



2022 Report Card

Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force

The Status of Prescription Drug and Opioid Use in San Diego County

The Report Card provides a range of available data on the scale of prescription drug misuse 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 look at all the information

presented herein, as well as the direction of trends over time. Additional detailed data is available in the 2022 PDATF Addendum. All data sources are identified on page 2.

	Indicator	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1.	Unintentional Prescription Opioid-Caused Deaths ^a <i>Note: Count includes both prescribed and illicitly obtained pharmaceutical opioids.</i>	208	210	214	534	873
	• Rate per 100,000 residents	6.3	6.3	6.4	16.0	26.3
	• % of Total Unintentional Prescription Opioid-Caused Deaths (excluding fentanyl)	60%	56%	29%	13%	7%
2.	Unintentional Fentanyl-Caused Deaths ^b <i>Note: This indicator is a subset of Indicator 1.</i>	84	92	151	462	814
	• Rate per 100,000 residents	2.5	2.8	4.5	13.8	24.6
	• % of Total Unintentional Prescription Opioid-Caused Deaths (Indicator 1)	40%	44%	71%	87%	93%
3.	Opioid-Related Emergency Department (ED) Visits ^c	7,564	7,303	8,804	9,450	Available in 2023
	• Rate per 100,000 residents	229	219	263	283	
4.	Opioid-Related Hospitalizations ^c	8,026	8,149	7,563	7,422	
	• Rate per 100,00 Residents	243	244	226	222	
5.	11th Graders Self Report of Lifetime Prescription Misuse	10%		10%		11%
6.	Adult Drug Treatment Admissions	15,952	23,022 ^d	19,910	15,080	15,539
	• % of Prescribed and Illicitly Obtained Pharmaceutical Opioids	3.2%	4.2%	2.9%	5.2%	11.4%
7.	Arrestees Self Report of Prescription Misuse					
	• Adult	47%	45%	46%	46%	52%
	• Juvenile	47%	56%	41%	54%	36%
8.	Prescription Drug Prosecutions ^e					
	• Prescription-specific Fraud Charge	95	49	45	24	13
	• Other Charges with Prescription-Drugs Involved	1,172	1,182	1,057	1,352	1,733
9.	Pharmacy Robberies/Burglaries ^f					
	• Night Break-Ins/Burglaries	25	11	18	18	6
	• Armed Robberies	27	10	7	27	21
10.	Pounds of Safely Disposed Medications					
	• Take Back Events	21,824	22,221	26,859	11,100	13,049
	• Sheriff's Department Collection Boxes	16,199	14,295	14,398	15,494	13,661
11.	Annual Number of Dispensed Pills Per County Resident					
	• Opioid Prescriptions	36.5	33.3	27.5	22.9	20.6
	• Benzodiazepines	12.5	11.5	9.8	8.5	8.0
	• Stimulants	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.1	5.3

a. These deaths are unintentional/accidental overdose deaths in which a prescription or illicitly obtained pharmaceutical opioid drug alone or with other drugs and/or alcohol was a causative factor in death. Additionally, these data represent only deaths examined by the County of San Diego Department of the Medical Examiner and those that had toxicology. There are over 22,000 deaths each year in San Diego County, the Department of the Medical Examiner investigates around 3,000 deaths a year.

b. These deaths are accidental overdose deaths in which fentanyl alone or with other drugs and/or alcohol was a causative factor in death. As opposed to the previous decade in which misused prescription fentanyl caused most of these deaths, in recent years, illicitly manufactured and obtained fentanyl has been responsible for almost all of these deaths.

c. Diagnoses are coded for any mention of opioid related disorders (including abuse, dependence, and unspecified use) in the encounter record. Data Source: California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Emergency Department and Patient Discharge Data, 2016-2020.

d. The Organized Delivery System Drug-Medical (ODS-DMC) implementation began July 2018 which increased access to treatment facilities throughout San Diego County. This change may account for the increased number of treatment admissions.

e. Prosecution data reported from the San Diego County District Attorney and City of San Diego City Attorney are presented as a combined total. The City Attorney's office prosecutes misdemeanors and infractions within the San Diego City limits. The District Attorney's office handles all felony matters in the County of San Diego and misdemeanors that occur outside the City of San Diego.

f. Federal law enforcement identified organized criminal street gangs as being responsible for the increase in nighttime pharmacy burglaries for 2017. Offenders have been arrested and were prosecuted.

