

SURVEY AND REPORT

# The state of retail worker safety

2023 Survey and report



# The state of retail worker safety

In the past year, brick-and-mortar retailers have seen more crime, violence and theft occurring within their stores and have been looking for ways to better respond to keep both their workers and their shoppers safe.

According to the British Retail Consortium's (BRC) [Crime Survey Report](#), the number of violent shoplifting events in the UK are on the rise. They have almost doubled since 2020, with over 300,000 colleagues having suffered from a violent or abusive incident in the last year.

It has been widely reported that the uptick in violence and theft has led retailers across the country to close stores or reduce hours to protect their employees. Retail crime is a multi-billion-pound problem in the UK, forcing retailers to increase their spend on crime prevention to protect their business and their colleagues. Its impact has grown since the pandemic, as many stores struggle with staffing challenges and new regulations limiting employees from engaging with perpetrators during incidents of theft.

To better understand how store employees feel about their safety, Motorola Solutions surveyed more than 1,000 retail associates and managers to determine their top concerns, the emergency protocols their stores have in place, current communication and technology tools used and the measures that could make them feel safer.

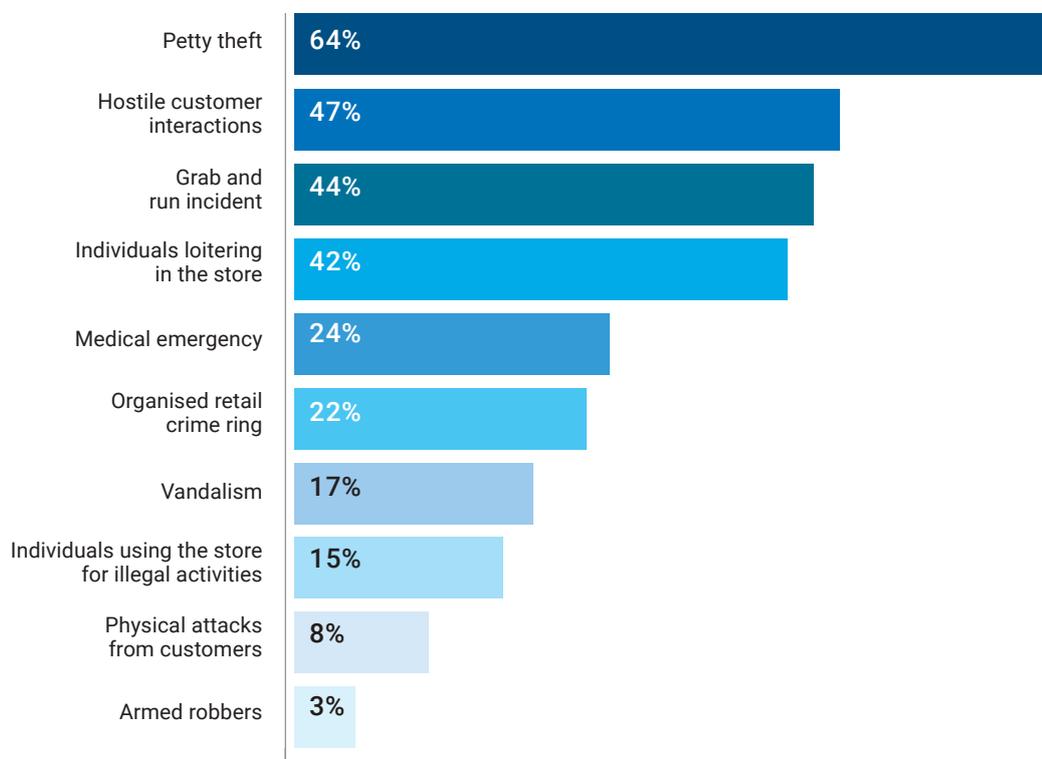
This research reflects the experiences and safety perceptions of everyday people working in the retail sector and can be used by industry leaders to usher in preparedness, communication and safety technology changes for the benefit of employees and shoppers alike.



