



# CRIMINAL JUSTICE BULLETIN

## 2017 Adult Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region

AUGUST 2018

Research findings from the Criminal Justice Clearinghouse

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## Highlights

### Drug use at 18-year high for adult males

In 2017, 79 percent of adult males tested positive for at least one illicit substance, an increase of 4 percent from 2016 and the highest rate since the study began in 2000. Seventy-three percent (73%) of adult females tested positive, the fourth highest rate since 2000.

### Methamphetamine use up

Despite regional efforts to combat meth use, it remained the drug of choice for adults with justice contact, with 55 percent of males and 58 percent of females positive in 2017 – rates that were unchanged from 2016 and represented 18-year highs.

### Marijuana frequently used and easily available

Marijuana was previously used by almost all adult arrestees (90% self-report), with first use starting around age 14. Two-thirds (66%) said it was “very easy” to obtain. Two-thirds (68%) of those who tested positive for marijuana also tested positive for meth, cocaine/crack, opiates, and/or PCP.

### Prescription drugs also being abused

Just under half (47%) of those interviewed reported ever abusing prescription drugs. While fentanyl was only abused by 9 percent of arrestees knowingly, it was the most commonly abused prescription drug in the past 30 days.

One in four (25%) of those arrestees who reported ever using heroin reported they were hooked on prescription drugs first.

### Mental health and housing issues frequently reported

About one in three (34%) of the adult arrestees reported that they had previously been diagnosed with a mental health issue and 23 percent reported previously attempting suicide.

Seven in ten (70%) reported ever being homeless and finding stable housing was the most common reentry issue reported by those who had ever returned from prison.

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## Background

This CJ Bulletin, [2017 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 2017, 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 2017, 347 male arrestees were interviewed at the Vista and Central Jails and 156 female arrestees at Las Colinas. Of these 503 arrestees, 487 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)

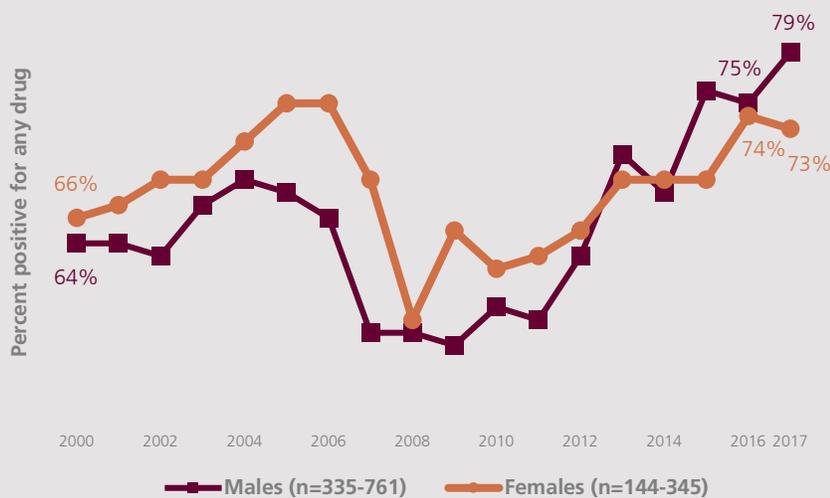
Possible effects of substance use on the community (page 20)

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

In 2017, 79 percent of male arrestees and 73 percent of female arrestees tested positive for an illicit drug, which includes marijuana<sup>1</sup>, meth, cocaine, opiates, and PCP. The 2017 male positive rate of 79 percent was the highest since 2000 and an increase of 4 percent from 2016. The 2017 female positive rate of 73 percent was fourth highest, following 75 percent in both 2005 and 2006 and 74 percent in 2016 (Figure 1).

Figure 1

### Over three-quarters of arrestees tested positive for drugs in 2017



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, 2017

## What were the characteristics of the arrestees interviewed?

Of the 487 arrestees with completed interviews, 335 (69%) were male and 152 (31%) were female. Forty-five percent (45%) were White, 33 percent Hispanic, 16 percent Black, and 5 percent "other". Three percent of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. Nineteen percent (19%) were under the age of 25, 43 percent between 25 and 39, and 39 percent 40 and older. The mean age was 37.4 (range 18 to 89). Three-fifths (60%) were single, 25 percent divorced, separated, or widowed, and 15 percent married.

Almost one-third (31%) were booked for an "other" offense, 29 percent for a drug offense, 21 percent for a violent offense, and 19 percent for a property offense. Ten percent of males and two percent 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-one percent (31%) reported living in the Central Major Statistical Area of the County, 21 percent in East Suburban, 13 percent in South Suburban, 10 percent in North City, 10 percent in North County East, 7 percent in North County West, 5 percent out of the County, and 2 percent in East County.

