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As of June 23, 2020

Highlights

Drug use is at a 20-year high

In 2019, 82% of adult females tested positive for at least one illicit substance, an increase of 3% from 2018 and a new 20-year high. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of adult males tested positive, the same high previously seen in 2017.

Methamphetamine use is up again for females

Despite regional efforts to combat methamphetamine (meth) use, it remained the drug of choice for adults with justice contact, with 55% of males and 66% of females positive in 2019. While the male positive rate was the same as it was in 2018, females were up 4%.

Despite legalization, arrestees continue to obtain marijuana illegally

Almost half (45%) of arrestees reported obtaining marijuana in multiple ways in 2019, with the most common including on the street (64%) and through a recreational dispensary (63%). In a series of new questions on vaping, 68% of arrestees who had ever vaped reported THC/marijuana was one of the substances they vaped.

Opioid overdose remains a concern for this population

While fewer arrestees reported they would try fentanyl if it was available for purchase in 2019, compared to 2018, 27% of arrestees reported they thought a drug they had used contained fentanyl, given the effects they experienced. With about 1 in 5 (22%) reporting they have ever overdosed and over half of these individuals (56%) previously administered naloxone, often more than once, opioid overdose remains an issue for the region.

Female arrestees have different underlying risks and needs than male arrestees

Every day, fewer females come into contact with the justice system than males. But those that do often have greater risks and needs, as highlighted in this report. These include higher rates of recent drug use, being approached to engage in prostitution and having a pimp that gave them drugs, having children and previous contact with the Child Welfare System, and being the victim of crimes they did not report to law enforcement.

Background

This CJ Bulletin, 2019 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, law enforcement, prevention, and treatment professionals regarding drug use trends and involvement in other risky or illegal behavior over time. In 2019, this data collection effort was generously supported by the San Diego-Imperial HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area); Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services; 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 2019, 310 male arrestees were interviewed at the Vista and Central Jails and 172 female arrestees at Las Colinas. Of these 482 arrestees, 469 (97%) completed the interview and 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 15)

Binge drinking (page 16)

Risk factors to recidivate (page 19)

Possible effects of substance use on the community (page 25)

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

In 2019, 79% of male arrestees and 82% of female arrestees tested positive for an illicit drug, which includes marijuana [1], meth, cocaine, opiates, and PCP. The 2019 female positive rate of 82% was the highest since 2000 and an increase of 3% from 2018. The 2019 male positive rate of 79% was also a high which was seen once previously in 2017. The lowest rate for males was in 2009 (56%) and for females in 2008 (58%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Four in every five adult arrestees positive for any drug in 2019

Note: Prior to 2013 and since 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, 2019

What were the characteristics of the arrestees interviewed?

Of the 469 arrestees with completed interviews, 299 (64%) were male and 170 (36%) were female. Almost half (48%) identified as White, 33% Hispanic, 15% Black, and 4% "other". Six percent (6%) of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. Sixteen percent (16%) of those interviewed were under the age of 25, 48% between 25 and 39, and 37% 40 and older. The mean age was 37.1 (range 18 to 77). Over two-thirds (69%) were single, 18% divorced, separated, or widowed, and 13% married.

About 1 in 3 (36%) were booked for a drug offense, 29% for a violent offense, 20% for an "other" offense, and 15% for a property offense. One-third (30%) reported living in the Central Major Statistical Area of the County, 22% in East Suburban, 13% in South Suburban, 12% in North County East, 8% in North City, 7% in North County West, 5% out of the County, and 2% in East County.
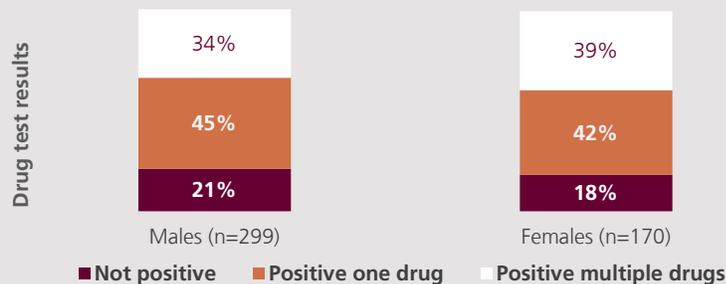
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[1] The drug test panel continues to include marijuana even though California voters approved Proposition 64 on November 8, 2016. Marijuana will continue to be tested because it remains illegal federally and because changes in use pre- and post-legalization among this population is expected to continue to be an issue of interest.

How many arrestees are polydrug[2] users?

Around 1 in 3 (34% of male and 39% of female) arrestees tested positive for more than one drug in 2019 (Figure 2). Of these, 86% tested positive for two and 14% tested positive for three drugs. Of those who tested positive for multiple substances, 90% were positive for meth, 80% marijuana, 29% opiates, 12% cocaine/crack, and 3% PCP.

Figure 2

Around 1 in 3 arrestees tested positive for more than one drug in 2019

Drug test results

	Not positive	Positive one drug	Positive multiple drugs
Males (n=299)	21%	45%	34%
Females (n=170)	18%	42%	39%

■ Not positive ■ Positive one drug □ Positive multiple drugs

Note: Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

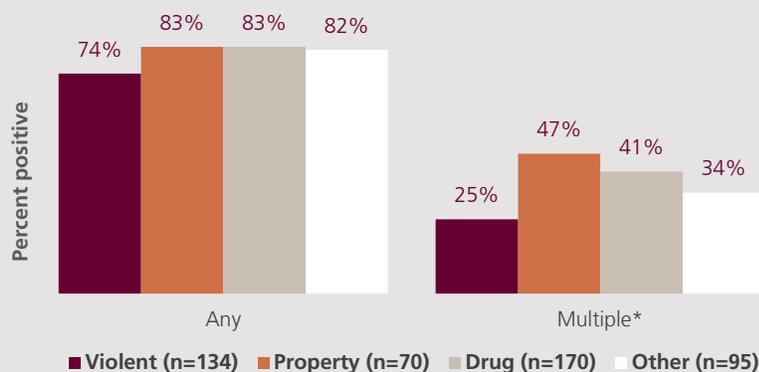*How many arrestees tested positive for just marijuana?*

35% of the adult arrestees who tested positive for marijuana in 2019 did not test positive for anything else, but 65% did – either meth, opiates, crack/cocaine, or some combination.

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

As Figure 3 shows, regardless of crime type, around three-quarters or more of arrestees tested positive for a drug in 2019 and 1 in 4 or more tested positive for multiple drugs. Individuals arrested for a highest charge that was for a violent offense were non-significantly less likely to test positive for any drug (74%) and significantly less likely for multiple drugs (25%), compared to those arrested for a property, drug, or "other" offense.

