



SANDAG

2022 Adult Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region

June 2023

Research findings from the Criminal Justice
Clearinghouse

CJ
Bulletin

Highlights

Three in four arrestees in the San Diego region tested positive for at least one substance

In 2022, 77% of adult males and 75% of adult females tested positive for at least one substance (i.e., marijuana, cocaine/crack, methamphetamine, PCP, or opiates).

Methamphetamine and marijuana were most common to have been used recently

Of arrestees who reported trying methamphetamine, about seven in ten (72%) reported use in the last 12 months and reported an average of 19.9 days of use in the past 30 days. Similar patterns were seen in marijuana users, with 70% using it in the last 12 months with a reported average of 15.5 days of use in the past 30 days.

Fentanyl's availability is steadily increasing in the San Diego region

Almost one in four (23%) interviewed arrestees reported ever intentionally and illegally (i.e., not prescribed) using fentanyl, and of those, 62% reported using it at least once in the 30 days prior to the interview. Additionally, 35% of arrestees reported they believed a drug they had used contained fentanyl, even though they were not told it did, because of their reaction to the substance.

Two-thirds of arrestees struggle with housing stability

Just under two-thirds of arrestees (65%) reported ever being homeless, with a majority (72%) saying they first became homeless in San Diego County. In a new question added in 2022, almost one-third (31%) with a prior booking reported spending the first night after their most recent release in the streets.

Mental health and substance abuse remain co-occurring issues in the arrestee population

Two in five (40%) of interviewed arrestees self-reported a mental health diagnosis or psychiatric disorder. One-third (33%) of those with a diagnosis reported ever staying overnight for treatment, of which 45% reported being intoxicated or under the influence at the time of admission. These statistics emphasize the importance of addressing co-occurring issues.

Background

This CJ Bulletin, 2022 Adult Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region, is one publication in a series that highlights 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 2022, this data collection effort was generously supported by the San Diego-Imperial High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA); 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, they are asked a series of questions related to their drug use history and provide a urine sample for drug testing. In 2022, 208 male arrestees were interviewed at the Vista and Central Jails and 97 female arrestees at Las Colinas. Of these 305 arrestees, 300 (98%) completed the interview and provided a valid urine sample for analysis.

What information is collected through these interviews?

Positive rates for any drugs (page 4)

Positive rates for multiple drugs (page 5)

Positive rates for marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine, and opiates over time (page 6)

Self-reported initiation patterns of drug use (page 8)

Drug market dynamics (page 10)

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Binge drinking (page 18)

Tobacco and vaping use (page 19)

Risk factors to recidivate (page 20)

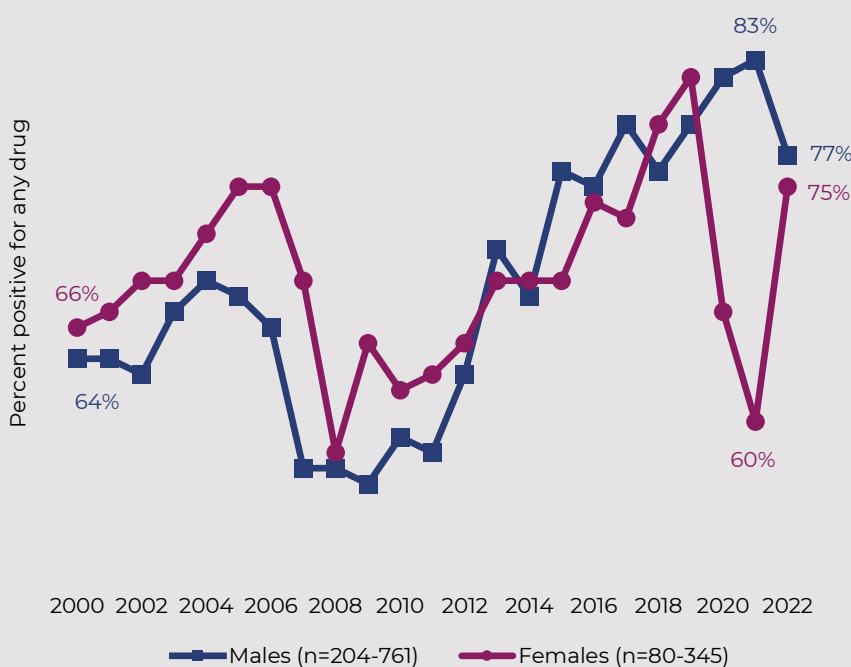
Possible effects of substance use on the community (page 25)

How has testing positive for any drug¹ changed over time for male and female arrestee?

In 2022, 77% of male arrestees and 75% of female arrestees tested positive for an illicit drug, which includes marijuana,² methamphetamine (meth), cocaine, opiates, and PCP (Figure 1). The 2022 male positive rate is a drop from the 22-year high (83% in 2021), beginning the first decreasing trend since 2018. The 2022 female positive rate of 75% is a sharp increase from last year, when it was the second lowest since 2008 (when it was 58%). While the rates of males and females testing positive for any drug show a noticeable inverse relationship, both rates are returning to normalcy following the influxes that were caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1

Similar percentage of adult males and females positive for a drug in 2022



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

What were the characteristics of the arrestees interviewed?

Of the 300 arrestees with completed interviews and urine samples, 204 (68%) were male and 96 (32%) were female. Forty-six percent (46%) identified as Hispanic/Latino(a), 37% White, 12% Black/African American, and 4% "other." Three percent (3%) of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. Ten percent (10%) of those interviewed were under the age of 25, 56% between 25 and 39, and 34% 40 and older. The mean age was 36.8 (range 18 to 72). Three-fifths (60%) were single; 19% divorced, separated, or widowed; and 21% married.

Over two-fifths (42%) were booked for a violent offense as the most serious charge, 21% for a property offense, 19% for an "other" offense (any offense that falls outside of the main three categorizations), and 18% for a drug offense. Twenty-nine percent (29%) reported living in the Central Major Statistical Area of the County, 18% in East Suburban, 13% in North County East, 11% in South Suburban, 9% in North City and in North County West, 7% out of the County, and 4% in East County.

¹ Aside from 2013 and 2014 when PCP was replaced with alcohol on the drug test panel, the percent positive has been based on marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine/crack, opiates, and PCP.

² 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 while 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 polydrug³ users?

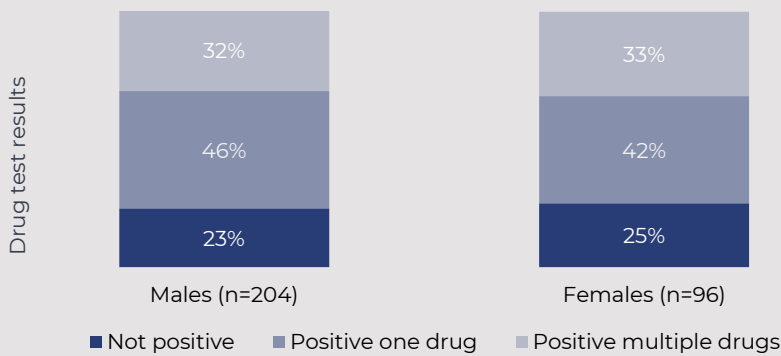
Around 1 in 3 arrestees (32% of males and 33% of females) tested positive for multiple drugs in 2022, (Figure 2). Of those positive for multiple drugs, 74% tested positive for two, 22% for three, and 4% for four drugs. Of those who tested positive for multiple substances, 97% were positive for meth, 95% marijuana, 21% opiates, 11% cocaine/crack, and 6% PCP.

How many arrestees tested positive for just marijuana?

Forty-two percent (42%) of the adult arrestees who tested positive for marijuana in 2022 did not test positive for anything else, but 58% did – either for meth, opiates, crack/cocaine, or some other combination.

