

# Retail Crime: International Update

Whitepaper by  
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## Setting the scene

### 2024 Levels of theft/ORC

Shoplifting rises by

**23%**

#### England and Wales:

Shoplifting offences rose by 23% (to 492,914 offences) compared with the previous year (402,220 offences), and is the highest figure since current police recording practices began for the year ending March 2003 (ONS data). OPAL (Serious Organised Acquisitive Crime) police unit – “Pegasus” 2024 highlights – 94 referrals supported. 99 arrests, 31 property seizures (including 14 vehicles). 36 court outcomes with over 21 years in custodial sentences and 6 deportations.

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**93%**

Increase in the average number of shoplifting incidents

#### USA:

Retailers reported a 93% increase in the average number of shoplifting incidents per year in 2023 versus 2019 and a 90% increase in dollar loss due to shoplifting over the same time period. 73% of retailers reported that shoplifters have become more aggressive and violent over the past year, with 84% expressing heightened concern about the violence occurring during theft incidents (survey data published in The Impact of Retail Theft & Violence 2024).

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External theft drives

**71%**

of losses in AU

#### Australia/New Zealand:

The 2024 ANZ Retail Crime Study estimates the cost of retail crime to the sector is AUD 7.79 billion and NZD 444.92 million respectively in FY24, equivalent to 1.82% of turnover. External theft drives 71% of losses in Australia, 61% in NZ, while post-pandemic crime losses surged 28% from FY22 to FY24 (survey data).

## Criminal patterns and trends



### Gift card fraud

Increase in volume and sophistication of incidents in USA (and UK to a lesser extent). Homeland Security Initiatives has launched Project Red Hook to target ORC.



### Self-service checkout

continues to be polarised especially in the grocery sector. Some stores are retracting the proposition (e.g. Booths in the UK, Walmart in the USA) while others are moving towards more customer autonomy around payment (e.g. Asda trials of cashier-less stores). Some supermarkets (e.g. Tesco) now trialling trolley scales.



### Facial Recognition

The use of facial recognition looks set to grow in the USA and UK markets. Some key developments such as Gatekeeper Systems acquiring FaceFirst look to expand the use of this technology. Retailers very positive about its use for crime but also the multiplicity of peripheral benefits (e.g. locating missing persons).



## Legislation/politics impacting on the sector

### **USA: Combating Organized Retail Crime Act (the “Grassley Bill”) pressure on Congress:**

Under the last administration, two bills were introduced in the U.S. House and Senate with the intention of making it easier to prosecute ORC offenders. The Combating Organized Retail Crime Act of 2023 and the Organized Retail Crime Center Authorization Act of 2023 stopped last year without a vote. In February of this year, a bipartisan group representing a majority of state attorneys general have written to Congress requesting that they reintroduce and strengthen the bills. In it they argue that Federal legislation is needed because the problem is larger than state resources available. However, while they await the Federal legislation, several states are introducing their own legislation; 28 states established criminal laws focused on either those engaged in ORC or enhanced penalties for repeat offenders last year.

### **UK: The Crime and Policing Bill:**

The Bill introduces a new offence of assaulting a retail worker, giving workers in shops up and down the country the protection they need. Additionally, the bill repeals section 176 of the Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014, which downgraded the police response to so called “low-value shop theft”.

### **Australia**

Looking to set up similar initiatives to tackle ORC. Separately, following the trial of “Jack’s Law” (an amendment to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act (QLD)) which allows police to use handheld metal detectors without a warrant, it has been announced that the law will be made permanent and extended, notably including shopping centres.

# Vendor solutions.

**Integration** of solutions.

**Dual functionality** for solutions  
e.g. securing product at front and  
back end (i.e. can solutions also  
deter/detect internal theft (two  
birds with one stone).

**Protecting more lines** and items  
e.g. gift card dispenser solutions.

Securing **click and collect** orders  
awaiting collection.

**Slowing down**/inconveniencing  
offenders continues to be a key  
theme (anti-sweep approaches)  
as bulk theft continues to  
be a concern.