

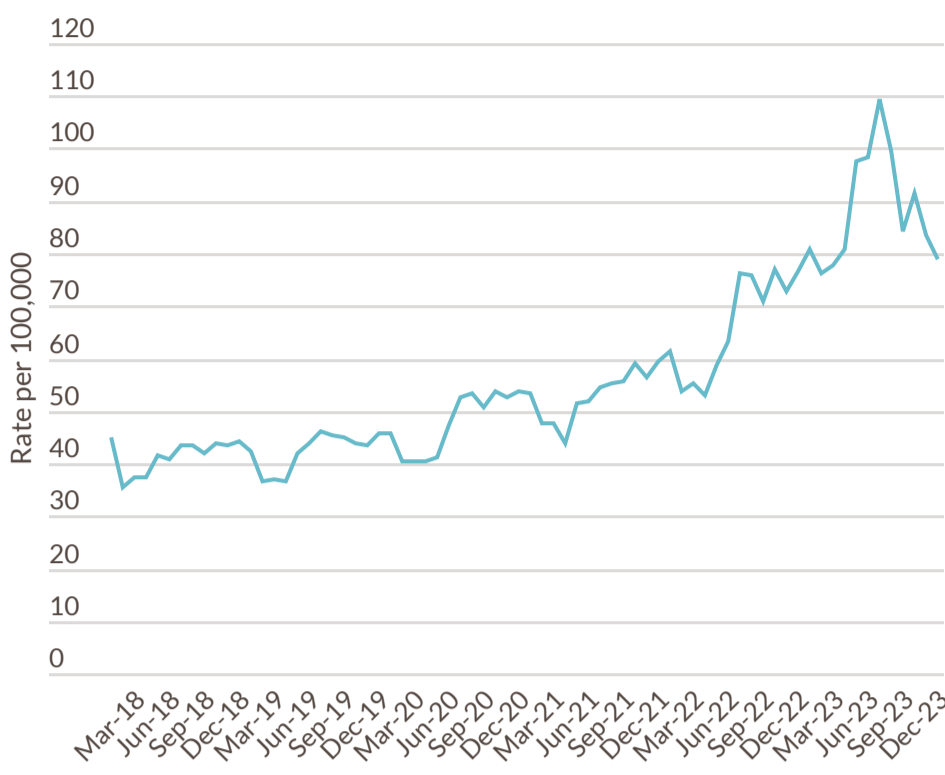
Trends in Motor Vehicle Theft: What You Need to Know

January 2024

- Before beginning to rise over the past four years, the rate of reported motor vehicle theft in the United States had fallen precipitously from its peak in 1991.
- The motor vehicle theft rate in larger cities is double the rate in smaller towns.
- Since 2004, the majority of motor vehicle thefts have occurred at or near the victim's home.
- The juvenile arrest rate for motor vehicle theft has decreased dramatically since the 1990s and is now similar to the adult rate.
- Clearance rates have fallen by two thirds from the 1960s and are lower than rates for other Part I offenses.

Monthly Motor Vehicle Theft in 34 Cities, 2018 - 2023

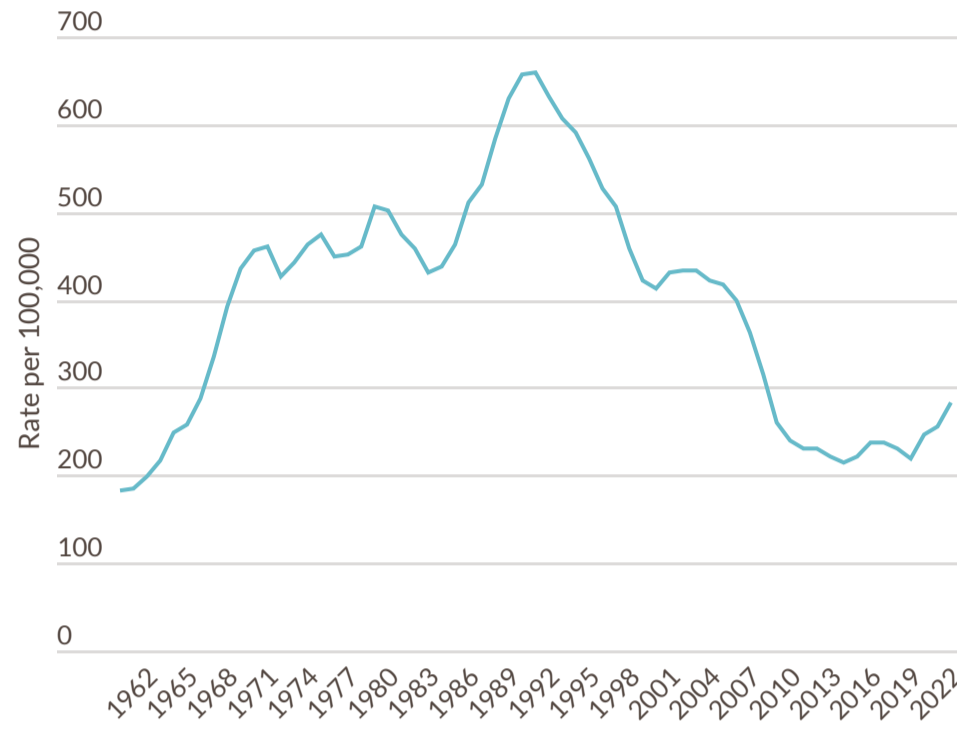
The average rate of motor vehicle theft in a sample of 34 American cities was **105% higher** in 2023 than in 2019. There were 29% more motor vehicle thefts in 2023 than in 2022.