Definitions and Sources for Report Card Indicators

1. **Unintentional Prescription Opioid-Caused Deaths.** These deaths are unintentional/accidental overdose deaths in which a prescription or illicitly obtained pharmaceutical opioid drug alone or with other drugs and/or alcohol was a causative factor in death. Source: County of San Diego Department of the Medical Examiner. Population estimates source: SANDAG, Current Estimates, 2021.
2. **Unintentional Fentanyl-Caused Deaths.** These deaths are accidental overdose deaths in which fentanyl alone or with other drugs and/or alcohol was a causative factor in death. As opposed to the previous decade in which misused prescription fentanyl caused most of these deaths, in recent years, illicitly manufactured and obtained fentanyl has been responsible for almost all of these deaths. Source: County of San Diego Department of the Medical Examiner. Population estimates source: SANDAG, Current Estimates, 2021.
3. **Opioid-Related Emergency Department (ED) Visits:** Diagnoses are coded for any mention of opioid related disorders (including abuse, dependence, and unspecified use) in the encounter record. Data Source: California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Emergency Department and Patient Discharge Data, 2016-2020.
4. **Opioid-Related Hospitalizations.** Diagnoses are coded for any mention of opioid related disorders (including abuse, dependence, and unspecified use) in the encounter record. Data Source: California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Emergency Department and Patient Discharge Data, 2016-2020.
5. **11th Graders Self Report of Lifetime Prescription Misuse.** Percent of a sample of San Diego County 11th graders who report using prescription drugs for non-medical reasons in their lifetime. Source: Collected biannually in the California Healthy Kids Survey.
6. **Adult Drug Treatment Admissions.** Total admissions to publicly funded drug treatment in San Diego County and the percentage who identify prescription Opioids as primary substance used. Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services; Behavioral Health Services Data Book.
7. **Arrestees Self Report of Prescription Misuse.** Percent that report lifetime prescription misuse from a sample of interviews among adult and juvenile arrestees at time of booking. Source: Substance Abuse Monitoring, San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG).

The 2021 data includes youth who were interviewed at either Juvenile Hall or one of the three Achievement Centers (Central, Escondido, and La Mesa). Achievement Center youth were included in the sample in 2021 because the number of youth booked into Juvenile Hall has decreased considerably. It is important to note that Achievement Center youth have not been adjudicated and Achievement Centers are an alternative to detention. Because of this, urine samples for drug testing were not obtained from Achievement Center youth and all self-response data are included regardless if a urine sample was provided from a youth at Juvenile Hall or the Achievement Centers.

8. **Prescription Drug Prosecutions.** Number of defendants prosecuted by the San Diego County District Attorney's Office and the City of San Diego City Attorney (misdemeanors only) for either prescription-related fraud, or other criminal charges where prescription was present. Source: San Diego County District Attorney's Office.
9. **Pharmacy Robberies/Burglaries.** Number of pharmacy robberies and burglaries reported to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Does not include attempted robberies and burglaries. Source: Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).
10. **Pounds of Safely Disposed Medications.** Pounds of medication safely disposed at semi-annual National Prescription Drug Take Back events. Source: Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Pounds collected at Sheriff's Department collection boxes. Source: San Diego County Sheriff's Department.
11. **Annual Number of Dispensed Pills Per County Resident.** The numbers of dispensed pills are derived from filled prescriptions reported to the state, and do not include prescriptions filled at the VA, any military or tribal hospitals and clinics, or in-hospital patient medications. Three principle groups of medicine are included:
 - a) Pain medications, 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.

Pain medication includes only pills; solution-based prescriptions are 2.5% of all pain medication and are not included. Population figures used to calculate per person rates are based on US Census and SANDAG population projection data across all ages. Source: Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System (CURES), California Department of Justice.

Facilitation services for the Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force (PDATF) are provided through HHSA, Behavioral Health Services, in a contract with the Center for Community Research.

2022 Heroin Addendum

Table 1. Selected Heroin Indicators		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1.	Heroin Seizures (kg) at San Diego County Ports of Entry	933 kg.	1,247 kg.	924 kg.	968 kg.	734 kg.
2.	Heroin Price Per Gram	\$40	\$40-100	\$40-80	\$40-100	\$70-100
3.	Adult Arrestees Testing Positive for Heroin	13%	11%	12%	10%	8%
4.	Treatment Admissions with Heroin Listed as Primary Substance Used	27%	29%	25%	27%	20%
5.	Number of Unintentional Heroin Overdose Deaths	83	105	124	106	74

Table 2. 2021 Treatment Admissions in which Heroin was the Primary Substance Used by Gender

