

Vulnerable in the public sector

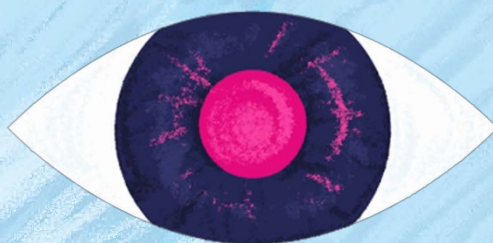
A report on threats, violence and undue influence



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1.

Foreword

Stockholm, April 2026

Every day, public sector employees carry out duties that underpin the foundations of our democratic society. They meet people in vulnerable situations, make decisions that affect living conditions and uphold the fundamental principles of the rule of law. For this mission to succeed, everyone working in the public sector must be able to do their job without fear, pressure or the risk of undue influence.

The ST Trade Union's 2026 working environment survey clearly shows that this is not the case. Although issues relating to threats and hate have taken on an increasingly prominent role in public debate, threats, violence and harassment are part of everyday life for ST Trade Union members. For some, this means being repeatedly subjected to verbal abuse, insults or harassment from members of the public. For others, it involves high-risk situations involving physical contact, conflicts and escalating behaviour, most often from members of the public or inmates. In some workplaces, the vulnerability stems from something entirely different: shortcomings in workplace culture, unclear structures and interdependencies that make it difficult to report or manage incidents.

The study reveals a clear link between workload, the working environment and the risk of undue influence. When pressure on an organisation increases, when there is not enough time, when there are too few staff, or when organisational support is lacking, the vulnerability of the exercise of public authority also increases. Our data shows that civil servants working under very high pressure are more likely to alter or adapt decisions to avoid exposure. This is a signal that concerns not only us as a trade union, but also the rule of law throughout the entire civil service.

We are living in a time when trust in social institutions is being challenged from many quarters, through a harsher social climate, increased demands on public authorities, growing polarisation, faster flows of information, and a public sphere in which both criticism and discontent are spreading more widely than before.

ILO Convention 190, which the Swedish government has just announced it will ratify, establishes that everyone has the right to a working life free from violence and harassment. Our survey shows that this principle is far from a given. For the ST trade union, it is a fundamental task to highlight the risks posed by threats and violence and to work for change. ILO Convention 190 is not merely a symbolic measure; through practical initiatives, it must strengthen our members' working environment, staffing, leadership and organisation by seizing the opportunity to ensure that all aspects of the Convention are upheld. For example, by securing time and resources. ILO 190 cannot be realised through policy documents alone; it requires adequate staffing, time for recovery and time for training.

We hope that this report will help to deepen understanding of the working conditions of those employed by the state and that it can be used to strengthen safety and security. A safe working environment is more than just a matter of working conditions. It is a prerequisite for a functioning democracy.



Britta Lejon

Chair, ST Trade Union

2.

Summary

This year's working environment survey shows that threats, violence and harassment remain a widespread and, in some respects, growing problem within the public sector. Despite increased focus on the issue politically, in the media and within organisations, many of the ST Trade Union's members describe a working day where vulnerability is a real and recurring part of the job, although the frequency of such incidents varies depending on where you work. The results show that the working environment, workload and legal certainty are closely interlinked.

In total, 28 per cent of members report that threats, violence or harassment occur in their workplace, and 43 per cent of these have themselves been subjected to such behaviour in the past year. The extent of this exposure varies significantly between organisations, with particularly high levels within the National Board of Institutional Care (SiS), the Prison and Probation Service, and several agencies with extensive public contact, such as the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the Swedish Public Employment Service, the Enforcement Authority and the Swedish Migration Agency. Within rail transport departments, working alone emerges as a particularly significant risk factor for exposure.

Younger employees are consistently more vulnerable than older ones, and women are the group that, overall, faces the greatest risk of threats and harassment, whilst men are more likely to be subjected to physical violence. Furthermore, the results show that internal vulnerability – that is, threats or harassment from a manager or colleague – is a significant problem within certain sectors, such as the cultural sector, universities and colleges, as well as parts of the Swedish Transport Administration, Swedavia and the Prison and Probation Service.

The survey shows that the risks vary depending on the work situation. Threats and harassment occur primarily during telephone contact, face-to-face meetings and in written communication, such as email. In several sectors, incidents occur regularly when working alone.

Unlawful influence remains low in reported figures, but the results show that workload is a key risk factor. Among those working under very high pressure, it is twice as common to have changed a decision following pressure, and significantly more common to have adapted decisions to avoid exposure. This demonstrates that there is a strong link between the working environment, organisational conditions and the lawful exercise of official duties.

Three types of work are particularly vulnerable to threats, violence and harassment:

- 1. Compulsory care and detention services**, where staff face very high levels of threats and physical violence, combined with complex organisational challenges.
- 2. Public authorities with extensive and decision-heavy public engagement**, where frustration or desperation is often directed at civil servants.
- 3. Operations involving physical exposure and working alone**, where rail transport operations in particular present high levels of risk.

Overall, the survey shows that threats, violence and harassment against those working on behalf of the state are not a uniform phenomenon, but rather a complex risk landscape that requires measures tailored to specific operations. There are significant differences between government agencies and companies working on behalf of the state, both in terms of scale and severity. At the same time, vulnerability is unevenly distributed across groups, with young people being the hardest hit.

This report emphasises that a safe working environment is more than just a matter of working conditions. It is a prerequisite for the state to function as a stable, impartial and legally secure

management. Strengthening resilience requires both national initiatives and workplace-based measures. Some of the most important are:

- a reasonable workload
- adequate staffing
- clear procedures
- openness to discussing vulnerability
- leadership that takes the issues seriously

2.1 Summary in 's figures

This section summarises the key findings from the 2026 workplace survey regarding issues relating to threats, violence or harassment and undue influence.

Overall levels of vulnerability

- Of government employees, 28 per cent state that threats, violence or harassment¹ occur in the workplace, and 43 per cent of these have themselves been subjected to such behaviour in the past year.
- Among employees in companies² working on behalf of the state³, 33 per cent report that threats, violence or harassment occur, and 46 per cent of these have themselves been subjected to such behaviour in the past year.
- Among members who have regular contact with the public, the figure is 31 per cent.
- Among those with daily contact with the public, the figure is 37 per cent.

Other departments that are not public authorities, where more than 30 per cent report that threats, violence or harassment occur:

- 48 per cent of those working for rail transport companies report that threats or violence occur in the workplace.

Of those who report that threats, violence or harassment occur in their workplace, the following state that they have been subjected to physical violence:

- 5 per cent have been subjected to physical violence in the past year.
- 9 per cent of men and 3 per cent of women have been subjected to violence in the past year.
- 9 per cent of those aged 18–29

Departments with the highest incidence of physical violence in the past year.

- SiS:.....46 per cent
- Prison and Probation Service:13 per cent
- Rail transport departments: 8 per cent

Who are the employees exposed to?

In certain sectors, specific groups are heavily overrepresented. For example, almost all incidents within the Swedish Prison and Probation Service (SiS) are perpetrated by detainees, whilst threats at universities and colleges most often come from students.

Figure 2.1 Who is responsible for threats, violence or harassment?

