

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children[®]

2020 AMBER Alert Report

Analysis of AMBER Alert Cases in 2020



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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. Dallas-Fort Worth area residents were outraged and began calling radio stations, not only to vent their anger and frustration but also to offer suggestions to prevent such crimes in the future. 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.

This program was eventually taken to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) with a request for a national initiative. It then became known as America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response (AMBER) Plan, which allows broadcasters and transportation authorities to immediately distribute information about recent child abductions to the public and galvanizes the community to assist in the search and safe recovery of the child. What began as a local effort in the Dallas-Fort Worth area has grown into a seamless system of such programs in every state across the country, the District of Columbia, Navajo Nation, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. More than two dozen countries have followed suit and developed similar plans. Each year, these alerts have led to the safe recovery of abducted children. Since the inception of the program in 1996, through December 31, 2020, the program has expanded to use every available technology, including cellphones, and 1,053 children have been safely recovered specifically as a result of an AMBER Alert being issued.

This program is a voluntary partnership among law enforcement agencies, broadcasters, transportation agencies, and the wireless industry to activate an urgent bulletin in the most serious cases of child abduction. Broadcasters use EAS to air a description of the abducted child, suspected abductor and the vehicle if one was used in the abduction. In the summer of 2004, NCMEC began to develop a network of internet content providers, trucking industry associations, social networking websites, digital billboards, and wireless industry representatives to further enhance the alerting capabilities of each state/territory's AMBER Alert program. The AMBER Alert program has now evolved to use all available technology when alerting the public. More recently, Wireless Emergency Alerts and targeted distribution on social media continue to improve and expand the reach of the AMBER Alert program.

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 More recently, 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 4, 2021.

AMBER Alert Definitions

This report presents information about AMBER Alerts issued in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Navajo Nation, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands from January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020, and intaked by NCMEC. Although an AMBER Alert case may be activated in multiple areas, this report organizes alerts based on the state/territory of first activation. This report analyzes cases according to the case type for which the AMBER Alert was issued, not the case type at the time of recovery.

When a law enforcement agency is notified about an abducted child, it must first determine if that child's case meets the program's AMBER Alert criteria. The U.S. Department of Justice's recommended guidelines 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.

An AMBER Alert may involve one or more children and is issued on either a state/territory, regional, or local level. Once an AMBER Alert is activated, the alert may be issued in another state/territory at the request of the originating state's AMBER Alert coordinator, thus creating a **multistate/territory activation**. A state-/territory-wide alert is issued in the entire state or territory, a regional alert is issued in multiple counties, and a local alert is issued in one county or a smaller geographic area. 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.

At the outset of an AMBER Alert case, law enforcement categorizes the case as one of the four types listed below, defined for the purposes of this report as:

- **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.

Law enforcement may determine an AMBER Alert should be recategorized based on new information developed during the case investigation. For example, when the AMBER Alert is issued, law enforcement may believe the child is a NFA victim, but at the conclusion of the case may determine the child was in fact an ERU.

Law enforcement occasionally encounters cases in which an AMBER Alert should not have been issued, later determining those cases were either **unfounded** or a **hoax**:

- A **hoax** occurs when an individual falsely reports a child missing or when a child reports themselves missing with the intent to mislead law enforcement.
- An **unfounded** case occurs when a child is reported missing based on available information at the time, but the investigation determines a child was never missing.

Cases are categorized as **resolved** when any of the criteria listed below are met. The child:

- 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's case is only labeled recovered/deceased by NCMEC if a body has been found and positively identified.

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.

Summary of AMBER Alerts

From January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, 200 AMBER Alerts were issued in the U.S. involving 260 children.

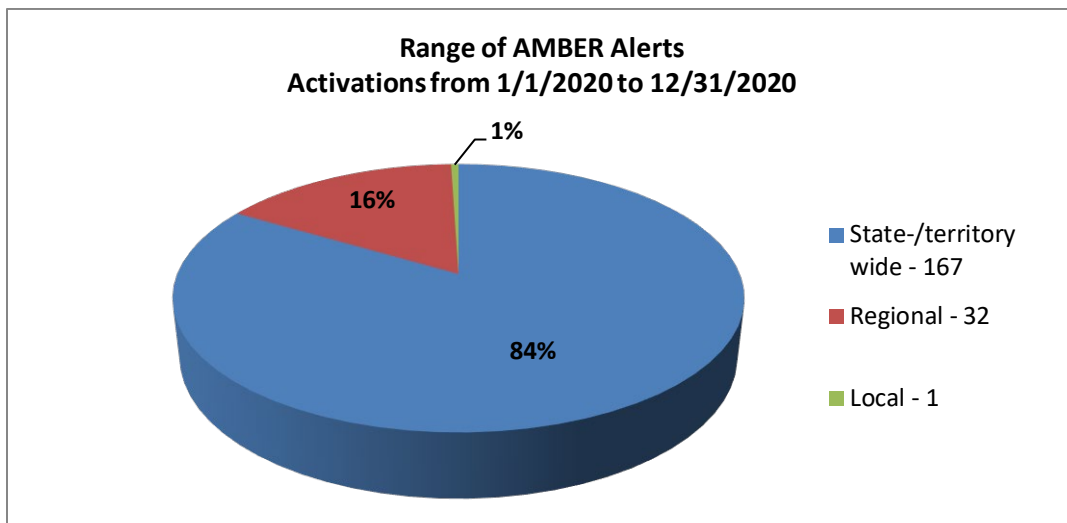
At the time the AMBER Alert cases were intaked at NCMEC, there were 125 FAs, 56 NFAs, 17 LIMs, and two ERUs. Ten cases were later determined to be hoaxes, and 12 cases were later determined to be unfounded.

Of the 200 AMBER Alerts issued from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, 196 cases resulted in a recovery, 46 of which were successfully recovered as a direct result of an AMBER Alert being issued. As of February 23, 2021, when statistics for this report were finalized for the AMBER Alerts issued in 2020, four children remained actively missing and 10 children were located deceased.

AMBER Alerts by Range

In 2020, 84 percent (n=167) of AMBER Alerts were issued state-/territory wide, 16 percent (n=32) of AMBER Alerts were issued regionally, and 1 percent (n=1) of AMBER Alerts were issued locally.

Figure 1: Range of AMBER Alerts



AMBER Alerts by State/Territory

From January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, 200 AMBER Alerts were issued in 39 states. One AMBER Alert occurred in Navajo Nation. Texas issued the most AMBER Alerts with 21 percent (n=42) followed by Florida with 9 percent (n=18) and Georgia with 6 percent (n=11).

Table 1: Number and Percent of AMBER Alert Cases by State/Territory

State/Territory	Number of alerts	Percent
Texas	42	21
Florida	18	9
Georgia	11	5.5
Missouri and Tennessee	9 each	4.5 each
Ohio	8	4
California, Montana, and Utah	7 each	3.5 each
North Carolina	6	3
Alabama, Colorado, Michigan, and New York	5 each	2.5 each
Idaho, Illinois, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Virginia, and Wisconsin	4 each	2 each
Kansas, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Washington	3 each	1.5 each
Arizona, Arkansas, Indiana, and Mississippi	2 each	1 each
Alaska, Delaware, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Navajo Nation, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, South Carolina, and Wyoming	1 each	0.5 each
Connecticut, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Dakota, U.S. Virgin Islands, Vermont, and West Virginia	0 each	0 each
Total	200	100

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 2020, 19 AMBER Alerts were extended beyond the limits of the state where the AMBER Alert first originated.

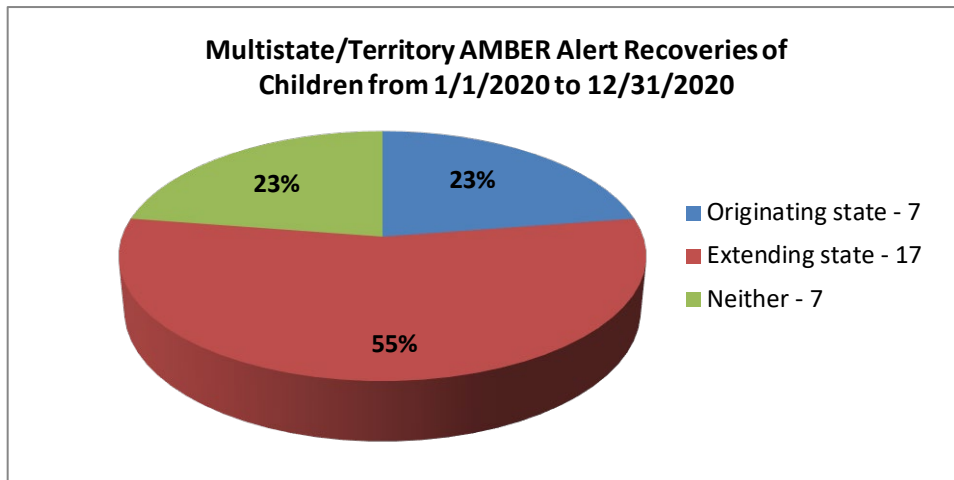
Table 2: List of Multistate/Territory AMBER Alerts

Originating	Extending
Arizona	New Mexico
Colorado	Wyoming
Georgia	Florida
Idaho	California
Idaho	Wyoming
Kansas	Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma
Kansas	Missouri
Mississippi	Alabama

Originating	Extending
Missouri	Arkansas
Missouri	Kansas
Montana	Washington
Montana	Wyoming
Nebraska	Kansas
New Jersey	Delaware and Virginia
New York	New Jersey
New York	Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania	New York
Utah	Nevada
Wyoming	Colorado

In six cases, seven children were recovered in the state where the alert originated. In 10 cases, 17 children were recovered in the extending state, and in three cases, seven children were recovered in neither the originating state nor the extending state.

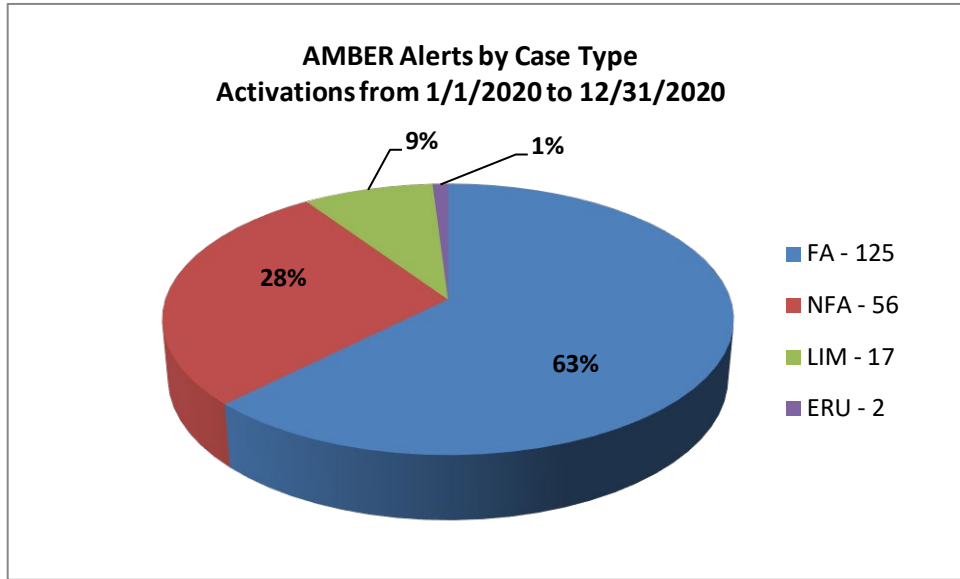
Figure 2: Multistate/Territory AMBER Alert Recoveries



AMBER Alerts by Case Type at Intake

In 2020, 63 percent (n=125) of AMBER Alert cases were intaked as FAs, 28 percent (n=56) were NFAs, 9 percent (n=17) were LIMs, and 1 percent (n=2) were ERUs.

