



EUROPEAN TRANSPORT WORKERS' FEDERATION

IT'S NOT PART OF THE JOB !



2nd ETF SURVEY

VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

AGAINST WOMEN TRANSPORT WORKERS

Summary of findings

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May 2026



2026 SURVEY OVERVIEW

- 1,732 women transport workers
- 27 European countries
- 9 transport sectors
- Majority frontline workers in public transport sectors
- 86% union members
- Age profiles of respondents similar to those in workforce



- Violence and harassment remain widespread
- Increased abuse from customers and service users since 2017 survey
- Higher risks in rail, civil aviation and urban public transport due to frontline, passenger-facing roles
- Persistent verbal abuse, sexual harassment and threats despite stronger policies
- Key reporting barriers, including fear of retaliation and lack of trust in grievance mechanisms



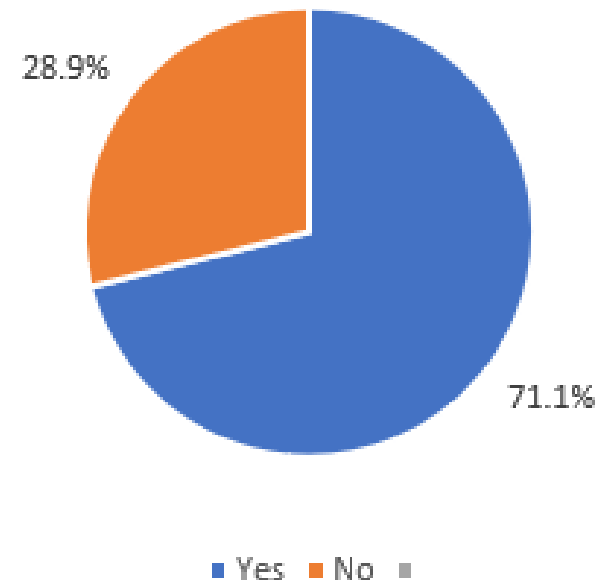
KEY FINDING: WIDESPREAD VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

- 71.1% experienced violence or harassment (in current job)
- Systemic issue across all sectors
- High TPVH exposure in frontline roles

Highest exposure in:

- Railways (82.5%)
- Civil aviation (80.3%)
- Urban public transport (73.2%)

Workers experiencing violence and harassment (% of respondents, n=1732)

