



CRIME

REPORT



Evidence for action

The Crime Report 2022

A report by the Association of Convenience Stores
#ShopKind

ACS | the voice of local shops

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Foreword

The Crime Report provides a snapshot of retailers' experience of crime, demonstrating that it has been another challenging year. The report findings reflect the complex challenge retailers have faced with communicating and implementing changing Covid-19 rules and helping stressed and fatigued customers and colleagues through the pandemic. It's not surprising that tensions have run high at times, and have unfortunately spilled over into abuse and violence against people working in shops.

The tagline for the report is 'Evidence for Action' and I want to acknowledge the action that has been delivered this year; tougher penalties for attacks on people serving the public. ACS has long campaigned for this change in the law and for greater recognition of retailers and shopworkers. It has been a joint effort by multiple business groups, trade unions, businesses and individual shopworkers over more than a decade. We should also thank the many parliamentarians, from all sides of the political divide, that have kept the pressure on Government and, of course,

the Home Office Minister, Kit Malthouse MP, who has championed the cause in Government.

This will go a long way towards giving people working in and operating shops reassurance that, if they are attacked at work, there is a better chance that the offender will be convicted. But this is not the end of the story, as you will see from the Crime Report findings there is far too much violent and acquisitive crime that retailers still contend with. To tackle this, we must seek to understand the root causes of crime in our communities and work in partnership with others to tackle them.

To that end, we have invited leading experts from industry, Government agencies, police and unions to share their analysis on the Crime Report findings this year. We have also addressed in the report new and growing threats, such as cyber crime, that retailers need to keep their business safe from.

James Lowman, Chief Executive, ACS

Cost of crime to convenience stores

Crime against convenience retailers costs an estimated

£100m to the sector

£2,134 per store

9p crime tax per transaction

Top features and approaches retailers are investing in to make colleagues feel safe

1 No lone working	2 CCTV	3 Security staff	4 Panic buttons	5 Internal radio communications
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Evidence for action

We want to acknowledge and thank retailers, shopworkers, unions, trade bodies, police forces and Police and Crime Commissioners that have come together over the last year to address the challenge of crime and violence in the retail sector. We are committed to maintaining these partnerships into the future to meet the ongoing challenges local shops, and the communities they serve, face from crime.

What have we achieved?

- ✓ **Tougher penalties for attacks on people serving the public**
 - The Government has amended the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to introduce an aggravated offence for attacks on people serving the public.
 - Courts will have to account for attacks on people while serving the public and offenders could face longer prison sentences.
- ✓ **Police and Crime Commissioner engagement**
 - A new intake of Police and Crime Commissioners have been developing their Police and Crime Plans and acknowledging the challenge faced by local shops.
 - 37 out of 42 PCCs now reference business crime in their plans, twice as many as two years ago.
 - Police and Crime Commissioners are championing the #ShopKind campaign across their force areas.
- ✓ **ShopKind campaign**
 - A Home Office funded and ACS coordinated campaign, has brought together over 130 retail organisations to encourage consumers to engage in positive behaviours in stores.
 - Thousands of #ShopKind posters have featured on social media, in high street shops and in local parades across the country reaching millions of consumers.
- ✓ **Drugs strategy**
 - The Government's 10-year drugs strategy rightly acknowledges the link between drug users and acquisitive crime targeted at local shops.

What do we need?

-  **Monitoring the implementation of tougher penalties for attacks on people serving the public**
Changes in statute are only effective when agencies are aware of new powers and actively use them. We must ensure that the new aggravating offence for attacks on people serving the public is used by courts across the country. We must also ensure that incidents of violence in retail settings get reported and heard in court with full victim and business impact statements.
-  **Building relationships with the police to focus resources where they are needed**
We recognise police resources are stretched but, when crime is committed in local shops, it must be reported and acted on. We need police forces and Police and Crime Commissioners to allocate more resources to improving reporting procedures, to actively seek to collaborate with retailers to share information and to tackle the crime in their communities.
-  **Making the 10-year drug strategy work for community retailers**
Some offenders need support to overcome their addiction issues and actively contribute to society. Persistent shop theft offences by individuals should instigate a cross agency response moving these offenders into treatment or diversionary pathways. As set out in the Centre for Social Justice's Report Desperate for a Fix, the Government should be investing in 'Second Chance' programmes.



