

## Impact of COVID-19 on Nevada's Prison Population: Project Update

Nevada Sentencing Commission

September 3, 2021

# Agenda

- Project Overview
- Preliminary Data Findings From:
  - Administrative Office of the Courts
  - Specialty Courts
  - Nevada Department of Corrections
- Questions

# About CJI

- The Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) works with local, state, and national criminal justice organizations to assist them in developing data- and public safety-driven solutions to tough criminal justice policy problems
- CJI provides non-partisan policy analysis, research, technical assistance, program evaluation, and training to jurisdictions throughout the country

# CJI's Other Work in Nevada

- Support Staff for the ACAJ (2018-2019):
  - Assisted Nevada's Advisory Commission on the Administration of Justice (ACAJ) as it developed policy recommendations that led to Assembly Bill 236, which went into effect in mid-2020
- Implementation Support for AB 236 (2019-present):
  - Staffs an implementation team that works closely with in-state agencies to support changes required by AB 236

---

# CRIME AND JUSTICE INSTITUTE

---

## Project Overview

# Leadership Charge

State leadership has asked CJI to:

*“[E]valuate the general impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Nevada’s criminal justice system, and the specific impact of the pandemic on Nevada’s prison population.”*

Letter signed by:

- Governor Sisolak
- Chief Justice Hardesty
- Majority Leader Cannizzaro
- Speaker Frierson

# Project Goals

1. To better understand the impact of COVID-19 on the state's prison population through data analysis and system assessment
2. To identify opportunities for post-pandemic policies and practices
3. To revise prison population projections where necessary

# Project Phases





# Presentation Scope

- This presentation includes preliminary analyses of trends in court and corrections data from timeframes before COVID-19 and 10 months of data during the pandemic



# Data Sources

- Summary-level data from:
  - Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC)
    - All admissions to NDOC custody for calendar year 2019 through 2020\*
  - Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)
    - All filings and dispositions for July 2017 through 2020
  - Specialty Courts
    - All admissions and outcomes for calendar year 2017 through 2020\*

\*Some 2021 data were provided. Current analyses focus on a 10 month COVID-19 timeframe of March through December 2020

# Data Notes

- Unless stated otherwise, all data were analyzed by CJI in consultation with NV agencies
  - Data presented here may not match agency reports due to different methodologies for analysis
- Analyses assess “before COVID-19” periods with a “during COVID-19” period

Data Source	“Before COVID-19” Period	“During COVID-19” Period
NDOC Data	January 2019 – February 2020 (14 months)	March – December 2020 (10 months)
AOC & Specialty Court Data	July 2017 – February 2020 (32 months)	

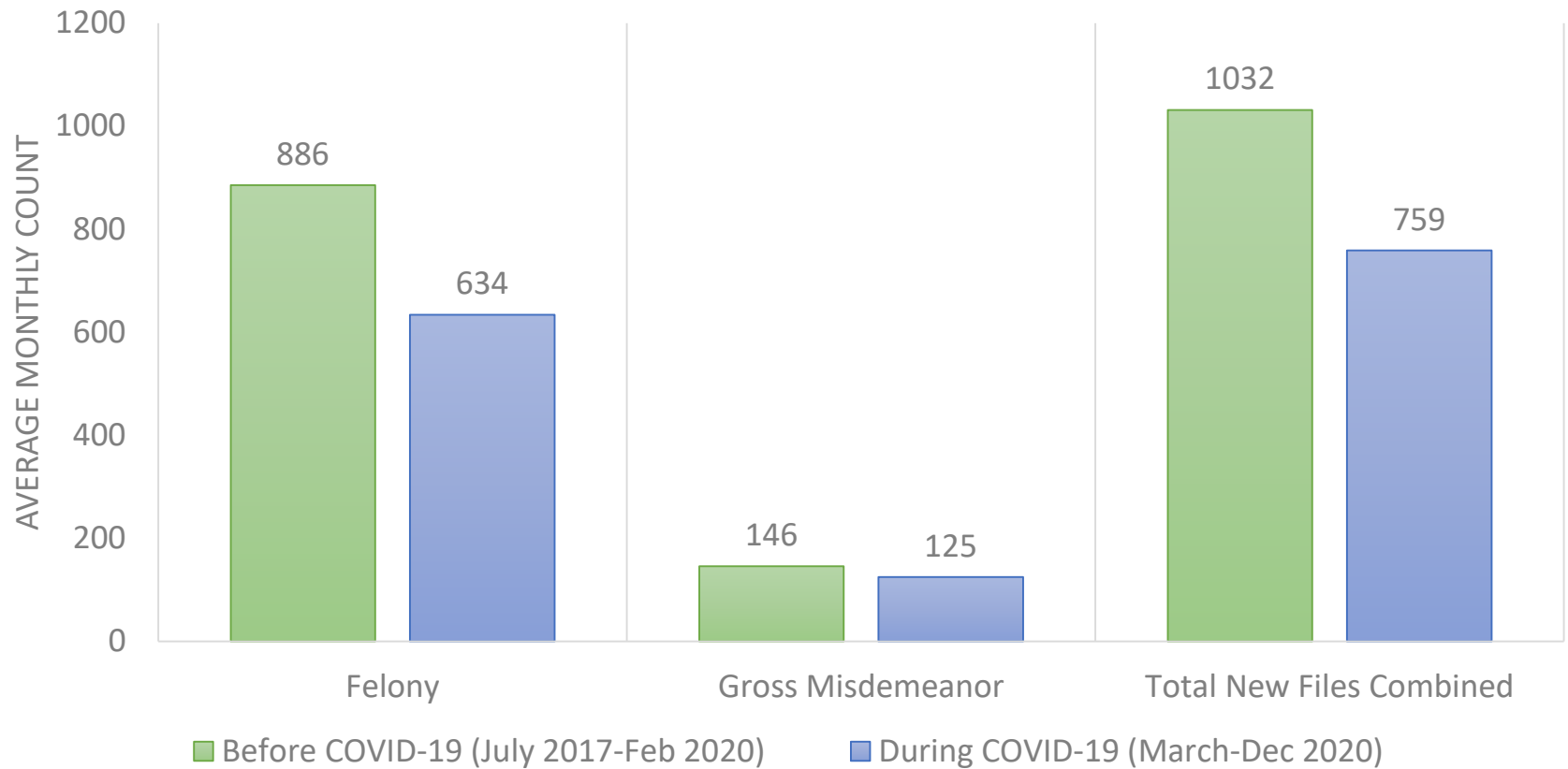
# Nevada Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC): Caseload Patterns Before & During COVID-19



# District Court New Filing Trends Before & During COVID-19

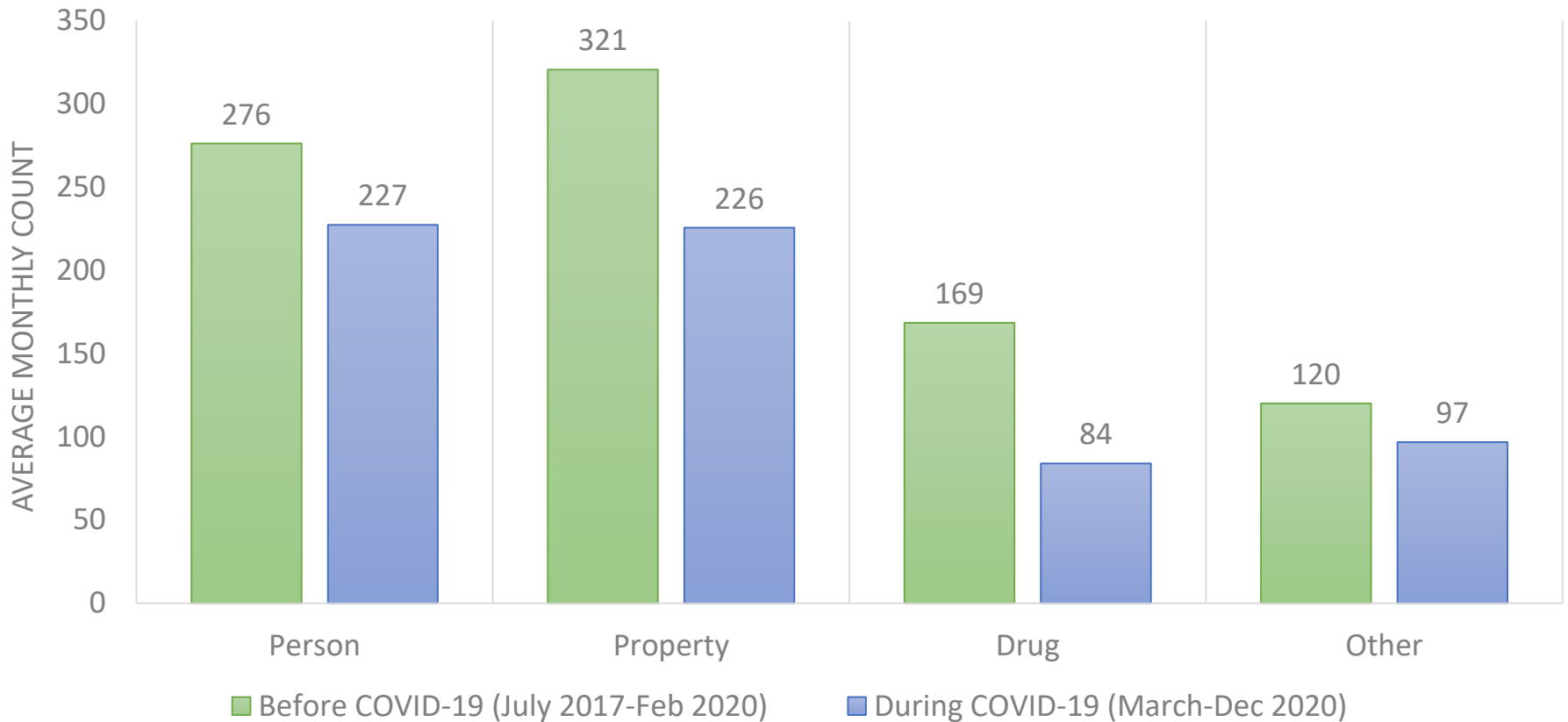
# Felony Filings Down 28%

District Courts' Average Monthly New Filings  
Before & During COVID-19



# Rates of Decline for New Filings Vary by Crime Types

District Courts' Average Monthly New Filing by Felony Crime Type Before & During COVID-19

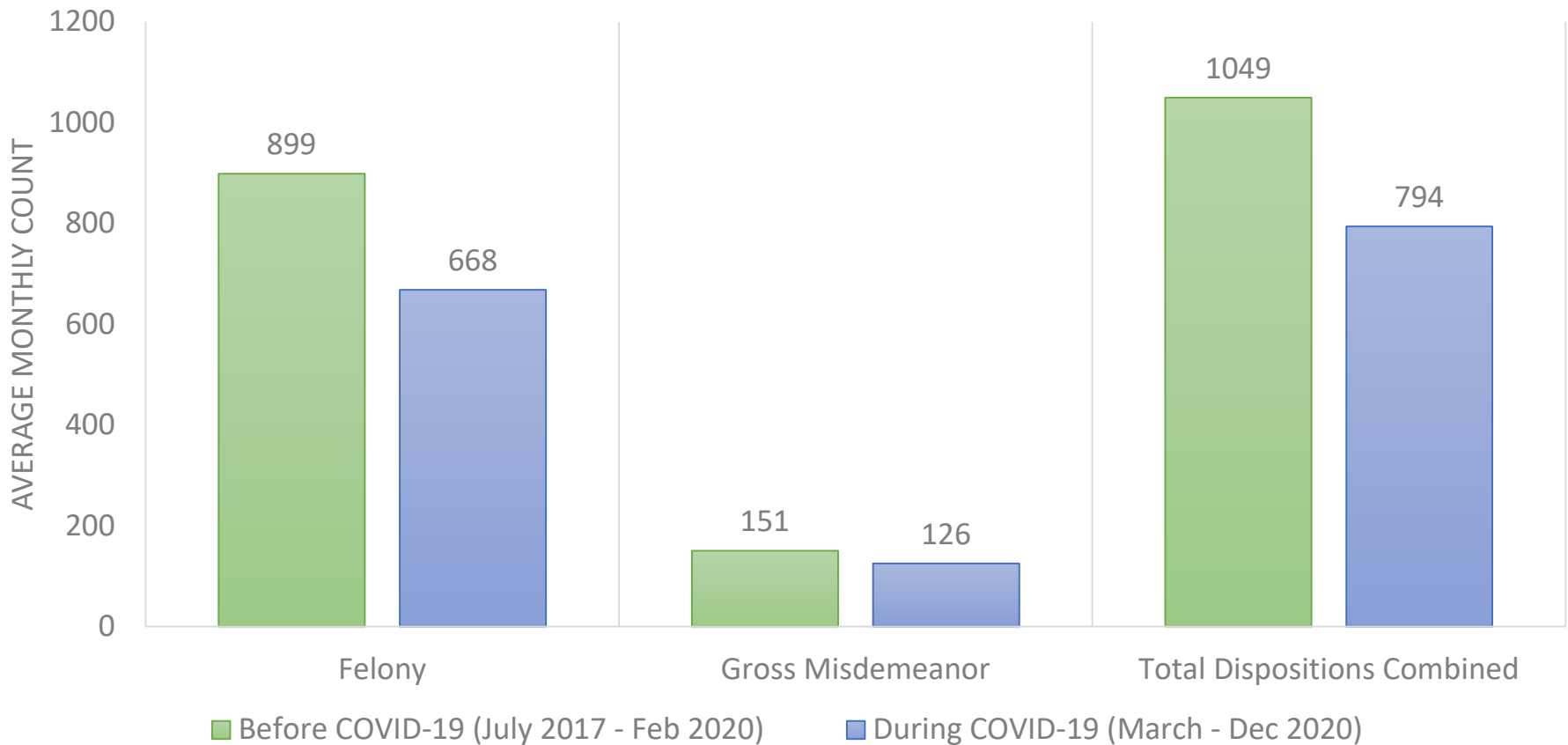


# District Court Disposition Trends Before & During COVID-19



# Felony Dispositions Decline Over 25%

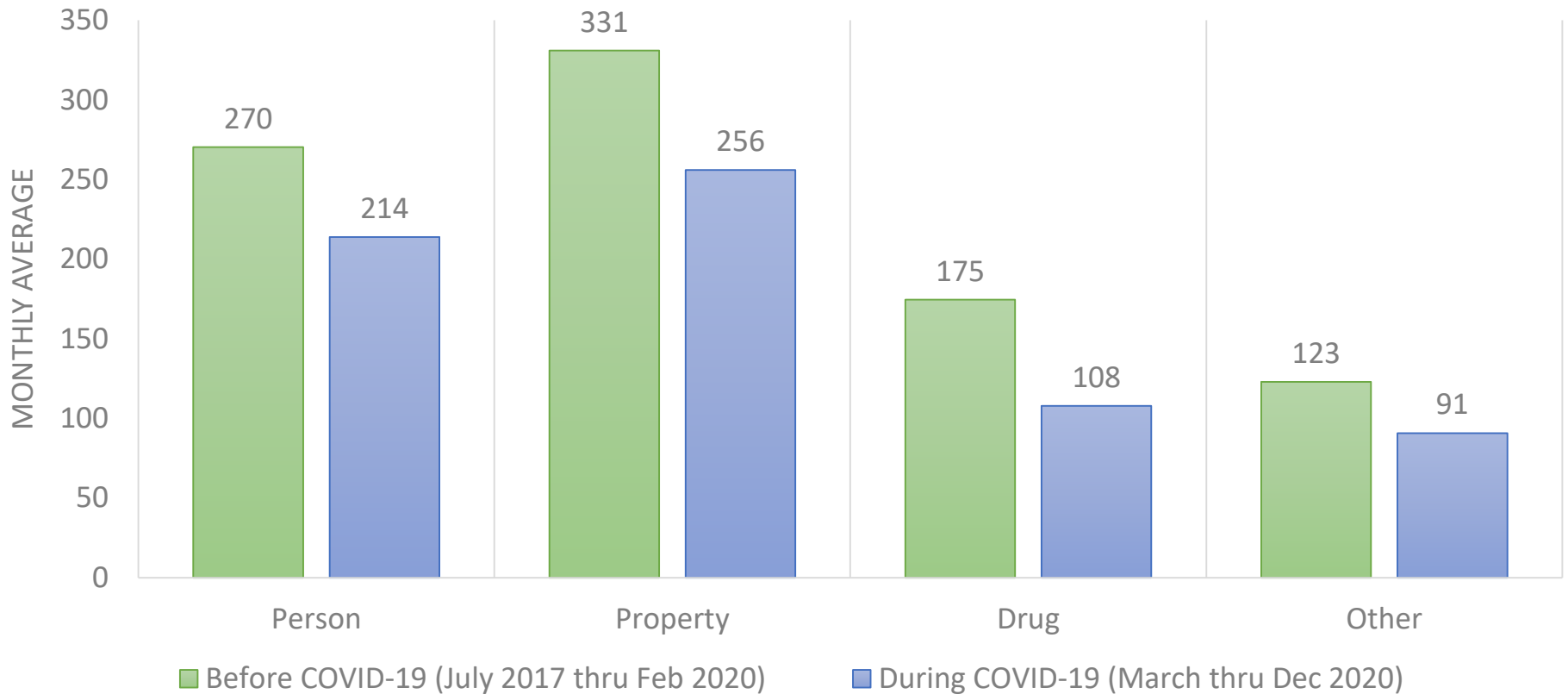
District Courts' Average Monthly Caseload - Original Dispositions  
Before & During COVID-19