Figure 3

Individuals with a violent offense as their highest charge least likely to test positive for any or multiple drugs

Percent positive

	Violent (n=134)	Property (n=70)	Drug (n=170)	Other (n=95)
Any	74%	83%	83%	82%
Multiple*	25%	47%	41%	34%

■ Violent (n=134) ■ Property (n=70) ■ Drug (n=170) □ Other (n=95)

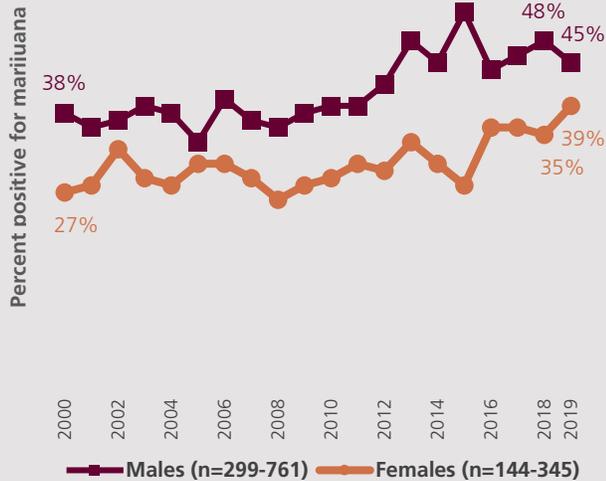**Significant at p < .05*
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

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[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 3%, from 48% in 2018 to 45% in 2019. However, for female arrestees, the percent positive for marijuana increased 4% from 35% in 2018 to 39% in 2019, which was the highest rate in the past 20 years (Figure 4). Arrestees under the age of 25 were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana (60%), compared to those between 25 and 39 (42%) and 40 years of age and older (37%).

For **meth**, the percent of males that tested positive stayed the same as it was for the past three years at 55% – 20-year highs. The female rate of 66% jumped another 4% from 2018 (when it had also increased 4% from 2017) and represented a new 20-year high (Figure 5). Recent meth use also varied significantly by an arrestee's age. Specifically, older arrestees (62% of those 25 to 39 and 61% of those 40 and older) were more likely to test positive for meth than those under the age of 25 (42%).

Figure 4

Marijuana second most common drug recently used by adult arrestees

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

Figure 5

Meth positive rates at all-time high for males and females
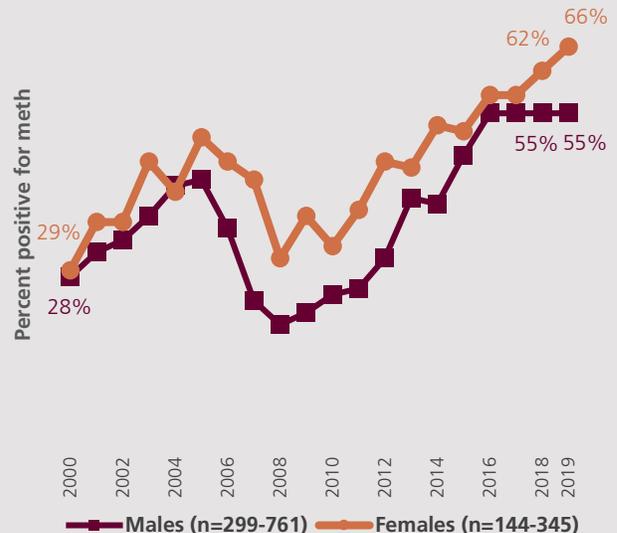
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

Takeaway

Regardless of why someone is booked into jail, substance use is an issue for many arrestees, with four-fifths testing positive for at least one drug overall and about 1 in 3 current polydrug users. Among polydrug users, meth and marijuana were used more than any other drug combination. Almost 2 in 3 arrestees positive for marijuana also were positive for another drug.

The percent of arrestees positive for **cocaine** decreased slightly in 2019, with 6% of males and 5% of females positive, compared to 6% and 7%, respectively, in 2018 (Figure 6). There were no differences in cocaine use by age or ethnicity in 2019.

Figure 6

Cocaine positive rates down slightly in 2019

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

For **opiates**[3], the percent of males that were positive remained steady at 11% in 2019. For females, the rate increased from 13% in 2018 to 15% in 2019 (Figure 7). Among the arrestees, those that identified as White were most likely to test positive for opiates (19%), compared to 10% of Hispanics and 1% of Blacks.

Figure 7

Around 1 in 10 arrestees positive for opiates in 2019
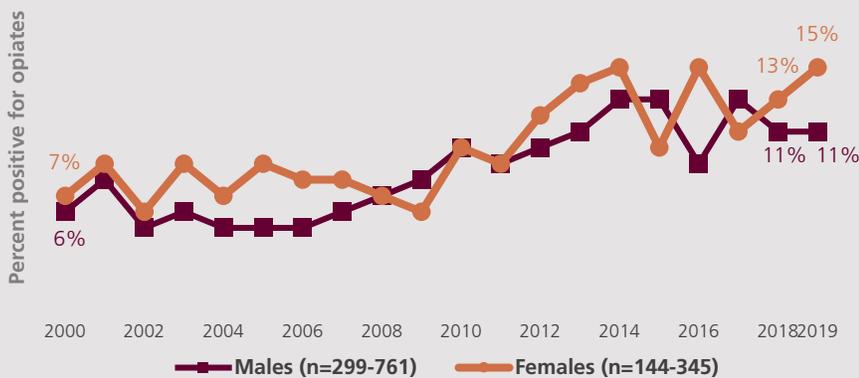
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

In addition, 1% of adult arrestees tested positive for PCP in 2019, which included 3% of females and <1% of males.

Takeaway

In 2019, meth remained the drug of choice for San Diego County arrestees, with more than half of adult males and two-thirds females positive for the drug. Marijuana and opiate use also were up slightly for female arrestees.

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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.

How does history of drug use vary by drug type?

Marijuana was the drug most commonly tried by arrestees (90%) and also was tried at the earliest age (14.9) – about five years earlier than any other drug. Those who used it in the past 30 days used it an average of 17.5 days (Table 1).

Meth was tried by more than two-thirds (70%) of the arrestees and it also was reported by the highest percent (84%) as having been used in the last year. Meth users reported using it an average of 18.7 days out of the past 30, more often than any other drug. While there was no significant difference between males and females in ever trying meth, females were significantly more likely to report use in the past 12 months (93% versus 80%), consistent with the higher percent of females testing positive for it.

Cocaine was tried by over half (56%) of arrestees and at the youngest average age (19.8), following marijuana. Twenty-nine percent (29%) reported using cocaine in the past year and the average use in the past month was 5.2 days. Males were significantly more likely than females to report having ever tried cocaine (62% versus 47%).

Heroin was tried by 33% of arrestees, three-fifths (60%) of whom had used it in the past year. Heroin was used an average of 16.5 days in the past 30 of those who had used it.

Crack was tried by 30% of arrestees and was least likely to be used in the last year (21%). Those who used it in the past month did so about every 1 in 5 days, on average (5.9). Males and females were equally likely to report having ever tried crack, but females were significantly more likely to report use in the past 12 months (30% versus 14%).

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?
90% marijuana	**14.9** marijuana	**73%** marijuana	**17.5** marijuana
70% meth	**21.6** meth	**84%** meth	**18.7** meth
56% cocaine	**19.8** cocaine	**29%** cocaine	**5.2** cocaine
33% heroin	**24.3** heroin	**60%** heroin	**16.5** heroin
30% crack	**23.1** crack	**21%** crack	**5.9** crack

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

In addition to these five drugs, around three in every five (61%) arrestees reported having ever tried at least one of nine other illicit substances, including hallucinogens (38%), ecstasy (35%), LSD (30%), spice (22%), inhalants (17%), PCP (16%), GHB (12%), ketamine (9%), and kratom (4%). When those who had ever used an illegal substance were asked if they had used it in the past 30 days, kratom users were most likely to respond affirmatively (25%), followed by ketamine (14%) and GHB (13%) users (Figure 8).

