



The Crime Report 2018

A report by the Association of Convenience Stores

#ACSCrimeReport

ACS | the voice of
local shops

CONTENTS

- 02 FOREWORD
- 02 ACS: WORKING FOR YOU
- 04 CRIME OVERVIEW
- 04 SHOP THEFT
- 05 STAFF THEFT
- 06 VIOLENCE & VERBAL ABUSE
- 08 ROBBERY & BURGLARY
- 09 FRAUD
- 10 MANAGING CRIME
- 12 METHODOLOGY



FOREWORD

One of the biggest challenges for retailers is preventing crime against their business, and dealing with the aftermath when it does occur. ACS produces its Crime Report each year to provide insight about the crimes that retailers face.

This needs to spark discussion at national and local level about the impact of crime on local shops, and what everyone from government Ministers, police officers, the courts, to retailers themselves can do to address this problem.

The financial cost of retail crime for local shops is considerable, equivalent to a 7p crime tax for every transaction that takes place in store.

Retail crime also has a physical and emotional cost. Staff face a number of triggers for violence when they carry out their day to day work, such as asking for ID when selling alcohol. For the first time, this year's report shows that challenging shop thieves is the most common trigger for violence and verbal abuse.

As our Crime Report sets out, retail crime is not victimless – it has a huge impact on the people running and working in local shops. Help us to help these people.

James Lowman
Chief Executive, ACS

ACS: WORKING FOR YOU

ACS relies on retailers' experiences in the Crime Report to make the case to government and the police that more needs to be done to tackle retail crime.

ACS' work doesn't stop at the Crime Report. ACS supports retailers by providing practical guidance on the ways to tackle crime in-store, including a new training animation which is free to all retailers. The animation looks at how to identify and manage abusive and violent situations that may arise in stores, such as refusing to serve customers and dealing with shop thieves. The animation is available here:

<https://www.acs.org.uk/advice/crime-prevention>

When a serious incident does take place, which results in the death or life-threatening injury to a retailer or a member of their staff, ACS works with Crimestoppers to help. ACS will issue rewards of up to £50,000 for information that is provided to Crimestoppers to bring offenders to justice.

To share your experiences of how crime is affecting your business, please contact ACS by emailing acs@acs.org.uk or calling 01252 515001.

ACS.org.uk

COST OF CRIME TO CONVENIENCE STORES

Crime against convenience retailers costs an estimated

£193m
TO THE SECTOR

£3,873
PER STORE

7p
CRIME TAX
PER TRANSACTION

RETAILERS ARE MOST CONCERNED ABOUT



INVESTMENT

ON AVERAGE EACH STORE SPENDS

£4,242

ON CRIME PREVENTION MEASURES PER YEAR

TOP AREAS FOR INVESTMENT

- 1 CCTV
- 2 CASH HANDLING & STORAGE
- 3 EXTERNAL SECURITY

TOP FEATURES IN-STORE

- 1 EXTERNAL SECURITY
- 2 CCTV
- 3 STAFF TRAINING
- 4 CASH HANDLING AND STORAGE
- 5 INTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS

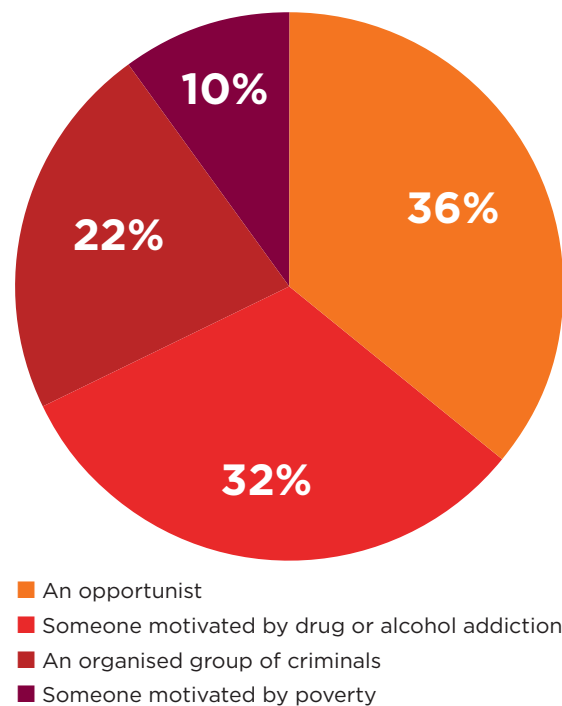
» DEFINITION

Theft is an offence where money, goods, company property or services are stolen from the business at that premises.

