

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AT WORK IN TRANSPORT

Summary report of findings  
from a survey by ETF



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**The ETF represents more than 3.5 million transport workers from more than 230 transport unions and 41 European countries, in the following sectors: railways, road transport and logistics, maritime transport, inland waterways, civil aviation, ports and docks, tourism and fisheries.**

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AT WORK IN TRANSPORT

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# Introduction

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**T**his report summarises the main findings of the survey by the European Transport Workers' Federation's (ETF) on violence against women workers in transport in Europe. It breaks the silence over violence against women in transport by giving voice to women's daily experiences of violence and harassment at work from colleagues, supervisors, managers and customers.<sup>1</sup> The survey gives alarming evidence of high levels of violence against women at work in transport across Europe, where a culture of violence is regularly seen to be part of the job. New risks of violence are also evident in the sector resulting from changes in work organisation, staffing shortages and job insecurity. According to the International Labour Organization, violence against transport workers is one of the most important factors affecting the retention and attraction of transport jobs for women.

The survey, completed by 1444 women transport workers, was disseminated in 13 languages. Table 1 (see page 4) shows the responses to the survey in each language. Table 2 shows the breakdown of responses by sector – nearly half of all responses came from the railway sector (n=708), followed by road transport (n=250) and urban transport (n=228). Smaller numbers came from civil aviation, maritime transport and dockers.

## Summary of key findings from the survey

- 1444 women transport workers from across Europe participated in the ETF survey.
- 911 women transport workers disclosed at least one recent experience of violence.
- One quarter (25%) of women transport workers believe that violence against women is a regular occurrence in the transport sector.
- Just over a quarter (26%) of women transport workers believe that harassment is considered to be 'part of the job' in transport.
- Shocking accounts are given in the survey of verbal threats and intimidation, sexual harassment, and sexual and physical assault against women workers, often with devastating effects on women.

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was carried out by the Women's Committee of the ETF between 25 November 2016 and 28 February 2017 as part of the ETF Fair Transport campaign and the campaign to say 'no' to workplace violence against women transport workers. For further information see: <http://www.etf-europe.org/etf-4009.cfm>

**Table 1. Responses to the survey, by language**

Language of survey	Number of responses
Bulgarian	63
Dutch	75
English	428
French	84
German	197
Hungarian	39
Italian	196
Latvian	1
Romanian	106
Russian	2
Spanish	21
Swedish	229
Turkish	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1444</b>

**Table 2. Responses to the survey, by sector**

Sector	Number of responses	%
Railways	708	49
Road Transport	250	17.3
Urban public transport	228	15.8
Civil Aviation	81	5.6
Maritime Transport	57	3.9
Dockers	33	2.3
Other	87	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1444</b>	<b>100</b>

The largest number of responses to the survey came from women transport workers in the UK (n=367), Italy (n=194), Sweden (n=178), Germany (n=161), and Romania (n=108). The age group of respondents to the survey is typical of workers in the transport sector. Nine out of ten respondents (n=1304) stated that they were a member of a trade union.

# Women transport workers' experiences of workplace violence

## Overview

Of the 1444 women responding to the survey, over half (n=911) disclosed that they had experienced violence at work, some more than once. Overall, 14.5% of respondents experienced one incident of violence, 17.7% of respondents experienced two incidents of violence, 29.3% experienced three incidents, 27% four incidents and 11.5% experienced five incidents.

- Violence is rarely a one-off event in the transport sector.
- In recent years, more than one-quarter of respondents experienced at least four incidents of violence.
- One-fifth of respondents had experienced at least five incidents of violence.
- Nearly half of the respondents to the survey who had experienced violence stated that the violence had occurred in the last year.

This is illustrated in Table 3 which shows the number of incidents of violence that women have experienced, by the sector worked in.

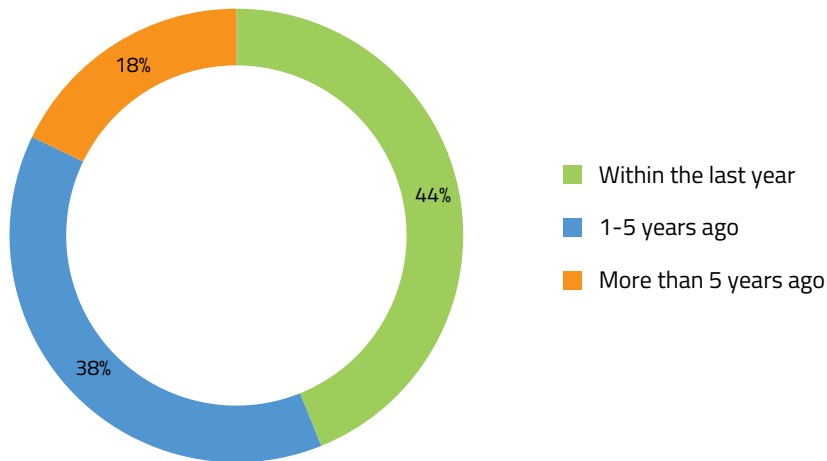
The highest incidence of violence is reported by women in the railway sector, where 447 incidents of violence are reported, followed by 152 incidents of violence reported by women in the road transport sector and 114 incidents in urban public transport.

