



2025

The State of Retail Safety



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Introduction

Retail remains a critical cornerstone of the American economy, contributing \$5.3 trillion annually to GDP and supporting more than one in four jobs. But the latest data shows that we're continuing to fail the frontline retail associates who power this economic engine.

As we continue to seek to understand how the safety landscape has evolved and what retail workers are experiencing daily, the Loss Prevention Research Council and Verkada partnered with the Harris Poll to survey 1,000 retail workers across the United States.

The findings, detailed in this report, present a troubling trendline: retail workers feel less safe at work than last year. Smash-and-grabs and brazen shoplifting haven't disappeared – they've been joined by a dramatic rise in workplace violence from multiple sources. But the data does provide a clear path forward for retailers, with a clear message not just on what would make them feel safe but also on what security measures are most effective.

The deeply concerning issues related to retail violence are also capturing policymakers' attention. This year, New York enacted the [Retail Worker Safety Act](#), a pioneering new law designed to make safety resources more accessible to retail workers with panic buttons and training. More than 100 jurisdictions and over 30 retailers came together for a first-ever [national Organized Retail Crime blitz](#).

The blueprint for change exists. We hope that more retail leaders and policymakers will join us in acting on it with the urgency this crisis demands.

Thank you for reading.

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We appreciate the contributions of Amelia Wiercioch, MA, and Sara Lucak, MS, from the University of Central Florida in the creation of this report - this research would not be possible without their time and efforts.

Methodology

To better understand the state of safety and the toll it has taken on retail workers, the Loss Prevention Research Council and Verkada worked with The Harris Poll in the summer of 2025 to distribute an online survey to 1,000 retail workers across the United States. This builds on an [earlier baseline survey in 2024](#) that measured the extent of violence retail workers face on the job and the solutions that would give them the most peace of mind. The Harris Poll also simultaneously surveyed 2,066 American adults about their shopping experiences with physical theft prevention measures to provide additional context for the broader impact of violence in retail stores.



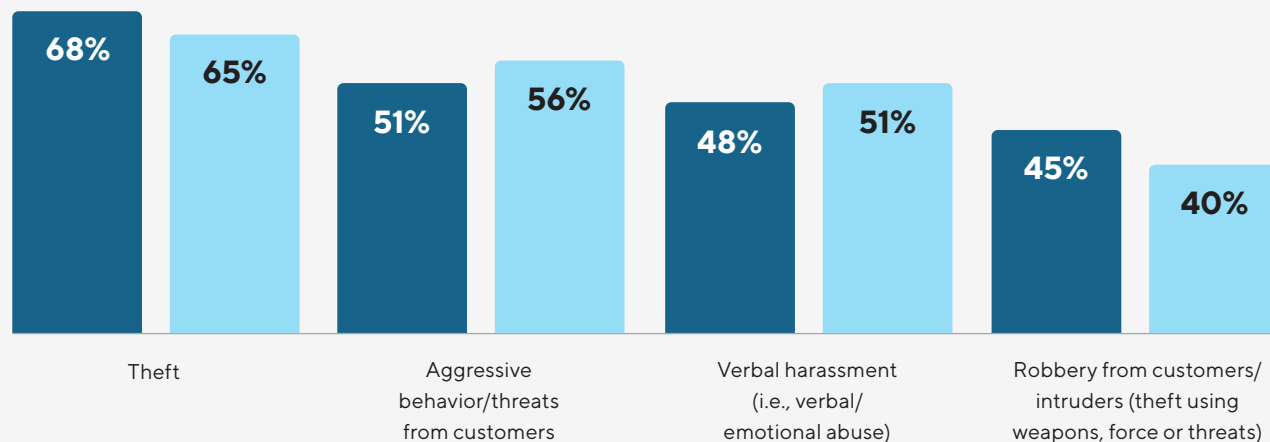
The State of Retail Safety

Overview

More than one third (35%) of retail workers say they have felt unsafe at work – up from 27% just one year ago. The unfortunate reality is that the key drivers behind these fears have largely remained unchanged in the past year. Theft, aggressive behavior/threats from customers, verbal harassment, and robbery from intruders continue to top the list of concerns retail workers have.

