

April  
2025



# Reference Guide

## Definitions

**Cybercrime:** Any criminal activity that involves a computer, network or networked device. Types of cybercrime include ransomware attacks, email and internet fraud, and identity fraud.

[Source: Tech Target](#)

**Drug Trafficking:** Drug trafficking is a global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws. [Source: UNODC](#)

**Financial Fraud:** Acts that “intentionally and knowingly deceive the victim by misrepresenting, concealing, or omitting facts about promised goods, services, or other benefits and consequences that are nonexistent, unnecessary, never intended to be provided, or deliberately distorted for the purpose of monetary gain. [Source: BJS.OJP.gov](#)

**Human Trafficking:** Also known as trafficking in persons, is a crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor or services, or to engage in commercial sex acts. The coercion can be subtle or overt, physical or psychological. Exploitation of a minor for commercial sex is human trafficking, regardless of whether any form of force, fraud, or coercion was used. [Source: justice.gov](#)



## Highest Grossing Criminal Trades

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## Section.1 In the News

### Feds dismantle smuggling ring that brought in 20,000 illegal immigrants

*Washington Times; March 3, 2025; [Source: washingtontimes.com](#)*

A smuggling operation that helped bring at least 20,000 illegal immigrants into the U.S. has been broken up with the arrests of four Guatemalans. Authorities described it as one of the most extensive smuggling operations in existence. It specialized in Guatemalans, and it was highly lucrative, charging \$15,000 to \$18,000 per person to reach the U.S. Authorities said the operation ran for at least 12 years, but the 20,000-person estimate covered those smuggled from 2019 through July 2024. That coincides with migrant surges under President Trump in 2019 and for most of President Biden’s tenure. Even assuming the lower \$15,000 rate for the migrants, that would work out to \$300 million over the period. The money was split among various operatives, including the Mexican smugglers, according to the indictment.

### How AI and underground markets fuel a \$70 billion cybercrime industry

*Invezz; March 6, 2025; [Source: Invezz.com](#)*

The global cybercrime landscape has evolved beyond isolated hackers operating in the shadows. An underground economy of cybercriminal marketplaces is expanding, offering illicit services that lower the barriers to entry for digital fraudsters. These networks provide hacking tools, stolen data, and AI-powered scam technology for purchase, allowing even unskilled individuals to engage in cybercrime. With transactions surpassing \$70 billion, platforms like Huione Guarantee are central to this underground economy, enabling criminals to operate on an unprecedented scale. Cybercrime-as-a-service (CaaS) is no longer confined to the darknet but is increasingly visible on public messaging platforms like Telegram. As authorities struggle to contain the growth of these networks, experts warn that the rise of AI-driven scams and deepfake fraud is making it harder than ever to distinguish between legitimate and malicious activities.



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# Section.2 Law Enforcement Resources

## CYBERCRIME

Federal agencies use a variety of mechanisms to collect and report data on cybercrime. The mechanisms used depend on whether the agency's mission related to cybercrime is identification, investigation, or prosecution. [Source: Gao.gov](#)

### Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

The FBI is the lead federal agency for investigating cyber attacks and intrusions. They collect and share intelligence, engage with victims, and work to unmask those committing malicious cyber activities. [Link: fbi.gov/investigate/cyber](#)

### Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3)

Operated by the FBI, IC3 collects reports of internet crime from the public and assists in freezing funds for victims of cybercrime. [Link: www.ic3.gov/AnnualReport/Reports](#)

### Department of Justice (DOJ)

The DOJ oversees various aspects of cybercrime, including the development of a taxonomy for types of cybercrime and cyber-enabled crime.

