

Case Study

**Lessons Learned:**  
*The Santa Cruz County Story*

*A product of the Jail Alternatives Initiative (JAI), a collaborative partnership with the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, the Earl Warren Institute on Law and Social Policy at the University of California, Berkeley Law School, the Santa Cruz County Probation Department and the Placer County Probation Department.*

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## Introduction

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Within California, 58 counties operate 58 diverse local criminal justice systems. Some counties rely heavily on the state prison system, while others invest in local practices and alternatives to incarceration. A few of these self-reliant counties are demonstrating positive crime reduction and public safety trends. This indicates their success in implementing deliberate strategies to reduce the number of inmates housed locally and within the state prison system.

Santa Cruz is one of those self-reliant counties, where the dedication of local administrators has improved the county's justice system ("Santa Cruz" refers to the county here, unless the city is specified). Consequently, the county is more prepared to manage the increase in local offender populations resulting from realignment under Assembly Bill 109 (AB 109).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the county's Jail Alternatives Initiative<sup>2</sup> (JAI) model helps anticipate the potential impacts of AB 109 and to develop systemic interventions necessary for successful implementation of the policy. JAI facilitates a continuous improvement process that is data-driven and can evolve over time. Santa Cruz engages in ongoing multi-agency collaborations that enhance the system-wide data analysis process to initiate deliberate interventions within the local criminal justice system

Santa Cruz County highlights the importance of a data driven and structured decision making approach to criminal justice. The county focuses on systemic factors and outcomes, rather than exclusively on individual offender behavior; resulting in positive and hopeful local trends. In light of realignment, California counties should look to Santa Cruz as a model for systems change that reduces unnecessary incarceration, while emphasizing due process and offender accountability. Partnerships between practitioners and California-based data experts allow local justice administrators to identify and implement appropriate alternatives to incarceration. This collaborative approach is rooted in cultivating an efficient system that promotes long-term public safety.

~ Daniel Macallair  
CJCJ Executive Director

This publication explores the Santa Cruz experience through an analysis of data trends and implications for deliberate local strategies. Further, the study understands how Santa Cruz best utilized systemic interventions. This serves as a basis for concluding how California counties can improve their justice systems and better prepare for the increased local responsibility over offenders, following AB 109.

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<sup>1</sup> In an effort to address overcrowding in California's prisons and assist in alleviating the state's financial crisis, the Public Safety Realignment Act (Assembly Bill 109) was signed into law on April 4, 2011, with implementation on October 1, 2011. AB109 transfers responsibility for supervising specified lower level inmates and parolees from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to counties. The population targeted to serve time locally includes the non-violent, non-serious, non-sex offender group.

<sup>2</sup> JAI is a collaborative partnership with the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, the Earl Warren Institute on Law and Social Policy at the University of California, Berkeley Law School, the Santa Cruz County Probation Department, and the Placer County Probation Department. A publication focused on JAI has an anticipated release date in July 2012 at [www.cjcj.org](http://www.cjcj.org).

## **Methodology**

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This case study derives from a larger data analysis conducted by CJCJ in conjunction with the Santa Cruz Probation and Sheriff Departments, and the Superior Court. The following data sources were utilized for this case study: crime and arrest figures are from the Criminal Justice Statistics Center (CJSC) (2011), jail statistics are from CJSC and the Corrections Standards Authority (CSA) (2011), and prison figures are from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) (2011) tabulations. Populations used to calculate rates are from the 2010 census of population by the US Bureau of the Census (2011) and the California Department of Finance (2011).

The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department and Probation Department provided detailed data sets on arrests, offenses, demographics, criminal justice proceedings, jail terms, and probation. This covers 60,000 arrests and 354,000 case processings for 25,235 individual probation cases spanning from July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2010.

These files were merged using case coding numbers common to both files. Of these, 12,085 individual cases were selected based on completeness of demographic data relative to offense, arrest, booking and release, and overall criminal justice processing information. This sample of cases closely resembled the total data set in demographics and offense categories. The merged file was then merged with the probation file for all cases, including drug offense cases, after removing duplicate cases from both. Finally, the SPSS<sup>3</sup> program sorted and matched coding numbers common to both files. Merging disparate files may entail the possibility of error, although the analyses of randomly picked cases and overall statistical results did not detect any discrepancies. For example, the resulting merged file for drug offenders yielded 3,163 cases for which all demographic and system information was available. The matching of both case numbers and the resulting statistical patterns (race, gender, offense, residence, etc.) indicates this merged sample produced valid statistics that are representative of the entire data set.

