



No One Deserves A Serve Survey Report

JULY 2021

No One Deserves A Serve Survey Report

At the end of 2020, the SDA surveyed both members and employers in relation to the nature and prevalence of abuse and violence by customers and the control measures that have been introduced to reduce it.

The member survey found that the nature and prevalence of abuse and violence by customers has not improved much since our last survey at the end of 2016, however, the retail and fast food industry has faced an increased risk of customer abuse and violence due to COVID-19 which led to panic-buying and stock shortages, and impacts from control measures such as social distancing and limits on customer numbers, hygiene measures such as hand sanitiser, face masks, QR codes and other customer record keeping processes.

Most members indicated that both the frequency and seriousness of customer abuse and violence had worsened during COVID-19, with almost 25% saying they had been coughed or spat on during this time.

While the incidence of customer abuse and violence doesn't appear to have improved since our last survey in 2016, both members and employers indicated that many measures have been implemented in workplaces to deal with this issue.

Some of the positive survey results included almost all employers implementing de-escalation training and a significant increase in members receiving training on threatening situations and de-escalation from 1/3 of members in 2016 to 2/3 in the recent survey. Training was a measure that most employers said was assisting to reduce customer abuse and violence and in particular assisting with reducing the seriousness and level of incidents.

Members were also more aware of company policies regarding customer abuse and violence in the recent survey, 56% compared to 50% in 2016.

Members and employers also identified a range of other measures which have been implemented quite broadly across retail and fast food, such as incident reporting, customer signage, badges/underbadges, perspex screens and other environmental measures such as CCTV, security etc.

NODAS Member Survey December 2020

In December, the SDA surveyed members across all Branches about customer abuse and violence and our No One Deserves A Serve campaign.

Approximately 2,338 members responded to the survey. In the previous SDA 2016 survey on customer abuse and violence there were approximately 6,000 respondents.

The purpose of this survey was to determine any differences in the abuse and violence experienced compared to the previous survey and to understand their level of awareness about our campaign.

Of those members who completed the survey, 76% were female, 22% were male and 2% were other or did not specify. The majority (78%) of members who completed the survey were retail employees, just over 5% were fast-food employees, 5% were line or department managers, 2% assistant store managers and 2.5% store managers. Seven percent indicated other roles including pharmacy assistants and supervisors.

Seven percent of respondents were aged 17 years and under, 21% were aged 18-25 years, 16% aged 26-35, 15% aged 36-45, 21% aged 46-55 and 20% aged 56 and over.

Experience of customer abuse and violence

Prevalence and Frequency

In the last 12 months, 88% of members said they had experienced verbal abuse from a customer which is the same as the 2016 survey. Unfortunately, this means there has been no change in the prevalence of customer abuse and violence experienced by members.

Female members were more likely to have experienced verbal abuse from a customer (89%) than male members (83%). Young women aged between 18 and 25 years were most likely (95%) to have experienced customer abuse and violence in the last 12 months.

Male members under 18 years (48%) and over 65 years (68%) were much less likely to experience customer abuse and violence and male members aged 18 to 25 years were also less likely (78%). Male members aged 36 to 65 years experienced customer abuse and violence at similar rates to the rate for all respondents, between 84% to 93%.

Of those members who said they had experienced verbal abuse from a customer in the last 12 months, most indicated that it was on more than one occasion and almost half said it was either weekly or monthly, with 7% indicating it was daily.

1-2 times	13.5%
2-3 times	25%
Every month	22%
Every week	25% (24% in 2016)
Every day	7%
Never	8%

Similar to the data above, young women aged 18 to 25 years who are most likely to have experienced customer abuse and violence also report a greater frequency with 34% of those saying it happens weekly and 25% monthly.

Many members also indicated that they had felt threatened by a customer in the last 12 months, and some said this was weekly or monthly.

1-2 times	32% (33.5% in 2016)
2-3 times	20%
Every month	11%
Every week	8%
Every day	2%
Never	27%

Members were also asked about repeat offenders. Almost forty percent (38.5%) of members said that the same customer was abusive or violent towards them or a group of employees on more than one occasion. This was slightly less than the 2016 survey (42.7%). The issue of repeat offenders still remains a significant problem.