Are you concerned about the following events happening at your workplace?

Percentage of retail workers who indicate yes



Retail workers' concerns are pervasive. When we asked them how often they were concerned about these events, nearly 40% said they worry about theft and verbal harassment most or every time they go to work.

How often are you concerned about the event happening at work?

■ 2024
■ 2025

Percentage of retail workers who indicated most or every time they go to work

Theft



Aggressive behavior/threats from customers



Robbery from customers/intruders
(theft using weapons, force or threats)



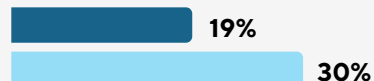
Aggressive behavior/threats from intruders



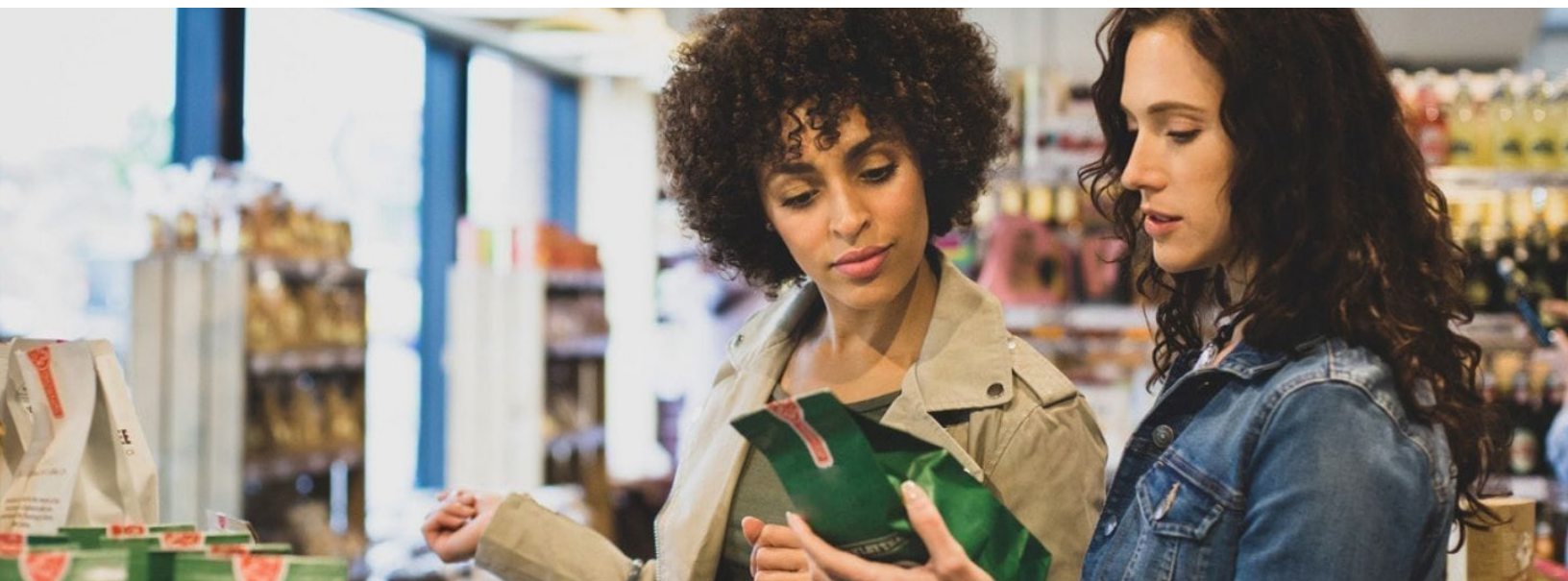
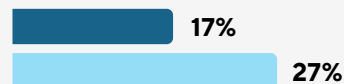
Verbal harassment (i.e., verbal/emotional abuse)



Aggressive behaviors/threats from a current coworker



Robbery from employees/insiders
(theft using weapons, force or threats)



These fears reflect retail workers' lived experiences. Nearly six in ten have experienced a theft or aggressive behavior/threats from customers while at work. And this year, they reported a significant uptick in their exposure to violence on the job. Aggressive behavior/threats from past employees and current coworkers jumped 47% and 53% y/y, respectively, and physical assault is 57% higher y/y.

