

# PRIMARK®

The high street anchor



# PRIMARK

Primark's impact on  
the UK economy and  
communities

2024





Public First is an independent consultancy that works to help companies and organizations develop new policy proposals, better understand public opinion, and model their economic and social impact. Public First is a member of the Market Research Society.

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# PRIMARK®

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# Foreword

Shops are at the heart of communities across the country and the high street is part of the fabric of society. High streets are a central point for people not only to shop, but to gather, socialise, and build and share community values.

With 193 stores across the UK and directly employing more than 30,000 people, we are privileged to be a part of those communities. We have stores on the high streets of towns and cities across the UK, as well as in major shopping centres and retail parks. Whether it's Birmingham, the home of the world's largest Primark, or Hamilton, home to our smallest Primark, what all of our stores have in common is the unique role they play in the communities they serve.

We know from what we see every day in our stores, and from the comments of our customers, other businesses, local civic groups and organisations, that the impact we have is so much more than just the products we sell.

We are often described as a high street anchor. This research was commissioned to help us deepen our understanding of the wider impact our stores have on the high street, and to understand why the high street is so important to society.

Each week more than 2.3 million people cite Primark as their main reason for visiting the high street – but their visit doesn't start and end with us. Half go on to spend money in other shops, while a similar number also visit local restaurants. For every £10 spent in Primark, it is calculated that a further £3.60 is spent in other stores, restaurants and cafes.

But the high street provides so much more than a place to shop or eat. A sense of community is what makes us human. For many people visiting shops is one of the most frequent interactions with other people.

That's why our commitment to physical retail in the UK has never been greater. This year we're investing £100 million in creating new and improved stores. It is 50 years since we opened our first store in Great Britain in Derby in 1974. We opened with the ambition of making fashion more affordable and accessible to everyone and, today, with many people and families struggling to make ends meet, it has never been more relevant. People want to be able to easily buy quality and affordable clothing for themselves and their family, and don't want to compromise on sustainability. Our own sustainability strategy, Primark Cares, aims to ensure that we are always making progress towards making more sustainable choices affordable for everyone.

There is no doubt that high streets up and down the country are facing unprecedented challenges right now – antisocial behaviour and retail crime are rising, the costs of doing business continue to increase and consumers have less money in their pockets. But this must not deter investment. Not least because this report finds that high streets really matter to people. They add to people’s lives in a way that online shopping will never be able to do.

We know that if we want high streets to thrive and succeed, we need organisations, businesses and government to come together and tackle these challenges. A successful high street provides stable jobs, drives economic value, and fosters community.

We’re committed to playing our part and we want others to join us to ensure a bright future for the UK high street. A healthy, vibrant and buzzing high street is not just good for business, it’s good for everyone.

**Paul Marchant**  
Primark Chief Executive





# Key findings



# £2.6bn

# 54,000 jobs

Every week, Primark stores draw 2.3 million people onto the high street by acting as the main reason for visiting. This suggests that Primark plays a significant role in the over 29 million visits that people make to the high street each week.

Primark contributes £2.6 billion to the UK economy and supports 54,000 jobs in this country. It has a large impact in constituencies that have experienced low employment historically, including Birmingham Ladywood, Sheffield South East, Liverpool Riverside, Manchester Central and Thurrock, home to the Birmingham High Street, Sheffield Meadowhall, Liverpool, Manchester and Lakeside stores respectively.

# 2.3m



£10



+£3.60

For every £10 spent in Primark customers go onto spend an extra £3.60 in other retail stores and restaurants. When people choose to travel to shop in Primark, 6 in 7 then go on to other stores; and over half make a purchase. Nearly half eat out. We calculate this drives another £1 billion of spending in other stores and £500 million in restaurants each year. 6 in 7 of these Primark shoppers visit other stores, over half make a purchase and nearly half eat out.

The public think the high street would be less popular, with less money spent, if Primark didn't exist. The vast majority of people – from every socio-economic and age group – have shopped with Primark.

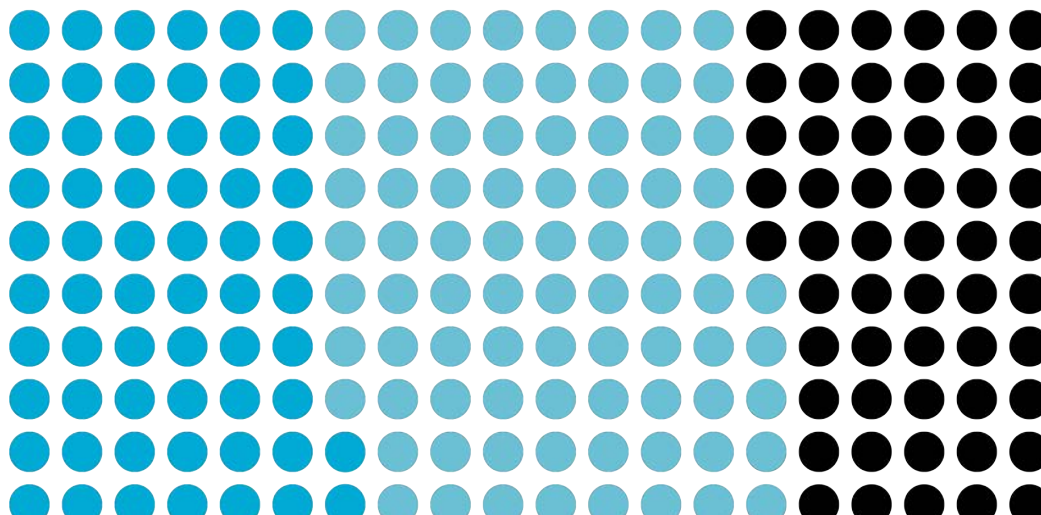


# 62

# 145

# 205

Of the 205 Primark store managers, 62 have worked there for over 20 years – and 145 for more than 15 years. One Primark colleague has been working at the Ipswich store for 43 years.



PRIMARK



PRIMARK

# Introduction



# Primark is an international fashion retailer employing more than 80,000 colleagues across 17 countries in Europe and the US.

This report focuses on Primark’s impact in the UK, where the company has over 190 stores across our towns and cities.

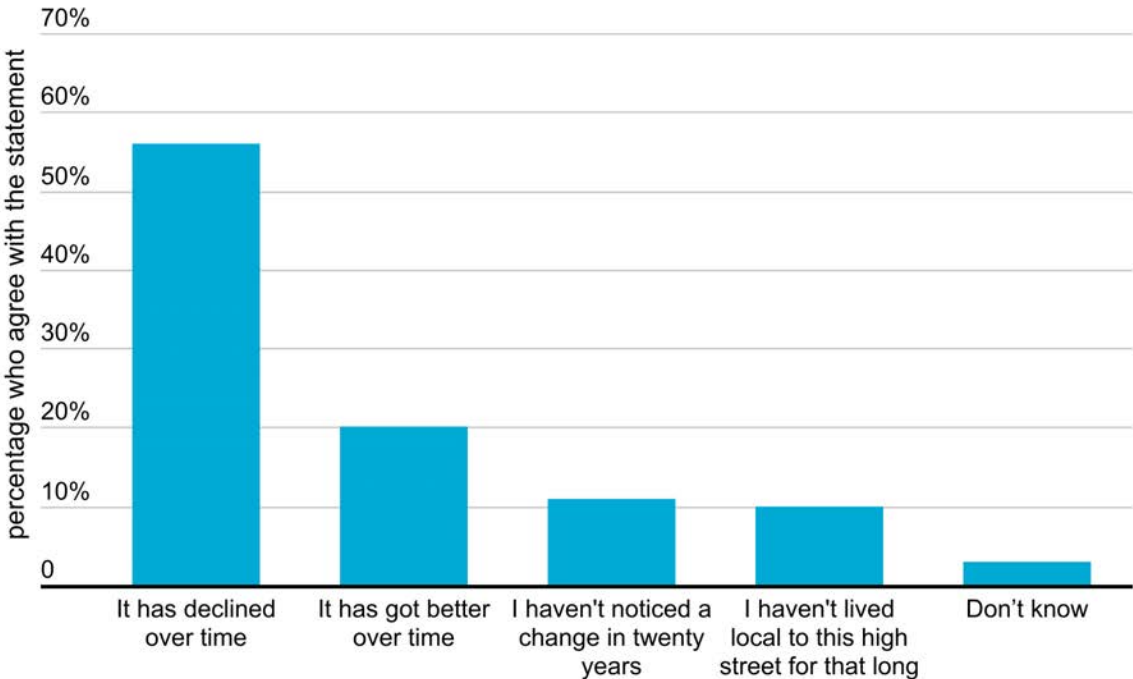
Public First’s new research – a national opinion poll, focus groups and immersive research with Primark’s customers and colleagues, as well as new economic modelling – shows that Primark is a critical ‘high street anchor’, drawing people into town and city centres to the benefit of other nearby stores. This is particularly important for smaller towns.

