



2007 Juvenile Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region

June 2008

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2007 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 Survey on Drug Use and Health, 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.

When the juvenile component of the ADAM program was discontinued in 2003, local funding was secured, which enabled this important data collection effort to continue in San Diego County as the Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program. In 2007, SAM was supported by the California Border Alliance Group (CBAG) and the County of San Diego's Public Safety Group, Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS), and District Attorney's office. Their support, as well as funding from SANDAG member agencies through the Criminal Justice Clearinghouse and the cooperation of the San Diego County Probation Department, which is necessary to conduct these interviews, are gratefully acknowledged.

This CJ Bulletin, "2007 Juvenile Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region," is the first in a three-part series presenting data collected (from both juveniles and adults) in the 2007 calendar year. As part of this study, a total of 177 youth were interviewed at Juvenile Hall during two separate months in 2007. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of these youth provided a urine sample for drug testing purposes (133 males and 40 females). This research bulletin includes the results of urinalysis trends over time, as well as information pertaining to lifetime and recent self-reported drug use, perceived risk and availability of different drugs, and characteristics of the youth that were interviewed and how these factors may be related

to drug use. In addition, all of the data (percentages and raw numbers) captured through the juvenile interviews and urinalyses for 2004 through 2007 are available online 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.

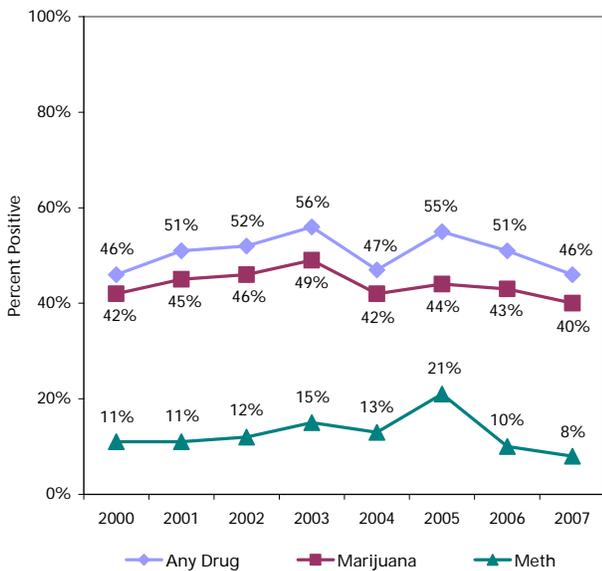
BULLETIN HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2007, almost half (46%) of the juvenile arrestees tested positive for at least one illicit substance.
- Positive drug test results for marijuana and meth were at new eight-year lows (40% and 8%, respectively).
- The average age of initiating gateway drug use (i.e., alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana) was less than 13 years and almost all (93%) had used more than just one of these substances.
- Over two-thirds (68%) of marijuana users think the drug does not have negative effects on health.
- More than one in three youth (37%) reported abusing prescription or over-the-counter medication.
- More than half (54%) of the sample reported some type of gang affiliation, with these individuals more likely to be involved in drug use and drug distribution.
- Significant predictors of drug use included parental substance use, sibling justice system contact, truancy, running away, and lack of participation in prosocial activities.
- In addition to the direct effect of their drug use, many youth also reported participating in other associated risky behaviors, including riding in a car with a driver who was under the influence.

RECENT AND PAST DRUG USE

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, in 2007, 46 percent tested positive for any substance, 40 percent for marijuana, and 8 percent for methamphetamine (meth). In addition, 3 percent of the youth tested positive for cocaine, 1 percent for opiates, and 1 percent for PCP (not shown).

Figure 1
PERCENT OF JUVENILES POSITIVE FOR MARIJUANA AND METH AT EIGHT-YEAR LOWS



TOTAL = 160 - 354

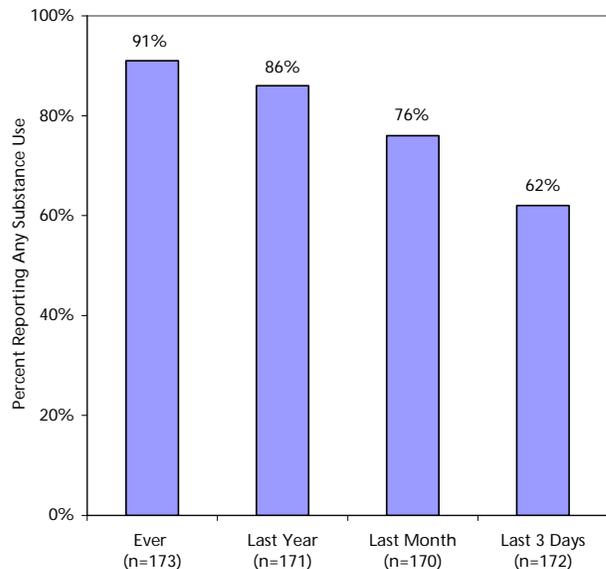
NOTES: Cases with missing information not included. Any drug includes marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, opiates, and PCP.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

Seven percent of the youth in 2007 tested positive for multiple illicit drugs. All 12 of these individuals tested positive for marijuana, with other positive substances including meth (7), cocaine (2), opiates (2), and PCP (1) (not shown).

