



# 2021 Report Card

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Methamphetamine Strike Force

## The Status of Methamphetamine Use in San Diego County

The Methamphetamine Strike Force, known as the Strike Force, was established by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors in 1996. Today the Strike Force is a collaboration at federal, state and local levels, with contributions from more than 70 participating agencies. The annual MSF Report Card provides data from 2020 on leading indicators of meth problems. All data sources are identified on page 2.

**Table 1. Methamphetamine Strike Force 2021 Report Card**

Indicator		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1.	Total Meth-Related Deaths <sup>a</sup>	377	368	483	546	722
	• Rate per 100,000 residents	11.5	12.3	14.5	16.3	21.6
2.	Unintentional Meth-Caused Deaths <sup>b</sup>	239	271	328	379	553
	• Rate per 100,000 residents	7.3	8.2	9.8	11.3	16.5
3.	Emergency Department (ED) Discharges for Amphetamines <sup>c</sup>	13,209	12,926	13,020	16,309	Available in 2022
	• Rate per 100,000 population <sup>d</sup>	402	390	390	487	Available in 2022
	• ED Use Rate per 100,000 ED Visits	1,539	1,469	1,516	1,841	Available in 2022
4.	Methamphetamine Primary Drug of Choice	4,689	4,911	6,906 <sup>e</sup>	6,591	4,740
	• Percent of all Public Drug Treatment Admissions	37%	37%	30%	33%	31%
5.	Positive Methamphetamine Tests					
	• Adult Arrestees	56%	56%	57%	59%	56%
	• Juvenile Arrestees	14%	11%	10%	11%	8%
6.	Number of Misdemeanor/Felony Arrests for Meth Sales and Possession <sup>f</sup>	8,428	9,293	10,156	11,313	7,211
7.	Availability Measures					
	• “Easy to Get” <sup>g</sup>	88%	89%	89%	88%	84%
	• Price per Ounce	\$250-450	\$120-250	\$150 -300	\$150-325	\$150-300
	• Meth Seizures at Border POE	8,706 kg.	13,831 kg.	19,171 kg.	34,182 kg.	42,087 kg.

- These data represent deaths of all manner examined by the San Diego County Department of the Medical Examiner and those that had toxicology. Only deaths in which methamphetamine was detected are represented in these data. There are over 22,000 deaths each year in San Diego County, the Department of the Medical Examiner investigates approximately 3,000 of those deaths a year.
- These deaths, a subset of the total meth-related deaths, are accidental overdose deaths in which methamphetamine alone or with other drugs and/or alcohol was a causative factor in death.
- Emergency Department (ED) diagnoses are coded for all amphetamine misuse and amphetamine dependence; it is likely that most amphetamine mentions among ED discharges are in fact methamphetamine.
- Population Rate and ED Use Rate are per 100,000 total population and 100,000 total ED discharges, respectively. Patients who were admitted to the hospital were not included. Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Emergency Medical Services, Emergency Department Discharges Database, 2013 – 2017.
- 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.
- This total includes both felony and misdemeanor arrests and citations since the passage of Proposition 47 in Nov. 2014. Citations are reported separately in the Meth Addendum.
- 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.

## Report Card Indicator Details and Source(s)

1. Unintentional Meth-Related Deaths. These data represent deaths of all manner examined by the Department of the Medical Examiner and those that had toxicology report in which methamphetamine was detected. *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 Meth-Caused Deaths. These deaths are accidental overdose deaths in which methamphetamine 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 Census data.
3. Emergency Department (ED) Discharges for Amphetamines. Rate per 100,000 of emergency department discharges per 100,000 for San Diego County residents with a diagnosis of amphetamine dependence or misuse. Patients who were admitted to the hospital were not included. *Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency (HHS), Emergency Medical Services.*
4. Total admissions to publicly-funded drug treatment in San Diego County that identified methamphetamine as their primary drug of choice. *Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services; Behavioral Health Services Data Book.*
5. Positive methamphetamine tests. Percent of meth positive tests from a sample of interviews and drug tests among adult and juveniles at time of booking *Source: Substance Abuse Monitoring, San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG).*
6. Number of Misdemeanor/Felony Arrests for Meth Sales and Possession. *Source: Automated Regional Justice Information System (ARJIS).*
  - *Proposition 47, the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act, passed November 4, 2014, and recategorized some non-violent felony offenses including felony drug offenses, to misdemeanors.*
7. Availability Measures:
  - Methamphetamine “easy to get” percent from jail interviewees. *Source: Substance Abuse Monitoring, San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG).*
  - Price per ounce. Price of meth samples acquired during arrests/ investigations. *Source: San Diego Law Enforcement Coordination Center (SD-LECC).*
  - Meth seizures as border POE. Crystal and Ice Meth Seizures at San Ysidro, Otay Mesa and Tecate. *Source: Customs and Border Protection.*

