



2020 RETAIL CRIME SURVEY

MARCH 2020





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FOREWORD

In February 2020, the Prime Minister argued that “we should not tolerate crimes of violence against shopworkers”. He is right, but it is essential such words are backed up by action.

Violence is a scourge on our industry and the three million people who work tirelessly to deliver for consumers around the country. It harms the people who work in our shops; the families they go home to; the communities they belong to. It must not be tolerated.

The BRC’s Retail Crime Survey plays an important role in helping the industry understand the threats it faces from retail crime. This report highlights a number of uncomfortable truths that we must address as a society.

Retail workers face a torrent of violence and abuse in the workplace. Our survey records an average of 424 violent or abusive incidents each day. These are not just crimes of opportunity – they are often professional operations, planned and executed by organised criminal gangs who use the proceeds to fund other illegal activities. Weapons are used to threaten or injure staff as they go about their job, so while the impact is societal, it is retail workers who are in the firing line.

It is against this backdrop that retailers are spending record amounts on crime prevention - £1.2 billion in 2017/18. Despite this, the losses attributed to crime rose to £1.0 billion, making a total cost to retailers of £2.2 billion. This represents resources that could be better put to use investing in better services for customers, hiring and training staff, or opening new stores. It is also a heavy burden to bear at a time when retail margins have been squeezed by a combination of rising costs and weak demand.

This report should be a wake up for many of our politicians. For too long they have left retailers and retail workers to fend for themselves. Let us now take seriously the impact of violence in retail and make the legal repercussions for these crimes match the level of harm it causes to our hardworking retail colleagues.

HELEN DICKINSON OBE
Chief Executive, British Retail Consortium

AT A GLANCE

424

**VIOLENT
OR ABUSIVE
INCIDENTS
PER DAY**



**TOTAL
COST TO
RETAILERS**

£2.2BN

£1.2BN

**TOTAL AMOUNT
SPENT ON CRIME
PREVENTION**



**TOTAL
AMOUNT
LOST TO
CRIME**

£1BN



70%

**POLICE
RESPONSE
AS POOR OR
VERY POOR**

**LOSS TO
CUSTOMER
THEFT**

£770M





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INTRODUCTION

Retail is a uniquely vibrant industry, woven into the fabric of each and every community. From the smallest village shop to the largest cities' central districts, and online, thriving retail spaces are essential for services, community, employment and prosperity.

Retail is the largest private sector employer, with nearly one in ten workers employed in it. Millions more rely on it indirectly for their livelihood. Crime is an existential threat to our industry; it's direct and indirect costs make otherwise viable shops close, harming the wider community. Where crime is unmanageable, retail is unsustainable.

The 2020 Retail Crime Survey is the latest edition of the most comprehensive and respected survey of the state and nature of crime in the UK's retail sector. Bringing together the experiences of our membership, our analysis is based on a thorough and precise understanding of the daily challenges facing our retail colleagues throughout this country.

Our analysis draws on companies with nearly £130 billion of annual turnover, or 33% of the industry, together employing 820,000 employees. Our data come from the period between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2019.

IN TERMS OF PRIORITY CRIME TYPES, OUR MEMBERS ANALYSIS OF RELATIVE PRIORITY HAS NOT CHANGED SINCE LAST YEAR:

TIER 1	Violence/Abuse
TIER 2	Theft
TIER 3	Fraud/Cyber Crime
TIER 4	Burglary/Insider Crime
TIER 5	Data Hacks

Notably, violence and abuse remains the over-riding priority, often linked to acquisitive crime. When thinking about violence and abuse, policy-makers must also keep the links to acquisitive crime and wider anti-social behavior firmly in mind.

This year we have decided that we will report on cyber-crime in a separate publication slightly later in the year, given the important different issues it raises. In some areas, however, our data on cyber-crime will be picked up in overall figures (e.g. around fraud, where some may be cyber-enabled).

OUR HEADLINE RESULTS FOR THE 2020 RETAIL CRIME SURVEY ARE:

424 **VIOLENT** OR ABUSIVE INCIDENTS PER DAY; UP BY 9% ON THE PREVIOUS YEAR



RECORD SPENDING ON CRIME PREVENTION OF **£1.2BN**

OVER **£1BN** LOST TO CRIME



CUSTOMER THEFT CONSTITUTES THE VAST MAJORITY OF LOSSES TO CRIME, NOW AT **£770M**

AND **70%** OF RESPONDENTS SAW THE POLICE RESPONSE AS 'POOR' OR 'VERY POOR'



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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORM

THROUGH OUR WORK IN THIS AREA, WE HAVE ARRIVED AT THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORM SUMMARISED AS:

VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

CENTRAL LEADERSHIP

- Review the terms of reference for the National Retail Crime Steering Group (NRCSG) to build stronger relationships with a range of stakeholders throughout the Criminal Justice System, including but not limited to: policing, prosecutors, the sentencing framework, and the court system.
- Set up a new Home Office fund specifically for tackling violence in the retail sector. The fund would periodically invite bids for capital to support the development or deployment of promising initiatives to tackle retail violence, including technological, human and systematic solutions.
- Scottish Parliamentarians should support Daniel Johnson MSP's forthcoming Members Bill on retail worker protection.
- With the resumption of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive, the Northern Ireland Justice Minister should take this unique opportunity to work with criminal justice partners including the Northern Ireland Business Crime Partnership, the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium and wider business community to drive improvements in how violence against retail colleagues is prevented and dealt with.

