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Motor Vehicle Thefts in Wisconsin 1985 - 1989

Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance
Statistical Analysis Center

I. INTRODUCTION

This publication summarizes data available through the State Uniform Crime Reporting program on motor vehicle theft offenses. 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 theft offenses have increased by 52.2%. Motor vehicle thefts accounted for 7.9% of the total Crime Index and 8.4% of all property Index Offenses. Commonly, juveniles have been the group with the

majority of motor vehicle arrests. In 1989, 62% 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.

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.

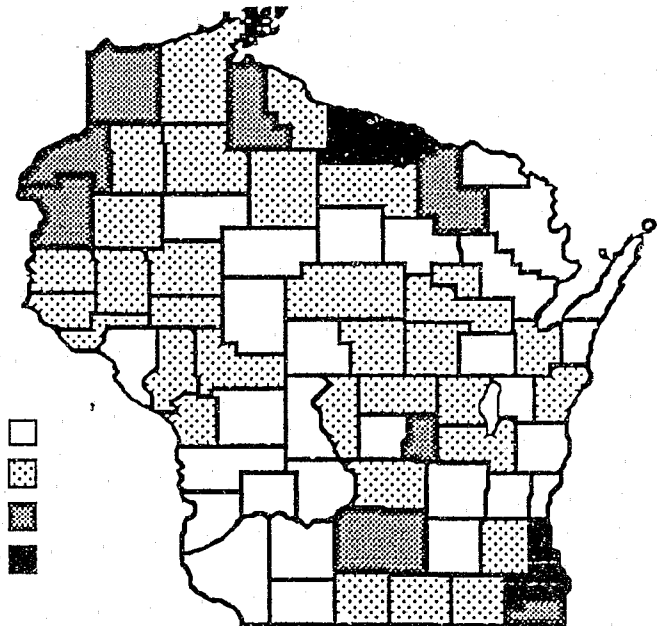
II. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF OFFENSES

The map of Wisconsin at right categorizes counties by their 1989 motor vehicle theft rate (number of offenses per 100,000 people). The Southeast area of the State and Vilas county had the highest motor vehicle theft rates. Population density and number of reported motor vehicle thefts usually have a positive relationship. Vilas County, with a low population density and high rate of motor vehicle theft is an exception to the rule. A high number of reported snowmobile thefts was the cause of the high rate in motor vehicle thefts in Vilas county during 1989.

Wisconsin Counties' MV Theft Rates, 1989

MV Theft Offense
Rates

0-99/ 100,000
100-199/ 100,000
200-299/ 100,000
>300/ 100,000



Jerome D. Lacke
Executive Director

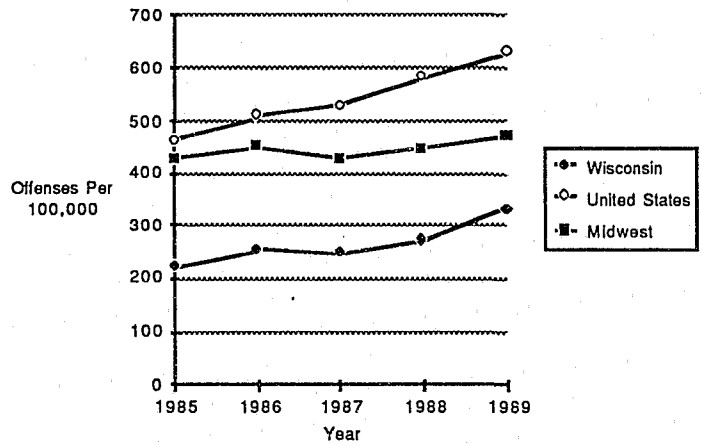
Tommy G. Thompson
Governor

III. TREND COMPARISONS

Regional Rates

Graph 1 shows the regional motor vehicle theft rate trends for the United States, the Midwest, and the State of Wisconsin for the last five years. All three categories show an increase in the number of motor vehicle theft offenses reported per 100,000 people. Wisconsin's MV theft rate has remained less than one-half the rate of the nation and has also remained substantially below the Midwest rate for 1989. Wisconsin's MV theft rate increased by 27% between 1985 and 1989; 6% less than the Nation's (33%). The Midwest rate has remained the most steady with only an increase of 9% over the past five years. (The Midwest includes the states of Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, and South Dakota.)

