Property Crime Rates
1985-2016

Trend Data From Six Alaska Police Agencies

Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)

- UCR data play an important role in developing policy responses to crime
    - Like any data source, UCR data have both strengths and weaknesses
- Strengths
    - As name suggests, uniformity in data collection/compilation methodology
    - Important data source for understanding crime trends
- Weaknesses
    - "Dark Figure of Crime" (flawed measure of crime prevalence)
    - Tell us WHAT is happening, but not WHY

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Property Crimes

- The focus of this presentation is on property crimes
  - Larceny theft; shoplifting (sub-category); burglary; motor vehicle theft

- Data sources
  - All crime UCR data obtained from "Crime in Alaska" reports published by Department of Public Safety
  - All population data obtained from Department of Labor & Workforce Development

Jurisdictions

- UCR data from six Alaska jurisdictions
  - Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, North Slope Borough, Palmer
  - Communities with police departments with consistent participation in UCR program (minimize missing data)

- Goal
  - Provide some additional context beyond just time period
  - Geography, total population, population density, population demographics

Property Crimes Known to Police: 1985-2016
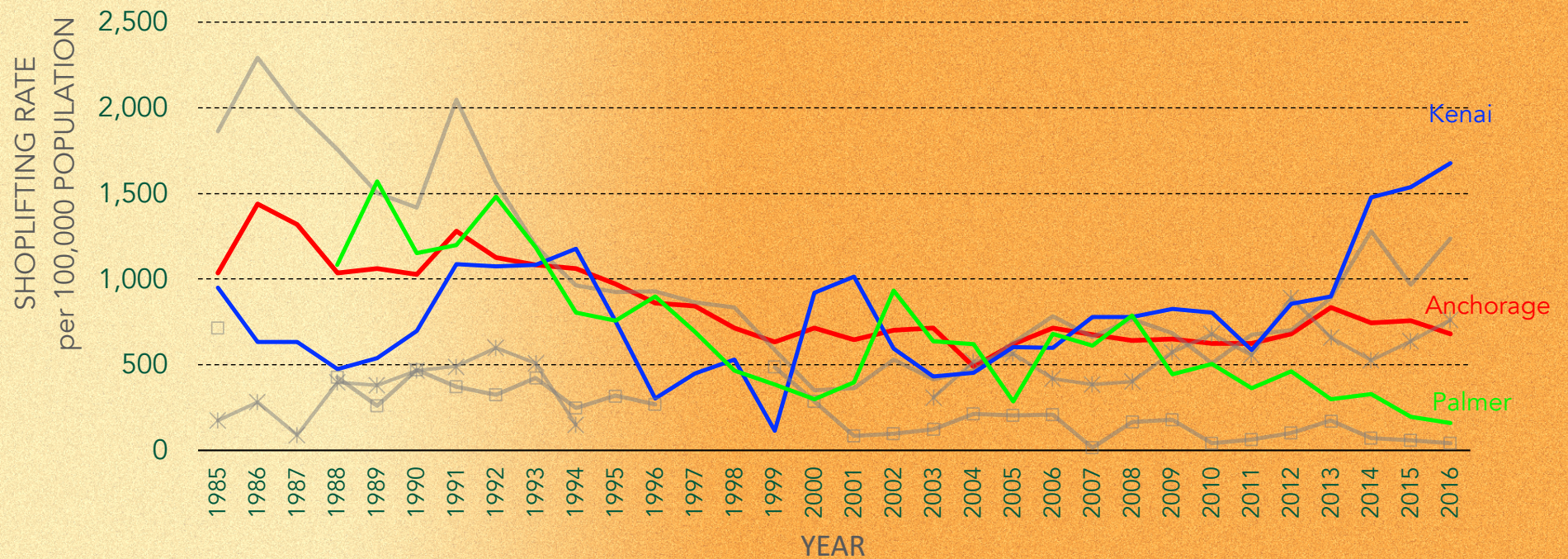
LARCENY THEFT
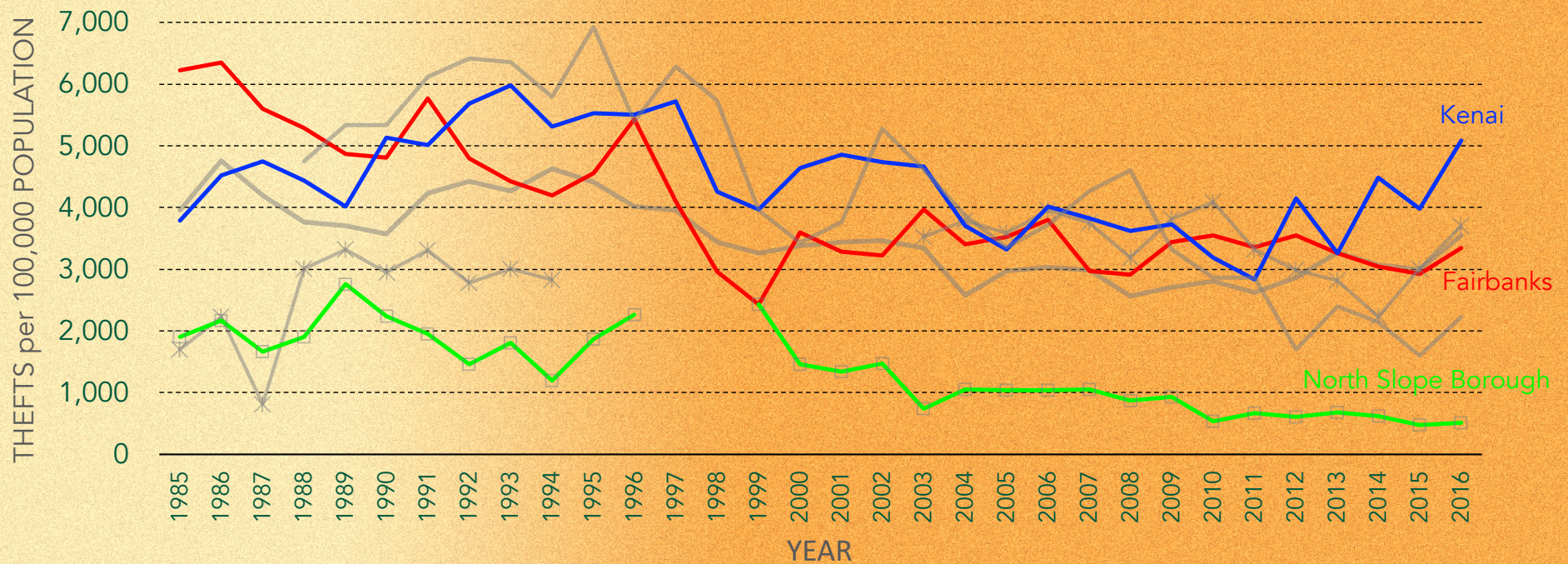
Property Crimes Known to Police: 1985-2016