Source: Data adapted from [Crime Trends in U.S. Cities: Year End 2023 Update](#). See the report for the list of cities.

Motor Vehicle Theft Rates, 1960 - 2022

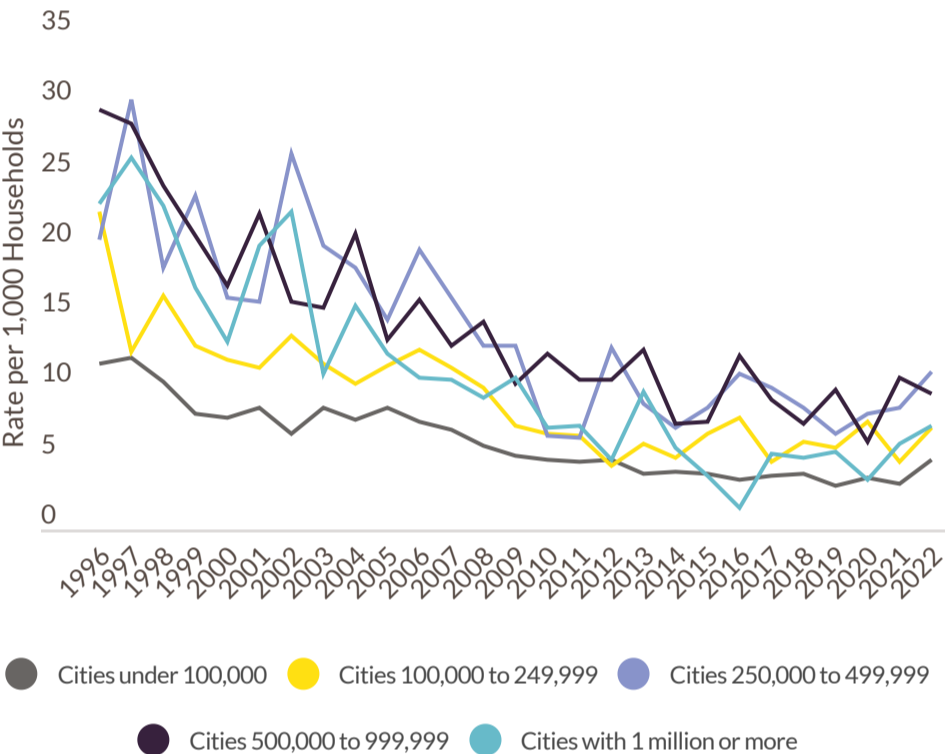
Motor vehicle theft peaked in 1991 at a rate of 659 per 100,000 people. By 2019, that rate had **dropped 67%** to 220 per 100,000 people—nearly identical to the rate in 1963. This trend reversed in 2020. From 2019 to 2022, motor vehicle theft **increased by 29%**, although it remains well below the 1991 peak.



Sources: 1960-1978: The Disaster Center. (2019). [United States crime rates 1960-2019](#). 1979-2022: Federal Bureau of Investigation. (n.d.). [Crime data explorer](#).

