

Almost 135,000 retail jobs lost during pandemic



Almost 135,000 traditional retail jobs were lost during the pandemic, GMB analysis of official figures suggests.

In 2019, there were an estimated 1.2 million sales and retail assistants, retail cashiers and check-out operators.

By 2021 that number had dropped to just under 1,075,000, the latest ONS figures show.

The stats emerge amid Wilkos closures across the UK with two – Stockton and The Fort, Birmingham – due to shut next week.



GMB represents tens of thousands of workers in the retail sector.

Occupation (with SOC code)	Jobs	Standard error
Sales and retail assistants (7111) and Retail cashiers and check-out operators (7112) – 2019	1,207,891	33,690
Sales and retail assistants (7111) and Retail cashiers and check-out operators (7112) – 2021	1,073,704	34,977
Source: GMB analysis of ONS Labour Force Survey data for October to December 2019 and September to November 2021, the latest period for which figures are available.		

Andy Prendergast, GMB National Secretary, said:

"The Great British High Street is being allowed to wither and die.

"These are vital businesses that drive our economy and help our communities thrive.

"GMB calls on councils and landlords to review commercial leases and offer lower rents – while our business rates system is archaic and no longer fit for purpose.

"Empty high streets and shopping centres that look like ghost towns are no good for anyone."

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