

THE SCOTTISH CRIME REPORT

2024/25





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FOREWORD

IN-STORE CRIME IN SCOTLAND

THE SCOTTISH CRIME REPORT

Retail crime remains one of the most significant challenges facing the convenience sector in Scotland today. The implications of retail crime are far reaching, affecting the store owner, their staff, and the communities they serve. Retailers and staff are regularly subject to abuse and aggression at work. Figures from Police Scotland reveal that 15,975* incidents were recorded from the introduction of the Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-Restricted Goods and Services) (Scotland) Act in August 2021 to the end of December 2024. Not only does retail crime have psychological impacts on store workers; it is also very costly. The average approximate cost of retail crime per store is £19,673 (averaging approximately £102.7million in Scotland overall). This information comes to light amid a surge in widespread shoplifting, some linked to organised crime groups, reports of staff resigning due to safety concerns, and suspected losses amounting to millions of pounds for local businesses.

The Scottish Grocers' Federation's (SGF) Crime Report 2024/25 provides the latest data on convenience retailers' experience of retail crime in Scotland. This report highlights some of the key figures from SGF's recent crime survey, which breaks down in-store crime into a range of categories, including shoplifting, violence against staff, verbal and physical abuse linked to sales refusals or age verification, incidents involving dangerous weapons, and hate crimes. The report also provides a range of resources and materials, including case studies and advice for retailers on conflict management, in-store security measures and cybercrime. Crime against retailers poses a clear and present threat to the convenience stores across Scotland. SGF continues to emphasise the urgent need for greater action from government and the Police to tackle this scourge on our sector.

GUIDANCE FOR SAFER BUSINESSES

Alongside our crime report, SGF has developed a Guidance for Safer Business document to support retailers to assess and manage the crime threat their businesses face. Every local shop is different and so too are the challenges they face from crime, but we have developed an updated package of guidance for retailers to assess the risks they face. We are grateful to our colleagues at the TMA for their invaluable support in producing this report.



DR. PETE CHEEMA OBE
SGF CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Thanks to our exhibitors and sponsor at the SGF Crime Seminar 2025

ABLOY

allwyn





REPORT IT, DON'T ACCEPT IT

Every day across the UK there are more than **2000 incidents of violence and abuse** towards shop workers.

The Protection of Workers Act (Scotland) makes it an offence to assault or behave in a threatening or abusive way towards a shop worker.

This is not part of your job, **don't put up with it, report it!**

SHOP THEFT

Shop theft continues to be the most costly and high volume form of crime that retailers in Scotland face.

Retailer responses to the SGF Crime Survey 2024:

- **99.8%** report that shoplifting has increased in the past year.
- **99.5%** report that shoplifting is a daily occurrence.
- The average cost of retail crime per store is £19,673 per year, among respondents (approximately £102.7 million across Scotland) (inc. theft, vandalism and other costs).
- **96.6%** report that police response times to shoplifting incidents are either unsatisfactory or significantly delayed (to the degree that it undermines the effectiveness of reporting the crime).
- **48.2%** report they are unlikely or very unlikely to report shoplifting incidents to the police.



* SGF received a total of 755 survey responses (14.5% of all stores in Scotland) from stores across a range of symbol groups and independent retailers

(**some responses are provided in aggregate across multiple stores*).



DEFINITION

Theft is the taking and appropriating of property without the consent of its rightful owner or other lawful authority.



STAFF SAFETY & AWARENESS

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION

Conflict under any circumstances is unpleasant and can easily escalate into verbal or physical confrontations which are completely unacceptable.



