Assessment of Motor Vehicle Thefts in Colorado 2019

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CATPA
Colorado Auto Theft Prevention Authority
Department of Public Safety

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, 2019 through December 31, 2019.

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 20,271 motor vehicle thefts statewide during 2019.
- Compared to the 20,952 thefts that were reported during 2018, Colorado experienced a 3.3% decrease in motor vehicle thefts during 2019.
- 66% of stolen vehicles were reported in the Denver Metro area, 20% in Southern area, 9% in Northern area, 2% in the Western area, 2% in the South West area, and 1% in the Eastern area.
- 17,047 stolen vehicles were recovered in 2019, which equates to an 88% vehicle recovery rate;
- The completion of information in the ATICC supplemental continues to be an area of concern. ATICC staff will coordinate communications and/or training opportunities for the appropriate data entry personnel.
- The top five vehicles stolen statewide in 2019 were (in ranking order): Honda Civic, Honda Accord, Dodge/RAM RAM*; Ford F250 and Chevrolet Silverado. (*As of 2009, RAM became a "make" under FIAT management. Dodge remained the "make" for the passenger style vehicles while RAM became the "make" for the pickup/truck style vehicles. As an initial standard, ATICC and CMATT analysts currently combine all pickup/truck styles under DODGE/RAM "make". A more standard model will be sought moving forward.
- Although mostly accurate, the ATICC continues to strive to improve collection standards and account for gaps that exist. Reporting standards in 2019 are similar to 2018 through the ATICC database. However, the ATICC database results should not be directly compared to the 2019 FBI Crime in the US Report due to different collection methods.

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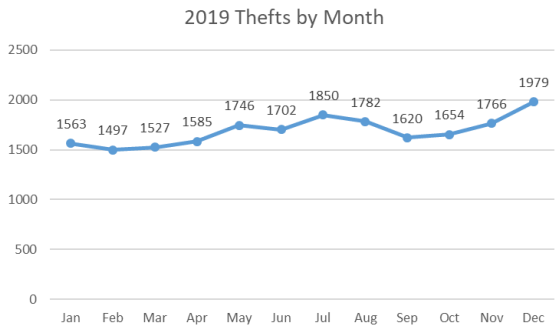
General Observations

Auto theft had continued on a gradual rise since 2012. In 2019, Colorado experienced a 3.3% decrease in auto theft from the previous year.

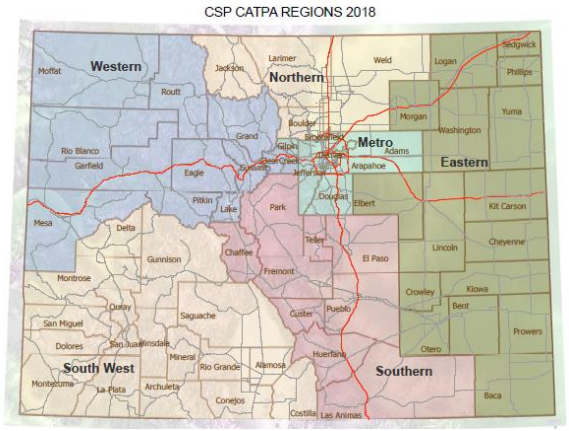
In 2019, there was an average of 1,689 vehicles stolen every month in Colorado. This is a monthly decrease of approximately 57 less stolen vehicles per month than experienced in 2018 (1746). There was an average of 390 vehicles reported stolen every week, and an average of 56 vehicle thefts every day in the state.

Using the F.B.I.'s average dollar loss per stolen vehicle reported in 2019 ($8,407)[1], Colorado experienced $170,418,297 loss. Compared to 2018, there was an additional $6,649,977 of loss in 2019 (The value assessed by the FBI increased since the last reported value). 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 2019, mid-summer through early fall showed a decrease rate of theft pattern. However, from late fall through the end of the year there was an increase theft pattern ending with 1979 thefts reported in December.



The US Census Bureau estimated the population of Colorado in 2019 was 5,758,736.[2] On average Colorado has observed a population growth of 79,663 per year for the last five years. With this in mind, there was an annual average of 352 vehicle thefts per 100,000 people. This is a decrease of 22 vehicles per capita compared to 2018 (374).



Colorado is divided into six different areas pertaining to auto theft and auto theft task forces. The Denver Metro and Southern areas accounted for an 86% majority of reported vehicle thefts.

