



**VIOLENCE AT
WORK -
A SURVEY OF
UNISON
EMPLOYERS
IN SCOTLAND
2018**

October 2018

**UNISON Scotland
Health & Safety Conference
19 October 2018**

**Violent Assaults on Public Service Staff in Scotland
Survey 2018**

1. INTRODUCTION

UNISON Scotland has carried out an annual survey of assaults to public sector workers by issuing a Freedom of Information (FoI) request to employers of UNISON members in the public sector since 2006.

The survey asks employers to tell us the total number of assaults which have been reported in the latest year for which they have information. This year's survey was carried out from July to October 2018 by e-mail.

The aggregated returns for our survey show that there were 40,568 assaults in total reported in the most recent year.

Assaults on local government workers account for half of this total – an aggregate of **20,208** in the most recent year under report.

Health Boards reported a total of **18,225** assaults on NHS workers in their latest annual returns.

The total number in our annual survey has been over 40,000 since 2016 - which is double the 20,000 assaults reported by public sector employers in our first violence at work survey in 2006.

Assaults on staff by public sector employers in most recent year under report

Survey year	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Loc Govt	20,208	22,006	17,605	13,206	15,671	14,879
Health	18,225	19,170	17,116	18,636	15,057	13,142
Other	2,135	1,245	6,445	6,437	6,296	6,187
Total	40,568	42,421	41,166	38,279	37,024	34,208

Even one assault on a worker who is providing a valuable public service for our communities would be one assault too many. This would be the case whether the assault was reported or not. To some extent the increase in reported assaults over the past decade or so has been the result of campaigning led by UNISON to have violence at work taken seriously by employers as well as staff and the public.

We believe there is some evidence in our series of annual surveys to suggest that the increases we have seen over the past decade will have at least been partly due to improved awareness and reporting amongst workers and employers.

We believe, however, there are many incidents which remain hidden. There are still public sector employers for which low figures and poor information on the issue suggests we still face a good deal of under-reporting.

2. LEGISLATION

UNISON Scotland has long been in favour of legislation on violence against all public service workers. We campaigned for and welcomed the introduction of the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act (EWA) in 2005 and its subsequent amendments - although we argued for legislation much wider in scope, covering not just a limited group of emergency workers, but all public service workers.

We believe that all workers providing a service to the public should be given specific legal protection.

The EWA has been used extensively since it was passed in 2005, despite claims from some quarters that claimed that there would be no successful prosecutions as common law and other statutory provisions covered most of the Bill's provisions. Proceedings have averaged around 300 per year, and the conviction rate is high as can be seen from the tables below.

People proceeded in Scottish Courts for offences under the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005										
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
EWA 2005 Total	287	309	290	336	372	354	310	302	269	275
EWA Section 1(1)	44	76	117	140	164	152	135	134	132	114
EWA Section 2(1)	96	79	39	42	34	39	31	41	29	21
EWA Section 3(1)	2	4	2	5	1	2	1	-	2	-
EWA Section 5(1)	145	150	132	149	173	161	143	127	106	140

People convicted in Scottish Courts for offences under the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005										
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
EWA 2005 Total	275	301	281	323	356	334	292	290	257	262
EWA Section 1(1)	40	74	113	136	159	142	126	131	127	106
EWA Section 2(1)	90	76	37	39	34	36	30	38	26	21
EWA Section 3(1)	2	4	2	4	1	2	1	-	2	-
EWA Section 5(1)	143	147	129	144	162	154	135	121	102	135

S:1(1) - Assault, obstruct or hinder constable/fire officer/person providing assistance in terms of S:35 or S:36 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005/ambulance worker.

S:2(1) - Assault, obstruct or hinder other emergency workers responding to emergency circumstances

S:3(1) - Assault, obstruct or hinder person assisting emergency worker responding to emergency circumstances

S:5(1) - Assault, obstruct or hinder health worker/ambulance worker/assistant to said workers on hospital premises

(Table extracted from a Scottish Government workbook dated 9 March 2018

<https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0053/00532563.xlsx> published as part of the Criminal Proceedings in Scotland 2016-17 statistics: <https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/Datasets/DatasetsCrimProc/CP1617EWA>)

The emphasis of the EWA is on emergency services - but all workers who deal with the public are at risk of violent assault, as our survey results show. The narrow focus on 'blue light' workers provides protection to predominantly male groups of workers, rather than nurses, care workers and classroom assistants, who are mainly female - and this continues to be an equal opportunities issue.

UNISON supported Hugh Henry MSP's proposed Protection of Workers (Scotland) Bill in 2009 which would have widened the scope for prosecutions, but this fell when opposed by the Scottish Government.

