

2021 AMBER Alert Report

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children®

Analysis of AMBER Alert Activations in 2021



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Introduction

The afternoon of January 13, 1996, Amber Hagerman, a 9-year-old girl who lived in Arlington, Texas, was last seen riding her bike in a parking lot. A witness saw a man with a black flat-bed truck snatch Amber from her bicycle. Four days later, Amber's body was found in a creek 3.2 miles from her home. Her murder remains unsolved. Residents were outraged and began reaching out to broadcasters and law enforcement. One person, Diana Simone, suggested a program be implemented allowing use of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) to notify the public when a child has been abducted. If the community was aware, then residents could also assist in the search. Simone followed up with a letter, and her only request was the program be dedicated to the memory of Amber Hagerman. That letter was used by broadcasters who met with local law enforcement and created Amber's Plan in Amber Hagerman's memory.

As the initiative grew, it became known as America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response (AMBER) Plan, which provides a framework for law enforcement to rapidly broadcast information about child abductions to the public so the community can assist in the search for and safe recovery of the child. What began as a local effort in the Dallas-Fort Worth area has grown into a seamless nationwide initiative, with many other countries following suit. AMBER Alerts in the United States have continued to make use of every available technology. From the initial program launch in October of 1996 through December 2021, at least 1,111 children have been confirmed as safely recovered due to an AMBER Alert being issued.

AMBER Alerts rely on a voluntary partnership among law enforcement, broadcasters, private companies, state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and technology partners to notify the public of an abduction. AMBER Alert plans initiate the alert by activating their state and local network, including resources such as the Emergency Alert System. Since 2005, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) has provided access to AMBER Alert Secondary Distribution (AASD), a resource composed of private corporations across many industries, social media, websites, digital signage, federal agencies, and others. Each of these partners bring unique technology to the program to enable the amplification of an alert to the public, staff, or customers. NCMEC provides geographically targeted information via the NCMEC Call Center to these partners as approved by each AMBER Alert coordinator. Finally, since 2012, both AMBER Alert plans and NCMEC can use Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) to provide geographically targeted cellular broadcasts to the public when a child is abducted.

On April 30, 2003, the *Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to End the Exploitation of Children Today (PROTECT) Act of 2003* (Pub. L. No. 108-21) was signed into law. Building on the steps already taken by the federal government to support AMBER Alerts, this act established the national coordination of state and local programs, including the development of guidance for issuance and dissemination of AMBER Alerts and the appointment of a national AMBER Alert coordinator within the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs. The national AMBER Alert coordinator, in collaboration with a national advisory group, developed a strategy for supporting states and communities to strengthen the AMBER Alert system nationwide and increase the likelihood abducted children will be recovered swiftly and safely.¹ And, in 2018, the *Ashlynnne Mike AMBER Alert in Indian Country Act* (Pub. L. No. 115-166) expanded resources and focused on integrating tribal AMBER Alert systems with state and regional systems.

¹*National Strategy*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, www.amberalert.gov/ntl_strategy.htm, accessed March 10, 2022.

AMBER Alert Program Information

The AMBER Alert program consists of independent AMBER Alert plans in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Navajo Nation, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. As of 2021, and including local and regional AMBER Alert plans, there are 82 plans in the United States. Each of these plans coordinates with resources and law enforcement in their jurisdiction and uses specific criteria to determine if an abducted child case qualifies for an AMBER Alert.

While there may be slight variations, each plan generally follows the AMBER Alert criteria recommendations published by the Department of Justice. These criteria are:

- There is reasonable belief by law enforcement an abduction has occurred.
- The abduction is of a child age 17 or younger.
- The law enforcement agency believes the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death.
- There is enough descriptive information about the victim and abduction for law enforcement to issue an AMBER Alert to assist in the recovery of the child.
- The child's name and other critical data elements, including the Child Abduction flag, have been entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database.

AMBER Alerts may be activated by multiple plans for a single case and the AMBER Alert plans will coordinate with each other. Although an AMBER Alert can be issued in multiple states or territories, it is never issued on a nationwide basis. AMBER Alerts are geographically targeted based on law enforcement's investigation.

In order to augment the efforts of each of these plans, NCMEC provides operational support during AMBER Alerts via AMBER Alert Secondary Distribution; Wireless Emergency Alert activation, when requested; case management services and resources from NCMEC; and program analysis via this report.

The AMBER Alert program is also supported by many other partners representing federal agencies, law enforcement, broadcasters, private corporations, nonprofit organizations, and others with the goal of providing amplification of AMBER Alerts; training support; and other resources on the state, local, and national levels.

2021 AMBER Alert Overview

Number and Locations of AMBER Alert Activations

Summary of AMBER Alert Activations and Children Involved

From January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021, 254 AMBER Alerts were issued in the U.S. involving 320 children.

Of the 254 AMBER Alerts issued from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021, 252 cases resulted in a recovery, 51 of which were successfully recovered as a direct result of an AMBER Alert being issued. As of March 1, 2022, when statistics for this report were finalized for the AMBER Alerts issued in 2021, two children remained actively missing and two children were located deceased.

Eleven cases were later determined to be hoaxes, and 19 cases were later determined to be unfounded.

For cases not determined to be hoaxes or unfounded, there were 139 family abductions (FA); 74 nonfamily abductions (NFA); seven lost, injured, or otherwise missing (LIM); and four endangered runaways (ERU) at the time of initial intake by NCMEC.

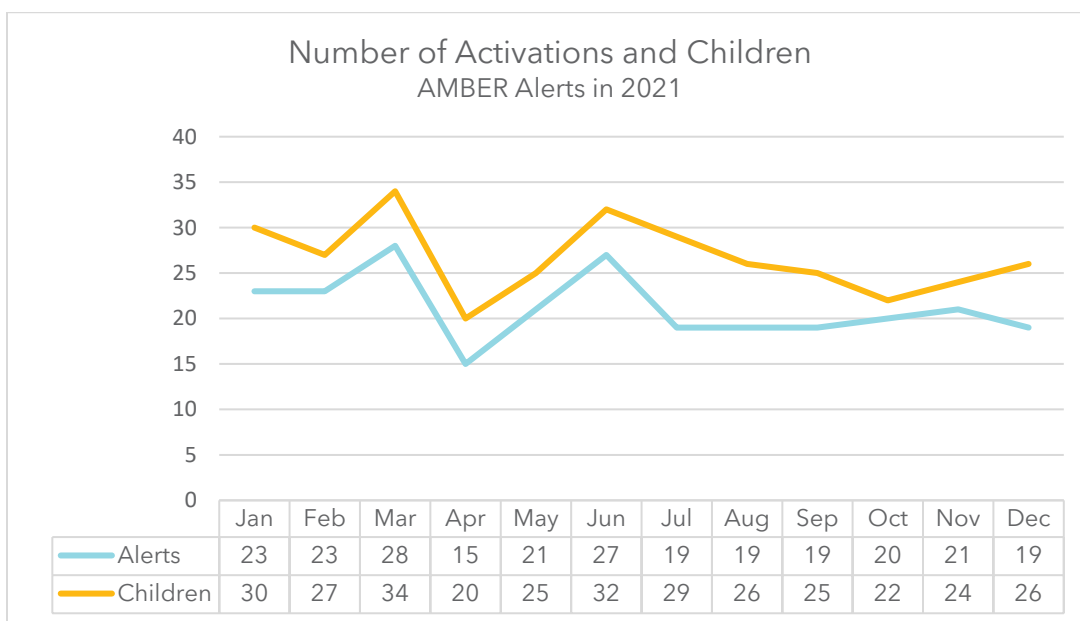


Figure 1: Number of AMBER Alert Activations and Children by Month

AMBER Alerts by State/Territory

From January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021, 251 AMBER Alerts originated in 39 states. Two AMBER Alerts originated in Navajo Nation, and one originated in the District of Columbia. Texas issued the most AMBER Alerts with 13 percent (n=33) followed by North Carolina with 7 percent (n=19) and Ohio with 6 percent (n=14).

Table 1: Number of Originating AMBER Alert Activations by State/Territory

State/Territory	Number of alerts
Texas	33
North Carolina	19
Ohio	14
California, Georgia, and Tennessee	13 each
New Mexico and Oklahoma	12 each
Wisconsin	11
Washington	9
Florida, Utah, and Virginia	8 each
Colorado and Missouri	7 each
New York	6
Idaho, Kansas, and Pennsylvania	5 each
Alabama, Arizona, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, and Montana	4 each
New Jersey	3
Arkansas, Louisiana, Navajo Nation, and South Dakota	2 each
Connecticut, District of Columbia, Iowa, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, South Carolina, West Virginia, and Wyoming	1 each
Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Vermont	0 each
Total	254

Multistate/Territory AMBER Alerts

When an AMBER Alert is issued, an abductor may take the child outside the jurisdiction of the issuing law enforcement authority. In some cases, the AMBER Alert coordinator in the state/territory where the AMBER Alert originated may request an AMBER Alert be extended into another state/territory. In 2021, 16 AMBER Alerts were extended beyond the limits of the state where the AMBER Alert first originated.