**Table 3. Number of incidents of violence experienced, by sector**

No. Incidents	Civil Aviation		Dockers		Maritime Transport		Railways		Road Transport		Tourism		Trade Unions		Urban Public Transport		Other	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1	15	26.3	2	9.1	3	7.5	60	12.6	19	12.5	7	17.5	0	0.0	23	20.2	7	17.5
2	17	29.8	7	31.8	8	20.0	72	15.1	28	18.4	11	27.5	1	50.0	17	14.9	11	27.5
3	14	24.6	5	22.7	14	35.0	141	29.6	48	31.6	14	35.0	0	0.0	29	25.4	14	35.0
4	6	10.5	6	27.3	10	25.0	140	29.4	43	28.3	3	7.5	1	50.0	35	30.7	3	7.5
5	5	8.8	2	9.1	5	12.5	64	13.4	14	9.2	5	12.5	0	0.0	10	8.8	5	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>477</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

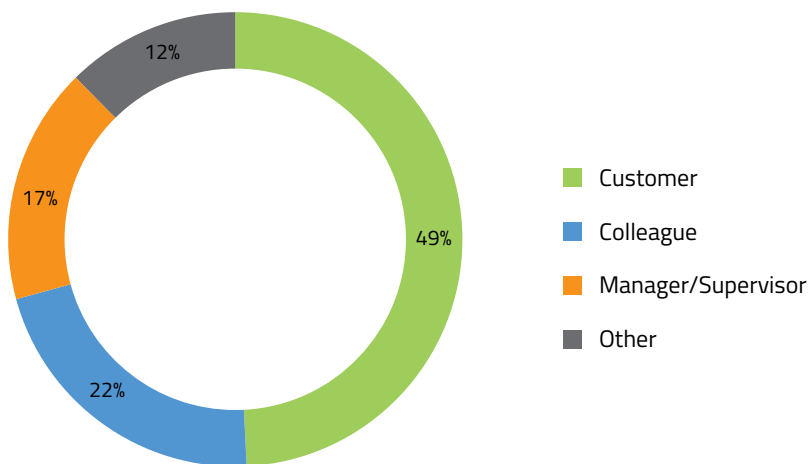
The survey also asked respondents to report on their most recent experience of violence at work. Chart 1 shows that nearly half (n=263) of respondents experienced an act of violence in the last year; just over one third (n=230) had experienced violence between 1 and 5 years ago, and 18% had experienced violence more than 5 years ago.

**Chart 1. When did the violence occur?**



Women respondents to the survey also reported on who was the perpetrator(s) of the violence they experienced. Chart 2 shows that nearly half (49%) of the incidents of violence reported in the survey were perpetrated by customers; 17% were perpetrated by a manager or supervisor, 22% by a colleague and 12% by other.

**Chart 2. Who was the perpetrator?**



Regarding the type of violence, Table 4 shows that verbal abuse was the most frequent form of violence experienced by 84.7% (n=772) of respondents. This is followed by offensive behaviour experienced by 79.7% (n=726) of respondents, threats/intimidation by 74.4% (n=678), physical violence by 24.3% (n=221), sexual harassment by 39.8% (n=363), and 0.4% (n=4) other.



**Table 4: Type of violence and perpetrator**

Perpetrator	Offensive behaviour		Physical violence		Sexual harassment		Threats/intimidation		Verbal abuse		Other	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Base n=911												
Customer	351	38.5	133	14.6	150	16.5	342	37.5	395	43.4	0	0.0
Manager / supervisor	65	7.1	7	0.8	21	2.3	83	9.1	71	7.8	0	0.0
Colleague	116	12.7	25	2.7	60	6.6	75	8.2	102	11.2	0	0.0
No Answer	35	3.8	2	0.2	14	1.5	30	3.3	38	4.2	4	0.4
Other / Multiple	159	17.5	54	5.9	118	13.0	148	16.2	166	18.2	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>726</b>	<b>79.7</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>39.8</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>74.4</b>	<b>772</b>	<b>84.7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0.4</b>

While these figures reflect the predominance of verbal abuse, threats, intimidation and offensive behaviour, the lower reported incidence of sexual harassment may reflect a reluctance by women to reveal that they are victims of it.

## Women's experiences of violence perpetrated by colleagues, supervisors and managers

Many women respondents to the survey spoke of a pervasive culture of sexual harassment and sexual intimidation in the workplace by colleagues, supervisors and managers. This takes the form of repeated, hostile and offensive verbal, non-verbal and physical forms of violence, including sexual harassment. Some workers spoke of sexist jokes being common, and that inappropriate calendars and posters continued to be displayed in the workplace. One woman found pornographic material that had been deliberately left on her desk.

These acts of violence are part of a culture where male colleagues, supervisors and managers believe they have an entitlement to abuse women, and if women "can't cope they should get out". This culture has resulted in many women being silenced and very isolated at work. Some women stated that they were unsure that what they had experienced was sexual harassment, which raises important issues about how workers can be empowered to identify sexual harassment and to know that it is illegal.

***"... my employer assumes that being verbally abused and assaulted is part of the job; some managers think if you can't cope then you should find another job, and some of them will openly tell you this."***

— *Railway worker, UK*

***"Verbal attacks...sexual assaults and the like. Touching of the rear and breasts, threats on the part of superiors if I complain [I am told]: 'a woman must be able to cope when she works in a men's profession.'"***

— *Railway worker, Germany*

***“[Male] colleagues think that it is given that they can touch or even to try to kiss me, just like that. Without any encouragement on my part.”***

— Urban public transport worker, Germany

***“My body is commented on and analysed by male colleagues. It happens too often to call it an occasional episode.”***

— Tram driver, Sweden

***“The worst is they don’t even think they are being inappropriate... I’ve had to jump through hoops and prove that I’m at least twice as good as my male colleagues to get the same respect, from the first time I took a flight lesson ... This is not isolated it’s every few months, especially when the male pilots feel uninhibited when drinks are held after the flight.”***

— Civil aviation worker, France

Several women respondents gave shocking accounts of sexual assault by colleagues, supervisors and managers, which they did not report to anyone. One woman who had worked in the Merchant Navy for six years gave examples of how she had been sexually assaulted (having her breasts groped, a co-worker forcing himself on her, stalking and regular harassment). Another woman maritime worker from the Netherlands spoke of her experience of an attempted rape by her supervisor, which included threats that she would lose her job. Other examples are given below:

***“An attempt to rape me was unsuccessful, I had attended self-defence classes and was able to defend myself. I was in shock for a few days, but I had to work through it because there was no one I could go to with the problem (I am the only woman in the workplace where the incidents occurred). My boss threatened me because I didn’t want to have sexual contact with him and he also threatened not to give me any more work...He did so, too, but he couldn’t keep me without work because there was too much pressure on the company and too few staff... If you can’t prove the facts it’s difficult. If you tell about what happened you often get even more problems... so not making a report was the ‘easiest’ solution.”***

— Docker, Belgium

***“Several co-workers sexually harassed me daily, but only one of them harassed me physically. For a long time, he kept sending me text messages, pictures of his penis. And then one day when we were the first two starting the shifts, he grabbed me when I passed by him to leave the room. All he said was, ‘I just have to.’ Then he held me and started kissing and groping me. I managed to shove him away, run down the stairs and out to the parking area where I knew another colleague was on duty. I made him accompany***

***me to the bus. It took a while before I was able to tell anyone at work but eventually I had to because I struggled with anxiety attacks and had to be on sick leave."***

— *Bus driver, Norway*

***"Gross use of language about certain parts of the body, intimidation... indecent suggestions, waiting in the car park and grabbing me tightly and then calling it a "joke", etc. It is the normal state of affairs that comments are made openly about certain parts of the body, you get asked about your (sexual) experiences, etc. Afterwards you still have to work with the perpetrator and colleagues, which only makes it worse... I have reported nothing"***

— *Civil aviation worker, Belgium*

Another form of harassment, sometimes referred to as 'hostile work environment', is being given unnecessary or difficult work tasks or being denigrated or reprimanded at work, whose aim is to undermine and humiliate a worker.

***"It happened to me, my managers insulted me because I defended workers... I received threatening emails with prohibitive time to perform a task without further explanations on how to perform the assigned task... it seeks to mentally distress me... I felt underappreciated, humiliated and demotivated."***

— *Admin worker, railway sector, Bulgaria*

Violence at work can extend to work-related social events, where harassing and offensive behaviour often also takes place. One woman gives an example of this from the work Christmas party, which had taken place five years ago when she was an apprentice:

***"I was an apprentice and one of the men on the course would always verbally harass me. At our work Christmas do I was surrounded by my male colleagues who whipped out their penises and trapped me and another girl in the circle."***

— *Railway worker, UK*

## Women's experiences of violence and harassment from customers

The second form of violence at work reported on in the survey is violence and harassment from customers ('third-party violence'). The survey reveals alarming incidents of violence against women transport workers by customers. Risks of violence increase when a woman works alone and when they face customers, for example, in ticket checking, driving buses and trams alone, or working in ticket offices alone.

Respondents to the survey give shocking details of regular physical violence, sexual assault, threats (of death, strangulation and rape threats, and threats against family members), and sexually offensive verbal abuse. Sexual propositioning, sexual innuendo, lewd comments about a woman's body and breasts and sexual comments are reported as being commonplace. One respondent stated that it was too upsetting to give information about what had happened to her. Many women recount problems they faced in having to deal with verbally aggressive and physically violent drunken customers, for example, on late night trains or buses, when passengers or groups of passengers are drunk.

The following selection of quotes reveal that violence and harassment against women by customers – just like violence by colleagues, supervisors and managers – are not one-off or occasional experiences; rather they are a frequent and in some cases a daily part of the job in transport.

***“Passengers who travel without tickets behave arrogantly and rudely. They often use abusive language when I refuse to do the ‘breaking into smaller bills’ which is not included in my duties.”***

— Urban transport worker, Bulgaria

***“A guy at the bar was trying to ‘flirt’ with me and he was telling the customers that came to the bar that I was going to give him a blow job in the toilet. I quickly said no I’m not and apologised to the customer everytime...It made me felt worthless and embarrassed in front of other customers.”***

— Railway worker, UK

***“All staff suffer abuse from customers but the abuse women have to put up with is more sexual and revolting.”***

— Railway worker, UK

***“The worst I’ve ever experienced is having a guy shout at me in front of a carriage full of passengers he hoped that I would die and that I would get raped. Over and over. This then followed by him calling me every swear word he could think off. Just because I told him his ticket was [invalid]... For a few weeks after, I was scared to go on that route again.”***

— Railway worker, UK

***“There was a difficult situation in the train, where passengers became loud and aggressive... I was spat on. I was cursed as a witch... as well as a dumb woman and asshole.”***

— Railway worker, Switzerland

***"[In the last five years] I have experienced three physical aggressions and incalculable verbal aggressions. Four times men showed me their private parts."***

— *Railway worker, Italy*

***"Usually these incidents involve intoxicated men who become verbally aggressive if you do not take kindly to their sexual harassment. I've been spoken to disgustingly especially on late night trains.. I feel a lot of anxiety when working on a train where there are groups of drunken men."***

— *Railway worker, UK*

***"Verbal aggression is a weekly occurrence; unfortunately you get used to it. It really happens a great deal. I have become hard. Ten years ago, it affected me deeply in my soul. Now I laugh about it. I try to commiserate with aggressive people. An established customer found it necessary to target me for two years and regularly called me names. It is very tiresome. When he began talking about me with my co-workers, I finally lodged a complaint with my line manager."***

— *Road Transport worker, Belgium,*

Often derogatory remarks are made about woman drivers breaking out of their 'traditional' roles, because driving is seen as a 'male' job. In one case, a woman was asked if she needed help driving "because she is too good looking to be a bus or tram driver". Other women bus drivers spoke of offensive remarks such as: "No, not a girl driving", "Girls can't drive a bus", "Shouldn't you be at home taking care of your husband and children".

Cases of physical assault are commonplace. Over 50 respondents spoke of being spat at, having their hair pulled, being punched, being shot at, as well as of men rubbing up against a woman's body, men exposing themselves to a woman, and sexual assault. These are among the examples given of physical violence. Other examples of sexually explicit behaviour include men exposing themselves to women bus drivers, men undoing their trouser zippers or urinating in front of a woman worker. It frequently involves customers invading the personal space of a woman, sometimes resulting in major safety issues.