Young female members aged 18 to 25 years (51%), female members aged 26 to 35 years (47%) and female members aged 36-45 (46%) were more likely to have said that the same customer was abusive or violent towards them or a group of employees on more than one occasion. Male members aged 26 to 35 years were also more likely (48%) to have said that the same customer was abusive or violent towards them or a group of employees on more than one occasion.

When providing examples of customer abuse and violence, there were some common themes cited for why the abuse or violence occurred, such as stock availability and limits, especially during COVID-19, issues with refund and returns, theft, sexual harassment and many examples of racial abuse.

Coming from different nationality and having dark skin we always get abused by customers and I am not the only one! I have 9 team members in my team who is from different race and we always face abuse because of it and it makes us feel very uncomfortable and depressed to work in that environment. Especially when you don't have strong back up from higher managements.

(Female Department/Line Manager, 26-35)

A girl was stealing and when she tried to get past me, she bashed me in the face with her 3 litre orange juice and box of ice-cream to make me move.

(Female Retail Employee, 26-35)

I was threatened to have my teeth knocked and my throat slit.

(Male Retail Employee, 46-55)

I've been spat on. I've been threatened to have my throat slit.

(Female Department/Line Manager 36-45)

They have called me dark skinned, Indian woman, go back to your country and other very upsetting names.
(Female Department/Line Manager 26-35)

Customer requested donation that was rejected. Customer said she hoped I would get cancer.
(Female Retail Employee, 46-55)

Nature of abuse and violence

Physical

Almost 8% of respondents said that they had been the victim of physical violence from a customer in the last 12 months. The experience of physical violence was similar between female (7.8%) and male members (8.3%).

Male members aged between 26 and 35 years are most likely to be the victim of physical violence (11.5%).

This was an improvement on the proportion of members who said they had been a victim of physical violence from a customer in the 2016 survey, which was 14.49%.

Customer grabbed my arm and pushed me into a self check-out machine.
(Female Retail Employee, 18-25)

I have been hit across the face by a customer.
(Male Retail Employee, 17 and under)

Since working for company I've had to fill out 3 police reports for either physical or sexual assault. I once had a male customer fake a heart attack to feel the female staff. In my first year working here I had a wine casket thrown at me.
(Female Retail Employee, 18-25)

I have had food thrown at me. But the worst time was when a lady was filming everyone in the store for no reason. I was sitting with another employee and we were watching what she was doing because she went to step behind the counter and she noticed us. She came over to film us and I covered my face and told her that we were both underage (at the time) and she told me she "didn't give a fuck" and then tried to remove my stuff from my hands as I was using it to cover my face. The other employee told her to stop but she continued until she was pulled away by her partner that had walked in with her.
(Female Fast Food Employee, 18-25)

Had items thrown at me, have been pushed and had shopping trolley forced into me.
(Male Retail Employee, 26-35)

I have had a glass bottle thrown at me & physically threatened in other ways.
(Female Fast Food Employee, 18-25)

Having things thrown at me. Threats of violence and murder. Called derogatory names. Insults about my appearance/age/ gender/ ability to do my job.
(Female Store Manager, 18-25)

I had a tray of mince thrown at my face.
(Female Retail Employee, 18-25)

Have been physically assaulted twice by people trying to steal and have been threatened by probably every 5th person I ask to leave for stealing or causing issues in the store.
(Male Department/Line Manager, 26-35)

Customers constantly threaten, swear and throw things at me.
(Female Retail Employee, 26-35)

I was hit on the head with pvc pipe, a packet of deadlocks thrown at me.
(Female, 26-35)

Had a rock thrown at my car after leaving work.
(Male Retail employee, 26-35)

I was grabbed by my throat by a male customer.
(Female Retail Employee, 26-35)

I was coping verbal abuse from customers at least a couple times a week for doing my job, which culminated in being physically assaulted and suffering concussion. I was off work for a month.
(Male Retail Employee, 26-35)

Online

The proportion of respondents who experienced customer abuse online in the last 12 months (4.75%) was slightly higher than in 2016 (4%). Male members were slightly more likely to have experienced customer abuse online (6%) than female members (4.5%).

