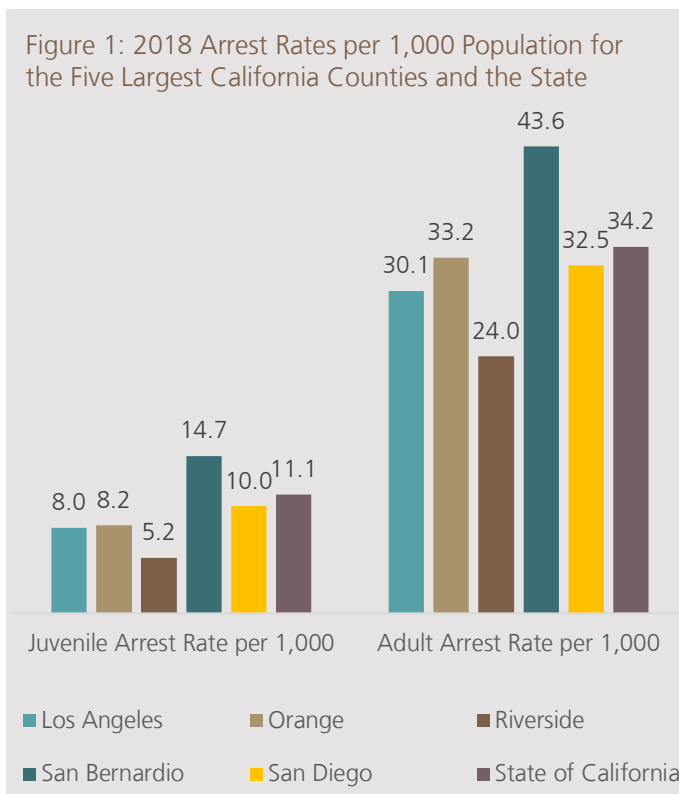# Four Interesting Facts about Arrests in San Diego County

While the SANDAG Criminal Justice Clearinghouse regularly reports regional crime statistics[1] in partnership with local law enforcement, arrest statistics provide another view of public safety in the region because a greater variety of offenses are included and trends over time for adults and juveniles can be tracked (because something is known about the individual believed to have committed an offense). Arrest statistics for calendar year 2018 (the most recent year available) were recently received by the California Department of Justice and summarized in an annual **CJ Bulletin**. This CJ Flash, the first of two, highlights four key findings from the full report.

Highlight 1

The 2018 San Diego County juvenile (10.0 per 1,000 population) and adult (32.5) arrest rates were both 10-year lows and lower than the state average (11.1 and 34.2, respectively). However, compared to the other four largest California counties (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino), they were the second (juvenile, following just San Bernardino) and third (adult, following San Bernardino and Orange) highest.
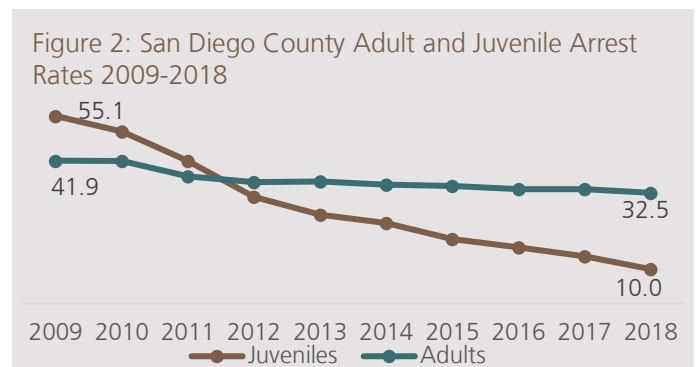

Figure 1: 2018 Arrest Rates per 1,000 Population for the Five Largest California Counties and the State

