



Drug Use and Other Risk Factors Among Juveniles Arrested in San Diego County in 2003

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DRUG USE AND OTHER RISK FACTORS AMONG JUVENILES ARRESTED IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY IN 2003

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, 360 juveniles who were arrested and booked into San Diego County's Juvenile Hall were interviewed (within 48 hours of booking) as part of SANDAG's Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) project. Of these 360, 344 also provided a urine sample for analysis (282 boys and 62 girls).

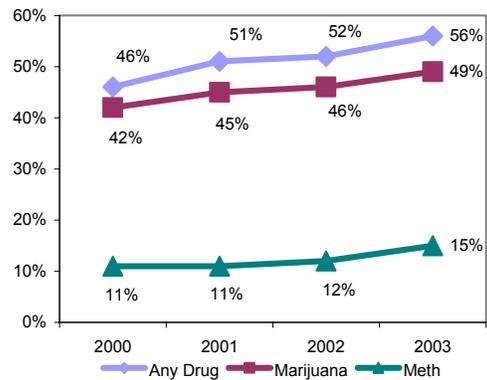
SANDAG has conducted interviews with the arrestee population since 1987. When the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) discontinued funding for the juvenile component of the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) project in 2003, the California Border Alliance Group (CBAG) provided financial support to keep this important data collection effort going. With this local funding, we were able to revise the juvenile interview instrument to include additional questions of interest pertaining to risk. This second in a series of CJ research bulletins on 2003 drug use among the arrestee population includes information regarding drug use among these juveniles, as well as other risk factors.

PERCENT POSITIVE TRENDS

The percents of juveniles who have tested positive for any drug, marijuana, and meth have all increased over the past four years. As Figure 1 shows, over half (56%) of the youth interviewed in 2003 tested positive for some type of drug, 49 percent were positive for marijuana, and 15 percent were positive for meth. Since juvenile arrests were down during the

same time period, it may be the case that juveniles being booked into Juvenile Hall in 2003 have a greater number of issues, including substance use, that need to be addressed. In addition, three percent of the youth interviewed in 2003 tested positive for cocaine, one percent for PCP, and one percent for heroin (not shown).

**Figure 1
MORE JUVENILES HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR DRUGS SINCE 2000**



TOTAL = 302 - 354

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

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program

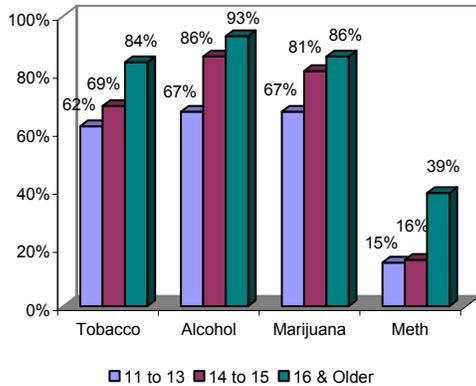
LIFETIME SUBSTANCE USE

Overall, 76 percent of the youth interviewed in 2003 reported that they had ever tried tobacco, 88 percent alcohol, 82 percent marijuana, and 28 percent methamphetamine. Other drugs that had been tried at some time by less than one in five of the youth surveyed included cocaine (16%), mushrooms (14%), inhalants (13%), ecstasy (12%),

rohypnol (10%), crack (9%), LSD (6%), and heroin (3%) (not shown).

However, lifetime experience varied with the age of the juvenile as Figure 2 shows. As one would expect, the percent of youth that had tried each substance increased with each older age group. However, it is worth noting that around two-thirds of youth ages 11 to 13 had tried alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana at least once. These statistics are disturbing due to the higher likelihood of dependency associated with early use (before age 15).¹ The greatest increase across the age groups was for meth, with 39 percent of those 16 and older reporting they had tried this drug at least once.

