

Research Briefing

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Shop opening hours and Sunday trading



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Summary

On Mondays to Saturdays, all shops in the UK (regardless of their size) are free to remain open for as long as they wish. The situation is different in respect to Sunday trading.

The [Sunday Trading Act 1994](#) (the STA 1994) regulates Sunday shop opening hours in England and Wales. There are no equivalent restrictions to the STA 1994 in Scotland, but there are similar restrictions in Northern Ireland.

Currently, under the STA 1994, a distinction is made between large and small shops in respect of permissible trading hours. For the purposes of the Act, a shop is classified as being large if it is over 280 square metres or 3,000 square feet in size.

On Sundays, **large shops** may open for no more than 6 continual hours between the period 10am and 6pm. All large shops must close on Easter Sunday and on Christmas Day.

In contrast, there are no opening restrictions for **small shops** (under 280 square metres or 3,000 square feet). In effect, a small shop could open twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year, including Easter Sunday and Christmas Day, if the owner so wished.

On 23 April 2020, amidst the Coronavirus pandemic, Alok Sharma, then Business Secretary, told the Commons Business Select Committee that he was considering allowing longer shop opening hours on Sundays to assist constituents. The precedent being the temporary changes introduced during the London Olympic Games in 2012. However, there was opposition to this idea from [Usdaw](#) (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers) concerned about employee rights, and from those who for religious or social reasons did not want a further relaxation of the laws, even temporarily. To date, no changes have been introduced.

This briefing paper sets out the current legal position in respect of shop opening hours and outlines the rights of Sunday shop workers contained in the [Enterprise Act 2016](#). It considers the Government's past attempt to devolve Sunday trading rules to local areas. It also considers calls to temporarily suspend Sunday trading hours during the coronavirus pandemic.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to current legislation

Weekday and Saturday trading

Restrictions on shop opening hours on weekday and Saturdays were completely removed for all shops (large and small) by [section 23](#) of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994.

Sunday trading legislation

Prior to the introduction of the current Sunday trading rules, large shops were required to be closed on a Sunday under Part IV of the Shops Act 1950.

The Sunday Trading Bill [Bill 1 of 1993/94] was published on 19 November 1993, presenting Parliament with three options for reforming the law on Sunday trading:

- Total deregulation.
- A regulatory scheme based on proposals supported by the “Keep Sunday Special Campaign” and the “Retailers for Shops Act Reform”.
- A compromise scheme of partial deregulation based on the proposal of the “Shopping Hours Reform Council” (SHRC).

On the first day of the Bill's Committee Stage on 8 December 1993, MPs voted in favour of the SHRC scheme by 333 to 258 votes.

The Bill finished its progress in the House of Commons on 23 February 1994 and was read a second time in the House of Lords on 8 March. On 29 March 1994, the first day of the Bill's Committee Stage, the Lords were given the same free choice as the Commons between the three options for reform. In the event, the SHRC option was also settled on, by 206 to 151 votes.

The Bill received its Third Reading in the House of Lords on 19 May 1994 and returned to the Commons for consideration on 21 June 1994, when the Commons accepted all but one of the Lords' amendments, concerning the treatment of garden centres and DIY stores. On 30 June 1994, the House of Lords concurred with the Commons' objection to this amendment and made no further changes to the Bill.

The [Sunday Trading Act 1994](#) (STA 1994) received the Royal Assent on 5 July 1994 and came into force on 26 August 1994. At the time, the Government said the STA 1994 was a compromise between strongly held and competing views.

Christmas Day trading legislation

Prior to the passing of the [Christmas Day \(Trading Act\) 2004](#) there was no legislation to prohibit Christmas Day opening other than the restrictions affecting large stores under the STA 1994. Under the STA 1974, large shops were required to remain closed on Christmas Day but only when the 25 December fell on a Sunday. Trading was allowed when Christmas Day fell on any other day of the week, although convention had dictated that large shops remain closed.

