CJBULLETIN

2018 Adult Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region

September 2019

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Division Director

Research findings from the Criminal Justice Clearinghouse

SANDAG Board of Directors

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As of September 23, 2019

Highlights

Drug use is at 19-year high for adult females

In 2018, 79% of adult females tested positive for at least one illicit substance, an increase of 6% from 2017 and the highest rate since the study began in 2000. Seventy-six percent (76%) of adult males tested positive, the second highest rate since 2000.

Methamphetamine use is up

Despite regional efforts to combat methamphetamine (meth) use, it remained the drug of choice for adults with justice contact, with 55% of males and 62% of females positive in 2018. While the male positive rate was the same as it was in 2017, females were up 4%.

Despite legalization, arrestees continue to obtain marijuana illegally

New questions added to the interview in 2018 revealed that around two-thirds of arrestees reported obtaining marijuana from both a recreational dispensary and on the street illegally in the past year. When asked their preferred source, arrestees were almost equally split between the two.

Homelessness significant issue for many arrestees

Other new questions added in 2018 revealed that most individuals (77%) who reported ever being homeless had first become homeless in San Diego, as opposed to somewhere else; those who reported ever being homeless had been homeless two times on average; and the median age of first homelessness was 26. When asked how they became homeless, the most common answers included money issues and drug use. Less than 1 in 5 who were homeless in the past 12 months reported using a shelter.

Fentanyl is a growing concern in the region

About 1 in 3 arrestees said they would or might buy a drug that contained fentanyl. Those who said they would buy it would do so because they are looking for a good high. About 1 in 5 who said they would not buy it said they did not know what fentanyl was.

Background

This CJ Bulletin, 2018 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 2018, this data collection effort was generously supported by the San Diego-Imperial HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area); Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services; the District Attorney's Office; and the Public Safety Group. Their support, as well as the cooperation of the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, is gratefully acknowledged.

As part of this project, arrestees are approached (using a random sampling method) within 48 hours of their booking into jail. If the arrestee is available and willing to participate in a confidential interview, s/he is asked a series of questions related to her/his drug use history and to provide a urine sample for drug testing. In 2018, 317 male arrestees were interviewed at the Vista and Central Jails and 168 female arrestees at Las Colinas. Of these 485 arrestees, 467 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)

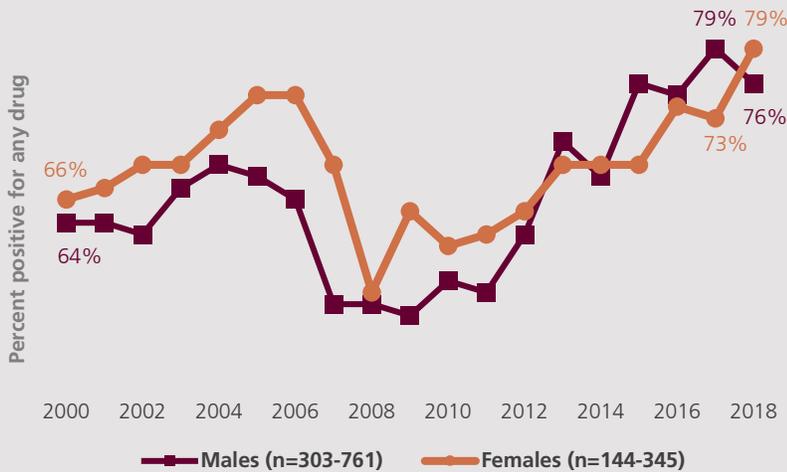Prescription drug abuse (page 15)

Binge drinking (page 17)

Risk factors to recidivate (page 18)

Possible effects of substance use on the community (page 23)

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

In 2018, 76% of male arrestees and 79% of female arrestees tested positive for an illicit drug, which includes marijuana [1], meth, cocaine, opiates, and PCP. The 2018 female positive rate of 79% was the highest since 2000 and an increase of 6% from 2017. The 2018 male positive rate of 76% was the second highest for males, following 79% in 2017. The higher positive rate for females reversed the three-year trend of males testing the same or higher than females (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Over three-quarters of adult arrestees positive for any drug in 2018

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, 2018

What were the characteristics of the arrestees interviewed?

Of the 467 arrestees with completed interviews, 303 (65%) were male and 164 (35%) were female. Almost half (49%) identified as White, 32% Hispanic, 15% Black, and 3% "other". Four percent (4%) of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. Almost 1 in 5 (18%) of those interviewed were under the age of 25, 44% between 25 and 39, and 39% 40 and older. The mean age was 37.2 (range 18 to 79). Almost two-thirds (64%) were single, 24% divorced, separated, or widowed, and 12% married.

About 1 in 3 (36%) were booked for a drug offense, 28% for an "other" offense, 23% for a violent offense, and 12% for a property offense. Seven percent (7%) of males and 1% of females were estimated to be in custody because of realignment, either because they were identified as being flash incarcerated (being booked into jail for a technical violation while under probation supervision) or identifying as a post-release community supervision (PRCS) offender. One-third (33%) reported living in the Central Major Statistical Area of the County, 14% in East Suburban, 14% in South Suburban, 12% in North City, 9% in North County West, 8% in North County East, 7% out of the County, and 4% in East County.
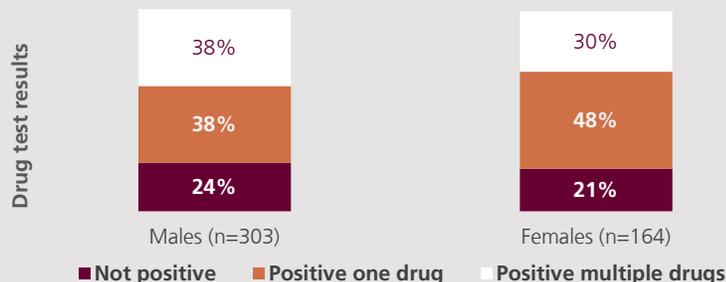
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1   The drug test panel in 2016, 2017, and 2018 continued to include marijuana even though California voters approved Proposition 64 on November 8, 2016. Marijuana will continue to be tested because it remains illegal federally and because changes in use pre- and post-legalization among this population is expected to continue to be an issue of interest.

How many arrestees are polydrug[2] users?

Around 1 in 3 (38% of male and 30% of female) arrestees tested positive for more than one drug in 2018 (Figure 2). Of these, 82% tested positive for two and 18% tested positive for three drugs. Of those who tested positive for multiple substances, 92% were positive for meth, 82% marijuana, 29% opiates, and 15% cocaine/crack.