TOP THREE PRODUCTS TARGETED BY THIEVES

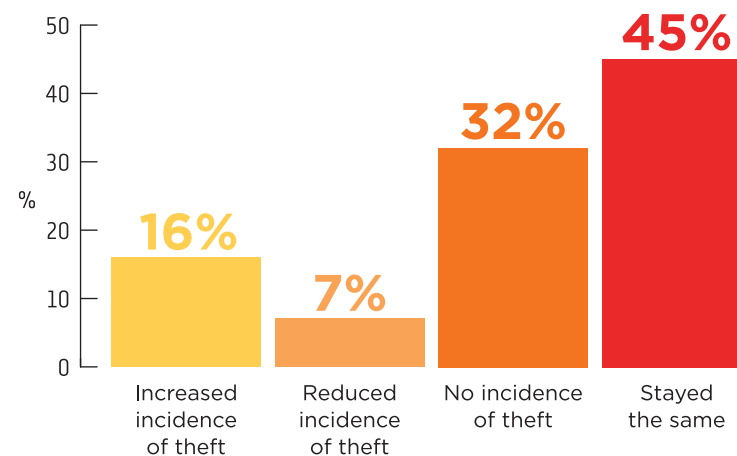


PERCEIVED MOTIVATIONS FOR SHOP THEFT



£1,739 THE TOTAL COST OF SHOP THEFT PER STORE

EXPERIENCE OF SHOP THEFT IN THE LAST YEAR (AVERAGE)¹

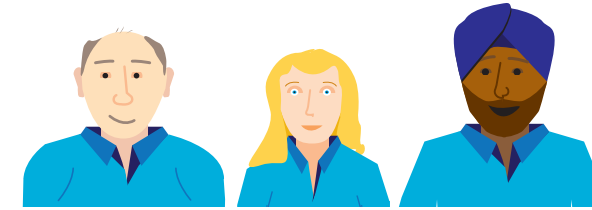


Shop theft remains the most costly type of crime that retailers face and is a growing problem. The Office for National Statistics estimate that there has been a 10% increase of shop theft incidents year-on-year² while the Home Office estimates that shop theft accounts for 67% of all crime in the retail and wholesale sector.³

ACS' Crime Report shows that retailers believe the majority of shop theft incidents are linked to offenders with drug or alcohol addictions or linked with organised criminality. This is reinforced by thieves targeting high value items for resale such as meat, cheese and alcohol. As a result, shop theft cost each store £1,739 in the last year.

Shop theft also presents physical and emotional costs for retailers and their staff. This year's Crime Report suggests that the top trigger for violence and verbal abuse is now challenging shop thieves. ACS has developed an animation for retailers to train their staff on how they can manage these triggers which can be downloaded or viewed here: <https://www.acs.org.uk/advice/crime-prevention>

All data on this spread - source: ACS Crime Survey 2018, apart from
¹ Source: ACS Voice of Local Shops survey
² Source: Office for National Statistics: Crime in England and Wales: year ending September 2017
³ Home Office Commercial Victimisation Survey 2016



£23m

the total cost of staff theft to the sector

18,591 INCIDENTS OF STAFF THEFT IN THE SECTOR

£1,214

the cost per staff theft incident

MOST COMMON INTERNAL THEFTS⁴

- 1 Cash directly from tills
- 2 Consumption of products in-store
- 3 Lottery process
- 4 Partial scanning of products
- 5 Bill payment process

£5m spent across the sector tackling staff theft

Retailers have invested over £5 million to tackle theft by staff in their stores. This has enabled retailers to identify and intervene in staff theft incidents earlier and reduce the cost of each staff theft incident, which currently stands at £1,214. The Home Office estimates that staff theft in the retail and wholesale sector has significantly fallen from an average of 13 incidents per business in 2012 to two incidents per business in 2016.⁵

Only 34% of staff theft incidents are reported to the police. ACS believes that retailers may be reluctant to report incidents of staff theft to the police because they perceive it to be a failing of their own internal reporting and checking procedures. Staff theft is a serious "breach of trust" offence which has significant fines and potential custodial sentences for offenders. Reporting incidents to the police can also prevent offenders moving to other businesses and committing the same offence.

