

SHOP THEFT
REPEAT OFFENCES
VERBAL ABUSE
THREATS
VIOLENCE
ROBBERY
BURGLARY
FRAUD
SHOP SECURITY
PERSONAL SAFETY

EVIDENCE FOR ACTION

The **Crime** Report 2020

A report by the Association of Convenience Stores
[#itsnotpartofthejob](#)

ACS | the voice of
local shops

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Foreword

The findings from our Crime Report add to the overwhelming body of evidence from academics, business groups, trade unions and the government showing the growing problem of violence against shopworkers. We estimate there were 50,338 incidents of violence against people working in local shops, 25% resulting in injury to colleagues. We found that violence is most commonly triggered when responsible shopworkers and retailers enforce the law, like age restrictions on regulated products, or when they encounter shop thieves.

The purpose of the Crime Report is to present evidence for taking action that will change this unacceptable situation for colleagues, retailers and communities. The Government, police and justice system must change the way they identify and respond to violence and crime against local shops and the people that work in them. Tougher sentences for violent offenders, more effective sanctions for repeat offenders and better funding and allocation of police and courts resources are all part of the solution.

All retailers have a responsibility for the safety of the people they employ. The report shows the scale of that commitment; convenience retailers have invested £209 million in crime prevention measures in order to deter criminals and make their colleagues feel safe. We will tackle this by working with the Government, police and other retailers to find solutions to reverse the growing trend of crime, violence and abuse in local shops.

James Lowman, Chief Executive, ACS

Cost of crime to convenience stores

Crime against convenience retailers costs an estimated

£211m to the sector

£4,543 per store

7p crime tax per transaction

Retailers are most concerned about



1 Theft by customers



2 Violence against staff



3 Verbal abuse against staff

The Crime Report: Evidence for Action:

#itsnotpartofthejob

→ Support local shops to invest in crime prevention equipment and build better working relationships with police forces.

£209m

invested in crime prevention across the sector

On average each store spent

£4,504

on crime prevention measures last year

→ Review the Out of Court Disposals system for issuing cautions, penalties and fines to shop thieves, to better address the root causes of offending.

1.1m

incidents of customer theft over the last year

£1,670

The total cost of shop theft per store

→ Introduce new and tougher penalties for attacks on shopworkers serving the public and review the sentencing guidelines for assaults.

50,338

incidents of violence estimated in the sector

25%

of violent incidents result in injury

→ Continue funding and support for the National Business Crime Centre to monitor and share information on crime trends and help local shops to prepare.

8,114

incidents of burglary

£17m

The total cost of burglary to the convenience sector

→ Police and Crime Commissioners, their Police and Crime Plans and budgets, must acknowledge the challenge of crime and violence in the retail sector and the impact it has on local communities.

17 out of 42*

Police and Crime Commissioners reference business crime in their Police and Crime Plans

47%

of all retail crime is reported by retailers to the police

£209m

invested in crime prevention across the sector over the last year

On average each store spent

£4,504

on crime prevention measures over the year

Top areas of investment

- 1** CCTV 
- 2** External security 
- 3** Cash handling and storage 

Top features in-store

- 1** CCTV 
- 2** Cash handling and storage 
- 3** External security 
- 4** Intruder alarms 
- 5** Staff training 

Case study



Southern Co-op has created a new fund to support UK charities working with local communities to reduce crime, supporting ex-offenders and those at risk from offending. "We commit a lot of time and money to protecting our colleagues and customers from violent offenders, but the stark reality is, it's getting worse."

"Our new Safer Neighbourhood Fund of £100,000 is there to support local charities who are delivering localised innovative programmes that help residents to build a secure future and reduce offending. Our colleagues deserve to work in a safe environment free from harm and we hope the Fund will be a step towards achieving this."

Gareth Lewis, Loss Prevention & Security Manager, Southern Co-op

Support local shops to invest in crime prevention equipment and build better working relationships with police forces.