TACKLING THE ROOT CAUSES OF OFFENDING

- Increase penalties and sentences for offenders attacking shopworkers serving the public and review the sentencing guidelines for assault.
- A comprehensive review of the Out of Court Disposals system to ensure that interventions are tackling the root cause of offending such as drug and alcohol addiction, instead of issuing fines to repeat offenders.

POLICE RESPONSE TO RETAIL VIOLENCE

- The Home Office should commission and fund H.M. Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Services (HMICFRS) to undertake a thematic review of violence against retail colleagues, including the links to theft and damage, and invite representatives from retail onto the Steering Group.
- Include retail violence as a strategic priority in the Strategic Policing Requirement, accompanied by appropriate resources for local police forces to properly prioritise this issue.
- Encourage Police and Crime Commissioners to make provision for retail violence in their Police and Crime Plans, making retail violence a local priority for each force.

TRIGGERS FOR ABUSE AND REPORTING INCIDENTS

- Acknowledge the major triggers for violence and abuse in the retail sector; managing shop theft, refusing to serve intoxicated customers and enforcing age restriction policies.
- Amend the Section 182 guidance to make clear that crime against a business cannot count towards alcohol licensing reviews.

THEFT AND DAMAGE

- HMICFRS inspection as above.
- National Business Crime Centre to work with police forces to enhance the understanding of theft and damage and ensure appropriate prioritisation decisions are taken.
- Senior figures to make certain one threshold corresponding to theft is applied by police.
- Based on the NI Business Crime Partnership, the Welsh Government should bring key stakeholders together in Wales to work together to tackle retail crime, including theft and damage.

FRAUD

- Implement improvements to Action Fraud, drawing upon the findings of the review delivered by Sir Craig Mackey.
- Consider whether the localised structure of policing is appropriate for fraud.

CHAPTER SUMMARY



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP ON, TACKLING THE CAUSES OF AND IMPROVING THE POLICE RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AND ABUSE.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT LOST TO THEFT AND DAMAGE.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF FRAUD.



RETAIL CRIME CONTEXT AND TRENDS



£2.2BN
TOTAL COST OF CRIME

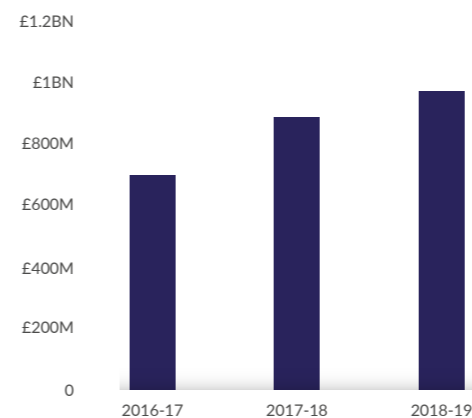
In last year's survey we reported a total annual cost of crime and prevention to the industry of £1.9 billion, by far the largest amount recorded. This was composed of losses to acquisitive crime such as theft and fraud of just under £900 million and spending on all crime prevention of around £1 billion. Both figures were record amounts.

For this year, all three figures have grown considerably again. The total amount for which crime accounts is £2.2 billion, an increase of 16% on the previous year. Total recorded losses to crime were £1.0 billion, up 9%. Total spend on crime prevention was £1.2 billion, a growth of around 20%.

TOTAL LOSSES

The following chart shows the total scaled losses from crime to the industry. Since the 2016/17 figure of around £700 million (indeed, the growth began earlier), the annual growth rates in losses to crime have been:

TOTAL LOSSES FROM CRIME TO BUSINESS



2016/17
AN INCREASE OF
£42M,
6%

2017/18
AN INCREASE OF
£194M,
OR 28%

2018/19
AN INCREASE OF
£82M,
OR 9%.

Certainly we think there are many better uses for these funds, which could be the motor for considerable growth in jobs and prosperity.

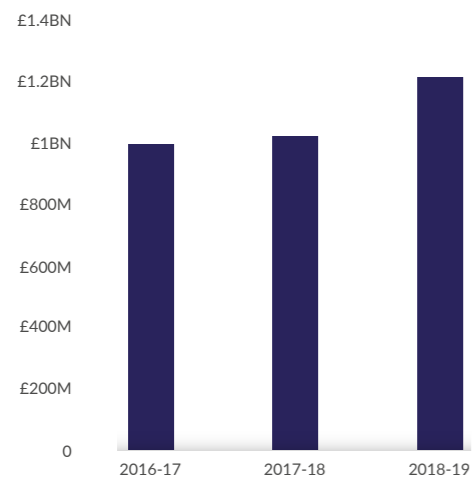
But the story does not finish there, because this money has undoubtedly been used to fund further organised crime. The Centre for Social Justice's recent report 'Desperate for a Fix' traces many of the links between retail crime and the illicit drug trade. As a result, the the harm to society and loss to the public purse can be many times higher than the initial cost of retail crime.

RETAILER SPEND

The following chart shows the total spend by retailers on crime prevention. These figures are only direct spend and do not necessarily include, for example, software upgrades that both improve stock management and reduce the potential for unreported loss, consequently allowing for improved security processes. This series includes spend on anti-fraud and cyber security measures.

We are reporting our data for spend since 2016/17:

TOTAL SPEND ON CRIME PREVENTION



This chart clearly demonstrates the very substantial recent upsurge in crime prevention spending.

The universal position of our members is that the spend is not only growing, but is also increasingly being shifted away from loss prevention and into what many see as the industry's most pressing concern: violence and abuse towards colleagues.

CHAPTER SUMMARY



THE TOTAL SPEND ON CRIME PREVENTION REACHED £1.2 BILLION, UP AROUND 20%.



THE TOTAL LOST TO CRIME WAS £1 BILLION, UP 9%.



