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### **Title**

Public Opinion on Prop 47: How Critical are Californians of Criminal Justice Reform?

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*Public Opinion on Prop 47: How Critical are Californians of Criminal Justice Reform?*

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POL 195: Policy Analysis in California

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**Introduction**

In *Brown v. Plata* (2011), the Supreme Court found that California's prison practices egregiously violated the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution. For years, California's prisons were operating with double the prison population. In almost every correction facility in the state, the population was about 156,000 when they were supposed to be operating at 75,000 capacity for nearly eleven years. (*BROWN V. PLATA*, n.d.) At the time, prisoners in these facilities were denied adequate medical and mental health treatment, and their basic needs were not met. The lack of resources and understaffing led to numerous wrongful death cases throughout California prisons. The Supreme Court ruled that California must reduce its prison population by 137% within a two-year span without creating new correctional facilities.

(*BROWN V. PLATA*, n.d.)

Therefore in 2014, California voters passed The Safe Neighborhood and Schools Act, which changed six non-violent and nonsex offender crimes from felonies to misdemeanors. Prop 47 successfully met the Supreme Court's imposed prison population requirements by granting resentencing opportunities for individuals whose felonies were changed to a misdemeanor. Although Prop 47 has successfully prevented prison overcrowding since its passage, recently, there has been an uptick in petty theft, causing extreme pushback from politicians and constituents. Many claim the proposition encourages repeated violations due to the lack of prosecution, while others claim Prop 47 is an equitable way to achieve racial equity and save taxpayer dollars. This begs the question: Do Californians believe the uptick in petty theft crime is enough to repeal Prop 47? Does public opinion of Proposition 47 reflect current crime statistics in California?

This paper will analyze California adults' opinions on Proposition 47, specifically their view on theft, progressive criminal justice reform, and changing the theft threshold of Prop 47. Further, this paper will compare public opinion to crime statistics and the estimated prison population for the next ten years. It is effective to frame public opinion data with current data on the issues Prop 47 aims to target. I will analyze data from a survey I conducted with 197 respondents. Through my survey, I aimed to understand if gender and political identification affect Californian's opinion of Prop 47. Throughout this paper, I will discover Californian's openness to criminal justice reform and if it compares to current crime statistics.

### **Significance to California**

In response to the Supreme Court's mandate in 2012, California lawmakers passed AB 109, the Public Safety Realignment, realigning prisons and jail jurisdictions around the state. AB 109 required nonviolent, nonserious, and nonsex offenders to serve their sentencing in county jails instead of state prisons. (Surtini, 2021) However, AB 109 did not sufficiently minimize the prison population to meet the Supreme Court's mandate. California voters passed prison reform initiatives by approving Proposition 47, formally known as The Safe Neighborhoods and School Act.

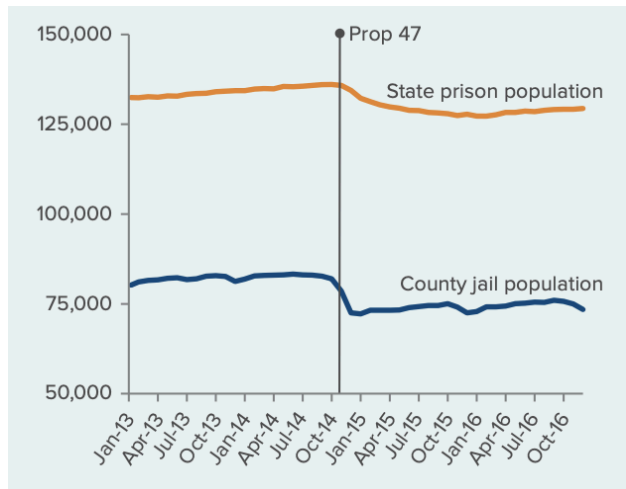
On November 5th, 2014, Proposition 47 passed with 58% of the vote and was implemented into law. (“Second Chances and Systems Change, How Proposition 47 is Changing California”) Prop 47 was created to streamline the decrease in the population of correction facilities. Proposition 47 aimed to lower the prison population by changing six non-violent and non-sex offender felonies to misdemeanors. (Surtini, 2021) Prop 47 also reduced possession of marijuana without the intent to distribute from a felony to a misdemeanor. (Surtini, 2021) Prop

47 changed the theft threshold from \$450 to \$950 for petty theft, shoplifting, grand theft, forgery, and fraud. (Surtini, 2021) Prop 47 granted resentencing and release for inmates serving time for a felony reclassified as a misdemeanor, causing a drastic drop in the prison population.

In 2014, it cost California nearly 10.5 billion dollars to fund overcrowded prisons. (“Second Chances and Systems Change, How Proposition 47 is Changing California”) The cost to imprison an individual is almost \$132,860 a year, and it was financially burdensome for the state to fund overpopulated prisons. (Yee et al.) California must adhere to the federal government and consider the cost-effectiveness of decreasing the prison population. With the current deficit predicted to last the next three years and the closure of prisons throughout the state, California must effectively decrease its prison population while ensuring it does not put public safety at risk.

