

The War on Drugs: Was it Necessary?

By Emma Holland

1971:
The War on
Drugs



Anti-Drug Abuse Act (1986)

Title 21 of the United States
Code, Sections:

- 841
- 846
- 844
- 862

Triggering Thresholds for Common Controlled Substances		
21 U.S.C. § 841	5-year Mandatory Minimum	10-year Mandatory Minimum
Heroin	100 G	1 KG
Powder Cocaine	500 G	5 KG
Cocaine Base (crack)	28 G ★	280 G
Marijuana	100 KG	1,000 KG
Methamphetamine (pure)	5 G	50 G
Methamphetamine (mixture)	50 G	500 G

★ was 5 G

Counter Argument:

The war on drugs was
necessary at the time

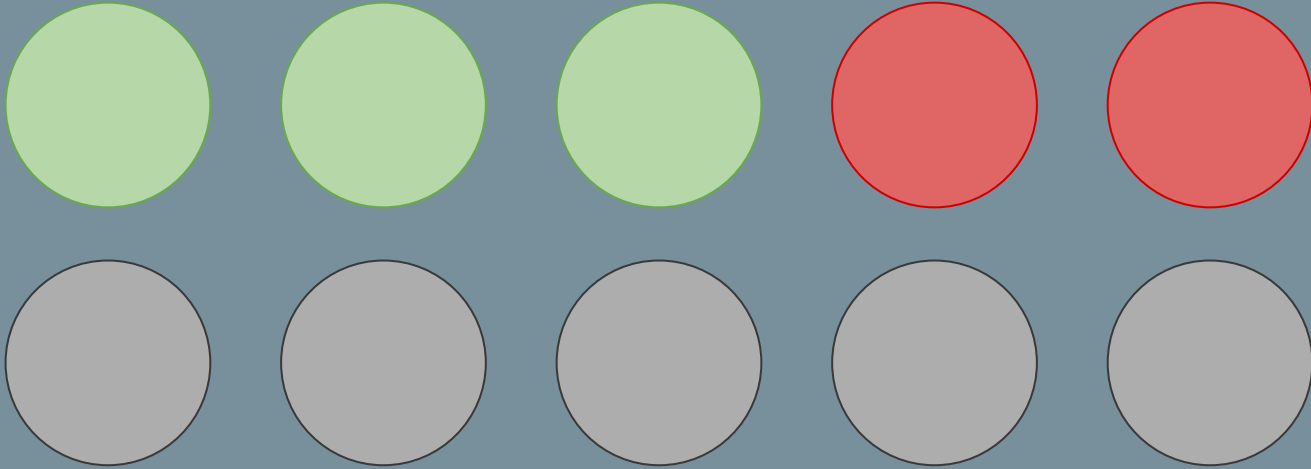
Grassroots Anti-Drug Groups



Reverend Oberia Dempsey



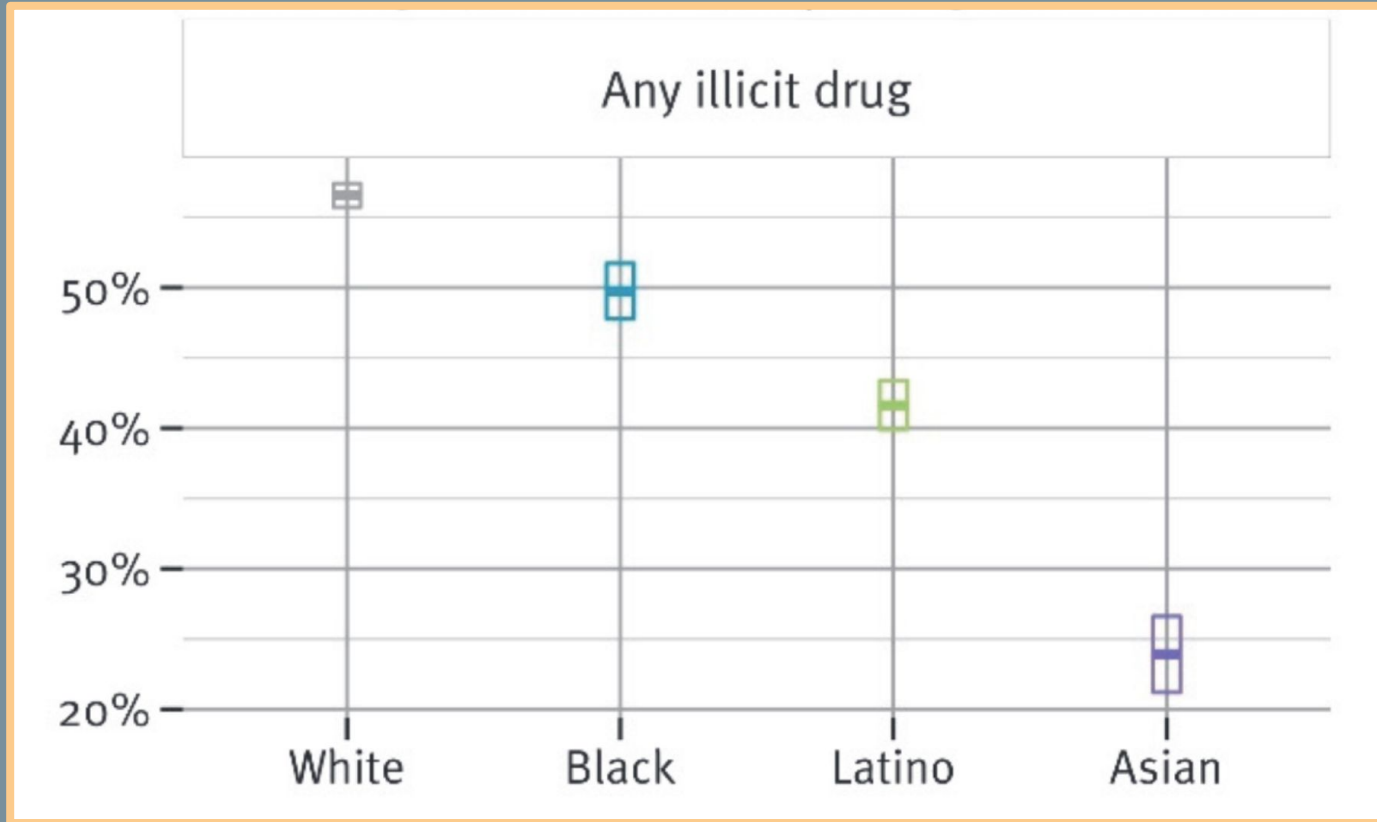
The Comprehensive Drug Abuse and Prevention Act (1970)



Argument 1:

The War on Drugs was
racially biased.

Lifetime Use (2014)



1995

People

<u>Race</u>	<u>selling drugs</u>	<u>using drugs</u>
All	100%	100%
White	82	84
Black	16	13
Other	2	3

Arrests

<u>Race</u>	<u>selling drugs</u>	<u>possessing drugs</u>
All	100%	100%
White	50	63
Black	49	36
Other	1	1

The Snowball Effect



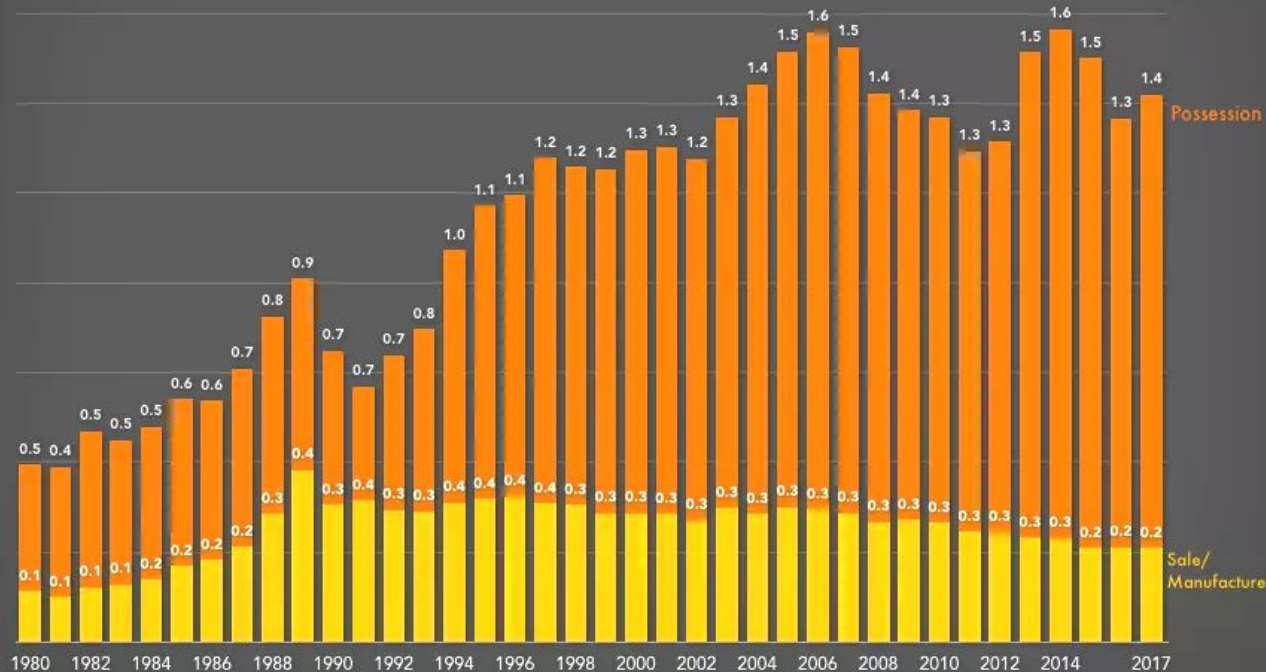
Argument 2:

The war on drugs was
ineffective.

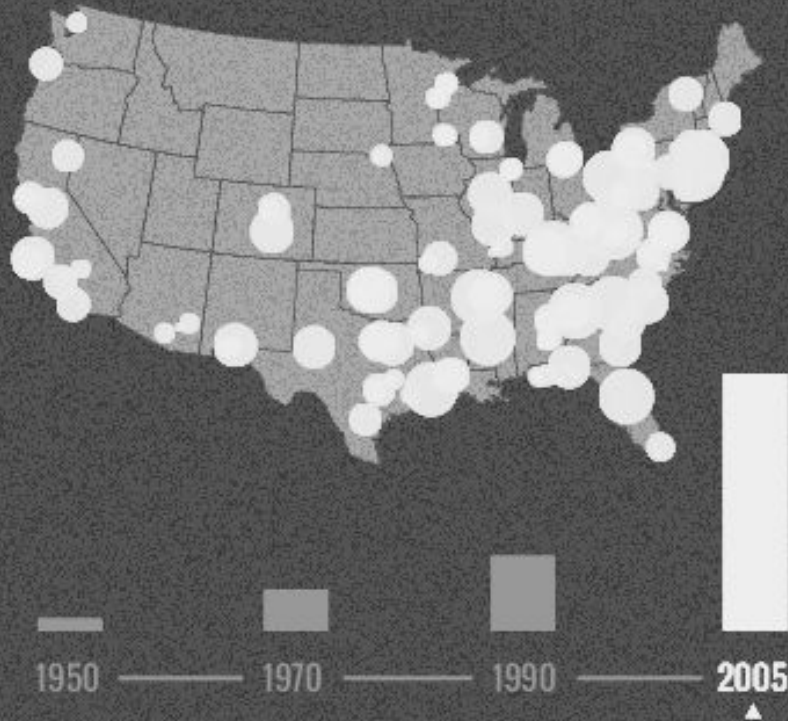
Possession Vs. Sales

There are over 1 million drug possession arrests each year

There are 6 times as many arrests for drug possession as for drug sales.
(Arrests in millions, 1980–2017)