Figure 2
YOUTH 16 YEARS AND OLDER MOST LIKELY TO HAVE TRIED ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS



TOTAL = 344

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

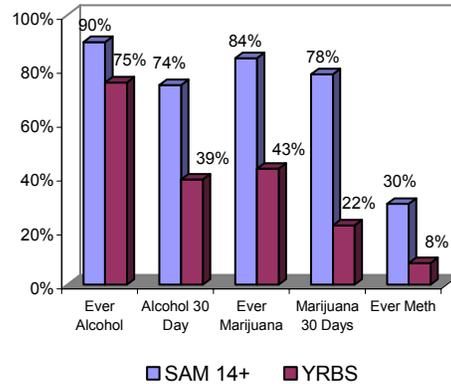
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program

How did this arrestee sample compare to youth in the general population? Figure 3 compares 2003 SAM data for youth ages

¹ Center for Substance Abuse Research (November 8, 2004). Cesar Fax. Volume 13, Issue 45. University of Maryland, College, Park.

14 and older to data collected during the same time period through the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) in San Diego City high schools by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While it is important to note that different methodologies (e.g., surveying versus interviewing the youth in person, phrasing questions in different ways, only surveying students in the City of San Diego) could affect the pattern of results, it is not surprising that the percents of SAM youth surveyed who had ever tried these substances and had used them in the last 30 days were higher than of those interviewed in the school setting since these youth were selected due to their contact with the juvenile justice system.

Figure 3
SAM YOUTH 14 YEARS AND OLDER MORE LIKELY TO REPORT DRUG USE HISTORIES



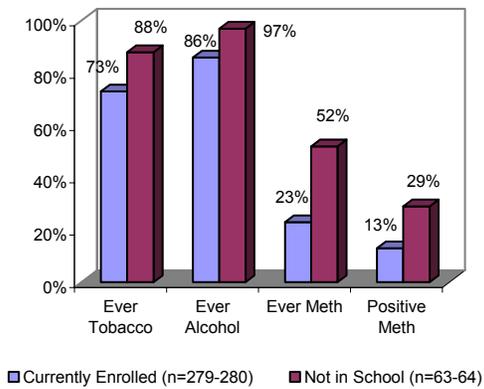
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2003 Data

FACTORS PREDICTIVE OF DRUG USE

To determine what other factors, besides age, were related to ever trying a drug or for testing positive for it, additional analyses were conducted. As the

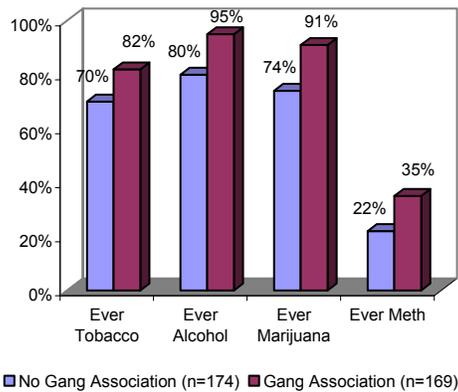
following three figures show, we found three youth characteristics that were consistent predictors of drug use: not being enrolled in school, being involved in a gang, and having parents who use drugs. These findings suggest that it is important to identify these risk factors in youth so that substance abuse issues can be targeted at an early point in time and further justice system contact avoided.

Figure 4
YOUTH NOT IN SCHOOL MORE LIKELY TO USE DRUGS



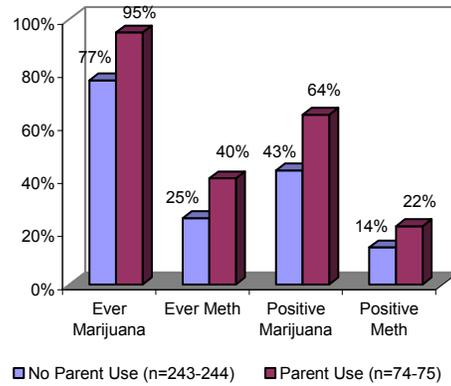
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program
NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

Figure 5
YOUTH IN GANGS MORE LIKELY TO USE DRUGS



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program

Figure 6
YOUTH WITH PARENTS WHO USE DRUGS MORE LIKELY TO USE DRUGS



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

OTHER RISK FACTORS

As previously noted, with the advent of the new SAM instrument, a number of new questions were added to the juvenile survey. From the responses to these questions, new indicators of risk among this population have become available, which are summarized in Table 1. The most common risk factor, reported by 88 percent, was having a history of truancy. In addition, over two-thirds (68%) had been arrested and over half (55%) had served time before.

