

ECON 594: Applied Economics

# How to Present

Sam Norris

*University of British Columbia*

## Why presentations matter

Presentations remain the best way to explain things to people

- Your job: tell them 95% of what they need to know
- Their questions fill in the last 5%

Attention is a precious resource—do not waste it!

- Tell people what they need to know
- Don't tell them what they don't need to know
- Presentations are not mystery novels

Bring it back to the narrative

- What are the two things you want your audience to remember?
- All decisions are downstream of that
- “Will this help them understand my main point?”

# Slide aesthetics

Use what your audience is familiar with

- For economics presentations, that's beamer

Keep it clean

- If it's on the slide, they might read it
- Drop the navigation symbols: `\setbeamertemplate{navigation symbols}{}`
- 16:9 aspect ratio: `\documentclass[english,aspectratio=169]{beamer}`
- Audience does not need to be reminded of your name, the date, the title...
- Keep each bullet point to one line

# Your Presentation Title

## Ritsumeikan Beamer Theme

Ming-Hao Xu

College of Information Science and Engineering (CISE)  
Ritsumeikan University

April, 2022



# The Effects of Incarceration on Employment and Earnings

Andrew Garin    Dmitri Koustas    Carl McPherson    Samuel Norris  
Matthew Pecenco    Evan K. Rose    Yotam Shem-Tov    Jeffrey Weaver

May 2023

All results have been reviewed to ensure that no confidential information is disclosed. The views and opinions presented reflect those of the authors and do not reflect the views or the official position of the Internal Revenue Service. All results are drawn from the publicly-available working paper available on the IRS SOI Tax Stats website: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-soi/07-2022-impact-incarceration-employment-earnings-tax-filing.pdf>

# Presentation structure

## The beginning

- Title slide
- Motivation
- Summary

## The middle

- Background
- Data
- Empirical specification
- Results

## The end

- Conclusion

# The motivation

You have one or two slides to make them care

- The single most important slide of your talk
- Remember: your audience does not care about your topic

Motivate from the world, not from the literature

- Descriptive facts, anecdotes, stakes
- Why is this missing from what we already know?

Research question must come on this slide or the next

- One sentence: what are you asking?
- Audience should know what's coming next

# What are the impacts of incarceration on labor market outcomes?

The U.S. has high rates of incarceration and a large population of ex-prisoners

Incarceration has been mentioned as a potential contributing factor for the falling employment and labor force participation rates of men, especially Black men Bayer and Charles (2018)

Audit studies consistently find that incarceration (combined with conviction) causes labor market discrimination in callback rates Pager (2003), Agan and Starr (2018)

Mixed evidence on the causal effects of incarceration on labor market outcomes Western, Kling, and Weiman (2001), Kling (2006), Loeffler (2013), Mueller-Smith (2015), Harding, Morenoff, Nguyen, and Bushway (2018), Looney and Turner (2018), Aneja and Avenancio-León (2021), Finlay, Mueller-Smith, and Street (2022)

## Preview your results

This is not a mystery novel

- Tell them what you found before you show how you got there
- Research question + headline result, one slide
- Audience knows where the talk is going

Explain what your contribution is

- Why is this question new?
- What did you do that no one else has?

# The causal effects of incarceration on employment, wages, and self-emp.

**Data and identification:** IRS records linked to administrative criminal justice data from

- Ohio (random judge assignment Norris, Pecenco, and Weaver (2021))
- North Carolina (sentencing guidelines discontinuities Rose and Shem-Tov (2021))

**Key contributions:**

- **Precision:** Big samples, strong instruments → better precision
- **Breadth:** Estimate effects on self-employment and gig work, and for spouses
- **External validity:** Provide effects in two states with two different research designs

**Preview of findings:**

- Rule out long-term reductions in earnings and employment
- Dip in economic activity only during period of incapacitation
- Explanation: Very low earnings and employment rates before charges filed

# The background

Give them the context they need

- Audience now knows the big picture; time for the detail
- Basic institutional / country setting

Tie it to your research question and design

- What do they need to know to understand your results?
- Why should we expect an effect?