⁴ Source: ACS Voice of Local Shops survey
⁵ Source: Home Office Commercial Victimisation Survey 2016

» DEFINITION

Assaults and threats are incidents where employees are assaulted, threatened or intimidated, as a result of disagreements with customers or other employees.

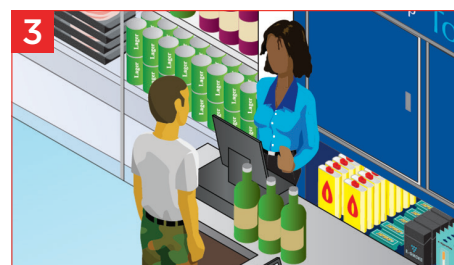
TOP CAUSES FOR AGGRESSIVE / ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR



1 CHALLENGING SHOP THIEVES



2 ENFORCING AN AGE RESTRICTED SALES POLICY



3 REFUSING TO SERVE DRUNKS

13,437

number of incidents of violence estimated in the sector

72%

of staff in convenience stores have experienced **verbal abuse**

39%

of violent incidents result in injury



Dealing with shop thieves is the number one trigger for violence and verbal abuse in the convenience sector. This clearly shows that shop theft is far from victimless or low level.

39% of violent incidents now result in the injury of a retailer or a staff member which is unacceptably high. Weapons may also be used in violent incidents to either intimidate or injure retailers and their staff. Of the 3,690 incidents involving a weapon that took place in the sector the majority of offenders used a knife, followed by other weapons such as an axe, screwdriver or a hammer.

The cost of violence and verbal abuse is difficult to quantify as the real impact is the physical and emotional impact on retailers and their staff. It can instead lead to staff feeling less safe when they are working⁷. Retailers' top concern is the impact of violence on their staff and look to find ways to prevent violence in their store by managing the triggers for violence and verbal abuse.

3,690 INCIDENTS WHERE A WEAPON WAS USED including firearms and knives in the sector

64%

KNIFE

19%

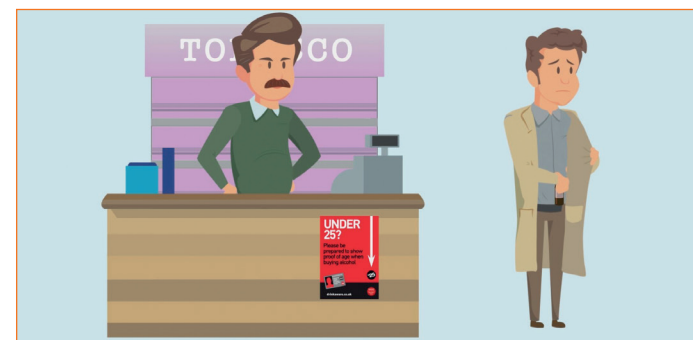
OTHER WEAPON (E.G. AXE or HAMMER)

17%

FIREARM (IMITATION or REAL)



