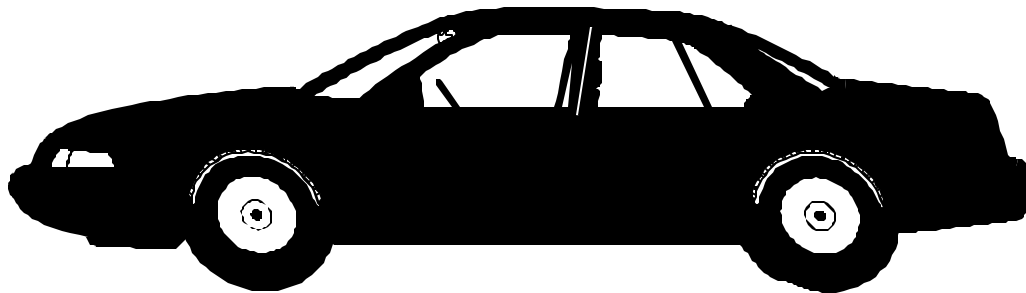


# **A Profile of the Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force (NITF)**

---

---



---

---

*Prepared for*  
**the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council**

**George Ryan, Governor**  
**Sam Nolen, Chairman**

**June, 2001**



**ILLINOIS MOTOR VEHICLE  
THEFT PREVENTION COUNCIL**

---

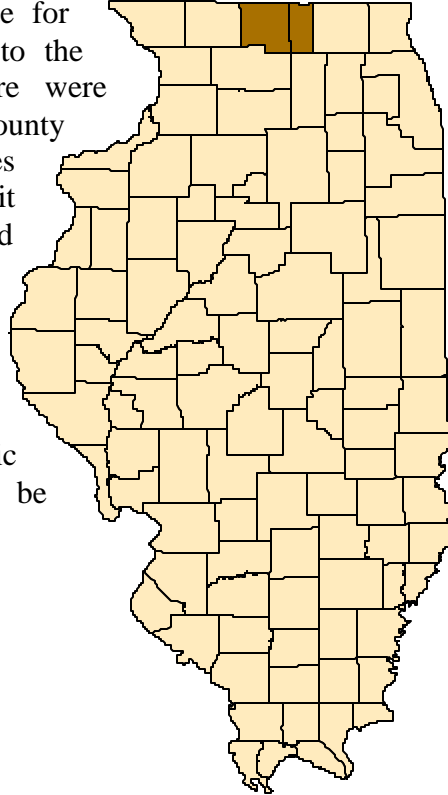
---

## Introduction

The Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force, also known as NITF, serves the Counties of Winnebago and Boone, located in northern Illinois. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Winnebago County had a 2000 population of 278,418, the sixth highest county population in the state. Boone County had a 2000 population of 41,786, the thirty-second highest county population in the state.<sup>1</sup>

Winnebago County ranks sixth in the state for number of registered vehicles. According to the Illinois Secretary of State's Office, there were 253,451 vehicles registered in Winnebago County in 2000. There were 36,985 vehicles registered in Boone County in 2000, making it 37<sup>th</sup> in the state for number of registered vehicles<sup>2</sup>.

Winnebago and Boone counties are two of the twenty-two urban counties in Illinois. To provide comparisons, information specific to Winnebago and Boone counties will be compared to other urban counties.



---

<sup>1</sup> United States Bureau of the Census. 2001. *County Population Estimates for July 1, 2000*.

<sup>2</sup> State of Illinois, Office of the Secretary of State. 2001. *County Statistical Report for Motor Vehicle License Units and Transactions Received for 2000*.