Figure 2

Females and males test positive for multiple drugs at similar rate



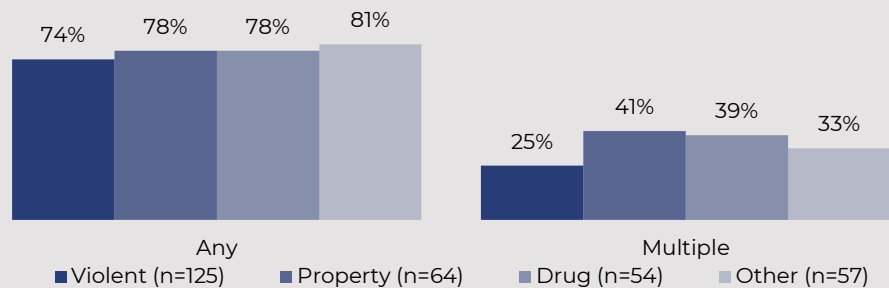
NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

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

As seen in Figure 3, regardless of offense type over seven in ten (70%) arrested individuals tested positive for any drug in 2022 and over one-fourth (25%) tested positive for multiple. While any differences were not significant and due to chance, it is notable that individuals with a violent offense as their highest charge were least likely to test positive for any and multiple drugs.

Figure 3

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



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

³ 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** decreased to 53% in 2022, from 60% in 2021 (Figure 4). Contrary to previous years, females' positive rate was not much lower rate than males, as the percent of female arrestees positive for marijuana represented a new 23-year high at 52%. While there were no significant differences in the percent positive for marijuana by gender, there were significant differences by age with arrestees under 25 more likely to test positive (77%) than arrestees between 25 and 39 (52%), and 40 and older (46%). There were also significant differences by race/ethnicity, with 62% of Black/African American individuals testing positive, compared to 58% of Hispanic/Latino(a) individuals and 44% of White individuals.

For **meth**, the percent of males that tested positive in 2022 decreased for the first time since 2014, to 52% (Figure 5). In comparison, the female rate of 55% represented a sharp increase compared to the 2021 rate of 44%. Similar to marijuana, meth use varied significantly by an arrestee's age. The trend in meth use by age was opposite of the trend seen in marijuana use as older arrestees (65% of those of those 40 and older and 49% of those between 25 and 39) were more likely to test positive for meth than those under the age of 25 (37%). Meth use did not vary significantly by an individual's race/ethnicity.

Figure 4

Marijuana positive rate at an all-time high for females, but down for males

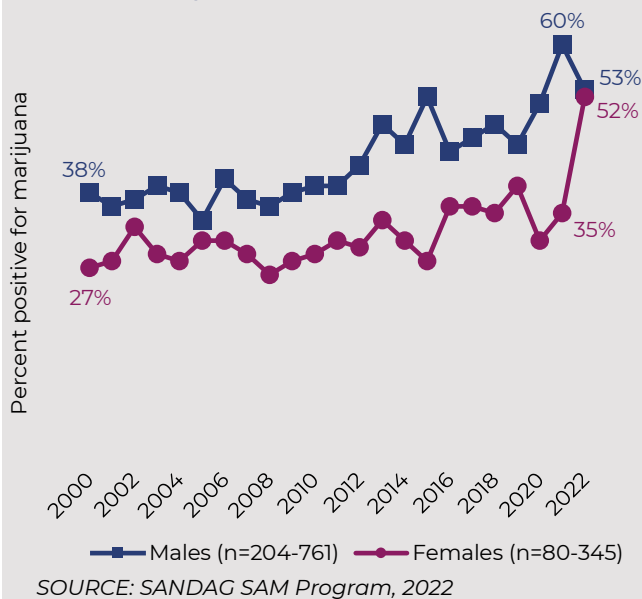
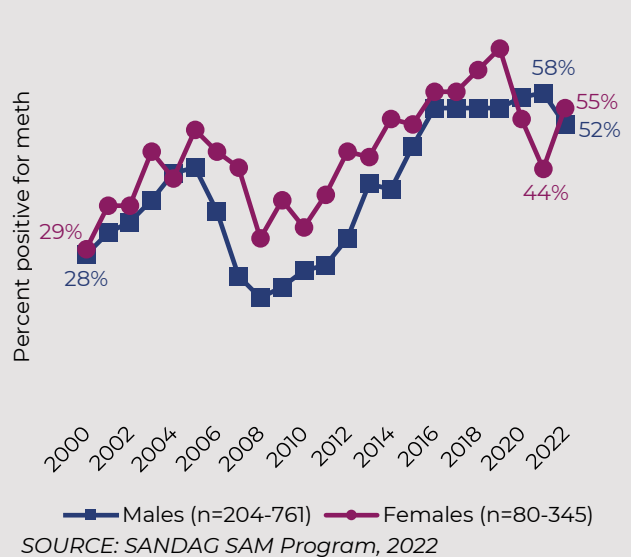


Figure 5

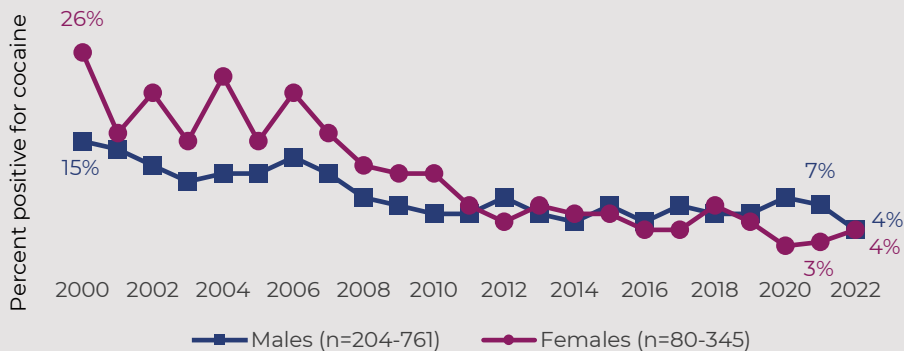
Meth positive rates for males down for the first time in almost a decade, but female rates increased



The percent of arrestees positive for **cocaine** in 2022 decreased for males (from 7% to 4%) but increased slightly for females (3% to 4%) (Figure 6). There were no significant differences in recent cocaine use by an individual's gender, age, or ethnicity/race.

Figure 6

Cocaine positive rates in 2022 the same for both male and female arrestees

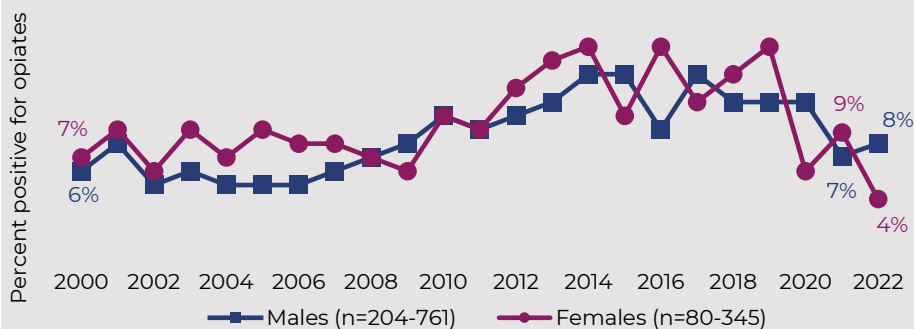


SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

For **opiates**,⁴ the percent of males that were positive slightly increased to 8% in 2022 (from 7% in 2021), but greatly decreased for females (to 4%, from 9% in 2021) (Figure 7). While there were no significant differences in the percent positive for opiates by gender or age, there were significant differences by ethnicity/race in 2022, with Hispanic/Latino(a) arrestees having a higher positive rate (12%) than White (4%) and Black/African American (0%) arrestees.

Figure 7

Female arrestees had a decline in positive opiate rates, but males increased in 2022



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

In addition, 2% of adult males and females tested positive for **PCP** in 2022 (not shown).

Takeaway

Regardless of why someone is booked into jail, substance use is an issue for many arrestees, with the majority testing positive for at least one drug. Among polydrug users, meth and marijuana were used more than any other drug combination. Compared to previous years, the positive rates for meth and marijuana increased for female arrestees, but decreased for male arrestees, whose rate is returning to where it was pre-pandemic. It is notable that although the male and female positive rate have an inverse trend to one another, both rates are nearing the same proportion. A similar pattern was seen in both cocaine and PCP except male and female rates were the same proportion (4% and 2%, respectively), unlike opiates where male arrestees had a higher positive rate than females.

⁴ A positive opiate drug test could indicate use of opiates other than heroin, including morphine, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, and codeine.

How do characteristics of drug use vary by drug type?