Data Source: Nevada Administrative Office of Courts

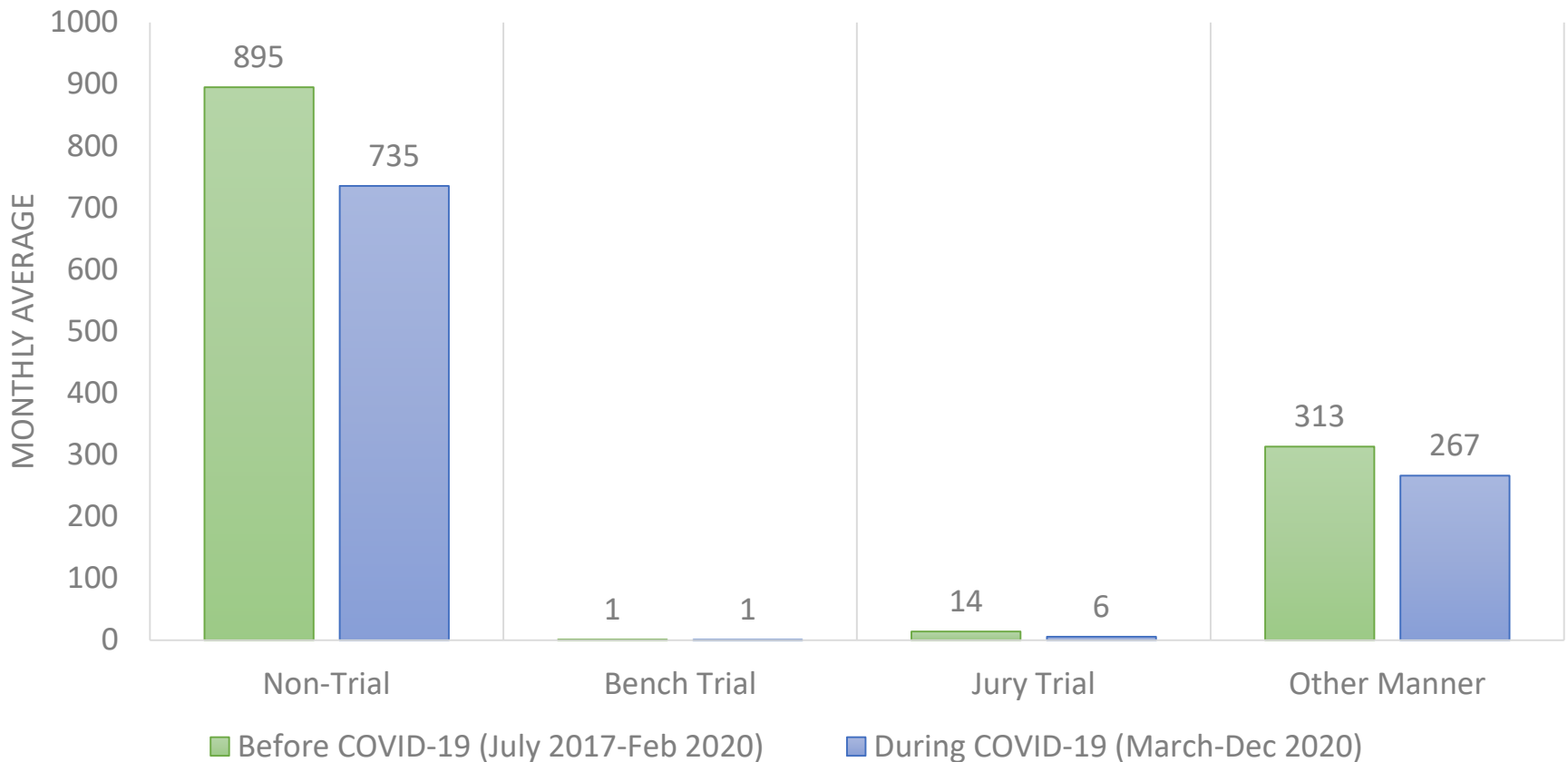
# Dispositions Decline Across All Crime Types

District Courts' Average Monthly Original Disposition by Felony Crime Type  
Before & During COVID-19



# Reductions in Most Disposition Types

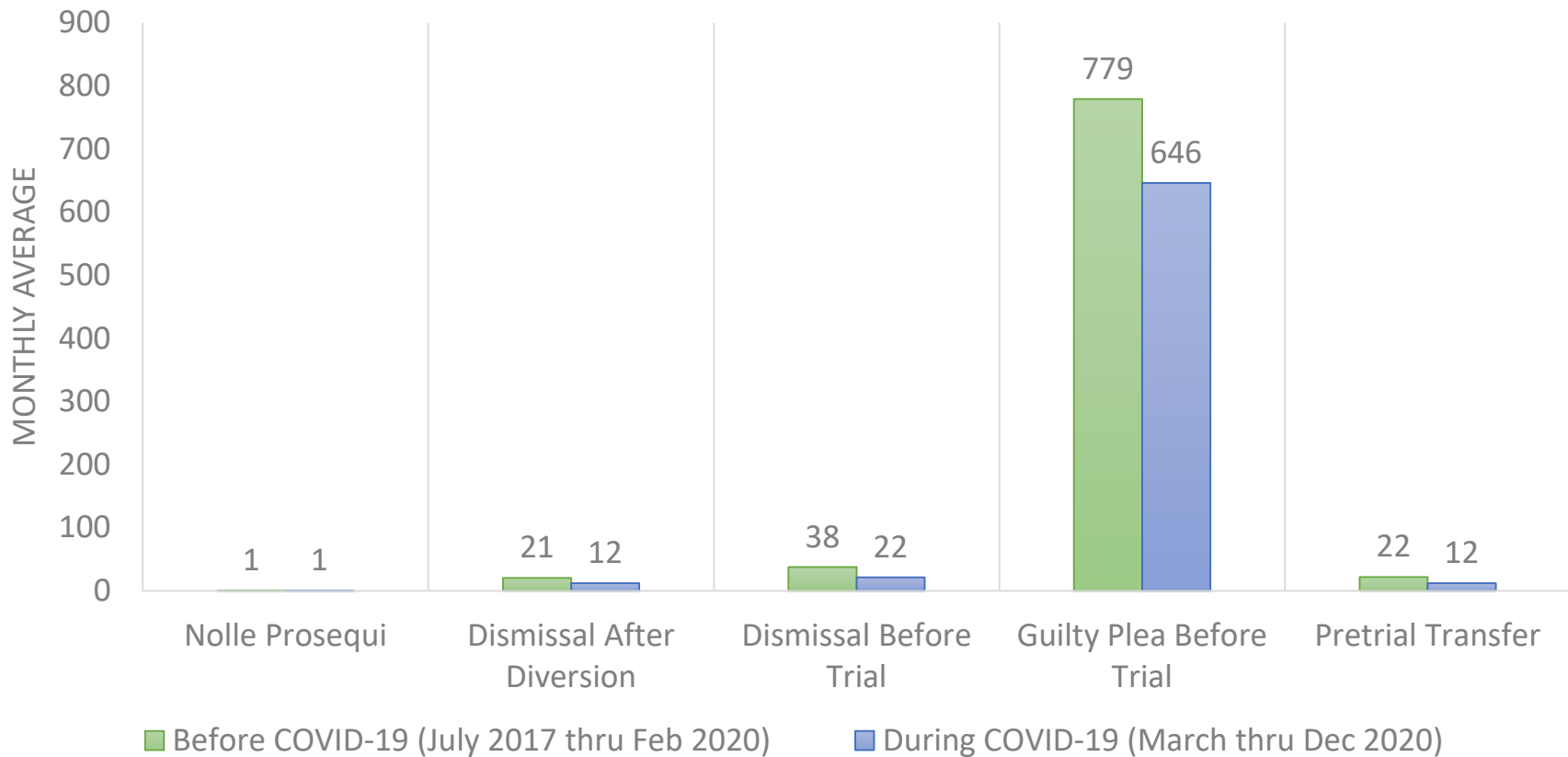
District Courts' Dispositions - Average Monthly Felony Disposition Types  
Before & During COVID-19



Data Source: Nevada Administrative Office of Courts

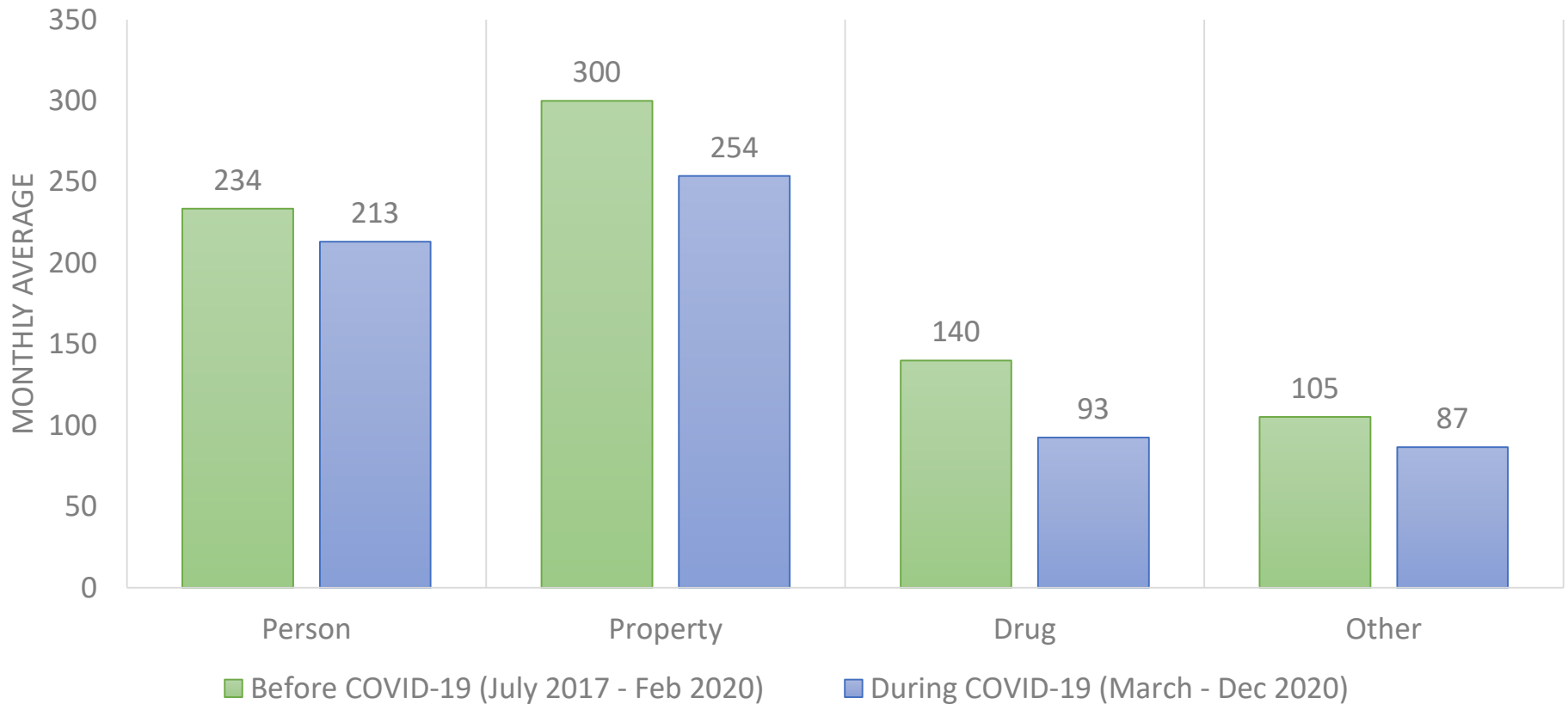
# Non-trial Guilty Pleas Decline by 17%

District Courts' Dispositions - Average Monthly  
Felony Non-Trial Disposition Types Before & During COVID-19



# Rates of Decline for Non-Trial Guilty Pleas Vary Across Offense Types

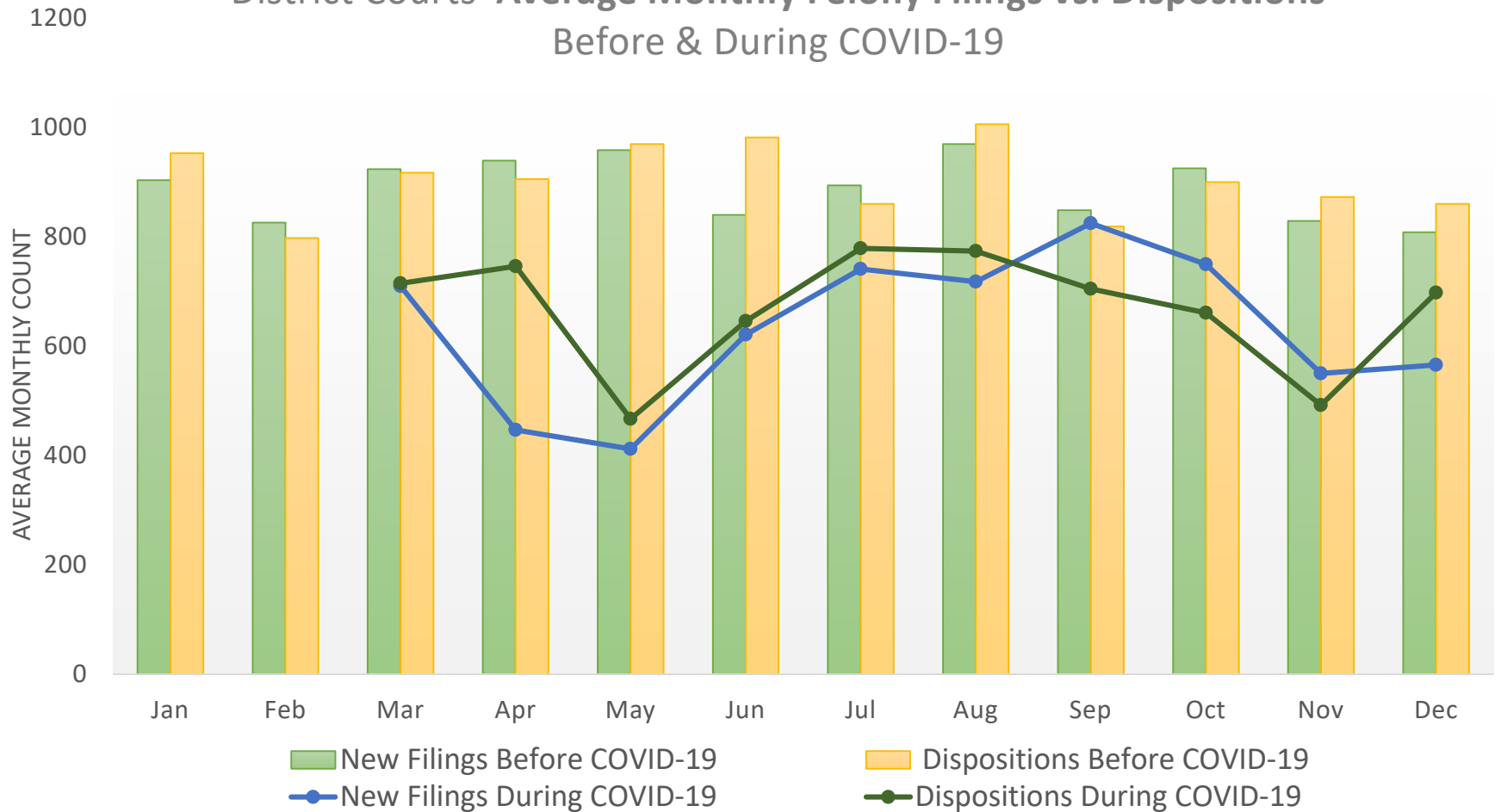
District Courts' Average Monthly Guilty Plea Before Trial by Felony Offense Before & During COVID-19



# District Court New Filings vs. Dispositions Before & During COVID-19

# Dispositions Slightly Outpace Filings

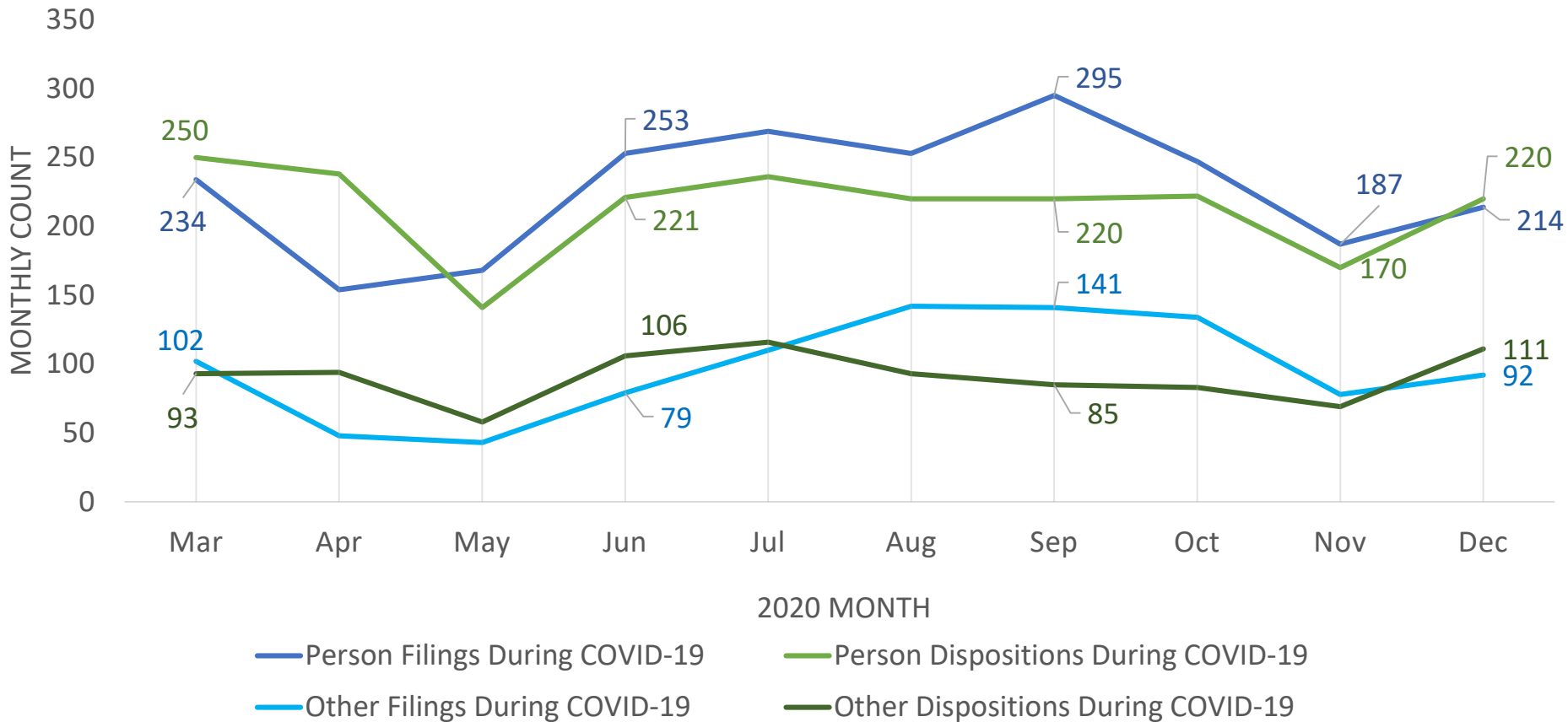
## District Courts' Average Monthly Felony Filings vs. Dispositions Before & During COVID-19



Data Source: Nevada Administrative Office of Courts

# More New Filings than Dispositions for Felony Person and Other Cases

District Courts' Monthly Filings vs. Dispositions  
 Felony Person and Felony Other Caseloads During COVID-19