"Over the last year, we have made new investments in crime prevention equipment to deter offenders from targeting our stores and to keep our store colleagues safe. With the growing problem of violence and abuse in stores we have focused on providing our colleagues with tools so that they can access help quickly and talk to a person at the Alarm Receiving Centre using headsets and speakers inbuilt into the ceilings. We are also looking to further invest in technology and are at the early stages of trialling body cams to try to combat anti-social behaviour and threatening behaviour before it escalates further."



Alison Fagan, Health & Safety Manager, McColl's

For more information go to acs.org.uk

"Shop theft remains a challenge in my store and it's often the same offenders that are known to my staff and me. We understand police resources are under pressure, but we don't always get the support we need."



Paul Cheema, Malcolm's Store

For more information go to acs.org.uk



Top areas of investment

- 1 Security staff
- 2 CCTV
- 3 Intruder alarms

Top features in-store

- 1 CCTV
- 2 Intruder alarms
- 3 Cash handling and storage
- 4 Perspex screens
- 5 Staff training on crime management

Profile of shop thieves



Most commonly stolen items

- 1 Confectionery
- 2 Alcohol
- 3 Meat

Motivations for repeat offending

- 1 Someone motivated by a drug or alcohol addiction
- 2 An organised group of criminals
- 3 Other (eg poverty)

Analysis

This year's Crime Report figures show that retailers have significantly increased the value of investment in crime prevention measures in the last year. This is unsurprising, as throughout the pandemic, convenience stores were disproportionately targeted by criminals during lockdowns as they were often the only stores open, so retailers have reacted by investing further in measures like CCTV, additional security staff, and more robust alarm systems to attempt to counter the rise in crime.

Retailers also tell us that the cost of investment itself is on the rise, with staff shortages in the security sector and the global chip shortage pushing up the cost of making a store secure. This investment is however still seen as essential, both to act as a deterrent to criminals and to provide usable evidence to the police in the event of an incident.

Chris Noice, Communications Director, Association of Convenience Stores

Analysis

Retailers continue to report a high proportion of drug-related repeat offenders targeting their stores. Many of these offenders are caught in a cycle of offending and ineffective criminal justice sanctions. Alongside police enforcement, expanded diversionary programmes to tackle the root causes of acquisitive crime are required.

Retailers also identify organised criminal groups who often exploit vulnerable adults and children to commit crimes. This requires more attention from government to disrupt these sophisticated criminal networks. Relatively high value items with strong resale potential are again this year the most commonly targeted items by thieves.

Dr Emmeline Taylor, Associate Dean - City, University of London

"Many of my colleagues have faced constant verbal and physical abuse, for simply doing their jobs. The pandemic heightened this with abuse more than doubling. I ask that everyone respects all retail workers and to understand we are doing our best to serve our communities."

Joanne Gates, Store Manager, Co-op

For more information go to acs.org.uk



Number of incidents of violence estimated in the sector = **35,216**

9% of violent incidents result in injury

Over **800,000** incidents of verbal abuse

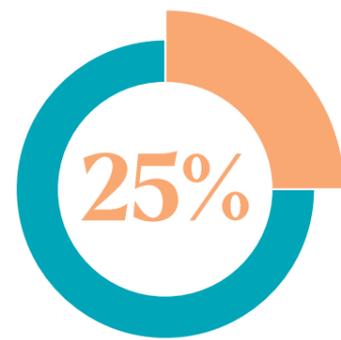
Top triggers for violence



89% of store colleagues have experienced verbal abuse

ACS Colleague Survey 2021

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)

#ShopKind

We are co-ordinating a retail industry wide campaign to raise awareness of violence and abuse and encourage the public to #ShopKind. The campaign, which is endorsed by the Home Office, calls for positive action from customers and encourages colleagues to report any abusive incidents.

You can download the ShopKind campaign materials from the www.nbcc.police.uk website to use in your store.



Number of violent incidents where a **weapon was used** **16,753**

25% of independent retailers have experienced violence over the past year

ACS Voice of Local Shops Survey 2021

Of crimes where a weapon was present



Number of incidents of **robbery** **9,059**

£4m cost to the sector

Analysis

Violence, threats and abuse have long been a major issue for shopworkers, which is why USDAW launched our Freedom from Fear campaign. For years we have worked closely with the Association of Convenience Stores and others across the retail sector to provide evidence, jointly campaign and lobby Government for action to stem this growing problem.

