

Food for Thought: Addressing Occupational Violence in Grocery Stores in the Saint Paul Metropolitan Area



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Occupational Health
Internship Program



Background

- United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1189 is a union that serves parts of Minnesota, Western Wisconsin, and North Dakota
- **10,000 members** across the retail, meatpacking, healthcare, bookselling, and cannabis industries
- Southern division has **43 retail grocery stores** with almost **3,700** members

Background

TwinCities PIONEER PRESS Crime & Public Safety | St. Paul man charged with carjacking and...

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St. Paul man charged with carjacking and shooting motorist in Cub Foods parking lot

He was prohibited from possessing a firearm because of earlier crime

By KRISTI MILLER | kmiller@pioneerpress.com | Pioneer Press
UPDATED: May 10, 2024 at 8:30 p.m.

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Authorities have charged a St. Paul man in connection with a shooting that occurred during a [carjacking attempt](#) Thursday afternoon in the Cub Foods parking lot on Clarence Street and Maryland Avenue.


Jarquez Jason Yankovec, 27, was charged Friday with one felony count of possessing a firearm when he was prohibited, one felony count of possessing ammunition when he was forbidden a one felony count of firing toward an occupied building or vehicle.

During the Thursday afternoon carjacking attempt on the East Side, a man was shot in the upper left thigh when Yankovec allegedly fired through the driver's window of the man's vehicle.

TwinCities PIONEER PRESS Kowalski's robbery: Man fatally shot in grocery...

NEWS

Kowalski's robbery: Man fatally shot in grocery store heist had robbed before



1 of 2

St. Paul PD investigators checking out the closed Apt Mill Road, just north of Summit in the wake of a police shooting of an alleged robber who hit the Kowalski food store on Grand Ave. in St. Paul Monday morning December 17, 2012. (Pioneer Press: John Doman)

By MARA H. GOTTFRIED | mgottfried@pioneerpress.com | Pioneer Press
UPDATED: November 10, 2015 at 3:15 p.m.

KSTP.COM News Weather Watch Live Traffic Sports

Multiple Cub stores targeted by bomb threats

Ryan Dattée KSTP
Updated: June 28, 2024 - 10:46 AM
Published: June 28, 2024 - 10:15 AM



Police block off the entrance to the Cub Foods in West St. Paul after the store received a bomb threat Thursday, April 4, 2024. (KSTP)

On Friday morning, a number of Cub stores in Minnesota were targeted with bomb threats, prompting multiple stores to ask for police assistance.

Objectives

1

Learn more about the lives and daily workplace safety concerns of grocery store and food retail workers.

2

Collect qualitative and quantitative data to gain a better understanding of workers safety & health concerns.

3

Create a giveback product to support UFCW Local 1189's efforts to improve their members' safety and knowledge of their rights.

Methods

- Worksite visits and observations
- Semi-structured interviews
- Surveys
- Key informant interviews
- OSHA 300 logs



Victoria, Sunniva and Scottie Rotter (Internal Organizer) at Cub Foods Inver Grove Heights

