



Corrections and Probation Supervision in San Diego County Since COVID-19

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the California prison population has decreased 24%, from 123,649 on January 31, 2020, to 94,310 on January 31, 2021.¹ These reductions were related to crime trends during COVID-19 resulting in fewer commitments to prison and to actions taken by the State to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within the state institutions, including early releases, suspension of intakes from county jails, and reduced time spent in the reception processing center.² While the pandemic has had a significant impact on California prison and local adult and juvenile detention populations, earlier factors, including voter initiatives, legislative reform, and local focus on implementing best practices, have also influenced the reduction. In the adult corrections system, which had significant overcrowding issues at the state level, these changes essentially swung the pendulum back from more severe penalties to lesser ones, as well as shifting the responsibility of housing, supervising, and rehabilitating individuals from the State to local counties.³ In the juvenile justice system, significant justice reforms have resulted in increased use of best practices as it relates to alternatives to detention, expansion of services in the community, and an even greater focus on rehabilitation which has resulted in significantly fewer juveniles being booked and detained in custody.

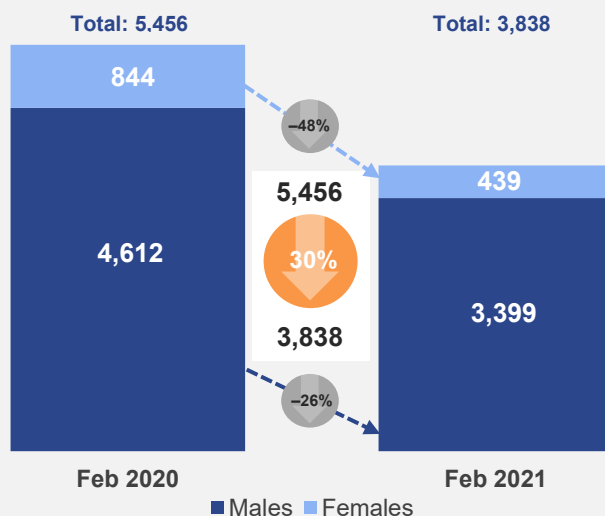


With one in every four dollars expended on local public safety functions going to corrections (19%) and probation supervision (6%), as described in the soon to be released CJ Bulletin *Public Safety Allocations in the San Diego Region: Expenditures and Staffing for FY 2019-20*, this CJ Flash highlights the decreases in the pre-COVID-19 institutional population (from February 2020 to February 2021)⁴, for both adults and juveniles in local facilities and under community supervision to see how these systems have changed since the pandemic began, as well as how much San Diego County spends on corrections and community supervision.

Highlight 1

The San Diego County Sheriff's Department is the local agency responsible for operating adult detention facilities in the region. As Figure 1 shows, the number of adult inmates in local custody decreased significantly from February 3, 2020 to February 8, 2021 (-30%), related to the statewide Emergency Bail Schedule and local policies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Interestingly, the one-year decrease in the number of females in detention was greater than males (-48% versus -26%), which may reflect differences in crime types committed. In addition, the percentage of realigned offenders housed locally as a result of AB 109 decreased from 1 in every 3 (32%) in 2020 to around 1 in every 5 (18%) in 2021, which could reflect alternatives to detention for supervision violations, possible delays in case processing, and other policy changes related to the pandemic. In FY 2019-20, the Sheriff's Department reported \$392.22 million in expenditures related to adult corrections, which included 1,270 budgeted sworn staff.

Figure 1: Number of adult males and females in custody in San Diego County



Source: San Diego County Sheriff's Department, 2020 and 2021

¹ Monthly statistics from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) are available online at: cdcr.ca.gov/research/%20monthly-total-population-report-archive-2021/

² These changes are described by the Legislative Analyst's Office in a recent report available online at: <https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2020/4304/correctional-population-outlook-111920.pdf>