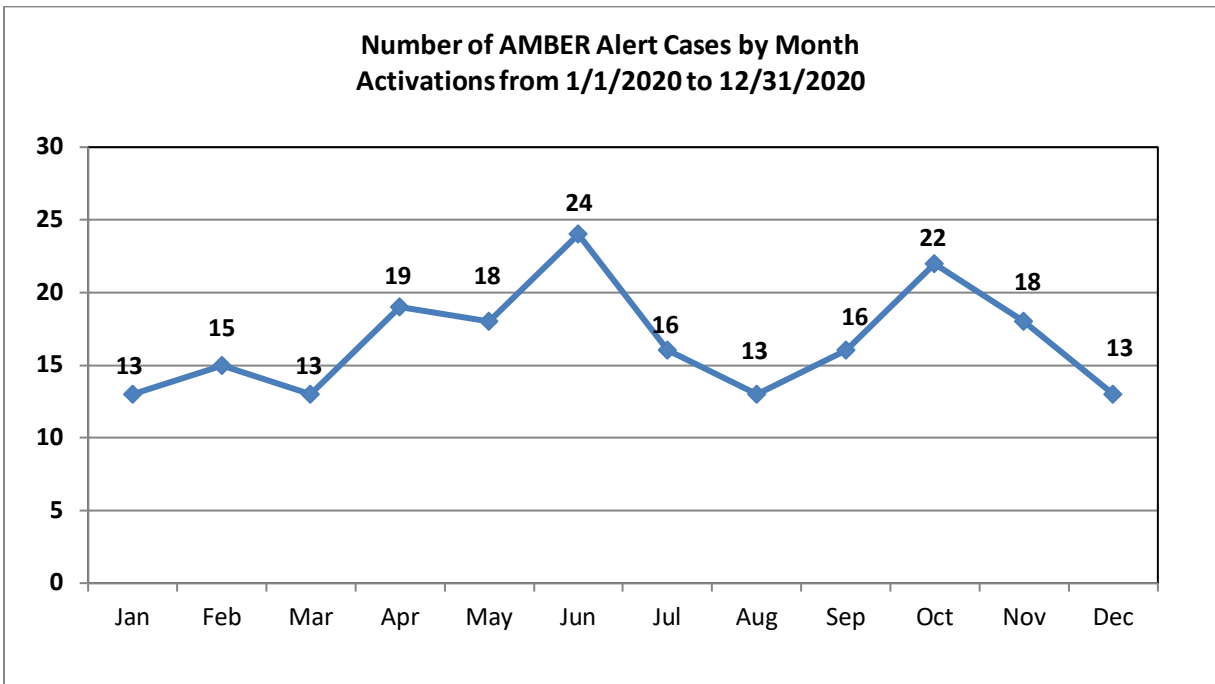
Figure 3: AMBER Alerts by Case Type



Number of Cases by Month

In 2020, the number of AMBER Alerts issued per month ranged from a low of 13 in January, March, August, and December to a high of 24 in June.

Figure 4: Number of AMBER Alert Cases by Month



Number of Case Types at Intake by Month

In 2020, AMBER Alerts were issued most frequently for FAs (n=18) in June. The highest number of NFAs (n=7) occurred in October. AMBER Alerts for LIMs (n=4) were most frequently issued in July. Alerts for ERUs (n=1 each) were issued in June and August.

Table 3: Number of Case Types by Month

	FA	NFA	LIM	ERU	Total	Total percent
Jan	9	3	1	0	13	7
Feb	7	5	3	0	15	8
Mar	7	6	0	0	13	7
Apr	12	6	1	0	19	10
May	11	6	1	0	18	9
Jun	18	4	1	1	24	12
Jul	9	3	4	0	16	8
Aug	8	3	1	1	13	7
Sep	8	6	2	0	16	8
Oct	13	7	2	0	22	11
Nov	12	5	1	0	18	9
Dec	11	2	0	0	13	7
Total	125	56	17	2	200	~100

Number of Children by Case Type at Intake by Month

In 2020, 260 children were involved in 200 AMBER Alert cases. Sixty-eight percent (n=176) of children were intaked as FAs followed by 24 percent (n=62) of children intaked as NFAs. Seven percent (n=19) were intaked as LIMs, and 1 percent (n=3) were intaked as ERUs.

Children intaked as FAs were most frequently involved in AMBER Alerts during the month of April (n=21). The highest number of children intaked as NFAs (n=8) occurred in the months of April and October. AMBER Alerts for LIMs (n=4) were most frequently issued in February and July. Children were most often intaked as ERUs (n=2) in the month of August.

Table 4: Number of Children by Case Type by Month

	FA	NFA	LIM	ERU	Total	Total percent
Jan	13	3	1	0	17	7
Feb	10	5	4	0	19	7
Mar	14	6	0	0	20	8
Apr	21	8	1	0	30	12
May	12	6	1	0	19	7
Jun	19	4	1	1	25	10
Jul	12	3	4	0	19	7
Aug	17	3	1	2	23	9

	FA	NFA	LIM	ERU	Total	Total percent
Sep	10	7	3	0	20	8
Oct	17	8	2	0	27	10
Nov	15	6	1	0	22	8
Dec	16	3	0	0	19	7
Total	176	62	19	3	260	100

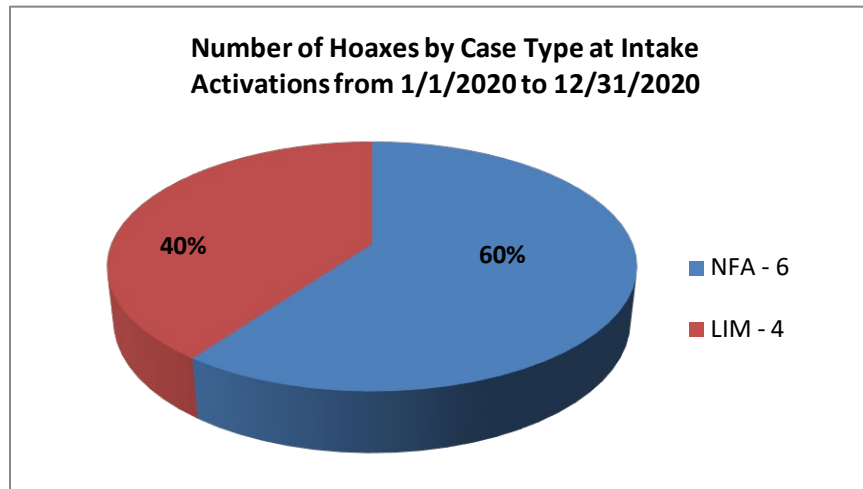
Cases Determined to Be Hoaxes

A case is determined to be a hoax when either an individual falsely reports a child missing or when a child reports themselves missing with the intent of misleading law enforcement.

In 2020, 5 percent (n=10) of AMBER Alerts issued involving 10 children were later determined to be hoaxes. Sixty percent (n=6) of hoaxes were originally intaked as NFAs, followed by LIMs at 40 percent (n=4).

In 60 percent (n=6) of hoaxes, false information was provided by the child's parent, 20 percent (n=2) of false information was provided by the child. Additionally, 10 percent each (n=1 each) was provided by the child's father and his girlfriend and the child's mother and her boyfriend.

Figure 5: Number of Hoaxes by Case Type at Intake



Of the 10 cases determined to be hoaxes, 9 cases had known locations from which the children involved were reported missing. Of those cases, 44 percent (n=4) were reported missing from home and 22 percent (n=2) were reported missing from a park. Additionally, 11 percent each (n=1 each) were reported missing from an automobile, an outdoor/open area, and the street.

Children Involved in Hoaxes

In 2020, 10 AMBER Alerts involving 10 children were later determined to be hoaxes. Seventy percent (n=7) of children involved in hoaxes were girls, whereas boys represented 30 percent (n=3) of children involved

in hoaxes. Seventy-one percent (n=5) of girls involved in hoaxes were between the ages of 1 and 3. Of the three boys involved in hoaxes, 67 percent (n=2) were between the ages of 2 and 3.

Table 5: Age and Sex of Children Involved in Hoaxes

Age	Girls	Boys
<1	0	0
1	1	0
2	1	1
3	3	1
4	0	0
5	0	0
6	0	0
7	0	0
8	0	0
9	0	1
10	0	0
11	0	0
12	0	0
13	0	0
14	0	0
15	0	0
16	1	0
17	1	0
Total	7	3

Table 6: Age and Case Type at Intake of Children Involved in Hoaxes

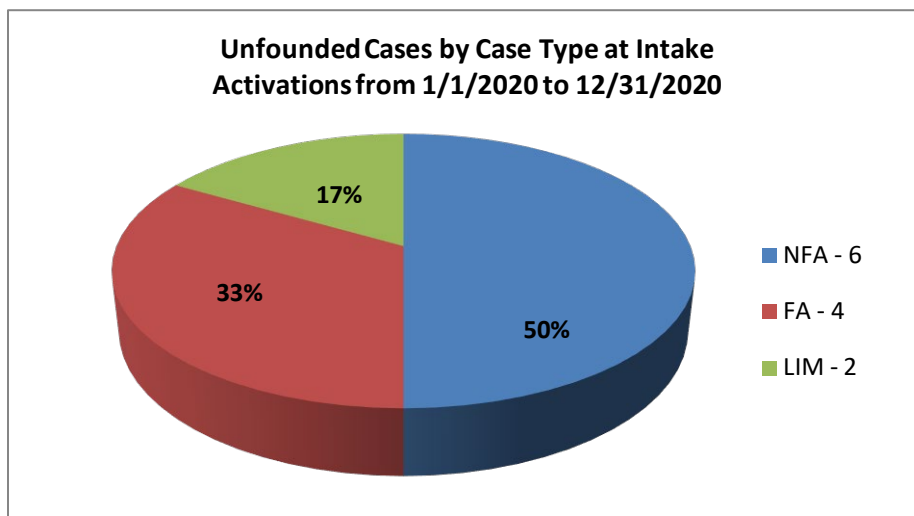
Age	NFA	LIM	ERU	FA
<1	0	0	0	0
1	0	1	0	0
2	0	2	0	0
3	3	1	0	0
4	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	0
9	1	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0
13	0	0	0	0

Age	NFA	LIM	ERU	FA
14	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0
16	1	0	0	0
17	1	0	0	0
Total	6	4	0	0

Cases Determined to Be Unfounded

A case is determined to be unfounded when a child is reported missing based on available information at the time, but the investigation determines a child was never missing. Twelve AMBER Alerts involving 14 children were determined to be unfounded, representing 6 percent of the total number of AMBER Alerts issued in 2020. These unfounded cases were originally intaked as NFAs at 50 percent (n=6), FAs at 33 percent (n=4), and LIMs at 17 percent (n=2).

Figure 6: Unfounded Cases by Case Type at Intake



Children Involved in Unfounded Cases

In 2020, 12 AMBER Alerts involving 14 children were later determined to be unfounded. Girls represented 64 percent (n=9), whereas boys represented 36 percent (n=5) of all children involved in unfounded cases. Of the nine girls involved in unfounded cases, 78 percent (n=7) were 10 or younger. Of the five boys involved in unfounded cases, three were 4 and younger.

Table 7: Age and Sex of Children Involved in Unfounded Cases

Age	Girls	Boys
<1	2	1
1	0	1
2	0	0

Age	Girls	Boys
3	0	0
4	1	1
5	2	0
6	0	0
7	0	0
8	0	0
9	1	0
10	1	1
11	0	0
12	0	0
13	0	0
14	0	0
15	0	0
16	2	1
17	0	0
Total	9	5

Table 8: Age and Case Type at Intake of Children Involved in Unfounded Cases

Age	NFA	FA	LIM	ERU
<1	0	3	0	0
1	0	1	0	0
2	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	0	0
4	1	0	1	0
5	1	0	1	0
6	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	0	0
9	1	0	0	0
10	1	0	1	0
11	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0
13	0	0	0	0
14	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0
16	2	1	0	0
17	0	0	0	0
Total	6	5	3	0

Secondary Distribution of AMBER Alerts

The AMBER Alert Secondary Distribution system (AASD), is comprised of wireless carriers, internet service providers, digital signage, social networking websites, content providers, and major retailers who distribute AMBER Alerts to a geographically targeted audience in support of the AMBER Alert coordinator. These alerts assist in notifying the public about recently reported child abductions with information to help in the search for the abducted child, suspected abductor, and/or suspected vehicle.

In 2020, 90 percent (n=179) of AMBER Alert cases were secondarily distributed whereas 11 percent (n=21) of the cases were not secondarily distributed because the AMBER Alert was canceled before secondary distribution was possible.

AMBER Alert Secondary Distribution was issued for 113 FAs, 47 NFAs, 17 LIMs, and two ERUs. Five NFAs and four LIMs were later determined to be hoaxes. Six NFAs, four FAs, and two LIMs were subsequently identified as unfounded.

Number and Characteristics of Children Reported Missing

Girls (n=138) were involved in AMBER Alert activations more often at 53 percent, compared to boys who represented 47 percent (n=122).

Thirty-five percent (n=90) of children involved in AMBER Alerts were Black, 32 percent (n=84) were White, 22 percent (n=58) were Hispanic, 6 percent (n=15) were Biracial, 4 percent (n=11) were Native American, and 0.4 percent (n=1) were Asian. The race for one child was unknown. AMBER Alerts were issued at a rate of 32 percent (n=84) for White children, whereas minority children represented 67 percent (n=175).

