Breaking into bicycle theft: Insights from Montreal, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Many cities have adopted policies that promote walking and cycling because of their positive environmental, economic, and social benefits. As bicycles become a more popular form of transportation and more bicycles are out on the road, planners and transportation researchers will have to consider not only how to create urban spaces that encourage cycling, but also how to discourage bicycle theft. Currently, bicycle theft often goes unnoticed and is largely unchallenged. The present research brings attention to this issue by providing a narrative on bicycle theft in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. A bilingual online bicycle theft survey was designed for this purpose and answered by 2,039 Greater Montreal residents. Summary statistics address ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘how’, and ‘when’ questions, a logit model determines variables associated with theft, and thematic maps compare experienced and expected theft between sub-regions. Half of respondents have had at least one bicycle stolen. Cyclists most frequently had their bicycles stolen in the downtown area. While, bicycles locked with U-locks, expensive bicycles, and those owned by women, are less likely to have been stolen. Satisfaction with bicycle parking availability and security tends to be low, and many cyclists are willing to pay for improved secure bicycle parking. Findings from this study can not only be useful to better understand and ultimately decrease bicycle theft in Montreal, but can also be beneficial for cyclists, police, and policy makers in other cities aiming to decrease bicycle theft as it highlights new findings in this unexplored area of research.

Key words: cycling – theft – victimization – Montreal – bicycle parking – logit – cycling facilities