Violence in the Workplace in the United Kingdom, Firm and Individual-Level Exposure

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Violence in the Workplace

Gallup global survey, established:

- 1 in 5 workers exposed to psychological violence and harassment at work
- 1 in 10 reported exposure to physical violence at work during their working lives.

Higher risk of experiencing violence at work among (ILO 2022, Eurofound 2023):

- Workers of lower socio-economic status
- Women
- Minority groups
- Precarious contracts

What is the situation in the UK?

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Gaps and Research question

- Absence of overarching analysis for all industrial sectors and occupations
- Little UK research, mostly case studies based on individual businesses or specifical industrial sectors.
- Evidence is based on sectoral level lobbying (e.g. British Retail Consortium)
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE) reports on violence at work using CSEW
  - but no detailed information on the workplace.
- Estimates should control for known individual-level and firm-level predictors of workplace violence.
- Disclosure an on-going issue, important to triangulate findings when possible.

Which industries and occupations are the most violent?

What are the effects violence at work for workers?

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Data & Method- two data

Commercial Victimisation Survey (CVS) - a firm-level data of private sector businesses.

- Manager reports experiences of crime or assault, threat and/or a robbery
- Used all available waves, sampled between 2012-2022
- Corrected for oversampling of key industrial sectors through inverse proportional weighting.

Q1. In the last 12 months, has anyone stolen anything from your business at these premises .. by using, or threatening to use, force or violence in any way?

Q2. Were any employees assaulted, threatened or intimidated in the last 12 months?

- Models control for: number of employees, area index of multiple deprivation decile, urban/rural location and year of survey.

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Data & Method- two data

United Kingdom Household Panel Study (UKHLS) - a nationally representative household panel survey collected via face-to-face interviews.

- Indicators asked of all adult respondents in wave 11 (2020-2021).

  Indicators determine whether participants had been 'physically attacked' and/or 'insulted, threatened or shouted at' at work in the 12 months prior.

  The 'effect' of perceived violence risk record whether respondents had 'felt unsafe' at work.

- Models control for individual-level confounders (age, sex and ethnicity) and employment characteristics (contract-type, and working-hours).

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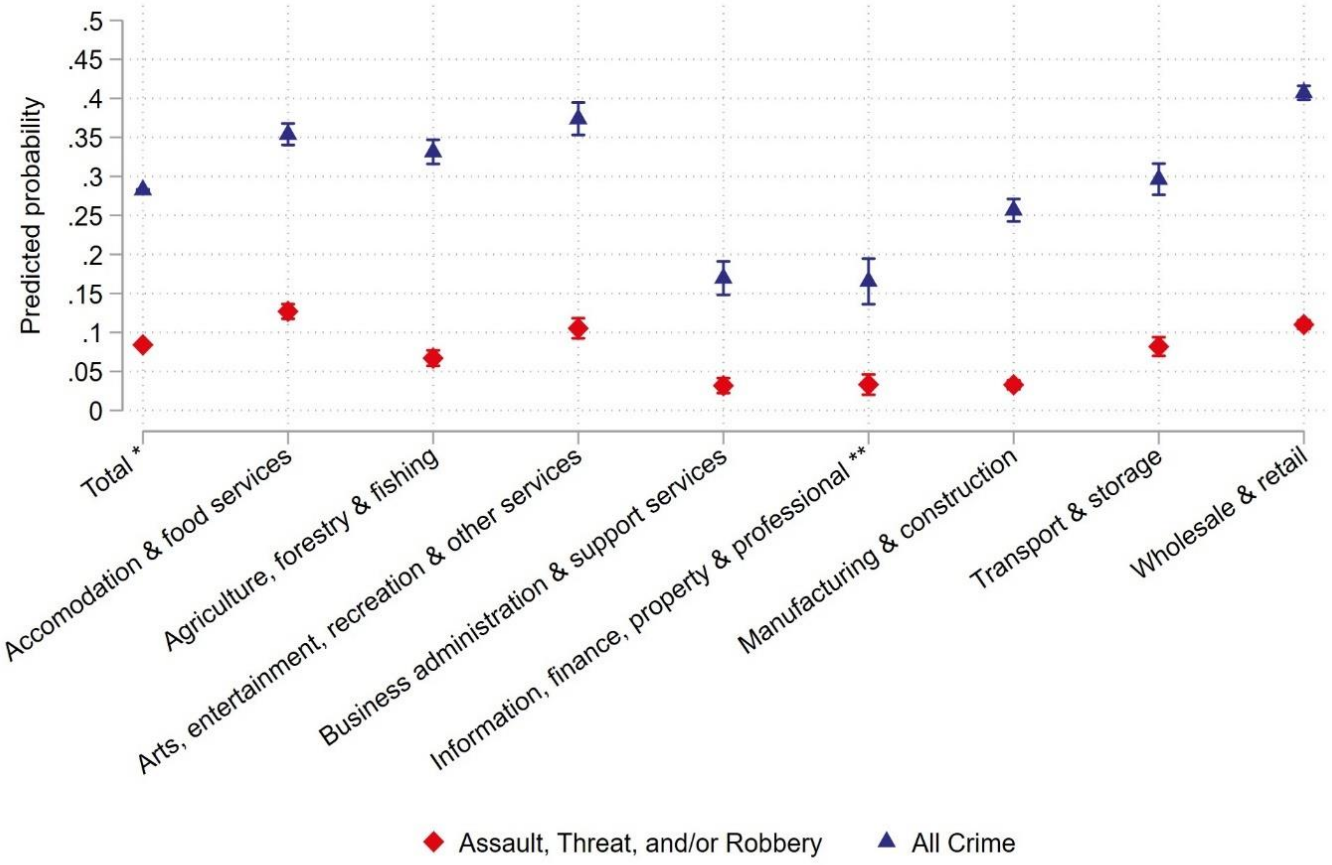
Prevalence of All Crime and Assaults/Threats/Robberies in the Workplace by sector.