ADVICE AND TIPS

- Step back. Don't rush in. Take a moment to assess the situation.
- Breathe. Take a second to take a deep breath. The situation might not be as bad as you think. Taking a moment to yourself will calm you down and help you to think rationally.
- Evaluate your options.
 - Can you talk this person down?
 - Do you need the assistance of another member of staff?
 - Do you need to walk away?
- Communication is key. Only 7% of our communication is the spoken word. Your tone and body language contribute 93% of your communication. Make sure the customer knows that they have your full attention and that you are taking their concern seriously. Empathy and positive engagement can help to reduce or prevent confrontation. Ask how you can help and don't assume you know what the customer wants.
- Spot the signs of aggression early. Look for the physical signs that someone is becoming impatient or annoyed. Let them know that you will be with them shortly or that you understand their frustration and will be happy to help when you can.
- Keep calm and talk in a restrained tone. Remember that you are the only one who can resolve their issue, and they will have to calm down to hear you. If necessary, you can raise your voice to exert authority and ask them to calm down or refrain.
- If you sense that no amount of placating or assuring is working, and the customer is becoming aggressive think about how you are going to remove yourself from the situation. Do you need the assistance of a colleague?
- Do you need to walk or run to a secure room, or even leave the premises?
- Always maintain a safe space and if necessary, ask the customer firmly to step back from you.
- No physical or verbal abuse is acceptable so do not hesitate to inform management, or if required report it to the police.

MENTAL HEALTH

62.5% of businesses that responded have at least one member of staff who has experienced mental health & wellbeing issues as a result of the impact of retail crime.

PHYSICAL AND VERBAL ABUSE



DEFINITION

Assaults and threats are incidents where employees are assaulted, threatened or intimidated, as a result of disagreements with customers or other employees.

* SGF received a total of 755 survey responses (14.5% of all stores in Scotland) stores across a range of symbol groups and independent retailers

(*some responses are provided in aggregate across multiple stores*).

Retailer responses to the SGF Crime Survey 2024:

- **99.6%** report that violence against staff occurs at least once a month.
- **79.8%** report that incidents involving a weapon (such as a knife, club or firearm) occur at least once a month.
- **83.5%** report that violence against staff has increased in the past year, with the remaining reporting similar levels.
- **36%** report that police response times to violence against staff incidents are either unsatisfactory or significantly delayed (to the degree that it undermines the effectiveness of reporting the crime).

- Refusing a sale or asking for proof of age are among the most common factors contributing to the number of incidents of abuse and threatening behaviour in-store.

- **98.8%** of respondents experience at least weekly incidents of abuse when refusing a sale or when asking for proof of age.



HATE CRIME



83.3%

report that hate crime occurs at least once a month.

DEFINITION

Hate Crime is behaviour which is both criminal and rooted in prejudice. Any crime which is understood by the victim, or any other person as being motivated (wholly or partly) by malice or ill will toward a social group.

The protected characteristics covered by The Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act are: age; disability; race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins; religion or belief; sexual orientation; transgender identity; and, variations in sex characteristics.



TOP TIPS FOR PREVENTION

SHOP THEFT

1. Install a good quality CCTV system. It deters offenders and is essential when providing police with the evidence they need to make an arrest.
2. Keep your high value items in sight. This might mean lowering shelving units or having additional dedicated CCTV.



VIOLENT CRIME AND ABUSE

1. Train your staff to deal with aggression. The training needs to be regularly updated and there needs to be a system for staff to report incidents and be given support.
2. Work with the local community to address your concerns. Make sure the store is viewed as a community asset, support local schools, community groups and good causes.



ROBBERY

- 1 Take simple measures by reducing the pay-off, like counter cache and reducing cash levels in tills.
- 2 Good conflict management training is essential. This will help colleagues remain calm in these situations. Colleagues should never put assets before their life and should comply with the demands of the offender.



THERE ARE THREE KEY ELEMENTS IN EVERY CRIME:

The key element you have most control over in-store is to minimise the opportunity.





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SGF ACTION: CONVENIENCE RETAIL CRIME IN SCOTLAND

SGF and our partners are leading the campaign urging the Scottish Government to put an emergency plan into action to tackle the threatening surge in retail crime in Scotland. We want the Scottish Government, Police Scotland and the Crown Office to take action:

- More resources for the Scottish Justice System, focused on supporting enforcement organisations to tackle the rise in retail crime.
- Improved police response times, swifter action taken against perpetrators of retail crime and reducing the backlog of cases awaiting trial.
- Improved feedback for retailers when they report a crime and exploring more efficient methods of reporting and providing information to the police.

SGF is taking action to support the sector and raise awareness about the damaging impact of retail crime:

- Three years on from its introduction, the total

number of reported crimes under the Protection of Workers (Retail) (Scotland) Act reached 13,857 cases. Since then, the latest figures up to the end of December 2024 show the number of cases reached 15,975.

