

Community Auto-Theft Reduction Project

In Partnership with Our Communities



**1997 Herman Goldstein
Award for Excellence in Problem-
Oriented Policing**

Community Auto-Theft Reduction Project Abstract



Scan

Thefts of automobiles in Hamilton Wentworth Region grew alarmingly by 160 % from 1991 to 5,668 vehicles stolen in 1995. Property loss totaled \$19,043,130. The public was being put at serious risk by unlicensed and irresponsible vehicle thieves. Deaths had occurred. Traditional policing methods were ineffective providing limited, unsustained impact on the problem.

Analysis

Telephone surveys indicated auto-theft was the second concern of area residents. 1995 statistics revealed 59% of individuals arrested for auto theft were under the age of 17. Joyriding projections for 1996 indicated a 10 % increase in auto thefts.

Response

Our design, partner with community and government agencies to inaugurate a crime prevention program. The Community Auto-Theft Reduction Project (C.A.R.) was designed and implemented.

The C.A.R. Team hired 16 unemployed young people, funded by Youth Services Canada. The Team developed 16 initiatives addressing issues across the Crime Prevention Matrix.

Response included:

- Public Awareness Campaign
- Education Campaign
- Lobbying Campaign

Assessment

A 6% reduction over 1995; a \$1.2 million savings in property loss. Identified youth involvement reduced 16%.

March 97 statistics reveal a sustained reduction in auto-thefts, 32% below 1996 levels.

• Scan

Scan

Automobile thefts increased by 160% in the Hamilton Wentworth Region between 1991 and 1995. These statistics were obtained from year end totals . The public was being put at serious risk by unlicensed and irresponsible vehicle thieves. Deaths had occurred. Traditional policing methods were ineffective providing limited, unsustained impact on the problem.

The problem was identified by several groups who made inquiries regarding our response. Our Police Service Board was questioning our chief on what initiatives we were undertaking to address this problem due to previous years end results. Also at the same level a local victim of auto-theft was presenting to the Police Service Board and the chief. The victim was requesting that we respond to the large increase in auto-theft. The local media were running numerous articles on the safety of leaving your car at our local malls and the large increase in auto-thefts in our region.

Budget restraints preclude the permanent enlargement of our 2 officer Auto-Theft Office. Community partnerships were needed to develop a sustainable Crime Prevention Program directed at the largest identifiable group of car thieves, the 59% who are 17 years or under.

• Analysis

Analysis

Analysis of our statistics revealed 59% of those arrested for auto-theft were 17 years of age or younger, joyriding. 80% of the cars stolen are recovered. These figures reflect the national statistics which indicate that only 24% of vehicles stolen are for direct gain. During 1995 alone 5,668 autos were stolen, resulting property loss over \$19 million. A phone survey of area residents identified auto-theft as the number 2 community concern.

Five separate analytical tools were used to evaluate, track and compare the statistics gathered on auto- theft within the region. The techniques used were:

- *Telephone Survey*-to ascertain public position on which crimes concerned them most.
- *Bar Graphs*-to tabulate and compare the number of automobiles stolen per month and year.
 - to demonstrate and track ages of those arrested for auto theft.
 - to analyze, compare and track the make, model and year of vehicles stolen.
- *Line Graphs*-to compare trends in auto theft over time, by number and percentage.
- *Pie Charts*-to visually demonstrate motive for and method of vehicle thefts.
 - to demonstrate distribution of vehicle theft throughout the region.
- *Matrix*-to visibly demonstrate crime prevention theories and to evaluate the viability of solutions proposed.

Line and bar graphs were used to identify that traditional policing methods were having limited sustained impact on the problem. Bar graphs were used to identify the targeted age group.

The C.A.R. Project Team made extensive use of bar and pie charts to further detail the problem enabling them to devise solutions.

• Response

Constant monitoring of statistics through line and bar graphs revealing steady decreases in the rate of vehicle thefts provided motivation for the team.

