

Crime after Proposition 47 and the Pandemic

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Ahead of its 10-year anniversary, Prop 47 remains at the center of policy discussions

- Part of California's efforts to reduce incarceration
- Reclassified certain drug and property felonies to misdemeanors; created misdemeanor shoplifting
- Drop in incarceration and enforcement of property and drug offenses
- Pandemic led to further drops of similar or greater magnitude
- Building on previous research to examine impacts on crime
 - Did drops in incarceration and enforcement affect crime rates?

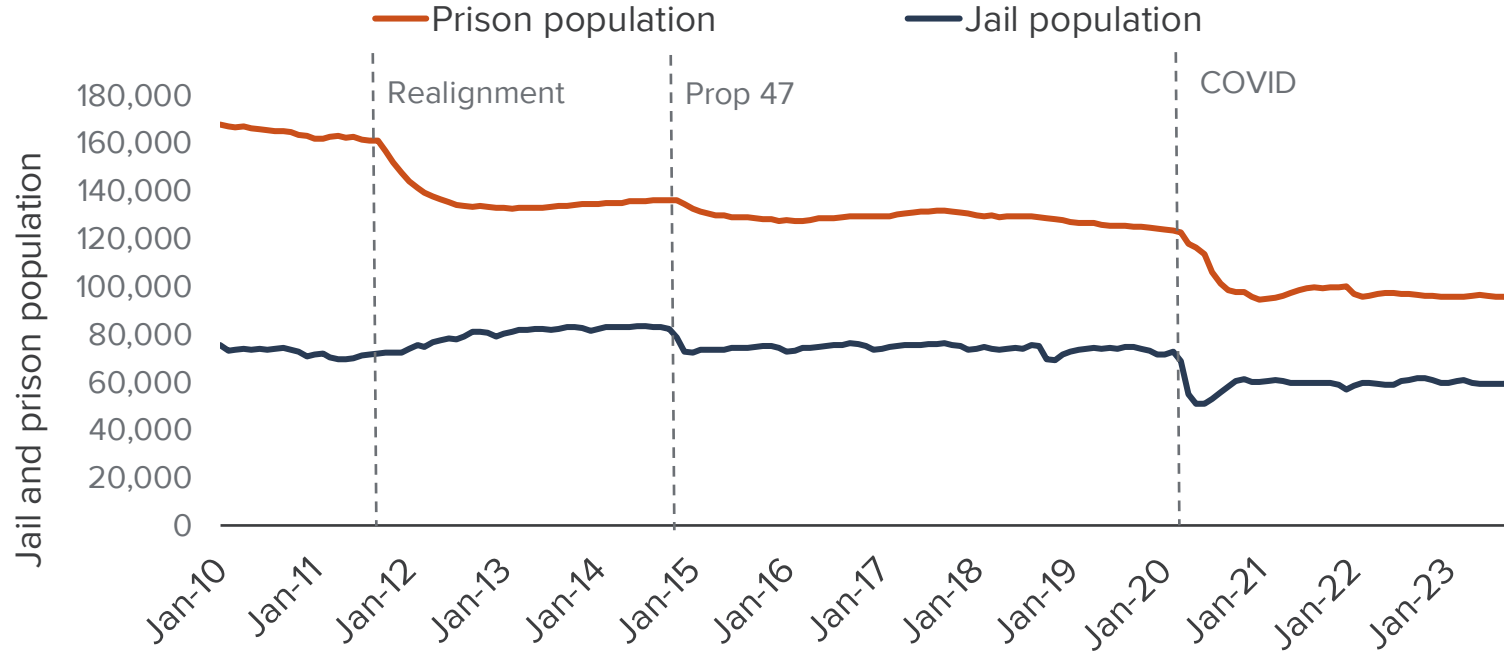
Definitions of crime

- Violent crime
 - Homicide, rape, robbery (theft with force), and aggravated assault
- Property crime
 - Motor vehicle theft, larceny (theft without force), and burglary
 - Larceny includes car break-ins, theft of car accessories, and shoplifting
 - Burglary includes residential and commercial

We rely on a range of state and county level data

- Incarceration in county jails and state prisons
- Drug offense arrest rates
- Clearance rates
 - Share of crimes that lead to arrest and referral for prosecution
 - Measure of likelihood of apprehension

