Property Crime in America: Current Trends and the Importance of Earlier Awareness

Property crime remains an everyday concern for homeowners, businesses, farms, ranches, and organizations responsible for protecting buildings, equipment, vehicles, inventory, livestock, and other assets.

The national picture is also more complicated than headlines sometimes suggest.

Recent federal statistics show that several major categories of reported property crime are declining. In 2024, the U.S. property-offense rate reported to law enforcement fell **9%**, from 2,019.7 offenses per 100,000 people in 2023 to 1,835.1 in 2024. (Bureau of Justice Statistics)

More recent FBI data continue that favorable trend. For the 12-month period from April 2025 through March 2026, reported burglary declined **12.1%**, larceny declined **16.1%**, motor-vehicle theft declined **21.5%**, and arson declined **9.6%** compared with the preceding period. (CDE UCR CJIS)

Those declines are encouraging.

But declining crime does not mean disappearing risk.

Millions of property crimes and attempted property crimes still affect American households and businesses, while farms, ranches and large commercial properties face additional challenges because important assets may be located far beyond a building, alarm panel, camera system or Wi-Fi network.

Reported Crime and Actual Victimization Are Not the Same Thing

There are two important ways crime is measured nationally.

The FBI and Bureau of Justice Statistics analyze crimes **reported to law enforcement** through systems such as the National Incident-Based Reporting System, or NIBRS.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics also conducts the **National Crime Victimization Survey**, or NCVS. The NCVS surveys a nationally representative sample of U.S. households and includes crimes whether or not they were reported to police. The survey covers burglary and trespassing, motor-vehicle theft and other household theft. (Bureau of Justice Statistics)

These two systems measure different aspects of crime, so their numbers should not be treated as interchangeable. Taken together, however, they provide a more complete picture of property crime in America. (Bureau of Justice Statistics)

That distinction matters because many thefts, trespassing incidents and attempted property crimes may never result in a police report.

Homes and Residential Property

The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimated approximately **13.1 million household property victimizations in 2024**, representing about **97.6 victimizations for every 1,000 U.S. households**.

Household property victimization includes burglary or trespassing, motor-vehicle theft and other household theft. The NCVS is particularly useful because it includes incidents reported and not reported to police. (Bureau of Justice Statistics)

Residential property protection traditionally concentrates on the house itself: doors, windows, garages and interior spaces.

But activity affecting a property may begin much farther away.

Examples include:

- Someone entering through a driveway or gate
- Movement around a detached garage or storage building
- A vehicle, trailer, boat or recreational vehicle being moved
- Activity around a pool or restricted outdoor area
- Movement at a fence line
- Access to equipment or property stored away from the house

In those situations, knowing that something is happening **before it reaches the building** can provide valuable time to evaluate the event and determine an appropriate response.

Businesses and Commercial Property

There is no single national federal statistic that can accurately be described as a universal “crime rate per business.”

Commercial properties vary enormously—from neighborhood stores and offices to warehouses, construction sites, equipment yards, logistics operations and corporate campuses.

Their risks vary as well.

Property-related concerns may include:

- Burglary
- After-hours entry
- Theft of equipment or inventory
- Vehicle theft

- Vandalism
- Unauthorized access
- Cargo and supply-chain theft
- Movement of equipment outside authorized hours
- Activity in remote portions of a property

Retail provides one measurable example of the continuing problem.

A 2025 National Retail Federation study involving 70 retail companies representing 168 brands reported that participating retailers experienced an **18% increase in the average number of shoplifting incidents in 2024 compared with 2023**. Threats or acts of violence associated with shoplifting or theft increased **17%** during the same period. (National Retail Federation)

The participating brands represented approximately $1.3 trillion in annual sales, so the study reflects a substantial portion of the retail industry, although it should not be interpreted as a crime rate for every American business. (National Retail Federation)

Commercial security increasingly requires multiple layers because the first indication of a problem may occur at a parking area, perimeter gate, storage yard, loading area, fleet location or remote piece of equipment rather than at the building entrance.

Farms and Ranches Present Different Security Challenges

Farm and ranch crime is more difficult to measure nationally.

There is currently no comprehensive annual federal crime rate specifically covering all U.S. farms and ranches. Agricultural crime is often studied through state, regional or specialized surveys rather than one national statistical system.

That limitation is important: general rural household crime statistics should not be represented as farm or ranch crime rates.

However, available agricultural studies demonstrate the types of losses producers may face.

For example, a USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service study of Hawaii agricultural operations for 2024 documented agricultural theft, vandalism and trespassing and found that producers were also spending substantial amounts on protective measures. (NASS Data)

Agricultural properties present characteristics that make awareness particularly challenging:

- Large acreage
- Multiple entrances

- Remote gates
- Barns and outbuildings
- Tractors and other equipment
- Livestock areas
- Fuel storage
- Pumps and irrigation equipment
- Trailers and vehicles
- Tools and supplies
- Seasonal or unattended areas
- Limited electricity or internet connectivity

A rancher may have valuable equipment a half-mile or several miles from the residence. A farm may have gates, storage structures or machinery that cannot reasonably be covered by a conventional residential alarm system.

