Assessment of Motor Vehicle Thefts in Colorado 2017

Purpose

The Auto Theft Intelligence Coordination Center (ATICC) has prepared the following assessment regarding the occurrence of motor vehicle theft in Colorado, during the period of January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017.

Data used in this report is sourced from the Colorado Stolen Vehicle Database Repository administered by the ATICC. The repository contains records of all stolen and recovered vehicles entered and removed from the Colorado Crime Information Center (CCIC).

Key Findings

- The Colorado Stolen Vehicle Database Repository captured a total of 19,488 motor vehicle thefts statewide during 2017.
- Compared to the 18,047 thefts that were reported during 2016, Colorado experienced an 8% increase in motor vehicle thefts during 2017. However the rate of increase of theft in 2017 declined 13.6% from the rate of theft in 2016. In 2016 the rate of increase from 2015 was 21.55%. Over the last couple of years, Colorado has still observed an overall theft increase, but that rate of increase has been lessening each year.
- 66.8% of stolen vehicles were reported in the Gold Camp area, 18.6% in Pikes Peak area, 7.5% in Longs Peak area, 2.2% in the Grand River area, 2% in the Four Corners area, and 0.8% in the area of High Prairie.
- 17,756 stolen vehicles were recovered in 2017, which equates to an 91% vehicle recovery rate;
- While 17,756 vehicles were recovered, only 9,854 recoveries entered into CCIC included a theft address; therefore, 44.5% of recovery records statewide do not include a recovery address– a mandatory entry in the "locate vehicle" mask of CCIC. However, agencies are bypassing the "locate vehicle" screen and either clearing or deleting the vehicle entry.
- The completion of information in the ATICC supplemental continues to be an area of concern. ATICC Team members started traveling around Colorado in the fall of 2017, which has shown to be effective as 2017 has shown to have the highest completion rate in years, which equated to 20.8%. In 2016 there was an 8.7% decrease of data entry from 2015.
- The top five vehicles stolen statewide in 2017 were (in ranking order): Honda Civic, Honda Accord, Subaru Impreza, Ford F250, and Chevrolet Silverado.
- Although mostly accurate, the ATICC continues to strive to improve collection standards and account for gaps that exist. Reporting standards in 2017 are similar to 2016 through the ATICC database. However, the ATICC database results should not be directly compared to the 2017 FBI Crime in the US Report due to different collection methods.

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General Observations

Auto theft has continued on a gradual rise since 2012. In 2017, Colorado experienced a 8% increase in auto theft from the previous year. Even though, the thefts from 2017 increased from 2016, the rate of theft slowed by 13.5% (2015 saw an increase of 29.7%, where 2016 had a 21.5% increase).

2013-2017 Vehicle Thefts
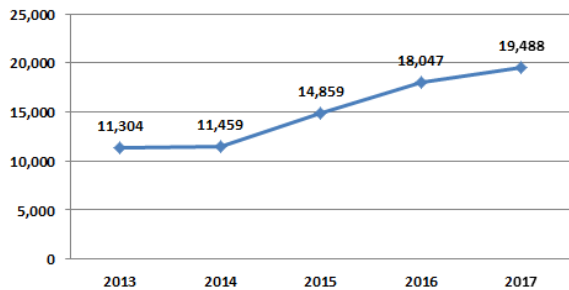
In 2017, there was an average of 1,624 vehicles stolen every month in Colorado. This is a monthly increase of 121 more stolen vehicles per month than experienced in 2016. There was an average of 375 vehicles reported stolen every week, and an average of 53 vehicle thefts every day in the state.

Using the F.B.I.'s average dollar loss per stolen vehicle reported in 2017 ($7,680), Colorado experienced $149,667,840.00 loss. Compared to 2016 ($7,001), there was an additional $23,320,793.00 of loss in 2017. This value is not considered an average vehicle value but a value based on the economic survival loss related to the vehicle's theft from the time it was stolen until it was recovered.

In 2017, mid-summer through late winter seemed to have a continual theft pattern.