*Facilitation services for the Meth Strike Force (MSF) are provided through HHS, Behavioral Health Services, in a contract with the Center for Community Research. Website maintenance and Meth Hotline support is provided by the San Diego and Imperial County High Intensity Drug Tracking Area.*

## What needs to be Done?

Analysis of available data, review of existing research and literature, and opinions from discipline member experts, suggest the following actions are required to decrease meth use and subsequent problems.

### **Increase Recognition and Visibility of the Meth Problem.**

News and social media coverage, events and more is needed to bring the story back into focus on meth.

### **Disrupt the Meth Market at All Levels.**

Support law enforcement efforts to reduce the availability of meth and other drugs in our region. The Drug Trends committee meets quarterly to discuss early trends among enforcement, prosecution and health sectors and address effective strategies to remove illicit and dangerous drugs from the community.

### **Increase Health-Screening.**

Older meth users have more cardio-vascular consequences resulting from chronic meth use and earlier health screening and engagement in drug treatment may reduce mortality. The Strike Force is promoting better connectivity between physical and behavioral health care providers to better engage and keep people with addiction problems in drug treatment.

### **Get More People with Use Problems – and their Family Members – into Treatment Services.**

The Meth and Families Committee is promoting the inclusion of wrap-around services for family members and support networks. Children need to recover alongside their parents. Trauma-informed practices for the whole family can help break the cycle of addiction. Law enforcement partners are more informed about addiction and are strengthening referrals to drug treatment for substance abusing offenders. It is equally important to reduce the overall stigma of addiction and substance use disorders to further encourage engagement in treatment services to regain health.

### **Expand Crime-Free Multi-Housing Partnerships to Promote Sustainable Crime-Free Neighborhoods Where Children and Families Live.**

Community norms about drug use can be protective – or can be risk factors. Norms where we live are essential cues for parents and families. The use of Crime-Free Multi-Housing principles and practices is being expanded to bring Live Well San Diego health, safety and thriving elements into this strategy.

### **Maintain High Quality Prevention Work on Alcohol and Marijuana as The First Line of Defense for the Vast Majority of Youth who Never use Meth.**

Fortunately, most youth in schools do not use meth – rates run from 3 to 5 percent for student lifetime use. However, early use of alcohol and marijuana is one risk factor of moving on to other substances.

## 2021 MSF Addendum

### A. Death Details

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

**Table 1. Meth-Related Deaths by Race/Ethnicity, 2020**

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Rate per 100,000
White	403	26.2
Hispanic	162	14.2
Black	79	49.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	25	6.8
Multi-Race*	37	--
Other*	6	--
Native American	7	46.2
Unknown*	3	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>21.6</b>

\*Rates not reported for fewer than 5 cases or Race/Ethnicity of 'Other' or 'Multi-Race'.

**Table 2: Meth-Related Deaths by Age and Gender, 2020**

Total Number of Deaths				Rate per 100,000*		
Age	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
0-14*	2	2	4	--	--	--
15-24	10	22	32	5.0	10.5	7.8
25-34	24	114	138	9.7	36.5	24.6
35-44	37	108	145	17.6	49.0	33.7
45-54	40	132	172	21.2	69.7	45.5
55-64	32	143	175	16.3	76.1	45.6
65+	11	44	55	3.9	19.8	11.0
Unknown*	0	1	1	--	--	--
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>33.6</b>	<b>21.6</b>

\*Rates not reported for fewer than 5 cases or for 'unknown'

**Table 3. Unintentional Meth-Caused Deaths by Race/Ethnicity, 2020**

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Rate per 100,000
Black	66	41.3
White	318	20.7
Hispanic	110	9.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	20	5.4
Multi-Race*	26	--
Native American	5	33.0
Other*	6	--
Unknown	2	--
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>16.5</b>

\*Rates not reported for fewer than 5 cases or Race/Ethnicity of 'Other' or 'Multi-Race'.