Table 2: List of Multistate/Territory AMBER Alerts

Originating	Extending
Idaho	Nevada
Idaho	Wyoming
Indiana	Illinois
Kansas	Missouri
Kansas	Missouri
Navajo Nation	Colorado
New Jersey	Ohio and Pennsylvania
New York	Pennsylvania
North Carolina	Georgia
North Carolina	Texas
Tennessee	Arizona
Tennessee	Florida

Originating	Extending
Tennessee	Florida and Georgia
Texas	Arkansas
Utah	Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and Oregon
Washington	Arizona and Idaho

Range of AMBER Alerts

AMBER Alerts may be targeted to large or small areas as determined by law enforcement. Local alerts indicate a target area of one county; regional alerts indicate a target area of multiple counties, which may cross state lines and include regional AMBER Alert plan activations; statewide indicates the activation of an entire state; and multistate indicates more than one plan in different states activated for the same incident.

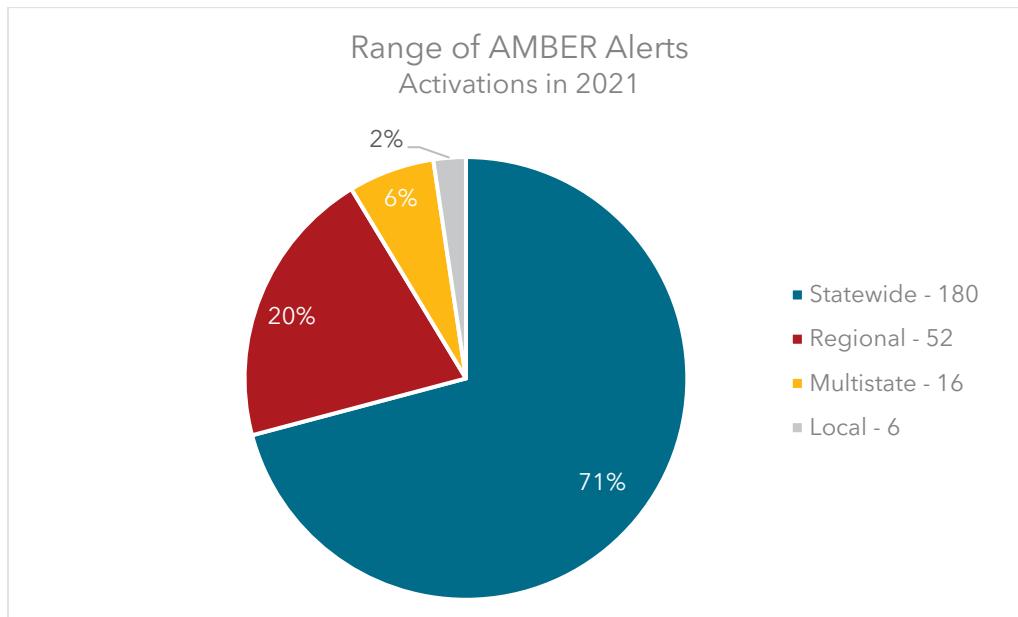


Figure 2: Range of AMBER Alerts

NCMEC Operational Support for AMBER Alerts

NCMEC is tasked with providing support to AMBER Alert plans by the Department of Justice. This includes amplification of AMBER Alerts when they are activated, pre-planning with AMBER Alert plans, and post-alert data collection and reporting. NCMEC does not determine if an AMBER Alert should be activated, and all actions taken by NCMEC are with the permission of law enforcement.

Secondary Distribution of AMBER Alerts

When an AMBER Alert is activated, NCMEC will deploy information to the AMBER Alert Secondary Distribution (AASD) network with the permission of the AMBER Alert coordinator. The AASD network amplifies the AMBER Alert using ever-evolving technology. The NCMEC Call Center works closely with each AMBER Alert coordinator to activate this system. As part of this procedure, NCMEC also posts the active alert on the national social media accounts for AMBER Alerts and on www.MissingKids.org/amber so the public can easily access the full alert.

AMBER Alert secondary distribution was completed for 239 AMBER alerts involving 302 children. In some instances, the alert may be canceled before secondary dissemination of the AMBER Alert is completed.

Wireless Emergency Alerts

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) can be activated by agencies connected to or designated by an AMBER Alert plan, which could include emergency management agencies, law enforcement, or directly by the AMBER Alert coordinator. NCMEC has the ability to activate WEA messages at the request of an AMBER Alert coordinator for any geographic area within the United States and can also provide a backup in instances of system failures. NCMEC works with each plan to determine the appropriate level of support, and the NCMEC Call Center activates WEA when requested during an AMBER Alert activation.

WEA messages are used for many types of emergency notifications. Cellphone users will see either a 90- or 360-character message displayed on their phone with an alert tone. WEA messages may not be issued for every case. The use of this tool is determined by law enforcement and the AMBER Alert coordinator, who must consider the available information to share with the public, investigative needs, timing, and geography. In some instances, the child is recovered quickly before the WEA message can be sent. In other instances, multiple WEA messages may be activated for a single AMBER Alert case, due to the geography or updated details of an AMBER Alert.

From December 2012 through December 2021, 1,457 WEA messages have been issued for AMBER Alerts. NCMEC activated 1,111 of those and 346 were activated by other agencies. In 2021, WEA was activated 248 times for AMBER Alerts with 133 sent by NCMEC and 115 sent by other agencies.

Team Adam Consultant Deployment

Team Adam is a program of NCMEC providing an on-site response and technical assistance support system to local law enforcement and support for families of missing and sexually exploited children. Team Adam was named in memory of 6-year-old Adam Walsh, the abducted and murdered son of NCMEC co-founders John and Revé Walsh.

In 2021, Team Adam consultants were deployed to assist with 17 AMBER Alert cases involving 25 children. One case was later determined to be a hoax and two cases were later determined to be unfounded. Eighteen children actually determined to be missing were recovered.

Primary Case Analysis

The following analysis provides details about AMBER Alerts and the abduction events which led to the activation of an alert. In some cases, it is determined upon resolution that the case did not meet AMBER Alert criteria due to inaccurate or intentionally false information provided to law enforcement. Cases falling under this designation are not included in this section and are analyzed separately in the *Hoax and Unfounded AMBER Alerts* section.

This section discusses 224 AMBER Alerts involving 283 children.

AMBER Alert Cases and Children

AMBER Alert by Case Type at Intake

A case type is assigned by NCMEC when an AMBER Alert is received, and an intake is completed by the NCMEC Call Center. As the investigation progresses, or recovery information is received, it may be determined the original case type must be changed. This section reflects case information available at the time of the initial AMBER Alert activation.

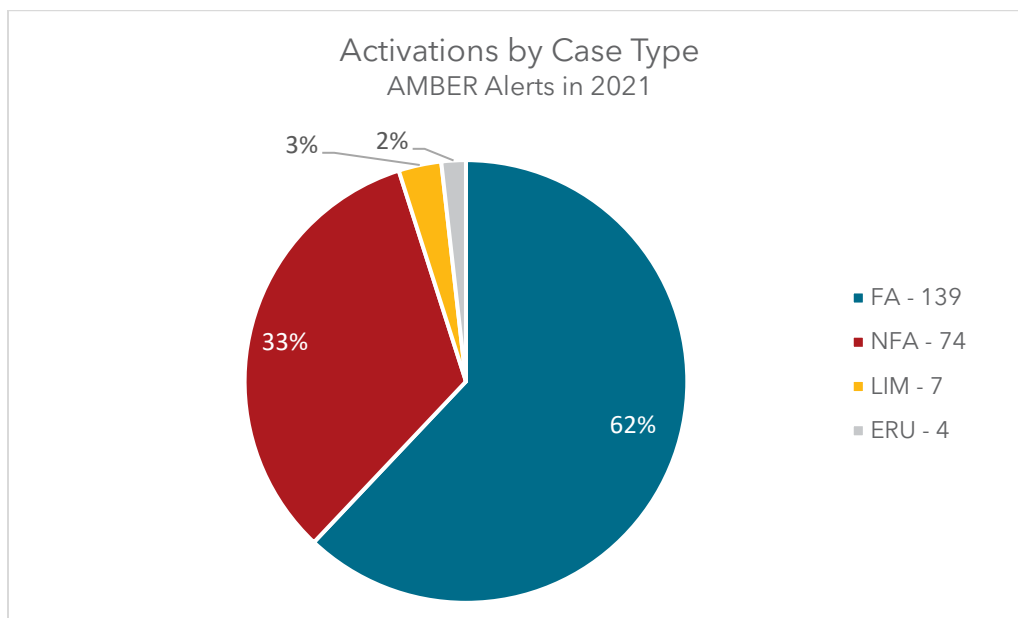


Figure 3: AMBER Alerts by Case Type at Intake

Demographics of Children Reported Missing

Females (n=155) were involved in AMBER Alert activations more often at 55 percent, compared to males who represented 45 percent (n=128). Children younger than 5 represented 55 percent (n=157) of the children who were reported missing with known ages.

