

# Public Safety Realignment and Crime Rates in California

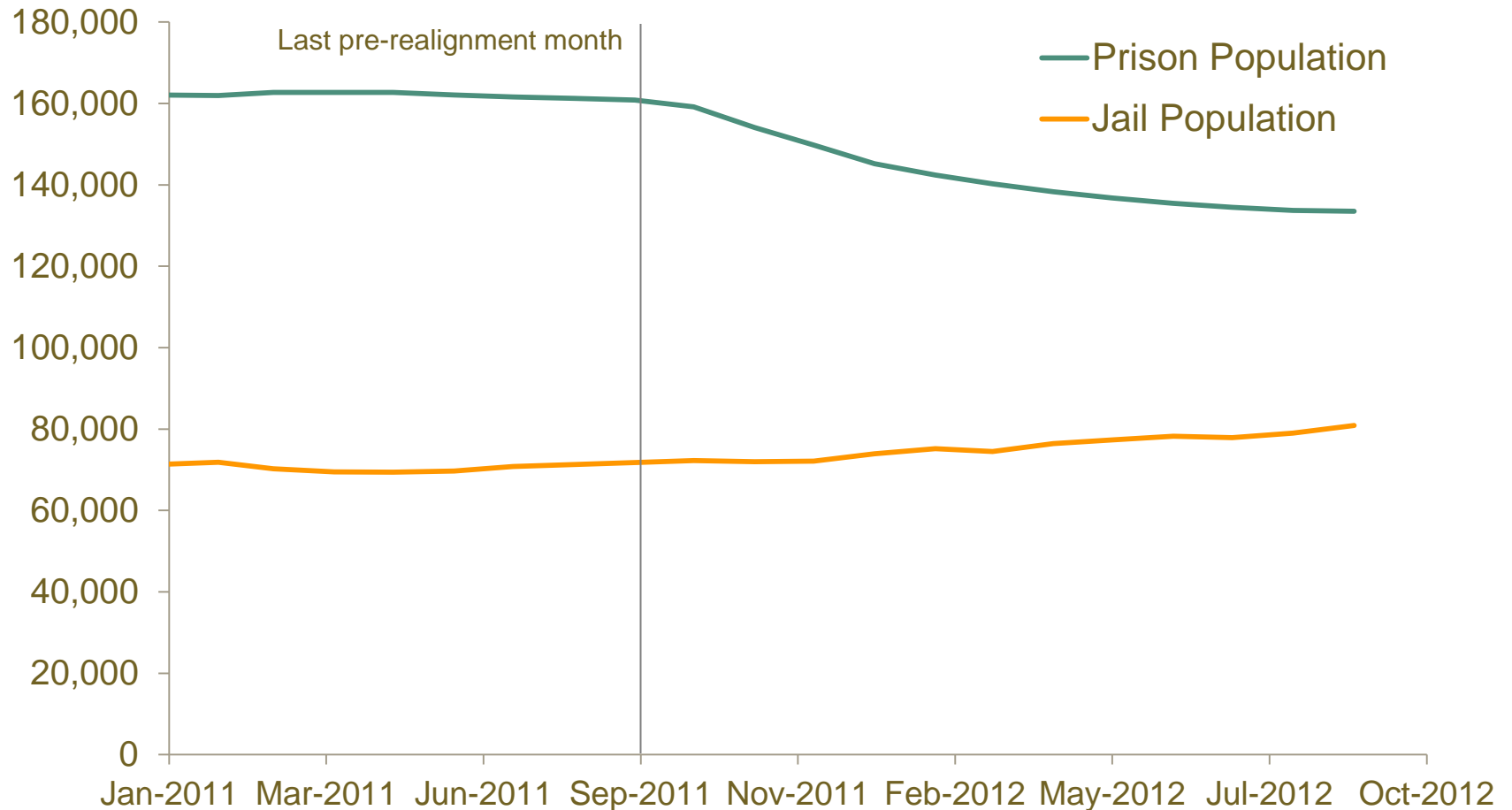
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Supported with funding from the Smith Richardson Foundation



# Increase in jail population was much less than decrease in the prison population

Prison and Jail Population, January 2011–September 2012



# Outline

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- Realignment and crime trends
- California and other states
- Incarceration and crime prevention
- Conclusions and recommendations



# Realignment is a major public safety reform

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- Prompted by federal court order to reduce overcrowding
- Shifted responsibilities and funding from state to counties
  - Parole violators no longer sent back to state prison
  - Lower-level felons now go to county jails
  - Counties now supervise lower-level felons released from prison



