Drugs In San Francisco

Group 14:

Alex Donis (issues assigned), Anthony Lencioni (background)
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Background/Demographics of San Francisco:

San Francisco is a relatively large city with a population of 852,469 and a square mileage of only 46.8. San Francisco is also very dense being located on somewhat of an island, its population density is 17,179.1 per square mile. It is also a very expensive place to live with the average house costing around $750,000. The normal person's income in San Francisco is about 75,000 dollars a year, but the cost of living in this area is very high. Since cost of living is so high the rate of poverty is increasing right now is around 13.5%, which is around 115,500 people. (San Francisco) As you can see the cost of living and owning a home in San Francisco is very high making it hard for people to live in this city, that is why the rate of homelessness is a significant issue.

Allison Sabo

Facts/ Figures

San Francisco is a largely populated and diverse area. The city is located in the Northern region of California and has been determined to be one of the fastest growing cities in America. San Francisco has not only been recognized for their growth, they’ve also been recognized for their growing drug problem and looking at the facts and figures of the city can help to understand why such a successful city is having a hard time controlling this. The most contributing factor to this city’s drug problem has to do with their high poverty rate of 13.5 percent of residents below the poverty level because poverty directly correlates to drug use and violence (San Francisco city QuickFacts). Highly populated areas in poverty can also be a catalyst to drug problems and the increase of homeless population in certain areas adds to the ongoing problem. The median income of San Francisco residents is $75,604 with the median value of owner-occupied housing
units being $744,600 (San Francisco city QuickFacts). As the city continues its success it is becoming even more expensive to live in which is making things harder for lower income residents. The people moving to San Francisco have more money and are willing to pay more, causing an even larger gap between the wealthy and poverty stricken residents. San Francisco has an estimated population of 852,469, making the total number of persons per square foot 17,179.1 (San Francisco city QuickFacts). The large number of people per square foot can also be a catalyst for drug problems. It’s harder to patrol a large number of people in one area which is why the high density of this city is causing problems. A wide variety of drugs are used in San Francisco but the most popular are methamphetamines, cocaine, and heroin. Methamphetamines are the most popular drugs in San Francisco with 37.8 percent of drug reports being methamphetamines. The next is cocaine at 15 percent of reports and heroin at 6.4 percent (Gleghorn). The location, population and demographic information of this city all help to explain this ongoing problem

**Jeff Vervlied**

**Issues faced by San Francisco (Combined with Quinton’s):**

Many cities in the United States face two major problems: homelessness and crime. These issues are very prominent in San Francisco and have no overnight fixes; they require a lot of hard work by those in charge of the city.

In 2004, mayor Gavin Newsom promised to fix the homeless problem in 10 years. 1.5 billion dollars later they have moved a mere 19,500 homeless people off the streets. Even with these people off the streets the homeless population hasn’t budged. It’s like every time they move one person off the street, another takes his place. The number of people without a place to
live in the city is still between 5,000 and 8,000. Comparatively, Indianapolis has a population of 4,800. San Francisco has a square mileage is 46.87 compared to Indianapolis which has a square mileage of 368.1. Another astonishing fact is that 25% of the homeless people are families with children (Compass). These families do not live on the street however. If they were to live on the street, child protective services would take the children away. Instead, these families live in homeless shelters or transitional homes until they can hopefully get back on their feet. 

Homelessness is a huge problem in the city of San Francisco. The new mayor has started to try to create more jobs to help this problem.

Quinton Oster

Issues faced by San Francisco (Combined with Jeff’s):

Crime rates in San Francisco are soaring above many other cities in the country. San Francisco has crime index of 3, making it more dangerous than 97% of other cities in the United States. San Francisco had over 56,000 crimes committed last year, mostly property related but over 7,000 of those being violent. The national median per square mile of crime in the United States is 38 whereas for San Francisco it is 1201. (Neighborhood Scout) There was a 20% increase in property and violent crimes from 2012 to 2013. (LA Times) According to the national median it is 2 times more likely that you will be the victim of a crime, 1 out of every 17 people in San Francisco will be a victim this year. (Neighborhood Scout)

As you can see homelessness and crime are two very prominent issues faced in San Francisco. Introducing harsh penalties for those convicted of crimes is one way of helping
control the issues. There are no quick fixes to these problems and only time can tell if they will be able to decline as the years pass.

