Mobile Theft & Loss Report

2020

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The Evolution of Theft

The first edition of the Mobile Theft & Loss Report, which represented 2018's theft statistics collected by Prey, marked the beginning of our company's journey towards understanding theft and its evolution in the mobile landscape.

Now, with the release of this second report we have reached our second milestone: having year-by-year information on the subject to compare how mobile theft risk shifted year by year.

This report will answer the following questions:

What are the most common threats and affected locations?

Are these tendencies shifting, compared to 2018's report?

How long do users take to recover their devices?

What kind of threat is rising?

The Methodology

The team behind the second edition of MTLR has reviewed the metadata of all 2019 recovery stories that users of the Prey software shared anonymously and publicly through the platform. On this occasion, the raw sample was reduced to 697 different cases.

Note: The cases were filtered to remove blank cases, tests, and those recovery stories lacking information that could alter the final sample.

The metadata on each case consisted of: device type, OS, type of theft/loss, location, location description, recovery time, brief story of the event, and date.

02.

THEFT AND LOSS STATISTICS

Types of Theft and Loss by Frequency (Year by Year)

Comparing 2019's statistics with last year's report, we have seen minor changes in the global tendency in the following categories: Misplaced, Pickpocket, Home Invasion, Robbery, Car Break-in, and Business Break-In.

However, there are some interesting facts to compare. As far as theft versus loss goes, the misplacement of devices has gone down, giving room for theft-related incidents to increase. Home invasions rose in 2019 and took the 2nd place, previously held by pickpockets. In general, we have seen a small decrease in violent thefts, and an increase in break-ins, and non-violent thefts such as pickpockets.

	2019	Change (2018-2019)
	64.28% Misplaced	**–4.84%** Misplaced
	12.77% Home Invasion	**+ 5.17%** Home Invasion
	9.33% Pickpocket	**–1.65%** Pickpocket
	4.88% Robbery	**–1.88%** Robbery
	4.88% Business Break-in	**+ 2.11%** Business Break-in
	3.87% Car Break-in	**+1.10** Car Break-in

Theft or Loss Type

Top Locations Where Each Type of Events Occurs (Year by Year)

We gathered the top locations where each theft/loss event type happens more frequently, excluding those with certain locations (Home Invasion, Business Break-in, and Car Break-in).

As for Misplaced devices, we still see over a quarter of the users losing their devices at home. However, we have seen a decrease in street-related incidents that leaves that location almost at par with the Office and Public Transport risk-wise.

Misplaced Locations 2019
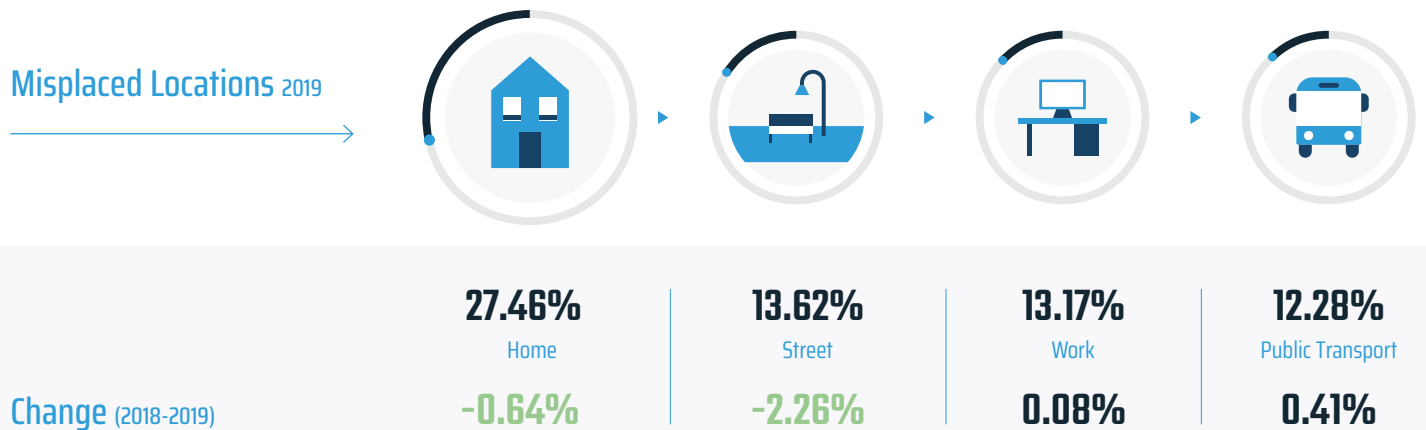
	27.46%	13.62%	13.17%	12.28%
	Home	Street	Work	Public Transport
Change (2018-2019)	-0.64%	-2.26%	0.08%	0.41%

Locations shown represent the top 4 places with the highest percentages/chances of having this event occur.

