



The state of U.K. retail worker safety

2024 survey and report



MOTOROLA SOLUTIONS



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Safety and security remain critical for the retail industry, with one in four workers considering leaving their jobs because of safety concerns.

Retail worker safety remains a pressing issue. The retail landscape continues to evolve, and the threats facing retail workers change with it. Increasingly, attention is being drawn to this issue, with the media highlighting the threat of [professional criminal networks](#).

[Retail losses are up 33%](#) compared to pre-COVID levels, and theft is at a 20-year high. Aligned with this, the Institute of Customer Service's [Service with Respect campaign](#) and a British Retail Consortium [study](#) have both evidenced the increasing hostility faced by the U.K.'s customer-facing staff.

The retail industry is one of the U.K.'s largest private sector employers, with a workforce that plays a critical role in the economy. Yet, despite the size and importance of this sector, concerns around safety are increasingly driving employees to contemplate quitting. Nearly a quarter of U.K. retail workers have considered leaving the profession.

Nobody should feel unsafe at work.

While there's a wealth of existing research diagnosing the problem, fewer studies seek to understand what can be done to help. That's why Motorola Solutions, a global leader in public safety and enterprise security, partnered with YouGov to survey retail workers across the U.K., aiming to understand their feelings about safety and the security measures that could make a difference.

The results provide valuable insights into the everyday realities of retail work and highlight areas for evaluation and advancement within the sector.

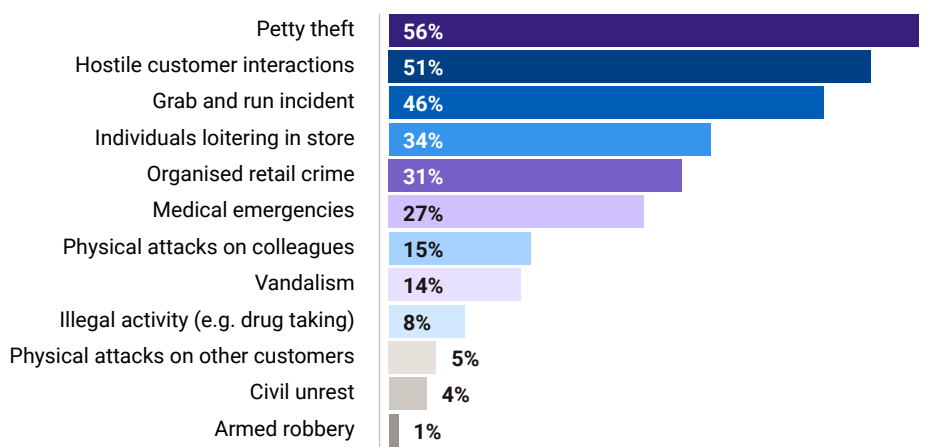


Safety concerns and crime are a growing issue

The survey paints a picture of the types of incidents retail workers encounter.

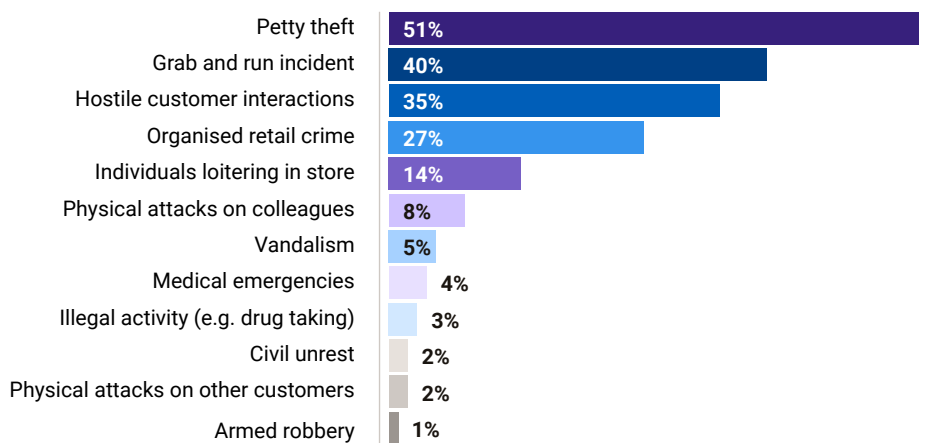
While petty theft remains the most common crime workers said they or their store have experienced (**56%**) in the last 12 months, one in two (**51%**) have witnessed or experienced a hostile customer interaction, **31%** have encountered organised retail crime rings and **15%** of workers have been victims of a physical attack or witnessed a colleague being attacked.