Private individual/ordinary citizen	57%
Inmates, persons deprived of their liberty	21
Colleague	20
Manager	15
Relative of the person concerned	12%
Representative from a company/organisation	6
Student	5
Other	3
Don't know	3

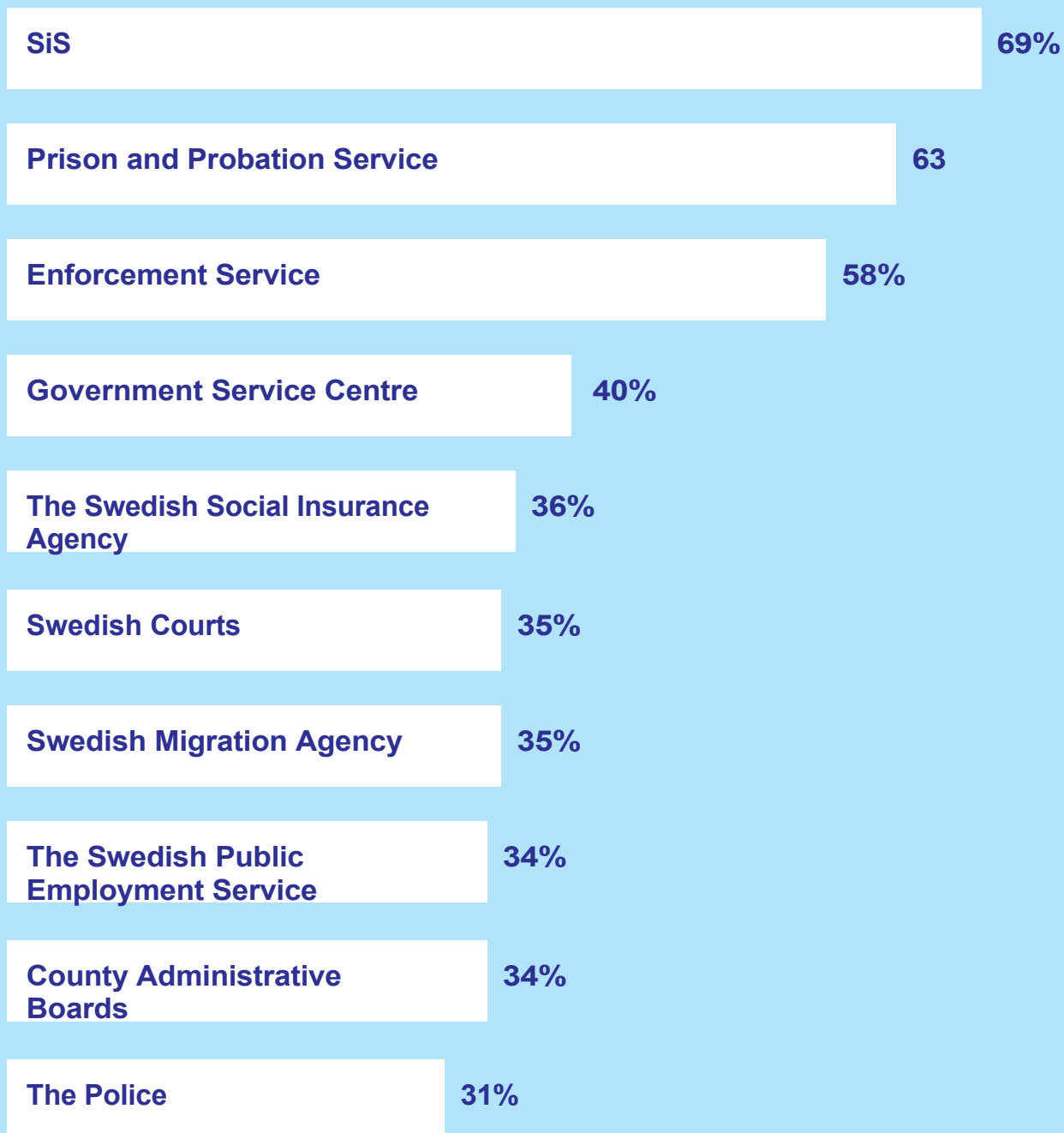
(multiple-choice option)

¹ In 2026, the question regarding personal victimisation was reworded to: "Have you personally been subjected to threats, violence or harassment in the past year?". The term "harassment" was added to better reflect current legislation and the way the phenomenon is now discussed in occupational health and safety and legal contexts. This is also consistent with ILO Convention 190, which covers violence and harassment. The addition means that more types of unwanted behaviour are covered and may therefore have contributed to more people reporting exposure than previously. This is evident in the results, particularly with regard to incidents involving a manager or colleague.

² Ibid.

³ Companies working on behalf of the state may include those in the rail sector (including regional companies such as SL and Pågataåg), Swedavia, Postnord and others.

The 10 most vulnerable public authorities where threats, violence or harassment in the workplace are reported



When and where do threats, violence or harassment occur?

Figure 2.2 In what situations do threats, violence or harassment occur?

	Total
When contacting citizens/students by telephone	46%
During face-to-face meetings at the workplace	38
When contacting citizens/students via email	27
At face-to-face meetings out in the public	12
In one-to-one meetings with a manager	12
During one-to-one meetings/work situations with a colleague	11
In meetings with several colleagues, including the manager	10%
In meetings with several colleagues	8%
Open in general staff areas	8
When working alone	7
Don't know	6
During face-to-face meetings on site visits	5
Following a statement or publication in the media	4%

(multiple-choice option)

People who have been subjected to threats, violence or harassment by members of the public, in different age groups:

Age groups	Men	Women
18–29	36%	44%
30–39	34%	31%
40–49	29%	23%
50 years and over	28%	25

High internal exposure to threats from a manager or colleague

22 per cent state that they have been subjected to such behaviour in the past year by a manager or colleague. The proportion stating that they have been subjected to such behaviour internally is highest within:

- The cultural sector:37%
- Universities and colleges:.....30
- Swedavia:30%
- Swedish Transport Administration:.....36%
- Prison and Probation Service:24%

Openness to speak out about being a victim

- 70 per cent feel there is openness to speak out about being subjected to threats, violence or harassment
- 21 per cent say they do not know
- 8 per cent feel there is no openness; below is a table broken down by age group showing those who do not feel there is openness to speak out:

Age groups	Men	Women
18–29	12%	9%
30–39	10%	8
40–49	9%	8%
50 years and over	8%	8%

Departments where significantly more people state that there is a lack of openness regarding whether the person has been subjected to abuse:

- National Board of Health and Welfare:18
- The National Agency for Special Needs Education: 18%
- The Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) 15%
- Prison and Probation Service:.....14
- SiS:.....14
- Swedavia12%

Undue influence

Undue influence⁴ means that someone attempts to influence a public official or authority through threats, harassment, pressure or other improper methods. The aim is to secure a decision, an action or a failure to act that benefits the person exerting the influence.

In this compilation, only those individuals who have themselves stated that they make official decisions have been included in the results.

Figure 2.3 Adjusting a decision to avoid being subjected to threats, violence or harassment

