# Greggs faces backlash after removing popular self-serve items to tackle anti-social behavior



The recent decision by Greggs, the UK’s largest bakery chain, to trial the removal of popular self-serve items from select locations has drawn significant backlash from customers. This initiative, aimed at addressing higher levels of anti-social behaviour, has left many patrons expressing their dismay and frustration on social media platforms.

The changes, implemented in at least five stores, including one in Whitechapel, East London, have seen items such as sandwiches and bottled drinks shifted behind the counter. Customers are now required to request these staples directly from staff. Many have voiced their concerns online, suggesting that these measures reflect a broader decline in societal trust. One Reddit user lamented, “It was nice to have grown up in a high trust society. I feel sad my kids won’t experience it.” Another commenter echoed a sense of nostalgia for past shopping experiences, stating, “We’re going to end up back at counter service like corner shops had in the 1940s.”

The company claims that these decisions are part of broader trials designed to enhance the safety and security of both customers and staff. A spokesperson for Greggs noted that the "safety of our colleagues and customers remains our number one priority," affirming a commitment to addressing the challenges posed by anti-social behaviour. This comes as several locations have reportedly been fitted with “bank-style screens” at the counter or have introduced full-time security personnel, reflecting a trend in retail towards heightened security measures.

In a climate where consumer confidence is waning, evidenced by a slowdown in sales growth—despite a reported 5.5% increase in annual sales for established outlets—Greggs appears to be balancing the needs of safety with customer satisfaction. Recently, the chain increased the price of its flagship sausage roll amid rising costs, a move that drew criticism while the company continues to open new locations to expand its footprint.

The response from the public has been mixed. While many lament the necessity for increased security and restricted access to self-service, some customers have expressed support for the measures, viewing them as a necessary response to criminal behaviours. One supporter remarked, “I don’t care if I have to ask [for food] as thieves are the worst,” highlighting a split perspective on the issue.

The evolution of Greggs’ service model comes as part of a larger narrative within the food service industry, grappling with the dual pressures of rising operational costs and shifting societal behaviours. The company is also addressing modern sensitivities, having previously introduced optional name badges for employees to display preferred pronouns, which, while praised by some, faced criticism from others who prioritized food service over such initiatives.

As Greggs navigates these challenges, including adjusting its menu introduced with excitement in previous years—such as new offerings like pizzas and hot desserts—the bakery faces the task of maintaining its reputation as a British cultural cornerstone while adapting to an increasingly complex retail landscape. The future of self-service in the food industry may hinge not just on customer preferences, but also on how effectively companies like Greggs can implement solutions to enhance security without alienating their customer base.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25177836.greggs-new-self-serve-changes-slammed-customers/?ref=rss)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25177836.greggs-new-self-serve-changes-slammed-customers/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/jan/09/greggs-sales-growth-slows-amid-lower-consumer-confidence), [[6]](https://www.tutor2u.net/economics/blog/rolling-with-the-punches-greggs-response-to-inflation-and-consumer-confidence)
3. Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25177836.greggs-new-self-serve-changes-slammed-customers/?ref=rss), [[5]](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/greggs-announces-phenominal-news-menu-25184658.amp)
4. Paragraph 4: [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/jan/09/greggs-sales-growth-slows-amid-lower-consumer-confidence), [[6]](https://www.tutor2u.net/economics/blog/rolling-with-the-punches-greggs-response-to-inflation-and-consumer-confidence), [[7]](https://whynow.co.uk/read/the-absolute-state-of-greggs)
5. Paragraph 5: [[4]](https://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/whats-on/food-drink/greggs-fans-take-aim-atbakery-7919867)
6. Paragraph 6: [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/business-68614636.amp), [[5]](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/greggs-announces-phenominal-news-menu-25184658.amp), [[6]](https://www.tutor2u.net/economics/blog/rolling-with-the-punches-greggs-response-to-inflation-and-consumer-confidence)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25177836.greggs-new-self-serve-changes-slammed-customers/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/jan/09/greggs-sales-growth-slows-amid-lower-consumer-confidence> - In January 2025, Greggs, the UK's largest bakery chain, faced criticism after increasing the price of its flagship sausage roll by 5p to £1.30. CEO Roisin Currie attributed the price hike to rising wages, higher employer National Insurance contributions, and increased food costs. Despite the backlash, Greggs reported a 5.5% sales increase at established outlets over the year, though growth slowed to 2.5% in the fourth quarter, reflecting subdued high street footfall. The company opened a record 226 shops during the year, bringing the total to 2,618.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-68614636.amp> - In March 2024, Greggs experienced a technical issue affecting its payment systems, leading to some shops closing or operating on a cash-only basis. The company resolved the problem and apologized for any inconvenience caused. Customers had expressed disappointment on social media, with some finding branches closed or unable to accept card payments. Greggs operates over 2,450 shops across the UK and emphasized its commitment to customer service during the disruption.
4. <https://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/whats-on/food-drink/greggs-fans-take-aim-atbakery-7919867> - In late 2022, Greggs introduced optional name badges for employees to include their preferred pronouns, such as she/her/hers, he/him/his, or they/them/theirs. While some customers appreciated the move, others criticized it, with some expressing that they were more interested in purchasing food than in staff pronouns. The initiative aimed to support diverse communities and was part of Greggs' 'Your Ideas Matter' program, which encourages employee suggestions for business improvements.
5. <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/greggs-announces-phenominal-news-menu-25184658.amp> - In October 2022, Greggs announced plans to introduce new menu items, including pizzas and hot desserts, across all UK stores. The announcement received positive feedback from customers, with many expressing excitement about the new offerings. Some customers also suggested extending opening hours to accommodate the new menu. The move was part of Greggs' strategy to diversify its product range and attract a broader customer base.
6. <https://www.tutor2u.net/economics/blog/rolling-with-the-punches-greggs-response-to-inflation-and-consumer-confidence> - In January 2025, Greggs faced consumer backlash after increasing the price of its sausage roll by 5p to £1.30. CEO Roisin Currie cited rising wages, higher National Insurance contributions, and increased food costs as reasons for the price hike. Despite the backlash, Greggs reported a 5.5% sales increase at established outlets over the year, though growth slowed to 2.5% in the fourth quarter. The company opened a record 226 shops during the year, bringing the total to 2,618.
7. <https://whynow.co.uk/read/the-absolute-state-of-greggs> - Greggs, the UK's largest bakery chain, has faced criticism over product quality and pricing. Despite its widespread presence with over 2,184 branches, some customers express dissatisfaction with the taste and quality of its offerings. The company has also been criticized for price increases, with some items rising by 30% since 2022. Despite these challenges, Greggs remains a staple in British culture, with many customers defending the brand and its products.