



# Drug Use Among Adult Arrestees in San Diego County

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# DRUG USE AMONG ADULT ARRESTEES IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

## INTRODUCTION

This SANDAG CJ Bulletin presents statistics on drug use among San Diego arrestees. These data were collected through a program called "ADAM" – Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring. ADAM was funded in 39 sites across the country in 2003 by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) has been the site administrator in San Diego since the program's inception in 1987. ADAM data are useful at both the national and local levels to law enforcement, treatment providers, and prevention programs to monitor the nature and scope of drug use over time.

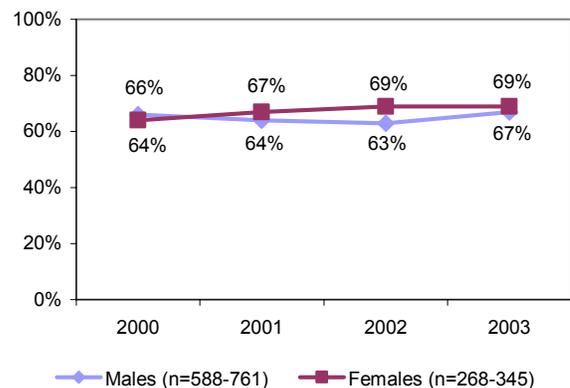
As part of this project, arrestees are approached by non-custodial research staff (hired specifically for this project) within 48 hours of their arrest and booking into jail. If the arrestee is available and interested in participating, he/she is asked a number of questions related to his/her drug use history and is also asked to provide a urine sample for drug testing. In 2003, interviews with male arrestees were conducted at the Vista and Central Jails and interviews with female arrestees were conducted at Las Colinas.

For the first time, rather than presenting one report with ADAM statistics, SANDAG's Criminal Justice Research Division is compiling data for a series of bulletins that will be more useful for policymakers and practitioners alike. This first bulletin, "Drug Use Among Adult Arrestees in San Diego County," includes information about the past and recent drug use history of adult arrestees and presents past years' data for comparison. Future bulletins will include information on juvenile drug use, drug markets, and methamphetamine use.

## POSITIVE FOR ANY DRUG

Since 2000 (when a new random sampling procedure was instituted), about two-thirds of San Diego arrestees have tested positive for some type of drug (marijuana, cocaine, opiates/heroin, PCP, or methamphetamine) at the time of their arrest. As Figure 1 shows, in 2003, 67 percent of males and 69 percent of females were positive for at least one of these substances.

**Figure 1**  
**TWO-THIRDS OF SAN DIEGO ARRESTEES TEST POSITIVE FOR DRUGS**



*NOTE: Cases with missing information are not included. Any drug includes marijuana, cocaine, opiates, PCP, and methamphetamine.*

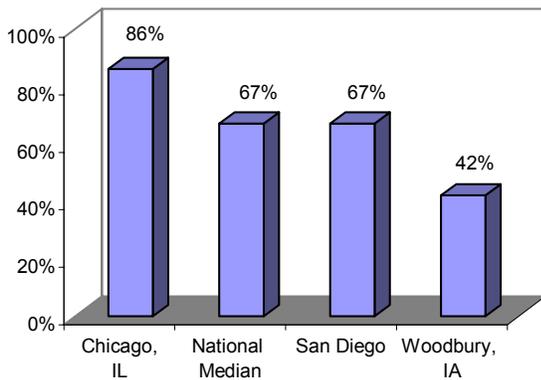
*SOURCE: SANDAG ADAM Program*

How does San Diego compare to other ADAM sites? In 2003, half of the other 38 sites that interviewed male arrestees had a *higher* percentage testing positive for some type of drug. As Figure 2 shows, Chicago, Illinois, had the highest rate of positive male arrestees at 86 percent and Woodbury, Iowa, had the lowest rate at 42 percent.

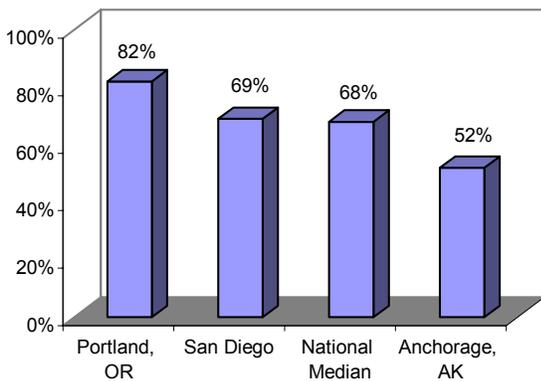
Compared to the other 24 sites that interviewed females in 2003, San Diego had the tenth highest rate of females testing positive for some type of drug, with 15 sites that were lower. As Figure 3 shows, Portland, Oregon, had the highest percent of females testing positive (82%), while Anchorage, Alaska, had the lowest (52%).