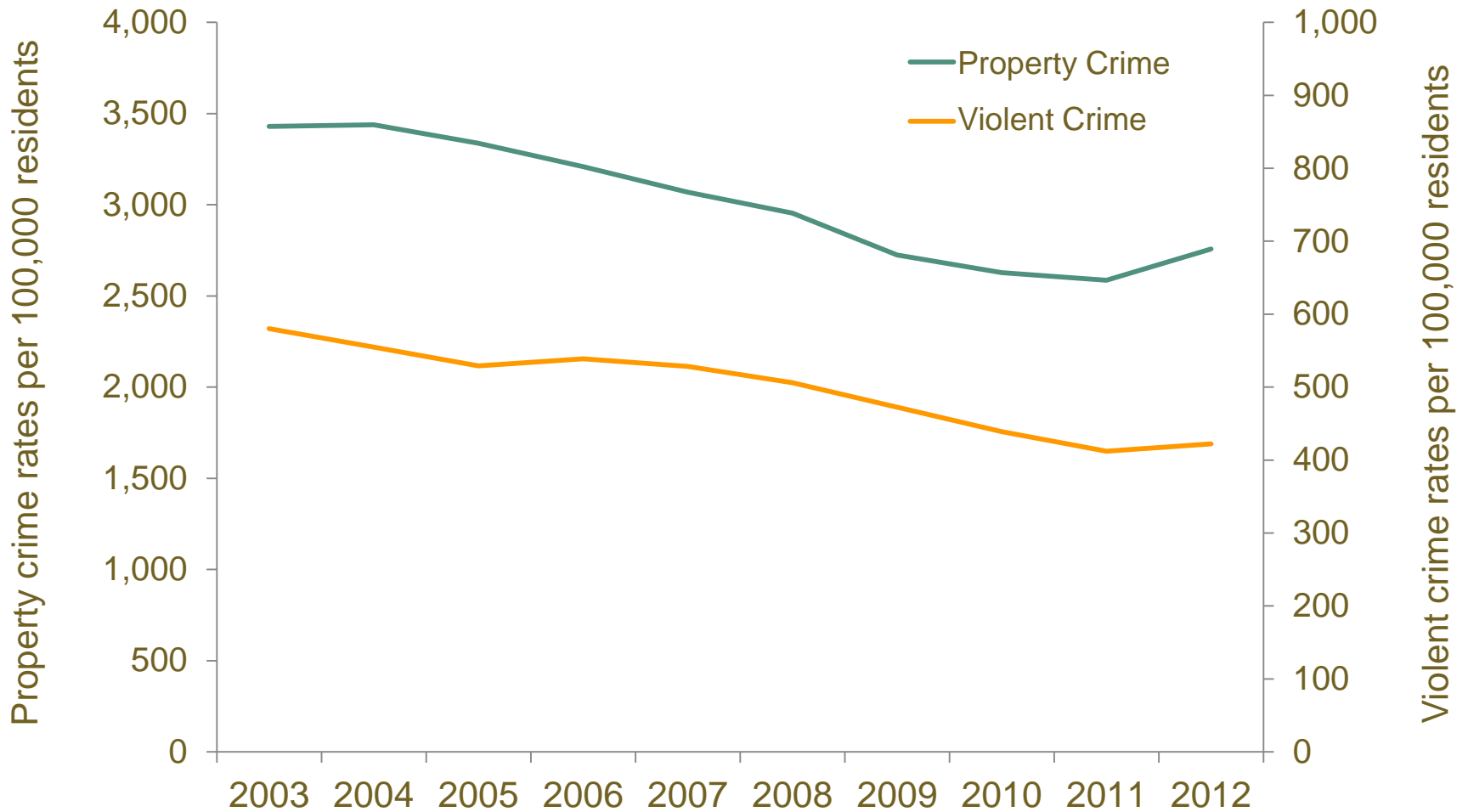
# Fewer offenders are incarcerated as a result of realignment

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- Prison population fell by about 27,000
  - A 17% drop
- County jails absorbed only a fraction of these lower-level felons
- As a result, about 18,000 additional offenders on the street
- Raises concerns about crime



