

Research Brief

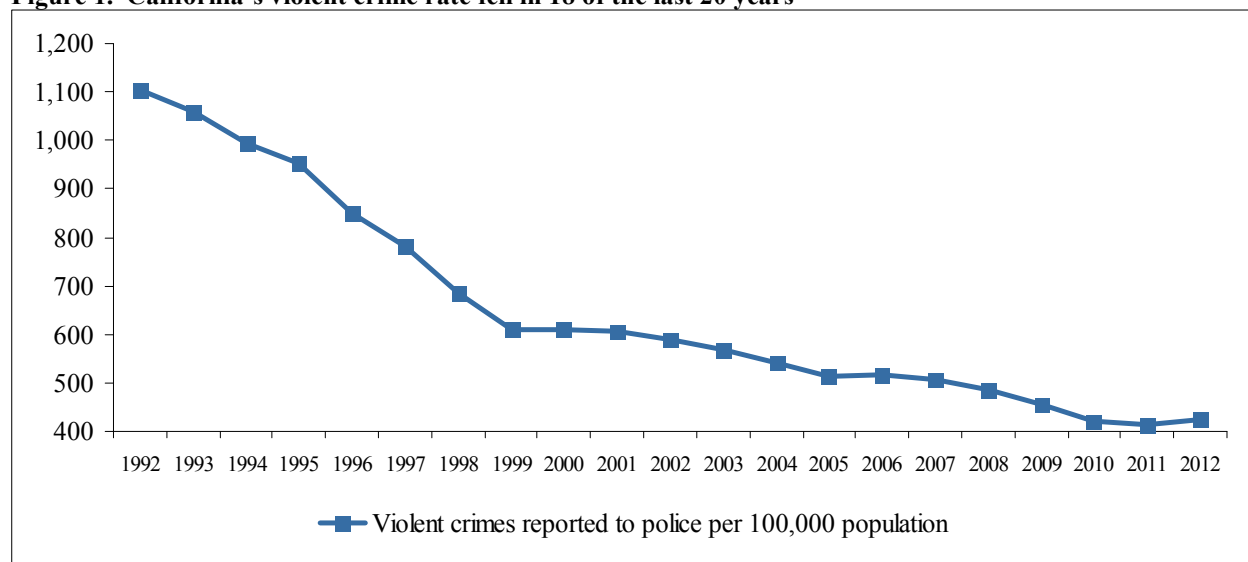
California’s Urban Crime Increase in 2012:
Is “Realignment” to Blame?

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Introduction

For nearly two decades, California’s violent crime rate has been falling steadily, with a 63% decrease from 1993 to 2011. However, preliminary reports released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI, 2013) show violent and property crimes increased slightly in most large California cities in the first six months of 2012, while remaining among the lowest recorded in more than 40 years (Figure 1).

Figure 1. California’s violent crime rate fell in 18 of the last 20 years



Sources: CJSC (2012); FBI (2013). Rate for 2012 is for the first 6 months, based on the FBI’s reported urban crime change in California’s 69 largest cities.

The 2012 figures are the first comprehensive crime data reported since the implementation of Public Safety Realignment (AB 109) in October 2011. Realignment effectively divided the state’s felon population into two categories: those legally-defined as violent, serious, and/or sex offenders (around 207,000 as of June 30, 2012) who continue to be sent to state prison and be supervised by state parole officers upon release, and those lower-level offenders (approximately

46,000) who formerly were managed by the state prison and parole system but now must be managed by local justice systems and supervised by local probation officers.

This publication analyzes whether Realignment — in this case, the 46,000 offenders diverted to local management — contributed to the increase in urban offenses in the first half of 2012. The data analyzed did not demonstrate any relationship between the implementation of Realignment and increases in violent or property crime.

Method

The FBI's semi-annual report compiled statistics from 69 California cities (see Appendix A) with populations over 100,000 for January 1 through June 30, 2012, for eight "index" crimes reported to police (the violent offenses of murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, and the property offenses of burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson) (FBI, 2013). In January 2012, the aggregate population of the 69 cities was 18.4 million, slightly less than half the state's population. Crimes in these cities accounted for more than half the index offenses reported to law enforcement statewide in 2011.

City populations obtained from the California Department of Finance (2012) were used to calculate offense rates, annualized and adjusted to reflect that the 2012 reporting period had one additional day (leap year). Figures for new prison admissions, prison populations, and paroled populations by county for the 21 counties containing these 69 cities were obtained from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR, 2012). Statistics for state-paroled populations transferred to local probation departments (Post-Release Community Supervision, or PRCS) were obtained from the Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC, 2013). These figures were used to compare the second quarter of 2012 to the third quarter of 2011, prior to Realignment's effective date of October 1, 2011.