Note: CVS Pooled waves 2012-2022, weighted by inverse proportional weights, models control for: number of employees, area index of multiple deprivation decile, urban/rural location and year of survey.

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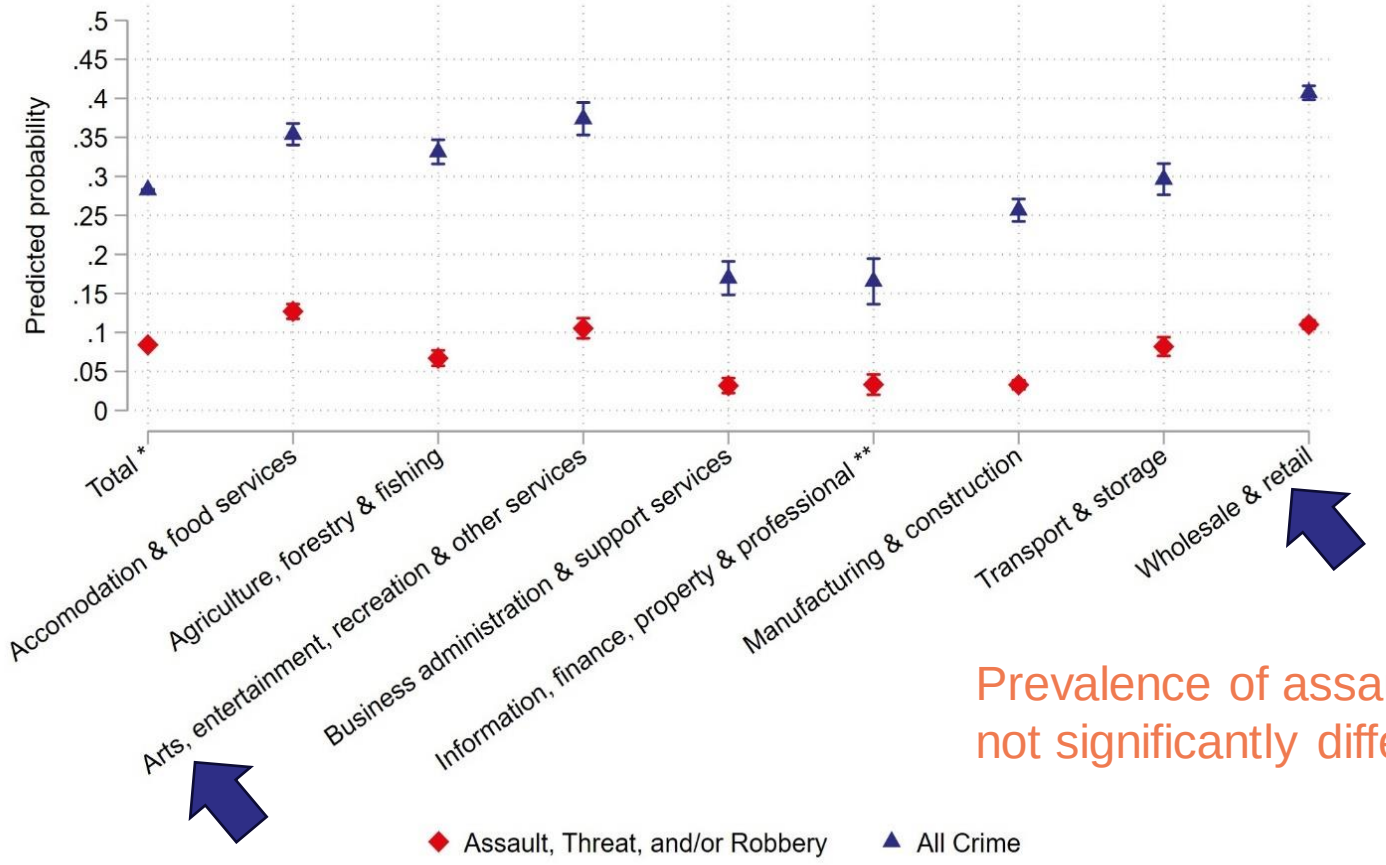