# Retail workers' top safety concerns

Respondents said they have experienced a range of crime, theft and unsafe situations in their stores over the past 12 months, with petty theft (64%) at the top of the list. Hostile customer interactions ranked second, with nearly half (47%) of respondents experiencing verbal or physical abuse, followed by grab and run incidents (44%). These incidents are occurring with greater frequency, according to respondents. More than half (54%) reported a rise in petty theft in the last year, while about one in three said they have experienced an increase in grab and run incidents and hostile customer interactions (35% and 31% respectively).

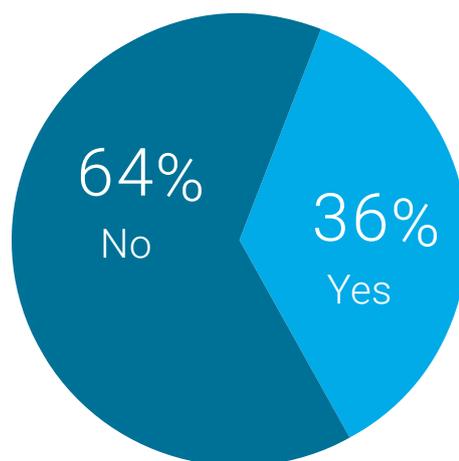
Have you or your store experienced any of these situations onsite in the past 12 months?



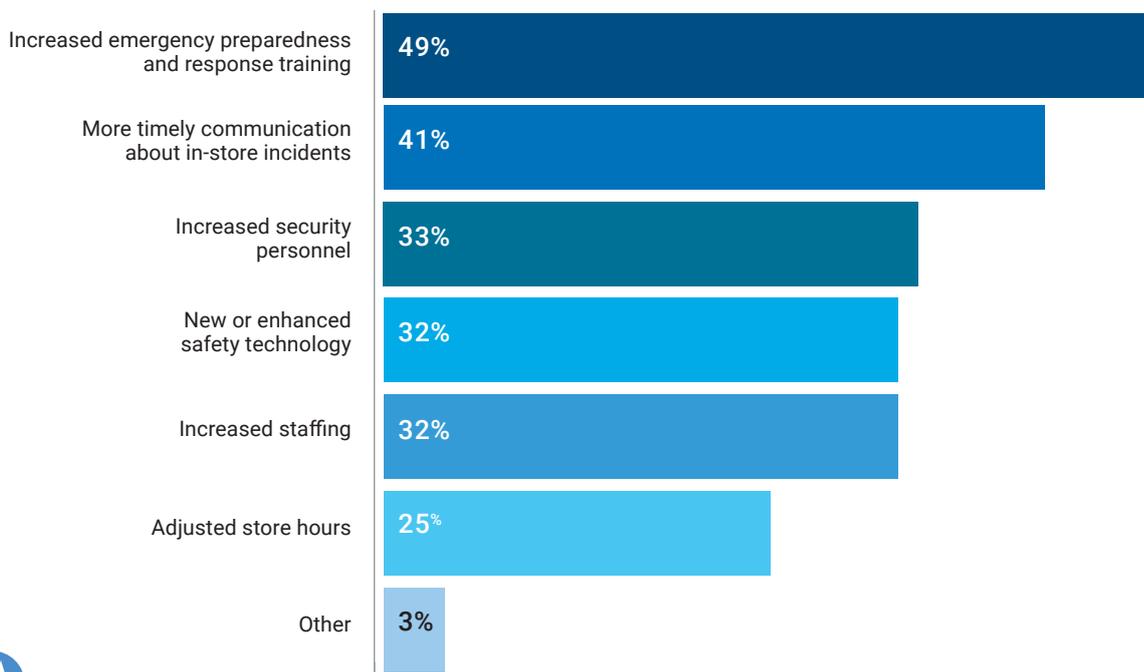


Some retailers are updating their safety and security protocols to support preparedness. About one-third (36%) said that their employer has introduced a new worker safety measure in the past 12 months, with top changes including increased emergency response training (49%), more timely communication about in-store incidents (41%) and adding security personnel (33%). Retail workers also noted that seeing a change in customer attitudes (44%) would impact their feelings around personal safety, and that video security cameras (69%), alarm systems (44%) and more store personnel (40%) would make them feel safer at work.

