

UK stores locking up chocolate to stop theft

2nd March 2026



Shopkeepers in the UK are having to go to extreme lengths to stop shoplifters from stealing chocolate. The candy is being locked in plastic security boxes. Customers wishing to purchase a chocolate bar must ask a member of staff to unlock the box. One leading supermarket chain said it has begun using "boxes on products which are regularly targeted" by thieves. A spokesperson for another popular store, the Co-op, told the BBC that chocolate theft was a "massive issue". He said: "In a particular shop, one individual could cost us thousands of pounds in a week." He added that some people would visit a store and "literally swipe the whole shelf" of chocolate.

Chocolate is the latest target of criminal gangs. The UK's Association of Convenience Stores said the candy is being stolen by "prolific offenders" and then sold on the black market. The Co-op spokesman said chocolate was the product most often stolen from its stores in 2024, and was only second to alcohol in 2025. Another retail association said: "Chocolate is now a target, deemed to be 'high value,' so retailers have installed anti-theft devices to prevent it from being stolen." There were 5.5 million reported incidents of shop theft in the UK last year. In London, only five per cent of these end up in the courts. Disturbingly, there are 1,600 daily incidents of violence against shop workers.

Sources: [dailymail.co.uk](https://www.dailymail.co.uk) / [independent.co.uk](https://www.independent.co.uk) / [aol.com](https://www.aol.com)

Writing

Chocolate is the best kind of candy and drink flavour. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

shopkeepers / shoplifters / security boxes / supermarket chain / chocolate / theft / criminal gangs / candy / black market / alcohol / courts / violence / shop workers

True / False

- 1) The article says shoplifters are going to extreme lengths to steal. T / F
- 2) Customers must ask staff to open security boxes to buy chocolate. T / F
- 3) A supermarket said one store was losing millions of pounds a week. T / F
- 4) Some shoplifters steal all of the chocolate on supermarket shelves. T / F
- 5) The article says a lot of stolen chocolate is sold in street markets. T / F
- 6) Chocolate was the product most often stolen from stores in 2024. T / F
- 7) There were over five million incidents of shoplifting in the UK last year. T / F
- 8) There are over 1,500 daily incidents of violence against shop workers. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. extreme | a. occurrences |
| 2. locked | b. pilfering |
| 3. purchase | c. criminals |
| 4. theft | d. secured |
| 5. swipe | e. focus |
| 6. target | f. buy |
| 7. offenders | g. landed up |
| 8. deemed | h. drastic |
| 9. incidents | i. believed |
| 10. ended up | j. steal |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of chocolate?
- b) Why do so many people love chocolate?
- c) What are your favourite chocolate dishes?
- d) Have you ever done or thought about shoplifting?
- e) What would you do if you saw someone shoplifting?
- f) How do you feel about higher prices because of shoplifters?
- g) Is there a lot of shoplifting in your country?
- h) Is it OK for a poor and hungry person to shoplift food?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. shopkeepers in the UK are having to go to | a. offenders |
| 2. candy is being locked in plastic | b. shelf of chocolate |
| 3. ask a member of staff to | c. security boxes |
| 4. products which are regularly | d. theft devices |
| 5. visit a store and literally swipe the whole | e. targeted by thieves |
| 6. chocolate is the latest target | f. up in the courts |
| 7. stolen by prolific | g. extreme lengths |
| 8. chocolate is now a target deemed | h. of criminal gangs |
| 9. retailers have installed anti- | i. to be high value |
| 10. only five per cent of these ended | j. unlock the box |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What do you think of shoplifting?
- How big a crime is shoplifting?
- What should the punishment for shoplifting be?
- What happens to shoplifters in your country?
- How would you feel if chocolate disappeared?
- How can we combat violence against shop workers?
- What questions would you like to ask a shoplifter?

Spelling

- go to reeemxt lengths
- recphsau a chocolate bar
- regularly targeted by eesihvt
- a smsviea issue
- one idindvauil could cost us thousands
- airleytll swipe the whole shelf
- stolen by ifoicprl offenders
- retail sancioasot
- retailers have installed anti-theft svidcee
- ended up in the corsut
- dgrsitinblyu, there are 1,600
- 1,600 daily ndscctien of violence

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. d	3. f	4. b	5. j
6. e	7. c	8. i	9. a	10. g

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions. (Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	What kind of lengths are shopkeepers having to go to?
2.	Who must customers ask to buy a bar of chocolate?
3.	What did the store Co-op call the theft of chocolate?
4.	How much chocolate does one person steal from a store each week?
5.	How much chocolate do people steal from a supermarket shelf?
6.	Who in the UK have made chocolate their latest target?
7.	Where are 'prolific offenders' selling their stolen chocolate?
8.	Which product was stolen more often than chocolate in 2025?
9.	How many incidents of shoplifting were reported in the UK last year?
10.	How many daily instances of violence are directed against shop workers?

Speaking – Chocolate Food

Rank these with your partner. Put the best chocolate things at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| • Chocolate fondue | • Chocolate bar |
| • Chocolate brownie | • Hot chocolate drink |
| • Chocolate-covered bacon | • Chocolate ice cream |
| • Chocolate milkshakes | • Chocolate croissants |

Answers – True False

1	F	2	T	3	F	4	T	5	F	6	T	7	T	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.