Prevalence of assaults, threats, and robberies, not significantly different

Note: CVS Pooled waves 2012-2022, weighted by inverse proportional weights, models control for: number of employees, area index of multiple deprivation decile, urban/rural location and year of survey.

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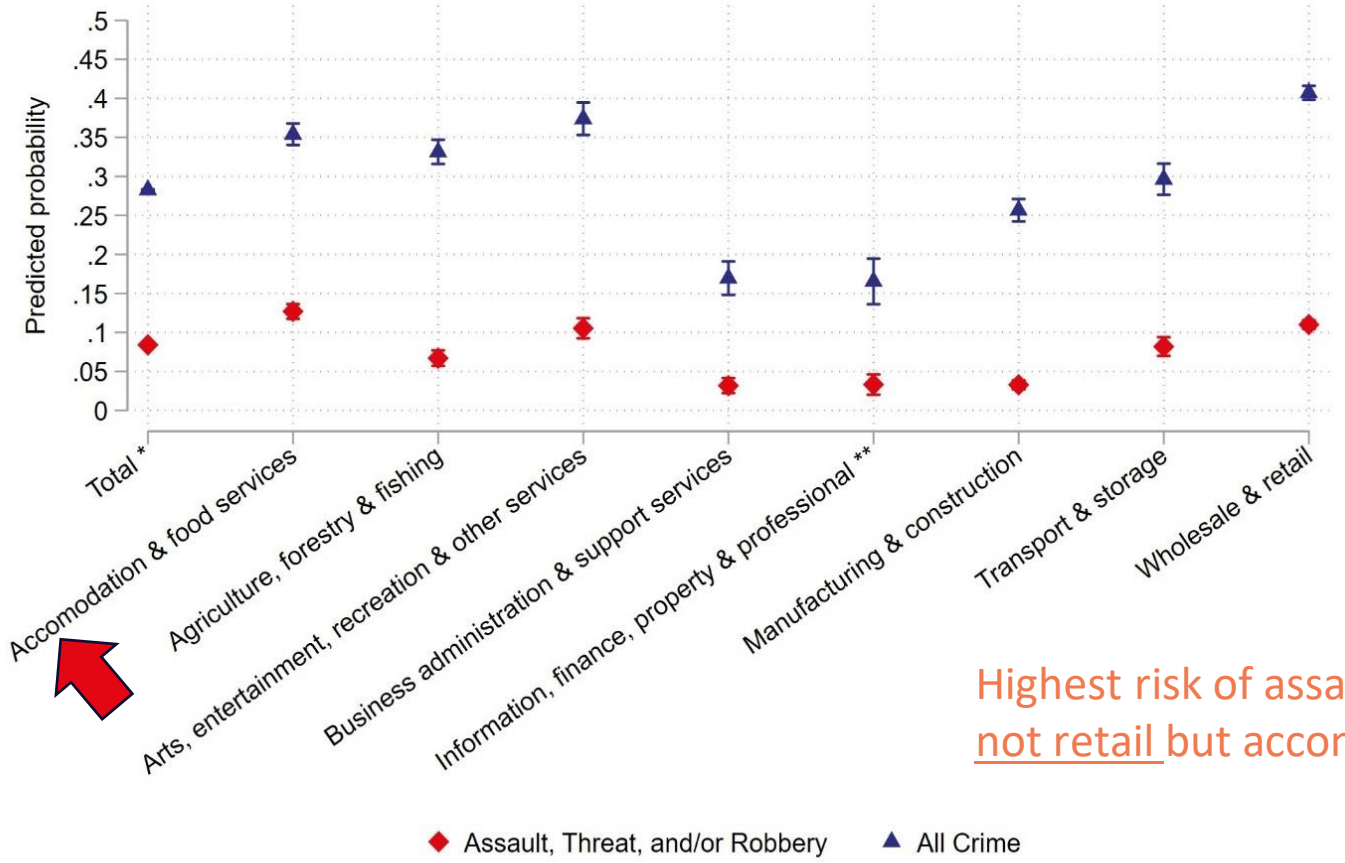

