

Organized Retail Theft Grant Programs

Annual Summary Report for Quarters 1 through 5

October 2023 to December 2024

Executive Summary

Organized retail theft (ORT), defined as working with one or more persons to steal property with the intent to sell and distribute or return for value, has intensified nationwide. ORT is responsible for increased costs for consumers and retailers, unsafe environments for those working and shopping in retail establishments and leads to frustration in communities – including law enforcement – which have struggled to garner the resources necessary to successfully address the issue.

In response to these escalating crimes in California, and with strong support from the California Legislature, Governor Gavin Newsom launched several initiatives, including a multi-pronged public safety funding program identified as the Organized Retail Theft Grant Program. Administered by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), the intent of the program is to empower law enforcement and prosecutors to effectively combat these crimes through two separate funding opportunities: ORT Prevention and ORT Vertical Prosecution.

The ORT Prevention Grant Program was established in the Budget Act of 2022 (Senate Bill 154) and the ORT Vertical Prosecution Grant Program was established through Assembly Bill 178. Funding for the ORT Prevention Grant Program was designated as a competitive grant for city police departments, county sheriffs' departments, and probation departments to support local law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in preventing and responding to organized retail theft, motor vehicle or motor vehicle accessory theft, or cargo theft. The ORT Vertical Prosecution Grant Program funding was awarded through a competitive grant process for district attorneys (DAs) to address increased levels of retail theft property crimes by using a vertical prosecution model. Both grant service periods began on October 1, 2023, with grantees reporting progress to the BSCC on a quarterly basis.

The BSCC has reported grantee progress through a series of quarterly analyses. This report represents a cumulative review of first-year grantee data¹, with the intent of providing additional annual reporting throughout the grant service period, through 2027. Grantees for both the Prevention and Vertical Prosecution funding programs have reported noteworthy data for numbers of arrests and referrals for prosecution and convictions, brought on by increases in staffing, surveillance and other equipment, as well as improved methods of communication within their communities.

**18,382 Arrests &
14,133 Case
Referrals to District
Attorneys' Offices**

¹ BSCC's first annual report includes five quarters to account for the initial ramp up period of the grant cycle, which may include activities such as establishing partnerships, purchasing equipment, and staff recruitment.

ORT Prevention Grant Program

About the Grant Program

The ORT Prevention Grant Program supports local LEAs in preventing and responding to organized retail theft, motor vehicle or motor vehicle accessory theft, or cargo theft. In September 2023, a total amount of \$242,250,000 in grant funds was awarded to 38 grantees (31 city police departments and 7 county sheriff's offices).² Detailed information about the grantees and their funding is available on the [ORT Prevention Grant webpage](#).³

In the first 15 months of the 39-month grant service period, a total of **18,382 arrests** occurred related to ORT, MVT/MVAT, and cargo theft, with **14,133 referrals** to district attorneys' offices for prosecution.