It is shocking that nine in 10 shopworkers are suffering abuse from customers, with far too many experiencing threats and violence. The scale of the problem is clearly set out in the ACS annual crime report and evidently shows that there is still much to do to make workplaces safer. Worryingly our own surveying of Usdaw members shows that around half are not confident that reporting these issues will make any difference.

The new protection of workers law in Scotland and the UK Government's move to toughen sentencing for those who assault workers in England and Wales are welcome, after years of resistance. We are closely monitoring the effectiveness of these initiatives and, along with retailers and the police, promoting these new legal protections. Importantly we are encouraging members to report incidents. Our message is clear, report it to sort it.

Paddy Lillis, General Secretary, USDAW





"Cyber crime is a growing problem for UK businesses of all sizes. Convenience retailers can help to better protect their businesses and staff by using NCSC resources such as the Top Tips for Staff e-learning, signing up to the small organisation newsletter or using the actions in the Small Business Guide."



National Cyber Security Centre

For more information go to acs.org.uk

77% of retailers have experienced **cyber crime** in the last year



Most common types of cyber crime

Most common prevention methods

- 1 Phishing emails
- 2 Hacking
- 3 Ransomware

- 1 Using secure passwords
- 2 Installed anti-virus software
- 3 Backed up data

Analysis

Cyber crime is crime that can only be committed through the use of online devices and where the devices are both the tool to commit the crime and the target of the crime. Cyber crime is an active threat to all UK businesses including the convenience sector. Convenience retailers must review their cyber security measures and colleague training to protect their business from cyber-attacks. For more information see ACS Crime Guidance or visit nsc.gov.uk

Organised crime and fraud



Burglary

Most common types of fraud

7,494 incidents
£1,484 cost per incident
£11m total cost to the sector

- 1 Counterfeit notes
- 2 Telephone scams
- 3 Credit & debit card fraud



"Retail crime is not faceless and should never be dismissed as a nuisance. The best way we can prevent it is for businesses and the police to work effectively, together, and I'm committed to making that happen - both nationally and in Sussex through our Safer Sussex Business Partnership. I urge retailers to report all crimes in their stores and engage regularly with their local police force and PCC."

Katy Bourne, Police and Crime Commissioner, Sussex

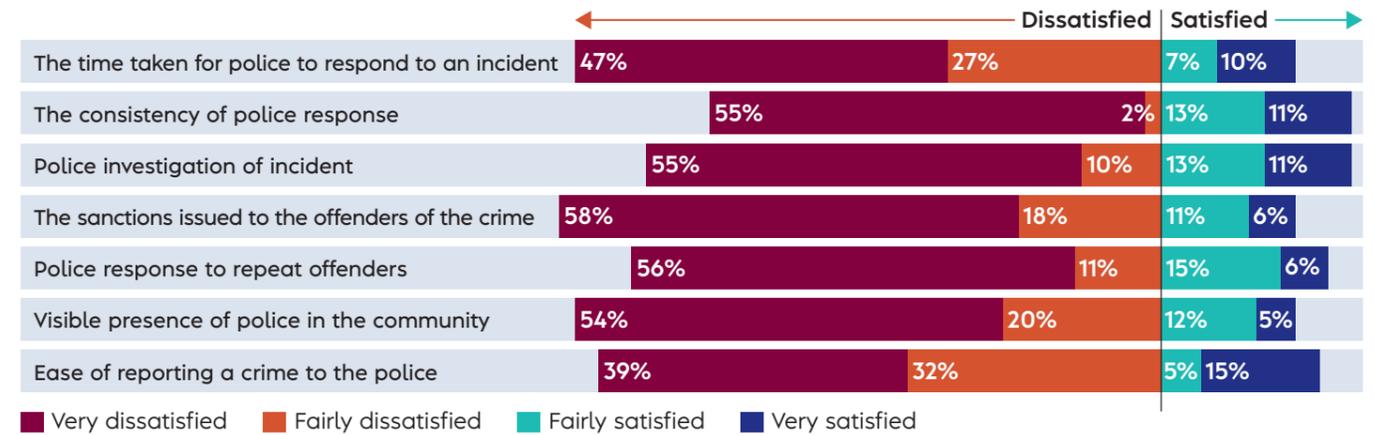


For more information go to acs.org.uk

37 out of 42* Police and Crime Commissioners reference **business crime** in their Police and Crime Plans

This is more than double the number of PCCs who did this two years ago, which is the result of campaigns to promote PCC awareness of retail crime

Retailers' satisfaction levels with police



ONLY 38% of all retail crime is reported by retailers to the police

Why retailers don't always report crime

(Based on open-ended responses)

55%

No confidence in a follow up investigation

40%

Perceived lack of interest from police

30%

The time it takes to file and process reports

Analysis



With the support of the National Business Crime Centre, police forces are working hard to reduce crime, target offenders and protect retail staff. However, this is no small feat, relying heavily on a strong working partnership between police forces and the retail community. Maintaining this relationship requires commitment to collaborative working, as well as acknowledgement of the challenges and demands faced by both police forces and the retail community.

