



Automobile Theft Prevention Program

2022

Minnesota Department of Commerce

Mission

For more than 150 years, the Minnesota Department of Commerce and its predecessor agencies have served Minnesotans. Our mission is to protect and assist consumers, to ensure a strong, competitive and fair marketplace, and to engage people and communities across the state.

Commerce Strategic Priorities

- Protect the public interest through consumer protection, consumer education, assistance to consumers, safety, health and financial security, and lowering inequities.
- Serve as a trusted public resource for consumers and businesses by listening and learning from the Minnesotans Commerce services, being effective stewards of public resources, advocating for Minnesota consumers and develop a policy, programmatic, and regulatory environment that meets their needs.
- Reduce economic barriers within Commerce's regulatory oversight and reduce disparities within those of all races, ethnicities, religions, economic statuses, gender identities, sexual orientations, (dis)abilities, and zip codes.
- Ensure all, especially historically disadvantaged Minnesotans, are resilient to Minnesota's climate and engaged in advancing efforts to mitigate climate change.
- Ensure a strong, competitive, and fair marketplace for Minnesotans.

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 3.197: This report cost approximately \$5,703.00 to prepare, including staff time.

Contents

Program Background	4
Scope of This Report	4
Statewide Analysis	4
Minnesota auto theft trends, national comparison.....	5
Bordering states auto theft trends	6
Automobile Theft Prevention Grant Program: Review of the 2021-2023 Biennium	7
General Auto Theft Prevention Grant.....	7
Law Enforcement Agencies.....	8
Law Enforcement Grantee Performance: General Grant	9
Dedicated Investigator Auto Theft Prevention Grant.....	10
Law Enforcement Grantee Performance: Dedicated Investigator	11
Prosecutor Offices Grants.....	13
Anoka County Attorney’s Office	13
Hennepin County Attorney’s Office.....	14
Ramsey County Attorney's Office.....	16
Washington County Attorney's Office.....	17
Nonprofit Grants.....	18
Ramsey County Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project	18
Minnesota Automotive Dealers Association.....	18
Auto Theft Training	19
Auto Theft Prevention Advertising Grant	19
Catalytic Converter Theft Prevention Pilot Project	20

Program Background

The Automobile Theft Prevention Program was created by the Minnesota Legislature in 1996. The program is authorized under Minn. Stat. § 65B.84. The program is funded by a 50¢ per vehicle surcharge¹ collected every six (6) months from automobile insurance carriers that provide comprehensive insurance coverage issued in the State of Minnesota. The program utilizes this funding for a competitive grant process for activities to address automobile theft in the State of Minnesota.

- 2004 - Program was statutorily transferred to the Minnesota Department of Commerce and managed by the Commerce Fraud Bureau since 2009.
- 2017 - Legislature expanded scope to include automobile-related theft crimes.
- 2020 - Special Agent from Commerce Fraud Bureau assigned as State's Automobile Theft Grant Prevention Coordinator.
- 2021 - Legislature allocated \$400,000 for Catalytic Converter Theft Prevention Pilot Program and appropriated \$500,000 to establish an equipment library to be made available to all law enforcement agencies in Minnesota to support efforts to combat automobile theft.
- 2023 - Added an Auto Theft Analyst to assist with looking at auto theft trends statewide and grant management.

Scope of This Report

The information in this report is presented as mandated by Minn. Stat. § 65B.84, subd. 2, to report the activities and expenditures of the Automobile Theft Prevention Program and Minn. Stat. § 325E.21 subd. 2b(g) on the progress, results, and findings of the Catalytic Converter Theft Prevention Pilot. The time period covered in this report covers the last grant period from July 2021 – June 2023.

The statistical information for reporting automobile thefts is a culmination of statistical information reported to the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB), and data submitted by grantees.

Statewide Analysis

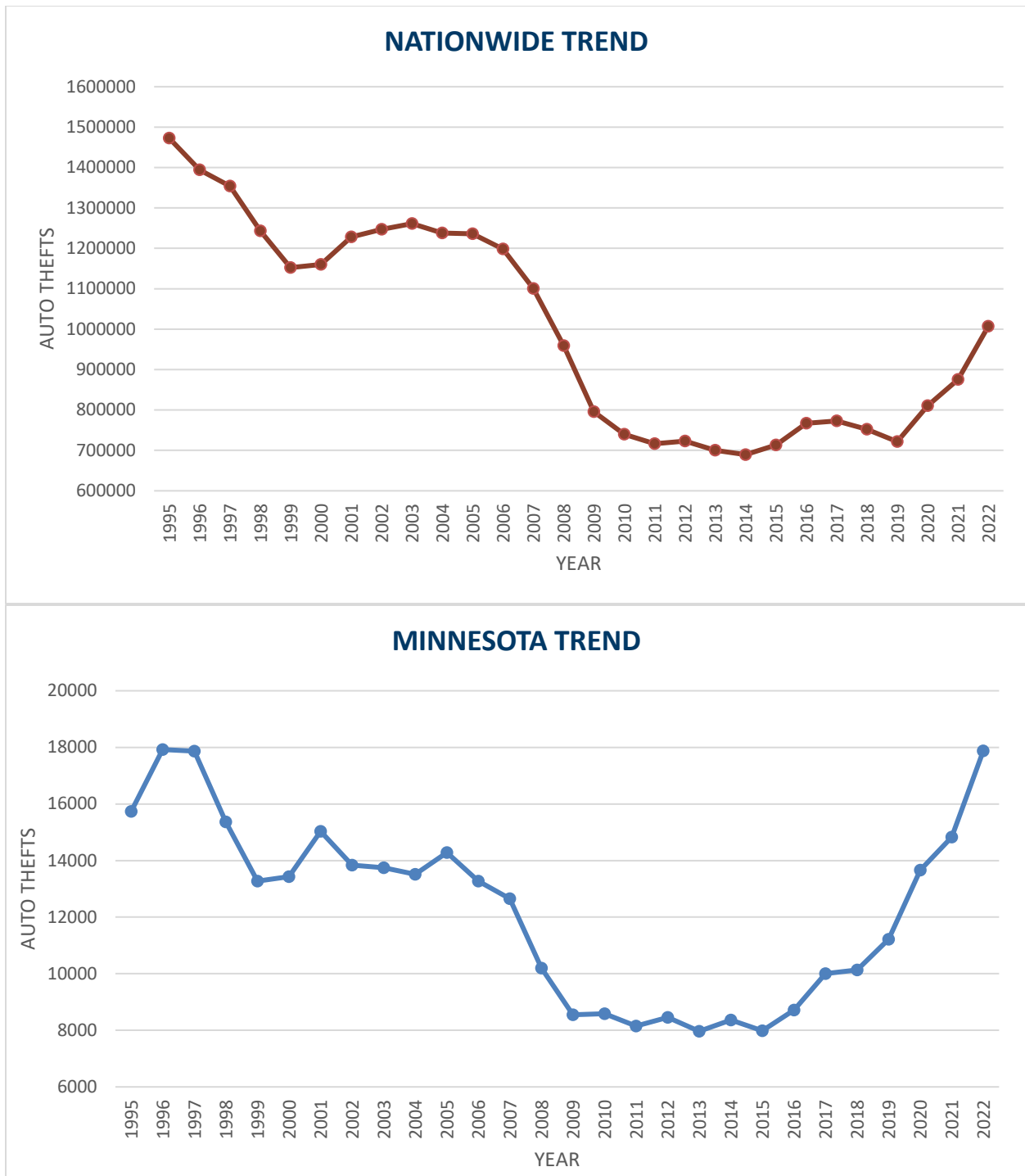
During 2022, there were 16,743 automobile thefts reported in the State of Minnesota. Auto theft occurrences vary widely across the state, ranging from zero reported automobile thefts in five counties to more than 6,000 auto thefts in the state's most populated county, Hennepin County.

¹ Only passenger vehicles, motorcycles, and light trucks are included. Fleet vehicles, recreational vehicles, and larger trucks are not subject to the surcharge.