**Table 4: Unintentional Meth-Caused Deaths by Age and Gender, 2020**

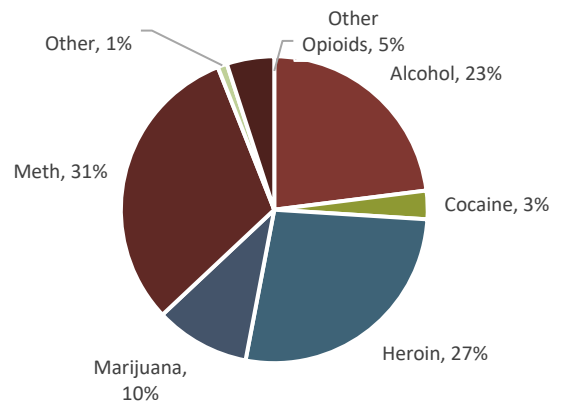
Total Number of Deaths				Rate per 100,000*		
Age	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
0-14*	0	1	1	--	--	--
15-24	6	9	15	3.0	4.3	3.7
25-34	21	66	87	8.5	21.1	15.5
35-44	31	79	110	14.8	35.8	25.6
45-54	31	103	134	16.4	54.3	35.4
55-64	33	136	169	16.9	72.4	44.0
65+	3	34	37	1.1	16.7	7.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>16.5</b>

\* Rates not reported for fewer than 5 cases or for 'unknown'

## B. 2020 Substance Use Disorder Admissions

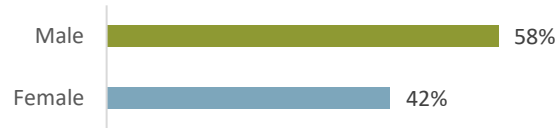
**Table 5. Admissions with Meth as Primary Drug of Choice in County Publicly Funded Treatment**

Primary Drug of Choice	Number of Admissions	Percent of Admissions
<b>Methamphetamine</b>	<b>4,740</b>	<b>31%</b>
Heroin	4,006	27%
Alcohol	3,422	23%
Marijuana	1,560	10%
Other Opioids	791	5%
Cocaine/Crack	379	3%
Other	182	1%



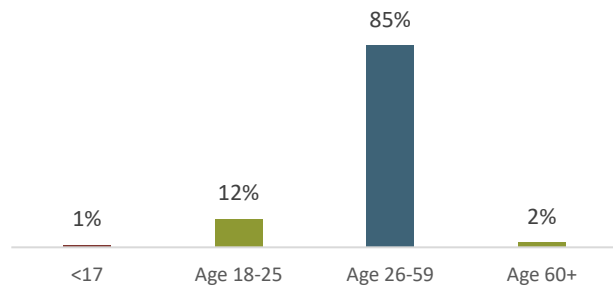
**Table 6. 2020 Primary Methamphetamine Treatment Admissions by Gender, San Diego County**