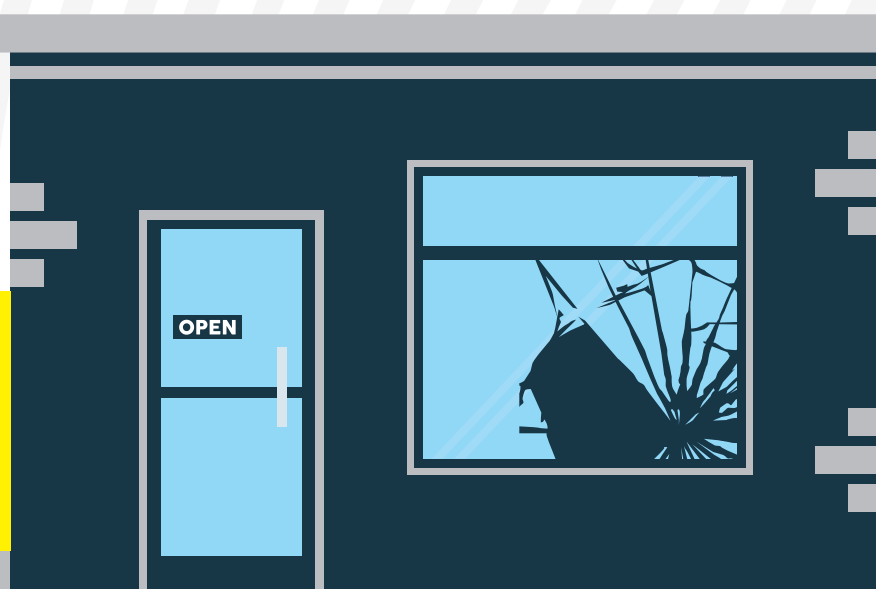
- SGF has regular engagement with Ministers, MSPs, Scottish Government officials and Police Scotland, highlighting the challenge of retail crime for convenience retailers. Alongside Retailers Against Crime, we have relaunched our joint campaign 'Don't Put Up With It!', which encourages retailers to take a zero-tolerance approach by reporting all offences against them.
- SGF continues to work closely with colleagues in the Rural Acquisitive & Business Crime Prevention team, the SPAACE Steering Group, and Police Scotland's Your Safety Matters group – and is a signatory of the National Assault Pledge (raising awareness and protecting workers from physical and verbal abuse).

Every day across the UK there are more than 2,000 incidents of violence and abuse towards retailers. The cost of crime to retailers was £4.2 billion in 2024.

The Protection of Workers (Retail) (Scotland) Act came into force in August 2021. It provides important legal protection for shop staff against assaults, threats and abuse.

**Figures provided by the Scottish Retail Consortium (Jan 2025)*

Effective political engagement from SGF ensured that the Protection of Workers (Retail) (Scotland) Act 2021 was passed by Parliament. In August 2024, exactly three years from introduction, 13,857 cases of abuse, threats and violence toward shop workers had been recorded under the act.





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'IT'LL COST YOU' CAMPAIGN



The 'It'll Cost You' campaign is aimed at tackling underage drinking by educating the adults who purchase alcohol for them.

Asking an adult to buy alcohol for under 18s is one of the most common tactics used by youngsters to access alcohol. It is an offence in Scotland for an adult to buy or attempt to buy alcohol for someone who is under the age of 18. This is known as a proxy purchase and for those that do it the consequences can be severe. Adults who buy alcohol for children may face a fine of up to £5,000, a prison sentence of up to three months, or both.

Whilst the campaign is clearly aimed at adults, young people under 18 and children need to understand that not only are there serious consequences for the adults they ask to make a purchase for them, but drinking alcohol could also place them in dangerous or vulnerable situations. Therefore, the overarching aims of the campaign are to protect children from harm, reduce crime and antisocial behaviour and make our communities safer.