**Figures 2 & 3  
ARRESTEES NATIONALLY TEST POSITIVE  
AROUND THE SAME RATE AS SAN DIEGO**

**Male Arrestees**



**Female Arrestees**



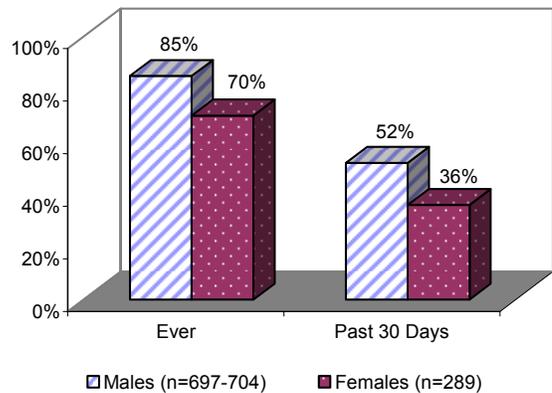
*NOTE: There were 39 ADAM sites that interviewed males and 25 ADAM sites that interviewed female arrestees in 2003.*

*SOURCE: National Institute of Justice, Drug and Alcohol Use and Related Matters Among Arrestees, 2003*

**ALCOHOL**

As Figure 4 shows, male arrestees were significantly more likely to report having ever had five or more drinks in one day in their lifetime, compared to female arrestees (85% versus 70%). They also were significantly more likely to have reported doing so in the past 30 days (52% versus 36%). Please note that urinalysis testing for alcohol was not included in these analyses.

**Figure 4  
MALE ARRESTEES MORE LIKELY TO USE  
ALCOHOL THAN FEMALE ARRESTEES**



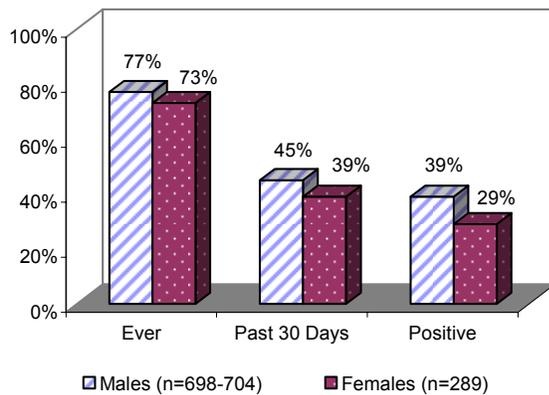
*NOTE: Cases with missing information are not included.*

*SOURCE: SANDAG ADAM Program*

**MARIJUANA**

Marijuana traditionally has been the most commonly used illicit substance among the U.S. population (SAMHSA's 2003 National Survey on Drugs and Health). In 2003, about three-quarters (77% of males and 73% of females) of San Diego arrestees had ever tried marijuana, and 45 percent and 39 percent, respectively, reported using this drug in the last 30 days (Figure 5). In addition, 39 percent of males and 29 percent of females tested positive for marijuana. Marijuana was the only illegal drug that males were more likely to test positive for, compared to females.

**Figure 5**  
**MARIJUANA MOST COMMONLY TRIED DRUG**  
**AMONG ARRESTEES**

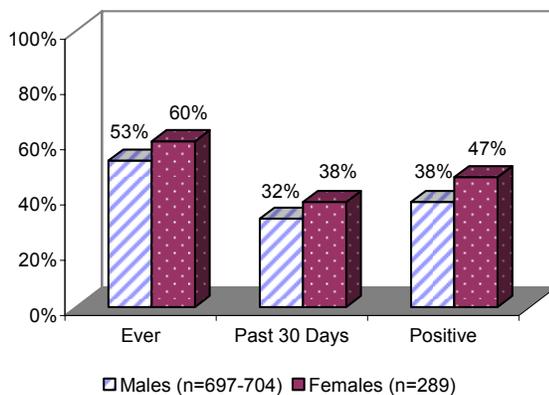


NOTE: Cases with missing information are not included.  
SOURCE: SANDAG ADAM Program

## METHAMPHETAMINE

In 2003, over half of both male and female arrestees (53% of males and 60% of females) reported ever trying methamphetamine and 32 percent and 38 percent, respectively, reported using it in the past 30 days (Figure 6). In addition, 38 percent of males and 47 percent of females tested positive for methamphetamine, both of which were higher than the percentages reporting use in the past 30 days.

