



National Motor Vehicle
Theft Reduction Council
driving down vehicle theft

Theft WATCH



National Motor Vehicle
Theft Reduction Council –
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Thefts Down by 10,000 in 2004

The number of vehicles reported stolen to Australia's state and territory police services in 2004 was 85,275, equating to one theft for every 167 registered vehicles and a 10 per cent decline on 2003.

Despite small increases in the second half of 2004 – thefts increased by 2 per cent in December and less than one per cent the previous quarter – the overall downward trend in annual theft numbers continues. Almost 10,000 fewer thefts were reported in 2004 than in the previous year and 25,000 fewer than in 2002.

Theft fell in all states and territories for the year: Victoria (3,180 fewer vehicles stolen; down 14 per cent); Western Australia (2,200; 22 per cent); New South Wales (1,640; 5 per cent); Australian Capital Territory* (1,010; 38 per cent); Queensland (1,000; 8 per cent); Tasmania (400; 20 per cent);

Northern Territory (240; 28 per cent); and South Australia (70; 1 per cent).

At the end of December the recovery rate for vehicles stolen in 2004 was 76 per cent. It is expected however that up to another 1,500 vehicles will be reported as recovered within the first few weeks of 2005 bringing the actual recovery rate to around 78 per cent.

Almost 19,000 vehicles stolen in 2004 will never be recovered. Unrecovered vehicles increasingly account for a greater proportion of total thefts. The substantial reduction in theft over the last four years has clearly been related to opportunistic or short term offending rather than professional or organised theft for profit.

** ACT theft reports prior to mid 2004 contain some reports of attempted theft and stolen numberplates.*

Figure 1: Vehicles stolen and stolen vehicles not recovered, Australia, by month, 2001-2004

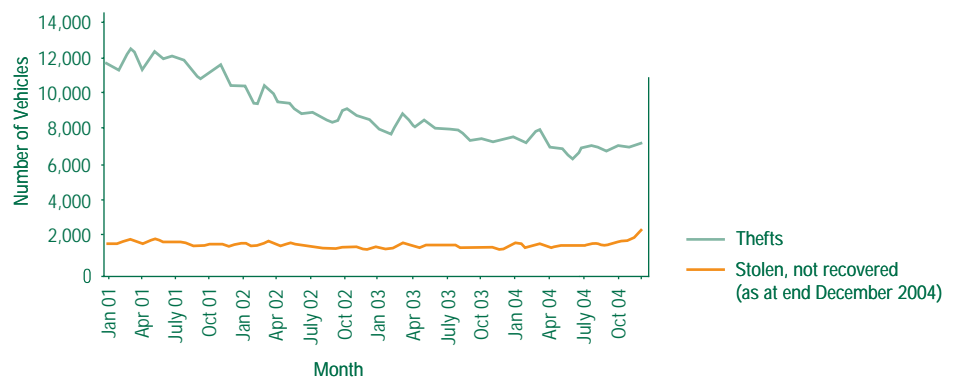


Table 1: Australia, theft snapshot

Calendar Year 2004	
Number of thefts	85,275
% change over previous 12 months	-10%
Thefts per 1,000 population	4.3
Thefts per 1,000 registrations	6.1
Recovery rate	76%
Number of motorcycle thefts	6,011
% change in motorcycle theft over previous 12 months	1%
December 2004 Quarter	
Number of thefts	21,250
% change over quarter	2%
% change over same quarter last year	-5%
Thefts per 1,000 population	1.1
Thefts per 1,000 registrations	1.5
Recovery rate	71%
Number of motorcycle thefts	1,580
% change in motorcycle thefts over same quarter last year	7%

NSW Goes Monthly

New South Wales (NSW) theft data is now supplied to CARS on a monthly basis directly from NSW Police's COPS database.

Information on NSW thefts was previously compiled each quarter by the amalgamation of two data sets and historical records for NSW have now also been revised using the direct data supply.

Stakeholders can access updated theft data for NSW, Victoria and Northern Territory each month via CARS Analyser (www.carsafe.com.au). Other jurisdictions continue to provide data on a quarterly basis.



www.carsafe.com.au

The NMVTRC is an initiative of all Australian Governments and the Insurance Industry

Around Australia

All states and territories recorded fewer thefts in 2004. Northern Territory, Western Australia (WA) and Tasmania recorded the largest percentage reductions: 28, 22 and 20 respectively. WA also recorded the second largest reduction in total numbers with 2,200 fewer thefts in 2004. Victoria recorded the greatest reduction with reported thefts down by almost 3,200.