For these environments, the question is not simply:

“Is the building protected?”

It may instead be:

“Do I know when something changes anywhere on the property?”

The Perimeter Is Often Where an Event Begins

Traditional security often begins at the structure.

A door opens.

A window breaks.

An interior motion detector activates.

A camera records activity.

Those technologies remain valuable, but many property events begin before anyone reaches the structure.

A vehicle enters a gate.

A trailer begins moving.

Someone crosses a restricted area.

Equipment is moved from its normal location.

A remote storage building is approached.

A gate or sliding door changes position.

Temperature changes threaten equipment, animals or stored materials.

These are not necessarily alarm events yet.

They are **awareness events**.

And that distinction can be important.

Awareness Before Alarm

An alarm usually indicates that a predetermined security condition has already been violated.

Property awareness can begin earlier.

An awareness system may detect movement, activity, access, location change or environmental conditions and allow the property owner or authorized user to determine what the event means.

For example:

Motion detected → Event identified → Image received → User evaluates → Appropriate response

The appropriate response may be very different depending upon the situation.

The user may:

- Ignore normal activity
- Contact an employee or family member
- Check another source of information
- Call a property manager or security personnel
- Contact law enforcement or emergency services when warranted

Earlier information does not replace judgment. It provides information upon which judgment can be based.

Why Still Images Can Be Valuable

Continuous video is valuable in many situations, but it is not necessary—or practical—everywhere.

Remote property locations may have limited:

- Power

- Bandwidth
- Cellular service
- Wi-Fi coverage
- Storage capacity

Event-triggered still images can provide visual verification without requiring continuous video transmission.

Government, industrial and commercial systems already use event-driven imagery for applications including wildlife monitoring, transportation enforcement, equipment monitoring, incident documentation and alarm verification.

In a property-awareness application, an image can answer a simple but important question:

What caused the event?

A person?

An animal?

A vehicle?

Authorized activity?

Something unexpected?

The objective is not necessarily continuous surveillance. It is useful information at the time something changes.

Beyond the Reach of Wi-Fi

Another challenge with large properties is communications infrastructure.

Wi-Fi works well around homes and buildings but was never designed to provide inexpensive coverage across hundreds of acres, remote gates, equipment yards or widely separated structures.

Running electrical and communications wiring across a large property may also be difficult or expensive.

For that reason, newer property-awareness technologies can combine different communications methods depending upon the task.

Long-range low-power radio can transmit basic sensor information across significant distances, while gateways, internet connections and cellular networks can provide additional paths for information leaving the property.

The objective is not to replace every camera, alarm or communications technology.

It is to use the appropriate technology for the information being transmitted.

Property Protection Is Becoming More Layered

No single technology answers every property-security problem.

Cameras provide visual information.

Alarms identify defined security violations.

GPS can identify location.

Motion sensors identify activity.

Movement sensors can identify displacement of an object.

Environmental sensors can identify temperature or other changes.

Cellular communications can provide an alternative communications path.

A property-awareness system can bring several of those functions together.

That is particularly useful when the protected environment extends beyond the walls of a traditional building.

A Changing Crime Environment Still Requires Awareness

The current national crime trend contains good news.

Reported burglary, larceny and vehicle theft have recently declined nationally. (Bureau of Justice Statistics)

That should be acknowledged rather than exaggerated.

At the same time, property crime continues to affect millions of households, retailers continue to report substantial theft-related concerns, and agricultural and commercial properties continue to face unique challenges involving equipment, vehicles, inventory and widely dispersed assets. (Bureau of Justice Statistics)

The issue therefore is not fear.

It is information.

Knowing sooner that something has changed can create more options for deciding what to do next.

The Emerging Role of Property Awareness

Property-awareness technology represents another layer between having no information and having a full alarm or surveillance event.

Rather than monitoring only the building, it can extend awareness outward—to gates, vehicles, equipment, storage areas, pools, barns, fence lines and other locations where activity may begin.

Systems such as **AlertBadger™** are being developed around that concept: combining distributed sensing, movement detection, location information, selective imaging and multiple communications technologies to help users become aware of property activity before a situation necessarily becomes an alarm.

The goal is straightforward:

> **Earlier awareness. Better information. More informed response.**

About the Statistics

Crime statistics should always be considered in context.

The National Crime Victimization Survey measures household victimizations, including those not reported to police. FBI/NIBRS statistics primarily measure crimes known to law enforcement. Retail statistics cited here reflect participating businesses rather than all U.S. businesses, and there is currently no comprehensive annual national farm-and-ranch crime rate. (Bureau of Justice Statistics)

Statistics and trends presented on this page should therefore be understood as indicators of different aspects of property crime rather than directly interchangeable measurements.

Sources

U.S. Department of Justice — Bureau of Justice Statistics
Criminal Victimization, 2024; *Crime Known to Law Enforcement, 2024*; and *The Nation's Two Crime Measures, 2015–2024*. (Bureau of Justice Statistics)

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