<sup>1</sup> The drug test panel in 2016 and 2017 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 polydrug<sup>2</sup> users?

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of male and 30 percent of female arrestees tested positive for more than one drug in 2017 (Figure 2). Of those who tested positive for multiple substances, 82 percent tested positive for two and 18 percent tested positive for three or more. Of those who tested positive for multiple substances, 90 percent were positive for meth, 84 percent marijuana, 31 percent opiates, and 11 percent cocaine.

Figure 2

### More than one in three arrestees tested positive for more than one drug in 2017



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

### How many arrestees tested positive for just marijuana?

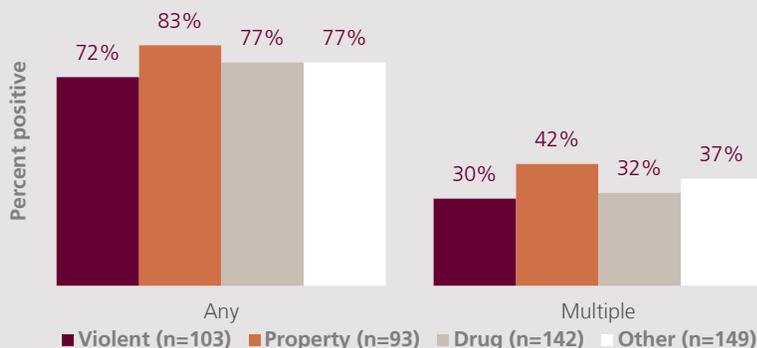
About one in three (32%) of the adult arrestees who tested positive for marijuana did not test positive for anything else, but 68 percent did – either meth, opiates, crack/cocaine, PCP, or some combination.

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

As Figure 3 shows, while there was some variation across the highest booking charge in positive drug test rates, the majority (around three-quarters or more) tested positive for at least one drug and at least one-third tested positive for multiple. The differences were not statistically significant.

Figure 3

### Majority of arrestees test positive for drugs regardless of highest charge



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

<sup>2</sup> 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 up 2 percent, from 44 percent in 2016 to 46 percent in 2017. This rate represented the third highest since 2000 (following 52% in 2015 and 48% in 2013). For female arrestees, the percent positive for marijuana stayed the same as it was in 2016 (36%), which was an 18-year high (Figure 4).

Arrestees under the age of 25 were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana (55%), compared to those between 25 and 39 (45%) and 40 years of age and older (35%).

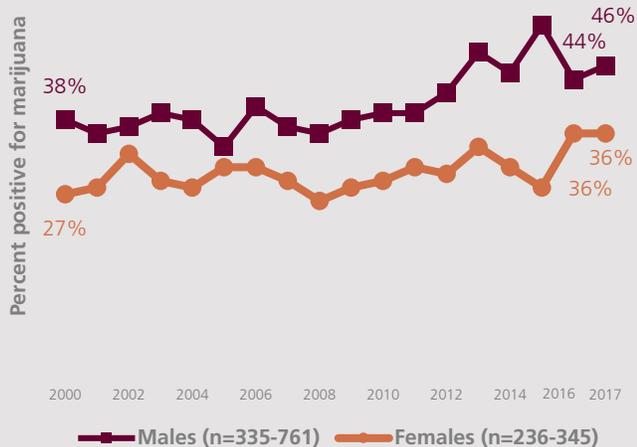
Around one in four (24%) arrestees reported they had ever obtained a medical marijuana card; 24 percent also reported they had a card to allow them to grow it. Of those who did not have a card, 43 percent had thought about getting one.

For **meth**, the percent of males that tested positive stayed the same as it was in 2016 at 55 percent – an 18-year high. The female rate of 58 percent was also the same as the previous year and also the highest rate since 2000 (Figure 5).

While there was no difference in recent meth use by the arrestee’s race in 2017, which historically there has been (with Blacks less likely to test positive), there was by age, with arrestees 25 and older more likely to test positive (59%), compared to those under 25 (41%).