Juvenile Arrest Rate per 1,000: 8.0, 8.2, 5.2, 14.7, 10.0, 11.1

Adult Arrest Rate per 1,000: 30.1, 33.2, 24.0, 43.6, 32.5, 34.2

Los Angeles Orange Riverside
San Bernardio San Diego State of California

Highlight 2

Perhaps the most striking change over the past decade in arrest statistics is the decrease in juvenile arrest rates. While the actual number of juveniles that are arrested has always been lower than the number of adults, their arrest rates were traditionally higher than adults due to the fewer number of juveniles in the population. This changed in 2012 when the adult arrest rate exceeded the juvenile arrest rate for the first time in San Diego County, a trend that has continued. Over the past ten years, the juvenile arrest rate has decreased 82%, almost double the adult decline (-46%). This trend has been seen across the California, and while there is no single explanation, possible factors could include an increased focus on prevention that started in the 1990s; other legislative changes that led to increased focus on adult offenders; increased use of diversion in response to research showing detention leads to an increased risk of recidivism; greater awareness of youth brain development and more appropriate responses; and technology changes that have affected how youth interact with one another.

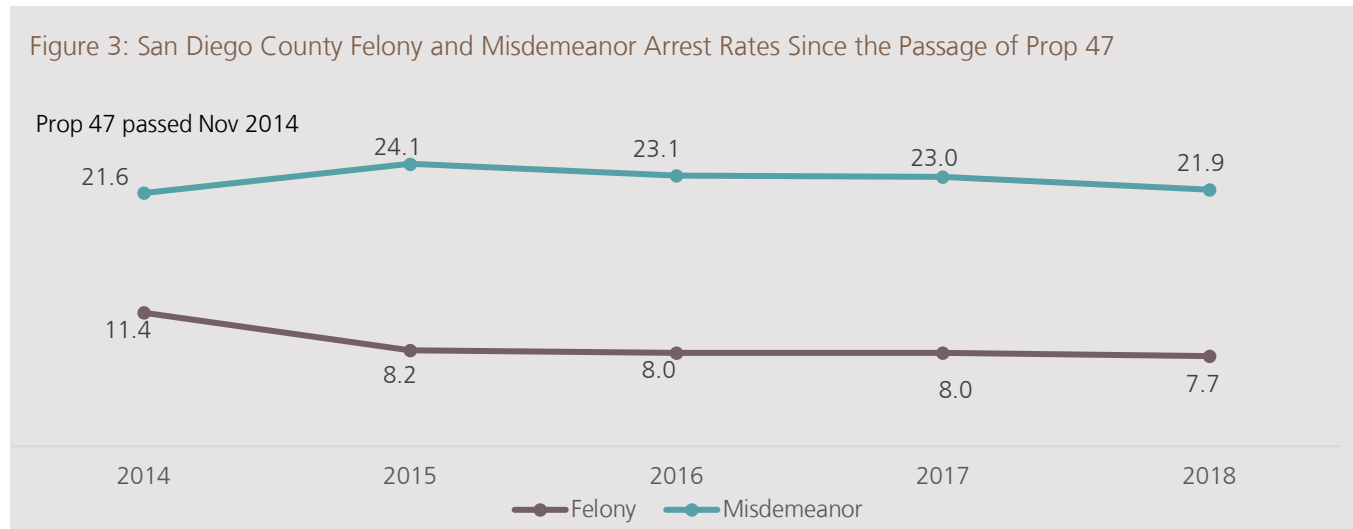Figure 2: San Diego County Adult and Juvenile Arrest Rates 2009-2018

55.1, 41.9 ... 32.5, 10.0

2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018
Juveniles Adults

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[1] SANDAG reports Part I crime statistics reported through the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting system on a bi-annual basis. The seven crimes that are documented include four violent crime (homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) and three property crime (burglary, motor vehicle theft, and larceny) types.

