

REALIGNMENT IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

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Since the implementation of Assembly Bill 109 (AB 109), more commonly referred to as Realignment, the number of Los Angeles County prisoners confined in state prisons has decreased by 15%, and the number of felons admitted to state prison has fallen by 41% (CDCR, 2013). Further, the Los Angeles County Probation Department is supervising 10,817 individuals under Post-Community Release Supervision (PCRS) who were released from state prison and who formerly would have been managed by state parole officers (CPOC, 2013).

Before Realignment, Los Angeles County jails confined around 18,000 inmates on any given day, the Probation Department supervised around 50,000 adult felons, and state parole officers supervised around 30,000 adult prison parolees in the county—nearly 100,000 local adult felons in all, including violent ones (CDCR, 2013, 2013a; CPOC, 2013).

Table 1 shows the numbers and proportion of offenders now being managed locally due to reduced state prison admissions and the PRCS population supervised by county probation departments in the first 15 months of Realignment. As of December 31, 2012, the county had retained 8,515 offenders who formerly would have been sentenced to state prison (based on the county's prison admissions before Realignment) and assumed supervision of 10,817 state prison parolees. The total realigned population of 19,332¹ equates to 23.9% of the total population requiring supervision in Los Angeles County, a proportion very close to the state average of 24.2%.

Table 1. Realigned populations in Los Angeles County before Realignment, and as of December 31, 2012

| Area | Realignment Percentage* | Total Realigned | PRCS | Prisoner reduction | Total state managed | Prison population | Parole population |
|--------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Before | n/a | 0 | 0 | 0 | 85,291 | 54,296 | 30,995 |
| Now | 23.9% | 19,332 | 10,817 | 8,515 | 61,388 | 46,328 | 15,060 |

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

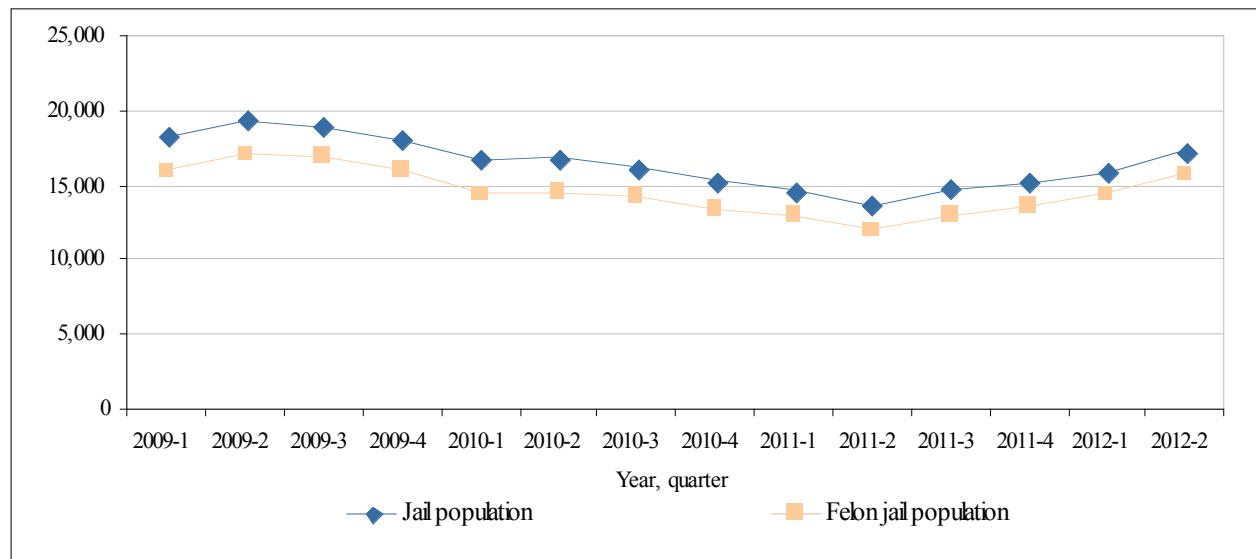
Sources: CPOC, 2013; CDCR, 2013, 2013a.

The impact of the 19,332 lower-level offenders Realignment diverted from state prison and parole to local jail, probation, and alternative supervision in Los Angeles County would be expected to increase jail and probation populations moderately. Figure 1 shows the county jail population numbers, which began rising in June 2011, 3 months before Realignment implementation. By June 30, 2012, county jail populations were approximately the same level as in 2009.

¹ This number is a maximum estimate; some prisoners and PRCS probationers represent duplicate cases that have been processed through the system more than once.



Figure 1. Los Angeles jail and felon jail populations, by quarter, 2009 through mid-2012



Source: BSCC, 2013.

Los Angeles crime trends after Realignment: Generally down

Since realigned offenders comprise less than 25% of the total population requiring supervision, one would also expect the relatively small proportion of realigned offenders to have a small, if any, effect on crime. Preliminary statistics indicate this is correct. The FBI's recent report on urban crime in the first half of 2012 showed crime (including violent crime) decreased in 8 and rose in 8 of the Los Angeles County's large cities compared to the first half of 2011 (CJCJ, 2013). In aggregate, these 16 cities, with populations totaling 6.2 million, experienced a 5% decline in violent crime and a 2.4% increase in property crime in the first half of 2012, both significantly better than the state average.

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) offense reports through March 23, 2013 (most recent as of this writing) allows comparison of crime statistics for the 18 months after Realignment's implementation (October 2011 to March 2013) with the 18-month period prior to Realignment (April 2010 to September 2011). Prior to realignment, the LAPD tabulated an average of 8,953 Part I (felony violent and property) offenses per month, including 1,728 violent felonies. After Realignment implementation began, all Part I offenses fell by 2.8%, including a large drop (-12.7%) in violent offenses.

Table 2. Los Angeles city crime, monthly averages 18 months before and 18 months after Realignment

| Monthly averages | Offenses reported to law enforcement | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------|----------|------|---------|---------|
| | Total | Violent | Homicide | Rape | Assault | Robbery |
| Before realignment (18 months) | 8,953 | 1,728 | 25 | 65 | 766 | 872 |
| After realignment (18 months) | 8,702 | 1,508 | 24 | 69 | 712 | 703 |
| Change, after vs. before | -2.8% | -12.7% | -1.6% | 5.5% | -7.1% | -19.3% |

Source: LAPD, 2013.

Realignment has minimal impact on Los Angeles County

Realignment is the major factor reducing Los Angeles County's state-imprisoned inmate population by approximately 8,000; from 54,296 as of mid-2011 to 46,328 as of the end of 2012. A considerable decline in violent crime in the county's urban areas during that period also appears to have contributed to the reduction in new imprisonments.

Despite assertions of a new "crime wave" fostered by Realignment circulated by some interests promoting a return to increased use of state prisons—an option that is not available due to court orders, budgetary constraints, and policy legislated by both lawmakers and voters—violent crime is generally down in 2012 and 2013. While some realigned offenders and PRCS probationers will commit additional crimes while under county supervision, so did 60% to 70% of these same types of offenders when formerly supervised by the state parole system. County probation departments at least offer the promise of more success, as well as reduced costs and localized services.

The realigned proportion of supervised offenders in Los Angeles County will rise slowly if state prison, and consequently state parole, populations continue to fall, though the decline has slowed in recent months. In tandem, Los Angeles County has seen increased jail and probation populations after Realignment, which were expected and are no higher than the county experienced in prior years. Although state funding to help counties address Realignment may require adjustments, preliminary analysis suggests that current jail and probation caseloads can be maintained without jeopardizing public safety.



References

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