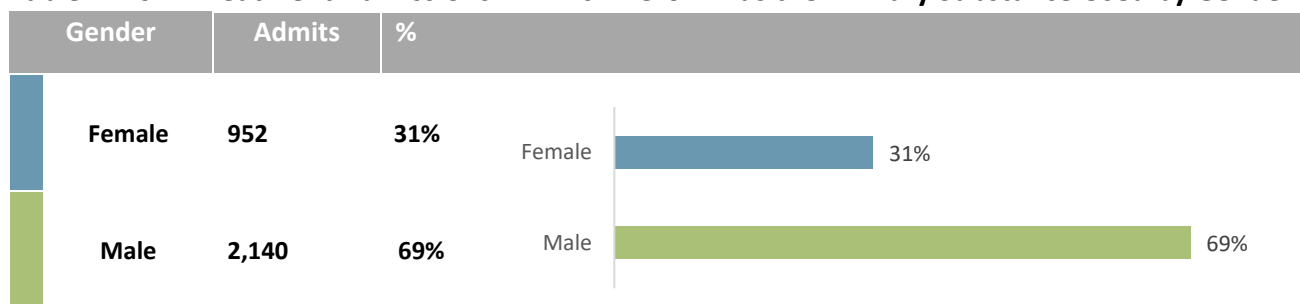


Table 3. 2021 Treatment Admissions in which Heroin was the Primary Substance Used by Age

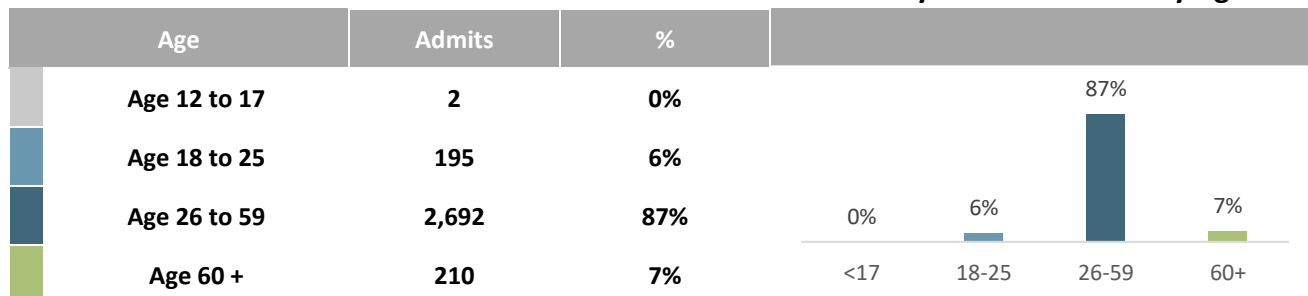


Table 4. 2021 Treatment Admissions in which Heroin was the Primary Substance Used by Race/Ethnicity

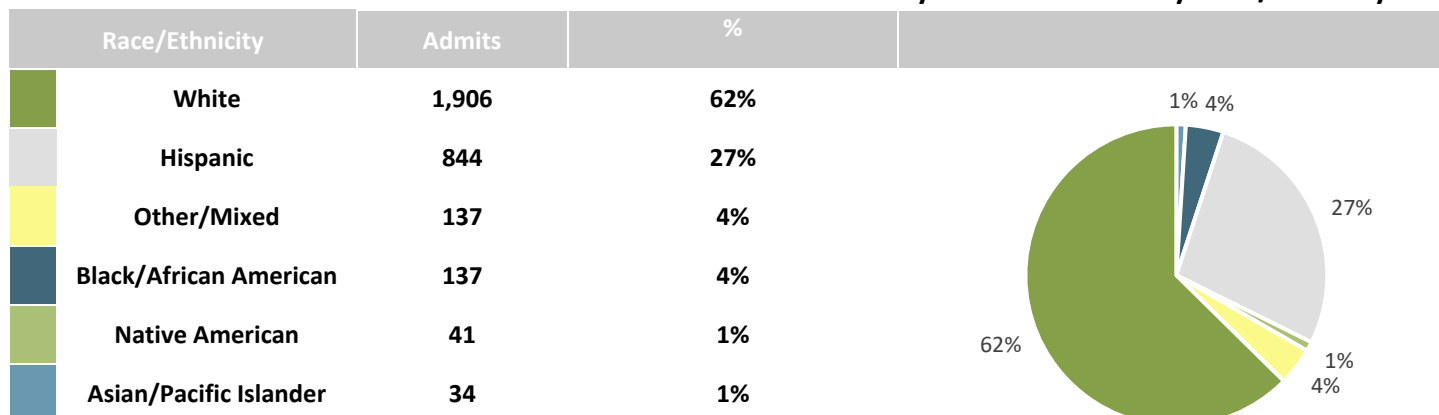
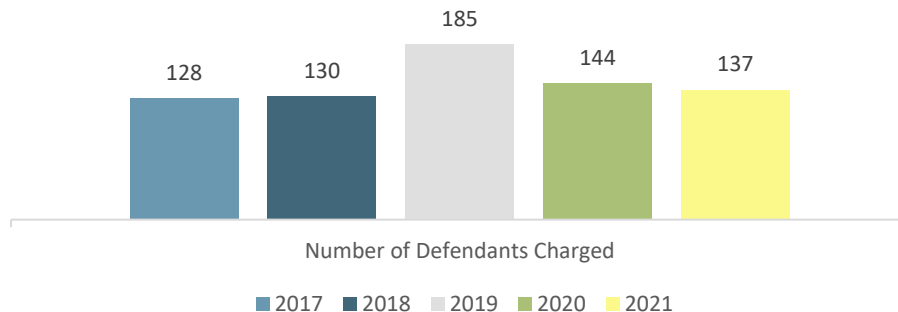


