

# The Economic Impact of Pardons: Evaluating a Decade of Data in Pennsylvania

Presented by:



**Economy  
League**

GREATER  
PHILADELPHIA

# Before We Begin

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- Please “mute” your microphone
- Use the “Q&A” feature to type your questions for moderators and panelists in real time
- Be respectful



# Today's Agenda

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- Welcoming Remarks from Keith Leaphart, The Lenfest Foundation
- Brief Presentation of Economy League Research – *Pardons as an Economic Investment Strategy: Evaluating a Decade of Data in Pennsylvania*
- Conversation with Esteemed Panel of Experts
- Audience Q & A
- Closing Remarks, The Economy League of Greater Philadelphia



**John Fetterman**  
Lieutenant Governor  
Commonwealth of PA



**Earl Buford**  
CEO, Partner for  
Work



**Dr. Nikia Owens**  
Managing Director,  
Financial  
Empowerment, United  
Way GPSJ



**Ryan Allen  
Hancock**  
Of Counsel, Willig,  
Williams & Davidson; Co-  
Founder Philadelphia  
Lawyers for Social Equity

# A Criminal Record Has Collateral Consequences

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- Prohibited from living in public housing
- Losing access to public benefits
- Prohibited by law from working in several industries
- Denied state licenses for not having the requisite “good moral character”

*The formal and informal barriers created by a criminal record expand an individual's punishment well beyond the criminal justice system*

# Collateral Consequences Impact Thousands of Individuals Across the Commonwealth

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84,794 PENNSYLVANIANS ARE  
INCARCERATED



296,219 ARE ON PROBATION  
OR PAROLE

*Source: The Sentencing Project, 2016*

# Relief from those Collateral Consequences Includes Pardons

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- **Pardons** provide relief from “the consequences, generally in the nature of legal disabilities, resulting from conviction for a crime.”
- A pardon "allows a job applicant to deny he was ever convicted without worry of any sanction." -PA Board of Pardons (BOP)

*Executive clemency - the power of a President in federal criminal cases, and the Governor in state convictions, to pardon a person convicted of a crime, commute the sentence (shorten it, often to time already served) or reduce it from death to another lesser sentence.*

# From Individual Relief to Community-Level Economic Growth

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1. Historically, **who has taken advantage of pardons** in Pennsylvania?
2. How have pardons helped Pennsylvanians with criminal records **improve their circumstances**?
3. Given the high overlap between criminal records and poverty, **what impacts have pardons had on communities**?