The campaign is delivered over the summer school holidays and is an excellent example of partnership working involving Police Scotland, The Scottish Alcohol Industry Partnership (SAIP), retailers, Police Scotland Youth Volunteers and Community Alcohol Partnerships (CAP), and is supported by the Scottish Government. The SAIP is a platform for the Scottish alcohol industry to support, devise and deliver initiatives that contribute towards the promotion of responsible consumption and tackle harmful drinking. CAP collaborates with local community groups to reduce alcohol harm among

young people, improve their health and wellbeing and enhance their communities.

Delivery of the campaign is via multiple channels with the campaign messages being delivered in store via posters, window stickers, digital displays and instore radio as well as commercial radio, through social media and ads in newspapers. An important part of the campaign is via direct consumer engagement where we have popup activities in store and at community events.

The campaign has run nationally for three years. The strength of the campaign continues to be derived from the partnership working between the key partners. This allows the campaign to be effectively delivered with a modest budget.

Another strength of the campaign is its flexibility, whilst there is a national focus on the campaign during the summer school holidays. Police divisions can deploy the campaign throughout the year if required.

The campaign Steering Group chaired by SGF is gearing up to deliver the campaign again in 2025 as an important contribution to tackling underage drinking.

More information on the campaign can also be found at www.itwillcostyou.com/





MANAGING CRIME

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:

www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm



CUSTOMER SERVICE

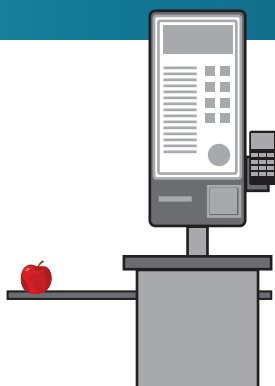
Make eye contact with customers when they enter the store and acknowledge them.

Reduce queuing in-store, as it can be a trigger for customer frustration.

SELF-SCAN TILLS

Ensure you have sufficient staff to authorise items during busy periods.

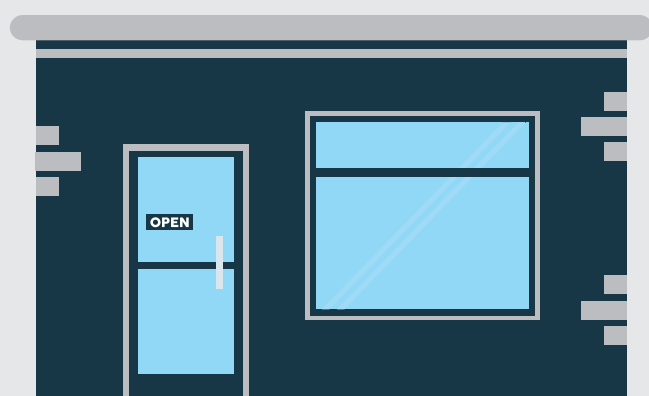
Ensure staff are trained to support customers to scan difficult items through tills correctly such as fruit and vegetables.




POLICE

Get to know your local community police officer.

Attend local community meetings and email your local police office to raise your concerns through 'contact us' on the Police Scotland website, where you will also find more information.



EXTERNAL SECURITY

Ensure that all doors and windows are secured to prevent housebreaking.

For high-risk stores, consider the installation of external shutters (this may require planning consent).

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



HATE CRIME

Report hate crime by telephone, 999 (emergency) 101 (non-emergency).

In person at any police office.

Or attend at a third-party centre (details online for your area).



CCTV

Ensure one camera provides quality images of everyone entering your premises and a second covers the till.

A minimum of six frames per second should be used on your camera. Ensure recorded images are similar quality to live images and all images have a time and date.

Identify the most important areas of the store for camera location and consider the angle of view and lighting.



INTERNAL THEFT

Regularly monitor stock levels and stock rooms to deter theft by employees.

Theft by an employee is a serious offence and breach of trust, it should be reported to the police.

BLINDSPOTS

Reduce height of stock shelves to remove 'blindspots' in-store.

CASH

Reduce the amount of cash held in tills and on your premises.

Change the routine of banking procedures so they are not easily observable.

TILL POSITION

Are high value goods or targeted products (meat, cheese, alcohol) 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 signage at the entrance, till and shelf edges of your store.

Make sure staff know the store policy and acceptable proof of age documents.

STAFF

Make sure staff have been informed about:

Security measures such as panic buttons and CCTV.