[Link: Justice.gov/criminal/criminal-ccips/ccips-documents-and-reports](#)

### United States Secret Service (USSS)

The USSS investigates cybercrime, particularly those involving financial fraud and counterfeiting. [Link: secretservice.gov/investigations/cyber](#)

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Law enforcement plays a critical role in combating human trafficking. Police agencies often collaborate with federal organizations like the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its Center for Countering Human Trafficking (CCHT) to investigate cases, protect victims, and raise public awareness. [Source: dhs.gov](#)

### Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)

Human Trafficking Resources [Link: ojjdp.ojp.gov](#)

### FBI Human Trafficking Task Forces [Link: fbi.gov](#)

- FBI Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Forces
- The Anti-Trafficking Coordination Team Initiative
- The Enhanced Collaborative Model Human Trafficking Program

### U.S. Department of Justice Special Programs and Initiatives

[Links: Justice.gov;](#)

[National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking;](#)  
[Task Forces and Working Groups;](#)

[Anti-Trafficking Coordination Team \(ACTeam\) Initiative;](#)  
[U.S.-Mexico Bilateral Human Trafficking Enforcement Initiative;](#)  
[Human Trafficking Task Force e-Guide](#)

### Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Blue Campaign [Link: dhs.gov/blue-campaign](#)

ICE Center for Countering Human Trafficking [Link: ice.gov](#)

## FINANCIAL FRAUD

The economic impact of fraud is staggering. As technology evolves, so do the modi operandi used by fraudsters, who are quick to exploit new vulnerabilities and adapt their tactics to circumvent security measures, staying one step ahead of law enforcement agencies. [Source: interpol.int](#)

### Federal Investigator Certificate (FIC)

The Fraud Investigator Certificate (FIC) Program is a framework by which law enforcement organizations can construct and professionally develop specialized economic crime investigators.

[Link: fletc.gov](#)

### INTERPOL Global Financial Fraud Assessment

The report constitutes an in-depth analysis of INTERPOL data holdings on offences and offenders related to financial fraud, which has been perpetrated against individuals and/or businesses, including INTERPOL Notices and/or Diffusions linked to financial fraud offences.

[Link: Interpol.int](#)

### Financial Crime Enforcement Network

*The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) is a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Treasury. It focuses on safeguarding the financial system from illicit use, combating money laundering, and promoting national security through the collection, analysis, and dissemination of financial intelligence.*

[Link: fincen.org](#)

## DRUG TRAFFICKING

As drug trafficking continues to evolve, local police face new challenges in combating this persistent threat. They could benefit from adopting strategies like advanced monitoring technologies, enhanced training for officers, public awareness campaigns, and advocating for updated legislation to keep pace with the evolving nature of synthetic drugs. [Source: Gao.gov](#)

### Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

- Drug Fact Sheets [Link: dea.gov/factsheets](#)
- National Drug Threat Assessment [Link: dea.gov](#)
- Fentanyl Supply Chain

[Link: dea.gov/resources/fentanyl-supply-chain](#)

### High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA)

Links: [hidta program.org;](#)  
[dea.gov/operations/hidta](#)

### National HIDTA Assistance Center

[Link: nhac.org](#)

### Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) Program

- RISS Drug Pricing Reference Guide

[Link: riss.net](#)

# Section.3 Cybercrime

Cybercrime costs in the United States reached an estimated **452.3 billion U.S. dollars in 2024**. Between 2017 and 2024, this figure has seen a significant increase. According to the latest estimates, this dynamic will continue in upcoming years, reaching approximately 1.82 trillion U.S. dollars in cybercrime costs by 2028. [Source: statistica.com](https://www.statista.com)

The profitability of cybercrime continues to rise as criminals exploit vulnerabilities in digital systems and target both individuals and businesses. The costs associated with cybercrime are expected to keep growing in the coming years. [Source: privacyaffairs.com](https://www.privacyaffairs.com)

## TYPES OF CYBERCRIME

**Hacking:** Unauthorized access to computer systems to steal, modify, or destroy data.

**Phishing:** Fraudulent attempts to obtain sensitive information by pretending to be a trustworthy entity.

**Malware:** Malicious software designed to damage, disrupt, or gain unauthorized access to computer systems.

**Ransomware:** A type of malware that encrypts a victim's data and demands payment for the decryption key.

**Identity Theft:** Stealing personal information to commit fraud or other crimes.

**Cyberstalking:** Using the internet to harass or stalk individuals.

**Denial of Service (DoS) Attacks:** Overloading a system with traffic to make it unavailable to users.

**Cyberterrorism:** Using the internet to conduct terrorist activities.

**Online Fraud:** Deceptive practices to gain financial or personal information.

## CYBER ATTACKS: Case Examples

### **Change Healthcare Ransomware Attack (2024)**

**Financial Loss:** \$2.87 billion

**How:** Sensitive data from over 100 million customer records was exfiltrated.

**Impact:** Crippled electronic payments and medical claims processing, forcing patients to pay out-of-pocket for services. [Source: cm-alliance.com](https://www.cm-alliance.com)

