



Road Worker Abuse Report

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GeoPlace LLP

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Introduction

Roadworkers are often subject to various forms of abuse, including verbal and physical attacks, threats or harassment. These incidents not only have the potential to harm the workers' physical and mental well-being, but also compromise the safety and efficiency of road construction, maintenance and utility infrastructure operations.

To shed light on this issue, we conducted a survey which was live on the HAUC App between 27 February and 31 March 2023. There were a total of 500 useable responses from participants living in England, Wales and Scotland (a few were ignored as the contained non relevant data). Data collected aimed to understand the prevalence, nature and impact of road worker abuse. This report presents the findings of that survey.

Where are you based?

According to the data collected from the survey, a total of 503 participants responded to this question, of which 126 (25%) are based in the office, 153 (30%) are based onsite, and 224 (45%) are based in both locations.

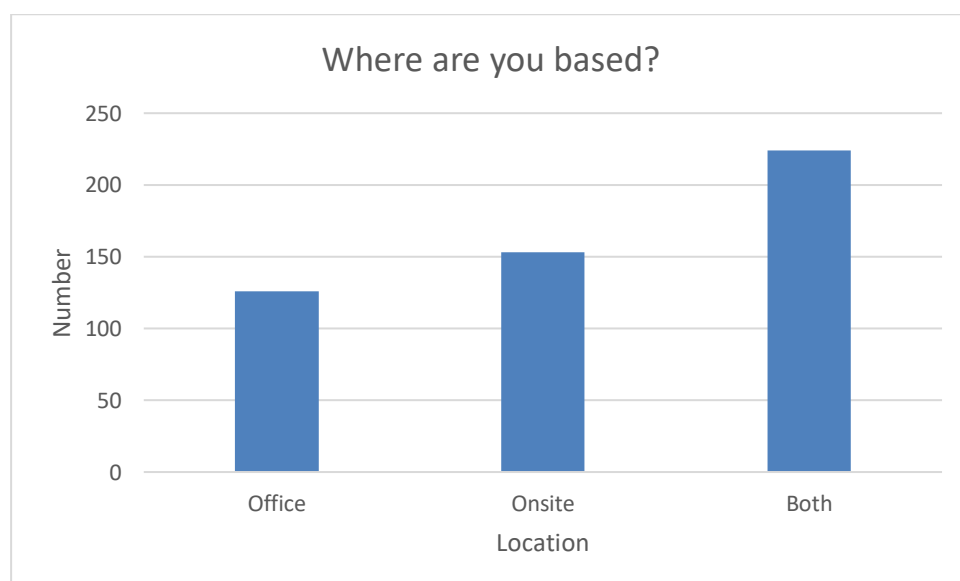


Figure 1: Distribution of survey participants based on their work locations

Figure 1 illustrates that the majority of the participants work in both office and onsite locations, while the rest are evenly distributed between office-based and onsite-based work.

Have you witnessed or experienced road worker abuse?

Out of the 503 participants, 302 (60%) have either witnessed and / or experienced road worker abuse within the last 12 months, while 154, (31%) have neither witnessed nor experienced such incidents within the same period. The remaining 47 (9%) did not respond to this question.