Figure 1. Federal Heroin Charges, 2017-2021*



*Charges included in the total count include: 040 - drug trafficking; 045 - simple drug possession; 047 - organized crime drug enforcement task force (OCDETF); and 06F - money laundering/structuring (narcotics).

Source: United States Attorney's Office, 2021

Naloxone

Naloxone is an antidote to an opioid overdose that is delivered as a nasal spray or injection.

Table 5. Drug-Related Naloxone Use	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
By Emergency Medical Services	1,903	2,113	2,457	4,101	6,295
By Sheriff Department*	26	23	109	163	283
San Diego Police Department	--	19	49	61	68

**These figures reflect the number of persons that had naloxone administered to them as a result of a suspected overdose incident. Per policy, naloxone should be administered to any individual who presents signs of opioid overdose or when opioid overdose is suspected. Data for all suspected overdoses with naloxone deployment is included in these figures, regardless of the medical diagnosis and prognosis of the individual. Therefore, these figures may include incidents that ultimately were due to other types of medical emergencies.

Note: 'Uses' represents the total number of individuals who received naloxone and NOT the number of doses administered as some cases require numerous naloxone administrations to reverse overdose.

Naloxone Distribution

- **San Diego County Naloxone Distribution Program:** During July 2021– December 2021, the San Diego County Naloxone Distribution Program distributed 972 naloxone kits.

2022 PDATF Addendum

A. Death Details

Table 6: Total Count of all Unintentional Deaths Caused by Drugs (Prescription and Illicit), and/or Alcohol (Distinct count of deaths in Table 2 & Table 3)*

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total for Unintentional Drug, Medication and/or Alcohol Caused Deaths 	552	576	645	976	1,306

* Count includes both prescribed and illicitly obtained pharmaceutical opioids.

Table 7: Number of Unintentional Deaths Caused by Prescription Opioids and Non-Opioids: 2016 – 2021*

Prescription Drugs: Opioid vs. Non-Opioid**	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prescription Opioids 	208	210	214	534	873
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All other Prescriptions (excluding Opioids) 	65	36	61	42	39
All Prescription Deaths	273	246	275	576	912

*Count includes both prescribed and illicitly obtained pharmaceutical opioids.

**This represents the number of accidental overdose deaths caused by one or more prescriptions, alone or with other drugs or alcohol. Note that these drugs are classified as prescription drugs, but they could have been obtained through illicit methods.

Table 8: Number of Unintentional Deaths Caused by Heroin and Other Illicit Drugs and Alcohol: 2016 - 2021

Heroin and Other Illicit Drug and Alcohol Deaths*	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heroin 	86	105	124	106	74
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other illicit substances and/or alcohol 	441	373	408	688	974
All Heroin and Other Illicit Drug and Alcohol Deaths*	527	478	532	794	1,048

*This number represents all accidental overdose deaths in which illicit drugs and/or alcohol with or without a prescription drug was a causative factor in the death.

Table 9. Unintentional Deaths Caused by Prescription Opioids and Non-Opioids by Race/Ethnicity, 2021

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Rate per 100,000
American Indian/Alaska Native	12	80.0
Other	6	79.8
Black/African American	87	54.9
White	525	34.6
2 or More Races	37	32.6
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	4	--
Hispanic/Latino	221	19.4
Asian	14	4.0
Unknown	6	-
Total	912	27.5

*Rates not reported fewer than 5 cases.

