

A catalytic converter is a device within the exhaust system of a car that converts environmentally hazardous emissions into less harmful ones. To do this, they use valuable metals such as palladium (\$2,938/ oz), platinum (\$1,128/ oz), or rhodium (\$20,000/ oz; [NICB n.d.](#)).

Catalytic converters often lack distinctive identifying features such as a serial number or VIN information to track ownership ([DOJ 2022](#)). They can be removed and stolen in less than a minute and can sell on the black market for over \$1,000 each. Recyclers typically pay from \$50 to \$250 for each catalytic converter ([NICB n.d.](#)). Factors such as the ease of access to the catalytic converter and the presence of multiple catalytic converters, such as in the Toyota Prius, make some vehicles higher targets for catalytic converter theft ([Bergal 2021](#)).

A new catalytic converter costs from \$1,000 to \$4,000 ([Bergal 2021](#)). Replacement of stolen converters is covered by comprehensive insurance coverage after a driver pays their deductible, however drivers without comprehensive coverage must pay out of pocket. Comprehensive insurance coverage is an optional form of automobile insurance that covers damages from theft ([DOI n.d.](#)). Around 79% of insured drivers have comprehensive insurance ([Ill n.d.](#)).

Recent data on the number of catalytic converter thefts that occur in the U.S. is not publicly available. However,

- The National Insurance Crime Bureau, an insurance industry trade group, reported that there were around 14,500 thefts in 2020 ([NICB n.d.](#)).
- One major insurer, State Farm, received over 43,000 catalytic converter theft claims from June 2021 – July 2022 ([SF 2022](#)). This is about a 110% increase from the previous 12 months.
 - The states with the most overall claims are CA, TX, IL, WA, MN.

State Legislation. From 2021-2022, 32 states enacted laws to address catalytic converter theft ([NCSL 2023](#)).

- Several states, (e.g., [TX](#), [AR](#), [SC](#), [CT](#), [NY](#), [CA](#), [RI](#), and [OR](#)) require record keeping of catalytic converter sales including proof of ownership, the VIN of the vehicle from which the part was removed, the seller's home address, and the seller's driver's license.
- In [ME](#), new and used car dealers are required to engrave a vehicle's VIN on its catalytic converter.
- A [MN](#) pilot program etches identifying information on catalytic converters of the top 15 most targeted vehicles for free.
- Catalytic converter theft is a felony in [TX](#), [VA](#), and [NC](#).
- [CA](#) and [OR](#) prevent scrap metal businesses from purchasing catalytic converters that are not from a commercial seller or from the owner of the vehicle from which the catalytic converter was removed.

Because bills targeting catalytic converter theft have passed relatively recently, their impact on rates of theft has not yet been well studied.