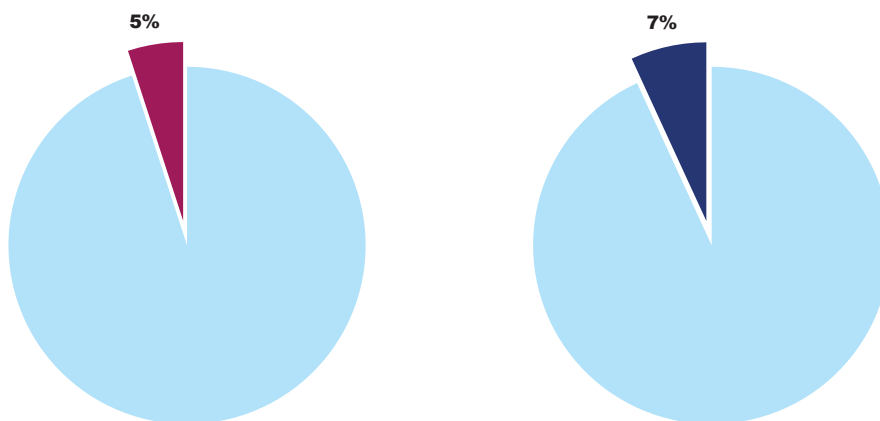
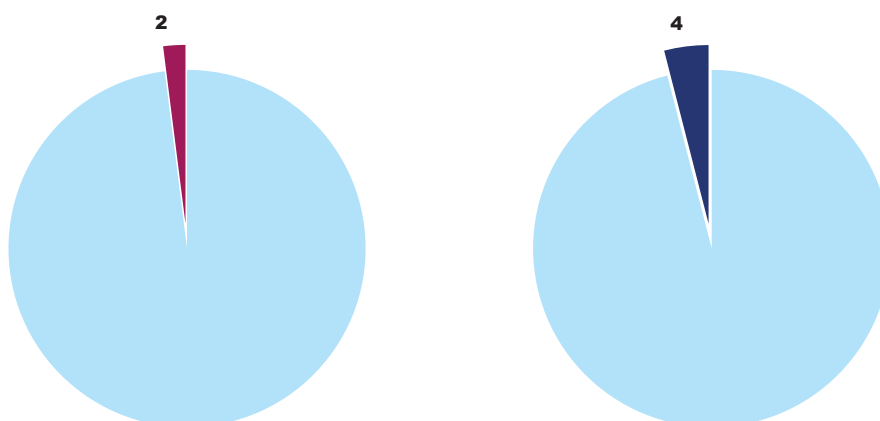


Figure 2.4 Changed a decision following pressure



■ Total
 ■ Those who report a very high workload

⁴ Undue influence = illegal influence (threats, violence, harassment, bribes, which are criminal offences). Improper influence = inappropriate but not necessarily illegal influence (pressure, gifts, relationships, excessive persuasion)

3.

Why this matters: from workplace environment to the rule of law

Threats, violence and harassment against public sector employees are not merely a workplace issue. It is a matter that extends far beyond the individual work situation and touches upon fundamental democratic values such as equal treatment, objectivity and the rule of law. For the civil servant members of the ST trade union, these principles are not abstract, but a prerequisite for being able to carry out their duties with professionalism, integrity and security.

In many of the organisations where ST members work, the decisions made have a direct and decisive impact on people's living conditions. Case workers at the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the Swedish Public Employment Service, the Swedish Migration Agency and the Swedish Enforcement Authority often deal with people in vulnerable or stressful situations. Within the justice system, particularly within the Police, the Swedish Security Service (SiS) and the Prison and Probation Service, employees work in environments characterised by high levels of conflict and high-risk situations. Even within universities and colleges, teachers and researchers are subjected to threats in connection with teaching, examination decisions or their participation in public debate.

Threats and violence against public servants risk undermining both the principles of legality and objectivity, two of the most central principles of Swedish public administration. If the working environment is characterised by fear, pressure

or harassment, it affects not only the individual employee but also the authority's decision-making. It becomes more difficult to make decisions that are unbiased, consistent and free from extraneous considerations.

It is therefore not merely a question of preventing threats and violence out of concern for the individual, although that in itself is reason enough. It is also a matter of preserving and strengthening the resilience of the public sector. A safe working environment is a fundamental prerequisite for:

- impartial decisions
- equal treatment of citizens
- high-quality public service delivery
- trust in the state and its institutions

At a time when public debate is polarised, when threats are directed at public sector employees in both digital and physical environments, and when civil servants frequently encounter people in vulnerable situations, a serious tension arises. If decision-makers do not feel safe, there is a risk that operations, individuals and society will all be adversely affected.

Therefore, the issue of threats, violence, harassment and undue influence is not merely a workplace issue. It is, to the highest degree, a matter of democracy.

4.

Undue influence

Unlawful influence is one of the most serious issues highlighted in this year's workplace environment survey. Although the reported levels are relatively low, the results clearly show that the problem is both real, growing and closely linked to the working environment. Threats, harassment and pressure against civil servants are not only a personal risk, but also pose a threat to the rule of law and democratic stability.

In this compilation, only those individuals who have themselves stated that they make official decisions have been included in the results.

It is therefore not merely a matter of the working environment, but a matter of democracy. When civil servants work in a climate of fear or under pressure, there is an increased risk that decisions will be influenced by threats rather than by the law and objective grounds.

Undue influence means that someone attempts to influence a civil servant or public authority through threats, harassment, pressure or other improper methods. The aim is to secure a decision, an action or a failure to act that benefits the person exerting the influence.

4.1 What is undue influence and why is it dangerous?

Threats, violence and harassment are often intended to influence the actions of public officials or the outcome of a decision. This type of pressure can undermine the principle of legality, the principle of objectivity, equal treatment and trust in the public administration.

4.2 Low levels of reported figures

This year's survey reports low figures regarding improper influence. On the surface, these figures may seem low. However, in a government organisation where hundreds of thousands of decisions are made every week, even a few per cent can have significant consequences over time, and these figures have risen slightly between 2024 and 2026. Nevertheless, the responses indicate that many possess a high level of integrity and take their role as civil servants seriously. The vast majority do not allow themselves to be influenced by attempts to exert influence.

Figure 4.1 Have you amended an official decision following pressure?

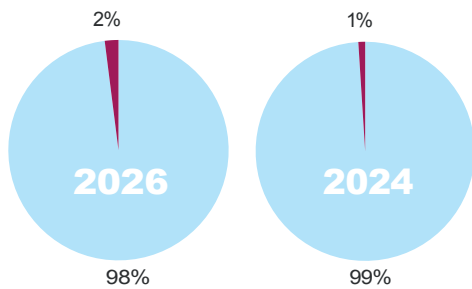
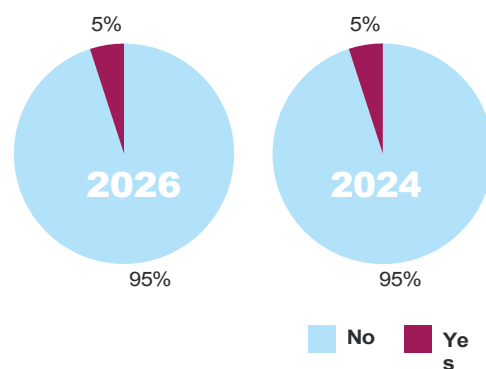


Figure 4.2 Have you adapted an official decision to reduce the risk of being targeted?



4.3 A high workload increases the risk of being subject to undue influence

The worrying pattern in the survey is the link between a very high workload and increased vulnerability to undue influence. Among those with the very highest workload, it is significantly more common to have changed or adapted a decision, either to reduce the risk of being subjected to undue influence or as a direct result of having already been subjected to it.

The risk of influence almost doubles when the workload is high. This shows that organisational factors such as time, resources, staffing and opportunities for recovery are just as important as legal tools and safety procedures for upholding the rule of law in practice.

Figure 4.3 Have you changed an official decision following pressure?

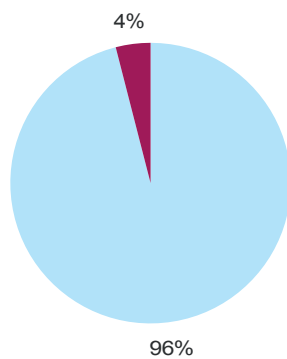
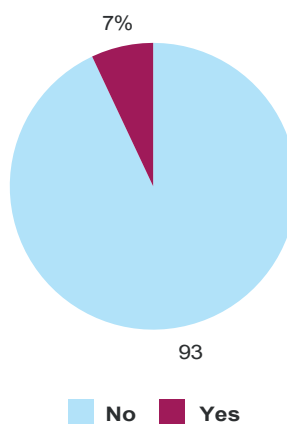


Figure 4.4 Have you adapted an official decision to reduce the risk of being targeted?



