



2021 Report Card

Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force

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

The Prescription Drug Report Card provides a range of available data on the scale of the prescription drug misuse 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 presented herein, as well as the direction of trends over time.

Misuse 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. Additional detailed data, including an alert about Fentanyl, is available in the 2021 PDATF Addendum. All data sources are identified on page 2.

Table 1. Key Measures of Prescription Drug and Opioid Problems in San Diego County: 2016 – 2020

	Indicator	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1.	Unintentional Prescription-Caused Deaths ^a	253	273	246	275	576
	• Rate per 100,000 residents	7.7	8.3	7.4	8.2	17.2
2.	Unintentional Fentanyl-Caused Deaths ^b	33	84	92	151	462
	• Rate per 100,000 residents	1.0	2.54	2.8	4.5	13.8
3.	Emergency Department (ED) Opioid Activity	7,005	6,607	6,162	7,723	Available in 2021
	• Rate per 100,000 residents	213	199	184	230.4	Available in 2021
4.	11 th Graders Self Report of Lifetime Prescription Misuse		10%		10%	
5.	Adult Drug Treatment Admissions	15,790	15,952	23,022 ^c	19,910	15,080
	• Percentage of Prescription Pain Medication	4.1%	3.2%	4.2%	2.9%	5.2%
6.	Arrestees Self Report of Prescription Misuse					
	• Adult	49%	47%	45%	46%	46%
	• Juvenile	38%	47%	56%	41%	54%
7.	Prescription Drug Prosecutions ^d					
	• Prescription-specific Fraud Charge	140	95	49	45	24
	• Other Charges with Prescription-Drugs Involved	1,422	1,172	1,182	1,057	1,352
8.	Pharmacy Robberies/Burglaries ^e					
	• Night Break-Ins/Burglaries	14	25	11	18	18
	• Armed Robberies	17	27	10	7	27
9.	Pounds of Safely Disposed Medications					
	• Take Back Events	17,772	21,824	22,221	26,859	11,100
	• Sheriff's Department Collection Boxes	15,901	16,199	14,295	14,398	15,494
10.	Annual Number of Dispensed Pills Per County Resident					
	• Pain Medication	36.5	33.2	27.4	22.8	20.6
	• Benzodiazepines	12.5	11.5	9.8	8.5	8.0
	• Stimulants	5.1	5.2	5.1	5.1	5.3

a. These deaths are unintentional/accidental overdose deaths in which a prescription 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. 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.

d. 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.

e. 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 are being prosecuted. Data prior to 2016 include both robberies and burglaries.

Definitions and Sources for Report Card Indicators

1. Unintentional Prescription-Caused Deaths: Unintentional/accidental overdose deaths in which a prescription 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. San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) population figures based on 2020 population estimate data.
2. Unintentional Fentanyl-Caused Deaths: 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. San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) population figures based on 2020 population estimate data.
3. Emergency department discharges per 100,000 with a diagnosis of opioid dependence or misuse. Source: County of San Diego Emergency Medical Services.
4. 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.
5. Total admissions to publicly funded drug treatment in San Diego County and the percentage who identify prescription Opioids as primary drugs of choice. Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services; Behavioral Health Services Data Book.
6. 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).
7. 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.
8. 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).
9. 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.
10. Prescription pills per San Diego 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.

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.

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.

2021 Heroin Addendum

Heroin use is a recognized national problem. San Diego County's experience is unique. Local and national studies note that younger users switch to heroin after painkillers are harder to find or become unaffordable.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1. Heroin Seizures (kg) at San Diego County Ports of Entry	591 kg.	933 kg.	1,247 kg.	924 kg.	968 kg.
2. Heroin Price Per Gram	\$40-80	\$40	\$40-100	\$40-80	\$40-100
3. Adult Arrestees Testing Positive for Heroin	11%	13%	11%	12%	10%
4. Treatment Admissions with Heroin Listed as Primary Drug of Choice	28%	27%	29%	25%	27%
5. Number of Unintentional Heroin Overdose Deaths	90	83	105	124	106