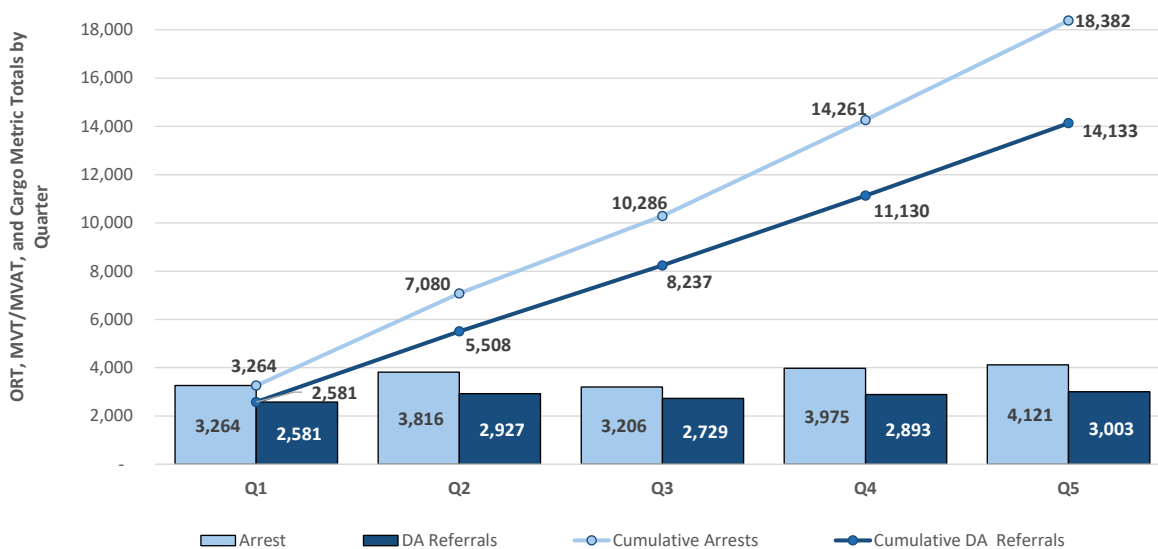


Figure 1. ORT, MVT/MVAT and Cargo theft metrics across all grantees during the first five quarters of the grant period.

Specific breakdowns of ORT, MVT/MVAT, and cargo theft-related metrics can be found below.

Organized Retail Theft Metrics

During the first five quarters of the grant reporting period (between October 1, 2023 and December 31, 2024), grantees reported on ORT metrics. The following figure illustrates arrest and case referral trends during the first five quarters of the grant period, across all 38 grantees.

² Three grantees are multi-agency partnerships: one police department with two partners, one police department with three partners, and a sheriff's office with 13 partners.

³ <https://www.bscc.ca.gov/organized-retail-theft-grant-program/>

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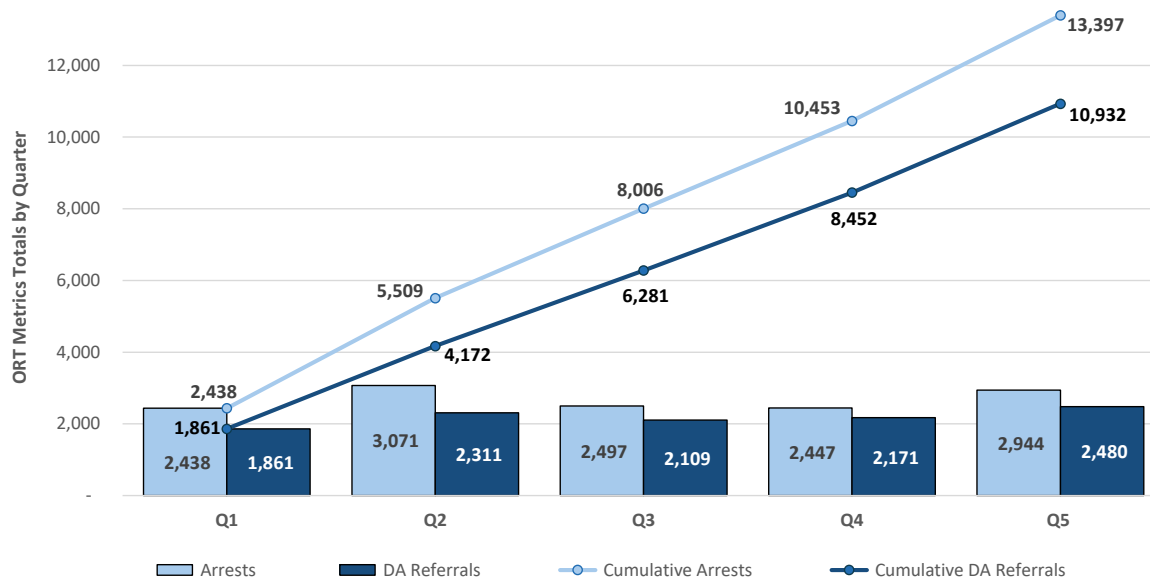


Figure 2. ORT metrics across all grantees during the first five quarters of the grant period.

Grantees reported a cumulative total of 13,397 arrests and 10,932 case referrals to DAs for prosecution of ORT crimes during the first five quarters of the grant period. The number of arrests increased during Quarters 2 and 5 and decreased in Quarter 3 and slightly in Quarter 4, as compared to the prior quarters. Grantees also made progress with the number of case referrals, which continued to increase across nearly all quarters.