Have you ever experienced or witnessed the following at your workplace?

■ 2024
■ 2025

Percentage of retail workers who indicate yes

Theft



Physical assault



Aggressive behavior/threats from customers



Aggressive behaviors/threats from a current coworker



Verbal harassment
(i.e., verbal/emotional abuse)



Aggressive behavior/threats from
past employees/candidates



Vandalism



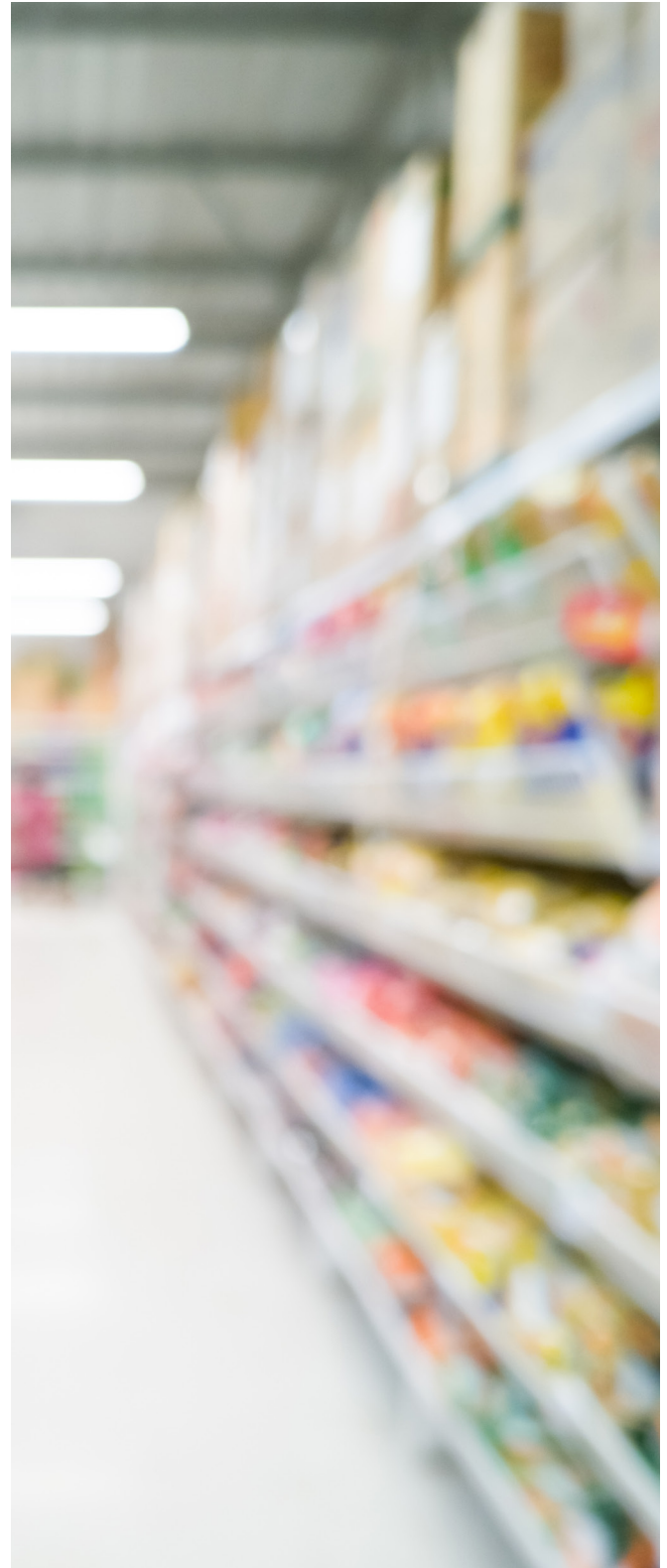
57% increase in **physical assault** year-over-year.

