



2019 Report Card

Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force

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

The Prescription Drug Report Card provides concrete data on the scale of the prescription drug abuse 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 trends over time.

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. Additional detailed data, including an alert about Fentanyl, is available in the 2019 PDATF Addendum. Please see page 3 for a list of data sources.

Table 1. Key Measures of Prescription Drug and Opioid Problems in San Diego County: 2014 – 2018

	Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1.	Unintentional Prescription-Caused Deaths ^a	244	248	253	273	246
	• Rate per 100,000 residents	7.6	7.7	7.7	8.3	7.4
	Fentanyl-Caused Deaths ^b	15	21	33	84	92
	• Rate per 100,000 residents	0.5	0.6	1.0	2.54	2.8
2.	Emergency Department (ED) Opioid Activity	6,866	7,501	7,005	6,607	Available in 2020
	• Rate per 100,000 residents	215	228	213	199	Available in 2020
3.	11 th Graders Self Report of Lifetime Prescription Misuse		14%		10%	
4.	Adult Drug Treatment Admissions	16,104	15,177	15,790	15,952	23,022 ^c
	• Percentage of Prescription Pain Medication	4.5%	4.3%	4.1%	3.2%	Available in 2020
5.	Arrestees Self Report of Prescription Misuse					
	• Adult	40%	44%	49%	47%	45%
	• Juvenile	35%	43%	38%	47%	56%
6.	Prescription Drug Prosecutions ^d					
	• Prescription-specific Fraud Charge	308	117	140	95	49
	• Other Charges with Prescription-Drugs Involved	1,237	1,353	1,422	1,172	1,182
7.	Pharmacy Robberies/Burglaries ^e					
	• Night Break-Ins/Burglaries	8	6	14	25	11
	• Armed Robberies	n/a	n/a	17	27	10
8.	Pounds of Safely Disposed Medications					
	• Take Back Events	17,676	14,595	17,772	21,824	22,221
	• Sheriff's Department Collection Boxes	13,079	14,725	15,901	16,199	14,295
9.	Annual Number of Dispensed Pills Per County Resident					
	• Pain Medication ^f	40	39	37	33	27.4
	• Anti-anxiety	13	13	13	12	9.8
	• Stimulants	4.7	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.1

a. These deaths are 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 San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office and those that had toxicology. There are over 22,000 deaths each year in San Diego County, the Medical Examiner's office investigates around 3,000 deaths a year.

b. 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.

c. Drug-MedICAL 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 numbers reported from the San Diego County District Attorney and City of San Diego City Attorney as a combined total.

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.

f. 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 2016 rate is 30.2; there were 20 Tramadol deaths in 2014, and 17 in both 2015 and 2016.

Definitions and Sources for Report Card Indicators

1. Unintentional deaths with prescription drug or involvement. San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) population figures based on 2018 Census data. *Source: County of San Diego Medical Examiner's Office.*
Unintentional fentanyl related deaths: 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: County of San Diego Medical Examiner's Office.*
2. Emergency department discharges per 100,000 with a diagnosis of opioid dependence or abuse. *Source: County of San Diego Emergency Medical Services.*
3. 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.*
4. Total admissions to publicly-funded drug treatment in San Diego County that identify prescription Opioids as primary drugs of choice. *Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services; Behavioral Health Services Data Book.*
5. Percent that report lifetime prescription misuse/abuse from a sample of interviews among adult and juvenile arrestees at time of booking. *Source: Substance Abuse Monitoring, San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG).*
6. 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.*
7. 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).*
8. 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.*
9. Prescription pills per San Diego County resident. The numbers of dispensed pills are derived from prescriber (dispenser) reporting 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.