4.4 Various forms of unauthorised influence

In the survey, members describe a wide variety of attempts to influence them:

- direct threats against the public servant
- threats against family or relatives
- threats of self-harm from the person affected by the decision
- harassment on social media
- repeated aggressive contact via telephone and email
- stalking behaviour
- public shaming or public attacks

It is not always a matter of a single dramatic incident. Low-intensity but persistent and systematic pressure can have an equally strong impact, particularly if support from the workplace is weak.

4.5 Countering undue influence

It is essential to view efforts to combat undue influence as a combination of two levels:

1. Structural and national measures

- training
- national strategies
- legal support and confidentiality protection
- supervision and monitoring

2. Workplace-related and organisational measures

- reasonable workload
- adequate staffing
- effective reporting channels
- clear procedures for dealing with threats
- strong and accessible leadership
- a culture of openness rather than silence

It is only when these two levels are combined that resilience can be strengthened.

5.

Threats, violence and harassment

This year’s working environment survey shows that threats, violence and harassment remain a significant part of the working environment for many of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation ST’s members. At the same time, vulnerability is unevenly distributed, both between workplaces, between groups of employees and between different types of work situations.

The term “harassment” has been added to the questionnaire to better reflect current legislation, ILO Convention 190, and the way the phenomenon is now discussed in work environment and legal contexts. This addition means that more types of unwanted behaviour are covered and may therefore have contributed to more people reporting exposure than previously. The addition of “harassment” in question 2026 has brought further incidents to light, particularly in operations where contact with the public takes place via telephone, email or digital channels.

5.1 External threats dominate – but the picture is more complex than in previous “ ” surveys

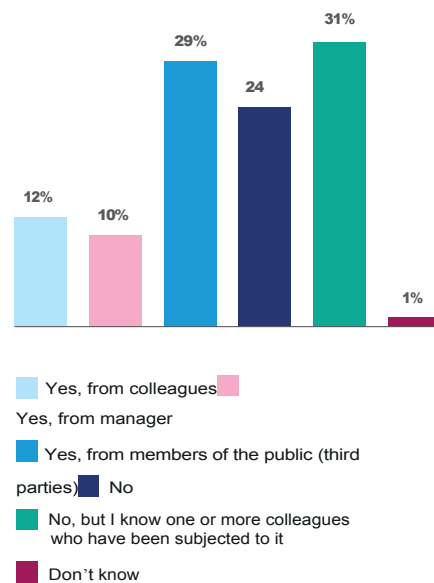
The most common scenario is that threats, violence or harassment come from private individuals, i.e. people who interact with public authorities in their capacity as citizens or clients. At the overall level, the following is stated:

- 57 per cent of those subjected to such treatment are targeted by private individuals or members of the public
- 21 per cent are subjected to abuse by persons deprived of their liberty
- 12 per cent are subjected to such behaviour by relatives of the person concerned

This means that the overall threat to public sector employees is not solely a matter of external pressure, but also relates to internal workplace practices, culture and leadership.

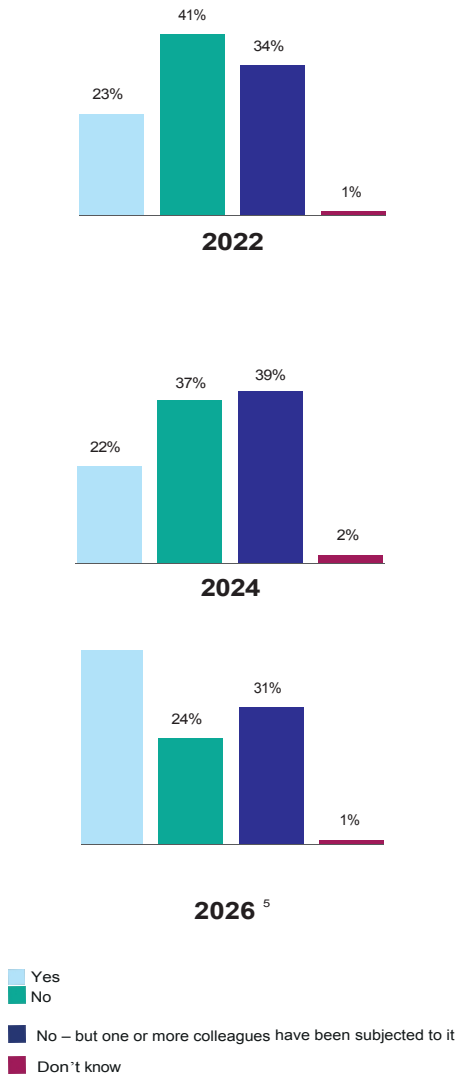
Personal exposure in workplaces where the respondent stated that threats, violence or harassment occur.

Figure 5.1.1 Have you personally been subjected to threats, violence or harassment in the workplace in the past year?*



* Of those who state that threats, violence or harassment occur in their workplace.

Figure 5.1.2 Have you personally been subjected to threats or violence in the past year?⁶ *



* Of those who state that threats, violence or harassment occur in their workplace.

5.2 Internal vulnerability

Being subjected to such behaviour by a manager or colleague is not the most common form of threats, violence or harassment. However, in certain sectors, it constitutes a significant part of the problem, and in many cases accounts for a higher proportion than incidents involving members of the public. The inclusion of the concept of harassment in the survey is most evident in the results regarding the occurrence of threats, violence or harassment in the workplace by a manager or colleague, which has increased significantly compared with the previous survey, from 3 per cent in 2024 to 10 per cent in 2026. However, listed below are the sectors where employees both report that threats, violence or harassment occur in the workplace and where they have personally been subjected to such behaviour in the past year. Particularly high levels of internal victimisation are found in:

- Cultural sector:37%
- Transport Agency:36%
- Swedavia:30%
- Universities and colleges:30%
- Prison Service:24%

Within these sectors, vulnerability often relates to:

- abuse
- aggressive behaviour
- disrespectful treatment
- conflicts linked to power structures

- harassment related to hierarchy or situations of dependency

This means that measures against threats, violence or harassment in these organisations must include procedures for internal conflict management, cultural change and strengthened leadership, not just initiatives targeting external actors.

⁵ The question regarding personal victimisation was reworded in 2026 to: "Have you personally been subjected to threats, violence or harassment in the past year?". The term "harassment" was added to better reflect current legislation and the way the phenomenon is now discussed in occupational health and safety and legal contexts. This is also consistent with ILO Convention 190, which covers violence and harassment. The addition means that more types of unwanted behaviour are covered and may therefore have contributed to more people reporting exposure than previously. This is evident in the results, particularly with regard to incidents involving a manager or colleague.

⁶ Figure 5.2 Have you personally been subjected to threats or violence in the past year? Only those who answered that they have contact with members of the public are included in this table.

The fact that physical violence is directed to a greater extent towards men and younger people in the workplace is a sign that employers need to take clearer responsibility for protection, staffing, training and support for these groups.

5.3 Young employees are most at risk

Exposure to threats, violence and harassment is not evenly distributed across age groups. For example, 9 per cent of 18–29-year-olds have been subjected to violence in the past year.

The survey shows that in workplaces where threats and violence occur, the following age groups report that they have personally been subjected to such incidents in the past year:

- 18–29 years:42%
- 30–39 years:32%

There are also clear gender differences in exposure to physical violence:

- Men as a group:9%
- Women as a group:3%

5.4 Where does exposure to violence occur?

Threats, violence or harassment occur in a variety of work situations, but certain patterns are clear:

Most common situations:

- Telephone contact:46%
- Face-to-face meetings at the workplace:38%
- Email:27%

This means that many incidents occur during direct interaction, often in situations where the employee has no control over the other party’s emotional state or behaviour.

