



SAN DIEGO ARRESTS 2021: LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSES TO CRIME

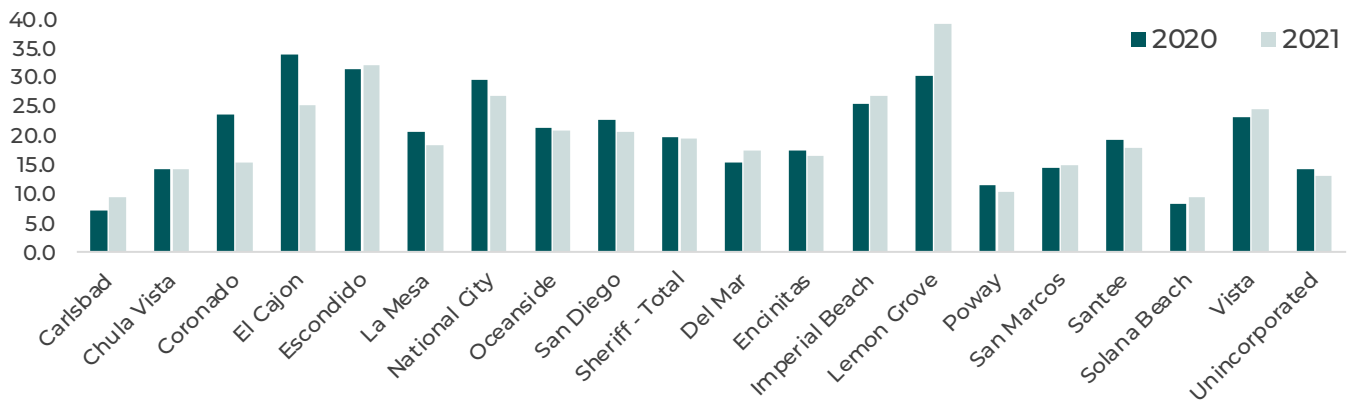
On an annual basis, the SANDAG Criminal Justice Research Division produces a report that summarizes arrests made by local law enforcement in the San Diego region. While SANDAG’s regular crime reports focus on crimes reported to law enforcement, these arrest reports describe law enforcement’s response in terms of who was arrested. With the recent release of arrest statistics for 2021, this CJ Flash highlights how many and what types of arrests were made in the San Diego region in 2021, differences across jurisdictions, and how arrest numbers varied from 2020 to 2021.

Highlight 1

2021 recorded a seven-year low in arrest rates for both adults and juveniles, although the rate of decline slowed substantially relative to that seen in 2020 (not shown). This slowdown is likely due to the lifting of COVID-19 stay-at-home orders in 2021, which resulted in more opportunities for crime and for contact between suspects and law enforcement. Figure 1 shows the changes in arrest rates per jurisdiction between 2020 and 2021.

Figure 1

Slowing decline in arrest rates per 1000 population observed in 2021



Sources: ARJIS; SANDAG, 2022

Highlight 2

There was a substantial increase in arrests for weapons offenses for both adults (17%) and juveniles (98%) in 2021. While the reasons behind such stark increases are complex, increased availability of firearms and the problem of “ghost guns” may have been contributing factors.

Figure 2

2021 Increase in arrests for weapons offenses

Weapons Arrests in 2020 and 2021



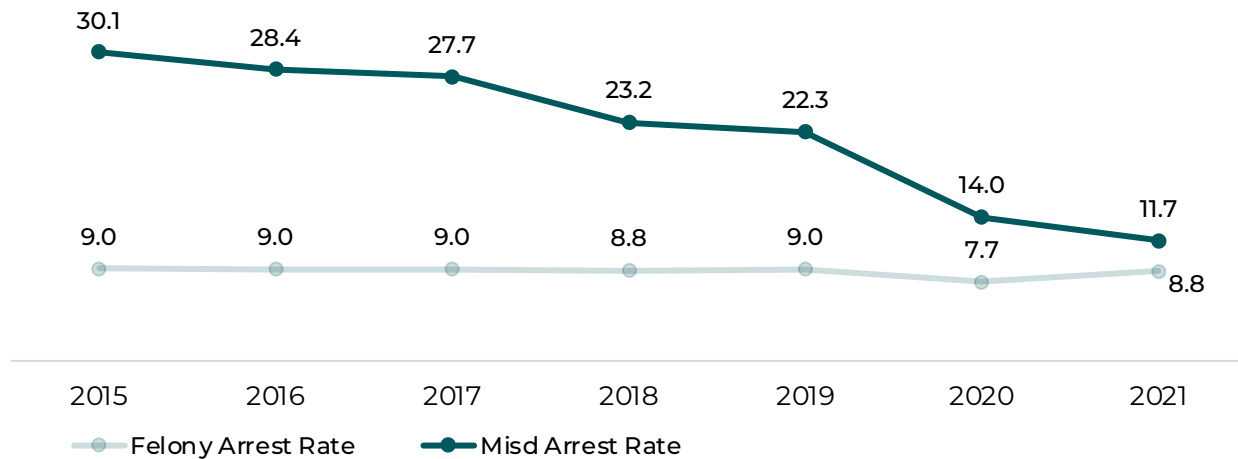
Sources: ARJIS; SANDAG, 2022.



Highlight 3

Felony arrest rate remained constant around nine per 1,000 people in the population since 2015. However, this rate dropped to 7.7 in 2020 and then increased by 14% to 8.8 in 2021. The misdemeanor arrest rate started at a high of 30.1 in 2015 and has declined each year since, reaching a seven-year low of 11.7 in 2021, a 62% decrease since 2015.

Figure 3
Felony vs. misdemeanor arrest rates

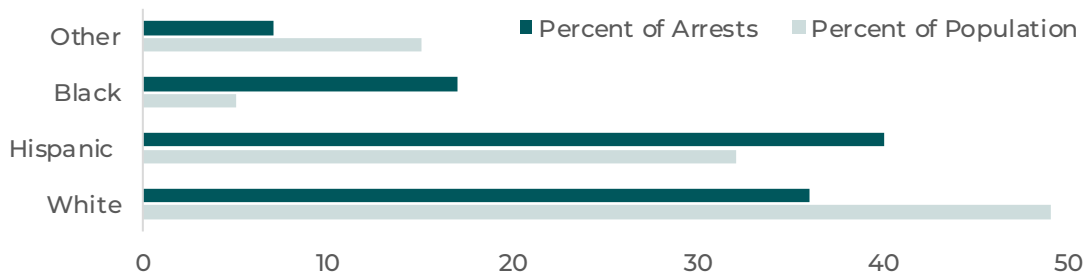


Sources: ARJIS; SANDAG, 2022.

Highlight 4

While arrest rates largely decreased across races in 2021, racial differences remained high overall, though decreasing in comparison with previous years. This was especially true for Black individuals: while they only represent 5% of the overall population in San Diego County, they comprised 17% of all arrests and were overrepresented across all arrest categories. On the opposite end, those categorized as “other” represent 15% of the overall population and only 7% of arrests.

Figure 4
Significant racial differences in arrest rates remain



Sources: ARJIS; SANDAG, 2022.

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