

NOVEMBER 2018

BICYCLE THEFT IN KINGSTON

FRONTENAC CYCLE

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

At Frontenac Cycle, bikes are not just a hobby. They're a lifestyle. We want others to experience the joy we feel when we're on our bikes. In order to encourage cycling, we aim to serve all cyclists in Kingston and provide them with reliable bikes and accessories so they can use their bikes for a variety of purposes. Most of our customers are commuters who use their bikes on a daily basis.

Unfortunately, we frequently see individuals come into the shop with either a part stolen off of their bike or their entire bike stolen. We see the negative impact that a stolen bike/bike part has on a person and, while we encourage cyclists to report any bike related theft to the police, we know that bike/bike part theft goes largely under-reported.

For this reason, a survey was developed and shared on social media to try to gather input from citizens impacted by bike theft. People were able to fill out the survey between August and early November of 2018. This is a brief report that summarizes survey responses and provides recommendations from cyclists in Kingston to reduce/prevent bike theft.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

The Frontenac Cycle team

WHY IS BIKE THEFT IMPORTANT?

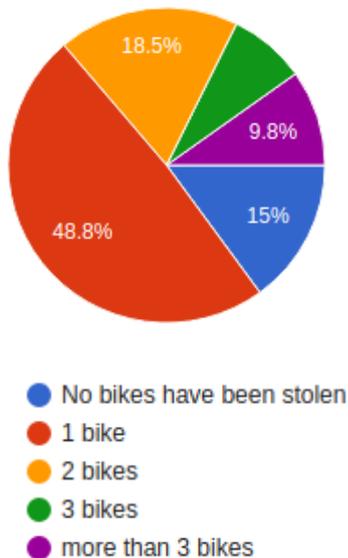
Bikes allow us to look at our community in a different light. We engage with our neighbours, fellow cyclists, joggers, etc. more frequently when riding a bike. Additionally, bikes are a tool for us to increase our physical activity, reduce stress levels, and minimize our carbon footprint. However, as cyclists, we also see the social issues that are prevalent throughout our community. Bike theft often reflects what's wrong in our community as it is heavily connected to poverty and drug addiction. Kingston's goal of becoming Canada's most sustainable city will not be accomplished if there are bike racks with bike skeletons attached to them. Finding strategies to reduce/prevent bike theft will involve multiple stakeholders around the community and can have broad effects towards correcting social, environmental, and health issues.

SURVEY SUMMARY

A total of 254 people participated in the survey.

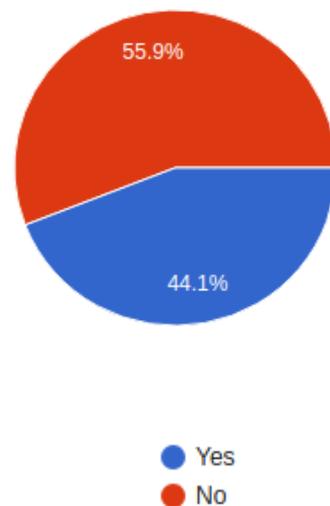
How many bikes have you had stolen?

254 responses



Have you ever had part of your bike stolen?

254 responses



85% (n=216) of those who responded have had at least one bike stolen and 44.1% (n=112) have had bike parts stolen. While respondents listed a variety of bike parts that were stolen, the most common parts were: seat and seat post, wheels (front and back), lights, brakes, and handlebars.

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Respondents also had a chance to provide an approximation of the monetary value of their stolen bike/bike parts. 191 people responded to this question with a numeric answer. Collectively, all the responses added up to approximately **\$150,000**.

To contextualize this further, below is a price estimate chart of what it would cost to replace the aforementioned bike parts with the most basic components available at the shop:

Bike Part	Price
Seat	\$30
Seat post	\$25
Front wheel	\$45
Rear wheel	\$55
Freewheel/Cassette	\$25
Tube	\$7
Tire	\$25
Rim tape	\$2
Light set	\$26
Set of brake levers	\$15
Set of rim brake calipers	\$25
Set of disc brake calipers	\$45
Handlebars	\$25
Shifters	\$30
Grips	\$10
Stem	\$25
Headset	\$25

While individually, these bike parts may not seem like a sizeable amount of money, bike part theft can quickly become a financial barrier to cycling. For example, if a seat is stolen, it is usually taken with the seat post, bringing the total cost to replace these bike parts to \$55.