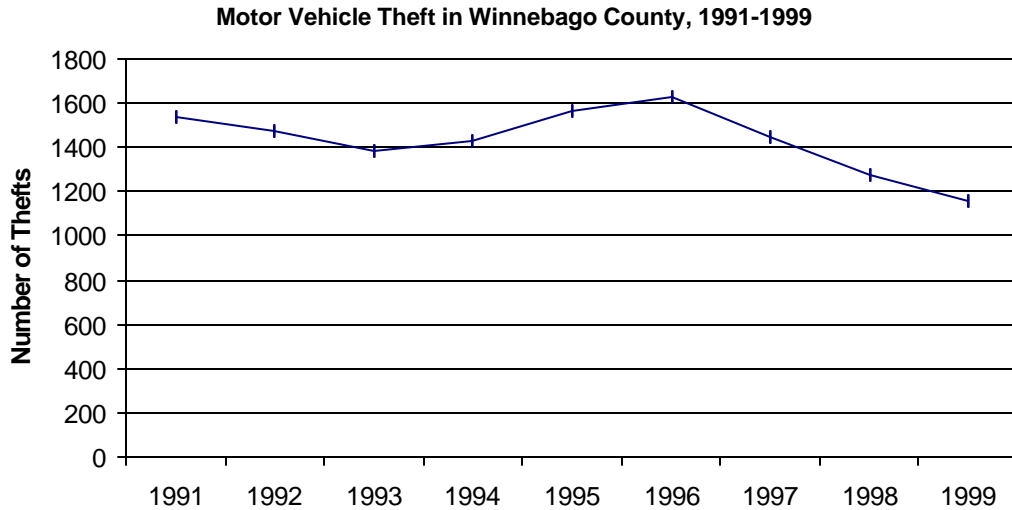
---

---

## Motor Vehicle Theft in Winnebago County and Boone County

In 1991, there were 1,540 motor vehicle thefts in Winnebago County. By 1993, the number of thefts had dropped by 10 percent to 1,382. Over the next three years, the number of vehicle thefts increased 18 percent, from 1,382 thefts in 1993 to 1,627 thefts in 1996. Since 1996, the number of vehicle thefts in Winnebago County has decreased each year to 1,160 in 1999. Motor vehicle theft in Winnebago County has decreased at a greater rate than in the other urban counties. From 1991 to 1999, Winnebago County saw a 33 percent drop in vehicle thefts, while the other urban counties saw a 2 percent increase during this same period. Figure 1 below shows the number of vehicle thefts in Winnebago County each year from 1991 to 1999<sup>3</sup>.

**Figure 1**



Source: Illinois State Police *Uniform Crime Reports*

In 1991, there were 39 motor vehicle thefts in Boone County. By 1993, the number of thefts had increased by 8 percent to 42. Over the next three years, the number of vehicle thefts decreased 8 percent, from 42 thefts in 1993 to 39 thefts in 1996. Since 1996, the number of vehicle thefts in Boone County has increased almost every year to 49 in 1999, while motor vehicle theft in the other urban counties has decreased. From 1991 to 1999, Boone County saw a 25 percent increase in vehicle thefts, while the other urban counties saw a 4.5 percent decrease during this same period. Figure 2 below shows the number of vehicle thefts in Boone County each year from 1991 to 1999.

---

<sup>3</sup> Most recent data available is 1999.

