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Problem-Specific Guides Series
Problem-Oriented Guides for Police

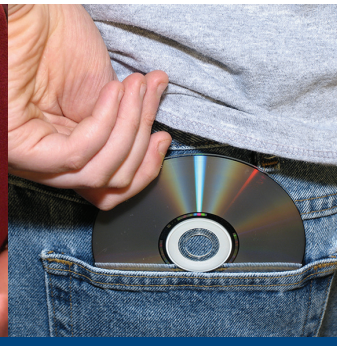
No. 11

Shoplifting

2nd Edition

Ronald V. Clarke

Gohar Petrossian



Center for
Problem-Oriented Policing

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Ronald V. Clarke and Gohar Petrossian

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The Internet references cited in this publication were valid as of the date of this publication. Given that URLs and websites are in constant flux, neither the author(s) nor the COPS Office can vouch for their current validity.

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About the Problem-Specific Guides Series

The *Problem-Specific Guides* summarize knowledge about how police can reduce the harm caused by specific crime and disorder problems. They are guides to prevention and to improving the overall response to incidents, not to investigating offenses or handling specific incidents. Neither do they cover all of the technical details about how to implement specific responses. The guides are written for police—of whatever rank or assignment—who must address the specific problem the guides cover. The guides will be most useful to officers who:

- **Understand basic problem-oriented policing principles and methods.** The guides are not primers in problem-oriented policing. They deal only briefly with the initial decision to focus on a particular problem, methods to analyze the problem, and means to assess the results of a problem-oriented policing project. They are designed to help police decide how best to analyze and address a problem they have already identified. (A companion series of *Problem-Solving Tools* guides has been produced to aid in various aspects of problem analysis and assessment.)
- **Can look at a problem in depth.** Depending on the complexity of the problem, you should be prepared to spend perhaps weeks, or even months, analyzing and responding to it. Carefully studying a problem before responding helps you design the right strategy, one that is most likely to work in your community. You should not blindly adopt the responses others have used; you must decide whether they are appropriate to your local situation. What is true in one place may not be true elsewhere; what works in one place may not work everywhere.
- **Are willing to consider new ways of doing police business.** The guides describe responses that other police departments have used or that researchers have tested. While not all of these responses will be appropriate to your particular problem, they should help give a broader view of the kinds of things you could do. You may think you cannot implement some of these responses in your jurisdiction, but perhaps you can. In many places, when police have discovered a more effective response, they have succeeded in having laws and policies changed, improving the response to the problem. (A companion series of *Response Guides* has been produced to help you understand how commonly-used police responses work on a variety of problems.)

- **Understand the value and the limits of research knowledge.** For some types of problems, a lot of useful research is available to the police; for other problems, little is available. Accordingly, some guides in this series summarize existing research whereas other guides illustrate the need for more research on that particular problem. Regardless, research has not provided definitive answers to all the questions you might have about the problem. The research may help get you started in designing your own responses, but it cannot tell you exactly what to do. This will depend greatly on the particular nature of your local problem. In the interest of keeping the guides readable, not every piece of relevant research has been cited, nor has every point been attributed to its sources. To have done so would have overwhelmed and distracted the reader. The references listed at the end of each guide are those drawn on most heavily; they are not a complete bibliography of research on the subject.
- **Are willing to work with others to find effective solutions to the problem.** The police alone cannot implement many of the responses discussed in the guides. They must frequently implement them in partnership with other responsible private and public bodies, including other government agencies, non-governmental organizations, private businesses, public utilities, community groups, and individual citizens. An effective problem-solver must know how to forge genuine partnerships with others and be prepared to invest considerable effort in making these partnerships work. Each guide identifies particular individuals or groups in the community with whom police might work to improve the overall response to that problem. Thorough analysis of problems often reveals that individuals and groups other than the police are in a stronger position to address problems and that police ought to shift some greater responsibility to them to do so. Response Guide No. 3, *Shifting and Sharing Responsibility for Public Safety Problems*, provides further discussion of this topic.

The COPS Office defines community policing as "a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies, which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime." These guides emphasize *problem-solving* and *police-community* partnerships in the context of addressing specific public safety problems. For the most part, the organizational strategies that can facilitate problem-solving and police-community partnerships vary considerably and discussion of them is beyond the scope of these guides.

These guides have drawn on research findings and police practices in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia. Even though laws, customs, and police practices vary from country to country, it is apparent that the police everywhere experience common problems. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, it is important that police be aware of research and successful practices beyond the borders of their own countries.

Each guide is informed by a thorough review of the research literature and reported police practice, and each guide is anonymously peer reviewed by a line police officer, a police executive, and a researcher prior to publication. The review process is independently managed by the COPS Office, which solicits the reviews.

For more information about problem-oriented policing, visit the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing online at www.popcenter.org. This website offers free online access to:

- The *Problem-Specific Guides* series
- The companion *Response Guides* and *Problem-Solving Tools* series
- Special publications on crime analysis and on policing terrorism
- Instructional information about problem-oriented policing and related topics
- An interactive problem-oriented policing training exercise
- An interactive *Problem Analysis Module*
- Online access to important police research and practices
- Information about problem-oriented policing conferences and award programs

Acknowledgments

The *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* are produced by the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, whose officers are Michael S. Scott (Director), Ronald V. Clarke (Associate Director) and Graeme R. Newman (Associate Director). While each guide has a primary author, other project team members, COPS Office staff, and anonymous peer reviewers contributed to each guide by proposing text, recommending research, and offering suggestions on matters of format and style.

The project team that developed the guide series comprised Herman Goldstein (University of Wisconsin Law School), Ronald V. Clarke (Rutgers University), John E. Eck (University of Cincinnati), Michael S. Scott (University of Wisconsin Law School), Rana Sampson (Police Consultant), and Deborah Lamm Weisel (North Carolina State University).

Members of the San Diego; National City, California; and Savannah, Georgia police departments provided feedback on the guides' format and style in the early stages of the project.

Kimberly Nath oversaw the project for the COPS Office. Phyllis Schultze conducted research for the guide at Rutgers University's Criminal Justice Library. Nancy Leach coordinated the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing's production process.

The Problem of Shoplifting

What This Guide Does and Does Not Cover

This guide reviews ways to reduce shoplifting (merchandise theft from the shop floor during business hours), which is a common crime that affects large and small retailers alike. Particularly at risk are self-service stores that sell small items that are easily concealed in clothes or bags. Several offender groups are responsible: (1) opportunistic thieves, not readily distinguishable from ordinary customers, who steal items for personal use (sometimes called petty shoplifters); (2) more determined thieves, usually operating alone, who steal small quantities of goods to sell, often to support drug habits; and (3) groups of organized thieves who steal large quantities of merchandise for resale (often referred to as professional or organized retail theft).

