

# Averhealth 2021 Annual Report

2021 Substance-Use Data Mirrors Pandemic Patterns

## 2021 SUBSTANCE-USE DATA MIRRORS PANDEMIC PATTERNS

Averhealth's annual survey of positivity rates for substance use reinforces COVID-19's negative impact on society.

For the second year in a row, data from courts in Averhealth's nationwide footprint show an uptick in positivity rates in 2021 for alcohol and other drugs as the pandemic's stresses, mental health challenges, and lifestyle changes continued to disrupt American life.

The alcohol positivity rate increased 13.6 percent in 2021 compared to the previous year – which itself was up 33 percent from 2019. While the types of drugs used varied regionally and even dipped in some regions, positivity rates for alcohol were up in all but one region – mirroring national trends that include an increase in drunk-driving cases and alcohol-involved crashes.

Averhealth compiled the data from its propriety, web-based application, Aversys, which provides real-time statistics from more than 2,700 treatment courts, probation offices, and treatment providers.

Among drug classes, Fentanyl increased significantly in the West, South Central, and Southeast regions, mirroring national substance use trends. Cannabinoids also increased nationally by 20.3 percent as several states legalized use.

Just as in 2020, Averhealth did not close patient care centers last year to ensure clients receive the care they need. However, many probation and service agencies limited their drug testing, potentially impacting positivity rates across drug classes and programs.

### Positivity rates by drug type and program

Table 1 provides an overview of positivity rates by drug category nationally. While positivity rates increased for Cannabinoids (up 20.3 percent) and alcohol (up 13.6 percent), other drug types saw a decline in 2021: Methadone by 20 percent, Opiates by 18.2 percent, and Benzodiazepines by 11.8 percent.

**Table 1. Average Positivity Rates by Drug Category Across Averhealth's National Footprint.**

Drug Class	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Alcohol	2.5%	2.5%	2.8%	3.0%	3.3%	4.4%	5%
Amphetamines	3.0%	3.3%	3.3%	3.9%	4.9%	5.8%	5.9%
Benzodiazepines	2.5%	2.5%	2.4%	2.2%	1.9%	1.7%	1.5%
Buprenorphine	2.8%	7.7%	9.1%	13.3%	12.5%	12.2%	12.6%
Cannabinoids Natural	5.8%	7.2%	8.2%	9.4%	11.1%	13.3%	16%
Cocaine	0.9%	1.4%	1.5%	1.7%	1.9%	1.8%	1.7%
Fentanyl	1.3%	3.0%	2.2%	2.4%	2.4%	2.7%	2.6%
Methadone	0.4%	1.3%	1.8%	2.3%	2.9%	3.5%	2.8%
Opiates	4.1%	3.7%	2.9%	2.6%	2.5%	2.2%	1.8%

In addition to data from specific drug classes, Averhealth tracks positivity rates by court program. In 2021, these rates went up in nearly every program category nationally year over year, including:

- Drug Court: up 23 percent
- DWI Court: up 50 percent (reflecting the national increase in positive alcohol tests)
- Veterans Court: up 13 percent
- Juvenile Court: up 14 percent

**Table 2. Average Annual Positivity Rates by Program Type Across Averhealth’s National Footprint. (Approx. 1.5 million tests in 2021)**

Program Type	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Drug Court	9%	11%	13%	13%	14%	15%	13%	16%
DWI Court	6%	7%	7%	8%	8%	7%	8%	12%
Family Court	18%	19%	19%	20%	26%	40%	42%	42%
General	21%	24%	29%	24%	27%	22%	25%	29%
Juvenile Court	26%	30%	30%	33%	35%	35%	36%	41%
Mental Health	13%	16%	16%	13%	17%	16%	17%	18%
Pretrial	15%	15%	19%	34%	35%	28%	30%	33%
Probation	17%	21%	24%	24%	25%	26%	27%	30%
Treatment	15%	26%	24%	24%	30%	32%	37%	36%
Veterans Court	10%	12%	14%	15%	13%	13%	15%	17%
Workplace	20%	20%	21%	25%	24%	25%	23%	21%

**Table 3. Percent of Tests Processed in Averhealth’s Regions by Year**

Region	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Midwest	41.2%	36.2%	27.7%	23.8%	20.4%	18.9%	15.4%
Southeast	8.1%	8.4%	10.1%	12.6%	13.3%	11.1%	9.7%
West	27.7%	23.7%	17.4%	15.4%	20.7%	30.3%	30.6%
Great Lakes	14.0%	14.4%	11.7%	12.2%	12.1%	11.1%	14.4%
Northeast	7.9%	12.1%	15.5%	16.5%	15.5%	13.7%	14.4%
Southcentral	1.1%	5.2%	17.6%	19.5%	18.0%	14.9%	15.5%

Additional details by region are found in the following tables.