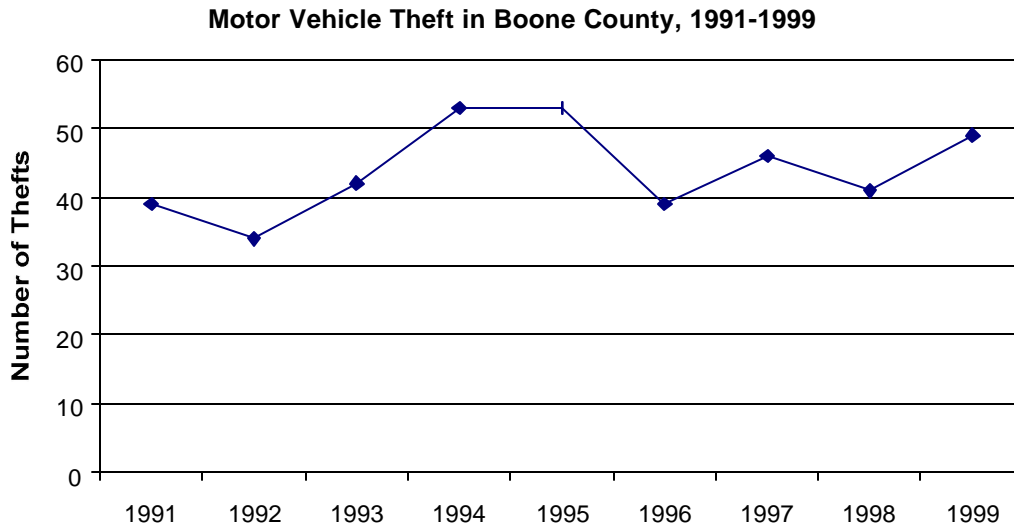
---

---

---

---

**Figure 2**

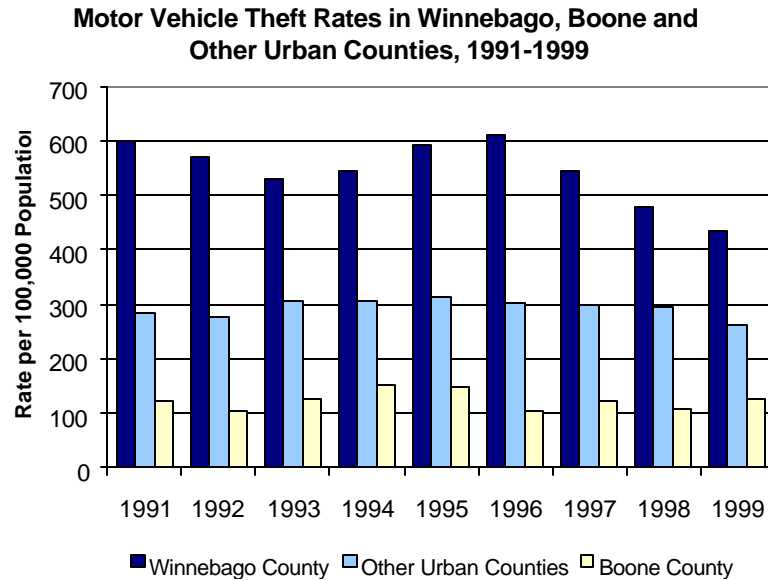


Source: Illinois State Police *Uniform Crime Reports*

From 1991 to 1999, motor vehicle theft rates in Winnebago County declined 38 percent, while the remaining urban counties experienced an 8 percent decrease.

From 1991 to 1999, motor vehicle theft rates in Boone County remained stable, while the remaining urban counties experienced an 8 percent decrease. Figure 3 below shows the motor vehicle theft rates in Winnebago County and Boone County compared to the other urban counties during this period.

**Figure 3**



Source: Illinois State Police *Uniform Crime Reports*

## Program Summary

The Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force (NITF) combats auto theft and insurance fraud in Winnebago County and Boone County by combining the expertise and resources of multiple law enforcement agencies. Operating since 1994, NITF links the efforts of the Loves Park Police Department, the Cherry Valley Police Department, the Winnebago County Sheriff's Office, the Boone County Sheriff's Office, and the Winnebago County State's Attorney's Office. NITF's multi-jurisdictional, cooperative approach maximizes its ability to investigate and prosecute auto theft in Winnebago and Boone counties. Implemented by the Winnebago County Sheriff's Department, NITF's services are available to all law enforcement agencies within Winnebago and Boone counties.

The focus of the task force is to identify patterns in joy riding and organized groups or individuals involved in chop shop operations, retagging operations, salvage certificate switching operations, insurance fraud, and vehicle theft operations. The task force also works to establish an effective means by which jurisdictional lines may be crossed to accomplish the goals established and to continue to utilize intelligence resources, confidential informants and citizen complaints to initiate covert and proactive investigations. The task force also uses information received for setting up future proactive investigation and sting operations and continues heavy daily sweeps throughout the problem areas in Winnebago and Boone counties. They continue to study and implement new programs to deal with drug give-up auto thefts.

---

---

NITF has two main goals: (1) to better provide capability for detection, surveillance, apprehension and prosecution of auto thefts and related criminal activities and, (2) to provide task force members and assistant state's attorneys with the necessary training needed for the investigation and prosecution of auto thefts. The task force's investigators are specially trained in auto theft investigations. NITF investigators coordinate the resources of the participating agencies and focus these resources on their investigations. NITF proactively combats vehicle theft by gathering intelligence information, conducting surveillance, and monitoring areas prone to vehicle thefts. An assistant state's attorney is dedicated solely to the prosecutions generated by the task force.