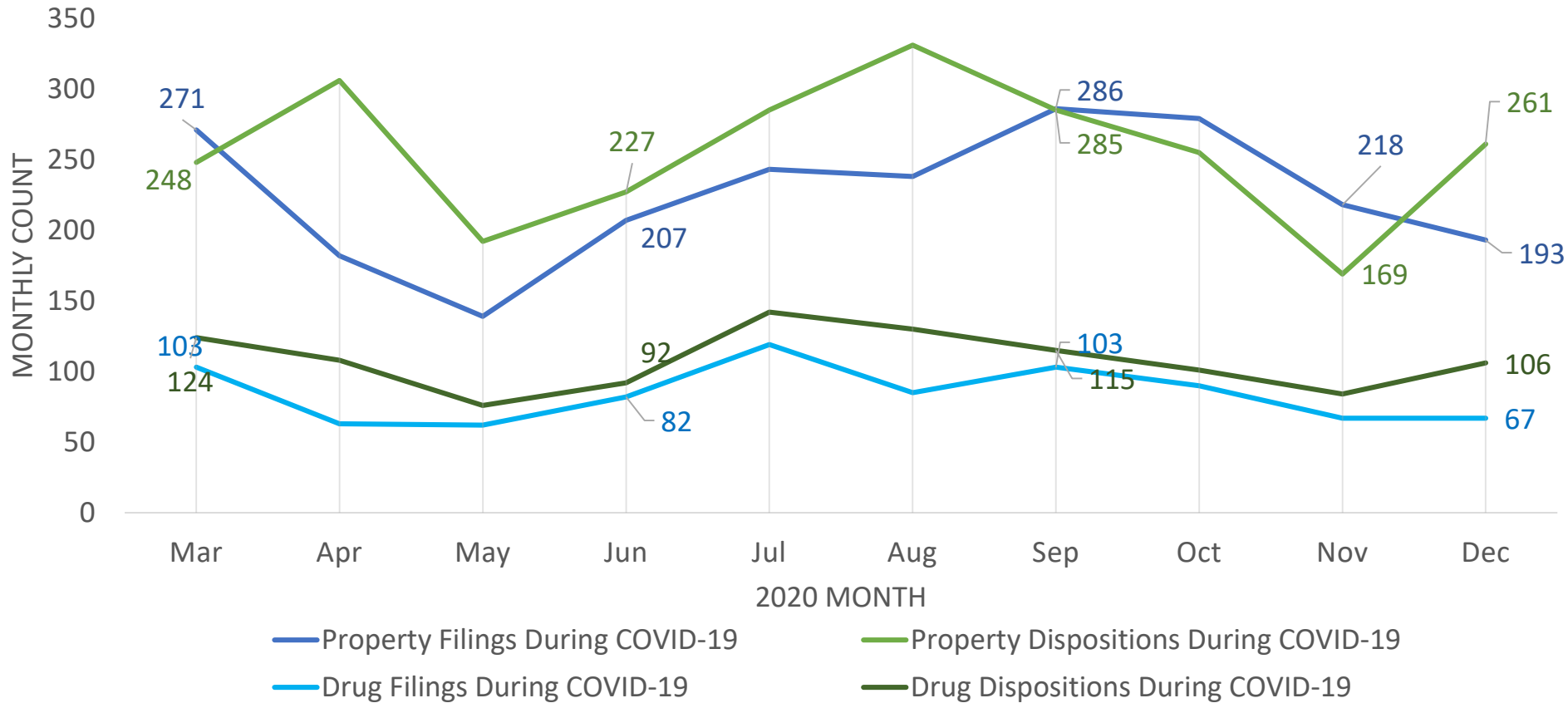


**Data Source:** Nevada AOC. Felony Person Category: *Crimes Against Persons; Domestic Violence; Elder Abuse; Child Abuse & Neglect.* Felony Other Category: *Weapons; Public Order; Motor Vehicle – DUI, Reckless, Other; Other.*



# Fewer New Filings than Dispositions for Felony Property and Drug Cases

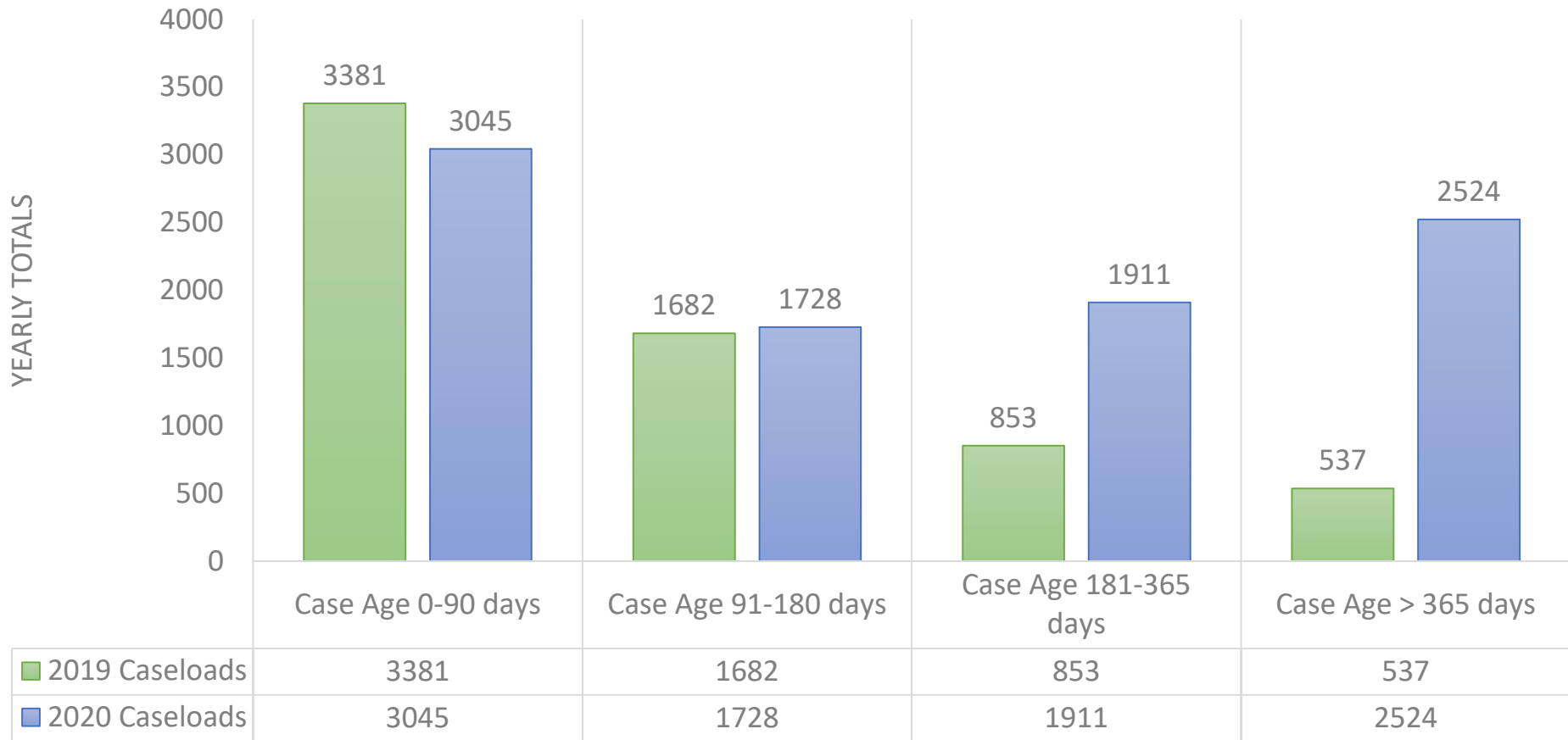
District Courts' Monthly Filings vs. Dispositions  
 Felony Property and Felony Drug Caseloads During COVID-19



# District Court Caseload Age Trends Before & During COVID-19

# Steep Increases in Case Ages in 2020

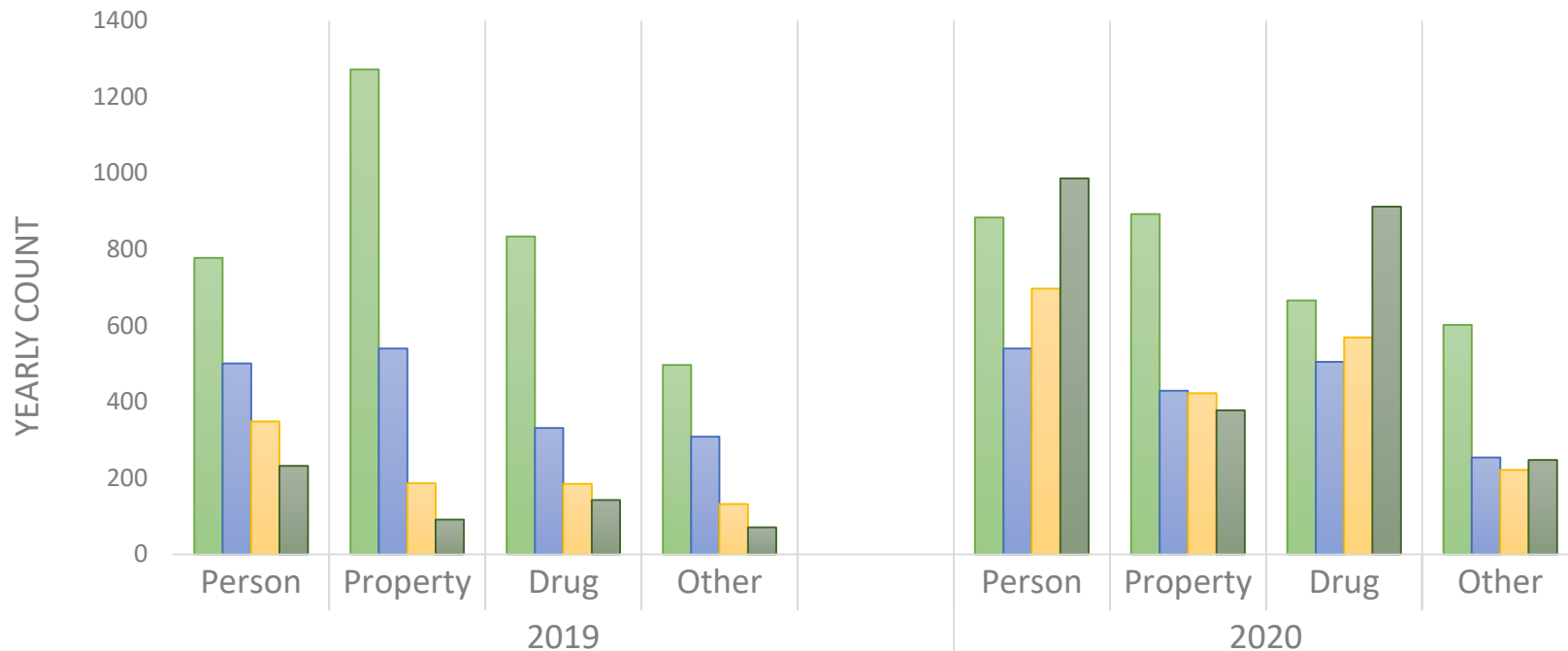
District Courts' Felony Caseload Ages 2019 vs. 2020\*\*



**Data Source:** Nevada Administrative Office of Courts. \*\* These data are preliminary. Reported only since July 2018 and not yet by all districts; e.g., current estimates do not include Nevada's largest district.

# Increased Case Ages for All Offense Types

District Courts' Felony Caseload Ages by Offense: 2019 vs. 2020\*\*



Case Age Category	2019				2020			
	Person	Property	Drug	Other	Person	Property	Drug	Other
Case Age 0-90 days	778	1272	834	497	884	893	666	602
Case Age 91-180 days	501	540	332	309	540	429	505	254
Case Age 181-365 days	349	187	185	132	697	423	569	222
Case Age > 365 days	232	91	143	71	986	378	912	248

**Data Source:** Nevada Administrative Office of Courts. \*\* These data are preliminary. Reported only since July 2018 and not yet by all districts; e.g., current estimates do not include Nevada's largest district.

# District Court Preliminary Data Findings Summary

# Summary: District Court Filings, Dispositions, and Case Ages

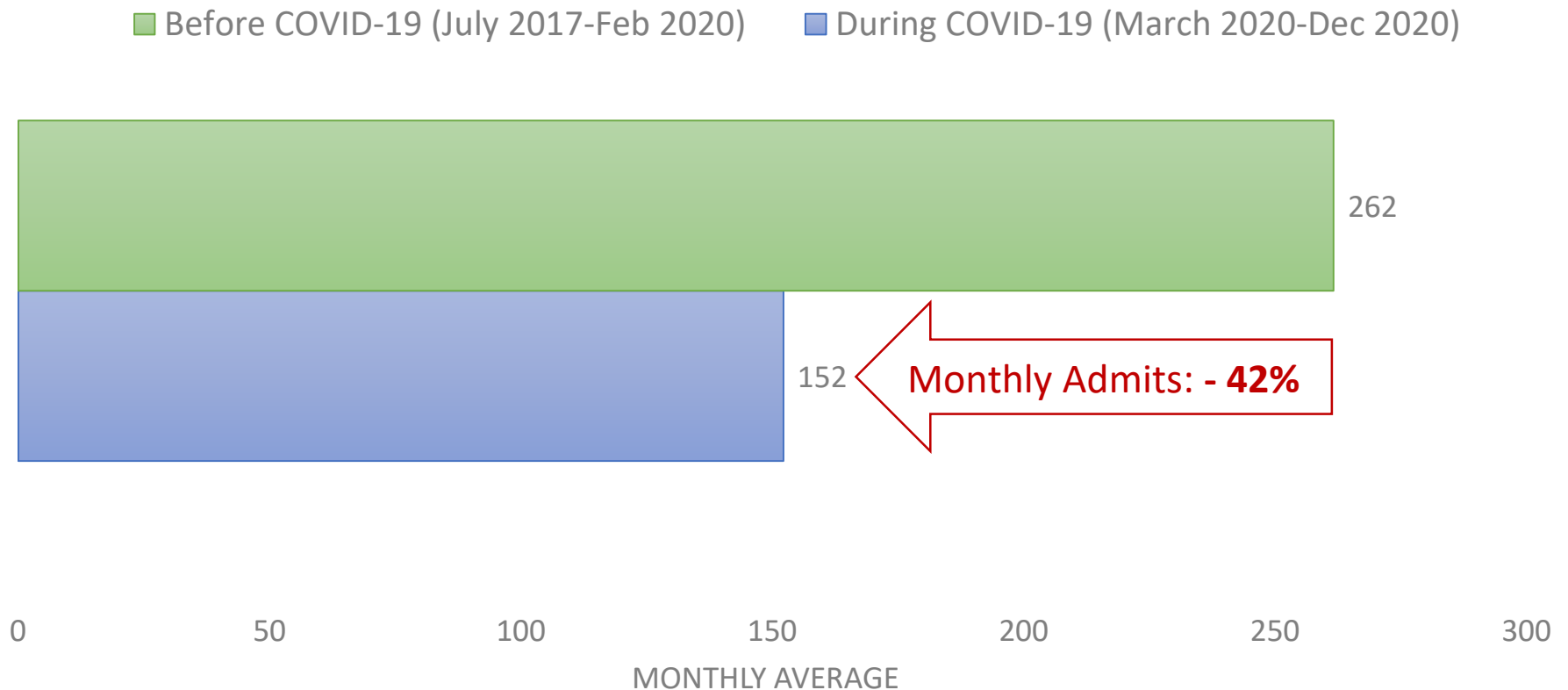
- **Declines in both Filings (-28%) and Dispositions (-25%)**
  - Varied declines by offense types for both filings & dispositions
- **Overall, dispositions exceeded new case filings**
  - More dispositions than filings for property & drug cases
  - More filings than dispositions for person & “other” cases
- **Case ages increased between 2019 and 2020**
  - More cases over one year in age for all offense types in 2020