Around 1 in 3 arrestees tested positive for more than one drug in 2018

Drug test results

Males (n=303)	Females (n=164)
38%	30%
38%	48%
24%	21%

■ **Not positive** ■ **Positive one drug** □ **Positive multiple drugs**

Note: Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

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

As Figure 3 shows, regardless of crime type, more than two-thirds of arrestees tested positive for a drug in 2018 and over 1 in 4 tested positive for multiple drugs. Individuals arrested for a highest charge that was for a violent offense were significantly less likely to test positive for any drug (67%) or for multiple drugs (26%), compared to those arrested for a property, drug, or "other" offense.

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

Percent positive

	Any*	Multiple*
Violent	67%	26%
Property	82%	31%
Drug	81%	46%
Other	76%	30%

■ **Violent (n=107)** ■ **Property (n=58)** ■ **Drug (n=169)** □ **Other (n=133)**

*Significant at p < .05

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

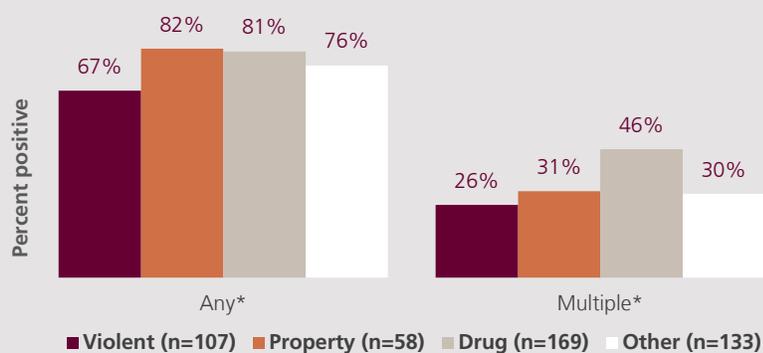### How many arrestees tested positive for just marijuana?

37% of the adult arrestees who tested positive for marijuana in 2018 did not test positive for anything else, but 63% did – either meth, opiates, crack/cocaine, or some combination.
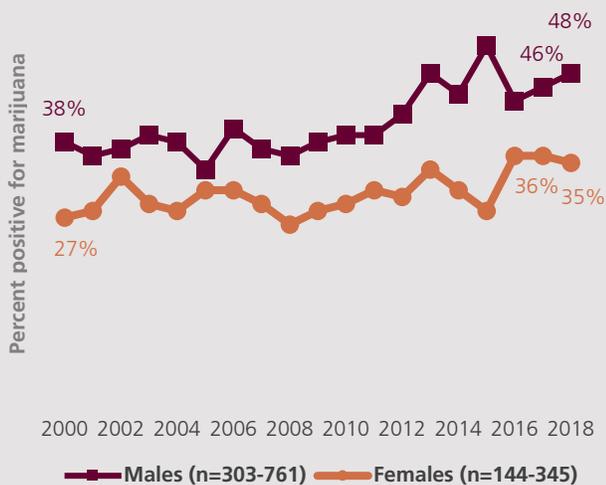
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[2] Polydrug use refers to the use of two or more psychoactive drugs in combination to achieve a particular effect.

How have positive rates by drug type changed over time?

The percent of male arrestees positive for **marijuana** was up 2%, from 46% in 2017 to 48% in 2018. This rate represented the second highest since 2000 (following 52% in 2015). For female arrestees, the percent positive for marijuana decreased 1% from 2017 to 2018, to 35% which also was the second highest rate in the past 19 years (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 (44%) and 40 years of age and older (37%).
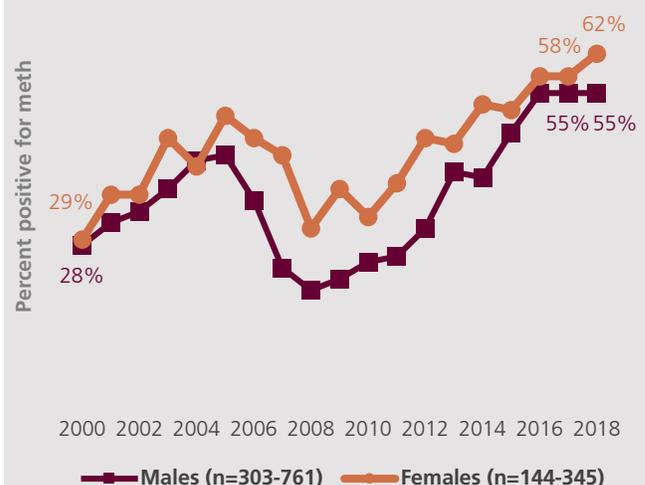
For **meth**, the percent of males that tested positive stayed the same as it was for the past two years at 55% – 19-year highs. The female rate of 62% was 4% higher than it was in 2017 and represented a new 19-year high (Figure 5). Recent meth use also varied significantly by an arrestee's age and race. Specifically, older arrestees (62% of those 25 to 39 and 61% of those 40 and older) were more likely to test positive for meth than those under the age of 25 (37%). In addition, Whites (64%) and Blacks (55%) were more likely to test positive, compared to Hispanics (48%).

Figure 4

Marijuana second most common drug recently used by adult arrestees

Males (n=303-761)   Females (n=144-345)

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

Figure 5

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

Males (n=303-761)   Females (n=144-345)

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

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. Almost 2 in 3 arrestees positive for marijuana also were positive for another drug.

The percent of arrestees positive for **cocaine** has dropped considerably since 2000, with 6% of males and 7% of females positive in 2018. However, the percent of females that were positive was up slightly over the past year (4% in 2017 to 7% in 2018) (Figure 6). There also were significant ethnic differences in cocaine use among the arrestees. Specifically, 17% of Black arrestees were positive, compared to 5% of Hispanic and 4% of White arrestees.

Figure 6

Cocaine positive rates down considerably since 2000

Males (n=303-761)   Females (n=144-345)

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

For **opiates**[3], the percent of males that were positive dropped to 11% in 2018, from 13% in 2017. For females, the rate increased from 11% in 2017 to 13% in 2018 (Figure 7). Among the arrestees, those that identified as White were most likely to test positive for opiates (17%), compared to 7% of Hispanics and 3% of Blacks.

Figure 7

Around one in ten arrestees positive for opiates in 2018

Males (n=303-761)   Females (n=144-345)

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

Takeaway

In 2018, 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 use also was up slightly for male arrestees and cocaine and opiate use was up for females.

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

How does history of drug use vary by drug type?

Marijuana is the drug most commonly tried by arrestees (89%) and also was tried at the earliest age (14.7) – about five years earlier than any other drug. Those who used it in the past 30 days used it an average of 16.7 days (Table 1).

