

Ventura County Jail Study – Assessment of Inmate Drug Use Behaviors

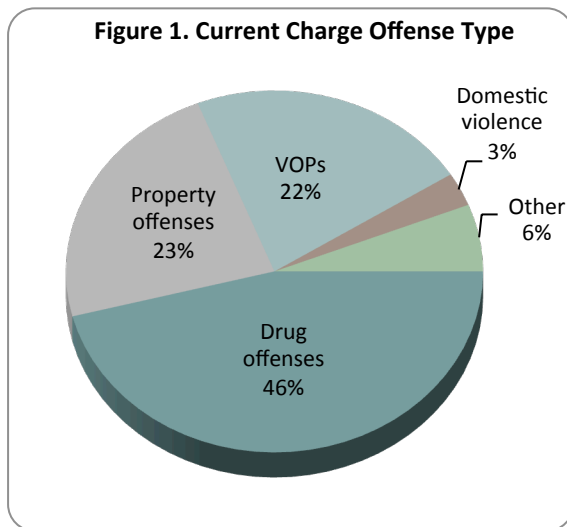
Summary of Findings, 2012

Overview/Introduction. An exploratory study was designed and implemented to examine whether prescription-type opiate use is a precursor or gateway to heroin use. The study was conducted with Ventura County jail inmates participating in substance abuse and life skills classes at the Todd Road Facility in Santa Paula, CA. All inmates who attended classes during a one-week timeframe were asked to complete a survey inquiring about their substance use in general, more detailed questions pertaining to their prescription (Rx)-type opiate use and heroin use, and heroin use among others they know. Demographic information was also collected from survey respondents.

Summary of Findings. The survey sample included 82 adult jail inmates participating in substance abuse and other life skills classes offered at Ventura County Jail’s Todd Road Facility.

Respondent Information

- Among inmates surveyed, 46% were of Hispanic origin, 40% were non-Hispanic White, 12% reported two or more races, two percent were Black or African American, and one survey respondent was Asian.
- The mean age of respondents was 32, with ages ranging from 18 to 62. Fifty percent of respondents were male and 50% were female.
- The average length of stay in custody for a current charge was slightly under 5 months, with respondent length of stays ranging from 1 to 36 months.



- As shown in **Figure 1**, the most common current charge offense types were drug-related offenses (includes possession, intent to sell, and transportation of a controlled substance) (46%); followed by property-related offenses (e.g., burglary, identity theft/forgery, auto theft) (23%); and violation of probation (VOPs) offenses (22%).
- Few in the surveyed sample were in custody for person-related offenses (e.g., domestic violence) (3%) or other offenses (6%) that could not be classified by the previously mentioned offense types (e.g., material witness, gang activity, lying to or evading police, offenses not specified).

- The majority (90%) of inmates surveyed reported that this was not their first time in jail.
 - Of those reporting prior jail stays, over half (58%) reported having been jailed between 1-10 times. Twenty percent of respondents reported they had been jailed 11-20 times, and 22% reported being detained in jail 21 times or more (responses ranged from 2 – 1,000 times with an average number of jails stays reported at 170 times.)
 - The most commonly reported prior offense types were drug-related offenses (40%), followed by property-related offenses (28%), VOPs (19%), and domestic violence (4%). Nine percent reported other prior offenses (e.g., possession of a deadly weapon, vandalism, gang activity).

Substance Use/Initiation of Use

Table 1 provides information obtained from survey respondents for eight categories of substances used.

- Nearly all (99%) respondents reported that they had used alcohol. The average age at first use was 13.
- Marijuana was the most commonly used drug (95%), followed by methamphetamines (91%), cocaine (89%), psychedelic/hallucinogenic drugs (63%), Rx-type opiates (66%), heroin (49%), and methadone (30%).
- Among those indicating use, the average age at first use was 13 years for marijuana, 19 years for methamphetamines, 18 years for cocaine, 17 years for psychedelic/hallucinogenic drugs, 19 years for Rx-type opiates, 20 for heroin, and 24 years for methadone.

