



# **Keep Transport Workers Safe: Results of TSSA Reps Violence at Work Survey**

[www.tssa.org.uk](http://www.tssa.org.uk)

# Keep Transport Workers Safe: Results of TSSA Reps Violence at Work Survey

## Introduction

Following a survey of TSSA members that led to the publication<sup>1</sup> of the union's Keep Transport Workers Safe Campaign in February 2025, the decision was taken to conduct a further survey aimed at TSSA staff representatives.

Those representatives are members who represent their colleagues in offices, depots and at stations under the various collective bargaining arrangements to which the union is a party. They therefore have a unique insight into and overview of the issues facing our members but also, crucially, the policies and procedures put in place by employers to tackle workplace assaults, abuse and harassment.

Some TSSA reps and members are found on the 'frontline', meeting railway passengers through their work selling tickets, providing advice on travel options, carrying out revenue protection duties and so forth. In going about their legitimate business, many of these workers face violence and assault from passengers and station users.

TSSA also has many reps who are in roles away from the public gaze but they and the members that they represent can find themselves the victim of violence and abuse as they walk to their workplaces along lonely, poorly lit roads in trading estates or industrial areas. They can also encounter issues from members of the public at work sites.

This survey sought to involve reps from both these areas of our membership.

## Details of the survey

The survey was conducted online from 16<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025 and involved staff reps answering 29 questions, some of which required tick box responses whilst others sought more information through participants being able to complete free text entries.

## Participation

89 TSSA reps participated in the survey, with responses received from people across Britain's railway industry, including most of the Train Operating Companies (24 reps), Network Rail (35 reps) and TfL (12 reps).

---

<sup>1</sup> [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://assets-eu-01.kc-usercontent.com/81b3452f-5056-01c8-b2c8-1c901bd27e20/61ada5f8-0eeb-451d-a158-7008dc1f0c87/Keep%20Transport%20Workers%20Safe%20from%20Violence%20Final%20Report.pdf](https://assets-eu-01.kc-usercontent.com/81b3452f-5056-01c8-b2c8-1c901bd27e20/61ada5f8-0eeb-451d-a158-7008dc1f0c87/Keep%20Transport%20Workers%20Safe%20from%20Violence%20Final%20Report.pdf)

## **Executive Summary of Findings**

The survey found that more than half (55.5%) of the TSSA staff rep respondents had experienced violence and abuse at work.

It also established that those reps had had to endure violence and abuse on multiple occasions. The experiences reported included verbal and racial abuse, being spat at, enduring physical assault, receiving threats with a weapon, becoming the subject of harassment and, for some, sexual assault.

But they are not alone in their experience. TSSA union reps are employees who are part of a team with other workers doing the same or similar jobs at a particular location which means that their experiences are the same as those that their colleagues also endure. The obvious conclusion, then, is that this is only a small sample of the scale of the violence and abuse that transport workers face

Violence and abuse perpetrated on lone workers is also a major issue. The survey revealed that over half (57%) of staff reps who are required to work alone at a railway station experience violence and abuse at least some of the time.

In that figure are included 25% of reps who reported that they endure violence and abuse most of the time they are working alone.

This has led TSSA to question if employers have properly assessed the risks of insisting that staff work alone and whether employees in such circumstances have an adequate refuge that they can escape to, especially if they are required to work alone outside ticket offices on platforms or station concourses. We found that one in five reps (21.28%) reported their employer does not provide a refuge, like a ticket office, where a lone railway worker can escape from a violent situation and call for assistance. We believe this should be a minimum requirement.

For members who are attacked or abused at work, the support that they may receive after the event is not consistent across railway employers. Some reps told us that they had received good support, including the use of counsellors, but we are concerned for the 25% who rated their experience as either quite bad or very bad.

