

Poster - Final

DH 100 Theory and Methods | Graham Galloway | June 6, 2021

Research Question:

How accurate are the claims made by the "Recall Chesa Boudin" campaign against San Francisco's District Attorney.

For my project I am focusing on crime and justice data for the city of San Francisco

The Backstory:

In late 2019, Chesa Boudin won the race for District Attorney in San Francisco. Boudin supports restorative justice and vowed to fight against mass incarceration. After assuming office on January 8, 2020, Boudin quickly became the subject of criticism. Critics blamed Boudin for what they saw as a rise in crime in the city. They claim the DA is letting crime go unanswered and that the city has become "lawless". A campaign to recall Boudin emerged based on these claims. As an advocate for restorative justice myself I wanted to test the accuracy of their claims.

The Claims I'm Testing:

- 1: Crime has increased in San Francisco since Boudin assumed office and it is a less safe place to live than it was before
- 2: Boudin is letting criminals go free and not pursuing charges
- 3: San Francisco has been getting more dangerous than other similarly sized cities

The Methods:

San Francisco has a plethora of publicly available data on crime and policing. To keep things simple for this brief class, I will be focusing on data from the year before Boudin took office and the time since, so January 2019 - June 2021. I will be using Python via Jupyter notebook and Tableau for visualizations (on next sheet). I have to consider critical crime theory when assessing this data. Questions like "What constitutes a crime?", "Who gets arrested or charged for crimes?", "What do police look for when documenting crime?" will help me better understand the biases that affect this data.

The Prosecutorial Process:

It's very important to understand the differences between the police and the District Attorney. Once a crime is committed (or suspected), usually the police are called. The city of SF records data on every 911 call. These calls include the location of the crime, a description, and the date and time of the call.

If the police determine a crime was committed, they file an incident report and it is officially documented. These reports include a description of the crime, the location, the date and time, and whether a perpetrator was confronted or arrested. For many police incidents, no perpetrator is found and no arrests are made.

If an arrest is made, the police are responsible for charging the suspect with a specific crime, which requires probable cause. The police then gather evidence against the subject, which they present to the District Attorney's office. The District Attorney is then responsible for pursuing these charges and prosecuting the suspect in court, but a conviction requires evidence of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, which is more difficult than determining probable cause.

The DA can choose to pursue a case, drop charges, or present the case to a different office (such as a state Attorney General, federal, etc.). An incoming DA inherits incomplete cases from the previous DA. For this reason, there are often more cases presented to a DA than arrests made for a given year.

Trials can take up to years to complete.

The DA has no control over the police or enforcing laws, only prosecuting suspects in criminal court.



Source: Wikimedia commons



Source: Twitter

Interpreting your results:

I will not be attempting to determine causation for crimes. I'm simply analyzing crime trends to test the 3 specific claims above. I don't have the capacity to study the multitude of factors that influence crime in this class, but I do have access to numerical crime data.

I will simply look at how crime rates have changed over time and how they compare to other cities, as well as the DA's rates of prosecution. I will only look at *what*, not *why*.