2019 Heroin Addendum

Heroin abuse 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.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1. Heroin Seizures (kg) at San Diego County Ports of Entry	756	941	591	933	1,247
2. Heroin Price Per Gram	\$50-70	\$40-80	\$40-80	\$40	\$40-100
3. Adult Arrestees Testing Positive for Heroin	13%	12%	11%	13%	11%
4. Treatment Admissions with Heroin Listed as Primary Drug of Choice	28%	29%	28%	27%	29%
5. Number of Heroin Overdose Deaths	105	90	90	83	105

Table 3. 2018 Primary Heroin Treatment Admissions by Gender, Age, and Race/Ethnicity, San Diego County

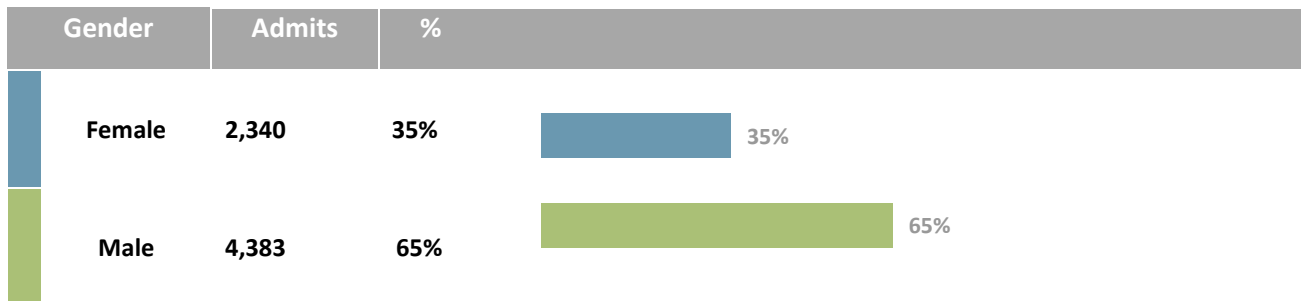


Table 4. 2018 Primary Heroin Treatment Admissions by Age, San Diego County

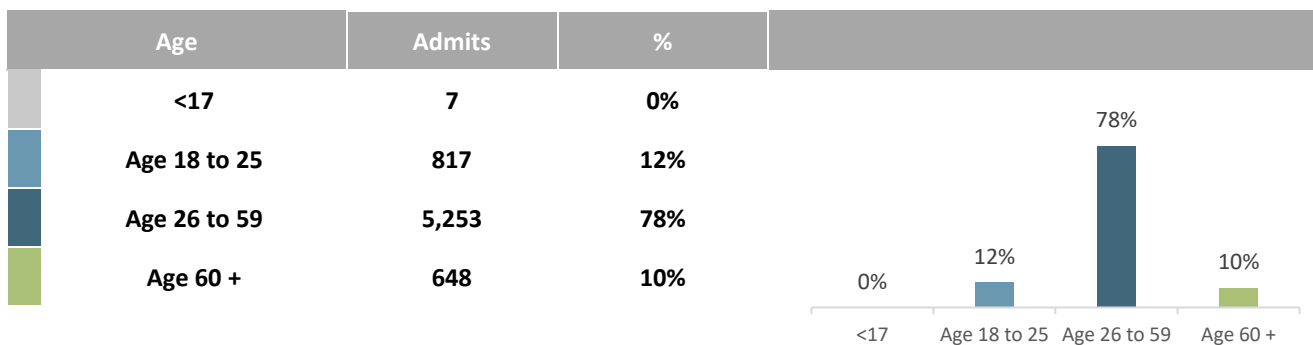
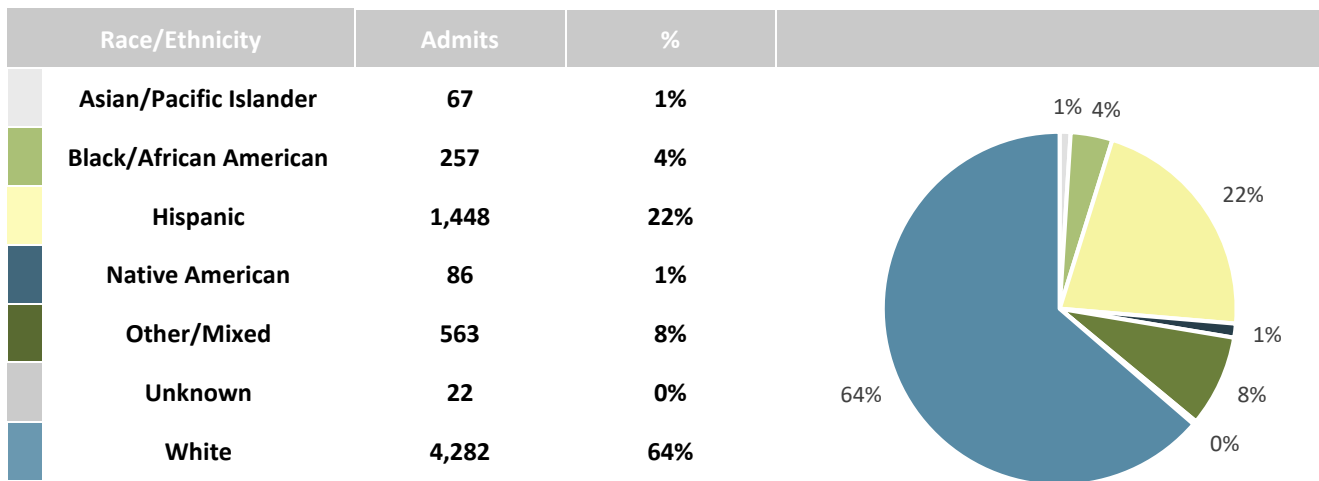


