

# Realignment and Recidivism in California

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# Public safety realignment drastically changed California's criminal justice landscape

- Realignment was implemented in 2011
  - After a Supreme Court mandate to reduce the prison population
  - Amid a state budget crisis
- The law shifted responsibility for lower-level offenders from state prison and parole to county jail and probation systems
  - In the first year, the prison population decreased by about 27,000 and the jail population increased by about 9,000 inmates
  - Overall, incarceration levels declined

# Realignment created two new populations of offenders

- The PRCS population
  - Individuals on post-release community supervision (PRCS) are released from prison to county probation supervision, rather than state parole
  - Revocations served in county jail
- The 1170(h) population
  - Individuals sentenced under §1170(h) of the California Penal Code serve time in county jail rather than state prison
  - Revocations served in county jail

# The reform prompted considerable debate

- Supporters and opponents had different views on whether changes in incarceration levels would affect public safety
- One goal of realignment was to reduce the state's persistently high rates of recidivism
  - Realignment emphasized the use of evidence-based interventions
  - Supporters argued that local justice systems are better positioned to provide these interventions

# Did realignment affect recidivism?

- Past research has focused on PRCS offenders released during the first year of realignment
  - Shows realignment did not reduce recidivism among this group, although outcomes vary by county
- This study:
  - Includes the 1170(h) population
  - Looks at two years of releases after realignment
  - Captures revocations to jail custody

# Outline

- Data and methodology
- Recidivism among PRCS offenders
- Recidivism among 1170(h) offenders
- Conclusions

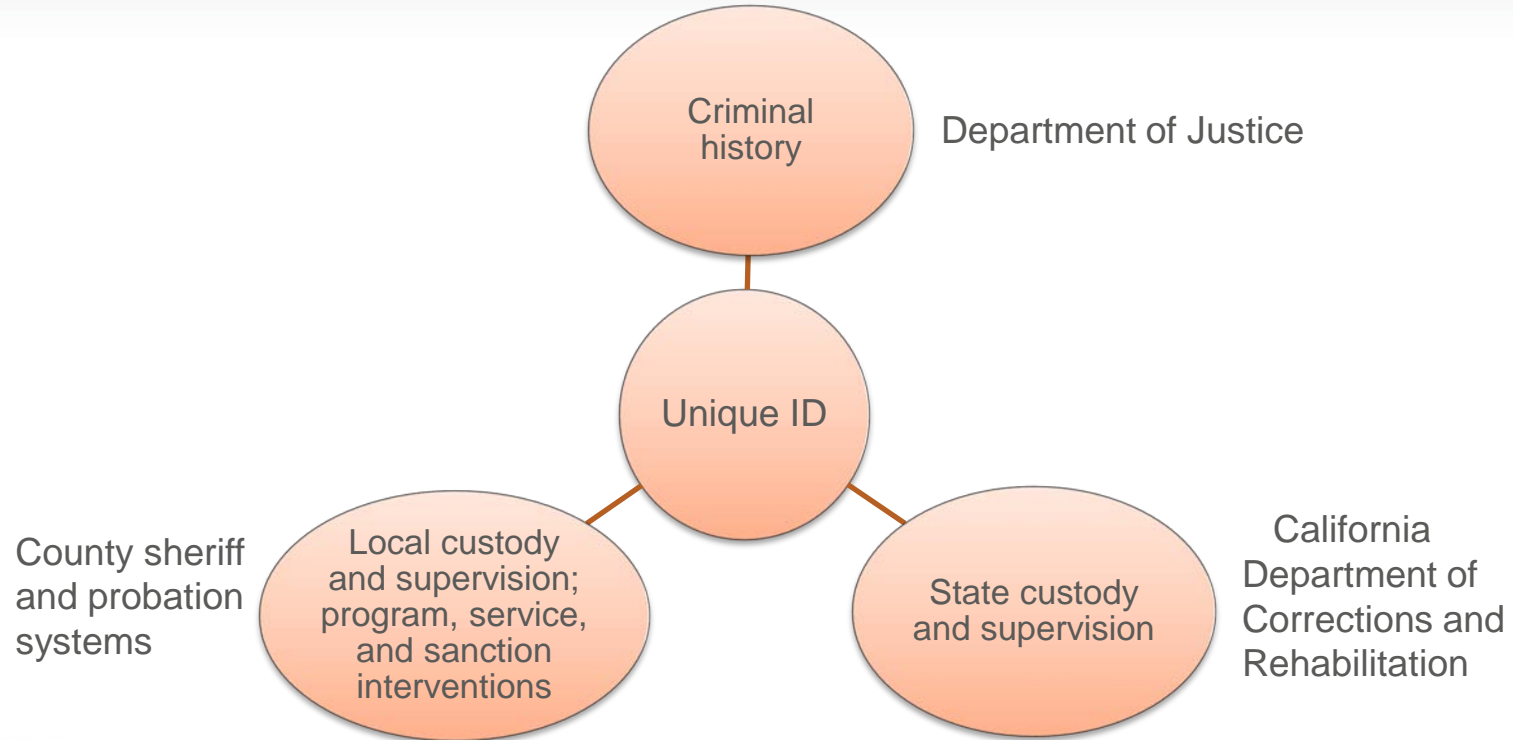
# The BSCC–PPIC Multi-County Study includes 12 California counties