Conclusions

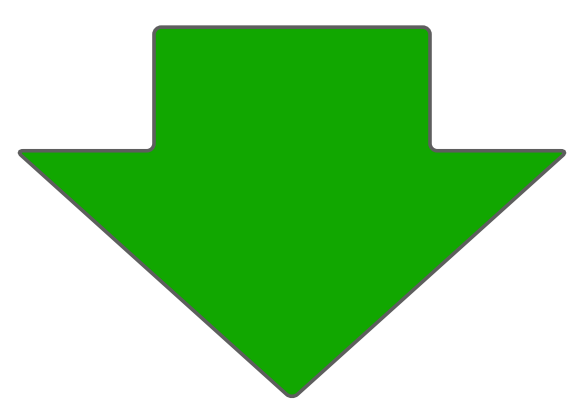
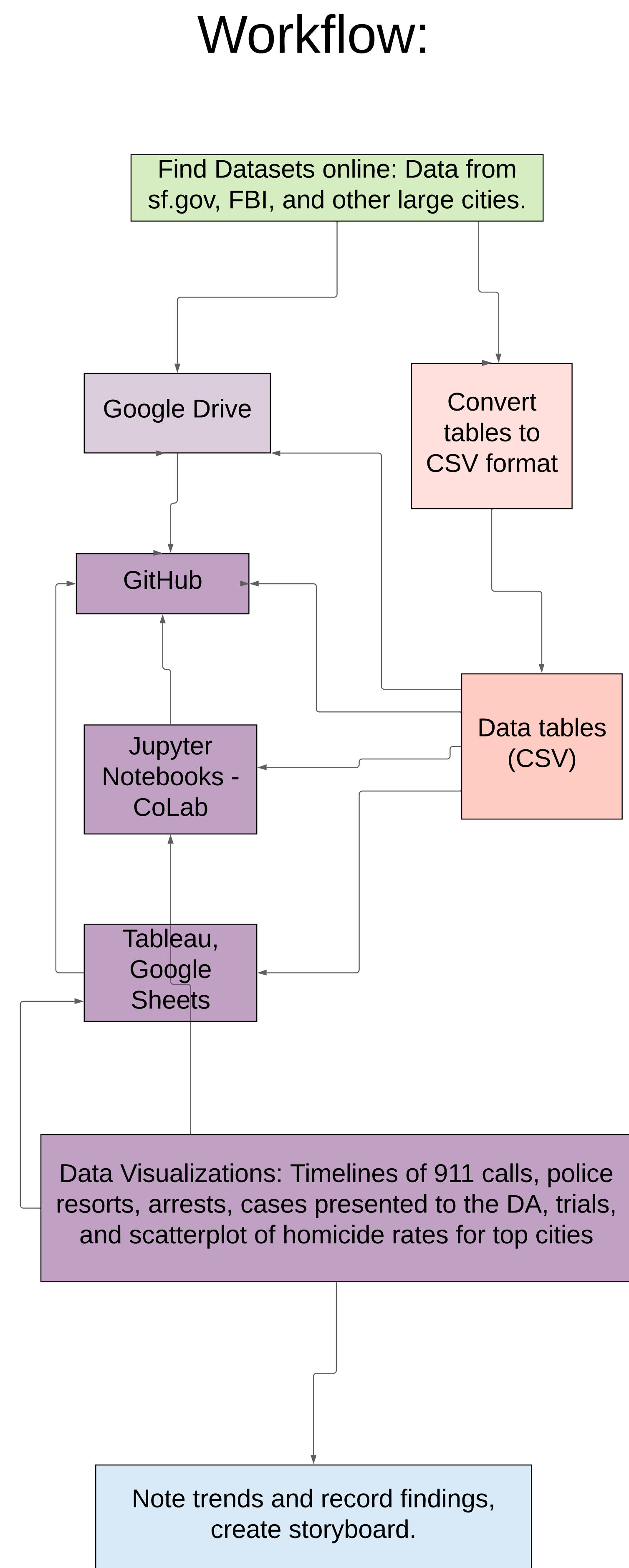
Based on the evidence I will present on the next page, I have determined that the three claims made by the Recall Boudin campaign are NOT supported by SF's publicly available crime and justice data.

Next Steps / Future Work:

I imagine that I will continue this research or need to look into more societal contributors to crime rates. I am interested in recidivism rates, as well as more demographic data of who is affected by crime and who is confronted by police.

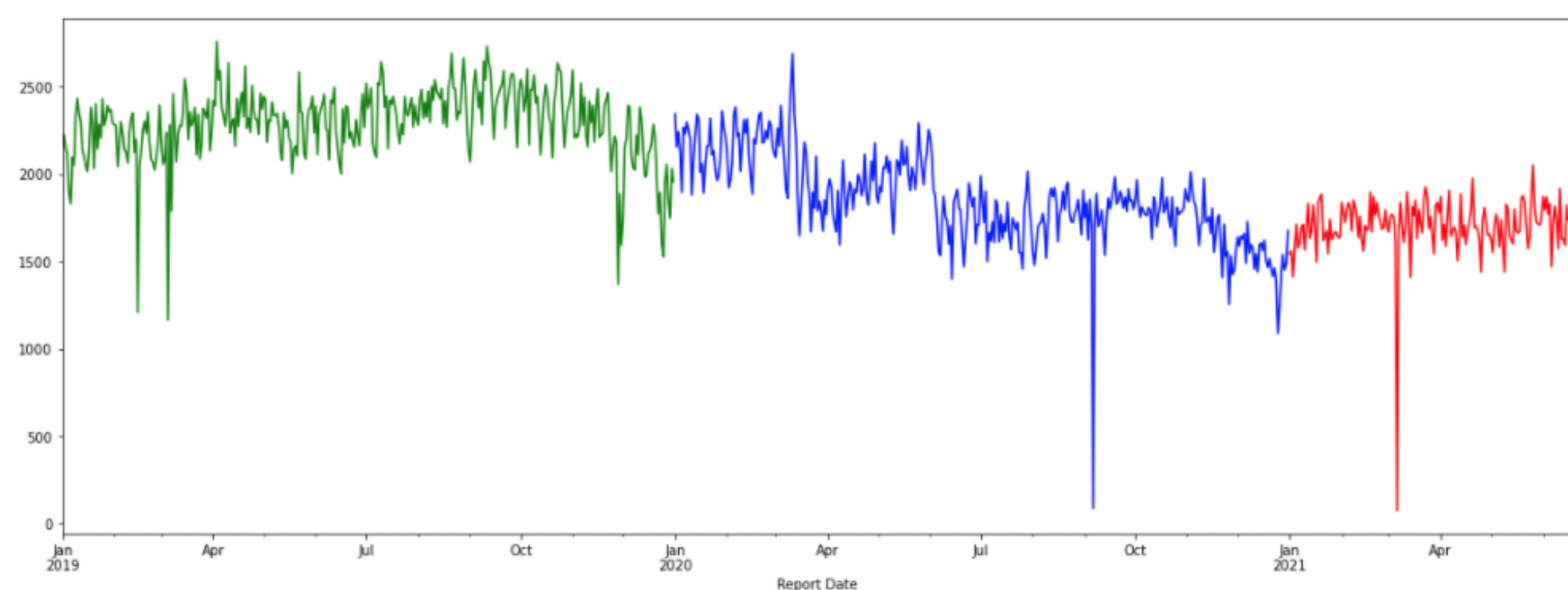
Work Cited:

1. data.sf.gov
2. <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr>
3. Washington Post
4. <https://recallchesaboudin.org/>
5. twitter.com/recallchesa
6. BallotPedia
7. <https://github.com/Grahambert/DH100>



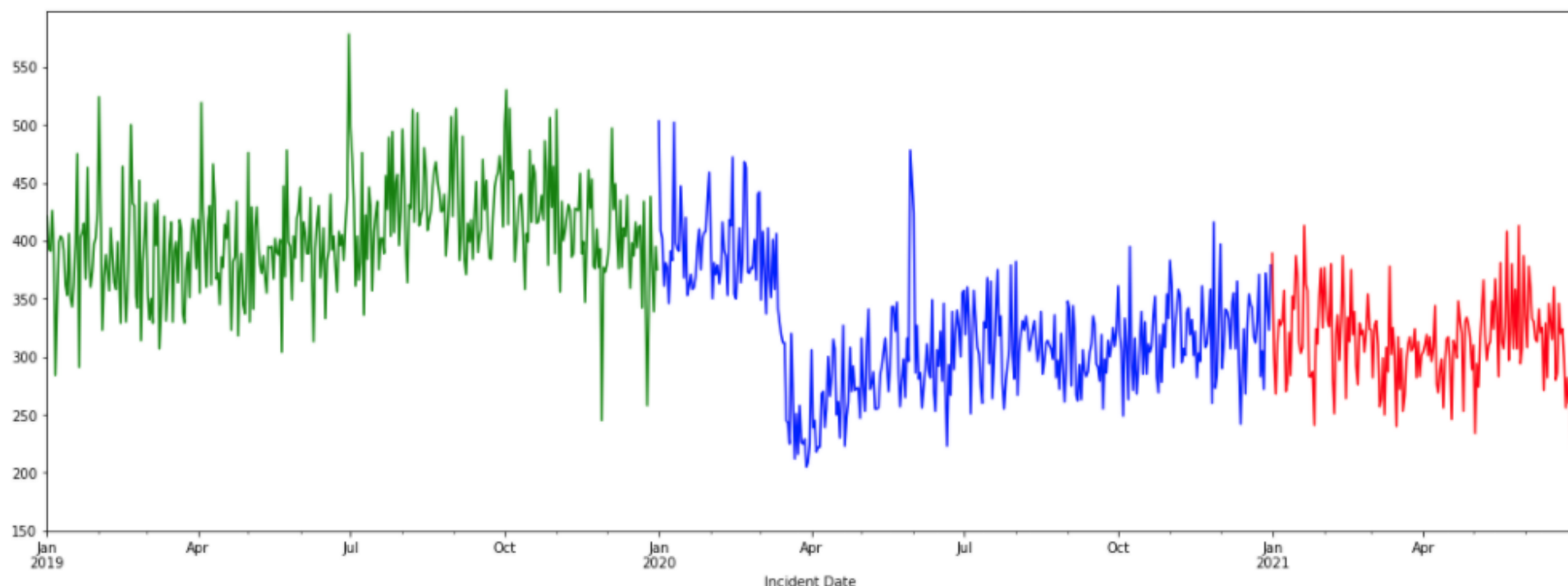
Findings/Visualizations

911 Calls



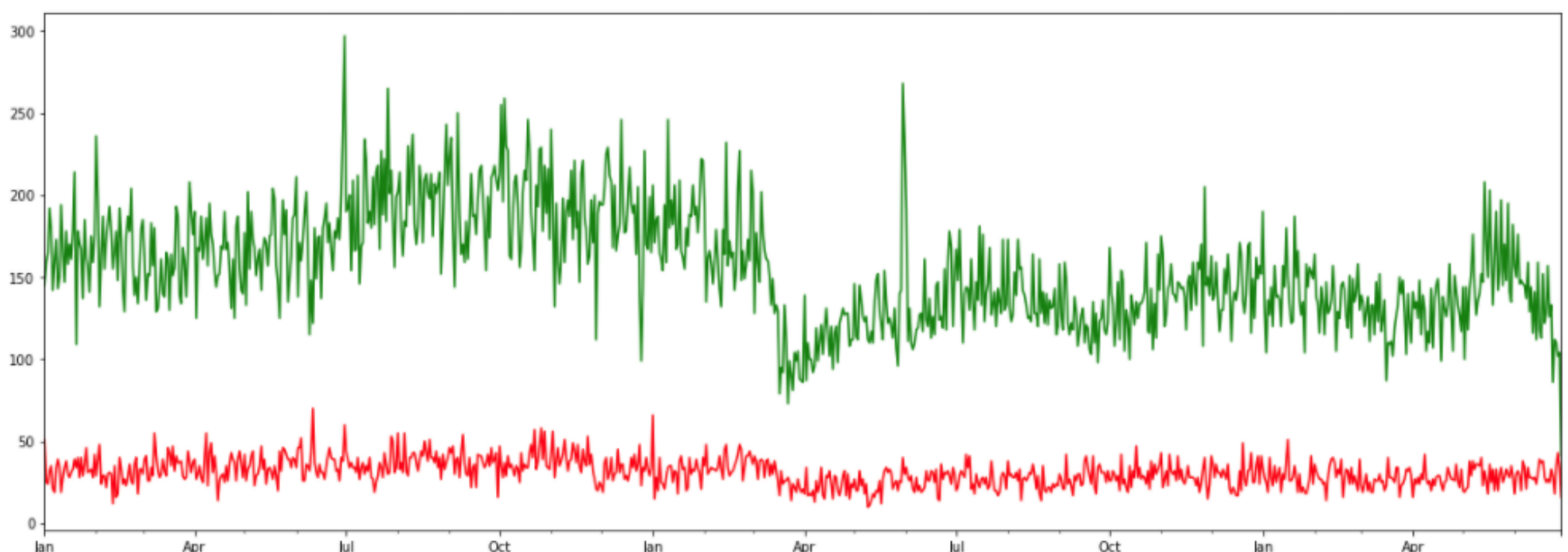
Key: Green:2019, Blue:2020, Red:2021
Calls to 911 fell significantly in 2020 and through 2021.

