

# Recidivism of Felony Offenders in California

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# Historically, California has had high recidivism rates

- California's recidivism rates have been among the highest in the nation
  - About three-fourths of people released from prison were rearrested and about half were reconvicted within three years
- “Revolving door” of prison revocations
  - About two-thirds of people released from prison returned within three years due to revocation or reconviction



# California has had many corrections reforms since 2011

Assembly Bill 109 (realignment) shifted responsibility over lower-level felons from state prison and parole to county jail and probation systems.

2011

Prop 36 revised the “three strikes” law (1994) to impose a life sentence only when the new, third-strike felony conviction is serious or violent.

2013

Prop 47 reduced the penalties associated with certain lower-level drug and property offenses.

2015

Court-ordered population reduction measures included increased credit earning and early parole for certain non-violent inmates.

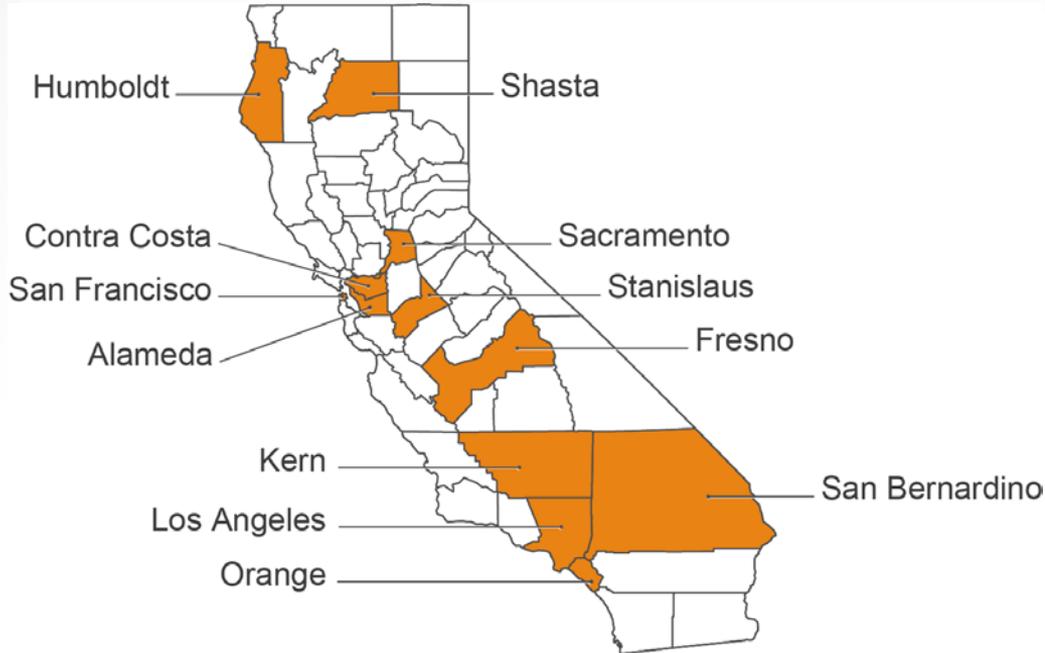


# Recidivism is a key metric for assessing reforms

- Recidivism rates provide a window into public safety and the effectiveness of correctional interventions
- Our past research focused on the causal effects of realignment and Prop 47 on recidivism outcomes for targeted groups
- Here, we take a broad look at recidivism trends after realignment