## **Historical Crime, Incarceration, and Probation Trends**

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Santa Cruz historically faced the challenge of jail overcrowding after the construction of its Main Jail in 1981. Jail crowding was common throughout California as incarceration significantly increased since the 1970s. Incarceration rates continued to rise even after crime declines in the 1990s and 2000s, which demonstrates that offender behavior does not completely drive the state's current jail and prison overcrowding problem. Over-reliance on incarceration is a systemic problem requiring a system-driven solution. This publication highlights Santa Cruz's methods that inform their approach to the local justice system.

In 2004, Santa Cruz justice administrators responded to a county grand jury report, noting unsafe and crowded conditions in the local jail, by forming a committee to develop strategies that addressed the problem. The Santa Cruz County Probation and Sheriff's Departments deliberately implemented programs with modest fiscal investment and limited data analysis, which decreased the jail population without jeopardizing public safety. Similarly, Santa Cruz's

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<sup>3</sup> SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is a computer program utilized for data analysis.

juvenile hall, also overcrowded at 355 inmate-jail-days over capacity in 1996, became a Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) model site in 1997. This local reform effort utilized data-driven strategies, among others, to reduce its reliance on local detention for youth offenders. The above research-based reform efforts instigated notable changes in the county's local incarceration and detention practices.

### ***Addressing Modern Changes and Challenges***

Santa Cruz demographics, crime patterns, and criminal justice responses have undergone more radical changes in the last 20 to 30 years than in the previous century. This subsection contains a thorough examination of arrest, probation, and jail population data over the last three decades. This statistical analysis offers opportunities for testing the inaugurating of new and dynamic reforms locally.

The analysis produced the following findings:

- As the county expanded by 32,000 new residents over the last two decades, arrests dropped, jail and prison populations plummeted, probation caseloads rose, and streets became safer (as measured by crimes reported to law enforcement).
- As the county experienced larger than average declines in jailings and imprisonments, it showed sharp increases in felony probation cases. This suggests that the county has shifted emphasis away from bricks-and-mortar crime containment and toward community-based supervision of a significant portion of felony offenders.
- Santa Cruz's jail population, including unsentenced inmates held without having been convicted of a criminal offense, remain significantly below the state average, a result directly attributable to the expansion of pre-trial services in 2005.
- Analysis of 12,085 recent cases further suggests that the growing proportion of drug/alcohol offenders, both direct violators and those whose drug/alcohol abuse contributed to other offenses, may benefit from more community-based supervision and evidence-based interventions as opposed to incarceration.

Santa Cruz is a tourist attraction (some 3 million people every year visit the Boardwalk) and a college center (the University of California's 17,000 students in a city with a population of 55,000); however, these populations do not significantly impact local crime trends. Both examination of arrestees' residence and comparison of local versus out-of-county residents who suffer in-county homicides, traffic fatalities, and drug overdose deaths—three types of mortality associated with crime—indicates that the overwhelming majority of crime is home-grown.

### ***Historical Arrest Trends***

During the last 35 years, Santa Cruz joined most of California in a generalized decline in crime and arrest rates that, after a temporary increase in the late 1980s and early 1990s, became especially pronounced over the last two decades. The major contributor to arrest trends is direct

drug and alcohol offenses (the indirect contribution of drugs and alcohol to other offenses is not included here). Overall arrest patterns indicate a shift away from violent and property offenses, both of which declined sharply, and toward drug offenses. There is also a significant shift in arrests away from alcohol and toward illegal drugs that parallels a sharp reduction in drunken driving deaths and increase in drug overdose deaths (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Santa Cruz DUI vs. drug overdose deaths and population-adjusted change in death rates, 1980-2009**

<u>Number of:</u>	<u>1980-84</u>	<u>1985-89</u>	<u>1990-94</u>	<u>1995-99</u>	<u>2000-04</u>	<u>2005-09</u>	<u>Change</u>
DUI deaths	112	111	48	36	40	48	-67%
Drug deaths	68	118	105	137	160	195	+118%

Sources: California Highway Patrol (2011); Center for Health Statistics (2010).

However, within drug offense categories, Santa Cruz displays major divergences over the last 20 years. Arrest rates of Latinos for marijuana possession have risen 6 times faster than for whites (both adjusted for population changes by race). In contrast, “dangerous drug” possession (such as cocaine and methamphetamine) arrest rates rose sharply for whites (248%), but fell for Latinos (-5%) (CJSC, 2011; US Census Bureau, 2011).