What's the driver behind these incidents? Retail workers say that the key driver of physical violence and verbal threats is customers becoming angry (41% and 54%, respectively) compared to approaching a shoplifter (13% and 12%, respectively) or a combination of the two (36% and 28%, respectively).

Not only does this harm the individuals, but it has a ripple effect across the business: one in four (25%) retail workers report that they've thought about looking for a new job due to personal safety concerns, up significantly from 19% last year. Those who reported they experienced at least one violent incident or one verbal threat this past year are even more of a flight risk: 53% and 39%, respectively, say they have thought about looking for a new job due to personal safety concerns. They're motivated, too: 52% of retail workers say that they are likely to leave their current job within the next 12 months due to safety concerns. The managers tasked with filling those newly opened roles are feeling the impact. Nearly half (49%) believe that safety concerns are a barrier to hiring, up significantly from 37% in 2024.

The good news is that amid this increase in violence, retail workers do feel they have an avenue to take action. Most (89%) said they feel comfortable reporting violent incidents to their employers and 67% always reported the incident. But 61% believe their employers prioritize inventory safety over worker safety – a perception that persists despite relatively high satisfaction rates (84%) with how employers actually respond to reports of physical violence.

Another important layer in reporting is law enforcement. Only 49% of retail workers who experienced physical violence always reported it to law enforcement and 43% say they reported it sometimes. That said, the majority of retail workers (88%) report that they were satisfied with law enforcement's response to the incident.



Shifting Gender Dynamic

Men's safety concerns are intensifying in ways we did not observe last year. Men are experiencing workplace violence at notably higher rates than women across nearly every category measured—from aggressive behaviors and threats from past employees (34% vs. 22%) and current coworkers (30% vs. 21%) to physical assault (30% vs. 12%). This heightened exposure is making an impact: men are significantly more likely to say they'd leave their current job over safety concerns in the next year (63% vs. 39%) — a marked shift from 2024.

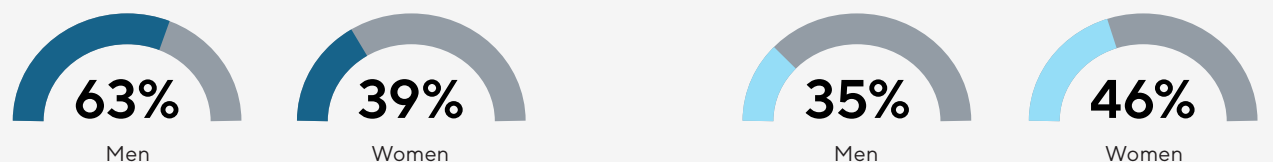
Have you ever experienced or witnessed the following at your workplace?

Percentage of retail workers who indicate yes



How likely are you to leave your current job in the next 12 months due to personal safety concerns?

