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# Motor Vehicle Theft in Wisconsin 1988 - 1993

Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance  
Statistical Analysis Center

## I. INTRODUCTION

This publication summarizes data on motor vehicle theft offenses available through the State Uniform Crime Reporting program. It addresses such issues as the geographic location of offenses, comparison of Wisconsin offense trends with the nation and the Midwest, demographic information, and other related information.

Motor vehicle theft is defined by the Uniform Crime Reporting system as "the theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle. This definition excludes those persons who have temporary lawful access to a motor vehicle."

In the past five years reported motor vehicle thefts have increased by 66.2%. In 1992, motor vehicle thefts accounted for 9.9% of the total Crime Index and 10.6% of all property Index Offenses. Typically, juveniles have made up the large majority

of arrests for motor vehicle theft. In 1992, over 68% of those arrested for motor vehicle thefts were juveniles. OMVWOC (operating a motor vehicle without owner's consent) or "joyriding", as it is often referred to, is a common type of motor vehicle theft among juveniles. However, age patterns of arrestees may not correspond to the age patterns of offenders.

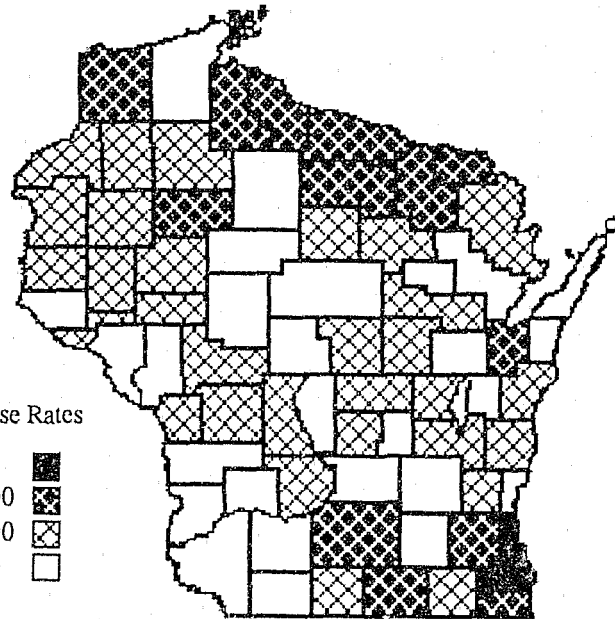
The majority of the information used in this publication has been obtained from Crime and Arrests in Wisconsin, published by the Office of Justice Assistance, and Crime in the United States, published by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The data supplied in these publications are summary data. This limits the type of information that can be presented in this publication. Only data already summarized can be presented because the original, incident-based, data are not available.

## II. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF OFFENSES

The map of Wisconsin at right categorizes counties by their 1992 motor vehicle theft rate (number of offenses per each 100,000 persons). The Southeast and Northeast areas of the State had the highest motor vehicle theft rates. Population density and number of reported motor vehicle thefts usually have a positive relationship. However, Northeast counties with low population density and high rates of motor vehicle theft are exceptions to the rule. A large number of reported snowmobile thefts caused the high motor vehicle theft rates in Northeast counties during 1992.

MV Theft Offense Rates

- >350/100,000
- 150-350/100,000
- 100-149/100,000
- <100/100,000



Jerome D. Lacke  
Executive Director

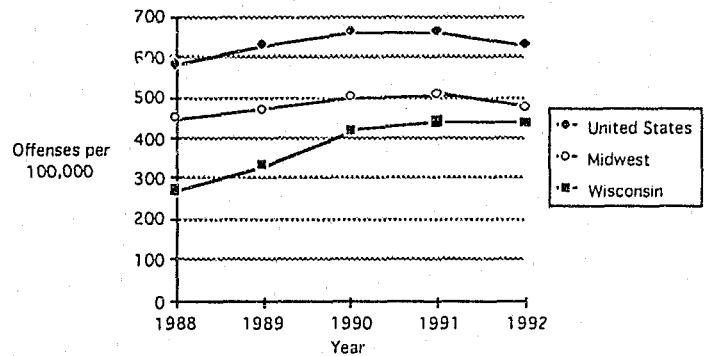
Tommy G. Thompson  
Governor

### III. TREND COMPARISONS

#### Regional Rates

Graph 1 shows five year trends in motor vehicle theft rates for the United States, the Midwest, and the State of Wisconsin. All three show an increase in the number of motor vehicle thefts reported per 100,000 persons. However, Wisconsin's rate has increased far more during the five year period. While Wisconsin's motor vehicle theft rate increased by 61% between 1988 and 1992, the nation's rate increased by 8%. The Midwest rate has also remained fairly steady with an increase of 7% in the past five years. (The Midwest includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.) Nonetheless, Wisconsin's 1992 motor vehicle theft rate was 31% less than the nation's and 8% less than the Midwest rate.