SPENDING ON CRIME PREVENTION IS INCREASINGLY BEING DIRECTED TOWARDS COLLEAGUE PROTECTION.

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VIOLENCE AND ABUSE



Violence and abuse towards colleagues remains by far the single highest priority area of crime for our members, and more broadly across the industry. This year we report a record number of incidents for the industry, at just under **155,000**. At that rate, there were **424** violent or abusive incidents every day of the year.

In 2017/18, the relevant figures were just under **142,000**, or **388** per day, an increase of around **9%**.

Having engaged widely, we think that the figure for violence and abuse is the right one to focus upon given it most accurately reflects the harm to our colleagues. Abuse, such as threats and intimidation, can cause serious and long-lasting harm, and we should not underestimate the impact on our colleagues. Experiencing violence and abuse regularly places a heavy burden on our colleagues' emotional and physical well-being, even when they are not the direct target.

For our members, who see staff safety as a key priority, this is not an issue around loss or cost. This is a human issue; it is about keeping our people as safe as possible, and protecting their families from the worry and stress they might otherwise face. We could not agree more with the following comment by the Prime Minister, in response to a question from Alex Norris MP:

Alex Norris MP:

"Every day, an estimated 280 shopworkers will be victims of violence at work. At my local Co-op, a staff member was hit with a glass bottle. The Co-op is a good employer, and it wants this to stop, so it and other local retailers engaged with the Government's call for evidence on violence towards shop staff. Seven and a half months later, they are awaiting a response. Prime Minister, will you commit today to publishing your response to the call for evidence, and will you meet me and a group of shopworkers who have experienced violence at work to hear about what happened to them?"

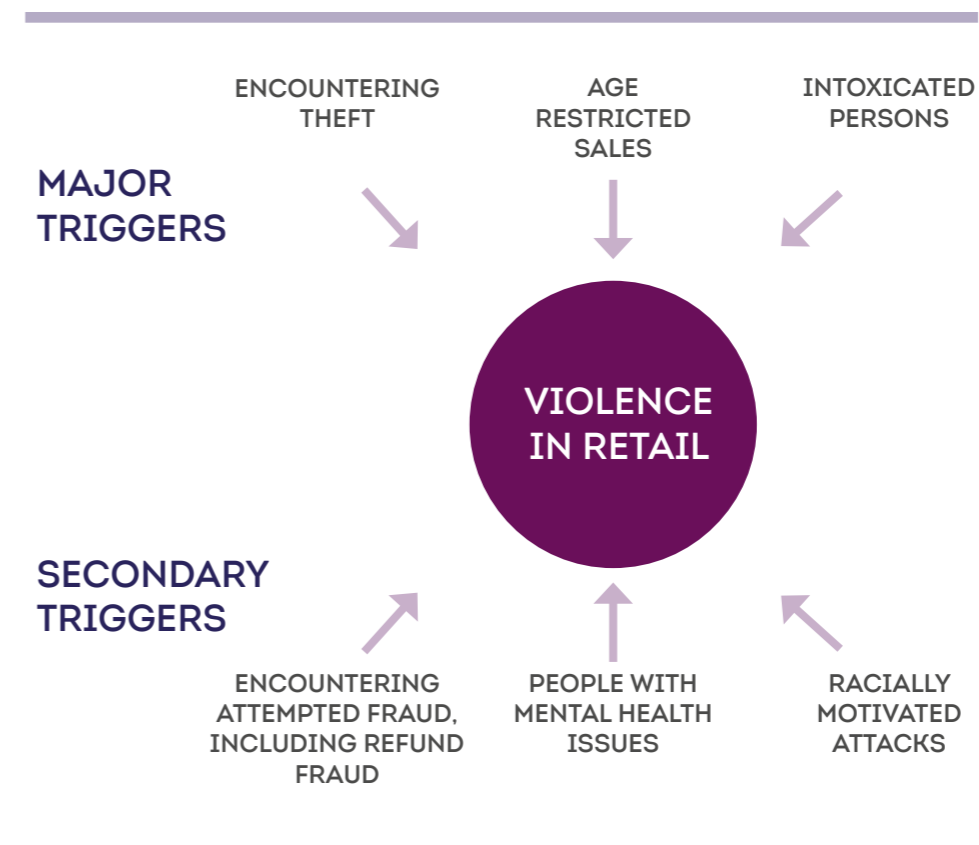
"I certainly will make that undertaking to the hon. Gentleman. I am glad that he has raised this matter. We should not tolerate crimes of violence against shopworkers or indeed anybody else..."

**Boris Johnson MP
Official Report, 12 February
2020, col. 849.**

No retail colleague should have to tolerate violence or threats in their place of work.

Their loved ones should never feel concerned about a parent, child or sibling going out to work, afraid of violence. Our work in this space, and that of our membership and partners across the sector, is motivated by that simple belief.

But there are also extremely strong reasons from a public policy perspective why violence and abuse against our colleagues, often linked to violence, requires specific action. To understand that, the next area to look at is the causes of violence. Building on a range of experience and analyses, we have identified 6:



The incidents appear to ever more be part of organised criminal gangs. Criminals are targeting retail as a stable income stream, and are prepared to use violence or the threats of violence to get their way. When surveyed, over 90% of our members have seen an increase in the amount of gang related crime they witness. None saw a decrease.

Many of our members have observed that such crimes are perpetrated on an industrial scale. They are executed with a high degree of planning and expertise, involve a hierarchy and pre-set 'roles and responsibilities'. The money thus generated is used to fund organised crime, for example drugs crimes, as reported in 'Desperate for a Fix' by the Centre for Social Justice.

