CRIME AND JUSTICE INSTITUTE

Understanding Oklahoma's Jail and Prison Population Growth

A System Drivers Assessment

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Jail and Prison Drivers

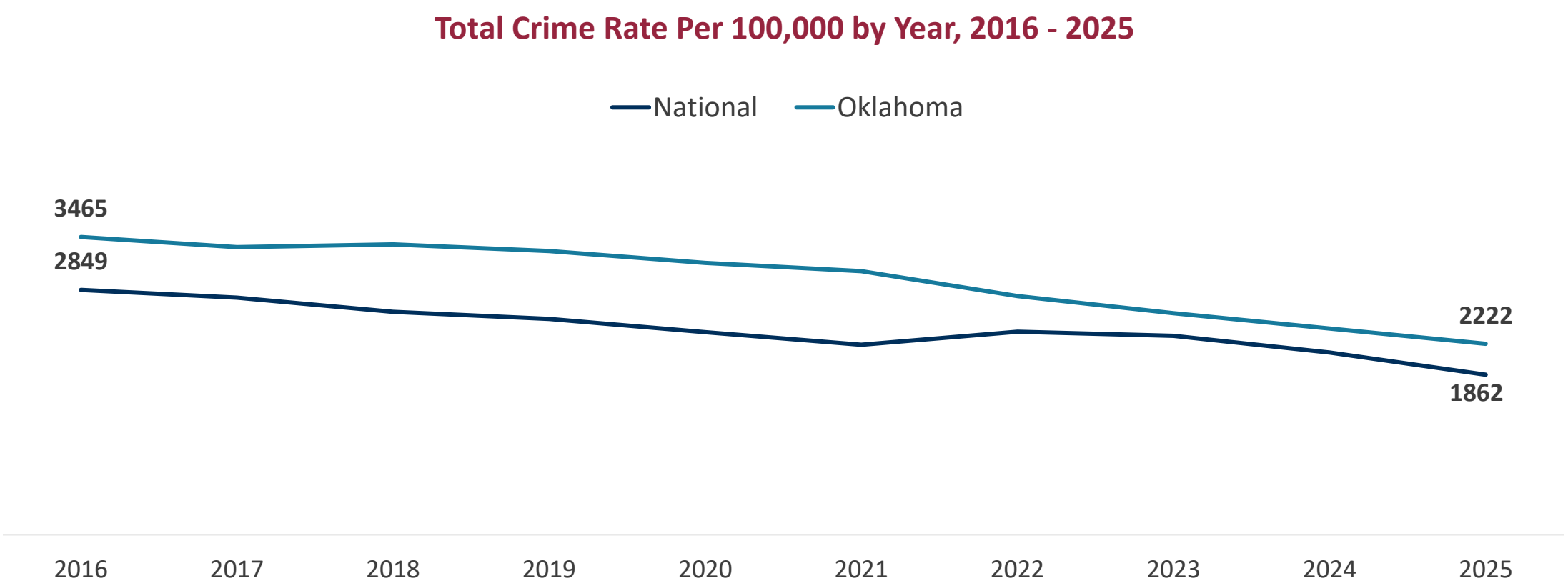
ENTRIES 

EXISTS 

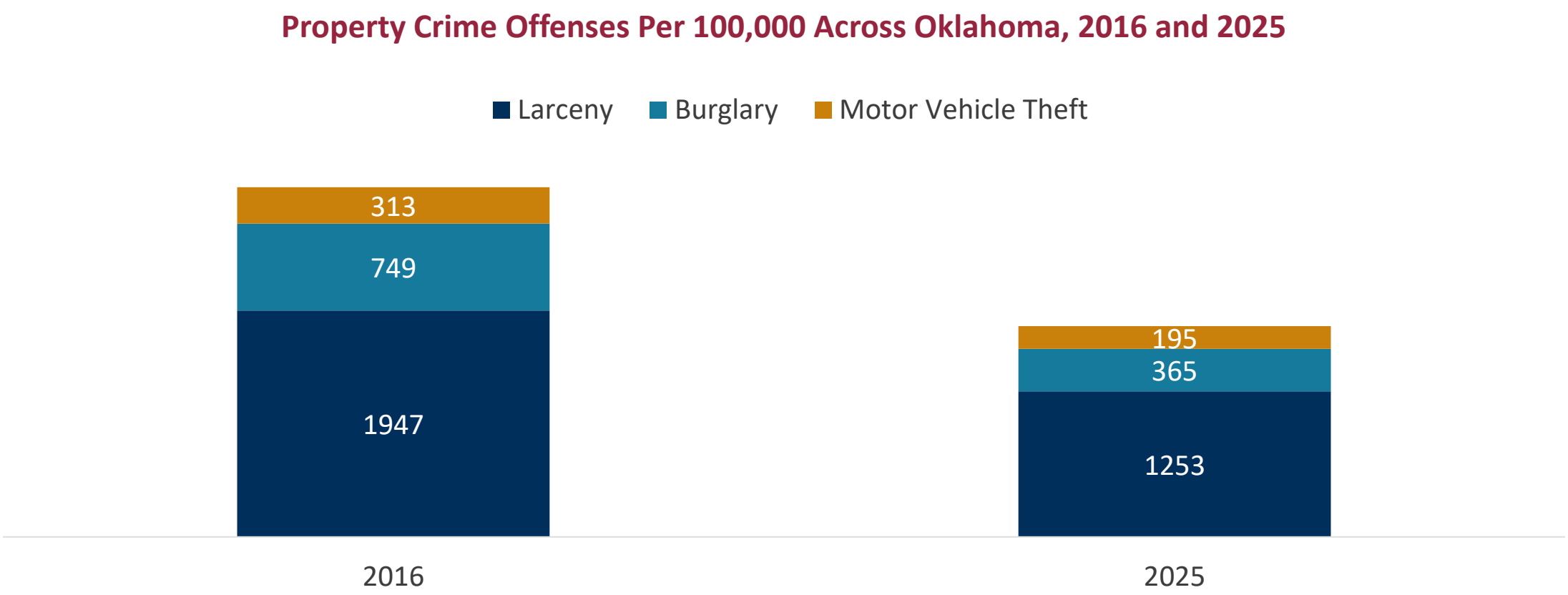
STAYS 