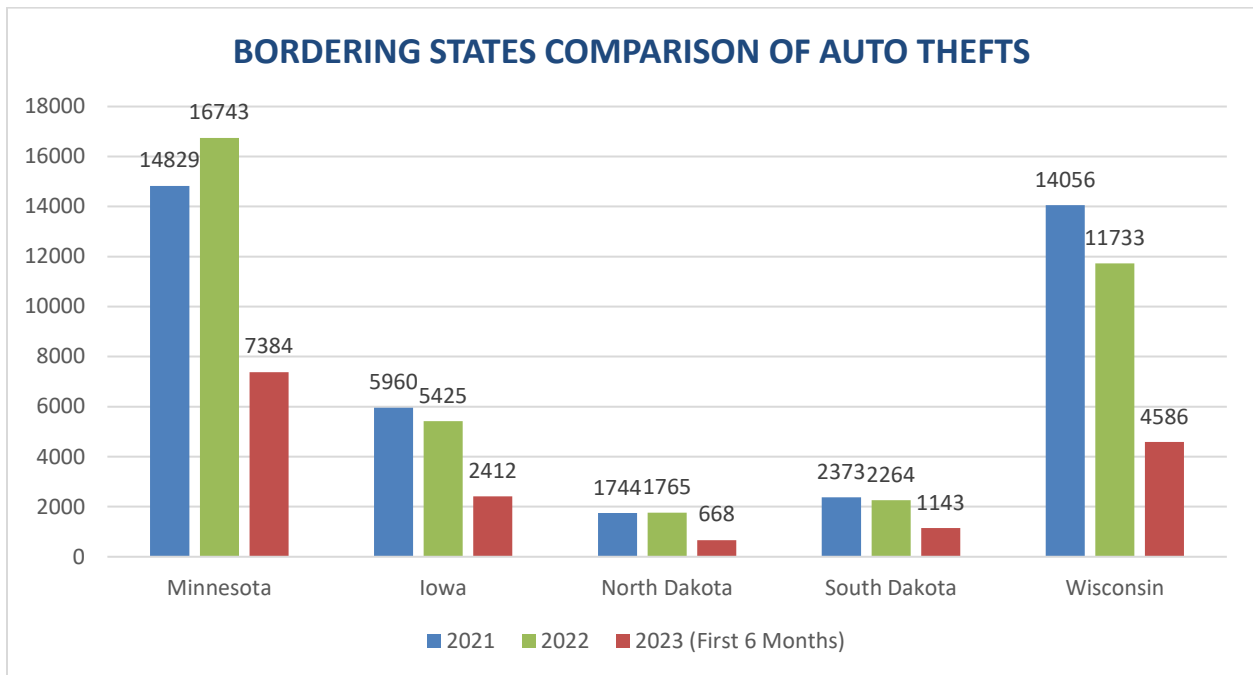
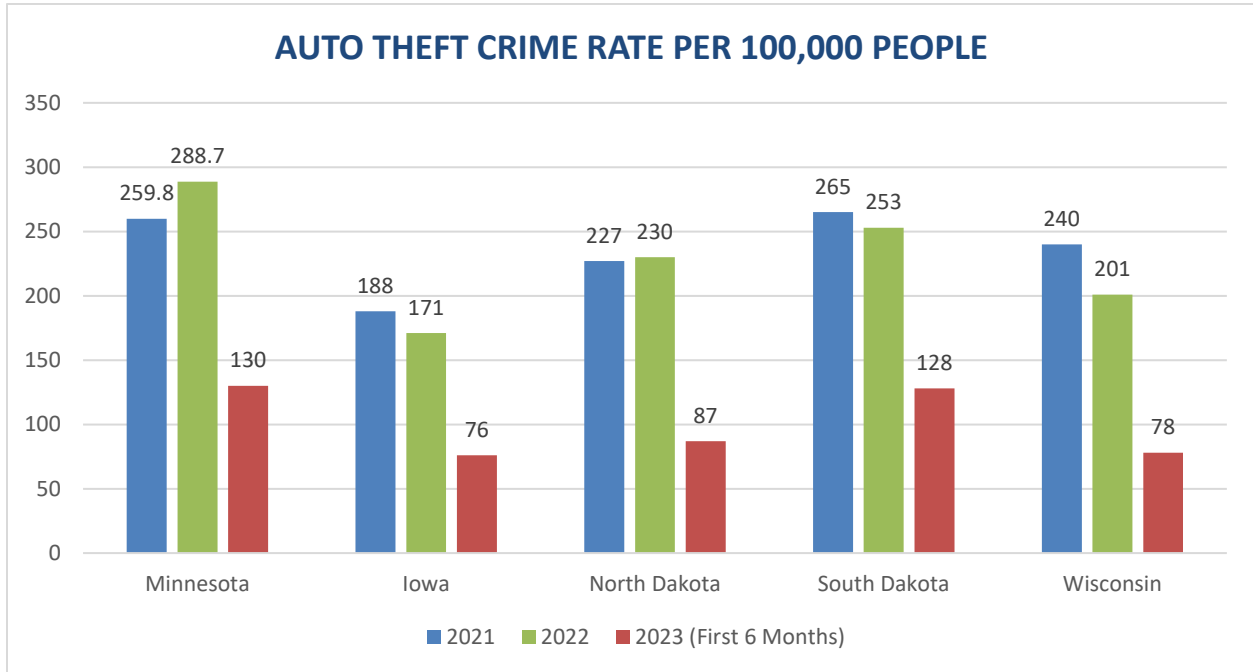
Automobile thefts disproportionately impact the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Although the seven-county metro area accounts for approximately 55% of the population, it accounts for 80% of the automobile thefts in Minnesota.

In 2022, Minnesota auto theft trended at a crime rate of 288.7 vehicles stolen per 100,000 people as compared to the national average of 300.6 vehicles stolen per 100,000 people.

Minnesota auto theft trends, national comparison



Bordering states auto theft trends²



² Data provided by NICB.

Automobile Theft Prevention Grant Program: Review of the 2021-2023 Biennium

General Auto Theft Prevention Grant

For the 2021 – 2023 state budget biennium (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2023) the Minnesota Automobile Theft Prevention Grant offered the General Auto Theft Prevention Grant and a new dedicated investigator grant program.³

For the General Auto Theft Prevention Grant, a total of \$4,565,169.43 was approved under this program for 25 law enforcement agencies, 4 prosecutor offices and 3 non-profit groups.

Funds from these grants were used to fund prosecution staff, analytical support, provide equipment, create training opportunities, and to pay overtime for investigations for the following:

Law Enforcement Agencies	Funds
Anoka County Joint Investigations ⁴	\$290,773.04
Brooklyn Center Police Department	\$34,200.00
Bloomington Police Department	\$84,336.00
Eden Prairie Police	\$19,885.00
Edina Police	\$65,742.00
Hennepin County Sheriff's Office	\$160,800.00
Hibbing Police	\$28,424.00
Maplewood Police	\$34,685.64
Minnetonka Police	\$68,046.00
Minneapolis Police	\$1,298,160.80
Minnesota State Patrol	\$5,800.00
Ramsey County Sheriff's Office	\$79,840.00
Roseville Police	\$64,636.20
St. Paul Police	\$218,433.00
South St. Paul Police	\$59,276.00

Prosecutor Offices	Funds
Anoka County Prosecutor	\$193,859.00
Hennepin County Prosecutor	\$548,424.55
Ramsey County	\$568,969.60
Washington County	\$116,200.00

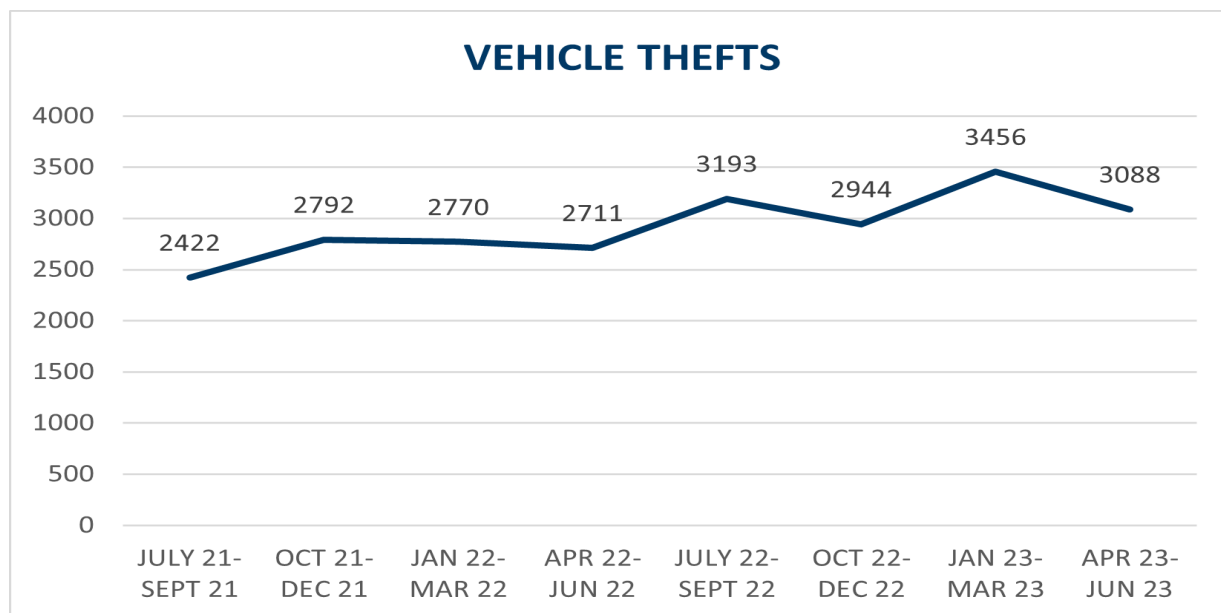
³ Summaries of these grant awards were provided in the 2022 report.