### **Snowflake Data Breach (2024)**

**Financial Loss:** \$350 million

**How:** Attackers exploited stolen credentials from infostealer malware dumps dating back to 2020.

**Impact:** Affected 165 organizations: AT&T, Ticketmaster, Santander Bank, and Neiman Marcus Group. [Source: strongdm.com](https://www.strongdm.com)

### **Equifax Data Breach (2017)**

**Financial Loss:** Over \$1.4 billion

**How:** Exploited a website vulnerability.

**Impact:** 147 million people's data compromised (Social Security numbers, etc.).

[Source: housingwire.com](https://www.housingwire.com)

### **Epsilon Email System Breach (2011)**

**Financial Loss:** Over \$4 billion

**How:** Unauthorized access to the email system.

**Impact:** Millions of customer email addresses compromised. [Source: alpinesecurity.com](https://www.alpinesecurity.com)

## GOVERNMENT ATTACKS

### **Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Data Breach (2015)**

**Attackers:** Advanced persistent threat linked to China's Ministry of State Security.

**Scope:** One of the largest U.S. government data breaches in history, affecting over 22.1 million, including federal employees, job applicants, and their families.

**Information Exposed:** Personally identifiable information (PII), security clearance records with psychological and financial details, fingerprints of 5.6 million individuals, as well as military records, pension data, and health/life insurance details.

[Source: oversight.house.gov](https://www.oversight.house.gov)

### **Blue Leaks Data Breach (2020)**

**Attackers:** The data was stolen from Netsential, a Houston-based web services provider used by law enforcement agencies.

**Scope:** A total of 269 GB of data was leaked, containing information from over 200 U.S. police departments, fusion centers, and federal agencies.

**Canadian Impact:** Data from 38 Canadian police agencies, including the RCMP, was also included due to cross-border collaboration. [Link: cbc.ca](https://www.cbc.ca)

**\$452.3 billion in 2024**  
Estimated

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# Section.4 Financial Fraud

Financial fraud is a significant issue in the United States, with criminals making substantial amounts of money from various fraudulent activities. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), consumers reported losing more than **\$12.5 billion** to fraud in 2024 alone which represents a 25% increase over the prior year. Consumers reported losing more money to investment scams—**\$5.7 billion**—than any other category in 2024. That amount represents a 24% increase over 2023. The second highest reported loss amount came from imposter scams, with **\$2.95 billion** reported lost. In 2024, consumers reported losing more money to scams where they paid with bank transfers or cryptocurrency than all other payment methods combined. [Source: FTC.gov](https://www.ftc.gov)

## Investment Scams

**\$5.7 billion losses in 2024**

Scams that involve persuading individuals to invest money in fraudulent schemes. These scams often involve fake cryptocurrency, precious metals, or real estate projects, and scammers build relationships with their targets through social media or dating apps. [Source: FTC.gov](https://www.ftc.gov)

## Online Shopping Scams

Losses totaled **\$750.6 million**—up nearly **\$250 million** from 2023. Fake online stores or sellers that take money without delivering the promised goods. Consumers reported losing over **\$3 billion** to scams that started online, compared to approximately **\$1.9 billion lost** to more traditional contact methods like calls, texts, or emails. [Source: FTC.gov](https://www.ftc.gov)

## Imposter Scams

**\$2.95 billion reported lost in 2024**

Losses to government imposter scams increased **\$171 million** from 2023 to a total of **\$789 million** in 2024.

Fraudsters pretending to be someone else, like a government official or a relative, to trick people into giving them money. Cybercriminals will falsely claim to be a representative from a government agency like the IRS, FEMA or a local police department.