Percentage of retail workers who indicate yes



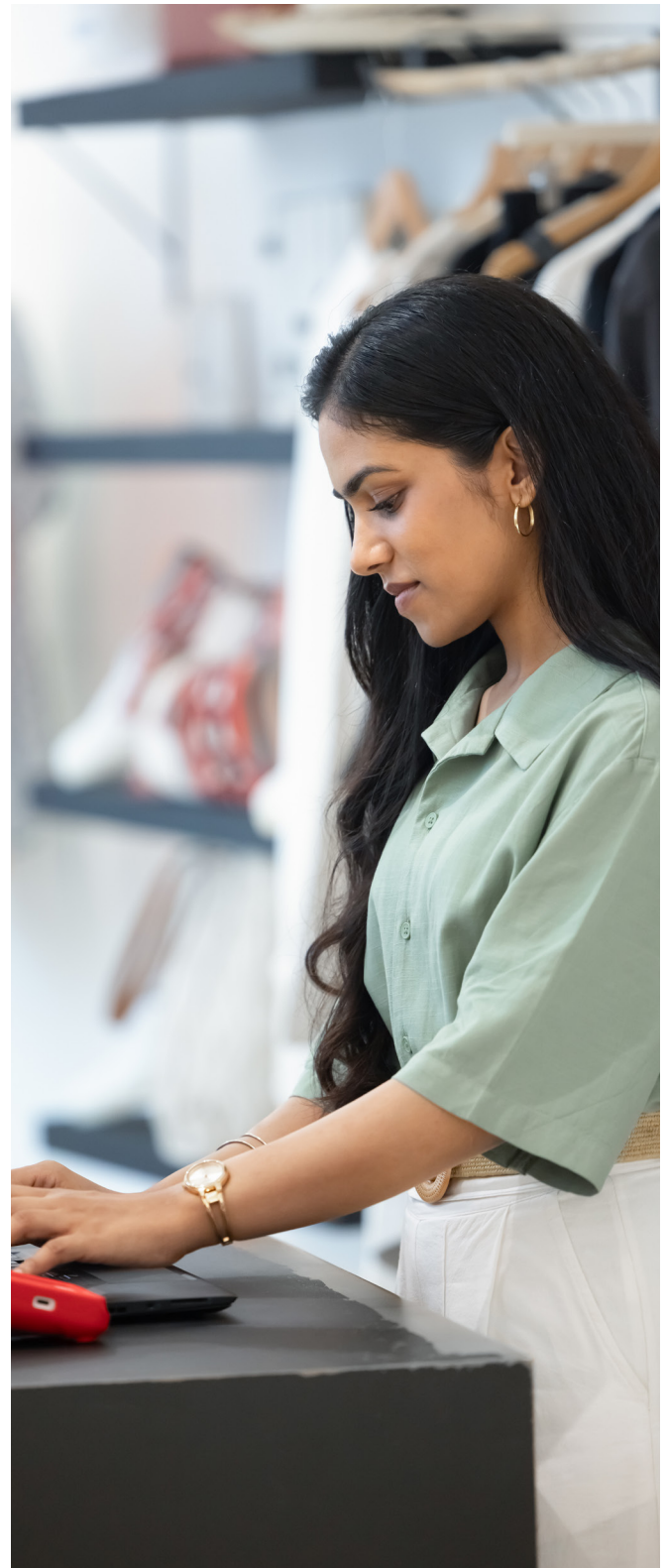
Cashiers Bear the Brunt of Verbal Threats

Cashiers are exposed to more verbal threats from customers than any other retail role. 63% report personally experiencing verbal threats, compared to 50% of sales associates or 53% of store managers. When it comes to physical violence, however, the differences level out across roles: roughly one in five workers in each position report personally experiencing physical violence at work, with no statistically significant differences between cashiers, sales associates, store managers, or warehouse staff.

Location Shapes the Experience

Retail workers experience similar levels of overall physical violence regardless of whether their store is in an urban, suburban, or rural location. Differences do emerge by location when it comes to what kinds of threats they face in their day-to-day work, though: suburban retail workers experienced and witnessed aggressive behavior and threats from customers more frequently (60%) than those in urban (53%) and rural (46%) areas. However, workers in urban areas experienced and witnessed aggressive behavior and threats from intruders (25%) and active shooter scenarios (10%) when compared to suburban (19%; 7%) and rural (11%; 1%) areas. With these elevated external threats, it follows that urban retail workers are notably more likely to report that their colleagues have voiced safety concerns (53% vs. 43% suburban and 37% rural).

Regional patterns are even more striking. Workers in the West are far more worried about smash and grab incidents (49% vs. 29% in the Midwest), physical assault (40% vs. 26% in the Northeast), and vandalism (40% vs. 25% in the Midwest). And those concerns reflect reality: Western retail workers also experience aggressive behavior from customers (65% vs. 50% in the Northeast), robbery from customers or intruders (33% vs. 14% in the Midwest), and smash and grab incidents (27% vs. 15% in the Midwest) at rates that outpace the rest of the country.