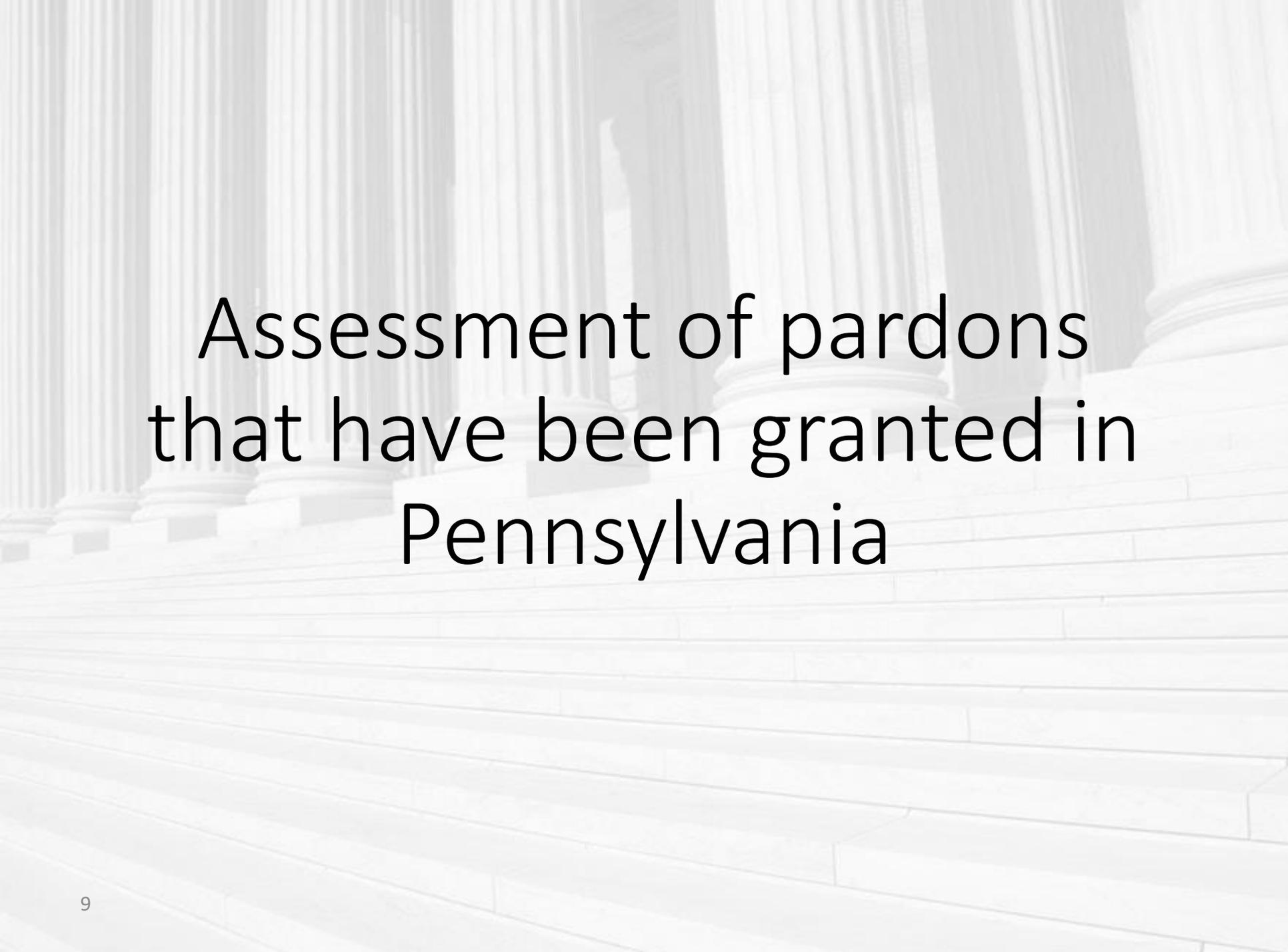
*The Economy League of Greater Philadelphia embarked on a quantitative analysis to examine the economic impact of pardons on low-income, high-arrest communities in Pennsylvania.*

# Key Components of our report: “Pardons as an Economic Investment Strategy”

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- Assessment of pardons that have been granted in Pennsylvania
- Assessment of pardons’ economic impact, particularly in **high-arrest, low-income communities**
- Proposal of **three policy and practice recommendations** to expand the use and impact of pardons as a workforce and economic development tool