## The high street

To understand the contribution of Primark, we must first understand the high street’s role. The high street is evolving, as it has many times in history. Before household refrigeration, many people had to shop almost every day. A fridge, a freezer and a car changed that forever, leading to the rise of the “weekly shop”. For many, though, shopping was still a time-consuming necessity. Now, online shopping is shaping both the way we shop and our motivations for visiting the high street. People no longer have to visit the high street, so it is evolving once again. The high street is now an all-day destination in its own right, a place for pleasurable experiences, a place to treat yourself. This next reorientation sees two stand-out winners. The first are leisure destinations – for example, beauty salons, bars and restaurants. The second are retailers who offer something that can’t be found online, and who create a rich experience in their stores. Clothing stores - which allow you to see and above all feel the merchandise - are the best example. They are a destination. Primark is a leader in this group.

High streets matter. 82% of people think their high street is important for people to have pride in their local area, and 84% think more should be done to support the health of UK high streets. Over half think their local high street has declined in the last decade, with the same number noticing fewer clothing stores and department stores.

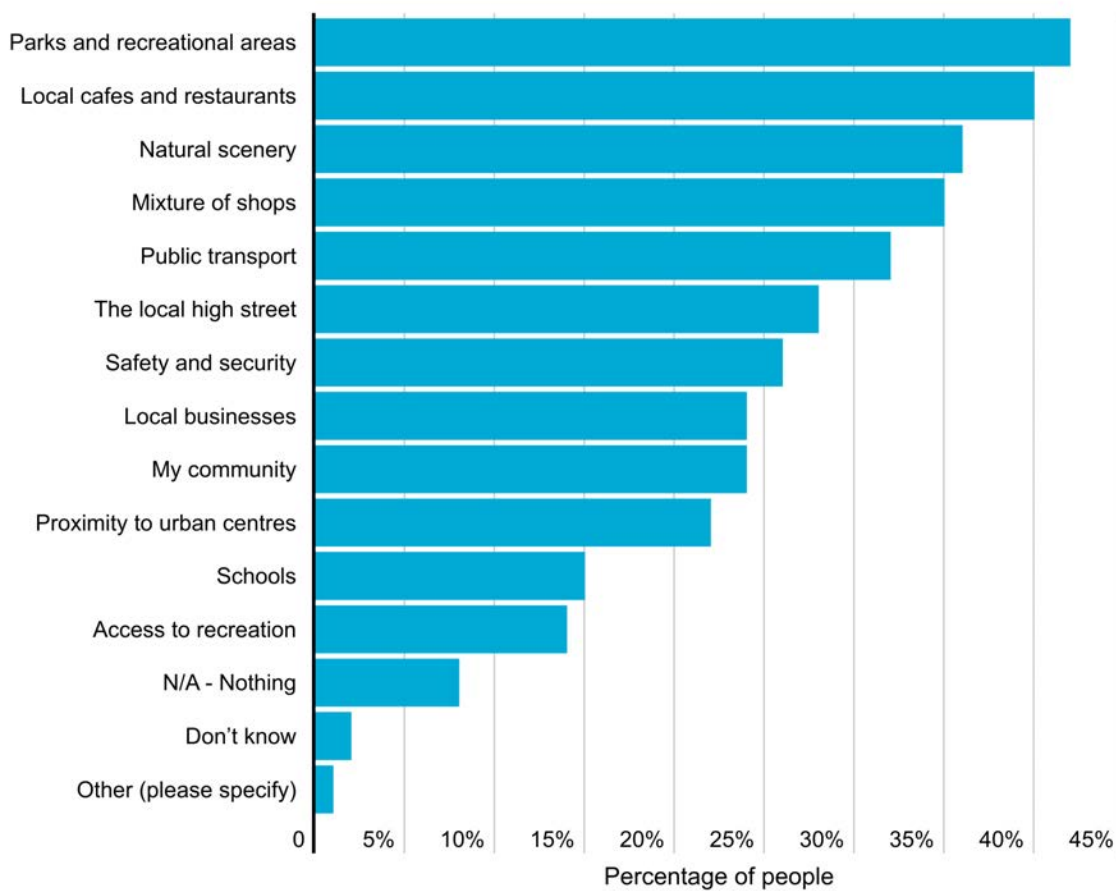
Thinking about the high street closest to you, how has it changed over the last twenty years?



# What people like about their local area

When it comes to their local area, people like to have easily accessible green spaces, cafes and restaurants, and a mix of stores. That mix includes clothing: 3 in 10 people say they would be more likely to visit their high street if it had more clothing stores.

Thinking about your local area, what do you like about it?



As well as an enjoyable shopping experience, a flourishing high street increases local employment prospects, and supports more local businesses. These benefits are most keenly felt by those who live closest to a high street.

In the survey, those over 65 were the most likely to buy goods on the high street, and over half said it was important that “those who don’t shop online have access to stores”.

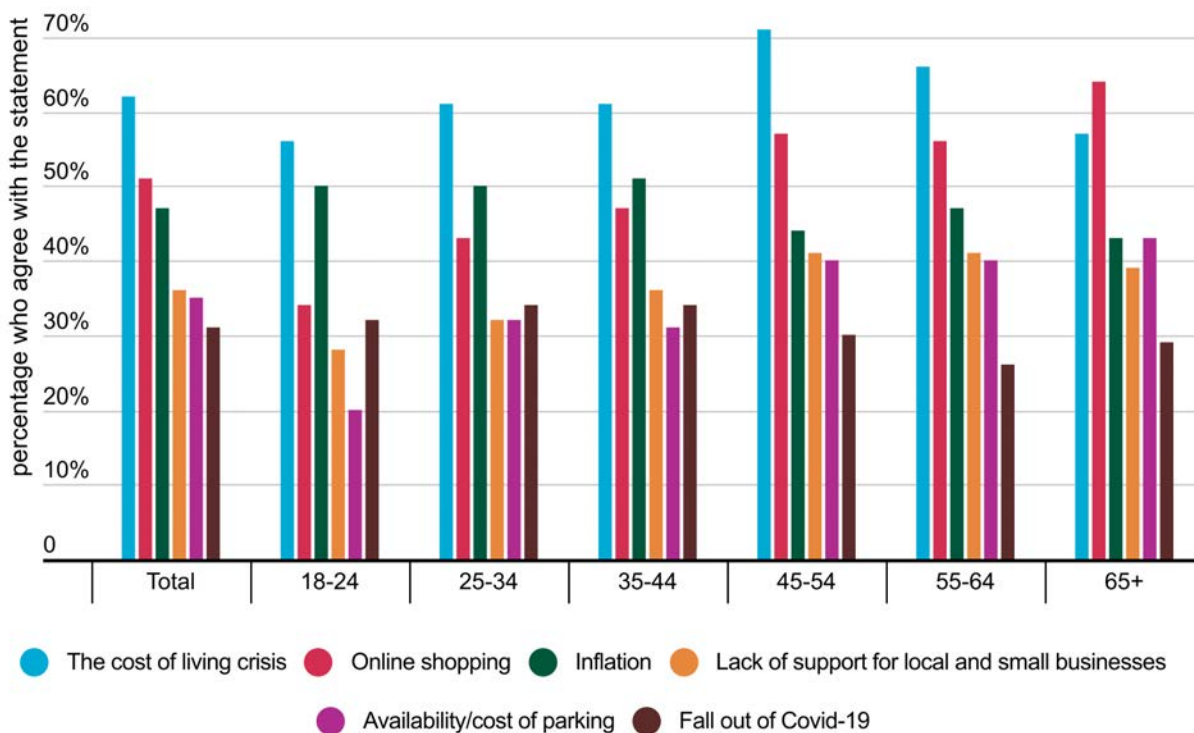


**82%** of people think their high street is important for people to have pride in their local area, and **84%** think more should be done to support the health of UK high streets.