2017 Thefts by Month
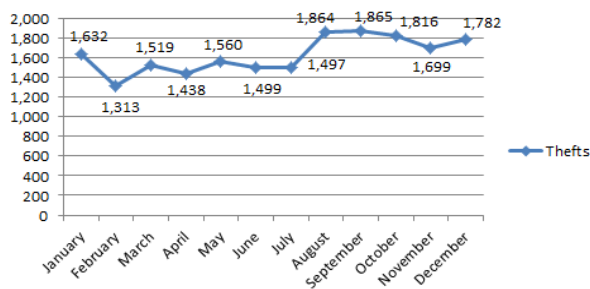
The US Census Bureau estimated the population of Colorado in 2017 was 5,607,154. [i] With this in mind, there was an annual average of 348 vehicle thefts per 100,000 people. This is an increase of 23 vehicles per capita compared to 2016.
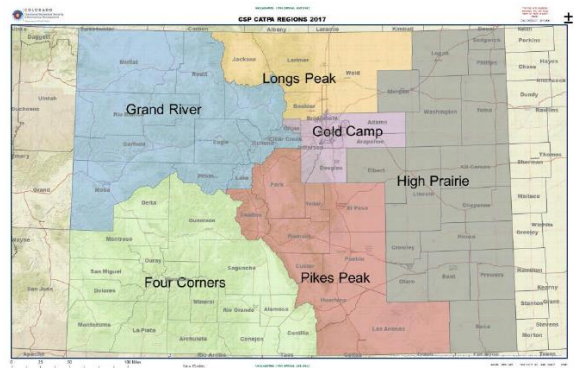
In Colorado the state is divided into six different areas pertaining to auto theft and auto theft task forces. The Gold Camp and Pikes Peak areas accounted for an 85.1% majority of reported vehicle thefts.

CATPA Area	2014	2015	2016	2017	2016/2017 %Δ
Four Corners	254	263	317	386	21.77%
Gold Camp	7,441	10,014	11,760	13,026	10.77%
Grand River	299	405	400	435	8.75%
High Prairie	144	157	159	151	-5.03%
Longs Peak	966	1,171	1,504	1,453	-3.6%
Pikes Peak	2,349	2,849	3,598	3,630	0.67%
Total	11,459	14,859	18,047	19,488	7.98%

Colorado Auto Theft Hot Spots

In 2017 the hot spots for auto theft occurred in and around larger cities. As seen in the heat map below, these include: Boulder, Canon City, Colorado Springs, Denver Metro, Fort Collins, Grand Junction, Greeley, La Junta, Lafayette/Erie, Loveland, Montrose, Pueblo, and Sterling.
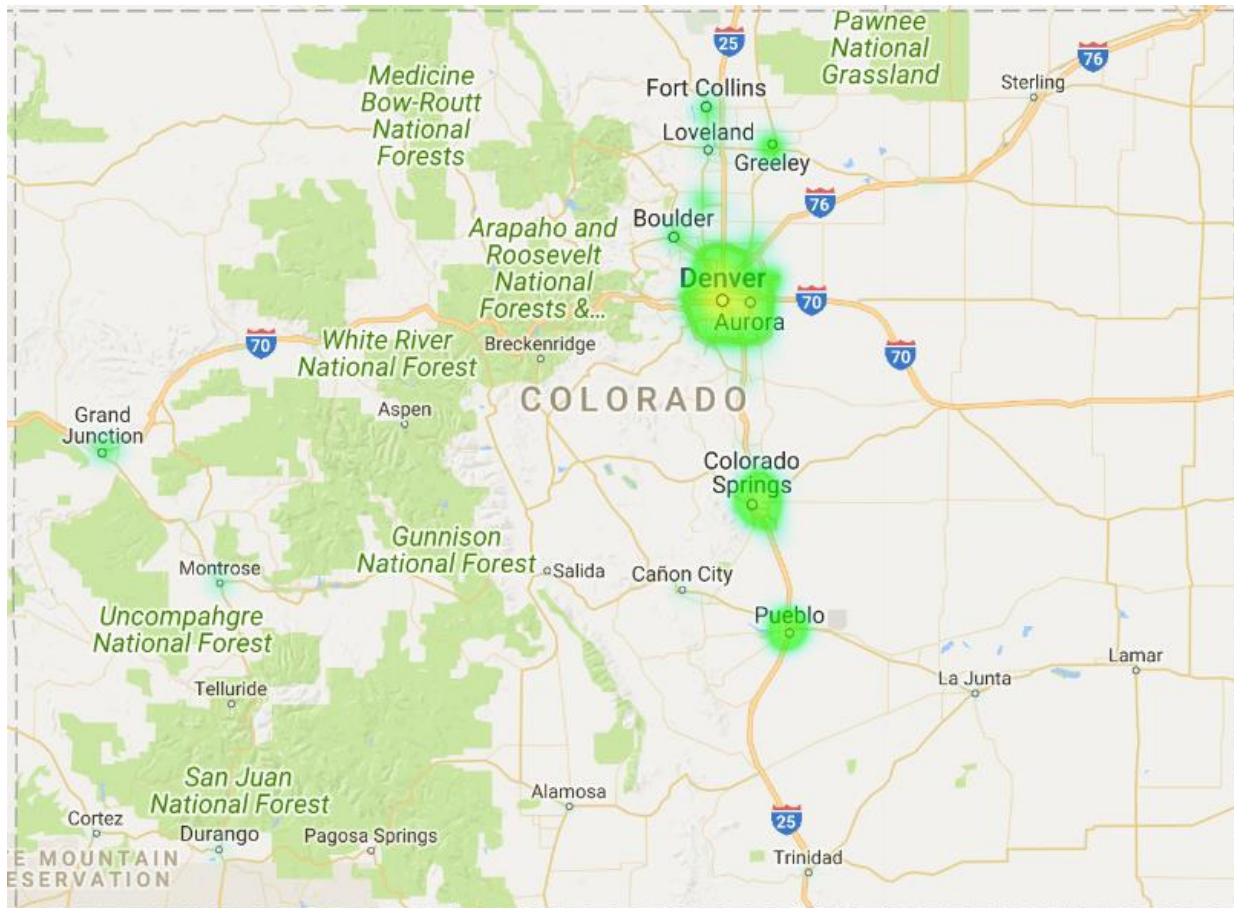
Statistics