Highest risk of assault/threats/robberies, not retail but accommodation and food services.

Note: CVS Pooled waves 2012-2022, weighted by inverse proportional weights, models control for: number of employees, area index of multiple deprivation decile, urban/rural location and year of survey.

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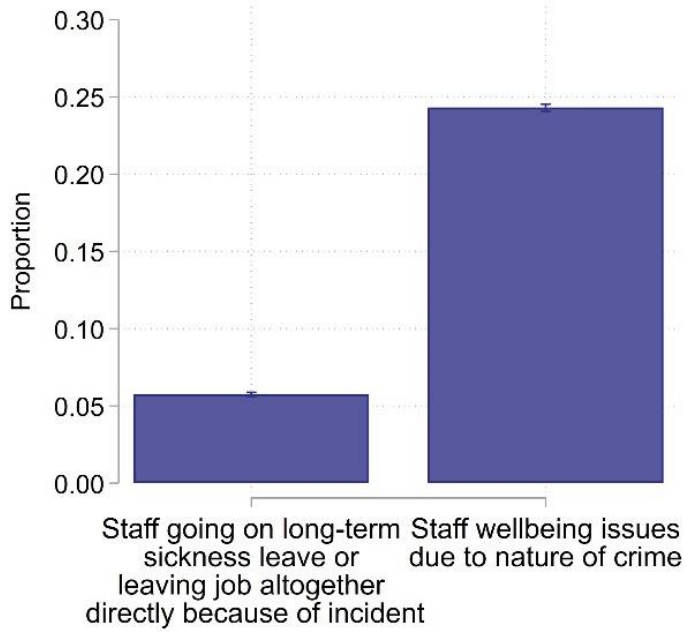
Impacts of Assault on Staff Well-being.

1 in 4 business premises reported staff well-being effects.

6% of managers noted staff had either left their job and/or had gone on long-term sick leave

Significant job retention issue, but also under examined risks for labour force attachment and aggregate employment rate



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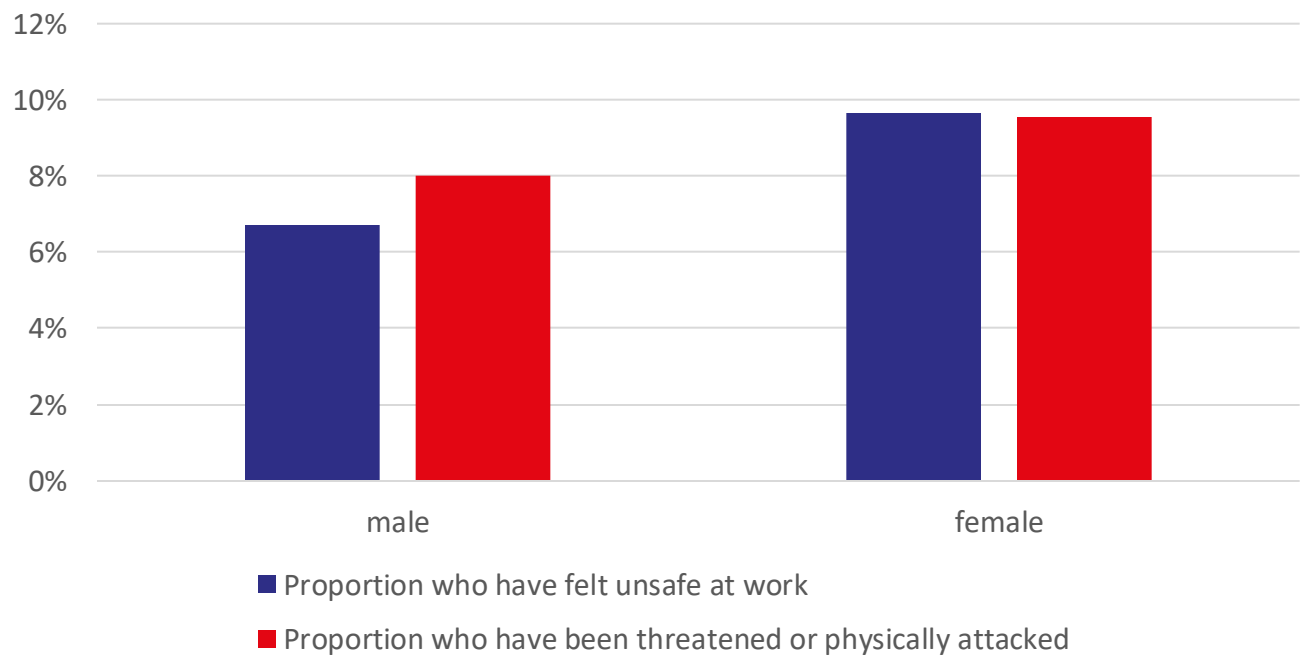
Distributions of Violence and Fear of Violence by sex



