

# Survey of small retailers in Great Britain

## Data Report

### Introduction

This paper presents the full results of a survey of small retailers in Great Britain conducted for ASH in 2016. Key results from this survey were published in the report *Counter Arguments: How Important is Tobacco to Small Retailers?* The report is available at [www.ash.org.uk/counterarguments](http://www.ash.org.uk/counterarguments).

### Methods

The survey was conducted by telephone between 16th March and 1st April 2016 by Retail Connect Cheetham Bell using an established database of independent stores and sole traders across the UK. Interviewees were owners or managers of these small shops. All questions followed a fixed script and had predefined answers but interviewees could refuse specific questions. Quantitative analysis was undertaken using SPSS Version 23.

### Sample

The final sample size was 591 retailers. All respondents were over 18 years old. Distribution of respondents across the regions and nations of Great Britain was as follows:

<i>Region</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
North West	105	17.8%
North East	36	6.1%
Midlands	89	15.1%
East	19	3.2%
Home counties	109	18.4%
London	61	10.3%
South	28	4.7%
South West	39	6.6%
Wales	54	9.1%
Scotland	51	8.6%
Total	591	100%

## Tobacco purchases

Q. On a normal day how many of your customers buy tobacco?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Fewer than a quarter	56	9.5%
Around a quarter	164	27.7%
Around Half	198	33.5%
Around three quarters	126	21.3%
All	12	2.0%
Don't Know	35	5.9%
Total	591	100%

## Regular problems

Q. Do you regularly have problems with:

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Theft	25 (4.2%)	562 (95.1%)	4 (0.7%)
Damaged stock	120 (20.3%)	468 (79.2%)	3 (0.5%)
The cost of stocking up	142 (24.0%)	426 (72.1%)	23 (3.9%)

Respondents were invited to identify 'anything else' as a regular problem in their own words. Nine respondents gave an answer:

- gantry doors (n=5)
- underage purchasers (n=2)
- contraband (n=1)
- profit margin (n=1)

## Lost sales

Q. How often do you lose a tobacco sale because you do not have the brand a customer wants?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Up to once a week	188	31.8%
Less than once a week but more than once a month	118	20.0%
Less than once a month but more than every 6 months	84	14.2%
Less than every 6 months but more than once a year	24	4.1%
Less often than this	74	12.5%
Never	90	15.2%
Don't Know	13	2.2%
Total	591	100%

## Views on selling tobacco

Q. Please can you tell me if you agree with, disagree with, or don't know about the following statements?

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know/refused
Selling tobacco is important to my business because of footfall	483 (81.7%)	90 (15.2%)	18 (3.1%)
Compared to other products I do not make much profit on a packet of cigarettes	407 (68.9%)	160 (27.1%)	24 (4.1%)
It is important to have full availability of a wide range of tobacco brands	435 (73.6%)	142 (24.0%)	14 (2.4%)
I have too much money tied up in tobacco stock every week	425 (71.9%)	136 (23.0%)	30 (5.1%)
Price-marked tobacco products are good for my business	491 (83.1%)	79 (13.4%)	21 (3.5%)
Profit from tobacco is an important part of my overall profits	349 (59.1%)	210 (35.5%)	32 (5.4%)
Tobacco companies have the best interests of retailers like me at heart	271 (45.9%)	242 (40.9%)	78 (13.2%)

## Visits from tobacco reps

Q How often do you have visits from tobacco industry reps?

	Frequency	Percent
Up to once a week	40	6.8%
Less than once a week but more than once a month	223	37.7%
Less than once a month but more than every 6 months	218	36.9%
Less than every 6 months but more than once a year	36	6.1%
Less often than this	12	2%
Never	52	8.8%
Don't Know	10	1.7%
Total	591	100%

Q. Was your tobacco gantry updated to put products out of sight free of charge by a tobacco company?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	397	67.2%
No	153	25.9%
Don't know	34	5.8%
Refused	7	1.2%

Q. In the last 6 months have you had conversations with tobacco industry reps about any of the following?

	Yes	No	Don't know/refused
Where tobacco stock should be positioned	397 (67.2%)	178 (30.1%)	16 (2.7%)
What brands you should be stocking	431 (72.9%)	148 (25.0%)	12 (2.1%)
What brands you should promote to customers	359 (60.7%)	214 (36.2%)	18 (3.0%)
How to speak to customers about brand promotions	309 (52.3%)	265 (44.8%)	17 (2.9%)
Free tobacco products	155 (26.2%)	419 (70.9%)	17 (2.9%)
Stocking their electronic cigarette brands	354 (59.9%)	225 (38.1%)	12 (2.1%)
Standardised 'plain' packaging	388 (65.7%)	184 (31.1%)	19 (3.2%)

## Law enforcement

Q. Do you think any of the following could help to ensure that other retailers in your area don't break the law around tobacco (such as selling to children or selling counterfeit tobacco)?

	Yes	No	Don't know/refused
Larger fines for breaking the law	441 (74.6%)	117 (19.8%)	33 (5.5%)
Strengthening of Challenge 21 and Challenge 25 schemes	403 (68.2%)	155 (26.2%)	33 (5.5%)
Removal of alcohol licence if they break the law around tobacco	338 (57.2%)	213 (36.0%)	40 (6.8%)
Removal of lottery if they break the law around tobacco	281 (47.5%)	264 (44.7%)	46 (7.8%)
More regular checks from trading standards staff	424 (71.7%)	137 (23.2%)	30 (5.1%)
Quicker action when offences take place	423 (71.6%)	126 (21.3%)	42 (7.1%)
Having a tobacco licence they could lose if they broke the law	410 (69.4%)	137 (23.2%)	44 (7.4%)

## The future

Q. How important do you think tobacco will be to your business in 10 years' time?

	Frequency	Percent
More important	71	12.0%
Just as important	204	34.5%
Less important	238	40.3%
Don't Know	72	12.2%
Refused	6	1.0%
Total	591	100%