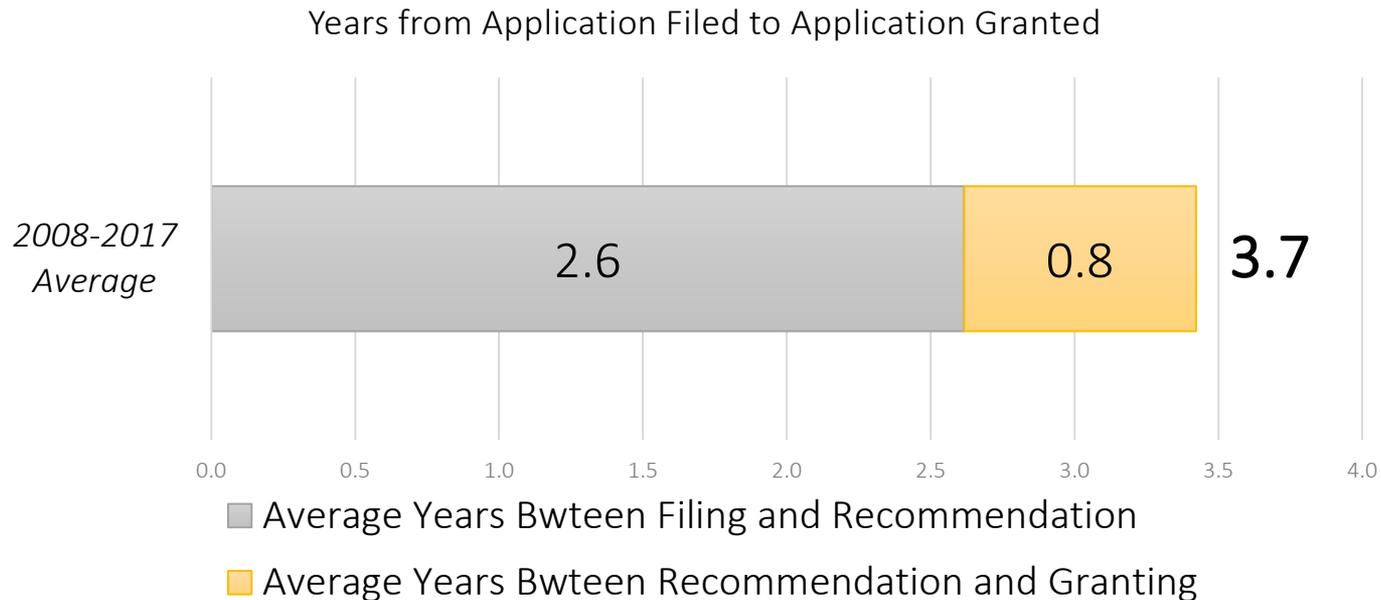
The background of the slide is a grayscale photograph of a grand, classical building. It features a series of tall, fluted columns supporting a structure, with a wide set of stone steps leading up to the entrance. The lighting is soft, creating a sense of depth and architectural grandeur.

# Assessment of pardons that have been granted in Pennsylvania

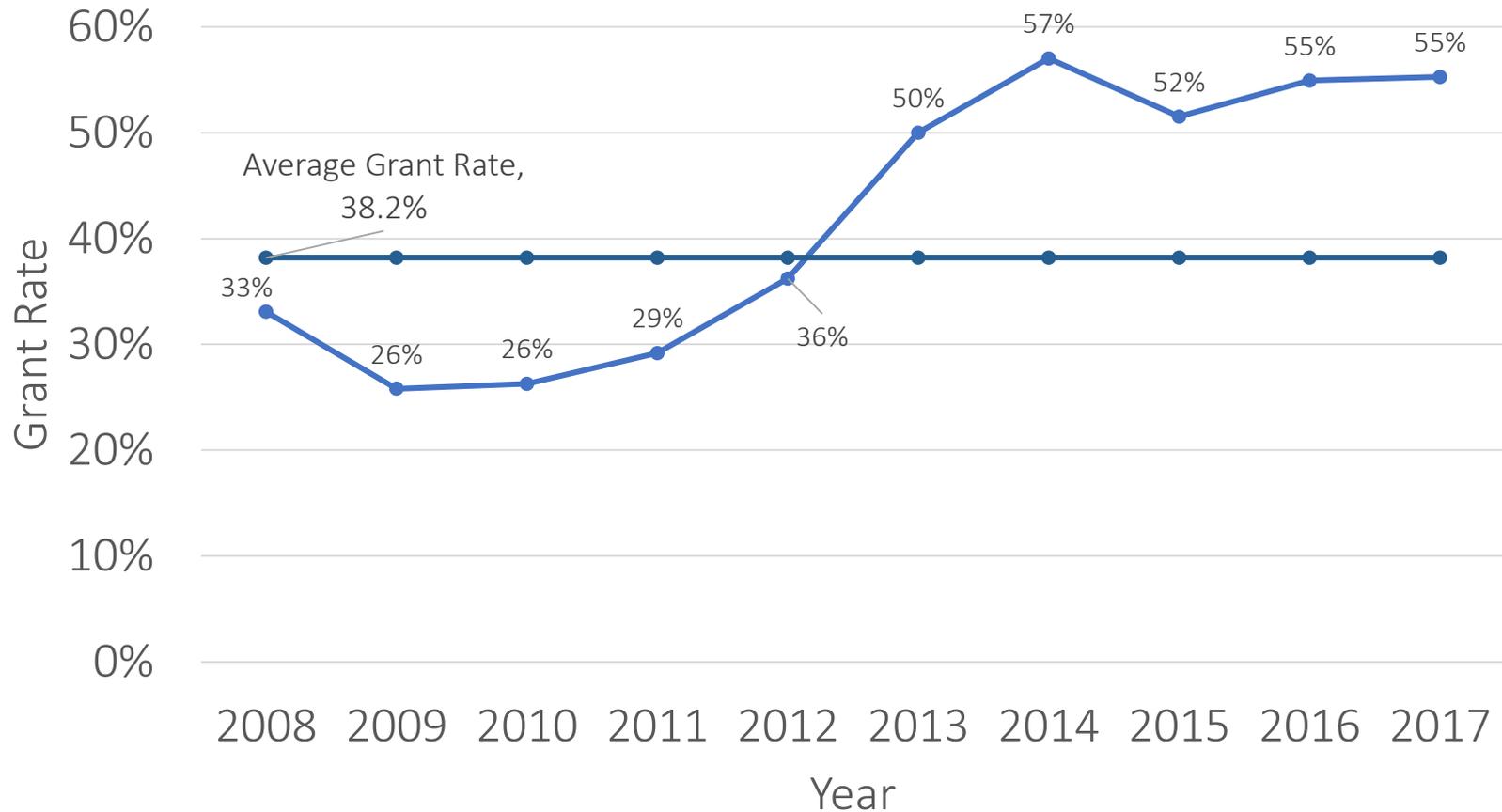
# Finding #1: Between 2008-2017 the average pardons process took upwards of three years from filing to final decision