Results

Realignment mandates that local jurisdictions manage low-level offenders and parolees, retaining new offenders rather than sending them to prison, and supervising newly released offenders under PRCS rather than state parole. However, the counties are implementing the policy at radically different rates (Table 1). Some critics of the policy charge that this new responsibility for counties may be leading to an increase in violent and property crime rates, which have risen since Realignment's implementation. However, CJCJ's analysis finds no connection between Realignment and these crime trends (Table 2).

Table 1 details the numbers of lower-level offenders who have been diverted from state to local management, and those more violent and serious offenders who remain under state management, for each of the 21 counties. The Realignment percentage expresses the percentage of total felony offenders that have been realigned. The table shows that Realignment's first 9 months had sharply varying impacts on major counties. As of June 30, 2012, the realignment rate in San Joaquin County, where new admissions to prison actually *increased* after Realignment, was just 11.4%, compared to 26.9% in Kern County.

Table 1. Impact of Realignment on 21 counties through June 30, 2012

County (ranked by low to high <u>Realignment</u> <u>rates</u>)	Realignment Percentage*	Total Realigned Offenders	Realigned from:		State-managed offenders:		
			Parole to Probation (PRCS)	Prison to Local Jail/ Sentencing**	Total	In prison	On parole
San Joaquin	11.4%	592	650	-58	4,598	2,837	1,761
Alameda	12.0%	832	609	223	6,075	3,624	2,451
Sacramento	13.8%	1,620	1,158	462	10,140	6,693	3,447
Contra Costa	14.1%	446	351	95	2,727	1,760	967
Sonoma	15.3%	288	224	64	1,590	1,073	517
Monterey	15.8%	459	292	167	2,438	1,599	839
Los Angeles	16.1%	12,703	7,719	4,984	66,390	47,512	18,878
San Diego	16.3%	2,796	2,064	732	14,308	9,882	4,426
San Francisco	16.3%	448	311	137	2,292	1,129	1,163
Tulare	16.6%	684	480	204	3,437	2,396	1,041
Solano	17.2%	436	323	113	2,091	1,147	944
Statewide	18.0%	45,621	30,041	15,580	207,191	136,431	70,760
Santa Clara	18.3%	1,753	837	916	7,842	4,543	3,299
Ventura	18.6%	632	382	250	2,759	1,747	1,012
Stanislaus	19.8%	742	671	71	3,009	1,873	1,136
San Mateo	20.4%	568	265	303	2,214	1,322	892
Riverside	20.6%	3,405	2,203	1,202	13,082	9,488	3,594
Santa Barbara	21.0%	533	320	213	2,000	1,222	778
Orange	22.9%	3,404	1,950	1,454	11,460	7,250	4,210
Fresno	23.3%	1,836	1,309	527	6,035	3,788	2,247
San Bernardino	25.2%	4,940	3,213	1,727	14,691	9,104	5,587
Kern	26.9%	2,324	1,614	710	6,305	3,785	2,520

Source: CDCR (2012, 2013); CPOC (2013).

* Realignment Percentage = Realigned Offenders / (Total Realigned Offenders + Total State-Managed Offenders).

**Reduction in new prison admissions from third quarter of 2011 to second quarter of 2012.

If Realignment contributed to the increase in violent offenses reported to city law enforcement in the first half of 2012, one would expect counties with higher percentages of realigned offenders to show the biggest increases in violent crimes. Table 2 compares changes in violent and property crime to the Realignment percentage (an indicator of Realignment’s implementation) for the 21 counties containing large cities.

In the first six months of 2012, the FBI reported that 40 California cities showed increases and 29 showed decreases in violent crime rates compared to the first half of 2011. Changes ranged from a 70.4% increase in Carlsbad in San Diego County to a 30.6% decline in Huntington Beach in Orange County. 13 counties, with an aggregate urban population of 9.6 million, showed increases in urban violent crime rates and 8 counties, with an aggregate urban population of 8.4 million, showed decreases in urban violent crime rates. The changes ranged from a 33.4% increase in San Mateo County to a 13.2% decline in Santa Barbara County (see Table 2). For property crime rates during the same period, 53 cities showed increases and 16 showed decreases.

The 11 counties that implemented Realignment the least (“Low-Realignment”) were locally managing an average of 15.5% of their formerly state-supervised offenders and parolees, while

the 10 counties that implemented Realignment the most (“High-Realignment”) were managing an average of 22.5% of their offenders and parolees locally. The Low-Realignment counties averaged a 5.7% increase in violent crime rate and a 9.8% increase in property crime, while the High-Realignment counties averaged only a 3.3% increase in violent crime and a 7.3% increase in property crime.