Kratom use was added to the interview in 2019. Kratom is a tropical tree native to Southeast Asia with leaves that contain compounds with psychotropic effects. Kratom is not illegal at the time of this report and is sold as an extract or gum.

NEW
QUESTION

Figure 8

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

Drug	Past 30 Days	Ever
Kratom	25%	4%
Ketamine	14%	9%
GHB	13%	12%
PCP	11%	16%
Inhalants	9%	17%
Spice	8%	22%
LSD	6%	30%
Ecstasy	9%	35%
Hallucinogens	9%	38%

□ Past 30 Days (n=20-176) ■ Ever (n=462-465)
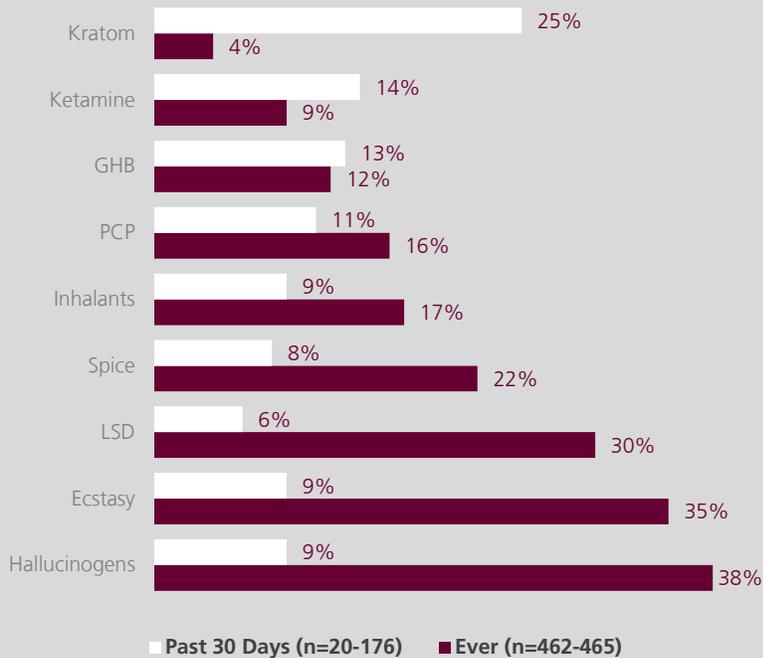
Note: Cases with missing information not included.
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

Due to the increased attention to combatting synthetic drug use in San Diego County, questions were added to the instrument to better understand why individuals use spice. Specifically, 48% of those who ever used spice said they use it as an alternative to marijuana and 29% said they use it to avoid a positive drug test.

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 most frequent use in the last 30 days. Among other illicit drugs ever tried, ecstasy and other hallucinogens were most common, but kratom 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?

Over the years, a number of standard questions have been asked of arrestees regarding drugs they may have obtained, including what they traded to get it (cash and/or non-cash means), how easy it was to obtain, and if they got it in the same area in which they lived.

As Table 2 shows:

- Marijuana was most likely to be reported as "very easy" to obtain (64%) among the five drugs in 2019. Meth followed with 48% reporting it was "very easy" to obtain.

- Over two-thirds of arrestees were able to obtain their drug of choice in the MSA in which they lived. The range was 68% of those obtaining crack to 82% of those obtaining meth.

- Regardless of the drug, arrestees reported obtaining the substance through cash as well as non-cash means. Crack was the only substance that was obtained more frequently with non-cash means, compared to cash.

Table 2

Illicit drug availability varies by type

	Marijuana	**Meth**	**Heroin**	**Cocaine**	**Crack**
Very easy to obtain	64%	48%	26%	34%	36%
Got in same MSA where live	78%	82%	75%	73%	68%
Got with cash	61%	70%	71%	58%	45%
Got with non-cash ways	58%	65%	57%	55%	55%

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

In a series of new questions added in 2019, arrestees were asked about buying drugs on the regular internet or dark web and if they had ever used electronic currency (e.g., bitcoin, PayPal, Venmo, Zelle). Overall, only 5% reported ever purchasing drugs on the regular internet and 1% on the dark web, with meth being the most common drug purchased from the dark web and marijuana from the regular internet. In addition, 2% said they had ever used electronic currency.
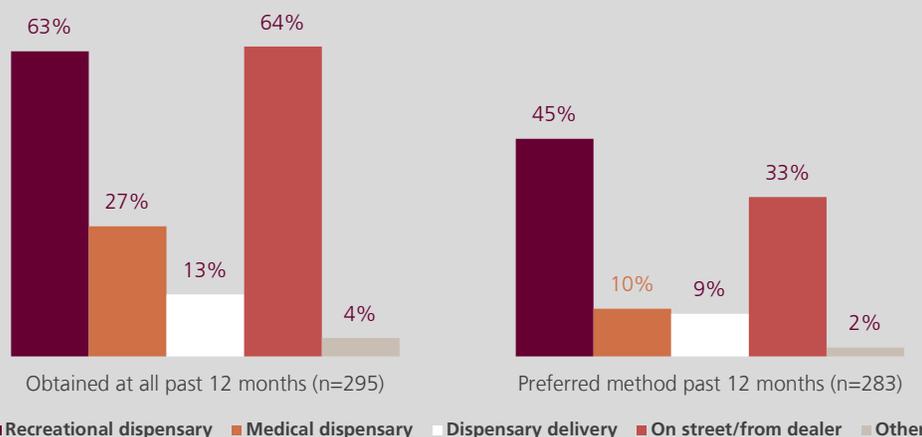
NEW
QUESTION

In addition, more detailed questions have been added over the years regarding marijuana, including how individuals obtain the drug.

- Just under half (45%) of arrestees reported they obtained marijuana in more than one way in 2019, with 55% saying they had just one preferred way. Of those who said they just obtained it only one way, the most common was illegally on the street (47%), followed by a recreational dispensary (39%), medical dispensary (8%), and delivery from a dispensary (6%).

- As Figure 9 shows, the two most common ways to obtain marijuana over the past 12 months (regardless of how many methods were used) was on the street (64%) and recreational dispensary (63%). When asked their preferred method, 45% said a recreational dispensary, followed by 33% saying on the street.

Figure 9
Arrestees report obtaining marijuana in a variety of ways in the past 12 months

Obtained at all past 12 months (n=295)   Preferred method past 12 months (n=283)

■ Recreational dispensary ■ Medical dispensary □ Dispensary delivery ■ On street/from dealer ■ Other
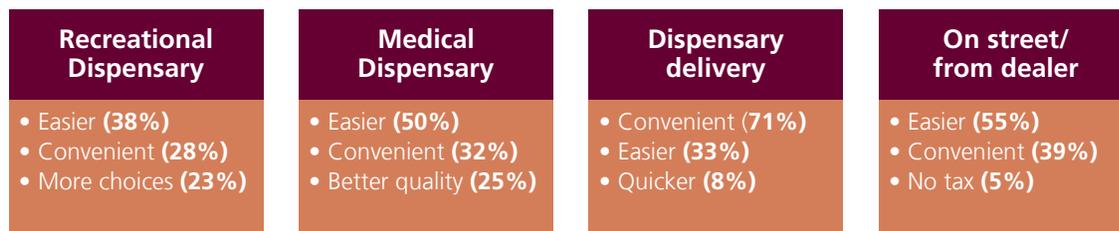
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

- When asked the reasons behind their preferred method, the 2 most common for recreational and medical dispensaries and dispensary delivery included they were convenient and easier. Those who preferred buying it on the street most often noted it was easier, convenient, and less expensive because there was no tax (Figure 10).