Cut anything that doesn't connect

- Extraneous detail wastes attention
- "Will this help them understand my main point?"

# The data

Tell them what you've got

- Source(s)
- Unit of observation
- Number of observations / events / treated units

How close is this to what you'd ideally measure?

- Acknowledge the gap
- Audience will trust you more for saying it

# Incarceration associated with worse pre-court labor market outcomes

## Economic activity for defendants 2-4 years before charges filed

	(2)		(3)		(5)		(6)	
	A. North Carolina				B. Ohio			
	Incarcerated	Not incarcerated			Incarcerated	Not incarcerated		
<b>W-2 wage earnings (third-party reported)</b>								
1{> 0}	0.467	0.567			0.500	0.598		
Mean if > 0	7,555	9,342			8,418	10,616		
90th pctl if > 0	19,540	23,920			22,760	28,120		
Non-filer if 1{> 0}	0.475	0.377			0.464	0.371		
<b>EITC and tax filing</b>								
Any EITC	0.154	0.205			0.148	0.204		
Mean if > 0	2,007	2,252			1,988	2,235		
N	108,591	197,663			43,845	114,820		

Notes: Statistics show means. Percentiles are rounded to the nearest \$10 for confidentiality.

# The specification

Be explicit about the equation

- Write it out, full notation
- Define your coefficient of interest

Be explicit about the standard errors

- What level are you clustering at?
- Why?

## 2SLS specification details [Back](#)

$$Y_{it} = \overbrace{\beta D_i}^{\text{Length of incarceration sentence}} + W_i' \gamma_2 + X_i' \lambda_2 + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$
$$D_i = \underbrace{Z_i' \alpha}_{\text{Instruments}} + \underbrace{W_i' \gamma_1}_{\text{Design controls}} + \underbrace{X_i' \lambda_1}_{\text{Additional controls}} + \xi_i \quad (2)$$

- $D_i$  is the length of the incarceration sentence
- $Z_i$  is the judge leave-out-mean (Ohio) or indicators for thresholds between punishment types in North Carolina's sentencing guidelines
- $W_i$  vary by design (e.g., in Ohio court-by-month FEs) [North Carolina](#) [Ohio](#)
- $X_i$  includes pre-event characteristics (avg. wage, industry FEs, demographics, and criminal history), included for precision [Details](#)
- $\beta$  is the effect of a 1-year incarceration sentence

## Talk figures are not paper figures

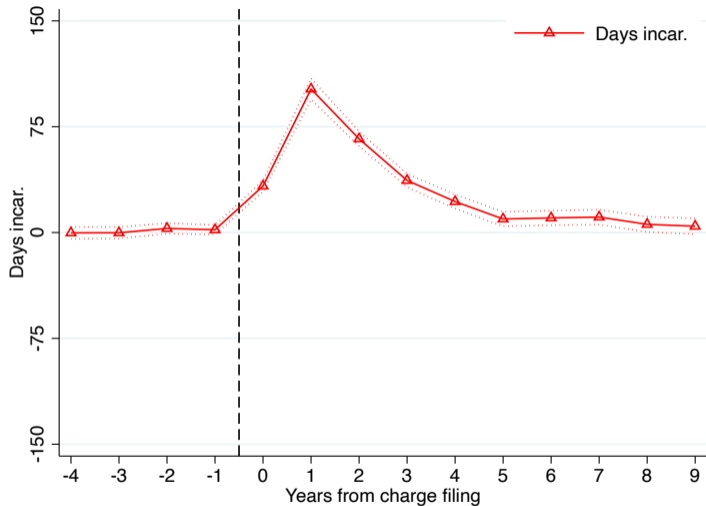
Make them readable from the back of the room

- Bigger font, slightly less detail
- Reveal over time
- Write on the figure to make the point clear