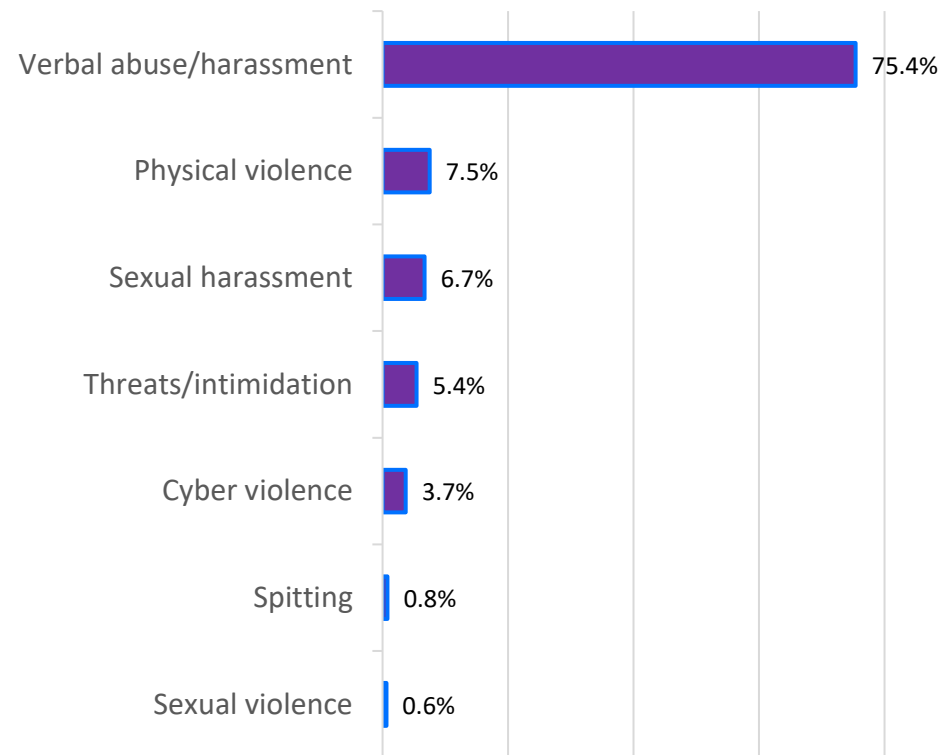


TYPES OF VIOLENCE

➤ verbal abuse dominates

➤ similar across all sectors

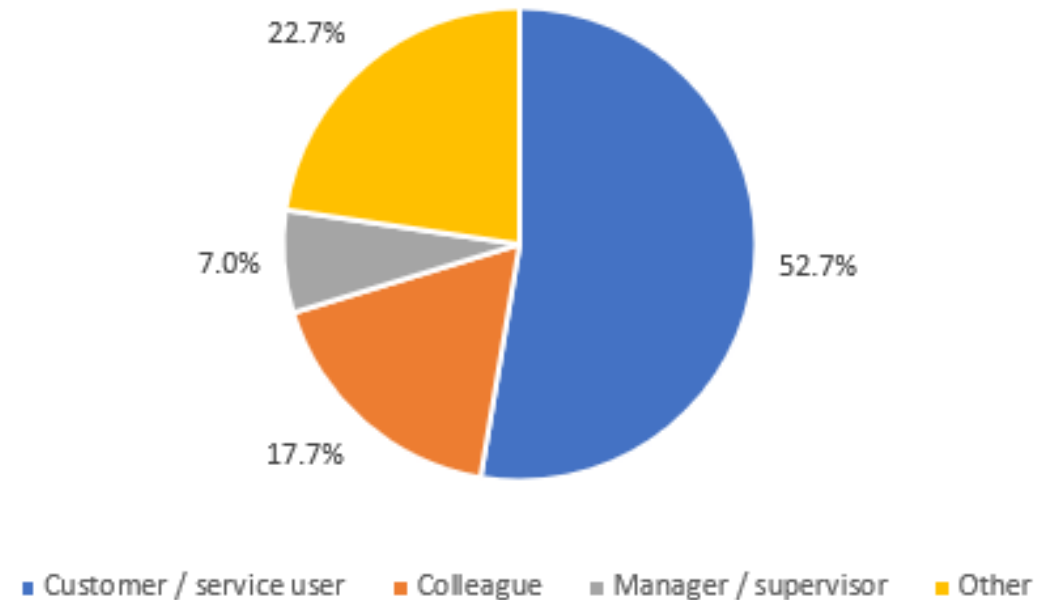
Types of violence and harassment experienced
(% of respondents, n=1304)



MAIN PERPETRATORS

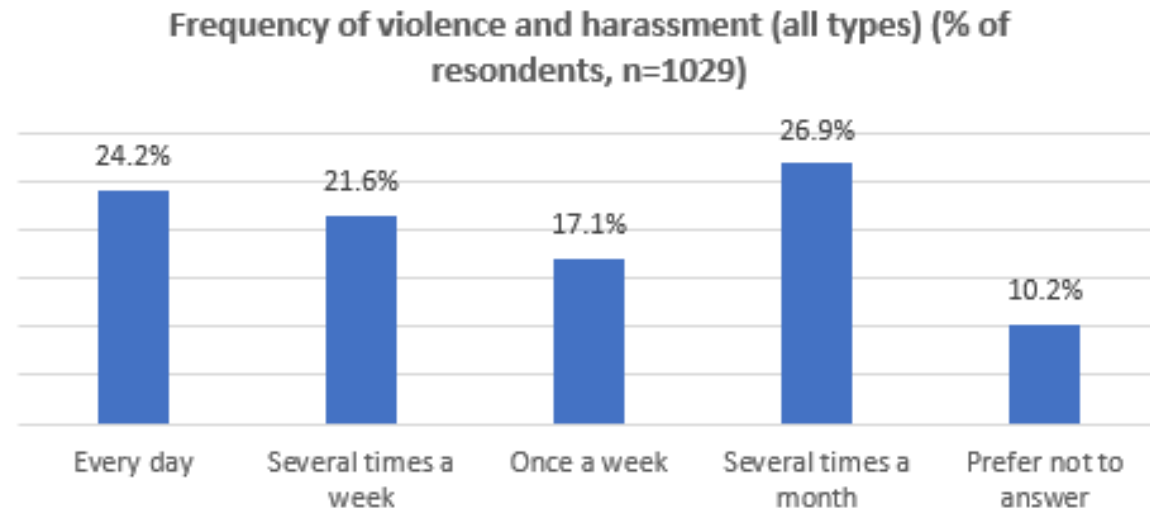
➤ over half (53.4%) of most recent incidents were perpetrated by customers/service users

Perpetrators of violence and harassment (% of respondents, n=1289)



VIOLENCE IS ROUTINE AND NORMALISED

- over 4 in 10 respondents experienced violence and harassment several times a month
- weekly and daily exposure common



VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT AGAINST WOMEN FROM MANAGERS/SUPERVISORS AND COLLEAGUES

Managers/supervisors

- Manager abuse reflects power imbalances: linked to control over shifts, contracts, and careers.
- Supervisory pressure drives abuse: Intimidation, threats, and humiliation tied to performance demands.
- Weak accountability sustains abuse: Mistrust in systems and impunity allow behaviours to persist.

“Your roster depends on your manager, so when harassment happens, you think twice before speaking up.” (Aviation, Spain)

Colleagues

- Colleague harassment is normalised: Everyday sexism, verbal abuse, and exclusion seen as routine.
- Workplace culture reinforces silence: “Banter” and group dynamics discourage reporting.