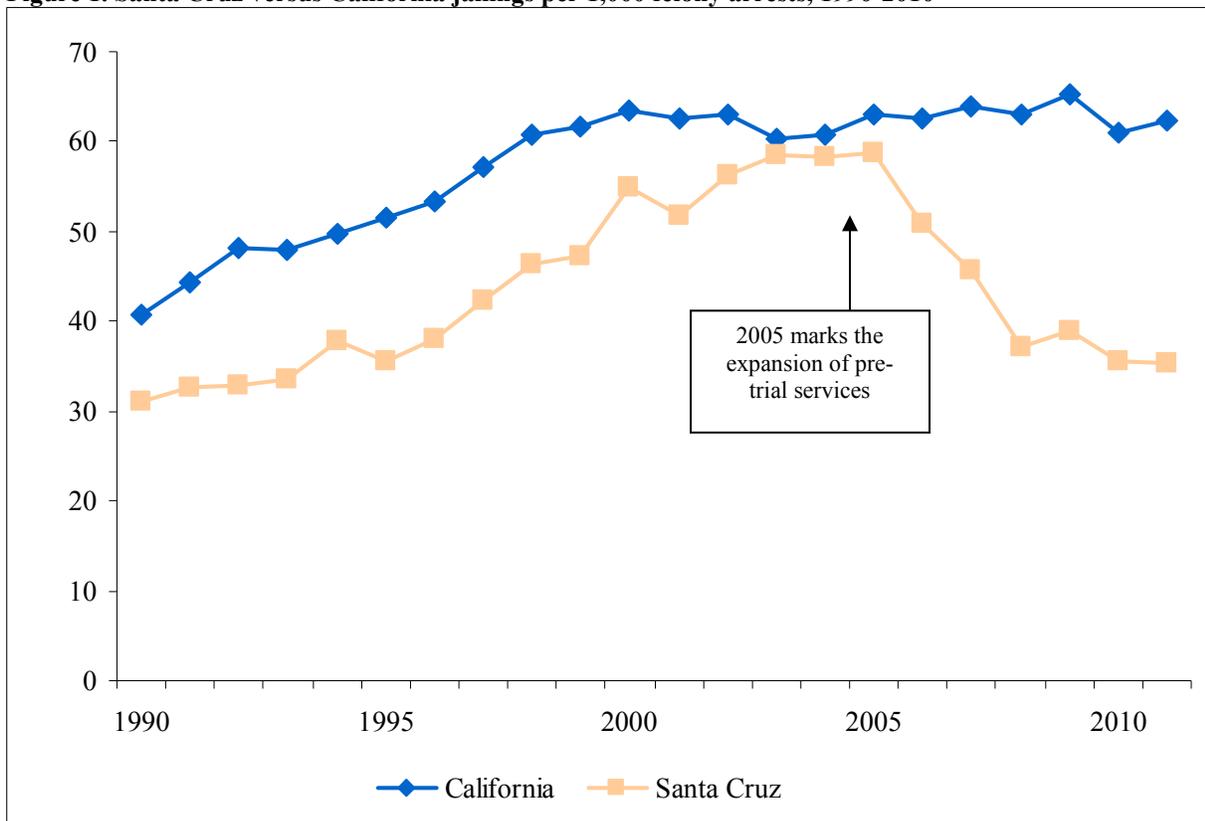
Drug arrests have demonstrated a significant increase in Santa Cruz, from 5% of all arrests in 1980, to 22% of adult arrests in 2009 (CJSC, 2011; US Census Bureau, 2011). The growth in drug arrests partly reflects a real increase in drug abuse and drug-involved crime both locally and nationally. Whether increased policing coinciding with the national “war on drugs” also contributed to more local drug arrests is not clear from the data available, though Santa Cruz law enforcement has cited special crackdowns on particular drug types in particular years (such as on narcotic drugs in 1990).

The shift in the criminal justice demographics has significant implications for the jail and probation populations. A study of the Santa Cruz “non-non-non” (non-violent, non-serious, non-sex), low risk offenders who went to prison in 2010 prior to the enactment of the AB 109 realignment legislation, revealed that they were primarily chronic drug users or property offenders with drug issues (communication with Scott MacDonald). Addressing drug offenders will be a key component in the ongoing implementation of AB 109 in Santa Cruz. Through the utilization of data-driven analysis, justice administrators can target deliberate interventions for this specific offender population.

