



The Status of Prescription Drug Abuse in San Diego County

What Do the Data Say? What Are We Doing to Reduce This Problem?

The Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force (PDATF), originally the Oxy Task Force, was convened in 2008; in 2010 the Task Force renamed itself as the PDATF, recognizing that many kinds of prescription drugs were involved in overdose, addiction, and crime problems in the region. Visit the PDATF website for more information at www.SanDiegoRxAbuseTaskForce.org. Since its inception, all partners have agreed that law enforcement, prevention, treatment, education, health, and community advocates must work together to address this complex problem in a comprehensive way.

This Rx Report Card provides concrete data on the scale of the problem by looking at multiple factors and data points over the last five years in San Diego County. Readers are cautioned not to consider a single data point alone, but rather are encouraged to look at all of the information, as well as the direction of the trends over time. Prescription drugs can be lifesavers for those who need them, but misuse and abuse of these drugs have serious consequences for health and safety of San Diego County residents, as well as our public health and safety community systems. Data sources are listed on Page 4.

2015 Prescription Drug (Rx) Abuse Report Card						
	Indicator	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1	Unintentional Rx-Related Deaths					
	• Number	228	267	268	259	244
	• Rate per 100,000 residents ¹	(8.5)	(9.8)	(9.8)	(8.2)	(7.6)
2	Emergency Room Painkiller-related Discharges					Not Available until 2016
	• Number	2931	3,278	3,791	5,723	
	• Rate per 100,000 residents	(91.1)	(105.2)	(121.2)	(181.7)	
3	Student Self Report Rx Misuse		19.6%		17%	
4	Total Adult Treatment Admissions	13,893	13,696	14,383	16,629	16,104
	• Percentage of Prescription Painkillers	4.1%	4.2%	4.7%	4.5%	4.5%
	• Percentage of Heroin	21.4%	22.0%	23.1%	24.8%	27.7%
5	Arrestees Self Report of Rx Misuse					
	• Adult	40%	41%	38%	43%	39%
	• Juvenile	31%	37%	40%	37%	37%
6	Rx Prosecutions					
	• Rx-specific Fraud Charge	465	505	387	311	214
	• Other Charges with Rx-involved	1,341	1,288	1,311	1,193	1,034
7	Pharmacy Robberies/Burglaries	14	26	8	5	8
8	Pounds of Safely Disposed Medications					
	• Take Back Events	7,446	13,008	16,707	18,732	17,676
	• Sheriff's Department Collection Boxes	3,400	5,128	9,902	13,872	13,079
9	Dispensed Pills Per County Resident					
	• Painkillers ²	33.4	35.9	37.9	36.3	36.3 ³
	• Anti-anxiety	13	13.3	13.8	13.7	13.3
	• Stimulants	4.3	4.5	4.8	4.9	4.7

¹ San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) population figures based on actual 2010 Census data

² Painkillers include only pills; solution-based prescriptions are 2.5% of all painkillers and are not included in the count.

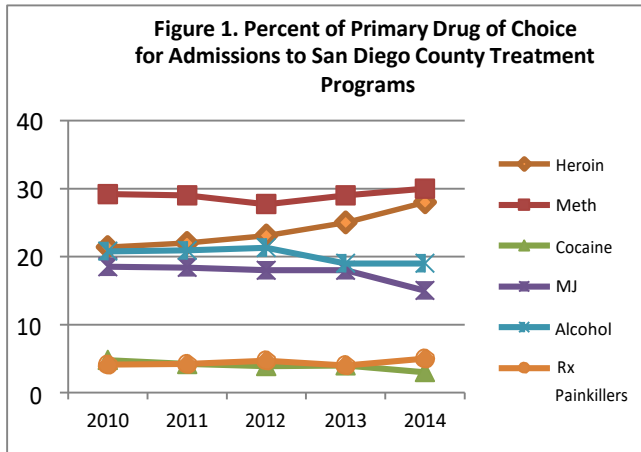
³ Tramadol has been used for pain for many years, but was only added as a Schedule IV medication in August 2014, thus added to CURES. Without Tramadol, the rate would have been 33.83; there were 19 Tramadol deaths in both 2012 and 2013.

Additional Details on Prescription Drug (Rx) Indicators

Sources listed on Page 4.

Drug Treatment

Data on the actual number of public treatment admissions in San Diego County reflect the availability of treatment, which varies according to funding and other factors, and does not necessarily reflect the need for treatment among drug users.



