

2010 ADULT ARRESTEE DRUG USE IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION

Project Overview

This SANDAG CJ Bulletin is one in a series¹ highlighting findings from data collected as part of the 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 SANDAG's 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 over time. In 2010, this data collection effort was generously supported by the California Border Alliance Group (CBAG), County of San Diego Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS), the District Attorney's Office, and the Public Safety Group. Their support, as well as the cooperation of the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, is gratefully acknowledged.

As part of this project, arrestees are approached (using a random sampling method) within 48 hours of their arrest and booking into jail. If the arrestee is available and willing to participate in a confidential survey, 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 2010, 563 male arrestees were selected to be interviewed at the Vista and Central Jails and 269 female arrestees were selected at Las Colinas. Of these 832 arrestees, 802 completed the interview and also provided a valid urine sample for analysis. This research bulletin includes updated information regarding self-reported drug use, the results of urinalysis trends since 2000, factors related to drug use, drug market dynamics, prior justice system contact, participation in other risky behaviors, and prior receipt of drug and/or mental health treatment.

¹ Three other bulletins highlighting findings from juvenile interviews, a methamphetamine addendum, and a gang addendum complete the series.

Bulletin Highlights

- In 2010, 62 percent of adult female and 59 percent of male arrestees tested positive for an illicit drug, a slight decrease for females and a slight increase for males from 2009 (p. 4).
- Around four in every five (81%) arrestees who tested positive for multiple substances tested positive for marijuana and at least one other drug (p. 4).
- One in three (33%) female arrestees and one in four (25%) male arrestees were positive for meth at the time of their arrest (p. 6).
- The greatest change in drug use trends since 2000 was in recent cocaine/crack use, with considerably fewer arrestees testing positive for the drug in 2010 (6% of males and 11% of females), compared to 2000 (15% of males and 26% of females) (p. 7).
- While heroin use remains relatively low among San Diego arrestees, its popularity has increased recently, with 1 in every 5 reporting they had tried it and 1 in every 10 testing positive for it in 2010, higher than any other time since 2000 (p. 8).
- Two in five (40%) arrestees reported using prescription drugs illegally, with Oxycontin topping the list of most recently used (p. 9).
- In 2010, almost three in five (58%) arrestees reported they were currently unemployed and these individuals also were more likely to test positive for marijuana and meth (p. 11).
- Around one-fifth (22%) of arrestees reported previous visits to the emergency room for a reason related to their alcohol or other drug use. Less than two in five (36%) currently had health insurance (p. 20 and 26).

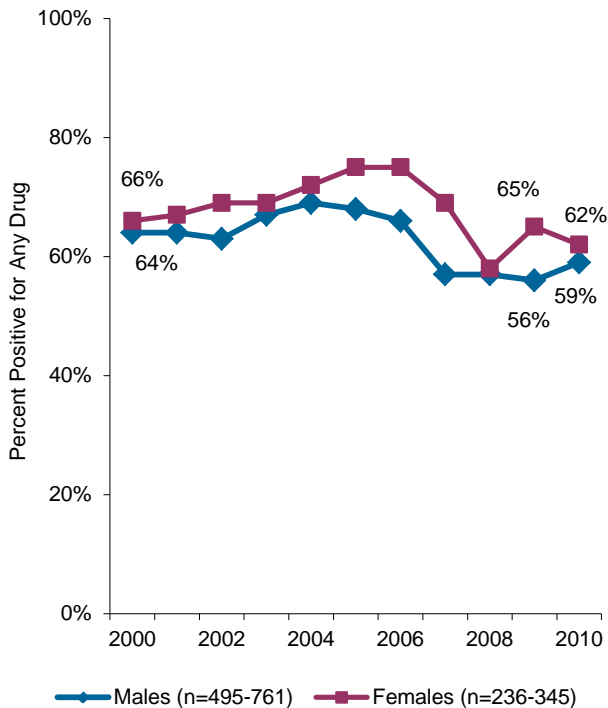
URINALYSIS RESULTS FOR ANY AND MULTIPLE DRUGS

Any Drug

As opposed to the general population in which males are more likely to be current drug users², female arrestees interviewed as part of SAM have historically tested positive at a higher rate than males, though this difference varied from year to year (Figure 1). In 2010, 62 percent of females and 59 percent of males tested positive for any drug (which includes marijuana, cocaine, PCP³, heroin, or methamphetamine). These rates represented a slight decrease from 2009 for females and a slight increase for males.

FIGURE 1

FEWER FEMALES, MORE MALES TEST POSITIVE FOR ANY DRUG IN 2010 COMPARED TO 2009



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

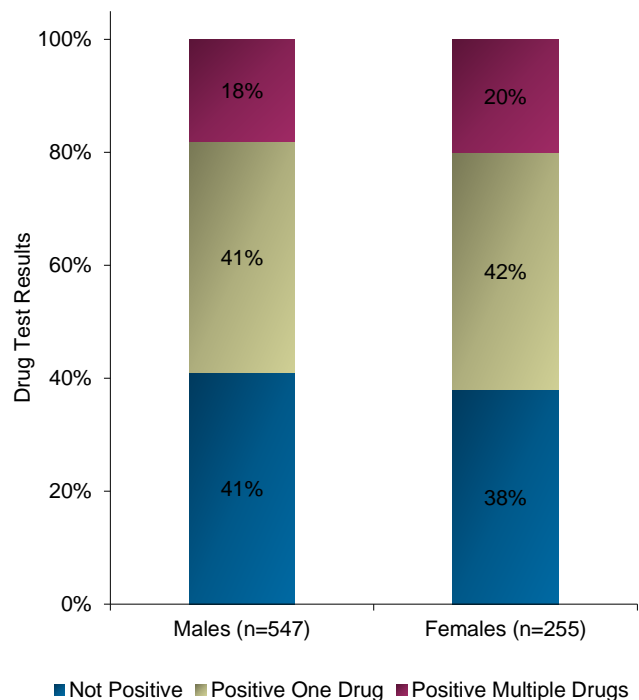
Multiple Drugs

As Figure 2 shows, most individuals who tested positive for any drug in 2010 only tested positive for one. However, 18 percent of males and 20 percent of females did test positive for multiple substances. Of these 149 individuals,

- 89 percent tested positive for two substances, 9 percent for three, and 1 percent for four;
- 81 percent tested positive for marijuana and at least one other substance; and
- the most common combination of drugs was marijuana and methamphetamine (or meth), either alone (48%), or with other drugs (9%) (not shown).

FIGURE 2

DRUG USING ARRESTEES MORE LIKELY TO TEST POSITIVE FOR ONLY ONE SUBSTANCE THAN MULTIPLE ONES



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

² SAMHSA (2011). *Results from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of 2010 Findings*. NSDUH Series H-41 HHS Publication Number 11-4658. Rockville, MD: Author.

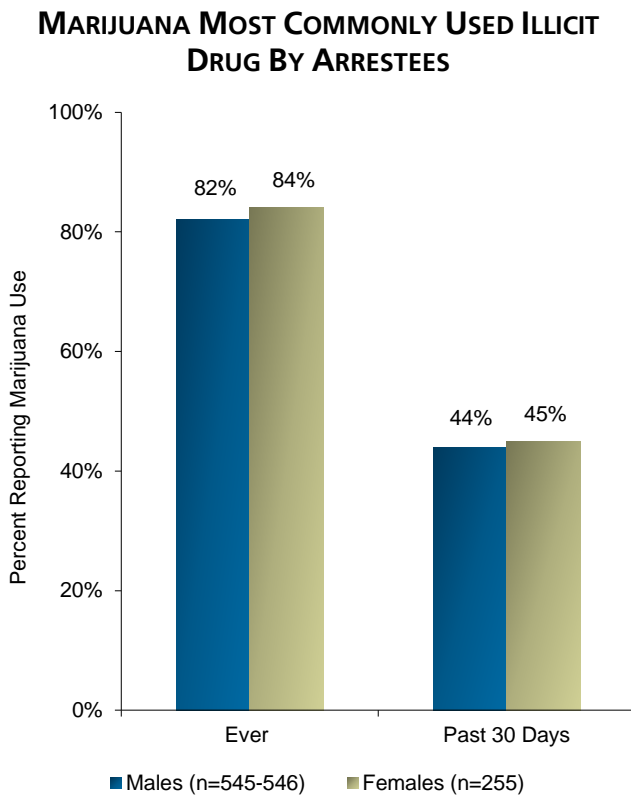
³ In 2010, no males and less than one percent of females tested positive for PCP.

MARIJUANA

According to findings from the most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)², marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug in the U.S. with 17.4 million individuals reporting past month use (equating to 6.9% of the population ages 12 and older). For the population interviewed here, marijuana was also the most commonly used drug, with approximately four in every five arrestees (82% of males and 84% of females) reporting having used marijuana sometime in their life and 44 percent of males and 45 percent of females reporting they used marijuana in the past 30 days (Figure 3)⁴.

