



ACS Submission – Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry

1. ACS (the Association of Convenience Stores) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the House of Lords Gambling Industry Committee's call for evidence to inform their inquiry into Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry. ACS is a trade association representing 33,500 local shops. Our members include the Co-Op, McColl's, SPAR UK, Nisa and thousands of independent retailers. For more information about ACS, see Annex A.
2. There are 46,262 convenience stores in the UK, employing 365,000 people selling a range of grocery products and providing a number of services to their local communities. The majority of convenience retailers (82%) offer lottery products¹. By far the most common lottery products offered in-store are for the National Lottery. The National Lottery has proved to be an extremely valuable development for convenience stores, not only bringing new income in the form of retailer commission offered on sales, but also introducing new customers to stores and bringing footfall.
3. ACS is proud of the role that local shops have played in the success of the National Lottery. Retailers have actively promoted the games and taken part in new marketing activity. This has driven sustained growth for the National Lottery which has generated £40bn² for good causes. Many of these good causes are in the communities served by retailers selling National Lottery games, which has allowed stores to promote the value of the National Lottery to local customers.
4. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport are currently consulting on plans to increase the minimum age of play for National Lottery scratchcards to ensure that young people are protected from the potential risks of gambling related harm. ACS will be responding to the consultation and we have set out our position on changing the age restriction below. We will share our full submission to the consultation with the Committee once agreed with members.

Should young people between 16 and 18 be able to purchase National Lottery products, including draw-based games, scratch cards and online instant wins?

5. If the government decides, after careful consideration and the commissioning of new research, that there is evidence of harm on young customers, and that the age restriction for scratchcards should be increased, we will work with retailers to ensure that the change is implemented effectively across the sector. The convenience sector is extremely effective at enforcing age restrictions in store on a wide range of products including alcohol, tobacco, fireworks, and lottery products. We provide comprehensive guidance in our Preventing Underage Sales Assured Advice³ on enforcing age restrictions, which is approved by trading standards as part of ACS' Primary Authority Partnership.

¹ ACS Local Shop Report 2018

² [The National Lottery: Life Changing](#)

³ [ACS Assured Advice: Preventing Underage Sales](#)

6. If the age restriction on scratchcards is moved to 18, we believe that the government should increase the minimum age of play for all National Lottery products to 18. It is important to ensure that there is a consistent message about the sale of lottery products. Having two separate age restrictions within the same product category would not only cause confusion for retailers but it would also cause confusion for customers.
7. This is also supported by ACS' Voice of Local Shops survey of 1,174 independent convenience retailers which found that 38% of retailers support the existing legal age restrictions for National Lottery products. This is likely due to very few retailers having difficulty enforcing the current age restriction and that their staff members are already familiar with the regulations. However, 34% of retailers supported changing the legal age restriction for all National Lottery products to 18, compared to 4% of retailers who supported changing the legal age restriction of scratchcards to 18 but keeping lottery at 16, and 1% of retailers who supported changing the age restriction for lottery to 18 but keeping the age restriction for scratchcards at 16. The survey also found that 24% did not have an opinion on the age restriction of National Lottery⁴.

For more information, please contact Julie Byers, ACS Public Affairs Manager by emailing Julie.Byers@acs.org.uk or calling 01252 533008.

⁴ ACS Voice of Local Shops Survey August 2019

ABOUT ACS

The Association of Convenience Stores lobbies on behalf of over 46,000 convenience stores across mainland UK on public policy issues that affect their businesses. ACS' membership is comprised of a diverse group of retailers, from small independent family businesses running a single store to large multiple convenience retailers running thousands of stores.

Convenience stores trade in a wide variety of locations, meeting the needs of customers from all backgrounds. These locations range from city centres and high streets, suburban areas such as estates and secondary parades, rural villages and isolated areas, as well as on petrol forecourts and at travel points such as airports and train stations.



WHO WE REPRESENT

INDEPENDENT RETAILERS



ACS represents over 19,000 independent retailers, polling them quarterly to hear their views and experiences which are used to feed in to Government policy discussions.

These stores are not affiliated to any group, and are often family businesses with low staff and property costs. Independent forecourt operators are included in this category.

SYMBOL GROUPS AND FRANCHISES



ACS represents over 14,000 retailers affiliated with symbol groups. Symbol groups like SPAR, Nisa, Costcutter, Londis, Premier and others provide independent retailers with stock agreements, wholesale deliveries, logistical support and marketing benefits.

Symbol group forecourt operators and franchise providers like One Stop are also included in this category.

MULTIPLE AND CO-OPERATIVE BUSINESSES



ACS represents over 12,000 stores that are owned by multiple and co-operative retailers. These businesses include the Co-Operative, regional co-operative societies, McColls and others.

Unlike symbol group stores, these stores are owned and run centrally by the business. Forecourt multiples and commission operated stores are included in this category.

THE CONVENIENCE SECTOR



In 2018, the total value of sales in the convenience sector was £39.1bn.

The average spend in a typical convenience store transaction is £6.50.



There are 46,262 convenience stores in mainland UK. 72% of stores are operated by independent retailers, either unaffiliated or as part of a symbol group.



The convenience sector provides flexible employment for around 365,000 people.

24% of independent/symbol stores employ family members only.



24% of shop owners work more than 70 hours per week, while 19% take no holiday throughout the year.

70% of business owners are first time investors in the sector.



Convenience stores and Post Offices poll as the two services that have the most positive impact on their local area according to consumers and local councillors.

81% of independent/symbol retailers have engaged in some form of community activity over the last year.



Between August 2017 and May 2018, the convenience sector invested over £814m in stores.

The most popular form of investment in stores is refrigeration.

OUR RESEARCH

ACS polls the views and experiences of the convenience sector regularly to provide up-to-date, robust information on the pressures being faced by retailers of all sizes and ownership types. Our research includes the following regular surveys:

ACS VOICE OF LOCAL SHOPS SURVEY

Regular quarterly survey of over 1,200 retailers, split evenly between independent retailers, symbol group retailers and forecourt retailers. The survey consists of tracker questions and a number of questions that differ each time to help inform ACS' policy work.

ACS INVESTMENT TRACKER

Regular quarterly survey of over 1,200 independent and symbol retailers which is combined with responses from multiple businesses representing over 3,000 stores.

ACS LOCAL SHOP REPORT

Annual survey of over 2,400 independent, symbol and forecourt retailers combined with responses from multiple businesses representing 7,669 stores. The Local Shop Report also draws on data from HIM, IGD, Nielsen and William Reed.

BESPOKE POLLING ON POLICY ISSUES

ACS conducts bespoke polling of its members on a range of policy issues, from crime and responsible retailing to low pay and taxation. This polling is conducted with retailers from all areas of the convenience sector.