Figure 4

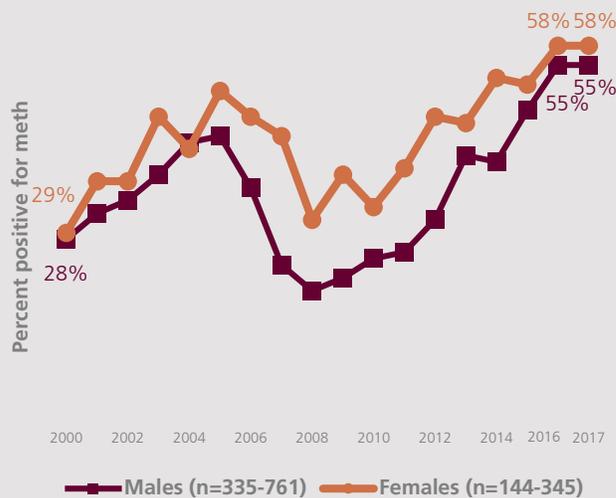
### Marijuana second most common drug recently used by adult arrestees



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

Figure 5

### Meth positive rates at all-time high for males and females



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

## Takeaway

Regardless of why someone is booked into jail, substance use is an issue for many arrestees, with three-fourths testing 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. Two in three arrestees positive for marijuana were also positive for another drug.

The percent of arrestees positive for **cocaine** has dropped considerably since 2000, with 7 percent of males and 4 percent of females positive in 2017. However, the percent of males that were positive was up slightly over the past year (5% in 2016 to 7% in 2017) (Figure 6).

There also were significant ethnic differences in cocaine use among the arrestees. In terms of ethnicity, 14 percent of Black arrestees were positive, compared to 6 percent of Hispanic and 4 percent of White arrestees.

Figure 6  
Cocaine positive rates down considerably since 2000



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

### Takeaway

In 2017, meth remained the drug of choice for San Diego County arrestees, with more than half of adult males and females positive for the drug. Marijuana, cocaine, and opiate use was also up slightly for male arrestees.

Figure 7  
Around one in ten arrestees positive for opiates in 2017



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

For **opiates**<sup>3</sup>, the percent of males that were positive increased to 13 percent in 2017, from 9 percent in 2016. For females, the rate dropped from 15 percent in 2016 to 11 percent in 2017 (Figure 7). Among the arrestees, those that identified as White were most likely to test positive for opiates (18%), compared to 10 percent of Hispanics and 4 percent of Blacks.

<sup>3</sup> 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** is the drug most commonly tried by arrestees (90%) and was also tried at the earliest age (14.4) – about five years earlier than any other drug. Those who used it in the past 30 days used it an average of 17.2 days (Table 1).

More than two-thirds (69%) of the arrestees reported trying **meth** and it was also reported by the highest percent (81%) as having been used in the last year. Meth users reported using an average of 17.8 days out of the past 30.

**Cocaine** was tried by almost three in five arrestees and at the youngest average age (19.9), following marijuana. Only around one-third (31%) reported using cocaine in the past year and compared to other drugs, it was used with the least frequency in the past month (3.5 days on average).

**Heroin** was tried by about one-third (36%) of arrestees, was used by over half (53%) of those in the past year and was used more frequently in the past month than any other drug (18.1 days).

**Crack** was tried by the smallest percentage of arrestees (34%) and was least likely to be used in the last year (20%), although those who used it reported doing so frequently (12.9 days per month, on average).

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?
<b>90%</b> marijuana	<b>14.4</b> marijuana	<b>72%</b> marijuana	<b>17.2</b> marijuana
<b>69%</b> meth	<b>22.3</b> meth	<b>81%</b> meth	<b>17.8</b> meth
<b>59%</b> cocaine	<b>19.9</b> cocaine	<b>31%</b> cocaine	<b>3.5</b> cocaine
<b>36%</b> heroin	<b>25.8</b> heroin	<b>53%</b> heroin	<b>18.1</b> heroin
<b>34%</b> crack	<b>22.0</b> crack	<b>20%</b> crack	<b>12.9</b> crack

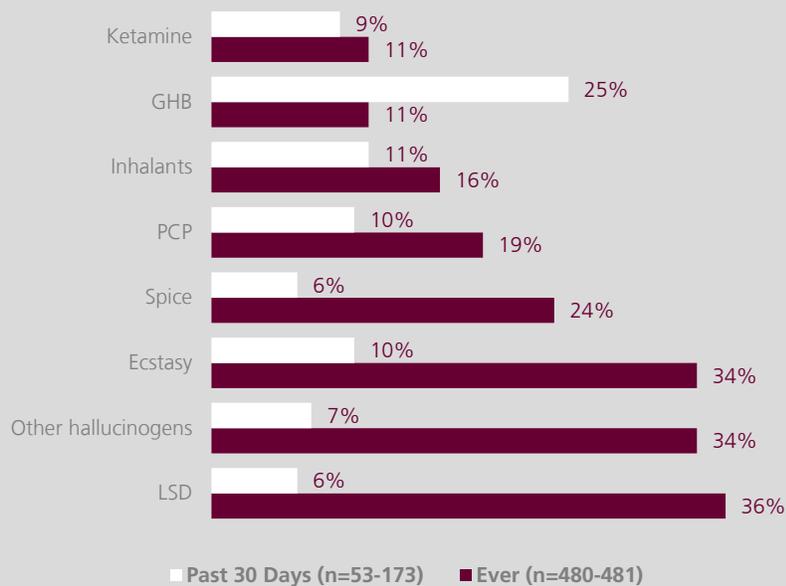
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