# Nevada Specialty Courts: Admissions Trends Before & During COVID-19



# Admissions Decline by 42%

Average Monthly Admissions Before & During COVID-19

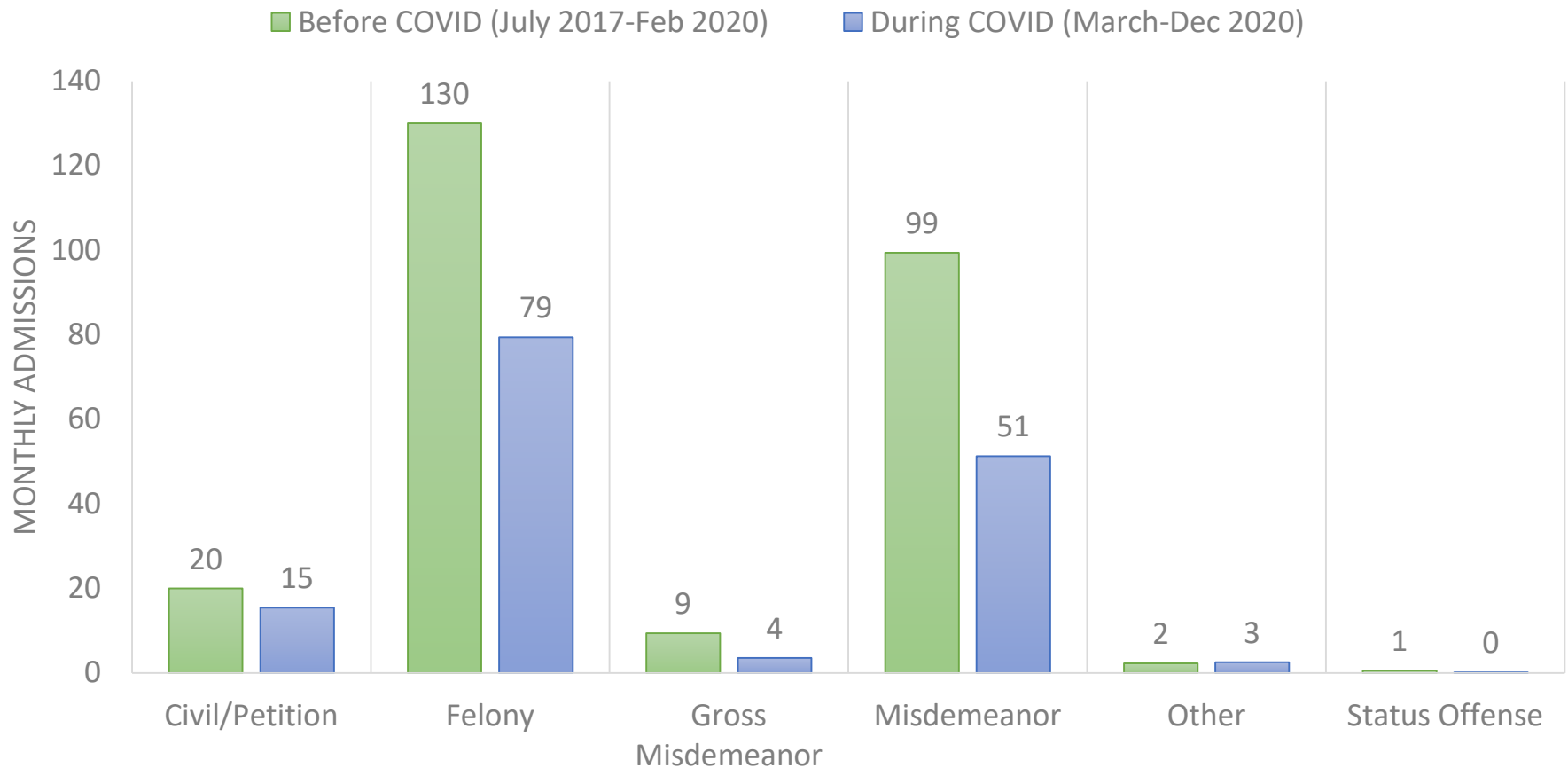


Data Source: Nevada Specialty Courts



# Felony Admissions Drop 39%

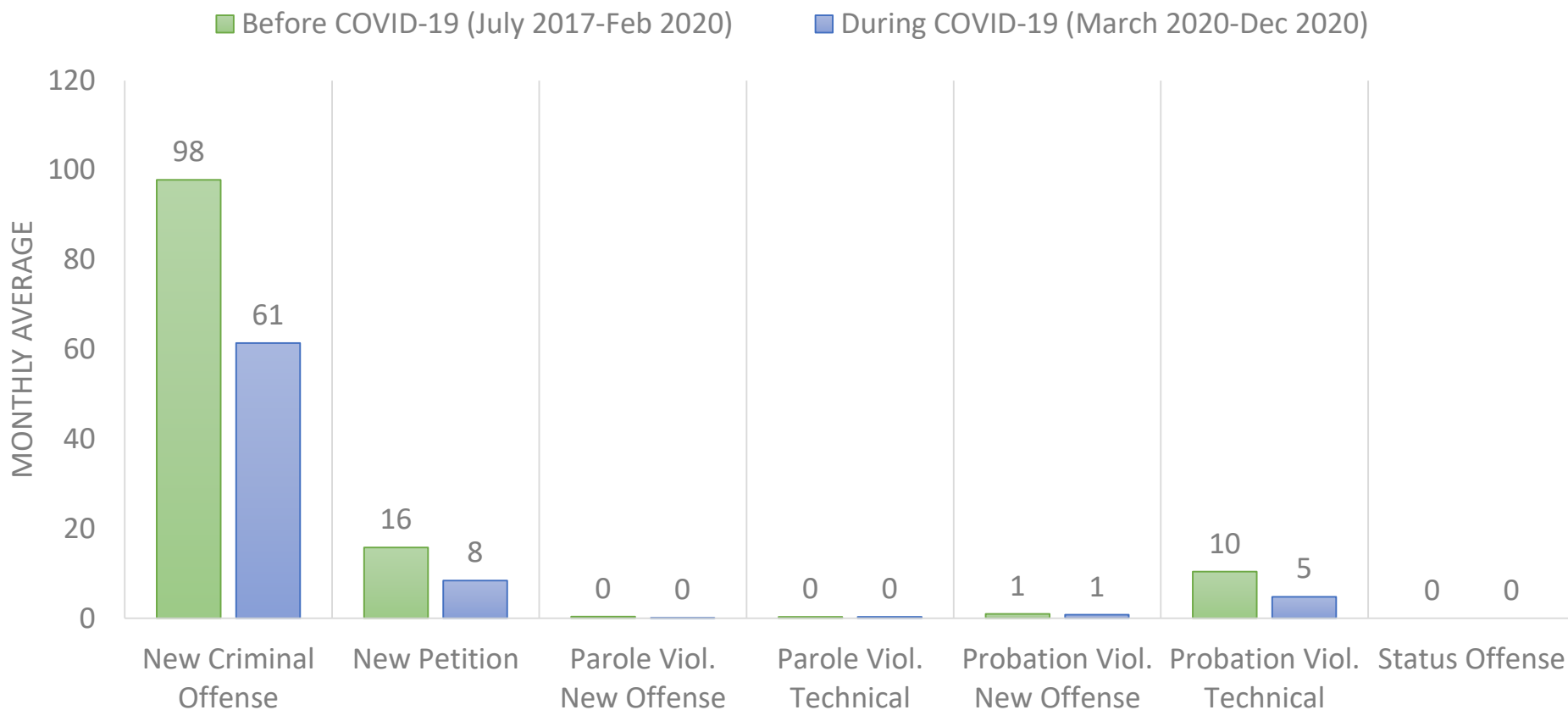
Average Monthly Admissions by Charge Type  
Before & During COVID-19



Data Source: Nevada Specialty Courts

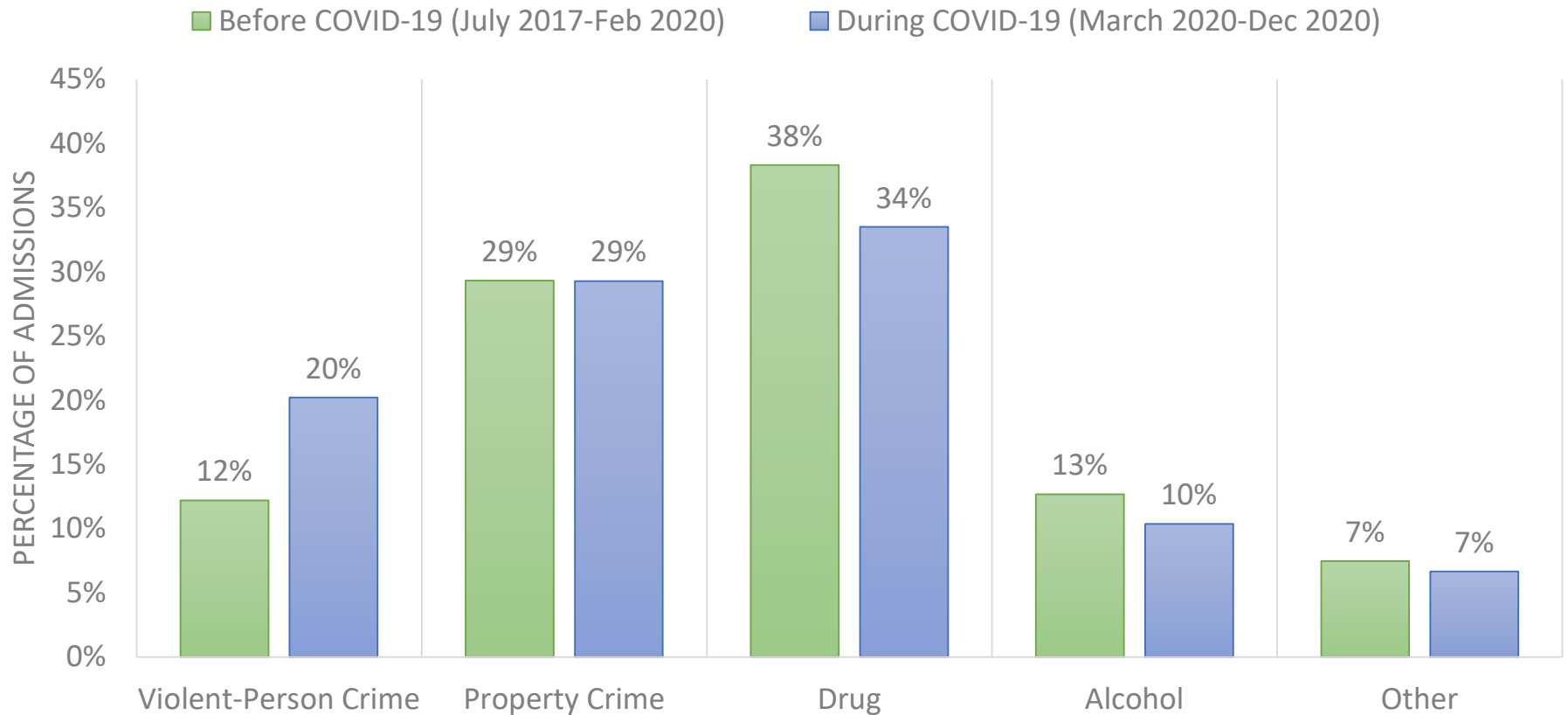
# Most Common Felony Admission Type Remains New Criminal Offense

Average Monthly Felony Admissions by Admit Type  
Before & During COVID-19



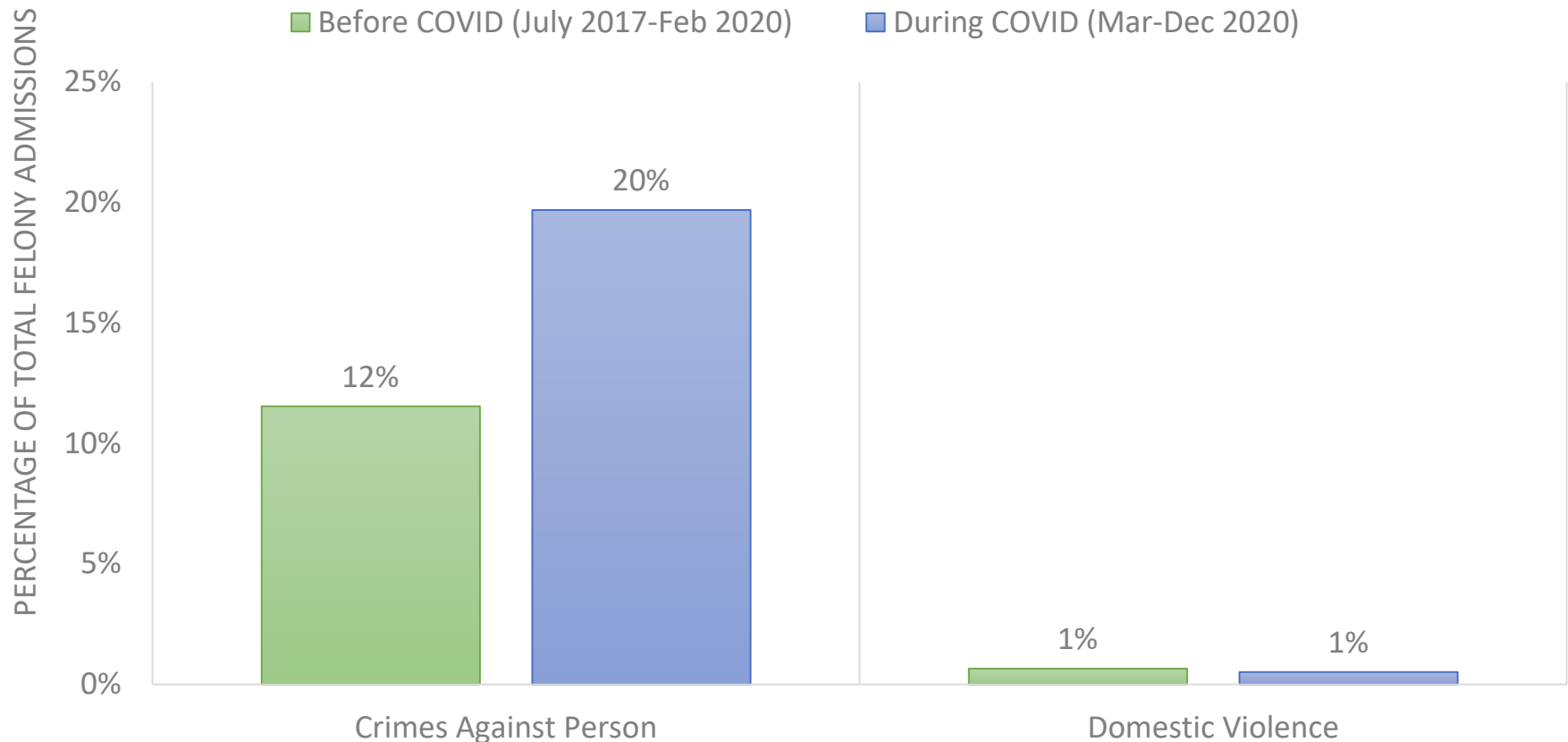
# Changes in Share of Admissions by Offense Type During COVID-19

Percentage of Total Felony Admissions by Offense Type Before & During COVID-19



# Person Offense Increase Unrelated to Domestic Violence

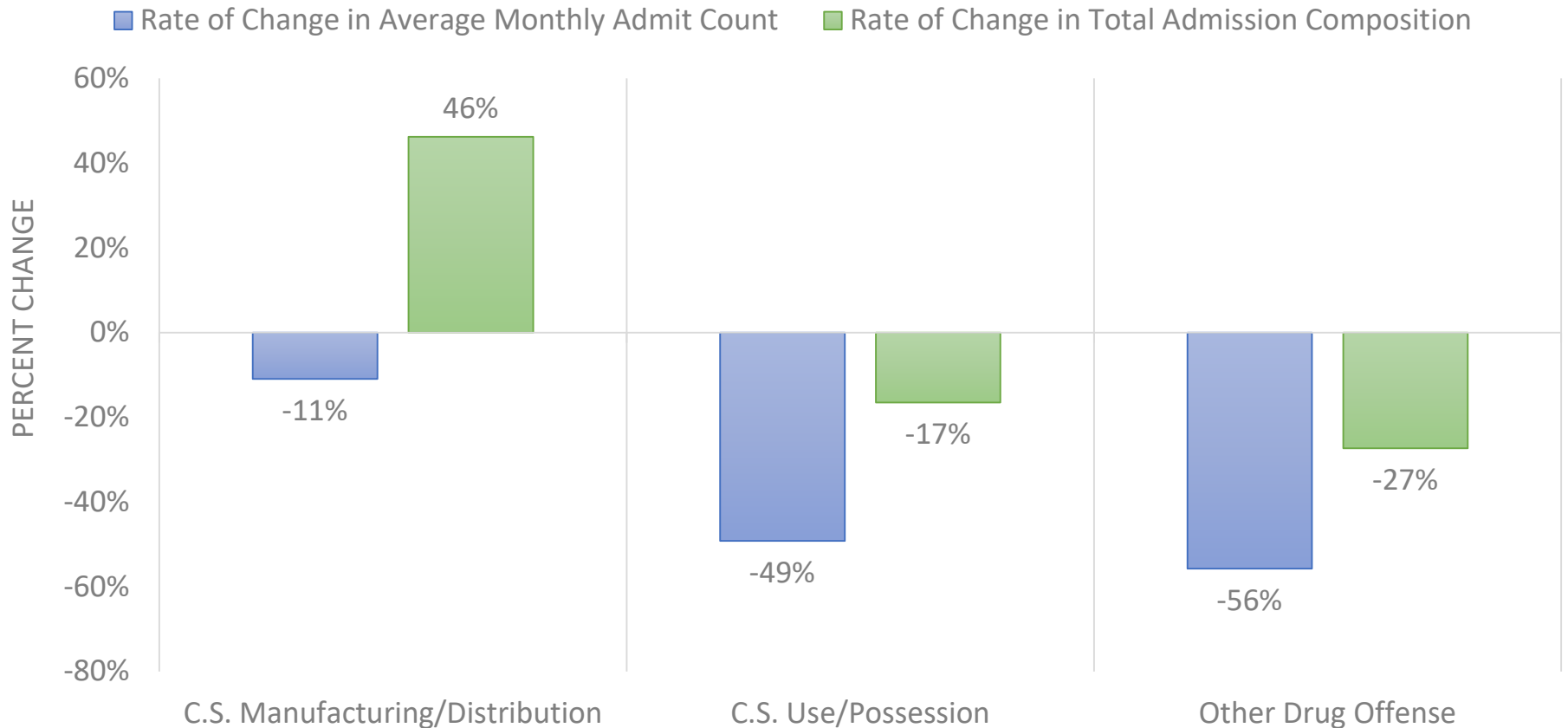
Percentage of Felony Admissions for Person-based Offenses Before & During COVID-19



Data Source: Nevada Specialty Courts

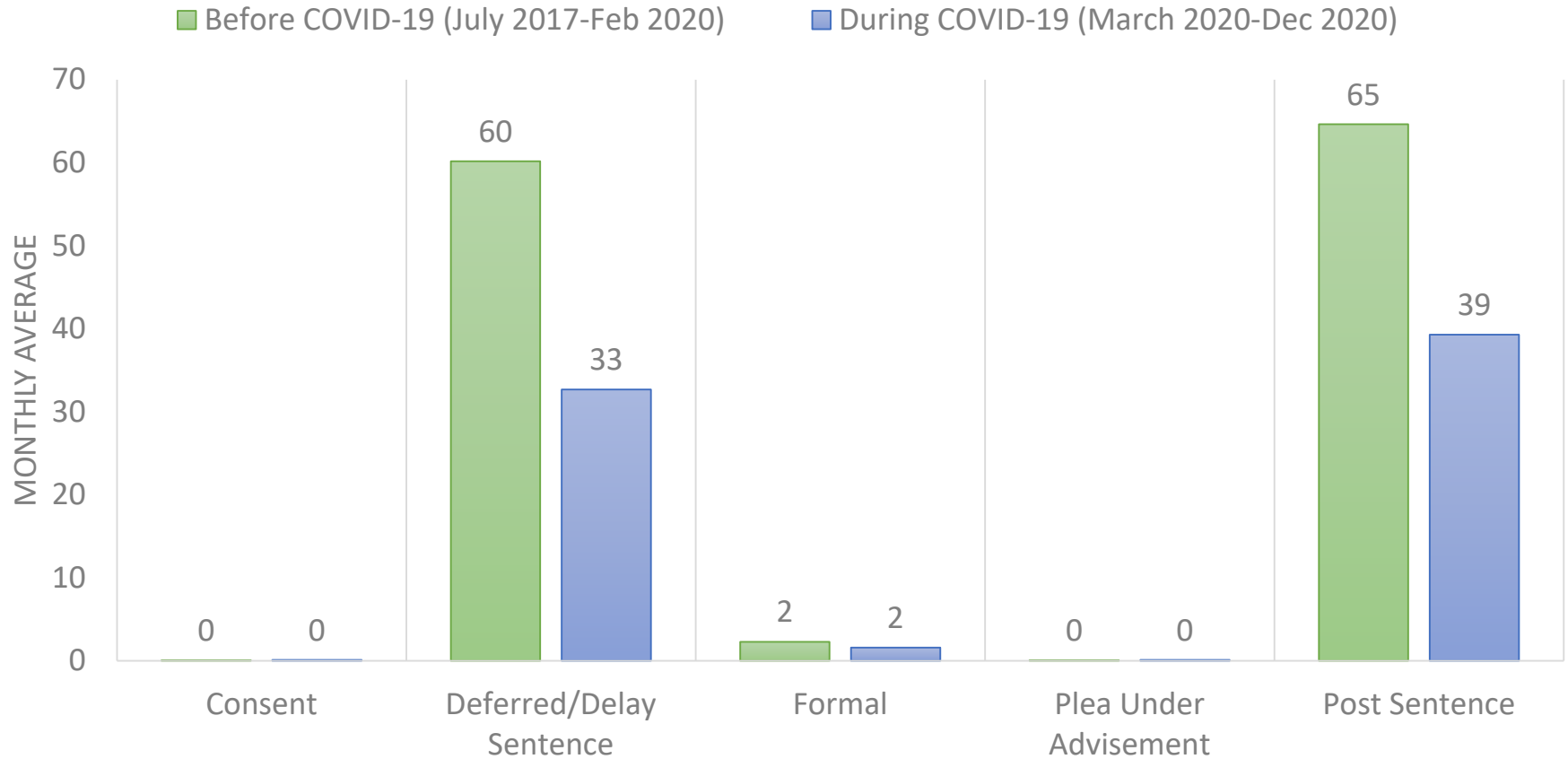
# Share of Admissions for Drug Possession Drop by Nearly 17%

