



The Rural Shop Report 2020

A report by the Association of Convenience Stores

[#RuralShopReport](#)

ACS | the voice of
local shops

» INTRODUCTION

There are **46,388** convenience stores in mainland UK

16,986 of these stores are rural



There are a **higher proportion of rural shops in Wales** than in any other part of mainland UK

Source: WRBM 2019

There are almost 17,000 rural shops in the UK, most of which operate in isolation with no other business or service provider nearby. As the only place for thousands of people to get local access to groceries and a wide range of services, rural shops are a crucial part of these communities. Being able to invest in new products and services is crucial to remaining relevant to consumers, and we see the £204m invested over the last year as a clear indicator of rural shops committing to developing their offer. Rural shops do however still face unique challenges when compared to the rest of the convenience sector, such as access to high speed internet, the provision of reliable mobile data coverage, and ensuring that the local community has free access to cash.

The information featured in this report is gathered from our own primary research, as well as data kindly supplied by organisations such as HIM, William Reed, IGD and the Plunkett Foundation.

Over the last year, rural convenience stores have:

Achieved **£15bn** in sales

Contributed **£3.3bn** in GVA

Provided around **146,000** jobs

¹ Source: IGD 2019. ² Source: ACS calculation based on Retail Economics 2019. ³ Source: ACS/HIM 2019

Investment

Over the last year rural convenience stores have **invested** around **» £204m** in their businesses

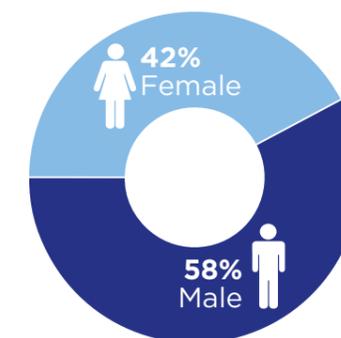
» WHO WE ARE

74% of rural convenience stores are independently owned

25%

of rural store owners have been in the business for more than 25 years

The people who own and run rural stores are:



White British	67%
Asian or Asian British	26%
Other	7%

Source: ACS/HIM 2019. ⁴ Source: WRBM 2019

Neighbouring businesses

53%

Isolated store No other retail/service businesses close by



36%

Located on a small parade Up to five retail/service businesses close by

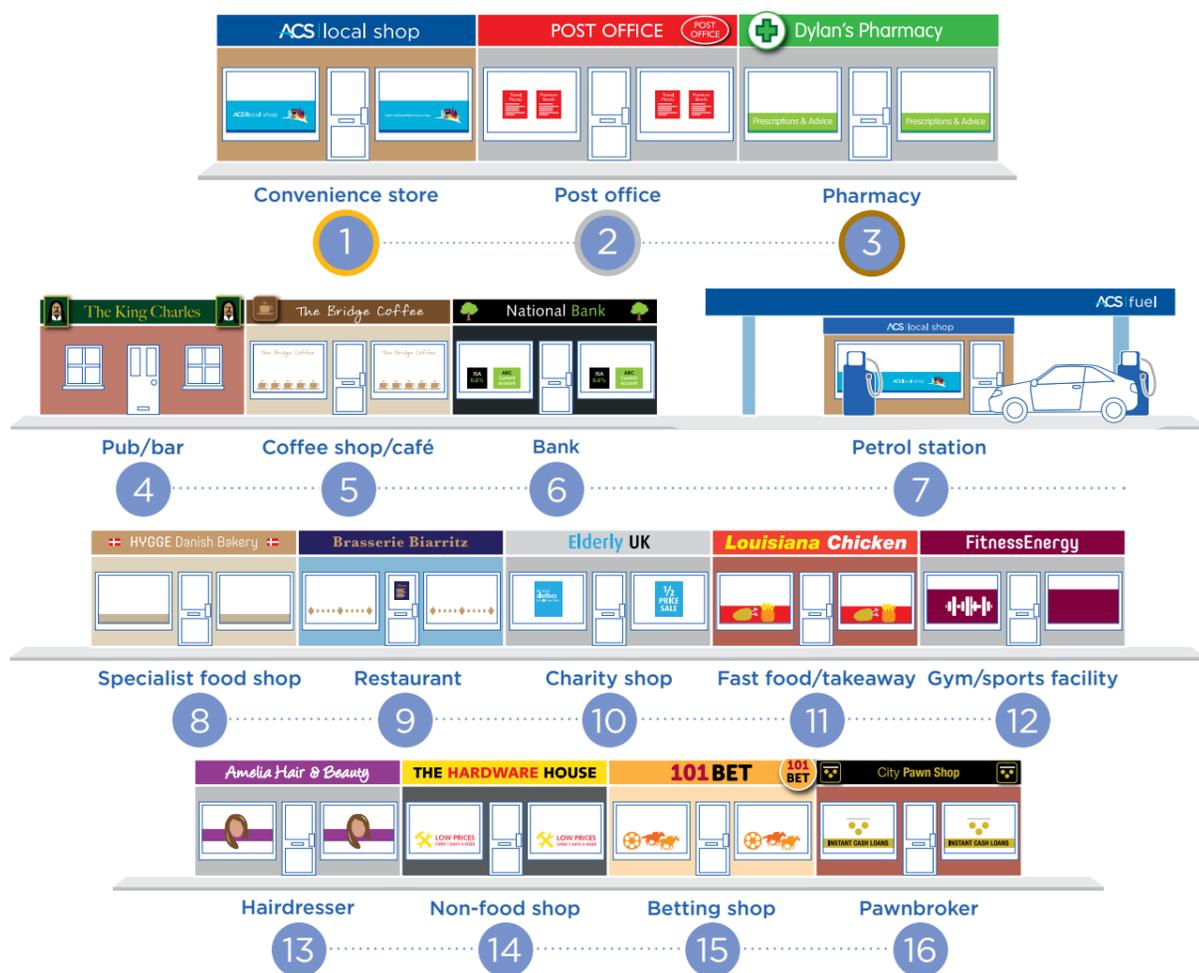


11%

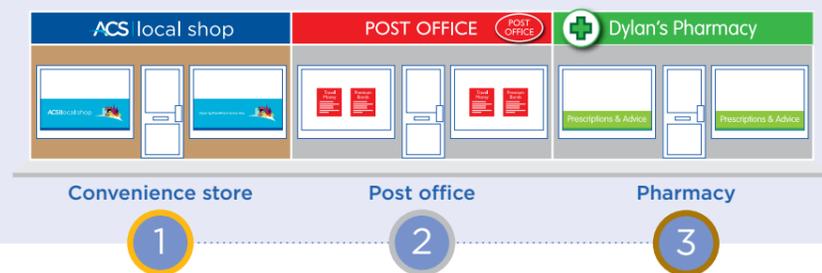
Located on a larger parade or village centre More than five retail/service businesses close by



Most positive impact on the local area



Top three most essential services



Top three most wanted services



Community owned shops



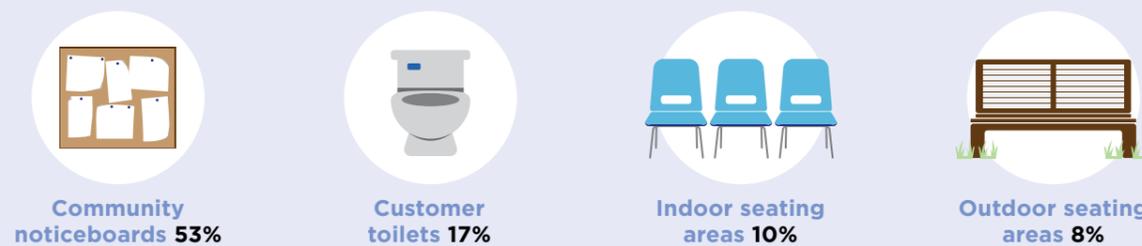
Source: Plunkett Foundation 2019

Community activity



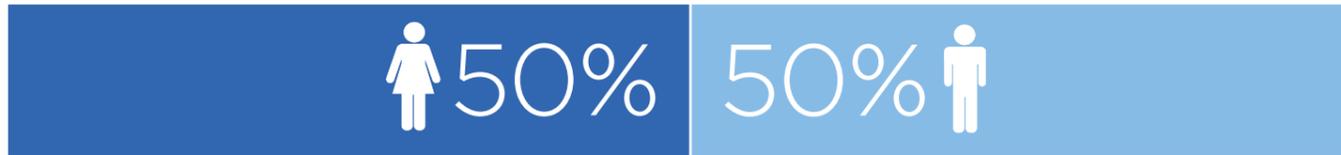
Source: ACS VOLs 2019 (UK average)

In-store services



Indoor and outdoor seating - source: ACS/HIM 2019
Community notice boards and customer toilets - source: ACS/HIM 2018/2019

Rural customers are:



Average age is: 52

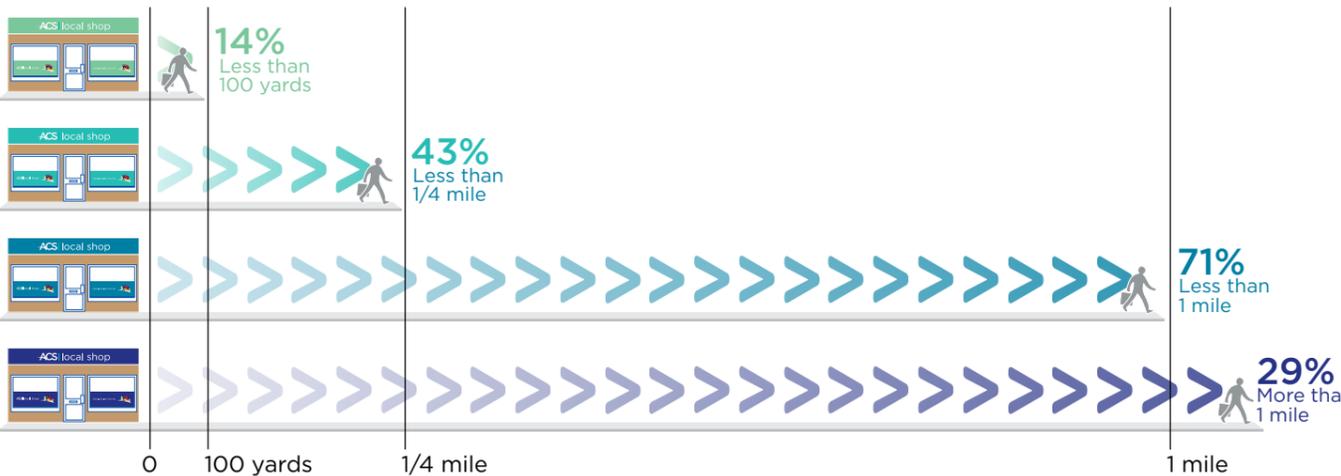
Source: HIM CTP 2019

How customers get to store



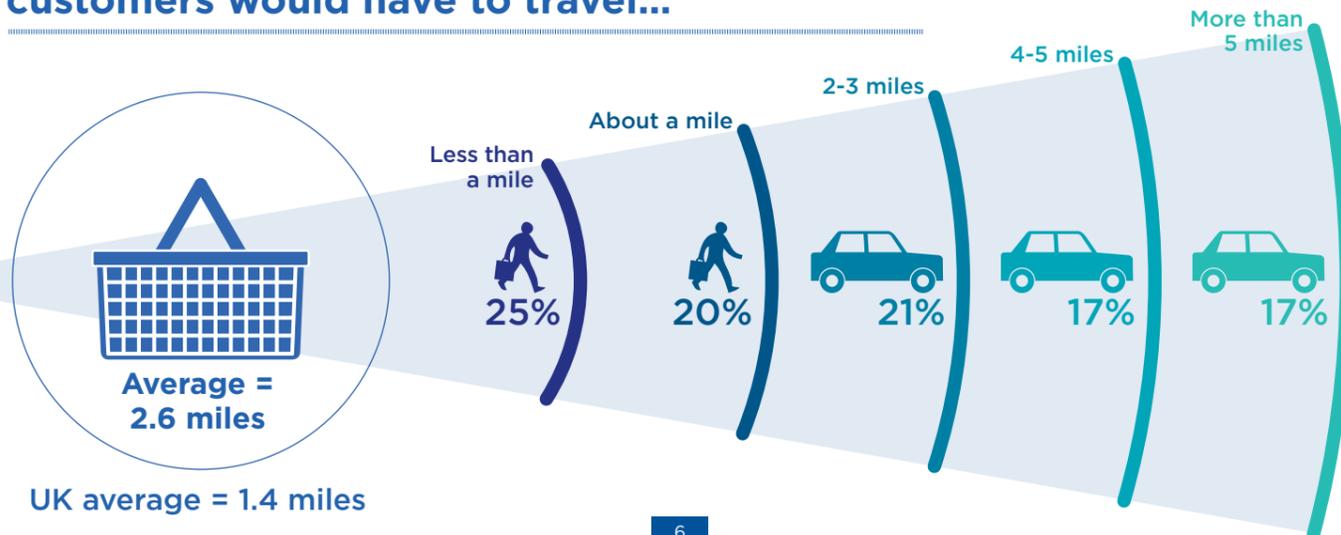
Source: HIM CTP 2019

Distance travelled to store



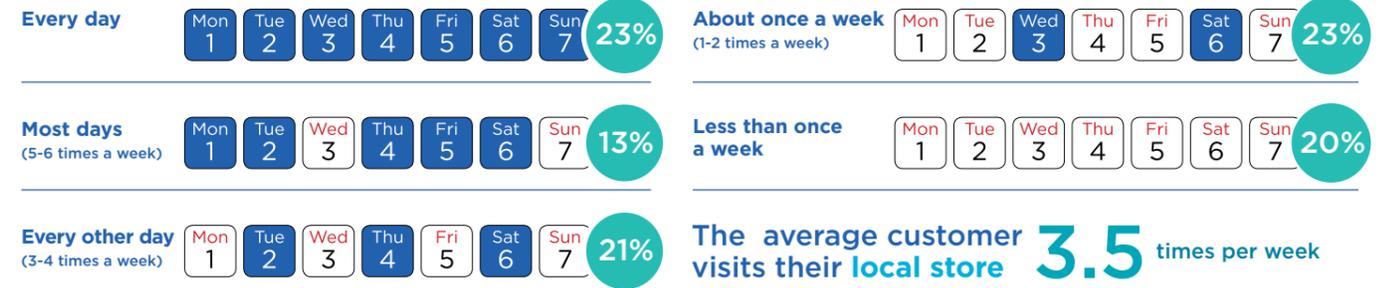
Source: HIM CTP 2019

If their local shop was no longer there, customers would have to travel...



Source: ACS Consumer Polling 2020

How often customers visit



Source: HIM CTP 2019

The average customer visits their local store 3.5 times per week

Purchases



Source: HIM CTP 2019

Customers' relationship with convenience colleagues



14% of customers know the people running and working in their local shop very well

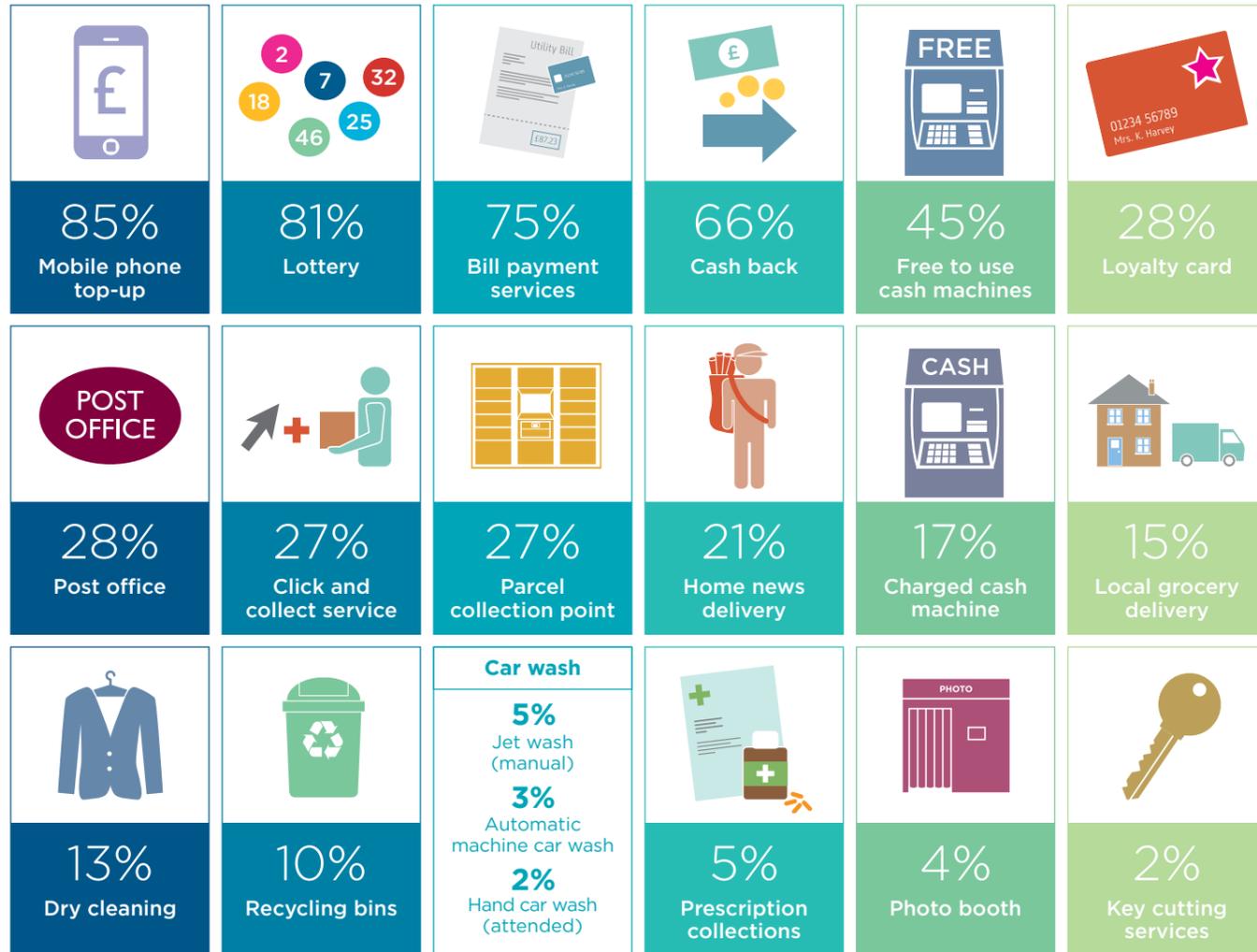
26% of customers know the people running and working in their local shop quite well