# BSCC–PPIC Multi-County Study (MCS)

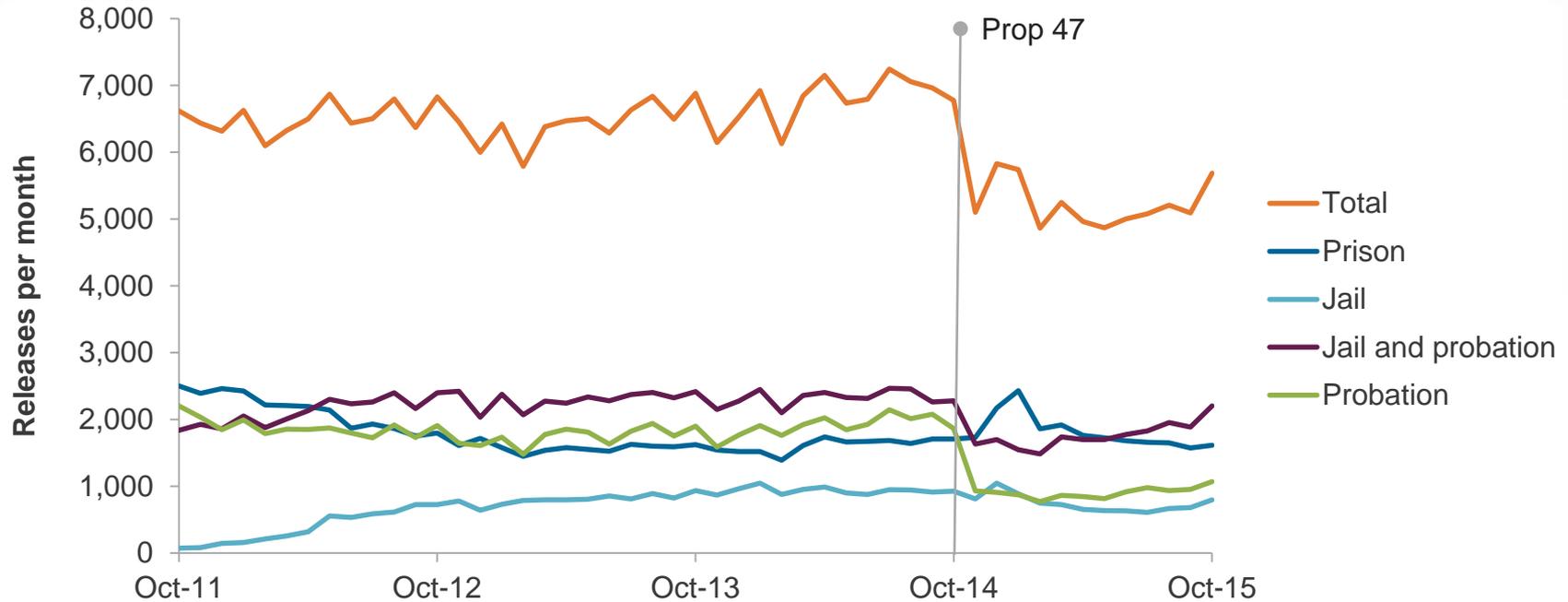


Additional engagement:

- California State Association of Counties
- County Administrative Officers Association of California
- California State Sheriffs' Association
- Chief Probation Officers of California
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
- California Department of Justice



# Felony population declined after Prop 47

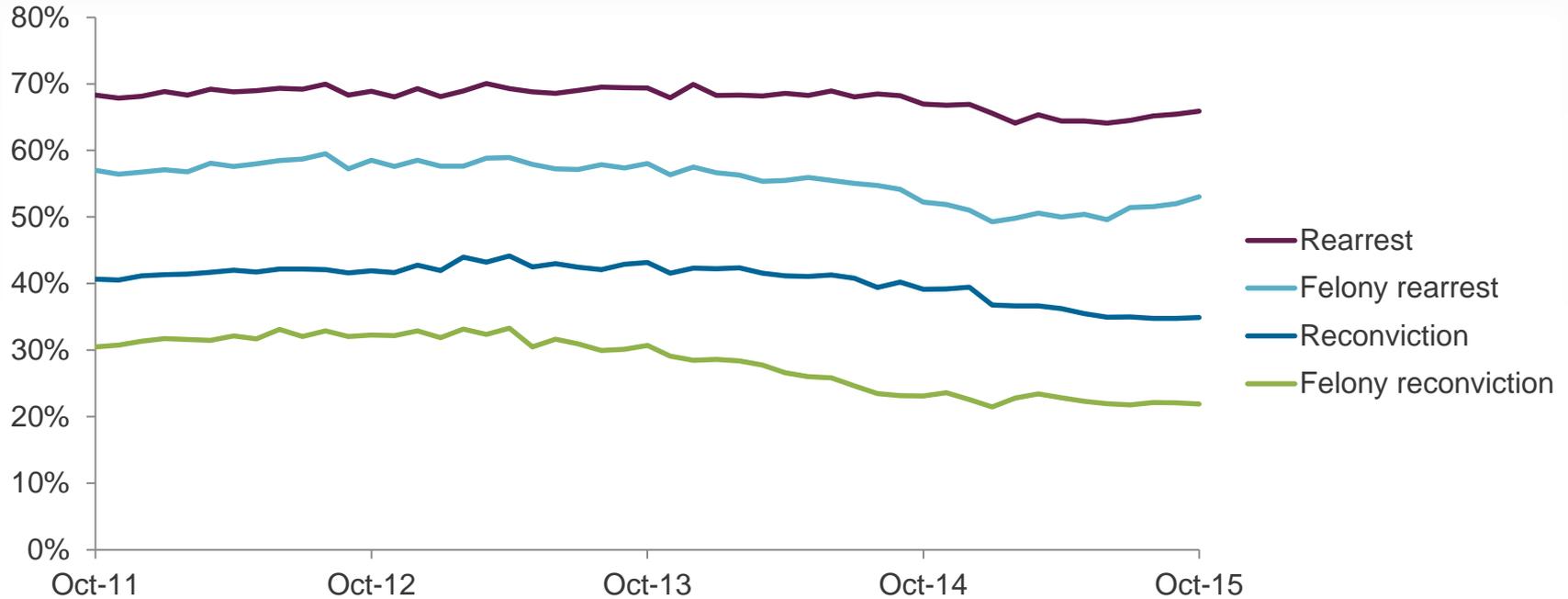


# Research approach

- We examine two-year rearrest and reconviction rates for individuals:
  - convicted of felony offenses
  - sentenced to prison, jail, jail and probation, or probation
  - released during the four years after realignment (2011–2015)
- We adjust estimates for differences in demographic and criminal history characteristics over time and across groups