Numbers Served



16

Worksites
Visited

53

Workers
Interviewed

228

Survey
Responses

5

Key
Informant
Interviews

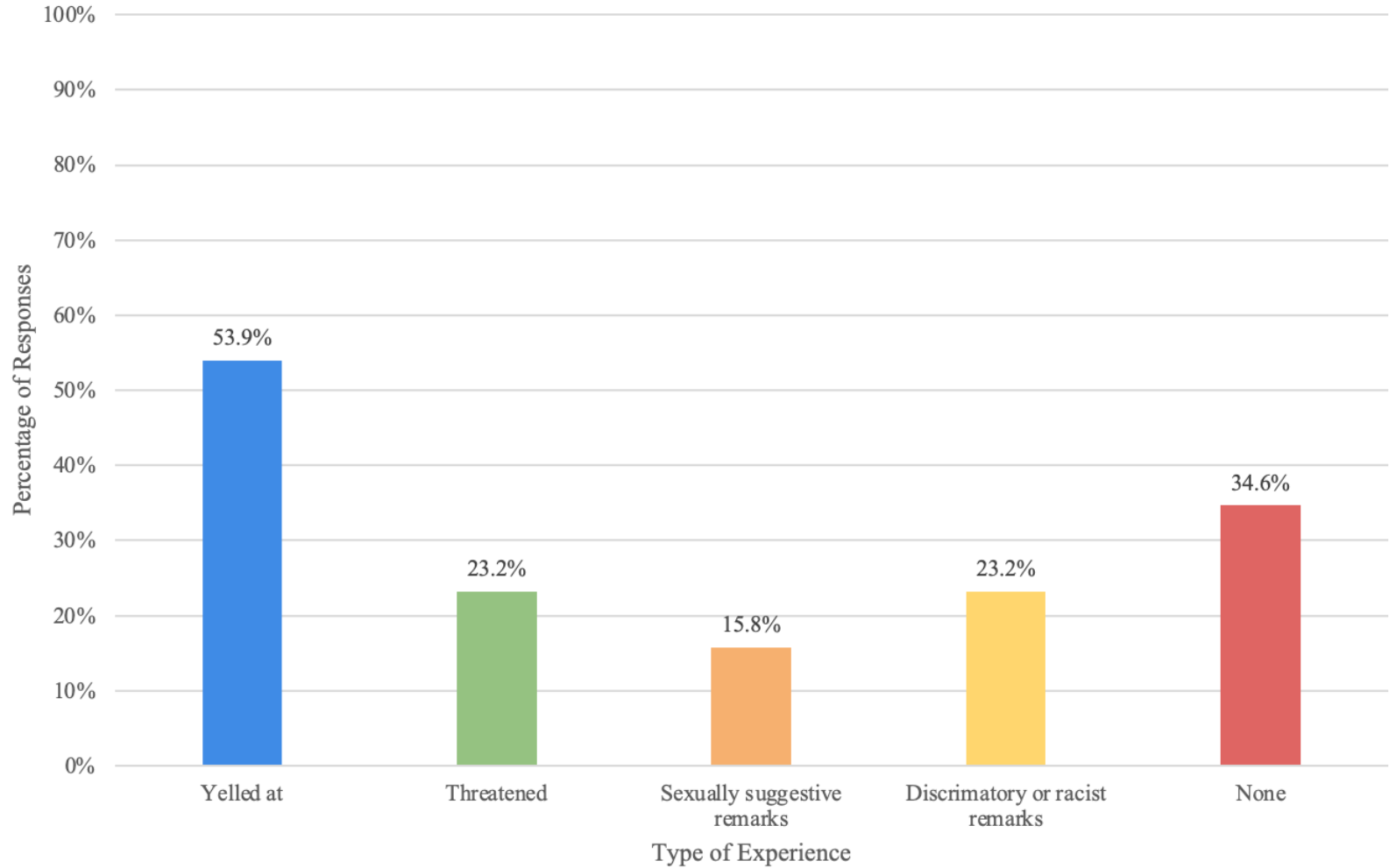
Results

Semi-Structured Worksite Interviews

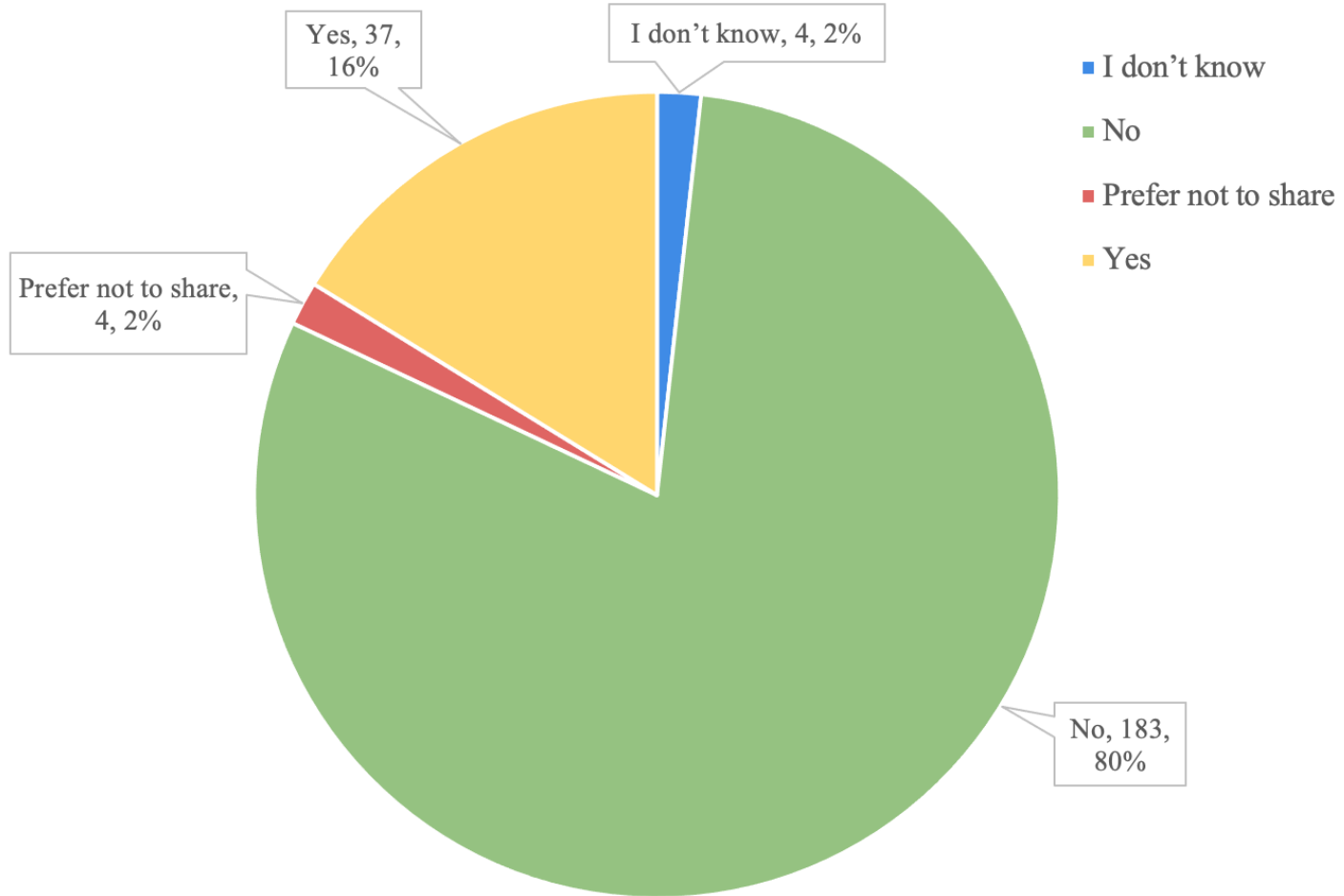
Theme	Number of Workers Who Mention Theme (n=50)
Negative customer interactions	32 (64%)
Dangerous emergencies or situations	13 (26%)
Negative perception of emergency training or no dangerous emergency training	19 (38%)