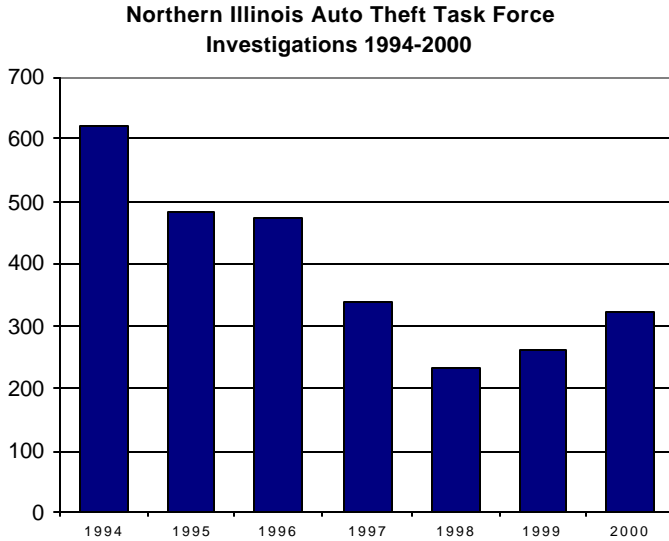
NITF aims to educate law enforcement personnel, auto dealers, and the general public about the vehicle theft problem. The task force conducts training sessions on auto theft investigation for patrol officers and police investigators. NITF also presents anti-car theft programs to community organizations, neighborhood watch groups, and citizen police academies. The task force also conducts VIN etching programs, making participants' vehicles less attractive theft targets. VIN etching is a process in which the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) is permanently etched into the glass of a vehicle's windows, making the vehicle easier to trace and consequently less attractive to auto thieves.

NITF will continue to combat auto theft by initiating numerous investigations into the following categories of offenders: heavy equipment, insurance fraud, retagging, drug related auto thefts, career auto thieves, and formulate programs with the local Crimestoppers in Winnebago and Boone counties.

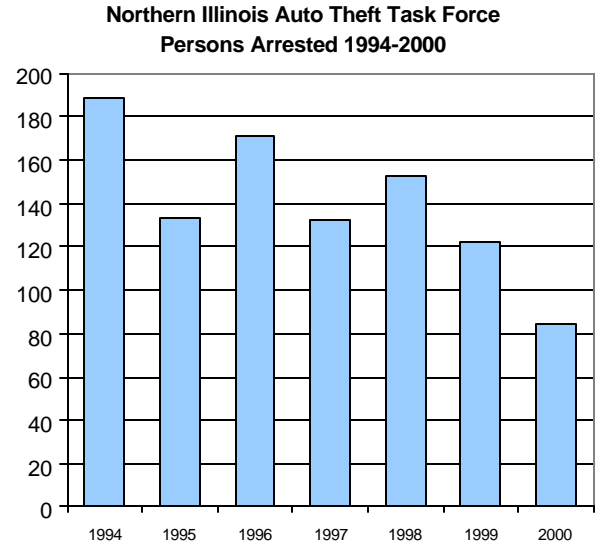
## Program Activity

Since the program began in November 1993, through December 2000, the Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force (NITF) has conducted 2,734 investigations, resulting in 984 persons arrested and 503 persons convicted.<sup>4</sup> Figures 4 through 6 below indicate the number of investigations, persons arrested, and persons convicted for each program year.<sup>5</sup>

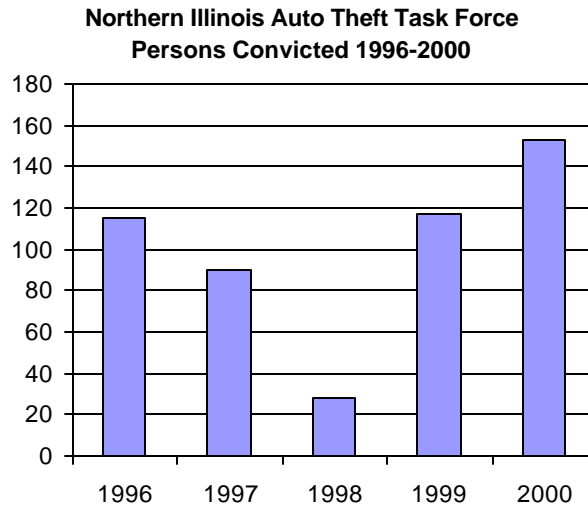
**Figure 4**



**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**



Source: NITF Performance Reports

<sup>4</sup> Data for 1994 and 1995 not available.

<sup>5</sup> Due to the time lapse between an arrest and subsequent prosecution, the number of prosecutions and convictions during a year does not directly reflect the number of arrests during the same year.

---

---

During this period, NITF has recovered 4,732 vehicles worth an estimated \$20.7 million, including 3,450 cars, 439 trucks/buses, and 146 motorcycles.