We are calling for the Government to do more to incentivise investment. Retailers investing in installing CCTV systems to keep their colleagues safe should not receive a higher business rates bills as a result. We also want to see more central funding from the Government where evidence suggests that innovative approaches to tackling retail crime, such as increasing local collaboration through Business Crime Reduction Partnership, or rehabilitation services that prevent repeat offending are working.

1.1m

incidents of customer theft over the last year

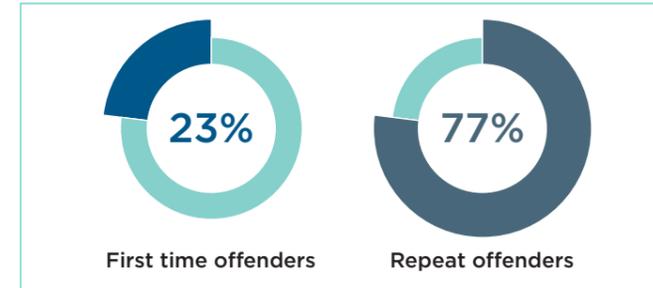


£1,670

The total cost of shop theft per store



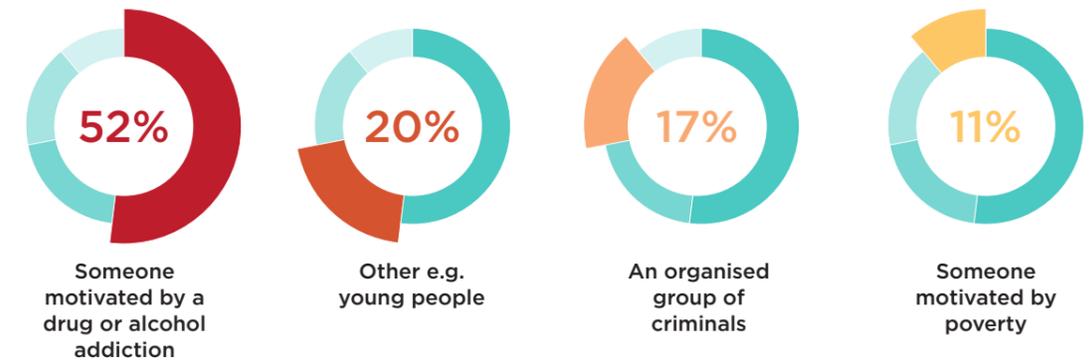
Profile of shop thieves



Most commonly stolen items

- 1** Meat 
- 2** Confectionery 
- 3** Alcohol 

Motivations for repeat offending



Case study



The Village Shop is part of the Cherwell Crime Partnership through which staff have access to the DISC app, which provides information on prolific offenders and a crime reporting tool that goes directly to Thames Valley Police.

"There are prolific offenders that will stop at nothing to keep coming into the store and stealing. The app flags prolific offenders including those that are banned from stores in the partnership, provides information on offenders' characteristics, such as whether they carry needles, or are violent or verbally abusive, and members can post updates or warnings that are immediately visible to all stores in the partnership."

Joe Williams, The Village Shop & Post Office

Review the Out of Court Disposals system for issuing cautions, penalties and fines to shop thieves, to better address the root causes of offending.

Pressure on police resources mean that offenders are often dealt with by Out of Court Disposals (OCD) such as cautions or penalty notices for disorder (PNDs). While these measures are expedient for police forces, they often fail to tackle the root cause of offending. We want to see more offenders dealt with by courts allowing for better assessment of offenders motivations for theft and the delivery of more effective sanctions. We the need the Ministry of Justice to look closely at their review of the OCD system undertaken in 2014. The OCD reviews findings were inconclusive on whether the simplification of OCD had been successful.