Table 5. 2018 Primary Heroin Treatment Admissions by Race/Ethnicity, San Diego County



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	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
By Emergency Medical Services	1,141	1,212	1,210	1,304	1,903	2,113
By Sheriff Department		15 uses* 1 death	13 uses 2 deaths	16 uses 4 deaths	26 uses 4 deaths	23 uses 3 deaths

*6 months only

2019 PDATF Addendum

A. Death Details

The following data is provided by the San Diego County Medical Examiner. While death represents the tip of the iceberg of prescription and other substance abuse, these numbers are also an absolute and visible sign of the misuse and abuse problem.

Table 1: Number of Deaths Caused by Prescription Opioids and Non-Opioids: 2008 - 2018

Prescription Drugs: Opioid vs. Non-Opioid	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
• Prescription Opioids	186	194	188	221	219	208	185	205	207	208	210
• All other Prescriptions (excluding Opioids)	34	43	37	41	50	51	59	43	46	65	36
All Prescription Deaths	220	237	225	262	269	259	244	248	253	273	246

*This represents the number of accidental overdose deaths caused by one or more prescription opioids, 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 2: Number of Deaths Caused by Heroin and Other Illicit Drugs and Alcohol: 2008 - 2018

Heroin Related Deaths*	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
• Heroin	74	73	70	80	74	89	105	90	91	86	105
• Other illicit substances and/or alcohol	330	342	388	394	421	455	381	420	454	441	373
All Heroin and Other Illicit Drug and Alcohol Deaths*	404	415	458	474	495	544	486	510	545	527	478

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

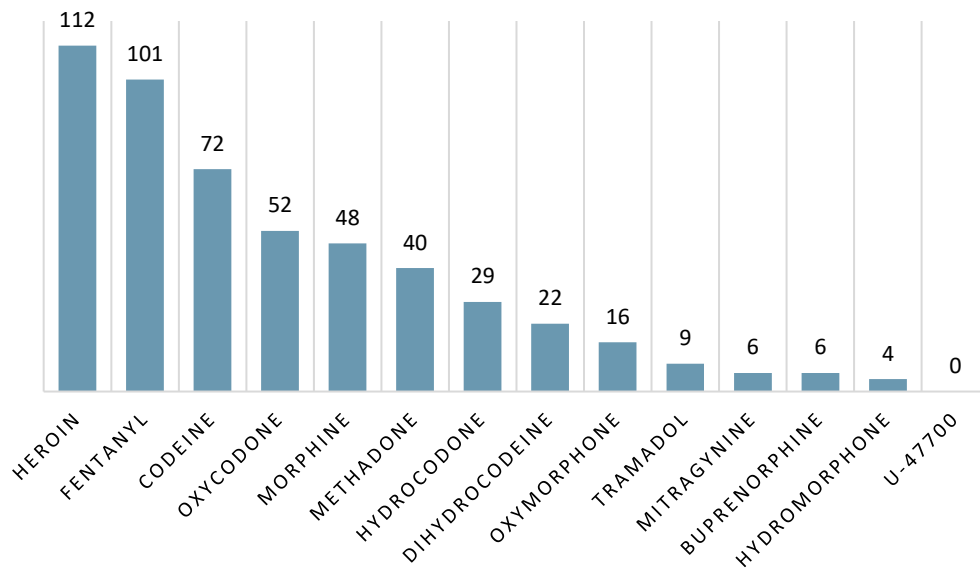
Table 3. Prescription-Caused Deaths by Race/Ethnicity, 2018