Rx-Impaired Driving

- In 2012, the first statewide roadside survey in California measured alcohol and other drug use among drivers on weekend evenings in eight communities – including Chula Vista. While 7.4% tested positive for alcohol, 7% were positive for marijuana and 4.6% were positive for Rx and over-the-counter drugs.
- New grants have created a special prosecution team for major Driving Under the Influence (DUI) fatalities and injuries at the District Attorney's office, and a dedicated drugged-driving unit at the San Diego City Attorney's Office. In addition, local efforts are underway to increase enforcement capacity through a unit designator and increased patrol training.
- In 2014, the DA's Office prosecuted 197 defendants (215 in 2012/161 in 2013) for DUI that included an Rx drug in the text of the incident report.

Demographics of 2014 Overdose Deaths

Table 1: Race/Ethnicity of 2014 Overdose Deaths

Race/Ethnicity	Count	Percentage
Asian Indian	1	0.41%
Asian Pacific Islander	4	1.64%
Black	15	6.15%
Hispanic	27	11%
Native American	3	1.23%
Other	2	0.82%
White	192	79%
Total	244	100%

Table 2: Age & Gender for 2014 Overdose Deaths

Age	Female	Male	Total	County Population Age %
15-24	4 (3%)	13 (10%)	17 (7%)	
25-34	11 (10%)	20 (16%)	31 (13%)	
35-44	19 (17%)	13 (10%)	32 (13%)	
45-54	33 (29%)	43 (33%)	76 (31%)	
55-64	39 (34%)	31 (24%)	70 (29%)	
65+	9 (8%)	9 (7%)	18 (7%)	
Total	115 (100%)	129 (100%)	244 (100%)	

Table 3: 2014 SAM Self-reported Method of Obtaining Rx

Method	Adult	Juvenile
Given	91%	76%
Bought	52%	45%
Stole	21%	33%

Prescription Interaction with Other Substances

Table 4: Rx-Related Overdoses in 2014

Prescription Only	122
Prescription and Alcohol	45
Prescription and Illicit	42
Prescription and OTC	10
Prescription and Other	2
Prescription, Alcohol and OTC	2
Prescription, Illicit and Alcohol	20
Prescription, Illicit and OTC	1
Total	244

2015 Heroin Addendum

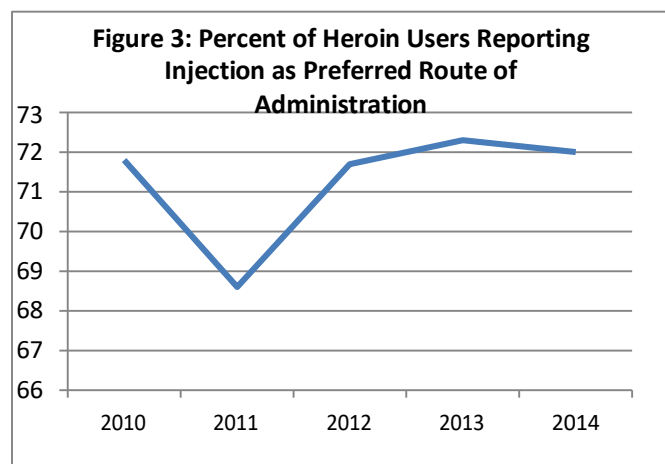
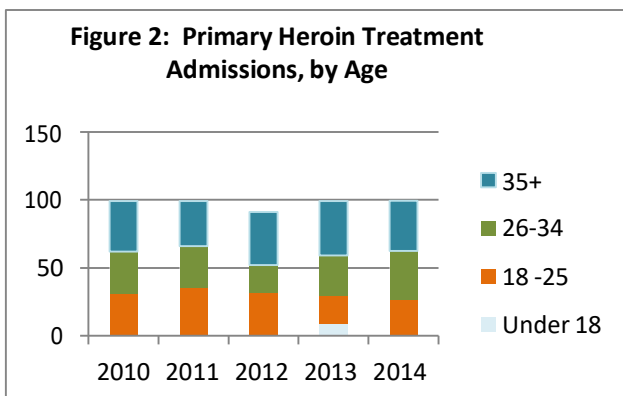
Heroin abuse continues to grow. Heroin seizures and treatment admissions have increased consistently in the last five years. National studies confirm that younger users switch to heroin after painkillers become harder to find or pay for. In 2012, according to the SANDAG's Substance Abuse Monitoring program, of arrestees who reported heroin use, 27% said they had used prescription opioids before trying heroin. Of this group, 63% said heroin was a substitute because it was easy to get and was less expensive. These findings echo a 2010 study of young (18-40 year old) intravenous drug users in San Diego County, where 40% said that they had misused opioids prior to initiating heroin injection (Pollini 2011). Other indicators of the growing heroin problem are listed below. Sources are listed on Page 4.