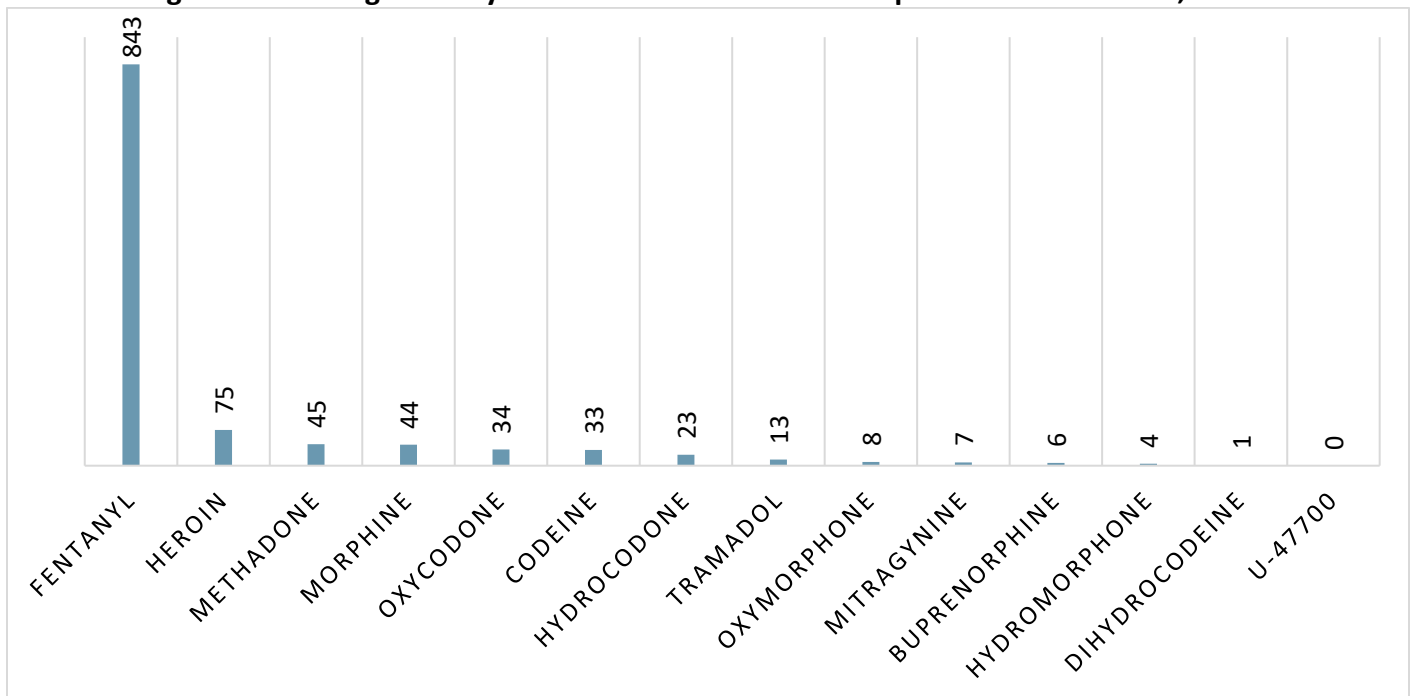
Note: Count includes both prescribed and illicitly obtained pharmaceutical opioids.

Table 10: Unintentional Prescription-Caused Deaths by Age and Gender, 2021

Number				Rate per 100,000*		
Age	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
0-14	2	1	3	-	-	-
15-24	18	86	104	8.0	32.1	21.1
25-34	53	187	240	27.3	87.8	58.9
35-44	33	168	201	15.5	75.0	46.0
45-54	37	123	160	18.6	61.3	40.0
55-64	39	119	158	19.3	60.8	39.7
65+	27	19	46	9.3	8.0	8.7
Total	209	703	912	12.7	42.1	27.5

Note: Count includes both prescribed and illicitly obtained pharmaceutical opioids.
 *Rates not reported for fewer than 5 cases.

Figure 2. San Diego County Accidental Deaths in which Opioids were Detected, 2021*



*Accidental deaths not only include unintentional drug overdoses but other unintentional deaths such as a car crash and falls. Drug detection is not mutually exclusive as several deaths were positive for multiple substances.

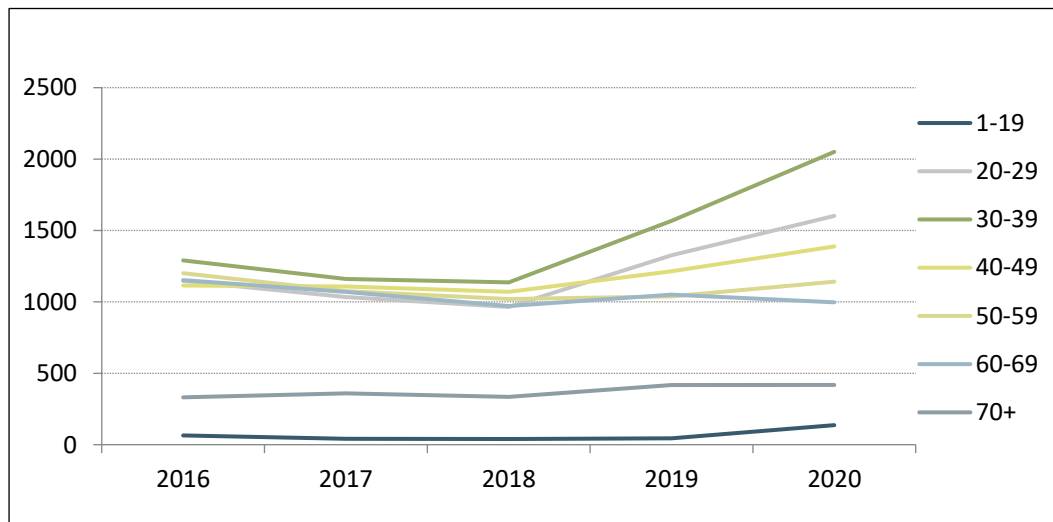
Source: San Diego County Department of the Medical Examiner, 2021.

