

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: October 7th, 2025

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To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: Sean McDonagh, Chief of Police
 Responsible Department: Police
Subject: Informational Presentation – Police Statistics/Report on Crime Statistics for last 5-10
 years

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RECOMMENDATIONS:
Request from V/Mayor McLewis and Councilmember Carter for presentation by Chief of Police Sean McDonagh on crime statistics and related information for the City of Sebastopol from 2015 through 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
Between 2015 and 2025, the city’s Police Department has navigated significant shifts in crime trends, calls for service, funding and budget challenges, staffing and organizational capacity. Reported crime rates have gradually declined overall, while calls for service have remained consistently high, reflecting increased community reliance on police for a broad range of non-criminal issues, including mental health crises, homelessness, and quality-of-life concerns.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:
Over the past decade (2015–2025), the city’s Police Department has operated in an environment shaped by significant national incidents, statewide criminal justice reforms, economic and social changes, and evolving community expectations.

Key legislative actions—including Proposition 47 (2014), which reclassified certain drug and property crimes; Proposition 57 (2016), expanding parole eligibility; and AB 109 (2011 Realignment)—have shifted responsibility for supervision and incarceration to local jurisdictions.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted court operations, altered crime patterns, and introduced new operational challenges. Municipal budget constraints, staffing reductions and recruitment challenges during this period further limited resources available to the Department, affecting response capacity and proactive policing efforts within the city, which have a direct correlation to proactive crime detection and prosecution rates.

At the same time, the community has faced rising homelessness, substance use, and behavioral health needs, resulting in increased calls for service related to welfare checks, disturbances, and public safety concerns not always tied to criminal activity.

Analysis of crime statistics from 2015 through 2025 shows an apparent gradual decline in reported crime, particularly in certain property and drug offenses, influenced by statutory changes and evolving enforcement priorities. However, calls for service have remained high, with 2024 being the highest in this reported period of time, reflecting the Department’s role as the primary 24/7 responder to a wide range of community issues beyond traditional crime.

Key observations include:

- **Crime Trends:** While violent crime has remained relatively stable, reclassification of lower-level offenses has contributed to declining arrest and case numbers.
- **Service Demands:** Calls for service frequently involve non-criminal matters (e.g., homelessness, mental health crises), stretching resources and impacting response times.
- **Resource Challenges:** Staffing levels have not kept pace with service demand. Recruitment and retention difficulties, combined with rising overtime costs, have created operational strain.
- **Community Expectations:** Residents increasingly rely on police for quality-of-life concerns, highlighting the need for cross-departmental and regional solutions.
- **Systemic Pressures:** Limited availability of jail space, treatment programs, and social services has placed additional responsibility on police officers as first responders.

Looking forward, the Department will continue adapting to these demands by prioritizing data-driven deployment, expanding partnerships with service providers, and seeking sustainable funding to maintain service levels.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

As Chief of Police, I have reviewed the Department's performance trends and community service demands between 2015 and 2025. While overall reported crime has declined over this period, calls for service remain elevated, reflecting the complexity of issues our officers are asked to manage.

Several factors contribute to these dynamics:

1. **Legislative and Systemic Changes**
 - State initiatives such as Proposition 47, Proposition 57, and AB 109 have reduced penalties for certain offenses, increased local supervision responsibilities, and limited jail capacity. These shifts have decreased arrest and prosecution rates for some crimes but have not reduced the volume of calls police respond to.
2. **Staffing and Resource Constraints**
 - The Department has experienced sustained vacancies and recruitment challenges, while service demand remains high. Overtime costs and workload distribution have become ongoing concerns. Without additional staffing or alternative service models, sustaining proactive policing and timely response will remain difficult.
3. **Homelessness and Behavioral Health**
 - The rise in homelessness, substance use, and behavioral health-related calls has been one of the largest drivers of service demand. These incidents are time-intensive and often require collaboration with outside service providers who also face limited capacity.
4. **Community Expectations**
 - Residents continue to rely on the Department for a wide spectrum of quality-of-life concerns beyond crime, including welfare checks, disturbances, and neighborhood safety issues. This expectation places additional strain on sworn staff.
5. **Fiscal Impacts**
 - Police operations represent a significant portion of the City's general fund. Balancing fiscal responsibility with community safety requires strategic resource allocation and potential investment in non-police alternatives for certain call types.

Conclusion:

Over the past decade, the City's Police Department has navigated a complex and evolving landscape. While reported crime has declined overall since 2015, calls for service remain high, reflecting increased reliance on police for non-criminal issues such as homelessness, behavioral health crises, and quality-of-life concerns. Statewide reforms, limited staffing, and fiscal pressures have further shaped how public safety services are delivered.

The Department has demonstrated adaptability in the face of these challenges through data-driven deployment, partnerships with community service providers, and a continued focus on public trust. However, sustaining this balance is becoming increasingly difficult as service demands rise and available resources remain constrained. Moving forward, the city must consider strategies that include targeted staffing increases, investment in civilian and alternative response models, and strengthened collaboration with regional partners. These measures will allow the Department to maintain core law enforcement responsibilities while addressing broader community needs in a sustainable manner.

The Police Department remains committed to protecting public safety and fostering community trust, but the support of the City Council in addressing staffing, resource allocation, and system-wide challenges will be essential to ensuring continued success into the next decade.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

As of the writing of this staff report, staff have not received any public comments. If staff receive public comment from interested parties following the publication and distribution of this staff report such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

This item has been noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled meeting date. The city has also used social media to promote and advertise the City Council Meeting Agenda Items.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this informational presentation.

RESTATED RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council receive this informational presentation.

ATTACHMENTS:

PowerPoint presentation slides associated with this informational item

APPROVALS:

Department Head Approval: Approval Date: 9/24/2025

CEQA Determination (Planning): Approval Date: N/A

The proposed action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Administrative Services (Financial) N/A Approval Date: N/A

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Account Code (f applicable) _____