Figure 7: AMBER Alerts by Race of Children

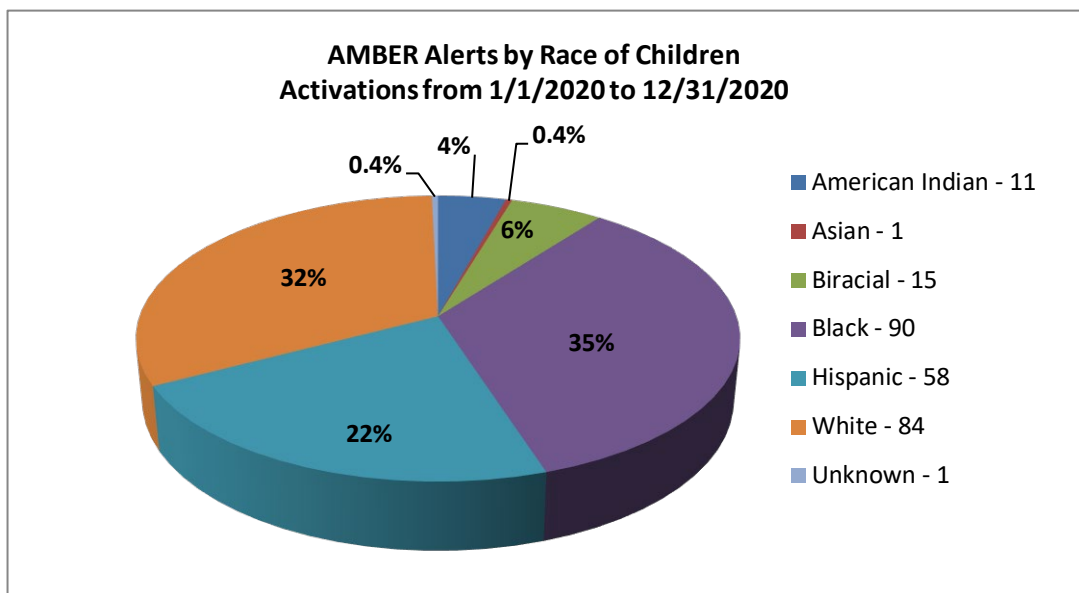
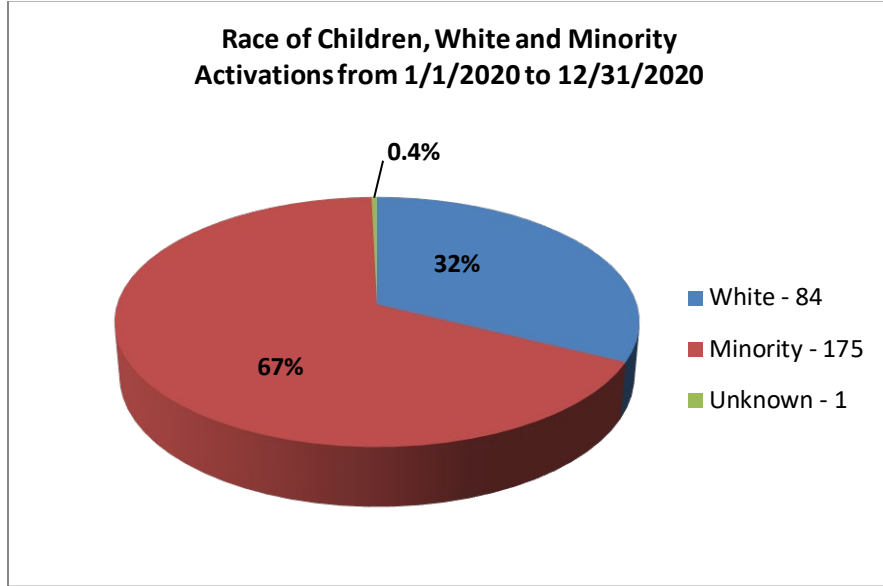
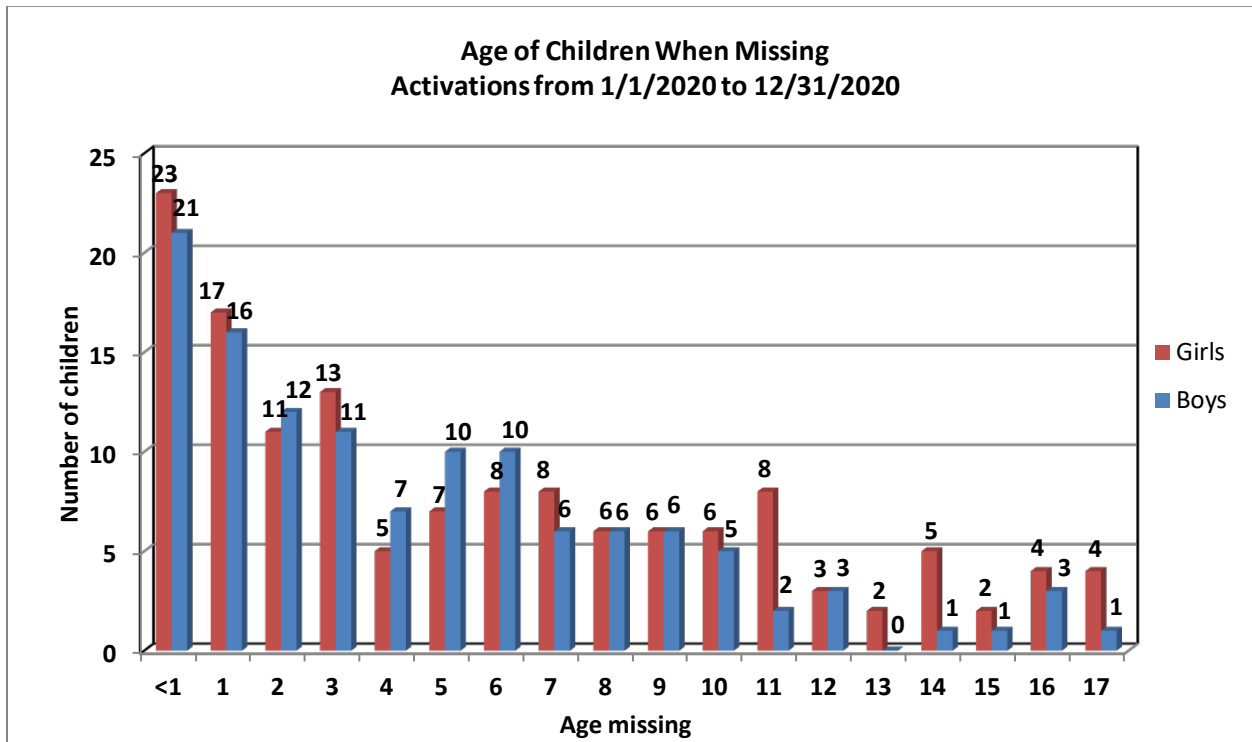


Figure 8: Race of Children, White and Minority



Boys and girls who were 6 years old and younger represented 66 percent (n=171) of the children who were reported missing with known ages. Of all children reported missing, girls younger than 1 (n=23) were most frequently involved in AMBER Alerts, and boys younger than 1 (n=21) were most frequently involved in AMBER Alerts. The age of one child was unknown.

Figure 9: Age of Children When Missing



Number and Characteristics of Abductors

In 2020, 203 abductors were identified as being involved in 163 AMBER Alert cases.

The majority of abductors were male at 60 percent (n=121), and 37 percent (n=75) of abductors were female. The sex for 3 percent (n=7) of abductors was unknown.

Thirty-three percent (n=66) of abductors were Black, 30 percent (n=60) of abductors were White, 16 percent (n=32) of abductors were Hispanic, 2 percent (n=5) of abductors were Native American, 2 percent (n=4) of abductors were Biracial, and 0.5 percent (n=1) of abductors were Pacific Islander. The race for 17 percent (n=35) of abductors was unknown.

Abductors with a Known Relationship to the Child

Of the 203 abductors involved in AMBER Alerts in 2020, 143 abductors had known relationships with the children. 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. The boyfriend would also be considered an abductor in a family abduction, although he is not related to the child.

Of the 125 FA cases, 125 abductors involved had known relationships with the children. They consisted of two aunts, one babysitter, one boyfriend, 58 fathers, one grandfather, five grandmothers, 49 mothers, three mother's boyfriends, one other relative, one stepmother, and three uncles.

Of the 56 NFA cases, 13 abductors involved had known relationships with the children. For the remaining cases either there was no relationship, or the relationship was unknown. The abductors consisted of one babysitter, one boyfriend, two fathers, two friends of the family, one grandfather, three mothers, two mother's boyfriends, and one neighbor.

Of the 17 LIM cases, five abductors had known relationships with the children. They consisted of one boyfriend, two fathers, one father's girlfriend, and one mother.

Table 9: Abductor Relationship to Child

Abductor relationship to child	FA	FA percent	NFA	NFA percent	LIM	LIM percent	Total	Total percent
Aunt	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	1
Babysitter	1	1	1	8	0	0	2	1
Boyfriend	1	1	1	8	1	20	3	2
Father	58	46	2	15	2	40	62	43
Father's girlfriend	0	0	0	0	1	20	1	1
Friend of family	0	0	2	15	0	0	2	1
Grandfather	1	1	1	8	0	0	2	1
Grandmother	5	4	0	0	0	0	5	3
Mother	49	39	3	23	1	20	53	37

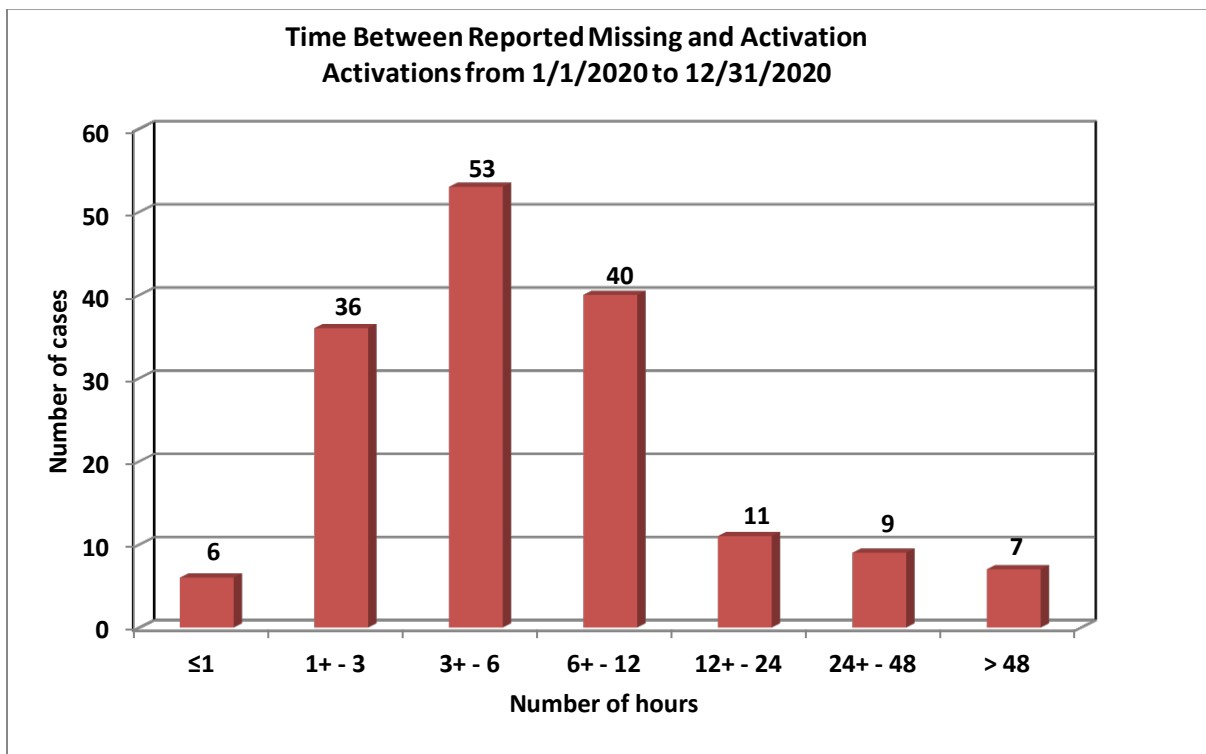
Abductor relationship to child	FA	FA percent	NFA	NFA percent	LIM	LIM percent	Total	Total percent
Mother's boyfriend	3	2	2	15	0	0	5	3
Neighbor	0	0	1	8	0	0	1	1
Other relative	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Stepmother	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Uncle	3	2	0	0	0	0	3	2
Total	125	100	13	100	5	100	143	~100

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 162 cases. Hoaxes and unfounded cases were excluded in the statistics because a child was determined not to be missing in those AMBER Alert cases.