36% of customers don't know the people running and working in their local shop well, but will occasionally have a conversation

23% of customers don't know the people running and working in their local shop and don't interact with them

Source: ACS Consumer Polling 2020

The percentage of rural stores in the convenience sector that provide each service is as follows:



Source: ACS/HIM 2018/2019

Food service



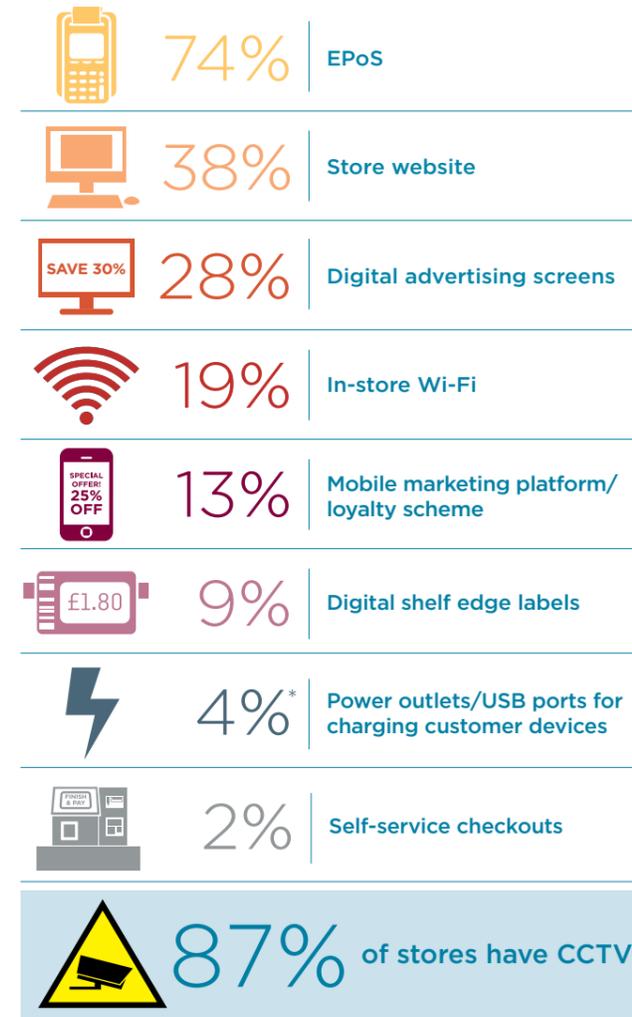
Source: ACS/HIM 2018/2019

Most valuable services

Rural consumers think that the **most valuable services** offered in their convenience store are:



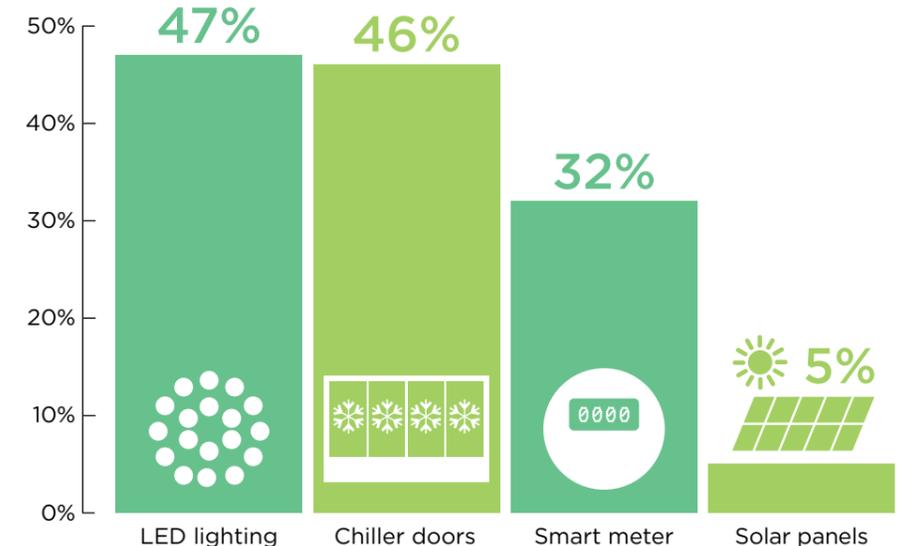
The percentage of rural stores in the convenience sector that have each of the following are:



Payment methods

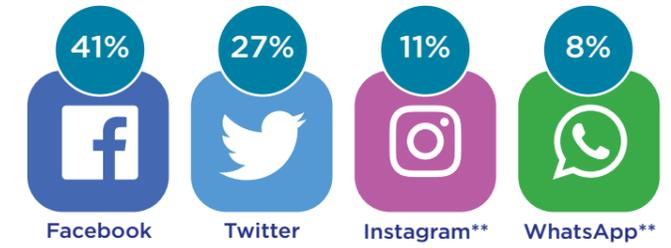


Energy saving



All data on this page: Source: ACS/HIM 2018/2019 unless stated otherwise. * Refers to 2019 only ** refers to independents only.

Social media



More customers search for convenience stores on Google during the week of Christmas than any other time of year



Source: Google Trends 2019

Top five rising searches related to convenience stores



Source: Google Trends 2019

Rural stores provide around **146,000 jobs** in mainland UK

Source: ACS/HIM 2019

Colleagues in rural stores are:



Source: ACS Colleague Survey 2019



Source: ACS/HIM 2019

Hours worked



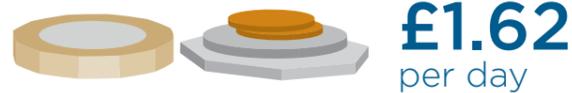
Source: ACS/HIM 2019



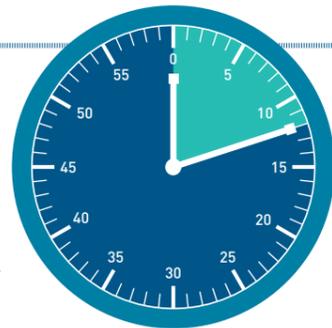
Source: ACS Colleague Survey 2019

Travel to work

Average travel cost



Average travel time



Mode of travel to work