## **Background**

Proposition 47 was highly successful in reducing California's state prison population. As of 2015, the prison population has been below the court mandate in *Plata v. Brown* and has steadily stayed below the cap. (Waxman, 2017) The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation estimates that annually, 3,300 fewer individuals will be incarcerated in state prisons due to Prop 47. (“Second Chances and Systems Change, How Proposition 47 is Changing California”) Prop 47 was the first successful law to drop prison and jail populations. **Figure 1** illustrates the 6% drop in the prison population from 2014 to 2015. **Figure 1** illustrates the 8.5% drop in jail population after the passage of Prop 47. As of 2015, jail populations have decreased by 43%. (*The Impact of Proposition 47 on Crime and Recidivism*, n.d.)

**Figure 1. Prison and Jail Populations Quickly Declined after Prop 47**

**Data Source: Public Policy Institute of California**

The PPIC has seen a slight uptick in property crime since implementing Proposition 47. In 2015, there was a slight uptick in property-related crimes. From 2016 until 2020, there was a steady decrease in property-related crimes. In 2020, property crimes were at a historic low; at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was still an uptick in petty theft; this increase did not surpass property theft numbers before the passage of Prop 47. Of all reported property crimes in California in 2022, 64% were larceny thefts, 20% were auto thefts, and 16% were burglaries. (*The Impact of Proposition 47 on Crime and Recidivism*, n.d.) In 2022, property crime rose in 32 counties. Property crime increased by at least 10% in fifteen counties in 2022— including the largest cities in California. (*The Impact of Proposition 47 on Crime and Recidivism*, n.d.) Despite the recent uptick in theft crimes, California's crime rates remain historically low.

Supporters of Proposition 47 believe that it allows the state to make more effective use of state funds by limiting incarceration spending, with the state no longer prosecuting low-level, nonviolent offenders. Prop 47 has lowered custody of nonviolent property crimes in exchange, allowing facilities to increase their custody for more serious offenders. Prop 47 aims to reduce

prison and jail populations throughout the state. Reduction in jails due to Prop 47 has allowed counties with court-capped capacity to reduce their overall population. After years of anti-drug prosecution, Prop 47 has allowed people with lower-level non-violent drug charges to be released and reunited with their families. Since its passage, there has been significant pushback from politicians and the general public. Those who oppose Prop 47 believe it produces “frequent flyers” or encourages repeated offenders to use sentencing reductions. (Ford, 2014) Opponents of Prop 47 thought that the measure would release dangerous three-strike inmates. (Law review)

To consider Californians' view on progressive criminal justice reform, I looked at public opinion on progressive district attorneys to correlate it to sentiments on Prop 47. When it comes to criminal justice reform, many Californians oppose reform when there is a slight increase in crime. Last year, Alameda County District Attorney Pamela Price absorbed criticism from residents that her progressive choice to charge less violent crimes directly caused the rise in carjacking and assaults. Price ran her campaign on a mission to dismantle the discriminatory criminal justice system that was supported by voters who elected her into office. (White) Now, Alameda County constituents claim that they no longer feel safe with the rise in crime because of lax prosecuting measures implemented by Price. (White) Both sides of the political aisle are pushing recall efforts, highlighting Californians' apprehensiveness towards progressive measures. Still, they tend to return to the change once it is implemented. Constituent's drastic change in public opinion on progressive district attorneys relates to Prop 47 and highlights opinion trends on progressive criminal justice reform.

In 2022, The Los Angeles Times co-sponsored a survey in a UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies Poll to understand public opinion on Prop 47. The survey found that 78% of respondents believe crime has risen statewide. (Lauter and Wiley) 59% of survey respondents

would support amending Prop 47 to change certain property crimes from a misdemeanor back to a felony, while 30% of survey respondents support leaving the law unchanged. (Lauter and Wiley) According to the poll, 88% of “strongly conservative” respondents support amending the proposition to allow felony charges for theft offenses. (Lauter and Wiley) In comparison, 64% of “moderate” respondents and 41% of “somewhat liberal” agree with similar felony sentencing. (Lauter and Wiley)

Additionally, The Public Institute of California has looked at a time series of recidivism rates, prison population, and crime rates after the implementation of Prop 47. Law journals have examined the legal reasoning behind Prop 47 and its implementation; however, there is a lack of research within Prop 47 that compares public opinion to current crime statistics. To understand how public opinion shifts with crime trends, surveys need to be distributed every other year after its passage to determine if there is a correlation between public opinion on Prop 47 and crime trends in California. Research and public opinion on Prop 47 has failed to analyze gender influence on public opinion. This paper aims to understand how personal characteristics such as a California adult's political affiliation and gender influence their opinion of Prop 47 while cross-examining crime and prison population statistics. As such, implementing crime and prison statistics will conceptualize the efficiency of Prop 47 in practice and understand how Californians process crime trends.