Marijuana was the drug most commonly tried by arrestees (89%) and was also the substance most frequently tried first (68%). Marijuana was also tried at the earliest age (15.5) approximately four years earlier than any other drug. Those who used it in the past 30 days used it an average of 15.5 days (Table 1). Males were significantly more likely than females to report using marijuana in the past 12 months (73% versus 62%) (not shown).

Meth was tried by almost two-thirds (62%) of arrestees and it was used more often than any other drug in the last 30 days and 12 months (average of 19.9 days out of the past 30 days and 72% in the past 12 months) (Table 1).

Cocaine was tried by over half (55%) of arrestees and at the second youngest average age (19.2), following marijuana. Recent cocaine use was less than any of the other substances, with around one in four (24%) reporting they had used it in the past 12 months, and the average use in the past 30 days being 4.8 days (Table 1). Males reported more frequent cocaine use in the past 30 days than females (5.3 versus 2.3) (not shown).

Heroin was tried by 32% of arrestees, half (50%) of whom had used it in the past 12 months. Heroin had the oldest average age of first use at 23.2. Of those who reported using heroin in the past 30 days, it was used an average of 14.5 days (Table 1).

Crack was tried by 29% of arrestees and was the substance second least likely to be used in the last 12 months (27%), following cocaine. Those who used it in the past 30 days did so about every one in three days, on average (8.9) (Table 1). Males were significantly more likely to have ever used crack (34%) compared to females (20%), and reported more frequent crack use in the past 30 days (9.8 versus 5.5) (not shown).

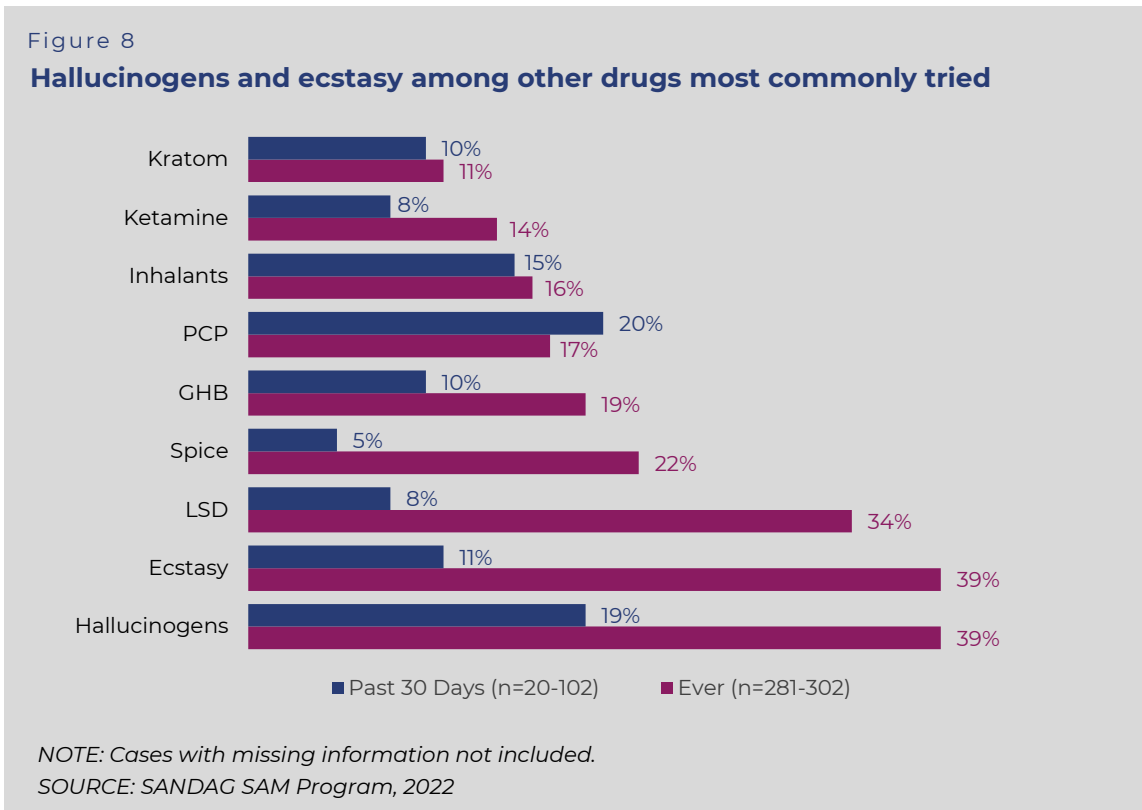
Table 1

Self-reported drug use history varies by drug

How many have ever tried?	What was the average age at first use?	Of those who have tried it, how many used in the last 12 months?	Of those who used in the past 30 days, how many days did they use on average?	Of all substances tried, which was the very first?
89% marijuana	15.5 marijuana	70% marijuana	15.5 marijuana	68% marijuana
62% meth	21.3 meth	72% meth	19.9 meth	3% meth
55% cocaine	19.2 cocaine	24% cocaine	4.8 cocaine	<1% cocaine
32% heroin	23.2 heroin	50% heroin	14.5 heroin	0% heroin
29% crack	21.4 crack	27% crack	8.9 crack	0% crack

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

In addition to these five drugs, almost two-thirds (64%) of arrestees reported having ever tried at least one of nine other illicit substances, including hallucinogens (39%), ecstasy (39%), LSD (34%), spice (22%), GHB (19%), PCP (17%), inhalants (16%), ketamine (14%), and kratom (11%).⁵ When those who had ever used an illegal substance were asked if they had used it in the past 30 days, PCP users were most likely to respond affirmatively (20%), followed by hallucinogen (19%) and inhalant (15%) users (Figure 8).



In addition to the high percentage of the usage of “club drugs,” synthetic drug use has remained steady, as demonstrated by the 22% who reported ever using spice.⁶ Although marijuana is legalized in California, more than half (56%) of those who reported ever using spice said they used it as an alternative and 30% said they use it to avoid a positive drug test.

Takeaway

Among arrestees, drug use history and current use varies by drug. Meth and marijuana were used most recently, with the highest rates of use in the past 12 months and the last 30 days. Among other illicit drugs arrestees reported trying, hallucinogens, ecstasy and LSD were most common, but PCP was the substance most likely to have been used recently.

⁵ 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.
⁶ “Club drugs,” also referred to as party or rave drugs, are often used recreationally at events to heighten sensory experiences. The substances that fall into this categorization include hallucinogens, ecstasy, and LSD.

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 (74%) among the five drugs in 2022. Meth followed with 51% reporting it was “very easy” to obtain.
- Aside from crack and marijuana, about one in seven (70%) of arrestees were able to obtain their drug of choice in the major statistical area (MSA)⁷ in which they lived. The range was 44% of those obtaining crack to 77% of those obtaining meth.
- Regardless of the drug, arrestees reported obtaining the substance through cash, as well as non-cash means. Cocaine and crack were the substances 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	74%	51%	43%	27%	43%
Got in same MSA where they live	65%	77%	71%	71%	44%
Got with cash	69%	70%	70%	52%	27%
Got with non-cash ways	55%	61%	36%	65%	64%

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

- Arrestees were asked about buying drugs on the regular internet or dark web and if they had ever used electronic currencies (e.g., bitcoin) or digital money transfer systems (e.g., PayPal, Venmo, Zelle). Overall, only 5% reported ever purchasing drugs on the regular internet and 1% on the dark web. Ten percent (10%) reported they had ever used electronic currency or digital money transfer systems to buy drugs.

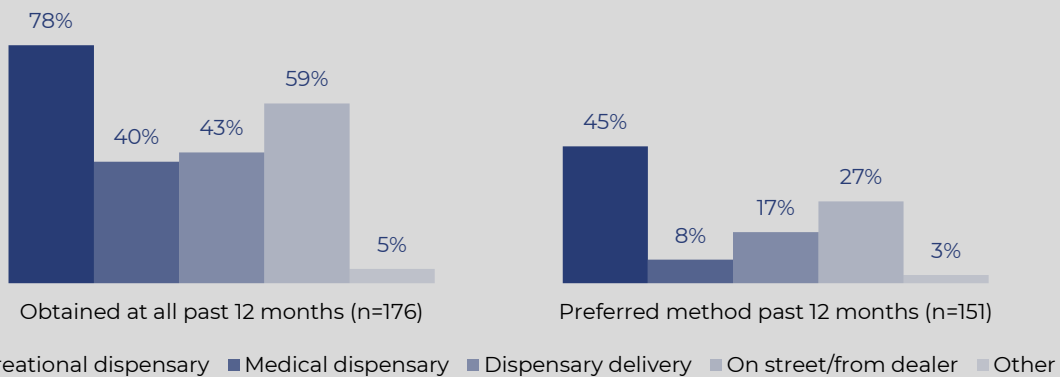
⁷ There are seven MSAs in the San Diego region that describe different geographical areas of the County. To view these MSAs on a map, please visit <https://sdgis.sandag.org/>.