In addition to obtaining a urine sample, youth are asked a series of questions regarding their experiences using alcohol, tobacco, and other substances. As Figure 2 shows, 91 percent of the youth reported that they had tried at least one drug in their lifetime (including tobacco and alcohol), 86 percent used at least one substance in the past year, 76 percent in the past 30 days, and 62 percent in the previous 3 days. Of the 158 youth who reported ever trying one of the substances listed in Table 1, the average number tried was 4.6 (range 1 to 13) (not shown).

Figure 2
ALMOST ALL JUVENILES REPORT PREVIOUS SUBSTANCE USE



NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

RECENT AND PAST DRUG USE (CONTINUED)

In terms of which substances they had ever and recently used, around three-quarters of juveniles in 2007 reported trying alcohol, marijuana, or tobacco previously (starting around the age of 12 years, on average) and around half (46% to 57%) had used each of these substances during the past 30 days (Table 1). Alcohol and marijuana were among the substances used by the greatest proportion of youth recently (within the last month), consistent with information from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health¹. Between 2 and 33 percent of the youth also reported trying other substances, including meth, ecstasy, powder cocaine, mushrooms, inhalants, crack, LSD, heroin, rohypnol, and steroids. For the first time, youth were also asked about binge drinking (consuming five or more drinks on one occasion), with just under two-thirds (63%) reporting this behavior.

Table 1
YOUTH REPORT INITIATING SUBSTANCE USE
AT AROUND AGE TWELVE ON AVERAGE

	Ever Used	Avg. Age 1st Use	Used Last Month
Alcohol	87%	12.7	57%
Marijuana	82%	12.8	46%
Tobacco	72%	12.6	55%
Binge Alcohol	63%	14.1	41%
Meth	33%	13.9	16%
Ecstasy	28%	14.7	9%
Powder Cocaine	25%	14.7	8%
Mushrooms	21%	14.3	2%
Inhalants	18%	13.9	5%
Crack	13%	14.8	3%
LSD	12%	14.3	2%
Heroin	9%	14.6	2%
Rohypnol	7%	14.6	2%
Steroids	2%	16.5	0%
GHB	0%	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	173	2-149	172-173

NOTES: Cases with missing information not included. Binge alcohol defined as five or more drinks on one occasion.

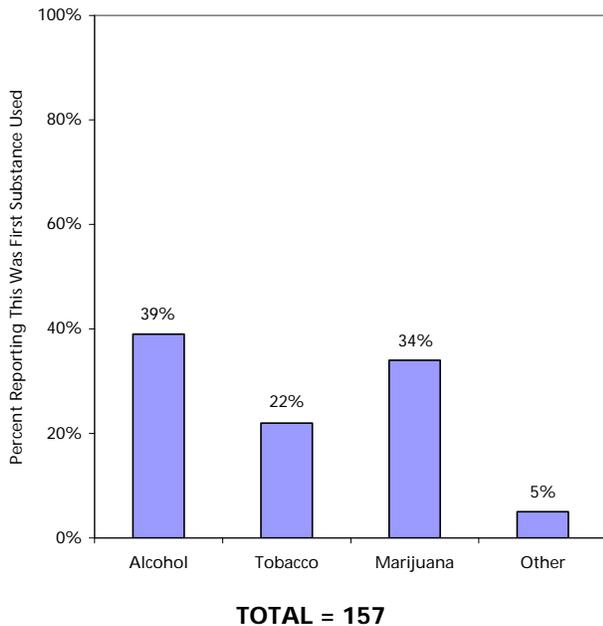
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

¹ Cesar FAX (2008, April). Alcohol and Marijuana Have Highest Rates of Continued Use in the Year After Initiation; Heroin and Crack Cocaine Have Highest Rates of Dependence, 17, 15. Available: www.cesar.umd.edu.