### **Theory and Argument**

This report seeks to understand how gender and political affiliation influence a California adult's opinion on Proposition 47. Additionally, how does Californians' public opinion compare to current crime and expected prison population statistics? To test these relationships, my two



hypotheses will be as follows: Hypothesis 1: individuals with strong party affiliation will align with their political party and either support or oppose Prop 47. Hypothesis 2: Women respondents will be more likely to support Prop 47 than male respondents. I theorized that Republican respondents will somewhat oppose Prop 47, while more Democrat respondents will somewhat support Prop 47. I theorized that female respondents would strongly support Prop 47 compared to male respondents. My independent variables  $x$  are political affiliation and gender. The dependent variable,  $y$ , is public opinion on Proposition 47.

As of last year, there has been increasing media attention on theft crimes like “smash and grabs,” where perpetrators enter a store, vandalize a display, and steal as much merchandise as possible before fleeing the scene. Additionally, there has been an increase in media attention on retail theft. The increased attentiveness on crimes relating to Prop 47 may be influencing California constituents' change of opinion on Prop 47. Media exposure causes legislators and constituents to blame Proposition 47 for the uptick in theft-related throughout the state. Therefore public opinion on Prop 47 decreased due to recent media attention.

My first hypothesis is that political affiliation will have a direct effect on a survey respondent's opinion on Prop 47. According to the Public Institute of California, independent voters are much more likely to be moderate, about 47%, than liberals(32%) and conservatives(22%). (“California Voter and Party Profiles”) The causal mechanism facilitating the relationship between political affiliation and public opinion on Prop 47 is the theory that conservative voters are less likely to support progressive legislation. The more conservative the survey respondents, the more opposed they will be towards Prop 47. For more liberal respondents, I utilized the theory that they are more open to supporting progressive legislation and would be open to justifying keeping Prop 47.

My second hypothesis is that there is an ideological divide between male and female survey respondents' approval of Prop 47. According to the Public Institute of California, Democratic voters are much more likely to be women by about 57%. (“California Voter and Party Profiles”) The causal mechanism that facilitates the relationship between gender and Prop 47 is the ideological divide between men and women.

Other confounding variables that may be impacting my research are increased homelessness, the cost of living in California, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The increase in homelessness can potentially cause an uptick in petty theft crimes. Additionally, the cost of living may impact the uptick of petty theft crimes as many Californians struggle to pay rent and basic commodities. There was a direct increase in theft at the beginning of the pandemic, which increased slightly over the two-year span outside of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic left many Californians with job insecurity, affecting their capacity to make a livable income and potentially causing an increase in theft crimes during the pandemic.

### **Research Design and Data**

I tested my hypothesis by conducting a large-end survey through Amazon Mechanical Turk, which received 197 respondents. Operationally, I predicted that conservative respondents would want to recall Prop 47 and more liberal respondents would strongly support it. Moreover, operationally, I predicted that female survey respondents would vote more liberally, thus strongly supporting Prop 47 more than male respondents.

The survey was designed to gather data from only California adults; because of this, there was a preliminary question establishing age and residency. If a survey respondent did not meet the request requirement, they were automatically restricted from completing the rest of the

survey. I did this to ensure the study gathered only California respondents to get an accurate representation of public opinion on Prop 47. I gave the respondents a brief overview of Prop 47 in conducting my survey. In the overview, I stated, “The Safe Neighborhoods and School Act, otherwise known as Proposition 47 (Prop 47), was passed by California voters to downgrade drug and property offenses from felonies to misdemeanors, focus prison resources on the most serious violent offenses, reinvest savings toward prevention, and reduce recidivism.” The purpose of the short analysis is to provide context to the respondents and have them begin the survey with a general overview of the issue. I intentionally omitted the crime-specific details to minimize survey respondent fatigue. After the brief proposition summary, I implemented a focus question to ensure that survey respondents fully understood the issue before proceeding with the rest. I decided to opt out of having a control group as I wanted to have a wider range of data to analyze my findings.

I gathered information on my independent variables' political affiliation and gender through close-ended demographic questions at the start of my survey. To gather information on gender, survey respondents were asked to identify their gender. The options that were given to the respondents were “Male,” “Female,” “Trans male/Trans man,” “Trans female/Trans woman,” and “Different identity.” One potential weakness of the data collected through the survey was the low respondent poll of female surveyors. There was almost double the amount of male survey respondents than females, see *Figure 4*. It must be noted that the data collected on females may be unreliable in determining all female Californians as there was a low percentage of respondents.

To effectively gather data on my second independent variable, political identification, before receiving Prop 47 specific questions, survey respondents were asked a series of

ideological questions. Respondents had the choice to select either “Democrat,” “Republican,” “Independent,” or “Other” to self-identify their political party. The purpose of asking the respondents the preliminary ideological question was to establish their self-identification and determine if it was consistent with the rest of their responses. Respondents were then asked what political party they identify themselves with. If respondents identified themselves as either a “Democrat” or “Republican,” they were asked a secondary question to identify how strongly they considered themselves to identify with the party. To understand the ideology of respondents who identified themselves as “Independent,” the survey poll asked about their political viewpoints. The survey poll was given an 8-point range from “Very Liberal” to “Very Conservative”; see *Figure 2* for ideological breakdown. *Figure 3*, questions 1 and 10 directly address Prop 47 and opinion on Prop 47. Some potential challenges I faced when analyzing political affiliation were independent responders identifying themselves as somewhat liberal or conservative. Although they identified themselves as neutral in the initial demographic and ideological questions, they leaned towards a specific party rather than being ideologically neutral.

