



2005 Juvenile Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region

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2005 JUVENILE ARRESTEE DRUG USE IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION

INTRODUCTION

Between 1987 and 2004, SANDAG completed interviews with local arrestees regarding their drug use histories as part of the federally-funded Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program. In comparison to other interview and survey efforts with households and juveniles across the country (e.g., National Household Survey on Drug Use, Youth Risk Behavior Survey), the ADAM program was unique in that it included an objective measure of recent drug use (i.e., urinalysis), in addition to collecting self-reported information. Over the years, data from these interviews with a high-risk population enabled practitioners and policymakers across the country to better track drug use trends, document need, and understand special topics of interest (e.g., domestic violence, illegal firearms use, and illegal immigration).

When the juvenile component of the federal ADAM program was discontinued in 2003¹, local funding through the California Border Alliance Group (CBAG) was secured, which enabled this important data collection effort to continue in San Diego County as the Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program. While the same data collection procedures are used for SAM (to allow comparability with prior years), local funding and control have allowed the addition of new questions of local interest based upon the input of the SAM Local Coordinating Council (LCC), a group of practitioners who meet quarterly to discuss the SAM findings as well as other new trends and initiatives.

BULLETIN HIGHLIGHTS

- Drug use for juvenile arrestees was up in 2005, with 55 percent testing positive for at least one substance, 44 percent positive for marijuana, and 21 percent positive for methamphetamine.
- More than nine out of ten arrestees had previously used alcohol and/or marijuana, and four out of five had used tobacco.
- Individuals who used meth and crack were aware of the negative health risks but used the substances anyway. In comparison, those who used alcohol and marijuana did not think these substances were as bad as non-users did.
- All of the youth who tested positive for multiple drugs tested positive for marijuana (in addition to at least one other substance).
- Three in four youth said that it was easy or very easy to obtain meth and marijuana.
- More than one in three youth reported they had gone to school drunk or high in the past year.
- Compared to boys, girls were significantly more likely to have a family Child Protective Services (CPS) case, attempted suicide, and run away from home.
- Two in five youth had used drugs in their home, and one in five reported keeping drugs in their home.

¹ The juvenile component was discontinued one year before the entire program was dismantled.

In 2005, this data collection effort was generously supported by CBAG, the San Diego County Public Safety Group, the Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS), San Diego County Alcohol and Drug Services, and the San Dieguito Alliance for Drug Free Youth. Their support, as well as funding from SANDAG member agencies through the Criminal Justice Clearinghouse, has enabled the production of "2005 Juvenile Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region". This CJ Bulletin, the first in a three-part series presenting data collected in the 2005 calendar year, includes information about drug use trends from 2000. Their support, as well as the cooperation of the San Diego County Probation Department, which is necessary to conduct these interviews, is gratefully acknowledged.

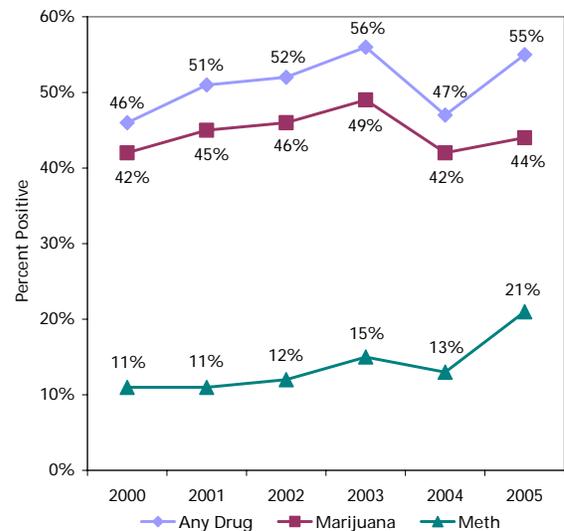
In addition, for the first time, all of the data (percentages and raw numbers) captured through the juvenile interview and urinalysis for 2004 and 2005 are being made available on-line at www.sandag.org/cj. For questions regarding the project methodology or data set, please contact SANDAG's Criminal Justice Research Division at (619) 699-1900.