Survey Results

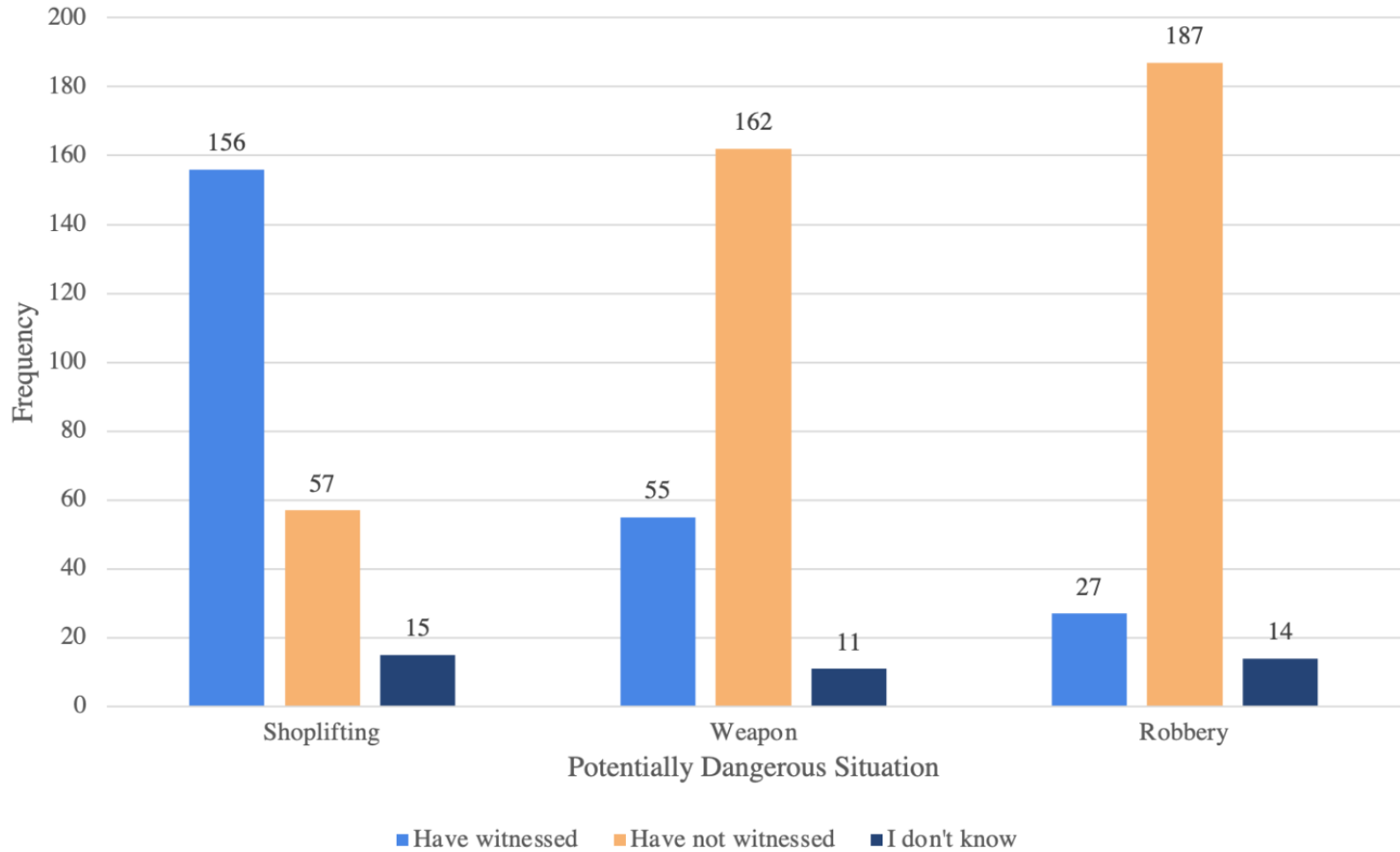
Respondent's Experiences With Verbal Harassment at Work (n=228)



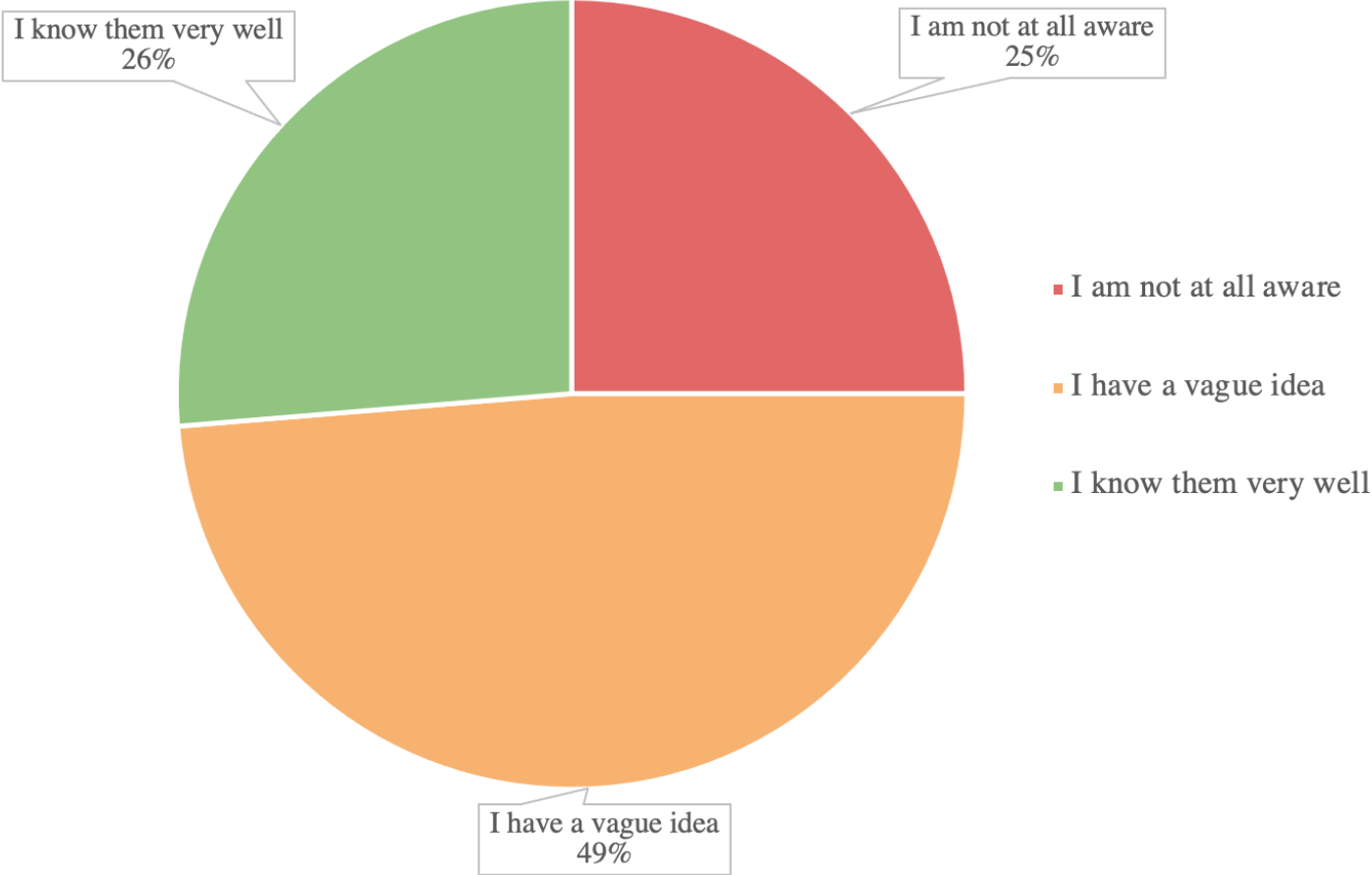
Respondents Who Have Experienced Physical Harassment at Work (n=228)



