

# WHEELS OF STEAL

Car makers must do more to make it harder for thieves to pinch valuables from cars



Chevrolet Lacetti

## NO LAMINATED SIDE GLASS

This Chevrolet does not have laminated side glass. Laminated glass resists a thief for about five times as long as toughened glass.

## DOOR LOCKS

It took us just 11 seconds to get past the door locks and open the door.

## ALLOY WHEELS

It took us only 41 seconds to remove the locking wheel nut – allowing us to remove the alloy wheel.

## YOUR OPINIONS

If you own one of these cars, please contact us.

New BMW 3-series (from Mar 2005), BMW X3, Chevrolet Lacetti, Chevrolet Matiz, Citroën C4, New Fiat Multipla (from Sep 2004), New Ford Focus (from Jan 2005), Honda FR-V, Kia Cerato, Kia Picanto, New Lexus GS (from May 2005), New Mercedes A-class (from Feb 2005), Mitsubishi Grandis, Mitsubishi Colt, Peugeot 407, Renault Modus, Seat Altea, Smart ForFour, New Subaru Legacy (from Nov 2004), New Volvo S40 or V50 (from Apr 2004).

Write to Dept NL at the address on p66, giving the model, age and date of purchase, plus full contact details. We'll then contact ten owners of each car.

We're calling for manufacturers to improve protection for belongings inside cars by using laminated glass in side windows, adding lockable boxes and improving alarms and locking systems. This is because we've tested another 23 cars for security and we're disappointed with the findings.

Laminated glass resists a thief for about five times as long as ordinary toughened glass. But

## Theft from cars is the biggest single contributor to vehicle crime

just four cars offer laminated side glass as standard. Citroën's C4 Exclusive is the first mass-market medium car to do so. The Lexus LS430, most Peugeot 607s and the Peugeot 407 Executive also offer it as standard.

In our tests, our experts used a range of everyday tools to break into the cars, assessing how easy it was to get into each and take the contents, or to drive away. We also contacted 30 car makers to find out their future plans for improving car security.

Honda's considering laminated glass but hasn't acted yet. 'We're investigating the pros and cons,' it told us, but added that 'the cost is too high' for it to be fitted to the new Honda Legend, due out early next year. Nissan effectively told us we'd be better off having our personal belongings pinched: 'When a laptop is on the seat, what thief isn't going to try? Laminated glass costs more and a thief has to do

more damage to get in, so repair costs are higher.' We agree it's foolish to leave your valuables on view, but faced with the option of breaking into two cars for similar rewards, a thief will choose the easier, quicker option – the one with standard glass.

One way to keep valuables hidden is a secure box in the car but these are fitted only on the Fiat Barchetta, Honda Accord Tourer and Kia Sedona.

Several manufacturers told us that a lockable glove box is adequate. But our car security expert, Phil Rhodes, disagrees: 'Glove boxes are mostly made of flimsy plastic, often with second-rate locks. Few of them are large enough to store something such as a laptop and, quite honestly, they leave a lot to be desired.'

## CAR CRIME AUDIT

Theft from cars is still the biggest single contributor to vehicle crime, in terms of the number of crimes, according to a report from the National Audit Office in January. In 2003 to 2004, 600,000 incidents were recorded, but the actual figure is likely to be more than 1.3 million, since many incidents go unreported.

The good news is that theft of cars is falling. The report cites improved vehicle security as 'one of the main reasons for the reduction of thefts of vehicles'. This is almost certainly because immobilisers (which prevent the car being driven away) became mandatory in 1998 so it became harder to steal a new car. Introducing laminated glass could lead to a similar decrease in theft from cars.

## Our assessments

The Chevrolet Lacetti has reached a new low for car security, coming straight in at the bottom of the large cars table. Our thieves assessed this and 22 other cars, on top of the 102 we already have results for, to see how each resists break-in and theft.

The tables show, from best (top) to worst (bottom), how well the cars ranked on being broken into ('theft from') and stolen ('theft of'). Newly tested models are in blue. Broadly speaking, results are comparable across each manufacturer's range, but if your model isn't shown, use the tables as a guide.