Monthly & Total Percent Change in Felony Admissions for Drug Offenses  
During COVID-19



# Admissions for Deferred Sentences Drop by Nearly Half

Felony Admissions by Admit Types Before & During COVID-19

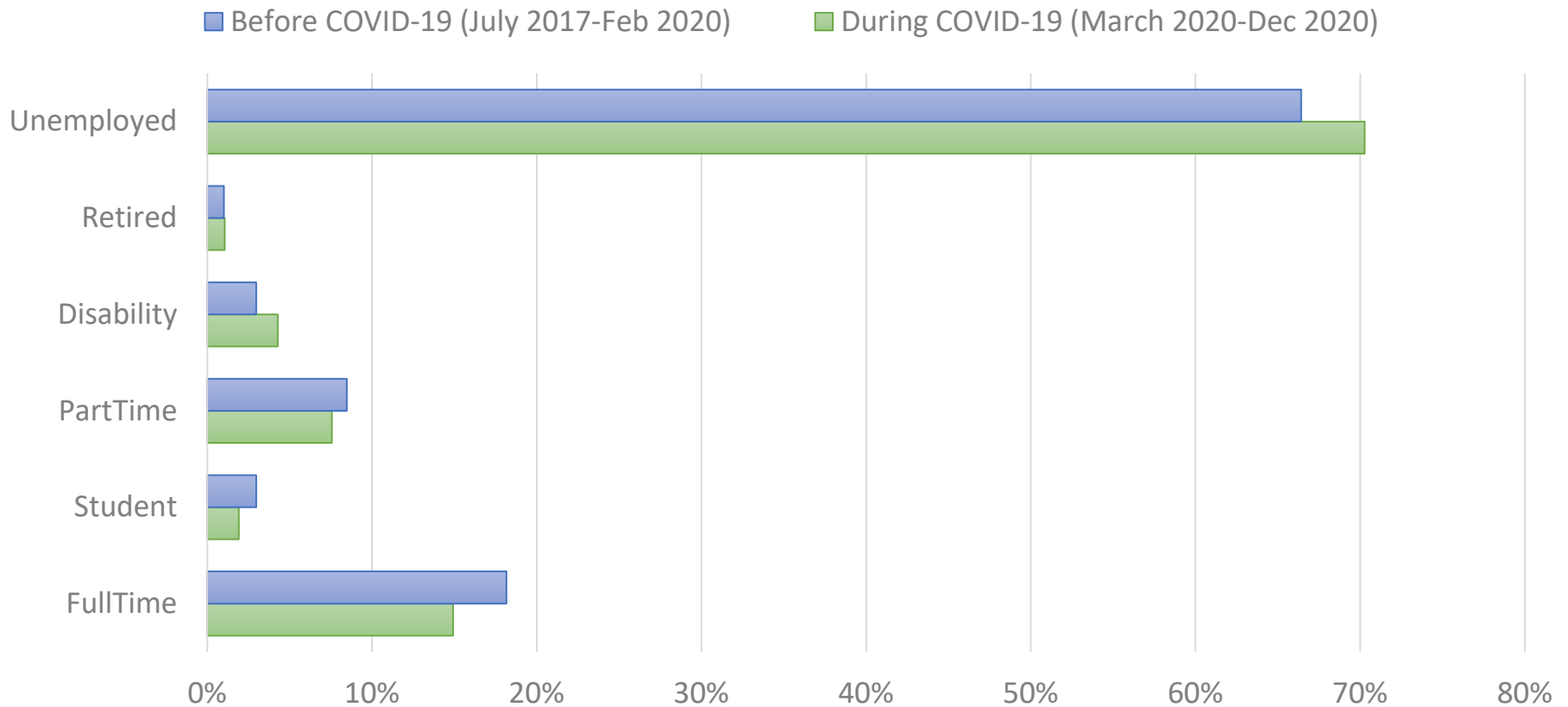


Data Source: Nevada Specialty Courts

# Specialty Court Demographic Trends Before & During COVID-19

# Increasing Portion of Admissions Unemployed

Percent of Admissions by Employment Status  
Before & During COVID-19



Data Source: Nevada Specialty Courts



# Increased Admissions with Behavioral Health Needs



## Prior Substance Abuse Treatment

**Over 20% increase in portion of monthly admissions comprised of people with Prior Substance Abuse Treatment**

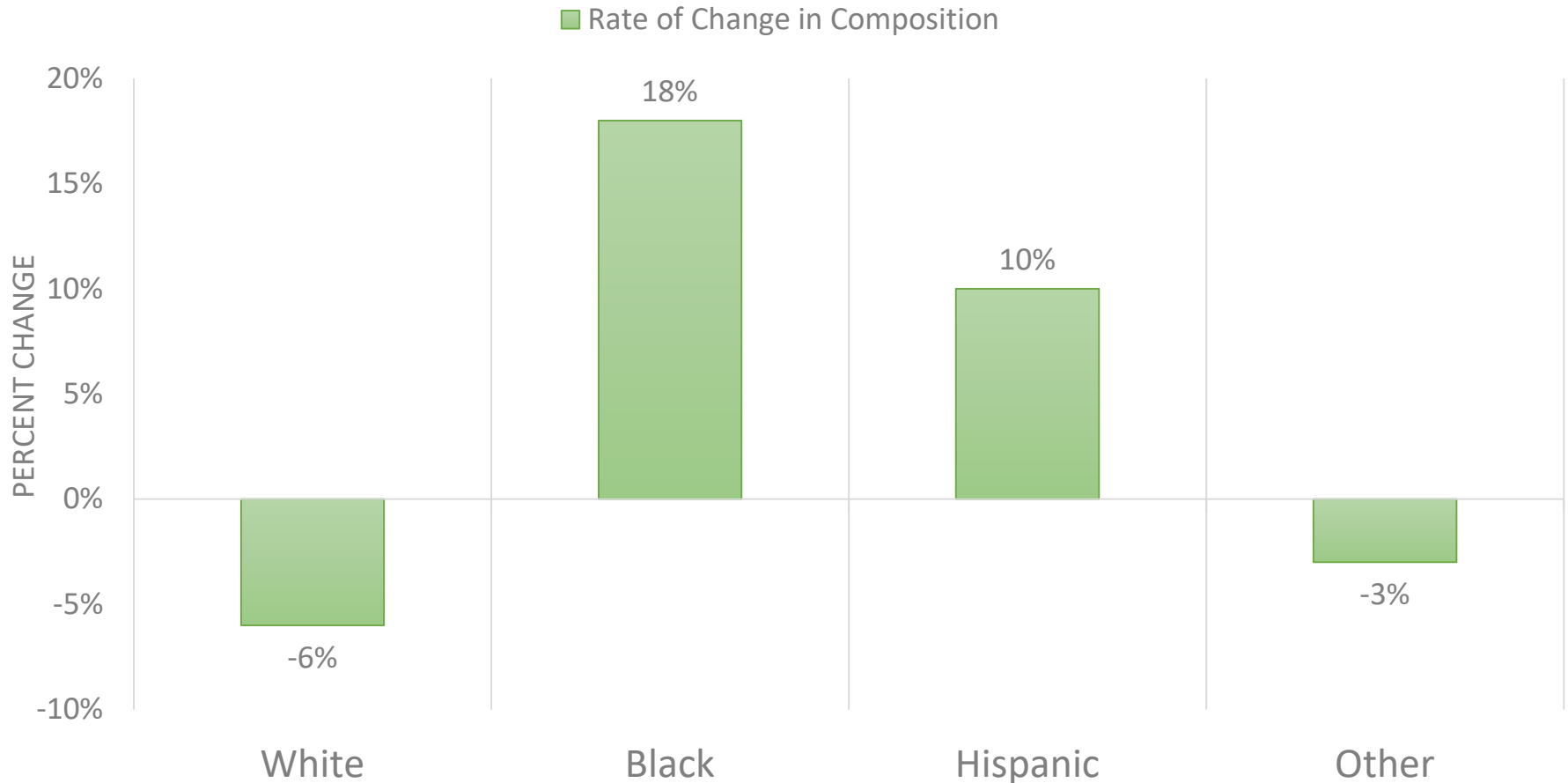


## Prior Mental Health History

**Over 20% increase in portion of monthly admissions comprised of people with Mental Health Histories**

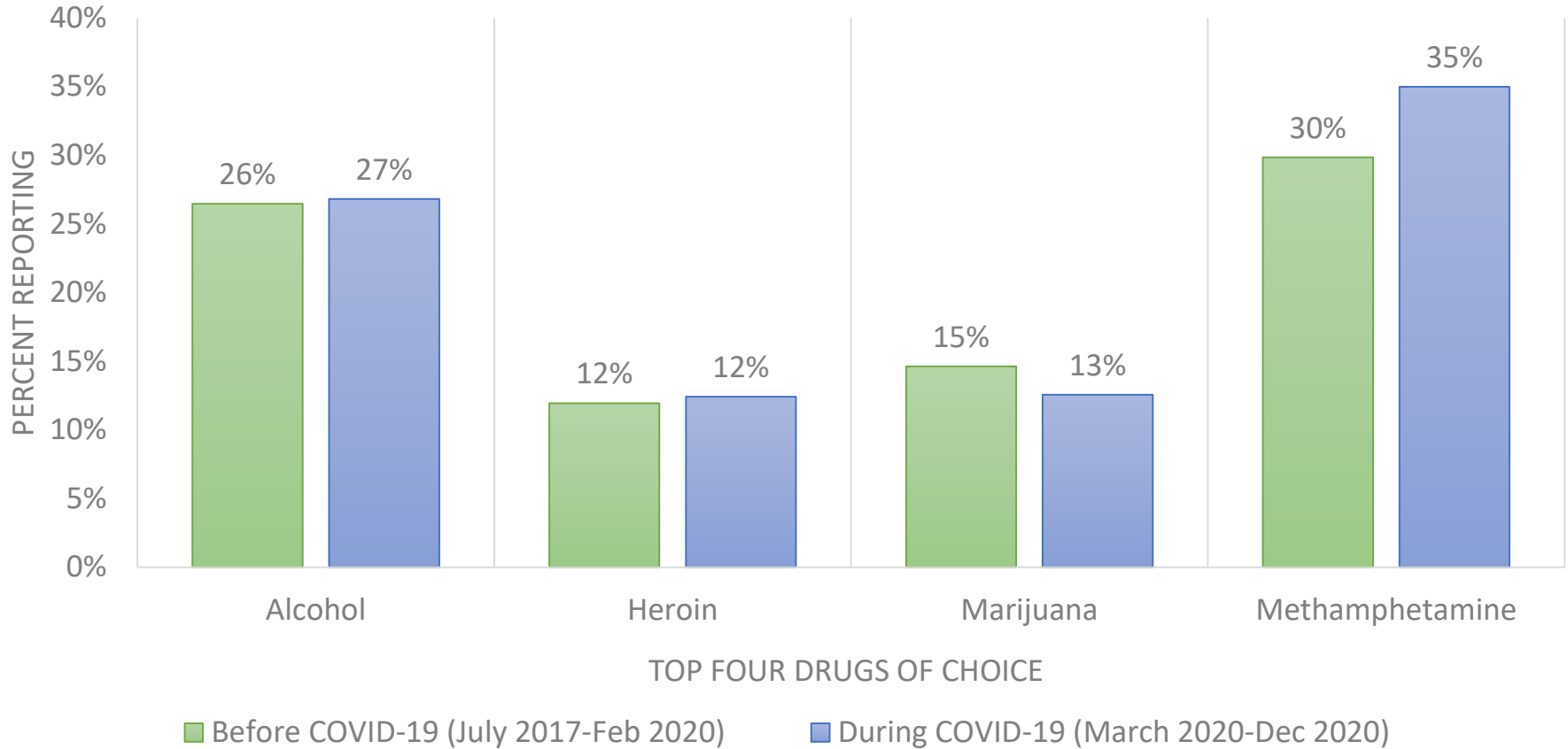
# Increase in Share of Admissions for Those whose Race-Ethnicity is Black or Hispanic

Percent Change in Racial-Ethnic Composition During COVID-19



# Increase Self-Reports of Meth as Drug of Choice

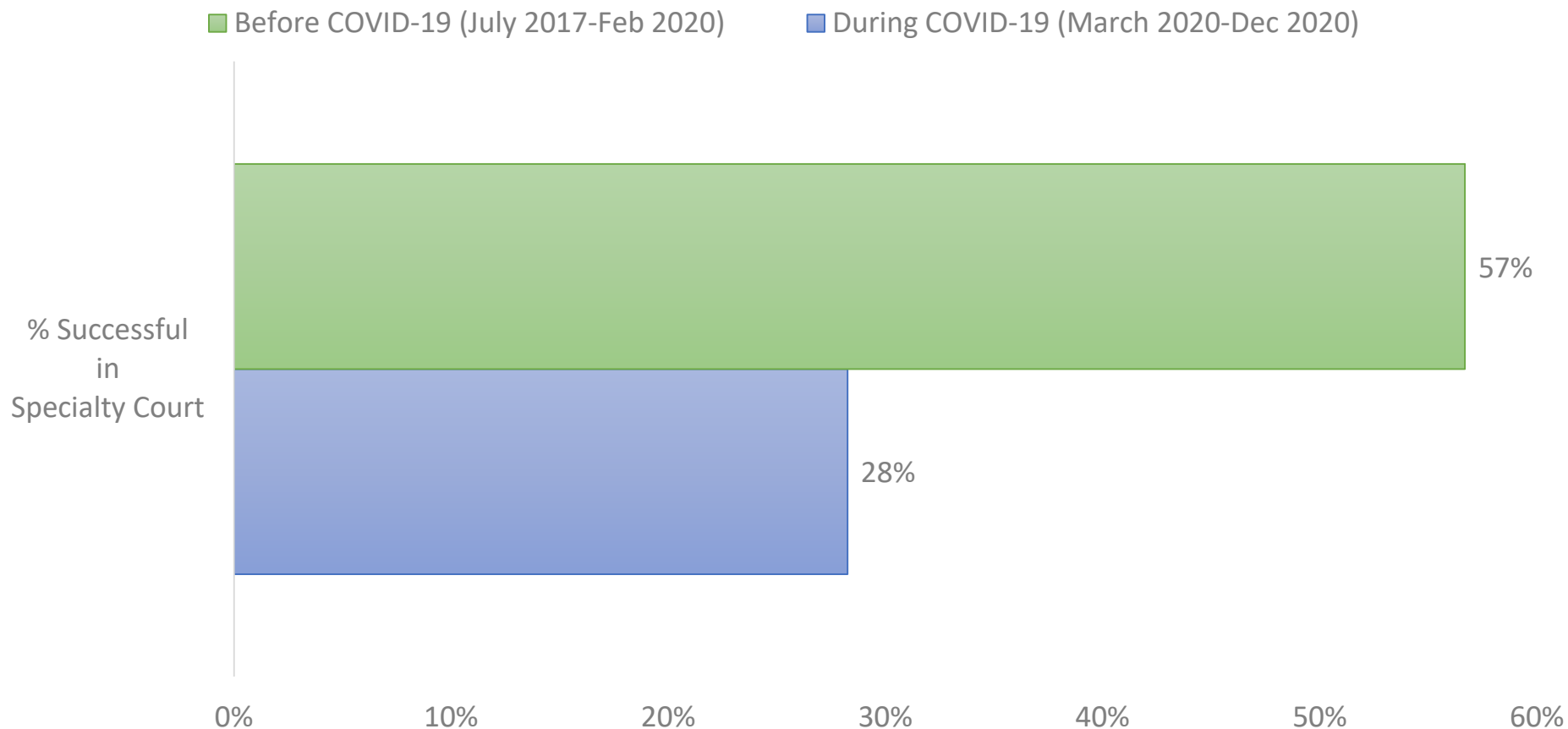
Top Four Drugs of Choice Among Admissions Before & During COVID-19



# Specialty Court Outcome Trends Before & During COVID-19

# Successful Completion Rate Drops 50%

Percentage of Program Successes Before & During COVID-19

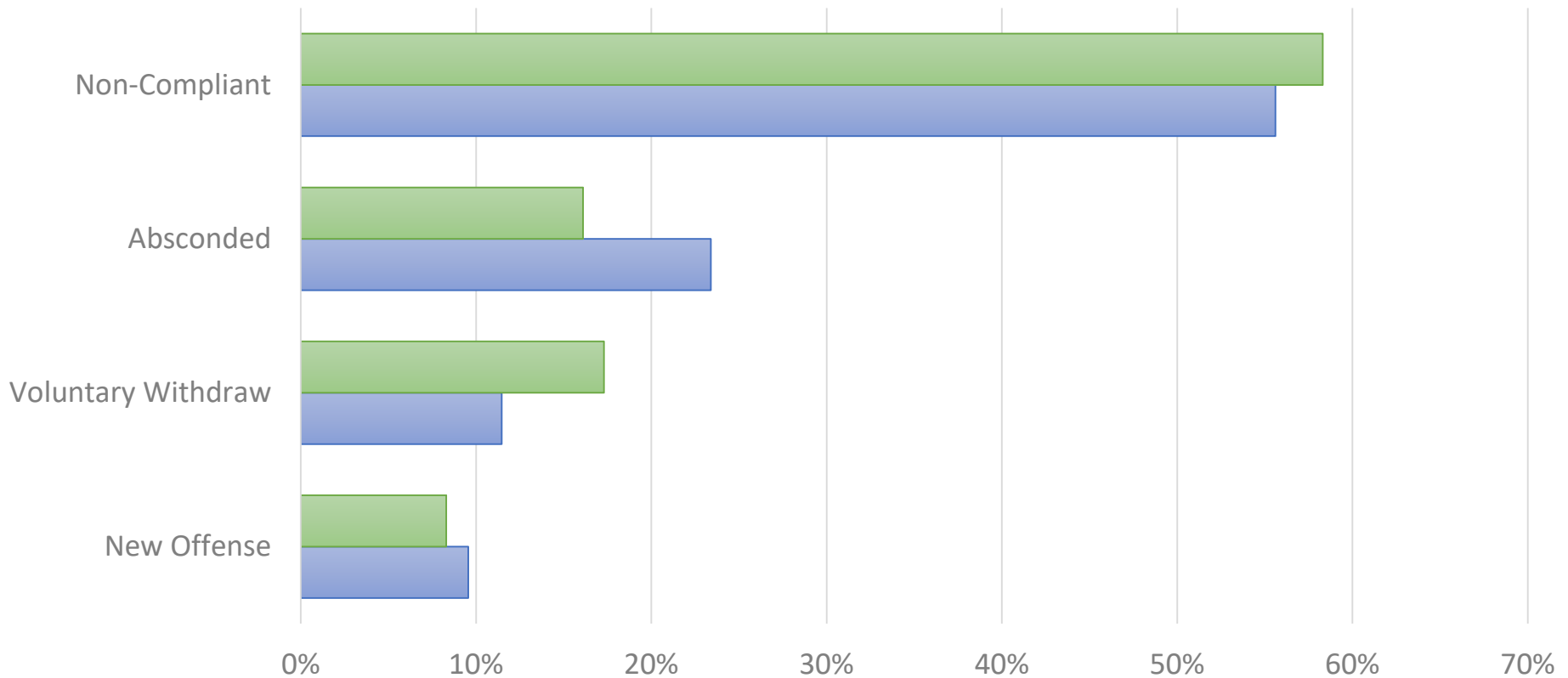


Data Source: Nevada Specialty Courts

# Rise in Failures Due to Absconding

Program Failure Reasons Before & During COVID-19

■ Before COVID-19 (July 2017-Feb 2020)    ■ During COVID-19 (March 2020-Dec 2020)

