



Cargo Theft, 2023

Cargo Theft, 2023, is the tenth cargo theft report released by the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. Forty-eight states participated in the data collection in 2023 as well as the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the District of Columbia Metro Transit. In 2023, 47 states submitted at least one cargo theft incident.

The FBI's UCR Program collects cargo theft data to inform the law enforcement community, federal and state legislators, academia, and the public at large about this particular crime. The data can be used to create awareness and to measure the impact cargo theft has on the economy and potential threats to national security. Often, cargo theft offenses are part of larger criminal schemes and have been found to be components of organized crime rings, drug trafficking, and funding for terrorism. The UCR collection of cargo theft data is relatively new with only 10 years of data published, but the number of agencies reporting cargo theft incidents has increased each year.

On January 1, 2021, the FBI's UCR Program transitioned to a National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) only data collection. Since the transition, the FBI's UCR Program has worked diligently to offer resources such as programming and technical support, training, and outreach to law enforcement agencies. Despite more than 11,500 law enforcement agencies submitting NIBRS data, participation for 2021 remained below a statistically acceptable level to be nationally representative. For the 2022 and 2023 data years, to provide nationally representative data, the FBI accepted Summary Reporting System (SRS) data submissions from non-transitioned agencies.

Participation

Participation in the UCR Program is voluntary, and agencies or states may choose not to participate. Since the first publication of cargo theft data in 2013, the number of states and federal agencies participating has steadily increased each year.

Although participation in the cargo theft data collection has steadily increased each year since its inception, several factors have a direct impact on this important data collection:

- States may not have the resources required to make the necessary technical changes or to align their local and state statutes with federal requirements.
- States may not have the necessary resources to conduct data quality checks on reported incidents associated with cargo theft, which could result in inaccurate data.
- States may not have adequate resources to train participants on how to recognize and properly record cargo theft incidents.
- States may not perceive cargo theft as a priority or a significant problem within their states and make decisions based on their immediate needs regarding resource allocation.

USA Patriot Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005

Due to the significant economic impact cargo theft has on the United States economy, and the potential for use by terrorist organizations, Congress mandated H.R. 3199, the USA Patriot Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005 on March 9, 2006. It required the Attorney General to “take the steps necessary to ensure that reports of cargo theft collected by federal, state, and local officials are reflected as a separate category in the Uniform Crime Reporting System, or any successor system, by no later than December 31, 2006.” In response to this mandate, the Criminal Justice Information Services Advisory Policy Board approved a definition for collecting cargo theft in December 2006. In 2010, data specifications required to capture cargo theft data in the UCR Program’s SRS as well as the NIBRS were finalized, and the FBI’s UCR Program released the first cargo theft report in 2013.

What is cargo theft?

Cargo theft is defined as “The criminal taking of any cargo including, but not limited to, goods, chattels, money, or baggage that constitutes, in whole or in part, a commercial shipment of freight moving in commerce, from any pipeline system, railroad car, motor truck, or other vehicle, or from any tank or storage facility, station house, platform, or depot, or from any vessel or wharf, or from any aircraft, air terminal, airport, aircraft terminal or air navigation facility, or from any intermodal container, intermodal chassis, trailer, container freight station, warehouse, freight distribution facility, or freight consolidation facility. For purposes of this definition, cargo shall be deemed as moving in commerce at all points between the point of origin and the final destination, regardless of any temporary stop while awaiting transshipment or otherwise.”

This definition does not serve as a legal description for prosecutorial purposes. Instead, it was developed to capture the essence of the national cargo theft problem in the United States. The legal elements of knowledge and intent were intentionally omitted.

Quality data concerning cargo theft can help us better understand this crime and the threats associated with it. As more agencies choose to report their incidents, the FBI’s UCR Program will be able to provide more information about cargo theft on a national scale. For additional information on the FBI UCR Program’s collection of cargo theft incidents, visit <https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr-program-data-collections>.

Under the umbrella of the FBI’s UCR Program, cargo theft data has traditionally been released on FBI.gov on the UCR Publications webpage. However, beginning in 2021, all UCR data is being released exclusively on the FBI’s Crime Data Explorer (CDE) website where data users can access and sort a variety of data. The content of the CDE comes from data collections such as Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted, Hate Crime Statistics, the National Incident-Based Reporting System, and National Use-of-Force. UCR data from previous years will also be accessible on the CDE. Cargo Theft reports from previous years can be accessed at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s> in *Crime in the United States* publications.

The following Cargo Theft tables are available as part of this compressed file download:

Table 1
Cargo Theft by State
by Incidents, and Stolen, Recovered Values, 2023

Table 2
Cargo Theft Property Stolen and Recovered
by Type and Value, 2023

Table 3
Cargo Theft by Location, 2023

Table 4
Cargo Theft by Victim Type, 2023

Table 5
Cargo Theft by Offense, 2023



Data Declarations and Methodology

Table 1
Cargo Theft by State
by Incidents, and Stolen, Recovered Values, 2023

The FBI collects these data through the Uniform Crime Reporting Program’s Summary Reporting System and National Incident-Based Reporting System.

General comment

This table presents by state the total number of agencies that submitted data about cargo theft incidents, the number of incidents reported, the reported value of stolen property, and the value of recovered property. The table also lists the percentage of recovered value for each submitting state.