Imagine having to replace your seat and seat post multiple times.

Wheels are another commonly stolen part that can quickly become very costly to replace. A functional front wheel (with rim tape, tube, and tire) comes out to a total of \$79 and a functional rear wheel would come out to be \$104. That is, if the bike did not have disc brakes where a rotor would then need to be included as well.

Again, these prices reflect the most basic available. If someone had higher quality parts stolen, the price would increase.

To replace an entire bike is even more costly. Thus, being victim of repeated bike or bike part theft can discourage people to use their bike as transportation around the city, negating the potential benefits of cycling for Kingston's citizens and the community.

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WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Understanding that this issue does not have one solution, we asked survey respondents for their ideas on what should be done in order to reduce/prevent bike theft around Kingston. The responses covered a wide range of possible initiatives and strategies to tackle this issue and are summarized below:

- 1. BETTER BIKE PARKING OPTIONS AROUND THE CITY.** This includes more bike racks, secure bike parking options, bike parking inside parking garages to protect bikes from rain and snow, racks in residential areas so that bikes aren't locked up to house porches or nearby trees.
- 2. MORE SURVEILLANCE AND PATROLLING.** A heightened level of surveillance in the form of cameras in areas with lots of parked bikes and more police officers on bikes patrolling the streets "on the ground". Additionally, respondents mentioned that a lot of thefts happen late at night and in the early hours of the morning, so having dedicated police officers who patrol high theft areas during these times would go a long way towards reducing the possibility of bike theft.
- 3. POLICE ENFORCEMENT.** There are known bike thieves around the city. There are also known "chop shops" where bikes are dropped off, "chopped up" to be made unrecognizable, and either sold again in Kingston or transported to other cities. Strategies to lure and catch bike thieves can intimidate other bike thieves and can reduce the likelihood of bike theft (and theft in general) around Kingston. Additionally, because a lot of bikes do not remain in Kingston, communication with other municipalities would increase the chance of bike recovery.
- 4. EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS.** There are many things one needs to know when adopting cycling as a mode of transportation or as a regular form of recreation. Respondents mentioned that increasing awareness on the quality of different locks and how to properly lock up a bike can help them keep their bikes secure.
- 5. BURSARIES AND INCENTIVES FOR BIKE LOCKS.** A good lock can be a sizable investment, but a bursary program where a certain percentage of a lock purchase is paid for, can make the difference between buying a low quality lock and buying a good quality lock.
- 6. IMPROVED SOCIAL SERVICES.** No one grows up wanting to be a bike thief. It is well documented that criminal behaviour is preceded by poverty, addiction, and a lack of opportunity and social supports. There needs to be a collective effort from different stakeholder organizations around Kingston to improve poverty reduction and drug prevention strategies.

WHAT FRONTENAC CYCLE IS DOING

This survey was one of many steps needed to make bike theft prevention a priority in Kingston. While 254 people responded to the survey, this is but a small fraction of all those who are and have been victims of some sort of bike theft in our community. This issue is much bigger, however, the strategies derived from the responses are a good first step towards preventing bike theft in the future.

As a shop, we commit to increase our efforts for the promotion of cycling. Not only how to ride safely but how to keep bikes safe. We always stock reliable locks and bike safety accessories and are happy to educate people on how to properly lock up their bikes. This winter, we'll start hosting basic bike maintenance workshops, and in the summer, we'll be hosting short bike rides through residential neighbourhoods to educate new cyclists on safe cycling strategies.

We also help facilitate community projects related to cycling. This year, we are working with various student groups to 1) develop a bike theft app that will make bike registration and bike identification easier, 2) map out and advocate for more bike parking locations around the downtown and Queen's campus area, and 3) create a social marketing campaign to promote bike registration and educate people on proper bike locking techniques. However, these efforts are not enough.

Coming up with a comprehensive way to reduce/prevent bike theft is complicated. This is not an issue we as a shop can fix alone. We need community member, business, non-profit, and government allies to get involved. Improving quality of life in Kingston should be on everyone's priority list. We believe that Kingston is a great place to live and we want to help this city become one of the most vibrant, healthy, and sustainable cities in Canada. Reducing/preventing bike theft is a good first step towards achieving that goal.