Crime & Arrest Rates

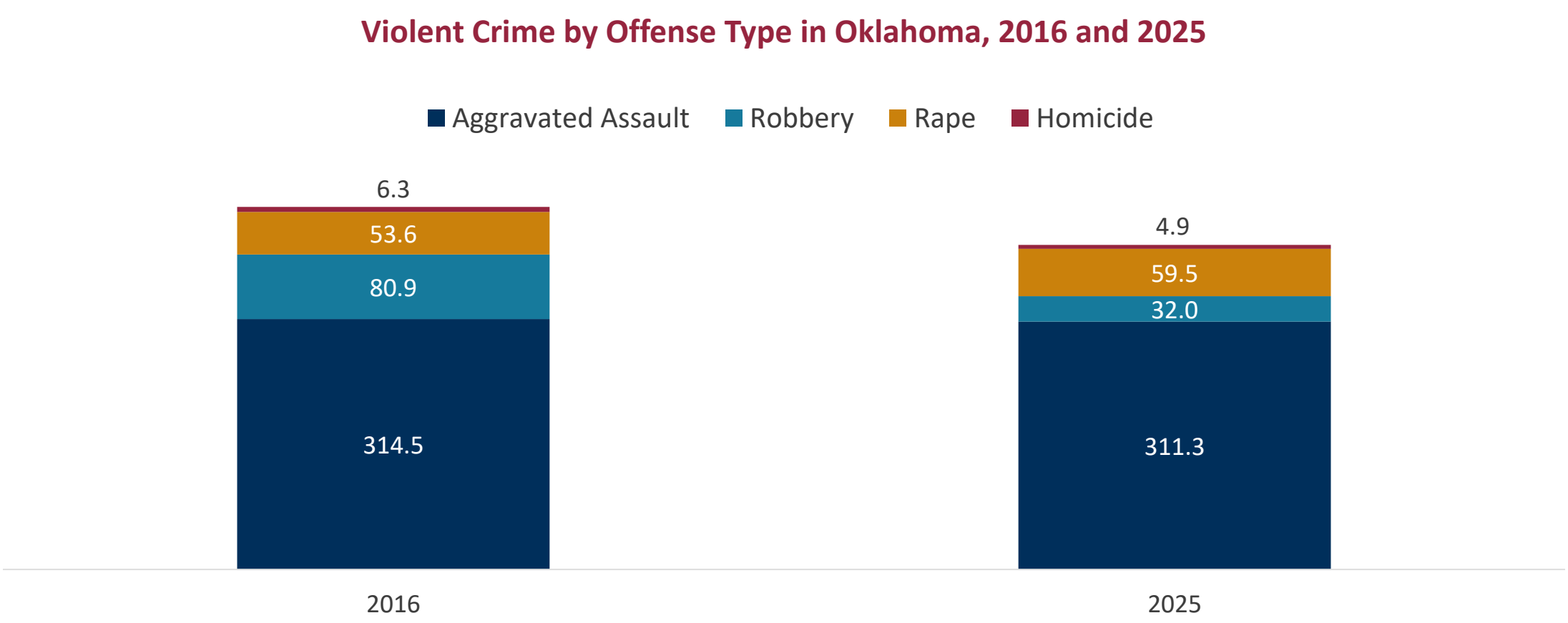
Oklahoma Crime Rate Decreased 36% Over Past Decade



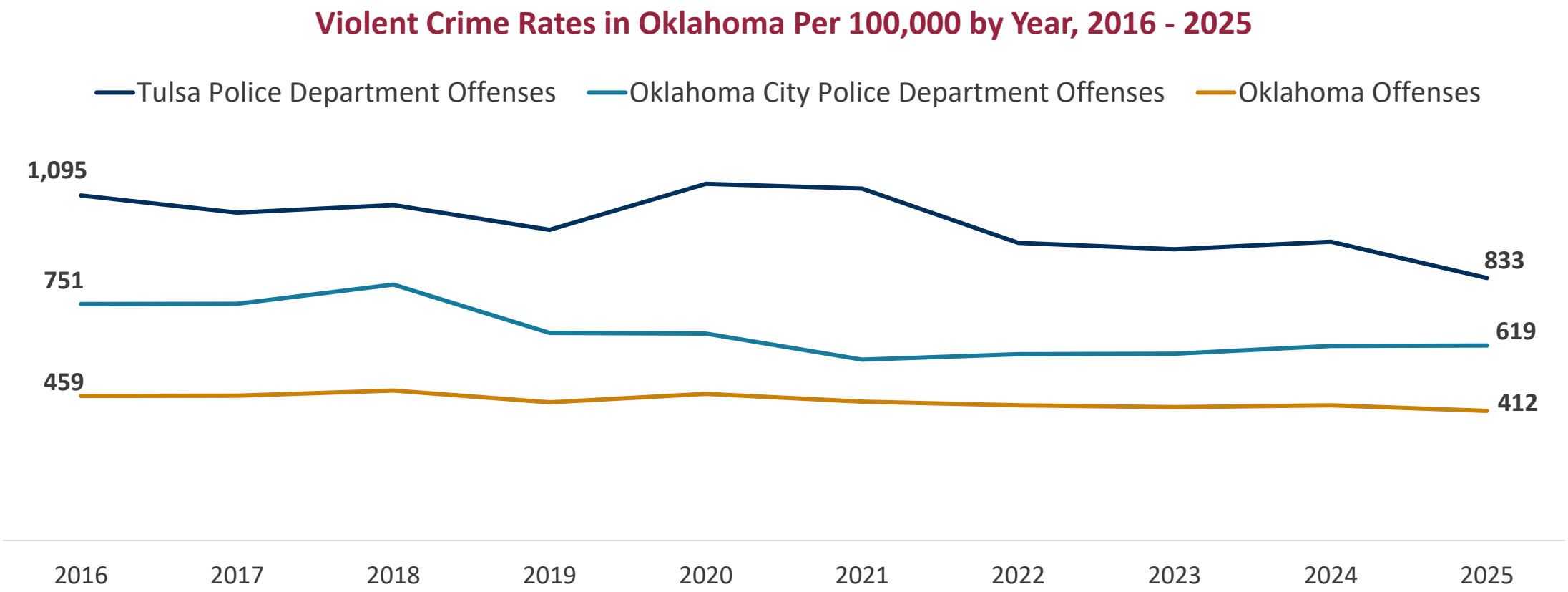
Property Crime Decline Driven by 51% Drop in Burglary



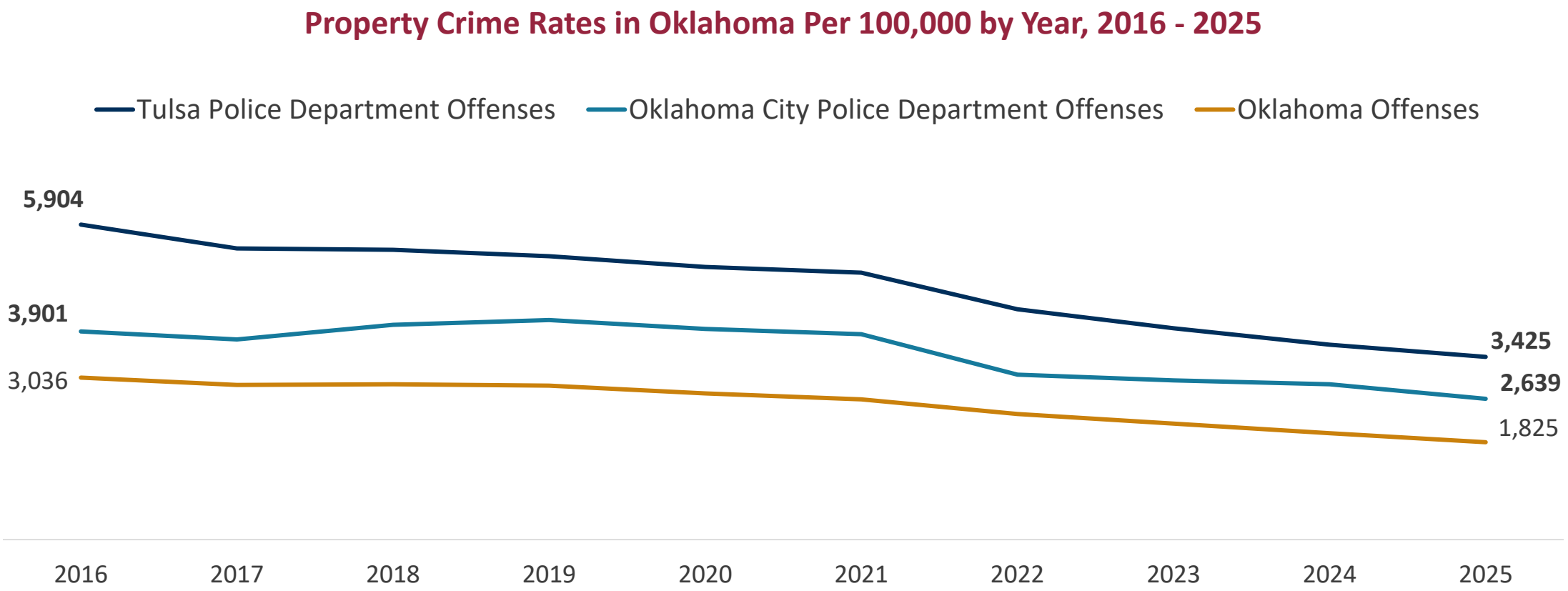
Violent Crime Decline Driven by 60% Drop in Robbery