CATPA Area	2016	2017	2018	2019	%Δ2018/2019
Denver Metro	11,760	13,206	13,829	13,305	-3.70%
Eastern	159	151	261	209	-19.90%
Northern	1,504	1,453	1778	1866	4.90%
Southern	3,598	3,630	4,202	4,086	-2.70%
South West	317	386	386	364	-5.60%
Western	400	435	486	425	-12.50%
Total	17,738	19,261	20,942	20,255	-3.20%

[1] https://ucr.fbi.gov

[2] https://www.census.gov/

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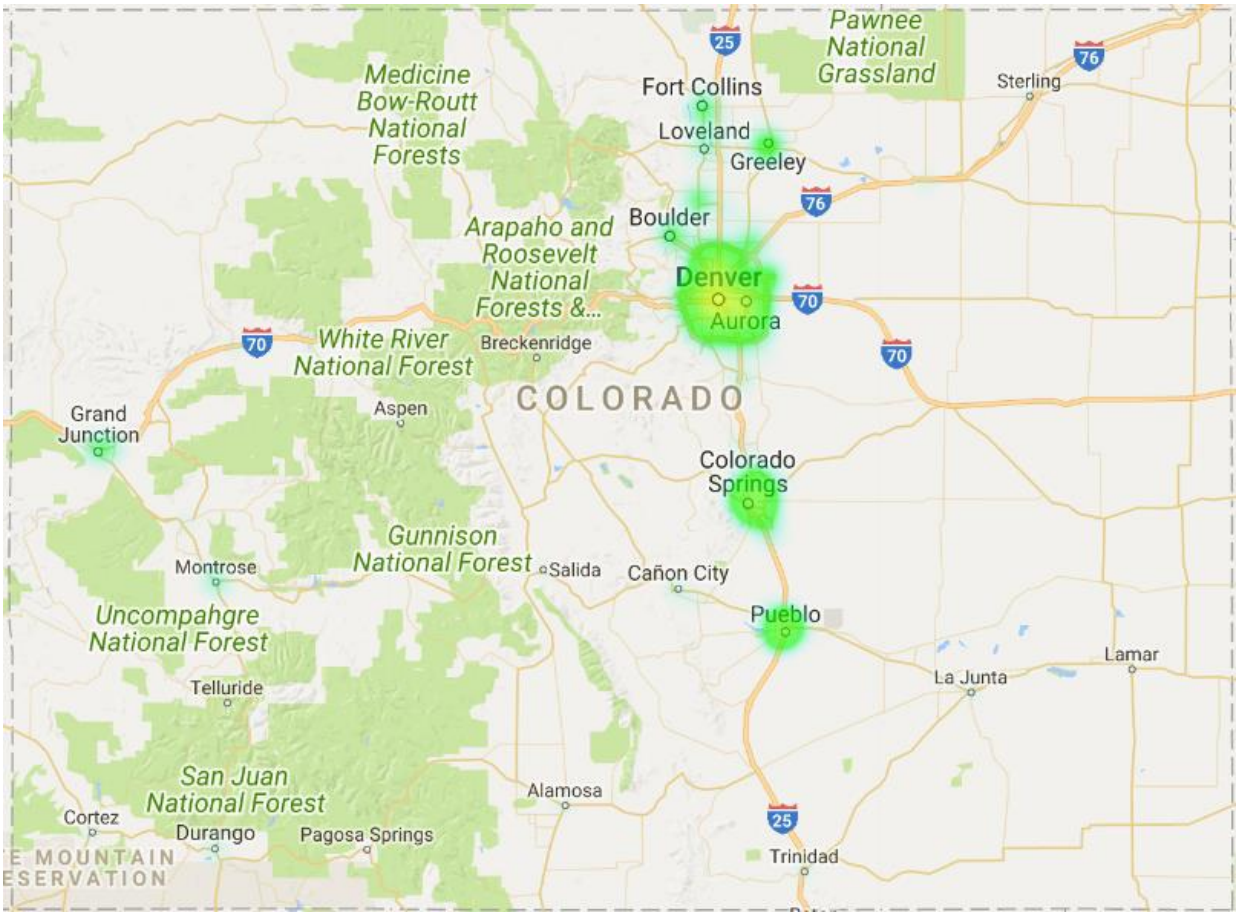
Colorado Auto Theft Hot Spots

In 2019 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.