City Attorney Approval: N/A Approval Date: N/A

City Manager Approval: Approval Date: 9/24/2025

SEBASTOPOL POLICE STATISTICS 2015 - 2025

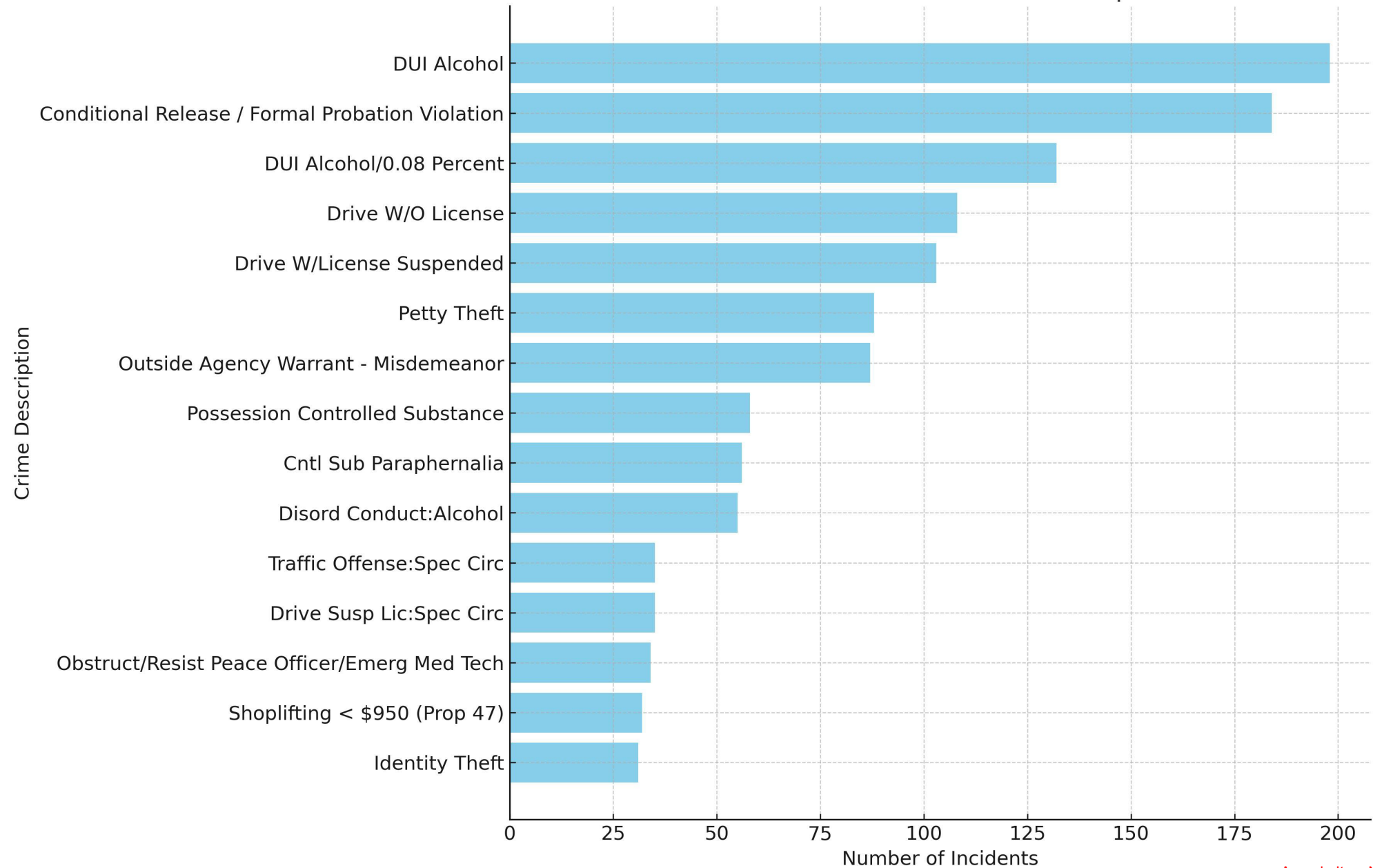
OCTOBER 7TH, 2025

Presented by Chief of Police Sean McDonagh



2015 Crime Statistics Bar Graph

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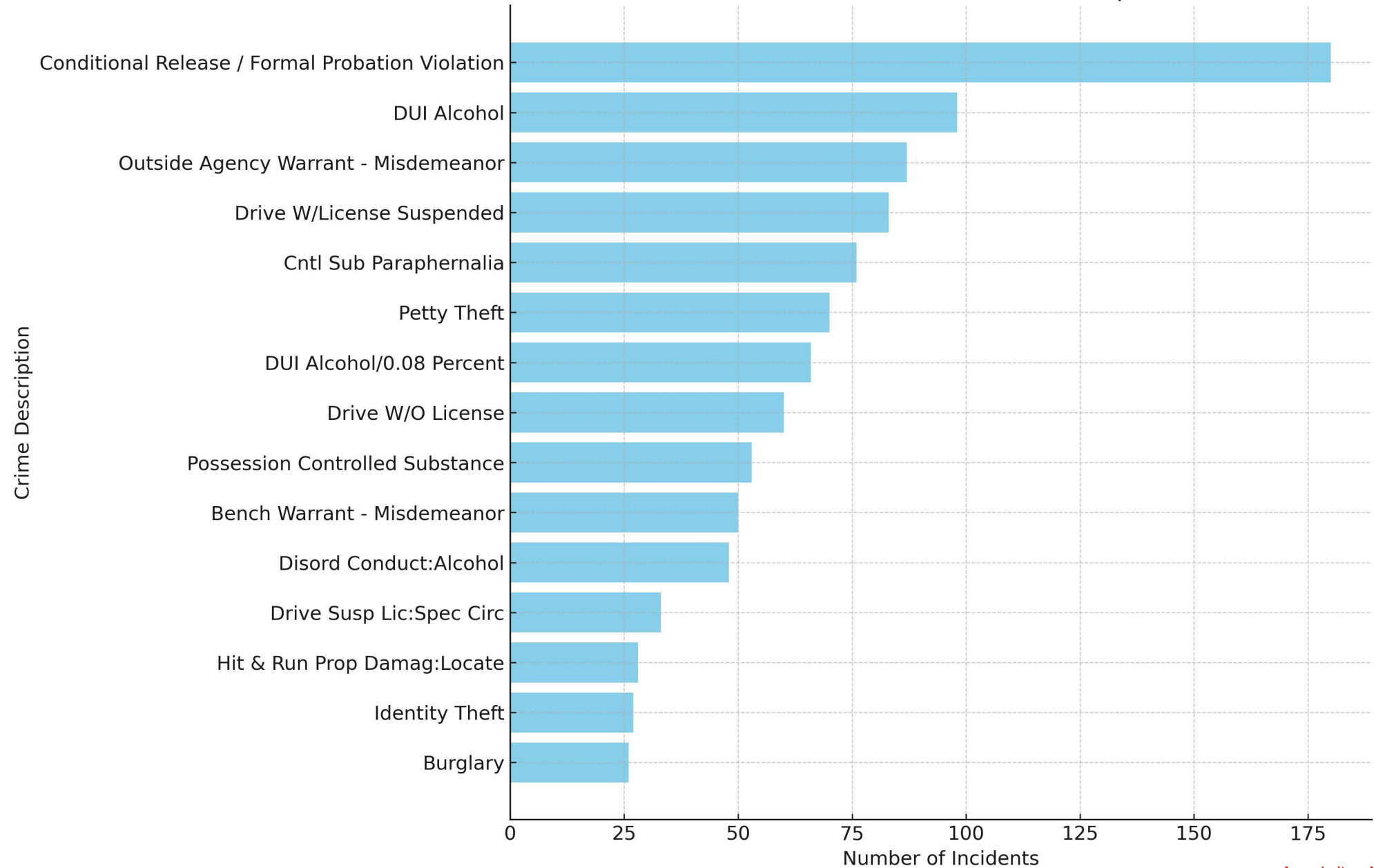
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2016 Crime Statistics Bar Graph