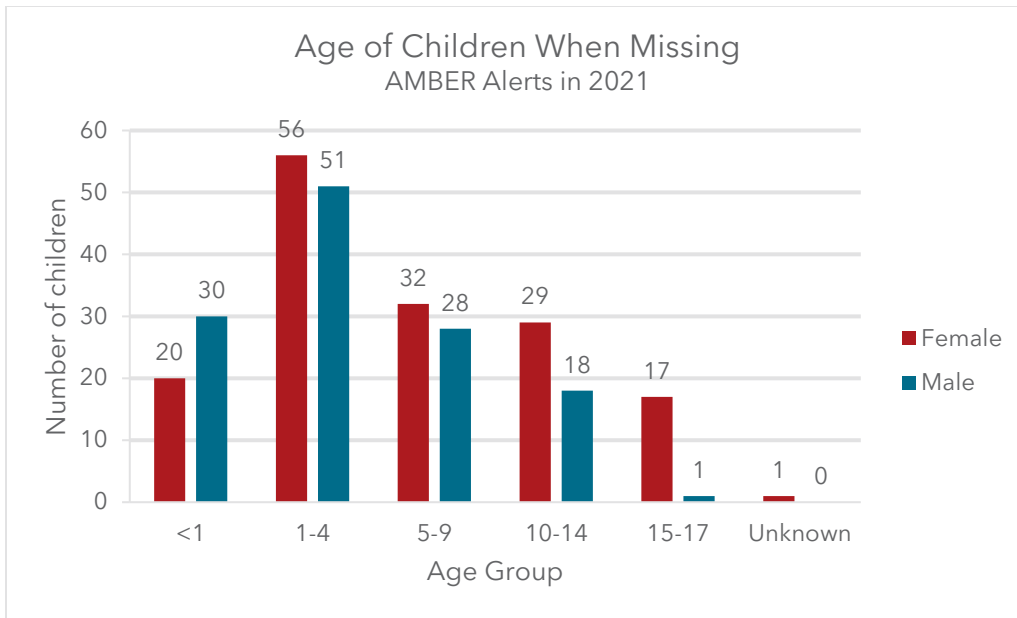


Figure 4: Age of Children When Missing

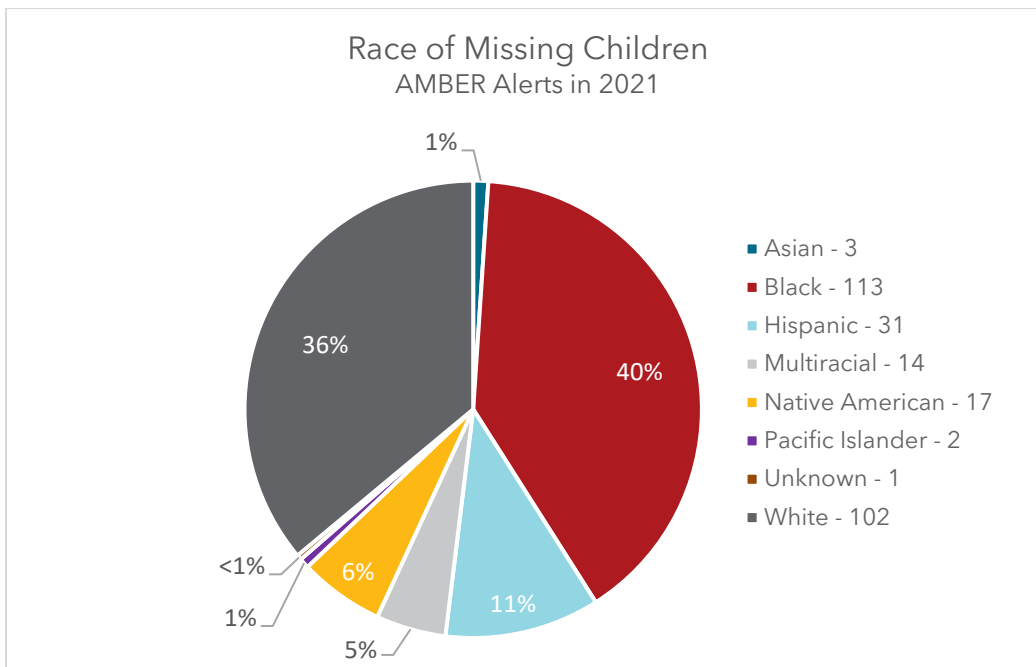


Figure 5: Race of Missing Children in AMBER Alerts

Abductors in AMBER Alert Cases

Abductor Demographics

In 2021, 244 abductors were identified as being involved in 231 AMBER Alert cases.

The majority of abductors were male at 61 percent (n=150), and 33 percent (n=81) of abductors were female. The sex for 5 percent (n=13) of abductors was unknown.

Thirty-seven percent (n=91) of abductors were Black, 32 percent (n=79) of abductors were White, 10 percent (n=24) of abductors were Hispanic, 4 percent (n=9) of abductors were Native American, and 0.4 percent (n=1) of abductors were Pacific Islander. The race for 16 percent (n=40) of abductors was unknown.

Abductor Relationship to Child

An AMBER Alert case may involve multiple abductors; therefore, the number of abductors may exceed the number of cases for any case type. Multiple abductors involved in an AMBER Alert case may have different relationships to the abducted child. For example, a mother who abducts her child may use her boyfriend as an accomplice. Therefore, he may be listed as an abductor.

Table 3: Abductor Relationship to Child by Case Type at Intake

Abductor relationship to child	FA	NFA	LIM	ERU	Total
Aunt	4	0	0	0	4
Babysitter	0	1	1	0	2
Boyfriend	1	4	0	0	5
Cousin	1	0	0	0	1
Ex-boyfriend	0	2	0	0	2
Father	76	2	0	0	78
Father's girlfriend	3	0	0	0	3
Friend of family	2	7	0	0	9
Grandmother	7	0	0	0	7
Mother	51	0	1	0	52
Mother's boyfriend	2	7	0	0	9
Mother's ex-boyfriend	1	2	0	0	3
Mother's girlfriend	0	2	0	0	2
No relation	0	43	0	1	44
Other	2	8	1	0	11
Sister	1	0	0	0	1
Trafficker	0	0	0	1	1
Uncle	4	0	0	0	4
Unknown	1	4	0	1	6
Total	156	82	3	3	244

Presumed or Likely Motivation for Abduction

In some AMBER Alert cases, a motivation may be confirmed or considered likely based on the circumstances of the case. When this is possible, the abductor's motive is determined by the primary abductor in the case rather than each abductor in the case. This is not a legal determination of intent, nor

does it necessarily reflect the legal resolution of a case. It is intended to identify possible trends in abductions which trigger the activation of AMBER Alerts.

Table 4: Abductor’s Motive for Abduction by Case

Motivation for abduction	Number of alerts
Domestic (Custodial)	69
Domestic (Other)	61
Vehicle theft	31
Unknown	20
Mental health concerns	11
Enticement (Online)	10
Sexual (No enticement)	6
Criminal activity	4
Substance use	3
Child Sex Trafficking (CST)	2
Infant abduction	2
Other	2
Human smuggling	1
Undisclosed	1
Ransom	1
Total	224

Table 5: Abductor’s Motive for Abduction by Abductor Relationship to Child

Motivation for abduction	Parent/guardian	Other relative	Known to family/child	No relation	Unknown	Total
Domestic (Custodial)	74	5	8	0	0	87
Domestic (Other)	42	2	16	0	1	61
Vehicle theft	0	0	1	30	0	31
Unknown	3	3	5	3	2	16
Enticement (Online)	0	0	1	10	0	11
Mental health concerns	6	4	0	0	0	10
Sexual (No enticement)	2	1	3	0	1	7
Human smuggling	0	0	5	0	0	5
Criminal activity	3	0	1	0	0	4
Substance use	0	2	2	0	0	4
CST	0	0	2	0	0	2
Infant abduction	0	0	1	1	0	2
Ransom	0	0	0	0	2	2
Undisclosed	0	0	1	0	0	1
Other	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	130	17	47	44	6	244

AMBER Alert Incident Duration

Time Between Reported Missing and Activation

Information about the time between when the child was reported missing to law enforcement and the AMBER Alert's activation was available in 215 cases.

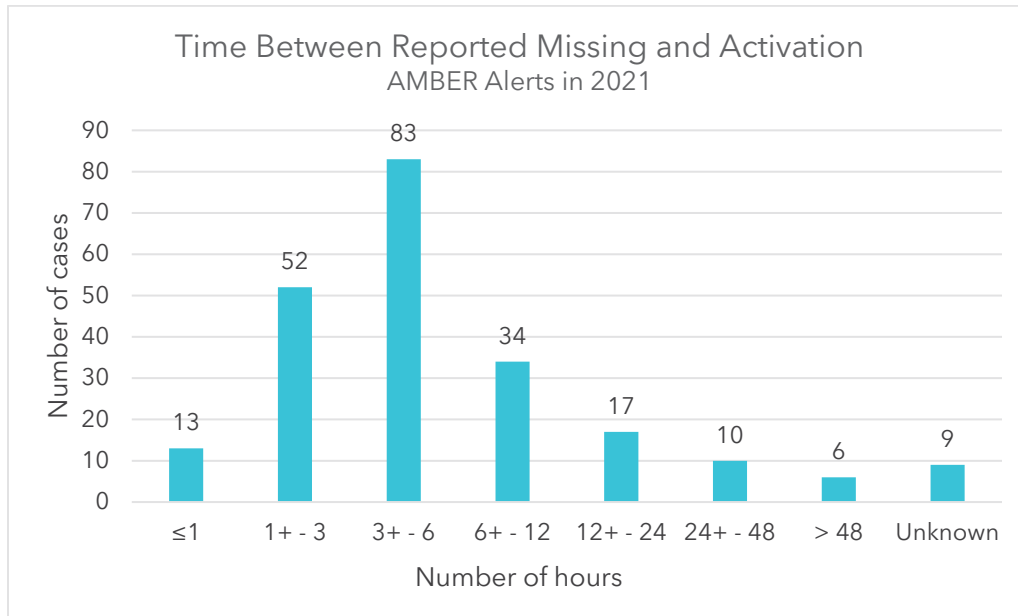


Figure 6: Time Between Reported Missing and Activation

Time Between Reported Missing and Recovery

Information about the time between when the child was reported missing to law enforcement and the AMBER Alert recovery was available in 214 cases.

