

LARCENY-THEFT

DEFINITION

Larceny-theft is the unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another. It includes crimes such as shoplifting, pocket-picking, purse-snatching, thefts from motor vehicles, thefts of motor vehicle parts and accessories, bicycle thefts, etc., in which no use of force, violence, or fraud occurs. In the Uniform Crime Reporting Program, this crime category does not include embezzlement, confidence games, forgery, and worthless checks. Motor vehicle theft is also excluded from this category inasmuch as it is a separate Crime Index offense.

TREND		
<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of offenses</i>	<i>Rate per 100,000 inhabitants</i>
1997	7,743,760	2,893.4
1998	7,373,886	2,728.1
Percent change	-4.8	-5.7

Estimated at nearly 7.4 million offenses, larceny-theft accounted for 59 percent of the 1998 Crime Index total and 67 percent of the property crime total. Regarding frequency, larceny-thefts occurred most often in August and least often in February. (See Table 2.27.)

Table 2.27

Larceny-theft by Month					
Percent distribution, 1994-1998					
Months	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
January	7.3	7.9	7.8	8.0	8.4
February	7.0	7.1	7.5	7.2	7.5
March	8.1	8.1	7.9	8.0	8.2
April	8.0	7.8	8.0	8.0	8.1
May	8.4	8.5	8.6	8.4	8.4
June	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6
July	9.1	9.1	9.3	9.2	8.9
August	9.4	9.4	9.2	9.1	9.0
September	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.5	8.4
October	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.5
November	8.2	8.1	7.8	7.9	7.8
December	8.5	8.1	8.1	8.3	8.1

Regional distribution percentages of the larceny-theft total for 1998 remained similar to those from 1997. The Southern States, the most populous region, comprised 40 percent; the Midwestern and Western States recorded 23 percent each; and the Northeastern States registered 14 percent. (See Table 3.)

Nationwide, the volume of larceny-thefts decreased 5 percent in 1998 when compared to the 1997 figure. Cities as a whole and suburban communities both reported decreases of 6 percent, and rural counties reported a 5-percent drop. (See Table 12.)

Each of the country's geographic regions showed a decrease in incidents of larceny-theft: 6 percent in the West, 5 percent in the Northeast, 4 percent in the South, and 3 percent in the Midwest. (See Table 4.)

Both the 5- and 10-year national trends reveal a decline of 6 percent when comparing the 1998 larceny-theft total to 1994 and 1989 figures respectively. (See Table 1.)

Rate

The 1998 larceny-theft rate of 2,728 per 100,000 population fell 6 percent from the 1997 rate. Five- and 10-year trends showed the rate fell 10 percent below the 1994 figure and 14 percent below 1989 levels. By area, rates were measured at 2,911 per 100,000 inhabitants in metropolitan areas, 3,435 in cities outside metropolitan areas, and 1,045 in rural counties. (See Tables 1 and 2.)

Regionally, the 1998 larceny-theft rate per 100,000 inhabitants decreased 8 percent in the West, 6 percent in the

South, 5 percent in the Northeast, and 4 percent in the Midwest. With respect to actual rates for 1998, the South reported a rate of 3,075 larceny-thefts per 100,000 population. The West registered a rate of 2,810. The Midwest experienced a rate of 2,713, and the Northeast recorded 2,011 per 100,000 inhabitants. (See Table 4.)

Nature

During 1998, the average value of property stolen due to larceny-theft was \$650, up from the 1997 value of \$585. Applying the average value to the estimated number of larceny-thefts nationally, the loss to victims was nearly \$4.8 billion for the year. Since many offenses in the larceny category never come to law enforcement attention, particularly if the value of the stolen goods is small, this estimated dollar loss is considered conservative. Collectively, losses under \$50 and over \$200 accounted for 77 percent of reported larceny-thefts. The remaining 23 percent involved losses ranging from \$50 to \$200.

Losses of goods and property reported stolen as a result of pocket-picking averaged \$407; purse-snatching, \$362; and shoplifting, \$142. Thefts from buildings resulted in an average loss of \$1,028; from motor vehicles, \$675; and from coin-operated machines, \$328. The average value loss due to thefts of motor vehicle accessories was \$415 and for thefts of bicycles, \$262. (See Table 23.)