Over the past nine years, the percentage of male arrestees testing positive for marijuana has ranged from a low of 34 percent (in 2005) to a high of 40 percent (in 2006) (Figure 4). In 2010, the rate (39%) was similar to the previous year (38%). During the same time period, females were consistently less likely than their male counterparts to test positive for marijuana, with around one in three or fewer (26% to 33%) testing positive during any given year.

FIGURE 3

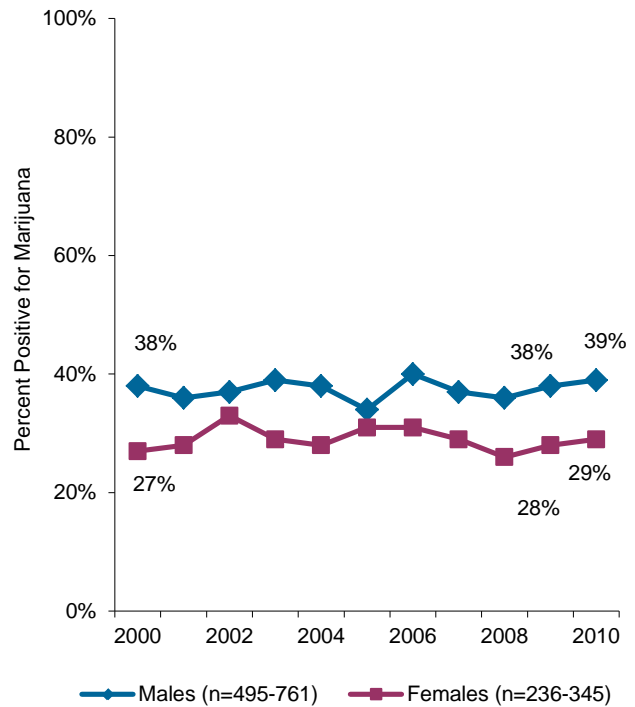


NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

FIGURE 4

FEMALES LESS LIKELY TO TEST POSITIVE FOR MARIJUANA COMPARED TO MALES



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

⁴ Eight percent of those who said they had not used marijuana in the past 30 days actually tested positive for it.

METHAMPHETAMINE

In 2010, 48 percent of male and 49 percent of female arrestees reported they had used meth at least once in their lifetime, making it the most commonly tried illicit drug after marijuana by San Diego County arrestees (Figure 5). In addition, 24 percent of males and females reported meth use in the past 30 days⁵. Unlike previous years, there was no significant difference in lifetime history of meth use by gender. Around three-quarters (78%) of these users reported their primary mode of administration was smoking, which has been associated with more immediate toxic effects. Other methods of administration included injecting (11%), snorting (10%), and eating (1%) (not shown).

For males, the 25 percent that were positive for meth in 2010 (Figure 6) represented a second consecutive increase, but was still a rate considerably lower than the percent positive in 2005 (44%). For females, the decrease from 38 percent (in 2009) to 33 percent (in 2010) represented a return to a rate seen in 2008, which was also lower than the high of 51 percent noted in 2005.

FIGURE 5

AROUND HALF OF ARRESTEES HAVE EVER TRIED METH

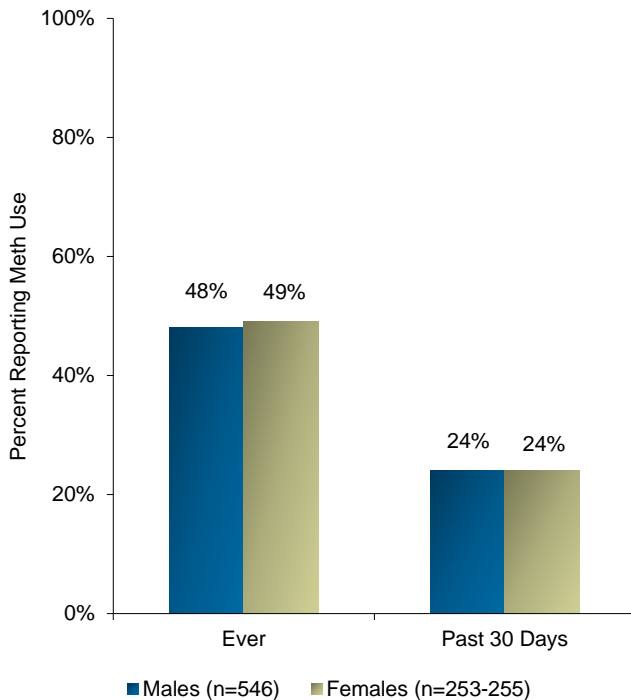
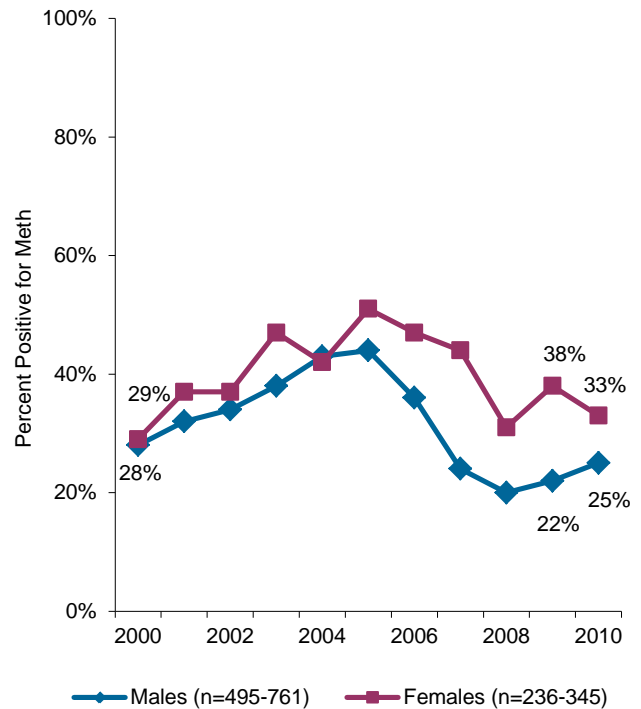


FIGURE 6

METH USE UP FOR MALES, DOWN FOR FEMALES IN 2010



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

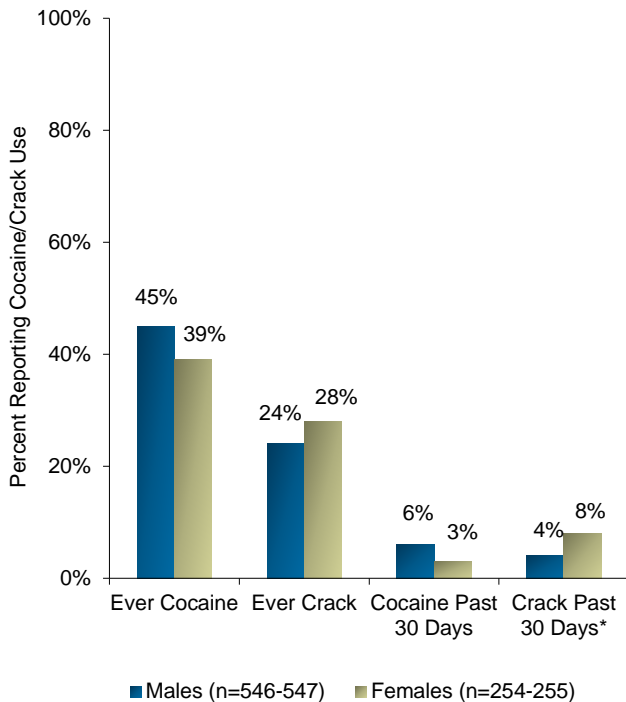
⁵ Eleven percent of those who said they had not used meth in the past 30 days actually tested positive for it.

COCAINE/CRACK

As shown in Figure 7, while a greater proportion of San Diego arrestees report having ever tried powder cocaine, compared to crack, there was less variation in past 30 day use. In addition, while males reported more cocaine use, females reported more crack use. The difference between male and female self-reported 30 day crack use was significant⁶.

FIGURE 7

MORE ARRESTEES REPORT EVER TRYING COCAINE COMPARED TO CRACK



*Significant at $p < .05$.

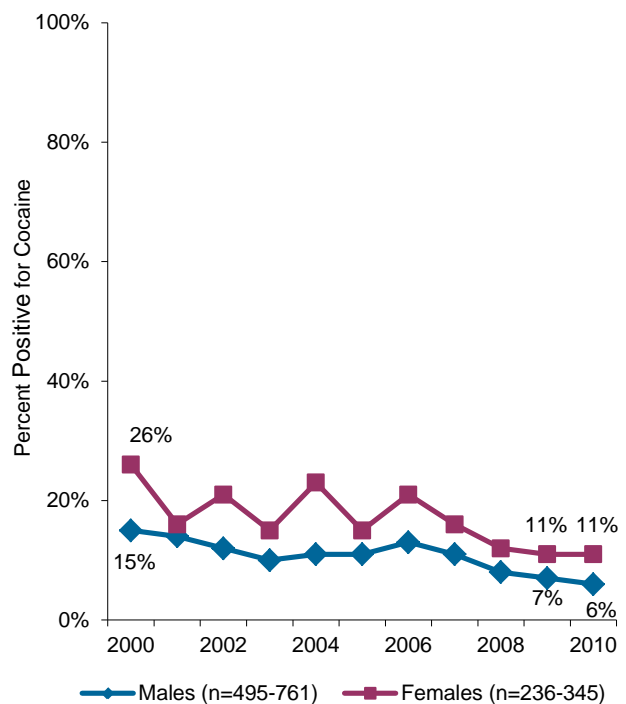
NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

Figure 8 shows that females have consistently tested positive at a slightly higher rate for cocaine, compared to males. In 2010, 11 percent of female arrestees tested positive for cocaine, compared to 6 percent for males. For both genders, these 2010 rates represented 11-year lows.