***"I have been spat at and screamed at by customers. Windows have been smashed or customers have tried to break into my work area or have even jumped over the counter. They often show no respect"***

— *Railway worker, Germany*

***"I have been shot at, had stones thrown at me, been verbally and physically threatened. Been spat at and sexually harassed."***

— *Road transport worker, UK*

***“Masked youths harassed and threatened myself and a passenger on Halloween. They isolated my bus so that I couldn’t start it by letting the air out. I was left alone in the dark waiting for a fitter to arrive... No one asked me after this incident how I was...”***

— *Railway worker, UK*

Respondents spoke of the violence and harassment occurring because of things that were beyond the control of the worker, such as increases in ticket prices, overcrowding, disruption, delays, and cancellation of buses or trains. In some cases, physical and verbal sexual abuse arose when a passenger was stopped from boarding a bus, train or tram without a ticket, or when passengers use threats and intimidation to get free rides.

***“I always get offensive remarks from passengers when I deny them to travel for free. They say things like bitch, whore, haven’t you had any dick in a while? I have even been spat at two times when denying free-riders. Violence has been close when I refused. It is an intimidating atmosphere and verbal insults occur in most cases when I refuse passengers to ride for free.”***

— *Bus driver, Sweden*

Many of the risks of violence are exacerbated by shortages in staff and workers being in more isolated work situations, where previously they may have worked alongside a co-worker. For example, large numbers of cases of abuse are reported by respondents who walk up and down the train checking the tickets of customers – in many cases they are alone in this role, whereas previously there may have been two ticket checkers per train.

***“Due to staff cuts we are more vulnerable now than before, as well as the passengers.”***

— *Railway worker, UK*

# The effect of violence on women's wellbeing

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## Introduction

Violence and harassment at work in the transport sector is a predominant form of workplace stress which has negative and often devastating effects on women workers' physical and mental health and wellbeing, their capacity to work, and their relationships with family, friends and work colleagues.

## Negative effects on physical and mental health and wellbeing

The ETF survey shows that violence against women workers in transport has damaging physical and psychological impacts. Psychological impacts reported in the survey include depression, stress, being upset and irritable, anxiety, feeling demeaned and violated, loss of confidence and fear. When violence and harassment are severe and/or repeated, the effects can be devastating – some respondents speak of significant mental health impacts and in some cases suicidal feelings. Physical impacts reported include insomnia, nightmares, difficulties concentrating, headaches, weight gain and being susceptible to viruses and colds. Some respondents had taken sick leave, including long-term sick leave, while others were taking anti-depressants. Many spoke of a loss of confidence and self-worth as a result of violence at work. For some women, a lack of serious attention given to tackling violence and harassment by colleagues, union representatives and managers, added greatly to the stress experienced.

***"It was a colleague who attacked me in the canteen before the first shift in the morning. He groped me, kissed me while he held me down. I managed to push him away. This incident was taken seriously... I struggled with anxiety and depression. I had to take sick leave."***

— *Bus driver, Norway*

***"Anxiety, sleep disorders, panic attacks, anxiety about going to work."***

— *Railway worker, Germany*

***“I still feel nervous, especially if I am doing lone station working. I’ve been stressed, it’s affected my sleep, weight and my behaviour. I tend to fail aspects of my job role from fear of a confrontation or threats.”***

— Urban public transport worker, UK

***“Morally I am down and I feel constantly sick. I have aches and stomach cramps.”***

— Railway worker, Italy

***“Blood pressure, nervous breakdowns and a lot of things that I do not want to comment on [following abuse by a co-worker].”***

— Aviation sector worker, Bulgaria

***“I was very stressed and had panic attacks. I was unable to go to work without worrying that I would have to work with the involved party... it made work very hard and distressing.”***

— Railway worker, UK

***“Seriously depressed, 11 months off work, felt stressed and very nervous anxious... I had to leave the Merchant Navy after 17 years.”***

— Maritime worker, UK

***“I feel worse. I sleep worse. I have become afraid. I have not regained the energy I had before the sexual harassment... and the constant harassment from passengers breaks you down. The great lack of support from the employers makes it sometimes very heavy.”***

— Bus driver, Sweden

## Loss of trust in colleagues and supervisors

The devastating effect of violence at work is exacerbated if the issue is not tackled and dealt with quickly. The survey reveals that many women workers experiencing violence lost trust in colleagues and supervisors, which affected their working environment and made them isolated at work.

***“I have no confidence in my superiors, I look with suspicion at my colleagues, I live in a state of anxiety during operation, especially during the evening or night shifts.”***

— Urban public transport worker, Italy



***“The sexual harassment from my boss made me feel like I’m not taken seriously as an employee. It destroyed my trust and made me question whether the whole company is like this.”***

— Urban public transport worker, UK

## Wanting to quit the job

Violence has a major impact on retention of workers. Several women stated that they wanted to leave their jobs but were unable to do so as they were concerned about not finding another job; others felt that they had to either bury the problem and get on with the job or leave the job.

***“[Violence has affected me] negatively... I don’t go to work happy any more.”***

— Railway worker, Italy

***“One time when I sat down to eat and read my newspaper a colleague came up from behind, he settled over me and bent me over the table pressing my face into my sandwich as he stood behind me and humped me like dog. Pinching butts and boobs, whistling and comments like “women only drive bus to catch men” etc. In the end this ruined me and I had to change job. I worked for that company for seven years and no one intervened.”***

— Bus driver, Norway

***“It is doubtful whether one can bear it until retirement!”***

— Railway worker, Germany

***“Is this why many women leave their jobs because they would not be harassed?... How do you think we can continue to work with such people? Is it a good working environment?”***

— Urban transport worker, Sweden

***“Whenever [this abuse] happens I feel like looking for another job, but I can’t afford to leave. I’m stressed and feel like taking a long time off sick. I’ve contemplated going to the doctor...”***

— Railway worker, UK

***“I quit my job as a team leader and have developed a hateful relationship to people. I’m cynical and from time to time I have little or no inclination to go to work.”***

— Bus driver, Norway

## Effect on work performance and the quality of customer service

Work performance and the ability to provide a quality service are seriously compromised if a woman experiences violence at work. Women reported that being stressed and being on guard in case of violence impairs customer service – workers are defensive and less likely to be willing to help customers.