Violent Crime Down 18% in OKC Over Past Decade, 24% in Tulsa



Property Crime Down 32% in OKC Over the Past Decade, 42% in Tulsa



Prison

Population Drivers - Prisons

ENTRIES 

- Admissions for public order offenses up
- Admissions for supervision revocations are up since 2020

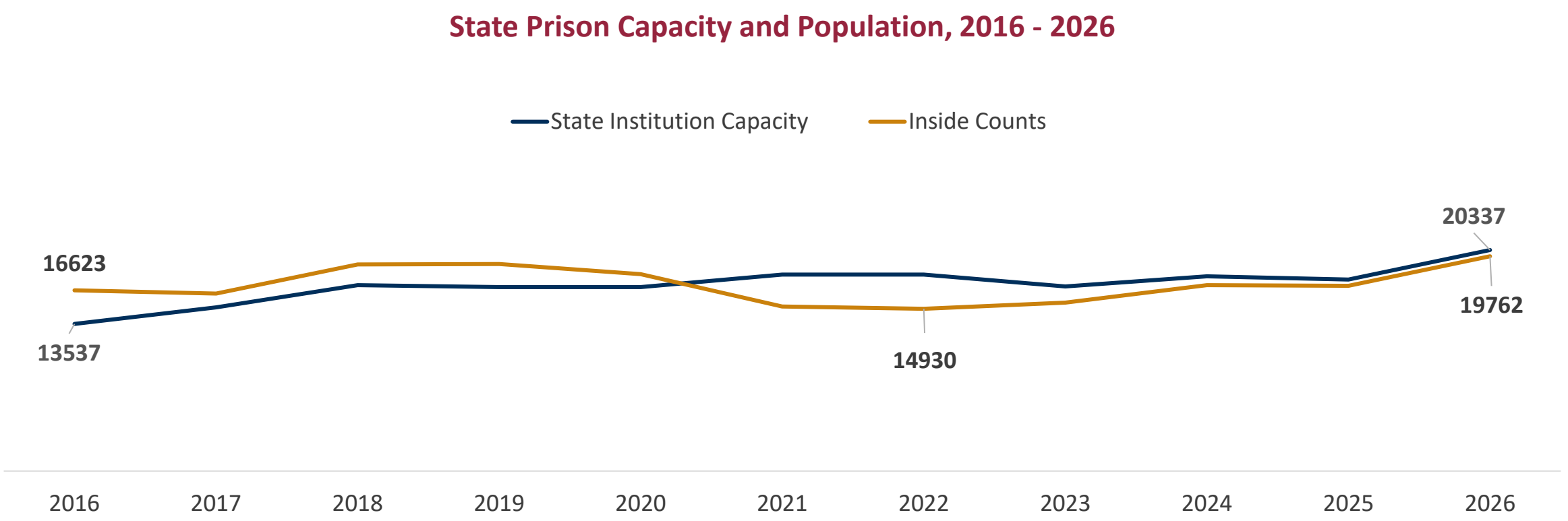
EXITS 

- Releases are down
- Releases are in decline in the last few years

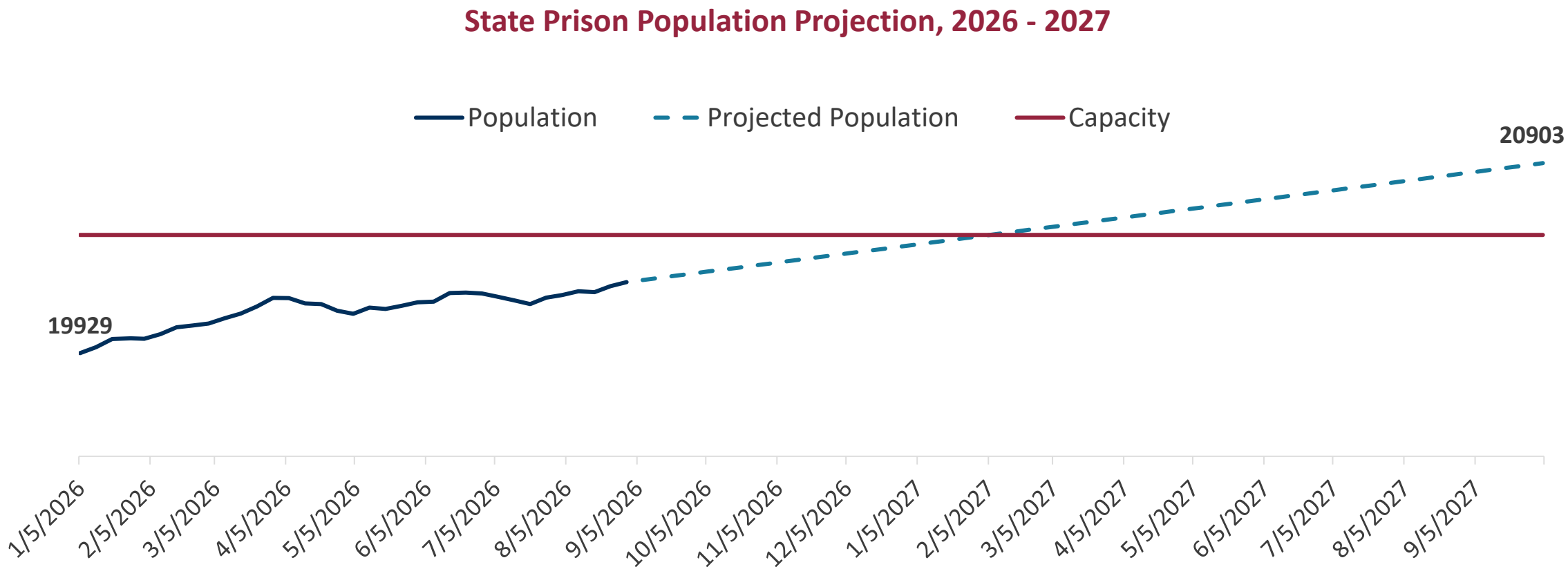
STAYS 

- Length of stay increased over the decade

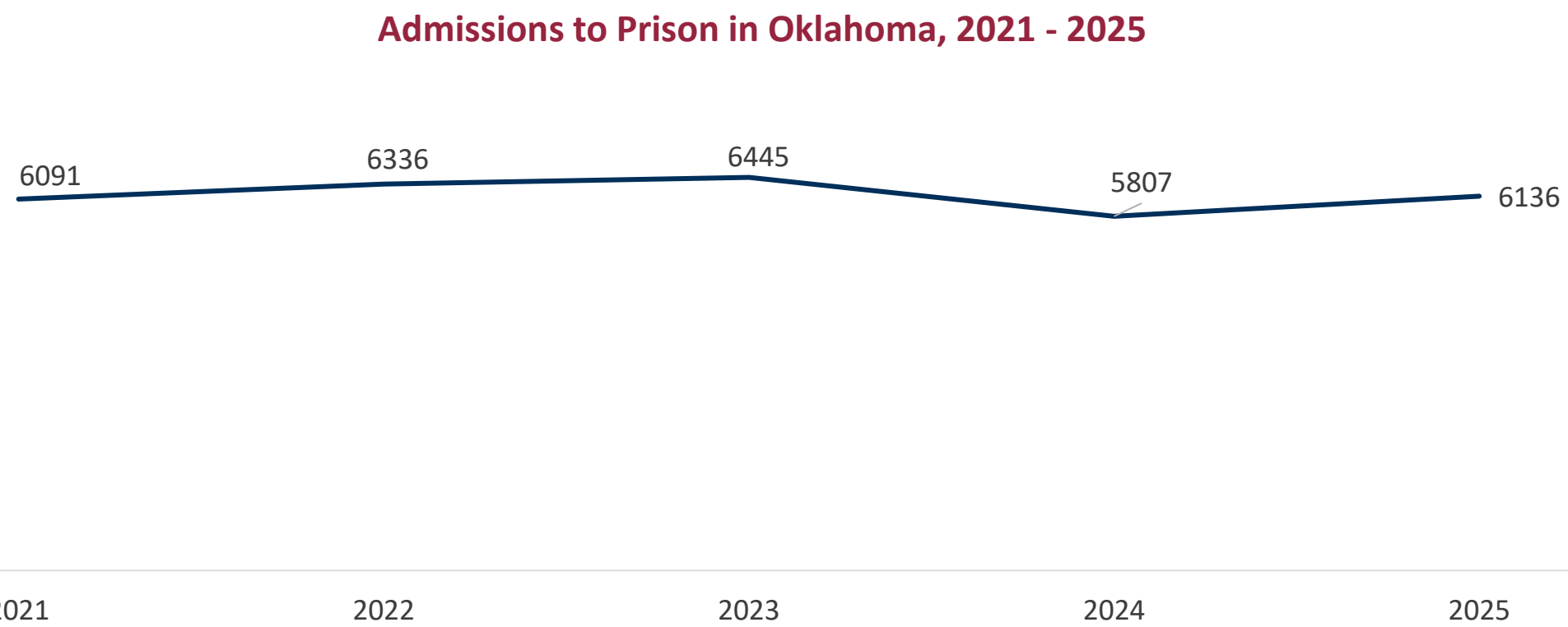
Prison Population Has Grown 32% Since Pandemic Low



Prison Population Will Exceed Current Capacity in February 2027 if the Average 2026 Increase Continues