### ***Historical Jail Trends***

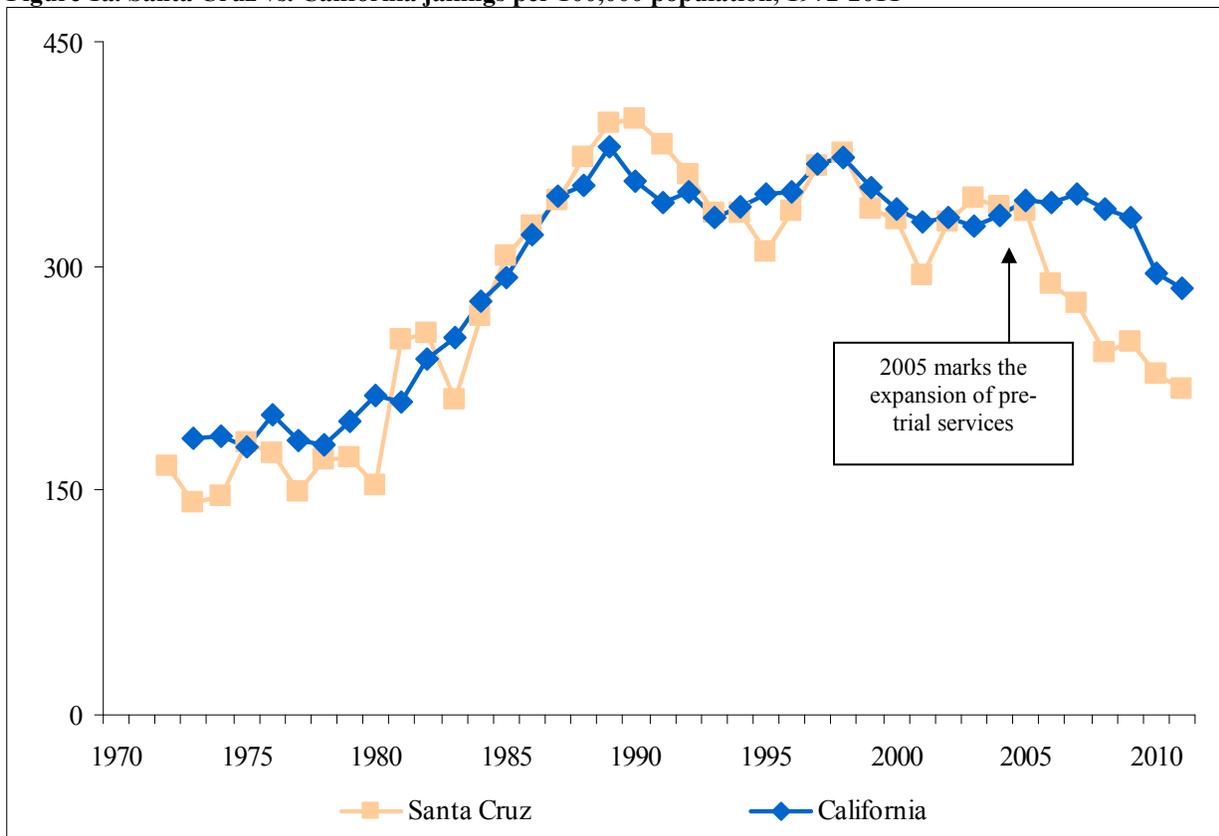
As the county’s adult population (age 18-69) grew by 32,000, from 1990 to 2010, its adult arrest and jail populations plummeted (U.S. Census Bureau 1995; 2010). The jail inmate drop in the 1990s paralleled a sharp decline in arrests, but the continuing decline in the 2000s accompanied an arrest increase (See Figures 1 and 1a).

**Figure 1. Santa Cruz versus California jailings per 1,000 felony arrests, 1990-2010**



Sources: Corrections Standards Authority (2010, 2010a); US Census Bureau (2011).

**Figure 1a. Santa Cruz vs. California jailings per 100,000 population, 1972-2011**



Sources: Corrections Standards Authority (2010, 2010a); US Census Bureau (2011).

A second important trend reducing Santa Cruz jail populations has been the avoidance of confining non-sentenced individuals. Statewide, non-sentenced inmates increased from a little over half of all jail inmates 20 years ago to over 70% today. However, in Santa Cruz, non-sentenced inmates remain at about half the jail population.

**Since 1990 California’s non-sentenced jail population has risen from 53.2% to 71.4% in 2010, while Santa Cruz remains significantly below the state average with a non-sentenced jail population of 53.8% in 2010 (CSA, 2010 & 2010a; US Census Bureau, 2011).**

Santa Cruz has implemented pre-sentence release alternatives to jail holding for non-sentenced individuals, a key element of preserving jail capacity through deliberate Santa Cruz Probation Department programs. This reduces the jail population and enhances arrestees’ constitutional right to due process. In 2006, the Department’s pretrial service program was expanded to include additional staff, which increased the release recommendations based on validated, objective risk criteria. Currently, the pretrial service unit recommends five types of release: pre-arraignment release, own-recognition, supervised release, intensive supervised release, and post-sentence electronic monitoring (Santa Cruz Probation Department, 2010). A well-designed pretrial service program allows Santa Cruz to remain significantly below the state average in number and proportion of non-sentenced inmates.

**By 2010, Santa Cruz ranked sixth from the bottom among the state’s 58 counties in proportion of adults incarcerated.**  
(CDRC, 2011; CSA, 2010, 2010a; US Census Bureau 2011)

Further, the Santa Cruz Probation Department implemented the Warrant Reduction Project (WRAP) (Foglesong & Rengifo, 2006) after a Vera Institute of Justice report found that probationers accounted for a significant portion of jail bed-days. This project reconnects probationers, who are on the verge of triggering an arrest warrant, with probation officers and the courts. The Probation Department collaborates with a local community-based organization, Friends Outside, to assist probationers in maintaining contact with department staff. This project generates positive results and decreases the cost of incarceration and court system processing. Both the Pew Foundation and the California State Association of Counties recognize this as an innovative program.