When working alone

The overall figure is low (7 per cent), but masks significant variations:

- Rail transport departments:38%
- SiS:23%
- Prison and Probation Service:12%

In these environments, working alone is linked to:

- an increased risk of physical assault
- greater exposure to aggression from detainees or the general public
- greater difficulty in defusing the situation

5.5 Physical violence – concentrated in a few units

Five per cent of staff have been subjected to physical violence in the past year in those units where threats, violence or harassment are reported to occur, but the figure varies significantly between units:

- SiS:46%
- Prison and Probation Service:13%
- Rail transport:8%

These results indicate that certain sectors require structurally different risk management, as their core remit involves significantly higher risk.

5.6 Who poses a threat and why does this vary ?

A key conclusion is that “who poses a threat” varies greatly between different parts of the state.⁷

The Swedish Public Employment Service reports that 81 per cent of all threats, violence or harassment come from members of the public, whilst 20 per cent state that pressure is also exerted by relatives. A similar pattern is evident at the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, where 84 per cent cite members of the public as the source and 19 per cent cite relatives.

Within the Prison and Probation Service and the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care, we see a different picture: there, 81 per cent and 88 per cent respectively state that the threats come from an inmate or a person deprived of their liberty.

The Enforcement Authority reports that 94 per cent of threats, violence and harassment come from private individuals, but also that 18 per cent come from companies or organisations and 22 per cent from relatives of the person concerned. 43 per cent of threats within universities and colleges come from students.



⁷ The results are based on a multiple-choice question and therefore total more than 100%

6.

Types of organisations with specific risks

This year's work environment survey shows that threats, violence and harassment are not evenly distributed across the civil service. On the contrary, three distinct risk clusters have emerged, where the level of exposure is both greater and more complex than in other areas of the civil service. These differences reflect the remit, target groups, organisational conditions and working environment of the various departments. To provide as broad an understanding as possible of what threats, violence and harassment can look like for those working in the civil service, we have conducted 11 interviews with elected representatives of the ST trade union. Read more on page 26, under Implementation and scope. Below is a summary of the three sectors that stand out most in this year's survey.

6.1 Compulsory care and detention operations

(National Board of Institutional Care and the Prison and Probation Service)

Few organisations face as high a level of risk as the National Board of Institutional Care (SiS) and the Prison and Probation Service. Here, the risk of both threats and physical violence is consistently higher than in any other part of the state.

The National Board of Institutional Care (SiS)

SiS is the department with the highest level of vulnerability in the survey:

- 69 per cent report that threats, violence or harassment occur in the workplace, of whom 71 per cent have personally been subjected to such behaviour in the past year.
- Of those who report that threats, violence or harassment occur, 46 per cent state that they have been subjected to physical violence in the past year, by far the highest figure in the entire data set.

- Almost all incidents are perpetrated by detainees (88 per cent).
- The incidents often occur during face-to-face meetings, with 76 per cent stating that incidents take place in this context.
- 23 per cent report that threats or violence have occurred whilst working alone.

This combination of physical exposure, coercive measures, conflict situations and a heavy workload creates a high-risk environment that is structurally different from that in other parts of the public sector.

The Prison Service

The Prison Service shows a similar pattern:

- 63 per cent report that threats, violence or bullying occur in the workplace, of whom 56 per cent have personally been subjected to such behaviour in the past year.
- Of these, 13 per cent have been subjected to physical violence in the past year.
- 81 per cent of the threats come from clients.
- 73 per cent state that the incidents occur during face-to-face meetings at the workplace.

A particularly important aspect within the Prison and Probation Service is the relatively high level of internal victimisation; 24 per cent report having been victimised by a colleague. This suggests that workplace culture, leadership, staffing and support structures are also important safety issues that need to be included in health and safety work in order to prevent and prevent threats, violence or harassment

6.1.1 Voices from trade union- e representatives

SiS:

“Violence has become more premeditated and more linked to gangs”

In an interview with a union representative at SiS, it is described that threats, violence and harassment primarily arise in encounters between clients and staff. Conflicts between colleagues are rare.

The elected representative points out that violent incidents often occur in connection with negative decisions, but that what has increased most in recent years is more premeditated violence linked to gang crime. The aim may be to facilitate escapes or disrupt operations, particularly when staffing levels are low and vulnerability is greater.

The threats are described as increasingly direct and personal, with statements such as “I know where your children go to school”, and one case is described where an employee’s door was blown up. Documentation in records is perceived as a risk, as inmates may access the information.

Overall, the interviews show that the nature of threats and violence has both broadened and deepened. This ranges from emotional outbursts to strategic violence and pressure from organised groups. This creates a complex working environment where both immediate and long-term risks must be managed simultaneously.

A small number of individuals are responsible for a large proportion of the violence, but the impact on staff is far-reaching.

“It is no longer just a fit of rage. It is premeditated, purposeful violence.”

Prison Service:

“Threats can come at any time”

An interview with an elected representative at a Class 1 prison⁸ within the Prison Service shows that threats, violence and harassment often arise unpredictably and can occur “at any time” at work. The staff representative describes both direct insults and explicit threats, such as “we can find out where you live” and “I’m going to kill you”. According to the staff representative, incidents often occur at random. It simply depends on who happens to be answering or meeting the client at that particular moment.

The elected representative also highlights a culture of silence, in which some staff members avoid talking about what they have experienced. Furthermore, staff are increasingly encountering more serious and organised crime in their work, which makes both threats and violence more serious. In a single week, four violent incidents were reported, in which staff were harassed, spat on or subjected to blows and thrown objects. Violent incidents between clients are also becoming increasingly common.

According to the elected representative, threats and violence have increased over time, particularly physical violence, which can now occur several times a week. The elected representative also describes how working practices have changed: staff work at a greater distance from clients and do not have time to build the same relationships as before, making it harder to understand and anticipate behaviour.

Identified need:

- reduce the workload
- reduce overcrowding, as current levels create unnecessarily high risks and stress for both staff and clients
- counteract the culture of silence surrounding the fear of speaking out about vulnerability

8 A Class 1 prison is Sweden’s most secure and restrictive type of prison, intended for high-risk inmates and/or those convicted of very serious crimes.

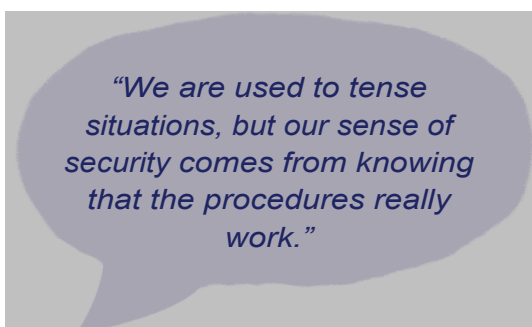
Swedish Courts:

“We feel safe, but the threats are always there”

An interview with an elected representative within the Swedish Courts reveals that threats, violence and harassment vary across the more than 80 separate authorities, where both circumstances and risk levels differ. In 2025, five incidents of violence were reported, and according to those interviewed, threats – particularly suicide threats or direct threats against staff – are the most common type of incident. In the case of suicide threats, the Swedish National Courts Administration recommends that the police be contacted whenever there is a suspicion of imminent danger. However, how this is applied in practice varies between different authorities and workplaces. In some authorities, the police are routinely contacted in the event of any suicide threat, whilst others make an individual assessment of the seriousness and immediacy of the threat before contacting the police.

Staff generally report a high level of safety on the premises. 90 per cent describe the workplace as safe, something the interviewee links to the security-enhancing measures introduced in recent years. A majority of organisations now have permanent security checks and security guards, often three to four per workplace.