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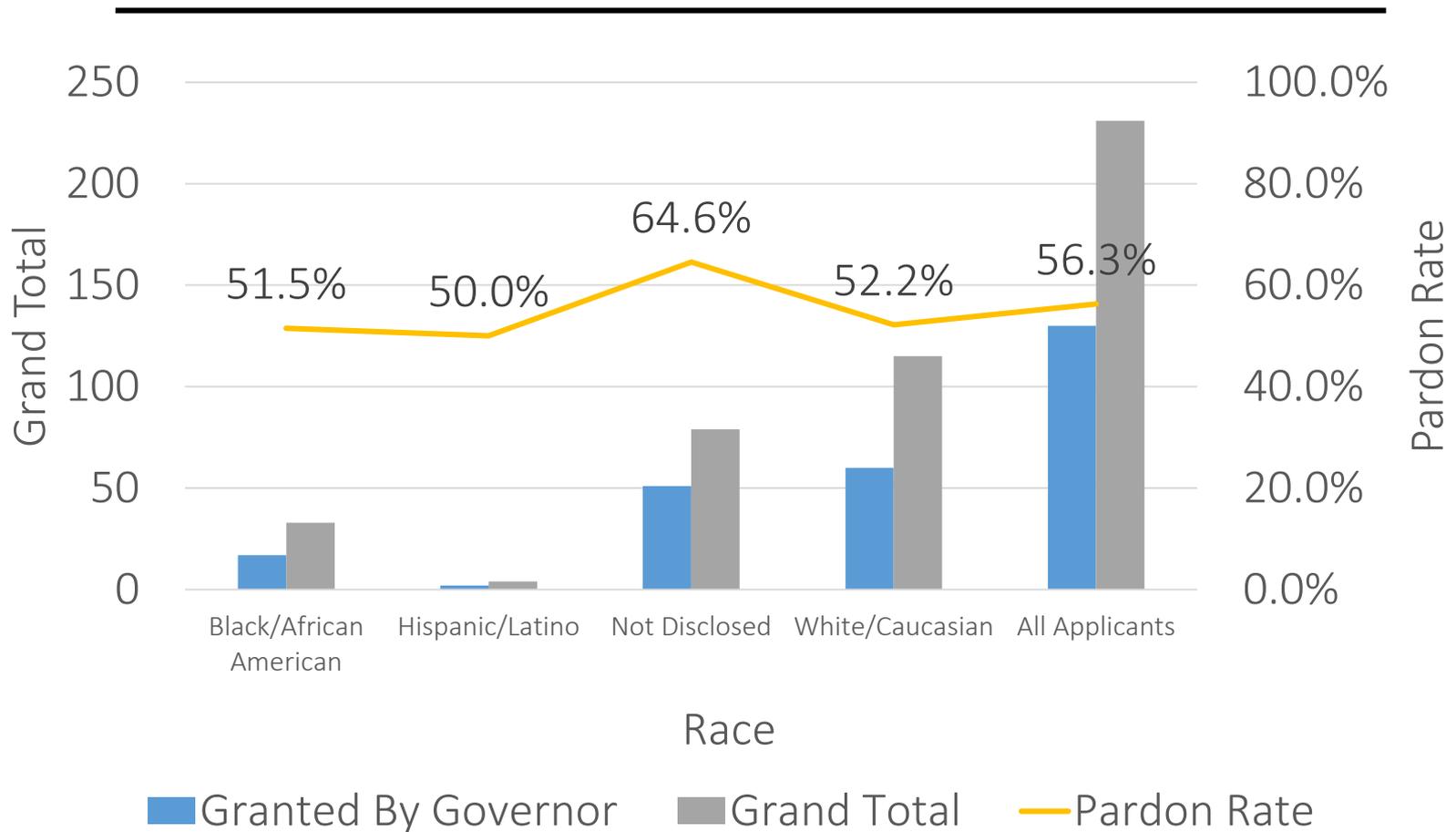
- › **3.17 years** from the date of filing to any outcome.
- › **3.68 years** from the date of filing to granted.