Grantees have shared many remarkable project highlights over the initial 15 months of the 39-month grant period. During Quarter 5, the **San Francisco Police Department (SFPD)** arrested eight (8) individuals suspected of participating in 23 ORT incidents, totaling over [\\$84,000 of stolen goods](#)⁴. As a result of the ORT Grant program, SFPD increased the number of Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPRs) put into operation across the city, making it difficult for criminals to operate in this jurisdiction. All organized crime arrests (including ORT) in San Francisco were attributed to this ALPR network.

During Quarter 4, the **San Ramon Police Department (SRPD)** investigated 35 retail theft incidents, made 17 arrests, and referred 30 cases to the DA's Office. SRPD worked with the California Highway Patrol (CHP) ORT Task Force to dismantle a large fencing operation in Oakland. This joint operation led to the discovery of a stolen goods trafficking network across the Bay Area. In this instance, \$450,000 in stolen goods were recovered. In another joint effort with CHP, SRPD targeted a second fencing operation in Oakland, recovering an additional \$200,000 in stolen merchandise and arresting another suspect connected to the initial operation.

Moreover, targeted investigations led to warrants for two women responsible for over \$42,000 in thefts from ULTA Beauty and Sephora stores, as well as three individuals connected to over \$100,000 in losses at multiple ULTA locations. All suspects were successfully apprehended with charges filed against each individual. The SRPD ORT team is following leads for other

⁴ <https://www.sanfranciscopolice.org/news/sfpd-arrests-8-suspects-organized-retail-theft-series-24-142>

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retail theft crews linked to over \$380,000 in stolen products. SRPD was also able to purchase 10 ALPRs, all funded through the grant.

During Quarter 5, **Sacramento County Sheriff's Department** conducted blitz operations resulting in 156 arrests and an estimated \$18,000 in recovered goods. As a result of the ORT Grant program, drones were purchased and used during operations to obtain situational awareness and assist with the capture of suspects attempting to commit crimes.

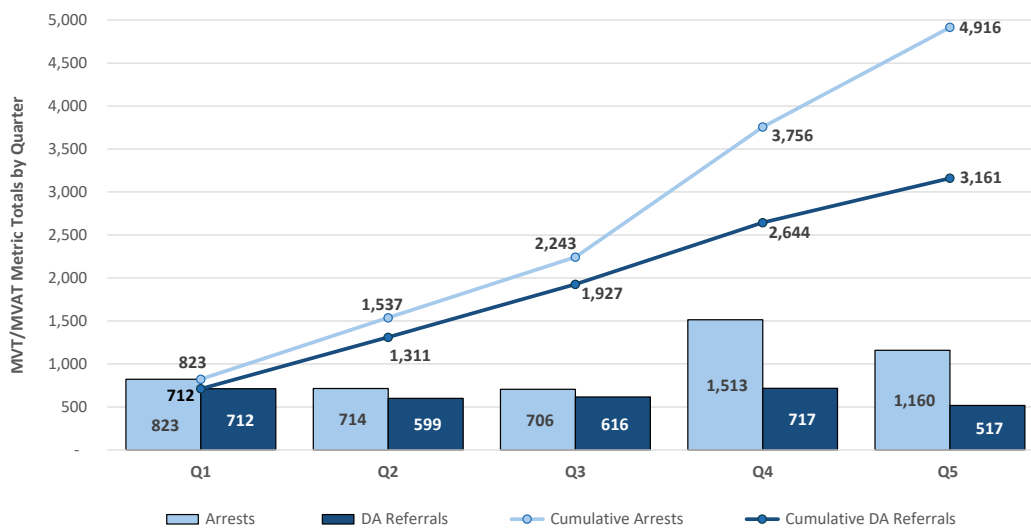
The **Salinas Police Department** conducted a blitz operation in Quarter 5, which resulted in several ORT arrests and \$1,785 in recovered goods. One pair of suspects were connected to more than 15 cases across eight counties, associated with more than \$45,000 in merchandise losses.

During Quarter 5, the **Costa Mesa Police Department** arrested a suspect selling merchandise on a resale app, resulting in the seizure of \$216,000 in stolen and counterfeit goods and cash. Additional investigations in collaboration with other LEAs during this quarter led to recovery of [\\$143,000 in stolen merchandise](#)⁵, 50,000 counterfeit electronics, and seizure of \$23,000 in cash.