Forty-two AMBER Alerts were issued within three or fewer hours from when the child was reported missing. Fifty-three cases were activated between more than three and six hours from when the child was reported missing, and 40 cases were issued between more than six and 12 hours.

Figure 10: Time Between Reported Missing and Activation

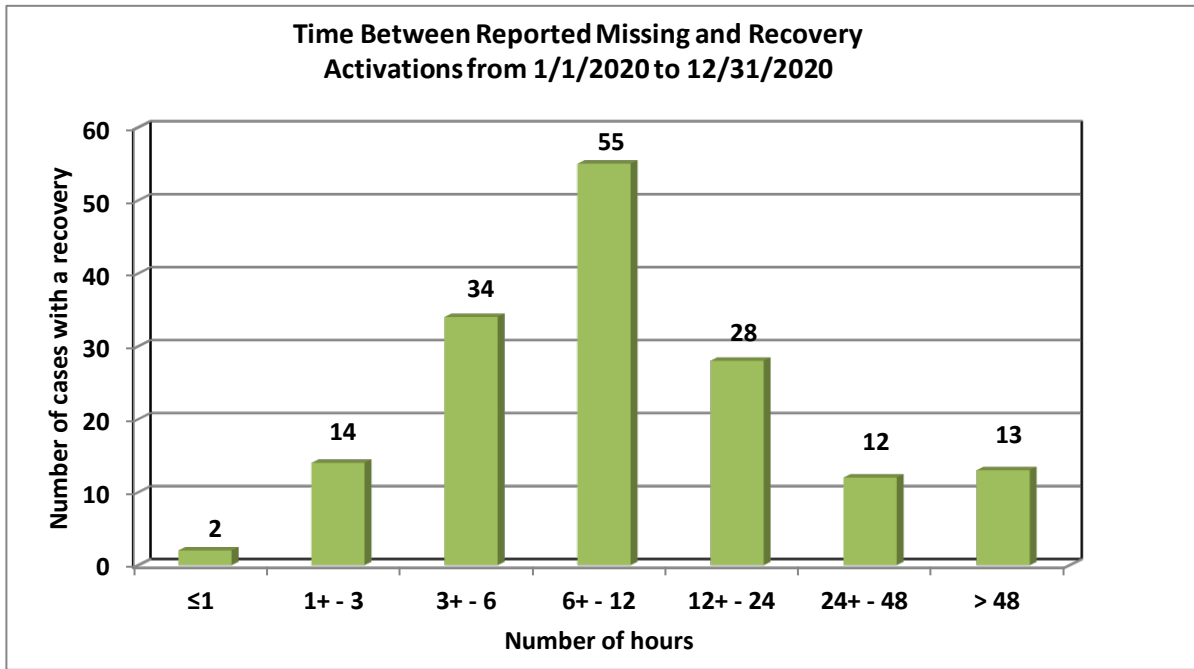


Time Between Reported Missing and Recovery

Information about the time between when the child was reported missing to law enforcement and the AMBER Alert recovery was available in 158 cases. Hoaxes and unfounded cases were excluded in the statistics because a child was determined not to be missing in those AMBER Alert cases.

In 16 of the cases when AMBER Alerts were issued, the children were recovered within three or fewer hours from when the child was reported missing. Children in 34 cases were recovered between more than three and six hours from when the child was reported missing, and in 55 cases the children were recovered between more than six and 12 hours.

Figure 11: Time Between Reported Missing and Recovery

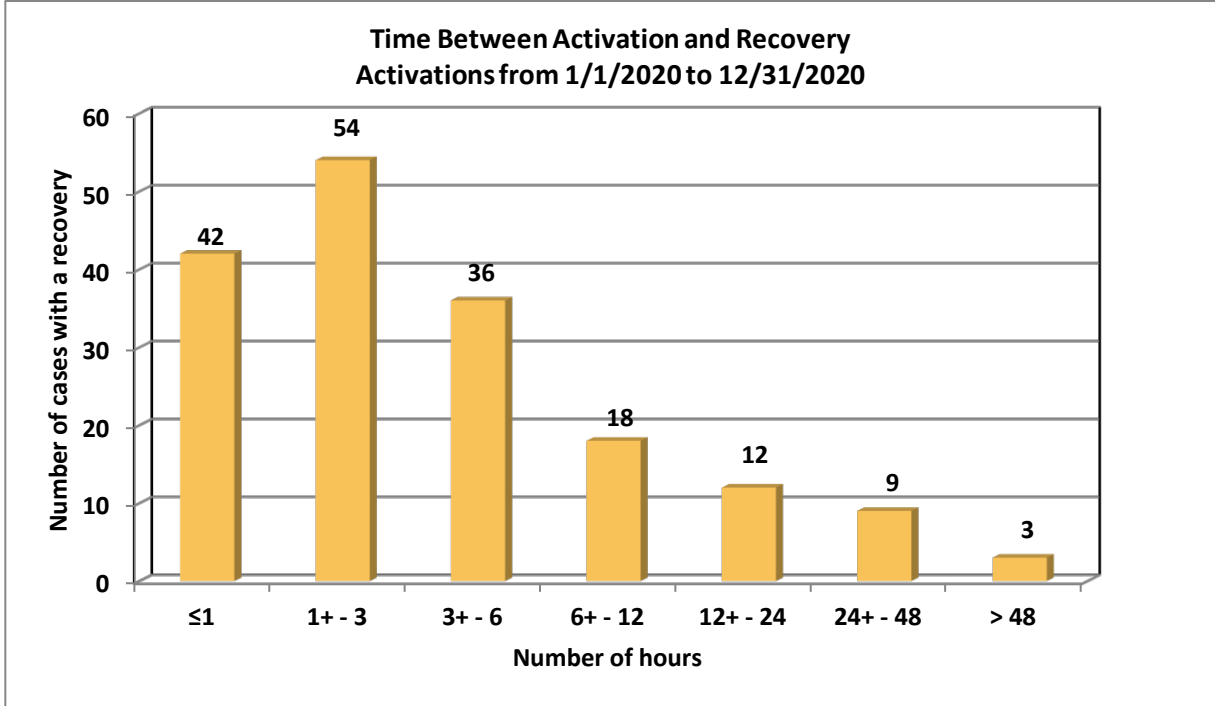


Time Between Activation and Recovery

Information about the time between when the AMBER Alert was activated, and the AMBER Alert recovery was available in 174 cases. Hoaxes and unfounded cases were excluded in the statistics because a child was determined not to be missing in those AMBER Alert cases.

In 96 cases, the children were recovered within three or fewer hours from when the AMBER Alert was activated. Children in 36 cases were recovered between more than three and six hours from when the AMBER Alert was activated, and in 18 cases the children were recovered between more than six to 12 hours.

Figure 12: 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 200 cases.

Table 10: Recovery Within Three Days of Activation

	Time between activation and recovery 1/1/2020 - 12/31/2020
Intaked cases	200
Cases reclassified as hoax or unfounded after intake	22
Intaked children	260
Children whose cases were reclassified as hoax or unfounded after intake	24
Number of cases in which child recovered within 72 hours	172
Percent of cases in which child recovered within 72 hours	97 percent*
Number of children reported as being recovered within 72 hours	229
Percent of children reported as being recovered within 72 hours	97 percent**

*Percentage excludes cases reclassified as hoaxes (n=10) and unfounded (n=12)

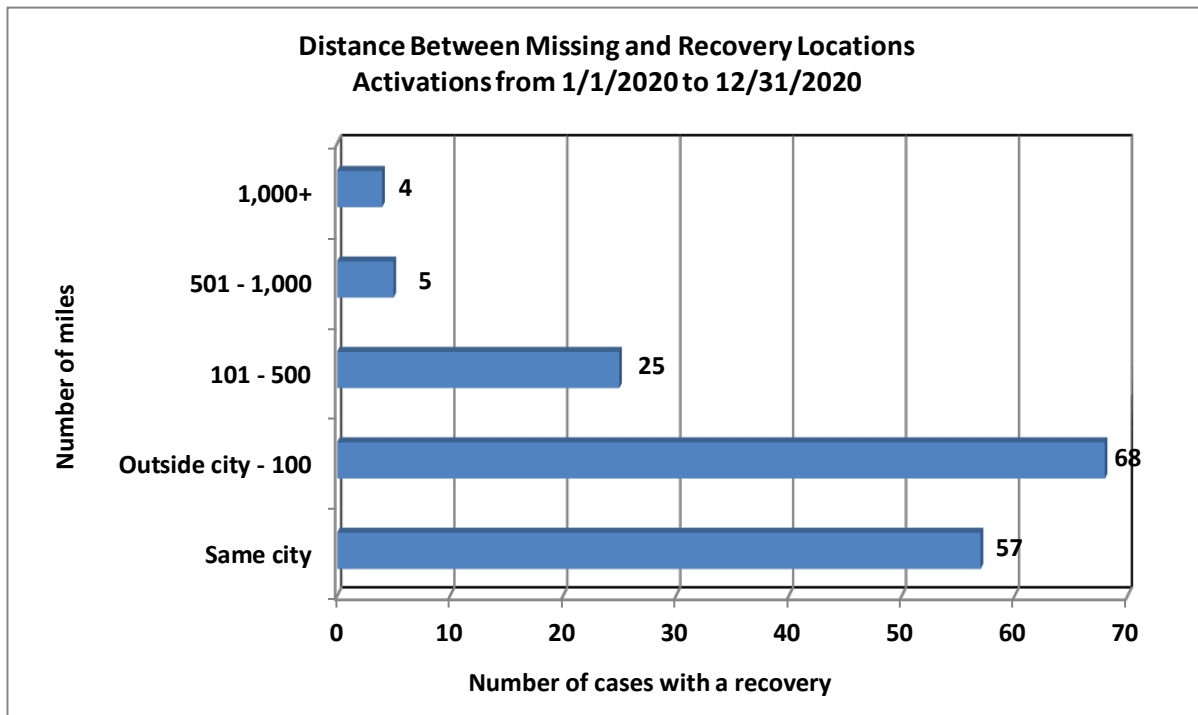
**Percentage excludes children whose cases were reclassified as hoaxes (n=10) and unfounded (n=14)

Travel Distances

In 2020, distances between where the child was reported missing and recovered were known for 159 AMBER Alert cases. Hoaxes, unfounded, and active cases were not included in these statistics because no recovery occurred. The distances reported below 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.

In 57 cases, the missing and recovery locations were in the same city; in 68 cases, the distance between missing and recovery locations was outside the city but within 100 miles of each other; in 25 cases the distance between missing and recovery locations ranged from 101 to 500 miles; in five cases, the distance between missing and recovery locations ranged from 501 to 1,000 miles; and in four cases, the distance was more than 1,000 miles. For 15 cases, the distance could not be calculated, and the remaining 26 cases were either hoaxes, unfounded, or active cases.

Figure 13: Distance Between Missing and Recovery Locations



Of the 125 AMBER Alerts issued for FA cases, children in 35 cases were found in the same city. In 46 cases, distances ranged up to 87 miles outside of the city, and in 18 cases the distances ranged from 126 to 460 miles. In four cases, distances ranged from 578 to 842 miles. In four cases, the travel distance ranged from 1,241 to 2,376 miles. In 12 cases, the distance could not be calculated, and the remaining six cases were active and unfounded cases.