Admissions to Oklahoma Prisons are Similar to 2021 Levels

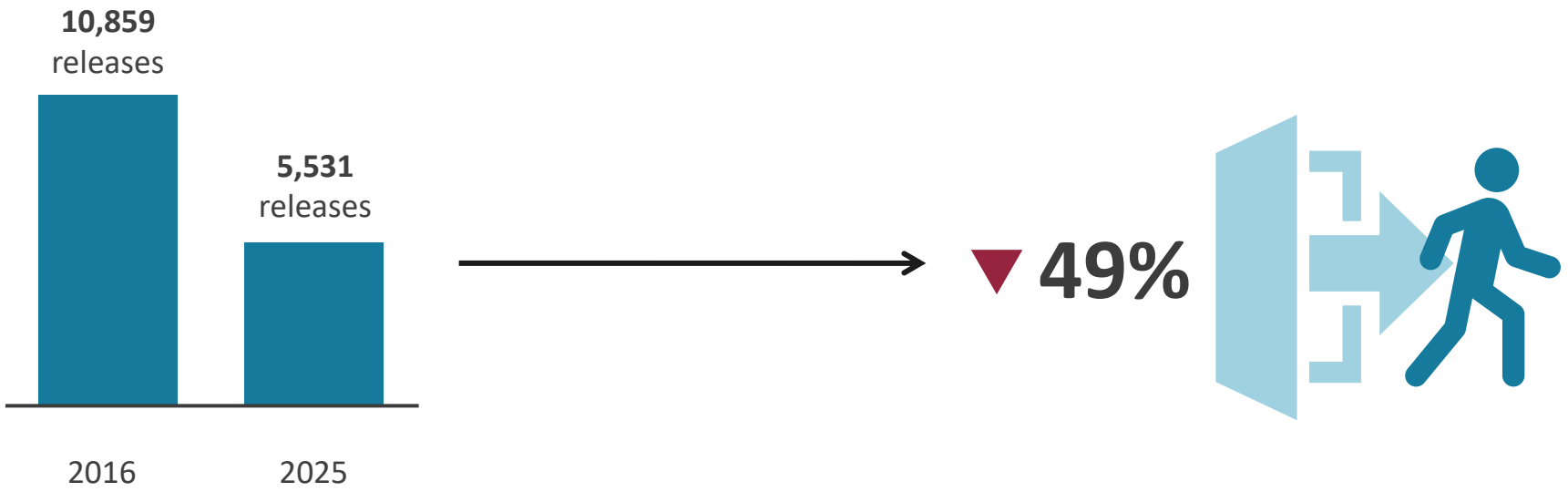


Source: Oklahoma Policy Institute

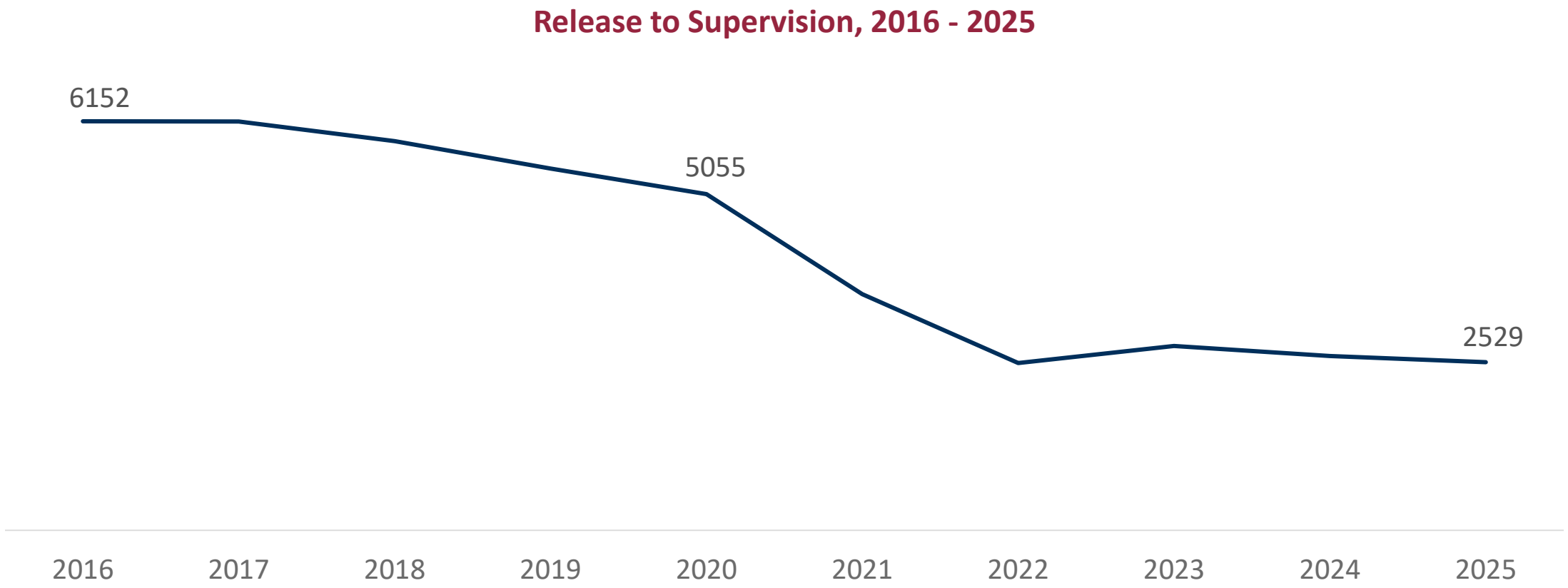
Prison Admissions Trends Shifted By Offense, Admissions Increased for Public Order Offenses (12%)

Offense	2016	2025	% Change