Number of incidents of **violence** estimated in the sector =

50,338

Number of violent incidents where a **weapon** was used

9,704

Top triggers for violence



1 Encountering shop thieves



2 Enforcing an age restricted sales policy

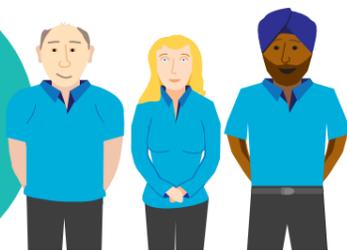


3 Refusing to serve intoxicated customers

25% of violent incidents result in injury

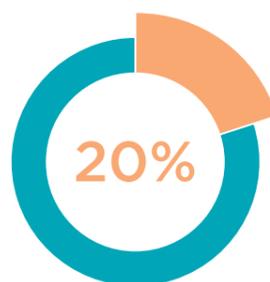


83%



of store colleagues have experienced **verbal abuse**

Retailers estimate that:



of verbal abuse incidents are **hate motivated**

(motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on their race or ethnicity, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity)

29% of independent retailers have **experienced violence** over the last year

Of crimes where a weapon was present

43%

Knife



57%

Other weapon (e.g. axe, hammer or syringe)



5%

of crimes where a weapon was present involved a **firearm**



Number of incidents of **robbery** estimated in the sector =

18,399

Case study



"In the past 30 years I could count on one hand the number of incidents we've had, but in the last year we have had an increasing number of violent incidents that have been particularly traumatic. One assailant jumped over the counter and threatened and prodded a member of staff, who was pregnant, with a large kitchen knife, to open the till. Another member of staff who witnessed the incident did not feel able to return to work for a week.

As my staff now feel threatened, we have had to prevent people coming into store with hoods or helmets which has been particularly hard to enforce upon our existing customers."

Harry Goraya, Nisa Local

Introduce new and tougher penalties for attacks on shopworkers serving the public and review the sentencing guidelines for assaults.

We want to see tougher penalties for attacks on shopworkers because of their vulnerability in serving the public and the legal requirements placed on them to enforce age restrictions on regulated products. The Government should introduce a new aggravated offence for attacks on shopworkers through the Sentencing Bill and review sentencing guidelines for assaults, making it explicit that attacks on shopworkers count as an aggravated offence as they are "providing a service to the public" and that this vastly increases the severity of sanctions used for offenders.

8,114

Incidents of burglary (excluding ram raids)

£2,132

The average cost of burglary per incident

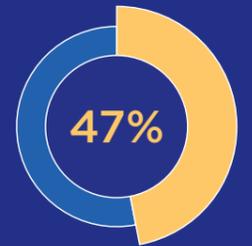
£17m

The total cost of burglary to the convenience sector

17 out of 42

Police and Crime Commissioners reference business crime in their Police and Crime Plans

Only half of all crime is reported by retailers to the police



ATM ram raids



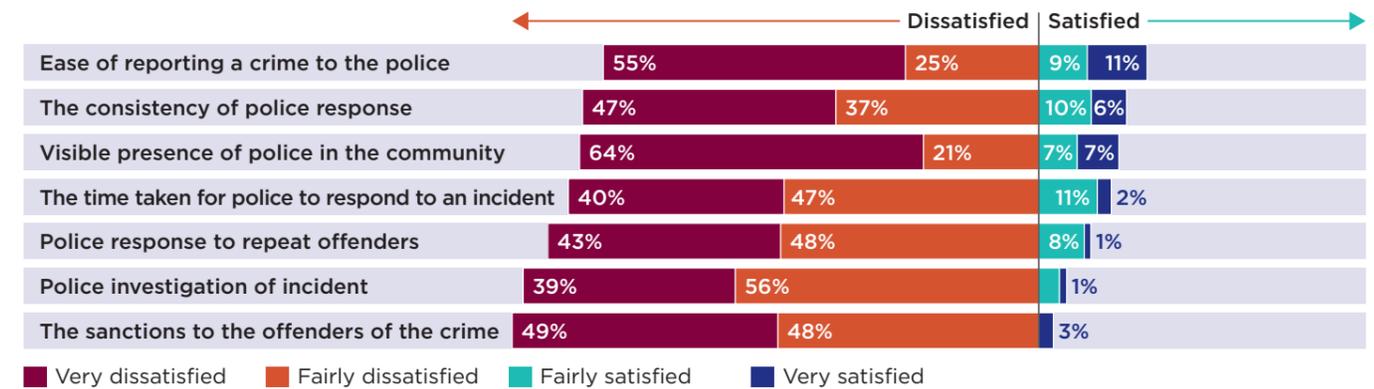
There were **over 500 ATM ram raids** in the last year