Given the way that the railway industry operates to a range of standards due to safety concerns in a variety of different railway operational and other situations, the same cannot be said when it comes to supporting employees affected by violence and abuse. On the evidence that we have received, we question whether railway companies are always acting in accordance with their duty of care responsibilities under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. With this in mind, we believe all employers should adopt consistently high standards to care for employees who have been the victims of violence and abuse and on that basis, we call for the industry to carry out a review of chain of care approaches before adopting a standard that can be properly monitored. This is a process that cannot wait for the arrival of GBR before it is addressed.

Reporting of incidents is another issue. The levels of violence and assault on railway workers is at an all time high but there is a suspicion in the various industry

authorities that under-reporting of instances is taking place, meaning the official figures do not reveal the full extent of the problem faced by staff.

Our survey of union reps reveals that nearly half (48%) of our colleagues know of occasions when employees have not reported instances, even though 73% of respondents they agree that they know how to report incidents of violence and abuse.

When asked why this happens, 64% of our reps told us that many workers have simply lost faith that their manager, employer or the British Transport Police would take any action to change anything.

The evidence that we have been presented with tells us that, as a consequence of this lack of faith, members increasingly see abuse at work as a part of their job. This is not helped by a lack of understanding or confidence in whether employers keep records of the incident reports they do make and whether any prosecutions or sanctions ever take place.

TSSA also found that most (64%) of staff reps either believed that their employer did not have clear policies and procedures to prevent and minimise violence in the workplace or were uncertain if such documents existed.

The survey also found that the majority (68%) of TSSA reps raised issues of violence at work with their employer, but most reps (39%) reported that their employer had refused to make any improvements. This refusal is shocking given that so many workers are having to endure such a traumatic situation. What's more, only a third of reps (33%) reported their employer willing to put in place improvements.

The conclusion TSSA has arrived at is that whilst the industry is currently putting a lot of time and resources into the use of Body Worn Videos, companies are often failing to engage with TSSA staff representatives or the workers they represent over the concerns that they have. This failure could lead to a continuation of the loss of faith that has become apparent from our survey.

Instead, in the interests of reducing and then eliminating violence against staff, employers should:

- involve union reps in devising policies to combat and overcome violence and abuse, recognising that BWVs are but one element of that response.
- where policies already exist, be prepared to brief reps and allow them to review arrangements
- overcome the lack of faith felt by employees by working with union reps and members to build confidence in reporting processes and sharing regular updates on the outcomes of company and BTP actions so that employees can see that things are being done
- address issues of support for members who have been the victims of assault or abuse by adopting a national standard
- work with BTP to increase police presence because our members feel the Force is only available some of the time, rather than all the time, to deal with the violence and abuse they face.

## Findings of the Reps Survey

- **Half of reps have experienced violence and abuse as work**  
Over half (55.5%) of the respondents told TSSA that they had experienced violence at work and each confirmed that they had had that experience whilst in their current role at the time of the survey.
- **Reps reported experiencing multiple occasions of violence and abuse**  
The survey has also found that many of the 48 (55.5%) TSSA reps who had reported being the victim of violence and abuse at work had that experience on more than one occasion. This was demonstrated by the 144 instances that members highlighted with the most common being:

<b>Violent act</b>	<b>Occasions</b>
Verbal abuse	43
Harassment	20
Being spat at	16
Racial abuse	14
Physical assault	13
Threatened with a weapon	11
Vandalism (directed at staff)	8
Sexual assault	5
Abuse based on gender	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>

- **TSSA reps represent groups of workers who are having similar experiences**  
What comes across is the extent of the problem being faced by railway workers. This survey reports on the experience of TSSA reps at stations, all of whom represent groups of colleagues doing similar jobs in similar circumstances and having similar experiences of violence and abuse at work.
- **Over half of staff who are required to work alone experience violence in the workplace at least some of the time**  
One of the concerns that TSSA has is how staff required to work alone have an increased vulnerability from violence and abuse. Lone working can occur in various ways in Britain's railway, such as at stations when only one person is on duty, dealing with a range of tasks that may take them onto the platform amongst passengers as well as selling tickets and answering queries, often from an office or cabin. It can also mean working late at night if the station must be kept open into the evening, a situation that can add to personal security concerns in what is often a lonely location with potentially unlit areas. CCTV cameras are usually present but may not be monitored in real time meaning that incidents may not be seen as they occur.

