

MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

DEFINITION

Defined as the theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle, this offense category includes the stealing of automobiles, trucks, buses, motorcycles, motorscooters, snowmobiles, etc. The definition excludes the taking of a motor vehicle for temporary use by those persons having lawful access.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of offenses</i>	<i>Rate per 100,000 inhabitants</i>
1999	1,152,075	422.5
2000	1,165,559	414.2
Percent change	+1.2	-2.0

For the first time since 1990, the number of motor vehicle thefts reported in the United States increased from the previous year's figures as the volume of thefts in 2000 showed a 1.2-percent increase over 1999 totals. Of the nearly 1.2 million estimated thefts of motor vehicles, the Western States recorded the largest increase at 7.1 percent. Motor vehicle thefts increased in Midwestern States by 0.9 percent. The Northeastern States reported the largest decrease of motor vehicle theft with a 2.9-percent decline. In the Southern States, motor vehicle thefts were down 1.3 percent. (See Table 4.)

The 2000 figures show that the greatest number of motor vehicle thefts was recorded during the month of August, and the fewest thefts occurred in February. (See Table 2.29.)

Table 2.29

Motor Vehicle Theft by Month					
Percent distribution, 1996-2000					
Month	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
January	8.8	9.0	9.1	8.5	8.2
February	8.0	7.6	7.9	7.3	7.5
March	8.2	8.2	8.5	7.9	8.0
April	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.7	7.6
May	8.1	8.2	8.3	8.0	8.2
June	8.0	8.1	8.1	8.2	8.3
July	8.8	8.7	8.7	8.8	8.9
August	8.6	8.7	8.8	9.0	9.1
September	8.2	8.3	8.3	8.5	8.5
October	8.6	8.6	8.4	8.8	8.7
November	8.3	8.2	7.9	8.5	8.5
December	8.6	8.3	8.1	8.8	8.6

Collectively, the Nation's cities had a 1.4-percent increase in motor vehicle theft. Among city population groupings, those with populations of 100,000 to 249,999 experienced a 4.1-percent rise in motor vehicle theft and those with populations of 250,000 to 499,999 had a similar increase of 4.0 percent. Suburban counties experienced a 2.9-percent increase, and rural counties recorded a 1.6-percent rise in motor vehicle thefts from 1999 figures.

Looking at the 5- and 10-year trends, the volume of motor vehicle thefts in 2000 was down 16.4 percent from the 1996 figure and fell 29.9 percent from the 1991 figure.

Rate

In 2000, the national rate of 414.2 motor vehicle thefts per 100,000 inhabitants recorded for the year was 2.0 percent lower than the previous year's rate. The 2000 rate

is 21.2 percent lower than the 1996 rate, and 37.2 percent below the 1991 rate.

For every 100,000 inhabitants living in metropolitan areas, 479.9 motor vehicle thefts were reported in 2000. The Nation's most heavily populated municipalities, cities with populations over 250,000, experienced the highest rate of motor vehicle theft during the year—929.1 for every 100,000 inhabitants, and the Nation's smallest cities, those with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants, recorded a rate of 217.3 per 100,000. In cities outside metropolitan areas, 199.2 motor vehicle thefts were reported per 100,000 in population. In rural counties, 122.3 motor vehicle thefts were recorded per 100,000 inhabitants.

Regionally, the highest motor vehicle theft rate was recorded in the Western States at 524.1 per 100,000 people. The Southern States reported a rate of 417.1; the Midwestern States, a rate of 378.3; and the Northeastern States, a rate of 322.1 per 100,000 inhabitants. Three regions registered declines in 2000 compared to 1999 data. The Northeast reported a 6.1-percent decrease, the South a drop of 5.0 percent, and the Midwest a decline of 0.9 percent. The West's rate of motor vehicle thefts per 100,000 in population increased 3.6 percent. (See Table 4.)

Nature

The value of motor vehicles stolen in the Nation during 2000 was estimated at nearly \$7.8 billion. At the time of theft, the average value per vehicle was \$6,682. The recovery rate for the value of vehicles stolen was higher than for any other property type. (See Tables 23 and 24.)

Of all motor vehicles reported stolen during the year, 74.5 percent were automobiles, 18.7 percent were trucks or buses, and the remainder were other types of vehicles.

Table 2.30

Motor Vehicle Theft				
Percent distribution by region, 2000				
Region	Total ¹	Autos	Trucks and buses	Other vehicles
Total	100.0	74.5	18.7	6.8
Northeastern States	100.0	88.2	6.2	5.6
Midwestern States	100.0	80.0	13.7	6.3
Southern States	100.0	71.8	20.1	8.1
Western States	100.0	69.7	24.2	6.1