In the case of Pickpocketed devices, we saw a major change in the top four affected locations. The Street saw a noticeable increase in events, displacing Public Transport to the second place. On the other hand, Schools surpassed Work locations by over a 6 percent difference.

Pickpocketed Locations
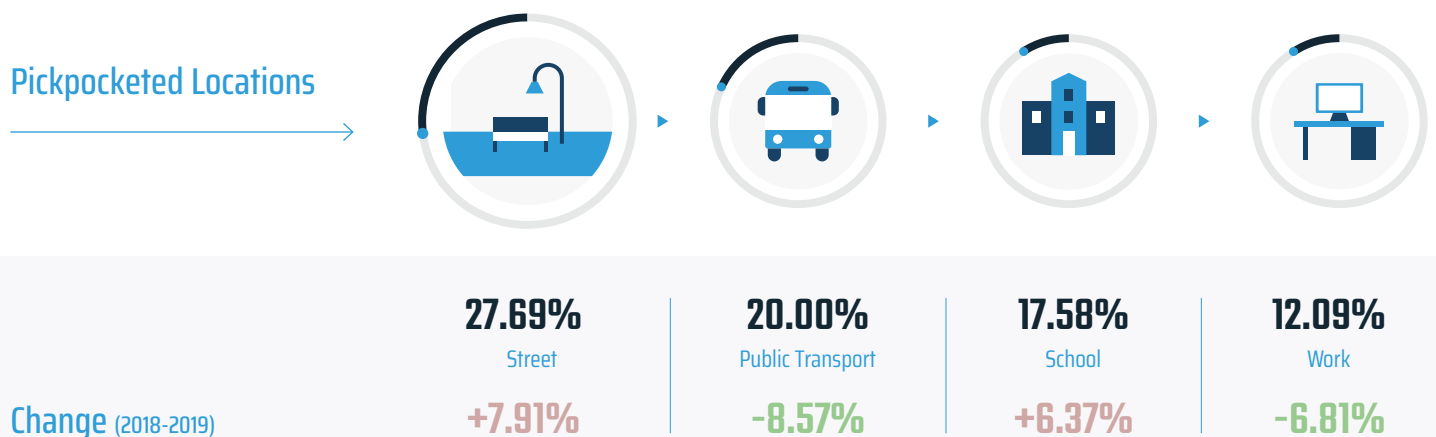
	27.69%	20.00%	17.58%	12.09%
	Street	Public Transport	School	Work
Change (2018-2019)	+7.91%	-8.57%	+6.37%	-6.81%

Locations shown represent the top 4 places with the highest percentages/chances of having this event occur.

Robbed devices continue to be dominated by the street location. However, the second, third, and fourth place have shifted and seen an increase in affected safe locations. Their frequency is considerably lower. Street-thefts have increased compared to 2018 due to a change in data categorization.

Robbery 2019

	Street	School	Public Transport	Work
	58.82%	**17.65%**	**11.76%**	**5.88%**
Change (2018-2019)	**+32.03%**	**+10.51%**	**+2.83%**	**-3.05%**