⁴ Includes Anoka County Sheriff's Office, Blaine Police, Centennial Lakes Police, Coon Rapids Police, Anoka Police, Fridley Police, Spring Lake Park Police, Columbia heights police, Lino Lakes Police, Ramsey Police, St. Francis Police

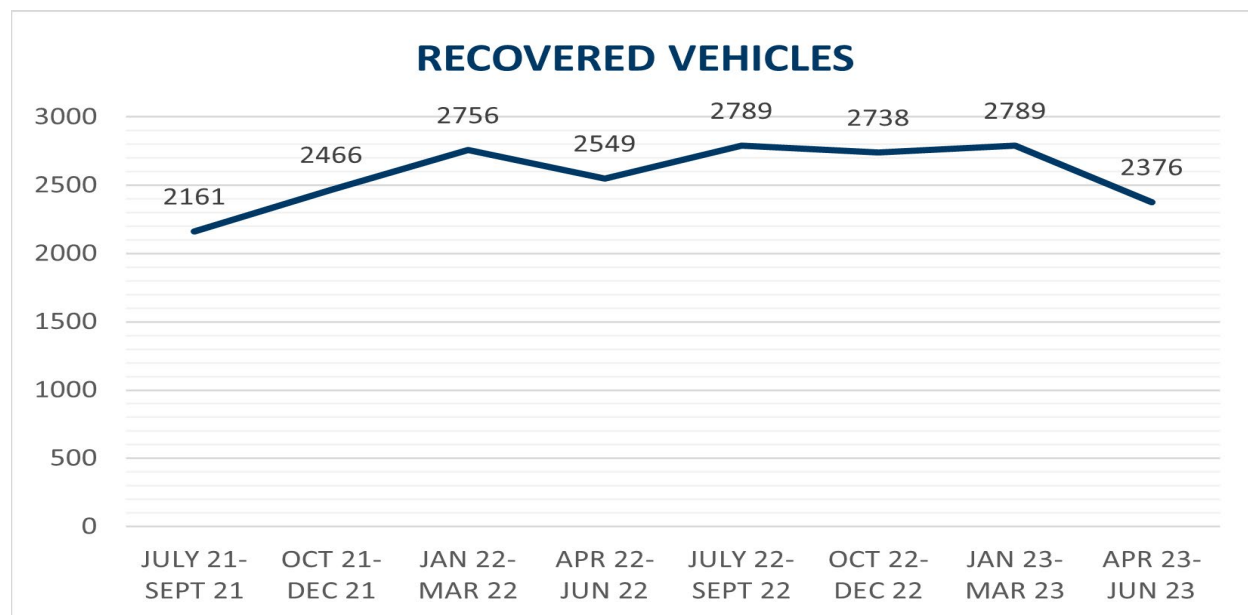
Non-profit	Funds
Minnesota Automobile Association	\$99,999.00
NCRC - IAATI	\$24,750.00
Ramsey County Youth Project	\$499,929.60

Law Enforcement Agencies

Law Enforcement Grantee Performance: General Grant



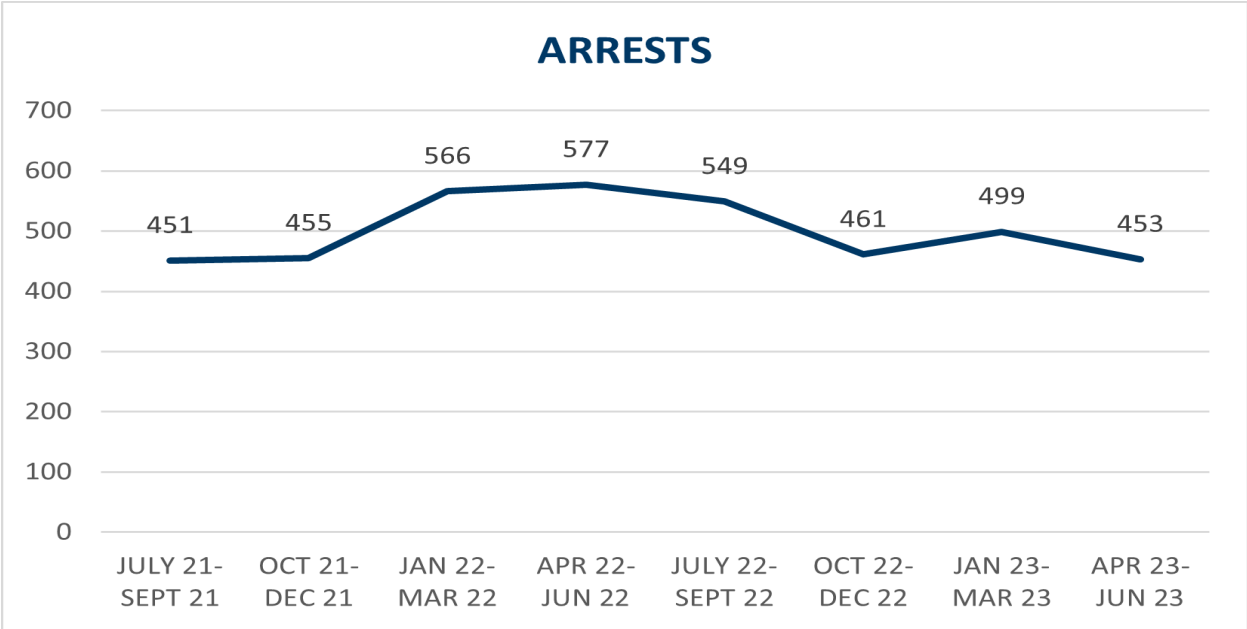
Grantees reported **23,276** vehicles stolen over the grant cycle with a value of **\$295,114,801.99**.⁵
 Grantee agencies account for an average of **70%** of all the State's auto thefts.⁶



Grantees reported recovering **20,624** vehicles. **Approximately 5%** of the vehicles stolen during this grant period are still unaccounted for.

⁵ When grantees did not specify a dollar amount, the average of \$14,000.00 was used.

⁶ July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022, grantees reported 15,965 vehicle thefts, 66% of the statewide total. July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023, grantees reported 17,039 vehicles thefts, 74% of the statewide total.



This chart shows all combined auto theft related arrests by grantee agencies by quarter.