The **Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department** arrested several suspects during Quarter 5, resulting in the recovery of merchandise and currency, including the seizure of about \$85,000 worth of Monster Energy Drinks, \$30,000 worth of Starbucks Coffee, \$150,000 in miscellaneous U.S. currency, and approximately 43,000 pounds (worth \$150,000) of rolled copper. This grantee also assisted other LEAs to recover stolen DeWalt trimmer tools valued at \$245,000, and \$262,000 worth of health supplements.

Motor Vehicle Theft/Motor Vehicle Accessory Theft Metrics

During the first five quarters of the grant reporting period, grantees reported on MVT/MVAT metrics. The following figure illustrates arrest and case referral trends during the first five quarters of the grant period across all 38 grantees.



⁵ <https://www.foxla.com/news/4-arrested-over-143k-stolen-merch-recovered-california-retail-theft-bust>

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Figure 3. MVT/MVAT metrics across all grantees during the first five quarters of the grant period.

Grantees reported a cumulative total of 4,916 arrests and 3,161 case referrals to DAs for potential prosecution for MVT/MVAT crimes during the first year of the grant period. Although the number of referrals varied across quarters, the total number of arrests steadily increased across nearly all quarters.

Cargo Theft Metrics

During the first five quarters of the grant reporting period, grantees reported on cargo theft metrics. The following figure illustrates arrest and case referral trends during the first year of the grant period across all 38 grantees.

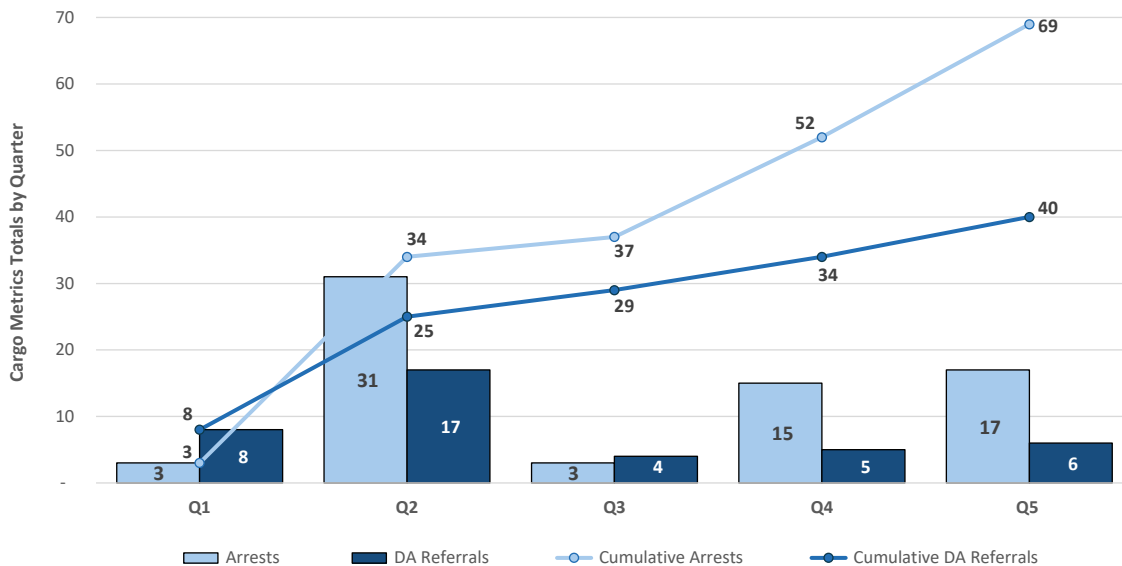


Figure 4. Cargo theft metrics across all grantees during the first five quarters of the grant period.

Grantees reported a cumulative total of 69 arrests and 40 case referrals to DAs for prosecution for cargo theft crimes during the first year of the grant period. In totality, the number of arrests and case referrals increased across the reporting period.

As only seven (7) of all 38 grantees have project purpose areas (PPAs) focused on cargo theft, metrics are noticeably lower than the more common PPAs of ORT and MVT/MVAT.