Table 2: State and territory snapshot, 2004

	Thefts	% change over 2003	% recovered	Thefts per 1,000 population	Thefts per 1,000 registrations
ACT*	1,639	-38	73	5.1	7.6
NSW	32,397	-5	74	4.8	7.9
NT	628	-28	86	3.2	5.9
QLD	12,123	-8	80	3.1	4.4
SA	9,564	-1	85	6.2	8.4
TAS	1,657	-20	92	3.4	4.4
VIC	19,249	-14	76	3.9	5.1
WA	8,018	-22	66	4.1	5.3
Australia	85,275	-10	76	4.3	6.1

* ACT theft reports prior to mid 2004 contain some attempted thefts and stolen numberplates.

What's Hot

One in five stolen vehicles in 2004 was a Holden Commodore. Whether it was an older VN stolen for joyriding or a later model VX stolen for profit, Commodore remains the top choice of vehicle thieves with more than 16,000 stolen in the year (see table 7).

More than five million vehicles in Australia, including many Commodores and Ford Falcons, are more than 12 years old and have minimal or no security. These vehicles drive the nation's theft numbers with around 70 per cent of stolen vehicles falling into this category. The year's top targets – Commodore VL, VN and VK, and Ford Falcon XF and EAII – accounted for 13,000 thefts between them (see table 3).

Because of their lack of security, older vehicles are obvious theft targets for joyriders, those who need transport to support another crime such as burglary or the purchase of drugs, or those who simply want transport. Unless fitted with an after market immobiliser, older cars can usually be 'hotwired' by even the most inexperienced thieves.

The majority of older cars are abandoned and quickly recovered – note the high recovery rates of vehicles listed in table 3 – but have often sustained extensive, and expensive, mechanical and body damage while in the hands of the thief.

Later model vehicles have the benefit of improved technology and, as such, are stolen in much lower numbers. Since 2001, all new passenger cars sold in Australia have been required to have an immobiliser fitted as mandatory equipment, although some manufacturers had already begun introducing the devices to certain models from the mid 1990s.

Improved security means that later model vehicles tend to be targeted by the more persistent opportunists via access to keys and the more organised or professional thieves who steal the vehicle for profit. In 2004, the recovery rate for post-1997 model vehicles was only 68 per cent with more than 5,000 of these later models stolen and never recovered. In comparison,

Table 3: Australia's most stolen cars, 2004

Make/Model/Series	Thefts	% recovered
Holden Commodore VL	3,960	84
Holden Commodore VN	3,050	85
Holden Commodore VK	2,250	87
Ford Falcon XF	2,210	86
Ford Falcon EA II	1,860	88
Hyundai Excel X3	1,490	87
Toyota Tarago	1,481	91
Ford Falcon EA	1,150	87
Holden Commodore VH	1,020	87
Mazda 626	980	85

Table 4: Australia's most stolen late model (post-1997) cars, 2004

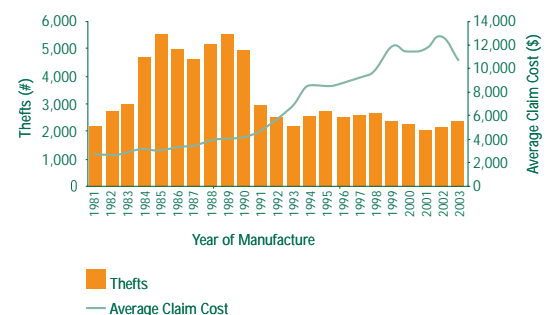
Make/Model/Series	Thefts	Number not recovered	% recovered
Holden Commodore VT	765	248	68
Holden Commodore VX	384	98	75
Holden Commodore VY	385	87	77
Toyota Hilux	261	77	71
Mitsubishi Lancer CE	255	76	70
Subaru Impreza WRX	142	62	56
Ford Falcon AU	293	62	79
Hyundai Excel X3	440	62	86
Toyota Landcruiser 100 Series	131	50	62
Ford Falcon BA	216	49	77

85 per cent of stolen 1980s model vehicles were recovered.

Vehicles most targeted by organised thieves in 2004 were: Holden Commodore VT, VX and VY, Toyota Hilux and Mitsubishi Lancer CE (refer table 4). These cars suffered the highest number of unrecovered thefts.