Josh Weiss & Alex Donis

Drugs in San Francisco:

At an estimated value of four-hundred million, San Francisco’s recreational drug market is not only one of the biggest in the United States, but in the world. From exhausted employees from multi-million dollar corporations to criminals who live on the street, San Francisco’s drug market has all of the drugs to satisfy one’s crave. In fact, thirteen percent of all residents in the bay area report to regularly use drugs recreationally. Methamphetamine, Marijuana, and Cocaine are San Francisco’s most popular recreational drugs respectively according to the DEA’s National Forensic Laboratory Information System in 2013. The city’s methamphetamine problem is largely associated with San Francisco’s homosexual community; the subculture known as “party and play” is stimulated by methamphetamine. While homosexuals are the top consumers, the Asian and Mexican cartels are the suppliers with the “dopest” recipes that go for seventy dollars per gram. On the other hand, Marijuana is a popular mild-hallucinogen that is legal for medicinal purposes in the state of California. However, many medical marijuana patients abuse their power to legally purchase marijuana and end up selling it on the streets; it is a relatively safer drug to deal compared to all other drugs due to its popularity. San Francisco’s lenient Marijuana laws and liberal population tend to be the driving forces behind marijuana’s high demand. Its prices typically go from ten dollars a gram to twenty dollars a gram; although Marijuana selling price won’t astonish a dealer, its supply is higher than any other drug in
California. Cocaine is a stimulant that allows one’s body to function without sleep, it is for the hard-working employees of fortune five-hundred companies and hard-core partiers. Due to its cheap cost of production and expensive selling price, sixty dollars per gram, the Mexican cartel has prioritized cocaine on its selling agenda. Although marijuana and cocaine charges have declined in recent years, methamphetamine and heroin charges have increased. Most drug-related offenses occur on the East side of the city in a neighborhood named Tenderloin, with Bayview being second. Tenderloin is a fairly-poor neighborhood with a large black community and a high-crime rate. With the amount of drug-related crimes, Tenderloin is known by police as an “all-night, open drug market” with drugs flowing in and out of the city. Many people have been killed as a result of San Francisco’s drug trade. Even though drug-related incidents have declined significantly, there are still serious criminal activities going around in the city.

**Cadence Luciano**

**Solutions/programs undertaken by the state:**

According to Priceonomics, “in San Francisco, 13% of all residents report regularly using recreational drugs — 5% higher than the national average” (Crockett 2015). With this being such a big issue, the city of San Francisco and the state of California intervened and implemented many new, strict programs to crackdown on the epidemic, take control of the situation and encourage a drug free city. In order to combat prescription drug abuse and trafficking, the Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System was put into operation in California, which is a specific type of Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP). “PDMPs serve a number of functions, including assisting in patient care, providing early warning signs of drug epidemics, and detecting drug diversion and insurance fraud” (whitehouse.gov 2011). The
state of California also implemented stricter driving laws dealing with drugs. Many states have *Per Se* laws, which make it illegal to drive with a certain amount of drugs in your system. However, California does not have a *Per Se* standard, but instead “it is unlawful for any person who is under the influence of any drug, or under the combined influence of any alcoholic beverage and drug, to drive a vehicle. It is also unlawful for any person who is addicted to the use of any drug to drive a vehicle” (whitehouse.gov 2011). Also, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program was started which supplies agencies with adequate technology, and other equipment and resources in order to target specific areas that are known to have the most drug trafficking. As San Francisco is known for their excessive drug use, it comes with no surprise that there has been a high concentration of drug incarcerations in the city in the past. However, in recent years “drug arrests are on a steep decline in the Bay Area and in San Francisco, where such arrests — for felonies and misdemeanors — have dropped 75 percent over the past five years, according to California Department of Justice data” (Roberts 2013). San Francisco’s new approach pushes addicts towards treatment instead of immediately imprisoning them. This has caused the dramatic drop in arrests, and has freed time for the police to focus more of serious, violent crimes. Although the amount of drug related arrests has decreased because of this new way of policing, it is questionable whether the amount of drug trafficking has dropped along with it. California, more specifically San Francisco, has tried many different ways of dealing the drug epidemic, both harsh and lenient. It is hard to know exactly what type of policies, laws and policing will decrease the use of drugs. San Francisco’s drug problem has not seemed to decrease much or at all over the years, leading to more questions on how to govern the city and state as a whole.
Recommendations for San Francisco:

- As mentioned earlier, San Francisco implemented a new way of policing that was more lenient on drug users, in order to push them towards recovery and free up time for the police to focus on bigger, more serious issues. However, with San Francisco being a city with one of the highest amount of drug abuse, it seems like the drug epidemic is a more serious issue. Instead of avoiding the issue, and letting drug dealers and people carrying large amounts of illegal drugs walk free, maybe the city of San Francisco should implement community policing. This way the “broken window effect” does not occur. If the police are extremely lenient on the issue of drugs then the drug epidemic will not decrease, but instead grow and might lead more people into serious crime. There should be more policemen on foot through the high intensity drug trafficking areas in order to reduce the amount of public drug dealing and increase the feeling of safety and police presence in these neighborhoods. -Cadence Luciano

- My solution to the drug problem: More police on the streets and harsher punishment for those who are found buying, selling, or in the possession of drugs. -Jeff Vervlied

- Recently, legalizing marijuana has been a hot topic in the United States, so many people and government officials question the criminal offense of marijuana possession. In San Francisco, it is no different. One action that should be down is legalizing Marijuana. There are constant studies proving not only that it is harmless, but actually helps some people with certain medical conditions. Another idea is for cops to stop cracking down on people who use the drug and only people who sells. The government should focus on
creating programs and facilities for addicts to treat their addictions. They should also focus on programs for young kids to teach them about addiction. Focusing on addiction and treating it as a serious disease will be more helpful in veering people in the community away from drugs than just shoving “Drugs are bad and using them is a crime” messages down their throats. -**Alex Donis**

- Authority should be less harsh on soft drugs like marijuana, but more harsh on illegal use of prescription pills and other hard drugs like heroin, cocaine, meth etc.. By focusing less on illegal use of marijuana they can focus more on serious issues like the violent crime and property damage rate that has raised 20% over the last year, as well as the drugs that are most likely affecting criminals to commit these crimes. -**Quinton Oster**

- Three specific steps need to be taken to help solve San Francisco’s drug problem. The first is addressing poverty and homelessness. There need to be more resources provided to people in poverty and affordable treatment plans available to residents in need that can’t afford them. Next there needs to be more monitoring on drug use reports and prescription drug accounts. This can help organize and address the problem. Last, there needs to be more of a police presence in poverty stricken areas without creating violence. Drugs tend to lead to violence and when police get involved it can cause more violence so they need to find a way to implement more government monitoring without disrupting residents. -**Allison Sabo**

- My recommendation for the illegal drug problem would be to decriminalize the use of marijuana, since marijuana is already legal for medical use in California. The police force would need to be more strict of the use of hard drugs such as Meth, Heroin, and Crack
because it is proven that these drugs from a serious dependency and users either end up homeless or in jail. If they are going to harshen up these drug regulations, then there would be a better chance for the drug users not to end up homeless and could be rehabilitated to enter the workforce and become a productive member of society.

-Antony Lencioni

- San Francisco can reduce the amount of recreational drug abusers by altering the external environment of the city. It is clear that stimulants methamphetamine and cocaine are most commonly used by the intense partiers who bounce around the city’s dance clubs and homeless drug addicts whose bodies can’t function without it. San Francisco must make an effort to ban night clubs who serve alcohol; taking away the alcohol portion of the night club will surely decrease its popularity around the city. Although kicking night clubs out of the city would be the easiest solution, negative business publicity and numerous lawsuits would end up hurting the city. Banning alcohol served in nightclubs allows the business to function properly with the exception of alcoholic beverages; in essence, no legality issues can be brought up against the city. In fact, the city of Chicago banned cigarette smoking inside its bars. This ultimately decreased its popularity but allowed the business to function as usual. In addition, concentrating the homeless population within an area will do the city wonders. It will increase tourism, crime rates will go down, and will allow police units to focus on certain areas instead of the entire city. -Josh Weiss
Work Cited