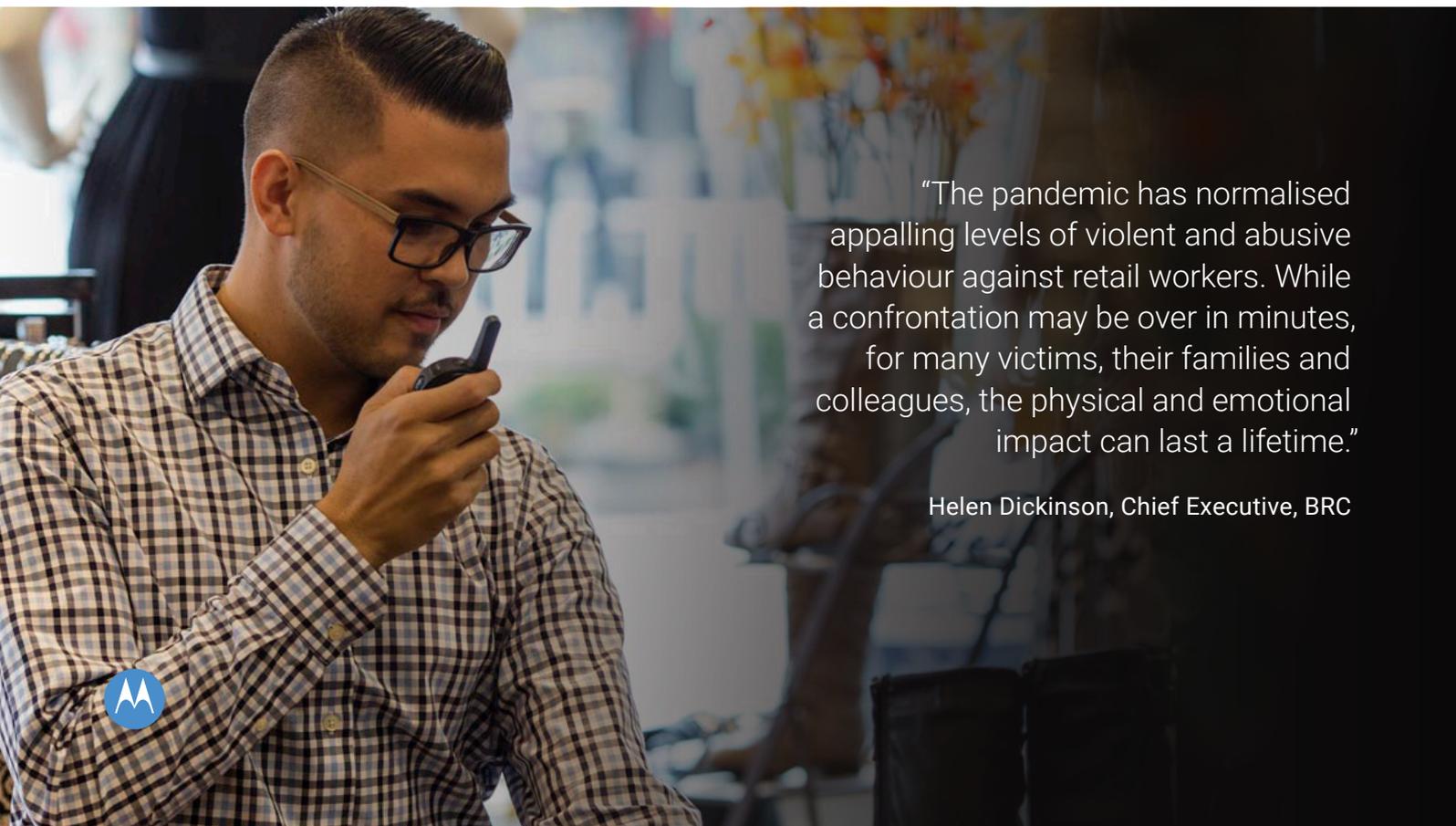
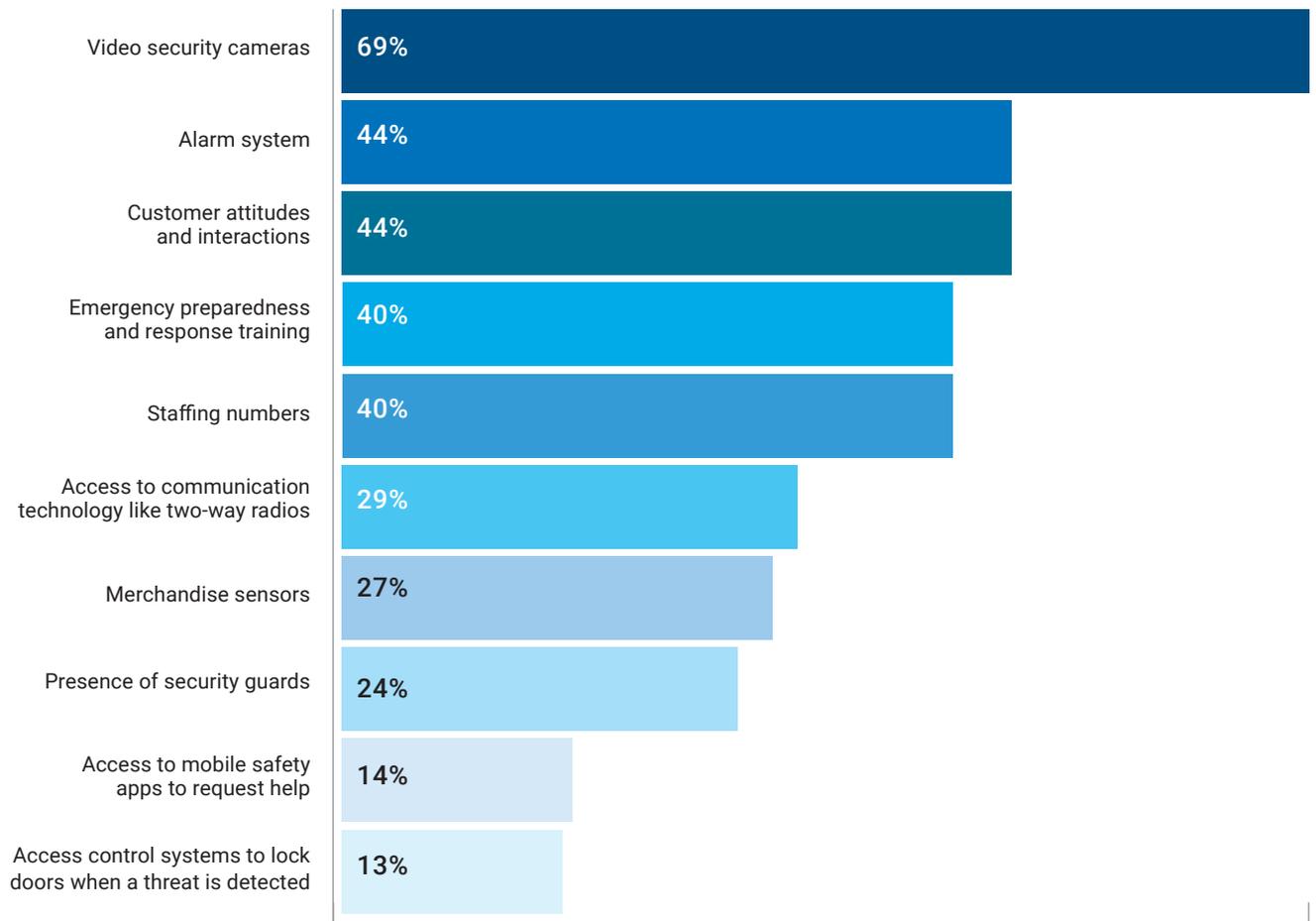
Over the past year, has your employer introduced new changes to address worker safety concerns?