Earlier this year, Daniel Johnson MSP brought forward a proposed Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-Restricted Sales etc) (Scotland) Bill - which can be seen here: <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/107499.aspx>.

UNISON has supported this proposed bill while noting again the narrow focus – this time aimed at 'workers in the retail sector and those applying or enforcing an age-restriction in relation to the sale or supply of goods or services'. The consultation closed in April 2018 and the bill could be introduced at any time before June 2020, depending on parliamentary support.

UNISON Scotland will continue support further attempts by MSPs to extend the legislation covering violence at work to offer legal protections to all public service workers. We reiterate our call to the Scottish Government that action is necessary and we will continue to hold them to account on this.

3. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION SURVEY 2018

Our annual Violence at Work survey is sent to all local authorities and area health boards in Scotland, as well as to other public sector areas in which UNISON organises which are subject to the Freedom of Information legislation, asking for details on the number of assaults on workers during the past year, broken down by job title or department and nature of assault.

In response to the 2018 survey, we have had responses from all 14 area health boards as well as 7 of the 8 special health boards, 18 out of 26 FE colleges, 14 out of 17 universities, and 7 out of 10 Non Departmental Public Bodies.

It is a matter of concern that we received data from only 23 of the 32 local authorities in this year's survey. In most previous years, we have had a full set returns from local councils – albeit that some have often been less detailed than others. Last year we had returns from 30 out of the 32 councils.

We have also had responses this year from only 16 out of 28 FE colleges – last year 18 provided returns.

It is clear that local councils and the further education colleges have borne the brunt of austerity economics over the last decade. We know that this has had a huge negative effect on all of the jobs and services they provide to local communities. It is extremely worrying that the reporting of violence at work and possibly the right to freedom of information enshrined in law might be affected by the pressures facing public sector employers.

It is disappointing to note again that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has failed to respond now over the past four years.

Police Scotland, having also failed to respond in 2015 and 2016, last year provided a figure for assaults on police officers, but not a full report covering all employees including police staff in detail. This year they have provided a figure for officers and staff but no detailed breakdown of this.

Culture and leisure trusts were included in the scope of the Freedom of Information legislation in 2014 – this is the first time we have surveyed them on violence at work reports. We received responses from 9 out of 13 culture and leisure trusts.

[NB In line with our survey methodology which asks for the most recent year under report, to recognise the fact that many employers use different year ends, where an employer has failed to provide a response to this year's request we have used their previous most recent figures include in the aggregate totals. Employers who have not provided survey responses this year are indicated with an asterisk * in the tables below.]

Local Government

Local government figures for violent incident reports have risen by around 36% over the last five years. The figure for our 2018 survey is **20,208**. In 2013, our survey found 14,879 reported incidents. So, while this year's figure represents a small drop since the previous year - the upward trend over the last decade has not been clearly reversed.

The following table lists the number of incidents for the most recent year under report for each local authority.

Employer	Number of incidents
Aberdeen City	584
Aberdeenshire	752
Angus *	583
Argyll & Bute	47
City of Edinburgh	1,429
City of Glasgow *	3925
Clackmannanshire	180
Dumfries & Galloway	545
Dundee City	677
East Ayrshire *	936
East Dunbartonshire *	57
East Lothian *	520
East Renfrewshire	274
Falkirk *	476
Fife	1,159
Highland	721
Inverclyde	206
Midlothian	317
Moray	835
North Ayrshire	577
North Lanarkshire *	912
Orkney (inc Orkney College)	16
Perth & Kincross *	761
Renfrewshire	574
Scottish Borders	194
Shetland	228
South Ayrshire	357
South Lanarkshire *	802
Stirling	214
West Dunbartonshire	130
West Lothian	1,171
Western Isles	49
Total	20,208

As already noted, we are concerned that the number of councils reporting violence figures to our Freedom of Information request has dropped quite significantly this year – only 23 of the 32 councils provided responses. Those which did not provide a response to this year’s request include some of our largest local authorities.

Health Service

The aggregate figure for violent incidents in the territorial health boards fell slightly over the last year from **18,671** last year to **17,787** in the current survey for 2018.

However as with local government figures the trend over the last decade has been an increase. The number of reported incidents of violence against health workers in these NHS area boards is more than 40% higher than it was in 2013 when the figure was 12,687.

Employer	Number of incidents
Ayrshire & Arran	515
Dumfries & Galloway	177
Fife	3,328
Forth Valley	228
Greater Glasgow & Clyde	4,775
Grampian	3,267
Highland	1,269
Lanarkshire	631
Lothian	2,300
Orkney	0
Scottish Borders	810
Shetland	15
Tayside	416
Western Isles	56
Total	17787

Of eight special health boards, all but one provided responses. The aggregate total for these was 438, which were mainly accounted for by 263 reported assaults on Scottish Ambulance Service staff.