**The Warrant Reduction Project (WRAP) was a recipient of the CSAC Challenge Award in 2011.**  
(The County Voice, 2012)

Santa Cruz did not reduce its jail populations by sending more felons to the state’s prison system. Over the last 18 years, Santa Cruz’s state imprisonment rates per adult arrest rose much slower than for the state as a whole (Table 2). Since a peak in the early 2000s, the county’s incarceration (prison and jail) rates declined significantly. This trend appears tied to intentional policies, such as its pretrial release program, to reduce jail overcrowding. In sum, Santa Cruz’s dedication to local programs, including those discussed above, limited the county’s reliance on both local and state incarceration. This is a major benefit in the current transition from state to local offender management under AB 109’s realignment mandate.

**Table 2. Santa Cruz versus California state adult imprisonment trends**

	CDCR imprisonment rates		Total incarceration rates (prison + jail)	
	<u>Santa Cruz</u>	<u>California</u>	<u>Santa Cruz</u>	<u>California</u>
1995	43.1	94.1	78.7	145.7
2000	66.7	133.7	121.5	197.2
2005	62.2	127.2	120.9	190.2
2010	48.2	137.6	83.7	198.6

Note: Rates are per 1,000 adult arrests. Sources: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (2011); Corrections Standards Authority (2010, 2010a); US Census Bureau (2011).

Santa Cruz’s substantial decline in incarcerations, compared to the state as a whole over the last 20 years, did not lead to higher crime rates. While the decline in all Part I (serious, violent, and property offense) crime reports appears to have been slightly slower in Santa Cruz (down 45% from 1990 to 2010) than statewide (down 52%), Santa Cruz adult arrest rates (down 48% from 1990 to 2010) fell faster than those statewide (down 41%) (CJSC, 2011; FBI, 2011).

Santa Cruz’s reduced reliance on local and state incarceration demonstrates that incarceration does not need to be the dominant component of a local criminal justice action plan. On the other hand, investment in community-based alternatives, which promote long-term public safety, can be an essential component of a local realignment plan.

### ***Historical Probation Trends***

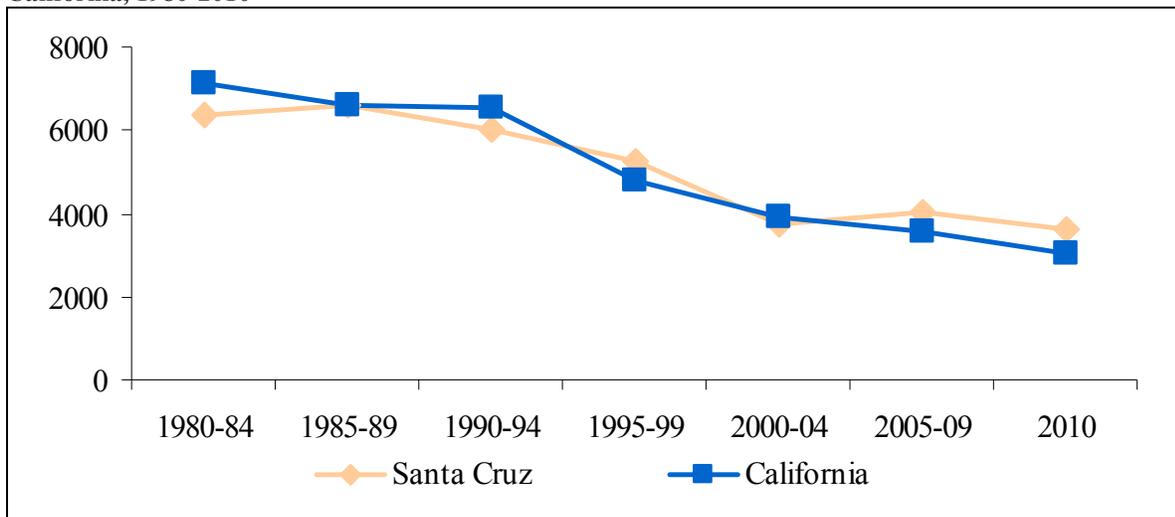
During the past 20 years, Santa Cruz probation cases displayed major changes. First, there was a significant decrease in probation cases for misdemeanor arrestees in 1992, followed by a gradual rise back to previous levels. Second, and more significant, a higher proportion of felony arrestees are now managed as probation cases. This may have contributed to the decline in jailings and imprisonments, both due to sentences of probation rather than jail and the earlier release of felons from jail to probation. The county’s probation department maintains higher case loads with fewer resources when compared to the state average for both misdemeanor and felony cases. In 2009 dollars (the latest fiscal data), Santa Cruz spent approximately \$3,146 for each of its 5,077 probation cases, less than half the average of \$6,775 spent by California as a whole on 331,270 probation cases statewide. Among the major counties with 200,000 population or more, Santa Cruz ranked the fourth lowest in per-case probation expenditures and third highest in probation cases per probation department employee (40.6) (Criminal Justice Statistics Center, 2011, Table 7, 10).