Table 3. 2020 Primary Heroin Treatment Admissions by Gender, Age, and Race/Ethnicity, San Diego County

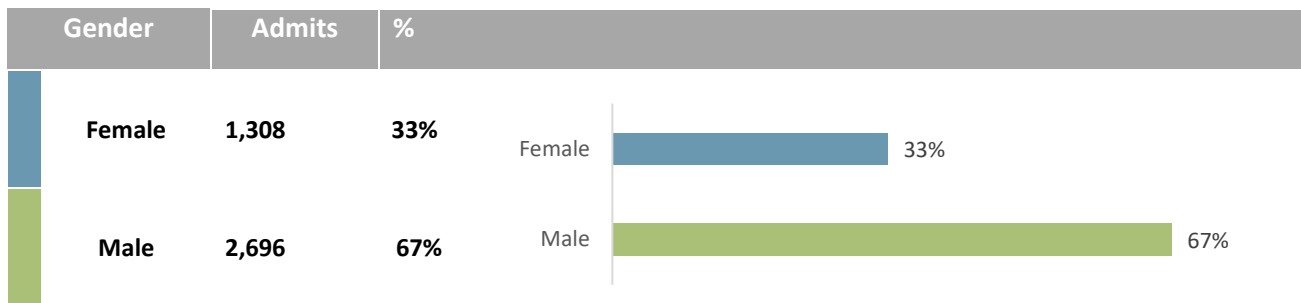


Table 4. 2020 Primary Heroin Treatment Admissions by Age, San Diego County

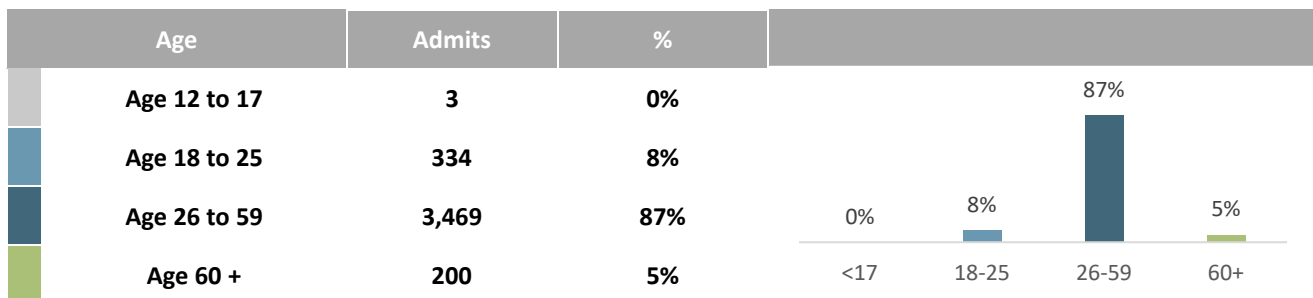


Table 5. 2020 Primary Heroin Treatment Admissions by Race/Ethnicity, San Diego County