The examples provided of online abuse by customers ranged from complaints made via online complaints methods, customer feedback forms/processes, Facebook pages and finding staff on their own Facebook.

Many examples were of complaints of interactions misrepresented by the customer and some of the abuse included threats of violence.

A customer berated me on Facebook page after I told her a product was unavailable. She later apologised to me in person saying she was, "just having a bad day" - but the damage was done and I had had disciplinary action against me for it.
(Female Retail Employee, 18-25)

Usually if I wear a name badge they find me on socials.
(Female Assistant Store Manager, 18-25)

Slandorous reviews left personally calling me out for things that are out of my control.
(Male Retail Employee, 18-25)

Company doesn't filter the customer feedback and it comes through to us, we can access this at home and have no way of responding to the online customer abuse that crosses into our homes and work life.
(Female Retail Employee, 26-35)

Facebook page where people were threatening to come to the store & slit my throat, wait in the carpark for me after closing the store.
(Female Department/Line Manager, 26-35)

Derogatory comments, refusing to take no for an answer, I've had to wear a fake name to stop creeps finding my socials.
(Female Retail Employee, 18-25)

Customers adding me on Facebook and trying to talk to me outside of work.
(Female Retail Employee, 18-25)

Sexual

Almost eleven percent (10.65%) of respondents said that they had experienced incidents of customer abuse and violence in the last 12 months that was sexual in nature. This was slightly less than the 2016 survey which was 11.6%.

Female members are much more likely to have experienced abuse or violence from a customer of a sexual nature (13%), than male members (2.5%). Like all forms of sexual harassment and assault, sexual harassment and assault by customers towards employees is a gendered issue.

Young female members are also much more likely to experience customer abuse and violence of a sexual nature than older members, Nineteen percent of female members aged 17 years and younger and 27.5% of female members aged 18 to 25 years said they had experienced abuse and violence of a sexual nature.

Cornered by male customers, unwanted sexual comments from male customers.
(Female Retail Employee, 18-25)

Indecently touched by older men (customers).
(Female Retail Employee, 18-25)

Grabbing private area telling me and staff to suck it.
(Male Retail Employee, 26-35)

Asking "are you horny", "are you turned on by old men", "I'm wet right now". MANY more like this. Also unwanted looks, very long lingering at breasts constantly.
(Female Retail Employee, 17 and under)

Hands grabbed, kisses been blown, asked what time I finished work, been cat called.
(Female Fast Food Employee, 17 and under)

A male slapped my bum.
(Female Pharmacy Assistant, 18-25)

Customers trying to pull me into their cars on drive thru or taking out parked food orders or just calling out comments.
(Female Fast Food, 18-25)

A customer started stalking me, trying to find out where I lived, looking for me on social media and making rude suggestions.
(Female, 18-25)

Makes remarks about how he can't wait to slit my throat and rape my dead body. Has also grabbed my butt before.
(Female Assistant Store Manager, 18-25)

Trying to put their hands on my waist or groping my bum.
(Female Retail Employee, 18-25)

Men making inappropriate comments of a sexual nature to do with my appearance.
(Female Store Manager, 26-35)

A man in his 50's that shops here regularly, he asks me to reach for the sliced meats that are up the front of the deli case so he can crouch down and look down my top. Calls me 'sexy' and asks if I'm wearing a g-string.
(Female Retail Employee, 26-35)

Creepy man who is a regular, always trying to chat me up, asked me if I enjoyed sex.
(Female Retail Employee, 26-35)

Perpetrators of customer abuse and violence

The vast majority (62%) of members said that perpetrators of customer abuse and violence directed at them over the last 12 months were both males and females. Just over 10% of members said the perpetrators were female and 12.5% said the perpetrators were male. The results were fairly consistent between male and female members.

Impact of COVID on the nature and prevalence of customer abuse and violence

The last 12 months have been particularly challenging for our members as COVID and the resulting panic buying, and infection control measures has led to an increased risk of abuse and violence from customers.

The survey asked members questions in relation to the impact COVID had on their experience of abuse and violence. Members were asked if the frequency and seriousness of abuse and violence was worse during COVID. The average response was that it was more frequent and somewhat more serious during COVID.

Seventy percent of respondents said that abuse and violence was more frequent during COVID-19, with 25% indicating the frequency was extremely greater. Only 10% said it was less frequent.