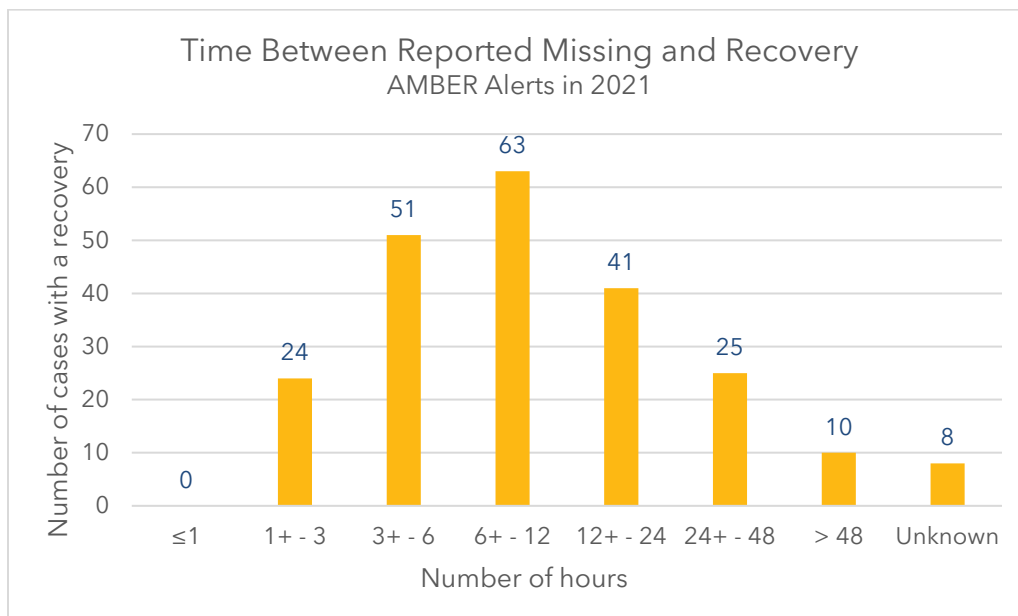


Figure 7: Time Between Reported Missing and Recovery

Time Between Activation and Recovery

Information about the time between when the AMBER Alert was activated, and the AMBER Alert recovery was available in 222 cases.

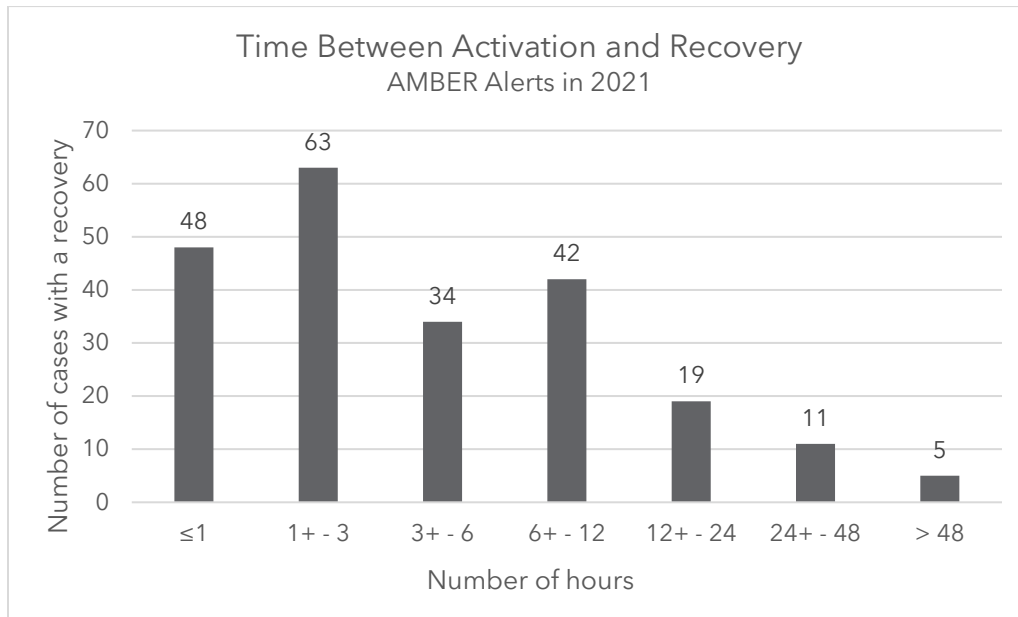


Figure 8: Time Between Activation and Recovery

Recovery Within Three Days of Activation

Information about the date between when the AMBER Alert was activated, and the AMBER Alert recovery was available in all 254 cases. Table 6 includes data for hoax and unfounded AMBER Alerts.

Table 6: Recovery Within Three Days of Activation

Time between activation and recovery 1/1/2021 - 12/31/2021	
Case Intake	254
Cases reclassified as hoax or unfounded after intake	30
Children Intake	320
Children whose cases were reclassified as hoax or unfounded after intake	37
Number of cases in which child recovered within 72 hours	218
Percent of cases in which child recovered within 72 hours	97 percent*
Number of children reported as being recovered within 72 hours	275
Percent of children reported as being recovered within 72 hours	97 percent**

*Percentage excludes cases reclassified as hoaxes (n=11) and unfounded (n=19)

**Percentage excludes children whose cases were reclassified as hoaxes (n=14) and unfounded (n=23)

Case Geography

Missing Location

In 2021, there were 208 cases with information about where the children involved were last known to be located.

Table 7: Missing Location

Missing location	Number of cases	Percent
Residence*	109	49%
Automobile	39	17%
Unknown	16	7%
Street	11	5%
Other	8	4%
Medical facility	6	3%
Retail	6	3%
School facility	5	2%
Social services	4	2%
Park	4	2%
Outdoor/open area	3	1%
Hotel/motel	2	1%
Parking lot/garage	2	1%
Transportation facility	2	1%
Daycare facility	2	1%
Restaurant	1	<1%
Library	1	<1%
Religious facility	1	<1%
Office building	1	<1%
School bus stop	1	<1%
Total	224	~100%

*Residence denotes any residential location, except social service placements.

Travel Distances

In 2021, distances between where the child was reported missing and recovered were known for 214 AMBER Alert cases. The distances reported in Figures 9 and 10 are estimates since they were calculated by using city and state. Therefore, distances are not calculated for cases in which the child was recovered from the city where they were abducted.