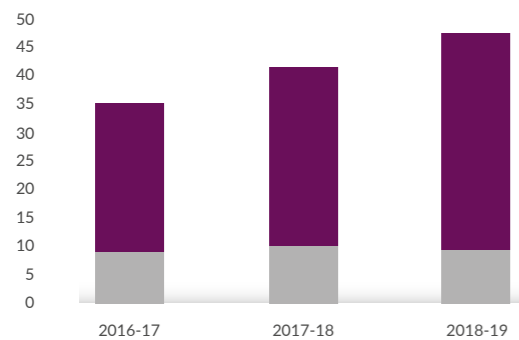
This highlights the importance of violence as a key part of much larger criminal enterprises. To that end, it makes the continuing inability of the Criminal Justice System to treat customer theft from shops a real problem.

With age-restricted sales, our colleagues are being put in greater risk because of the duties placed upon them by the law. These duties have expanded over time. Our members are clear: they will fully discharge any lawful requirements Parliament places upon them. But when Parliament is creating these flashpoints that lead to violence, it must be incumbent upon Parliament and H.M. Government to provide adequate protection through the Criminal Justice System. At present, the clear industry view is that that does not happen so shop thieves go unpunished.

TRENDS

The number of violence and/or abusive incidents has been growing solidly for some time, certainly since 2016/17:

VIOLENCE & ABUSE PER 1,000 WORKERS



Although they all record slightly different things, the major sources (e.g. from USDAW and the ACS) are unanimous that there has been, and continues to be, a growing number of incidents.

Within violence (excluding abuse) the overall numbers may have broadly plateaued at a very high level. Whereas for the previous year's figures there were 115 incidents per day, there are now 102 per day. But we make five main observations around this:

- the figure remains extremely high – in the words of Dr Emmeline Taylor, Associate Professor of Criminology at City, University of London, violence has become an “epidemic”. That is despite record spending on protecting colleagues;
- many of the recorded violent incidents are more serious – professional opinion is unanimously that weapons are being used more readily and the injuries are becoming more severe. The violence is becoming so significant that, as the work of Dr Taylor highlights, colleagues are suffering Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in record numbers. That a condition more typically associated with the battlefield is affecting retail colleagues emphasises the nature of the incidents faced;

CASE STUDY 1

The manager reported that the store security officer and store manager were physically assaulted and verbally threatened by a male shoplifter. The man was stopped from exiting the store with alcohol products concealed underneath his jacket, he then refused to hand back the goods to colleagues who spoke to him politely but firmly.

A scuffle ensued between him and colleagues, and he pushed the store manager hard. The store manager fell to the floor, causing some injuries.

The store recovered one item and some were damaged in the process. The man told the security officer that he's was HIV positive and threatened to infect him with it if he's was not allowed to leave freely. He was then allowed to leave with one product without further provocation. The store manager was shaken up and was given medical support for both the physical and psychological impacts.

- the growth in abuse – our view is that fewer incidents are escalating from abuse or threats into violence, which is to be welcomed, but is often at the expense of other crime types. In short, colleagues are less regularly being attacked when they encounter theft because they have been instructed to not intervene. As such they are being threatened and abused to support stealing, even if actual violence is less necessary than before – which is still a substantial public policy issue;
- weapons are increasingly being used to threaten violence, such as a knife being shown to an innocent colleague as part of an organized gang stealing. For many, that might be categorized as abuse rather than violence;

“

HE MAN TOLD THE SECURITY OFFICER THAT HE'S WAS HIV POSITIVE AND THREATENED TO INFECT HIM WITH IT IF HE'S WAS NOT ALLOWED TO LEAVE FREELY.

”

CASE STUDY 2

The duty manager was made aware of a suspect who had stolen razor blades. When he challenged the man, the suspect threatened to stab him whilst holding his hand in his pocket, clearly indicating he had a knife.

- The manager then held back and allowed the suspect to leave with the stolen goods.
- an increasing prevalence for the incidents to involve racial elements; and

CASE STUDY 3

A colleague reported a known female shoplifter had entered the store. The store verbally asked the shoplifter to leave the store immediately.

The shoplifter became racially abusive towards everyone.

The shoplifter walked out the store and moments after re-entered. The store security officer informed the shoplifter she must leave immediately. The shoplifter scratched the security officer's skin, causing significant lacerations and bleeding, and fled the store.

- in many cases, the threats are not only to the colleague in the store but also in their life outside of work, considerably increasing the impact of the incident on them.

CASE STUDY 4

A female threw carrot cakes at the store manager and pushed the security guard and called a BAME colleague a "Chinese Bitch".

The suspect threatened the store manager, saying she would wait for the manager outside the store.

Our members are clear that there is an obvious trend of violence, or the threat of violence, being used for thefts involving relatively small amounts, including under £200. Our members see that the £200 threshold in legislation has provided some very unhelpful messaging to police on the ground. Whilst that legislation only relates to the court in which an offence can be prosecuted, and so also to the severity of the possible punishments, in many areas a perception has evolved within the police that they should not and will not attend an incident for under £200, choosing to apply that rationale even where there has been violent aspects.

Our view is that that model is not being driven at senior levels but is a response at local levels to resourcing pressures, and we would ask Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables to together promote messaging that explicitly bans any kind of crude monetary threshold in practice.

“

THE SUSPECT THREATENED THE STORE MANAGER, SAYING SHE WOULD WAIT FOR THE MANAGER OUTSIDE THE STORE.

”

WEAPONS

Our members are universally agreed that weapons are becoming an ever more significant threat, used without qualm even for relatively tiny amounts of gain.