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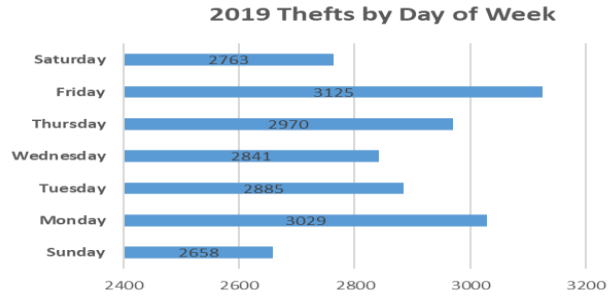
Statistics

The following reporting agencies reported three or more vehicle thefts per week. These communities accounted for 87% 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	Theft	Weekly Average
Statewide	20,271	390
Denver	5101	98
Colorado Springs	2634	51
Aurora	2182	42
Adams County	818	16
Lakewood	752	14
Pueblo	651	13
Westminster	543	10
Thornton	515	10
Arapahoe County	498	10
El Paso County	376	7
Arvada	355	7
Jefferson County	335	6
Commerce City	319	6
Greeley	308	6
Englewood	273	5
Longmont	264	5
Boulder	253	5
Fort Collins	232	4
Northglenn	202	4
Littleton	195	4
Brighton	178	3
Wheat Ridge	178	3
Grand Junction	158	3
Weld County	140	3
Larimer County	136	3
Douglas County	132	3

The highest volume of theft days in 2019 was Fridays, followed by Mondays. Tuesdays and Wednesdays competed for 3rd with approximately 44 thefts difference.



Of the 20,271 vehicles stolen during 2019, 83% (16,844) of reported stolen vehicles were deemed "inactive" in 2019. The following is a breakdown of the reported stolen vehicles by vehicle type.

Rank	Name	Active	Inactive	Count
1	PASSENGER CAR	605	6339	6944
2	SUV	439	4683	5122
3	Pickup Truck	472	3680	4152
4	MOTORCYCLE	732	670	1402
5	Trailer	709	522	1231
6	Van	36	260	296
7	Flatbed	65	39	104
8	Open Body	35	15	50
9	Mult-wheeled Vehicle	33	6	39
10	BUS	2	32	34

In 2019 there were 16,844 recovered vehicles where the vehicle was stolen during 2019. Of these vehicles, 39% of the vehicles were recovered within one week from the date of theft.

Recovery Delay	Stolen in 2019	Precentage
Same Day	1473	9%
Same Week	7000	41.55
Same Month	13033	77%
3 Months	223	1%
6 Months	30	0.18%
1 year	0	

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For the 2018 Auto Theft report, we have captured the top 20 most stolen vehicles by utilizing year, make and model. In previous year, we just calculated by make and model. For the 11 of the 20, are a combination of Honda Civic's & Accords, the next type of vehicle is the Ford F-250.

Rank	Make & Model	Class	Thefts
1	1998 Honda Civic	Small Car	125
2	1997 Honda Accord	Mid-size Car	110
3	1996 Honda Accord	Mid-size Car	107
4	2000 Honda Civic	Small Car	100
5	1997 Honda Civic	Small Car	96
6	1999 Honda Civic	Small Car	91
7	2003 Ford F-250	Full-size Pickup	79
8	2000 Ford F-250	Full-size Pickup	76
9	2006 Ford F-250	Full-size Pickup	76
10	1994 Honda Accord	Mid-size Car	70
11	2004 Ford F-250	Full-size Pickup	70
12	2005 Chevrolet Silverado	Full-size Pickup	69
13	1996 Honda Civic	Small Car	68
14	2003 Chevrolet Silverado	Full-size Pickup	68
15	1995 Honda Accord	Mid-size Car	65
16	1999 Ford F-250	Full-size Pickup	65
17	2005 Ford F0250	Full-size Pickup	59
18	1999 Chevrolet Silverado	Full-size Pickup	57
19	1995 Honda Civic	Small Car	56
20	2001 Ford F-250	Full-size Pickup	56

We also ran the number list of most stolen vehicles based solely on Make & Model. We observed similar results in 2019 as we observed in 2018, that the Honda Civic & Accord were the most stolen Make & Models. These two vehicle models account for 7.9% of all vehicle thefts in 2019. However, this is a decrease of 19.1% from 2018.