Gender	Admits	%
Male	2,731	58%
Female	2,005	42%

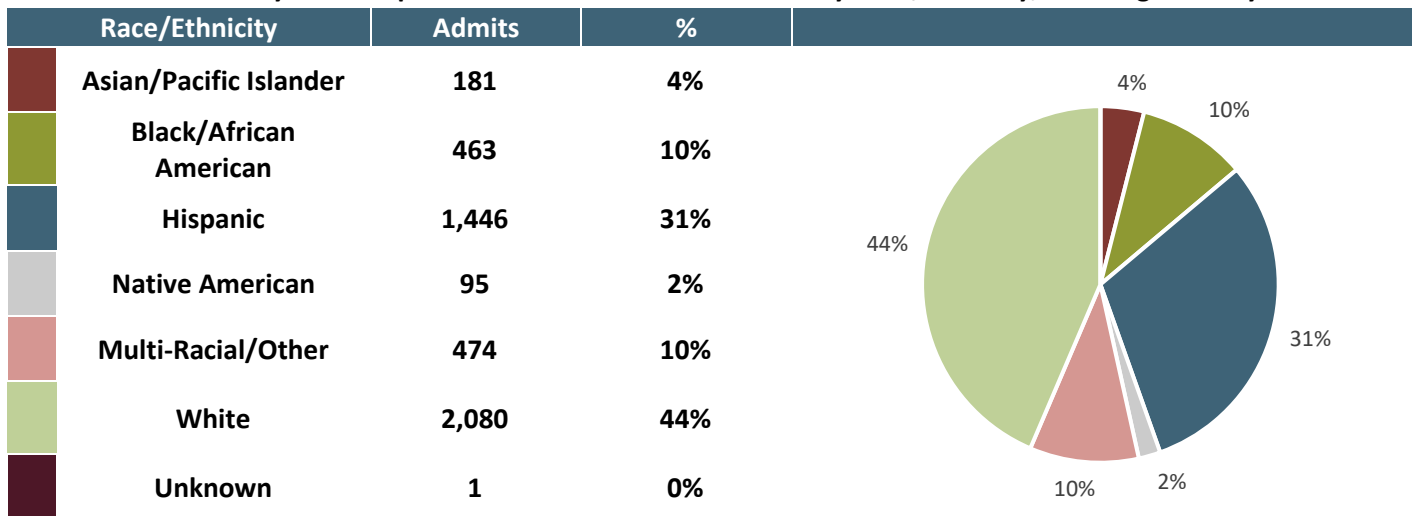


**Table 7. 2020 Primary Methamphetamine Treatment Admissions by Age, San Diego County**

Age	Admits	%
Age 12 to 17	47	1%
Age 18 to 25	555	12%
Age 26 to 59	4,028	85%
Age 60 +	110	2%



**Table 8. 2020 Primary Methamphetamine Treatment Admissions by Race/Ethnicity, San Diego County**



**Meth Hotline**

The Meth Hotline (1-877-No2-METH or 1-877-662-6384) was established in 1996 with support from the Sheriff’s Department and HIDTA with a dual purpose; to provide an anonymous place to report meth-related crimes including clandestine meth labs and identity fraud, and to provide referrals to local drug treatment programs. This was the first hotline resource of this kind in the county. From the onset, the hotline was staffed with interns from local colleges who were provided annual training on collecting tip information and from county treatment programs on how to make an appropriate referral. The www.no2meth.org website was established in 2005 to provide additional accessible information to the community that included tips on how to access treatment services and a confidential reporting section to report meth crime occurring in the neighborhoods. The website has received inquiries for information not only from San Diego County and other California counties, but also from a number of other states and from several countries including Australia, Scotland and Malesia.

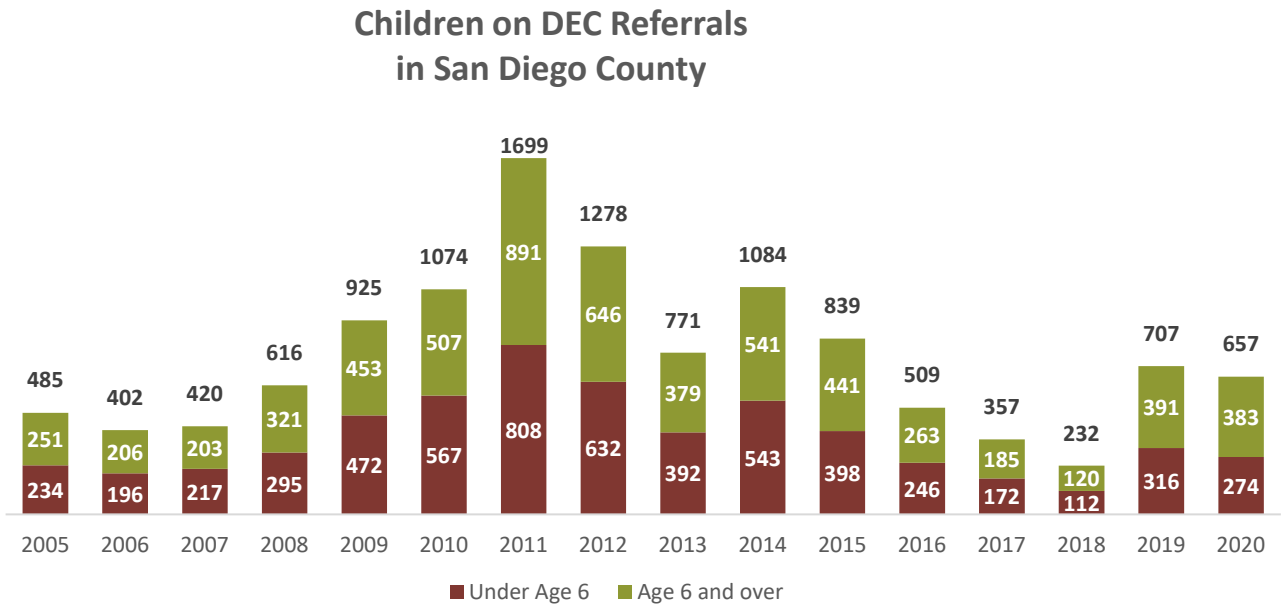
**Table 9. Number of Hotline Contacts, 2016-2020\***

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Hotline Contacts *	83	45	87	21	28

\*Total calls/emails made to 1-877-No-2-METH and info@no2meth.org. SD County discontinued marketing efforts for these contacts in 2016, which could account for the drop-in hotline contact volume between 2016 to 2017.