More than half of respondents indicated that the abuse and violence was more serious during COVID-19, with 20% saying it was extremely more serious.

Members were also asked if they had been coughed or spat on during COVID-19. More than 1/5 of members (21.5%) said they had been coughed on or spat at during COVID-19.

Female members were slightly more likely to have been coughed or spat on during COVID-19 (22%) than male members (19.5%). Women aged 18 to 25 years (31%) and women aged 26-35 (27%) were even more likely, to have been coughed or spat on during COVID-19.

I was spat at by a customer due to Covid pandemic and stock was limited.
(Female Retail Employee, 18-25)

During lockdown, we had many customers who were already drunk coming into our store, one who we refused to serve throw a woodstock can at me and hit me in the leg. the rate of thefts has also gone up and another couple attempted to hit me over the head with a glass bottle and we have had many other threats from thieves.
(Female Retail Employee, 18-25)

Spit on, intimidated, verbally assaulted.
(Male Retail Employee, 18-25)

Health impacts of abuse and violence

Seventy-one percent (1670) of respondents said that the experience of customer abuse and violence had impacted their physical or mental health. Of those 71% of members who's physical and/or mental health was impacted, they indicated that they experienced the following health impacts:

Physical injury	2.5%
Stress	76.5%
Anxiety	72.5%
Depression	32%
Sleeplessness	36%
Fatigue	33.5%
Burn out	39%
Loss of self-esteem or confidence	41%
High blood pressure	12%
Body aches/pains	16%
Digestive problems	11%
PTSD	6.5%
Suicidal thoughts	7.5%
Impacts on private life	24.5%
Other (if you feel comfortable, please specify)	9%

The health impacts experienced by male and female members were fairly consistent, however, female members were more likely than male members to experience anxiety (74% compared to 68%) and loss of self-esteem (42% compared to 37%) while male members were more likely than female members to experience depression (35% compared to 31%), fatigue (37% compared to 32%) and high blood pressure (16% compared to 10%).

Young female members aged 17 years and under were twice as likely (4.5%) to experience physical impacts and much more likely to experience a loss of self-esteem (65%) and suicidal thoughts (11%).

Young female members aged 18 to 25 years were much more likely to experience health impacts such as stress (88%), anxiety (87%), depression (39%), fatigue (46%), burn-out (52%), loss of self-esteem or confidence (59%), PTSD (11%) and suicidal thoughts (14%) than all workers.

Female members aged 36-45 years were more likely to experience health impacts such as stress (87%), anxiety (80%), depression (39%), fatigue (41%), burn-out (51%), and suicidal thoughts (11%) than all workers.

Male members aged 26 to 35 years were much more likely than other male age groups to experience health impacts from customer abuse and violence. The most common health impacts for this group of workers were stress (86%), anxiety (77%), fatigue (51%), burn-out (55%) and suicidal thought (17%).

Sexual harassment caused paranoia and body insecurities. Also relationship issues.
(Female Retail Employee, 17 years and under)

Caused me to have a panic attack.
(Female Retail Employee, 18-25)

Made me scared and anxious to go to work.
(Male Retail Employee, 46-55)

Constant crying almost every day.
(Female Retail Employee 26-35)

I only suspect PTSD at this stage however my mental health has been severely effected.
(Male Retail Employee, 26-35)

I felt I am not important to company as much as customers are.
(Female Retail Employee, 26-35)

Crying arriving to work during Covid, scared of the customers.
(Female Retail Employee, 36-45)

Most of the time I took it out on my family and it's not healthy. Every day I go to work put on a brave face but when I get home I'm always angry and my family don't know why I snap all the time. I kept it to myself and sometimes I cried. My husband and kids they noticed the change in my behaviour I get depressed and angry all the time coz the abusing I got it's not bearable.
(Female Retail Employee, 46-55)

Worthlessness, hopelessness, fear.
(Female Retail Employee, 56-64)

Reporting and action taken

Almost sixty percent (58.5%) of members said they had reported an incident of customer abuse or violence to their employer. This was slightly less than the 2016 survey (62%).