Table 11. Opioid-Related Emergency Department (ED) Discharges in San Diego County by Hospital, 2016-2020

Region	Hospital	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	1-Year Percent Change	5-Year Percent Change
N. Inland	Palomar Medical Center	612	413	611	1,732	1,811	4.6%	196%
Central/South	Scripps Mercy & Scripps Chula Vista*	743	678	622	780	1,479	89.6%	99%
Central	UCSD Medical Center & UCSD Thornton	751	730	779	916	1,076	17.5%	43%
N. Coastal/N. Central/N. Inland East	Kaiser*	969	1,037	827	847	545	-35.7%	-44%
	Sharp Grossmont	958	894	745	626	534	-14.7%	-44%
N. Central	Sharp Memorial	879	880	807	555	471	-15.1%	-46%
South	Paradise Valley	495	462	519	852	467	-45.2%	-6%
N. Inland	Palomar/Pomerado Hospital	191	129	195	457	460	0.7%	141%
N. Coastal	Scripps Encinitas	254	231	229	186	244	31.2%	-4%
N. Coastal	Tri-City Medical Center	255	319	169	159	203	27.7%	-20%
N. Central	Scripps La Jolla	295	334	223	191	190	-0.5%	-36%
N. Central	Alvarado	261	185	114	173	189	9.2%	-28%
South	Sharp Chula Vista	226	200	219	156	149	-4.5%	-34%
South	Sharp Coronado	104	105	98	84	85	1.2%	-18%
N. Central	Rady Children's Hospital	12	10	5	9	15	66.7%	25%
Total		7,005	6,607	6,162	7,723	7,918	2.5%	13%

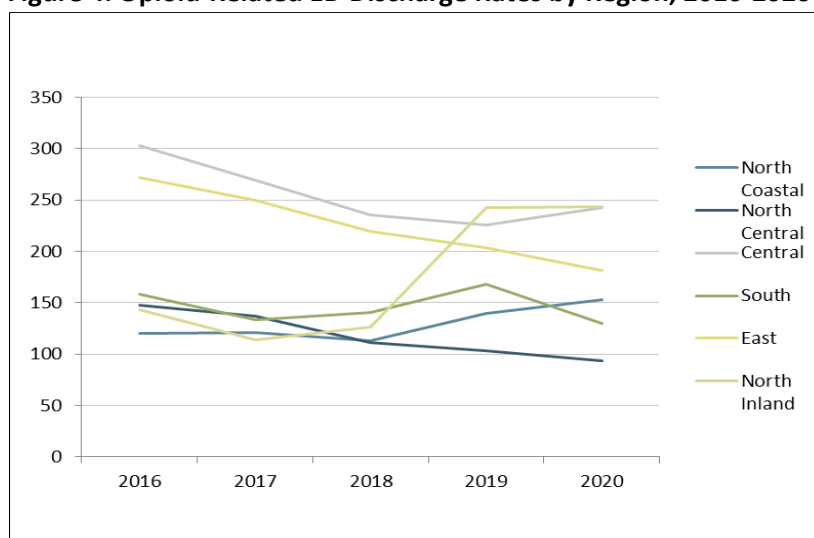
**Data cannot be separated by individual location. Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services, Emergency Department Discharges Database (via HCAI), 2016 - 2020.*

Figure 3. Opioid-Related ED Discharge Rates* by Age Group, 2016-2020



California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Emergency Department and Patient Discharge Data, 2016-2020. *Rate per 100,000 ED Discharges.

Figure 4. Opioid-Related ED Discharge Rates by Region, 2016-2020



California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Emergency Department and Patient Discharge Data, 2016-2020.
 *Rate per 100,000 Population.