Shoplifting is just one of the crimes that occur in the retail environment. Other crimes requiring their own analyses and responses include:

- Burglaries of retail stores
- Credit card and check frauds by customers
- Harassment of immigrant shopkeepers
- Robbery of retail shops (e.g., convenience stores, gas stations, liquor stores, pharmacies)
- Smash-and-grab burglaries
- Thefts and frauds by delivery personnel
- Thefts from open-air or covered market stalls
- Thefts of merchandise by employees (usually thought to account for more losses than shoplifting)
- Vendor frauds, shortchanging, and other offenses

Some of these related problems are covered in other guides in this series, all of which are listed at the end of this guide. For the most up-to-date listing of current and future guides, see www.popcenter.org.

General Description of the Problem

Though common, shoplifting is one of the least detected and reported crimes, according to (1) self reports, (2) observations, and (3) comparisons of marked items with sales of those items. Only about one in 150 shoplifting incidents leads to the offender's apprehension and subsequent police action.[1]

It is not surprising that shoplifting is so widespread. Shops contain new goods, temptingly displayed. Self-service provides ample opportunity for shoppers to handle goods (many of which are prepackaged) and conceal them in clothing or bags. People seem to have fewer inhibitions about stealing from shops than from private individuals. They also know they have little chance of getting caught, and, if caught, they can often produce plausible excuses, such as forgetting to pay. In addition, the stock control in shops is so deficient that few retailers know how many goods they lose to shoplifters or to their staff. So long as theft and damage of goods, known in the retail industry as *shrinkage*, does not rise above 2-3 percent of goods sold, retailers may pay little attention to shoplifting, especially when stolen goods can be taken as a tax write-off.

The guide begins by summarizing what is known about the main offender groups involved in shoplifting and by reviewing the police role in dealing with shoplifting. It then reviews factors that increase shoplifting risks and it lists a series of questions that might help you analyze your local shoplifting problem. Finally, it reviews responses to the problem, and what is known about them from research and police practice. It will be apparent that there are many gaps in knowledge, and that particularly lacking is information about the market for goods stolen by shoplifters.†

Main Offender Groups

As mentioned above there are three main offender groups:

1. **Petty thieves.** These shoplifters differ little from a store's regular clientele. Many of them seem to believe that shoplifting harms no one except an anonymous business. Stores that attract juveniles, males in particular, are more likely to experience shoplifting and some behavioral cues have been found to be characteristic of shoplifters, such as entering the store but making no purchase and tampering with packaging.[2] Some research has claimed to identify psychological reasons for theft,‡ but this work has little relevance for policing strategies.

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† See Problem-Specific Guide No. 57, *Stolen Goods Markets*, for further information.

‡ See Klemke (1993) for a comprehensive review.

2. **More determined thieves.** Shoplifters who steal regularly to support a drug habit or to provide income show more evidence of planning, such as adapting clothing to facilitate thefts. They often work with lower-level fences, who dispose of the goods by selling them to higher-level fences or out of their own homes, in flea markets or taverns, on the Internet, or through gas stations, bodegas, and pawnshops that they operate.

3. **Organized groups.** Organized shoplifter groups frequently comprise immigrants (legal or not) from the Middle East, South America, or Asia, perhaps because they can sell the goods to fellow immigrants who run small businesses.† They concentrate their activities in particular states, including Florida, Texas, Georgia, California, and New York.[3] Their arrival in a city might be signaled by a spike in reports of goods being shoplifted in large quantities.‡ Each group consists of members with distinct roles: "boosters" steal the goods; "handlers" sell the goods to fences; and others take care of transport and logistics. Boosters act either alone or in groups. They are often provided with a "fence sheet" of the items to be stolen and the quantities requested. They carry tools to remove security tags, they use foil-lined bags to defeat electronic tags, and they may use cell phones to communicate with other group members while shoplifting. They may change bar codes so merchandise registers at much lower prices at checkout ("ticket switching"). They may use stolen credit cards and use the receipts to return stolen goods to the store for cash. In some cases, they may brazenly wheel carts full of merchandise out the doors to a waiting getaway van. The stolen goods may be held in rented storage units before being taken to the group's home base. The goods are often sold to fences who clean and repackage them to look like new and who then sell them to *wholesale diverters*, who might mix them with legitimate goods for sale to retailers.[4]

† They may make use of so-called "golden bodies," recent immigrants intending to return home after short stays in the United States with excellent credit who open store credit card accounts at department stores and at home improvement, electronics, and other specialty chains. Their credit cards are used by the professional shoplifters to make substantial purchases from these stores. In return, the individuals are paid $10,000 in cash upon return to their home countries (Hayes 2005).

‡ When this happens suddenly at a particular location, retail circles are using the term "flash mobs" to describe these organized shoplifters.

Harms Caused by Shoplifting

Stores may not take official action against shoplifters because prosecution takes time and effort, mistaken apprehensions can result in lawsuits, the store could acquire a reputation for crime if it continually reports shoplifting, and some merchants might fear retaliation. Some merchants are persuaded not to take official action when shoplifters claim it is their first offense, show fear or remorse, and/or agree to pay for the items stolen.

In addition, some retailers believe that the police can do little about the problem and may be unwilling to get involved. Others see the police role as simply to deal with thieves whom security staff or store detectives have caught. When particularly blatant shoplifting occurs, or when professional shoplifters are thought to be operating, merchants may call upon the police to take some kind of preventive action, usually in the form of increased presence or patrols. This may be of little deterrent value, since shoplifting takes place inside the store, away from police view. Consequently, this guide focuses on other preventive actions police might take. In many cases, their most important task is to persuade store-owners and managers to improve their security. This is difficult, because many retailers believe that the police should protect them from dishonest people and that people who steal should be caught and punished.† Others are content to ignore the problem until it seriously affects profits. Whatever the reasons, the police may have an uphill task convincing retailers that their sales practices and lack of security may be contributing to the problem.

Faced with these attitudes, it is tempting for police to wash their hands of shoplifting and let the shops bear the consequences. But there are many reasons why this may be shortsighted, including the following:

- Shoplifting is often regarded as an entry crime, from which juveniles graduate to more serious offenses.
- Shoplifting can be said to fuel the drug trade, because it provides the income some addicts need to buy drugs.
- For stores in deprived neighborhoods, shoplifting can seriously erode profits and result in store closures. This can depress employment prospects and further erode the amenities in such neighborhoods.
- Shoplifting can consume a large proportion of police resources in processing offenders whom the store has detained. In this regard, the police are at the mercy of merchants who may avoid changing their business practices in favor of simply relying on security staff and police to handle shoplifters.

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† British retailers, in particular, have sought to avoid the term "shoplifting" on grounds that it suggests a less serious form of theft. They prefer "shop theft."

- Professional shoplifters are increasingly resorting to violence, putting the sales associates and customers at risk of being hurt.[5]
- Many shoplifting groups are thought to have connections to organized crime[6] and illicit profits obtained from professional shoplifting may be used to finance terrorist organizations.[7]

For all these reasons, police cannot ignore shoplifting. The challenge facing them is to conduct a thorough analysis of the local problem to put together a combination of preventive responses.

