

# SNAP work requirement and criminal recidivism

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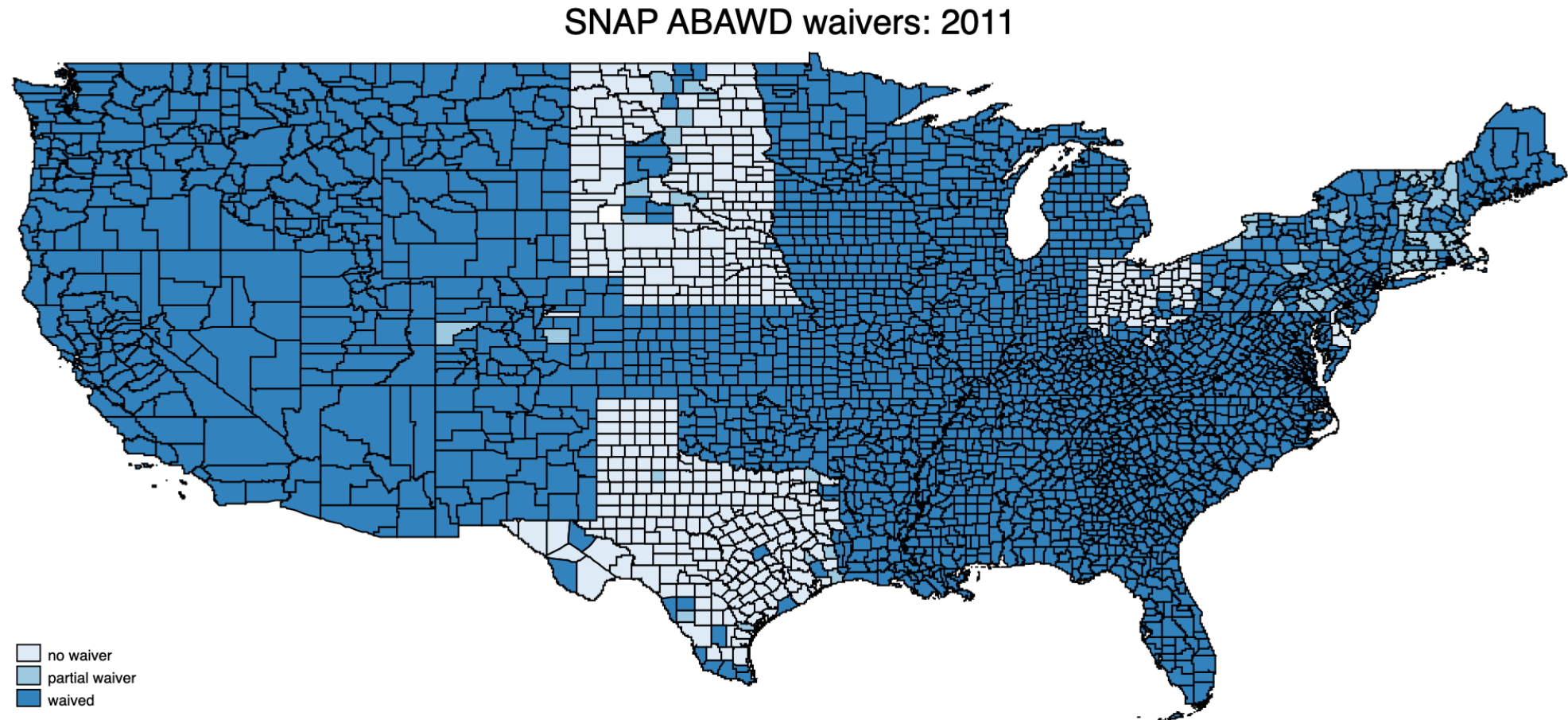
# Interaction of social safety net and mass incarceration

- The United States the country with the largest incarcerated population and the highest incarceration rate in the world
- There are over 600,000 offenders released from US prisons every year. The reentry into their communities is coupled with a series of vulnerabilities, such as
  - chronic diseases
  - food insecurity
  - Homelessness
  - weak employment prospects
- the public benefits system plays an important role in the transition from incarceration

