

DATE: February 6, 2020

REGARDING: U.S. Snowmobile Thefts in the U.S. 2018- 2019 (Public Dissemination)

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Introduction

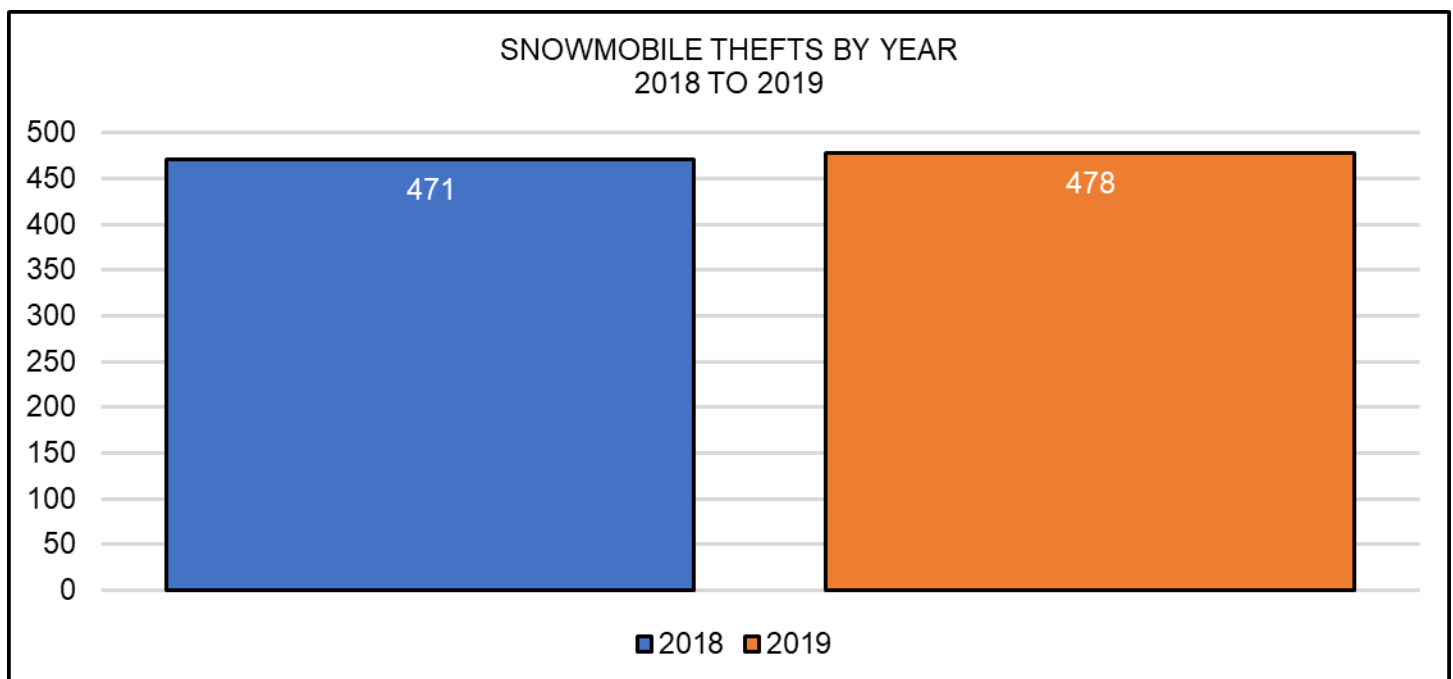
This **ForeCAST**SM report analyzes snowmobile thefts reported to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019. A vehicle was determined to be a snowmobile by meeting any of the following criteria:

- The VIN that was included in the theft record matched the VIN structures of snowmobiles detailed in the NICB Vehicle Identification Manual (years 1999 to 2019).
- The Vehicle Manufacturer (VMA), Vehicle Style (VST), Vehicle Model (VMO), and/or License Plate Type (LIT) recorded in the theft record matches the codes for a snowmobile laid out in the NCIC Vehicle Data Codes Manual.
- The short text description included in the theft record states that the record is for a snowmobile.

It is important to note that NCIC is a dynamic dataset which allows for records to be updated or deleted as new information is discovered or as the situation for the specific theft record changes (mainly recoveries and partial recoveries). For this reason, the exact numbers change on a regular basis. Variations between similar reports created at different times should be expected.