# Challenges facing the high street

Our high streets are in a period of transition. Our polling showed that 70% think inflation threatens the high street, with working-age people particularly worried. The rise of working from home has made it much easier for people to be in when a parcel is delivered, increasing the attractiveness of online shopping.

In your view, what are the biggest challenges facing the high street closest to you?



Nearly half say the cost of living means fewer visits to the high street. Many – especially in lower socioeconomic groups – report cutting out non-essentials or eating out. They are also the most likely to say their high street is run down. Overall, retail footfall in summer 2023 was 89% of 2019 levels.<sup>1</sup>

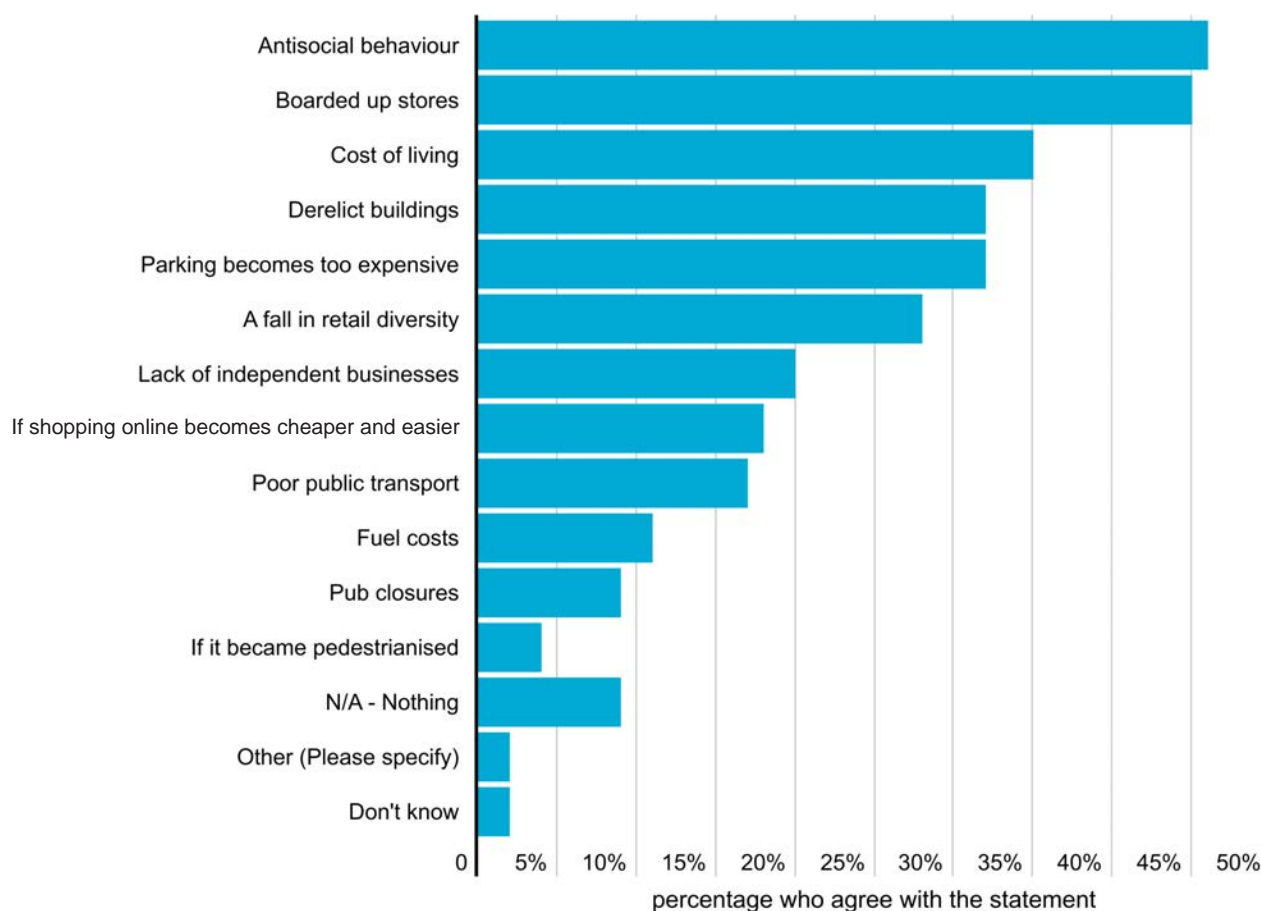
Despite some recovery from Covid, retailers are also struggling with higher energy costs and rising wages. The Federation of Small Businesses found over half of small high street businesses need business rate relief (not confirmed past 2025) to survive. The British Retail Consortium named rising rents and business rates as prime drivers of rising shop vacancies.

1 ONS Economic Activity 13 July 2023

## Rising crime on the high street

People are actively discouraged from their local high street not only by empty stores and derelict buildings, but also by a rise in antisocial behaviour and crime. Focus groups confirm that this is a growing concern, with reports of low-level violence on high streets across the country. There were over a million reports of antisocial behaviour in the UK between April 2022 and April 2023. Much antisocial behaviour also goes unreported, but when it is, up to 75 per cent of reported incidents go unattended by some police forces.<sup>2</sup>

What would stop you from shopping on this high street, if anything?



Antisocial behaviour, which includes psychological and physical abuse and theft, has a significant impact on retail workers. Usdaw found that 31% had experienced violence, threats and abuse in 2022, more than double the 2016 level.<sup>3</sup> The British Retail Consortium (BRC) found that attacks on staff including “racial and sexual abuse, physical assault, and threats with weapons rose from 450 per day in 2019/20 to over 1300 per day in 2021/22”.<sup>4</sup> The cost of retail crime was £1.76 billion in 2021/22. Failing to address these problems could lead to challenges around employee retention or difficulty in attracting people to certain shifts.<sup>5</sup>

2 Research by Liberal Democrats using Freedom of Information requests  
3 <https://www.usdaw.org.uk/About-Us/News/2023/May/Worrying-increase-in-shoplifting>  
4 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-68290879>  
5 BRC Crime Survey 2023

PAY HERE

# Primark's economic and social footprint

Primark first opened its doors in 1969 in Dublin, Ireland under the Penneys brand, with the purpose of providing affordable choices for everyone. As well as great quality everyday essentials to stand-out style across women's, men's and kids' clothing, it offered beauty, homeware and accessories, with a focus on creating great retail experiences.

After opening its doors in Ireland, it went on to expand to Northern Ireland in 1971 before opening its first store in Great Britain in Derby in 1974 under the Primark name.

Today, Primark employs 80,000 people across 17 countries in Europe and the US.<sup>6</sup> It has more than 190 stores on high streets and retail parks in city centres and towns across the UK, employing more than 30,000 colleagues. Its UK Head Office can be found in Reading.

Drawing on financial, headcount and supply chain data provided by Primark, Public First has quantified the economic impact of Primark UK, from stores and Head Office, the supply chain, and employee spending. Economic output is calculated in terms of gross value added, a widely-used measure of the economic importance of different businesses and sectors. Public First has quantified:

- **The direct economic impact of Primark** – economic output and jobs created directly by Primark in its stores and Head Office.
- **The supply chain economic impact of Primark** – economic output and jobs created by Primark's supply chain spending – e.g. spending on goods manufactured in the UK, logistics, computer equipment and professional services.
- **The employee spending economic impact of Primark** – economic output and jobs created by Primark employees and employees along Primark's supply chain spending money in the wider economy – e.g. on housing or retail.