[Source: FTC.gov](https://www.ftc.gov)

## Advance Fee Fraud

In 2024, global losses from advance fee fraud amounted to **\$8.2 billion**, making it one of the most financially damaging scam categories targeting both consumers and businesses.

[Source: static.poder360.com](https://static.poder360.com)

Criminals trick victims into paying upfront fees, claiming it's required for a deal to proceed. These fees are promised to be repaid later. Scams include fake investments, lottery winnings, found money, or other fraudulent opportunities. [Source: investor.gov](https://investor.gov)

## Business and Job Scams

Employment-agency scams saw major growth, with reports tripling between 2023 and 2024 and losses jumping to **\$501 million** from **\$90 million**.

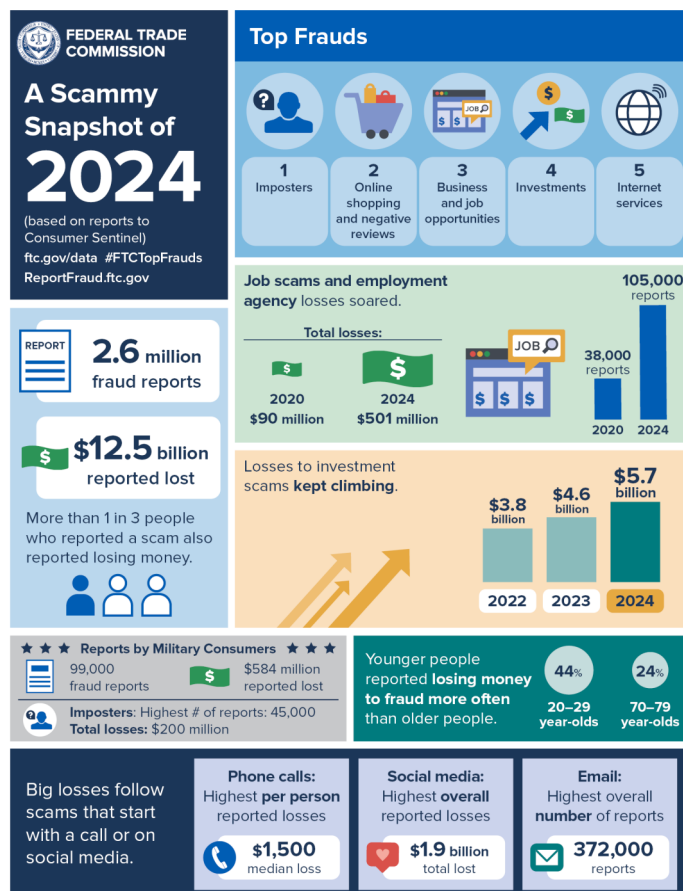
Scammers pose as legitimate employers or business opportunities to deceive individuals into providing money or personal information impersonate well-known companies and offer fake jobs on platforms like LinkedIn or Indeed.

Sources: [consumeraffairs.com](https://consumeraffairs.com); [FTC.gov](https://www.ftc.gov)

## Credit Card Fraud

62 million Americans had fraudulent charges on their credit or debit cards last year alone, with unauthorized purchases exceeding **\$6.2 billion annually**.

Only 8% of fraudulent charges involved stolen or lost credit cards; the rest accessed personal data and account information remotely. [Source: security.org](https://www.security.org)



Estimated \$12.5 billion in 2024

## Section.5 Drug Trafficking

Drug trafficking remains a highly profitable criminal enterprise in the United States. According to the DEA's 2024 National Drug Threat Assessment, the illegal drug trade generates billions of dollars annually. The shift from plant-based drugs like heroin and cocaine to synthetic drugs like fentanyl and methamphetamine has significantly increased the profitability of drug trafficking.