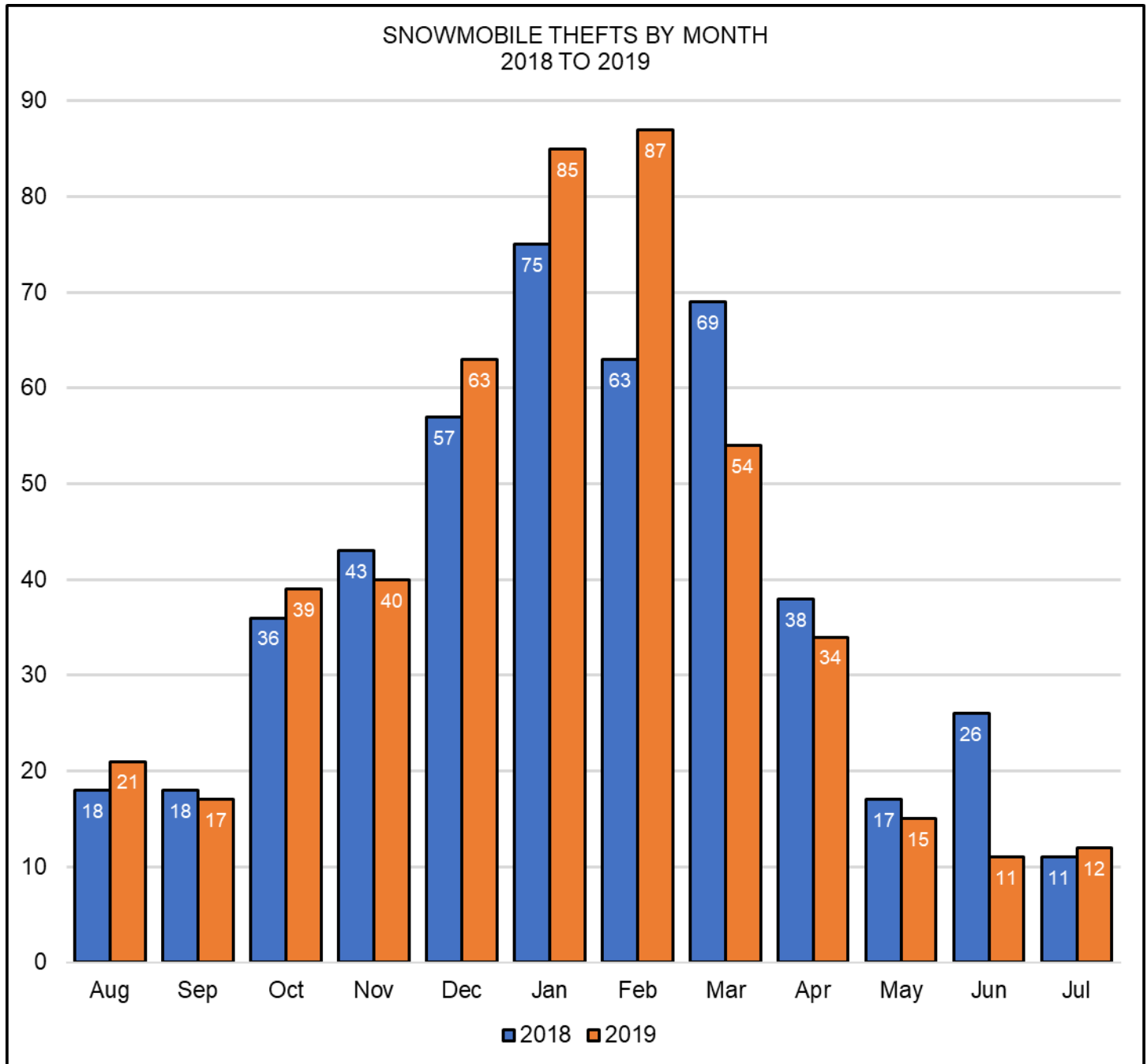
Snowmobile Theft Totals by Year

From January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019, 949 snowmobiles were reported stolen in the United States. 2019 had slightly more thefts reported than 2018 with 478 compared to 471. Averaged out, there are 475 snowmobiles reported stolen every year.