This is important to consider in light of realignment and the additional responsibility for supervision of the “non-non-non” offender population at the local level. State policy makers should consider this data when determining funding allocations for realignment.

### ***Historical Crime Trends***

The county’s reduced reliance on jail and state prison does not result from low crime rates. Over the past decade, the county has seen higher serious crime rates than the state average. When considering the Santa Cruz experience, it is important to understand these crime trends in conjunction with deliberate interventions by the Probation and Sheriff’s Department.

**Figure 2. All Part I (serious violent and property) offenses reported to law enforcement, Santa Cruz vs California, 1980-2010**



Note: Rates are per 100,000 population. Source: Criminal Justice Statistics Center (2011).

To understand Santa Cruz’s crime trends in relationship to its rates of incarceration, data was compared across all major counties from 1995-2010. **The correlation showed crime changes are not related to incarceration changes.** This data demonstrates why Santa Cruz’s marginally higher serious crime rate cannot be linked to its de-emphasis on incarceration. For example, Kern County imprisons at 2.7 times the levels of Santa Cruz, yet Kern experienced greater increases in crime rates. Conversely, San Francisco County experienced one of the largest crime declines in the state (down 47%) accompanied by one of the state’s largest reductions in prison and jail populations (down 46%). Counties with complex criminal justice populations can implement deliberate interventions that reduce reliance on incarceration without compromising public safety.

This analysis, along with highlights of successful local interventions, indicates that Santa Cruz’s successes can be replicated in counties across California. During this new era of realignment, many county justice administrators must develop feasible methods to redirect their local justice systems and produce long-term reductions in incarceration, without compromising public safety or best offender management practices. The deliberate interventions in Santa Cruz allow the county to better prepare for increased responsibility with “non-non-non” offenders through realignment. Santa Cruz Sheriff and Probation department administrators continue to re-evaluate their local arrest, crime, jail, and probation trends to determine if new interventions should be implemented.

### **Analysis of County 3-year Snapshot, 2007-2010**

An analysis of data from Santa Cruz’s Probation and Sheriff’s department, for the period July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2010, demonstrates the county’s use of pretrial mechanisms and a variety of sentencing outcomes. The detailed files compiled by the Santa Cruz County Sheriff’s and Probation departments, recoded by CJCJ and reduced to 12,085 cases for which all variables are complete, indicate that 91% of the arrests are local residents. Whites and Latinos account for

95% of cases; African Americans have the highest case rates, but comprise only 4% of the total population.

### ***Sentences and Release Processes***

Santa Cruz maintains a lower non-sentenced inmate population, both per-capita and per arrest, than the state average. Release on a bond or after other pretrial instances require little jail time, typically a few hours to a week. Thus, more than half of the pretrial cases necessitate only brief jailings. Non-sentenced inmate proportions rose only modestly in Santa Cruz due to policy decisions that emphasize more robust pre-trial services, along with frequent decisions to release without bail, and expedite court hearings.

Jail time accumulates for the cases requiring court attention. Release by the court on the defendant's own recognizance, which occurs in about 9% of cases, typically occurs after about a week of jail stay. About 30% of arrestees are sentenced to incarceration, and these occupy 90% of jail days. Nearly all court sentencing to probation are expedited, with most occurring after a week of jail time. Release to programs such as alcohol, drug, mental health, and other treatment regimens usually occur after an average of 50 days in jail; nearly all are accomplished within 90 days. In Santa Cruz as elsewhere, the waiting list to get into programs contributes to more jail time. Certain offenders are only eligible for release to programs through judicial order and after serving a specified time in jail. After this period of confinement, Santa Cruz's pre-trial services unit expedites placement into community based programs. Once eligible for release, the offender's waiting period is significantly reduced to 10 days or less.

The two common adjudications most straining jail capacities are release after serving the sentence time and holding inmates before transfer to state prison. Release after the sentence time served often indicates a delay in bringing the defendant to court; an average of 66 days. Holding inmates for transfer to state prison occupies the most jail time; an average of 108 days. These two outcomes, which presumably involve the most serious offenders, constitute only 12% of cases, but account for 56% of total jail days. Fully 20% of all jail capacity holds the 3% of inmates who are headed for state prison (See Table 3).

