

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)

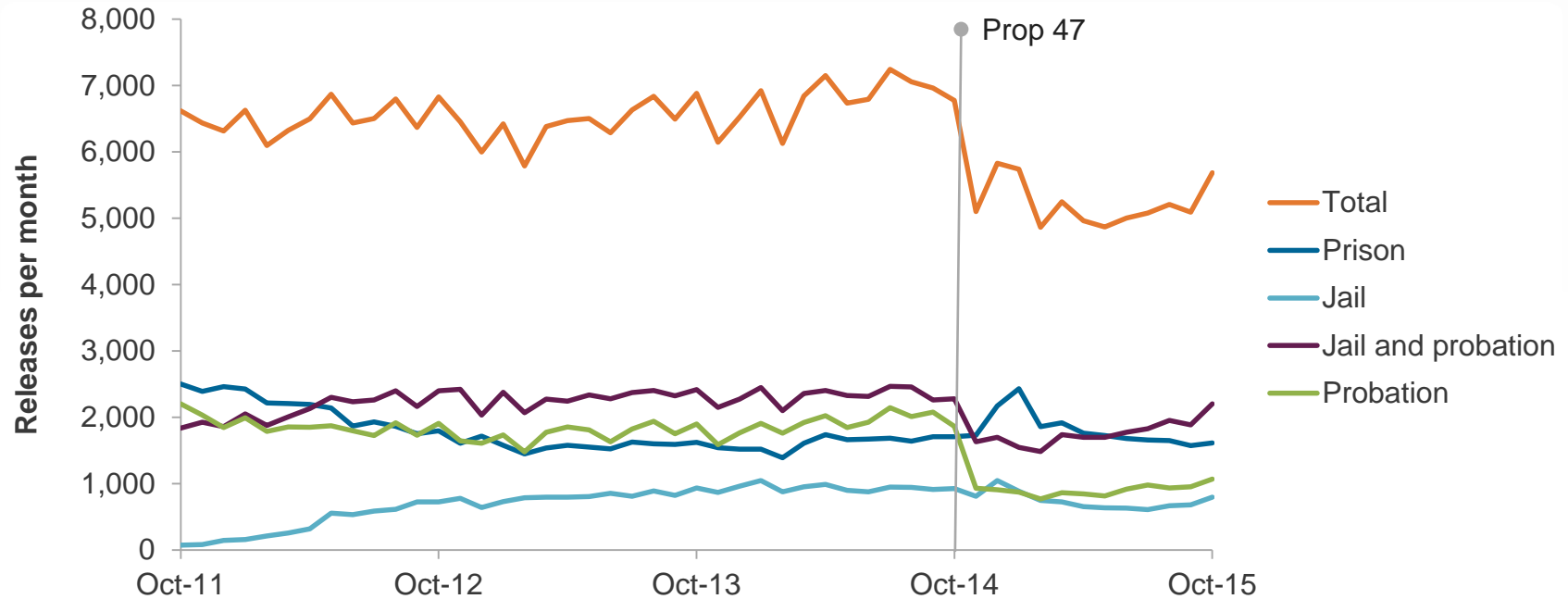


Additional engagement:

- 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

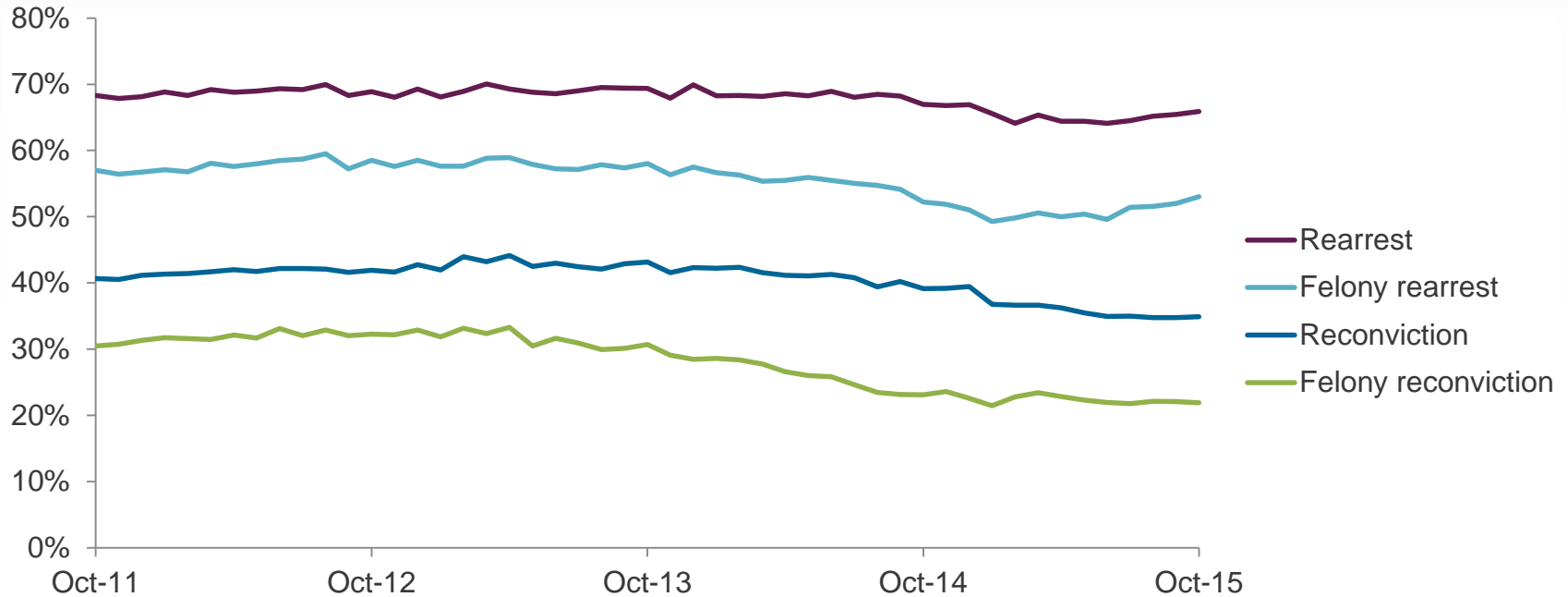


Research approach

- 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

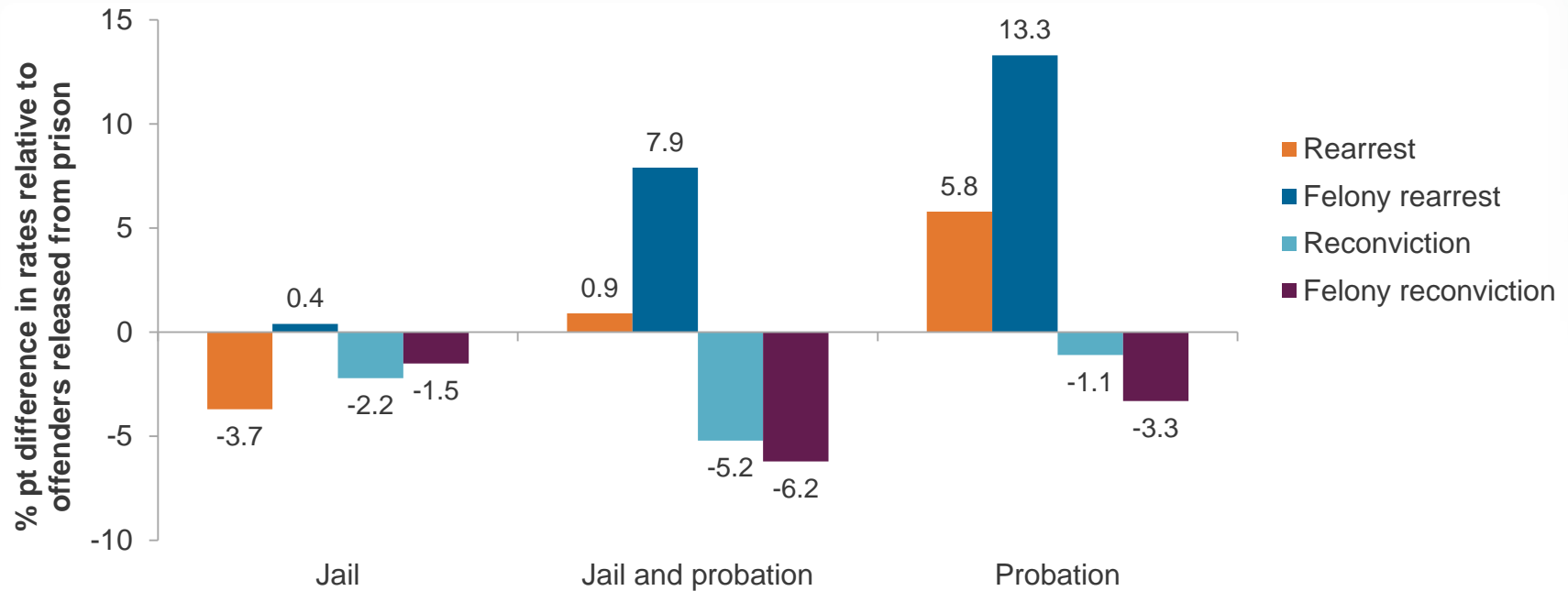


Recidivism rates declined for all sentencing groups

- 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.