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Rate per 100,00
White	182	11.9
Hispanic	30	2.6
Black	16	10.8
Other	9	7.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	1.1
Native American	5	33.0
Total	246	7.4

Table 4: Prescription-Caused Deaths by Age and Gender, 2018

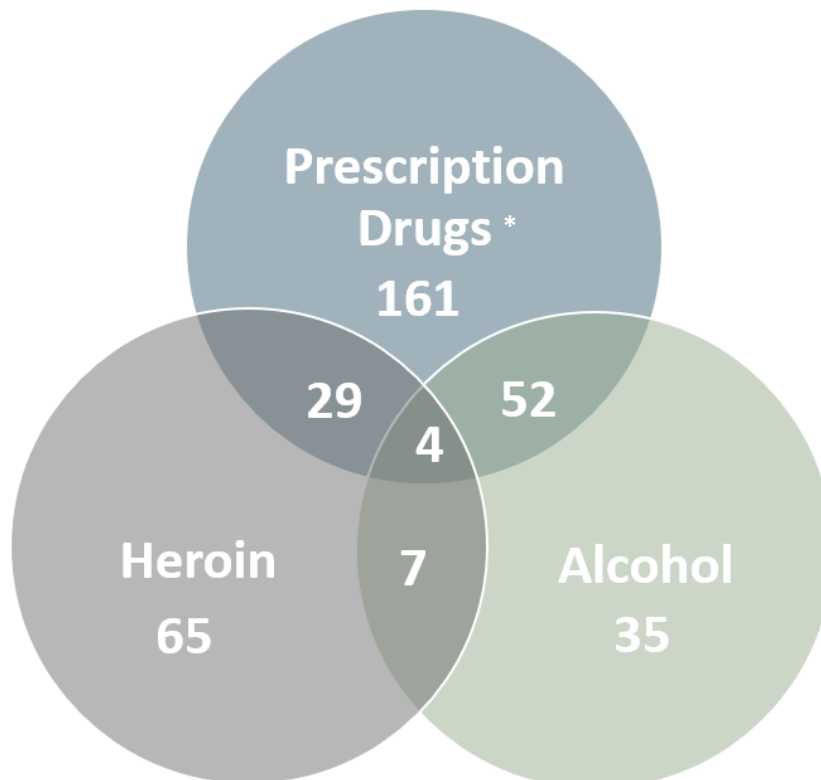
Age	Number			Rate per 100,000*		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
0-14	0	0	0	0	0	0
15-24	0	19	19	0	7.1	3.9
25-34	20	38	58	9.4	16.5	13.1
35-44	10	23	33	4.7	10.4	7.6
45-54	21	33	54	10.1	15.9	13.0
55-64	21	38	59	10.2	19.5	14.8
65+	12	11	23	4.5	5.1	4.8
Total	84	162	246	5.1	9.7	7.4

Figure 1. San Diego County Accidental Deaths in which Opioids were Detected, 2018*



*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.

Figure 2. Relationship Between Unintentional Prescription Drug, Heroin, and Alcohol Caused Deaths in San Diego County, 2018*