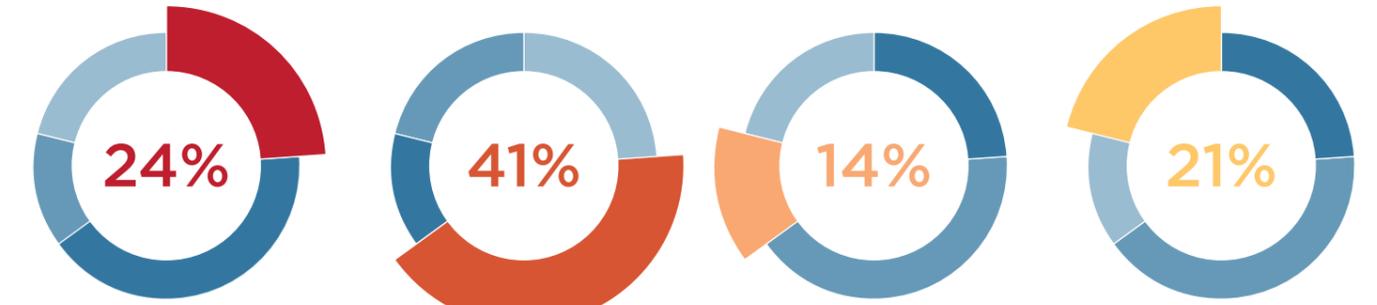


68% are satisfied with their job
70% feel valued by their employer



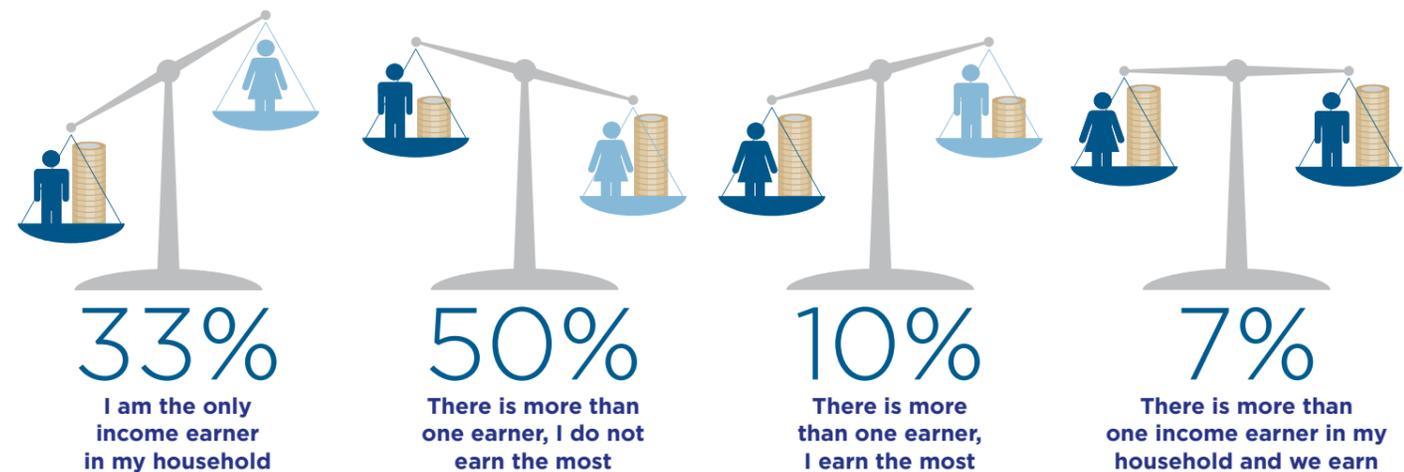
Source: ACS Colleague Survey 2019

Length of employment



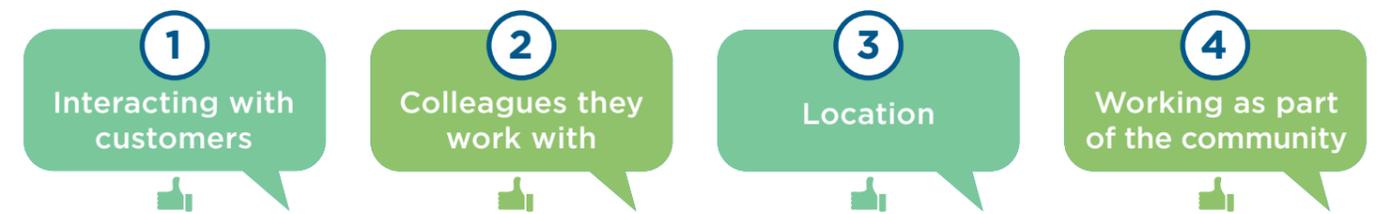
Source: ACS/HIM 2019

Contribution to household income



Source: ACS Colleague Survey 2019

What colleagues like about working in convenience



Source: ACS Colleague Survey 2019

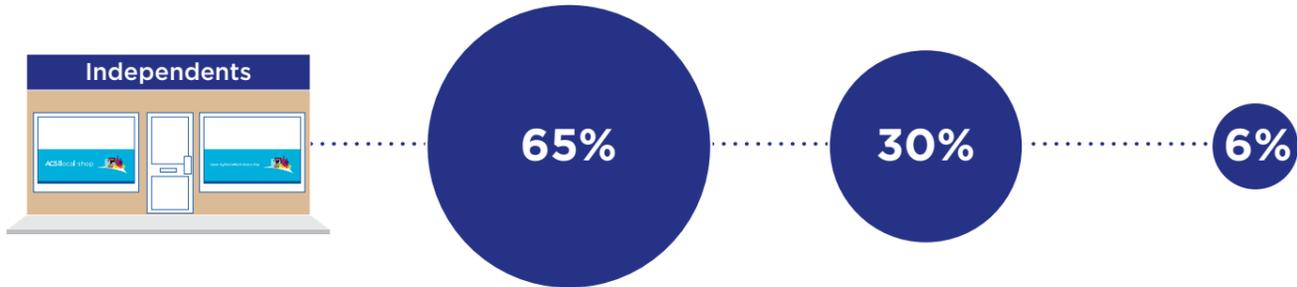
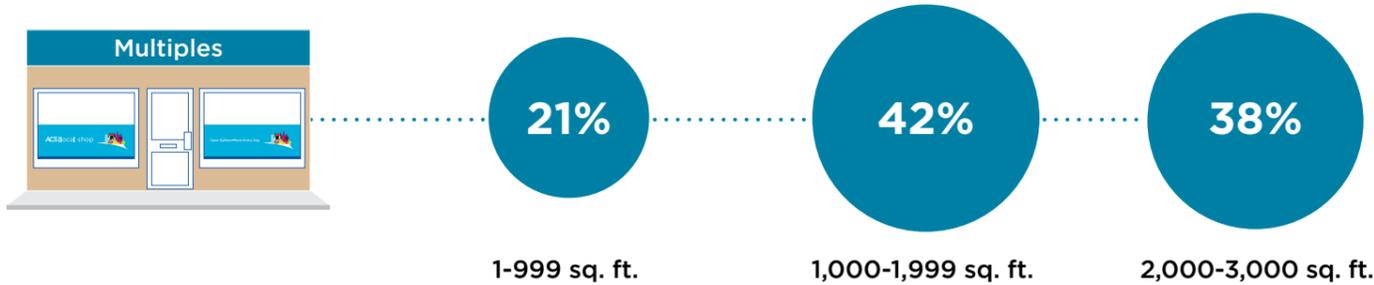
Future plans



90% of independents operate **one** store



Sales space



Additional space

24% of independents have **no additional space** in-store

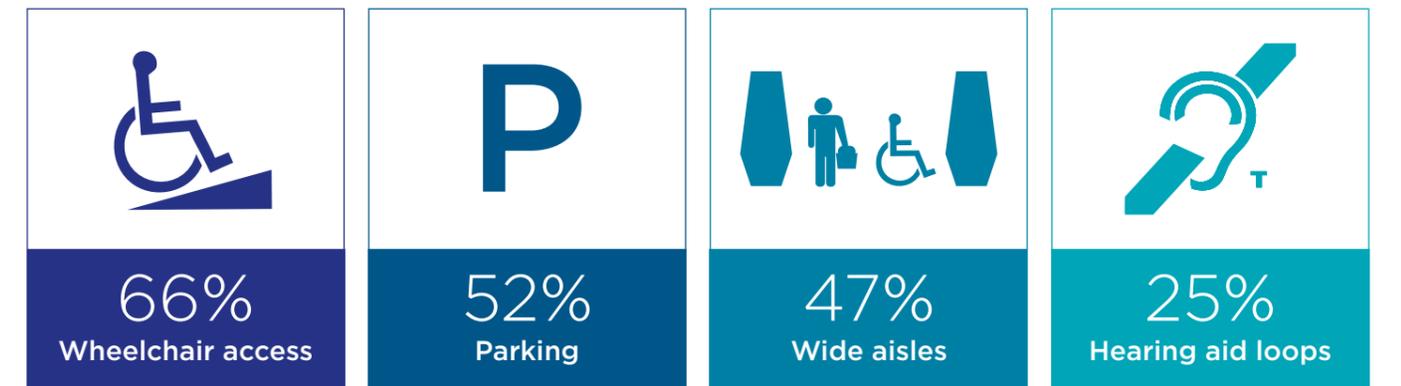
	1-499 sq. ft.	500-999 sq. ft.	1,000-1,999 sq. ft.	2,000-3,000 sq. ft.	Over 3,000 sq. ft.
Multiples	26%	26%	30%	8%	10%
Independents	51%	15%	7%	3%	0%