# California's long-term decline in crime rates ended in 2012



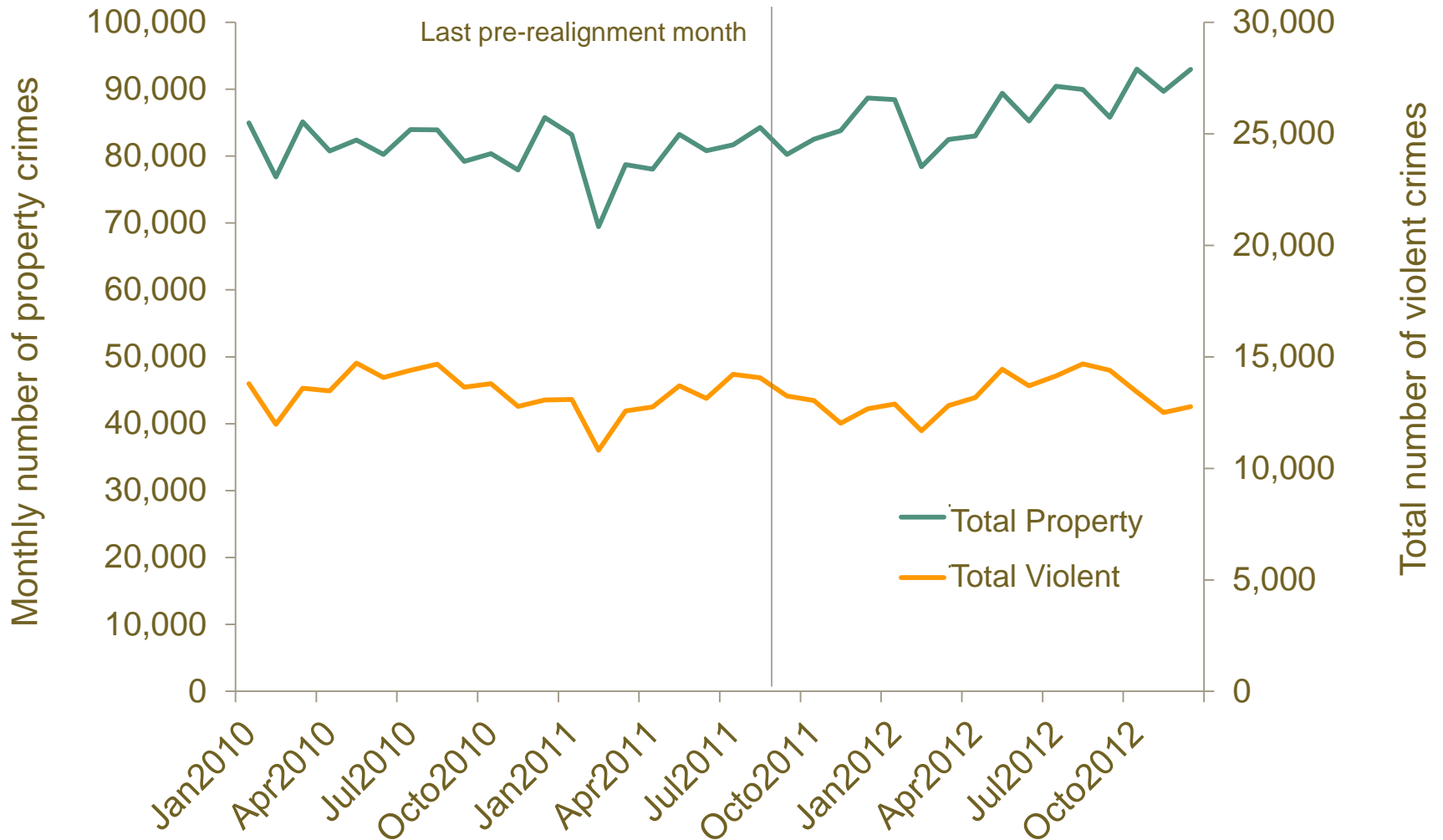
# Is realignment responsible?