We estimate that, in the UK, Primark supports £2.6bn of economic activity and 54,000 jobs per year.

**Just under 33,000 jobs are Primark's direct employment footprint, with over 20,000 additional jobs in the supply chains – including warehousing, transportation and construction – and from employees spending money in the wider economy.** Primark's largest contributions to jobs along supply chains are in the wider retail sector, logistics, security services, employment services and real estate.

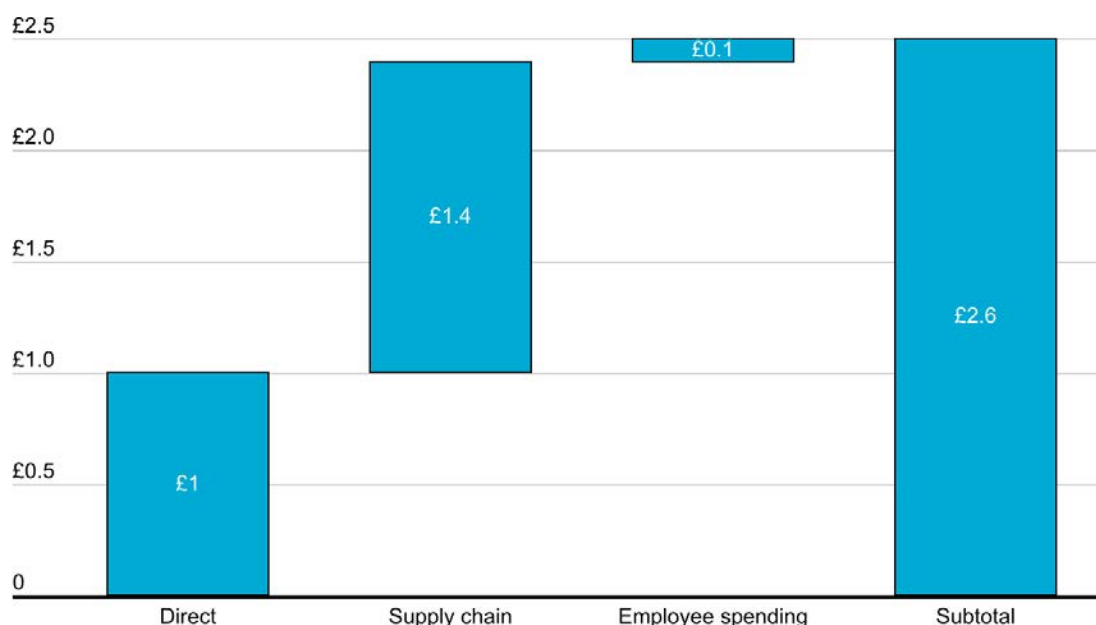
More people work for Primark in the UK (32,900 jobs) than the entire UK television broadcasting (29,000), shipbuilding (26,000) and pharmaceutical manufacturing (30,000) industries.

6 <https://corporate.primark.com/en-gb/a/about-us/who-we-are>

Primark has the highest value added impact on the economy in these 5 constituencies:

- **The Cities of London and Westminster**, home to Primark’s two Oxford Street stores (£167m of GVA and 3,000 jobs supported)
- **Birmingham, Ladywood**, which hosts the largest Primark in the world (£120m of GVA and 2,100 jobs)
- **Reading East**, where Primark’s Head Office is based (£107m of GVA and 900 jobs)
- **Suffolk Coastal**, with the port town of Felixstowe being an important entry point for goods sold in Primark (£73m of GVA and 650 jobs)
- **Milton Keynes North**, where a store opened in 2019; it is also home to a major Primark supplier (£46m of GVA and about 700 jobs)

GVA impact of Primark in the UK, £ billions

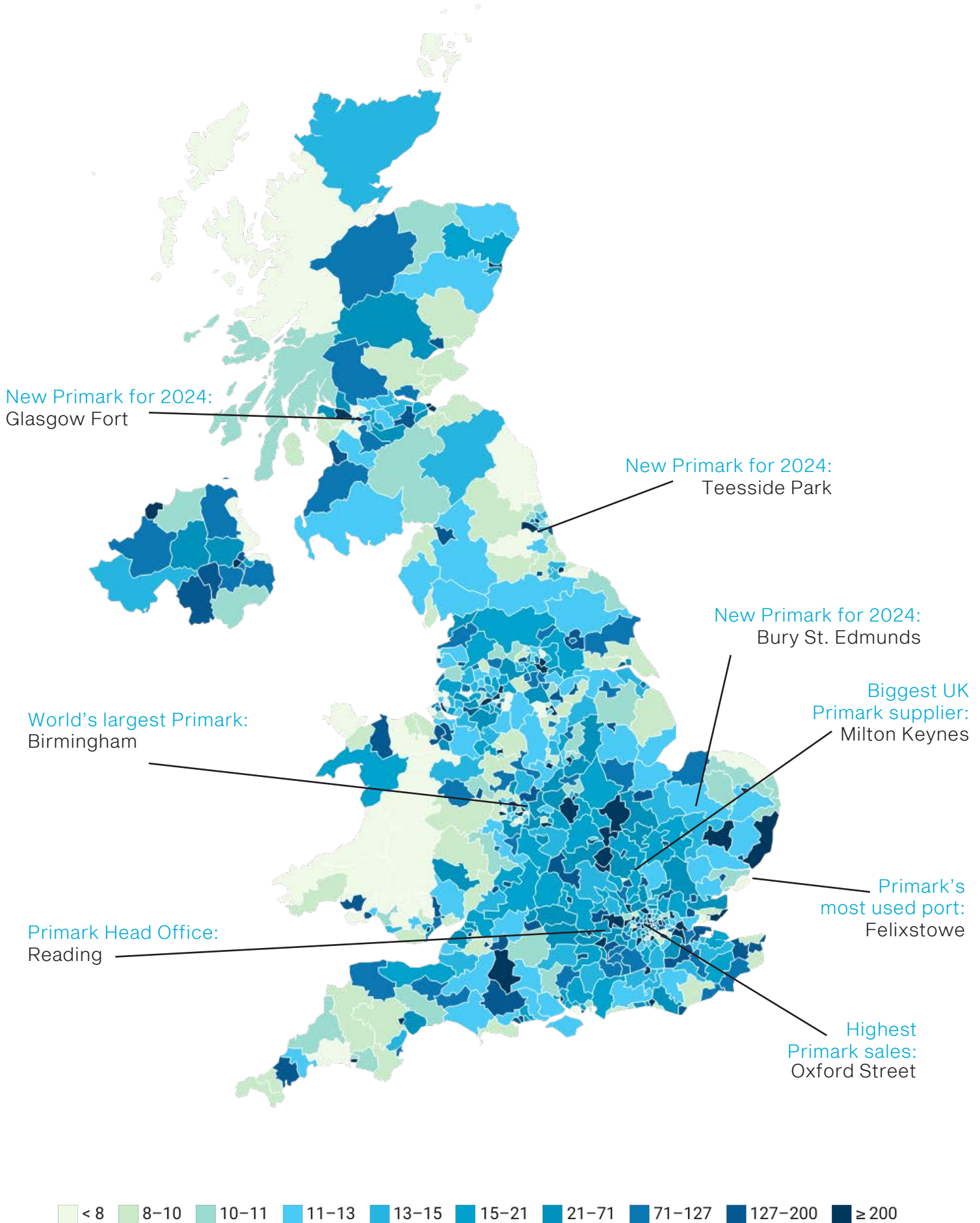


Primark’s stores and supply chains are nationwide. The map below shows the estimated impact by parliamentary constituency in the UK.