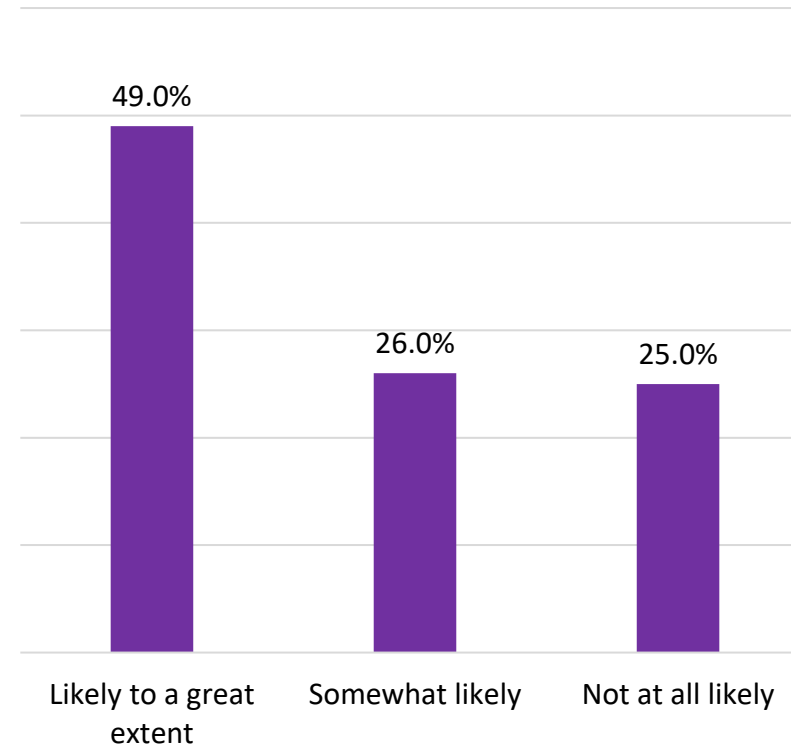
“It still feels like an ‘old boys’ club’ where women are not fully accepted.” (Railways, Germany)



GENDER IS A KEY FACTOR IN THIRD-PARTY VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

- 75% feel targeted by customers/service users because of their gender (half to a great extent, one-quarter likely)
- Male-dominated workplace culture
- Women's authority challenged

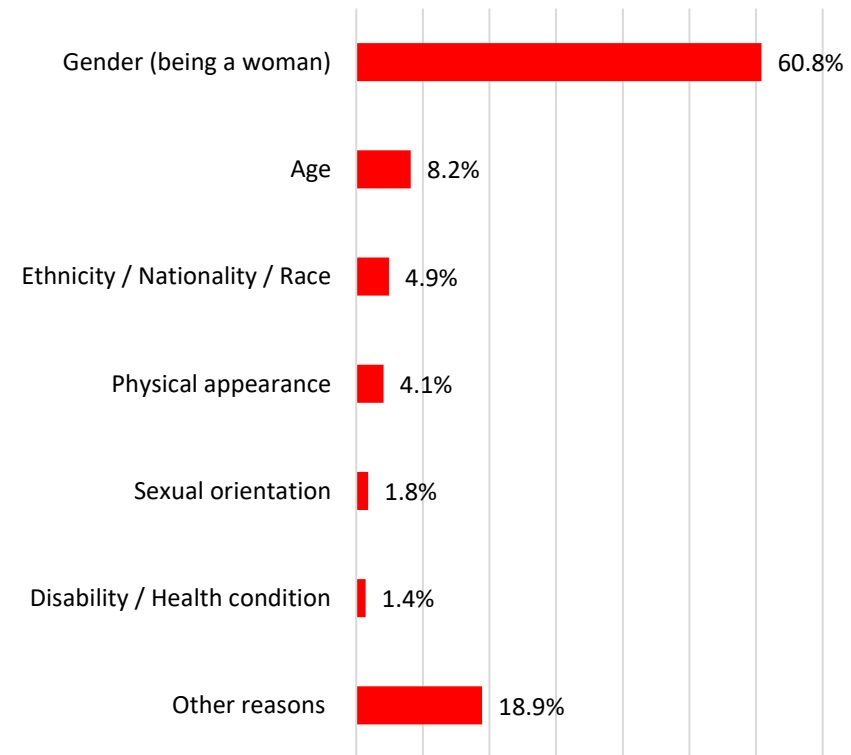
Perceived gender-based exposure to violence and harassment (% of respondents, n=690)



INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

- Majority of respondents (60.8%) attribute differential exposure to violence primarily to gender Male-dominated workplace culture
- Age (8.2%) and ethnicity/nationality (4.9%) are also perceived as risk factors.
- Other elements such as physical appearance, sexual orientation and disability are present, but less frequently cited.