Dedicated Investigator Auto Theft Prevention Grant

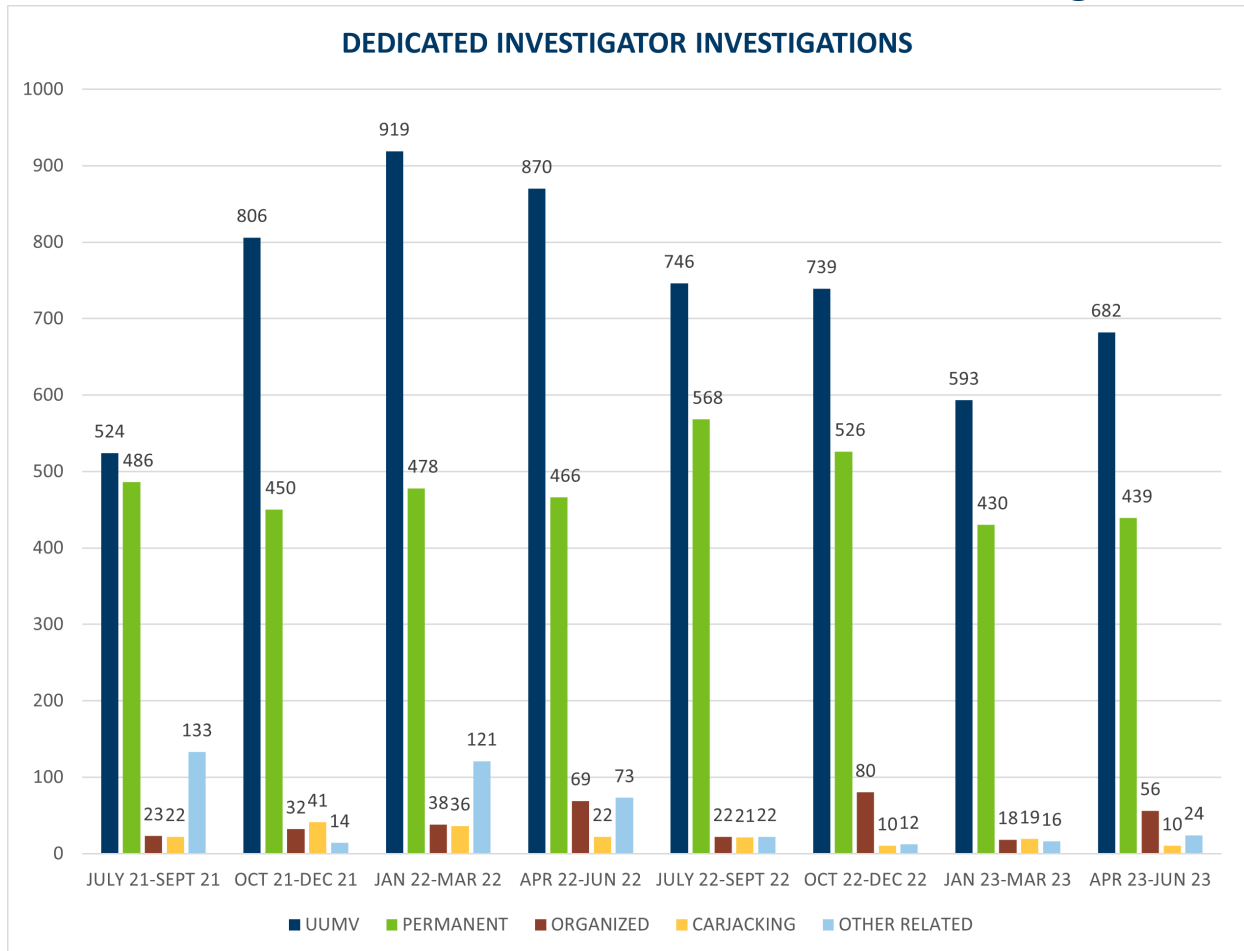
The Automobile Theft Prevention Program also offered a new grant opportunity to agencies willing to assign an investigator to focus on auto thefts in their community. Agencies having at least 75 auto thefts and recoveries per year were eligible for \$12,000 per year in exchange for assigning all the auto theft cases to a single investigator. Agencies having at least 250 auto thefts and recoveries were eligible for \$100,000 per year in exchange for having an investigator work auto theft cases full-time. Agencies with more than 500 auto thefts were eligible for multiple positions. Agencies were allowed to consolidate to meet greater eligibility. All grantee investigators received funding for specialized auto theft investigation training.

The following agencies were awarded the dedicated investigator position⁷:

- Bemidji Police Department (part-time)
- Brooklyn Center Police Department
- Duluth Police Department
- Coon Rapids / Anoka Police Departments
- Edina Police Department (part-time)
- Fridley / Columbia Heights / Spring Lake Park Police Departments
- Hennepin County Sheriff's Office – 2 positions
- Maplewood Police Department
- Mille Lacs County Sheriff's Office (part-time)
- Ramsey County Sheriff's Office
- Roseville Police Department
- St. Cloud Police Department
- Saint Paul Police Department – 2 positions
- South St. Paul Police Department (part-time)

⁷ Agencies that had a part-time investigator received \$12,000.00 per year. These departments included: Bemidji Police Department; Edina Police Department; Mille Lacs County Sheriff's Office; and South St. Paul Police Department.

Law Enforcement Grantee Performance:⁸ Dedicated Investigator



This chart shows the number of cases by type per quarter of the activity of the dedicated investigators.

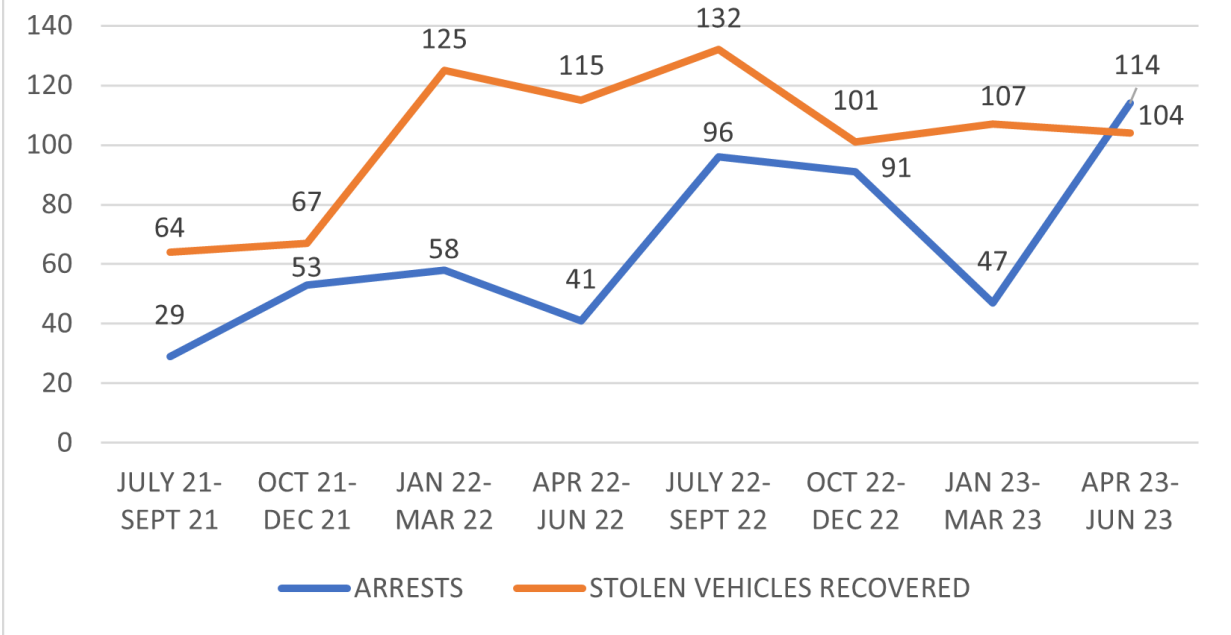
⁸ “UUMV” is Unauthorized Use of a Motor Vehicle. These are cases where a vehicle is primarily used for quick transportation. Many of these are used to commit other crimes.

“Permanent” are those cases where the offender makes an attempt to keep the vehicle, such as removing the VIN, removing the plates, painting the vehicle, or selling the vehicle.

“Organized” include theft rings and chop shops with the purpose of financial gains.

These statistics are compiled from the activities of the dedicated auto theft investigators from the following areas: Bemidji, Coon Rapids/Anoka, Duluth, Edina, Fridley/Columbia Heights/Spring Lake Park, Hennepin County, Mille Lacs County, Ramsey County, Roseville, South St. Paul and St. Cloud.