The following reporting agencies reported three or more vehicle thefts per week. These communities accounted for 83% of all reported vehicles thefts in the state. These reporting agencies were located in or around Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Fort Collins, and Greeley.

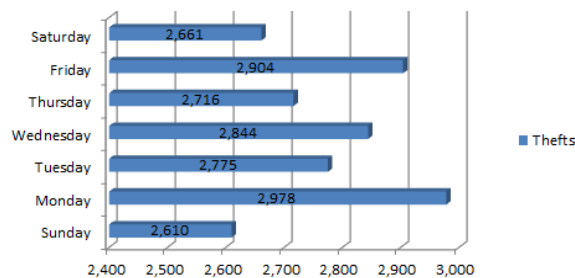| Reporting Agency	Thefts	Weekly Average
Statewide	19,488	375
Denver	5,625	108
Colorado Springs	2,086	40
Aurora	2,016	39
Pueblo	1,149	22
Lakewood	922	18
Thornton	694	13
Westminster	674	13
Arvada	388	8
Englewood	350	7
Littleton	321	6
Commerce City	320	6
Blank	310	6
Greeley	290	6
Northglenn	269	5
Fort Collins	256	5
Wheat Ridge	254	5
Boulder	223	4

Considering the number of weekdays in 2017, the highest volume of theft days continues to be on Fridays and Mondays.

2017 Thefts by Day of Week

Day	Thefts
Saturday	2,661
Friday	2,904
Thursday	2,716
Wednesday	2,844
Tuesday	2,775
Monday	2,978
Sunday	2,610

Of the 19,488 vehicles stolen during 2017, 86% (16,719) of reported stolen vehicles were deemed "inactive" in 2017. The following is a breakdown of the reported stolen vehicles by vehicle type.

Vehicle Styles	Active Thefts	Inactive Thefts	Grand Total Thefts
Bus	2	3	5
Construction/Farm	61	30	91
Moped/Scooter	51	12	72
Motorcycle	576	528	1,104
Passenger Car	550	7,875	8,430
Pickup Truck	314	2,919	3,235
Recreational Vehicle	61	45	106
SUV	355	3,902	4,257
Trailer	601	484	1,085
Tractor Truck/Truck	38	116	154
Van	62	662	724
Unknown (Blank)	0	4	4
Grand Total	2,671	16,580	19,251

In 2017 there were 17,756 recovered vehicles where the vehicle was stolen during 2017. Of these vehicles, 48% of the vehicles were recovered within one week from the date of theft.

Recovery Delay	Stolen in 2017	Percentage
Same Day Recovery	1,504	9%
1 Day to 1 Week	8,516	51%
1 Week to 1 Month	4,822	29%
1 Month to 3 Months	1,350	8%
3 Months to 6 Months	372	2%
6 Months to 1 Year	155	1%
Total	16,719	100%

The leading vehicle thefts, by make and model, are the Honda Civic followed by the Honda Accord. These two vehicle models account for 12.9% of all vehicle thefts in 2017, which is an increase of 0.3% from 2016.