### Figure 2. Demographic Questions

Thank you for taking part in our survey! This survey should take approximately 6-8 minutes of your time.
This survey will consist of some basic questions about you and your household and then move on to your opinions and attitudes on several different topics. You do not need to research any answers--please just give your opinion without looking anything up.
<p>1. Are you currently living OUTSIDE of California? In another state or country?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>2. What county in California do you live in?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> County name: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I don't live in California</p>

3. What is your current age?

- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45- 54
- 55 +

4. What type of high school did you attend?

- Public school
- Charter school
- Private school (non-parochial)
- Private parochial school
- Home school
- I did not attend high school

5. Did you attend high school in California?

- Yes
- No

6. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- Less than a high school degree
- High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree or certificate
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional degree (JD, MD)
- Doctoral degree (Ph.D.)

7. Are you Hispanic, Latino, or Chicano--or none of these?

- Yes
- None of these

8. Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be:

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Some other race: \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Trans male/Trans man
- Trans female/Trans woman
- Different identity (please state): \_\_\_\_\_

10. Are you currently married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never married?

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Never Married

11. How many people are currently living in your household?

- \_\_\_\_\_

12. Information about income is very important to understand. Please give your best guess--indicate the answer that includes your entire household income for last year (2022).

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 - \$24,999
- \$25,000 - \$44,999
- \$45,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$84,999
- \$85,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- \$150,000+

13. Which statement best describes your current employment status?

- Working (paid employee)
- Working (self-employed)
- Not working (temporary layoff from job)
- Not working (looking for work)
- Not working (retired)
- Not working (disabled)
- Not working (other): \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to answer

14. Did you vote in the 2022 midterm congressional election?

- No
- I usually vote, but did not in 2022
- I am not sure
- Yes, I definitely voted

<p>14B. What was the party of the candidate you voted for U.S. House of Representatives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Democratic party</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Republican party</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Did not vote</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not recall</li></ul> <p>15. Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Independent, or something else?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Republican</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Democrat</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Independent</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</li></ul> <p>15B. Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Strong</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Not very strong</li></ul> <p>15C. Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Strong</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Not very strong</li></ul> <p>15D. Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Republican</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Democratic</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Neither</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</li></ul>
<p>16. Thinking about politics these days, how would you describe your own political viewpoint?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Very liberal</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Liberal</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat liberal</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Middle of the road</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat conservative</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Conservative</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Very conservative</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</li></ul> <p>17. How interested are you in politics or public policy debates?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Very interested</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat interested</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Not very interested</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Not interested at all</li></ul>

Data Source: Amazon MTurk

Figure 3. Survey Questions

**Background:**

The Safe Neighborhoods and School Act, otherwise known as Proposition 47 (Prop 47), was passed by California voters to downgrade drug and property offenses from felonies to misdemeanors, focus prison resources on the most serious violent offenses, reinvest savings toward prevention, and reduce recidivism.

The act aims to ensure that prison spending is focused on violent and serious offenses, maximizes alternatives for nonseries, nonviolent crime, and invests the savings from this Act into prevention and support programs in K-12 schools, victim services, and mental health and drug treatment. This Act ensures that sentences for people convicted of dangerous crimes like rape, murder, and child molestation are not changed.

**Concept check Question:**

1. What did Prop 47 implement?
  - It focused on limiting fossil fuels by implemetic electric vehicles.
  - Expanded Social programs in California prisons.
  - Downgraded drug and property offenses from felonies to misdemeanors.
  - Legalized recreational use of marijuana.

2. Do you support or oppose Prop 47?

- Strongly oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat support
- Strongly support

3. To what extent do you think retail theft is a problem in the state of California?

- Not at all a problem
- Minor problem
- Moderate problem
- Serious problem

4. To what extent do you think retail theft is a problem in your county?

- Not at all a problem
- Minor problem
- Moderate problem
- Serious problem

5. To what extent do you think retail theft is a problem in your county?

- Not at all a problem
- Minor problem
- Moderate problem
- Serious problem

6. Over the past year in California, to what extent do you think retail theft has increased or decreased?

- Decreased by a lot
- Decreased by a little



<input type="checkbox"/> Did not increase or Decrease <input type="checkbox"/> Increased by a little <input type="checkbox"/> Increased by a lot
<p>7. Proposition 47 raised the threshold for theft as a felony from \$459 to \$950. Do you support or oppose this change?</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly oppose <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat oppose <input type="checkbox"/> Neither support nor oppose <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat support <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly support
<p>8. If you were in charge of deciding the felony theftshold for the state of California, where would you place the threshold?</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$450 <input type="checkbox"/> Between \$459 and \$950 <input type="checkbox"/> \$950 <input type="checkbox"/> More than \$950
<p>9. The cost of imprisoning one person in California is about \$132,860. To what extent do you think it is cost effective or ineffective for the state to reduce the total prison population?</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Very cost effective <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat cost ineffective <input type="checkbox"/> Neither cost effective nor ineffective <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat cost effective <input type="checkbox"/> Very cost effective
<p>10. If Prop 47 was placed on the ballot from the 2024 November election, would you vote to repeal the proposition, so it is no longer law, or keep the proposition as law?</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Vote to repeal proposition <input type="checkbox"/> Vote to keep proposition <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided

My survey respondent pool was comprised of 65% male and 35% female respondents. 70% of the respondents voted for a Democrat in the House of Representatives, 30% voted for a Republican, and 1% did not recall who they voted for in the past election. 67% of the respondents identified themselves as a Democrat, 24% Republican, and 9% as Independent. 94% of Republican-identifying survey respondents consider themselves strong Republicans, while 6% consider themselves not strong Republicans. 94% of the Democrat-identifying respondents consider themselves strong Democrats, while 6% identify themselves as not strong

Democrats. 8% of respondents identified themselves as very liberal, 25% as liberal, 9% as somewhat liberal, 5% as middle of the road, 10% as somewhat conservative, 21% as conservative, 21% as very conservative, and 21% as very conservative.

**Figure 2: Respondent Poll**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Count</b>
Male	65%	129
Female	35%	68
<b>Party Identification</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Count</b>
Democrat	67%	132
Republican	24%	47

**Data Source: Amazon MTurk**

I framed close-ended survey questions in four ways to collect my intended data for my dependent variable. I utilized direct and indirect questions that specifically addressed the propositions, while others were related but were not presented as directly linked to Prop 47. The first discussed directly survey respondents' support or opposition to the proposition. After the brief overview, I placed this question at the beginning of the survey to understand respondents' initial sentiments towards the proposition after being exposed to a short explanation. Framing questions related to Prop 47 allowed me to observe survey respondents' opinions on Prop 47. The data collected from a majority male Democrat respondent poll is not entirely representative of female and Republican public opinion. Although the scale of respondents is not equal to the state demographics, my analysis still shows some notable findings between gender and political identification opinions on Prop 47.

Secondly, I presented questions to understand Californians' opinions on retail theft concerning Prop 47. I framed crime questions without explicitly stating the potential correlation between Prop 47 and an increase in retail theft to observe the respondents' current opinion on crime. To understand opinions on theft crime statistics, I asked survey respondents separately to consider retail theft on the state and local levels. Asking for two units of analysis allows for further study on whether retail theft is a geographic or an entire state issue. See the close-ended question option in Figure 3, which is questions 3 through 6. A substantial amount of county-level data is missing. Although question number 5 aimed to gather county-level data, many respondents did not give accurate county information. Since only about 31% of respondents provided a valid county, any county-level analysis would have inconsistent results. Due to the lack of precise county data, I only focused on California.

Further, I asked survey respondents if they would alter a key factor of Prop 47, specifically the felony theft threshold. With this question, I presented the change in theft threshold due to Prop 47 and asked if respondents would amend this proposition section. *In Figure 3*, question 8, you can see the numerical range presented to respondents. Including this question, I wanted to gather data on Californians' openness to limit, decrease, or keep theft quotas. Additionally, this question mirrored the current political discourse by California politicians to increase the theft threshold. Similar to questions 2 and 10, since the respondent poll does not represent Californians' political and gender demographics, the data collected does not represent the totality of public opinion of Prop 47.

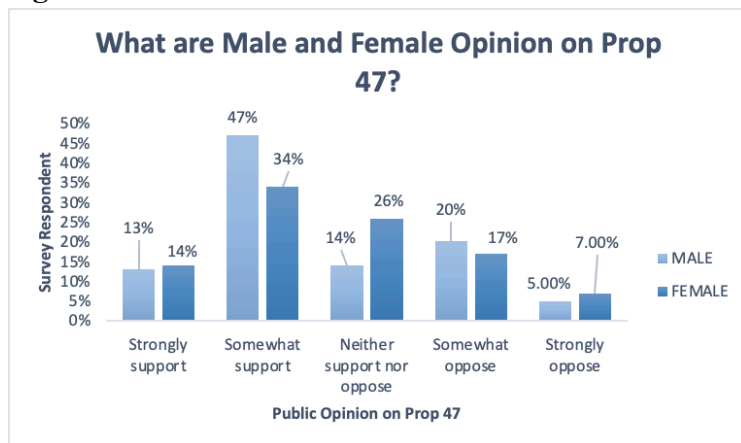
I pulled data from the Department of Justice's Crime statistics database from 2004 to 2022 to connect public opinion to current crime statistics. More specifically, I looked at shoplifting, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft trends affected by Prop 47. I looked at

theft-related crimes over the past 20 years to understand any noticeable crime trends before and after the implementation of Prop 47 further. Moreover, I will utilize data from the Legislative Analyst Office depicting the expected prison population within the next ten years to consider if repealing Prop 47 is feasible with California’s rapidly declining prison population. Framing crime and expected prison population statistics builds a comparison to the current output of Prop 47-related effects and current public opinion.

**Findings and Analysis**

Throughout my research, there was a mix of data to support and not support my hypothesis. As I predicted, Female survey respondents were more likely to support Prop 47 than Male respondents strongly. Figure 5 depicts a slight increase in Female respondents who support Prop 47 by about 1%. Although Female respondents slightly supported Prop 47 more than Males, significantly more Female respondents strongly opposed Prop 47 compared to men, with a 2% difference. Both Male and Female respondents somewhat endorsed Prop 47.