Motor Vehicle Theft Rates by City Size

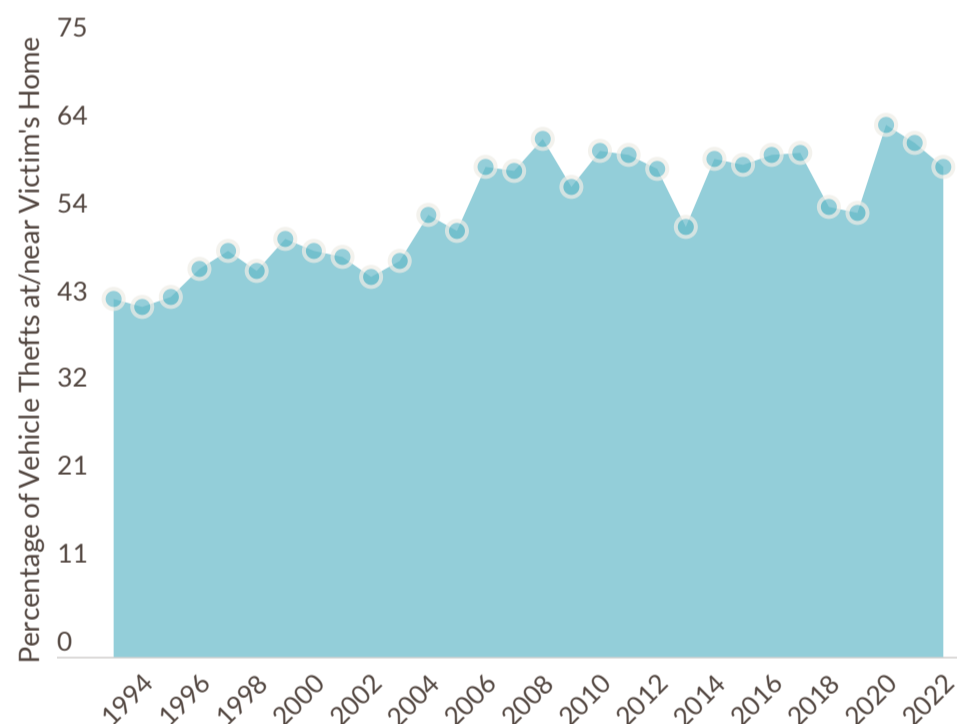
Motor vehicle theft rates were generally higher in larger cities than in smaller cities. In 2022, rates were **twice as high** in cities with 500,000 to 999,999 residents compared to those with fewer than 100,000 people.



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics. (n.d.). [National crime victimization survey data dashboard \(N-DASH\)](#).

Motor Vehicle Thefts: A Shift in Location

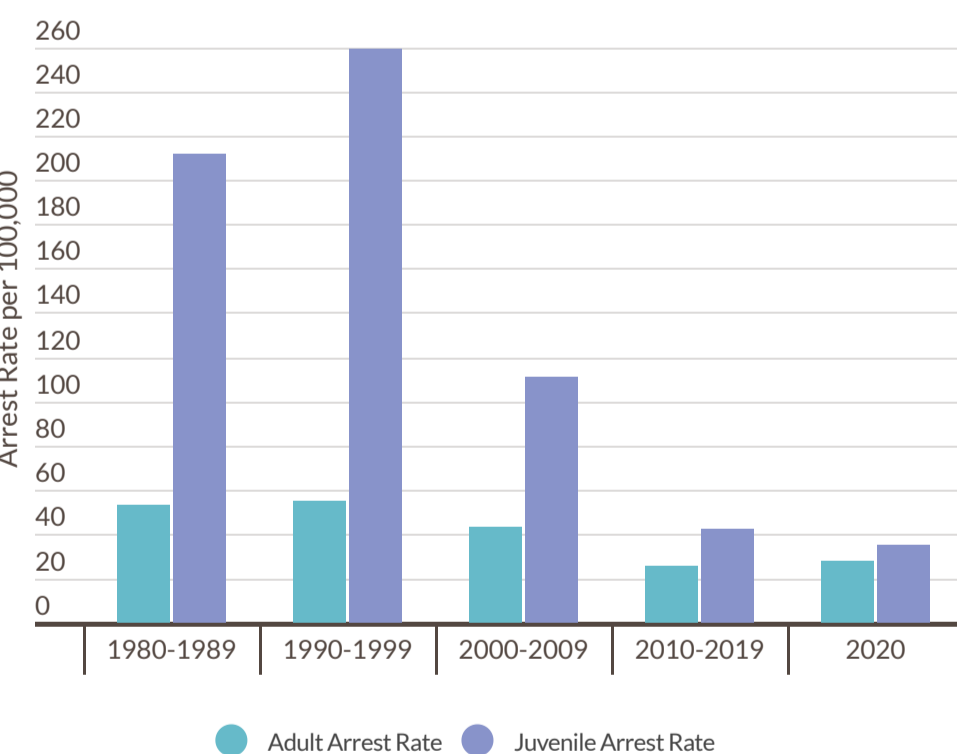
Motor vehicles thefts are more likely at or near the victim's home than in the past. "At or near the home" became the most common location for victimization in 2004 and peaked in 2020, with **65% of vehicles stolen near the home**, a 20% increase from 2019. The next most common location is a "public area."