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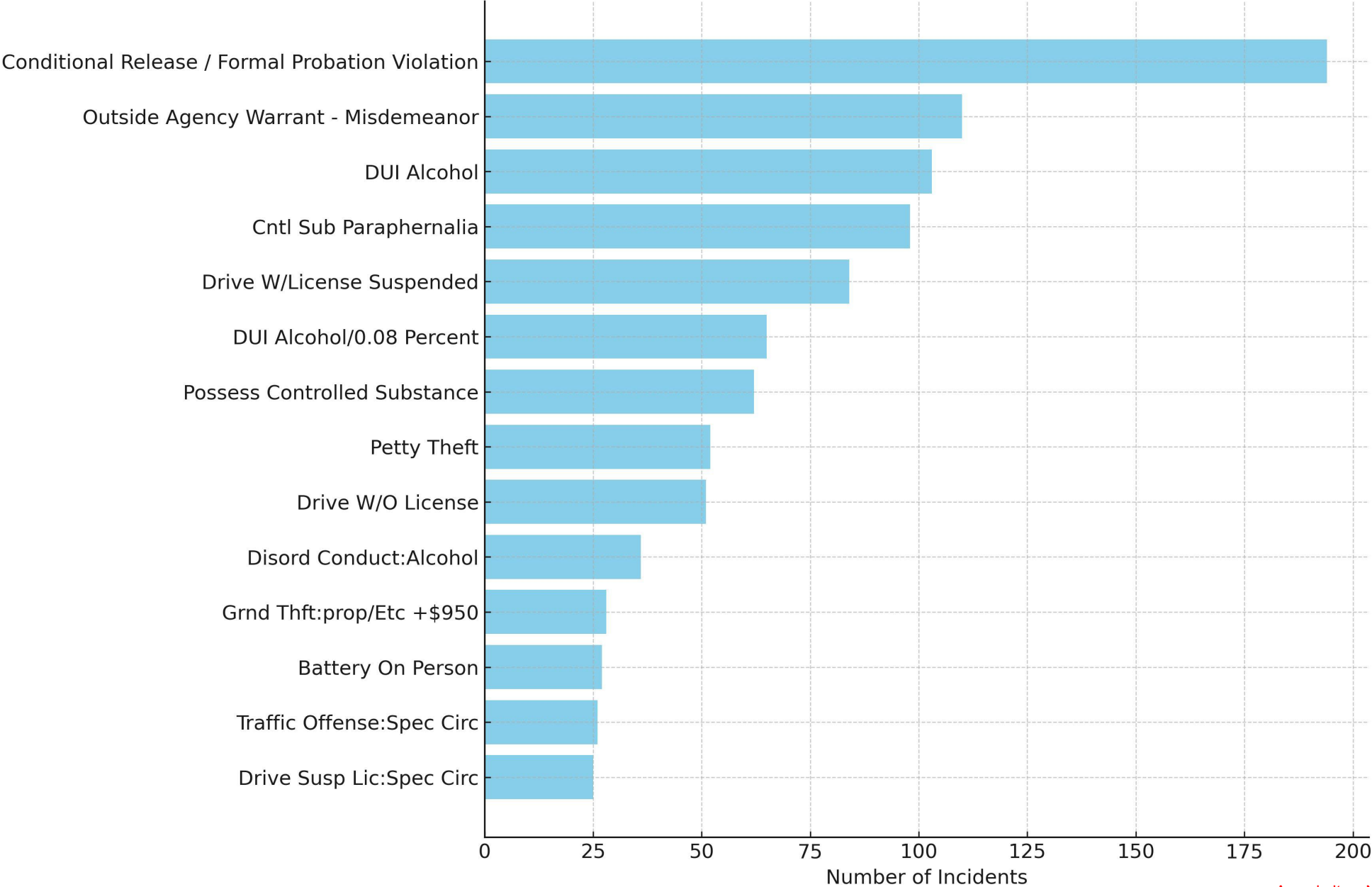
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2017 Crime Statistics Bar Graph

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Crime Description

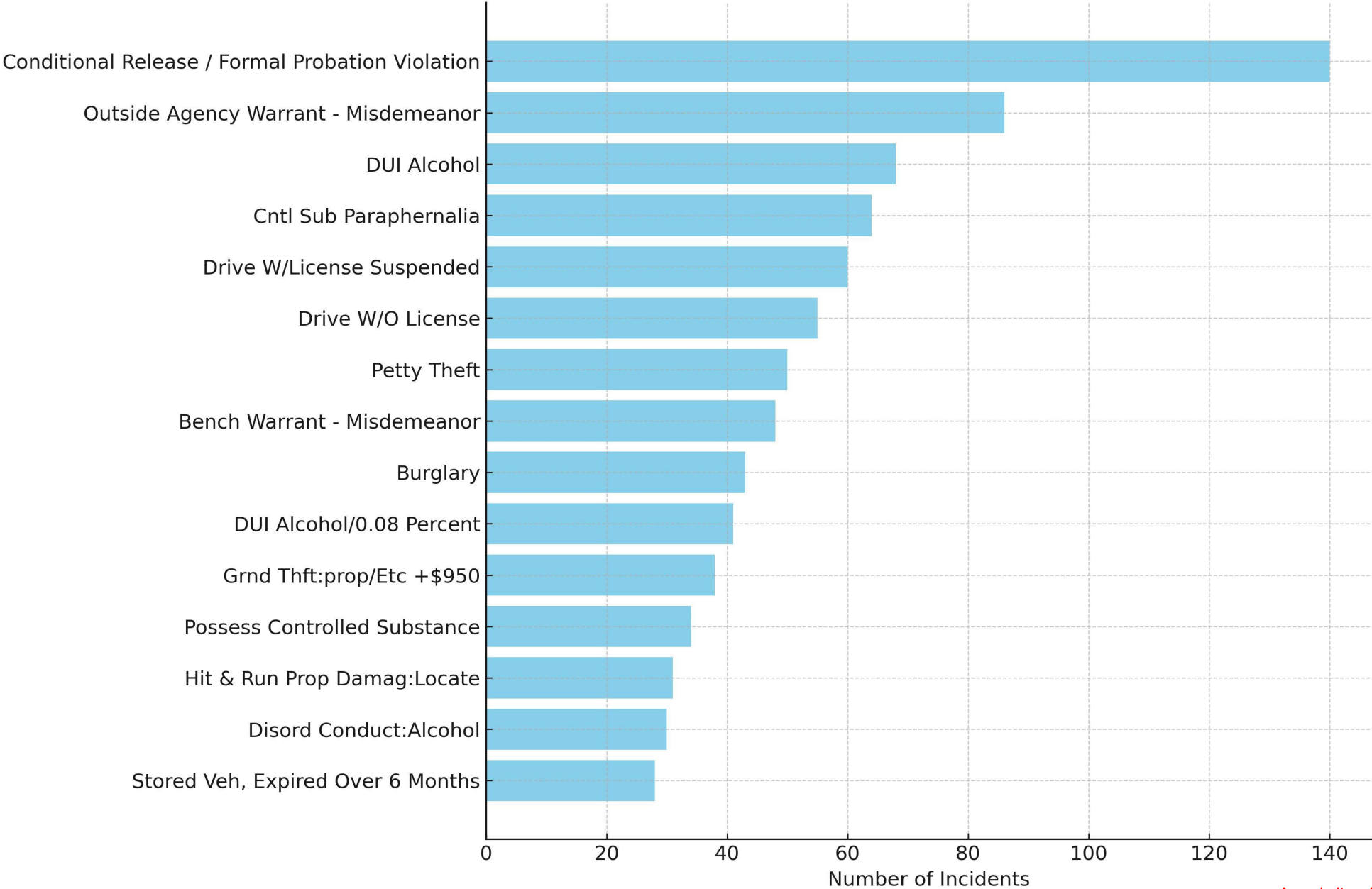


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2018 Crime Statistics Bar Graph