**U.S. Midwest Region (Kansas, Kentucky, Iowa, Minnesota, and Missouri)**

In the Midwest Region, the positivity rate for many drugs increased, including Cannabinoids (up 35.7 percent), alcohol (up 13.6 percent), and Amphetamines (up 11.9 percent). Despite an increase nationally in Fentanyl use, this type dropped by 37.5 percent from the previous year.

**Table 4. Positivity Rates by Drug Category for Averhealth’s Midwest Region (~292K tests in 2020)**

Drug Class	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Alcohol	2.4%	2.1%	2.1%	2.0%	1.9%	2.2%	2.5%
Amphetamines	3.0%	3.2%	3.5%	3.7%	4.1%	4.2%	4.7%
Benzodiazepines	3.0%	3.1%	2.9%	3.1%	2.5%	1.6%	1.6%
Buprenorphine	4.9%	7.0%	3.4%	8.6%	9.5%	10.6%	11.1%
Cannabinoids Natural	5.5%	6.2%	6.1%	6.6%	6.6%	5.6%	7.6%
Cocaine	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.5%	0.6%
Fentanyl	1.6%	4.3%	1.7%	3.2%	2.1%	1.6%	1.0%
Methadone	0.4%	1.2%	1.6%	1.2%	0.8%	0.8%	1.0%
Opiates	4.0%	3.9%	3.0%	2.3%	1.9%	1.3%	1.2%

Among program types, the most significant increases in positive cases came from DWI Court (up 50 percent), Veterans Court (up 31 percent), and Drug Court (up 28.6 percent).

**Table 5. Annual Positivity Rates by Program for Averhealth’s Midwest Region (~307k tests in 2021)**

Program Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Drug Court	12%	14%	14%	16%	17%	14%	18%
DWI Court	7%	8%	9%	9%	8%	8%	12%
Family Court	10%	14%	16%	17%	16%	23%	22%
General	26%	35%	33%	32%	31%	35%	37%
Juvenile Court	27%	27%	30%	33%	33%	32%	34%
Mental Health	19%	27%	20%	30%	30%	30%	32%
Pretrial	15%	24%	31%	25%	22%	36%	39%
Probation	26%	25%	25%	25%	25%	28%	32%
Treatment	30%	29%	29%	27%	28%	28%	31%
Veterans Court	10%	15%	14%	11%	15%	16%	21%
Workplace	28%	29%	31%	32%	33%	30%	28%

## U.S. Southeast Region

In the Southeast Region, many drug classes saw a solid drop in positivity rates, with the high-profile exceptions of Fentanyl (up 25 percent) and alcohol (up 4 percent).

**Table 6. Positivity Rates by Drug Category for Averhealth’s Southeast Region (Approx. 171,000 tests in 2021)**

Drug Class	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Alcohol	8.1%	5.2%	3.7%	4.1%	4.6%	5.1%	5.3%
Amphetamines	1.8%	1.7%	1.5%	3.4%	5.2%	6.2%	5.6%
Benzodiazepines	3.8%	1.3%	1.1%	1.4%	1.4%	1.5%	1.4%
Buprenorphine	0.4%	1.0%	4.4%	6.0%	15.2%	11.1%	7.9%
Cannabinoids Natural	7.2%	6.4%	6.2%	7.4%	7.9%	9.4%	9.6%
Cocaine	2.0%	2.0%	1.6%	2.2%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
Fentanyl	-	-	0.5%	0.6%	0.7%	1.6%	2.0%
Methadone	-	0.0%	0.1%	1.1%	1.5%	1.9%	1.5%
Opiates	6.1%	3.9%	2.7%	3.0%	3.2%	3.2%	2.5%

Meanwhile, programs in the Southeast saw little change in positivity rates in 2021:

**Table 7. Annual Positivity Rates by Program Type for Averhealth’s Southeast Region (~192k tests in 2021)**

Program Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Drug Court	8%	8%	8%	7%	8%	9%	9%
DWI Court	28%	7%	8%	7%	6%	7%	6%
Family Court	-	-	-	52%	48%	48%	47%
General	21%	32%	33%	33%	21%	23%	25%
Juvenile Court	-	-	-	49%	33%	40%	41%
Mental Health	27%	21%	16%	15%	15%	14%	13%
Pretrial	-	36%	40%	37%	40%	39%	38%
Probation	35%	34%	35%	37%	41%	39%	39%
Veterans Court	22%	19%	18%	14%	16%	20%	17%

**U.S. West Region (Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, Washington)**

The story in the West Region is the dramatic increase in the positivity rate for Fentanyl – a staggering 40 percent. Other drug use was up as well. Cannabinoids rose 31.6 percent, while Buprenorphine positives were up by 48.5 percent. Cocaine and Methadone each rose 17 percent, with alcohol up 15.7 percent. A drop in Benzodiazepines and Opiates tempered this increase.