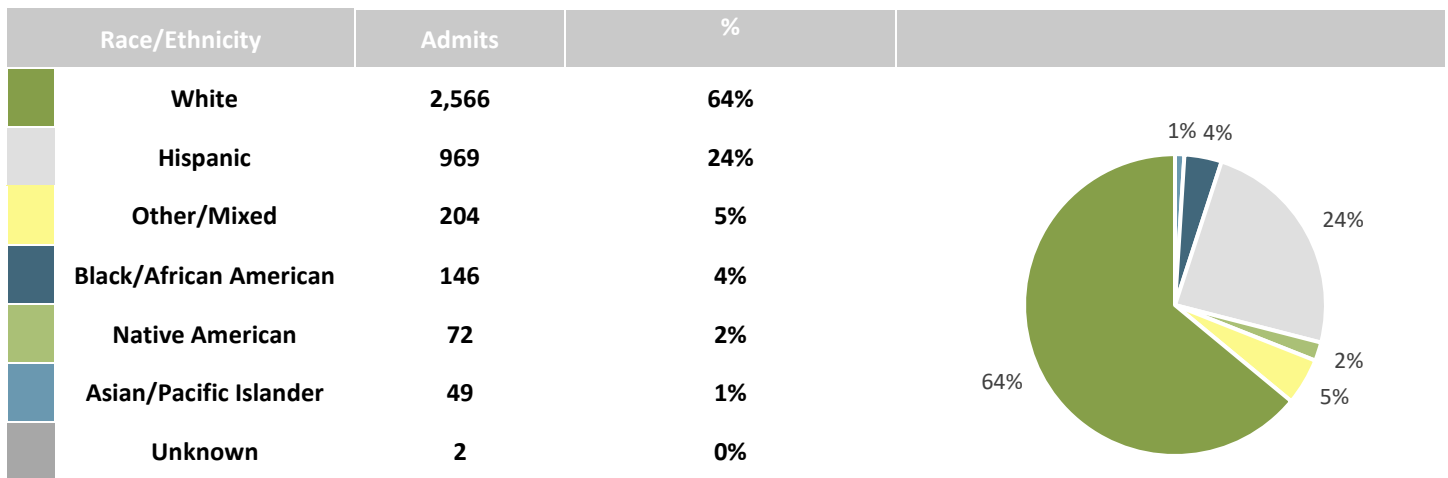
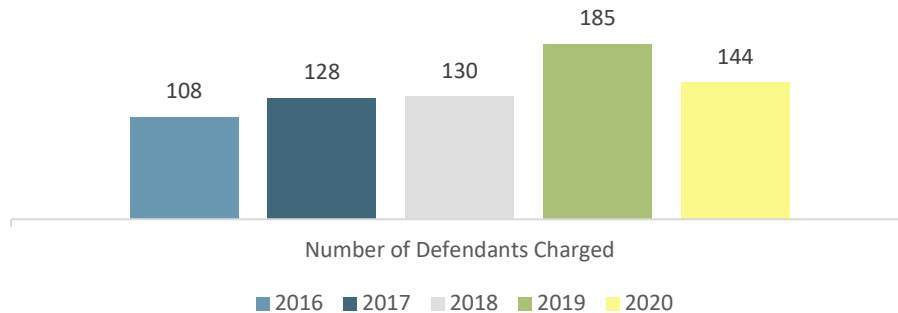


Figure 1. Federal Heroin Charges*



*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. In 2015, the San Diego County Sheriff's Department expanded Naloxone distribution to all patrol cars in the nine contract cities and unincorporated areas.

Table 6. Drug-Related Naloxone Use	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
By Emergency Medical Services*	1,304 uses	1,903 uses	2,113 uses	2,457 uses	4,101
By Sheriff Department**	16 uses	26 uses	23 uses	98 uses	120 uses
San Diego Police Department	--	--	19 uses	49 uses	61 uses

*There has been a significant increase in naloxone administration by sheriff deputies due to a more developed naloxone program in response to increased opiate use including significant increases in fentanyl use; increased field deployment; and policy change regarding instructions for jail medical staff to deploy naloxone in any instance where a person is found unresponsive.

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.

2021 PDATF Addendum

A. Death Details

The following data is provided by the San Diego County Department of the Medical Examiner. While death represents the tip of the iceberg of prescription and other substance misuse, these deaths are also an absolute and visible sign of the issue and did not have to happen.

Table 1: Total Count of all Unintentional Deaths Caused by Drugs (Prescription and Illicit), and/or Alcohol (Distinct count of deaths in Table 2 & Table 3)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
• Total for Accidental Drug, Medication and/or Alcohol Caused Deaths	518	552	576	645	976

Table 2: Number of Accidental Deaths Caused by Prescription Opioids and Non-Opioids: 2016 - 2020

Prescription Drugs: Opioid vs. Non-Opioid*	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
• Prescription Opioids	207	208	210	214	534
• All other Prescriptions (excluding Opioids)	46	65	36	61	42
All Prescription Deaths	253	273	246	275	576