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics. (n.d.). [National crime victimization survey data dashboard \(N-DASH\)](#).

Motor Vehicle Theft Arrest Rates by Age

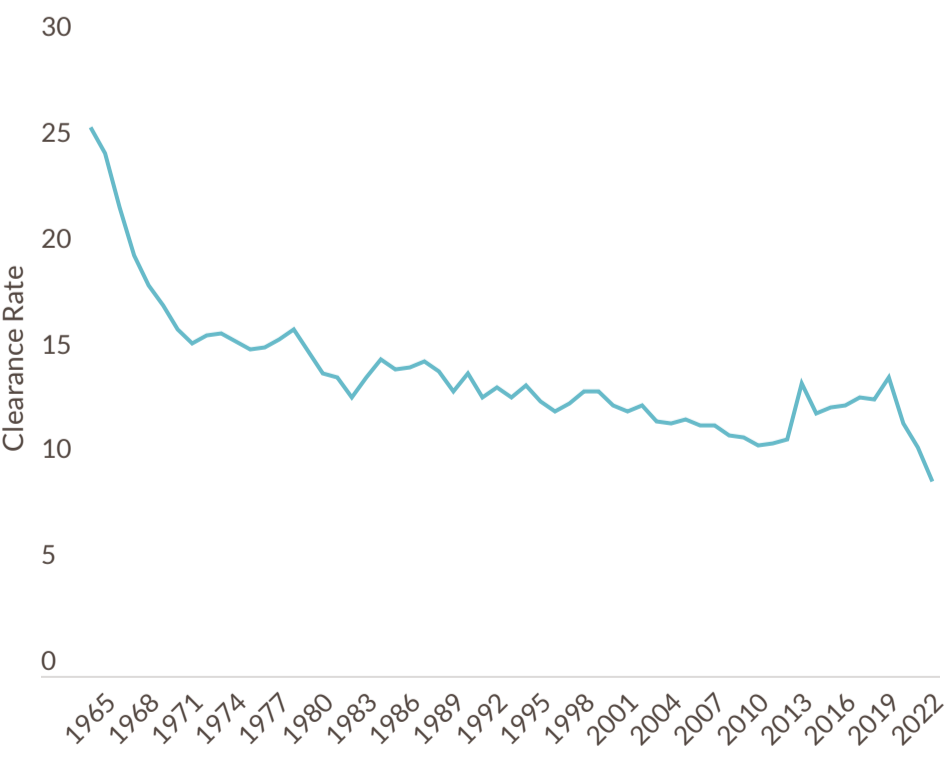
In the 1980s and 90s, **juvenile arrest rates were four times higher than rates for adults**. By 2020, the arrest rates for both groups were about equal. From the 1980s to 2020, adult arrest rates dropped 48% while juvenile rates fell by 83%.



National arrest rates are not available from the FBI or OJJDP for 2021-2022. Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (n.d.). [Statistical briefing book](#).

Motor Vehicle Theft Clearance Rates

Motor vehicle theft clearance rates **decreased 64%** from 1964 to 2022, dropping from 26% to 9%. Since 1967, fewer than one out of every five vehicle thefts has been cleared by arrest or other means. In 2022, the clearance rate was 12% for larceny and 13% for burglary. By contrast, the homicide clearance rate in 2022 was about 50%.



Sources: 1964-2021: Kaplan, J. (2023). [Uniform crime reporting program data: Offenses known and clearances by arrest \(return A\), 1960-2021](#); 2021-2022: Federal Bureau of Investigation. (n.d.). [Crime data explorer](#).

*Analyses that use data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System should be viewed with caution due to the low number of reporting agencies. Click [here](#) for additional information.

This brief was prepared for the Council on Criminal Justice Crime Trends Working Group as part of a series examining major crimes as defined by the FBI. It explores relevant data from multiple sources but does not seek to explain the causes of the patterns.