Comparisons with seven area police services provided no one causal effect. Statistics showed our rates of theft were average.

Causal analysis demonstrated, for services with lower increases, intense permanent enforcement units reduced thefts for some services while others relied on crime prevention programs. What became apparent, those services with higher rates were addressing the problem of auto theft with traditional short term policing strategies.

Response

Traditional policing methods have been tried in attempts to control the increase. Short term task force gains were not sustained for more than a few months upon completion of the project.

The Community Auto-Theft Reduction Project (C.A.R.) was formed in partnership with Youth Services Canada. Funding was provided to hire 16 unemployed young people between the ages of 18 and 24 for a period of 28 weeks.

The C.A.R. Team had two goals:

1. Design and implement a crime prevention initiative targeted at the identified 59% which would be sustainable after the life of the project.
2. Provide valuable training and experience to the project participants enabling them to find employment or return to school on termination of the program.

• Response

Organization

The project was organized with four components, a community steering committee, police liaison, project co-ordinator and 15 team members.

Steering Committee

The purpose of the steering committee was to direct and support the team on community concerns relating to auto theft. The 8 member committee reviewed project proposals and using their collective expertise provided counsel on the feasibility of solutions presented. The committee consisted of representatives from local school boards, Neighbourhood Watch, Canadian Automobile Association, local media, a victim of auto theft and community leaders who met monthly with the co-ordinator and liaison officer to evaluate progress.

Police Liaison

The police liaison officer facilitated the project; responsible for co-ordinating training in critical learning areas and guiding the operation of the project to achieve the identified goals.

Project Co-ordinator

The co-ordinator assisted with the hiring of team members and organization of staff training. The main responsibilities were organizing, implementing and supervising daily operations and facilitating the team member's projects.

Team Members

Were responsible for creating, designing and implementing solutions. The unit broke down into smaller teams which worked closely together on unit assignments.

Training

The project commenced with two weeks of intensive training in the following fields:

- Theory of Crime Prevention , and use of Typology Matrix. (Appendix)

• Response

- formal public speaking and effective presentation
- problem solving (S.A.R.A.)
- auto theft reduction techniques
- victim services
- mentoring
- automobile insurance
- marketing
- corrections and rehabilitation
- creative thinking
- team building
- personal safety
- Crime Stoppers
- media
- time management
- police practices.

The final day consisted of an intensive brain storming session for ideas in reducing auto theft. Many possible solutions were presented for future consideration. However from the ideas presented three main areas of focus were discernible, awareness, education and lobbying.

This training was later supplemented by 3 and 1/2 days of career coaching arranged through Waterloo University to satisfy prerequisites set by Youth Services Canada.

General

The training completed, set-up commenced. Office space, equipment, supplies and transportation were secured by the team, through community partnerships and donations whenever possible (see appendix for budget). The unit then broke into smaller teams to prepare an operations plan, guidelines for proposals, marketing strategy and an in-depth study which detailed the multiple facets of auto theft ("The Auto-Theft Report").

The project had originally been designed as a Divisional initiative. However the team soon discovered the problem involved victims and offenders from different divisions. It was decided the best strategy for addressing the issue would be on a regional and national level.

• Response

Project proposals were written and submitted to the steering committee for recommendations as to the feasibility and sustainability of each, only the most promising projects were implemented. Some of the project submissions were rejected examples were: 3 on 3 basketball; drop in centers and teen dances.

Project Initiatives

Projects were written and developed by team members. Production of pamphlets and display materials were arranged through partnerships and donations from businesses and organizations.

Public Awareness Campaign

It takes less than a minute to steal a car. One is stolen every 90 minutes in the region. Studies show that only 13% of auto theft victims take steps to protect themselves from re-victimization. Many believe auto theft is a victimless crime because vehicles are insured. The community appears unaware of the effects auto theft have on rising insurance costs, the danger of irresponsible thieves on our roads or the numerous methods and devices available for prevention of this crime. A campaign was designed to raise public awareness around issues of auto theft, providing information on how the public can protect themselves.