According to staff, the increased presence of security guards has helped to reduce the number of disturbances. At the same time, the threat level has remained relatively stable over time, even though more incidents are being reported today than in the past. In the interviews, this is attributed to greater awareness, improved procedures and long-term efforts by the National Courts Administration.



Identified need:

- ensure sufficient recruitment of security guards
- more units require permanent security checks
- continue to systematise health and safety work at all courts

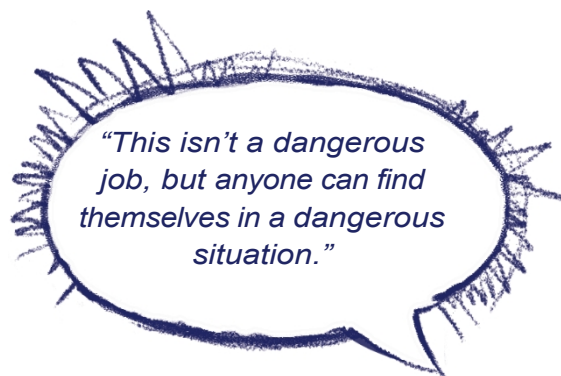
The police:

“Civilian staff are exposed to the same risks as uniformed officers, but without the protection”

Interviews with staff at the Police Authority reveal that threats and violence occur in many areas of the organisation’s work, both in face-to-face encounters and over the telephone. Service centres and detention facilities are highlighted as being particularly vulnerable, as are civilian staff on external duty, who sometimes face the same threats as their uniformed colleagues but without the same legal protection.

Staff also describe threats linked to organised crime, primarily directed at uniformed personnel, but sometimes also at civilian staff through vandalism or targeted threats. At the same time, there is more everyday, subtle harassment that is perceived as stressful.

According to the union representative, threats have increased over time. This is linked to the fact that more professional groups now work in high-risk situations and to the organisation’s growing focus on organised crime. The need for more systematic training in risk assessment, conflict management and escalation is highlighted as a clear step forward.



Identified need:

- training for all staff, focusing on de-escalation and on leaving or avoiding high-risk situations
- more local safety initiatives

6.2 Authorities with extensive and decision-making-heavy citizen-

(the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the Swedish Public Employment Service, the Swedish Enforcement Authority, the Swedish Migration Agency, etc.)

Organisations where staff members encounter people on a daily basis whose lives are affected by official decisions are generally more vulnerable to threats, violence and harassment. This applies in particular to organisations that make far-reaching decisions affecting people’s daily lives and finances. This applies especially to authorities whose decisions concern finances, support, settlement, debts or the right to remain in Sweden.

Main patterns

- Threats and harassment mainly come from private individuals and, in some cases, relatives.
- Incidents often occur in connection with telephone contact, email and face-to-face meetings.
- Frustration, desperation or dissatisfaction with decisions are the driving forces behind many of these incidents.
- Organisations with very high workloads are more vulnerable, both to exploitation and to risks linked to undue influence.

Examples of organisations that stand out

The Enforcement Authority

- 58 per cent report that threats, violence or harassment occur, of whom 37 per cent have personally been subjected to such behaviour in the past year.
- 94 per cent of the threats come from private individuals.

The Swedish Social Insurance Agency

- 36 per cent report that threats, violence or harassment occur, of whom 41 per cent have personally been subjected to such behaviour in the past year.
- 84 per cent of the threats come from private individuals.

The Employment Service

- 32 per cent report that threats, violence or harassment occur, of whom 37 per cent have personally been subjected to such behaviour in the past year.
- 81 per cent of the threats come from private individuals.

The Migration Agency

- 35 per cent report that threats, violence or harassment occur, of whom 42 per cent have personally been subjected to such behaviour in the past year.
- The threats come from asylum seekers, relatives and detainees.

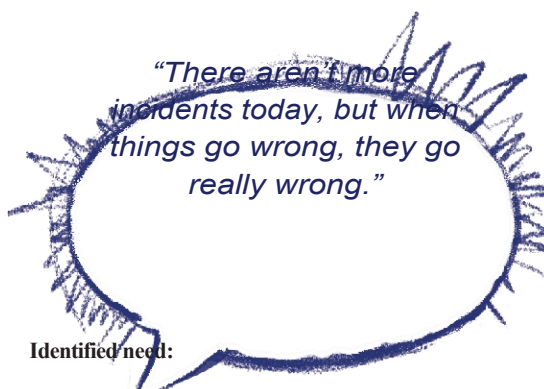
6.2.1 Voices from trade union- e representatives

The Enforcement Authority: “Incidents are becoming fewer, but more serious”

An interview with an elected representative at the Enforcement Authority shows that threats, violence and harassment within the enforcement department mainly come from members of the public and most often occur over the telephone. However, the most serious situations arise in face-to-face encounters, where both direct and more veiled threats occur. Suicide threats are the most common type of incident and are made during conversations.

The elected representative explains that internal incidents are rare, but that more serious threats have increased in recent years, including more bomb threats, slightly more physical violence and more threatening situations out in the field. This trend is linked both to a harsher social climate and to changing working conditions.

The interview also highlights that the loss of access to the JUNO legal database has complicated preparatory work and made risk assessments more challenging. The full impact of this change is still difficult to assess, but according to the elected representative, it may affect incident levels in the future. At the same time, the organisation feels that the government is showing greater understanding of its needs, which is seen as a step in the right direction.



Identified need:

- anonymous decisions in the event of a confirmed threat
- use of employee numbers instead of full names
- improved inter-agency cooperation regarding risk information
- enhanced protection for service agents working alone

**The Swedish Social Insurance Agency:
“We face threats in situations where life and health are at stake”**

An interview with an elected representative at the Swedish Social Insurance Agency reveals that suicide threats are the most common form of threat and often require immediate assessment. When sickness benefits are withdrawn, there may be direct threats against case workers, as well as attempts in such situations to have decisions overturned by seeking out private information or contacting staff via social media. Individuals may also attempt to influence assessments and decisions by claiming that they have contacted a journalist and/or a lawyer.

The elected representative explains that threats often arise in cases where clients are suffering from mental health issues, and that aggressive situations can occur both towards caseworkers and between family members during face-to-face meetings. Staff are therefore urged to carry out their own risk assessments ahead of meetings and to exercise caution following threatening situations.

According to the elected representative, threats have become more closely linked to mental instability than to financial decisions alone, which makes the situations harder to predict and manage.

“You never know if someone is following you. That makes you more cautious.”

The working environment is also affected by individuals with severe mental health issues. Over time, the threats have become less linked to economics and more linked to mental instability, which makes the situations harder to assess.

Identified need:

- access to/offering of greater access to psychological support where needed
- a clearer message to the public that threats against public servants are illegal
- support to establish a clearer boundary between professional and private life

**The Employment Service:
“When people are in the heat of the moment, they often lose their inhibitions”**

An interview with an elected representative at the Employment Service reveals that threats and harassment most often occur when jobseekers are in a highly emotional state, particularly in connection with negative decisions or when they feel that the support provided is insufficient.

In 2023, 558 incidents were reported, but according to the representative, the number of unreported cases is high as many incidents are never reported.

Suicide threats occur regularly and have remained at roughly the same levels over time. Internal harassment also occurs, but the organisation has improved in handling these issues. Training in low-affect communication is highlighted as particularly important.

Since 1 March, the number of face-to-face meetings has increased, which, according to the interview, changes the risk profile: threats over the phone have a lower threshold, whilst face-to-face meetings can become more direct and more charged. In certain locations, particularly Malmö, security has therefore been stepped up. At the same time, fewer offices mean that more people, including those with links to criminal activity, gather in the same place, which further increases the risks.

