



Community Barometer 2024

A report from the Association of Convenience Stores

Introduction

The ACS Community Barometer provides new insight into how people feel about the services that are local to them, the impact that they have on their communities, and which services are most needed in the future.

We conducted a UK-wide survey of 2,000 consumers in June 2024 that asks the following key questions:

- Which of the following types of services do you think are the most essential for your local area?
- Which of the following types of services do you believe have the most positive impact on your local area?
- Which of the following types of services do you believe is most important in supporting the local economy?
- For each of the following types of services, please indicate whether you think that it would be beneficial for your local area to have more or less of these types of services, or if you think the number should remain the same.
- If you were in charge of a fund to improve your local area, which of the following would you choose to invest in?

The local services that we look at in the Community Barometer are as follows:

Convenience Stores	Non Food Shops	Coffee Shops	Pawnbrokers
Specialist Food Shops	Pharmacies	Petrol Stations	Charity Shops
Banks	Restaurants	Fast Food Shops	Gym or Sports Facilities
Post Offices	Pubs/Bars	Vape Shop	Hairdressers

By looking at how people view the value of different services in their local communities, we have generated insights that could inform decision making in national and local government, as well as helping convenience retailers as they consider how to make investments in their business in new services for their local customers. ACS has developed a number of policy recommendations for the new Government which can incentivise investment in communities and enable retailers to grow their businesses, which are available on our website at www.acs.org.uk

More information about the methodology for this research, as well as previous versions of the Community Barometer are available on the ACS website at www.acs.org.uk

Most Positive Impact



The impact that a service has on a community is often influenced by the way that service affects house prices locally, how it makes things easier for people to get essentials without having to travel, and how that service supports different age groups.

Post Offices, pharmacies and convenience stores have made up the top three services in communities consistently since we started the Community Barometer a decade ago. These services are incredibly important to all demographics locally, provide jobs for local people, and make people feel good about where they live.

- Other services ranked:**
- 4th: Pub/Bar
 - 5th: Coffee shop / Cafe
 - 6th: Bank
 - 7th: Gym or sports centre
 - 8th: Restaurant
 - 9th: Specialist food shop
 - 10th: Charity shop

Most Essential



There are close links between services that are deemed to have an overall positive impact, and those that are deemed to be essential in a local area. Pharmacies became more important than ever before during the pandemic and have held on to that standing with local people, while Post Offices, despite other parcel delivery/collection offers being available on the market, and despite the move toward more online shopping, still are held in high regard by consumers across all age groups and demographics. Convenience stores provide a range of essential goods and services, and increasingly include Post Office counters and pharmacy services/prescription collections when there is inadequate local provision.

- Other services ranked:**
- 4th: Bank
 - 5th: Petrol station
 - 6th: Pub / bar
 - 7th: Specialist food shop
 - 8th: Coffee shop / Cafe
 - 9th: Gym / sports centre
 - 10th: Fast food / takeaway

Most Important in Supporting the Local Economy



It is reassuring to see that communities view their local convenience stores as the most important service at creating jobs, encouraging local investment and attracting more customers. Across the UK, convenience stores employ over 400,000 people and welcome millions of customers every year. Convenience retailers also consistently invest over half a billion pounds each year in improving their businesses, investing in sustainable technologies and curating their range of products and services for customers.

- Other services ranked:**
- 4th: Coffee shop / Cafe
 - 5th: Post Office
 - 6th: Bank
 - 7th: Pharmacy
 - 8th: Fast food / takeaway
 - 9th: Specialist food shop
 - 10th: Petrol station

Across different demographics, all rank convenience stores top, but the favourability of convenience stores increases as you go through AB, C1, C2 and DE segments.

Most Wanted Services



The services that are most wanted on high streets are typically those that are the hardest to find, or that have recently closed in significant numbers. Despite the shift to online banking and the perception that cash is less prevalent, banks have been the number one most wanted service among consumers for several years running.

- Other services ranked:**
- 4th: Post Office
 - 5th: Pharmacy
 - 6th: Restaurant
 - 7th: Convenience store
 - 8th: Coffee shop / Cafe
 - =9th: Gym / sports centre
 - =9th: Petrol station

The most wanted list of services is a good blueprint for convenience retailers when looking at ways to diversify their offer locally. We have seen examples of convenience stores featuring all of the top eight most wanted services, often because of a lack of other provision locally.

Local Investment Priorities

1st: Public spaces, for example parks
= 2nd: Community projects, for example youth centres
= 2nd: Community policing
4th: Local transport links
5th: Support for existing local businesses
6th: Public services, for example nurseries
7th: Support for new / emerging local businesses
8th: More CCTV on streets
9th: Local parking provision
10th: Accessibility, for example more wheelchair ramps

Investing in **community policing** is the number one priority for people aged 45 and over

How Local Shops Benefit the Community

30%

of consumers know the people running or working in their local shop quite well or very well

63%

of consumers have to travel less than a quarter of a mile to get to their local shop

28%

of consumers would have to travel two to three miles or more for essential groceries if their local shop wasn't there

32%

of consumers believe that their local shop helps to reduce loneliness in their community

The UK Convenience Sector: Key Facts

- » There are **49,388 convenience stores** in mainland UK
- » Convenience stores **employ over 437,000 people** across the UK in secure, flexible jobs
- » **70%** of the UK convenience sector is run by independent retailers, either on their own or supplied by a symbol group
- » **27%** of people running convenience stores are **aged 30 or under**
- » Convenience stores generated **over £47bn in sales** in 2023
- » Convenience retailers **invested over £646m** over the last year
- » **79%** of independent convenience retailers engaged in some form of **community activity** over the last year

About ACS

The Association of Convenience Stores is the voice of the UK's 49,000+ local shops, supporting its members through effective campaigning, comprehensive advice and innovative networking opportunities. ACS' core purpose is to engage with Government on the issues that make a difference to local shops.

For more information about the Community Barometer, please contact Rosie Wiggins at Rosie.Wiggins@acs.org.uk