ORT Vertical Prosecution Grant Program

About the Grant Program

The ORT Vertical Prosecution Grant Program supports DAs in addressing increased levels of retail theft property crimes through the use of a vertical prosecution (VP) model⁶. In the VP model, a prosecutor is assigned to an ORT case from the beginning of the case through conclusion (e.g., initial hearing/arraignment to sentencing). Under this model, victims, witnesses, and law enforcement officials have a single point of contact. In September 2023, a

⁶ The vertical prosecution model is one method of prosecution utilized by district attorneys.

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total amount of \$24,868,293 in grant funds was awarded to 13 District Attorneys' Offices. Detailed information about the grantees and their funding is available on the [ORT Vertical Program Grant webpage](#).⁷ Theft-related property crimes encompass a broad range of offenses, including ORT crimes, which are a subset of theft-related crimes.

Metrics for Theft-related Property Crimes

During the first five quarters of the grant reporting period, grantees reported on theft-related property crime (TRPC) metrics using the VP Model. The following figure illustrates the trend of people charged for TRPC during the first five quarters of the grant period across all 13 grantees.

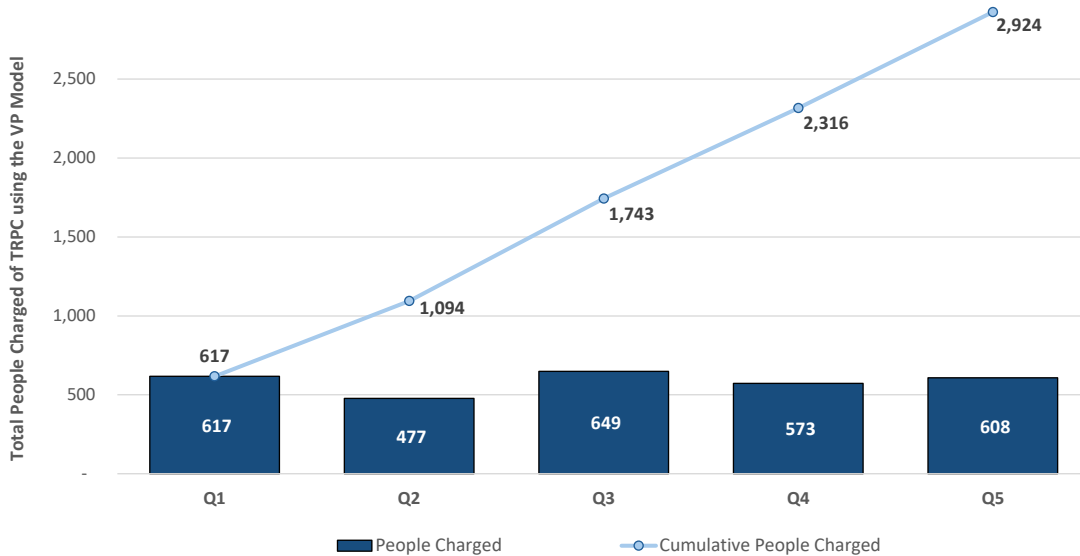


Figure 5. People charged with TRPC using the VP model across all grantees during the first five quarters of the grant period.

The following figure illustrates the trend of people convicted for TRPC during the first five quarters of the grant period across all 13 grantees.

⁷ <https://www.bscc.ca.gov/organized-retail-theft-vertical-prosecution-grant-program/>