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- Our study
  - Compared changes in incarceration to changes in crime rates, by county
  - Accounted for county jail incarceration responses, pre-existing county differences, and statewide trends
- Also examined the timing of changes
- And compared California's crime trends to other states

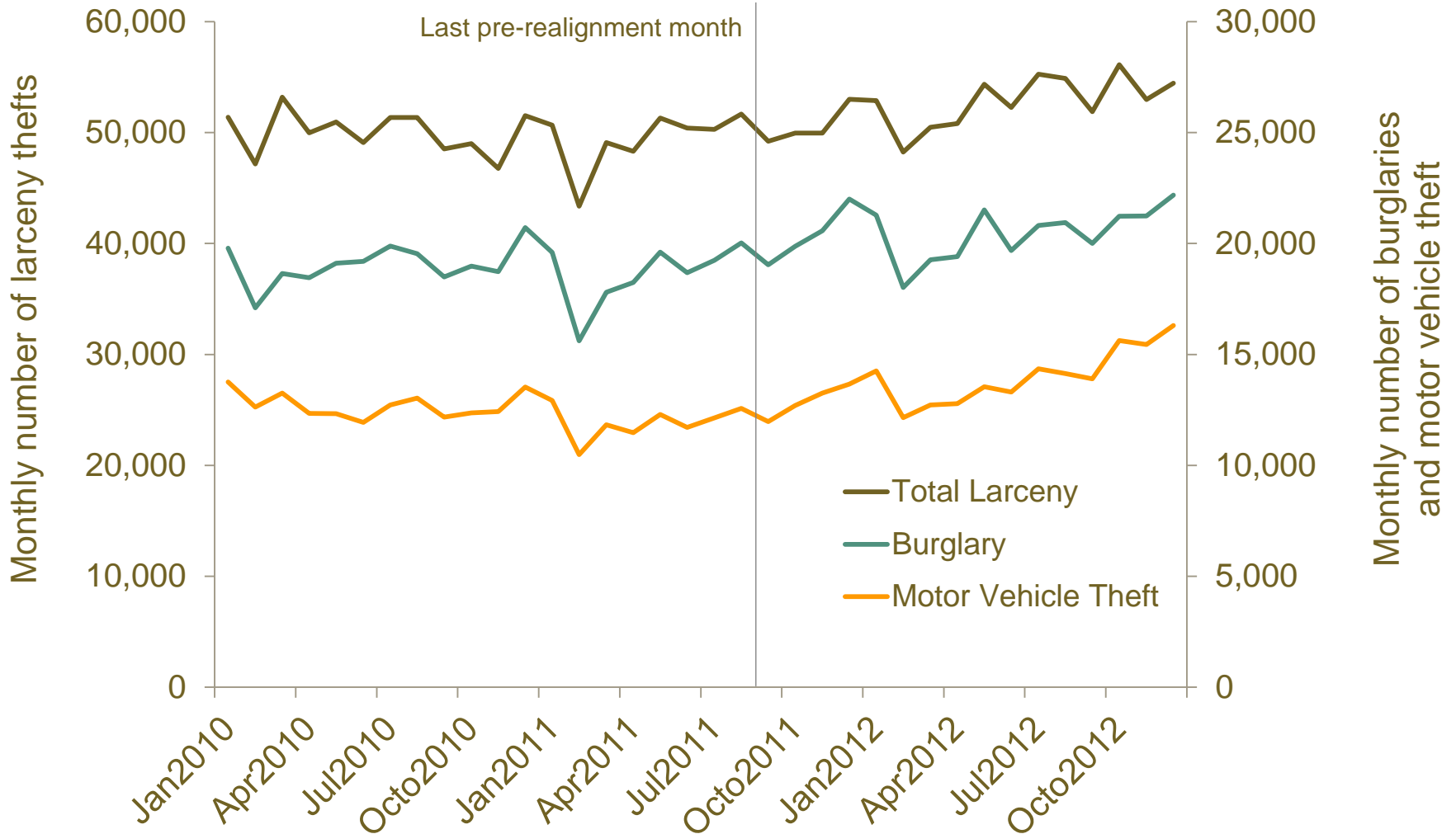


# Increases in property crime, but not violent crime, after realignment

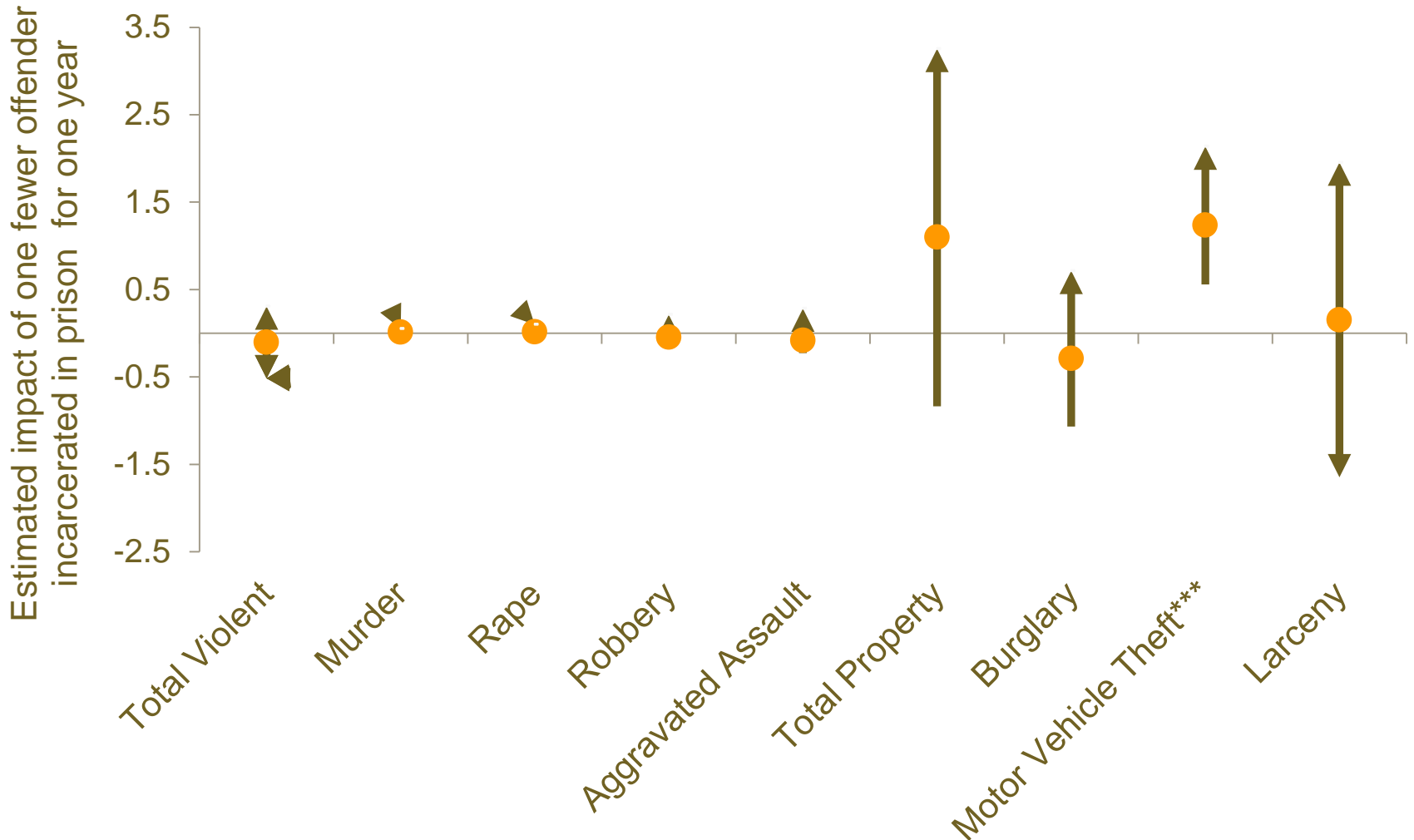




# Auto thefts increased most



# Only auto theft increases can be attributed to realignment



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# Many other states also experienced increases in violent crime

	Violent Crime	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault
California	3.9%	5.1%	2.2%	4.1%	3.8%
# of states with larger rise	10	17	21	15	15
Select states					
Arizona	4.9%	-9.8%	-8.9%	3.4%	8.0%
Nevada	8.5%	-10.8%	2.0%	14.2%	6.9%
Oregon	0.1%	9.5%	-8.0%	7.9%	-1.2%
Florida	-4.2%	2.5%	-0.2%	-6.8%	-3.6%
New York	2.8%	-11.1%	3.5%	0.9%	4.1%
Texas	1.7%	1.2%	3.0%	6.2%	-0.4%