POSITIVE DRUG TEST RESULTS

Since 2000, about half of juveniles interviewed as part of SAM have tested positive for at least one drug, with the most commonly used illicit drug being marijuana. As Figure 1 shows, the one year decrease in the percent positive for any drug², marijuana, and methamphetamine (meth) seen from 2003 to 2004 did not continue in 2005. That is, in 2005, over half (55%) of juveniles tested positive for any drug, 44 percent tested positive for marijuana, and 21 percent tested positive for meth. This rate of around one in five juvenile arrestees testing positive for meth was the highest percent positive over

the past six years (when new sampling procedures were implemented). In addition, six percent of the youth tested positive for cocaine, two percent for heroin, and one percent for PCP (not shown).

Figure 1
JUVENILE DRUG USE, INCLUDING METH, UP FROM LAST YEAR



TOTAL = 165 - 354

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2005

Also, not shown in Figure 1, 18 percent of the youth in 2005 tested positive for more than one drug. All 29 of these individuals tested positive for marijuana, with other positive substances including meth (18), cocaine (4), PCP (2), heroin (2), heroin and meth (2), and meth and cocaine (1). In addition, it also is worth noting that individuals who tested positive for multiple drugs also were significantly more likely to report using alcohol in the past 30 days (76%), compared to those who did not test positive for multiple drugs (53%) (not shown).

² Any drug includes marijuana, opiates or heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, and PCP.

LIFETIME AND RECENT SUBSTANCE USE

As Table 1 shows, more than four in every five juveniles in 2005 reported trying alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana previously (starting around the age of 12 years old, on average) and over half (56% to 62%) had used each of these substances during the past 30 days. In addition, while 21 percent of the youth interviewed in 2005 tested positive for meth (Figure 1), 42 percent reported they had tried it at least once. Between 1 and 25 percent of the youth also reported trying other substances, including powder cocaine, mushrooms, ecstasy, crack, inhalants, LSD, rohypnol, heroin, GHB, and steroids (which were asked about for the first time in 2005).

**Table 1
OVER HALF OF JUVENILE ARRESTEES
HAVE USED "GATEWAY" DRUGS
IN THE PAST 30 DAYS**

	Ever Used	Avg. Age 1st Use	Use Last Month
Alcohol	92%	12.4	57%
Marijuana	92%	12.8	56%
Tobacco	82%	12.6	62%
Meth	42%	13.9	22%
Powder Cocaine	25%	14.2	8%
Mushrooms	20%	14.4	1%
Ecstasy	19%	14.8	4%
Crack	16%	14.1	4%
Inhalants	11%	12.3	1%
LSD	7%	13.8	0%
Rohypnol	7%	14.0	1%
Heroin	6%	14.8	1%
GHB	1%	14.0	0%
Steroids	1%	14.0	0%
TOTAL	163-165	1-151	165

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2005

While data from national surveys of high school students (e.g., Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Monitoring the Future) have shown recent declines in the initiation rate of adolescent drug use since 1999³, these downward trends were not as consistent in San Diego among the arrestee population. Specifically, while the percent of juveniles who had ever tried cocaine and inhalants was slightly lower in 2005 compared to 2000 (27% to 25% and 15% to 11%, respectively), the percent of youth who had ever tried marijuana and meth actually increased slightly during this time period (88% to 92% and 37% to 42%, respectively) (not shown).