Table 1. Substance Use History and Mean Age at First Use for Specific Substances Among Survey Respondents Aged 18 to 62			
Substance Use	# of Inmates Responding to Item	% Reporting Use	Mean Age at First Use
Alcohol	81	99%	13
Marijuana	81	95%	13
Methamphetamines	81	91%	19
Cocaine	82	89%	18
Psychedelic or hallucinogenic drugs (mushrooms, LSD, etc.)	81	63%	17
Rx- type opiates not as intended by a doctor (misusing OxyContin, Vicodin, Morphine, Codeine, Demerol, etc.)	80	66%	19
Heroin	80	49%	20
Methadone	81	30%	24

Lifetime Heroin Use/Users

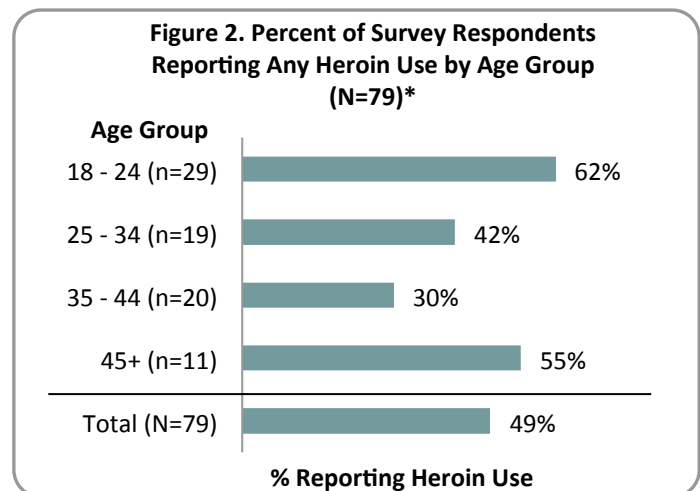
- As indicated in **Table 1** above, nearly half (49%) of the study sample that responded to the item about their heroin use history reported that they had used heroin during their lifetime.

Age Group

- The highest rate of reported heroin use in their lifetime was among respondents aged 18 to 24 (62%), followed by respondents aged 45 and older (55%), and by 25 to 34 year olds (42%). The lowest lifetime heroin use rates were among 35 to 44 year olds (30%) (see **Figure 2**).

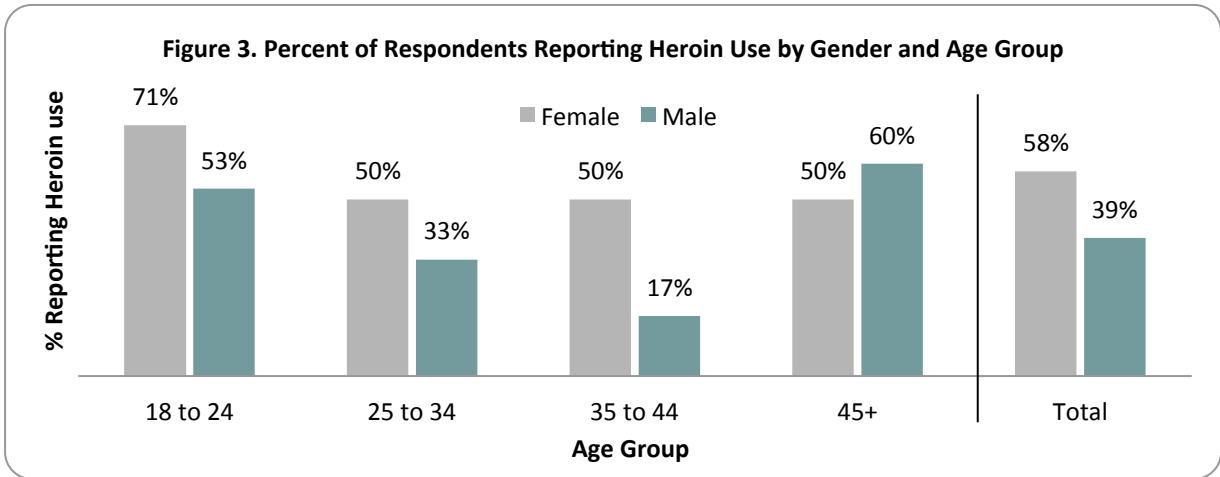
Gender

- As shown in **Figure 3**, lifetime heroin use was higher for all female survey respondents as a group (58%) than for male survey respondents (39%).