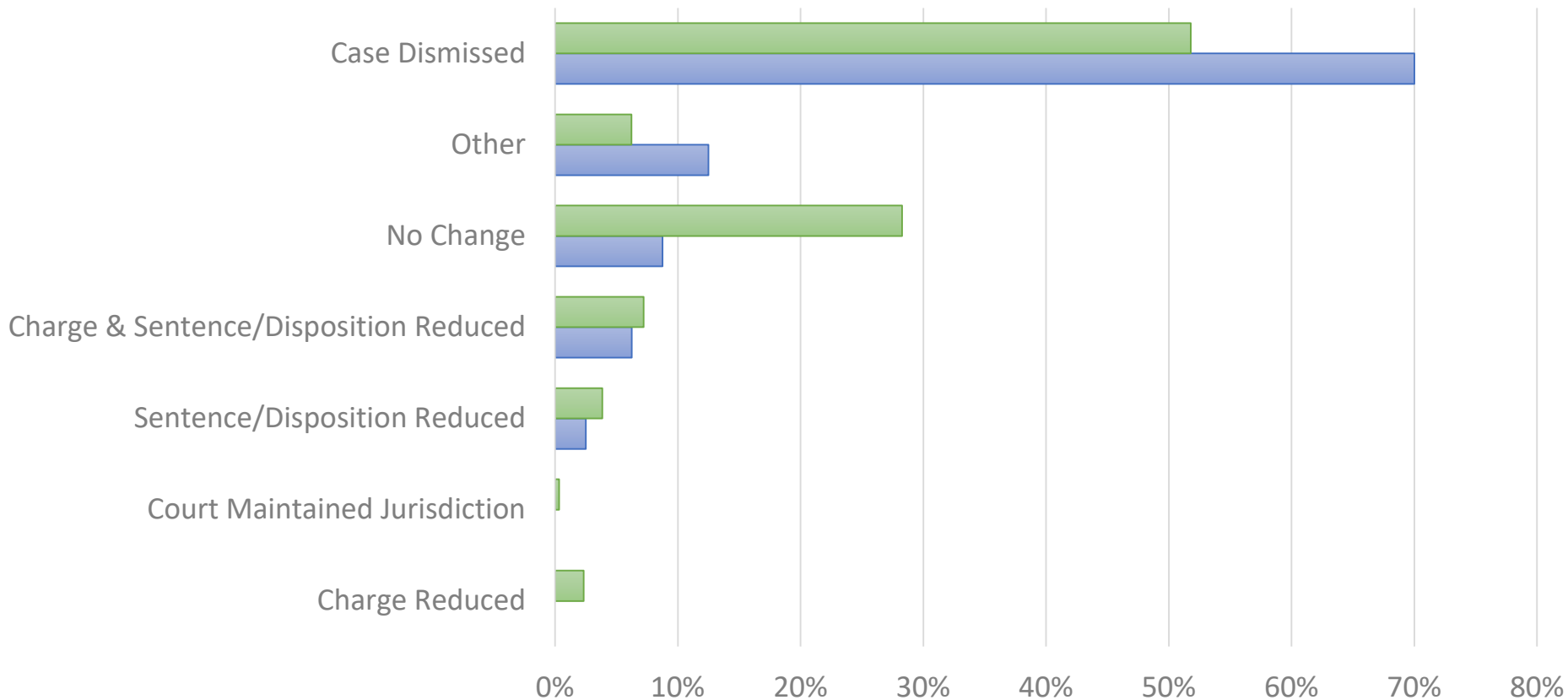


Data Source: Nevada Specialty Courts

# Increased Share of Case Dismissals for Successful Completion During COVID-19

Case Outcomes for Successful Program Completion Before & During COVID-19

■ Before COVID-19 (July 2017-Feb 2020)      ■ During COVID-19 (March 2020-Dec 2020)



Data Source: Nevada Specialty Courts

# Specialty Courts

## Preliminary Data Findings: Summary



# Summary: Specialty Courts Admissions Trends

- **Monthly admissions declined (-42%)**
  - New criminal offense admissions remained the most common
  - Changes in share of admissions by offense types; more person offenses, fewer drug offenses
- **Deferred/delayed sentence admissions declined (-50%)**
- **Changes in share of admissions** by race-ethnicity and reporting unemployment, prior substance abuse treatment, and/or prior mental health history

# Summary: Specialty Courts Outcome Trends

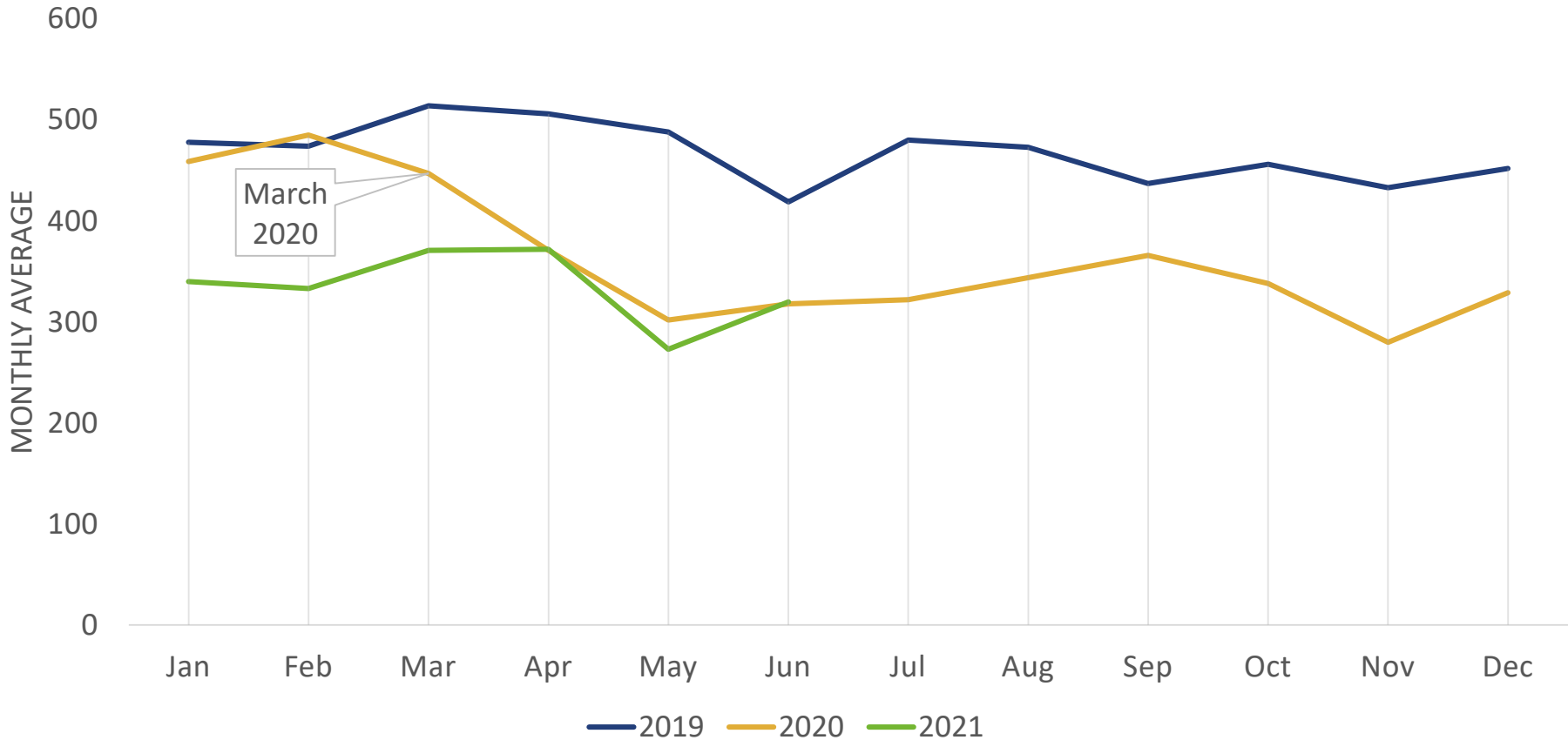
- **Successful completion rate decreased (-50%)**
- **Share of failures due to absconding increased (+45%)**
- **Increased share of case dismissals (+35%) for successful completion**

# Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC): Admission Trends Before & During COVID-19



# Average Monthly Admissions Drop by 27%

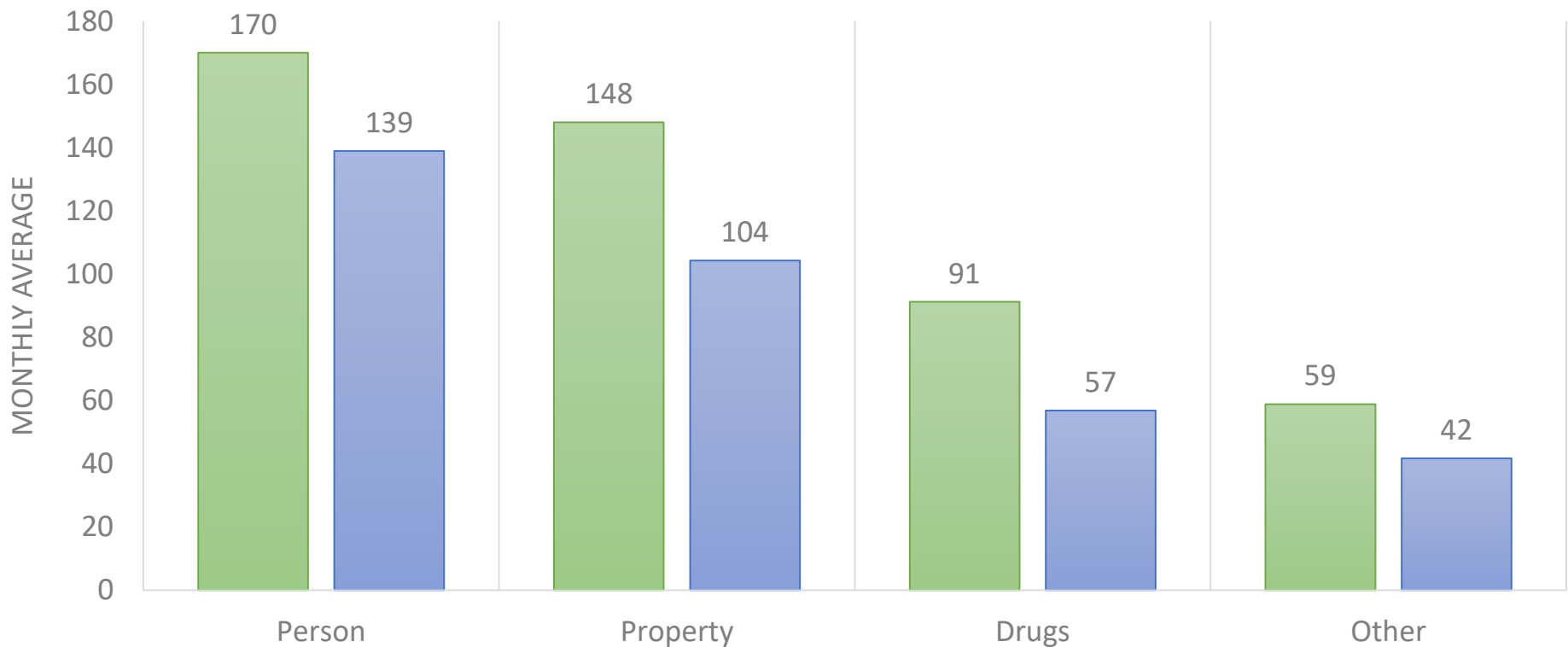
NDOC Monthly Admission Trends: January 2019 - June 2021



# Admissions Decline For All Offense Types

Average Monthly Admissions by Offense Types Before & During COVID-19

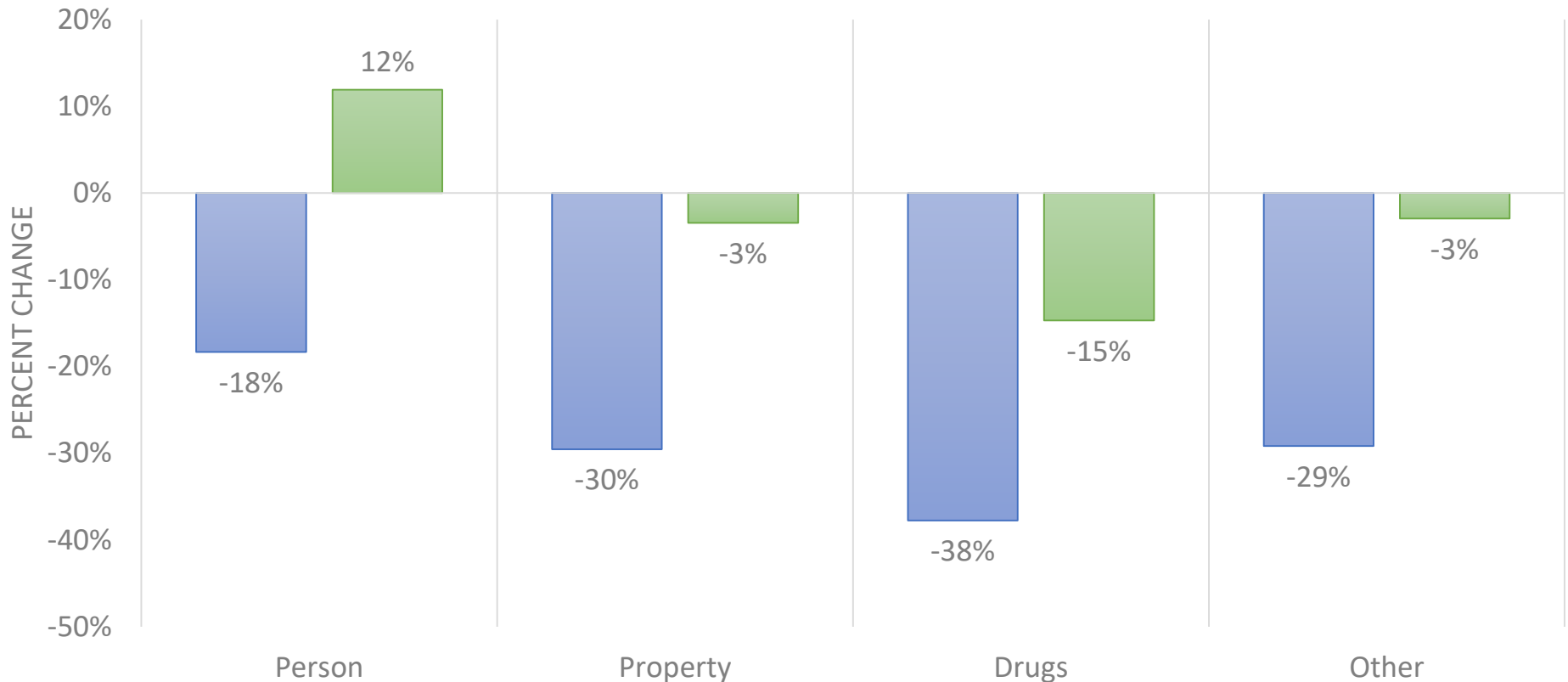
■ Before COVID-19 (Jan 2019 thru Feb 2020)     ■ During COVID-19 (March thru Dec 2020)



# Different Rates of Decline Impact Offense Type Share of Admissions

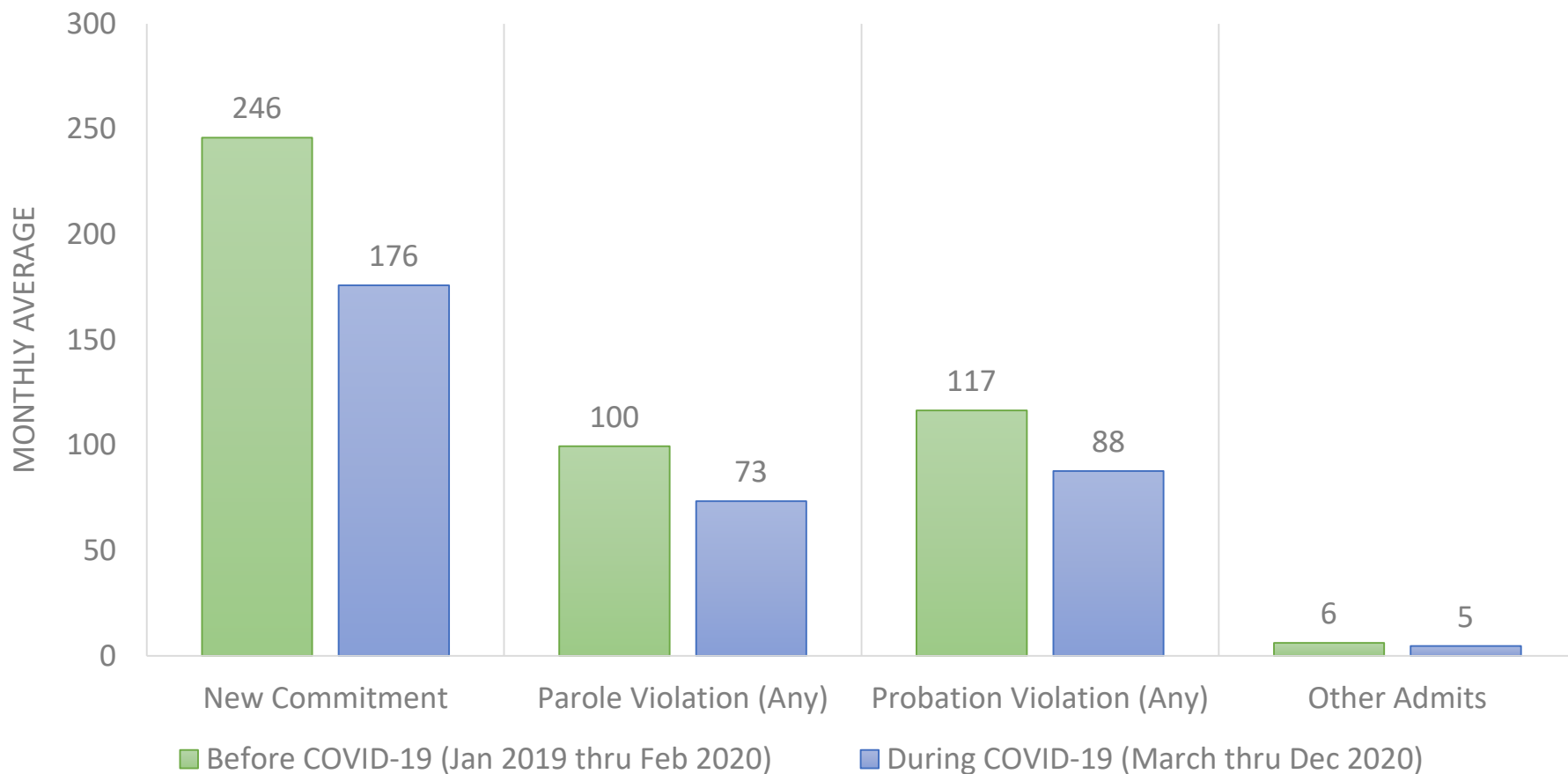
## Monthly & Total Percent Change in Offense Type Admissions During COVID-19