Violence and (impact = feeling unsafe) measured concurrently.

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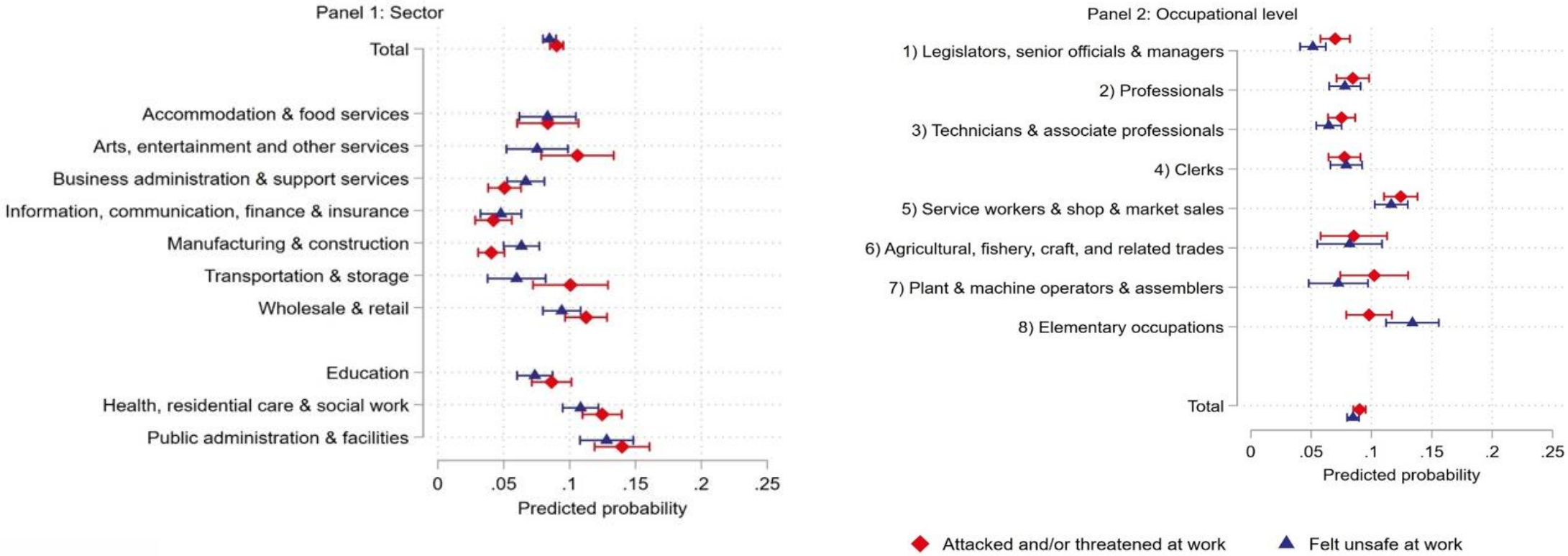
Prevalence of Violence and Fear of Violence by sector and occupational level



Public administration and facilities have significantly higher risks of being **attacked/threatened**, than **retail workers.**

In a model that controls for individual-level confounders and employment characteristics, and which includes public sector workers.