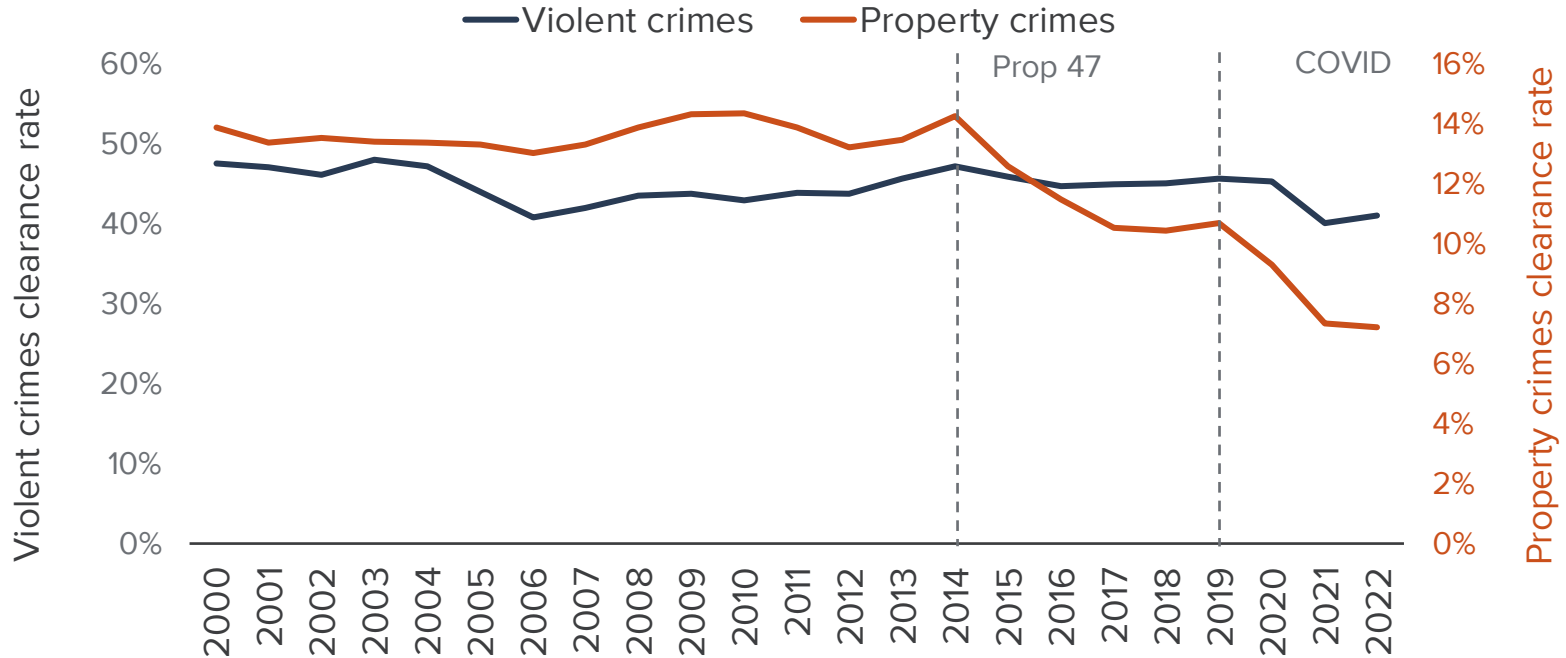
Reforms and the pandemic reduced incarceration in California