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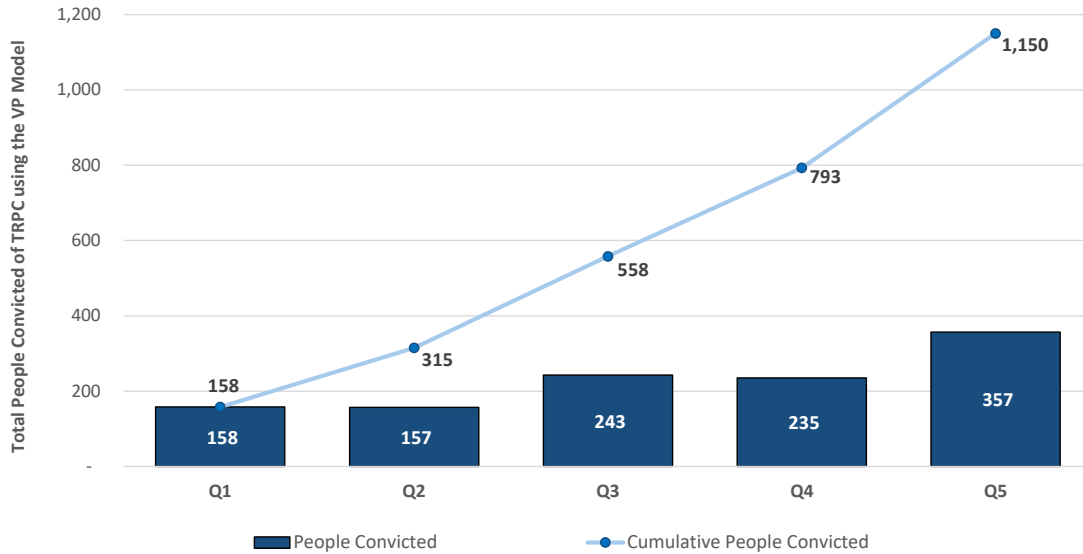


Figure 6. People convicted of TRPC using the VP model across all grantees during the first five quarters of the grant period.

Across all five quarters of the grant period, grantees reported a cumulative total of 2,924 people charged and 1,150 people convicted of theft-related property crimes, all of which were obtained using the VP model. In general, the number of people charged fluctuated across all quarters; however, the number of people convicted steadily increased across all quarters.

Metrics for Organized Retail Theft Crimes

During the first five quarters of the grant reporting period, grantees reported on ORT metrics using the VP model. The following figure illustrates the trend of people charged with ORT crimes during the first five quarters of the reporting period across all 13 grantees.

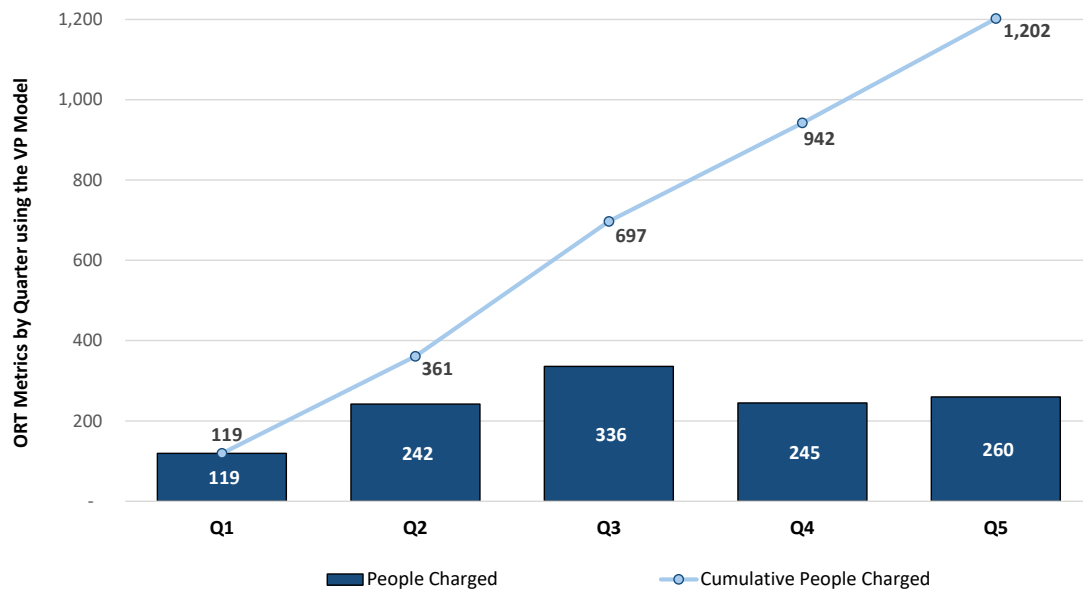


Figure 7. People charged with ORT crimes using the VP model across all grantees during the first five quarters of the grant period.

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The following figure illustrates the trend of people convicted of ORT crimes during the first five quarters of the grant period across all 13 grantees.