Employer	Number of incidents
Education for Scotland	0
Golden Jubilee	32
Healthcare Improvement Scotland	0
NHS 24	49
NHS Health Scotland	0
NHS National Services *	-
Scottish Ambulance Service	263
State Hospital	94
Total	438

Police Scotland

As noted in the introduction, Police Scotland provided a figure of 1,710 assaults on 'officers/staff members' for 2017/18. Last year the service gave a figure of 922 for 'injuries due to assault' on police officers in 2016/17. Our requests for a breakdown of figures to show the nature of the assault, the category of worker (job title, area of work etc) have been refused on grounds of cost. The last previous Police Scotland response was in 2014, when a figure of 6,163 was given for 'injuries due to assault' on police officers.

The information provided this year is below:

***Police Scotland:** For the time period 1 July 2017 - 30 June 2018 there were a total of 1710 assaults reported on the SCOPE accident system. In relation to your request for a breakdown of this information, I regret to inform you that I am unable to provide you with the information you have requested, as it would prove too costly to do so within the context of the fee regulations. As you may be aware the current cost threshold is £600 and I estimate that it would cost well in excess of this amount to process your request.*

...

To clarify, we don't currently hold the collated data in the format requested – i.e. detailing the nature of assault, category of worker etc. and any attempt to obtain this level of detail would involve manually checking each individual entry which would clearly exceed the cost limitations described above.

I am pleased to confirm that the methodology of collating of these statistics continues to improve in terms of the level of detail which can be extracted overall. To explain, from the 1st of April 2017, reports that would previously have been included in a very general 'near miss' category are now manually separated by the H&S Advisers and added to the assault figures. This relates to all assaults where the officer/staff member was punched, kicked, pushed, spat on, struck with an object but they recorded no injury being sustained. The assault figure therefore now includes

injuries due to assault PLUS all assaults where contact was made (and there was no injury reported).

Police Scotland have said that the SCOPE system is 'constantly evolving to accommodate improvements to our policies and practice'. We hope that for the next survey this will include better reporting on violent incidents against staff.

Fire and Rescue Scotland

Fire and Rescue Scotland unfortunately failed to provide a response to this survey for the second year running. The figure of 255 in 2015 is the most recent we have under report.

Universities

We had responses from 14 of 17 higher education institutions this year. There was a total of 5 violent incidents in the latest year under report for all the universities combined.

Employer	Number of incidents
Aberdeen University	1
Abertay	0
Dundee Uni *	0
Edinburgh Uni *	1
Glasgow Caledonian	1
Glasgow School of Art	0
Glasgow University	0
Heriot Watt	0
Napier Uni	1
Queen Margaret Uni	0
Robert Gordon Uni	0
Royal Cons of Scotland	1
St Andrews Uni	0
Stirling Uni *	-
Strathclyde Uni	0
UHI	0
Univ of West of Scotland	0
Total	5

Colleges

The number of colleges providing figures this year has gone down, with only 16 out of 28 responding.

The total number of violent incidents reported by the colleges in the latest year was 73. These are mainly accounted for by 55 reported incidents in Ayrshire College, up from 36 the previous year. Most of the others reported either one assault or none in the year.

Employer	Number of incidents
Argyll College *	0
Ayrshire College	55
Borders College *	3
City of Glasgow	4
D&G College *	-
Dundee & Angus College	0
Edinburgh College *	2
Fife College	0
Forth Valley College	0
Glasgow Clyde College	2
Glasgow Kelvin College	1
Inverness College *	1
Lewis Castle College UHI	0
Moray College *	1
New College Lanarkshire	0
Newbattle Abbey College	0
North East Scotland	0
North Highland College *	1
Orkney * (in LG figs)	-
Perth College *	0
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig *	-
SAMS Oban *	0
Shetland College *	0
South Lanarkshire College	0
SRUC	0
West College	0
West Highland College	0
West Lothian	3
Total	73

Overall the universities and colleges continue to report very low numbers of assaults. Given that one college accounts for more than half of all the reports, UNISON remains concerned that the low level of reports in others is likely to be due to under-reporting.

Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs)

Seven out of 9 NDPBs responded and provided figures this year. There were 29 assaults in total. The Care Inspectorate noted zero incidents, compared with 11 last year. Skills Development Scotland reported 15, and SEPA reported 14 assaults.