Notable and immediate changes to arrests in the wake of Prop 47 and pandemic

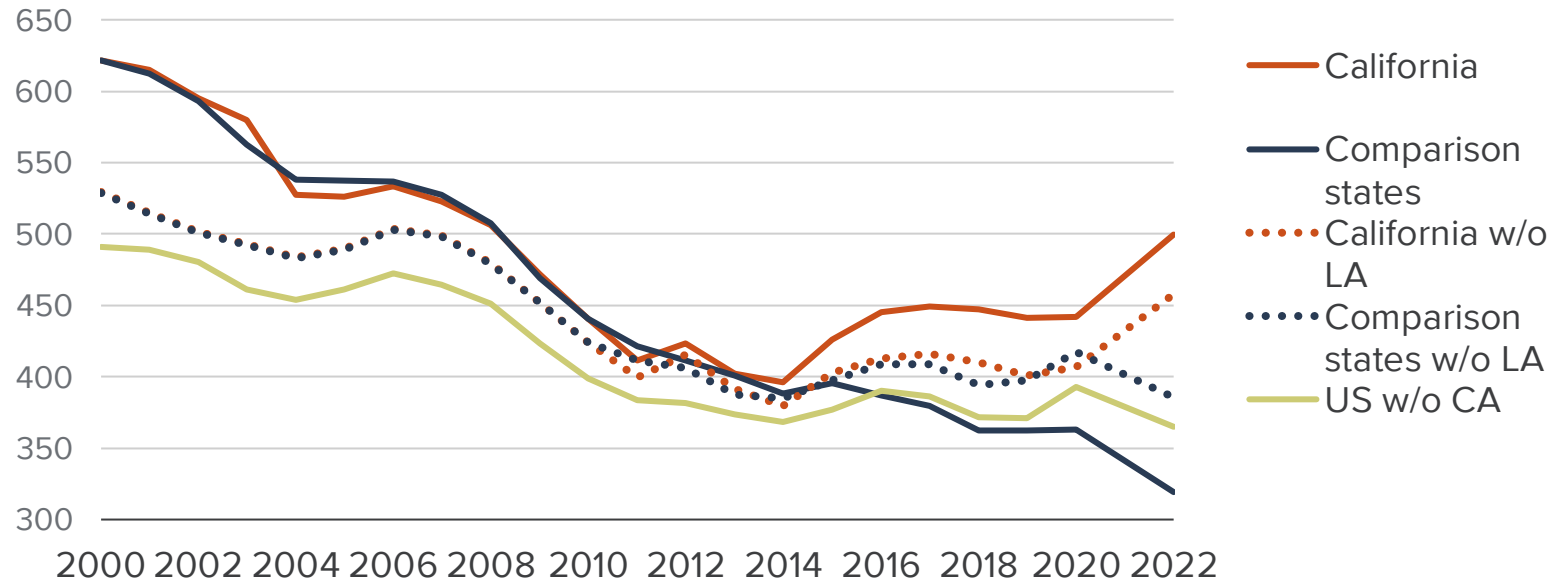
- Prop 47 reduced felony arrests for drug and property offenses
 - only partly offset by rise in misdemeanor arrests
 - Arrests for drug offenses declined by about 10%
 - Arrests for property offenses dropped by about 11%
- Pandemic brought immediate drop in *both* felony and misdemeanor arrests
 - Drug and property arrests down by 36% and 22% (end of 2019 to end of 2022)

The clearance rate for property crimes dropped after Prop 47 and the pandemic



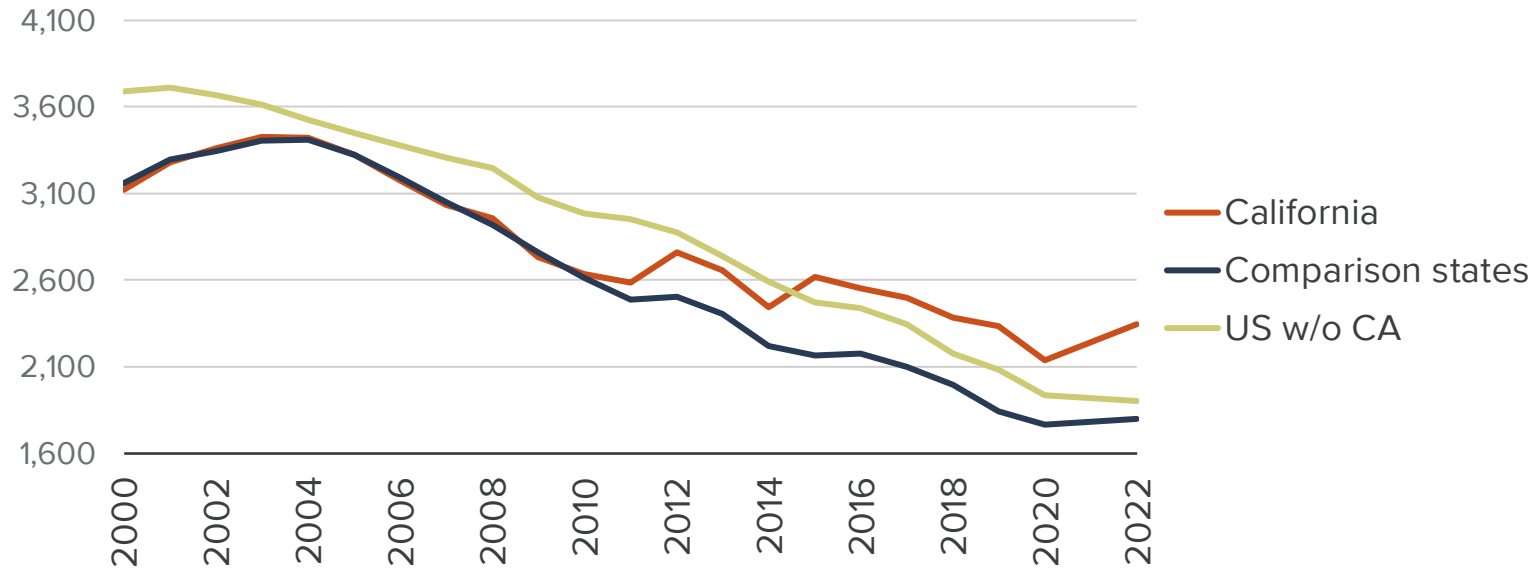
Violent crime diverged over last decade, sharpest at the start of the pandemic