The largest portion of larceny-theft, 36 percent, involved thefts of motor vehicle parts, accessories, and contents. Shoplifting accounted for 15 percent; thefts from buildings, 13 percent; and thefts of bicycles, 5 percent. Pocket-picking, purse-snatching, thefts from coin-operated machines, and all other types of larceny-thefts comprised the remainder. The distribution of larceny-theft by type and geographic region is shown in Table 2.28.

Table 2.28

Larceny Analysis by Region

Percent distribution, 1998

	United States Total	North-eastern States	Mid-western States	Southern States	Western States
Total ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Pocket-picking	.6	2.1	.3	.3	.4
Purse-snatching	.6	1.1	.5	.5	.5
Shoplifting	14.8	14.5	12.5	14.1	17.1
From motor vehicles (except accessories)	26.3	25.0	25.9	24.0	30.2
Motor vehicle accessories	10.0	7.8	10.4	10.5	10.7
Bicycles	5.1	5.9	5.6	4.3	5.4
From buildings	13.4	18.1	16.0	10.8	13.0
From coin-operated machines	.6	.4	.5	.7	.6
All others	28.6	25.1	28.3	34.8	22.1

¹ Because of rounding, percentages may not add to total.

Figure 2.14 Larceny-theft
Percent Change from 1994

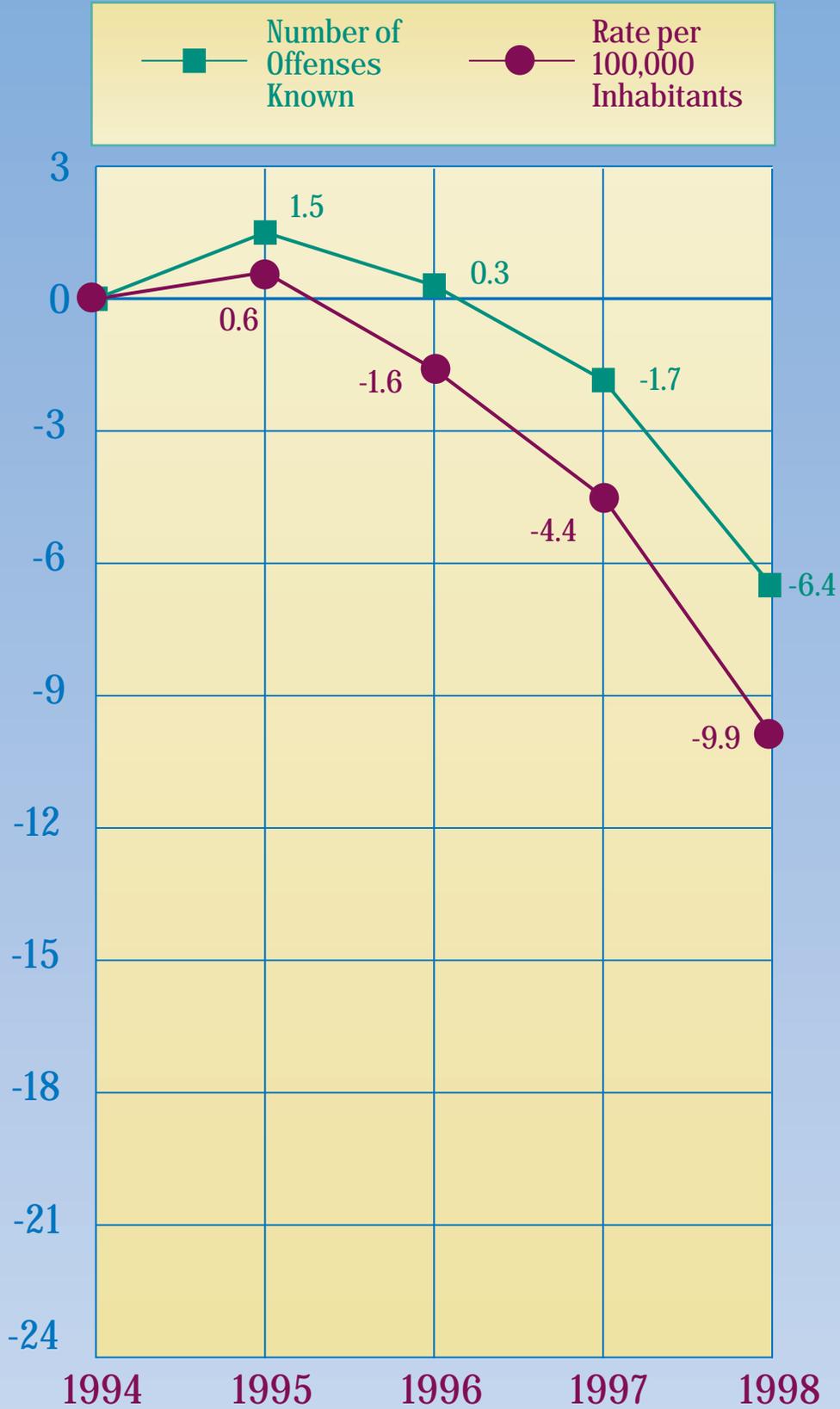


Figure 2.15 Larceny-Theft Analysis

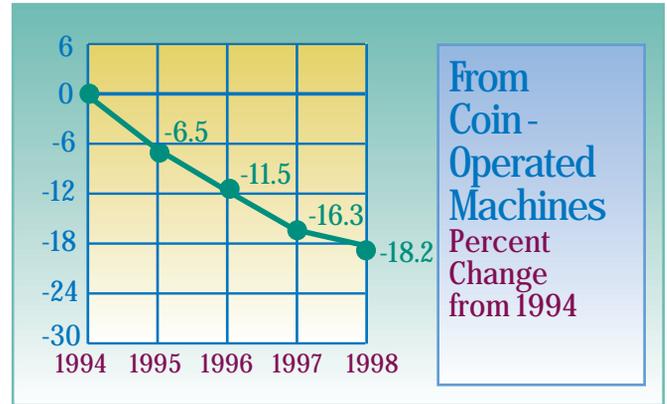
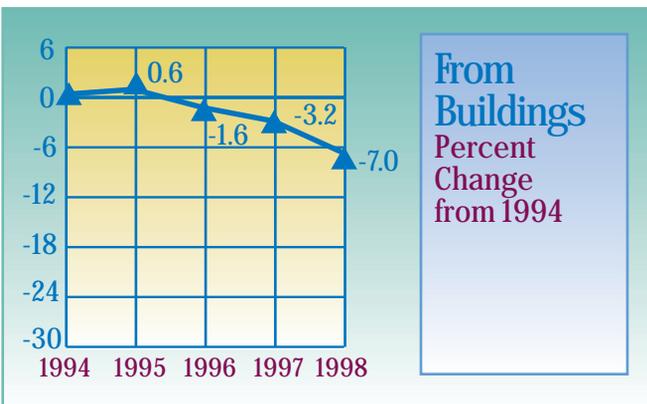
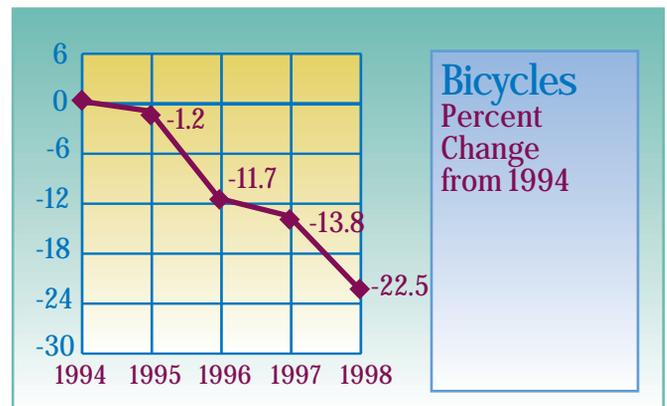
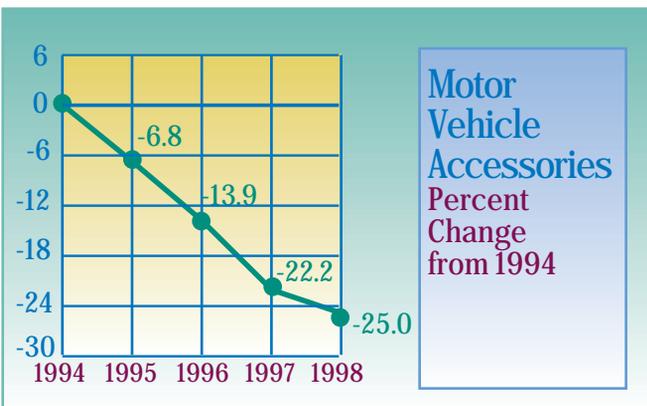
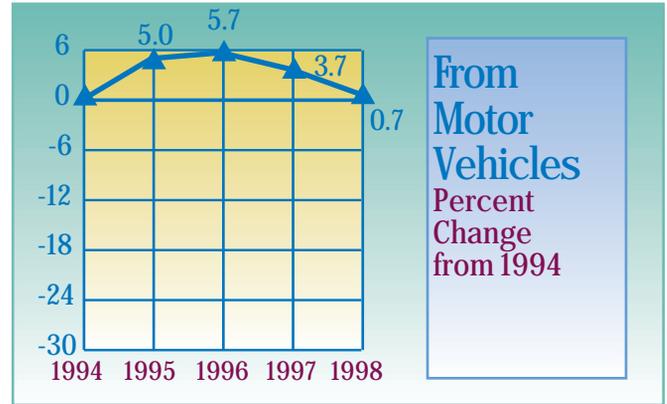
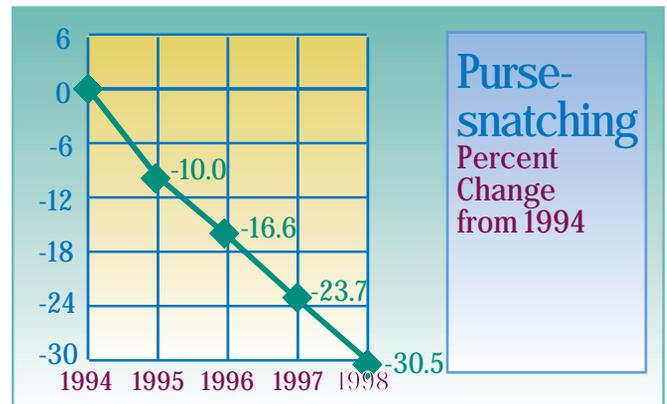
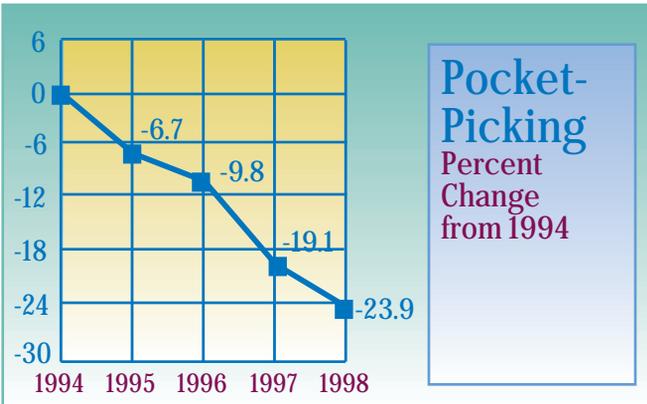
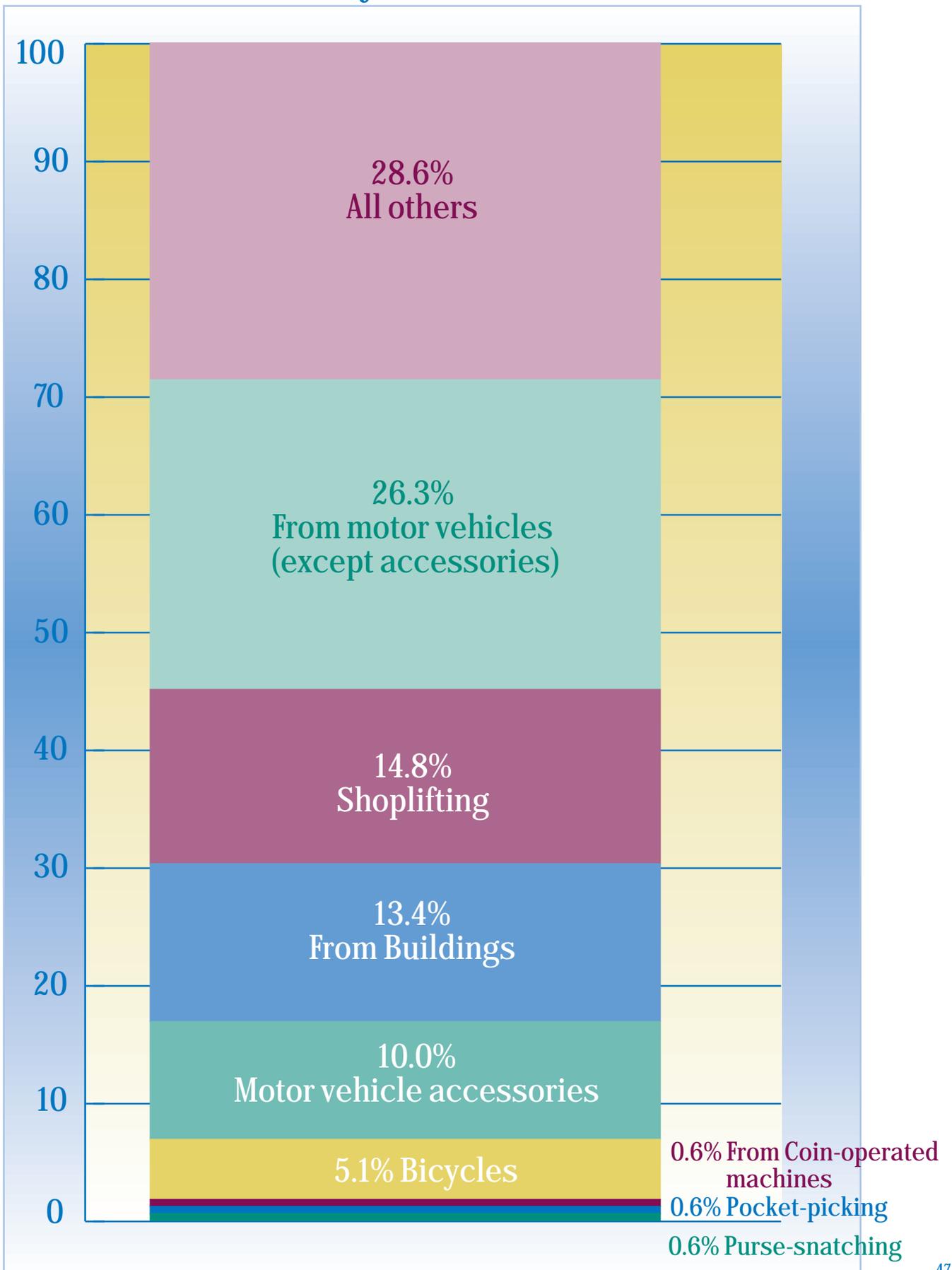