Figure 10
Preferred means of obtaining marijuana most often tied to convenience and ease

| Recreational Dispensary	Medical Dispensary	Dispensary delivery	On street/ from dealer
• Easier **(38%)** • Convenient **(28%)** • More choices **(23%)**	• Easier **(50%)** • Convenient **(32%)** • Better quality **(25%)**	• Convenient (**71%**) • Easier **(33%)** • Quicker **(8%)**	• Easier **(55%)** • Convenient **(39%)** • No tax **(5%)**

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

- Residents of the East County MSA were least likely to report obtaining marijuana at a recreational or medical dispensary in the MSA where they lived (40%) and residents of the South County MSA were most likely to report obtaining it in the same MSA where they lived (87%) (Figure 11).

Figure 11

Residents who obtained marijuana at a dispensary generally obtain it in the same MSA in which they live
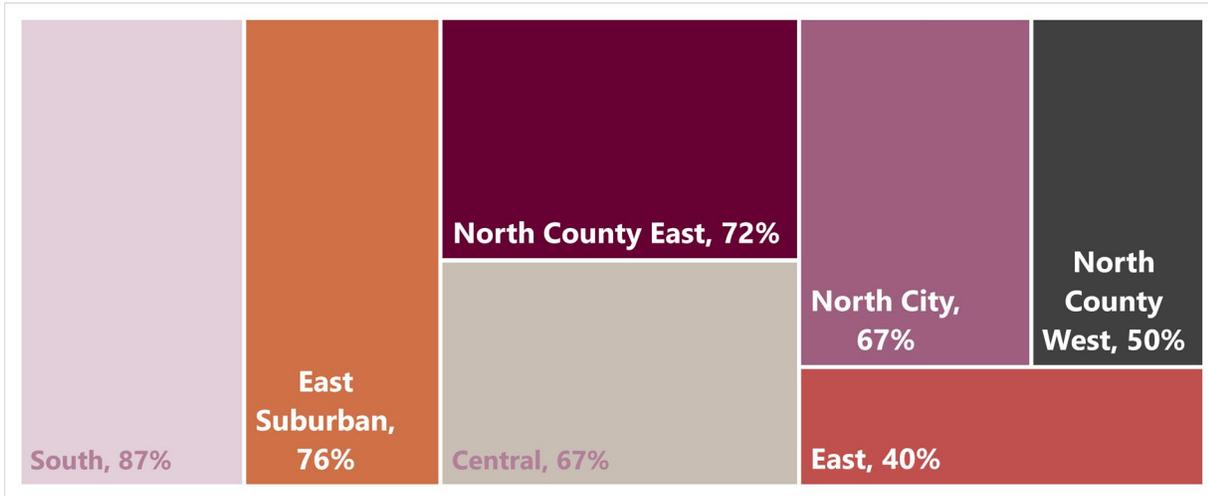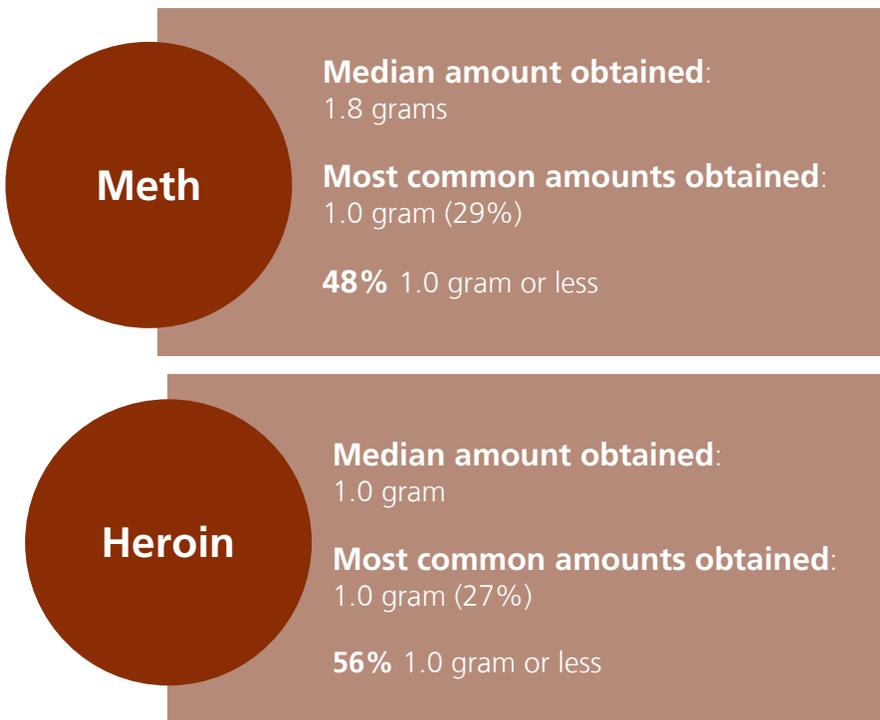

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

- Around 1 in 4 (23%) of the arrestees reported having ever had a medical marijuana card, 24% of whom still did. When asked the medical condition they got the card for, the most common included physical pain (38%), anxiety (32%), to help them sleep (16%), and depression (15%).

To better understand how much meth or heroin arrestees obtain for their own personal use, a question was added to the interview 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 median was 1.8 in 2019, and for heroin, it was 1.0 (Figure 12).

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

Meth

Median amount obtained:
1.8 grams

Most common amounts obtained:
1.0 gram (29%)

48% 1.0 gram or less

Heroin

Median amount obtained:
1.0 gram

Most common amounts obtained:
1.0 gram (27%)

56% 1.0 gram or less

One in ten (10%) arrestees reported traveling to Mexico for drugs. When these arrestees described what they obtained, 47% said heroin, 42% meth, 24% marijuana, 11% prescription drugs, 11% cocaine, and 2% steroids.

In addition, 18% reported they had ever been approached to transport, smuggle, conceal, or participate in bringing drugs over the border. Almost half (49%) of those who said they were approached also reported they had crossed the border to obtain drugs, versus 2% of those who said they had not been approached. In a new question added in 2019 regarding why they brought drugs over the border, 65% reported someone paid them to do so, 39% did so for their own personal use, and 22% were going to sell it themselves. Arrestees between the ages of 25 and 39 were most likely to report they had ever been approached (23%), compared to 16% of those 40 and older and 8% of those younger than 25.

