

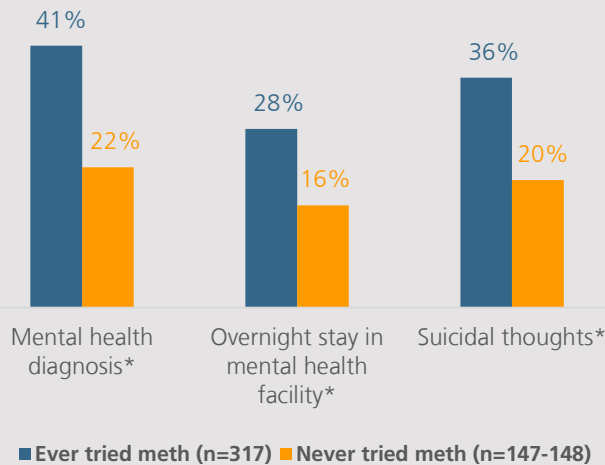


Methamphetamine Use and Mental Health Issues Among the Arrestee Population

According to SAMHSA, 9.2 million adults, or 3.7% of the population in 2018, had any mental illness (AMI) and at least one substance use disorder (SUD) in the past year. Substance use was also more common among individuals with a mental health issue than those without one.¹ With methamphetamine (meth) use at a 19-year-high among adults booked into our local detention facilities² and a greater awareness of mental health issues, including co-occurring disorders or dual diagnosis among this population,³ this CJ Flash describes how common mental health issues were among arrestees who had ever used meth versus those who had not. It also provides a deeper dive into those interviewed who reported ever using meth and also said they had ever received a mental health diagnosis or stayed overnight in a mental health facility (153 of the 467⁴ arrestees),⁵ referred to as the “meth-mental health group.”

Highlight 1

Adult arrestees who reported they had ever tried meth were significantly more likely than those who had not tried meth to have received a mental health diagnosis, stayed overnight in a mental health facility, or thought about attempting suicide.



* Significant at $p < .05$.

Highlight 2

Because meth use can result in psychotic-like symptoms⁶ and individuals may self-medicate with illicit substances to alleviate mental health symptoms, the relationship between drug use and mental health is a complex one. When asked the first age of meth use and the first age of getting a mental health diagnosis, almost equal percentages said they had either tried meth first or had received a mental health diagnosis first – one did not come before the other in any predictable way.

45% received mental health diagnosis first

43% tried meth first

12% received diagnosis and tried meth at the same time

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2019). *Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. (HHS Publication No. PEP19-5068, NSDUH Series H-54). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from [samhsa.gov/data/](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/)

² As part of the Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program, interviews are conducted with arrestees booked into local detention facilities and an anonymous and confidential urine sample is provided for drug testing. More information about the SAM program can be found at [sandag.org/SAM](https://www.sandag.org/SAM)

³ Co-occurring disorder and dual diagnosis are clinical terms for an individual who has a drug addiction as well as a diagnosis for a mental health issue that significantly impacts his/her life.