The exact annual revenue from drug trafficking in the US is challenging to pinpoint due to the illicit nature of the trade. However, it's estimated that the global drug trade is worth between **\$426-652 billion annually**, with a significant portion of that revenue generated in the United States. [Source: UNODC.org](#)

### TYPES OF DRUGS

**Fentanyl** is the nation's greatest and most urgent drug threat. Seizures of fentanyl, in both powder and pill form, are at record levels. Over the past two years seizures of fentanyl powder nearly doubled. DEA seized 13,176 kilograms (29,048 pounds) in 2023. Meanwhile, the more than 79 million fentanyl pills seized by DEA in 2023 is almost triple what was seized in 2021. Last year, 30% of the fentanyl powder seized by DEA contained xylazine. That is up from 25% in 2022. [Source: DEA NDTA 2024](#)

The California National Guard seized 1,045 pounds of illicit fentanyl with a street valuation of \$6.8 million in just the first two months of 2025. [Source: gov.ca.gov](#)

**Nitazenes** are a potent class of synthetic opioids estimated to be 1.5X - 20X more potent than fentanyl compounds. [Source: cfsre.org](#) The mixtures are probably being made mainly by mid-level and street-level dealers in the United States, but since nitazenes are sold by China-based chemical suppliers through online marketplaces, the Mexican cartels could easily use their existing relationships with those suppliers to obtain nitazenes. [Source: DEA NDTA 2024](#)

A kilogram of xylazine powder can be purchased online from Chinese suppliers with common prices ranging from \$6-\$20 U.S. dollars per kilogram. [Source: DEA.gov](#)

**Xylazine** is used as an anesthetic in veterinary medicine, primarily on large animals, and is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) only for veterinary use. Xylazine is being added to fentanyl by drug traffickers, a mixture known as "tranq" in illicit drug markets, increasing the risk of death from fentanyl poisoning. DEA and DHS have identified xylazine intended for illicit human use entering the U.S. in several ways—in solid form from China and other countries, in liquid form either diverted from veterinary supply chains or packaged to resemble a veterinary drug, and, to a lesser degree, mixed with fentanyl seized at the southwest border. [Sources: DEA.gov and DEA NDTA 2024](#)

Nearly all the **methamphetamines** sold in the United States today is manufactured in Mexico, and it is purer and more potent than in years past. The shift to Mexican-manufactured methamphetamine is evidenced by the dramatic decline in domestic clandestine lab seizures. [Source: DEA NDTA 2024](#)

**Heroin** seizures in the United States began declining steadily in direct contrast to a rapid acceleration in fentanyl seizures over the same time period. Heroin seizures decreased by almost 70 percent between 2019 and 2023, and fentanyl seizures increased by a staggering 451 percent over the same time period. In many U.S. drug markets, nearly all the heroin available at the street level is combined with or has been replaced by fentanyl. Fentanyl is much more profitable for the cartels than heroin. Unlike fentanyl, heroin is a traditional plant-based opioid (derived from the opium poppy). Crop-based drugs are time consuming and expensive to produce. [Source: DEA NDTA 2024](#)

In 2021, the DEA New York Division seized nearly \$170 million of drug proceeds and assets, and over \$603 million dollars' worth of illicit drugs. Of particular significance is the upsurge in methamphetamine and fentanyl seizures in New York which parallel CDC's overdose death data. [Source: DEA.gov](#)

**\$426-\$652 billion annually**  
Estimated



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# Section.6 Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a highly profitable criminal enterprise in the United States. Internationally, human trafficking is responsible for an estimated

**\$236 billion in illicit profits annually.** [Source: ilo.org](#)

Human trafficking is considered the second most profitable illegal industry in the U.S., following drug trafficking with estimated annual profits of **\$52 billion annually.** [Source: state.gov](#)

## Who are the victims?

Many trafficking cases in the United States involve workers in agriculture, landscaping, construction, factories, in homes as nannies or other domestic workers, restaurants, elder care, massage parlors, and more — essentially in jobs with low pay and few legal protections in the underground economy. Sex traffickers are increasingly operating online to both recruit and advertise victims in addition to locations such as bars, massage parlors, street prostitution, and escort services. [Source: DHS.gov](#)

