Catalytic converter thefts have surged in lockdown amid a spike in the value of precious metals, research shows.

The RAC and insurer Ageas found the crime now accounts for three-in-10 thefts from private vehicles in the UK, up from two-in-10 before the pandemic.

Catalytic converters contain metals such as platinum and rhodium which fetch high prices on the black market.

When values of these metals go up it usually leads to a spate of thefts, the RAC and Ageas said.

They pointed out that prices of rhodium hit record highs earlier this year, having climbed more than 200% since March 2020.

The research compared thefts during the first three months of the year, compared with the period between October and December 2019.

RAC spokesman Simon Williams said: "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."

- **Lockdown surge in catalytic converter thefts**
- **Reality Check: Thefts of catalytic converters**

According to the research, most thefts happen while cars are parked at home, either on the driveway or the road.

But converters have occasionally been stolen in supermarket car parks while the driver is shopping, the research said.