NEW
QUESTION

Takeaway

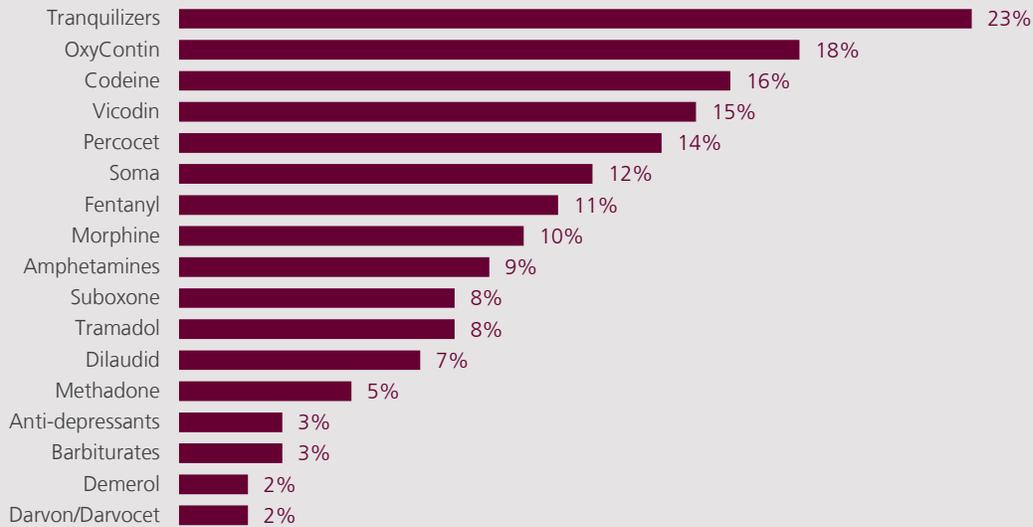Consistent with use data, arrestees reported marijuana was the easiest drug to obtain in the region in 2019, followed by meth. Arrestees most often reported they had obtained marijuana both legally and illegally in the past 12 months. Heroin was less available than other drugs. Arrestees were most often able to obtain drugs where they lived and 18% reported being approached to transport drugs across the border.

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

In 2019, 46% of arrestees reported they had ever abused prescription drugs, with the most commonly abused including tranquilizers (i.e., benzodiazepines), OxyContin, codeine, Vicodin, Percocet, and Soma (Figure 13).

Figure 13

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

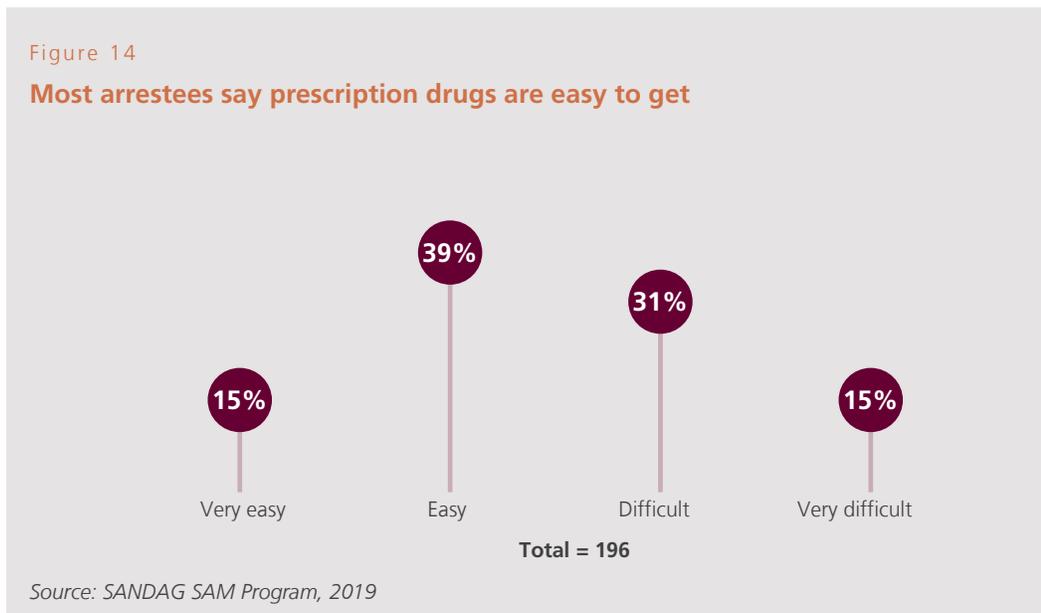| Drug	Percent
Tranquilizers	23%
OxyContin	18%
Codeine	16%
Vicodin	15%
Percocet	14%
Soma	12%
Fentanyl	11%
Morphine	10%
Amphetamines	9%
Suboxone	8%
Tramadol	8%
Dilaudid	7%
Methadone	5%
Anti-depressants	3%
Barbiturates	3%
Demerol	2%
Darvon/Darvocet	2%

Total = 461-466

Note: Cases with missing information not included.
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

When those who had ever abused a prescription drug were asked if they had abused it in the past 30 days, the top five drugs currently being abused included fentanyl (27%), barbiturates (11%), Suboxone (10%), tranquilizers (9%), and methadone (9%). Additional analyses revealed that White arrestees were significantly more likely to report abusing prescription drugs (53%), compared to arrestees of other ethnic groups (41% Black and 39% Hispanic). An arrestee's age also was a significant predictor, with younger ones more likely to abuse prescription drugs (48% of those under 25 and 52% 25 to 39), compared to older ones (37%). Additionally, arrestees who abused prescription drugs were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana (48% versus 38%) and meth (68% versus 50%).

When asked how difficult it was to obtain prescription drugs illegally, just over half said it was "very easy" or "easy" (Figure 14).

Figure 14

Most arrestees say prescription drugs are easy to get

15%	39%	31%	15%
Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult

Total = 196

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

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 friend) (Figure 15). In addition, 9% reported that they had "doctor shopped," 66% of whom were successful in doing so.

Figure 15

Most common ways to get prescription drugs illegally

82% given	**64%** bought	**19%** took
Most common source: friends (74%)		**Most common source:** family (51%) and friends (51%)

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

In a new question added in 2019, 3% of arrestees reported they had ever knowingly bought counterfeit prescription medicine.

NEW QUESTION

Almost 1 in 3 (31%) heroin users said they were hooked on prescription opiates before they began using the street drug and of these, 85% said they began to use heroin as a substitute for prescription opiates. When asked which opiates they were addicted to, 66% said OxyContin, 40% Vicodin, 32% Percocet, 21% Dilaudid, 15% morphine, 11% methadone, 9% Demerol, and 6% fentanyl. When asked why they switched from prescription drugs to heroin, the most common answers included that heroin was cheaper (63%) and easier to get (54%).

Given the recent national attention to the dangers of fentanyl, new questions were added to the SAM questionnaire in 2018, including, "If you knew a drug contained fentanyl, would you purchase it?"

- Overall, 89% of the arrestees said they would not purchase it, but 2% said they didn't know what they would do and 9% said they would. Last year, only 69% said no and 23% said they did not know, suggesting education efforts regarding the dangers are at least somewhat successful.

- While an arrestee's gender and age were not significantly related to saying they would knowingly buy fentanyl, ethnicity was, with 13% of White arrestees saying they would, compared to 3% of Hispanic and 7% of the Black arrestees.

- When those who said they would buy it were asked why, 50% said opiates were their drug of choice, 34% because it is a strong high, 11% they were curious, 5% it could help with pain or for them to sleep.

- When those who said they would not buy it were asked why, the most common answers included it was a dangerous drug (65%), they did not know what it is (17%), and opiates/prescription drugs are not their drug of choice (13%).

- A new question added in 2019 pertained to whether someone ever used a drug they thought may have contained fentanyl, even if they were not told it did because of how they reacted to it. One in three (34%) female arrestees and 1 in 4 (23%) male arrestees said they had (27% overall).

NEW
QUESTION

- In another series of new questions, arrestees were asked if they had ever used fentanyl test strips to see if their drugs contained fentanyl, and if they had not, would they. While only 4% of arrestees said they had used these strips, almost half (45%) said they would if they were available.