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

- Over two-thirds (69%) of arrestees reported they obtained marijuana in more than one way in 2022. When individuals who reported obtaining marijuana in two or more ways were asked about their most common ways of obtaining it, 97% reported from a recreational dispensary, 73% said on the street, and 62% reported delivery from a dispensary (not shown).
- As Figure 9 shows, the two most common ways to obtain marijuana over the past 12 months (regardless of how many methods were used) were from a recreational dispensary (78%) and the street (59%). When asked their preferred method, 45% said a recreational dispensary, followed by 27% saying on the street.

Figure 9

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

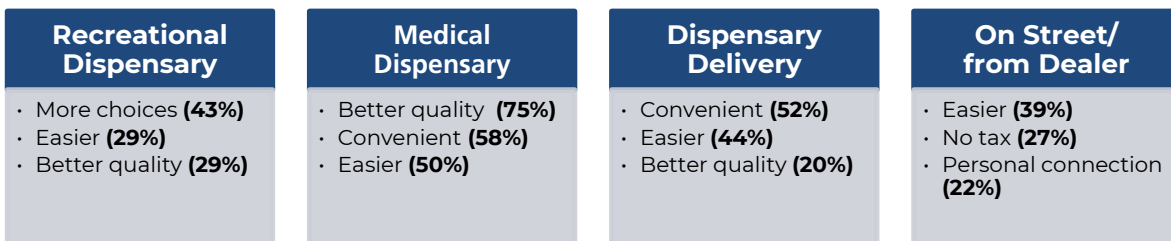


NOTE: Cases with missing information not included. Percentages based on multiple responses.
 SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

- When asked the reasons behind their preferred method, the most frequent response for recreational dispensaries was having more choices, for medical dispensaries it was better quality, and for dispensary delivery it was convenience. Those who preferred buying it on the street most often noted it being easier and not requiring any tax (Figure 10).

Figure 10

Preferred means of obtaining marijuana most often tied to quality and convenience

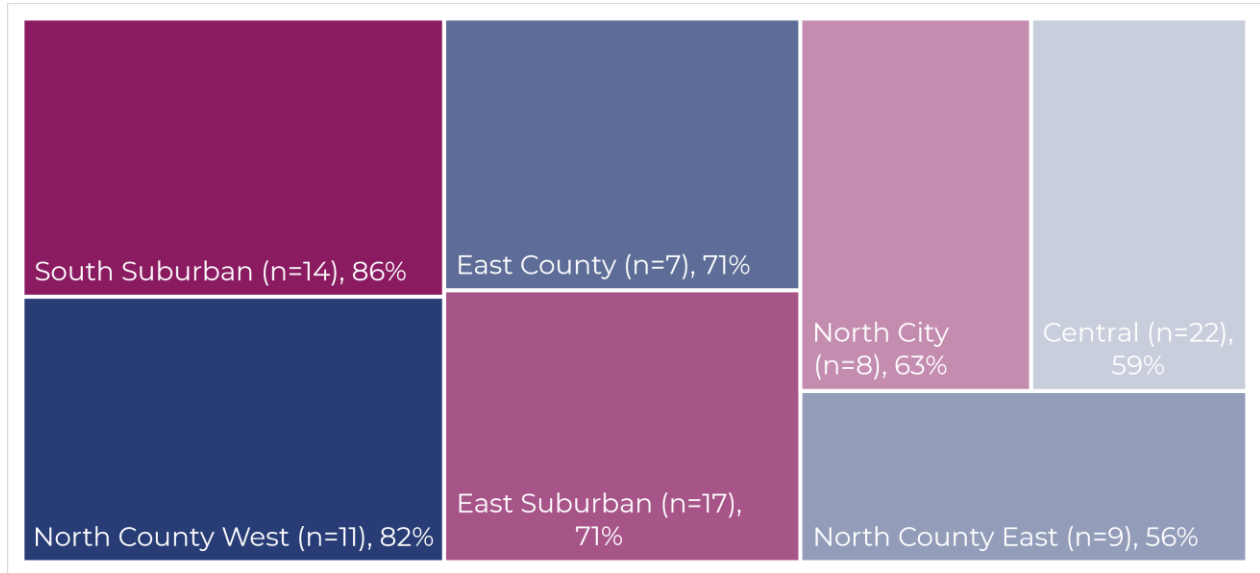


SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

- A majority of residents across the various MSA's in San Diego County reported obtaining marijuana at a recreational or medical dispensary in the MSA where they lived, ranging from 56% to 86% (Figure 11).

Figure 11

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



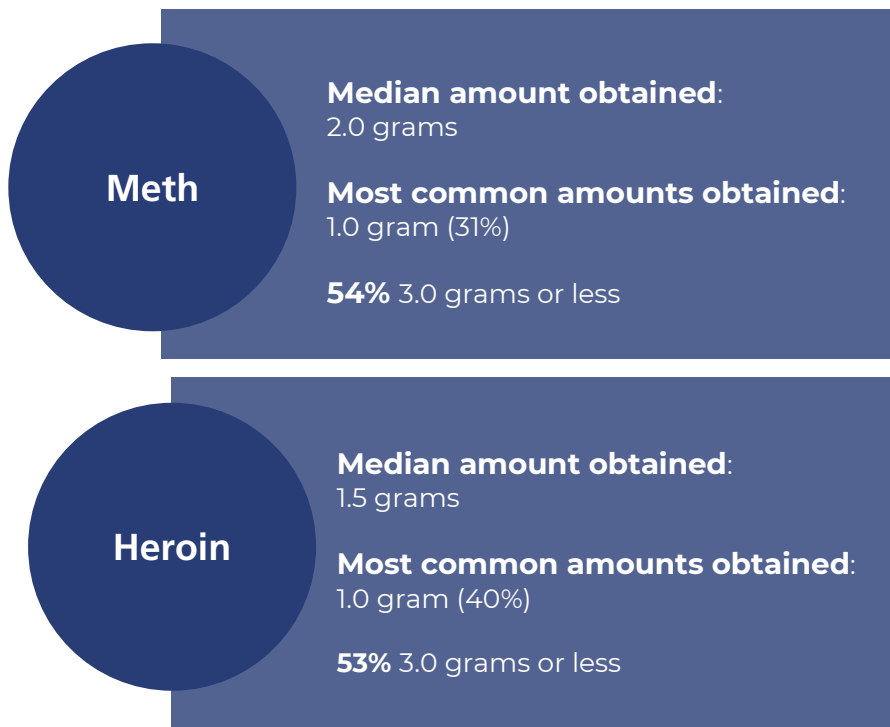
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

- Around 1 in 4 (23%) of the arrestees reported ever having had a medical marijuana card, only 12% of whom still did. When asked the medical condition they got the card for, the most common included physical pain (41%), anxiety (19%), to help them sleep (15%), and depression (13%) (not shown).

To better understand personal acquisition habits of meth and heroin, a series of questions aimed to determine the quantities of meth and heroin individuals obtain for their own use, with a specific focus on their most recent purchase. For meth the median amount obtained was 2.0 grams and for heroin it was 1.5 grams (Figure 12).

Figure 12

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



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

One in ten (10%) arrestees reported traveling to Mexico for drugs. When these arrestees described what they obtained, 36% said heroin, 32% marijuana, 32% meth, 7% cocaine, and 4% crack.