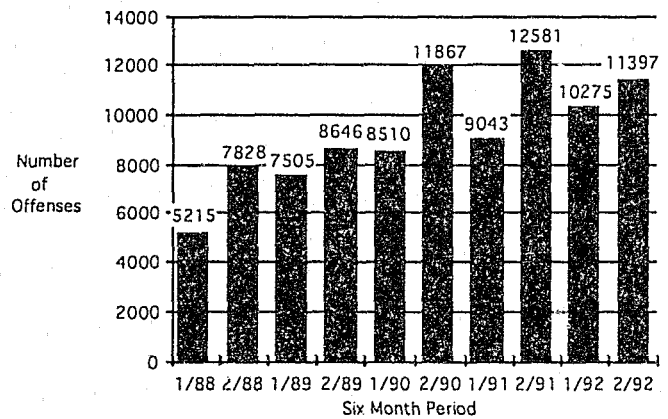
Graph 1: MV Theft Offense Rates, 1988 - 1992



#### Seasonal Trends

Graph 2 shows the number of motor vehicle thefts reported by six month periods from 1988 through 1992. The graph shows a steady upward trend from the first half of 1988 through the first six months of 1992. There was a 97% increase in motor vehicle theft from the first half of 1988 to the first half of 1992. In each of the five years, the most active months for motor vehicle theft were October and November.

Graph 2: MV Theft by Six Month Periods, 1988 - 1992

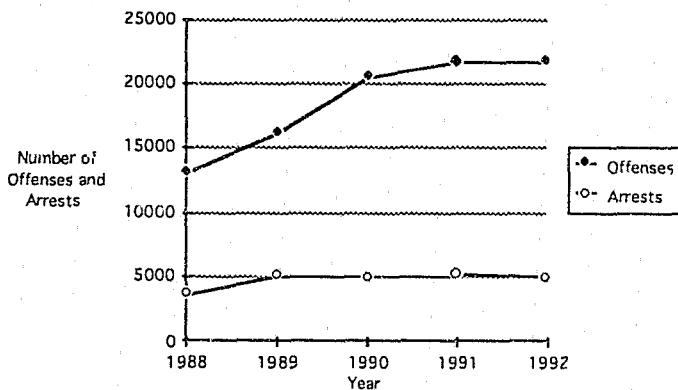


#### Arrests and Clearances

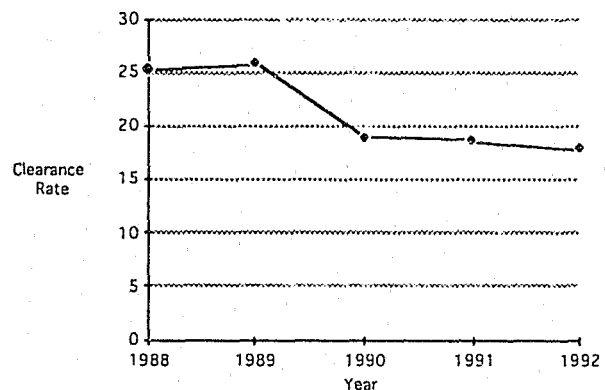
Graphs 3 and 4 portray trends in the number of reported motor vehicle thefts in Wisconsin and the relative ability of law enforcement agencies to clear these offenses. Graph 3 shows that in the past five years both the number of arrests and the number of reported offenses increased. However, the ratio of arrests to offenses has declined from 27.4% in 1988 to 22.7% in 1992.

Graph 4 shows the percentage of offenses cleared by arrest. There has been a decline in clearance rates (the percentage of offenses cleared) from 25.2% in 1988 to 17.8% in 1992. It should be noted that one arrest may lead to multiple clearances of reported motor vehicle thefts.

Graph 3: MV Theft Offenses and Arrests, 1988 - 1992



Graph 4: MV Clearance Rates, 1988 - 1992



#### IV. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

##### Race

Graph 5 shows the racial breakdown of persons arrested for motor vehicle theft in Wisconsin during 1992. For the state as a whole, White adults and juveniles accounted for over half (53.5%) of the arrests for motor vehicle thefts. While Blacks made up 42.9% of the arrests in Wisconsin; 84% of the Black arrests were in Milwaukee County. As a result, over 82% of those arrested for motor vehicle theft outside Milwaukee County were White.

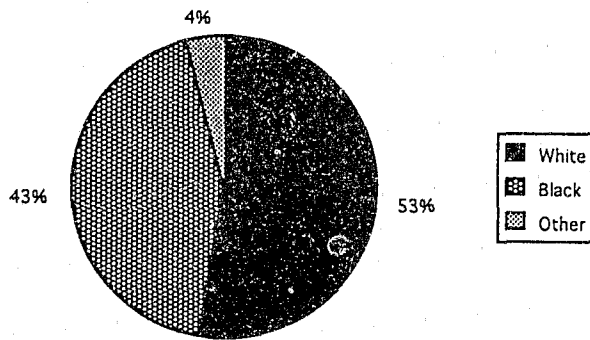
##### Age

Graph 6 shows 1992 motor vehicle theft arrests grouped by age category. While 68.1% of those arrested for motor vehicle theft were juveniles, over 55% (2723) of all arrestees were 16 years or younger. In fact, the most common age group of arrestees was 14 and under.