Officer Involved Incidents



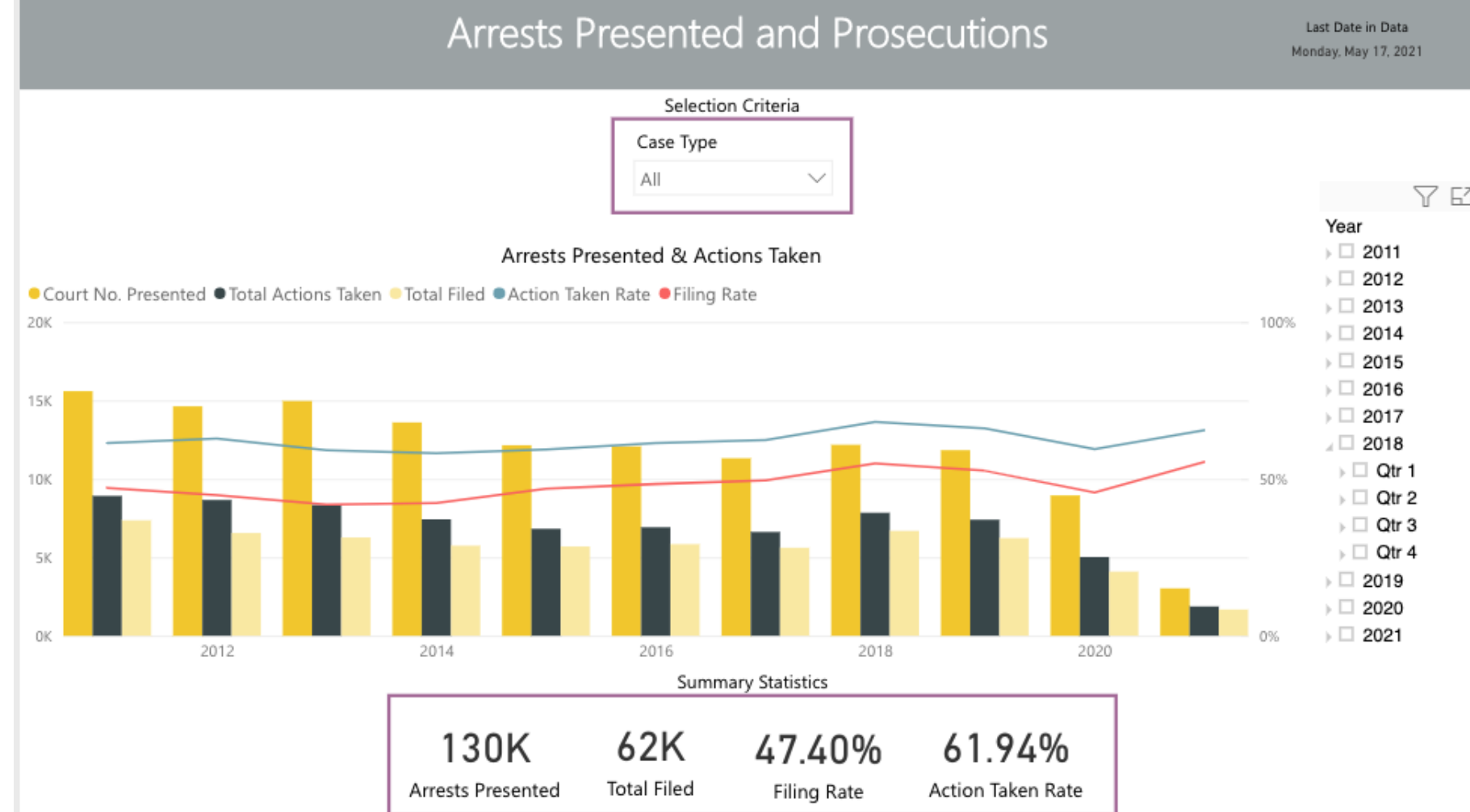
Key: Green:2019, Blue:2020, Red:2021
There was a sharp decrease in Officer reported crimes in 2020, followed by consistently lower rates than 2019 and before.

Reported Incidents: Violent vs Property