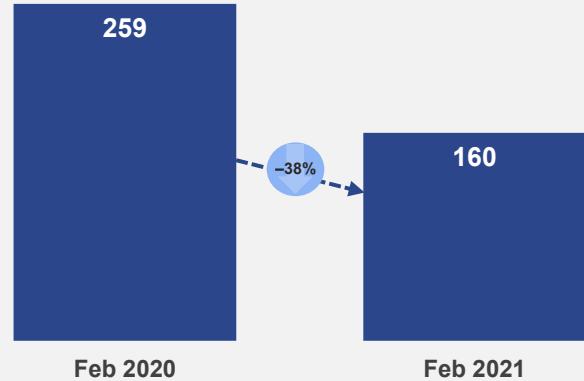
³ As a result of AB 109 which was passed in October 2011, local jail populations increased with individuals housed and under community supervision locally, who previously would have been the responsibility of the State. Proposition 47, which passed in November 2014, reclassified numerous drug and property crimes from felonies to misdemeanors and led to a reduction in both numbers. Proposition 57 in 2016 expanded the State's authority to reduce the prison terms of certain inmates through credits earned.

⁴ It should be noted that there may be more fluctuation in monthly numbers than are reflected in this one-year comparison.

Highlight 2

Locally, the San Diego County Probation Department is responsible for housing and supervising all juveniles who are involved in the juvenile justice system. In 2020, in addition to responding to COVID-19, justice system partners also implemented other policy changes to reduce youth in detention, consistent with best practices, such as not booking youth into juvenile hall for most misdemeanor offenses and increasing the use of alternatives to detention to include youth who have committed felony offenses.⁵ As Figure 2 shows, the number of youth in custody was down 38% from 259, in 2020, to 160, in 2021. According to the Probation Department, 9 youth were booked during this first week in February 2021, compared to 43 during the first week of February 2020. Probation expenditures related to juvenile institutions were \$60.68 million in FY 2019-20, which included 364 budgeted probation officer positions.

Figure 2: Number of youth in custody in San Diego County

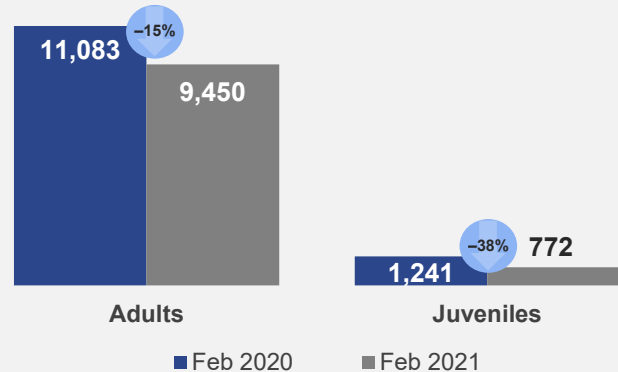


Source: San Diego County Probation Department, 2020 and 2021

Highlight 3

In addition to operating local detention facilities for juveniles, the San Diego County Probation Department is responsible for community supervision of adults and juveniles. As Figure 3 shows, the number of adults under community supervision on February 1, 2021 was 15% lower than it was on February 3, 2020, and the number of juveniles under community supervision decreased to an even greater degree (-38%). In FY 2019-20, the Probation Department reported \$79.70 million in expenditures related to community supervision of adults and \$44.33 million for juveniles, and the number of budgeted positions for probation officers was 449.

Figure 3: Number of adults and juveniles under community supervision in San Diego County



Source: San Diego County Probation Department, 2020 and 2021

Looking Forward

Over the past year, the numbers of adults and juveniles in local custody were both down considerably (-30% and -38%, respectively), which reflected responses to COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, as well as other policy changes which began prior to 2020. The ability to look forward is limited due to uncertainty regarding how long the pandemic will last and how quickly vaccines can be administered, as well as how changes at the State level will trickle down and affect public safety. When the courts fully resume operations, and if the temporary changes to bail schedules and the criteria used to book individuals in local facilities to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 are reversed, jail populations and the number of those under community supervision will most likely rise. The juvenile population may remain at lower levels given the ongoing transformational efforts focused on responding with the least restrictive intervention and providing services and supports in the community when appropriate. The Criminal Justice Clearinghouse of SANDAG will continue to monitor and report on budget, crime, and arrest data, as well as policy changes which may affect them.

⁵ Beginning on March 1, 2020, the San Diego County Probation Department instituted new juvenile booking guidelines stating that no youth arrested for a misdemeanor be booked into Juvenile Hall without prior screening and approval from the Probation Detention and Control Unit (DCU). It should also be noted that all youth on probation are continuing to receive services (primarily virtual) during COVID-19 as another tool to reduce potential bookings, especially those associated with probation violations.