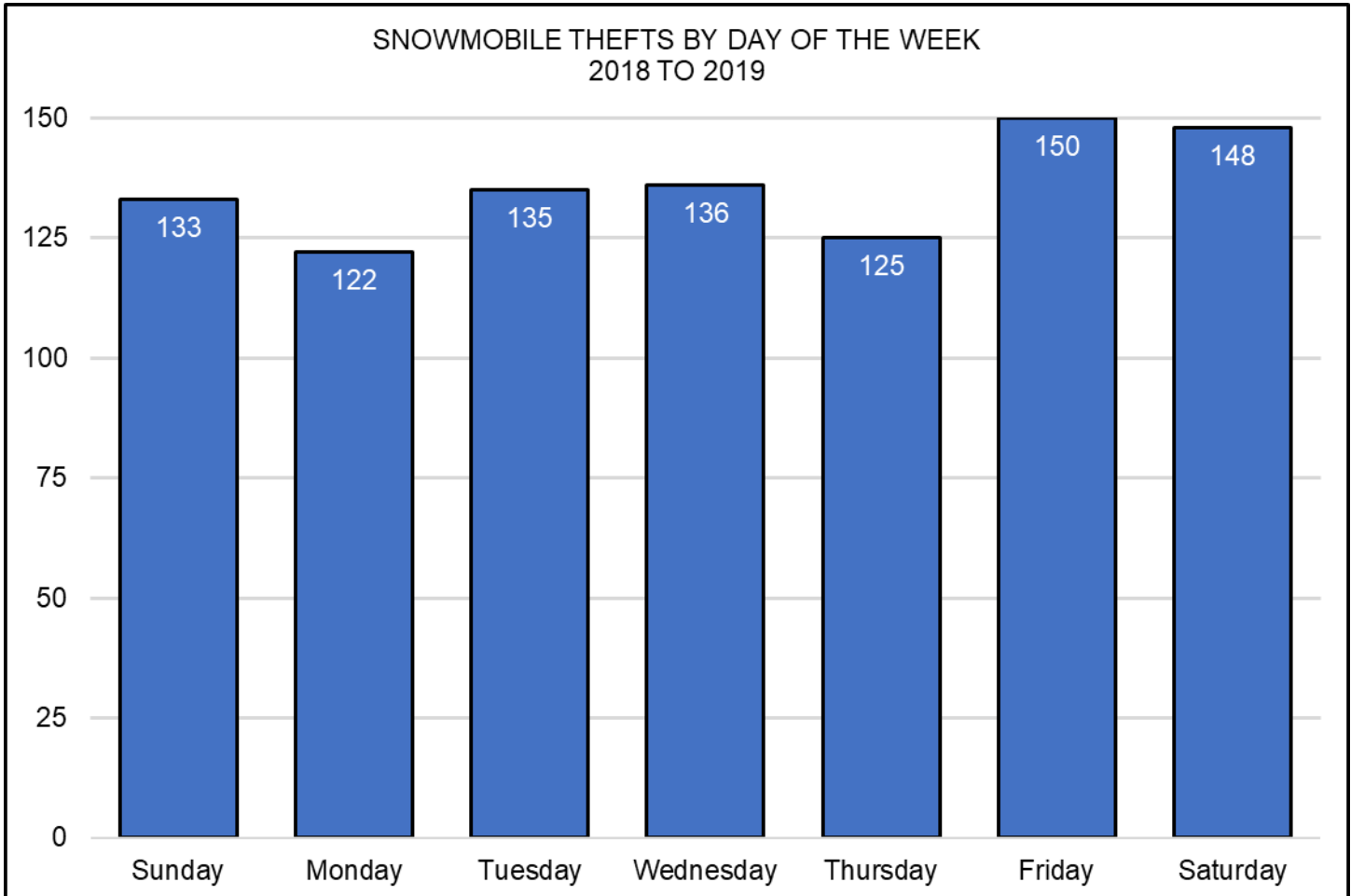
Snowmobile Theft Totals by Month

As might be expected, snowmobile thefts mainly take place during the winter months. The four months from December to March are the only months to have more than 100 thefts take place over the two years of this study. Overall these 4 months account for nearly 58% of all reported snowmobile thefts. January was the most active month for snowmobile thefts with 75 or more reported thefts each year, but February 2019 was the busiest single month with 87 reported thefts. Late spring to early fall were periods of relatively little snowmobile theft with July 2018 and August 2019 being the only months within that timespan to have more than 20 reported thefts.



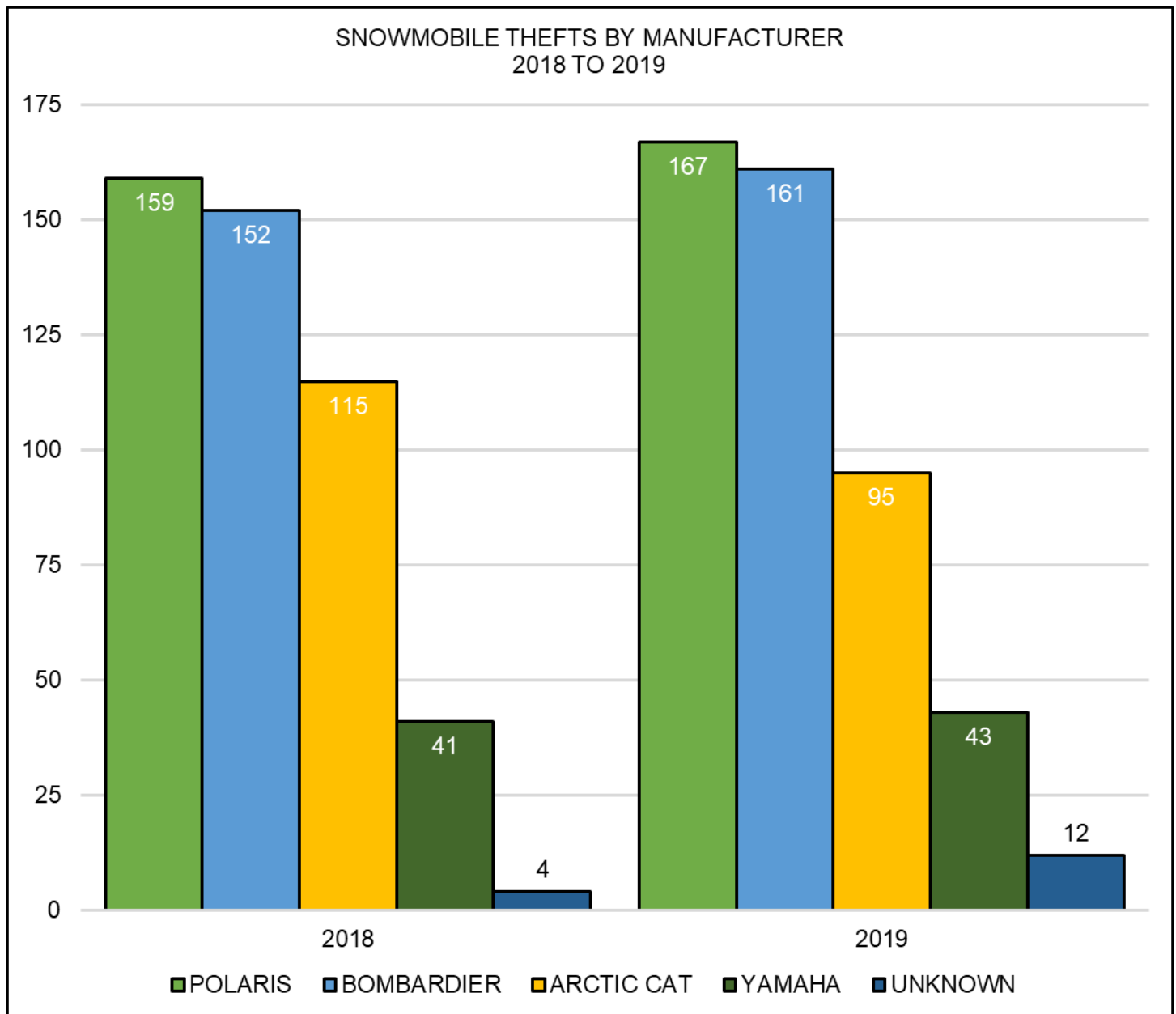
Snowmobile Theft Totals by Day of the Week