Meth was tried by more than two-thirds (68%) of the arrestees and it also was reported by the highest percent (78%) as having been used in the last year. Meth users reported using an average of 18.9 days out of the past 30, more frequent than any other drug.

Cocaine was tried by over half (52%) of arrestees and at the youngest average age (19.4), following marijuana. Only around one-fourth (24%) reported using cocaine in the past year and compared to other drugs, it was used with the least frequency in the past month (4.8 days on average).

Crack was tried by 31% of arrestees and was least likely to be used in the last year (18%). Those who used it in the past month did so about every 1 in 3 days, on average (9.6).

Heroin was tried by 29% of arrestees, two-thirds (62%) of whom had used it in the past year. Heroin was used an average of 16.8 days in the past 30 of those who had used it, the second most frequent rate among the five drugs.

Table 1

Self-reported drug use history varies by drug

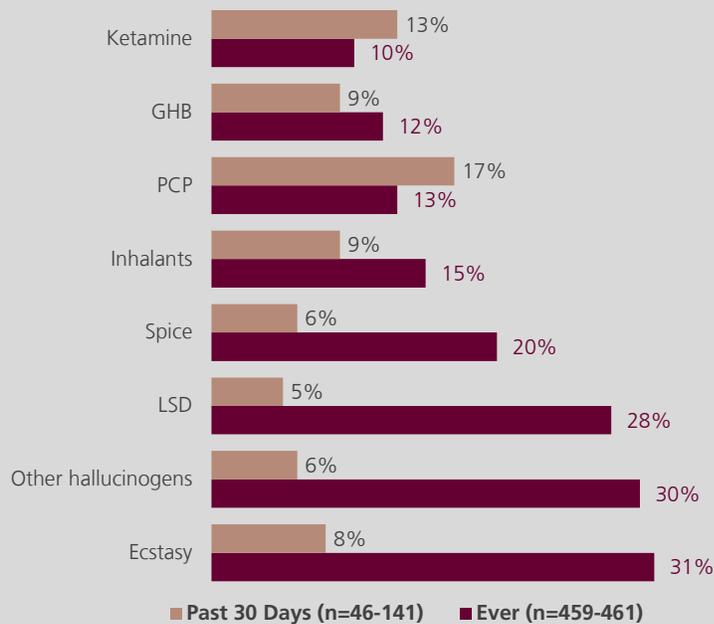| How many have ever tried?	What was the average age at first use?	Of those who've tried it, how many used in the last year?	Of those who used in the past 30 days, how many days did they use on average?
89% marijuana	**14.7** marijuana	**71%** marijuana	**16.7** marijuana
68% meth	**22.1** meth	**78%** meth	**18.9** meth
52% cocaine	**19.4** cocaine	**24%** cocaine	**4.8** cocaine
31% crack	**23.4** crack	**18%** crack	**9.6** crack
29% heroin	**25.5** heroin	**62%** heroin	**16.8** heroin

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

In addition to these five street drugs, just over half (53%) of the arrestees reported having ever tried other illicit substances, including ecstasy (31%), other hallucinogens (30%), LSD (28%), spice (20%), inhalants (15%), PCP (13%), GHB (12%), and ketamine (10%) (Figure 8).

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 (17%), while the other drugs were used by 13% 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, questions were added to the instrument to better understand why individuals use spice. Specifically, 41% of those who ever used spice said they use it as an alternative to marijuana and 24% said they use it to avoid a positive drug test.

Figure 8

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

Ketamine: 13% / 10%
GHB: 9% / 12%
PCP: 17% / 13%
Inhalants: 9% / 15%
Spice: 6% / 20%
LSD: 5% / 28%
Other hallucinogens: 6% / 30%
Ecstasy: 8% / 31%

■ Past 30 Days (n=46-141)   ■ Ever (n=459-461)

Note: Cases with missing information not included.

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

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 the most frequent use in the last 30 days. Among other illicit drugs ever tried, ecstasy and other hallucinogens were most common, but PCP 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 (68%) among the five drugs in 2018.

- Around three in four (74%) 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).

- Just over half (52%) said it was "very easy" to get meth in 2018 – making it the second most available drug in the region according to arrestees.

- Eighty-three percent (83%) of arrestees who obtained meth got it in the same MSA in which they lived.

- Those who obtained heroin were least likely to report it was "very easy" to obtain (31%).

- 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.
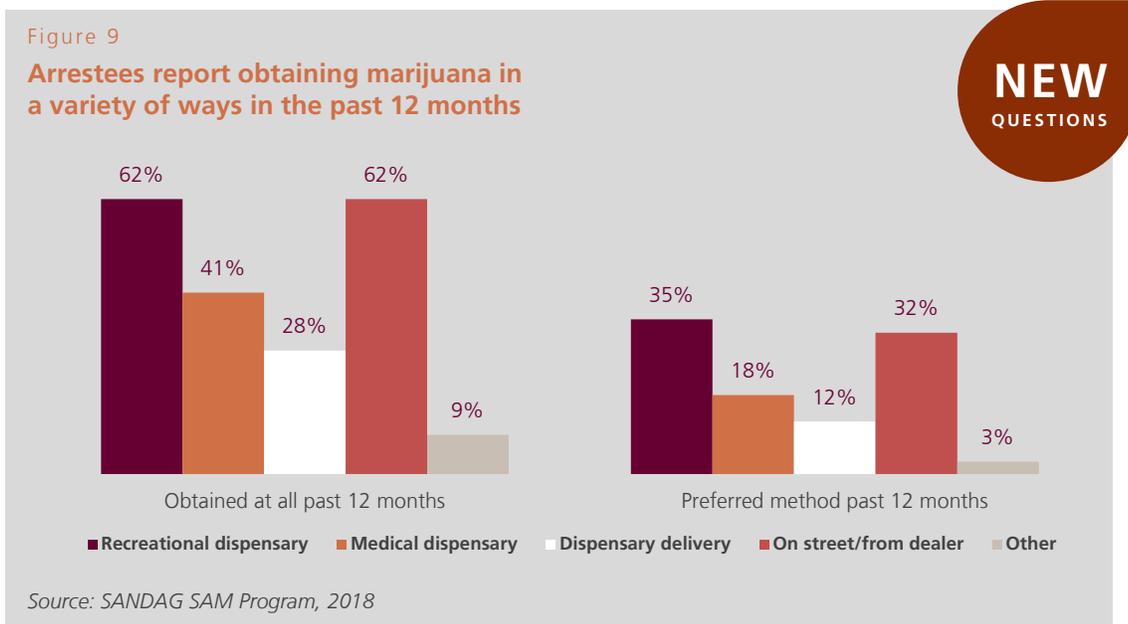
Table 2