In addition to these five street drugs, around two-thirds (65%) of the arrestees reported having ever tried other illicit substances, including LSD (36%), other hallucinogens (34%), ecstasy (34%), spice (24%), PCP (19%), inhalants (16%), GHB (11%), and ketamine (11%) (Figure 8).

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 (25%), while the other drugs were used by 11 percent or fewer 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, 63 percent of those who ever used spice said they use it as an alternative to marijuana and 22 percent said they use it to avoid a positive drug test. Arrestees younger than 25 were significantly more likely to have ever tried spice (37%, versus 25% of those 25 to 39 and 16% of those 40 and older), and to also have used it as an alternative to marijuana and to avoid testing positive on a 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, 2017

### 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, LSD, 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 (66%) among the five drugs in 2017.
- Around three in four (78%) said they obtained marijuana in the Major Statistical Area (MSA) 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 2017 – making it the second most available drug in the region according to arrestees.
- Seventy-three percent (73%) of arrestees who obtained meth got it in the same MSA in which they lived.
- Those who obtained cocaine (27%) and heroin (28%) were least likely to report it was “very easy” to obtain.
- Of those who obtained drugs outside the MSA in which they lived, marijuana, meth, and heroin users were most likely to report traveling to the Central MSA, with the second most common location traveled to being the East Suburban MSA for marijuana and heroin and South Suburban for meth (not shown).
- Individuals who obtained cocaine were more likely to report they got it at a residence, while those who obtained crack were more likely to say they got it outside.

Table 2

### Illicit drug availability varies by type

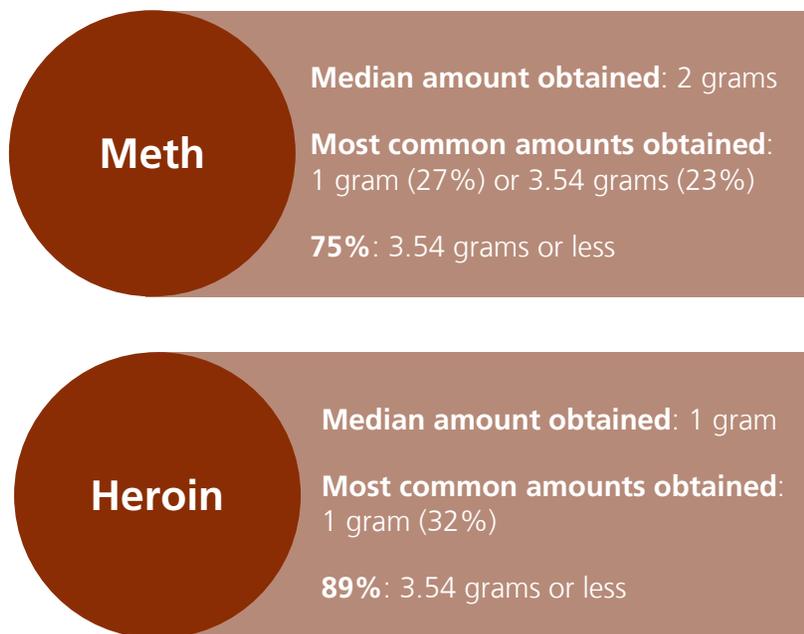
	Marijuana	Meth	Heroin	Cocaine	Crack
Very easy to obtain	66%	52%	28%	27%	48%
Got in same MSA where live	78%	73%	66%	68%	57%
Got with cash	52%	70%	72%	62%	71%
Got with non-cash ways	70%	56%	46%	56%	43%
Got at a residence	31%	41%	42%	55%	29%
Got at a public building	12%	6%	4%	8%	5%
Got outside	37%	52%	52%	37%	62%

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

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 average was two in 2017, 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?



Thirteen percent (13%) of arrestees reported traveling to Mexico for drugs. When these 61 arrestees described what they obtained, 41 percent said meth, 30 percent marijuana, 25 percent heroin, 15 percent prescription drugs, 10 percent cocaine, 3 percent steroids, 2 percent LSD, and 2 percent crack.