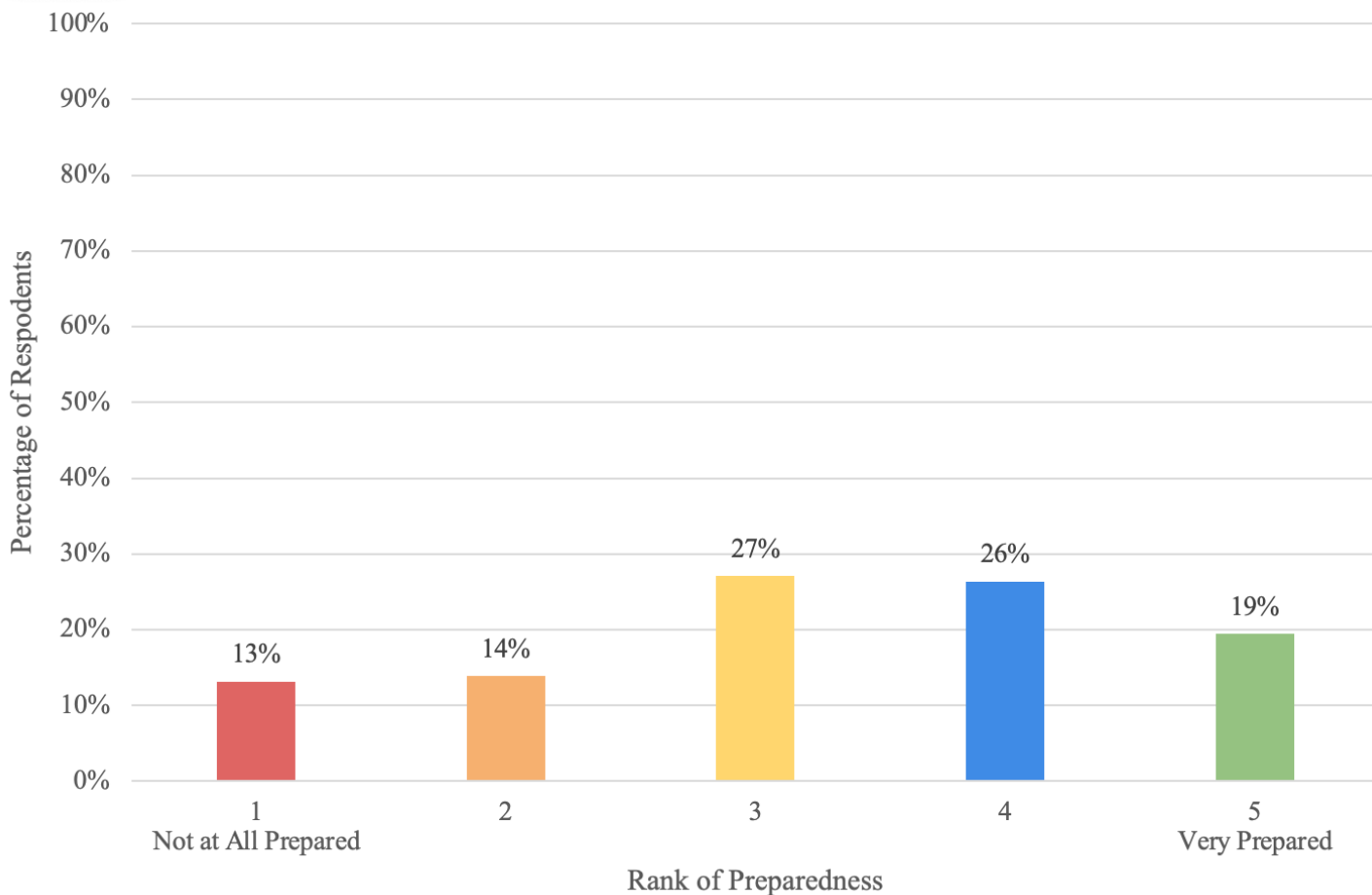
Potentially Dangerous Situations Witnessed at Work (n=228)



