



# 2004 Juvenile Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region

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# 2004 JUVENILE ARRESTEE DRUG USE IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION

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## INTRODUCTION

Since 1987, SANDAG has completed interviews with local arrestees regarding their drug use histories. When the juvenile component of the federal ADAM (Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring) program was discontinued in 2003, local funding through the California Border Alliance Group (CBAG) was secured which enabled this important data collection to continue as the Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program.

This CJ Bulletin, "2004 Juvenile Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region," is the third in a three-part series presenting data collected in the 2004 calendar year. With local funding, the interview instrument has been revised to capture key data elements identified by local prevention, enforcement, and treatment professionals as information that would be helpful in identifying need, understanding trends, and informing public policy.

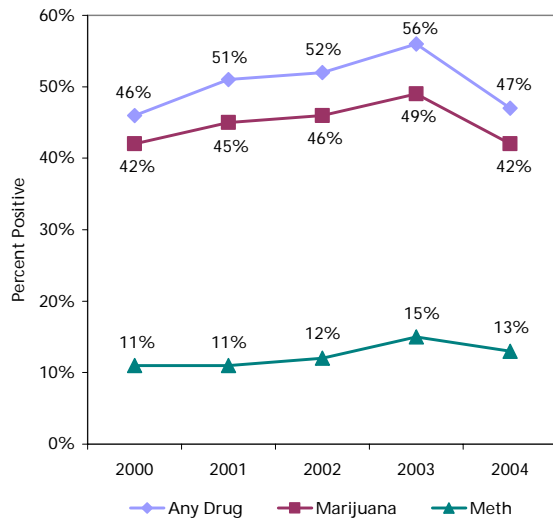
## POSITIVE DRUG TEST RESULTS

Since 2000, about one-half of juveniles interviewed as part of this study have tested positive for at least one drug, with the most commonly used illicit drug being marijuana. As Figure 1 shows, however, after four years of increases, there was a decrease in the percent of youth who tested positive, from 56 percent in 2003 to 47 percent in 2004. Similarly, there was a decrease in the percent testing positive for marijuana (49% to 42%), as well as methamphetamine or meth (15% to 13%). In addition, 6 percent of the youth tested positive for cocaine, 1 percent for heroin, and 13 percent tested positive for more than one drug (not shown).

## OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

- Fewer juveniles tested positive for drugs in 2004, compared to 2003 – the first year in the past five in which there has been a decrease.
- Approximately one in every four juveniles reported they had used meth in the past 30 days.
- Parental drug use is a strong predictor of initial alcohol and other drug use by juveniles.
- The majority of local youth feel that alcohol and marijuana use is not harmful to their health and that they are easy to obtain in our communities.
- Four out of every five youth reported a history of truancy, a key risk factor for delinquency.
- Approximately one-half of the youth interviewed reported they had ridden in a vehicle with a driver under the influence of alcohol or other drugs in the past 12 months.
- White non-Hispanic youth were more likely to have received drug treatment in the past and also more likely to express a need for it now, compared to youth of other ethnic groups.
- Girls have different needs than boys in the justice system – as documented by their higher rate of running away from home, truancy, and previously attempting suicide.

**Figure 1  
JUVENILE DRUG USE DOWN  
FROM LAST YEAR**



**TOTAL = 175 - 354**

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2004

## LIFETIME AND RECENT SUBSTANCE USE

As Table 1 shows, three in every four juveniles reported trying alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana previously (starting around the age of 12 years old, on average) and around one-half had used each of these substances during the past 30 days. In addition, while only 13 percent of the youth interviewed in 2004 tested positive for meth (Figure 1), around one in three (35%) had used it at least once and one in four (23%) had used it in the last 30 days. Between 10 percent and 18 percent of the youth also reported trying other substances, including powder cocaine, mushrooms, crack, ecstasy, rohypnol, LSD, and inhalants. When asked why they first used the different substances, the most common responses were "to experiment" or because a friend or sibling was using it. Not shown in Table 1, seven youth also used heroin and 3 had used GHB.

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

	Ever Used	Avg. Age 1 <sup>st</sup> Use	Use Last Month
Alcohol	85%	12.2	50%
Marijuana	85%	12.5	53%
Tobacco	78%	12.6	59%
Meth	35%	14.2	23%
Powder Cocaine	18%	14.4	7%
Mushrooms	18%	14.7	5%
Crack	15%	14.4	5%
Ecstasy	13%	14.4	1%
Inhalants	10%	12.8	2%
Rohypnol	10%	13.8	5%
LSD	10%	14.2	3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>174 - 175</b>	<b>17 - 149</b>	<b>173 - 175</b>

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2004

## 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 age, parents who use(d) illegal drugs, previously running away from home, and not attending school.