*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 3: Number of Accidental Deaths Caused by Heroin and Other Illicit Drugs and Alcohol: 2016 - 2020

Heroin and Other Illicit Drug and Alcohol Deaths*	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
• Heroin	91	86	105	124	106
• Other illicit substances and/or alcohol	454	441	373	408	688
All Heroin and Other Illicit Drug and Alcohol Deaths*	545	527	478	532	794

*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 4. Unintentional Prescription-Caused Deaths by Race/Ethnicity, 2020

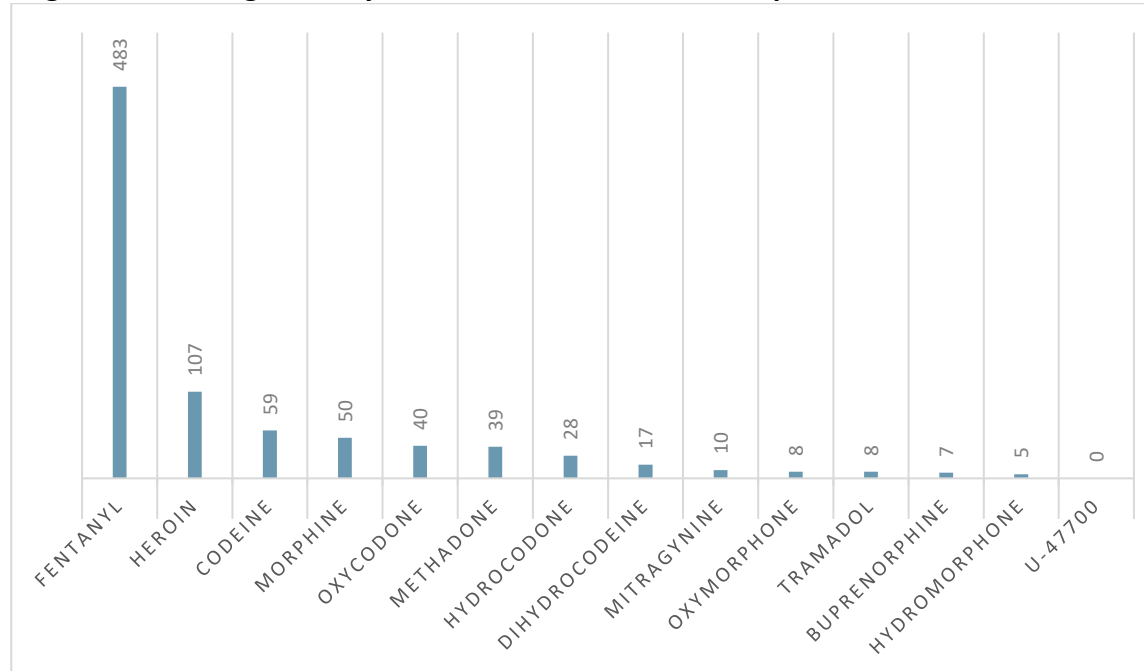
Race/Ethnicity	Number	Rate per 100,000
White	356	71.39
Hispanic	104	23.32
Black	49	79.05
Other*	6	--
Asian/Pacific Islander*	13	9.01
Native American*	7	118.20
Multi-Race	38	--
Unknown	3	--
Total	576	17.23

*Rates not reported for 'Other' or 'Multi-Race'.

Table 5: Unintentional Prescription-Caused Deaths by Age and Gender, 2020

Age	Number			Rate per 100,000*		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
0-14	0	1	1	0.0	0.29	0.15
15-24	16	63	79	7.98	29.92	19.22
25-34	36	123	159	14.49	39.37	28.35
35-44	33	93	126	15.73	42.15	29.27
45-54	26	69	95	13.76	36.41	25.10
55-64	29	60	89	14.81	31.95	23.20
65+	6	21	27	2.17	9.47	5.41
Total	146	430	576	6.27	21.12	1.47