### Superminis

This table has four new entries, the Renault Modus, Kia Picanto, Fiat Panda, and the now defunct Rover CityRover. Nothing challenges the Citroën C3 Pluriel, which even beats the best car in the medium category, the Mazda 3.

	THEFT FROM	THEFT OF
Citroën C3 Pluriel 1.6 16V Sensodrive	6	8
Mini Cooper 1.6	5	6
Citroën C2 1.1LX	4	8
Ford Fusion 3 1.6 5dr	4	8
Honda Jazz 1.4i SE Sport	4	8
Vauxhall Agila 1.0	4	8
Ford Fiesta Ghia 1.4 5dr	4	7
Rover 25 1.4 iS 5dr	4	6
Citroën C3 1.4i LX	3	8
Mazda 2 1.4	3	8
Seat Ibiza 1.4 SE 16V 5dr	3	8
Skoda Fabia 1.4 16V Elegance 5dr	3	8
Nissan Micra 1.2S	3	7
Renault Modus 1.4 16V Dynamique	3	7
Renault Clio 1.2 16V Expression 3dr	3	7
Ford Ka 1.3i	3	6
Peugeot 206 1.1 LX 5dr	3	6
Toyota Yaris 1.0 GLS 3dr	3	6
Vauxhall Corsa 1.0 12v GLS 3dr	3	6
VW Lupo 1.4S	2	7
Citroën Saxo 1.1i SX 5dr	2	6
Fiat Punto 1.2 Active	2	6
Hyundai Getz 1.1 CDX	2	6
Kia Picanto 1.1 SE	2	6
Peugeot 106 1.1 Zest 3dr	2	6
VW Polo 1.2 S 3dr	1	7
Chevrolet Kalos 1.4 SE	1	6
Fiat Panda 1.2 Dynamic	1	6
Rover CityRover Sprite 1.4	1	6
Seat Arosa 1.0 Mpi 3dr	1	6
Smart Passion Cabriolet 0.6	1	6
Suzuki Alto 1.1 16v GL	1	6
Suzuki Ignis 1.3 GL 3dr	1	6

### Medium cars

The Mazda 3 goes to the top of the medium cars table. The BMW 1-series and new Toyota Prius match the Mazda for 'theft of' but not 'theft from'. The new VW Golf is no better than the old model, while the Fiat Idea and Honda Civic IMA Hybrid are close to the bottom of the pile.

	THEFT FROM	THEFT OF
Mazda 3 1.6	5	8
Renault Mégane 1.4 16V	5	8
VW Beetle 2.0	5	8
Chrysler Neon 2.0 RT	5	6
BMW 1-series 1.6i	4	8
Toyota Prius 1.5 Hybrid	4	8
VW Bora 1.9 Tdi	4	8
Audi A3 2.0	4	7
Nissan Almera 1.8 SE+ 5dr	4	7
Peugeot 307 1.6 Rapier 5dr	4	7
Vauxhall Astra 1.6 Club	4	7
Fiat Stilo 1.6 16V Dynamic 3dr	4	6
Rover 45 1.4iS 4dr	4	6
Audi A2 1.4	3	8
Mercedes A140 Classic	3	7
Toyota Corolla 1.6 T3 5dr	3	7
Alfa Romeo 147 1.6 T Spark 3dr	3	6
Ford Focus 1.8 LX 5dr	3	6
Honda Civic 1.6 SE 5dr	3	6
Smart ForFour Passion 1.3	3	6
Subaru Impreza 2.0 GX 4dr	3	6
Seat Leon 1.6S 16V	2	7
VW Golf Mk V 1.6S (old) <sup>a</sup>	2	7
VW Golf Mk IV 1.6 FSI 5dr (NEW)	2	7
Fiat Idea 1.4 Dynamic	2	6
Honda Civic IMA 1.3 Hybrid	2	6
Hyundai Accent 1.3 Si 3dr	2	6
Citroën Xsara 1.4i 5dr	1	7
Kia Rio LX 1.3	1	6
Suzuki Liana 1.6 GL	1	6