**Table 8. Annual Positivity Rates by Drug Category for Averhealth’s West Region**

Drug Class	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Alcohol	2.2%	2.4%	1.9%	2.4%	3.2%	5.1%	5.9%
Amphetamines	4.8%	5.1%	4.3%	4.4%	5.5%	6.6%	7.0%
Benzodiazepines	3.1%	2.5%	2.2%	1.7%	1.7%	1.5%	1.4%
Buprenorphine	3.9%	1.4%	2.8%	2.6%	11.1%	9.9%	14.7%
Cannabinoids Natural	5.2%	6.4%	6.9%	8.2%	8.6%	13.0%	17.1%
Cocaine	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%
Fentanyl	1.2%	1.8%	0.8%	2.1%	3.7%	3.7%	5.2%
Methadone	0.8%	2.5%	3.2%	1.4%	3.3%	4.1%	4.8%
Opiates	4.2%	3.5%	3.1%	2.7%	2.8%	2.6%	2.2%

Among court programs in the West, DWI courts saw the most significant increase – a staggering 214.3 percent, followed by Veterans Court (up 44.5 percent).

**Table 9. Annual Positivity Rates by Program Type for Averhealth’s West Region (~609k tests in 2021)**

Program Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Drug Court	11%	13%	13%	10%	10%	14%	14%
DWI Court	12%	15%	15%	11%	6%	7%	22%
Family Court	22%	19%	19%	22%	24%	27%	32%
General	18%	12%	30%	43%	25%	31%	27%
Juvenile Court	-	30%	33%	39%	27%	33%	36%
Mental Health	4%	6%	5%	11%	8%	16%	11%
Pretrial	15%	17%	19%	28%	15%	19%	23%
Probation	15%	15%	15%	17%	20%	22%	24%
Treatment	20%	18%	15%	19%	20%	22%	18%
Veterans Court	-	23%	17%	16%	5%	11%	16%
Workplace	9%	9%	13%	12%	10%	11%	13%

**Southcentral Region (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas)**

The South Central Region saw significant increases in positive rates in all but two drug classes in 2021. Fentanyl churned up 200 percent, followed by Methadone (up 100 percent), Cocaine (41.2 percent), Cannabinoids (30 percent), Amphetamines (28.2 percent), alcohol (24.5 percent), and Benzodiazepines (up 15.4 percent).

**Table 10. Positivity Rates by drug category for Averhealth’s Southcentral Region**

Drug Class	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Alcohol	2.3%	5.7%	6.3%	5.0%	5.1%	5.3%	6.6%
Amphetamines	0.8%	3.1%	3.3%	3.6%	3.4%	3.9%	5.0%
Benzodiazepines	1.6%	1.6%	2.1%	1.8%	1.4%	1.3%	1.5%
Buprenorphine	-	-	-	-	36.6%	17.9%	12.1%
Cannabinoids Natural	3.8%	9.4%	9.9%	10.1%	9.3%	10.0%	13%
Cocaine	1.4%	1.7%	1.5%	1.4%	1.5%	1.7%	2.4%
Fentanyl	-	-	-	-	0.4%	0.5%	1.5%
Methadone	0.0%	0.0%	3.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.4%
Opiates	0.9%	2.5%	2.6%	2.5%	2.1%	1.9%	1.8%

These increases were reflected in the program types. Positivity rates grew the most in DWI Court at 71.4 percent, followed by Probation (up 26 percent) and Juvenile (up 25.6 percent).

**Table 11. Positivity Rates by program type for Averhealth’s Southcentral Region (~309k tests in 2021)**

Program Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Drug Court	13%	14%	16%	16%	12%	11%	11%
DWI Court	-	-	15%	12%	11%	14%	24%
Family Court	-	-	11%	19%	36%	22%	-
General	-	19%	16%	19%	20%	23%	27%
Juvenile Court	-	-	50%	40%	41%	43%	54%
Mental Health	-	-	-	71%	64%	38%	25%
Pretrial	14%	20%	36%	36%	36%	39%	40%
Probation	16%	23%	22%	22%	21%	23%	29%
Veterans Court	-	21%	10%	14%	11%	11%	10%

## Great Lakes Region

Consistent with national data, alcohol led to an increase among drug classes in the Great Lakes Region. While others dropped, in some cases significantly, the positivity rate for alcohol jumped 43.75 percent in 2021. Dropping the most? Methadone by 77 percent.