Generally speaking, snowmobile thefts are spread out over all seven days of the week. Friday and Saturday are the two most common days of the week for snowmobiles to be stolen. Friday accounted for 28 more thefts than Monday, the day of the week with the lowest number of reported thefts.



Snowmobile Theft Totals by Manufacturer

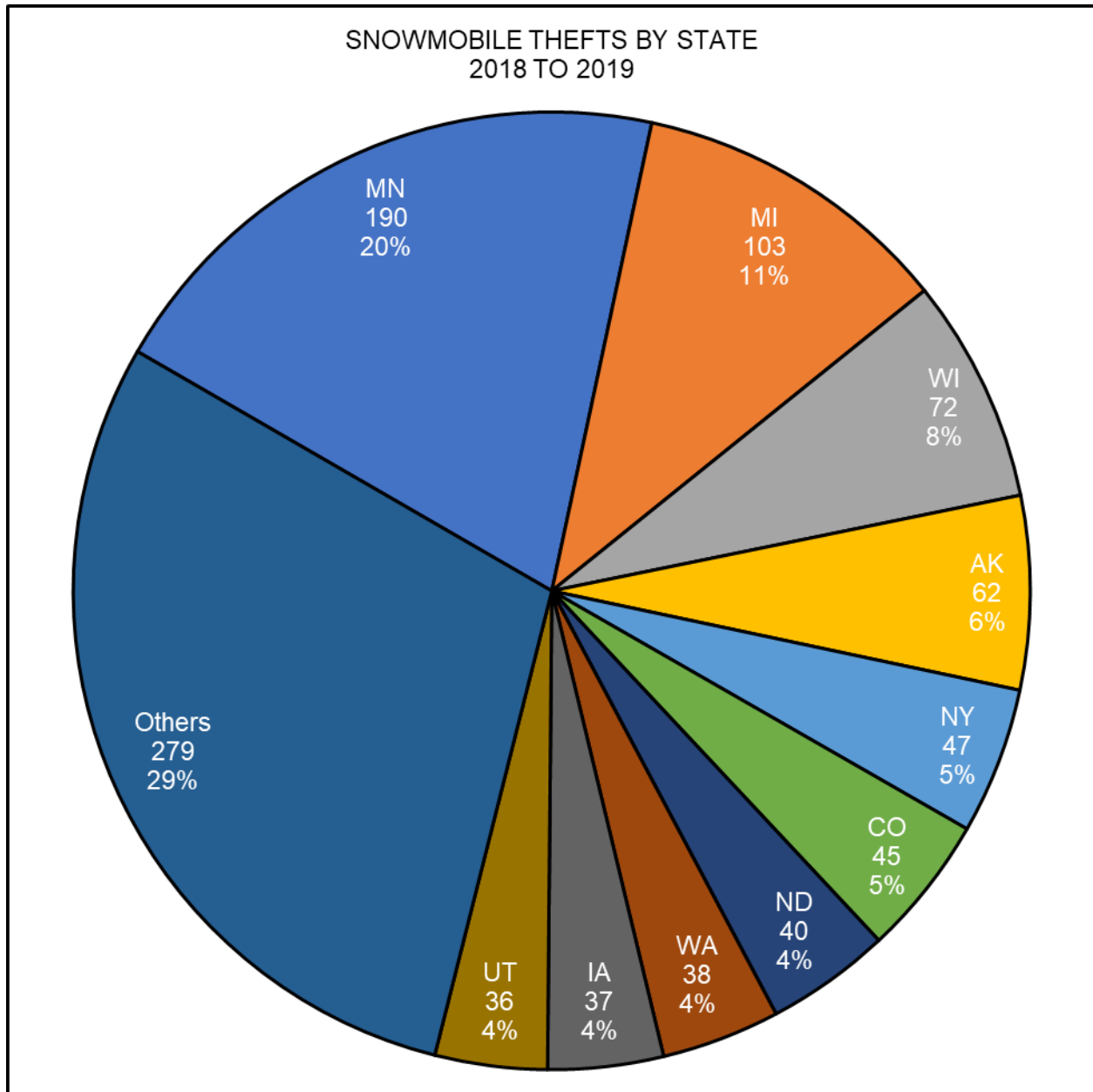
The snowmobile market is unique compared to many other vehicle markets because the North American market has only been made up of 4 main manufacturers for several decades. Historically there have been other brands, but currently the 4 main manufacturers of snowmobiles in North America are Arctic Cat, Bombardier (brand name Ski-Doo), Polaris, and Yamaha. Based off VIN structure, data filed entries, and text entries included with the theft records; 933 of the 949 of the records were able to be identified as a product of one of the 4 previously mentioned main manufacturers. Polaris and Bombardier are the most common brands to be reported stolen accounting for 34% and 33% of all reported snowmobile thefts, respectively. Arctic Cat was the third most common brand to reported stolen with 22% of reported theft and Yamaha was the least common brand of the four with 9% of thefts. Two percent (2%) of snowmobile thefts were for records that could not be identified or for brands no longer in production.