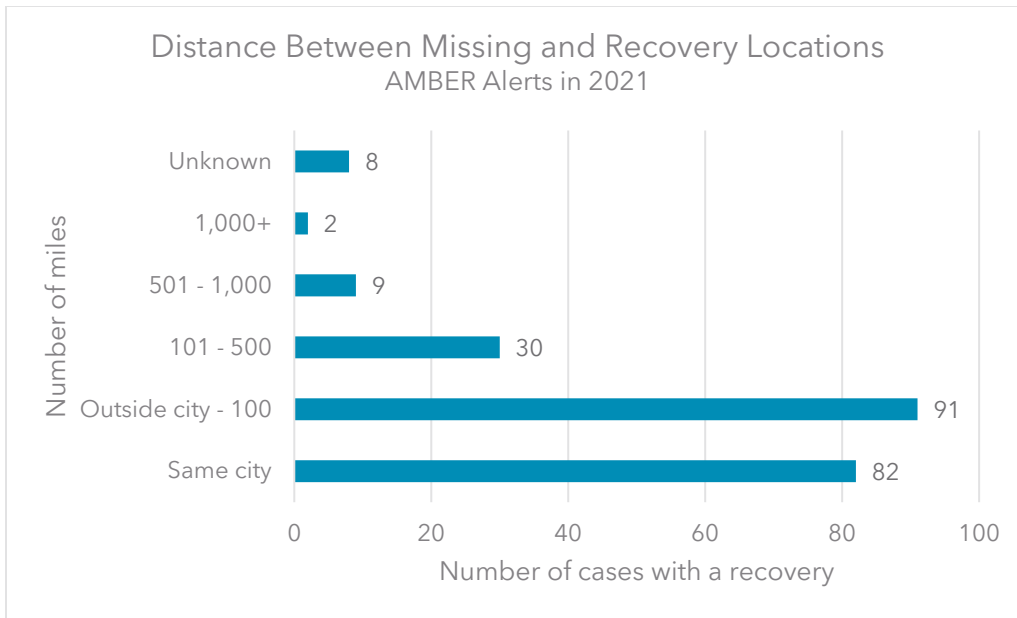


Figure 9: Distance Between Missing and Recovery Locations

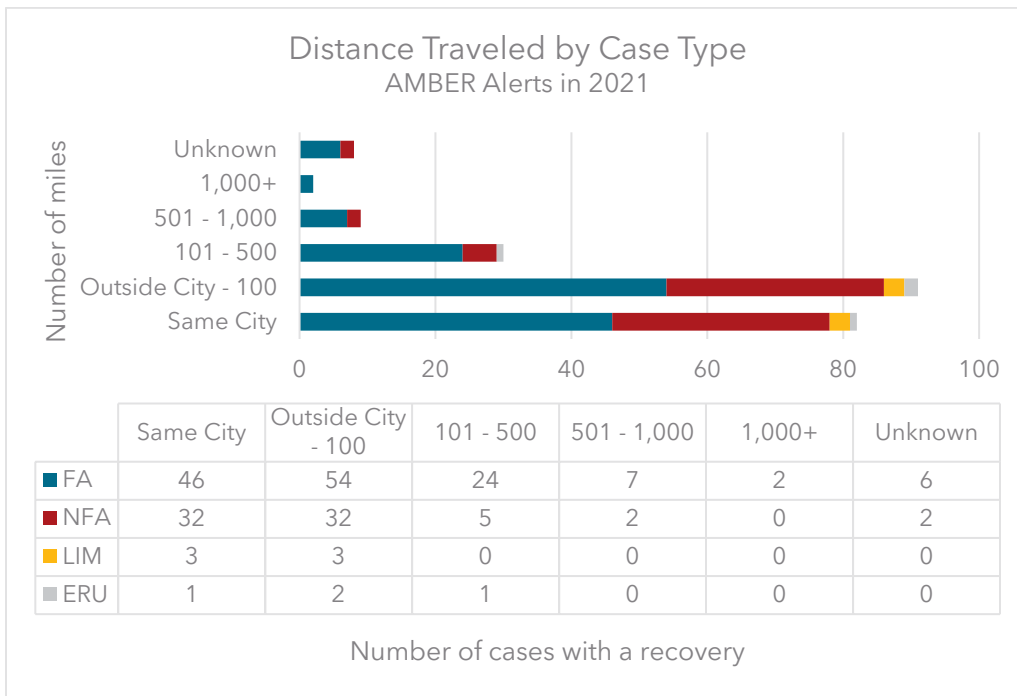


Figure 10: Distance Traveled by Case Type at Intake

International Abductions

In 2021, there was one AMBER Alert activation as a result of an international abduction. One Hispanic child was recovered in Mexico. The child and her mother were abducted by the child's father.

Recoveries Outside of State/Territory Where AMBER Alert First Activated

There are instances when an abductor may travel with a child out of the state/territory where the AMBER Alert was first activated. Of the 254 AMBER Alerts issued in 2021, two cases remain active.

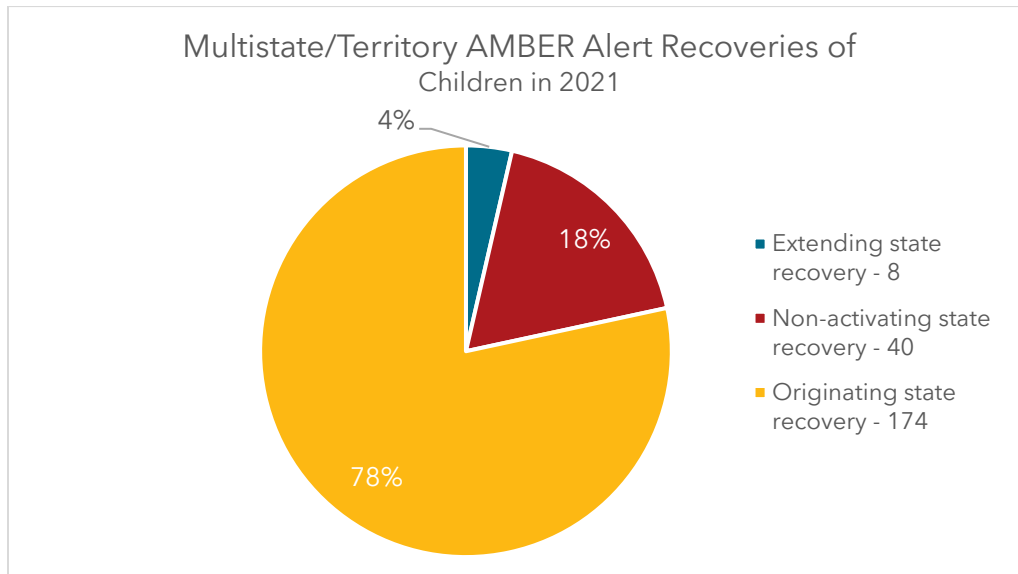


Figure 11: Multistate/Territory AMBER Alert Recoveries

Recovery Location

There were 209 cases with information about where the child was recovered. Two cases remain active. In 2021, 32 percent (n=72) of children involved in AMBER Alert cases were most often recovered at home followed by recoveries in an automobile at 18 percent (n=40).

Table 8: Recovery Location

Recovery location	Number of cases	Percent
Residence*	72	32%
Automobile	40	18%
Street	33	15%
Hotel/motel	21	9%
Unknown	13	6%
Law enforcement station	11	5%
Retail	7	3%
Outdoor/open area	6	3%
Parking lot/garage	4	2%
Restaurant	4	2%
Government facility	2	1%
Medical facility	2	1%
Park	2	1%
Transportation facility	2	1%
Beach/boardwalk	1	<1%
Office building	1	<1%
Other	1	<1%
Total	222	~100%

*Residence denotes any residential location, except social service placements.

Vehicle Information in AMBER Alert Broadcast

AMBER Alert cases often involve a vehicle, though vehicle information is not required to issue an AMBER Alert. When appropriate, law enforcement will include this information in the notification sent to the public. In some instances, only vehicle descriptors, such as make, model, or color, are available. In others, complete or partial license plate information is available.

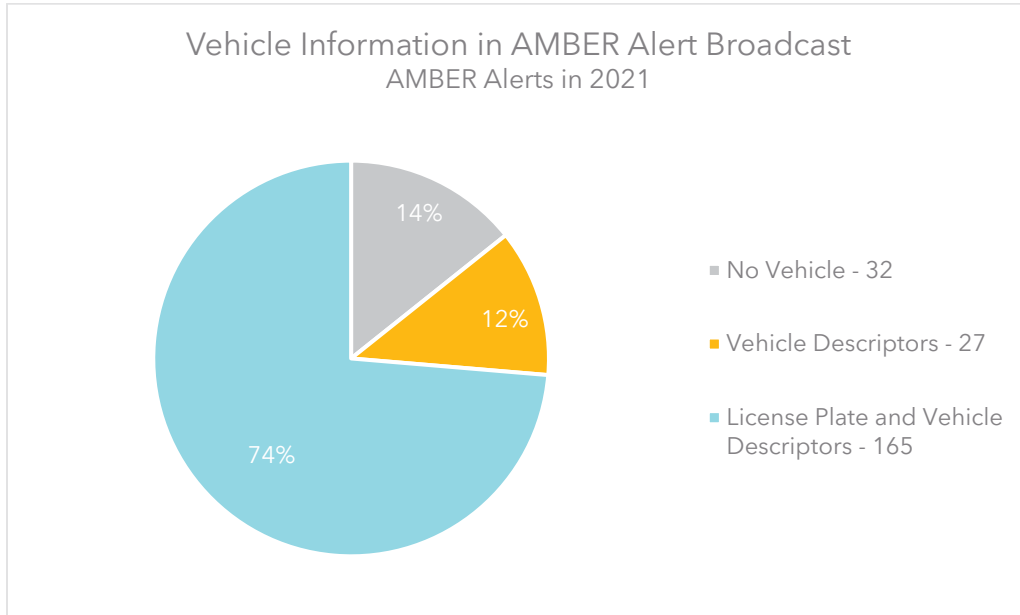


Figure 12: Vehicle Information Listed in AMBER Alert Broadcast

Success Stories

A success story is a case in which a child is confirmed to have been safely recovered as a direct result of the AMBER Alert being issued. A case is not considered a successful recovery if the law enforcement investigation indicates the case is unfounded or a hoax.

Count of Success Stories

Of the 254 AMBER Alert cases in 2021, 58 children involved in 51 AMBER Alert cases were successfully recovered as a direct result of those respective AMBER Alerts being issued.

Table 9: Success Stories by Case Type

Case type at intake	Number of successful recoveries by case	Number of successful recoveries by child
FA	33	39
NFA	17	18
LIM	1	1
ERU	0	0
Total	51	58

Reason for Success Stories

The most common reason for an AMBER Alert success story is an individual or law enforcement recognizing the vehicle from the AMBER Alert at 35 percent (n=18).

