

Striking a balance with loss prevention

[Shopper behaviors and attitudes](#) | [Store design, operations, and real estate](#) | [Retailer performance and strategy](#)

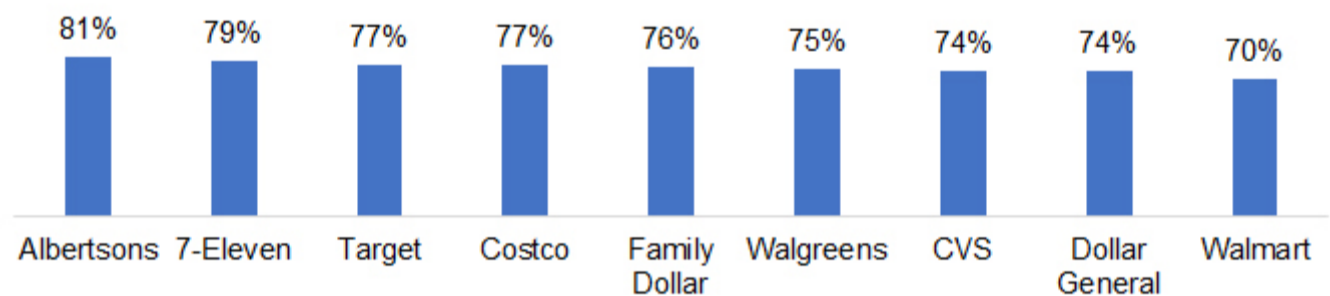


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Retail theft continues to be an issue across brands, retailers, and shoppers. While retailers and brands [invest in loss prevention measures](#) to combat both organized and petty retail theft, balancing the effectiveness of the solution with the impact to the shopper will be critical.

In Q4 of 2023, **71%** of all shoppers noticed items they wanted to purchase were locked away to prevent theft. Shoppers at Albertsons, 7-Eleven, and Target were most likely to notice these loss prevention tactics (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Share of Shoppers Noticing Products They Wanted to Purchase Locked Away to Prevent Theft, by Retailer Shopped
(among all shoppers)




Source: ShopperScape Shopper Sightlines, Q4 2023

Among those shoppers who noticed products locked away, 23% indicated they have avoided shopping at retailers where products aren't easily and readily available on shelf, and nearly half say they still shop those retailers, but find the loss-prevention shelving annoying and frustrating (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Shopper Reaction to Retailer Issues Noticed in Past Three Months
(among all shoppers noticing products locked away to prevent theft)



this issue, but it doesn't
annoy me  32%

Source: ShopperScape Shopper Sightlines, Q4 2023

Shoppers at Sam's Club (29%), Ahold/Delhaize (28%), and Aldi (27%) are more likely than all shoppers to avoid stores with products locked away.

In addition, shoppers who tend to buy the highest quality products and those who tend to stick to a budget when shopping are also more likely than all shoppers to avoid retailers with these loss-prevention measures in place, (27% and 25%, respectively).

While loss-prevention measures do help reduce the risk of shrink, shopper experience takes a hit, especially as shoppers place increasing value on convenience factors such as being able to get in and out quickly and having products in-stock.

Shoppers seeking specific products, such as private label products or natural/organic products may find the experience of having to wait for an employee to unlock a shelf or bring a product out from behind a counter particularly disruptive. In a retail environment where shopper loyalty will determine success or failure in the market, retailers must carefully balance the effectiveness of their theft reduction plans with the impact on loyalty. Some retailers are taking a cue from apparel and testing RFID tags that can be removed at checkout; others are allowing shoppers to scan membership cards and loyalty apps to open shelves. Regardless of the route retailers choose, prioritizing the overall shopper experience will be critical to growth in 2024 and beyond.