Additional engagement:

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

# The Multi-County Study brings together data from state and local sources





# Our research takes into account changes in criminal justice systems

- Realignment shifted incentives toward pursuing formal prosecutions, rather than revocations, in response to reoffending
- We adjust rearrest and reconviction rates to account for this shift in the use of revocations before and after realignment
  - Adjusted rearrest rates include formal arrests and revocations to prison or jail; adjusted reconviction rates include formal convictions and revocations
- We also adjust for differences in the characteristics of pre- and post-realignment offender groups

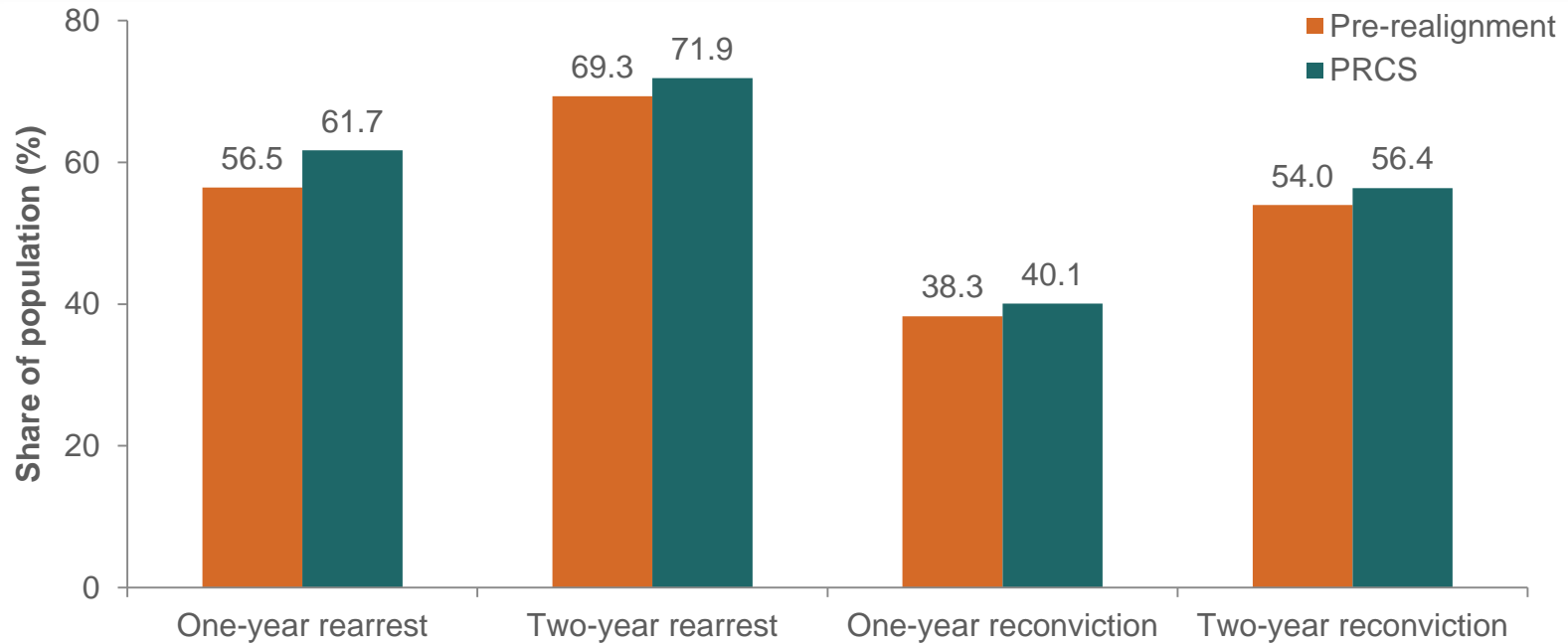
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# PRCS offenders differ from those released from prison before realignment

- 35,218 individuals were released on PRCS to the MCS counties between Oct 2011 and Sept 2013
- When compared to the full pre-realignment population (released between Oct 2009 and Sept 2011), PRCS offenders are:
  - More likely to be incarcerated on a revocation
  - Less likely to have committed a crime against a person
  - More likely to have committed a property or drug crime
  - Have more past arrests and convictions