57% of survey respondents told us that they experienced violence at work either most of the time (25% of participants) when they were working alone or some of the time (32%).

In view of this response, we are concerned about whether train operating companies have properly risk assessed the dangers of lone working and whether they have sufficient measures in place to provide adequate protection to staff in real time, and not only after an event has taken place.

The passenger railway companies are embarking on the widespread use of Body Worn Videos (BWV) which can have the benefits of deterrence and may record an incident happening, but they do not call for assistance or protect the lone worker from the criminality that they may be exposed to whilst at work. TSSA does not see BWVs alone as a solution to issues of lone working.

- **TSSA reps raise issues of violence at work but at the time of the survey at least half of railway employers did not respond and try to ensure workplaces are safer for workers**

The survey found that most (68%) of TSSA reps raised issues of violence at work with their employer but most reps (39%) reported that their employer had refused to make any improvements or their response was unknown (28%).

Only a third (33%) of reps could report that their company had responded and tried to make improvements.

- **Support for staff who were the victims of incidents of assault, abuse or vandalism was not consistent across railway employers**

25% of TSSA reps rated the support from their employer after they had been assaulted or abused as either quite bad or very bad.

Only 5% of respondents agreed that their experience was 'very good' whilst another 17% thought it was 'quite good'.

30% classified the support they received as 'neither good nor bad'.

Given the way that the railway industry operates to a range of standards due to safety concerns in a variety of different railway operational and other situations, the same cannot be said when it comes to supporting employees affected by violence and abuse.

The finding of this survey then calls into question whether railway companies are always acting in accordance with their duty of care responsibilities under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.

- **The majority of employees know how to report incidents of violence and abuse, but nearly half knew of occasions that had not been reported because of a lack of faith that their manager or BTP would take any action to change anything.**

Of the reps taking part in the survey, 73% agreed that the majority of

employees know how to report incidents of violence and abuse but nearly a half (48%) affirmed they know of occasions which had not been reported.

Reasons given for non-reporting were dominated by a lack of faith that making a report would make any difference, including in terms of the company or BTP doing anything about the problem. This view was expressed by over 64% of those giving reasons – and alongside it:

- some people expressed how members felt that being verbally abused is now just something they must accept as part of their job
- members complained about not being given time off work to make statements to the British Transport Police.
- several quoted the fear of reprisals if they made a report which could then affect their opportunities for overtime.

- **There is a lack of knowledge about whether employers record all reported incidents of violence against transport workers.**

Over half (51.67%) of respondents did not know whether employers recorded all incidents of violence.

45% were also uncertain about whether their employer published any reports about incidents of violence, assault and abuse. Such reports could be the results of investigations, looking at trends, how incidents have been dealt with, potential for action against perpetrators and the outcome of criminal court proceedings taken forward by BTP.

This lack of knowledge may go some way to explain the lack of faith employees have in how seriously employers take the situation of violence and abuse.

However, even if members do make a report, they need to see follow up in terms of support and information from their manager and employer as well as action from the BTP where a crime has been committed.

- **Over 72% of reps are unaware of any prosecutions or sanctions being taken against violent offenders**

This lack of information is likely to be another reason that reps report a lack of faith in the reporting system.

- **TSSA asked questions about whether staff received training in how to tackle workplace violence**

Half of participating reps had received training provided by their employer to help tackle workplace violence – but nearly 1 in 5 (18.33%) said they had not.

Training included:

- De-escalation and conflict resolution
- Situational awareness and risk assessment

- Incident response and emergency procedures
- Use of technology for safety

Some respondents (6%) also said their training including consideration of legal rights and responsibilities

- **Over 20% of frontline workers do not have a refuge space that they can escape to in an emergency situation**

Staff who are at risk of being assaulted or abused should have a secure space that they can retreat to and call for emergency assistance should the risk become a reality.

