



THE SCOTTISH CRIME REPORT 2023/24

SGF
Scottish Grocers' Federation





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In-store crime in Scotland

The Scottish Crime Report

SGF's Crime Report 2023/24 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 that include: shoplifting, violence against staff, verbal/physical abuse when sale refused, verbal/physical abuse when proof of age requested, incidents involving a dangerous weapon and hate crime.

Crime against retailers continues to pose one of the principal challenges to our sector. 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. Not only does this have psychological impacts on store workers; it is also very costly. According to our survey, the average approximate cost of retail crime per store is £12,164 (averaging approximately £62.9million in Scotland).

Figures from Police Scotland show that 10,295* incidents were reported to the police from when the Protection of Workers

(Retail and Age-restricted Goods and Services) (Scotland) Act came into effect in August 2021 to the end of January 2024. This information comes to light amidst a torrent of widespread shop theft, some of which involves organised crime groups, reports of staff resigning because they fear for their safety, and suspected losses worth millions of pounds to local businesses. Crime against retailers is a clear and present threat and current economic conditions, alongside budgetary strains on the police have caused the situation to worsen further.



Dr. PETE CHEEMA OBE
SGF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Guidance for Safer Businesses

SGF has developed this guidance 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 a package of guidance to act as a starting point 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.



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 2023:

- **100%** 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 £12,164** among respondents (approximately **£62.9million in Scotland**).
- **93.6%** 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).
- **76.7%** report they are **unlikely or very unlikely to report shoplifting incidents** to the police.



Note: SGF received a total of 763 survey responses (14.7% of all stores in Scotland) 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.

Conflict management and resolution

Conflict under any circumstances is unpleasant and can easily escalate in to 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.



DEFINITIONS

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

Retailer responses to the SGF Crime Survey 2023:

- **92.8%** report that **violence against staff** occurs at least **once a week**.
- **37%** report that incidents **involving a weapon** (such as a knife, club or firearm) occur at least **once a month**.
- **57.5%** report that **violence against staff has increased** in the past year, with the remaining reporting similar levels.
- **55.7%** 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.

- **56.9%** of respondents experience **daily incidents of abuse** when refusing a sale or when asking for proof of age.



DEFINITION

Hate crime is an offence motivated by hatred of someone's race religion gender identity, sexual orientation or disability.

Hate crime



92.7%

report that **hate crime** occurs at least once a month

Note: SGF received a total of 763 survey responses (14.7% of all stores in Scotland) stores across a range of symbol groups and independent retailers (*some responses are provided in aggregate across multiple stores).

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.



At our Annual Conference in October 2023, SGF launched a 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:

- Two years on from its introduction, the total number of reported crimes under the Act reached 7,955 cases. Meanwhile, the latest figures up to the end of January 2024 show the number of cases reached 10,295.

- Throughout 2023, SGF called for the figures on convictions relating to the Protection of Workers Act to be made public, contacting the Scottish Government, the Lord Advocate, the Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service, and the Courts & Tribunal Service. This is essential information to show the Act is a working deterrent and SGF will continue to press the case for this.
- SGF has regular engagement with Ministers, MSPs, Scottish Government officials and Police Scotland, highlighting the challenge of retail crime for convenience retailers. We are also calling for our joint campaign 'Don't Put Up With It', which encourages retailers to take a zero-tolerance approach by reporting all offences against them, to be refreshed. While the Scottish Government have informed SGF that it has no funding available to renew the website and materials, we are exploring alternative options that will allow us to continue the 'Don't Put Up With It' campaign.
- SGF continues to work closely with colleagues in the Business Crime Prevention Unit 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).

RETAIL CRIME

Effective political engagement from SGF ensured that the Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-restricted Goods and Services) (Scotland) Act 2021 was passed by Parliament. In August 2023, exactly two years from introduction, 7,955 cases of abuse, threats and violence toward shop workers had been recorded under the Act.



Every day across the UK there are more than 1,300 incidents of violence and abuse towards retailers. The cost of crime to retailers was £1.8 billion in 2022/23. The Protection of Workers Act (Scotland) 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.

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: <https://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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.



Retail crime – The brutal reality

Male selected a pack of beer and proceeded to remove cans from it, so staff asked him to stop. This caused him to become aggressive and verbally abusive towards staff as well as spitting at them.