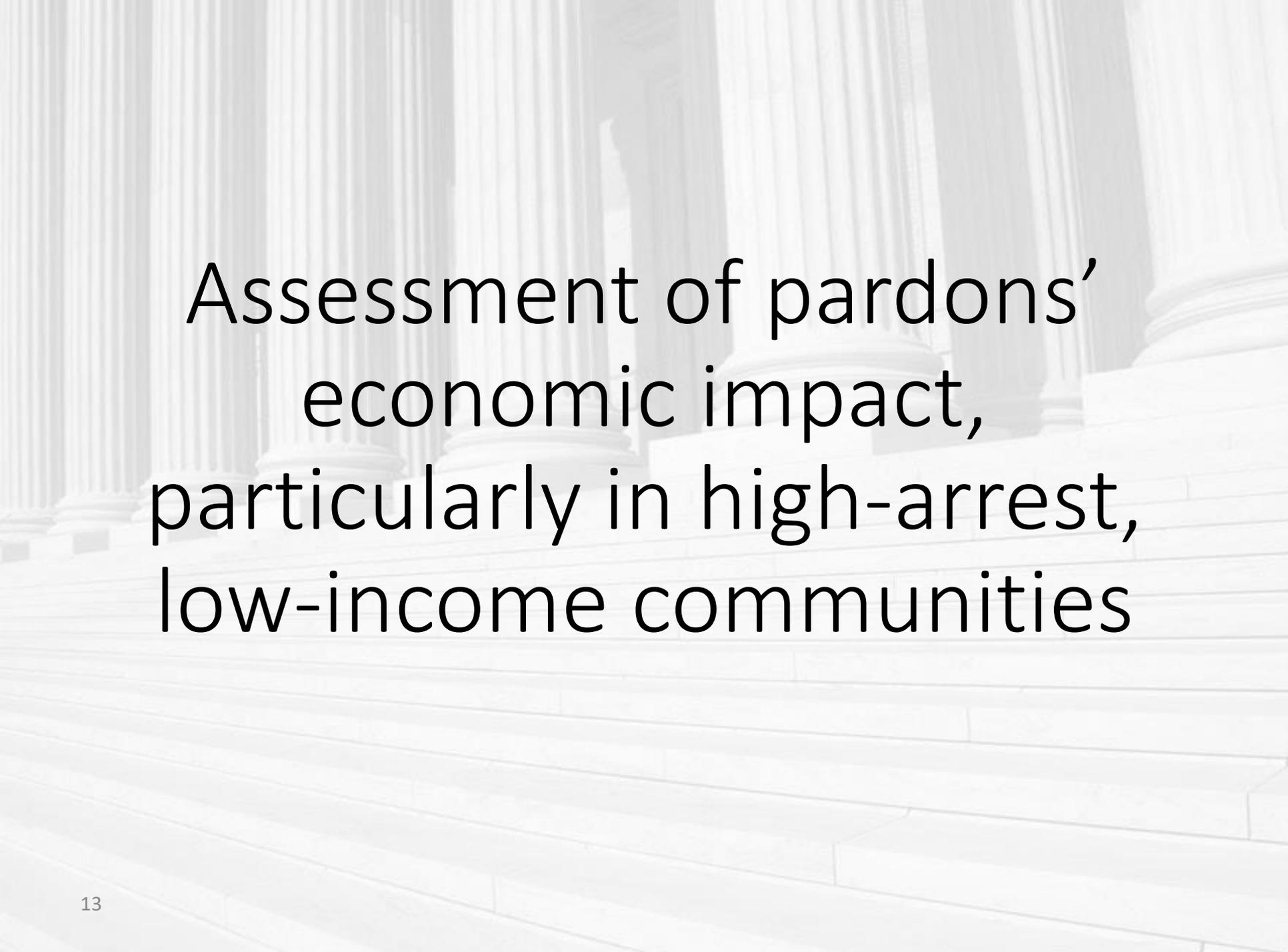


**Finding #2:** The average pardon grant rate during this ten-year period was **38.2%**, and has been **54%** from 2015-2017



### Finding #3: In 2017, pardon grant rates were consistent across racial groups



The background of the slide is a grayscale photograph of a classical building. It features several tall, fluted columns supporting a structure, with a wide set of stone steps leading up to the base of the columns. The