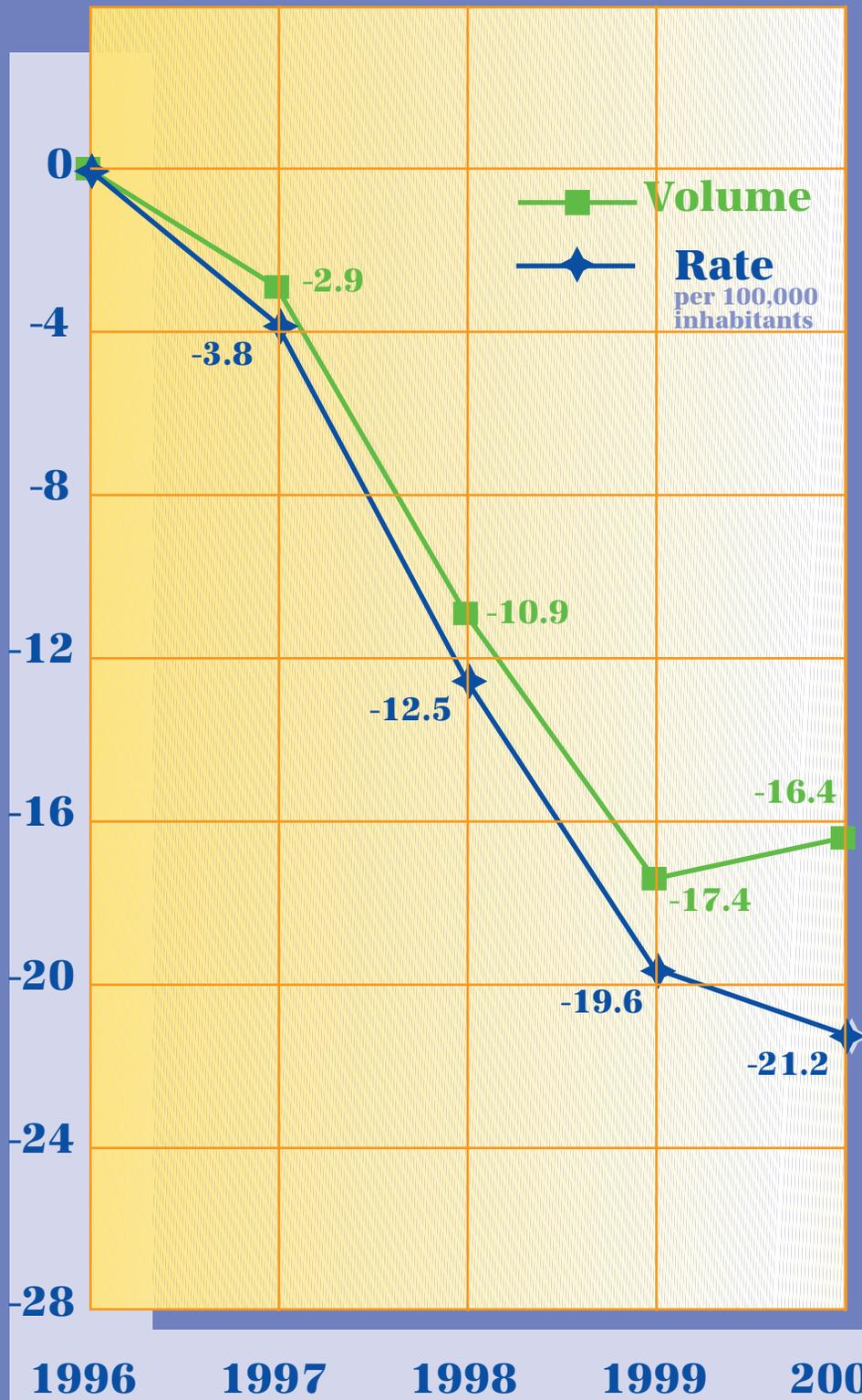
¹ Because of rounding, the percentages may not add to total.

Law Enforcement Response

FIGURE 2.18

MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

PERCENT CHANGE
from 1996



Law enforcement agencies across the Nation reported a 14.1-percent motor vehicle theft clearance rate in 2000. Motor vehicle theft clearance rates in the Nation's cities overall ranged from a 27.7-percent clearance rate in cities with less than 10,000 inhabitants to 9.9 percent in cities with populations of 1 million and over. Law enforcement agencies in rural counties reported a 29.3-percent clearance rate, and those in suburban counties reported a 15.8-percent clearance rate. (See Table 25.)

Regionally, the Southern States had a motor vehicle theft clearance rate of 15.9 percent and Midwestern States recorded 15.6 percent. The Northeastern and the Western States experienced 13.7- and 11.4-percent clearance rates, respectively.

Nationally, persons in the under-18 age group were involved in 19.8 percent of the motor vehicle thefts cleared. This group also comprised 19.9 percent of those cleared in cities collectively, 19.6 percent of those cleared in suburban counties, and 19.4 percent of the motor vehicle thefts cleared in rural counties.

Persons under the age of 25 made up the largest percentage of persons arrested for motor vehicle theft, 66.5. Arrestees under the age of 18 accounted for 34.3 percent of the total in 2000, although arrests of persons under age 18 were down 2.6 percent from 1999. Juvenile female and male arrests decreased, 1.2 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively.

Adults comprised 65.7 percent of all motor vehicle theft arrestees. The number of adults arrested in 2000 increased 3.3 percent from the previous year's figures.

Males accounted for 84.2 percent of the estimated 148,225 arrestees for motor vehicle theft in 2000. By race, 55.4 percent of the arrestees were white, 41.6 percent were black, and the remainder were of other races.

In 2000, total motor vehicle theft arrests were up 1.2 percent from the 1999 numbers. The 2000 arrest totals were 18.5 percent below the 1996 level and 35.2 percent lower than the 1991 figure.