In addition, 15 percent reported they had ever been approached to transport, smuggle, conceal, or participate in bringing drugs over the border. Fifty-two percent (52%) of those who said they were approached also reported they had crossed the border to obtain drugs, versus 6 percent of those who said they had not been approached.

**Takeaway**

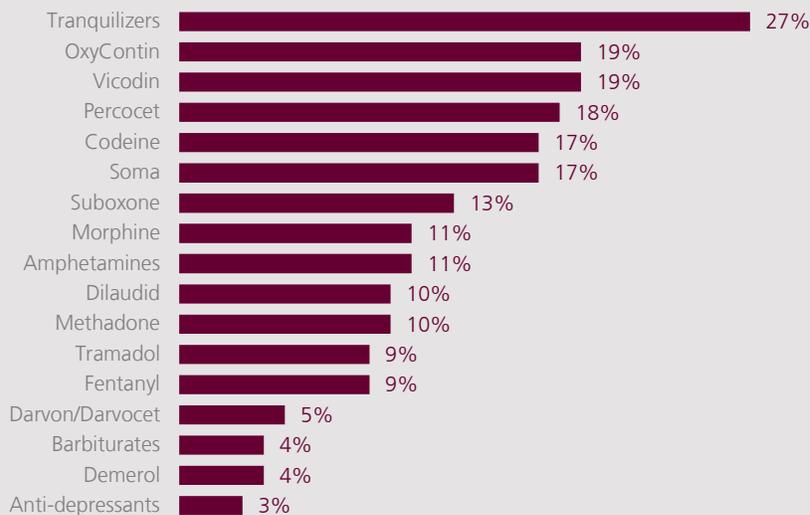
Consistent with use data, arrestees reported marijuana was the easiest drug to obtain in the region in 2017, followed by meth. Cocaine and heroin were less available. Arrestees were willing to travel around the region to obtain drugs, and just over one in ten crossed the border to Mexico to obtain them. A number of these individuals participated in various risky or illegal activities to obtain drugs without paying cash for them.

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

In 2017, 47 percent of arrestees reported they had ever abused prescription drugs, with the most commonly abused including tranquilizers (i.e., benzodiazepines), OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet, codeine, and Soma (Figure 10).

Figure 10

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



TOTAL = 477-482

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

When those who had ever abused a prescription drug were asked if they had abused it in the past 30 days, the top four drugs currently being abused included fentanyl (24%), tranquilizers (18%), Percocet (14%), and Soma (14%).

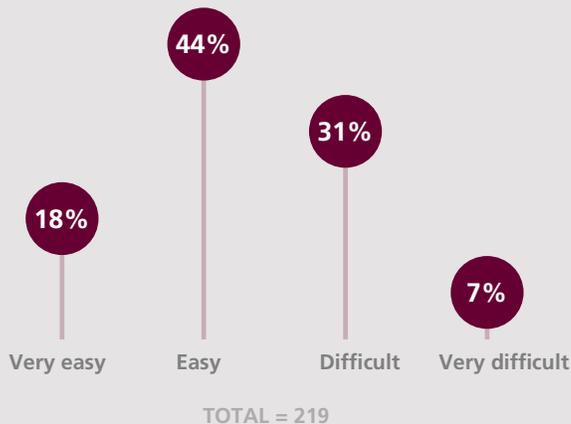
Additional analyses revealed that White arrestees were significantly more likely to report abusing prescription drugs (55%), compared to arrestees of other ethnic groups (38% Black and 42% Hispanic). Additionally, arrestees who abused prescription drugs were significantly more likely to test positive for meth (67% versus 46%) and marijuana (49% versus 37%).

Twenty-five percent (25%) of heroin users said they were hooked on prescription opiates before they began using the street drug and of these, 68 percent said they began to use heroin as a substitute for prescription opiates. When asked which opiate they were addicted to, 56 percent said OxyContin, 56 percent Vicodin, 51 percent Percocet, 28 percent Dilaudid, 21 percent methadone, 14 percent morphine, 14 percent fentanyl, and 7 percent Demerol. When asked why they switched from prescription drugs to heroin, the most common answers included that heroin was cheaper (63%) and it was easier to get (47%).