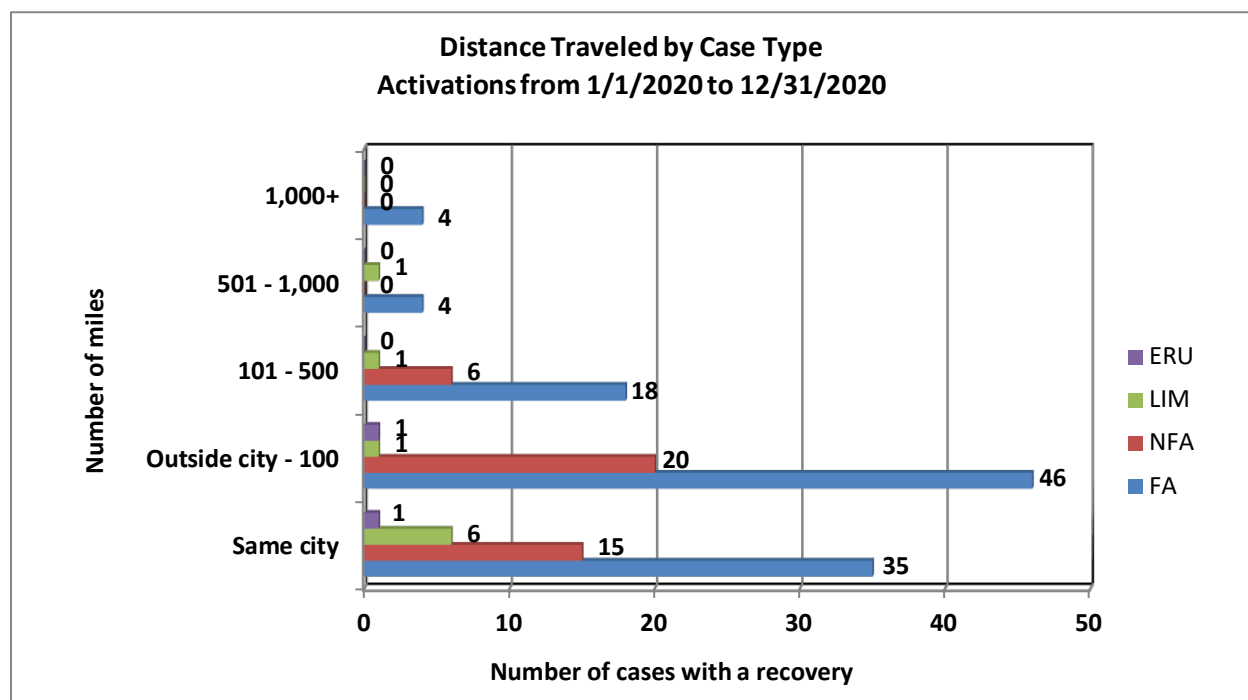
Of the 56 AMBER Alerts issued for NFA cases, the children involved in 15 cases were found in the same city. In 20 cases, distances ranged from 2 to 94 miles outside of the city. In six cases, travel distances

ranged from 102 to 464 miles. In three cases, the travel distances were unknown. The remaining 12 cases were hoaxes and unfounded cases.

There were 17 AMBER Alerts issued for LIM cases in 2020, and, of those cases, six were found in the same city. In one case the travel distance was 79 miles outside of the city, and in another case the travel distance was 113 miles. In one case, the travel distance was 679 miles. The remaining eight cases were active, hoaxes, and unfounded cases.

Two cases were intaked as ERUs in 2020. In one case, the recovery was in the same city, and in the other case the travel distance was 19 miles.

Figure 14: Distance Traveled by Case Type



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 200 AMBER Alerts issued in 2020, four cases remain active. Seventeen percent of cases (n=33) had recoveries outside of the state of the original activation. Of those 33 cases, 85 percent (n=28) were FAs, 12 percent (n=4) were NFAs, and 3 percent (n=1) were LIMs.

Table 11: Recovery Outside of State Where AMBER Alert First Activated

Activation state	Recovery state
Alabama	Kentucky
Alabama	Tennessee
Colorado	California

Activation state	Recovery state
Colorado	California
Colorado	Maryland
Delaware	California
Georgia	Alabama
Georgia	Florida
Georgia	Indiana
Idaho	California
Idaho	Kansas
Idaho	Wyoming
Kansas	Oklahoma
Maryland	Pennsylvania
Michigan	Ohio
Missouri	Kansas
Missouri	Oklahoma
Montana	North Dakota
Montana	Washington
Nebraska	Kansas
New Jersey	Maryland
New York	Maryland
New York	New Jersey
North Carolina	Maryland
Ohio	West Virginia
Pennsylvania	New York
Tennessee	Georgia
Texas	Kentucky
Texas	North Dakota
Utah	Colorado
Utah	Oregon
Wisconsin	Indiana
Wyoming	Colorado

Missing Location

In 2020, there were 162 cases with information about where the children involved were last known to be located. Of those 162 cases, 70 percent (n=113) were last known to be at home followed by 9 percent (n=15) of cases where children were last known to be in a retail location.

Table 12: Missing Location

Missing location	Number of cases	Percent
Automobile	5	3
Home	113	70

Missing location	Number of cases	Percent
Hotel	2	1
Medical facility	1	1
Office building	1	1
Other	5	3
Outdoor/open area	3	2
Park	2	1
Restaurant	2	1
Retail	15	9
School bus stop	1	1
School facility	2	1
Social services	4	2
Street	6	4
Total	162	100

Recovery Location

There were 175 cases with information about where the child was recovered. In 2020, 36 percent (n=63) of children involved in AMBER Alert cases were most often recovered at home followed by recoveries in an automobile at 21 percent (n=36).

Table 13: Recovery Location

Recovery location	Number of cases	Percent
Automobile	36	21
Body of water	3	2
Dump site/Landfill	1	1
Government facility	4	2
Home	63	36
Hotel	7	4
Law enforcement station	11	6
Office building	1	1
Other	2	1
Outdoor/Open area	8	5
Park	3	2
Parking Lot/Garage	2	1
Restaurant	1	1
Retail	6	3
School facility	1	1
Street	24	14
Transportation facility	1	1
Truck/Rest stop	1	1
Total	175	~100

International Abductions

In 2020, there were no AMBER Alert activations as a result of an international abduction.

Infants Involved in AMBER Alert Activations

In 2020, 30 infants, who are defined as children 6 months of age or younger, were involved in 30 AMBER Alert activations. Seventy percent (n=21) of infants involved were FAs, 23 percent (n=7) were NFAs, and 7 percent (n=2) were LIMs.

Sixty percent (n=18) of infants involved in AMBER Alerts were boys and 40 percent (n=12) were girls. Forty-seven percent (n=14) of infants involved were Black, 30 percent (n=9) of infants involved were White, 17 percent (n=5) were Hispanic, and 7 percent (n=2) were Biracial.

Success Stories

A successful AMBER Alert recovery is a case in which a child is 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.

Of the 200 AMBER Alert cases in 2020, 70 children involved in 46 AMBER Alert cases were successfully recovered as a direct result of those respective AMBER Alerts being issued.

Table 14: Success Stories

Case type at intake	Number of successful recoveries by case	Percent of successful recoveries by case	Number of successful recoveries by child	Percent of successful recoveries by child
FA	28	61	50	71
NFA	16	35	18	26
ERU	1	2	1	1
LIM	1	2	1	1
Total	46	100	70	~100

The most common reason for an AMBER Alert success story is an individual or law enforcement recognizing the vehicle from the AMBER Alert at 43 percent (n=20) followed by the abductor hearing the alert and releasing the child at 17 percent (n=8).

Table 15: Reason for Success Stories

Summary of success stories	Number of cases	Percent of cases	Number of children	Percent of children
Individual or law enforcement recognized vehicle	20	43	27	39

Summary of success stories	Number of cases	Percent of cases	Number of children	Percent of children
Abductor heard alert and released child	8	17	15	21
Individual knew of abductor's/child's whereabouts	7	15	11	16
Law enforcement received tips from individuals	5	11	10	14
Individual or law enforcement recognized child and/or abductor	5	11	6	9
Individual heard alert and convinced abductor to turn self in	1	2	1	1
Total	46	~100	70	100

Time Between Activation and Recovery for Success Stories

Of the success stories in 2020, 67 percent of the children (n=31), representing 57 percent (n=40) of the cases, were successfully recovered within three hours of those AMBER Alerts being issued.

Table 16: Time Between Activation and Recovery for Success Stories

	Number of cases	Percent of cases	Number of children	Percent of children
Up to 1/2 hour	5	11	8	11
1/2+ - 1 hour	8	17	8	11
1+ - 2 hours	10	22	15	21
2+ - 3 hours	8	17	9	13
3+ - 4 hours	4	9	10	14
4+ - 5 hours	3	7	7	10
5+ - 6 hours	2	4	2	3
6+ - 12 hours	4	9	8	11
12+ - 24 hours	1	2	1	1
24+ - 48 hours	0	0	0	0
48+ hours	1	2	2	3
Total	46	100	70	~100

Children Located Deceased

In 2020, 200 AMBER Alerts were issued for 260 children. Ten children in nine AMBER Alert cases were located deceased. Seventy percent (n=7) of children were reported as LIMs, 20 percent (n=2) of children were reported as FAs, and 10 percent (n=1) of children were reported as NFAs. Seven girls, mostly ranging in age from younger than 1 to 5, were found deceased, and three boys, ages younger than 1, 2, and 9, were found deceased. Five children were Black, one child was Hispanic, and four children were White.

Of the 10 children located deceased in 2020, 60 percent (n=6) were reported missing from their respective homes and 20 percent (n=2) were reported missing from a park. Ten percent (n=1) were reported missing from an outdoor or open area. It is unknown where one child (10 percent) was last seen.

In one case involving two children, the father of one of the children murdered the child, her half sibling, and their mother. In three cases involving one child each, the child’s mother falsely reported the child missing and was later charged with the child’s murder. One child was murdered by his mother. Another child was murdered by her father, and one child died due to suicide. In one case, the child’s father and his girlfriend falsely reported the child missing and were later charged with the child’s murder. In another case, the child’s mom and her boyfriend made a false report and were charged with the child’s murder.

Table 17: Children Located Deceased

Activation date	Case type at intake	Race/Sex of child	Age when missing	Time between activation and recovery	Distance between missing and recovery	Cause of death
02/15/20	LIM	Black girl	5	<72 hours	Same city	Undisclosed**
02/15/20	LIM	Black girl	4	<72 hours	Same city	Undisclosed**
02/19/20	LIM	White girl	1	>72 hours	Same city	Undisclosed**
02/22/20	FA	Black boy	6 months	<72 hours	Same city	Undisclosed**
05/21/20	NFA	Hispanic boy	9	<72 hours	Same city	Drowning
06/01/20	LIM	White boy	2	<72 hours	Same city	Undetermined*
06/09/20	FA	Black girl	3 months	<72 hours	Same city	Drowning
07/06/20	LIM	White girl	10	<72 hours	Same city	Undisclosed**
07/10/20	LIM	White girl	3	<72 hours	Same city	Blunt Force Trauma
08/23/20	LIM	Black girl	2	>72 hours	Same city	Undisclosed**

*Undetermined means a cause of death was not determined at the time of data collection.

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

AMBER Alerts Involving Victims of Sexual Assault

In 2020, at the time of data collection, no children in AMBER Alert activations had been reported to be a victim of sexual assault during the abduction.

Team Adam Consultant Deployment

Team Adam is a program of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children 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 2020, Team Adam consultants were deployed to assist with 14 AMBER Alert cases involving 19 children. No cases were later determined to be a hoax or unfounded. Eighteen children actually determined to be missing were recovered.

FBI Involvement in AMBER Alerts

The FBI has a specialized Child Abduction Rapid Deployment (CARD) team, designed to deploy experienced personnel to provide on-the-ground investigative, technical and resource assistance to state and local law enforcement. CARD consists of violent crimes against children investigators and analysts who have in-depth experience in child abduction cases. CARD is made up of more than 60 members organized into five regional teams of both special agents and analysts. Additionally, personnel from the FBI’s Behavioral Analysis Unit 3, Cellular Analysis Survey Team (CAST), and National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime are also consulted during deployments. According to the FBI, since CARD’s inaugural deployment in 2006, teams have deployed approximately 181 times to assist law enforcement agencies when an AMBER Alert or mysterious disappearance of a child has occurred.

Command Post Use in AMBER Alerts

A command post is a field headquarters/office for scene management to centralize investigative efforts as well as search-and-rescue operations.

In 2020, 28 of the AMBER Alert cases reported to NCMEC involved the use of a command post. Of those cases, 13 were intaked as FAs, nine were intaked as NFAs, and six were intaked as LIMs.

National Crime Information Center

The National Crime Information Center (NCIC) houses a set of databases law enforcement uses to document and query activity and information about missing people. *The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006* (Pub. L. No. 109-248) clarifies an NCIC entry by law enforcement must be made within two hours of receipt of a report of a missing or abducted child.