Most common types of fraud

- Counterfeit notes**
- Credit and debit cards**
- Discount and label fraud**

£20 The most common counterfeit note used

Retailers' satisfaction levels with police



Why retailers don't always report crime

(Based on open-ended responses)

- Lack of response from the police
- Lack of outcome/resolution
- Takes too much time
- Below police threshold

Case study



In this incident, offenders used a telehandler tractor to smash into the side of the Spar store. The vehicle was then used to pull the ATM cash machine out of the wall and was driven off on the back of a pick-up truck.

"This ATM raid was carried out with such ferocity, it forced all the safes, equipment and office furniture through the wall, damaging the roof and twisting the stock room wall, moving four metres of refrigeration forward. We put in the exterior cashpoint as a community service since the closure of the local bank. The repairs cost thousands of pounds. The raid also left the community and all the staff feeling uneasy and unsure if there would be a store for them to come back to."

Julian Taylor-Green, Taylor-Green's SPAR

Case study



Central England Co-op and the West Midlands Police have worked together to tackle persistent offenders through a pioneering programme aimed at helping prolific shoplifters turn their lives around.

"We work extremely hard to make sure that our stores are safe places to work and shop for colleagues, customers and members. However, unfortunately, violent incidents and shoplifting do still take place. As well as working closely with partners such as local police forces to bring criminals to justice, we also want to try and back projects that can not only put an end to crime taking place but also help turn the lives around of those involved. This is why we were delighted to partner with West Midlands Police to try this different approach to tackle persistent offenders."

Hannah Gallimore, Corporate Responsibility Manager, Central England Co-op

Continue funding and support for the National Business Crime Centre to monitor and share information on crime trends and help local shops to prepare.

The National Business Crime Centre plays an important role in co-ordinating the business community, sharing information and best practice. We believe their funding should be secured and enhanced to help local shops and all businesses to understand and anticipate crime trends.

Police forces could do more to invest time and resources into establishing links with the business community through greater support for the established network of police force single points of contact (SPOCs). Where these SPOCs are supported and resourced, they can make a real difference to developing cohesion with the business community.

Police and Crime Commissioners, their Police and Crime Plans and budgets, must acknowledge the challenge of crime and violence in the retail sector and the impact it has on local communities.

We want to see Police Crime Commissioners allocate budget to tackling violence against shopworkers, recognise the retail sector in their Police and Crime Plans and formalise structure across all force areas for engaging with the business community. We welcome the Government's commitment to deliver 20,000 new police officers but police must be allocated to local communities and develop a better system for reporting and responding to crime in the retail sector. A HMICFRS led review into police forces' approach to engaging with the business community would enable a positive evaluation of the current system and identify best practice that could be spread across all force areas.

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 knives

- There has been an increase in the number of attacks where acid and knives are being used as a weapon to injure someone.
- The Offensive Weapons Act has introduced an age restriction of 18 for corrosive substances. It is illegal to sell corrosives or knives to anyone under 18.
- The National Business Crime Centre website hosts a good practice guide and training modules for retailers on the storage and sale of knives. <https://nbcc.police.uk/guidance/knife-retailers-toolkit>
- 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. To find out how to activate the Community Trigger in your area use the following link to search for local authority: <https://asbhelp.co.uk/community-trigger-directory/>

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.
- ACS has developed an animation to help retailers and their staff identify and manage the triggers of violence and verbal abuse. The animation is available on ACS' YouTube Channel.

