

# New research shows retail crime increasing and more violent

December 7 2017

---



Retail crime is becoming more violent and organised, shows a joint University of Otago and Retail NZ study. Credit: University of Otago

A new study by Retail NZ and the University of Otago shows retail crime costs about \$1.1 billion a year, and retailers are facing increasingly organised and violent criminals.

Greg Harford, Retail NZ's General Manager for Public Affairs, says retail crime "is a massive issue" which has a disproportionately high impact on small businesses and high street [retailers](#).

University of Otago Department of Marketing Senior Lecturer Dr John Guthrie says a concern is that retail crime is increasing, and becoming increasingly organised and more violent.

"The research shows that 38 per cent of retailers have noticed changes in the profile of retail crime in the past 12 months, and are seeing more brazen criminals than in previous years. Theft by employees is also growing in significance, accounting for 18 per cent of losses now, compared to 12 per cent at the time of the previous survey in 2003."

Mr Harford said retailers are worried criminals are more aggressive than in the past.

"Retail crime no longer involves just petty theft from stores. Retailers are reporting a sizeable number of violent and aggressive incidents every year, as well as more sophisticated fraud incidents.

"This shows that retailers need to be more alert to a range of criminal activity, as well as taking steps to protect their employees and customers from the threat of violence."

Dr Guthrie says the total cost of crime is far greater than the \$1.1 billion reported in losses.

"Our research shows that retailers are spending around \$514 million a year on crime prevention, plus crime takes a massive toll on the individuals who face violence, intimidation and who are fearful about going to work.

"However, the research also shows that money spent on preventative measures does pay off. The biggest retail firms, who spend the most on [crime prevention](#) have a noticeably lower rate of recorded crime overall, so it's a good idea for retailers to review their security arrangements and do what they can to make it tough for the criminals."

"It's really important that all crime is reported to the Police," Mr Harford said.

"The survey shows that, overall, just 31 per cent of retail crime goes unreported, either because there is a perception that the Police won't act, or because it is time-consuming and difficult to do so. It is heartening that 63 per cent of retailers think Police do an 'okay' or 'great job' of managing crime, but an online tool or app would go a long way towards making it simple and easy for retail crime to be reported."

Retail NZ is renewing calls for Government action to help manage retail crime by establishing a dedicated Retail Crime Reduction Taskforce within the Police, funding a social change programme to make it clear that crime is not acceptable, and bringing in an "infringement ticket" style offence for petty theft to ensure that there are consequences for people beginning their life of crime, Mr Harford says.

"Retail NZ sees early intervention and real consequences as key to stopping the cycle of [crime](#)."

**More information:** The 2017 Survey for Retail Crime:  
[www.retail.kiwi/advocacy/retail-crime](http://www.retail.kiwi/advocacy/retail-crime)

Provided by University of Otago

Citation: New research shows retail crime increasing and more violent (2017, December 7)  
retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-12-retail-crime-violent.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.