GATEWAY AND OTHER DRUG USE PATTERNS

“Gateway drug” is a term used to refer to a substance (alcohol, tobacco, marijuana) whose use is thought to precede and possibly lead to the use of and dependence upon harder drugs. When asked to describe what substance they had *first* used, almost all (95%) reported a gateway drug, including alcohol (39%), marijuana (34%), and tobacco (22%) (Figure 3). The “other” drugs included meth (3), inhalants (2), ecstasy (1), heroin (1), and Coricidin (or skittles, an over-the-counter cold medicine) (not shown).

Figure 3
ALCOHOL AND MARIJUANA FIRST SUBSTANCES USED BY MOST YOUTH



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

Additional analyses regarding patterns of gateway drug use also revealed that most youth had tried all three, rather than just one or two of these substances. As Table 2 shows, of the 157 youth who had ever tried a gateway drug, almost three-quarters (72%) had tried all three. Further, youth who reported using “harder drugs” (i.e., meth, cocaine, mushrooms, ecstasy) were significantly more likely to report using gateway drugs, compared to those who had abstained (Table 3). For example, while 100 percent of cocaine users had also used alcohol and marijuana, only 82 percent and 76 percent, respectively, of non-cocaine users had. This pattern is not surprising and is consistent with other data regarding patterns of initiation and use².

Table 2
MOST JUVENILES HAVE TRIED MORE THAN ONE GATEWAY DRUG

Types of Gateway Drugs Experimenting Youth Have Ever Tried	
Alcohol only	4%
Tobacco only	0%
Marijuana only	3%
Alcohol and tobacco	5%
Alcohol and marijuana	14%
Tobacco and marijuana	2%
Alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana	72%
TOTAL	157

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

² Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (1994). Comprehensive National Analysis Between Gateway Drug Use and Other Illicit Drug Use. New York, NY: Columbia University.

GATEWAY AND OTHER DRUG USE PATTERNS (CONTINUED)

Table 3
GATEWAY DRUG USE APPEARS
TO PRECEDE USE OF OTHER
SUBSTANCES FOR MOST YOUTH*

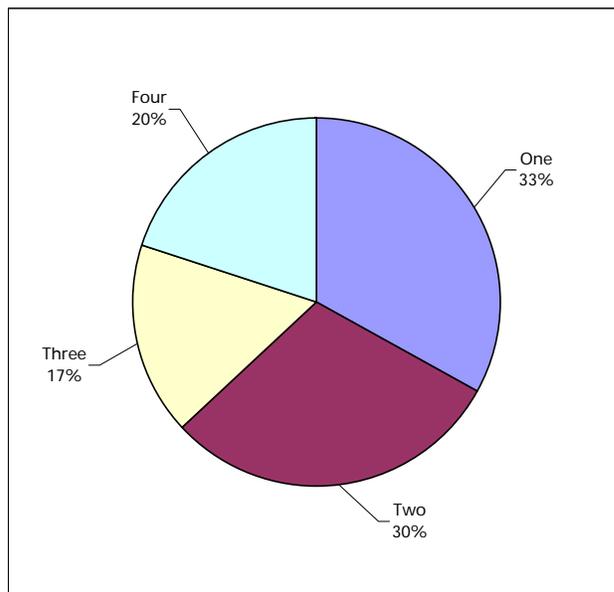
	Also Used		
	Alcohol	Tobacco	Marijuana
Ever Used			
Meth	96%	95%	96%
Cocaine	100%	93%	100%
Mushrooms	100%	97%	100%
Ecstasy	96%	96%	100%
Never Used			
Meth	82%	60%	75%
Cocaine	82%	64%	76%
Mushrooms	83%	65%	77%
Ecstasy	83%	62%	75%

*Significant at $p < .05$.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

Figure 4 shows the proportion of youth who used one or more of the “harder drugs.” As this graph shows, only one in three (33%) reported ever using just one of these four substances (meth, cocaine, mushrooms, or ecstasy), with the rest using two (30%), three (17%), or all four of them (20%). This pattern speaks to the severity of addiction for some of these youth and supports the need for effective treatment for this population.

Figure 4
MOST YOUTH WHO HAVE TRIED
“HARDER” DRUGS HAVE USED
MORE THAN JUST ONE



TOTAL = 83

NOTE: “Harder drugs” include methamphetamine, cocaine, mushrooms, and ecstasy.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

ILLEGAL PRESCRIPTION DRUG USE

In 2007, questions were added to the SAM interview regarding illegal use of prescription and over-the-counter medications. According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy (www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov), abuse of painkillers ranks second – only behind marijuana – as the nation’s most prevalent illegal drug problem.