Source: ACS/HIM 2019

Accessibility in stores

The percentage of convenience stores that have:



Source: ACS/HIM 2018/2019

Amount of refrigeration



Source: ACS/HIM 2019. Freezer units - source: ACS/HIM 2018/2019

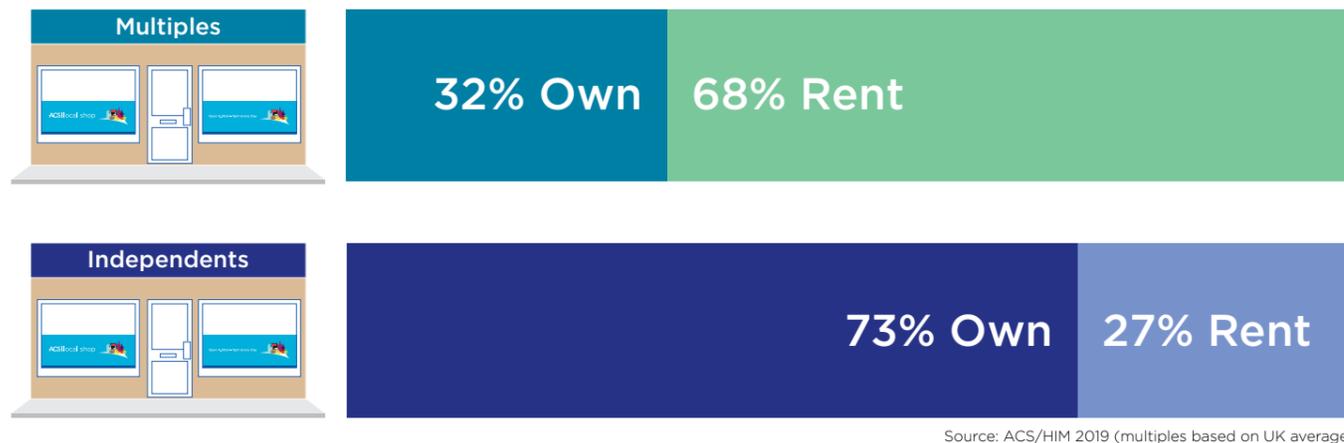
22% of shop owners work more than **70 hours** per week



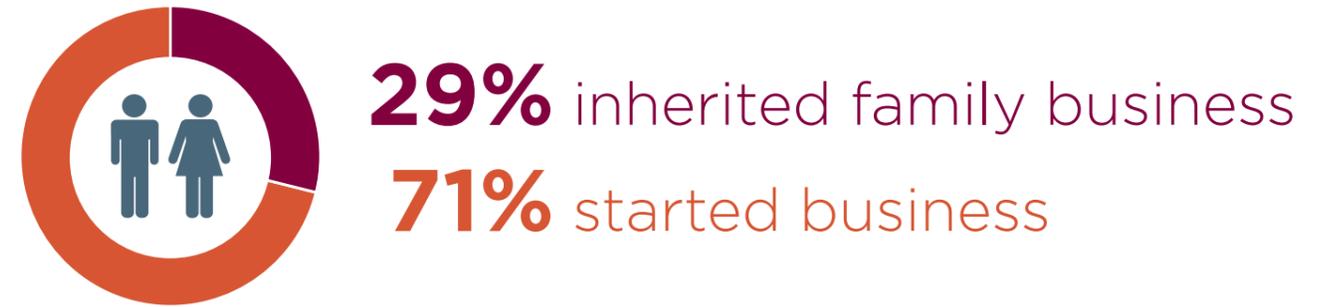
How independent retailers source their products