Community Presentation and Display

Designed to be delivered to an adult audience in two formats; as an active presentation to community groups or as a passive display in high activity locations. The presentation was developed with a video and a pamphlet "Auto Theft: Protecting Yourself and Your Community". Delivery was made at community meetings, area malls and community events. Numerous presentations and functions were attended. 10,000 pamphlets were distributed. During these sessions over 550 interested parties were sign up for existing anti-theft programs such as "C.A.T. - Combat Auto Theft" run by the Canadian Automobile Association.

• Response

Victim Package

Designed to inform victims of auto-theft about methods of prevention and the counselling services available to them. The package will be delivered to victims when they attend at a police station to report the theft or arrange for the return of their vehicle. 2,000 packages were prepared by the team with arrangements made for additional packages to be prepared on a need basis after termination of the project.

Hot Cars Broadcast

A program run in conjunction with "Crime Stoppers" for the daily broadcast of the "Hot Car of the Day". This adopted program will raise public awareness, provide a deterrent to car thieves and will provide an opportunity for private citizens to assist police, empowering them.

Interior Transit Posters

A partnership formed with GAN Canada and Urban Outdoor Transad Company to place advertising in local transit buses. The poster was designed by the team to target the 12-17 year age group, highlight the dangers of "Joy Riding". The posters were displayed in 190 buses from July to September 1996.

Safety Infraction Ticket

Designed to resemble a parking ticket, the notice provides a risk assessment of the vehicle it is placed on. Local malls which were identified as high risk for vehicle thefts were targeted.

10,000 tickets were distributed which assessed the following factors:

- keys left in car
- no alarm system
- valuables visible inside car
- parked in dark isolated location
- doors unlocked
- no window etching
- no steering wheel locking device
- no C.A.T. sticker

• Response

After a trip to a mall the phones in the project office would be jammed with calls for information.

Public Service Announcements

The Team developed the Public Service Announcement "Get a Life - Don't Steal One" in partnership with General Accident Assurance Company of Canada. Team staff arranged partnerships with local and national television and radio stations for the broadcast of the 30 second Public Service Announcements on the effects of auto theft and methods of protecting your vehicle. This initiative was launched at the end of the project with a media conference.

Education

Programs designed specifically to target the 12-17 year old high risk group.

Video Drama Project

The team reviewed the available lesson plans and found none targeting the school age population. The team developed and produced a new lesson plan highlighting the consequences of joy riding complete with a video targeting the high risk youth. The video was produced in co-operation with a local theatre company. The team made presentations to 13,000 students.

Poster Contest

The Poster Contest involved the younger children from grades 6 to 8 working in groups to design a poster with an anti-theft message. Each school was allowed to submit one poster for each grade level. Over 300 entries were received and final judging allowed for a winner at each level. The winning submissions were framed and displayed at the Hamilton Automobile Club Office for the summer and then returned to the school.

Mentorship Program

Three area schools participated in this program. The program involved team members spending

• Response

1 hour a week for 2 months with selected youth, providing a positive role model. School guidance teachers selected at risk youths for the program. The teachers surveyed commented on the marked improvement in attitude of the 32 students involved in the program.

Anti-theft Device Contest

A contest was launched in area high schools for students to plan and construct an anti-theft device for vehicles. There were only three criteria for entering the contest.

1. Submissions must be by a team of 2 - 5 students
2. Must be designed for an electronic fuel injected engine
3. must fit one of three categories
 - a) mechanical device
 - b) blueprint design
 - c) electronic device

Potential entrants were educated on the nature of auto-theft and on ways they could help combat the problem. Three finalists from ten entries received cash prizes donated by area insurance brokers. The 22 participants gained :

- a sense of respect for other people's property
- through creative thinking
- empowerment by helping to fight crime
- empowerment by helping to fight crime.
- valuable team skills
- technical skills in initiating and
- planning ideas

Lobbying

The detailed analysis of auto-theft both regionally and nationally glaringly demonstrated areas where changes to the Young Offenders Act, Automobile Manufacturers, Insurance Industry, policing practices and rental properties would have a positive affect on auto-theft rates.