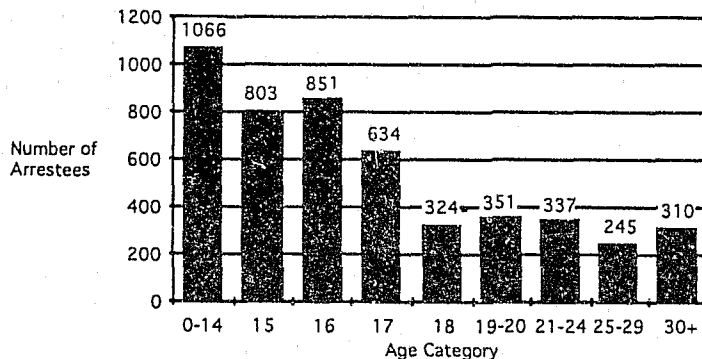
##### Sex

Between 1988 and 1992, males accounted for an average of 88.5% of all arrests for motor vehicle theft, while females made up 11.5% of these arrests.

**Graph 5: Race of Persons Arrested in Wisconsin, 1992**



**Graph 6: Age of Arrestees, 1992**



#### V. MV THEFT CHARACTERISTICS

##### Relationship to Population

Table 1 shows the relationship between population size and the volume of motor vehicle theft. Nearly two-thirds (65.7%) of motor vehicle thefts were reported by areas over 250,000 in population. However, the motor vehicle theft rate decreased in 1992 for all groups except police agencies serving populations over 250,000 (Milwaukee) and those between 10,000 and 24,999. The motor vehicle theft rate is positively related to the size of the jurisdiction.

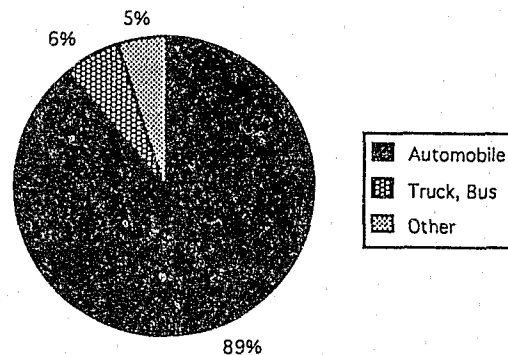
**Table 1: Motor Vehicle Thefts and Rates by Population Group, 1992**

Population Group	1992 MV Thefts	1992 Rate/100,000
<b>Police Agencies:</b>		
Over 250,000	14,248	2,263.2
50,000-250,00	2,729	315.0
25,000-49,999	1,109	258.6
10,000-24,999	1,048	160.9
5,000-9,999	551	141.1
Under 5,000	433	136.2
<b>Sheriff's Departments:</b>		
Suburban	726	102.4
Rural	827	84.8
<b>State Total</b>	<b>21,672</b>	<b>436.2</b>

##### Type of Motor Vehicle

Table 2 shows the target of motor vehicle thefts. The increase in motor vehicle thefts can be attributed to a sharp increase in automobile thefts combined with a fairly stable number of other types of vehicles over the past five years. Graph 7 illustrates the relative proportion of motor vehicle thefts in 1992.

**Graph 7: Type of MV Theft, 1992**



**Table 2: Motor Vehicle Theft, 1988 - 1992**

Type of Vehicle	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Automobile	78.5%	83.6%	85.5%	86.3%	89.0%
Truck/Bus	7.6	6.4	7.2	6.6	5.5
All Other	13.9	10.0	7.3	7.1	5.5
Total	13,043	16,151	20,377	21,624	21,672

**Recovery of Motor Vehicles**

Table 3 shows the total value of motor vehicles stolen and the amount recovered between 1988 and 1992. The amount of motor vehicle value recovered has not kept up with the amount of the total value stolen in the past five years. While there has been an increase in the number of reported motor vehicle thefts over the past five years, the increase in total value of stolen motor vehicles is also due to a 16% increase in the average value of stolen motor vehicles, from \$3,222 during 1988 to \$3,751 in 1992.

**Table 3: Recovery Rate, 1988 - 1992**

Year	Total Value Stolen	Total Value Recovered	% Recovered
1988	\$42,026,540	\$29,536,588	70.3%
1989	61,414,651	43,499,415	70.8
1990	79,071,582	54,194,278	68.5
1991	82,296,570	44,425,132	54.0
1992	81,295,754	45,371,145	55.8
Percent Change	+ 93.4%	+ 53.6%	- 20.6%

**VI. CONCLUSION**

Motor vehicle thefts in Wisconsin have increased by 66.2% in the past five years. Most Wisconsin motor vehicle thefts occurred in the Southeast area of the State with 61.2% of all motor vehicle thefts between 1988 and 1992 reported by the City of Milwaukee. The clearance rate for motor vehicle theft has declined from 25.2% in 1988 to 17.8% during 1992. Over 68% of those arrested for motor vehicle theft in 1992 were juveniles. Also, preliminary Wisconsin figures for 1993 indicate that motor vehicle theft has declined by 19.8% when comparing the first six months of 1992 to the first six months of 1993.

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