Overall, one-third of the youth reported ever using prescription drugs (33%) or over-the-counter drugs (30%) illegally. These percentages are considerably higher than those reported for youth between the ages of 12 and 17 in the general population according to the National Household Survey on Drug Use and Health, where 12 percent reported any lifetime abuse. Consistent with national data, the most commonly abused prescription drug type was painkillers (which includes Codeine, Vicodin, and Percocet) (88%), followed by tranquilizers (e.g., Xanax, Valium, Rochas) (54%), and Oxycontin (37%) (Table 4). In terms of over-the-counter drugs, 92 percent described abusing Coricidin (also referred to as DXM, Skittles, or Triple C) and 43 percent liquid cold medicines.

Table 4
LIFETIME PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE REPORTED BY ONE IN THREE YOUTH

Prescription Drugs	
Painkillers	88%
Tranquilizers	54%
Oxycontin	37%
Other	25%
Anti-depressants	19%
Darvon/Darvocet	11%
Demerol/Fentanyl	9%
TOTAL	57
Over-the-Counter	
Coricidin	92%
Liquid Cold Medicines	43%
Other	12%
TOTAL	51

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

While there was no difference by gender in terms of who had ever abused prescription or over-the-counter medication (37% overall), there was by ethnicity and by age. Specifically, Whites (59%) and youth of other ethnicities (50%) were significantly more likely to report this abuse, compared to Hispanic (34%) and Black youth (15%). Similarly, youth 16 years of age and older were more likely to have engaged in this behavior (51%), compared to those 12 or 13 (11%) or 14 or 15 (34%) (not shown). In addition, those youth who reported abusing prescription or over-the-counter medication were significantly more likely to have tried the gateway drugs, as well as other substances, as Table 5 shows.

Table 5
YOUTH WHO ABUSE PRESCRIPTION AND OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATION ALSO USE OTHER SUBSTANCES*

	Percent Who Ever Tried Substance	
	Prescription or Other Medicine Abuse	No Prescription or Other Medicine Abuse
Alcohol	100%	79%
Tobacco	95%	57%
Marijuana	98%	72%
Meth	61%	16%
Powder Cocaine	53%	8%
Mushrooms	52%	3%
Ecstasy	58%	10%
TOTAL	64	107

*Significant at $p < .05$.

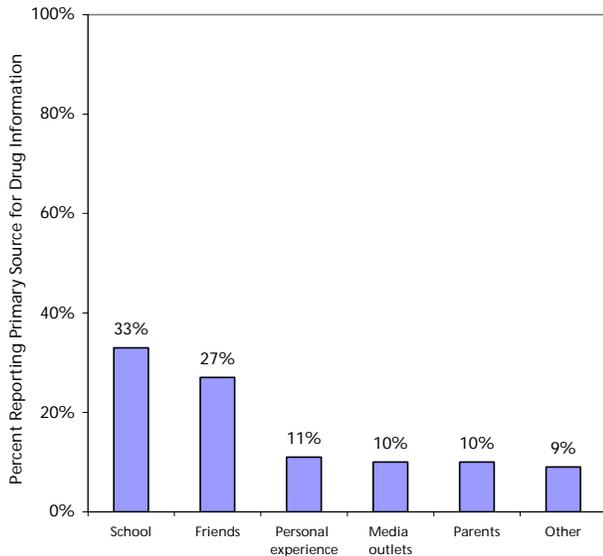
NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

KNOWLEDGE AND VIEWS ON DRUGS

For several years, prevention messages have targeted parents regarding the need to have candid conversations with their children regarding the risks associated with drug use (e.g., www.theantidrug.com). When these youth were asked to describe their main source of information regarding drugs, only one in ten (10%) said parents, with others saying school (33%), friends (27%), personal experience (11%), media outlets (television, movies, or the Internet) (10%), and other individuals/institutions (9%) (Figure 5).

Figure 5
FEW YOUTH REPORT LEARNING ABOUT DRUGS FROM THEIR PARENTS



TOTAL = 172

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

Youth were also 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 6 shows, while around three-quarters to almost all (78% to 100%) respondents who did *not* use a given substance felt different drugs are “extremely bad” or “very bad,” these ratings varied considerably for those who had ever used the drug. Specifically, heroin, crack, meth, and inhalant users had similar perceptions of the risks of using the drug to non-users, even though they had or were currently using it. However, only 40 percent of the youth who used alcohol and 32 percent of those who used marijuana thought the drug could have negative effects on their health (compared to 78% and 84% of those who did not use the drugs), suggesting that different prevention and intervention strategies should be used for different substances.