Primark’s economic impact is large in constituencies where unemployment is relatively high, including:

- **Birmingham, Ladywood** (Birmingham High Street store): 700 direct and 2100 total employees in an area with 9.3% unemployment last year, compared with 3.6% for the UK as a whole
- **Liverpool, Riverside** (Liverpool store): 670 people directly in an area with 6.2% unemployment
- **Manchester, Central** (Manchester store): 600 direct and 900 wider jobs, 7.5% unemployment
- **Thurrock** (Lakeside store): 470 direct jobs in an area with 8.3% unemployment
- **Sheffield South East** (Sheffield Meadowhall store): 430 direct jobs with 9.2% unemployment

Jobs supported by Primark across the UK



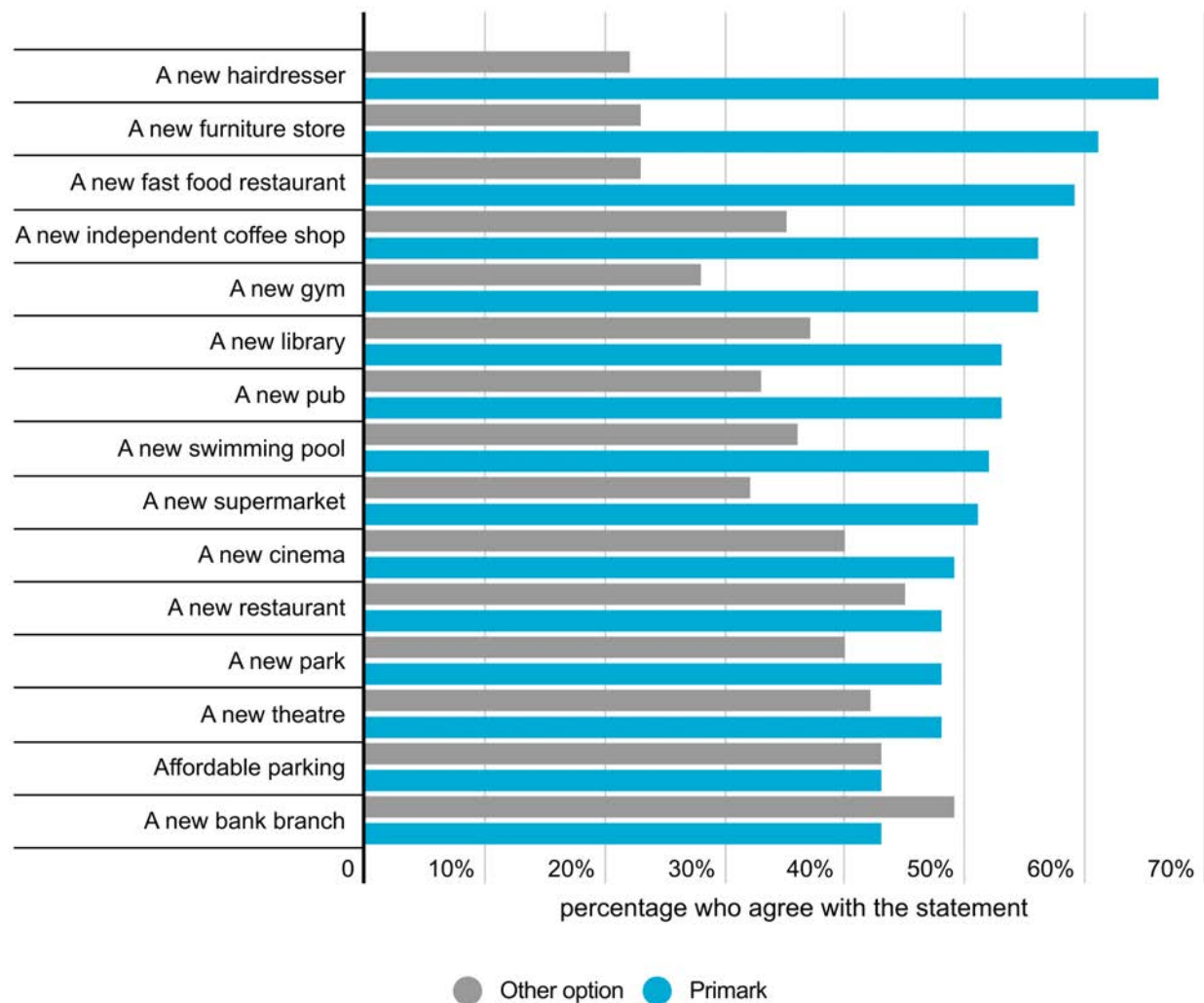
# Primark: the high street anchor



Primark, with its offer of affordable items, is a popular choice for what people want to see on their local high street today. It substantially outscores almost every alternative, including a hairdresser, a gym, a coffee shop, a swimming pool, and a cinema.

This drives footfall. In 2020, a Springboard report for the Financial Times found that high street footfall rose more than two fifths on the day a new Primark opened – and remained 7 per cent higher six months later. This compared with a 2.6 per cent decline in footfall across UK retail in the same period.<sup>7</sup>

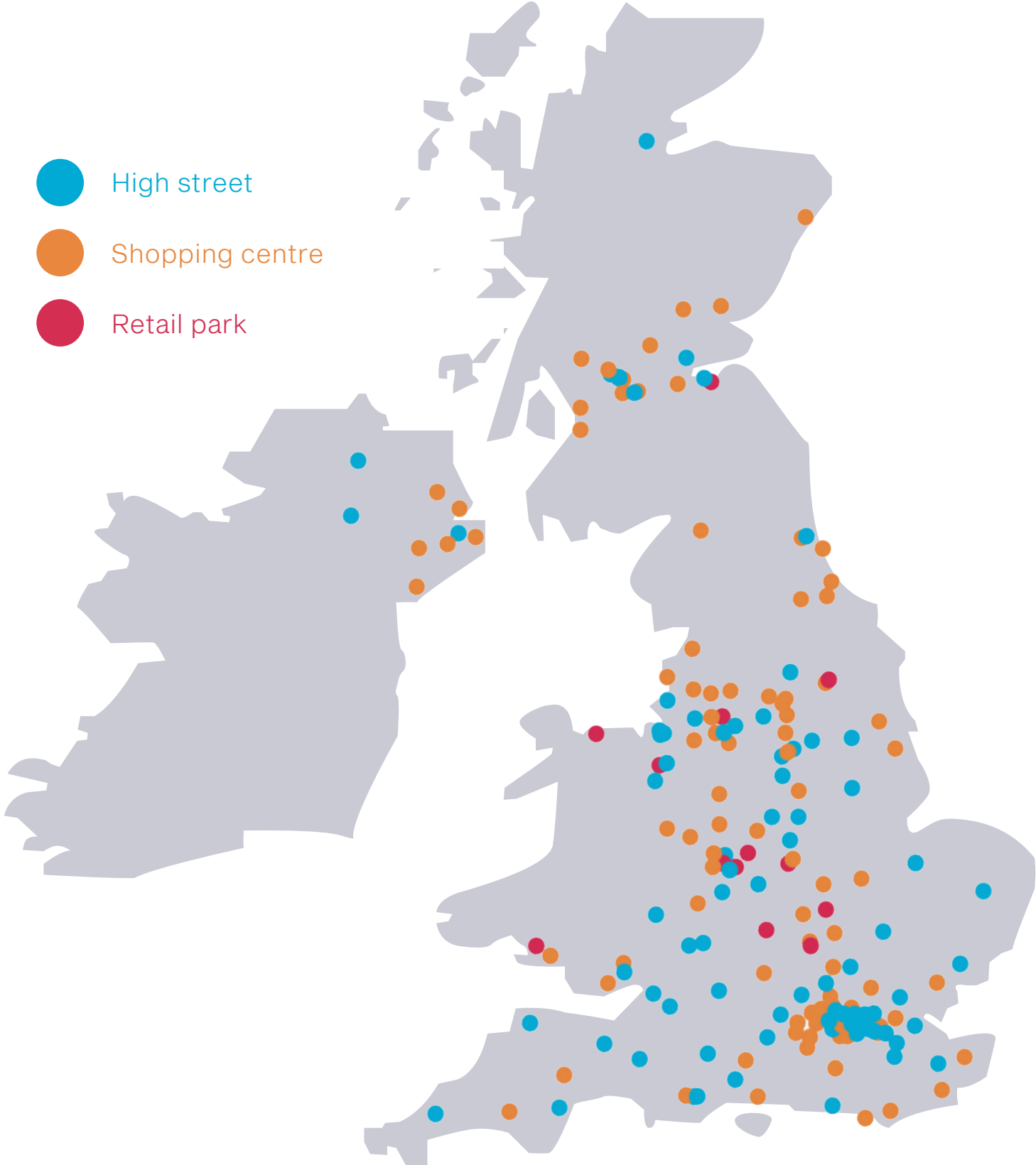
Given the choice, which of the following would you want to be opened on the high street closest to you?