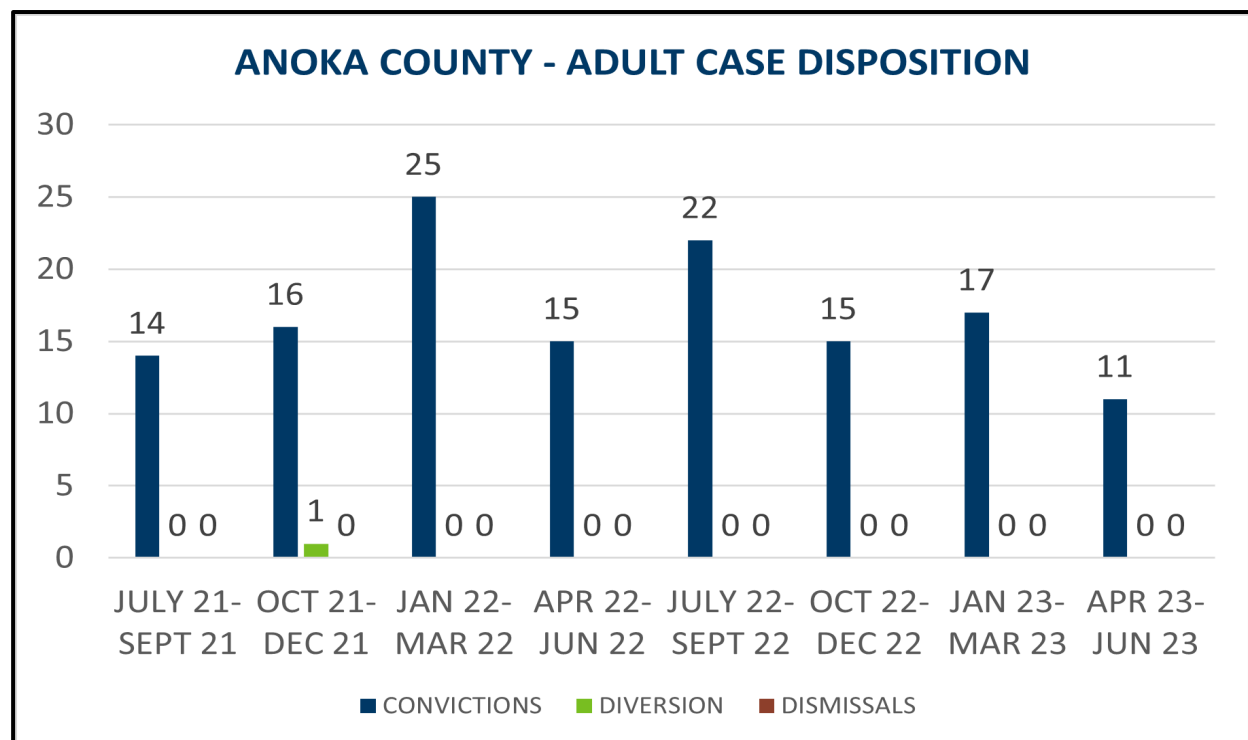
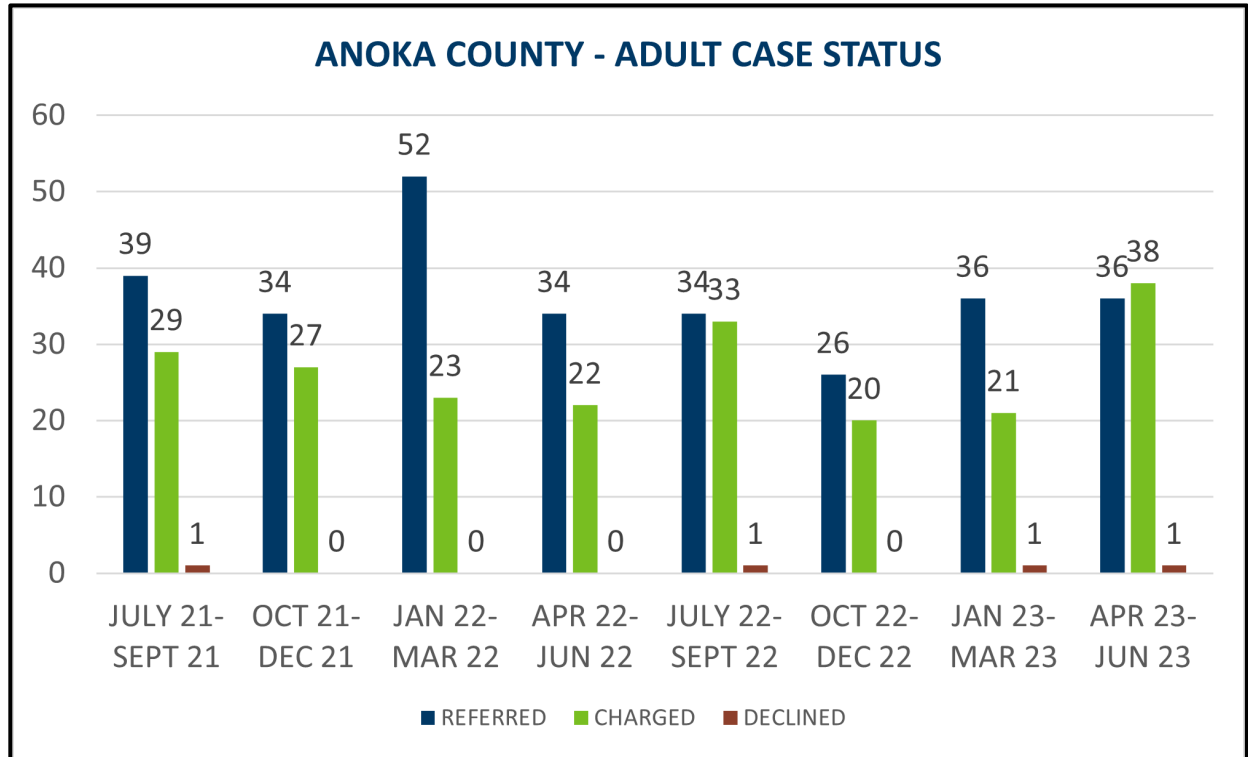
DEDICATED INVESTIGATOR INVESTIGATIONS



These investigations resulted in 815 vehicles recovered with an estimated value of \$95,352,768.

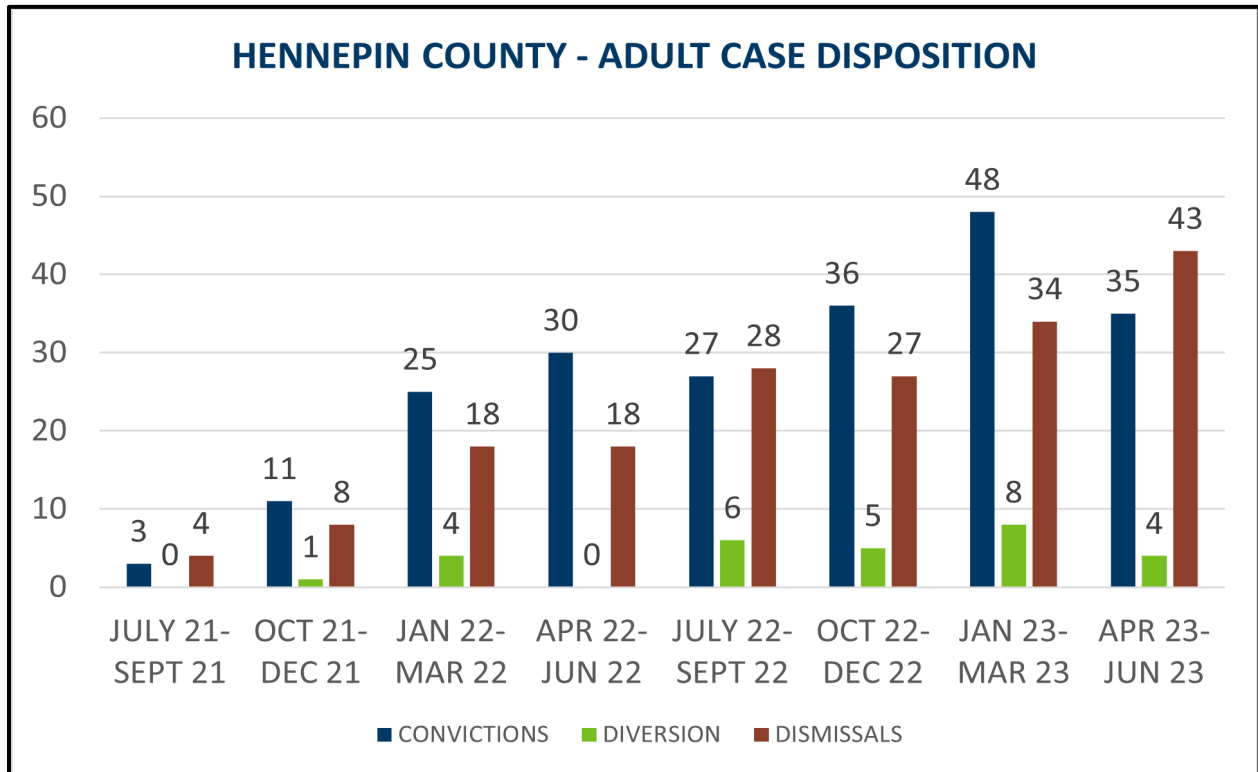
Prosecutor Offices Grants Anoka County Attorney's Office

The Anoka County Attorney's Office was awarded \$193,859 to support a full-time prosecutor to prosecute auto theft cases where the offender was an adult. Their efforts resulted in 135 convictions and \$452,474.65 in restitution ordered.