Rank	Make & Model	Class	Thefts
1	Honda Civic	Small Car	1,282
2	Honda Accord	Mid-size Car	1,224
3	Subaru Impreza	Small Car	538
4	Ford F-250	Full-size Pickup	493
5	Chevrolet Silverado	Full-size Pickup	368
6	Jeep Cherokee	Mid-size MPV	328
7	Ford F-350	Full-size Pickup	315
8	Ford F-150	Full-size Pickup	300
9	Dodge Ram Pickup	Full-size Pickup	300
10	Subaru Legacy	Mid-size Car	298
11	Toyota Camry	Mid-size Car	269
12	Jeep Grand Cherokee	Mid-size MPV	257
13	GMC Sierra	Full-size Pickup	191
14	Toyota Corolla	Small Car	184
15	Honda CR-V	Small MPV	173
16	Acura Integra	Small Car	170
17	Chevrolet Tahoe	Full-size SUV	166
18	Ford Explorer	Mid-size MPV	164
19	Subaru Outback	Small MPV	163
20	Nissan Altima	Small Car	140

Puffer Vehicles

The Stolen Vehicle Database Repository was searched for any notation that may lend identification to a vehicle theft where, at the time of theft, the vehicle was unattended and left running. These thefts would be considered "Puffer Thefts" by the Colorado Auto Theft Prevention Authority (CATPA). The database resulted in a total of 229 thefts where a notation was made that the vehicle was a puffer. This is a 15.1% increase over 2016's 199. In addition, there were 669 vehicle theft records identifying that keys were left in or with the vehicle at the time of the theft. This is a 137.2% increase over 2016's 282. These vehicle records attribute to 4.6% of all vehicle thefts in 2017 versus 2.67% in 2016. These numbers do not include victims of vehicle theft who do not report they left their vehicle unattended and running. Additionally, the ATICC database does not require law enforcement reporting of a puffer event.
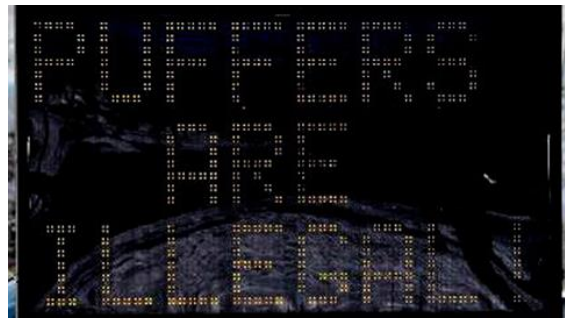
Auto Theft Victim Impact

Auto theft is considered a property crime; however, stolen vehicles are often used to commit other crimes. Drug use connected with auto theft is very common in Colorado. There is a financial impact on the victim as well as potential danger associated with a recovered stolen vehicle. Victims are encouraged to check their cars for damage, illegal drugs, drug paraphernalia, and other contraband. The victim should carefully vacuum the vehicle and wipe down the interior surfaces with a disinfectant. If the vehicle was stolen with the key and they key was not recovered, a new ignition switch should be installed. Locks on the victim's home, office, and other buildings should be changed if the thief had access to their keys. Garage door codes should be changed and enhanced security measures should be taken at home, since the thief knows where the victim lives.