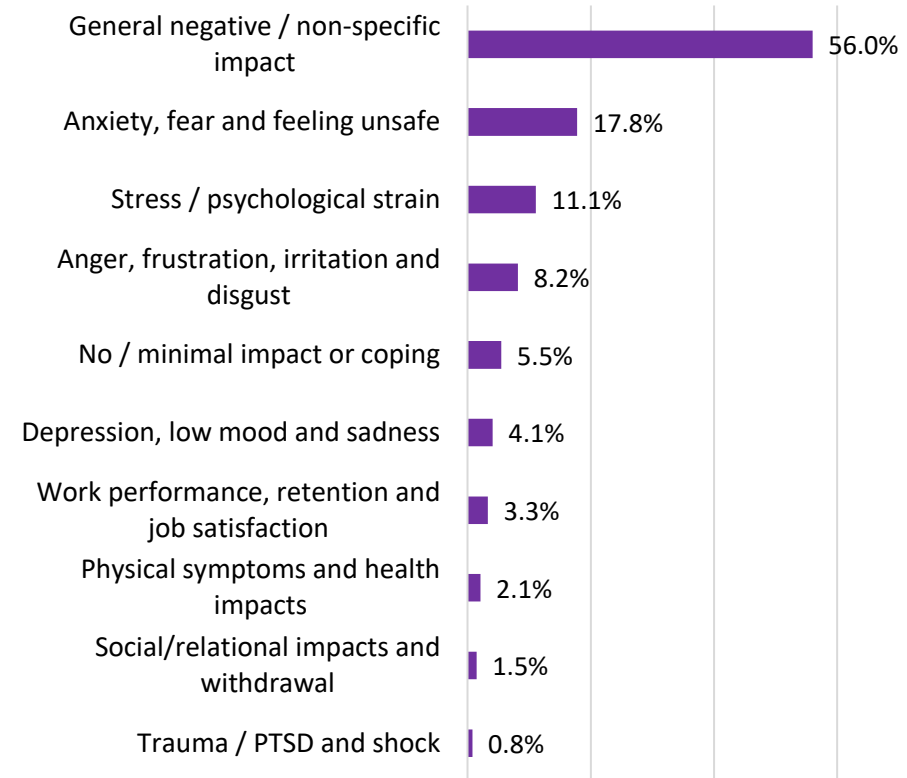
Exposure to violence and harassment: an intersectional perspective (% of respondents, n=1004)



HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOSICAL IMPACTS

- Over half of respondents experienced negative effects on health & wellbeing
- Most prominent are anxiety/fear stress/psychosocial strain
- Long-term psychological harm and cumulative exposure effects

Effects on health and wellbeing (% of respondents)



WOMEN WORKERS' VOICES

HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACTS

"I don't always feel safe at work or walking home after a shift. Sometimes I have nightmares..."

(Railways, Sweden)

"It stays with you long after the incident is over."

(Urban Public Transport, Belgium)

"I feel more anxious now when interacting with passengers."

(Civil Aviation, Italy)

"It affects your sleep. You replay the situation in your head."

(Road Transport, Denmark)

"The stress builds up. It's not one incident — it's the constant repetition."

(Railways, International/Multi-country)



REPORTING VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT FORM CUSTOMERS/SERVICE USERS

- Vast majority (80.4%) report informally e.g. work peers, family, friends (very few to a trade union rep or manager)
- Only one-half (50.8%) formally reported the most recent incident
- Formal responses are weak: just 27.6% satisfied; many cite inaction (35%) or not being taken seriously (22%)
- Reporting is deterred by fear of retaliation, lack of evidence/support, and negative consequences



GAP BETWEEN REPORTING AND OUTCOMES

- Poor outcomes for complainants: negative consequences / did not lead to a safer workplace
- Only one-third (36%) of formal reports Resulted in investigations
- Only one-quarter (26.9%) resulted in consequences for perpetrators
- Nearly one quarter did not feel believed

Outcomes of official reporting (% of respondents responding yes, multiple responses possible)



WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF REPORTING

Low trust in formal reporting

“There are no clear reporting procedures. Similar cases were handled badly.”

(Railways, International/Multi-country)

“They would not believe me. There is no information about the official procedure (who, when and what to report), lack of evidence, fear of negative consequences, lack of support, and similar cases were not resolved.”

(Civil Aviation, Croatia)

Negative consequences from formal reporting

“I was judged negatively by almost the entire team. I was made to feel like a troublemaker.”

(Railways, Austria)

“A male colleague had to shadow me for a whole day, trying to identify why men are interested in me/what I do to allure the men. He was instructed to listen to the way I speak and what I say, look at how I moved/ stood when interacting with customers, and so on. It was humiliating and ridiculous. I was furious, and so was the man ordered to watch me. But we could do nothing.”