The 2004 Act was a response to a growing trend for large shops to open on Christmas Day in 2002 and 2003. A campaign by [Usdaw](#) (the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers) argued that large shops should be prohibited by law from opening on Christmas Day on whatever day of the week it falls. Usdaw was concerned that its members were working longer hours over the Christmas period, often for no extra money.¹

The Christmas Day (Trading) Bill, a Private Members' Bill with Government support, was introduced in the House of Commons on 7 January 2004 by Kevan Jones MP. The Act came into force on 9 December 2004.

1.2

Rejuvenating the high street

Rejuvenating town centres and high streets has long been a matter of concern for government. Several complex and interacting trends are impacting town centres, including changes in the retail industry and people's shopping habits, changes in use of office space, and changes in consumer spending power. These issues cover a wide array of policy areas. For a wider discussion of these topics, see the Library briefing: [Town Centre Regeneration](#) (14 December 2021).

Government policy to support high streets is set out in the strategy for high street regeneration [Build Back Better High Streets](#), published by in July 2021.

¹ "Shop workers vote against Christmas Day opening", USDAW press notice, 30 June 2003, (not online)

2 Shop opening hours in England & Wales

2.1 Weekday and Saturday trading

Currently, all shops, large and small, are free to remain open for as long as they wish. There are no restrictions on shop opening hours on weekday and Saturdays.

2.2 Sunday trading

The current Sunday trading rules were established in the [STA 1994](#). The Act introduced a scheme of partial deregulation. The Act makes a distinction between small and large shops.

Small shops

Small shops are not covered by the restrictions of the STA 1994 and can open at any time on a Sunday. In effect, a small shop could open twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year including Christmas Day, if the owner so wished. For the purposes of the Act, a shop is 'small' if its relevant floor area does not exceed 280 square metres or 3,000 square feet in size.

Large shops

Under the STA 1994, shops are 'large' if their relevant floor area exceeds 280 square metres or 3,000 square feet in size. The Act limits the opening hours of large stores in England and Wales on a Sunday to **6 continuous hours** between 10am and 6pm. Large shops must display their opening hours inside and outside the premises.

Under the STA 1994 ([Schedule 2 Part 1](#)) local authorities have a duty to enforce the Sunday trading laws within their area and appoint inspectors. It is an offence punishable on summary conviction by a maximum fine of £50,000, for a large shop to trade on a Sunday in contravention of the provisions of the Act.²

A few types of large shops are exempt from the provisions of the STA 1994 and can open all day on a Sunday (see **Box 1**, below).

² [Section 7\(1\), Schedule 1](#), Sunday Trading Act 1994

1 Shops exempt from the Sunday Trading Act 1994

A few types of large shops are exempt from the provisions of the STA 1994 and are allowed to open all day on a Sunday. These are:

- farm shops
- motor and cycle supply shops
- stands at exhibitions
- pharmacies for the sale of medicines
- shops at airports, railway stations and shops servicing ocean going ships
- shops at petrol filling stations and motorway service stations³
- outlets which offer a service such as restaurants and public houses are also excluded from the restrictions on Sunday trading.

The [Regulatory Reform \(Sunday Trading\) Order 2004](#) has removed the requirement for large shops to notify local authorities of their Sunday trading hours or of any changes.

Loading and unloading of vehicles at large stores

The STA 1994 imposes restrictions on the loading and unloading of vehicles at large shops situated in a loading control area before 9 am on a Sunday. In certain circumstances, consent can be obtained from the local authority to load and unload before this time.

Planning restrictions

It is important to note that there may also be existing restrictions on opening hours of individual premises imposed through planning permissions. These remain in place unless and until the local authority decides to permit a change.

³ [Section 3\(1\), Schedule 1](#), Sunday Trading Act 1994

2.3 Easter Sunday trading

In addition to regulating the opening hours of large shops on Sundays, the STA 1994 prohibits large shops from opening at all on Easter Sunday.⁴ In 2016 the Government said it did not intend to change this.⁵

2 Why are garden centres prohibited from opening on Easter Sunday?

This issue was specifically considered by Parliament during the passage of the Sunday Trading Bill. An amendment proposing that large garden centres should be exempt from closing on Easter Sunday was defeated on a free vote in both Houses.