Employer	Number of incidents
Care Inspectorate	0
Highlands & Islands Enterprise	0
Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority *	-
Scottish Children's Reporter Administration	0
Scottish Enterprise (Information Commissioner)	0
Scottish Environment Protection Agency	14
Scottish Qualifications Authority	0
Scottish Social Services Council *	0
Skills Development Scotland	15
Total	29

Culture and Leisure Trusts

We received responses from 8 out of 13 culture and leisure trusts – this was the first year in which we have asked them to respond to the Violence at Work survey.

Employer	Number of incidents
Angus	0
Argyll & Bute	0
Dundee *	-
East Ayrshire *	-
East Dunbartonshire *	-
East Renfrewshire *	-
Falkirk	0
Glasgow Life	48
High Life Highland	2
North Lanarkshire	11
Perth & Kinross *	-
Scottish Borders	8
South Lanarkshire	24
Total	93

4. COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

As part of our campaign to tackle violence against workers in the Community and Voluntary Sector, UNISON Scotland launched **It's Not Part of the Job** - a new health and safety guide in September 2017.

The guide is aimed at the representatives and stewards for workers in the community and voluntary sector who are most vulnerable to violence at work, and provides policies and strategies for tackling workplace violence.

The UNISON Scotland guide 'It's Not Part of the Job' is partly based on the Healthy Working Lives strategy and toolkit published in 2010 and the UNISON UK health and safety guide on tackling violence at work produced in 2013.

UNISON UK launched its Violence at Work Charter at its communities conference in 2017. The Charter commits voluntary sector organisations to comply with their duty of care to staff when it comes to violence in the workplace. The organisation which sign up pledge to:

- collect and monitor data on violent incidents;
- provide proper structured support for staff who experience violence;
- provide thorough risk assessments when staff are placed in vulnerable situations;
- train staff so they know how to deal with threatening situations.

So far 34 CVS bodies have signed up to the UNISON Violence at Work Charter – including UK wide organisations which operate in Scotland, and Scottish charities such as Capability Scotland and Glasgow Association for Mental Health.

Freedom of Information

Unfortunately the Freedom of Information legislation which we use for our annual Violence at Work survey does not cover all of the areas in which UNISON has members, such as charities, private care homes, etc. As a result we cannot easily obtain accurate data on violent assaults on staff in the community and voluntary sector who are doing vital but frequently underpaid and jobs looking after vulnerable people in our communities. Many of the clients they care for present challenging behaviours and often the workers also face poor levels of support from their employers, even when they report violent incidents.

We will continue to press for the extension of Freedom of Information legislation to cover these organisations which are largely funded by the public purse to provide public services.

5. CONCLUSIONS

UNISON Scotland calls for all employers engaged in delivering public services - whether in local government, health or any of the other services and importantly the community and voluntary sector - to put the guidelines produced in 2010 by the Scottish Centre for Health Working Lives fully into practice, in order that we can make the level of violent assaults fall across Scotland.

The massive scale of violence against public service workers - including those in the community and voluntary sector - has been at least partially revealed over the last decade, with more than 40,000 reported assaults each year for the last three years.

We need to have accurate and reliable systems for reporting all violence against public sector workers, in order to achieve truly effective measures to overcome and eliminate the problem.

Employers engaged in delivering public services - whether local government, health or the community and voluntary sector - should put the guidelines on violence in the workplace produced in 2010 by the Scottish Centre for Health Working Lives fully into practice. Community and voluntary sector employers should be pressed to sign up to the UNISON Violence at Work Charter.

We support the extension of legislation covering violence at work to cover all workers engaged in delivering public services - and not just the emergency services. The Scottish Government must move to address this issue.

We now need action by employers and stronger legislation, regulation and oversight by government to end the aggro. It really isn't 'part of the job'.

Further information/links:

UNISON Scotland Health and Safety page

<http://www.unison-scotland.org/about-us/health-and-safety/>

UNISON UK Health and Safety page

<https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/health-and-safety/>

It's not part of the job

UNISON Scotland Health and Safety guide and toolkit for reps and stewards in the community and voluntary sector

<http://www.unison-scotland.org/2017/09/19/not-part-job-health-safety-guide-tackling-violence-work/>

UNISON charter to commit employers to tackle violence at work, UNISON Community Conference, March 2017

<https://www.unison.org.uk/news/article/2017/03/community-violence/>

Healthy Working Lives

<http://www.healthyworkinglives.com/>

Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression in the Workplace Tools and Strategies Resource produced by Healthy Working Lives for employers and employees to tackle the issue of violence and aggression in the workplace - April 2010

<http://www.healthyworkinglives.com/resources/managing-occupational-violence-and-aggression-in-the-workplace-tools-and-strategies-55264>

TUC's Work SMART page

<https://worksmart.org.uk/work-rights/health-and-safety>

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UNISON Scotland

October 2018