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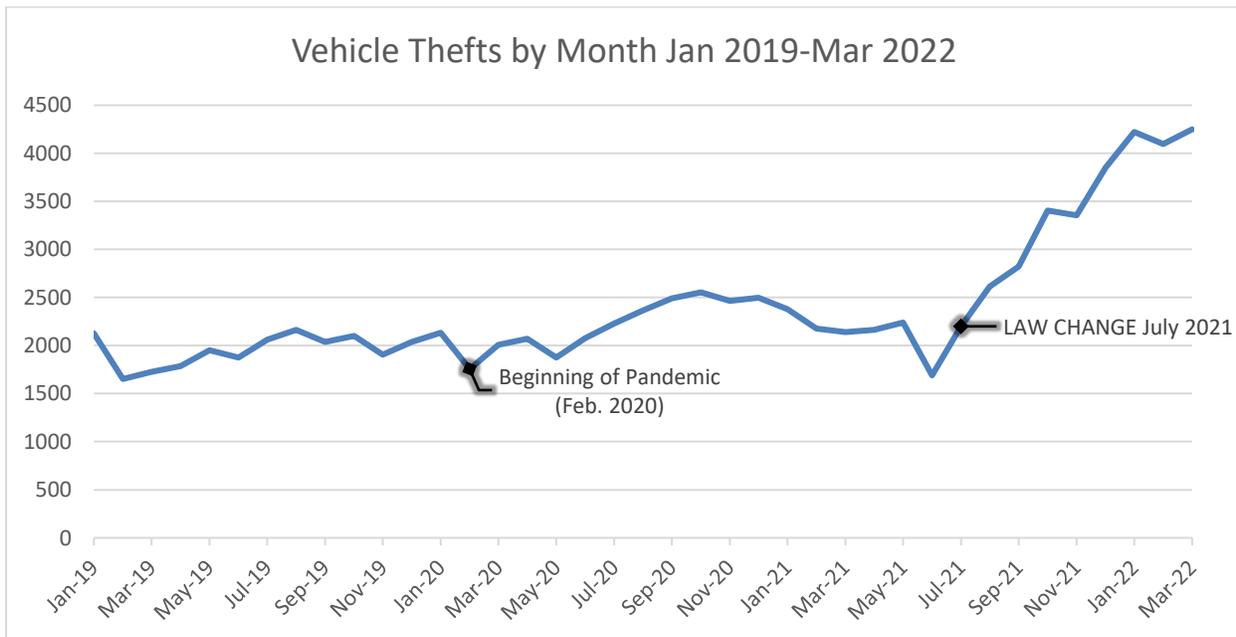
STATEWIDE VEHICLE THEFTS RISE AGAIN, INCREASE 88 PERCENT SINCE 2021

(Lacey, WA) – The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs ([WASPC](#)) today noted vehicle theft data from the Washington State Patrol showing the [following](#):

- Vehicle thefts have increased **88 percent year-to-date for 2022 compared to 2021** through the end of March.
- Vehicle thefts have **increased 99 percent for March 2022 compared to March 2021**
- Vehicle thefts have **increased 93 percent since a number of new laws went into effect at the end of July 2021**

“The data show what our law enforcement and communities are seeing out there every day—the word is out and criminals know what they can do under our current laws,” said Strachan. “Each of these alarming numbers represent a victim, and victims of auto theft too often are those who can least afford it- with older cars with fewer anti-theft systems, with less insurance coverage, and with greater impacts on their lives.”

WASPC believes the failure of the legislature to give law enforcement the authority to allow even the perceived possibility of a pursuit has created an environment that is a significant cause of the increase.



Between February 2020, the start of the pandemic, and July 2021, auto thefts increased 25 percent. In July 2021 laws went into effect that placed blanket restrictions on the tools law enforcement could use to detain, pursue, and investigate suspects. Since the laws changed in 2021 vehicle thefts have increased 93 percent which WASPC believes is a direct result of the restrictions on investigating criminal activity.

“I have never seen criminals as emboldened as they are now,” said Steve Strachan, executive director. “Our mayors, law enforcement, and the community asked for help, and the legislature made the specific decision to continue to allow for brazen contempt for the law. No one wants more pursuits, which are inherently dangerous, but current law has created an atmosphere of flouting the law even on simple traffic stops. This is one example of a change in atmosphere that is, and will continue to be, unacceptable and dangerous to public safety. Fleeing in a vehicle should not be a get-out-of-jail-free card.”

In the 2022 Washington legislative session, several bills were passed to address the unintended consequences of some of the 2021 laws, but other needed changes were not made. There was bipartisan support for SB 5919 to provide for a balanced improvement for vehicle pursuits, and the bill passed both chambers by a large margin, but it did not pass on the last night of session.

There were 26,520 vehicles stolen in 2020, and 31,032 in 2021. If current trends hold, WASPC estimates that without additional tools to change the current environment of criminal behavior, 2022 would end with over 50,000 vehicles stolen this year in the State of Washington.

Links to stolen vehicle totals by months for each county can be found here [2021](#) and [2022](#). The Washington State Patrol compiles the data each month from law enforcement across the state.

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WASPC was founded in 1963 and represents executive and top management personnel from law enforcement agencies statewide. With more than 900 members it includes the 39 elected county sheriffs, and 240 police chiefs, as well as the Washington State Patrol, the Washington Department of Corrections, and representatives of several federal agencies.