Locations shown represent the top 4 places with the highest percentages/chances of having this event occur.
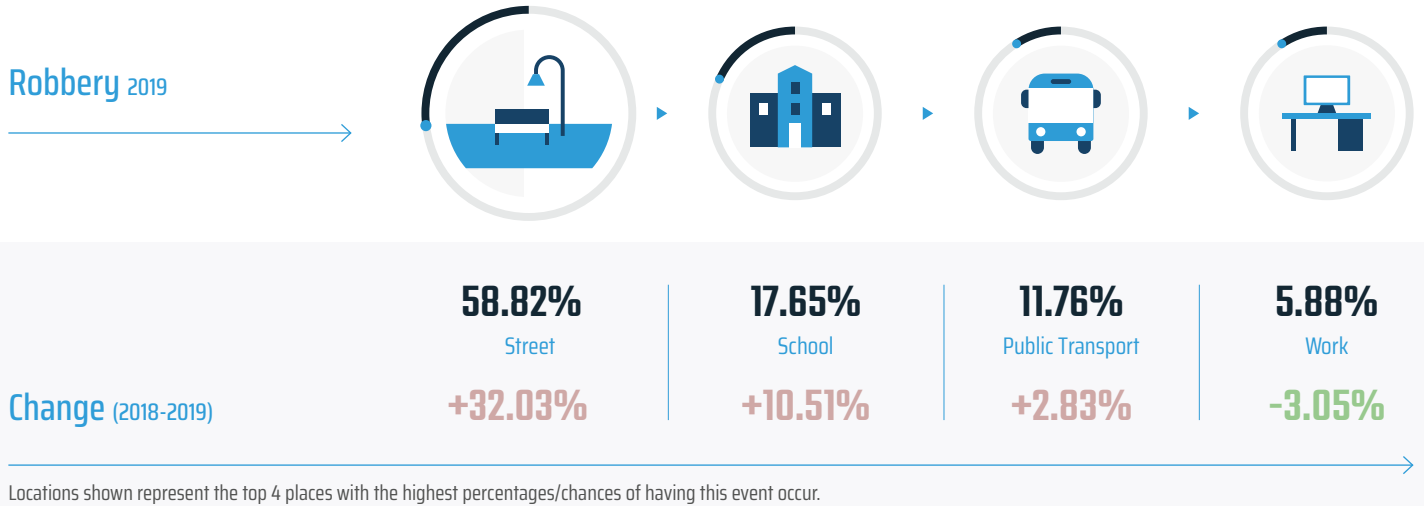
Not-so Uncommon Scenarios

Last year we shared a couple of uncommon scenarios that stood out among the masses of stories. However, this year we're starting to see many scenarios that we thought rare, which now are becoming the norm:

Students
Who take devices from students, or the school.

Family
Members that take devices without permission.

Ex-employees
Who refuse to turn in their device.

Roommates
That hide devices for themselves.
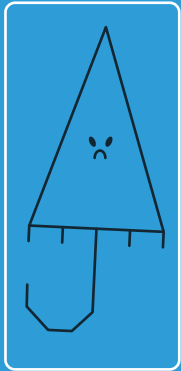
An umbrella-wielding gang that stole laptops from cars.

Still, Here Are Some Uncommon Scenarios From 2019

A user's friend was kidnapped and was located by tracking her phone with Prey.
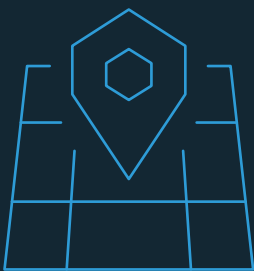
User was mugged in a cemetery while visiting his father's grave

R.I.P

03.

THE GREATEST ENEMY

Thieves vs Ourselves

Thieves vs Ourselves

Last year we discovered that you are +2X more likely to lose your device than have it stolen. Making ourselves the biggest enemy our phones face every day. In 2019, we did not see this change. Theft has increased, but refuses to take a considerable piece of responsibility for mass device loss yet.

You are
+2X
likely to lose your device than have it stolen.

35.72%
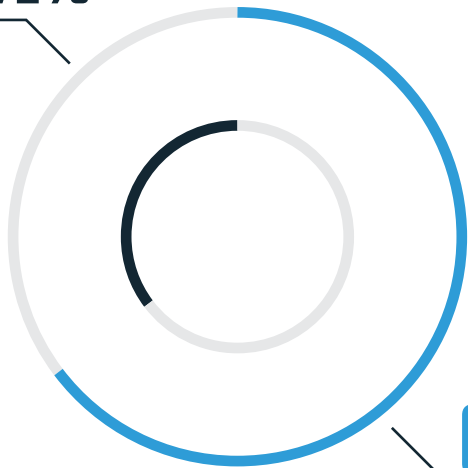
64.28%

Misplaced

All types of theft

Why? Stuff Just Happens

Forgot my phone at the grocery store.

Left my laptop in the old house.

My couple took it from me.

Left my phone in Japan somehow

My phone fell into the couch.

My kid took it and hid it.

I sent my phone to Nigeria.

Misplaced my laptop in class.

Forgot my phone in the bar's counter.

My phone fell out of my pocket.

My roommate stole it.