lighting is soft, creating a sense of depth and architectural grandeur.

Assessment of pardons'  
economic impact,  
particularly in high-arrest,  
low-income communities

## A Note on Data

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To identify high-arrest  
counties:

Pennsylvania Uniform Crime  
Reporting System

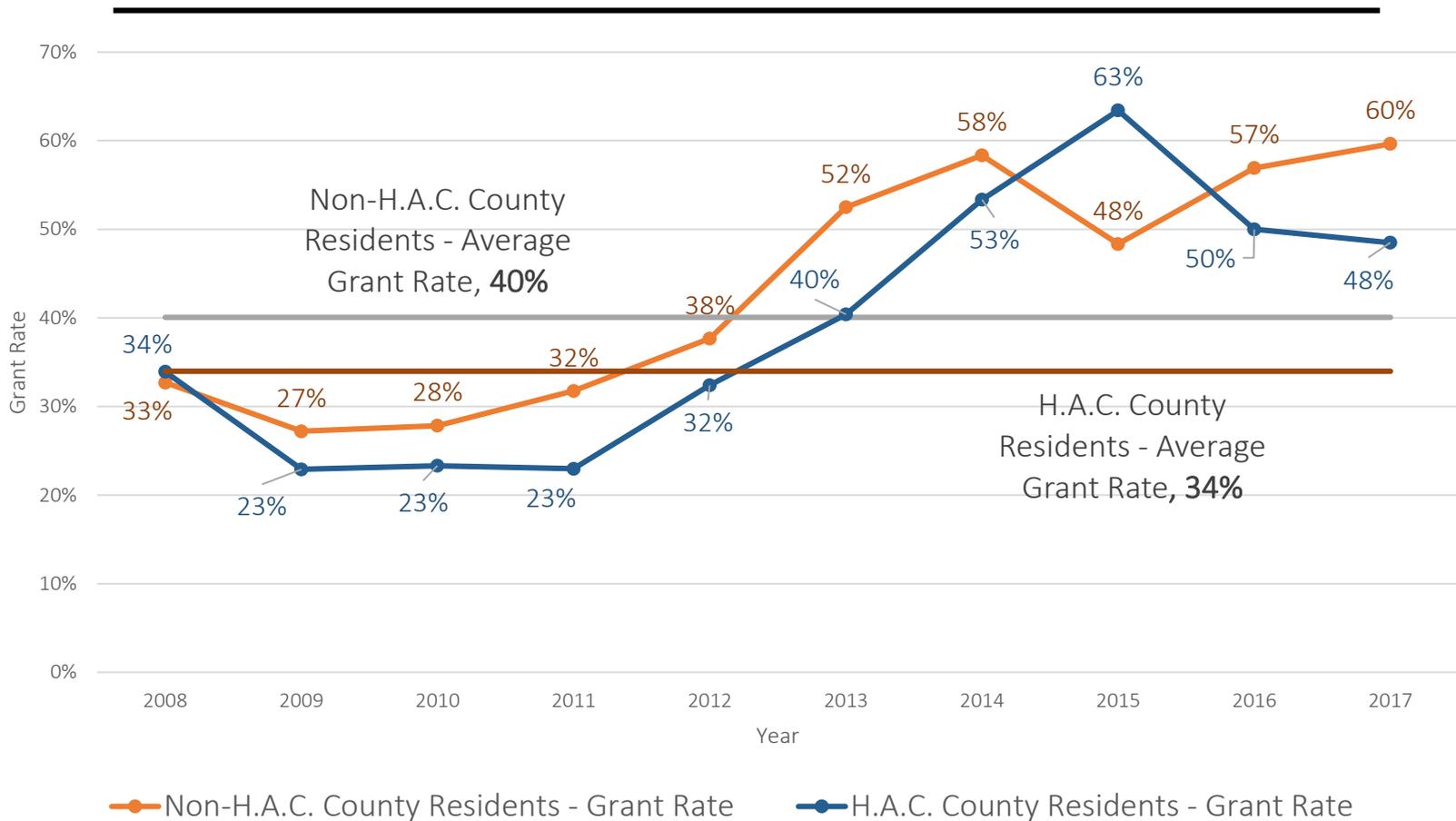
To identify the low-  
income zip codes  
within these counties:  
2017 ACS 5-year estimates