CASE STUDY 5

Two men entered a store in north west London at around 4pm on a sunny day. They were unmasked. The store was in the middle of a large, busy shopping parade. They went to the till, and threatened the young woman who was working it. They each pulled out a knife, and threatened the woman with it, shouting violently at her to open the till. A knife was held to her face. Other staff nearby were also caught up in the incident.

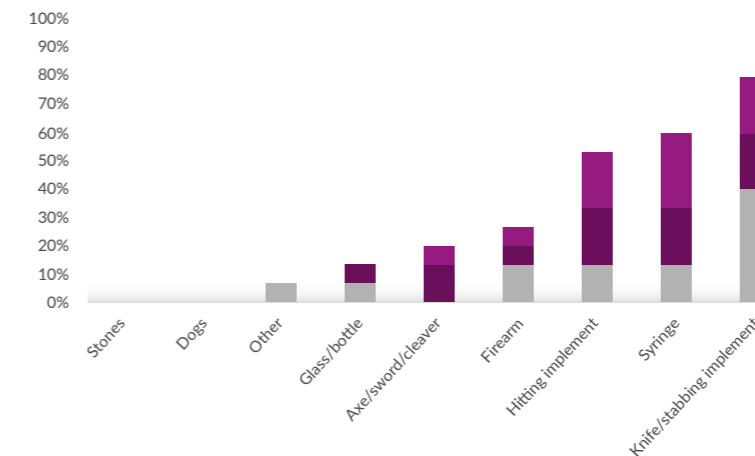
The young lady responded calmly, and did as they said. The thieves made off with an estimated £150 in cash, shouting that if the police were informed they would return to inflict even more serious harm. Despite CCTV evidence (as of today) no one has been apprehended or charged.

The young lady suffered no physical injuries, but received support for stress.



We asked our members for their views on the most significant and concerning weapon types they face. They told us that knives are by far the most concerning, closely followed by syringes and hitting implements, such as hammers.

RANKING OF SIGNIFICANT THREATS



The order of the threats is the same as last year's, but perhaps the most notable increase is that Firearms are becoming a more significant weapon type.

THE CALL FOR EVIDENCE

When it was published in April of last year, we were strong supporters of the potential for the Home Office's Call for Evidence 'Violence and abuse towards shop staff' to be the start of a collaborative process with HM Government which could finally drive some positive change.

We still see the potential for industry and Government to come together to tackle this issue collaboratively. The obvious forum is the National Retail Crime Steering Group, which we co-chair with the Home Office.

The Call for Evidence closed in June 2019. On 4th March 2020 it will have been 250 days since the Call for Evidence closed.

Responding to the consultation, more than 50 of our member CEOs alongside a number of senior retail industry figures took the then unprecedented step of signing an open letter to the Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Justice at the time. The letter is Annexed to the end of this document. In that letter we said that "There is no scope to kick the can down the road by waiting for a further consultation - the [suggested] actions..... must be agreed to.... turned into a proper plan and delivered rapidly...". That has not happened.

We understand that the end of 2019 was a politically tumultuous time, which necessarily delayed progress on a number of public policy fronts. But we urge the Home Office to publish a much-needed response setting out a programme of work and reforms that show the industry this Government takes its concerns seriously and is able to help manage them.

OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION INCLUDE:

CENTRAL LEADERSHIP

- Review the terms of reference for the National Retail Crime Steering Group (NRCSG) to build stronger relationships with a range of stakeholders throughout the Criminal Justice System, including but not limited to: policing, prosecutors, the sentencing framework, and the court system.

- Set up a new Home Office fund specifically for tackling violence in the retail sector. The fund would periodically invite bids for capital to support the development or deployment of promising initiatives to tackle retail violence, including technological, human and systematic solutions.

TACKLING THE ROOT CAUSES OF OFFENDING

- Increase penalties and sentences for offenders attacking shopworkers serving the public and review the sentencing guidelines for assault.
- A comprehensive review of the Out of Court Disposals system to ensure that interventions are tackling the root cause of offending such as drug and alcohol addiction, instead issuing fines to repeat offenders.

POLICE RESPONSE TO RETAIL VIOLENCE

- The Home Office should commission and fund H.M. Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Services (HMICFRS) to undertake a thematic review of violence against retail colleagues, including the links to policing theft and damage, and invite representatives from retail onto the Steering Group.
- Include retail violence as a strategic priority in the Strategic Policing Requirement, accompanied by appropriate resources for local police forces to properly prioritise this issue.
- Encourage Police and Crime Commissioners to make provision for retail violence in their Police and Crime Plans, making retail violence a local priority for each force.

TRIGGERS FOR ABUSE AND REPORTING INCIDENTS

- Acknowledge the major triggers for violence and abuse in the retail sector; managing shop theft, refusing to serve intoxicated customers and enforcing age restriction policies.
- Amend the Section 182 guidance to make clear that crime against a business cannot count towards alcohol licensing reviews.

CHAPTER SUMMARY



424 INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE EVERY DAY, UP 9%



6 MAIN CAUSES, INCLUDING ENCOUNTERING THEFT AND FRAUD, AGE RESTRICTED SALES AND RACIALLY MOTIVATED ATTACKS



MORE THAN 250 DAYS SINCE THE CALL FOR EVIDENCE CLOSED

THEFT AND DAMAGE



In total, there were 17% more incidents of theft and damage this year.

Customer theft remains by far the most significant type of loss and damage, comprising around 94% of the total number of recorded incidents and 79% of the total loss. The cost to the industry is now at more than £770 million more, until very recently, than the total cost of all crimes against retailers.