Violent	2,039	2162	▲+6%
Property	2,230	1,254	▼-44%
Drug	3,541	998	▼-72%
Public Order	1,449	1,616	▲+12
Other	135	94	▼-30%

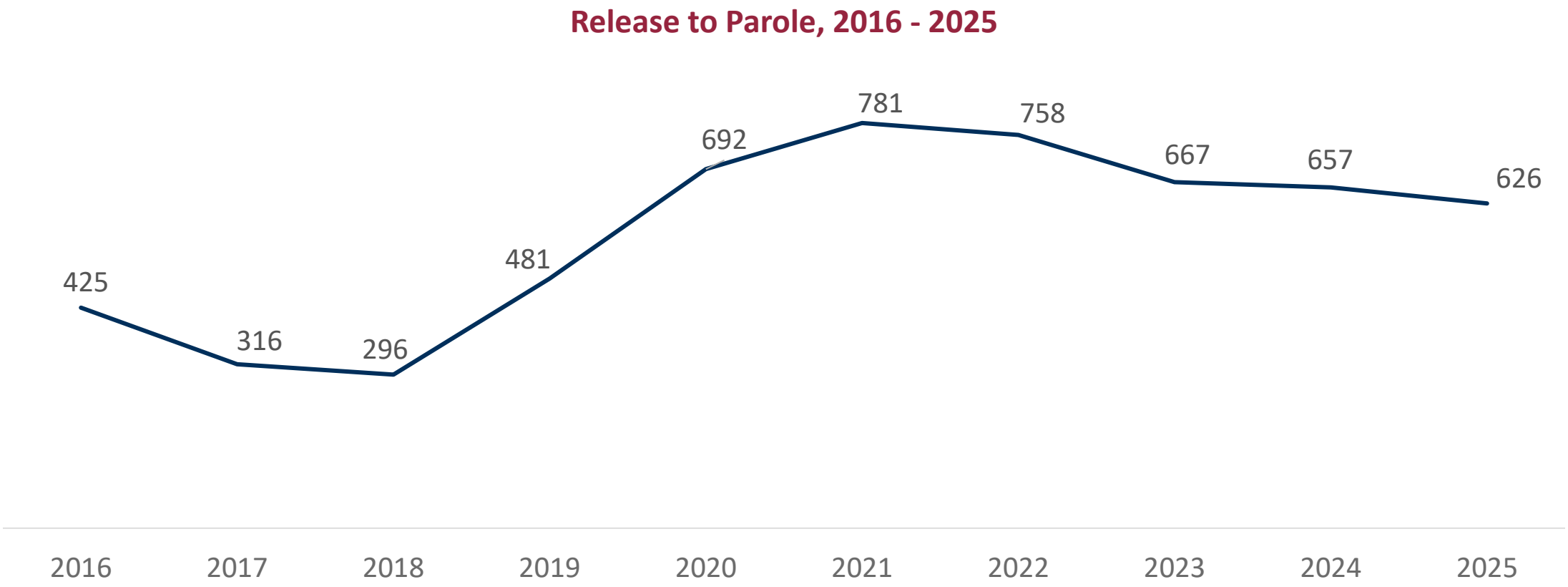
Releases Drop 49% Since 2016 and 13% Post Pandemic



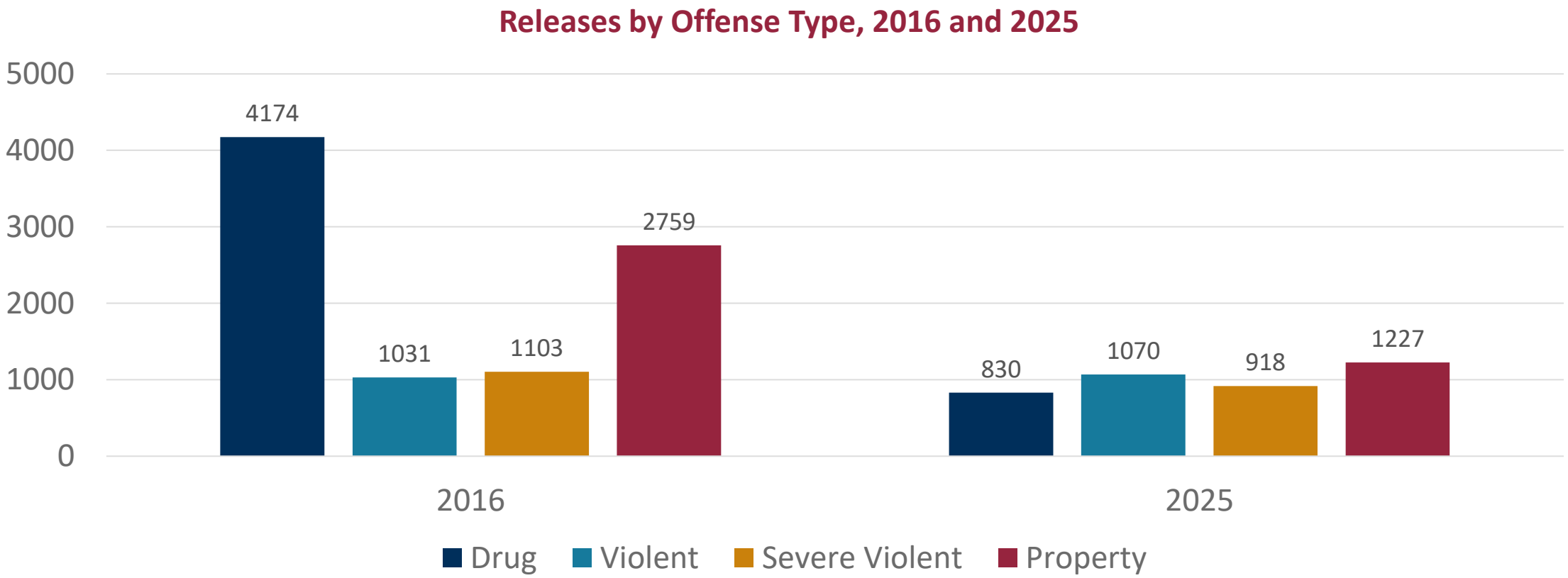
Releases to Supervision Decline Significantly During Pandemic