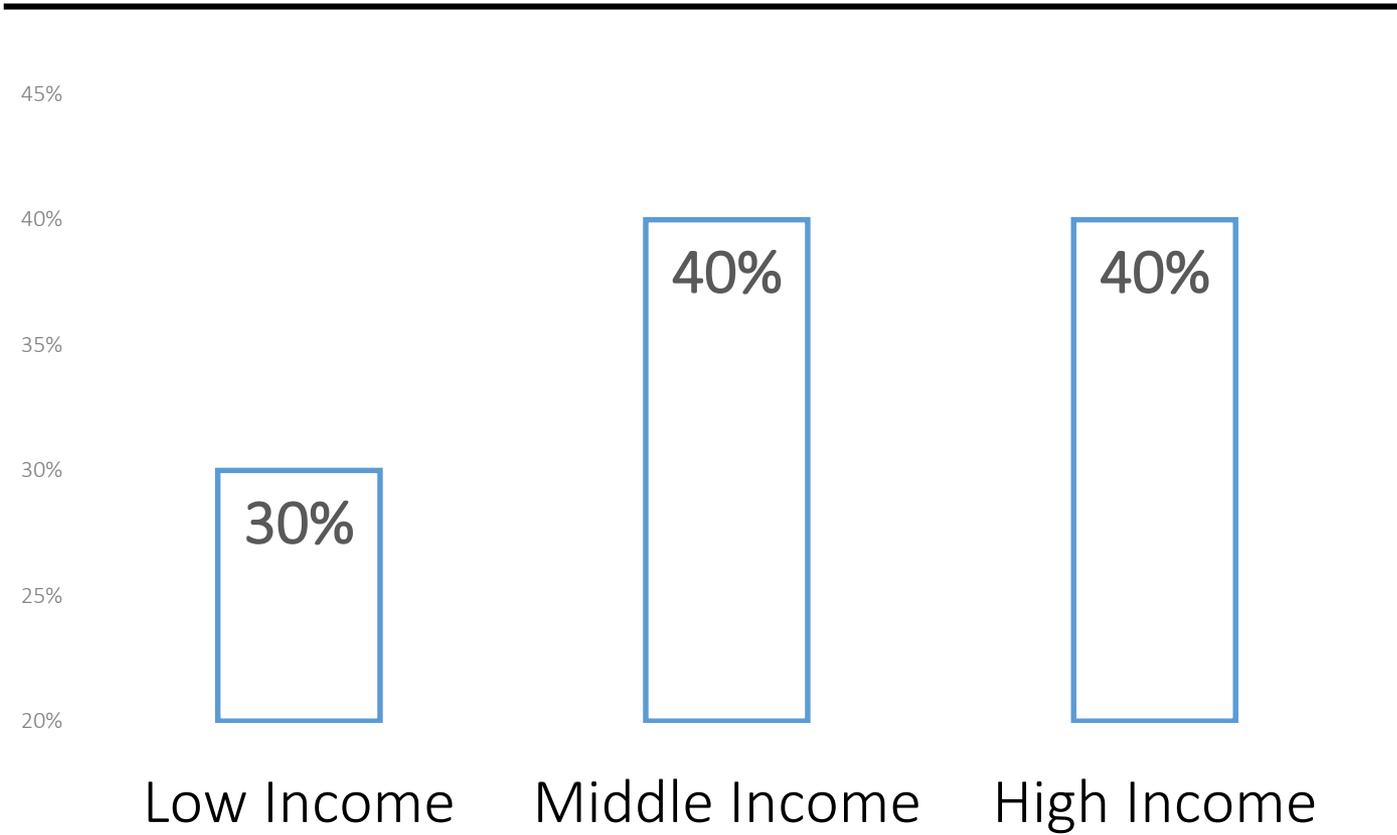
### High Arrest Counties (H.A.C.):