People, particularly those under 45, say Primark leaving would make a high street less affordable and less popular.

Most people, of all ages and backgrounds, will have visited Primark. In the last week, we estimate 5 million adults visited Primark. If people go shopping for the day, over 3 in 5 are likely to visit Primark. The retailer holds widespread appeal, although younger people and those on lower incomes are especially likely to go into Primark.

# Primark stores across the UK



## CASE STUDY

# Primark in Barnsley

Public First did immersive research in Barnsley, South Yorkshire. Barnsley sits between the cities of Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester, and towns like Doncaster, Huddersfield, Rotherham and Wakefield. It has a proud industrial heritage of linen, coal mining and glassmaking, but has struggled economically in recent times.

**Barnsley's high street** is viewed locally as an attractive destination and is also home to a Primark. People remark:



"I know how the old Barnsley was ten years ago. It's much better now."

*Female, middle-aged*

"It's got a lot busier... everything complements each other. A lot of the small independent retailers and the big ones bring people in. It works hand in hand."

*Male, middle-aged*



**Primark's role on the high street.** Local people see Primark as integral to their high street. They volunteered without prompting that people came to Barnsley because of Primark and other stores benefited from the footfall.



"it brings people in [to the town]. ...you need that."

*Female, middle-aged*

"Primark's quite useful... [it] brings people to [our shop]."

*Female, shop owner, middle-aged*



**Primark's role in daily life in Barnsley.** People told us they bought everything at Primark, noting the range, quality and prices, which was especially prominent in family life.



"I go very often because it's cheap and good quality...It's good for regular people on minimum wage salaries, for everybody's budget it's very good."

*Female, middle-aged*

"for kids' stuff it's the only place... they grow fast and wreck stuff."

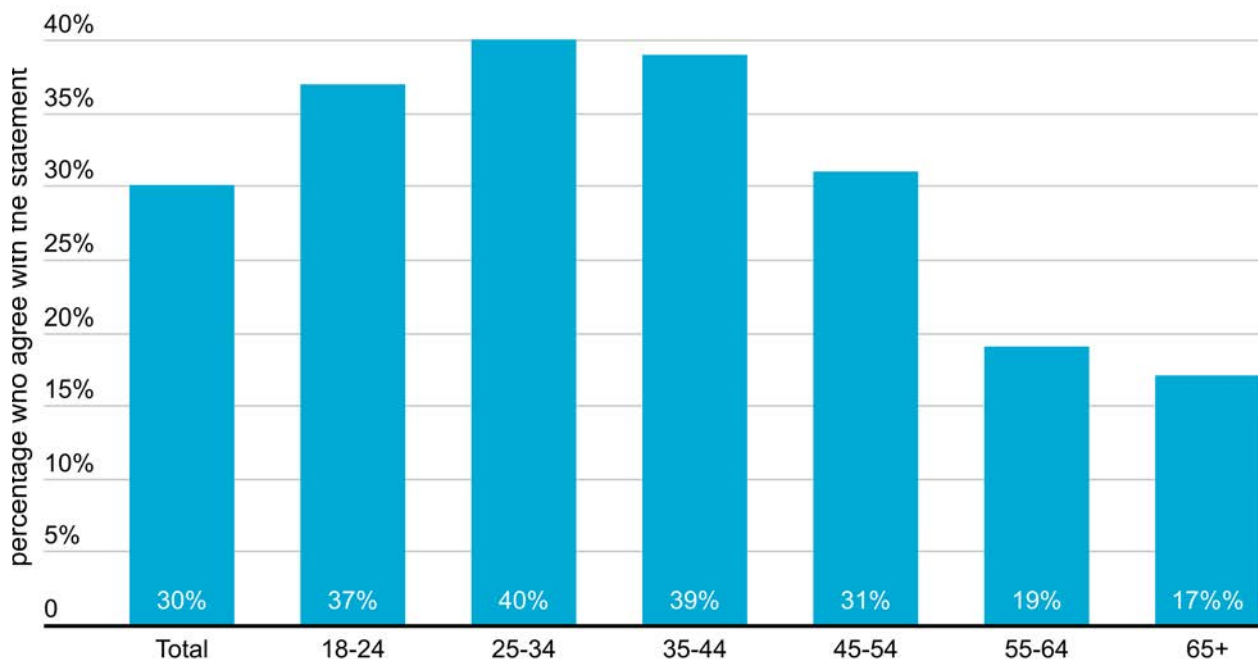
*Female, middle-aged*



# Primark and high street spending

Primark drives high street trips. 30% of the public – almost 40% of working age adults – have visited a town or shopping centre to shop at Primark at some point in their lives. This research shows that Primark draws 2.3 million people into the high street every week, with Primark acting as a primary reason for going to the high street. 2.3 million is a significant part of the total 29 million visits that people make to the high street each week.<sup>8</sup>

Have you ever visited another town or city centre further away from you primarily to visit Primark?



**6 in 7** of these Primark shoppers visit other stores, over half make a purchase, and **nearly half eat out**. Primark supports about £1 billion of spending in other stores and £500 million in restaurants each year - spending that occurs entirely because people have chosen to travel for Primark.

The customers who travel to shop in Primark spend £3.60 in other stores and restaurants for every £10 they spend in Primark

Internal data suggests **Primark also attracts overseas shoppers – particularly to Oxford Street and Westfield in London, but also to Manchester, Edinburgh and Liverpool. Tourists take special bus trips to the Primark Birmingham store.**

<sup>8</sup> A survey commissioned for the *High Street Report* found that 53% of adults visit the high street once per week – 29 million adults. Total high street visits is likely to be higher than this given some individuals will visit more than once per week.



## Primark in Birmingham

Primark's Birmingham flagship opened in April 2019 in what was previously the Pavilion shopping centre. The 5-floor store covers 160,000 square feet, and officially holds the Guinness World Record for the biggest retail store in the world. Primark Birmingham employs more than 750 colleagues to keep it running smoothly, and draws thousands of shoppers every day – amounting to roughly 80,000 shoppers coming through its doors every week. The store was designed with the idea to create much more than just a space to shop, building a shopping destination where customers can shop the latest trends and everyday essentials, but also spend quality time with friends and family, recharge and have fun. As well as the full range of Primark products across womenswear, menswear, kidswear, beauty, home and lifestyle, the store includes Disney's first officially licensed cafe outside its own resorts and cruise ships; a hairdresser and barbers; a beauty studio; a customisation station where shoppers can embellish their purchases; and a Tasty by Greggs cafe. Shoppers come from all over the UK, and beyond, to visit the store.



Primark continues to invest millions in growing and enhancing its stores across the UK, demonstrating its long-term commitment to UK retail and the high street. It will invest £100 million in 2024 alone, including opening new stores in Bury St. Edmunds, Teesside Park and Glasgow Fort. In addition, fifteen stores will be refurbished. Westfield Stratford will almost double in size, while Newcastle's Metrocentre will become one of the largest in the country. These plans will create 700 new jobs.

Primark has also introduced new services designed to give people another reason to want to make the visit to their local store. This includes offering Click + Collect across 57 stores and enhancing the experience on offer in stores to include beauty services, food and drink outlets, and vintage clothing concessions.

# The demand for Primark

Calls for a new Primark are common in towns across the UK. People want to shop there, and they know that a Primark will support other local shops.

In 2024 Primark opened a new store in Bury St Edmunds. 750 people queued outside to wait for opening and more than 11,000 people visited the store on its first Saturday. Again, Primark drew people in: footfall doubled in the shopping centre compared with the previous year.