Male selected four bottles of vodka and pulled a knife out on store manager as she asked for the vodka back. Male then walked away with the goods and knife.

Male selected and concealed goods before being stopped by staff. This caused the male to throw the goods, knock over stock, throw his bike and a basket at staff before also threatening to stab staff with a knife.

Three males and a female entered site who are believed to be pick pockets. They were observed trying to pickpocket a customer and were told to leave. The centre security team then approached them at their car. They became violent trying to run over the security and driving dangerously through the car park nearly hitting customers. Police arrived on scene and searched the car which was full of stolen mobiles - all were seized.

Male was suspected of smashing up the ATM machine at the store using a handmade weapon with a blade attached to it. He then threatened the security guard and a colleague from the store.

Male and female selected and concealed vodka. Both were approached and the male then produced a kitchen knife and waved it at the staff, who stood down.

Male entered alone and concealed candles down his trousers, so he was stopped at exit. He was escorted to the holding room as Police were called (Upgraded to 999 Call). Male became violent and tried to bite the guard then attacked managers by pushing and kicking. Male was arrested.

Male entered store and goes to till area to buy alcohol which is kept behind tills. Staff refused as he was drunk. He became verbally abusive and aggressive. He assaulted instore guard after personal body camera activated.

Female is suspected of assault and public nuisance. She entered the store with six other individuals, and they began verbally abusing both staff and customers. They were also consuming alcohol and vaping on the premises. She was then

reported to have assaulted a young female. They eventually left the premises.

Male selected and placed goods into a basket before exiting, making no attempt to pay. Staff attempted to retrieve the goods, but this caused the male to become extremely violent, assaulting them.

Male refused to leave store. When asked by security male attacked security while shouting and threatening staff "I will stab you". He ran at security with a glass bottle making a motion to swing the bottle. Security had to physically get involved as male was trying to attack a female member of staff. Male was intoxicated and was carrying a dirty needle. Police arrived on site and male was arrested.

The suspect can be seen to select bottles of spirits from the shelf. When approached by staff the suspect picked up another bottle and attempted to strike staff with the bottle. The bottle missed and shattered on the floor after hitting a refrigerator and the suspect then left the store.

Youths were in store committing anti-social behaviour. They were asked to leave by staff, and they refused. Staff said they would call the police. Youths then left store and spat on a member of staff.

Male known to store for previous thefts. Security staff stopped the male from entering the store and asked him to leave. On doing so the male became aggressive and started to push security. Centre security intervened and the male became very aggressive, shouting and threatening to kill security. Male had to be restrained when he spat and bit staff. Police arrived on site, arrested the male and put a spit hood on the male to prevent him assaulting anyone else.

Two suspects entered the service station and grabbed the staff member by the collar. They informed him that he was being robbed and forced him behind the counter requesting that he opened the tills. Thereafter they removed a quantity of cash from both tills.

Thank you to Retailers Against Crime for the use of these case studies.
www.retailersagainstcrime.org



'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's 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 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 face 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.

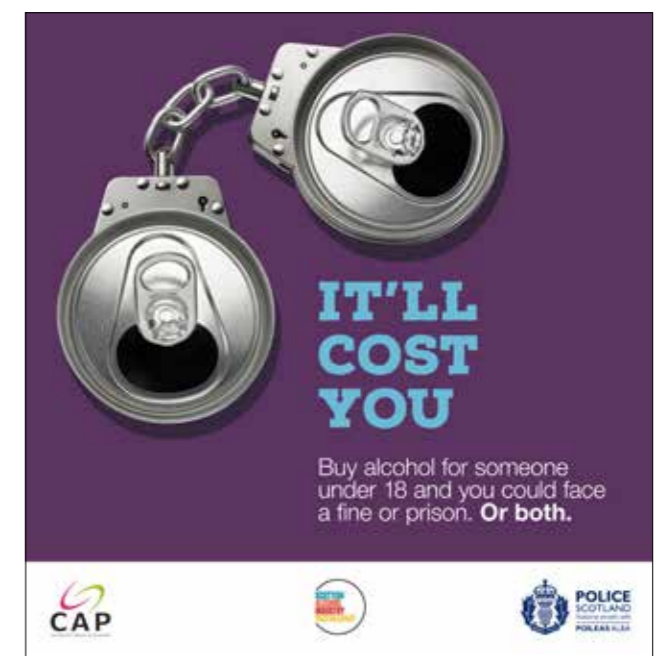
The campaign is delivered over the summer school holidays and is an excellent example of partnership working involving Police Scotland, The Scottish Alcohol Industry Partnership (SAIP), retailers, Police Scotland Youth Volunteers and Community Alcohol Partnerships (CAP), and