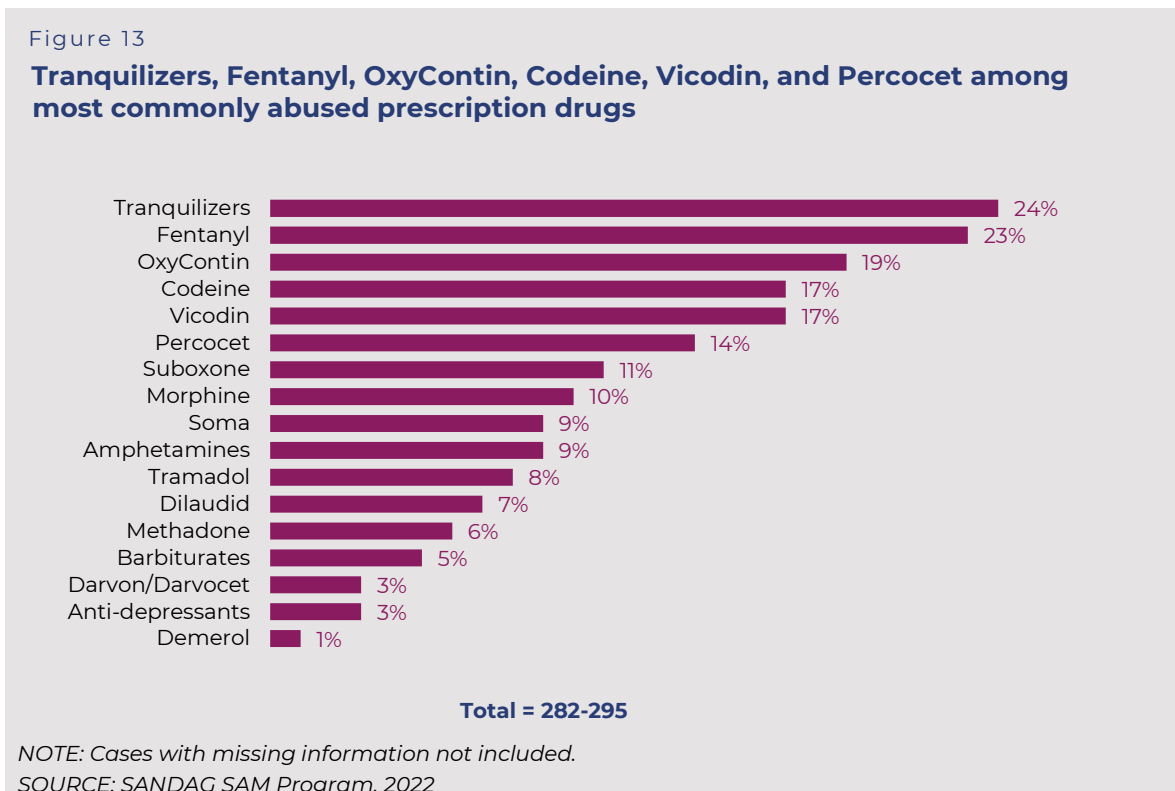
In addition, 19% reported they had ever been approached to transport, smuggle, conceal, or participate in bringing drugs over the U.S./Mexico border. Of those who had been approached, almost two in five (38%) reported they had crossed the border to obtain drugs. When asked why they brought drugs over the U.S./Mexico border, 54% said they did so for their own personal use, 43% reported someone paid them to do so, and 18% were going to sell it themselves.

Takeaway

Consistent with use data, arrestees reported marijuana was the easiest drug to obtain in the region in 2022, followed by meth. Arrestees most often reported they had obtained marijuana both legally and illegally in the past 12 months. Cocaine was harder to obtain compared to other drugs. Arrestees were often able to obtain drugs where they lived, however, 10% of interviewed arrestees reported traveling to Mexico to buy drugs.

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

Within the series of questions related to prescription drug use, arrestees are asked to specify if they had used a prescription drug with a prescription (legally), without a prescription (illegally), or both. Figure 13 presents the percentage who reported any illegal use. In 2022, 49% of arrestees reported they had ever abused prescription drugs, with the most commonly abused including tranquilizers (i.e., benzodiazepines), fentanyl, and OxyContin (Figure 13). The drugs most often used both ways (legally and illegally) included Vicodin (4%), Percocet (3%), Codeine (3%), Tramadol (2%), and tranquilizers (2%).



When those who had ever abused a prescription drug were asked if they had abused it in the past 30 days, the four most common drugs currently being abused included fentanyl (62%), barbiturates (24%), tranquilizers (13%), and Darvon/Darvocet (11%) (not shown).

Additional analyses revealed that White arrestees were significantly more likely to report abusing prescription drugs (56%), compared to arrestees of other ethnic groups (46% Hispanic/Latino(a) and 30% Black/African American). Additionally, arrestees who abused prescription drugs were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana (61% versus 44%) and meth (67% versus 39%).

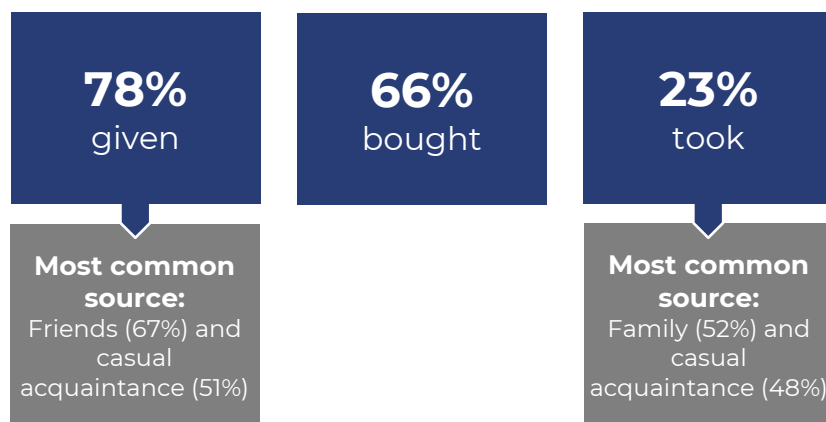
Almost three in every ten (29%) heroin users said they were dependent on prescription opiates before they began using the street drug and of these, 71% said they began to use heroin as a substitute for prescription opiates. When asked which opiates they were addicted to, 58% said OxyContin, 50% Vicodin, 42% Percocet, 31% Dilaudid, 23% fentanyl, 19% methadone, 15% Demerol, and 15% morphine. When asked why they switched from prescription drugs to heroin, the most common answers included that heroin was easier (61%) and cheaper (56%) to get. One-third (33%) also said it gave them a "better high."

When asked how difficult it was to obtain prescription drugs illegally, just under three fifths (58%) said it was “very easy” or “easy” (Figure 14).



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) (Figure 15). In addition, 10% reported that they had “doctor shopped,” 67% of whom were successful in doing so.⁸

Figure 15
Most common ways to get prescription drugs illegally



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

When arrestees were asked if they thought that any of the pills they had ever bought were counterfeit, 40% believed they were.

⁸ “Doctor shopping” is the practice of attempting to persuade a doctor, or multiple, to prescribe a drug that is not actually needed for a mental or medical condition.

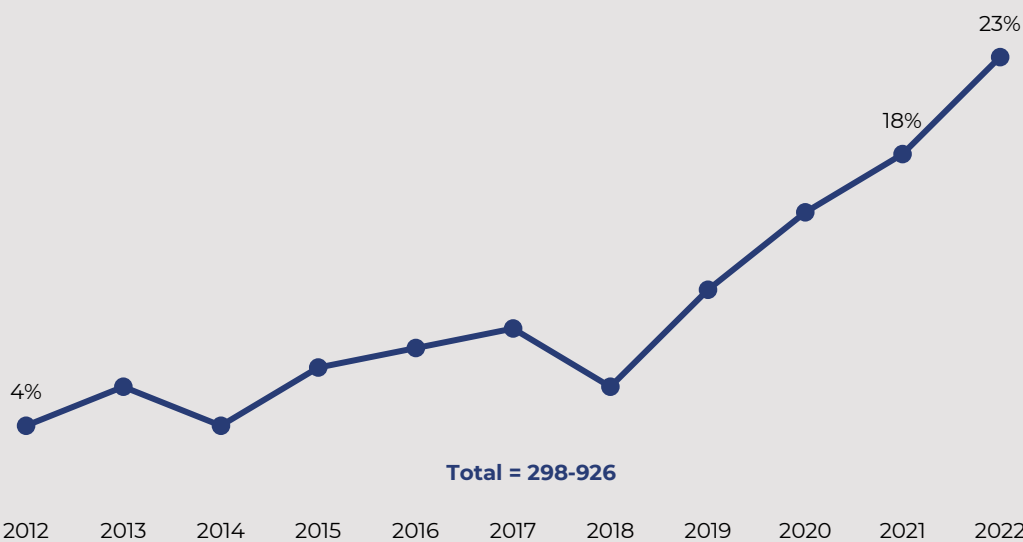
What does fentanyl use look like among the arrestee population in San Diego County?