FIGURE 8

PERCENT OF FEMALES POSITIVE FOR COCAINE AT ELEVEN-YEAR LOW



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

⁶ Three percent of those who said they had not used powder cocaine or crack in the past 30 days actually tested positive for it.

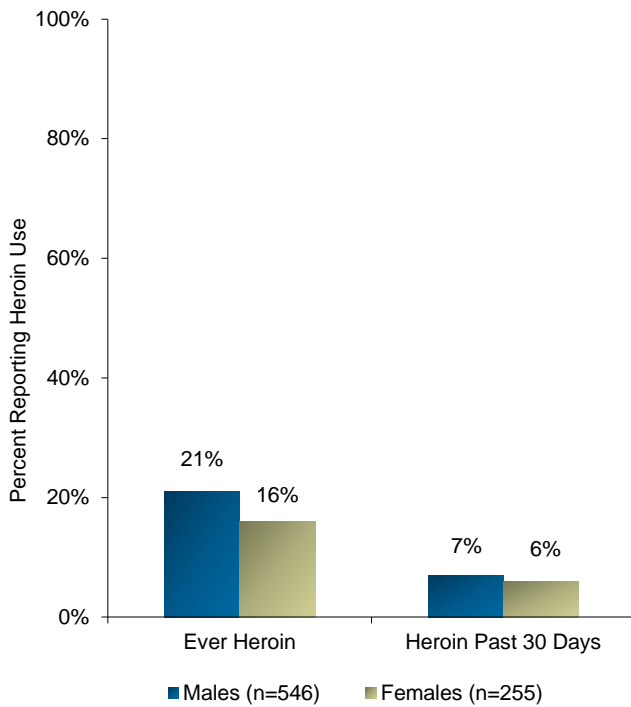
HEROIN

Twenty-one percent (21%) of male arrestees and 16 percent of female arrestees reported they had used heroin at some time in their life and seven percent and six percent respectively, had used it in the past 30 days (Figure 9)⁷. There was no significant difference in use patterns by gender.

As Figure 10 shows, the proportion of positive tests for heroin remained fairly stable over the past 11 years, although 2010 rates were the highest to date. In 2010, ten percent of adult arrestees (males and females) tested positive for heroin.

FIGURE 9

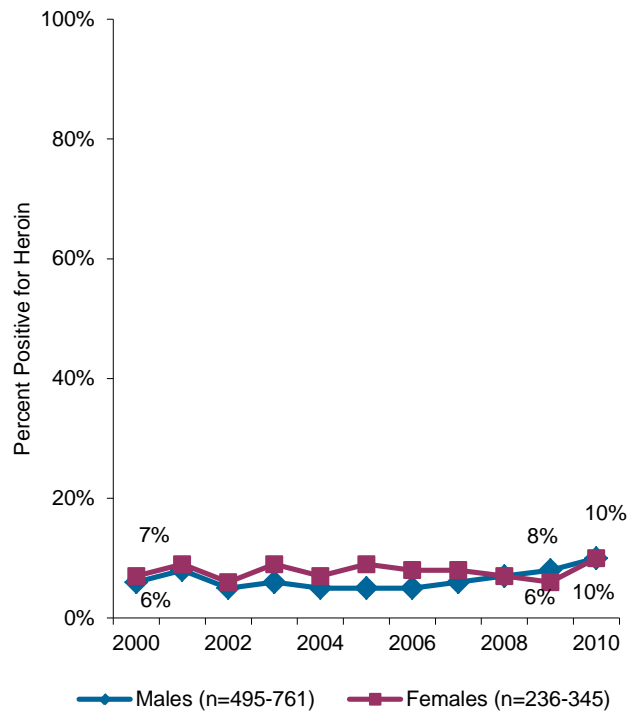
HEROIN ONE OF THE LEAST COMMONLY USED DRUGS AMONG ARRESTEES



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

FIGURE 10

ONE IN TEN ARRESTEES TESTED POSITIVE FOR HEROIN IN 2010



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

⁷ Five percent of those who said they had not used heroin in the past 30 days actually tested positive for it.

OTHER DRUGS

As part of the interview, questions are asked regarding lifetime illegal use of prescription drugs, as well as other less common substances that are not available legally in the U.S. Just over half (55%) of the arrestees reported using some other type of drug illegally, with 40 percent reporting ever having used a prescription drug illegally and 46 percent using other illicit drugs (Table 1).

TABLE 1

ARRESTEES HAVE ALSO EXPERIMENTED WITH OTHER TYPES OF DRUGS

Prescription Drug Illegally	40%
Vicodin	21%
Tranquilizers	16%
Oxycontin	14%
Somas	13%
Codeine	13%
Percocet	13%
Morphine	10%
Methadone	7%
Darvon/Darvocet	6%
Amphetamines	5%
Dilaudid	5%
Demerol	4%
Fentanyl	4%
Anti-depressants	3%
Barbiturates	2%
Other Illicit Drugs	46%
Ecstasy	28%
Peyote/Mescaline/Mushrooms	25%
LSD	23%
PCP	14%
Inhalants	11%
Ketamine/Special K	7%
GHB/G	7%
TOTAL	795 - 800

As Table 1 shows, five of the six most commonly abused prescription drugs among the local arrestee population are categorized as painkillers, including Vicodin, Oxycontin, Somas, Codeine, and Percocet. In addition tranquilizers were illegally used by 16 percent of the arrestees. In terms of other illicit drug use, arrestees were most likely to report previous use of ecstasy (28%), peyote/mescaline/mushrooms (25%), and LSD (23%). Additional analyses revealed that White arrestees were significantly more likely to have used both prescription and other drugs illegally, compared to other ethnic groups (55% versus 30% to 40% for prescription drugs and 63% versus 30% to 46% for other drugs) (not shown).

Those who reported ever using a prescription drug illegally were also asked if they had used the substance in the past 12 months. Those who had ever reported using Oxycontin were most likely to report using it in the past year (39%), followed by those who had abused tranquilizers (37%), Fentanyl (35%), Somas (30%), and methadone (30%). The most common other illicit drugs used in the past year (by those who had ever used the substance) were ecstasy (52% of those who had ever used the drug), GHB/G (44%), and inhalants (38%) (not shown).

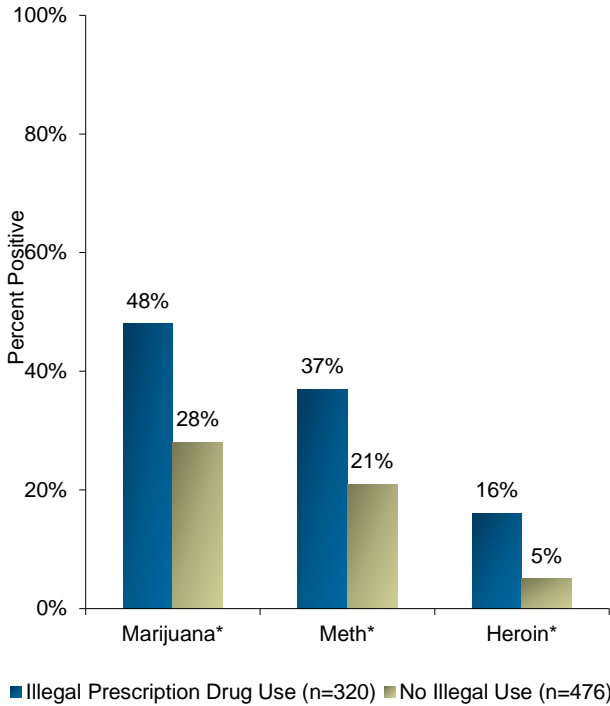
To determine how a history of abusing prescription drugs was related to illegal drug use, additional analyses were completed. As Figure 11 shows, arrestees who previously reported using prescription drugs illegally were significantly more likely to be current illicit drug users. Specifically, these individuals were more likely to test positive for marijuana (48% versus 28%), meth (37% versus 21%), and heroin (16% versus 5%).