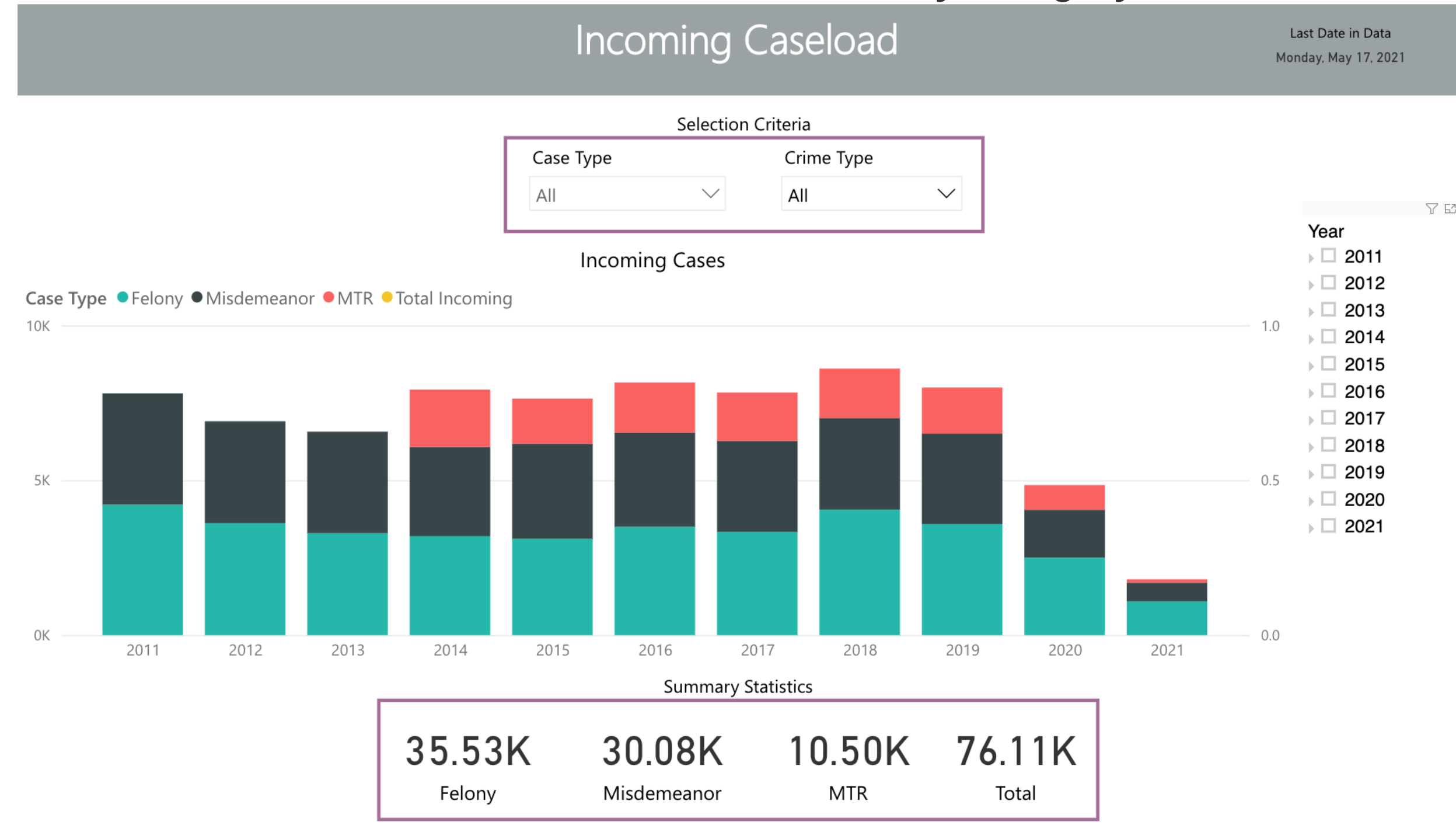
Key: Green:Property, Red:Violent
Both overall violent and nonviolent crime remained lower for 2020 and into 2021 than before Boudin took office. Violent crime rates for 2020 were 80% of 2019 rates and property crime rates were only 78% of 2019 rates.

