# surge in shoplifting reaches record highs amid government neglect and police failure



New analysis exposes a concerning surge in shoplifting across England and Wales, with a staggering 793 offences each day going unresolved in 2024-25. The figures, gathered from police forces by the House of Commons Library, reveal nearly 290,000 cases closed without suspect identification—a sharp increase from about 245,000 the previous year. This alarming trend pushes total recorded shoplifting offences to a record 530,643, a 20% jump from 444,022 in 2023-24—marking the highest figure since records began in 2002-03. Such figures underscore the failures of a government that has taken a hands-off approach, leaving communities to face rising crime with declining support from law enforcement.

London's Metropolitan Police, which should be a frontline in combating theft, has shown the poorest response, with nearly 77% of its 93,705 shoplifting cases unresolved and less than 6% resulting in charges. The city's shoplifting incidents have surged by over half in 2024 compared to the previous year, with nearly 90,000 offences recorded—a testament to the neglect and mismanagement at the heart of the Capitol. Furthermore, Metropolitan Police data between April 2022 and April 2023 reveals police attended just 38% of shoplifting calls, illustrating their limited capacity to respond effectively amid a deluge of crime.

In the West Midlands, shoplifting rose by 29%, with 26,145 cases to June 2024, starkly outpacing the national average increase. Other areas, such as Reading in Thames Valley, saw similar troubling trends, with offences rising by almost 700 to 2,606 in 2024. These regional figures paint a bleak picture of a nation failing to protect its retail sector and vulnerable communities from a crime wave fueled by political complacency.

Official statistics for the year ending March 2025 show that over half (55.3%) of shoplifting cases closed without identifying a suspect; only 18.5% led to charges or summons. The median time to close investigations has grown from 7 to 10 days, revealing that police resources are stretched beyond breaking point—yet the government remains passive, refusing to prioritize crime prevention.

Retailers—those on the frontline—are increasingly vocal about their frustration. Disturbingly, some now report a disturbing rise in shoplifting by pensioners, blaming economic hardship and the cost of living crisis. Such social issues are being exploited by criminals and overlooked by ministers, who seem more interested in political posturing than delivering real security or justice.

In a misguided attempt to address the crisis, Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Barber suggested civilians should intervene if they witness shoplifting, potentially putting ordinary citizens at risk. This reckless advice drew sharp criticism from retail workers and MPs alike, who condemned it as "reckless and dangerous." Critics argue that police failure, combined with this laissez-faire attitude, has emboldened thieves and worsened a breakdown in law and order. Yet, the government continues to neglect the root causes, failing to back police with the resources needed to restore safety or hold offenders accountable.

This escalating epidemic of shoplifting reveals a government entirely disconnected from the realities facing communities and businesses. Instead of implementing strong crime measures or restoring discipline to our streets, the authorities have abdicated responsibility, leaving the public to fend for themselves in a lawless environment. The time has come for a shift away from failed policies and towards a government willing to prioritise law and order ahead of political posturing. Ordinary citizens deserve security, and a decisive stance against crime is long overdue.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2099629/uk-shoplifting-crisis-laid-bare> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2024-to-2025/crime-outcomes-in-england-and-wales-2024-to-2025> - The UK government's official statistics for the year ending March 2025 reveal that 55.3% of shoplifting offences were closed without identifying a suspect, while 18.5% resulted in a charge or summons. The median time to assign an outcome for shoplifting cases increased from 7 to 10 days compared to the previous year. These figures highlight the challenges faced by law enforcement in addressing shoplifting incidents across England and Wales.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c87xgqdzw9wo> - In the 12 months up to June 2024, West Midlands Police recorded 26,145 shoplifting offences, marking a significant increase from the previous year. This surge reflects a broader national trend of rising shoplifting incidents, with the West Midlands experiencing a 29% rise compared to the 20% increase across England and Wales during the same period.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cgm8enwywr1o> - Shoplifting offences in London rose by 54% in 2024 compared to 2023, with nearly 90,000 incidents recorded. This sharp increase underscores the escalating challenges faced by the Metropolitan Police in addressing retail theft in the capital.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-67742042> - Between April 2022 and April 2023, the Metropolitan Police attended only 38% of shoplifting-related calls. This low attendance rate has raised concerns about the police's capacity to effectively respond to retail theft incidents in London.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/may/12/uk-food-shops-report-massive-rise-in-pensioner-shoplifting> - Food retailers in the UK have reported a significant increase in shoplifting incidents involving pensioners over the past year. This trend is attributed to the rising cost of living, which has led some older individuals to resort to theft due to financial pressures.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0elqxv8py5o> - Thames Valley Police reported a substantial rise in shoplifting in Reading, with 2,606 offences recorded in 2024, an increase of 699 from the previous year. The force attributes this surge to increased attention on business communities and proactive measures against prolific offenders.