**Figure 5.**

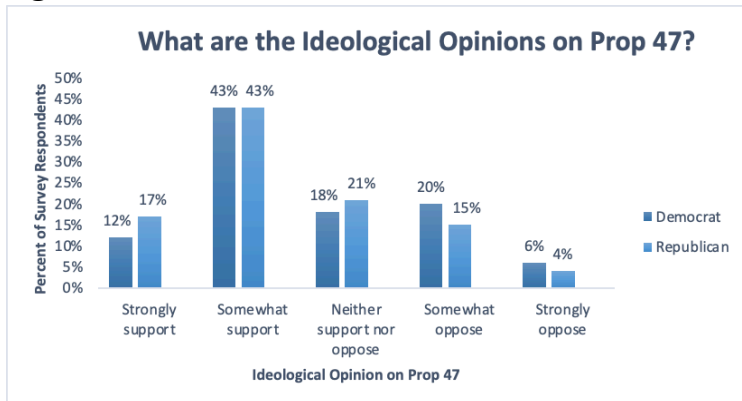


**Data Source: Amazon MTurk**

My hypothesis on political party support of Prop 47 was not supported. Republican and Democratic respondents both equally and somewhat support Prop 47. Therefore, there was more opposition to Prop 47 from Democrats than Republicans (see Figure 6). Political support of Prop

47 was surprising given that, traditionally, California Democrats are more likely to support “progressive” reform while Republicans tend to push back on these initiatives. Republican support may be larger than that of Democrats due to the small percentage of Republican survey respondents.

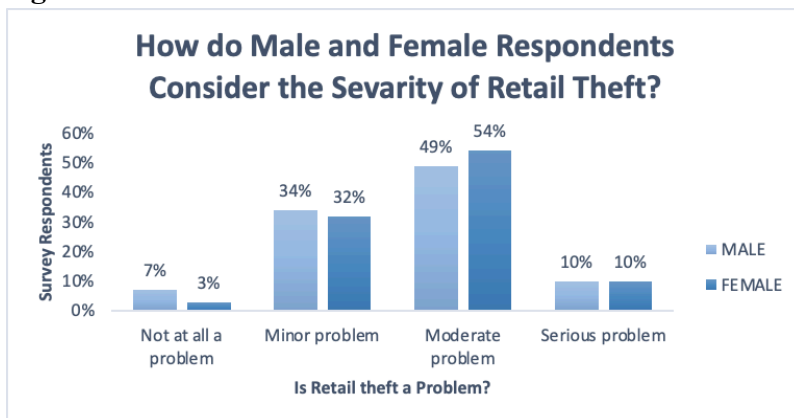
**Figure 6.**



Data Source: Amazon MTurk

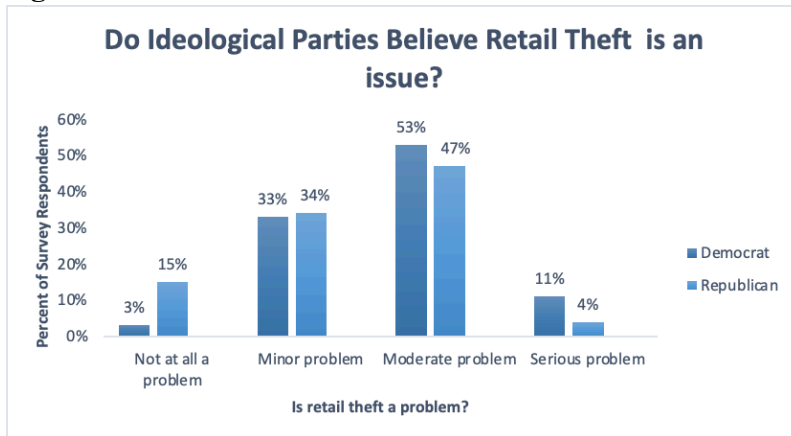
I found that a majority of both Female and Male respondents consider retail theft in California to be a moderate problem. Female respondents view retail theft as more of a mild problem than men at 54% compared to 49%. Democrats believe that California retail theft is a more moderate problem than Republicans. 53% of Democrat respondents believe retail theft is a mild problem compared to Republicans 47%.