Snowmobile Theft Totals by State

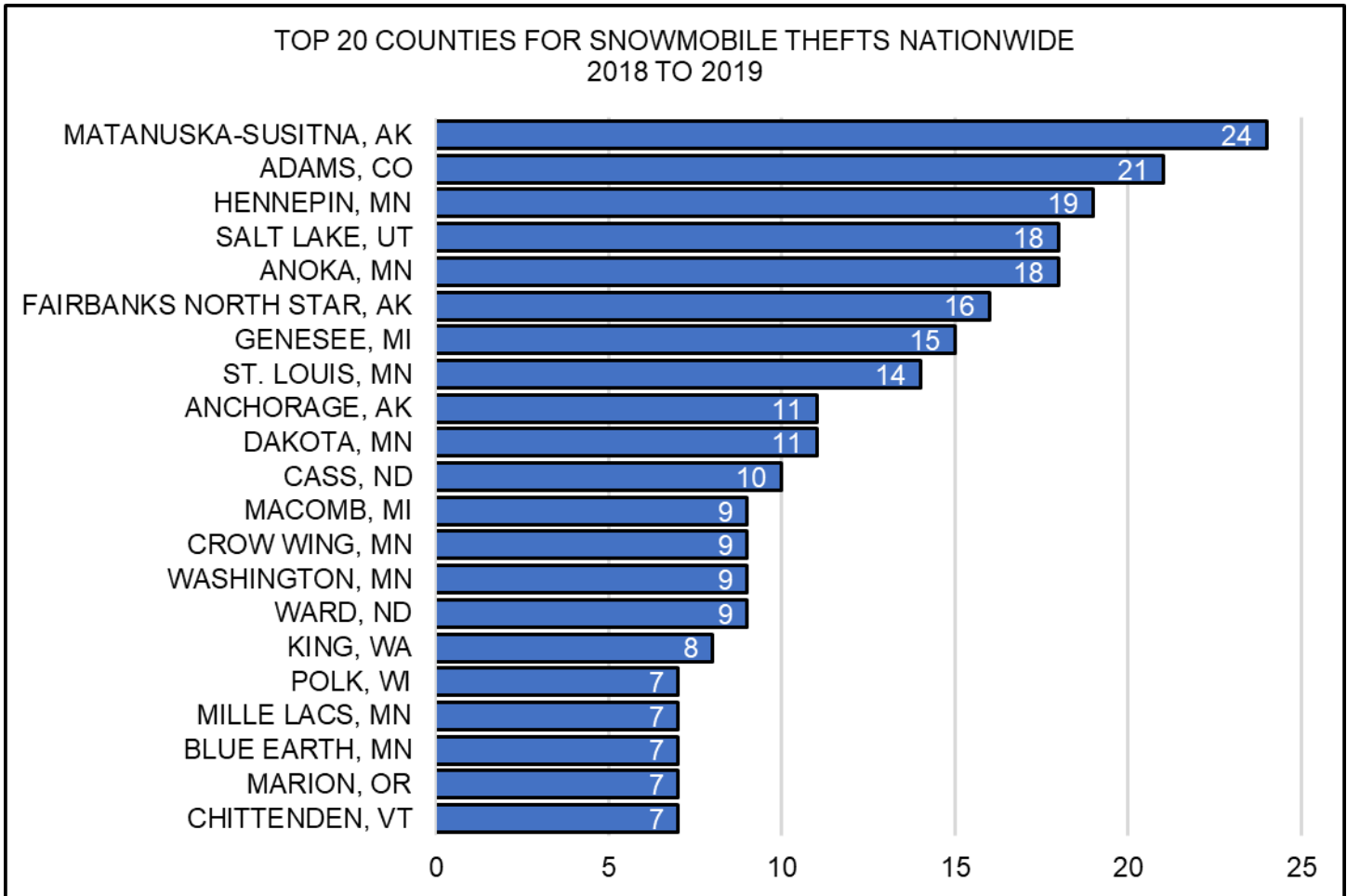
Only four states reported more than 50 snowmobile thefts from 2018 to 2019, with only another six reporting more than 30 thefts. As might be expected, all these states are in the northern United States. Sixteen (16) states (and the District of Columbia) did not have any reported snowmobile thefts from 2018 to 2019.

Minnesota, the location of Arctic Cat's and Polaris's headquarters, is the most common state for snowmobile thefts. Minnesota reported 190 stolen snowmobiles from 2018 to 2019; about 59% difference from than the next most common state, Michigan, which reported 103. Rounding out the top five states was Wisconsin (72), Alaska (62), and New York (47).



Snowmobile Theft Totals by County

Fourteen (14) of the top 20¹ counties for reported snowmobile thefts were in one of the previously mentioned top five states. Much like the locations of the most common states, all the top 20 counties are in the northern United States. Matanuska-Susitna, Alaska and Adams, Colorado were the only two counties² to report over 20 snowmobile thefts from 2018 to 2019.