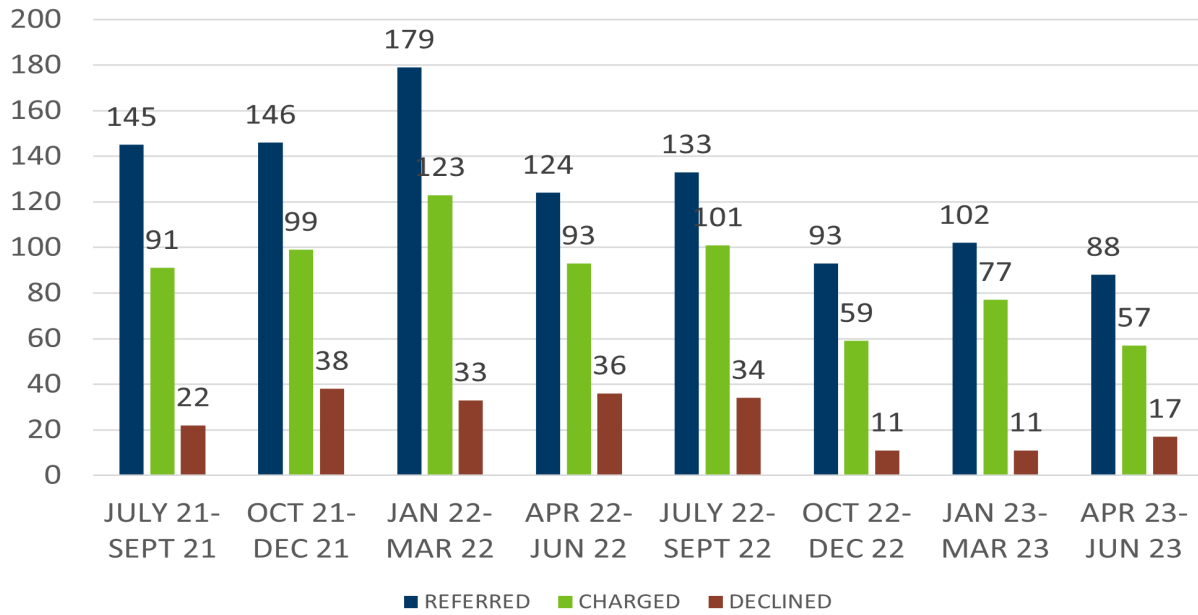


Hennepin County Attorney's Office

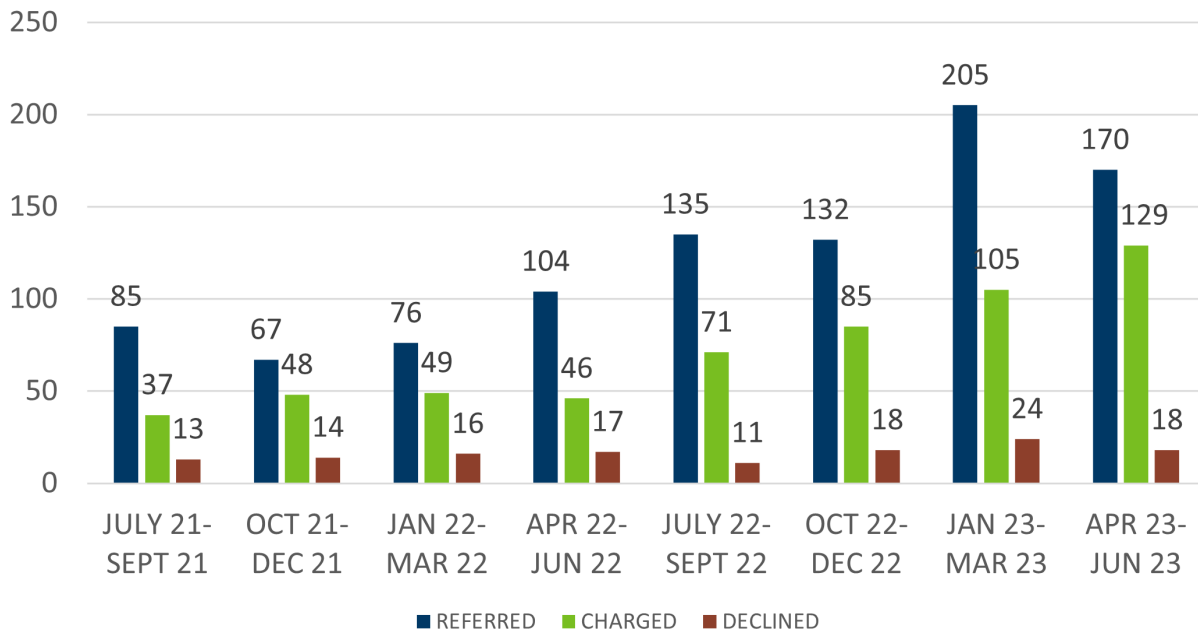
The Hennepin County Attorney's Office was awarded \$548,424.55 to support a full-time adult prosecutor, half-time juvenile prosecutor, quarter-time paralegal, and half-time investigator. In addition, an amount was awarded to support community youth diversion services for juvenile auto theft offenders. However, the Hennepin County Attorneys' Office never sought payment for the portion of their grant ask to support community youth diversion services. In adult cases, \$286,245.27 in restitution was ordered. In juvenile cases, \$22,384.27 in restitution was ordered.