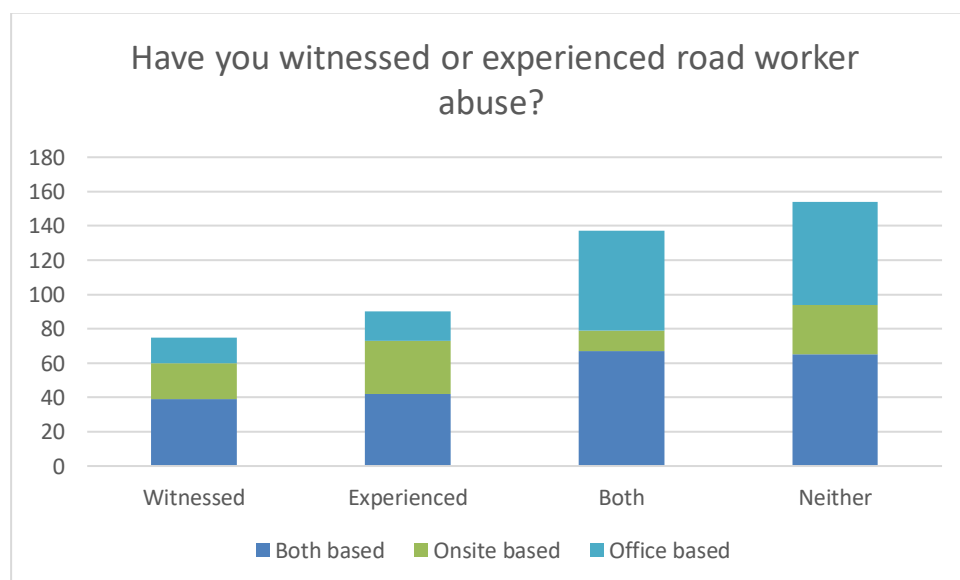


Figure 2: Distribution of survey participants based on their experience of road worker abuse

Figure 2 illustrates that the majority of participants have either witnessed and/ or experienced road worker abuse in some form over the past year. This is a concerning finding that highlights the pervasiveness of this issue within the industry.

Participants who work onsite are more likely to have witnessed or experienced road worker abuse compared to those based solely in the office. However, this does not

mean that office-based workers are immune to the issue, as a significant proportion of them have also reported incidents of abuse.

How often have you witnessed or experienced abuse?

Out of the respondents who have witnessed and/or experienced roadworker abuse, 43% have witnessed/experienced abuse 0-4 times, 34% 5-9 times and 23% 10 or more times within the past 12months.

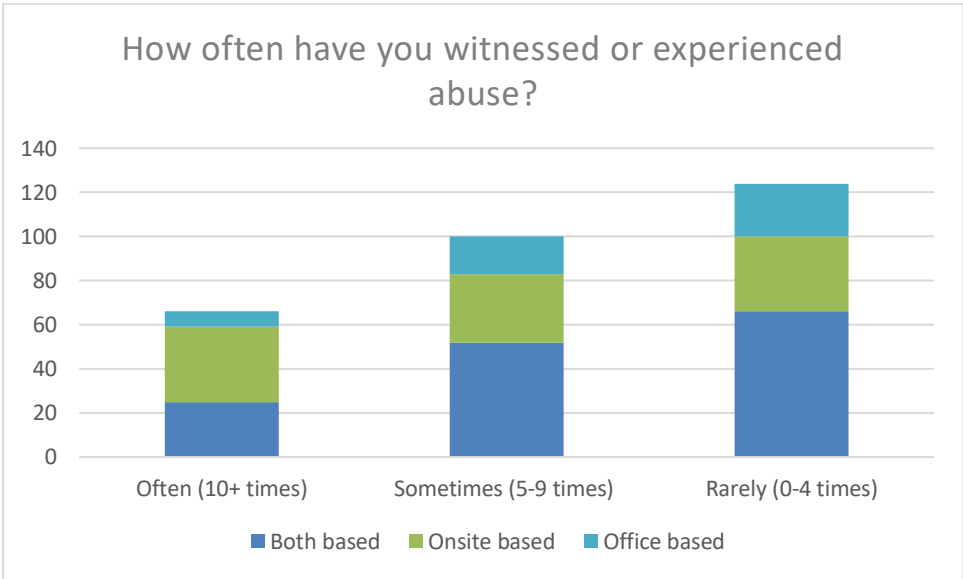


Figure 3: Frequency of road worker abuse based on the experiences of survey participants

Figure 3 highlights that while a significant proportion of participants have experienced road worker abuse, the majority of them have only experienced it a few times, or rarely in the past 12 months. However, it is concerning that 33% of participants have witnessed or experienced abuse sometimes/ often.