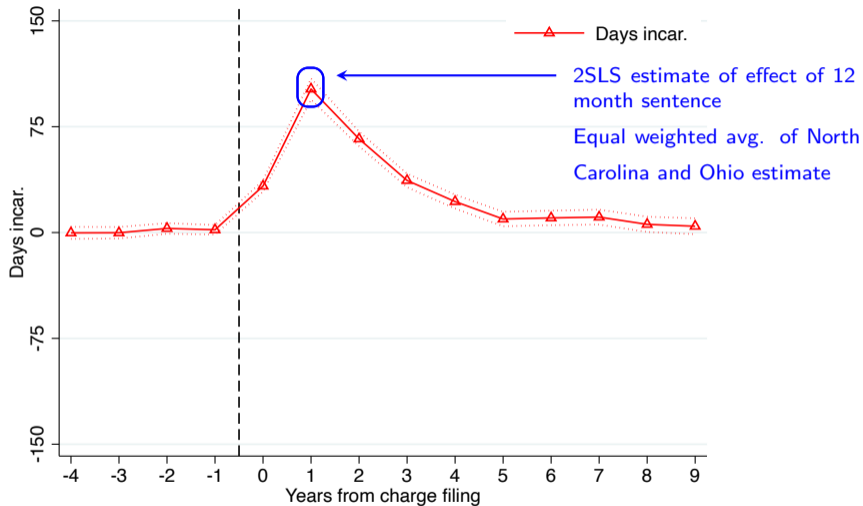
Cut anything your audience doesn't need

- For every number, ask: does my audience need to know that?
- Tell them what they need to know

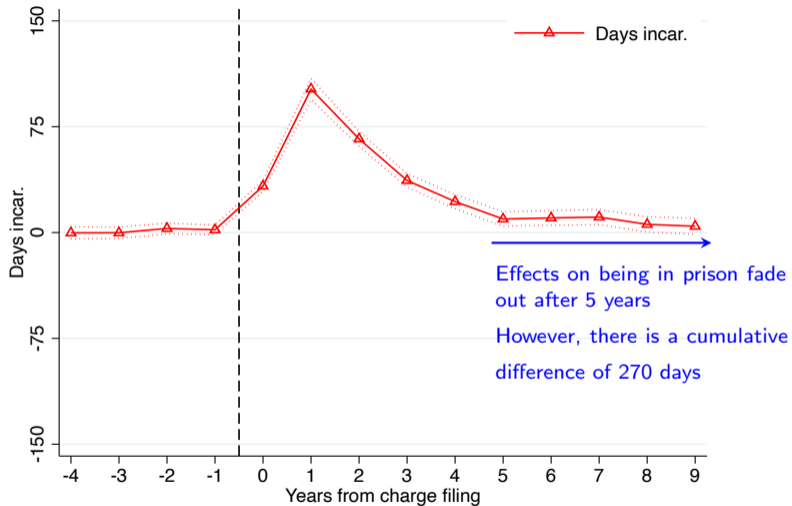
## Immediate effects on days incarcerated that fade out over time



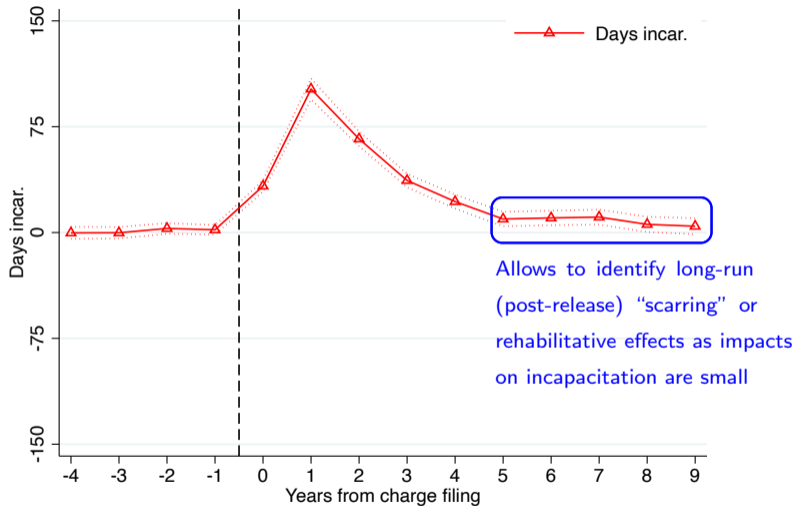
## Immediate effects on days incarcerated that fade out over time