Illicit drug availability varies by type

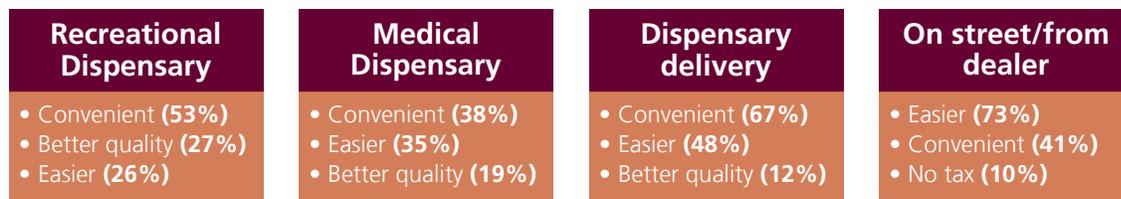|	Marijuana	Meth	Heroin	Cocaine	Crack
Very easy to obtain	68%	52%	31%	37%	35%
Got in same MSA where live	74%	83%	80%	76%	76%
Got with cash	62%	73%	72%	66%	79%
Got with non-cash ways	65%	65%	54%	59%	53%
Got at a residence	28%	40%	33%	52%	15%
Got at a public building	19%	7%	6%	4%	10%
Got outside	28%	51%	57%	44%	75%

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

While questions had been included for a number of years regarding having a medical marijuana card, new questions were added to the instrument in 2018 regarding obtaining the drug through recreational distributors.

- Just over half (55%) of arrestees reported they obtained marijuana in more than one way in 2018, with 45% saying they had just one preferred way. Of those who said they just obtained it only one way, the most common way was illegally on the street (48%), followed by a recreational dispensary (34%) and a medical dispensary (18%).

- As Figure 9 shows, the two most common ways to obtain marijuana over the past 12 months was through a recreational dispensary (62%) and on the street (62%). When asked their preferred method, 35% said a recreational dispensary, followed by 32% saying on the street.

Figure 9

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

NEW
QUESTIONS

Legend: Recreational dispensary | Medical dispensary | Dispensary delivery | On street/from dealer | Other

Obtained at all past 12 months: 62%, 41%, 28%, 62%, 9%

Preferred method past 12 months: 35%, 18%, 12%, 32%, 3%

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

- When asked the reasons behind their preferred method, the 3 most common for recreational and medical dispensaries and dispensary delivery included they were convenient, easier, and had better quality drugs. Not shown, 15% of those who preferred medical dispensaries and 11% of those who preferred recreational said this was because they were safer and legal. Those who preferred still buying it on the street most often noted it was easier, convenient, and less expensive because there was no tax (Figure 10).

Figure 10

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

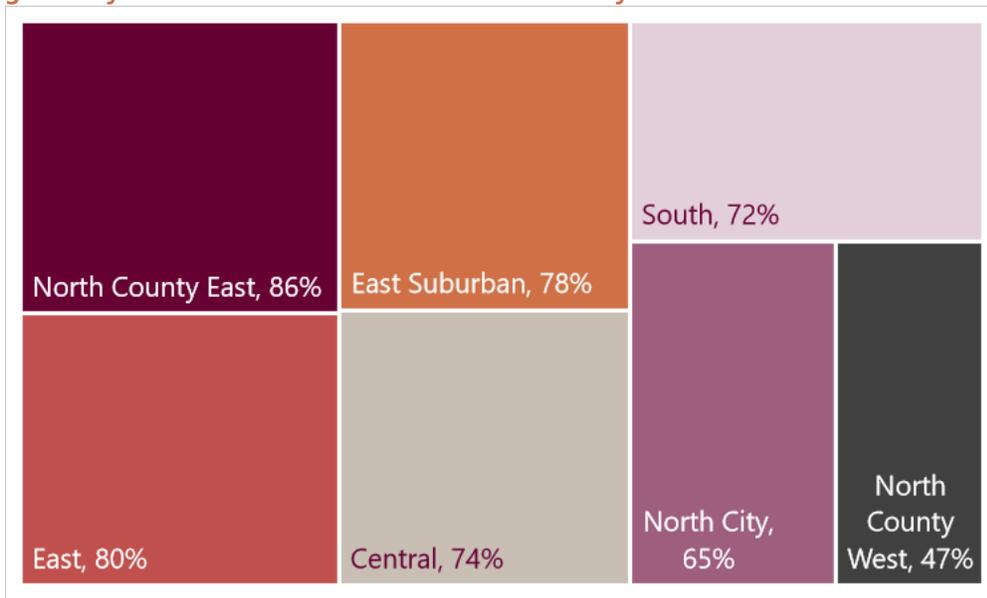| Recreational Dispensary	Medical Dispensary	Dispensary delivery	On street/from dealer
• Convenient **(53%)** • Better quality **(27%)** • Easier **(26%)**	• Convenient **(38%)** • Easier **(35%)** • Better quality **(19%)**	• Convenient **(67%)** • Easier **(48%)** • Better quality **(12%)**	• Easier **(73%)** • Convenient **(41%)** • No tax **(10%)**

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

- Residents of the North County West MSA were least likely to report obtaining marijuana at a recreational or medical dispensary in this MSA (47%) and residents of North County East MSA were most likely to report obtaining it in the same MSA where they lived (86%) (Figure 11).

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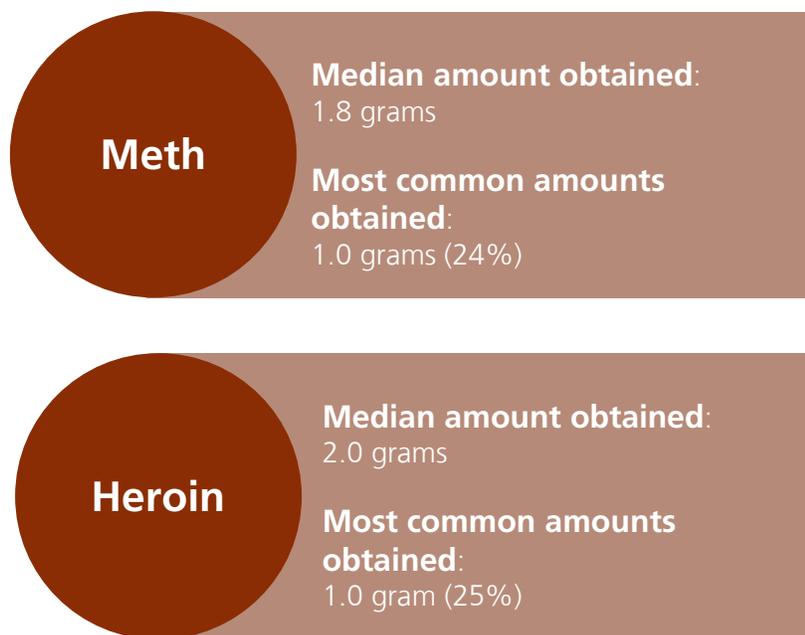

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

- Around 1 in 4 (26%) of the arrestees reported having ever had a medical marijuana card, 33% of whom still did. When asked the medical condition they got the card for, the most common reasons included physical pain (39%), to help them sleep (32%), anxiety (23%), and depression (15%). An arrestee's age was a significant predictor of ever having a medical marijuana card, with 30% of those under 25 having a card, compared to 33% of those 25 to 39 and 16% of those 40 and older.