Factors Contributing to Shoplifting

Understanding the factors that contribute to your problem will help you frame your own local analysis questions, determine good measures of effectiveness, recognize key points of intervention, and select an appropriate set of responses. Many of the factors contributing to a heightened risk of shoplifting are under management control, while others, such as seasonal and temporal patterns, are not; even in the latter case, however, knowledge of those patterns can assist in framing a preventive response.

Goods Sold

One of the main factors determining a store's shoplifting rate is the type of goods sold. For obvious reasons, furniture stores have much lower shoplifting rates than, say, convenience or drug stores. Numerous surveys have shown that the most common items stolen from retail stores in the United States include tobacco products (particularly cigarettes), health and beauty products (such as over-the-counter analgesics and decongestants,† popular remedies, and birth control products), recorded music and videos, and apparel ranging from athletic shoes to children's clothing, with an emphasis on designer labels. One item that is especially popular among professional shoplifters at present is infant formula, presumably because it is expensive and easily sold.

† Clarke (1999) notes that certain analgesics contain ingredients that can be used in making other drugs, and that decongestants help to produce a high when taken together with some illegal drugs. See Problem-Specific Guide No. 16, *Clandestine Methamphetamine Labs, 2nd Edition*, for further information. He also notes that some frequently stolen products, such as hemorrhoid remedies and condoms, can be embarrassing to buy. Self-checkout systems that allow customers to scan and bag their own goods might provide a solution.

Photo credit: Ronald Clarke

Self-checkout systems such as the one shown on the right are a new alternative to the standard clerk checkout seen on the left and might reduce theft of products that some shoppers find embarrassing to buy.

Some items might be constantly stolen, while thefts of others may reflect the popularity of new product releases, such as movies, video games, and music titles. Also, the popularity for theft can be highly brand-dependent, so that, for example, only certain brands are stolen of razor blades, cigarettes, designer clothes or even, according to recent media reports, laundry detergent.[8]

The acronym CRAVED captures the essential attributes of these "hot products" which are Concealable, Removable, Available, Valuable, Enjoyable, and Disposable.[9], † The last of these attributes—disposability—may be the most important in determining the volume of goods shoplifted. Those shoplifting for profit must be able to sell or barter what they steal.

The most vulnerable parts of the store to shoplifting are those that carry hot products. One study in a large music store in London found that the highest theft rates were in the sections carrying rock and pop recordings (nowadays, it would probably be rap or hip-hop). Equally expensive recordings in the classical music department were rarely stolen.[10]

† See the forthcoming Problem-Solving Tool Guide, *Understanding Theft of 'Hot Products,'* for further information.

Seasonal and Temporal Patterns

Most shoplifting occurs when stores are busiest, with the majority of incidents occurring late in the week, between Wednesday and Saturday.[11] Seasonal shoplifting corresponds with the demand for goods, which means that much shoplifting occurs during pre-Easter, pre-summer, and pre-Christmas periods. As mentioned, juveniles commit much shoplifting, and consequently, high-risk times include non-school days during the late mornings, and afternoons into the evening.[12]

Location

Research does not provide a clear indication of the risk factors related to a store's location, but shoplifting rates tend to be higher for stores with the following features:

- In city centers and other busy places, with a large number of casual customers
- Fronting onto the open street
- Close to highways that provide easy escape routes
- Near schools, with many juvenile customers
- In economically deprived areas, with large concentrations of impoverished or addicted residents

Retail Policies, Staffing, and Stock Control

Retail policies, staffing, and stock control are store management's responsibility, but these are heavily influenced by how competitive, profit-driven, and technology-dependent is the broader retail environment. For example, stock control is usually deficient because the effort needed to keep proper track of stock has rarely been justified by any reductions in theft and other forms of shrinkage. Similarly, it would be impossibly expensive for stores to abandon self-service and rely instead on armies of helpful, attentive sales clerks, even though this would substantially reduce shoplifting.† The savings in reduced theft would be greatly outweighed by increased staff wages and, possibly, by sales lost as a result of shoppers being unable to inspect goods at their leisure. Such marketing considerations might also limit the scope for tightening up return policies, which, if too liberal, can encourage theft of goods to be returned for cash refunds. For example, some clothing stores do not have changing rooms because the staff costs of monitoring them to prevent shoplifting may be too great. These stores have to allow the return of clothes that do not fit.

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† Even so, retailers might be advised to take account of the finding that shoplifters do not think that "young, skater type teen" store associates are effective place managers because they "are kind of lax…and they really don't care" (Cardone 2006: 83).

However, increased competition is continually eroding retail profit margins, and thus the incentive to reduce shrinkage is increasing. At the same time, the sales environment is constantly changing in the search for increased profits. One current example is the increasing use of self-scan checkouts that reduce staff costs and perceived wait times for customers. However, self-scan presents new opportunities for shoplifting, despite security features that include cameras to monitor the transactions, and software systems to detect irregularities.[13] Theft methods include scanning one item and including more of the same item without paying for them, using wrong item codes that are cheaper and putting unchecked items in strollers. With increasing use of self-scan, stores might find ways of closing these security loopholes.

Store Layout and Displays

Research provides little guidance, but common sense suggests certain store layout and display features contribute to shoplifting.[14] Most of these relate to the staff's ability to supervise shoppers, and stores at greater risk include large ones which make it easier for organized groups to hide among ordinary shoppers. Also vulnerable are stores with the following features:

- Many exits, particularly where they are accessible without passing through the checkout
- Passageways, blind corners, and hidden alcoves
- Restrooms or changing rooms
- High displays that conceal shoppers (and shoplifters) from view
- Crowded areas around displays of high-risk items
- Aisles that staff cannot easily survey from one end

> "I'll find, like, the most unlikely place a customer's going to go, like the most boring items in the store, I'll go into that aisle and try to get into the packages as fast as I can…then I just keep the product with me…and just walk out the normal exit."
>
> – *Pat*[15]

Goods on the ground floor especially near entrances are at greater theft risk because this is often where the newest products are displayed, because these areas receive least employee attention, and because shoplifters can dart in and out quickly. Other risk factors include the store's security measures, such as CCTV surveillance, security tagging, access control, employees' location, mirrors, and how well the hot products are secured.[16]

The Internet

As mentioned, little is known about how stolen goods are sold,† but one study undertaken in 2008 calculated that approximately 18 percent of all stolen goods were sold on the Internet.[17] In some cases, goods are pre-sold on Internet sites before they are stolen from stores by organized theft groups.[18] The profit on e-fence merchandise (approximately 70 percent of retail) is much higher than merchandise sold through a traditional fence.[19]

† See Problem-Specific Guide No. 57, *Stolen Goods Markets*, for further information.

Understanding Your Local Problem

To develop an effective response, you must combine the basic facts reviewed above about shoplifting with more detailed understanding of your local problem. In most cases, your problem is likely to involve a group of stores, such as those in a city center, mall, or shopping precinct. Accordingly, your analysis is likely to focus on differential shoplifting risks among the stores in your group, and the reasons for those differences. In any case, the measures appropriate to deal with the problem will vary with the nature of the stores at risk.