* A total of 80 survey respondents answered the item "Have you ever used heroin?"; however, one respondent failed to report his/her age. Thus, Figure 2 total reflects 79 respondents' age categories.

- Within each age category, the reported rate of heroin use was higher among females, with one exception (i.e., those in the 45 and older age category, wherein males reported higher lifetime heroin use compared to females) (60% vs. 50% respectively).



Frequency of Use Across Lifetime

- When asked about the number of times in their lifetime that they had used heroin, responses ranged from once to over 1,000 times. Of those reporting lifetime heroin use, 41% reported use between 1-300 times; over half (59%) indicated their lifetime heroin use was greater than one thousand times.

Link Between Rx-type Opiate Use and Heroin

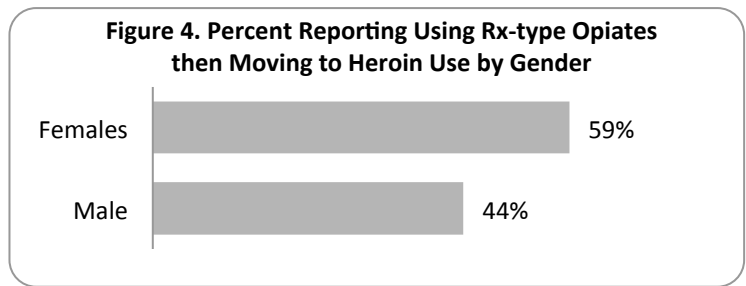
- Of those who reported lifetime heroin use, 54% indicated beginning with Rx-type opiates, then progressing to heroin use.

Age Group	# Reporting Heroin Use	Started with Rx-Type Opiate	
		No	Yes
18-24	18	33%	67%
25-34	8	37%	63%
35-44	6	60%	40%
45+	6	83%	17%
Total N*	37	46%	54%

- Progression from Rx-type opiate use to heroin use was highest among younger survey respondent. Two-thirds (67%) of 18-24 year olds and 63% of 25 to 34 year olds indicated beginning with Rx-opiates then moving to heroin.
- The rate of progression from Rx-type opiate use to heroin use was 40% among respondents aged 35 to 44, and 17% among those aged 45 or older.

*N refers to the number of respondents who indicated heroin usage in their lifetime and responded to the above item.

- The reported rate of progression from Rx-type opiate use to heroin use was higher among females than males (59% vs. 44% respectively).



Reasons for Using Heroin Instead of Rx-type Opiates

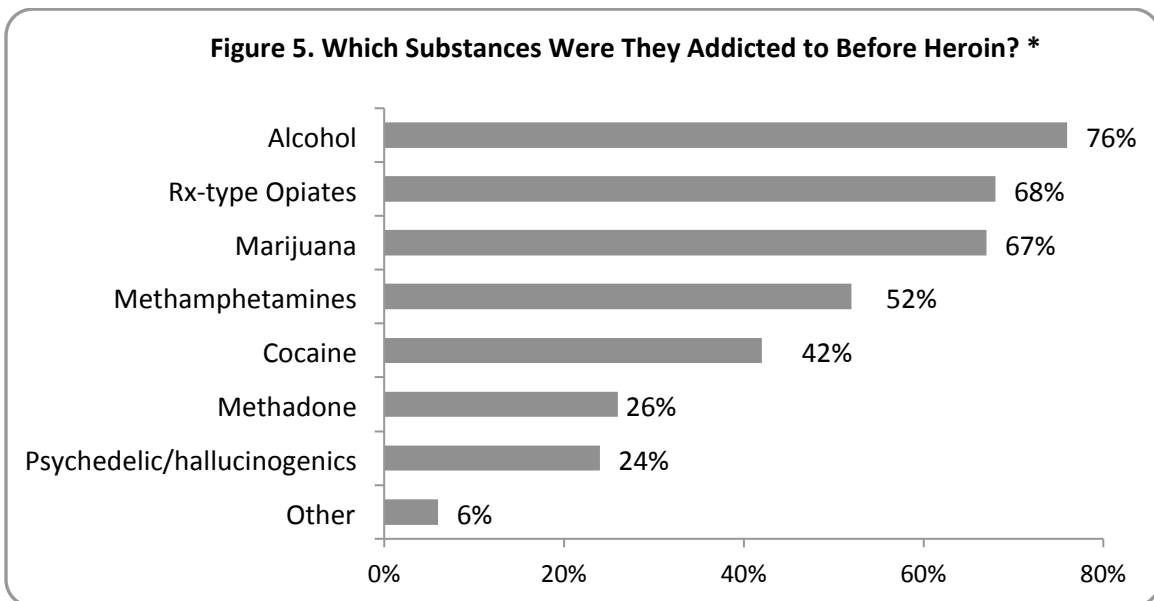
Respondents most often indicated that they started using heroin instead of Rx-type opiates because it was cheaper (65%); other people they knew were using it (60%); it was easier to get (50%); or because they were not getting a “good high” from the Rx-type opiates anymore (35%).