Internal and external crime reporting structures.

Dealing with abusive customers.



SCOTSS & SCOTTISH TRADING STANDARDS

PROTECTING CONSUMERS AND SUPPORTING BUSINESS

The Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS), is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SC047951). Our members are professional trading standards managers representing every Scottish local authority trading standards service.

Trading Standards services in Scotland are delivered by local councils, and they enforce both UK and Scottish laws that protect consumers and businesses, prevent illegal practices, and investigate consumer complaints. Most Trading Standards cases can end in criminal investigation, but civil or administrative penalties can also be applied where relevant, for example fixed penalties or undertakings, and these are generally more efficient and do not take up court time.

In general Trading Standards services:

- **Protect consumers:** Prevent scams, doorstep crime, and poor workmanship
- **Protect businesses:** Provide advice and guidance, and prevent unfair competition
- **Enforce laws:** Ensure that goods are accurately measured, and that prices are marked correctly
- **Audit businesses:** Audit high-risk businesses, such as food producers, importers, and retailers
- **Conduct market surveillance:** Prevent unsafe or illegal products from entering the market.

SCOTSS acts as a central resource for Scottish trading standards services, we spread good practice and help coordinate local council activities and project work across different legislative areas, for example on supermarket pricing, our pricing project in 2023 was the forerunner of very high profile work done by the Competition and Markets Authority and latterly Which?

SCOTSS projects have also highlighted issues around short-weight packs of meat, short measure delivery of rural fuel oil supplies, and the safety of e-bikes and scooters. Our members across Scotland are routinely responsible for monitoring the safety of imported goods at ports, for example at Grangemouth; checking production at manufacturing plants for weight accuracy, for example

at bottling plants and large packers; providing a Weights and Measures service traceable to UK National Standards through a network of metrology laboratories; protecting the food chain through Animal Health and Welfare duties; visiting retailers to make sure the whole supply chain is compliant.

In short pretty much anything that ends up with a consumer will have had some sort of check by trading standards before getting there! Trading Standards also deals with all sorts of Fair Trading issues, from misdescriptions, to pricing, to scams – and most local authorities also support a trusted trader scheme, that local consumers can utilise for free to be certain that they won't get scammed!

Currently, the trading standards focus is on tobacco and vapes, tobacco remains the single biggest preventable cause of death in Scotland and vaping has been a recent phenomenon that threatens Scotland's young people, as well as being an environmental nuisance with millions of cheap vapes being littered on a weekly basis.

SCOTSS coordinates most of the work done in these areas, we liaise with Scottish and UK Governments and are active across areas such as under age sales of tobacco and vapes, sales of illegal vapes, and Operation CeCe which is a partnership with HMRC to disrupt the supply of illegal, smuggled, and counterfeit tobacco at the retail level. Operation CeCe has been extremely successful across the UK with over 20 million sticks of tobacco seized last year from small local shops. A new sanctions regime has also been introduced through HMRC so that penalties of up to £10,000 can be issued to sellers of illegal tobacco.

In all our efforts, the ultimate aim is to provide a level playing field for business and a safe and fair market for consumers. If there are any queries about the work of trading standards in Scotland please contact our coordinator, contact details below.

CONTACT

Ken Daly, National Coordinator
coordinator@scotss.org.uk
07720538349



SCOTSS, representing the trading standards service in Scotland.

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The Society liaises with local council colleagues across the UK, and engages with government and others around the operation of the consumer protection landscape, providing leadership and consistency to Scotland's 31 trading standards teams. We aim to educate, coordinate, and support.

UNDER AGE SALES OF TOBACCO AND VAPES

- Don't sell to under 18s
- Do you have an age verification policy
- Tobacco kills
- Train your staff

SINGLE USE VAPES

- SU vape ban is imminent
- 1st June deadline for old stock
- Recycle returns
- £200-£800 fixed penalties!

OPERATION CECE (SCOTLAND)

- Disrupting the sale of illegal tobacco
 - No smuggled tobacco
 - No 'cheap whites'
 - No counterfeit tobacco
- New HMRC sanctions of up to £10000
- Fighting organised crime groups
- Helping protect legitimate traders