Table 6
FOR MOST DRUGS, NON-USERS PERCEIVE MORE HARM THAN USERS

	Percent Who Think The Drug Is Extremely Or Very Bad	
	Never Used Drug	Used Drug
Heroin	100%	94%
Powder Cocaine*	100%	84%
Crack	99%	100%
Meth	98%	93%
LSD*	98%	60%
Inhalants	93%	87%
Ecstasy*	92%	71%
Mushrooms*	88%	44%
Marijuana*	84%	32%
Tobacco*	80%	60%
Alcohol*	78%	40%
TOTAL	23-152	16-150

*Significant at $p < .05$.

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

KNOWLEDGE AND VIEWS ON DRUGS (CONTINUED)

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 7 shows, with the exception of mushrooms and LSD, half or more of users said it was "easy" or "very easy" to obtain these substances, with tobacco, inhalants, marijuana, and alcohol among those easiest to obtain.

Table 7
JUVENILE ARRESTEES REPORT MANY
SUBSTANCES EASY TO OBTAIN

Percent Who Think The Drug Is Very Easy Or Easy To Obtain	
Tobacco	90%
Inhalants	89%
Marijuana	77%
Alcohol	71%
Rohypnol	64%
Meth	63%
Ecstasy	61%
Crack	55%
Powder Cocaine	50%
Mushrooms	49%
LSD	44%
TOTAL	11-150

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

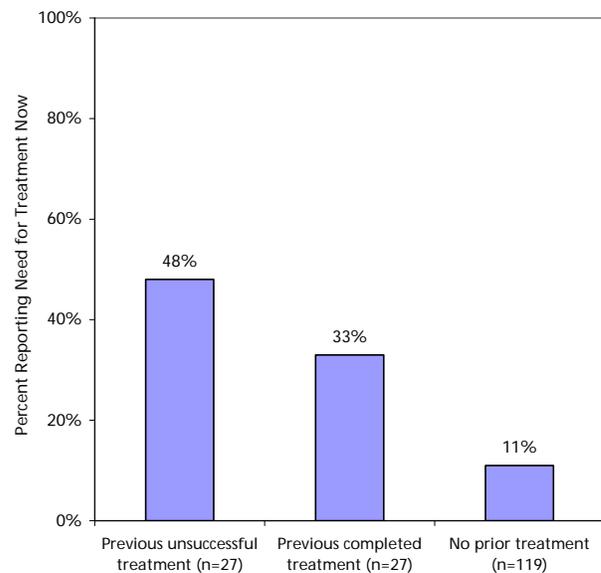
DRUG TREATMENT

Almost one-third (31%) of the juveniles interviewed in 2007 reported that they had previously received some type of drug treatment³ (not shown). When these 54 youth were asked for more details regarding this prior treatment, they revealed that:

- 43 percent had been in treatment once, 32 percent twice, and 25 percent three or more times;
- the treatment was more likely to be court-ordered (67%) than voluntary (33%);
- 35 percent had attended in-patient treatment, 31 percent out-patient treatment, 13 percent Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous (NA/AA), and 20 percent received treatment while in custody;
- 76 percent had received treatment for marijuana, 46 percent for alcohol, 24 percent for meth, 11 percent for cocaine/crack, and 6 percent for heroin; and
- only 50 percent reported that they had successfully completed treatment⁴ (not shown).

When asked if they currently need treatment, only one in five (20%) responded affirmatively. However, this desire varied by prior treatment history, with non-completers most likely to report needing it (48%), followed by those who had completed treatment (33%), and those who had no prior treatment history (11%) (Figure 6). Of the 35 individuals who felt they needed treatment, 54 percent wanted it for their marijuana use, 40 percent for meth use, and 29 percent for alcohol use (not shown).

Figure 6
YOUTH WHO PREVIOUSLY RECEIVED TREATMENT MORE LIKELY TO REPORT CURRENT NEED AS WELL *



*Significant at $p < .05$.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

³ There was a significant difference in this response by ethnicity, with White youth more likely to report previous treatment (53%), compared to Hispanic (25%), Black (21%), and other (17%) youth.

⁴ Reasons for not completing treatment included that they had been arrested, they had been kicked out, it was too long, they were still in, they wanted to use, it was too strict, it was too far to get to, or their parents did not support their efforts.

CRIMINAL HISTORY AND GANG INVOLVEMENT

Instant Offense

The SAM interview is conducted at Juvenile Hall with youth who were arrested within the previous 48 hours. Overall, about two-thirds of the youth were arrested for an “other” offense (31%) (which includes probation violations) or a violent offense (30%). The other third were arrested for a property offense (22%), status offense (13%) (such as truancy or a curfew violation), or drug offense (5%) (not shown).