## C. Meth and Family Impacts

Figure 1. Meth use impacts children in the home, partly measured by the numbers of Drug Endangered Children (DEC) victims



**Notes:**

1) Beginning in 2005, Child Welfare Services (CWS) began using data from their case management system with special codes for Drug Endangered Children (DEC) cases. These include Level 1, where children are exposed to manufacturing of methamphetamine, and Level 2, the majority of cases, where children are exposed from either parental use or dealing to a variety of substances in the home.  
 2) The large increases in numbers beginning in 2009 are attributed, in part, to improved tracking and data entry, training of police officers and improved collaboration.

**Intimate Partners:** The County of San Diego Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (DVFRT) selects five to seven domestic violence fatality cases each year for in-depth, multidisciplinary review in order to identify needed improvements in areas such as policy, programming, resource development and awareness. Included in the table below are the findings for meth use - current and history by the perpetrators and victims in these cases. (Source: San Diego County DVFRT 2021).

<b>Table 10. Meth Involvement in Domestic Violence Fatalities: Findings from Multidisciplinary In-Depth Case Review CY 2015-2020</b>		
	<b>Intimate Partner Victims (n=34)</b>	<b>Perpetrators (n=34)</b>
<b>Current Meth Use*</b>	<b>8 (24%)</b>	<b>7 (21%)</b>
No Current Meth Use	26 (76%)	27 (79%)
<b>History of Meth Use**</b>	<b>9 (26%)</b>	<b>14 (41%)</b>
No History of Meth Use	25 (74%)	20 (59%)

\* Meth detected at the time of death, as indicated by toxicology screen results.

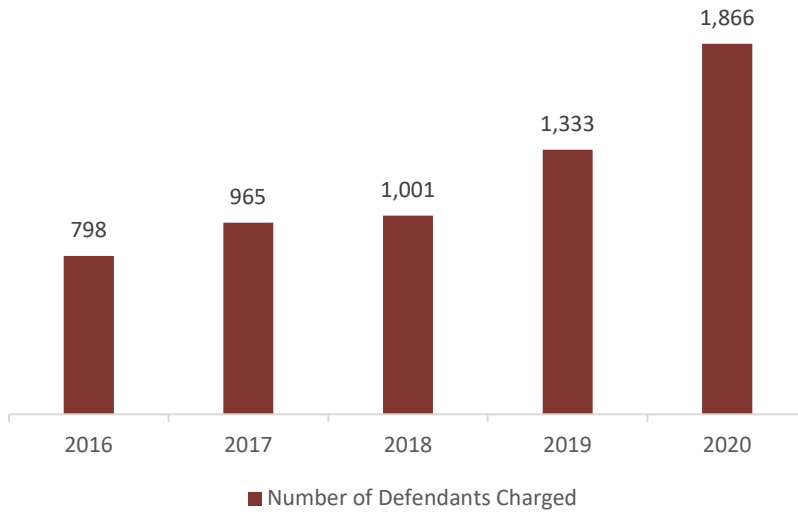
\*\* Determined when the individual has been known to use methamphetamines at some point in their life, as documented through a review of multidisciplinary case records.

**Older Adults:** Meth problems affect older adults in several ways:

- In FY 19/20 Adult Protective Services confirmed 233 cases with reported meth detected substance by the suspected abuser.



Figure 2. Federal Methamphetamine 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

Table 11. Number of Arrests and Citations (Misdemeanor and Felony) San Diego Region CY 2016-2020

Year	Total Arrests	Meth Related Arrests	% of Total
2016	92,876	8,665	9.3%
2017	95,409	9,286	9.7%
2018	94,273	10,141	10.8%
2019	104,104	11,313	11.2%
2020	89,497	7,214	8.1%

Sources: ARJIS

**Table 12: Number of Arrests and Citations (Misdemeanor and Felony) for Methamphetamine, San Diego Region: CY 2016-2020**