### 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, tobacco, and marijuana; to have used meth at least once; and to test positive for any drug, as well as multiple drugs.

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

	11 to 13	14 to 15	16 to 18
Alcohol 30 Days	21%	39%	61%
Tobacco 30 Days	36%	52%	68%
Marijuana 30 Days	21%	49%	60%
Ever Meth	7%	34%	40%
Positive Any Drug	14%	40%	57%
Positive Multiple	0%	8%	18%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>173 - 175</b>		

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2004

## Parents' Use of Drugs

When asked if they knew if their parents had ever used illegal drugs, 29 percent of the respondents replied affirmatively<sup>1</sup>. As Figure 2 shows, youth who reported their parent(s) had or currently use illegal drugs were significantly more likely to ever have used alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and meth.

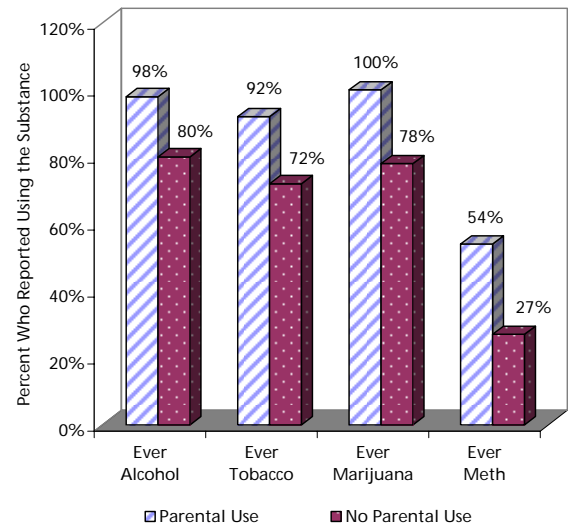
## Runaway Behavior

Overall, about one in three boys (32%) and two-thirds of the girls (67%) reported that they had run away from home in the past<sup>2</sup>, with the most common reason for leaving being fights with other family members (not shown). As Figure 3 shows, running away from home also was significantly related to having used alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and meth.

<sup>1</sup> Girls were significantly more likely than boys to report their parents had or currently used illegal drugs (50% versus 24%), but gender was not a significant predictor of drug use.

<sup>2</sup> This behavior also varied significantly by gender overall.

**Figure 2**  
**YOUTH WITH PARENTS WHO USE DRUGS MORE LIKELY TO HAVE USED ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS**

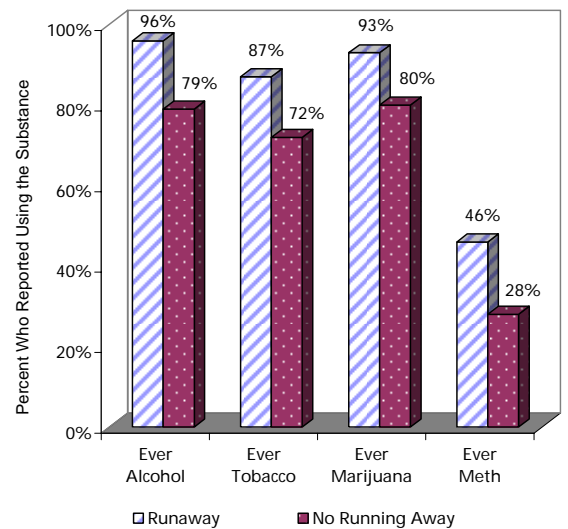


TOTAL = 170

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2004

**Figure 3**  
**YOUTH WHO HAVE RUN AWAY MORE LIKELY TO HAVE USED ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS**



TOTAL = 175

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2004

## No Enrollment in School

One in five (20%) of the youth interviewed 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 meth (29%), compared to those who were still enrolled (9%) (not shown).

## EASE AND AVAILABILITY OF DRUGS

At the same time the youth are asked about their use of different types of drugs, they are asked to rate how bad they think the drugs they use are for them, as well as how easy these substances are to obtain. As Table 3 shows, while two-thirds or more of those who used powder cocaine, ecstasy, tobacco, crack, inhalants, and meth reported that the drug was "very bad" or "bad" for them, there was much less concern expressed regarding the potentially negative health effects of alcohol and marijuana, as well as rohypnol and mushrooms. This pattern of results, combined with the fact that alcohol and marijuana were among those substances most often reported as "easy" or "very easy" to obtain, supports the necessity for continued prevention messages targeted at local youth, as well as enforcement efforts to decrease opportunities for youth to obtain these substances.