■ Rate of Change in Average Monthly Admit Count    ■ Rate of Change in Total Admission Composition



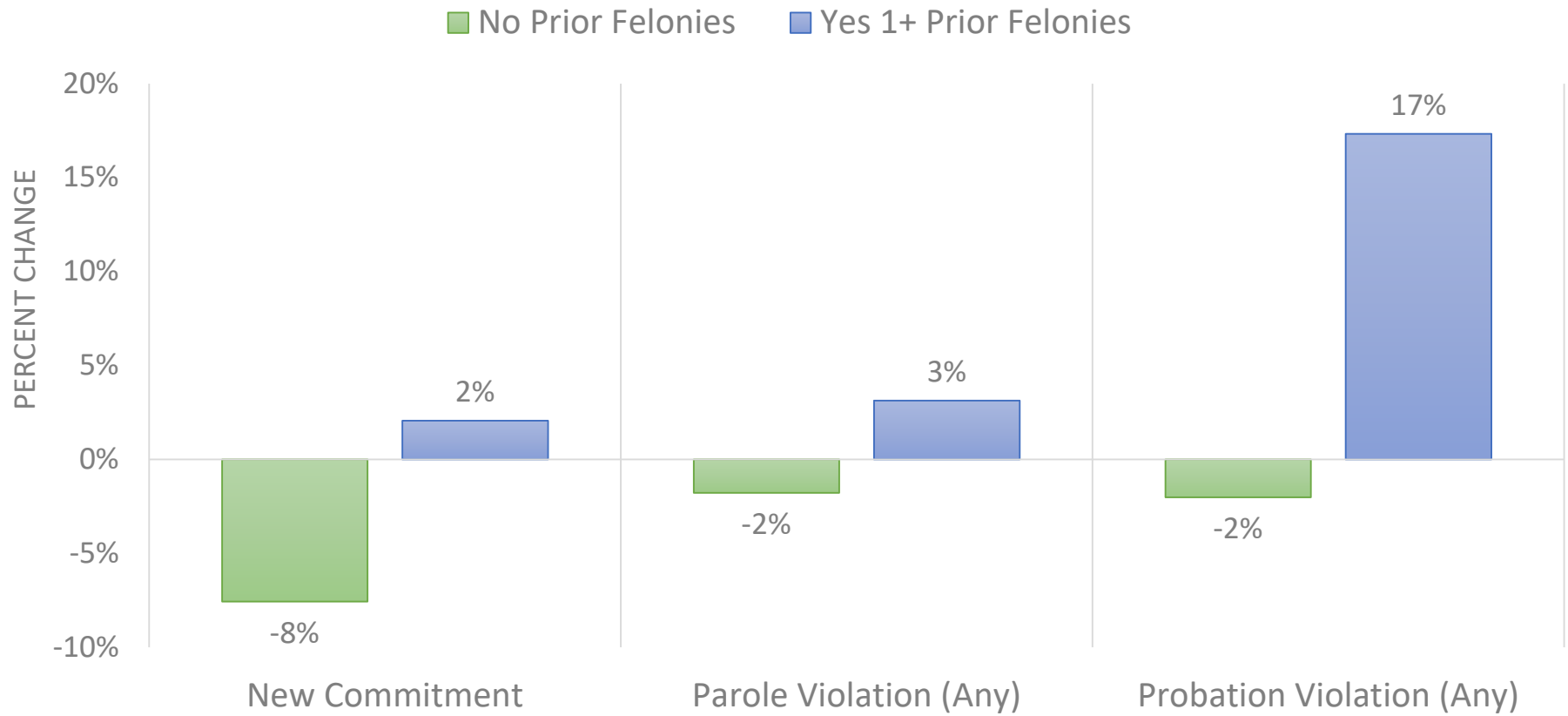
# Similar Decline Rates Across All Admission Types

Average Monthly Admissions by Admit Type Before & During COVID-19



# Increase in Share of Individuals Admitted with Criminal Histories

Percent Change in Admission Types by Prior Felony Convictions During COVID 19



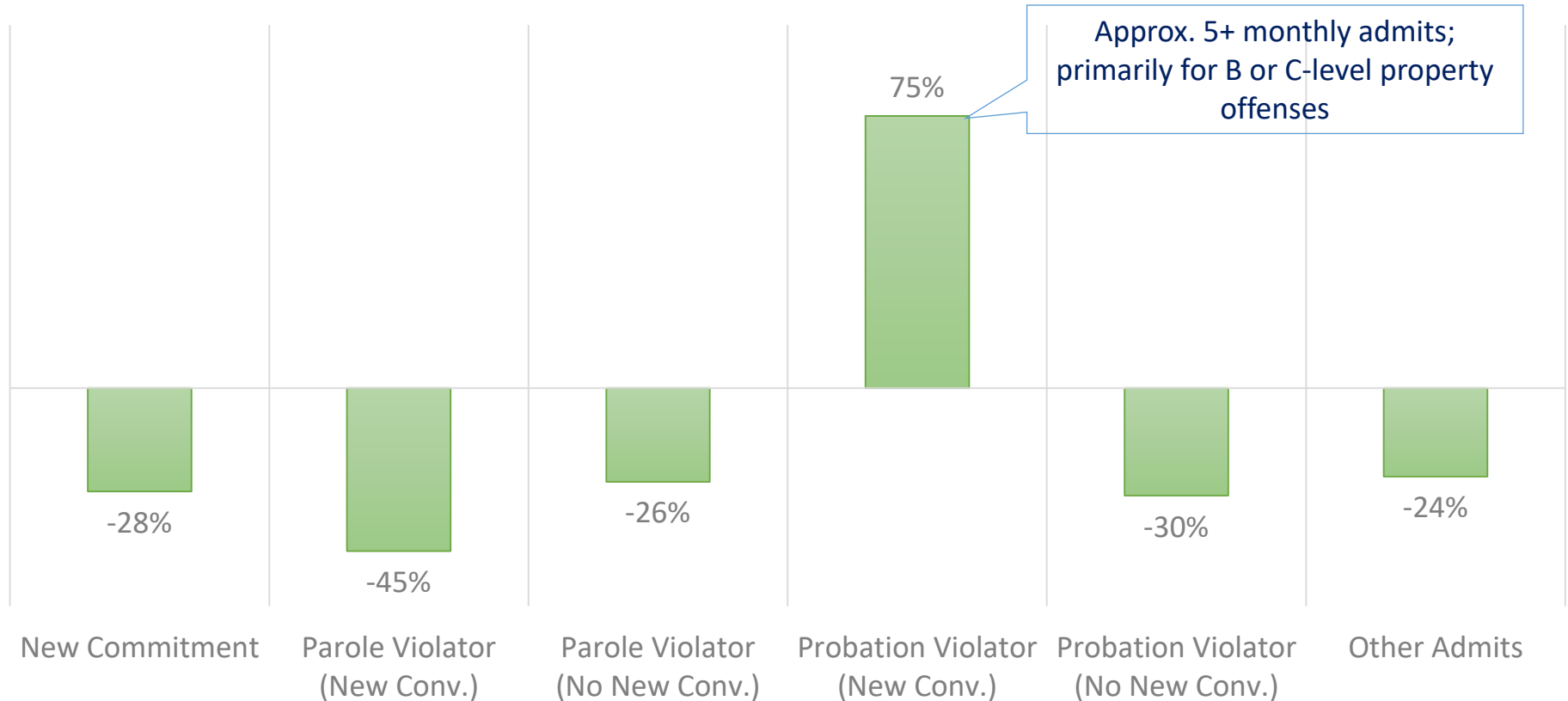
Data Source: Nevada Department of Corrections



# Increased Admissions of Those on Probation with a New Conviction

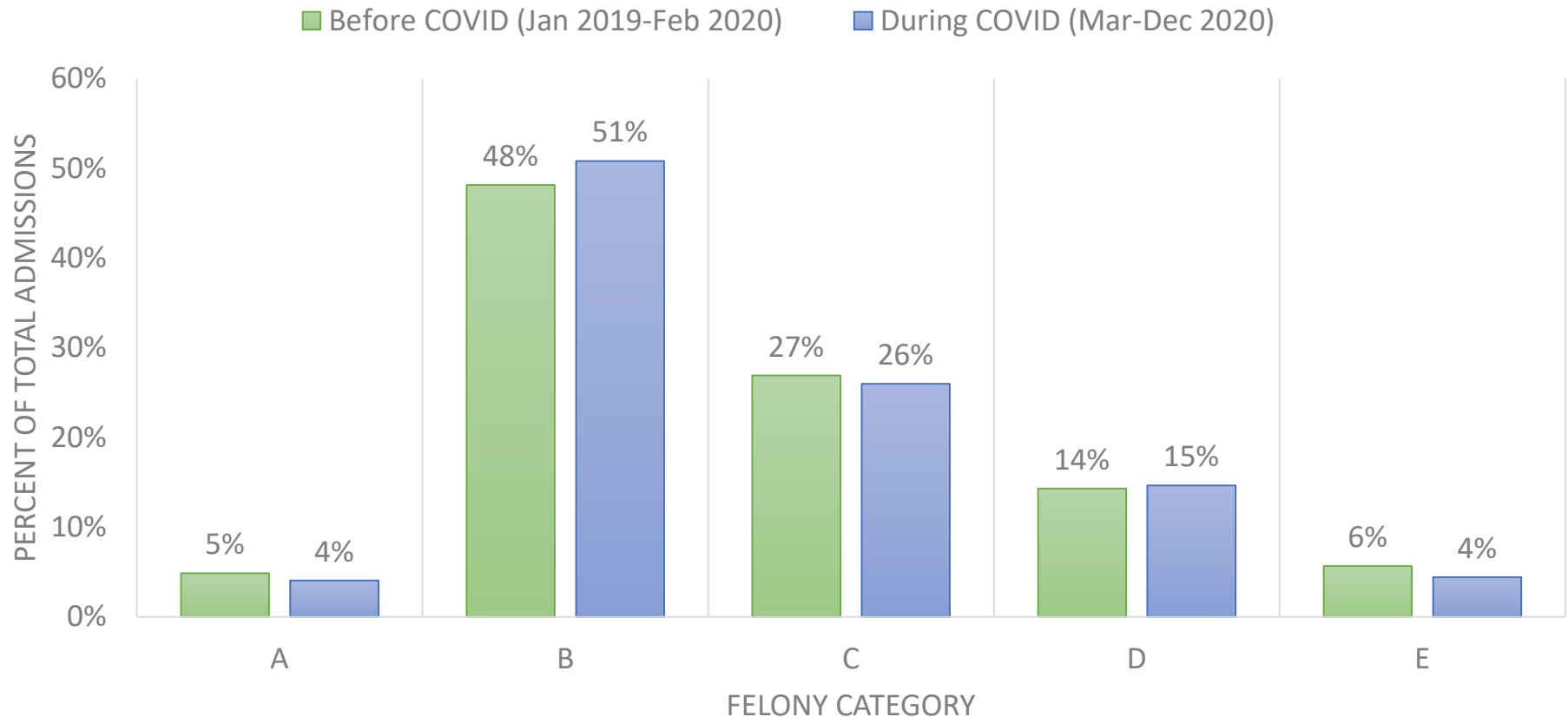
Percent Change in Average Monthly Admission by Type During COVID-19

■ Rate of Change in Average Monthly Admit Count



# Slight Growth of Categories B and D Felonies

Admission Patterns by Felony Categories  
Before & During COVID-19

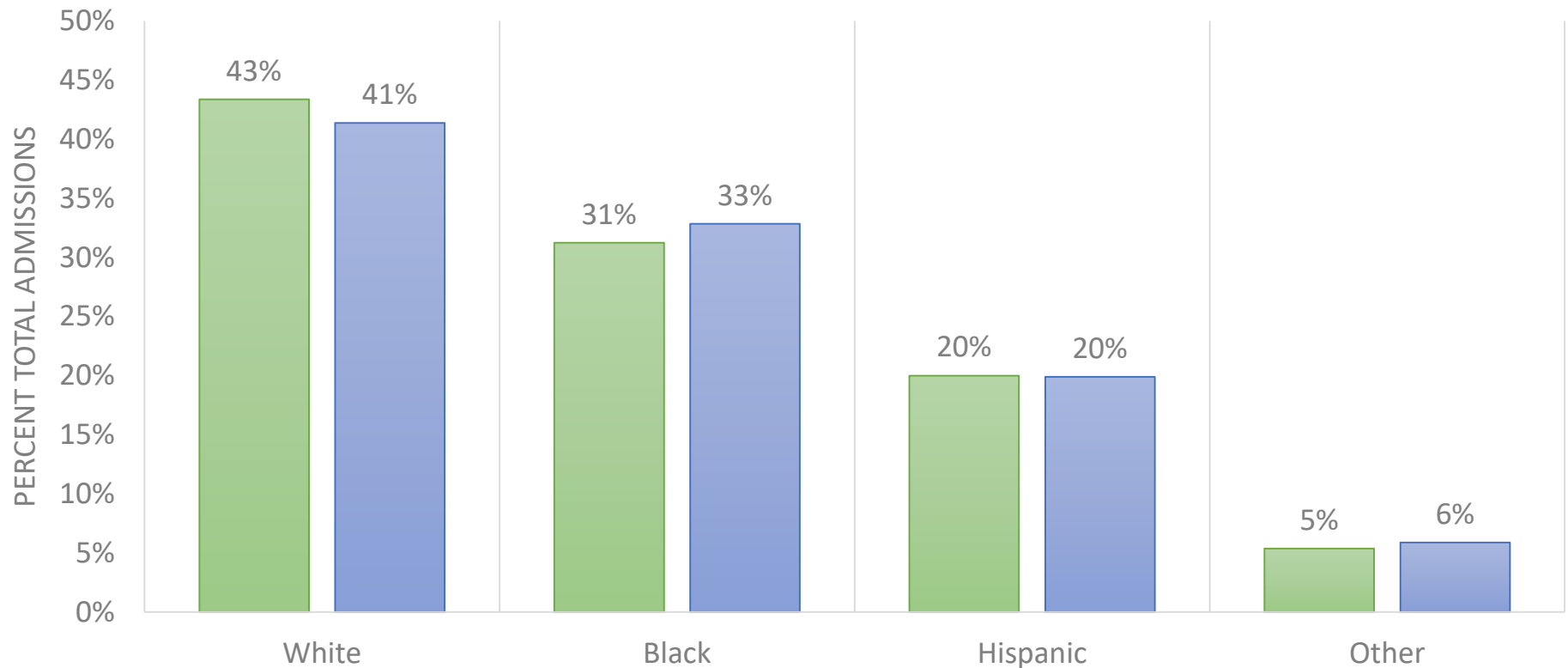


# NDOC Admissions: Demographic Trends Before & During COVID-19

# Disparate Growth in Admissions Across Racial-Ethnic Categories

Share of Admissions by Race-Ethnicity Before & During COVID-19

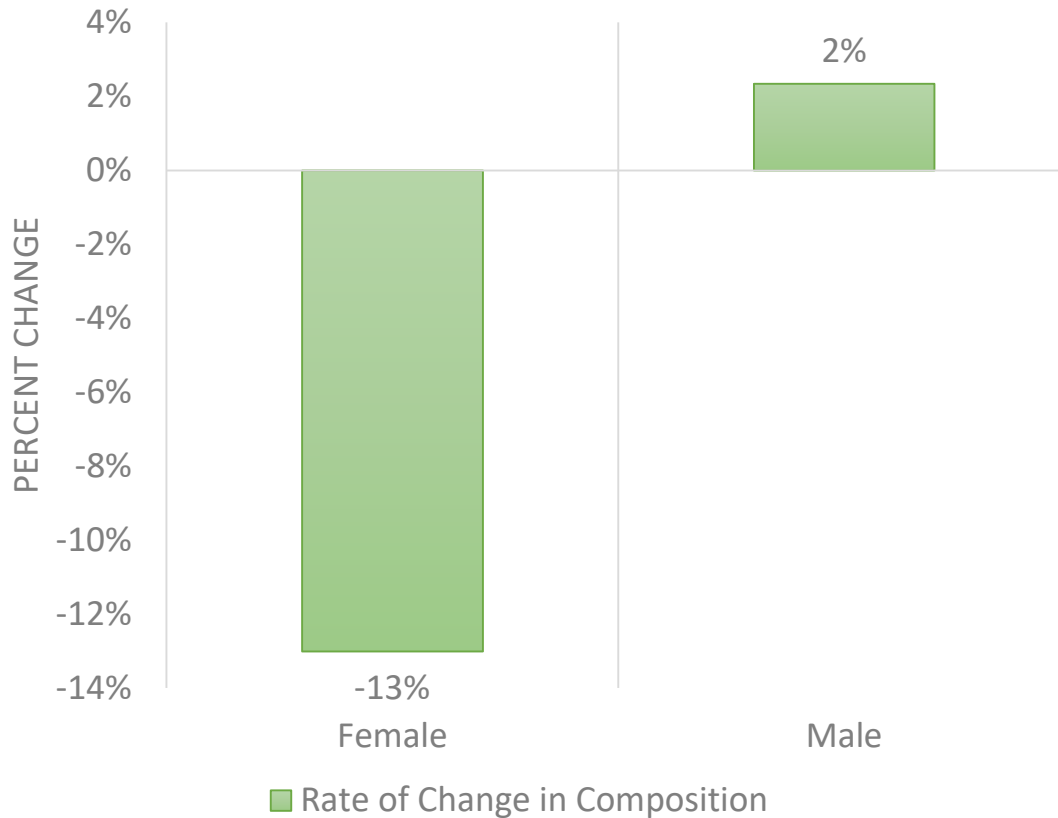
■ Before COVID-19 (Jan 2019 - Feb 2020)    ■ During COVID-19 (March - Dec 2020)



