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The rise of shoplifting in the UK Speaker Notes

- Shoplifting is when someone steals stuff from a shop without actually paying for it. There are many reasons why people do this, but a big one is that they're homeless. Those without a safe place to call home often find themselves sleeping on the streets, in parks, at shelters, or even in old, abandoned buildings. Life without a roof over your head is really tough and can turn everyday living into a real challenge (Sentencing Council, 2024).
- Being homeless is very hard. And people who are homeless are often without money. They may be unable to purchase food, clothing, or other important items. So some of them steal small items from stores, such as food, soap, or warm clothes. They are not doing it to be bad, but they are stealing because they are cold, hungry, or desperate as well.
- Homeless people often feel like they have no other option. They have no jobs or support, and sometimes they are also struggling with issues like mental illness or addiction to drugs or alcohol. These things just make life so much harder. When people are in pain, sick, or very hungry, they might take something to survive. They may feel bad about it, but at that moment, they feel it's the only way to get by.
- More than 270,000 people are homeless in the UK. This total counts people in temporary accommodations, sleeping on the street, or staying in shelters. That is a lot of people who do not have a safe and stable place to live. Many of them are in danger every day and may not receive the help that they need. Some of them go days without eating or sleeping properly. This kind of life can lead people to do things they normally would not do (Shelter, 2023).
- Shoplifting is how some homeless people get what they need. Most don't want to steal, but feel they have no choice. With no food or shelter, they do what they must to survive. It is not about being a criminal. It is about trying to live through another day. If they had the things they needed, they would not steal (Wright, 2024).

- Stores face losses from theft. Shop owners lose money when things are stolen. To stop this, they may use security cameras, hire guards, or put locks on items. Some stores also call the police. But arresting someone doesn't fix the real problem. After jail, the person is still homeless and still has no help. This starts the cycle all over again (Alavi, 2025).
- The real solution is not more punishment — it is more help. If homeless people get food, shelter, and support, they are less likely to steal. Helping them with jobs, mental health care, and safe places to live can lower shoplifting and help people live better lives. (CRISIS, 2024).
- To sum up, many homeless people in the UK shoplift because they are trying to survive. If people helped them, I think there wouldn't be as much of shoplifting.

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