• Assessment

Recommendations for change

The lobbying report (contained in "Auto Theft Report") was compiled and forwarded to individuals the team felt were in a position to effect change in the identified fields. The mail out was followed by personal contacts.

Private Members Bills

Private Members Bills were written by the Lobbying Team, addressing Provincial issues of insurance legislation and Federal changes needed for the Criminal Code of Canada. The bills were delivered to elected representatives for each legislature. Promises were elicited from the representatives that the bills would be presented to the government for consideration.

Assessment

When the C.A.R. Project commenced in March 1996 the region was already experiencing a 16% increase in auto-thefts over the March 1995 figures. By the time the project terminated in Sept. 1996 the rate had dropped 18 % below the March 1996 levels. A change of 18% over 7 months. Part of this initial change however must be shared with the H.E.A. Team enforcement initiative conducted from May 1996 to Aug. 1996.

The most encouraging result was the continued decrease in auto -theft, December 1996 showed a 6% decrease over the January 1995 figures! March 1997 figures reveal a 32% decrease over January 1995. A 30% decrease after the project ended. A savings in property loss of over \$ 3 million.

The most gratifying results came in the targeted 12-17 year offender rates which dropped from 59% to 43% of arrests (figures unavailable for 1997).

• Assessment

The Hamilton Wentworth Regional Police were not the only one to claim the project as a success. Youth Services Canada and all the project members also claim success. Everyone of the Team members realized personal goals of obtaining employment or returning to further education upon termination of the project.

The continued downward trend of auto-thefts can be contributed to the successful institutionalization of project programs.

The community presentation, video and pamphlet and the school presentation, with the new video, are now standard programs in our Community Services repertoire. There have been requests from outside agencies for copies of the video and lesson plan.

The Victim Packages, resupplied, are still being distributed to all victims of auto-theft.

The Anti-Theft Device Contest has been taken over by one of our local high school shop teachers.

The Transad Company has recently contacted the police service with plans to rerun the transit ad campaign.

The Hot Car of the Day broadcast is being maintained by our local radio stations and Crime Stoppers.

Public Service Announcement "Get a Life - Don't Steal One" has continually been broadcasted

• Assessment

locally, provincially and nationally. Seven television stations committed to broadcasting the P.S.A.. Three of the stations agreed to forward the detail billing and time slots shown with a total of \$40,000.00. Lobbying has been continued by the Police Liaison Officer.

One of the Private Members Bills forwarded to the Federal Government has resulted in changes to a criminal law bill C-17. This law passed on April 15, 1997. This law allows the charging of passengers in stolen vehicles. This will affect every police service in Canada. This amendment to the Criminal Code of Canada will take the "joy out of joyriding." The law took effect on June 15, 1997 and result will be monitored.

The project Liaison Officer, on request, conducted a workshop on Auto-Theft Crime Prevention at the Youth Serving Officers conference held at the Ontario Police College in December 1996. Youth Services Canada contacted the Hamilton Wentworth Police Service in April 1997 requesting that we sponsor a similar project.

Media Highlights

Since public awareness was one of our initiatives, media highlights were very important for increased awareness. The project was involved in radio, television and print media for interviews and programs. The project was reported numerous occasions in the regional and provincial news stories. Some of the highlights were:

- Hamilton News - April 10, 1996

"C.A.R. is a fine example of responsive policing" describes the role of the project.

- Hamilton Spectator - March 29, 1996

Young Joyriders Crave thrills - Vehicles theft jump 170% " unveiling of C.A.R. Project and initiatives.

• Assessment

- HAC News (C.A.A.) - May 1996

"Auto-theft a billion dollar problem" describes role of the project to combat this major problem.

