

The Economic Impact of Retail Theft & ORC

How Theft Threatens Washington Communities

Retail theft & ORC isn't a victimless crime. It harms public safety, the communities, and the economy.

A Growing National Crisis

Retail theft is no longer petty crime — it's a national economic and public-safety emergency.

- \$112 Billion lost nationwide to theft and Organized Retail Crime (ORC).
- +19% increase in shoplifting and merchandise theft.
- 54% increase in repeat-offender thefts.
- 64% of thefts go unreported.
- 46% increase in violence during thefts; 17% target employees.

Source: [*2025 Impact of Retail Theft & Violence Report; National Retail Federation*](#)

Washington: Leader in Retail Theft

Washington leads the nation in retail theft with devastating consequences for businesses, workers, and communities.

- #1 in the U.S. for retail theft rates — 3,510 cases per 100,000 businesses.
- \$2.7 Billion in stolen goods (2021).
- \$3.65 Billion in total retail-crime costs.
- \$603 Million in lost state tax revenue (2021).

Source: [*US Chamber of Commerce – Retail Crime Data Center*](#)

Across Washington Communities

Real-world cases show theft is pervasive, emboldened, and statewide:

- **Lynnwood:** thefts grew from 446 (2015) to 2,364 (2024). [*Lynnwood Times*](#).
- **Seattle:** 13,103 police calls at top 100 retail sites (2022). [*Seattle City Auditor, 2023*](#).
- **King County/Seattle:** King County accounts for 10% of Nordstrom's global theft. [*KIRO 7 News*](#).
- **Western WA:** \$537,000 stolen by organized ring. [*Bellevue Police Department*](#).
- **Spokane:** \$22,800 in merchandise stolen in 3 months. [*KHQ News*](#).

The Business Fallout

Retail theft drains more than revenue — it erodes communities.

- 1.6% of U.S. retail sales lost annually.
- 28% of retailers closed stores; 45% cut hours; 30% reduced inventory.
- Locked products and restricted hours
- cut sales by 15–25%.
- Worker stress and turnover rising as theft-related violence grows.

Source: [*2023 National Retail Security Survey; National Retail Federation*](#)

Small Retailers, Big Burden

- 90% of Washington small retailers have experienced theft; 83% say it's a major concern.
- 64% raised prices to offset losses — driving customers to big-box and online competitors.
- Many can't afford guards or AI security; DIY deterrents sacrifice safety for affordability.

Source: [*The Impact of Retail Theft on Small Businesses; Forbes Advisor*](#)