Table 10: Reason for Success Stories

Reason for success story	Number of cases	Number of children
Individual or law enforcement recognized vehicle	18	21
Law enforcement received tips from individuals	8	10
Individual knew of abductor's/child's whereabouts	8	9
Individual or law enforcement recognized child and/or abductor	8	8
Abductor heard alert and released child	7	8
Individual heard alert and convinced abductor to turn self in	2	2
Total	51	58

Time Between Activation and Recovery for Success Stories

Of the success stories in 2021, 62 percent of the children (n=36) were successfully recovered within three hours of those AMBER Alerts being issued.

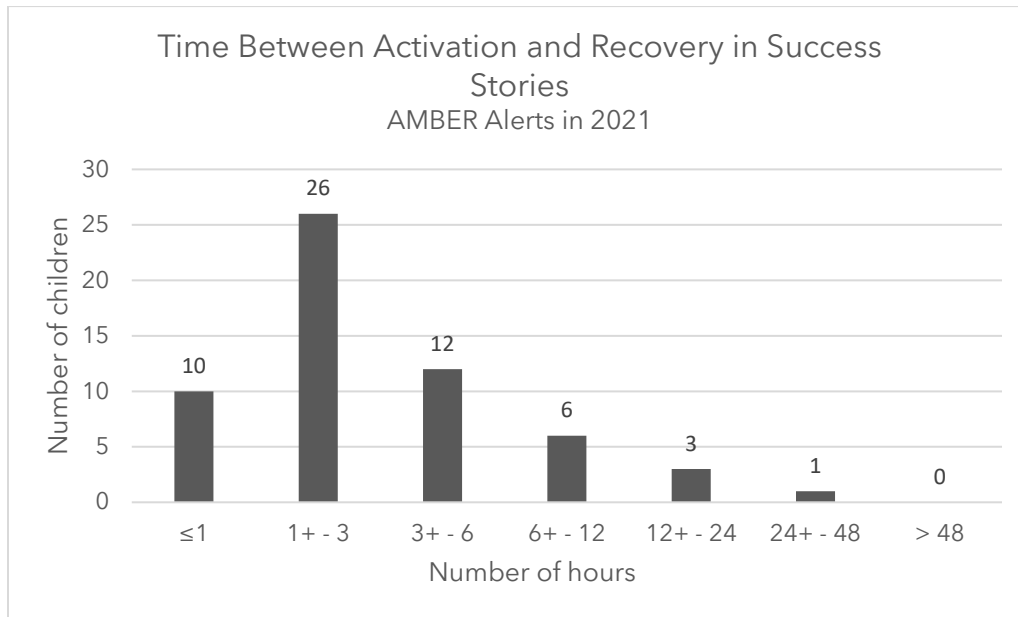


Figure 13: Time Between Activation and Recovery for Success Stories

Children Located Deceased

In 2021, two children in two separate AMBER Alert cases were located deceased. Children in hoax and unfounded AMBER Alerts have been included in this analysis.

Table 11: Children Located Deceased

Case type	Abductor motivation	Race/Sex of child	Age when missing	Time from activation to resolution	Distance from missing to recovery	Manner of death
NFA	Unknown	Black male	3	>72 hours	Same city	Homicide
NFA	Domestic (Other)	Hispanic female	2	<72 hours	Same city	Undisclosed*

*Undisclosed means the manner of death was not released by the investigative agency at the time of data collection.

Hoax and Unfounded AMBER Alerts

Hoax AMBER Alerts

Cases and Children in Hoax AMBER Alerts

In 2021, 4 percent (n=11) of AMBER Alerts issued involving 14 children were later determined to be hoaxes.

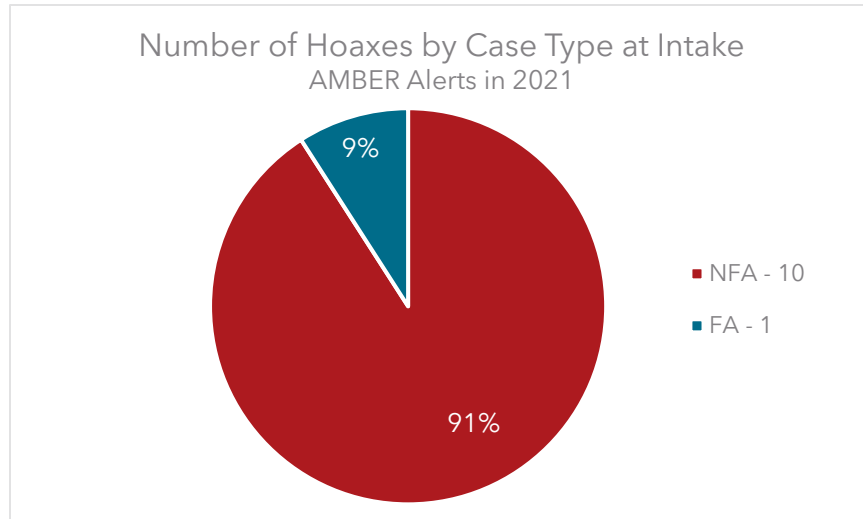


Figure 14: Number of Hoaxes by Case Type at Intake

Table 12: Age and Sex of Children in Hoaxes

Age group	Female	Male	Total
1-4	1	3	4
5-9	0	0	0
10-14	5	1	6
15-17	3	1	4
Total	9	5	14

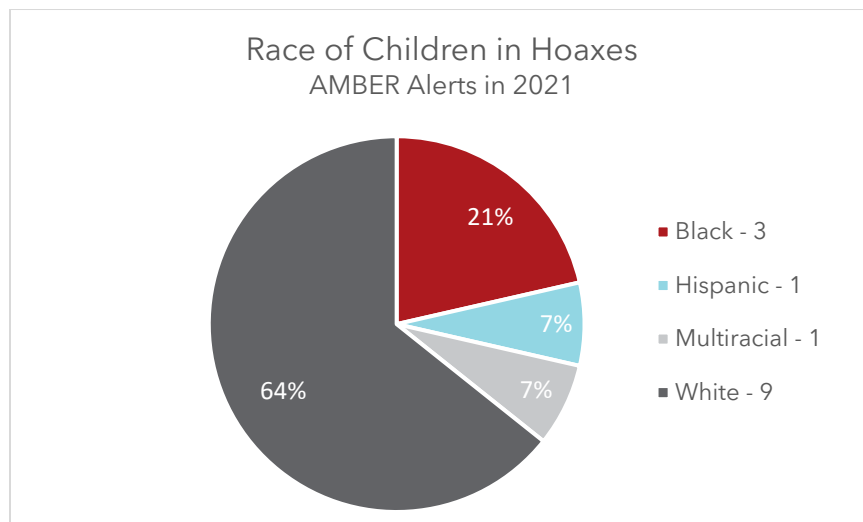


Figure 15: Race of Children in Hoaxes

Hoax Source or Reporting Party

In 36 percent (n=4) of hoaxes, false information was provided by the child’s parent and 27 percent (n=3) of false information was provided by the child. Additionally, 9 percent each (n=1 each) was provided by the child and their friend, by the child and their cousins, and by the child’s boyfriend and friend. For one case, it was unknown who provided false information.

Reported Hoax Locations

Of the 11 cases determined to be hoaxes, five cases had known locations from which the children involved were reported missing. Of those cases, 60 percent (n=3) were reported missing from a residence and 40 percent (n=2) were reported missing from a retail location.

Unfounded AMBER Alerts

In 2021, 7 percent (n=19) of AMBER Alerts issued involving 23 children were later determined to be unfounded.

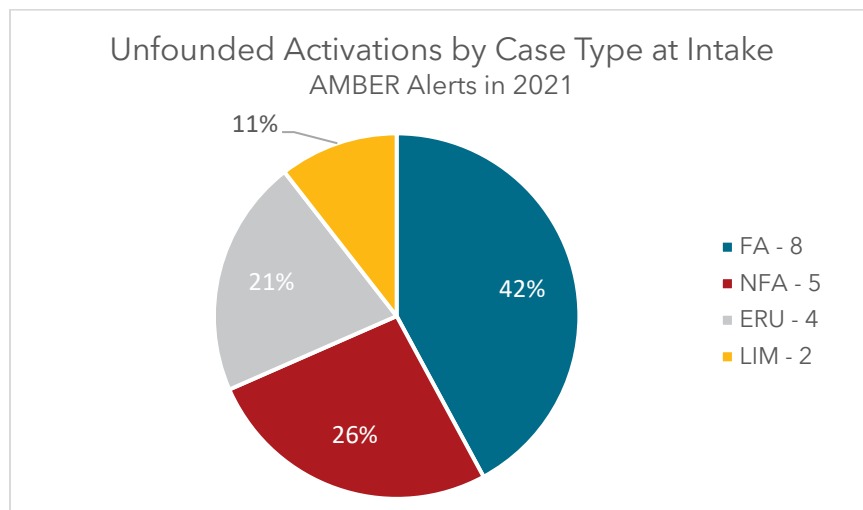


Figure 16: Unfounded Activations by Case Type at Intake

Table 13: Age and Sex of Children in Unfounded AMBER Alerts

Age group	Female	Male	Total
1-4	2	3	5
5-9	1	3	4
10-14	9	1	10
15-17	3	1	4
Total	15	8	23