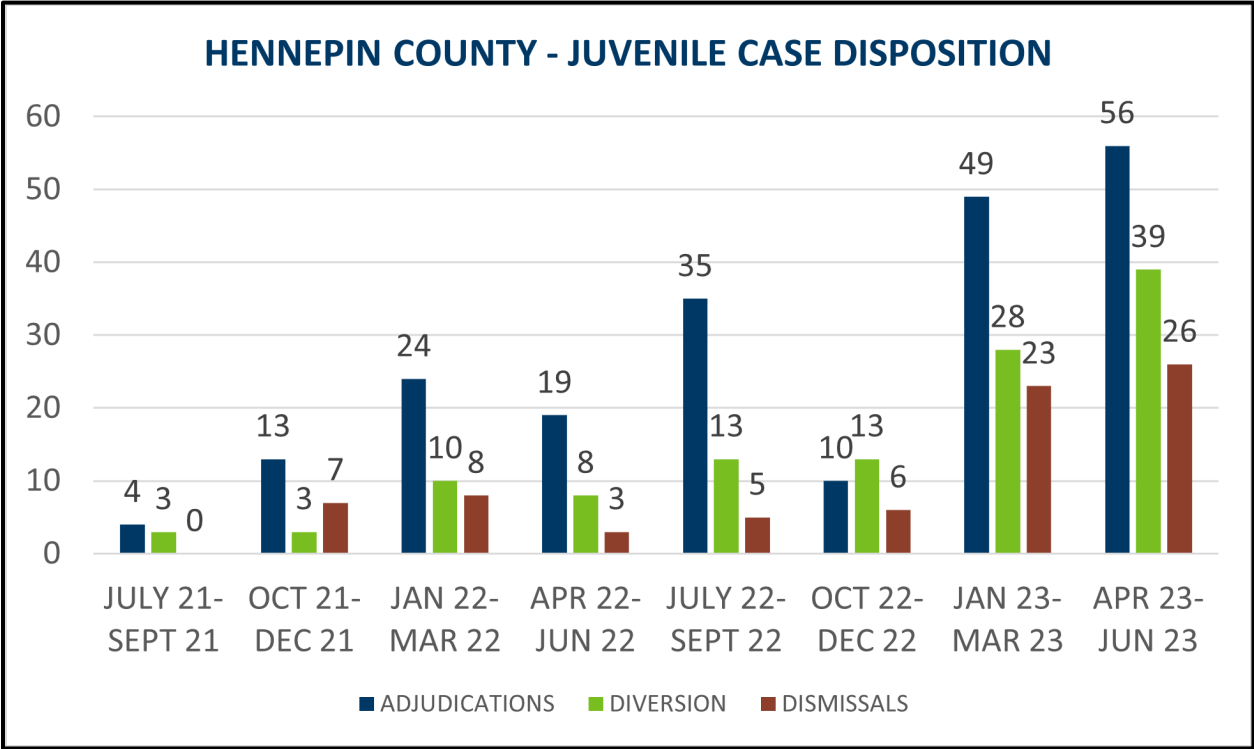


HENNEPIN COUNTY - ADULT CASE STATUS



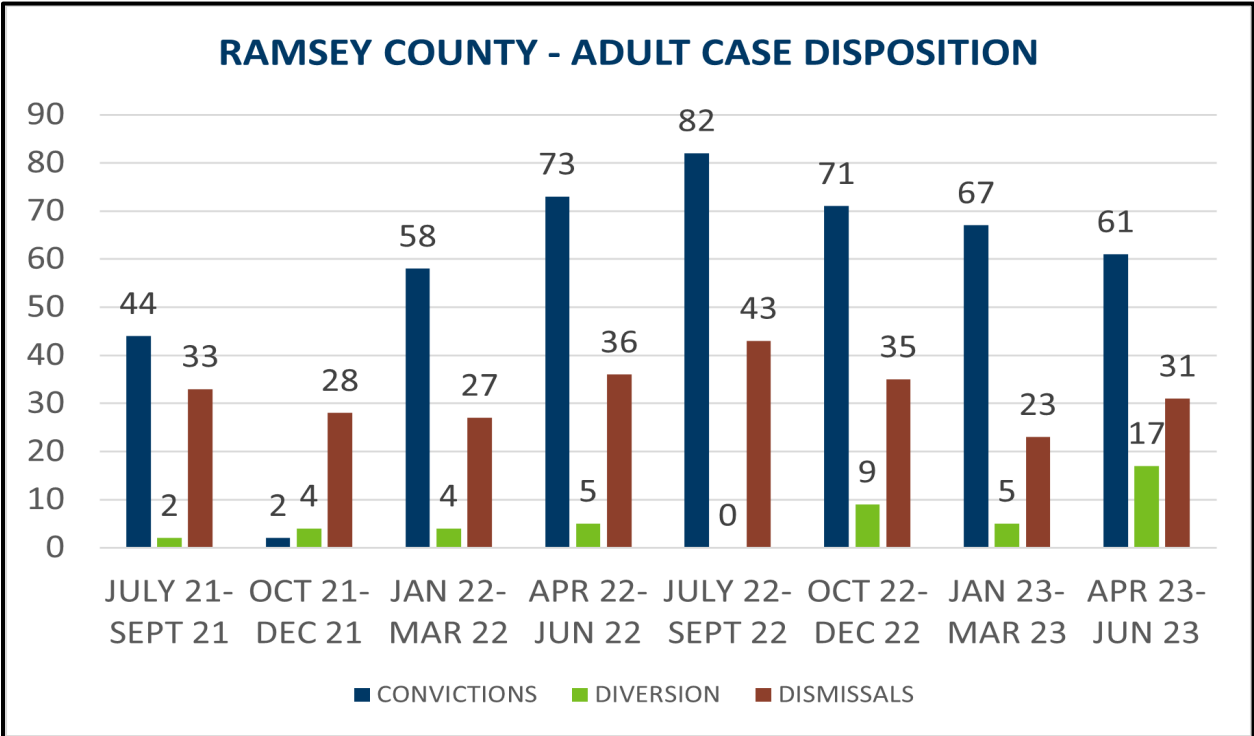
HENNEPIN COUNTY - JUVENILE CASE STATUS

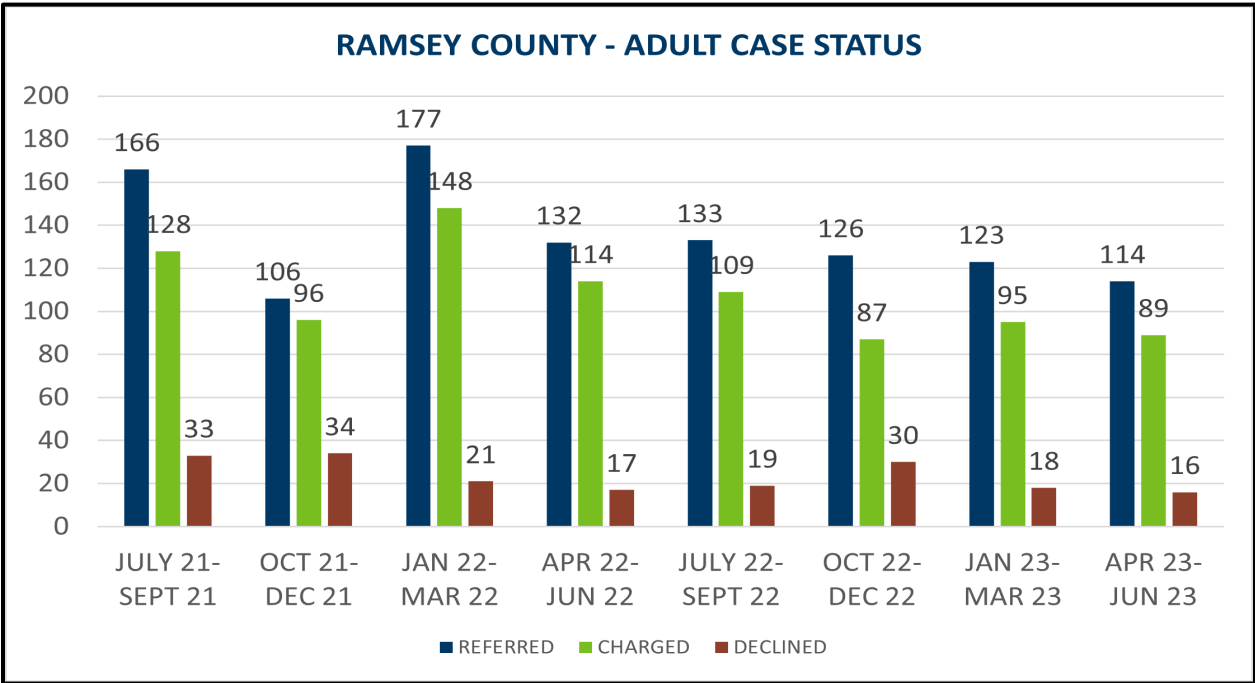




Ramsey County Attorney’s Office

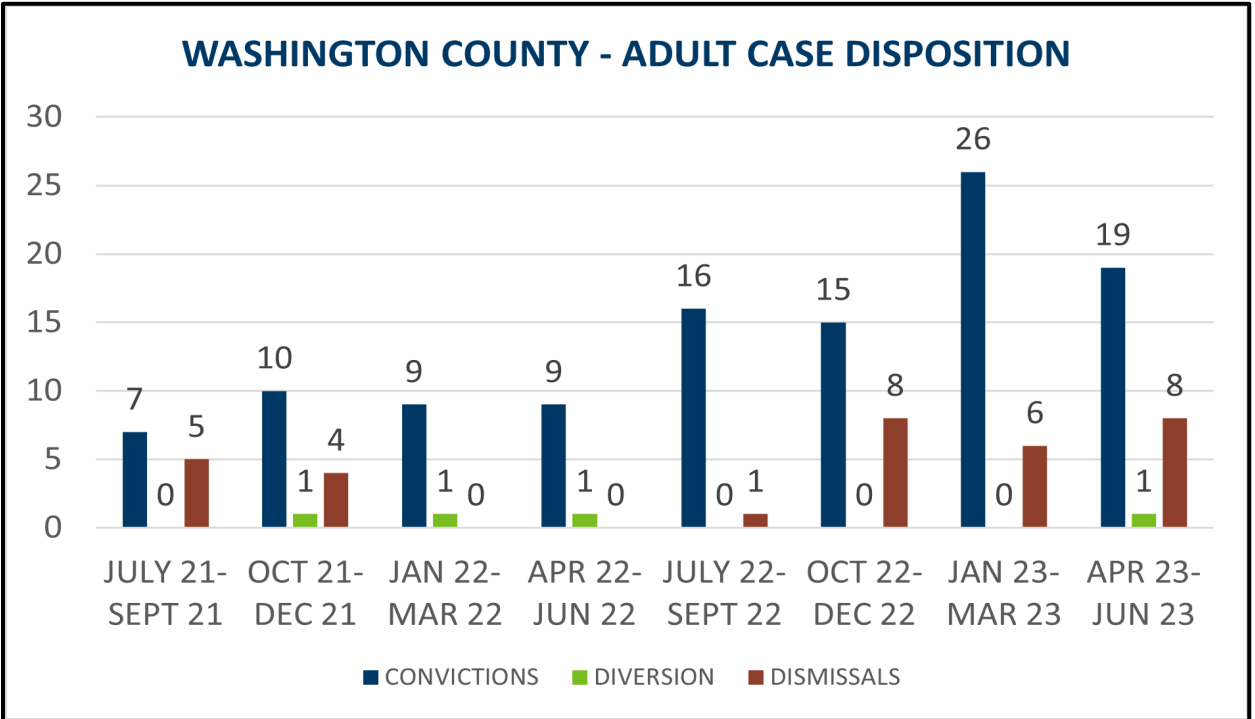
The Ramsey County Attorney’s Office was awarded \$568,969.60 to support a full-time adult prosecutor, part-time legal assistant, and full-time deputy investigator. In adult cases, a \$215,204.02 in restitution was ordered.