To better understand how much meth or heroin arrestees obtain for their own personal use, a question was added to the interview regarding how much of the drug they obtained the last time they did so. For meth, of those who provided a unit of measurement in grams, the median was 1.8 in 2018, and for heroin, it was 1.0 (Figure 12).

Figure 12

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

Meth

Median amount obtained:
1.8 grams

Most common amounts obtained:
1.0 grams (24%)

Heroin

Median amount obtained:
2.0 grams

Most common amounts obtained:
1.0 gram (25%)

One in ten (10%) arrestees reported traveling to Mexico for drugs. When these arrestees described what they obtained, 40% said meth, 33% heroin, 30% marijuana, 16% prescription drugs, 14% cocaine, 7% crack, and 2% ecstasy.
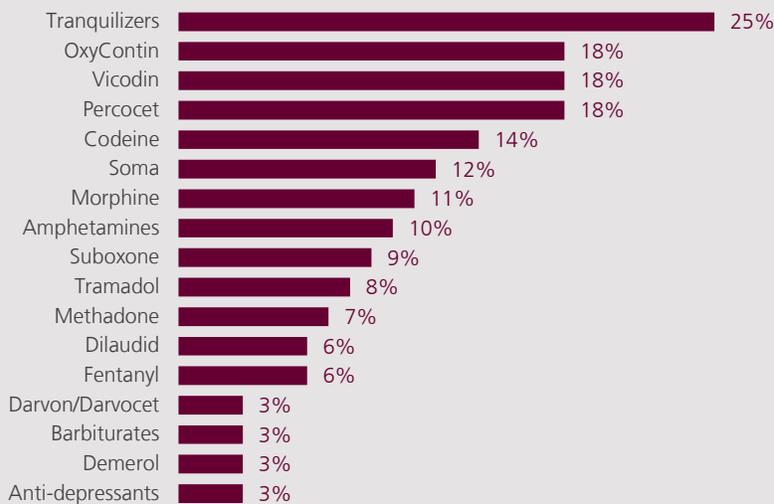
In addition, 15% reported they had ever been approached to transport, smuggle, conceal, or participate in bringing drugs over the border. Around 2 in 5 (41%) of those who said they were approached also reported they had crossed the border to obtain drugs, versus 4% of those who said they had not been approached. Arrestees who identified as White were significantly most likely to be approached (19%), compared to 15% of those who were Hispanic and 4% of those who were Black.

Takeaway

Consistent with use data, arrestees reported marijuana was the easiest drug to obtain in the region in 2018, followed by meth. Arrestees most often reported they had obtained marijuana both legally and illegally in the past 12 months. Heroin was less available than other drugs. Arrestees were most often able to obtain drugs where they lived and 15% reported being approached to transport drugs across the border.

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

In 2018, 45% 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 13).

Figure 13

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

Drug	Percentage
Tranquilizers	25%
OxyContin	18%
Vicodin	18%
Percocet	18%
Codeine	14%
Soma	12%
Morphine	11%
Amphetamines	10%
Suboxone	9%
Tramadol	8%
Methadone	7%
Dilaudid	6%
Fentanyl	6%
Darvon/Darvocet	3%
Barbiturates	3%
Demerol	3%
Anti-depressants	3%

Total = 456–461

Note: Cases with missing information not included.

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

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 (23%), tranquilizers (13%), amphetamines (10%), and Percocet (7%). Additional analyses revealed that White arrestees were significantly more likely to report abusing prescription drugs (61%), compared to arrestees of other ethnic groups (35% Black and 28% Hispanic). An arrestee's age also was a significant predictor, with younger ones more likely to abuse prescription drugs (51% of those under 25 and 50% 25 to 39), compared to older ones (37%). Additionally, arrestees who abused prescription drugs were significantly more likely to test positive for meth (66% versus 50%).

More than 1 in 4 (29%) heroin users said they were hooked on prescription opiates before they began using the street drug and of these, 82% said they began to use heroin as a substitute for prescription opiates. When asked which opiate they were addicted to, 79% said OxyContin, 45% Vicodin, 39% Percocet, 24% Dilaudid, 16% morphine, 11% methadone, 8% fentanyl, and 3% Demerol. When asked why they switched from prescription drugs to heroin, the most common answers included that heroin was cheaper (61%) and it was easier to get (48%).
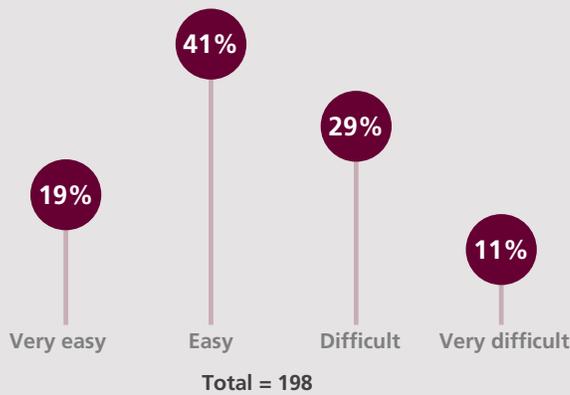
Given the recent national attention to the dangers of fentanyl, new questions were added to the SAM questionnaire in 2018, including, "If you knew a drug contained fentanyl, would you purchase it?"

- *Overall, 69% of the arrestees said they would not purchase it, but 23% said they didn't know what they would do and 8% said they would.*

- *While an arrestee's gender and age was not significantly related to saying they would knowingly buy fentanyl, ethnicity was, with 13% of White arrestees saying they would, compared to 3% of Hispanic and none of the Black arrestees.*

- *When those who said they would buy it were asked why, 74% said because it is a strong high, 12% that opiates were their drug of choice, 6% it could help with pain or for them to sleep, 6% it was cheap, and 3% said they were curious.*

- *When those who said they would not buy it were asked why, the most common answers included it was a dangerous drug (55%), they did not know what it is (19%), and opiates/prescription drugs are not their drug of choice (13%).*

When asked how difficult it was to obtain prescription drugs illegally, three-fifths said it was "very easy" or "easy" (Figure 14).