In September 2018 TSSA presented evidence to the Transport Select Committee's Inquiry into the Rail Timetable Changes that had created chaos at stations and on services operated by GTR and Northern. One of the things highlighted by nearly a third of our members was the need for a secure space where they could find sanctuary.

TSSA's 2026 survey of reps has found that whilst 32% do have access to a refuge space (eg, like a ticket office), 21.28% do not. This situation will be especially pertinent for members who are required to work alone on platforms or station concourses but when confronted by violent or abusive passengers have nowhere to go to escape the situation.

- **British Transport Police are generally available some of the time when workplace violence occurs**

Whilst 28% of TSSA reps have not required the support of the British Transport Police, 61.7% have, and the commonest experience is that the BTP are generally available some of the time when workplace violence occurs.

Nearly a quarter (23.4%) of reps selected this option but others reported BTP as generally available:

- Every time (10.64%)
- Neither some nor none of the time (14.89%)
- None of the time (12.77%).

- **Employers generally do not reach out to local venues and other companies to improve security arrangements.**

This was the response of over 40% of reps with another 36% unsure if their employer had been proactive in this way. Only 23% knew the company they worked for had taken this action which could improve security arrangements when people leave venues to catch their train.

TSSA is aware that some employers will increase security measures when major events like football matches or concerts are scheduled. However, from the responses that we have received, this does not appear to be a regular

action that should feature through engagement with local pubs and clubs.

- **The use of body worn videos is increasing and in most companies their use is voluntary.**

The use of body worn videos on a voluntary basis is spreading across companies and whilst their use is generally voluntary, some employers are now making them compulsory (eg, GWR, TfL).

- **Most reps were not sure if their employer had clear policies and procedures to prevent and minimise violence in the workplace.**

A total of 64% of reps either knew their employer did not have clear policies and procedures to prevent and minimise violence in the workplace (26%) or were uncertain if such documents existed (38%).

Of those that did know (36%), none of the reps appear to have been able to produce the appropriate documents when asked and only a few said the employer enforced the policy. The outcome again implies that where policies may exist, they are not readily available and their content potentially mostly unknown.

This is staggering given the attention currently being given to violence at work within the industry. TSSA's expectation was that all employers would have developed, consulted on, and made available policies and procedures in this area. It is certainly something that must be investigated further to gain greater clarity.

Anticipating that this may be a finding of the survey, we also asked reps a general question about whether their employer involved staff and/or trade union representatives in developing these policies and procedures. This confirmed that nearly 62% of reps either knew reps were not involved (19%) or were unsure if they were (43%).

At best, then, there is a lot of uncertainty about reps being involved in the formulation of policies but more concerning is that nearly a fifth of reps know that their employer does not involve union reps, even though their Collective Bargaining Agreements are likely to list policies and procedures as a discussion item.

Involvement in policy formulation can happen by employers consulting reps on a draft proposal or, some cases, inviting them to be a part of a joint working party set up to develop a response to an issue. An example would be the introduction of Body Worn Videos which we know has involved reps in TOCs, Network Rail and TfL.

- TSSA's survey also asked reps for ideas about how workplace policies, practices and procedures could be improved to better address workplace

violence. In response, a number of suggestions were received which are being collated but included:

- Involving reps in policy formation and development at an early stage
- Enhanced training for managers and reps in the use of policies connected to violence and abuse at work
- A campaign to encourage confidence amongst members about the need to report incidents through:
  - clearer information about reporting incidents
  - informing staff where there are successful prosecutions
  - provision of regular information about how the company is managing the issue of violence
  - commitment by employers to provide support for members who have been the victims of violence and abuse
  - regular reminder briefings on policies
  - publicity for incidents
- Addressing issues raised by reps, including recognising the risk associated with walking to work at depots and offices in lonely and poorly lit areas
- Investment in extra staff and alarms to discourage assailants
- More funding for BTP and BTP to be asked to attend briefings and be more visible
- Advertise on TV and social media that violence against staff will not be tolerated, repeating the message in trains and at stations
- Use of hard-hitting posters