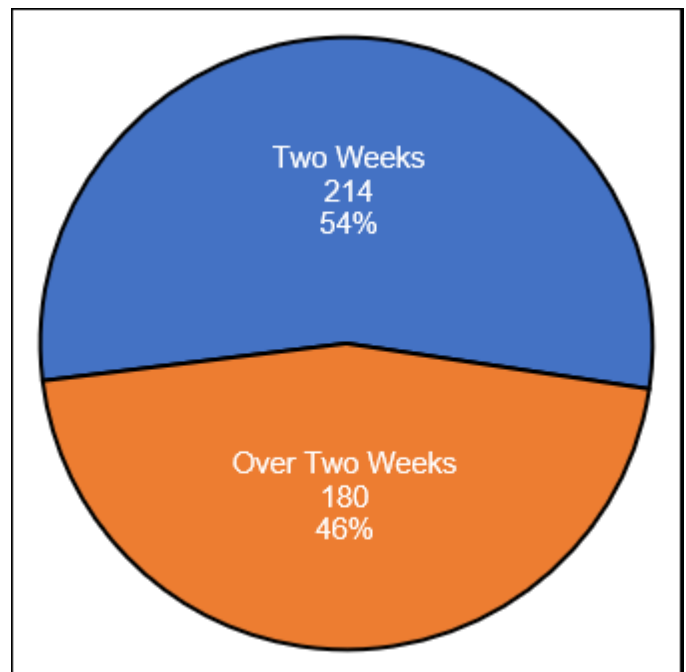
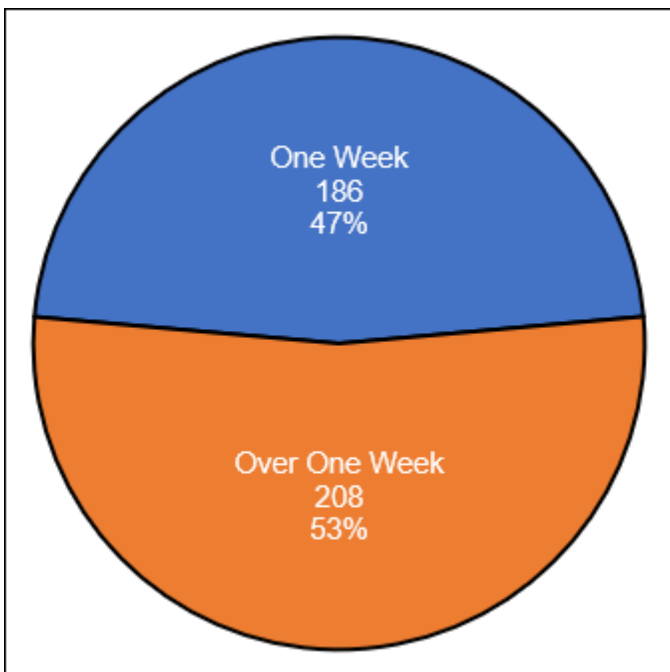
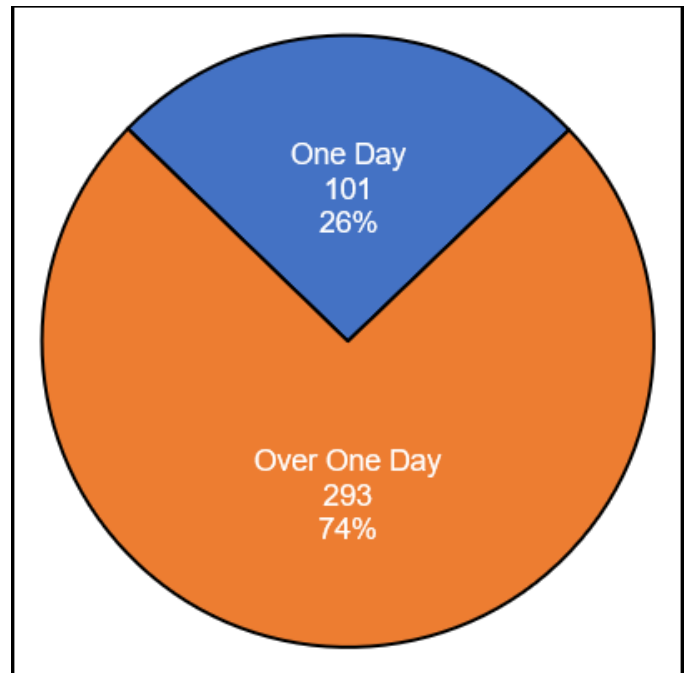
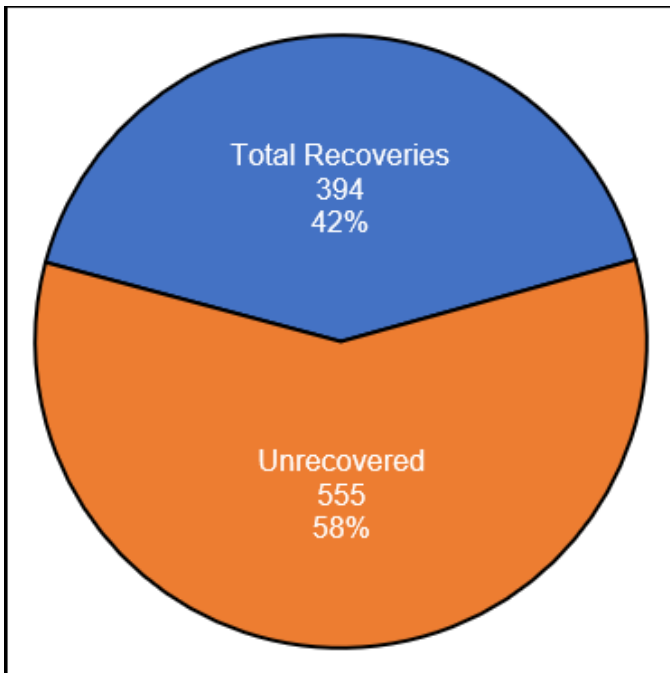