**Figure 7.**



Data Source: Amazon MTurk

**Figure 8.**



Data Source: Amazon MTurk

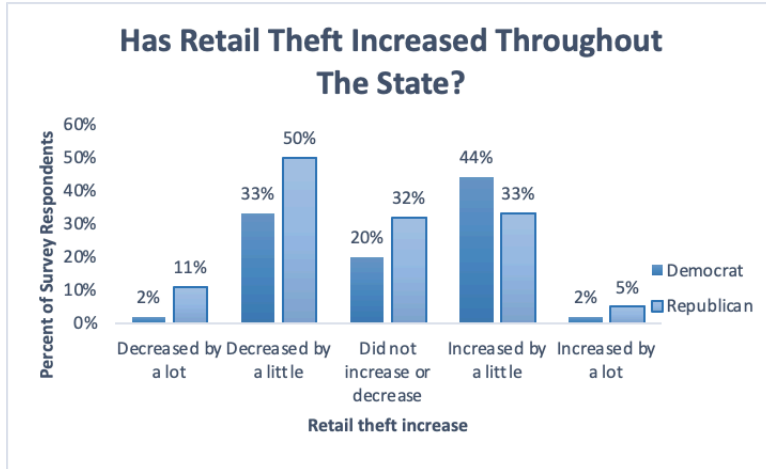
When male and female respondents were asked if they believed retail theft had increased in recent years, female respondents felt that it had risen by 40%. 37% of male respondents believe that retail theft has improved a little. Looking at the political breakdown, 50% of Republican respondents believed that retail theft has decreased by a little throughout the state, while 44% of Democrats believe retail theft has increased a little.

**Figure 9.**



Data Source: Amazon MTurk

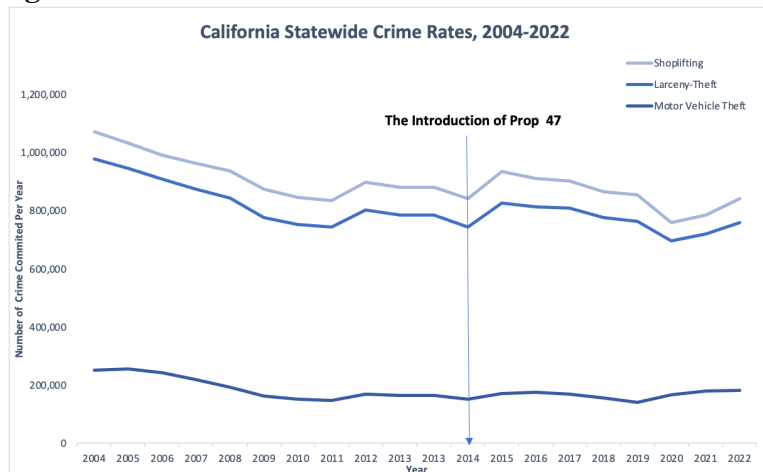
**Figure 10.**



Data Source: Amazon MTurk

Comparing political and gender differences in opinion on retail theft over the years, it is vital to consider current theft statistics. *Figure 11* demonstrates an uptick in shoplifting, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. There was a drastic increase at the start of the pandemic that continued up until 2022. Unfortunately, due to a lack of updated data, there are no theft crime statistics for 2023 to see if the increase has stayed consistent or is beginning to decrease.

Figure 11.

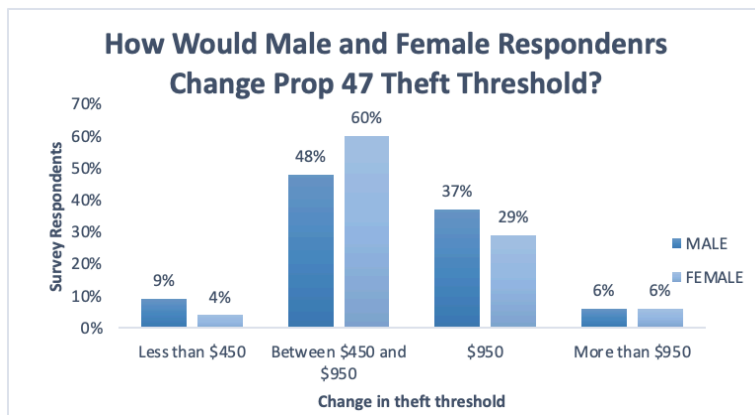


Data Source: The California Department of Justice

Disproportionately Male and Female respondents would prefer the theft threshold to be lower than \$950. As *Figure 12* demonstrates, 60% of Female respondents preferred the threshold to be between \$450 and \$950, while 48% of Male respondents agreed to this change. These

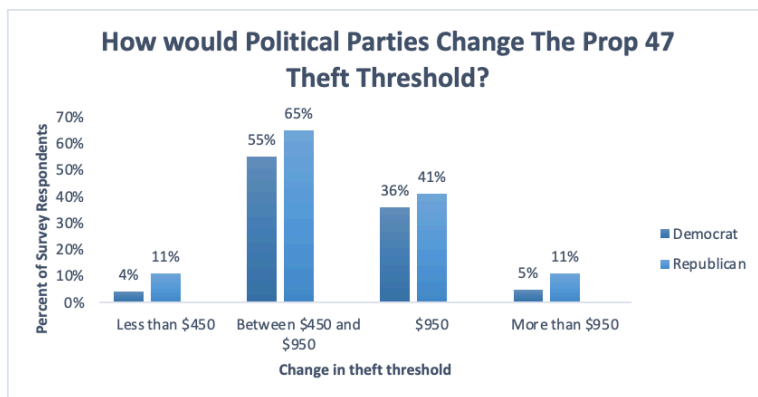
findings supported my hypothesis that female respondents accept progressive policies more than males. Male respondents would prefer to keep the current threshold established by Prop 47 than females. **Figure 13** demonstrates that more Republican respondents than Democrats would like to change the theft threshold from \$450 to \$950, and more Republicans than Democrats would prefer to keep the threshold as is.