PREDICTORS OF DRUG USE

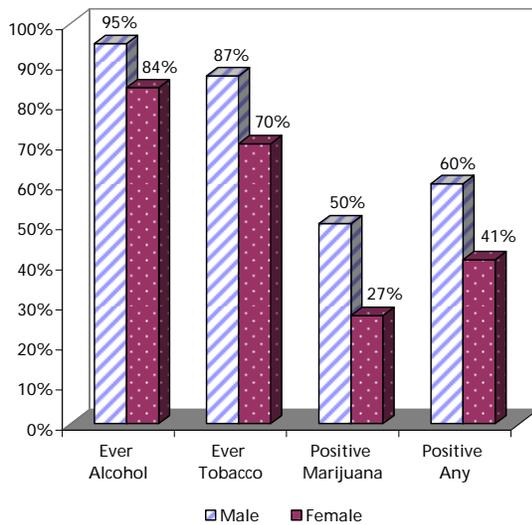
Additional analyses were conducted to determine which, if any, youth characteristics were associated with lifetime or recent substance use. As the next series of figures show, significant factors included gender, age, race/ethnicity, having parents who abused alcohol or used illegal drugs, and enrollment in school.

Gender

As Figure 2 shows, boys interviewed as part of the SAM program were significantly more likely to have ever used alcohol and tobacco, compared to girls. In addition, while there was no difference in ever trying marijuana, boys were significantly more likely to test positive for it (which is related to the fact they also were more likely to test positive for any drug) and to have tried marijuana at an earlier age, on average (12.49 versus 13.51) (not shown).

³ Center for Substance Abuse Research (June 12, 2006). Illicit Drug Use by U.S. High School Students Declining. *CESAR Fax*.

Figure 2
BOYS MORE LIKELY THAN GIRLS TO
HAVE TRIED ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO



TOTAL = 161-165

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2005

Age

As one would expect, a youth's age was one of the strongest predictors of alcohol and other drug use, with younger juveniles less likely to have used various substances compared to those who were closer to 18 years in age. As Table 2 shows, youth who were 16 and older were consistently and significantly more likely to have recently used alcohol and tobacco, to have tried meth at least once, and to test positive for any drug and meth.

Race/Ethnicity

In terms of race/ethnicity, the drug use history of juveniles varied in one area: meth. Consistent with other sources of data (e.g., Drug Abuse Warning Network, or DAWN), White and Hispanic youth were significantly more likely to have ever tried meth (52% and 50%, respectively), compared to Black (12%) youth and youth of other ethnicities (20%)

(not shown). While the mechanism for this difference is not totally understood, one of the prominent theories is that it is related to drug distribution networks. That is, meth historically has not been distributed in predominantly Black neighborhoods.

Table 2
A YOUTH'S AGE AND USE OF ILLICIT
SUBSTANCES ARE POSITIVELY RELATED

	13	14 to 15	16 to 18
Alcohol 30 Days	20%	51%	64%
Tobacco 30 Days	20%	57%	69%
Ever Meth	0%	40%	48%
Positive Any Drug	20%	53%	60%
Positive Meth	0%	16%	27%
TOTAL	10	57	98

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

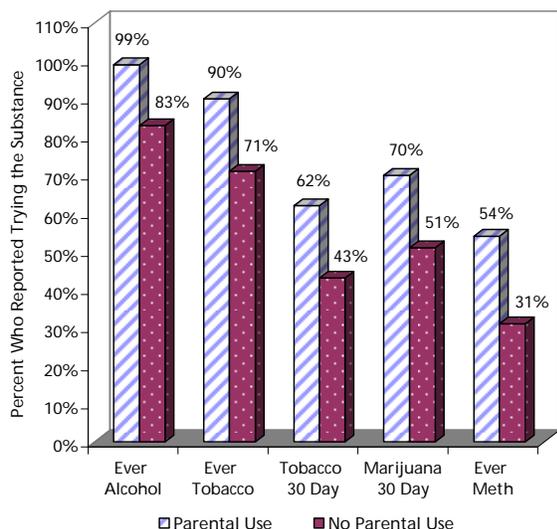
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2005

Parents' Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs

When asked if they knew if their parents had abused alcohol or used other drugs during the youth's lifetime, 17 percent said their parents had used other drugs, 16 percent they had abused alcohol, and 21 percent they had done both⁴. As Figure 3 shows, youth who reported parental usage were significantly more likely to have ever tried alcohol, tobacco, and meth, as well as to have used tobacco and marijuana in the past 30 days. This relationship between parental and child use speaks to the appropriateness for youth treatment programs to address the needs of the entire family unit.