Arrests Presented to the DA and DA actions



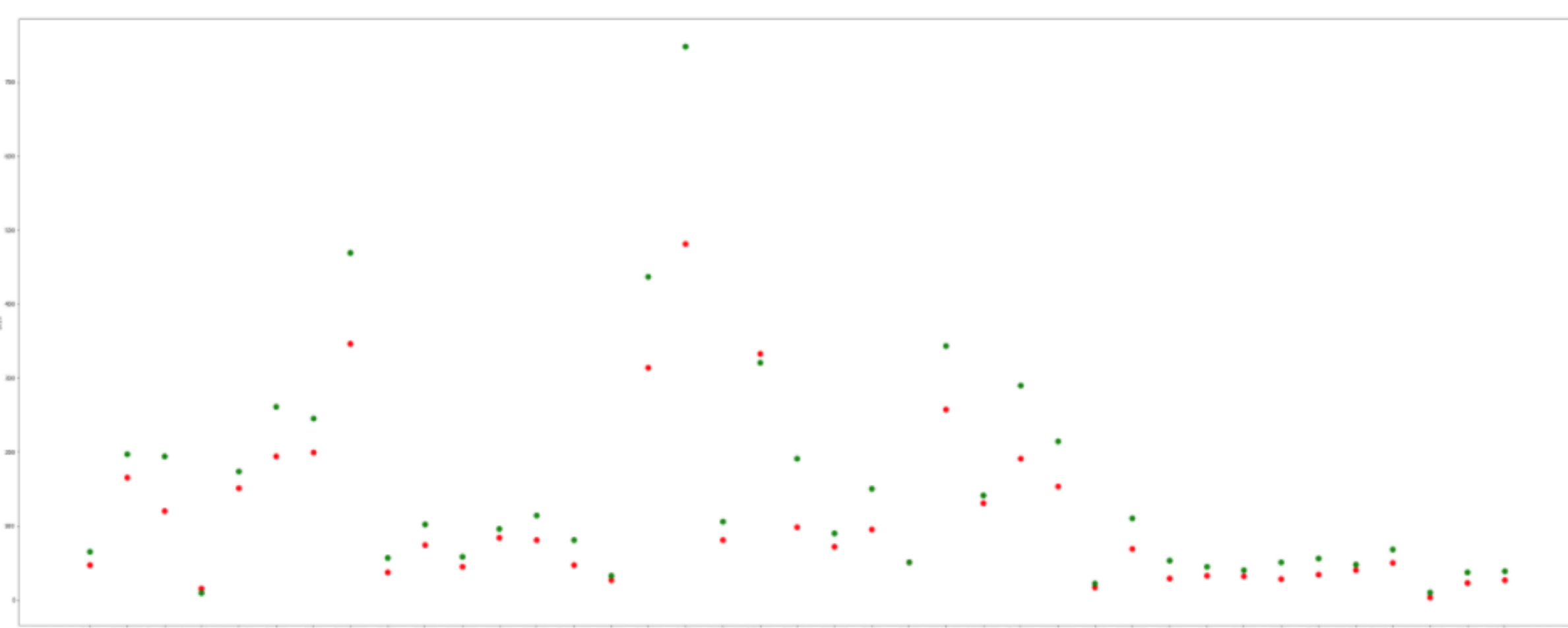
As you can see, 2020, the year Boudin took office, there was a decrease in total arrests, but also a decrease in the rate of charges filed by the DA. However, the DA's conviction rate is higher so far for 2021 than it was previously. Boudin's filing rate is also comparable to pre 2019 years. As this chart clearly shows, the number of arrests has been consistently declining in San Francisco.