2.4 Christmas Day trading

Large shops are not permitted to open at all on Christmas Day; this is regulated through separate legislation, the [Christmas Day \(Trading\) Act 2004](#) (see **Box 3** below). In 2016 the Government said it had no intention of amending this Act.⁶

3 The Christmas Day (Trading) Act 2004

- The [Christmas Day \(Trading\) Act 2004](#) prohibits large shops and supermarkets from opening on Christmas Day whatever day of the week it falls. For the purposes of the Act, a ‘large shop’ is defined as being larger than 280 square metre or 3,000 square feet) in size.
- The Act exempts those shops currently exempt from restrictions on Sunday trading under paragraph 3(1) of Schedule 1 of the [STA 1994](#).
- Smaller shops are unaffected by the Act and can open on Christmas Day.
- Under section 3 of the Act, local authorities are under a duty to enforce the prohibition of opening by large stores on Christmas Day and to appoint inspectors for this purpose.

⁴ [Schedule 1](#), Sunday Trading Act 1994

⁵ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills & Department for Communities and Local Government, “[Devolving Sunday Trading Rules – Government Response](#)”, BIS/16/2, 9 February 2016, p.13

⁶ Ibid

The Christmas Day (Trading) Act 2004 also prohibits large shops located in an area designated by a local authority as a loading control area from loading and unloading before 9am on Christmas Day unless,

(a) the relevant authority has granted consent, and

(b) any loading or unloading is carried out in accordance with any conditions attached to that consent⁷

A person who breaches the prohibition on loading and unloading shall be liable to a fine not exceeding level three on the standard scale.

⁷ [Section 2\(1\)](#), Christmas Day (Trading) Act 2004

3

Shop opening hours in Scotland and Northern Ireland

The STA 1994 applies only to England and Wales.

In Scotland, there are no equivalent restrictions to the STA 1994. Sunday trading is completely deregulated. However, shop workers' rights contained in the [Employment Rights Act 1996](#) do extend to Scotland. This means that any changes to shop workers opt-out rights will apply across England, Wales and Scotland (see below).

In Northern Ireland, under the [Shops \(Sunday Trading &c.\) \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1997](#),⁸ large shops can only open on a Sunday between 1pm and 6pm. Large shops are defined as retail businesses with a floor area of more than 280 square metres (3,014 square feet). There are significant fines for large shops that fail to comply. Smaller shops can open whenever they choose. Large retailers must also check whether they require permission from the relevant district council to load and unload goods before 9am on a Sunday.

⁸ [S.I. 1997/2779](#)

4 Employee protection rights

4.1 3.1 Current position

The [Employment Rights Act 1996](#) (the ‘ERA 1996’) extends to England, Wales and Scotland. It contains protections for shop workers from having to work on a Sunday.

Shop workers who started their employment before 26 August 1994 and have to date remained continuously in that employment cannot be required to work on a Sunday, subject to certain exceptions. All other shop workers (except those only employed to work on a Sunday⁹) can give their employer an opting-out notice which, with effect from three months beginning on the day that the notice was given, gives them the right to opt out of Sunday working.

4.2 Enterprise Act 2016: changes to shop workers’ rights

The [Enterprise Act 2016](#) (EA 2016) contains measures to strengthen shop workers’ rights in relation to Sunday working. Specifically, [Schedule 5](#) to the EA 2016 inserts new sections 41A to 41D into the ERA 1996. However, to bring these sections into force requires a commencement order - no date has yet been set for implementation.