NEW
QUESTION

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. Fentanyl was used most often in the past 30 days by those who had abused prescription drugs and around 1 in 10 said they might buy a drug if they knew it contained fentanyl. More common ways of obtaining prescription drugs included being given it by a friend, buying it illegally, or taking it from another person, most often a family member or a friend.

What do we know about arrestee 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 for males and four drinks or more for females), with males doing so at an earlier age (17.0) than females (18.5). Around 1 in 3 of both genders had reporting drinking any alcohol in the 24 hours prior to their arrest.

Additional analyses revealed that:

- Hispanic arrestees were significantly more likely to report binge drinking in the past 30 days (54%), compared to White (37%) and Black (36%) arrestees.
- Arrestees under the age of 25 were significantly more likely to report binge drinking in the past 30 days (55%), compared to those between 25 and 39 (41%) and those 40 and older (37%).
- Individuals who reported binge drinking in the past 30 days were significantly *less* likely to test positive for meth (50% versus 65%), but *more* likely to test positive for cocaine (9% versus 3%).

Takeaway

Alcohol remains the drug of choice for many adults in the justice system, with more than 4 in 5 arrestees reporting ever binge drinking. Around one-third drank alcohol within 24 hours prior to their arrest.

Figure 16

Male and female arrestee alcohol use history

Male		Female	
87% ever binge drank		**82%** ever binge drank	
17.0 average age first binge*	**5.3** average number of drinks in past 24 hours	**18.5** average age first binge*	**4.0** average number of drinks in past 24 hours
44% binge drank past 30 days	**37%** self-report drinking any alcohol in the past 24 hours	**38%** binge drank past 30 days	**35%** self-report drinking any alcohol in the past 24 hours

Males (n=111-298)   Females (n=59-170)

Significant at p < .05
Note: Cases with missing information not included.
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

What do we know about tobacco use and vaping?

Given the growth in e-cigarettes and vaping over the past several years, new questions were added to the interview in 2019 regarding their history of vaping, the types of products vaped, and the frequency of use of vaping products.

NEW
QUESTION

- Overall, 69% of adult arrestees reported currently using tobacco products and 56% reported they had ever vaped. Individuals who reported ever using tobacco products were significantly more likely to report vaping (64%), compared to those who had never used tobacco products (39%).

- While there was no difference in vaping by gender or ethnicity, arrestees under 25 were significantly more likely to report ever vaping (72%), compared to those 25 to 39 (62%), and those over the age of 40 (41%).

- Just under half (45%) of arrestees who had ever vaped said they had done so in the last 30 days and of those who had vaped in the past month, the average number of days vaped was 11.9 (range 1 to 30). Around 1 in 5 (19%) reported vaping all 30 days.

- When asked what they had vaped, the most common answer was flavored nicotine (76%), followed by THC/marijuana (68%), and non-flavored nicotine (27%). Males were significantly more likely to report vaping THC/marijuana (74%), compared to females (59%).

Figure 17

Types of substances arrestees have ever vaped

Total = 259-260
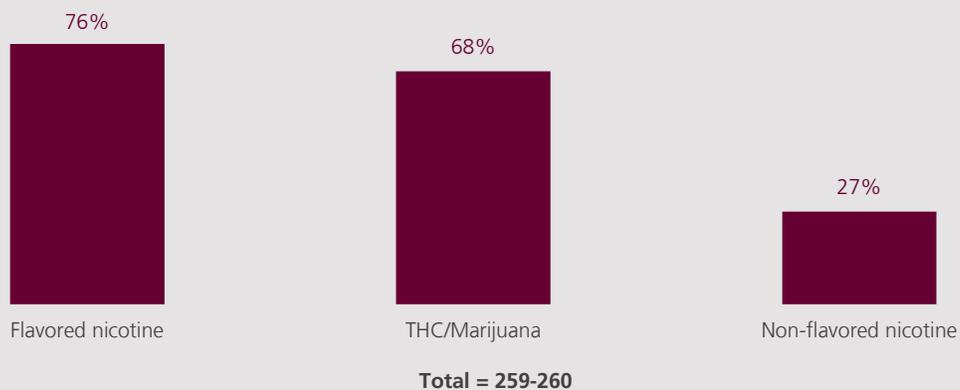
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

Takeaway

More than 1 in every 2 arrestees has ever vaped, with those under the age of 25 most likely to report doing so (almost 3 in every 4). Flavored nicotine and THC/marijuana are the substances most often vaped and about 1 in 5 of those who vaped in the past 30 days did so every day.

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

Prior arrests and incarcerations

- Almost four in every five arrestees (83%) reported having a previous arrest, with a median number of 6.0 prior arrests.

- On average, males were 21.0 years old at their first arrest as an adult, compared to 25.2 for females. When asked what their first arrest as an adult was for, 32% said a property crime, 30% a drug-related crime, 24% some other type of offense, 16% a violent crime, and 4% a weapons offense.

- More than 1 in 3 (37%) reported being arrested as a juvenile, including 45% of males and 24% of females. When asked what their first arrest as a juvenile was for, 48% said a property crime, 20% a violent crime, 15% a drug-related crime, 15% a status offense, 6% a weapons offense, and 3% some other type of offense.

- Just over three-quarters (77%) reported previously serving time in jail and 29% in prison (38% of males and 14% of females).

Community supervision

- Of those who had served time in prison, 78% said they also had been on parole – 34% of whom still were.

- Only about 1 in 4 (28%) of those who had ever been in custody reported receiving services (19% while incarcerated and 20% in the community). When asked their biggest need upon reentry after incarceration, the most common answers included housing (38%), employment (25%), and help with substance abuse (12%).

- Around 3 in 4 (78%) of those with a prior arrest reported they had previously been on probation (85% of males and 63% of females), 62% of whom said they were currently on probation.

Involvement in drug distribution

- More than 2 in 5 (43%) of those interviewed reported being involved in selling drugs and of these, 52% said they had done so in the past year. Of those convicted of a felony, 57% reported ever being involved in selling drugs.

Crime to support drug use

- One in three (33%) 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 (45% versus 25% of those who had not been).

- Of those who admitted to doing so, 86% said they committed property crime and when asked what drug they were ever under the influence of while committing the crime, the most common was meth (70%), followed by heroin (31%), and marijuana (27%).

- Individuals who reported committing a crime to support their drug habit, as well as those who were involved in selling drugs were significantly more likely to report having ever carried a gun (34% of those who were supporting their habit and 42% of those who had sold drugs), compared to those who said they had not (22% and 13%, respectively).

Weapons

- One in four (25%) arrestees reported ever carrying a gun, with males significantly more likely to do so than females (30% versus 17%).

- When asked how easy it was to obtain the gun, 32% said "very easy", 44% "easy", 20% "difficult", and 4% "very difficult."

- When asked how they obtained it, 37% said from a friend, 32% bought it off the street, 15% from a store or gun shop, 8% from a family member, and 13% some other way (e.g., stole it, found it).

- In a new question added in 2019, just over 1 in 5 (21%) said they had ever committed a crime with a gun.

NEW QUESTION

Proposition 47

- In 2014, California voters passed Proposition 47 (Prop 47) which reduced certain property and drug-related felonies to misdemeanors. In 2019, 43% of the arrestees said they had heard of Prop 47, including 61% of those ever convicted of a felony and 29% of those who had not had a prior felony conviction.

- Of those who had ever heard of it, 16% said that they or their attorney had petitioned to have a prior offense reduced.