Auto Theft Volume by County

County	Area	2015 Thefts	% Δ '14-'15	2016 Thefts	% Δ '15-'16	2017 Thefts	% Δ '16-'17
Adams County	Gold Camp	2,428	3%	4,447	83%	3,039	-31.7%
Alamosa County	Four Corners	27	-16%	27	-	34	25.9%
Arapahoe County	Gold Camp	1,698	181%	973	-43%	2,843	192.2%
Archuleta County	Four Corners	14	56%	3	-27%	11	266.7%
Baca County	High Prairie	2	-60%	1	-50%	1	-
Bent County	High Prairie	5	-44%	9	80%	10	11.1%
Boulder County	Longs Peak	343	10%	398	16%	470	18.1%
Broomfield County	Gold Camp	85	85%	130	53%	144	10.8%
Chaffee County	Pikes Peak	21	17%	33	57%	22	-33.3%
Cheyenne County	High Prairie	0	-100%	0	-	2	200%
Clear Creek County	Grand River	15	50%	18	20%	21	18.7%
Conejos County	Four Corners	7	75%	5	-29%	9	80%
Costilla County	Four Corners	5	-44%	5	-	12	140%
Crowley County	High Prairie	5	0%	7	4-%	0	-100%
Custer County	Pikes Peak	2	-71%	2	-	3	50%
Delta County	Four Corners	39	11%	51	31%	43	-15.7%
Denver County	Gold Camp	3,922	25%	4,210	7%	4,700	11.6%
Dolores County	Four Corners	2	0%	3	50%	2	-33.3%
Douglas County	Gold Camp	215	12%	244	13%	268	9.8%
Eagle County	Grand River	25	47%	24	-4%	27	12.5%
El Paso County	Pikes Peak	1,749	8%	2,190	25%	2,249	2.7%
Elbert County	Gold Camp	9	-18%	13	44%	10	-23.1%
Fremont County	Pikes Peak	63	34%	66	5%	62	-6.1%
Garfield County	Grand River	60	40%	65	8%	69	6.2%
Gilpin County	Gold Camp	7	-50%	15	114%	18	20%
Grand County	Grand River	4	-20%	22	450%	17	-22.7%
Gunnison County	Four Corners	14	250%	8	-43%	20	150%

County	Area	2015 Thefts	% Δ '14-'15	2016 Thefts	% Δ '15-'16	2017 Thefts	% Δ '16-'17
Hinsdale County	Four Corners	3	0%	0	-100%	0	-
Huerfano County	Pikes Peak	11	83%	18	64%	15	-16.7%
Jackson County	Longs Peak	1	0%	3	200%	1	-66.7%
Jefferson County	Gold Camp	1,633	53%	1,838	13%	1,969	7.1%
Kiowa County	High Prairie	2	-33%	1	-50%	4	300%
Kit Carson County	High Prairie	11	38%	11	-	7	-36.4%
La Plata County	Four Corners	49	29%	64	31%	77	20.3%
Lake County	Grand River	7	133%	8	14%	5	-37.5%
Larimer County	Longs Peak	270	25%	390	44%	419	7.4%
Las Animas County	Pikes Peak	12	-14%	29	142%	29	-
Lincoln County	Gold Camp	9	350%	8	-11%	7	-12.5%
Logan County	High Prairie	28	-7%	39	39%	24	-38.5%
Mesa County	Grand River	168	-3%	227	35%	243	7.1%
Mineral County	Four Corners	-	-	0	-	0	-
Moffat County	Grand River	8	-43%	8	-	17	112.5%
Montezuma County	Four Corners	34	79%	24	-29%	33	37.5
Montrose County	Four Corners	53	89%	89	68%	121	36%
Morgan County	High Prairie	29	7%	36	24%	41	13.9%
Otero County	High Prairie	26	18%	34	31%	37	8.8%
Ouray County	Four Corners	1	-50%	4	300%	5	25%
Park County	Pikes Peak	10	43%	16	60%	9	-43.8%
Phillips County	High Prairie	2	0%	1	-50%	1	-
Pitkin County	Grand River	3	-57%	15	400%	13	-13.3%
Prowers County	High Prairie	11	22%	10	-9%	9	-10%
Pueblo County	Pikes Peak	611	24%	1,228	101%	1,216	-1%
Rio Blanco County	Grand River	3	-40%	1	-67%	3	200%
Rio Grande County	Four Corners	11	267%	19	73%	11	-42.1%
Routt County	Grand River	12	0%	4	-67%	10	150%
Saguache County	Four Corners	6	500%	5	-17%	5	-
San Juan County	Four Corners	0	-	0	-	1	100%
San Miguel County	Four Corners	5	67%	2	-60%	2	-
Sedgwick County	High Prairie	-	-	0	-	4	400%
Summit County	Grand River	23	21%	27	17%	20	-25.9%
Teller County	Pikes Peak	17	55%	15	-12%	17	13.3%
Unknown		6	-	182	-	0	-100%
Washington County	High Prairie	4	300%	4	-	4	-
Weld County	Longs Peak	382	14%	713	87%	560	-21.5%
Yuma County	High Prairie	10	0%	4	-60%	7	75%
Total		15,062	25%	18,046	20%	19,447	7.8%

Call to Action

The ATICC along with the CATPA funded Auto Theft Task Forces need to work collaboratively to improve collection and reporting standards of auto theft data. ATICC is also reaching out to all Agency dispatcher/records unit to give update training on entering data into the ATICC Mask databse.