LE Agency	2016*	2017*	2018	2019	2020	% Change (19-20)	2020 Rate per 100,000
Carlsbad	192	159	233	214	276	+28.9%	241.1
Chula Vista	899	782	870	770	486	-36.9%	178.5
Coronado	19	18	30	30	22	-26.7%	103.2
El Cajon	378	367	538	721	528	-26.8%	505.8
Escondido	542	724	660	697	504	-27.7%	329.4
La Mesa	385	632	1,014	544	158	-71.5%	263.5
National City	225	188	204	202	123	-39.1%	198.1
Oceanside	467	418	744	942	1,011	+7.3%	570.1
San Diego	1,997	2,201	2,493	3,455	2,140	-38.1%	149.6
Sheriff Total	3,561	3,797	3,355	3,738	1,963	-47.5%	207.1
City of Del Mar	21	4	2	4	0	-100%	N/A
City of Encinitas	235	166	137	142	80	-43.7%	128.7
City of Imperial Beach	70	115	116	116	95	-18.1%	338.6
City of Lemon Grove	115	144	121	267	84	-68.5%	316.7
City of Poway	73	79	50	81	16	-80.2%	32.4
City of San Marcos	250	293	240	200	159	-20.5%	163.6
City of Santee	217	223	211	288	120	-58.3%	207.0
City of Solana Beach	31	16	12	10	3	-70.0%	21.7
City of Vista	509	471	452	516	244	-52.7%	237.1
Sheriff Unincorporated	2,040	2,286	2,014	2,114	1,162	-45.0%	229.8
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>8,665</b>	<b>9,286</b>	<b>10,141</b>	<b>11,313</b>	<b>7,211</b>	<b>-36.3%</b>	<b>215.7</b>

Data Source: ARJIS; SANDAG, 2019 Demographic/Economic Estimates.

-Field (i.e., non-warrant) arrests; 11377/11378/11379 HS (and variants) only.

-Arrest rate per 100,000 population. Populations include individuals ten years and older.

-Data reflects the site of the arrest, not the residence of the arrestee. Meaning these data are based on where the arrest occurred, not where the individual arrested resides.

\*\*2020 Rate was calculated based on current 2020 population numbers.

**Table 13. Methamphetamine Lab Cleanups**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
• County Cleanup	8	3	3	2	12
• DEA/NTF Cleanup	1	1	0	3	0

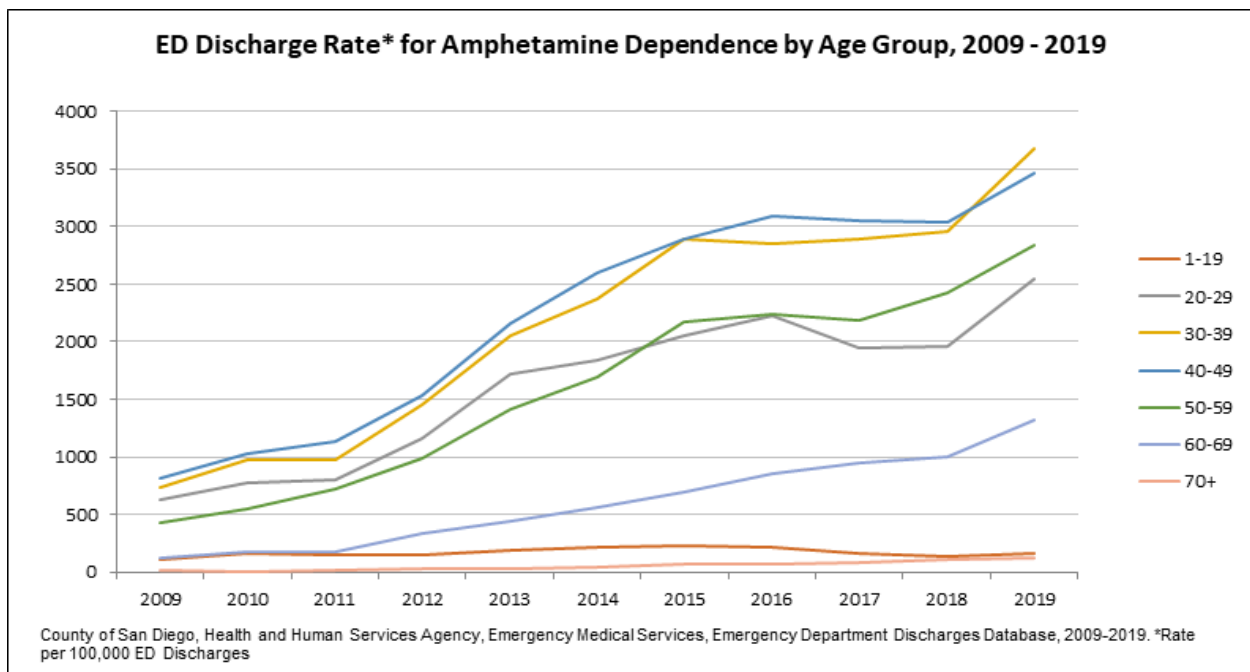
Lab cleanup/seizure. Number of meth-related toxic clean ups and dump sites. Source: County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health. Meth Lab Seizures. Source: Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