- Four survey respondents gave other reasons for transitioning from Rx-type opiate use to heroin. These included curiosity; family friend was injecting [respondent] before he/she realized what it was; and doctor that was prescribing Rx-type opiates was busted.

Perceived Substance Addiction Prior to Heroin Use Among Acquaintances, Friends, and Family

Seventy respondents reported that they knew other people who became heroin users. The majority (94%) also indicated they believed that heroin users were addicted to other substances prior to starting their use of heroin.

- **Figure 5** depicts which substances heroin users were believed to be addicted to prior to their heroin use. The most common substance selected was alcohol (76%), followed by Rx-type opiates (68%), marijuana (67%), methamphetamines (52%), and cocaine (42%). Other substances frequently reported included methadone (26%) and psychedelic/hallucinogenic drugs (24%).
- Other substances reported included morphine, Xanax, and a “combination of [unspecified] drugs.”



* Percentages do not equal 100%, as respondents selected multiple options.

Summary

The primary purpose of the current exploratory study was to assess the extent to which Rx-type opiate use leads to heroin use. Analyses revealed that just about half (49%) of the surveyed inmates (that provided a response when asked about their lifetime heroin use) indicated that they had used heroin.

- The highest rate of reported lifetime heroin use was among respondents aged 18 to 24, as 62% of respondents within this age group reported using heroin in their lifetime.
- The lowest rate was among 35 to 44 year olds, as 30% within this age category reported lifetime heroin use.
- Across all ages, the rate of reported lifetime heroin was higher for female survey respondents (58%) than for male survey respondents (39%). This trend was mirrored when looking at findings within age categories; with the exception of the 45 and older age category in which males reported higher heroin use compared to females.

Among those who reported lifetime heroin use, over half (54%) indicated that they had started with Rx-type opiates and then progressed to heroin.

- Progression from Rx-type opiate use to heroin use was highest among younger survey respondents; 67% of 18-24 year olds and 63% of 25 to 34 year olds indicated beginning with Rx-opiates then moving to heroin.
- The Rx-type opiate use to heroin progression rate was lowest among the 45 and older age category with 17% of respondents within this age group reporting first using Rx-type opiates then moving to heroin.

Respondents most often indicated that they started using heroin instead of Rx-type opiates because it was cheaper (65%); other people they knew were using it (60%); it was easier to get (50%); or because they were not getting a “good high” from the Rx-type opiates anymore (35%).

Survey participants were also asked to think about heroin users they know and to reflect upon whether they believed those heroin users were addicted to other substances. Of the 70 respondents who indicated that they knew other people who became heroin users, the majority (94%) believed that heroin users were addicted to other substances prior to starting their use of heroin. The most common substances that heroin users believed others were addicted to prior to using heroin were: alcohol (76%); Rx-type opiates (68%); marijuana (67%); methamphetamines (52%); and cocaine (42%).