***“Verbal abuses and insults related to the sexual sphere as “suck me, bitch” etc., spitting in the face and shoving... I cannot any longer implement regulations for customers, and I often ignore any problems in order to prevent a confrontation.”***

— Railway worker, Italy

***“I’m very distant and reserved towards passengers.”***

— Urban public transport worker, Germany

## Negative impact on personal and family relationships outside of work

Several respondents spoke about the impact of violence and harassment on their personal relationships.

***“It still affects me now. I don’t trust men, it helped ruin a six-year long relationship with my boyfriend. I get anxious, struggle to sleep, lost out on promotion due to lack of confidence.”***

— Railway worker, UK

***“[Harassment from a co-worker affected me] negatively, not only on me but my whole family. Continuous tension, quarrels, high blood pressure, nervous breakdowns.”***

— Aviation sector worker, Bulgaria

# Reporting an incident and making complaints

## Women workers who reported incidents of violence and made complaints

The survey asked women transport workers to give information about their experiences of reporting incidents of violence and making complaints. Just over two-thirds (n=626) of the women who had experienced violence stated that they had reported an incident of violence to one or more persons. Nearly one-half of these women reported an incident of violence perpetrated by a customer, as shown in Table 5. Lower numbers of reports were made regarding acts of violence perpetrated by a manager/supervisor or a colleague. Just over one-fifth of respondents stated that they had made multiple reports of violence, suggesting again that the experience of violence is not a one-off incident.

**Table 5. Reporting on violence, by perpetrator**

Perpetrator	Number reporting	%
Customer	307	49.0
Manager / supervisor	66	10.5
Colleague	96	15.3
Other / Multiple	135	21.6
No Answer	22	3.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The highest level of reporting on violence was of verbal abuse, followed by threats and intimidation, and offensive behaviour. Lower levels of reporting took place on sexual harassment and physical violence. This reporting reflects the predominance of verbal abuse, threats/ intimidation and offensive behaviour. However, a low level of reporting on sexual harassment may reflect a reluctance by women to report because the culture of sexual harassment may make it difficult or impossible for women to report to male managers or union officials.

## Who did women report to?

Regarding who a woman reported to, the highest level of reporting on all forms of violence was to an employer, followed by a colleague, family/friends or the police.

- Less than one in six of respondents reported a recent incident of violence to a trade union, which is much lower than made to a colleague, employer or the police.

This can be seen in Table 6, which also shows that women often reported to more than one person/organisation. The lowest level of reporting on all types of violence was to a trade union.

**Table 6: Who women reported to**

Reported to:	Offensive behaviour	%	Physical violence	%	Sexual harassment	%	Threats / intimidation	%	Verbal abuse	%	Other	%
Colleague	248	39.6	84	13.4	120	19.2	256	40.9	277	44.2		0.0
Employer	343	54.8	135	21.6	170	27.2	336	53.7	353	56.4		0.0
Family / friends	210	33.5	84	13.4	118	18.8	223	35.6	232	37.1	1	0.2
Police	157	25.1	94	15.0	82	13.1	158	25.2	162	25.9		0.0
Trade union	142	22.7	58	9.3	65	10.4	146	23.3	147	23.5	1	0.2
Other	60	9.6	24	3.8	36	5.8	62	9.9	73	11.7	1	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1100</b>		<b>455</b>		<b>555</b>		<b>1119</b>		<b>1171</b>		<b>3</b>	

Despite the fact that many trade unions in the transport sector have already negotiated policies and procedures and have campaigned to end violence at work, this suggests there is a continued and urgent need for trade unions to take active measures to tackle violence against women workers as a serious occupational safety and health issue.

## Satisfaction with reporting and complaints procedures

Many women spoke of the problems they encountered when reporting an incident or making a complaint to a superior. As Table 7 shows, there is generally a low level of satisfaction with the complaints process. Just over half stated that they were not satisfied with the response they received, even though an overwhelming 78% of those reporting violence stated that they felt that they were believed. 69.2% of respondents stated that no investigation was held. Of concern is that eight out of ten respondents (81.8%) believed that their complaint did not result in a safer workplace. Similarly, eight out of ten respondents (81.5%) stated that their complaint did not result in negative

consequences for the perpetrator. It is of even greater concern that nearly seven out of ten respondents (66.9%) stated that their complaint resulted in negative consequences for them.

- Eight out of ten respondents said that their complaint did not result in a safer workplace, nor did their complaint lead to negative consequences for the perpetrator.
- Seven out of ten women stated that their complaint resulted in negative consequences for them.

**Table 7. How complaints were dealt with**

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)	No response (%)
Were you satisfied with the response you received?	45	51.1	3.9
Did you feel believed?	78.8	17.6	3.6
Was there an investigation?	27.3	69.3	3.4
Did your complaint result in a safer workplace?	12.6	81.8	5.6
Did your complaint result in negative consequences for the perpetrator?	13.3	81.5	5.2
Did your complaint result in negative consequences for you?	26.7	66.9	6.4

## Complaints about violence from colleagues, supervisors and managers

There is an under-reporting of violence, particularly of sexual harassment, when it is perpetrated by co-workers, supervisors and managers. Some of this stems from the pervasive culture of sexual harassment in the sector, which leads women to fear retaliation, further victimization and not being taken seriously. Several respondents stated that there was a failure to deal with their complaints appropriately, some felt let down by their union or employer, and others said that malicious rumours were spread about them in order to discredit them, or that supervisors and managers perpetuate the culture of sexual harassment by covering up cases.