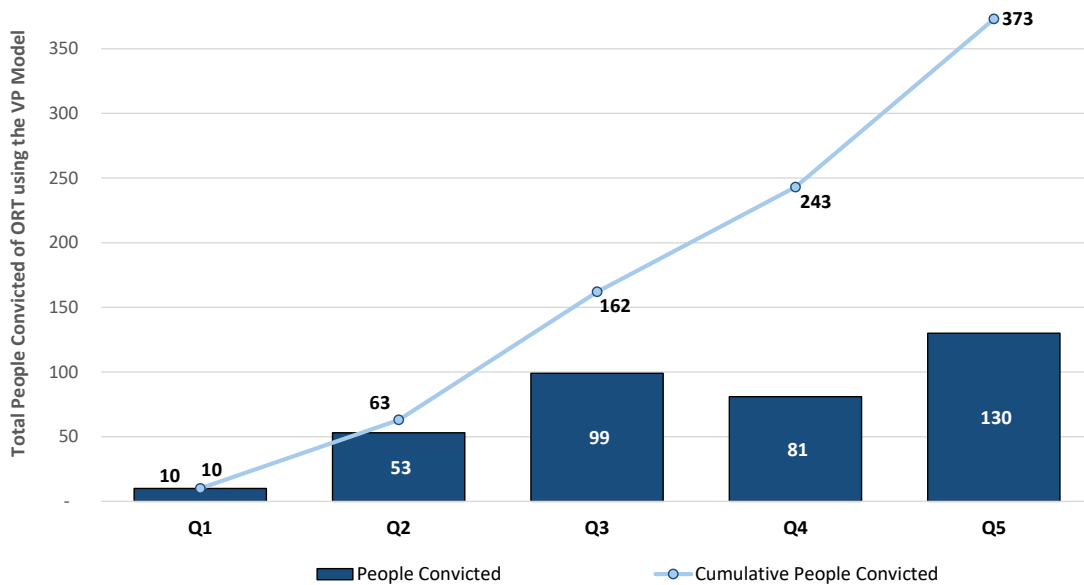


Figure 8. People convicted of ORT crimes using the VP model across all grantees during the first five quarters of the grant period.

During the first five quarters of the grant period, grantees reported a cumulative total of 1,202 people charged and 373 people convicted of ORT crimes, obtained using the VP model. The number of people charged fluctuated across all quarters. However, grantees made progress with the overall number of people convicted, which steadily increased across the grant period.

Grantees shared project highlights over the initial 15 months of the 39-month grant period. During Quarter 5, the **Santa Clara District Attorney** made significant progress towards building a case against a prolific offender who has stolen an estimated \$91,000 worth of merchandise from 31 REI locations across different states in the country. During Quarter 4, suspects were arrested after stealing approximately \$194,169 in merchandise from different ULTA stores. A second crew of six suspects who targeted Home Depot, Lowes, and Summit Bicycle, stealing approximately \$62,993 worth of goods, were pending prosecution at the time of reporting.

During Quarter 4, the **Sonoma County District Attorney** identified multiple ORT suspects as a direct result of working with retailers (Macy's ORT investigators) and LEAs (Santa Rosa Police Department), resulting in the arrests of two suspects for jewelry theft, leading to the recovery of \$16,000 worth of jewelry in less than 96 hours.

The **Ventura County District Attorney** significantly increased their caseload during Quarter 5, with 42 cases filed. These cases included 129 charges, 61 defendants (of which 39 are out of the county), and the recovery of over \$36,000 in stolen property.

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The **Yolo County District Attorney** launched a new innovative Direct-to-DA retailer reporting program designed to dramatically expedite the investigation and prosecution of retail crimes. This “FastPass to Prosecution” program was launched in the Fall of 2023 and led to successful prosecution of organized retail theft crimes. More detail about this program can be found at the [Yolo DA website](#)⁸.

ORT Felony Convictions

During the first five quarters of the grant period, grantees reported on the number of felony convictions for people who received an ORT conviction. The following figure illustrates the trend of those who received felony convictions during the first five quarters of the grant period across all 13 grantees.