**Table 12. Annual Positivity Rates by drug category for Averhealth’s Great Lakes Region**

Drug Class	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Alcohol	0.5%	0.9%	0.9%	1.8%	1.7%	3.2%	4.6%
Amphetamines	2.0%	2.8%	3.7%	4.9%	7.9%	10.4%	7.6%
Benzodiazepines	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	1.6%	1.6%	0.9%
Buprenorphine	4.4%	5.1%	9.3%	13.6%	11.8%	11.6%	13.0%
Cannabinoids Natural	8.5%	10.1%	9.3%	9.8%	17.6%	26.1%	22.1%
Cocaine	2.0%	3.1%	3.5%	3.4%	4.8%	5.5%	2.8%
Fentanyl	-	0.2%	2.1%	2.4%	3.5%	3.4%	2.8%
Methadone	-	8.0%	3.5%	9.1%	17.5%	17.0%	3.9%
Opiates	4.6%	4.6%	4.3%	3.7%	4.1%	3.8%	2.0%

In the Great Lakes Region, positive rates for most program types increased in 2021, notably General Court by 58.3 percent and Mental Health by 50 percent.

**Table 13. Positivity Rates by program type for Averhealth’s Great Lakes Region (~286k tests in 2021)**

Program Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Drug Court	12%	16%	18%	22%	23%	27%	28%
DWI Court	-	-	11%	12%	15%	20%	21%
Family Court	-	-	-	33%	56%	59%	56%
General	19%	17%	27%	25%	17%	24%	38%
Juvenile Court	38%	39%	35%	34%	36%	46%	59%
Mental Health	23%	19%	12%	21%	18%	18%	27%
Pretrial	-	46%	40%	46%	-	-	36%
Probation	17%	21%	22%	23%	24%	30%	33%
Treatment	-	-	77%	87%	86%	91%	71%
Veterans Court	32%	18%	20%	20%	21%	22%	21%



**Northeast Region (Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont)**

The positivity rate for most drug classes fell in the Northeast Region, including alcohol – the only region to record a decline here. Recording gains in the Northeast were cocaine (up 23.5 percent) and Cannabinoids (20.5 percent).

**Table 14. Annual Positivity Rates by drug category for Averhealth’s Northeast Region**

Drug Class	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Alcohol	1.3%	3.3%	4.0%	4.1%	4.1%	4.8%	4.5%
Amphetamines	1.2%	2.6%	3.1%	3.8%	4.5%	4.6%	4.6%
Benzodiazepines	1.4%	2.7%	3.5%	3.1%	2.7%	2.5%	2.1%
Buprenorphine	0.6%	16.2%	18.0%	24.2%	25.6%	25.7%	18.7%
Cannabinoids Natural	2.0%	7.5%	12.3%	15.8%	20.7%	22.9%	27.6%
Cocaine	0.4%	1.3%	2.1%	2.4%	1.9%	1.7%	2.1%
Fentanyl	-	3.2%	2.6%	3.0%	2.4%	2.8%	2.6%
Methadone	0.0%	0.3%	2.6%	7.0%	9.8%	10.5%	7.7%
Opiates	1.9%	2.7%	2.3%	1.8%	1.4%	1.2%	1.0%

Nearly all programs in the Northeast reported increases in positivity rates, led by DWI (up 125 percent), Mental Health (77.8 percent), and Treatment (48 percent).

**Table 15. Positivity Rates by program type for Averhealth’s Northeast Region (~287k tests in 2021)**

Program Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Drug Court	5%	4%	15%	23%	13%	7%	7%
DWI Court	2%	2%	3%	2%	5%	4%	9%
Family Court	-	-	35%	33%	35%	43%	44%
General	-	-	12%	40%	27%	18%	22%
Juvenile Court	33%	24%	30%	36%	56%	48%	58%
Mental Health	8%	5%	5%	8%	8%	9%	16%
Pretrial	-	-	24%	31%	26%	28%	24%
Probation	14%	28%	30%	31%	33%	36%	37%
Treatment	-	-	-	41%	44%	50%	74%
Veterans Court	6%	2%	5%	4%	6%	7%	9%

## ***Conclusion***

Substance use has not decreased over the last two pandemic years. And while drug types vary across US regions with some encouraging trends, including decreases in positivity for Methadone, Opiates, and Benzodiazepines, overall positivity rates for drugs and alcohol are on an unfortunate upswing, most notably in the West Region.

Averhealth is committed to working with our partners nationwide – treatment courts, probation departments, and social service agencies – that operate at the holistic intersection of criminal justice and behavioral health. Our annual report reminds us to redouble our collective efforts to combat substance use through testing, education, counseling, and support.

Averhealth is proud of our long-time partnerships with probation, treatment courts, and social service agencies around the nation to reclaim lives, unite families, and strengthen communities.