



Adults Booked into Local Jails in 2021: Comparisons from the SAM Data

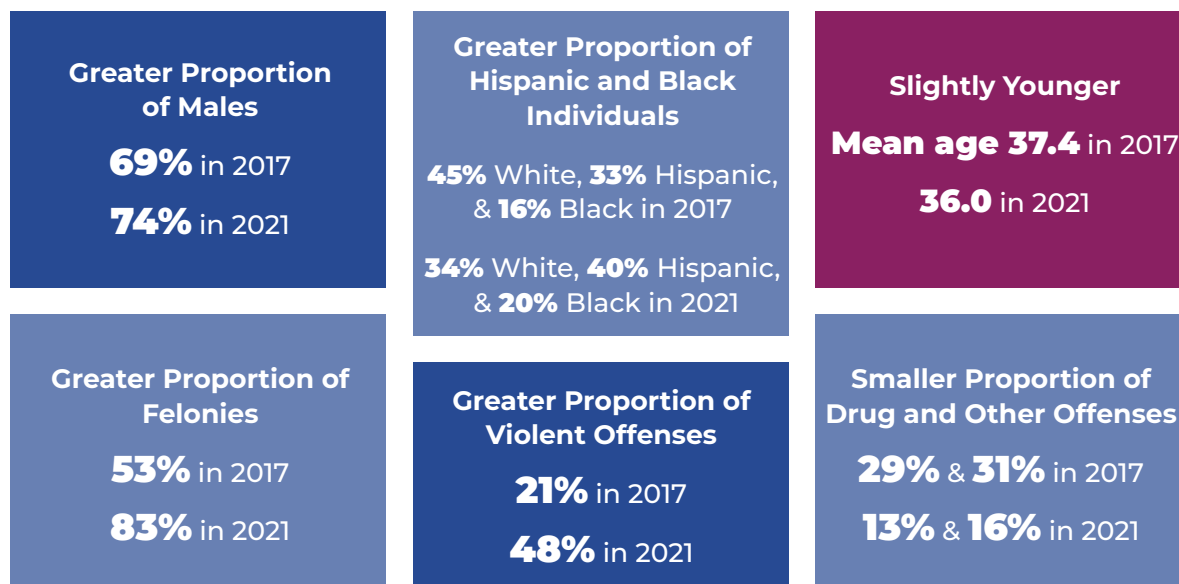
Six months every year, SANDAG staff interviews both adults and juveniles booked into local detention facilities within 48 hours of their arrest. These interviews, which are confidential and anonymous, include a variety of lifestyle and personal history questions, as well as the provision of a voluntary urine sample that is tested for the presence of one of five drugs (marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine/crack, opiates, and PCP). Reports describing these data from the SANDAG Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program are provided **annually** and supplemented with CJ Flashes highlighting specific topical areas from the interviews. With the recent release of the 2021 Adult SAM bulletin, this CJ Flash looks at how the sample of individuals interviewed as part of SAM has changed since 2017 (five years previously) and what their current underlying needs look like.

Highlight 1

With fewer individuals booked into jail during the pandemic, the SAM sample decreased in size, from 487 in 2017 to 305 in 2021. In addition, as Figure 1 shows, this sample included a greater proportion of males, individuals who were slightly older, more individuals who identified as Hispanic or Black, and more individuals booked for a felony offense (as opposed to a misdemeanor) and a violent offense (as opposed to a drug or other type).

Figure 1

Comparison of Adults Interviewed for the SAM Project in 2017 and 2021



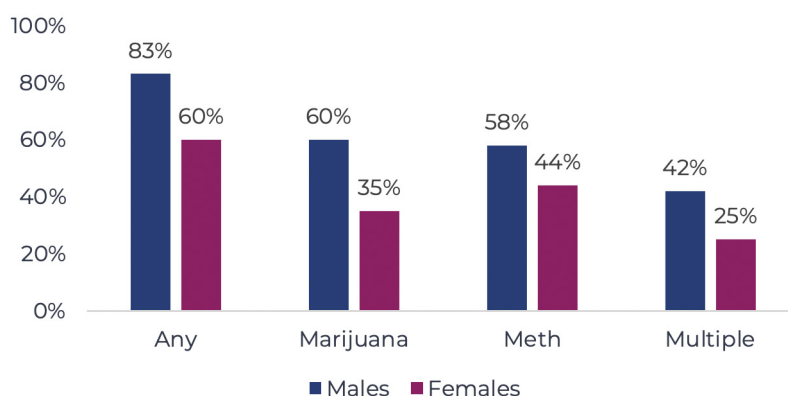
SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Study, 2017 and 2021

Highlight 2

In 2021, the percent of males that tested positive for any drug, marijuana, and meth were at new 22-year highs, which most likely reflects changing booking criteria during the pandemic and those who were booked having a greater number of needs and risk factors. Interestingly, however, the reverse trend was seen for females booked into jail in 2021, with historic decreases, which are described in more detail in the annual Bulletin. Not shown in Figure 2, 7% of males tested positive for both opiates and cocaine/crack in 2021, compared to 9% and 3% of females, respectively.

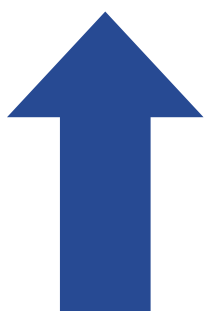
Figure 2

Males More Likely to Test Positive for Drugs in 2021, Compared to Females



SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Study, 2017 and 2021

Further, when asked how easy it was to obtain meth and heroin, a greater percentage said it was “very easy” in 2021, compared to 2017.



How easy is it to obtain this drug?

Meth: **52%** said “very easy” in 2017
62% in 2021

Heroin: **28%** said “very easy” in 2017
52% in 2021

Highlight 3

Individuals interviewed as part of SAM are asked numerous questions regarding their criminal history, mental health, history of homelessness, and other areas that provide a full picture of their underlying needs and risk factors. Table 1 highlights some of the personal information these individuals shared in 2021, including a lengthy history of justice system contact, use and impact of substance abuse, and other areas that suggest service needs.

Table 1 Self-Reported History Information from Adult Arrestees, 2021	
Criminal History	
Ever arrested	78%
Mean age at first arrest	21.7
Median number of times ever arrested	6
Ever arrested as a juvenile	42%
Ever committed a crime to support drug use	34%
Greatest Self-Reported Needs	
Housing	30%
Substance abuse treatment	15%
Employment	14%
Mental Health	
Ever diagnosed with a mental or psychiatric disorder	41%
Ever had a drug-involved psychosis	24%
Other Needs/Underlying Factors	
No high school degree or equivalent	17%
Unemployed and looking for work	31%
Ever homeless	65%
Parents used illegal drugs	36%
Ever had open case with Child Welfare Services	38%
Ever in foster care	15%
Victim of a crime they did not report	37%

SOURCE: SANDAG SAM Study, 2017 and 2021