Bridgewater Mercury - 25th November 2024

Bridgewater Mercury

## Bridgewater residents propose turning former cinema into Primark

BRIDGWATER locals have proposed a diverse array of potential new uses for the former Penel Orlieu cinema and bingo hall - including turning it into a Primark.

The building, now vacant since South...



The demand for a Primark clothes store was the most popular suggestion in a readers...

St Helens  
15TH JAN  
CE ISSUE WEATHER  
NING TO MOTORISTS



MANY STAR READERS BELIEVE A PRIMARK WOULD HELP REVITALISE ST HELENS' RETAIL AREA

## Other nearby towns and cities have a Primark - so why not St Helens?

THERE are few issues that generate debate like the plight of St Helens town centre.

Like many areas around the country, the central retail area has witnessed the departure of many national brands.

It has left gaps on the high buildings that used to thr...

PLENTY OF RETAILERS REMAIN

However, there is a lack of retail in St Helens, such as...

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## Calls for Primark to open in Ashford in MP Damian Green's town centre survey



County Square would be... for Primark

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## Primark opens in Bury St Edmunds to queues of excited shoppers

Shoppers queued in the cold this morning to be among the first inside a new clothing store.

Primark in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, and shoppers were greeted by



The first Primark in Bury St Edmunds opened at 10am

6 March 2024

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ANUARY 2023

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## CASE STUDY

# Primark in Salisbury

We undertook immersive research in Salisbury, where Primark opened a 29,700 square foot store in September 2023. This was the first new Primark store in England in over two years, and formed part of Primark's £140 million investment into UK retail. The store was much anticipated in the local community, with over 650 customers through the doors within the first 15 minutes of opening.

We know, from research in this paper and other work, that a new Primark store generates new footfall into the high street. Previous store openings – such as the Primark in Colchester – increased visits to the high street by 30%.<sup>9</sup>



*Christopher Carter joined Primark over 10 years ago and has worked his way up through the business to become store manager of the newly opened Primark Salisbury. Starting his career as a department manager in Primark Bournemouth, Christopher went on to become senior department manager in Primark Gloucester, and assistant manager of Primark Cardiff. The former Arts University Bournemouth student then returned closer to home to lead an 11-strong management team in the latest new store in the UK.*

**Primark's arrival has caused genuine excitement and optimism.** People brought the news up unprompted when asked about the area, and were overwhelmingly pleased to see Primark opening. Participants talked of reading about it in the local press and hearing about it from excited friends and family on WhatsApp groups. Multiple people also noted the big queues on opening day.

"When it first opened, I came down and you couldn't even get in because there was a queue all the way down here; it seems so much busier than usual since it opened down here. I think it's been amazing for the economy and everything because everyone seems to be going in the other shops more as well."

*Female, middle-aged*

"There was a campaign, 'what we need in this city is a Primark, not another cafe or charity shop'. That's sort of the general tone on social media."

*Female, middle-aged*

**Increased footfall is the biggest benefit from Primark's arrival for other businesses.**

Participants noticed how busy the city centre had been since Primark's opened. Small business owners pointed this out. Even those with a very different customer base saw its arrival as a good thing for the area because it brought people and money into the city.

"[Salisbury's doing] better, Primark's just opened and a lot of people have come in because of that."

*Female, older, business owner*

"I think it's good for the other shops...when the people go to Primark they come to the smaller shops to buy stuff."

*Male, middle-aged, business owner*

**Primark is bringing people into Salisbury who otherwise wouldn't come.** Many people explained that they didn't live in Salisbury but had come into the city to shop because of the store. They explained they would have shopped in other places such as Southampton, Bath or Basingstoke.

"Primark has brought me here. We live just outside Swindon and she's [his wife] come in here specially for Primark... the prices are very good"

*Male, middle-aged*

"Primark definitely brings me in. It's definitely more affordable without having to always trek up to Southampton."

*Female, middle-aged, mum*

**The store offered affordable options in a centre which was lacking them.** People noted that the city's affordable options had declined recently, and Primark reversed this trend.

"It's cheaper and it has quality as well."

*Male, middle-aged*

"I like them for the kids' clothes, the affordability. Also I enjoy their clothes, they're quite bright and colourful."

*Female, middle-aged, mum*

# PRIMARK



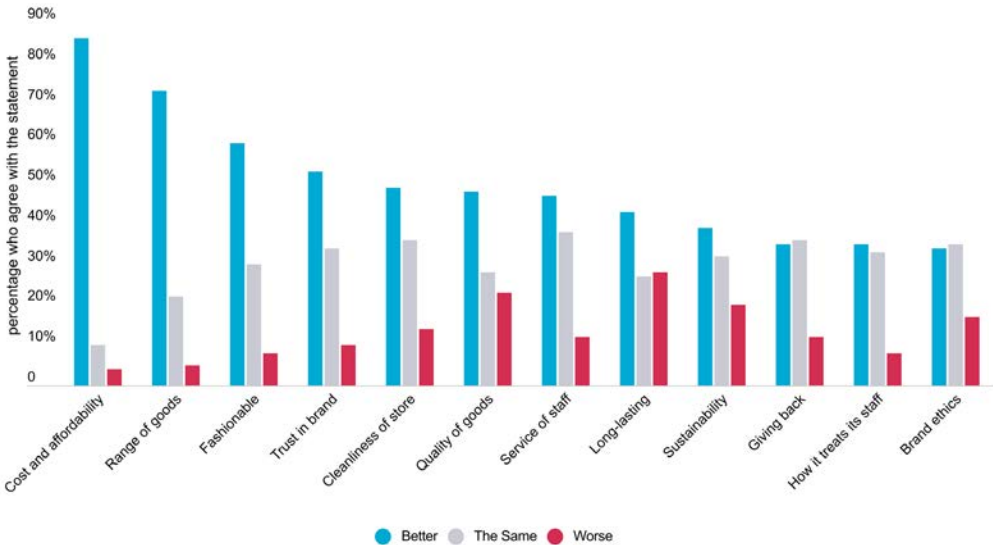
Primark and  
everyday life



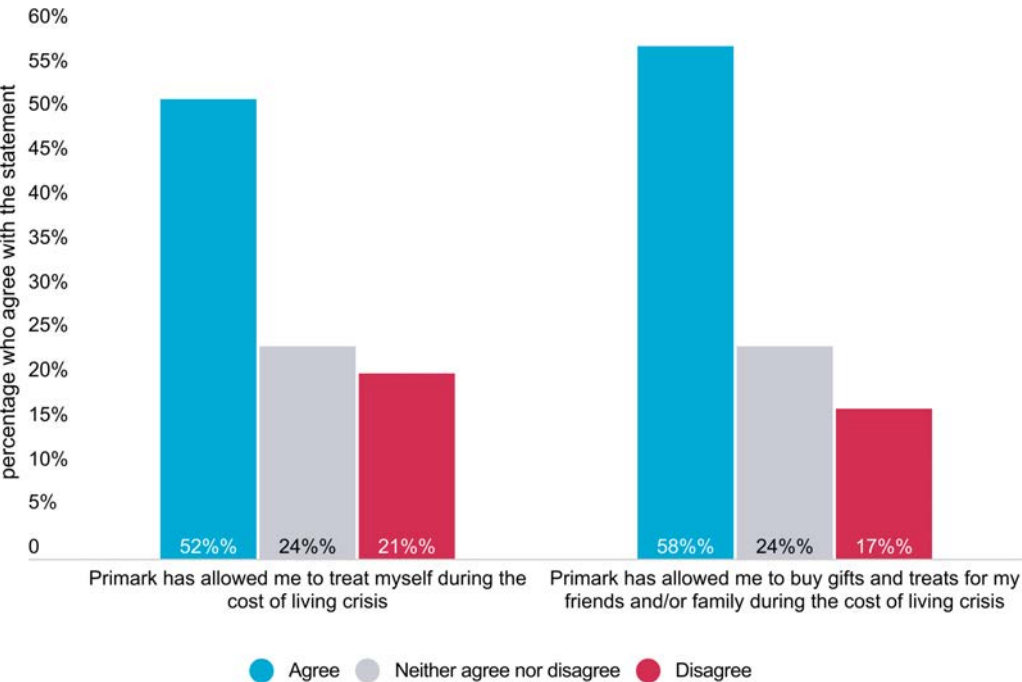
In our national poll, well over half of people say they ‘love visiting Primark’; only 15% disagree. 9 in 10 young people say they shop there, and more than 4 in 5 people having shopped at Primark at some point. It’s not just a place to buy clothes and homeware: it’s a day out, a place where people meet family and friends to browse and shop together. Over a third have arranged to meet family and friends to go to Primark. That popularity translates into growing UK sales, which are up 15% between 2022 and 2023.<sup>10</sup>

Primark customers overwhelmingly think of it as affordable, with a wide range of products that are also fashionable. They give high marks for product quality, store quality, and staff service.