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**

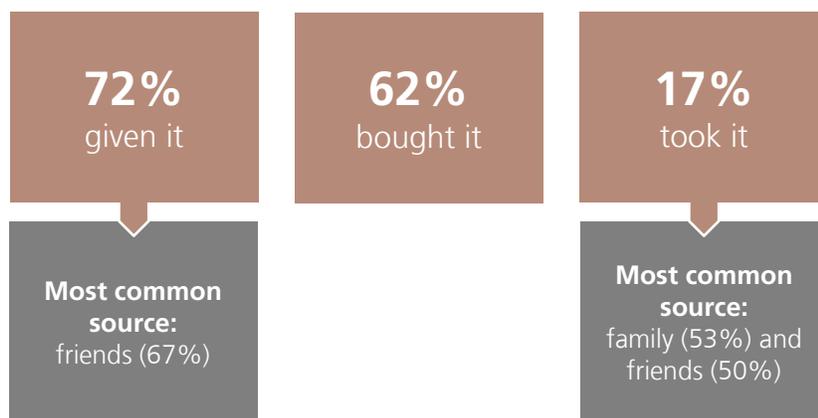


SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

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 12). In addition, 10 percent reported that they had “doctor shopped,” 69 percent of whom were successful in doing so.

Figure 12

**Most common ways to get prescription drugs illegally**



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

**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 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), with males significantly more likely to do so than females (84% versus 68%) and at an earlier age (16.5 versus 18.0). 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). Additional analyses revealed that:

- White arrestees were significantly more likely to report ever binge drinking (85%), compared to Hispanic (78%) and Black (68%) arrestees.
- Younger arrestees (under 25) were significantly less likely to report binge drinking (68%), compared to those 25 to 39 (82%) and 40 and older (80%).
- Individuals arrested for a property offense were less likely to report ever binge drinking (66%) and to binge drinking in the past 30 days (23%), compared to those arrested for another type of most serious offense.
- Individuals who reported binge drinking in the past 30 days were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana (49% versus 38%) and cocaine (11% versus 3%).

### 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	
<b>84%</b> ever binge drank*		<b>68%</b> ever binge drank*	
<b>16.5</b> average age first binge	<b>6.0</b> average number of drinks in past 24 hours	<b>18.0</b> average age first binge*	<b>5.9</b> average number of drinks in past 24 hours
<b>46%</b> binge drank past 30 days*	<b>39%</b> self-report binge drinking in the past 24 hours	<b>30%</b> binge drank past 30 days*	<b>34%</b> self-report binge drinking in the past 24 hours

Males (n=122-335) Females (n=48-152)

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

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

### Prior arrests

- Around four in every five arrestees (82%) reported having a **previous arrest**, with a median number of 7.0 prior arrests.
- On average, males were 21.4 years old at their **first arrest** as an adult, compared to 25.7 for females. When asked what their first arrest as an adult was for, 28 percent said a property crime, 28 percent a drug-related crime, 26 percent some other type of offense, 21 percent a violent crime, and 4 percent a weapons offense.
- Forty-one percent (41%) reported being **arrested as a juvenile**, including 48 percent of males and 25 percent of females. When asked what their first arrest as a juvenile was for, 50 percent said a property crime, 17 percent a violent crime, 17 percent a drug-related crime, 14 percent a status offense, 4 percent some other type of offense, and 1 percent a weapons offense.

### Prior incarcerations

- Just over three-quarters (77%) reported serving **time in jail** (81% of males and 69% of females) and 30 percent **in prison** (36% of males and 15% of females).
- Fourteen percent (14%) of those with a previous arrest said they had ever been **flash incarcerated**, which is a sanction for PRCS offenders.

### Under community supervision

- Of those who had served time in prison, 82 percent said they had also been on **parole** – 19 percent who still were.
- Just over half (52%) of those who had ever been in prison reported receiving services (42% while in prison and 33% in the community). When asked their biggest need upon **reentry** after prison, the most common answers included housing (31%), employment (24%), and help with substance abuse (22%).
- Four in five (80%) of those with a prior arrest reported they had previously been on **probation**, 55 percent of whom said they were currently on probation.

### Involvement in drug distribution

- Almost half (47%) of those interviewed reported being involved in **selling drugs** and of these, 57 percent said they had done so in the past year. Of those convicted of a felony, 64 percent reported ever being involved in selling drugs.

### Crime to support drug use

- Almost two in five (39%) of 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 (54%).
- 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 of while committing the crime, the most common was meth (71%), followed by heroin (32%), and marijuana (17%).