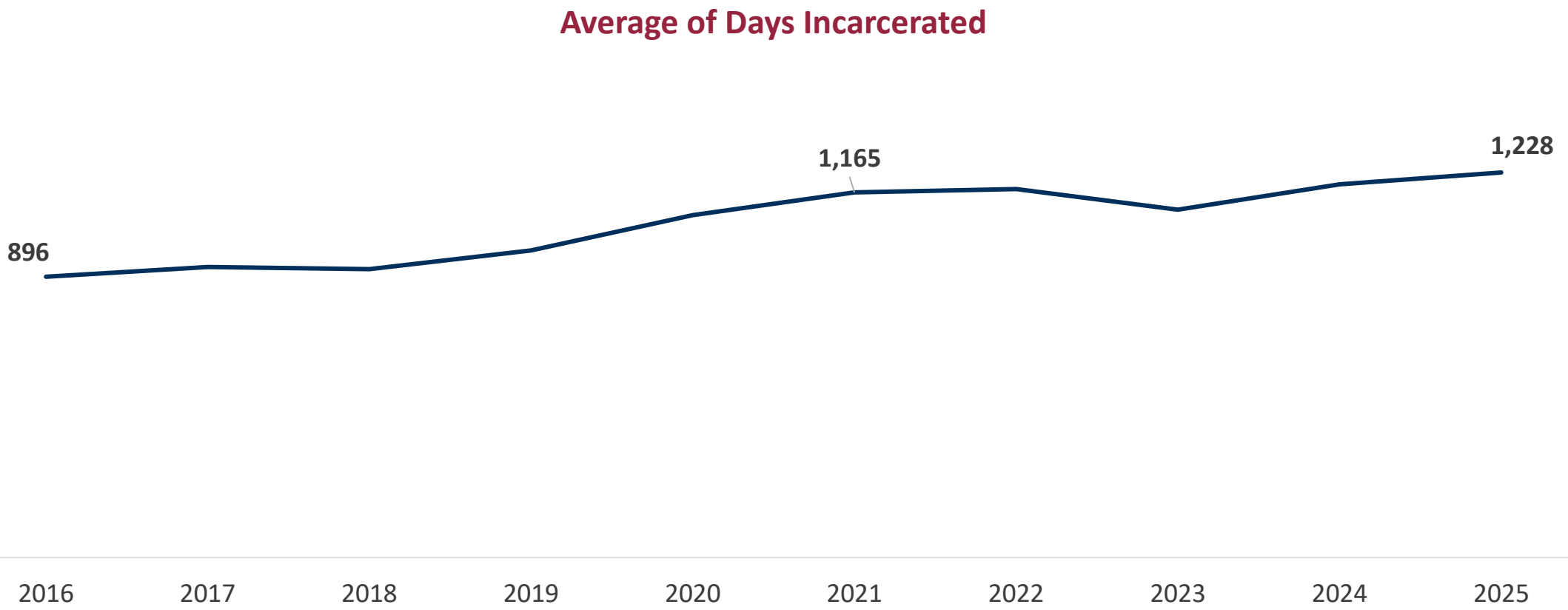
Since the Pandemic, Releases to Parole Dropped 20%