⁴ When asked what drug they used, the most common responses included marijuana (71%) and meth (65%).

Figure 3
PARENTAL ABUSE HISTORY PREDICTS
YOUTH ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE



TOTAL = 154

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2005

Enrollment in School

Around one-quarter (26%) of the youth were not currently enrolled in school (because of an expulsion, suspension, or dropping out on their own). Additional analyses revealed that those youth who were not in school were significantly more likely to test positive for any drug (77%), meth (42%), and multiple drugs (26%), compared to those who were still enrolled (48%, 14%, and 15%, respectively) (not shown).

KNOWLEDGE AND VIEWS ON DRUG USE AND AVAILABILITY

For the first time in 2005, youth were asked to rate (on a four-point scale) how bad they think different types of drugs are, regardless of their past use of the drug. As Table 3 shows, while around 9 out of 10 (86% to 98%) respondents who did *not* use a given substance felt the drug is “extremely bad” or “very bad,” these ratings varied considerably

for those who had ever used the drug. Specifically, meth (97% versus 93%) and crack users (98% versus 92%) had similar perceptions of the risks of using the drug, even though they had or were currently using it. However, only 40 percent of the youth who used alcohol and 34 percent of those who used marijuana thought the drug could have negative effects on their health (compared to 92% and 92% who did not use the drugs), suggesting that different prevention and intervention strategies should be used for different substances.

Table 3
METH AND CRACK USERS
AWARE OF DRUGS’ RISK

	Percent Who Think The Drug Is Extremely Or Very Bad	
	Never Used Drug	Used Drug
Meth	97%	93%
Crack	98%	92%
Powder Cocaine	98%	83%
LSD	95%	82%
Ecstasy	97%	81%
Inhalants	93%	78%
Tobacco	89%	63%
Rohypnol	94%	60%
Mushrooms	87%	50%
Alcohol	92%	40%
Marijuana	92%	34%
GHB	93%	N/A
Steroids	86%	N/A
TOTAL	13-139	10-149

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

N/A reflects less than ten respondents had used the drug.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2005

In another series of questions, individuals who had ever used the drug were asked to rate how easy the drug is to obtain, again on a four-point scale. As Table 4 shows, with the exception of LSD and mushrooms, more than half of users said it was “easy” or “very easy” to obtain these substances. According to the 2005 interviewees, inhalants, tobacco, marijuana, and meth were among those easiest to obtain.

**Table 4
YOUTH REPORT MARIJUANA AND METH
ARE EASIER TO OBTAIN THAN ALCOHOL**

Percent Who Think The Drug Is Very Easy Or Easy To Obtain	
Inhalants	87%
Tobacco	84%
Marijuana	74%
Meth	74%
Alcohol	70%
Rohypnol	70%
Powder Cocaine	66%
Crack	64%
Ecstasy	56%
Mushrooms	41%
LSD	20%
TOTAL	10-148

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2005

SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

During the interview, youth are asked a number of questions pertaining to their experience and opinion of school. Overall, more than four out of every five (88%) reported they had *ever* skipped school or been truant⁵. In addition, 47 percent reported they do not like to read for school, 44 percent do not like to read for fun, 27 percent have

⁵ The median number of days truant reported in the past 30 days was 3.00.

brought a weapon to school, 24 percent have been referred to the School Attendance Review Board (SARB), 15 percent do not like school at all, and 18 percent have been bullied at school (not shown).