## How are victims trafficked?

Traffickers use violence, manipulation, or false promises of well-paying jobs or romantic relationships to exploit victims. Victims are forced to work as prostitutes or to take jobs as migrant, domestic, restaurant, or factory workers with little or no pay. Human trafficking is a heinous crime that exploits the most vulnerable in society. [Source: fbi.gov](#)

## Who are the traffickers?

Traffickers can be individuals, organized crime groups, or even family members. They use various methods to recruit and control their victims, including manipulation, coercion, and violence. [Source: justice.gov](#)

[Cartels](#) make a staggering amount of money from human trafficking. It's estimated that human smuggling alone is a **billion-dollar industry**. They charge between **\$8,000 and \$15,000** per person, depending on where they are coming from. [Source: borderreport.com](#)

Some [gangs](#) engage in human trafficking due to a reliable “supply” of victims, greater profitability, and lower risk of detection than other criminal activities. [Source: justice.org](#)

## Sex Trafficking

### How much do “pimps” make

**trafficking juveniles and women?** One teenage girl was forced to meet quotas of **\$500/night**, 7 days a week and gave the money to her trafficker each night. This particular pimp also controlled three other women. Based on these numbers, Polaris Project estimates that the **pimp made \$632,000 in one year** from four young women and girls. [Source: dcjs.virginia.gov; traffickinginstitute.org](#)

## Trafficking Children

With 1.7 million children in commercial sexual exploitation, and another 1.3 million in forms of forced labor, the total profits made by the criminals from child victims can be estimated at **\$50.8 billion:**

**\$46 billion** from sex trafficking, and **\$4.8 billion** from forced labor.

In 2024, [NCMEC](#) received more than **27,800 reports** of possible child sex trafficking. [Source: hopeforjustice.org](#)

## Types of Human Trafficking

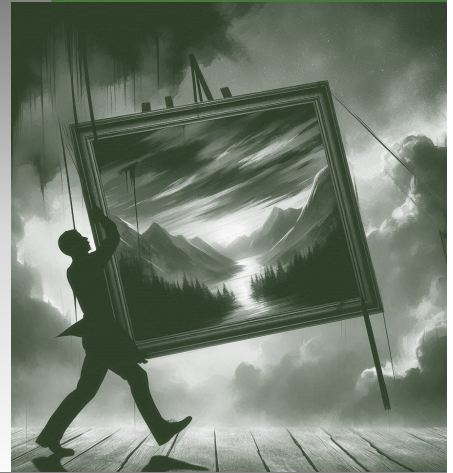
1. **Forced Labor** – victims are forced to work against their will
2. **Sex** – individuals are required to engage in sexual acts
3. **Forced Marriage** – victims are forced to marry another person without giving consent
4. **Domestic Servitude** – forced labor that occurs in a private household

## Section.7a Unique Criminal Trades

**ART THEFT** in the United States contributes to the global black market for stolen art, which is valued at \$6–8 billion annually. Criminals typically earn only 10% of the legitimate market value for stolen artworks due to challenges in selling high-profile pieces. Famous U.S. cases, such as the Isabella [Stewart Gardner Museum heist](#), involved stolen art valued at \$500 million.

**\$10 billion:** Some sources estimate the black market for art trafficking could reach this figure, including stolen and trafficked antiquities.

Sources: [Bloomberg.com](#); [UNESCO.org](#); [INTERPOL Stolen Art Database](#); [theadaco.uk](#); [How to Steal a Masterpiece | TIME](#); [FBI National Stolen Art File — National Stolen Art File](#)



**ANTIQUITIES SMUGGLING** generates significant illicit revenue, with estimates ranging from \$225 million to \$6 billion annually, depending on the source and methodology.

Sources: [UNESCO.org](#); [theadaco.uk](#); [financialcrimeacademy.org](#)

The United States is the dominant destination for these declared goods, and, overall, more than \$100 million of these goods are imported into the West annually. Source: [RAND.org](#)

### Terrorist Financing through Antiquity Smuggling:

Several terrorist groups, including ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra (an Al-Qaeda affiliate), and armed factions in Libya and Yemen, have systematically looted antiquities to fund their operations. [Source: cfj.org](#) **The Islamic State (ISIS)** has made substantial revenue from antiquities smuggling, with estimates ranging from several million dollars to **\$100–200 million** annually during its peak years. [Source: financialservices.house.gov](#)

Globally, the **ILLICIT ARMS TRADE** is valued at \$1.7–\$3.5 billion annually, about 10–20% of the legal arms trade.