This partnership is particularly effective at a local level, where information and insights can be shared about offenders operating in communities, and there are some excellent examples of us successfully utilising these relationships to tackle retail crime and violence. I am pleased that violence against retail is gaining recognition in police and crime plans. This give police forces a strong foundation to translate reports into measurable action and outcomes.

Patrick Holdaway, Superintendent, National Business Crime Centre

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>

External security



Where reasonably practicable, advertising on shop windows should be restricted to allow for clear viewing into and out of the premises.

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).

Anti-social behaviour

If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour contact your local police or community safety partnership via www.police.uk or your local police website

If you are experiencing persistent anti-social behaviour 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 visit: <https://asbhelp.co.uk/asb-help/>

ATMs

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.

Colleagues and customers



Store colleagues

Make sure you consult with store colleagues on risks assessment and provide regular training on:

- Security measures such as panic buttons and CCTV.
- Internal and external crime reporting processes.
- Dealing with abusive customers.

ACS has developed the following materials to support store colleagues:

- ACS' Managing Violence and Abuse in Convenience Stores. The animation is available on ACS' YouTube Channel.
- The Suzy Lamplugh Trust in association with ACS has developed 'Suzy's Charter for Workplace Safety'.

Customer service

Be attentive, acknowledge all customers as they enter the store, so that potential thieves know that you are watching them.

Display ShopKind materials in your store to promote positive behaviour towards store colleagues.

If you think you have spotted someone concealing goods, avoid direct confrontation, instead, offer them a basket or help with carrying their goods.

In-store security



CCTV

Ensure one camera provides quality images of everyone entering your premises and a second that covers the till. Identify other frequently targeted areas of the store for camera location and consider the angle of view and lighting.

When operating CCTV in your premises you need to display signs telling people CCTV is in operation. You must also keep a record of your policy for protecting your customer's and employees' privacy for example not using audio recording or putting cameras in private areas. Do not keep CCTV footage for longer than you need. More information is available on the Information Commissioner's Office website: ico.org.uk

Any company using CCTV for crime prevention purposes is required to pay an annual data protection fee to the Information Commissioner's Office. To find out more about how to pay your annual data protection fee visit: ico.org.uk/fee

Self-Scan Tills

ACS created dedicated guidance on preventing theft from self-scan tills that is available on the ACS website: acs.org.uk/crime-report-2022

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: ncsc.gov.uk/smallbusiness

Till position

Place high-value goods or targeted products (meat, cheese, alcohol, confectionery) 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 Challenge 25 signage at the entrance, till and near all age-restricted products in your store. This will remind customers they will be challenged for proof of Age. You can download and print Challenge 25 materials here: acs.org.uk/challenge25



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' Preventing Underage Sales Guide here: acs.org.uk/advice/age-restrictions

Managing cash

To reduce the risk of burglary and robbery decrease the amount of cash held in tills and on your premises and consider using counter drop safes. Regularly change the routine of banking procedures so they are not easily observable.

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Internal theft

- Check references of any new employee.
- Highlight internal investigation procedures in staff meetings or staff newsletters.
- Implement training processes for Store Managers and Supervisors to help them identify staff theft.
- Train staff to make them aware of the security features in-store.

Identifying staff theft

- Monitor till processes carefully and review individual end of day reports.
- Use till overlay systems to allow CCTV to combine with 'real-time' till receipt images.
- Monitor voids and refunds transactions closely
- Analyse till, cash management and inventory data to identify trends - look for anything out of the ordinary.
- When carrying out internal theft investigations, ensure you establish how and why the offence happened. This enables you to tackle the motive and presents an opportunity to prevent future incidents.

Reporting staff theft

- Report incidents to the police using the 101 number.
- Only using civil action means that the offender can move into another business and repeat the offence.