***“In the company, there is a culture of actively hiding the sexual harassment by men. Men in leading/managerial positions are often the ones who violate women.”***

— *Bus driver, Sweden*

***“Due to my bad experience, I believe that the perpetrators enjoy more protection, and as a woman one must fear the consequences, if one complains ... I know from experience!”***

— *Railway worker, Germany*

***“I was absolutely destroyed by the rumours and lies that people spread around about me.”***

— *Railway worker, UK*

***“Of course, at that time I was exposed to severe stress and anxiety. What is most frustrating in such a situation is that I had the courage to tell the truth, but the opposite managerial side lacks any morality... the company level decisions are made subjectively.”***

— *Urban public transport worker, Bulgaria*

***“I was so stressed... and often fell ill. I had to fight alone, I was isolated and put on sick leave by the company that did not fulfil its legal obligations when I denounced the facts. People in the company did not want to testify in my favour, not even my union shop steward...”***

— *Other, France*

## Complaints about violence from customers

An important finding from the survey is that reporting on violence and harassment from customers is rarely taken seriously, unless there are serious physical injuries, in which case reports are regularly made to the police. Women were expected to ‘man up’ and deal with verbally offensive and threatening customer behaviour. Some women criticised employers for not taking active steps to prevent further violence against women after an incident had been reported.

***“In most cases management react when a problem has occurred, but there is little done around prevention.”***

— *Railway worker, UK*

Some respondents stated that their complaints were dealt with effectively by the company, and in some cases with the union, when they concerned violence from customers.

***“In April 2015, I had a cruel experience, where I was threatened with death by an angry passenger. He was suddenly furious because he didn’t want me to drive across the bridge... he threatened to kill me several times... After this incident, I got very good help from my manager and several of my colleagues.”***

— *Bus Driver, Norway*

## Reasons for not reporting an incident

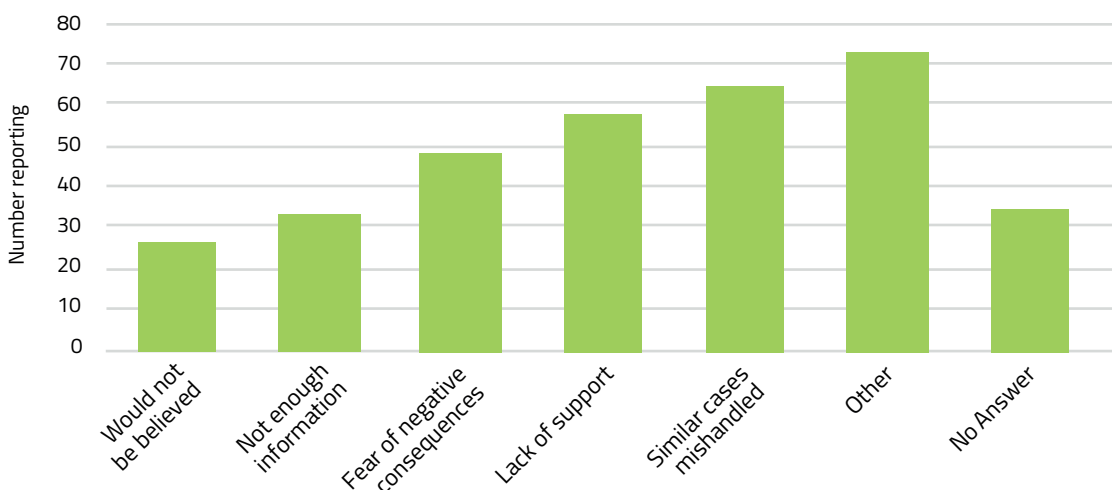
Women transport workers report a lack of trust in workplace reporting procedures.

Some 221 women who had experienced violence at work indicated a range of reasons why they had not reported an incident, some expressing more than one concern. As Chart 3 shows, the single most important reason, reported by over six out of ten women (n=64), was that she had seen that other, similar, cases were not dealt with effectively, resulting in a loss of trust in the reporting procedure. A lack of support, was another significant factor highlighted by just under six out of ten respondents (n=58), followed by a fear of negative consequences in just under half of respondents (n=48), a lack of information, reported by just over a third of women, about reporting procedures (n=33) and feeling that you would not be believed in over a quarter of respondents (n=27).

- Women transport workers report a lack of trust in workplace reporting procedures.
- Six out of ten women did not report their experience of violence because they had seen other similar cases not being dealt with effectively.

Further reasons given for not reporting an incident, included a fear that they would not be taken seriously by managers or union representatives, and that it would have a negative impact on work relationships and on future promotion and career development opportunities. Some women were embarrassed about reporting unwanted sexual behaviour to their union or employer and others were unaware of how to report an incident.

**Chart 3. Reasons for not reporting an incident**



Many women transport workers stated that they did not report because of fear of losing their job, of being victimised or having to face retaliation if they complained, or of being seen negatively as a whistleblower, or all these things. For others, it was the woman's word against the man's word, or not having sufficient evidence, that preventing women from complaining. Several women stated that working in a male dominated workplace made it difficult to report, and violence had to be tolerated, particularly if they were the only woman in the workplace. Reasons given for not reporting to a trade union included not knowing who to report to in a union, not being a union member, not trusting union reps – who were seen to be either ineffective or more likely to support management than a woman worker – and not seeing the relevance of a union rep. Admin workers particularly felt unsupported by their union reps.