Figure 2.16

Larceny-theft By Type & Percent Distribution



Law Enforcement Response

Nationwide, law enforcement registered an overall 19-percent clearance rate for larceny-theft offenses in 1998. Likewise, both the Nation's cities collectively and rural counties recorded a 19-percent clearance rate for these offenses. Specifically, cities with populations from 10,000 to 24,999 accounted for the highest rate, 24 percent. Suburban counties reported an 18-percent clearance rate.

By geographic region, law enforcement agencies in the Northeast cleared 21 percent of reported larceny-theft offenses in 1998; the South, 20 percent; the West, 18 percent; and the Midwest, 17 percent. (See Table 26.)

Twenty-two percent of the larceny-theft clearances nationally involved juveniles (persons under 18 years of age). Persons in this age group comprised 23 percent of clearances in the Nation's cities collectively, 20 percent in suburban counties, and 17 percent in rural counties.

The number of persons arrested for larceny-theft in 1998 fell 9 percent in comparison to the 1997 figure. Arrests of males and females declined 9 percent and 8 percent, respectively. Arrests of juveniles dropped 12 percent

during this same period, and arrests of adults decreased 7 percent.

Considering the 5-year period 1994-1998, larceny-theft arrests declined 11 percent. While the number of adult arrests decreased 10 percent during the timespan, arrests of persons under the age of 18 fell 14 percent. Arrests of males were 13 percent lower, and arrests of females were down 8 percent.

In 1998, larceny-theft accounted for the largest portion of Crime Index offenses reported to law enforcement. Similarly, 53 percent of total arrests for all Index crimes and 73 percent of all arrests for property crimes were attributed to larceny-theft. Of those individuals arrested for larceny-theft, 46 percent were persons under 21 years of age, and 32 percent of the arrestees were under 18. Overall, 35 percent of larceny-theft arrestees were females, who were arrested for this offense more often than for any other offense.

By race, 65 percent of the total number of persons arrested for larceny-theft offenses were white, 32 percent were black, and 3 percent were all other races.