“Many people who come here feel that society has let them down. When you encounter that frustration, it’s easy for us to become the symbol of everything that’s gone wrong.”

Identified need:

- more training in customer service
- faster and clearer procedures in threatening situations
- better security measures
- more time to build trusting relationships

CSN:

“The threats affect us, even though it’s part of the job”

An interview with an elected representative at CSN reveals that threats within the Grants and Repayments departments mainly involve suicide threats and threats of self-harm, most often in connection with negative decisions or when cases have been referred to the Enforcement Authority. Face-to-face meetings are common, but when they take place, there is always the option of having two staff members present, and panic alarms are standard in our offices.

The elected representative explains that there is a risk that staff may choose not to report threats of violence, out of concern that they will have to act as a complainant and thus testify in court. Two police reports regarding threats of physical violence have been made in recent years, one of which led to a conviction in 2025.

The work of dealing with threats is carried out systematically through procedures, checklists, training and the ability to record calls. In specific cases, decisions may be anonymised following approval by the head of security and the head of department.

According to the elected representative, the nature of the threats has changed in recent years, and a sense of resignation among those contacting the authority is making suicide threats more common. The threats affect staff emotionally, but are rarely described as something that causes daily anxiety at work.

“More people sound despondent now. It’s no longer just about money – it’s about people’s desperation.”

Identified need:

- sign decisions with a code instead of a name
- only provide first names in high-risk situations
- a more trust-building approach to reduce the risk of emotional outbursts

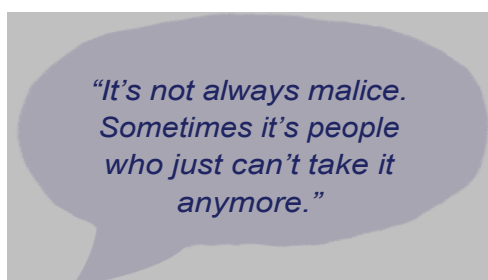
County Council:

“Caring for animals sometimes means dealing with people’s desperation”

An interview with an elected representative at the County Administrative Board reveals that threats, violence and harassment within animal welfare work have increased since the authority took over parts of the police’s responsibilities in 2019. According to the representative, case officers often face strong reactions during emergency interventions or when shortcomings are highlighted during inspections. Harassment is more common than direct threats, but when threats do occur, they often involve suicide threats, threats of violence or threats to kill animals. Isolated cases of physical violence, such as shoving during inspections, have also occurred.

The elected representative explains that personal attacks have become more common, both in online forums and directed specifically at staff members. Attempts to track down officials using their private contact details online have increased, leading many to remove their private telephone numbers from such platforms. Restricting the ability to request home addresses is highlighted as an important safeguard.

According to the elected representative, this development is partly linked to a harsher tone in society and the increased spread of discontent in digital environments. The situation can also escalate gradually during home visits, meaning that case workers have sometimes had time to give their name before the threat becomes clear.



Identified need:

- body cameras during high-risk inspections
- permission to record telephone calls
- that decisions do not always need to be signed with a full name
- better information campaigns on the role of animal welfare

6.3 Operations involving high physical exposure and working alone

(Rail transport and parts of the Swedish Transport Administration, etc.)

When rail transport departments are merged, a risk profile emerges that differs significantly from other sectors:

- 48 per cent report that threats, violence or harassment occur, of whom 49 per cent have personally been subjected to such incidents in the past year
- 38 per cent say that incidents occur when working alone, which is five times higher than the average.
- 51 per cent are exposed to incidents during meetings in public places.
- 54 per cent in face-to-face meetings at the workplace.
- A smaller but still significant proportion (8 per cent) have been subjected to physical violence.

The work often involves sole responsibility in high-risk environments, late evenings, conflict management on public transport, and direct contact with passengers who are stressed or intoxicated.

The Swedish Transport Administration

At the Swedish Transport Administration,

- 18 per cent report that threats, violence or harassment occur, of whom 46 per cent have personally been subjected to this in the past year.
- 14 per cent report that threats or violence occur when working alone

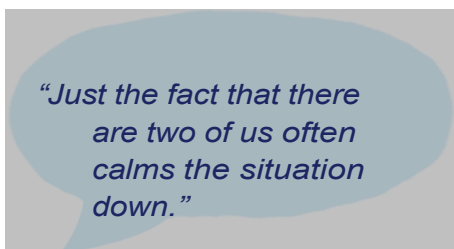
6.3.1 Voices from trade union- e representatives

SJ: “Confrontations have become more frequent and more intense”

An interview with a union representative at SJ reveals that threats, violence and harassment mainly occur when passengers do not have a valid ticket or question staff instructions. According to the union representative, discussions can quickly escalate into direct threats or violence, and even after the ticket issue has been resolved, some passengers may continue to harass staff. The situation is described as particularly high-risk when passengers are intoxicated.

The elected representative emphasises that safety improves when more people are involved in handling the situation, as additional staff often help to calm things down. The trend over time is seen as negative, with more confrontations, and a harsher social climate has led to incidents becoming both more frequent and more serious.

The introduction of cameras and alarms in recent years has nevertheless improved safety somewhat, as staff can more easily withdraw before a situation escalates.



Identified need:

- more staff
- More security staff on high-risk departures

The Swedish Transport Administration: “There are more threats, but they are not necessarily more serious”

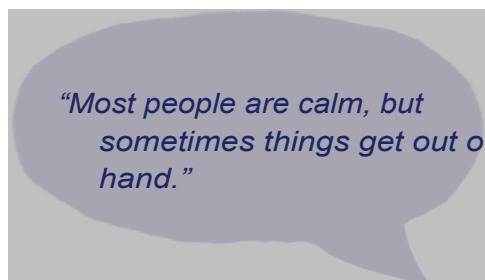
An interview with an elected representative at the Swedish Transport Administration describes how threats, violence and harassment are generally uncommon, but do occur

Occasionally within the driving test operations, which account for around 85 per cent of all reported incidents. Threatening behaviour and potential harassment also occur in relation to land acquisition officers at the Swedish Transport Administration. The Swedish Transport Administration’s project managers, who are often interviewed in the media in connection with construction and maintenance projects, can sometimes be met with harsh words, particularly on social media.

According to the elected representative, around half of the incidents involve direct threats, whilst the rest relate to aggressive behaviour. Violence is rare, but two cases have been reported during the year. Harassment outside working hours, however, has increased, including through contact via social media and serious threats where staff have received photographs of their homes.

The trend over time is perceived as a general increase in threats. The situation is not described as more serious than before, but as significantly more common. According to the elected representative, this is due to a harsher social climate and frustration linked to the driving licence process, particularly among people who have failed several times or are under financial pressure.

That said, the Swedish Transport Administration’s staff come into contact with a great many people in the community every year. There are only a small number of cases each year where this leads to threats, violence or harassment.



Identified need:

- Strengthened social responsibility
- clearer communication regarding legislation
- continued focus on training in customer service

7.

Final discussion and conclusions

This year's work environment survey clearly shows that threats, violence, harassment and undue influence continue to constitute a significant part of the work environment within the public sector. Although the overall proportion of respondents reporting that threats, violence or harassment occur in the workplace has decreased slightly compared with 2024, the survey reveals a complex reality. Beneath the surface, a range of activities emerges where both the scale and severity are significantly higher than average, and where the risks have also increased over time.

7.1 Unlawful influence – low in figures

The fact that relatively few respondents in this survey state that they have changed or adapted their decisions following pressure is encouraging; the vast majority maintain their integrity and do not allow themselves to be influenced. However, it can be difficult to admit that one has allowed oneself to be influenced, and much of this influence takes subtle forms and manifests through repeated harassment, pressure, aggressive contact or threats of self-harm from individuals who are the subject of decisions. Consequently, one may not even admit to oneself that one has allowed oneself to be influenced. And we see that the figures have risen slightly between 2024 and 2026, which is in itself a cause for concern.