Most arrestees say prescription drugs are easy to get

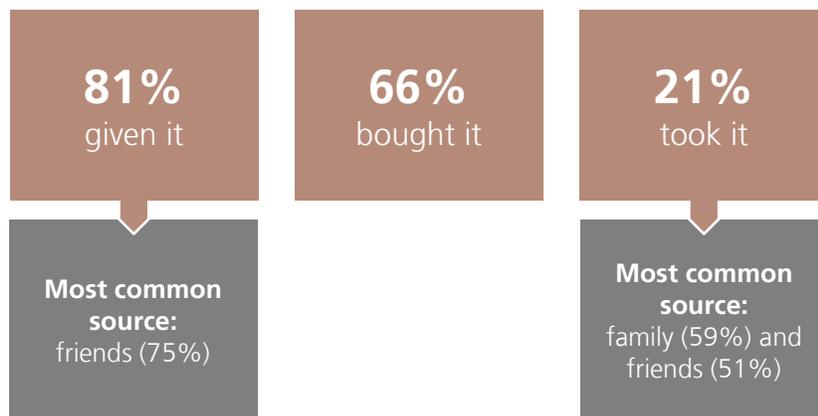|			
19%	41%	29%	11%
Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult

Total = 198

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

When asked to describe how they had obtained the prescription drugs, the most common ways included that they were given it (most often from a friend), they bought it from someone illegally, or they took it from someone (most often a family member or friend) (Figure 15). In addition, 7% reported that they had "doctor shopped," 58% of whom were successful in doing so.

Figure 15

Most common ways to get prescription drugs illegally

81%
given it

66%
bought it

21%
took it

Most common source: friends (75%)

Most common source: family (59%) and friends (51%)

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

Takeaway

In addition to using illicit drugs, a number of arrestees have a history of abusing prescription drugs, particularly Whites and those later addicted to heroin. Fentanyl was used most often in the past 30 days of those who had abused prescription drugs and around 3 in 10 said they might buy a drug if they knew it contained fentanyl. More common ways of obtaining prescription drugs included being given it by a friend, buying it illegally, or taking it from another person, most often a family member or a friend.

What do we know about arrestee use of alcohol?

The majority of both male and female arrestees reported at least one prior binge drinking episode (defined as five drinks or more for males and four drinks or more for females), with males significantly more likely to do so than females (82% versus 72%) and at an earlier age (16.8 versus 18.2). Male arrestees also were significantly more likely to report binge drinking in the past 30 days and drinking any alcohol in the past 24 hours (Figure 16). Additional analyses revealed that:

- White arrestees were significantly more likely to report ever binge drinking (85%), compared to Hispanic (72%) and Black (70%) arrestees.

- Individuals arrested for a property offense were less likely to report drinking alcohol in the 24 hours prior to their arrest (25%) compared to those arrested for another type of most serious offense (34% to 44%).

- Individuals who reported binge drinking in the past 30 days were significantly *less* likely to test positive for meth (48% versus 63%) and opiates (7% versus 14%), but *more* likely to test positive for cocaine (10% versus 5%).

Takeaway

Alcohol remains the drug of choice for many adults in the justice system, with more than 4 in 5 males and almost 3 in 4 females reporting ever binge drinking. Two in five males and 1 in 4 females drank alcohol within 24 hours prior to their arrest.

Figure 16

Male and female arrestee alcohol use history

Male		Female	
82% ever binge drank*		**72%** ever binge drank*	
16.8 average age first binge*	**6.0** average number of drinks in past 24 hours	**18.2** average age first binge*	**3.6** average number of drinks in past 24 hours
44% binge drank past 30 days*	**43%** self-report drinking any alcohol in the past 24 hours*	**28%** binge drank past 30 days*	**27%** self-report drinking any alcohol in the past 24 hours*

Males (n=126-302)   Females (n=42-162)

Significant at p < 0.05

Note: Cases with missing information not included.

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

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

Prior arrests

- Almost four in every five arrestees (78%) reported having a previous arrest, with a median number of 7.0 prior arrests.

- On average, males were 21.9 years old at their first arrest as an adult, compared to 25.6 for females. When asked what their first arrest as an adult was for, 34% said a drug-related crime, 26% said a property crime, 24% some other type of offense, 16% a violent crime, and 3% a weapons offense.

- More than 1 in 3 (38%) reported being arrested as a juvenile, including 45% of males and 24% of females. When asked what their first arrest as a juvenile was for, 46% said a property crime, 29% a violent crime, 16% a drug-related crime, 11% a status offense, 3% a weapons offense, and 2% some other type of offense.

Prior incarcerations

- Just over three-quarters (77%) reported previously serving time in jail and 27% in prison (36% of males and 12% of females).

- Almost 1 in 5 (17%) 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, 79% said they also had been on parole – 22% who still were.

- Forty-three percent (43%) of those who had ever been in prison reported receiving services (33% while in prison and 31% in the community). When asked their biggest need upon reentry after prison, the most common answers included housing (34%), employment (27%), and help with substance abuse (13%).

- Around 3 in 4 (76%) of those with a prior arrest reported they had previously been on probation, 53% of whom said they were currently on probation.

Involvement in drug distribution

- More than 2 in 5 (44%) of those interviewed reported being involved in selling drugs and of these, 55% said they had done so in the past year. Of those convicted of a felony, 61% reported ever being involved in selling drugs.

Crime to support drug use

- One in three (33%) arrestees reported they have committed a crime to support a drug habit, but this percentage was even higher for those who said they had previously been convicted of a felony (51%).

- Of those who admitted to doing so, 85% 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 (75%), followed by heroin (24%), and marijuana (23%).

- 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 (38% each), compared to those who said they had not (21% and 18%, respectively).

Weapons

- Around 1 in 4 (26%) arrestees reported ever carrying a gun, with males significantly more likely to do so than females (35% versus 10%).

- When asked how easy it was to obtain the gun, 42% said "very easy", 41% "easy", 12% "difficult", and 5% "very difficult."

- When asked how they obtained it, 36% said from a friend, 30% they bought it off the street, 25% from a store or gun shop, 12% from a family member, and 10% some other way (e.g., stole it, found it).

- Individuals who reported they had committed an act of domestic violence in the past 12 months were significantly more likely to report carrying a gun (37%) than those who said they had not (24%).