Releases With Drug And Property Offenses Have Declined

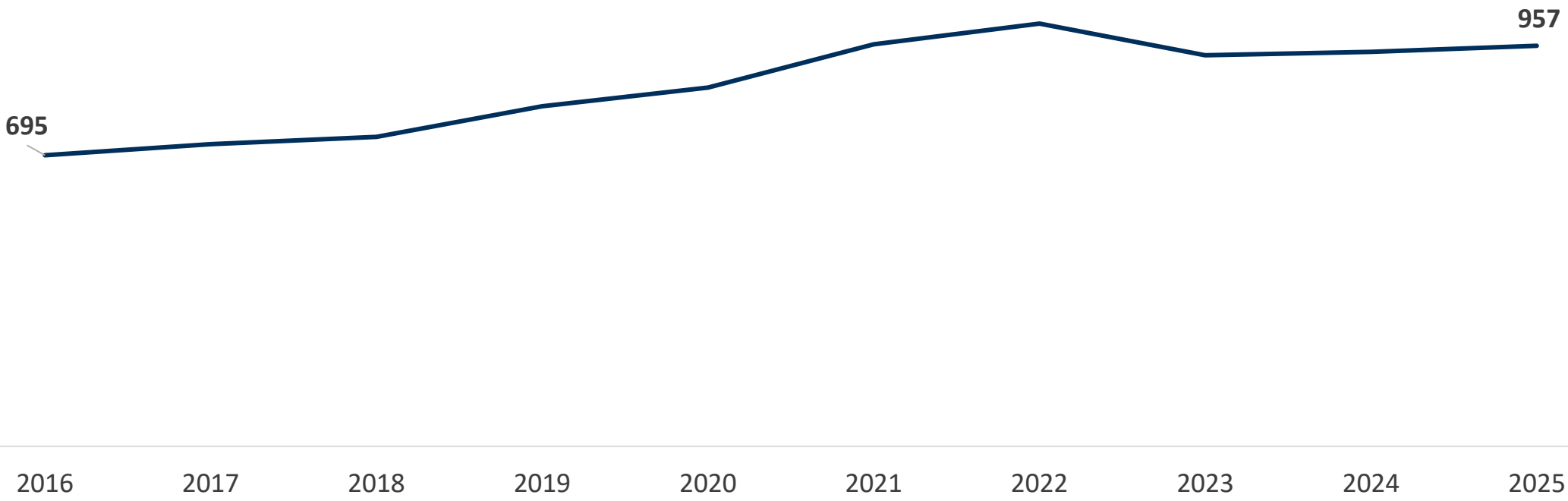


Average Length of Stay Increased 5% Since 2021, 37% Since 2016

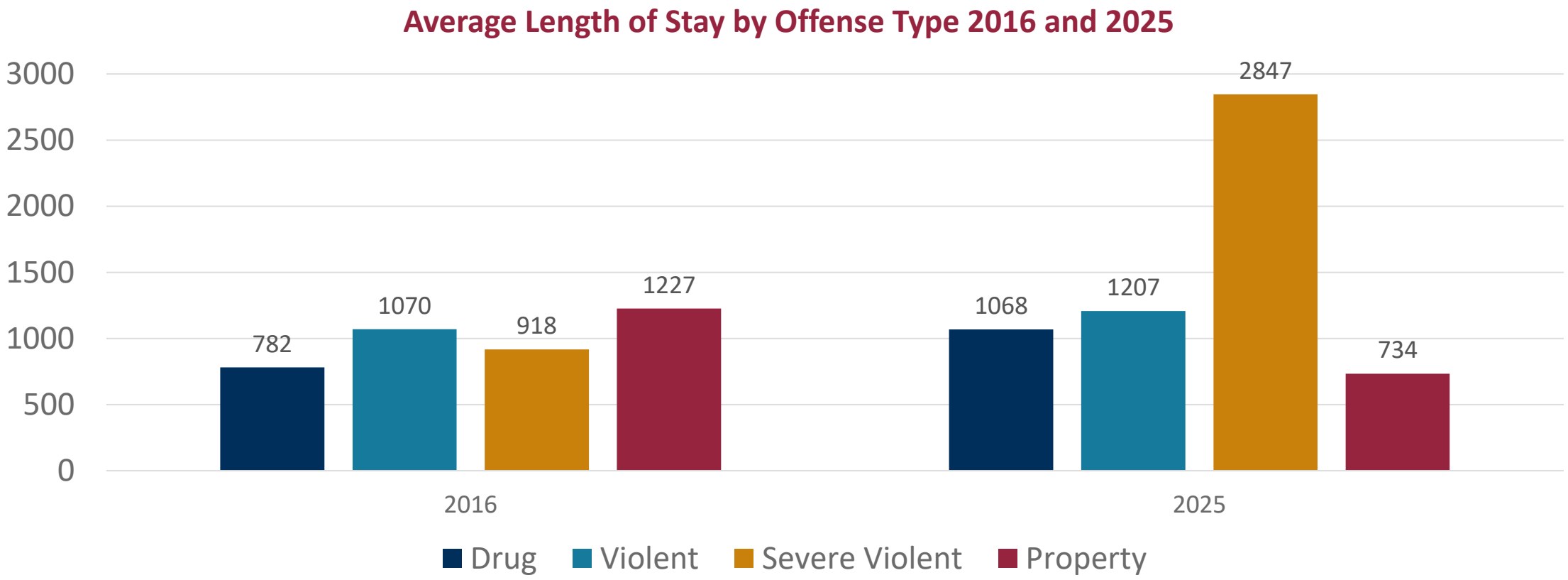


Length of Stay for Those Released to Supervision Increased 38% Since 2016

Average Number of Days Incarcerated for those Released to Supervision, 2016 - 2025

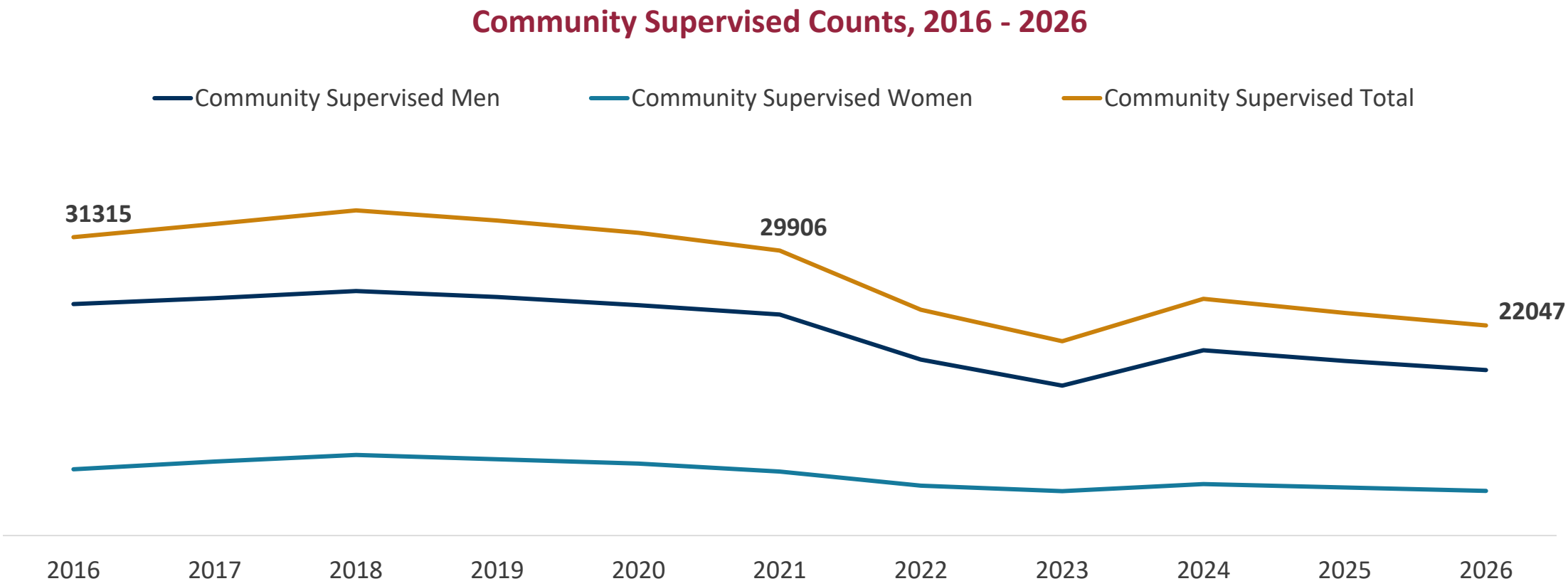


Length of stay has increased across the board except for property offenses.