It is likely that you will mostly be dealing with petty shoplifting, but in big cities, particularly those in the five high-risk states—Florida, Texas, Georgia, California, and New York, as mentioned earlier—you should determine if organized groups are involved. If they are, you might need the cooperation of state and federal agencies, as these criminal organizations often work within several states. An important indicator of organized shoplifting is whether large numbers of goods are stolen at one time.

Shoplifting analysis is made difficult by low reporting rates, and by the fact that police records rarely permit shoplifting offenses to be readily identified among reported thefts. There are other ways to gather information about your local problem, including the following, but these, too, have their difficulties:

- Store apprehensions may provide some useful information, but the data tend to say as much about surveillance and apprehension practices as about the "typical" offender, or even the most targeted goods.
- Observational studies—in which randomly selected shoppers are followed around the store—can produce some useful results, but they are labor-intensive and ethically problematic. If followed by police or security, those observed stealing would have to be apprehended; if followed by researchers, the police or the store might be criticized for permitting this approach.[20]
- The most accurate way to assess retail theft is repeated systematic counting of items on display, but this, again, is labor-intensive.† It is also difficult to determine whether losses are due to theft by customers or by staff, or whether they are the result of innocent clerical error.

† Researchers have developed an effective method of measuring theft (see Buckle et al. 1992). Small tags, color-coded by item, are attached to each high-risk item. An inventory of these items is taken before opening the store for business. When items are sold, clerks remove the tags that are then counted at the end of the day. The number of tags collected is added to the number of those items left on the floor. If the total does not match the initial inventory, then the residual number of items is presumed stolen.

In some cases, store stock-control records or staff may be able to provide information about items particularly vulnerable to theft. However, whenever possible, you should check such information by asking the kinds of questions discussed below. The effort required to obtain accurate information about problems is almost always justified by the improved responses that result.

Stakeholders

In addition to criminal justice agencies, the following groups have an interest in the shoplifting problem and ought to be considered for the contribution they might make to gathering information about the problem and responding to it:

- Nearby stores experiencing a shoplifting problem
- Similar stores, or stores in the same chain, not experiencing a shoplifting problem
- Managers of nearby shopping centers or malls
- Corporate loss prevention officials
- Local chambers of commerce and other retail business associations

Asking the Right Questions

The following are questions you should ask in analyzing your particular shoplifting problem, even if the answers are not always readily available. The answers will help you choose the most appropriate set of responses. For some information categories, the questions are divided into those you should ask for all shoplifting problems and those that you should ask specifically for organized shoplifting.

Incidents

For *all* shoplifting:

- How many incidents are detected?
- How much is typically lost (goods' dollar value, lost profit)?
- What proportion of shrinkage does shoplifting account for? Compared with employee theft or delivery fraud?
- How do targeted stores' shrinkage rates compare with those of similar-size stores of the same type?
- Which items do shoplifters target most frequently?
- Do the goods stolen fit the CRAVED model? (See the "Factors Contributing to Shoplifting/Goods Sold" section above.) Are they sold or kept for personal use? If sold, how so?

For *organized* shoplifting:

- How many times have victim-stores been victimized in the past week, month, year?
- How many of these incidents can be classified as those carried out by "flash mobs"?
- What is the average dollar value of goods lost during each incident?
- How are the shoplifted goods fenced? Are they sold on the Internet?

Offenders

For *all* shoplifting:

- What is known about offenders? Do they tend to belong to any particular demographic group? What proportion are juveniles?
- What proportions of offenders are casual/opportunistic or determined/addicts? Are organized rings involved?
- Do some types of offenders use particular shoplifting methods or target particular goods?
- Are there repeat offenders?

For *organized* shoplifting:

- How is the group organized?
- How many people are involved in the group? What is the typical group size?
- What is the task distribution among the group members? Who are the boosters, lower-level fences, higher-level fences, and illegitimate wholesale diverters?
- What is the demographic profile of the members involved in the group?
- Is the group local or from out-of-town?

Locations/Times

- What is the nature of the surrounding neighborhood?
- When do thefts mainly occur (time of day, day of week, month, season)? Are certain items more commonly stolen during certain seasons (e.g., batteries for toys at Christmas)?
- Is the problem concentrated at particular stores, or does it affect a cluster of stores? If concentrated at particular stores, what do they have in common?

Conditions Facilitating Shoplifting

- How large is the store? What type of store is it? What market segment does it target?
- What are the store's hours? Is it open at night? Are nearby businesses open at night and on weekends?
- Does the store have a security department or set of policies on apprehending shoplifters?
- Does the store treat shoplifting as a business cost or does it invest resources in prevention?
- Does the store report shoplifting incidents to the police?
- How adequate is stock control?
- Where are targeted goods located in the store?
- Is lack of natural surveillance a contributory factor? Can thieves conceal goods without being seen?
- After stealing, can thieves evade store employees?
- Is there more than one escape route?
- What security hardware does the store have? Mirrors? Electronic tagging? Closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras?
- What other prevention measures are in place?

Current Responses

- How do police currently handle shoplifting incidents?
- Do police have a separate unit dealing with organized shoplifting groups?
- Do police train or regulate private security forces?
- How do prosecutors handle shoplifting charges?
- What sentences do courts typically hand down for convicted offenders? Do offenders comply with the sentences?

Measuring Your Effectiveness

You should take measures of your problem *before* you implement responses, to determine how serious the problem is, and *after* you implement them, to determine whether they have been effective. Measurement allows you to determine to what degree your efforts have succeeded, and suggests how you might modify your responses if they are not producing the intended results. For more detailed guidance on measuring effectiveness, see Problem-Solving Tools Guide No. 1, *Assessing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide for Police Problem-Solvers*, and Problem-Solving Tools Guide No. 10, *Analyzing Crime Displacement and Diffusion.*

Potential indicators of an effective response to shoplifting include the following:

- Fewer shoplifting incidents
- Fewer repeat offenders
- Increased identification and break-up of organized shoplifting groups
- Increased number of fences and e-fences identified and disrupted
- Decreased shrinkage
- Increased sales
- Increased profits

If you suspect that shoplifting is currently underreported to police, increased reporting might be a positive indicator of your efforts, at least temporarily. If you suspect too few shoplifters are getting caught, a temporary increase in apprehensions might also be a positive indicator. Ultimately, though, the number of reported thefts and apprehensions should decline as the number of actual shoplifting incidents declines.

Responses to the Problem of Shoplifting

Once you have analyzed your local problem and established a baseline for measuring effectiveness, you should consider possible responses to address the problem. It is critical that you tailor responses to local circumstances, and that you can justify each response based on reliable analysis. In most cases, an effective strategy will involve implementing several different responses. Law enforcement responses alone are seldom effective in reducing or solving the problem. Do not limit yourself to considering what police can do: give careful consideration to others in your community who share responsibility for the problem and can help police better respond to it.

The response strategies discussed below are drawn from research studies and police reports. This section reviews what is known about the effectiveness of these responses in dealing with shoplifting. Unfortunately, the information is severely limited because few of the common preventive practices have been evaluated. Retailers have been reluctant to undertake the necessary studies, and to share the results of any studies they do complete. Government has funded little research in this field, generally regarding it as the private sector's domain.