Given the growing national concern over the fatality of fentanyl, a deeper dive was necessary to further understand the characteristics of non-prescribed fentanyl use in San Diego County. As noted in Figure 13, fentanyl was the second most commonly abused prescription drug at 23%, following tranquilizers (24%). Compared to last year's percentage (18%), this year's has increased by 5%, however, compared to ten years ago, this percentage has increased by nearly 20% (Figure 16).

Fentanyl is a potent synthetic opioid typically used legally in medical settings for severe pain mitigation. Illicit fentanyl manufacturing and use, in powder and liquid form, has become increasingly common and fatal as individuals are seeking out a "stronger high." Most often, fentanyl is mixed with other drugs including meth, heroin, and cocaine.

Figure 16

The reported fentanyl use in San Diego arrestees exponentially increased in the past ten years



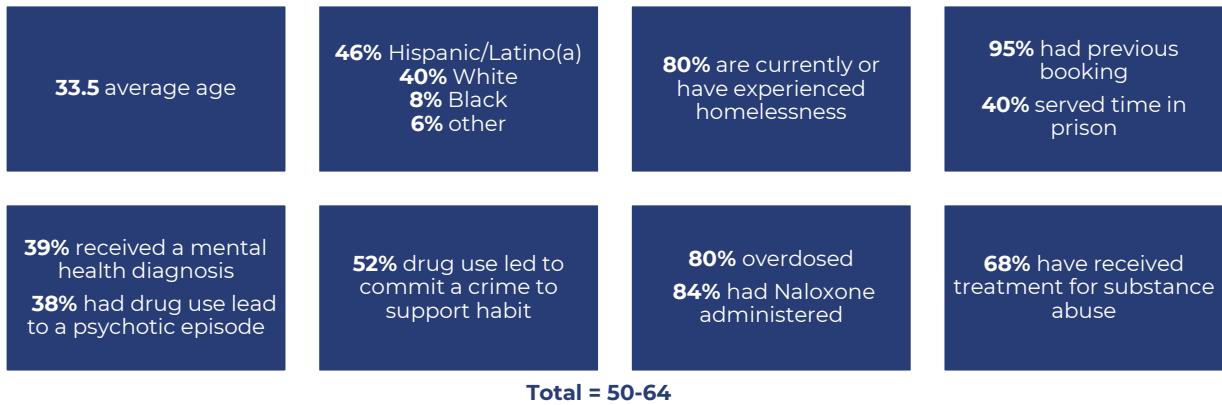
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

While reported fentanyl use has continued to increase over the years, 86% of arrestees said they would *not* purchase it, but there were differences across several different variables. Specifically,

- Arrestees between 25 and 39 (19%) and those under 25 (14%) were significantly more likely to say they would buy it compared to those 40 and over (5%);
- Those positive for meth were significantly more likely to say they would use it (21%), compared to those who were not positive for meth (5%); and
- Those positive for opiates were significantly more likely to say they would use it (45%), compared to those who were not positive for opiates (11%).

Figure 17

Characteristics of arrestees who reported illegal use of fentanyl



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

When asked why they would buy fentanyl, 58% said they were interested in a stronger high, 32% said opiates were their drug of choice, and 16% said it helps with pain or sleeping. With meth being a substance commonly used along with fentanyl, interviewed arrestees were asked a new series of questions about their history of purchasing and using meth with fentanyl; one in ten (10%) arrestees said they had used meth knowing fentanyl was mixed in and 4% reported actively seeking out meth with fentanyl in it. When those who said they would not buy fentanyl were asked why, the most common answer was because it was a dangerous/deadly drug (74%). Other responses included not doing drugs in general (9%), simply having no interest (6%), and opiates/prescription drugs not being their drug of choice (4%).

Arrestees were also asked a series of questions to gauge their precautionary behaviors towards using fentanyl; they were asked if they had ever used fentanyl test strips to see if their drugs contained fentanyl, and if they had not, they were asked if they would in the future. Only 11% of arrestees said they had used test strips, and just under three-fifths (56%) said they would not use test strips, even if they were made available. These findings are particularly concerning when considering the high percentage of illegal fentanyl users who have overdosed (80%) and required Naloxone administration (84%) (Figure 17). While the percentage who said they would use test strips if they were available was relatively low, over one in three (35%) said they thought a drug they had used contained fentanyl, even if they were not told it did, based on how they reacted to it.

Takeaway

In addition to using illicit drugs, a number of arrestees have a history of abusing prescription drugs, particularly tranquilizers and fentanyl. Fentanyl's growing use is very clear as it was used most often in the past 30 days by those who had abused prescription drugs. Its increasing availability is also extremely evident when comparing the percentage of arrestees who reported ever trying fentanyl in 2022 to previous years. Individuals who tested positive for meth and opiates were significantly more likely to say they would buy fentanyl in the future, and those interested in purchasing fentanyl reported their motivation to be a stronger high.

What do we know about arrestee use of alcohol?

The majority of arrestees (83%) reported at least one prior binge drinking episode (defined as five drinks or more for males and four drinks or more for females), and one in three (33%) reported drinking any alcohol in the 24 hours prior to their arrest.

Additional analyses revealed that:

- Over fifty percent (54%) of arrestees reported binge drinking in the last year, and of those, 29% reported binge drinking in the last 30 days.
- The average number of days interviewed arrestees reported binge drinking in the last 30 days was 7.9 (range 1 to 30).

Figure 18

Male and female arrestee alcohol use history

Male		Female	
82% ever binge drank		84% ever binge drank	
17.1 average age first binge	4.5 average number of drinks in 24 hours before arrest	17.4 average age first binge	4.4 average number of drinks in 24 hours before arrest
31% binge drank past 30 days	34% self-report drinking any alcohol in the past 24 hours	27% binge drank past 30 days	29% self-report drinking any alcohol in the past 24 hours

Males (n=203-204) Females (n=94-96)

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

Takeaway

Alcohol continues to be consumed by many adults in the justice system, with more than four in five arrestees reporting ever binge drinking. One-third drank alcohol within 24 hours prior to their arrest.

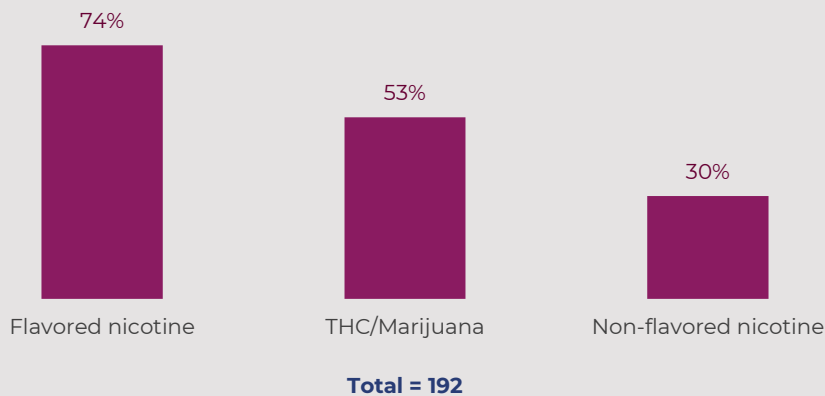
What do we know about tobacco use and vaping?

Given the growth in e-cigarettes and vaping over the past several years, a series of questions address the history of vaping, the types of products vaped, and the frequency of use of vaping products.

- Overall, 59% of adult arrestees reported currently using tobacco products, and a new question asked in 2022 revealed that 10% of arrestees reported tobacco being the first substance they ever used.
- Females were significantly more likely to report ever using tobacco (68%) compared to males (54%). There were no significant differences in tobacco use by race/ethnicity or age.
- Sixty-eight percent (68%) reported they had ever vaped. There were no significant differences in reported vaping history by gender, race/ethnicity, or age.
- Individuals who reported using tobacco products were significantly more likely to report vaping (68%), compared to those who do not use tobacco products (32%).
- Just under sixty percent (58%) of arrestees who had ever vaped said they had done so in the last 30 days and of those, the average number of days vaped was 15.80 (range 1 to 30).
- When asked what they had vaped, the most common answer was flavored nicotine (74%), followed by THC/marijuana (53%), and non-flavored nicotine (30%) (Figure 19).