Rank	Make & Model	Class	Thefts
1	Honda Civic	Small Car	865
2	Honda Accord	Mid-size Car	754
3	Dodge/RAM Ram	Full-size Pickup	653
4	Ford F-250	Full-size Pickup	648
5	Chevrolet Silverado	Full-size Pickup	625
6	Ford F-150	Full-size Pickup	448
7	Ford F-350	Full-size Pickup	359
8	GMC Sierra	Full-size Pickup	341
9	Subaru Legacy	Mid-size Car	298
10	Subaru Impreza	Small Car	277
11	Honda CR-V	Mid-Size MPV	273
12	Jeep Grand Cherokee	Mid-Size SUV	265
13	Toyota Camry	Mid-Size Car	242
14	Jeep Cherokee	Mid-Size SUV	229
15	Toyota Corolla	Small Car	215
16	Chevrolet Tahoe	Full-size SUV	209
17	Toyota 4-Runner	Mid-Size SUV	185
18	Nissan Altima	Small Car	176
19	Ford Explorer	Mid-size SUV	174
20	Subaru Forester	Compact SUV	151

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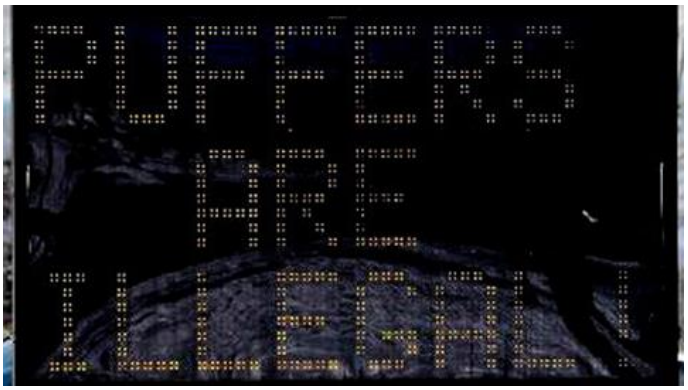
Puffer Vehicles

Puffer data was not obtained this year for the annual report, based on the lack of standardization in reporting across the state. To obtain an exact number is currently inaccurate, based on the many options that are in the system to choose from, and for the fact that some of the options that were chosen may not have been a true puffer. The Stolen Vehicle Database Repository can not be searched to identify a vehicle theft where, at the time of theft, the vehicle was unattended and left running, keys in the ignition, keys in the car, keys in the ignition and vehicle running, puffer, etc. Additionally, the numbers that can be entered into the system will not include victims of vehicle theft who do not report they left their vehicle unattended and running. Lastly, 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	CATPA Area	2017 Thefts	% Δ '16-'17	2018 Thefts	% Δ '17-'18	2019 Thefts	% Δ '18-'19
Adams County	Denver Metro	3,039	-31.70%	3,118	2.60%	4,888	56.76%
Alamosa County	South West	34	25.90%	41	20.60%	39	-4.87%
Arapahoe County	Denver Metro	2,843	192.20%	3,009	5.80%	1,180	-60.78%
Archuleta County	South West	11	266.70%	12	9%	25	108%
Baca County	Eastern	1	-	3	200%	2	-33%
Bent County	Eastern	10	11.10%	14	40%	13	-7%
Boulder County	Northern	470	18.10%	667	41.90%	676	1.30%
Broomfield County	Denver Metro	144	10.80%	128	-11.10%	124	-3.12%
Chaffee County	Southern	22	-33.30%	25	13.60%	18	-28.00%
Cheyenne County	Eastern	2	200%	4	100%	0	-100%