Once enacted, shop workers will have a new right to object to working more than their normal Sunday working hours. They will be protected from detriment and dismissal as a result of exercising this new right. There is no minimum service requirement to bring a claim. In brief, the changes will mean that:

- Workers will be required to give only 1 months’ notice to large shops that they object to working on Sundays, rather than the current 3 months.
- There will be a new right for all shop workers to opt out of working more than their normal Sunday hours. This new right will also be subject to 1 months’ notice for shop workers at large shops, and 3 months’ notice for those at small shops.

⁹ For new employees, employers may ensure the need to work on Sundays is agreed when a job offer is made and written into contracts

- Employers' obligations to provide information about the new opt-out rights will be clarified. Employers will be required to provide an explanatory statement notifying employees of their opt-out rights, including the right to opt out of working more than their normal Sunday hours. The statement must also set out where shop workers can find support and advice about their rights.
- Where an employer fails to notify their shop workers in accordance with these requirements, the notice period will, in respect of both opt-out rights, be automatically reduced. For shop workers in large shops the notice period will be reduced from 1 month to 7 days, or for shop workers in small shops, from 3 months to 1 month.
- Where an employment tribunal finds that an employer failed to notify a shop worker of their opt-out rights as required, the tribunal will be able to award the shop worker a guaranteed minimum award (2 weeks' pay, or 4 weeks' pay where the tribunal considers it just and equitable).

5

Suspension of Sunday trading rules - 2012 Olympic Games

On 21 March 2012, George Osborne, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced in his Budget Statement that legislation would be introduced under the fast-track procedure to introduce temporary changes to the STA 1994 during the London 2012 Games (see **Box 4** below). The Chancellor said that it would be a great shame if Britain had a “closed for business sign on it during the Games”.¹⁰ He argued that a suspension of Sunday trading restrictions would assist in ensuring visitors could take full advantage of all the UK has to offer, including its shops.¹¹

The Chancellor confirmed that the suspension of Sunday trading laws was to be a temporary “one-off” measure but added that the Treasury may “learn lessons” from the experiment.¹² At the time, this comment provoked some to accuse the Government of using the Olympics as a step towards the permanent deregulation of Sunday trading.¹³

Further background information is provided in a briefing paper written for Second Reading of the [Sunday Trading \(London Olympic Games and Paralympic Games\) Bill](#).¹⁴

4 Sunday Trading (London Olympic Games and Paralympic Games) Act 2012

- The Act introduced a temporary suspension of Sunday trading restrictions for large shops.
- The suspension only applied to eight consecutive Sundays, beginning on 22 July 2012 (the Sunday before the Olympic opening ceremony), and ending on 9 September 2012 (the Sunday on which the closing ceremony of the Paralympic Games took place).

¹⁰ “[Osborne plans new Sunday trading laws during Olympics](#)”, BBC News [online], 18 March 2012, (accessed 26 January 2022)

¹¹ [HC Deb. 21 March 2012 c.800](#)

¹² Ibid

¹³ “[Anger over plans to extend Sunday trading](#)”, Independent [online], 19 March 2012, (accessed 26 January 2022)

¹⁴ [Sunday Trading \(London Olympic Games and Paralympic Games\) Bill \[HL\]](#), Bill No. 335 2010-12, Research Paper 12/20, 26 April 2012

- In effect, all shops, of whatever size, could choose their own Sunday opening times for the period of the London Games.
- Section 2 contained a sunset clause, ensuring that the Act was repealed on **9 September 2012**.
- Importantly, the Act temporarily reduced the usual period of notice that employees of large shops must give their employers if they wish to opt out of Sunday working, from 3 months to as little as 2 months.
- Some commentators saw the temporary suspension of Sunday trading laws as crucial if large retailers (and the economy) were to benefit from hosting the London Games. Others criticised the Act; in particular, its use of the fast-track procedure and the lack of consultation.

6 Past initiatives to change Sunday trading law

6.1 2006 consultation - no change

Liberalisation of Sunday trading rules

On 13 January 2006, the Government announced a review of the pros and cons of further liberalization of the Sunday trading laws. The Government gave various reasons for instigating this review, including:

- Consumers now have greater expectations. Many more people are in employment, often benefiting from flexible working outside core 9-5 weekday hours. Society is now more multicultural. There is greater recognition that we should only regulate where it is necessary to do so. The Government's belief that the time has come to have a fresh look at the issues around Sunday trading.¹⁵ As part of its review, the Government commissioned an independent cost benefit analysis on the impact of allowing large shops to open for longer.

