



THE BIG DEBATE

Should shops be open for longer on Sundays?



OPINIONS

"Sunday should be a different day to the rest of the week. For those with a strong Christian faith, I support them. For those that just want a different day of the week, a day you can get together with friends and family for a bit of relaxation and recreation, that's good. If all the major shops are allowed to open exactly the same time on Sundays as they are on any other day are we going to have 24-hour shopping seven days a week? Are we going to have all the traffic that goes with it? You then have pressure on everything else to be open."



Jeremy Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party

"Extending Sunday trading hours has the potential to help businesses and high streets across the UK better compete as our shopping habits change. The rights of shop workers are key to making these changes work in everyone's interests. We are protecting those who do not wish to work Sundays, and those who do not want to work more than their normal Sunday working hours."



Sajid Javid MP (Conservative), Secretary of State for Business

THE LOWDOWN

- The Government wants to change the law in England and Wales on how long shops can stay open for on Sundays.
- Currently, large shops such as supermarkets and department stores can only open for six hours. They cannot open before 10am or stay open after 6pm. Small shops can open for longer.
- Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne has argued that allowing councils in England and Wales to decide whether larger stores should be able to trade longer could help "struggling" high streets. He pointed out that shops are now competing with 24-hour online stores like Amazon.
- The Government's attempt to increase Sunday opening hours failed when a majority of MPs in the House of Commons voted against the idea earlier in March.



- The Labour Party warned that increasing opening hours would lead to a fall in shop workers' pay and wouldn't protect those workers who didn't want to work on Sundays.



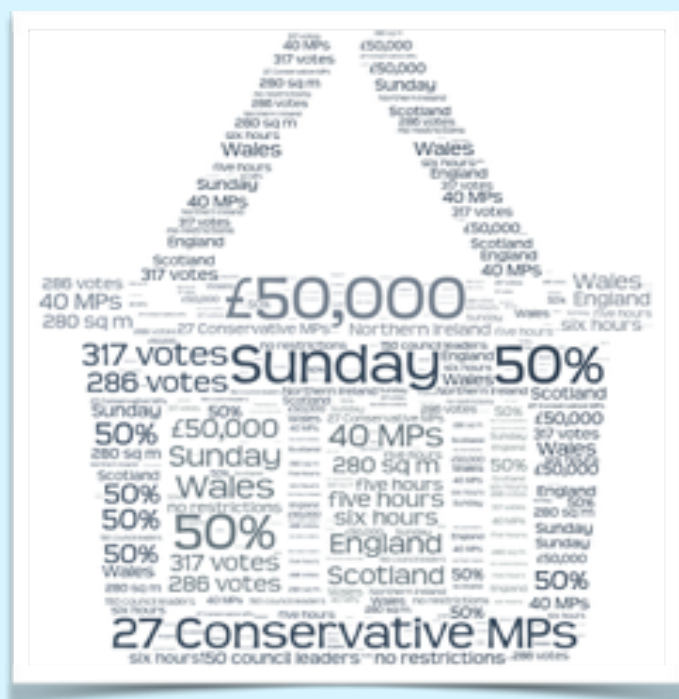
- Religious leaders have also expressed concerns about changing the law and the impact it would have on society.
- During the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, all shops were allowed to stay open longer on Sundays throughout England and Wales. They reported a big increase in sales.



SHOULD SHOPS BE OPEN FOR LONGER ON SUNDAYS?

FACTS AND FIGURES

● Small shops covering less than **280 SQUARE METRES** are allowed to open all day on Sunday



- **27** Conservative MPs joined forces with Labour and the Scottish National Party to vote against Chancellor George Osborne's plans to extend opening hours
- The Government was defeated by **317** votes to **286**
- **150** council leaders and **40** MPs published a letter against the new law
- **£50,000** is the maximum fine charged to shops that break the law
- Over **50%** of people regularly shop on a Sunday
- Sunday is the busiest day on online shopping site **EBAY**

UK DIFFERENCES

The law on Sunday trading varies in each country of the United Kingdom.

In **England** and **Wales**, the Sunday trading law applies to large shops. They can open on Sundays but only for six consecutive hours between 10:00 and 18:00. They must remain closed on Easter Sunday and on Christmas Day.

In **Northern Ireland**, large shops are allowed to stay open for five hours. In 1997, a law allowed small shops (under 280 square metres) to trade at any time on Sunday and allowed big shops to trade for a maximum of five hours between 13:00 and 18:00.

In **Scotland** there are no restrictions. Shops often open for long hours on Sundays.



SHOULD SHOPS BE OPEN FOR LONGER ON SUNDAYS?

TIMELINE: SHOPPING IN BRITAIN



1571

The first shopping centre in Britain opens. The Royal Exchange, which was opened by Elizabeth I (right), contained a two-storey shopping mall with 100 individual kiosks selling hundreds of items.



1869

John and Mary Sainsbury open their first grocery store in London. It would go on to become one of the biggest businesses in the country: Sainsbury's supermarkets.

1939
– 1945

The Second World War changes shopping habits in the UK. Many items, such as meat, sugar, tea and clothing, are rationed. Every citizen is given a ration book and is only allowed a certain amount of each item per week. The shopkeeper stamps the ration book and hands over the appropriate quantity. Rationing continues until 1954.



1947

The first self-service supermarkets open in the UK. Until this point, most shoppers had to queue up at the till and ask shopkeepers to fetch their groceries from shelves behind the counter. Most foods and items did not come in individually wrapped packets. The shop assistant had to measure out or weigh the amount the shopper wanted, then wrap it up. Shopping took a lot longer than it does now! But in 1947, the Co-operative opened 10 stores in which shoppers could pick the food themselves. It became known as "Q-less shopping".