MANAGING VIOLENCE AND VERBAL ABUSE IN CONVENIENCE STORES

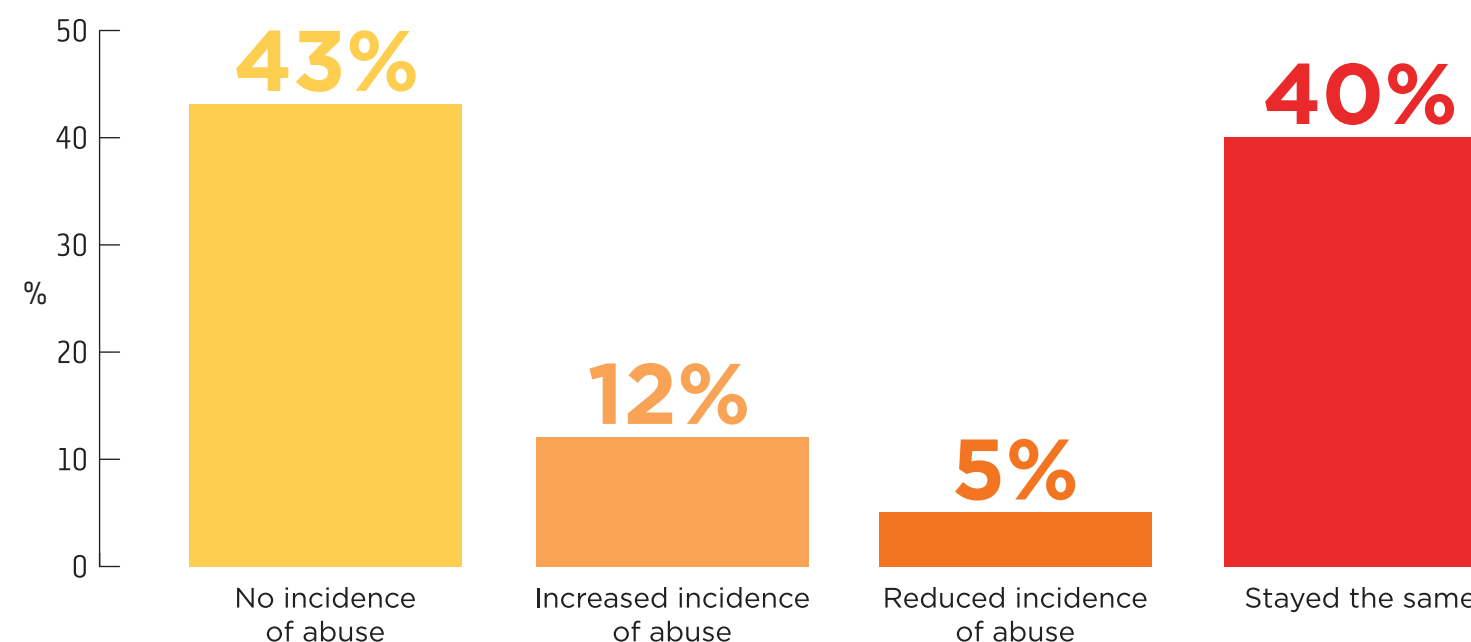


ACS has developed an animation to help retailers and their staff identify and manage the triggers of violence and verbal abuse in store. The training animation covers three key areas: refusing to



serve customers, dealing with shop thieves, and armed robberies. To download or view the animation, visit: <https://www.acs.org.uk/advice/crime-prevention>

EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE AND VERBAL ABUSE IN THE LAST YEAR (AVERAGE)⁸



ROBBERY

» DEFINITION

Robbery is an offence where force, or the threat of force, is used either during or immediately prior to a theft or attempted theft, which can include use of a weapon.

9,304

INCIDENTS OF ROBBERY

£1,986

THE AVERAGE COST
PER INCIDENT

£18m

THE TOTAL COST OF ROBBERY
TO THE CONVENIENCE SECTOR

BURGLARY

» DEFINITION

Burglary with entry is defined as entering any building on the premises without permission with intent to steal.

2,859

INCIDENTS OF BURGLARY

£7,002

THE AVERAGE COST
PER INCIDENT

£20m

THE TOTAL COST OF BURGLARY
TO THE CONVENIENCE SECTOR

ATM RAM RAIDS

» DEFINITION

A robbery in which an ATM is rammed with a vehicle and looted.

£8m

THE TOTAL COST
OF ATM RAM
RAIDS TO THE
CONVENIENCE
SECTOR

There has been an increase in the number of incidents of robbery compared to the last year. However, there has been a significant reduction in the cost per incident for robberies. This is because one of the top areas that retailers invest in is in cash handling and storage to reduce the amount of cash kept on the premises.

For the first time, ACS surveyed members to find out the impact of ATM ram raids on the convenience sector. The report estimates that ATM ram raids cost convenience retailers £8m in the last year.

» DEFINITION

Fraud is wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in financial or personal gain.