SHOPLIFTING

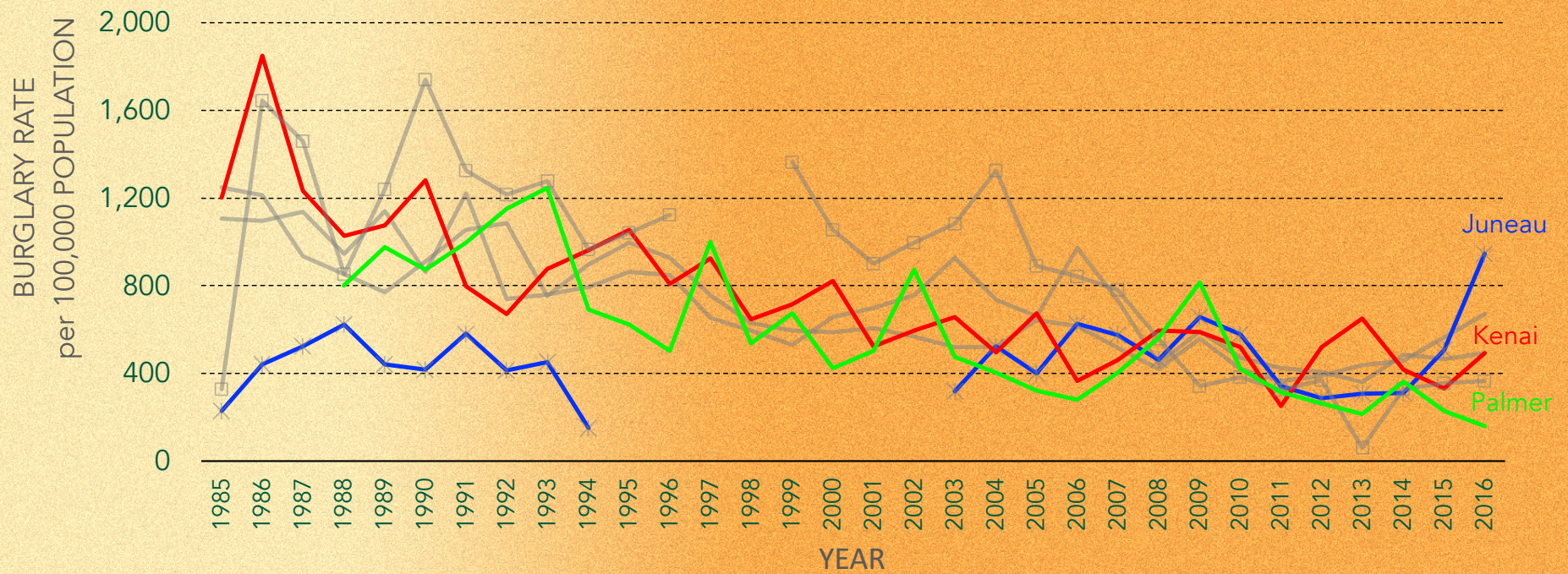# Shoplifting

Shoplifting Incidents Known to Police: 1985-2016

Property Crimes Known to Police: 1985-2016

BURGLARY

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Burglary

Burglaries Known to Police: 1985-2016

BURGLARY RATE per 100,000 POPULATION

2,000
1,600
1,200
800
400
0

1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016

YEAR

Juneau
Kenai
Palmer

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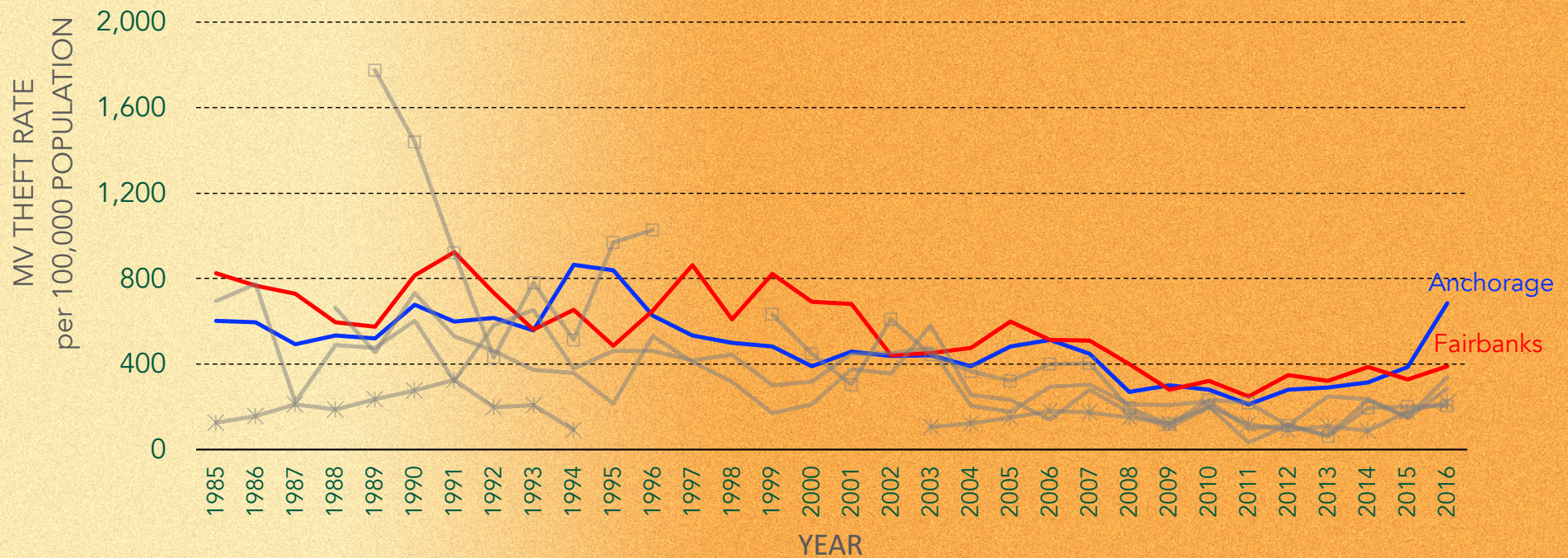
Summary

- Are rates of property crime increasing?
  - It depends on when, on where, and crime type
    - When…
      - What is the appropriate reference period? 1985? 1995? 2005? 2015?
    - Where…
      - Crime levels and patterns of fluctuation vary widely across jurisdictions
    - Crime type
      - Crime levels and patterns of fluctuation vary widely according to the crime being considered

The Issue of Causation

- **What causes crime rates to increase (or decrease)?**
  - Crime is not a single-variable cause phenomenon

  - Crime is not only a multi-variable phenomenon, it is a multi-level phenomenon
    - Crime "drivers" depend heavily on the level of analysis
      - Individual risk factors…
      - Situational ("crime event") factors…
      - Neighborhood factors…
      - City/borough factors…
      - And so on…

The Issue of Causation {continued}

o   All of which is to say…

    o   Crime correlates depend heavily on which level of analysis is being analyzed!

- What is required to establish causation?
  - o   Correlation/association
  - o   Time sequence
  - o   Lack of spuriousness
  - o   Theoretical rationale*

  - o   "Necessary" and "Sufficient" conditions

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