It is worth noting that all but one of the unrecovered Subaru Impreza WRX vehicles in 2004 were manufactured prior to Subaru Australia's introduction of key pad immobiliser systems to their highest risk cars and VIN-based microdots across their entire vehicle range.

Figure 2: Thefts and average insurance claim cost by vehicle year of manufacture, Australia, 2004



No Immobiliser: Quadruple the Risk

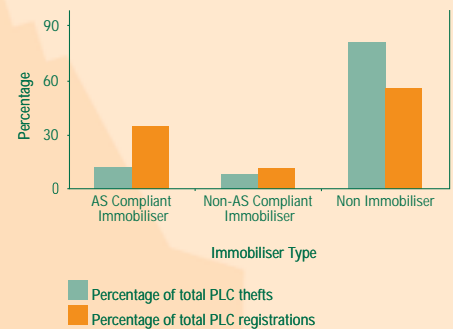
Vehicles without immobilisers comprise only 55 per cent of Australia's registered passenger and light commercial (PLC) vehicle fleet but account for eight out of every ten thefts.

Overall, one in every 164 registered PLC vehicles was reported stolen in 2004. The rate of theft was significantly higher for non-immobilised vehicles at one theft for every 113 registered. Vehicles protected by an Australian Standards (AS)

compliant immobiliser were stolen at a rate of only one in every 457 vehicles with the risk almost doubling to one in every 230 for vehicles with a non-complying device.

Taking advantage of owner carelessness, key theft and in a small number of cases burglary or violence to access keys have become the most common methods of stealing immobilised cars.

Figure 3: Proportion of thefts and registrations by immobiliser type, passenger and light commercial (PLC) vehicles, Australia, 2004



Motorcycles: Once Gone, Rarely Recovered

Seven per cent (7 per cent) of all stolen vehicles reported in 2004 were motorcycles. Although it is commonly held that many motorcycle thefts are not reported due to relatively low values, low levels of insurance and the unregistered status of many bikes, police reporting remains the most reliable basis for identifying overall trends.

Police received 6,011 reports of motorcycle theft in 2004: a 1 per cent increase over the previous year. This equates to 200 fewer motorcycles stolen than four years ago compared to 52,000 fewer for other passenger vehicles.

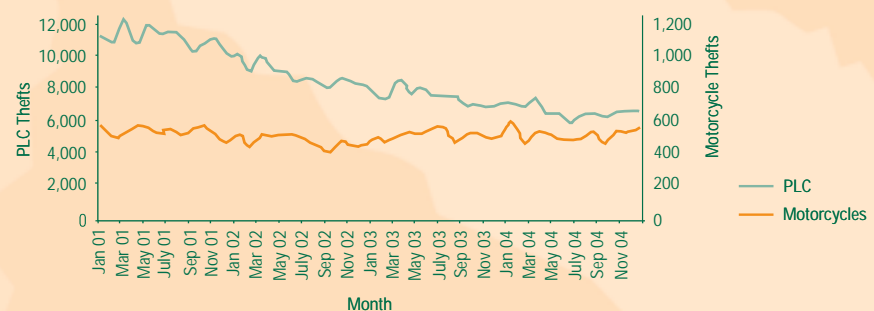
Motorcycles have an extremely low recovery rate of only 29 per cent, indicating that they are primarily targeted for profit. Unregistered motorcycles have an even lower recovery rate of just 17 per cent. Almost one third of reported stolen motorcycles in 2004 were unregistered.

Yamaha and Honda made up six out of every 10 motorcycles stolen in 2004. Almost half of all stolen bikes were manufactured from 2000 onwards.

Table 5: Theft and recovery of reported stolen motorcycles, Australia, 2004

	Thefts	% recovered
All Makes	6,011	29
Yamaha	1,720	32
Honda	1,716	25
Suzuki	733	30
Kawasaki	701	34
KTM	166	25
Harley Davidson	147	16

Figure 4: Number of thefts by month, passenger and light commercial (PLC) vehicles and motorcycles, Australia, 2004



Definitions

The NMVTRC's CARS database uses definitions provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to define motor vehicle and motor vehicle theft.

According to the ABS, a motor vehicle is "a self propelled vehicle that runs on land surface (but is not restricted to rails or tram lines) and is eligible

for registration for use on public roads. This includes but is not limited to: car, motorcycle, campervan, truck, lorry, bus, grader and tractor."

Non-motorised vehicles such as trailers or caravans are not included in theft information published by the NMVTRC.