Appendix A – Stolen Vehicle Data Validation Processes and Reliability

The Stolen Vehicle Database Repository is the best solution we have to compile a review of statewide auto theft data. It is believed that this data could be significantly more useful with statewide agencies participating to complete the ATICC Supplemental. The ATICC Supplemental is accessed through the Colorado Crime Information Center and enables the ability to collect additional data for a motor vehicle theft event. This supplemental reporting includes additional identifiers related to suspects, modus operandi, victims and the vehicle condition when the vehicle was stolen and when it was recovered. Lastly, ATICC encourages using CCIC stolen vehicle entries compliant with the data standards as outlined in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) /CCIC User's Manual.

Process 1: Origination of Data
Since January 2010, the CATPA has funded a project for the collection, analysis and dissemination of auto theft incidence occurring within Colorado. This project funded the ATICC, operated and managed by the Colorado State Patrol. ATICC was funded to provide reliable, timely, and accurate information/intelligence pertaining to the incidence of auto theft. ATICC has acquired stolen vehicle records for conducting analysis and study of vehicle thefts reported to the Colorado Crime Information Center (CCIC). These stolen vehicle records are classified as law enforcement sensitive and are compliant with the FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Security Policy. ATICC uses the stolen vehicle records, as entered into CCIC, for administrative, strategic and tactical analytical products. In July 2012, ATICC successfully implemented an information technology system to database stolen vehicles reported into CCIC. This database, called the Stolen Vehicle Database Repository (SVDR), affords the ability to capture vehicles that are reported stolen and those that are cleared, located and/or recovered. This report is exclusive to information obtained from the SVDR.

Data used in this report is inclusive of vehicles stolen that are reported to the Colorado Crime Information Center with a date of theft range of January 01, 2017 to December 31, 2017. Stolen vehicles included in this report include vehicles entered into CCIC as a "stolen vehicle" message. The actual number of auto thefts in Colorado is likely higher than reported, as some incidences of auto theft may not be reported to law enforcement, law enforcement agencies may not have entered other stolen vehicles into CCIC due to a stolen vehicle recovery occurring prior to completing the jurisdiction's reporting and processing procedures, and other stolen vehicles may have been reported as a carjacking and/or a felony crime involved stolen vehicle incident. Information contained in the Stolen Vehicle Database Repository is considered dynamic, as modifications, changes and amendments to the stolen vehicle records are made on a daily basis.

Process 2: CCIC Data Validation
Stolen vehicle records entered into CCIC undergo validation standards established by National Crime Information Center and CCIC.

Process 3: Data Range
Stolen vehicles were obtained by a query of the SVDR for thefts occurring from January 01, 2017 through December 31, 2017, and this data was pulled on January 18, 2018.

Process 4: Deduplication of the 2017 Dataset
The dataset was reviewed for duplicate records, based on unique record identifier, vehicle identification number, case number, and license plate number, to ensure a single vehicle theft record is not counted more than one time.

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Process 5: Test Records
The 2017 database was examined to identify "test records", which were not records of actual stolen vehicles, but records entered as tests in the system. These records were not used in this report.

Process 6: Identification of Removed Vehicles
Records that were removed during the year were not identified as to why the stolen vehicle was inactive from CCIC. ATICC has identified user errors and misuse of message keys where vehicles are removed from CCIC that may not have been actually "recovered."   However, ATICC does not have the technological advantage to ensure the appropriate message keys to validate the purpose of the inactivation, e.g., cancellation, locate or clear (recovery). Briefly stated, removals from the CCIC database occur from three messages conducted by CCIC authorized users from the Originating Agency who performed the initial entry. These three CCIC message keys are a "clear", "locate" and "cancel" of the record. The "clear" (CV) and "locate" (LV) message is performed when a vehicle has been located and is subsequently removed from the CCIC/NCIC database. Accordingly, a "clear" is supposed to be performed by the agency that entered the vehicle and then subsequently recovered it. The "locate" is supposed to be performed when an agency, other than the one who originally entered the vehicle into CCIC, has located the vehicle. The "cancel" (XV) record is supposed to be performed when an agency discovers the vehicle was not stolen, yet was originally recorded into CCIC as stolen, and thus needs to be cancelled. Current data processes/practices within the CCIC system treats the CV, LV and XV message the same, regardless of the technical definitions. When reviewing the SVDR records for the purpose of removal from CCIC, it was observed that CCIC Users inappropriately utilize the XV (Cancellation) message key in lieu of the CV (Clear) or LV (Locate). This cause's additional analytical concern as each XV message key had to be examined as to whether or not the vehicle was truly cancelled or recovered. The process of using a Cancel message key should invoke cases where a previously stolen vehicle entry was discovered not to have been stolen (e.g., joyriding, mistaken vehicle identity, etc.). However, based on law enforcement experience of ATICC personnel, the comparative records of "true" XV messages affecting the overall analysis are minimal. In other words, ATICC believes some of the identified cancellations were a result of stolen vehicles being recovered. In accordance with NCIC policy and law enforcement practice, an official police report of a stolen vehicle must be made prior to the CCIC entry. The result of the aforementioned is that ATICC treated the message keys of "inactive," "cancel," "clear," and "locate" as inactivity in the stolen vehicle database, thus inferring each message key was a recovery.