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Crime Description

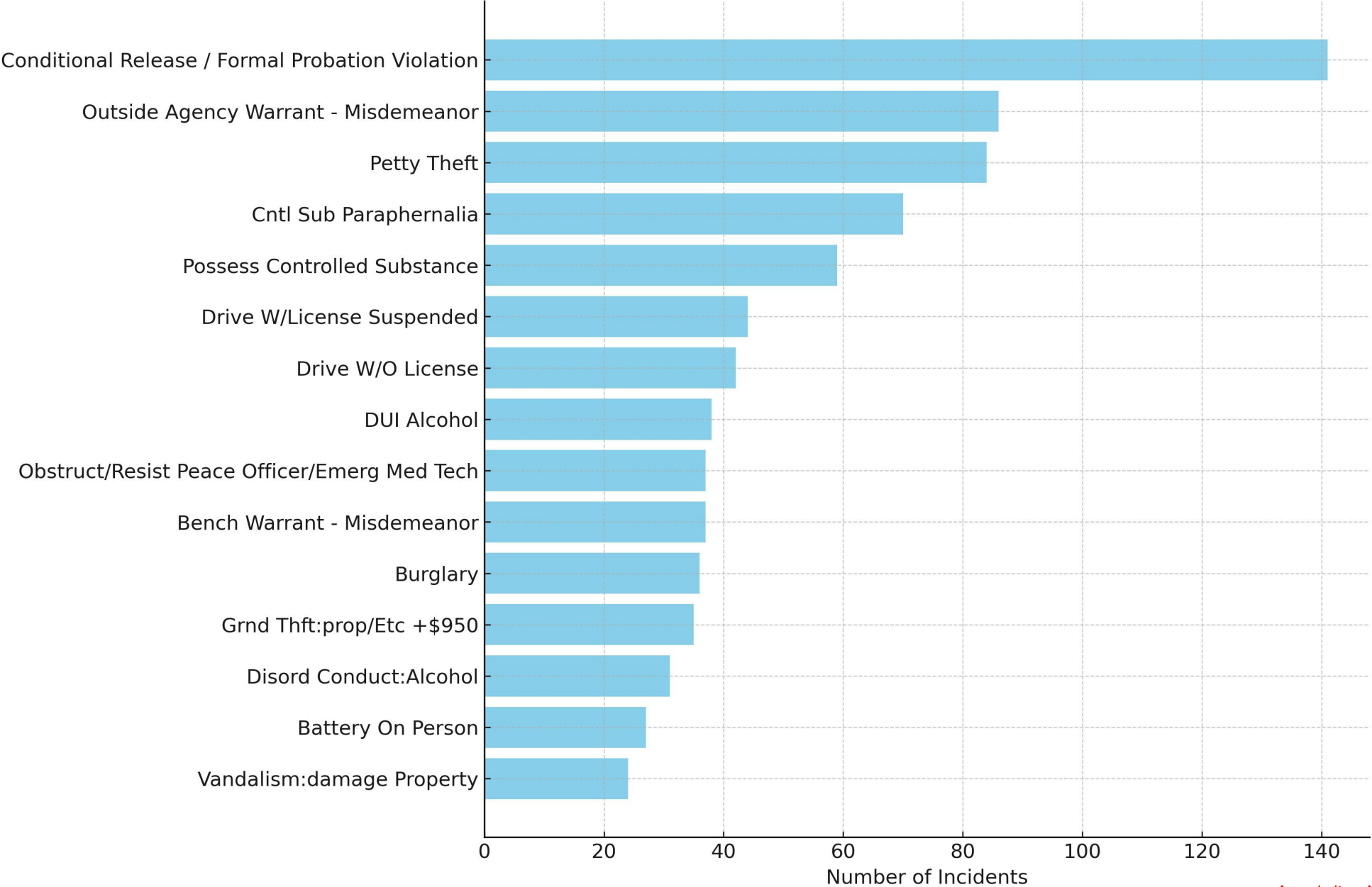


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2019 Crime Statistics Bar Graph

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Crime Description

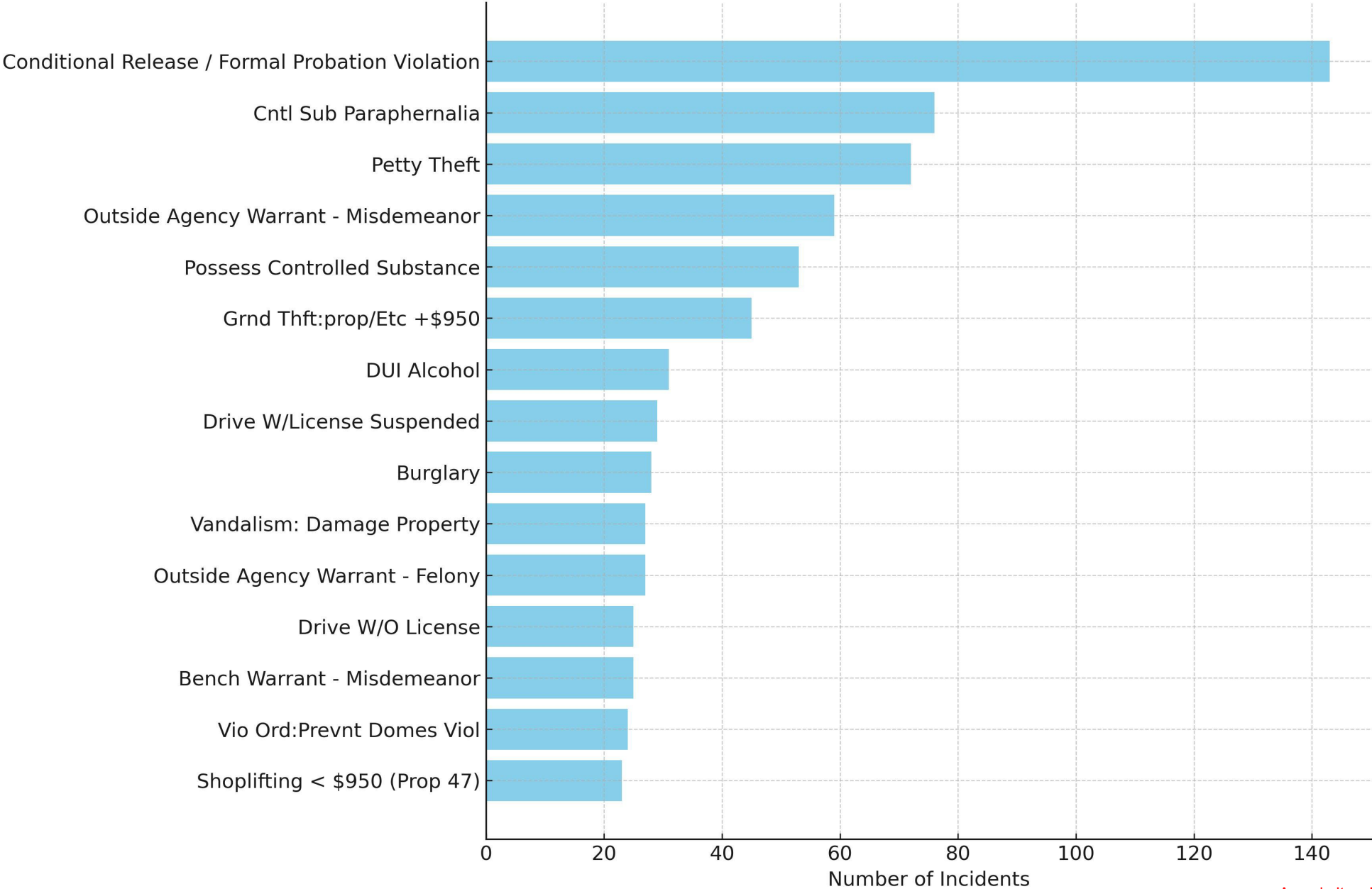


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2020 Crime Statistics Bar Graph