Prior Offenses and Arrests

Two-thirds (67%) of the youth reported they had been arrested previously (the median number of prior arrests was 3.0 and the range was 1 to 21), and over half (58%) said they had previously been detained at a juvenile facility. Additional analyses revealed that individuals who reported previously being arrested were significantly more likely than those with no prior arrests to report previous use of tobacco (79% versus 55%), marijuana (88% versus 70%), cocaine (32% versus 13%), and meth (42% versus 13%) (not shown).

Eighty-three percent (83%) of the youth also reported previously committing a property-related offense, whether or not they were arrested for it. When further queried as to the nature of this/these offense(s), 81 percent of the 144 said they had shoplifted, 63 percent committed vandalism, 36 percent burglary, 24 percent motor vehicle theft, and 13 percent forgery (not shown).

Drug Distribution

Despite the fact that few (only 1 in 20) youth were arrested for a drug-related offense, more than one-third (37%) reported that they had some previous involvement in drug distribution – either selling drugs (13%), serving as a middleman (7%), or both (17%). When asked what drug(s) this involved, 88 percent said marijuana, 36 percent meth, 22 percent powder cocaine, 13 percent ecstasy, 8 percent crack, and 5 percent heroin (not shown).

When asked how much they made in these activities in the past 30 days, the median was \$400 (range \$30 to \$8,000). While there was no difference between the genders in this involvement, youth 16 years of age and older were significantly more likely to report a role in drug distribution (49%), compared to younger youth (11% of those 12-13 and 26% of those 14-15) (not shown).

Gang Involvement

More than half (54%) 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 two years (median, range 30 days to 12 years) and 86 percent reported their gang generated income from some type of illegal activity⁵, including theft (73% of the 70 respondents reporting income), dealing drugs (67%), and pimping/prostitution (20%). There was no significant difference in being in a gang or associating with a gang by a youth's gender, but there was by ethnicity. Specifically, Hispanic youth and youth of other ethnicities were more likely to report this membership/association (68% and 67%, respectively), compared to White youth (47%) and Black youth (32%). Gang-associated individuals were also significantly more likely to have ever tried meth (40% versus 24%), mushrooms (30% versus 11%), and ecstasy (37% versus 18%), and also to report they had ever sold drugs or acted as a middleman (52% versus 20%) (not shown).

Teen Prostitution

Four of the youth (2 boys and 2 girls) reported ever engaging in prostitution, three of whom had done so in the past 30 days. Each of these three youth reported they were interested in stopping. On average, these youth had begun to engage in this activity at the age of 13.75 (range 12 to 15) (not shown).

⁵ Three-quarters (72%) also reported the gang had legal sources of income.

OTHER RISK FACTORS

Home Environment

Overall, most of the youth interviewed reported living in a stable environment, but many lived without both biological parents. Specifically, prior to arrest, 93 percent reported living in a stable residence, 5 percent said they lived in some type of group setting, and 2 percent said they were homeless. When asked who they lived with, three-fourths (78%) said their biological mother⁶ and 39 percent their biological father; 15 percent said they did not live with a biological parent at all. Three-fourths (75%) reported they lived with at least one sibling and three percent of the youth said they were already a parent themselves. When asked to rate the quality of their relationship with their parents, 41 percent said excellent or very good, 44 percent said good, and 16 percent said not very good or very bad. Over one-fourth (29%) said that their family had some type of previous Child Protective Services (CPS) involvement (not shown).

Parental Drug Use

When asked if they knew if their parents had abused alcohol or used other drugs, 16 percent said their parents had abused alcohol, 9 percent used other drugs, and 18 percent both. When asked what (drugs) they used, the most common responses included marijuana (72%), meth (49%), cocaine/crack (36%), and heroin (23%). As Table 8 shows, youth who reported parental usage of drugs and/or abuse of alcohol were significantly more likely to have ever tried marijuana, tobacco, meth, ecstasy, cocaine, and mushrooms. While the exact nature of this relationship cannot be determined from these data alone (e.g., genetic versus environmental influences, type of environmental influences), it is clear that, in some households, a cycle of substance use exists that needs to be addressed before additional generations are also affected.

⁶ Females were significantly less likely to report living with their mother (61%) than males (82%).

Table 8
PARENTAL DRUG USE ONE OF
STRONGEST PREDICTORS OF
SUBSTANCE USE BY CHILDREN*

Percent Who Ever Tried That Substance		
	Parental Drug Use or Abuse	No Parental Drug Use or Abuse
Marijuana	93%	75%
Tobacco	83%	64%
Meth	48%	21%
Ecstasy	42%	18%
Cocaine/Crack	39%	14%
Mushrooms	33%	13%
TOTAL	69	92

*Significant at $p < .05$.