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

FIGURE 11

**ILLEGAL USE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS
ASSOCIATED WITH OTHER CURRENT DRUG USE**



*Significant at $P < .05$.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

In a new series of questions added in 2010, arrestees who had ever used heroin were asked if prior to using heroin, they were “hooked on any prescription-type opiates”. Sixteen percent (16%) of these 153 individuals said they were, and for these 25 individuals, almost three-quarters (72%) said they began using heroin as a substitute for the other drug(s). When asked what these prescription opiate(s) were, 68 percent said Oxycontin, 48 percent Vicodin, 32 percent Percocet, 20 percent morphine, 12 percent methadone, 8 percent Dilaudid, and 4 percent Fentanyl (not shown).

PREDICTORS OF CURRENT DRUG USE

To better understand what factors were related to current drug use among the arrestee population, additional analyses were conducted. The following describes how drug testing results varied by arrestee characteristic.

Current Age

As Figure 12 shows, arrestees between the ages of 18 and 24 were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana, while meth, cocaine, and heroin use was more likely among arrestees 25 years of age and older. In addition, older arrestees were significantly more likely to test positive for multiple drugs (23% of those 25 to 39 and 19% of those 40 and older, compared to 14% of those under 25) (not shown). In contrast, self-report information from the NSDUH suggests that among the general population, drug use is highest for those 18 to 25, regardless of the drug².

Ethnicity

As Figure 13 shows, arrestee ethnicity also was a significant predictor of having a positive drug test result for marijuana, cocaine, meth, and heroin. Specifically, individuals who identified as Black were significantly more likely to test positive for cocaine and marijuana and Whites were more likely to test positive for meth and heroin. Hispanic arrestees had a similar use profile to Whites for marijuana and cocaine, but were less likely to use meth and heroin.

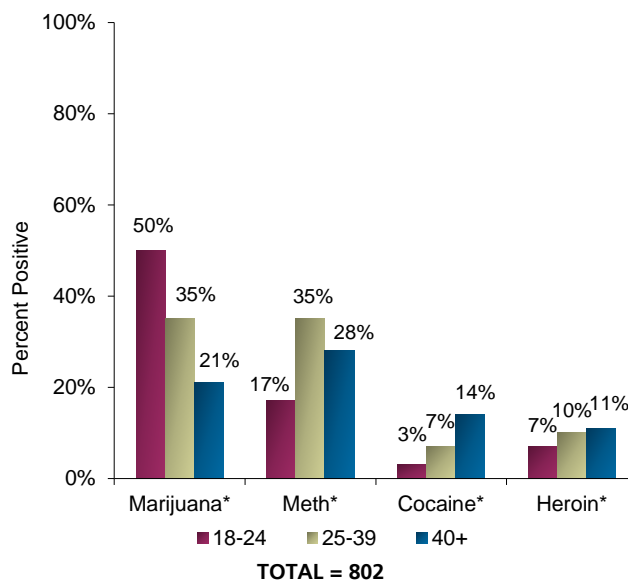
Current Employment Status

Overall, about two in every five (42%) arrestees reported they were employed either full-time or part-time, while the rest (58%) were unemployed⁸. Additional analyses revealed that for this sample, employment status was related to recent drug use. Specifically, those who were unemployed were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana (39% versus 32%) and meth (32% versus 20%), as well as for multiple drugs (22% versus 14%) (not shown).

⁸ Males were significantly more likely to report being employed (49%), compared to females (29%).

FIGURE 12

POSITIVE DRUG TEST RESULTS VARY BY ARRESTEE AGE

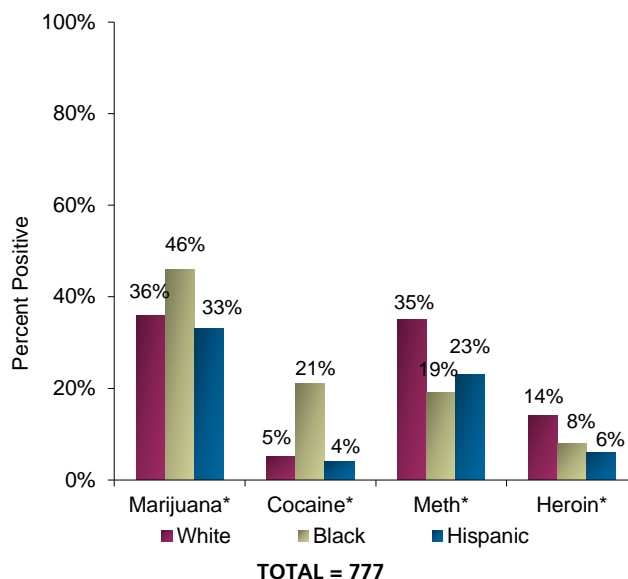


*Significant at $p < .05$.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

FIGURE 13

POSITIVE DRUG TEST RESULTS VARY BY ARRESTEE ETHNICITY



*Significant at $p < .05$.

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

Previous Arrest History

About three-quarters (77%) of those interviewed reported they had been arrested previously (including 80% of males and 70% of females, a significant difference). Being arrested in the past was significantly related to testing positive for marijuana (40% versus 23%) and meth (32% versus 11%), as well as testing positive for multiple drugs (22% versus 7%) (not shown).

In terms of this current arrest, the only significant predictors were related to current meth use. Specifically, individuals who tested positive for meth were significantly less likely to be arrested for aggravated assault (16% versus 29%), domestic violence (15% versus 29%), or disturbing the peace (13% versus 29%) and more likely to be arrested for a drug-related offense (possession 60% versus 20%, under the influence, 72% versus 24%) and motor vehicle theft (60% versus 27%) (not shown).

Prior Time Spent in Prison

Around one in five (22%) of those interviewed reported previously serving time in prison (25% of males and 14% of females, a significant difference). Similar to the previously described relationship regarding prior arrest and recent drug use, individuals who had previously served time in prison were significantly more likely to test positive for meth (42% versus 23%) and cocaine (18% versus 4%), as well as for multiple drugs (32% versus 15%) (not shown).

Parental Drug Use

Around one-quarter (26%) of arrestees reported they knew at least one of their parents had previously used illegal drugs (24% of males and 31% of females). Having a parent who used illegal drugs was a significant predictor of current marijuana (45% versus 33%) and meth use (35% versus 25%), as well as use of multiple substances (24% versus 17%). Additionally, it was a significant predictor of prescription drug abuse (62% versus 34%). This relationship between parental drug use and risk-taking behaviors by children, which was previously reported with

juvenile data, reiterates the special need for intervention in the lives of drug abusers with children (not shown).

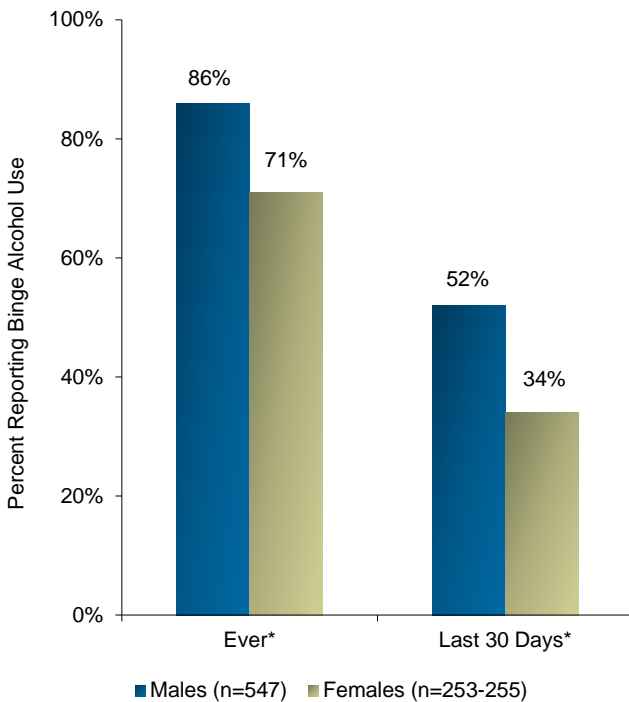
ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO USE

Alcohol

Arrestees are also asked whether they have ever had five or more alcoholic drinks in one day (i.e., binge drinking) and if they have done so in the past 30 days. Figure 14 shows the percent of arrestees in 2010 who responded affirmatively to these questions. Males were significantly more likely than females to report ever having consumed five or more alcoholic drinks (86% versus 71%) and also to report doing so in the last 30 days (52% versus 34%). Males reported using alcohol in the last 30 days more often than any other substance.

FIGURE 14

MALE ARRESTEES MORE LIKELY TO REPORT CONSUMING FIVE OR MORE DRINKS IN ONE DAY



*Significant at $p < .05$.