What types of changes have been made?



## What factors impact how safe you feel at work?



“The pandemic has normalised appalling levels of violent and abusive behaviour against retail workers. While a confrontation may be over in minutes, for many victims, their families and colleagues, the physical and emotional impact can last a lifetime.”

Helen Dickinson, Chief Executive, BRC



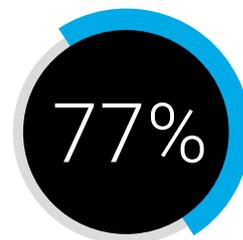


## Retail workers are speaking up

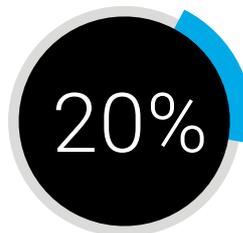
If a threat were to occur in their store, the majority (77%) of respondents said they would report an issue if they feared for their own or a co-worker's safety, even if reporting mechanisms were not anonymous. Twenty-percent more would report a threatening scenario if they could do so anonymously. This shows an overwhelming willingness among retail workers to speak up about retail crime and violent in-store incidents.

When asked how they document and report crimes to police or insurers, more than half (59%) said they rely on verbal reports to bosses or security who then contact police/insurance, or use an online (31%) or paper reporting system (29%). For any type of report — anonymous or not — technology can help employees document details quickly and accurately so that key data can be readily shared with internal and external sources for reporting and investigative purposes.

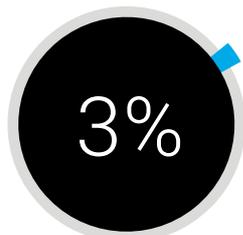
If there was a scenario at work where you feared for your own or a co-worker's safety, how likely would you be to report the issue?



I would report it, even without it being anonymous



I would report it if I could do so anonymously



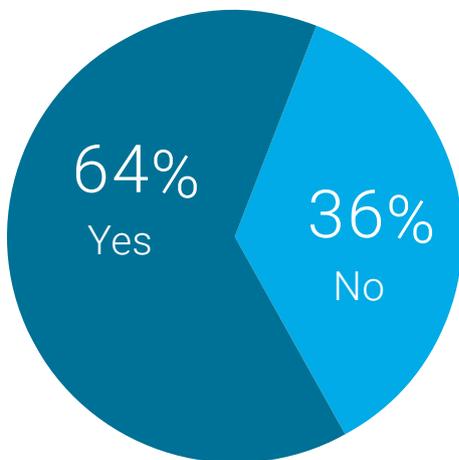
I would not report it



## Retail workers feel safer in numbers

Forty percent of retail workers and managers said staffing numbers have an impact on their feelings of personal safety at work. However, 64% expect their store to be understaffed at times, which could impact their feelings of safety.