The detailed snapshot below provides practitioners and researchers with an opportunity to explore the composition of this local jail population. Such data analysis is a necessity for counties as they continue to cultivate their local response to realignment.

**Table 3. Jail terms by most common release mechanisms, ranked by average jail time**

Release mechanism	Percent of total releases	Mean days jailed	Percent involving jail terms of:							Percent of total jail days
			None	1 day	2-7 days	8-31 days	1-3 months	3-12 months	1 year+	
<b>Pretrial releases</b>										
DA letter to appear	1.4%	0.1	99%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0.01%
Citation OR*	1.0%	0.2	97%	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0.02%
Sheriff's OR	36.3%	0.4	86%	12%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.8%
Cash Bail	1.0%	1.4	67%	21%	8%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0.1%
Bondsman	17.2%	3.4	69%	20%	7%	4%	1%	0%	0%	3.5%
Supervised pretrial release	3.7%	4.4	35%	30%	29%	5%	2%	1%	0%	1.0%
Release to probation	0.9%	6.6	3%	6%	77%	15%	4%	0%	0%	0.4%
Court OR	8.8%	7.2	5%	7%	76%	12%	2%	1%	0%	3.9%
<u>Other pretrial release</u>	1.0%	<u>3.6</u>	<u>43%</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>28%</u>	<u>2%</u>	<u>2%</u>	<u>1%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<u>0.2%</u>
Total pretrial release	71.3%	2.3	68%	14%	15%	3%	1%	0%	0%	10.0%
<b>Posttrial releases</b>										
Conditional sentence	1.4%	9.1	1%	2%	78%	17%	5%	1%	0%	0.8%
Dismissed	1.1%	11.3	1%	4%	70%	28%	5%	2%	0%	0.8%
Probation	4.1%	16.6	1%	3%	65%	27%	6%	4%	0%	4.2%
Other specified release	2.2%	22.7	12%	4%	44%	26%	10%	6%	0%	3.0%
Released to return	1.6%	24.7	18%	2%	40%	23%	14%	7%	1%	2.4%
Released to other agency	1.5%	46.9	1%	1%	44%	32%	15%	18%	1%	4.5%
Released to program	1.8%	49.8	0%	0%	14%	39%	35%	16%	0%	5.6%
Time served	8.9%	65.5	2%	1%	19%	25%	29%	26%	1%	35.7%
5-day early release	1.2%	68.8	1%	0%	17%	33%	43%	21%	1%	4.9%
Release to Immigration	0.9%	83.1	0%	0%	23%	18%	28%	34%	1%	4.7%
Release to CDCR	3.0%	107.7	0%	0%	8%	20%	36%	34%	5%	20.2%
<u>All other posttrial release</u>	1.0%	<u>51.5</u>	<u>26%</u>	<u>4%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>20%</u>	<u>23%</u>	<u>19%</u>	<u>2%</u>	<u>3.2%</u>
Total posttrial release	28.7%	50.9	4%	2%	33%	26%	22%	18%	1%	90.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department and Probation Department (2011). Based on a representative sample of 11,977 cases and 194,027 total jail days. \*"OR" refers to "own recognizance."

### ***Offenses, Time Served, and Release***

In Santa Cruz as in many jurisdictions, more than half of jail time is consumed by violent, property, and drug felonies. More than one-fourth of all offenses involve misdemeanor alcohol violations (chiefly DUI or drunk in public), which rarely go to court and typically involve no or only overnight jail time. These offenses occupy less than 5% of jail days. Felony and misdemeanor drug offenses comprise 28% of cases and jail time. This involves considerably more court attention. Misdemeanor drug possessors spend an average of 12 days in jail, a longer time than expected for a minor offense. This may result from the fact that they are more likely to be repeat offenders and/or experience delays in finding treatment. **That a third of jail capacity is utilized on direct drug and alcohol violations indicates that expanded use of treatment and probation may conserve jail space.** Data shows 13% of misdemeanor drug possession

offenders now are sent to programs or probation. A key element of future reform in Santa Cruz includes systemic interventions and innovative approaches that utilize community programs to divert certain low-level drug offenders from incarceration.

Property offenders, more than half of whom go to court, account for one-sixth of cases and one-fourth of jail days. Violent offenses comprise 21% of cases and 31% of jail days. Thus, Santa Cruz treats violent offenses and property crimes similarly in terms of sentencing and jail time. Felony violence offenders average about a month in jail, though 7% eventually go to prison. Whether this is due to property offenders being more likely to be chronic offenders is not clear, but there may be opportunities to avail more alternative, non-incarceration sentencing options for this population.