Nearly 1,000 responses were received to the consultation from consumers, religious groups, employees and business, with no substantial demand for change. On that basis, and having considered all the evidence from the review, Alistair Darling, then Trade and Industry Secretary, announced on 6 July 2006 that there would be no change to Sunday trading laws.¹⁶

6.2 2015 consultation – no change

Devolution of power to local authorities

In August 2015, the Government published a consultation paper in which it sought views on whether it should, as part of its localism agenda, devolve the power to extend Sunday trading hours to areas in England and Wales to give them greater choice and control of their local economy.¹⁷ Specifically, it proposed to devolve the power to extend Sunday trading hours in England to all unitary and shire district councils and in Wales to all county and county borough councils. In London and Manchester, the proposal was to devolve the power to mayors.

¹⁵ Department of Trade and Industry, "No change to Sunday trading law", 6 July 2006, [not online]

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Department for Business Innovation & Skills and the Department for Communities and Local Government, [Sunday Trading – Consultation on devolving Sunday trading rules](#), August 2015

In the consultation document, the Government outlined its view that extending Sunday trading hours across England and Wales could potentially bring significant economic benefits equivalent to an estimated £1.4 billion per year.¹⁸ This would be generated from lower prices as a result of increased efficiency from shops being able to make more use of existing stores. This would amount to £64 per household.¹⁹

It was argued that other potential benefits would include improved productivity by freeing retailers to make better use of large stores allowing them to sell more without a proportionate increase in costs. The Government highlighted an Office of National Statistics survey which found that 15 per cent of individuals would shop later on a Sunday at a supermarket. This represents around 6.1 million adults.²⁰

Greater flexibility for businesses & consumers

More generally, it was the Government's view that devolving Sunday trading rules to local areas would result in the following benefits:

- Offer businesses more flexibility on opening hours.
- Offer shop workers more opportunity to work on Sundays, whilst protecting those workers who do not.
- Offer consumers more choice about when and where to shop locally, irrespective of the size of the store.
- Offer advantages to working families who may be most able to do their shopping at the weekends.
- Allow local areas to decide for themselves as to the right approach to Sunday trading hours to drive competition, productivity and local economic growth.
- Ensure that the Sunday trading rules reflect local preferences, shopping habits and economic conditions.
- Help major cities to compete for international tourism.

Taking all these benefits together, the Government thought that extended Sunday opening hours would encourage an increase in 'footfall' on high streets to the benefit of local businesses (large and small).

Position in other European countries

In its consultation document, the Government drew attention to a [study](#) by the London School of Economics, which compared the effects of extending Sunday trading hours in a number of European countries. It found that the amount people spent on non-durable retail products, such as food, rose by up to 12.5 per cent following deregulation.²¹

The Government also pointed to increasing online retail sales as a rationale for the change, arguing that while Sunday trading restrictions continued to limit shopping on local high streets, consumers could buy from online

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ London School of Economics, [Evaluating the Impact of Sunday Trading Deregulation](#), Centre for Economic Performance Discussion Paper No 1336, Christos Genakos, Svetoslav Danchev, March 2015

retailers at any time.²² For further discussion of online retailing trends, see the Library briefing: [Retail sector in the UK](#).

The Government's response to the consultation was published in February 2016.²³ It acknowledged that some groups were opposed to any changes to the Sunday trading rules for various reasons, not least a desire to keep Sunday special. Nevertheless, the Government had decided to take forward its proposals through amendments to the [Enterprise Bill](#).