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County	CATPA Area	2017 Thefts	% Δ '16-'17	2018 Thefts	% Δ '17-'18	2019 Thefts	% Δ '18-'19
Clear Creek County	Western	21	18.70%	17	-19%	12	-29%
Conejos County	South West	9	80%	15	66.70%	10	-33.33%
Costilla County	South West	12	140%	28	133.30%	19	-32.14%
Crowley County	Eastern	0	-100%	4	400%	6	50%
Custer County	Southern	3	50%	1	-66.70%	5	400.00%
Delta County	South West	43	-15.70%	45	4.70%	50	11.11%
Denver County	Denver Metro	4,700	11.60%	4,733	0.70%	5,114	8.04%
Dolores County	South West	2	-33.30%	3	50%	3	0%
Douglas County	Denver Metro	268	9.80%	378	41%	303	-20%
Eagle County	Western	27	12.50%	31	14.80%	26	-16.12%
El Paso County	Southern	2,249	2.70%	2,869	27.60%	3,115	8.57%
Elbert County	Denver Metro	10	-23.10%	14	40%	17	21%
Fremont County	Southern	62	-6.10%	78	25.80%	85	8.97%
Garfield County	Western	69	6.20%	82	18.80%	60	-26.82%
Gilpin County	Denver Metro	18	20%	13	-27.80%	11	-15.38%
Grand County	Western	17	-22.70%	10	-41.20%	11	10.00%
Gunnison County	South West	20	150%	13	-35%	11	-15%
Hinsdale County	South West	0	-	0	-	0	0%
Huerfano County	Southern	15	-16.70%	10	-33.30%	23	130.00%
Jackson County	Northern	1	-66.70%	1	-	3	200%
Jefferson County	Denver Metro	1,969	7.10%	2,043	3.80%	1,707	-16.44%
Kiowa County	Eastern	4	300%	0	-400%	0	0%
Kit Carson County	Eastern	7	-36.40%	9	28.60%	7	-22.22%
La Plata County	South West	77	20.30%	67	-13%	69	3%
Lake County	Western	5	-37.50%	6	20%	3	-50%
Larimer County	Northern	419	7.40%	367	-12.40%	499	35.96%
Las Animas County	Southern	29	-	23	-20.70%	28	21.73%
Lincoln County	Denver Metro	7	-12.50%	9	28.60%	7	-22.22%
Logan County	Eastern	24	-38.50%	37	54.20%	25	-32.43%
Mesa County	Western	243	7.10%	252	3.70%	255	1.19%
Mineral County	South West	0	-	0	-	1	100%
Moffat County	Western	17	112.50%	7	-58.80%	11	57.14%
Montezuma County	South West	33	37.5	34	3%	28	-18%
Montrose County	South West	121	36%	87	-28.10%	57	-34.48%
Morgan County	Eastern	41	13.90%	59	44%	44	-25%
Otero County	Eastern	37	8.80%	63	70.30%	40	-36.50%
Ouray County	South West	5	25%	2	-60%	4	100%
Park County	Southern	9	-43.80%	11	22.20%	3	-72.72%
Phillips County	Eastern	1	-	4	300%	2	-50%
Pitkin County	Western	13	-13.30%	13	-	8	-38.46
Prowers County	Eastern	9	-10%	13	44.40%	7	46.15%

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County	CATPA Area	2017 Thefts	% Δ '16-'17	2018 Thefts	% Δ '17-'18	2019 Thefts	% Δ '18-'19
Pueblo County	Southern	1,216	-1%	1,065	-12.40%	792	-25.63%
Rio Blanco County	Western	3	200%	5	66.70%	2	-86.66%
Rio Grande County	South West	11	-42.10%	14	27.30%	12	-14.28%
Routt County	Western	10	150%	9	-10%	12	33%
Saguache County	South West	5	-	4	-20%	17	325%
San Juan County	South West	1	100%	0	-100%	3	300%
San Miguel County	South West	2	-	3	50%	1	-67%
Sedgwick County	Eastern	4	400%	4	-		-100
Summit County	Western	20	-25.90%	40	100%	29	-28%
Teller County	Southern	17	13.30%	15	-11.80%	23	53.33%
Washington County	Eastern	4	-	2	-50%	11	4509%
Weld County	Northern	560	-21.50%	705	25.90%	662	-6.09%
Yuma County	Eastern	7	75%	14	100%	16	14%
Total		19,488	8%	21,324	9.40%	20,230	-5.13%

Call to Action

The ATICC along with the CATPA funded Auto Theft Task Forces need to continue working 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 database. A distance learning-type platform is being discussed with CSP Training Academy personnel.

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.

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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, 2019 to December 31, 2019. 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, 2019 through December 31, 2019, and this data was pulled on January 14, 2020.

Process 4: Deduplication of the 2019 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.

Process 5: Test Records
The 2019 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 causes 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.

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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 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 all are 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.

Disclaimer: Information contained in the Stolen Vehicle Database Repository is considered multifarious; modifications to records are made on a daily basis. Stolen vehicle records were screened for accuracy and normalized for standardization prior to use in this analysis.