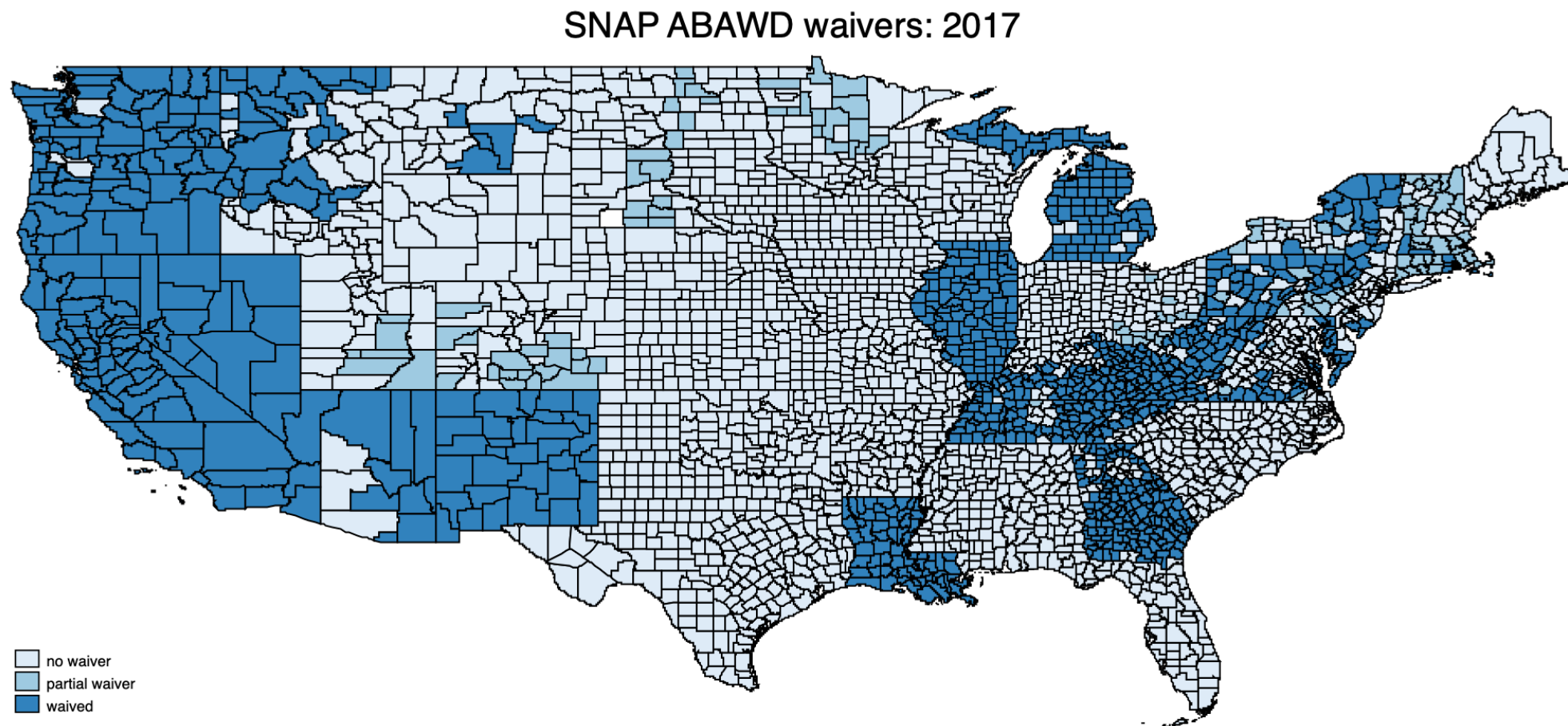
# SNAP work requirement for ABAWDs

- The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) imposed work requirement on ABAWDs (able bodied adults aged 18-49 without dependents) to reduce dependency and encourage work.
- For SNAP, food stamp limits benefits for ABAWDs to three months in a 36-month period unless they satisfy the work requirement of at least 80 hours of work per month.
- The welfare reform bill also allows states to request a time limit waiver for areas with high unemployment rate or insufficient jobs.

# Declining coverage of SNAP ABAWD work requirement waivers



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# Is the work requirement a double-punishment for ex-offenders?