Figure 5. Relationship Between Unintentional Prescription Drug, Heroin, and Alcohol Caused Deaths in San Diego County, 2021*

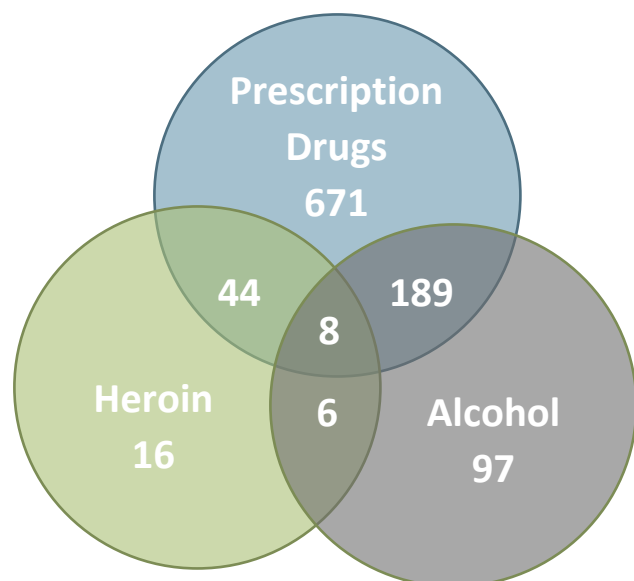
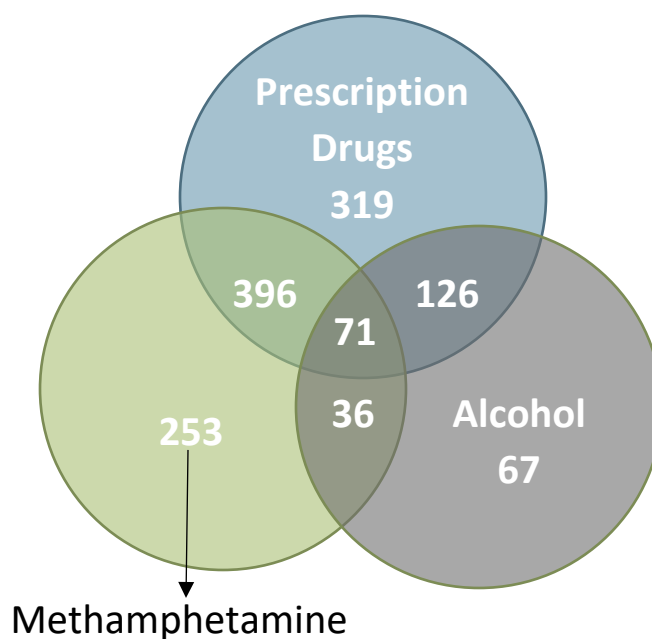


Figure 6. Relationship Between Unintentional Prescription Drug, Methamphetamine, and Alcohol Caused Deaths in San Diego County, 2021*



Source: San Diego County Department of the Medical Examiner, 2021.

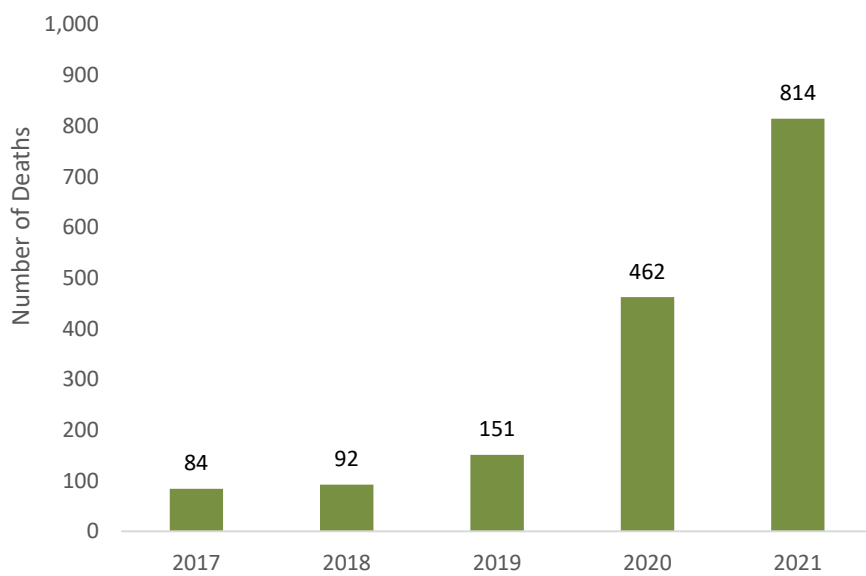
Note: Prescription drugs represent the number of accidental overdose deaths caused by one or more prescriptions, alone or with other drugs or alcohol. Note that these drugs are classified as prescription drugs, but they could have been obtained through illicit methods.

B. Fentanyl Trends

What is Fentanyl? Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine.