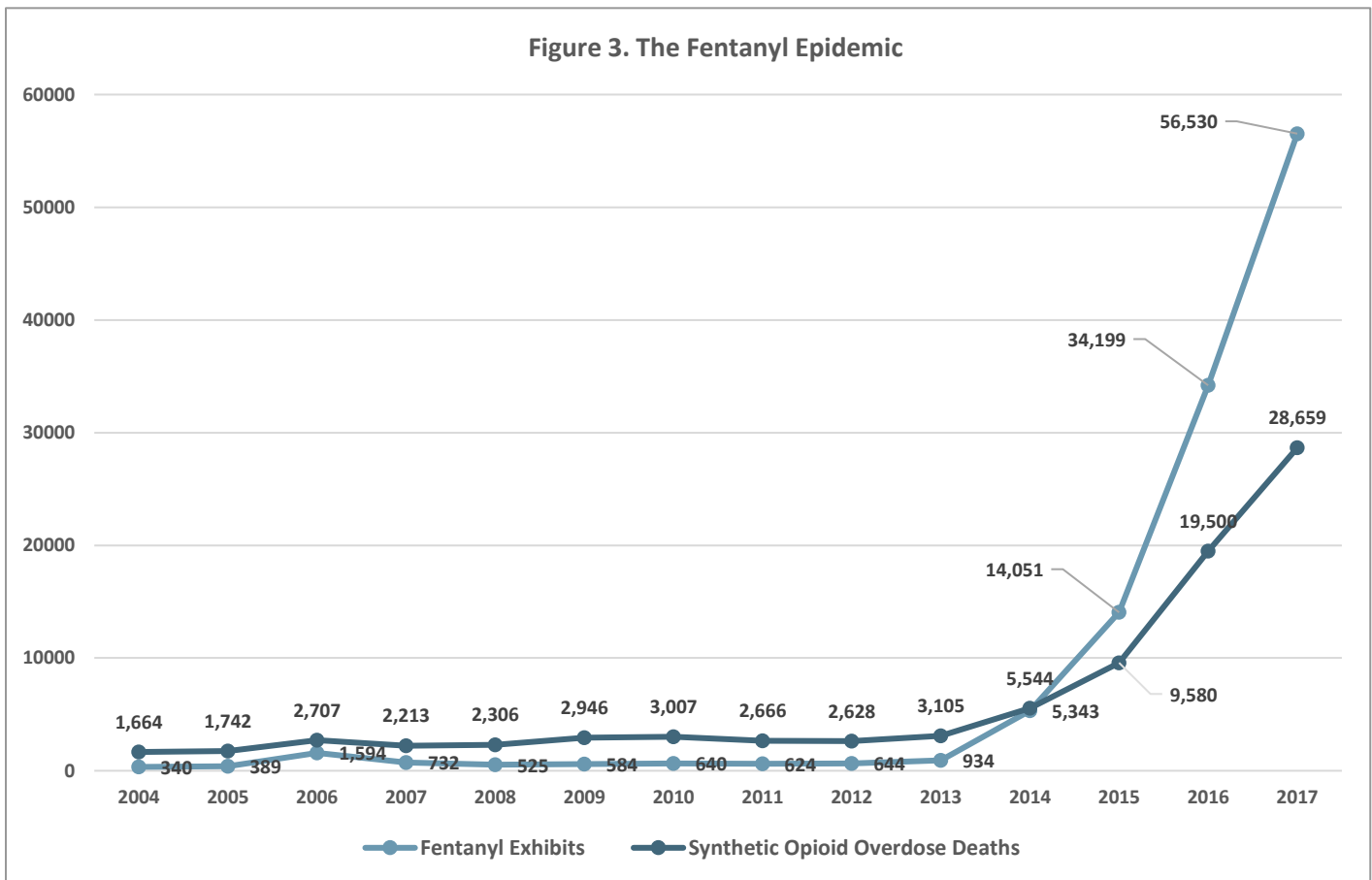
*The 2018 Report Card diagram included the number of all accidental deaths in which alcohol was detected. The 2018 diagram has been updated to include only deaths in which alcohol toxicity was a causative factor. This represents the number of accidental overdose deaths caused by one or more prescription opioids, 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

An overview of the fentanyl epidemic: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, deaths from fentanyl have increased dramatically in recent years. Highly concentrated fentanyl can be transported in small quantities and generates significant profits. One kilogram of fentanyl, which costs \$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.

