



# 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](https://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](https://acs.org.uk)



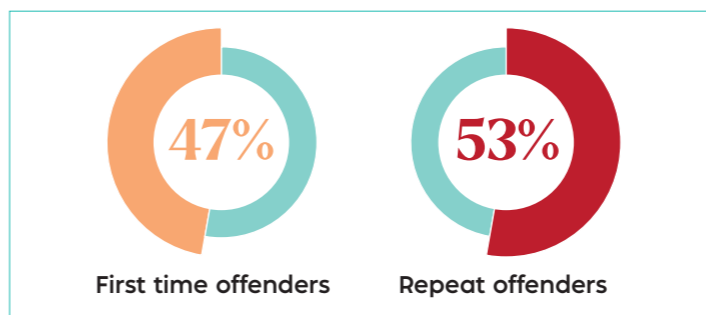
Top areas of investment

- 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](https://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

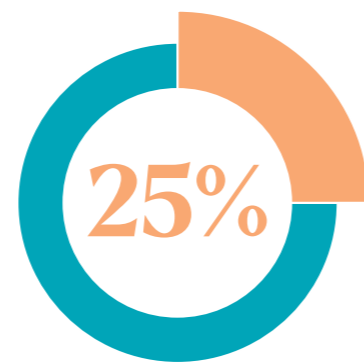
## Top triggers for violence

- 1** Customers not following Covid secure guidelines
- 2** Enforcing an age restricted sales policy
- 3** Refusal to serve intoxicated customers

**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](https://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

- 44%** Knife
- 55%** Other weapon (e.g. axe, hammer or syringe)
- 1%** Firearm



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](https://acs.org.uk)

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



## Most common types of cyber crime

- 1  Phishing emails
- 2  Hacking
- 3  Ransomware

## Most common prevention methods

- 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 [ncsc.gov.uk](https://ncsc.gov.uk)

# Organised crime and fraud

## Burglary

**7,494** incidents

**£1,484** cost per incident

**£11m** total cost to the sector

## Most common types of fraud

1 Counterfeit notes



2 Telephone scams



3 Credit & debit card fraud