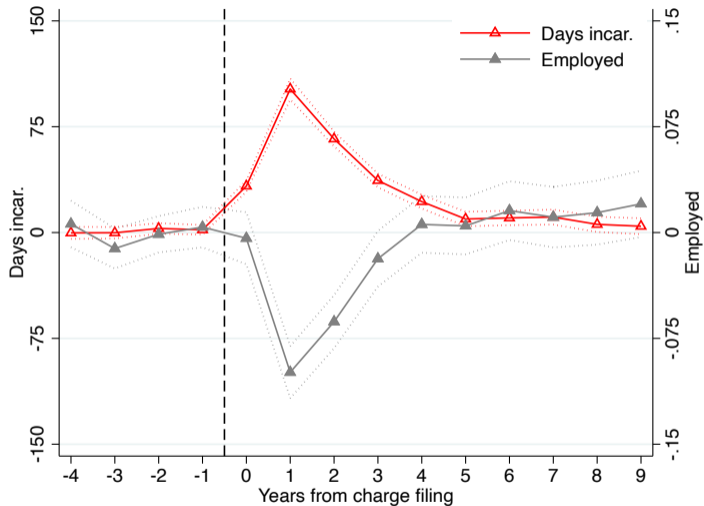
## Immediate effects on days incarcerated that fade out over time



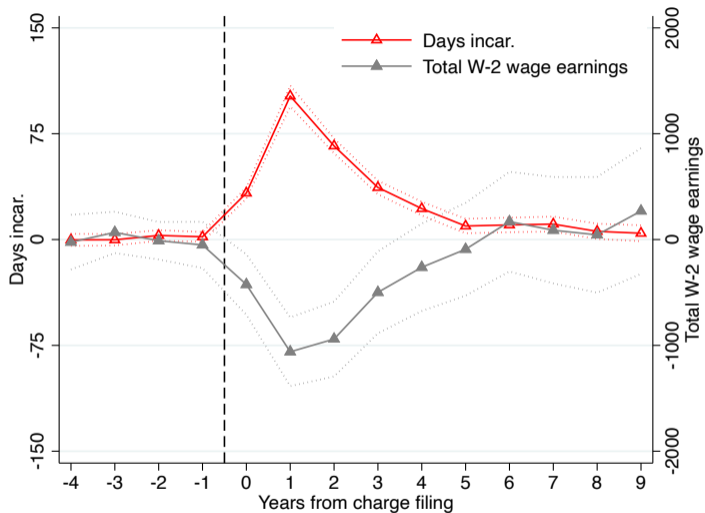
## Immediate effects on days incarcerated that fade out over time



# Effects on employment mirrors those on days incarcerated



## Limited long-term effects also for W-2 wages



# The conclusion

Signal that you're ending

- Don't trail off
- Audience should leave with the take-home

Boring vs. interesting endings

- Boring: rehash your three main results
- Interesting: one bullet on results, rest on implications

## Summary and discussion

Incarceration has limited to no long-run effects after 5 to 9 years

- With 95% confidence reject long-run reductions of 0.17 p.p. in employment and \$251 in annual wages

Consistent with the extreme lack of attachment to labor markets and low wage growth

More research is needed on the causes of labor market barriers and discrimination faced by the formally incarcerated population

- Likely emerge much before the incarceration event Agan, Doleac and Harvey (2021); Mueller-Smith and Schnepel (2021); Agan, Garin, Koustas, Mas and Yang (2022)

## The conclusion (in your case)

You probably don't have many results yet

- That's fine—tell us where you're going

What to put on the slide

- Clear plan for next steps
- Possible roadblocks
- Possible pivots

# Practice, and don't read your slides

## Rehearse out loud

- First run is always too long
- You catch awkward transitions only by saying them

## Don't read your slides

- Slides anchor; your voice carries
- Look at the audience, not the screen
- Don't pace

# Timing

20 minutes, questions throughout

- Plan for interruptions
- Don't rush; don't end early

Practical solutions

- Practice with a timer
- Backup slides for predictable questions
- "Let me push on; I'll come back to that" is fine