

PRESS RELEASE

2025 CRIME SURVEY

RETAIL CRIME "SPIRALLING OUT OF CONTROL"

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- Retail violence and abuse increased over 50% to more than 2,000 incidents a day
- Losses from customer theft reached a record £2.2 billion in 2023/24
- Record crime levels come despite retailers spending £1.8 billion on prevention

Retail crime is at its highest level on record, according to new figures released today from the [British Retail Consortium's \(BRC\) Annual Crime Survey](#).

The survey reveals incidents of violence and abuse in 2023/24 climbed to over 2,000 per day, up from 1,300 the year before. This is more than four times what it was in 2020, when there were just 500 incidents a day. Incidents included racial or sexual abuse, physical assault and sexual harassment. There were also 1,000 incidents per day which involved a weapon, more than double the number in 2020.

With the total number of incidents rising, retailers are reporting a significant drop in their satisfaction with the current level of retail crime. The survey also found that 70% of retailers are likely to increase their security measures in response to the rising levels of crime.

incidents as 'poor' or 'very poor'. Of the remaining, 29% rated the response as 'fair', a further 6% said good, and 3% described it as 'excellent', the first time in five years that any retailers have rated it as such.

Theft also reached an all-time high with over 20 million incidents (over 55,000 per day) costing retailers £2.2 billion in 2023/24 (up from £1.8 billion the previous year). Many more incidents are linked to organised crime, with gangs systematically targeting stores across the country, stealing tens of thousands of pounds worth of goods and rotating around multiple stores.

Unsurprisingly, the amount spent on crime prevention is also at a record high, with retailers investing £1.8 billion on measures such as CCTV, more security personnel, anti-theft devices and body worn cameras, up from £1.2 billion the previous year. This takes the total cost of crime to an eye-watering £4.2 billion, up from £3.3 billion. And adds to the wider cost pressures retailers already face, further limiting investment and pushing up prices for customers everywhere.

The Labour Government has pledged to address the rise in retail crime through stronger measures to tackle shoplifting and anti-social behavior, including removing the £200 threshold of 'low level' theft. They also announced in the King's Speech they would introduce a standalone offence for assaulting a retail worker. Retailers will be looking closely at the details of the Crime and Policing Bill to ensure that its protections apply to all customer-facing retail workers, from those behind the till to delivery drivers.

Helen Dickinson, Chief Executive of the British Retail Consortium, said:

"Retail crime is spiralling out of control. People in retail have been spat on, racially abused, and threatened with machetes. Every day this continues, criminals are getting bolder and more aggressive. We owe it to the three million hardworking people working in retail to bring the epidemic of crime to heel. No one should go to work in fear.

"With little faith in police attendance, it is no wonder criminals feel they have licence to steal, threaten, assault and abuse. Retailers are spending more than ever before, but they cannot prevent crime alone. We need the police to respond to and handle every reported incident appropriately. We look forward to seeing crucial legislation to protect retail workers being put in place later this year. Only if the industry, Government and police work together, can we finally see this awful trend reverse."

Paddy Lillis, General Secretary of Usdaw, said:

"The scale of the epidemic of retail crime is laid bare in this shocking BRC report. Crime has a very direct impact on the viability of stores, as retailers go to increasing lengths and expense to make them secure and safe. Communities are blighted by anti-social behaviour and store closures. Staff are working in fear of the next incident of abuse, threats or violence. We have campaigned along with the BRC for substantial legislative measures to combat this growing problem and we are pleased that the Government will be introducing the Crime and Policing Bill, which will meet our aims. That is only part of the fightback against the criminals and we will continue to work closely with retailers to deliver respect for shop workers."

Chris Brook-Carter, Chief Executive of retail industry charity the Retail Trust, said:

"Almost half of the retail workers we've surveyed told us they currently fear for their safety and nearly two thirds are stressed and anxious going to work due to this unacceptable level of retail crime. People are contacting our helpline in their thousands to report horrifying incidents of abuse and violence and many say that they are now at breaking point.

“Retailers are taking the threat to their staff’s physical safety extremely seriously and more and more of them are working with the Retail Trust to reduce the terrible toll it is having on their people’s mental wellbeing. But stronger measures are clearly needed to prevent this criminal behaviour from happening in the first place.”

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