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

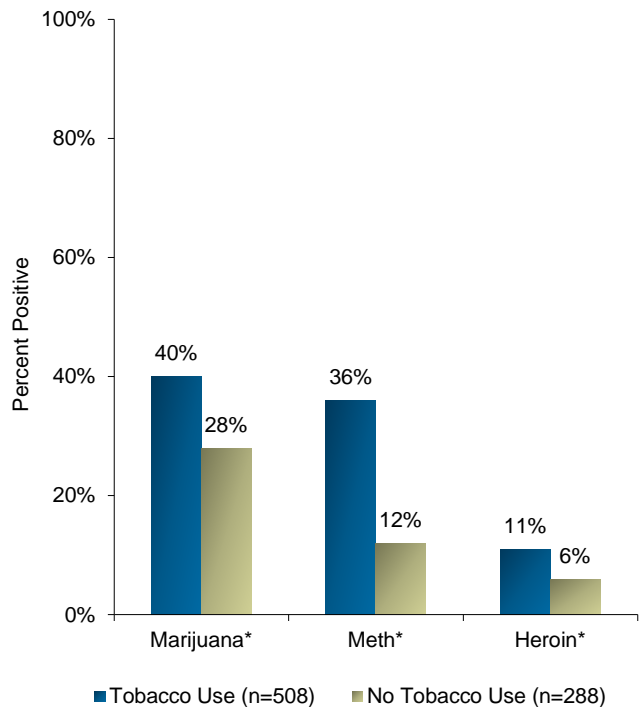
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

Tobacco

Approximately two-thirds (64%) of arrestees reported that they currently use tobacco in some form (65% of males and 62% of females) (not shown). Consistent with national survey data², individuals who reported currently using tobacco were significantly more likely to currently use illicit drugs. As Figure 15 shows, tobacco users were more likely to test positive for marijuana, meth, and heroin, as well as multiple drugs (24% versus 8%, not shown), compared to those who did not use tobacco.

FIGURE 15

CURRENT TOBACCO USERS MORE LIKELY TO TEST POSITIVE FOR ILLICIT DRUGS



*Significant at $p < .05$.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

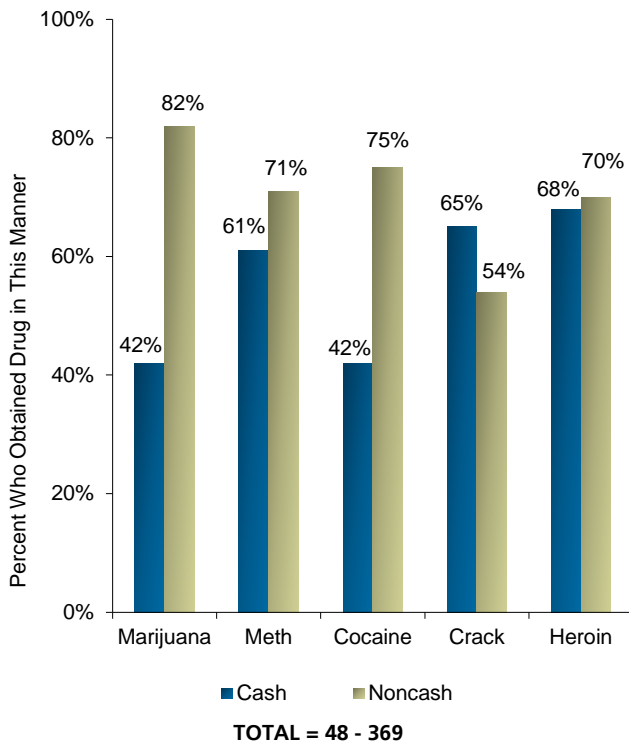
DRUG MARKET DYNAMICS

Types of Transactions

Arrestees who reported they obtained drugs in the past 30 days were asked a series of questions regarding the details of these transactions⁹. As Figure 16 shows, respondents were more likely to report getting marijuana, meth, and cocaine through non-cash means, such as trading something for it or just receiving it as a “gift”. In comparison, those who obtained heroin were almost equally likely to report getting this drug through cash and non-cash transactions and those who obtained crack were more likely to do so after paying cash for it.

FIGURE 16

ARRESTEES OBTAIN DIFFERENT DRUGS IN DIFFERENT WAYS



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

⁹ Ninety-seven percent (97%) of those who reported obtaining meth also reported using it in the past 30 days, compared to 96 percent for heroin, 94 percent for marijuana, 92 percent for crack, and 81 percent for cocaine.

Location and Frequency of Cash Transactions

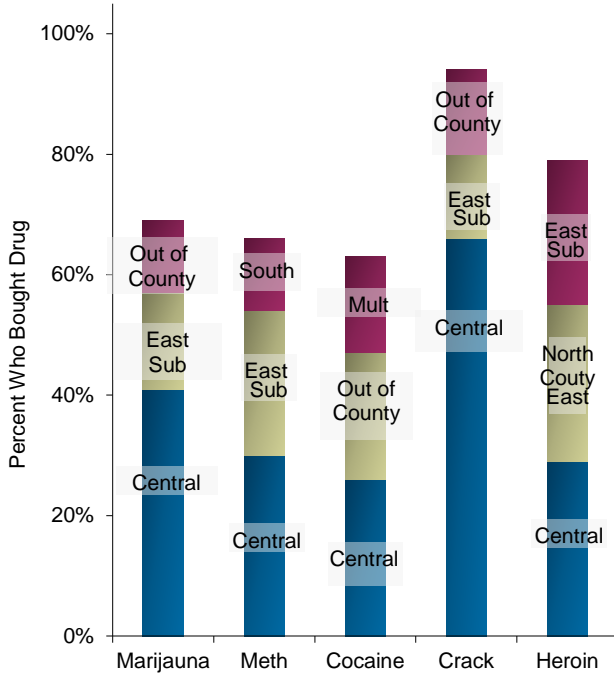
Individuals who paid cash for drugs reported obtaining the substances from Major Statistical Areas (MSA)¹⁰ across the region. Figures 17 and 18 show the percent who reported obtaining a drug in the three most common MSAs, as well as what percent of arrestees purchased drugs in the same MSA in which they lived. Some highlights from these data include:

- The Central MSA was the area most frequently noted as the purchase location, although there was variation, with crack users most likely to purchase it there, and cocaine users least likely.
- The East Suburban MSA was in the top three areas where buyers purchased each of the five drugs.
- Buyers of marijuana, cocaine, and crack were more likely to report obtaining the drug outside of San Diego County, compared to some other areas within the region.
- Heroin users were most likely to report purchasing the drug in the same MSA in which they lived, while cocaine users were most likely to report they traveled outside of it to obtain the drug.

¹⁰ MSAs are groups of subregional areas (SRAs) which, in turn, are groups of census tracts. The seven MSAs encompass the entire San Diego region, with boundaries remaining static over time. A map of these MSAs is included at the end of this bulletin.

FIGURE 17

MOST ARRESTEES REPORT BUYING DRUGS IN THE CENTRAL MSA

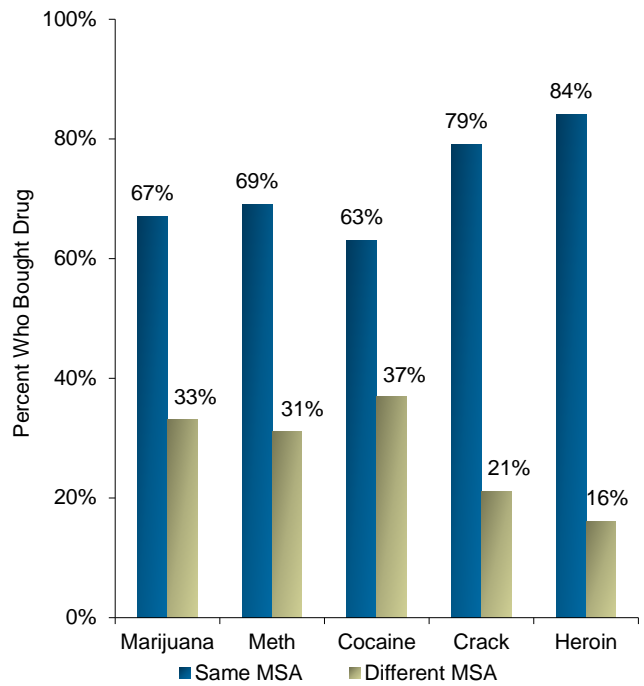


NOTE: Cases with missing information not included. For cocaine, both East Suburban and North County East represented the same proportions at 16 percent each.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

FIGURE 18

MOST INDIVIDUALS BUY DRUGS IN THE MSA IN WHICH THEY LIVE



TOTAL = 19 - 154

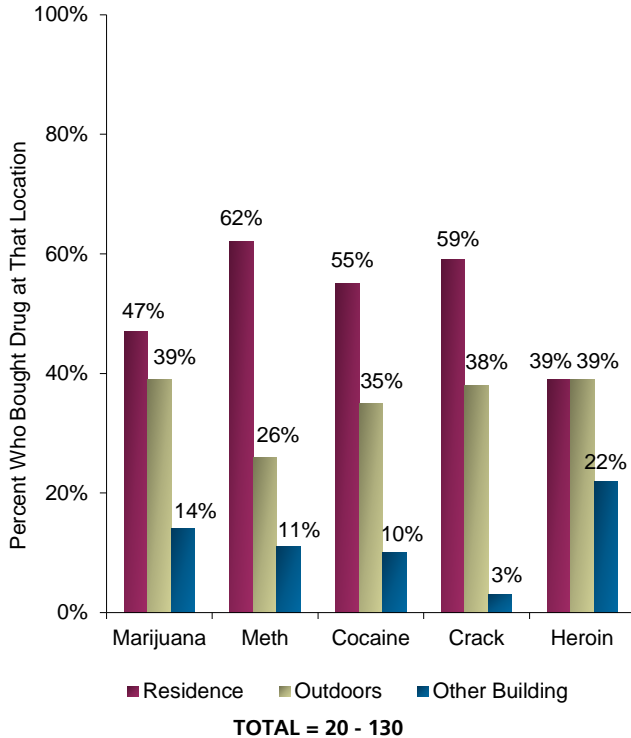
NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

Buyers also varied in terms of what type of place they reported the most recent drug purchase occurred. As Figure 19 shows, individuals buying meth were more likely to make the purchase indoors at a residence. Heroin users, on the other hand, were more likely to make the purchase in another type of building (e.g., place of business), compared to other drug users.