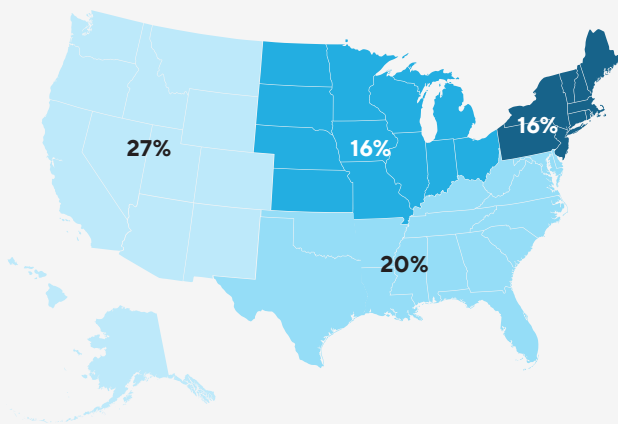


Exposure to violence on-the-job, by region

Smash & Grab

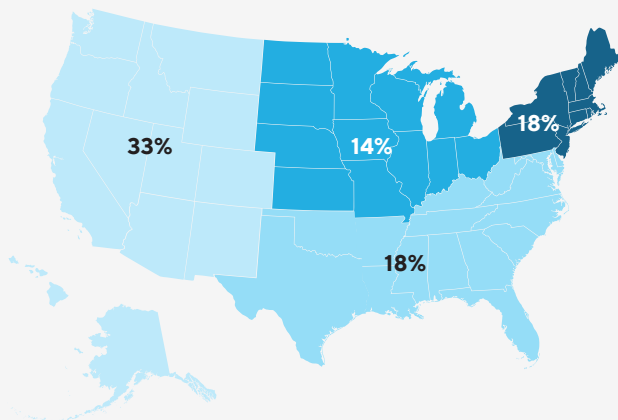
West Midwest
South Northeast

Percentage of retail workers who report experiencing or witnessing at their workplace



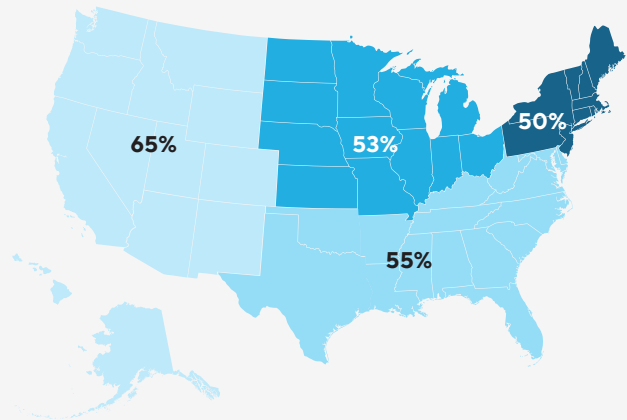
Robbery from customers/intruders

Percentage of retail workers who report experiencing or witnessing at their workplace



Aggressive behavior/threats from customers

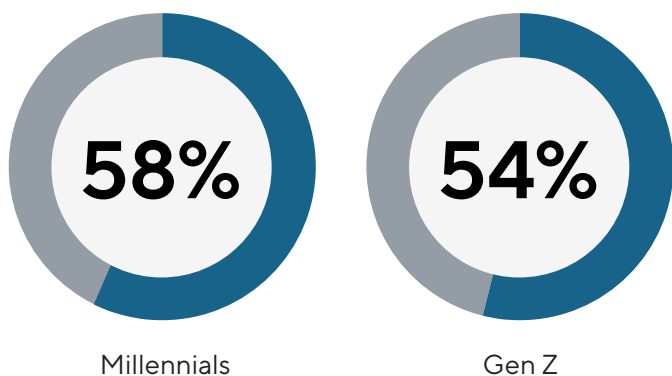
Percentage of retail workers who report experiencing or witnessing at their workplace



Younger Workers Feel the Impact Most

More than one in three Gen Z (37%) and Millennial (35%) retail workers have felt unsafe at work—significantly higher than Gen X (27%) and Baby Boomers (26%). This isn't just a perception gap based on experience, though. Younger workers are actually experiencing workplace violence at markedly higher rates: Millennials and Gen Z report more frequent encounters with aggressive behavior from both customers (Gen Z: 54%; Millennials: 58%) and coworkers (Gen Z: 22%; Millennials: 26%), and physical assault (Gen Z: 16%; Millennials: 24%) compared to their older counterparts.