- Of these individuals, 42% were currently in custody for a most serious crime that was a drug-related offense, 23% for an "other" offense, 23% for a property offense, and 13% for a violent offense.

- When asked if they would complete programs such as drug treatment if they did not have to (because of legislative changes), 43% said they would not.

Exchanging sex/pimping/pandering

- Almost 1 in 5 arrestees (18%) report they have ever been approached by someone to pimp/prostitute them, including 36% of females and 7% of males.

- Around 1 in 10 (9%) of those interviewed said they had ever exchanged sex for money, drugs, or other things (17% of the females and 5% of the males). Of these individuals, 28% of the females and none of the males said that they had ever had a pimp.

- Of these 8 females who had ever had a pimp, 7 (88%) reported their pimp had given them drugs.

NEW
QUESTION

- When asked the first age they exchanged sex for something else, the mean was 23.8 years (range 13 to 53).

- One-fourth (26%) of those who reported ever exchanging sex for something said they had done so in the last 30 days. Of these individuals, 62% said they would be interested in getting help to stop.

- Four percent reported being involved in pimping or pandering activities. This included 9 males (4 who said they had exchanged sex themselves and 5 who had not) and 8 females (6 who had exchanged sex themselves and 2 who had not).

- Three-fifths (59%) of those who had pimped/pandered said they had given drugs to the person/people they were pimping.

- Individuals who reported ever engaging in pimping or pandering activities were significantly more likely to report having ever carried a gun (53%), compared to those who did not have this history (24%).

Gang involvement

- Almost 1 in 5 (20%) of arrestees reported some type of gang involvement.

- Self-reported gang involvement varied by ethnicity (12% of White arrestees compared to 30% of Hispanic and 27% of Black arrestees).

- When asked how old they were when they started hanging out with the gang, the mean age was 16.2 years (range 7 to 42).

- Of the 95 adult arrestees who reported any type of gang involvement, 62% said they had this contact within the past five years. When asked their current status with the gang, 29% said they currently hang out and were never a member, 23% used to be a member but aren't now, 21% currently are a member, 20% used to hang out but don't anymore, and 7% used to be a member but just hang out now.

- When those individuals who ended their affiliation with a gang were asked why they had done so, the most common reason was they grew tired of the lifestyle (72%).

- Those who reported a previous gang affiliation were significantly more likely to report having been arrested as a juvenile (51% versus 33%), having been involved in drug distribution (67% versus 36%), and carrying a gun previously (54% versus 18%).

Mental health issues

- Over one-third (35%) of the arrestees reported they had ever been diagnosed with a mental or psychiatric disorder and 27% reported they had previously stayed at least overnight for mental health treatment at a hospital or other facility.

- Having a mental health diagnosis was significantly related to race. Arrestees identified as White were significantly more likely to report having a diagnosis (43%), compared to Blacks (32%) and Hispanics (25%).

- 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 2.8 (range 1 to 14) and the mean age for the first stay was 25.6 (range 5 to 58).

- Just over half (52%) 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 (91%) of those who had ever been diagnosed also had been prescribed medication for the disorder. However, only 36% said they were currently prescribed the medication and of those, 37% said they were not taking them.

- Individuals who reported having a mental health diagnosis were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana (54%), compared to those who did not have one (38%).

- One in five (21%) arrestees reported they had ever tried to commit suicide. In addition, 30% 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 (40% versus 11% without a diagnosis), as were younger arrestees (28% of those under 25, 24% of those 25 to 39, and 15% of those 40 and older).

- In a new question added in 2019, arrestees were asked if they had ever taken a drug that led to a psychotic episode. Seventeen percent (17%) said they had, with meth being the drug most often mentioned as leading to this occurrence (78%).

NEW QUESTION

Education, employment, and insurance

- Around 1 in 5 (22%) did not have a high school degree or equivalent.

- Thirty-four percent (34%) were employed full- or part-time at the time of their arrest and 66% were not.

- Six percent (6%) reported previously serving in the military. Around 9 in 10 (92%) of these individuals said they were discharged (50% honorably), 4% were active duty, and 4% were in the reserves.

- Twenty-six percent (26%) said they currently did not have health insurance.

Table 3

Arrestee risk in different areas

Criminal involvement	
83%	prior arrests
77%	prior jail bookings
43%	have sold drugs
37%	arrested as a juvenile
Prop 47	
16%	petitioned to have prior offense reduced
43%	would not participate in voluntary programs
Prostitution	
9%	history of prostitution
4%	history of pimping/pandering
Gangs	
20%	history of gang involvement
Mental health	
52%	admitted overnight to a mental health facility under the influence at time
37%	not taking medication for mental health issues as prescribed
21%	previously attempted suicide
Instability	
65%	ever homeless
66%	currently not employed
26%	no health insurance
22%	no high school degree
Foster care	
15%	prior foster care system involvement
Drug treatment	
40%	received drug treatment previously
Children	
60%	have children
34%	prior Child Welfare Services contact

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019
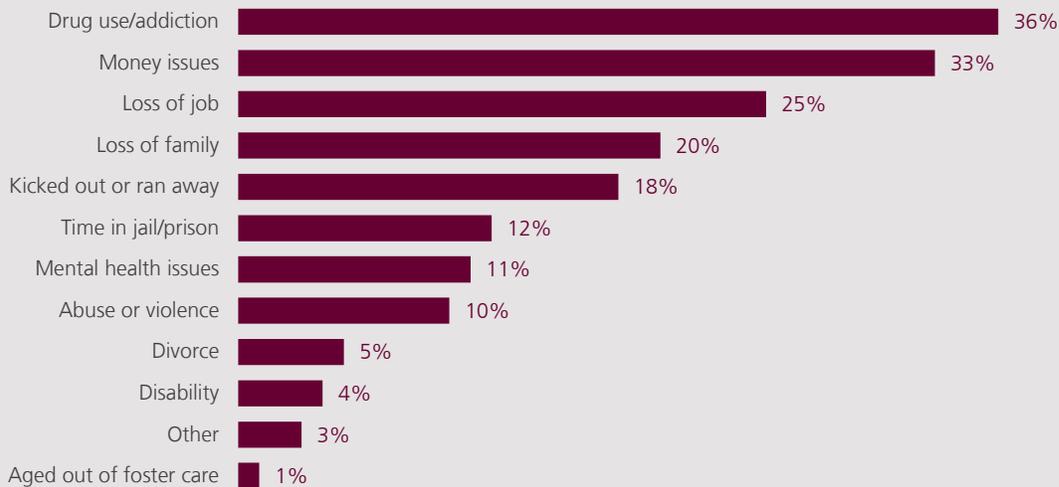
County of origin

- Over half (54%) of those interviewed reported they were not born in San Diego County.
- When asked how long ago they moved to San Diego County, 4% said they moved here in 2019, 23% in the past five years, and 73% five years ago or longer.
- When asked why they moved here, 43% cited family, 18% to be with someone, 16% for work, 10% to get a new beginning, and 8% liked something about San Diego.

Homelessness

- Two-thirds (65%) of those interviewed reported ever being homeless and 39% described themselves as being homeless in the past 30 days.
- More than four in every five (85%) said they had first become homeless in San Diego County, as opposed to somewhere else. Males were more likely to report first becoming homeless here (89%), compared to females (79%).
- As Figure 18 shows, the most common reasons these individuals gave for becoming homeless were drugs, followed by money issues, loss of job, and loss of family.