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Crime Description

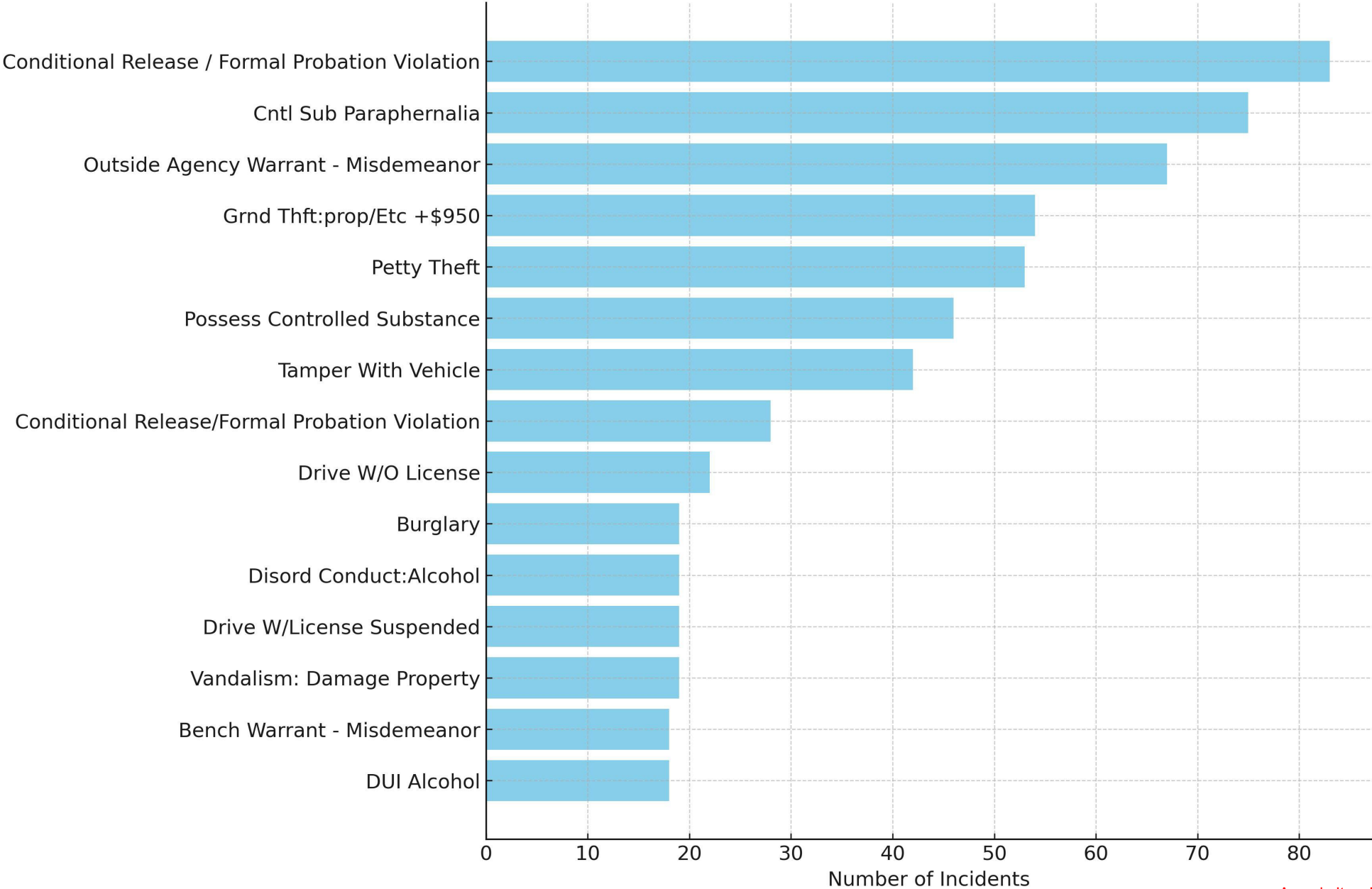


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2021 Crime Statistics Bar Graph

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Crime Description

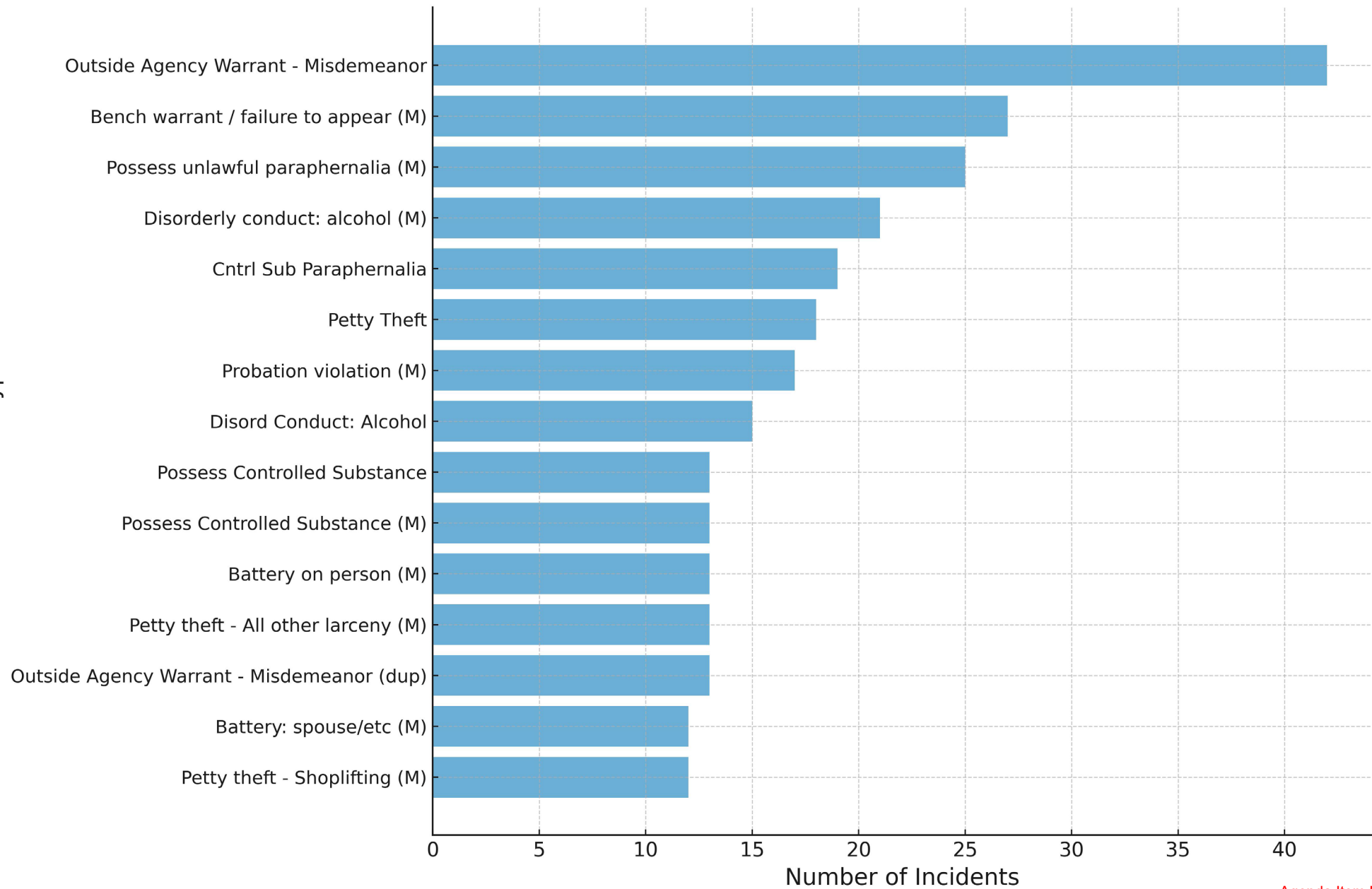


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Crime Statistics 2022

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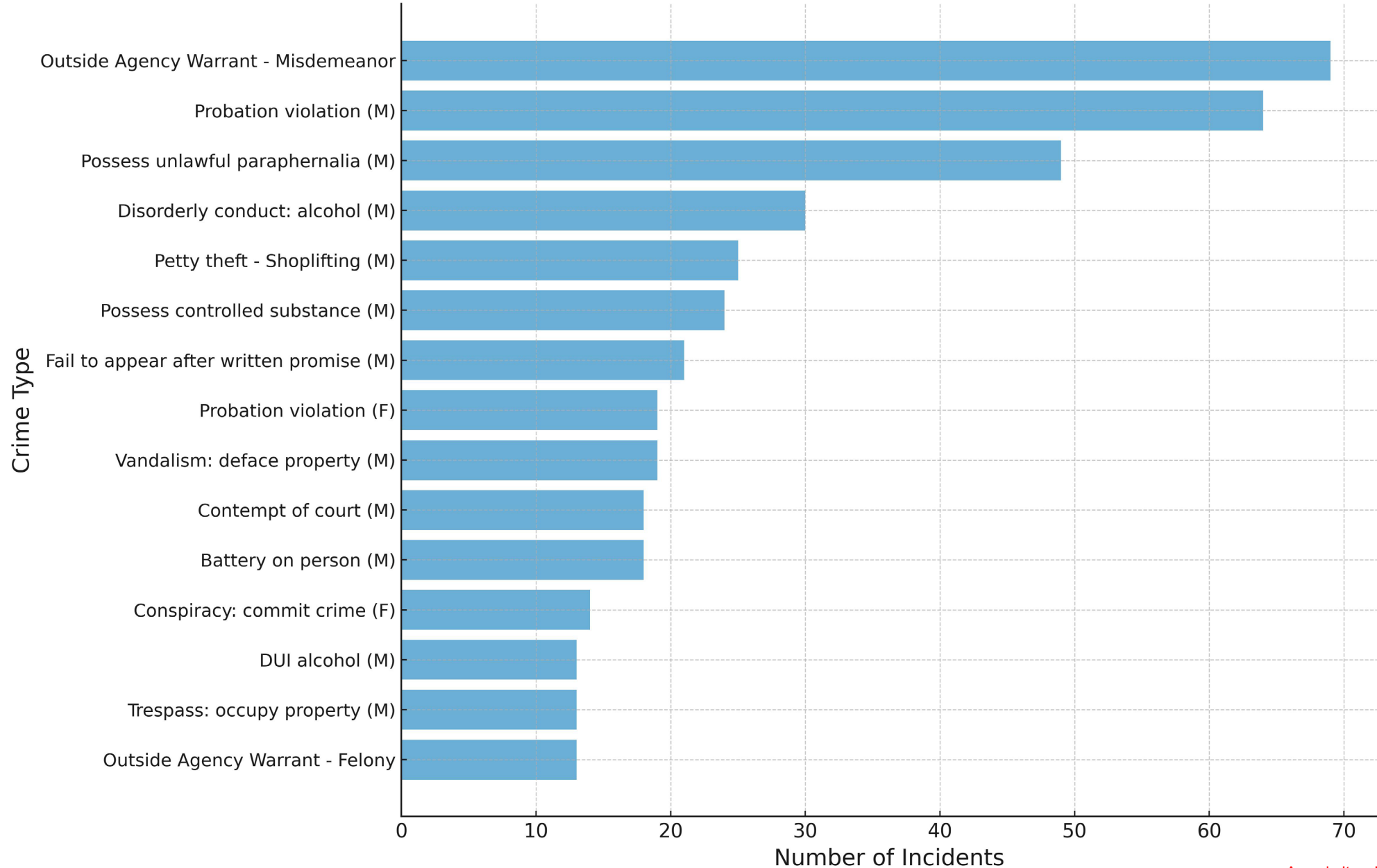
Crime Type