Premises ownership



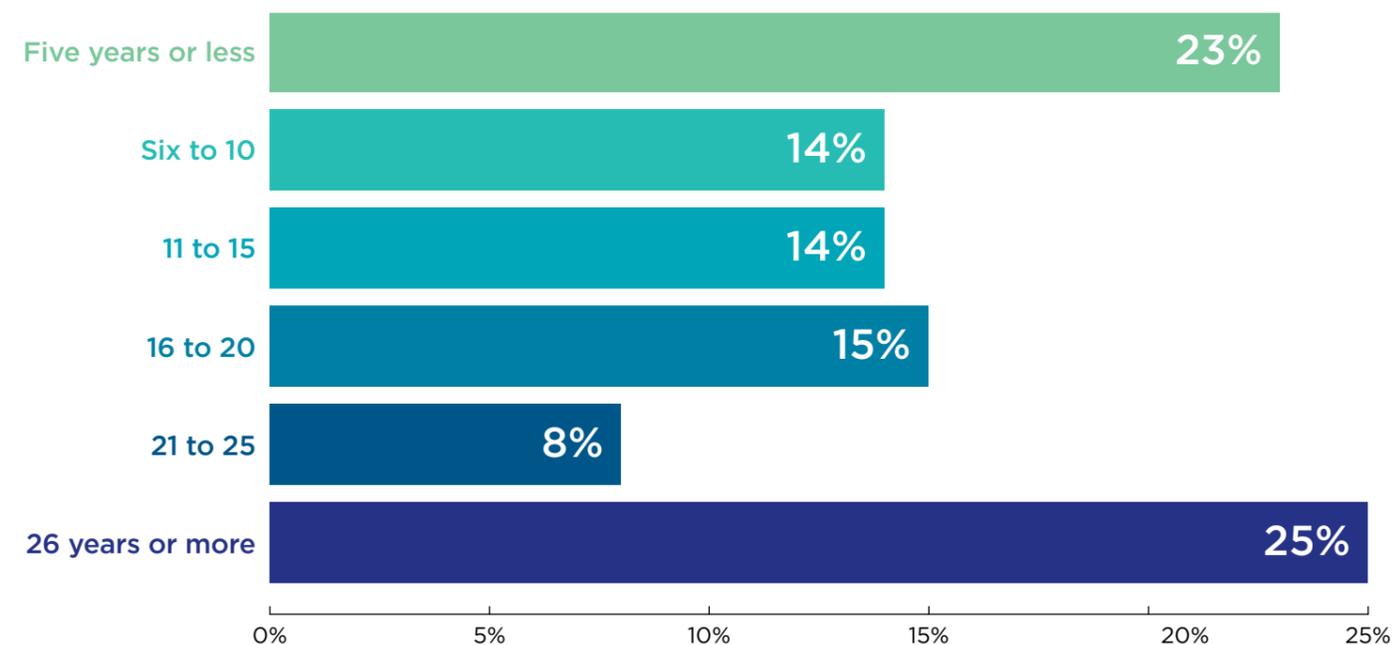
Business origin



Employment of family members



Time in business



» METHODOLOGY

ACS Rural Shop Report draws on data from the ACS Local Shop Report 2019.

New primary data for the Local Shop Report was undertaken by ACS in the form of two surveys:

1. Independent Retailer Survey – A sample of 2,371 independently owned convenience store businesses in the UK. ACS commissioned HIM Research and Consulting to aid in the design and delivery of the survey. The survey was carried out over the phone by BCC Marketing between 20th June and 17th July 2019. The telephone survey gathered responses from unaffiliated independent convenience stores, independent forecourt stores and independent stores that are part of a central buying or marketing group (known as 'symbol' groups). These are represented in the survey in the same proportion as they are represented in the market. The survey covers the nine regions of England, along with Wales and Scotland. Rural data refers to a sample of 994 respondents who reported that they operate in a 'rural area'.

2. Multiple Retailer Survey – ACS conducted an online/paper survey of its multiple chain members. This survey was based on the questions asked in the Independent Retailer Survey, where relevant, to ensure consistency and accuracy of results. This survey returned results relating to a sample of 7,556 stores.

The results of these two surveys have been collated and figures for independents and multiples have been combined according to the proportion of stores in the market, in order to determine overall results for the sector.

William Reed Business Media (WRBM) – Store numbers and sector data
WRBM continually updates data through re-registering customers thereby adding changed recipients, closures and new stores. This is through postal, telephone research, online delivery and events, plus the ongoing work of the editorial teams on its brands Convenience Store, Forecourt Trader and The Grocer.

The UK Convenience Market 2019 – IGD (Institute of Grocery Distribution)
This report is compiled by the IGD based on the sales data up to the end of March 2019.

ACS Economic Report

ACS commissioned Retail Economics to provide an economic overview of the convenience sector in 2018. ACS have updated the figures for 2019 based on revised data.

Convenience Tracking Programme 2019 – HIM Research and Consulting

This programme is a survey of over 20,000 convenience shoppers conducted at the 'moment of truth' in-store.

Community Barometer

Populus surveyed a nationally representative online sample of 2,066 UK adults aged 18+, between 11th and 12th January 2020. Rural results refer to a subsample of 424 adults in rural locations. Respondents were surveyed using a questionnaire designed by ACS.

For more Community Barometer results please visit the ACS website or email katie.cross@acs.org.uk

ACS Voice of Local Shops

A quarterly telephone survey with a sample of 1,210 independent retailers, covering the nine regions of England, along with Wales and Scotland. The sample consists of unaffiliated, symbol group and forecourt independents which are represented in the survey in the same proportion as they are in the market. HIM Research and Consulting aid in the design and delivery of the survey.

ACS Investment Tracker – Data obtained in the form of two surveys:

ACS Voice of Local Shops survey – Questions are asked relating to the amount retailers have invested over the past quarter, what they have invested in and how they have funded their investments.

Multiples Investment Tracker survey – A sample of over 3,000 multiple stores in the UK. Questions in the Multiple Investment Tracker survey are based on the questions asked in the Voice of Local Shops survey, where relevant, to ensure consistency of results.

The results of these two surveys are collated and combined according to the proportion of independent and multiple stores in the sector. The ACS Investment Tracker is completed every quarter and an average has been taken across the latest four quarters (February 2019 to November 2019).

ACS Colleague Survey

An online and paper survey with a sample of 2,493 staff working within the convenience sector. The fieldwork was conducted between 4th February and the 15th March 2019. The data in this report excludes store managers and refers to a sample of 452 rural colleagues. Store managers have been excluded from the analysis to be consistent with previous reports. For more Colleague Survey results please visit the ACS website or email katie.cross@acs.org.uk

Community Shops – Plunkett Foundation

The number of community owned shops is obtained from the Plunkett Foundation database. All other data on community shops is obtained from the Plunkett Foundation report 'Community Shops - A better form of business 2019'. The report is based on statutory data sourced from the Financial Conduct Authority and Companies House; electronic questionnaires and follow up telephone surveys; together with information held by Plunkett on every community shop.

ACS Consumer Polling 2019 – Conducted by Populus

Populus surveyed a nationally representative online sample of 2,078 UK adults aged 18+, between 28th and 30th June 2019. Rural data refers to a subsample of 393 adults in rural locations. Respondents were surveyed using a questionnaire designed by ACS.

Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the support of a number of industry and research organisations that have helped by providing data. These sources are referenced alongside the relevant sections of the report, and those organisations are:



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