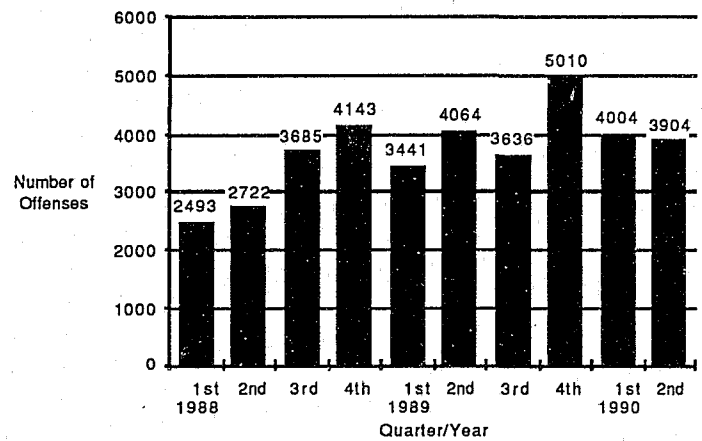
Graph 1: MV Theft Offense Rates, 1989



Seasonal Trends

Graph 2 shows the number of motor vehicle thefts which occurred quarterly between 1988 and the first half of 1990. A comparison of quarters does show an upward trend occurring in consecutive years. There was a 61% increase in motor vehicle thefts in the first quarters of 1988 and 1990. The most active months for motor vehicle thefts were the fourth quarter (October through December) of 1988 and 1989.

Graph 2: MV Theft Offenses by Quarter, 1988-1990

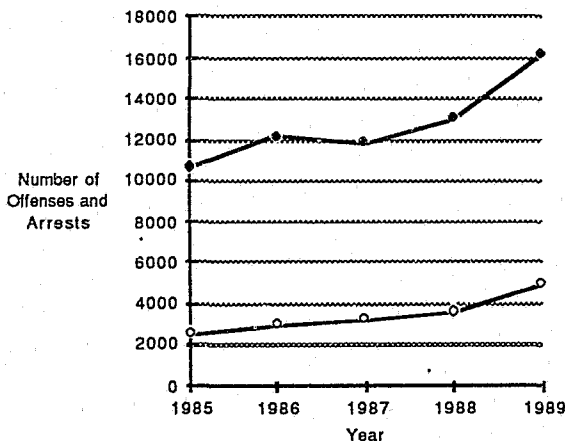


Arrests and Clearances

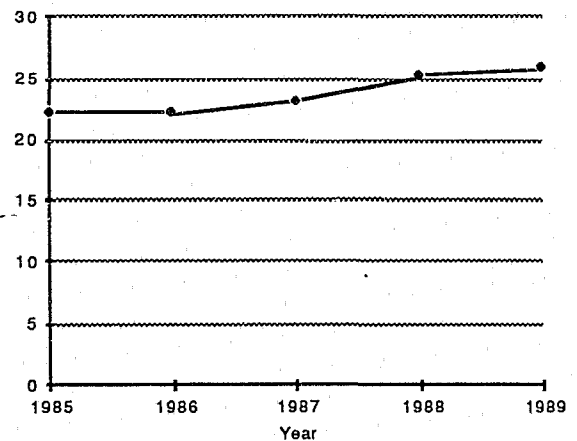
Graphs 3 and 4 show changes in the number of reported motor vehicle thefts in Wisconsin and the relative ability of law enforcement agencies to clear these offenses. Graph 3 shows that in the past five years the number of arrests increased along with the number of reported offenses, yet arrests have not kept up with the number of reported offenses after 1987.

Graph 4 illustrates the percentage of offenses cleared by arrests. A slight upward trend in clearance rates (the percentage of offenses cleared) has occurred since 1986. It should be noted that one arrest may lead to multiple clearances of reported motor vehicle thefts.

Graph 3: MV Theft Offenses and Arrests, 1989



Graph 4: MV Clearance Rates, 1985-1989



IV. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Race

Graph 5 shows the race breakdown of persons arrested for motor vehicle theft in Wisconsin during 1989. For the state as a whole, White adults and juveniles were arrested for almost three-fifths (58%) of the motor vehicle thefts. While Blacks made up 39% of the arrests in Wisconsin; 37% of the 39% occurred in the city of Milwaukee, revealing that 95% of all motor vehicle arrests outside the city of Milwaukee were committed by Whites.

Age

Graph 6 shows motor vehicle theft offenders grouped by age category for 1989. Nearly half (2476) of all motor vehicle thefts were committed by juveniles 16 years or younger in 1989. The largest offender age group was 14 and under.

Sex

Between 1985 and 1989, males committed an average of 89% of the motor vehicle thefts, while females made up just over 11% of the thefts.

V. MV THEFT CHARACTERISTICS

Relationship to Population

Table 1 shows the relationship between population size and reported motor vehicle thefts. Over three-quarters (77%) of the reported motor vehicle thefts occurred in populated areas over 250,000 (Milwaukee). The number of reported motor vehicle thefts with populations over 250,000 increased by 37% from 6,679 in 1988 to 9,145 in 1989. The motor vehicle theft rate is positively related to the size of the jurisdiction.