Following a recent written question in Parliament by Philip Davies MP (Official Report, 6 March 2019), the Ministry of Justice revealed exactly how many shoplifting offences criminals might be convicted for before receiving an immediate custodial sentence: in 2016, one offender received their first custodial sentence after 435 previous offences; in 2017, 279 previous offences; and, in 2018, 287 previous offences. Focusing purely on 'customer theft from a retailer' offences, the respective figures were 66, 47 and 62. Clearly, the system is failing retailers and the customers who rely upon them.

CHAPTER SUMMARY



CUSTOMER THEFT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TYPE OF LOSS AND DAMAGE



CUSTOMER THEFT ACCOUNTS FOR MORE THAN £770 MILLION LOST TO CRIMINALS.



CUSTOMER THEFT IS 79% OF TOTAL LOSSES TO CRIME.

connect to address 192

username: ****
password: #

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FRAUD



80%
OF RETAILERS THINK REFUND
FRAUD IS **HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT**

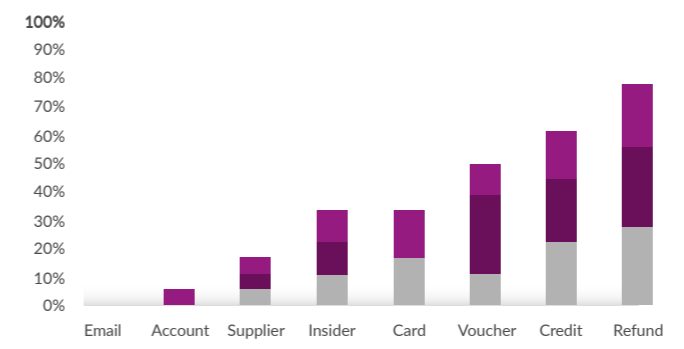
Fraud remains an extremely difficult area for the UK's Criminal Justice System to grip effectively, as several reviews have shown. For retail this is a particular challenge, and one where considerable investment is going, for example in using bespoke anti-fraud services.

It remains a key priority for the BRC and our members, and we sit on the Joint Fraud Taskforce and engage regularly with the Home Office and beyond.

Our members have indicated that the two most concerning areas of fraud for them are refund fraud and credit fraud, with voucher fraud also a particularly concerning area.

Action Fraud, the online system through which frauds are reported to the police, remains a key concern, and we await more detail of how the Government intends to proceed in the wake of the review by Sir Craig Mackey.

RANKING OF SIGNIFICANT FRAUD TYPES



Beyond that, we recommend that H.M. Government urgently takes forward work to improve how fraud is prioritised and investigated by the police. There remains a question about whether the current structure is the right way to manage fraud, given that it is a classic example of a crime where the victims are often in a different place to the criminals, and hence the investigating force.

There is a case for moving away from the traditional 43 force structure for fraud and other such crimes, and instead either extending the reach of national-level bodies or creating a series of 'super regions' for investigating these crimes. Prevention work could still continue at the local level, but investigative teams could become more skilled and experienced at the specific requirements of fraud.

CHAPTER SUMMARY



80% OF RETAILERS THINK FRAUD IS HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT



CREDIT AND VOUCHER FRAUD ARE ALSO PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT CRIME ISSUES.



URGENT WORK REQUIRED TO IMPROVE POLICE PRIORITISATION OF FRAUD, POTENTIALLY INCLUDING SYSTEMATIC REFORM.

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POLICE RESPONSE

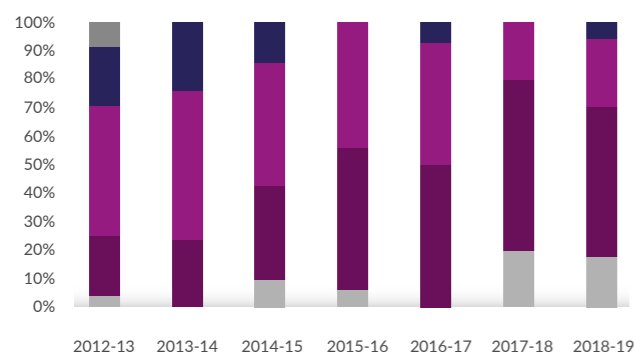


70%
SEE POLICE RESPONSE
AS **POOR** OR VERY POOR

Our starting point on policing, on that of our members, is one of absolute respect for police as an institution and the individuals working within policing, including serving constables, community support officers and civilian staff. Time and again, they demonstrate bravery, dedication and professionalism over and above that which we, as a society, have any right to expect of them.

Nonetheless, industry views of how the police deal with retail crime are generally poor, albeit they may be improving slightly.

OPINION OF POLICE RESPONSE



This year's survey shows that around 70% of respondents view the police response as 'Poor' or 'Very Poor', down from 80% in the previous year's survey. Around 25% see the response as 'Fair', comparable with last year, and 5% as 'Good', up from 0% last year.

These are slightly promising, but there is clearly a way to go. The Government has announced that it intends to recruit an additional net 20,000 police officers over the next few years, which is very much to be welcomed. We would ask that, given the importance of retail and the specific issues which we, above other industries are facing, some of these are ring-fenced specifically for retail crime, particularly organised gang violence, on the basis that removing a relatively small number of prolific mobile criminals will significantly reduce the harm to quality of life for many.

CHAPTER SUMMARY



THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO RECRUIT 20,000 POLICE OFFICERS OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS.



