

The Surge in Retail Theft and Violence



Published
March 31, 2025



The escalation of retail theft isn't just about lost revenue—it's a growing threat to the safety and security of employees and customers alike. It's reshaping the shopping experience, casting long shadows over what were once considered safe community spaces. As we delve deeper into the causes behind this uptick, from policy implications to systemic challenges, it becomes clear that addressing this issue requires urgent and collective action.

Retail Policies on Non-Confrontation

To ensure the safety of their teams and customers, many retailers have adopted non-confrontation policies, instructing staff not to engage directly with shoplifters. This stance, while prioritizing safety, may unintentionally embolden thieves, who know they are unlikely to be challenged in the moment. The impact of such policies can lead to increased losses and foster an environment where theft becomes more frequent and aggressive.

The Impact of Felony Thresholds

Organized retail crime (ORC) groups are skilled at exploiting legal loopholes, especially felony theft thresholds. By coordinating thefts to remain under these limits, criminals avoid harsher penalties—making ORC a low-risk, high-reward operation. Retailers increasingly need support to identify and respond to repeat offenders whose behavior spans multiple incidents and locations.

Technology-Driven Theft Deterrence

Retailers are turning to advanced technologies to combat theft without compromising customer experience.

Gatekeeper Systems' Purchek® solution successfully prevents cart-based theft without confrontation. Carts that have not met the criteria for exit are stopped at the door, and event-triggered video captures the incident for further investigation. This allows retailers to combat ORC and opportunistic theft while maintaining a seamless experience for trusted and loyal shoppers.

FaceFirst is a highly accurate face matching solution designed specifically for retail environments. As the frequency and severity of in-store violence and theft increase, FaceFirst's AI-enabled software transforms traditional CCTV systems into proactive security tools—helping prevent violence, reduce loss, and accelerate investigations. Together, Purchek® and FaceFirst offer a powerful, layered approach to pushout prevention and repeat offender detection.

Strained Law Enforcement Resources

Limited law enforcement availability only compounds the problem. Underfunded and overstretched departments may not prioritize shoplifting or ORC-related offenses, leading to delays—or even absences—in response. This lack of action reinforces criminal behavior and leaves retailers with few options. By implementing intelligent, proactive solutions such as FaceFirst and Purchek®, retailers gain critical support in addressing repeat offenders and deterring theft in real time.

A Burdened Judicial System

The judicial system, already under significant strain, faces mounting pressure as ORC and retail-related violence grow. Courts are overwhelmed with the volume of cases, delaying justice and reducing the deterrent effect of prosecution. Retailers are calling for not only stronger ORC legislation at the federal level, but also for improved tools that can support case-building and offender identification—tools like FaceFirst, which provides real-time alerts and video evidence to streamline investigations and support judicial outcomes.

A Call for Collaboration

The situation calls for a multi-faceted approach—combining legislative reform, enhanced store security, and innovative technologies. Retailers are investing in advanced solutions to protect their teams and assets, but success depends on partnerships across the private and public sectors.

At the forefront of these efforts are technologies like **Gatekeeper Systems' Purchek®** and **FaceFirst**, which enable retailers to prevent pushout theft, reduce repeat offender incidents, and improve overall store safety—without disrupting the customer experience. By working together, we can reshape the future of retail protection.

About Gatekeeper

Gatekeeper Systems' expanded product suite of intelligent cart solutions offers solutions for EVERY retailer's needs to minimize merchandise loss, reduce asset and labor expenditures. Gatekeeper's loss prevention and cart containment solutions utilize patented locking technology to put an end to cart-based shoplifting, shopping cart loss, and uninformed decision-making. Cart management solutions increase safety and reduce labor costs by maximizing productivity while simultaneously resulting in a positive store image. Intelligent pushout theft prevention solutions stop thieves and their cart full of unpaid merchandise from leaving the store. Customizable technology allows retailers to defend their entire store or just a high loss department based on the store's unique layout. Business Intelligence solutions provide increased visibility for informed decision making. Increase efficiency, optimize fleet size, and perfect the entire customer shopping experience with store and enterprise-level analytics.

