

What is Vehicular Hijacking?

Subcategory of robbery

- Taking of a motor vehicle
 - From a person
 - or in the immediate presence of a person
 - By use or threat of force
- Does not require
 - Weapon
 - Injury
 - Physical Contact
 - Verbal threat
 - Victim to be inside the car

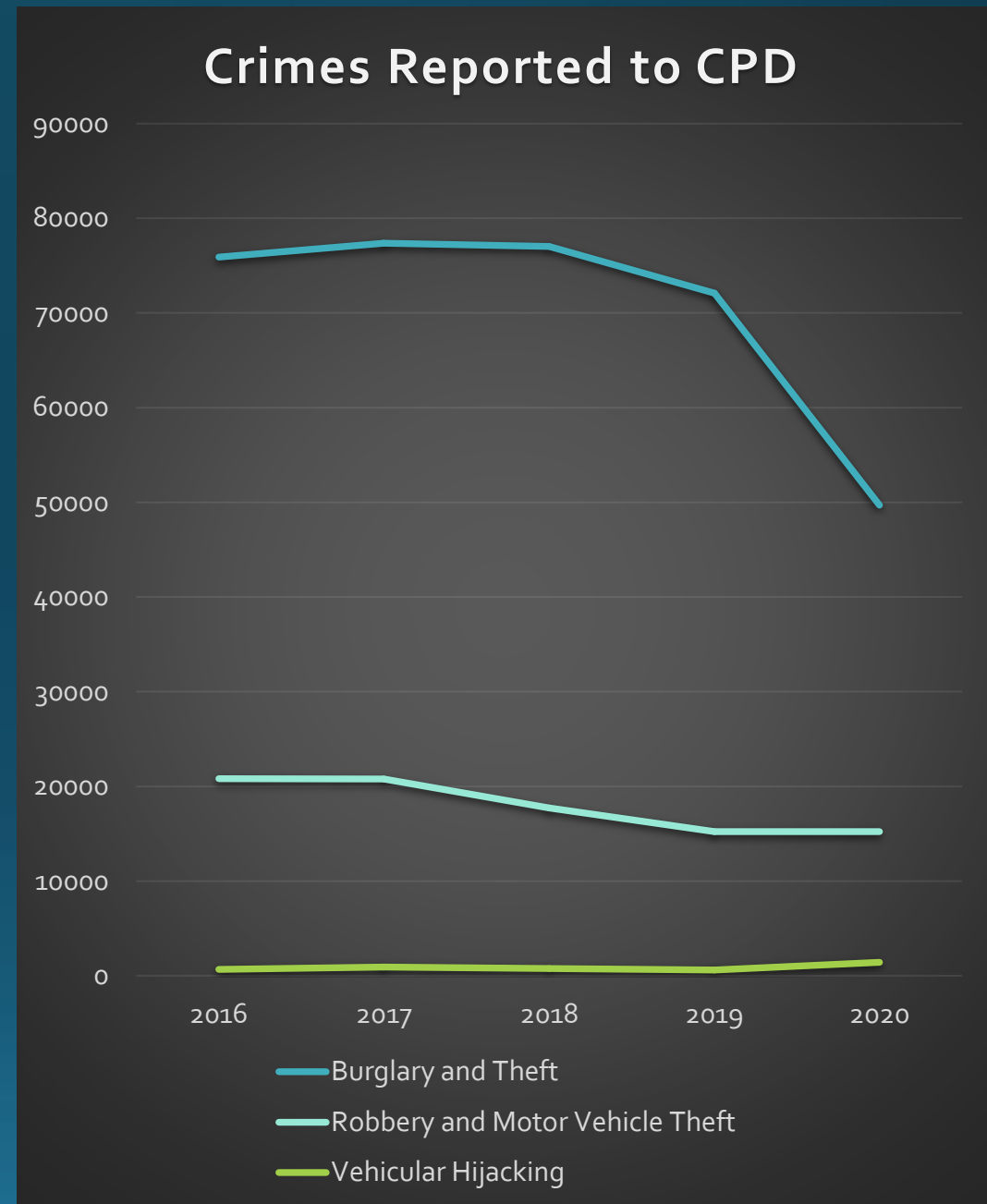
Vehicular Hijacking in Context

Although police brutality protests and the pandemic have been blamed for increased crime, in 2020:

- Robbery, theft, and burglary were at their lowest in 5 years
- Car theft without a person present did not spike

Compared to 2019, in 2020 there were

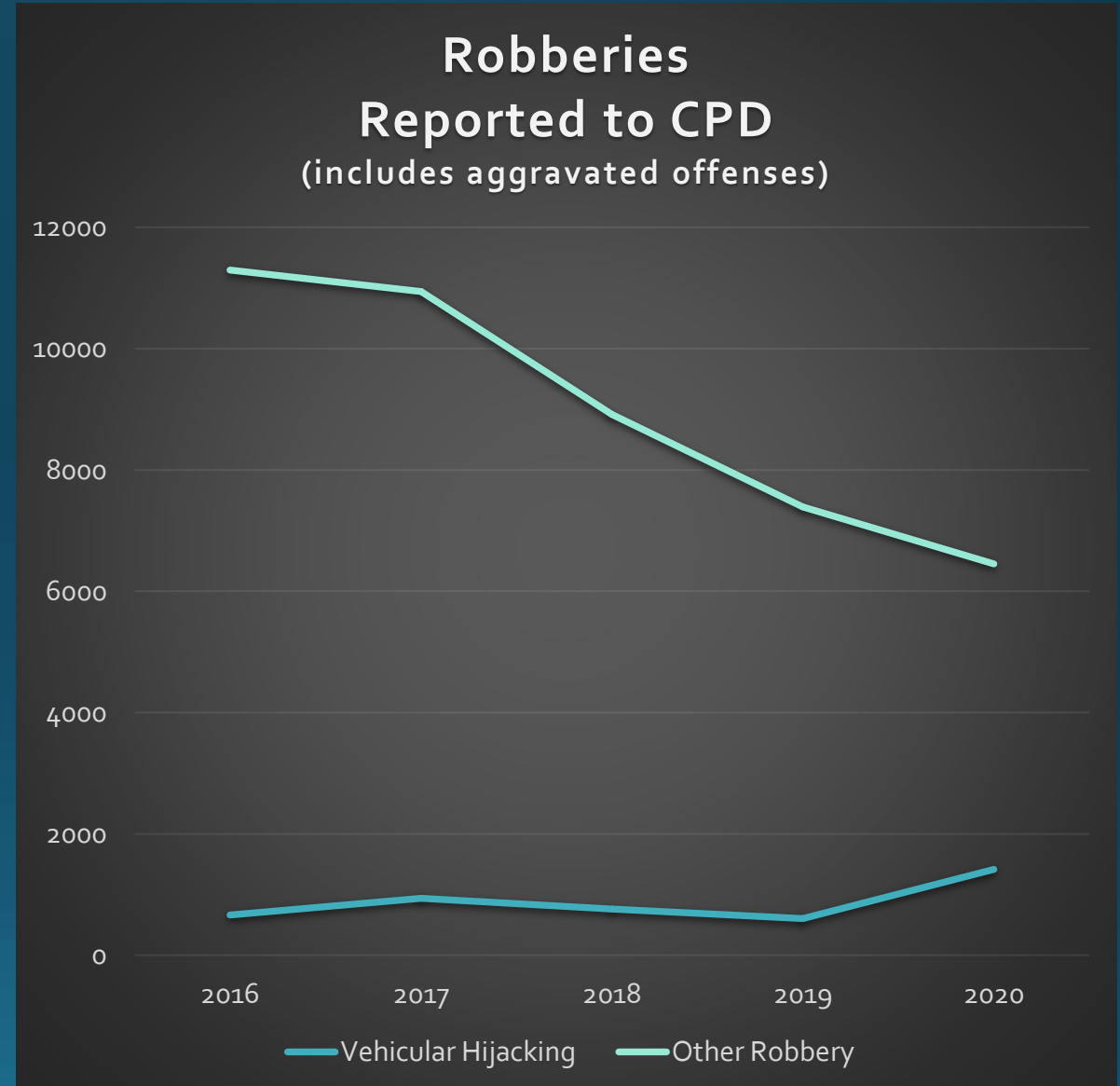
- **-21,567** fewer robberies, thefts, car thefts, and burglaries
- **+813** additional vehicular hijackings