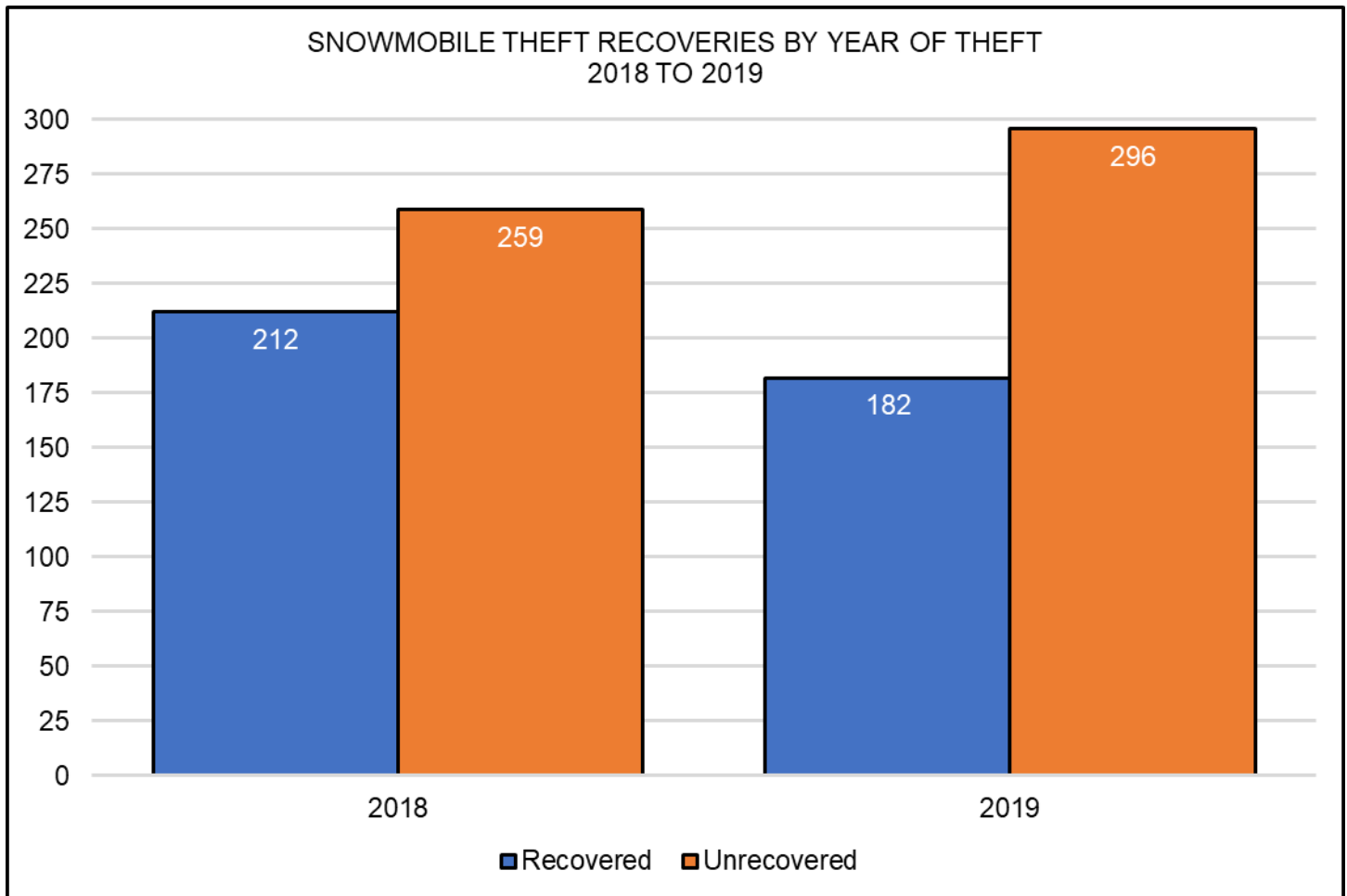
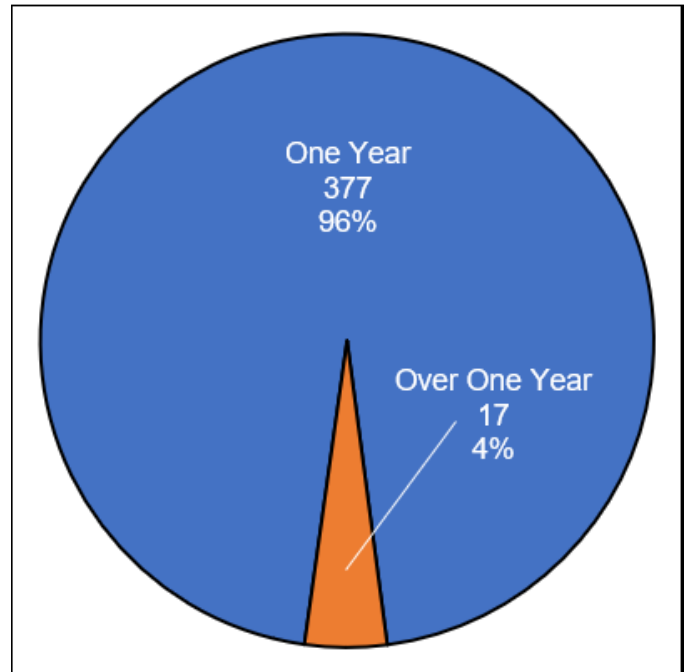
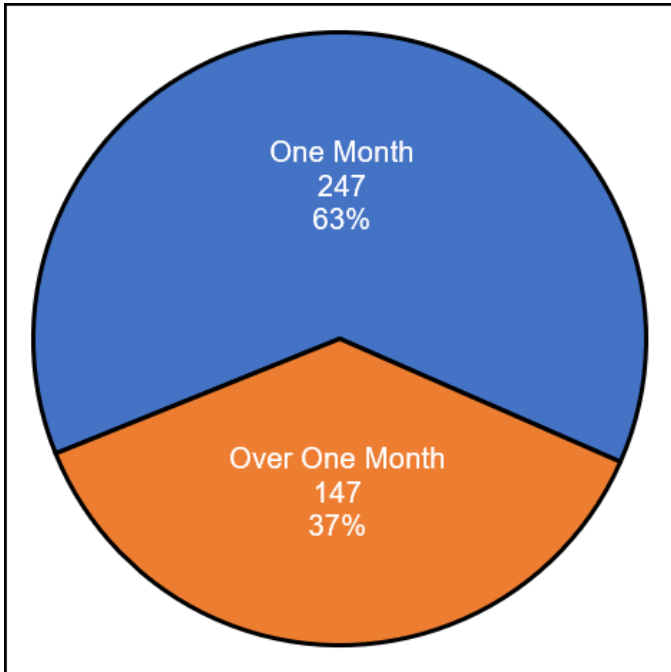
¹ Due to 5 counties all having the same amount of reported thefts (7), there are 21 counties included in the top 20.