Millennials and Gen Z report **more frequent encounters with aggressive behavior** from customers.



Percentage of retail workers who report experiencing aggressive behavior from customers at their workplace



The Path Forward

There is good news: retail workers believe better security could prevent many of these frequent incidents of violence from happening.

Which incidents do you think might have been preventable if there were better/more security measures in place?

Percentage of retail workers who indicate yes

Theft



Robbery from customers/intruders



Smash & grab



Robbery from employees/insiders



Vandalism



Physical break-in/trespassing



Aggressive behavior/threats from intruders



Physical assault



When asked which security solutions would give them the greatest peace of mind, retail workers point first to video security monitoring (49%). On-site security guards (44%), alarm systems (38%), panic buttons (27%), and parking lot surveillance units (25%) follow.

Despite the increasing presence of physical theft prevention tools like locked cabinets and checkout gates in stores – 77% of retail workers say their workplaces implement physical theft prevention – solutions like barriers and locked gates did not crack the top five solutions that would give retail workers peace of mind. And when we asked retail workers about them specifically, it’s clear that they create friction in the workplace: nearly half (46%) said that these tools are more disruptive than effective, and more than half (55%) say that they reduce their efficiency when they’re busy on the job. They’re also contributing to eroding trust between retail workers and their employers: 61% say that they feel their employer prioritizes inventory safety over team safety.

Understanding the impact on customers

Of course, retail workers aren’t the only ones experiencing the impact of heightened security – it’s also the customers coming into stores to shop. Not only do 60% of U.S. adults agree with retail workers that physical theft prevention tools are more disruptive to the shopping experience than they are effective at deterring crime, but the data also reveals that these physical theft prevention measures are increasingly deterring shoppers from making in-store purchases.

Overall, 74% of U.S. adults say certain theft-prevention measures would make them less likely to shop in-store. The biggest deterrents are locked cabinets and shelves (45%), limited service hours (32%), and gated check-outs/exits (32%), all up significantly from 2023. In contrast, on-site security guards are perceived as less of a barrier than before, dropping from 24% in 2023 to 20% in 2025.

Which of the following security measures give you/would give you the most peace of mind while at work?

Percentage of retail workers who indicate yes

Video security monitoring (live monitoring)