- Consider a prisoner is released to a county with SNAP work requirement, he may
  - Put in more endeavor looking for a job -> higher opportunity cost of recidivism
  - Give up looking for jobs -> lower opportunity cost of recidivism
- This study aims at evaluating the effect of the SNAP work requirement on recidivism of ex-offenders, exploiting the temporal and geographical variation in waiver status at release and the age cutoff for ABAWDs.

# Data

- SNAP waivers – USDA
  - Dates when the waiver for each county went into effect and expired
- Recidivism Data 2011-2017 – National Corrections Reporting Program
  - Demographic characteristics of the offender including age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, highest grade completed, gender
  - crime characteristics such as offense of conviction, total sentence, time served, reason for entering and release, county of release, and the month and year of entering and release from the prison
  - We don't observe their SNAP participation after release, so all results here are interpreted as Intent-to-treat.

# County level characteristics, 2017

	All	Waived Areas	Non-waived Areas
Prisoners	399.96	429.62	384.05
	1439.42	1792.78	1208.21
Released	162.71	152.79	168.02
	548.19	588.30	525.49
Unemployment Rate	4.58	5.58	4.07
	1.61	1.64	1.33
Officer per 1000 Population	1.88	1.97	1.82
	0.48	0.37	0.52
SNAP Drug Ban Opt-out	0.88	0.86	0.90
	0.32	0.35	0.30
TANF Drug Ban Opt-out	0.65	0.72	0.61
	0.48	0.45	0.49
One-year Reicidivism	0.09	0.07	0.10
	0.09	0.08	0.09
One-year Recidivism: Property	0.03	0.02	0.03
	0.05	0.03	0.05
One-year Recidivism: Violent	0.02	0.02	0.02
	0.05	0.04	0.05
One-year Recidivism: Drug	0.02	0.02	0.02
	0.03	0.03	0.04
Counties	2490	769	1721



# Demographics of Released Prisoners (2017 cohort)

	Waived Areas			Non-waived Areas		
	All ages	49	50	All ages	49	50
Male	0.90 (0.30)	0.90 (0.31)	0.90 (0.31)	0.87 (0.34)	0.87 (0.33)	0.89 (0.32)
White	0.41 (0.49)	0.47 (0.50)	0.45 (0.50)	0.50 (0.50)	0.54 (0.50)	0.53 (0.50)
Black	0.38 (0.49)	0.36 (0.48)	0.39 (0.49)	0.35 (0.48)	0.33 (0.47)	0.34 (0.47)
Hispanic	0.18 (0.38)	0.15 (0.36)	0.13 (0.34)	0.15 (0.36)	0.13 (0.33)	0.13 (0.34)
High School	0.35 (0.48)	0.43 (0.49)	0.42 (0.49)	0.39 (0.49)	0.45 (0.50)	0.45 (0.50)
Admit - Property	0.24 (0.43)	0.27 (0.44)	0.25 (0.43)	0.27 (0.44)	0.26 (0.44)	0.26 (0.44)
Admit - Violent	0.37 (0.48)	0.35 (0.48)	0.35 (0.48)	0.29 (0.46)	0.29 (0.45)	0.28 (0.45)
Admit - Drug	0.19 (0.40)	0.20 (0.40)	0.21 (0.41)	0.25 (0.43)	0.24 (0.43)	0.25 (0.43)
Observations	181950	2888	2776	369307	5927	5494

Standard deviations in parentheses

# Method

- Under the assumption that release time is exogenous to local waiver status, I estimate the following regression equation

- $$Y_{ict} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot Below50_i \cdot Req_{ct} + \beta_2 \cdot Below50_i + \beta_3 \cdot Req_{ct} + \beta_4 \cdot X_{ct} + \beta_5 \cdot Z_i + \alpha_c + \gamma_t + \epsilon_{ict}$$

- $Y_{ict}$ : indicator of recidivism
- $Below50_i$ : indicator of whether the individual's age is below 50 at release
- $Req_{ct}$ : indicator of work requirement in county  $c$  at time  $t$
- $X_{ct}$ : local labor market and policy variables, such as unemployment rates, minimum/low-skilled wages, Medicaid expansion status, Ban-the-Box. policies, and states pledge for SNAP E&T programs.
- $Z_i$ : individual characteristics including gender, age, race, and education