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. CAPs work with local community groups to reduce alcohol harm among young people, improve their health and wellbeing and enhance their communities.

The campaign messages are delivered in store via posters, door and window stickers, digital displays and through instore radio ads as well as on commercial stations and through social media. An important part of the campaign is via direct consumer engagement where we have popup activities in store and at community events.

The success of the campaign has meant that it now runs nationally. The campaign Steering Group chaired by SGF are gearing up to deliver it again in 2024.

More information on the campaign can also be found at <https://www.itwillcostyou.com>



The far-reaching impact of retail crime and the potential consequences of a phased generational smoking ban on independent retailers in Scotland

“Violence and abuse against people working in retail has almost doubled since pre-pandemic levels”¹

This assessment summarised the latest findings published in March 2023, by the British Retail Consortium (BRC) in its annual Crime Survey. The BRC claimed that “incidents, including racial and sexual abuse, physical assault, and threats with weapons, rose from the pre-Covid high of over 450 per day in 2019/20, to over 850 per day in 2021/22”².

These are shocking figures and lay bare the very real threat that shopkeepers and their staff face every day across the UK.

Alongside the huge emotional cost and physical impact that retail crime has on shopkeepers and their staff, is the financial impact. In 2021-22 the total cost of retail crime in the UK was £1.76 billion, with £950 million lost to customer theft and 8 million incidents of theft taking place over a year³. Retailers have tried to respond to this escalating threat investing over £715 million in crime prevention measures over the same period, but it’s not difficult to see which parties are feeling the real pain and it’s not the criminals⁴.

In November 2023, the Retail Trust surveyed more than 1,600 retail workers. 9 in 10 questioned said that they had experienced customer abuse, 1 in 3 had been threatened with violence, 14% had been physically assaulted and 10% spat on, resulting in two thirds of retail staff saying they felt stressed and anxious about going to work and 42% are considering quitting their jobs or leaving retail altogether⁵.

Lastly, according to USDAW (The Union of Shop, Distributive & Allied Workers) shoplifting was the main trigger for violence and abuse towards retail staff in 2022, accounting for 31% of reported incidents. This was followed by age-restricted product sales which was responsible for 16% of reported incidents against retail staff⁶.

In citing these collective research findings, TMA doesn’t underestimate in any way the efforts that law enforcement agencies are making (nor the challenges that they are facing) in trying to bring down the level of retail crime. But the sad reality is that every day, retailers are facing unprecedented levels of verbal intimidation and physical violence, and it is why, TMA know many retailers, especially independent retailers, have genuine concerns about the prospect of the introduction of a phased generational ban on buying tobacco products, as they believe that there is a strong likelihood that it will lead to a further escalation in anti-social behaviour against retailers.



The proposal put forward by the UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak last autumn is to “ban the sale of tobacco products to anybody born on or after 1 January 2009”, which will “effectively raise the smoking age by one year, every year until it eventually applies to the whole population”⁷.

As a devolved matter, health policy is under the control of the Scottish Government, however, in reply to the UK Government’s consultation response (on “Creating a Smokefree Generation”) published in January, the Scottish Government committed to taking forward the age of sale ban believing that it will help achieve Scotland’s goal of being tobacco-free by 2034⁸.

Westminster and Edinburgh governments appear to be on the same page with regard to introducing a phased generational smoking ban – but the TMA is of the view that such a policy would be a mistake, and if implemented in Scotland, would have far-reaching consequences which have not properly been considered.

The burden of enforcing a phased generational ban will fall squarely on the shoulders of retailers, and especially, independent retailers who will feel the full force of its impact.