Due to technical system changes and data quality issues, some cargo theft data may be inflated.

Methodology

The data used in creating this table were from all law enforcement agencies submitting one or more cargo theft incidents for at least 1 month of the calendar year. The published data, therefore, do not necessarily represent reports from each participating agency for all 12 months of the calendar year.

Table 2
Cargo Theft Property Stolen and Recovered
by Type and Value, 2023

The FBI collects these data through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program’s Summary Reporting System and National Incident-Based Reporting System.

General comment

The value of stolen and recovered property, and the percentage of recovered value of each property type is reflected within this table.

Due to technical system changes and data quality issues, some cargo theft data may be inflated.

Note: Based on UCR guidelines, the property descriptions of credit/debit cards, nonnegotiable instruments, documents/personal or business, and identity-intangible, must be submitted with zero value for stolen and/or recovered.

Methodology

The data used in creating this table were from all law enforcement agencies submitting one or more cargo theft incidents for at least 1 month of the calendar year. The published data, therefore, do not necessarily represent reports from each participating agency for all 12 months of the calendar year.

Table 3
Cargo Theft by Location, 2023

The FBI collects these data through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program's Summary Reporting System and National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS).

General comment

Cargo theft is the criminal taking of any cargo including, but not limited to, goods, chattels, money, or baggage that constitutes, in whole or in part, a commercial shipment of freight moving in commerce, from any pipeline system, railroad car, motor truck, or other vehicle, or from any tank or storage facility, station house, platform, or depot, or from any vessel or wharf, or from any aircraft, air terminal, airport, aircraft terminal or air navigation facility, or from any intermodal container, intermodal chassis, trailer, container freight station, warehouse, freight distribution facility, or freight consolidation facility. For purposes of this definition, cargo shall be deemed as moving in commerce at all points between the point of origin and the final destination, regardless of any temporary stop while awaiting transshipment or otherwise.

This table presents the number of location types reported in cargo theft incidents.

Due to technical system changes and data quality issues, some cargo theft data may be inflated.

Note: In NIBRS, a location may be entered for each offense; therefore, an incident may have more than one location code reported.

Methodology

The data used in creating this table were from all law enforcement agencies submitting one or more cargo theft incidents for at least 1 month of the calendar year. The published data, therefore, do not necessarily represent reports from each participating agency for all 12 months of the calendar year.

To arrive at the totals provided, the UCR Program counted one for each offense location reported in an incident.

Table 4
Cargo Theft by Victim Type, 2023

The FBI collects these data through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program's Summary Reporting System and National Incident-Based Reporting System.

General comment

This table presents the number of victim types in each of the cargo theft incidents reported to the FBI. The victim of a cargo theft may be an individual, a business, an institution, or society as a whole.

Due to technical system changes and data quality issues, some cargo theft data may be inflated.

Methodology

The data used in creating this table were from all law enforcement agencies submitting one or more cargo theft incidents for at least 1 month of the calendar year. The published data, therefore, do not necessarily represent reports from each participating agency for all 12 months of the calendar year.

To arrive at the totals provided, the UCR Program counted one for each victim type reported in an incident.

Table 5
Cargo Theft by Offense, 2023

The FBI collects these data through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program's Summary Reporting System and National Incident-Based Reporting System.

General comment

Cargo theft is the criminal taking of any cargo including, but not limited to, goods, chattels, money, or baggage that constitutes, in whole or in part, a commercial shipment of freight moving in commerce, from any pipeline system, railroad car, motor truck, or other vehicle, or from any tank or storage facility, station house, platform, or depot, or from any vessel or wharf, or from any aircraft, air terminal, airport, aircraft terminal or air navigation facility, or from any intermodal container, intermodal chassis, trailer, container freight station, warehouse, freight distribution facility, or freight consolidation facility. For purposes of this definition, cargo shall be deemed as moving in commerce at all points between the point of origin and the final destination, regardless of any temporary stop while awaiting transshipment or otherwise.

Because cargo theft is defined as “the criminal **taking of** any cargo . . .,” specific crimes against property apply to cargo theft. The applicable crimes against property include:

- 120 = Robbery
- 23D = Theft from building
- 23F = Theft from motor vehicle
- 23H = All other larceny
- 26A = False pretenses, swindle, confidence game
- 26B = Credit card, automatic teller machine fraud
- 26C = Impersonation
- 26E = Wire fraud
- 26F = Identity theft
- 26G = Hacking, computer invasion
- 210 = Extortion, blackmail
- 220 = Burglary, breaking & entering
- 240 = Motor vehicle theft
- 270 = Embezzlement
- 510 = Bribery

In addition, cargo theft is not considered an offense by itself; all offenses that happen within a cargo theft incident are to be reported. Cargo theft data are derived by capturing the additional element of “theft of cargo” in incidents that contain any of the applicable offenses.

This table shows the number of offenses specific to cargo theft and the number of additional offenses reported within a verified cargo theft incident.

Due to technical system changes and data quality issues, some cargo theft data may be inflated.

Methodology

The data used in creating this table were from all law enforcement agencies submitting one or more cargo theft incidents for at least 1 month of the calendar year. The published data, therefore, do not necessarily represent reports from each participating agency for all 12 months of the calendar year.

To arrive at the totals provided, the UCR Program counted one offense for each offense type reported in an incident.