The finding that the risk of undue influence appears to increase under very high workloads is particularly significant. This means that undue influence cannot be viewed in isolation from health and safety issues. On the contrary, it is a direct consequence of organisational conditions. It is a signal that staffing levels, recovery time and support structures must be strengthened to ensure the lawful exercise of public authority. That said, however, the

the vast majority are not affected. A good working environment and a reasonable workload are key factors in ensuring that this remains the case and does not increase in the future.

7.2 Internal victimisation – a particular problem in certain sectors

Threats and harassment from colleagues or managers account for a small proportion of the total vulnerability, but within certain departments the problem is significant. The cultural sector, universities and colleges, the Swedish Transport Administration, Swedavia and the Prison and Probation Service stand out with high levels of internal issues. This is a high-risk environment that is not about external pressures, but about culture, leadership, conflicts and organisational structures.

These results show that efforts to create a safe working environment cannot focus solely on external threats. A parallel focus on internal working environment factors is required, including:

- clear leadership
- a transparent and trusting workplace culture
- effective reporting channels
- active efforts to combat harassment and abusive behaviour

7.3 Vulnerability is unevenly distributed – and hits younger people hardest

One of the clearest and most consistent trends in this year’s survey is that younger employees are significantly more vulnerable than their older colleagues. This applies to threats, harassment and exposure to physical violence alike. At the same time, younger men and women feel to a greater extent than older colleagues that there is a lack of openness to talk about vulnerability.

This combination of high risks and a lower propensity to report creates a significant number of unreported cases and places demands on employers to:

- actively work to ensure that young people feel safe
- offer support, guidance and relief
- create safe reporting structures
- develop leadership to identify early signs of vulnerability

7.4 Working alone – a significantly heightened risk factor for

At an aggregate level, seven per cent report that threats or violence occur when working alone. However, this figure is deeply misleading for several sectors. In rail transport, the figure is 38 per cent; within the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care (SiS), 23 per cent; and within the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, 12 per cent.

- higher risk of escalating conflicts
- difficulties in defusing a dangerous situation
- limited ability to get help in time
- increased psychological strain

This is an area where employers need to implement structural changes rather than individual support measures.

7.5 A fragmented risk map – three environments stand out

The report’s analysis shows that threats and violence within the state are not a uniform phenomenon, but that certain organisations face entirely different circumstances to others. Three high-risk environments are particularly evident:

- 1. Compulsory care and detention services**
 SiS and the Prison and Probation Service exhibit the highest levels of threats and violence, both physical and verbal, and combine this with organisational challenges and high internal vulnerability.
- 2. Authorities with extensive contact with the public**
 For example, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the Swedish Public Employment Service, the Swedish Enforcement Authority and the Swedish Migration Agency encounter frustration and difficult life situations in direct contact with citizens, resulting in high levels of threats and harassment.
- 3. Operations involving physical exposure and working alone**
 Rail transport is particularly vulnerable, with a high level of threats when working alone and a risk environment that differs significantly from other government roles.

Dealing with threats and violence therefore requires activity-specific measures rather than general solutions.

7.6 Conclusions – what is needed to move ?

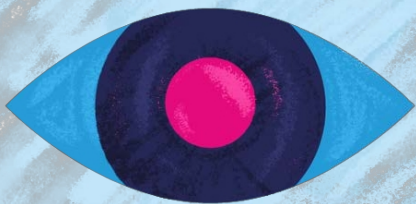
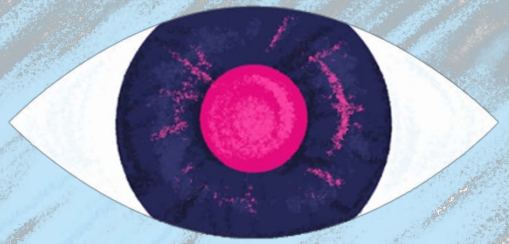
This year's findings clearly demonstrate that threats, violence, harassment and undue influence cannot be regarded as isolated incidents or individual workplace issues. These are structural issues relating to the working environment, staffing, organisation, culture, leadership and legal certainty.

The ST trade union concludes that a safe working environment within the public sector is a fundamental prerequisite for a functioning democracy. This therefore requires:

- stronger leadership and cultural initiatives, particularly in high-incident operations and in sectors with high internal vulnerability.
- organisational changes to reduce risky lone working, particularly in rail transport and compulsory care.

- increased staffing levels and scheduled rest periods to address the clear link between workload and vulnerability to stress.
- Safe and controlled conditions for public engagement, through the design of premises, digital support and training in customer service and conflict management.
- Better support structures for young employees, who are currently the most vulnerable group
- Increased transparency and improved reporting channels to reduce unreported cases and counteract a culture of silence.

The report makes it clear that efforts to prevent threats, violence, harassment and undue influence are not merely a workplace health and safety issue. They are a prerequisite for the lawful exercise of public authority, for an impartial civil service and for democratic trust in the state.



8.

Implementation and scope

The ST trade union's 2026 working environment survey was conducted among all the union's working members between 13 January and 7 February 2026. The survey was sent out to just over 62,000 members, and 22,765 responded, representing a response rate of 37 per cent. Individuals without an email address or who had opted out of receiving mailings were excluded from the sample.

The survey was conducted by the company Novus on behalf of the ST Trade Union. The results are weighted by gender and age, meaning they are representative of the membership in these respects. Results from corresponding surveys conducted in 2022 and 2024 are used as comparative data.

The survey focuses on members' experiences of their physical, social, organisational and digital working environment. Stress, workload and high-risk work situations are key components, as are issues relating to threats, violence, harassment and undue influence.

Definition of the target population

The report covers only those parts of the labour market where the ST trade union has members. This means:

- public authorities
- universities and colleges
- public enterprises
- state-owned companies
- private companies commissioned by the public sector
- state-funded foundations

Results are presented in the report by department only when at least 50 people within the department have completed the survey. Other results are reported at an aggregated level to safeguard privacy and statistical reliability.

Interviews with trade union representatives

Eleven interviews have been conducted with representatives of the ST Trade Union in the departments where the highest number of respondents reported incidents of threats, violence or harassment, or which otherwise stand out in terms of high-risk situations. This was done to provide as broad an understanding as possible of what threats, violence and harassment can look like for those working in the civil service. The representatives were asked to answer the following questions:

- What do the threats, violence and harassment look like?
- Have they increased or changed in recent years?
- If so, what do you think is the reason?
- What measures would you like to see?

The concept of 'departments' in the report

The report uses the term 'departments' in accordance with the internal organisation of the ST trade union. This means that:

- an authority usually corresponds to one branch
- departments may encompass several geographically dispersed workplaces (for example, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and Swedavia)
- all universities and colleges are included in a single department, with the exception of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), which is reported separately

Scope: Rail transport as a combined department

Previously, results were reported separately for individual departments within rail transport, but several of these have fewer than 50 responses. In order to highlight risk patterns in operations where the working environment differs significantly from other government contracts, the following departments have been combined in the report:

- ST within Green Cargo
- ST within Göteborgs Spårvägar / Västtåg / Kinnekullebanan
- ST within Pågatåg
- ST within SJ AB
- ST within Spårtrafiken
- ST within Stockholm Tramways
- ST within Stockholmståg
- ST within the Underground
- ST within Öresundstrafiken

The consolidated rail transport sector enables comparability and clarifies risk exposure linked to working alone, physical exposure and contact with the public, which would otherwise risk being lost in aggregated data.

9.

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