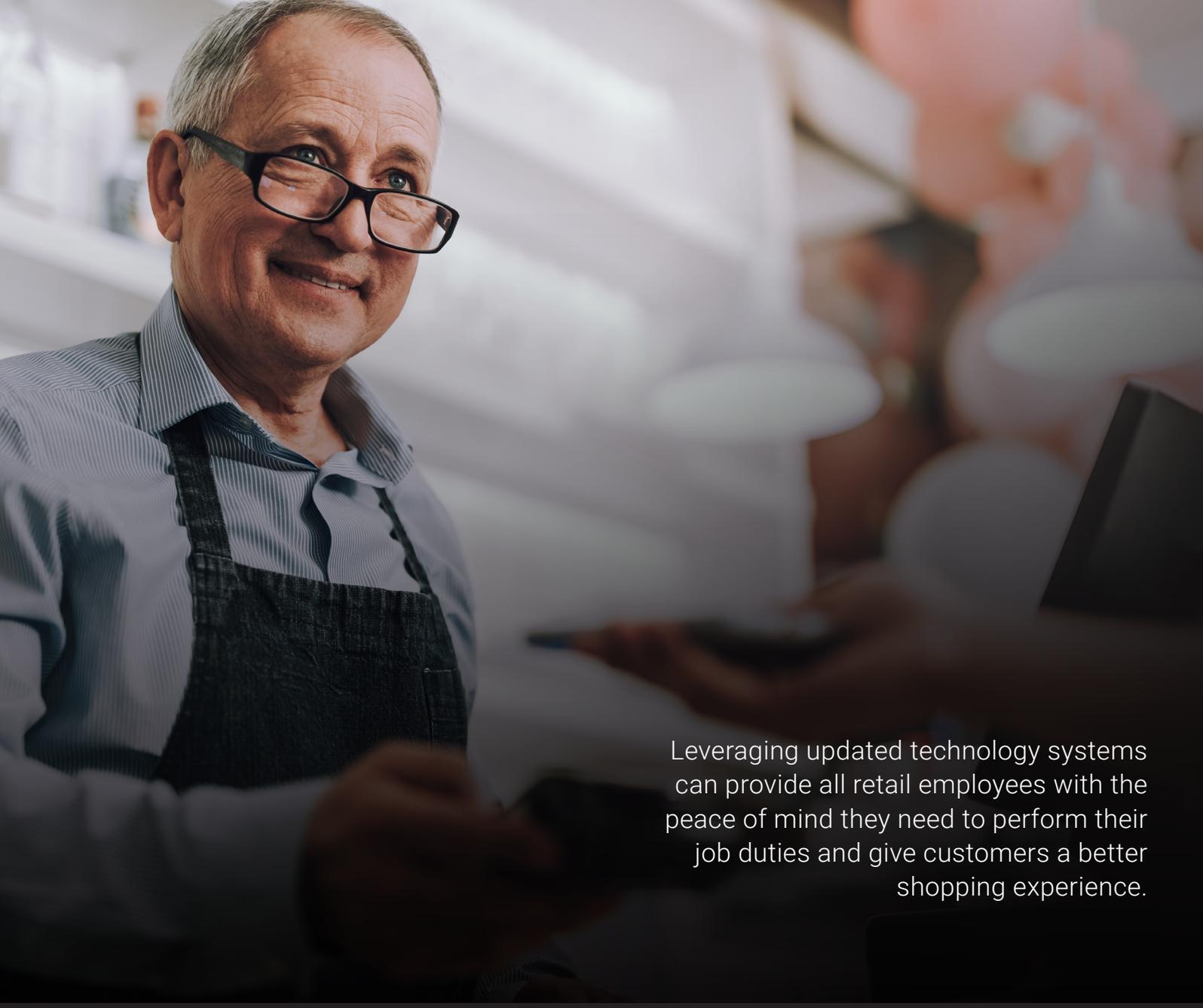
Going into peak shopping season, do you anticipate your store will be short-staffed?



Workers who feel safer stay longer. One in four (26%) respondents said they have considered leaving retail due to safety concerns. Retailers who invest in store safety and security measures are more likely to build employee morale and retention.

By proactively assessing employee safety concerns and introducing innovative technologies that detect, deter and capture footage of criminal activities, retailers can more holistically address the increasing number of safety and security incidents unfolding in their stores today. Video solutions including mounted cameras, body cameras, visible firearm detection and license plate readers can help to thwart in-store crime, while panic buttons and mobile safety applications can support retail associates and managers by swiftly and seamlessly connecting to those who can help when safety concerns arise.





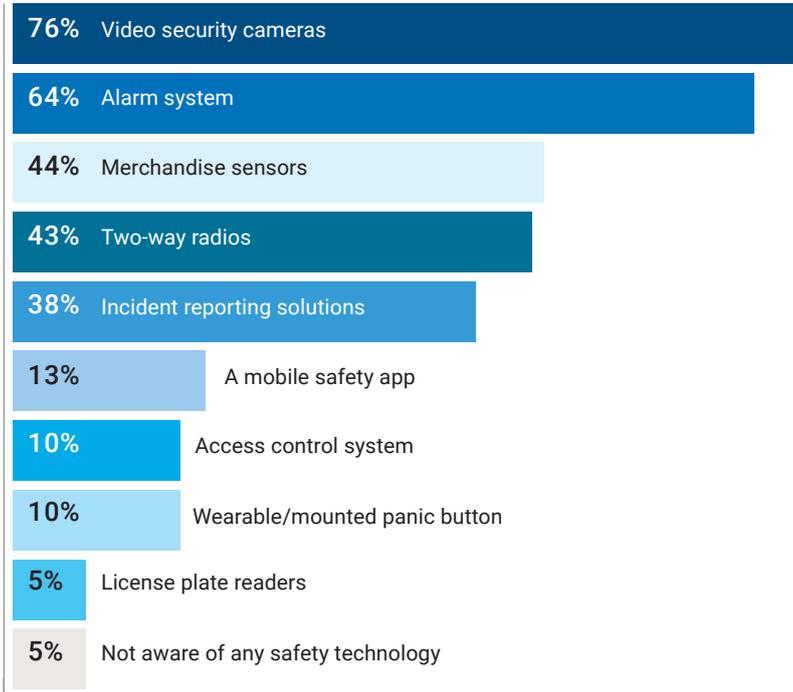
Leveraging updated technology systems can provide all retail employees with the peace of mind they need to perform their job duties and give customers a better shopping experience.