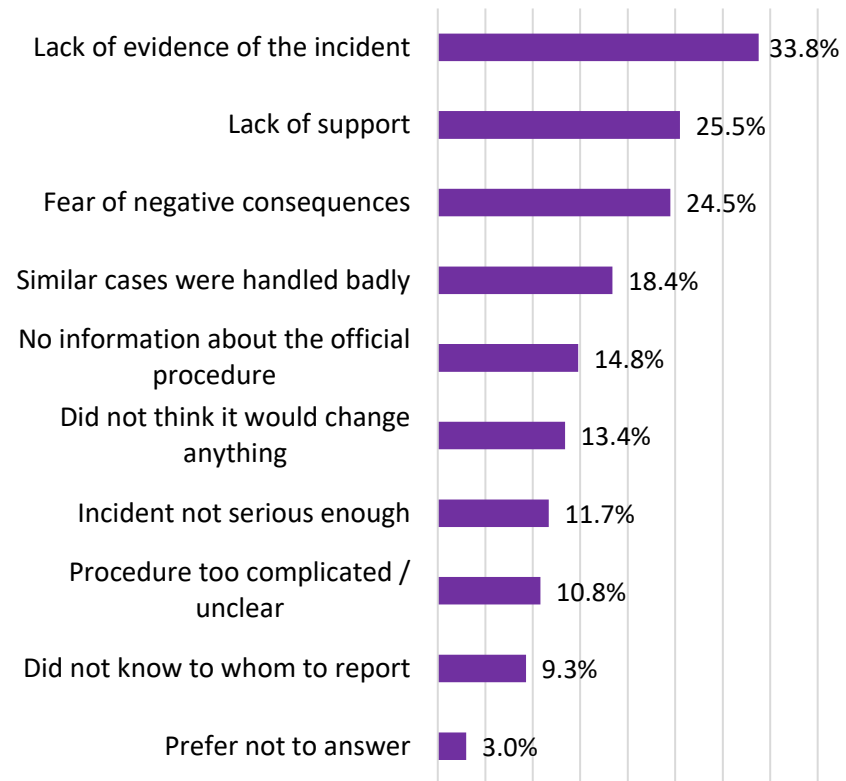
(Railways, Sweden)



REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING

- Multiple reasons given for not reporting
- One-third believed it was because there was a lack of evidence
- Over one-quarter because of lack of support
- Just under one-quarter cited fear of negative consequences

Reasons for not reporting (% of respondents)



COMPANY MEASURES (1)

Despite new legislation and ILO C190, weak responses from employers

- Just over one-third stated that their company had a policy
- Just over one-half had a workplace reporting procedure
- Only 6% had extra leave for victims

“No one granted any days off — the employee was left alone with the problem...there was no legal support.” (Parking Controller, Poland)

“I took sick leave, I started to look for another job” (Maritime transport, Norway)

“I continued to go to work. I told the manager that, as always, he was doing nothing to improve the situation and that we should improve customer management...” (Other, Italy)



COMPANY MEASURES (2)

➤ Most frequently reported company measures are incident-response measures:

- awareness training on violence and harassment
- de-escalation training
- alarm or call-for-help systems

➤ Low priority given to survivor-centred / psychological support for victims

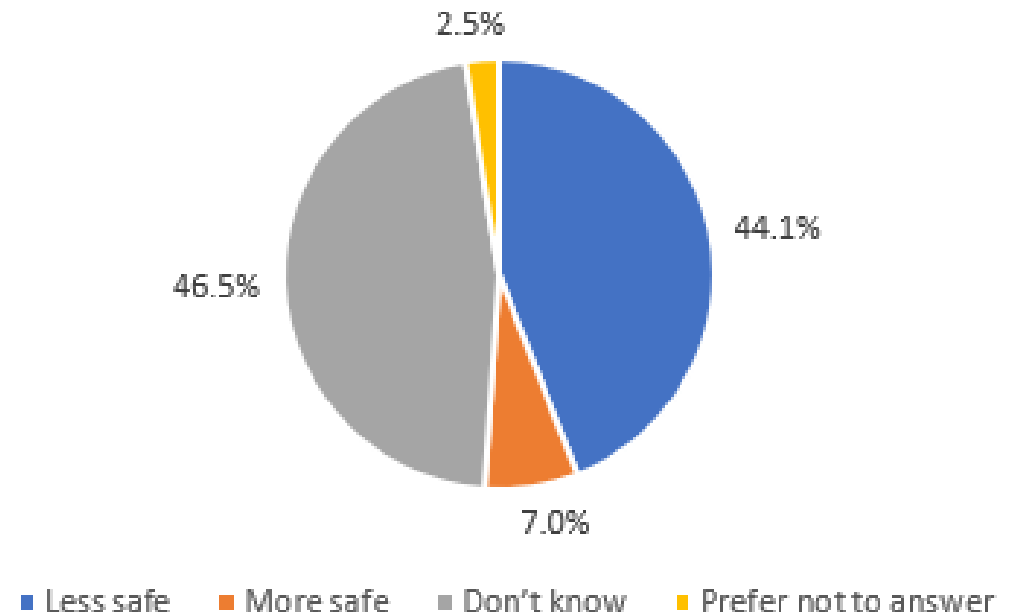
Measures taken by companies to improve safety (% of respondents, n=1274)



PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY

- Nearly half of the respondents report that workplace safety has deteriorated in recent years.
- Only 7 % believe that safety has improved.
- A further 46,5 % are unsure, suggesting that, where improvements exist, they may not be clearly visible or consistently implemented.
- A strong perception of declining safety in the transport sector, reinforcing concerns raised elsewhere in the survey regarding high exposure to violence and harassment in customer-facing roles.