Violent crime rate

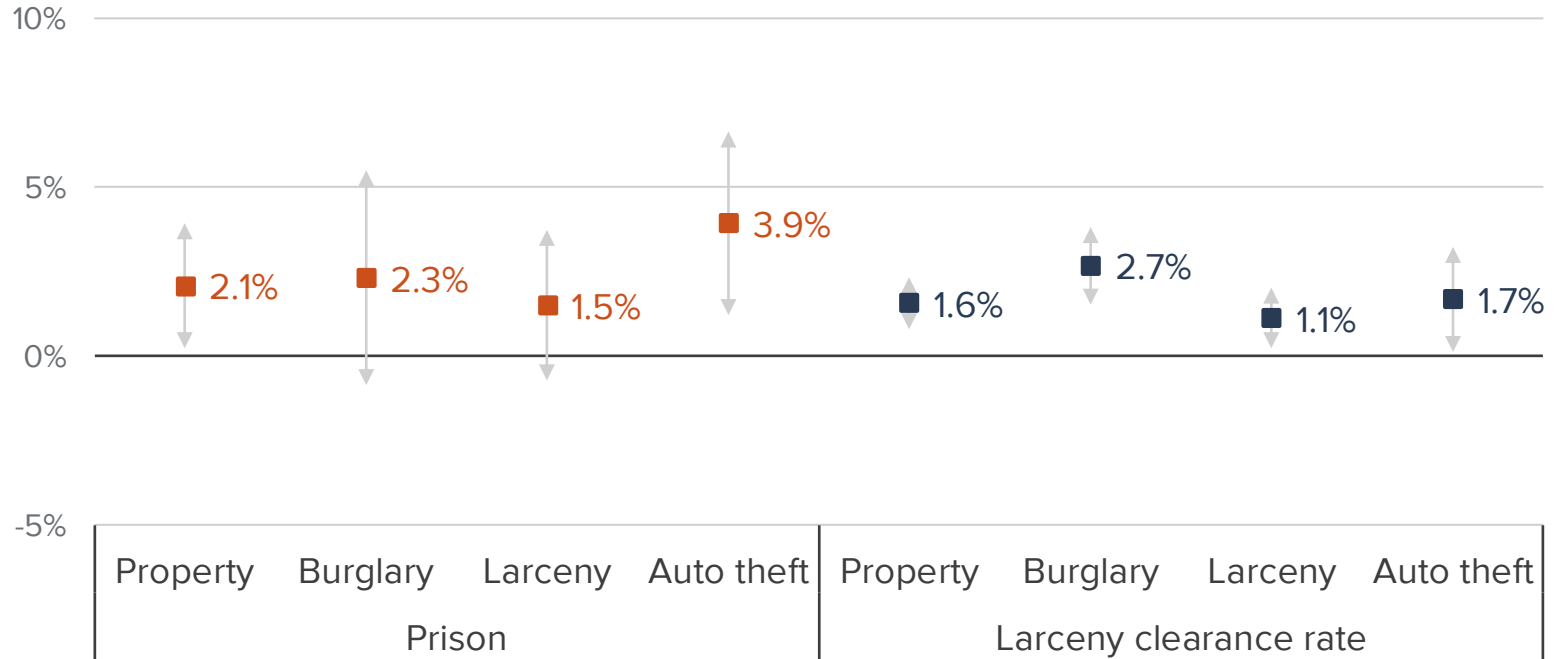


California's property crime rate jumped in 2012, 2015, and 2022

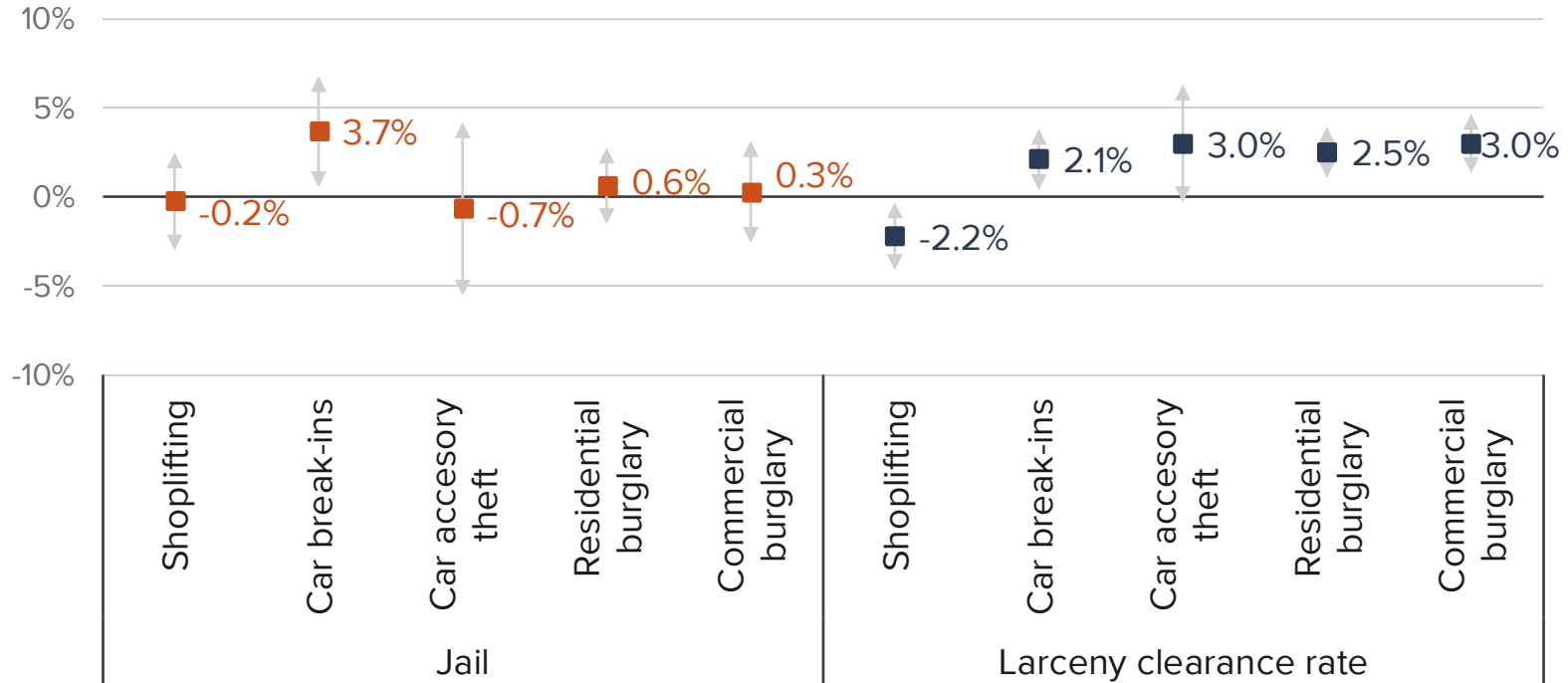
Property crime rate



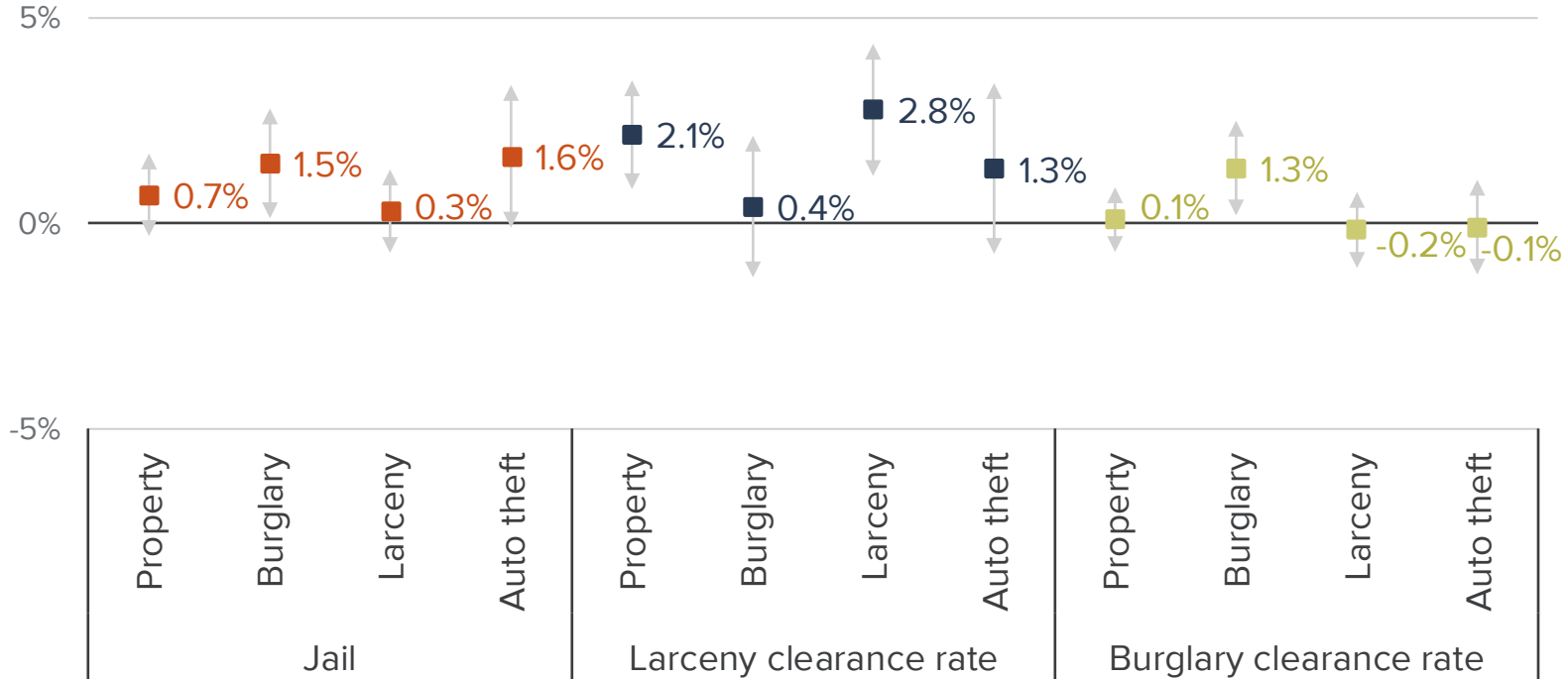
Property crime rose after Prop 47 drops in prison incarceration and larceny clearance rates



More car break-ins after Prop 47 were driven by lower jail populations and cleared larcenies



Some property crimes had modest increases from pandemic drops in incarceration and clearance rates



There were modest rises in crime

- Due to drop in incarceration
 - Prop 47: rise in auto thefts and car break-ins
 - Pandemic: auto thefts and commercial burglaries
- Due to lower clearance rates
 - Prop 47: burglaries, auto thefts, and larcenies
 - Pandemic: car accessory thefts, car break-ins, and commercial burglaries
- While statistically significant, small fraction of total rise in crime
 - Greater impact of pandemic on retail theft than Prop 47
- No evidence of rise in crime due to drop in drug arrests

Policy implications around incarceration

- Lower populations in prison and jail after Prop 47 and the pandemic led to modest rise in some property crime
 - Of similar magnitude to realignment
 - Encouraging, shows continued limited crime preventive effects of incarceration
 - Caveat, some weak indication of small effect on violent crime
- California should seek evidence-based alternatives to jail and prison

Policy implications around enforcement

- Property crime clearance rate dropped between 2014 and 2022
 - A person is half as likely to be apprehended for property crimes
- Rise in some property crime, including retail theft
 - May also have affected retailers reporting of theft incidents
- Need to determine contributing factors and reverse falling rates
 - Decrease in law enforcement officers may be one factor
 - Higher likelihood of being apprehended is more effective in deterring crime than harsher penalties or longer sentences

Notes on the use of these slides

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.