FIGURE 19

METH USERS MORE LIKELY TO PURCHASE DRUGS AT A RESIDENCE



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

Drug purchasers were also asked questions related to whether they made multiple purchases on the same day, as well as multiple purchases in the same week. Specifically, arrestees were asked to remember the last time they purchased a drug and to note how many times they made a purchase in the same day. As Table 2 shows, heroin and crack users were most likely to report making more than one purchase on a given day (31% and 29%, respectively). Heroin users also reported buying the greatest number of times per week on average (4.1), followed by crack users (3.1).

TABLE 2

HEROIN USERS MOST LIKELY TO MAKE MULTIPLE PURCHASES PER DAY AND PURCHASE MOST TIMES PER WEEK

	BOUGHT MORE THAN ONCE/DAY	MEAN NUMBER OF DAYS PURCHASED IN LAST SEVEN
Marijuana	11%	2.5
Meth	21%	2.9
Cocaine	15%	1.6
Crack	29%	3.1
Heroin	31%	4.1
TOTAL		20 - 155

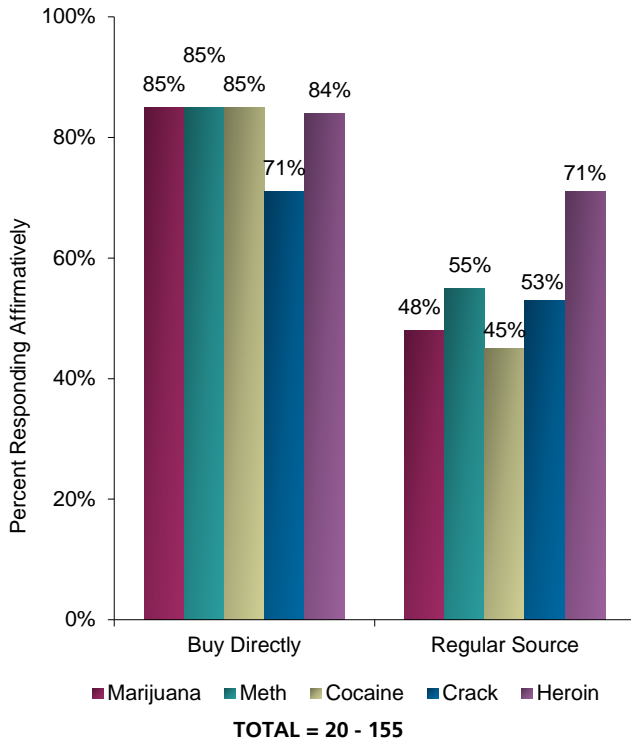
NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

Ease and Reliability of Cash Transactions

When asked from whom they obtained drugs, around three-quarters or more reported they bought it directly themselves, rather than having someone else purchase it for them (Figure 20). In terms of having a regular source (as opposed to an occasional source or new source), there was a greater amount of variability across the drugs. Specifically, almost three-quarters (71%) of heroin users reported a regular source.

FIGURE 20

HEROIN USERS MOST LIKELY TO HAVE REGULAR SOURCE



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

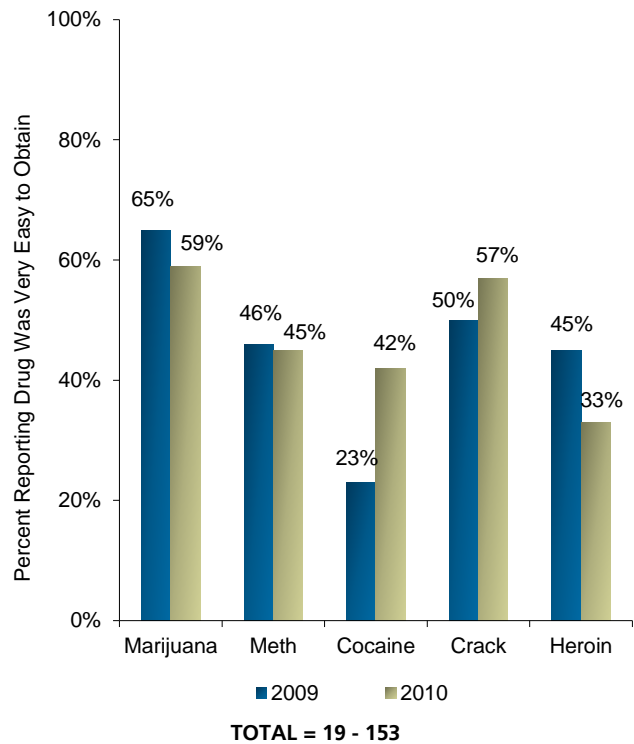
Arrestees were also asked how many individuals they had purchased a given drug from in the past seven days. This answer is partly a function of how frequently they purchased the substance (Table 2), as well as if they had a regular source (Figure 20). Cocaine users were least likely to say they used more than one source (9%) and crack users were most likely (40%). Around one-quarter to one-third of marijuana, meth, and heroin users reported using more than one source (26%, 30%, and 31%, respectively) (not shown).

In another set of questions, arrestees were asked “how easy is it usually” to obtain a particular substance, as well as if “there was a time in the past 30 days when you tried to buy the drug but you were unable to.” As Figure 21 shows, marijuana and crack were the easiest drugs to obtain according to users in 2010. In terms of how often these arrestees reported they were unable

to buy one of these substances in the past year, heroin users were most likely to report there was a time they were unable to obtain this drug, and the percentage reporting this increased compared to 2009 (Figure 22).

FIGURE 21

ARRESTEES MOST LIKELY TO SAY MARIJUANA AND CRACK ARE THE EASIEST TO OBTAIN

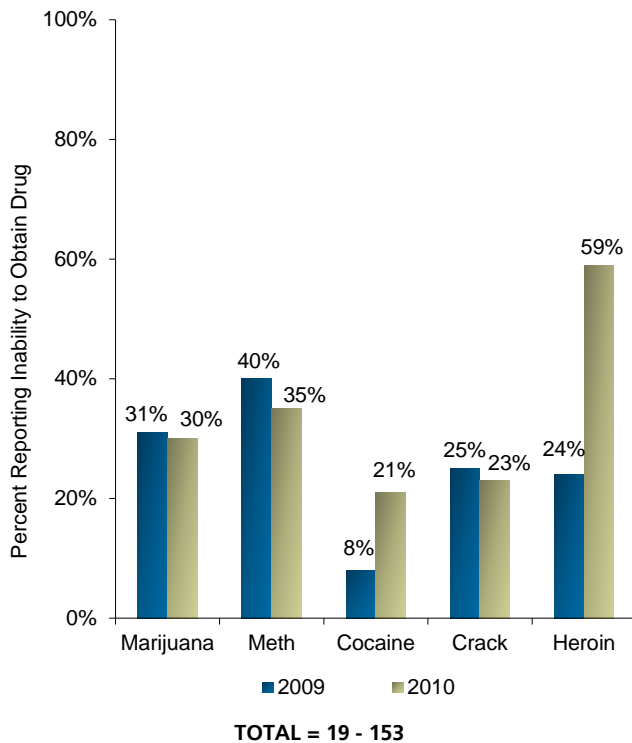


NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

When further queried if they bought another drug when the one they intended to purchase was unavailable, meth, heroin, and marijuana users were least likely to respond affirmatively (29%, 30%, and 33%, respectively), and crack (71%) and cocaine (100%) users were most likely (not shown).

FIGURE 22

HEROIN HARDER TO OBTAIN IN 2010 THAN 2009



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.
 SOURCE: SANDAG SAM PROGRAM, 2010

Crossing the U.S./Mexican Border for Drugs

Arrestees were asked if they had ever crossed the U.S./Mexican border to obtain drugs and 12 percent of the respondents indicated they had. On average, these 93 individuals first crossed the border at 23.6 years of age (range 13 to 50) and did so to obtain marijuana (40%), meth (34%), heroin (24%), cocaine (14%), steroids (2%), ecstasy (1%), or crack (1%). Thirty-one percent (31%) (of the 93) also reported crossing the border for prescription drugs (not shown).