Naloxone is an antidote to a heroin overdose that is delivered as a nasal spray or injection. In 2014, the Sheriff's Department trained patrol officers on naloxone use, and patrol cars in the Santee Station were equipped in a pilot project. There were 11 resuscitations in that station over six months. The Sheriff's Department established policy to train and outfit all patrol in the nine contract cities and unincorporated areas.

Drug-Related Naloxone Use by Emergency Medical Services	2011	2012	2013	2014
	929	997	1,141	1,210

Table 5: Selected Heroin Indicators for San Diego County

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1. Heroin Seizures (Kgs.) At San Diego County Ports of Entry	214	319	470	689	756
2. Heroin Price per Gram	\$50-80	\$80-100	\$50-90	\$50-100	\$50-70
3. Adult Arrestees Positive Heroin Rate	10%	9%	11%	12%	13%
4. Treatment Admissions: Heroin Listed as Primary Drug of Choice	21%	22%	23%	25%	28%
5. Number of Heroin Overdose Deaths	71	80	74	86	105
A. Percentage of deaths with heroin detected as part of all illicit drug overdoses	35%	38%	34%	32%	36%
B. Percentage of all overdose deaths	15%	17%	15%	16%	17%



What Action Is Needed?

- ✓ **Secure your medications, and safely dispose of unwanted medications.** Don't let your medicine cabinet be a point of access for young people and others looking for prescriptions to get high. See http://sandiegorexabusetaforce.org/safe_disposalx.html for information on year-round Rx Collection box locations.
- ✓ **Support your doctor in using Safe Prescribing guidelines.** Use One Doctor, One Pharmacy. Doctors should check Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System (CURES), the state prescription drug monitoring program, and use a medication agreement for patients who need controlled substances for three or more months. Doctors should avoid the dangerous combination of opioids and benzodiazepines.
- ✓ **Save lives with naloxone.** Naloxone can resuscitate someone in an opiate overdose. With brief training, naloxone is available to opioid users and their family members. Sheriff's Deputies now carry naloxone kits in patrol cars. Let's get naloxone to people who may need it.
- ✓ **Get help if you need it.** Addiction treatment is effective and available. Drug treatment is an important first step towards recovery. San Diego County has an array of private and publicly funded treatment. Contact the County's Access and Crisis Line at 1-888-724-7240 for referrals.

Definitions and Sources for Report Card Indicators

1. Unintentional deaths with prescription drug or involvement. *Source: County of San Diego Medical Examiner's Office.*
2. Emergency department discharges per 100,000 with a diagnosis of opiate dependence or abuse. Prior to 2010, hospitals in Fallbrook and Coronado were not included. The 2010 figure represents data from all non-federal hospitals with emergency departments in San Diego County. *Source: County of San Diego Emergency Medical Services.*
3. Percent of a sample of San Diego County 11th graders who report using Rx drugs for non-medical reasons in their lifetime. Collected biannually in the California Healthy Kids Survey.
4. Total admissions to publicly-funded drug treatment in San Diego County that identify Rx Opiates or Heroin as primary drugs of choice. *Source: California Outcomes Measurement System (CalOMS).*
5. Percent that report Rx misuse/abuse from a sample of interviews among adult and juvenile arrestees at time of booking. The 2009 question used the term painkiller; in 2010, the question wording referred to the category of all Rx drugs. *Source: Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM), a program operated by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG).*
6. Number of defendants prosecuted by the San Diego County District Attorney's Office for either Rx-related fraud, or other criminal charges where Rx was present. *Source: San Diego County District Attorney's Office.*
7. Number of pharmacy robberies & burglaries reported to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Does not include attempted robberies and burglaries. *Source: DEA*
8. Pounds of medication safely disposed at Rx Take Back events. *Source: DEA.* Pounds collected at Sheriff's Department collection boxes. *Source: San Diego County Sheriff's Department.*
9. Prescription pills per San Diego County resident. The numbers of prescribed pills are derived from prescriber (dispenser) reporting to the state, and do not include prescriptions filled at the VA, any military hospitals and clinics, or in-hospital patient medications. Three principle groups of medicine are included: a) Painkillers or morphine-related pain medications such as Oxycontin or hydrocodone; b) Anti-anxiety medications or benzodiazepines such as Valium or Ativan; c) Stimulants or ADHD medication such as Ritalin, Adderall. In 2012, more than 163 million doses of painkillers were prescribed. Population figures used to calculate per person rates are based on US Census and SANDAG population projection data. *Source: Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System (CURES), California Department of Justice.*

Note: Heroin indicators are also drawn from the Medical Examiner's Office, SANDAG's Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program and the CalOMS treatment database. Seizure and price information was obtained from the San Diego Law Enforcement Coordination Center.