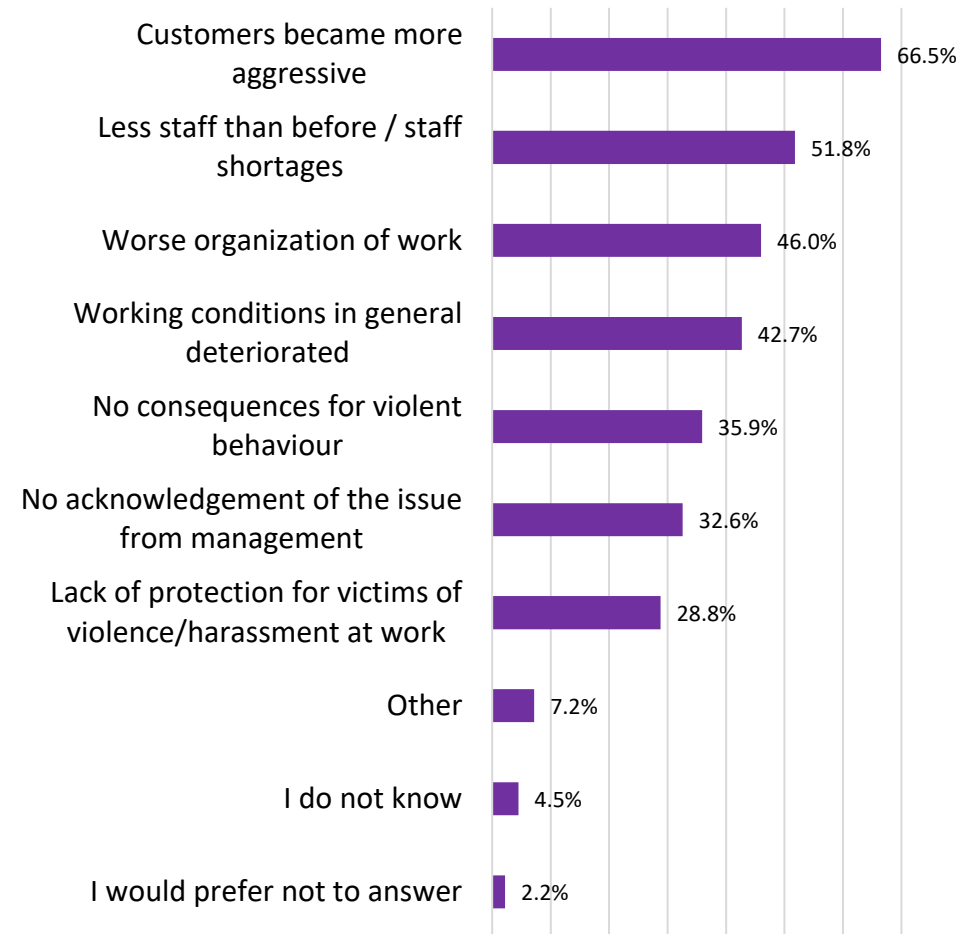
Workers' perception of changes in workplace safety in recent years (% of respondents, n=1265)



REASONS GIVEN FOR DETERIORATING SAFETY

- Over half say workplace safety has worsened.
- Rising customer aggression and organisational pressures (staff shortages, poor organisation, worsening conditions)

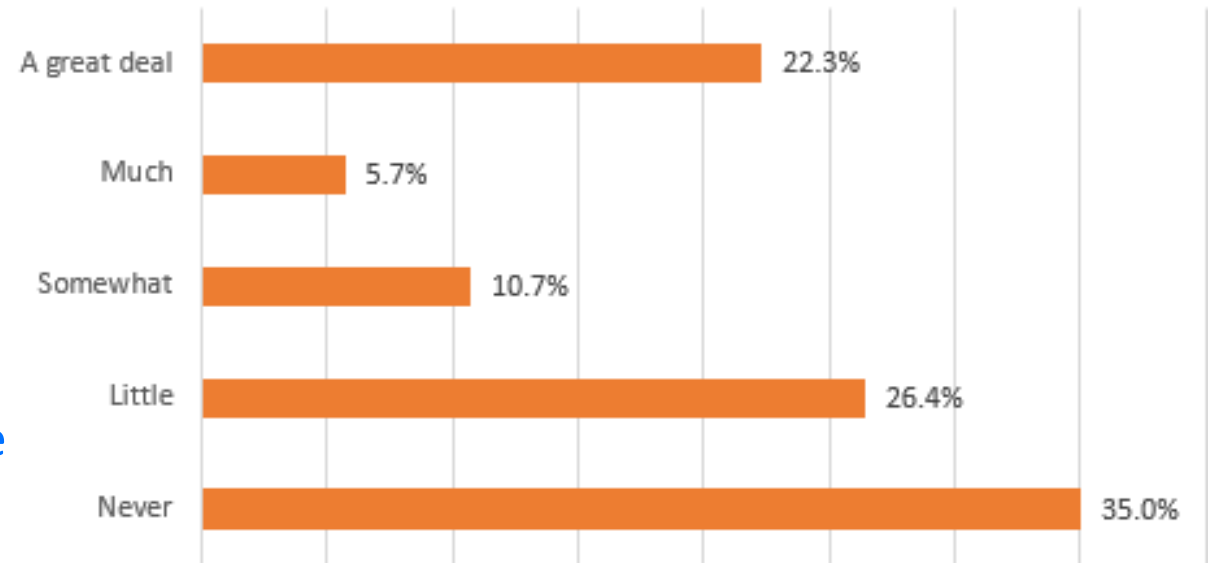
***“My company does nothing to achieve a safer workplace. There is an official protocol, but as far as I know, nobody does anything about it. As a member of the works council, I have never experienced a single incident being reported.”
(Logistics, Netherlands)***