£483

THE AVERAGE COST
PER STORE

£24m

THE TOTAL COST OF FRAUD
TO THE CONVENIENCE SECTOR

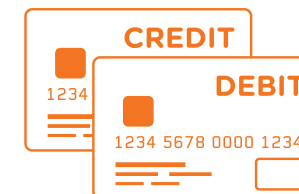
MOST COMMON TYPES OF FRAUD EXPERIENCED BY RETAILERS

1

Counterfeit notes



2

Credit and
debit cards

3

Discount and
label fraud

£20

THE MOST COMMON
COUNTERFEIT
NOTE USED

Fraud cost the convenience sector £24m in the last year, equivalent to £483 per store. Fraud is still a growing crime against the convenience sector and should not be overlooked.

Counterfeit notes are the most prevalent type of fraud facing the convenience sector and also one of the most costly. The most common counterfeit banknote used in the sector is the Bank of England £20 paper note – the last note to switch to polymer.

The Bank of England are expected to introduce the £20 polymer banknote in 2020. Polymer notes have been introduced to reduce the number of counterfeit notes in circulation.

While counterfeit notes are the most prevalent type of crime, retailers should also be conscious of the most expensive types of fraud facing the convenience sector including cyber crime and debit and credit card fraud.

Crime is one of the biggest operational challenges for retailers and the illustration below outlines some of the key considerations for managing crime.

Assessing the vulnerabilities of your business to crime and planning a proportionate response is essential, whether it is installing CCTV or providing additional training for staff.

An example risk assessment for a convenience store is available from the Health and Safety Executive website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/pdf/newsagent.pdf>

ACID AND CORROSIVE SUBSTANCES

- There has been an increase in the number attacks where acid is being used as a weapon to injure someone. Retailers should identify if they sell corrosive substances and think about ways to responsibly retail these products.
- There is currently no legal age restriction for the sale of acid or corrosive substances. However, the government has committed to introduce an age restriction of 18 for corrosive substances (which is still to be defined).
- For more information, see ACS' Preventing Underage Sales guidance here: <https://www.acs.org.uk/advice/age-restrictions>

ATM

- If you have an ATM located outside, ensure that you have CCTV with a good view of the ATM. This will help with the police investigation in the event of an ATM ram raid.

EXTERNAL SECURITY

- Ensure that all doors and windows are secured to prevent burglaries.
- For high risk stores, consider the installation of external shutters (this may require planning consent).
- Where reasonably practicable, advertising should be restricted to allow for clear viewing into and out of the premises.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- Contact your local police or community safety partnership.
- You can use the Community Trigger power to force a response from local agencies.

SELF-SCAN TILLS

- Ensure you have sufficient staff to authorise items during busy periods.
- Ensure staff are trained to support customers to scan difficult items through tills correctly such as fruit and vegetables.

STAFF

- **Make sure staff have been informed about:**
 - Security measures such as panic buttons and CCTV.
 - Internal and external crime reporting structures.
 - Dealing with abusive customers.

CCTV

- Ensure one camera provides quality images of everyone entering your premises and a second covers the till.
- A minimum of six frames per second should be used on your camera. Ensure recorded images are similar quality to live images and all images have a time and date.
- Identify the most important areas of the store for camera location and consider the angle of view and lighting.
- For more information: <http://bit.ly/cctvguidance>

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Be attentive, acknowledge all customers as they enter the store, so that potential thieves know that you are watching them.
- If you think you have spotted someone concealing goods, avoid direct confrontation, instead offer them as basket or help with carrying their goods.

CYBER CRIME

- The ways retailers can protect themselves from the most common cyberattacks are by backing up data, keeping smartphones and tablets safe, preventing malware damage, avoiding phishing attacks, (e.g. emails asking for sensitive information such as bank details), and using passwords to protect your data.
- For more information on ways to improve cyber security in your business see the National Cyber Security Centre's guidance for small businesses here: <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/smallbusiness>

INTERNAL THEFT

- Regularly monitor stock levels and stock rooms to deter theft by employees.
- Theft by an employee is a serious offence and breach of trust, it should be reported to the police.

TILL POSITION

- Are high value goods or targeted products (meat, cheese, alcohol) in view of the till?
- Ensure that the front of the store is visible from the till, so staff can see customers approaching.