# PRCS offenders have higher recidivism rates



# Recidivism rates among the PRCS population vary across counties

- Overall, rearrest and reconviction rates are somewhat higher for PRCS offenders compared with their pre-realignment counterparts
- The majority of MCS counties see higher one-year rearrest rates among PRCS offenders
- However, one-year reconviction rates among PRCS offenders are actually lower in 9 of the 12 counties

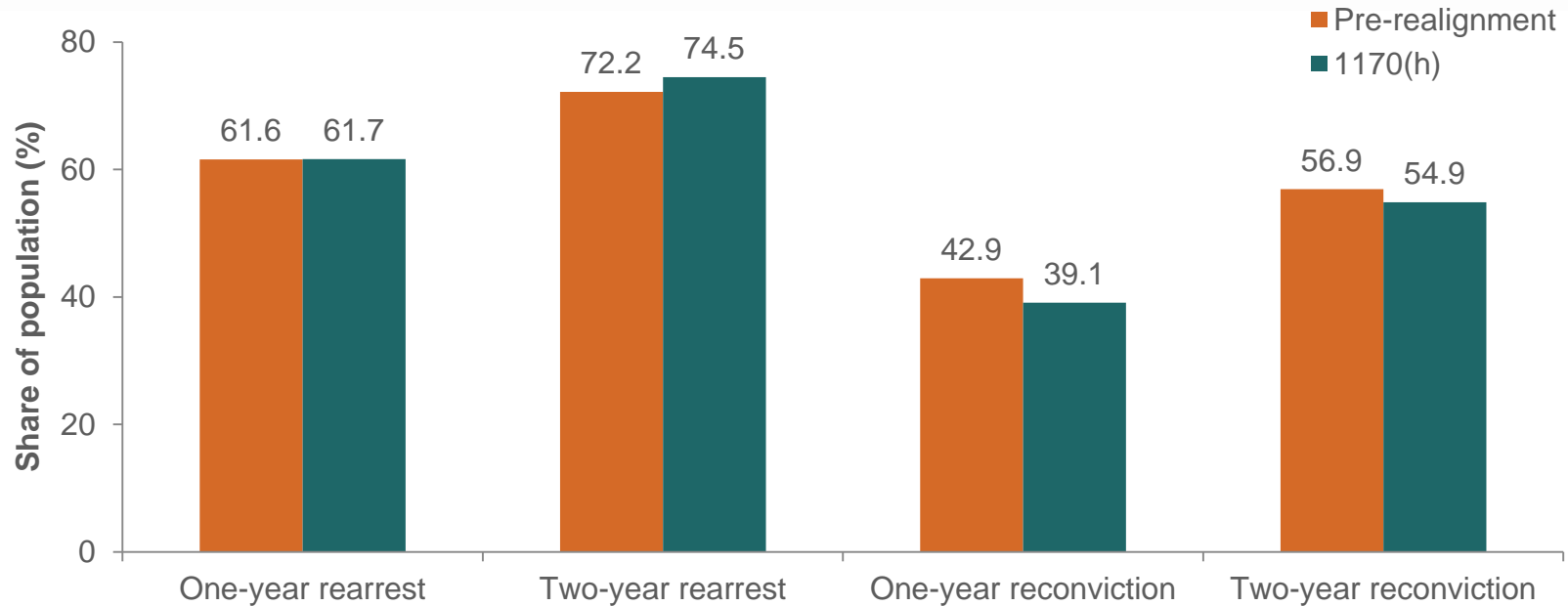
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# 1170(h) offenders differ from those released from prison before realignment

- 13,435 individuals sentenced for 1170(h) offenses were released from MCS county jails between Oct 2011 and Sept 2013
  - Group limited to those who had jail sentences of at least one year
- When compared to the full pre-realignment population (released between Oct 2009 and Sept 2011), 1170(h) offenders are:
  - Much less likely to have committed a crime against a person
  - More likely to have committed a property or drug crime
  - Have more past arrests and convictions

# 1170(h) offenders have lower reconviction rates





# Among 1170(h) offenders, recidivism rates vary across counties

- We find no overall difference in one-year rearrest rates for 1170(h) offenders
  - However, one-year rearrest rates among the 1170(h) population are actually lower in more than half of MCS counties
- One-year reconviction rates are lower for the overall 1170(h) population, as well as in the majority of MCS counties

# Realignment created two kinds of 1170(h) offenders

- 1170(h) offenders with split sentences:
  - Receive both jail time and probation supervision
  - This group had higher rearrest rates but lower reconviction rates than their pre-realignment counterparts
- 1170(h) offenders with straight sentences:
  - Receive jail time with no supervision
  - This group stands out as having consistently better recidivism outcomes under realignment, with the same or lower rearrest and reconviction rates

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# Conclusions

- Effects of realignment on recidivism vary across offender groups and counties
- These effects will likely vary over time as the composition of offender groups change and counties build capacity and gain experience with evidence-based practices
- We need to carefully consider the relationship between supervision and higher rearrest rates

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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.