Arrests Presented to the DA by Category



The police presented significantly fewer cases to the DA in 2020 compared to previous years. As you can see by this graph there were fewer felonies, misdemeanors, and MTR cases (parole violations).

Homicide Numbers for Largest US Cities

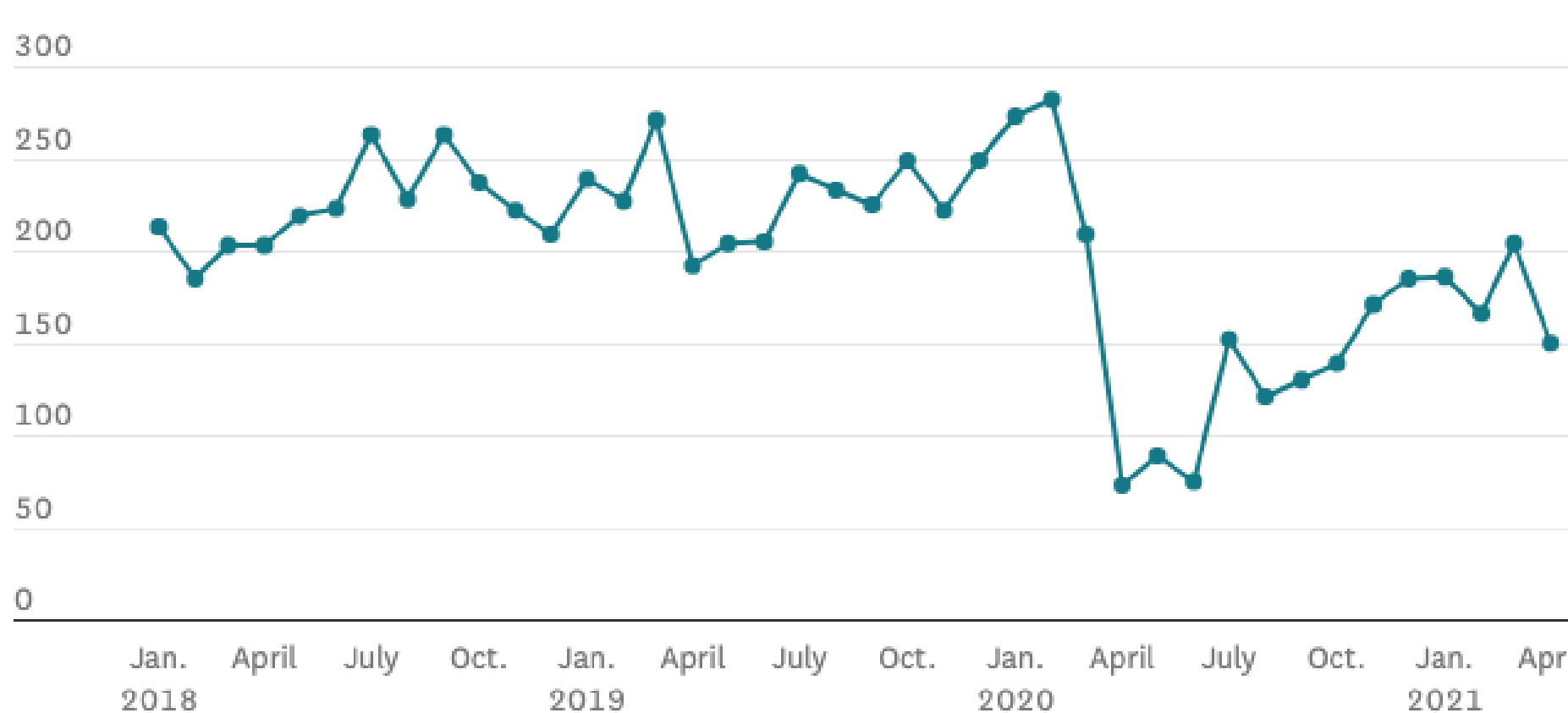


It's hard to read the city names, but here are the homicide numbers for the 39 most populous US cities for 2019 and 2020. 2019 homicides are in red and 2020 are in green. As you can see, there was a consistent increase in homicides for all but two cities. Homicides on average increased 36%. In San Francisco there was a 20% increase in homicides, which is still an increase, but lower than the average and certainly not an outlier.