In the U.S., firearms trafficking is a smaller but critical market, driven by high demand and relatively low detection risks. Prices vary widely; for example, an AK-47 on the dark web can cost up to \$3,600. Between 2017 and 2021, nearly 230,000 firearms were trafficked in over 7,700 cases, with unlicensed sellers accounting for 41% of these firearms.

Privately Made Firearms (PMFs) increased by 1,600%, while Machinegun Conversion Devices (MCDs) recoveries rose by 784% between 2017 and 2023 in the U.S.. Guns traced to Mexico increased by 63%, and over 25,000 firearms previously owned by law enforcement were recovered at crime scenes between 2019 and 2023. Sources: [aic.gov.au](#); [atf.gov](#); [globalinitiative.net](#); [ice.gov](#)

PHOTO: John Tlumacki/The Boston Globe/Getty Images



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## Section.7b Unique Criminal Trades

**COUNTERFEITING** is one of the largest illicit trades globally, generating significant revenue for criminals. Estimates indicate that the global trade in counterfeit goods amounted to **\$464 billion** in 2019, accounting for **2.5%** of world trade.

This figure has grown substantially, with projections suggesting it could reach **\$1.79 trillion** by 2030, representing **5%** of global trade.

Counterfeiting spans various industries, including pharmaceuticals, electronics, luxury goods, and food products, posing risks to consumer safety and economic stability.

Sources: [Anti-Counterfeit Packaging Strategic Research Report 2025](#); [Counterfeit and pirated goods | OECD](#); [Counterfeiting & Piracy - Transnational Alliance to Combat Illicit Trade](#)



**ORGAN TRAFFICKING** is a highly lucrative criminal enterprise, generating an estimated **\$840 million** to **\$1.7 billion** annually.

This revenue stems from approximately 12,000 illegal transplants per year, with kidneys being the most commonly trafficked organ due to their high demand and relative ease of removal.

Trafficking people for the purpose of organ removal is one of the least reported and least understood forms of trafficking.

Sources: [Trafficking in Human Organs: An Overview](#); [UN: Understanding Human Trafficking for Organ Removal](#); [International Organ Trafficking: In Brief](#); [state.gov](#)

**ILLEGAL LOGGING** is one of the most profitable environmental crimes, generating an estimated **\$51–\$157 billion** annually globally.

This revenue stems from the illicit trade in timber, which accounts for up to 30% of all timber traded worldwide and is often facilitated by organized crime networks.

U.S. CBP works with HSI and other partner government agencies and NGOs to investigate illegal logging practices around the world. [Source: cbp.gov](#)

Sources: [Illegal Logging: Multi Billion Dollar Transactions Hiding in Plain Sight](#); [World Bank Blogs: The Real Cost of Illegal Logging](#)



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# Section.8 The Future

## CYBERCRIME

Cybercriminals are increasingly using AI tools to enhance their attacks. This includes deepfake videos, voice cloning, and AI-assisted phishing campaigns. Opinions are divided on the future of cloud computing. Some experts believe cloud services will continue to grow, while others predict a shift back to on-premises solutions and peer-to-peer networks. Data breaches are expected to increase as more data and devices come online. The growing number of online assets and digital systems will contribute to the risk of breaches. The cybersecurity skills gap remains a significant challenge. Efforts to attract more talent, including women, to the field are crucial for addressing this issue.