Figure 19

Types of substances arrestees have ever vaped



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

Takeaway

Three in five arrestees reported ever using tobacco products, with females most likely to report doing so (over two in every three). Vaping has also remained popular among adult arrestees as just under seventy percent reported ever vaping. The most common substance vaped, flavored nicotine, has remained unchanged since the previous year.

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

Prior arrests and incarcerations

- Just over four in every five arrestees (81%) reported having a previous arrest, with a median number of 5.0 prior arrests. Females were significantly more likely to report a prior arrest (90%), compared to males (76%).
- On average, males were 22.6 years old at their first arrest as an adult, compared to 25.5 for females. When asked what their first arrest as an adult was for, 33% said for a drug-related crime, 30% said a property crime, 23% a violent crime, 12% some other type of offense, and 6% a weapons offense.⁹
- Forty-one percent (41%) reported being arrested as a juvenile, including 43% of males and 37% of females. When asked what their first arrest as a juvenile was for, 47% said a property crime, 23% a violent crime, 12% a drug-related crime, 11% a status offense¹⁰, 7% a weapons offense, and 5% some other type of offense.⁹
- Around three in every four arrestees (74%) reported previously serving time in jail and 28% in prison. Males were more likely than females to report serving time in prison (33% versus 18%).

Community supervision

- Of those who had served time in prison, 83% said they also had been on parole – 31% of whom still were.
- Around three in four (73%) of those with a prior arrest reported they had previously been on probation and 49% reported currently being on probation.
- About one-third (30%) of those who had ever been in custody reported receiving services (27% while incarcerated and 11% in the community). When asked their biggest need upon reentry after incarceration, the most common answers included housing

(39%), employment (31%), and help with substance abuse (15%).

Involvement in drug distribution

- One in three (32%) of those interviewed reported being involved in selling drugs and of these, 43% said they had done so in the past 12 months. Males (37%) were more likely to report being involved in distributing drugs, compared to females (22%).

Crime to support drug use

- Just under one in three (29%) 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 (40% versus 21% of those who had not been). Of those who admitted committing a crime to support a drug habit, 94% said they committed a property crime.
- When individuals who reported committing a crime to support their drug habit were asked what drug they were ever under the influence of while committing the crime, the most common was meth (60%), followed by heroin (29%), and marijuana (10%).
- 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 (56% of those who were supporting their habit and 62% of those who had sold drugs), compared to those who said they had not (29% and 24%, respectively).

Firearms

- Arrestees were asked to report if they had ever possessed a gun, with possession being defined as owning, using, carrying, borrowing, sharing, or holding a gun for

⁹ Total exceeds 100 as percentages are based on multiple responses.

¹⁰ A status offense is one that only a juvenile can be arrested for (e.g., curfew violation).

someone else. Almost two in five (37%) reported they had, with males being significantly more likely to have reported doing so than females (46% versus 18%).

- When asked how easy it was to obtain the gun, 28% said “very easy”, 47% “easy”, 16% “difficult”, and 9% “very difficult.”
- When asked how they obtained it, 67% bought it, 25% received it as a gift, 8% said they were holding the gun for someone, 6% inherited it, 3% traded it for it, 3% stole it, and 3% some other way (e.g., found it).
- Of the ninety-nine arrestees who have possessed a gun, seventeen percent (17%) reported ever having a ghost gun. All of those (100%) who reported having one said it was easy to acquire the parts to build it.
- Just under one-third (31%) of arrestees who have possessed a gun said they had carried a gun when committing a crime.

Proposition 47

- In 2014, California voters passed Proposition 47 (Prop 47) which reduced certain property and drug-related felonies to misdemeanors. In 2022, 23% of the arrestees said they had heard of Prop 47, including 32% of those ever convicted of a felony and 16% of those who had not had a prior felony conviction.
- Of those who had ever heard of it, 12% said that they or their attorney had petitioned to have a prior offense reduced.
- Of these individuals, 28% were currently in custody with their most serious crime being a drug-related offense, 25% respectively for a property or violent offense, and 23% for an "other" offense.
- When asked if they would complete programs such as drug treatment if they did not have to (because of legislative changes), 55% said they would not.

Exchanging sex/pimping/pandering

- Fourteen percent (14%) of arrestees reported they had ever been approached by someone to pimp/prostitute them, including 33% of females and 5% of males.

- Less than one in ten (8%) of those interviewed said they had ever exchanged sex for money, drugs, or other things. Of those who had, 64% were female and 36% were male.
- Forty-four percent (44%) of the females and 13% males said that they had ever had a pimp. Four of the seven females and the one male who ever had a pimp, reported their pimp had given them drugs.
- When asked the first age they exchanged sex for something else, the mean was 20.5 years (range 12 to 41).
- One in four (25%) of those who reported ever exchanging sex for something said they had done so in the last 30 days. Of these individuals, 33% said they would be interested in getting help to stop.
- Three percent (3%) of interviewed arrestees reported being involved in pimping or pandering activities. This included 6 males (2 who said they had exchanged sex themselves and 4 who had not) and 2 females who had not exchanged sex themselves.
- All (100%) eight individuals 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 (75%), compared to those who did not have this history (35%).

Gang involvement

- Over one in three (36%) arrestees reported some type of gang involvement. Males were more likely to report a history of gang involvement, compared to females (39% versus 28%).
- When asked how old they were when they started hanging out with the gang, the mean age was 16.5 years (range 1 to 40).
- Of the 106 adult arrestees who reported any type of gang involvement, 72% said they had this contact within the past five years. When asked their current status with the gang, 41% said used to hang out but do not

anymore, 27% said they currently hang out but were never a member, 17% were current members, and 13% said that they used to be a member but are not anymore.

- 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 (57%).
- Those who reported a previous gang affiliation were significantly more likely to report having been arrested as a juvenile (59% versus 30%), having been involved in drug distribution (68% versus 13%), and carrying a gun previously (59% versus 24%).
- Arrestees with gang relations were also more likely to test positive for meth (69% versus 44%), marijuana (64% versus 46%), and cocaine (9% versus 1%).

Mental health issues

- Two in five (40%) of the arrestees reported they had ever been diagnosed with a mental or psychiatric disorder and 33% reported they had previously stayed at least overnight for mental health treatment at a hospital or other facility. Females were significantly more likely to say they had been diagnosed (49%), compared to males (36%).
- Of those who had ever been admitted to a mental health or psychiatric facility for at least an overnight stay the mean number of stays was 4.4 (range 1 to 40) and the mean age for the first stay was 25.5 (range 2 to 68).
- Almost half (45%) of arrestees who had been admitted to a mental health facility 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 nine in ten (86%) of those who had ever been diagnosed also had been prescribed medication for the disorder. However, only 47% said they were currently prescribed the medication and of those, 81% said they were not taking them.

- Just under two-fifths (38%) of interviewed arrestees reported being diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), with 71% of those being prescribed medication. Of those with a prescription for ADD or ADHD, 70% reported using another drug (most often marijuana) as a substitute for their ADD or ADHD medication.
- One in four (25%) arrestees reported they had ever attempted suicide and 42% said they had seriously thought about it. Those who reported a mental health diagnosis were more likely to say they had attempted suicide (47% versus 10% without a diagnosis).
- Arrestees were asked if they had ever taken a drug that led to a psychotic episode. One in every five (20%) said they had, with meth being the drug most often mentioned as leading to this occurrence (61%).

Education, employment, and insurance

- Thirteen percent (13%) of those interviewed did not have a high school degree or equivalent.
- Forty-four percent (44%) were employed (full-time, part-time, or active military duty) at the time of their arrest.
- Five percent reported previously serving in the military. Four in five (80%) of these individuals said they were discharged (45% honorably) and 20% were active duty.
- Sixteen percent (16%) of interviewed arrestees said they currently did not have health insurance.

