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## Another bite out of crime

The Leader-Post

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In Brief: The continuing reduction in property crimes, including auto thefts, is good news for Regina residents.

Murder, sexual assaults and other "crimes against the person" grab the headlines, but there's only a slim risk of most Reginans being attacked or suffering extreme physical violence.

In reality, break-ins, auto thefts and other property crimes are far more likely to disturb the peace of the average family -- so a dramatic reduction in them is good news.

Residential break and enters in 2005 fell to 1,905 from 2,324 in 2004 -- an 18-per-cent reduction, according to statistics tabled at Wednesday's meeting of the city's board of police commissioners. The number of auto thefts dropped to 2,109 from 2,701 in 2004 -- a 22-per-cent reduction.

Meanwhile, crimes against the person, which include murder, attempted murder, robbery, sexual and other assaults crept up slightly to 3,516 from 3,508 in 2004. However, these type of crimes have remained fairly stable over the past decade. The eight homicides and 14 attempted murders in 2005 were down from the 10 homicides and 15 attempted murders of 2004.

Auto theft reduction is the big story: Since police, provincial Justice, Corrections and other agencies combined to get chronic repeat car thieves off the street in 2001, there has been a 45-per-cent drop in auto thefts. Four years ago, more than 300 vehicles were stolen each month, making Regina the "car theft capital" of Canada. In 2005, the rate of Regina auto thefts was down to 175 vehicles a month, with Montreal and Surrey, B.C. the worst places for auto theft.

That said, 2,109 vehicles were still stolen in Regina in 2005, and that translates into anger and frustration for Reginans whose cars, trucks and vans are often written-off or in need of lengthy repairs after being stolen. The \$700 deductible for basic SGI insurance adds to the injury.

Though auto theft has been reduced to a more "normal" level, we trust the auto-theft strategy will remain in place to further drive down the numbers. Owners can help by using a steering wheel bar or other deterrent -- particularly on older model vehicles which are easier for joyriders to steal.

With a decade-long trend of lower crime rates in many categories, Regina Police Service deserves our thanks for helping make this city a safer place to live.

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