On 9 February 2016, Anna Soubry tabled new clause 21 (with new Schedule 1). In a nutshell, the new clause sought to amend the STA 1994, giving powers to "Sunday trading authorities" (i.e., the relevant local authority for the area) to extend opening hours for large shops. The extended hours to apply to the whole or part of the local area. Schedule 1 contained amendments to the [Employment Rights Act 1996](#) and the [Employment Act 2002](#) in relation to Sunday working.

However, on 9 March 2016, the Government abandoned the proposals after they were voted down by the House of Commons. In effect, only **Schedule 1** and the provision of new employment rights on the Sunday opt-out survived.

Pandemic: calls to suspend Sunday trading rules

On 23 April 2020, with restrictions on shopping trips imposed as part of the Coronavirus lockdown measures, Alok Sharma, Business Secretary, told the Commons Business Select Committee that he was considering longer shopping hours on Sundays. He said:

There were temporary changes around the time of the Olympics [in 2012]. I think trade unions, people across the House [of Commons], would want to reflect on the fact that [a] temporary measure may well assist our constituents.²⁴

A group of 40 MPs, led by Nusrat Ghani, supported a relaxation of the rules on the basis that it could give more shopping time to NHS staff and vulnerable customers, while also shortening queues.²⁵ However, there was also opposition from other MPs who were concerned about employee rights or did not want a further relaxation of the laws, even temporarily, for religious reasons.

Supermarkets themselves had different views on the issue. Those that predominantly operate large stores were in favour; Morrisons was already

²² Ibid

²³ Department for Business, Innovation & Skills and Department for Communities and Local Government, [Devolving Sunday Trading Rules: Government Response](#), BIS/16/2, 9 February 2016, p13

²⁴ "[UK considers relaxing Sunday trading laws for supermarkets](#)", Financial Times [online], 24 April 2020, (accessed 26 January 2022)

²⁵ Ibid

opening an hour early on Sunday, contrary to the rules, to offer a shopping window to NHS staff.²⁶ Aldi and Lidl, which do not offer home delivery services, also supported extending Sunday hours.²⁷ However, those with express or convenience store operations (such as Tesco, J Sainsbury and the Co-operative) were less enthusiastic.²⁸

Usdaw was opposed to the idea of longer trading hours on Sundays during the crisis.²⁹ It said that although there were large queues around opening time in some places, shops were relatively quiet later in the day and there was still plenty of stock on the shelves. It suggested that opening for longer on a Sunday would simply make the busy times earlier and the quieter times longer.³⁰

Following press reports on 6 June 2020 that the Government was still considering a deregulation of Sunday trading hours, Paddy Lillis, Usdaw General Secretary, wrote to Alok Sharma. An extract from this letter is reproduced below:

This move to deregulate Sunday trading hours would come across as an opportunistic use of the coronavirus crisis and a slap in the face for each and every worker in retail and the food supply chain.³¹

In the event, there was no formal deregulation of the Sunday trading rules by the Government.

However, during the pandemic some local authorities (for example Wakefield Council and Conwy Council in Wales) decided not to enforce the Sunday trading rules.³² They said this was to distribute the number of consumers visiting supermarkets at any one time, and to give key workers more time to do essential shopping on Sundays. [Usdaw](#) asked for guarantees that this was strictly a temporary measure:

We are aware that some local authorities have stated that they will not prosecute illegal Sunday trading. Given the extent of the crisis the country is facing, we are not going to pursue this, although I'm not sure how much this will benefit key workers or reduce the pressure on the shops.

However, we are only willing to accept this as a short-term temporary situation and we expect the co-operation of shopworkers to be respected and the situation to revert to compliance with the existing trading regulations once

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ "[Sunday trading deregulation call rejected by Usdaw](#)", Usdaw press notice [online], 6 June 2020, (accessed 10 June 2020)

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ "[Sunday trading deregulation would be a slap in the face for key workers says Usdaw](#)", letter from Paddy Lillis, Usdaw General Secretary, to Alok Sharma, Secretary of State for BEIS, 6 June 2020, (accessed 25 January 2022)

³² "[Enforcement of Sunday trading rules temporarily relaxed by Wakefield Council](#)", ITV news release [online], 1 April 2020 (accessed 26 January 2022)

the immediate crisis has eased. Seeking longer term variation of the trading laws is taking advantage of shopworkers' good will.³³

³³ [“Councils not enforcing Sunday trading laws must provide guarantees that this is a strictly temporary measure says Usdaw”](#), Usdaw press notice [online], 2 April 2020, (accessed 26 January 2022)

7 Sunday trading statistics

There are limited statistics on the number of people who shop on Sunday or the proportion of sales made. Official retail statistics are not broken down by day.