AGE RESTRICTED SALES

- Ensure you have visible signage at the entrance, till and shelf edges of your store.
- Make sure staff know the store policy and acceptable proof of age documents.
- When asking for ID think about the following as ways to prevent confrontation: deflect, flattery, being constructive. For more information about ways to mitigate violence from enforcing age restricted sales, see ACS' animation on 'Managing Violence and Abuse in Convenience Stores', here: <https://www.acs.org.uk/advice/crime-prevention>

CASH

- Reduce the amount of cash held in tills and on your premises.
- Change the routine of banking procedures so they are not easily observable.
- Think about using counter drop safes to reduce cash in tills.

1. ACS Crime Survey 2018

The survey was sent to ACS members between 21st November 2017 and 12th January 2018. The survey had 31 respondents representing 7,103 stores. The results from the ACS Crime Survey are scaled up to the total sector using store number figures from the ACS Local Shop Report 2017, which stipulates there are 49,918 stores in the sector. The survey data has been weighted to represent the different store types according to their proportion of stores in the market.

For more information about the sector, see ACS' Local Shop Report 2017.

Crime Tax

The crime tax on page 3 is calculated using ACS crime survey figures relating to total cost of crime per store and by using data from ACS Local Shop Report 2017 on sales and average basket spend to calculate a 7p cost per transaction.

2. ACS Voice of Local Shop Survey (VOLS)

The Crime report includes data from ACS' VOLS. VOLS is a quarterly tracker of the key confidence indicators in the convenience sector. VOLS is a telephone survey of 1,210 retailers, operating both symbol and independent businesses across Great Britain to discover essential information about the trading performance of their stores, their opinion on what barriers are to the growth of their businesses and their experience of crime.

Staff theft

Respondents were asked "what are the most common ways in which employees attempt to steal from your business?" The question was asked in the February 2018 VOLS survey.

Shop theft, violence and verbal abuse tracker questions

Respondents were asked about their experience of shop theft and violence and verbal abuse each quarter. Figures in the report relate to data over the past year, calculated by taking an average from May 2017 to February 2018. For the purposes of the crime report, 'don't know' responses were excluded from the analysis.

Violence

The February 2018 VOLS survey asked respondents to state how many incidents of violence with injury and violence without injury they had experienced in the last 12 months. The results from VOLS were combined with multiple and co-operative retailer responses from the ACS crime survey, according to the proportion of stores in the market, to determine overall results for the sector.

3. Home Office Commercial Victimisation Survey (CVS) 2016 (pages 4 and 5)

The CVS is a telephone survey where respondents from a representative sample of business premises in England and Wales are asked about crimes experienced at their premises in the 12 months prior to the interview.

Estimates for the 2016 CVS are based on 2,962 interviews with respondents at premises in wholesale and retail, transportation and storage, and administration and support sectors. Fieldwork was carried out between August and November 2016.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612477/crime-against-businesses-2016-hosb0617.pdf

4. Office for National Statistics (ONS) Crime in England and Wales (page 4)

ONS publish quarterly releases of their Crime in England and Wales statistical bulletins which are produced in partnership with the Home Office. The statistics are based on police recorded crime data.

Data in the report refers to the year ending September 2017.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingseptember2017>

5. ACS Colleague Survey 2017 (page 6)

ACS' Colleague Survey is an annual online and paper survey which looks at the demographics, experiences and situations staff working within the convenience sector. The 2017 Colleague Survey received 1,230 responses. Fieldwork was carried out January to February 2017.

6. ACS Local Shop Report 2017 (page 8)

The 2017 edition of the ACS Local Shop Report provides insights with a deep and wide- ranging look at the people who run, work and shop in the UK's local convenience stores.

The methodology for the Local Shop Report is available at www.acs.org.uk/research

CONTACT

For more details on this report, contact Julie Byers at ACS by emailing Julie.Byers@acs.org.uk

To find out the questions asked in the crime survey, visit: <http://www.acs.org.uk/research/crime-report-2018>

For more details on ACS:

Visit: www.acs.org.uk

Call: 01252 515001

Follow us on Twitter: @ACS_Localshops