## **Funding Summary**

The Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Act that took effect on January 1, 1991 created the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Council. The Council has the statutory responsibility to prevent, combat, and reduce motor vehicle theft in Illinois.<sup>6</sup>

The Act established the Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Trust Fund, a special trust fund in the State Treasury, from which the Council makes grants to eligible applicants for programs that address the problem of motor vehicle theft in Illinois. The Act requires all insurance companies licensed to write private passenger motor vehicle physical damage coverage in Illinois to pay annually into this trust fund an amount equal to \$1 for each earned car year of exposure for physical damage insurance coverage during the previous calendar year. About \$5.6 million is collected each year.

The Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force is funded by the Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Trust Fund. Figure 7 below lists the amount granted to and expended by the task force for each program year.

**Figure 7**  
**Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force**  
Funding by Program Year

<b>Year</b>	<b>Grant Amount</b>	<b>Expenditures</b>
1995	\$362,279.00	\$301,434.00
1996	\$326,051.00	\$300,563.00
1997	\$343,471.00	\$308,958.00
1998	\$377,212.00	\$324,944.00
1999	\$385,940.00	\$369,225.00
2000	\$391,706.00	\$363,378.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,186,659.00</b>	<b>\$1,968,502.00</b>

---

<sup>6</sup> Chapter 20 Illinois Compiled Statutes 4005/2.

---

---



---

---

Figure 8 below summarizes NITF's program expenditures from 1995 through December 2000. Expenditures are divided into six categories:

**Personnel**—includes salaries, social security, and fringe benefits for program staff.

**Equipment**—includes computers, communication devices, and other equipment with a cost greater than \$50.

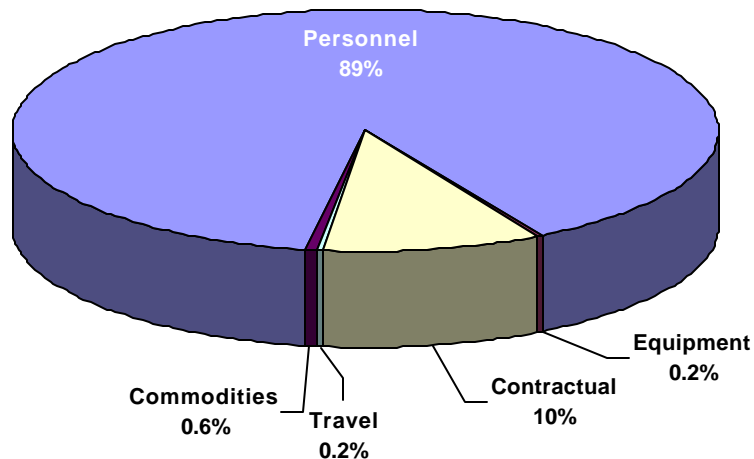
**Commodities**—includes consumable supplies (such as office supplies) and equipment costing less than \$50.

**Travel**—includes lodging, food, and transportation expenses incurred by program staff while conducting official program-related business.

**Contractual**—includes facility costs, utilities, telephone service, equipment rentals, and wages for hourly personnel.

**Other**—includes any costs not covered by the above categories.

**Figure 8**  
**Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force**  
Percentage of Expenditures by Category  
1995-2000



---

---

## Conclusion

Since the Northern Illinois Auto Theft Task Force (NITF) began operation, vehicle thefts have declined in Winnebago County. From 1991 to 1999, motor vehicle thefts in Winnebago County decreased 33 percent, from 1,540 to 1,160. Though data on the value of stolen vehicles is not available at the state or county level,<sup>7</sup> the FBI estimates that the average value of vehicles stolen in the United States in 1999 was \$6,104.<sup>8</sup> Based on this value, the decrease in Winnebago County auto thefts amounts to a savings of \$2.3 million.

Since the NITF began operation, vehicle thefts have increased in Boone County. From 1991 to 1999, motor vehicle thefts in Boone County have increased 25 percent, from 39 to 49. Based on the estimates that the average value of vehicles stolen in 1999 was \$6,104, the increase in Boone County auto thefts amounts to a loss of \$61,040.

NITF has received a total of \$2.2 million in funding from the Illinois Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Trust Fund, and has recovered an estimated \$20.7 million in stolen vehicles and parts. Combining the recovery value with the savings from reduced auto theft, the task force has produced a \$23 million 'return' on its \$2.2 million in funding, more than a 1000 percent 'return rate.'

---

<sup>7</sup> NITF reports the total estimated value of all the vehicles that it recovers each month. However, this includes only cases handled by the task force, not all vehicle thefts within Winnebago County.

<sup>8</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2000. *Crime in the United States – 1999: Uniform Crime Reports*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

---

---