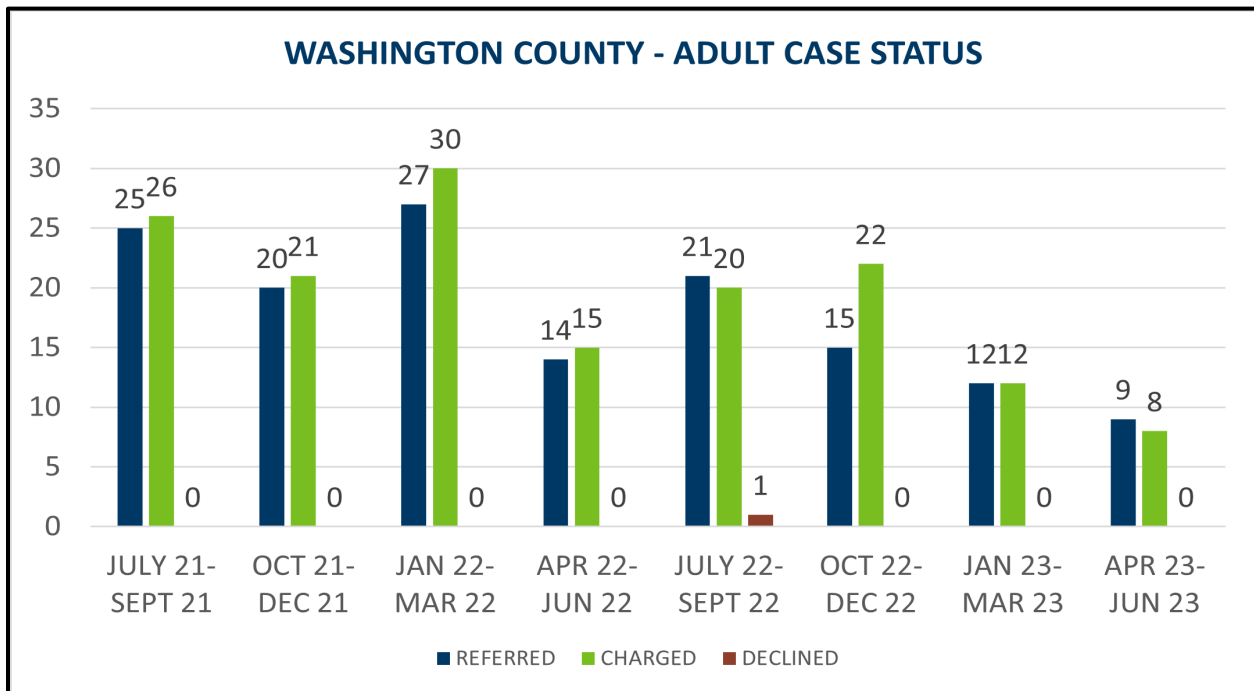




Washington County Attorney’s Office

The Washington County Attorney’s Office was awarded \$116,200 to support a half-time prosecutor position and training . For adult cases, \$102,150.92 in restitution was ordered.





Nonprofit Grants

Ramsey County Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project

For the 2021 – 2023 biennium, \$499,929.60 was awarded to Ramsey County to administer a Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project. The project was initiated as a result of discussions between the Commerce Fraud Bureau and the Ramsey County Attorney’s Office in 2020. These discussions identified that many auto thefts were committed by a relatively small group of repeat offenders and current enforcement methods were not deterring these offenders. The Ramsey County Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project is funded and governed by a board of law enforcement and community members.

As of June 30, 2023, the program reports that:

- 100 youths have received services from the team.
- 65 youths are currently in the program.
- 10 youths are no longer in the program.
- 1 youth in the program is recovering from a gunshot wound.
- 1 youth in the program was killed.

Minnesota Automotive Dealers Association

The Minnesota Automotive Dealers Association received grant funds to purchase approximately 9,930 CatGuard labels and paint for a catalytic converter marking pilot program. The intent of the pilot was to mark converters at dealerships as part of routine service or when specifically installing a new catalytic converter. A modification to the pilot was made mid-cycle to allow dealerships to also install labels on existing inventory.

Participation in the pilot amongst dealerships was lower than projected with only a few dealerships taking part. It appears, however, that marking converters was an effective deterrent to theft. For example, one dealership that had experienced eight incidents of catalytic converter thefts in less than three months marked all vehicles on its lot. In the following 18 months, that dealership did not experience any catalytic converter thefts.

Auto Theft Training

Investigating automobile thefts can be complicated. Specialized training can be given to increase the knowledge, skills, and networking of investigators and prosecutors. The Automobile Theft Prevention Grant has sponsored sending analysts, investigators, and prosecutors to the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators (IAATI) conferences.

The North Central Chapter of IAATI has also offered scholarships to the regional conference that was held in May 2023 in Bloomington, Minnesota. In addition, the Special Agent assigned to the program has provided a variety of auto theft related trainings to various groups throughout the nation over the past two years.

Auto Theft Prevention Advertising Grant

The number one complaint the ATPP hears from law enforcement and prosecutors are that a large number of vehicles are stolen with the keys in the vehicle. These thefts represent the largest category of automobile thefts - approximately 60% in the Metro Area.

In the Fall of 2022, a grant offering was made to a marketing and advertising agency to increase public awareness of the auto theft problem in the hope it would encourage vehicle owners to change their habit of leaving keys in the car. \$450,000 was allocated for the project. Russell Herder was selected to create content and place advertisements. The theme developed for the campaign was "Take Your Keys. Always."

Through multiple advertising avenues, to include Google, Facebook, TV, radio, window clings, gas pump toppers and billboards, Russell Herder was able to develop these interactions:

- 5,873,904 digital ads viewed
- 527,739 videos viewed with 16,017 clicks
- 19,157,600 impressions during TV ads
- 1,416,000 impressions on MNN radio ads
- 140,000 listeners per week on KMOJ radio ads
- 7,129,017 impressions on billboards
- 8,932,000 impressions on gas pump toppers
- 1,540,000 impressions on window clings

In addition to the ads placed directly, content was developed for law enforcement and community organizations to share on their social media platforms. The interest in the campaign was exceptional. The number of people interacting with digital ads connected to this campaign was approximately three times higher than average ad campaigns. In addition, many ads were translated into Spanish, Hmong, and Somali languages.

The Russell Herder advertising campaign was supported by Commerce's Communications Office. It included issuing press releases, multiple media interviews, developing website content, and a downloadable toolkit for law enforcement to use. The website recorded 25,661 total visitors coming directly to the website and 9,295 visitors coming via Google searches. The average visitor looked at three pages on the website. The significant direct traffic could have been related to greater reach by non-digital ads, such as TV ads and out-of-home ads.

While the ATPP continues to evaluate the effectiveness of the project, the feedback from law enforcement has been positive.

Catalytic Converter Theft Prevention Pilot Project

Catalytic Converters are easily stolen from a vehicle, have a high recycle value, and can be quickly sold to buyers. In addition, once they are removed from a vehicle, they are virtually untraceable, which makes prosecution of the theft extremely difficult. In response to a rapid increase in the number of catalytic converter thefts, the Minnesota Legislature created the Catalytic Converter Theft Prevention Pilot Project designed to mark the most at-risk catalytic converters.

This program is administered by the Commerce Fraud Bureau as part of the State's Automobile Theft Prevention Program. The Commerce Fraud Bureau purchased 39,133 CatGuard Labels and partnered with law enforcement agencies and service centers to distribute and install them. Initially, the program targeted 15 vehicle models that had the most reported incidents of thefts. The program was later expanded to include all gasoline vehicles with an accessible catalytic converter. To date, approximately 32,500 labels have been distributed.

While the deterrence effect of having a marked converter has shown many positive results, the interest in the program diminished slightly when Minnesota passed its new catalytic converter law in March 202, which requires legitimate proof of ownership to sell a catalytic converter, increasing penalties, and closing loopholes (Minn. Stat. § 325E.21).

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