In a new question added in 2010, arrestees were asked if they had “ever been approached to transport, smuggle, conceal, or participate in bringing drugs across the U.S./Mexican border”. Overall, 18 percent of the arrestees responded affirmatively to this question, with Hispanics (20%) and Whites (20%) significantly more likely

than Blacks (9%) to report being asked to participate in drug distribution (not shown).

Methods for Obtaining Prescription Drugs

In a newer series of questions, arrestees were asked if they had ever obtained prescription drugs without a legitimate prescription. Around two in five (41%) respondents said they had. Of these 327 individuals who described how, most (96%) had obtained the drug from another individual with fewer individuals reporting they had obtained it another way (3%), used a fake prescription (2%), stolen the drug from someone else (2%), or stolen the drug from a pharmacy (<1%). In addition, 4 percent of the arrestees said they had “doctor shopped” for someone to write them a prescription, with the majority (75%) saying they had been successful in doing so (not shown).

OTHER RISKS

Age of First Drug Use

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the younger an individual starts using “gateway drugs” (such as alcohol and marijuana), the greater the probability s/he will continue with other illicit drug use in her/his lifetime¹¹. As Table 3 shows, marijuana use began earlier than other drugs for this sample of individuals, around 14 for males and 15 for females. Alcohol use (five drinks or more) seemed to typically follow around the age of 16 on average for males and 18 for females, a significant difference. Additional analyses revealed that experimenting with alcohol and marijuana at a younger age (13 and younger) was significantly related to having a previous mental health diagnosis, being in jail previously, and ever injecting drugs. Early use of marijuana was also a significant predictor of testing positive for meth, heroin, and multiple drugs at this arrest (not shown).

TABLE 3**MALE ARRESTEES YOUNGER ON AVERAGE AT TIME OF FIRST SUBSTANCE USE**

	MALES	FEMALES
Marijuana	14.3	15.0
Alcohol*	16.4	18.2
Powder Cocaine	19.2	19.5
Meth	20.2	20.6
Rock/Crack Cocaine	22.0	22.7
Heroin	23.2	23.1
TOTAL	117-469	40-211

*Significant at $p < .05$.

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

¹¹SAMHSA (2004). Initiation of Marijuana Use: Trends, Patterns, and Implications. Rockville, MD: Author.

PARTICIPATION IN RISKY BEHAVIORS

Arrestees were asked about a variety of risky behaviors they participated in after consuming alcohol or other drugs in the past year. Table 4 shows the percent of arrestees reporting they engaged at least once in each particular risky behavior after alcohol, other drug(s), or with one or the other. The most common risks, reported by 54 percent, included participating in sexual acts while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, followed by riding in a vehicle with a driver who had been drinking or using drugs (48%) or driving a car themselves while under the influence (37%)¹².

Additional analyses revealed some age differences for these self-reported behaviors worth noting. Specifically,

- arrestees between 18 and 24 were significantly more likely to report they had ridden in a vehicle with someone who had used alcohol/drugs (45%), compared to those between the ages of 25 and 39 (37%) and 40 years of age and older (26%);
- arrestees between 18 and 24 were significantly more likely to report participating in sexual acts after consuming alcohol/drugs (50%), compared to those 25 to 39 (41%) and 40 and older (37%); and
- arrestees 40 and older were significantly more likely to report an alcohol-related health problem (16%), compared to younger arrestees (5% of those 18 to 24 and 6% of those 25 to 39) (not shown).

TABLE 4
ARRESTEES REPORTED RISKY BEHAVIORS OR EFFECTS OF USING AFTER SUBSTANCE USE

	ALCOHOL	DRUGS	EITHER OR BOTH
Participated in sex acts	43%	40%	54%
Rode with a driver under the influence	37%	36%	48%
Drove a car	26%	25%	37%
Went to work	N/A	N/A	28%
Missed work	N/A	N/A	17%
Health problems	8%	10%	15%
Family violence perpetrator	6%	6%	9%
TOTAL			549 - 796

NOTE: Cases that were not applicable or with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

Injection Drug Use

In 2010, 17 percent of arrestees reported having ever injected drugs and of these 135 individuals, 60 percent reported injecting in the past 12 months. Of these 81 individuals, 69 percent had injected meth, 59 percent heroin, and 15 percent cocaine. A follow-up question pertained to whether or not these individuals had shared their needles or works, with 39 percent responding affirmatively (not shown).

¹²Six percent of arrestees who drove a vehicle after consuming alcohol reported they had gotten in an automobile accident as a result, as did three percent of those who had consumed drugs.

Overdoses and Hospitalizations

Around one in ten (12%) arrestees reported they had overdosed at least once in the past. When asked what they had overdosed on, 36 percent said heroin, 20 percent meth, 5 percent cocaine, 2 percent crack, and 50 percent some drug combination (or other drug). White arrestees were significantly more likely to report overdosing (20%), compared to Black (6%) and Hispanic (7%) arrestees (not shown).

In another set of questions, arrestees were asked if they ever had to go to the emergency room for anything related to alcohol or other drug use. Overall, around one in five (22%) reported they had been admitted. When asked to describe in more detail the reason for this visit, the most common responses included an overdose (37%), alcohol poisoning (23%), physical injury (12%), other medical issue (such as difficulty breathing or high heart rate) (12%), and a car accident (8%) (not shown).

Job Loss

Given the current economic situation, a series of questions were added to the interview in 2009 regarding whether the arrestee had lost a job in the past 12 months, and if so, what the reason was and what collateral effects may have been associated with this event. Overall, around one in five arrestees (18%) reported losing a job in the past year, with just over half (54%) saying they were laid off, 31 percent that they were fired, 14 percent that the employer went out of business, and 1 percent giving another reason. In regard to how this job loss affected them, 78 percent said it led to financial problems, 48 percent emotional problems, 45 percent family problems, 32 percent substance use, 29 percent legal problems, and 24 percent health problems (not shown).

CRIMINAL HISTORY

Previous Contact

The majority of the individuals interviewed as part of this project reported that this was not their first adult arrest (77%) and most had also spent time previously in jail (70%). In addition, one in three (35%) reported they had also been arrested as a juvenile [with males significantly more likely to report both adult (80% versus 70% for females) and juvenile (39% versus 28%) justice system contact] (not shown).

When asked how many prior adult arrests they had, the median was 4.0 (range 1 to 100) and the mean age at the time of their first adult arrest was 21.2 for males and 22.8 for females, also a significant difference. In terms of their current highest offense, just over one-third (37%) were arrested for a drug-related offense, 24 percent for a violent offense, 20 percent for another type of offense¹³, 19 percent for a property-related offense (not shown).

Arrestees were also asked specifically whether they had ever traded sex for money or been involved in any pimping or pandering activity. Overall, 9 percent of the arrestees said they had ever exchanged sex for something else (starting on average at 21.9 years of age, with a range of 12 to 46) and 4 percent had ever engaged in pimping/pandering. Females were significantly more likely to report exchanging sex for money (19%) compared to males (5%). Other predictors of engaging in these sexual acts included age (with those 40 and older more likely to respond affirmatively), ethnicity (with Black individuals significantly more likely to report this type of exchange), and recent drug of choice (those who tested positive for cocaine were significantly more likely to have ever exchanged sex for money or other things). Forty percent (40%) of the individuals who had ever exchanged sex for

money reported doing so in the past 30 days (not shown).

Partner System Involvement

Arrestees were asked if their intimate partner had ever been arrested and booked into jail, and if so, if this had occurred in the past year. Given the greater preponderance of male contact with the justice system, it was not surprising that female arrestees were significantly more likely to report their partner also had a prior arrest history (61%) compared to males (22%). Of those who reported this contact, 60 percent of the females and 50 percent of the males reported their partner had also been arrested in the past year (not shown).

Gang Association

Twenty-two percent (22%) of the arrestees reported they had ever been in a gang or associated with one. In 2010, gang membership/association was tied to gender, age, and ethnicity. Specifically,

- males were significantly more likely to report this association, compared to females (24% versus 17%, respectively);
- individuals 40 years of age and older were less likely to report this association (11%), compared to those 18 to 24 (26%) and 25 to 39 (26%); and
- individuals who identified as Black were most likely to report the association (31%), compared to 23 percent of Hispanics, and 17 percent of Whites (not shown).

Individuals who reported some type of gang association were more likely to test positive for marijuana (49% versus 32%) and meth (34% versus 25%), as well as multiple drugs (25% versus 17%) (not shown).

¹³The most common other offenses included disturbing the peace, flight or escape, obstruction of justice, and parole/probation violation.

Reentry Issues

With the recent increase in numbers of individuals returning from jail and prison, as well as realignment with more local supervision of felons, rather than from the state, more attention is being paid at the local and national level to the issue of how well ex-offenders readjust to life not behind bars.

Among those interviewed for this study, over half (56%) reported that they had a prior felony conviction and 22 percent (25% of males and 14% of females, a significant difference) reported that they had ever served time in prison. When asked to describe the biggest problem ex-offenders face when returning home, the two most common answers included employment (48%) and housing (19%). However, only 36 percent reported receiving any type of in-custody program related to reentry and only 30 percent reported receiving services post-release (47% received one or both) (not shown).

