



Image: Getty

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## Motorists urged to protect their vehicles as lockdown fuels catalytic converter thefts

**Criminals have been targeting cars parked during lockdown to fuel the illegal trade of precious metals, according to the RAC and [Ageas](#), one of the UK's biggest car insurers.**

Ageas Insurance says it has seen a marked rise in theft of catalytic converters since the start of the first lockdown just over a year ago, with this type of crime now accounting for three-in-10 of all theft claims reported. Before the

lockdown catalytic converter theft only accounted for around one-in-five, the company's data shows.\*

Most thefts have happened while cars have been parked at home, either on the driveway or the road, although in a very small number of cases thieves were brazen enough to steal them in supermarket car parks while the driver was shopping.

Catalytic converters form part of a car's exhaust system. They contain a honeycomb coated with precious metals such as platinum, palladium and rhodium which help to reduce and filter harmful gases from the vehicles' exhaust systems.

But criminals steal catalytic converters so they can sell them on and make money from the precious metals inside them.

When global values of these metals go up it usually leads to a spate of thefts. Prices of rhodium hit a record high earlier this year, up more than 200 per cent since March 2020.\*\*

**Robin Challand, Claims Director at Ageas, says:**

“While catalytic converters are just one component of a car, their theft can often result in a driver's car being written off which is the last thing we want for our customers. We hope that by shining a spotlight on this type of crime, we can arm motorists with the information they need to protect their vehicles.”

**RAC Insurance spokesman Simon Williams says:**

“Drivers are often oblivious of their vehicle's catalytic converter being stolen. Our patrols are often called to attend cars that have suddenly become excessively noisy. On investigation it's very often the case that the car's catalytic converter has been stolen.

“We'd strongly recommend motorists get in the habit of taking extra precautions to guard against this type of crime. Generally-speaking, most car crime takes place at night, so it makes sense to park a vehicle in a well-lit and residential location, or ideally in a garage if available. When away from

home, look for car parks that have security patrols and are covered by CCTV. It's also a good idea to look for the [ParkMark logo](#) at car parks as this shows they have met certain security standards.

“But unfortunately, as Ageas’ data shows, even taking sensible precautions may not necessarily make you immune to this type of crime. For this reason, having a strong, comprehensive insurance policy is a vital in case the worst happens.”

*The RAC website carries a [guide on how to avoid falling victim to car crime](#).*

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## **Notes to Editors**

\* Catalytic converter theft represented 19.8% of thefts from private vehicles Oct-Dec 2019 and 29.7% from Jan to March 2021, according to Ageas’ own claims data

\*\* Benchmark prices for rhodium hit a record of \$17,790 an ounce, up more than 200 per cent since their March 2020 low. Financial Times. January 2021. <https://www.ft.com/content/42b17e6e-ff96-437b-8f41-dd9900a3f8b3>

The press office email address is [press.enquiries@rac.co.uk](mailto:press.enquiries@rac.co.uk). **Please note:** the press office is unable to help with individual customer enquiries - please visit the [RAC contacts page](#) to find the right contact.

ISDN radio studio facilities are available for interviews Monday to Friday.

## **About the RAC**

The RAC provides complete peace of mind to 12m UK private and business drivers, whatever their motoring needs. Its services include:

- [Breakdown assistance](#). Its highly-skilled, 1,600-strong branded

patrol workforce attends more than two million breakdowns every year, fixing on average four out of five vehicles at the roadside. The RAC's patrol fleet is one of the most advanced in the UK, and was the first to roll out both an [All-Wheels-Up recovery system](#), allowing the vast majority of vehicles to be recovered from a single patrol van, and [EV Boost](#) mobile electric vehicle charging units

- [Insurance](#). The RAC is a top-five [car insurance](#) broker having surpassed the 500,000 policies-in-force milestone in 2018. It also offers '[black box](#)' [telematics policies](#), as well as home and travel insurance
- **Other motoring services.** The RAC leads in the development of new solutions for business, fleets, electric vehicles and future car technology. Its additional products and services include a [personal loans offering](#), a [used car buying website](#), [vehicle inspections and checks](#), [legal services](#) or up-to-the-minute [traffic and travel information](#). It also has a network of [Approved Dealers](#) and [Approved Garages](#) which combine the trust of RAC brand with local service and convenience

The RAC also works to support the interests of its members and UK drivers on the most important motoring issues which it identifies via the annual [RAC Report on Motoring](#) and the RAC Opinion Panel. The Report on Motoring is the longest running analysis of driver opinion in the UK having been published every year since 1989.

**For more information about the RAC, visit the [RAC website](#).**

## About Ageas

Ageas is one of the largest general insurers in the United Kingdom, providing insurance to around five million customers. It offers car and home, travel and small business insurance through brokers, affinity partners and its own brands. Customers are able to buy Ageas branded car insurance direct from [ageas.co.uk](#). Ageas is a wholly owned subsidiary of Ageas Group, which is listed on the Belgium stock exchange.

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