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.
- If you plan to share your CCTV footage, you must ensure you comply with GDPR regulations. To find out more, visit the Information Commissioner's Office guidance on CCTV, here: <http://bit.ly/CCTVGDPRGuidance>
- For more information on CCTV use the Home Office's CCTV Supporting Small Business Guide: <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 a basket or help with carrying their goods.

Cyber crime

- Retailers can protect themselves from the most common cyberattacks 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'. The animation is available on ACS' YouTube Channel.

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 2020

Unless otherwise stated all data in this report comes from ACS' Crime Survey 2020. An online survey was conducted between 27th November 2019 and 13th January 2020 and captures incidents and cost of crime experienced by convenience retailers over the last 12 months.

The survey had 67 respondents, representing 5,131 convenience stores. The survey gathered responses from independent, multiple and co-operative retailers and the data has been weighted to represent these store types in the same proportion as they are represented in the overall market. Data regarding the overall number of stores in the convenience sector, as well as a breakdown by store type, can be found in ACS' 2019 Local Shop Report.

Why retailers don't always report crime (page 9)

Information on why retailers don't always report crime was captured through the following open-ended question; 'What, if anything, prevents you from reporting crimes to the police?'. Responses were categorised into themes using an inductive coding approach, resulting in the themes represented in the report.

2. Police and Crime Plan review

ACS reviewed 42 Police and Crime Commissioner Police and Crime plans using the following search criteria: 'retail crime', 'business crime', and 'shoplifting'.

Please note the review was conducted in November 2019 and Police and Crime plans may have been modified since this date. For more information about your local Police and Crime Plan, see the Police and Crime Commissioner website for your area. To find more information about which local policing area you belong to see <https://www.police.uk/>

3. ACS Voice of Local Shops survey (VOLS)

The VOLS survey is a quarterly telephone survey with a sample of 1,210 independent retailers, including unaffiliated, symbol group and independent forecourt retailers.

Data on the percentage of independent retailers who have experienced violence in the last year (see page 6) was taken from the following VOLS question:

Which of the following best describes your experience of violence in the last year?

- I have experienced an increase in violence.
- I have experienced a decrease in violence.
- I have experienced the same level of violence.
- I have not experienced any violence.
- Don't know.

Don't know responses were excluded for analysis. Those who recorded experiencing an, increase, decrease or the same level of violence in the last year were considered to have experienced some form of violence over the last year. Averages were calculated using figures from the latest four quarters (May 2019 to February 2020).

4. ACS Colleague Survey 2019

An online and paper survey looking at the demographics, experiences and situations of 2,493 staff working with the convenience sector. Fieldwork was carried out between 4th February and 15th March 2019. The percentage of staff experiencing verbal abuse (see page 6), was based on the following question within the Colleague Survey:

'Over the last twelve months, how often (if at all) have you been a victim of the following in the workplace?'

Verbal abuse - 'Never, hardly ever, every few months, monthly, weekly, daily or almost daily.'

Those who responded with any option other than 'never' were considered to have experienced some form of verbal abuse in the last year.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the retailers who took the time to complete our 2020 crime survey and share their crime data with us, without which this report would not be possible.

Additional resources

For more information about retail crime and wider crime trends please see the following websites, reports and statistics:

British Retail Consortium

<https://brc.org.uk/making-a-difference/priorities/crime/>

USDAW Freedom From Fear campaign

<https://www.usdaw.org.uk/freedomfromfear>

City University of London and Co-op report 'It's not part of the job' Violence and verbal abuse towards shop workers: A review of evidence and policy.

https://assets.ctfassets.net/5ywmq66472jr/22QfMejeWYbimJ9ykX9W9h/0e99f15c0ed24c16ab74d38b42d5129a/lt_s_not_part_of_the_job_report.pdf

Home Office Commercial Victimization Survey (CVS) 2018

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 2018 CVS are based on 2,000 interviews with respondents at premises in wholesale and retail.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/829399/crime-against-businesses-2018-hosb1719.pdf

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

ONS publish quarterly 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 and look at trends in overall police recorded crime.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingseptember2019>

CONTACT

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