## Technology can be transformative for retail stores

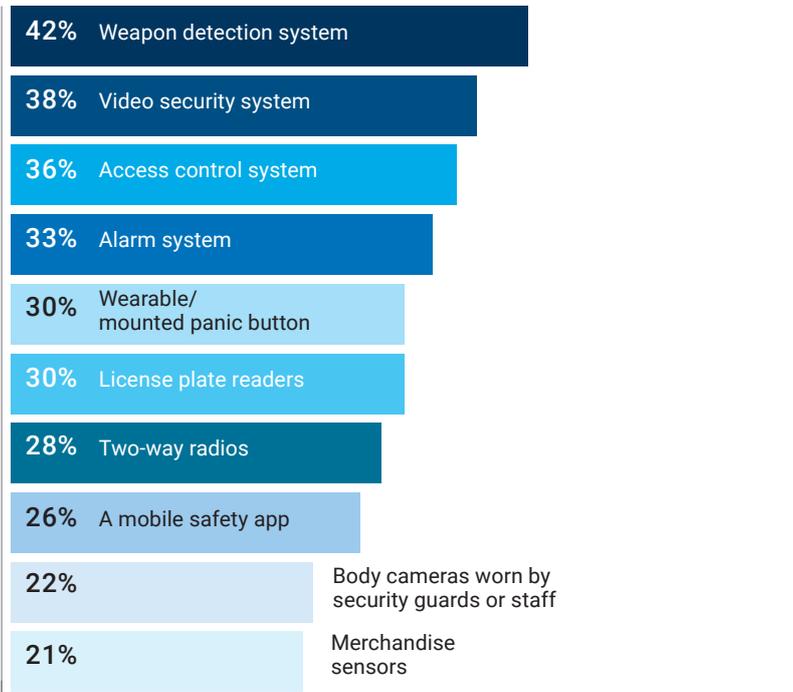
Given employees' concerns about the increase of theft and safety incidents within their stores, it's important for retailers to evaluate the security technologies they use to prevent, detect and respond to threats. Respondents said their stores currently feature video security systems (76%), alarm systems (64%) and merchandise sensors (44%), but that additional technologies would make them feel safer such as access control systems to lock doors when threats are detected (36%), wearable/mounted panic buttons to alert for help (30%) and license plate readers to identify vehicles associated with criminal activity (30%).



## What types of safety technology are you aware of in your store?



## What types of safety technology would make you feel safer at work?





## Conclusion

Retail workers are concerned with the rise of theft and crime targeting stores today, and their concerns are heightened during peak shopping seasons when stores are full and tensions are high. By prioritising associate and manager concerns and upgrading communication processes as well as security technology, retailers can institute the type of changes workers say would help to address safety issues – not to mention improve the in-store experience for shoppers. After all, when store associates and managers can stay keenly focused on serving their customers it's a retail win-win for all.

## About Motorola Solutions

Motorola Solutions is solving for safer. We build and connect technologies to help protect people, property and places. Our solutions enable the collaboration between public safety agencies and enterprises that's critical for a proactive approach to safety and security. Learn more about how we're solving for safer communities, safer schools, safer hospitals, safer businesses – safer everywhere – at [motorolasolutions.com](https://motorolasolutions.com).





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