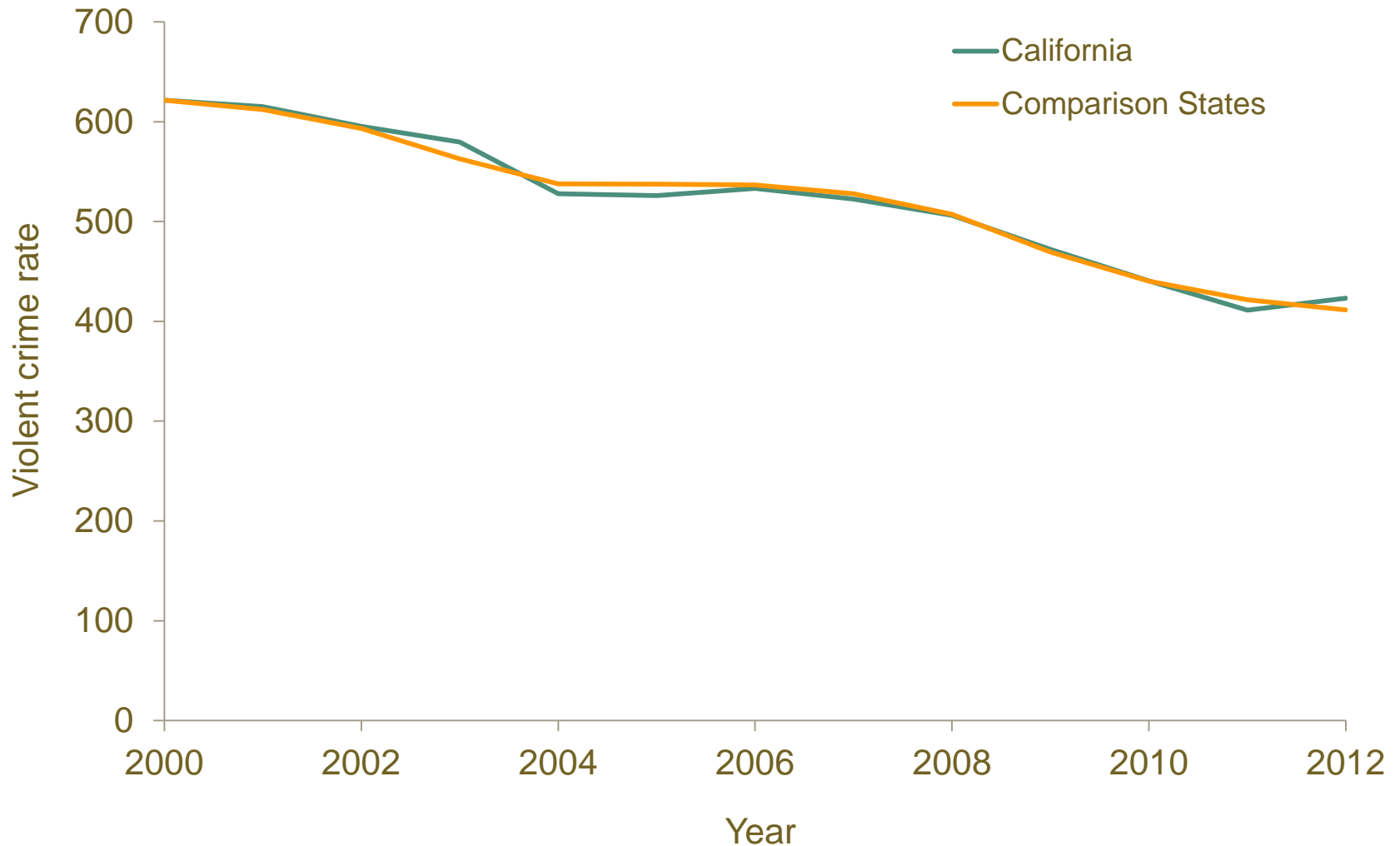


# California's increase in property crime stands out more

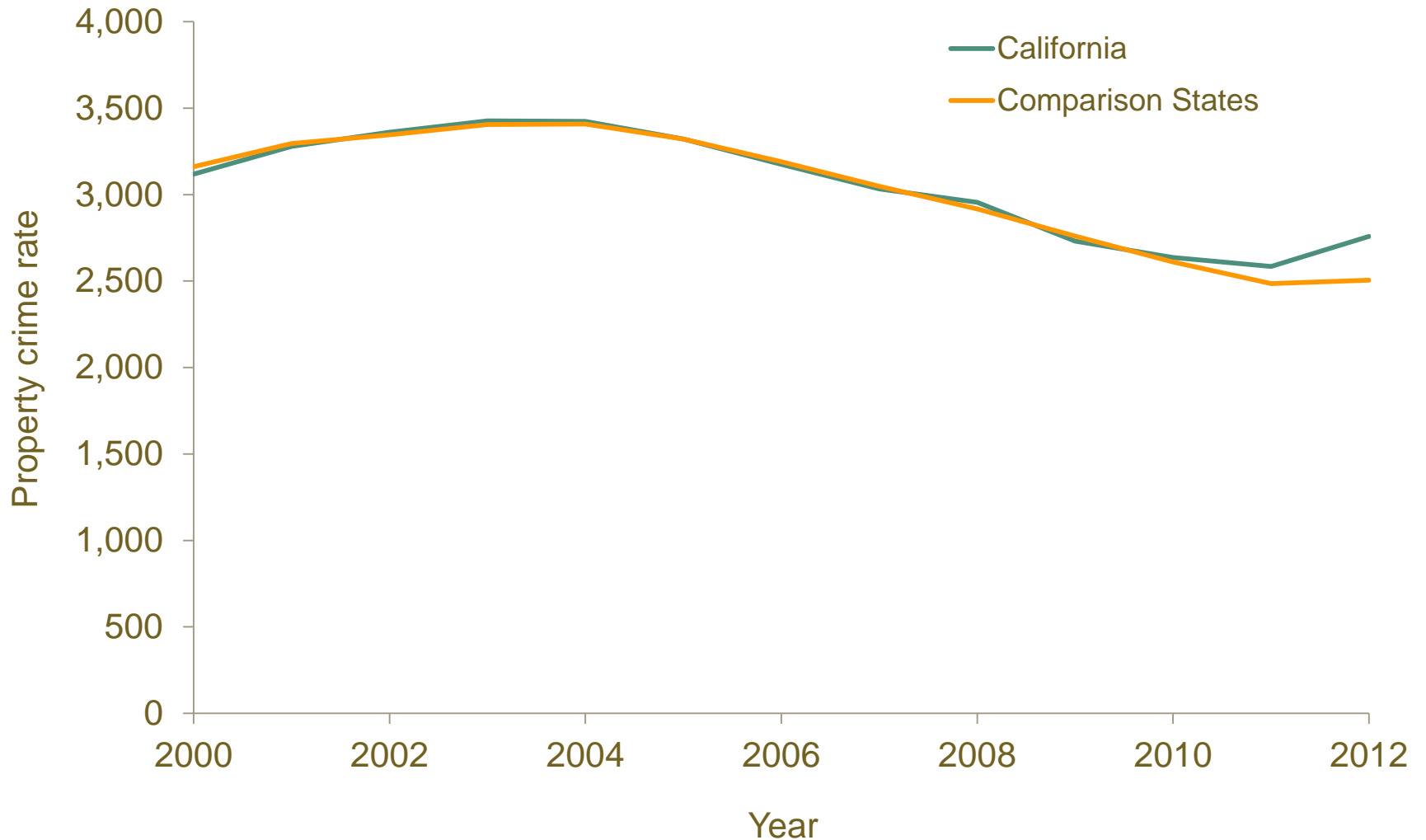
	Property Crime	Burglary	Larceny Theft	Motor Vehicle Theft
California	7.8%	6.8%	6.4%	14.8%
# of states with larger rise	4	6	6	2
Select states				
Arizona	0.9%	-3.2%	2.9%	-3.2%
Nevada	10.6%	8.7%	13.0%	4.6%
Oregon	3.2%	5.8%	1.7%	12.0%
Florida	-5.7%	-9.8%	-4.2%	-5.8%
New York	1.2%	-1.0%	2.4%	-9.9%
Texas	-1.9%	-5.1%	-1.1%	1.7%



# California's violent crime trends continue to closely track matched states



# Property crime trends diverge after realignment



# Cross-state trends confirm findings

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- Increase in violent crime part of a broader trend, also seen in other states
- Increase in property crime stands out, is caused by realignment, and concentrated on auto thefts
- About 65 more auto thefts per 100,000 residents per year
  - Or 24,000 additional auto thefts per year
  - Reverses a declining trend, brings it back to 2009 levels