# Result

Table 1. Probability of Recidivism, Age 45-54

	All Crimes		Property Crimes		Violent Crimes		Drug-related Crimes	
Panel A. 1-year Recidivism								
Below50	0.015***	(0.001)	0.005***	(0.001)	0.003***	(0.001)	0.005***	(0.001)
Req	0.020***	(0.002)	0.005***	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)	0.012***	(0.001)
Below50*Req	-0.007***	(0.002)	-0.003***	(0.001)	-0.002*	(0.001)	-0.002**	(0.001)
N	646,899		646,899		646,899		646,899	
Panel B. 3-year Recidivism								
Below50	0.037***	(0.002)	0.014***	(0.001)	0.008***	(0.001)	0.011***	(0.001)
Req	0.025***	(0.004)	0.001	(0.003)	-0.001	(0.002)	0.027***	(0.003)
Below50*Req	-0.007*	(0.004)	-0.002	(0.003)	-0.002	(0.002)	-0.004	(0.002)
N	364,362		364,362		364,362		364,362	
Individual	√		√		√		√	
County Policies	√		√		√		√	

# Result

Table 2. Probability of Recidivism, Age 49-50

	All Crimes		Property Crimes		Violent Crimes		Drug-related Crimes	
Panel A. 1-year Recidivism								
Below50	0.003	(0.002)	0.001	(0.001)	0.000	(0.001)	0.001	(0.001)
Req	0.016***	(0.004)	0.008***	(0.003)	-0.001	(0.002)	0.010***	(0.002)
Below50*Req	-0.003	(0.004)	-0.004*	(0.002)	0.001	(0.002)	-0.002	(0.002)
N	132,000		132,000		132,000		132,000	
Panel B. 3-year Recidivism								
Below50	0.006	(0.004)	0.005*	(0.002)	-0.002	(0.002)	0.005**	(0.002)
Req	0.025***	(0.009)	0.005	(0.006)	-0.004	(0.005)	0.026***	(0.005)
Below50*Req	-0.000	(0.007)	-0.004	(0.005)	0.003	(0.004)	-0.002	(0.004)
N	76,336		76,336		76,336		76,336	
Individual	√		√		√		√	
County Policies	√		√		√		√	

# Falsification test – alternative age cutoffs

Table 3. Probability of 1-year Recidivism, Age Cutoff at 48/52

	All Crimes		Property Crimes		Violent Crimes		Drug-related Crimes	
Panel A. Cutoff at 48, 46-49 years old								
Below48	0.006***	(0.002)	0.002*	(0.001)	0.001	(0.001)	0.002***	(0.001)
Req	0.015***	(0.003)	0.003*	(0.001)	0.000	(0.002)	0.011***	(0.002)
Below48*Req	-0.001	(0.003)	-0.002	(0.002)	0.000	(0.001)	0.000	(0.001)
N	287,678		287,678		287,678		287,678	
Panel B. Cutoff at 52, 50-53 years old								
Below50	0.007***	(0.002)	0.003***	(0.001)	0.002*	(0.001)	0.002*	(0.001)
Req	0.017***	(0.003)	0.006	(0.002)	-0.002	(0.002)	0.009***	(0.002)
Below50*Req	-0.002	(0.003)	-0.001	(0.002)	0.001	(0.001)	-0.001	(0.001)
N	234,006		234,006		234,006		234,006	
Individual	√		√		√		√	
County Policies	√		√		√		√	

# Discussion

- The study shows the 1-year recidivism rate of those released to areas with SNAP ABAWD work requirement and subject to the ABAWD age cutoff is 0.7 pp lower. But the effect is not persistent.
  - Implies the the work requirement may not be a double-punishment
- The estimate only includes recidivism with sentence to state prisons. Not all crimes accounted for, e.g. grocery store theft.
- Can extend the analysis to periods before the financial crisis which allows for investigating long-term impact. But this can be tricky.

Questions/Comments/Suggestions

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Thanks!