25% OF RESPONDENTS SEE THE POLICE RESPONSE AS 'FAIR'



5% OF RESPONDENTS SEE THE POLICE RESPONSE AS 'GOOD' UP FROM 0% LAST YEAR

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IN ADDITION TO OUR MEMBERS, ON WHOSE DATA AND EXPERTISE WE RELY, WE WISH TO LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING:

Kit Malthouse MP, Minister of State at the Home Office;

David Hanson;

Alex Norris MP;

Louise Haigh MP, Shadow Minister for Policing;

Mike Amesbury MP;

Kate Green MP;

Ruth George MP;

Philip Davies MP;

Lucy Allan MP;

Laurence Robertson MP;

Alex Cunningham MP;

Gareth Thomas MP,

Daniel Johnson MSP;

Ian Dyson, Commissioner, City of London Police;

Patrick Holdaway, National Business Crime Centre;

Officials at the Home Office, Ministry of Justice, BEIS and elsewhere;

Fiona Cuthbertson, Keystone;

Dr Emmeline Taylor, City, University of London;

Dr Shane Johnson, University College London;

Dr Lewis Griffin, University College London;

Mike Haley, Chief Executive, Cifas;













Katy Worowec, Managing Director, UK Finance; and

Centre for Social Justice.

GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

CRIME THREATS / TERMINOLOGY

 <p>ABUSE Incidents of non-physical aggressive, intimidating or abusive behaviour</p>	 <p>BURGLARY Entry into a premises without permission with the intent to steal</p>	 <p>CRIMINAL DAMAGE Deliberate damage or destruction of property, including arson</p>	 <p>CUSTOMER THEFT Theft by customers or those purporting to be honest customers</p>
 <p>CYBER-CRIME Crime that committed through use of ICT (e.g. hacking, malware)</p>	 <p>CYBER-ENABLED CRIME Traditional crime increased in scale by the use of computers, networks</p>	 <p>FRAUD Wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in illegal gain</p>	 <p>ICT Information and Communications Technology</p>
 <p>POLICE RESPONSE Expert opinion of police responses to retail crime</p>	 <p>ROBBERY Force / threat of force used either during / before a theft, or attempt at one</p>	 <p>THEFT Where money, goods, property or services are stolen from the business</p>	 <p>VIOLENCE Assaults and robberies where physical injury may have been sustained</p>

ANNEX RETAIL VIOLENCE LETTER

The Home Office and Ministry of Justice

Via www.gov.uk

28th June 2019

Dear Home Secretary, Lord Chancellor and Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability,

ACTION TO PREVENT VIOLENCE TOWARDS SHOP STAFF

Retail is the largest single private sector employer in the UK, with roughly 3 million direct employees. Perhaps uniquely, it is woven into the fabric of each and every community and constituency in the country.

As an industry retail faces a range of challenges, but perhaps the most pressing and difficult is the rising tide of violence against retail workers (for the avoidance of doubt, including charity shop volunteers). The data are unanimous, describing a problem which has grown across the industry. The British Retail Consortium's analysis shows that 115 workers are attacked each and every day. The Association of Convenience Stores' research estimates there were almost 10,000 incidents of violence in convenience stores in the last 12 months. USDAW's work highlights that, on average, a shopworker is abused, threatened or assaulted 21 times a year - that is once a fortnight. According to research by the Charity Retail Association, one quarter of charity retailers report that incidents of violence against volunteers have increased in the past two years and nearly a third of charity retailers report that incidents of verbal abuse against volunteers have increased in the past two years. The Home Office's own Commercial Victimisation Survey shows the retail sector consistently suffers several times more crime per premises than any other business sector surveyed.

The evidence multiple retail organisations are providing in response to the Call for Evidence, linked to other publications over past years, highlights one inescapable fact – violence against retail colleagues is a hugely problematic and serious area of crime, with weapons, particularly knives, increasingly significant. This violence is commonly triggered by shopworkers delivering what the state asks of them: enforcing age restriction policies or refusing to serve intoxicated customers, or dealing with shop thieves, who might be carrying weapons.

The only conclusion is that there is a serious imbalance in the relationship between risk and reward for these criminals.

For us, it is the human angle that matters most. These are not victimless crimes. They impact on the skilled, passionate, determined individuals who make the industry such a vibrant place to work; their families and loved ones; the communities to which they contribute so much; and those who rely on the public services retail indirectly supports. Irrespective of whether they are volunteers or employees, work during the day or overnight, or from set retail premises or remotely, they deserve to be acknowledged and supported as victims of crime.

For the Government this must be seen as a considerable public policy challenge played out daily in every High Street, neighbourhood parade and village square.

The growth in violence has come despite record spending by retailers on crime prevention, deploying new technology and additional colleagues to tackle this problem. Clearly a new approach is required, and we are writing to urge you to give effect to a range of recommendations, which are set out in more detail in the annexed paper. We will play our role, but need your consistent support and efforts to drive forward desperately needed reform.

The key recommendations are:

- legislating for a specific new offence of assaulting a retail worker (including charity shop volunteers), giving them the same status as emergency workers. This visible and clear offer of support and protection will finally provide for effective sentencing responses and will help drive improved reporting;
- urgent work on the use of community disposals, looking in more depth and where and how they are used and culminating on appropriate guidance to support and appropriate response. This change will be rendered more necessary if plans to abolish short prison sentences further increase criminals perceived incentives to offend;
- inclusion of retail violence in the next iteration of the Strategic Policing Requirement and for Home Office Ministers to work with Police and Crime Commissioners to support inclusion in each and every Police and Crime Plan; and
- an immediate and fully funded HM Inspectorate of Policing thematic review of policing of retail violence, including attitudes to retail victims, response frameworks and relevant prioritisation. These will help identify the better performing forces and allow the less effective ones to learn much-needed lessons.