In the absence of research, you cannot assume that retailers have learned through long experience what does and does not work. For example, hiring store detectives is a staple response to shoplifting, but as will be seen below, their effectiveness is questionable. Hiring them usually seems to be an economic choice dictated by the need to do something about shoplifting.

General Considerations for an Effective Response Strategy

Police can do little on their own to prevent shoplifting, and you will have to persuade the retailers themselves to act. You may have to explain why police can achieve little through more patrols, and why heavier court sentences are of limited value. You may want to explain how the store's goods and sales practices may be contributing to the problem. You may have to convince retailers that they cannot ignore the problem, due to the costs to the community and, in the long run, the stores themselves. Finally, you will have to offer them guidance on preventive measures they can take to reduce the problem.

Photo credit: Kip Kellogg

Properly placed mirrors like this "fish-eye" mirror, allow staff to keep watch over customers and goods that might otherwise be hidden from view.

It is important that shoplifting responses be selective and based on a thorough understanding of the risks. For example, the highest-risk goods should be given the greatest protection, and dealing with organized shoplifters will demand a wider set of measures than those needed for petty shoplifting. You must therefore think carefully about the nature of the risk, which varies greatly with the kinds of offenders, the nature of the store, and the goods offered. These factors also determine the nature of the remedies. The security approach required for a self-service supermarket is quite different from that required for a jewelry store. Department stores with huge turnovers of expensive goods can afford to spend much more on security than small retailers can. In all cases, you must appreciate stores' need to make a profit. This determines selling practices and how much money is available for preventing shoplifting.

Even when shops can afford more for security, they are likely to resist this expenditure. In making your case, you may need to do the following:

- Calculate the likely cost of measures, such as installing CCTV or hiring security guards
- Convince owners that they can recoup the cost of increased security through reduced losses associated with shoplifting—item replacement, profit, and lawsuit costs
- Enlist the support of the chamber of commerce and other business organizations to persuade owners to improve security, or to brief the local media on the problem and proposed solutions

Specific Responses to Reduce Shoplifting

Effective shoplifting prevention depends on well-rounded strategies encompassing good retailing practices, appropriate staffing, carefully articulated shoplifting policies, and selective technology use. The measures in the final group are particularly addressed to defeating organized shoplifters, which responses are over and above those for defeating petty shoplifting.

For All Shoplifting

Retailing Practice

Good management is the first line of defense against shoplifting. Managers must ensure that stores are properly laid out, have adequate inventory controls, and follow standard security practices.

1. **Improving store layout and displays.** Store layout and displays must make it easier for staff to exercise effective surveillance. This includes the following:
   - Reducing the number of exits, blind corners, and recesses
   - Carefully placing mirrors
   - Providing good, even lighting
   - Eliminating clutter and obstructions
   - Placing goods away from entrances and exits
   - Creating clear sight lines in aisles and reducing the height of displays
   - Reducing crowding near displays of high-risk items
   - Moving hot products into higher-security zones with more staff surveillance
   - Speeding up checkout to reduce congestion and waiting, which provide the opportunity for concealment

2. **Tightening stock controls.** Inventory-control procedures should permit shoplifting trends to be detected, and shoplifting to be distinguished from employee theft. Unfortunately, very few retailers have such controls in place, but the more widespread use of merchandise bar coding and point-of-sales technology at checkout is resulting in significant improvements in stock control. These improvements can be expected to increase with further technological developments.

Photo credit: Kip Kellogg

Cluttered merchandise displays make it harder for staff to monitor shoplifting.

3. **Upgrading retail security.** Standard security must make shoplifting more difficult. This may include the following:
   - Restricting the number of unaccompanied minors allowed in small neighborhood stores
   - Establishing clear rules for use of changing rooms in clothing stores
   - Placing retail associates in changing-room stations
   - Displaying only the cassette, CD, and DVD cases in music and video stores (and only one shoe per pair in shoe shops)
   - Keeping high-value items in locked displays, or securing them through cable locks and security hangers
   - Encouraging shoppers to use supermarket-type baskets for purchases (which removes the excuse for putting things in their own bags or pockets) or providing them with secure lockers for their bags
   - Sealing bags of legitimate purchases to reduce impulse stealing
   - Giving receipts and, where there is a high shoplifting risk, checking them against goods on exit
   - Requiring proof of purchase for refunds

> "The simple step of approaching a customer and asking if they need help finding anything tends to inhibit criminal behavior among those who prefer to remain unseen and unheard."
>
> *— Brad Brekke, Vice President of Assets Protection, Target*

4. **Posting warning notices on high-risk merchandise.** Many stores display signs reminding customers that shoplifting is a crime, and warning that shoplifters will be prosecuted, but it is doubtful that such warnings have more than a marginal deterrent effect on a few susceptible people. One early study showed that when specific merchandise was prominently marked with large red stars as being frequently taken by shoplifters, shoplifting was virtually eliminated. A more recent study showed that this deterrent effect was greater for items next to the items marked with a sign that read "Attention Shoppers! Items Marked with a RED RIBBON are Frequently Shoplifted!"[21]

Staffing

5. **Hiring more and better-trained sales staff.** Stores should hire sufficient numbers of staff to properly oversee goods and customers, especially at high-risk periods for shoplifting. Stores should train staff to be attentive to customers and alert for thieves, and should also train them in procedures for dealing with shoplifting incidents. For instance, in order to sustain a prosecution, it is usually necessary to prove that the goods were not only taken away, but that there was intent to avoid payment. It is therefore always advisable to wait until the suspect has left the shop before apprehending them or they may claim they intended to pay before leaving.

6. **Hiring security guards.** Little is known from research about the effectiveness of uniformed security guards in any environment—and retail is no exception. Only one small study has been published, and it suggested that security guards had less value than electronic article surveillance (EAS) or store redesign in decreasing the theft risk; however, the study's small sample limits the findings' reliability.[22]

7. **Hiring loss prevention and asset protection teams.** Most large retailers invest in loss prevention and asset protection teams that investigate theft within the stores once it occurs. They perform various functions, such as checking receipts when customers walk out, and monitoring the surveillance systems inside a store to identify and stop shoplifters.[23]

Photo credit: Kip Kellogg

Security guards who move around, creating an active, visible presence, are likely to be more effective at preventing shoplifting.

Retailers in South Africa contracted with third-party companies ("Hot Product Controllers") to help stop the shoplifting of products that accounted for 80 percent of the shrinkage within their stores. These contractors focused on five key areas, which included securing delivery, fast tracking, securing storage, conducting daily counts, and conducting shelf replenishment. Their efforts resulted in a 61 percent reduction in shrinkage in all hot products, with the greatest reductions achieved in sugar and razor blades.[24]

Shoplifting Policies

Many stores routinely refer apprehended shoplifters to the police. For persistent offenders, this is clearly necessary. In the case of more opportunistic shoplifters, many of whom show shock at getting caught, it is doubtful that police arrest has any additional deterrent value.† An inflexible policy of referring shoplifters to the police could result in reduced staff enthusiasm for apprehending them, and stores are probably best served by a flexible shoplifting policy that includes formal and informal avenues and, perhaps, civil recovery.