Data source: CPD
Analysis: Children and Family Justice Center

Carjacking Spike in Context

- Comparing 2019 to 2020:
 - -813 fewer non-VH robberies
 - +938 VH robberies
 - Net increase of +125 citywide
- Comparing 2016 to 2020:
 - -4,846 fewer non-VH robberies
 - +753 VH robberies
 - Net decrease of -4,093 citywide
- Of 2020 carjackings:
 - Over 1/3 were not aggravated
 - no weapon
 - no protected victim type



Data source: CPD

Analysis: Children and Family Justice Center

VH Arrests vs. Incidents Cleared

- This type of robbery frequently occurs in a group
- Arrest numbers overestimate case clearances
- Youth are overrepresented in CPD arrests
- But most cases are unresolved; it is unclear how many youth are involved
- CPD used to arrest 2 people per cleared incident; now more than 3

Year	Incidents	Total Arrests	Incidents with an Arrest	Incidents Cleared by Arrest
2016	663	136	69	10.4%
2017	937	145	76	8.1%
2018	764	191	78	10.2%
2019	603	122	57	9.5%
2020	1,416	188	62	4.4%

Data sources: CPD, CCSAO
Analysis: Children and Family Justice Center

Are youth responsible for the uptick in car robberies?

- Out of 1,416 vehicular hijackings in 2020, the Chicago Police Department
 - Arrested 103 youth
 - Annual average since 2016: 71 youth arrests
 - Increase of 32 youth for all VH
 - Increase of 9 youth arrests for VH with a gun
 - Arrested 85 adults
 - Arrested no one in 1,354 cases
- When officials focus public blame for safety issues on youth, it is often to distract from other failures

Are youth responsible for the uptick in car robberies?

- "Police records show the great majority of [car] thefts to have been committed by boys under 18 years of age. Their youth saves them from the penitentiary and they apparently pay little attention to the moderate punishment inflicted by the juvenile court. The situation, however, has become so serious that drastic action must be taken."
 - Editorial, Salt Lake City Ledger, 1919
- Youth deserve better than century-old rhetoric

Explanations:

- This is not unique to Chicago: several major cities are experiencing an uptick in vehicular hijackings
 - Philadelphia: Three-fold increase in last month
 - New Orleans: 150% increase in 2020
 - Oakland: 38% increase in 2020
- Law enforcement leaders in other cities confirm the pandemic is a driving cause
- Relatedly, COVID has fueled a historic, once-in-a-generation mental health crisis

Solutions:

- Age-appropriate interventions – not adult punishments
- Responsibly reduce illegal gun flow
- Increase funding for violence reduction programs
- Ask youth what they need
 - Programs that teach youth how to repair cars
 - Speak responsibly to and about teens

“We owe it to these juveniles to reach out and see how we can help them more than just making an arrest and getting a case charged.”

-- Lt. Robert Muniz
Oakland Police

Recorded presentation delivered to:
Illinois Senate Joint Public Safety and
Criminal Law Committee
Subject Matter Hearing: Public Safety
Outcomes Update
February 16, 2021

Contact/slide reuse:
Kollmann@nlaw.northwestern.edu