Which of the following have you experienced at work in the past 12 months?



The problem appears to be getting worse. Half of all respondents (**51%**) claim that petty theft has increased over the last year. One-third (**35%**) have experienced an increase in hostile customer interactions, and a quarter (**27%**) say that organised criminal gangs are more prevalent than they were before.

Which of the following have you experienced an increase in, in the past 12 months?





Holiday season heightens safety concerns

The festive season, traditionally the busiest time for retailers, brings heightened safety concerns for workers. The survey revealed that four in ten (**41%**) retail employees are worried about their personal safety heading into the holiday rush.

Underpinning these concerns was the prospect of more hostile customer interactions, an increase in petty theft and organised crime and physical attacks by customers.

Thirty percent of respondents placed a physical attack on themselves or a colleague as one of their top three concerns.

4 in 10 are concerned about their personal safety heading into the holiday season.





Night shift workers express unease

As stores extend their opening hours to cater to last-minute and late-night shopper demand, safety concerns are further exacerbated. Retail workers who work both day and night shifts feel particularly vulnerable. Almost half (**49%**) of these workers feel less safe during evening or night shifts.

Working at nighttime was more of a concern for women, with **54%** stating they felt less safe, compared to **43%** of men. Generally, fewer staff are working during evening

and night shifts, which our data shows is a key driver of concern, and the perceived increase in criminal activity during these hours may contribute to a sense of unease.

54% of female retail workers stated they felt less safe working evening or night shifts.

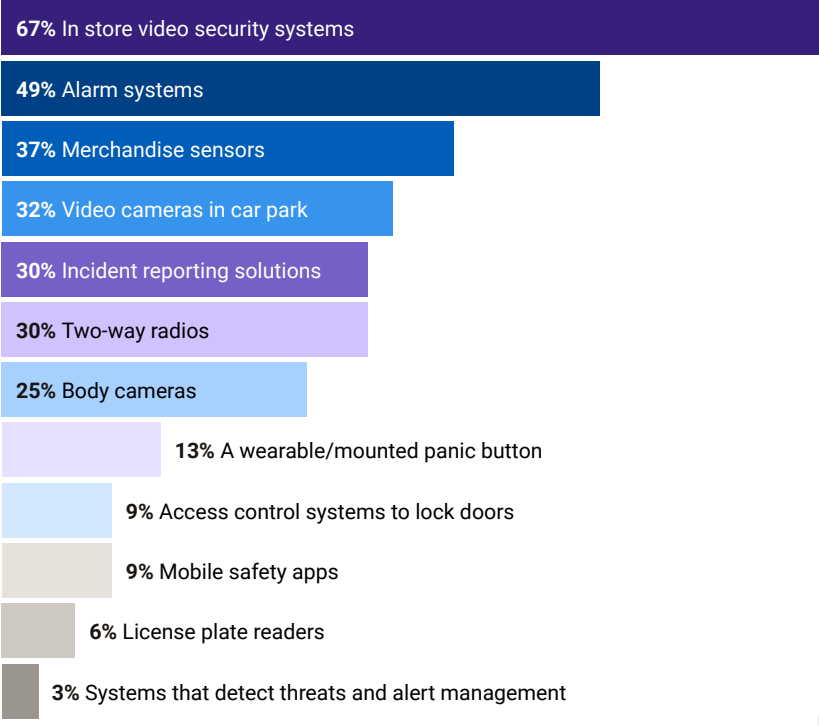




How technology can help retail workers feel safer

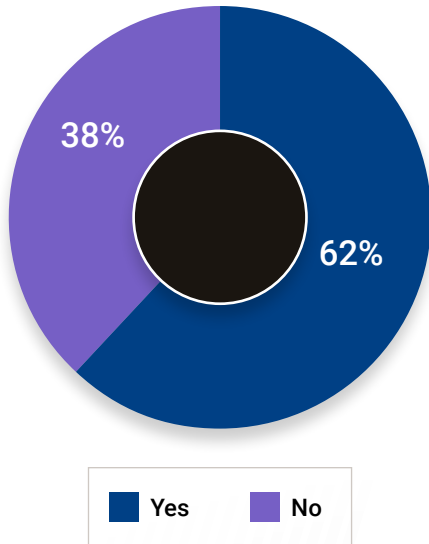
The role of technology in improving safety was a recurring theme in the survey results. Two-thirds of respondents (**67%**) said that video cameras were installed in their store, just under one in three (**30%**) used two-way radios and a quarter (**25%**) said body cameras were in use to improve safety.

