

# Key Factors in Arrest Trends and Differences in California's Counties

September 19, 2019

Magnus Lofstrom, Brandon Martin, Justin Goss,  
Joseph Hayes, and Steven Raphael

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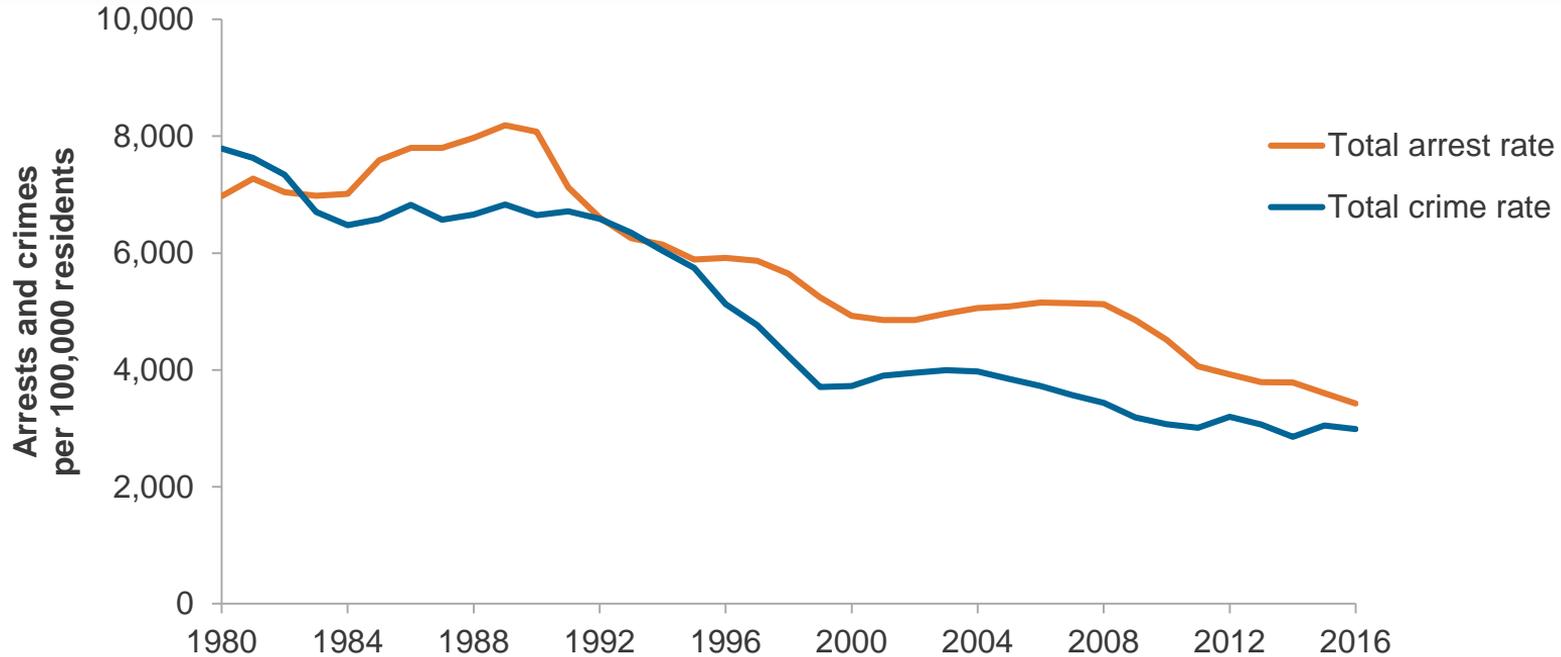
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# Arrests are a critical but understudied topic