2017 Drug-Related Incarceration

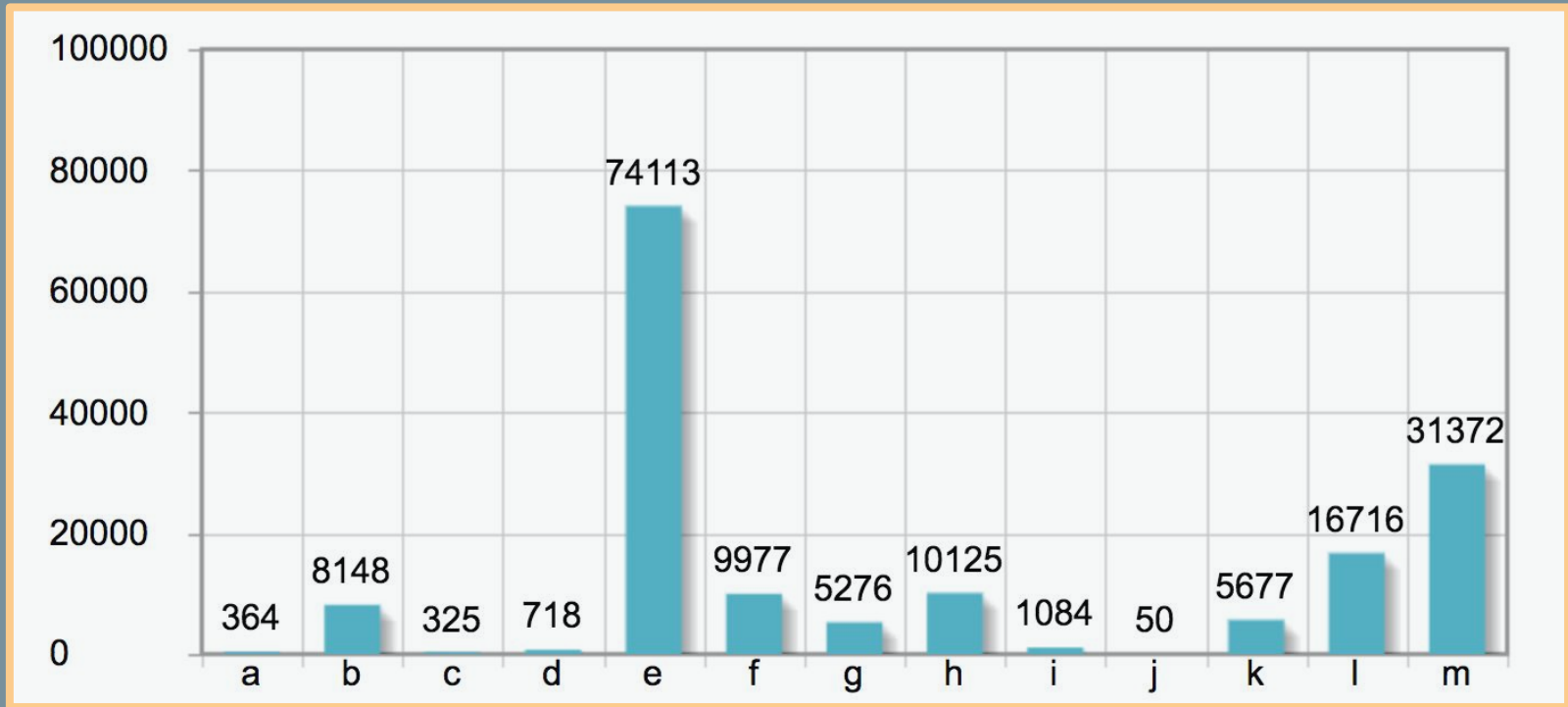


2,300,000

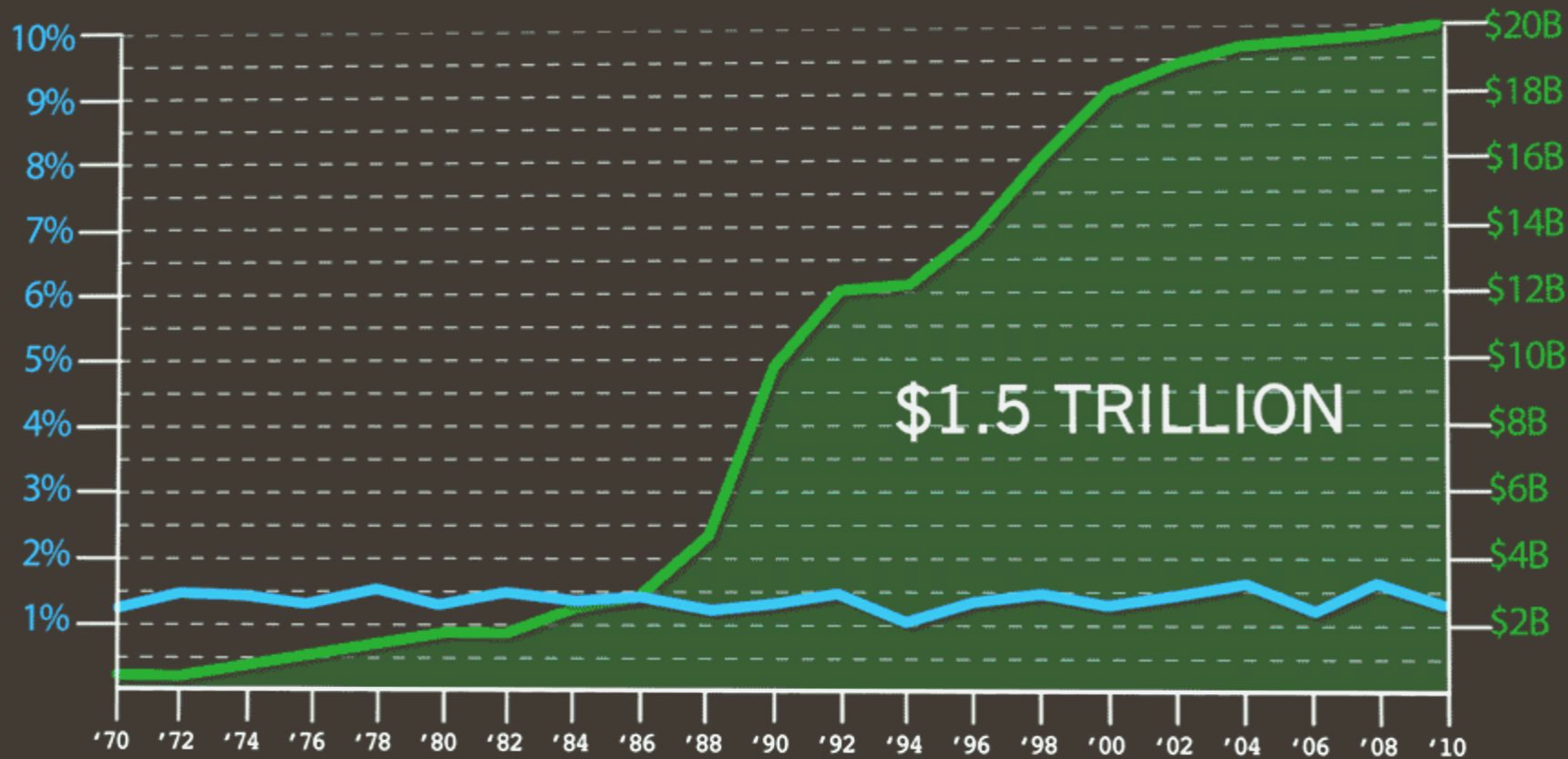
TOTAL U.S. INMATE POPULATION

The incarceration rate has increased dramatically in recent decades. In 1980, 40,000 people