In another series of questions, respondents were asked how they obtained different substances (initially and most recently), as well as in what location they were when the substances were consumed. The most common place youth consistently reported using alcohol and other drugs, both initially (not shown) and most recently (Figure 4), was a friend's house, followed by their own house. Other places that were noted less frequently included school, parties, parks, and other outdoor locations (not shown).

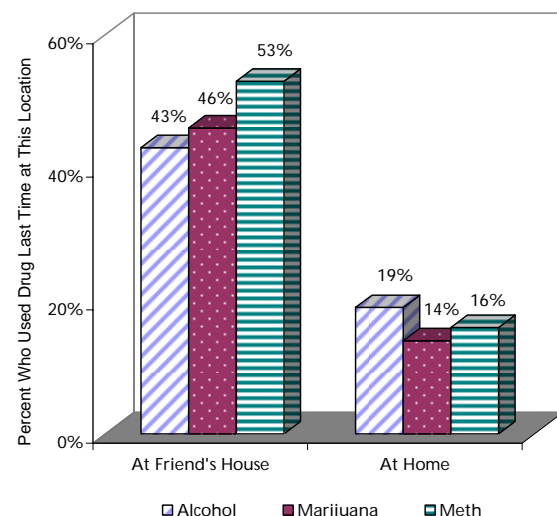
**Table 3**  
**ONLY ONE IN THREE YOUTH THINK THAT ALCOHOL AND MARIJUANA CAN NEGATIVELY AFFECT THEIR HEALTH**

	<b>Drug is Bad</b>	<b>Easy to Obtain</b>
Meth	85%	77%
Inhalants	81%	100%
Crack	76%	57%
Ecstasy	73%	59%
Tobacco	70%	89%
Powder Cocaine	68%	43%
LSD	53%	47%
Rohypnol	41%	63%
Alcohol	39%	80%
Marijuana	33%	79%
Mushrooms	32%	48%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16 - 145</b>	

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2004

**Figure 4**  
**MOST YOUTH REPORT USING ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS AT A FRIEND'S HOUSE**



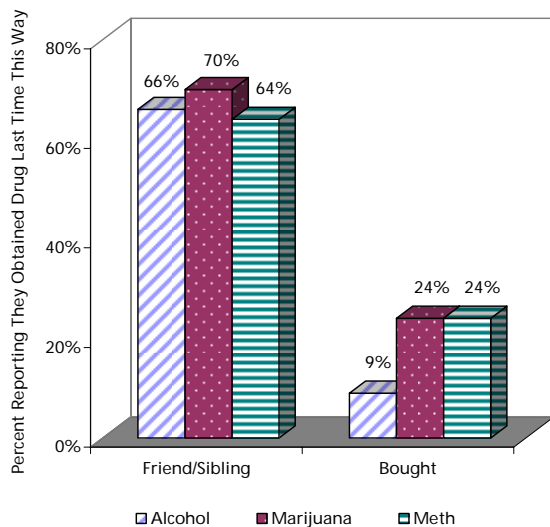
**TOTAL = 57 - 140**

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2004

When asked how they obtained alcohol or other drugs most recently, the most common response across drug categories was through friends or siblings, followed by buying it themselves (Figure 5). Other ways, not shown, included stealing it, or getting it from a stranger, parent, or other relative.

**Figure 5**  
**MOST YOUTH REPORT THEY OBTAINED ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS FROM FRIENDS/SIBLINGS**



**TOTAL = 58 - 141**

*NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.*

*SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2004*

## SCHOOL-RELATED FACTORS

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 (82%) reported they had *ever* skipped school or been truant (with girls significantly more likely to respond affirmatively than boys – 97% versus 78%). In addition, 47 percent reported they do not like to read for school, 43 percent do not like to read for fun, 27 percent have brought a weapon to school, 26 percent do not like school at all, and 23 percent have been bullied at school (not shown).

## GANG MEMBERSHIP

A little more than one-half (54%) of the youth interviewed at Juvenile Hall as part of this study reported they were or had been a member of a gang. Interestingly, there was no significant difference in self-reported gang membership by a youth's gender, race, or age. However, these self-identified gang members were significantly more likely to report they were involved in the distribution of drugs (52%), compared to those with no gang ties (25%) (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 4 shows, around one-third or more reported they had engaged in a number of these behaviors, including riding in a car with someone who was intoxicated or high, as well as consuming alcohol or other drugs and then getting into trouble with parents, getting into a fight, becoming sick, going to school, feeling bad about some type of behavior, and participating in sex acts. Interestingly, while engaging in these behaviors was significantly related to age (with those ages 16 and older more likely to respond affirmatively), there was no difference by gender (not shown).