### Weapons

- Almost one in three (32%) arrestees reported ever **carrying a gun**, with males significantly more likely to do so than females (37% versus 21%).
- When asked **how easy it was to obtain the gun**, 44 percent said “very easy”, 32 percent “easy”, 19 percent “difficult”, and 5 percent “very difficult”.
- When asked **how they obtained it**, 40 percent said they bought it off the street, 25 percent from a friend, 25 percent from a store or gun shop, 12 percent some other way (e.g., stole it, found it), and 11 percent from a family member.

## Proposition 47

- In 2014, California voters passed Proposition 47 (Prop 47) which reduced certain property and drug-related felonies to misdemeanors.
- In 2017, 54 percent of the arrestees said they **had heard of Prop 47**, including 70 percent of those ever convicted of a felony and 36 percent of those who had not had a prior felony conviction.
- Of those who had ever heard of it, 26 percent said that they or their attorney had petitioned to have a **prior offense reduced**.
- Of these 64 individuals (13% of the 487 in this study), 34 percent were currently **in custody for** a most serious crime that was a drug-related offense, 25 percent for an “other” offense, 25 percent for a property offense, and 16 percent 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), 41 percent said they would not.

## Exchanging sex/pimping/pandering

- Fifteen percent (15%) of those interviewed said they had ever **exchanged sex** for money, drugs, or other things.
- When asked the **first age** they exchanged sex for something else, the mean was 23.8 years (range 12 to 57).
- Thirty-four percent (34%) of those who reported ever exchanging sex for something said they had done so in the **last 30 days**.
- Eight percent reported being involved in **pimping or pandering activities**. This included 23 males (16 who said they had exchanged sex themselves and 7 who had not) and 13 females (7 who had exchanged sex themselves and 6 who had not).

## Gang involvement

- Twenty-six percent (26%) of arrestees reported some type of **gang involvement**.
- Self-reported gang involvement **varied by ethnicity** (16% of White arrestees compared to 40% of Black and 34% of Hispanic arrestees), as well as **age** (27% of those under 25, 31% of those 25 to 39 and 20% of those 40 and older).
- When asked how old they were when they **started hanging out** with the gang, the mean age was 14.4 years (range 1 to 36).
- Of the 127 adult arrestees who reported any type of gang involvement, 61 percent said they had this contact within the past five years. When asked their **current status** with the gang, 40 percent said they currently hang out and were never a member, 21 percent were currently a member, 19 percent used to hang out but don't anymore, 14 percent used to be a member but aren't now, and 6 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** (59% versus 34%), to have been involved in **drug distribution** (74% versus 37%), and to have **carried a gun** previously (50% versus 25%).
- Individuals who reported a gang affiliation were significantly more likely to test positive for **marijuana** (53% versus 39%), **meth** (71% versus 50%), and **multiple drugs** (50% versus 30%).

## Mental health issues

- Thirty-four percent (34%) 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.
- Having a mental health diagnosis was significantly related to **gender, age, and race**. Female arrestees were significantly more likely to report having a diagnosis (43%), compared to males (30%), as well as those who were older (43% of those 40 and over, versus 17% of those under 25 and 34% of those 25 to 39) and who identified as White (43%) or Black (40%) (compared to Hispanic, 22%).
- 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 3.5 days (range 1 to 65) and the **mean age for the first stay** was 27.1 (range 11 to 71).
- Fifty-eight percent (58%) 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 45 percent said they were currently prescribed the medication and of those, 41 percent said they were not taking them.
- Almost one-quarter (23%) of arrestees reported they had ever tried to commit **suicide**. In addition, 34 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 (46% versus 11% without a diagnosis).

## Education, employment, and insurance

- One in five (20%) did not have a **high school degree** or equivalent.
- Thirty-six percent (36%) were **employed full- or part-time** and 64 percent were not.
- Twenty-two percent (22%) reported they had **lost their job** in the past year.
- Nine percent (9%) reported previously serving in the **military**. Ninety-one percent (91%) of these individuals said they were discharged (75% honorably), 4 percent were active duty, and 4 percent were in the reserves.
- Twenty-eight percent (28%) said they currently did not have **health insurance**.