Within a year of a proposed ban coming into force (the UK Government has recommended 1 January 2027), situations will arise where one 18-year-old born in 2008 will be eligible to buy tobacco, while another 18-year-old born weeks later in 2009, will be prohibited from doing so.

If a phased generational ban comes into law, it will be a significant departure from the consensus view that we presently have in the UK, that you are legally an adult when you reach the age of 18-years-old. Indeed, in Scotland, if you are 16 years old, you are eligible to vote in Holyrood elections, as you are deemed to have the necessary maturity to make decisions for yourself and understand the consequences of those choices.

However, there is also consensus that it is perfectly appropriate that there are occasions when young adults are asked to prove their age, if they want to purchase age-restricted goods such as alcohol and tobacco. There is almost unanimous support among retailers for asking people who appear to be under 21 (or even 25) to prove that they are 18 or older, if they want to buy age-restricted goods, and Challenge 21 and 25 and ‘No ID, No Sale’ are long running successful schemes which support enforcing the existing law on age-restricted sales.

With a phased generational ban, fast forward a few years, and retailers will have to act as ‘judge and jury’ over which 28-year-olds or 29-year-olds or 30-year-olds (ever increasing in age) are allowed to buy tobacco or not.

Every year, the ‘proof of age’ requirements will change, and the only way retail staff will be able to ensure they are not breaking the law, will be to ask any consumers who want to buy tobacco to present photo ID - effectively meaning that all adults in Scotland who wish to buy tobacco would have to present mandatory photo ID.

Proxy purchasing will become a daily challenge for retailers to detect and enforce, and in due course will become even more complicated, when two or more customers enter a store and retail staff find themselves being able to sell tobacco to one 36-year-old but not a 35-year-old.

Smuggled tobacco already costs law-abiding retailers thousands of pounds as larger numbers of smokers switch to cheaper, un-taxed and unregulated illegal products. A phased generational ban would hand more and more of the Scottish tobacco market to criminals every year and threatens to fuel the profits of organised criminal gangs which corrupt local communities with crime, violence and disorder across the country.

TMA have been fortunate to speak with many retailers over the last few months, and they are almost in unanimous agreement that a phased generational ban will be impractical, unworkable and unenforceable.

If the Scottish Government wishes to double down on preventing young people from smoking, TMA hope it takes a more pragmatic approach and concentrates on stronger enforcement action against anyone who sells cheap illegal tobacco, alongside more targeted-education campaigns which are proven to be the most effective deterrents to prevent young people from taking up smoking.

GET IN TOUCH

If you have any enquiries relating to illegal tobacco or you are after more information about the tobacco industry in the UK, please contact info@the-tma.org.uk or visit www.the-tma.org.uk



¹ British Retail Crime Survey (March 2023 Report).
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Retail Trust Survey (November 2023).
⁶ USDAW Campaign to end violence and abuse against retail workers – Survey results 2022 (October 2023).
⁷ House of Commons Library, King’s Speech 2023 briefing paper
⁸ Scottish Government: “Tobacco and vaping framework: roadmap to 2034” (22 November 2023).

Sponsored Content: opinions represented in this article are solely the view of the TMA and do not necessarily reflect the views of SGF.

Violence and verbal abuse

Outlined below are the top three triggers for violence and aggression in-store. Managing and preventing these circumstances will help you and your staff to avoid abuse in-store.



Age restricted sales – abuse at the till

Making sure that staff challenge customers for the sale of age restricted products such as alcohol and tobacco is imperative, but can often lead to confrontation.

Ensure that you have clear signage in-store explaining your policy and that staff enforce this consistently. Make sure that your staff are trained to manage difficult customers and can clearly explain your store policy.

Refusing to serve intoxicated persons

Retailers are legally obligated to refuse an alcohol sale to an intoxicated person. One way to avoid personal abuse, is to make clear to the customer that it is not your decision, but the rules applied to your licence.



Customer service

Queuing is a frustration for customers and sometimes acts as a trigger for abuse.

Maintaining good staffing levels will prevent customers becoming frustrated and ensure that your staff have support in-store if they need it.