Proposition 47

- In 2014, California voters passed Proposition 47 (Prop 47) which reduced certain property and drug-related felonies to misdemeanors. In 2018, 58% of the arrestees said they had heard of Prop 47, including 69% of those ever convicted of a felony and 31% of those who had not had a prior felony conviction.

- Of those who had ever heard of it, 17% said that they or their attorney had petitioned to have a prior offense reduced.

- Of these 44 individuals, 39% were currently in custody for a most serious crime that was a drug-related offense, 34% for an "other" offense, 14% for a property offense, and 14% 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), 36% said they would not.

Exchanging sex/pimping/pandering

- Almost 1 in 5 arrestees (17%) report they have ever been approached by someone to pimp/prostitute them, including 36% of females and 7% of males.

NEW QUESTIONS

- Around 1 in 10 (11%) of those interviewed said they had ever exchanged sex for money, drugs, or other things. Of these individuals, 22% of the females and none of the males said that they had ever had a pimp.

- When asked the first age they exchanged sex for something else, the mean was 23.2 years (range 13 to 48).

- One-fourth (25%) of those who reported ever exchanging sex for something said they had done so in the last 30 days. Of these 13 individuals, 62% said they would be interested in getting help to stop.

- Five percent (5%) reported being involved in pimping or pandering activities. This included 11 males (7 who said they had exchanged sex themselves and 4 who had not) and 10 females (7 who had exchanged sex themselves and 3 who had not).

- Two-thirds (67%) of those who had pimped/pandered said they had given drugs to the person/people they were pimping.

- Individuals who reported ever engaging in pimping or pandering activities were significantly more likely to report having ever carried a gun (45%), compared to those who did not have this history (25%).

Gang involvement

- Almost one-quarter (24%) of arrestees reported some type of gang involvement.

- Self-reported gang involvement varied by ethnicity (19% of White arrestees compared to 34% of Black and 26% of Hispanic arrestees), as well as age (23% of those under 25, 30% of those 25 to 39 and 17% of those 40 and older).

- When asked how old they were when they started hanging out with the gang, the mean age was 15.6 years (range 1 to 35).

- Of the 109 adult arrestees who reported any type of gang involvement, 60% said they had this contact within the past five years. When asked their current status with the gang, 40% said they currently hang out and were never a member, 27% used to hang out but don't anymore, 19% were currently a member, 11% used to be a member but aren't now, and 3% 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 (51% versus 33%), to have been involved in drug distribution (68% versus 37%), and to have carried a gun previously (47% versus 20%).

- Individuals who reported a gang affiliation were significantly more likely to test positive for meth (70% versus 53%), and multiple drugs (43% versus 33%).

Mental health issues

- Over one-third (36%) of the arrestees reported they had ever been diagnosed with a mental or psychiatric disorder and 25% 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 and race. Female arrestees were significantly more likely to report having a diagnosis (42%), compared to males (32%), as were those who identified as White (48%) or Black (44%) (compared to Hispanic, 15%).

- 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 3.0 days (range 1 to 30) and the mean age for the first stay was 24.3 (range 7 to 56).

- Almost half (46%) said they had been under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time they were admitted, supporting the need for dual diagnosis treatment options.

- Almost all (91%) of those who had ever been diagnosed also had been prescribed medication for the disorder. However, only 32% said they were currently prescribed the medication and of those, 29% said they were not taking them.

- One in five (20%) arrestees reported they had ever tried to commit suicide. In addition, 31% 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 (39% versus 9% without a diagnosis).

Education, employment, and insurance

- Around 1 in 5 (18%) did not have a high school degree or equivalent.

- Thirty-seven percent (37%) were employed full- or part-time at the time of their arrest and 63% were not.

- Almost 1 in 5 (17%) reported they had lost their job in the past year.

- Eleven percent (11%) reported previously serving in the military. Almost 9 in 10 (86%) of these individuals said they were discharged (77% honorably), 10% were active duty, and 4% were in the reserves.

- Twenty-nine percent (29%) said they currently did not have health insurance.

Table 3

Arrestee risk in different areas

Criminal involvement	
78%	prior arrests
77%	prior jail bookings
44%	have sold drugs
38%	arrested as a juvenile
Prop 47	
17%	petitioned to have prior offense reduced
36%	would not participate in voluntary programs
Prostitution	
11%	history of prostitution
5%	history of pimping/pandering
Gangs	
24%	history of gang involvement
Mental health	
46%	admitted overnight to mental health facility under the influence at time
29%	not taking medication for mental health issues as prescribed
20%	previously attempted suicide
Instability	
66%	ever homeless
63%	currently not employed
29%	no health insurance
18%	no high school degree
Foster care	
12%	prior foster care system involvement
Drug treatment	
37%	received drug treatment previously
Children	
57%	have children
31%	prior Child Protective Services contact

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

County of origin and homelessness

- Over half (58%) of those interviewed reported they were not born in San Diego County.
- When asked how long ago they moved to San Diego County, 8% said they moved here in 2018, 24% in the past five years, and 68% five years ago or longer.
- When asked why they moved here, 42% cited family, 16% something they liked about San Diego, 14% to be with someone, 14% work, and 12% a new beginning.
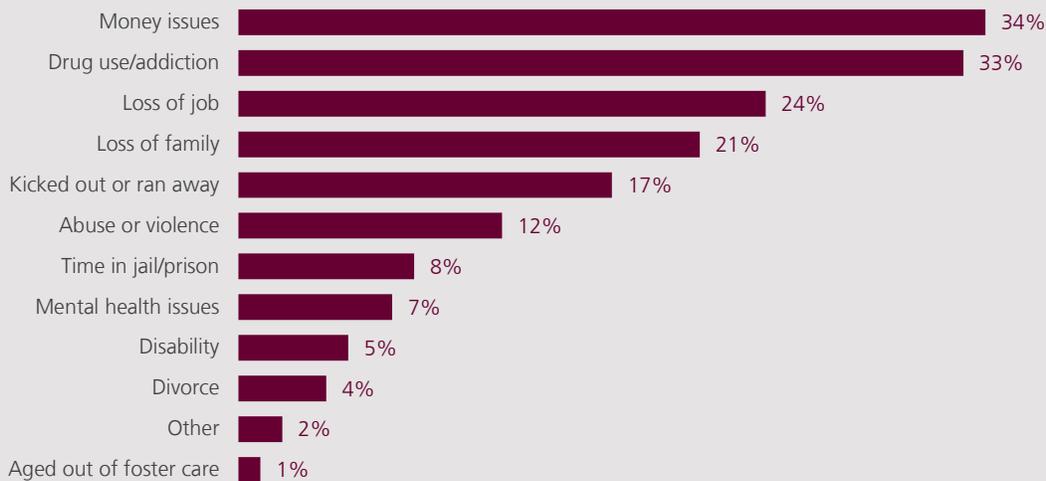
In 2018, a number of new questions that delved deeper into how these individuals with justice contact became homeless and their use of shelter services were added.