Table 3

### Arrestee risk in different areas

Criminal involvement	
82%	prior arrests
77%	prior jail bookings
47%	have sold drugs
41%	arrested as a juvenile
Prop 47	
26%	petitioned to have prior offense reduced
41%	would not participate in voluntary programs
Prostitution	
15%	history of prostitution
8%	history of pimping/pandering
Gangs	
26%	history of gang involvement
Mental health	
58%	admitted overnight to mental health facility under the influence at time
41%	not taking medication for mental health issues as prescribed
23%	previously attempted suicide
Instability	
70%	ever homeless
64%	currently not employed
28%	no health insurance
20%	no high school degree
Foster care	
14%	prior foster care system involvement
Drug treatment	
36%	received drug treatment previously
Children	
59%	have children
30%	prior Child Welfare System contact

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

## Homelessness and county of origin

- Seventy percent (70%) reported ever being **homeless** and 36 percent described themselves as being homeless in the past 30 days.
- Over half (56%) of those interviewed reported they were not born in San Diego County.
- When asked how long ago they moved to San Diego County, 8 percent said they moved here in 2017, 18 percent in the past five years, and 74 percent five years ago or longer.
- When asked why they moved here, 30 percent cited family, 22 percent to be with someone, 17 percent work, 17 percent something they liked about San Diego, and 15 percent a new beginning.

## Foster care involvement

- Overall, 14 percent of the arrestees reported they had been in the **foster care system** as a child and over two-fifths (44%) of these individuals reported aging out of the system.

## Drug treatment needs

- Overall, 36 percent of the arrestees said they had **received drug treatment** in the past, but 31 percent of these individuals said the most recent time was not successful.
- The mean number of prior treatment admissions was 2.9 (range 1 to 21).
- Older arrestees were more likely to report having received treatment, compared to younger ones (23% of those under 25, 38% of those 25 to 39, and 40% of those 40 years of age and older). Older individuals were also more likely to report completing their most recent treatment program successfully (81%, versus 62% and 59%, respectively).
- For 60 percent of those who had received treatment, the last program was **court-ordered** (as opposed to voluntary). Individuals who reported having a prior arrest (42% versus 9%) were more likely to have received treatment.
- There was no significant difference between court-ordered treatment being successful (70%), **compared to voluntary** (67%).
- Four in five (79%) of the arrestees reported that every time they had sought drug treatment, it **had been available**.

## Dependent children

- Fifty-nine percent (59%) of arrestees reported **having children**, including 55 percent of males and 66 percent of females.
- Twenty-one percent (21%) reported they currently **live with a child**, whether or not it was their own.
- Forty-four percent (44%) of female arrestees and 23 percent of males reported prior **Child Welfare System contact** (30% overall). Nineteen percent (19%) 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/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

- About one in three (36%) arrestees 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 sexual assault (31%), assault (31%), robbery (22%), domestic violence (12%), and some type of larceny/theft (10%).

## 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 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, 2017

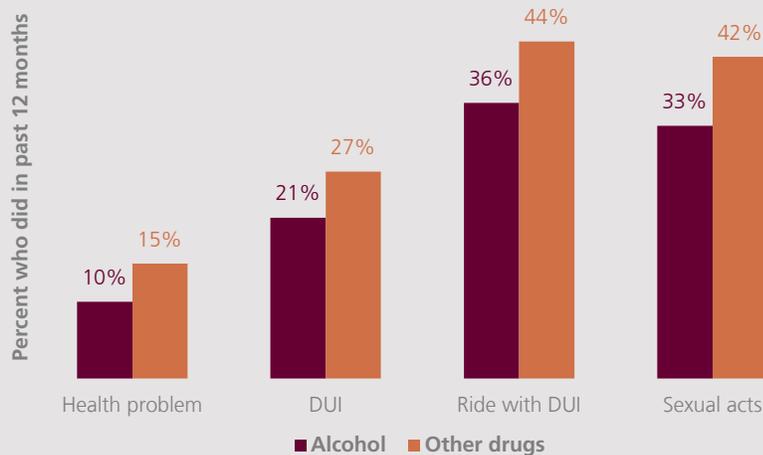
Of those who had ever injected drugs, over two-thirds (69%) reported they had injected in the last year. Of those who had ever overdosed, 49 percent said they had been administered naloxone to help reverse the effect of the opiate and 29 percent said they would know how to obtain it if they needed it in the future.

Overall, 36 percent of arrestees (39% of males and 29% 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 (49%), compared to those who were under 25 (11%) or between 25 and 39 (35%). Fifty-three percent (53%) reported they had been arrested just once for driving under the influence, and 48 percent more than once, with a range of one to ten previous arrests. When asked what they had consumed when they drove under the influence most recently, 66 percent said alcohol, 11 percent drugs, and 24 percent both alcohol and drugs. When the 57 individuals who had used drugs were asked and answered which type of drug, 53 percent said meth, 32 percent marijuana, 21 percent some other type of drug (e.g., prescription), 11 percent heroin, 5 percent powder cocaine, and 2 percent crack.

In terms of how self-reported alcohol and drug use is potentially related to risky behavior, as Figure 15 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 15

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



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2017

**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.