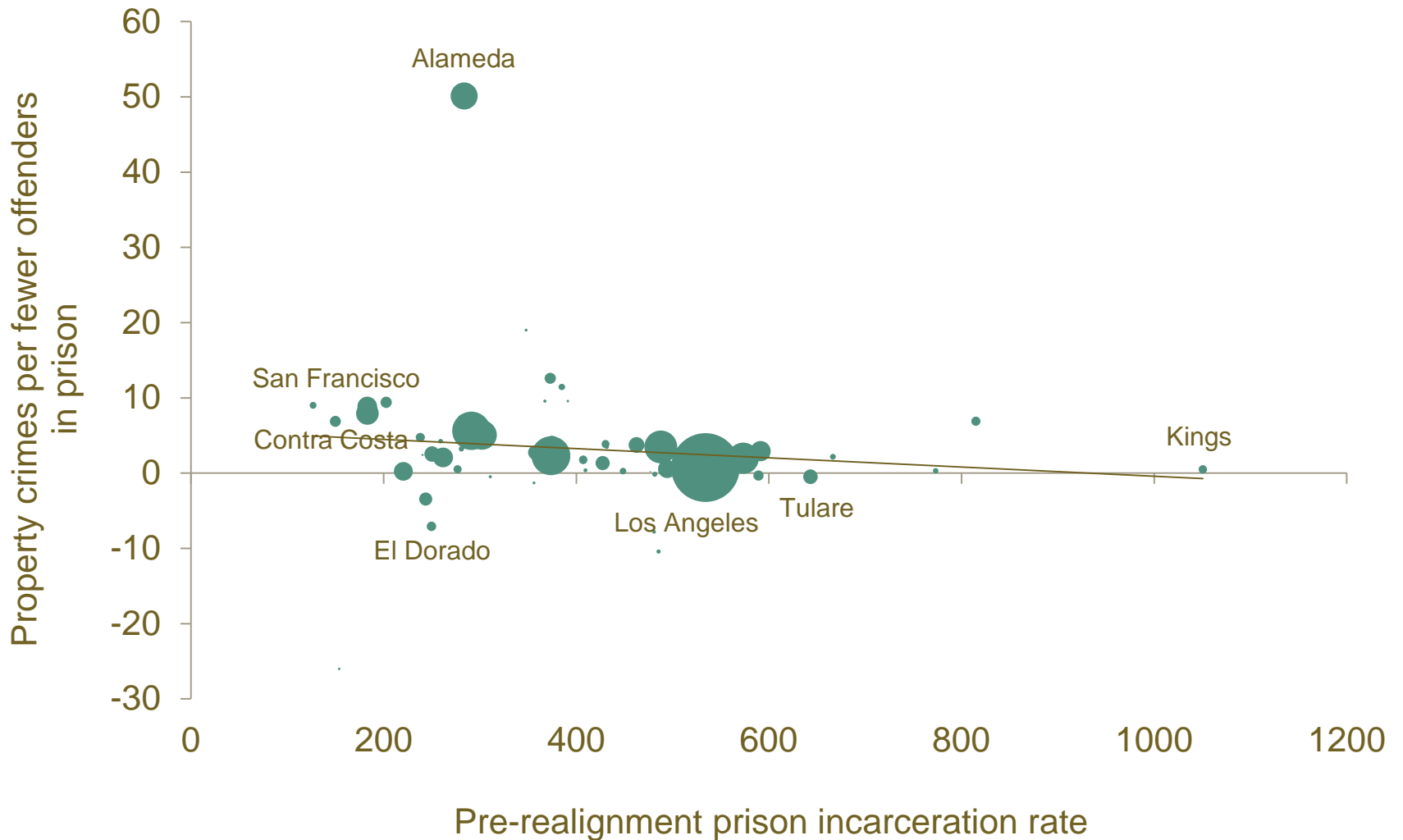
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# Counties with high incarceration rates did not prevent more crime



# Incarceration has a limited effect on crime prevention...

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- About 1.2 more property crimes per year for each offender on the streets
- Why aren't realignment's effects greater?
  - Policy targets lower-level, non-violent offenders
  - At high rates, incarceration has a lower impact on crime
- Further reductions in prison population may lead to more crime
  - Property crime could be between 7 and 12% greater than the realignment effect



# ...and yields a low return on the state's investment

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- Each prison year served prevents 1.2 auto thefts
  - Translates to an estimated benefit of about \$11,800
  - Annual prison incarceration cost is \$51,900
- Additional \$1 spent on incarceration yields 23¢ in crime savings
- But \$1 spent on additional policing yields \$1.6 in crime savings

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# Conclusions and policy recommendations

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- Realignment's impact on crime so far limited to property crime
- Increased crime is not a given
  - Savings from reduced prison expenditures can be channeled into alternative crime-control strategies
- Increased policing is one promising strategy
  - An additional \$1 spent on policing rather than incarceration would prevent 3.5 to 7 more crimes
- Look for other alternatives to incarceration



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# Notes on the use of these slides

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These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.