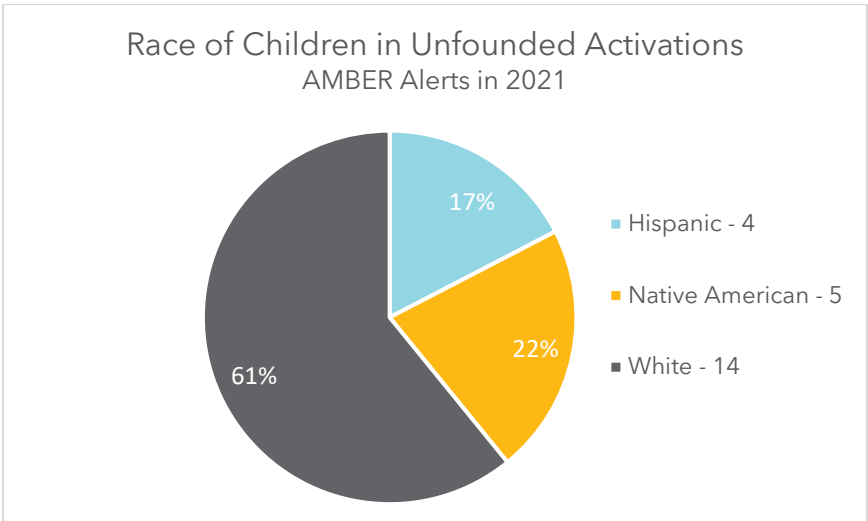


Figure 17: Race of Children in Unfounded AMBER Alerts

Five Year Comparison of AMBER Alerts Issued

This section includes all hoax and unfounded AMBER Alerts for the described parameters and time periods.

Five Year Overview

Yearly Totals of AMBER Alerts and Children Involved

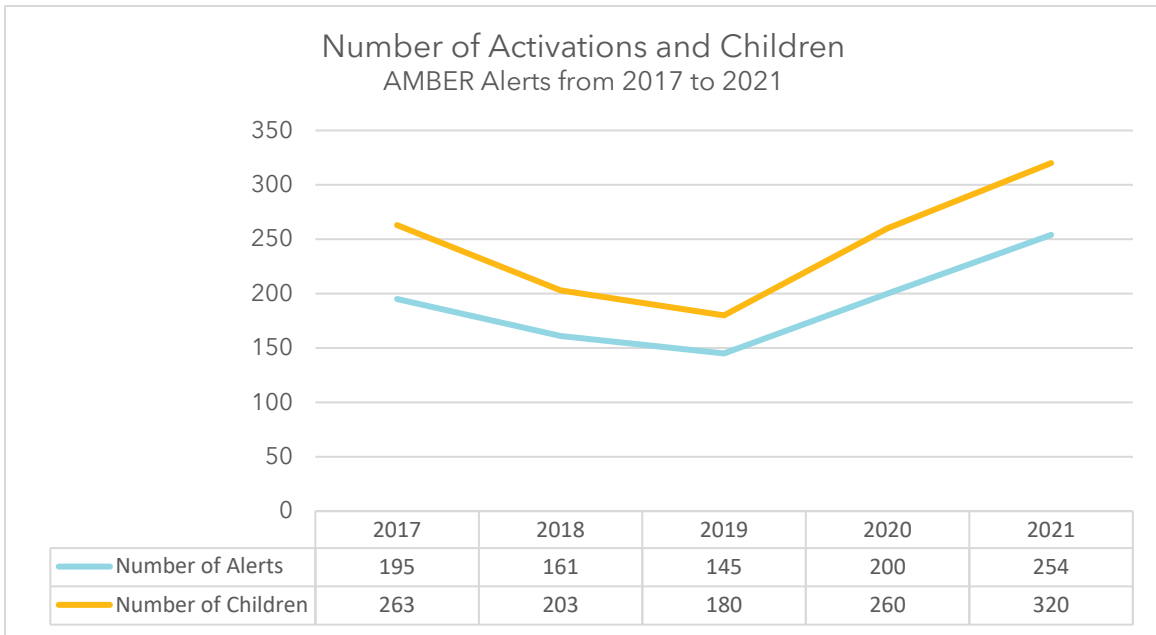


Figure 18: Number of AMBER Alerts and Children from 2017 to 2021

Monthly AMBER Alert Totals

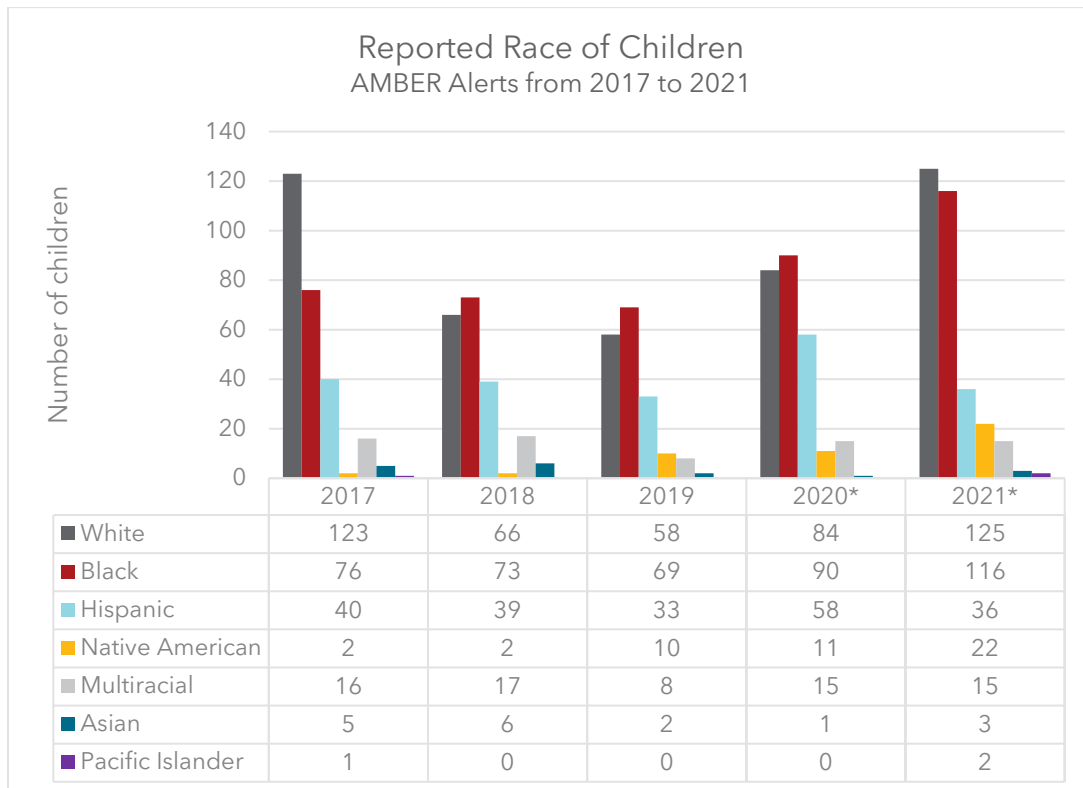
Table 14: Number of AMBER Alerts by Month from 2017 to 2021

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2017	20	11	17	19	20	18	18	23	16	13	10	10
2018	12	3	15	14	22	17	18	13	18	7	14	8
2019	10	5	12	10	18	9	10	18	11	16	12	14
2020	13	15	13	19	18	24	16	13	16	22	18	13
2021	23	23	28	15	21	27	19	19	19	20	21	19
Average total	16	11	17	15	20	19	16	17	16	16	15	13

Children in AMBER Alerts from 2017 to 2021

Reported Race of Children

Figure 19 provides the total number of children by race as reported to law enforcement at the initiation of an AMBER Alert. It includes children shown in AMBER Alerts later determined to be hoaxes or unfounded. Earlier portions of this report provide more detailed break downs of race in hoax or unfounded alerts vs. non-hoax/unfounded alerts.



*The race of one child was unknown.