Young workers were much less likely to report an incident of customer abuse and violence, only 29% of those aged 17 years and under and 44% of those aged 18-25 years reported and incident. The main reasons young workers gave for why they didn't report was that they didn't think it was important or serious enough or that nothing would be done or it wouldn't be taken seriously.

Of the almost 42% of members who said they did not report an incident almost 20% said it didn't seem important / serious enough, almost 18% thought nothing would be done if I reported it and almost 10% said they dealt with it myself.

Of the almost 60% who did report an incident, they reported to the following people:

Line or Department Manager	48%
Store Manager	31%
Assistant Store Manager	8.5%

Of those members who reported an incident, almost half (47%) said that no action was taken in response to the report and 14% were unsure if any action was taken. Of those members who reported an incident and action was taken, these were the actions they said were taken in response to the report:

Security called	11%
Police called	10%
Customer warned	17%
Customer asked to leave/removed from store	20.5%
Customer banned	9.5%
Unsure	14%
No action	47%
Other (please specify)	12.5%

Of those members who reported an incident almost half (48%) did not think it was a satisfactory response. This is an improvement on the 2016 survey which found that 56% were not satisfied with the response.

Measures introduced to prevent customer abuse and violence

Members were asked to indicate what measures their employer has introduced to prevent customer abuse or violence:

Customer signage	44%
Incident reporting	30%
Increased security	16%
Process for banning customers	17.5%
Training on how to deal with customer aggression or de-escalation	57%
Badges (asking customers to respect staff)	30%
Perspex screens	56%
Customer violence and harassment policy	23%
Other (please specify)	12%

More than half (56%) of respondents said that they were aware of store or company policies aimed at addressing situations involving customer abuse and violence. This was higher than the 2016 survey (50%).

In the last 12 months two-thirds (67%) of members said they had received training on how to deal with threatening situations that includes abusive or violent customers. This was significantly higher than the 2016, where only 35% of members had received training on how to deal with threatening situations or customer abuse and violence.

Members were asked what more their employer could do to support employees if they have been subjected to customer abuse or violence. Almost 30% said having a zero tolerance policy on customer abuse and violence, 17% percent said banning, warning or removing customers from the store, 14% said having enough staff, 8.5% said not rewarding customers for bad behaviour, 7% said having security guards and 6% would provide more support to employees subjected to abuse and violence by customers.

NODAS Campaign

Just over 85% of members have heard of the SDA's No One Deserves A Serve (NODAS) campaign.

Of those 85% who had seen the campaign, half have seen the NODAS Badges (I'm a mother, I'm a son etc.), 43% have seen the campaign on social media/online posts, 41% have seen the TV ads, 40% have seen materials in store, 19% have seen the Industry Statement, 12% have heard radio ads and seen news articles, and 8% have seen billboards.

Sixty five percent of those who responded regarding the effectiveness of the campaign said they agreed to strongly agreed that the campaign made a difference in their workplace.

Most effective changes so far and what would most help to reduce the incidents of customer abuse and violence

Members were asked to rank what they thought were the most effective changes in their workplace. The top five most effective changes ranked from most effective were:

1	Customer signage
2	Incident reporting
3	Increased security
4	Process for banning customers
5	Training on how to deal with customer aggression or de-escalation

Members were asked what they think would help to reduce the incidents of customer abuse and violence in their workplace. The most common thing members (66%) said would help is a process for removing and banning customers. This was followed by increased security (56%), messages for customers to respect workers on the overhead PA (46%), public campaign (42%), training of how to deal with customer aggression or de-escalation (38%), customer violence and harassment policy and badges (36%) and incident reporting 32%.

NODAS - Employer Survey

In December last year, the SDA invited employers in retail and fast food to complete a survey on the work they have done to prevent and respond to abuse and violence by customers. This survey was designed to complement a member survey which was conducted at the same time to measure the nature and prevalence of customer abuse and violence and changes in their workplaces since our campaign began.

Seventeen companies, fifteen retail and two fast food, responded to the survey. The survey respondents represent 28 large and medium retail and fast-food brands. The survey was completed over December 2020 and January 2021.

Workplace Policy & Procedures on customer abuse, violence and harassment

Almost 65% of respondents indicated that they have a policy on abuse, violence, and harassment by customers in the workplace, which means that one third have no policy in place.