NEW
QUESTIONS

- Two-thirds (66%) of those interviewed reported ever being homeless and 39% described themselves as being homeless in the past 30 days.
- Over three-quarters (77%) said they had first become homeless in San Diego County, as opposed to somewhere else.
- As Figure 17 shows, the most common reasons these individuals gave for becoming homeless were money issues, followed by drugs, loss of job, and loss of family. Female arrestees were significantly more likely to say their homelessness was related to a loss of family or abuse, compared to males, and less likely to say it was related to a loss of a job or drug use.

Figure 17

Primary factors arrestees said led to their first becoming homeless

Factor	Percentage
Money issues	34%
Drug use/addiction	33%
Loss of job	24%
Loss of family	21%
Kicked out or ran away	17%
Abuse or violence	12%
Time in jail/prison	8%
Mental health issues	7%
Disability	5%
Divorce	4%
Other	2%
Aged out of foster care	1%

Total = 287

Note: Percentages based on multiple response.

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

- When asked the first age they became homeless the median age was 26.0 and when asked how many times they had ever been homeless, 41% said once, 15% twice, 12% three times, and 32% 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, 49% said the Central MSA, 16% East Suburban, 11% South, 9% North City, 7% North County East, 6% North County West, 2% East County, and 2% outside the County.

- Almost 1 in 5 (18%) said they had stayed in a shelter in the past 12 months, with females significantly more likely to report doing so compared to males (25% versus 15%). When asked why they had not stayed in a shelter, 30% said because of restrictions and rules at the shelter, 26% concerns for safety, 23% wait lists, 15% because they have family, friends, or a pet that is not allowed to stay there, and 24% provided an "other" answer that was coded (and included personal preference, have someplace else to stay, personal pride, and don't know how to).
- When asked what they thought their housing status would be a year from now (if they had described themselves as primarily homeless in the past 30 days), 61% said they would be in a house, mobile home, or apartment, 23% said they would still be homeless, and 16% said they would have some other type of living situation.

Foster care involvement

- Overall, 12% of the arrestees reported they had been in the foster care system as a child and almost half (48%) of these individuals reported aging out of the system.

Drug treatment needs

- Overall, 37% of the arrestees said they had received drug treatment in the past, but 35% of these individuals said the most recent time was not successful.
- The mean number of prior treatment admissions was 3.0 (range 1 to 60).
- Older arrestees were more likely to report having received treatment, compared to younger ones (22% of those under 25, 40% of those 25 to 39, and 41% of those 40 years of age and older).
- When asked what type of treatment they had most recently completed, 68% said in-patient, 14% out-patient, 10% detox, and 8% NA/AA.
- For 54% of those who had received treatment, the last program was court-ordered (as opposed to voluntary). Individuals who reported having a prior arrest (44% versus 12%) and Child Protective Services (CPS) contact (46% versus 31%) were more likely to have received treatment.
- There was no significant difference between court-ordered treatment being successful (70%), compared to voluntary (60%).
- Over three-quarters (77%) of the arrestees reported that every time they had sought drug treatment, it had been available.

Dependent children

- Over half (57%) of arrestees reported having children, including 56% of males and 58% of females.
- Around one-quarter (23%) reported they currently live with a child, whether or not it was their own.
- Forty-three percent (43%) of female arrestees and 24% of males reported prior CPS contact (31% overall). Around 1 in 4 (26%) of these individuals said their case was still open.

Takeaway

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

Unreported victimization

- Twenty-nine percent (29%) of males and 42% of females (33% overall) reported they had previously been the victim of a crime they did not report to police.
- When asked to describe what type of crime they were the victim of, the most common responses were sexual assault (34%), assault (34%), some type of larceny/theft (22%), robbery (16%), and domestic violence (14%).

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 18 shows how addressing underlying addiction can have a cost-benefit for the community overall and Figure 19 shows how common alcohol versus other drug use is in relation to these behaviors.

Figure 18

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

45% rode with driver under influence and **36%** drove under the influence

40% went to work high or drunk and **25%** missed work because of being under the influence

29% have injected drugs, and of those who injected in the last year, **36%** shared their needles and/or works

24% have gone to an emergency room for an alcohol/drug-related issue and **16%** have overdosed

16% had health problems related to their alcohol/drug use
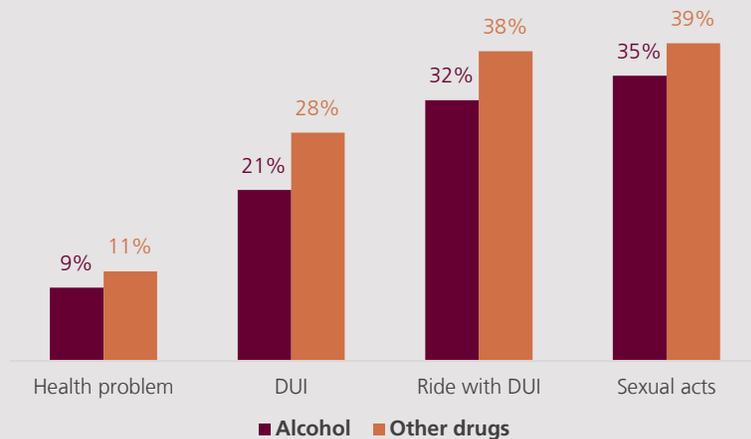
Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

Of those who had ever injected drugs, almost two-thirds (65%) reported they had injected in the last year. Of those who had ever overdosed, 45% said they had been administered naloxone to help reverse the effect of the opiate and 36% said they would know how to obtain it if they needed it in the future.

Overall, 31% of arrestees (37% of males and 19% 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 (40%), compared to those who were under 25 (16%) or between 25 and 39 (29%). Almost two-thirds (61%) reported they had been arrested just once for driving under the influence, and 39% more than once, with a range of 1 to 8 previous arrests. When asked what they had consumed when they drove under the influence most recently, 69% said alcohol, 15% drugs, and 16% both alcohol and drugs. When the individuals who had used drugs were asked and answered which type of drug, 43% said marijuana, 41% meth, 14% some other type of drug (e.g., prescription), 14% heroin, 7% crack, and 5% powder cocaine.

In terms of how self-reported alcohol and drug use is potentially related to risky behavior, as Figure 19 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 19

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

Source: SANDAG SAM Program, 2018

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.