**Table 4  
YOUTH ENGAGE IN A NUMBER  
OF ALCOHOL/DRUG-RELATED  
RISK BEHAVIORS**

Get in trouble with parents for using alcohol/drugs	47%
Ride in a car with a driver who has used alcohol/drugs	46%
Get in physical fight after using alcohol/drugs	39%
Get sick from alcohol/drugs	36%
Go to school drunk/high	34%
Feel bad about something done when drunk/high	34%
Participate in sex acts after using alcohol/drugs	31%
Not remember what happened after using alcohol/drugs	29%
Miss school because of alcohol/ drugs	27%
Pass out after using alcohol/ drugs	22%
Drive a car drunk/high	17%
Have alcohol/drug-related health problems	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>173 - 175</b>

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

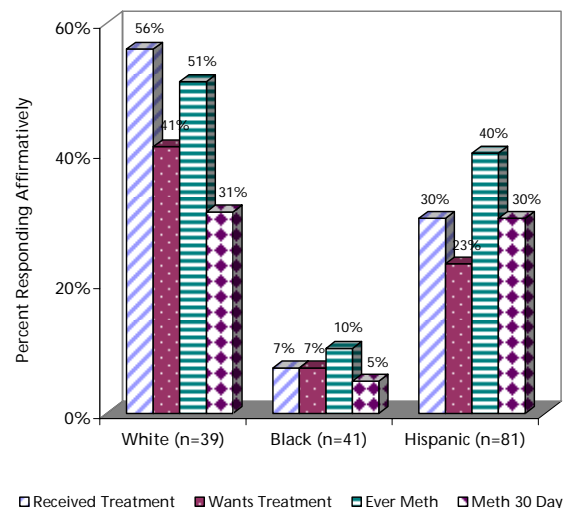
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2004

## DRUG TREATMENT: RECEIPT AND PERCEIVED NEED

Overall, one-third (33%) of the juveniles interviewed in 2004 reported that they had previously received some type of drug treatment, with around three-quarters (76%) of these saying it was court-ordered rather than voluntary. When asked what type of treatment they had received, about one-half (54%) said out-patient, 23 percent Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous (NA/AA), 18 percent in-patient, and 5 percent

treatment while in custody (not shown). While there was no difference in receiving treatment by gender, there was a difference by ethnicity, with White non-Hispanic youth significantly more likely to have received treatment (56%), compared to Hispanic (30%) and Black (7%) youth. As Figure 6 shows, it appears that at least part of this difference is due to significantly greater meth use by White juveniles, as well as to a significantly greater desire on their part to receive some type of treatment (overall, 25% of the youth reported the need for some type of treatment). Regardless, this disparity appears to be an issue worthy of further investigation by those who work with this population to ensure all drug-dependent youth are receiving the culturally-competent services they need.

**Figure 6  
USE OF METH AND DESIRE FOR  
TREATMENT VARY BY RACE**



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2004

## **SAMPLE DESCRIPTION**

A total of 182 youth were interviewed at Juvenile Hall during two separate months in 2004. Of these 182, 96 percent or 175 (142 males and 33 females) provided a urine sample for drug testing and are included in the final sample described here.

- The average age of these youth was 15.5 years;
- Prior to arrest, 92 percent reported living in a stable residence, 5 percent described themselves as homeless, and 3 percent said they lived in some type of group setting;
- 76 percent reported they lived with their mother, 31 percent that they lived with their father, and 19 percent that they did not live with a parent at all;
- 66 percent had been arrested before and 54 percent reported they previously had served time;
- 39 percent of the girls and 7 percent of the boys had thought about suicide and 36 percent of the girls and 5 percent of the boys actually had attempted it;
- 40 percent reported that they ever had played some role in the distribution of drugs, with 34 percent reporting they actually sold drugs and 29 percent reporting serving as a "runner" or "middleman";
- 34 percent had a highest arrest charge for a violent crime, 15 percent for a property crime, 9 percent for a status offense, 6 percent for a drug offense, and 36 percent for an "other" type charge, which primarily included probation violations;
- 17 percent of the youth interviewed reported they had been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or ADHD;
- 15 percent of the girls and 3 percent of the boys reported having a child of their own; and
- 12 percent of the girls and 9 percent of the boys reported that they or their girlfriend was or could be pregnant.