Burglars broke into my school.

A teammate took it by mistake.

| A thief broke into my car.

04.

AFFECTED LOCATIONS

Most Affected Locations (Yearby year)

The changes reported in the frequency of different types of thefts didn't affect the tendency of affected locations greatly. The top 5 results continue to concentrate over 80% of the events in the locations users frequent the most and there was a slight increase in loss events located in Homes.

	2019	Change (2018-2019)
Home	**30.99%** Home	**+3.00%** Home
Street	**14.92%** Street	**-0.64%** Street
Office	**12.77%** Office	**-1.71%** Office
Public Transport	**10.90%** Public Transport	**-1.16%** Public Transport
School & Univ.	**10.90%** School & Univ.	**+0.04%** School & Univ.
Car	**6.03%** Car	**+0.72%** Car

	2019	Change (2018-2019)
Mall	**3.73%** Mall	**+0.83%** Mall
Restaurant	**2.58%** Restaurant	**-1.04%** Restaurant
Bar	**2.44%** Bar	**+1.23%** Bar
Supermarket	**1.43%** Supermarket	**-0.74%** Supermarket
Other	**1.16%** Other	**+0.46** Other
Airport	**1.15%** Airport	**-0.18%** Airport
Gym	**1.00%** Gym	**-0.81%** Gym

Comfort-based Insecurity

When it comes to the types of locations where theft or loss occur, we continue to see last year's tendency. When taking the top 4 secured locations, and comparing them to the top 4 unsecured locations, we see that secured locations tend to be riskier due to the user being more careless, and comfortable. Those locations out of a person's comfort zone tend to be seen as a risk and are not as frequently visited, making the chance of loss there considerably lower.

65.38%

Incidents in Secured Locations

Home

Office

School & Univ.

Car

34.62%

Incidents in Unsecured Locations

Street
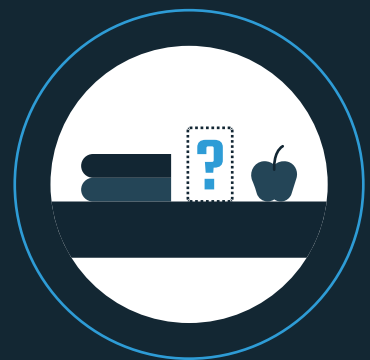
Public Transport

Mall

Restaurant
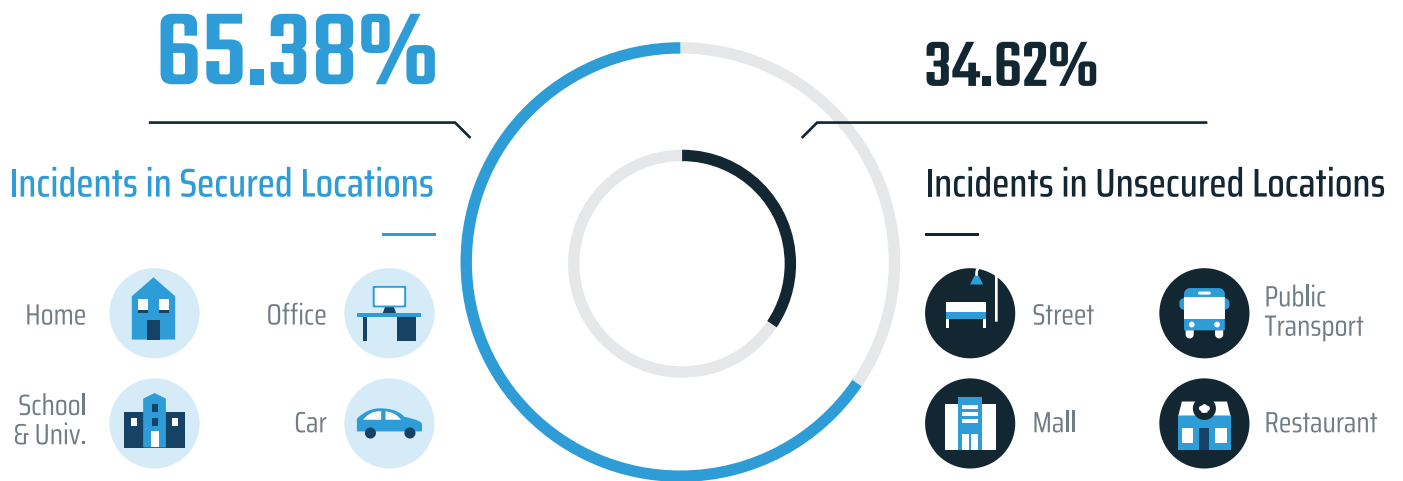
Other Facts About Theft & Loss Locations

Most device losses happen on INTERIOR locations.