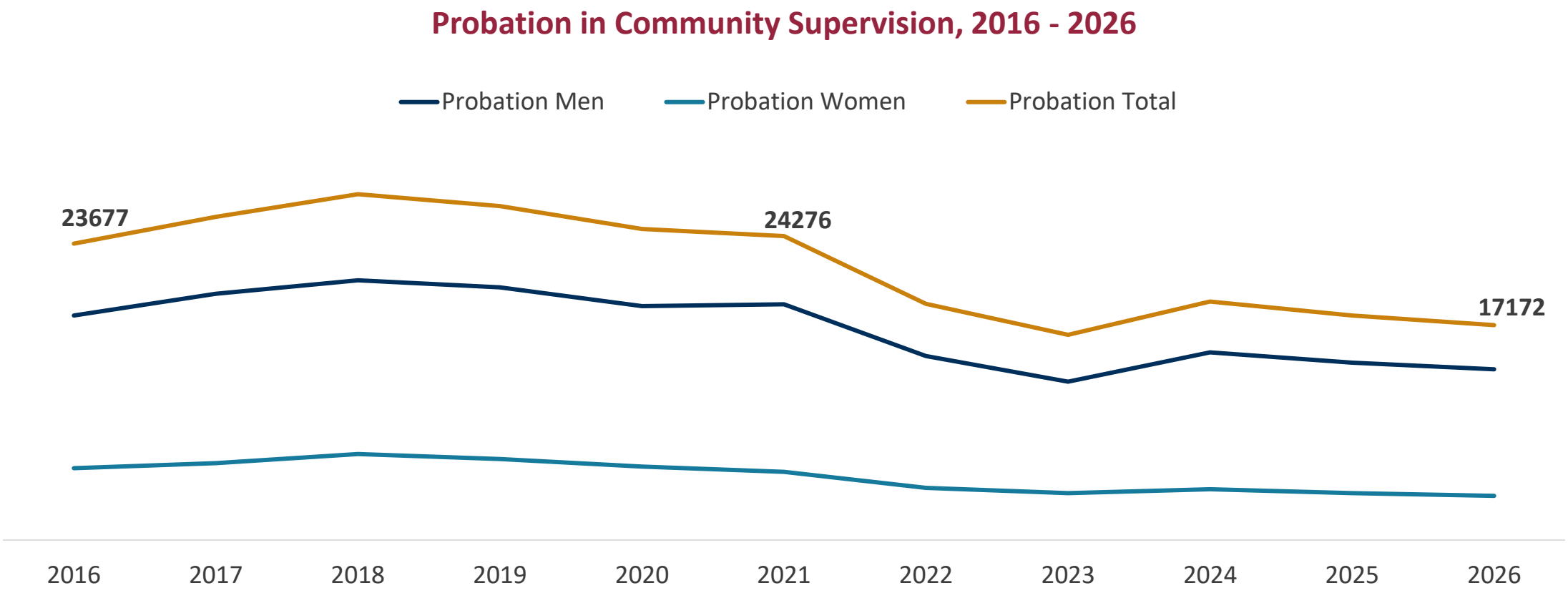


Community Supervision

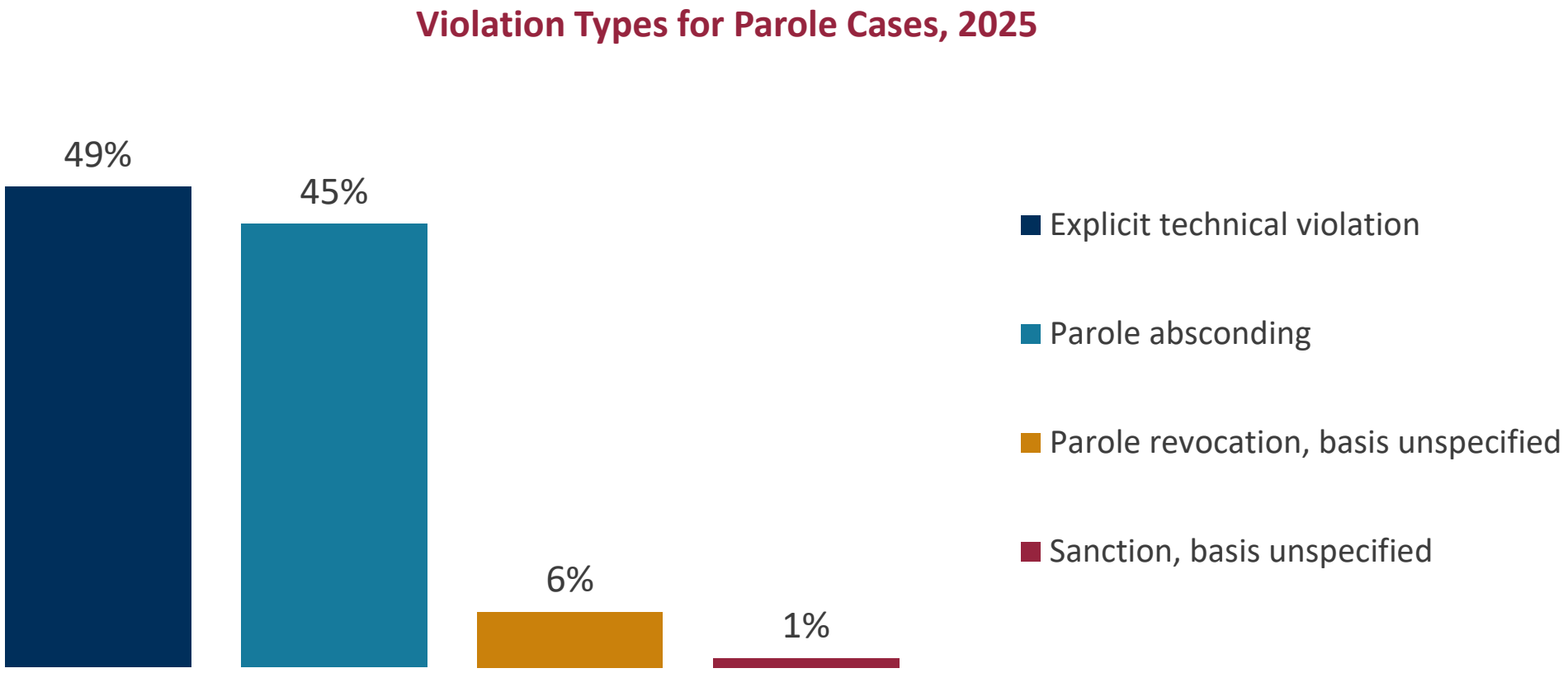
Number of Individuals on Community Supervision Decreased 26% Since 2021



Decreases in Probation Drive Community Supervision Declines, Down 29% Since 2021



Nearly Half of Parole Violations Are Technical



Source: Oklahoma Policy Institute

Crime Trends: Key Takeaways

Statewide Crime Trends

- Oklahoma's crime rate is down **36%** over the past decade
- The overall decline is driven by property crime, with every property index offense down — burglary **51%,** larceny **36%,** and motor vehicle theft **38%**

Local Crime Trends

- In Oklahoma City, violent crime is down **18%** and property crime is down **32%**
- In Tulsa, violent crime is down **24%** and property crime is down **42%**



Prison Population: Key Takeaways

Population

- Prison population is down since 2016 but has been rising since the pandemic

Admissions

- Admissions declined over the decade, up since 2020
- Admissions for public order offenses up **12%** from 2016-2025

Length of Stay

- Length of stay increased **37%** since 2016 and **5%** since 2021
- Length of stay increased **33%** for drug offenses and **40%** for violent offenses
- Length of stay for those released to parole declined during the pandemic but has risen since 2023

Releases

- Releases to supervision declined over the decade

Outlook

- If current trends continue, the prison population will exceed capacity by February 2027

Policy Options to Address Drivers

PROBLEM: Releases from prison are declining.

DRIVER: Releases to parole are in decline since 2021.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

- Increase use of administrative parole
  - Improve coordination with DOC to support compliance with and prep for admin parole approval
- Limit parole denials for lack of program participation and treatment when similar services are available in the community
- Revisit parole release criteria, ensure factors align with public safety needs
- Explore department-driven release mechanisms such as furlough
- Establish annual reporting requirements for all relevant parole data

Policy Options to Address Drivers

PROBLEM: People are staying longer in prison.

DRIVER: Length of stay increased 37% since 2016.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

- Expand opportunities to get credit for institutional behavior, educational and vocational attainment, and program participation
- Reduce long sentence lengths through the use of tiered penalty structures for offenses that drive long lengths of stay
- Update lengthy penalties for drug offenses to focus on those causing harm instead of those who are addicted
- Reduce the impact of prior criminal history on long sentences
- Explore resentencing mechanisms for individuals who have long lengths of stay and serve no public safety risk

Policy Options to Address Drivers

PROBLEM: People are returning to prison.

DRIVER: Admissions from supervision are ticking up.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

- Improve reentry process with reentry case plans, transitional housing opportunities, and alignment between vocational programming and job availability in the community
- Incentivize compliance on supervision through credits
- Establish reentry centers in the community to provide wraparound services to those on supervision and returning from prison
- Reduce supervision term lengths and allow early termination and step-down supervision
- More in-reach services (1115 waiver) to support continuity of care