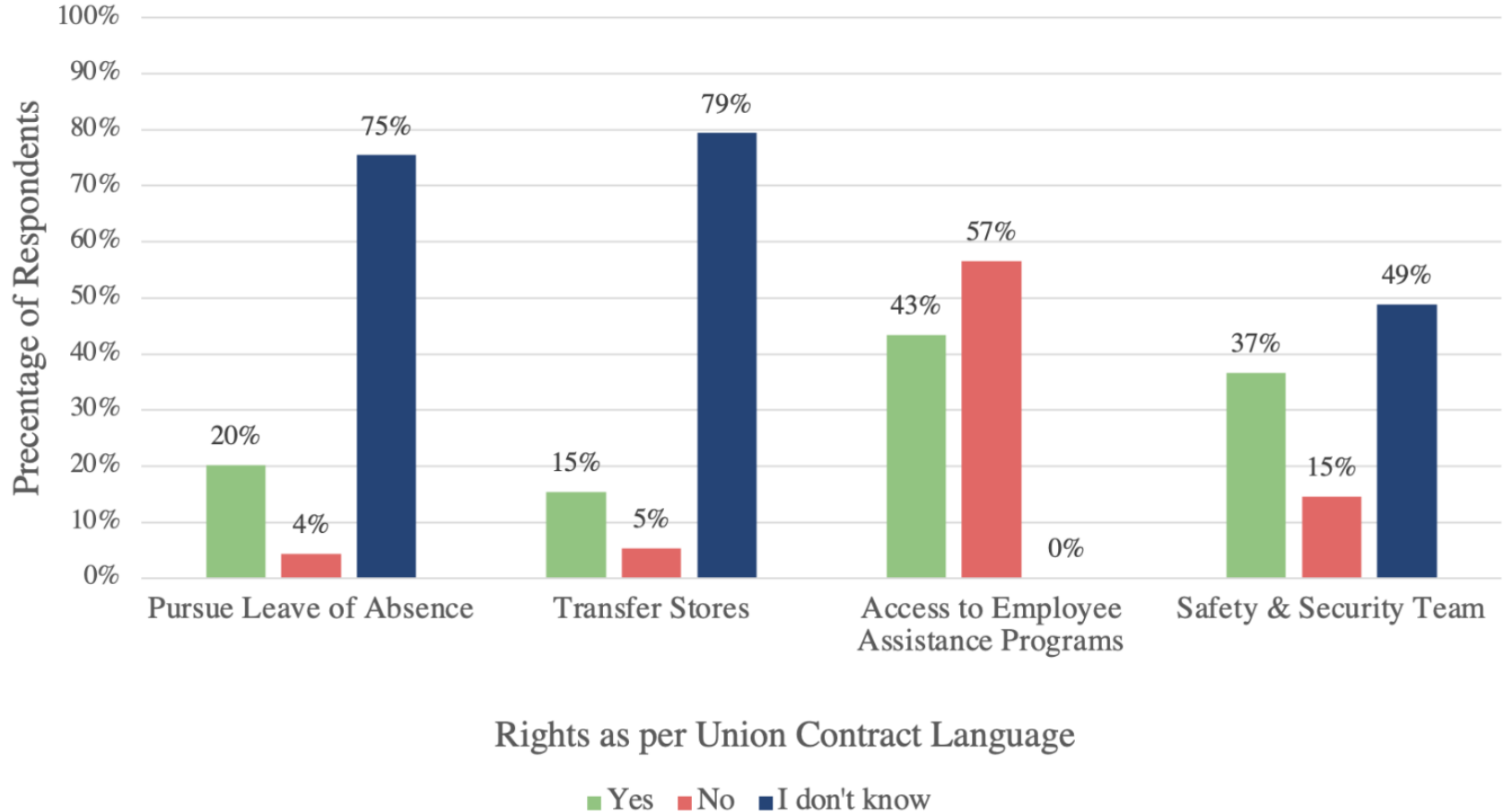
Awareness of Store Dangerous Emergency Policies & Evacuation Plans (n=228)