Almost sixty-five percent of respondents have other workplace policies that address customer abuse and violence. For most respondents who indicated they included customer abuse and violence in other policies, the other policy most commonly referred to was a Health and Safety Policy. All other policies referred to included:

- Health and Safety Policy, Procedures and Strategies
- Code of Conduct
- Mental Health Training
- Personal Safety Program

All respondents said they have procedures to deal with incidents of abuse and violence by customers.

Eighty-five percent have a process in place for banning customers who are abusive or violent. Fifteen percent said they have no process for banning customers.

Security measures

Respondents were asked to indicate the security measures they have in place to prevent or deal with abusive and violent customers and incidents. Most have CCTV (86%) and emergency procedures (93%). More than three quarters have a safe place for employees to retreat to in the case of an incident. Forty-three percent use security staff and much fewer use other measures such as duress alarms (28.5%) and alert bracelets (7%).

Others indicated that they used security staff but not across all sites and that the use of security staff and other procedures varies from location to location. One respondent said that security measures are implemented based on risk with greater measures in place for strip store locations and that while all stores have a safe place, training, and emergency procedures the use of security staff and CCTV are in high-risk stores only.

Other security measures used by respondents included service codes used for in store support, centre security and 000.

Support for staff impacted by abuse and violence

Employers were asked what support they provide to staff who report or are impacted by an incident of abuse and violence. Almost all indicated that they offer EAP. Some also said that they have a psychological injury response which offers EAP and internal allied health support and mechanisms through incident reporting to assist with improvement opportunities. Others indicated that they provide ongoing post-incident support, welfare checks, incident debriefing and management support. One respondent referred to included roster changes, customer ban notices, security guard and team member training on threatening situations and de-escalation controls post-incident. Another said that ongoing support from regional management, health and safety and people and culture are provided including check in calls, relocation depending on the circumstances, follow up with centre management and security to support team with increased visits and walking team members to cars, or arranging team members across brands to walk to cars together. Investigation of incidents was also mentioned.

Incident Reporting

Employers were asked what processes they have in place for workers to report an incident of abuse and violence by a customer, listing both formal and informal processes.

The most common form of incident reporting is through formal Incident reporting processes mostly within Health and Safety and through a range of methods including online and apps. Almost all (13) respondents use this process as one of the methods to report incidents.

Many (6) also have informal/formal reports to colleagues and managers, with processes for escalation.

Some (3) indicated they also have anonymous reporting processes such as Hotlines, Speak Up and other anonymous reporting lines.

Some use reporting to management external to the store, e.g., regional/state managers.

Some (3) have critical incident call centres for reporting all incidents.

One indicated that activation of duress devices is a way a worker can report or alert of an incident.

Employers were asked the most common way that workers report incidents of abuse and violence by customers. For just over a third of employers the most common workers report an incident is to their line manager. In some instances, the line manager is then responsible for reporting through more formal incident reporting processes. For just over 40% of respondents, workers report through incident reporting tools, apps, or other formal processes.

Almost all (85%) companies track changes in the incident reporting levels. More than 70% of companies indicated there had been an increase in workers reporting incidents since implementing a reporting method.

Respondents were asked what percentage of incident reports received by the business in the last 12 months related to customer abuse and violence. Four respondents said reports of abuse and violence made up between 5-7% of reports. One respondent said around 2% and another indicated that it varies across the business. Another respondent said that abuse and violence make up 15-18% of reports and that this has increased over the last 12 months, particularly in Victoria around the commencement of COVID. Another said customer abuse and violence makes up 22% of incident reports. One respondent indicated that the level of verbal aggression remains largely unchanged but there has been a 52% increase in reports of physical assault.

Respondents were asked if their reporting method of abuse and violence included incidents of a sexual nature, including sexual harassment and assault. Almost all respondents (93%) include incidents of a sexual nature in reporting.

Training

Thirteen respondents answered the questions regarding training.

Of those respondents who answered, almost all (93%) provide specific training for staff on how to handle abusive and violent customers including de-escalation. Ninety-two percent said this training was provided to sales/service assistants and supervisors and 100% said it was also provided to managers.

