

# BIKE THEFTS IN VICTORIA

## WHAT THE STATISTICS TELL US

If we want to increase the number of people riding bikes, we need to address a growing problem: bike thefts.

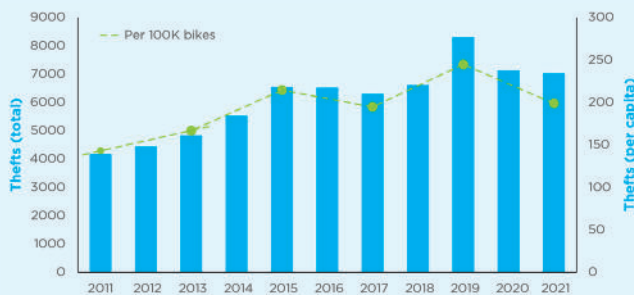
Thefts leave significant burdens on people who ride and can discourage others from even hopping on. But bike theft is more than a barrier, it's a multi-million dollar problem.

To illustrate the depth of the problem in Victoria, we present an analysis of recorded offence data collected by the Crime Statistics Agency Victoria (ending March 2022).

### How many bikes are stolen?

Over 7000 bikes are stolen in Victoria in 2021, roughly 19 bikes a day. Since 2011, bike thefts have risen by 75%, and may continue to rise into the future without appropriate action.

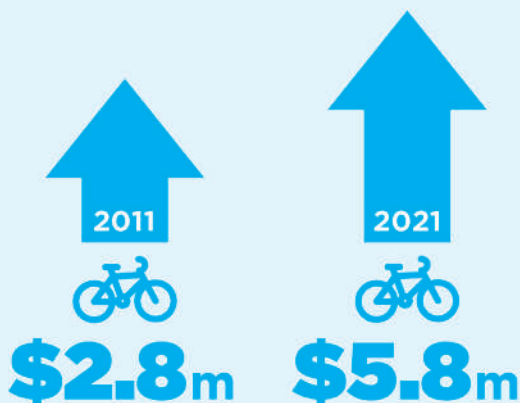
A common argument is that more people are buying bikes each year, so naturally there will be more thefts. While it is true that bike ownership is on the rise, if we look at the number of thefts per 100,000 bikes in Victoria we can see that the rate of thefts is also rising (green line, right). In other words, there are more bikes but there are even more thieves!



### What is the cost to Victorians?

The average retail price for a bike is \$900AUD. Using historical bike theft records and adjusting for inflation, we can estimate the year-on-year cost burdens associated with bike thefts.

Unsolved bike thefts in Victoria equated to \$5.8 million in 2021, a two-fold increase compared to 2011 (\$2.8 million). The councils with the highest theft-related cost burdens are Melbourne, Port Phillip, Yarra, Moreland, and Maribyrnong.



### How do bike thefts compare to car thefts?

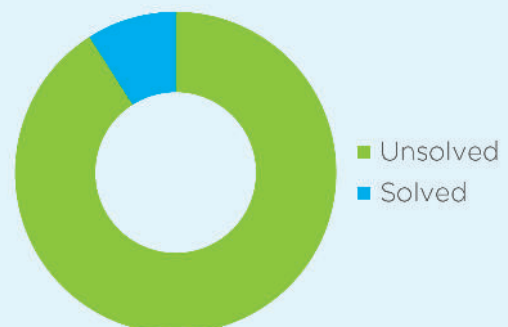
There are approximately 3.53 million bikes and 5.16 million registered vehicles in Victoria. Combining these figures with their respective number of thefts in 2021, we find that the rate of theft for bikes is 2 per 1000, and 3 per 1000 for vehicles. Not wildly different as some might suppose!

Furthermore, if the year-on-year theft numbers are compared, it is clear that bikes thefts are on the rise. Conversely, vehicle thefts, while experiencing some peaks and troughs, have remained reasonably stable overall.



### How many cases are unsolved?

Unfortunately, 91 per cent of bike theft cases are remain unsolved. This figure has not changed in 10 years. In some instances, the case may be filed as 'withdrawn' or 'not authorised', but these numbers are negligible.

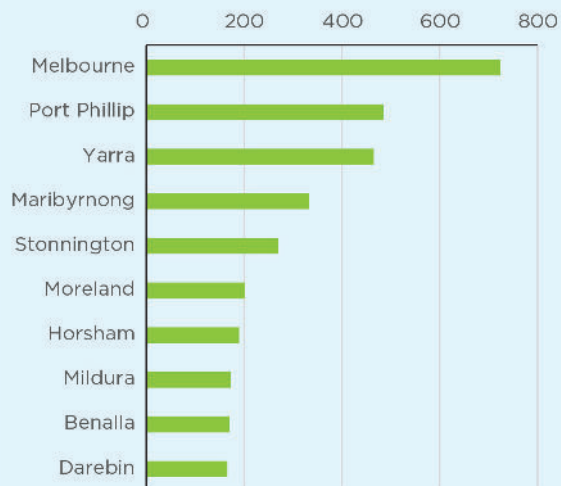


## What are the common theft locations?

Inner city suburbs in Melbourne pose the highest bike theft risk. The Victorian local government area (LGA) with the most reported bike thefts in 2021 was Melbourne, with 1243 thefts, or 724 thefts per 100,000 people.

The Port Phillip LGA was the second most common place for bike thefts, with 540 thefts, or 484 per 100,000 people. This was closely followed by Yarra, Maribyrnong and Stonnington.

In regional Victoria, the LGAs with the highest bike thefts are Horsham, Mildura, and Benalla. Other regional LGAs of concern include Greater Shepparton, Warrnambool, Wangaratta and Colac-Otway.



## What can policymakers do?

Many Victorians rely on bikes as their primary vehicle for transport, especially in the inner city suburbs where thefts are highest.

If we are to grow bike riding across Victoria, we need to ensure that people's bikes will be safe when they park. No one is going to want to purchase and ride a bike if they know it is just going to end up in the hands of thieves.

Here are some policy recommendations to reduce theft risks into the future:

- Funding provisions for lockable on-street and off-street bike parking facilities.
- Funding provisions for businesses to build secure bike parking and end-of-trip facilities in their workplace.
- Communication strategies to educate the community about parking bikes securely.
- National guidelines for workplaces regarding the provision of fit-for-purpose bike facilities.
- Inclusion of bike theft offences in crime-related open datasets.

## What can you do?

We recommend that riders take the following steps to ensure the risk of bike theft is minimised:

- Record your bike's serial number and details.
- Make your bike identifiable, for example by engraving your name.
- Consider using a voluntary bike register to record your bike's details, which helps police and the general community return your bike, should it become lost or stolen.
- Use a high-quality hardened lock, such as a D-lock.
- When parking, wrap your bike lock between the bike's wheels and frame, as this will increase the bike's protection.
- If travelling to a railway station, use a secure bike cage, such as Parkiteer.
- Consider a bike insurance policy. [Bike Insure](#), for example, can provide insurance for any kind of bike.

## What will Bicycle Network do?

We will work closely with local and state government to identify opportunities where theft risks can be minimised. We will present our findings to Victorian councils where theft rates are highest, and encourage a concerted effort to make sure bikes are safe when unattended. Finally, we will continue to provide our Bike Insure program to members so that they are protected in the unlikely event of a theft.