In general, retail sales overall have increased over the last two decades. For further information on trends in retail in general, including online sales, see the Library briefing: [Retail sector in the UK](#).

7.1 Sunday working

The number of people who usually work on Sunday has more than doubled since the Sunday Trading Act first came into force in 1994.

- In 1994, **2.1 million people** usually worked on a Sunday, **8.5%** of the workforce.
- In 2021, this figure had risen to **4.6 million**, **18.7%** of the workforce.

Looking at only sales and customer services jobs, in 1991, 63,000 men and 81,000 women usually worked on Sunday. In 2021, 263,000 men and 302,000 women usually worked on Sundays.³⁴

Note that some of this increase is due to an increase in overall retail employment: during the same time period, total retail employment increased by 3.4%, going from 4.6% of all employment to 8.3% of all employment.³⁵

7.2 Public opinions on Sunday trading

YouGov have a bimonthly tracker recording the public's opinion on Sunday opening hours. The most recent results are from 10 January 2022 when 1,811 adults from Great Britain were surveyed. The results were:

- 49% of people thought shops should be allowed to open for as long as they want on Sundays.

³⁴ Data for 1994 comes from ONS article [Two decades of Sunday trading](#), 9 March 2016. Data for 2021 comes from Library analysis of Labour force survey microdata. Both sets of data are for April to June.

³⁵ Library analysis of Labour force survey microdata, April to June 1994 and 2021

- 29% thought that shops should only be allowed to open for six hours on Sundays.
- 14% thought shops should not be allowed to open at all on Sundays
- 7% don't know. ³⁶

In June 2020 the [Government proposed](#) suspending Sunday trading laws for a year in a move to stimulate the economy. Whilst this was never put in place, several polls were carried out around this time. YouGov carried out a survey of 4,300 adults on 8 June 2020, with the following results:

- 48% supported removing the limit on how long shops in England and Wales can open on Sundays for the next year.
- 31% opposed removing the limit.
- 21% don't know. ³⁷

The Guardian reported that polling conducted by Populus on 7 May 2020 showed that 58% of consumers supported the existing trading regulations, compared with 21% who didn't. ³⁸

The trade union Usdaw (The Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers) surveyed 11,631 retail staff in England and Wales in June 2020 and found that:

- 92% opposed large shops opening for more than 6 hours on a Sunday.
- 66% feel they are pressured to work more on Sundays.
- 51% want fewer hours on Sunday with only 3% wanting more. ³⁹

According to ACS (Association of Convenience Stores) 90% of shopworkers oppose changes to Sunday trading laws (as of June 2020). ⁴⁰

³⁶ YouGov, [Sunday opening hours](#) (last accessed 24 January 2022)

³⁷ YouGov, [Would you support or oppose removing the limit on how long shops in England & Wales can open on Sundays for the next year?](#) 8 June 2020 (accessed 26 January 2022)

³⁸ [England could suspend Sunday trading laws in push to boost economy](#), Guardian [online], 6 June 2020 (accessed 26 January 2022)

³⁹ [Sunday trading: Usdaw survey finds 92% of shopworkers oppose longer hours, with two-thirds pressured to work on Sundays](#), Usdaw news [online], 18 June 2020 (accessed 26 January 2022)

⁴⁰ [Changes to Sunday trading won't kickstart a retail recovery](#), ACS blog, 9 June 2020 (accessed 26 January 2022)

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