### ***Drug Offense Trends***

Sentenced drug offenders in Santa Cruz spend significantly more time on probation than confined in a local jail facility. This is reflective of Santa Cruz's intention to de-emphasize incarceration as the sole response for drug offenders. However, as discussed above, drug offenders and property offenders with drug addictions tend to repeatedly cycle through the criminal justice system. Justice administrators have designated drug-involved offenders a focus area as the county proceeds with their response to realignment.

Length of time in jail or on probation varies by race and gender. For example, African American drug offenders served the highest proportion of time in jail, followed by Latinos and Whites. Latinos served the longest sentences for felonies, African Americans for misdemeanors. Whites, who accounted for 67% of drug felonies and 74% of drug misdemeanors, served the shortest time in jail overall regardless of offense type. Additionally, female drug offenders spend less time in jail and on probation than male drug offenders (Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department and Probation Department, 2011, based on representative sample of 3,163 drug cases).

Santa Cruz supervises these drug offenders through probation for 97% of their adjudicated time, rather than as jail inmates or state prisoners. This preserves incarceration space for those more serious offenders who require incarceration. The county releases 45% of drug arrestees after spending no time or just overnight in jail. Nearly all of these are released by the sheriff (half with bail, half with no bail); the remainder are released under special pretrial release or after mere citation. Of drug arrestees who are jailed for more than one day, around 20% serve out their sentence in jail. Nearly as many are released by the court after spending approximately a week in jail. Almost 17% are sent to probation after spending an average of 13 days in jail, and 9% are released to a program after jail time is served. Finally, 6% of this population are sent to state prison after an average of 65 days in jail (Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department and Probation Department, 2011; Based on representative sample of 3,163 drug cases).

Santa Cruz justice administrators are focusing resources to treat the significant issue of drug addiction in the offender population. This population is increasingly being managed locally as a result of realignment, which facilitates effective localized treatment options for addressing this public health issue. Through data analysis, Santa Cruz justice administrators will be able to target interventions shown to yield the strongest impact on this population. It is likely the other

57 counties will also see an increase in this population requiring local treatment. Thus, the deliberate interventions implemented in Santa Cruz may point to replicable solutions for other California counties. The analysis described in this publication demonstrates the value of a researcher-practitioner relationship when devising deliberate strategies to meet the challenges of realignment.

Since 2005, Santa Cruz justice administrators have utilized data-driven analysis to inform the implementation of deliberate strategies that reduce their reliance on incarceration. The success of the historic efforts of the probation and sheriff department has cultivated confidence in designing systems interventions. This is demonstrated through the county's response to realignment that focuses on establishing an array of community based alternatives, implementing evidence-based probation supervision, and developing community based intervention services (CCP, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

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Santa Cruz's story is reflective of an intentional effort by local stakeholders to improve the local justice system. Through the utilization of data-driven analysis, Santa Cruz justice administrators embraced a practitioner/researcher relationship to target specific areas within their justice system most amenable to significant changes. This case study demonstrates the county's success in employing deliberate strategies to reduce jail occupancy. For example, the Santa Cruz Probation Department's pretrial service program has allowed the county to maintain lower levels of non-sentenced individuals within their jail than the state average.

During a time of mass incarceration at both the state and local level, and now, in light of realignment, the story of Santa Cruz County provides an example of how strong local leadership combined with data-driven interventions can cultivate systemic change. If California's other counties jailed their adult arrestees at Santa Cruz's lower rate, approximately 43,000 inmates would be held in jails statewide instead of the current 74,000,

When I began my probation career 28 years ago, there were no computers in the workplace, much less data driven management. However, over the past 15 years in Santa Cruz, we have learned that data driven practices reduce unnecessary incarceration, produce good public safety outcomes, and save public dollars through the creation of alternatives to detention. In fact, our successful implementation of the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) has now been applied to the adult system.

Structured community based alternatives can change behavior to reduce recidivism and promote accountability, whereas jail, while absolutely necessary in some cases, can have an unintended consequence of making individuals more criminogenic. This is all too often the result of placing high risk and low risk offenders in crowded jails with insufficient programming.

As practitioners who manage jails and community corrections, we need to look beyond solely changing offender behavior and include a critical examination of possible systemic interventions that maximize public safety, reduce victimization, and increase probation success, while utilizing public dollars wisely.

~ Scott MacDonald  
Chief Probation Officer  
Santa Cruz County

freeing 31,000 additional jail beds to house returned state prisoners under AB 109's mandated realignment. Unfortunately, this is not the current situation in California; in fact, 34 counties lack sufficient jail capacity to incarcerate offenders affected by AB 109 (Males, 2011). As result of over-reliance on incarceration, some counties will be faced with significant challenges as they accept increased responsibility for offenders at the local level. As California moves forward with realignment, local counties could look to Santa Cruz's JAI as a model for replication across the state.

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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, CJCJ cannot be responsible for data reporting errors made at the county, state, or national level.

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