Trends in Carjacking: What You Need to Know

Methodology

The analysis, entitled Trends in Carjacking: What You Need to Know, examines recent trends in carjacking, other robberies, and motor vehicle theft in cities across the United States. The data in this report are drawn from two main sources: incident-level data taken directly from law enforcement agencies or city websites and data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). All analyses that examine carjacking and other offenses from January 2018 to December 2023 use incident-level data from police departments or city websites. For these analyses, the largest city in the sample was Los Angeles, with about 3.9 million residents, and the smallest was Norfolk, VA, with around 232,000 residents. The mean population for all included cities was approximately 1.09 million residents; the median was roughly 646,000 residents. Study cities were selected based on the availability of incident or monthly-level shoplifting data on their online portals.[1] Since carjacking is not a Part I offense, not all cities that post crime data online identify carjacking incidents.

The values may differ from data published by individual police departments, due to the updating of data over time, and from official counts released by the FBI. In addition, data may differ from those used in previous CCJ reports because they are based on a different number and mix of cities. For the most up-to-date information for a specific city, please visit its website.

NATIONAL INCIDENT-BASED REPORTING SYSTEM DATA

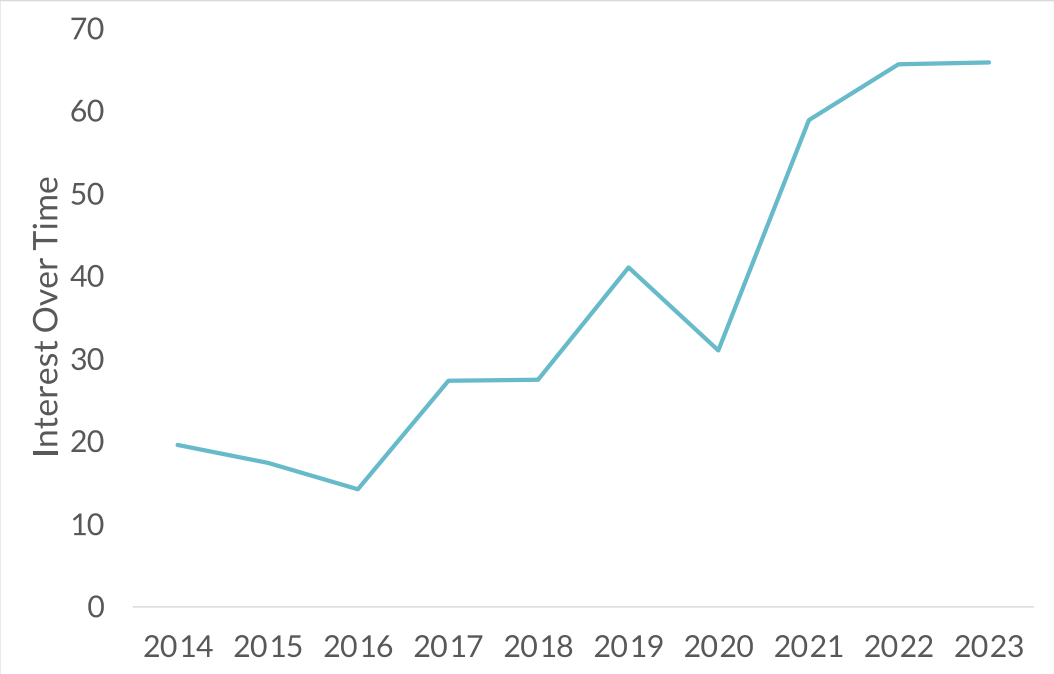
At the time of the analysis, NIBRS data were available only through 2022. The FBI is undergoing a shift to its data collection and reporting methods—shifting from a Summary Reporting System (SRS) to the incident-level NIBRS. However, not all law enforcement agencies have made this transition. In 2019, 8,497 agencies reported NIBRS data; by 2022, that number had increased to 13,293. The sample for the NIBRS analysis includes 97 local law enforcement agencies that reported 12 complete months of NIBRS data from 2018-2022 and had a population of at least 100,000. This population cutoff is used because much smaller localities will typically experience zero carjackings in a year, and generating rates with smaller law enforcement agencies is problematic because jurisdictions may not align with city or county geography. For this sample, the largest city (and county) is Honolulu, HI which has a population of just under 1 million. The smallest city was Davenport, IA, with about 100,000 residents. The mean population for all

[1] The 10 cities are: Baltimore, Chandler (AZ), Chicago, Colorado Springs, Denver, Los Angeles, Memphis, Norfolk (VA), San Francisco, and Washington D.C.

included cities was approximately 240,000 residents; the median was roughly 155,000 residents. Since carjacking is not identified by the FBI as a specific offense (e.g., motor vehicle theft or aggravated assault), the carjacking offense is generated by identifying robbery incidents where a motor vehicle was the stolen property.[2]

Supplemental Materials

Figure S1: Google Trends News Search Results for "Carjacking"



Note: Interest over time is a relative measure of when a search term is the most popular over a certain period. For more information, visit the Google Trends website.

Table S1: Offense Rates for NIBRS (97 cities) sample, 2018 - 2022

Offense	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Carjacking	11.7	10.2	12.0	18.2	18.1
Robbery (excluding carjacking)	162.6	145.9	131.1	120.2	119.1
Motor Vehicle Theft	495.5	453.1	509.0	615.5	738.1

[2] NIBRS data were accessed from: Kaplan, J. (2023). Jacob Kaplan's concatenated files: National incident-based reporting system (NIBRS) data, 1991-2022. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor]. https://doi.org/10.3886/E118281V10