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

Other Family Justice System Contact

To better understand the potential cycle of cross-generational contact with the justice system, questions were added to the interview in 2007 regarding whether immediate family members (siblings and parents/guardians) had ever been arrested and booked into a detention facility or adult jail. Overall, 43 percent of the youth reported a sibling and 52 percent said a parent had been previously arrested and booked. While having a parent with a prior record was not significantly related to ever using any substances, having a sibling with this history was. Specifically, youth who reported a sibling with justice system contact were significantly more likely to have tried marijuana (91% versus 75%) and meth (39% versus 22%) (not shown).

OTHER RISK FACTORS (CONTINUED)

Runaway Behavior

In addition to many youth being exposed to parental substance use, it also appears that many of the youth, especially girls, are running away. Specifically, 40 percent of the youth reported they had previously run away from home, but there was a significant gender difference with females more likely to report this behavior (65%), compared to males (33%)⁷. Youth who reported previously running away were also significantly more likely to report using tobacco (84% versus 63%), marijuana (90% versus 77%), meth (50% versus 21%), mushrooms (30% versus 16%), and ecstasy (46% versus 17%). This relationship (between running away and drug use) has implications that include the need to assess the backgrounds of those youth at greatest risk of substance use and not merely criminalize the running away behavior without addressing the underlying causes.

Drug Use at Home

While only four percent of the youth reported that they had ever used illicit drugs with their parents, 37 percent reported that they had used drugs at home previously (with 55% of the 62 youth acknowledging a parent or caregiver was at home when this substance use occurred and 39% that the caregiver was aware of this use). Sixteen percent (16%) reported keeping drugs at home (not shown).

Mental Health

Overall, about one in five youth (18%) reported they had been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Around two-thirds (68%) of these youth reported they had been prescribed Ritalin or Adderall, one of whom had also given or sold the Ritalin to someone else⁸. Individuals who reported they had ADHD did not differ from those without this diagnosis in their lifetime drug use (not shown).

About one in ten (13%) of the youth reported they had previously thought about killing themselves and of these 23 individuals, 12 had previously made a suicide attempt (not shown)⁹.

Table 9
SUMMARY OF OTHER
YOUTH RISK FACTORS

Don't live with biological parent: 15%
Previous CPS involvement: 29%
Parental alcohol and other drug abuse: 43%
Sibling with justice system contact: 43%
Parent with justice system contact: 52%
Previously run away from home: 40%
Has used drugs at home: 37%
ADD diagnosis: 18%
Suicidal thoughts: 13%

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

⁷ Youth who reported their family had previous CPS involvement were also significantly more likely to have run away (54%), compared to other youth (35%).

⁸ Three additional youth reported they were prescribed Ritalin but said they had not been diagnosed with ADHD. None of these individuals gave or sold the drug to someone else.

⁹ Girls were significantly more likely to report suicidal thoughts (30%), compared to the boys (8%).

SCHOOL AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Overall, 84 percent of the 2007 sample reported they had previously skipped school or been truant¹⁰ and one in four (25%) was not currently enrolled in school (because of an expulsion, suspension, or dropping out on their own). Those who reported previous truancy were also significantly more likely to report previous drug use (Table 10).

Table 10
JUVENILES WHO REPORTED
PREVIOUS TRUANCY ALSO
MORE LIKELY TO REPORT DRUG USE*

Percent Who Ever Tried Substance		
	Previous Truancy	No Truancy
Alcohol	92%	61%
Tobacco	79%	36%
Marijuana	87%	57%
Meth	37%	11%
Powder Cocaine	30%	4%
Mushrooms	25%	4%
Ecstasy	34%	0%
TOTAL	145	28

*Significant at $p < .05$.

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

Other information related to school included:

- 70 percent reported they do not like school;
- 49 percent do not like to read for fun;
- 45 percent reported they do not like to read for school;
- 32 percent have been referred to the School Attendance Review Board (SARB);
- 26 percent had an individualized education plan (IEP);
- 24 percent have brought a weapon to school (most often a knife);

- the median GPA was 2.0 (range .0 to 3.80); and
- 18 percent have been bullied at school, with girls significantly more likely to report being bullied than boys (33% versus 14%) (not shown).

Two in five youth (40%) reported current participation in prosocial extracurricular activities. When these 70 youth were asked to describe the type of activity they were involved in, 63 percent said it was a church-sponsored activity (including regular attendance), 41 percent a sport, 13 percent an artistic endeavor, and 10 percent a school club (not shown). Additional analyses revealed that youth who reported no involvement in these types of activities were significantly more likely to report lifetime substance use, including alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and meth (Table 11).