Table 1: MV Theft Offenses/ Rates by Population Group, 1989

Population Group	1989 Estimated MV Thefts	1989 Rate/100,000
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Police Agencies:

Over 250,000	9,145	1,523.3
50,000-250,00	2,471	297.0
25,000-49,999	832	211.6
10,000-24,999	972	151.1
5,000-9,999	582	158.9

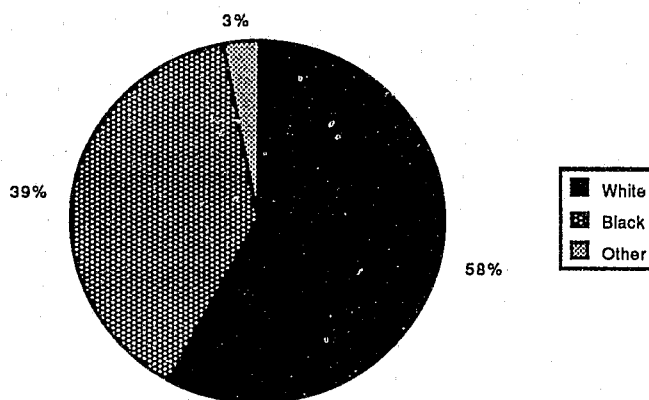
Under 5,000

398 144.8

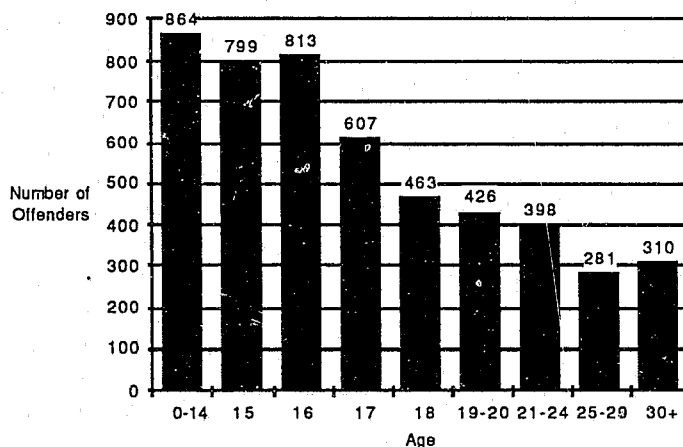
Sheriff's Departments:

Suburban	725	101.2
Rural	1,026	98.9

Graph 5: Racial Characteristics of Persons Arrested in Wisconsin, 1989



Graph 6: Age of Offenders, 1989



Type of Motor Vehicle

Table 2 shows the type of motor vehicle thefts. The increase in the number of motor vehicle thefts can be attributed to a sharp increase in automobile thefts combined with a fairly stable level in other types of vehicles in the past five years. Graph 7 illustrates the proportion of motor vehicle thefts in 1989.

Graph 7: Type of MV Theft, 1989

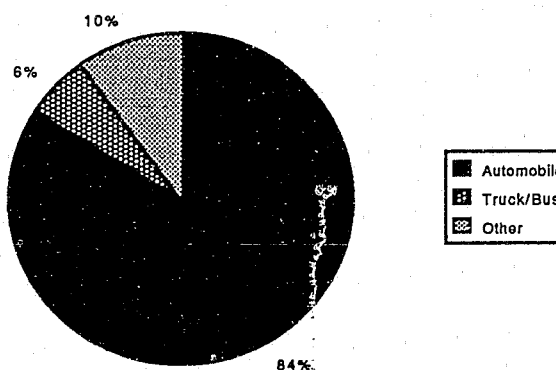


Table 2: Motor Vehicle Theft, 1985-1989

<u>Type of Vehicle</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>
Automobile	73.9%	78.8%	77.3%	78.5%	83.6%
Truck/Bus	8.1	7.3	8.5	7.6	6.4
All Other	18.0	13.9	14.2	13.9	10.0
Total	10,615	12,168	11,803	13,043	16,151

Recovery of Motor Vehicles

Table 3: Recovery Rate, 1985 - 1989

Table 3 shows the total value of motor vehicles stolen and the amount recovered between 1985 through 1989. The percent 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 offenses and arrests in motor vehicle thefts over the past five years; the increase in the value of stolen property increasing may be the result of either a rise in the value (cost) of the vehicle or how many motor vehicles were stolen.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Value Stolen</u>	<u>Total Value Recovered</u>	<u>% Recovered</u>
1985	\$38,556,050	\$30,758,963	79.8%
1986	42,421,324	34,454,681	81.2
1987	40,038,584	30,784,833	76.9
1988	42,026,540	29,536,588	70.3
1989	61,414,651	43,499,415	70.8
Percent Change	+59.3%	+41.4%	-11.3%

VI. CONCLUSION

Motor vehicle thefts in Wisconsin have been increasing steadily in the past five years, with an increase of 23.8% since 1988. Most motor vehicle offenses in the State of Wisconsin occurred in the Southeast area of the State. The number of motor vehicle theft offenses has been increasing more than the number of arrests since 1987. An average of 78% of the reported motor vehicles stolen between 1985 and 1989 were automobiles. Seventy-seven percent of the reported motor vehicle offenses occurring between 1985 and 1989 were in Milwaukee.

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