- Hamilton Spectator - June 3, 1996

"Teens invent CAR Theft Deterrents" included picture of the winning Anti-Theft device with article.

- Hamilton News - August 28, 1996

"C.A.R. Project video offers stark ending to auto theft" described creation of video and the results of joyriding.

Summary

The successful completion of this project is a direct result of the hard work, enthusiasm and creativity contributed by all members involved. The community support and interest was manifested in the co-operation, partnering and sponsorships that developed. The communities continued willingness to maintain the initiatives is a further indicator of the institutionalization of the programs.

• Agency and Officer Information

This problem-solving initiative was adopted by a few officers who co-ordinated the project throughout the service. All project members were trained in Problem Oriented Policing (P.O.P.) using the Problem Oriented Policing Training Guide. (San Diego Police Department, May 1994) and internal P.O.P. lesson plans, based on Police Executive Research Forum publications.

There were no additional incentives given to police officers to engage in the problem-solving initiative; except for achieving a reduction in the auto theft problem. The co-ordinating officers were experienced in Problem Oriented Policing, greatly enhancing the efficiency of the project.

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• Support Material

Appendixes

A • C.A.R. Project Information

B • *Letters of support for the CA.R. Project*

- Barton Secondary School
- Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton-Wentworth
- Committee of Youth Officers For The Province of Ontario

C • *Statistical Graphs Supporting:*

- Decline in auto theft by month from start of C.A.R. Project
- Theft of Vehicles by accused age 94-96
- Theft of Vehicles 1991-1996

D • *Media Articles:*

- Teens invent car theft deterrents - Hamilton Spectator
- Road Warriors - Hamilton News
- Introducing the C.A.R. Team - C.A.A. Club News

- **Appendix A**

C.A.R. PROJECT Information

Population

Year	Policing Population
1991	451,665
1996	467,799
2001	498,050

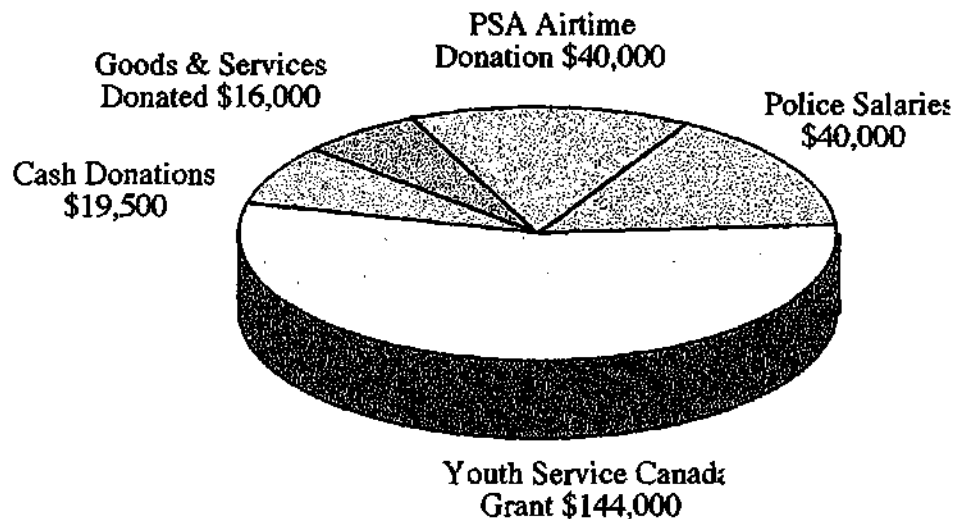
Service Budget

\$74,067,380

Jurisdiction

- The Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police is responsible for policing Stoney Creek, Flamborough, Ancaster, Glanbrook, Hamilton and Dundas, with a total of 1138 square kilometers.