† Sherman and Gartin (1986), in a randomized experiment, found that recidivism rates did not differ for two large groups of apprehended shoplifters: those released and those arrested.

Belief in the value of prosecution is strong among many retailers and the general public and there is little chance the police will be relieved of this burden.† Consequently, the arrest process should be made more efficient. Ways of doing so fall outside this guide's scope, but some police forces have developed systems whereby private security officers are authorized and trained to write criminal summonses themselves (after first checking with the police by phone for outstanding warrants and arrest histories). This obviates the need for patrol officers to process arrests, but still gets the cases into the formal criminal process.

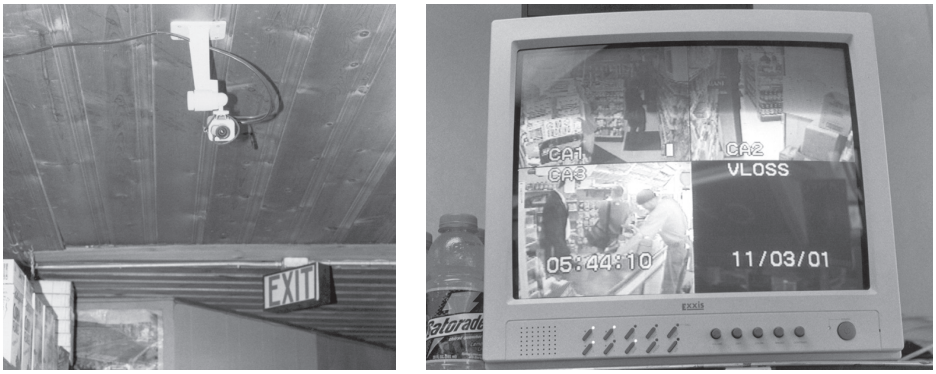
8. **Using civil recovery.** In nearly every state, retailers can use civil law to collect restitution from shoplifters, and many retailers take advantage of this.[25] Civil recovery is designed to operate quickly, with little recourse to the courts. Civil recovery offers the retailer the benefit of recovering more than just the retail cost of the item stolen, requires a lesser degree of proof, spares the thief an arrest and conviction record, and relieves the burden on the criminal justice system.

9. **Using informal police sanctions.** In some jurisdictions first offenders are given the option, as an alternative to prosecution, of participating in programs in which they are instructed about shoplifting's harms. If the offender completes the program the initial charge is dismissed and, sometimes, upon petition, can be erased from the records, so that the person does not have a "criminal" record.‡ In Britain, similar police programs are called "cautioning." One program introduced by the Thames Valley Police combines counseling modules and a formal caution, and claims to have substantially reduced re-offending among juvenile shoplifters. Counseling modules include meetings with store managers, sessions with youth workers about available leisure activities, and group work to learn about resisting peer pressure to offend.[26]

† Not only is shoplifter prosecution of doubtful preventive value, but also, practice in this area is fraught with difficulties: Merchants may see the police as being at their beck and call; private security staff may expect the police to take cases that are not "good," or that reflect a lack of discretion (e.g., a 12-year-old stealing a candy bar); and there are issues regarding obtaining proper evidence, identifying alleged offenders, using force, targeting minorities, imposing burdens on the criminal justice system, using statutes or ordinances/summonses or physical arrests, etc.

‡ As an alternative to prosecution, police sometimes also refer first offenders to structured programs like the Stop Shoplifting Education Program, operated by the Better Business Bureau of WNY, Inc. (1993), which claims to reduce recidivism. In addition, stores themselves sometimes run first-offender warning programs, without extensive police involvement. Stores might check with police to determine whether the offender has been charged before and, if not, issue their own warning, without having an arrest made.

Photo credit: Kip Kellogg



Surveillance cameras and CCTV are increasingly used to prevent shoplifting, but more study is needed to determine their effects.

Technology

10. **Installing and monitoring CCTV.** Improvements in quality and reductions in cost have resulted in the widespread use of CCTV to prevent shoplifting. Few evaluations have been published, though one careful study of 15 clothing stores in England found that CCTV's value was directly related to the system's sophistication. Effectiveness was quite marked in the first few months after installation, but declined rapidly thereafter, which the researchers explained by arguing that "would-be offenders became progressively inured or desensitized to CCTV's deterrent potential."[27]

    Little is known about CCTV's value in other kinds of stores, and there is "a raft of unanswered questions about its impact. These questions relate to the following:

    - The detection of offenders
    - The deterrence of would-be offenders, and possible displacement of criminal activities elsewhere
    - The relative value of video recordings and real-time images
    - The ability of operators to monitor and make sense of multiple images
    - The impact on customers (who may be reassured, even when there are no measurable benefits)
    - The effect on shop staff (who may become less vigilant about crime following its installation)"[28]

Photo credit: Kip Kellogg

Electronic tags affixed to goods activate alarms when passed through exit gates. Electronic tagging has demonstrated effectiveness in preventing shoplifting, although knowledgeable offenders can sometimes defeat the systems.

11. **Using electronic article surveillance.** Electronic article surveillance (EAS) is often known as electronic tagging. Exit gates detect tags that have not been removed or deactivated, and sound an alarm. The tags have been made progressively smaller and the detectors have become more reliable. Increasingly, tags are now being included in the goods' packaging at manufacture (source tagging), which reduces the cost.[29] Despite their widespread use, few evaluations have been published of EAS systems.[30] The most comprehensive of these evaluations used comparisons between stores with and without EAS systems, and before-and-after studies, in a variety of retail settings. The authors concluded that EAS could reduce shoplifting and total inventory shortage from 35 to 75 percent.[31] The considerable costs of buying and running EAS systems must be set against these benefits and the fact that sophisticated offenders are knowledgeable about ways to defeat EAS systems.

12. **Attaching ink tags to merchandise.** Ink tags attached to clothing are quite different from electronic tags. Rather than sounding an alarm when removed from the store, and thus increasing the offender's risk of getting caught, ink tags remove the rewards of theft by ruining the garments to which they are affixed when the thief tries to detach them. To date, only one rigorous evaluation has been reported: it concluded that ink tags might be more effective than EAS when used in the same retail environments.[32] Devices are now available that combine both electronic and ink tags' advantages, but with the inevitable disadvantage of increased costs. Other devices not containing ink are also available, such as small clamps that cannot be removed from items such as jewelry or eyeglasses.