1950

The Shops Act makes it compulsory for all shop workers to take specified meal and rest breaks during the working day, and a half-day holiday each week. Most shops remain closed on Sundays.



SHOULD SHOPS BE OPEN FOR LONGER ON SUNDAYS?

TIMELINE: SHOPPING IN BRITAIN CONTINUED

1964

Manufacturers can no longer set the prices for their food and goods in the shops. This gives the shops a lot more power as they can decide how much things are sold for. Supermarkets begin offering large discounts and hold a lot more power over their suppliers.



1976



The first out-of-town shopping centre opens at Brent Cross. As more and more people begin owning cars, shops start to move out of city centres and to the outskirts.

1986

Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister at the time, tries to change the law to allow all shops to open on a Sunday for the same number of hours as any other day. She loses the vote in the House of Commons and large shops are still barred from opening at all on Sundays.



1994

The Conservative government changes the law so that large shops throughout England and Wales can open for six hours on a Sunday. Only three chains opened on the first 'legal Sunday': Marks and Spencer, House of Fraser and Waitrose. Curiously, both Marks and Spencer and Waitrose had been against Sunday opening!

1995

Amazon.com launches. At first, it is an online bookstore, but it soon expands to sell virtually everything. Amazon paves the way for large, online shops and has changed the way many people do their shopping.



SHOULD SHOPS BE OPEN FOR LONGER ON SUNDAYS?

CONVENIENCE

Things have changed since the 1940s, when shoppers had to queue for ages to ask a shop assistant to fetch them their groceries. Today, people expect to be able to buy things at any time of day and night using the internet, in many cases having the goods delivered within hours. So in order to compete with online stores like Amazon, it's important that shops are allowed to open for as long as they want. This will lead more people back onto the high streets, especially if they know they can find what they need at all times of the day and night. A change in the law would also provide a

boost for the economy, as the more people buy in UK stores, the more money the Government makes in taxes, which in turn means there is more available to spend on things like schools and hospitals. It's all about convenience: being able to easily find what you want, when you want it. Convenience stores are so called because most of them are open for long hours and sell essential items. If they are allowed to open all day on Sundays, why shouldn't the supermarkets?



DID YOU KNOW?

It isn't just shops that have had restricted Sunday opening hours. In the past, pubs had to close between 3-7pm on a Sunday, and theatres and cinemas were kept shut altogether.

James Lowman, chief executive of the Association of Convenience Stores, thinks smaller shops would suffer if the superstores were given permission to trade on a Sunday. He said: "Changing Sunday trading regulations will not help the high street. It would actually damage small high street stores as trade would get diverted to large out of town supermarkets. While ministers talk of increasing high street sales, our survey of local councils shows that extended Sunday hours would be applied to out of town parks, hurting high streets."

WHAT ABOUT THE WORKERS?

It's all very well saying that extended Sunday opening hours will benefit shoppers, but what about the people who have to work in the shops? The Labour Party and **trade unions** are concerned that extending the Sunday trading hours would lead to many workers being forced into working longer hours. George Osborne introduced a change to the proposed new law that prevented employers from forcing their staff to do this, but many people were not convinced this would make much difference. Usdaw, the trade union for shop workers, is unimpressed. Its general secretary, John Hannett, thinks the Government's plans are "a betrayal of shopworkers and all those who regard Sunday as a special day". For many workers in large shops such as supermarkets or department stores, reduced working hours on a Sunday gives them time to spend with friends and family. A longer working day might not make that impossible.

SHOULD SHOPS BE OPEN FOR LONGER ON SUNDAYS?

OPINIONS

“We know that over half of shop workers in large stores already feel pressure to work on Sundays, and an increase in opening hours will only lead to more people being pressured into spending Sunday apart from their children and families.” – Alan Smith, bishop of St Albans

THE CASE FOR INCREASING SUNDAY OPENING HOURS



1. Keeps real shops alive

With more and more people buying so many things online now, the shops in our towns and cities need a helping hand to avoid going out of business. By extending Sunday shopping hours, shops will be able to better compete with the internet stores that are so powerful.



2. The same rules should apply to all shops

It isn't fair that small shops are allowed to stay open for as long as they like on a Sunday, but large shops are restricted to just six hours. By changing the law, every shop will be treated the same.



3. Times have changed A lot of people work long hours during the week and Sundays can be their only day to get shopping done. It seems silly to only allow shops to stay open for six hours when many people use Sundays to buy their groceries, clothes and other goods they don't have time to buy during the rest of the week.

THE CASE AGAINST INCREASING SUNDAY OPENING HOURS



1. Small shops will suffer



If big shops like Tesco and Marks and Spencer are allowed to open for longer on Sundays,

smaller shops on the high street will see a fall in customers. This could leave many of them out of business. A change in the law would mostly benefit the big chains and not the independent shops.

2. Keep Sunday special

There's something special about Sundays. It's a day unlike any other, and offers people more time to relax, see friends, and take part in hobbies and activities we can't do during the week. For religious people, it's a day of rest, prayer and worship. If all shops can be open for as long as they want, we will lose all that is special about Sundays.



3. Workers' rights would be damaged Trade unions think that most workers will feel forced to accept longer working hours on a Sunday or risk losing their jobs. Sunday is currently the one day that shopworkers can work a shorter shift, and it should stay that way.

SHOULD SHOPS BE OPEN FOR LONGER ON SUNDAYS?



GLOSSARY

● **Trade union** – An organisation that represents workers in a particular industry, such as shopworkers.

QUESTIONS

Do you and your family go shopping on a Sunday?

Do you do things on a Sunday you don't do any other day of the week?

Should Sundays be "special days", different to all the others?

Would shopworkers suffer if opening hours were extended?

Will extended opening hours help small shops as well as big ones?

Should we keep *all* shops closed on a Sunday?