MANY WORKERS ARE CONSIDERING LEAVING THEIR JOBS

- Two third (65,1 %) said they had considered leaving the transport sector at least to some extent.
- Four interconnected reasons:
 - exposure to GBVH without protection or consequences;
 - high psychosocial risks (including fatigue, stress, and isolation);
 - lack of trust in reporting and grievance systems;
 - and poor work–life balance /unsustainable working patterns.
- GBVH is a central factor, particularly in urban transport, aviation, and logistics.

Women workers considering leaving your job because of violence and harassment from customers/service users



VOICES OF WOMEN WORKERS CONSIDERING LEAVING TRANSPORT JOBS (1)

“I used to love this job, but the constant harassment and lack of support made me question if it’s worth staying.”(Railways, France)

“Every shift feels like a battle — not just with the workload, but with how people treat you. I’ve seriously thought about leaving.” (Urban Public Transport, Spain)

“I don’t see a future here. The environment is too hostile, especially for women.”(Civil Aviation, Ground Staff, Italy)

“It’s not the job itself, it’s the culture. You’re expected to just ‘put up with it’ — I don’t want that long-term.” (Road Freight/Logistics, Germany)

“I’ve seen too many colleagues leave because of bullying and harassment. I’m starting to think I should do the same.”(Maritime/Ports, Netherlands)



VOICES OF WOMEN WORKERS CONSIDERING LEAVING TRANSPORT JOBS (2)

“There’s no real protection. Reporting issues just makes things worse, so you end up thinking the only option is to quit.” (Railways, Poland)

“The pressure, the long hours, and the disrespect — it adds up. I don’t think I can keep doing this for years.” (Road Passenger Transport, Ireland)

“I joined because it was a stable career, but now I’m actively looking for a way out.” (Civil Aviation, Cabin Crew, Greece)

“If things don’t change, I can’t see myself staying in this sector. It’s just not sustainable for me.” (Logistics/Warehousing, Belgium)



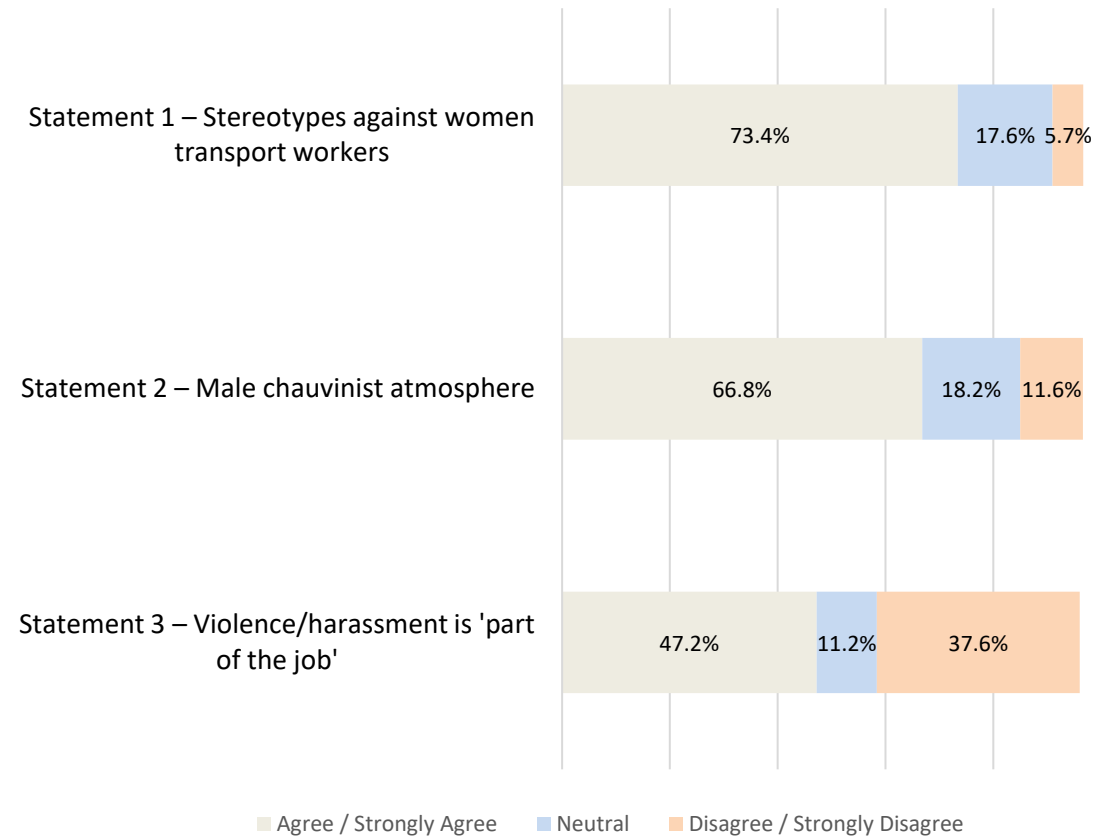
OVERALL ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

➤ Gender stereotypes, male dominated culture, and normalisation of violence persist.