13. **Using advanced surveillance electronic systems.** These systems come in a number of varieties including the following:
    - Video Investigator® can monitor shoppers' movements and detect unusual activity, such as removing multiple items of the same type from a particular shelf. The software alerts the monitoring room operators and security guards with a chime or a flashing screen.[33]
    - ShelfAlert® is an on-shelf security rack that can alert the monitoring center when too many products are taken off the shelf at the same time. The store can set the number of items that will trigger the alert.[34]
    - LaneHawk® can spot packages hidden on rungs underneath the carts. Cameras mounted in cashier stands scan these racks. If an item matches an image in a database, the system computes the product price and automatically adds it to the customer's bill.[35]
    - RFID (radio frequency identification) technology is increasingly being used to track items within stores, as well as check inventory levels. RFID tags, which can be as small as a pinhead, transmit signals that can travel up to 300 ft. The tags can be read even when concealed within an item.[36] This allows items to be tracked as they travel through the store. As in the case of Video Investigator and ShelfAlert, RFID tags can serve as alert systems when large numbers of items are removed from the shelves.

For Organized Shoplifting

14. **Establishing early warning systems.** Merchants in some areas have found it useful to establish a same-day early warning system whereby they notify one another about the presence of mobile gangs of organized shoplifters, but there have been no formal evaluations of this practice. Although local police are mainly alerted to organized shoplifting incidents through retail investigators, they can also identify suspicious activities, for example, by the discovery of large quantities of retail merchandise during routine calls or traffic stops.

15. **Forming task forces with other law enforcement agencies.** Organized-theft groups rarely operate within one jurisdiction, and it is important that local police forge partnerships with state and federal law enforcement agencies. Several such partnerships have proven effective in dismantling some of the largest professional shoplifting groups in the country. Operation Greenquest was established by the U.S. Customs Service to target thieves who financed Al Quaeda and other terrorist groups.[37] Operation Blackbird, mounted by a task force comprising investigators from local, state, and federal agencies formed by the Pasadena (California) Police Department, uncovered some large organized crime shoplifting operations.[38]

16. **Forming partnerships and working with retailers and manufacturers.**† Many partnerships have been established among law enforcement agencies, retailers, retail associations, and manufacturers. Successful partnerships of these kinds with local stores have been undertaken by the police in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina;[39] Mesa, Arizona; Colorado Springs, Colorado;[40] Portsmouth, England;[41] and Boise, Idaho.[42] In Boise, for example, a growing organized shoplifting problem was addressed in 2005 by the establishment of the Organized Retail Crime Interdiction Team. This took a number of preventive initiatives that included updating stakeholders on recent trends through regular monthly meetings, using email and text messaging to maintain an efficient intelligence flow between retailers and police, and responding immediately to in-progress incidents. These actions led quite quickly to a significant reduction in organized shoplifting incidents.

† See Problem-Solving Tools Guide No. 5, *Partnering with Businesses to Address Public Safety Problems*, for further information.

Notable partnerships that encompass wider areas and a larger number of entities include the following:

- The Law Enforcement Retail Partnership Network (LERPnet) was established in 2007 by the National Retail Federation in partnership with the FBI, the Food Marketing Institute, and the Retail Industry Leaders Association. LERPnet is a web-based repository that allows retailers to share information with each other and with police about shoplifting incidents.[43]
- The ORC Pilot Program was launched by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in four cities with known organized retail crime activity: Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York City. The program developed a database with retail industry contacts and a threat-assessment to help determine the extent of organized retail crime. It also explored how organized shoplifting groups exploit vulnerabilities in the banking system to launder profits. The pilot program resulted in multiple arrests and convictions, leading to the seizure of nearly $4.9 million in cash, property, and money instruments. It has now been expanded into an ongoing national initiative known as SEARCH (Seizing Earnings and Assets from Retail Crime Heists).
- In 2008, eBay® launched the PROACT (Partnering with Retailers Offensively to Attack Crime and Theft) program which aimed to combat stolen goods sales on its web site. Based on information received from regulatory and law enforcement agencies, the site created filters to search for prohibited goods up for auction. eBay also cooperated with police in monitoring and reporting suspicious activity on its web site. Other web sites, which are also potential outlets for stolen merchandise, such as Amazon.com®, Overstock.com®, and Craigslist, might usefully be drawn into such partnerships.[44]

17. **Monitoring stores' goods suppliers.** Retailers might inadvertently buy goods that have been stolen by organized shoplifters unless they carefully monitor their suppliers.[45] Some store buyers might also be bribed by these suppliers to buy stolen goods. To reduce these risks, the retailer's loss prevention team can conduct unannounced visits to the suppliers' warehouse(s) to look for clues suggesting that the goods may be illegitimate. These include the products' condition and the overall warehouse condition, as well as the presence of (a) cleaning stations and chemicals, (b) security tags and labels on the floors or in the trash cans, and (c) repackaging stations. Talking to other retailers who obtain their goods from the same suppliers might also prove useful. In addition, buyers should be trained to identify and report possible suspicious transactions, and they should be encouraged to report to police when a deal is "too good to be true."

18. **Using social networking sites to gather information about shoplifting incidents.** A 2011 survey of retailers found that about 70 percent of them use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn®, Craigslist, Myspace, Google, Foursquare, Pipl, Carnivore Lite, YouTube, and Flickr® to gather information about shoplifting from their stores. Using these networking sites they identify perpetrators, investigate connections between perpetrators and company employees, and identify premises where the stolen goods may be stored or sold. Retailers report "huge success" using Facebook to gather intelligence about past events and planned activities.[46] When "view only" is selected, no direct contact is made with the subjects, thereby allowing the investigators to gather this information without their knowledge. Police, therefore, can use these social networking sites to gather similar information.

Responses with Limited Effectiveness

19. **Hiring store detectives.** Some stores rely on store detectives, despite research that suggests they may have only a limited impact on shoplifting. When researchers have followed random samples of people entering stores, few of those they have observed shoplifting have also been seen by the store detectives.[47] A study in a large London music store, with four store detectives on duty at any one time, suggested that the store would need to hire 17 times this number to be able to catch all the shoplifters likely to enter the store—clearly not an economic proposition.[48] Most stores do not advertise store detectives' presence, but some do. Advertising their presence may provide a greater deterrent, but it may also mean that shoplifters exercise greater caution. No research has evaluated these possibilities.

    While it must be assumed that store detectives have some deterrent value, it is possible that they lower other staff's vigilance. It is also important that store detectives spend as much time as possible on the shop floor, and not have their time consumed in court attendance or police liaison work.

20. **Arresting and prosecuting shoplifters.** There is little hard evidence that apprehending, arresting, and prosecuting shoplifters results in reduced shoplifting by those arrested or by others who learn about the arrests. Studies of criminal sanctioning have consistently failed to show any clear deterrent effects. In regard to shoplifting, the chances of getting caught are so low, and the risks of severe punishment so small, that most researchers believe offenders pay little attention to the possible costs.[49]

21. **Using shaming punishments for first-time offenders.** Many retailers, especially those in California, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas, have increasingly used "shaming" as an alternative to prosecution resulting in jail time, fines, or other traditional penalties. Convicted shoplifters are ordered (sometimes by judges after consulting with the store's management) to wear a sign and go about in public declaring their crimes. Little is known about the effectiveness of shaming.

22. **Banning known shoplifters.** A related practice entails banning offenders from, and posting their pictures in, stores. Little is known about the effectiveness of this practice, but if it publicizes shoplifters' identity, it might have some limited value. However, where courts have not convicted those identified, both the merchants and the police engaged in the practice are vulnerable to criticism and legal challenge.