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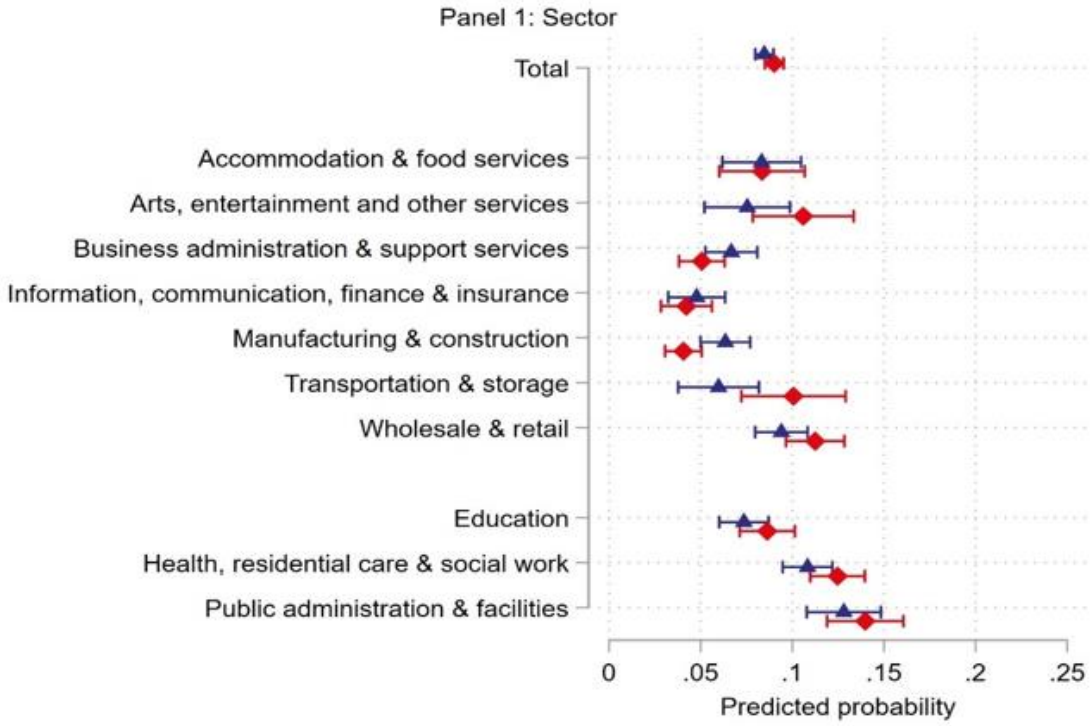