**Figure 6**  
**ALMOST HALF OF FEMALE ARRESTEES**  
**TESTED POSITIVE FOR METHAMPHETAMINE**  
**IN 2003**



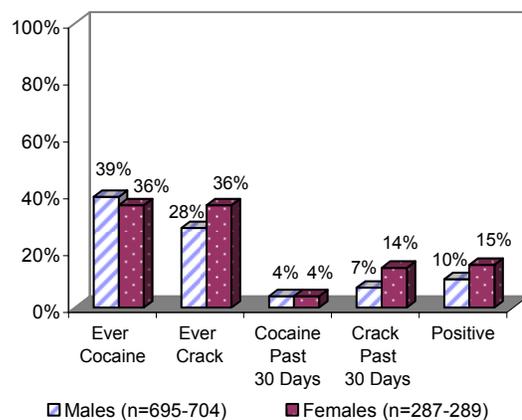
NOTE: Cases with missing information are not included.  
SOURCE: SANDAG ADAM Program

Methamphetamine traditionally has been a substance used more frequently in the western portions of the U.S., with use declining as one moves east. Compared to weighted data for other ADAM sites, San Diego had the *fifth* highest positive rate for males and the *second* highest positive rate for females in 2003. For males, the positive rate was surpassed only by Honolulu, Hawaii; Phoenix, Arizona; Sacramento, California; and San Jose, California. The national median for males was five percent positive. For females, only Honolulu, Hawaii, had more female arrestees positive for methamphetamine, and the national median was only nine percent.

## COCAINE/CRACK

A little more than one-third (39% of males and 36% of females) reported ever trying cocaine and only 4 percent (of both groups) reported using it in the past 30 days (Figure 7). In contrast, females were significantly more likely to report ever using crack (36%), compared to males (28%), and also were more likely to report using it in the past 30 days (14% versus 7%). In 2003, 10 percent of males and 15 percent of females tested positive for cocaine/crack. There has not been any significant change in use for males or females over the past four years.

**Figure 7**  
**MORE ARRESTEES WHO HAVE TRIED CRACK**  
**USED IT IN THE PAST MONTH**

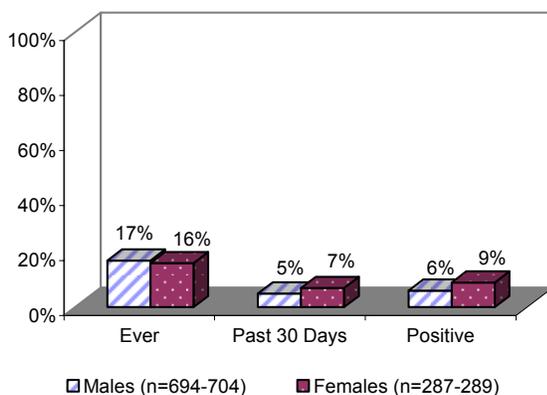


NOTE: Cases with missing information are not included.  
SOURCE: SANDAG ADAM Program

## HEROIN

Less than one in five arrestees interviewed in 2003 (17% of males and 16% of females) reported ever trying heroin (Figure 8). Five percent and seven percent, respectively, reported using it in the past 30 days. In 2003, six percent of males and nine percent of females tested positive for heroin. There has been no significant change in use for males or females over the past four years.

**Figure 8**  
**LESS THAN ONE IN FIVE ARRESTEES**  
**HAVE TRIED HEROIN**



*NOTE: Cases with missing information are not included.*  
*SOURCE: SANDAG ADAM Program*

## FACTORS RELATED TO DRUG USE

Additional analyses revealed that several arrestee characteristics are significantly related to drug use, in general, as well as drug of choice.

- Individuals who reported having a prior arrest or previously serving at least 24 hours in jail were significantly more likely to test positive for at least one drug, as well as marijuana, cocaine, and methamphetamine (but not opiates).
- Females who were employed were significantly less likely to test positive for cocaine and heroin. This difference did not exist for males.

- Individuals who identified themselves as White non-Hispanic were significantly more likely to test positive for methamphetamine and those who identified as Black were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana and/or cocaine. Hispanics were significantly least likely to test positive for any of the five drugs.
- Individuals age 18 to 24 were significantly more likely to test positive for marijuana, those age 25 to 39 were more likely to test positive for methamphetamine, and those age 40 and older were more likely to test positive for cocaine.

## SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

A total of 1,194 adult arrestees were approached as part of the ADAM Program in 2003. Of these, 86 percent agreed to be interviewed and 14 percent declined. Of the 1,030 interviewees, 993 also provided a urine sample at the conclusion of the interview and these individuals are described here. Seven hundred four (704) of these arrestees were male and 289 were female. Other characteristics include:

- 41 percent were White non-Hispanic, 34 percent Hispanic, 20 percent Black, and 4 percent another ethnicity;
- 89 percent completed the interview in English and 11 percent in Spanish;
- 29 percent did not have a high school degree;
- 41 percent worked full-time;
- 56 percent were single and 23 percent were married;
- 14 percent were homeless;
- 28 percent had previously received in-patient drug treatment and 20 percent had received out-patient; and
- 78 percent had previously been arrested and 73 percent had spent prior time in jail.