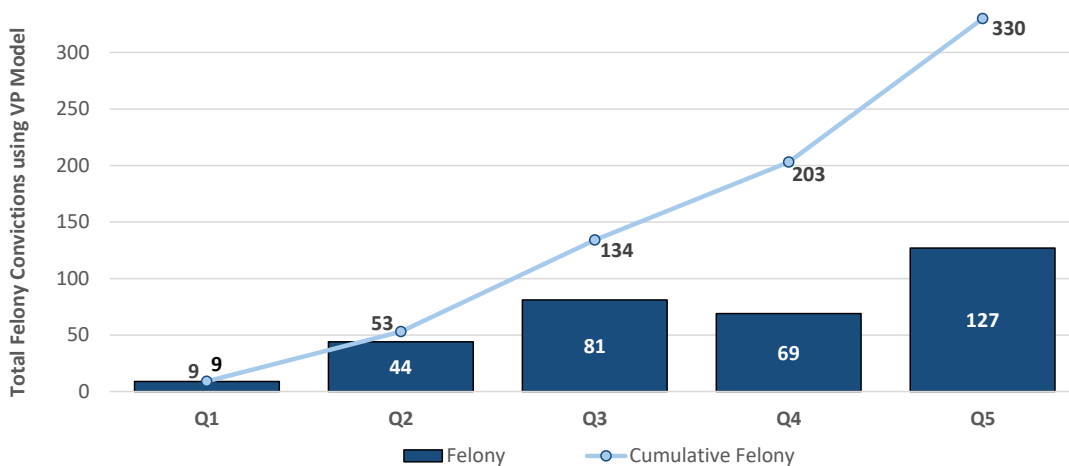


Figure 9. Felony convictions using the VP model during the first five quarters of the grant period.

During the first five quarters of the grant period, grantees reported a cumulative total of 330 felony convictions obtained using the VP model. The number of felonies increased steadily across nearly all quarters.

Summary

The Organized Retail Theft Grant Program has made a positive impact in addressing organized retail theft and related crimes in the first 15 months of execution. This success has been realized through a variety of grant funded resources and engaged relationship building by law enforcement and the retail community. Increases in the number of arrests and convictions are anticipated to climb exponentially throughout the grant cycle.

The sixth quarterly report of grantee progress is anticipated in May 2025. Following BSCC’s review and subsequent analysis of the reports, updates regarding grantee progress and reported metrics will be made available on the [BSCC ORT Prevention Grant webpage](#)⁹ and the [BSCC ORT Vertical Prosecution Grant webpage](#).¹⁰

⁸ <https://yoloda.org/yolo-da-announces-the-launch-of-fastpass-to-prosecution-combatting-retail-theft-through-retailer-initiated-reporting-and-rapid-prosecution/>

⁹ <https://www.bscc.ca.gov/organized-retail-theft-grant-program/>

¹⁰ <https://www.bscc.ca.gov/organized-retail-theft-vertical-prosecution-grant-program/>

Appendix A: Data Collection

About the Collection of Arrest and Referral Metrics

The relationship between arrests by law enforcement and referrals to the District Attorneys' Offices (DAs) for prosecution is complex. Once an arrest is made, law enforcement must conduct an investigation *prior to* referring a case for prosecution. The investigation, which includes the collection of evidence, witness interviews, victim statements, etc., can take a significant amount of time. For this reason, arrests are not always equal to or greater than the number of referrals for prosecution. Arrests made in one quarter may not be referred for prosecution until subsequent quarters. Similarly, an incident may occur in one quarter which prompts an investigation during the same quarter and, given the time to investigate, an arrest may not be made until a subsequent reporting period. Finally, not all incidents involve an arrest, and not all arrests result in a referral for prosecution. An arrest may not lead to a referral for prosecution due to insufficient evidence or a variety of other factors at the local level.

Arrest metrics are totals for the grantee (and any partner agencies). Arrests can be made by any officer on any assignment and therefore difficult to directly attribute to the ORT Prevention Grant Program. The number of referrals to DAs is collected by funding source (ORT Prevention Grant funds and other funding sources). For this document, the total of all referrals to District Attorneys' Offices for ORT prosecution was used to be consistent with the reporting of incident and arrest metrics.