Primark customers’ view of Primark compared to other retailers



44% say they would ‘struggle to buy the clothes they want’ without Primark. Over half say it has helped them buy things for themselves, friends and family. Primark is particularly important for families with children. Around three quarters of 25-45 year old parents have taken their children to shop at Primark, and it is very commonly used for presents. Half say it would be difficult to buy essential clothing for their children if it weren’t for Primark.



10 <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/apr/25/primark-sales-prices-rise-inflation-cost-of-living-crisis>



## How does Primark remain affordable?

Note: this content is not from Public First analysis. The below is a summary of Primark's own sustainability strategy, Primark Cares, which launched in 2021 and forms an important part of Primark's commitment to sustainable fashion.

Primark has a unique business model, one that has been honed and refined over the past 50 years. Affordability for our customers sits at the heart of this. Supported by our retail footprint, Primark is designed to be lean and simple. We have one centralised Product function, so customers will find the same ranges – adapted for local preferences – across all 17 markets where our stores are located. We don't offer home delivery. We buy at scale which helps make our lower prices possible. This approach also extends across our operating model. We work hard to minimise the steps between the factory and shop floor and we use very little, expensive air freight. Our labels and packaging are minimal to keep our packaging costs, and therefore customer prices, down. All of this is underpinned by our commitment to responsible business practices towards the suppliers we work with, the workers who make our clothes and the colleagues who operate our stores. We succeed by staying close to our customers, through our retail colleagues, improved customer website and social media followers.



# PRIMARK<sup>®</sup>

## Primark Cares

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Primark is working to make more sustainable fashion affordable for everyone through its Primark Cares strategy, a multi-year programme that focuses on giving clothing a longer life; protecting life on the planet and supporting the livelihoods of the people who make Primark clothes. As part of this, Primark unveiled nine commitments it is working to achieve by 2030. These commitments include by 2030: making all of its clothes from recycled or more sustainably sourced materials by 2030, halving carbon emissions across its value chain and pursuing a living wage for workers in its supply chain. Primark Cares builds on over 15 years of existing work in ethical trade and environmental sustainability in the countries where they make their clothes.



## Working in Primark

Primark employs more than 30,000 colleagues across over 190 stores in the UK. There are jobs at Primark, but also careers. Internal promotion is a major focus – and store managers often stay for decades. Of the 205 store managers, 62 have worked at Primark for over 20 years – and 145 for more than 15 years. One Primark colleague has been working at the Ipswich store for 43 years.

In 2023 Primark was accredited as a Top Employer by the Top Employers Institute.

Public First held four focus groups of staff in Primark's Barnsley store. The store opened in 2000 and employs 110 colleagues, the longest-serving of whom has been there the full 23 years since opening. Store manager Jasdeep Shokar has led the business there since the start of the 23/24 financial year, and has been a part of Primark since July 2014, starting her career as a retail assistant in the Leeds Headrow store (now relocated to Trinity).

**Employees were positive about Primark.** Primark was seen as offering good solid jobs with decent hours and considerate management. Employees noted that they had been well treated during the pandemic.

“It just feels like they [Primark] do, kind of, want to help you.”

*Male Primark employee, Barnsley*

“We’ve just had a ‘My Voice’, where you can put all your opinions across anonymously... to be fair, things do get introduced that are good.”

*Female Primark employee, Barnsley*

**Career progression opportunities are recognised.** Each group listed examples of colleagues who had climbed the management ranks. In the year to May 2023, Primark internally promoted 227 colleagues across the UK, while 117 new hires in its Head Office came from stores. These opportunities were broadly seen by the focus groups as open to anyone, and the standout example of career progression raised in multiple groups was a colleague who had recently moved out to New York to help set up the new store there.

“[Someone who worked in] womenswear, she used to be a supervisor, and now she’s a department manager. So she’s done really well.”

*Female Primark employee, Barnsley*

“I think most people, if they’ve gone to [management] and said ‘I want to train’, I think, to be fair, they do [provide opportunities for progression].”

*Female Primark employee, Barnsley*

“They do all these apprenticeship things. So if you wanted, you could work your way up.”

*Female Primark employee, Barnsley*

**The boost to their people skills and general confidence were seen as the main skills employees had developed since working for Primark.** Multiple participants from a range of age groups explained that working at Primark had given them a social confidence they hadn’t previously felt they had.

“I think my communication with other people has really improved, and [my] confidence. Obviously now it just comes naturally to talk to a customer that you’ve never met before. Before I just avoided them.”

*Male Primark employee, Barnsley*

**All workers felt strongly that Primark was important to Barnsley.** To them, it felt vital to the high street, with employees talking about how people from outside the town travel into the centre purely to visit Primark, and that closure would ‘finish’ the town. It felt personally important to them too, with one younger woman explaining how on her days off one of her favourite things is to go shopping in the store.

“I think if it weren’t here, I don’t think anyone would be in the town centre as much as they are. And you get people not even just coming in if they live in Barnsley, you see people coming in from all over.”

*Male Primark employee, Barnsley*

“I think Barnsley would really, really suffer if Primark weren’t here... because I think it’s the most popular shop.”

*Female Primark employee, Barnsley*

**Universally, the best thing about working at Primark was the staff and atmosphere.** In all of the groups we held conversations with, all participants spoke incredibly highly of the atmosphere among staff. It was clear that this culture was one of the key reasons that such a high proportion of the staff had worked at the store for such a long time.



# Methodology

## Measuring the economic footprint of Primark

Public First quantified Primark's **Direct impacts** (Primark's GVA and jobs, using data provided by Primark), **Indirect impacts** (GVA and jobs supported along Primark's supply chains) and **Induced impacts** (GVA and jobs from employees spending money in the wider economy). The latter two are derived from Public First's in-house economic model, based on ONS "input-output" tables, which detail the interrelationships between different parts of the economy.

## Measuring Primark's role as a high street anchor

Public First used its survey on the proportion of visits for which Primark was a key motive and shoppers' likelihood of spending money elsewhere after visiting Primark. The share of visits resulting in purchases and average spend gives the value of Primark's anchor effect.

## Polling Methodology

The consumer survey ran online August 4-10, 2023, with a representative sample of 2,000 adults aged 18 and over. Public First is a member of the [British Polling Council](#) (BPC) and a company partner of the [Market Research Society](#) (MRS), and abides by their rules.

### Survey design

The broad order of the survey was as follows:

- **Demographics:** to ensure a representative sample as per the UK adult population.
- **Influences on consumer behaviour:** focusing on the public's shopping habits.
- **Public opinion on the UK high street:** respondents were asked about what they currently like about their high street, the future and the past.
- **Primark as a staple of the UK high street:** Primark as a driver of footfall on UK high streets, both at the local level, and a driver of travel to larger cities and towns.
- **Primark as a brand:** Questions on Primark's reputation.

### Respondents and sample

The sample was representative along interlocked age and gender, regional and socio-economic grade lines. Results were weighted to be nationally representative for the UK. Sample sizes under 100 are considered too small for statistical analysis and are avoided throughout. Our sample of 2,000 has a margin of error of +/- 2%. When samples are split, either through different message testing or crossbreaks, this margin of error will increase.

The full tables are available [here](#).



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