GANG MEMBERSHIP

Almost two-thirds (63%) of the youth interviewed as part of this study reported they were or had been a member of a gang or associated with gang members. On average, these individuals had interacted with the gang for three years (median), and 65 percent reported their gang generated income either through the distribution of drugs or through other criminal activity. Consistent with this, these individuals were significantly more likely to report they were involved in the distribution of drugs (52%), compared to those with no gang ties (26%)⁶, and to have brought a weapon to school (36% versus 11%). These gang-associated individuals also were significantly more likely to have ever tried marijuana (97%) and meth (51%) (versus 82% and 28%, respectively). Interestingly, there was no significant difference in being in a gang or associating with a gang by a youth’s gender, race, or age (not shown).

PARTICIPATION IN RISKY BEHAVIORS

At the end of the interview, youth are asked if they have participated in any types of specific risk behaviors in the past 12 months. As Table 5 shows, around one-third or more reported they had engaged in a number of these behaviors, including getting in trouble with parents for using alcohol/drugs, riding in a car with someone who had used alcohol or other drugs, as well as consuming alcohol or

⁶ Overall, 93 percent of those involved distributed marijuana and 53 percent meth. The median amount earned distributing drugs in the past 30 days was almost \$6,000.

other drugs and then feeling bad for some type of behavior, getting sick, going to school, participating in sex acts, and getting into a fight. While engaging in some of these behaviors was significantly related to age (i.e., those 16 and older were more likely to have gotten in trouble for alcohol/drug use, feel bad about doing something while under the influence, participate in sex acts under the influence, and engage in risk behaviors that involved vehicle use), there was no difference by gender (not shown).

**Table 5
YOUTH ENGAGE IN A NUMBER
OF ALCOHOL/DRUG-RELATED
RISK BEHAVIORS**

Get in trouble with parents for using alcohol/drugs	48%
Feel bad about something done when drunk/high	45%
Ride in a car with a driver who has used alcohol/drugs	44%
Get sick from alcohol/drugs	41%
Go to school drunk/high	39%
Participate in sex acts after using alcohol/drugs	39%
Get in physical fight after using alcohol/drugs	35%
Not remember what happened after using alcohol/drugs	26%
Miss school because of alcohol/drugs	23%
Drive a car drunk/high	23%
Pass out after using alcohol/drugs	18%
Have alcohol/drug-related health problems	13%
TOTAL	153-165

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2005

DRUG TREATMENT: RECEIPT AND PERCEIVED NEED

Overall, one-third (34%) of the juveniles interviewed in 2005 reported that they had previously received some type of drug treatment. When these 56 youth were asked for more details regarding this prior treatment, they revealed that:

- the median number of prior treatment episodes was 2.0 (range 1 to 6);
- the treatment was more likely to be court-ordered (80%) than voluntary (20%);
- 45 percent had attended out-patient treatment, 20 percent Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous (NA/AA), 20 percent in-patient, and 15 percent received treatment while in custody;
- 71 percent had received treatment for marijuana, 39 percent for meth, and 38 percent for alcohol; and
- only 39 percent reported that they had successfully completed treatment⁷ (not shown).

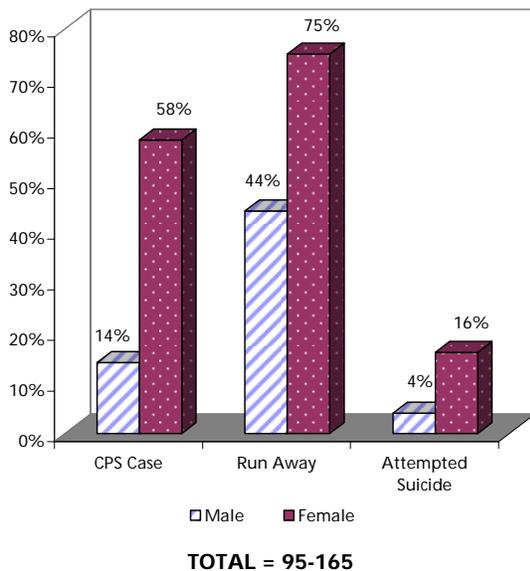
When asked if they currently need treatment, only around one in five (22%) overall responded affirmatively. However, this desire varied by prior treatment history, with non-completers most likely to report needing it (38%), followed by those who had completed treatment (23%), and those who had no prior treatment history (17%). Of the 36 individuals who felt they needed treatment, 20 thought they could use it for meth use, 17 for marijuana use, 6 for alcohol use, 3 for cocaine use, and 1 for crack use (not shown).