Ranking of Dangerous Situation Preparedness Among Respondents Who Have Received Training (n=144)



Respondents' Awareness of Whether They Have Access to Certain Rights Regarding a Dangerous Emergency (n=228)



Quotes

1

“Some days I can just shut it off. Some days it really bothers me. Because it's not my fault. I'm not the one to blame.” [customers being rude]

3

“I think employees should be able to see what happened and what management said about it.” [incident report]

2

*“My life's worth more than \$100.”
[shoplifting]*

4

“Reporting needs to be improved. I've reported the harassment of myself and coworkers in the past. However, it seems as though nothing has happened, or at least, I can't tell if any difference has been made.” [incident report]

**Giveback Product 1:
“Know Your Rights” Posters**

UFCW Local 1189 wants you to

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

regarding your safety at work! Refer to the union contract or contact your union representative for more information.

Lunds & Byerlys



SEE SOMEONE SHOPLIFTING? HANDS OFF!

Article 9: You have no obligation to protect the store from shoplifting. If you see someone shoplifting, DO NOT BE A HERO or put yourself between them and the door. The thief can be dangerous and react poorly. Your safety is more important!



PROTECT YOURSELF IN AN EMERGENCY

Article 25: You don't bear any responsibility to protect the store, its merchandise, or others (unless it's safe to do so) in an emergency.

ANNUAL DANGEROUS EMERGENCY TRAINING

Article 25: Your employer must train you on dangerous emergency procedures at least annually. This includes how to recognize a dangerous emergency and how to de-escalate situations when appropriate. All employees must be paid for training.



PARTICIPATE IN STORE SAFETY MEETINGS!

Article 9: Union stewards can participate in safety meetings to identify and remediate workplace hazards! Safety meeting dates and outcomes must be posted for all employees to see.



KNOW YOUR STORE'S EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Article 25: Make sure your employer is openly communicating the procedures they've come up with to protect you in an emergency. These include where employees should go to protect themselves, evacuation plans, what to do, and how prompt first aid should be administered to injured employees.

LOOKING TO TRANSFER OR NEED A LOA?

Article 25: If there's a dangerous emergency at your store, you have a right to transfer to an opening another store while keeping your wage, seniority, PTO, holidays, and benefits that you received at your previous store. You may also pursue any leave of absence (LOA) offered by your employer.

NEED EXTRA MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT?

Article 25: If there's a dangerous emergency, you may have access to counseling or therapy and other Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) through your health insurance.

Giveback Product 2: Union Contract Language

Challenges and Successes

Successes

- Site visits and semi-structured interviews
- Disseminating the survey via Prompt
- Key informant interviews
- Starting the final report draft during week 1

Challenges & Limitations

- Revised the survey multiple times during data collection
- Didn't receive OSHA logs from stores in a timely manner

Personal Reflections



Victoria and Sunniva at Santa Monica Pier during Orientation



Victoria and Sunniva touring and interviewing workers at Kowalski's Central Facility

Acknowledgements

Claire Van den Berghe, UFCW Local 1189 Organizing Director

Adam Moskowitz, Minneapolis Project Mentor

Matt London, OHIP Program Advisor

UFCW Local 1189 Staff

OHIP Staff



Thank You!



Victoria and Sunniva (with Scottie) on their first site visit
(and first day of work!)

References

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