**Figure 12.**



Data Source: Amazon MTurk

**Figure 13.**



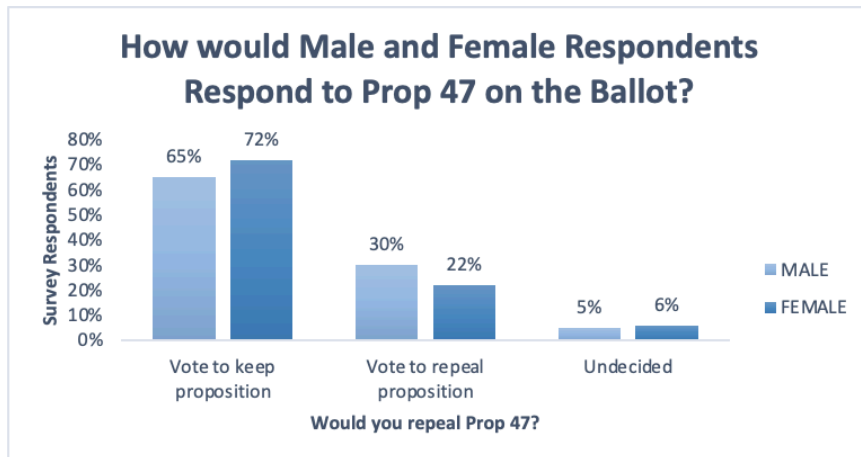
Data Source: Amazon MTurk

Further supporting my hypothesis, Female survey respondents are more likely to re-vote and reapprove Prop 47 if the measure was placed on the ballot. As **Figure 14** demonstrates, 72% of Female Survey Respondents would keep the measure, 22% would vote to repeal the



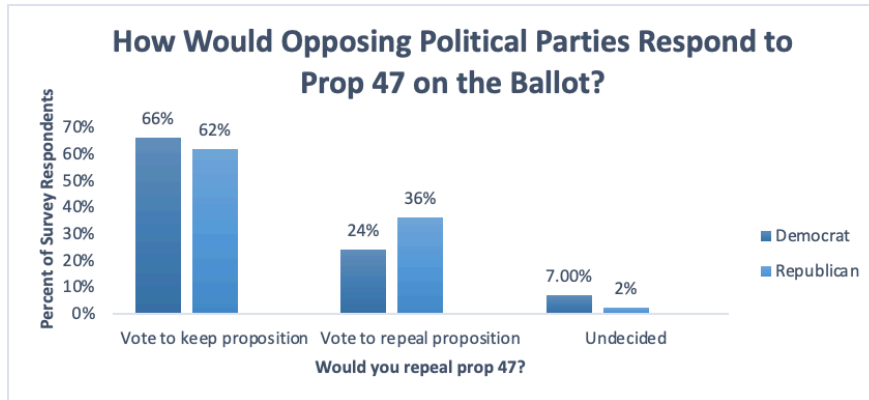
proposition, and 6% are undecided. 65% of Male survey respondents would keep Prop 47, 30% would repeal it, and 5% are undecided. **Figure 15** demonstrates that Democrats are more likely to vote to keep Proposition 47. This finding supports my hypothesis that Democrats are more willing to help more progressive criminal justice reforms. It is interesting to note that 62% of surveyed Republicans would vote to keep Prop 47, pushing back on my hypothesis on conservative voting behavior. Over 50% of Republicans supporting a progressive measure can demonstrate that Californians are open to criminal justice reform regardless of political affiliation.

**Figure 14.**



Data Source: Amazon MTurk

**Figure 15.**



**Data Source:** Amazon MTurk

### Policy Implications

As of this year, assembly members Ramos, Mathis, and Valencia introduced AB 1772. Assembly members and senators from both political parties co-authored AB 1772. The bill has been referred to the Assembly Committee on Public Safety later this year. AB 1772, if implemented into law, would maintain the theft threshold but allow for aggregate theft charges. Aggregate theft charges will be tried as a felony instead of a misdemeanor. (California Legislative Information) It is prudent that the Legislature conducts a large end study to understand Californians' opinion on Prop 47 and consider confounding variables that may be causing the uptick in theft crimes. Some potential variables the legislature should look at are the rise of homelessness and its impact on retail theft coming out of the pandemic. Moreover, the Legislature should be considering the current economy, causing the cost of living to increase. There are potential external factors that can explain the uptick in crime from 2020 to 2022.

Before moving forward with legislation, the legislature should allow time for the Department of Justice to publish crime statistics from the past year to see if theft crime is still on an uptick. The legislature should work alongside specialists who are equipped to understand crime statistics and crime trends. Legislatures should consider the Legislative Analyst's Office(LAO) publication on the expected prison population for the next ten years. The LAO

predicts that there will be a decrease in the prison population over the next ten years, and the office made these predictions considering an unamended Prop 47. If theft and misdemeanor charges are potentially changed to felonies, California prisons might see a drastic increase in the prison population. Considering California's 13 billion dollar deficit, potential funding for a large prison population of non-violent offenders will lead to cuts in other necessary government programs throughout the state.

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