Table 11
JUVENILE ARRESTEES WHO REPORT
SOME PROSOCIAL ACTIVITY LESS LIKELY
TO REPORT SUBSTANCE USE*

Percent Who Ever Tried Substance		
	No Activity Participation	Activity Participation
Alcohol	95%	74%
Tobacco	82%	57%
Marijuana	88%	73%
Meth	41%	21%
TOTAL	103	70

*Significant at $p < .05$.

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

Fourteen percent (14%) of the youth reported having a job (part-time for 64% of these youth, 20% full-time, and 16% odd jobs). However, being employed was not significantly related to drug use history (not shown).

¹⁰ The average number of days truant reported in the previous month was 3.4 (range 0 to 20).

OTHER RISKY BEHAVIORS

At the end of the interview, youth were asked if they had participated in any types of specific risky behaviors associated with alcohol or other drug use in the past 12 months. As Table 12 shows, around one-third or more reported they had engaged in a number of these behaviors, including getting in trouble with parents, getting sick, riding in a car with a driver under the influence, feeling bad, participating in sex acts, and going to school drunk/high.

While there were no differences in these reported behaviors by gender, there was by race, with White youth significantly more likely to report a number of these risky behaviors, including not remembering something that happened (48% versus 26%), feeling bad about something that happened (60% versus 32%), and participating in sex (55% versus 30%). This difference may be at least partially related to ethnic differences in drug use history, including greater use of mushrooms and ecstasy by White youth, compared to other youth (44% versus 12% and 44% versus 22%, respectively) (not shown).

In another series of questions, youth were asked if they had ever crossed the United States/Mexico border to obtain alcohol or other drugs. Overall, 32 of the youth (19%) said they had, with 18 crossing for just alcohol, 4 for just drugs, and 10 for both types of substances. The median age of first crossing was 15.00 for both alcohol and other drugs (range 12 to 17) and those who crossed for drugs reported obtaining marijuana (7), meth (4), other substances (5), powder cocaine (3) and ecstasy (1). There were significant age differences for these variables, with none of the youth 13 years of age and under reporting crossing the border, compared to 8 percent and 5 percent of 14 to 15 year olds (for alcohol and other drugs respectively), and 32 percent and 21 percent of those 16 years of age and older (not shown).

Table 12
MANY JUVENILE ARRESTEES
PARTICIPATE IN RISKY BEHAVIORS
ASSOCIATED WITH DRUG USE

Get in trouble with parents for using alcohol/drugs	48%
Get sick from alcohol/drugs	41%
Ride in a car with a driver who has used alcohol/drugs	40%
Feel bad about something done when drunk/high	40%
Participate in sex acts after using alcohol/drugs	38%
Go to school drunk/high	33%
Get in physical fight after using alcohol/drugs	32%
Not remember what happened after using alcohol/drugs	31%
Pass out after using alcohol/drugs	26%
Miss school because of alcohol/drugs	25%
Drive a car drunk/high	15%
Have alcohol/drug-related health problems	9%
TOTAL	166-173

NOTE: Cases with missing information not included.

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Program, 2007

ADDITIONAL SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Additional descriptive information regarding this sample of these 173 youth follows.

- The average age of these youth was 15.8 years (range 12 to 18);
- 47 percent of the youth were Hispanic, 26 percent White, 20 percent Black, and 7 percent other; and
- 28 percent reported living in the East suburban MSA¹¹ of San Diego County, 24 percent in Central suburban, 12 percent in North County East, 14 percent in South suburban, 14 percent in North City, 6 percent in North County West, 1 percent in East County, and 1 percent outside of San Diego County.

SUMMARY

As the data here describe, illicit drug use has declined slightly over the past eight years among this juvenile justice population. However, youth booked into Juvenile Hall continue to face a number of risk factors that require communities and systems of care to continue to work together. Some of the risks described here include both gateway and other drug use at relatively early ages; poly-drug use; negative peer groups, including gang involvement; challenging home environments with individuals who also use drugs and have had contact with the justice system; and truancy. These data offer program and policy leaders support for continued prevention and targeted intervention services. Specific areas of prevention and intervention focus could include ensuring treatment availability that is family-based; education for parents regarding the importance of prevention; coordination with educational units to address truancy, as well as facilitate prevention messages; and continued support of prosocial activities.

¹¹ 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. Please see <http://maximus.sandag.org/website/viewdata2/viewer.htm> for a map of these areas.