1. Allegheny
2. Bradford
3. Dauphin
4. Lycoming
5. Philadelphia

# Finding #1: The rate of granted pardons in high-arrest counties falls below the statewide average

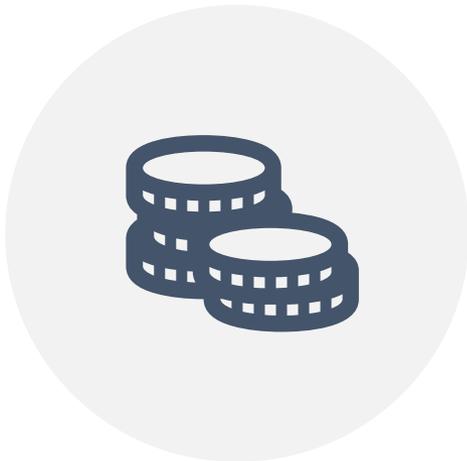


# Finding #2: Pardon grant rates differ by community income level



# Finding #3: Pardons filed between 2008 and 2018 and ultimately granted allowed recipients to earn an estimated **\$16 million** in additional wages as of December 2019

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“SERVING TIME REDUCES [...] ANNUAL EARNINGS BY **40%**.”

*SOURCE: PEW RESEARCH CENTERS*



“THOSE WHO OBTAIN EXPUNGEMENT EXPERIENCE [...] ON AVERAGE, WITHIN TWO YEARS, WAGES GO UP BY **25%** VERSUS THE PRE-EXPUNGEMENT TRAJECTORY.”

*SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, PRESCOTT AND STARR*



# Policy and Practice Options to Expand the Impact of Pardons

# Policy Option #1: Increasing the number of pardon applicants

## *Key Finding:*

If the number of applicants in Philadelphia County from 2008 to present doubled, earnings could have increased by \$92,828

# Policy Option #2: Increasing the share of applications that are granted pardons

## *Key Finding:*

If residents of low-income, high-arrest communities received pardons at the state-wide rate from 2008-2015, earnings could have increased by \$440,433.57

# Policy Option #3: Shortening the processing time

## *Key Finding:*

If the processing time were reduced by 25%, those who received pardons over the past 10 years could have generated \$6.9 million in additional income.



# Moderated Panel with Esteemed Experts



**Earl Buford**  
CEO, Partner for  
Work



**John Fetterman**  
Lieutenant  
Governor  
Commonwealth  
of PA



**Ryan Allen Hancock**  
Of Counsel, Willig,  
Williams &  
Davidson; Co-  
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**Dr. Nikia Owens**  
Managing Director,  
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