⁷ The most common reasons for not completing treatment included that they were still in, they had been kicked out, or they wanted to use again.

GENDER DIFFERENCES: BOYS AND GIRLS

Overall, about one-quarter (26%) of the youth interviewed responded affirmatively when asked if their family had ever been involved with Child Protective Services (CPS), half (52%) had run away from home, and seven percent had attempted suicide at least once. Additional analyses revealed that girls were significantly more at risk in each of these three areas, compared to boys, as Figure 4 shows. Specifically, they were more likely to report their family had a previous CPS case (58% versus 14%), that they had run away from home (75% versus 44%), and that they had previously attempted suicide (16% versus 4%).

Figure 4
GIRLS ARE MORE AT RISK
IN A NUMBER OF AREAS



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2005

OTHER NEW QUESTIONS IN 2005

As previously noted, with local funding and input, new questions were added to the juvenile interview instrument in 2005 related

to how and where drugs were obtained and used, as well as sources for information about drugs, participation in extracurricular activities, and delinquency activity that did not come to the attention of the juvenile justice system. Results from these questions included:

- 42 percent of the juveniles reported that they have used drugs at their home and, of these 62 youth, 58 percent said their parent was home at the time;
- 19 percent keep drugs at home;
- when asked their primary source of information about drugs, 35 percent said school, 25 percent friends, 13 percent other, 10 percent parents, 7 percent television, 5 percent treatment, 4 percent the Internet, and 1 percent the movies;
- 7 percent had crossed the U.S./Mexico border to obtain alcohol, 2 percent to obtain drugs, and 2 percent to obtain both alcohol and other drugs;
- 64 percent reported they had committed crimes in the past year for which they had not been arrested, with the median number of crimes being 5.00; and
- 24 percent reported they participated in some type of extracurricular activity (such as sports or religious group participation).

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

A total of 178 youth were interviewed at Juvenile Hall during two separate months in 2005. Of these 178, 93 percent or 165 (121 males and 44 females) provided a urine sample for drug testing and are included in the final sample described here.

- The average age of these youth was 15.6 years (range 13 to 18);
- Over half (59%) of the youth were Hispanic, 20 percent White, 15 percent Black, and 6 percent other;

- Prior to arrest, 96 percent reported living in a stable residence, 1 percent described themselves as homeless, and 3 percent said they lived in some type of group setting;
- 75 percent reported they lived with their mother, 28 percent that they lived with their father, and 20 percent that they did not live with a parent at all;
- 15 percent reported they had a job (29% of these said it was full-time, 54% part-time, and 17% odd-jobs);
- 68 percent had been arrested before (the median number of prior arrests was 3.00), and 53 percent reported they previously had served time;
- 26 percent had a highest arrest charge for a violent crime, 18 percent for a property crime, 15 percent for a status offense, 7 percent for a drug offense, and 35 percent for an “other” type charge, which primarily included probation violations;
- 44 percent were arrested for a felony, 53 percent for a misdemeanor, and 3 percent for a status offense;
- 17 percent reported they had been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or ADHD;
- 10 percent had been prescribed Ritalin and, of these 10 individuals, 4 reported they had sold it or given it away;
- 5 percent of the boys and 2 percent of the girls reported having a child of their own; and
- 25 percent of the girls and 7 percent of the boys reported that they or their girlfriend was or might be pregnant.