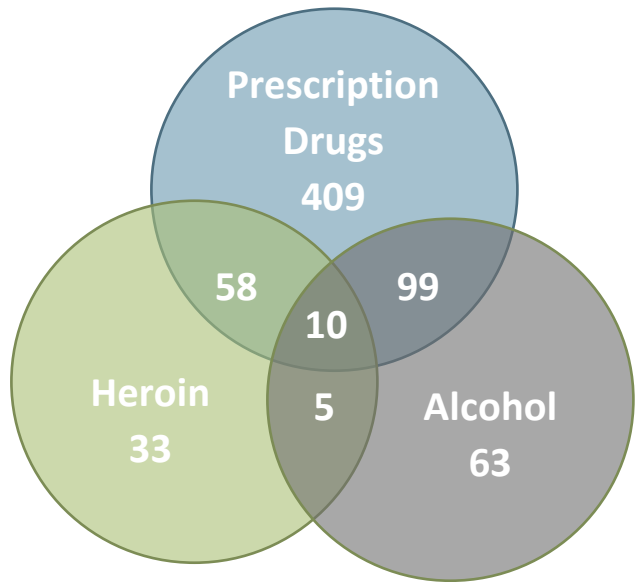
Figure 2. San Diego County Accidental Deaths in which Opioids were Detected, 2020*



*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

Figure 3. Relationship Between Unintentional Prescription Drug, Heroin, and Alcohol Caused Deaths in San Diego County, 2020*