Source: [securityintelligence.com](https://www.securityintelligence.com)

Additional Resource: [NCL releases Top Ten Scams Report of 2024 - National Consumers League](#)

Tracking Cyber Attacks: [Link: cm-alliance.com](https://www.cm-alliance.com)

## FINANCIAL FRAUD

When you envision a credit card thief, you may picture someone using your card to pay for things at a department store counter. That's an increasingly rare occurrence, though. Roughly 70% of all card-related fraud happens in a card-not-present (CNP) scenario. And it's definitely on the rise. It is projected that CNP fraud will reach \$49 billion globally by 2030. Source: [cardrates.com](https://www.cardrates.com)

We're increasingly seeing fraud moving from card rails to account-to-account (A2A) transactions, which enables the fraudsters – through the real-time payment rails – to access the funds instantly. Data from Juniper Research finds that the global volume of A2A payments is expected to grow from 60 billion in 2024 to 186 billion by 2029, signifying an increase of 209%. Source: [finextra.com](https://www.finextra.com)

Additional Resource: [#StopRansomware: Black Basta | CISA](#) ; [NCL releases Top Ten Scams Report of 2024 - National Consumers League](#)

## DRUG TRAFFICKING

The rise of synthetic drugs, such as fentanyl and methamphetamine, is likely to continue. These drugs are easier to produce and transport compared to traditional plant-based drugs like heroin and cocaine. Drug traffickers are increasingly using technology to facilitate their operations. This includes the dark web for anonymous transactions, cryptocurrencies for laundering money, and social media for marketing and distribution. Drug trafficking networks are becoming more globalized, with cartels expanding their operations across multiple countries and continents. This includes partnerships with other criminal organizations and control over key smuggling routes. Efforts to combat drug trafficking will continue to evolve, with a focus on international cooperation and advanced technologies for detection and interdiction. Sources: [DEA.gov](https://www.dea.gov); [iiss.org](https://www.iiss.org); [UN World Drug Report 2024](https://www.un.org)

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Traffickers are likely to continue leveraging technology to recruit, exploit, and control victims. This includes using social media, encrypted messaging apps, and the dark web. Efforts to combat human trafficking will increasingly involve international cooperation. Governments, NGOs, and law enforcement agencies will work together to share information and resources. Source: [state.gov](https://www.state.gov)

New digital tools and applications continue to be developed to combat human trafficking. For example, The United Nations's International Classification for Administrative Data on Trafficking in Persons (IC-TIP). The framework standardizes data collection helps identify key trafficking trends, such as common routes, recruitment methods, and industries involved in exploitation. It also supports law enforcement efforts by facilitating data-sharing practices between countries, making it easier to track and dismantle trafficking networks. Source: [UNODC.org](https://www.unodc.org)

Additional Resources: [Technology and human trafficking: Fighting the good fight](#) ; [Using the Power of Technology to Help Victims of Human Trafficking](#)

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# Section.9 Key Takeaways

An underground economy of cybercriminal marketplaces is expanding, offering illicit services that lower the barriers to entry for digital fraudsters. (Section.1)

Police could benefit from adopting strategies like advanced monitoring technologies, enhanced training for officers, public awareness campaigns, and advocating for updated legislation to keep pace with the evolving nature of synthetic drugs, human trafficking, cybercrime, and fraud schemes. (Section.2)

Cybercrime costs in the United States reached an estimated 452.3 billion U.S. dollars in 2024. Between 2017 and 2024, this figure has seen a significant increase. (Section.3)

Financial fraud is a significant issue in the United States, with criminals making substantial amounts of money from various fraudulent activities. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), consumers reported losing more than \$12.5 billion to fraud in 2024 alone which represents a 25% increase over the prior year. (Section.4)

Drug trafficking billions of dollars annually. The shift from plant-based drugs like heroin and cocaine to synthetic drugs like fentanyl and nitazenes has significantly increased the profitability of drug trafficking. (Section.5)

Human trafficking is a highly profitable criminal enterprise in the United States. According to the International Labour Organization, human trafficking is responsible for an estimated \$236 billion in illicit profits annually. (Section.6)

Other unique criminal trades such as art and antiquity smuggling, counterfeiting, organ harvesting, and illegal logging generate billions in illicit profits. (Section.7a-7b)

AI and the digital age are fundamentally transforming the nature of crime, enabling new forms of exploitation and amplifying existing threats, therefore police must continually adapt by embracing advanced technologies and strategies. (Section.8)

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