Figure 19: Reported Race of Children from 2017 to 2021

Deceased Children

Table 15: Number of Children Located Deceased from 2017 to 2021

Case type at intake	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
FA	0	1	3	2	0	6
NFA	2	5	3	1	2	13
LIM	4	1	4	7	0	16
ERU	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	6	7	10	10	2	35

Hoaxes and Unfounded AMBER Alerts

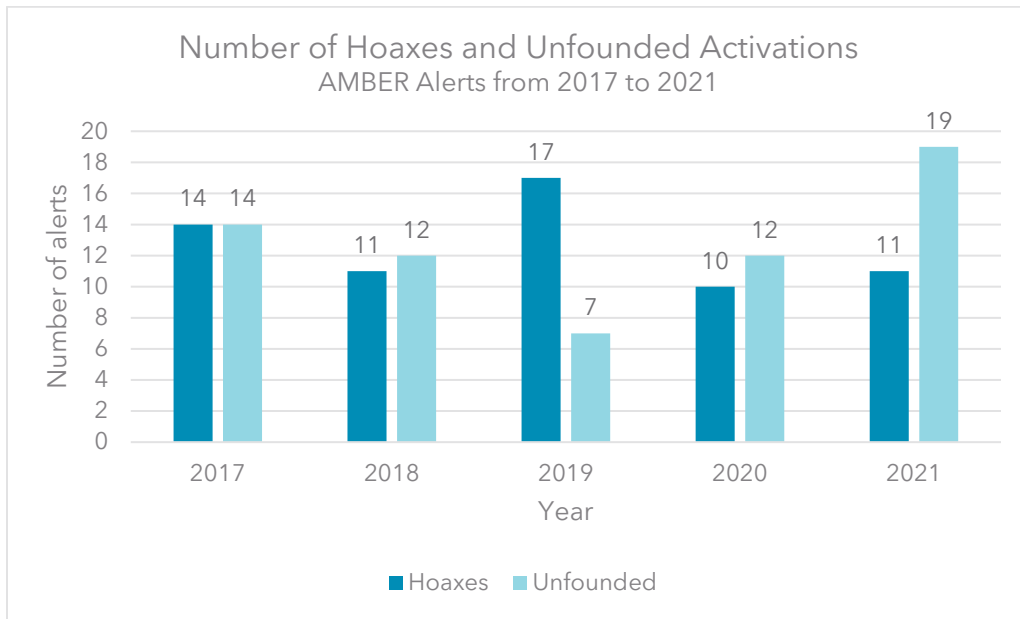


Figure 20: Number of Hoaxes and Unfounded Alerts from 2017 to 2021

Glossary

AMBER Alert: An AMBER Alert is a rapid notification to the public using all available technology when a child is abducted or believed to have been abducted. AMBER Alerts are activated based on specific criteria and use common technologies across each AMBER Alert plan. For the purposes of analysis, the below terms can be used to reference different aspects of an AMBER Alert.

- *AMBER Alert Plan:* A defined jurisdiction for the activation of an AMBER Alert which may exist at the state, local, regional, tribal, or territorial levels. Plans are generally under the direction of an AMBER Alert coordinator.
- *AMBER Alert Case:* This represents an abduction event for which one or more AMBER Alerts have been activated.
- *AMBER Alert Activation:* One or more AMBER Alert plans may activate their resources for the same abduction event. Each plan that issues an AMBER Alert for a case is considered an activation.
- *Originating AMBER Alert Activation:* This refers to the FIRST plan to activate during an abduction event.
- *Extending AMBER Alert Activation:* Any plan that activates an AMBER Alert after or at the request of the originating AMBER Alert plan.

AMBER Alert Range: AMBER Alerts are activated geographically based on the needs of the investigation. A statewide plan may issue an alert for only a single county and some cases may result in activations by multiple AMBER Alert plans. The below terms are used to define the geography of all notifications for an AMBER Alert case.

- *Local:* The activation of the AMBER Alert was limited to a single county.
- *Regional:* The activation of the AMBER Alert was limited to a group of counties within one state or the jurisdiction of a regional plan which includes multiple counties in different states. An example of a regional plan with counties in multiple states would be the Navajo Nation AMBER Alert Plan.
- *Statewide:* An AMBER Alert was activated for the entirety of one state.
- *Multistate:* AMBER Alert plans in more than one state or territory activated for the same AMBER Alert case.

AMBER Alert Secondary Distribution (AASD): A network of private companies, social media, technology partners, federal agencies, and others which geographically amplify AMBER Alerts to the public, customers, or their employees. This network is maintained and activated by NCMEC.

Case Type: NCMEC categorizes missing child cases based on specific factors for the purposes of case management and data analysis. In this report, all case type analysis is based on the case type at the time of intake by NCMEC.

- *Family abduction (FA)* - A family abduction is defined as the taking, retention, or concealment of a child, younger than 18 years of age, by a parent, other person with a family relationship to the child, or his or her agent, in violation of the custody rights, including visitation rights of a parent or legal guardian.
- *Nonfamily abduction (NFA)* - A nonfamily abduction is defined as the unauthorized taking, retention, luring, confinement, or concealment of a child younger than the age of 18 by someone other than a family member.
- *Lost, injured, or otherwise missing (LIM)* - Lost, injured, or otherwise missing is defined as any missing child younger than the age of 18 when there are insufficient facts to determine the cause of

the child's disappearance or any child 10 years of age or younger who is missing on his or her own accord.

- *Endangered runaway (ERU)* - Any missing child between 11 and 17 years of age who is missing of their own accord and whose whereabouts are unknown to their parent(s) or legal guardian.

Hoax and Unfounded AMBER Alerts: Law enforcement activates AMBER Alerts based on information known at the time of a confirmed or suspected abduction, but in some instances when the case is resolved, the information which led to the activation of an AMBER Alert was determined to be false or inaccurate. If it is determined at the conclusion of the investigation that the AMBER Alert criteria would not have been met were all accurate facts available, the AMBER Alert is considered unfounded or a hoax. For example, in some instances a child may have been missing but it was later determined they were not in danger or were not abducted.

- A hoax AMBER Alert occurs when false information is relayed at any point during the investigation to create the impression of an abduction or endangerment which results in law enforcement activating an AMBER Alert.
- An unfounded AMBER alert occurs when an AMBER Alert is activated based on information later determined to be inaccurate.

International Case: An AMBER Alert case is considered international if either of the following are true:

- At any point during the abduction incident it was confirmed the child was transported across an international border.
- Based on a significant belief the child had entered the country, an AMBER Alert was activated within the United States for a child missing from another country.

Motivation: Motivation analysis is provided based on the best available information regarding the presumed or likely motivation for the abduction of a child. These do not account for other endangerments or reasons why law enforcement believed the child was in imminent danger. AMBER Alerts determined to be a hoax or unfounded are not assigned a motivation. The following categories are used in this report:

- *Criminal Activity:* The child was abducted due to criminal activity not covered by other motivations, such as drug sales or fleeing a crime scene. The child may or may not have a direct involvement in the criminal activity.
- *Domestic (Custodial):* The primary motivation is the custody of the child.
- *Domestic (Other):* Any other domestic incident or dispute led to the abduction of the child or the reason for the domestic incident is unknown. This includes incidents related to romantic relationships involving the child or guardian of the child.
- *Enticement (Online):* The child was initially/primarily groomed or enticed online or via an app. There may be prior in-person meetings, and there may or may not be a sexual component.
- *Enticement (Other):* The child was initially/primarily groomed or enticed in person. There may be secondary technology aspects, and there may or may not be a sexual component.
- *Human Smuggling:* The child was abducted while being transported to gain illegal entry into a foreign country.
- *Infant Abduction:* The taking of a child younger than 12 months of age for the purpose of raising the child as their own. This includes fetal abductions, where a child is forcefully and violently removed from the womb by an abductor for the same purpose.
- *Mental Health Crisis:* The abduction occurred due to a mental health crisis on the part of the abductor.
- *Other:* Any motivations not specified in the definitions of this report.

- *Ransom*: The child was abducted with the intent of collecting ransom.
- *Sexual (No enticement)*: The abduction occurred with intent to sexually assault or exploit the child.
- *Substance Use*: The use of drugs or alcohol by the abductor led to the abduction of the child.
- *Trafficking (CST)*: The child was abducted in an incident related to child sex trafficking. For example, a child was abducted by a trafficker.
- *Trafficking (Other)*: The child was abducted in relation to other forms of human trafficking, such as forced labor or adult commercial sex.
- *Undisclosed*: Law enforcement did not release motivation information to NCMEC.
- *Unknown*: Law enforcement is unable to identify a presumed or likely motivation for abduction.
- *Vehicle Theft*: The child was in a car which was stolen. The abduction is likely unintentional with the car being the primary target of the incident.

Recovery: A child is considered recovered when any of the criteria listed below are met. AMBER Alerts involving multiple children may result in recoveries which take place at different times during the investigation.

- Returns home to their parent or legal guardian.
- Remains in the custody of law enforcement.
- Is in contact with their parent or legal guardian but will not be returning home and the parents or legal guardian and law enforcement are satisfied with the situation.
- A child is only considered recovered/deceased by NCMEC if remains have been found and positively identified.

Resolved: An AMBER Alert is considered resolved when one of the following criteria are met:

- All children featured in the AMBER Alert have been recovered.
- Law enforcement determines no child was missing, which may happen during AMBER Alerts categorized as hoaxes or unfounded AMBER Alerts.

Success Story: A child's recovery is considered a success story when their safe recovery occurred as a direct result of the AMBER Alert being issued. For example, an individual may recognize the vehicle involved in the alert and report the sighting to law enforcement leading to the safe rescue of the child.

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA): Wireless Emergency Alerts are short emergency messages, from authorized federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial public alerting authorities, that can be broadcast from cell towers to any WEA-enabled mobile device in a locally targeted area. Wireless providers primarily use cell broadcast technology for WEA message delivery. WEA is a partnership among FEMA, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and wireless providers to enhance public safety.²

² FEMA. n.d. *Wireless Emergency Alerts*. Accessed February 15, 2022. <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/integrated-public-alert-warning-system/public/wireless-emergency-alerts>.

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2021 Map



2021 AMBER Alert Report

AMBER Alert Activations
 from Jan. 1, 2021, to Dec. 31, 2021
 Total = 254