were incarcerated on drug-related charges as compared to 500,000 today.

2019 Federal Prison Population



↑ 45%



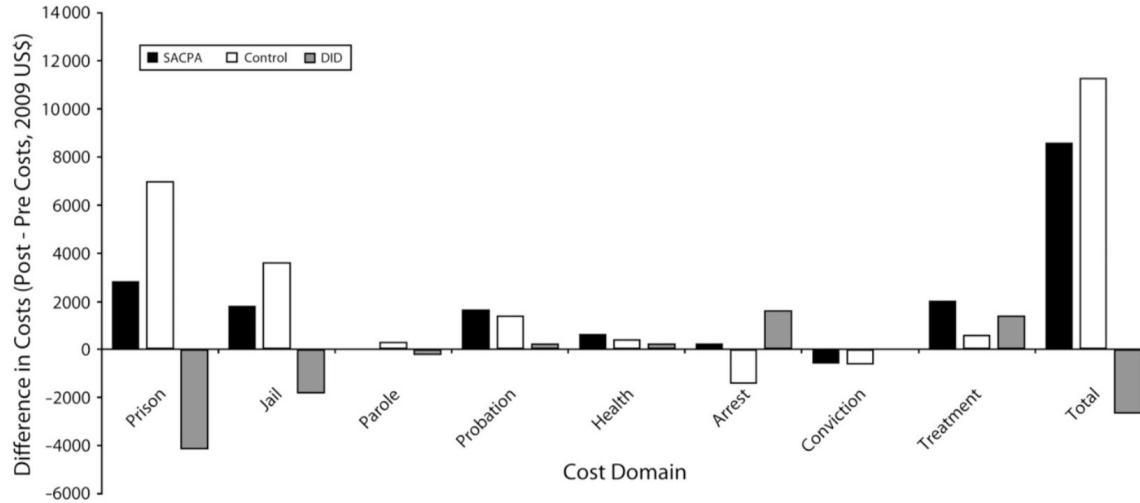
U.S. Drug Addiction Rate, 1970 - 2010
U.S. Drug Control Spending, 1970 - 2010

The Solutions!