Table 2. Changes in crime rates versus changes in Realignment rate by county in 2012

<u>County (number of cities)</u>	Change in reported crime rates, 2012 vs. 2011			2012 Urban Population
	Realignment Percentage*	Violent Crimes	Property Crimes	
<u>Lower implementation of Realignment</u>				
San Joaquin (1)	11.4%	24.1%	-2.0%	295,707
Alameda (4)	12.0%	17.3%	19.5%	874,975
Sacramento (3)	13.8%	4.7%	3.2%	706,928
Contra Costa (3)	14.1%	15.6%	19.6%	331,926
Sonoma (1)	15.3%	-10.4%	11.8%	168,841
Monterey (1)	15.8%	-1.9%	14.3%	152,401
Los Angeles (16)	16.1%	-5.0%	2.4%	6,227,811
San Diego (6)	16.3%	6.8%	6.8%	2,094,316
San Francisco (1)	16.3%	6.5%	12.2%	812,538
Tulare (1)	16.6%	1.1%	5.0%	126,864
Solano (2)	17.2%	3.8%	15.1%	222,307
Average, 11 Counties (39)	15.5%	5.7%	9.8%	12,014,614
<u>Higher implementation of Realignment</u>				
Santa Clara (3)	18.3%	11.3%	23.9%	1,233,081
Ventura (3)	18.6%	-0.6%	7.4%	435,587
Stanislaus (1)	19.8%	20.8%	24.5%	203,085
San Mateo (1)	20.4%	33.4%	-9.9%	102,593
Riverside (5)	20.6%	-4.4%	6.5%	867,603
Santa Barbara (1)	21.0%	-13.2%	-10.8%	100,199
Orange (8)	22.9%	0.9%	10.2%	1,646,673
Fresno (1)	23.3%	-5.3%	-5.4%	505,009
San Bernardino (6)	25.2%	5.7%	14.0%	966,869
Kern (1)	26.9%	-1.5%	16.9%	354,480
Average, 10 Counties (30)	22.5%	+3.3%	+7.3%	6,415,179

Sources: FBI (2013); CDCR (2012); Department of Finance (2012). The FBI reporting period is January through June, 2012. *The Realignment percentage is detailed in Table 1 and covers the first 9 months through June 30, 2011. Numbers in parentheses represent number of cities analyzed.

Realigning more prisoners, then, was not connected to increases in crime. For example, Sacramento County and Alameda County, which have similar urban populations and realigned at similar rates, saw sharply different increases in violent and property crimes. Further, 5 of the 8 counties showing decreases in urban violent crime in 2012 had larger than average percentages of realigned offenders. The city of Los Angeles showed a substantial decrease in violent crime in the first half of 2012 (down 7.9%), which, according to figures from the police department, persisted throughout the year and into 2013 (LAPD, 2013).

Conclusion

Critics of realignment such as the Criminal Justice Legal Foundation cite anecdotes and assertions to charge that “mounting number of murders and other violent crimes” are “occurring as the result of Governor Jerry Brown's ‘Public Safety Realignment’” (CJLF, 2012). However, this analysis of the first full crime figures for the Realignment period provided by the FBI (2013) for California’s 69 largest cities in 21 counties does not support these alarms.

Realigned offenders managed by local jurisdictions do not appear disproportionately responsible for reported crime increases in 40 California cities in the first half of 2012. If they were, one would expect counties with higher proportions of realigned offenders to show larger increases in violent and property crime than counties with fewer realigned offenders. As shown, the opposite is true. The 11 counties that realigned offenders at lower rates showed *greater increases* in violent and property crime than the 10 counties that realigned offenders at higher rates. The 8 counties whose cities showed decreased violent crime in 2012 had realigned offenders at a higher rate than those that showed increased violence.

In addition to representing lower-level offenders, the number of realigned offenders (46,000 as of June 2012) is far lower than the number of state-supervised parolees (71,000) present in local communities. However, many factors influence crime rates, and the possibility remains that Realignment is one of them. It is important to note the data analyzed in this report represent only the first six-month period of Realignment, therefore the question should be revisited as more data become available. Understanding why some California cities showed increased violent and property crime in early 2012 and others showed declines, and why counties continue to show such wide variation in their implementation of Realignment, require further, careful analysis.

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Please note: Each year, every county submits their data to the official statewide databases maintained by appointed governmental bodies. While every effort is made to review data for accuracy and to correct information upon revision, CJCJ cannot be responsible for data reporting errors made at the county, state, or national level.