Highlight 3

Proposition 47 (Prop 47) was passed by voters in November 2014 and made numerous property and drug crimes that would have been felonies now misdemeanors. As was reasonable to expect in 2015, the felony arrest rate declined and the misdemeanor arrest rate increased. However, since then, both have declined overall, and interestingly, the misdemeanor arrest rate has decreased to a greater degree since 2015 (-9%), compared to the felony arrest rate (-6%).
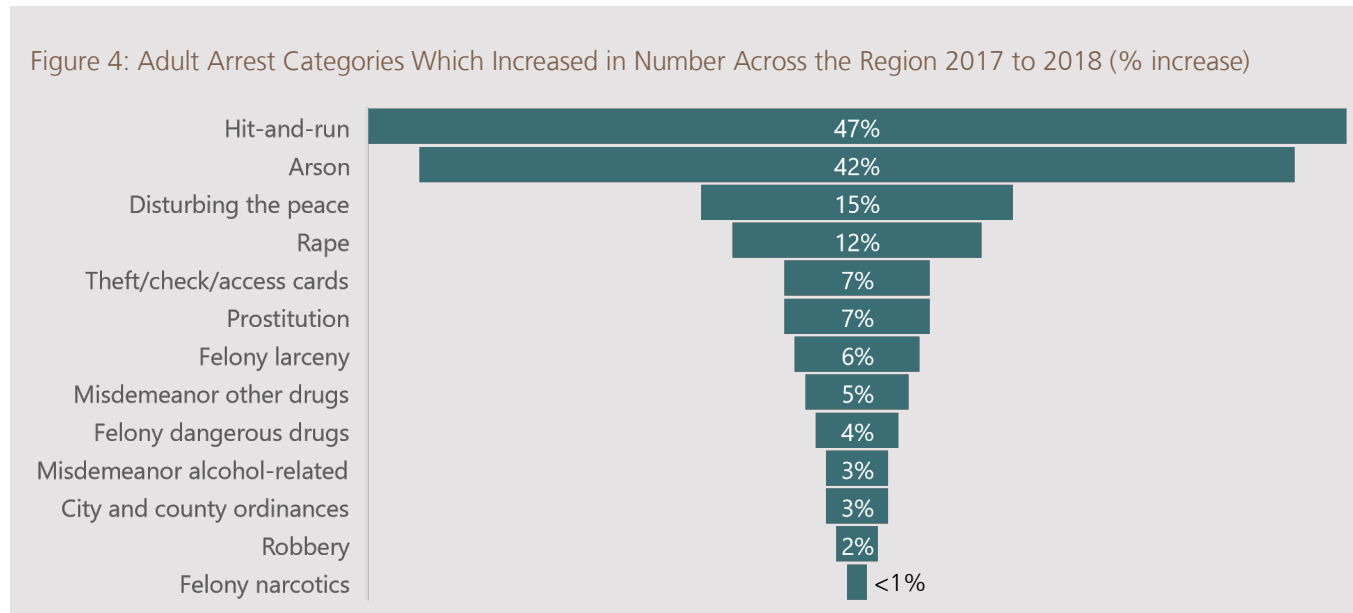
Figure 3: San Diego County Felony and Misdemeanor Arrest Rates Since the Passage of Prop 47

Prop 47 passed Nov 2014

Highlight 4

While fewer adults were arrested in almost every category in 2018 compared to 2017, there were increases regionally for 13 of the 35 categories used to analyze the data. The greatest one-year increases included hit-and-run (up 47%, from 270 to 397), arson (up 42%, from 55 to 78), disturbing the peace (up 15%, from 2,951 to 3,381), and rape (up 12%, from 104 to 117).

Figure 4: Adult Arrest Categories Which Increased in Number Across the Region 2017 to 2018 (% increase)

Category	% increase
Hit-and-run	47%
Arson	42%
Disturbing the peace	15%
Rape	12%
Theft/check/access cards	7%
Prostitution	7%
Felony larceny	6%
Misdemeanor other drugs	5%
Felony dangerous drugs	4%
Misdemeanor alcohol-related	3%
City and county ordinances	3%
Robbery	2%
Felony narcotics	<1%

NOTE: If felony is indicated in a category description it is because the same category could also be a misdemeanor. Felony dangerous drugs includes offenses related to methamphetamine and felony narcotics includes those related to heroin.