33% of all device losses happen when the owner MOVES locations.

You're 6X times more likely to be pickpocketed at school or work than in a bar.

05.

TARGETED DEVICES

Theft Statistics by Device

Average Recovery Time

Theft Statistics by Device

When it comes to the devices most affected by theft, phones continue to be the main target, increasing in percentage year by year and slowly taking over laptops as they continue to replace them in everyday tasks. Desktop loss has increased as well by minor margins, reflecting the growth we saw in home and business break-ins.

77.00%
Mobiles
(+3.95%)

18.51%
Laptops
(-5.71%)

4.49%
Desktops
(+1.76%)

Average Recovery Time

When we analyzed the recovery time shared in each lost device case, we discovered...

Average Recovery Time: 6572 minutes, or 4.6 days.

Fastest Recovery: 1 minute.

Longest Recovery: 525500 minutes, or 364 days!

Most Common Recovery Times:

1	1440	10	5	60
MINUTE	MINUTES	MINUTES	MINUTES	MINUTES

In a nutshell...
Be quick!

Recovery chances are in your favor on the first 24 hours.

Why Do Some Recoveries Take Longer?

Sometimes thieves resell the stolen gadget, and it stays offline until it is bought.

New & Used

Buy.Sale.Trade

We pay **Quick Cash**

We buy

Fast
Exchange

Other times thieves lay low for a while thinking that's all it takes to avoid tracking.

06.

CONCLUSIONS

Owners continue to be the biggest threat.

There is an early recovery-time gap.

Mobiles have become the perfect target for theft.

Opportunists are rising as the third threat.

Device owners continue to be the biggest threat.

We have seen crime statistics fluctuate in the 2018-2019 period, but a fact remains: owners are still responsible for most device losses. We have seen a small decline in the number of misplaced devices, but it remains the main cause by a considerable difference. When analysing each case individually, we don't see a main reason but general carelessness by the device owners. The most frequent scenario is simple: a user places his/her device somewhere, and goes elsewhere without it.

There is an early recovery-time gap.

The information regarding recovery times gives insight on how the recovery change evolves as time goes by. There is a 1 day period of recovery in which there is a high chance of having an early device recovery. After that period, recovery times are not concentrated and repeated, but start to spread to various lengths, even reaching the 1 year mark at times.

Meaning that after the initial 1 day period, chances of an early recovery diminish, and the long-term recovery process begins.

Mobiles have become the perfect target for theft.

Each year we rely more and more on our smartphone's capabilities, and thus, they continue to evolve to meet our needs. With this rise of quality comes a rise of price and a growth in the audience willing to pay for more sophisticated devices, turning them into the most cost-efficient target for theft. On the other hand, due to their flexibility in features, there is a wider range of offers users can choose from when acquiring a phone. Therefore, they are a universal type of device that's transversal to a wider set of audiences, easily accessible, and massively owned.

Opportunists are rising as the third threat.

When looking for the responsible behind device loss/theft, we talked about two main suspects: the owner itself, or a thief. There's a third force starting to position itself as we continue to see it appearing in countless cases year by year. They qualify as thieves themselves, but we want to differentiate them from the regular criminal stereotype. These are the opportunists.

These are people you're most likely familiar with, or that you share a similar environment with. Other students in a school, co-workers, roommates, untrustworthy family members. They all pose a passive threat to your devices and, when comfort puts your mind at ease, there's a chance they can strike without you even knowing.

Whatever the case, we've got your back.

Be ready, get Prey.

Involved from Prey

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About Prey

Prey is a cross-platform anti-theft and management solution for laptops, tablets and phones used to protect over 8 million devices and their data, all around the world.

Prey started back in 2009 as a solid tracking technology that helped people keep track of their laptops and phones. Nowadays, crossing the 10-year mark, Prey has evolved into a multi-platform tracking technology that offers a variety of solutions for both people and businesses: tracking, device management, data protection, and anti-theft for laptops, tablets, and smartphones.

Prey for: People | Businesses | Schools

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