Figure 18

Primary factors arrestees said led to their first becoming homeless

Factor	Percentage
Drug use/addiction	36%
Money issues	33%
Loss of job	25%
Loss of family	20%
Kicked out or ran away	18%
Time in jail/prison	12%
Mental health issues	11%
Abuse or violence	10%
Divorce	5%
Disability	4%
Other	3%
Aged out of foster care	1%

Total = 298

Note: Percentages based on multiple response.
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

- When asked the first age they became homeless the median age was 28.7 (range 5 to 62) and when asked how many times they had ever been homeless, 38% said once, 19% twice, 10% three times, and 33% four or more times.
- When those who reported any homelessness in the past 12 months were asked in what part of the county they most often stayed, 41% said the Central MSA, 25% East Suburban, 8% South, 8% North County East, 7% North City, 6% North County West, 3% East County, and 4% outside the County.

- Fourteen percent (14%) said they had stayed in a shelter in the past 12 months. When asked why they had *not* stayed in a shelter, 24% said because of restrictions and rules at the shelter, 20% concerns for safety, 14% wait lists, 6% because they have family, friends, or a pet that is not allowed to stay there, and 52% provided an "other" answer (that included personal preference, have someplace else to stay, personal pride, and don't know how to).
- When asked what they thought their housing status would be a year from now (if they had described themselves as primarily homeless in the past 30 days), 65% said they would be in a house, mobile home, or apartment, 24% said they would still be homeless, and 11% said they would have some other type of living situation.

Foster care involvement

- Overall, 15% of the arrestees reported they had been in the foster care system as a child and almost half (54%) of these individuals reported aging out of the system.

Drug treatment needs

- Overall, 40% of the arrestees said they had received drug treatment in the past, but 34% of these individuals said the most recent time was not successful.
- The mean number of prior treatment admissions was 3.5 (range 1 to 35).
- When asked what type of treatment they had most recently completed, 61% said in-patient, 24% out-patient, 10% detox, 3% other, and 2% NA/AA.
- For 55% of those who had received treatment, the last program was court-ordered (as opposed to voluntary). Individuals who reported having a prior arrest (46% versus 11%) were more likely to have received treatment.
- There was no significant difference between court-ordered treatment being successful (66%), compared to voluntary (66%).
- Four-fifths (80%) of the arrestees reported that every time they had sought drug treatment, it had been available.

Dependent children

- Three in five (60%) arrestees reported having children, including 54% of males and 70% of females.
- Around 1 in 5 (21%) reported they currently live with a child, whether or not their own. Females were more likely to report living with a child, compared to males (27% versus 18%).
- Almost half (49%) of female arrestees and 23% of males reported prior Child Welfare System (CWS) contact (34% overall). Almost 1 in 3 (30%) 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, homelessness, drug and mental health treatment needs, employment, and housing challenges, prior foster system involvement, and/or 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

- Thirty-two percent (32%) of males and 46% of females (37% overall) reported they had previously been the victim of a crime they did not report to police.

- When asked to describe what type of crime they were the victim of, the most common responses were assault (35%), some type of larceny/theft (25%), sexual assault (24%), domestic violence (20%), and robbery (9%).

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 when someone misses work due to alcohol or other drug use. Figure 19 shows how addressing underlying addiction can have a cost-benefit for the community overall and Figure 20 shows how common alcohol versus other drug use is in relation to these behaviors.

Younger arrestees were more likely to report ever driving under the influence (44% of those under 25), compared to older arrestees (36% of those 25 to 39 and 25% of those 40 years of age and older).

Figure 19

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

43% rode with driver under influence and **33%** drove under the influence

36% went to work high or drunk and **24%** missed work because of being under the influence

27% have injected drugs, and of those who injected in the last year, **32%** shared their needles and/or works

28% have gone to an emergency room for an alcohol/drug-related issue and **22%** have overdosed

17% had health problems related to their alcohol/drug use

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

Of those who had ever injected drugs, two-thirds (67%) reported they had injected in the last year. Arrestees who injected heroin in the past year were more likely to report sharing their needles and/or works (i.e., equipment) than those who did not report injecting heroin (46% versus 9%). Younger arrestees were also more likely to report sharing, even though they were least likely to report ever injecting. Specifically, 15% of those under the age of 25 reported ever injecting drugs, but 75% of these individuals reported sharing their needles and/or works in the last year. The percentages for older arrestees were 32% and 30% for those 25 to 39 and 26% and 22% for those 40 and older.

Over half (56%) of arrestees who had ever overdosed on heroin or another opiate reported they had been administered naloxone; a medication designed to rapidly reverse opioid overdose at least once. In a series of new questions added in 2019, these individuals answered additional questions about naloxone, including:

NEW QUESTION

- How many times they had been administered it, with 52% getting it once, 17% twice, and 31% three or more times.
- Who administered it, with responses including friends (54%), emergency medical services or EMS (25%), family (21%), healthcare providers (17%), law enforcement (8%), and service providers (8%).
- Whether the person who gave them naloxone talked to them about getting treatment for their addiction, and 1 in 3 (33%) said they had overall. Looking more closely at if this information was conveyed from individuals who were not family or friends, both (100%) of the two who were administered it by law enforcement and all four administered it by a health care provider were offered drug treatment, as was 33% of the six who received it from fire/EMS.
- If they knew where they could get naloxone and two-thirds (67%) said they did.

Overall, 34% of arrestees (41% of males and 22% of females) reported they had ever been arrested for driving under the influence. Fifty-nine percent (59%) reported they had been arrested just once for driving under the influence, 22% twice, and 19% three or more times. When asked what they had consumed when they drove under the influence most recently, 74% said alcohol, 15% drugs, and 11% both alcohol and drugs. When the individuals who had used drugs were asked and answered which type of drug, 54% said meth, 46% marijuana, 10% heroin, 8% powder cocaine, and 8% some other type of drug (e.g., prescription).

In terms of how self-reported alcohol and drug use is potentially related to risky behavior, as Figure 20 shows, arrestees were more likely to report that drug use preceded each of the four outcomes (health problems, DUI, riding with someone under the influence, and participating in sexual acts), compared to alcohol.

Figure 20

Other drug use more common than alcohol use before most risky behaviors in the past 12 months
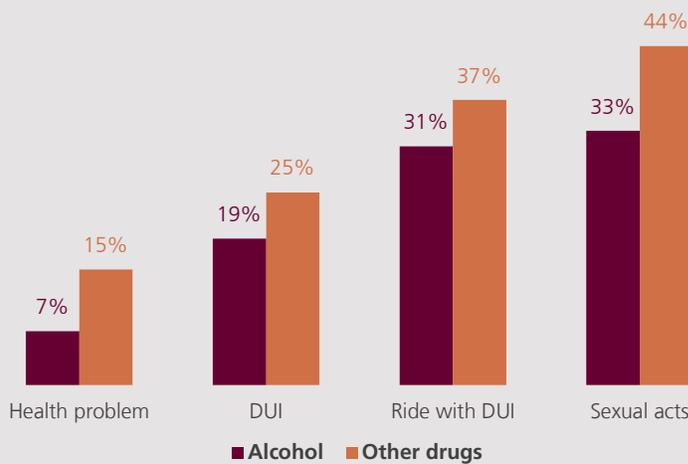
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2019

Takeaway

The risk-taking behaviors that are associated with alcohol and other drug use by the arrestee population have a direct impact on their lives, as well as others 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.