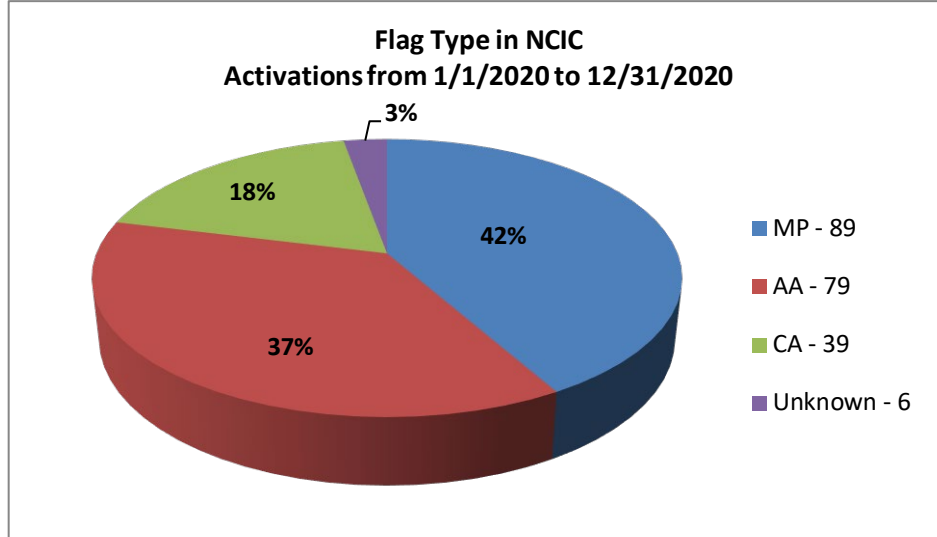
Of the 260 children involved in AMBER Alert cases in 2020, information about 213 children was entered into NCIC, and information about 47 children was not entered into NCIC.

Table 18: Information Entered in NCIC

	1/1/2020 - 12/31/2020	1/1/2020 - 12/31/2020 percent
Information entered in NCIC	213	82
Information not entered in NCIC	47	18
Total	260	100

Of the 213 children whose information was entered in NCIC from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, 89 children were flagged as a Missing Person (MP), 79 children were flagged as an AMBER Alert (AA), and 39 children were flagged as a Child Abduction (CA). The flags for six children were unknown.

Figure 15: Flag Type in NCIC



NCMEC has permission to modify flags in NCIC to AA status for AMBER Alert cases at the originating agency’s request. During the months of January through December 2020, a total of 30 flags were updated in NCIC. Fifteen flags were changed from MP to AA, 13 flags were changed from CA to AA, and two flags were changed from MP to CA. Law enforcement made the flag updates for 24 children, and NCMEC made the flag updates for six children.

The table below shows the NCIC missing person type category for children involved in AMBER Alerts at the time of entry from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020.

Table 19: Missing Person Type in NCIC

NCIC missing person type	1/1/2020 - 12/31/2020	1/1/2020 - 12/31/2020 percent
Endangered	98	46
Endangered – caution	9	4
Involuntary	46	22
Involuntary – caution	4	2
Juvenile	52	24
Juvenile – caution	4	2
Total	213	100

From January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2020, information about 37 children was entered and canceled from NCIC within three hours.

Table 20: Hours Between Information About Children Entered and Canceled from NCIC

	1/1/2020 - 12/31/2020 (total)	1/1/2020 - 12/31/2020 (cumulative total)	1/1/2020 - 12/31/2020 percent	1/1/2020 - 12/31/2020 cumulative percent
Up to 1/2 hour	1	1	0	0
½+ - 1 hour	6	7	3	3
1+ - 2 hours	18	25	8	12
2+ - 3 hours	12	37	6	17
3+ - 4 hours	22	59	10	28
4+ - 5 hours	9	68	4	32
5+ - 6 hours	9	77	4	36
6+ - 12 hours	45	122	21	57
12+ - 24 hours	44	166	21	78
24+ - 48 hours	13	179	6	84
48+ - 72 hours	9	188	4	88
72+ hours	18	206	8	97
Unknown	7	213	3	100
Total	213		~100	

Data collected from the miscellaneous field in NCIC captured additional information entered by law enforcement, such as abductor threats and use of weapons for 75 children involved in 65 AMBER Alerts issued in 2020. Law enforcement noted 13 abductors were armed with a weapon, nine children had medical issues, six abductors threatened to kill themselves and the child, three abductors had a history of alcohol and/or drug abuse, one abductor had a history of mental illness, one abductor threatened to kill herself, and one abductor threatened to harm the child. Thirty-one children had “other” listed in the miscellaneous field.

Of the 213 children whose information was entered in NCIC, 82 percent (n=174) had vehicle involvement in the AMBER Alert and 17 percent (n=37) did not have a vehicle involved. It was unknown if a vehicle was involved in one AMBER Alert involving two children.

In order for vehicle data to be entered into the NCIC vehicle field, the license plate number on the vehicle must be available to law enforcement.

License plate information was available and entered in NCIC for 105 children. Of those, 82 children’s records had license plate information entered in the vehicle field only, and in 12 children’s records the license plate information was entered in the miscellaneous field only. **Note:** Law enforcement cannot search for license plate information in NCIC if the vehicle information is entered only in the miscellaneous field. For 11 children’s records, the license plate information was entered in both the miscellaneous and vehicle fields.

Five Year Comparison of AMBER Alerts Issued

Number of AMBER Alerts and Children Involved

The number of AMBER Alerts has shown an overall increase of 12 percent from 2016 to 2020.

In 2016 there were 179 alerts involving 231 children, in 2017 there were 195 alerts involving 263 children, in 2018 there were 161 alerts involving 203 children, in 2019 there were 145 alerts involving 180 children, and in 2020 there were 200 alerts involving 260 children.

Figure 16: Number of AMBER Alerts from 2016 to 2020

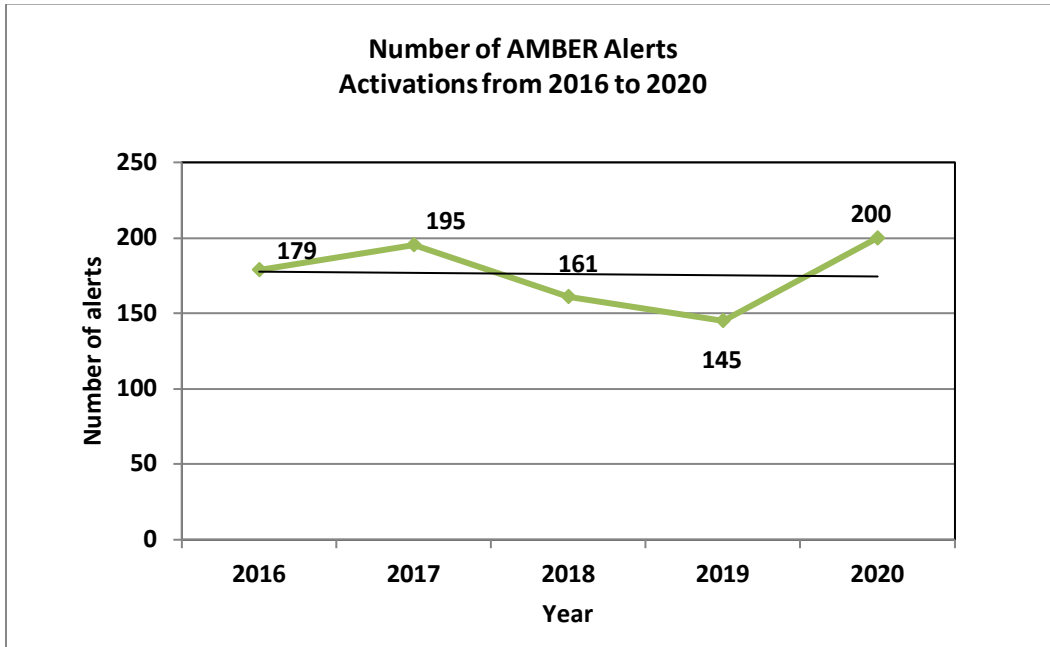
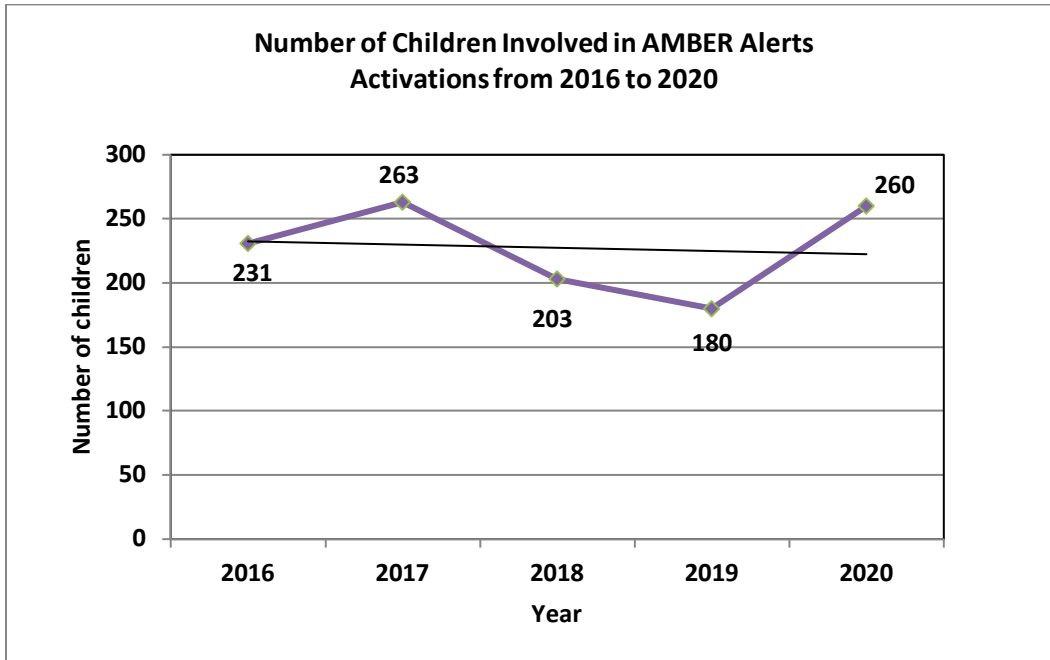


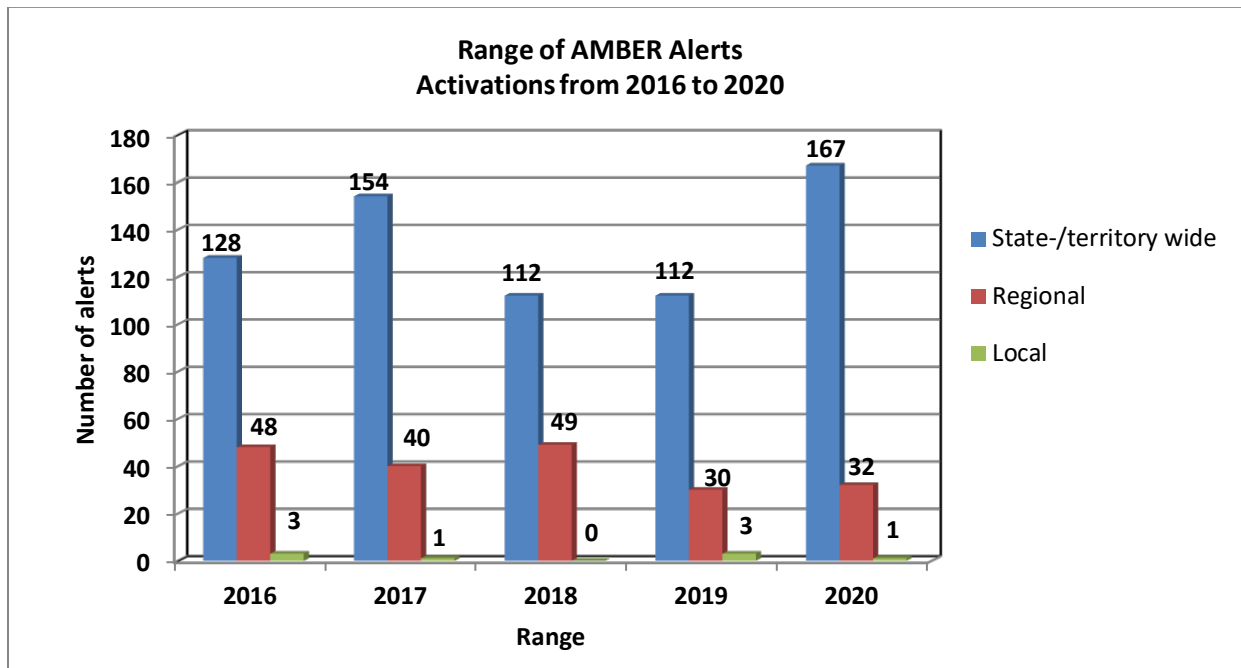
Figure 17: Number of Children Involved in AMBER Alerts from 2016 to 2020



AMBER Alerts by Range

From 2016 to 2020, AMBER Alerts were predominantly issued state-/territory- wide, followed by regional alerts, and then local alerts.