*“It is unsettling, but a certain male chauvinist culture still exists in parts of the transport sector.”
(Public transport, Norway)*

*“Society in general is becoming harsher, and this is reflected in how passengers treat transport workers.”
(Urban Public Transport, Germany)*

Attitudes and perceptions (%)



MAIN CONCLUSIONS

- Violence is systemic and gendered
- Third-party violence and harassment has increased
- Reporting systems lack credibility
- Many workers do not feel safe at work
- Need for structural and cultural change



RECOMMENDATIONS - PROPOSED BY WOMEN WORKERS (1)

For companies/employers

- Safe staffing levels, reducing lone working and ensuring adequate backup in frontline roles
- Regular training and awareness initiatives to better equip staff and managers to prevent and respond to harassment
- Stronger policies and enforcement mechanisms
- Improved security infrastructure
- Accessible reporting systems and stronger support for affected workers
- Cultural change to address sexism, discrimination, and lack of respect toward women workers



RECOMMENDATIONS – PROPOSED BY WOMEN WORKERS (2)

Policy makers/politicians

- Stronger legislation and enforcement
- Improve security and policing
- Enhanced support gender equality measures
- Safer transport infrastructure

Trade unions

- Improve support and representation for victims
- Conduct training and awareness raising
- Greater focus on gender equality and women's representation in decision-making
- Carry out regular campaigning and advocacy



OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The report makes recommendations for employers, social partners, policy makers and trade unions. In summary:

- Embed gender equality across transport policies and workplaces to improve conditions for women and strengthen outcomes for all workers.
- Tackle root causes and systemic risks by addressing the organisation of work, including psychosocial risks, power imbalances, and workplace culture.
- Implement ILO Convention No. 190 through awareness, training, and gender-responsive strategies grounded in social dialogue and worker participation.
- Strengthen prevention within OSH systems by integrating gender responsive risk assessment, accountability, and trauma-informed grievance mechanisms.
- Adopt a coordinated multi-level response (companies, unions, policymakers) combining prevention, enforcement, infrastructure, and cultural change to ensure safe and sustainable workplaces.



COMPANIES/EMPLOYERS

- Deliver regular, mandatory training on violence and harassment, including communication, de-escalation and self-defence.
- Strengthen workplace security measures, including surveillance and rapid response systems (e.g. emergency buttons, mobile alerts).
- Implement robust, trusted policies and procedures, ensuring zero tolerance, confidential reporting, anti-retaliation safeguards and trauma-informed support.
- Integrate GBVH prevention into OSH risk assessments, identifying gender specific psychosocial risks (e.g. lone working, stereotyping, normalised aggression).
- Monitor workplace culture proactively, using surveys, worker consultation and joint OSH committees as early warning systems.



TRADE UNIONS

- Embed gender-responsive provisions in collective bargaining, including reporting systems, investigation procedures, staffing levels, paid leave and psychosocial risk prevention.
- Negotiate clear, trauma-informed case-handling procedures, ensuring transparency, trust and consistent follow-up.
- Promote gender-responsive social dialogue, challenging sexist norms and addressing domestic violence as a workplace issue.
- Engage actively in OSH committees, holding employers accountable and shaping effective prevention policies.



EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL SOCIAL PARTNERS

- Use sectoral social dialogue to address rising violence and harassment, particularly by customers and service users.
- Develop binding sectoral guidelines aligned with ILO C190, clarifying roles, responsibilities and prevention measures.
- Ensure guidelines include safe reporting systems, gender-responsive and psychosocial risk assessments, and measures for organisational and cultural change.
- Secure European Commission funding to develop, implement and promote these guidelines through awareness campaigns.
- Support collective bargaining frameworks, enabling effective agreements at sectoral, national and workplace levels.

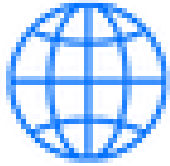


POLICY MAKERS

- Align national OSH frameworks with ILO C190, recognising violence and harassment as occupational risks requiring prevention.
- Strengthen labour inspectorates, particularly on third-party violence, psychosocial risks and gender-based violence.
- Invest in safe infrastructure, staffing and security systems across transport sectors.
- Run public awareness campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes and promote transport as a safe and attractive sector for women.
- Improve gender-disaggregated data collection, enabling better monitoring, accountability and policy development.



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