The Impact of Proposition 47 on Crime and Recidivism

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with research support from Justin Goss
Prop 47 led to major criminal justice changes

- Reduced penalties for lower-level offenses like drug possession, thefts, shoplifting, and others
- Succeeded in reducing prison and jail populations
  - Incarceration rate is now at levels not seen since the early 1990s
- Remains controversial
  - Supporters hoped to limit lower-level offenders’ involvement with the criminal justice system and redirect funds to treatment
  - Opponents were concerned about burdening local jails and communities and potential increases in crime
Did Prop 47 affect crime and recidivism?

- We examine changes in crime rates over time within California and in comparison to other states
  - Data from the FBI and the California Department of Justice
- We assess changes in jail bookings and recidivism
  - Data from the BSCC–PPIC Multi-County Study, a collaborative effort among the Board of State and Community Corrections, PPIC, and counties
  - The 12 participating counties are representative of the state
California’s crime rates are still at historic lows
Changes in violent crime were similar to other states

Graph showing the violent crime rate per 100,000 residents from 2000 to 2016. The purple line represents California (without LAPD), and the blue line represents comparison states. The graph shows a decline in violent crime rates over the years, with a notable drop post-2014 labeled as Prop 47.
California’s larceny theft rate deviated from other states
Jail bookings for Prop 47 offenses declined dramatically

![Graph showing decline in jail bookings for Prop 47 offenses]

- Misdemeanor
- Felony
- Total

Two-year rearrest rates declined after Prop 47, driven by reductions in lower-level drug offenses.
Two-year reconviction rates declined after Prop 47 for both lower-level property and drug offenses.
Prop 47 increased funding for behavioral health programs

- Prop 47 redirected 65% of state correctional savings toward mental health and substance-use treatment programs
- BSCC oversees the allocation of behavioral health funding
- BSCC provided grants to public agencies, with $104 million available from 2017–2020
  - However, it is too early to tell whether this funding played a role in reducing recidivism
Our study finds:

- Prop 47 did not affect violent crime but may have increased property crimes, particularly larcenies.
- It reduced both overall jail bookings and the number of individuals entering the jail system.
- Prop 47 offenders have lower two-year rearrest and reconviction rates when compared with their pre-reform counterparts.

Policymakers are continuing to pursue criminal justice reforms:

- Should work with practitioners to identify programs and policies that will reduce recidivism and maintain public safety.
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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.