C.A.R. Project Budget



- **Appendix C**

Theft of Motor Vehicle: Year to Date % Change over Previous Year

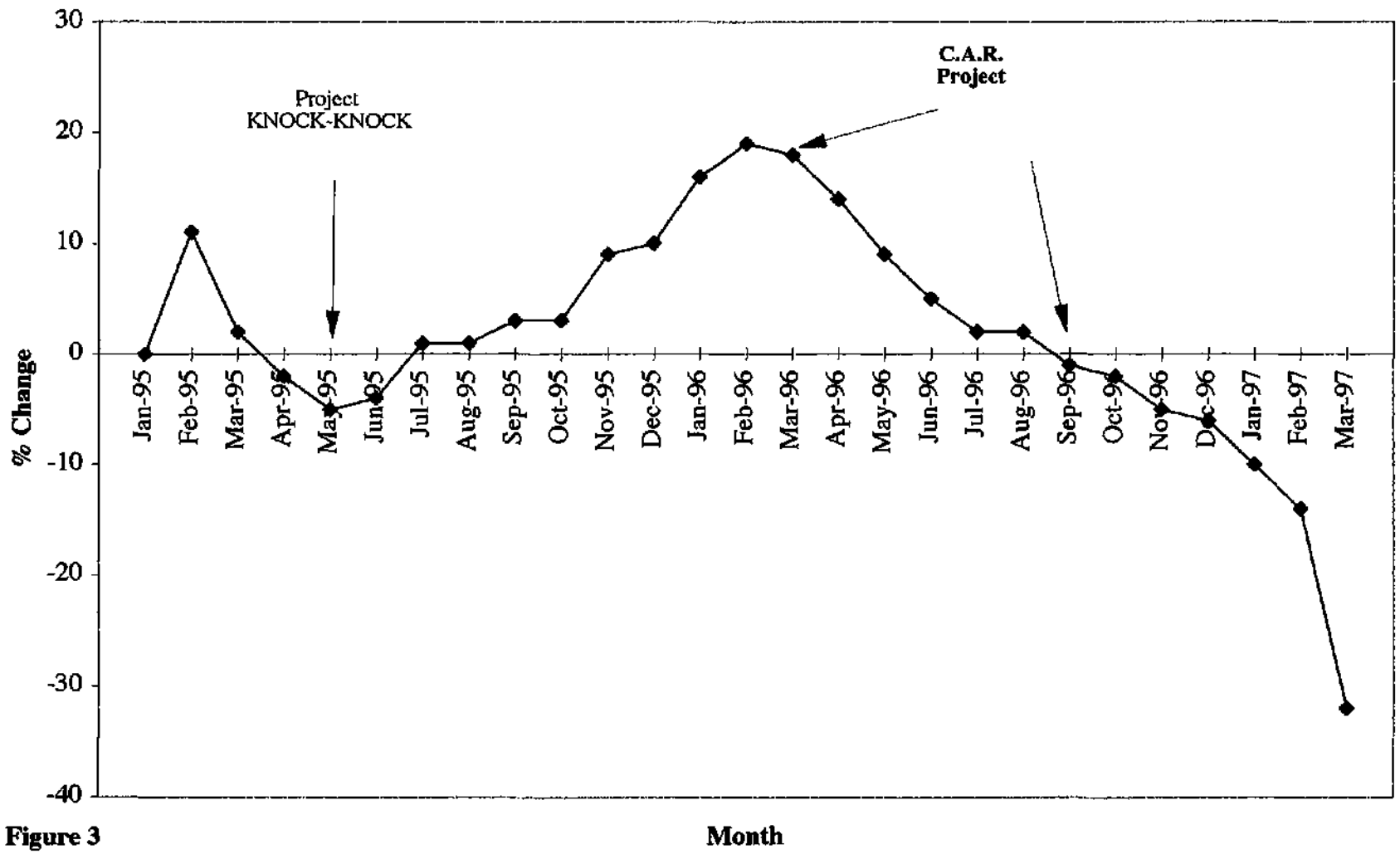


Figure 3

Theft of Vehicle-Accused 94-96

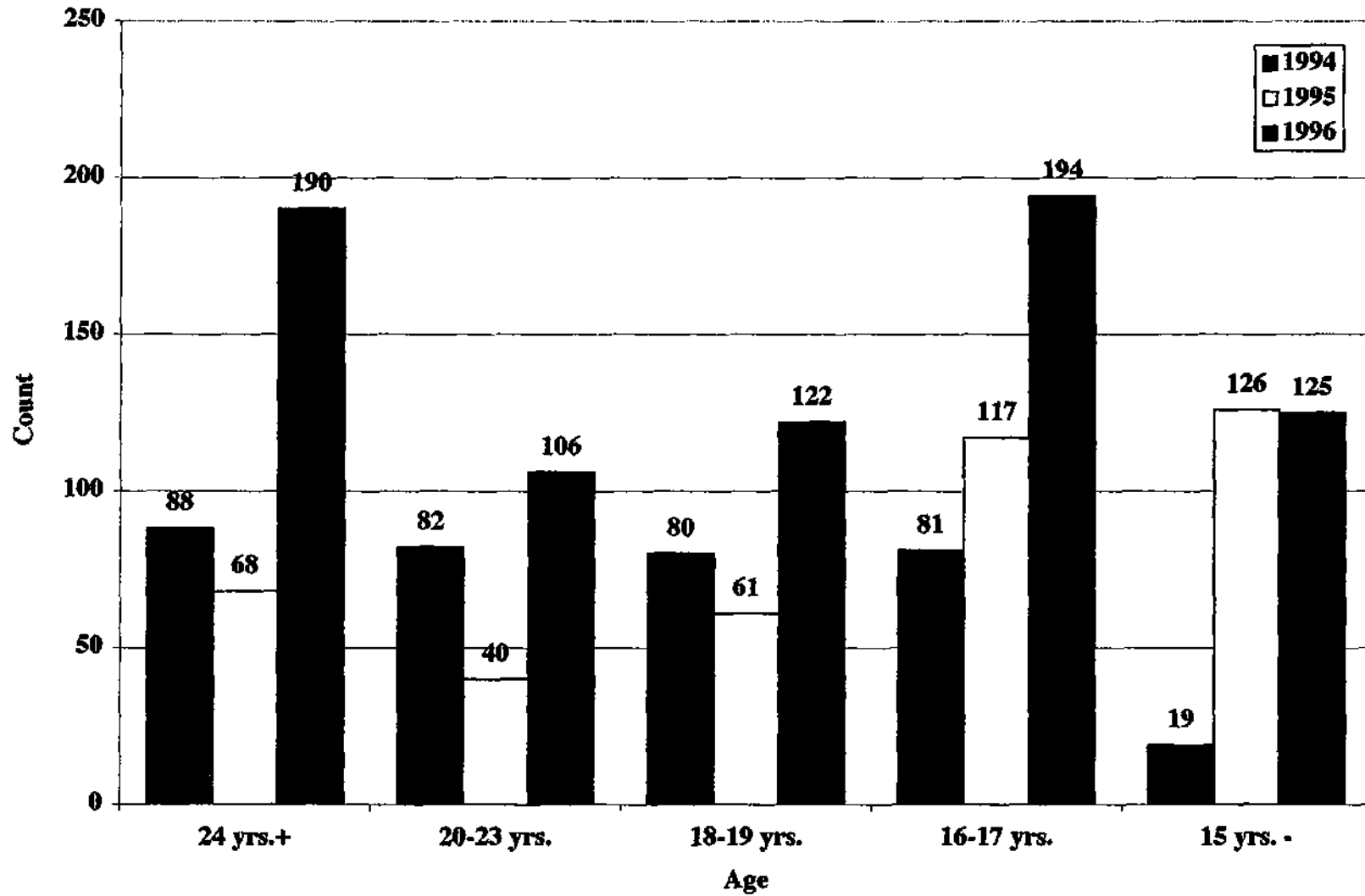