<sup>a</sup> Estate version still available



Mazda 3





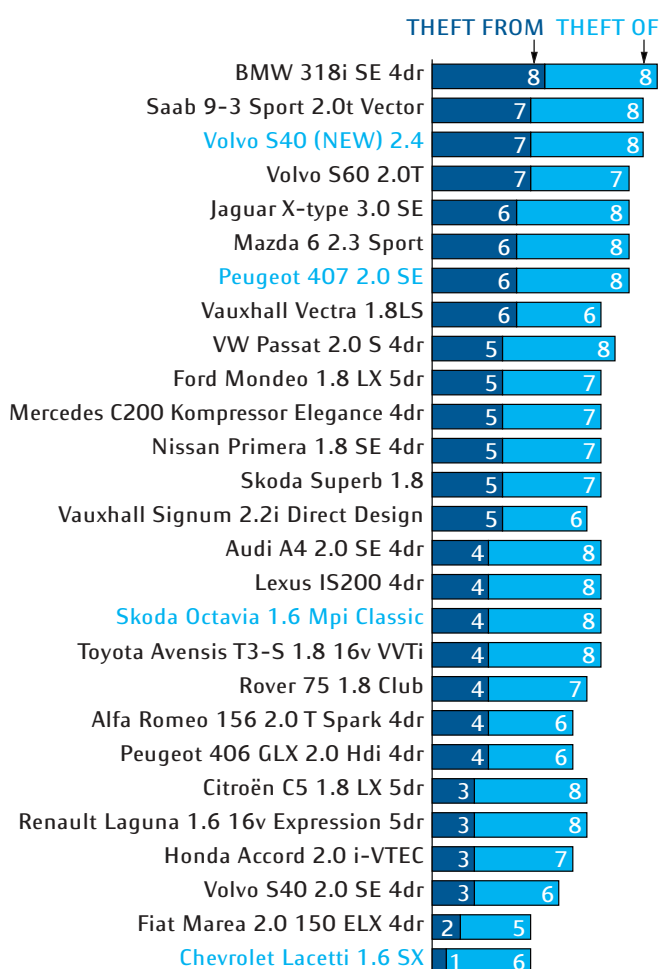
VW Touran



Audi A6

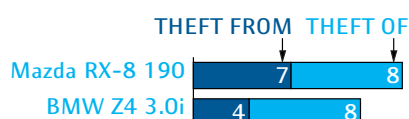
## Large cars

The new Volvo S40 comes in close to the top, one point ahead of the other new entry, the Peugeot 407. But the Chevrolet Lacetti (the renamed Daewoo Nubira) enters at the bottom.



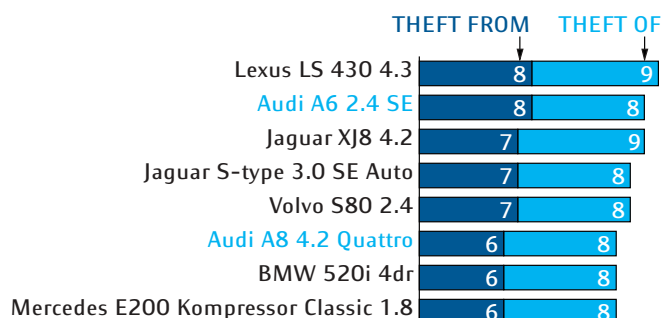
## Sports cars

The Mazda RX-8 competes on security with some of the creditable large and luxury models – it's on a par with the Jaguar S-type. The BMW Z4 is far less secure for 'thefts from'.



## Luxury cars

The Lexus remains best in this and all classes. It beats the Audi A6 by one point. But the A6 beats the Audi A8, its more luxurious and expensive big brother.



## MPVs

The Seat Altea matches this sector's top performers, the Ford Focus and Renault Scénic II. The Toyota Corolla Verso comes in further down, being poor at securing your valuables. But the worst MPV in the latest batch is the VW Touran.