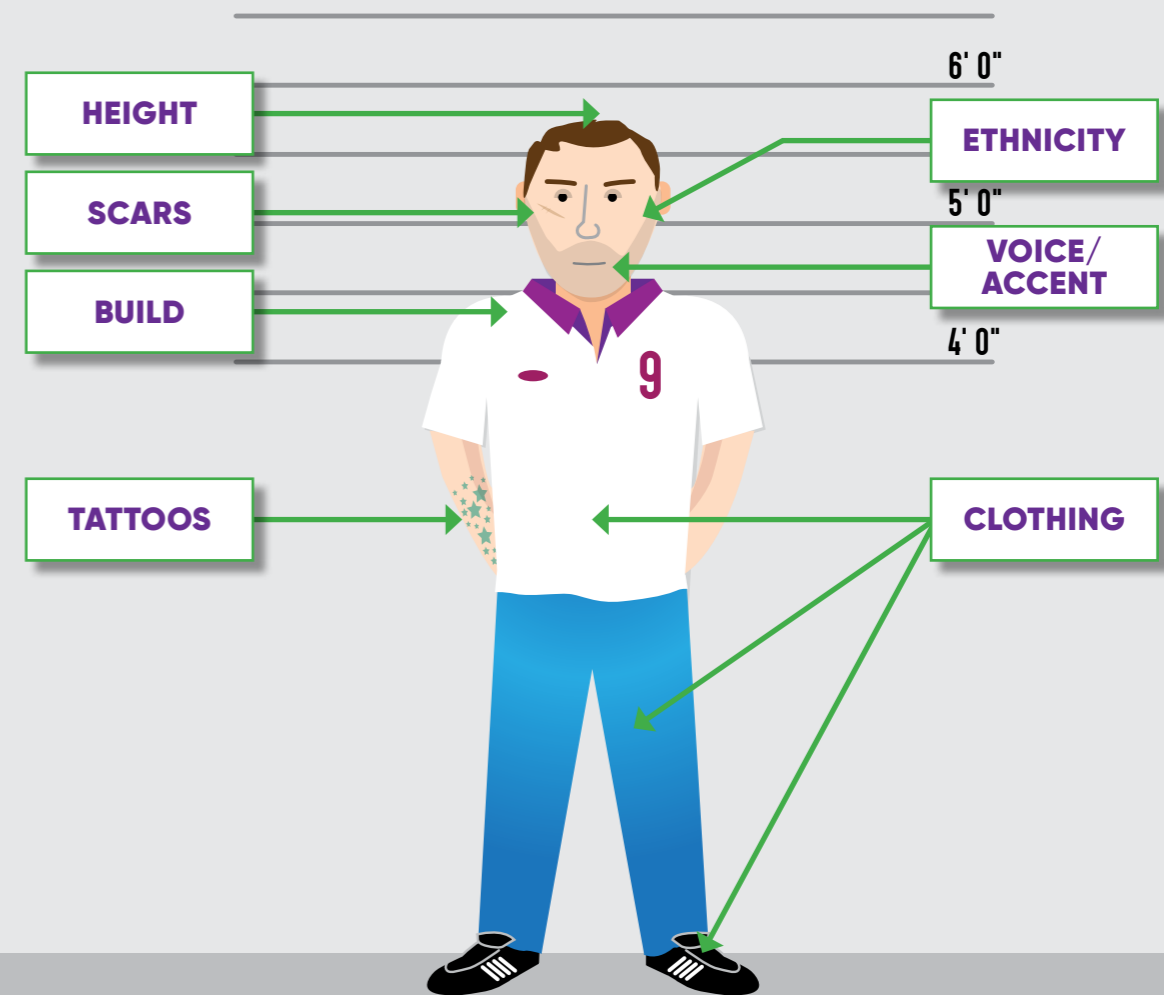
TOP TIPS

1. Make sure your staff are aware of the triggers of abuse and are trained to deal with difficult customers.
2. Have a clear policy for reporting abuse by customers internally and externally to the police.

Robbery

Make sure you are utilising existing security measures to prevent your premises becoming a target for robbers. Assess your risk by following these steps: identifying the hazards, deciding who might be harmed and how, evaluating the risks and deciding on precautions, recording the findings and implementing them, and regularly reviewing your policies.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS POLICE REQUEST FOR CRIME REPORTS



TOP TIPS

1. Be compliant and passive with the robber's instructions but remain in control.
2. When safe, call the police and write down a description of the robber(s) immediately.
3. Reduce the amount of cash held on the premises.
4. Change your banking procedures regularly, so they are not observable to offenders.