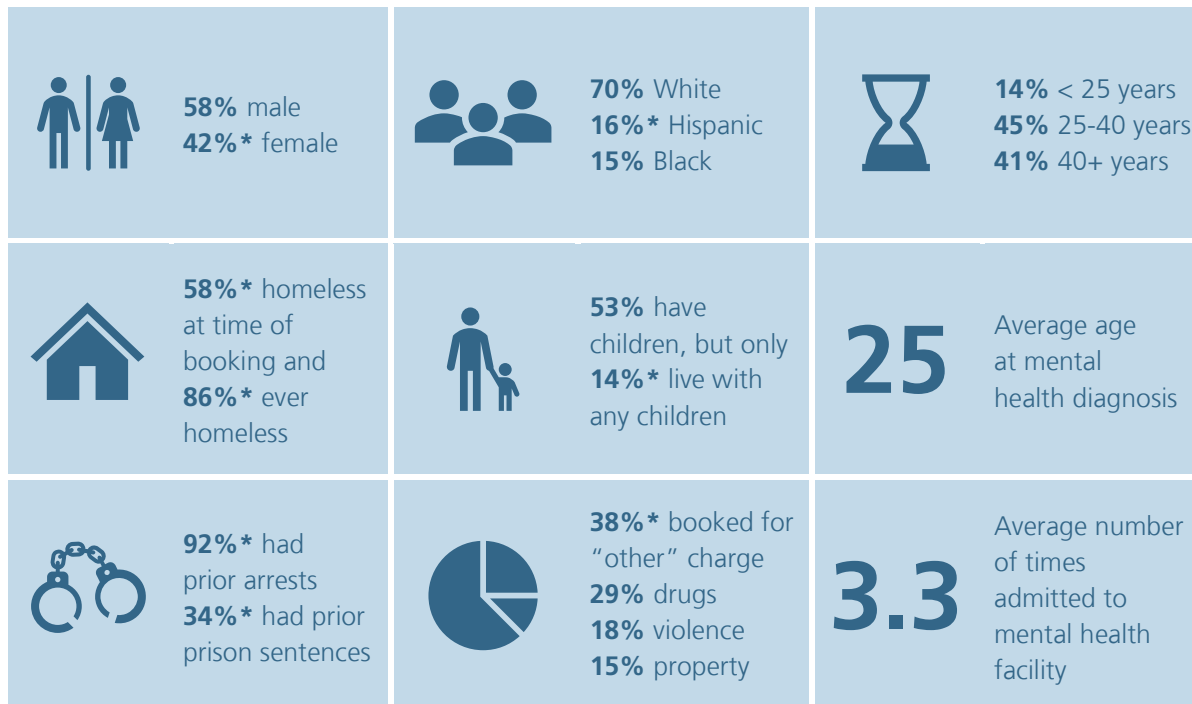
⁴ A total of 317 arrestees reported they had ever tried meth; 196 had reported having a mental health diagnosis and/or overnight stay in a mental health facility; and 153 had a history of meth use and a mental health issue.

⁵ When considering these findings, it is important to remember that correlation is not causation, that these data are based on self-report, and that meth use and a mental health issue were operationalized very broadly and did not include a clinical assessment. It is also possible that some individuals with mental health issues have never been diagnosed or that those with a history of using meth were more likely to receive a diagnosis.

⁶ Glasner-Edward, S. & Mooney, L. J. (2014). *Methamphetamine psychosis: Epidemiology and management*. *CNS Drugs*, 1,115-1,126. Available online at [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5027896/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5027896/)

Highlight 3

Characteristics of the 153 adults who reported ever using meth and having a mental health diagnosis or staying overnight in a mental health facility (meth-mental health group) are shown in the figure below. Significant differences between the meth-mental health group and other arrestees are noted with an asterisk and described below. Three-quarters (75%) of the meth-mental health group tested positive for meth at the time of their current arrest, as did 42% of the other arrestees.



Note: "*" indicates a statistically significant difference between the meth-mental health group and the other arrestees on this characteristic.

- Females represented a greater proportion of the meth-mental health group (42%) than they did of the other arrestee group (32%).
- A lower percentage of the meth-mental health group identified as Hispanic (16%), compared to other arrestees (42%), which could reflect other issues, such as stigma in that ethnic/culture group or other issues that limit the chance of having a diagnosis.⁷
- The meth-mental health group was more likely to be arrested for an offense that was not violent, property, or drug-related (38%), compared to the other arrestees (24%).
- The meth-mental health group was more likely to be homeless at the time of their arrest (58% versus 29% of other arrestees) and to report ever being homeless (86% versus 55%).
- The meth-mental health group were more likely to have prior arrests (92% versus 72%) and prior prison sentences (34% versus 24%).
- While the two groups were equally likely to report having children, the meth-mental health group were less likely to report living with any (14% versus 27%).

⁷ Only 15% of individuals who identified as Hispanic reported having a mental health diagnosis, compared to 48% of Whites and 44% of Blacks, a significant difference. In terms of ever trying meth, 63% of Hispanics said they had, compared to 76% of Whites and 58% of Blacks, also significantly different.