**Table 14. Emergency Department (ED) Discharges for Amphetamine Dependence and Misuse in San Diego County by Hospital, 2015– 2019**

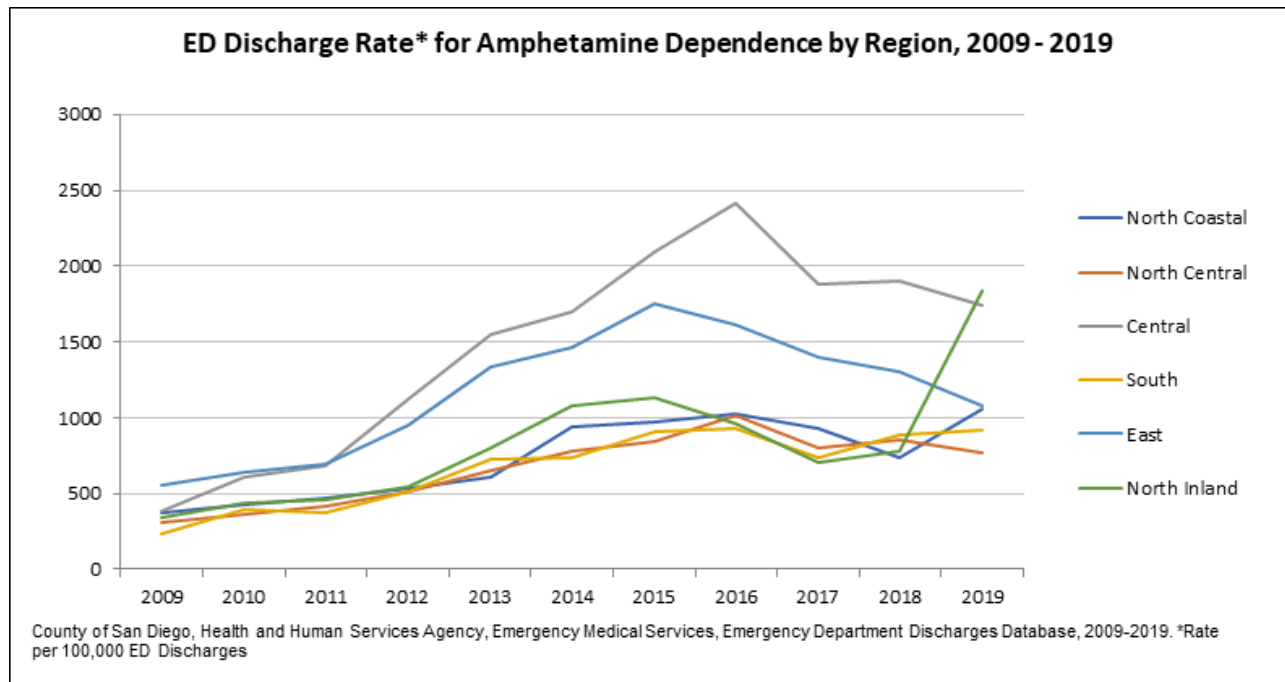
Hospital (ED)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	1-Year Percent Change	5-Year Percent Change	Percent of County Meth Increase
Alvarado	827	964	783	343	693	+102.0%	+16.2%	-3.6%
Rady Children's Hospital	21	19	32	18	17	-5.5%	-19.0%	-0.1%
Sharp Coronado	136	180	202	239	142	-40.6%	+4.4%	+0.2%
Sharp Memorial	740	882	954	1,055	848	-19.6%	+14.6%	+2.9%
Grossmont	2,697	2,485	2,444	2,398	1,915	-20.1%	-29.0	-21.1%
Kaiser*	325	452	557	616	443	-28.1%	+36.3%	+3.2%
Scripps Mercy**	2,008	1,775	1,748	1,738	2,457	+41.4%	+22.4%	+12.1%
Palomar Medical Center	1,416	973	739	1,067	3,155	+195.7%	+122.8%	+46.8%
Paradise Valley	1,183	1,286	1,145	1,189	1,359	+14.3%	-0.5%	+4.7%
Scripps La Jolla	140	171	164	168	188	+12.0%	+34.3%	+1.3%
Tri-City MC	728	923	929	528	490	-7.2%	-32.7%	-6.4%
UCSD MC***	1,525	2,344	2,574	2,863	3,312	+15.7%	+117.2%	+48.1%
Sharp Chula Vista	424	372	354	415	345	-16.9%	-18.6%	-2.1%
Pomerado Hospital	248	195	165	249	755	+203.2%	+204.4%	+13.7%
Scripps Encinitas	177	188	136	134	190	-56.0%	+7.3%	+0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,595</b>	<b>13,209</b>	<b>12,926</b>	<b>13,020</b>	<b>16,309</b>	<b>+25.3%</b>	<b>+29.5%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\*Starting in 2017 these data include two Kaiser locations in San Diego County – Kaiser Permanente San Diego Medical Center and Kaiser Permanente Zion Medical Center.  
 \*\*Also includes data for Scripps Chula Vista.  
 \*\*\*Also includes data for UCSD Thornton. Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Emergency Medical Services, Emergency Department Discharges Database (via OSHPD), 2010 - 2018.  
 Notes: Does not include inpatient admissions. These data do not include emergency department (ED) discharge data from the Veterans Administration Hospital or the Balboa Naval Medical Center.