Counterfeit fentanyl pills: Illicitly produced fentanyl is increasingly available in the illegal marketplace in the form of counterfeit prescription pills and powder.

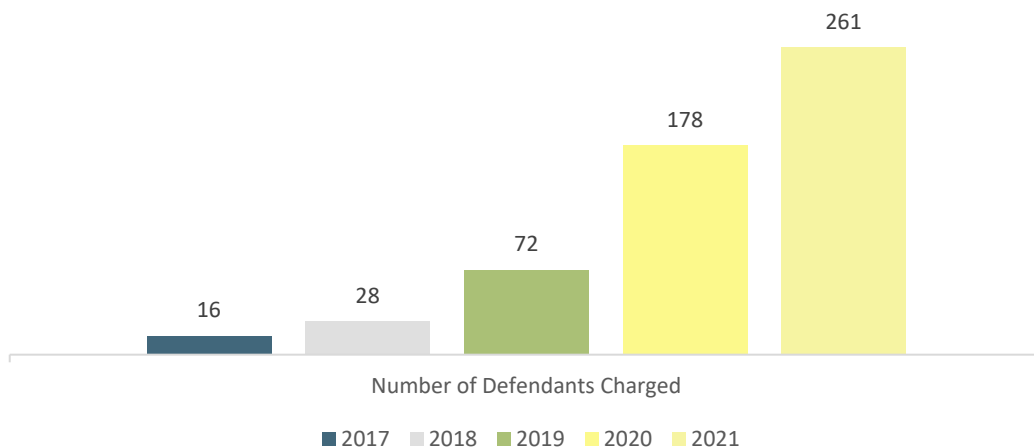
Figure 7. Number of Unintentional Fentanyl Caused Deaths in San Diego County 2017- 2021*



* As opposed to the previous decade in which misused prescription fentanyl caused most of these deaths, in recent years, illicitly obtained fentanyl has been responsible for most of these deaths.

Source: San Diego County Department of the Medical Examiner, 2021

Figure 8. Federal Fentanyl Charges



*Federal charges included in the total count include: drug trafficking; simple drug possession; organized crime drug enforcement task force (OCDETF); and money laundering/structuring (narcotics).

Source: United States Attorney's Office, 2021

C. Additional Indicators

Figure 9. Primary Substance Used Reported by Patients Admitted to San Diego County Treatment Programs

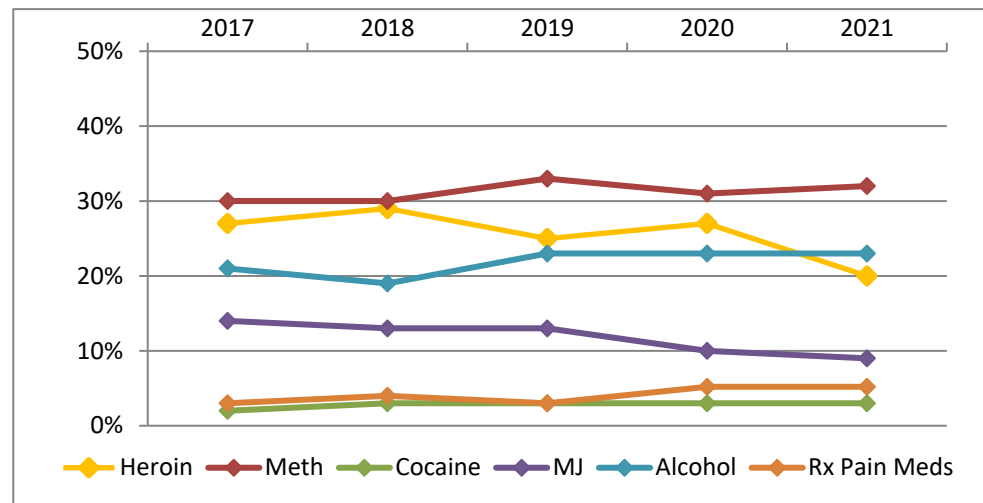


Table 12: SANDAG Self-Reported Method of Obtaining Prescription Drugs*

	2017		2018		2019		2020*		2021	
	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile
Given	72%	77%	77%	87%	72%	77%	77%	87%	77%	88%
Bought	62%	56%	50%	51%	62%	56%	50%	51%	65%	69%
Stolen	17%	29%	23%	31%	17%	29%	23%	31%	30%	31%

*Note: When considering Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) statistics for 2020, please note that while the interviews were able to continue, administrative procedures and survey methodologies were refined to ensure the health and safety of both the interviewers and those being interviewed. These changes, coupled with changes in terms of who was booked into jails at this time, may affect the statistics presented here and limit the validity of comparisons to prior years.