Appendix A: Crime changes in 69 Major California Cities

2012	Change in rate, 2012 vs. 2011		
	All index	Violent	Property
ANAHEIM	10.6%	-3.0%	12.6%
ANTIOCH	55.2%	43.7%	57.8%
BAKERSFIELD	14.1%	-2.0%	16.2%
BERKELEY	6.5%	16.5%	5.5%
BURBANK	-9.4%	1.0%	-10.3%
CARLSBAD	11.4%	70.4%	6.3%
CHULA VISTA	-2.3%	-17.6%	-0.1%
CONCORD	9.4%	-0.1%	10.5%
CORONA	17.7%	7.5%	18.3%
COSTA MESA	12.0%	11.8%	12.0%
DALY CITY	-6.8%	32.7%	-10.4%
DOWNEY	-16.2%	-5.3%	-17.3%
EL CAJON	0.0%	-25.6%	5.2%
ELK GROVE	-5.7%	-9.4%	-5.1%
EL MONTE	-4.0%	-12.7%	-2.4%
ESCONDIDO	19.5%	31.8%	17.7%
FAIRFIELD	9.7%	7.4%	10.1%
FONTANA	13.6%	22.2%	12.2%
FREMONT	8.2%	-25.5%	11.7%
FRESNO	-5.9%	-5.9%	-5.9%
FULLERTON	17.4%	43.2%	14.8%
GARDEN GROVE	15.1%	7.8%	16.0%
GLENDALE	-12.4%	-16.1%	-12.1%
HAYWARD	19.5%	17.5%	19.7%
HUNTINGTON BEACH	10.7%	-30.6%	14.5%
INGLEWOOD	-0.7%	-11.9%	3.1%
IRVINE	-5.6%	-11.2%	-5.4%
LANCASTER	19.7%	16.5%	20.5%
LONG BEACH	9.7%	2.2%	11.4%
LOS ANGELES	-1.0%	-8.4%	0.8%
MODESTO	23.4%	20.2%	23.8%
MORENO VALLEY	6.4%	-10.9%	8.9%
MURRIETA	0.7%	0.8%	0.7%
NORWALK	21.8%	20.8%	22.0%
OAKLAND	22.6%	19.6%	23.5%
OCEANSIDE	4.1%	8.1%	3.5%
ONTARIO	3.2%	-2.5%	3.8%
ORANGE	3.6%	17.6%	2.9%
OXNARD	6.5%	-8.4%	9.2%
PALMDALE	6.7%	1.9%	7.9%
PASADENA	-7.6%	-15.0%	-6.7%
POMONA	7.5%	-0.2%	9.1%
RANCHO CUCAMONGA	4.2%	-0.3%	4.6%
RIALTO	22.2%	11.4%	23.9%
RICHMOND	-0.4%	1.6%	-0.9%
RIVERSIDE	1.8%	-4.8%	2.7%
ROSEVILLE	-9.9%	8.3%	-11.3%
SACRAMENTO	6.0%	6.1%	6.0%
SALINAS	10.3%	-2.4%	13.6%
SAN BERNARDINO	23.5%	2.9%	28.4%
SAN DIEGO	6.7%	8.0%	6.4%
SAN FRANCISCO	10.8%	5.9%	11.6%
SAN JOSE	23.1%	11.2%	24.9%

2012	Change in rate, 2012 vs 2011		
	All index	Violent	Property
SANTA ANA	4.5%	-2.5%	6.0%
SANTA CLARA	14.6%	8.9%	15.0%
SANTA CLARITA	10.5%	46.4%	7.3%
SANTA MARIA	-11.9%	-13.7%	-11.3%
SANTA ROSA	7.4%	-10.9%	11.2%
SIMI VALLEY	18.0%	38.6%	16.6%
STOCKTON	2.7%	23.4%	-2.5%
SUNNYVALE	16.2%	2.0%	17.2%
TEMECULA	-0.2%	14.7%	-0.8%
THOUSAND OAKS	8.7%	26.4%	7.5%
TORRANCE	-4.7%	-16.0%	-3.9%
VALLEJO	14.7%	1.1%	17.1%
VENTURA	3.9%	2.6%	4.0%
VICTORVILLE	-2.0%	-0.9%	-2.2%
VISALIA	4.1%	0.6%	4.5%
<u>WEST COVINA</u>	<u>7.5%</u>	<u>-7.4%</u>	<u>8.9%</u>
All cities	6.8%	2.6%	7.6%

Source: FBI (2013).

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