Further analysis of the data reveals that onsite workers are more likely to report experiencing road worker abuse often, compared to office based workers.

Where did the abuse take place?

Figure 4 shows the distribution of road worker abuse incidents reported by survey participants based on their location, with office-based responses removed. Out of the remaining 225 responses to this question 168 (75%) stated abuse took place in an urban setting such as a town, 51 (23%) stated the abuse occurred in a rural area and a small proportion of survey participants (2%) stated they witnessed and/ or experienced roadworker abuse on the motorway.

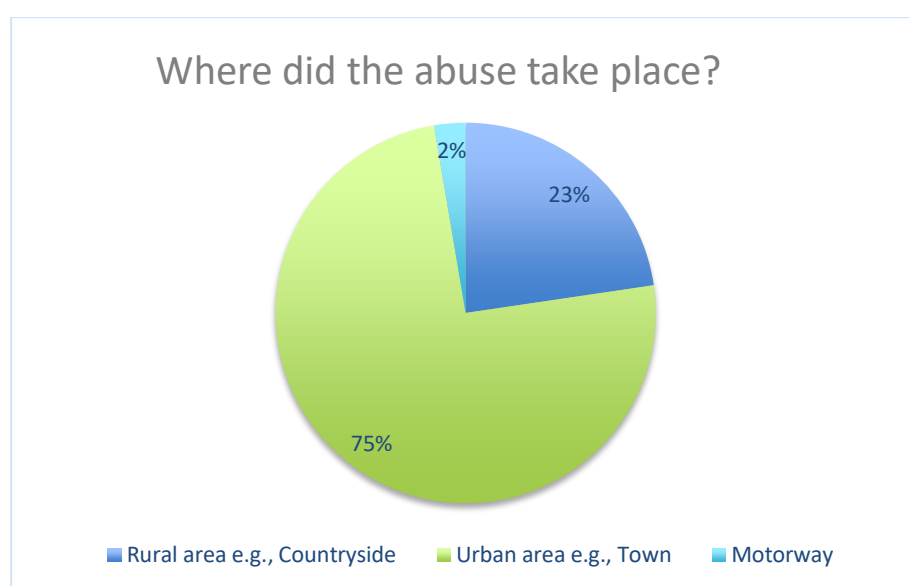


Figure 4: Distribution of road worker abuse incidents based on their location?

The chart illustrates that the majority of road worker abuse incidents take place in urban areas, given the higher density of traffic and people in these areas. It is also concerning that a significant number of incidents occur in rural areas, highlighting the need for targeted interventions in both settings.

What form has the abuse been?

The graph shows the forms of road worker abused reported by the 503 survey participants. Out of the 267 responses to this question, verbal abuse in person is the most common type of abuse roadworkers are experiencing with 230 participants (86%) stating they had experienced within the last 12 months. Verbal abuse can include insults, threats, and derogatory comments.

A small number of participants, 19 (7%), reported experiencing abuse over the phone. This may occur when road workers receive abusive phone calls from members of the public or others.

Physical attack and physical threats were reported by 9 participants (3% each). This form of abuse can be particularly traumatic and may result in physical harm to the victim.