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Crime Statistics 2023

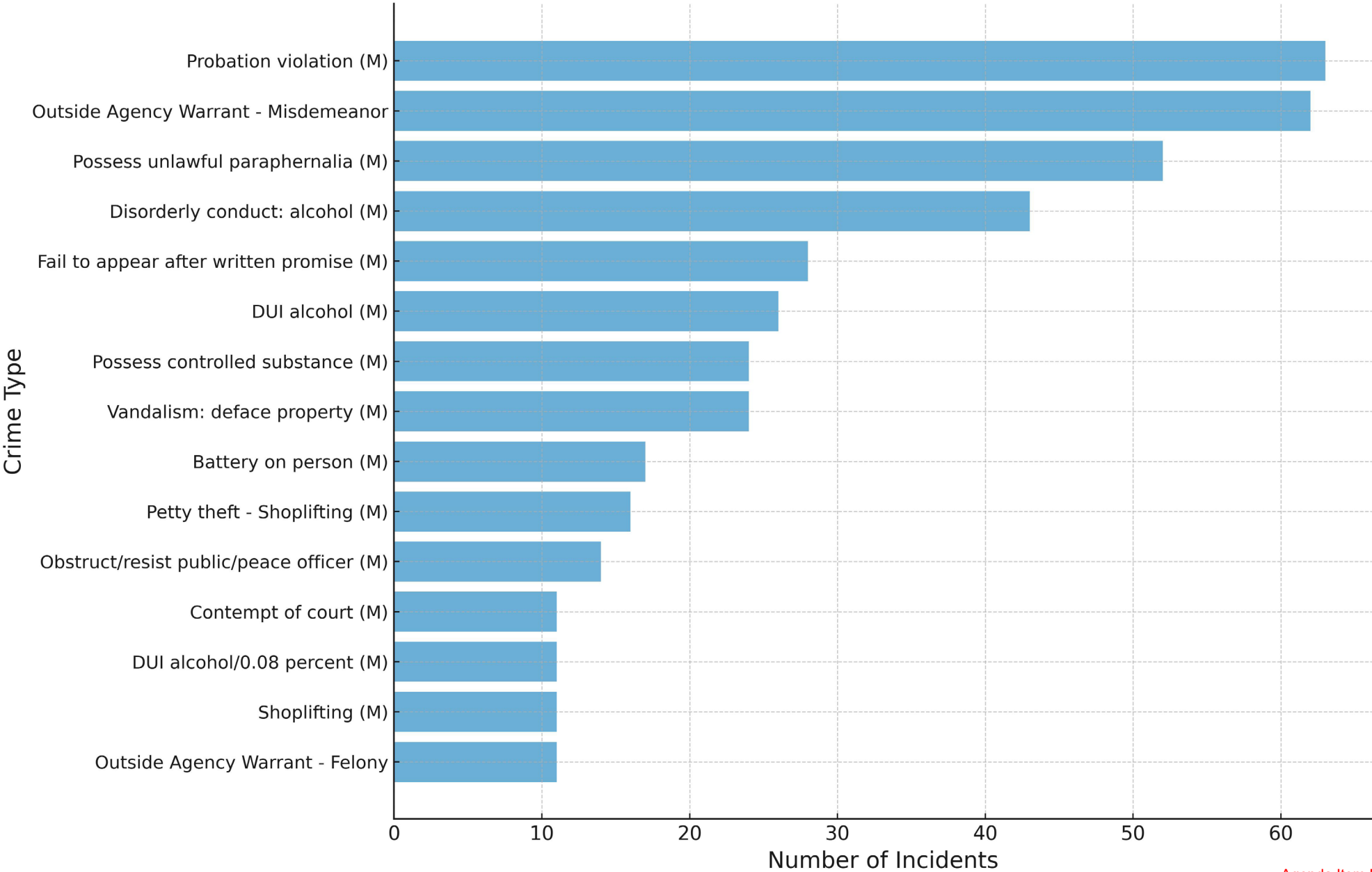
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Crime Statistics 2024

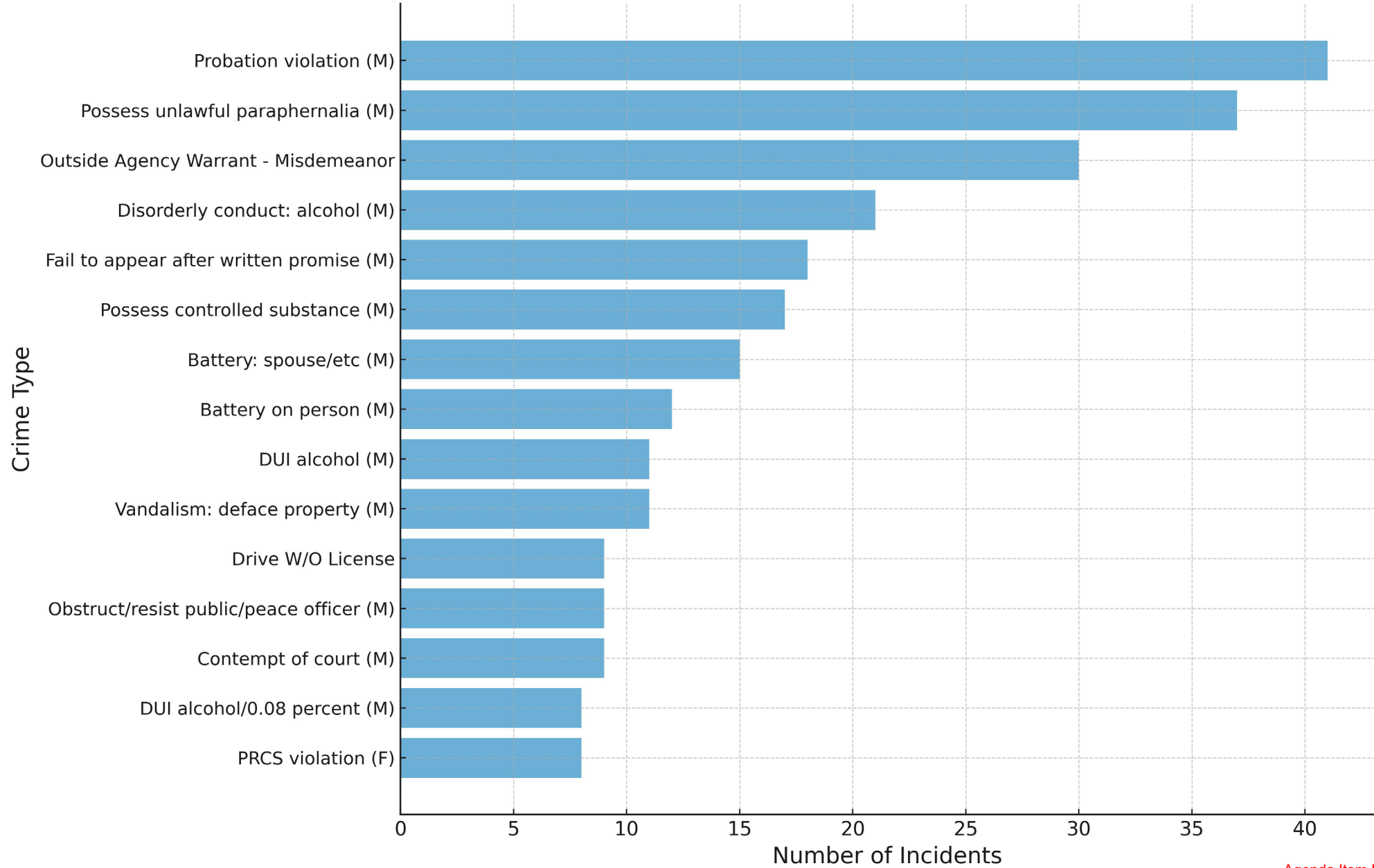
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Crime Statistics 2025

