# Tesco staff throw baskets amid rising UK retail violence and record shoplifting surge



Shoppers were left shaken after a chaotic scene unfolded at a Tesco store in Finsbury Park, north London, where staff were seen throwing metal baskets at two men they had just ejected. Harrowing video footage captures the moment the tensions escalated, with a security guard urging the men to leave while the latter verbally retaliated. The confrontation quickly turned physical, with the security guard retaliating by throwing a metal basket outside the store, narrowly avoiding being hit by an object thrown by one of the men.

This incident shines a troubling light on the broader issue of violence and abuse targeting retail staff across the UK. According to recent figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the number of violent and abusive occurrences against retail workers alarmingly exceeds 2,000 incidents each day. A significant uptick in shoplifting and assaults has been noted, with the costs of theft skyrocketing from £1.8 billion to £2.2 billion in just one year. The British Retail Consortium reported that last year alone, police recorded more than 516,971 shoplifting offences, marking a 20% increase as compared to 2023. These figures represent the highest levels of recorded shoplifting since records began 22 years ago.

The incident at Tesco was part of a wider trend. In July 2024, data revealed that shoplifting offences surged by 30% in England and Wales, with the ONS reporting 443,995 incidents in the year leading up to March 2024. Retailers have voiced concerns over the lack of confidence in law enforcement's response to these crimes, especially small store owners who feel their reports often yield little action. The increasing prevalence of organised crime targeting retail outlets has exacerbated this crisis, prompting retail workers' unions like Usdaw to label it an “epidemic of retail crime”.

Public reactions to the Finsbury Park incident have been mixed, with some condemning the security guard's aggressive response as unprofessional. However, others empathised with the challenging nature of their duties. A local customer praised the staff for their constant approachability and expressed a longing for increased police presence to support them in dealing with such confrontations. A Tesco spokesperson acknowledged the incident, stating that the conduct displayed did not align with the standards they expect and that an investigation is underway.

As retailers increasingly grapple with the implications of shoplifting, the question remains: how can these businesses protect their staff and customers while ensuring a safe shopping environment? The ongoing surge in theft and violence underscores not just a breakdown in community safety but also raises pressing concerns over the responsibility of law enforcement in addressing these issues effectively. As it stands, the landscape for retail operations continues to be fraught with risk and uncertainty, forcing many to reconsider their strategies and responses to increasingly brazen criminal behaviour.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694875/moment-Tesco-staff-hurl-baskets-shoplifters.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
2. Paragraph 2: [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/shoplifting-surges-30-england-wales-official-data-shows-2024-07-24/), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/24806037-af41-49ec-ada7-adcb691c00e8), [[5]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/07/24/shoplifting-offences-record-high-knife-crime-police/)
3. Paragraph 3: [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/shoplifting-surges-30-england-wales-official-data-shows-2024-07-24/), [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/9df4439e-c33c-4e31-972f-20ba70a86583), [[7]](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingdecember2023)
4. Paragraph 4: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694875/moment-Tesco-staff-hurl-baskets-shoplifters.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/c3d922c8-2598-4c7b-be1e-9c83bd65d044)
5. Paragraph 5: [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/24806037-af41-49ec-ada7-adcb691c00e8), [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/9df4439e-c33c-4e31-972f-20ba70a86583)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694875/moment-Tesco-staff-hurl-baskets-shoplifters.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/shoplifting-surges-30-england-wales-official-data-shows-2024-07-24/> - In July 2024, Reuters reported a 30% surge in shoplifting offences in England and Wales, reaching the highest level in 20 years. The Office for National Statistics recorded 443,995 incidents in the year leading up to March 2024, up from 342,428 the previous year. Retailers expressed concerns over unreported incidents, especially in smaller stores, due to a lack of confidence in police response. The British Retail Consortium estimated the industry's losses from theft at nearly £1 billion annually. The retail workers' union Usdaw called the rise an 'epidemic of retail crime.'
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/24806037-af41-49ec-ada7-adcb691c00e8> - The Financial Times reported in February 2025 that shoplifting in the UK reached a record £2.2 billion in the previous year, with over 20 million incidents reported. Despite investments by high-street brands to prevent theft and protect staff, crime in stores has drastically increased. Violence and abuse against shop staff rose to more than 2,000 incidents per day, up from the previous year's 1,300. Many incidents are linked to organized crime, with gangs targeting stores nationwide. Retailers have invested £1.8 billion in crime prevention measures, a significant increase from the prior year.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/c3d922c8-2598-4c7b-be1e-9c83bd65d044> - In April 2025, the Financial Times reported that the Co-op Group experienced a 14% rise in retail crime losses, amounting to £80 million ($105 million), representing over half of its adjusted operating profit. The retailer, which operates more than 2,300 food stores across the UK, has been significantly affected by increasing theft, a trend mirrored across the UK and other countries. Despite the spike in retail crime, the Co-op Group saw a 35% rise in annual operating profit, reaching £131 million, supported by a stronger performance from its food retail business.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/07/24/shoplifting-offences-record-high-knife-crime-police/> - The Daily Telegraph reported in July 2024 that shoplifting offences in England and Wales reached a record high, with 50 offences recorded by police every hour, marking a 30% increase in one year. The number of shoplifting offences rose to 443,995 in the year to March 2024, an increase of more than 100,000 on the 342,428 recorded in the previous 12 months. The figure is the highest since current records began in the year to March 2003, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/9df4439e-c33c-4e31-972f-20ba70a86583> - In August 2024, the Financial Times reported that shoplifting in England and Wales surged to its highest level in 20 years, increasing by 30% year-on-year, as per official data. Additionally, street theft, including bag snatching and mobile phone theft, rose by 40%. In the year up to March 2024, police-recorded shoplifting offenses jumped from 342,428 to 443,995. The crime wave presents a significant challenge for law enforcement, already stretched thin with priority crimes involving violence remaining steady.
7. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingdecember2023> - The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported in December 2023 that the number of shoplifting offences in England and Wales increased by 37% compared with the previous year, with 430,104 offences compared with 315,040 in the previous year. This rise was predominantly the result of increases in shoplifting offences. Increases were also seen in police recorded theft from the person offences, up by 18% to 125,563 crimes, and other theft, which was up by 2% to 355,152 offences.