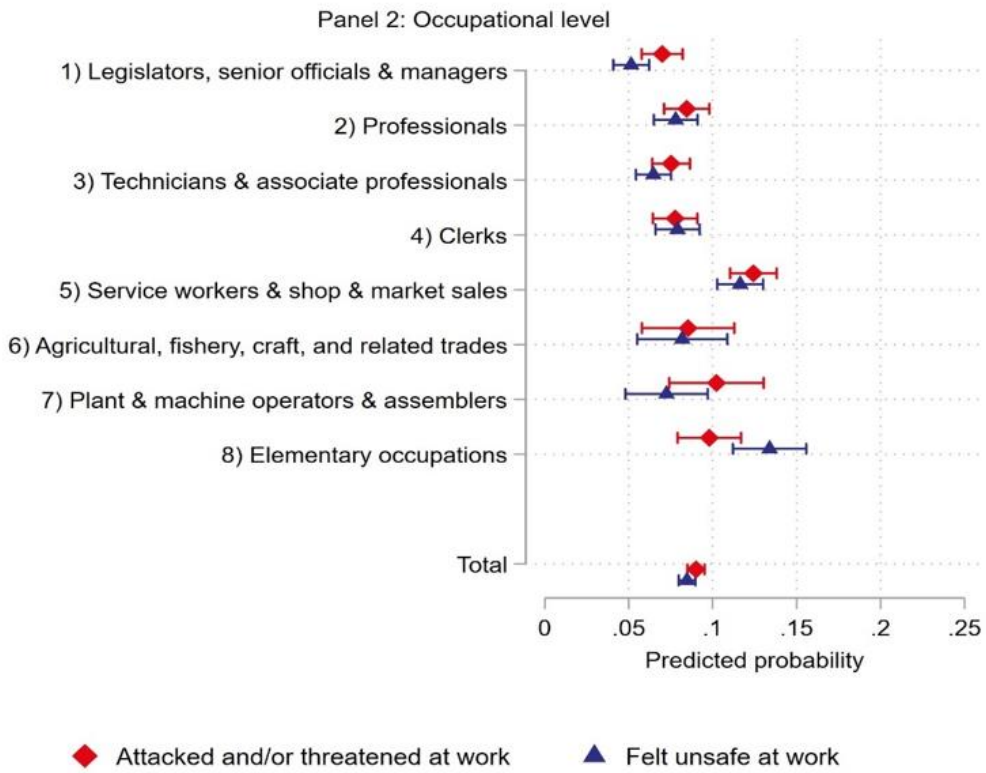

Risks of being attacked/threatened in 'Health' and 'Arts & Entertainment', statistically similar to **retail workers'**

Lower occupational groups more exposed to being attacked (occupational level 5, 7, & 8).

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Who is most at risk of violence at work?

Risks of being threatened/attacked:

- Risk factor same by sex.
- Lower occupational groups most at risk.
- Age is negatively correlated, younger people more likely to be threatened/attacked.
- Part-time workers less at risk.
- Asian British *lower risk* than White category

Risks of Feeling unsafe :

- Higher for women.
- Lowest for highest occupational group.
- Age was negatively correlated,younger people feel less safe.
- Black British (.10) and mixed-race *feel less safe* than White category, again Asian British had lower risks.

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Insights from those with Lived Experience

- Statistics on prevalence **'tip of the iceberg',** given disclosure issues.
- Reporting and **describing an abusive or violent incident to management**, can be **traumatising in and of itself** for the victim.
- **Managers** were said to frequently **minimise or dismiss incidents** reported, especially if they were between co-workers.
- Easier to report physical or **'routine violence'**, than insidious bullying behaviours, especially if between co-workers.
- Spoke of **erosion of self-confidence and mental health** as a result of violence in the workplace.

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Conclusion

- Criminal victimisation reported by 28.3% of business premises, 8% reported violent victimisation
- 10% of women and 8% of men have been threatened, insulted or physically attacked at work,
  - with non-negligible risks found in all sectors and occupational groups examined
  - highest risks among public sector workers.
- Fear of violence at work, and mental health effects are considerable.

Further work:

- Productivity effects of violence in the workplace largely unknown, with no indicators on quit intentions or other staff reported productivity effects.
- Need for effective firm-level strategies to increase job retention
- Need for firm-level strategies to minimise expressions of violence in the workplace from both service users and co-workers

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Thank you

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Questions

Commercial Victimisation Survey (CVS)

In the last 12 months has anyone stolen anything from your business at these premises or from any of your employees by using, or threatening to use, force or violence in any way? Y/N

Were any employees assaulted, threatened or intimidated in the last 12 months since this business has been at these premises? Please include any incidents which were a result of disagreements with customers or other employees. Include incidents which happened both at these premises and when staff were on duty elsewhere. Y/N

Questions

Commercial Victimisation Survey (CVS)

Thinking of all the crime that your premises experienced in the last 12 months, have any of these crimes or incidents impacted your organisation in any of the following ways, or not?

We examine two options, of 13 available, which directly reference the harms of violence for the victim.

1. Staff wellbeing issues due to nature of crime
2. Staff going on long-term sickness leave
3. Staff leaving job altogether directly because of incident

Questions

United Kingdom Household Panel Study

In the last 12 months, have you felt unsafe in any of these places? If so, which ones?

In the last 12 months, have you avoided going to or being in any of the places listed on the card? If so, which ones?

In the last 12 months, have you been insulted, called names, threatened or shouted at, in any of the places listed on this card? If so, which ones?

In the last 12 months, have you been physically attacked in any of the places listed on the card? If so, which ones?

The show card presented offers the following list of locations to choose from, and the respondent can choose as many locations as relevant.

Locations: At school, At college or university, **At work**, On public transport, At or around a bus or train station, In commercial places like shopping centres, shops or petrol stations, In places of entertainment like theatres, cinema, cafes or restaurants, At pubs, nightclubs, discos or clubs, In car parks, Outside, such as on the street, in parks or sports grounds, At home, other, No, this has not happened to me in the last 12 months.