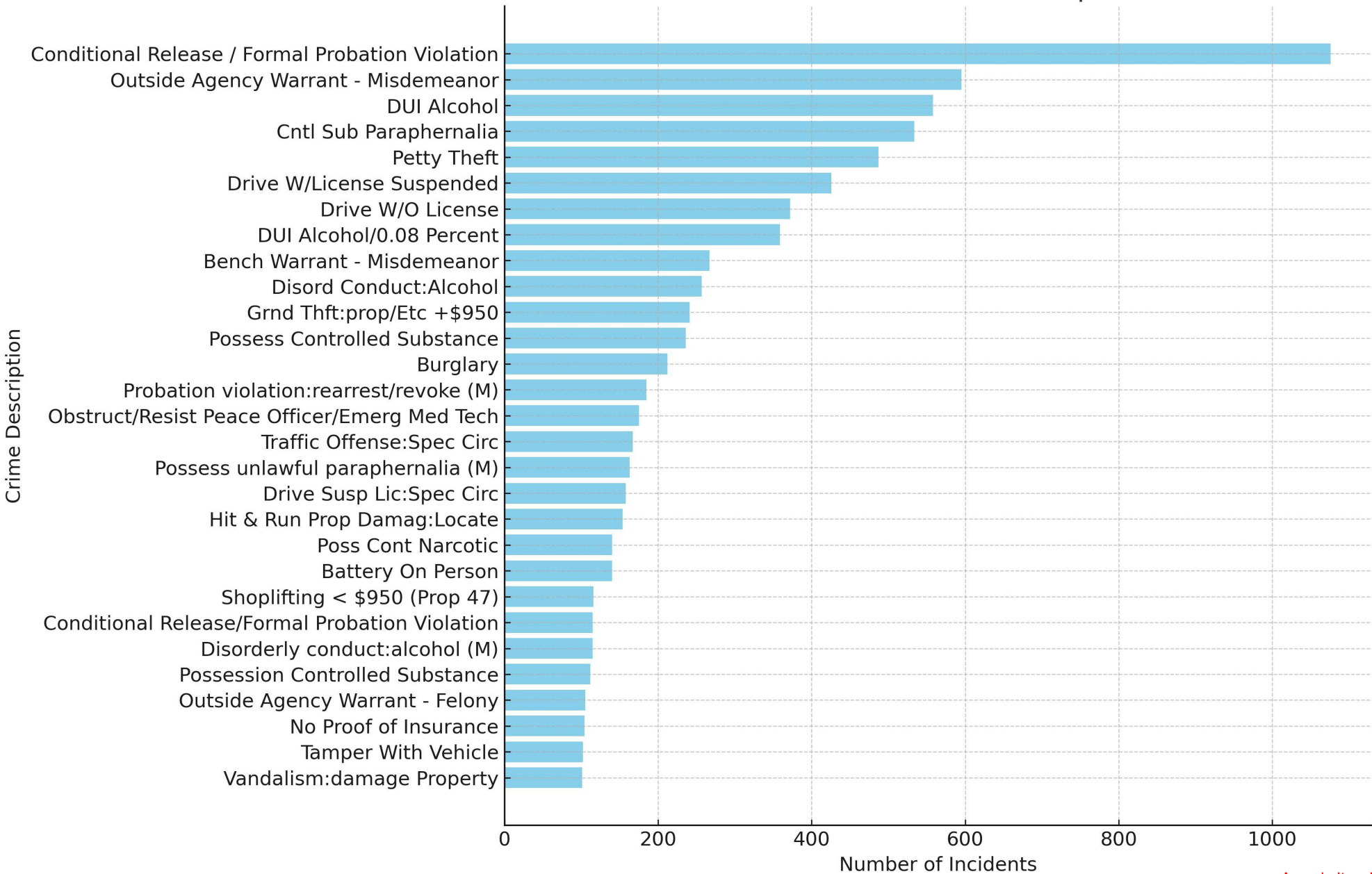
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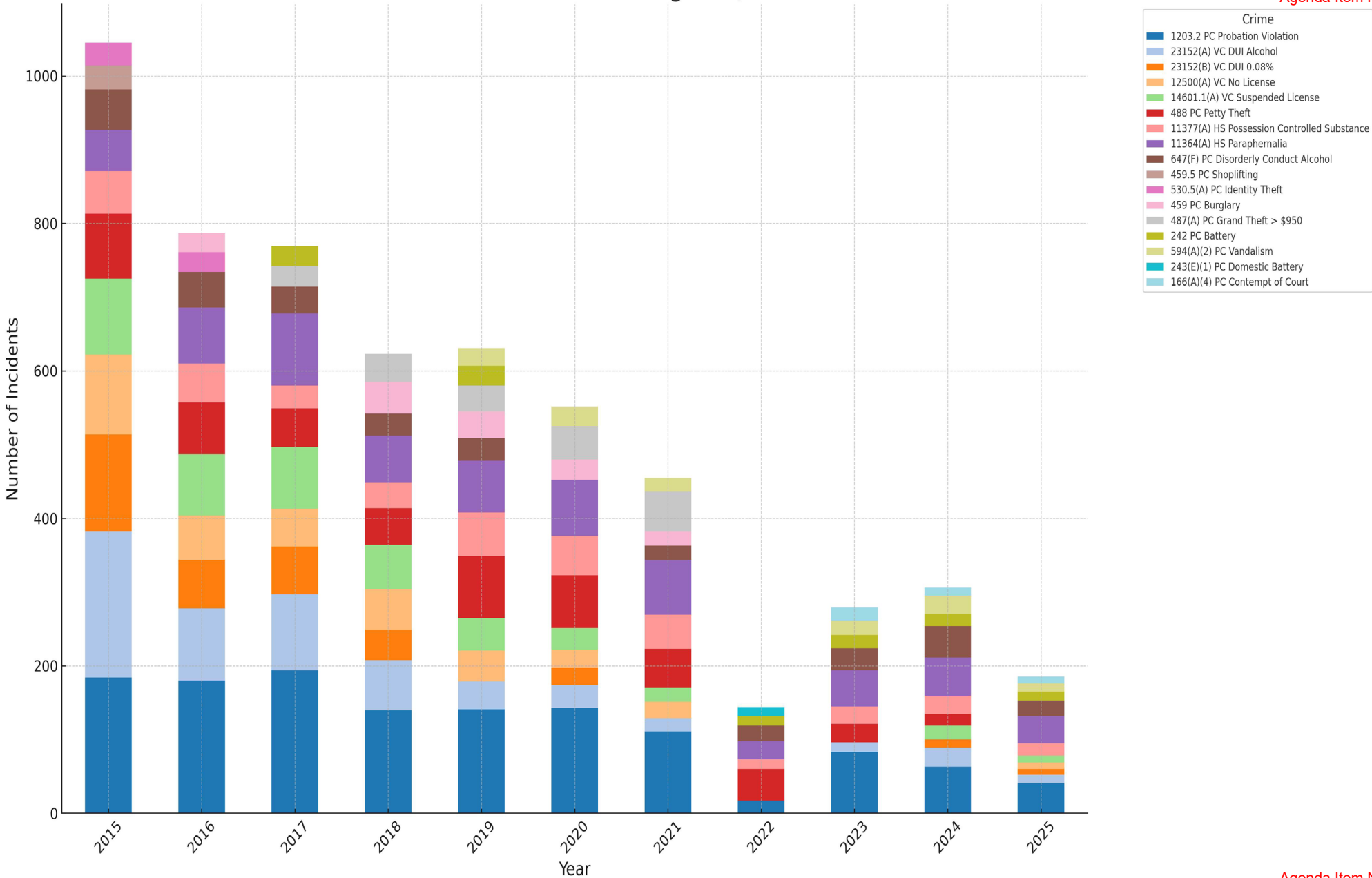
Crime Statistics Bar Graph