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This guide has been produced with support from the TMA

Introduction

SGF has developed this guidance 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 a package of guidance to act as a starting point for retailers to assess the risks they face. The guidance includes details on triggers for violence and abuse, robbery, illegal tobacco and retail crime – the brutal reality.

	CYBER SECURITY – IS YOUR BUSINESS READY?	Do you have the correct procedures in place? Are you doing everything you can to protect your business from a Cyber-attack? Do you do enough to protect your customer's data?
	VIOLENCE AND VERBAL ABUSE	This section focuses on the triggers for abuse that could result in violence and verbal abuse towards retailers and staff.
	ROBBERY	This section supports retailers and staff to focus on gathering evidence to support police in following up on an incident of robbery.
	THE FAR-REACHING IMPACT OF RETAIL CRIME AND THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF A PHASED GENERATIONAL SMOKING BAN ON INDEPENDENT RETAILERS IN SCOTLAND	TMA highlights the damaging impact of crime on retail and outlines its views on factors that could intensify illicit trade in the coming years. (Sponsored content)
	RETAIL CRIME – THE BRUTAL REALITY	Concerning accounts of retail crime incidents across Scotland, often involving violent assaults.
	'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.

Cyber security – Is your business ready?

Technologies are advancing faster than ever before. The impact of Covid forced many retailers to start trading online, some, earlier than they had planned. We are now living in a virtually contactless world where everyone can select, pay for and receive goods in the touch of a button.

But are you ready for these advancements? Do you have the correct procedures in place? Are you doing everything you can to protect your business from a Cyber-attack? Do you do enough to protect your customers data?

The following advice will not necessarily prevent you from being a victim of a Cyber crime, however, it may protect your business enough to prevent huge financial or unrecoverable reputational damage.

Back up your data

- 1. What do you consider essential data?** What could your business not function without? (Suppliers details, invoices, banking, customer accounts, stock levels etc) This essential data is what you need to back up.
- 2. Keep your backed up data away from the original source.** Follow the 3-2-1 rule. There should be three copies of data, on 2 different mediums, and 1 off site. We recommend a copy to the network, a copy to the cloud and a copy to an independent, encrypted device such as a removable hard drive or flash drive.
- 3. Back up regularly,** this will ensure you have the most up to date information stored in the event of having to re-establish your systems following a cyber-attack.

Phishing

Phishing is a process of hacking whereby attackers attempt to trick users into clicking a suspicious link or providing sensitive data which is usually done through an email.

- 1. What is it?** Phishing is when users are encouraged to click a bad link that will download malware, or direct them to a suspicious website. It can also be conducted via a text message, social media, or by phone.
- 2. What are the risks?** When a user opens up a phishing email and clicks on a link within it can install malware (such as ransomware), sabotage systems, or steal intellectual property and money.
- 3. I have received a suspicious email?** If you suspect that you have received a phishing e-mail, contact your IT department or Managed Service Provider if your IT service is out-sourced and send the e-mail as an attachment – do not open any links within the e-mail. Alternatively forward the email to report@phishing.gov.uk and the URL will be taken down.

Passwords

When used correctly, passwords are a free and efficient way to keep your data secure and prevent unauthorised access to your information

- 1. Change ALL default passwords.** Many IT systems come preset with passwords. Ensure these are changed prior to restricted data being input.
- 2. Avoid predictable passwords.** Use three random words, interlaced with numbers and symbols. Avoid using your own name, the premises name or the word password.
- 3. When available, use 2-step verification (2SV).** This provides additional security measures for your data. Usually, a code is sent to a smart phone or other device that is used along with your password to give you access.

Updates

It is much harder for attackers to break into up-to-date software.

Updates are free and easy to install.

Installing updates is the easiest thing you can do to keep yourself safe.

For further guidance please visit this link: <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/small-business-guide>

Get a free personalised action plan that lists what your organisation can do right now to protect against cyber-attack – <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/cyberaware/actionplan>





THE SCOTTISH SAFER BUSINESS GUIDE 2023/24

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