23. **Launching public information campaigns.** Some communities have launched media campaigns to inform the public about the shoplifting's harms, encourage people to report it, and increase knowledge about the consequences of apprehension. Posters, pamphlets, classes, and public service announcements have all been used to get the message across.[50], † Evaluations of these programs have produced little evidence that they reduce shoplifting.[51]

† See Response Guide No. 5, *Crime Prevention Publicity Campaigns*, for further information.

Appendix: Summary of Responses to Shoplifting

The table below summarizes the responses to shoplifting, the mechanisms by which they are intended to work, the conditions under which they should work best, and some factors you should consider before implementing a particular response. It is critical that you tailor responses to local circumstances, and that you can justify each response based on reliable analysis. In most cases, an effective strategy will involve implementing several different responses. Law enforcement responses alone are seldom effective in reducing or solving the problem.

Responses 1–13 outlined below address all shoplifting, while 14–18 deal specifically with shoplifting conducted by organized groups. Responses 19–23 are those with limited effectiveness.

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
For All Shoplifting					
Retailing Practice					
1	25	Improving store layout and displays	Makes it easier for staff to exercise effective surveillance	…staff are trained and motivated to detect shoplifting	May be relatively inexpensive, but some stores' basic design makes it hard to eliminate all opportunities for shoplifters to conceal their activity
2	26	Tightening stock controls	Helps managers to detect changes in amounts or patterns of shoplifting	…managers have incentives to reduce shoplifting	Increases in source tagging and electronic point-of-sales systems will gradually lead to improvements in stock control

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
3	26	Upgrading retail security	Makes it harder for shoplifters to operate	…staff and managers have incentives to reduce shoplifting	Some security practices may be unpopular with staff and customers alike, and consequently have the effect of reducing sales; they sometimes carry costs in terms of staff time
4	27	Posting warning notices on high-risk merchandise	Alerts potential thieves that identified merchandise may be subject to special surveillance	…the notices identify the most frequently targeted items	A low-cost measure; might alarm some innocent shoppers
Staffing					
5	27	Hiring more and better-trained sales staff	Makes it harder for shoplifters to operate	…staffing levels are increased at high-risk periods	Can be a relatively expensive way to reduce shoplifting
6	27	Hiring security guards	Provides a deterrent to shoplifters who might otherwise believe they could escape if apprehended by sales staff	…the guards are properly trained, are physically imposing, and have an active, visible presence	Guard characteristics and behavior are extremely important: poor guards have no effect on shoplifting
7	27	Hiring loss prevention and asset protection teams	Improves strategic responses to prevent and deter shoplifting	…the teams are briefed about the specific concerns and guided to focus on certain key areas	Some team functions may overlap with those already employed by store security personnel

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
Shoplifting Policies					
8	29	Using civil recovery	Provides retailers with a practical means of recovering some shoplifting costs; penalizes and deters apprehended shoplifters	…administrative procedures are clear and uncomplicated, and shoplifters are able to pay restitution	May not be an option for small retailers who lack time and resources to pursue civil recovery
9	29	Using informal police sanctions	Of unknown deterrent value, but saves time for retailers, police, and the criminal justice system	…combined with efforts to change offenders' attitudes about shoplifting	Usually used only with first-time offenders; often limited to juveniles
Technology					
10	30	Installing and monitoring CCTV	Increases surveillance of vulnerable merchandise and locations; can be used to identify offenders after the act and/or provide evidence for charges	…the CCTV cameras are located close to key areas (offenders can conceal goods elsewhere, such as around blind corners, in elevators, and in stairwells)	Employees must be trained in equipment's use; equipment must be adequate to keeping close watch on suspicious individuals; staff watching monitors quickly become fatigued
11	31	Using electronic article surveillance	Detects shoplifters trying to leave store with concealed goods	…the tags are difficult to remove without damaging goods	Staff may become complacent about other antitheft policies and procedures; not all merchandise can be easily tagged; an expensive option, but source tagging will reduce costs

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
12	32	Attaching ink tags to merchandise	Removes the rewards of shoplifting by rendering stolen goods unusable	…combined with electronic article surveillance	Not all merchandise can be easily tagged; ink tag security can be compromised by theft of tag-removal equipment
13	32	Using advanced surveillance electronic systems	Advanced software programs appended to surveillance systems allow for immediate detection of unusual activity	…early warnings are attended to at once by monitoring centers or security personnel	May be expensive to obtain or maintain
For Organized Shoplifting					
14	33	Establishing early warning systems	Eliminates element of surprise that organized shoplifting groups often rely on	…systems are operated by stores whose merchandise is targeted by organized shoplifters	A low-cost, sensible precaution for stores vulnerable to organized shoplifting
15	33	Forming task forces with other law enforcement agencies	Enhances police intelligence about shoplifting incidents and groups	…large organized criminal groups are involved	Law enforcement priorities may vary across jurisdictions, which may affect outcome of investigations
16	33	Forming partnerships and working with retailers and manufacturers	Enhances shoplifting intelligence and improves theft prevention and offender apprehension	…retailers express willingness to work closely with law enforcement	Roles and functions should be established to avoid confusion

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
17	34	Monitoring stores' goods suppliers	Reduces retailers' risk of purchasing goods previously stolen by organized shoplifters and therefore disrupts market in these goods	…suppliers' premises are regularly inspected by loss prevention teams and store buyers are encouraged to watch for suspicious transactions	Loss prevention teams and buyers need to be trained and be given incentives to identify and report suspect goods and irregular transactions
18	35	Using social networking sites to gather information about shoplifting incidents	Enhances police intelligence about shoplifting incidents and groups	…monitoring helps identify and prevent future incidents	Can be resource and time consuming and may not always yield useful intelligence
Responses with Limited Effectiveness					
19	35	Hiring store detectives	Deters offenders, especially casual shoplifters	…the stores are large, so that detectives' identity does not become known, and detectives spend considerable time on shop floor	May not be an effective deterrent to more determined or organized shoplifters who can spot store detectives
20	35	Arresting and prosecuting shoplifters	Punishment deters shoplifters from offending again and deters other people from shoplifting	…the chances of getting caught for shoplifting are perceived to be high	Risks of getting caught are so low that shoplifters pay little attention to possible costs
21	36	Using shaming punishments for first-time offenders	First-time offenders learn how and why not to repeat their behavior	…the sanction is combined with some other informal sanction	Uncertain effectiveness; may be more effective if used with young offenders

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
22	36	Banning known shoplifters	Denies known shoplifters opportunity to steal	…the identities of those who have been convicted of shoplifting are publicized	May have some value in deterring shoplifting, but unless those identified have been convicted by a court, both merchants and police are vulnerable to legal challenge or public criticism
23	36	Launching public information campaigns	Informs public about shoplifting harms; encourages people to report shoplifting; increases knowledge about penalties	…used to advertise new anti-shoplifting measures	Little evidence exists that these campaigns reduce shoplifting, but they might change community attitudes

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