On-site security guards/staff



Alarm systems



Panic buttons

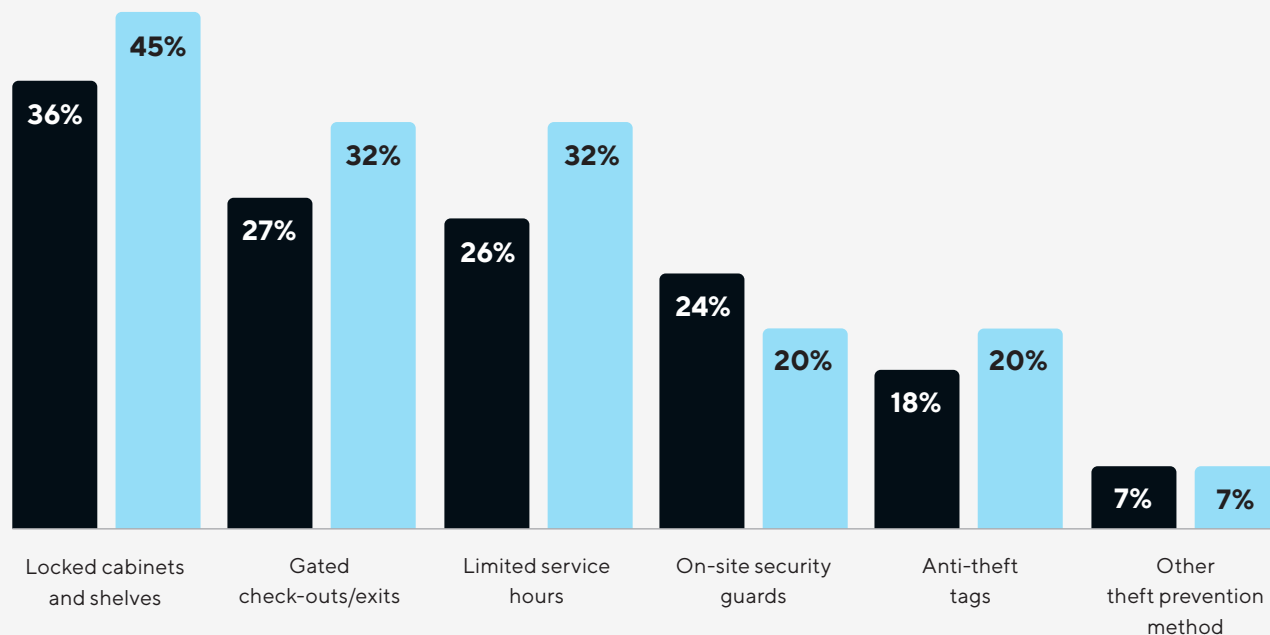


Parking lot surveillance towers/units



Which of the following theft prevention methods, if any, would make you less likely to shop at such a store?

Percentage of retail workers who indicate yes



The data also validates what retail workers say about these measures impacting their efficiency on the job: 74% of US adults say store staff are slow to respond when they need secured products unlocked.

The data surfaces an uncomfortable tension: theft prevention measures like locked cases, implemented to protect inventory, may be unintentionally fueling the customer confrontations workers face. More than half (56%) of US adults agree physical theft prevention tools frustrate them – and frustrated customers are a leading driver of workplace violence, as covered earlier in this report. Retail workers report that 54% of verbal threats stem from angry customers, and another 12% occur when they approach shoplifters. That means two-thirds of verbal threats connect directly to customer interactions, and it's not unlikely that these interactions involve may physical theft prevention tools, given how widely adopted they are.

And when we look at the experience of retail workers, those who work in stores where there are physical theft prevention measures in place report higher rates violence in aggregate than those who work in stores that do not.

Have you ever experienced or witnessed the following at your workplace?

Percentage of retail workers who report experiencing or witnessing

- Employer implements physical theft prevention measures
- Employer does not implement physical theft prevention measures

Theft



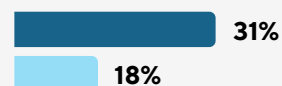
Aggressive behavior/threats from customers



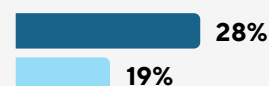
Verbal harassment (i.e., verbal/emotional abuse)



Aggressive behaviors/threats from past employees/candidates



Vandalism



Ultimately, retailers shouldn't have to choose between protecting inventory and protecting people. Retail workers have already told us what would make them feel safer, and the promising news is that what they want their employers to invest in can potentially achieve both without creating additional friction or escalation.





Verkada is transforming how organizations protect their people and places with an integrated, AI-powered platform.

A leader in cloud physical security, Verkada helps organizations strengthen safety and efficiency through one connected platform. Its solutions—including video security, access control, air quality sensors, alarms, intercoms, and workplace tools—work seamlessly in Verkada Command, a cloud-based software experience built for scale.

From finding footage in seconds to identifying events like a door held open, a visitor check-in, or a change in air quality, Verkada gives teams the insight to see, understand, and act with confidence—helping create safer, smarter environments.



The **Loss Prevention Research Council** partners with retail industry executives, solution partners, and law enforcement officials to conduct scientific research to improve retail asset protection. They focus on preventing and detecting theft, fraud, and violence in retail settings. The LPRC is a vital hub for retail leaders seeking advanced strategies in retail crime prevention. Members get access to the latest research, best practices, and retail insights on asset protection, plus opportunities to collaborate with industry experts through training programs and networking events to advance their professional development. To learn more about the Loss Prevention Research Council's events and membership, please visit lpresearch.org.