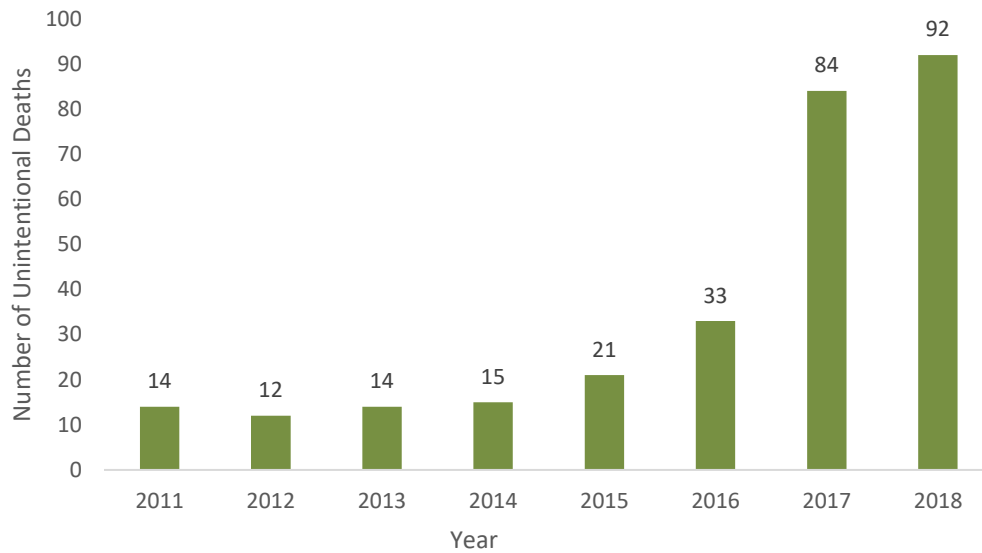
What is Fentanyl? Fentanyl is a Schedule II synthetic opioid approved for use as a painkiller and anesthetic.

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



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

Figure 4. Number of Unintentional Fentanyl Deaths in San Diego County 2011- 2018*



* 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 Medical Examiner's Office, 2019

Emergence of counterfeit pills: Trafficking of fentanyl-laced pills has increased dramatically. Nine fentanyl seizures in August 2018 along the San Diego border are representative: five were in pill form, significantly more than in previous months. Counterfeit pills represented more than 30 percent of the total fentanyl seizures in FY2018, up from five percent in FY2017. Users often do not realize the pills contain fentanyl and the doses are not standardized, resulting in high overdose potential.



“Pressed blues” resemble oxycodone pills but actually contain fentanyl. The pills attract those who use prescription drugs, enabling cartels to expand their target market and profit margins.

C. Additional Indicators

Figure 5. Primary Drug of Choice for Admissions to San Diego County Treatment Program

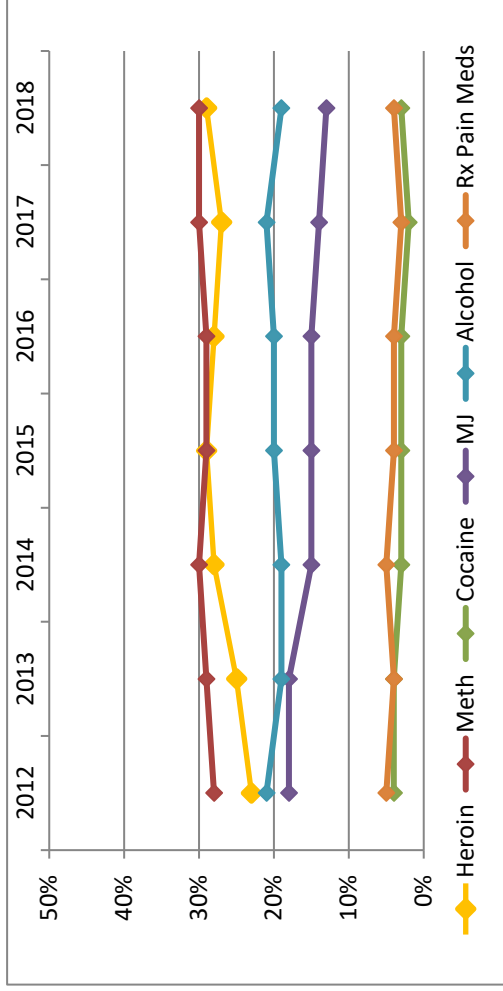


Table 5: SANDAG Self-Reported Method of Obtaining Prescription Drugs

	2015		2016		2018	
	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile	Adult	Juvenile
Given	86%	78%	77%	87%	81%	79%
Bought	51%	61%	50%	51%	66%	61%
Stolen	19%	20%	23%	31%	21%	36%

2018 Street Pill Prices: Prices continue to vary, but a sampling of prescription drug street prices includes:

- Adderall: \$10 - 15
- Fentanyl Patch: \$20-30
- Hydrocodone: \$5-10
- Oxycodone: \$20-30
- Alprazolam: \$3-15