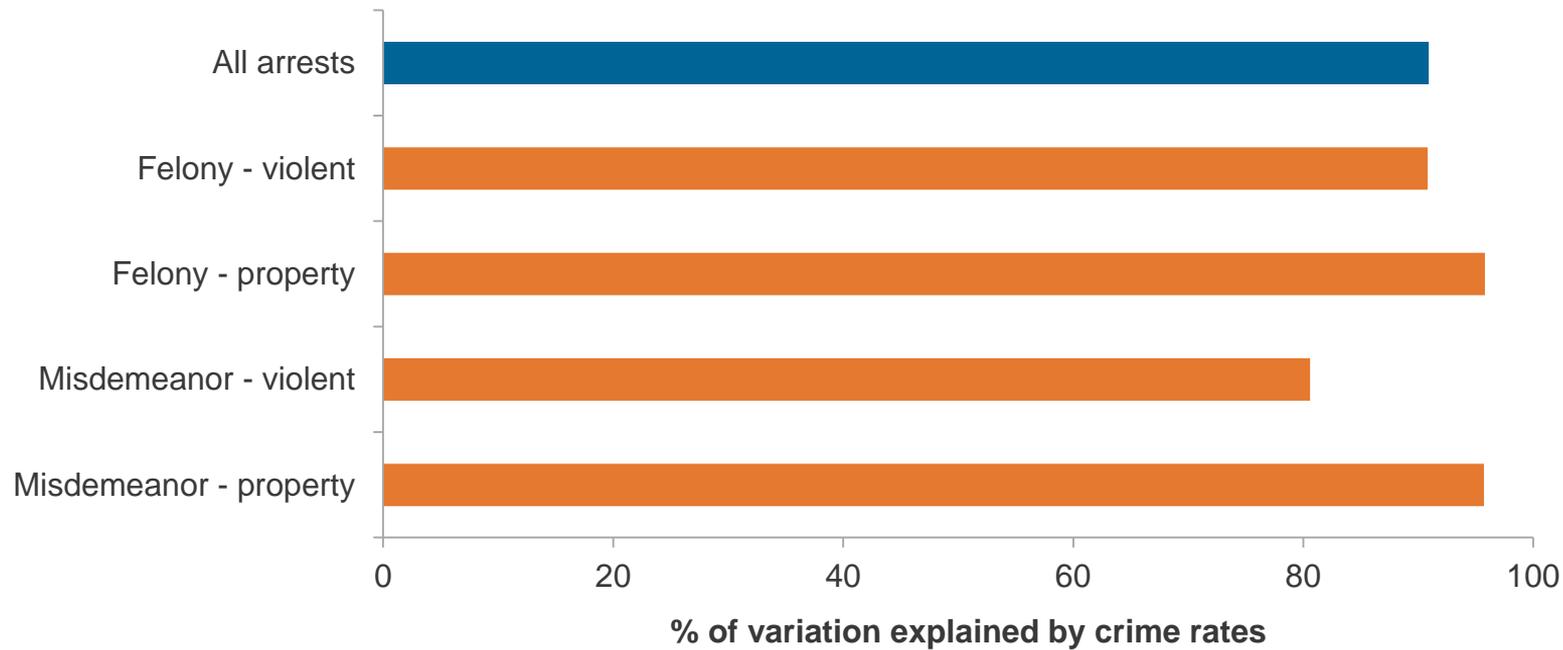
- Arrests have wide-ranging consequences
  - Risk of injury, use of public resources
- Racial disparities are a key concern
- We examine statewide arrest trends as well as differences in arrest rates and racial disparities across counties in California
  - Crime rates
  - Recent criminal justice reforms
  - County-level factors



# Arrest and crime rates in California have both declined substantially



# Statewide trends in arrest rates are largely driven by crime rates



# Arrest rates decreased in the wake of recent criminal justice reforms

- After public safety realignment in 2011:
  - Drop of about 7% in overall arrest rate
  - Driven by decrease in misdemeanor traffic- and alcohol-related arrests
- After Proposition 47 in 2014:
  - Drop of an additional 11% in overall arrest rate
  - Driven by decrease in felony drug and property arrests