**Data Source:** Nevada Department of Corrections. Other Category: *American Indian; Asian; Unknown.*

# Larger Declines in Female Admissions

Percent Change in Admissions Composition by Gender During COVID-19



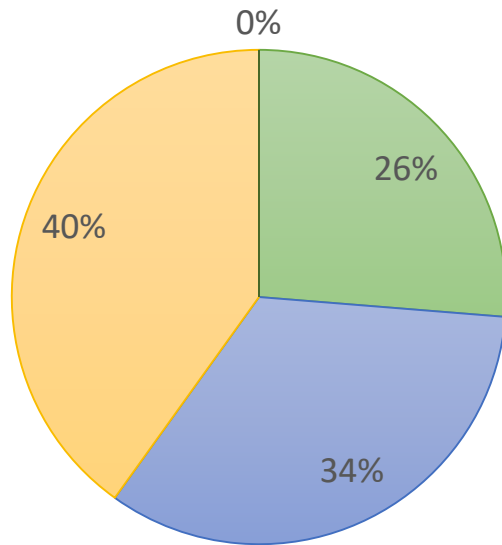
**Females comprised approximately 13% of total admits during COVID-19, a decrease from just over 15% before COVID.**

**Total admissions median age was 33 years old.**

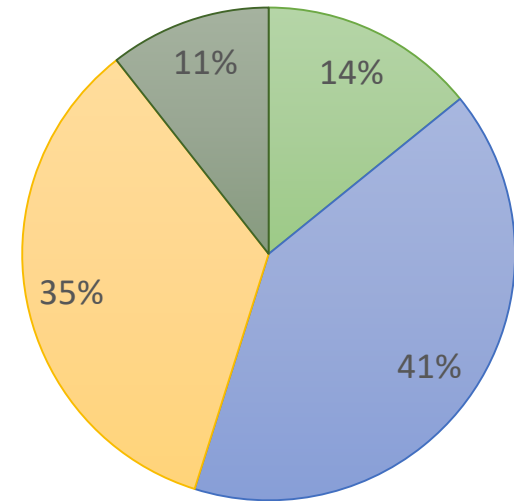
# Male Admits Generally Classified as Higher Risk than Female Admits

## NRAS Risk Classifications by Gender During COVID-19

Female Admissions During COVID-19



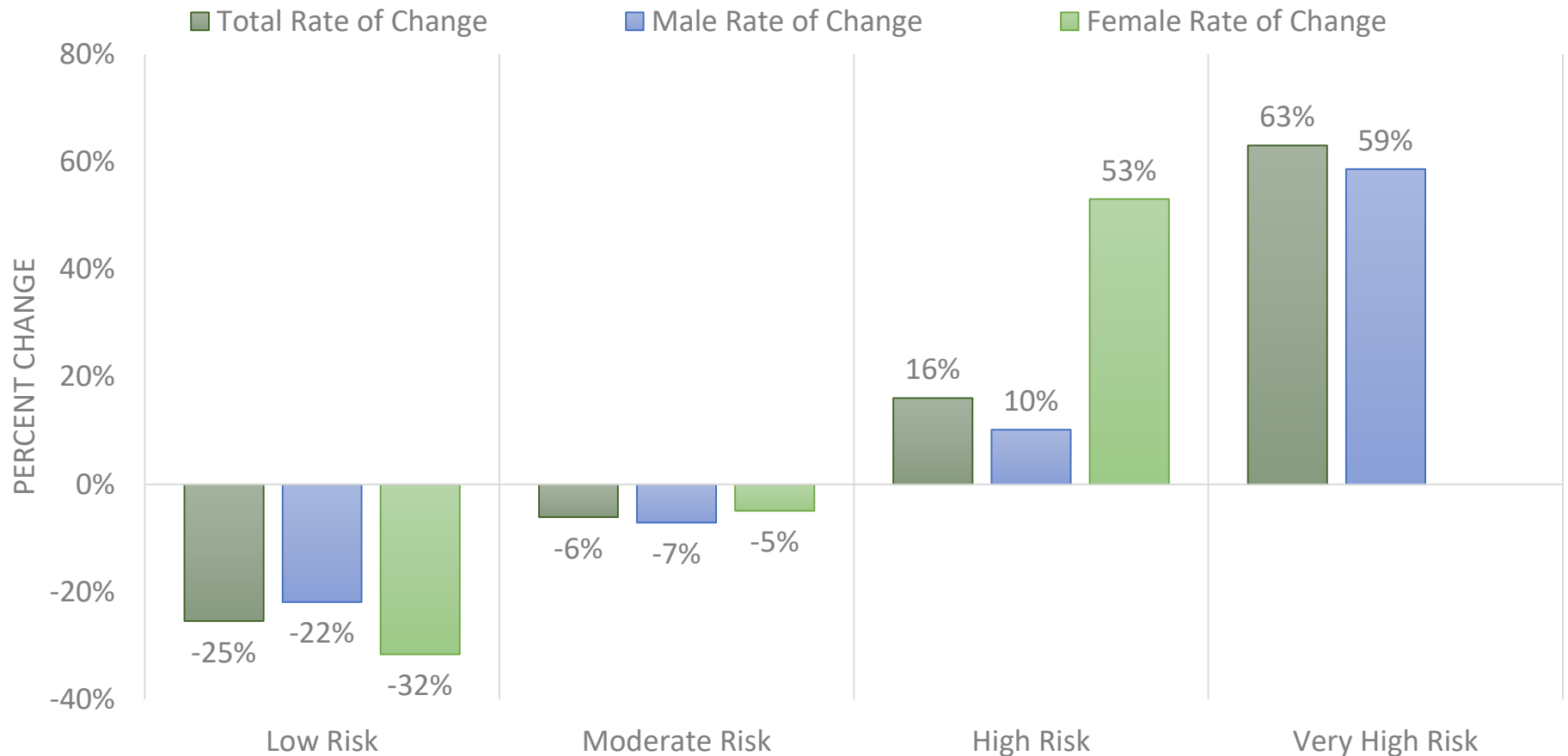
Male Admissions During COVID-19



- Low Risk
- Moderate Risk
- High Risk
- Very High Risk

# Increased Share of Higher Risk Admissions During COVID-19

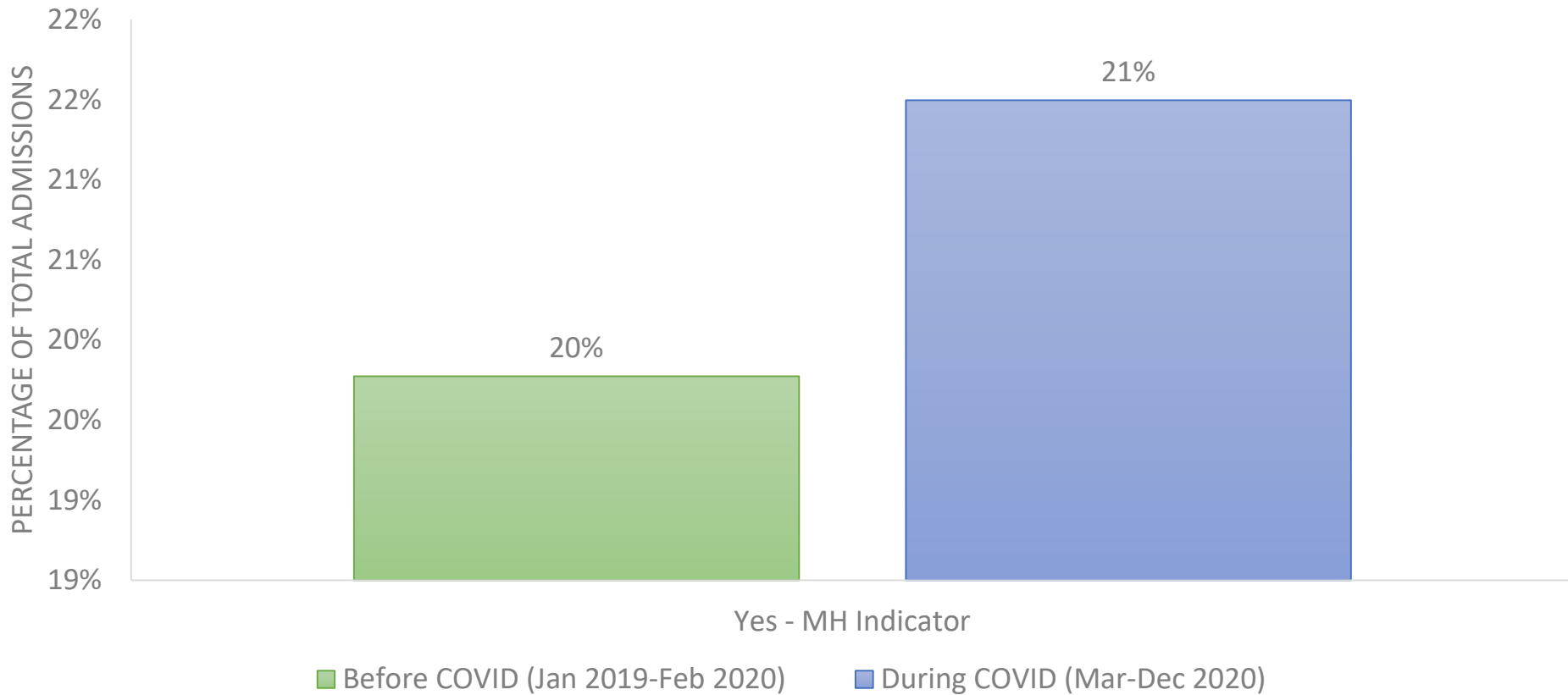
Total Percent Change in NRAS Score Admissions During COVID-19



Data Source: Nevada Department of Corrections

# Increased Share of Mental Health Indicators at Admissions

Percent of Mental Health Treatment Indicator in Total Admissions  
Before & During COVID-19

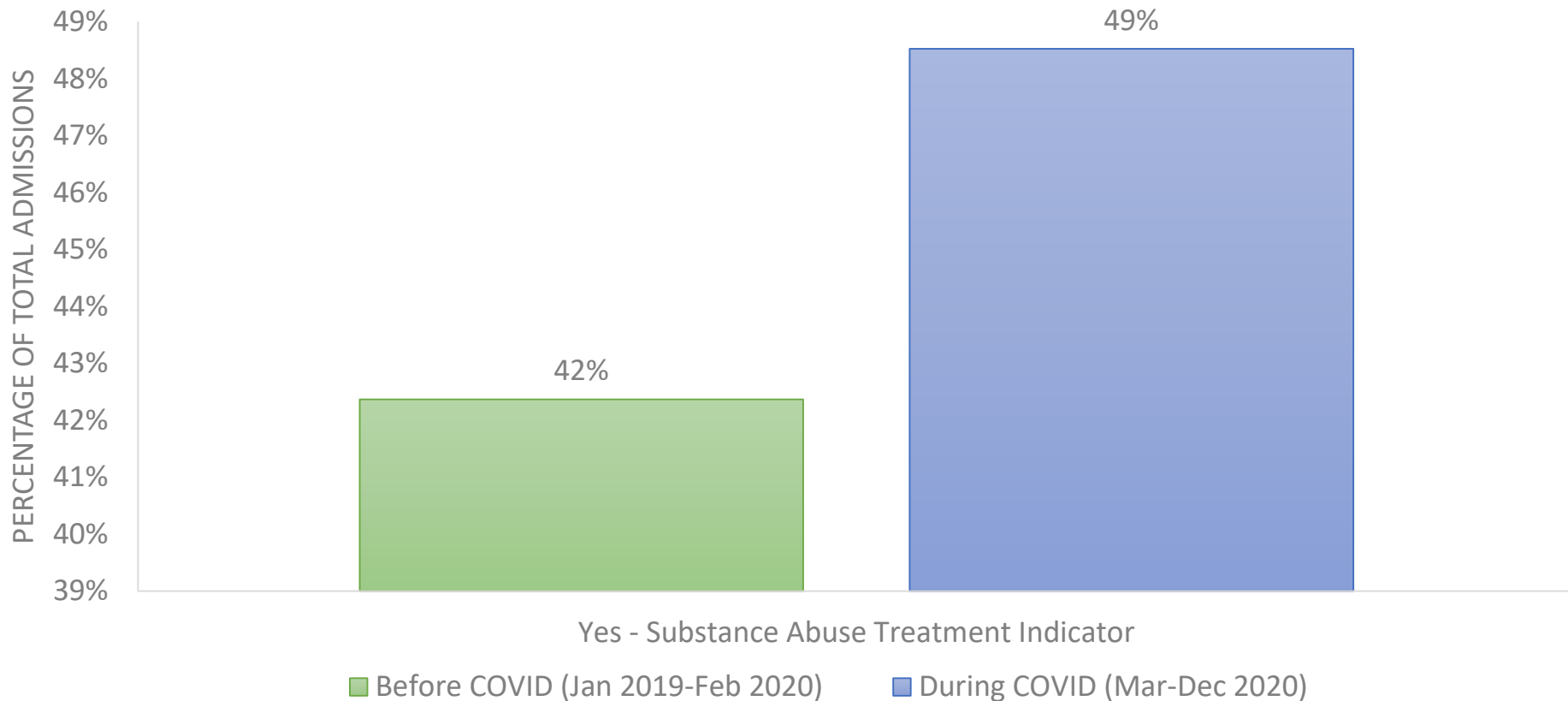


Data Source: Nevada Department of Corrections



# Increased Share of Admissions with Substance Abuse Treatment Needs

Percent of Substance Abuse Treatment Indicator in Total Admissions  
Before & During COVID-19

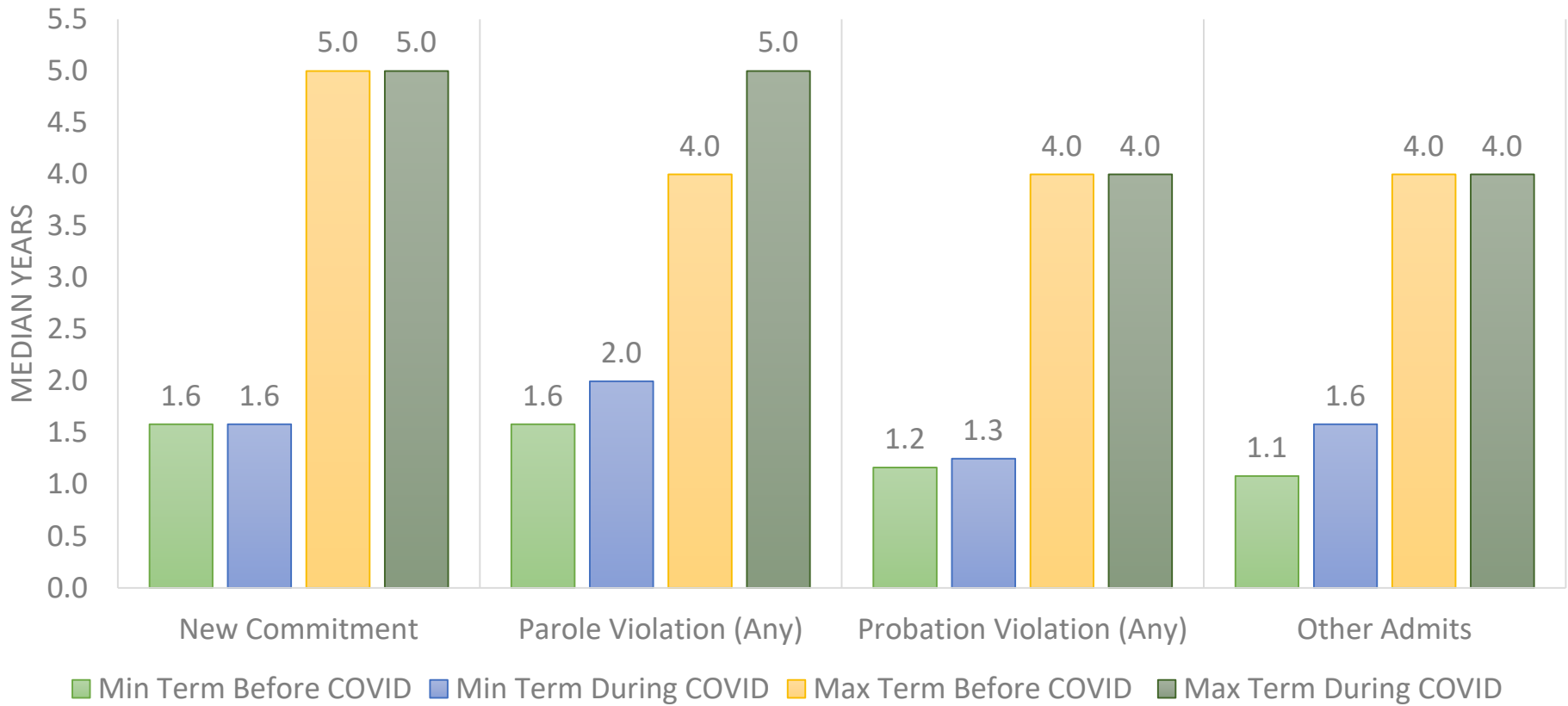


Data Source: Nevada Department of Corrections

# NDOC Admissions: Minimum & Maximum Sentence Length Trends Before & During COVID-19

# Sentence Lengths Grow for Parole Violators, Otherwise Consistent

Median Minimum & Maximum Sentence Lengths by Admission Type Before & During COVID-19



Data Source: Nevada Department of Corrections

# NDOC Preliminary Data Findings: Summary

# Summary: NDOC Admissions Trends

- **Average monthly admissions declined (-27%)**
  - Declines occurred across almost all offense types & admission types
  - Slight increase in admissions of:
    - Those on probation with a new conviction
    - Category B or D Felonies
- A larger share of admissions had **prior felony convictions**
- Slight increase in sentence length for those who violated parole, otherwise sentences were consistent

# Summary: NDOC Demographic Trends

- **Disparate growth in admissions** across racial/ethnic categories
- **Female admissions declined more** than male admissions
- Admissions classified at a **higher risk levels** than prior to COVID-19
- The share of admissions who reported **mental health or substance abuse treatment needs increased**

# Next Steps

# Next Steps

- Continued data analysis and system research
  - Other planned analyses include data from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial Districts, Clark County Detention (CCDC), Nevada RCCD, Nevada Parole & Probation, and NDOC release trends
- Report summarizing both the qualitative and quantitative findings to be published in fall/winter





# CJI Contacts

Quentin Weld, Esq.  
[qweld@cjinstitute.org](mailto:qweld@cjinstitute.org)  
(617) 485-4956

Molly Buchanan, Ph.D.  
[mbuchanan@cjinstitute.org](mailto:mbuchanan@cjinstitute.org)

Joanna Abaroa-Ellison  
[jabaroa-ellison@cjinstitute.org](mailto:jabaroa-ellison@cjinstitute.org)

Vibha Honasoge  
[vhonasoge@cjinstitute.org](mailto:vhonasoge@cjinstitute.org)

# Disclaimer

*This project was supported by Grant No. 2019-ZB-BX-K003 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this presentation are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.*