Figure 18: Range of AMBER Alerts from 2016 to 2020



Multistate/Territory AMBER Alerts

The number of multistate/territory AMBER Alerts varied between the years 2016 and 2020. In 2016 there were 21, and in 2017 and 2018 there were respective decreases to 13 and seven. In 2019, the number of multistate/territory AMBER Alerts rose to 12 and again in 2020 to 19.

Number of Cases at Intake by Month

Table 21: Number of Cases by Month from 2016 to 2020

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2016	8	17	14	19	18	12	11	18	20	17	14	11
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
Total	63	51	71	81	96	80	73	85	81	75	68	56

Table 22: Cases and Percent Increase/Decrease by Month from 2016 to 2020

	2016	Percent change	2017	Percent change	2018	Percent change	2019	Percent change	2020
Jan	8	150	20	-40	12	-17	10	30	13
Feb	17	-35	11	-73	3	67	5	200	15
Mar	14	21	17	-12	15	-20	12	8	13
Apr	19	0	19	-26	14	-29	10	90	19
May	18	11	20	10	22	-18	18	0	18
Jun	12	50	18	-6	17	-47	9	167	24
Jul	11	64	18	0	18	-44	10	60	16
Aug	18	28	23	-43	13	38	18	-28	13
Sep	20	-20	16	13	18	-39	11	45	16
Oct	17	-24	13	-46	7	129	16	38	22
Nov	14	-29	10	40	14	-14	12	50	18
Dec	11	-9	10	-20	8	75	14	-7	13
Total	179	9	195	-17	161	-10	145	38	200

Case Type at Intake

The number of cases intaked as FAs increased 17 percent from 107 alerts in 2016 to 125 alerts in 2020.

There were 60 alerts issued for NFAs in 2016, and the number decreased in 2017 to 50. In 2018 the number of alerts issued rose to 56, fell to 47 in 2019, and in 2020 returned to 56 alerts.

Overall the number of cases intaked as LIMs varied from 2016 to 2020 (n=6, 10, 6, 9, and 17). From 2016 to 2020, the number of ERUs continued in a wave pattern (n= 6, 7, 2, 7, and 2).

Figure 19: AMBER Alerts by Case Type at Intake from 2016 to 2020

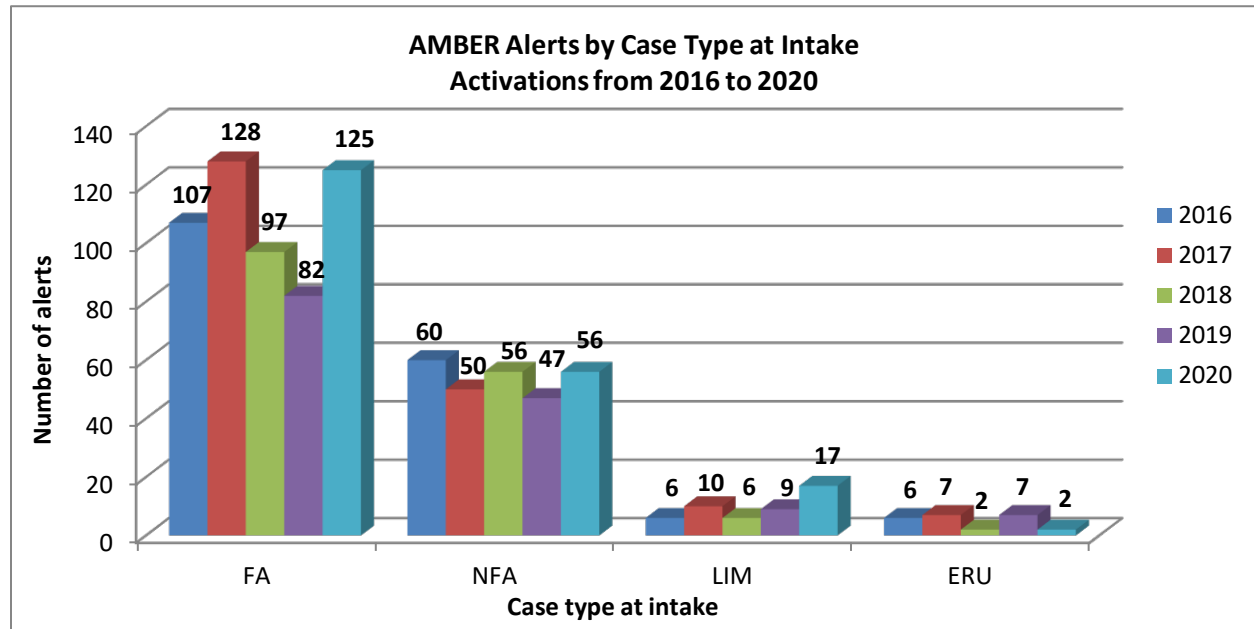


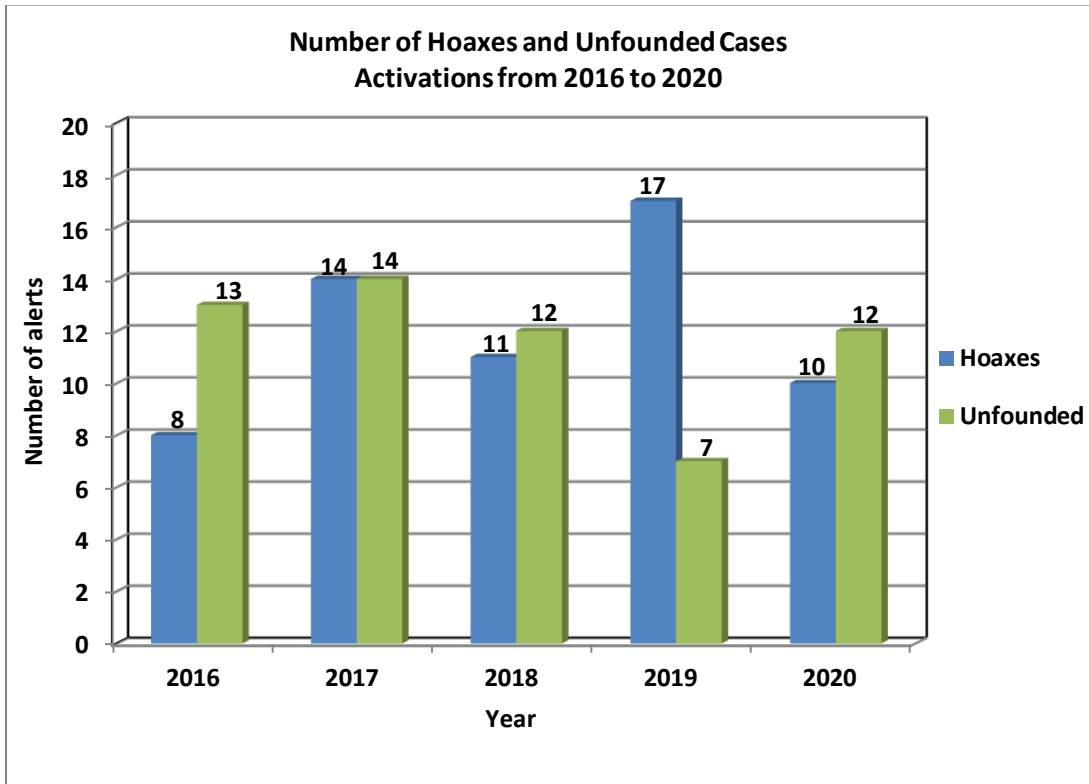
Table 23: Cases and Percent Increase/Decrease by Case Type from 2016 to 2020

	2016	Percent change	2017	Percent change	2018	Percent change	2019	Percent change	2020
FA	107	20	128	-24	97	-15	82	52	125
NFA	60	-17	50	12	56	-16	47	19	56
LIM	6	67	10	-40	6	50	9	89	17
ERU	6	17	7	-71	2	250	7	-71	2
Total	179	9	195	-17	161	-10	145	38	200

Hoaxes and Unfounded Cases

The number of hoaxes was eight in 2016, and in 2017 the number of hoaxes increased to 14. In 2018 the number fell to 11, and then rose in 2019 to its highest point at 17. In 2020, the number of hoaxes fell to 10. The number of unfounded cases remained relatively stable from 2016 to 2020, (n=13, 14, 12, 7, and 12) with the exception of 7 in 2019.

Figure 20: Number of Hoaxes and Unfounded Cases from 2016 to 2020

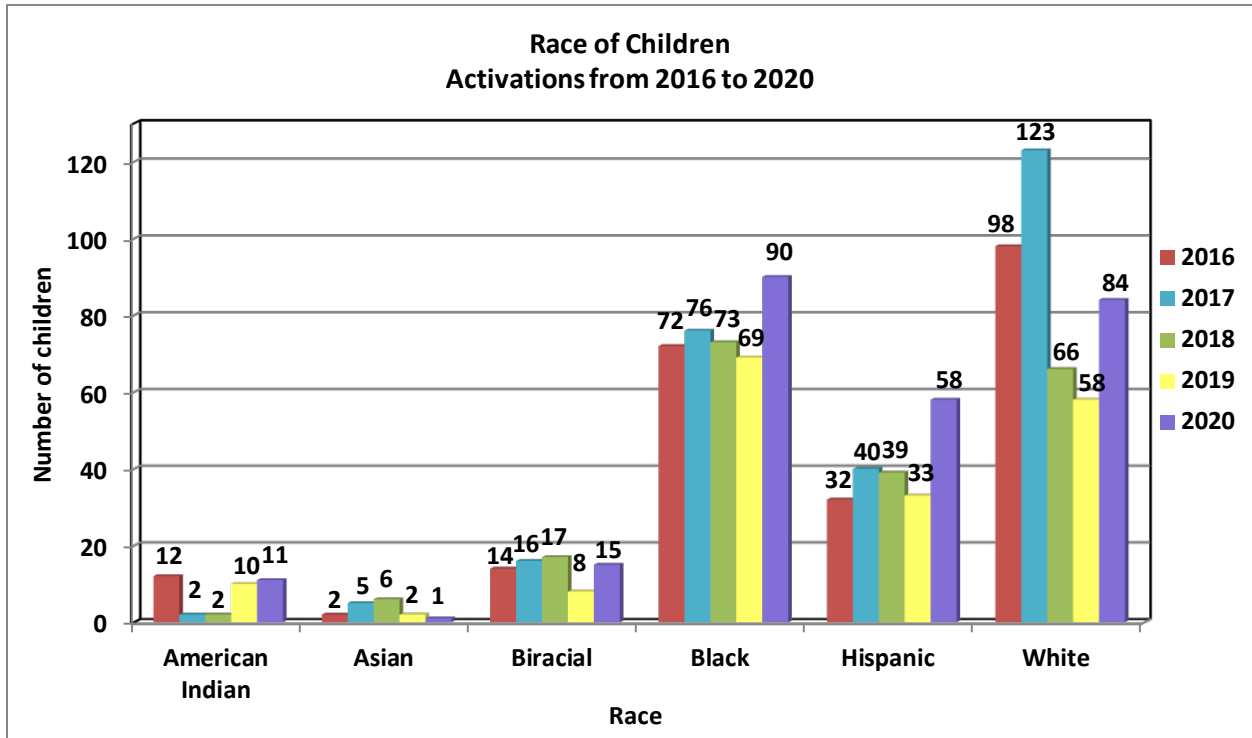


Number and Characteristics of Children Involved in AMBER Alerts

Girls were more often involved in AMBER Alerts in 2016. In 2017, the number of boys and girls involved in an alert was nearly the same. There were slightly more girls involved in AMBER Alerts than boys in 2018. In 2019, girls greatly outnumbered boys. More girls than boys were involved in AMBER Alerts in 2020. In 2016, girls represented 59 percent (n=136) of children involved in AMBER Alerts, and boys made up 41 percent (n=95). In 2017, boys (n=132) and girls (n=131) each made up 50 percent of AMBER Alerts, and, in 2018, 52 percent (n=105) of AMBER Alerts were girls and 48 percent (n=98) were boys. In 2019, girls comprised 61 percent (n=109) of AMBER Alerts, whereas boys comprised 39 percent (n=71). Girls represented 53 percent (n=138) of children involved in AMBER Alerts compared to boys, who made up 47 percent (n=122) in 2020.