Fund more SUD treatment, harm
reduction, and education
programs instead of incarceration

Proposition 36

Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act



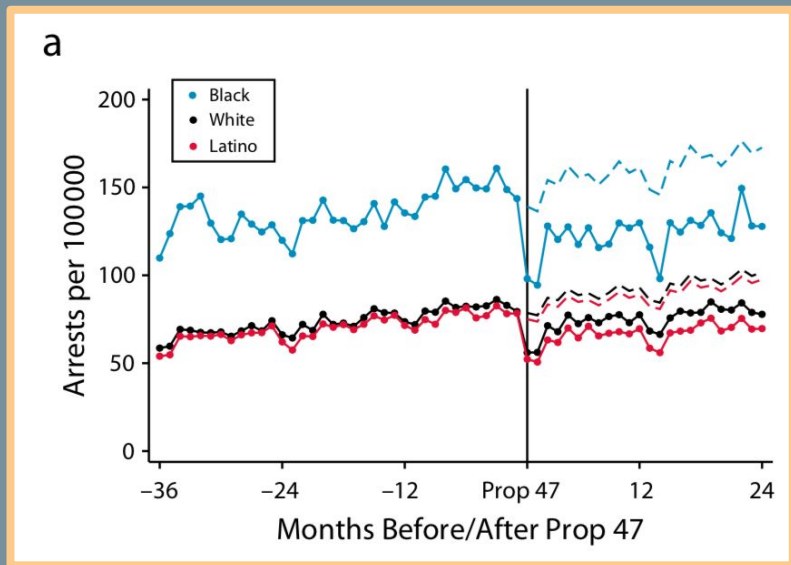
Note. DID = difference-in-differences; SACPA = Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act. Negative differences indicate savings resulting from SACPA program

FIGURE 1—Domain-specific and overall adjusted difference in costs (30-month pre-index conviction and 30-month post-index conviction) and cohort difference-in-differences: California; January 1, 1995–December 31, 2000 (control cohort), and January 1, 1999–December 31, 2004 (SACPA cohort).

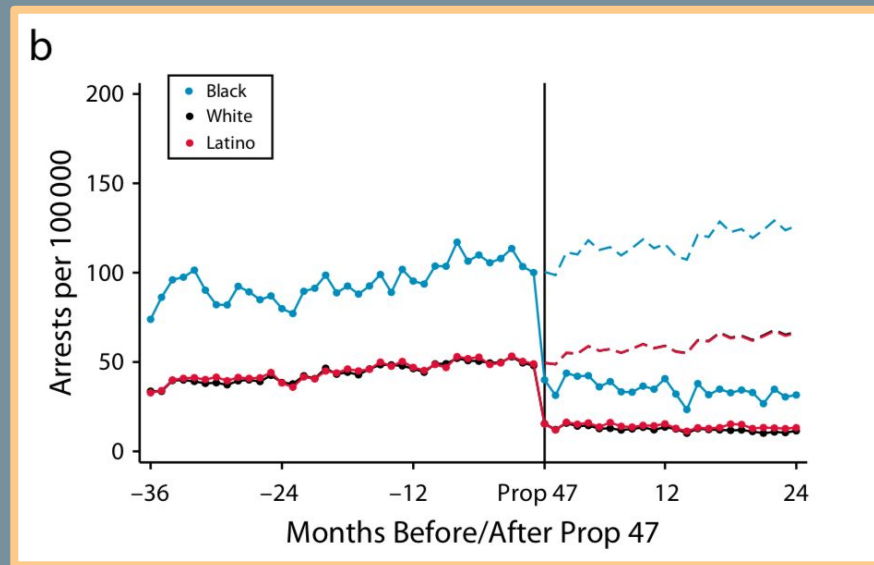
Drug possession is NEVER a
felony and should not be used as
sentencing enhancement

Proposition 47

Criminal Sentences. Misdemeanor Penalties. Initiative Statute.



total



felony

- ❏ Remove financial assistance limitations and other collateral damages for possession convictions
- ❏ No mandatory fines or mandatory minimums!
- ❏ Bail should be tailored to the person's economic situation
- ❏ First time conviction for possession → treatment, not incarceration