Process 7: Identifying Re-Entered Entries
As discussed in last year's Annual Report, several law enforcement agencies have engaged in a practice to re-enter a stolen vehicle in CCIC/NCIC in order to maintain an alert on the vehicle in the event the vehicle is checked through the system.   Qualitative screening involved searching the miscellaneous field for key words and notations, and the stolen vehicle case number indicating re-entry from previous purging.

Process 8: Normalizing the Dataset
The SVDR populates a list of common terminologies to normalize the dataset, including the common name of the reporting agency, vehicle identifiers based on the vehicle identification number (using VinLink lookup), theft/recovery areas in accordance with the designated CATPA area map, and county assignments based on the assigned CCIC originating reporting agency identifier. As part of using the key indexing charts, many fields of the database underwent cleaning and scrubbing to ensure normalization of key words and terms (e.g., Denver PD vs. Denver vs. Denver City vs. Den vs. Denver CO vs. Denver, CO vs. Denver, Colorado vs. Denver Colorado, etc.).

Process 9: Cleaning the Dataset with Investigatory Tools
Current CCIC policies do have mandates for a stolen vehicle file to be accepted into the CCIC database, where limited primary fields of information are required. These primary fields of information include, but all are not necessarily required: the date of theft, case number, originating agency identifier number, vehicle make, and vehicle identifier (license plate, vehicle identification number, owner applied number or production number). Unfortunately, for

analytical purposes, other key information is not required for entry by the CCIC authorized user. Examples include the vehicle model and style. To add further challenges to cleaning the dataset, when key analytical data is entered, it is oftentimes inaccurate due to a lack of data standardization. For example, when the style of the vehicle is entered, it is oftentimes incorrect as the style field does not match the vehicle make and model (i.e., pickups may be entered as passenger cars; SUVs as pickups; scooters as motorcycles, etc.). The most significant value added to the data analysis was information obtained from VinLink®. This tool provided 47 various identifiers for each vehicle possessing a valid VIN entry in the database.

Process 10: Reliability Note
Based on the above notations, it is obvious the database used to compile this report has limitations and justifies the direction that ATICC is moving in acquiring completion of the ATICC Supplemental. The ATICC Supplemental provides the ability to analyze additional information involving the vehicle theft event and its recovery, such as the suspect information, their location, how a vehicle was stolen (e.g., puffing, forcible entry, etc.), the condition of a vehicle upon recovery, and any associated crimes involving the particular vehicle theft and its recovery. Unfortunately, the dataset is unable to provide valid analysis of these identifiers as few agencies used the ATICC Supplemental within the CCIC stolen vehicle file upon the report of theft and/or the vehicle recovery event.

With regards to the accuracy and reliability of the CCIC data used in this report:
> 1) There is no other uniform statewide reporting system for auto theft other than CCIC stolen vehicle file,
> 2) The CCIC entries were not intended to provide a records management system for analysis of auto theft,
> 3) There is established criteria and validation of entries made into the SVDR that many individual law enforcement records management systems do not possess (e.g., VinLink, CJIS validation standards, etc.) and
> 4) It is recommended to keep in mind the actual numbers are likely higher than portrayed, but it is believed this report provides the best picture of auto theft experienced in Colorado.

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[i] Colorado http://www.census.gov/search-results.html?q=colorado&page=1&stateGeo=none&searchtype=web&cssp=SERP&search.x=0&search.y=0
Accessed 13 February 2017