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Crime Trends 2015-2025 (All Categories, Stacked)



CRIME TRENDS 2015 TO 2025

1. Legal Changes

- Prop 47 (2014): Reduced many theft/drug felonies → misdemeanors
- Prop 57 (2016): Expanded parole/credits → more offenders supervised locally
- AB 109 Realignment: Shifted inmates to county jails/probation

CRIME TRENDS 2015 TO 2025

2. Staffing & Resources

- Ongoing officer shortages & recruitment challenges
- Rising overtime → higher costs, reduced effectiveness

CRIME TRENDS 2015 TO 2025

3. Fiscal Impacts

- Budget constraints → hiring freezes, reduced investigations

CRIME TRENDS 2015 TO 2025

4. Pandemic Disruptions (2020–21)

- Arrests, stops, and court activity dropped sharply
- Backlogs slowed prosecutions

CRIME TRENDS 2015 TO 2025

5. Diversion & Social Programs

- Expanded treatment/mental health diversion programs
- Lower arrest counts but more caseloads outside the criminal system

CRIME TRENDS 2015 TO 2025

6. Crime-Specific Dynamics

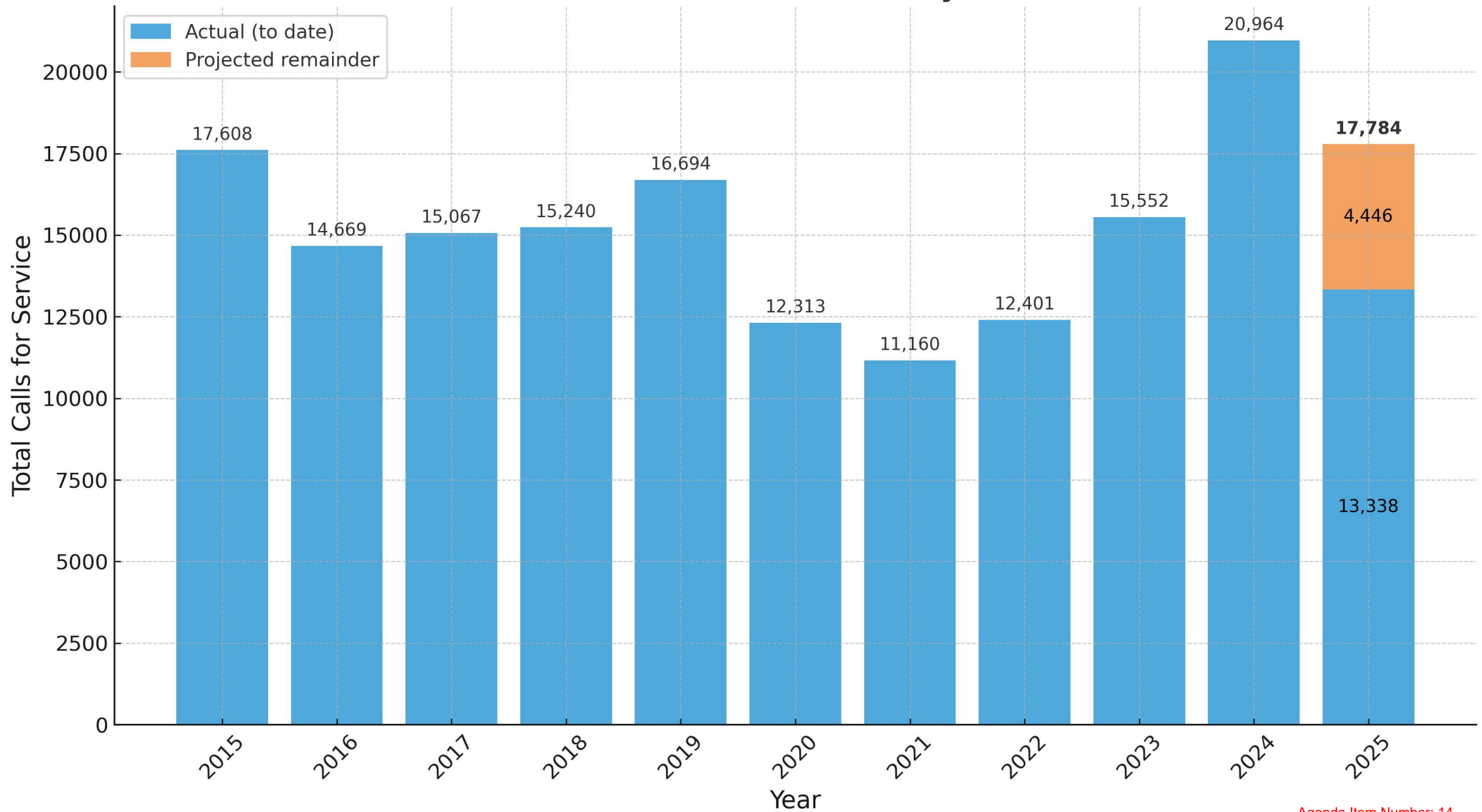
- Retail and catalytic converter theft spikes
- Some traditional property crimes declined

CRIME STATISTIC IMPACTS

- Higher **property theft, burglary, shoplifting, trespass** when homelessness rises
- More **calls for service** tied to encampments, substance use, disorderly conduct
- **Resource strain:** policing shifts toward homelessness response, less capacity for proactive crime prevention
- **Policy & resources matter:** expanded shelters/outreach reduce unsheltered populations, lowering exposure to both committing and being victims of crime

Calls for Service Totals by Year

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OVERVIEW

- **Why Calls for Service Remain High While Crime Decreased (2015–2025)**
- **Broad Service Role:** Police respond to quality-of-life, welfare checks, mental health, and homelessness issues, not just crime.
- **Homelessness & Behavioral Health:** Rising visible homelessness and crisis calls significantly increased non-criminal service demand.
- **Policy & System Changes:** Prop 47, Prop 57, AB109 reduced custodial arrests, shifting workload toward repeat service contacts.
- **Community Expectations:** Continued reliance on law enforcement for social, medical, and public nuisance problems.
- **Resource Strain:** Staffing and budget limits mean fewer officers handle more service-related workload, even as serious crime declined.

QUESTIONS?



Presented by Chief of Police Sean McDonagh