**Table 1
ARRESTED YOUTH INDICATE PAST
RISKY BEHAVIOR IN A NUMBER OF
AREAS**

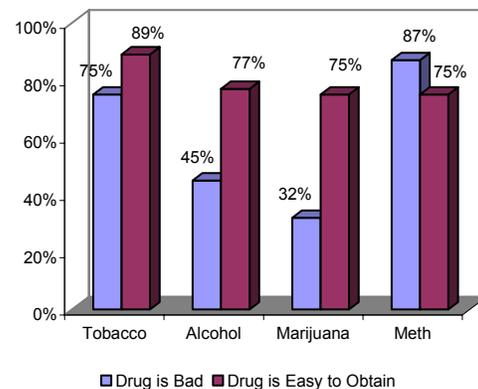
88%	Reported a history of truancy
68%	Had been arrested at least once before
55%	Have served time before
48%	Don't like reading for fun
47%	Have gotten into trouble with their parents for drinking/using drugs
45%	Have ridden in a car with a driver who was drinking/using drugs
41%	Have gotten sick or had a hang-over
39%	Have sold drugs or acted as a "middleman"
37%	Later felt bad about something they did while drunk/high
35%	Have gone to school drunk or high
33%	Have gotten in a physical fight while drinking/using drugs
26%	Have not remembered what happened while they were drinking or using drugs
24%	Have brought a weapon to school
24%	Have missed school because of drinking or using drugs
22%	Have driven a car while or after drinking/using drugs
21%	Were diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
19%	Have passed out while drinking/using drugs
16%	Have dropped out of school or been expelled
10%	Have a child or are currently pregnant (or have a girlfriend who is)

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program

PERCEIVED RISK AND AVAILABILITY OF DRUGS

Two of the new questions on the 2003 revised instrument asked youth who had reported using a substance in the past year (1) how bad they thought it was for them and (2) how easy it was to obtain. Both ratings were made on a four-point scale. As Figure 7 shows, while almost nine in ten meth users thought this drug was "extremely bad" or "very bad" for them and three-quarters felt the same about tobacco, less than half (45%) gave these ratings to alcohol and only one-third (32%) gave it to marijuana. This finding suggests the need for more information campaigns regarding the negative health effects associated with marijuana. Equally disturbing, three-quarters or more reported that it was "easy" or "very easy" to get these substances.

**Figure 7
YOUTH REPORT DRUGS ARE EASY TO OBTAIN AND DON'T THINK THEY ARE EQUALLY BAD FOR THEM**



TOTAL = 91 - 279

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program

GENDER DIFFERENCES

While there were no significant differences in drug use between the boys and girls surveyed through SAM in 2003 [with the exception that on average, girls tried meth approximately one year earlier in life (13.48) than boys (14.49)], the two did differ in other areas. Specifically, girls were:

- less likely to have a stable residence in the past 30 days (23% versus 6% of boys);
- more likely to have been bullied (31% versus 19% of boys);
- more likely to report having ever run away from home (71% compared to 38% of boys); and
- more likely to report that their parents had ever used drugs (33%) and had abused alcohol (39%) compared to boys (21% and 21%, respectively).

These increased risk factors for girls are important for those who work with this population to take into account when trying to meet the unique needs of female youth in the juvenile justice system.

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

- About half (46%) of the youth interviewed in 2003 were Hispanic, 24 percent were Black, 22 percent were White, and 8 percent identified with another ethnic group.
- About one-third (34%) of these youth were arrested for a violent offense, 27 percent for a property offense,

23 percent for some other type of offense (e.g., citation), 9 percent for a status offense (e.g., curfew violation), and 7 percent for a drug/alcohol offense.

- The average age of these youth was 15.93 years, with a range from 11.26 to 18.64 years old.

FUTURE BULLETINS

Future research bulletins will be released over the next few months summarizing 2003 SAM data related specifically to methamphetamine use and drug markets in San Diego County. Bulletins with 2004 data will also be available in early 2005.