The number of homicides in San Francisco for 2020 was only 32% of the average for large cities. This does not account for per-capita homicide rates.

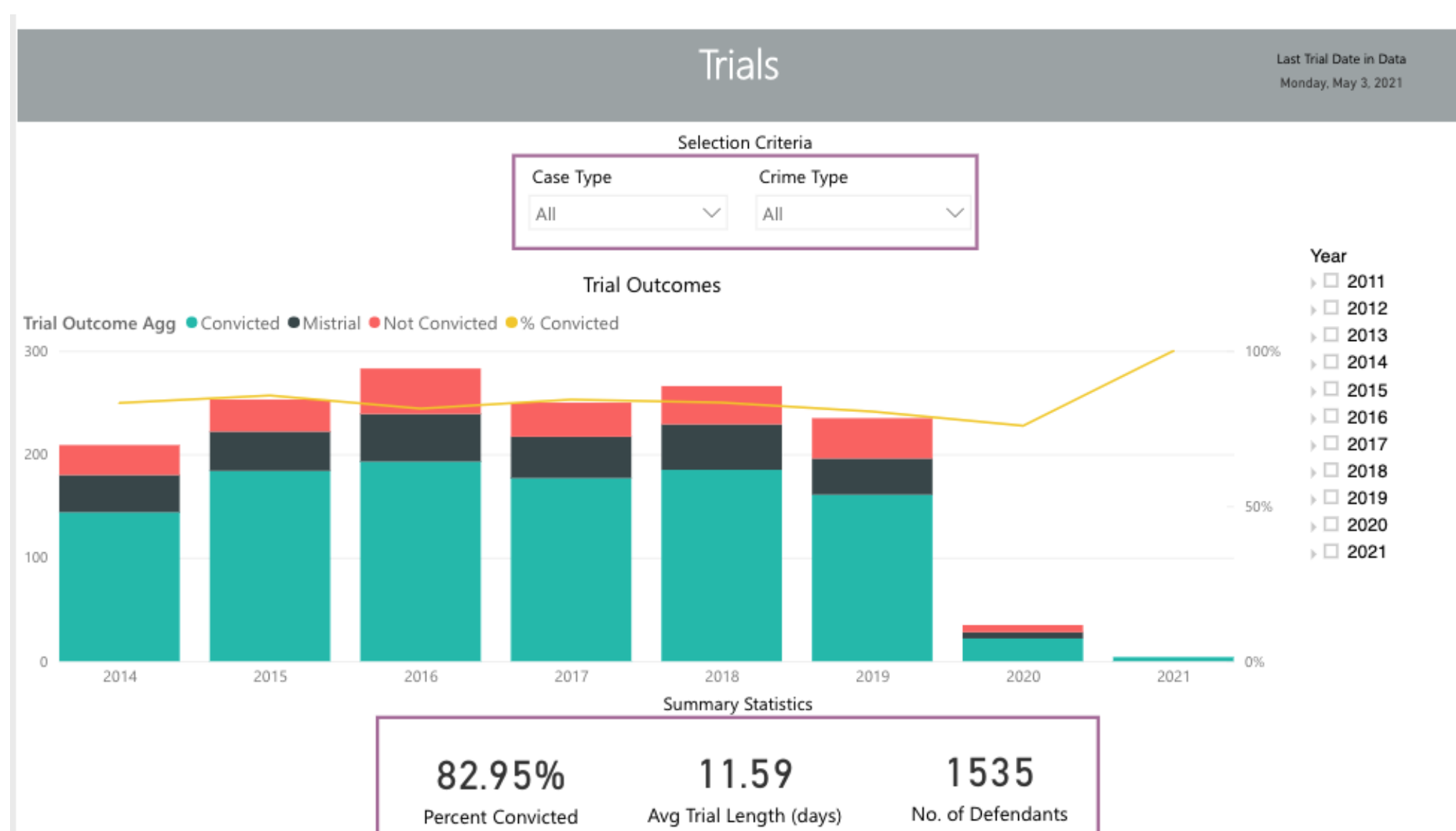
Despite being the 15th most populous city, San Francisco has the 66th highest homicide rate in the US at 6.35 homicides per 100,000 residents.

Total shoplifting incidents in San Francisco



Source: [SFPD incident data](#)

Shoplifting, a large concern of the recall campaign, also dropped sharply in 2020 and remains lower than previous years even into mid 2021.



There were significantly fewer trials in 2020, likely due to COVID, but conviction rates stayed similar and through 2021 conviction rates increased. However, due to how few trials there were this data is inconclusive.