When the 77 individuals who received any service(s) (pre- or post-release) described them, the most common were substance abuse treatment (66%) and employment assistance (35%), followed by housing assistance (19%). Less than one in five reported receiving education (16%), anger management (14%), mental health care (6%), transportation assistance (6%), assistance reunifying with children (5%), food and clothing (5%), medical care (4%), or assistance reunifying with a spouse (3%) (not shown).

In a new question added in 2010, arrestees who had served time in prison previously were asked why they thought they were back in the system. The most common reasons given for their continued contact with the criminal justice system included drug use (36%), strict parole conditions (21%), alcohol use (13%), and employment challenges (12%) (not shown).

TREATMENT

Drug Treatment

Overall, one in three (33%) arrestees reported they had received alcohol or other drug treatment in the past. For over half (58%) of these individuals, treatment had been court-ordered and the median number of times arrestees had entered a drug treatment program was 2.0 (range 1 to 20). Forty-one percent (41%) of the individuals who tested positive for any drug had received drug treatment previously and 76 percent of those who had previously received treatment were positive for any drug, supporting the view that relapse is a part of recovery. Several other factors were also predictive of receiving drug treatment, including age, ethnicity, prior CPS referral, and previously being arrested. Specifically:

- older individuals were more likely than younger ones to have received treatment (41% of those 40 and older, compared to 21% of those 18 to 24 and 36% of those 25 to 39);
- arrestees identifying as Hispanic were less likely (20%) than other ethnic groups (46% of Whites and 30% of Blacks);
- arrestees who had ever had a CPS case were more likely (41%) than those who had not (29%); and
- those who reported previously being arrested were more likely than those experiencing their first arrest (41% versus 4%) (not shown).

Of the individuals who had ever received drug treatment, around three in five (61%) reported they had successfully completed the program¹⁴. When asked why they had not completed the program, the most common response was that they wanted to use again and were not ready to be clean, with others noting they were still in the program, they were arrested, the program was too strict, they were kicked out, or it was too long (not shown).

Only 16 percent of arrestees reported that they had previously sought treatment, but it was unavailable. Of these individuals, 35 percent had not been in treatment previously. The most commonly reported type of treatment that was unavailable was in-patient (68%) (not shown).

Overall, around one-quarter (27%) of those interviewed said they had previously been offered drug treatment as a condition of probation or parole or as a sentencing alternative. There was variance by age on this dimension, with those 25 to 39 and 40 and older more likely to report receiving this option (32% and 31%, respectively), compared to those 18 to 24 (16%) (not shown).

Mental Health Treatment

Twenty-two percent (22%) of the arrestees reported they had previously been diagnosed with a mental or psychiatric disorder and just under one in five (17%) reported that they had previously stayed overnight for mental health treatment at a hospital or other facility. On average, these individuals had been admitted for an overnight stay 2.0 times (median, range 1 to 100) and the mean age of their first admittance was 23.5 (range 4 to 58) (not shown).

Of the individuals who had previously been diagnosed with a mental health issue, almost all (95%) reported they had been prescribed medication for their illness. However, only around half (49%) said they were still being prescribed this medication and of these 80 individuals, 15 percent said they were currently not taking it. When asked for the primary reason for not taking their medication, the most common responses included that they had run out of or lost it, they did not like the side effects, or it interfered with their other drug use (not shown).

Additional analyses revealed that a number of arrestee characteristics were associated with being diagnosed with a mental health issue (Table 5), as well as staying 24 hours or longer in a mental health facility (not shown). That is, individuals

¹⁴ If a respondent reported more than one treatment episode, s/he was asked about the most recent.

who reported having a diagnosis were significantly more likely to have a history of drug use and prior justice and social service system contact, and received drug treatment. This last association - between having a diagnosis, receiving mental health treatment, and receiving drug treatment - is consistent with the fact that over half (54%) of those with an overnight stay reported they had previously been under the influence of alcohol or other drugs when admitted for mental health treatment. This supports the view that addressing the needs of dual diagnosis clients (those with mental health and drug treatment needs) is a key issue for the criminal justice system (not shown).

Additionally, there were a number of significant gender differences in regard to mental health issues. Specifically, females were significantly more likely than males to have been diagnosed with a mental health issue (32% versus 17%) and to have received mental health treatment (23% versus 14%) (not shown).

TABLE 5

INDIVIDUALS WITH DRUG USE HISTORIES MORE LIKELY TO REPORT HAVING A MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSIS*

	MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSIS	NO DIAGNOSIS
Positive cocaine	12%	6%
Positive heroin	14%	8%
Positive multiple drugs	25%	17%
Other previous illicit drug use	69%	51%
Illicit prescription drug use	49%	38%
Previous arrests	91%	73%
Previous CPS case	35%	22%
Previous drug treatment	58%	25%
TOTAL	86-174	354-627

*Significant at $p < .05$.

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2010

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

A total of 832 adult arrestees were interviewed as part of the SAM Program in 2010. Of those interviewed, 802 (96%) provided a viable urine sample¹⁵ and completed the entire interview; these individuals are described here. Five hundred forty-seven (547) of these arrestees were male and 255 were female. Other characteristics include:

- 39 percent were Hispanic, 38 percent were White, 20 percent Black, and 3 percent identified with “other” in terms of ethnicity;
- 90 percent completed the interview in English and 10 percent in Spanish;
- 32.2 years (age range 18 to 72) was the average age of respondents ;
- 30 percent did not have a high school degree;
- 58 percent were unemployed;
- 83 percent were single (either never married, divorced, legally separated or widowed) and 17 percent were married;
- 56 percent reported having children (of any age), 33 percent reported living with at least one child under the age of 18 (whether or not the child was their own), and 5 percent of the female arrestees reported they were pregnant;
- 24 percent of those who reported having any children also said they previously had an open case with Child Welfare Services (CWS);
- 12 percent had previously been in foster care, with 41 percent of these individuals reporting they had aged out of the system;
- 48 percent had ever been homeless and 13 percent were currently homeless; and
- 64 percent currently had no health insurance.

In addition, all of the data (percentages and raw numbers) captured through the adult interview and urinalysis for 2004 through 2010 are 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.

¹⁵ In 2010, additional analyses revealed that a willingness to provide a urine sample was not significantly related to the arrestee’s gender, age, race, or highest charge at arrest.

SUMMARY

As a continuation of the federally-funded ADAM (Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring) program, the San Diego SAM (Substance Abuse Monitoring) program involves annual interviews with local arrestees booked into one of four booking facilities across the region. Because interviews are supplemented with urinalysis, these data provide one of the only objective measures of drug use trends over time for an at-risk population that may predict forthcoming trends in the general population. In addition, because of the richness of the qualitative information obtained, additional insight useful to law enforcement, drug prevention specialists, treatment providers, other service providers, elected officials, and the general public is available regarding the current needs and issues of this group of criminally-involved individuals.

As described in the current bulletin (which highlights results from interviews conducted in 2010 with adult arrestees), meth use for both males and females was still lower than in previous years. Additional analyses revealed that arrestees 25 years of age and older and those who identified as White or Hispanic were more likely to use the drug than other arrestees. In addition, these individuals were more likely to be arrested with a high charge for a drug-related offense.

Marijuana continues to be the drug of choice for most arrestees, especially those between 18 and 24, with most arrestees reporting having tried it and around one in three testing positive for it at the time of booking into jail. Marijuana was the most common drug used in combination with other drugs and users were most likely to describe it as very easy to obtain.

Compared to other parts of the country, cocaine and crack are used less frequently than meth². Individuals who obtained crack recently were most likely to report getting it in the Central MSA and outdoors, and often multiple times per week and times per day. While the percent of arrestees testing positive for cocaine has decreased

substantially since 2000, more arrestees reported powder cocaine and crack were easy to obtain in 2010, compared to 2009.

With about one in five arrestees reporting ever having tried heroin and one in ten testing positive for it, heroin was the least commonly used of these four illicit substances among this population. Heroin users were more likely than arrestees obtaining other drugs to report a regular source for the drug. About one in ten individuals who had ever used heroin reported they had first been hooked on a prescription opiate and replaced that substance with heroin.

Forty percent (40%) of arrestees reported using prescription drugs illegally in the past, with tranquilizers and painkillers among those most commonly abused. Individuals who had a history of abusing prescription drugs were more likely to test positive for marijuana, meth, and heroin than those who had not, suggesting that treatment providers should be aware of multiple addictions that could be present when serving this population.

Other relevant information about this population includes other lifestyle risks that affect both the individual, as well as the community at large. These include repeated contact with the criminal justice system, including as a juvenile; gang association; unmet reentry issues; intravenous drug use; unmet treatment needs; driving under the influence; missing work; health problems and visits to medical providers; lack of health insurance; previous contact with Child Welfare Services (CWS); homelessness; and mental health issues that may be untreated.