Eighty-five percent provide the training at induction, and more than two thirds also provide the training annually. Some respondents also indicated that training is provided on an ad hoc basis as it is also available to workers through their employee portal which means workers can access it at any time. Another respondent said the timing of training is variable and that they are currently trialling training delivery, and this has been impacted by COVID. One respondent said they also provide weekly health and safety messages to stores and complete a health and safety audit at least once annually.

Environmental Measures

Employers have implemented a range of environmental measures to reduce the incidents of abuse and violence.

- Perspex screens (78.5%)
- Staffing levels (85.5%)
- Clear visible aisles (78.5%)
- Queuing procedures (64.5%)
- Social distancing markers (93%)
- Adequate lighting (93%)
- Temperature controls (57%)
- Noise controls (43%)
- Clear signage for aisles, stock, sales (85.5%)
- Visible security cameras (64%)

Respondents also provided further examples of environmental controls they have implemented including posters encouraging customers to treat staff with respect, increased staffing levels at peak times including school holidays and following and incident or threat of an incident occurring, zero tolerance posters.

One respondent highlighted that an environmental hazard they have identified is the type of product and marketing which can lead to a higher rate of incidents.

Communicating zero tolerance

Employers have implemented a variety of ways to communicate that they have a zero tolerance of abuse and violence towards their workers. Three quarters of respondents display signage in stores asking customers to respect staff and that they have a zero tolerance for abuse and violence. Eight percent said they have badges/under badges for staff to remind customers to be respectful. Some companies have rolled this out since completing the survey. Seventeen percent said they use store PA systems to make announcements about being respectful to staff. Almost 60% said they include zero tolerance of customer abuse and violence in their terms and conditions of entry. Almost 60% have signed the Industry Statement for zero tolerance of abuse and violence in the retail and fast-food industries and support the NODAS campaign.

Some employers are also implementing other measures including communicating on workplace social media, increasing internal communication and messaging such as through training, coaching and posters and internal campaigns and strategies around store signage. One respondent has also set up an aggressive customer working group which is looking at other options.

Most successful measures to prevent abuse and violence

Respondents were asked which measures introduced by the business do they believe have achieved the best results in reducing customer abuse and violence. The most common successful measure referred by respondents was occupational violence and de-escalation training. Some mentioned that following the training there was a massive increase in reporting but the severity of the incidents declined. Others citing training referred to the skills team members have to deal with perpetrators early and reduce the risk of escalation. The next most common response was a reporting process, followed by communication and signage to the public regarding behaviours, e.g., thanking customers for good behaviour. Respondents also said that other successful measures included banning notices, increased security measures such as CCTV cameras and gates to close the opening of store, removing the requirement to conduct bag checks, staff not engaging or preventing theft but calling the police first, not policing or enforcing COVID requirements and focusing on business process that may be contributing to the issue.

Initiatives and other comments

Respondents were also invited to make further comments or tell us about any initiatives they are working on. Here are some of the initiatives:

- Working on response procedures so managers can access a 'checklist' style response to ensure the best possible support is provided following different types of customer related abuse.
- Developing a sexual harassment/assault training pack to release this year.
- Investment in maximising personal safety risk controls and training which has led to recording improvements in reporting and decrease in severity of incidents.
- Currently reviewing refunds and returns process as these are key contributors/drivers of customer abuse.
- Online training development which includes a relatively simple model and video scenarios which have been a useful tool to communicate how to use the model to manage customer acts. Happy to share this work.

Summary of findings and next steps

The results of the member survey identify that customer abuse and violence is still being experienced by SDA members at work and there has not been a significant change since 2016.

In positive news, the No One Deserves A Serve campaign is widely recognised by SDA members, but it is not clear whether they feel it is making a difference directly in their workplace.

The changes members feel to be most effective in their workplace are ranked below and should be considered when we talk to members and employers about how to address customer abuse and violence.

- Customer signage
- Incident reporting
- Increased security
- Process for banning customers
- Training on how to deal with customer aggression or de-escalation

The changes members feel would be most effective are also consistent with the measures that employers who responded to the NODAS employer survey indicated as being most effective including occupational violence and de-escalation training, a reporting process, communication and signage for the general public regarding behaviours, banning notices and increased security measures.