# Arrest rates vary significantly across counties

- High-arrest counties arrest two to three times as many suspects per 100,000 residents as low-arrest counties
- County crime rates play a significant role in this variation
- A range of other factors likely contribute:
  - Demographics
  - Poverty and labor market conditions
  - Jail capacity and law enforcement staffing



# Counties with higher arrest rates tend to have poorer economic conditions

- Counties with the highest arrest rates tend to have:
  - Poorer economic conditions
  - Lower shares of nonwhite residents
  - Higher shares of young adults
  - Lower population density
- The ratio of law enforcement officers to residents does not appear to affect arrest rates

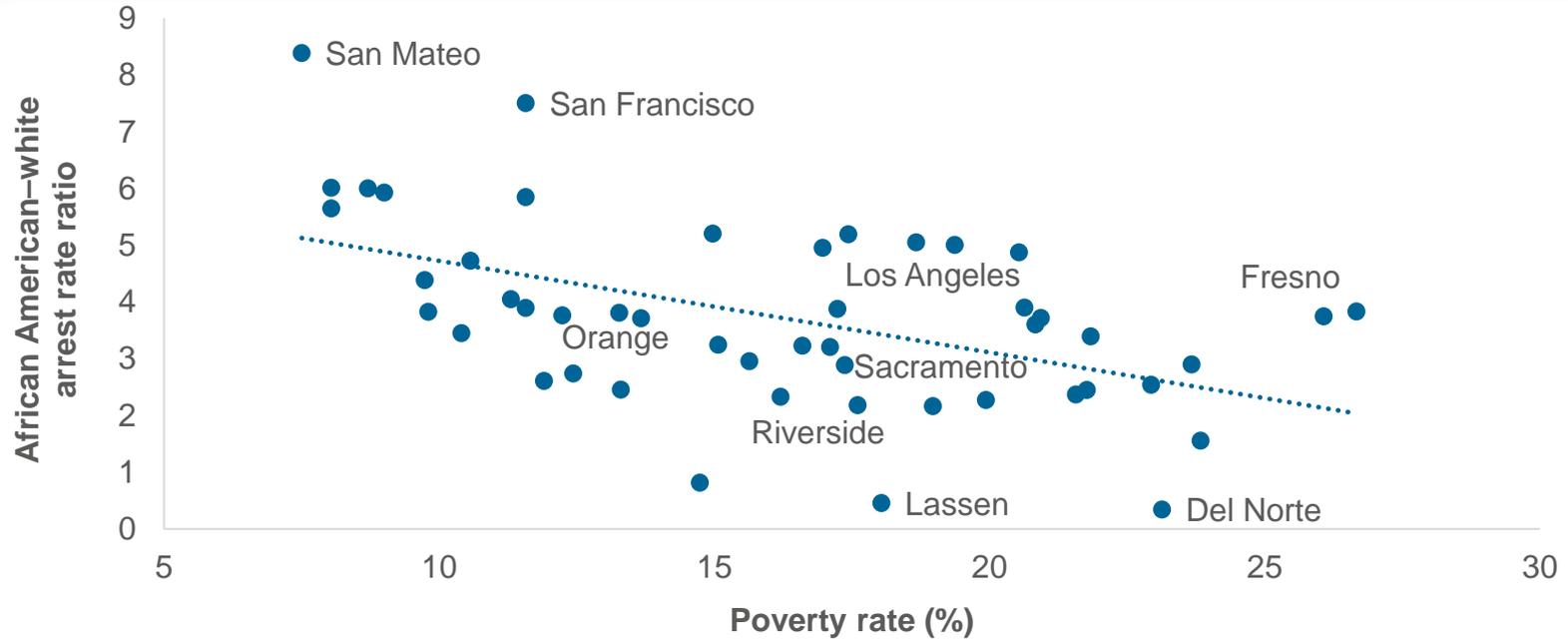


# Racial disparities in arrests also vary across the state

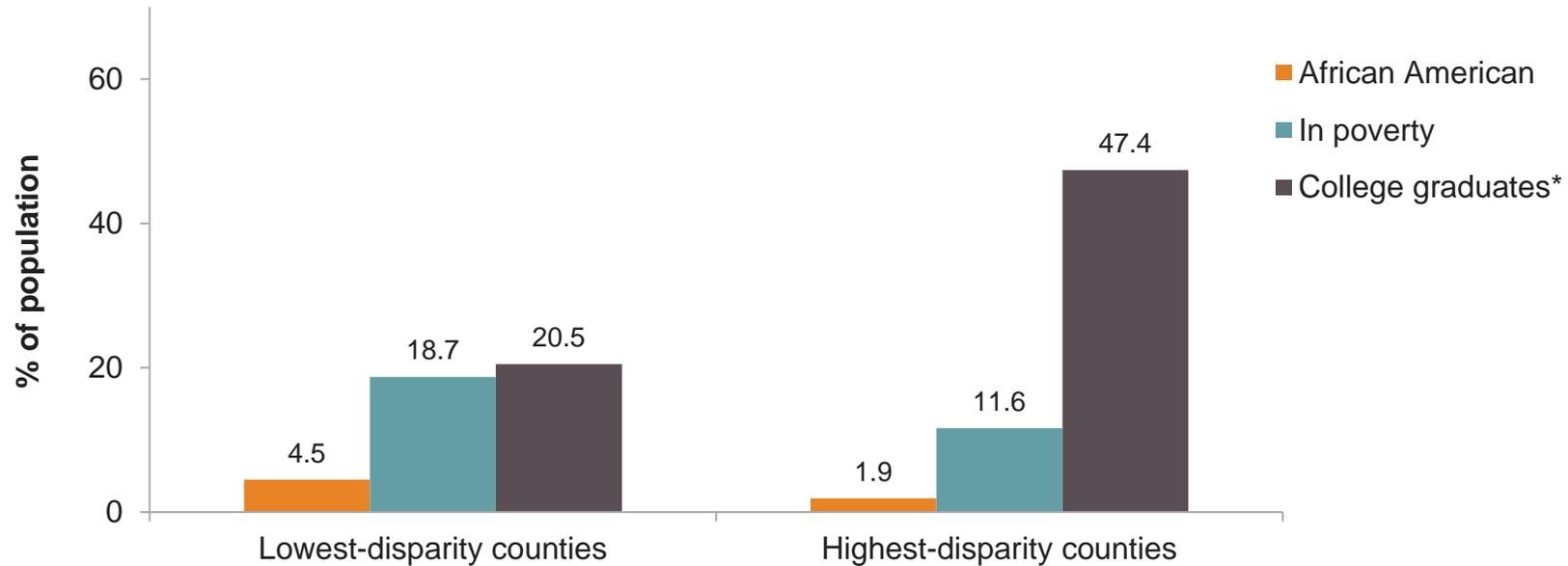
- Statewide, the African American arrest rate is about three times as high as the white arrest rate
- Counties with the highest disparities have, on average, an African American arrest rate about six times higher than the white arrest rate
  - In counties with the lowest disparities, the African American arrest rate is about two times higher



# Racial disparities tend to be greater in counties with lower poverty rates



# Counties with larger racial disparities have lower shares of African Americans and lower poverty rates



\*Data available only for the 41 largest counties.

# Conclusions

- Crime rates are a major factor in arrest rates
- Arrest rates declined substantially after public safety realignment and Proposition 47
- Counties with the highest arrest rates tend to have poorer economic conditions
  - But counties with the largest racial disparities tend to be relatively affluent
- Efforts to reduce racial disparities in arrests should include wealthier areas



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# 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:

Brandon Martin (martin@ppic.org; 916-440-1131)

Thank you for your interest in this work.