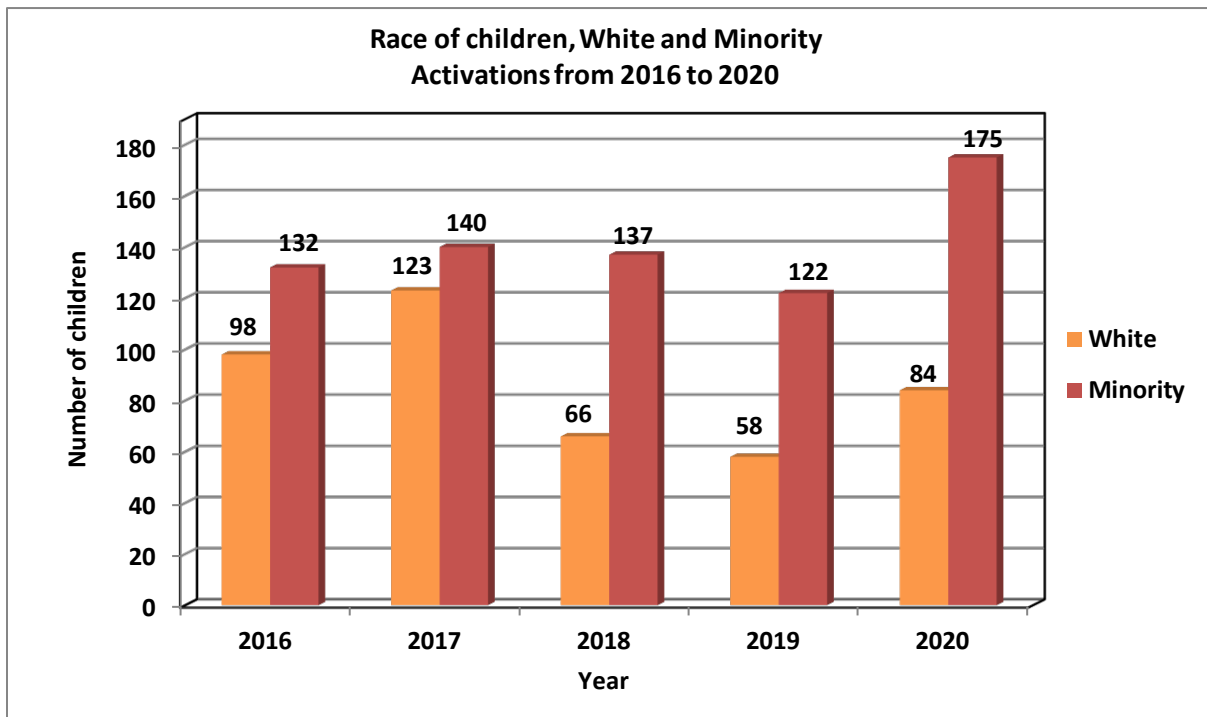
The number of Native American children involved in AMBER Alerts initially decreased and then increased from 2016 to 2020 (n=12, 2, 2, 10, and 11). The number of Asian children generally varied from 2016 to 2020 (n=2, 5, 6, 2, and 1). The number of Biracial children varied from 2016 to 2020 (n=14, 16, 17, 8, and 15). For Black children, there was a pattern of increasing and then decreasing from 2016 to 2019 (n=72, 76, 73, and 69). The number of Black children (n=90) increased substantially in 2020. The number of Hispanic children generally remained the same from 2016 to 2019 (n=32, 40, 39, and 33). In 2020, the number of Hispanic children increased (n=58). The number of White children varied between 2016 and 2020 (n=98, 123, 66, 58, and 84).

Figure 21: Race of Children from 2016 to 2020



From 2016 to 2020 minority children were involved in AMBER Alerts more frequently than White children.

Figure 22: Race of Children, White and Minority from 2016 to 2020



International Abductions

In 2016, there were no AMBER Alerts issued for international abductions. In 2017, there was one AMBER Alert for a case originating in Canada, and the child was recovered in Washington state. In 2018, one AMBER Alert involving four children was an international abduction. The children were recovered in Mexico. In 2019, there were three AMBER Alerts involving six children. In all three cases, the children were recovered in Mexico. In 2020, there were no AMBER Alert activations as a result of an international abduction.

Children Located Deceased

A total of 46 children who were involved in AMBER Alerts issued from 2016 to 2020 were located deceased, (n=13, 6, 7, 10, and 10).

While children intaked as NFAs who were located deceased were slightly more frequent overall between 2016 and 2020, there were more children intaked as LIMs who were located deceased in 2017, 2019, and 2020.

Table 24: Number of Children Located Deceased from 2016 to 2020

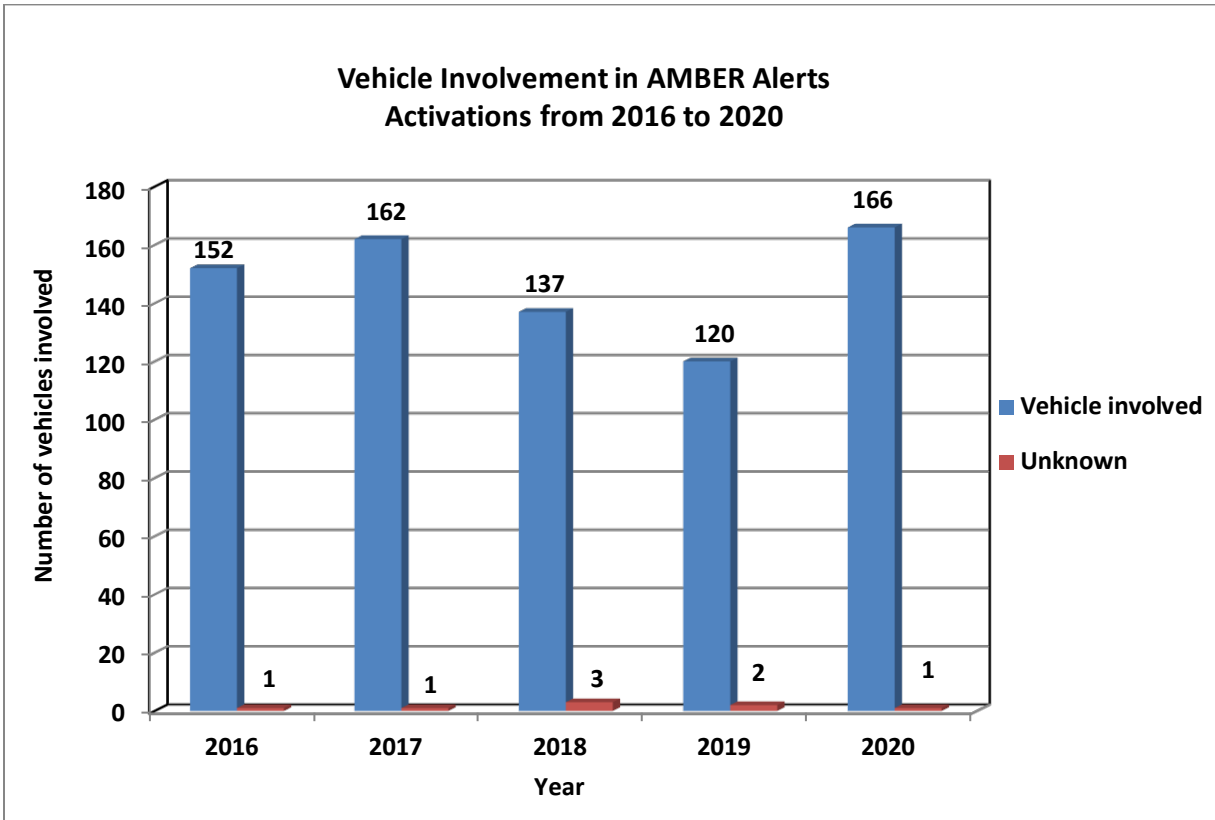
Case type at intake	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
FA	5	0	1	3	2	11
NFA	7	2	5	3	1	18
LIM	1	4	1	4	7	17
ERU	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	13	6	7	10	10	46

National Crime Information Center

In regard to children's information entered in NCIC from 2016 to 2020, it was 78, 85, 85, 81, and 82 percent respectively (n=181, 223, 172, 146, and 213). The AA flag was the predominant flag type from 2016 to 2018; however, in 2019 and 2020 the MP flag was the predominant flag type.

From 2016 to 2020 there were more instances when it was known a vehicle was involved in the alert (n=152, 162, 137, 120, and 166) than unknown.

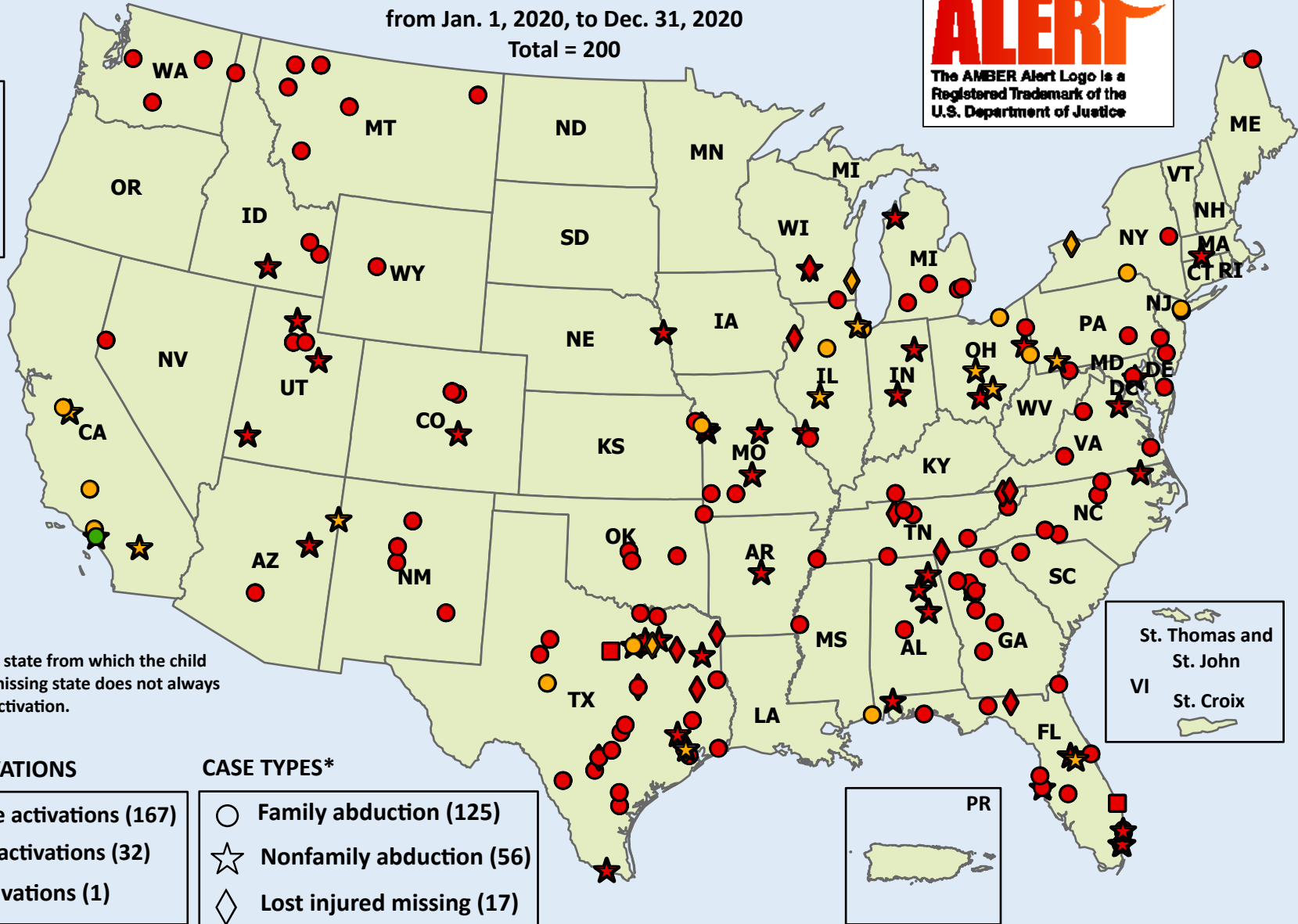
Figure 23: Vehicle Involvement in AMBER Alerts from 2016 to 2020





2020 AMBER Alert Report

AMBER Alert Activations Issued
from Jan. 1, 2020, to Dec. 31, 2020
Total = 200



*Symbols represent the state from which the child is missing. The child's missing state does not always represent the state of activation.

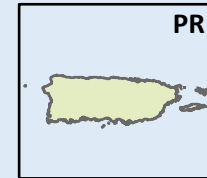
RANGE OF ACTIVATIONS

- Statewide activations (167)
- Regional activations (32)
- Local activations (1)

CASE TYPES*

- Family abduction (125)
- ☆ Nonfamily abduction (56)
- ◇ Lost injured missing (17)
- Endangered runaway (2)

St. Thomas and
St. John
VI
St. Croix



Source: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children
Mapping software donated to NCMEC by Esri, Redlands, California
March 10, 2021