***“I am the only woman at the terminal and that causes the men to act tough with one another... [I have been] abused and threatened, I have had to listen to filthy language while the others just laughed.”***

— Road transport worker, Belgium

***“It would have attracted unnecessary attention and there may be no positive outcome”.***

— Railway worker, UK

***“In the case of harassing bosses or colleagues, no! If I complain they make my life miserable. And those who previously have been reported get no penalty. I have seen it several times.”***

— Tram driver, Sweden

***“[I could not report the threats of sexual propositions by my manager] as it was too subtle to prove and there were no witnesses.”***

— Railway worker, France

***“To report [sexual harassment] would isolate me further within the crew; I would be seen as a whistle-blower, changing the dynamics of a male dominated work environment where the general belief from the vocal majority is that they are accommodating me, not that I've earned the right... I didn't notify my trade union for the same issues as above. Whistle-blowers generally have to give up their position through isolation.”***

— Maritime transport worker, UK



## Company policies and reporting procedures

The survey found that few women workers knew about their company's policy and procedures. When women did know that the policies or procedures existed, it was often the case that women did not know how to use them, or that they had no confidence or trust in the policies or procedures. Table 8 shows that just over one-third of respondents (n=500) did not know if there was a workplace reporting procedure and about one-tenth (n=123) stated that there was no workplace reporting procedure. In addition, over one-third of respondents (n=556) did not know if the company had a policy on violence at work, and just under one-seventh (n=194) said that there was no company policy in place. It is of concern that only one-third of respondents (n=462) knew that there was a workplace procedure in place and that only one-fifth (n=335) knew that there was a company policy on the issue.

- Less than one-third of respondents stated that their employer took action to deal with violence against women workers.
- One-half of respondents said that they knew who they could turn to in the workplace if they had an experience of violence.

**Table 8. Workplace policies and reporting procedures**

	Yes	%	No	%	Don't know	%	No response	%
Workplace reporting procedure	462	31.9	123	8.51	500	34.62	359	24.86
Company policy	335	23.2	194	13.4	556	38.5	359	24.9

Even when company policies and procedures exist, it is often the case that workers do not know about them, or, as this survey has revealed, do not have trust in them being implemented effectively.

***“There is a procedure, but it is cumbersome and workers prefer to avoid it.”***

— Admin worker, railway sector, Bulgaria

Respondents spoke of a variety of initiatives by transport companies to improve the safety of workers, including de-escalation training, self-defence courses and security controls, amongst others. However, many women spoke of the need to do much more to improve security and safety for women workers.

***“It would be necessary to reinforce... security in the case of known trouble trains (at night, football games, festivals, demonstrations). Regular de-escalation training is required!”***

— Urban public transport worker, Germany

***“The truth is that almost all my colleagues, as well as the people who were in charge, support us and are continuing to work and updating the policy on aggression in stations... which has increased security in the station.”***

— *Railway worker, Spain*

## Support given by a union

Survey respondents gave mixed responses – positive and negative – about the support given by a union representative or officer. Positive comments included praise for the encouragement a union representative or shop steward had given to women to report cases and make complaints, as well as offers of practical support, and help given in representing a woman and attending meetings with her.

■ **39% of respondents to the survey stated that their trade union took action to deal with violence against women.**

***“... my union rep was fantastic; the perpetrator was stood down and I received practical as well as emotional support.”***

(*Urban transport worker, UK*)

***“The union works all the time on finding solutions to different problems in the workplace.”***

— *Bus driver, Sweden*

***“Fantastic. I could call them anytime and they also made sure I was accompanied by a colleague the first few shifts following the incident.”***

— *Underground train driver, Norway*

***“They stood behind me and told me that if I want to lodge a complaint they are ready to support me and to do whatever is necessary.”***

— *Admin worker, railway sector, Bulgaria*

***“They [the union] defended me with the support of a colleague from [the company] who, at the workplace, has mediated so that these situations would not arise again.”***

— *Environmental hygiene worker, transport company, Italy*

Despite the challenges and the evidence of a rising incidence of violence, particularly from customers, some women said that they had noticed a change in attitudes over the years, particularly as a result of action by women’s sections of unions.

***“As member of Filt-Cgil I reported the problems discussed within the women coordination meetings. My unions took charge of the requests and asked for separate toilet facilities... As for the attitudes, the situation has changed and improved with the increasing number of female workers in every sector, even technical ones, and with a higher presence of young workers, they are more respectful of their colleagues.”***

— *Railway worker, Italy*

However, it is of concern that several respondents spoke of a complete lack of trust in their union representatives, in some cases because it was the union officer who was the harasser.

***“A colleague (who is a union officer), has harassed me sexually, and has tried to make me spy and sneak on the other colleagues.”***

— *Bus Driver, Norway*

***“I cannot stand to talk about the incidents, I’m still so disappointed about how my union failed me.”***

— *Bus driver, Sweden*

***“Unions were not even informed because at that time I lost my confidence in unions.”***

— *Railway worker, Italy*

# Other factors affecting the safety of women transport workers

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## New risks of violence in the workplace

An important finding from the survey is that there are new risks of violence associated with deteriorating working conditions, changes in work organization, and reduced staffing levels. These are serious issues that are exposing women to higher levels of violence and harassment at work.

### *Security and policing have been compromised*

Although some transport workers spoke of improvements in security in recent years with CCTV, better police attendance in stations and better company policies, many believe that these security measures have been undermined, have worsened or are inadequate. The risk of violence is exacerbated if a woman worker is isolated or working alone, particularly at weekends or on late shifts.

***“We have to now lock ourselves away in a secure area away from the platform if there is severe disruption after the evening peak. We can no longer be visible or helpful as our efforts are not appreciated.”***

— (Railway worker, UK)

### *Reduced staffing levels and changes in work organisation*

Staffing shortages and staff restructuring has resulted in women workers being more isolated at work and therefore at greater risk of exposure to violence. These issues were raised in particular by women transport workers in the UK and Italy, where restructuring has led women to work alone in increasingly dangerous situations. Some women workers also believed that they were also the target of their male colleagues' low job satisfaction, at a time when job satisfaction arising from restructuring, amongst other trends, is very low in the transport sector.