We remain absolutely committed to going even further to do our part. Across the industry, the record spending on crime prevention we spoke of earlier is increasingly focused on staff protection. Beyond that, we are leveraging the industry's power to tackle the root causes of the symptoms we face, with the Shop Safe Alliance in Brixton shortly due to start an excellent example of our determination to resolve these issues and harness the power of the retail for the whole community's benefit. We are also developing training and guidance to help the smallest businesses.

We understand the importance of reporting more of the crimes we witness to police. Each undersigned retailer and representative body pledges to retain their focus on this area, to work to ensure that reporting within their organisation and to the police remains unencumbered. This will include greater use of the new Business Impact Statement and crime reporting guidance which we are grateful to the Home Office and National Business Crime Centre for publishing. We also ask the Home Office and senior police officers to ensure that, when reported, such crimes are recorded and reacted to as appropriately serious, which will build confidence in the Criminal Justice System and help reporting. No violent incident should be recorded as a simple shop theft and not attended rapidly.

Given the nature of the issues we have described, delay is not an option. There is no scope to kick the can down the road by waiting for a further consultation – the actions below must be agreed to, along with others which arise from the Call for Evidence, turned into a proper plan and delivered rapidly, co-ordinated through the National Retail Crime Steering Group.

Yours sincerely,

The following members of the British Retail Community, making a positive difference to the retail industry and the customers it serves today and in the future:

Aldi Stores Ltd – Giles Hurley, Chief Executive Officer – UK and Ireland

Anne Summers – Jacqueline Gold CBE, Chief Executive

Asda – Roger Burnley, Chief Executive Officer

A S Watson UK – Peter Macnab, Chief Executive Officer

B&Q UK and Ireland – Graham Bell, Chief Executive Officer

Boots UK – Sebastian James, Chief Executive Officer

British Independent Retailers Association – Andrew Goodacre, Chief Executive Officer

C & J Clark International Ltd – Ben Fletcher, Managing Director UK and Europe

Card Factory – Karen Hubbard, Chief Executive Officer

Carpetright PLC – Wilf Walsh, Chief Executive Officer

Central England Co Operative – Deborah Robinson, Chief Executive Officer
Co-op Food – Jo Whitfield, Chief Executive
Co-op Food – Catherine Muirden, Director of People
Company Shop Group – Jane Marren, Group Managing Director
Costcutter Supermarkets Group Ltd – Darcy Willson-Rymer, Chief Executive
Officer Debenhams – Terry Duddy, Interim Executive Chairman
DFS Furniture – Tim Stacey, Chief Executive Officer
Dixons Carphone Group – Alex Baldock, Group Chief Executive
Dreams Ltd – Mike Logue, Chief Executive Officer
Fenwick Ltd – Robbie Feather, Chief Executive Officer
Greggs PLC – Roger Whiteside OBE, Chief Executive Officer
Henderson Retail – Mark McCammond, Retail Director
Homebase – Damian McGloughlin, Chief Executive Officer
Iceland Foods Ltd – Sir Malcolm Walker CBE, Founder & Executive Chairman
Iceland Foods Ltd – Richard Walker, Managing Director
J Sainsbury's – Mike Coupe, Group CEO
John Lewis Partnership – Sir Charlie Mayfield, Chairman
L'Occitane Ltd – Alia Hawa, Managing Director UK & Ireland
Lidl GMBH – Christian Härtangel, UK Managing Director
Marks & Spencer – Steve Rowe, Chief Executive Officer
McKesson UK – Toby Anderson, Chief Executive Officer
Musgrave Group PLC – Chris Martin, Chief Executive Officer
National Guild of Spar UK – Dominic Hall, Chairman
New Look Retailers Ltd – Alistair McGeorge, Executive Chairman
New West End Company – Jace Tyrrell, Chief Executive
Next PLC – Lord Wolfson of Apsley Guise, Chief Executive
Savers Health and Beauty Ltd – Doug Winchester, Managing Director
Scotmid Co Op Group – John Brodie MBE, Chief Executive
Scottish Grocers' Federation – Pete Cheema OBE, Chief Executive
Screwfix – John Mewett, Chief Executive Officer
Spar UK – Jackie Mackenzie, Managing Director
Steinhoff UK – Mark Jackson, Chief Executive Officer

The Body Shop International – David Boynton, Chief Executive
The Body Shop International – Linda Campbell, Managing Director
The Perfume Shop, Gill Smith, Managing Director
W H Smith PLC – Stephen Clarke, Chief Executive
Wilko Retail Limited – Andrew Moore, Chief Commercial Officer
The following associated organisations:
McColl's Retail Group – Jonathan Miller, Chief Executive
Motor Fuel Group Limited – Jeremy Clarke, Chief Operating Officer
One Stop – Jonny McQuarrie, Managing Director
Association of Convenience Stores – James Lowman, Chief Executive
British Retail Consortium – Helen Dickinson OBE, Chief Executive
Charity Retail Association – Robin Osterley, Chief Executive Officer
USDAW – Paddy Lillis, General Secretary.

CONTACTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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THE BRITISH RETAIL CONSORTIUM

The BRC's purpose is to make a positive difference to the retail industry and the customers it serves, today and in the future. Retail is an exciting, dynamic and diverse industry which is going through a period of profound change. Technology is transforming how people shop; costs are increasing; and growth in consumer spending is slow.

The BRC is committed to ensuring the industry thrives through this period of transformation. We tell the story of retail, work with our members to drive positive change and use our expertise and influence to create an economic and policy environment that enables retail businesses to thrive and consumers to benefit. Our membership comprises over 5,000 businesses delivering £180bn of retail sales and employing over one and half million employees.

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