County of origin

- More than half (51%) of those interviewed reported they were not born in San Diego County.
- When asked how long ago they moved to San Diego County, 7% said they moved here one year ago, 17% in the past five years, and 76% five years ago or longer.

- When asked why they moved here, 50% cited family, 14% for work, 12% for a new beginning, 9% liked something about San Diego, 7% to be with someone, 7% for school, and 6% to run away from something in their past.

Homelessness

- About two-thirds (65%) of those interviewed reported ever being homeless and 34% described themselves as being homeless in the past 30 days.
- The majority (72%) said they had first become homeless while living in San Diego County, as opposed to somewhere else.
- The most common reasons homeless individuals gave for becoming homeless were loss of job (47%), money issues (44%), loss of family (24%), and drug use/addiction (19%).
- A new question that was added in 2022 asked individuals with a previous arrest where they spent their first night after their last release from jail, the second most common answer after their own home (41%), was on the street (31%).
- When asked the first age they became homeless the average age was 24.3 (range 3 to 65), and when asked how many times they had ever been homeless, 36% said once, 18% twice, 16% three times, and 29% 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, 44% said the Central MSA, 15% East Suburban, 10% South Suburban, 10% North County East, 8% North City, 7% North County West, 3% East County, and 3% outside the County.
- Thirty-one percent (31%) said they had stayed in a shelter in the past 12 months. When asked why they had *not* stayed in a shelter, 32% said because of restrictions and rules at the shelter, 21% concerns for safety, 14% wait lists, 13% because they have family, friends, or a pet that is not allowed to stay there, and 40% provided an “other” answer (that included personal preference, have someplace else to stay, personal pride, and don’t know how to).¹¹
- When asked what they thought their housing status would be 12 months from now (if they had described themselves as primarily homeless in the past 30 days), 63% said they would be in a house, mobile home, or apartment; 26% said they would still be homeless; and 11% said they would have some other type of living situation (e.g., residential hotel, shelter, or jail).

Table 3

Arrestee risk in different areas

Criminal involvement	
81%	prior arrests
74%	prior jail bookings
41%	arrested as a juvenile
32%	have sold drugs
32%	carried a gun while committing a crime
Exchanging sex/pimping/pandering	
8%	history of exchanging sex and/or sexual favors for money, drugs, or other things
3%	history of pimping/pandering
Gangs	
36%	history of gang involvement
Mental health	
81%	not taking medication for mental health issues as prescribed
33%	admitted overnight to a mental health facility
25%	previously attempted suicide
Education, employment, and insurance	
56%	currently not employed
16%	no health insurance
13%	no high school degree
Homelessness	
65%	ever homeless
31%	spent first night after jail release on streets
Foster care	
13%	prior foster care system involvement
Drug treatment	
40%	received drug treatment previously
Children	
66%	have children
35%	prior Child Welfare Services contact

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

¹¹ Total exceeds 100 as percentages are based on multiple responses.

Foster care involvement

- Overall, 13% of the arrestees reported they had been in the foster care system as a child and just under one-third (31%) of these individuals reported aging out of the system.

Drug treatment needs

- Forty percent (40%) of the arrestees said they had received drug treatment in the past and 74% of these individuals said the most recent time was successful. When individuals who did not successfully complete the program were asked why, the most common response was they wanted to start using it again (46%).
- The mean number of prior treatment admissions was 3.1 (range 1 to 15).
- When asked what type of treatment they had most recently completed, 65% said inpatient, 16% detox, 15% outpatient, and 1% other.
- For 54% of those who had received treatment, the last program was court-ordered (as opposed to voluntary). Females were significantly more likely to voluntarily go to treatment (66%) compared to males (38%).
- There was no significant difference between court-ordered treatment being successful (75%), compared to voluntary (74%).
- Only 27% of the arrestees reported that they had sought drug treatment, but it had not been available.

Dependent children

- Two-thirds (66%) of arrestees reported having children, and females were significantly more likely (79%) to report having children compared to males (60%).
- One in five (20%) 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 (33% versus 13%).
- Thirty-five percent (35%) reported prior Child Welfare System (CWS) contact. Thirty percent (30%) of these individuals said their case was still open.

Unreported victimization

- Just over two in five (41%) arrestees reported they had previously been the victim of a crime they did not report to the police, and of those, individuals who identified as an 'other' race/ethnicity were significantly more likely to have been a victim of an unreported crime (62%) compared to other race/ethnicities (50% for White individuals, 34% Hispanic, and 33% Black/African American).
- When asked to describe what type of crime they were a victim of, the most common responses were assault (38%), sexual assault (27%), robbery (23%), domestic violence (16%), and some type of larceny/theft (15%).
- When asked why they did not report the crime to police, the most common reasons included they had a negative view of law enforcement (22%), were scared (21%), did not think it would help (19%), thought it would be risky (10%), and knew the person who had committed the crime (10%).

Takeaway

Many of the arrestees booked into local jails have prior justice system involvement and experienced homelessness, mental health issues, and other social, behavioral, and financial challenges. Continuing efforts that gather this information is crucial to further understanding how underlying risk factors may impact one's likelihood of struggling with substance abuse.

What are possible ways other risk-taking behaviors of this population indirectly affect others in the community?

As seen in Figure 21, criminal and other risky behaviors of arrestees with substance abuse issues can affect others in the community. Some instances where risk-taking behaviors may affect the community include being on the road with an impaired driver in another vehicle or potentially coming in contact with a used syringe.

Figure 21

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



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

Almost two-thirds (63%) of arrestees who had ever overdosed reported they had been administered naloxone; a medication designed to rapidly reverse an opioid overdose. These individuals answered additional questions about naloxone, including:

- How many times they had been administered it, with 30% receiving it once, 13% twice, and 57% three or more times.
- Who administered it, with responses including friends (61%), emergency medical services or EMS (51%), healthcare providers (18%), law enforcement (16%), and family (11%).
- Whether the person who gave them naloxone talked to them about getting treatment for their addiction, with 67% who received it from law enforcement saying they got the offer of recovery, 41% from EMS, 40% a healthcare provider, and 37% a service provider.
- If they knew where they could get naloxone, with almost seven in ten (68%) reporting they did.

In a new series of questions added in 2022, interviewed arrestees were asked whether they had ever administered naloxone to someone else and if they had, they were asked how many times. Thirty-five percent (35%) reported they had administered naloxone to someone else, and of those who had the majority reported administering it two (32%) or three (26%) times.

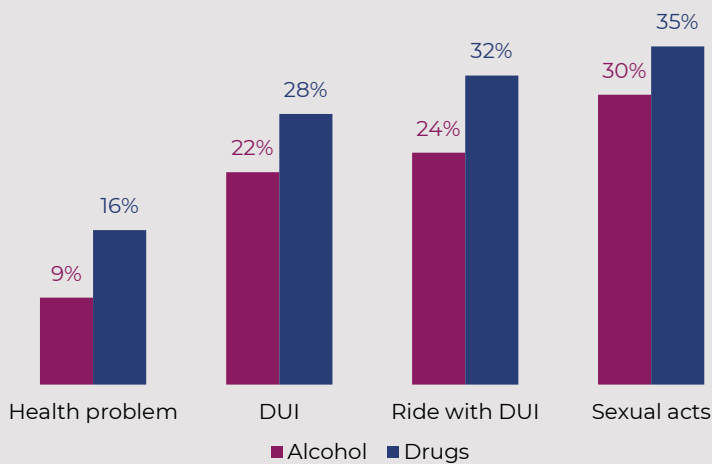
Overall, 36% of arrestees reported they had ever been arrested for driving under the influence (DUI). Fifty-nine percent (59%) reported they had been arrested just once for driving under the influence, 25% twice, and 15% three or more times. When asked what they had consumed when they drove under the influence most recently, 65% said alcohol, 21% drugs, and 14% both alcohol and drugs. When the individuals who had used drugs were asked which type of drug,

66% said meth, 26% marijuana, 6% heroin, 3% crack, and 23% 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 22 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 22

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



Total = 276-281

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2022

Takeaway

When combined with underlying needs, the risk-taking behaviors of the arrestee population with a history of substance abuse may have direct impacts on the communities in the San Diego region. It is important to address the underlying needs and risk factors of this population in hopes of reducing the likelihood of arrestees engaging in potentially harmful behaviors.