***“It [verbal aggression and threats] happens all the time on the gateline of underground stations. Being called names, shouted at and told we are scum. It is much worse since the ticket offices shut as we can't solve as many problems for customers as they used to.”***

— Railway worker, UK

***“With staffing reductions made in the number of onboard personnel and ticket office operators, stations are degrading places and trains are very dangerous, most of all at night time. There are no more police stations, apart from at some big railway stations... Any action taken has not been useful in limiting the problem. Personnel on board are alone and can’t do anything to defend themselves in case of danger.”***

— *Railway worker, Italy*

### *Precarious work and violence and harassment from colleagues, supervisors and managers*

An increase in precarious jobs, as a result of zero-hours contracts and temporary contracts, increases women’s vulnerability to sexual harassment from colleagues, supervisors and managers. Some women spoke of their experiences of ‘quid pro-quo’ sexual harassment, some risked their jobs or renewal of their contracts if they spoke out.

***“When you are on a zero-hour-contract you’re careful about what you say because you might not get any more work.”***

— *Bus driver, Sweden*

***“[My manager] wanted to check in on me and he told me that if I went to bed with him, I could advance in the company.”***

— *Bus driver, Sweden*

## **Gender inequalities and harmful stereotypes of women**

Although all transport workers face risks of violence at work, women experience particular types of violence and also are targets of violence because they are women. A wider societal culture of unequal gender roles and relations, of harmful gender stereotypes, and of an acceptance of gender inequalities, is seen by many respondents as contributing to a culture of violence and harassment against women transport workers. Many respondents spoke of the male chauvinist atmosphere in the workplace, where discrimination against women and a culture of sexual harassment negatively affect the working environment. Although women are a growing proportion of transport workers, a culture of violence against women is used to perpetuate the myth that women are outsiders and that transport is an industry only for men.

***“The general public seem to think it’s OK to intimidate or harass female workers. They say things that they normally wouldn’t dare had it been one of my strapping male colleagues.”***

— *Urban public transport worker, UK*

***“The intimidation and violence isn’t what you expect when you take on the role... in order to be treated like a man though, you must work harder and complain less. This is the industry in which we work. It is a poor state really.”***

— *Railway worker, UK*

***“They do not recognize the role and professionalism as a woman. For instance, some colleagues address me calling me “lady” instead of “engineer”, as they used to do when addressing a man... Having to care for the family disadvantages women, as compared with male colleagues.***

— *Railway worker, Italy*

***“I think that we, female workers, are really alone, at the mercy of anyone who wants to come on to us or tell us everything that goes in his mind.”***

— *Urban public transport worker, Italy*

***“I have been sworn at, verbally name called, been told I’m useless, and I have been intimidated and been treated badly because I am a female [team leader]. It makes you question your own worth. And I felt down for a little while. I would not let anyone get away with it now... It just makes you feel low as you are only trying to do your job to the best of your ability.”***

*Railway worker, UK*

Migrant, black and minority ethnic women frequently face high risks of violence and harassment. Black and minority ethnic campaigners have pointed to the double discrimination faced by black and minority ethnic women, including the eroticising of black and minority ethnic women’s bodies and sexuality. Recognizing the overlapping effects of gender and racial inequalities is an important issue for future trade union strategies in tackling violence and harassment at work.

***“I have been physically, racially and verbally abused at work a few times so far. Even now it makes me cry thinking about it. I wasn’t expecting to be physically and racially abused in a European country in 21st century.”***

— *Railway worker, UK*

***“Obviously, it was not funny at all being called darky.”***

— *Bus driver, Sweden*

Respondents to the survey refer to the need to tackle a culture where sexually offensive suggestions and intimidating personal remarks and gestures are commonplace. However, many spoke of managers, supervisors and union officials lacking awareness of gender inequality, including how it intersects with race inequalities, the specific risks of violence and harassment faced by women and the sexualised nature of that violence.

# Conclusions and recommendations

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## Conclusions

The EFT survey reveals that violence against women at work is a widespread and growing problem in transport, affecting women's occupational safety, health and wellbeing at work. It is of particular concern that the survey shows that violence is rarely a one-off experience; rather it is likely to take place repeatedly over the working life of a woman transport worker. Many respondents to the survey stated that, in their experience, violence is so widespread and pervasive in the transport sector that it is difficult to report and challenge it, resulting in many cases of violence not being reported. Many women suffer in silence, have to deal with physical and psychological health problems resulting from violence, and often they leave their jobs.

This report, which provides first-hand evidence of violence against women in transport, provides an important evidence-base for the ETF to build its campaign and implement social dialogue initiatives on violence against women at work in the transport sector.

## Recommendations

The recommendations are addressed to the ETF and the Women's Committee:

- Lobby for an EU legal framework on violence against women at work to ensure the full EU ratification of the Istanbul Convention – this should recognise the important role that trade unions can play in preventing and addressing violence against women at work.
- Actively lobby for an ILO Convention with a strong focus on violence against women at work, and disseminate information about the ITUC 'No to gender-based violence at work' campaign.
- Provide guidance and good practice examples to assist unions in developing and implementing workplace policies and procedures, including a model workplace policy, guidance on mainstreaming gender equality and addressing violence against women in occupational safety and health initiatives, awareness raising about the gendered nature of violence against women and the harm resulting from a culture of sexual harassment and intimidation at work, and guidance about how trade union representatives can support women who have experienced violence.

- Include violence against women in future European social dialogue initiatives in transport, for example, in drawing up Europe-wide guidelines on addressing violence at work, with a strong focus on violence against women.
- Encourage affiliates to engage in national and European training and awareness raising on the gendered nature of violence and harassment, and ensure that this is included in occupational safety and health training.
- Develop an ambitious new project and seek funding in 2018 for a new ETF project on violence against women, to support the ETF campaign, raising awareness amongst affiliates and implementing the recommendations contained in this report to draw up and implement European and national guidelines.







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