Which of the following safety technologies do you use in store?



But a majority believe more can be done to keep them and their coworkers safe – **62%** think that additional safety measures should be implemented.

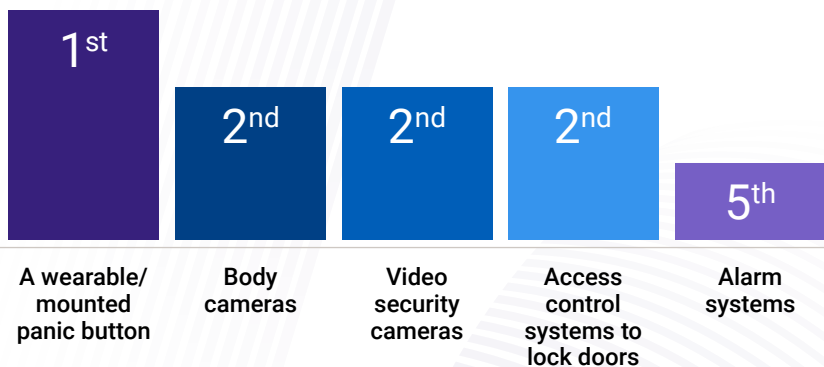
Do you think your retail store could be doing more to keep you and your coworkers safe?



Four in ten workers (**42%**) said that they had no way to instantly notify other colleagues if there was an incident in store. This may, in part, explain why, when asked which technologies would make workers feel safer, a wearable or mounted panic alarm came out on top.

Just behind panic alarms were body cameras, video security cameras and access control systems to secure stores, with alarm systems making up the top five.

Which, if any, of the following safety technology would make you feel safer at work?



Asked specifically about body cameras, four in ten (**42%**) said that they'd feel safer wearing one, while a majority (**70%**) believed they are effective in de-escalating dangerous situations.



7 in 10 believe that body cameras are effective in de-escalating dangerous situations.





Growing adoption of body cameras

As a response to the more challenging retail environment, and especially in the U.K., there is greater adoption of body cameras to increase retail worker safety among retailers. This sentiment is echoed by one of the largest U.K. retailers, Co-op, [which said the roll out of body cameras helped employees feel safer](#) and provided another deterrent to prevent crimes.

“Retailers are increasingly seeking durable, high-performance solutions that not only aid in loss prevention but also provide critical protection for staff against aggressive or hostile behaviours, enhancing both security and workplace safety. The use of body-worn cameras in the retail sector is projected to experience significant growth, with the global market expected to double in size between 2022 and 2027.”

– Paul Bremner, principal research analyst at Omdia.

Four in ten retail staff (**43%**) have said that they report incidents in stores verbally to supervisors or security staff. Safety technology, including body cameras, can help to give an objective overview of interactions and recorded video and audio footage can be used as evidence to support investigations. The effectiveness of these safety tools is supported by a majority of retail staff who said that body camera technology can help stores to better understand incidents (**58%**) and support investigations (**64%**).



Conclusion

U.K. retail workers are navigating an increasingly dangerous environment. From hostile customer interactions to organised crime, the challenges are significant, and, heading into the holiday season, there's a greater concern for safety. However, by embracing modern security technologies and taking a proactive approach to safety, retailers can help create a safer environment for their workers – and shoppers alike.

Methodology

This survey was conducted by YouGov on behalf of Motorola Solutions. It polled 1,013 full- and part-time retail workers across the U.K. to gather insights into their safety concerns and the effectiveness of current safety measures in stores. The survey was conducted online in **October 2024**.

Similar surveys on behalf of Motorola Solutions were conducted around the same timeframe in the [U.S.](#) and [Australia and New Zealand](#).

About Motorola Solutions

Motorola Solutions is solving for safer. We build and connect technologies to help protect people, property and places. Our solutions enable the collaboration between public safety agencies and enterprises that's critical for a proactive approach to safety and security. Learn more about how we're solving for safer communities, safer schools, safer hospitals, safer businesses – safer everywhere – at www.motorolasolutions.com.





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