Figure 2

Theft of Vehicles 1991 to 1996

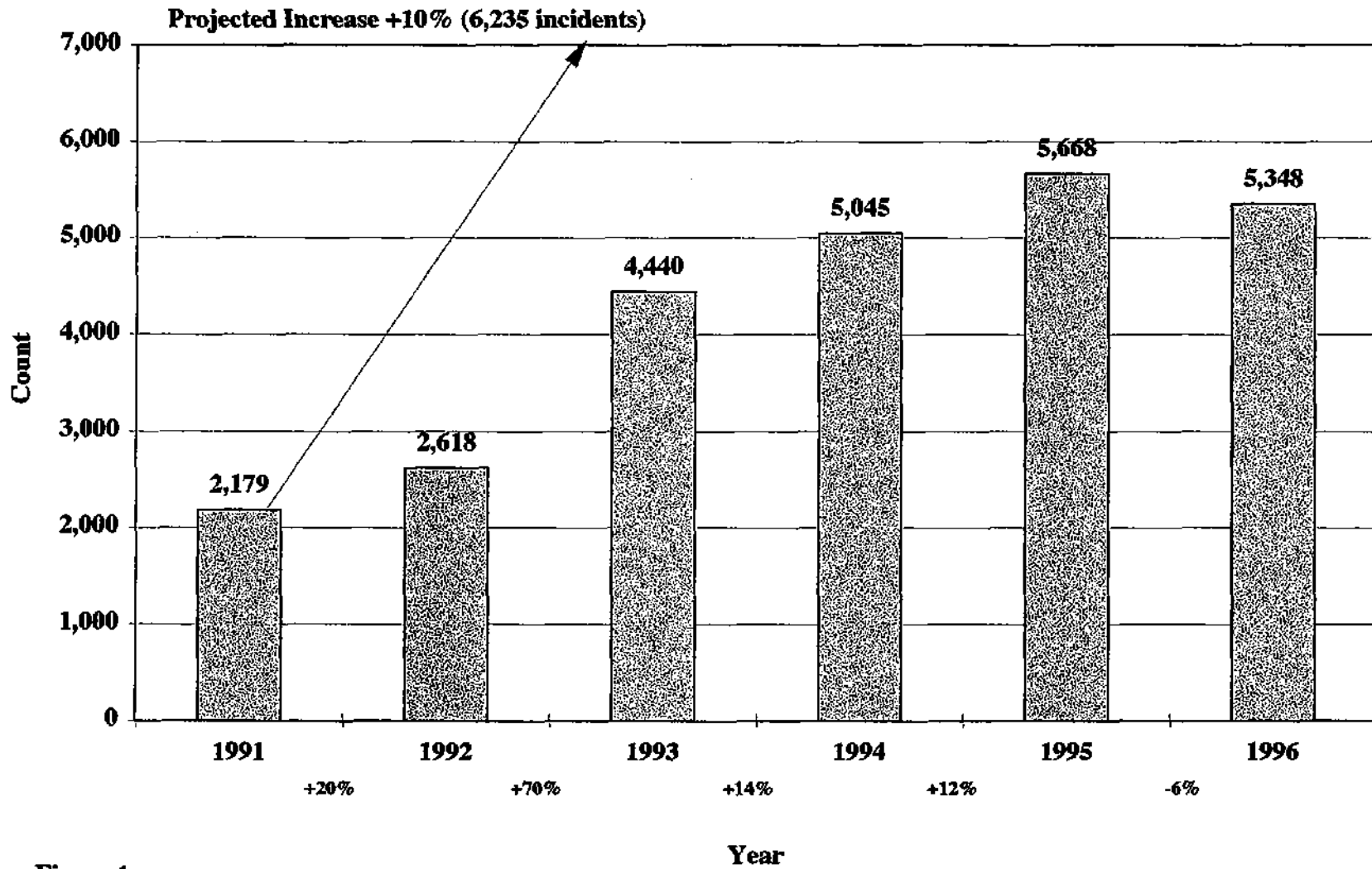


Figure 1