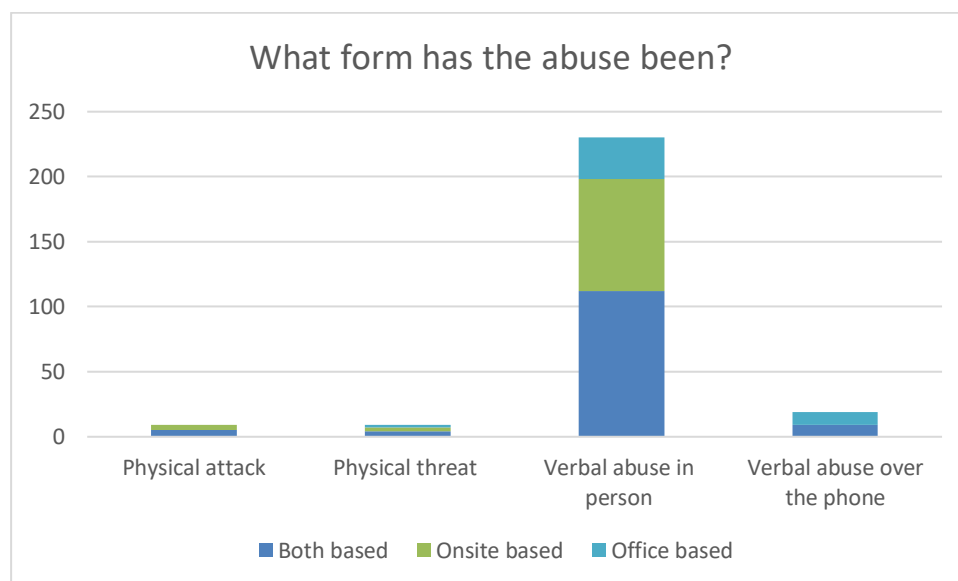


Figure 5: Form of abuse

It is important to note that these numbers represent only the participants who responded to this question, and that some incidents of abuse may involve a combination of different forms of abuse.

What was the method of physical attack?

The table below contains some of the comments describing the physical attacks witnessed or experienced.

ID	What was the method of physical attack?
001	Items thrown from moving vehicles at myself
002	Spitting, kicking and throwing spoil at me.
003	Head butt to nose
004	Tried to drive the car over a road worker under a road closure. Driver came down from his vehicle and engaged with road workers including throwing the traffic cone towards the worker
005	Site operatives punched on multiple occasions
006	Lit gas cylinders thrown into hole
007	Bottle of urine thrown at me
008	Use of vehicle to threaten workers

Table 1: Methods of physical attacks witnessed and/ or experienced

What was the method of physical threat?

The table below contains some of the comments describing the physical threats witnessed or experienced.

	What was the method of physical threat
001	1. Brandishing a knife on one occasion 2. Glass bottles being thrown from a balcony down into our worksite.
002	Language aggressive manner threatening of violence
003	Threats to remove the traffic management and team from site, physically.
004	Revvng of engine in an intimidating manner with swerving
005	Both verbal and physical. I've been grabbed and threatened. been threatened with iron bars and been abused and spat at
006	Shouting, showing visit verbal threat. 'Let me through or I will smack you one' for example

Table 3: Methods of physical threats witnessed and/ or experienced

What was verbal abuse over the phone?

The table below contains comments describing the verbal abuse over the phone witnessed or experienced.

Id	What was the verbal abuse over the phone?
001	Swearing, labelling highway authority incompetent
002	Members of the public unhappy with the service provided (or lack of service to be more accurate)

Table 4: Verbal abuse witnessed and/ or experienced

What was verbal abuse in person?

The table below contains description and counts of reports that have referenced expletives or threats witnessed or experienced by road workers.

Id	Verbal abuse in person?	Description	Count of comments that have referenced expletives or threats from the public
001	Expletives and Derogatory comments	Shouting, swearing, general	154
002	Threatening comments	Threats and aggression	96

Table 5: Verbal abuse in person

The findings highlight the prevalence of verbal abuse as the most common form of road worker abuse, which may have a significant impact on workers' mental health and well-being. It is also concerning that a non negligible number of participants reported physical attack or physical threats, which can result in physical harm and injury.

The survey data suggests that intervention efforts to address this issue should focus on developing strategies to prevent and respond to all forms of abuse, especially in onsite settings. These strategies may include improving communication and engagement with the public, strengthening policies and enforcement measures, providing training and support to workers and supervisors, and promoting a culture of respect and zero tolerance for abuse within the industry.

HAUC(UK) understand the need for a coordinated approach to preventing and addressing road worker abuse, taking into account the different forms of abuse and their impact on workers' safety and well-being. Therefore, steps such as improving communication will be taken to educating the public on why we close a road as well as sharing case studies of operatives who were sadly injured or killed on the highway by vehicles.