² Matanuska-Susitna is an administrative district called a borough, but it is treated like a county for statistical purposes.

Recovery Clock

Approximately 42% of stolen snowmobiles are recovered while 58% of stolen snowmobiles do not have any recovery record at the time of this report. Of the recovered snowmobiles, 26% are recovered within a day of being stolen, 53% are recovered within two weeks, and 96% are recovered within a year of the reported date of theft. Currently snowmobiles stolen in 2018 have the greater rate of recovery of the two years at 45% while 2019 has the lower rate of recovery at 38%. However, this may be due to the recency of the 2019 thefts so the number may rise as the time between the date of theft increases.





Conclusion

Snowmobile thefts in the United States did not change by much from 2018 to 2019 with an increase of only 7 total thefts between the two years. While snowmobiles were reported stolen during every month of the year, the number of thefts drastically increased during the dead of winter from December to March and bottomed out near the summer months for both years of this study.

Polaris branded machines are more likely to be the reported stolen than any other brand accounting for 34% of all thefts. Bombardier (brand name Ski-Doo) accounts for 33% of thefts, while Arctic Cat (22%) and Yamaha (9%) are the third and fourth most common brands. Unidentified vehicles made up 2% of theft records.

Snowmobile thefts are primarily a regional issue almost exclusively happening in the northern United States, with a third of states not reporting any thefts in 2018 or 2019. Additionally, snowmobile thefts were concentrated in a handful of states with the top five states accounting for about half of all thefts in the country.

A little over a 40 percent (42%) of all stolen snowmobiles are eventually recovered and returned to the proper owner. Of the recovered snowmobiles, about a quarter (26%) are recovered within one day of the reported date of theft and just over half (54%) are recovered within two weeks. While snowmobiles can be and often are recovered later, only 6% of recoveries took place over a year past the date of theft.

Protecting Your Snowmobile

If a snowmobile is unattended, do not leave the keys in the ignition and park the machine in a location you can easily see it. This will prevent any would-be thieves from simply driving the machine away or loading it on to their own truck or trailer. Similarly, avoid parking a snowmobile on high snowbanks or other locations where it can easily be loaded onto a truck or trailer then driven away. If you have finished riding for the day, lock the vehicle with a cable or heavy chain to a secured object, like a tree or even another snowmobile, to anchor the machine and make moving it without your permission considerably more difficult.

Numerous snowmobile theft records mention the vehicle being taken while it was being stored or transported on a trailer. Properly securing a trailer which a snowmobile is being stored or transported on is an easy way to protect not only your snowmobile but also your trailer. If space permits, storing a snowmobile separately from its trailer can greatly increase the difficulties related to taking a machine away from its storage site, especially in the summer months when snow is not present. Similarly, when a snowmobile is not in use, storing the machine in a secure area, like a locked shed or garage, will not only shield your snowmobile from the elements but also from would-be thieves.

It is easy to be organized and prepared in case of the theft of your snowmobile. If the vehicle must be registered with the local government, keep the registration up to date and in good standing. If not, keep track of the vehicle's bill of sale and any other documents that can be used as proof of ownership.

Canadian law states that all snowmobiles starting in the 2001 model year must have a unique 17-digit VIN (just like a car); while a similar law does not exist in the US, it is very likely that any machine sold in the US will have a VIN as well. Even if you are not required to register your snowmobile with your local or state government, keep a record of this information stored separately from the machine in a secured area. A VIN is an easy way for law enforcement to verify if a recovered snowmobile is yours and will speed up the process of returning the machine to its rightful owner.