Motor vehicle theft is defined as taking a motor vehicle unlawfully or without permission. Incidents of attempted theft, damaging or tampering with a vehicle, where the vehicle has not been moved, are not included in the NMVTRC's theft data.

Counting the Costs

Australian insurers provided details of almost 38,000 finalised claims in 2004, totalling \$294 million*. This represents almost 10,000 fewer claims and \$27 million less in costs compared to the claim sample provided in 2001.

Claim costs refer to the net cost incurred by an insurer in finalising a claim, including any revenue received from the salvage of the recovered vehicle and excess deductions. Costs may include, for example, settlement payment to the policyholder, repair costs, hire car fees, towing fees, external assessor and investigator fees, and auctioneer services.

The average claim cost for the 2004 sample was \$7,780. Agreed value policies accounted for 57 per cent of claims but 66 per cent of the year's total costs. The average cost to finalise an agreed value claim was \$9,140.

In general, older model vehicles generate lower claim costs. For example, of the top targets listed in table 7, 90 per cent of Tarago and Laser vehicles and almost 70 per cent of Commodores stolen in 2004 were manufactured before 1991.

Lower recovery rates of later model vehicles drive higher average claim costs. Four models of four wheel drive vehicles were amongst those with high thefts, high claim numbers and high costs with three models of Toyota Landcruiser alone accounting for almost \$4 million.

From a victim's perspective theft can also be costly. NMVTRC's surveys reveal that, on average (including both insured and uninsured victims), theft victims are left around \$5,000 out of pocket once all costs related to the theft are taken into account.

The NMVTRC acknowledges all police services, registration authorities, participating insurers, the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, Polk Autospec and Insurance Australia Group for their supply of data.

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Costs to victims include: covering the shortfall between an insurance payout and the purchase of another vehicle of equal reliability; insurance penalties and registration costs; replacement of non insured personal items such as tools, and electrical or sporting equipment that were in the car when stolen; organising alternative transport for the time spent without a car; and the extensive amount of time and inconvenience spent resolving the problem.

* The NMVTRC's CARS database receives finalised insurance claim details from Australia's top 20 insurers.

Table 6: Insurance snapshot, 2004

Number of claims finalised	37,800
Total claim costs	\$294m
Claims with costs >\$100,000	41 claims totalling \$6m
Average claim cost	\$7,780
Average cost – agreed value policy	\$9,140
Average cost – market value policy	\$5,100

Table 7: Thefts and insurance claim costs by most stolen make and models, Australia, 2004

Make/Model	Thefts	Thefts per 1,000 registrations	Average claim cost (\$)	Sum of claims (\$)
Holden Commodore	16,312	12.2	6,760	46,114,737
Ford Falcon	8,976	8.9	6,282	17,984,214
Ford Laser	3,629	12.3	3,339	4,370,680
Toyota Corolla	2,452	4.8	5,406	5,319,124
Hyundai Excel	1,696	7.5	4,507	5,777,462
Mitsubishi Magna	1,590	3.7	5,998	5,074,258
Toyota Camry	1,590	3.2	6,380	5,072,154
Toyota Tarago	1,481	27.7	6,012	2,633,101
Nissan Pulsar	1,338	5.1	6,063	4,450,292
Toyota Corona	1,232	26.3	2,248	537,254

Table 8: Highest average claim costs for late model (post 1997) vehicles*, Australia, 2004

Make/Model/Series	Average claim cost (\$)	Sum of claims (\$)	Thefts in 2004	Thefts per 1,000 registrations
Nissan 200SX S15	30,942	742,597	56	15.3
Mitsubishi Pajero NM	26,161	1,909,777	60	2.9
Toyota Landcruiser Prado 90 Series	24,566	1,768,732	73	1.8
HSV Clubsport VX	24,216	702,269	26	7.8
Holden Statesman WH	23,575	966,576	67	3.6
Toyota Landcruiser 70 Series	22,485	562,129	147	3.3
Toyota Landcruiser 100 Series	19,546	1,563,662	132	1.9
Holden Calais VT	19,210	749,173	42	4.4
Holden Monaro V2 III	18,940	1,563,662	132	19.4
Volkswagen Passat	18,427	749,173	42	6.6

* For vehicle types with more than 20 claims finalised and more than 20 thefts.

Want more statistics?

Follow the links to QuickStats or CARS Analyser on the NMVTRC's website – www.carsafe.com.au



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