

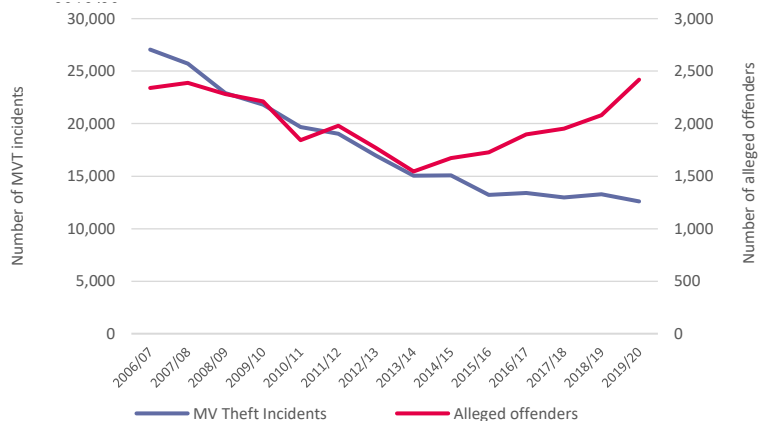


National Motor Vehicle  
Theft Reduction  
Council

# theft matters

## An analysis of vehicle theft charges and their court outcomes in NSW

Figure 1. Number of MVT incidents and alleged offenders apprehended, 2006/07 -



During the last decade we have seen motor vehicle theft (MVT) decline by 41 per cent in Australia's most populous state, New South Wales (NSW). At the same time, there has been a notable increase in offender apprehension and sentencing rates in the state.

To further explore a possible correlation, the NMVTRC's CARS has examined alleged offender and criminal courts data from NSW, tracking changes in alleged offender numbers and finalised charges/appearances in local and higher courts, as well in demographics over time.

Analysis of the alleged offender data from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research between FY2014 and FY2020 showed that:

- The number of alleged offenders who had legal action commenced against them increased by 57 per cent. This was despite the number of motor vehicle theft incidents declining by 16 per cent. (Figure 1).
- In FY2020, alleged offenders were predominately adult males. The number of adult female offenders increased over the time period by 87 per cent.
- Nonetheless, juvenile males had by far the largest offender rate and are hugely overrepresented as a group with 163 per 100,000 population in FY2020 (compared with 47 for adult males).

Analysis of the Criminal Courts Statistics between 2014 and 2019 found:

- The number of finalised charges for motor vehicle theft in all courts increased by 61 per cent. The rise was most notable in the local court (99 per cent).
- In the higher court, there was a 42 per cent increase in charges resulting in a guilty finding (from 33 to 47 per cent).
- In 2019, most offenders were on bail at the finalised appearance, and the proportion in custody increased to 50 per cent over the time period (from 38 per cent).
- Male adults dominated the finalised appearances. However, the increase in female adult appearances was more significant at 88 per cent.
- There has been a 58 increase in Aboriginal defendants.

Overall, the research suggests that the considerable decline in theft numbers in NSW may in part be due to increases in police apprehension rates and court proceedings across the spectrum of motor vehicle theft offending. It also points to the introduction of specific rebirthing legislation in the state in 2006 as a likely contributor to increased guilty charges in the higher courts.

The full research report can be found at:  
<https://carsafe.com.au/nsw-sentencing-trends>.

The NMVTRC acknowledges all police services, registration authorities, participating insurers, the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, Glass's Information Services, Polk Autospec and Insurance Australia Group for the supply of the data on which this report is compiled. Theft incident data may be subject to later revision by the data providers.

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CARS

comprehensive auto-theft research system



An initiative of Australian  
governments and the  
insurance industry.

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