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

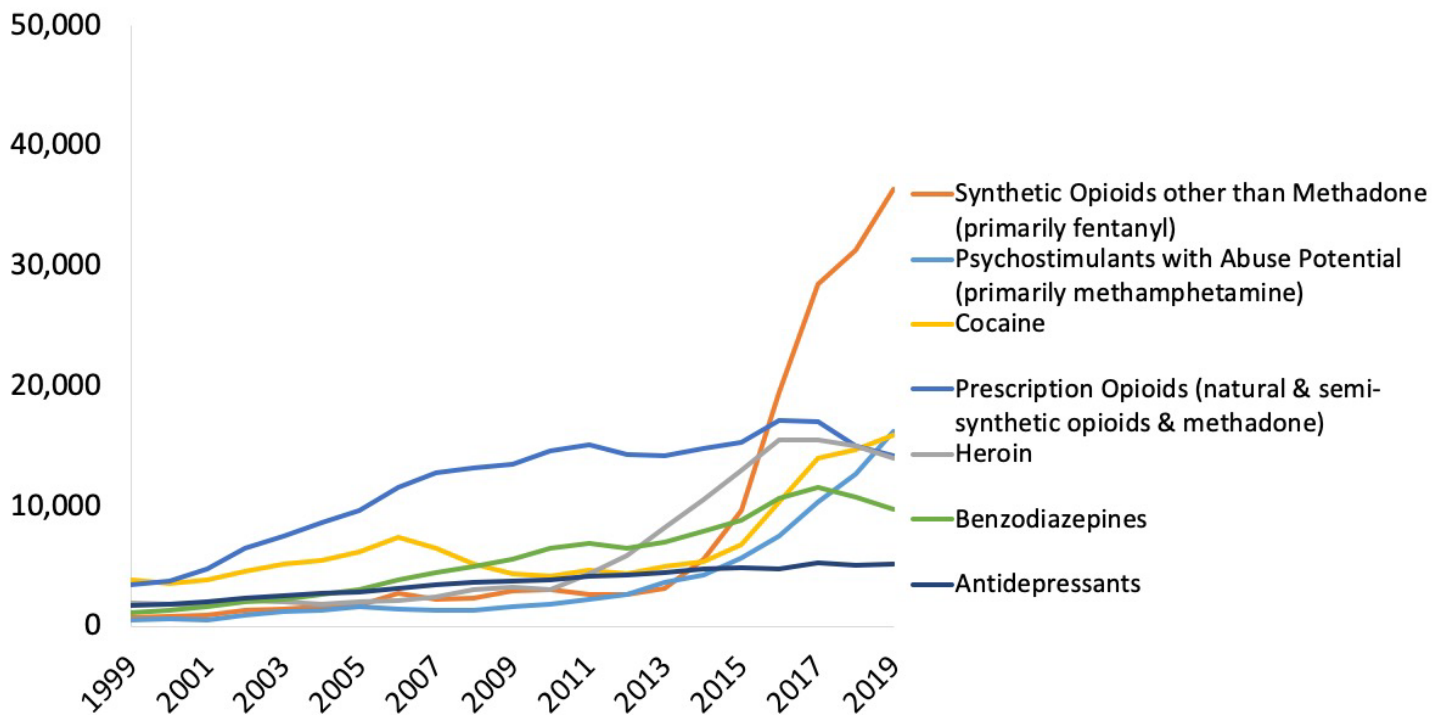
B. Fentanyl Trends

An overview of the fentanyl epidemic: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, deaths from illegally manufactured fentanyl continue to be high nationwide. Fentanyl is a highly concentrated synthetic opioid that can be easily transported in small quantities generating significant profits for criminal organizations. One kilogram of fentanyl, which costs about \$32,000, can make one million counterfeit pills with a street value of \$20 million. This renders fentanyl both particularly attractive to traffickers and dangerous for users.

What is Fentanyl? Fentanyl is a Schedule II synthetic opioid with approved medical protocols for use for pain and anesthetic in certain situations.

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

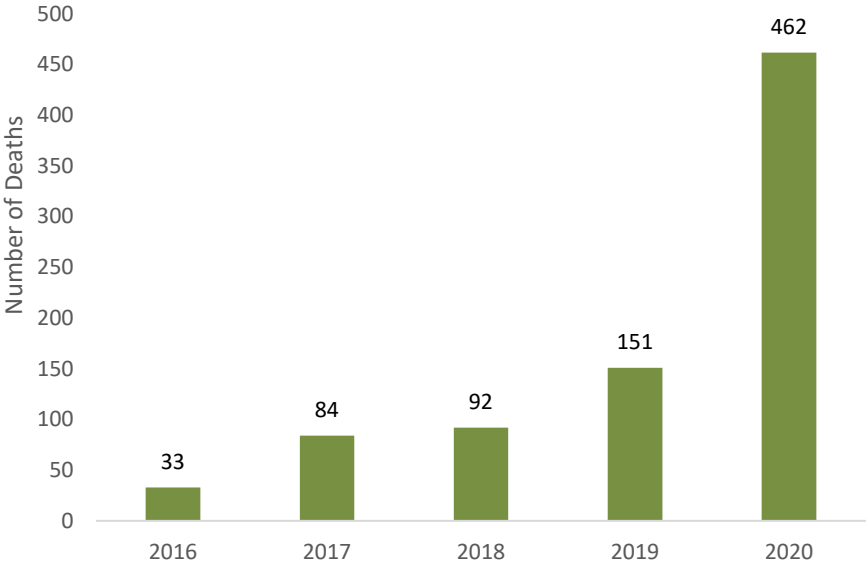
Figure 4. National Drug-Involved Overdose Deaths*, Number Among All Ages, 1999-2019



*Includes deaths with underlying causes of unintentional drug poisoning (X40–X44), suicide drug poisoning (X60–X64), homicide drug poisoning (X85), or drug poisoning of undetermined intent (Y10–Y14), as coded in the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision. Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2019 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released 12/2020.

Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

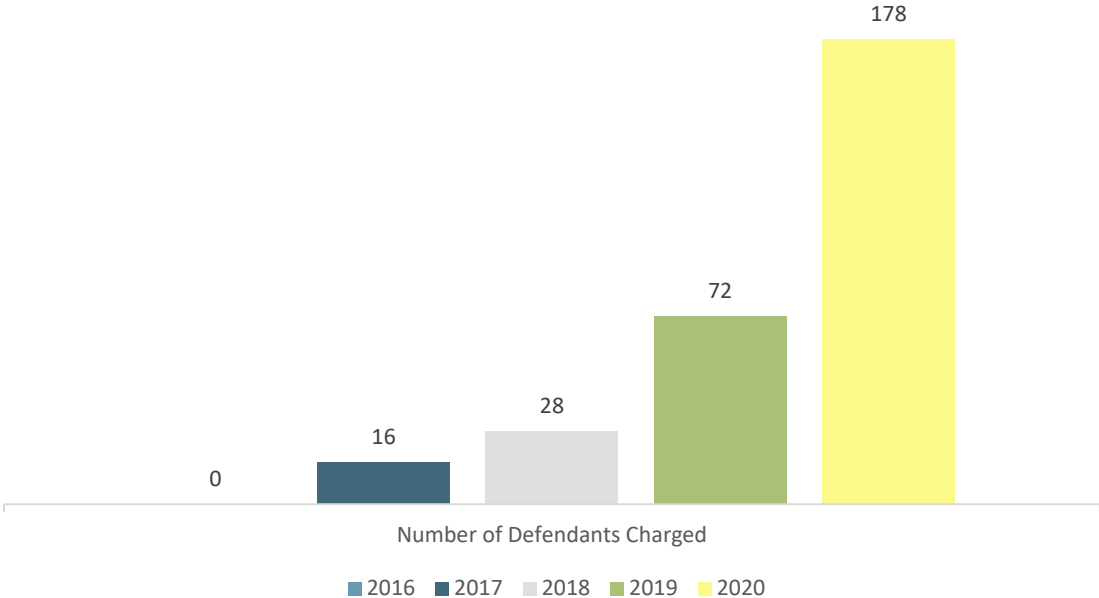
Figure 5. Number of Unintentional Fentanyl Caused Deaths in San Diego County 2016- 2020*



* 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 6. 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 7. Primary Drug of Choice for Admissions to San Diego County Treatment Program

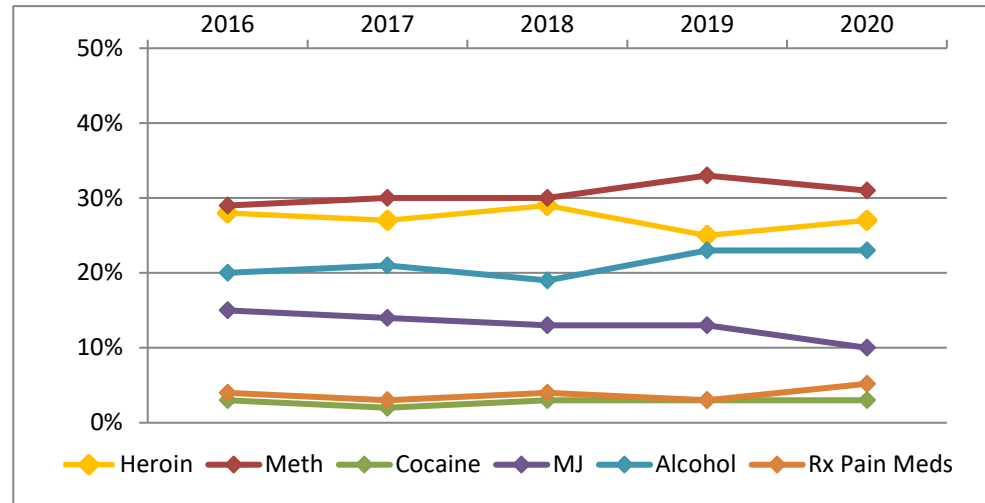


Table 6: SANDAG Self-Reported Method of Obtaining Prescription Drugs*

	2016		2016		2018		2019		2020	
	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile
Given	77%	87%	72%	77%	77%	87%	72%	77%	81%	81%
Bought	50%	51%	62%	56%	50%	51%	62%	56%	64%	58%
Stolen	23%	31%	17%	29%	23%	31%	17%	29%	24%	38%

Note: When considering 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.

2020 Street Pill Prices: Prices continue to vary, but a sampling of prescription drug street prices includes:

- Adderall: \$5-\$10
- Hydrocodone: \$15-\$30
- Oxycodone: \$12-\$30
- Alprazolam: \$5-\$13