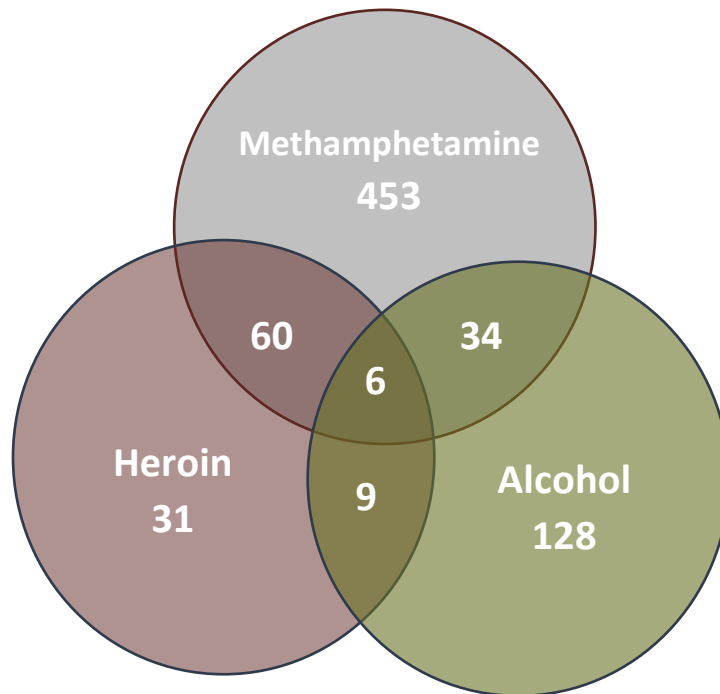
**Figure 3. Emergency Department (ED) Discharge Rates by Age Group and Region**



**Figure 4. Emergency Department (ED) Discharge Rate for Amphetamine Dependence by Region, 2009-2018**

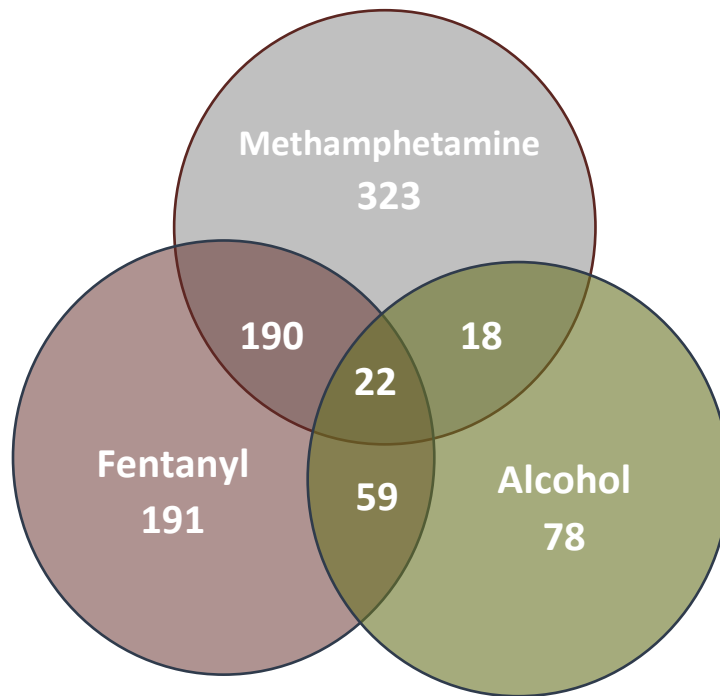


**Figure 5. Relationship Between Unintentional Methamphetamine, Heroin, and Alcohol Caused Deaths in San Diego County, 2020**



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

**Figure 6. Relationship Between Unintentional Methamphetamine, Fentanyl, and Alcohol Caused Deaths in San Diego County, 2020**



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

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