# Recidivism rates declined somewhat over the period



# Reductions in felony recidivism drove overall declines

- The felony rearrest rate declined from 56% to 53% in the four years after realignment
  - However, overall and felony rearrest rates ticked up for individuals released at the end of the study period
- The felony reconviction rate declined sharply from 30% to 22% and remained low for individuals released late in the period



# Rearrests and reconvictions for drug offenses fell sharply

- Declines in recidivism among felony offenders were driven by declines in rearrest and reconviction for drug offenses
- Rearrest rates for property offenses held steady, while reconviction rates declined
- Rearrests for offenses against a person increased slightly, while reconviction rates held steady

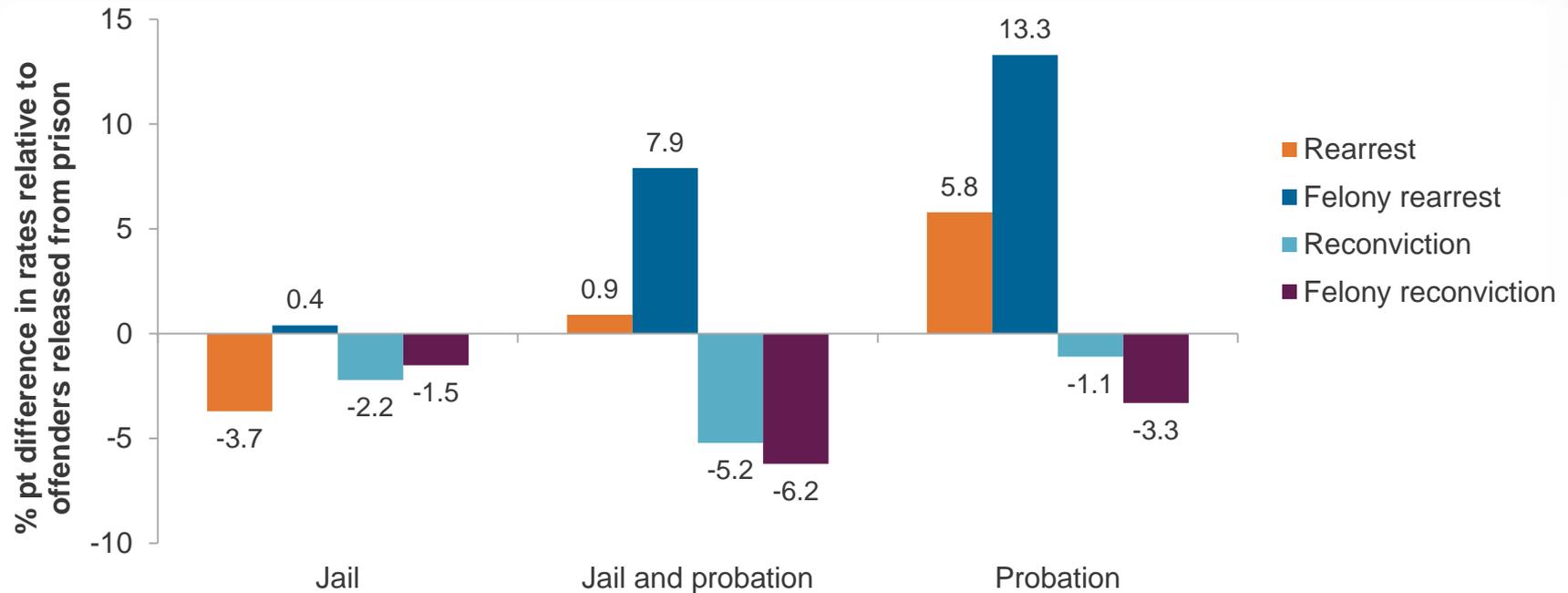


# Recidivism rates declined for all sentencing groups

- Recidivism rates for individuals sentenced to prison or jail fell steadily through the four-year release period
- For those sentenced to jail and probation or to probation only, recidivism rates increased during the early years of realignment
  - However, recidivism rates then decreased for these groups during the later years of realignment



# Individuals sentenced locally had lower conviction rates than those sentenced to prison



# Summary of findings

- Overall, recidivism rates declined for felony offenders
  - Driven by declines in felony offenses and drug offenses
- Recidivism steadily fell for individuals sentenced to prison or jail
- Recidivism rates also declined for those sentenced to jail and probation or probation only
  - But these declines are concentrated in the period after Prop 47
- Recidivism rates vary across sentencing groups
  - Probationers have the highest rearrest rates, while those released from prison have the highest reconviction rates



# Conclusions

- These findings have several possible interpretations:
  - Recidivism rates may have declined over time due to improved use of evidence-based practices under realignment
  - Recidivism may also have declined under Prop 47 due to increased availability of treatment or changes in criminal justice practices
- More and better data are needed
  - Would help further state's goals of improving public safety, reducing costs, and ensuring equity



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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:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.

